

And by opposing end them. *[He's definitely too intense now.]*
To die; to sleep;

To sleep . . . perchance to nap . . . *[JESS has gone to a very dark place. With rising panic.]* To . . . nap . . . My nappy time. In my crib and mommy's gone and my head is stuck in the rails and there's a clown! A scary clown puppet!! And it's laughing! Laughing at ME!!!

[JESS screams and collapses, sobbing, into a nervous breakdown. DANIEL and ADAM rush in to comfort him.]

ADAM: Please! *[Stage lights come up.]*

DANIEL: Jess is up!

ADAM: What happened to your speech?

Continue

JESS: I was so into it. I mean, way deep in the method, really feeling Hamlet's fear in the face of oblivion. But . . . then suddenly there was a clown's face. Laughing at me. They ALL laugh at me. Just like they laugh at Teresa. *[Sobs.]*

ADAM: Teresa?

DANIEL: What his girlfriend?

ADAM: I have no idea.

JESS: Oh my god, do you two *not* watch *Real Housewives of New Jersey*?! Teresa tries so hard to be good, but she went to jail, and then her husband went to jail, and then her mom died and then her dad had a heart attack and he finally died and Melissa has *never* been supportive. *[Of course this bit changes weekly or monthly, as JESS updates the audience on the trauma of the latest Housewife drama, or whatever incredibly schlocky show you care to comment on.]* And you don't even care! *[Collapses into more sobs.]*

ADAM: *[Stunned.]* You watch *Real Housewives*?

JESS: *[Defensive at first, then the floodgates open.]* I watched one episode as research for an article on *Merry Wives of Windsor* but then I just couldn't stop. *Total Divas, Hillbilly Wives, Soap, Bachelorette* . . . all of 'em.

DANIEL: So, wait a minute. All this stuff you were spouting about killing our televisions and embracing the Bard—that's all B.S.?

JESS: *[Feebly.]* Yes.

ADAM: Jess, you're not really a preeminent Shakespeare scholar, are you?

Look you where the poor wretch comes reading.
Away, I do beseech you.

[OPHELIA exits.]

How does my good lord Hamlet?

J/HAMLET: Well, God-a-me!

D/POLONIUS: Do you know me, my lord?

J/HAMLET: Excellent well. You are a th . . . longer.

D/POLONIUS: What do you read, my lord?

J/HAMLET: Words, words, words.

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

[OPHELIA makes her head out from backstage.]

A/OPHELIA: Daddy, the Players are here and they say they want to do a play within-a-play whatever that means. *[Beat.]* That's all.

[OPHELIA disappears.]

POLONIUS: *[Bowing.]* My lord.

[POLONIUS follows OPHELIA off.]

[HAMLET:] "I am but mad north-northw . . .
I'll have the players play something like
The murther of my father by my uncle.
I'll If he do blench,
I know my course. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king!"

Begin

[HAMLET kneels and draws a dagger. Lights blackout to a pin-spot, which misses JESS by several feet; he has to slide over to it, while trying to maintain his serious composure. JESS gets into a "Method" space for his speech. He's into it. Maybe too far into it . . .]

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 sea of troubles