

RESCUING OPHELIA

A five-minute play
by

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Cast of Characters

OPHELIA	Rash and desperate
JULIET	Regretful and cautious
LADY MACBETH	Ambitious but regretful
HAMLET	Unseen taunting voice
POLONIUS	Unseen taunting voice
LAERTES	Unseen taunting voice

Place:

A bridge in Denmark

Time:

Late middle ages, between scenes of *Hamlet*

Pereira
SAMPLE

LIGHTS UP. OPHELIA sits on the bridge with her feet dangling, holding a bouquet and tossing flowers into the water below one by one.

OPHELIA

Farewell, lilac. Farewell, violet. Farewell. Goodbye, holly and farewell fair orchid. I bid you all adieu. Farewell, aster.

HAMLET (V.O)

I did love you once. I loved you not. Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? Go thy ways to a nunnery. If thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; wise men know well what monsters you make of them. God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another. To a nunnery, go.

OPHELIA shakes the voice from her head and drops another flower.

OPHELIA

Farewell, sorrel. Farewell.

POLONIUS (V.O)

You do not understand yourself so clearly as it behooves my daughter and your honor. Do you believe his "tenders," as you call them? Think yourself a baby that you have taken tenders for true pay. You'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA

Farew-

LAERTES (V.O)

Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, a violet in the youth of primy nature, forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, the perfume and suppliance of a minute. No more. Think it no more. Perhaps he loves you now, but you must fear for he himself is subject to his birth. Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes.

OPHELIA

Farewell, marigold. Farewell, farewell. Farewell, geranium.

The voices grow louder. OPHELIA gets more visibly uncomfortable.

HAMLET(V.O)

I did love you
once. I loved
you not. Get
thee to a
nunnery. Go thy
ways to a
nunnery. Wise
men know what
monsters you
make of them.
To a nunnery,
go. I did love
you once. I
loved you not.
To a nunnery,
go. I did love
you once. I
loved you not.
I loved you
not. I loved
you not.

POLONIUS (V.O)

You do not
understand
yourself as it
behooves your
honor. Do you
believe his
"tenders," as
you call them?
You'll tender
me a fool. You
do not
understand
yourself. Do
you believe his
tenders? You'll
tender me a
fool. You do
not understand.
You'll tender
me a fool.

LAERTES (V.O)

Forward, not
permanent,
sweet, not
lasting, the
perfume of a
minute. No
more. Perhaps
he loves you
now, but he is
subject to his
birth. Not
permanent, not
lasting, the
perfume of a
minute. No
more. No more.

POLONIUS (V.O)

Do you believe his tenders?

LAERTES (V.O)

Perhaps he loves you now.

HAMLET (V.O)

I loved you not.

POLONIUS (V.O)

You'll tender me a fool.

LAERTES (V.O)

No more.

OPHELIA

No more. No more.

OPHELIA rises and gazes down at
the water. JULIET ENTERS on the
bridge and just as OPHELIA is
about to jump—

JULIET

Ophelia?

OPHELIA turns with a start

OPHELIA

What is't? A ghost? Or perhaps an angel?

JULIET

A girl. A fool.

OPHELIA

What is't that tenders you a fool, girl?

JULIET reveals a knife plunged
into her stomach. OPHELIA rushes
to end of bridge.

OPHELIA

Medic! There must be a doctor nearby. Doctor! O let there be
a doctor near.

JULIET

Don't. Tis too late for me.

OPHELIA

What do you mean?

JULIET

Ophelia...

OPHELIA

You are...a ghost?

OPHELIA grows more distressed and
returns to the center of the
bridge, looking to the water

JULIET

Do not! You act too rash-

OPHELIA

Let me be, phantom! Leave me to do as I must.

JULIET

Must? Why must!

OPHELIA

I have *nothing*—

LADY MACBETH ENTERS opposite side
from JULIET.

LADY MACBETH

And nothing *shall* you have unless you remain.

OPHELIA

Another spirit? O, O won't you begone as well?

LADY MACBETH

Not I. Thy frailty thrusts thee forth. Armor yourself and retreat. Thou'rt an innocent Maybud. No guilt upon your mind, no hands stained with blood.

OPHELIA

No guilt? No nothing neither. I have fallen from his favor in love, from order with my father's empiercement, and from placement with his burial.

LADY MACBETH

Create your own favor, order, placement. Thou cannot from beyond the veil. You become a painting, nothing more. Still beauty but lacking depth which death cannot grant.

OPHELIA

Why art ye here, ye spirits? I long not to hear.

JULIET

We're simply trying to save you.

OPHELIA

I need not a savior! Nor need I counsel! All of my life, my body and my mind by my Lord the King and my Lady Queen, by father, dear depart, and brother mine, and by my lord Hamlet have been reined. Counsels and tyrants all—prune azalea, carnation, snapdragon, orchid. Tend the flower to be sure it looks in bloom but disregard the root; hack haphazard with garden shears and hope the petal stays, and only when the rose pricks back dost the gardener take heed of the plant and merely gloves his hands! No more. I say no more.

OPHELIA returns to edge of bridge
and looks out.

POLONIUS (V.O)

Understand yourself. You'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA

O! Methinks I see my father, paler still than thou art though thy death is more dim and ancient. He frowns, his face froze in a wail or-

JULIET

See his misery? You wish to join him?

OPHELIA

Shall he reign o'er me in Heaven? I'd give my life again to avoid that ruling.

LADY MACBETH

Are you not, then, more free whilst you still live? Escaped thy father's reign and still mewling, wishing and wanting for freedom and law. No compromise for a woman. Tis she who bends and yields, and that's her tragic flaw. Bow to one fate, mortal or Heavenly.

JULIET

You cannot choose both and we implore you- select the former, learn from our mistake. We know you not but want the best for you.

OPHELIA

And what if the best is for my life to take? Shall we meet again? When this is over?

LADY MACBETH

We and more shall greet you.

OPHELIA

Thank you. Farewell clover.

OPHELIA drops her final flower and jumps into the water after it.
Blackout.