

J/HAMLET Well, God-a-mercy.

D/POLONIUS Do you know me, my lord?

J/HAMLET Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

D/POLONIUS What do you read, my lord?

J/HAMLET Word, words, words.

D/POLONIUS *[Aside]* Though this be madness, yet there's method in't."

A/OPHELIA *[Poking her head out from backstage.]* Daddy, the players are here and they want to do a play-within-a-play and I don't know what that is, so you'd better talk to them right away—

[She disappears.]

D/POLONIUS "My lord.

Begin Scene

[Polonius follows Ophelia off.]

J/HAMLET I am but mad north-northwest. When the wind is southerly,
I know a hawk from a hawk from a handsaw.
I'll have these players play something like
The murder of my father before mine uncle.
I'll observe his looks. If he do but blench,
I'll know my course. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king!

[Hamlet kneels and draws his dagger. Lights blackout to a pin-spot, which misses the actor by several feet; he has to slide over to it, while trying to maintain his serious composure. As he speaks, however, the titters

of the audience annoy him each time they react, he reacts with increasing anger.]

To be, or not to be? That is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a seas of troubles
And by opposing end them.

[He's really intense now; maybe a little too intense.]
To die; to sleep;"

Perchance to nap...

[If the audience hasn't tittered yet, they will now. It throws him.]

To... doze, to... snooze, perchance to... much, it's too much!!!

[Jess collapses into a nervous breakdown. Daniel and Adam rush in to comfort him.]

ADAM Bob, lights please!

DANIEL What's wrong? What happened to your speech?

JESS They were laughing at me!

DANIEL They weren't laughing *at* you. They were laughing... adjacent to you.

JESS No! That woman was laughing *at* me!

ADAM Don't worry about her. That's Jennifer and her opinion is worthless.

JESS She laughed at me! Just like they laughed at Lulu!!!

DANIEL Ladies and gentlemen, this is a heavy-duty emotional speech, and frankly, Jess hasn't been himself lately—

JESS Lulu...!

ADAM Who is this Lulu he keeps going on about?

DANIEL I don't know. I mean, there's a bratty character named Lulu on *General Hospital*.

JESS She is *not* bratty! She's going through hell! She had an abortion at eighteen 'cause the condom broke, and her mother's been in a catatonic state for four year, and... *[Jess updates the audience on Lulu's trauma of the week. Visit <http://soapcentral.com/gh/recaps.php> for details.]* And you don't even *care!* *[Collapses into more sobs.]*

ADAM You watch *General Hospital!*?!

JESS Maybe...

DANIEL So... wait a minute. All that stuff you were spouting about killing our televisions and embracing the Bard... that was all BS?

JESS No...

ADAM Jess... you're not really a preeminent Shakespeare scholar at all, are you. *[Jess mumbles inaudibly.]* ARE YOU?!

JESS I'm not even post-eminent.

DANIEL But... you took that course.

JESS I didn't finish it.

DANIEL I saw your certificate!

JESS I made it in Photoshop.

DANIEL I... don't even know who you are.

JESS I thought the world of Shakespeare scholars would be all fast cars and hot babes. But it's not! It's full of folios and quartos and quatrains and ibids. So cold. But when I'm in Port Charles, and everyone's so young and bold, and beautiful and restless—*[Jess collapses in a heap, quietly sobbing.]* I just love my stories.

[Adam glares at the woman in the audience.]

ADAM Well, I hope you're really proud of yourself. *[Addressing the rest of the audience.]* Sorry, folks, I think we're gonna have to skip the "to be or not to be" speech.

DANIEL We can't skip "to be or not to be," it's the most famous speech in all of Shakespeare.

ADAM It's overrated.

DANIEL Overrated?!

ADAM Think about it. Hamlet is supposed to be killing his uncle and suddenly he's talking about killing himself. Where did *that* come from? It completely weakens his character.

DANIEL It makes it more complex. The layers give it meaning.

ADAM The layers make it sucky! All those long speech with big words nobody understands! Like what that one that goes, "I have of late, but wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile

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| <p>promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you; this brave o’erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, why it appears to me no more than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is man; how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, in form and moving how express and admirable; in action how like an angel; in apprehension how like a god. The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals; and yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me?” <i>[He has delivered the speech simply, quietly and without a trace of “interpretation.” You can hear a pin drop. To Daniel.]</i> Hey, that didn’t suck!</p> | <p>ADAM Whoa, whoa, whoa! You can’t rush all those layers! If Ophelia is that complex, we need to peel open her brain like an onion!</p> <p>DANIEL Ew! That’s gross!</p> <p>JESS No, that’s great! Adam, you’re actually having a rare moment of lucidity. We could explicate Ophelia’s id, ego, and superego. Do a sort of Freudian analysis.</p> <p>ADAM Yeah, a Floridian analysis! We can divide Ophelia’s brain into three different parts. Okay, I’ll be Ophelia, but one of you needs to play the Id.</p> <p>DANIEL Whoa, whoa, whoa. I can’t play Ophelia’s Id. I’m already playing Polonius and Laertes, and the play-within-a-play scene’s coming up. I’m overbooked. <i>[Adam looks at Jess.]</i></p> <p>JESS Hello? Hamlet.</p> <p>ADAM Fine. I’ll get my new friends to do it! <i>[Adam goes into the audience and selects a female volunteer to bring onstage. Jess is enthusiastic about this idea and helps Adam get the gal up onstage. Daniel is not happy.]</i></p> <p>DANIEL Adam, you can’t just bring some bozo onstage to play Ophelia’s brain!</p> <p>ADAM She’s not a bozo, she’s one of my very best friends. <i>[to volunteer.]</i> Okay, what’s your name? <i>[She responds.]</i> Do you mind if we call you, “Bob?” It’s a little easier to remember. <i>[She responds.]</i> Okay, Bob this is a very important scene. What’s happening is... um... <i>[He has no idea what’s happening in the scene.]</i> Jess, would you like to tell Bob about all the layers?</p> |
| <p>End Scene</p> <hr style="border: 2px solid red;"/> <p>JESS <i>[Still emotional, like a drunk.]</i> That was beautiful, man!</p> <p>DANIEL See you guys? That speech is emotional <i>and</i> intellectual. The two can live side by side.</p> <p>JESS Like Luke and Laura!?</p> <p>DANIEL Um, sure.</p> <p>ADAM So when I play Ophelia, I could add some layers?</p> <p>DANIEL That would be appreciated. She’s not all screams and vomit, you know. There’s something going on inside her pretty little wig.</p> <p>ADAM Oh, I get it! Ophelia’s complicated! I bet in the “Get thee to a nunnery” scene, she’s probably thinking stuff, and feeling stuff, like, at the same time!</p> <p>DANIEL In fact, let’s do that scene real quick...</p> | |