

*As You Like It* (2.7.139-66)

139                                   All the world's a stage,  
140                                   And all the men and women merely players;  
141                                   They have their exits and their entrances,  
142                                   And one man in his time plays many parts,  
143                                   His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,  
144                                   Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.  
145                                   Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel  
146                                   And shining morning face, creeping like snail  
147                                   Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,  
148                                   Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad  
149                                   Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,  
150                                   Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,  
151                                   Jealous in honor, sudden, and quick in quarrel,  
152                                   Seeking the bubble reputation  
153                                   Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice,  
154                                   In fair round belly with good capon lined,  
155                                   With eyes severe and beard of formal cut,  
156                                   Full of wise saws and modern instances;  
157                                   And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts  
158                                   Into the lean and slippered pantaloon,  
159                                   With spectacles on nose, and pouch on side,  
160                                   His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide  
161                                   For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice,  
162                                   Turning again toward childish treble, pipes  
163                                   And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all,  
164                                   That ends this strange eventful history,  
165                                   Is second childishness, and mere oblivion,  
166                                   Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.

The whole world is a stage, and all the men and women merely actors. They have their exits and their entrances, and in his lifetime a man will play many parts, his life separated into seven acts. In the first act he is an infant, whimpering and puking in his nurse's arms. Then he's the whining schoolboy, with a book bag and a bright, young face, creeping like a snail unwillingly to school. Then he becomes a lover, huffing and puffing like a furnace as he writes sad poems about his mistress's eyebrows. In the fourth act, he's a soldier, full of foreign curses, with a beard like a panther, eager to defend his honor and quick to fight. On the battlefield, he puts himself in front of the cannon's mouth, risking his life to seek fame that is as fleeting as a soap bubble. In the fifth act, he is a judge, with a nice fat belly from all the bribes he's taken. His eyes are stern, and he's given his beard a respectable cut. He's full of wise sayings and up-to-the-minute anecdotes: that's the way he plays his part. In the sixth act, the curtain rises on a skinny old man in slippers, glasses on his nose and a money bag at his side. The stockings he wore in his youth hang loosely on his shriveled legs now, and his bellowing voice has shrunk back down to a childish squeak. In the last scene of our play—the end of this strange, eventful history—our hero, full of forgetfulness, enters his second childhood: without teeth, without eyes, without taste, without everything.

*No Fear Shakespeare*

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