

Becket, Space 1999, The Scarlet Letter, The Cutting Edge, Clochemerie, Amadeus, Oliver, Othello, Suez,



Roy Dotrice OBE



Peer Gynt, Buntilla, Richard III, The Tempest, As you like it, Becket, Best of friends Twelfth Night, Beauty & The Beast, Mother Adam, Winston Churchill,

Great Expectations, Day fever, Tom Browns school Days, Kingdom, The hollow Crown, Heracles, Romeo & Juliet, Ondine, The hero, One at Night, Brief Lives,



Princes, Pawns, and Opening Gambits

By Cindy Rae



With Love, to Roy Dotrice. Happy Birthday, Father.



King Lear, Curtmantle, The Devils, Edward IV, Alife, Murder in Mind, The Genius, Enemy of the People.

Hamlet, Julius Ceasar, Dickens of London Lincoln, Gomes Suez.

A pawn makes an opening gambit.

That is chess, my dears, a game I was at least familiar with. Which is to say that it was a game I was familiar with *before* I got to pretend to play it as part of my living.

A pawn, the lowliest of pieces on the board, is sent in first. Sent in, don't you see, to do all sorts of things. Claim territory. Own the middle of the board. Check to see if your opponent will simply match the move with his own pawn, or take out his knights, and begin to play a more aggressive game.

I like pawns. Though I don't recommend trying to win a chess game with one. (Which isn't to say it's never been done.)

Spend time in a POW camp, as I did, and you'll learn the definition of "pawn," by the way. We were all one. And we were moved where and when they sent us, for whatever reasons they had. (I might *play* a king, though, when we were doing *Lear* in camp. We had to make everything for ourselves, including our own entertainment. It was a thing.)

My finest accomplishment actually came a bit after that. (Back home, I made a baseball team out of a bunch of cricket players.) Players with names like Laurence Olivier, Peter O'Toole, Albert Finney, and Paul Robeson.

Funny that in the show they had me with a ticket to Ebbets Field in my pocket. Connections. They're everywhere.

But I digress. Back to pawns.

I like them. There are some who claim that actors are pawns, and for that, damn them, even if they sometimes speak the truth. (It's at least kinder than Alfred Hitchcock's assertion that rather than being pawns, actors are cattle.)

No, I'm not "cattle." But I was a pawn, once, or at least I was an important part of someone else's game.

I take it you've heard of Ron Koslow?

Well. This is decades ago, mind you, and a few years besides, but it was a wonderful little show, and I was a bit of an opening pawn. A bit of a "We'll turn the camera on your face, while we keep it to Vincent's back, and shoot the scene that way." That was fine. Ron Perlman would likely admit I was the handsomer of the two of us anyway, at the time. (I loved him then and love him still, but he definitely had the harder job, of the two of us, under all that makeup.)

So I come to my big scene, and I say my lines, and I'm grateful that at least the budget is bigger than some of the other television I've done, and I'm delivering my dialogue, and the camera is all on me, and wonder of wonders, this marvellous, simply marvellous voice comes out of Ron Perlman.

And all I can say is, the knight was on the board, my dears, and he was moving. (And I say that even though there were times he spoke so softly I could barely hear him, and needed off-camera cues, to let me know when to speak.)

But, anyway, there I was, in my big scene of this lovely pilot. The one where people really got to see Jacob, and didn't get to see Vincent. (Or barely got to see him, at the very end of it).

I'm climbing down the stairs (This is before my hip replacement, obviously), and talking about how dangerous things are, and how they wouldn't admit minorities into medical school.



Roy Dotrice – Pilot episode, Beauty and the Beast

With Ron holding his back to the camera, I should have easily stolen that scene. Stolen it? Bother. It had been gift-wrapped for me. But there was Ron, holding his own, no advantage whatsoever mind you, but that wonderful voice. My face is to the camera, and I'm moving, while he's still. It's my expression the audience is watching. I've got the lion's share (you should pardon that expression, considering), of the lines and... well...



Roy Dotrice and Ron Perlman - Pilot

I almost didn't manage to wrestle the attention of the audience away. Don't try to tell me differently. I've seen the re-runs, same as anybody. Ron had magic in him. Both Rons did.

And so did I.

And it *was* magic, my dears. Not the only time in my career I've felt that, by the way, but you certainly know when it *isn't* there, if you will.

Those opening scenes for your character? They're so vital in setting the tone of a show. Those "first moments" when you feel something quite wonderful start to happen. You could feel it, on the set. You simply could.

Would we make it past the pilot? I had a hope that we would. An opening pawn's hope, granted. Not so much more. None of us were sure of anything, then, though I think I was the wisest of the bunch of us, at the time. There is a virtue to having done this for job for more

decades than I should politely mention, don't you know. As opening gambits went, that pilot was very, very strong.

My fear didn't have to do with it getting picked up, so much as it had to do with where we could go, after the pilot. To me, it was already a story told in full, just as it was.

So glad there were other stories to tell. So glad that other people are telling them, still.

There were touches of Shakespeare in it, and touches of Dickens, and of Dante. A bit of a morality play wrapped inside a fairy tale, packaged within a police procedural. And chess? We played it all the time, on the show. And I don't think they let me win so much as one game.

Ah, but I was in there, playing, don't you know. And *winning*, in my own way. We all were.

Life is just a bit like a chess game. And a chess game is just a bit like a TV show. You put all your characters on the board, and move them in a way that you hope will get someone else to take notice. I was the king, in some of the many productions I've been in. And a bit of a rook in others. And though I was an opening pawn in this one, I think I grew to a solid bishop, as the series went along. (I certainly leaned a bit on the diagonal, on that cane they let me use.)

I had a lot of good scenes with a lot of good actors. You can't always say that, in this game, and when you can, you should never forget it.

We had some decent writers, too. You may have heard of a few of those. I used to send them a bottle of wine, at Christmas. And perhaps

we had just a little luck that first year, so who knew where it was all going to go?

I'm sure we didn't. Didn't expect it to become what it became. Didn't expect how... deeply it would touch other people. Everywhere.

I've done good work, my dears. Shakespeare, Dickens of London... Mercy, I even hit Guinness (that's the book, not Sir Alec) for the voice work on the Game of Thrones books. Yes, I've done good work. At the end of the day, they can say that about me. I knew my lines, hit my marks, and I was generous as an actor, and as a person.

And perhaps I was a bit of a scoundrel, here and there, too. No sense pretending otherwise. But *Beauty and the Beast* was really something. All these years later, I'm not sure what, exactly, because I've no clear way to explain it. It's like when the pawn suddenly puts the king in check, and it surprises everyone, just a bit. (You know pawns. They can take any piece. Match anything. Nobody ever said they couldn't.)

And perhaps that's what it was with us on the show. No one ever told us we couldn't do something special, if we wanted to. So we did. Lord knows the talent level was there. Can't say that it wasn't. A little talent, a little luck, and a bit of magic...

And who's to say that "luck" and "magic" aren't interchangeable words, anyway? I know I can't.

It didn't last too long, of course. Nothing good ever does, in this business. For every opening night, there's a closing curtain, don't you know.

But it was such an astonishing little bit of treasure, among all the other treasures that I've had. And everyone was preserving it on VHS tapes back when we were on, and it's on DVD now, so I suppose, in its way, it did last. Much longer than its initial run. Much longer.

Ron calls me Pops, in honour of his father who passed away tragically early in the boy's life. I don't mind. In fact, I'm flattered. In return I call him my favourite son, which he enjoys greatly.

In my life I have been blessed with three incredibly talented and beautiful daughters, and a beloved wife whom I miss more than I can say here. So I know about love and loss. And how they shape us all.



Kay and Roy Dotrice, with James Avery

For us, Ron is family. A thing he's been for many more years than I care to remember, and we truly do have a bond stronger than friendship or love. Family is everything, you see, and always will be. And that is no game.

People like Ron Perlman and George Martin, they're still doing well. Still being kings, or at least princes, in their worlds. Still thrilling the fans and getting the applause. Good for them. More than good, I say. They deserve whatever success they can garner. We all do. It's a tough business, all this make-believe. Tougher than most know. And ... brighter, too.

My entire family took part in it. My amazing wife, daughters, all. My favourite son. My dear friends. All of us.

The great big world was better because all of us were in it, and are still in it, making things. Bright things. It simply is. So thanks for the great memories, my dears. I hope to see more of you sometime, as we all travel down that winding road that leads into the future. And I hope you have your chess set handy. One of us may want to start something.

People at the conventions would ask if I'm like Father, and I was never quite sure what to tell them. In a way I am, and in a way, I'm not. I can tell you my affection for Ron Perlman is utterly genuine. If that came across on camera, it's well that it should. But am I like Father? Hmmm.

I'd like to leave a bit of mystery there, so I'll close with this:

Both Father and I knew how to make a really good opening gambit.

Happy Birthday to me, my dears. And thank you all for remembering.

--



Roy Dotrice as Father

Once Upon a Time in the City of New York- Pilot episode for Beauty and the Beast



No Matter where you are in your own fairy tale, I wish you love. ~ Cindy