

UNCORSETED
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(The cast is lined up on stage with their backs to the audience. The Barker is standing stage front, right. The area where the Barker stands is lit; the area where the cast stands is dark. Alternatively, there is a spotlight on the Barker.)

Barker: *(The barker calls out to the audience as if selling tickets at the entrance gate to fair.)* Come one, come all, that's right – step right up folks, get your tickets, get your tickets here! For the Chicago World's Fair celebrating 400 years since the brave Christopher Columbus sailed to the New World. Tickets. Come see the Chicago miracle, 600 acres of marvels, see the manmade lagoons, Mr. Ferris's grand wheel, 200 new buildings, Mr. Thomas Edison's miracle of electrification making night as clear as day. Tickets, tickets, step right up for the Chicago's Wooorld Fair.

(The Barker introduces each character and as he does, the actor playing the character turns to face the audience. The Barker's drops his singsong sales pitch and speaks to the audience.) And within this spectacle, our own story -- 1893, in the great city of Chicago, Paris on the Prairie, *(lights come up on the cast) first, George Sand (George turns),* a man with a past and perhaps something to hide. Fate has brought George to Chicago to learn the fine art of fencing. Next, a beauty renowned throughout the Midwest, Chicago's own Penelope *(Penelope turns),* a women who has lost her heart to her best friend Felicity *(Felicity turns).* Felicity, blind to Penelope's love, Felicity instead has fallen in love with Penelope's brother, Douglas *(Douglas turns).* Douglas, love object of Felicity, brother of Penelope finds himself mysteriously drawn to George Sand. Douglas. Our next character is a man with 4 faces: you will see him as Fredrick the wrestler; as an anonymous rapists; he will then magically transforms into a lesbian sex vixen; and finally will dazzle you as a bare breasted sword fighter. That is versatility—you will only find that in the Midwest folks—only in the Midwest. What tour would be complete without lesbian vixen (Vixens). And finally at the center of our pageant, Countess Cornelia – a woman of means and the sword, in touch with her womanhood and anyone else's as well. *(The cast exits stage left.)* In our first act, you will learn how each of these characters came to be in Chicago.

(Barker slipping back into his roles as pitchmen.) Tiiiickets, get yer tiiiickets to the Chicago Worlds Fair. See Wild Bill Hitchcock and Anne Oakely, see cowboys and Indians fight it out, take a ride on silent magic boats through a lagoon lit by a hundred torches, watch the daring of the dancing swordmen, risking live and limb with the long daggers of steel. Tickets, get you tickets to the one and only the biggest and best Chicago's World Fair! *(Barker moves stage right front)*

(Lights go down. Set up for first vignettes.)

Act I: A series of 4 vignettes that explain/show something about the main characters past. Each vignette occurs in a

bedroom.

Act I, scene 1: The lights come up on Douglas and the Man.

Man: *(Douglas has the Man in a wrestler's hold. The Man breaks free and assumes an old style boxing stance—he holds both arms as "L's" directly in front of his chest.)* Come no closer!

Douglas: *(oblivious to the man's discomfort.)* Ah, tired of Greco Roman wrestling, eh, and want to have it by the Queen's rules? Fine, then, *(Douglas assumes the same stance and begins to pump his arms up and down and dancing around the Man.)* I am also trained in the art of boxing and can clench with the best of men. *(Douglas drops his boxing stance and pounces on the Man wrapping his arms around the man's upper torso and pulling him close.)*

Man: *(struggling.)* Let ...me...go.

Douglas: What?

Man: Let...me...go, I said. *(Douglas drops him. The man slightly loses his balance, fumbles a bit, and starts straightening his hair and clothes.)* If I had known what sort you were I would not have come here.

Douglas: The sort I am?

Man: Yes, the sort you are *(nodding toward Douglas's crotch, where his erection is obvious.)*

Douglas: *(oblivious, doesn't get his meaning.)* Are you calling me a cheat? I'm an athlete, *(crossing his arms, turning up his nose as if offended, and turning a way from the man so the audience gets a full shot of his erection)* a man's man. That was a legitimate wrestling hold.

Man: *(with derision)* Legitimate?

Douglas: Are you sore for being bested? Not everyone can wrestle as I do, my friend. Worry not. Let me show you a new hold I learned just last week and then you can try it on me. *(Douglas grabs the man and tries to pull him toward the bed.)* Get face down.

Man: *(the Man pulls away, both angry and scared)* You sir, are an invert!

Douglas: An invert? A lover of men? I say...

Man: *(nodding toward Douglas's crotch)* Can you deny that this rousing sport has aroused more than your heart?

Douglas: *(finally realizing the man's meaning is embarrassed by his erection and tries to cover up)* I. I...Find you a worthy opponent.

Man: Your offer of fraternal affection was nothing more than an invitation to corruption. Good day, *(looks again at him with contempt)* "sir." *(The Man snatches up his jacket and bolts out of the room stage right.)*

Douglas: *(chasing after him, but stopping short of exiting stage).* But, but Fred, wait! Shall we try fencing?

Barker: *(Upper stage right.)* Not to worry about our Douglas. Even though his has lost another *(makes quotation marks with fingers)* "friend". He retreats to his favorite haunt, the gymnasium—where he feels most at ease--and pursues a new past-time recently introduced to the states—fencing.

(Lights go down. Set up for next vignette. Lights go up.)

Act 1, scene 2: Soon to be George Sand and the Rapist in the room of the lodging house furnished with a bed. The rapist is on the stage left side of the bed in boxer shorts and a wife beater; George sand is in front of the bed,

bent over facing stage right—called in the middle of the night, she is wearing a night dress. Also in the room are a fencing sword, a man’s walking stick and a neat pile of the rapists’ clothing.)

Soon to be George Sand: *(bending over and checking out the bed)* Sir, I don’t know why you called me here in the middle of the night. I see absolutely nothing wrong with your bed. *(The rapist comes up behind her and grabs her around the hips; she screams and pulls away; they struggle and both end up on the stage right side of the bed.)* Get your hands off of me, your filthy. . . *(to evade the rapist, George goes behind the bed and ends up on the stage left side; enroute she picks up the walking stick).*

Rapist: *(to pursue her, the rapist passes in front of the bed, also moving to stage left)* Ahh. . .don’t you do more than clean rooms, now lassie? *(she uses the cane to push him to the bed.)*

Soon to be George Sand: *(takes a few steps back and waves the sword)* By Zeus. . .

Rapist: “By Zeus” *(mockingly, while sitting on bed; then gets up and moves stage right, turning his back slightly to audience).*

Soon to be George Sand: *(as he is doing this, she picks up the fencing sword and grabs it, pointing it at the rapist)*
I said come no further, man.

Rapist: *(He turns)* Here’s a blade for you. *(He exposes himself and waves his penis).* Let me show you how to sink the dagger. *(He lunges at her and she stabs him spinning him around so he is positioned to fall on the bed. He collapses on the bed. She gets blood on her nightdress.)*

Soon to be George Sand: *(as she takes off the dress)* And there’s a blade for you. *(she looks at the sword appraisingly.)* And quite a handy thing. *(She looks around, makes a decision. Looking back at the collapsed figure she waves the sword, trying it out. Pointing at the collapsed figure with the sword)* “Thou shalt not steal what should be given freely. . . *(she looks at his clothes).* . . what? The least you can do? Well, thank you *(bowing)*. I think from now on I shall be doing more than cleaning. Now how are you, I mean who am I to be? *(She goes through is wallet).* George Post. Post? Ugh, no, so *(looking at the collapsed figure)* obvious. George I like, but I believe the new me, as I join the ranks of men should fit in, be one of the millions, like a grain of sand undistinguishable from the rest. George Sand, yes, I like that. *(Continues going through the wallet).* What have we here? Tickets to the 1893 Columbian Exhibition, Chicago, Illinois. *(Reading the tickets.)* You are invited to the fencing demonstration and for a week of fencing instruction, soon to be featured at the 1900 Olympics. Well, then, let’s not keep them waiting. *(She puts on his trousers, shirt and suspenders. She puts her hair under his hat but it won’t fit. She searches around and finds a pair of scissors. She hesitates and begins to cut off her hair. When finished she puts the hat back on and takes the sword. And exits stage left.)*

Barker: So George leaves for Chicago for a fencing exposition, where currently, our heroine Penelope and best friend, Felicity cavort in the bedroom of Penelope’s brother Douglas. Penelope is hoping that chance will smile on her and grant her heart’s desire.

(Lights go down. Set up for next vignette. Lights go up.)

Act 1, scene 3: *Best friends Penelope and Felicity chase each other around Douglas’s bed, laughing. They are in their night clothes. A fencing sword sits by the bed on the stage left side.*

Penelope: Felicity, you are my best friend but I must say you are the slowest girl in Chicago.

Felicity: Perhaps the foot race is not my best sport. Penelope, by the gods you must be own one of the fastest pair of feet in town. Have you thought about testing your winged feet of Mercury at the foot races at the World's Fair.

Penelope: Try harder, Felicity, catch me and you can kiss me.

Felicity: Can I pretend you are Douglas?

Penelope: This is his room, what better place for a sister to pretend to be her brother? *(Penelope lets Felicity catch her and throw her on the bed and straddles her. When they land on the bed, their heads are facing stage left. Penelope is turned slightly sideways).* OOOOOooooooo, Felicity! *(She screams with delight)*

Felicity: Now I have you, speed demon.

Penelope: Call me Douglas.

Felicity: Now I have you, Douglas.

Penelope: Felicity, show me what a woman you are.

Felicity: When I am married to your brother. . .

Penelope: I'm Douglas.

Felicity: Be still, Douglas, my love. When I'm married to you, Douglas, I shall kiss you like this. *(The two share of deep kiss. Penelope's toes and legs twitch with pleasure. Felicity notices the sword and gets off of Penelope and stoops down and picks it up, remaining stage left.)*

Penelope: *(trying to attract Felicity back to the bed)* I think you need more practice. Show me again.

Felicity: *(ignoring her and speaking towards the audience.)* Yes, when I finally capture by prize, my darling Douglas, the world will see a modern love, then. *(She begins to get a little melodramatic)* Yes, our love will climb to new heights like...like

Penelope: Mr. Ferris's Wheel?

Felicity: Yes! Like Mr. Ferris's wheel rolling churning...*(she gets carried away imaging sex with Douglas and stops talking.)*

Penelope: Pounding?

Felicity: Yes, pounding like a... a...

Penelope: *(trying to get Felicity to think about her and not Douglas)* Steam engine, churning the deep, wet waters of the Mississippi?

Felicity: Yes! *(turning to her)* Penelope, you're his sister. You must help me win him.

Penelope: *(speaking to the audience)* I fear that rather than be your bridesmaid, I would prefer to be your bride.

Felicity: *(Grabs the sword, trying to wield it, turns back to Penelope):* Will you?

Penelope: *(sighing and sitting up)* For you, my love, anything. He's at the gymnasium at the fair taking fencing lessons. He'll be there all week. That will be the place to pin your prize. Perhaps if he sees you excelling at a man's sport, he'll see you for the woman you are.

Felicity: Brilliant! Away! *(She exits stage left with the sword/foil held aloft.)*

Penelope: *(to self and audience)* And perhaps you'll finally see that you've thrust you dagger at the wrong target – aiming for the brother, instead of the sister who loves you so.

Barker: While Penelope is thwarted in love, our Countess Cornelia, an émigré from France, a woman of modern ideas, and a skilled swordswoman, has found that America's heartland has an abundance to offer.

(Lights do down; Cast members enter from stage left holding a sheet in front of them—Cornelia and 3 women known as the Vixens. When they are seated on the bed the lights come up.)

Act 1, Scene 4: *There is a sword leaning in the corner. Cornelia is in the bed with a woman on each side of her. They are sitting up in the bed, the covers pulled up just beneath their bare breasts. The audience doesn't know it, but there is a third woman under the sheet.)*

Cornelia: How lucky am I to be like Saturn orbited by her moons.

The Vixens: *(taking turns speaking and overlapping one another):* Countess Cornelia, tell us our names. Yes, Countess, Mother Saturn, name us, name us! ...*(Both are standing on their knees on the bed facing the audience at a 45 degree angle to Cornelia. With each naming Cornelia touches the breast, tracing the outline of the nipples of the women.)*

Cornelia: Why, you, of course are the moon Lapetus, mysterious, inviting. *(Turning to the other breast)* And you, my lovely perky beauty, are Rhea. Hot and firey, spinning rapidly, burning, a flame with passion.

Third Vixen: *(Popping up from under the sheet)* And what of me? *(Standing on her knees on the bed facing Cornelia.)*

Cornelia: Ah, you. Well you are a very special case, a strong, determined moon and slowly but inevitably revolving round and round and Mimas, argumentative yet inviting, challenging and yet wanting to be conquered.

(The two women squeal and try to pull the covers over the heads of all three.)

Cornelia: *(Laughing)* Haven't we had enough play? We need our energies for our sporting tomorrow in the meadow. I promised to teach you how to feint, parry and thrust.

(Her protests meet deaf ears as the women successfully pull the sheet over her head. Under the sheet obviously begin to make love.)

Barker: But the Countess will need her rest for in a meadow not far from this very fair, under the light of the moon, she offers lessons in the art of fencing to these women. Our intrepid Felicity has uncovered their secret, seeking the knowledge held by the Countess hoping it will help her unlock the heart of her beloved Douglas.

Act 2: *Occurs at night in a forested meadow. Penelope and Felicity make their way to a forested meadow where they encounter Cornelia.*

Act 2, scene 1: *Penelope and Felicity make their way into the meadow. Stage can be black except for a spotlight on Penelope and Felicity. Alternatively the lights can be dimmed or up.*

Penelope: *(Penelope and Felicity enter from stage left. Felicity pulling Penelope along.)* Felicity, where are we going?

Felicity: You are still willing to help me win Douglas, your fair brother?

Penelope: Of course

Felicity: Well then, if I am to impress him with the sword, I shall have to master that fine shaft of steel, shan't I?

Penelope: I suppose but why are we venturing to this wild meadow in the middle of the night?

Felicity: I have found our teachers, dearest Penelope. Last week, upon chance or perhaps it was fate, I learned of women who have taken up the art of fencing.

Penelope: Fencing? But it is a man's sport

Felicity: Not so, Penelope. There is talk of women competing in the 1900 Olympics – we are on the verge of a new millennium, after all. First the sword and then the ballot. (*Waves an imaginary sword.*)

Penelope: Oh, Felicity, I don't know. Who are these women?

Felicity: They are European, I think. Some are American. Led by a magnificent countess skilled in the art of war they practice here in the glade, as nature intended.

Penelope: I'm not sure about this.

Felicity: They take off their corsets, bare their breasts, and seize their swords.

Penelope: Take off the corsets?

Felicity: Yes.

Penelope: Bare their breasts?

Felicity: Yes

Penelope: This sounds very educational. Perhaps we should stay and observe – just observe.

Felicity: Agreed. Hush, we're here.

Cornelia: (*from offstage*) Ladies, this way to the glade.

Felicity: And there they are. (*Our heroines hide behind bushes at front stage left and watch as Cornelia enters with her protégés and begins to drill them.*)

Act 2, scene 2: Lights, if dimmed, should come up as Cornelia and the Vixen enter from stage left.

Cornelia: Welcome, welcome to all. Let's begin with our warm up drills and then we shall spar. Corsets off if you wish. (*The Vixens take off their corsets.*) Please take your place in line. Assume the first position "En garde" (*in unison, the women adopt the posture*); next, the two step thrust. Ready, attack! (*in unison, the women take two sliding steps forward and attack*). Next, the two step retreat with a parry (*in unison, the women slide two steps back and parry an imaginary attack*). One step counter attack. Ready, Counter! (*in unison, the women take a step forward and thrust*). Good, Good, very good. Mary, thrust like you mean it. Carlotta, wonderful parry. Don't lose courage on your counter attack. Let's try it again. (*having spied Penelope and Felicity, Cornelia designates her lieutenant to continue the drill.*)

Cornelia: (*Moves to center stage and speaks to the audience.*) What luck I have today. Not one but two targets at which to thrust my blade. It will put my skill to test given the narrowness of each fair maid. (*Move stage left directly behind Penelope and Felicity.*) On guard my pretties. (*She flushes them out from behind the bushes and with her sword, herds them center stage; Cornelia stands slightly to the left of them. While this is going on, the Vixens stop their own sword play and gather stage, right back and watch.*) Carefully state your case. Why do you spy on us from these hedges? What brings you to this place?

Penelope and Felicity: Uh..what..ah..ooo (*Felicity is stage right; Penelope stage left*)

Penelope: (*moving to gain the upper hand*) Enough of this nonsense. We are not the one's who need to explain. Taking our constitution in this fine meadow, how were we to know we would stumble upon such an abhorrent spectacle. Women fencing. Women bare breasted without a suckling babe in sight. Trying to run each other through with hard cold shafts of steel. In our shame, we hid behind these hedges to spare us all the embarrassment.

Cornelia: Every woman should have such a shaft. It makes for a lively sport.

Felicity: (*Felicity moves to stand between Penelope and Cornelia*) A sport it is ma'm, but one I have seen only practiced by men.

Cornelia: Yes, and what want should men have for such a sport except their shaft is not as big as the one in hand, afraid to thrust at home against an equal partner, they thrust at other men.

Penelope: Scandalous!

Cornelia: Quiet so. (*moves to stage right, so that she is in front of the vixens*) Here in the meadow we are hermaphrodite warriors with breasts and rod. (*they strike a Charlie's Angels-like pose.*)

Penelope; Can we take you seriously madam?

Cornelia; Speak the truth, or speak at peril. I am a bull, (*Cornelia comes up behind Penelope and Felicity who are standing shoulder-to-shoulder center stage and pushes through them.*) dagger-horned. Don't think to flirt with me. To wave red-faced lies about my head. Take... me... seriously...young dove. (With each word she snaps off the buttons on Felicity's blouse.

Felicity: I must confess. Happening a week earlier through this field I saw you and the others at play. As I said, it is a sport for men and I have seen exhibitions, but I have never known women to take up swords and to exercise the art in such a...free state.

Cornelia: The rules here cut us free from the rules of convention. (*As she says this, she puts her rapier in Felicity's hand, and wraps her own hand around Felicity's. Felicity is mesmerized by the sword and totally unaware of Cornelia's presence. Penelope has taken an interest in the Vixens.*) This holds appeal (*Saying this to Felicity but taking note of Penelope's interest in the Vixens.*) I can see it in your eyes (*said with a knowing smile*). Come back next week and we will initiate you into the fold of Amazonians with blades. You two chicks who hide in hedge without a peep, what are your names?

Felicity: Felicity

Penelope: Penelope

Cornelia: (Bowling) Cornelia

(Lights go down with the end of Act 2)

Act 3: Felicity and Penelope at a public gymnasium watch Douglas and George fencing.

(Lights come up on Douglas and George; both are wearing fencing masks; they are mid-stage, center facing each other in profile, fencing. Douglas is to the left side of the stage. George is to the right side; Felicity and Penelope stand stage, left front. Felicity is nearer to Douglas. When Felicity and Penelope enter, they freeze the actions. Penelope and Felicity stand in front of them)

Felicity: Do you think Douglas will be angry that we have come to the gymnasium?*

Penelope: How else shall we learn?* (*Turns and sees Douglas and George.*) There they are. Let's go (*They turn to enter the gymnasium and stand stage right. Douglas and George resume their fencing*)

Douglas: (*when he sees Penelope and Felicity, he stops, as does George. Douglas takes off his fencing mask and holds it in the crook of his left arm. To Penelope*) Sister, what brings you here?

Felicity: (*Penelope opens her mouth to speak but Felicity begins firsts, rushes over to Douglas (stage right, by left arm) and takes the fencing mask from his arm.*) We came to watch you fence. Your form is most impressive--the dexterity you display. (*Douglas is seems put off by her forwardness.*)

Penelope: Your flattery falls on deaf ears Felicity. (*To her brother, Douglas*) We want lessons and since I doubt you would be kind enough to school us, we at least want to watch to learn what we may through our own observations.

Douglas: To learn? What ever for? This is a game that only men can find amusement in. Take George and me. What better way to wear off the animal tendencies that characterize men, (*Douglas and George fence each other down to the front of stage*) than to exhaust them through a dance of vigorous thrusts (*fence, fence turn*) until, our swords crossed and locked, (*George brings Douglas to one knee*) we come face to face. (*pause, pregnant sexual tension*) Why would girls need such a sport? (*Douglas gets up and moves stage left near Felicity.*)

Felicity: Indeed, why? When a sheath can conquer the sharpest blade (*Felicity grabs hold of the hand Douglas is using to hold the sword.*) and make it hum in its firm embrace. But it is the sight of one unsheathed that makes me want to firmly grasp it by the hilt and brandish it, to swing it in a way that makes the very air part and sing a hollow-throated song of homage. (*She swings his arm and the blade back and forth.*)

Douglas: (*Pulling away from Felicity, displeased and moving back toward George.*) A woman who acts like a man has nothing left with which to woo me.

Felicity: Then be wowed by me when I learn this art and prove myself to be your equal partner in this dance.

Penelope: You have yet to introduce us to George.

George: (*George takes off his fencing mask and bows.*) Ah, begging your pardon. I am George

Penelope: Your family name?

George: Sand.

Penelope: (*She was furthest stage right, she moves to the other side of George, so he is furthest stage right*) One of a multitude and yet you stand out.

George: Just one among many.

Penelope: But finer somehow.

George: A trait we seem to share.

Penelope: So why is this the first time I make your acquaintance.

George: My move to Chicago is fairly recent

Douglas: (*Clearly peeved that his sister has usurped his friends attention, pushes in between George and Felicity. He wraps his arm around George's shoulder.*) It seems like you have been a friend forever, but it was only last week that I saw George here at the gymnasium and realized that I had met my match.

Penelope: (*Not to be put off so easily, Penelope reinserts herself between her brother Douglas and George. When she does this, she touches his chest and a look of surprise registers on her face. George registers slight discomfort and tries to turn away slightly. Douglas, is clearly displeased but stays the side of his sister.*) And from where did you move?

George: From here and there. I've been about.

Felicity: Ah, the sand shifts. Be wary Penelope. Be wary.

Penelope: Am I to have no firm foundation on which to build my impression?

George: You will have time enough. I plan to be here through the season.

Penelope: So our fair city is like the neck of an hour glass through which you pass until our time is done. (*moves so she is furthest stage left*)

George: (*seeming to flirt.*) You don't seem the kind who would let time flit away.

Felicity: (*Moves across stage and inserts self between Penelope and Douglas—line up from stage right: George, Douglas, Felicity, Penelope*) All this talk of time wastes ours. Will you let us watch and learn?

George: Agreed (*looks at Douglas*)

Douglas: (*Stepping forward and waving sword.*) The hen can watch the roster greet the sun each morning, but she herself will never crow. (*George looks at him disapprovingly.*) For the love of George, agreed. (*They exit stage right*).

(*Felicity and Penelope walk to stage left front as if leaving*)

Felicity: Well, that didn't go very well. What now?*

Penelope: Back to the glade. (*Penelope and Felicity exit stage left.*)*

(*Lights go down at end of Act 3.*)

Act 4: Lights come up on Cornelia and the Vixens fencing in the meadow.

Vixens: (*are engaged in sword play while Cornelia coaches them.*)

Felicity: (*Penelope and Felicity enter. Felicity starts is center stage, waving her sword wildly.*) This hen crows like the boldest cock.

Cornelia: (*Moves to center stage with Felicity and begins to fence with her. She is closer to Penelope than Felicity.*) Young chick you wield your sword like a boy on his first foray into manhood, all thrust and no art. But your lack of techniques is compensated for by your impressive energy and stamina--a rousing assault that elicits a thrill. But rest now and let me have a different dance. Penelope you are next. Wait! (*George comes out from behind the hedge, stage left and moves stage right to stand beside Penelope who remains the furthest to the right of stage.*) Who is this interloper who dares interrupt our sport?

Penelope: George!

Felicity: George?

George: I happened to see you pass this way and couldn't help but follow.

Penelope: Follow?

Felicity: How dare you.

George: *(George raises Penelope's skirt with the tip of his sword's blade.)* You should be more careful to ensure that the tips of your swords don't peek from beneath your skirts as you saunter down the street. Douglas's blade I assume?

Cornelia: *(turning face George)* You will have your answers soon enough if you live to hear them. Prepare to dual!

George: As you wish, and I will follow the conventions of this meadow, I too shall remove what constrains me and keeps me from equal play. *(He takes off his jacket and shirt to reveal that he has breasts.)*

Penelope: *(To George)* You, sir, are a woman I could love. *(Douglas steps out from behind the hedge, stage left and moves Center stage between George and Cornelia.)*

Douglas: An army of hermaphrodites dually equipped and you George among them! If God has not given you another rod besides the one in hand, prepare to fight.

(George and Douglas fight. Just as George is going in for the kill, Felicity moves from her position stage left and comes in with a sweeping blow that lacks form but has the strength to knock George's blade away.)

Felicity: *(To George)* Enough. I have stolen your win, and the prize *(she looks at Douglas)* is mine.

George: I am already vanquished. Booty to another. *(looks at Penelope)*

Penelope: I will take my prize but now must ensure the safety of us both.

Cornelia: I think it's safe to say that our time in this meadow is over, but there are other fields far away. I have homes abroad in England, France and Spain. The two of you will come with me *(Cornelia, George, and Penelope begin to exit.)*

Felicity: *(to Penelope)* We will meet again, friend.

Penelope: I will anxiously await that day. *(Cornelia, George and Penelope exit.)*

Felicity: *(To Douglas)* I am equal parts the man you are and a woman who can woo you. Be wooed.

Barker: The Chicago World's Exhibition closed after six months. How do our characters' stories end? Sit back and see the lives they led.

Act 4: A series of 3 vignettes that explain how the characters ended up

Act 4, Scene 1: The lights come up In Douglas's bedroom. Felicity and Douglas are fencing, playfully.

Douglas: *(being almost bested by Felicity)* Only 3 years of married life and haven't you learned your lessons quickly, oh, my darling little dove

Felicity: *(really pouring it on and bringing Douglas to his knees in retaliation for the "little dove," she throws his words back to him),* "Darling little dove?"

Douglas: "Not a dove?"

Felicity: No. *(they fence as Douglas moves backwards in a kneeling position)*

Douglas: *(they stop fencing)* "A lovely chick?"

Felicity: Non. *(they begin fencing for a few moves and then stop)*

Douglas: "A duckie?"

Felicity: Certainly not. *(And now she bests him and parries away his sword and he falls off balance from his knees landing on his behind.)*

Douglas: "The hen who watches the roster..."

Felicity: **But** she herself never crows." *(She stabs at him as he rolls one way and the next to avoid her blade).*

Never. Have you learned your lessons?

Douglas: *(laughing he rolls up to grab the hilt of her blade and wrist on one knee.)* Have I? My sun *(kisses the inside of her wrist),* my moon, *(holding out his hand and she pulls him up),* the better man *(kisses one cheek),* my best woman *(kisses the other cheek and then steps back).* I think it's time for a new blade for both of us. *(He pulls out a dildo, waves it in front of her, she snatches it away from him as the light goes on in her eyes.)*

Felicity: Oh, Douglas! *(they both laugh as she chases him around the bed and tosses him on the bed spooning him, dildo in hand.)*

(Lights go down. Set up for next vignette. Lights go up.)

Act 4, scene 2: Penelope and George on a Paris street.

Penelope: *(Holding George's arm and walking)* I enjoyed going back to Chicago to be Felicity's bridesmaid for her marriage to my dear brother. But Paris is my home. Cornelia was right. Paris is lovely this time of year.

George: She was right about a good many things *(kisses her hand)*

Penelope: I never knew it could be like this... Do you think he's right?

George: Who?

Penelope: That German doctor who came to Cornelia's last salon – the one she threw out.

George: You mean that dreary little Freud. . . something or other?

Penelope: Yes, that one – his theory that people who love like us are inversion of natural human desire, “inverts: what does that mean – that we're twisted some how?

George: I'll tell you what's twisted, a world in which lovely free given and received must be denied.

Penelope: I love you, George. *(George kisses on the cheek)*

George: He had such an odd little daughter, Dora, didn't he?

Penelope: Yes, she didn't look very happy. She needs a sword.

George: Couldn't agree more. Every little girl needs one of these. *(George takes the parasol, closes it and waves it dramatically;)*

Penelope: *(laughs)* I caught her eyeing mine.

George: Really? Parasol envy? *(exit stage left laughing)*

(Lights go down. Set up for next vignette. Lights come up.)

Act 4, scene 3: Cornelia, Vixens, George and Penelope at Cornelia saloon.

Cornelia: Thank you all for coming to my saloon today. Talk. Talk. Talk. I must say it is invigorating to share in topics of discussion. I imagine someday it will be appreciated as its own art. I especially want to thank our friend Gertrude *(Eric will play Gertrude)* and talking about her dear friend, Alice's, cookbook. And because each of you is my dear friend, you will receive you own copy. *(To the audience)* And I want to thank each of you for coming today and because you helped make this so special, we have a gift for you. . .

Technical note: We have a gift giveaway that ends the show.

THE END

Fencing
Parrying
To avoid a direct answer
To depend on strategy rather than might
To conserve movement
To strike only when in striking distance
Fencing has been in the US as a sport since after the Civil War. In 1891 an amateur association formed and started holding national competitions in 1892. Fencing for men has been part of the Olympics since 1891
George Sand had many lovers; was accused of lesbianism; argued for removing distinctions between genders.

<http://fashion-era.com/undergarments.htm>
<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/gsand.htm>
<http://www.hickoksports.com/history/fencing.shtml>
<http://mars.sgi.com/worlds/CyberMarz/Saturn/HTML/saturnMoons.html>

George: Sand

Penelope: A famous name at that. The Sands from?

George: From Ohio, recently arrived

Penelope: There is little sand in Ohio beyond Lake Eerie shores

George: But even more where my family hails from, Cambridge, where we make glass. As smooth and unblemished as your fair skin

Penelope: A trait we seem to share.

Felicity:

The two woman are thoroughly enjoying it. Cornelia gives instruction. Treat it like badminton. The tip of my rapier is a ball you must return. Treat it like a dance. Each move your make is a countermove of your partner in the dance..

.....
One Act, four scenes

Characters

Penelope: The headstrong, idealistic, young heroine; younger sister to Douglas; comes from an affluent family; best friend of Felicity; object of infatuation for George; smitten with George

Felicity: sidekick to Penelope; has a masculine beauty; headstrong but for the most part reserved; infatuated with Douglas, Penelope's brother, who seems unaware of her; she ultimately teaches him that a woman can be a man's best friend

Douglas: Oblivious, older brother of Penelope; all-male and not very perceptive; fencing partner of George; infatuated with George; feels George understands him and that they enjoy each other's mutual company as only two men can

George: A woman masquerading as a young man (She has taken the name of George Sand; thin; flat chested; narrow in the hips

Cornelia: A countess from France. A vibrant, mature women with great energy and charisma; she is the ringleader of a group of women who meet in secret to fence with each other topless in a meadow

3 Other unnamed women: Women who join Cornelia in her fencing

Nude Man – attacks George Sands

Homophobic man – wrestles with Douglas but flees

Synopsis

Time period: 1893 the year of the Chicago World's Exposition; women still wear corsets, but there is the sense of change in the air with this being the last decade of the century; single women are moving the city and things that never before seemed possible, do now. *What other elements of history could we introduce – Jane Hull of Hull House, the progressive reformer? Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony who in the last 20 years agitated for suffrage? The temperance movement? Amelia Bloomer and outrageous “bloomers” in fencing?*

Scene 1: *(Maybe use a narrator- Cornelia- to introduce the audience to fencing terms which provide double entendres for the dance of love and seduction.)* A series of vignettes that explain/show something about the main characters' past. Each vignette occurs in a bedroom.

Scene 2: Penelope and Felicity sneak through a woods. Last week Felicity followed a group of women to the spot beyond the trees--a meadow. She wants Penelope to see what she saw. When they arrive, they see a group of women, there blouses and corsets thrown in a heap. They are in voluminous skirts, but they are fencing vigorously. *(Maybe have them do fencing exercises and warm ups to train before pairing off as fencing partners – introduce the fencing terms which will serve as metaphors for love and seduction – parry, thrust, alle (yield).* As Penelope and Felicity watch in fascination, they fail to notice that Cornelia, rapier in hand and topless has come up behind them. When she challenges them, they rise up startled and try to explain why they are spying. To gain the upper hand, Felicity challenges Cornelia on the women's unconventional activity and the fact that they are all topless. Cornelia responds: “The rules here cut us free from the rules of convention.” as she says this she uses her rapier to snap off the buttons on Felicity's blouse. The woman are invited to watch. They join the other women in the open meadow.

Scene 3: Felicity and Penelope at a public gymnasium watch Douglas and George fencing. Douglas and George are both wearing the white outfits and masks normally associated with this activity. Douglas raises his mask and calls out to his sister and Felicity. He holds his hood under his arm. George also takes off “his” mask, but the two continue to spar. The two “dual” over to where the two women are standing. There are introductions. We learn of Felicity's interest in Douglas' and his interest in George. We sense the sexual/romantic tension between George and Penelope. When Penelope asks George about himself, they parry--George tries to avoid giving a directing answer.

Scene 4: We are back in the meadow. A topless Felicity if fencing with Cornelia. When it is Penelope turn, she takes off her blouse and corset. As she prepares to fence with Felicity. George steps out from the behind the trees dressed as a man. Cornelia challenges him to a dual. George explain that like her he will follow the conventions of the meadow. He takes off his shirt and unbinds his breasts. At this point, Douglas steps out of the woods. He is hurt most by the fact the George is a woman. The two dual. Felicity intervenes rescuing Douglas. George ends up with Penelope and Felicity ends up with **George.**