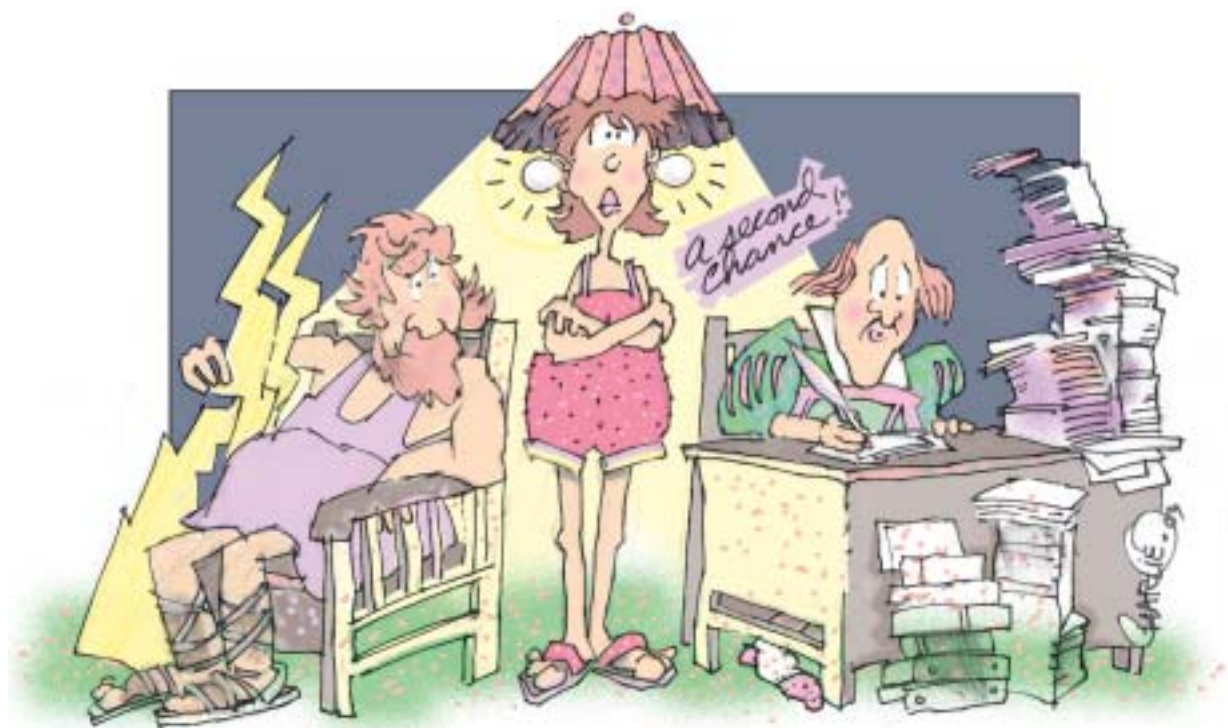


What Fools These Mortals Be



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he critical elements are all in place. The storm is fast approaching the Greek holiday isle of Corfu. Up on Mt. Olympus, Zeus is poised with a thunderbolt in each god-like fist. The electrical potential between clouds and earth is ideal, and here is Robin Goodfellow reprising his gig in *Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is endlessly repeating the line William Shakespeare wrote for him, "Lord, what fools these mortals be!"

The fool in this instance is one Becky Nyang, a 26-year-old special services agent for Virgin Airways at Heathrow. Becky and her friend, sensing the approach of inclement weather, hustle from their interlude on the Corfu beach at Kavos back to the sanctity of their hotel.

They are crossing the courtyard to their refuge when it happens. The curtain goes up, not for Becky's friend, but for Becky

herself, who is an au courant, happening mortal with a barbell piercing in her tongue and an attractive bit of iron thrust through her lower lip. In rapid sequence, Zeus launches his thunderbolt, Goodfellow reiterates his quote, and Becky suddenly has a nonspeaking role.

After it is determined that Becky is still among the living, as evidenced by a fogged compact mirror, she regains the power of speech, remarking, "When it hit me, all I could see was lightning. It was bright blue, and I couldn't see anything else. My body was shaking for 10 minutes." She has a pulse rate of 200 BPM, has a large bruise on her shoulder at the point of impact, and suffers from burns in her mouth where the lightning passed through the two metal piercings. Already she has been approached by five attorneys

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who are ready and willing to take her case on a 25/75 contingency basis.

After two weeks, Becky finds sleeping difficult and is getting weary of people joking about the benefits of getting her batteries recharged on holiday. She reflects, "I have been given a second chance at life, and every second is precious. I thank God I'm alive." With every second precious, it would seem like a propitious moment to get down to Earl's House of Body Disfiguration to take advantage of that nose-piercing special, good until Thursday with coupon. Lightning never strikes twice in the same place; what are the odds?

It seems to us that the dental profession has taken a rather benign approach to oral piercings. Resisting the temptation to bodily heave the piercee out of the office, we offer a wussy warning that infections could result and teeth could be damaged, omitting the obvious fact that the pierced person looks like a complete idiot. Our attitude has somewhat echoed Shakespeare's observation. A more vigorous approach is needed to ensure that the population 50 years hence is not solely made up of tattooed, studded mutants.

Perhaps the ADA, in concert with

the EPA and other governmental do-good agencies, should require persons desiring body enhancements to undergo certain safety checks. Cal Tech and MIT both have at their disposal high-voltage lightning simulators where they periodically blow up things for their own amusement and to qualify for government grants.

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Piercing aficionados would be certified as satisfying the requirements once they had been zapped with 100,000 gigavolts of ersatz lightning and remained sentient enough to care for themselves. It seems like a win-win solution. Becky Nyang concurs.

"I feel a bit different within myself as I know how close I came to losing my life and never seeing my loved ones again." These are the same loved ones who undoubtedly counseled her against having the metalwork done in the first place and who are now having trouble with their own tongues to avoid smugly noting "I told you so."

By the way, Ms. Nyang, Earl's will give you a substantial discount if you get the eyebrow, navel and nose piercings all at the same sitting. You should check with the National Weather Service before leaving the building.

Shakespeare had no comment. **CDA**