

St. Matilde's Malady

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CAST

Molly Forge

Tammy

Connie

Sampson

Captain Twister

Dirty Vicki

(A private sitting room on the top floor of a massive pre-industrial brothel. There are three doors: one that leads to the staircase for the rest of the building, and then two others that lead to bedrooms. MOLLY FORGE, a young prostitute, stands center stage, fuming, with her two hands balled into fists. Behind her stands a weaving loom. Her roommate TAMMY, another prostitute, enters from one of the bedrooms.)

TAMMY

Oh fortune unfurled! I am the most ineffective prostitute in all the world. The man I got tossed last night—only because you were busy—glared and frowned the entire time. But, Molly my friend, what was I to do? He thought he'd have you. He acted like my bed was a tomb, I resorted to juggling just to keep him in the room.

MOLLY FORGE

This is a full day of total night. Look out. The sky denies the sun and fat fog hides all the smiles. But worse, the bay is black, the water dark. SAD. SAD. SAD. Tammy oh Tammy, I fear I have the SAD.

TAMMY

You! Sad? You can't be sad. You're the most popular prostitute at Connie's Brothel and Rug Shop. You serviced five men, six women, and a gay couple last night. I saw your tip can. Overflowing with coinage and compliments! I only had the one, a portly teen, with neck hair, cobwebby teeth, ear jam! And he paid in coupons. *(TAMMY picks up a coupon from her tip can.)* "Ten coppers off wash rags", what am I to do with that! I'm sad, the saddest most disappointing prostitute in all the town.

MOLLY FORGE

Not emotionally distressed. But a victim of SAD. A SAD.

TAMMY

A sad what?

MOLLY FORGE

S-A-D. Sexually Aquired Disease. SAD. I've got the SAD.

TAMMY

Which one?

MOLLY FORGE

I think. I fear. It seems like. St. Matilde's Malady.

TAMMY

Oh no! St. Matilde's Malady! That's the worst! Are you sure?

MOLLY FORGE

Look at my hands. Clamped shut. Diseased! I can't weave with fists. And if I can't use the loom customers will know that I am riddled with an incurable, transmittable, and debilitating infection that could leave them as locked up as I.

TAMMY

If you can move everything but your fists, you might get by.

MOLLY FORGE

Everyone checks. Which is why we are cursed with looms in our rooms. When people see she cannot weave, they know their prostitute is diseased.

TAMMY

Molly Forge, unlike a capricious man, my loyalty will never shrink or flop below the belt. I will have no daily spree, until I cure your St. Matilde's Malady!

(CONNIE, the brothel mistress, enters.)

CONNIE

Tragedy coupled with tragedy in Connie's house of humping tragedies. We walked into happy Sandra's room this morning and she was immobile. We tried rolling her down the stairs, but St. Matilde's Malady has fastened her tight within its sickly snares.

MOLLY FORGE

She's dead?

CONNIE

Hardly. Her heart still beats tremendously within its cage. But don't grieve the poor lamb. The army came and made her a battering ram!

TAMMY

Connie, why didn't you find her a cure?

CONNIE

There's no cure for St. Matilde's Malady. But in the midnight of this tragedy, I have found daybreak. Happy Tammy, you will move into lost Sandra's room.

TAMMY

What? No! I can't

CONNIE

It's time you were released from the feet of my deepest gorge, the formidable Molly Forge.

TAMMY

But who's going to make sure that Molly's customers sign the guest book? And take a mint. And who will take the one's who want Molly but don't want to wait and don't mind getting disappointed by my frequently heralded bedroom failures?

CONNIE

All your customers are distracted by Molly. You'll do far better on your own.

TAMMY

Clients will howl if I'm alone. Molly alleviates their disappointment. Me the pain, her the pill. She the anesthetic, me the dental drill.

MOLLY FORGE

Let Tammy stay.

CONNIE

Connie commands, everyone obeys, happy Tammy moves, handsome Molly stays. Today I need everyone to flaunt their greatest attraction. The whole harbor is completely locked up and the sailors will need distraction.

TAMMY

Why's the whole harbor stalled?

CONNIE

A tragedy, it's called.
One ship, full of oil thus,
went beserko maximus.
With steering wheel firmly caught,
It struck every ship in th' lot.
Then, a cannon shot left this tanker doomed,
And from its shattered hull a dark yoke bloomed.
The oil made our harbor a black jail,
from which not even one ship can sail.
Thousands of sailors wait now impatient,
So we are cast to make the entertainment.
Tam and Mol prepare your warm brothel bed,
For we have the busiest of days ahead.
To begin, my eager mares:
A young lad waits downstairs,
He has risen with the morning bands
and waits orchestration from your hands.
So we work now because we must,
Forgoing love, to conquer lust.

(CONNIE exits.)

TAMMY

This is the worst. The busiest day ever, you incapacitated, and me still myself.

MOLLY FORGE

This is all my fault.

TAMMY

St. Matilde's Malady is no one's fault. It could happen to anyone. I've heard it said you can't always trace the source.

MOLLY FORGE

No, I sabotaged that ship to whirl around the bay.

TAMMY

Hump what? You haven't left our room.

MOLLY FORGE

I didn't sleep alone last night. A man slept over.

TAMMY

MOLLY CHRISTINE FORGE! That's forbidden!

MOLLY FORGE

He was my evening's final customer. And he fell asleep astride me, my breasts rocking in the soft hammock of his palms, my hair entangled his, his eyes locked upon mine. We bedded our armies in blissful concordance. When we awoke, he called me his star fire, I lauded him my saintly fox. Then a thousand joyful kisses without purpose or monetary remuneration. I saw my life's end on the ruby curve of his lips and he said as much to me. It was right then that my hands froze into the puppets you see now.

TAMMY

He gave you the SAD?

MOLLY FORGE

Yes. He gave me St. Matilde's Malady. The moment he saw my hands, he bolted out of bed discovering that he couldn't bend his knees from a similar and simultaneous disease. Frightened, he robed himself to leave, dropping his oil tanker's wheel keys. I tried halting him, but limping so to travel farther, he trundled out my window and down the trumpet vines toward the harbor.

TAMMY

You love him.

MOLLY

No. Oh no. I hate him with all the darkness and fury caught in the monstrous hurricane of my soul. In a night he has caught my dear profession from these hands and abused the morning so he can steal away. If I ever see him again, I will use every fist my body can create to tear holes across his corpse.

(A knock at the door.)

TAMMY

What to do! Oh what to do! There's a man coming for reprieve and he'll know you're sick if you can't weave!

MOLLY FORGE

Bullets of rain, calamity, thunder, wind whirl and strike! I am the worst beast the wharf ever dreamed. My staid wooden dock demonically rises plank by plank from its stale marine home and writhes viciously high above the oceanic horizons. I am the storm tornadoes flee from. I am the bluster cities bow towards. I am the devil fire no virgin sea could dream.

(A young man, SAMPSON, enters.)

SAMPSON

Hello, I'm ready for a lascivious stunt.

TAMMY

Tammy. You vile, untempered slut. *(TAMMY slaps MOLLY.)*

MOLLY FORGE

What?

TAMMY

I told you, Tammy, to stop shouting about. Have no fear, sir, this whore, Tammy, is lamenting all the sad fates endured by the poor fellows I cannot service with my famous ten-piece band that plays lubricious carnival tunes on the vibrating accordions of the luckiest sweat drenched thighs.

SAMPSON

Wow. I'm Sampson.

TAMMY

Hello, young sailor, I'm Molly Forge. Yes, that magical Molly Forge you always hear about. You're undisguisedly handsome. My bed is there. My tip can is there. And you can have me here, here, and here. *(TAMMY indicates herself.)* You're very pretty. Maybe you just want to hold my hand and talk about an imagined future we could have if you liked me and wanted to stay and live through that.

SAMPSON

I hate to hurry, but this is the first time I've ever come to land and I have to get back to my mother very soon.

TAMMY

Mother? Who's your mother?

SAMPSON

The meanest pirate to ever haul freight
And tender little me, her only mate.
She's generally a ruthless brutal queen,
But today she's the cruelest I've ever seen:
our peaceful pirate vessel got smote
by this evil oil tanker boat,
so my irate mother never dull
made a cannon crash into their hull.
As that ship sunk and spewed its night-colored juice,
Its feral captain swam towards the harbor sluice.
My mom leapt off our deck to sink that prey
Which gave me this great chance to steal away.
While I have my first brothel and rug shop splurge,
my mom will promptly drown that oil captain scourge.

MOLLY FORGE

But that oil captain's death is meant for my trample.

SAMPSON

Well you're too late. My mother, Dirty Vicki, the esteemed pirate queen, already
executed the deed. Can we begin? For time is precious dear. My mom would
detach my arms if she found me here.

MOLLY FORGE

For plagiarizing murder from my page, this Dirty Vicki will suffer my rage. Beware
world for what I like: my terrors unleashed, I have death at my strike!

(MOLLY exits.)

TAMMY

Tammy, no! *(TAMMY considers going for MOLLY but stops.) (Aside:)* To my defense,
I'm not leaving her side, she has left mine, and I will help her later after I tend to the
finest little bird trembling on my branch. *(To SAMPSON:)* Sampson, don't mind her.
She'll return. Shall we, or do you prefer that we dream of a mutual future with a
farmhouse and a pen of goats we milk together each morning dawn. Sometimes the
best love is left dreamt upon.

SAMPSON

I didn't want to embarrass you in front of your friend. But I think I'd prefer her.

TAMMY

I'm more skilled. You've no doubt heard about me, Molly Forge. I'm very famous.
Is it because she's prettier?

SAMPSON

No! You're undeniably lovely and I could even say that I would fall for a face that fine. But I came here because I heard this man, a portly teen, talking all about Tammy. So I want her.

TAMMY

But no one wants Tammy. She's everyone's last choice. And Molly makes innocents rejoice.

SAMPSON

I hear Tammy juggles. And I thought that would be a lovely way to spend a morning with a woman. With her juggling and me cheering her on.

TAMMY

You don't mean that. Molly is the elegant acrobat, Tammy just a dowdy clown. Let me be the bell you ring to wake the town.

SAMPSON

Why a Molly (*He mimes a lascivious prostitute*), when there's a Tammy (*He mimes a fun juggler*)!

TAMMY

If you knew how many frowns, grumbles, and crying fits followed an experience with Tammy you would demand Molly. Trust me, a time with Tammy is a date with disappointment. Your legs are too fine, your eyes too sweet a candy, for you to be soiled with letdown Tammy.

(CAPTAIN TWISTER enters, wet and oily, unable to bend his legs. He runs around the room.)

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Help! Refuge. Respite! I'm being chased!

TAMMY

Who are you, if you please? And what happened to your knees?

CAPTAIN TWISTER

When I'm not running for my life, I'm the noble Captain Twister, but in this instant I'm willing to disguise myself as your little sister. (*CAPTAIN TWISTER begins putting on clothes around the room.*) Hide me.

SAMPSON

(Pointing to TAMMY.) You can hide in her arms. She's available.

TAMMY

No she's not. Who's chasing you?

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Trouble after trouble follows me today
A cannon sunk my ship into the bay.
I fell too and was swimming to the shore
Hindered by my damn legs both stiff as oars,
Then a sea beast with a butterfly stroke
Swam up to me and grabbed by cloak.
She grappled my head between her thighs
(and so not to drown)
I gnashed the flesh her ass supplies!
This small bite that you will moan
Permitted me to free myself
From that brawny vice no man has known.
And so I escaped from a watery death,
Hoping you excuse my sea foam breath,
The pirate chases me to here and now
So I'll hide over there if you'll allow.

SAMPSON

She's coming here? Dirty Vicki's coming here!

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Brutal creature, she won't stop until I'm bloated in barnacles at the bottom of the bay. If she finds me here, I'm doomed.

SAMPSON

If she finds me here, I'm doomed. But you deserve it. Your hit our ship.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

It's not my fault, I lost my wheel key.

SAMPSON

You broke the gorgeous mermaid off the bow of our ship. My mom spent my entire childhood carving that beautiful woman with a fish tail using no other tools but her fingernails. But now that mermaid lies splintered and broke, whirling lost in the sea, leaving my poor mom bereft and angry. As much as I would like to see you mutilated for your crimes, I have to go before I face my own end times.

TAMMY

Don't leave, I'll hide you. *(To CAPTAIN TWISTER:)* However, I won't hide you.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Where's Molly Forge? She'll hide me.

SAMPSON

(SAMPSON points to TAMMY.) She's right here.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

You've mistaken Molly Forge for an unlikely substitute.

TAMMY

No he didn't, Captain Twister. It's me, Molly Forge, or do you not recall my electric seaweed fingers, which sent you into the brightest tinctures of pleasure last night. Please, describe for young Sampson here, how un-disappointing a night with Molly Forge is. He's deciding.

SAMPSON

I've decided.

TAMMY

Decide again.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Sometimes it happens that you see the end of your life looking back at you and no culminated machinations of men's highest pleasures and imaginations can match the silent hours nestled in the pillows of her bed. You've heard the ancient monster Medusa who's look turned men to stone? You probably heard it wrong. Medusa's horror was not the snakes twining about her head, nor the mangled skin marring her face; it was her delicate cheek, the adventure of her thighs, a glow about her shy grin, that caught men frozen at her sight. Ugliness illicit indifference, beauty stops. And so I, last night:

Seeing the temptation of Medusa unfold
the blightless beauty beyond the tale told,
under the terror of that gorgeous Gorgon gaze,
who among us wouldn't stupidly run away.

TAMMY

You love her.

SAMPSON

See, I want Tammy. Molly Forge is occupied.

TAMMY

Try this happy Molly fest, here between my heaving breasts! *(TAMMY buries SAMPSON's head in her breasts.)*

(A knock at the door. "Let me in! Please! Help!")

CAPTAIN TWISTER

When people ask, I'm your visiting little sister who's crumpled over, blind, and shy. *(A disguised CAPTAIN TWISTER runs into one of the bedrooms.)*

TAMMY

Say you want Molly Forge.

SAMPSON

I don't. And I never will want anything like her.

(SAMPSON runs into the other room to hide. DIRTY VICKI enters in a huff.)

DIRTY VICKI

Hide me or I'll lop your head off its pedestal.

TAMMY

It will be a disappointing interaction I'm sure.

(DIRTY VICKI puts TAMMY into a headlock.)

DIRTY VICKI

I am Dirty Vicki, the most horrible pirate imperial, and you will hide me or I will grind you into a gizzard sack of digestible material.

TAMMY

Oh Dirty Vicki, do as you wish. But if you can reprocess human bodies into new forms, please make me a silky cobweb so that I might enwrap my little angel and freeze his smile with my loving threads.

DIRTY VICKI

(DIRTY VICKI releases TAMMY.)

This is why my boat never meets the sand
You're all crazy or miserable on land.
I was aiming to fix a fiasco:
Avenge my sweet, sculpted mermaid torso
A certain man cracked my only prize
So I vowed to drown him 'tween my thighs.
While I held him down there fast
His jaw unhinged and bit my ass!
(Look, ye, hark
there's the mark!)
I let him loose so I could scratch
And thus I lost my spiteful catch.
Giving this man chase into the streets
I meet two hammers attached to a screech.
This baleful woman with fists of hate
Blamed me for drowning her only mate.
I screamed three times, "I haven't yet"
But fury's target was surely set,
She flung innocent me on to the ground
And let her wrecking balls go pound pound pound.
Had I not moved my skull here and there
I am sure that my face would share
The thousand cracks blossomed in the street,
Her rage breaking the toughest concrete.

One such punch had the force of a boulder!
Her whole arm was buried, hand to shoulder!
While she was fiercely buried
I slipped away and carried
My pirate booty to this fruity stop
Called Connie's Brothel and Rug Shop.
I knew a Connie once, a fishy maid
But I never speak of that crusade.
So here I am
and if you don't hide me from this unprovoked war
I will sacrifice you to that raging two-fisted manticore.

TAMMY

Do so, but know you kill a woman who wasn't good enough even when she was
being someone else. You can hide behind my loom.

DIRTY VICKI

You will hide me better, or I will weave your face through my thighs and crack you
like a walnut. Oh no! She's come to give her pummeling, I can hear the stairs hum-
hum-hum-a-ling! (*DIRTY VICKI puts her ear to the outside door.*)

(SAMPSON pokes his head out.)

SAMPSON

(Sotto voce:) Please help me.

(SAMPSON pokes his head back in. TAMMY blows him an unseen kiss.)

TAMMY

Oh my heart flutters through the pain! I can't help but try and try again.

DIRTY VICKI

I must hide! (*DIRTY VICKI tries to go into the bedroom with SAMPSON.*)

TAMMY

No, you can't.

(DIRTY VICKI opens the door, TAMMY whirls her away.)

DIRTY VICKI

My son!

TAMMY

No that's my nightstand!

DIRTY VICKI

Why's my son in this dirty house of caprice!

TAMMY

Nay! That was a motherless furniture piece.

(DIRTY VICKI opens the next bedroom door.)

DIRTY VICKI

A man in covered in panties.

TAMMY

No, that's my introverted sister.

(TAMMY whirls DIRTY VICKI towards the outside door. DIRTY VICKI opens it. CONNIE is there. DIRTY VICKI stops.)

DIRTY VICKI

Connie.

CONNIE

Dirty Vicki. My sacred enemy.

DIRTY VICKI

My dearest foe. Where have you been?

CONNIE

Here, at my brothel. It's very lucrative and I'm very happy. Much happier than I currently appear.

DIRTY VICKI

I, too, love my life and your absence from it.

(SAMPSON and CAPTAIN TWISTER enter from their hiding places.)

SAMPSON

Mother.

TAMMY

The nightstand grew a voice!

SAMPSON

(Pointing at CONNIE.) It's your mermaid. She walks!

CONNIE

Who is this boy?

DIRTY VICKI

No one. Get back to your room, the nightstand, before I decompartmentalize your tongue.

SAMPSON

The mermaid broke from our ship, grew legs, and walked ashore. Hello, wooden creature.

CONNIE

Is this your son?

DIRTY VICKI

Sampson, this angelic devil is not our wonderful mermaid.

SAMPSON

You said you carved her from your tears.

DIRTY VICKI

He's been drinking fish pee for years.

SAMPSON

Yes, you carved this very same figure, stuck her on our ship, and now with a little oil and water, she walks. Look here's the pose (*SAMPSON makes CONNIE cup her breasts and rearranges her face in an intimidating glance*). There! It is our ship's guiding force! Hello, two-legged mermaid, now that you've been given birth, would you like to lead our sails across the earth?

DIRTY VICKI

Sampson! Who said you could come to land?

SAMPSON

I came for the love of my life, Tammy.

TAMMY

But he wants to try Molly Forge before he commits.

CONNIE

(*To SAMPSON:*) Watch out, little boy. You'll get a SAD.

TAMMY

Not from me. I'm clean, watch me weave.

CONNIE

(*To SAMPSON:*) Your mother gave me a SAD. St. Matilde's Malady. And I was locked up for months. But I got over it and am once again pure.

TAMMY

I thought St. Matilde's Malady didn't have a cure.

CONNIE

I surrounded myself with daily chores and salty whores, with my attention blocked, my body unlocked. And the freedom . . . (*CONNIE's jaw locks and she begins*

speaking gibberish.) DAMMIT! I see this woman I've sworn I hate and I can't move my jaws.

DIRTY VICKI

My hands, my hands, damn these frozen claws. (*DIRTY VICKI's hands freeze into claws.*)

CONNIE

(*Having difficulty moving her jaws:*) I got my SAD back! I must leave.

(*MOLLY FORGE enters with her fists blazing.*)

MOLLY FORGE

Give me room to beat that hag to dust.

DIRTY VICKI

I didn't do anything!

CAPTAIN TWISTER

I'm just a terribly shy, hunkered-over, little girl.

MOLLY FORGE

You musty undertow
with that camel toe:
I hereby pity your feeble crown,
For now my vengeance comes raining down.
I summon bouquets of lightning strike from high above
for killing the only man I ever dared to love.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

What?

TAMMY

My sister, who's visiting for a spell,
cannot hear you very well.
Speak louder if your voice raises.
And maybe try repeating phrases.

MOLLY FORGE

If love means I can't move as quick or fast,
I would lose my speed to make it last.
If love means I can't run amuck,
then I would stand forever stuck.
If love means love might die,
then I would abandon all just to try.
But you, moulting crow, drowned my stupid dream.
Now I'll pound chasms into your topography.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Don't kill her.

TAMMY

Listen to my timid sister.

CONNIE

(Garbled:) Kill her. *(CONNIE tries to leave.)*

SAMPSON

Stay mermaid stay!

CONNIE

You should kill her . . . but know you'll have to get through me. *(CONNIE grabs DIRTY VICKI's hand.)* Though it means I lose my pride, I will not leave her side.

MOLLY

Like that will stop me, you conjoined crones,
Two lovers are as easy to mangle as one alone.

(MOLLY advances.)

CAPTAIN TWISTER

You never gave him a chance to return. *(MOLLY stops.)*
Sometimes beauty-blinded people run away,
From such beds they should never stray.
In the best situation they're given a revelation
that they were not alone in their adoration.
And they return with wrenched heart ablazing
With dreams of futures beyond amazing.
Now a fearing lover dreads your rebuff
He hopes his recurred presence is proof enough.

(CAPTAIN TWISTER takes off his disguise.)

CAPTAIN TWISTER

I came back.

(Silence.)

TAMMY

My sister is a man!

CAPTAIN TWISTER

If you'll let me.

(MOLLY FORGE walks up to CAPTAIN TWISTER. She hits him in the chest as hard as she can. She hits him again.)

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Careful. You'll stop my heart.

(MOLLY FORGE flings herself into CAPTAIN TWISTER's arms.)

SAMPSON

No, stop! I love that woman. *(Points to MOLLY FORGE.)*

TAMMY

Oh tragic folly, everyone loves Molly.

SAMPSON

That may be, but I love Tammy!

TAMMY

Are you sure?

SAMPSON

As sure as these balls will find tender hands. *(An awkward moment, then he produces three juggling balls.)*

TAMMY

Sweet angel. *(TAMMY takes the balls and juggles.)* If this doesn't disappoint: I am sadly Tammy.

SAMPSON

Then I am happily entranced.

DIRTY VICKI

I can't release your grip.

CONNIE

That's okay. Sampson's your son?

DIRTY VICKI

No. He's ours. Our only one.

CONNIE

I never knew.

DIRTY VICKI

And now you do.

MOLLY FORGE

My elbows have locked.

CAPTAIN TWISTER

So have mine. My neck bones too.

MOLLY FORGE

Are we cursed together?

CAPTAIN TWISTER

Not cursed. Clasped, my love, clasped together, forever.

(CAPTAIN TWISTER and MOLLY sway. DIRTY VICKI and CONNIE stand hand in hand. TAMMY stops juggling and steps forward.)

TAMMY

Though we've sorted through this disarray
We hope you take something from our little play:
Patrons, travel far and keep your limbs loose
But when it happens don't let yourself refuse:
It is improbable and impossible to flee
When braced with St. Matilde's Malady.

(Dance party! Everyone dances with frozen limbs. Slowly their entire bodies freezes up until the end when everyone freezes together. The music plays on.)

END OF PLAY