

Really BAD Shakespeare – Season 1

By Weeb

Episode 7: Each Playing Many Parts

Beatrice quickly sits up in bed, fear and confusion masking her face; Aaron walks into the room like the Little Lord Fauntleroy he believes himself to be, prepared to do whatever needs to be done to prevent Armageddon from ending before it begins; and I, Shakespeare, begin mentally questioning everything that has transpired over the last few hours.

Even though I know Aaron is something unworldly from Hell, there is something about his sudden appearance that just doesn't make sense... like, WHY is he here? Roger has never before sent an emissary to do his bidding with me. Everyone knows that the Lord and Ruler of Hell is an attention seeking whore, so WHY would he send a child to deliver a message... if that is why he's here? And, why did Beatrice hit me with the car if Aaron is here to help me? Shouldn't he have tried to prevent me from being almost killed? If I died now, wouldn't Armageddon be a total bust on our part? And, when I was lying on the ground, why was Aaron so insistent in discovering if I was dead? He seemed to almost cherish... no, desire... the thought that I might have been killed. Why was he even on Earth, contacting me? Why was he changing the plans? Why was he treating me like a second-hand antichrist...

Why... Why... Why...

Then there is Beatrice... How did Beatrice, someone who appears so sweet and kind, fit into our plan for Armageddon? She appears oblivious to everyone and thing happening around her. **WAIT!** How did I know what was happening inside the car, moments before they hit me? How could I have known her thoughts during that time? How could I have known her entire backstory before she even told me about it (though I played it cool... like the iceman)? **OH FUCK!** How could I have known about her dream? There is another party working behind the scenes, foreshadowing an event that hasn't even been scripted yet.

This “someone” has warned Beatrice about us, made clear that she is playing a much larger role in the coming days, that she is... what did he refer to her as... the MOTHER.

How... How... How...

No matter how hard I try... these pieces

DO NOT

quite fit.

Who is telling this story?

I thought I was... **AM**... me, Shakespeare Williams, the Antichrist, recounting the beginning of the end for all the members of the opposable thumb tribe... but someone, someone who has the ability to traipse into another person’s life without any thought or consideration, has interrupted MY story several times and provided information that I could not know. An omnipresent narrator has high-jacked my present tense autobiography several times, leaving me on the sideline like a secondary character.

I do not appreciate this!

How many of “us” are there wanting to tell this story?

And, most important,

which one of us is telling the truth...

and who is playing what part?

“Is everything alright, mommy?” Aaron asks.

Beatrice brings her hand up to brush the hair from her face. She stops in mid-movement, her hand freezing inches from her face. She stares in horror at the Virginia Slims cigarette she holds between her

index and middle fingers. She shrieks, tosses the cigarette across the room, jumps out of bed, and moves as close to the distant wall as she can get – providing plenty of open space between all of us.

When she speaks, her voice shakes nervously: “What the fuck is going on here?”

“What do you mean, mommy?” Aaron answers, slowly moving closer. “You must have had a bad dream... you know mommy, maybe you’re still dreaming?”

“I’m not dreaming Aaron,” she snaps. “I don’t wake up from dreams holding cigarettes in my hand. Now, someone better tell me what’s going on here.”

“I agree,” I add from the hallway. “I want to know the answer to that question too.”

Aaron turns toward me, anger clouding his angelic face, “Don’t YOU start with me, Shakespeare. It’s bad enough that I have to deal with this irrational mortal woman and –”

“Irrational mortal woman,” Beatrice repeats. She slides down the wall into a sitting position, her arms cross in a personally protective gesture. Her eyes dart from Aaron to me, back and forth, wishing for a logical answer from someone, anyone, friend or foe. “I’m your mother, Aaron! I’m not some irrational mortal woman. I know, yeah, you must be right... I must still be dreaming. That’s it! I had too much to drink and my subconscious is really taking me on one fucked up ride. That’s it, right?”

“No Beatrice, unfortunately, you’re awake. Aaron and I have some things that need to be explained to you.”

Aaron turns to face me. “Now whose fucking side are you on? Grow a set, Shakespeare, or this fucking irrational mortal woman will win.”

“Aaron, you will not use that language!” Beatrice yells, the motherly side of her coming out. “And I AM NOT an irrational mortal woman! I AM YOUR FUCKING MOTHER!”

“I agree with Beatrice, don’t refer to your mother as an irrational mortal woman anymore. Show her some respect or I’ll –”

“Or you’ll what?”

“Don’t you threaten my son you thumbless freak!”

“Beatrice, I’m on your side. Calm down so that we can discuss this like rational –”

“THAT’S IT!”

Aaron screams in a deep, testicle dropping voice.

“Everyone just calm the fuck down!”

“Don’t you talk like that,” Beatrice warns.

Aaron whips around, his eyes glowing fiery red, “Enough with this fucking mortal – SLEEP!”

Beatrice’s eyes close, her head drops to her chest, and she falls instantly in a deep dark dreamless sleep.

“You shouldn’t do that to your mother.” I reprimand the child.

“Shakespeare, what’s your problem?” Aaron marches up to me and places his hands on his hips. Rage burns in his eyes. “You’re acting like such a goody-two-shoes. Where are your balls, man? Were they cut off at the same time your thumbs were?”

Time stands still...

pieces click, begin to fit...

information starts becoming clearer...

verbal gaffes make sense...

questions become clearer...

This child is not a messenger! This child

IS MY REPLACEMENT!

“It all makes sense now, Aaron.” I tell him, my anger starting to rise. “If you weren’t 5 years old, oh the horrendous things I would do to you.”

“What you talkin ‘bout Shakespeare?” He says all innocent like.

I kneel down so we are eye to eye. “You know exactly what I’m talking about, Aaron. Don’t play me as a fool. I have you figured out like yesterday’s news. It just took me a little while to fit the pieces together but, after your little verbal mistake...”

“You’re talking insane, Shakespeare,” he stutters. I can see it in his face, he is becoming nervous. “Maybe you should go to sleep too? You’re not thinking right.”

I laugh in his face. “Your parlor tricks won’t work on me, little one. So, before this gets really ugly, I suggest you come clean right now.”

He fidgets... he starts to shake... tears rim his eyes...

“Oh knock it off,” I snap. “That might work on Beatrice, but not on me. Here, let me start for you... I know all about what happened in the car tonight. You wanted Beatrice to hit me. That was all part of your plan, wasn’t it? See, you can’t kill me... it goes against the **RULES**. But, if a mortal kills me, well, I’d just be another antichrist statistic taken out before his time. With me out of the way, you ambitious little fuck, you could then take my place without any problems whatsoever.”

He snivels. “I didn’t want to hurt you, Shakespeare.”

“Bullshit! For some unknown reason you want me out of the picture. Now, the big question is – WHY?”

A heavy silence fills the air between us. Our eyes lock. His tears vanish and I can tell that he is getting a grip on himself. He changes – not physically – but I can see the projection of an innocent 5 year old boy vanish... In his place is another person, someone like me – another antichrist who is filled with all the knowledge of our ancestors.

“Ok, let’s play this your way,” he begins with a smile. “You want the truth... well, you can’t handle the truth! Shakespeare, you’ve become weak in this world. Father needs someone who is going to do the right thing, at the right moment, without hesitation or emotion. You’ve become one of THEM. Just like that little phone call tonight. What do you think that was going to accomplish? Well, let me tell you brother – it accomplished nothing! Oh sure, you pissed off the other side but that was about it. See, while you’re playing all of your little emotional games the other side is using your weaknesses in **THEIR** favor. They know how to push your buttons, how to get a reaction out of you... **You’ve become THEIR puppet.**”

Fury like I have never felt floods through me. “How dare you say such a thing? I’m loyal to our cause! My duty is to bring about the destruction of the human race and nothing or no one is going to stop me.”

“Then we have a little problem here, don’t we. You spit out words like loyalty and duty, but you continue to ‘sleep’ with the enemy.”

This last statement hits me like a slap across the face. He is right. I am sleeping with the enemy. While I thought I was only getting closer to Shepherd to gain information and confidence, I had actually fallen in love with him. That was the real explanation concerning the telephone call I made earlier. I wasn’t starting Armageddon... I was pissed off because he thought more of his God than he did of me! It was nothing more than a stupid lover’s quarrel. It had nothing to do with the war.

Aaron is right – I HAVE lost sight of my goal because of this fucked up emotion that you members of the thumbed tribe call - LOVE.

“What’s wrong Shakespeare? Cat suddenly got your tongue?” He laughs and steps right up to me with all the confidence in the world. “You, my brother, are nothing more than a blot of total disgrace for our cause. You are a liability... a liability that needs to be taken out... if you get what I mean.”

I stand up, my head spinning. This isn’t how it is supposed to go down. I have experienced far too much torture and pain to lose it all because of my emotions, emotions that I promised myself on the day I lost my thumbs that I will never feel. I stumble backwards, needing to get away from the horrendous replacement standing before me.

My body starts to shake...

black dots flash before my eyes...

my heart thuds against my chest like a jackhammer...

trying to break free

tears fill my eyes...

I moan, cry, shriek

like a baby...

and, just when it can’t get any worse,

I pass out...

Episode 8: There Is No Evil Angel But Love

Through the darkness, I see his face... it is Shepherd.

Ten years older than me, in his mid-thirties, with streaks of gray running through his shoulder length jet-black hair. He stares at me with piercing black eyes, eyes that could see past the outward façade of my mask and deeply into my soul. His wrinkle free skin, darkly tanned; his nose and lips, perfectly formed. Even in the most trying of times, he radiates calmness and security.

He is faultless in every aspect.

No doubt about it,

Shepherd is an ANGEL...

My immortal enemy.

We met about a year ago.

I was standing on the corner of Thirty-third and Third Street in downtown Potter's Field, minding my own business, when this stranger approached me. He wore a basic black trench coat over a nondescript black suit, shirt and tie. He stopped directly in front of me, a darkly dressed seraph, and smiled.

"Excuse me," he said in a calm, controlled, soothing voice. "Would you happen to be Shakespeare Williams?"

"That could be me." I mumbled, not one who enjoyed associating with any member of the opposable thumb tribe. I attempted to walk around him, but he moved with me... never once taking his eyes off me. Extremely uncomfortable, anger built up inside me. "Do you mind? I'm in a hurry and don't have time for this bullshit."

He laughed, and our eyes locked.

The windows to the soul opened and, without needing to say another word, I knew exactly WHO, and WHAT, he was.

"Shit, you found me..." was all I could say.

"Shakespeare," Shepherd's voice drifts softly through the darkness, "This is not the time for sleeping or walking down memory lane. You need to open your eyes and deal with the present situation before it's too late."

A quote by Sun Tzu, a 6th century Chinese military strategist and author of *The Art of War*, drifted through my brain:

"It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles; if you do not know your enemies but do know yourself, you will win one and lose one; if you do not know your enemies nor yourself, you will be imperiled in every single battle."

With this knowledge, I knew what was required of me... I had to make Shepherd – my known enemy – my closest ally and dearest friend. No matter what I needed to do, no matter what feelings required overcoming or actions taken, Shepherd had to be part of my life.

I swear I was only doing what was essential for my survival.

I was keeping my friends close and my enemies even closer.

Love, or desire, had nothing to do with my decision.

Love,

unfortunately,
was an emotion
that I never dreamed
would be part of the equation.

“So tell me,” Shepherd said one night, “Why did they take your thumbs?”

I rolled over and turned away from him. This was a subject I didn’t like talking about. It was a personal experience, a religious experience shared between me and my Father. After several minutes of silence, once I formulated the perfect politically correct argument, I answered. “It was an offering... kind of the way your God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac.”

“But God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son. At the last minute, an angel came and provided a ram for the sacrifice. It was all a test of faith, to see if Abraham would do what was right... nothing more. It was purely symbolic.”

I faced him. “And this only proves your God’s weakness. Sometimes, actions speak louder than words.”

We fell silent, each thinking of our religious indoctrination – his for GOOD, mine for pure EVIL. We were as different as night and day... but our common ground was the twilight. It’s within those shades of gray that every person, whether good or bad, must exist in if they intend to survive humanity’s reality.

After a while, he asked: “Have you ever doubted Him?”

I raised my head and laughed, “Never... just as you’ve never doubted your God.”

“Listen to me, Shakespeare,” Shepherd’s voice continues, “You need to stop with this silliness and wake up. This is neither the time nor the place... Come back... the twilight has been triumphed and total darkness created... You have to prevail... you have to wake up.”

But, I lied.

There was one point in my life that I did have reservations.

I was about 13, it was on September 11th ...

when the buildings fell.

In a cloud of smoke and dust, they crumbled to the ground. There wasn't anything that could be done to stop it. People ran down the street in a panic, clouds of smoke and rubble chasing behind them, and the television cameras were locked on the sight.

Horror and tragedy, trapped eternally on film.

Before the buildings hit the ground, the rewind button was pressed and I watched them resurrect themselves. My heart was breaking, but I was told I needed to watch it again – in slow motion this time. My Father truly believed I needed to see such destruction... but slower this time. I needed to see every millisecond of horror that transpired earlier that day.

At the beginning of the video, the entire nightmare started again. HE played the tape in slow motion, showing the horrendous moments contained within each frame of the video.

"Look at this," he said with an excited smile, "You can actually see people jumping from the top floors."

I turned toward him, actually horrified at these words.

Having been raised on the horrors of history, I didn't think anything could shock me. I have seen documentaries concerning the atrocities of war and read countless books about what the soulless can do to their fellow man... Hell, I had even suffered through the mutilation of my own body in the name of my Father... but... but this was different. This incident was happening NOW – in so-called real time. How could someone view such material as if they were only watching a horror movie? Didn't HE realize that those were real people leaping for their lives, only to find the sweet comfort of death at the end of their plunge? This wasn't special effects – this was reality, plain and simple.

This was what I was CREATED for – destruction on a global level.

My heart broke,

shattered...

and I doubted.

Maybe Aaron is right? Maybe I'm not suited for this job? No matter how hard I try, there is this little piece of humanity still within me... a little piece that even HE can't take away. I wonder about the others, the ones who came before me... Stalin, Hitler, Mr. Rogers... Did they also suffer from this same dilemma? Was that why all the antichrists before me had failed? Did we, as humans (with or without thumbs), always possess that one aspect within our soul that makes us strive for the survival of humanity... is that what LOVE really means?

Love is an emotion of strong affection and personal attachment. In philosophical context, love is a virtue representing all of human kindness, compassion, and affection. Love is central to many religions, as in the Christian phrase, "God is love" or Agape in the Canonical gospels. Love may also be described as actions towards others (or oneself) based on compassion, or as actions towards others based on affection. In English, the word love can refer to a variety of different feelings, states, and attitudes, ranging from generic pleasure ("I loved that meal") to intense interpersonal attraction ("I love my partner"). "Love" can also refer specifically to the passionate desire and intimacy of romantic love, to the sexual love of eros (cf. Greek words for love), to the emotional closeness of familial love, or to the platonic love that defines friendship, to the profound oneness or devotion of religious love. This diversity of uses and meanings, combined with the complexity of the feelings involved, makes love unusually difficult to consistently define, even compared to other emotional states. Love in its various forms acts as a major facilitator of interpersonal relationships and, owing to its central psychological importance, is one of the most common themes in the creative arts. Science defines what could be understood as love as an evolved state of the survival instinct, primarily used to keep human beings together against menaces and to facilitate the continuation of the species through reproduction.

All of us are created to suffer, to show our beliefs in different behaviors and customs... From Buddhists, to Christians, to Muslims, to Jews, to Satanists... we all strive for the preservation of our beliefs.

To overcome?

To survive?

Maybe Aaron is a new breed, the next generation, a combination of all the previous antichrists? Maybe Aaron is nothing more than a totally heartless being... one without a soul or without a conscience. Maybe he is the TRUE antichrist? A perfect being of destruction designed for only one purpose – the complete annihilation of humanity.

Maybe...

***“Shakespeare,” Shepherd shouts,
“WAKE THE FUCK UP, NOW!”***

My eyes snap open.

Beatrice straddles my midsection. Her eyes completely white, having rolled into the back of her head. On her face is a frozen expression of pure hatred.

Above her head she holds, in both hands, a large butcher’s knife...

“Do it,” Aaron orders...

before I can react,

Beatrice brings the knife down...

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