

LADIES, SIGH NO MORE

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By **Thomas Hischak**

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CHARACTERS

Lady Macbeth	a regal but cold and calculating woman with a habit of rubbing her hands together
Cordelia	young, attractive and very intelligent
Kate	a large, brazen and outspoken woman who is also attractive and quick-witted
Ophelia	a distracted and rather distant young woman who is cutting out flowers from construction paper
Lady Anne	a younger, prettier woman who is rather naïve and innocent
Jamison	a young, carefree and indifferent orderly who takes things as matter of fact
Dr. Patricia Wells	a mature, friendly woman
Juliet	young, nervous and very beautiful
Desdemona	a pretty desperate girl with wild untamed hair
Mysterious Man	a handsome young man

SETTING

The patients' lounge in a modern hospital or sanitarium. There are some armchairs, a sofa, two card tables set up for games and other activities, a table with a coffeemaker and cups, and a music and TV console. Two doors on either side of the room lead out to the hallway. There are no windows and the lounge is cheerful and bright, but still unmistakably institutional.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

There are three different approaches one may take with the costumes. The Shakespeare characters can be in Elizabethan dress appropriate to their personalities, they can wear institutional hospital gown and robes, or they can be dressed in contemporary street clothes. Regardless of which style is used, DR. WELLS should be in a modern dress with a doctor's lab coat and the orderly, JAMISON, should be in a hospital uniform.

Ladies, Sigh No More – Page 3

“Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,
One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never...”

Much ado About Nothing

ACT I

SCENE 1

At Rise: LADY MACBETH is sitting at the game table playing chess with LADY ANNE. At the other table sits OPHELIA. Sitting on the sofa and reading a magazine is CORDELIA. For a few moments no one speaks, then LADY ANNE moves her chess piece.

LADY M: Ha! I knew you'd do that! Not very smart, my dear. My knight will take him and your queen is caught in a corner. ***(moves her chess piece)***

LADY A: I forgot about the knight moving in a silly angle like that.

CORDELIA: You made the same mistake yesterday.

LADY M: And the day before. You have to watch those knights.

LADY A: I forget.

CORDELIA: In my experience, you don't have to worry about the knights as much as you have to watch the king. He's the tricky one.

LADY M: We're talking about chess, Cordelia, not your tragic past.

CORDELIA: Same thing.

OPHELIA: Here are tulips... and daffodils... and buttercups!

LADY A: Now what should I do?

LADY M: You want my advice?

CORDELIA: No! Figure it out yourself, Anne. You can do it.

LADY A: Oh, dear. Let me think.

LADY M: Think all you want. I'm in no hurry. I'm not going anywhere.

CORDELIA: None of us are. ***(throws down her magazine)*** I wish they'd get some new magazines in here. These are so out of date. ***(takes up another magazine)***

LADY M: They let them sit in doctors' and dentists' offices until they are so old that they send them to us.

LADY A: How does a bishop move again?

CORDELIA: In my experience, always toward the money.

LADY M: Cordelia! ***(to LADY ANNE)*** On the diagonal, dear, like a staircase.

LADY A: That's right. Now let me think...

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OPHELIA: And here are marigolds... and baby's breath... and forget-me-nots...

LADY M: That's nice, Ophelia. Just don't make poison ivy.

OPHELIA: My brother was poisoned once, but I don't think it was ivy. Mushrooms, I think...

LADY A: How about this? **(moves a piece)** Well?

CORDELIA: **(head still in a magazine)** It's not worth taking her pawn, Anne. Put it back.

LADY A: How did you know I -

CORDELIA: You did the same thing yesterday. Put it back or Lady Macbeth will have you in checkmate again.

LADY M: Who's playing this game, Cordelia, you or her?

CORDELIA: In my experience, we all are. Put it back, Anne.

LADY A: Okay. **(moves it back)**

DESDEMONA: **(bursts into the room in a panic; her hair is down and quite wild)** Has anybody seen my handkerchief?

ALL OTHERS: **(wearily)** No, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA: It's the pretty one with the strawberry design. I must find it!

LADY M: Look in your sock drawer.

DESDEMONA: Good idea! **(runs out)**

OPHELIA: Strawberries! I haven't made any strawberries today! **(starts cutting up paper)**

LADY A: I don't know how I'm supposed to concentrate with all these distractions. **(moves a piece)** There!

LADY M: Hmmm. **(moves a piece and picks up one of LADY ANNE's)** I take your bishop and... checkmate.

CORDELIA: Tough luck, Anne.

LADY A: That's what everybody said when I married Richard. Oh, dear...

OPHELIA: Wild strawberries! The little ones that are so sweet!

CORDELIA: Is it time for our group yet?

LADY M: Not yet, I don't think. I wish they had clocks in this place.

LADY A: Back in the old days I always heard the Westminster chimes from my room.

LADY M: From your dungeon, you mean.

OPHELIA: And wild daisies, too! The little kind!

(JAMISON enters carrying a chair.)

CORDELIA: Jamison! Is it almost time for group?

JAMISON: A few more minutes yet.

LADY M: What's the chair for?

JAMISON: New person, just come in this morning.

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LADY M: You don't say.

CORDELIA: Poison or the axe?

JAMISON: Suicide, I think. *(leaves the chair and exits)*

LADY M: Suicide!

LADY A: Well, that will make for a nice change.

LADY M: But a suicide! Ugh!

CORDELIA: What's the matter? Some say you committed suicide.

LADY M: I most definitely did not! I died of guilt and it wasn't easy, let me tell you.

LADY A: Weren't you a suicide, Ophelia?

OPHELIA: Me? No, I just didn't know how to swim.

LADY M: I wonder who it is.

CORDELIA: Yes, I'm very curious myself.

LADY A: Here comes someone now

DESDEMONA: *(bursts in again as panicky as before)* Has anyone seen my handkerchief; the one with the strawberry design?

ALL OTHERS: *(wearily)* No, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA: Maybe I left it in my room. *(rushes off)*

LADY M: What do we need with a clock? We can set time by Desdemona there.

OPHELIA: I never took swimming lessons as a girl. Needlework, tapestries and Danish geography, but never swimming.

LADY A: And botany, I'm sure.

OPHELIA: No, I just sort of picked up botany on my own at the nunnery.

LADY M: You never went to a nunnery!

OPHELIA: I didn't? I can't remember now. I better make some more forget-me-nots!

KATE: *(parades into the room forcefully and goes to the sofa)*
Cordelia, how many times do I have to tell you THAT is MY sofa!

CORDELIA: Oh, go away, Kate.

KATE: They call me Katharine that do speak of me!

LADY M: Actually, those that speak of you usually use another word.

KATE: Get up, Cordelia! That's my spot.

LADY M: Out, out, damned spot.

KATE: I don't want to hear a crack out of you, Queenie, you Scottish nutcase!

CORDELIA: I detect a bit of hostility, Kate. How unlike you.

KATE: The last person who called me hostile -

LADY M: Was her husband.

LADY A: *(quietly to LADY MACBETH)* Goodness, what a shrew!

KATE: I hate that word.

LADY M: If the shoe fits...

DESDEMONA: *(bursts in again)* Has anyone seen my handkerchief?

KATE: Is it white?

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DESDEMONA: Yes.

KATE: With a lace border?

DESDEMONA: Yes!

KATE: And a strawberry design?

DESDEMONA: Yes! You've seen it?

KATE: No, now get out of here before someone strangles you for a second time!

DESDEMONA: Maybe it's in my room. **(exits)**

CORDELIA: What's put you in such a foul mood today, Kate?

LADY M: Alimony payments falling behind again?

KATE: I won't take a penny from that madcap ruffian, not a ducat!

CORDELIA: Pity. I was hoping you'd buy us some up-to-date magazines.

LADY A: Or some new records. These are so old.

KATE: They don't make records any more, you loser!

LADY A: Oh? Well, I knew they wouldn't last. One of us should learn how to play the lute.

OPHELIA: Kate, did you ever take swimming lessons?

KATE: Sure, on my first anniversary my addlebrained husband took me to Lake Como, pushed me off the pier, and said, "Learn how to swim."

OPHELIA: That's nice.

LADY M: Lady Anne, it's still your turn.

KATE: You're still playing chess with that half-wit?

LADY M and LADY A: She is not a half-wit! **(look at each other)** Thank you!

JAMISON: **(enters)** Almost time, ladies. **(looks around the room and counts)** One, two, three, four, five... where's Desdemona?

KATE: Off her rocker, as usual.

JAMISON: Nobody leave. I'll be right back. **(exits)**

LADY M: Leave? No one leaves this place.

CORDELIA: That's not true. Remember Gertrude?

KATE: That Danish queen with the drinking problem?

CORDELIA: She left.

LADY A: And so did Titania, just flew out the window one day.

LADY M: They were different. They weren't so...

OPHELIA: So what?

KATE: Disturbed. Complicated. Screwed up.

OPHELIA: Like us!

KATE: Speak for yourself, water baby!

OPHELIA: I don't want to leave. I've got too many flowers to make.

CORDELIA: Jamison said there's a new one, just arrived today.

KATE: Just what this loony bin needs!

LADY A: He said she was a suicide.

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KATE: No kidding?

OPHELIA: Kate, were you a suicide?

KATE: Hell, no! I wouldn't let my husband off that easy, the creep! I lived to a ripe old age and then got bitten by a snake in the grass.

LADY M: Just like Cleopatra. Remember her, ladies?

CORDELIA: Another one that got to leave. I'd forgotten about her.

KATE: This snake was no asp. It was a python my husband gave me for my birthday.

LADY A: How tacky.

KATE: Why? I gave him a tarantula for his.

JAMISON: (**enters with DESDEMONA**) Right in here. Group is going to start.

DESDEMONA: But I've got to look for my handkerchief!

JAMISON: Time for that later. Now that makes six, right?

LADY M: A mathematics wizard! Why didn't you go into accounting, Jamison?

JAMISON: I like it here okay. (**starts arranging the chairs in a half circle**) Six chairs for six...

KATE: Six cuckoo birds?

OPHELIA: Six flowers? (**holds some up**) One for each of us!

JAMISON: Six chairs for six ladies. (**bows**)

LADY A: Thank you, Jamison.

DESDEMONA: (**to OPHELIA**) Have you seen my handkerchief?

KATE: Use your sleeve, Desdemona!

JAMISON: Be nice, ladies. Dr Wells ought to be here any second.

CORDELIA: What about the new one?

LADY A: The suicide!

JAMISON: She's with the doc now. (**pulls over two more chairs**) Two more chairs: one for the doc and one for the new arrival.

LADY M: Tell us, Jamison, another queen?

JAMISON: I don't think so.

OPHELIA: A princess then?

JAMISON: Nope.

LADY M: Not a commoner! I hope not!

KATE: (**to LADY MACBETH**) Scottish snob!

DESDEMONA: Do you think she has my handkerchief?

LADY A: Old or young?

JAMISON: Definitely young and a looker, too!

OPHELIA: Most suicides are.

LADY M: Are what, young or beautiful?

JAMISON: This one is both.

CORDELIA: Methinks Jamison has been struck by Cupid's arrow.

JAMISON: Say what?

KATE: It's Elizabethan. She says you've got the hots for the new honey.

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JAMISON: I didn't say that!

OPHELIA: Isn't it sweet? I must make some flowers for the happy couple.

JAMISON: You ladies just stay put. I'll go see what's taking the doc...
(rushes outs; some of the LADIES laugh)

KATE: And all this time I thought he was only interested in the Red Sox.

DESDEMONA: I looked in my sock drawer and it wasn't there! Maybe I left it in – **(starts to leave)**

CORDELIA: Stay here, Desdemona. You heard Jamison.

DESDEMONA: But I've got to find my handkerchief before... before...

LADY M: Before what?

DESDEMONA: Before *he* does.

LADY M: It's too late. He's found it and you're dead. Sit down; you're making me nervous. **(rubs her hands together)**

KATE: You should talk. If you keep rubbing those hands of yours, Queenie, I'm going to go bug-eyed.

LADY M: Too late, if you ask me.

KATE: Why, you miserable hunk of haggis...

(KATE starts toward LADY MACBETH and the others start shouting as DR. WELLS enters with JULIET.)

WELLS: Some kind of disagreement, ladies? **(All freeze.)** A difference of opinion? Or just a healthy debate?

CORDELIA: A good, old-fashioned Elizabethan cat fight, actually.

WELLS: Well, whatever it is, I'm afraid it's not going to make a very good first impression on our new guest. **(LADIES circle around WELLS and JULIET.)** May I introduce Juliet Capulet?

JULIET: Montague. Capulet was my maiden name.

CORDELIA: What's in a name?

LADY A: A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

OPHELIA: Roses! I forgot to make roses! **(heads toward the table)**

WELLS: Later, Ophelia, dear. Now everyone come and sit down and we'll all get acquainted. **(All move to the chairs.)** Are there enough chairs? Two, four, six, eight... excellent. Sit here next to me, Juliet.

KATE: I'll sit anywhere but next to that Scottish witch!

WELLS: What can you mean, Kate? You know very well that the three old hags from Scotland are in the next ward.

LADY M: She was making a crack about -

WELLS: Try not to keep wringing your hands, Mrs. Macbeth. You know how unbecoming it is for a queen. Sit, everyone. **(All are seated.)** Fine.

DESDEMONA: **(jumps up)** I know where it could be – in the kitchen! **(starts to go)**

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WELLS: I looked there already, Desdemona; it's not there.

DESDEMONA: Oh. **(sits)**

OPHELIA: Should I pass around the flowers now, Dr. Wells?

WELLS: Not now, Ophelia. We've got to introduce ourselves to our new arrival.

OPHELIA: I made a flower for her, too... a dahlia.

WELLS: How sweet. You shall present it to her later. Now I would like to start today's group with Juliet telling us a little bit about herself. Don't be nervous, dear. There is nothing to frighten you. Just speak freely.

JULIET: Well, I was born in Verona -

KATE: My old stomping ground! I'm from Padua, Quacchero!

WELLS: No interruptions, Kate.

KATE: I've been to Verona lots of times. They have a swell pizza shop there!

WELLS: You two will have to have a little chat later. Go on, Juliet.

JULIET: And I was supposed to marry this man... my father picked him out. His name was Paris -

LADY M: A Frenchman! Ugh!

JULIET: No, he came from a very rich Italian family... friends of my father.

OPHELIA: How nice.

JULIET: No, it wasn't, because I loved someone else - a Montague!

LADY A: A Monty who?

JULIET: The bitter enemies of my family. Not Romeo, of course, but his family.

CORDELIA: Who's Romeo?

JULIET: The man I loved!

OPHELIA: How nice.

DESDEMONA: Did he give you a handkerchief?

JULIET: What?

WELLS: So you see Juliet's dilemma: caught between two feuding families.

LADY A: If that isn't just like those Italians!

KATE: Hey! Watch it or I'll bounce you back to the War of the Roses!

WELLS: What happened then, Juliet?

JULIET: Well, we got married... secretly.

OPHELIA: How nice.

JULIET: But when I was supposed to marry Paris, I took this poison that wasn't really poison and Romeo didn't know... well, all I know is I woke up and he was dead. So, I...

LADY M: Killed yourself?

JULIET: Yes.

DESDEMONA: How?

WELLS: That's not polite, Desdemona.

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JULIET: I stabbed myself with Romeo's dagger.

KATE: Wow!

OPHELIA: That's not very nice.

JULIET: I didn't mean to... I mean, I did mean to but... I was so confused and -

WELLS: It's all right, dear. That's what you're here for: to work it all out, to try to figure out how it all happened, and to make peace with yourself.

JULIET: But I thought by killing myself I'd be with Romeo again! **(All but WELLS snicker.)**

CORDELIA: That's what we all thought.

JULIET: You knew my Romeo?

WELLS: No, dear. What Cordelia means -

CORDELIA: Death is both an end and a beginning, but at the moment you are stuck between the end part and the beginning part.

WELLS: Very well put, Cordelia. You may indeed someday see your Romeo again, but first you must learn about yourself.

JULIET: I don't understand.

LADY A: None of us do.

LADY M: If we totally understood, we wouldn't be here.

WELLS: Perhaps you will feel better after you hear from the other ladies. I would like each of you to introduce yourself to Juliet and to tell her a little bit about yourself. We'll start with you, Cordelia.

CORDELIA: All right. My name is Cordelia and my father was King Lear of ancient Britain.

KATE: She's the oldest one here.

CORDELIA: Yes, Kate, I am. I'm not ashamed of it. **(to JULIET)** During a civil war my father and I were captured and killed.

JULIET: How terrible!

CORDELIA: The reason I'm here is rather complicated. I loved my father, yet he distrusted me so he hated me. Then I ran away and hated him but later he started to love me, I think, so I returned home, but he thought I hated him -

WELLS: We get the idea, Cordelia.

CORDELIA: I told you it was complicated.

WELLS: Lady Anne?

LADY A: I'm Lady Anne of the Plantagenets. I was queen of England for a time.

LADY M: A very short time.

LADY A: Yes. My husband, Richard, was king of England.

KATE: For a very short time.

LADY A: Yes. I think he married me so he could become king. When he got to be king, he didn't need me...

CORDELIA: You can guess the rest, Juliet.

Ladies, Sigh No More – Page 11

LADY A: They said I was mortally ill, but I don't remember being sick at all, but here I am. I'm still trying to figure out my feelings for Richard, but I suspect he was not a very nice person.

WELLS: Very good. Lady Macbeth?

LADY M: I was married to Macbeth who was king of Scotland.

LADY A: For a very short time.

LADY M: Too short, if you ask me. (*rubbing her hands nervously*) Well, I made a few errors of judgment while helping my husband become king.

KATE: Errors of judgment? Ha!

WELLS: Now, Kate...

LADY M: And I had a few qualms afterward.

KATE: You went bonkers, you mean. Look at her hands!

WELLS: Enough, Katharine!

LADY M: And I didn't commit suicide! I'm not *that* crazy! (*looks to JULIET*) Oh, I beg your pardon. So I have a few loose ends to work out here before I get over this slight guilt complex I have.

WELLS: Yes, Ophelia.

OPHELIA: My name's Ophelia and I come from Denmark. I love flowers... all kinds of flowers! Roses and pansies and rosemary and lambs' ear and daffodils and -

WELLS: Ophelia... tell us about Hamlet.

OPHELIA: Hamlet? Who's he?

KATE: Here we go again!

OPHELIA: I don't know any Hamlet. I know petunias and carnations and Jacob's ladder and -

WELLS: Ophelia... Hamlet, prince of Denmark?

OPHELIA: Oh, *that* Hamlet. We were going to get married but I went to a nunnery instead because he killed my brother – no, he killed my father and – wait, he killed my father and my brother! So then I went for a swim but I forgot that I never took swimming lessons so I drowned. That's all I can remember at the moment.

WELLS: Thank you, Ophelia.

KATE: She ought to be able to work out *her* problems... in about ten thousand years.

WELLS: It's your turn, Desdemona.

DESDEMONA: I can't; not without my handkerchief! The one with the strawberry design...

WELLS: Tell us who you are and where you come from.

DESDEMONA: Desdemona... Venice... and Cyprus.

WELLS: Very good. What else?

DESDEMONA: He gave me a handkerchief.

WELLS: Who did?

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DESDEMONA: Othello. It belonged to his mother or his grandmother or someone important, but he gave it to me! It was a wedding present, I think, but I lost it and then he asked for it back and I couldn't find it so... so he strangled me... over a handkerchief. **(rises)** That's why I have to find it! Because -

WELLS: Please sit down, Desdemona. We aren't finished yet.

DESDEMONA: No?

WELLS: No. Kate hasn't gone yet.

DESDEMONA: No?

KATE: No!

DESDEMONA: Oh. **(sits)**

WELLS: Kate?

KATE: First of all, I didn't kill anyone and no one killed me so I don't know what I'm doing here with all these female fruitcakes!

WELLS: Kate...

KATE: All right, but I just wanted to make it clear to my Italian *amica* here that I'm not like the rest of them.

CORDELIA: Oh, yes, you are.

KATE: Stuff it, Stonehenge face. **(to JULIET)** My name is Katharine and I'm from Padua where my dad had lots of *lira*. He married me off to this hotheaded ruffian who only wanted my money and to turn me into a meek little wifey-poo who'd rub his feet and feed his dogs. I sorta took a shine to the boneheaded lummoX for a while, actually thought I loved him and pretended to be tamed, but a girl can take only so much! Trying to get a divorce in Italy is like getting the Pope to dance the hula, so I was stuck. I considered murder – and suicide – but in the end I just suffered and became the world's first Italian feminist. And I can tell you, Juliet, honey, there is nothing so rare and so difficult in this world – and the next – as an Italian feminist.

LADY M: And she says she doesn't belong here.

KATE: I don't. **(stands)** I belong in the women's centers, on television, in the Congress working for women's rights and freedom from the tyranny of men!

LADY M: You belong in a padded cell! **(stands)** You're nothing but a self-centered, man-hating, spoiled daddy's girl with an Italian temper!

WELLS: Ladies!

KATE: Politician!

LADY M: Fishwife!

KATE: Murderer!

LADY M: Italian trash!

KATE: Scottish snob!

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(KATE and LADY MACBETH attack each other but the other LADIES tear them apart and get them back to their chairs. Suddenly all are quiet and a little embarrassed.)

CORDELIA: Well, Juliet, what do you think?

JULIET: Oh... Romeo! *(bursts into tears)* Wherefore art thou, Romeo?

(Blackout)

SCENE 2

Before the scene starts, the MYSTERIOUS MAN enters in front of the curtain or, if none is used, the other characters are frozen in position as MAN suspiciously crosses the stage. If Elizabethan dress is used for LADIES, HE should be in dark Elizabethan clothes with a long cloak that has a hood. If the LADIES are in modern dress, MAN should be in a trench coat and hat. After HE pokes around suspiciously for a few moments, HE leaves and the scene begins.

At Rise: CORDELIA, LADY MACBETH, JULIET and LADY ANNE are at the game table playing Monopoly. OPHELIA is at the other table cutting out flowers and KATE sits on the sofa reading a magazine. An old record plays on the phonograph.

LADY A: Do I want to buy Mediterranean Avenue?

LADY M: Why not? It's cheap.

JULIET: Mediterranean! It sounds so inviting... like home.

KATE: It ain't Italy, honey. It's a street in Atlantic City.

CORDELIA: They're all streets in Atlantic City.

KATE: I know that. Why do you think I'm not playing?

LADY M: Because you can't handle money.

KATE: No, it's a stupid game, that's why. Who wants to buy a street in New Jersey?

LADY A: I would buy Boardwalk... if I could afford it, but for now I'll have to settle for Mediterranean. *(gives money to CORDELIA)* Here, Cordelia.

CORDELIA: Your turn, Juliet.

JULIET: Oh. *(rolls dice)* Four: one, two, three, four. Reading Railroad.

LADY A: A train. You want to buy a train?

CORDELIA: Lady Macbeth already owns two of the other railroads. You better buy it or she'll have a monopoly.

JULIET: I should?

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KATE: Buy it. Then you can always get the heck out of New Jersey.

OPHELIA: There are peonies for thee and hydrangeas and irises and bleeding hearts!

LADY M: It's rather expensive, dear. Save your money for Park Place.

KATE: Don't listen to her, Juliet. She wants all four railroads... the greedy Scot!

LADY M: Since you are not playing the game, Kate, I suggest you shut up!

KATE: "Do not pass Go. Do not collect two hundred dollars." Do not trust anyone who encourages her husband to kill a king.

CORDELIA: Do you want it, Juliet?

JULIET: Oh, I don't think so.

(CORDELIA rolls dice.)

OPHELIA: I never used to like bleeding hearts, but now I do. Isn't that funny?

KATE: No.

CORDELIA: Luxury tax again! I always land on that one!

DESDEMONA: **(rushes in waving a paper tissue in her hand)** I found it! I found it! Look... my missing handkerchief. See? **(eagerly hold it out with two hands and the tissue accidentally rips in two)**

LADY M: Very nice, dear.

DESDEMONA: Ahh! **(collapses on the floor with grief)**

LADY A: You'll never be able to fool him with tissue, Desdemona.

CORDELIA: And isn't it the wrong color?

DESDEMONA: I am doomed. He's sure to strangle me again! **(blows her nose loudly into tissue)** I may as well die right here and now. **(lies back on the floor)**

OPHELIA: Would you like a lily? I have plenty!

DESDEMONA: No, thank you.

LADY M: Pennsylvania Railroad! I'll buy it! **(goes through her money)**

LADY A: Oh, my. Maybe you should have bought the Reading Railroad, Juliet.

JULIET: Sorry.

CORDELIA: Don't worry, dear. You're still learning the game.

JULIET: I've been here almost a week and I'm still so confused!

KATE: I've been here forever, it seems like, and some days I don't know what the hell is going on either!

JAMISON: **(enters with a tray filled with little cups of pills)** Med time, ladies. Just what the doctor ordered!

OPHELIA: Jamison, would you like a lily? Oh, I forgot, you're not dead.

JAMISON: You could have fooled me. A red pill and two yellow ones for Ophelia. **(hands her a cup)** Two blue bills for Kate. **(hands her a**

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cup) And for – (*sees DESDEMONA*) what's the matter with Desdemona?

KATE: She's waiting to be strangled.

JAMISON: (*to DESDEMONA*) Well, while you're waiting you better take your white pill and your yellow pill. (*hands them to her*)

DESDEMONA: Okay. (*sits up*) Hand me some water, Cordelia, or I'll choke on them before I get a chance to be strangled. (*CORDELIA pours her some water. Others take their pills during the following, some drinking water, coffee, etc.*)

JAMISON: And I have a treat for Lady Macbeth toady. Your two orange pills and a new pink one for you as well! (*gives her the cup*)

LADY M: You're interrupting our game, Jamison.

JAMISON: Chinese Checkers again?

LADY A: Monopoly, and she's winning.

JAMISON: Watch for that luxury tax!

CORDELIA: You don't have to tell me.

JAMISON: Your green pill, Cordelia. (*hands her a cup*) Two blue pills for Lady Anne. (*hands her a cup*) And just one little white pill for Juliet. Here you go. (*hands her a cup*)

JULIET: Thank you.

JAMISON: I don't need to remind you ladies that today is Tuesday which means it's role playing. The doc ought to be along soon, so nobody wander off.

OPHELIA: I can't be anyone else today. I'm too confused about who I am myself.

DESDEMONA: I can only play a dead person. (*lies back down on the floor*) It's the only role I understand.

JAMISON: You'll have to take that up with the doc. (*to LADY ANNE*) Something the matter with your pills, Lady Anne?

LADY A: Why do I have only two blue pills?

JAMISON: Doctor's orders.

LADY A: But I usually get four.

JAMISON: Ask the doc. Have fun, ladies! (*exits*)

LADY A: Something is going on here. I always get four blue pills.

KATE: Maybe you're only half crazy today.

CORDELIA: Ask Dr. Wells. There must be a reason.

JULIET: I don't understand; what is role playing?

LADY M: It's like charades... with dead people.

JULIET: What?!

CORDELIA: Pay no attention to her, Juliet. It's nothing to be frightened of.

KATE: Yeah, right. Remember the time Gertrude did the role playing? I was supposed to be some old guy named Polonius and I nearly got stabbed through the curtains!

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CORDELIA: It was a very successful session. If you recall, Gertrude got to leave soon after that particular role playing.

JULIET: You mean if I do this role thing, I can go and find my Romeo?

LADY M: It's not that simple. Sometimes the role playing is a disaster. Desdemona, remember the time it was your turn? You fell on top of Ophelia who was playing your husband and she just about suffocated!

DESDEMONA: I didn't mean it!

OPHELIA: I don't remember any of that.

KATE: You don't remember your name.

OPHELIA: Yes, I do. My name is... Rosemary. No... it's Daisy. Or is it Iris?

JULIET: I don't like the sound of this role playing.

LADY A: Relax, honey. You're too new. It won't be your turn today. The most you'll have to do is play someone else.

KATE: Which is a lot easier than playing yourself, believe me.

DESDEMONA: She's right.

OPHELIA: Ivy! My name is Ivy. I mean... Myrtle. No... Violet.

CORDELIA: It will be fine, Juliet; don't worry.

LADY M: Let's get back to the game. Lady Anne, it's your turn.

LADY A: I can't concentrate on any game, not with only two blue pills instead of four!

KATE: Let it rest, Annie!

LADY M: You can't quit now. I'm winning!

CORDELIA: Maybe we can continue after role playing. We'll only get interrupted again.

LADY M: But I gotta get that fourth railroad!

OPHELIA: Rose! My name is Rose, but you can call me Rosebud for short.

KATE: Be quiet, Ophelia, before I nip you in the bud!

OPHELIA: Ophelia?

KATE: And, Desdemona, if you don't get off the floor, I'm going to stomp on you!

LADY M: Someone is certainly off her iambic pentameter today.

KATE: Just watch it, Scottie!

DESDEMONA: I may as well get up. **(gets to her feet)** A person could get strangled just as well standing up. I wonder if I have time to run to my room. I think I left something there.

LADY A: It's not there. Oh, what can be keeping the doctor?

CORDELIA: You seem very worried about something, Lady Anne. Is it the pills?

LADY A: No, I just have a feeling... oh, I don't know.

WELLS: **(enters; one of the LADIES turns off the music)** Good afternoon, ladies. It's Tuesday and, as you know, role playing.

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DESDEMONA: Go ahead. I've been strangled before. I don't mind.

WELLS: Not today, Desdemona. We need to concentrate on someone else this time.

KATE: Not me, doc! I got a headache!

JULIET: I'm too new here.

OPHELIA: Will it be me? I have all these flowers to finish and -

WELLS: No, ladies. I think it's time we all try and help Lady Anne.

LADY A: Me?

WELLS: It's time, dear. I think you're ready.

LADY A: I am? But I don't play chess very well, or Monopoly... how could I possibly play this game?

WELLS: The same as everyone else, and all the ladies will be here to help you.

LADY A: I had a feeling something was going to happen today. **(to CORDELIA)** Didn't I say I had a feeling?

CORDELIA: Yes, Anne, but this might be the day – your day.

WELLS: That's right. Now, ladies, gather round over there and get comfortable. **(LADIES sit on the sofa and chairs facing an acting area where WELLS and LADY ANNE stand.)** Don't be frightened, Lady Anne. You know how this works. You must think back to that day, that hour, that moment when you could have taken control of the situation. By going back and role playing the situation out, we might discover the solution. It's your second chance; a chance to change the direction of your life.

LADY A: Oh, dear. It's so complicated.

CORDELIA: You can do it, Anne. Think back.

LADY M: Concentrate.

OPHELIA: Try and remember.

LADY A: I recall that I ate lamb chops on the night before I died. Maybe I shouldn't have. They were poisoned I'll bet. I'll refuse the lamb chops.

WELLS: But you didn't know that your husband had poisoned them, so there was no decision to be made. You must think back further.

LADY A: When I was sixteen, my mother showed me a portrait of my husband, King Henry, and she asked me if I would marry him.

WELLS: Better...

LADY A: I said yes, but I'm sorry I said yes! I loved him. I still do! I don't want to change that!

WELLS: No, of course not. That was not when your fate was decided. It was later with Richard.

LADY A: I don't want to think about him!

CORDELIA: But you must, Anne.

KATE: Face it, Annie; that's where you have to go.

LADY A: **(to WELLS)** Do you think so?

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WELLS: Yes. At what moment in your relationship with Richard did you have a choice?

LADY A: Well...

DESDEMONA: Don't fight it, Anne. I've tried and it doesn't work.

LADY A: It would have to be the day he asked me to marry him.

WELLS: Very good.

LADY A: But that was a dreadful day. I don't want to think about it!

OPHELIA: You have to. Otherwise, you'll end up as loony as me!

WELLS: Tell us, Lady Anne, about that day. We'll help you re-enact it. We'll give you a chance to change your future.

LADY A: Well... it was the day of the funeral. We were taking my dear Henry's body to the crypt and *he* was there.

WELLS: Who, dear?

LADY A: Richard. He was the duke of Gloucester then. I hated him! They say he murdered my Henry. I knew he did! I was sure of it.

WELLS: What did you say to him when you saw him?

LADY A: I called him a lump of foul deformity. He was a hunchback, you know, ugly outside and in.

KATE: Sounds like a real catch!

WELLS: We must role play it. Lady Macbeth, will you play Richard?

LADY M: I'm no hunchback. I've never even known a hunchback!

WELLS: It doesn't matter, and who will play the corpse of King Henry?

JULIET: It sounds awful!

DESDEMONA: Do I get to lie down?

WELLS: Of course.

DESDEMONA: I'll do it. ***(moves to the acting area and lies down on her back)***

OPHELIA: Wait! ***(takes one of her paper lilies and puts it in DESDEMONA's hand)*** Here!

WELLS: Fine, now, Richard... approach Lady Anne.

LADY M: What do I say?

LADY A: "You that bear the corpse, set it down."

LADY M: "Put down the body!"

WELLS: What did you say, Lady Anne?

LADY A: Well, I called him a fiend... said he was inhuman and unnatural and...

WELLS: Tell him.

LADY A: "And... you... defused infection of a man! Give me leave to curse they cursed self." Then I spit in his face. ***(starts to spit and LADY MACBETH)***

LADY M: Hold it! ***(pulls away)*** No spitting. Even in Scotland we don't spit at people.

LADY A: You would if you knew my Richard.

WELLS: What was his reaction to all this?

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LADY A: He said... he loved me.

KATE: What!

OPHELIA: The nerve!

WELLS: Say it, Richard.

LADY M: You've got to be kidding!

WELLS: Of course not.

LADY M: "I love you, Lady Anne." There.

LADY A: "How can you say you love me? You killed my husband!"

KATE: Good question.

LADY M: "I did it..."

LADY A: Out of love... for me.

LADY M: "I did it because I love you. Your beauty was the cause."

LADY A: "If I thought that, these nails should rend that beauty from my cheeks!" **(puts her fingernails against her cheeks)**

DESDEMONA: **(sits up)** Whoa! Go easy on the face, Annie. This guy ain't worth it!

WELLS: What happened then, dear?

LADY A: He took out his dagger. We need a dagger, Dr. Wells.

CORDELIA: Use this ruler. **(picks up a short ruler from OPHELIA's flower cutting table)** Here, it's safer. **(gives it to LADY MACBETH)**

WELLS: Very good.

LADY M: What did he do with the dagger?

LADY A: He handed it to me... **(LADY MACBETH gives her the ruler.)**

Then he knelt down before me... **(LADY MACBETH kneels.)** and told me that if I didn't love him that I may as well kill him right now.

DESDEMONA: No way!

OPHELIA: Wow!

KATE: Here's your chance, Annie. Stab the little creep!

LADY M: Wait a second here! **(gets up and returns to her chair)** No one's stabbing me today; ruler or no ruler, it's not safe!

WELLS: But there's nothing to be frightened of.

KATE: When they bring out the weapons in role playing, I go to my room and take a few more of those pills!

WELLS: Now, ladies... we must help Lady Anne.

LADY M: I'll help her from over here.

WELLS: Someone else then? **(silence)** I see. **(goes to the door and calls out)** Jamison! Can you come in here, please? **(to LADIES)** Jamison will help us out.

OPHELIA: I didn't know Jamison was crazy.

CORDELIA: He's not. That's why he'll make a perfect Richard.

JAMISON: **(enters)** You called, Doc?

WELLS: I'm afraid we're going to need your help with role playing.

JAMISON: Again?

WELLS: You haven't done it in quite a long time.

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JAMISON: Yeah, but when I played Julius Caesar, all the ladies stabbed me to death!

WELLS: Only one this time and we're using a ruler.

JAMISON: Well, okay! Who am I this time?

LADY A: The Duke of Gloucester.

JAMISON: Only a duke? Last time I was an emperor.

WELLS: Come over here and kneel before Lady Anne.

JAMISON: All right. *(kneels and LADY ANNE raises the dagger against him)*

LADY A: "Black night o'ershade the day and death thy life!" *(pause)*

KATE: Do it, Annie!

LADY A: I... I... *(drops the ruler)* I can't. I couldn't then and I can't now.

WELLS: Of course you couldn't, dear. You were wronged; your husband killed; your life destroyed... but you weren't a murderer.

LADY A: No.

JULIET: So you married the duke?

LADY A: Not yet. I said to him, "Though I wish thy death, I will not be the executioner."

KATE: Too bad. It would have solved all your troubles right there. I wish my husband gave me such an opportunity.

WELLS: So you did not kill him. What happened next?

LADY A: It gets worse. He picked up the dagger and pointed it at his heart.

WELLS: Do it, Jamison.

JAMISON: Sure. *(picks up ruler and points it at his chest)* What now? Hari Kari?

LADY A: He said, "Bid me kill myself and I will do it."

DESDEMONA: He didn't!

OPHELIA: What nerve!

CORDELIA: He was very sly, Anne. Now I understand everything.

LADY A: Do you, Cordelia?

WELLS: It's becoming clearer. What happened next?

LADY A: I said, "I already wished you dead so go ahead and kill yourself."

KATE: Good girl!

JULIET: What did he say to that?

(LADY ANNE whispers into JAMISON's ear for a few moments. MYSTERIOUS MAN enters unseen behind them all and watches from the doorway with a curious grin.)

JAMISON: I think I got that. Here goes. *(puts the ruler to his throat)*
"That was in thy rage. Speak it again and, even with the word, this

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hand which for thy love did kill thy love, shall, for thy love, kill a far truer love.”

DESDEMONA: **(to OPHELIA)** Did you follow that?

OPHELIA: No, but wasn't it pretty?

LADY A: **(to JAMISON)** “I wish I knew thy heart.”

JAMISON: “Tis figured in my tongue.”

LADY A: “I fear both are false.”

JAMISON: “Then never man was true.”

LADY A: “Put down the dagger.”

JAMISON: “I'll put it down only if you take me up.” **(pause)** “Say, then, my peace is made.”

LADY A: “That shall you know hereafter.”

JAMISON: “But shall I live in hope?”

LADY A: “All men, I hope, live so.” **(moves away from the acting area then sits, shaking and scared)** And that's how it happened.

(JAMISON rises to his feet.)

JULIET: You married him?

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