

(Monologue delivered by a very effeminate man with a guitar that he uses to strum lightly to punctuate his reading.)

Good evening ladies and gentlemen and other lovers of the *craft* of *art*. Let's move quickly now shall we? Today, I shall be reciting for you a portion of my epic poem, "The Drowning of Ophelia: And other Desirable Women" for Max

Now. Before we embark on this *journey* together, I think it behooves us, in fact it necessitates us, that we dim the lights. At the last poetry reading I attended the glare from the fluorescent lighting was sooo bad that the entire production was a shambles of white light and more white light.

(Lights dim)

Good.

This po-em is dedicated, as always, and lovingly to Max. Our days together maybe few, but we spend them more than they are worth. Oh God.

(almost breaks down, but recovers.)

Okay. The first movement. Stanza really--. Could we get the lights down a little dimmer in here?

(lights dim to almost total darkness.)

Too dim. Can't see my po-em now. Sorry. That was my fault. No, I didn't mean to snip at you. (pause) Well, if it was your fault then it was your fault.

Say as much then.

(lights go up)

Sorry. Before I continue. I must express my sincere gratitude and bountiful thankfulness that you have all chosen to come here and pay, by most standards, a paltry fee for seeing this performance. Witnessing, if you will, the *Moment!* The Moment of the making of *Art!* For while this po-em is written on paper, it is a dead and lifeless thing until I, like Jesus to Lazarus, wilt breathe life into it. Awakening it anew.

Could we dim these lights just a skoch more? Are they fluorescent, or what's going on? Maybe I... does anyone have a candle? Could we get a stagehand with a candle? This is really my fault. We only had the hall for rehearsal two days this week, and yesterday was so nice out that Max

and I went for a--

(Stagehand enters with candle)

Oh candle, good. Excellent.

And now. My po-em. “The Drowning of Ophelia: And other Desirable Women” for Max.

“Oh! You hath died. Oh! Submerged you are and gone! N’er to return again to this oft too quickly fleeting mortality we call life.”

(He gestures wildly, snuffing out the candle.)

I’ve blown out my candle. Sorry. Can we get the lights a little brighter? No? We’ll just sit in the dark then. I’ll wait. *They’ll* wait.

You’re the one making them wait, not me. You. Lights.

(Lights come up to full.)

Thank you.

“The Drowning of Ophelia: And other Desirable Women” for Max ...

Many people ask me... well, some people ask me, more should really, who is this enigma Max that you refer to before, during and after your performances.

Thank you for asking.

Max, is... my one, my only. My light. My, life partner. Though the world may not recognize, or fully appreciate the length, depth and breadth of our relationship, we know that it’s real.

Max doesn’t like it when I talk about him this much during a show. And normally, I respect his wishes... because he’s usually sitting right there. (gestures to empty chair on stage), but tonight he is home... ill.

His illness has baffled every doctor we have visited. Manifesting itself only in a lack of energy and lack of interest in most everything.

Max is my 5 year old Labradoodle, and he has... Lou Gehig’s disease, for dogs. People say that dogs can’t have Lou Gehig’s disease, but that is not true. They just don’t have a star dog athlete who has this mysterious, incurable disease. If only a major dog star would get the same illness

that Max has, then some light could be shown on his plight. A Lassie, a Bengi, a Rin- tin... tin.

But, alas, those famous dogs have already passed on. The age of big name famous dogs has passed us by just as the golden age of movie stars has passed. Marilyn, Gene Kelly, Elton John.

This Lou Gerhig's for dogs, Max and I have discussed at length and humbly offer the name Max's Disease. We ask only for your prayers and donations, and financial aid. Monetary contributions will be welcomed as well.

"The Drowning of Ophelia: And other Desirable Women" for Max

"Oh! You hath died. Oh! Submerged you are and gone! N'er to return again to this oft too quickly fleeting mortality we call life."

"Oh! You hath died. Oh! This world. Which day by day plummets inexorably towards that fateful *last* day. The day for which there'll be no tomorrow. May multicolored angels' wings sweep you to the stars. May the sky embrace you in their highest heights. Kissing the heavens. The blue domed underbelly of God himself!"

(stage manager enters giving the "time's up" signal.)

And, it appears that my time, like sands of the beach, hath eroded away to naught. I thank you for your attention. Max thanks you. Thirty-four stanzas more to go... another day.

There will be a donation box for Max's Disease in the lobby. Please give generously. Give from the heart.

Good day to you. And--- Good Day. (bows deeply.)