

AMULET

A PLAY

Todd Crawshaw



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CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

Bennett McCoy: recently-elected senator (age 39)

Angela McCoy: wife to Bennett, (age 45)

Quintin Amulet: father to Juliet, Angela's ex-husband (age 55)

Raymond Humes: Juliet's friend from college (age 22)

Juliet Amulet: Quintin's and Angela's daughter (age 22)

Gwen: Quintin's escort date (age 30)

Flora Spenser: caterer, also Bennett's ex-girlfriend (age 36)

Bryce Spenser: Flora's twin sister, caterer (age 36)

Faun Spenser: Flora's twin sister, caterer (age 36)

Donald Montague: former senator, Bennett's rival (age 40)

Tricia Montague: wife to Donald (age 37)

Ryan McCoy: son to Angela and Bennett (age 7)

Nicolas Capulet: former senator, father to Angela (age 85)

Marko McCoy: Bennett's younger brother (age 36)

Iggy: Marko's friend (age 36)

Bianca: Marko's friend (age 27)

Rex: cocker spaniel (age 10)

ACT ONE

SCENE I

Interior of an estate with a luxurious living room. Ocean waves are heard in the distance. Angela is center stage, clearly the focal point. Elegantly dressed, she stands next to Bennett, both holding martini glasses. Quintin sits on a sofa also sipping a martini. Gwen meanders along a wall staring at oil paintings. Nicolas has dozed off in a chair with an empty martini glass on a table. The crooning voice of Frank Sinatra is heard singing *What Is This Thing Called Love*, interrupted by the electric explosions coming from Ryan's hand-held device. The boy is seated on an ottoman near the fireplace, lost in virtual battle.

Bennett: Kill me.

Angela: Stop it.

Bennett: I'm serious. Just kill me. Right now.

Angela: Don't tempt me.

She sips her martini, eyeing antique swords on the wall.

Bennett: Has Juliet gone mad?

Angela: It's an act.

Bennett: There's a difference?

Bennett starts pacing. Quintin raises his martini glass.

Quintin: I personally blame the colleges.

Angela: Bennett, relax.

Quintin: The universities encourage this liberal-art thinking.

Bennett: When am I *not* relaxed?

Angela: Bennett. I mean it. Uncoil.

Bennett: Are you insinuating I'm a snake?

Angela: A snake, no. But a shark, yes.

Bennett: Shark?

Angela: Stop pacing.

Bennett: Sharks are required to keep moving.

Angela: As my attorney *and* husband I advise you to calm down.

Bennett: If I stop, I die. It's my nature to attack or parry.

Angela: Ben, you're not on trial here.

Bennett: Every day is a trial, Angela.

Quintin: (*aside*) Ah, some wisdom.

Angela: Juliet will come to her senses. Give her time.

Bennett: She hates me.

Angela: No. She ... *respects* you.

Bennett: (*huffs*) There's a difference?

Angela: It's the same way you bait her. She's baiting you.

Bennett: Like hell. Not in my house.

Angela: Our house.

Quintin: Mine, too, once.

Bennett: Inviting his parents, for God's sake?

Angela: Let's try not to be judgemental.

Bennett: Isn't it customary to first approve of *him* before ...
He flails his hand to finish his thoughts.

Angela: Please refrain from going on the warpath today.

Bennett: Now I'm a savage Indian?

Angela: Well, it *is* Thanksgiving. And, it could be worse.

Bennett: How?

Angela: What if she'd brought home a girl? Her future wife?

- Bennett:** Good, God. This world.
- Angela:** Your political rivals would have a field day with that.
She removes the empty martini glass from his hand.
- Bennett:** I'll have another one.
- Quintin:** Me too, Angie.
Quintin holds up his glass. Angela walks right past him, distracted by the noise from her son's computer game competing with the music.
- Angela:** Ryan, go mute. You're killing poor Frank.
The front door opens. Juliet and Raymond enter. Both are dressed in casual artistic attire.
- Bennett:** *(cynical)* At last. Juliet and her Romeo have returned.
- Raymond:** It's Ray-mon, Mr. McCoy.
- Bennett:** Raymond, of course. Call me Ben. How was your walk?
- Raymond:** Cerebral. Dee ocean is one *beauteous* beast.
- Juliet:** With clouds amassing, portenting, perchance, a storm.
- Bennett:** What? The forecast called for blue skies.
- Juliet:** Alas. 'Tis blue no more.
- Raymond:** Ya, *mon*. Word.
- Bennett:** Word?
- Raymond:** Your palatial beach estate, it be *awe* inspiring.
- Bennett:** Thank you. Would you care for a martini?
- Raymond:** No, *mon*. I am cool.
- Bennett:** Don't be shy. Name your poison. I'm sure we have it.
- Raymond:** Naw. I am good, *mon*.
- Juliet:** Lord Bennett, can you not perceive that he wants not?
- Bennett:** As I perceive there is no change forthcoming in you.
Angela emerges from behind the bar holding martinis.
- Juliet:** Perception knows no bounds yet binds us to this time.

- Angela:** Dear, can we refrain from talking so—*Shakespearean*?
- Juliet:** Alas, Mother, when time is out of joint, kind thoughts
beget cruel words and doves falsely feathered take flight
to hawk a tilting world.
- Bennett:** This is giving me a headache. Angela, make her stop.
- Angela:** And have her die?
She hands Bennett a martini.
- Juliet:** Stepfather, how common to find you thus, imbibing
nectars of the night to induce the dying daylight.
- Bennett:** Damn-it. I am not amused by this pretentious gibberish.
Quintin, amused, mimes clapping from his seat.
- Angela:** Play along. Who are we to dissuade, if sport be her game.
- Juliet:** Pray tell, is there sport in numbing the brain?
- Angela:** Why, yes, Dear, there is.
- Juliet:** I perceive none.
- Angela:** Ah, but the night is still young.
- Juliet:** If not yet born.
- Angela:** Then we must conceive ourselves as one undone.
She smiles and hands Juliet the other martini.
- Juliet:** Do I dare stay aloft on liquid wings if thirst be to fly?
- Angela:** A lofty challenge, it is.
- Juliet:** Then beware, let the games begin.
Juliet proceeds to gulp down the entire martini.
- Angela:** Raymond, nothing for you?
Raymond realizes he has entered dangerous territory.
- Angela:** Tell us how you two met?
- Raymond:** Othello.
- Angela:** Excuse me?
- Raymond:** In the play, mum.

- Angela:** I can hardly be your *mum*. Please, call me Angela.
- Juliet:** On stage is the floor upon which Raymond first *had* me.
- Bennett:** Good, Lord.
He skewers and chews a martini olive.
- Raymond:** Most heavenly, the moment was. It be bliss.
- Angela:** What exactly does that mean?
- Raymond:** Juliet was my Desdemona.
- Angela:** And what, pray tell, is she to you now?
- Juliet:** His lover, Mother.
- Angela:** I see.
- Juliet:** As white is to black your thoughts speak clearly to me.
- Angela:** Do not presume to know my thoughts, Dear.
Gwen approaches. The others regard her curiously.
- Gwen:** Oh, hi, hello. Have I missed anything?
- Angela:** Your cue.
Angela leaves for the bar. Juliet addresses Gwen.
- Juliet:** If memory serves me true, mistress to my late father?
- Gwen:** Mistress? (*blushes*) No. No, I'm his ...
Quintin half rises from his seat.
- Quintin:** Friend.
- Gwen:** Date?
- Juliet:** Ah, but not akin to the fruit of any palm?
- Gwen:** Huh?
- Juliet:** Yet *ripe* in sumptuous beauty.
- Gwen:** Ripe? I'm only thirty.
- Juliet:** A sweet age for precious plucking.
- Gwen:** What are you saying?
- Juliet:** Self-endowed, yet slight in perception, I see.
- Gwen:** I'm confused. Quintin?

Quintin: Jules is toying with you.

Juliet: Did I offend thee?

Gwen: I think you are being rude.

Juliet: If my play be roughly hewn, you need not look too far to see the why and by whom.

Angela: *(cheerfully)* Another drink, anyone?
Juliet addresses an audience when there is none.

Juliet: With voice she speaks, but hath not wit to hear.

Angela: Don't be mean, Juliet. My perception is loud and clear.
Raymond sighs, unable to keep up the pretense.

Raymond: What the hell. I'll have a beer. If you're still offering?

Bennett: Good man. *(frowns)* Your voice. You sound different.

Raymond: How so?

Bennett: Than before.

Raymond: Before what?

Bennett: Don't play games with me, young man. I won't have it.
Angela returns and hands a martini to Raymond.

Angela: Here you go.

Raymond: But I—

Angela: Propose a toast.

Gwen: A toast to what?

Angela: To Desdemona and Othello.

Gwen: Who?

Angela: And happy endings. May we all be so lucky. Cheers!
Raymond sips the gin as the lights fade to black.

SCENE 2

Distant thunder and lightning accent Sinatra singing Witchcraft. The hired caterers, three woman, Flora, Faun, and Bryce, stand together holding trays of appetizers.

Flora: Are we ready, sisters?

Faun: We are three, united.

Bryce: As it was at our birth.

Flora: I now don the mask of a witch to avenge sweet Juliet.

Faun: I second the motion. This is for you too, Flora.

Bryce: We are all one in league with you.

Flora holds out her tray of stuffed mushrooms.

Flora: Care for a toasted toadstool?

Bryce: Or ground chicken, if liver be your taste.

Faun: Try my sautéed bottom feeders plucked from the sea
They cackle playfully.

Flora: Shush, sisters. Behold, I sense a pilgrim coming.
Bennett approaches them.

Bryce: Nay, it be his Imperial Majesty.

Flora: Hail, King McCoy.

Bennett: Have you been seduced by Juliet's theatrics too?

Faun: Aye, me Lord.

Bennett: I hired you to cater. Not to stand around and chitchat.

Flora: We shall make haste, Senator, elected to rule the stars.

Bennett: *(sips his martini)* You did predict this, remember?

Bryce: Where to next, Governor?

Bennett: Governor? My political sights are aimed much higher.

Flora: Then you *will* be accepting the crown.

- Bennett:** Unfortunately that position comes without a crown.
- Bryce:** Ah, but once you've presided over the golden state—
- Faun:** And risen to rule all fifty, united, how will you dictate?
- Bennett:** Are you predicting I'd win if I ran for president?
- Flora:** It is written in the stars, President McCoy.
- Bennett:** Thanks for your vote of confidence, but don't count—
- Bryce:** Beware! Not a false word. Or you will jinx your fate.
- Faun:** To undo what is meant to be true.
- Bennett:** (*at Flora*) Well, you did predict I'd win the senate seat.
- Flora:** We are here to serve. And now we bid you adieu.
They leave with their trays. Bennett shakes his head.
- Bennett:** Nonsense. But what if ... Don't be a fool.
Angela approaches him.
- Angela:** You've stopped moving. You look pale.
- Bennett:** Flora, the witch, informed me I will become President.
- Angela:** Of what?
- Bennett:** The United States.
- Angela:** Flora? Why is she a witch?
- Bennett:** Acting like one. Along with her twins. Our hired help.
- Angela:** And why, pray tell, are they acting like witches?
- Bennett:** Juliet's doing, I presume.
- Angela:** Didn't you tell me Flora was homecoming queen?
- Bennett:** She's no ordinary witch. We used to date in high school.
- Angela:** And I had to know that, why?
- Bennett:** Back then, she even predicted I'd become a politician.
- Angela:** How clever of her.
- Bennett:** And, specifically, that I'd become this state's senator.
- Angela:** Credit me, a little, for prodding you onto victory.
- Bennett:** I'm indebted. Eternally.

He leans in and kisses her on the lips.

Angela: Shall we hire the witches to plan your next campaign?

Bennett: I'm just stating her predictions come true. It's uncanny.

Angela: As spooky as you are becoming.

He makes a ghoulish face.

Bennett: Boo.

Angela: Go mingle. Keep moving. Or you will *die*.

As they leave, Juliet and Raymond enter center stage.

Raymond: Jules, I'm not sure this was a brilliant idea of yours.

Juliet: We will alter the course of history for the better.

Raymond: And by doing so, *be* history? Your dad holds power.

Juliet: *Step*-father. As does yours. We will triumph.

Raymond: You father defeated mine. And *mine* will disown me.

Juliet: You own yourself.

Raymond: Except I lack money to pay for the cost of law school.

Juliet: Be strong.

Raymond: I don't like suffering. I wouldn't survive as a waiter.

She makes an overt display of kissing him on the lips.

Juliet: Be axis, bold as love.

Raymond: Hendrix, okay. I absolutely love Jimi.

Juliet: Then be as bold as *he*.

Ryan overhears them talking and comes over.

Ryan: Hey, dude, I thought you were in love with my sister?

Juliet: Ryan, take your leave. *Now*.

Ryan: I think not, Sister.

Juliet: Return to your virtual space-pod game

Ryan: Who's this Jimi guy you love? Are you gay?

Raymond: No.

Raymond walks away.

Ryan: What's up with Romeo?
Juliet: Buzz off.
Ryan: Victory! A direct hit. I short-circuited your vessel, Sis.
Juliet: What do you want, Ry?
Ryan: To know it's still you in there.
Ryan refocusses on his Gameboy and drifts off.
Ryan: And that you haven't gone totally mad.

SCENE 3

On the portico await Tricia and Donald Montague. Beyond this shelter, gusts of rain pelt the grounds. Donald pushes the doorbell. Bennett opens the door and expresses shock. He steps outside.

Bennett: What in blazes are *you* doing here?
Donald: We were invited.
Bennett: By whom?
Donald: This is a mistake.
Bennett: I'd say.
Donald: This can't be 39 Oceanview Drive.
Bennett: How the hell did you get past security?
Donald: I was given the gate code!
Bennett: By whom?
Raymond and Juliet appear at the door.
Donald: Raymond.
Raymond: Father.
Bennett: Father?
Donald: I thought you told me her surname was Amulet.
Raymond: It is. Juliet, this is my mother and father.

- Juliet:** Welcome, Montagues.
- Tricia:** Pleased to meet you, finally.
- Bennett:** Wait. What happened to your accent?
- Raymond:** What accent, Sir?
- Bennett:** A moment ago you were talking like some—like a—
- Donald:** Like a what?
- Bennett:** Nothing. Forget it.
- Juliet:** So gracious of you to join us on this portentous day.
A flurry of leaves and rain accent the distant thunder.
- Bennett:** Did you fail to realize, Jules, this is the enemy?
- Juliet:** Whom you did soundly defeat.
- Donald:** Unseat.
- Juliet:** Alas, Lord Bennett, be victorious. Declare a truce.
- Bennett:** *(to Juliet)* You've gone too far this time.
- Juliet:** Put away your two-faced rapier tongue. Make peace.
- Donald:** *(at Raymond)* Does she always talk like this?
- Bennett:** *(at Juliet)* How could you *do* this to me?
- Juliet:** By observing diplomatic channels. A written invitation.
- Donald:** *(at his wife)* We should leave.
- Bennett:** I respect your decision to vacate the premises.
Angela peers out from the front door.
- Angela:** Why is everyone outside? Oh.
She steps onto the portico too.
What a—surprise. Won't you come in. Have a martini?
- Bennett:** Angela?
- Angela:** My martinis are exquisite.
- Juliet:** To die for.
- Raymond:** They are rather good.
- Tricia:** Raymond, you don't drink alcohol.

Angela: Nonsense. Everyone drinks. How else can one survive?

Donald: This is insanity.

Bennett: There, you finally admit you *are* insane.

Donald: Go to hell.

Bennett: I exposed the truth about you, that's all.

Donald: There is no shame in—

Bennett: Telling the truth?

Donald: Seeking medical attention for—

Bennett: Outing you for being unfit to govern?

Donald: You're a ruthless son-of-a—Benedict Arnold!

Tricia: Gentlemen, please!

Angela: Let us try to be civilized pilgrims and Indians.

Bennett: Personally, I don't give a flying—

Angela: Vultures!
They all look toward the ocean.

Angela: Behind the gates. I see one. And another. There!

Donald: Paparazzi? Damn it. How did they know I'd be here?

Bennett: Forcing us to take shelter. Tricia, please, after you.

Tricia: You can flush down that false charm of yours, Benedict.
She pushes past him through the front door.

Bennett: *(at Donald)* Are you coming or going?

Donald: Coming in. Against my better judgement.

Bennett: No need to get paranoid.
Bennett grins. Donald bristles.

Bennett: I never devour my guests once inside.

Donald: Promises. From one whose word is valued less than a—

Angela: Gentlemen! I said, *behave*.
They enter the house to the sound of distant thunder.

SCENE 4

Nicolas abruptly lunges awake in the sofa chair. He is startled to see the three caterers standing around him, looking down.

Nicolas: How long have I been asleep?

Bryce: We were wagering on whether you were still alive.

Faun: Shrimp?

Nicolas sits up and stares at the trays of food.

Flora: You reek of juniper berries.

Faun: Distilled.

Flora: 6 ounces, by my estimation, plus or minus.

Bryce: You will be dead by sunrise if you resume at this pace.

Flora: Liver?

Nicolas: *(winces)* Ugh. No. Thank you.

Bryce: Toadstool?

Quintin stands unsteadily, a hand covering his mouth.

Nicolas: Excuse me.

He bolts for the front door and exits.

Flora: A cold shower might restore him.

Electronic beeping is heard as Ryan approaches.

Ryan: Aren't you three being paid to go around and serve us?

Bryce: Toadstool?

Ryan: Did you pick these in the woods today?

Faun: Yes, in the dark forest near our mossy cave.

Ryan: *(he eats a mushroom)* Will I die?

Bryce: Yes.

Faun: Nature's way, not our doing.

Flora: It's the body's climax.

Ryan: Are you enjoying the party?

Flora: We are not paid to enjoy ourselves.
Ryan eats another mushroom.

Ryan: Not bad. Are these the mind-altering kind?

Bryce: Yes.

Ryan: So I'll be having hallucinations?

Faun: You will.

Ryan: When?

Flora: When the future finds you.

Ryan: Could you be a little more vague?

Bryce: Yes.

Flora: Heed this: No one here gets out alive.

Ryan: You stole that line from a song.

Faun: The Doors.

Flora: Ah, he is a perceptive young lad.

Faun: Sister, now the translation.

Bryce: You will be experiencing visions of infinite wisdom.

Ryan: Tonight?

Bryce: Yes.

Flora: Is that too vague?
Ryan grins uneasily and backs away.

Ryan: Okay. I give. You win. You definitely out-weirded me.

Faun: Shrimp?

Ryan: I don't think so.

Flora: Liver?

Ryan: I take it all back. Don't come around to find me.
Ryan looks down at his Gameboy and wanders off.

SCENE 5

On a deck overlooking the ocean at sunset, Quintin is alone in the shadows, smoking a pipe. Juliet and Raymond walk onto the deck. Heard in the distance are ocean waves and thunder rumbling.

Raymond: Our fathers will likely kill each other.

Juliet: Mine has already succumbed to an untimely death.

Quintin: Jules, darling, hello, I'm right over here.

Quintin's presence in the shadows goes unnoticed.

Raymond: Their divisive public feuding sickens me.

Juliet: Likened to parasitic amoebas, yet unwilling to reform.

Raymond: It's hard to believe they were close friends in college.

Juliet: Best friends often devolve into the best of enemies.

Raymond: I hate politics.

Juliet: The politics of hate, is what we hate.

Raymond: This pandemic of stupidity is going to destroy us.

Juliet: And we are the sad fools cast within it.

Raymond: We're not fools.

Juliet: My mother thinks so. She sends spies. Next, assassins?

Raymond: She's overly protective, that's all.

Juliet: Nay. She has murdered the last orphan of filial trust.

Raymond: She means well.

Juliet: Mean, she is. And evil.

Raymond: Come on, Jules, she's not evil.

Juliet: Then a conniving weasel.

Raymond: An incredibly beautiful weasel, then.

Juliet: Of this she knows.

Raymond: So are you.

Juliet: A weasel?

Raymond: No. Beautiful.

Juliet frowns and looks away.

Juliet: It is but a cunning mask.

Raymond: Try to make amends with your mother.

Juliet: Must I make the birds swim and the fish fly too?

Raymond: Nay, I mean—*no*. Don't get me talking like you.

Juliet: But are we not kindred spirits?

Raymond: Housed in different skins.

Juliet: As are our two households, rooted in ancient division.

Raymond: I don't think this intervention is going to work.

Juliet: It shall. All from that *thing* called love. Yes? No?

Raymond shakes his head and looks away.

Raymond: Marko had better show up and come through for us.

Juliet: He hath not the power to resist.

Raymond: You told me he's a flake.

Juliet: An eccentric one who comes armed with precious wit.

Raymond: That's our weapon? Wit?

Juliet gazes pensively toward the stormy sky.

Juliet: Words are mad blossoms on a vine,
seasoned to wither and decline,
yet push forth to bear rare fruit of a kind
not meant for consumption, but accretion
toward reason, to bite for tasting sweet insight.
As our addled orbs spin forth toward dreams.
No happy endings. Alas, only happy inbetweens.
Quintin steps out from the shadows.

Juliet: Lo! Behold, who goes there? A ghost?

Quintin: Juliet, it's me. Your father.

- Juliet:** 'Tis but a madness of atoms stirring the air!
- Quintin:** Why do you keep avoiding me. Stay and talk.
- Juliet:** Though he be long dead, my father haunts me still.
Quintin appeals to Raymond as she reenters the house.
- Quintin:** Juliet blames me for the divorce with her mother.
- Raymond:** I believe her issues go deeper than that.
- Quintin:** Quite so. Angie was young. Twenty-three. We eloped.
- Raymond:** Sir?
- Quintin:** She was raised by a family who are political animals.
He relights his pipe.
- Quintin:** I didn't fit in. Wrong stripes. It was her way of rebelling.
- Raymond:** I'm not following.
- Quintin:** As time went on, Angie grew ambitious too. Politically.
He muses, puffing on his pipe.
- Quintin:** Family trait. Saw Bennett's potential. *She* divorced me.
- Raymond:** I'm sorry.
- Quintin:** (*shrugs*) What's going on with Juliet? Is she sick?
- Raymond:** Only mad in craft, Sir.

SCENE 6

Bennett, Donald, Angela & Tricia are standing with drinks in hand. The storm continues to brew outside. No one is talking.

- Donald:** This is awkward.
- Bennett:** Astute of you to notice.
- Donald:** Glorious weather.
- Angela:** Befitting the mood.
Frank Sinatra is heard singing That's Life.