

A TALE OF TWO FATHERS, WRITTEN WITH MY FATHER

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

KING CHARLES – **Nadine Ellis**

PRINCE NICOLAS – **Josh Schell**

LOYAL GUARD – **Intae Kim**

Reprise with Public Assembly on 12/13/19

KING CHARLES – **Amber Friendly**

PRINCE NICOLAS – **Josh Schell**

LOYAL GUARD – **Aaron Leddick**

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 goblet.

CHARLES: Good morrow Loyal Guard.

GUARD: Good morrow mi'lord... uh... there is a matter that needs // (addressing)

CHARLES: // A matter, what matter...? Ah, yes, The Royal Healer for thy son! I... uh... it pains me the messenger boys are unionizing... once they're found and killed, The Royal Healer shalt indeed visit thy boy.

GUARD: Of course, mi'lord. A thousand thank thee's mi'lord... but // (there is another)

Charles stops **Loyal Guard** with a motion.

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

GUARD: Uh, a thousand pardons mi'lordship... but... thy son ... he is hither and wishes an audience with thee... he hath 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 PENSRAW 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 endure 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 born from 29 winters of mal-hygiene, 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)** Loyal 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. //

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, work 'till end of sun. My memories art mostly of 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 ravished and killed by vicious brigands who to this day //(I curse with all my heart)

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'm certain The Royal Healer shalt be able to... //

CHARLES: // Enough!

Charles puts goblet 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? 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 cannot 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 left you, 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: // Do you really think you're some herald of the common 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! All of your little free love, creative make believe is paid for *with blood* by well-meaning feudal 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 LATETH. //

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* some royal accident did shortly befall my former father 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! Send all our healthy sons to The Prestigious Peshaw Academy! WE'LL FIND MY REAL DAD! //

GUARD: // DEATH TO THE KING, *QUEEN*! Take mine sword!

Guard puts out sword for **Nicolas**.

CHARLES: WHAT!?! NO! Loyal Guard! Arrest this child!

Nicolas takes sword.

NICOLAS: I am NOT a child!

Nicolas flourishes the sword and points it 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... //

GUARD: // Think of the status quo! Think of thy penis! Think of Little Jim!

Beat.

NICOLAS: I cannot. I cannot.

Nicolas gives the sword to **Guard** and slowly walks to **Charles**. They embrace.

Beat as **Guard** picks up the sword and realizes he's chosen the wrong horse here.

GUARD: Aw, BALLOCKS!

Guard runs off. Black & end of play.