

Qwendolyn's Gambit was first produced as a part of *Heart Shaded Blue* at the Newtown Theatre in Sydney, Australia, in 2005. Directed by Wayne Tunks.

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CHARACTERS

RAZZA: 7 to 15 years old, a Rook

BRENDAN: 7 to 15 years old, a Bishop

KEIRA: 7 to 15 years old, a Knight

QWENDOLYN: 7 to 15 years old, the Queen

PATTIE: 7 to 15 years old, a Pawn

BELINDA: 7 to 15 years old, the Replacement Queen

NOTE: Height is quite important in the play—QWENDOLYN and BELINDA must be the tallest, then BRENDAN, KEIRA, and RAZZA. PATTIE must be noticeably smaller than the rest—she can be on her knees.

TIME

Sunday afternoon.

SETTING

The corner of a chessboard. RAZZA, BRENDAN, KEIRA, QWENDOLYN, and PATTIE stand on stage—RAZZA, KEIRA, BRENDAN, and QWENDOLYN are in a line, with PATTIE in front of RAZZA. Their feet are rooted to the spot, but they can move their upper bodies. As the lights come up they all sway on the spot, trying to avoid something swinging above their heads.

RAZZA: Here he comes again.

BRENDAN: Ooh, he's a clumsy one, this one.

KEIRA: [*To QWENDOLYN.*] Watch out—he's coming for you.

QWENDOLYN: No, he's just hovering.

PATTIE: Where's he going now?

KEIRA: [*To RAZZA.*] Over towards you.

BRENDAN: Watch out!

RAZZA: Here he comes, great clodhoppers.

[*RAZZA ducks.*]

RAZZA: Ha-ha—missed me!

PATTIE: I think he got me.

QWENDOLYN: Are you sure?

PATTIE: I think so.
 KEIRA: He'll have to move you then.
 BRENDAN: But was it a real touch—or just a graze?
 PATTIE: I'm not sure.
 RAZZA: Well, get sure. I'm involved here.
 PATTIE: I think it was a graze.
 QWENDOLYN: You're safe then.
 KEIRA: Is it tournament rules, or a friendly?
 PATTIE: Or maybe it was a touch.
 RAZZA: Make up your mind.
 BRENDAN: All this uncertainty is quite off-putting.
 PATTIE: I don't know!
 QWENDOLYN: It's okay. He's castling.
 RAZZA: Castling?
 BRENDAN, KEIRA, AND RAZZA: Which side?
 QWENDOLYN: King's side.
 PATTIE: Whew! We can all relax then.
 RAZZA: Not for long.
 [*Slight pause.*]
 KEIRA: Can anybody see? How we doing?
 BRENDAN: Not too good. He's already lost a front-liner.
 PATTIE: Which one?
 QWENDOLYN: Mine.
 PATTIE: Oh no—good old Pattie 5.
 BRENDAN: I thought you were Pattie 5.
 PATTIE: No silly—I'm Pattie 8. But don't feel too bad. We're identical.
 RAZZA: Did he at least get one of theirs?
 BRENDAN: Afraid not. Gave it up without even the slightest hint of a fight.

KEIRA: He's hopeless.
 RAZZA: We're doomed! All doomed!
 QWENDOLYN: Quiet now. It's early days. We all have to make sacrifices occasionally.
 PATTIE: Did she say "sacrifices"?
 BRENDAN: 'Fraid so.
 KEIRA: [*To BRENDAN.*] Well you'd know all about those, I guess.
 QWENDOLYN: It's all for the greater good.
 RAZZA: Don't see what's good about it.
 QWENDOLYN: We make an individual sacrifice so the rest may survive.
 RAZZA: It's all very well for you to talk about sacrifices Miss La De Da, because it's not you who gets sacrificed.
 KEIRA: How do you figure that?
 RAZZA: Think about it—you got Rook's Gambit, Knight's Gambit, and Bishop's Gambit—even Pawn's Gambit—but whoever heard of Queen's Gambit?
 PATTIE: What's a gambit?
 BRENDAN: A sacrifice—he's talking about giving up your mortal role so the rest of us may live on.
 PATTIE: Don't like the sound of that.
 RAZZA: Well we all do it, my small friend—me, Brendan, Keira—even all eight of you. All except Miss Queen Qwendolyn.
 QWENDOLYN: Do be quiet—he's about to make his next move.
 BRENDAN: Probably botch it up again.
 RAZZA: No, I won't be quiet. It's a travesty and I'm not putting up with it.
 KEIRA: Actually, I have.
 RAZZA: Have what?
 KEIRA: Heard of a Queen's Gambit. I believe it's quite common, actually.
 RAZZA: Crap.

KEIRA: It is.

RAZZA: Is not.

QWENDOLYN: I can assure you, Rachel—it does exist.

RAZZA: Don't call me that. My name's Razza.

QWENDOLYN: Well, Razza, I can assure you—there is such a thing as a Queen's Gambit.

RAZZA: Oh, yeah? How can you be so sure?

QWENDOLYN: Because I think he's about to play it.

PATTIE: Oh, Queen Qwendolyn—no. No!

[QWENDOLYN jerks suddenly as if being pulled from the spot—she stumbles left then right then exits straight ahead and off the stage. BRENDAN mutters a blessing and crosses himself.]

KEIRA: Oh, dear Qwendolyn—and so early in the game. *[To RAZZA]* And you—how rude and ungrateful.

RAZZA: Steady on, sister. She'll be okay. We all gotta get moved sometime.

PATTIE: Don't speak so quickly.

KEIRA: What's he doing? Don't leave her there.

BRENDAN: Can't he see my black counterpart? Oh my Grace.

RAZZA: *[Calling.]* Hey Dumbo—get her out of there!

KEIRA: Too late—he's released his hand.

BRENDAN: And our opponents see the mistake.

PATTIE: Oh no—Queen Qwendolyn!

[They all hide their eyes and turn away. There is a loud crunching noise from off. They all flinch.]

BRENDAN: *[Making the sign of the cross, giving last rites.]* In nomine Pater . . .

PATTIE: Poor Qwendolyn.

RAZZA: That bloody idiot.

KEIRA: He wasn't even looking.

PATTIE: Noble Qwendolyn.

KEIRA: I wonder which one of us will be next.

RAZZA: Always the Rook. Once the Queen's gone—I'm next in line.

PATTIE: Regal Qwendolyn.

RAZZA: Steady on Pattie 8—she wasn't all that crash hot.

KEIRA: Says you! Bloody useless. Stuck in the corner. Hiding.

RAZZA: I am not hiding. Just fenced in. You wait till I get out of here. I'll show them!

BRENDAN: Quiet now, sisters . . . Qwendolyn's passing has affected us all, but be assured that in the great land Off Board there is another life—one much greater than our humble existence here—where we will all live forever—in peace and harmony.

PATTIE: Even with the black pieces?

BRENDAN: Yeah, sister—even with them. And readily I say unto you, in the great world Off Board we may all live freely with no rigid constraints to bind us.

PATTIE: You mean no squares? Holy crap! Oops. Sorry Father.

RAZZA: Sorry your lordship, but you're missing the point. We're not that upset about Qwendolyn passing . . .

KEIRA: Hey! Speak for yourself.

RAZZA: We're upset about the fact that she passed so pointlessly—for diddly-squat.

PATTIE: Diddly what?

RAZZA: All because our guy is so bloody hopeless. She went to the Great Board in the Sky for nothing.

KEIRA: *[Watching.]* I wouldn't be so sure.

BRENDAN: Keira's right. Our opponent was so busy grabbing Qwendolyn, he's left his whole left flank exposed.

PATTIE: And our boy's on to it.

RAZZA: Go on son!

BRENDAN: He's moving fast now.

KEIRA: The other guy doesn't even know what hit him.

PATTIE: We may not even be needed.

RAZZA: Go on son!

BRENDAN: He's split them wide open.

KEIRA: Our opponent's pieces are shell-shocked.

PATTIE: Their king is exposed!

RAZZA: Go on son!

BRENDAN: Mate in two.

KEIRA: Does he see it?

PATTIE: Yes he does!

RAZZA: Go on son.

BRENDAN: One!

KEIRA: Almost there.

PATTIE: Two!

RAZZA: Go on son!

ALL: Checkmate!

[They all clap and cheer.]

RAZZA: Good on you, son. Well done!

KEIRA: Don't you mean "Good on you, girl?" It was Qwendolyn who won it for us.

RAZZA: Fair call. Gotta give her that.

BRENDAN: Yeah, you're right sisters. She did give up her mortal life so we may all live on in peace.

PATTIE: Yep, she was a bonza chick.

KEIRA: Thanks, Qwendolyn . . .

RAZZA: Wherever you are . . .

BRENDAN: Lest we forget.

[Slight pause.]

PATTIE: So, what do we do now?

RAZZA: I don't know about you, but I'm looking forward to a good nap. I'm tired.

KEIRA: For once we both agree. Let's get some sleep.

[Suddenly, BELINDA enters.]

PATTIE: Who's she?

BELINDA: Hello. My name is Belinda. I am your new Queen.

RAZZA: New Queen? We just got rid of the last one.

BRENDAN: Great King defend us!

PATTIE: What is it?

KEIRA: Look over to the other side of the board.

BRENDAN: The vanquished black pieces. They're reappearing. Regrouping.

PATTIE: What's going on?

BELINDA: For your eternal sacrifice—we are grateful.

RAZZA: Oh no!

ALL: *[Except for BELINDA.]* He's playing another game!

[All the pieces sway on the spot, trying to avoid something swinging above their heads.]

RAZZA: Here we go again!

[Blackout.]

END OF PLAY