

Zoe Rosenfeld

Dialogue exercise: Our Flag Means Death

COME, GENTLE NIGHT

*(The deck of the Revenge. Night. The crew is arrayed in their hammocks and blankets, tucked up around Stede, who is sitting on his customary barrel. Ed leans at his side with his long pipe.)*

STEDE

*(In a high-pitched, breathy tone)*

*...Come, night, come, Romeo, come, thou day in night;  
For thou wilt lie upon the wings of night  
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.  
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night,  
Give me my Romeo; and, when he shall die,  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night -*

ED

That's a bit fucked, innit? Gnarly bitch.

STEDE

And pay no - What?

*(The crew groans in chorus at the interruption)*

ED

G'wan, mate, keep reading.

STEDE

No, what did you mean?

ED

Juliet, y'know?

*(He mimics Stede's tone)*

"I love Romeo so much, I want to cut him into little chunks and pin him to the ceiling so I can stare at him all the time." It's proper maniacal of her.

WEEE JOHN

I think it's like... a metaphor.

STEDE

*Thank* you, John. It's a metaphor, Edward. Heightened language to convey how very much in love Juliet is.

ED

Heightened, yeah, like bits of dead boyfriend all over her ceiling. I'm not complaining. Good for Juliet. It's bloody intense, is all.

JIM

*(sotto)*

Teenage girls are intense.

WEE JOHN

That Lady Macbeth was quite intense though, too. All that about smashing up her baby and murdering the king.

FRENCHIE

That was supposed to be scary, though. This is a love story.

WEE JOHN

I think cutting up your boyfriend is supposed to be scary, a bit.

STEDE

She is *not* cutting up Romeo!

ED

Shouldn't really say she is, then, should she?

STEDE

She's not - listen:

(he resumes reading in his normal tone)  
"Take him and cut him out in little stars,/And he will  
make the face of heaven so fine/That all the world  
will be in love with night/ And pay no worship to the  
garish sun." She's not even doing the cutting up - not  
that there *is* cutting up, I mean! She's saying she  
wants everyone to be as in love with the night as she  
is, because that's when Romeo comes.

LUCIUS

Romeo's coming alright.

STEDE

Lucius!

LUCIUS

It's what she said! (*Lasciviously*) Oh, come Romeo.  
Please come. Come, come *faster*, Romeo...

STEDE

(*Really stuttering*)

Oh, I mean - *stop* that, Lucius!

ROACH

I don't mind if she's got her wires a little crossed  
up.

WEE JOHN

(*Slapping the deck triumphantly*)

Like Lady Macbeth!

FRENCHIE

Ew, do you think she was... you know? Boned up? During  
the whole murder thing?

LUCIUS

Had to be.

ROACH  
(*Simultaneously*)

Definitely.

JIM

Good for her.

LUCIUS  
Anyway, she's allowed to be a little horny and weird,  
isn't she? She's what, like sixteen?

OLUWANDE  
I wouldn't do the math there, mate.

LUCIUS  
...or *whatever*, and she's just gotten married.

THE SWEDE  
In secret!

LUCIUS  
She's just gotten *secretly* married and now she wants  
to get *secretly* very fucked.

STEDE  
She might be excited at the, ah, prospects afforded to  
her in marriage, yes...

ED  
She was just talking about *playing with her maidenhead*  
like a second ago, mate.

JIM  
While she's waiting for Romeo to... *come*.

OLUWANDE

Oh my god.

ED

Anyway, it's pretty cool of her, innit? It... it makes sense. I mean. I get it.

LUCIUS

You *did* say Shakespeare would broaden our horizons, captain.

ED

She's like: feeling really intense, like I said. Sometimes it's hard to tell what you're feeling intense about... when you're in love. You just know there's a lot of feelings in you. And you have to get them out. Somehow. So you say stuff that other people are like "what the fuck are you talking about, man?" But they get it, the other person. Because they get *you*.

*(A moment. Stede's eyes soften.)*

THE SWEDE

Are they going to... on *stage*?

FRENCHIE

Nah, they never do it onstage. It always happens between scenes. Just like the murders.

JIM

I bet you could do the murders onstage. A good bit of fuckery.

PETE

This one's got some good sword fights in it too, for a love story. Not like that one with the fairies.

FRENCHIE

But for that one you'd have to figure out how to turn that guy into a donkey...

JIM

That Mercutio cabrón. *That's* a good sword fight.

STEDE

*(Trying to regain hold of the situation)*

Ah, a tragic end! Put into motion by Romeo and Juliet's star-crossed -

JIM

Think we could make Dizzy Izzy do Tybalt?

LUCIUS

I think he'd literally rather eat glass.

PETE

*(Simultaneously)*

So who'd do Mercutio?

JIM

Me, pendejo!

*(The crew begins to argue casting. Ed leans slightly into Stede. Nobody else hears their conversation.)*

ED

You don't get Juliet. But I think you could do a pretty good Romeo.

STEDE

"Did my heart love 'til now? Foreswear it, sight! For I ne'er saw true beauty 'til this night."

ED

You're hired.

STEDE

Are you the director now?

ED

Might be. Haven't decided yet.

STEDE

I think you'd be a wonderful director. You have quite the head for theatricality.

ED

Might direct... might act... I'll definitely do the sword fights.

STEDE

You're a man of many talents. Do you have a role in mind?

ED

Well, I don't trust any of these lot to do Juliet. Maybe Wee John. But I want to see him bustling around as that nurse.

STEDE

So you'll be my ingenue.

ED

Nah, Just your Juliet.

*(A moment)*

STEDE

Well, I, uh... story time has gone a bit off the rails, hasn't it?

ED

It's good for them.

PETE

*(In the background)*

Paris is a *moron*! He doesn't do anything fun - make Oluwande do it!

JIM

*(In the background)*

Hijo de puta, nunca me escuchas - I told you, Oluwande has to be Benvolio!

ED

C'mon, Romeo

*(he stands and stretches)*

We'll leave the happy ending 'til another night.

STEDE

The happy... hmm?

ED

Y'know. They're in love. People kept them apart. They found a way to be together. It's how all the stories go. You fancy a brandy?

*(He wanders towards Stede's cabin before Stede can respond. Stede is left sitting on his barrel with the Shakespeare in his lap. He looks thoughtful and a little sad.)*