



*By S. A. Cranfill*

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### **ACT I – Introduction**

[SCENERY: Backdrop for Will Shakespeare's house with his desk center stage. Basic props for Will Surrey's gas station center stage in front of curtain, or just his gas can and storybook. If you have no curtain possibility, use a cardboard background for the gas station that sets up easily toward front of stage.]

[MUSIC: First verse of *Will Shakespeare Is His Name* – slows or fades at end as Will walks on]

WILL: (from offstage) Shakespeare! Shakespeare!

*Will Surrey walks on to front center stage holding Shakespeare the (Stuffed) Dog (SP) by the collar.*

WILL: Come, Shakespeare. Atta boy! (Stops, facing audience) Now,... sit! (Drops SP to the floor) Good boy! (Smiles and shakes head to indicate satisfaction; addresses audience) Most obedient dog I've ever had.

Just let me sit down on this old gas can and I'll introduce myself.... There now.

Good day to you all! Glad you're here. (Tips hat) My name's Will Surrey, and I'm here to tell you a story. It's a fanciful tale, that's for certain. In fact, heh, heh, it involves quite a number of tails,... but, you'll see what I mean.

*For his special addresses to the audience, Will may use a storybook disguised with "A Shakespearean Tale!" on the cover and the lines of his narration scenes hidden inside. He can leave it somewhere on stage where he can retrieve it each time he comes on for a narration, or a crew member can put it there along with his gas can.*

This story I'm about to tell you is a bit of a treasure hunt that spans a few centuries. For you young 'uns out there, that means a lo-on-g time. (Leans down toward audience and motions as he stretches out the word.)

It has a lot to say about the importance of *words*. *And*,... it'll explain why *my* name is Will, and how *he* got the name Shakespeare (points at the dog)

SP: RUFF! RUFF! [deep voice in mic]

WILL: (Will acts like the gas can shakes a little) Whoo! He *is* a big ‘un! Stay! Good boy!

Our tale begins some 400 years ago, far away in London, England, in a famous house...well, you’ll see, you’ll see.

Just remember to listen close, and you might just learn a good word or two. *And*, keep your eyes peeled for some, er, rather remarkable little characters.

Tell you what. I’ll get back with you pretty soon. I need to gas up Petruckio’s truck.

(Gets up, reaches down and grabs SP by the collar.) Up, Shakespeare! Good lad! (To audience) Trained him myself. C’mon, Boy. I hear *Rosie* callin’. (Walks off stage with SP)

[MUSIC: WILL SHAKESPEARE song, play through scene change]

[SCENERY: Remove gas station props as Will walks off ]

## **ACT I – LONDON, ENGLAND – 1611 AD SCENE I**

*Will Shakespeare at his desk, center stage, behind curtain if you have one. Gertrude enters and takes front-center stage and strikes a regal pose. Katherina rushes on and half stumbles around in a rage until she encounters Gertrude.*

KATHERINA: (Loud and demanding) Who are you?!

GERTRUDE: (Stuffy and annoyed) I am Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, of the house of *Hamlet*. I am one of Shakespeare’s leading ladies. And,...just who are you?

KATHERINA: My *name* is Katherina. I am one of Shakespeare’s most *famous* leading ladies.

GERTRUDE: Katherina? Oh-h-h,...*that* one. (Nods head and raises eyebrows at audience)

*Petruchio enters from behind curtain or scenery. He is eating an apple.*

PETRUCHIO: (Loud and firm, but good natured) Nay, come, Kate. You must not look so sour.

*Katherina immediately transforms to sweet and obedient.*

KATHERINA: (Slight curtsy) Whatever your will, my Lord, I will gladly do.

GERTRUDE: (Astonished) My, my, sir! Just who are *you*?

PETRUCHIO: (bows with flourish) Petruchio of Verona, at your service, madam.

KATH: (Sweetly) He is my husband, madam.

GERT: (Amazed) Petruchio, eh? I must say, sir, you have certainly *tamed* this bad-tempered spirit!

PETRUCHIO: (Smiles, winks at audience) I'm *good!* (Takes bite of apple)

*Will Shakespeare appears from behind curtain or scenery or gets up from his desk.*

WILL SP [WSP]: Children! My children! Back to your pages! I have much work to do. (returns to his desk, picks up quill pen, and works on a manuscript.)

*Katherina stomps her foot, Gertrude "harumphs."*

PETRUCHIO: (Indicating WSP with the hand that holds the apple) *He's the boss.* This way, ladies. (He removes his hat and bows with a flourish and escorts them to the side of the stage where they stand to watch.)

MUSIC: Background music of *Will Shakespeare is His Name*

*Falstaff emerges with the cleaning bucket and carefully looks around. He puts bucket down on side of stage, then motions other mice to come out. Falstaff then gives a big yawn and stretch, indicates to audience to "sh-h-h, be quiet and don't tell" and curls up on side of stage beside bucket.*

*Mice look around as they come from behind scenery, then begin to whisper to one another. All speak in a stage whisper. If you have a curtain, you may want the mice to be spaced across the stage, quietly doing various cleaning chores as the curtain opens. Falstaff would then emerge and sneak over to lie down as they work.*

*Horatio and Mrs. McReedy step toward front, on either side of the stage.*

*Will Shakespeare (WSP) always behaves as if the mice were not there.* MUSIC FADES

HORATIO: (Stage whisper) Mrs. McReedy! Inspection.

MRS MCR: (Carries her feather duster) Yes, Master Horatio.

*Mice scurry into two lines, divided on either side of WSP's desk, so that he is visible as he works. Each one steps out and curtsies as the housekeeper makes her way down the line.*

OLIVIA: (Curtsy) Good mornin', Mrs. McReedy.

MRS MCR: Good morning to you, Olivia. Nice and tidy. (Smiles in approval)

IRIS: (Curtsy) Missus.

MRS MCR: Iris. Very good. (Moves to Viola) Ah, Viola. Is your rag nice and clean?

VIOLA: Yes'm. (Curtsy) It is indeed, Mum.

MRS MCR: Excellent, Viola. Now, Chloe.

CHLOE: (Curtsy) Yes'm.

MRS MCR: Are you ready to scrub the pantry floor?

CHLOE: I am, Mum. I have me brush.! (Holds up brush)

MRS MCR: Falstaff will fetch your pail. (Looks around) And just where *is* young Master Falstaff? (All the mice except Horatio point to where Falstaff is curled up, sleeping)  
Ah, I see. Desdemona, dear.

WSP: (Suddenly looks up from work) Hm-m-m. Desdemona. That's a good name. I think I'll use that.

MRS MCR: (Mice giggle and she signals to the mice to be quiet) Sh-h-h. Now, Desdemona, would you please retrieve young Master Falstaff and see that he attends to his chore.

DESDEMONA: Yes'm, forthwith, Mum. (Scurries over to Falstaff and grabs him by the ear) Up, straightaway, you little scoundrel! (Falstaff jumps up, wincing from his ear) You have a pail to fetch!

FALSTAFF: Ow! Unhand me, Desdemona!

CHLOE: I need me pail! And be quick about it!

FALSTAFF: (Stretches and yawns) Why do we always have to clean so early in the morning?

HERO: Because the Master is already up and working, Falstaff!

WSP: (Looks up again) Falstaff. Now *that's* the name I was looking for. (Mice titter)

MRS MCR: Sh-h-h! See? (indicating that their service to WSP goes beyond cleaning)

FALSTAFF: Yes, indeedy, Mrs. McReedy!

MRS MCR: (Hands on hips) You can do a better rhyme than that, young man! Fetch the pail, then off to your studies.

FALSTAFF: Aye, Missus. (Head down, fetches pail and gives it to Chloe who grabs it and scowls at him) Words, words, words. Every day, I have to study words. (Goes to his book and sits down)

HORATIO: And a fine study it is, young fellow. We have a *duty* to fulfill.

MRS MCR: Now, Audrey and Hero. (Both step forward)

AUDREY: (Curtsy) Yes, Mum.

HERO: (Curtsy) Good morning, Mrs. McReedy.

MRS MCR: Ladies, the banisters need a good polishing.

HERO: Our cloths are nice and clean, Mum. (Exchanges look of pride with Hero)

MRS MCR: Very good. Now, Duchess, you know your special chore. (Duchess steps forward and curtsies)

DUCHESS: Yes, Mum. Beatrice, Miranda, and I all have our special slippers.

BEATRICE: (Beatrice & Miranda step forward and curtsy) We're ready to polish the floor in the study.

MIRANDA: We're quite the good skaters! (Indicates her slippers)

MRS MCR: (Looks at each one) Excellent, Miranda... Beatrice. Now, scurry! (They all quickly get to their work.)

(WSP gets up and paces thoughtfully behind his desk)

HORATIO: (Stage whisper) Mrs. McReedy. Attend to the Master's desk!

MRS MCR: Forthwith, Master Horatio. (Busies herself with a feather duster around the desk totally unnoticed by WSP)

WSP: (Stops and listens) Horatio! I must write that down. (Turns to write it down and gets the feather duster in his nose and lets loose a huge sneeze.) Ah---ah---ahh---CHOO!

MRS MCR: Oh-h-h-h! (She is blown a short distance across the stage by the sneeze and lands in a heap)

MICE: Gasp!

MRS MCR: (Getting up and smoothing her apron) Sh-h-h!

MICE: Sigh! (Sigh of relief. Then all turn at once to WSP) Bless you!

WSP: Odd tickle. (No notice of mice. Sits at desk.)

*As music intro starts, Petruchio, Katharina, and Gertrude come to stand behind WSP, sometimes looking over his shoulder, reacting appropriately to song lines and to each other, unacknowledged by WSP. Petruchio should still be holding his partially eaten apple. When WSP has a line, he stands and delivers it with a flourish of his pen.*

## WILL SHAKESPEARE IS HIS NAME

We work in a most prestigious home, For a chap of particular fame  
Our master says, [WSP] “The play’s the thing,” Will Shakespeare is his name

A word he rhymes, a play he writes, His aim to entertain  
Our master says, [PETRUCHIO] “The world’s a stage,” Will Shakespeare is his name

We scurry, scurry, scurry with a tail that’s fury  
To keep things nice and clean  
We hurry, hurry, hurry his favor to curry  
As long as we’re not seen! (*a young mouse can stage whisper this to audience*)

A second master of this house, Quite civilized and tame  
Is a brilliant mind, a studious mouse, Horatio is his name

Horatio keeps the manuscripts, And that is how he came  
To be the master’s right-hand mouse, Horatio is his name

He worry, worry, worries if the ink is blurry  
Or the paper’s not kept clean  
He hurry, hurry, hurries with a paw that’s fury  
His work is just ingen---eous

Our master’s acting company, Is quite the best, it’s true  
Our master says, [WSP] “Lend me your ears,” And that’s what the Londoners do!

We scurry, scurry, scurry to shine the surrey  
When the master is quite keen  
To hurry, hurry, hurry with his horse and surrey  
To play before the Queen!

KATHERINA: (To Gertrude, who acknowledges her curtsey; Petruchio also bows toward Gertrude, as she is the only queen onstage) Your majesty! “*Ding*” on piano for cue to sing

We work in a most prestigious home, For a chap of particular fame  
Our master says, [WSP] “Ay, there’s the rub,”

[MRS MCR: Rub a little harder there, Dear. Ah! That’s nice and shiny!]

Will Shakespeare is his name, Will Shakespeare is his name  
Will Shakespeare is his name  
[END SONG]

HORATIO: (Steps forward, addresses audience) Horatio is my name. As you can see, our little band of mice play an important role in the life of this great playwright. (Points at WSP)

OLIVIA: We keep the house clean!

IRIS: We dust his writing desk!

VIOLA: We polish the floors! (Duchess, Beatrice and Miranda all point proudly to their slippers)

CHLOE: We clean the pantry!

FALSTAFF: We eat a *lot* of cheese! (All the mice turn and look at a guilty faced Falstaff) Well, a fella's gotta eat.

HERO: With you around, Master Shakespeare's going to be eaten out of house and home!

WSP: (Stands up) Eaten out of house and home. Hm-m-m. I can use that line.

AUDREY: Our job is important, isn't it, Master Horatio.

HORATIO: It certainly is, Audrey. And that's why I must be exceedingly well read.

WSP: (Stands up) Aha! Exceedingly well read. I can use that line too. Funny how these things just *pop* into my head.

MIRANDA: We work hard...

BEATRICE: But we're as merry as the day is long!

*WSP stands again, raises a finger to indicate another good idea, while the mice all take note and nod to one another. WSP then gets up and begins to pace, heavy in thought.*

DUCHESS: Well done, Beatrice. But, look... now the Master is pacing!

MIRANDA: He's looking for the right words!

DESDEMONA: Master Horatio, the Master needs some good words!

MRS MCR: Right you are, Desdemona.

*Mice line up for song. WSP continues to pace, sit down & write, get up, etc.*

### A FEW GOOD WORDS

A few good words for Mister Shakespeare  
We must find for Mister Shakespeare  
As he works to finish up the newest of his plays

A brilliant stroke for Mister Shakespeare  
Turn it well for Mister Shakespeare  
And a polished phrase or two will brighten up his days

A timeless thought Writ as it ought               ### END OF PREVIEW ###