ACT 1: THE HUNT

Scene 1) Beware the Ides of Fringe

The stage is set as a makeshift Roman Coliseum outdoors with the audience surrounding the playing area within. A Commentators' desk and Emperor's Box are positioned opposite each other on the north and south points. As audience members meander in, an ANNOUNCER comes over the loud speakers.

ANNOUNCER   Ladies and Gentlemen, the Ludi is about to begin. We would ask you at this time that you ensure that all sundials and hourglasses are turned off. We would like to remind you that the use of electronic recording devices of any kind are strictly not invented. Thank you for your attention in this matter. And now, without further a-do, the man who is responsible for these games: he crushed all of his enemies, he's been compared to Alexander the Great – by himself – and he's veni, vidi, vici'd his way into our hearts…give it up for YULIUS KAISER!

CAESAR and his TRAIN enter with great fanfare. Most of the MEN wear robes with nothing underneath except a loincloth, and they all wear white half-masks that give them an almost Greek Chorus effect. They carry "goatskin" phalluses for "whipping" people. CAESAR stops in the centre of the Coliseum.*

CAESAR   Calpurnia.

CASSIUS   Peace ho, Caesar speaks.

CAESAR   Calpurnia.

CALPURNIA   Here my Lord.

CAESAR   Stand you directly in Antonio's way,
When he doth run his course. Antonio.

ANTONY   Caesar, my Lord.

CAESAR   Forget not in your speed Antonio,
To touch Calpurnia.

CALPURNIA   *(spanking ANTONY)* Yeah – forget not to touch.

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* In the original production these were nylons stuffed with balls of paper.

ANTONY   I shall remember,
              When Caesar says, Do this; it is perform'd.

CAESAR   Set on, and leave no Ceremony out!

*On this cue the MEN drop their robes as Ceremonial music fills the
air and they run around the Arena in a celebratory fashion swinging
their phalluses until a cry cuts through the air.*

SOOTHSAYER   Caesar!

EVERYONE freezes and the music comes to a halt.

CAESAR   Who is it in the press, that calls on me?
              Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear.

SOOTHSAYER   *(ominously)* Beware the Ides of March!

CAESAR and his TRAIN explode with laughter.

CAESAR   March?! Like someone's pendulum stopped. Hello – it's
              JULY!

SOOTHSAYER   Are you sure about that?

CAESAR   I think I would remember the month that I named after
              myself.

SOOTHSAYER   Oh, sorry about that – never mind.

CAESAR   Proceed with the Holy Chase.

Cue music again and the MEN run around until another cry goes out.

SOOTHSAYER   Caesar!

CAESAR   What now?!

The Ceremonial music and celebration stop once more.

SOOTHSAYER   No, I got it this time. *(ominously)* Beware the Ides of
              Fringe!

Crashing music and everyone shudders.

CALPURNIA   Do not go forth today: Call it my fear
              That keeps you in the house, and not your own.

CAESAR   Cowards die many times before their deaths,
                    The valiant never taste of death but once.
                    And today we're going to party like it's 1 BC!
                    LIVE FROM TORONTONIUM – IT'S LUDI
                    FRINGES!!!

Scene 2) A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum
          The triumphant strains of the Upstart Crow Sports Network (UCSN)
          theme begin pounding. CAESAR and his small TRAIN make their
          way to the Emperor's Box. OVID, one of our Commentators, enters
          searching for his co-host PLAUTUS but cannot find him anywhere.
          Somewhat bewildered and peeved, OVID takes his chair at the
          Commentators' desk and addresses the audience.

OVID   Good morning Gladiator and Ludi fans alike. Thank you
                    for joining us for what promises to be a glorious munera
                    full of Roman Virtue and Carnage. Before we start our
                    morning activities, I'd like to take this opportunity to
                    thank this Ludi's sponsor: Romulus and Remus
                    Charioteers: "For top quality Chariots at rock bottom
                    sesterces – no one sucks wolves like Romulus and Remus
                    Charioteers." *(aside)* Who the hell writes this ad-copy?
                    Ah-em. I'm Publius Ovidius Naso and obviously *not*
                    joining me today is my co-anchor Titus Maccius Plautus.
                    But like I always say, "The cause is hidden. The effect is
                    visible to all."

          PSEUDOLUS comes running in out of breath.

PSEUDOLUS   Wait, wait, wait…it's okay…it's okay, I'm here – I can
                    explain everything.

OVID   Explain? Where is Plautus?

PSEDOLUS   Well, you see. A funny thing happened on the way to the
                    Forum.

OVID   Forum? Why did you go to the Forum?

PSEUDOLUS   Well you see…that's the funny thing…

OVID   I told Plautus: Trinity Collegiate Amphitheatre, eight
                    o'clock.

PSEUDOLUS   Day of Kalends.

OVID   No, Day of Ides.

PSEUDOLUS   No, I know. He thought it was the Day of Kalends.

OVID   He thinks today is Day of Kalends?

PSEUDOLUS   No, he thought you had told him "Day of Kalends."

OVID   Regardless, the Games are never held in the Forum –
                why did he go to the Forum?

PSEUDOLUS   He didn't go to the Forum.

OVID   He didn't? But you just told me…

PSEUDOLUS   He didn't go anywhere. He's home sick. *I* went to the
                Forum.

OVID   You – what have you got to do with this?

PSEUDOLUS   That's what I've been trying to tell you. Plautus told me to
                tell you he's home sick and can't come. He sent me as a
                replacement – I'm late because I went to the Forum first.

OVID   So why did *you* go to the Forum?

PSEUDOLUS   Everyone knows that on Day of Kalends they open the
                markets – I went to get some fresh meat.

OVID   *(very frustrated)* But today is NOT Day of Kalends, it's
                Day of Ides!

PSEUDOLUS   Tell me about it – on Day of Ides all the Christians come
                out of the woodwork and get on their orator's box – and
                those guys just don't know when to shut up do they?

OVID   Enough! Who the Hades are you?

PSEUDOLUS   Oh, that's easy. I'm Plautus' slave. My name is…

    *Nine PERFORMERS run out holding placards containing the letters
    P-S-E-U-D-O-L-U-S, raise their cards in an incorrect order, and
    shout out what their misspelling reads.*

                No, my name is…

    The nine PERFORMERS re-arrange themselves, again incorrectly,