

Scene Three

We are in the bed and breakfast at night. **DOROTHY** arrives with bags of takeaway food.

DOROTHY All part of the noble theatrical tradition - the takeaway. I am afraid Mary is at her flamenco night so you have to fend for yourself on a Thursday.

She produces tin foil containers.

JESSICA Well I'm famished.

DOROTHY It must be nice to spend some time with your father.

JESSICA I wouldn't know.

DOROTHY Oh come on you must be proud of what he's doing here.

JESSICA I just can't get my head around it. Could he actually be doing something decent for once?

JEFFERSON *enters.*

JEFFERSON That's me. Full of surprises.

JESSICA The surprise will be if you don't screw up.

DOROTHY *starts dishing out food.*

DOROTHY So how's your back?

JEFFERSON Lauren has hidden talents. She has amazing hands.

DOROTHY *(bridling a bit)* I'm sure she has. Now, I hope everyone's hungry.

JEFFERSON So Jessica can you eat this or are you gonna explode or something?

JESSICA If you had bothered to take an interest you would know I'm not allergic to *everything*. I can eat most things. Apart from wheat and dairy products. And gluten and shellfish. And nuts, obviously...

JEFFERSON *laughs.*

JEFFERSON Obviously...

JESSICA You are supposed to feel sorry for me.

JEFFERSON Ah I was wondering what I'm supposed to be emoting in this scene.

DOROTHY *(smoothing over row)* I checked - everything is fine - it's the vegan option...

JESSICA You see Dad she's really nice. I don't understand why she's working with you?

JEFFERSON Ow!

JESSICA *(to DOROTHY)* So what *is* in it for you?

DOROTHY I used to work in the theatre.

JESSICA You are so lucky...

DOROTHY I was much younger. In another life.

JESSICA So why did you quit?

DOROTHY I got married to an actor but it didn't work out.

JEFFERSON Surprise!

DOROTHY He couldn't handle the commitment.

JEFFERSON My kind of guy!

DOROTHY But I never quite managed to lose the theatre bug - and so here I am trying to direct an impossible play with an improbable cast in a dilapidated barn in the middle what you charmingly call Pigsville ...

JEFFERSON Yeah, yeah, enough of the backstory. Tell me about Nigel.

DOROTHY Nigel? There's nothing to tell.

JEFFERSON *(to JESSICA)* Looks like Nigel's got the hots for Dorothy...

JESSICA Dad...

DOROTHY No he hasn't.

JEFFERSON I've seen him looking at you ...

DOROTHY No you haven't. Besides, you're forgetting he's married.

JEFFERSON Where I come from that don't count for diddly-squat. In Hollywood the only thing that stops you fooling around is a prenup.

JESSICA Didn't stop you though, did it Dad?

JEFFERSON Only the last couple of marriages. Anyway if you want my professional opinion as a recovering serial philanderer ...

DOROTHY Do tell ...

JEFFERSON The truth is you're way too good for Nigel.

DOROTHY *is slightly embarrassed.*

DOROTHY If we are being embarrassing, let's talk about *your* love life.

JESSICA Urgh! Do we have to? It's all in the National Enquirer if you're interested.

JEFFERSON I'm taking a time out from women at the moment.

DOROTHY Oh really?

JEFFERSON The only woman in my life is...my daughter.

JESSICA Yeah, right.

JEFFERSON And she doesn't even like me.

JESSICA Is this where we're supposed to feel sorry for you?

JEFFERSON Touche ...

DOROTHY *and JESSICA laugh. JEFFERSON takes a sip of wine.*

(To JESSICA) There was a time when you used to think I was great.

DOROTHY What happened?

JEFFERSON *looks at JESSICA fondly.*

JESSICA I grew up.

JEFFERSON Awkward pause. During which all the characters wonder if they have just heard something heartfelt and significant.

JESSICA And cut! I am going to leave you guys to it. I better call Mom - find out how the honeymoon's going - if she's still married. Thanks for supper Dorothy.

DOROTHY Pleasure. I'll see if I can get some of these lines into his head.

JESSICA Night Dad.

JESSICA *leaves.*

DOROTHY She's a lovely girl.

JEFFERSON She is - if you're not her father.

DOROTHY So Mr. Action Hero shall we...kick some Shakespeare butt?

JEFFERSON Let's whip that sonofabard's ass!

DOROTHY *gets text out.*

DOROTHY Act One Scene Five. I'll be the Fool.

DOROTHY AS FOOL If you wert my fool, nuncle, I'd have thee beaten for being old before thy time.

JEFFERSON/LEAR How's that?

DOROTHY AS FOOL Thou shouldst not have been old till thou hadst been wise.

JEFFERSON/LEAR O, let me not be mad, not mad, sweet heaven!

Keep me in temper; I would not be mad!

DOROTHY I really think you're getting there. This could be OK.

JEFFERSON Praise indeed.

He looks at her.

Y'know something Dorothy? You're a good-looking woman but you don't make the most of yourself ...you should try a bit of makeup...

DOROTHY Thanks. Maybe I could borrow some of yours.

JEFFERSON *smiles. He leans over to try and kiss her.*

DOROTHY *is tempted but avoids the kiss.*

Pause.

Um ...that's not in the script.

JEFFERSON I'm improvising.

He tries it again. They very nearly kiss. Then in comes MARY wearing flamenco outfit. The moment is lost.

Hey Mary did you have a good evening?

MARY *(coldly)* Not really. Enrico has never been the same since he had the accident with the castanets.

JEFFERSON I have to say Mary that you look absolutely terrific...

MARY And I have to say Mr. Steel that your opinion is no longer of interest to me.

DOROTHY What's the matter Mary?

MARY Nothing. I'm surprised to see you still up Mr. Steel given your exertions earlier.

JEFFERSON I'm good.

MARY That is a matter of opinion. Good night Dorothy.

We hear the FOOL's song performed by MARY in a flamenco style.