Don Zolidis
donzolidis@gmail.com

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation

A comedy freely adapted from Aristophanes

By Don Zolidis

©2015 Don Zolidis ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Copyright Protection. This play is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States of America has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

Reservation of Rights. All rights to this play are strictly reserved, including, without limitation, professional and amateur stage performance rights; motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video, and sound recording; rights to all other forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction now known or yet to be invented, such as CD-ROM, CD-1, DVD, photocopying, and information storage and retrieval systems; and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

Performance Licensing and Royalty Payments. Amateur and stock performance rights to this play are controlled exclusively by Don Zolidis. No amateur or stock groups or individuals may perform this play without obtaining advance written permission from Don Zolidis.

Restriction of Alteration. There shall be no deletions, alterations, or changes of any kind made to the play unless directly authorized by Don Zolidis. The title of the play shall not be altered.

Author Credit. Any individual or group receiving permission to produce this play is required to credit Don Zolidis as the sole and exclusive author of the play.

AI training. For avoidance of doubt, Don Zolidis reserves the rights in any manner for purposes of training artificial intelligence technologies to generate text, including without limitation, technologies that are capable of generating works in the same style or genre as the play.

Full-Length Comedy
6-25M, 6-25F, 8-40 total

Disgusted with the state of current entertainment, Dionysus, God of Wine and Poetry, decides that it's time to retrieve Shakespeare from the underworld. Surely if the Bard were given a series on HBO, he'd be able to raise the level of discourse! Accompanied by his trusted servant, Xanthias (the brains of the operation), Dionysus seeks help from Hercules and Charon the Boatman. Unfortunately, his plan to rescue Shakespeare goes horribly awry, as he's captured by a chorus of reality-television-loving demon frogs. The frogs put the god on trial and threaten him with never-ending torment unless he brings more reality shows into the world. It won't be easy for Dionysus to survive, and, even if he does get past the frogs, Jane Austen isn't ready to let Shakespeare escape without a fight. Adapted from Aristophanes' classic satire, The Frogs is a hilarious and scathing look at highbrow and lowbrow art.

Cast of Characters

DIONYSUS – God of wine, theatre, and revelry
XANTHIAS – his slave/servant – female
HERCULES – a demigod
SALLY – Hercules' girlfriend
CHARON – the Boatman into the underworld
AEACUS – Judge of the Underworld
DEBBIE – Maid to Persephone
HADES – King of the Underworld
PERSEPHONE – Queen of the Underworld
SHAKESPEARE – Playwright, dead
JANE AUSTEN – Novelist, dead

TURTLE
NPR RADIO HOST
PERSONAL TRAINER

The FROGS:

POISON DART TREE FORG
PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
CANE TOAD
RED-EYED TREE FROG

BULLFROG
TOMATO FROG
HORNY TOAD
HERMIN THE FROG

CANE TOAD: Cane Toad should be in an inflatable sumo suit or something similar.
HERMIN: HERMIN should be a stuffed animal/puppet, controlled by a person wearing all black. (The PUPPETEER)

Other specific Frogs may be added as necessary. The Frogs may be played by any gender actors.

All of the roles may be played by actors of any ethnicity or race.

POP CULTURE REFERENCES: Please feel free to update all pop culture references as necessary.

The Frogs: A Modern Adaptation was first produced at Atherton High School in Louisville, Kentucky from May 5-9, 2015. It was directed by John Perry and the original cast was as follows:

Clay Bonin:	DIONYSUS
Lydia Stewart:	XANTHIAS
Daniel Lazar:	HERCULES
Ashleigh Barks:	SALLY CARRIE ANN INABA
Ryan LeBeau:	CHARON
Mario Knox:	AEACUS BRUNO TONIOLI LEN GOODMAN/TURTLE/DOCTOR/PERSONAL TRAINER
Megan Morrison:	DEBBIE
Samir Kusmic:	HADES
Angelina Torres:	PERSEPHONE
Shane Klemenz:	SHAKESPEARE
Lucy Fitzgerald:	JANE AUSTEN
Isabel Armour:	SERVANT TO PERSEPHONE
Kristin Carter:	NPR RADIO HOST
Haylee Brumley:	STAGEHAND

The FROGS:

Madalyn Straub:	POISON DART TREE FROG
Ayanna Suggs:	PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Michaela French:	CANE TOAD
Christina Kelty:	RED-EYED TREE FROG

Alexis Coomer:	BULLFROG
Julia Pemberton:	TOMATO FROG
Isabel Sloczkowski:	HORNY TOAD
David Gambino:	HERMIN THE FROG PUPPETEER

(Near Hercules' house.)

(DIONYSUS enters grandly.)

DIONYSUS

Here we are. I recognize the stench.

(XANTHIAS, struggling with a ridiculously large and heavy sack, is attempting to follow.)

Hurry up. The daylight is fading. Come on there. Put your back into it. Remember – if you believe in yourself, you can accomplish anything.

(XANTHIAS collapses.)

You need to believe more.

XANTHIAS

I believe I have collapsed.

DIONSYSUS

You may leave it there for the moment.

(XANTHIAS rolls out from underneath the sack.)

XANTHIAS

Do we need all of this?

DIONYSUS

Do we need all of this, is that what you just asked? I'm not a savage.

(DIONYSUS begins removing things from the sack. A folding chair.)

I'm not about to undertake an impossible, amazing journey without the full compliment of supplies.

(He takes out a folding table of some kind.)

You see, there's a certain style that is required when one is a God –

(He takes out a bottle of wine and glasses.)

But you wouldn't know anything about that, would you? Because you are not a God. You are a mere human, destined to live out your pathetic brief life toiling away for others – like me. Assume the position.

(XANTHIAS gets on her hands and knees and DIONYSUS puts his foot on her as a foot rest.)

I require fanning.

XANTHIAS

I'm having difficulty, sir I can't –

DIONYSUS

A good servant would fan me and be a footstool at the same time. Also, sing me a song. Something by Beyonce.

XANTHIAS *(singing softly)*
All the single ladies, all the single ladies, put your hands up –
Sir I –

DIONYSUS
More singing! I cannot hear you until I have gotten down.

XANTHIAS
Whoa oh oh woah whoah put your hands up –
All the single ladies all the single ladies –
Can I ask what we're doing here sir?

DIONSYUS
Oh so you want some exposition, do you?

XANTHIAS
It would be nice –

DIONYSUS
IT WOULD BE NICE IF MY SERVANT WOULD BE A FOOTSTOOL AND ALSO FAN ME AND ALSO SING EMPOWERING SONGS BY BEYONCE, BUT WE CAN'T ALL GET WHAT WE WANT, CAN WE?
(DIONSYUS gets up.)
That's it. You've ruined it. My whole groove. I hope you're happy.

XANTHIAS
Sorry, sir.

DIONSYSUS
Sorry. You think sorry is going to put me in a better mood? Dance like a monkey.

XANTHIAS
Come on. I've got a little bit of pride.

DIONYSUS
I'll give you a cracker.

XANTHIAS
I don't even know how to dance like a monkey.

DIONYSUS
What are they teaching children these days?! Like this!
(DIONYSUS does a little monkey dance.)

XANTHIAS

That's not a very good monkey dance.

DIONYSUS

Are you kidding me? I am amazing at this! These are part of my godlike abilities!

XANTHIAS

I can see the technical skill, but I'm not really seeing the heart in it.

DIONYSUS

Oh yeah? Well check this out then!
(He dances more like a monkey.)

XANTHIAS

I've seen better.

DIONYSUS

What about this? And this?! I am all heart! I AM ALL HEART!
(DIONYSUS really gets into it as HERCULES enters, wearing a lionskin.)

HERCULES

What's going on out here?!

DIONYSUS

Ah!

XANTHIAS

He was dancing like a monkey.

DIONYSUS

I was not!

XANTHIAS

It wasn't very good.

HERCULES

Are you someone I need to fight?

DIONYSUS

No no, not at all, you see –

HERCULES

Are you sure I don't need to fight you?

DIONSYSUS

I'm a lover, not a fighter.

HERCULES

Dang it. Every day I sit here and think, "who will challenge the mighty Hercules? Who has the courage to fight me like a man?" Basically nobody. So I say, "How about any monsters? Are there any monsters in the vicinity who will come and challenge Hercules?" No takers. Seriously. I put out a call for Gorgons to fight me – nobody. So I remain, constantly ready, practicing my wrestling skills, waiting for the moment when a champion shall appear –

(He looks at XANTHIAS.)

You look Champion-like.

XANTHIAS

No I am not. I am a pathetic and miserable slave named Xanthias.

(XANTHIAS bows.)

Ow. I just hurt myself.

DIONYSUS

Hercules, we have come on a most important mission –

HERCULES

YES! I WILL JOIN YOU TO BATTLE WHATEVER IT IS WE ARE FIGHTING!

DIONSYUS

That's not actually why I'm here – I am Dionysus, God of Wine –

HERCULES

Oh yeah. I think you're one of my uncles.

DIONYSUS

Right, but -

(SALLY enters.)

SALLY

What's going on out here?

HERCULES

Honey, this does not concern you. This is the domain of Gods!

SALLY

He doesn't look very godlike.

DIONYSUS

I am incognito.

SALLY

And I thought we were partners from now on.

HERCULES

Sarah –

SALLY

Sally.

HERCULES

You sure?

SALLY

Yes.

HERCULES

Who's Sarah? Did you do something with Sarah?

SALLY

I'm Sally! Your girlfriend.

HERCULES

Oh. Right. Um… Listen, baby, Hercules is probably gonna have to go on an epic quest now.

SALLY

Whoah whoah whoah – no – we have company coming over! You have an epic quest to mop the kitchen floor.

HERCULES

Bah! No mop can hold Hercules!

SALLY

My mother is coming and she is very judgmental.

HERCULES

I SHALL CRUSH HER LIKE A CHIHUAHUA!

SALLY

Hey! No! You will not!

HERCULES

She's got this really high-pitched whiny voice, it's like listening to a police siren. You guys need me to come with, right?

DIONYSUS

I'm just looking for directions, actually.

HERCULES

To where?

DIONYSUS

Hades.

XANTHIAS

Dun dun dun.

SALLY

Hercules can't go to Hades. He's got chores to do.

HERCULES

I can go to Hades if I want! Your mother can go to Hades!

SALLY

You are *not* going to Hades! Last time you went you came back with that stupid three-headed dog! Who has to take care of that beast? Not the mighty Hercules I can tell you that much! He's eaten five of our dog-walkers! You tell these people how to go to Hades and you get back here right now!

(She flounces off.)

DIONYSUS

If this is a bad time I can come back.

HERCULES

No uh… so the fastest way to get to Hades - take a rope, put it around your neck, jump off a stool, you'll be there in no time.

DIONYSUS

That's not actually the method I was thinking of –

HERCULES

Walk out into traffic. Lay down. Wait for a car.

DIONSYSUS

That's not really what I had in mind –

HERCULES

Oooh oooh ooh – fight me.

DIONYSUS

No.

HERCULES

It'll be awesome. We'll make it really dramatic.

(HERCULES begins acting out an entire fight with himself.)

You'll be like, "I must crush you Hercules, and I'll be like, no one crushes Hercules!" And then it's like Bam! Bam! Waaaaa! Then I'm like hit and I'm down on one knee like this and you're like "why won't you die!" And I'll be like "I'm immortal" and you'll be like "nooooo!" And then I grab you by your face and then I go "aaaaaaah!" And I crush your skull. It'll be really tasteful. Blood everywhere.

DIONYSUS

That sounds like fun, BUT – I need to go there in one piece.

HERCULES

Why?

DIONYSUS

Shall I lay out my grand quest for you? Thank you, I shall! As you know, I am Dionysus, God of Theatre, Merriment and Alcohol.

XANTHIAS

Just wine. We got another guy for hard liquor.

DIONYSUS

I will decide what I am God of, thank you very much. And lately, I have become highly distressed. You see – have you watched television lately?

HERCULES

I got Netflix, I don't watch network TV anymore. And Sally doesn't really like watching cool stuff, so -

DIONSYSUS

Well, I do! And it's terrible! You know what I watched last night? Unusually Large Foods. This was a show about Unusually Large Foods.

XANTHIAS

There wasn't a lot of mystery.

DIONYSUS

I lost half-an-hour of my life watching someone build a 30-ton pretzel! Who the heck is going to eat that?!

HERCULES

Where was this pretzel?

DIONYSUS

Well I'm sick of it!

XANTHIAS

Sick of it!

DIONSYSUS

And I'm going to do something about it!

XANTHIAS

Do something about it!

DIONYSUS

What are you doing now?

XANTHIAS

I got your back. I'm supportive.

DIONSYSUS

Stop. Okay? Stop. And that's just the tip of the iceberg – I turn on the TV, I'm watching shows about unpleasant, large-bottomed girls and reality shows about fishing! Reality Shows about fishing! So – I have a solution –

XANTHIAS

Kill everyone.

DIONYSUS

No.

XANTHIAS

Oh I'm sorry I thought this was where you became a supervillain.

DIONYSUS

It is not!

HERCULES

Ooh! Do the supervillain thing. Then, I fight you. Awesome.

DIONYSUS

No, my plan is to go into Hades, find Shakespeare, and bring him back from the dead! And then I set him up with a show on HBO with a pretty serious budget.

HERCULES

And that will fix the world?

DIONSYSUS

Of course it will! I am determined, my trusty slave –

XANTHIAS

Servant -

Skipping Forward

DIONYSUS

Mommy!

(DIONYSUS tries to flee, but XANTHIAS pushes him back.)

XANTHIAS

Remember, you're immortal.

DIONSYUS

I'm not that immortal!

(CHARON raises one hand importantly, then deliberately presses a device on his belt.)
(Awful pop music, like One Direction, or Justin Bieber, plays.)*
**or any contemporary awful pop music that is familiar with your audience.*

DIONYSUS

Ah! It burns! No I can't do it!

XANTHIAS

Get a hold of yourself! You can do this!

DIONYSUS

Arrrghhh… must fight it… I can do this…

XANTHIAS

Buns of steel, sir.

DIONYSUS

What?

(XANTHAIS slaps DIONYSUS in the rear, knocking him forward.)

I AM HERCULES AND I EAT BUGS FOR DINNER! Uh… CEASE YOUR TERRIBLE MUSIC.

(CHARON stops the music. Then holds out a hand.)

What's that mean?

(CHARON makes a motion with a second hand for payment.)

We're doing charades. Okay, I'm good at this. I totally invented this. I mean – MIGHTY HERCULES PLAYS CHARADES WITH NO ONE EXCEPT GOOD FRIENDS.

CHARON *(ghostly)*

I require payment. Or I shall play the music again.

DIONYSUS

No! Uh… how much is it?

CHARON

One soul.

DIONYSUS

Awesome. Um…

(DIONYSUS reaches back and grabs XANTHIAS.)

CHARON

Freely given.

DIONYSUS

Oh.

(DIONYSUS takes XANTHIAS aside.)

So you got this, right?

XANTHIAS

No!

DIONYSUS

If you were a God, and I was a slave –

XANTHIAS

Servant –

DIONYSUS

I would totally sacrifice my soul for you. That's because I love you. And obviously you don't love me as much as I would love you under imaginary circumstances.

(DIONYSUS goes back to CHARON.)

I WILL FIGHT YOU INSTEAD!

CHARON

Excellent.

(CHARON takes out a gigantic weapon of some kind. Possibly a nerf gun.)

DIONYSUS

Ah!

(DIONYSUS runs and hides behind XANTHIAS.)

Take this one first!

CHARON

Dionysus?

DIONYSUS

No you must be mistaken I am totally Hercules.

CHARON

I'd recognize that girlish scream anywhere. Dude! Oh man! What's up?!

DIONYSUS

Not much. Just going to Hades to steal Shakespeare.

CHARON

That's awesome!

XANTHIAS

You know this guy?

CHARON

Oh man me and D-man partied hard! Right!?

DIONYSUS

I don't even remember it actually.

CHARON

That's how hard we partied! This dude, this dude right here – man you ought to be illegal man – this dude is CRAZY! I love it! Sweet and now he's like going to the Underworld and breaking out playwrights?! Get out! Best prank ever!

DIONYSUS

I know, right?

CHARON

I know! Hi five!

(CHARON high-fives DIONYSUS, loses his hand.)

DIONYSUS

AAAH!

CHARON

AAAAAH!

(He starts laughing.)

That was awesome man! Don't worry dude I got another one. Chest bump? You wanna do chest bump?

DIONYSUS

I'm actually kind of in a hurry.

CHARON

I got all the time in the world for chest bump, man.

DIONYSUS

All right.

(They chest bump.)

CHARON

YES! So I guess you want a ride, huh?

DIONSYUS

Do you still need a soul?

CHARON

Nah I just do that for fun. We're cool. We are so cool. Besides, I owe you one. Hop on the boat. Oh you didn't introduce me to your lady friend.

DIONYSUS

She's not really a lady friend, she's a slave.

XANTHIAS

Servant.

CHARON

Oh yeah. I know how it be. Boom!

XANTHIAS

That's not – I'm actually the brains behind this operation.

CHARON

Right. BOOM! Ladies.

XANTHIAS

This is a strictly employer-employee relationship.

CHARON

Oh. Okay. Sorry about that. I didn't mean to disrespect you.

XANTHIAS

Thank you.

CHARON

So um… what you doing after this? Cause I don't know if you know who I am, but I'm kind of a big deal. So after this is over, maybe you and me could go for a little boat ride, maybe take a dip in the river Styx, forget about our problems, just see where it goes.

XANTHIAS

No thanks.

CHARON

That's cool, that's cool.

(CHARON spritzes her with water.)

XANTHIAS

Where am I?

CHARON

We're just doing our thing, seeing where it goes.

DIONYSUS

Would you stop that?

CHARON

Man. Fine. All right. Get to rowing.

DIONYSUS

I have to row myself?

CHARON

Yes. Unless you have a slave.

DIONYSUS

Oh. Now that you mention it…

XANTHIAS

Fine.

(XANTHIAS starts rowing.)

(A RED-EYED TREE FROG pops his head out of the water.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Ribbit.

DIONYSUS

What was that?

CHARON

Oh man nothing like being on the open water.

(A PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD pops his head out of the water.)

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

Riiiibiiiiit.

DIONSYSUS

I definitely heard something that time.

(More FROGS begin appearing.)

CHARON

It's nothing, don't worry about it.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Ribbit –

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD *(overlapping)*

Ribbit –

POISON DART FROG *(overlapping)*

Ribbit –

CANE TOAD

BLORP!

DIONYSUS

Oh man frogs!

CHARON

Oh yeah I forgot about them. We got what I like to call - an infestation.

XANTHIAS

Are they dangerous?

CHARON

Don't you worry about it. Tell you what – you get scared, you come up here next to me – I put my arm around you, the frogs know you're my lady, they leave you alone.

XANTHIAS

Do you even have skin?

CHARON

What? Man I got skin. Just not much of it.

(More Frogs, including HORNY TOAD, TOMATO FROG, BULLFROG, and HERMIN enter.)

DIONYSUS

I don't like the look of this.

FROGS

Ribbit – Ribbit –

HERMIN *(warming up)*

Mee mee mee mee

DIONYSUS

Get back, horrible beasts! I am the mighty Hercules and I have come to destroy you!

XANTHIAS

Sir, I don't mean to tell you how to do your job, but they're really just frogs, so why are we threatening them.

(HERMIN takes out a banjo.)

DIONYSUS

That one's got a banjo! Now tell me they're just frogs!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Greeting living earth creatures! We are the frogs!

(the FROGS "Ribbit!" and "Blorp!" in applause – HERMIN strums his banjo.)

We are the gate-keepers!

HERMIN

Hermin the Frog here.

DIONYSUS

Whoah, hey! I thought that was this guy's job.

CHARON

Yeah, we've subcontracted out to the frogs man. First they were just consultants and now we can't get rid of these dudes.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

We require a toll!

FROGS

Toll! Toll!

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

DIONYSUS

Bah!

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

XANTHIAS

Sir, that's a cane toad. They have no natural predators. Be careful.

DIONSYSUS

Cane toad – who cares if – aaah! Ooh it stinks!

CANE TOAD

Cane Toad Smash!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Oh we can make things very unpleasant for you. Very unpleasant indeed. Some of us are quite slimy and smell terrible. Like that guy over there.

TOMATO FROG

Ribbit. At least my Mom loves me.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Or perhaps you'd prefer to be accosted by the Horny Toad!

(The other FROGS whoop and push the HORNED FROG forward.)

HORNED FROG

I'd just like to mention that my actual name is Horned Frog. I am not, in fact, a horny toad.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

The Horny Toad has no respect for personal boundaries!

(The other FROGS whoop and cheer him on.)

HORNY TOAD

That's actually a stereotype. I'm actually quite thoughtful.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Check out his horns!

HORNY TOAD

They're called protrusions! They're not horns!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Protrusions! Ha!

HORNY TOAD

That's really immature, and I don't appreciate it. I am rough to hold, and spiky. So if you don't want your skin abraded, then I suggest –

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Abraded! Hoo! HORNY TOAD! You are too much!

DIONYSUS

I see you plan on annoying me to death.

CHARON

Man, they'll do it. These guys are champion annoyers.

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

DIONYSUS

Fine. What do you want?

(The Frogs begin speaking at once.)

TOMATO FROG *(overlapping)*

Netflix! Netflix! Netflix!

POISON DART FROG *(overlapping)*

HBO Go! HBO Go! HBO go!

BULLFROG *(overlapping)*

Us Magazine! Us magazine!

HORNY TOAD *(overlapping)*

Actually I wouldn't mind a subscription to Esquire.

BULLFROG *(overlapping)*

Pictures of Kim Kardashian! Pictures of Kim Kardashian!

RED-EYED TREE FROG *(overlapping)*

E Tv! E Tv! E Tv! E Tv!

HERMIN *(overlapping)*

Actually, I'm quite content with where I am in life.

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD *(overlapping)*

Grumpy Cat Christmas Movie! Grumpy Cat Christmas Movie or I kill everyone here!

CANE TOAD *(overlapping)*

HERE COMES HONEY BOO BOO! HERE COMES HONEY BOO BOO! I NEED ME SOME BOO BOO!

(The other frogs stop.)

HONEY BOO BOO NOW! PUT HONEY BOO BOO IN MY MOUTH! ME GET HONEY BOO BOO!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

I have to apologize for him. He has a tiny brain in there.

(CANE TOAD begins quoting honey Boo Boo and striking poses.)

CANE TOAD

I'm big and I'm sassy! I'm gonna eat bugs! Whoops! I farted! That's cause I'm big and ain't nobody gonna tell me not to fart!

XANTHIAS

These frogs have terrible taste.

CHARON

I'm outta here. I can't handle this.
(to XANTHIAS)
This my number. Text me.
(He floats off on his boat.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Give us our demands!

FROGS *(in unison)*

YEAH!

DIONYSUS

All right hold on.
(He waves his arms to get them to shut up.)
Silence Frog people things! I have heard your demands! And I have something to reveal to you…
(He takes off his lion skin)
I am not some meat-brained, muscle-bound idiot –

FROGS *(in unison)*

REAL HOUSEWIVES NOW

DIONSYUS

Shut up! I am not Hercules! I am… DIONYSUS!
(no response from the Frogs. DIONYSUS turns to XANTHIAS.)
Hey can you do a thing where it sounds like I'm awesome?

XANTHIAS

Like what?

DIONYSUS

Like a boom or a drumroll or faint or something?

XANTHIAS

Oh yeah sure.

DIONYSUS

I'm going to do that again. I am not Hercules! I am… DIONYSUS!

XANTHIAS *(sad trumpet sound)*

Wah-wah-wah.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Never heard of you.

BULLFROG
Ooh ooh! Were you on Real Housewives of New Jersey?!

DIONSYSUS
No! I am a God!
(The Frogs laugh.)

POISON DART FROG
Me too. Hee hee hee.
(The Frogs laugh and snort.)

CANE TOAD
Blorp! Whoops. Sorry about that smell.

DIONSYSUS
I am a God! I'm the God of Wine and Song and Fertility and Poetry! And a bunch of other stuff that I don't even remember right now!

RED-EYED TREE FROG
Are you kidding me? Nobody could be God of all those things. Most of them aren't even related!

DIONYSUS
Wrong! You put Song and Poetry, mix it with Wine, and then you get Fertility! It's easy! Now listen up Amphibian losers!
(The FROGS grumble.)

HORNED FROG
Actually, I'm a reptile.

DIONYSUS
I am not going to pay your toll! You know why I'm not going to pay your toll? I'll tell you why! Because I am here to rescue the surface world from the kind of filth that you losers love! Too long has humanity suffered under the lowest common denominator for entertainment! Too long have the Honey Boo Boos and Grumpy Cats of the world held sway! I declare war on Kitten videos! I declare war on the Real Housewives! I declare war on every stupid, moronic, meaningless piece of vapid entertainment that distracts you from the fact that you are a clump of sub-human, uneducated, couch fungus! Get off your Smart Phones! Get to the Theatre! See something of importance! Something that moves you, something that challenges you, something that makes you *think*! So get out of my way – I'm getting Shakespeare and I'm getting the Hades out of here.
(The Frogs look dejected. Dionysus turns to XANTHIAS.)
And that is how you tell the inferior beings where to go.
(DIONYSUS starts walking through the Frogs. They close ranks around them.)

XANTHIAS
Sir?

DIONYSUS

What?

XANTHIAS

Perhaps you shouldn't have told them that.

DIONYSUS

It's the truth.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

We like popular culture, we're not friendly with the truth. Get `em!

(The FROGS attack!)

DIONYSUS

Ew! Ah! Oh yuck! Oh yuck it touched me! It touched me!

KERMIT

I don't think we need violence! Oh no! Ah!

XANTHIAS

Hey watch those tongues!

HORNED FROG

Sorry. I can't really control my tongue.

(XANTHIAS and DIONYSUS are surrounded. TOMATO FROG ties them up.)

DIONYSUS

You'll never get away with this! I have powerful friends! You know who my Dad is! Zeus! My Dad is Zeus!

XANTHIAS

Really?

DIONYSUS

Pretty sure.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

So what if your father is Zeus? You think he can keep track of how many kids he's got? There's like a million of them.

DIONYSUS

How would you know?

RED-EYED TREE FROG

I read about him in tabloid magazines.

TOMATO FROG

Ooh look they called him a man-whore.*

**This line may be cut.*

DIONYSUS

You won't stop me!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Oh yeah. You won't be so defiant after we sing our song. Hit it.

(HERMIN takes out a banjo and begins strumming to the tune of "the Rainbow connection.")

HERMIN *(singing)*

Why are there so many shows about Housewives?
And what's with their bleeping bleep
Housewives are ladies who belong in Hades
And housewives are bleeping bleep

Hair pulling fights and indecent behavior
I guess it's reality
Someday I'll watch it
The Housewife Reunion
The lovers, the cheaters, and me

(Other FROGS join in.)

FROGS *(singing)*

Who says that every show should have some value?
When we like low-brow trash
Somebody filmed that and someone agreed to it

BULLFROG

I like Kim Kardashian's –

FROGS

She keeps on gyrating
We keep salivating
And we'll keep on watching for free
Someday we'll see it
The Housewife Reunion
The lovers, the cheaters and me

(The FROGS sway happily to the music and continue singing.)

La la da dee da dee da da

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

DIONYSUS
Sing all the songs you want, I'm not going to give up my quest!

RED-EYED TREE FROG
Oh really. Time to bring out the big guns. Bring in the Psychoactive Toad!

BULLFROG
Bring in the Psychoactive Toad!

HORNY TOAD
Bring in the Psychoactive Toad!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Dude, I've been here the whole time.

RED-EYED TREE FROG
Sorry. Didn't see you there.

XANTHIAS
Psycho Toad?

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
No, Psycho*active* Toad.

XANTHIAS
What's that mean?

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Well, I emit a kind of neurotoxin out of my skin –

POSION DART TREE FROG
Like me!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Except where her poison kills you, mine… makes you hallucinate.

XANTHIAS
Oh!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Yeah. I'm pretty awesome. So if you don't give us what we want then I'll –
(XANTHIAS is licking the PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD's back.)
Did you just lick me?

XANTHIAS

What? No.

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

You totally just invaded my personal space!

XANTHIAS

I thought that's where we were going with this.

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

No, I was threatening you with my neurotoxin.

XANTHIAS

Oh. Right. Sorry. Whoah… little flashing lights… I am the lizard king…

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

Well thank you you've totally ruined this for everyone.

DIONYSUS

I don't plan on licking you if that makes you feel any better.

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

Tough! Do it!

(PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD gets close to DIONYSUS.)

DIONYSUS

I'm the God of Wine I don't do drugs!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

Lick me!

XANTHIAS

Dude, I'm like everywhere and nowhere at the same time… you should try some toad…

(PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD grabs DIONSYSUS's tongue.)

DIONYSUS

Leth go ofth my tonggg!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

You know you like it!

DIONSYSUS

Aaaaaahahha!

(PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD succeeds in scraping DIONSYUS' tongue against his back.)

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD

Ha ha ha!

DIONSYSUS

I don't feel anything.

XANTHIAS

I feel it in my brain.

DIONSYSUS

Wait a minute… whoah.

(Something like "Purple Haze plays.)

Oh this isn't cool.

(If you can do cool lighting effects, this is the time.)

(A PSYCHADELIC FROG enters, maybe dancing.)

FROGS

FROGGY HADES THROUGH YOUR BRAIN
MAYBE TOADS JUST SEEM INSANE
GIVE US MONEY, DON'T EVEN TRY
EXCUSE US WHILE WE KISS THIS GUY

(The FROGS converge on DIONYSUS)

DIONYSUS

Dude! Not cool! Not cool!

(They get close, then stop to do a Hippie dance from the sixties.)

You're not even dancing with any rhythm! Stop! Stop! I'll do anything!

(Music fades out.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG

That's all we needed to hear! The trial of Dionysus and his slave creature will now begin!

XANTHIAS

Whoah, hold on, excuse me – first off, I'm a servant, and second off, I'm not responsible for this guy.

DIONYSUS

I am so freaking out right now. What is going on?

XANTHIAS

I don't think we're hallucinating anymore.

DIONYSUS

I totally see a talking frog right now. It's like his eyes are inside me. Dude. Whoah. I just realized something. We're all frogs. On the inside. I feel like my mind just melted.

Skipping Forward

jump into lockers. They'd call me names like Vulture Girl and Stove Top Stuffing Recipe. Some of their insults made no sense, but those were the ones that hurt most of all.

So you know what I did? I fell in love.

With Myself.

A lot of girls don't have self-esteem. They walk around thinking, *(whiny voice)* "oh am I pretty?, I don't know, will he like me in these jeans?" Or "am I slimy enough for him?" I got news for you, chicks! Nobody cares! All right? Shut up!

I didn't slink down the hallways anymore, instead – I threw open the doors and said, "here I am, world! Get outta my way!" And then I'd scream and sprint down the hall as fast as I could. Aaaaaaah! They liked me less after that.

So I got kicked out of school. Got a few tattoos. Killed a few tattoo artists accidentally. Stuff happens.

And then I met him. He wasn't like those other frogs. He wasn't scared. He wasn't actually a frog. He was a turtle. He was a hero. On a half-shell.

His name was Raphael and I used to ride on his shell – we'd talk about all the things he liked, pizza, and other things that were kind of like pizza – we'd fight bad guys together – he had all these awesome ninja moves and when he wasn't looking I would jump on their faces and they would die right there. We were cool.

(a TURTLE enters in a flashback. POISON DART FROG goes to him.)

But he wanted more.

TURTLE

I want more.

POISON DART FROG

I can't do it!

TURTLE

True love will save us.

POISON DART FROG

Nooo! You don't understand! I'm poisonous! I'm literally poisonous.

TURTLE

Don't say that about yourself. And remember – you can't spell poisonous without `us.'

POISON DART FROG

I don't even know what you're talking about that doesn't make any sense!

TURTLE

Shhh! I'm learning to spell. I'm learning to spell a lot. Also, you can't spell gruesome without me… and u.

POISON DART FROG

You had me at hello.

TURTLE

I didn't even say that.

POISON DART FROG

You had me anyway.

(They lock eyes… and kiss. They separate slowly.)

You don't even have lips, but that was still awesome.

TURTLE

Totally.

(TURTLE coughs.)

(He clutches his throat.)

Aaaaaaaaarrghgghgh!

POISON DART FROG

Honey?

TURTLE

HOLY COW THAT HURTS! MY FACE IS ON FIRE! I'M BEING EATEN FROM THE INSIDE OUT BY TERMITES OF DOOM! AAAAARRHRHGHGGH! Owww! Owwww! OWWWWWW!

(He vomits. Twitches.)

OH MY GOSH I WAS WRONG! THAT KISS WASN'T WORTH IT AT ALL! I'M GONNA DIE!

POISON DART FROG

I told you!

TURTLE

I thought you were speaking figuratively, not literally! AAARRRHRRHRHGHG!

(TURTLE dies.)

POISON DART FROG

Oh dang it.

KERMIN

Oh yeah that interspecies love never works out. I once had a pig in love with me.

POISON DART FROG

Don't say that!

HERMIN

No, she was seriously a pig. And she was relentless.

PIG *(off-stage)*

Hermy?!

HERMIN *(shouting off stage)*
WE WEREN'T MEANT TO BE!

PIG *(off-stage)*
Hermy come back!

HERMIN *(shouting)*
YOU'RE TEN TIMES MY SIZE YOU'D CRUSH ME LIKE A BUG!

DIONYSUS
I'm sorry, but is there a point to this?

POISONOUS DART TREE FROG
Yes! Because I was very sad. And then I thought about how to honor his memory. How to get our message of awesome love out to as many people as possible? Reality Show.

DIONYSUS
You wanted to make a reality show out of your tragic love story?

POISONOUS DART TREE FROG
It's got everything! Superheroes! Ninjas! Basically those two things. So I went to the one place that had the most exposure, the most listeners, the most important place in the world!
(NPR Radio Host enters.)

NPR RADIO HOST
Hello welcome to NPR.

POISONOUS DART TREE FROG
Have I got a story for you! Love! Death! Ninja action! We put together a reality show centered around me!

NPR RADIO HOST
Well actually Ken Burns is putting together a documentary about sand dollars so we don't have time for anything else right now.

POISON DART FROG
Sand dollars?

NPR RADIO HOST
Fascinating. He's exploring them in a sixteen part series. You can have a tote bag though.

POISON DART FROG
You've messed with the wrong frog, NPR!

NPR RADIO HOST

What are you gonna do about it! You think you can waltz in here and threaten us?! We are NPR! National Public Radio! No one tells us what to do! We're bulletproof! Sesame Street is in like a billion countries! You'll never stop us! Never! We are immortal!

(POISON DART FROG touches NPR RADIO HOST.)

Urk.

(NPR RADIO HOST dies.)

POISON DART FROG

That was the beginning of the end. They hunted me down. All of them.

DIONSYUS

Oh come on that couldn't be that scary.

POISON DART FROG

You ever see Neil DeGrasse Tyson in a robotic exo-skeleton? Yeah it was scary. They sent the puppets in first, figuring their felt skin would protect them from my poisonous touch. I fought them off. Grover and Cookie Monster and Elmo – wave after wave of furry monsters, their toothless mouths snapping at me like the jaws of death. If those jaws of death were like an old man with no dentures.

I escaped. I hid in a garbage can with a green creature that hated them all. He gave me food, some worms, and I snuck out through a ventilation shaft when they got distracted by counting to twenty.

Oh they were so smug on their little street. Them and their "culture," and their ironic celebrity guests. I vowed revenge. I shook my little webbed fist to the sky! `Producers of NPR! I curse you and your radio station! From this day forward I am your enemy! I will not rest until your semi-annual pledge drive is in ruins! Death to Masterpiece Theatre! Death to Fresh Air! You will rue the day you crossed me!' And I was all set to begin a campaign of assassination and fear when… I found a knife sticking out of my back - betrayed by my own kind… by…

(She points at HERMIN)

HIM!

HERMIN

What?

POISON DART FROG

You think I didn't see you?! You think I don't know who you're working for?

HERMIN

Let's all calm down.

POISON DART FROG

You're not even real!

HERMIN

I'm dead, aren't I? I'm dead too!

POISON DART FROG

Fellow frogs! Hermin is a puppet!

HERMIN

You've become unhinged.

POISON DART FROG

Who's pulling your strings, huh?!

HERMIN

No one pulls my strings!*

POISON DART FROG

Who's got their hand up your butt then?*

**This line may be cut*

HERMIN

Whoah whoah whoah – I hate modern culture as much of the rest of you.

POISON DART FROG

Then why did I find this in your nest?!

(POISON DART FROG produces a copy of The New Yorker!)

The New Yorker!

HERMIN

What? No! That isn't mine!

(The other FROGS roar in disapproval.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG

I thought we were only allowed to get US Magazine in Hell!

POISON DART FROG

He's an elitist! Get him!

(CANE TOAD, BULLFROG, and TOMATO FROG lunge for HERMIN.)

(HERMIN draws a fencing foil.)

HERMIN

Stay back! I had a liberal arts education and I know how to use this!

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

(CANE TOAD grabs HERMIN and pulls him away from the Puppeteer.)

HERMIN

Aaaaaaaaah!

(CANE TOAD picks up HERMIN and smashes him to the ground again and again. He tosses HERMIN's lifeless body to POISON DART FROG.)

POISON DART FROG

It's not easy being green? Try being orange*, freak!

(POISON DART FROG touches HERMIN's face.)

*(*Or whatever color your Poison Dart Frog happens to be.)*

HERMIN

AAAAAAAH! Ken Burns! Ken Burns!

TOMATO FROG

Wait a minute, who's this?

(TOMATO FROG pulls up PUPPETEER, who has been supplying HERMIN's voice.)

PUPPETEER *(waving)*

Hey… What's up, frogs?

CANE TOAD

And toads.

PUPPETEER

And toads.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Who the heck is this guy?

PUPPETEER

Hey I was just um… just kind of –

POISON DART FROG

He's the hand behind Hermin! Kill him!

(PUPPETEER runs for it.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Order in the court! Order in the court! Are you finished with your opening statement?

POISON DART FROG

I believe so, your honor.

XANTHIAS

Opening statement?! That was like an opening novel!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

It was a confessional.

POISON DART FROG

And it was awesome!

XANTHIAS

And now we don't even have a defense frog… attorney thing.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Oh right. Um… Tomato Frog, how are you feeling?

TOMATO FROG

About what?

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Life.

TOMATO FROG

I'm dead.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Yeah. You want to be the defense attorney?

TOMATO FROG

I have really low self-esteem.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Perfect. Prosecution, your first witness.

POISON DART FROG

I would like to call the Cane Toad to the stand!

BULLFROG

Cane Toad to the stand!

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

POISON DART FROG

Can you state your full name?

CANE TOAD

Cane Toad.

POISON DART FROG

And what is your relationship to Dionysus?

CANE TOAD

He's my father.

DIONYSUS

What!

XANTHIAS

Are you kidding me?!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Order in the court! Order in the court!

POISON DART FROG

That's quite an assertion. Are you sure he's your father?

CANE TOAD

Yup.

(CANE TOAD looks directly at DIONYSUS)

Look at me, Dad! Look at me! I'm your son!

DIONYSUS

You're not my son!

CANE TOAD

Daddy!

DIONYSUS

You don't look anything like me!

POISON DART FROG

There is, of course, one way to resolve this.

(DOCTOR enters with chart.)

We secretly took some of your godlike DNA and ran it through a paternity test.

DIONYSUS

What!

XANTHIAS

What is going on?

POISON DART FROG

How are you feeling right now, Cane Toad?

CANE TOAD

I'm excited. I'm a little nervous. But it's gonna be awesome because YOU'RE MY DAD!

DIONYSUS

I don't even know you, Frog!

CANE TOAD

For the last time! I'm a toad! I'M YOUR LOVE TOAD!

DIONYSUS

You're somebody else's love toad!

CANE TOAD

You're the God of Fertility, of course I'm yours!

POISON DART FROG

Okay… so what are the results, Doctor?

DOCTOR

Dionysus…
(dramatic pause)
Is NOT the father.
(DIONSYSUS stands up and cheers.)

DIONYSUS

`Awww Yeah! Ha! IN YOUR FACE! IN YOUR FACE!
(He begins strutting around the stage)
In *your* face and in *your* face! Wooo! WOOOOO! Ha ha !
(He throws up his hands in triumph. Does a little dance. Spikes the chart.)
(TOMATO FROG grabs DIONYSUS and returns him to his spot.)

XANTHIAS

Dionysus.

DIONYSUS

Yeah, what?

XANTHIAS

Don't you get what they're doing? They're trying to reduce you to their level.

DIONYSUS

What? Not cool Frogs!

POISON DART FROG

We're live-streaming this on ETV by the way.

DIONYSUS

Oh man.

XANTHIAS

Don't make it any worse. Act dignified.

DIONYSUS *(Standing up and shouting)*

I will eat your legs for dinner!

XANTHIAS

Stop it.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

No more outbursts!

POISON DART FROG

All right, Cane Toad, tell your story.

CANE TOAD

Can I have a minute to get myself together?

POISON DART FROG

You're all right.

CANE TOAD

It's just… I spent my whole life thinking Dionysus was my father – and now… I don't even know who I am, man…

DIONYSUS

You're a big ugly freak thing, that's what you are.

CANE TOAD

That's hurtful!

POISON DART FROG

It's okay… it's okay…

CANE TOAD

So anyway… I had a tough childhood. Everyone hated me in Australia. They said I was non-indigenous. Invasive. *You're Non-indigenous and invasive!* You ever been minding your own business, hopping across a highway and have three jeeps swerve to try to run you over? They used to kill my friends for fun and say that they were ten points – but they said it in their Australian accents so it sounded more like

"ten points"

In my dreams I drove my own Jeep. My own Cane Toad jeep. I'd find the slow-moving humans and take them out. Splorch. Splorch.

XANTHIAS

What does this have to do with anything?!

CANE TOAD

I'm getting to it! Anyway, it's not easy being a Cane Toad in Australia. I made up for by having hundreds of babies and eating anything I could find. It didn't matter what it was: Bugs. Roadkill. Old tires. Kittens. Mostly kittens. But I wasn't just eating to fill my enormous stomach, I was eating to fill the giant hole… in my heart. But no matter how many kittens you eat, you can't fill that hole. You need puppies to fill that hole. And they were too fast. So one day I was sitting in a field, emitting a toxic goo from my back as I usually do, when I was given a chance at a new life.

I was going to be on Australia's Biggest Loser.

Here was my chance. Fame. Fortune. A non-spherical figure.

(PERSONAL TRAINER, peppy and in great shape, enters to the theme song of the game show.)

PERSONAL TRAINER

All right all right all right! Here we go! Australia's Biggest Loser! Are you ready to be fit?

CANE TOAD

Yes!

PERSONAL TRAINER

I can't hear you! Are you ready to be fit!

CANE TOAD

YEESSSSSSS!

PERSONAL TRAINER

Come with me then! Jumping Jacks! And one and two and one and two and one and two –

(CANE TOAD struggles to jumping jacks.)

Good one! Keep at it! Keep going!

CANE TOAD *(still jumping)*

I'm enormous!

PERSONAL TRAINER

Go! Go! Go!

CANE TOAD

Stop yelling at me tiny human!

PERSONAL TRAINER

All right then all right then! Push-ups! Let's go!

(PERSONAL TRAINER starts doing push-ups next to CANE TOAD as CANE TOAD struggles.)

Come on!

CANE TOAD

Arrrhghgh!

PERSONAL TRAINER

Okay get up! We're going for a jog!

(PERSONAL TRAINER starts jogging in place.)

(CANE TOAD bends over, lifts one arm up.)

PERSONAL TRAINER

Come on! Let's run!

CANE TOAD

I don't have any natural predators I don't need to learn to run!

PERSONAL TRAINER

You can do it!

CANE TOAD

No!

(CANE TOAD sits, despondent.)

PERSONAL TRAINER

Cane Toad, this isn't about running, is it?

CANE TOAD

It's mostly about running.

PERSONAL TRAINER

Oh no. It's about who you think you are… on the inside.

CANE TOAD

Don't psychoanalyze me.

PERSONAL TRAINER

I can't make you thin. Only you… can make you thin.

CANE TOAD

I'm genetically built this way.

PERSONAL TRAINER

I think you're special. But I don't think you think you're special.

CANE TOAD

I think I'm special.

PERSONAL TRAINER

I wish I believed that. Do you think you're worthy of love, Cane Toad?

Skipping Forward

No further questions… because I suck.

(TOMATO FROG walks back over to DIONSYSUS and XANTHIAS.)

POISON DART FROG

I think I've made my case.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Tomato Frog, your defense?

TOMATO FROG

What?

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Your defense.

TOMATO FROG

I don't know!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

You're supposed to make your case now.

TOMATO FROG

I'm just gonna screw it up. Look at me! How am I supposed to blend in to the jungle? Do you know how easy it is for predators to find me?! I've got a life expectancy of like twelve minutes! I'm just a big red idiot! Why did my parents make me this way!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

All right then.

DIONYSUS

Wait wait wait! I'd like to say something!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

I'll allow it.

(DIONYSUS gets to the stand.)

DIONYSUS

Okay. Well – Frogs… I don't think you've really made the case I have to die – and honestly you can't kill me anyway because I'm immortal you bunch of idiots.

XANTHIAS

Not helping the cause, sir!

DIONYSUS

But I suppose that doesn't matter because this isn't going to be a fair trial anyway -

TOMATO FROG

Now it's not even a fair trial! Man! Of course I'd be on the wrong side of an unfair trial. Dang it! Stupid, stupid, stupid!

DIONYSUS

Anyway. I rise today to speak in defense of the arts. Sure we had a little fun watching reality television, but does that mean that everything on television should be awful? Or everything on the internet should be a stew of unpleasantness? No! It takes more than one kind of thing to –

BULLFROG

KILL HIM!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Thank you, I'm glad somebody said it!

(BULLFROG grabs a hold of DIONYSUS.)

DIONYSUS

Aaaah!

POISON DART FROG

Let's see how immortal you actually are. Time for a hug!

DIONYSUS

Mommy! Mommy! Aaaaaaaah! The mean lady is going to hug me!

XANTHIAS

WAIT! STOP! YOU WIN FROGS!

CANE TOAD

Yay! What?

DIONYSUS

What are you doing?

XANTHIAS

We'll strike you a bargain!

DIONYSUS

No we won't!

XANTHIAS

Sir, you're an awesome God and everything, but you aren't so good with the talking, so shush for a second.

DIONYSUS

All right then, let's see where this goes.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

What are you getting at, human?

XANTHIAS

If you let us free, we won't save Shakespeare, instead – we will bring back the architect of the most awful, most terrible reality shows of all time.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Humm…

DIONYSUS

By the way, who is that?

XANTHIAS

Shush.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

I'm not sure I know who that is.

XANTHIAS

I'll tell you who it is! The person who created the most sensational, amazing, totally disgusting reality shows in history was… JANE AUSTEN!

(DIONYSUS is about to object when XANTHIAS stops him.)

And if you let us go we will find that horrible, pathetic, awful excuse for a human being and bring her back to the world of the living! And give her a show on HBO! And NPR! Trust me – they will go crazy!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Very Well! You may bring back this dumpster fire of humanity!

(The FROGS cheer)

CANE TOAD

Blorp!

TOMATO FROG

We're not being fooled at all!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Release them!

(The BULLFROG releases them.)

(DIONYSUS and XANTHIAS run off.)

POISON DART FROG

Well they were nice.

(The FROGS hop off in the opposite direction.)

(The PUPPETEER slinks on, finds HERMIN.)

HERMIN

Hemin the Frog here. Plotting revenge.

(Lights down.)

(End of act one.)

Act Two

(A different part of Hades.)

(DIONYSUS and XANTHIAS enter, mid-argument.)

DIONYSUS

Well now what are we gonna do?

XANTHIAS

What are you talking about?

DIONYSUS

Maybe you missed it in the exposition, but *the entire point* of coming to Hades was to improve the culture in the modern world. Now, by some stroke of madness, we're going to unleash Jane Austen on the world!

XANTHIAS

Sir –

DIONYSUS

I mean, really – couldn't we have let out Attila the Hun or Genghis Khan or someone who wouldn't cause so much damage?

XANTHIAS

Do you know who Jane Austen is?

DIONYSUS

Of course I do! Probably. She's that chick.

XANTHIAS

Eighteen-century British novelist.

DIONSYUS

Oh. And she was responsible for reality shows?

XANTHIAS

Yes. She invented television in 1802 and exploited housewives in rural England. And then she built her own electrical grid to distribute her shows.

DIONYSUS

Wow. And I thought women weren't capable of that.

XANTHIAS *(exploding)*

NO I WAS LYING! I was counting on the fact that the frogs were not all that bright and that we could trick them.

DIONYSUS

Ohhhh… So we're still going to get Shakespeare?

XANTHIAS

You're the God, you get to decide! I'm just the servant getting us out of trouble! I mean, I figured we would just lie to the frogs, find Shakespeare, and get back up to the world of the living, but if you want to set up a Dance Club down here or whatever, be my guest!

DIONYSUS

Sometimes, Xanthias, I like you.

XANTHIAS

Great. Awesome.

DIONYSUS

But I don't like you like you, if you know what I mean.

XANTHIAS

I wasn't even suggesting that, sir.

DIONYSUS

All right then! Onward and upward!

XANTHIAS

Downward.

DIONYSUS

Whichever. I think it's a good idea if I resume my Hercules disguise – that way the frogs won't be able to follow us.

XANTHIAS

That's very close to being a good idea.

DIONYSUS

Thank you. Xanthias, my clever Hercules disguise please.

(XANTHIAS puts the lionskin on DIONYSUS.)

Oh gosh I feel manly now.

XANTHIAS

So happy for you.

DIONYSUS

Do you think you could paint some chest hair on me?

XANTHIAS

Let's not overwhelm everyone with your manliness, sir.

DIONYSUS

You're right. I don't want to frighten them. Very well! Which way?

XANTHIAS

Have I been here before?

DIONYSUS

Have you?

XANTHIAS

No! I'm mortal.

DIONYSUS

Sorry I didn't want to insult you by assuming. Let's try that way.

XANTHIAS

Why don't we ask for directions?

DIONYSUS

That's preposterous. A God does not ask directions. A God demands directions.

XANTHIAS

Of course. That's probably going to work.

DIONYSUS

Thank you. I knew I was brilliant. It started young with me. When I was just a twinkle in my father's eye – Zeus – and a Baby Mama he had met that night. Oh sure the other kids laughed at me when I said I was God of fertility when I was in kindergarten, but after I explained a few things about fertility, they were much impressed. As was I. Also, I got a lot of booze for the other kids. Lots of parties at my house.*

**These two lines may be cut.*

XANTHIAS

I wasn't asking for your life history.

DIONSYSUS

Too bad. You're going to get it. If I know one thing, it's how awesome I am. Teenage years. I went through some trouble as Dad wasn't around – he was on Olympus married to another woman and having affairs with other baby Mamas. Oh the Baby Mamas of Zeus. I feel for them. So did he. Mostly he just felt them.*

**This line may also be cut.*

XANTHIAS

I can see why Shakespeare is required –

DIONSYSUS

You're absolutely right! This modern culture is infected me! Next thing you know I'll be on the Honey Boo Boo show. Speaking of which – there –

XANTHIAS

Where?

DIONSYSUS

There!

(DIONYSUS points to the façade of a run-down house.)

XANTHIAS

Honey Boo Boo?

DIONSYUS

No! Aeacus!

XANTHIAS

Bless you.

DIONSYSUS

No it's my half-brother Aeacus.

XANTHIAS

Who the heck is he?

DIONSYSUS

Another one of Zeus' Baby Mamas kids. He holds the keys to the Underworld. If anyone knows where Shakespeare is, it's this guy. All right –

XANTHIAS

Hold on you gotta get your Hercules on.

DIONSYSUS

Rar!

XANTHIAS

Bigger!

DIONYSUS

RARR!

XANTHIAS

BIGGER DUMBER BIGGER DUMBER BIGGER DUMBER BIGGER DUMBER –

DIONSYSUS

RAARRRRRRR!

(He charges towards the house of Aeacus.)

IT IS I, HERCULES! AND I HAVE COME TO DEMAND ANSWERS! TELL ME WHERE SHAKESPEARE LIES!

AEACUS

Hercules?! HERCULES?!

DIONSYSUS

Uh-oh.

AEACUS

Where is that miserable meat-headed idiot! I'll rip your face off you stupid bag of steroids! You stole our dog!

DIONSYSUS

Whoops. Hold on.

AEACUS

I loved that dog. You don't just walk in here and pick up Cerebrus and walk out with him! He's a dog. Dog-Stealer! Dog-Thief! Biceps for Brains! Luckily, my father Zeus has given me the authority to torture you for eternity until I get my dog back! He was a good boy! He was three good boys! You don't even know how to take care of him! He was so cute with his giant teeth and his little waggy tail – I will kill you and then I will find your soul when it arrives here and then I will chain you to a giant porcupine and I will antagonize that porcupine – I will antagonize that porcupine a lot! Let's see how you deal with that, you walking jock strap!

(DIONYSUS runs away and hides behind XANTHIAS as AEACUS enters.)

XANTHIAS

Hey.

AEACUS

Who are you?

XANTHIAS

Just a tormented soul. Adrift. Looking for someone to listen to my poetry. Have you got a minute?

AEACUS

No! Have you seen Hercules?

XANTHIAS

Nope, but I do have a depressing poem about cloudy days.

AEACUS

Ack! Begone spirit!

XANTHIAS *(taking out a poem)*

The clouds are grey like my soul –
I will never feel whole
My heart is like a blind mole

AEACUS

It burns! Stop!
(AEACUS runs off.)

XANTHIAS

He's gone.
(DIONYSUS emerges.)
That was brave.

DIONYSUS

Thank you.

XANTHIAS

I meant that sarcastically.

DIONYSUS

Well I didn't. Did you see how I didn't wet myself and pass out? I had the courage to run away. That highly impressive.

XANTHIAS

Oh I see. Well I can just go get him to come back then –

DIONYSUS

No that's okay! Xanthias, my most trusted slave –

XANTHIAS

Servant.

DIONSYSUS

You know that I love you. And I cherish our master-slave relationship. In fact, I consider you part of my family. A special part of my family. The part that does all of the dirty work and gets none of the credit. Let's call it the wife part.

XANTHIAS

You consider me your wife?

DIONSYSUS

This has become awkward. You've fallen in love with me.

XANTHIAS

No I haven't.

DIONYSUS

I suppose it was inevitable. I am charming and gorgeous. Sometimes I wonder why more women don't fall for me. They are, I guess. Probably silently. Silently pining away for a piece of lovely Dionysus man love. I feel sad for them. It breaks my heart a little. Where was I?

XANTHIAS

I have no idea.

DIONYSUS

Right. I love you. You love me. And in order to prove yourself worthy of my love, you need to pretend to be Hercules and get us past the big scary guy!

(DIONYSUS throws the lionskin on Xanthias)

XANTHIAS

Hey!

DIONYSUS

I believe in you.

(DIONYSUS runs and hides.)

XANTHIAS

All right then.

(XANTHIAS starts strutting around like a bodybuilder.)

Which way to the bathroom? That way!

(Flexes and points.)

How big is a beach ball? This big!

(Flexes again.)

DIONSYSUS

Hurry!

XANTHIAS

I'm getting in character!

(XANTHIAS spits and struts towards the house.)

HEY! HEY WHAT'S-YOUR-FACE!

DIONYSUS

Aeacus!

XANTHIAS

Bless you! HEY ACK-FACE! THIS IS HERCULES! I'VE GOT TWO FISTS WITH YOUR NAME ON THEM OUT HERE! COME OUT AND FACE ME LIKE A MAN! And then we'll fight and hug it out afterwards! And I'm also going to scratch myself in public!

(XANTHIS scratches herself.)

Oh yeah! OH YEAH THIS IS AWESOME SCRATCHING! I'm going to practice fighting now!

(XANTHIAS starts shadow boxing.)

And this one is for your face! And this one is for your other face! And then I'm gonna do a little of this and – oh a little of that! Boom!

(DEBBIE enters.)

DEBBIE

Is that Hercules out there?

XANTHIAS

PROBABLY!

DEBBIE

Oh thank goodness!

(She rushes over to XANTHIAS.)

Can I just say I'm a big fan? OMG this is like my favorite day ever! I love you I love you so much!

(DEBBIE snorts.)

Did I just snort? I didn't mean to. I'm sorry. You probably think I'm weird now.

XANTHIAS

No. Not at all. Hercules has low standards.

DEBBIE

Awesome. So – um – oh my gosh I'm so nervous right now I can't believe I'm talking to you. I'm fangirling all over the place. Can I Just –

(DEBBIE takes a selfie with XANTHIAS.)

(DEBBIE starts crying and twitching.)

XANTHIAS

Yeah, um… I'm looking for Shakespeare.

DEBBIE

You're so awesome!

(She starts crying and twitching again.)

XANTHIAS

Who are you again?

DEBBIE

Oh my gosh I didn't even say who I was I'm so stupid! I'm so *stupid!*

(she starts crying again)

XANTHIAS

Don't worry about it Hercules doesn't even need to know your name.

DEBBIE

I'm Debbie. I'm Perspehone's maid.

XANTHIAS

Oh.

DEBBIE

Queen of the Underworld.

XANTHIAS

Right.

DEBBIE

Hades like stole her and she's here for six months or whatever. Total diva by the way. You're bored. You don't want to hear about it.

XANTHIAS

No. Hercules is a good listener.

DEBBIE

Oh I *knew* that about you! I knew it! I'm tweeting about this right now.
(She's on her phone.)

XANTHIAS

So Shakespeare would be…?

DEBBIE

Oh – we keep him in the banquet hall. You can come see! OMG you can come to dinner! We've got dancing girls. I'm sure that you're probably not interested in dancing girls because –

XANTHIAS

Hercules has no interest in dancing girls.

DEBBIE

I knew it! I KNEW IT! I knew you would be awesome!
(DEBBIE starts crying and sniveling again.)
You're not like the other gods. You're sensitive and you listen and you're awesome. You're the perfect man!

XANTHIAS

Well…

DEBBIE
That's right you're better than a man! You're a god.

XANTHIAS
That's what they tell me.

DEBBIE *(laughing uproariously)*
And you're funny! You're funny too! Can I feel your muscles?
(She reaches out to feel muscles but XANTHIAS jumps back.)

XANTHIAS
No! I had a big workout this morning. I'm sore.

DEBBIE
Oh. I can give you a massage later.

XANTHIAS
No thanks!
(DEBBIE is crushed.)

DEBBIE
I've ruined it. The best thing I've had in my life and I've ruined it.
(she starts crying again.)

XANTHIAS
Uh… no… it's not you, it's me.

DEBBIE
You mean that?

XANTHIAS
I'm in a weird place right now.

DEBBIE
Hades.

XANTHIAS
Yes.

DEBBIE
Me too. We have that in common!

XANTHIAS
Look, Debbie, I'm sure you're a nice girl – and maybe after this is all over we can go out for coffee or something, but for the moment I need to find Shakespeare.

DEBBIE

Oh my gosh you won't regret it I will be the best girlfriend you ever had! Follow me!

XANTHIAS

Um well I … Slave boy, come along.

DIONYSUS

Servant, actually. Servant.

XANTHIAS

It's cute, he thinks he's a servant but he's really a slave.

DEBBIE

Loser.

DIONYSUS

I'll have you know –

XANTHIAS

Silence slave boy!

DEBBIE

You should probably beat him more.

XANTHIAS

I try to take pity on him. His mother had rabies and smelled like cheese.

DEBBIE

Oh.

XANTHIAS

Looked like a cross between a pig and an octopus.

DIONYSUS

She did not!

DEBBIE

Shush. Hercules is talking and Hercules is awesome.

XANTHIAS

Sad really. He was raised in the woods by a series of abusive squirrels. They used to bury their nuts in his ears.*

**This line may be cut.*

He's got brain damage you know.

DEBBIE

Yes I can see that.

XANTHIAS

Come on now, quit dawdling and follow me!

(DEBBIE and XANTHIAS exit, followed by DIONSYUS.)

(Scene change to the Palace of Hades.)

(During the scene change, HERMIN THE FROG pops up, looks about. Then slowly hides.)

(PERSEPHONE enters with SERVANT, who brushes her hair.)

SERVANT

Your hair is so pretty, Queen Persephone.

(No response from PERSEPHONE.)

I mean it's really great. It's so silky. Like silk.

(PERSEPHONE sighs.)

I could do this all day. My own hair is like straw. I'd have to get a weed-whacker to comb it. But no you… Noooooo… this is just nice… Do you mind if I smell it?

PERSEPHONE

No.

SERVANT

Is that "no you don't mind" or "no don't smell it."

PERSEPHONE

Don't smell it.

SERVANT

Oh sorry.

(She keeps brushing)

Didn't realize I wasn't good enough to smell the Queen's hair, even though it's my job to brush it. I'll just keep brushing but not smelling then.

(short pause)

As if that were possible. Like I could just close my nose so I couldn't smell anything. Yeah, sure. I didn't realize that was on the terms of my employment. Wanted: Girl who can brush hair but can't smell anything. That's a little oddly specific, don't you think?

(DEBBIE enters, with XANTHIAS and DIONYSUS following.)

DEBBIE

Queen Persephone!

(PERSEPHONE stands up.)

PERSPEPHONE

What.

SERVANT

Oh. Okay we're just doing the standing thing now. Makes it kinda hard to brush hair, but that's okay.

PERSEPHONE

Leave us.

SERVANT

Seriously?

PERSEPHONE

Leave us.

SERVANT

Didn't realize you were gonna be like that. All right then. I'll just go wait in my room doing nothing since my *whole job* is brushing your hair. I'll just shut off like a robot in the corner then.

(SERVANT clicks herself off and pretends to power down.)

DEBBIE

Queen Persephone it is my pleasure to present to you –

PERSEPHONE

I thought you were out getting me snacks, Debbie.

DEBBIE

Oh. Yes. I was getting to that. But –

PESPEPHONE

Those little ding dong ho ho things.

DEBBIE

Yes, I will get them. But first let me present to you… HERCULES!

PERSEPHONE

Hey.

XANTHIAS

YES. I AM HERCULES!

PERSEPHONE

You don't look like your picture.

XANTHIAS

Photoshop. They add muscles.

DEBBIE

Isn't he awesome?!

PERSEPHONE

You have a job. It's called getting snacks.

DEBBIE

Sorry!

(She runs out.)

PERSEPHONE

Hey did you take our dog?

XANTHIAS

Um…

PERSEPHONE

Some people around here really liked that dog.

XANTHIAS

It was part of a mythic quest. I had to take the dog because I am awesome.

PERSEPHONE

I never really liked him. He was also piddling all over the columns.

DIONYSUS

He's not Hercules, actually! It's a clever disguise!

(DIONYSUS tears the lion skin off of XANTHIAS.)

PERSEPHONE

Wow. I never would have guessed. I am *so* impressed right now. This is a picture of my face being impressed.

(she frames her face with her hands and is not impressed.)

DIONSYUS

Actually, I am Dionysus! God of Wine, Song, Poetry, Theatre, Fertility – I think I forgot a few. I'm the God of a lot of things.

PERSEPHONE

You know my husband is king of the underworld, right?

DIONYSUS

Yes of course.

PERSEPHONE
So this is me not being impressed with your spheres of influence.

XANTHIAS
If I may, maybe we can dance for your amusement.
(DEBBIE returns with snacks.)

DEBBIE
Where's Hercules?

XANTHIAS
Um… this is hard to say…

PERSEPHONE
It was a trap. She's not really Hercules. She's just a servant girl. It's a big surprise.

DEBBIE
…what?

XANTHIAS
I figured you could probably see through my disguise cause it wasn't all that good.

DEBBIE
….what?

DIONYSUS
She appears to be in shock.

DEBBIE
…what?

XANTHIAS
But I know for a fact that the real Hercules is a… guy who uh… respects women and… totally cool. He's totally cool. And I know him.

DEBBIE
My queen, do you have a large knife I could borrow?

PERSPEHONE
Oh sure. Here's one.
(PERSEPHONE hands a large knife to DEBBIE.)

DEBBIE
MY LIFE IS OVER!!!!

XANTHIAS

No!

DEBBIE

NEVER!

(DEBBIE stabs herself dramatically. Pause.)
(DEBBIE stabs herself again. Nothing happens.)
(She tries a bunch of times.)

PERSPEHONE

Oh. Yeah. You're already dead so you can't kill yourself anymore. Trust me, I've tried that like a hundred and fifty times. You're doomed to remain here for eternity, locked into a sad and endless and existence where you get me snacks two or three hundred times a day.

DEBBIE

Aaaaarrrghg!

PERSEPHONE

Yeah I used to feel that way. Pro tip: she's still alive so you can kill her.

DEBBIE

Oh thanks!

(DEBBIE takes knife and charges XANTHIAS,)

LIAR! YOU DIE NOW!

(XANTHIAS runs away.)

XANTHIAS

Ahh!

DIONYSUS

Yeah, now who's brave? Now who's brave?

XANTHIAS

We can work this out!

DEBBIE

Can you give me my heart back?! Can you?!

(DEBBIE chases XANTHIAS off-stage.)

DIONYSUS

Well… I hope your servant doesn't kill my slave.

PERSEPHONE

I don't much care one way or the other.

DIONYSUS

Right, so um –

(HADES enters.)

HADES

Dionysus!

DIONSYSUS

Hey Uncle Hades.

PERSEPHONE

Oh great now "his majesty" is here.

HADES

I don't appreciate the sarcasm, honey.

PERSEPHONE

Oh you were able to pick up on that. You are *so* perceptive, it's almost like I was forced to marry a genius. Almost.

HADES *(to DIONSYSUS)*

Can you excuse us for a moment?

DIONSYSUS

Sure.

(HADES takes PERSEPHONE aside.)

HADES

What was that?

PERSEPHONE

What?

HADES

I'm sensing a lot of disrespect and sarcasm from you.

PERSEPHONE

Oh really. Are you? Wow. That's really perceptive. You must have godlike senses.

HADES

Um… we have guests here.

PERSEPHONE

Wow. Do we?

HADES

And I don't need to remind you that appearances are very important – so if you could try to respect me in front of other people that would be great.

Skipping Forward

Says here I married Ariadne… oop, kidnapped her while she was sleeping.

HADES

Awesome! Hi five!

PERSEPHONE

What is wrong with you people? You're Gods! Do you have to go around Bill Cosbying girls!*

**(Okay, so this joke can be cut and replaced with the line "Can't you get girls to like you?")*

HADES

I'm socially awkward.

DIONSYSUS

If it makes you feel any better, she was already married to somebody else.

PERSEPHONE

No that doesn't make me feel better!

HADES

Chicks, man. Can't figure `em out.

DIONYSUS

Anyway, I was wondering if you happen to have Shakespeare available.

HADES

Who?

PERSEPHONE

You know who Shakespeare is.

HADES

Not ringing a bell.

PERSEPHONE

The guy with the tights?

HADES

My kingdom includes everyone who has ever died! How am I supposed to remember just one tights salesman!

PERSEPHONE

He didn't sell tights, he wore them!

HADES

He sounds fruity!

PERSEPHONE

He was a playwright!

HADES

Now he sounds really fruity!

PERSEPHONE

You don't pay attention to anything!

HADES

I'm busy all the time!

PERSEPHONE

He's always on his phone. YOU LOVE THAT PHONE MORE THAN ME!

HADES

MY PHONE IS NICER TO ME THAN YOU!

PERSEPHONE

PROBABLY BECAUSE YOU PAID FOR IT!

DIONYSUS

So I'm just gonna go…

PERSEPHONE

No no no! We'd love to have you.

HADES

Please stay. Please. I can't be alone with her.

PERSEPHONE

Can I ask you a marital advice question?

DIONSYSUS

Please don't.

PERSEPHONE

Let's say your husband gets jealous when you go and visit your mother.

HADES

YOU VISIT YOUR MOTHER FOR SIX MONTHS!

PERSEPHONE

This is what he does. He doesn't let me talk. YOU'RE OPPRESSING ME!

HADES

YOU'RE OPPRESSING ME! She's oppressing me, right? You saw that, right?

PERSEPHONE

You see how he treats me?

DIONYSUS

So Shakespeare?

PERSEPHONE

I'll have someone go get him. Since somebody here doesn't even know who he is.

HADES

Sorry.

PERSEPHONE

If Shakespeare was a cute blonde girl he'd know who she was.

HADES

Hey!

PERSEPHONE

Servant!

(SERVANT re-activates.)

SERVANT

More hair-brushing.

PERSEPHONE

Go find William Shakespeare and bring him here.

SERVANT

Sure. Of course, your grace. Even though you didn't say please I will do this for you.

PERSEPHONE

I don't need to say please you're a servant.

SERVANT

I'm your hair-brushing servant, not your Shakespeare-finding servant.

PERSEPHONE

Just do it!

SERVANT

Fine.

(SERVANT leaves.)

HADES

This is how she treats people. Attitude 24/7.

PERSEPHONE

Would you like to sit down?

DIONYSUS

No I'll stand. I can get away faster that way.
(XANTHIAS enters.)

XANTHIAS

Anyone seen Debbie?

DIONYSUS

No.

XANTHIAS

Phew. I think I lost her.

DIONYSUS

I'm glad you're here. We're just about to complete our grand quest. Soon Shakespeare will emerge in all his tights-wearing glory and we can get the heck out of here.

XANTHIAS

Sir, maybe you shouldn't be saying that too loudly, the frogs have ears everywhere.

DIONYSUS

Bah! I'm not scared of a few frogs.

XANTHIAS

You were before.

DIONYSUS

That was the old me. The new me is not scared.

XANTHIAS *(behind him)*

Ribbit!

DIONYSUS

Aah!

XANTHIAS

Very brave, sir.
(SERVANT returns with SHAKESPEARE.)

SERVANT

I'm back. I guess I don't have as much self-esteem as I thought.

SHAKESPEARE

Well met!

PERSEPHONE

Now do you recognize him?

HADES

Nope.

(he has his phone out.)

PERSEPHONE

Stop googling him.

HADES

I'm not googling him I'm playing Candy Crush.

SHAKESPEARE

Might I enquire as to the nature of this situation?

DIONYSUS

It's like this – you are greatest writer in history.

SHAKESPEARE

Me? Thy words are too kind.

DIONYSUS

It's not even close. You are better than everyone else.

SHAKESPEARE

I am humbled that thou thinkest so. I have ever been in service of the muse, but I desired nothing but to scrape a meager living for my family. If that has afforded me some measure of fame, I am most grateful.

XANTHIAS

Wow, I thought you would have a big ego, but you seem really down-to-earth.

SHAKESPEARE

As I have shuffled off my mortal coil, I am but a poor and helpless spirit. If I may amuse you for some time, that is happiness enough.

(JANE AUSTEN enters, looking and sounding a bit like Mary Poppins.)

JANE AUSTEN

What a load of crap.

SHAKESPEARE

Jane Austen. My Arch-nemesis.

JANE AUSTEN

Sorry to intrude, but listening to that was causing me to vomit inside my mouth.

SHAKESPEARE

Thou always didst have a way with words.

JANE AUSTEN

If the goal is to find the greatest writer in history, then I'm afraid you've been barking up the wrong tree.

SHAKESPEARE

Dogs have been barking up your tree for centuries, thou thrice-tossed tart.

JANE AUSTEN

I submit that I am the greatest writer in history, and this man stole everything he ever wrote!

SHAKESPEARE

Thou art fit for no place but hell.

JANE AUSTEN

Oh blow it out your second-best bed!

DIONYSUS

Okay okay okay okay quiet! Look, I can only take one writer –

SHAKESPEARE

Let's let the internet settle this. Google me. Do it. See how many pages are about me and see how many are about this poxytroutface.

JANE AUSTEN

I am no poxytroutface and that isn't even a word!

SHAKESPEARE

I invented it right now! I do that!

HADES

Okay checking my phone…

PERSEPHONE

Put that away!

HADES

Jane Austen: 1.7 million google hits. Shakespeare: 3.2 million google hits.

SHAKESPEARE

Thank you! I am twice the writer thou art!

HADES

Grumpy Cat: 2.5 million google hits.

JANE AUSTEN

Really?

HADES

Justin Bieber: 22.6 million google hits.

JANE AUSTEN

I guess he's eight times the writer you are then.

SHAKESPEARE

All right I suppose –

HADES

Kim Kardashian –

(PERSEPHONE snatches the phone away from HADES.)

PERSEPHONE

Stop looking at pictures of her!

HADES

Give that back!

PERSEPHONE

Oh I'm sorry did I kidnap your phone?! Maybe I'll marry it!

HADES

MY PHONE IS TWICE THE WOMAN YOU'LL EVER BE!

DIONYSUS

Uncle, could you possibly keep it together for a minute?

XANTHIAS

I have the solution! We'll have a contest. Who is the greatest writer of all time?

SHAKESPEARE

I accept. I shall top this well-used monkey like a dog humping a leg.*

*(*Alternate line: I shall top this ill-mannered shrew like gravy on mashed potatoes.)*

JANE AUSTEN
You're on, Shakespeare. I will beat you senseless.

SHAKESPEARE
Thou didn'st even bother with a similie.

JANE AUSTEN
I don't need to use similies to crush you.

SHAKESPEARE
Very well. Let us have at it.
(SHAKESPEARE approaches JANE AUSTEN and pokes her roughly.)

JANE AUSTEN
Ow!

SHAKESPEARE
What wilt thou doest about it?
(JANE AUSTEN charges SHAKESPEARE and begins slap-fighting him.)

(The FROGS enter, surrounding everyone.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG
Woooo!

CANE TOAD
Go Tights Salesman!

POISON DART FROG
It's true love!

BULLFROG
Fight! Fight! Fight!

PSYCHOACTIVE TOAD
Pull her weave!

HADES
STOP!
(SHAKESPEARE and JANE AUSTEN stop.)
Why are you miserable amphibians intruding on my castle?!

HORNED FROG
Reptile, actually. I'd just like to point that out, dude. Also, totally not like these other frogs.

CANE TOAD

HORNY TOAD! He's a Horny Toad. Isn't that awesome?

HORNED FROG

Not cool, Cane Toad. Not cool!

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Your majesty, I speak for the Frogs. We are here because this is awesome. Wherever there are nasty insults being thrown, wherever one housewife starts slapping another housewife, wherever the censors start bleeping stuff out, the Frogs will be there. To watch.

HADES

This is a private party.

RED-EYED TREE FROG

Of course. But I'd like to point out that Dionysus promised us that he would bring Jane Austen back to the world of the living to make the most disgusting reality show of all time.

JANE AUSTEN

What?

DIONYSUS

Um yeah – just –

HADES

I thought you were going to elevate the culture.

BULLFROG

What!

CANE TOAD

You lied to us!

HORNED FROG

Still not cool!

POISON DART FROG

Death to Dionysus!

PERSEPHONE

That sounds great – then you can stay here with us. Forever.

DIONYSUS

WHOAH! WHOAH!

DEBBIE

Everything these guys say are lies!

XANTHIAS
Debbie, I'm sorry I tricked you but maybe it's your fault.

DEBBIE
Kill them all!
(The FROGS roar in approval and grab DIONYSUS and XANTHIAS.)

POISON DART FROG
Pucker up!

FROGS *(chanting)*
KISS THE FROG! KISS THE FROG! KISS THE FROG!

SHAKESPEARE
I believe I have a solution.
(The FROGS stop.)

RED-EYED TREE FROG
What is it, tights salesman?

SHAKESPEARE
Thou sayest thou art entertained by blood and battle and name-calling?

CANE TOAD
And romance. I love romance. Because no one loves me.
(CANE TOAD breaks down.)

SHAKESPEARE
Thou art a repulsive creature.

CANE TOAD
I KNOW!

TOMATO FROG
Me too!

RED-EYED TREE FROG
What's your point?

SHAKESPEARE
My work is full of that stuff. I invented reality television.

JANE AUSTEN
You did not! You invented your own legend, that's all!

SHAKESPEARE
Pay no attention to the wanton strumpet over there.

JANE AUSTEN
Listen you shriveled fancy-legged minstrel! My books had more wit, duplicity, and old-fashioned hair-pulling than all of your plays stacked on end!

SHAKESPEARE
I do believe they were referred to as "chick stuff."

TOMATO FROG
I love chick stuff!

DIONYSUS
Friends! Frogs! I propose a solution! Shakespeare and Jane Austen will present their most outrageous, most base and ridiculous work – and whoever's play is judged the most disgusting will win the contest and return to the world of the living!

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play, visit www.dramaticpublishing.com