

The Battle of Wills

By Pamela Morgan

Synopsis

Two men meet at a costume party and an epic battle of wills ensues.

Cast of Characters

Shakespeare - a person dressed up as William Shakespeare

Shatner - a person dressed up as William Shatner, dressed up as Captain Kirk.

Place

Any costume party, anywhere.

Time

Anytime.

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Setting: A *costume party*. Audience is standing in for the party goers and should be referred to as such. The set can be as simple as necessary, containing nothing at all or a drink table, balloons, etc. Two foam swords should be positioned for easy grabbing or tossing in from off stage.

At Rise: Shakespeare is standing at one end of the party, Shatner is at the other. As these things happen, their eyes meet.

(Shatner nods to Shakespeare. Shakespeare gives a bigger, more flourishing nod. Shatner gives a sort of flourishing bow. Shakespeare gives a bigger, more flourishing bow back. Shatner tries to outdo Shakespeare's flourishing bow with a bigger bow of his own, to which Shakespeare gives him a silent applause and a short flourish bow as if conceding the battle. Shatner silently accepts the applause, hand over his chest with a bow. Shakespeare imitates the gesture, but larger and more dramatically, hat off and across his chest. Shatner fumes for a moment, feeling outdone, then reconsiders, catches Shakespeare's eye and flashes the live long and prosper symbol. Shakespeare bites his thumb at Shatner.)

SHATNER

(storming over to Shakespeare)

Did you bite your thumb at me?

SHAKESPEARE

I do bite my thumb.

SHATNER

Did you bite it at me?

SHAKESPEARE

I do not bite my thumb at you, sir, but I bite my thumb. Don't be so melodramatic.

SHATNER

You dress up as William Shakespeare for a costume party and call me melodramatic.

SHAKESPEARE

I dressed up as the Bard himself, for a frolic among friends and family. You, however, dressed up as a two-bit hack.

SHATNER

Two-bit hack?! At least I only take credit for my own work.

SHAKESPEARE

What is that supposed to mean?

SHATNER

Two words. Christopher. Marlowe. Who, by the way, wrote the play that I starred in in my Broadway debut.

SHAKESPEARE

Of course he did, no one would have cast you in any quality production, and anything with that villain's name on it is definitely not quality.

SHATNER

I have dabbled in Shakespeare's work many times. Many say I embody the true essence of the Bard's intentions, as if I traveled through time and space from that long ago era, to bring his vision of theatricality to—

SHAKESPEARE

Priceline commercials.

SHATNER

To the screen.

SHAKESPEARE

Fine, a wager then. Thirty seconds, any of the Bard's finest monologues, soliloquies, or your favorite, as you colonials like to say, chit chat. We have plenty of willing bystanders here (*indicating audience members*), we will let them decide.

SHATNER

Look, I'm only dressed up as William Shatner, I don't-

SHAKESPEARE

Do you yield, sir?

SHATNER

I can't possibly be expected, off the top of my head to-

SHAKESPEARE

Do you yield?

SHATNER

(turning out to audience, suddenly performing)

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep-
No more - and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep;
To sleep, perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub.

(Shakespeare applauds, getting crowd to applaud.)

SHAKESPEARE

Well done, good sir! Bravo! He was good wasn't he?

(Shatner takes some bows to the adoring fans, Shakespeare waits a moment then turns to the audience, dropping his accent.)

SHAKESPEARE

Space: the final frontier. These are the voyages of the starship *Enterprise*. Its five-year mission: to explore strange new worlds. To seek out new life and new civilizations. To boldly go where no man has gone before!

SHATNER

That wasn't Shakespeare!

SHAKESPEARE

Nothing slips past you, does it? You see the dilemma now. Should I win, I prove the better actor. Should you win, I prove the better writer. Either way, I win.

(He takes a flourishing bow to the audience.)

SHATNER

I challenge you to a duel! A duel!

SHAKESPEARE

A duel? With what? Don't be absurd.

SHATNER

I have my phaser.

SHAKESPEARE

Ooh, what are you going to do, make funny noises at me?

SHATNER

Perhaps the good people here at this party have something.

SHAKESPEARE

Yes, let us summon the good people of this party to provide us with...what...sub sandwiches? Pool noodles?

SHATNER

(He is tossed two swords, by audience or from off stage.)

Swords!

SHAKESPEARE

Swords?!

(Shatner tosses him one, a sword fight ensues.)

SHAKESPEARE

How did you learn to sword fight?

SHATNER

(clearly winning the fight)

I studied advanced sword and shield techniques when I was cast in Alexander the Great.

SHAKESPEARE

(retreating and doing poorly)

But you're not Shatner! You're in a costume!

SHATNER

(pauses)

Oh...right!

(turns to retreat, Shakespeare advances)

SHAKESPEARE

I, on the other hand, penned the great fight between Tybalt and Mercutio.

(lunge, advance)

And Tybalt and Romeo

(lunge, advance)

And Romeo and Paris.

(lunge, parry, lunge, pause)

SHATNER

Well I played King Richard the III

(lunge parry advance)

Act V, a bloody, bloody duel.

(lunge parry lunge, pause)

SHAKESPEARE

In which Richmond defeated Richard the III and raced back into battle.

(lunge, parry, advance)

I also wrote the most famous fight between Hamlet and Laertes.

(lunge parry lunge, pause)

SHATNER

I played Laertes!

(lunge parry advance, pause)

SHAKESPEARE

Who was slain by Hamlet.

(lunge, parry advance pause)

SHATNER

I also played Hamlet!

(lunge, parry, advance, pause)

SHAKESPEARE

Who was slain by Laertes!

(lunge, parry, advance, pause)

SHATNER

I also played Horatio, who survived it all!

(lunge, parry, disarms Shakespeare)

SHAKESPEARE

Oh rubbish, you've played practically every role I ever wrote, that's terribly unfair.

SHATNER

Then you concede defeat.

SHAKESPEARE

I concede nothing.

SHATNER

Then how do we solve this duel?

SHAKESPEARE

I know! We must woo a woman.

SHATNER

What?

SHAKESPEARE

I have written the most eloquent sonnets of all time, and you are...considered moderately average, I assume.

SHATNER

Voted Sexiest Man Alive by People's Magazine, two times, and by Glam Magazine just this year.

SHAKESPEARE

Unbelievable.

SHATNER

James Tiberius Kirk, at your service.

SHAKESPEARE

Fine, choose a fair maiden.

SHATNER

A what?

SHAKESPEARE

Choose someone to woo.

SHATNER

Any volunteers?

(Selects an imaginary volunteer from across the room.)

That one, there. Woo away.

SHAKESPEARE

Of course I must go first, show you Neanderthal how it's done. You would what, sidle up to her and be all, well hello there, little lady.

SHATNER

Never, I have more charm than that.

SHAKESPEARE

Oh, yes, you have more charm. Perhaps you favor the old:

(Chin nods towards Shatner, like Joey from Friends.)

How you doing.

SHATNER

No, I would strike up a conversation, compliment something, make a connection.

SHAKESPEARE

Make a connection.

(directed to Shatner)

When in the chronicles of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead, and lovely knights,
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing;
For we, which now behold these present days,
Had eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

(There is a silence between the two men as they stare deeply into each others eyes, struck by their equal greatness.)

SHATNER

Well, that was nice but I'm going after the prize!

(He lunges forward, Shakespeare should pull him back, lunge ahead, Shatner pulls him back then they stop and look in the direction of where the imaginary person was.)

SHAKESPEARE

They're speaking to someone! Who is that vile man?

SHATNER

Damnit, William, I know exactly who that man is.

SHAKESPEARE

Who, tell me!

SHATNER

It's Will (*Wheaton/Smith/Hung/Prince William/any current celebrity well-known Will*). I hate that man!

SHAKESPEARE

What woman would choose that second-rate-Will over one of us?

SHANTER

(This line should reference the famous celebrity Will in some way.) Like choosing Next Generation over the original Star Trek! or We are clearly the fresher Princes! or I guess she bangs! or It's good to be the king!

SHAKESPEARE

Alas, it appears, the better Will has won.

(They bow to each other, then head off together.)

End of Play.

