

BILL'S BACK

BARRY. That . . . is the question of the century. First, let me start by saying that I never would have said those things about you if I had known that I would be looking at you face to face one day. To answer your question, I don't know. You were always nothing to me. The product of a bad English teacher's paycheck. Something to fill in the two weeks between comma splices and a research paper about some Spanish novel, written by a Frenchman, translated into English by a German adapter. I knew so little about you. And your plays. . . God! Were they long! The longest I had ever read . . . correction . . . tried to read. *(Pause)* Have you ever heard of Dyslexia, Bill? No, I guess you wouldn't have. Let me tell you what it is. Dyslexia is defined as a disturbance of the ability to read. *(Pause)* To the afflicted adult, it can keep you from getting a job and make you embarrassed to pick up any book. Basically, you live in fear. To a teenager in school, it's the Mark of the Beast. . . and it can stamp you for life under the right circumstances. My stamp happened in my 11th grade English class. I'm getting ahead of myself, though. *(BARRY crosses and gets a glass of water)* My parents are people of privilege. In fact, I believe my dad uses one hundred dollar bills to wipe his ass. It's always been that way. To people that high up the social ladder, status is everything, family is expendable. My parents found out about my learning disability when I was in the seventh grade. They dismissed it as "liberal hogwash" I believe was the term they applied to it. I just needed to work harder. So I did. My memory was my best friend for the next four years. I memorized everything and just regurgitated it during tests and quizzes. Easy enough, right? Then one day, I walk into my English class and SURPRISE! We're going to read Hamlet out loud, and guess who gets to read the leading role? Yours truly! I begged the teacher to switch me to a lesser part, but she refused, having no idea of my condition. So, we start reading. I race through the pages trying to decipher what Hamlet is saying, and I somehow managed to keep ahead of the rest of the class until the teacher sees me scribbling and writing notes. Thinking I'm not paying attention, she closes my notebook and makes me put down the pen. Then, it happens.

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The speech of all speeches. I try to wrap my brain around the “To Be or not to Be” speech, but it’s useless. The class begins snickering, I begin sweating, and the groundwork for a disappointing future is being laid. The letters are racing all over the page. I say, “To eb or ont to be”. Well, at that moment, in that classroom, I didn’t want to be. I suffered those sling and arrows your so eloquently speak of. But, that was just the beginning. Because where do you suppose all of those high dollar chuckles went? I’ll tell you. They were relived around dinner tables all though our social circles. My parents were humiliated. They were the parents of the boy who couldn’t say BE! As I said, earlier, status is everything. I was the rotten limb. So, my family sent me to public school, but by that time the drive was gone. My grades left me out of the college running. So, here I am. In the Big Apple. I guess you could say I traded one place where no one cared for another. *(Pause. He looks at SHAKESPEARE)* So, here I am! No career! No Shannon! Nothing! And I have you to thank for it.