

Barrymore
Andrew

a golden dagger hangs. A full-length cape swirls about him. He is phenomenally sexual and dashing; he is the very image of a shy, romantic hero. Barrymore lifts his head, still appearing quite severe. He smiles rakishly. He surveys the apartment; he's been gone a long time. He slowly descends the staircase, studying what has become of his former residence. Finally, Barrymore sees Andrew. Andrew is frozen, holding the champagne bottle. Barrymore smiles at him.

BARRYMORE. Dear fellow. (Barrymore spots the bottle. He grabs a glass and heads for Andrew; he hasn't had champagne in ages. He holds out the glass, gesturing to the bottle.) May I? (Andrew remains frozen. He tries to speak; only choking sounds emerge from his throat.) Pardon? (Andrew tries to speak again, but cannot. He holds out the bottle; Barrymore takes it, fills his glass and drinks, with vast enjoyment.)

ANDREW. You're ... him.

BARRYMORE. Am I?

ANDREW. You're ... dead.

BARRYMORE. You know, occasionally I'm not truly certain. Am I dead? Or just incredibly drunk?

ANDREW. You're ... Barrymore.

BARRYMORE. Yes. Although my father's given name was Blythe; he changed it when he became an actor, to avoid embarrassing his family. Your name?

ANDREW. (Still completely unnerved.) Andrew. Rally. It's really Rallenberg. I changed it, to avoid embarrassing ... the Jews.

BARRYMORE. (Surveying the premises.) Behold, My nest. My roost. (Indicating where things had been, perhaps with musical cues.) A grand piano. A renaissance globe. A throne.

ANDREW. You're dead! You're dead! What are you doing here?

BARRYMORE. Lad — I'm here to help.

ANDREW. Wait — how do I know you're a ghost? Maybe you're just ... an intruder.

BARRYMORE. (Toying with him.) Perhaps. Cleverly disguised as Hamlet. (Andrew slowly sneaks up on Barrymore. He touches Barrymore's forearm. Barrymore is very nonchalant.) Boo.

ANDREW. But — I can touch you. My hand doesn't go through.

BARRYMORE. I'm a ghost, Andrew. Not a special effect.

ANDREW. But ... ghosts are supposed to have powers! Special powers!

BARRYMORE. I just rose from the dead, Andrew. And how was your morning? Now shall I truly frighten you?

ANDREW. (Not impressed.) I'm not afraid of you.

BARRYMORE. Shall I cause your flesh to quake?

ANDREW. (Very cocky.) You couldn't possibly.

BARRYMORE. Shall I scare you beyond all human imagination?

ANDREW. Go ahead and try.

BARRYMORE. In just six weeks time, you will play Hamlet. (Andrew screams.)

ANDREW. (Genuinely terrified.) Oh my God, you really are him, aren't you?

BARRYMORE. John Barrymore. Actor. Legend. Seducer. Corpse.

ANDREW. So — it worked. The seance. Felicia, her mother — she brought you back, from over there.

BARRYMORE. Not at all. You summoned me.

ANDREW. I did?

BARRYMORE. As a link in a proud theatrical tradition. Every soul embarking upon Hamlet is permitted to summon an earlier player. From Burbage to Kean to Irving — the call has been answered.

ANDREW. Wait — you mean you're here to help me play Hamlet? Because you did it?

BARRYMORE. Indeed.

ANDREW. Okay. Fine. Then the problem's solved. Because I'm not going to play Hamlet. No way. So you can just ... go back. To ... wherever.

BARRYMORE. I'm afraid that's not possible.

ANDREW. Why not?

BARRYMORE. I cannot return, I will not be accepted, until my task is accomplished. Until you have ...

ANDREW and BARRYMORE. Played Hamlet.

BARRYMORE. Precisely.

ANDREW. (Completely floored.) Oh no. Oh my God. You mean, if I don't go through with it ...