

# HOMONYMS

by Eric Boyd

Madison was not stupid, just uncultured. She knew nothing of England, but decided to travel from New York to Warwickshire to see Shakespeare's grave. She hoped to capture some sort of magic from seeing the playwright's tomb, believing that seeing his grave would somehow make her a better writer. Madison herself was a playwright; her last produced work was *The Horny Janitor*, which received mixed reviews during its six week run at a community theatre in Pittsburgh. She hadn't written a play in over a year; she thought the trip would be good for her. The plane ticket to England was very expensive, but Madison was able to stay with her old friend, Caleb, from art school.

Before heading to Shakespeare's grave, Caleb took Madison to the White Horse Inn to have a few drinks. Madison was anxious about the entire trip, but visiting the grave seemed particularly nerve racking for her.

"You've nothing to worry about, dear," Caleb said, sipping at a glass of wine.

"I want to experience something, y'know?" Madison said, running her fingers through a bed of her blonde hair. "I want to see that grave and feel something, like feel his genius go through me."

"That's the silliest thing I've ever heard. You spent five hundred pounds for this trip?"

"Eight hundred dollars."

"I'm pretty sure that's the same thing," Caleb laughed. "You didn't study much before you came over here, did you?"

"Whatever. Do you have any cigarettes?"

"No, I don't. Sorry, dear."

Caleb offered the rest of his wine to Madison, she finished it, then they both had a cup of tea before leaving.

They arrived at the Holy Trinity church twenty minutes later. Madison took a deep breath as she looked at the shadowy, arched entrance.

"Shakespeare's bones are in there," she said. "Why aren't you excited, Caleb?"

"Because I deal with tourists telling me to be excited for something I've already seen thirty times."

"You've seen it thirty times and you've never even felt the urge to write a play?"

"Do you even like Shakespeare?" Caleb asked.

"I saw that *Romeo and Juliet* movie that had Leonardo DiCaprio," Madison said.

Caleb sighed.

"Twice," she smiled.

Caleb shook his head. They entered the church.

The interior of the church was old and large and stunning. Light shone through stained glass panels featuring Jesus with a dove hovering over his head. A small group of people was huddled in front of Shakespeare's grave. Madison took another breath. She was prepared to pass out at any time, carrying a bum bag around her waist filled with various pills, powders, and remedies. She was prepared for anything.

Madison knew that, once in front of the grave, something would happen. She would experience something powerful. William Shakespeare would materialize out of thin air and instill Madison with everything which made his work so cherished. Madison's next play, *Urban Gangbang: a tragedy*, which she had scribbled notes for during the last seven months, would be a smashing success. There would be many awards. She had been working on the play for a long time, but after this it could be finished. And it would be great. All because she saw the grave.

She walked forward through the beautifully carved pews. Caleb stayed behind. Shakespeare's Grave was in the chancel of the church, in front of the altar. Madison still couldn't see past the small

crowd surrounding the grave. As she walked, her bum bag jingle-jangled loudly; the grave-crowd began to turn around.

"Awful tourists," one woman in a black veil said.

As the annoyed crowd continued to turn around, staring at Madison, a view of the grave appeared. In between the irritated bodies lay William Fucking Shakespeare. Madison could hardly contain herself. She could almost see it, but pots of flowers blocked her view. Though there were only five or six onlookers, Madison couldn't squeeze between them to see the grave.

"Won't one of you tea-suckers move?!"

"Whatarudeyoungladywhydoesn'tshgobackhomestupidgirlsorudeterribleAmericans..." the crowd angrily muttered amongst each other.

But the crowd finally opened up and Madison was in. She could see it. Shakespeare's grave.

It was a tiny block of cement outlined by an old blue rope; the plaque above the grave said something Madison couldn't understand. Most of the flowers on the grave were wilted and they stunk.

No, Madison thought. This can't be it. This can't be. I must be at the wrong Shakespeare's grave, because this is *stupid*.

She continued to look, hoping she was wrong, hoping that, at any moment, it would hit her. Something would hit her so hard that she would be overcome with brilliance. Where was it?

"I don't get it," Madison said to herself.

"AAAAARGUHUUH!"

The woman in a black veil fell to her back, rolling around.

"My heart doth beat for thee, my earthly love," she said in a garbled voice.

"What's going on?" Madison said, "I think she's speaking in tongues!"

"No, it's Iambic pentameter!" an old man in the crowd shouted. Madison unzipped her bum bag. "Don't worry!" she said. "I have some smelling salt in my fanny pack!"

"She has it where?!" the old man gasped, then began coughing hysterically.

"What? Is smelling salt bad? I have plenty of other stuff in my fanny pack."

"You hear that? It's all up in her fanny," a boy in the crowd snickered.

"What? It is! I have lots of things in my fanny pack. Does she need water?"

"Not from where you'd get it," someone else said.

Caleb ran up from the back of the church. "What's going on?"

"This woman was touched by the spirit of Shakespeare!" the old man said, regaining his breath.

"What? Her? No!" Madison shouted. "Not her! I spent eight hundred dollars to get here!"

Caleb grabbed Madison and began dragging her out of the church. The young boy in the crowd lifted a heavy brass bowl of holy water from the alter and poured it over the possessed woman's face. The crowd began to trip from the slippery ground and fall over themselves.

Outside of the church, Madison continued cursing the old woman, the church, and Shakespeare. Caleb walked her back to the White Horse Inn, hoping to talk sense into her.

"Why are you so upset?" Caleb asked as he walked to the barman and asked for two pints of cider.

"I was supposed to get possessed. Me!" she shouted. "If I wanted to see an old hag roll on the ground and babble, I would have stayed in New York. I was supposed to become a great writer."

Caleb returned to the booth with the two glasses of cider and sat down. "Don't yell like that. I'm sure plenty of people write just

fine without seeing graves, otherwise writers would just be sitting around cemeteries all day."

"I don't know," Madison sighed. "Why was everyone laughing at me at the church?"

"I told you that you didn't study before you came here, didn't I?" Caleb said. "A fanny is what we call a vagina here. You were saying you had smelly salt and pills and water and whatever else in your vagina," Caleb laughed.

"Y'know, this entire time you've done nothing but giggle and laugh at me! I know plenty about England! I didn't know one thing about fannies, that's it."

"Alright Madison," Caleb said.

"I'm just as cultured as anyone else," she said. "I just wish I had a damn cigarette."

Hearing this, the barman stepped out from behind the counter. "Would the lady like a fag?" he asked.

"Sure, why not? I'm just as cultured as anybody. Why wouldn't I like a fag?" Madison said, offended. "And I think it's rude to even call them that. I happen to have plenty of gay friends back in New York."

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