me the task of suggesting cuts in the fourth act, many of which he accepted. Looking back on this, I feel I am too eager for his approval, something I should be beyond at this point. My envy of those who seem most favored will prove deadly. Here our shortcomings are magnified.

July 19: Today spent on Act V of Richard. Doc was finally furious at our "indifference" (the party last night caused some late rising this morning). Serious work ensued. Evening performance was rough. People are still reeling from the cuts.

July 21: Another dreadful day. The lighting technicians, who yesterday replaced the wiring in the barn (at last, a lighting system that we don't need to worry about catching fire!), will not be finished as soon as planned, thus leaving us, quite literally, in the dark.

Last evening was diverted from the plays and dedicated to catching up on costumes, but we can't afford to keep doing that.

Worse still was this morning's "performance" of Twelfth Night. Sluggish, haphazard rendering. I was mostly watching, but was half asleep. This indifference has brought about heightened discouragement and anger, both from Doc and ourselves. This evening's memorandum chastised us for not working as a unit.

We performed Twelfth Night this evening in an unlit barn with acceptable results.

Afterward we had an hour discussion about our problem as a community. I was relieved by the effort to correct problems, but for my part there was too much floundering for solutions and too much selfishness, even in the altruism. Robert Haringa felt too much time was spent on discussion, and while this brought considerable rebuke from most people, I was nearly in agreement with him.

What a crew! Tony takes things too personally, Jayne worries too much, Chris is too defensive in his individualism, Dave and John are too pompous (never mind that they are also right). Only Kirsten speaks without pontification and inaccuracy.

July 22: A storm has passed, quietly, with force. The situation is simple: either we hang together or hang separately. With so few choices, it is no wonder that the day has been highly productive. The schedule we have created for ourselves has worked well today, and the hard work showed in the evening performance.

Am trying to apply people's suggestions more uncritically, and to trust their feedback. It is not always easy; the observers are one's mirror and must be believed if change is to occur, but they are a mirror once removed. Their report is not an exact, unbiased reflection of what is happening onstage. It is there that faith enters.

July 24: Last night's performance was another matter altogether. Afterwards Doc had us gather around the stage and told us exactly what was wrong. Pretty rough, but it could have been worse. He suggested that we think about our characters for a long time tonight, so I remained at the barn for several hours, just walking around on the clay and the stage, then speaking my lines as they came to me, first quietly, then in full voice.

Doc spent considerable time with us working on the more problematic scenes, notably I.4. I'm sure he was no happier about having to intervene than I or anyone else was. Anyway I was grateful for his help.

Tonight was the worst yet. Forgot everything we did this afternoon. No concentration. Whatever confidence I have had has been completely eroded.

Kirsten, seeing that I was tired, ordered me to go to bed early, advice I was more than willing to take, although I needed a beer first. She let me stay up till 11.

July 25: Began the day much rested. Performed the play this morning; excellent wakeup. Felt smoother, more controlled than it has before. I sensed that something was going to break today. After lunch we worked on I.1. And worked and worked. Repeating incessantly, trying to find the rage. I kept pushing higher and higher, and everyone kept asking for more and still more. Finally I became so frustrated I really was angry. And Cordelia was becoming more impatient until I couldn't take it anymore. I was glad I booted her out of the kingdom. I started hitting posts and kicking benches, and rust have been trothin. I almost strangled that upstart Kent, and had to shove the bastard out of court.

The treatment was a bit much, but it burned as it never had before. That evening we lost some of the edge, but there was plenty of fire from this afternoon to drive the play along.

Now we must find the subtleties of the play.

July 31: Losing track of what has happened, or when. Lear is currently in passable shape, thanks to everyone else's ideas. Richard has been rough this week. Doc finally lost his temper Wednesday evening. Gathering us behind the barn, he gave anyone who didn't want to hear what he had to say the opportunity to leave. No one did. He then began, speaking slowly, with crisp, razor clarity, "How dare you?!!"

Thus began a tirade on how we had allowed the play to slide, how our characters were poorly defined. How we were lazy.

Costume room has become a war zone. Picked up the pins and needles off the floor (there were no more to be had in the cushions); there must have been a thousand of them down there. Panic has drifted toward indifference, and all anyone wants at this point is to be finished.

Poor ol' Haringa innocently volunteered some time back to supervise the stage lighting. Nobody told him that it's the most thankless job here. Every night he, Jack, and Kristen would work well past midnight, and the next day Doc would gripe about the shadows in the corner or the intensity on the upper deck being too low. Some people were born to suffer.

August 2: Cleaned the barn and set the chairs up. It's beginning.

August 3: Dress performance of Twelfth Night.

Solemly listened to play from behind the barn when I wasn't onstage. Accused of not having fun, being a killjoy. Maybe so; thought I was trying to listen, to absorb the meaning of the play, understand what's going on. I'm having trouble assessing these plays; in figuring out what people are doing right and wrong. Critical faculties are blunted.

August 4: Lear dress performance. The play isn't ready. How did this happen? Where did we get lost?

August 5: Last night before we go public. General uneasiness.

The last week has been marked by a rash of breakages. Everything seems to be falling apart. Started when the new tape deck in the barn jammed and had to be replaced (fortunately it was still under warranty). One of the ceiling fans was broken in transport to Brehm for cleaning. A crown that we were using roughly in Richard turned out to be a gift for a former class gave Doc. Jackie tossed down a dagger the other day on stage and the guard broke. There must be at least a dozen other things that have been damaged, culminating tonight with the collapse of the ceiling above the kitchen entrance. Apparently water that has seeped through the floor from the men's shower accumulated over the door. Kirsten calls this "the summer of sad mischance." David and I have found the motto for the summer: "Nothing unbroken." It applies equally well to physical properties and spirits.

August 9: First performance weekend has passed. Twelfth Night went well both times.

Lear on Friday lacked conviction. Doc gave us a "half-time locker room" diatribe that helped us recover, although it was not the astonishing turnaround of two weeks ago.

This afternoon's performance was charged with more fire, more grief. While waiting by the door where I was to carry in Cordelia's corpse, I listened to the words of the final scene in fearful anticipation of the numerous reports of death that suddenly cascade into the play. Edgar provides a touching report of Gielot's death, and a heartbreaking account of Kent, who is about to die. The announcement of General's suicide and Regan's murder. I, Lear, the angel of death who through my vanity had inadvertently brought about these events, felt the sorrow of each character's...