

SHAG/RICHARD/ARMIN/NATE/SHARPE

The actors have just rehearsed a scene from Shag's 1st draft of The Gunpowder Plot

SHAG: Thoughts?

RICHARD: *(a grudging admission)* It doesn't work.

SHAG: *(Told you)* Doesn't and can't.

SHARPE: *Fletcher!* I'm telling you – give it to *Fletcher!*

SHAG: It amazes me how little brilliant actors know about theater.

SHARPE: But if you just—

RICHARD, ARMIN, and NATE: *It doesn't work!*

SHARPE: Alright then, *teach me.* What's wrong with it?

SHAG: Well, there's a step.

ARMIN: It's all foreplay and no fucking. *(Sharpe doesn't get it.)*

SHAG: It's a four act build-up to an explosion that *doesn't* happen.

ARMIN: Actually, it's not unlike my marriage.

NATE: You've got four kids.

ARMIN: I'm married ten years. Scripts, gentlemen. *(he collects scripts)*

RICHARD: Plus the characters are like wood.

SHARPE: Well, *that's* his fault.

SHAG: *(raising the manuscript)* Consider the source. Heroes and villains.

SHARPE: Can't you fix it?

RICHARD: He can make the improbable make perfect sense –

SHAG: It's called history.

ARMIN: -- but if nothing happens? It's not drama.

RICHARD: What are we going to do?

SHAG: Well, we could return the money.

RICHARD: No. Really. What are we going to do? *(It's a problem.)*

SHARPE: Wait! . . . Wait! *(best idea ever)* We change the ending. *(All look at Sharpe.)*

NATE: Everyone in London – everyone in the country – knows what happened.

How can you change the ending?

SHARPE: *(The big idea)* We blow up Parliament.

(Sharpe couldn't be more pleased with himself. Then, before Richard can attack Sharpe --)

SHAG: No. I want to hear this.

(Sharpe pitches his idea with growing commitment)

SHARPE: They want an explosion? We give them one. Dozens of cannons – all fired at the same time.

RICHARD: How do we do that without blowing up the theater?

SHARPE: *(improvising)* We – We fire the cannons *toward the river . . .* We *shake* the city to its foundations with the *roar* of cannons. The biggest explosion ever this side of war. Onstage we have a model of Parliament. The cannons roar.

Parliament – *explodes!*

(pretty good, huh?)

ARMIN: Then?

SHARPE: Then – then . . . THEN we EXPLAIN – in an EPILOGUE – that *this* is what *COULD* have happened *if* the plot had worked. We sing a *Te Deum*, do a dance – *(he does)* and take our bows.

RICHARD: Soooo – we do a play – for the King – in honor of the King – in the presence of the King – in which we *blow up* the King – and his wife – and his children.

ARMIN: Then we do our little dance – *(Armin, Nate and Shag all do a little dance as--)* ON the bits and pieces of the dead King – and his wife – and his children.

RICHARD: *(building)* A king whose *father* was *killed* in an explosion, a king who was nearly *burned to death* as a child, a king who is so *terrified* of *smoke and fire* that he even hates *TOBACCO!* *(Then.)* The *worst* thing – the *worst* thing – I have ever done in my shoddy life was giving *you a full share* in this *company!*

SHAG: Sharpe?

SHARPE: *What!*

SHAG: It's an ending – which is more than I have.