

THEATREFOLK'S TEN-MINUTE PLAY COLLECTION

FOOTBALL ROMEO

Characters

NICOLA CALABRETTA – high school senior
RICK RINDER – her football player boyfriend
MRS. CAVENDISH – drama teacher
DANNY DINNING – also a high school senior

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LINDSAY PRICE

SCENE ONE

The living room of NICOLA'S home.

NICOLA stands downstage centre. She is completely enrapt in playing Juliet from "Romeo and Juliet."

NICOLA: Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo
Deny thy father and refuse thy name
Or if thou wilt not but be sworn my love
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.

NICOLA holds a pose of longing. She waits. And waits. It's clear she's waiting for RICK, her boyfriend who is sitting on the couch, to speak. RICK has fallen asleep. NICOLA keeps up her pose as long as she can before she swats him with the script she is holding.

NICOLA: It's your line!

RICK: (waking up) Huh?

NICOLA: It's your line!

She shows him his place and gets right back into her pose.

RICK: (speaking in a completely deadpan voice - like someone who doesn't do much reading) Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

NICOLA turns to RICK in disgust over his acting.

NICOLA: Rick!!!

RICK: What?

NICOLA: Never mind. Never mind. I'm ready. (She takes in a deep breath) I know I'm going to get this part. (She starts to gather her things) So, you're going to meet me at the audition tomorrow at 4:00. Can you remember that or should I write it down?

RICK: 4:00. I got it.

NICOLA: Good. (She gives RICK a peck on the cheek)

RICK: Why?

NICOLA: Why what?

RICK: Why do I have to meet you at the audition? (A thought comes to him) Oh I get it! You want moral support. You want me to cheer you on. Maybe I should borrow a set of pom poms from one of the cheerleaders - "Go Nikkil!" (He laughs to himself at his own cleverness. Then he notices that NICOLA is staring at him.) What?

NICOLA: Rick. We've been going over these lines for weeks.

RICK: Yeah.

NICOLA: I've been reading Juliet. You've been sort of reading Romeo.

RICK: You're great, Nik. I know you're going to get the part.

NICOLA: We're both going to get the part.

RICK: I'm going to be Juliet?

NICOLA: Try to stay with me. We've talked about this. Planned this. We've been practicing for weeks so that we can audition together and get the parts together and be on stage together.

RICK: On stage?

NICOLA: You - Romeo, Me - Juliet.

RICK: On stage?

NICOLA: Yes.

RICK: In front of people?

NICOLA: That's how it's usually done.

RICK: You never told me that!!!

NICOLA: Rick....

RICK: Uh uh, no way, no can do. It's fine behind closed doors where no one can see us but there's no way I would ever stand...*(he becomes lost in thought - it almost looks like his brain has closed down)*

NICOLA: Rick?

RICK: Tights...

NICOLA: Rick, what's the matter?

RICK: *(holding up the script)* This guy, this Ray...

NICOLA: Romeo.

RICK: He wears tights! *(He drops the script)* Nikki, you want me to embarrass myself in front of the entire football team looking like a ballerina?

NICOLA: There are no tights. Mrs. Cavendish is doing a modern version. No tights.

RICK: No?

NICOLA: Jeans and T-shirts.

RICK: I still can't do it.

NICOLA: Ricky...

RICK: I play football. I take other football players by the head and slam them to the ground.

NICOLA: And you're very good at that. But don't you want to be more than a football player?

RICK: No.

NICOLA: Don't you want to be something else?

RICK: No.

NICOLA: Don't you want to fully experience the wonder, the thrill, the excitement that is William Shakespeare?

RICK: *(like he's eaten a bug)* No!

NICOLA: Fine. I see. *(She picks up the script and moves away)*

RICK: You're mad.

NICOLA: No. Not at all. I'm perfectly - *(RICK moves in to hug her)* Don't touch me!!

RICK: I'm sorry Nikki. It's just not going to work.

NICOLA: I understand.

RICK: Good.

NICOLA: So I guess you'll be ok with the kissing scenes.

RICK: What?

NICOLA: You've been reading the lines Rick; surely you noticed that there are at least two kissing scenes.

RICK: I wasn't really paying attention.

NICOLA: If you're not playing Romeo that means I'll be kissing somebody else.

RICK: Give me that! *(He takes the book from NICOLA and frantically begins searching)*

NICOLA: I'm really impressed Rick. I never thought you would be so open about this. You are really growing as a human being.

RICK: *(whining like a baby)* I can't read this. I hate this guy! Why can't he write English like everybody else?

He hands the book to NICOLA, who finds her page and acts out the scene between Romeo and Juliet at Capulet's masked ball. She plays each part with utter seriousness.

JULIET: Saints do not move though grant for prayers sake

ROMEO: Then move not while my prayers effect I take.
Thus from my lips by thine my sins purged.

JULIET: Then from my lips the sin that they have took

ROMEO: Sin from my lips? O trespass sweetly urged!
Give me my sin again.

NICOLA closes the script with a sigh and holds it to her chest. She is clearly quite moved by the scene. RICK looks very, very confused.

RICK: Is that Shakespeare for kissing scene?

NICOLA: Big time.

RICK: Give me that book. When did you say the auditions were?

NICOLA: *(with a big smile)* Four o'clock.

The lights fade.

SCENE TWO

In the hall outside the auditorium.

The lights come up on MRS. CAVENDISH talking to the audience as if they were group of students.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Thank you all for coming out to the auditions for the spring play. This year we're being very adventurous with our tackling of Romeo and Juliet. I'm very excited about this project, as it's my favourite Shakespeare play. So, take a few minutes, get yourselves centred, and I'll start seeing monologues in a few moments.

She exits. RICK and NICOLA enter. RICK is completely calm and NICOLA is a nervous wreck.

NICOLA: I am Juliet. *(Taking in a deep breath)* I am Juliet. I am Juliet.

RICK: Hey Nikki after this do you want to...

NICOLA: Don't talk to me! *(She turns away and starts doing warm-up exercises)*

RICK wanders away flipping through the script, not really reading it. He sees DANNY enter, also reading a script preparing to audition. RICK walks over to DANNY and grabs him by the shoulder.

RICK: Hey. What part are you trying out for?

DANNY: *(somewhat off-balance)* I don't know. What part are you trying out for?

RICK: *(with pride, not realizing he's saying it wrong)* Raymeo

DANNY: Romeo? Then I'm definitely not trying out for him.

RICK: *(letting go of DANNY)* Good. I don't want anyone kissing Nicola but me. You pass that along to your dramoid geek friends.

DANNY: If she gets the part.

RICK: *(he re-grabs DANNY)* Are you saying that Nicola isn't good enough?

DANNY: I'm sure she's perfect.

RICK: *(letting go)* Of course she is.

MRS. CAVENDISH enters.

MRS. CAVENDISH: All right let's get started. *(Consulting her clipboard)* Rick Rinder.

RICK: Yo.

He struts towards MRS. CAVENDISH.

NICOLA: Break a leg!

RICK: Nikkil I got a game on Saturday.

NICOLA: No it's a...never mind.

MRS. CAVENDISH: *(to RICK)* This is a pleasant surprise. Are you ready?

RICK does a wrestling pose with a large grrrr. He exits. MRS. CAVENDISH follows a little uncertainly. NICOLA follows but still remains onstage. She is straining to hear how RICK'S audition is going. DANNY looks up and sees NICOLA. He thinks about not going over to her and then changes his mind. DANNY wanders over to NICOLA.

DANNY: This is your first time huh?

NICOLA: Huh?

DANNY: Your first time trying out for the school play.

NICOLA: Uh huh.

DANNY: You must really like Shakespeare. I do too. I especially like -

NICOLA: *(quite rudely)* Do you mind? I'm trying to hear.

DANNY: Sorry. Sorry. *(Turning away and muttering)* I'll just come over here and bang my head against the wall. No problem.

The lights fade.

SCENE THREE

A hallway outside of MRS. CAVENDISH'S office.

MRS. CAVENDISH enters with a folder in her hand. NICOLA enters, chasing after her.

NICOLA: Mrs. Cavendish!!!! Please I'm dying to know about the show.

MRS. CAVENDISH: I'm sure you're not dying Nicola.

NICOLA: I know you said you'd post the list at 1:00 but it's 12:45 now and what could it possibly hurt to let me know fifteen minutes early?

MRS. CAVENDISH: Nicola...

NICOLA: Wait. This is your way of telling me, isn't it? You're subtly telling me not to get my hopes up. I'm a page. That's it. I'm a page. Mrs. Cavendish, I appreciate your sensitivity and –

MRS. CAVENDISH: (*interrupting*) Nicola, calm down. I have the cast list right here and I was just about to post it. (*She takes the list out of the folder and puts it on a board*) There you are.

MRS. CAVENDISH exits and NICOLA dives for the board.

NICOLA: And the role of Juliet goes to... Nicola Calabretta. Nicola Calabretta! That's me! I got it! (*She screams and does a little dance*) And the role of Romeo goes to Ric – (*she does a double take*) Danny Dinning? Danny Dinning? NOOOOOOO!!!

The lights fade.

SCENE FOUR

MRS. CAVENDISH'S office.

DANNY comes running in. He is out of breath.

DANNY: Mrs. Cavendish. Mrs. Cavendish.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Congratulations Danny.

DANNY: You have to take it back.

MRS. CAVENDISH: What?

DANNY: The part. You have to take the part back.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Why?

DANNY: Rick Rinder would make a much better Romeo than I would.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Why?

DANNY: Because he's daring. Because he's good looking. Because he's Nicola Calabretta's boyfriend. Because after he beats me to a pulp I won't be good for much of anything!

MRS. CAVENDISH: He won't do that.

DANNY: How do you know?

MRS. CAVENDISH: I'll ask him not to.

DANNY: (*as if explaining to a child*) Mrs. Cavendish. I know you're a very good teacher. But Rick Rinder's specialty is taking football players by the head and smashing them to the ground. He does it without even thinking. Subconsciously. BAM! Mrs. Cavendish. I don't have a helmet. My head is very precious to me.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Then I'll talk to Nicola.

DANNY: That's even worse. She wants my head smashed. She wants me out of the picture. Goodbye!

MRS. CAVENDISH: She wants Rick to be Romeo.

DANNY: Exactly. You see what I'm saying.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Well, she'll have to live with the decision.

DANNY: She won't do that. She doesn't like me.

MRS. CAVENDISH: I'm sure that's not true.

DANNY: I've known her since the third grade. She still doesn't know my name. If she does speak to me, by accident of course, she doesn't look at me, she looks through me. She looks for someone better to talk to. She doesn't see me. She's certainly not going to say "Romeo, Romeo wherefore art thou Romeo" to me.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Danny. I want you to have the part. You deserve it. But I won't force you. What do you want?

DANNY: Me? I have to decide?

MRS. CAVENDISH: Yep.

DANNY: You're an adult. You *have* to force me.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Uh Uh. You decide.

DANNY: I...I don't know.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Danny, close your eyes for a second. Don't argue, just close your eyes. Think about being Romeo. See yourself in the part. Now think about not being in the part. How does that make you feel? Do you miss it? Open your eyes. What do you want?

DANNY: I want to be Romeo.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Truly?

DANNY: More than anything.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Then you are.

DANNY'S moment of euphoria fades. He sighs.

DANNY: I better go buy a helmet.

DANNY leaves the office. MRS. CAVENDISH picks up the phone.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Louise, can you tell me what class Nicola Calabretta has right now?

NICOLA breezes into the office with great drama.

NICOLA: Mrs. Cavendish!!

MRS. CAVENDISH: *(into the phone)* Never mind, Louise. *(She hangs up the phone)*

NICOLA: I must speak with you immediately!

MRS. CAVENDISH: Aren't you supposed to be in class Nicola?

NICOLA: I spoke with Mr. Green and said that it was imperative that I come to your office. He let me go.

MRS. CAVENDISH: I see.

NICOLA: I must protest about the unfairness of the audition.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Really?

NICOLA: Rick should never have gone first. He's a newcomer to Shakespeare and he needed more time to prepare. You're just going to have to audition him again. That's all there is to it.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Nicola, you love Shakespeare.

NICOLA: Yes.

MRS. CAVENDISH: You have a passion for it.

NICOLA: Yes.

MRS. CAVENDISH: In every fibre of your being.

NICOLA: Oh yes.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Rick doesn't.

NICOLA: Yes he does.

MRS. CAVENDISH: No he doesn't.

NICOLA: Yes he does, yes he does! He loves Shakespeare. If I have to ram it down his throat, he's going to love it.

MRS. CAVENDISH: You can't force someone....

NICOLA: I'm not forcing him. I'm just giving him a little push.

MRS. CAVENDISH: You can't do that.

NICOLA: Why not?

MRS. CAVENDISH: Nicola.

NICOLA: Why not? Sometimes people respond to being pushed. That's all they need, a little kick, a teeny tiny kick in the butt, like me and math. I hate doing math. I get pushed and I'm fine. *(MRS. CAVENDISH opens her mouth to argue and NICOLA cuts her off)* Don't say it! Don't say it! Don't say anything. I know you're going to say that math and Shakespeare are two completely different things. Don't say it!

MRS. CAVENDISH: Ok. I won't.

NICOLA: Mrs. Cavendish, won't you please consider Rick for Romeo?

MRS. CAVENDISH: The play has been cast.

NICOLA: But Danny Dinning. Danny Dinning.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Gave an excellent audition and deserves the part, just as you deserve the part of Juliet.

NICOLA: I can't kiss Danny Dinning. Rick will completely freak out.

MRS. CAVENDISH: We'll talk about that in rehearsal.

NICOLA: Danny Dinning.

She slinks out. MRS. CAVENDISH picks up the phone again.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Louise, can you tell me....

RICK rushes into the office.

RICK: Mrs. Cavendish!

MRS. CAVENDISH: Today's my lucky day. Never mind Louise.

RICK: Mrs. Cavendish, I have a big problem.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Tell me all about it.

RICK: Nicola is totally after me for this Shakespeare guy, but I never wanted to do it in the first place but the kissing scenes, I mean, I just can't let some guy kiss Nicola but I know that you know that I know that I couldn't do it, that I just froze up but I can't tell Nicola that. I can't tell her that I got...I got.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Stage fright.

RICK: Me. Rick Rinder. I'm not afraid of nothing.

MRS. CAVENDISH: I see.

RICK: Do you? I lost myself somewhere in the middle.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Do you like Nicola?

RICK: *(very positive - he really likes her)* Yeah.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Why?

RICK: I don't know... she doesn't treat me like a stupid football player.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Do you trust Nicola?

RICK: I guess so.

MRS. CAVENDISH: Then I don't see the problem Rick. All you have to do is trust her.

RICK: I never thought of that. *(He mulls it over)* So I trust Nicola. And I don't turn Raymeo into a Pop Tart.

MRS. CAVENDISH: I would have to advise against that.

RICK: Ok. Mrs. Cavendish. We'll play it your way. Mrs. Cavendish, you're not going to tell anyone that I... that I couldn't...

MRS. CAVENDISH: My lips are sealed.

The lights fade.

SCENE FIVE

A hallway.

DANNY is pacing. He is obviously waiting for NICOLA.

DANNY: I'm not talking to you. You got some nerve. I'm not talking to you. I mean I know we run in different circles, different cliques but I have ears you know. I have feelings. And I'm a really good actor. I'm really good. Much better than you. And I'm going to go to Broadway where I will kick the behinds of snotty people like you. I know the only reason you tried out for the spring play was because of some twisted fantasy you and your boyfriend have. And I know you went to Mrs. Cavendish and if it had been any other teacher you probably would have been able to twist her around your finger the way you twist everyone else around here. But for one small flaw in your plan Nicola Calabretta.

He takes a deep breath and begins to act. He is exceptionally good. He becomes Romeo and is no longer a geek. The piece is honest and not melodramatic.

DANNY: Ah dear Juliet.

Here, Here will I remain
With worms that are thy chambermaids. O here
Will I set up my everlasting rest
And shake the yoke of inauspicious starts
From this world wearied flesh. Eyes, look your last!
Arms take your last embrace!
Come bitter conduct, come unsavoury guide!
Thou desperate pilot, now at once run on
The dashing rocks thy seasick weary bark!
Here's to my love! *(He drinks)* O true Apothecary!
Thy drugs are quick. Thus with a kiss I die.

DANNY collapses to the floor.

NICOLA: *(softly)* Wow.

DANNY doesn't move.

NICOLA: You're right.

DANNY looks up but stays on the ground.

DANNY: What?

NICOLA: You're right. I should have given you a chance. You won the part fair and square. I shouldn't have tried to take it away.

DANNY: *(clearly surprised)* Oh. Thank you.

NICOLA: Do you want a hand?

DANNY: No. I think I'll lie here for a while.

NICOLA: Ok.

She turns to go.

DANNY: *(sitting up)* Nicola? Is your boyfriend going to kill me?

NICOLA: No.

DANNY: Do you promise?

NICOLA: I promise. See you in rehearsal.

She exits.

DANNY: See ya. *(He gets up and watches her leave)* Huh. How do you like that? Just when you decide to really hate someone, they go and do something nice. Go Figure!

He exits shaking his head.

The lights fade.

— THE END —