

Dean Gladish

A new student had recently been attending some of my classes. I had not taken notice of Orville, rather, he had taken notice of me. He would follow me in the hallways, and eventually we started to talk to each other. Our conversation would consist mostly of normal things, but he had the most piercing black eyes. He never spoke of anything pertaining to himself, and seemed to become increasingly derisive. We grew apart, and truthfully, I was relieved. He had always made me feel uneasy. After a few months he reentered my life. We had been assigned to the preparation and performance of the Shakespearean play “As You Like It”, and despite my gut feeling of cold fear and revulsion, I agreed to collaborate with Orville. One day I needed to retrieve a prop for the preparation of this play, so I walked into a storage room to search for it. The room was dimly lit, cluttered with old dusty props and wood that seemed to be placed somewhat arbitrarily, with cobwebs hanging in the corners. Masks with disturbed faces hung on the walls. The room felt claustrophobic, and the air thick and hot. I stood in the middle, feeling an unreasonable fear from the depth of my being. Suddenly, I heard the click of the door behind me and the sound of laughter. I turned toward the door but I did not see anyone enter the room, and the lights suddenly fizzled and died. When I shouted into the darkness, a wet hand reached my mouth, smothering my screams. After a moment of muffled screaming and banging on the wall, he grabbed me, quite violently, and threw me against the wooden props, tearing my arm, and removed his jacket. Within his chest was a disfigured head with a most terrifying set of blood-shot eyes and fanged teeth. I was stupefied, unable to move. The head, with spittle dripping off his fangs, uttered the phrase “Tu falsissimum est” in a bestial and unearthly voice. As I began to stand, I heard him writhing on the ground and a bestial voice telling me how I was

a good actor. At this time of sheer madness, shaken out of my preconceived notions of reality, I had a moment of true insight. I had been playing a predictable role in my world, a stage.

Orville, this utterly improbable entity, had shattered my reality, my play. Orville then abruptly closed his jacket, straightened his hair, and turned to open the door. He said, “We’re on, time for us to play our parts”.