Vititi Fructus

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The Cast

The Director: Morrie was the boss of Broadway. Treachery from all fronts brought him down. Most of the crew worked for him during the glory days. They have grudges.

Adam: Scott

Eve: Rachel

Director’s assistant: Stacy drinks to much coffee, but she’s good.

Adam understudy: Chad comes from some tough breaks.

Eve understudy: Tiffany stays near Chad. At first, she does not speak up. She has a startlingly beautifully voice.

Light tech: Gillette, an old balding black man.

Set manager: John is a middle-aged gay AA. He does leatherwork and upholstery for a living.

Remote camera operator: Cody is a skateboarder. He gets caught with Rachel.

Theater critic: Harvey is secretive and sneaky, turns on the charm when put on the spot.

Makeup artist: Hammersmith is a Viet Nam vet. He has painful secrets.

Sound Lady: Robin, a strong attractive woman.

Child actor: Brucie, troublemaker.

Child actor’s mother: Clair, the enabler.

The Play

Act I

Stage is dark.

Morrie: Okay. Let there be light already.

Loud clicks. Lights coming up, showing the crew, one by one. The stars come up almost last. Then the lights shine on the understudies, biting their lips, looking pensive. There are real and stuffed animals around them, a few scraggly fake plants

Brucie: I want to go home. This is boring.

Robin backhands him.

Robin: Shut up, you brat.

Everybody applauds.

Clair: You just wait until he gets his law degree.

Robin: He’ll be lucky to get a passing grade in sandbox.

Morrie: TS Gallows wrote this play.

John: So.

Morrie: He’s the guy who revolutionized sit-coms.

Hammersmith: Oh yeah.

Morrie: Yep. He decided that comedy shows do not need to be that funny, to work. That was his breakthrough, and he became amazingly prolific. Sadly, television comedies got to where they would only give you a giggle. Never a side ache.

Scott: So he’s a big name?

Morrie shakes his head in disgust.

Morrie: You talk to them.

Stacy: I have never seen thesbionics/acting like this.

Rachel: Really? That good!

Stacy: You perform like we starched your jeans and left the cardboard in your shirts, even though you’re naked as the days you were born.

Racel: Oh.

Morrie: What she means is, we need time together to talk things out. Not just you actors. The whole crew. We need to come together as a team.

First lights out, we see the critic on the phone. The monitor delivers grainy black and white footage like a movie you saw in school.

Harvey: Hold the presses, boss. We’re going to trash this forbidden fructus flop.

Act II

Lights come on and the stars are gone. Fruits are gone, too. The stars come back. Rachel’s hair is a mess. Scott is tucking in his shirt.

Morrie shakes his head.

Morrie: Take five.

Morrie goes out for a Lucky. Concession people and an usher are down the alley.

Morrie: They should pay these kids better. Three of them are sharing a cigarette.

Gillette: When my wife died. I got so depressed. I wanted to die.

Hammersmith: I’m glad you didn’t.

Gillette: I tried. I heard about some dangerously strong heroin, and I bought a balloon-full. I shot it up and drifted away. Then some idiot broke into my apartment and he called 911.

Morrie: Did he wait for the ambulance?

Gillette: No. He stole all my stuff down the fire escape.

Chad: I’m in the dark about all this bible stuff.

John: Well, for starters, the real Adam lived to be over nine hundred years old.

Tiffany: That’s ridiculous. Nobody lives that long.

John: Think about it, people had a healthier lifestyle back then. The Bible says Methuselah lived to be 969 years old.

Tiffany: Seriously?

John: Yeah. You know Methuselah quit drinking for five hundred years.

Hammersmith: I’ll bet they gave him a nice chip for that.

John: Oh yeah. But one night at a banquet, he relapsed.

Hammersmith: Damn!

John: I know. It wasn’t his fault. He got goaded into it by a hot looking hundred twenty-five-year old.

Set manager: Rim shot noise.

Robin: I’ve gone to plenty of meetings. Guys love hearing about me wondering where my bra went in the morning.

Morrie: I’m Morrie and I’m not an alcoholic. I know. Half the people in community theater do the twelve steps. Stop turning this into one of your meetings.

Stacy: Boss. John made a good point. Pollution, chem-trails and over-processed food, it’s a wonder we live as long as we do.

Morrie: You’re making me hungry. Take five, everybody.

Act III

Stacy: Pools of poison? Let me see, now. The event horizon contaminated the Gulf of Mexico. Fukushima irradiated the Pacific. Meanwhile, poisons flood into our bodies, no matter how hard we try.

Robin: If you took all the chemicals that your body generates when you get mad, it would kill you.

John: Instant karmas gonna get you.

Goes dark. The critic is with Tiffany.

Critic: Like my dear departed mother always said: “If you want to make sure a play flops, you have to write it yourself,” and that’s just what I did. I’m TS Gallows.

Tiffany: TS Gallows! I love your sci-fi stories. The one with the dog and the goat.

Critic: That’s so encouraging. I’ve struggled for so long. Let’s have a drink.

Tiffany joins him for a few swallows of scotch. He hugs her, starting with patting her butte and then tearing clothing. Tiffany screams. The critic runs away.

People arrive.

Stacy: Tiffany, what happened? You’ve torn your dress.

John: And you reek of alcohol.

Robin: Our age group. If a girl wants to get a good man, she has to steal him. The man who’s not taken, he’s busy getting drunk every night, smoking in his room and peeing into a bottle. He might be a good man, but he will never be good in bed.

Hammersmith: I resent that remark. I may get drunk and pee into an occasional bottle in my lonely apartment. But if some lady gives me the high sign, I will make it a good night for her.

Robin: Is that so?

Hammersmith: And I’ll smoke you out and take you out to breakfast in the morning.

Robin: Hmm. Sounds lovely.

Morrie: I’m Morrie, and, okay, I admit it already, I’m a drunk. Christmas season, I was in a subway station, and the holidays had me bummed. I was standing on the wrong side of the station when an event short circuited my bummer.

Scott: Boring!

Morrie: Shut up kid. This pretty young lady got on the train. As the doors closed, it knocked her arm, and she dropped her purse.

Scott: Cool. You told her to come back and she gave you a reward. I’ll bet she had money, drugs and shooters in her purse.

Morrie: I’ll never know.

Scott: Tell me you got lucky?

Morrie nods.

Morrie: I looked at her, and I looked down at her purse. I picked it up and I shoved it through the rubber gaskets on the doors. I held it in her face.

Scott: Damn! You could have got some bank. Maybe even her.

Hammersmith: She mouthed a thank you. I nodded you’re welcome. It was the best moment of my life.

Adam: What?

Morrie: Yeah. You flip burgers. You sweep floors. No matter how many cars you wash, you’ll never have a house to drive your relatives by.

Chad: I helped build a house once.

Morrie: I never wrote a hit single. I never knocked one out of the park. But I saved a lady’s Christmas. And I didn’t ask for anything in return.

Hammersmith: Hey, Prince Valiant. Don’t sell yourself short. All those floors you swept and idiots you endured, day by day, you made things better for people. Just your smile when you cleared a customer’s table. You made somebody feel better.

John: I’m just glad I was at peace with my parents when they died.

Stacy: Aren’t we getting off track here?

Morrie: I’d say we finally got on track. Insults and all, we’re getting to know each other.

John: Except the kids. What makes you pretty people so precious? Ever have any dirty love?

Scott: Hey, I’ve got an unstamped package for you to lick.

John blows him a kiss.

Scott looks embarrassed.

Scott: just kidding.

Brucie: I’m hungry!

Morrie: Take five, no. Take ten.

Act IV

Stacy and Morrie meet in his office for an amorous moment. Stacy takes a puff of Morrie’s cigarette.

Stacy: Here’s the challenge. The play starts with the stars totally naked. How do we make it sexier when they get dressed?

Morrie stubs out his Lucky.

Morrie: There’s the rub, Stacy. There’s the rub.

Hammersmith: Roses are red and ready for plucking. You’re eighteen and ready for high school.

Hammersmith: I can go without alcohol as long as I can smoke myself out now and then.

Robin: Same here. I started doing it when I was no taller than a moment.

Hammersmith: Wealth, honors the greatest gift a man ever receives is a woman pressing her body against his. Some men never experience that.

John: it’s highly overrated.

Tiffany tenderly kisses Hammersmith’s bald spot.

Hammersmith: I love getting stoned. You know, I don’t want to brag, but you do something long enough, you get good at it. I put in the time. Up early, at it until late at night. Sometimes I’d wake up in the middle of the night, and I would put in some overtime. You need some bud incinerated, I’m your man.

Morrie: Don’t break a leg

Brucie does. Loud snap. He trips over his tail, turning around fast.

Brucie: Oww!

Robin: Carnation milk, it’s the best in the land Here I sit with a can in my hand. No tail to pull. No tail to switch. You just poke a hole in the son of a bitch.

Hammersmith: We cannot have God slurring his words now.

Scott: Aren’t we created in his image?

Hammersmith: You’re skating on thin ice, kid. You ever play a hand of 52 card pick-up?

Act V

Robin: My dad, he was a sincere Navy vet, tatoos and all. He was a roofer. He partook of the fruit in French Indochina.

Tiffany: I’m sorry. Are you for real about what you want to tell our audience about the forbidden fruit?

Morrie: I am. I cannot tell you how many times I was mad about something when I partook of the fruit. Suddenly I understood the other person’s perspective.

He plucks a fruit from the fake tree and crumbles it into a cigarette paper. He takes a long puff.

And now I have a new perspective on this play.

Lights go down.

Hammersmith: You know, this has been an interesting exchange of ideas. To bad we didn’t write it down. That would have made a good play.

Morrie: Too late now. Places everyone.

Morrie: Let there be light.

A sliver of light grows into a bright light on the densely planted stage. Monitors fill the background, some of it in lush 3D color. Everybody involved in the play brought in their TV, and the tech people patched them together. The audience gets to come on stage.