

# LADIES, SIGH NO MORE

## 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

## PROPS

Chess set  
Monopoly set  
Trivial Pursuit game  
Clipboard with papers  
Folded paper  
Construction paper, scissors, pipe cleaners  
12-inch ruler  
Tissues  
Cloth scraps

Empty soda can

Paper money

Tray with five cups with pills in them

### **SET PIECES**

Phonograph

Records

Water pitcher

Cardboard cups

Magazines

Books

### **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.

“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: Hmm. (*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.

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: (**warily**) 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!

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