

Production notes:

Roquefort was first produced in NYC by Emerging Artists Theatre Company in the EAT Fall EATFest 2000 with Paul Adams as artistic director and directed by Donna Kaz with the following cast:

Speed: Matt Boston
Doris: Wynne Anders

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(for) "danny!"
#1 for a better and
Bring up ROQUEFORT *who he comes*
through door
bring
up #8

Setting: A lower middle-class kitchen in the Lackawanna Valley.

Time: Present.

Characters: Speed, mid 30s-40s, Doris, mid 30s-40s.

(Doris and Speed appear on the opposite side of the kitchen door. They are locked out.)

DORIS: Danny?

SPEED: Open up!

DORIS: Honey?

SPEED: I said open up!

DORIS: Are you in there?

SPEED: He's in there. I heard him run in. Heard him lock the door.

DORIS: Maybe it was the cat.

SPEED: We don't have a cat.

DORIS: I know, but I've been thinking about getting one.

SPEED: Danny, if you don't unlock this door, I'm going to kill your mother.

DORIS: The more you threaten me, the longer you'll wait for supper. *(knocks on door)* Danny, your father's hungry. All the food's in there with you. Why don't you come out and lock yourself in the bathroom. C'mon, I just put in a new roll.

SPEED: *(BANGS on the door)* Hey you little bastard, I'm sick of the games. If you don't unlock this door right now, I'm getting the ax. *(pause)* The ax, Daniel. *(to Doris)* Doris, I'm getting the ax.

(Speed Exits.)

DORIS: Danny, he's getting the ax. Did you hear me? I can't help you if he's got a weapon.

(Speed returns in a rage.)

SPEED: Where's the ax?

DORIS: In the kitchen.

(Speed pounds on the door.)

SPEED: Open this door and give me that ax!

DORIS: Wait. What if he's done something with the ax? What if he's fallen on it? What if he accidentally severed his arms or something?

SPEED: It is humanly impossible for a person to cut off both his arms. Both legs yes—

DORIS: His legs?! (to Danny) Use the tablecloth as a tourniquet, baby. I'm coming—

(Doris takes a running leap against the door.)

SPEED: Stop right there. Breaking down doors is man's work.

DORIS: So is satisfying a woman. Step aside *(She side-swipes him and CRASHES through the door.)* Mommy's here—mommy's here—

SPEED: *(following Doris in the kitchen.)* Danny, boy? Oh, Danny, boy? *(turns on Doris)* You let him out when I was chasing the ax—

DORIS: The door locks from the inside, remember?

SPEED: Then where the hell—?

(Doris points to the table and mouths, "under the table." Doris stealthily approaches the table.)

DORIS: Once upon a time—

(Doris tosses a glance to Speed. Speed shakes his head, no. A silent but fierce argument ensues. Doris wins.)

DORIS: Once upon a time—

(Speed reluctantly joins in. They creep toward the table.)

SPEED:—there was a sad weepy bastard named Danny—

(Doris shushes Speed.)

DORIS:—and Danny was scared because he thought his mommy was really angry with him. But she wasn't angry—

SPEED:—his father, on the other hand, swore that when he got his hands on the little bastard—

DORIS:—quit it, Speed—

SPEED:—he was going to twist him into a pretzel and EAT HIM!

(On "eat him" Speed lunges under the table.)

DORIS: *(screaming)* Don't you hurt him—

(Silence.)

SPEED: *(from under the table)* He ain't here.

(Doris removes the note from the head of lettuce. She can't make it out.)

DORIS: Get up.

(Speed rises. Bangs his head under the table. He stands, rubbing his head. Doris hands him the note.)

DORIS: Read it.

(Speed looks at the note. Confusion sets in.)

SPEED: You read it.

DORIS: My glasses are broken. Remember?

SPEED: Someone needs to teach you how to duck.

DORIS: Read the note.

SPEED: "Dear Ma, I can't take the pressure, so I've turned myself into a head of lettuce. Do with me what you must, I'll understand. Only please don't put me in the salad spinner; you know how seasick I get. Your son, Daniel Rinaldi. PS Please give my ballet slippers to father."

(Pause. Doris runs off. Seconds later she returns with ballet slippers and conks Speed upside his head.)

DORIS: Go get him. I'll have supper ready by the time you get back. What Rachel must think.

SPEED: What makes you think he's over Rachel's.

DORIS: Where else would he be? If he's not quietly listening to *Swan Lake* in his closet so as not to disturb your depraved sense of masculinity, he's over in Rachel's coal bin, hiding from the Master of the Cave's daily temper tantrum.

SPEED: Let him stay—

DORIS: Leave our sad weepy boy sitting in Rachel's cellar like an unloved sack of coal? No. Go get him.

SPEED: I can't.

DORIS: You won't.

SPEED: I won't because I can't. I've had it, Doris. Up to the hairs on my ass. I get my hands on that kid, there's no telling what I might do. And I will not, under any circumstances, beat my son in public. You want him, you go get him.

DORIS: It isn't my place to get him.

SPEED: It's not mine.

DORIS: I'm not the one he's running away from.

SPEED: Right. I forgot. It's me. I'm the villain. Unfather of the year. Not Ward Cleaver. A meat Cleaver. I'd rather drink my own piss than spend one minute with my little boy. I'm a bastard. No. A crumb-bum. Well, if I'm so rotten-bad, there's no way I can be trusted with our bundle of joy. *(Speed indicates the door)* So be my guest.

(Speed sits. He's not about to move. Doris grabs her breasts.)

DORIS: You don't get Danny and you'll never see these without a bra for as long as you live your miserable life.

SPEED: I'll rip that bra right off.

DORIS: And I'll have it tattooed back on.

(Pause.)

SPEED: This is the last time.

(Speed exits. Doris sets the table. She places the lettuce center table. She takes the knife, places it on the lettuce. She can't do it. She picks up the note. Re-reads it.)

DORIS: "—turned myself into a head of lettuce—" *(laughs)* Your father would have turned himself into a shot glass. Not unlike his present form.

(Doris gets in close to the lettuce.)

DORIS: In case you haven't noticed, your father drinks. He didn't drink when we first met. I honestly don't know what got into him...

(Doris realizes she is talking to a head of lettuce. She laughs, a strained, nervous laugh. She positions the knife above the lettuce and closes her eyes. She raises the knife. She can't do it. Wringing her hands, she circles the table, staring at the lettuce.)

DORIS: Danny?

(No response. She places the lettuce at the far end of the table.)

DORIS: Danny? If you're in there, let me know by rolling across the table.

(She reaches out and gently arranges the lettuce leaves.)

DORIS: Okay? Go.

(The lettuce doesn't move. Doris gives it a helping push. It doesn't move.)



Boston (SPEED) and Wynne Anders (DORIS)
Speed: "Right. I forgot. It's me. I'm the villain. Unfather of the year."

DORIS: Danny, don't do this to me. I'm low on my prescription.

(No response. Doris gathers up her strength. She takes the knife and like a Samurai housewife, raises the knife high in the air. She stands there for a long time, quaking. She doesn't notice Speed's entrance.)

SPEED: Doris—

(Doris screams. The knife comes down and cuts the lettuce in half.)

DORIS: Where's Danny?

SPEED:—he wasn't there. Rachel hasn't seen him all week. Feed me.

(Speed sits. Doris regards the two halves of lettuce with creeping horror.)

DORIS: Sweet Jesus, what have I done?

SPEED: You forgot the beer.

DORIS: Someone hold me—

SPEED: What'd I tell you? No holding in the kitchen.

DORIS: I feel like I was dipped in ice water.

SPEED: Stand next to the stove.

DORIS: I've killed that which I've created—

(Doris holds up the lettuce.)

DORIS: Look.

SPEED: Ah, salad—

(Speed reaches for the lettuce. Doris pulls it away.)

DORIS: No—

SPEED: What the hell are you doing?

(Doris grabs the duct tape.)

DORIS: I'm saving my son.

(She tries to tape the two halves together.)

DORIS: Danny, come back. Come back and tell them I didn't do it on purpose.

(Speed is up and grabbing at her.)

SPEED: Give me that—

(Doris pulls back.)

DORIS: Oh, you'd love it if I went to prison, wouldn't you?

SPEED: People don't go to prison for making salad.

DORIS: Of course. How can they send me to prison when I'm already in one? Born in prison. Raised in prison. Dying in prison. You were supposed to be my pardon, Speed. You promised me freedom. Air that no one else had breathed. Clean underarms. Streakless windows. A Hush Puppy life. But instead I got solitary confinement. With you.

SPEED: Okay. You win. We're both prisoners. Well, even prisoners get to eat. Hand it over—

(Speed grabs for the lettuce. Doris jabs at him.)

SPEED: Give me the knife.

DORIS: Where do you want it?

SPEED: Oh, you want to play?

DORIS: I thought we were.

SPEED: Let's go—

(They circle the table. Speed grabs for the lettuce. Doris counters with quick jabs. Speed lunges. They're in a clinch. Speed YELPS. He pushes

Doris. She lands on the floor. Speed is holding the knife by the blade. He drops the knife; wraps his bloody hand in his tee shirt. Doris sits on the floor, clutching both halves of lettuce.)

SPEED: Why are you crying? I'm the one who's bleeding.

DORIS: My sunshine is gone.

SPEED: Turn on a lamp.

DORIS: Don't you order me. Don't you even talk to me. I don't exist in your world any more. Me or Danny.

SPEED: You are most definitely in my world. You are my world. Danny, on the other hand. Not in my world. You made sure of that.

DORIS: Because in your world he's invisible. In your world he's unloved.

SPEED: In your world he's produce. Yeah, the little bastard drives me nuts. With those scratchy baller records and the tap dancing on the coffee table. But you know what? I didn't have no father. There was no one around to show me nothing. I had to teach myself everything. How to shoot pool. How to clean a carburetor. How to fish. I want to be there for my son the way my father wasn't. But the only chance I get with him. The only time you allow. Is the time I spend coaxing him out of Rachel's coal bin. That's no way to teach a kid how to bait a hook.

(Doris rises, clutching the lettuce. She backs up.)

DORIS: Stand back, Danny, your father's about to sob—

SPEED: Ask him. Go ahead. Ask him why he runs away.

DORIS: *(to lettuce)* I know why you run away—

SPEED: *(to lettuce)* Tell her, Danny—

(Doris clamps both halves over her ears.)

DORIS:—we can't hear a word you're saying—

SPEED: Tell her what you told me, Danny—

DORIS: Don't you dare—

SPEED: You run away—

DORIS: Because of you—

SPEED: Because of me?

DORIS: Yes!

SPEED: Then why is the note addressed to you?

(Doris re-reads the note, then shakes the lettuce.)

DORIS: Come back here this instant and tell me it isn't true.

SPEED: Get your hat, son— *(Speed grabs the lettuce.)* We're going fishing—

(Doris takes it back.)

DORIS: You are not—

(Speed takes the lettuce.)

SPEED: Doris, I'm taking the lettuce fishing—

DORIS: Give me back my baby—

(Doris lunges, but Speed holds the lettuce high above his head. Doris jumps all over Speed, grabbing at the lettuce.)

SPEED: Stop it. Stop it. STOP IT!

(He thrusts the lettuce halves in Doris' face.)

SPEED: This. Is. Not. Your. Son.

(He takes a giant bite. Doris screams and fans to the floor. Silence.)

SPEED: Doris. Get up.

DORIS: Once upon a time.

SPEED: Get off the floor!

DORIS: Once upon a time. There was a man and a woman who used to love each other.

SPEED: So they had a son.

DORIS:—they had a son—

SPEED: But the kid wouldn't stop running away. One cold day, he got so tired of running he turned himself into a head of lettuce. Just like that. When the mother and father found their son, the lettuce, they were confused. The mother blamed the father. The father blamed the mother. And they ended up on the kitchen floor, bruised, bloodied, and hungrier than shit. That's when they came to their senses.

DORIS: They sure did.

SPEED: And they ate the lettuce. They ate the lettuce because—

(Doris rises.)

SPEED: Because?

DORIS: Deep in their hearts and souls, they knew it wasn't their son.



Matt Boston (SPEED) and Wynne Anders (DORIS)

Doris: "Don't you order me. Don't you even talk to me. I don't exist in your world any more. Me or Danny."

SPEED: Great. Let's eat.

(Speed seats Doris in a chair. He places what's left of the lettuce in the bowls. He picks up a bottle of salad dressing. He passes the bottle to Doris.)

SPEED: Dressing? ← BQ

(Doris looks at Speed. At the lettuce. At Speed. Blackout.)

The End

