

GABBIE HAMLET

Sadie Shapiro

(a monologue from the perspective of Hamlet, as told by Gabbie Hanna's bestselling and very mediocre poetry)

I don't pretend to make much sense.

I need to just start. I need to stop putting this off. I need to look up at the distorted face in the mirror, the empty shell that somehow tricked people into thinking I was somebody important.

The past few months were a hell of anxiety, of unbearable pickiness, the tangible ego of a twenty-something child. I prayed to find myself without a qualm, but there is no single word in any language ever written to describe the predicament I'm working in. I am so overwhelmed. It would be quite nice, having zero thoughts.

What is a monster?

It all comes down, truly, to marriage, to a stale and empty life, to echoed resentments, to a home empty of memories, a pleasant, charming, lonely, hostile, fucked-up place to live.

I'll admit that my neuroticism will ruin your day— everything I try it's just revision after revision, mind, body, and soul, every skin, hair, and blood cell ripped to shreds until there's nothing left. I've been here before. I'm the one they're afraid of.

Maybe I'm the monster.

I tried to take a nap today. When I sleep I don't have to think, but I spent so much time anticipating having to wake up that I never fell asleep. I wonder what dying feels like. I'd

sleep for eternity in the bed that I made, shut the lid and turn the key and feel the dark. I don't particularly wish to die, but I suppose that'd be just fine. Still. Rotting. Turned to dust. Soon to be forgotten.

There's comfort in the permanence of dying.

All this looking down will surely be my demise. I wanted to fight. Hand around the sharp, cold metal. Death through the closed curtain. Oozing head, blood and bruises, blinding pain. It'd be nice. To kill off a king. To say I can't have your heart because it no longer beats. To win.

I stopped loving my mother. I'm wary of my friends. They're dropping like flies. I wait for the comfort of a ghost. I thought you should know that I wish you were dead. I want your outsides to match what festers inside me, strange, scary, shaking, desperate. How does it feel to be loved by the Queen? I can never unlearn it. I am lost so close to home, thanks to you.

I am left without a sense of direction. I'll never know this area less than I know it right now. I have to think ahead. What if this is a beginning, and I don't acknowledge it?

Family is relative. I am unconditionally loved by a grueling, violent world. I suppose I owe my entire existence to everyone who tore my heart out.

GABBIE HAMLET (KEY)

ADULTOLESCENCE

DANDELION

MONSTER

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REFLECTION

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is widely regarded as the best play that has ever been written. It has been taught for hundreds of years across thousands of schools. The titular character is one of the most compelling characters in all of literature, a deeply troubled person whose inability to act presents an inner turmoil much realer than his false portrayal of madness. He is known for his very famous monologues and soliloquies, where he frequently contemplates the meaning of life while trying to survive in a world he no longer understands.

Gabbie Hanna is an American YouTuber and internet personality, most well-known for her unpredictability. She has considered herself a musician, actress, author, and in one memorable instance, the second coming of Jesus Christ. Her outspokenness, although it initially earned her popularity, has led her to the forefront of many Internet scandals, so she has mastered the art of the YouTube Apology Video— an insincere acknowledgement of the harm she probably doesn't believe she caused. She has also published two books of poetry (*Adulthood* in 2017, and *Dandelion* in 2020) that, although bestselling, gained attention due to the bad name she gave the entire genre of poetry. I encourage bad writing. I *love* bad writing. I think self-indulgent creativity makes us human. I hated Gabbie Hanna's poetry.

For my original plagiarism, I wanted to see if I could take the worst writing I've ever read, switch the order of some words, and write a monologue for the protagonist of the best writing I've ever read. This involved forcing myself to read over 40 of Hanna's poems (I refused to actually purchase the books out of principle), and to listen to her song "Monster" which was not great. I have always loved creative writing, and this was the ultimate test of a creative writer. I asked the question that many people have asked before: *is there anything in these poems worth salvaging?*

I found out that the answer is yes. Hanna's writing is not as surface-level as I had believed. Her thoughts contain beauty and genuine reflection. Although I am taking her exact words and completely restructuring them, I'd like to think that I am simply highlighting the value that shines through her incoherence. Her word choice actually lends itself to the plot of *Hamlet* quite well; she speaks of feeling lost, of severe anxiety and mental illness, of not knowing who to trust, of broken families, of life and death. She is far from inarticulate. She talks to her audience just as much as Hamlet does. In fact, if you are familiar with her role in the YouTube Original TV series *Escape the Night*, you'll find that she, too, is afflicted with an inability to act.

I think this project carefully toes the line between plagiarized and original. I am using her words and putting them in a context that I am very confident she never intended, and they fit together to a surprising degree. Looking for connections between Hanna and Hamlet was a fascinating exercise ("I like sleep, sleep is neat" does not pack the same punch as "to sleep, perchance to dream," but the similarities are definitely there). I restructured Hanna's poetry to the point where I wouldn't call it a complete plagiarism— I never kept more than 15 consecutive words in her original order. I used her vocabulary as a jumping-off point to write from the perspective of everyone's favorite prince of Denmark. I hope I was able to do Shakespeare justice. I'm sure this is what he would have wanted.

I still wholeheartedly support bad writing. If anything, this is evidence that anyone can improve.