

A TALE OF TWO FATHERS, WRITTEN WITH MY FATHER

A one act play by Nic Murphy, produced by Public Assembly on 6/27/19

PRINCE NICOLAS – Josh Schell

KING CHARLES – Nadine Ellis

LOYAL GUARD – Intae Kim

There is a medieval throne center stage. **GUARD** stands besides, dressed in medieval wardrobe that's more typical "Hollywood" than realistic. He has a sword on his belt.

Beat and a half.

GUARD: ALL HAIL HIS GRAND MAJESTY, LORD OF IRONHAVEN, CONQUEROR OF THE WESTERN LANDS, PATRIARCH OF THE GRAND DYANASY MURPHY, OUR LORD FATHER, HIGH KING CHARLES THE PROTECTOR!

KING CHARLES (female, black) walks in from stage right. She is dressed as a "Hollywood stereotypic King" and the gender-swap will not be acknowledged until the very end. She is drinking out of a chalice. She sits down on the throne.

CHARLES: Good morrow Loyal Guard.

GUARD: Good morrow mi'lord... uh... any update on thy Royal Healer mi'lord?

CHARLES: The Royal Healer? Ah yes! I... uh... it *truly* doth pain me the carrier pigeon service has been so difficult to coordinate... but The Royal Healer shalt visit thy son the moment the birds are once again flapping!

GUARD: Of course, mi'lord. A thousand thank thee's mi'lord.

Charles sips / Beat.

CHARLES: Mockingwoods must be swiftly defended from The Dread Empire. Fetch The Council of War, Loyal Guard.

GUARD: Uh, pardons mi'lordship... but... there is another matter... thy son ... he is hither and wishes an audience with thee... he hath also impressed his urgency.

CHARLES: My son?

GUARD: Uh yes, mi'lord.

CHARLES: My son is here?

GUARD: Uh yes, here, mi'lord

Beat.

CHARLES: Very well. The Council wilt shortly wait. Fetch thy Prince.

GUARD: ALL HAIL, PRESTIGIOUS PENSHAW ACADEMY GRADUATE OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE, FORMER FIRST SCRIBE TO THE COUNCIL OF WAR, CURRENT THEATRICAL INTERN WITH THE SOUTHERN CLOWN'S PLAYERS, HIS EXCELLENCY, HIGH PRINCE NICOLAS OF THE GRAND ROYAL DYNASTY MURPHY!

NICOLAS walks in from center aisle. He is also dressed in a "Hollywood medieval-style," though more Hamlet than Camelot. He has a brief stare down with **Charles** before huffing and turning away.

Beat.

CHARLES: So. I hear you art now acting with thy little band of mongrel thespians?

NICOLAS: Yes Father... I am a natural, they call-eth me multi-hyphenate.

Beat.

CHARLES: Though I loath to abridge this joyous reunion, you would forgive me as The Council of War needs my swift attention... //

NICOLAS: // There will *always* be something that needs thy swift attention Father!

Beat.

CHARLES: Be swift then. Why art thou here Nicolas? We both know thy yearly allowance of coin has already been sent.

Beat.

NICOLAS: There is a personal matter I would discuss with thee. Loyal Guard, you may leave us.

GUARD: Yes, mi'lord.

CHARLES: Loyal Guard, you shall stayeth.

GUARD: Stayeth I shall.

Beat.

NICOLAS: Very well.

Beat.

NICOLAS: My penis father.

CHARLES: Beg thy pardon?

NICOLAS: That is wherefore I am here. My princely shaft! My red, painful, itchy, tight, princely shaft. I cannot piss, I cannot run, I cannot even enjoy the sin of a lady lest I deal with the dull pain of the sores and the sharp pain of her disgust.

CHARLES: I... I see... hath thou not visited the Royal Healer?

NICOLAS: Of course I hath and her diagnosis was most dire! An incurable infection grown from 29 winters of mal-hygiene, from 29 winters of not knowing I was supposed to wash that most sensitive area beneath mine foreskin.

CHARLES: Well... mine sympathies to thee and thy... personal issue... //

NICOLAS: // YOU DIDN'T TEACH ME HOW TO CLEAN MY FUCKING COCK! Hast thou ever had penial problems of this sort Father? Hast *thou* ever dealt with the guilt of unwed sin? With etchings of nude wenches? With drug and drink and dice? Art these things good men like yourself have problems with? Or perhaps not and I am just a wretched soul with a wretched heart. I don't know. You didn't teach me!

CHARLES: (*stands*) I am... surprised at this dear account of my fatherly wisdom. **(To Guard)** Do I not instruct my advisors to send him day of his birth cards every year...

GUARD: You do, mi'lord.

CHARLES: Do I not instruct our Master of Coin to send him the yearly allowance on which he lives? //

Nicolas: // Is that all you can see of fatherly duty? Charles snaps for his chalice, Guard brings it.

Nicolas: // Ah Loyal Guard!

GUARD: Yes mi'lord!

NICOLAS: Did thy father teach thee to clean thy shaft?

CHARLES: You doth not have to answer that.

Beat.

NICOLAS: Come man. Tell me of thy father. Please.

Guard looks to Charles. Charles slightly nods.

GUARD: If... if it pleases mi'lord... mi'lords... mine father was also a guard here at the palace, sire. He would start ere dawn, and work 'till end of sun. My memories art mostly him guardin'.

Beat.

NICOLAS: Did thy father teach thee to clean thy shaft?

GUARD: Uh... aye mine Prince. I was indeed thus taught.

Nicolas makes a "see?!" gesture.

CHARLES: Loyal Guard... how fares thy father? Tell mine son what has befallen thy family.

GUARD: I... my family... tis just mine boy and I left sire, as you well know. Mine father died of the pain sickness some years hence. Mine Lady... well, mine Lady wast attacked by brigands and... she did not ever // (*recover*)

CHARLES: // Yes yes, tell him of thy son. //

GUARD: // Ah, Little Jim... //

NICOLAS: // Little Jim? What hast happened to Little Jim?

GUARD: Little Jim sire... has been recently diagnosed with a rare ailment. On the verge of death... he hath better days 'n he hath worse... though thy lord father hast graciously promised a soon visit to his Royal Healer. I know The Royal Healer will be able to... //

CHARLES: // Enough!

Charles puts chalice out to be taken away.

GUARD: LONG LIVE THE GRAND DYNASTY MURPHY!

Beat.

CHARLES: You see? Mayhaps our guard's father did choose to teach his children to clean their fiddles, but a lot of good it seems to have done them. Life is not a satisfying, logical comedy put on by thy thespian friends. Life is tragedy, Nicolas. Unsatisfying. Illogical. This guard knows it, his son knows it, I know it, but you, you don't. I give thee all the benefits I can and you forsake them.

NICOLAS: I don't need your benefits, I need your supportive manhood!

CHARLES: // You think I doth not support your manhood? You think I doth not constantly shield thee and thy oblivious Clown's Players from The Dread Emperor's Assassins? Doth thou even know I tortured a priest blind so that he might never see your drunken work with the statue of St. Mary *The Now No Longer Virginal*? I hast ordered the rape and pillage of villages, numberless innocent men burned at the stake, thousands of conscripts killed in battle, all so that I can bestow upon thee, my *dearest* son, thy grand privilege of playing himself in a silly southern play where he slays his father. I am overjoyed your genitals itch since that means you are still alive. That itch is mine love.

Beat.

CHARLES: What doth thou want from me?

Beat.

NICOLAS: Father... I... there is... // (another matter)

CHARLES: // Ah! Now the actor can't speak! //

NICOLAS: // Drusilla The All-Powerful... // (The Sorceress of the South...)

GUARD: // The Sorceress of The South!? //

NICOLAS: // Aye, yes... my new companions at the Clown's Players are certain she can rebirth my royal phoenix...

GUARD: Really mi'lord?

NICOLAS: ...revert all ill effects of my mal-hygiene...

GUARD: Yes mi'lord!

NICOLAS: ...you see, she is highly regarded by thy common folk! //

GUARD: Oh yes mi'lord!

CHARLES: // If the Royal Healer says you are incurable, then you are incurable! //

NICOLAS: // We both know the Royal Healer is an overpaid Royal Quack! //

CHARLES: // SURE but rather a quack who sleeps in a castle than lives in a cave! //

GUARD: // The Royal Healer is a quack...?

Guard takes a lonely blocking move.

NICOLAS: **(To Guard)** Yes yes **(To Charles)** help me now with Drusilla's price and thy dire fatherhood shalt be forgiven, I swear it!

CHARLES: *Price...* you have squandered thy yearly allocation of coin! How oft have I heard this pithy speech? //

NICOLAS: // Think of thy lineage! If not for The Sorceress, thy heir's staff will forever lie burned and thy dynasty shalt be ended!

Beat.

CHARLES: No, it won't be.

Beat.

NICOLAS: What dost thou mean?

CHARLES: Nicolas... I am not your father.

NICOLAS: What... what are you saying? You doth joke?

CHARLES: I'm clearly not your dad! I am a black, woman Nic! Your parents died, I took you in, you started to call me Father and I just ran with it. I didn't know how to clean your penis because I don't have one!

Beat.

NICOLAS: I... I doth not see color... //

CHARLES: // You are so goddamn self-absorbed! Do you really think you're some artist of the people? You know Draco from The Clown's Players? That's the Princess of Cumbria's son! Adrianna? She's the niece to the Dastardly Flower Baron of Brie! You're all allowed to live in fantasy by well-meaning parents. But no longer. Nephew Humphrey shall be my heir, you are disinherited... //

NICOLAS: // ARGH! //

Nicolas moves away in anguish.

GUARD: // THE ROYAL HEALER IS A QUACK?

Beat.

CHARLES: What? Well... no... not... //

GUARD: WAST THIS ROYAL QUACK EVER EVEN *REALLY* INSTRUCTED TO HELP MINE BOY?

CHARLES: Loyal Guard... come now, calm down... //

GUARD: THOU CALM DOWN! THOU WAST GOING TO LET MINE LITTLE JIM WASTE AWAY AND DIE? AND NOW HE SHALL SINCE IT IS TOO LATE. //

CHARLES: // I... wait, Loyal Guard, thou misunderstand! The Royal Healer is *truly* the most highly trained healer in all the land and she is *truly* instructed to soon visit thy son, this *quack* business is simply an ill-tasting family joke... //

NICOLAS: // Apparently my whole life is an ill-tasting family joke! This Evil King, *Queen* has lied to you about The Royal Healer, as she's lied to me for 29 years. She cares only for her own murderous self!

CHARLES: // I protected you, you ungrateful orphan!

NICOLAS: // Think of it Loyal Guard, if *if* my former father did shortly befall some royal accident then you and I shall quickly take your son to see Drusilla!

CHARLES: // You can't even clean your penis! //

NICOLAS: // We'll upend her tyrannical status quo! We'll send all our healthy sons to The Prestigious Penshaw Academy! WE'LL FIND MY REAL DAD! //

GUARD: // DEATH TO THE QUEEN! Take mine sword!

Sword goes from Guard to Nicolas.

CHARLES: WHAT!? NO! Loyal Guard! Arrest this ungrateful villain!

Nicolas stops, sword at Charles. All Three characters huff and puff in tableau for a beat.

GUARD: Uh... Prince Nicolas... what's wrong... Death to the Queen! Guard makes stabbing motion.

NICOLAS: I... I can't.

GUARD: You cannot? What doth thou mean? What about thy penis? What about the status quo? What about Little Jim?

NICOLAS: I'm sorry. I can't.

Beat.

CHARLES: Do not slayeth me, my prince!

Beat.

NICOLAS: AH HH MAMA!

Nicolas throws down the sword and grabs Charles' waist.

Beat as Guard picks up the sword.

GUARD: I shall fetch the Royal Therapist!

End.