

SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN

by

Jonathan Edgington

## Characters

HERBIE: Male, late 30's/early 40's

URSULA: Female, any age

GLENDA: Female, any age

MEDEA: Female, any age

AN EMPTY APARTMENT WITH A LAPTOP AND AN IPHONE ON A TABLE. ENTER HERBIE BREATHING DEEPLY AND LOOKING STRESSED.

HERBIE: There it is! (PICKS UP IPHONE AND KISSES IT) Thank goodness for that! I thought I'd lost you. (LOOKS AT IPHONE, SEES HE HAS SOME VOICEMAIL MESSAGES, SETS PHONE TO SPEAKER, PRESSES BUTTON TO LISTEN TO MESSAGES & PUTS IT BACK ON TABLE. EXITS TO KITCHEN.)

iPHONE: (SEXY FEMALE VOICE) Hello Herbie. It's Sam. Just wanted to thank you for a *fantastic* night last night. You really are a man of *many* talents. Let's do it again. Call me.

HERBIE RE-ENTERS CARRYING A GLASS OF WINE AND A BOTTLE OF WINE WITH A LARGE SMILE.

(ANOTHER SEXY FEMALE VOICE) Hi Herbie. Tamzin here. I'm *still* recovering from Tuesday night. Now that's what I call a *hot* date. Don't forget to call me.

HERBIE SMILES AGAIN BUT NOT AS MUCH.

(ANOTHER SEXY FEMALE VOICE) Herbie. It's Annie. Sunday was amazing. You were amazing. Why haven't you called me? Call me. I want to see you again. Soon.

HERBIE'S SMILE BECOMES RATHER WEAK.

(AN IRRITATED MALE VOICE) Herbie. It's Bill. (SARCASTIC) Remember me - your agent. I've been phoning, texting and emailing you all day. The deadline for the book is tomorrow at noon. You know the book I'm talking about? The book I got you that unbelievable advance for? Have I got your attention? Good. If that book's not with me by noon tomorrow, the publishers want that unbelievable advance back. Got it? Good. Get it to me. By noon tomorrow!

HERBIE LOOKS STRESSED.

HERBIE: It's finished. Well nearly. Just needs a final read through. Maybe the odd change. Or two. Maybe a few changes. It'll be ready in good time. But I'll make you sweat, you bastard. I'll email it to you at 11:55 tomorrow. See how you like that! (SITS AT TABLE, OPENS LAPTOP AND TURNS IT ON) Better get on with it...

HERBIE TYPES AWAY, PAUSING OCCASIONALLY TO TAKE A SIP OF WINE. SUDDENLY HE "FREEZES". HE SITS COMPLETELY MOTIONLESS WITH HIS HANDS POISED ON THE KEYBOARD.

ENTER URSULA, GLENDA AND MEDEA FROM DIFFERENT AREAS. GLENDA IS CARRYING A SMALL CASKET.

URSULA: Girls. You made it!

URSULA, GLENDA AND MEDEA ALL HUG AND KISS.

GLENDA: Good summoning spell.

MEDEA: (LOOKING CLOSELY AT HERBIE) Even better freezing spell. How long will it last?

URSULA: A few minutes.

MEDEA: I've never been able to get that one right.

URSULA: (LOOKING AT CASKET GLENDA IS CARRYING) Got it?

GLENDA: Yeah.

URSULA: Any problems?

GLENDA: Surprisingly not.

URSULA, GLENDA AND MEDEA PAUSE AND LOOK AT EACH OTHER WITH AFFECTION.

Together again.

URSULA: The Sisters.

MEDEA: It's so cool!

URSULA, GLENDA AND MEDEA HIGH FIVE EACH OTHER.

U:G:M: (TOGETHER) Fair is foul and foul is fair. Hover through the fog and filthy air!  
(THEY LAUGH)

URSULA: Best get on with it.

URSULA, GLENDA AND MEDEA GATHER CLOSELY AROUND HERBIE. THEY WALK ROUND HIM GENTLY TOUCHING HIM AND GIGGLING.

GLENDA: Gorgeous...

URSULA: He's like they said...

GLENDA: Hot...

MEDEA: He's *very* hot. I could easily ....

URSULA: (INTERRUPTING) No. We're not here for that!

MEDEA: I was just .....

URSULA: (INTERRUPTING) No!

GLEENDA: Lovely body.

MEDEA: Smells nice.

URSULA: He's meant to have a great sense of humour.

GLEENDA: He's got *quite* a reputation.

URSULA: You mean for sleeping with nearly three thousand women and one man?

MEDEA: One man?

URSULA: A misunderstanding in a bar in Basingstoke. (BEAT) Apparently.

GLEENDA: He's very sexy. He's making me go all... (BEAT) You know...

MEDEA: Me too.

URSULA: Pull yourself together girls. We've got a job to do.

MEDEA: (LOOKING VERY CLOSELY AT HERBIE) Irresistible to women...

GLEENDA: (LOOKING VERY CLOSELY AT HERBIE) And a man in Basingstoke...

URSULA: (LOOKING VERY CLOSELY AT HERBIE) A best-selling author...

MEDEA: An acknowledged world authority on Shakespeare...

GLEENDA: He's got it all...

MEDEA: He's got the world at his feet...

URSULA: Let's do what we came to do. Got the box ready Glenda? I'll un-freeze him.

GLEENDA: Aren't we going to read his book first?

URSULA: Alright. There's just time.

URSULA PICKS UP HERBIE'S LAPTOP.

GLEENDA: What's it called?

URSULA: Shakespeare's Women.

MEDEA: (DISPARAGINGLY) Shakespeare's Women!

GLEENDA: What does he know about Shakespeare's women?!

MEDEA: We're Shakespeare's women!!

URSULA: What does he know about us?

MEDEA AND GLEENDA JOIN URSULA . ALL THREE STARE  
AT THE LAPTOP SCREEN FOR A FEW SECONDS.

MEDEA: Finished it!

GLEENDA: Me too. It's very good.

URSULA: Better than good.

MEDEA: I liked "Of all Shakespeare's characters his women are perhaps the most attractive, and also, in a sense, his most original creations, so different are they, as a whole, from the ideals of the feminine type prevalent in the literature of his day."

GLEENDA: "Shakespeare realistically captured the essence of femininity" works for me.

URSULA: Surprisingly PC.

MEDEA: Loved what he said about us.

GLEENDA: Got us off to a tee.

URSULA: He's doing it.

MEDEA: Doing what?

URSULA: Working his magic on you both – and he's still frozen! Best we get on with this, before you two change your minds! (URSULA "UN-FREEZES" HERBIE)

HERBIE: (JUMPS WITH FRIGHT) What's going on?! Who are you?! What are you doing here?! How did you get in?!

MEDEA: Disappointing...

GLEENDA: Most...

URSULA: Don't you recognise us Herbie?

HERBIE: (CALMING DOWN) I'd most certainly remember you if I'd met you before.

GLEENDA: How so?

HERBIE: I never forget a beautiful woman...

MEDEA: Better...

HERBIE: (WITH A WINNING SMILE) I am in a state of shock.

GLEENDA: He's good...

MEDEA: (MOVING SEDUCTIVELY TOWARDS HERBIE) Very good...

URSULA: Medea – I'm not telling you again. No!!

MEDEA: (SULKY) Alright.

GLEENDA: Shall we tell him why we're here?

MEDEA: Better tell him who we are first.

GLEENDA: He should have worked it out.

URSULA: Let's give him a clue.

GLEENDA: The usual?

MEDEA: Why not?

U, G&M: (TOGETHER) Double, double toil and trouble. Fire burn and cauldron bubble. (THEY LAUGH AND HIGH FIVE EACH OTHER)

GLEENDA: Love it.

MEDEA: Never tire of it.

URSULA: Great lines.

GLEENDA: Will should have given us more.

MEDEA: We ended up with quite a few he didn't give us.

GLEENDA: (TO HERBIE) You must know who we are now?

HERBIE: Actors?

URSULA, GLEENDA & MEDEA LOOK VERY OFFENDED.

GLEENDA: Most definitely not.

URSULA: We're the real thing.

HERBIE LOOKS PUZZLED.

MEDEA: The real thing from the Scottish Play.

HERBIE: Shakespeare's Scottish Play?

URSULA: Of course.

HERBIE: Are you trying to tell me you're the Weird Sisters?

GLEENDA: We don't like to be called that...

HERBIE: I meant the three witches.

GLEENDA: That's us.

HERBIE: (HUMOURING THE WITCHES) Of course you are. I'm so sorry. Forgive me. I'm a bit stressed. Got a book to finish.

MEDEA: We read it.

URSULA: We liked it.

GLEENDA: Particularly what you said about us.

URSULA: We've got something for you. Show him the box, Glenda.

GLEENDA SHOWS HERBIE THE CASKET.

HERBIE: What's in it?

URSULA: Something special.

GLEENDA: Very special.

MEDEA: Something very special. For a very special person.

URSULA: First you have a choice to make.

MEDEA: You can have what's in the box.

GLEENDA: Or not.

HERBIE: Tell me what's in it...

MEDEA: That's too easy.

URSULA: You don't get to see what's in the box.

GLEENDA: Unless you do a little deal with us.

MEDEA: Then you get to open it.

GLEENDA: And see what's inside it.

URSULA: And keep it.

MEDEA: Forever.

GLEENDA: If you want to.

HERBIE: What's the deal?

MEDEA: I like this part.

URSULA: You can see what's in the box. But in exchange you have to give up something.

MEDEA: You have to give up .....

GLEENDA: (INTERRUPTING) Your power over women!

MEDEA: (CROSS) I wanted to tell him!

GLEENDA: Too bad.

URSULA: Sisters!

HERBIE: Don't argue ladies. Nothing to argue about. My answer's "no". I don't want to give up my "power" over women – so I'll pass on seeing what's in the box.

THE WITCHES ALL SMILE CONDESCENDINGLY AT HERBIE.

GLEENDA: Fair enough.

MEDEA: Nice to have met you.

URSULA: Hope the book's a success.

THE WITCHES START TO EXIT THEN STOP AND TURN AROUND.

MEDEA: Have you thought this through?

HERBIE: Yes.

GLEENDA: Sure?

MEDEA: Aren't you wondering?

HERBIE: What's in the box?

MEDEA: Yes.

HERBIE: A bit. It's not a problem.

GLEENDA: It could become one.

HERBIE: How?

MEDEA: If we leave now, you will, never, ever see us again. You will never, ever see the box again.

GLEND A: You've started to wonder already. To wonder what's in the box. Every day that wonder will grow.

MEDEA: And grow.

GLEND A: And grow.

MEDEA: Then, slowly, very slowly, it will start to drive you mad.

GLEND A: The knowing that you will never know.

MEDEA: It will eat away at you. Day and night.

GLEND A: Night and day.

MEDEA: It will eat into your soul.

GLEND A: And drive you stark, staring, mad!

URSULA: (CLAPS HANDS) Very good, sisters. Very good indeed. You don't need me.

GLEND A: We need you, Ursula. We need you.

URSULA: So, Herbie. Is your answer still "no"?

*End of extract...*