

# The Taming of the Shrew

Written by Steven Fogell  
*Based on the work of William Shakespeare*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

This version of the famous story begins with us meeting The Forest of Arden Players. A group of animal actors putting on the play "The Taming of the Shrew" for the King and Queen. Bartholomew (a fox) and Cassandra (a cat) run this misfit group. The troupe includes Raoul (a crow), Peter (a rabbit), Sebastian (a bear), and Sidney (a dog). Currently they have included Miss Bianca (a white cat), a famous opera star from France. This adaptation shows what happens on stage as well as backstage. King Louie (a lion) and Queen Marie (a lioness) arrive to judge the troupe for performing for the royal court. They are placed in the center of the audience and have their own issues.

We learn that Miss Bianca is being teased by a mischievous mouse that hides in her dressing room. Her ego will not allow her to listen to directions from Bartholomew. The fun begins when she refuses to go and work with such low-level actors.

Bartholomew tries to keep the show together but runs into many problems on stage as well as back. As the stage story of "Taming of the Shrew" unfolds, we learn how characters on stage are much like ones backstage. Because the troupe is so small and with little money, they are forced to have one character played by a puppet. The King and Queen find this quite odd.

This hilarious adventure reaches its height as the character Kate reads her final speech about men and women. The Queen can take no more and rushes to the stage to stop her. All ends well as the King grants his approval and gives the actors money and the promise of playing for the court. Miss Bianca has her end with the mysterious mouse that pursues her.

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**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(5 m, 3 w, 2 flexible)*

**RAOUL:** A crow, plays Baptista, the rich father.

**SIDNEY:** Sleepy dog, changes cue cards. Plays Grumio, Petruchio's servant.

**CASSANDRA:** A cat, plays Kate, Baptista's strong-willed daughter, the shrew.

**BARTHOLOMEW:** A fox, heads the troupe with Cassandra. Plays Petruchio from Verona, a suitor of Kate.

**BIANCA:** A white cat, plays Bianca, Baptista's other, more gentle daughter.

**PETER:** A rabbit, plays Lucentio, a suitor of Bianca.

**MOUSE:** Teases Miss Bianca.

**SEBASTIAN:** A bear, plays Hortensio, a suitor of Bianca.

**KING LOUIE:** Lion.

**QUEEN MARIE:** Lioness.

*(The part of Gremio, another suitor for Bianca, is done with a hand puppet often carried by Sebastian or Peter. The roles of three servants, Curtis, Nathaniel and Joseph, are played by Raoul, Sebastian and Peter, respectively. The roles of Sidney and the Mouse may be played by male or female actors.)*

**PROPS:** Chocolates, nail file, makeup, mirror, bowl with mints, items for Bianca to throw, 2 bags of coins, 2 swords, horn for Sidney, broken lute, paper and pen for note, two musical instruments for Hortensio, tray of food and jug of water, beautiful gown and hat, stick horses and coconuts, dinner ware and goblets.

**Necessary cue cards include:**

A Street in Padua	Outside Hortensio's House
Baptista's House	Later That Day
Petruchio's Country House	Outside Baptista's House
Petruchio's House	On the Road to Padua
Outside Baptista's House	Inside Baptista's House
The End	

### **COSTUMES**

Since all the characters are animals it is important to make each one very exaggerated. Using different voice levels and body types help create each character's personality. Animal make-up, ears on wigs, gloves, and tails attached to the back of costumes can make creating the animals easy. The part of Gremio is a puppet. It can simply be a large stuffed goat head with a movable mouth that is operated by the Hortensio character.

### **STAGING**

Staging can be as simple as two dressing rooms, one stage left, one stage right, each with doors linked by a center stage area for the play within the play. This area can have a basic black and white background. Make the characters' costumes the colorful part of the stage. Each dressing room can have a mirror with lights around it and little stools.

Put the King and Queen in the audience with specially marked chairs. (Reserved signs or tie off these chairs.) They can react to everything and add lines when needed. The audience will love it!

Several times throughout the play the character of Bianca speaks French...poorly! Do not try to make it sound correct. The Latin phrases Lucentio teaches Bianca are the same. The worse they sound the funnier they can be.

Grumio's description of the wedding can be done with all the cast standing behind him with cartoon cardboard cutouts of their characters attached to sticks. They can move them about as he tells the story. Grumio can be looking at a photo album as he speaks.

The cue cards should be put on an easel downstage. Sidney can announce each location and place the card on the easel.

Have fun with this production! You can't go too far with voices, costumes, or the humor! Enjoy!!

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**ACT I**

*(AT RISE: The stage is being set by RAOUL, SIDNEY, and SEBASTIAN. CASSANDRA and BARTHOLOMEW are in one dressing room, BIANCA and PETER in another dressing room.)*

CASSANDRA: Bartholomew?

BARTHOLOMEW: Yes, love?

CASSANDRA: How many performances of this show have we done now?

BARTHOLOMEW: Including today's?

CASSANDRA: Yes.

BARTHOLOMEW: Two.

*(BIANCA begins meowing MUSIC scales in her dressing room.)*

CASSANDRA: Why does she do that?

BARTHOLOMEW: What?

CASSANDRA: What? ... that!

BARTHOLOMEW: Oh, I don't know.

CASSANDRA: There is no singing in this show, yet she always does that.

BARTHOLOMEW: Well you know, darling, she is an opera star. We are very lucky to have her.

CASSANDRA: Bartholomew, why are we using an opera singer in a serious play?

BARTHOLOMEW: Miss Bianca is known throughout the land. The King and Queen will be so impressed that our little theatre troupe has her.

*(BIANCA hits high note.)*

BARTHOLOMEW: Does that irritate you, darling?

CASSANDRA: Well...yes!

BARTHOLOMEW: I'll speak to her.

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*(BIANCA is fixing her makeup in mirror and still singing scales.)*

PETER: You have a beautiful voice, Miss Bianca.

BIANCA: Yes ... I know. *(Back to scales.)*

PETER: I can't believe we are performing for King Louie and Queen Marie today. I'm so nervous. Are you nervous, Miss Bianca?

BIANCA: Moi? No.

PETER: Of course you're not, what am I saying. You have performed everywhere for all types of audiences. Is it true you had three standing ovations in Vienna?

BIANCA: *(Ending scales.)* Four.

PETER: Wow!

BIANCA: Excuse me.

PETER: Yes.

BIANCA: Who are you? *(Begins eating chocolates.)*

PETER: I'm ... I'm ... Peter. I play Lucentio in the play.

BIANCA: *(Pause.)* Lucentio? Oh, yes. Why are you in my dressing room, Lucentio??

PETER: Peter ... Umm ... Um ... we share this room, also with Raoul, Sidney, and Sebastian.

BIANCA: *(Screams.)* What?? Monsieur Bartholomew! Monsieur Bartholomew! *(SHE storms on stage.)*

BARTHOLOMEW: What now?

CASSANDRA: Ignore her! I always do.

BARTHOLOMEW: Cassandra, you can at least try to be nice.

BIANCA: MONSIEUR!!!

*(RAOUL, SIDNEY and SEBASTIAN stop working.)*

RAOUL: Spider in the dressing room, Miss Bianca?

BIANCA: Are you talking to me?

RAOUL: I believe your name was used.

BIANCA: Who are you?

RAOUL: I'm Raoul, I play your father, Baptista, in the show.

BIANCA: *(Pause.)* Oh yes, well get out of my way, Mr. Baptista. Monsieur Bartholomew!!!

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