

INT. METICULOSCHOOL

Two young people stand before the board at the fore-end of a Meticulo City public school classroom. Overhead is a retracted screen. The projector is pushed off to the side near a lectern. A row of LIGHTBULBS set in the ceiling panels above the board are on, but there's no light coming from the other side of the classroom.

GIESTA FLUKE, a young person rather tall and resembling a fish, performs Shakespeare. Her character is a young lady. She gestures open-palmed as she speaks.

MIRANDA (FLUKE)

Sweet lord, you play me false.

Her classmate FACTS MACHINE, sometimes MASH for short, a squat square-peg robot whose face occupies most of his chassis, is her partner in performance as a young man. He walks to Fluke's other side, stepping toe-first.

FERDINAND (MASH)

No, my dear'st love, I would not  
for the world.

While Fluke remains still, Mash POPS in an obviously-rehearsed manner from young Ferdinand to ALONSO, a father - his posture and demeanor change with the shift in character. As Alonso, his back bows.

ALONSO (MASH)

But O, how oddly it will sound that  
I must ask my child forgiveness!

Fluke pops from Miranda to PROSPERO to respond, assuming the archetype of a wise old man. She crooks the fingers of her hands and clasps them together.

PROSPERO (FLUKE)

Let us not burden our remembrance  
with a heaviness that's -

MASH'S PHONE RINGS, throwing off Fluke's performance. Mash BREAKS CHARACTER to silence his phone. Fluke holds the pose. Mash pops back. Fluke resumes.

PROSPERO (FLUKE)

- gone.

They're still in a partly-lit classroom. A BRACKET is drawn on the board. Three matches are crossed out. A MODERATOR with a hat reading MODERATOR leans against the wall. A series of seated JUDGES face the team.

2.

ANOTHER DUO waits to the left of the stage. Teams and spectators, who are all classmates or visiting students, sit or stand elsewhere in the room.

Mash and Fluke bow to the judges.

FLUKE

You left your ph-

MASH

It was an accident, I'm s-

Someone shushes them while they exit the performance stage. Mash and Fluke find a quiet spot near the DOOR to breathe.

The next performers, CORNELIUS and GEISS, cross the stage and assume their starting positions in the middle. Freckled redhead Cornelius, in all black, wears a sour expression. Goat-like goateed geek Geiss shakes with nerves.

MODERATOR

Our next Duo Interp-

Fluke and Mash review their performance in hushed tones.

MASH

I never get texts. The one time!  
That kills a whole point, right?

FLUKE

We're gonna lose our place, man. I  
should rework this strategy. Ever  
done Poetry?

MASH

Sorry, Fluke. I know how bad you  
wanted to win Locals.

FLUKE

It's not too late to drown Geiss.  
Who's so important they had to  
interrupt our closing act?

MASH

I didn't look yet.

Fluke has her eyes on the bracket. Mash checks his phone. The time onscreen turns from 10:59 to 11:00. The city bell TOLLS.

MASH

Oh, nouns and adjectives.

FLUKE

What, no emoji?

3.

MASH  
No, I'm expleting. It's Granbra.

FLUKE  
Your hairless hedgehog?

MASH  
He's head of the family!

FLUKE  
So's my mom.

MASH  
I forgot I said I'd help him today.

FLUKE  
Can't anymore - WST starts today.

MASH  
No! I forgot Water Savings Time!?

FLUKE  
Sounds like you should set better  
reminders. So, about making Locals-

MASH  
(To himself)  
Granbra's gonna kill me!  
(To Fluke)  
Sorry, Fluke, I gotta do this. BRB!

Mash dashes out the door.

FLUKE  
Hey! Machine!

I/E. RESERVOIR - DAY

Mash hits the inner rim edge as the eleventh bong tolls.  
Rotating city districts stop and lock like clockwork. Mash  
faces water - one of Meticulo City's three GAP RESERVOIRS.

MASH  
It's gap hour, too! I'll never get  
home in time! Unless -

Sure enough, Mash catches sight of a solo MOTORBOAT, steered  
by a HORNED FIGURE with a hand on the motor. It's BISON  
BOSUN! She's a small business AND a kind neighbor.

MASH  
Bison Bosun!

4.

BOSUN  
Facts Machine! How are you, kid?

MASH  
Bosun, I need a ride across the reservoir. It's Granbra's bath day but we won't have water after noon.

BOSUN  
No need to confess all your crimes. Just pay the toll!

MASH  
Um, uh,

Mash checks his pockets for fare. He produces a crumpled SPEECH AND DEBATE PROGRAM BIFOLD from the tournament.

MASH  
Here you go. It's from today.

BOSUN  
Eh... I'll take it. Hop on up.

A leisurely ride across the reservoir. Bosun keeps them pointed at the other shore, browsing the brochure one-handed. Mash checks his phone. And the remaining distance.

BOSUN  
So, forensics?

MASH  
Is this about my crimes?

Bosun shakes the program he'd offered as payment.

BOSUN  
I mean your speech-and-debate club. You're competing in this?

MASH  
Oh. Yeah, it's my extracurricular.

BOSUN  
How do you like it?

MASH  
Well...I made a friend.

BOSUN  
Good for you! Congratulations, FM.

MASH  
But I ruined our first performance.

5.

BOSUN  
My condolences.

MASH  
She really wants to score well, but  
Granbra barely let me join speech.

BOSUN  
You want to win, too?

MASH  
I do, but not like Fluke does.

BOSUN  
Have you talked to your grownups?

MASH  
Planning our lives is the only  
hobby Granbra has. Plus he never  
stops talking.

BOSUN  
Yeah, no kidding.

MASH  
But I can't say that to Fluke!

BOSUN  
Listen -

The boat LURCHES. Bosun straightens them out.

MASH  
What was that?!

BOSUN  
Sounds like we hit a building.

The boat starts taking on water.

BOSUN  
A sharp one. Oops. I got distracted  
by small talk.

MASH  
Bosun, your boat!

BOSUN  
Don't worry, it's insured! Let's  
get to ground.

Mash scoops water out with his hands. Bosun increases speed.  
Mash's phone FALLS into the reservoir. He grabs for it but  
misses. The boat sinks almost to his seat level.

6.

MASH  
We're sinking!

BOSUN  
Trying!

Mash's panic triggers a spark of electricity. It jumps from his head across the water and zaps Bosun.

BOSUN  
Hey! I'm doing my best here!

MASH  
Sorry! Nervous reflex!

Water creeps near the motor. The bow is all but underwater. They're within leaping distance of the shore.

Mash gives off another spark. This one hits the steaming MOTOR. It BURSTS INTO FLAMES! Bosun gets a faceful of smoke.

BOSUN  
Subordinate clause!

Bosun lets go of the motor. She grabs Mash and jumps off the boat. The unattended rudder swings and sends the boat in the opposite direction. Bosun loses her grip on Mash and falls into the water. Mash lands on the opposite bank.

The CITY BELL begins to TOLL again. Mash jumps up at the sound. Bosun pulls herself out, flopping onshore.

MASH  
Sorry, Bosun!

He runs off.

INT. MACHINE HOUSE - DAY

Mash dashes inside, shutting the door behind him. The twelfth bong of the city bell tolls. A sprinkler outside shuts off.

MASH  
It's noon...our water...

He looks around and sees nobody. He sighs and shuts the door. Mash turns around. GRANBRA GHOST awaits him, his telescoping power chair at Mash's eye level.

Fluke's earlier comparison to a hairless hedgehog is apt; GRANBRA is a living cartoon brain seated atop a robotic platform on wheels, sort of like a Segway. He's fleshy, grayish, and shaped like a loaf of bread.

7.

He can use the chair to move anywhere chair-accessible, and he can move the platform holding his body up and down.

GRANBRA

Machine! What an expected pleasure!

MASH

Granbra! I forgot bath time!

GRANBRA

Not to worry - I filled the sink.  
How was your duo with young Giesta?

MASH

You know about that?

GRANBRA

Mash, I know everything. Back when I was born on the open ocean, we couldn't use the "Internets" to follow people. Why, I remember-

Mash rolls his eyes.

MASH

All right, Granbra, it's bath time.

INT. MACHINE HOUSE - BATHROOM

Granbra's power chair waits by the toilet railing. Mash holds Granbra in the sink, scrubbing him with a sea sponge. Hand towels, soap, and other toiletries sit on the counter.

GRANBRA

- after all that, I never forget to carry a pumice stone! That's why I made sure to save us water earlier. Oh, how nice. Scrub there again.

MASH

Right, Granbra.

Mash reaches for his phone, but he doesn't have it any more.

MASH

How long did you soak again?

GRANBRA

Twenty of your minutes.

MASH

Everyone's minutes, Granbra.

8.

GRANBRA

Suit yourself. I'd say it's 12:38.  
Check my chair.

Mash checks the chair. It shows 12:38.

GRANBRA

Excuse me, 12:39.

The time changes to 12:39. Mash scrubs faster.

MASH

I need to get back.

GRANBRA

You still have 81 minutes. Soon 80.

The time changes again.

MASH

Okay, Granbra. Let's get you clean.

Mash groans with boredom. He washes, dries, moisturizes and powders Granbra, who beams and natters on. Mash checks the chair time again. When his bath is done, Mash pats Granbra off one last time and settles him in his chair, looking nice and refreshed and squeaky-clean. Granbra activates the chair and "stretches", rolling around.

GRANBRA

Thank you, my boy!

MASH

Yep, you're clean. Anything else?

GRANBRA

All jake, Mash. You are free to go.

INT. MACHINE HOUSE

Mash runs for the door. Granbra descends from the second story via the WHEELCHAIR LIFT on their stairs as Mash leaves.

GHOST

Good luck at your afternoon event!

Mash pauses.

MASH

Say, Granbra Ghost...

GHOST

Oh? Do you have a story for me?

9.

MASH

I was just wondering. Now that I'm in Speech and Debate, we're gonna have more of these tournaments to go to. The rankings are really, really important to Fluke, so...

GHOST

Shall I purchase first place?

MASH

No! I wanted to ask if we can reschedule stuff. So I can keep doing this without...doing this.

GHOST

Ah. It's important to Fluke, is it?

MASH

...Yeah. She's really serious.

GHOST

Afraid to let a friend down?

MASH

Well, I made a commitment.

GHOST

You had one today. You were late.

MASH

I know...

GHOST

Is this why you're in such a rush?

MASH

Forget it. I'll figure it out.

GHOST

No, it's good to have a hobby. We can change the schedule. I expect you to appear, Facts Machine!

MASH

Yes, Granbra! Thanks, Granbra!

GRANBRA

Let's get you back to your friend.

Granbra scoops Mash onto the platform at the base of his power chair. They zip out the front door. Mash holds onto the telescoping stand for dear life.

EXT. RESERVOIR - DAY

Granbra drives them up a ramp to the METICULOCITY COIL, a sky bridge around the city. The Gap Reservoir is below.

GRANBRA  
There she is.

MASH  
Uh - huh!?

Granbra drops Mash off the coil. He plummets toward the water, but something grabs him out of the air. Mash lands on the deck of a brand-new boat.

BOSUN  
Gotcha!

It's Bison Bosun again!

GRANBRA  
Well done, Bison!

BOSUN  
Thank you, Ghost!

GRANBRA  
Don't thank me - thank him!

EXT. METICULOSCHOOL - DAY

Mash runs up to the school entrance. The students from the speech and debate tournament are spilling out of the doors and onto the bus platform. Fluke is there with two envelopes in hand, frowning at her phone.

MASH  
Fluke!

She fumbles her phone and almost drops it. Mash offers his fist to bump. Fluke does so, with an even bigger frown.

MASH (CONT'D)  
I talked to Granbra. I can have competition days off.

FLUKE  
That's great.

MASH  
We rearranged the schedule, so.

11.

FLUKE

No, it's great! You'll never believe what happened -

MASH

Yeah! But also, I'm out ferry privileges until WST ends. I'm on a boat repayment for Bison Bosun, so

FLUKE

What's a boat repayment?

MASH

(Whispering) I broke a boat.

FLUKE

Okay okay. Does that mean you're definitely, really, no-takebacks-allowed not ditching me next week?

MASH

I promise!

FLUKE

I can work with that, then.

Fluke hands Mash one of the envelopes.

FLUKE (CONT'D)

Here's your ballot.

MASH

Thank you, Fluke!

FLUKE

So here's the plan.

The kids stick their heads together. The bus pulls up to the stop. The city bell starts bonging again.

THE END