

SUMMARY:

“MFA acting student, Tamara reports to her favorite professor, Cassie, an uncomfortable moment in class: her professor, Oz, has kissed a student while acting in a scene. Cassie, unsure of how to serve Tamara, brings some faculty friends in on the secret, and the rumor escalates until the head of the program (Doc), the dean (Alma), and Oz all attempt to squash it. Tamara and Cassie’s plans are halted when Doc offers Cassie a better position, and Cassie sells out Tamara. They leverage Tamara’s mental health against her to get her to drop any complaint. But at a board gala, the Cassie writes and performs her rendition of the controversial event.”

SAMPLE:

(5:00pm. Another office, bigger, with diplomas and awards. Doc is eating a hasty dinner in front of his emails. Enter Cleta.)

Cleta

I’m going to close the door.

(She does.)

Doc

(*concerned*)

What’s up?

Cleta

How’s the show going?

Doc

More relevant every day. What’s up?

Cleta

(*sigh*)

You got anything to drink?

(Doc produces a bottle of liquor. Cleta pours herself a drink.)

Cleta

Have some.

(Doc pours himself a drink.)

Cleta (ct’d)

You once told me you valued loyalty above anything else. Huzzah.

Doc
Huzzah.

(They drink.)

Cleta
Is that true?

Doc
I don't think I said that.

Cleta
But you did.

Doc
Well, I must have been drunk.

Cleta
Bingo. But is it true?

Doc
...I value many things.

Cleta
It's Oz. His usual shit.

Doc
Is it something...?

Cleta
Kissed a student. In a scene.

Doc
Oh. That's not so bad.

Cleta
That's what *I* said.

Doc
And the student came to you?

Cleta

To Cassie.

Doc
Who the hell talks to Cassie?

Cleta
Tamara.

(Doc drinks.)

Cleta
Anyway I thought you should know.

Doc
But... he's gay.

Cleta
He pushes the kids past their limits.

Doc
That's one of the things we used to value about him.

Cleta
Used to.

Doc
I guess what I'm wondering is: is this some sort of teaching technique? Is it just some class gone wrong? We've all been there. One time I had this girl who just could not understand what a *syllable* was. Can you imagine? I got halfway through pentameter before I figured it out.

Cleta
I've made so many kids cry.

Doc
When I went to conservatory it was an honor to be picked on by the master. One of them used to tell me I was the reason he drank. So much *character*. Not like today.

Cleta
All that pussy-footing, All that leaving the office door open.

Doc
Using the gender neutral form.

Cleta
Being het-cis — whatever the hell that is.

Doc
Trigger warnings.

Cleta
Trigger warnings!

Doc
As if we don't go to the theatre *to be triggered*.

Cleta
“I have a learning disability!”

Doc
“I'd like to be referred to as ‘Zim-Zem-Zer LGBTQXYZ!’”

Cleta
(*mock crying*)
“I have an eating disorder!”

Doc
“Will you be my daddy?”

(They laugh.)

Doc (*ct'd.*)
Things used to be simpler.

Cleta
I guess that was always the illusion.

(Pause.)

Cleta (*ct'd*)
I'm worried this time. Cassie's is all stirred up. And from what it sounds like, by today's standards, he may have crossed a line. Subjectively speaking.

(Beat.)

Doc
How old is Oz?

Cleta
Sixties.

Doc
Doesn't he have a sabbatical coming up?

Cleta
He just had one. *I* have a sabbatical coming up. You thinking about that deal?

Doc
You think he'd take it?

Cleta
Hell, I almost took it.

Doc
Me too. Maybe it's his time, you know? He's been here, what?

Cleta
Twenty-six years.

(Doc whistles.)

Doc
I just feel like every couple of years we have one of these — flare-ups — and my main duty is to protect the University from litigation. (*Beat.*) Would you be willing to talk to him? Do you know where he stands on this?

Cleta
On the deal? Or am I going to explain that you would *prefer* he take the deal?

Doc
Just feel him out for me.

Cleta
Because he's going to ask questions, and you know what I'm going to tell him? "Ask Doc."

Doc
Don't suggest anything, just feel him out.

Cleta
I feel uncomfortable doing that. Do I need a rep to come in here to explain my rights?

Doc

Come on, Cleta, don't do this to me.

Cleta

I don't know, Doc, it seems like you're trying to leverage my friendship with a fellow teacher —

Doc

If I talk to him it's *official*, we'll have to start writing things down, we'll have to call the lawyers. If you talk to him it's just friends talking.

Cleta

If I say no, am I fired?

(Beat.)

Doc

I think we need to de-escalate this situation — ...

Cleta

Because if this is an order, then I'd like to make an official — .

Doc

(*over her*)

— Cleta, you're not going to get anywhere by shouting — !

Cleta

(*never shouted*)

— I'm not shouting, you're shouting.

Doc

(*sigh*)

No. You're right. I'll do it.

Cleta

That was unfair to me.

Doc

Alright, Cleta, I'll talk to him.

Cleta

Good.

(*beat*)

I don't like being in the middle of your fights.

Doc

Then why did you bring it to me?

Cleta

(hurt)

You're my friend.

(Cleta stands.)

Cleta *(ct'd)*

He responds well to compliments.

Doc

Thanks.

Cleta

And, be careful, he's the best actor I know.

(Cleta goes to the door.)

Doc

Cleta?... What would I do without you?

(Beat.)

Cleta

You never got me that class...

Doc

Dramatic Literature of the African Diaspora. I haven't forgotten.

Cleta

Loyalty, Doc. Nothing more valuable than loyalty.

(beat)

Open or closed?

Scene:

(6:00pm. Oz and Doc are drinking in Doc's office.)

Oz

Gielgud puts the hat back on his head.

(he demonstrates)

Winks at the girl, and says, "It's called *acting*, love."

(They laugh.)

Doc

Do you miss it?

Oz

Christ no. Nobody tells you, but Londoners have terrible breath.

Doc

Ever want to go back?

Oz

Never. You?

Doc

Rather die.

Oz

To death!

Doc

("to life")

L'cha-im!

(They drink.)

Doc

You thinking about taking that deal?

Oz

I always assumed I'd teach until I died. My sincerest hope is to die onstage on closing night of Lear:

"Why should a dog, a horse, a rat, have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!
Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir.

Do you see this? Look on her, look, her lips,
Look there, look there!”

(He dies.)

That’s the life.

Doc
I want to die fat, in the arms of an ingenue.

Oz
I won’t tell Beth.

Doc
So are you thinking about it?

Oz
Hm?

Doc
The deal?

Oz
What are you playing at, Doc?

Doc
It’s a good deal. A full year’s salary? Edmond’s doing it. And Nancy. When are we going to get
this chance again?

Oz
But you’re not leaving.

Doc
(*sigh*)
No, I’ve got *ambitions* for this place.

Oz
At your age?

Doc
I’m young.

(Oz laughs.)

Oz

And I'm the Dalai Lama. What's this about, Doc? Do I need to start chiseling my tombstone?

Doc

No, no, no, I'm just looking at the big picture. I want to take on a dramaturgy person.

Oz

You want me to retire, and then eliminate my position? Are you firing me, Doc?

Doc

I'm trying to plan ahead. The burden of the chair: eyes always on the horizon.

Oz

Don't look too hard, you'll go blind.

(Doc drinks.)

Doc

I'm feeling out the staff. The deal's only on the table for one year. They want to thin the herd — new blood — and I agree. We're old men.

Oz

You *are* firing me!

Doc

I'm not.

Oz

Come on, something's afoot.

Doc

There's nothing "afoot," Oz, I'm asking everyone.

Oz

Then why did you get me drunk?

(Pause.)

Doc

How was class, today?

Oz

Good, good. Richard III. Is that what this is about? Christ, is it that — that girl — ?

Doc
— Tamara.

Oz
Tamara? This is the problem Doc, these kids: stuck in adolescence; what happened to devoting oneself to one's craft? I was a featured player for ten years, walking the planks, mopping sweat off the damn leads.

Suffering is in the artist's nature, and they want to be coddled, cuddled, and told, "good boy, good girl, you're so talented," instead of admitting that they're fucking awful, and could stand to learn something!

Doc
Tamara says you kissed her.

Oz
I did nothing of the sort! Doc, this girl doesn't like me, and I understand that, but please, believe me, I'm only trying to teach.

I told them they could come to me. Why didn't she come to me?

Doc
She came to a female faculty member.

Oz
Ah, the girls club.

Doc
They stick together.

Oz
If only we were the same.

Doc
...So will you think about the deal?

Oz
Over this? Fuck off, Doc, really.

Doc
I'm not even supposed to know about this, what if she goes over my head?

Oz

No need to fear *Alma*.

Doc

Please take this seriously. People sue people all the time. We have to be careful.

Oz

How many shows have we done together?

(Beat.)

Doc

Twenty? Thirty?

Oz

Theatre folk are curious folk. We aren't like other people. We can take more pain, we can stomach more rejection, we can live on less, so long as we have our first love: playing.

For us, a drink at the pub is work, and a day hard at work is play. A kiss is different from a stage kiss. A friendship is different than stage friendship.

(*beat*)

I'm not going to let you drag my name through the muck, Doc.

Doc

So, take the deal.

(Oz goes to leave.)

Oz

I miss the days when teaching was teaching. When none of us knew what we were doing but we figured it out. I miss being that young and irresponsible. The urgency of those days, when we thought we would be creating vital throbbing art every day for the rest of our lives. When we imagined that was all we needed to be happy. You remember?

(Doc remembers.)

Oz (*ct'd.*)

No hard feelings, Doc?

(Beat.)

Doc

“The quality of mercy is not strain’d;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heav’n
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless’d;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

Oz

“And earthly pow’r doth then show likest God’s —
When mercy seasons justice.”

(Silence.)

Doc

Sleep on it?