

**SHREW YOU; OR, WHO HATH NEED OF MEN?
AS GOODE ACCOUNTS AS ANYE KNOWNE DESCRIBING HOW
SWEET SHAGSPER SHUFFLES OFF HIS MORTAL COIL**

A One-Act Comedy for One Male and Three Females or Two Males and Two Females

by

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Cast of Characters

MADAME MNEMOSYNE, a lively female, 2500-plus years old, mother of nine muses

WM(INA) SHAKESPEARE, 52 years old, a near-female dead author

PETRUCHIO, 21 and 45 years old, a suitor then a husband

KATHARINE, 17 and 41 years old, a shrew then a wife

Set

Minimal scenery, suggestive of both an ancient scriptorium appropriate for a personnel processing room and a room in Baptista's house, Padua, 1592, appropriate for Act II, Scene i, *The Taming of the Shrew*, by W. Shakespeare.

SHREW YOU; OR, WHO HATH NEED OF MEN? AS GOODE
ACCONTE AS ANYE KNOWNE DESCRIBING HOW SWEET
SHAGSPER SHUFFLES OFF HIS MORTAL COIL

PLACE: The stage has minimal scenery, suggestive of both a room in Baptista's house, Padua, 1592, and a Scriptorium/Processing Room, Hereafter, Whenever. An escritoire topped by a crystal ball. A box bearing a large legend, "Happy 2500th Birthday, from Pandora"; it contains scrinia with scrolls, books, computers, belt, broaches, tap shoes. An impressive writing chair and four join'd stools. A mirror, a huge campaign-style picture of Zeus playing pit-band drums, and a sign proclaiming "Hereafter" decorate on the wall.

TIME: 3:33 o' an ominous clock, post meridian, Tuesday, April 23, 1616 A.D. A late lunch break.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE, 2500-plus years old, a lively mother of nine by Zeus, is a Bea Lillie/Elaine Stritch type. She loves to talk even when that carries a penalty. Memory itself, she frequently suffers

being buzzed by Fury Forgetfulness. It seems she remembered and divulged to Mother Hera too much of Father Zeus's indiscretions. But she is resourceful with mnemonic devices. For example, she often resorts to a futuristic method of temporarily driving off Fury; she can tap-dance a choreographic doodle by her daughter Terpsichore and always remembers on the fourth repetition of the pattern. She recommends the routine as a great exercise. Her classic dress features nine medals, awards from Zeus. She wants to serve well as a minor godly bureaucrat; however, her heart belongs at hearth with her family. She is intelligent but now preoccupied. (She later acts the play-within-a-play dual role of Gremio-Tranio.)

WM(INA) SHAGSPER, 52 years old, is a transitional female, i.e., a man playing a woman playing a man playing a woman playing a man. Hence, the part may be played by either sex enacting the other sex. References here are to a female in the part. She wears the popular Elizabethan winding sheet and carries matching luggage with prominent tags. She wants to save man as a kind, so obviously this is her tale, told by an idiom syncretic. She later acts the play-within-a-play role of Baptista.

AT RISE: By way of protasis,

wherein the characters are introduced, the audience sees MADAME MNEMOSYNE in tableau vivant.

DRUM ROLL.

She continues ransacking her desk and P-box while lunching on grilled ambrosia and diet nectar; she is busily researching.

DRUM ROLL and KNOCK ON BLOCK.

The knock catches MADAME MNEMOSYNE's attention, but she puts off answering.

ANOTHER KNOCK ON BLOCK.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER, getting no response to the knock, ENTERS, with baggage.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Why, how now, dame! Demesnes Elizium here?

(MADAME MNEMOSYNE stops, sizes WM(INA) SHAGSPER up, snaps her fingers.)

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

There, that's enough of that.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Good Neighbor, I but crave a boon. What realm—

(MADAME MNEMOSYNE snaps her fingers again.)

It doesn't always work the first time. Now, try it again.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Good friend, I would but . . .
 What I really mean to say is, . . .
 I need some information. . . .
 about where this is, and how I reached this place, and what am I to
 do now that I am here, and who are you?
 O, what language this besmears my mouth?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Doesn't fall quite trippingly of the tongue at first, does it?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

My mouth, it cheweth hard on twisted sounds.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Speech comes late in the change. . . This is a rest stop of sorts on
 your journey. You are here for procedural matters. You didn't
 declare Anglican or Catholic or specify any other choice, so a cast
 of the dice sent you here. It's not your Purgatory. It's not our
 Styx—I'm not Charon. In fact, Zeus hasn't named the place yet. . .
 .I'm Mnemosyne, I'll be processing you as soon as I—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Struggles with pronunciation.)
 Good Mistress, er, Mnemosyne—

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Enunciates title and name.)
 Madame, MADAME Mnemosyne.
 It's a shame about that cute Stratford accent; you'll exchange that
 within the hour.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Exchange?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Speech and body. Go, look at yourself in the mirror.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Eluvia of death becloud my gaze.
 The glass yields portrait so o'erweening strange—
 Oh, ye gods!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Mistaking that as personal address.)

Yes?

(Seeing her error.)

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Oh. Take your time. I'm busy.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I trow I'm not myself.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You'll get used to it.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

My mind the same, yet I behold new form.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Nice outfit.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I wot this garment. 'Tis my winding sheet.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

An Elizabethan wears furniture upholstery throughout life, then finally chooses an attractive, sensible style for death.

(Demonstrates her own outfit to best effect.)

Now, what is more beautiful than a sensuously-draped material?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Taking full visual measure of MADAME MNEMOSYNE's buttocks.)

O, pardon me for staring at your, ah . . .

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

A certain callipygian attractiveness? That was what caught Zeus' eye. "Mnemosyne," he would say, "you have a rare rump." I like stares. When a girl has a few birthdays she'd rather not mention, she takes stares where she finds them. You won't be staring like that soon, what with the change.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Indeed, I feel a strangeness o'er myself.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Welcome to Strange City. That sheet might have to do you for a while, even after the change is complete. So, here, let me perk it up.

(Goes to P-box.)

There's the whole world's future in this box, if I can just find what I need. Oh, look, a belt, a couple of broaches. Try these. Not quite like mine, but they give a nice effect. These were awards from Zeus for my special feats of memory that proved useful to him. He would come over and give them to me personally. We would lounge around and sip some wine, estate bottled especially for him by Dionysus. Zeus can be ever so charming. One thing would lead to another. You know how it is. As it turned out, I got nine medals and nine daughters from him. I don't do him favors anymore. Hera never found out. Although she is a little cool toward me: she thinks I am just sleeping around. "Mnemosyne," she would say, "you do have a lot of daughters for a single girl. Aren't you forgetting proprieties?" Me, memory itself, forgetting! Sort of a prude, Hera. I only forget when Zeus sends F.F.—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I'm the worse for journeying to this place.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Still regarding the winding sheet.)

Something here, something there. Now sit. It's been a big day. You should be a trifle tired. All that's happened, . . . and the change, and all. . . . I have to get on with my work.

(WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I thank thee.

Weariness doth bear me down.

(Sits.)

DRUM ROLL.

(WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The baggage hath a flaw.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I beg your pardon! Oh, the tag?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

It says W-m-parenthesis-i-n-a-parenthesis-space-S-h-a-g-s-p-e-r.

"William Shagsper" is but enough. Wherefore the "parenthesis-i-n-a-parenthesis"?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Do you believe in transubstantiation?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

To change one substance another—alchemy,
A Moorish dream.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Be that as it may, it happens here. Zeus has a rule in the contract.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

My baggage alters to new form?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

No, you do.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The rotting hath set in. And next the stink.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

We aren't big on rotting and stinks. We Greeks have Hades not Hell,
definitely quieter and no odors. And here—

(Points to sign.)

Hereafter—Zeus is trying something new. You just revert to your
beginning.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Not exactly. You keep your teeth, eyes, taste, in some cases, almost
everything, but in your case, definitely not everything. You revert to
being female. You just have to give up your manhood. All males last
approximately an hour, Hereafter.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I have Protean feelings 'neath this sheet.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Oh, that.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Is this the change of which you spoke at first?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I was so busy about my daughters—they've got me going on a project

for them—that I forgot to read you your rights.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE (*Continues.*)
(Hands him a scrinia containing a scroll.)

Here.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

And what is this?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

It's the latest contract from Zeus. You're supposed to read it and sign it. Formally! Legally! How do you spell your name now? You keep changing.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

A man is e'er in flux, so why a name
Be constant? Man by any other name
Is still—I spell my name to recreate.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Always wanting something new. Like Zeus. Even without notifying me, he keeps changing these contracts. You males! Just use the spelling on your will. I try to be informal, but there are sticklers for protocol.

(Points to the huge picture of Zeus.)

Don't take it personally. There's a grand design. It works this way. You enter life, do whatever you have to do, then leave life, die. That's the human lot. Then you journey to Hereafter. You got here. Not really all that difficult, is it? You took only a few trices, arrived ahead of schedule. I work this Scriptorium—one of our best Processing Rooms—on Tuesdays in alternate years. My first day back this year, I am sorting things out. It could use a few flowers. I brought along this box, which I have to find a place for. Pandora gave me it on my last birthday. Clashes with my furniture at home. More suitable for an office. I have to rearrange the furniture, though, to make it fit in.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

My body rearranges seriously.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Let me explain. Zeus, despite his huff and bluff about masculinity, agrees that all mortals start female. There's some news from Nature you Elizabethans don't know. This is the latest. Are human zygotes male? Not a bit. Add one male gamete to one female gamete, get a male. Or, add a different male gamete to that same female gamete, get a female. Add no male gamete to that female gamete, get a fe-

male. When an ovum conceives without sperm, the ovum always goes female. If only there had been a really good sex education course when I was starting out a couple of thousand years ago—I tell you, If I'd known then what I know now—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

A child without a father is begot?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Zeus can do that, but you mortals have limitations. We Greeks have coined a word: parthenogenesis.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

It boggles brain. I ne'er have heard of babe—

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Leave that aside. The point is, Nature arranged biology, but Nature does not come up with mythologies or religions.

(Points to picture.)

Zeus wrote the contract here.

(Points to a line in the scroll.)

Look: “All mortal males who enter here abandon their manhood.” He didn't even bother to hide it in the fine script. This is not Hades, not Hell, it's an experiment. This is the world as it began, of women, by women, for women. Back to Nature, you might say.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Rising.)

My manhood's what I am! To give it up?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

As I said, don't take it personally.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

A weariness doth gore my soul.

(Sits.)

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Don't knock womanhood till you've tried it. At least, you don't have to worry about motherhood. Zeus tried that, but head or thigh, he didn't enjoy it. And you ought to hear Medea go on about it. The way she describes it to the Chorus—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Trying to concentrate.)

I'm reading, reading. Contract base and foul!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I'll get on with my work.

(Cannot keep silent. Talks while she plunders the P-box.)

You wouldn't believe the uproar nine daughters can get into when they get their expectations up.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Giving slight attention.)

I can imagine all of that you say.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Well, you're good at that, according to my recollections, but you only had a boy and two girls. So just imagine triple the trouble. First, early this morning at breakfast Thalia—she's the comedian of the lot—she comes up with the notion that women need men. Everyone thought it was one of her jokes. Clio—she's hot on history—gave a dreary rundown on independent women. She was dear to cite me in the lot. I liked that, but it's not quite true. Now, my other daughters, Mel—Melpo—Mel—oh, no . . . oh, no . . . get away.

(Slaps at the air.)

When I can't remember my own daughters' names, I know you're here! Go back to their father! Get away! Go back to Zeus. I'll make you sorry! All right . . .

(She starts a simple tap-dance routine. Continues talking.)

As I way saying, the others . . . the name's are coming back . . . they're coming back . . . aha . . . Melpomene, Calliope, Euterpe, Erato, Polyhymnia, Urania, . . .

(She finishes with a flourish.)

And Terpsichore! I had to raise them. Children of both Zeus and Mnemosyne, but I was the one who had to bring them up. My folks—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Automatically.)

Yes, Uranus and Gaea.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I'm surprised that you know about them.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I studied little Latin, less of Greek.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Don't be modest. In Stratford's King Edward VI Grammar School ten hours a day, six days a week? You had to learn mythology. You know how your teacher pressed it upon you.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

How would you know my education there?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Memory, my specialty! Except when their father sics Fury Forgetfulness on me.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

What cause would have great Zeus your lord do that?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You saw a minute ago? I forgot their names? That was F.F. I can always tell now because Terpsichore taught me a little exorcism. I don't know how she came across it. She was fooling around with some new dance steps one day when all she could think of was me. She went on to something else, came back to the steps, and there I was, shoving every other thought from her mind. Of course, she went to the Oracle for advice. A girl wants to think her own thoughts. You know, being a muse, she didn't have to stand in line at Delphi, or make a sacrifice, or pay the priests. It was a freebie. They told her that she had found a potent dance routine, one that was bound to make people happy, even without wine. And they gave her a design for the right kind of shoes to make it work. Dancing in shoes—what will they think of next? Well, now when F.F. comes around, I just start the old routine. F.F. has no feet, you see, so it will never be able to tap. It has a wonderful sense of rhythm, I can tell by the cadence in its attacks on me, but without feet. . . . F.F. just gives up and flies off in a sulk until Zeus remembers again how I told Hera about some of his indiscretions and orders it to bug me.

(Joyously laughing.)

Now I have relief. And how do you spell relief?

(Dance flourish.)

Terpsichore!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

You have amazing daughters. I do owe Erato thanks in all my written thoughts. She hath inspir'd me oft with iamb meet. I don't know how she feels about the way Pentameter did young Kit Marlowe and I take

From that rare Master Spencer's verse. We've used
His lyric style for our poor plays. We don't

WM(INA) SHAGSPER (*Continues.*)

Intend perforce demean it, but in truth
Our actors say the iambs love that beat.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Erato wants to talk to you about that. She was miffed, until Thalia
and Melpomene argued your side. When Euterpe said that your lines
go really well with music, Erato calmed down. Then Clio said you
would be remembered throughout history—

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Remember'd? For such a thing as plays?
Did not she praise my lengthy poems more?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Oh, my girls, they do get into long discussions. Around the house,
they go off in all directions: Calliope touts epic poetry, Polyhymnia
goes on and on about religious music, Urania practically goes into
orbit about astronomy. . . . In fact, guess what they're up to now.
They're organizing an Elizabethan festival on the role of women.—
Of all the ages of man, they pick yours. Would you believe the coin-
cidence? Of course, I'll have to do most of the work, as always. I
must get them some information on Elizabethan women, or I won't
hear the end of it tonight at table. What we won't do for our chil-
dren—

(Laughs.)

And here you up and die!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

That accounts for the winding sheet. I hoped
It was a joke the London boys played me.
They showed last night. We bedded all the horse,
Broke bread, then right away Anne stuffed all of
Them into guestroom since it was so late.
We had no chance to talk about the olden days.
So, morning did we reminisce lost time.
I bade them break their fast with ale.
We sat abed and talked. I poured us more,
And by-and-by e'en more and more.
As wenches at the Mermaid poured us then.
Oh, did we talk! About our everything!
We grew so hearty we did crack the bed.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Just the way my daughters go on. Oh, not cracking beds! The talking, I mean. Maybe they get that from me. Their father, never strong on conversation, just sits on Olympus. Believes in action, he says. And Hera is nervous about inviting guests in, considering his roving eye.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The gentles propos'd a tankard contest then.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

We Greeks have been known to down the grape.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Round after round, healths to all the boys . . .

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

And look what happened.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The healths o'erdone did loose my mortal coil?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Who knows? There won't be an autopsy. That story will be as good as any about your death. They'll miss you. Especially the missus.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Anne, Mistress Anne. . . . Our wedding bed, was not
In smit condition, somewhat second best,
But it held special memories 'twixt us twain.
I will'd it her to bind her thoughts to me.
I hope the boys do mend the frame.
Our daughter now in charge, Susanna, will
See they do that, I trow. She's mettlesome.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You are taking your demise calmly.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

No allycholly. All that lives must die.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

That's easy to say—about other people. When it becomes personal .

..

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Full fifty-two years. Far beyond the span
Of many men. O'erwhelm'd the mortal odds.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You had a good life.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Near all my fancies came to pass.

DRUM ROLL and GONG.
Epitasis, wherein the plot
thickens.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Points to scroll.)

O Hark!

A clause lies here: a last request is gi'en.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

That's standard.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

A last request before what thing transpires?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You go from Hereafter to Thereafter. I told you this was a process-
ing room. You don't stay here.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

When do I go? How do I reach this place?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I have to check the schedule.

(Goes to her desk.)

There's no use in my memorizing it, they always keep shifting
times. Let's see. . . . Oh, TBA.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

What?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

To be arranged. Things have gotten lax. Oh, no. That's my salary,
TBA. Now, yes, your departure: imminent.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

'Tis sure that I am 'low'd a last request?
Hereafter? Then Thereafter I shall find my way?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

That's guaranteed.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Pleads.)

Petruchio in acture yet again.

(Goes to mirror.)

I need the lad.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You want me to stage "The Taming of the Shrew" right now?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Not all. One scene. The essence of myself
at twenty-eight. My Petruchio's a man!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER (*Continues*)

(Regards her reflection.)

There in the mirror is a changing thing. I
Dislike to be a woman for e'ermore.

(Again regards the contract.)

Another clause: first party can appeal.
Consider this my tort—I wrongfully
Must shed my sex. Great Zeus must grant as right
That mortals have their manhood evermore.
I shall convince him men do have this right,
Because . . . because . . . I item: women's need!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Zeus is always experimenting. He is even thinking about giving
Greeks democracy again. He tried it in Athens briefly, about two
hundred years, not really a proper try.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Our Virgin Queen hath been democracy
Enow for England's needs.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Clio says that England will be come a democracy in majestic guise.
The gnarled cousin from Scotland who succeeded Elizabeth, how do
you think he's doing?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Since second Richard I've no politics.
 I steer'd my sail to safer, deeper ports.
 Long live King James! Imported sov'reign
 Though he be seen, he knits up all the land.
 I've been away from London for five years.
 Myself would ask who holds democracy
 Will ever work? But back to my appeal.
 By this good contract and this dear clause, I'll
 Have Zeus review my case. How reach him soon?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I can present the case, if you make it formally.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Mayhap, we could ease both our problems now.
 Petruchio can key my case. You do
 Grant this request: I see Petruchio.
 You study him, describe him full to Zeus.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER (*Continues*)

As I now see, he, Zeus, and I hold much
 In common brief. Example will stir bold
 Remembrances in Zeus of masculine
 Resourcefulness and women's love of men.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I have borne evidence nine times that Zeus has never had trouble
 with his masculinity.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

He must have grown absorb'd in godhood and
 Forgotten the need of woman's heart for man.
 Bring back Petruchio, and see his Kate,
 A fine Elizabethan mate and dame,
 Of whom tonight regale your daughters nine.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

How do you mean?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

But summon here Petruchio. Eye him.
 See how he 'bodies manliness. I don't
 Suppose you could get Zeus to join us here.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Getting him from Olympus is like getting a shield from a Spartan.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Take notes, present them him.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Take notes! You forget . . . you forget—Oh, I forget what you forget!
Excuse me.

(She tap-dances.)

Give me a tune.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

How say you one of old: the “Greensleeves” lay?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Anything.

MUSIC in.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER sings
“Greensleeves.”

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Keep it going. That’s hardly a good tempo. Aha . . . now I remember:
you forget that I am memory itself.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

O, hasten more!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

The crystal ball, that’s how I’ll do it. It’ll just take a minute to warm
up.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Petruchio was my very self at twenty-eight.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

That’s not the way I recall it. And you’re talking to memory itself.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Correcting himself.)

Petruchio was my inmost dream at twenty-eight.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

He’s now forty-five.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

That old?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Kate is forty-one. It's been twenty-four years since you inscribed them. Perhaps the battery is low on this ball.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I know not what you mean.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Its life force.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Canst thou replenish it?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

There is a way, but I don't often use it.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Do. Do.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Starts tap-dancing.)

A tune, a tune!

MUSIC in.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Complies by singing with a sprightly tune in period.)

Da dum, etc.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Are you there? I know you are.

(Sings to the tune.)

You don't have feet. And that's real neat.

(Thumbs her nose to the air. She grabs the crystal and holds it high.)

A BURST OF SMOKE comes
from the ball.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Continues.)

It worked!

(Laughs joyously.)

Fury Forgetfulness, you can't keep your temper, can you? Gotcha!
Thanks for that little burst of energy. Now, fly away, fly away, fly
away home.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

What hap?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

F.F. has been plaguing me so long, it has a knee-jerk reaction to my
dancing now. Anytime I start, it shows up to watch. Oh, that's funny:
knee-jerk. It doesn't have feet, so it probably doesn't have knees.

(To F.F., if it be still around.)

Probably just one big fat rump!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Is it still here?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

No, it'd put in at least one little attack if it were. Gone back to Zeus
to sulk.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Will it tell what we're doing now, our plan?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I have sent messages to Zeus through it. Some rude ones, which he
deserved, I might add. But I don't think F. F. tells tales out of gym-
nasium. How come you get music with your tunes? How well do you
know Euterpe?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

O, check thy crystal still!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

All right. Let's see what we have. I'm getting through.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

blocks the audience view of the
crystal.

The audience sees only a bright
light from the crystal area.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

They are at table. Lo, there's Petruchio,
He looks fine, much the same, and Katharine,
How beauteous she! They're four, O! seven—nine!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

A proper family. But not so fortunate as mine, not nine daughters.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The eldest's surely twenty-three. Fine lad.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER (*Continues.*)

Begot upon the wedding night, I trow.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Casting an aspersion on his personal history.)

Some men didn't wait for that.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Youth's blood runs hot. . . . Grandchildren there?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Did you preconceive them in your play?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

No.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Then maybe they're awaiting your thought.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I don't write sequels, cheap exploitatives.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

All those Henrys, Parts I and II and on and on?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Forget my early histories. I have.
They suited passions 'gainst the Spanish threat.
Pot boilers to the crowd's low taste, not mine.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

What scene do you want?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

When first they meet.

Act II, scene i.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

That calls for five actors. I don't know if the battery will last long enough for us to round up the other three.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Call but the both. I have played parts at need.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Your Ghost of Hamlet senior was moving. Was it anything like how you feel now?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Ignoring her.)

I undertake Baptista, fathering
this Katharine. The others, are but
Two functionaries, menials with few lines.
Read Gremio and Tranio as one.
I know my part. I'll prompt you all your lines.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Double-take with exasperation.)

I am memory itself. I have read the script; therefore, I know the lines.
I could do all the parts in all your plays. We Greeks are your equal-
more-than-equal in theatre. Pardon the Latin.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Then call the scene, and let me view them as
those carping lovers that they were of yore.
And see you woman hath sore need of man.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

1592. Act II, Scene i. Padua. A room in Baptista's house.

LIGHTING SHIFTS to emphasize stage center. A STROBELIGHT EFFECT suggestive of silent films.

DRUM ROLL.

PETRUCHIO, 21 here, 45 later, is a suitor with a mission: to wed. He wears Elizabethan

garb.

ENTER PETRUCHIO.

MUSIC under.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Signoir Petruchio, will you go with us—cut!

MUSIC out.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Let me fine tune the ball.

(Thumps ball.)

It has stop action.

(Taps ball.)

I've set it to stop when you say, "Cut."

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Addresses audience.)

The Globe did have most intricate machines—

Ne'er had we disaccord, except with that

Rushed, rough-hewn Scottish play writ for the King.

What's with this crystal ball bethump'd and tapped?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Addresses audience.)

Assemblage of This Temple, he comes in here, asking for many favors, I try to help as I can, improvise and such, departing from protocol, and he complains about a few glitches in my crystal. Well, I don't have the manual with it. Nostradamus left it here when passing through. Claimed it made his calculations easier. I've found it quite helpful on occasion, but you and he must realize I'm still getting the hang of how to tune it.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Can we go on?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You can talk to the Chorus and I can't?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Behold, 'tis not a Chorus but a house

Of groundlings come to see us here. Except

They all have brought their comfort seats with them.

I forsook that old device of Chorus lines.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Thank you, but we Greeks used it with good effect throughout our Golden Age. Dancing, chanting, singing. Majestic. Terpsichore used to fill in when they needed another body. I attended all of her performances.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Can we get on? And once again, the scene.

The presentation now suggests
INTERACTIVE HOLOGRA-
PHY.

ENTER stage center
WM(INA) SHAGSPER, MA-
DAME MNEMOSYNE,
PETRUCHIO.

MUSIC under.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

*Signoir Petruchio, will you go with us,
Or shall I send my daughter Kate to you?*

PETRUCHIO

I pray you do.

EXEUNT ALL but
PETRUCHIO.

*I will attend her here,
And woo her with some spirit when she comes.
Say that she rail; why then I'll tell her plain
She sings as sweetly as a nightingale:
Say that she frown; I'll say she looks as clear
As morning roses newly wash'd with dew:
Say she be mute and will not speak a word;
Then I'll commend her volubility,
And say she uttereth piercing eloquence:
If she do bid me pack, I'll give her thanks,
As though she bid me stay by her a week:
If she deny to wed, I'll crave the day
When I shall ask the banns and when be married.*

But here she comes; and now, Petruchio, speak.

DRUM ROLL.

KATHARINE, 17 here, 41
later, is a practiced shrew.
She wears Elizabethan garb.

ENTER KATHARINE.

PETRUCHIO

Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear.

KATHARINE

*Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing:
They call me Katherine that do talk of me.*

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Cut!

MUSIC out.

PETRUCHIO and
KATHARINE freeze. MA-
DAME MNEMOSYNE does
not.

FOLLOWSPOTS ON for
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Addresses audience.)

He speaks her well.
The gentleman to her shrew.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Addresses audience.)

The soliloquy bared his predatory thoughts.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Addresses audience.)

He but catches her with kindness.
Play on.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
touches the crystal ball.

FOLLOWSPOTS OUT for
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

MUSIC under.

PETRUCHIO

*You lie, in faith; for you are call'd plain Kate,
And bonny Kate and sometimes Kate the curst;
But Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
Kate of Kate Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all Kates, and therefore, Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation;
Hearing thy mildness praised in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs,
Myself am moved to woo thee for my wife.*

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Cut!

MUSIC out.

PETRUCHIO and
KATHARINE freeze. MA-
DAME MNEMOSYNE does
not.

FOLLOWSPOTS ON for
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Addresses audience.)

He honourably speaks marriage. 'Tis meet
He play the gentleman to shrew. She likes
Already groom-to-be Petruchio.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

(Addresses audience.)

I grant she does. But need him?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Play on.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
touches the crystal ball.

FOLLOWSPOTS OUT for
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

MUSIC under.

KATHARINE

Moved! in good time: let him that moved you hither
Remove you hence: I knew you at the first
You were a moveable.

PETRUCHIO

Why, what's a moveable?

KATHARINE

A join'd stool.

PETRUCHIO

Thou hast hit it: come sit on me.

KATHARINE

Asses are made to bear, and so are you.

PETRUCHIO

Women are made to bear, and so are you.

KATHARINE

No such jade as you, if me you mean.

PETRUCHIO

*Alas! good Kate, I will not burden thee;
For, knowing thee to be but young and light—*

KATHARINE

*Too light for such a swain as you to catch;
And yet as heavy as my weight should be.*

PETRUCHIO

Should be! should—buzz!

KATHARINE

Well ta'en, and like a buzzard.

PETRUCHIO

O slow-wing'd turtle! shall a buzzard take thee?

KATHARINE

Ay, for a turtle, as he takes a buzzard.

PETRUCHIO

Come, come, you wasp; i'faith, you are too angry.

KATHARINE

If I be waspish, best beware my sting.

PETRUCHIO

My remedy is then to pluck it out.

KATHARINE

Ay, if the fool could find it where it lies.

PETRUCHIO

Who knows not where a wasp does wear his sting? In his tail.

KATHARINE

In his tongue.

PETRUCHIO

Whose tongue?

KATHARINE

Yours, if you talk of tails: and so farewell.

PETRUCHIO

*What, with my tongue in your tail? nay, come again,
Good Kate; I am a gentleman.*

KATHARINE

That I'll try.

She strikes him.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Cut!

MUSIC out.

PETRUCHIO and
KATHARINE freeze. MA-
DAME MNEMOSYNE does
not.

FOLLOWSPOTS ON
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Addresses audience.)

Petruchio is sorely tried. But watch.

I wrote this loosely from “discussion” with Anne.

FOLLOWSPOTS OUT for
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
MADAME MNEMOSYNE.

PETRUCHIO

I swear I'll cuff you, if you strike again.

KATHARINE

So may you lose your arms:

If you strike me, you are no gentleman;

And if no gentleman, why then no arms.

PETRUCHIO

A herald, Kate? O, put me in thy books!

KATHARINE

What is your crest? a coxcomb?

PETRUCHIO

A combless cock, so Kate will be my hen.

KATHARINE

No cock of mine; you crow too like a craven.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, come, Kate, come; you must not look so sour.

KATHARINE

It is my fashion, when I see a crab.

PETRUCHIO

Why, here's no crab; and therefore look not sour.

KATHARINE

There is, there is.

PETRUCHIO

The show it me.

KATHARINE

Had I a glass, I would.

PETRUCHIO

What, you mean my face?

KATHARINE

Well aim'd of such a young one.

PETRUCHIO

Now, by Saint George, I am too young for you.

KATHARINE

Yet you are wither'd.

PETRUCHIO

'Tis with cares.

KATHARINE

I care not.

PETRUCHIO

Nay, hear you, Kate: in sooth you scape not so.

KATHARINE

I chafe you, if I tarry: let me go.

PETRUCHIO

*No, not a whit: I find you passing gentle.
'Twas told me you were rough and coy and sullen,
And now I find report a very liar;
For thou art pleasant, gamesome, passing courteous,
But slow in speech, yet sweet as spring-time flowers:
Thou canst not frown, thou canst not look askance,*

*Nor bite the lip, as angry wenches will,
 Nor has thou pleasure to be cross in talk,
 But thou with mildness entertain'st thy wooers,
 With gentle conference, soft and affable.
 Why does the world report that Kate doth limp?
 O slanderous world! Kate like the hazel-twig
 Is straight and slender and as brown in hue
 As hazel nuts and sweeter than the kernels.
 O, let me see thee walk: thou dost not halt.*

KATHARINE

Go, fool, and whom thou keep'st command.

PETRUCHIO

*Did ever Dian so become a grove
 As Kate this chamber with her princely gait?
 O, be thou Dian, and let her be Kate;
 And then let Kate be chaste and Dian sportful!*

KATHARINE

Where did you study all this goodly speech?

PETRUCHIO

It is extempore, from my mother-wit.

KATHARINE

A witty mother! witless else her son.

PETRUCHIO

Am I not wise?

KATHARINE

Yes; keep you warm.

PETRUCHIO

*Marry, so I mean, sweet Katharine, in they bed:
 And therefore, setting all this chat aside,
 Thus in plain terms: your father hath consented
 That you shall be my wife; your dowry "greed on;
 And, will you, nil you, I will marry you.
 Now, Kate, I am a husband for your turn;
 For, by this light, whereby I see thy beauty,
 Thy beauty, that doth make me like the well,
 Thou must be married to no man but me;
 For I am he am born to tame you Kate,*

*And bring you from a wild Kate to a Kate
Comfortable as other household Kates.
Here comes your father: never make denial;
I must and will have Katharine to my wife.*

ENTER MADAME
MNEMOSYNE and
WM(INA) SHAGSPER.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Now, Signoir Petruchio, how speed you with my daughter?

PETRUCHIO

*How but well, sir? how but well?
It were impossible I should speed amiss.*

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Why, how now, daughter Katherine! in your dumps!

KATHARINE

*Call you me daughter? now, I promise you
You have show'd a tender fatherly regard,
To wish me wed to a half lunatic;
A mad-cap ruffian and a swearing Jack,
That thinks with oaths to face the matter out.*

PETRUCHIO

*Father, 'tis thus: yourself and all the world,
That talk'd of her, have talk'd amiss of her:
If she be curst, it is for policy,
For she's not froward, but modest as the dove;
She is not hot, but temperate as the morn;
For patience she will prove a second Grissel,
And Roman Lucrece for her chastity:
And to conclude, we have 'greed so well together,
That upon Sunday is the wedding-day.*

KATHARINE

I'll see the hang'd on Sunday first.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

*Hark, Petruchio; she says she'll see thee hang'd first.
Is this your speeding? nay, then, good night our part!*

PETRUCHIO

*Be patient, gentlemen; I choose her for myself:
 If she and I be pleased, what's that to you?
 'Tis bargain'd 'twixt us twain, being alone,
 That she shall still be curst in company.
 I tell you, 'tis incredible to believe
 How much she loves me: O, the kindest Kate!
 She hung around my neck; and kiss on kiss
 She vied so fast, protesting oath on oath,
 That in a twink she won me to her love.
 O, you are novices! 'tis a world to see,
 How tame, when men and women are alone,
 A meacock wretch can make the curstest shrew.
 Give me thy hand, Kate: I will unto Venice,
 To buy apparel 'gainst the wedding day.
 I will be sure my Katharine shall be fine.*

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

*I know now what to say: but give me your hands;
 God send you joy, Petruchio! 'tis a match.*

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Amen, say we: we will be witnesses.

PETRUCHIO

*Father, and wife, and gentlemen, adieu;
 I will to Venice; Sunday comes apace:
 We will have rings and things and fine array;
 And kiss me, Kate, we will be married o' Sunday.*

EXEUNT PETRUCHIO and
 KATHARINE severally.

MUSIC out.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER fin-
 ishes his quick notes (*epi-
 logue*).

PETRUCHIO

(Now forty-five years old.)

Kate, your napkin.

KATHARINE

(Now forty-one years old, hands her napkin to him.)

My love.

PETRUCHIO

(PETRUCHIO wipes his brow, then tenderly wipes
KATHARINE's nape.)

It has been years!

(Laughs heartily.)

The children should have seen us in our youth!

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I'll turn the ball off. But that's all we can use it before another charge.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Well done.

Exceeding well.

PETRUCHIO

(Bows.)

My lord.

KATHARINE

(Curtseys.)

Sire.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I know you theatre folk love an aftershow chat, but we are short on
time.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

The scene is clear enow. It argues as no
Debate: the fit of man to his woman's need.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER is pe-
rusing scroll until next "Hark!"

PETRUCHIO

That motto has led my life with Katharine.

KATHARINE

Have I been valuable to Petruchio?

PETRUCHIO

Dear Kate, I cannot gainsay nine children's worth.

.....~~INSERT DEBATE~~.....

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

~~WM(INA) SHAGSPER~~

~~PETRUCHIO~~

~~KATHARINE~~

~~They hesitate to talk about how things have been in Verona.~~

~~KATHARINE longs for the good old days.~~

~~PETRUCHIO is mayor of town, like WM(INA) SHAGSPER' father.~~

~~She claims to know more about women, being one, having 9 daughters.~~

~~She refuses to tell him what will happen to Susanna and Judith.~~

~~He regards the audience as that of the Globe; she regards it as the Greek Chorus.~~

~~They want more spice in life.~~

~~He goes into the spice business.~~

~~.....END DEBATE.....~~

DRUM ROLL and GONG.

Catastrophe, the change which produces the final event.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Points to scroll.)

Hark! Yet another clause. I swear it was
Not there before. It guarantees me Zeus
Will hear my case. And I must bring along
The ball to show to him their scene of love.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Are you sure the clause was not there before?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Most positive.

I read the scroll entire.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

He's altering the contract again.

Zeus is relenting.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I win. My manhood's sav'd eternally.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Only maybe.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I leave to find Thereafter and great Zeus.

(Goes to the mirror.)

Dost notice hints my looks are changing back?

Slight body alteration pleases me.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Hormones. You do look a bit more manly. But don't get carried away.

Although Zeus is waiting for you, you still have to make him see your way.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I thank thee thricefold, yet not near enough.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

All in a year's work.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Ay, verily, my thanks, good friend; hence, I do hate to take thy crystal ball from thee.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Not to worry. I was watching too many daytime shows. Maybe I'll catch up on my office work now.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Good soul, remains there one more littlest whim.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

What?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Ne'er would I want forget my life, nor

This selfsame first hour of eternity.

I must remember all. I have soar'd high;

Or, I have reach-ed Bottom's depth: have I

Met this most rarest vision? I may have

Dreamt all, far past the wit of man to say

What dream this is. If dead men sleep, as they
 Say, can dead men not dream this all away?
 Whatever! . . . That strange loudish dance. Would teach
 It me? As warrant 'gainst F.F. if Zeus
 Againward rankle and do rant o'er my appeal?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

You do have way with words. All you males!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Woulds't lift a leg with John and Mary Shagsper's son?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Sure, why not? Give me a tune.

(Gets WM(INA) SHAGSPER
 a pair of tap shoes from P-box.)

DRUM and CYMBAL. MU-
 SIC in.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER sings
 an Elizabethan air appropriate
 for tap dancing.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

Here, follow.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER, now
 in tap shoes, easily catches a
 foothold on the dance.

You are good.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

I am but a quick study, journeyman
 Of stage. My poems long and sonnets short,
 Befit a muse's leisure meal. Read them
 With your ambrosia-nectar lunch repast.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE

I have.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

And?

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
stops dancing.
WM(INA) SHAGSPER then
stops, too.

MUSIC out.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
Stick to show business.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER
(Laughs.)
I fain am ready now to hit the road.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
Getting to Thereafter is as easy as getting Hereafter.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER
I'll to your Zeus anon. This is the end.
So fare thee well till we shall meet anew.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
Wait. What is an ending without an epilogue?

WM(INA) SHAGSPER
Ay, verily . . .

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
You've been scribbling away. I saw you.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER
Tis naught that I have writ. But scribblings for
an epilogue—to raise a merry thought.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
Ready when you are.

MUSIC under.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER bows
then yields to KATHARINE,
who ENTERS and moves
down center.

KATHARINE

*I am ashamed that women are so simple
 To offer war where they should kneel for peace,
 Or seek for rule, supremacy and sway,
 When they are bound to serve, love and obey.
 Why are our bodies soft and weak and smooth,
 Unapt to toil and trouble in the world,
 But that our soft conditions and our hearts
 Should well agree with our external parts?
 Come, come, you froward and unable worms!
 My mind hat been as big as one of yours,
 My heart as great, my reason haply more,
 To bandy word for word and frown for frown;
 But now I see our lances are but straws,
 Our strength as weak, our weakness past compare,
 That seeming to be most which we indeed least are.
 Then vail your stomachs, for it is no boot,
 And place your hands below your husband's foot:
 In token of which duty, if he please,
 My hand is ready; may it do him ease.*

PETRUCHIO

Why, there's a wench! Come on, and kiss me, Kate.

MUSIC out.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Cut! Try you both this ending in its stead.
 Start here: And place your hands below your la—

MUSIC under.

PETRUCHIO

And place your hands below your lady's foot:
 In token of which duty, if she please,
 My hand is ready; may it do her ease.

KATHARINE

Why, there's a man! Come on, and kiss me, Pete!

PETRUCHIO and
 KATHARINE kiss and freeze.

MUSIC segue.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

Now I ask you!

WM(INA) SHAGSPER EX-
ITS happily.

BLACKOUT

* * * * *

CURTAIN CALL AS WAR-
RANTED

DRUM ROLL and CYMBAL.
MUSIC segue.

HOUSE AND STAGE
LIGHTS up.

MADAME MNEMOSYNE
and KATHARINE curtsy,
WM(INA) SHAGSPER and
PETRUCHIO bow.

WM(INA) SHAGSPER

(Moves forward and addresses audience.)

A shade, a shadow in
your stead am I. Men, women twain, you do
not need to fear. And neither need you rue.

(Speaks toward the ceiling.)

Experimental Zeus, your contract we'll review.

(To audience.)

“Shrew You; Or, Who Hath Need of Men?” As goode
Account as any knowne describing how
Sweet Shagsper shuffles off his mortal coil.
Now, gentles all, a final last adieu.
Have we proved worthy of your minds this while
And caused you thAnd caused you think a thought or smile on cue?
Then clap these trifles if that be our due.

DRUM and CYMBAL.

EXEUNT ALL in shuffle-step, possibly to applause.

CURTAIN

Note: Shagsper's words appear in italics.