

BODKIN

By Robin Russin

SETTING: a restaurant

CAST:

A PRODUCER - white, late 20's

A WAITER (i.e. actor) - black,
large, early 30's

LIGHTS UP:

PRODUCER sits at a table. He
speaks apparently to himself,
until it's revealed that he's
wearing a bluetooth.

PRODUCER

I don't know what to do at this point, I really don't. I mean, this is the third fucking actor to flake on me--one you recommended, I might add. No, he didn't show up. Yeah, yeah, I know, it's a scary role, the greatest role ever written, blah blah blah--but isn't that supposed to be why they all want to do it? I mean, really, "to be or not to be," how fucking hard can that be?

(listening for a second)

What? No, I haven't read the fucking play, it's written in fucking medieval English or whatever, you think I have the time for that kind of thing?

(looking around in irritation)

Speaking of which, if this fucking waiter thinks he's going to get a tip, he better get his ass in gear, I been sitting here since the fucking middle ages myself.

He hangs up as WAITER, a buff
black dude in a waiter's apron,
enters and walks by.

PRODUCER

Yo-- dude! What the hell? What are they doing back there, rubbing sticks together to make the fire?

WAITER

You told me to hold your order, you were waiting for someone--

PRODUCER

Well now I'm waiting for you to bring me my fucking order!

WAITER

Yes sir. "If it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all."

PRODUCER

What?

WAITER

Hamlet. I overheard you talking about it. You're a producer?

PRODUCER

Yep. And wait...wait...don't tell me. You aren't just a waiter, you're an actor too. What a shock.

WAITER

I've even played Hamlet before.

PRODUCER

Really? Was it for a "theater for the blind?"

WAITER

Now hold on--it was Shakespeare in the Park--as in New York Central Park--

PRODUCER

Look, dude--I'm sure you're a terrific actor, which is why after all you're working at this fine establishment, and I do appreciate the gumption, but let's not go there and embarrass ourselves, alright? In other words, get real, I'm looking for a name.

WAITER swallows his growing anger
and puts out his hand.

WAITER

Name's Sam Black.

PRODUCER

(ignoring the hand)

Black isn't the name I'm looking for, or the look for that matter. No offense, but--

(gesturing at WAITER'S overall appearance)

--Scandinavian is not what comes to mind. What does come to mind isn't fucking Hamlet, but when you'll bring me my fucking omelet!

WAITER

You know, you're a real asshole.

PRODUCER

I'm a producer, what do you expect? And right now, "to be or not to be" pretty much refers to the state of your tip if I don't get my fucking omelet, you catch my drift?

WAITER leaves. PRODUCER calls after him.

PRODUCER

And don't even think about spitting on it or sticking a booger in it or any of that shit--I know what to look for!

PRODUCER gets back on the bluetooth.

PRODUCER

Hey. It's me. Who? No, no way. Look, I keep telling you, I want someone dangerous, someone with an edge. Yes, I know Gibson did it, but that was like a thousand years ago and everyone who even remembers hates him now anyway. But one thing I do NOT want is some prissy Brit like what's-his-name--Brannock? Whatever. I want to play against type--I mean, "Hamlet"-- even the title sounds like it's gonna be "Babe, the Return" or something. Look, all I told the studio is that there's a lot of murder and sword-fighting and a guy almost fucks his mother, and they bought the pitch. No, of course they haven't read it. But they want something classy for Oscar season. Now find me someone who can grab this fucking role by the throat and take it someplace no one ever has before!

WAITER returns, overhearing this last bit. He politely sets down the omelet.

PRODUCER

About fucking time...

(poking at it with his fork)

Jesus Christ! Hold on. Look at this. Can you tell me what's wrong with this picture?

WAITER

(under his breath)

Uh...no spit or boogers?

PRODUCER

It's cold! Ex-squeeze me, but usually when one orders hot food, one expects it to be...hot!

WAITER

I'm sorry, sir. I'll have it reheated.

PRODUCER

The hell you will! You'll have that moron in the kitchen cook a new one, and maybe this time use actual eggs instead of rubber cement!

WAITER reaches for the plate and accidentally knocks a fork into PRODUCER'S lap.

PRODUCER

Could you be any less competent?

WAITER suddenly grabs PRODUCER by the throat and lifts him bodily from the chair, taking him to the floor.

WAITER

That's it. I've had just about enough shit from you!

PRODUCER

Are you insane? Do you know who I am!

WAITER

Yeah, and I don't give a shit! You know how long I've been working here, or at a thousand other places just like it, having to put up with crap from jerks like you? I studied at the Royal Shakespeare company, I have my MFA from Yale--you don't even know the play you're producing!

PRODUCER

Help! Anyone-- help!

WAITER

Shut up!

He grabs the knife off the table,
puts it to PRODUCER'S throat.

WAITER

Now the question's for you: To be or not to be? Whether 'tis
nobler in the mind to suffer The slings and arrows of
outrageous fortune, Or--

(brandishing the knife)

--to take arms against a sea of troubles, And by opposing
end them?

PRODUCER

Oh, please...please...I don't want to die!

WAITER

To die: to sleep; No more; and by a sleep to say we end The
heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks That flesh is
heir to, 'tis a consummation Devoutly to be wish'd.

WAITER drags producer to his feet,
backs him up against the wall.

WAITER

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, The
oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of
despised love, the law's delay, The insolence of office and
the spurns That patient merit of the unworthy takes, When he
himself might his quietus make With a bare bodkin?

PRODUCER

(hysterical)

No! Not a bodkin! Not the bodkin!

WAITER lets PRODUCER go and tosses
the knife aside.

WAITER

Fuck it.

He shakes his head wearily and
begins to take off his apron.

PRODUCER

You're not gonna kill me?

WAITER

No. Just...something I had to get out of my system. A guy can only take so much. I guess I should be used to that by now.

PRODUCER

You assaulted me. You scared the shit out of me.

PRODUCER picks up his bluetooth.

WAITER

So you gonna call the cops? Look, buddy; can't we just let this go? I mean, I think maybe this was a wake-up call for me. I don't belong here. I'll clear out.

PRODUCER

Are you out of your fucking mind? I'm not letting you go anywhere. Not after that.

(on phone)

Hey. Get over here, right now. Yeah, I did. Yeah, drop everything else. This guy, this fucking waiter no less, fucking knocked me out.

PRODUCER hangs up. WAITER sits despondently in a chair.

WAITER

I didn't hurt you.

PRODUCER

The fuck you didn't, you destroyed me. You got a headshot?

WAITER

What?

PRODUCER

I need to give it to the studio, today.

WAITER

What?

PRODUCER

Dude, are you deaf? I've got the Veep of Production on his way here as we speak. You got an agent?

WAITER

You're...casting me? As Hamlet?

PRODUCER

No, as his mother.

WAITER double-takes. Producer slaps his shoulder.

PRODUCER

Dude--of course as Hamlet. That was maybe the most smokin' audition I ever saw. Un-fucking-believable! You actually scared the shit out of me. While doing Shakespeare. You, my friend, are what I've been looking for!

WAITER

But...but...what about...what you said? About me being black?

PRODUCER

Good producer looks beneath the skin. I mean, I've seen them cast Othello as a black guy, that never stopped them.

WAITER double-takes at this odd statement, but doesn't have time to dwell on it.

PRODUCER

You're going to be the new face of the Bard's greatest action hero--

(imagining the billboard)

"Hamlet--he's big! He's bad! He's got a bare bodkin, and he's out for revenge!"

(to WAITER)

So, what are you waiting for? Headshot? Chop chop?

WAITER

Waiting...?

He looks down at his apron and starts laughing. So does PRODUCER. WAITER starts to head off stage.

PRODUCER

Hey, dude--!

WAITER turns back. PRODUCER holds up the plate of eggs.

PRODUCER

While you're at it, get me a new omelet. And if you want a tip, try bringing it to me while it's still hot this time.

He gets on his bluetooth. WAITER,
stunned by it all, takes the plate
and exits.

PRODUCER

(to himself)

Hmmm...What the hell's a bodkin, anyway?

LIGHTS OUT