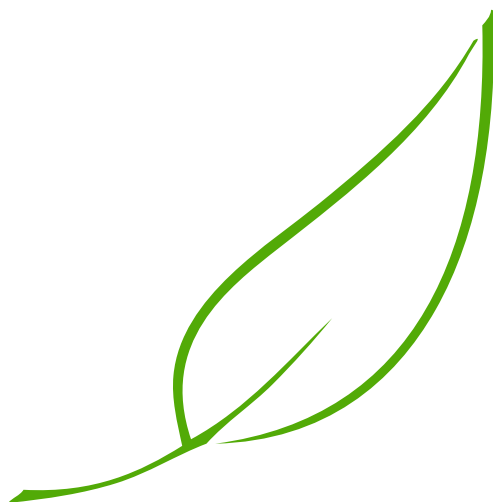


WHEREFORE ART WHO?

by Ken Bradbury



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LAINIE: (*running in, covering her ears*) No! No! I quit and I mean it! I just can't do it, Tommie!

TOMMIE: You've got to do it, Lainie! You're signed up and you're the best actress in the school.

LAINIE: But I'm scared!

TOMMIE: That's normal! That's okay! Romeo and Juliet is a tough play, but just think! Imagine it, Lainie! (*takes her by the arm and points out to the great world beyond*) Lainie Rostenberg ... starring in William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet! Oh! It takes my breath away! My own, dearest friend up there onstage, proclaiming her love for the handsome Romeo ... who by the way will be wearing tights! They'll scream, Lainie! They'll cheer and they'll scream and you'll be the greatest star that Woodrow Wilson Consolidated School District Number 27 has ever known!

LAINIE: What if I'm awful?

TOMMIE: You won't be awful. I promise you. Look, I'll help you. You wanna run lines? Come on, let's do a scene just to get you calmed down.

LAINIE: You can't calm me down. When I got up this morning I knew this was going to be a terrible day and I don't want you to ruin it.

TOMMIE: What a stinky attitude! You really want to fail, don't you? You're too lazy to learn all the lines, right? You want to go into that audition and be a miserable failure just so you don't have to work!

LAINIE: That's not true!

TOMMIE: Then prove me wrong! Go for it, girl! Shoot for the stars! (*looking around*) Where's a script?

LAINIE: Right there on the table.

TOMMIE: What scene do you want to do?

LAINIE: The death scene. Now. Quickly. Anything to get out of this. Start at the scene where I'm already dead. I know those lines.

TOMMIE: You're funny.

LAINIE: I'm too scared to be funny. I could do volleyball!

TOMMIE: What?

LAINIE: Volleyball! I love the game!

TOMMIE: You hate volleyball!

LAINIE: I could learn to love it! Spike! Set! Touchdown! Bunt!

TOMMIE: You don't even know the right words. Believe me, girl, you're an actress.

LAINIE: But Tommie, the biggest part I ever had was as one of the dancing trees in 4th-grade! I was a stupid tree, Lainie! I sang, (*singing and dancing*) "Have you ever, ever seen, bark so brown and leaves so green?" I was awful!

TOMMIE: You had the best limbs onstage, Lainie. And you had a line! I remember it!

LAINIE: So do I. "Oh please, Mr. Woodsman, spare this tree! Let me be! Let me be!"

TOMMIE: They applauded.

LAINIE: My mother applauded. She stood up and cheered and screamed and yelled, "That's my Lainie! That's my Laine!" The rest of the audience applauded just so she'd sit down.

TOMMIE: (*picking up the imaginary script*) Come on, you're just nervous. Let's find a scene. (*thumbing through the pages*) Hey, how about the balcony scene? I heard you do that one in class.

LAINIE: I think I fell off the balcony.

TOMMIE: Okay, Juliet appears in the window above. Romeo speaks: "But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun! See, how she leans her cheek upon her hand." Lean your cheek on your hand, Juliet. (*she does*) "O, that I were a glove upon that hand that I might touch that cheek."

LAINIE: (*she's actually pretty good*) "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet."

TOMMIE: "Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?"

LAINIE: “What's in a name? that which we call a rose. By any other name would smell as sweet ...”

TOMMIE: That's beautiful!

LAINIE: It's awful.

TOMMIE: Look, maybe just a little more passion ... more heartbreak. You're sad because his family and yours don't get along.

LAINIE: That's because Juliet's a chicken and doesn't want to audition on the balcony.

TOMMIE: Come on, try a little more ... please, Tommie? Just for me?

LAINIE: (*looks at her a moment, then continues ... even more beautifully*) “O gentle Romeo, If thou doest love, pronounce it faithfully. Or if thou think'st I am too quickly won, I'll frown and be perverse and say thee nay, So thou wilt woo. But else, not for the world. In truth, fair Montague, I am too fond ...

TOMMIE: (*nearly in tears*) That is so gorgeous, Lainie! And you! You're gorgeous when you say it! I'm not kidding! You're making me cry, kid!

LAINIE: That's two of us. I can't do.

TOMMIE: (*hears something*) You hear that? They just called for the actors. Come on, Lainie. (*grabs her to go*)

LAINIE: (*holding back*) What if I make a make a complete fool of myself, Tommie? What if they laugh?

TOMMIE: They won't laugh! They'll cry just like I did! Now come on. (*tugs at her again*)

LAINIE: (*again stopping*) How can you do this to me!

TOMMIE: Because I love you, kid! I'm selfish, okay? I want you to audition so I can say, “Hey! That's my best friend in the world up there!”

LAINIE: You won't stand on your chair and cheer will you?

TOMMIE: And I'll sit on your mother if she tries it.

LAINIE: Well ...

TOMMIE: (*tugging at her*) Come on! Come on!

LAINIE: (*stopping*) For you! I'm just doing this for you.



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