

One Regrettable Talent for Tragedy

by strannikov

Vandalina graduated from the Paramount School of Theatrical Arts as a thespian of tragicomic comportment and range. She embarked on her career of serious dramatic roles to widespread acclaim, her depth of feeling and potency of delivery winning her thunderous ovations and gushing reviews wherever she traveled and in whatever role she played.

Once two theatrical seasons had passed, however, even with her fame as a tragedian secured for all time and eternity both, Vandalina began to experience dreadful and appalling problems with flatulence. At first, she merely exposed her fellow actors to quiet infestations of disagreeable odors confined to the stage proper, resulting in abrupt miscues and bewildering facial contortions: their stage responses infuriated leading critics and theatre reviewers, who interpreted Vandalina's fellow actors' spontaneity as signs of petty jealousy, mean-spirited attempts to sabotage Vandalina's justly noble career as the leading tragedian of the age.

By the end of the next season, Vandalina's squitty farts were attaining auditory capability that required much stammering and harrumphing from her fellow actors in order to conceal the precise source of these ghastly abominations stealing from her nether throat. Theatre managers were forced to equip their stages with just the number of offstage electric fans necessary to circulate each performance's foul vapors. Backstage skylights had to be left agape even on raw winter evenings to help dispel the noxious fumes. Vandalina's manager began supervising her diet between shows and between seasons.

Another season later, Vandalina's performances were becoming objectionable to theatre patrons formerly anxious to sit on

the rows closest to whatever stage she emoted and gesticulated from. Her new manager suggested a greater variety of dramatic roles: that season, Vandalina went from Ibsen and Chekhov to Miller and Williams before reverting to Sophocles, Aeschylus, Euripides, and Shakespeare and back again, but the variety and depth and challenge of these markedly tragical roles did nothing to compensate for her blatant and rancid farting. Her costume designers began resigning one after the other once Vandalina's squitty farts progressed from suspicious stains to unambiguous skid marks on their hand-crafted works. Requests for outdoor performances were kindly proffered.

The very next season, audience members began objecting strenuously to their mistreatment and ticket prices, and stage reviewers responded to this public clamor by objecting to the raucous interference Vandalina's nether throat was contributing to her dramatic deliveries. Vandalina's fragrant rearward blasts grew so violent as to split her costumes in the likeliest of places and actually shred backdrops and curtains depending on how the stages and productions were blocked. Costumers and stage designers soon refused to work with her at all. Theatre patrons united in arming themselves with ornate fans, which became the season's notable fashion statement for men and women alike. By the end of this dreadful season, impolite twittering and rude guffaws were erupting from atop and beneath the balconies at the respective rears of the respective theaters Vandalina performed in, and vociferous challenges to the continuation of her dramatic career inevitably began to dominate her performance reviews. Stern demands for outdoor performances proliferated.

At the suggestion of the manager she engaged at the end of this most dreadful season, Vandalina readied herself in short months to begin a season dedicated to prominent roles in ribald comedies where her squitty farting was more amenable to prevailing taste, at least as long as theatres' electric fans refused to malfunction.

The most striking feature of Vandalina's comedic career thereafter was her costumers' insistence on dressing her in black,

often in material heavy enough to restrict her stage movements, though audiences quickly discounted her immobility in favor of her exquisite comic timing and their preservation from olfactory assault and battery.

Quite naturally, in her memoirs Vandalina confessed to gut-wrenching stage fright besetting her from the end of her second season, a terror that overwhelmed her after she'd masticated a tragic farce by François Villon and swallowed a Senecan comedy by Niccolò Machiavelli.

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