

A New Play

By the Remarkable playwrights Mornstar and Starke. To be performed at the *GOLDEN CONGER*, Honey Lane, by the *SIX OF HOUNDS*, the famed company of players, with leave of the Master of Revels. Sure to please.

THE LUSTY QUEEN

Dramatis Personae



Pierre,
an Absent King



Pernelle,
the Lusty Queen



Magdelaine,
a Loyal Servant



Druette,
a Melancholy Princess



Arthus,
an Ardent Prince



Clown,
a Fool

A New Play

By the Esteemed playwrights Mornstar and Starke. To be performed at the *CLOISTERS*, Chiswell Street, by the *SIX OF HOUNDS*, a reputable company of players, with leave of the Master of Revels. Will not disappoint.

THE LUSTY QUEEN

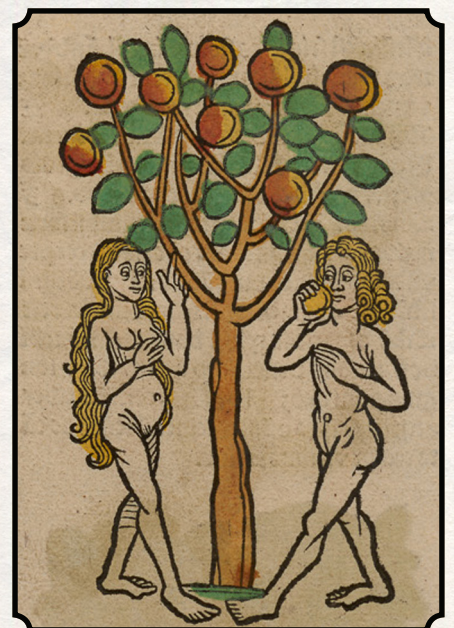
You Will See



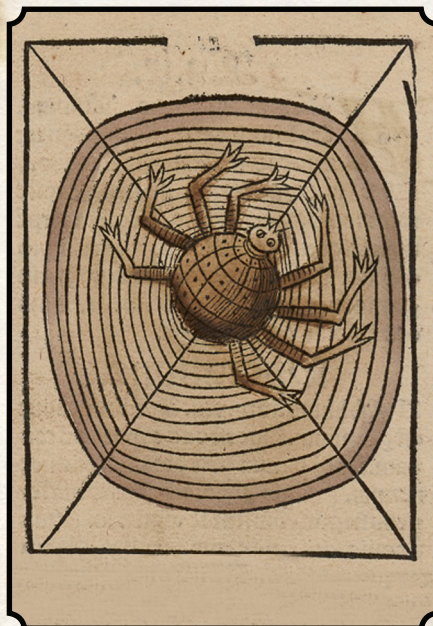
Lust,
Most Unnatural



Disaster,
Upon the Seas



True Love,
Star-Crossed



Treachery,
Foul & Mendacious



Banishment,
Hasty & Cruel



Mirth,
Capers & Poesy

THE LESSER PLAYERS' TALE

Fastaval final version

FACT BOX

How could you bear a partnership so vile?—Theseus, in Racine's *Phèdre*

The play's the thing! In *The Lesser Players' Tale*, a grubby troupe of Renaissance actors take their new play, a racy tragedy, on the road. Along the way, they'll furiously adapt that play to the absurd whims of each new audience.

Participants will perform *The Lusty Queen* (a sloppy, ten-minute adaptation of Racine's *Phèdre*) many times as they scramble to master the material while holding their little family together across danger and opportunity.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Jason and Lizzie are a US-based writing team of award-winning game designers. They share an abiding love for early modern theater and the dirty charlatans who made it. Jason is best-known for designing *Fiasco*, while Lizzie is best-known for her monograph and blog series *Leaving Mundania*. They take a hands-on approach to the participant experience and revel in period details and ridiculous, heartfelt drama.

NOTE

Good acting is emphatically *not* required—there's no time for it in a ten-minute play with improvised dialogue that includes:

- A treacherous plot to frame a good Prince for unspeakable deeds
- A star-crossed romance and a stepmother's skeevey love for her skeeved-out stepson
- A King who is not as dead as popularly believed
- Two brisk deaths at sea, witnessed by a clown
- Surprise adoption and a more surprising suicide
- And, of course, a lusty Queen!

Don't worry about it, and assure your players *they* don't need to worry about it either.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Number of participants: 6 who play actors and 1 or 2 facilitators

Total time needed: 4 Hours

Language: Materials are available in English and Danish, but the facilitator's script is in English only.

Age limit: 18+

Amount of reading: About nine pages, including the script.

Timeline: This game takes about four hours. That includes the following:

- Workshop (50 minutes)
- In-scene rehearsal (60 minutes or less)
- Break (10 minutes)
- Chapter 1: Cloister or Brothel (20 minutes)
- Chapter 2: King or Queen (30 minutes)
- Break (10 minutes)
- Chapter 3: Gallows and Voting (40 minutes)
- Curtain Call and Debrief (20 minutes)

MATERIALS

- Six iconic character hats, perhaps a few more if you are able. A crown or two, a tiara, a clown's hat, a gallant's hat, a hennin, a veil, etc.
- A foam knife, pen, or other object to be the knife
- Assorted scarves, other hats, and so forth to costume the facilitators (Optional, but recommended)
- Tape, for marking the floor
- One copy of this document for each facilitator
- One set of character sheets
- Seven copies of the Player Handout (eight if you have two facilitators)
- Seven copies of *The Lusty Queen* script (eight if you have two facilitators)

FACILITATOR ORIENTATION

Thank you for running *The Lesser Players' Tale*!

This document is for you. Participants probably shouldn't read it until they have played, because it includes a few satisfying and delightful surprises that you may want to preserve for them. These moderately juicy secrets are all in the scenario's outline, found in the *Playing the Game* section.

BEFORE PLAY

PREPARE THE MATERIALS

See *Materials*, above.

BEFORE HEADING TO YOUR ROOMS

► **ASK THE PARTICIPANTS TO FORM GROUPS.** Read the following content aloud to allow anyone who wants to opt out to opt out:

“This is a light comedy about the rise and fall of a troupe of actors who may perform before king and gallows. The play they are performing is *The Lusty Queen*, which includes potential incest, tragic suicide and violence (similar to *Hamlet* in tone and intensity). The scenario also places characters in personal peril, and includes themes of poverty, class, romance, and plenty of sexual innuendo. The overall vibe is meant to be joyful, but characters might die. There will also be time pressure on the participants.”

► **CHOOSE A LANGUAGE.** Figure out how you're going to work with groups that want to play in English or in Danish. Sort that out first.

► **FORM GROUPS OF SIX.** Work in from either end.

If you don't have a multiple of six, see if anyone is interested in playing a member of the audience/utility player. These folks can play a variety of NPCs—it can also be quite fun to watch the participants put on the play.

► **LINEUP BY EXPERIENCE.** Ask participants to stand in a line from a lot of theater experience to a little theater experience. Fold that line in two at the middle, so you have two groups of people facing each other.

Ask participants to rearrange themselves in their two lines by age, from youngest to oldest. We do this because, from our American sensibility, we thought it might be uncomfortable to play the on-stage romances in groups with widely differing ages. Don't do this if you don't think it will be an issue.

NOTE

This scenario works well with one or two facilitators. If possible and practical, we recommend two. Having two people in the audience for the performances feels more meaningful than one. It also means that you can play your reactions against one another, hoot louder, and talk to one another to give real-time feedback to the performers. Plus, it's just plain fun to facilitate with a friend. However, from a running-the-scenario perspective, only one is strictly necessary.

This means *The Lesser Players' Tale* can accommodate a range of facilitators. Perhaps you are one experienced facilitator supporting one facilitator learning the ropes, two equal facilitators, or a main facilitator and an audience member who only wants to play a little bit as the extra

PREPARE THE SPACE

► LAY OUT COSTUME PIECES. Put them on a convenient table.

► SET UP THE AVAILABLE SPACE. YOU NEED:

- **A stage with a wing on one side.** The stage should be comfortably large. The wing should be a smaller area—large enough to contain all the cast members and perhaps one chair, but not so large that everyone can sit down at once. This area must be exclusive and it is used constantly. Don't create more than one wing!
- **An audience area.** If you can, put a couple chairs together in rows opposite the stage. This is where the facilitators, as their characters, will sit.
- **A restaurant area.** This should include some chairs for the participants to sit in while they play the cast party scenes.
- **A prison.** A small area barely big enough for all the participants to sit on the ground in. You might wish to separate it from the rest of the play space with chairs, or use the stage with specific space constraints.
- **The gallows.** You will want to make this on the fly during the scenario. It should be appreciably smaller than the stage—it should feel claustrophobic, be bereft of any furniture, and perhaps only large enough for your six participants to stand in a line.

NOTE

Be flexible about space—we list the areas the participants will encounter during play. If possible, it'd be nice to tape some of them off before the participants arrive. While the stage must always be an exclusive space, everything else can be flexible. For example, the audience area might double as the restaurant and the prison, with the use of a few chairs to constrain the participants.

WORKSHOP (50)

EXPLAIN THE SCENARIO (5)

- ▶ GIVE THE PARTICIPANTS THE PARTICIPANT HANDOUT. Let them read it.
- ▶ EXPLAIN THE PREMISE OF THE SCENARIO. Mention that you, and your co-facilitator, if any, will be stepping in to play a rotating cast of extras.
- ▶ MENTION THE THEMES. The *The Lusty Queen* includes potential incest, tragic suicide and violence (similar to *Hamlet* in tone and intensity). The scenario also places characters in personal peril, and includes themes of poverty and class, romance, and plenty of sexual innuendo. The overall vibe is meant to be joyful, but characters might die.
- ▶ SOOTHE ANXIETY. Explain that this scenario is designed to make you a master of a new play. You won't be for most of the experience! Also, don't try to be a "good actor"—there's not enough time during the renditions of the play for nuance. When in doubt, aim for clarity!
- ▶ EXPLAIN THE SCENARIO'S STRUCTURE:
 - First we're going to workshop. We'll learn about the scenario, pick characters, and rehearse the play out of scenario a little bit.
 - Then we will move into character and have an in-scene rehearsal, with the facilitator playing the director.
 - After rehearsal is over, we will take a bio break, and then we play three chapters. Each has the same structure:
 - It starts at a casual social gathering where the entire troupe is present and hanging out.
 - Eventually, the facilitator(s) will enter as the troupe's Director/Booking Agent, and offer them a choice of places to perform.
 - Once the troupe has decided, the Director/Booking Agent will let them know about any special considerations or constraints they should observe, then leaves the troupe to plan the performance.
 - The troupe performs the play and the facilitator, in character, portrays the audience.
 - After moving through this cycle three times, the scenario ends with a final brief scene and a curtain call for each character.

CHOOSE ROLES (5)

► **EXPLAIN TERMINOLOGY.** Say: “This scenario is about the theater troupe called Six of Hounds! With the characters in the scenario being actors who play characters in a play, words can get complicated pretty quick. So let’s lay out some terminology. When we talk about...

- ...participants, we’re talking about the humans in this room
- ...actors, we’re talking about the actors who are members of Six of Hounds
- ...parts, we’re talking about the people the actors are portraying in *The Lusty Queen*.

It is the custom of the repertory theater to refer to each other by the name of their part. This is advantageous in its simplicity, and also popular with wanted criminals. So the actors call the person who plays Arthus by that name whether they are currently performing the play or not.

This scenario has six parts, all roughly equal in terms of stage time. Druette and Arthus’ stage time is highly focused, making them good “utility” members of the troupe to handle props and scripts, etc. Druette also has a pair of cool monologues that open and close the show.”

► **DESCRIBE ALL SIX ACTORS.** Use general terms:

- Pernelle’s actor is a veteran performer, comfortable in their own skin.
- Arthus’ actor is a hard-living raconteur, gambler and life of the party.
- Druette’s actor has been around the longest, and loves the idea of love.
- Magdelaine’s actor is a kind optimist who is also, tragically, very naive.
- Pierre’s actor is a little shady and a little inexperienced, but tries hard.
- Clown’s actor considers themselves a great, and often misunderstood, artist.

► **LET THEM CHOOSE ACTORS/PARTS.** Lay out the parts and let the participants negotiate with one another as they select roles, which consist of an actor and accompanying part. Emphasize that while gender of the parts is important, the gender of the actor and participant are not.

► **LET THEM CHOOSE COSTUME BITS.** Once participants have selected roles, send them over to the costume table to select hats or other items to portray their characters. Arthus should begin with the harmless foam knife, or whatever you are using to represent the knife.

INTRODUCTIONS (15)

► **FACILITATE INTRODUCTIONS.** Have the participants sit in a circle, if they aren't already there. Ask for a volunteer to introduce their actor, for example, Arthus, then give all other members of the troupe the chance to briefly describe their opinion of Arthus as written under "Opinions of Other Actors in the Troupe" on their character sheet. Continue until everyone has introduced their character and heard the others' opinions. Some conversation among the participants about their actors may emerge—this is good!—but do try to keep the conversation moving so that all characters have a moment in the sun.

CONNECTIONS (5)

► **CREATE CONNECTIONS.** Ask the participants to make eye contact with the person directly opposite them. These actor pairs have a special connection with one another, good or bad. They have three minutes to figure out what that is—have them get up and quickly decide.

► **SHARE CONNECTIONS.** When the timer rings, do a speed round to share what connections have been uncovered with the troupe.

SAFETY (5)

► **DISCUSS AND COMMUNICATE SAFETY TOOLS.** Here is our suggested set:

- The participants are more important than the scenario. Look out for each other and safeguard each other's well being. When in doubt about a boundary, ask!
- The door is always open—the cast will always be able to figure out how to adapt the play, whether you need to step out for a drink of water or because you need to leave the scenario completely.
- "Stop play" if you need the scenario to stop for any reason, please just say this and all play will stop. Practice it now.
- Touch Boundaries. This scenario can be played with no touch at all, or with quite a lot of touch. We suggest a default boundary of hands and forearms. If you want to touch someone more during play, remember that people are more important, and ask about boundaries.

NOTE

Your friendly designers come from a US context where we absolutely must communicate our safety values around play before every session, both because these aren't always shared across US play cultures, and because sharing them makes leaving the scenario easier if you need to. We know that the Fastaval tradition has norms and values that differ from ours. We encourage facilitators to adapt this section to fit the needs of Fastaval participants.

ASK THE PARTICIPANTS IF YOU CAN FILM (1)

► **ASK FOR PERMISSION.** Say: “By the end of this experience you’re going to have a brilliant, rehearsed performance of this very silly play. Is it OK to film the very last performance via cell phone?”

The designers would really like to see these films—and it’d be helpful to us for future work. We are considering making and posting an anthology of them to show folks how awesome you all are.”

If one or more people aren’t up for being filmed, do not film.

THESE ACTORS LOVE EACH OTHER (5)

► **EXPLAIN THAT THIS TROUPE IS A FAMILY.** They might drive each other nuts at times—hey that’s what family does—but when push comes to shove, they will back each other up to the very end.

BUILD TABLEAUS (10)

► **BUILD TABLEAUS.** Ask the participants to do the next activity silently. You will give them several different situations, and their job is to arrange themselves, without talking, except to negotiate any necessary physical boundaries, into a silent, still portrait that communicates their relationships with one another. Do as many tableaux as you have time for—at least two—but end with the party at a tavern after a good show, and keep the pace brisk. If necessary, or it feels appropriate, you can help direct them. Some tableau ideas:

- The troupe awakens in their outdoor camp to the sound of a bear
- The troupe enviously watches a different troupe’s successful play
- The troupe comforts Druette after epic heartbreak
- The troupe toasts Pernelle after a reviewer praises her
- The troupe argues over how to split their meager earnings
- The troupe parties at a tavern after a great show

REHEARSAL (UP TO 60)

ORIENT THE PARTICIPANTS (5)

► **EXPLAIN THE REHEARSAL PROCESS.** Say “The Six of Hounds has recently acquired a new play—*The Lusty Queen*! Our play experience will begin with rehearsals and move on to performances. Eventually, you’ll feel completely confident with the play, but keep your expectations low—we don’t expect you to have mastered the material by the end of rehearsals, or even by the end of the first performance. We hope, though, that you’ll have it down solidly by the end of the scenario.

We’re going to rehearse the play, first by going over it and summarizing it out of scenario a little; then we’ll move into scene and rehearse three or four times with the facilitators in character as director and stage manager.

It’s OK to be confused—this is a complicated story and it will become clear the more we practice. You’ll feel confident by the end of the experience, but not by the end of rehearsal. Flying by the seat of your pants is part of the fun!”

OUT OF GAME (20)

► **LET THEM HELP.** Ask the participants to help “build” the stage as needed. Let them walk it and feel the boundaries. Note where the “wing” is—and how big it is.

► **EXPLAIN THE TIME CONSTRAINTS.** The goal is to do this play in about ten minutes—this means they have to keep the pace up.

► **HAND OUT THE SCRIPTS.** Facilitators need scripts too.

► **DO A TABLE READ.** Facilitator reads through the play summary. Participants raise their hands when their actor’s parts are mentioned.

► **DO A NARRATIVE RUN.** Follow the table read with a narrative run for each actor’s part. Give the participants a minute or two to read through the summary on their own. Go around the circle and ask each participant to summarize what happens to their part during the play.

► **TEACH THE ENERGY BUILDING RITUAL.** Before every performance, the troupe does a small ritual to psych themselves up. They pass hand squeezes around the circle, put their hands in the middle, and go “six of hounds!” Explain this to the participants and add any spontaneous elements that may come up. Tell them that after they perform this ritual, they will be in scene as their actors, and you will be playing their director and booking agent, who are not nice people.

NOTE

The idea during rehearsal is to gradually take away their supports.

When it becomes obvious the participants have a handle on the material and are warmed up, stop rehearsing and go to the first performance.

NOTE

In playtests, we’ve observed participants trying to create entirely new plays. Tell them not to do this.

The actors will, of course, alter *The Lusty Queen* to entertain various audiences, but it should be an alteration of the main play, not a new one made up of whole cloth. Contorting *The Lusty Queen* will be infinitely more fun, so making up a new play is forbidden.

IN GAME (UP TO 40)

- ▶ “ARRIVE” AS THE DIRECTOR AND BOOKING AGENT. These characters should be shady at best and criminally mercenary at worst. You can cajole, insult or groan at their ineptitude. Keep it entertaining.
- ▶ TELL THEM TO BE FLEXIBLE. Encourage the participants to change the on-set furniture as needed to denote the two locations where this play takes place—the Throne Room and the Castle Garden.
- ▶ DO A BLOCKING RUN, WITH LINES. The Director reads the script out loud and has the participants improvise lines as they move on and off stage. They can say “line” for help if they don’t know what to do.
- ▶ DO A FULLY SCRIPTED RUN. Participants perform the play on their own, using scripts. They can say “line” for help if they don’t know what to do. Director’s job is to keep them moving.
- ▶ FINALLY, DO AN OFF-BOOK RUN. No scripts allowed on stage. Let them try it on their own with prompting. No help from the Director. They can, of course, help each other. Give them a couple scripts back stage.

BREAK (10)

- ▶ TAKE A BREAK. Ten minutes for bathrooms, last-minute brush-ups, and then it is show time.

NOTE

You don’t need the troupe to be too-well rehearsed by the end of rehearsal, but you should have confidence that they can run the play on their own without crashing and burning. If they are struggling, you can rehearse them an additional time as needed.

The trickiest scene for our play-testers to remember has been Act IV, Scene 3. This is tricky because it contains lots of plot points, and because it’s a double scene for Magdelaine (i.e. she doesn’t have the opportunity to look at a script off stage). Watch for struggling actors and give this scene a little extra rehearsal if needed.

PLAYING THE GAME

CHAPTER 1: CLOISTER OR BROTHEL (20)

This chapter begins with a scene where the actors choose the venue for their first performance of *The Lusty Queen*. Then they will perform the play in that venue while you portray the audience. Be sure to hoot and holler at appropriate places! Afterward, they will have a cast party at the tavern and evaluate how the performance went.

SELECTION (10)

► **SET THE SCENE.** Let the participants know that they are at a grimy tavern, after a successful show. After expenses, they have one extra coin. Who deserves it? Give them some time to establish the scene.

► **ARRIVE WITH OPTIONS.** At a suitable point, enter, roleplaying their oily, unreliable agent and/or director and let them know that you believe in them, that they are on the way up, and that you have two potential bookings for them that could help them make it big! They need to decide between these two options, and then plan their performance. Make the constraints of each of the venues clear, but you do not need to read any of the below text word for word.

The Cloister. These nuns have taken a vow of temperance that cause them to live a stoic, unemotional life. All they want is to feel. They want big romances that stir their dormant hearts, epic over-the-top tragedy that makes them weep, and searing reveals that cause them to question the very foundations of their faith. Go big or go home!

The Golden Conger (brothel). The troupe is dirty and low-down and in their element. Perform the play in the most raunchy and scandalous way possible, to entertain and arouse patrons and workers alike. Expect rowdy patrons and get ready to dodge rotten apples!

THE PERFORMANCE (10)

► **INVITE THEM TO BEGIN.** Let the actors know that their audience awaits and gesture them toward the stage. Watch the performance and do not be stinting with your reactions. Hoot and holler, laugh uproariously, hiss when things get bad. You are either a emotion-starved nun or a scurrilous brothel patron, so live it up.

NOTE

They will take infinite time to plan if you let them, so watch the clock. The feeling of flying by the seat of their pants—performing while under-prepared—is part of what makes this scenario fun.

CHAPTER 2: KING OR QUEEN (30)

THE CAST PARTY+SELECTION (20)

► **START THE CAST PARTY.** Let the participants know they are now moving to a grimy tavern for the cast party. Let them unwind a bit and gossip with one another about the show. When their interactions seem to be winding down, enter so participants can make their next venue selection. Enter as the slimy agent and/or director and let them know their reputation is on the make and that you have a *big surprise* for them—they've been invited to give a command performance for royalty!

They've gotten offers to perform for King Baston or Queen Margay—the royalty is on the outs with one another for some reason. Baston is an easier audience but potentially a less rewarding one, and Margay is tougher to please but well connected to the Master of Revels. Ask them to choose without telling them the particulars! Once they have decided, make the constraints of both audiences clear, then give them a bit of time to prepare.

His Majesty, King Baston. The troupe has been “invited” to a royal command performance. Perform the play according to His Majesty's particular preferences. His Majesty believes every play should have a jester, and that the jester should be the main character. His Majesty adores dogs and hates plays without them. His Majesty likes to be flattered as often as possible.

Her Majesty, Queen Margay. The troupe has been “invited” to a royal command performance. Perform the play according to Her Majesty's particular preferences. Her Majesty despises tragedy and loves a happy ending, so make sure the play ends in a wedding. Also there must be faeries, and unsubtle jests about His Majesty, her husband.

THE PERFORMANCE (10)

► **INVITE THEM TO BEGIN.** Let the actors know that their audience awaits and gesture them toward the stage, if you can, change up your costuming to look a bit more posh (consider “borrowing” Pierre's crown, for example). Behave like snooty royalty. If you have a second facilitator, that person could be a lackey for the king or queen. Don't enjoy this version of the play too much—look sour, and when they near the end, say something negative such as “hated it, imprison them,” and storm out.

BREAK (10)

► **TEN MINUTES.**

NOTE

In playtests, Chapter 2 was the place where making up a new play was most tempting, so remind them that they need to stick to what they know, and inventing something completely new is forbidden. Improvisation and adjustment is, of course, encouraged.

CHAPTER 3: THE GALLOWS (40)

FILMING

▶ **ASK FOR PERMISSION.** Before Chapter 3 begins, if the participants initially consented to filming remind them and make sure everyone is still comfortable with it. The final performance is always really good and worth capturing.

AFTERMATH + PREPARATIONS (15)

▶ **SET THE SCENE.** Let the participants know that they have fucked up and are now in a filthy prison. Use furniture inside the room to quickly make a penned-in area if possible. Let them play out their post-performance scene a bit and let the tension build.

▶ **ARRIVE WITH BAD NEWS.** Enter the scene as the Director/Agent and let the actors know that you've been lobbying for them from the outside, and if they perform the play—as written—well enough to entertain the executioner and whoever else has showed up to watch, they just might earn a pardon. While they plan, use chairs or tape to outline a smaller, cramped stage area without wings. It should contain no furniture, and be no wider than about five people standing shoulder to shoulder.

The Gallows. The troupe has royally fucked up and things are desperate. You could earn a pardon from a death sentence if you entertain the hangman. The hangmen want to see the best possible version of this play, acted to absolute perfection. The hangmen want to cry.

THE PERFORMANCE (10)

▶ **PLAY A JAILER OR HANGMAN.** Be serious, and if you need to, dangle a pardon (a blank piece of paper or a mimed gesture will do well) right in front of them. If you are going to film this, don't forget to set your phone up somewhere, ideally propped so that you can play a hangman with free hands.

VOTING (5)

▶ **MAKE THEM VOTE.** After the performance, ask the participants to vote on whether they think the troupe survived or not. Thumbs up for survival, thumbs down for hanging. Count the votes. On ties they are pardoned.

SCENE IF THEY HANG... (10)

▶ **ARRANGE THE END.** Take time to say goodbye to the other members of the troupe before your inevitable death. When you are ready to end the scenario, line up in your line across the stage—this is the order you will die in. When everyone is in line, the scenario ends. Begin the curtain call immediately.

...OR SCENE IF THEY ARE PARDONED (10)

▶ **ARRANGE THE END.** Let them celebrate their narrow escape and good fortune back at the bar, and let them know that when they do their final "Six of Hounds!" ritual, the scenario will end. Begin the curtain call immediately.

AFTER THE EXPERIENCE (20)

CURTAIN CALL (5)

▶ **HUZZAH!** Have each actor step out and take a bow while the others clap for them. If possible, do the voiceover. “Starring Jason as Arthus...Lizzie as Clown...etc., etc.”

DEBRIEF (15)

HOLY SHIT

▶ **OH MY GOODNESS!** We just played this scenario together. Let the group blow off its first burst of energy. You can take off your costuming when you are ready. Give anyone who needs a bio break time!

CHANGE THE LIGHTING

▶ **CHANGE THE MOOD.** Turn the lights down or up to change the atmosphere in the room to something that feels right for right now. (This might not require a change at all). Especially do this if you lowered the lights during the performance.

SHAKE IT OFF AND BREATHE

▶ **RETURN TO REALITY.** Take a few minutes to shake these characters out of their bodies if they need to.

CHATTING

▶ **HAVE A CONVERSATION.** Anyone have impressions they just have to share? Do a round and let people say a sentence if they need to. Let them know to be kind to themselves, talk things over with one another, and that you’ll be around for a little while now and in the cafe or bar later. Then thank them and ask them to help you clean up.

DO IT ONE MORE TIME?

If everyone consents, and you have time, consider performing one last time. They may prefer not to. If anyone is reluctant, don’t do it.

▶ **ONCE MORE, DEAR FRIENDS.** With enthusiastic consent, take the play into “The Market”—the troupe is dirty and low-down and back in their element. Perform the play as broadly and engagingly as possible—you are home. Attract and delight the assembled crowd in a place that isn’t disruptive to other activities. Consider the cafe, the bar, for the OttoTV crew, or in the Cafeteria area. Go out in public to perform—leave the play space and find an audience, or do it one last time with competent verve and film it for posterity, either in front of your live audience. (If you end up filming this, get everyone’s consent!)

HANDOUTS AND MATERIALS

CHARACTER SHEETS

PERNELLE

PART: Queen Pernelle, the eponymous lusty queen, doomed to death. A vindictive woman who hates herself and is wracked with guilt and shame.

ACTOR: You love being the troupe's experienced leading lady and are comfortable in your own skin. A happy, generous, open person.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Arthus is a wonderful actor, but an absolute wild man.
- Druette took a chance on you, and you won't disappoint her.
- Magdelaine is green as grass and adorable.
- Pierre is all right, but there's something off about him you can't place.
- Clown is incredibly pompous, but also occasionally right.

ARTHUS

PART: Pernelle's stepson, Pierre's son, a prince who is too good for this world until he disobeys his father and breaks an oath.

ACTOR: You love often, deeply, and imprudently. Some call you a dirty dog, but you enjoy life and are, at heart, kind and generous.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is good. A little too good. Stop stealing scenes!
- Druette is delightful! You could fall in love with her.
- Magdelaine is delightful! You could fall in love with her.
- Pierre used to be an honest-to-God criminal! A highway robber, no less! Cool!
- Clown is, well, a clown—perhaps mad but certainly a visionary.

DRUETTE

PART: Princess Druette is the last heir to the dynasty destroyed by King Pierre who only survives due to her vow of chastity. If she loves, she dies.

ACTOR: You want everyone in this troupe to fall in love, maybe including yourself. You are the only original member of the troupe, so you get to recite poems to open and close the play!

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- You worship Pernelle—she is the most talented actor you’ve ever seen.
- Magdelaine is an unschooled rube who greatly benefits from your tutelage.
- Arthus is a sexy rake and his complete confidence in himself gets him into trouble.
- Pierre is lovely and tries hard, but you don’t trust him with a change purse.
- Clown is a genius. Cantankerous and often wrong, but a genius.

(Feel free to adjust these or improvise new ones)

PROLOGUE

Attend her majesty Pernelle,
A queen who tempts the fires of hell
With pride and o’erweening lust
And therein hangs the tale, we trust

EPILOGUE

Our tale is told, our queen is dead
And old Pierre must hang his head
Let all the fancy we have dared
Of pride and lust be warning, shared

PIERRE

PART: King Pierre wants to be a good ruler, but is clueless and impulsive. He loves his family but is quick to judge. He begins *The Lusty Queen* missing on some adventure and presumed dead. Queen Pernelle is his second wife. Prince Arthus is his son from a former marriage.

ACTOR: You're paddling furiously to keep up with these geniuses. You are a ne'er-do-well. You told them things about your skill that maybe aren't true. What is true is that you just spent three years in prison for highway robbery.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a great actress, generous to a fault.
- Arthus knows about your past and sometimes you use it to impress him.
- Druette is a beautiful busybody. You wish she would butt out of your love life!
- Magdelaine is just like the people you used to rob.
- Clown is smartest person you've ever met.

MAGDELAINE

PART: Queen Pernelle's nurse and confidante. She loves her mistress—maybe too much—and schemes for her, to her own ruin.

ACTOR: You are the newest member of the troupe and you just adore the theater! They call you tragically naive but you call yourself cheerful and kind. Maybe everyone is right!

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a friend—aging, but still talented.
- Arthus is a delicious bad boy you'd like to devour like a sweetmeat.
- Druette bosses you around, and sometimes that sets you off.
- Pierre seems like a perfectly upstanding, trustworthy young man.
- Clown has shocking ideas that make me nervous.

SPECIAL NOTE

The trickiest scene to remember is Act IV, scene 3. This is tricky because it contains lots of plot points, and because it's a double scene for Magdelaine (i.e. you won't have the opportunity to look at a script off stage). Be alert!

CLOWN

PART: Clown is a Servant. A comic foil who is everywhere and nowhere, Clown knows everything and evades the truth diplomatically.

ACTOR: A self-described Great Artist striving for excellence. Full of exciting ideas that are unpopular or impractical or both. Clown wasn't your first choice, but the role has its moments.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a tolerable actor.
- Arthus is my partner in drunken crime.
- Druette is more interested in the bottom line than in artistic integrity.
- Magdelaine has a sort of raw, untutored talent that drives you to distraction.
- Pierre has a sort of raw, untutored talent you deeply admire.

THE LUSTY QUEEN

SYNOPSIS

In the long and mysterious absence of her husband, A great queen, Pernelle, falls in love with her stepson, Prince Arthus. Arthus is, himself, in love with a forbidden maiden. From these bitter seeds vines of tragedy grow and intermingle.

ACT I (THRONE ROOM)

Druette recites her prologue poem. The Queen confesses her love for her stepson Arthus to her maid and confidant Magdelaine. Clown arrives with news that King Pierre is dead. Could Magdelaine and Arthus marry and have a legitimate heir?

ACT II (CASTLE GARDEN)

Druette and Arthus speak of their love and desire to wed while Clown plays negligent chaperone. The Queen tells Arthus of her plan, then rushes off with his dagger, ostensibly to kill herself after he rejects her.

ACT III (THRONE ROOM)

Magdelaine tries to convince Arthus to marry his stepmother for practicality's sake. It's discovered that the King yet lives and is on the way home. The Queen and Magdelaine hatch a plan to protect Her Majesty by incriminating Arthus with his own dagger. The King is puzzled by his family's cold welcome.

ACT IV (THRONE ROOM)

The King questions Clown about what happened while he was away. Magdelaine accuses Arthus of assault while he is also visiting the King. The King banishes Arthus, who declares his secret love for Druette as he leaves for exile. The Queen feels guilty about her role in Arthus' banishment, until Magdelaine explains he loves another. The Queen decides to stand mute, and banishes Magdelaine for disloyalty.

ACT V (CASTLE GARDEN)

While the King hides nearby, Arthus and Druette discuss their plans to wed on a nearby island in three days' time. The King, doubting the Queen's story, orders Clown to fetch Magdelaine. Clown explains that he can't—both Magdelaine and Arthus have drowned on their way to exile. The King collapses. The Queen arrives with the dagger and Druette, and Clown tells them the news. Druette collapses; the Queen confesses her crimes and kills herself. The King dismisses Druette's vow and adopts her as his daughter.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

- Queen PERNELLE, The Lusty Queen
- Prince ARTHUS, Pernelle's stepson
- Princess DRUETTE, last heir to the dynasty destroyed by King Pierre. If she loves, she dies. Opens and closes the performance.
- MAGDELAINE, Queen Pernelle's nurse and confidante.
- King PIERRE, missing on some adventure and presumed dead. Queen Pernelle is his second wife. Prince Arthus is his son from a former marriage.
- CLOWN, a Servant

CALL SHEET

PROLOGUE (DRUETTE: A POEM)

ACT I (THRONE ROOM)

1. Queen, Magdelaine: A confession
2. Queen, Magdelaine, Clown: The King is dead.
- 3, Druette, Clown: Druette's Vow

ACT II (CASTLE GARDEN)

1. Druette, Arthus, Clown: A chaperoned walk
2. Druette, Arthus: A confession of love
3. Druette, Arthus, Queen: The Queen's unnatural lust

ACT III (THRONE ROOM)

1. Magdelaine, Arthus: A practical solution.
2. Magdelaine, Queen: A plot is hatched.
3. Queen, King, Arthus: The King's cold homecoming.

ACT IV (THRONE ROOM)

1. King, Clown: Clown is interrogated.
2. King, Clown, Magdelaine, Arthus: A foul plot banishes Arthus.
3. Magdelaine, Queen: Guilt, shame and misplaced passion.

ACT V (CASTLE GARDEN)

1. Arthus, Druette, King: True love revealed.
2. King: The King reconsiders
3. King, Clown: Awful news
4. King, Clown, Queen, Druette: Tragedy, horror, and lamentation.

EPILOGUE (DRUETTE: A POEM)

THE LUSTY QUEEN

PROLOGUE

DRUETTE recites a poem.

ACT I (THE THRONE ROOM)

1. QUEEN, MAGDELAINE: A CONFESSION.

—PERNELLE and MAGDELAINE enter.

PERNELLE tells MAGDELAINE she is in love with her stepson, Prince Arthus, but that she wants to die rather than confront her passion and dishonor.

—CLOWN enters.

2. QUEEN, MAGDELAINE, CLOWN: THE KING IS DEAD.

CLOWN announces the death of King Pierre in the dungeons of distant Morgard. Clown acknowledges that succession is in dispute, as prince and queen both have strong claims to the throne.

CLOWN makes a show of leaving, but lingers.

MAGDELAINE suggests that the king's death frees the queen to marry Prince Arthus and have a child who would rule undisputed. CLOWN overhears.

—MAGDELAINE and PERNELLE exit, CLOWN remains.

3. CLOWN, DRUETTE: DRUETTE'S VOW.

—DRUETTE enters

DRUETTE remembers how she got here, explaining it to Clown. King Pierre killed her whole family, but allowed her to live on the condition that she swear a vow of chastity.

DRUETTE explains that she's about to visit the man she loves, and will be tempted to break her vow during a secret meeting in the garden.

CLOWN reminds Druette that for her, to love spells her doom, and tries heroically to distract her from leaving. A jest, a caper, a song, a trick! She cannot be deterred.

—CLOWN and DRUETTE exit.

ACT II (THE CASTLE GARDEN)

1. DRUETTE, ARTHUS, CLOWN: A CHAPERONED WALK.

—DRUETTE, ARTHUS, CLOWN enter.

DRUETTE and ARTHUS share a romantic walk with CLOWN as chaperone. They talk of Druette's circumstances and the presumed death of King Pierre.

At DRUETTE's urging, CLOWN leaves them alone.

—CLOWN exits.

2. DRUETTE, ARTHUS: A CONFESSION OF LOVE.

Finally alone, DRUETTE confesses her love. Now that Prince Arthus will become king, they can marry and she can abandon her vow of chastity. Her lineage will continue.

ARTHUS is happy at the prospect of wedding Druette but crushed by the loss of his father.

3. DRUETTE, ARTHUS, QUEEN: THE QUEEN'S UNNATURAL LUST.

—PERNELLE enters.

PERNELLE appears, unaware of Princess Druette's ambitions, and boasts of her passion and plan to Prince Arthus.

DRUETTE is crushed. ARTHUS is repulsed and horrified.

PERNELLE, mad with lust and unaccustomed to being so roundly rejected, goes temporarily mad. She boldly takes ARTHUS' dagger and rushes off to kill herself.

—DRUETTE and ARTHUS exit.

ACT III (THE THRONE ROOM)

1. MAGDELAINE, ARTHUS: A PRACTICAL SOLUTION.

—MAGDELAINE and ARTHUS enter.

MAGDELAINE begs ARTHUS to co-rule the kingdom with Queen Pernelle as a practical solution if not a romantic one.

ARTHUS refuses. He's still revolted by his step-mother's inappropriate love for him.

—ARTHUS exits as PERNELLE enters.

2. MAGDELAINE, PERNELLE: A PLOT IS HATCHED.

PERNELLE informs MAGDELAINE that King Pierre yet lives and is on his way to the castle.

MAGDELAINE, in a panic, begs PERNELLE to save herself by making up a story about Prince Arthus, who will surely betray her monstrous lust to King Pierre.

PERNELLE orders MAGDELAINE to create a tale that will sway the king's heart.

—MAGDELAINE exits as PIERRE and ARTHUS enter.

3. PERNELLE, PIERRE, ARTHUS: THE KING'S COLD HOMECOMING.

PIERRE is puzzled by the cold reception of both PERNELLE and ARTHUS.

PERNELLE feels guilt over her unwholesome love for Prince Arthus; ARTHUS feels guilt over his forbidden love for Princess Druette.

—PERNELLE, PIERRE, ARTHUS exit.

ACT IV (THE THRONE ROOM)

1. PIERRE, CLOWN: CLOWN IS INTERROGATED.

—PIERRE and CLOWN enter.

PIERRE is physically weak and haunted by his trials, but ready to rule his kingdom again and eager to learn what has transpired in his absence.

PIERRE asks after his wife and son.

CLOWN artfully dodges his questions without ever actually telling a lie.

—MAGDELAINE and ARTHUS enter.

2. PIERRE, CLOWN, MAGDELAINE, ARTHUS: A FOUL PLOT BANISHES ARTHUS.

MAGDELAINE tells PIERRE that ARTHUS tried to force himself on Queen Pernelle, using the dagger as evidence.

PIERRE, enraged, banishes his son despite CLOWN's efforts to soothe his temper.

ARTHUS, despairing, reveals his secret love for Princess Druette to PIERRE and MAGDELAINE and then mournfully leaves to prepare for eternal exile.

—ARTHUS exits, followed after a moment by PIERRE and CLOWN.

—PERNELLE enters.

3. MAGDELAINE, PERNELLE: GUILT, SHAME AND MISPLACED PASSION.

MAGDELAINE returns the dagger to PERNELLE.

PERNELLE feels guilty about her stepson's banishment and possible death and decides to tell King Pierre everything. But then...

MAGDELAINE explains that Arthur is in love with Princess Druette.

PERNELLE flies into a jealous rage and decides to stand mute and let her stepson be destroyed.

MAGDELAINE tells the queen that this situation is all her fault and if anyone needs to die it should be her.

PERNELLE banishes her loyal friend as well.

—PERNELLE and MAGDELAINE exit in different directions.

ACT V (THE CASTLE GARDEN)

1. ARTHUS, DRUETTE, PIERRE: TRUE LOVE REVEALED.

—PIERRE conceals himself in the garden.

—ARTHUS and DRUETTE enter.

The two lovers meet one last time.

ARTHUS promises to marry DRUETTE outside the city on a nearby island. He will go ahead to prepare the ceremony.

—ARTHUS and DRUETTE exit in different directions.

2. PIERRE: THE KING RECONSIDERS.

PIERRE emerges, alone, from hiding. He considers the love he has witnessed, and begins to doubt Queen Pernelle.

3. PIERRE, CLOWN: AWFUL NEWS.

PIERRE decides to question Magdelaine and summons Clown.

—CLOWN arrives with a heavy heart.

PIERRE orders CLOWN to fetch Magdelaine

CLOWN explains that Magdelaine has drowned in a terrible accident. After some hesitation, Clown adds that Magdelaine was going into exile with Prince Arthus, who is also dead; dashed against the rocks in the surf as he tried to leave the city.

PIERRE is prostrate with grief. CLOWN tries to comfort him.

4. PIERRE, CLOWN, PERNELLE, DRUETTE: TRAGEDY, HORROR AND LAMENTATION.

—PERNELLE and DRUETTE enter.

CLOWN explains what has happened.

DRUETTE screams in horror.

PERNELLE calmly tells PIERRE of her guilt and Prince Arthus's innocence. She then stabs herself through the heart with the dagger.

PIERRE pardons DRUETTE, dismisses her vow, and adopts her as his daughter.

PIERRE and DRUETTE mourn those who have died, and King Pierre laments his own cruelty, blindness and pride.

EPILOGUE

DRUETTE recites a poem.

FIN

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

GENERAL

This experience is for six participants and one or two facilitators. It will take about four hours to play.

THE PARTICIPANT

That's you! Welcome! We're glad you are here.

THE ACTOR

You will play an actor in the renaissance theater troupe the Six of Hounds.

THE PART

The Six of Hounds is preparing to perform their new play *The Lusty Queen*. Whether on or off stage, you call each other by the same name. If you are playing Arthus, for example, you will be Arthus, both on stage and off. This is advantageous in its simplicity, and also popular with wanted criminals.

THE PLAY

During the long and mysterious absence of her husband, the great queen, Pernelle, falls in love with her stepson, Prince Arthus. Arthus is, himself, in love with a forbidden maiden. From these bitter seeds vines of tragedy grow and intermingle.

REHEARSAL AND MASTERING THE PLAY

Confusion is normal! Eventually you will feel completely confident with the play. But don't expect that by the end of rehearsal! This play is complicated and can make your head spin! Everything will become clear with practice. Just remember: flying by the seat of your pants in the early runs is part of the fun.

THE PLAY STYLE

The Lesser Players' Tale is a tragicomedy; play it with a seriousness of purpose but also joyful abandon. The vast majority of this experience takes place during performances, either on stage or waiting to go on stage. Embrace this! If you have something to say, express it through *The Lusty Queen*. Don't make up a new play—change the one you have to meet your new goals.

Good acting is emphatically *not* required—and after all, given that *The Lusty Queen* is based on a four-hour Racine play condensed into ten minutes—there isn't time for it.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

This scenario takes about four hours. That includes the following:

- Workshop (40 minutes)
- In-scene rehearsal (60 minutes or less)
- Bio Break (10 minutes)
- Chapter 1: The First Performance (30 Minutes)

All performances have the same format—a small pre-scene where the troupe is relaxing, a decision about where to perform next followed by planning for that performance, and then the performance itself.

- Chapter 2: The Second Performance (30 Minutes)
- Bio Break (10 minutes)
- Chapter 3: The Third Performance (30 Minutes)
- Curtain Call and Debrief (20 Minutes)

THANKS

Moyra Turkington, Troels Ken Pedersen, Sara Williamson, Lars Kroll Kristiansen, Kathryn Hymes, Hakan Seyalioglu, Randy Lubin.

PLAYTESTERS

JR Blackwell, Jonathan Cook, Erik Fearing, Liz Gorinsky, Andrea Humez, Kathryn Hymes, Samuel Liberty, George Locke, Randy Lubin, Scott Morningstar, S.J. Murdock, Caroline Murphy, Eugene Pappas, Eli Seitz, Hakan Seyalioglu, Jeeyon Shim, Lucia Starkey, John Stavropoulos, Kitty Stoholski, Liz Stong, Eleanor Tursman, Avital Unger, Peter Vander Giessen, Annika Waern, Anna Westerling, and Chad Wolf.

Druette



PART: Princess Druette is the last heir to the dynasty destroyed by King Pierre who only survives due to her vow of chastity. If she loves, she dies.

ACTOR: You want everyone in this troupe to fall in love, maybe including yourself. You are the only original member of the troupe, so you get to recite poems to open and close the play!

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- You worship Pernelle—she is the most talented actor you've ever seen.
- Magdelaine is an unschooled rube who greatly benefits from your tutelage.
- Arthus is a sexy rake and his complete confidence in himself gets him into trouble.
- Pierre is lovely and tries hard, but you don't trust him with a change purse.
- Clown is a genius. Cantankerous and often wrong, but a genius.

The Messer Players' Tale

Druette



(Feel free to adjust these or improvise new ones)

Prologue

Attend her majesty Pernelle,
A queen who tempts the fires of hell
With pride and overweening lust
And therein hangs the tale, we trust

Epilogue

Our tale is told, our queen is dead
And old Pierre must hang his head
Let all the fancy we have dared
Of pride and lust be warning, shared

The Messer Players' Tale

Arthus



PART: Pernelle's stepson, Pierre's son, a prince who is too good for this world until he disobeys his father and breaks an oath.

ACTOR: You love often, deeply, and imprudently. Some call you a dirty dog, but you enjoy life and are, at heart, kind and generous.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is good. A little too good. Stop stealing scenes!
- Druette is delightful! You could fall in love with her.
- Magdelaine is delightful! You could fall in love with her.
- Pierre used to be an honest-to-God criminal! A highway robber, no less! Cool!
- Clown is, well, a clown—perhaps mad but certainly a visionary.

Magdelaine



PART: Queen Pernelle's nurse and confidante. She loves her mistress—too much—and schemes for her, to her own ruin.

ACTOR: You are the newest member of the troupe and you just adore the theater! They call you tragically naive but you call yourself cheerful and kind. Maybe everyone is right!

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a friend—aging, but still talented.
- Arthus is a delicious bad boy you'd like to devour like a sweetmeat.
- Druette bosses you around, and sometimes that sets you off.
- Pierre seems like a perfectly upstanding, trustworthy young man.
- Clown has shocking ideas that make me nervous.

SPECIAL NOTE

The trickiest scene to remember is Act IV, scene 3. This is tricky because it contains lots of plot points, and because it's a double scene for Magdelaine (i.e. you won't have the opportunity to look at a script off stage). Be alert!

Pierre



PARR: King Pierre wants to be a good ruler, but is clueless and impulsive. He loves his family but is quick to judge. He begins *The Lusty Queen* missing on some adventure and presumed dead. Queen Pernelle is his second wife. Prince Arthus is his son from a former marriage.

ACTOR: You're paddling furiously to keep up with these geniuses. You are a néer-do-well. You told them things about your skill that aren't true. What is true is that you just spent three years in prison for highway robbery.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a great actress, generous to a fault.
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- Druette is a beautiful busybody. You wish she would butt out of your love life!
- Magdelaine is just like the people you used to rob.
- Clown is smartest person you've ever met.

Clown



PARR: Clown is a Servant. A comic foil who is everywhere and nowhere, Clown knows everything and evades the truth diplomatically.

ACTOR: A self-described Great Artist striving for excellence. Full of exciting ideas that are unpopular or impractical or both. Clown wasn't your first choice, but the role has its moments.

OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Pernelle is a tolerable actor.
- Arthus is my partner in drunken crime.
- Druette is more interested in the bottom line than in artistic integrity.
- Magdelaine has a sort of raw, untutored talent that drives you to distraction.
- Pierre has a sort of raw, untutored talent you deeply admire.

Pernelle



PART: Queen Pernelle, the eponymous lusty queen, doomed to death. A vindictive woman who hates herself and is wracked with guilt and shame.

ACTOR: You love being the troupe's experienced leading lady and are comfortable in your own skin. A happy, generous, open person.

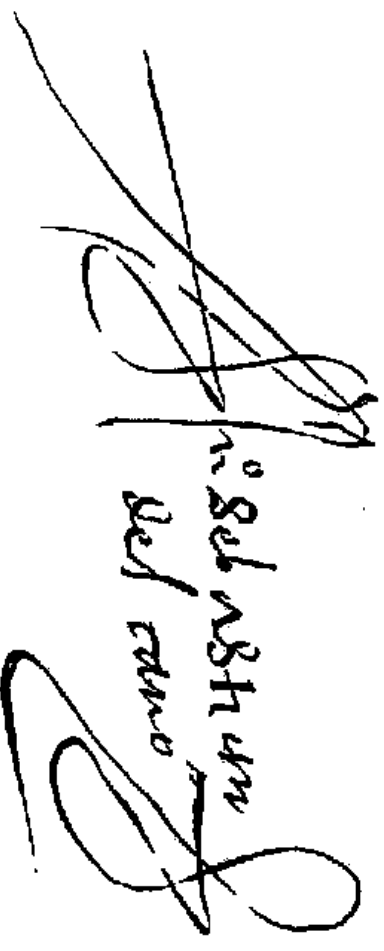
OPINIONS OF OTHER ACTORS IN THE TROUPE:

- Arthur is a wonderful actor, but an absolute wild man.
- Druette took a chance on you, and you won't disappoint her.
- Magdelaine is green as grass and adorable.
- Pierre is all right, but there's something off about him you can't place.
- Clown is incredibly pompous, but also occasionally right.

Pardon



Their August Majesty, fully cognizant of the circumstances of extenuation present in such matters when players become involved in the affairs of state, hereby grant a free, full and unconditional pardon to those various actors known as the Six of Hounds, who have so recently made the kingdom a temple of mirth.



King Sebastian