

Clue Phrase = ACTOUTMACBETHAISCI

Answer = Dark Brooding

You have letters to an advice column. They look like this:

Dear Abby,

I have recently come to an interesting conclusion: that, really, everyone wants to commit suicide, and the only reason they do not is because they are too frightened of what comes next. If we could be certain that death is only like sleep, and a dreamless sleep at that, then no one would stay alive for long. After all, everyone has some sort of burden in their life, whether it's sickness, bad luck in love, troubles with the law, or a boss who is a bully. It's only our own cowardice that keeps us from killing ourselves.

- Candid

And for each one, you have an answer from Abby. The answers look like this:

Dear Candid,

An interesting conclusion indeed! Most would say it was not cowardice but courage, to stay alive in the face of everything. And while many people do feel an urge to kill themselves occasionally, I do not think you are right to say that everyone does all the time. It is a temptation to say that everyone thinks the way you would in their place: after all, we are human, we all bleed when we are pricked. But minds are far more complicated than bodies, in some ways, and not nearly as predictable. Don't take this the wrong way, but I would recommend that you see a therapist.

- Abby

Each letter is 'written' by a Shakespearean character. This one is Hamlet.

Each letter represents a specific monologue said by the character. This one is 'To be or not to be'.

Each response contains a quote or a reference to a different monologue, and that monologue is also used for one of the other letters. "We are human, we all bleed when we are pricked" is a reference to "If you prick us, do we not bleed?" which is a quote from Shylock's "Hath not a Jew eyes" monologue. This establishes an ordering: 1. Hamlet. 2. Shylock. 3. (the monologue the response to Shylock quotes), etc.

The last one clues the end in Abby's response.

Each pseudonym (in this case 'Candid') shares EXACTLY ONE letter with the name of the character: cAndid, hAmlet yields A.

Taking the letters in order yields ACTOUTMACBETHAISCI (act out Macbeth Act I Scene III, which is the scene where Macbeth and Banquo meet the witches). After you do that, you get the answer DARK BROODING from HQ.

Character identifications, in solved order:

A - Candid - Hamlet

C - Defence - Shylock

T - Nihilist - Margaret

O - Offkey - Orsino

U - Auburn - Juliet

T - Spirits - Leonato

M - Almost - Edmund

A - Upcaught - Rosalind

C - Secrecy - Luciana

B - Poor Boy - Caliban

E - Helpless - Beatrice

T - Pitied - Arthur

H - Unhappy - Othello
A - Aurora - Helena
I - Veracity - Polonius
S - Blushful - Cressida
C - Crowded - Cassius
I - Pitiful - Richard
I - Discord - Titania
I - Mimic - Julia

The letters in the correct order, with the characters and monologues identified, and the quotes from the next monologue in bold:

A – Hamlet - ‘To be or not to be’

Dear Abby,

I have recently come to an interesting conclusion: that, really, everyone wants to commit suicide, and the only reason they do not is because they are too frightened of what comes next. If we could be certain that death is only like sleep, and a dreamless sleep at that, then no one would stay alive for long. After all, everyone has some sort of burden in their life, whether it’s sickness, bad luck in love, troubles with the law, or a boss who is a bully. It’s only our own cowardice that keeps us from killing ourselves.

- Candid

Dear Candid,

An interesting conclusion indeed! Most would say it was not cowardice but courage, to stay alive in the face of everything. And while many people do feel an urge to kill themselves occasionally, I do not think you are right to say that everyone does all the time. It is a temptation to say that everyone thinks the way you would in their place: after all, **we are human, we all bleed when we are pricked**. But minds are far more complicated than bodies, in some ways, and not nearly as predictable. Don’t take this the wrong way, but I would recommend that you see a therapist.

- Abby

C – Shylock, Merchant of Venice - ‘Hath not a Jew eyes’

Dear Abby,

I have recently been asked multiple times why I pursue a certain course of action when it cannot possibly profit me. I would like to make my answer public.

There is a man who has made me a laughing stock repeatedly, thwarted my business plans, helped my enemies, and harmed my friends, all because he is a prejudiced bigot. Are we not all human? Do we not all have eyes, and hands, and thoughts, and feelings? We all eat, we all get sick, we all die, and so, since we are so similar, I will make another similarity: we all get revenge on those that wrong us. I have the opportunity now to get even with him, and I will show him that we are not as different as he thought, that he and those like him have taught us how to get revenge.

-Defence

Dear Defence,

The best thing to do with bigots is to ignore them and prove them wrong by your actions, though this can be difficult. Revenge is a tempting idea, but in practice it often comes out wrong. I can see that you want to make sure this man gets **the just proportion of your sorrow**, but do you really want to be like him? Think carefully, and don’t do anything you’ll regret later.

-Abby

T – Margaret, Richard III - ‘I had an Edward...’

Dear Abby,

Many years ago, I made some enemies. I don’t want to talk about what they did to me, my husband, and my son, but the important part is that now, after years of pain, I am finally seeing them receive the same. You see, the youngest son in that family is a high-functioning psychopath, and he has clawed his way up in the heap of their family enterprise, going through his brothers and nephews on the way. In fact, his mother and sister-in-law are now in precisely the same position I am! I couldn’t resist gloating to them about it all - after all, they were all for the psychopath when he was going after *my* family. The coincidence of names is especially beautiful: their sons, who have now become his victims, were both named Edward, just like my son! It is a beautifully symmetric situation, and it proves to me there is indeed justice in the world.

- Nihilist

Dear Nihilist,

Seeing bad things happen to those you hate can be exhilarating, especially when the punishment seems to fit the crime. But at the same time, it is very easy to let this feeling slip to those who haven’t done you any harm, or to let it dominate your life. You have been holding on to your hate for years; isn’t it time to let go? Don’t you feel **it’s not as sweet now as it was before?**

-Abby

O – Orsino, Twelfth Night - ‘if music be the food of love’

Dear Abby,

I am in love with a woman that doesn’t love me at all, and nothing I do changes her mind. I have tried to change what I feel, but nothing works. When you listen to music over and over again, you get tired of it, you don’t like it as much as you did at first. Why doesn’t the same thing happen when you are in love, and you think about the same person all the time? Is it because our imaginations are so fruitful that the thoughts change all the time? They say music is akin to love, and I’ve tried to pour my love into music, but all that happened was that I got really sick of music.

- Offkey

Dear Offkey,

The only thing you can do is wait. Try to find yourself something different to do, to distract yourself from thinking about her. Find new people to talk to. Find other women. (Though don’t lead them to expect any commitment until you know you can give it to them.) Music was a good idea, but it’s not the only worthwhile thing out there. There is **no end, limit, or measure** to the things you can accomplish if you really try. Sooner or later, you will suddenly realize that your feelings have faded. Just don’t keep asking her to change her mind. It sounds like she knows what she wants, and it isn’t you.

- Abby

U - Juliet - ‘what tongue shall smooth thy name’

Dear Abby,

My husband and I just got married, and almost right away, he got into a fight with my cousin. It was my cousin’s fault, as far as I can tell, but unfortunately, my first instinct was to blame my husband. I don’t know how I could have possibly thought it of him, knowing both of them as I do. I know I have betrayed him - of all the people in the world, he should at least be able to rely on his newlywed wife to trust him! I have betrayed him, and with everyone else blaming him, too. How can I possibly make amends, Abby?

- Auburn

Dear Auburn,

While I agree that your first loyalty should be to your husband, I think you are being too harsh on yourself. You haven’t been married long; it makes sense that your instincts are still to side with family over your husband. If it was only a passing thought, I don’t think it matters much at all, especially if you didn’t tell anyone. It’s obvious you care about your husband very much, so don’t think you’re **mired with infamy** because of one thought.

-Abby

T – Leonato, Much Ado About Nothing - “Wherefore! Why, doth not every earthly thing”

Dear Abby,

My daughter has done something terrible. She denies it, but the proof is overwhelming. I find myself wishing she would die, so that I wouldn't have to bear the shame of it. I was so proud of her, I loved her so much, and now I wish she had never been born. To think I grieved that she was my only child! One too many, now! She has betrayed everything, and nothing she can do can fix it. No one will want to know her now, much less marry her. I only wish I could blame it on someone else. If she was adopted, I could say that these are the bad genes coming out, but as it is... Best that she would die, truly.

- Spirits

Dear Spirits,

It is surely a little too much to wish your daughter *dead*? If she has shamed you, as you say, then she should probably go away for a time, perhaps for a long time. If the memory of what has happened does not fade, perhaps she shouldn't return, and you should tell some story to hide why she isn't coming back. And perhaps she is indeed innocent, as she says. But above all, remember, if she did this, it was her choice. There was no **heavenly compulsion** forcing her to do anything. And she's an adult - it's not your fault.

-Abby

M – Edmund, King Lear - “This is the excellent foppery of the world”

Dear Abby,

It's a curious thing that whenever someone gets in trouble because of their actions, they blame it on bad luck. Clearly, they say, it wasn't *my* fault that I lied, that I stole, that I became an alcoholic, that I was stupid! No, it was all the fault of bad luck, bad horoscopes, bad omens. I wish you would talk a little about that, because it is ridiculously common for people to attempt to evade responsibility by blaming fate, luck, anything but themselves. Even my father blames fate for his recent misfortunes, not those truly at fault. I happen to be a good match for my own sign, but really, it has nothing to do with who I am and I know it. I would be the same even if I was born at a completely different time, even if I was supposed to be virtuous and modest.

- Almost

Dear Almost,

Your letter is certainly very rational, and in many ways, I agree. People have always found ways to evade responsibility, if not by blaming others, then by blaming fate. Life is easier that way. From what you say, your main problem seems to be with your father refusing to blame someone who is at fault and blaming bad luck instead. But are you certain that the people are indeed at fault? You are very harsh on your father; **must** you be **proud and pitiless** towards him, simply because you are more logical in one thing? That makes little sense. You imply that you believe you are not 'virtuous and modest'. Are you, perhaps, one of the people you think your father should blame?

-Abby

A – Rosalind, As You Like It - “And why, I pray you? Who might be your mother”

Dear Abby,

I recently met a young man that was in love with a young girl who didn't want to ever see him again. He was very sweet and kind to her, and she told him to go away and not bother her, obviously thinking a lot of herself. I lost my temper. I told her what I thought - that she wasn't nearly as pretty as she thought and that she should be grateful for the love of a good man. And I told him what I thought, too - that by following her like that, he was flattering her and inflating her opinion of herself, even though he was a far better person, and better-looking as well! And then the stupid girl went and started to fall in love with *me*! I tried to tell her that none of her charms could make me possibly fall in love with her, but she wouldn't listen! Even though the idea is utterly absurd! She doesn't really know who I am, and if she did, she would definitely not be in love with me! Abby, what *now*?

- Upcaught

Dear Upcaught,

First of all, I want to point out something you probably already noticed: that if you hadn't interfered in the first place, you wouldn't be in this position. We can't fix everything that we see is going wrong, and sometimes we shouldn't try.

That being said, your situation is not actually that bad. Yes, it's awkward, but it's much more so for the girl. She, after all, has a crush on you and cares what you think of her, which doesn't seem to be anything good. You just have to let her down gently. Be nice; even if you dislike her, **don't let her read it in your eye**. Don't string her along, either; just tell her you don't like her that way, and leave it at that. Unless, of course, you do want to give it a try after all, which you seem to have ruled out completely, and you may be right.

-Abby

C – Luciana, Comedy of Errors - “And may it be that you have quite forgot”

Dear Abby,

My sister is married to a man that seemed to love her passionately, and she was happy in her marriage, until today. Today, he was late to dinner, and she asked him to come quickly. And what do you think he responded? He said he did not know who she was, and why she was bothering him! And after dinner, when she went to her room to rest, do you know what he did? He started hitting on me! I don't know what to think now. Perhaps he married my sister for money, and is now showing his true colors, but in that case, he would at least pretend to still love her to her face. If he no longer loves her, isn't that enough hurt without going out of his way to demonstrate it? I wish he would hide it, pretend nothing has changed, let her think that he still loves her. It would be more merciful. I told him so. He answered that he owed her nothing and that she was not his wife. I am now seriously concerned for his sanity.

- Secrecy

Dear Secrecy,

If I were you, I would be concerned too. It certainly sounds like your brother-in-law needs help, preferably as soon as possible. It's very rare for mental illness to set on suddenly in adulthood like this, so try talking to his parents and friends to see if he has had episodes like this before. Perhaps this is the effect of a drug. Perhaps it's even just misguided humor. Get him to sit down with someone removed from the situation, preferably a therapist, but in any case a person that can talk to him without getting emotional, and see if you can figure out exactly how bad the situation is. And **be not afeared**: there are professionals that can help him, and support structures for your sister.

- Abby

B – Caliban, Tempest - “Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises”

Dear Abby,

All my life I've lived on a small island, and I know it better than anyone else. It is a strange island, with strange sounds sometimes, like instruments playing, or voices singing, music that makes you cry, and if you sleep, to have strange dreams. Recently, we got some visitors, and talking to them made me remember the times when my mother and I were the only ones that lived here. I wish the other guy that lives here would go away - he ruined everything when he came. Do you think I could get the visitors to get rid of him for me?

- Poor-boy

Dear Poor-boy,

It sound like you really love your home, and it's understandable that you want an intruder to leave, but how exactly do you envision getting rid of him? It sounds like he's been there for a while, and presumably you've tried to get him to leave before. Even if he were **approved in the heart a villain**, you'd need help to kick him out, and more reliable help than random visitors at that. You'd need to prove he had no right to be on the island, and help from the authorities. Perhaps you need to make your peace with him. Ask yourself if there is anything you have done that is as bad as what he has done, see if you can talk to him.

-Abby

E – Beatrice, Much Ado About Nothing - ‘O that I were a man!’

Dear Abby,

My cousin’s fiance just dumped her at the altar. Literally. He purposefully humiliated her, said she’d cheated on him, and that he would not marry her. If I was only a boy, I’d be able to fight him, beat him up until he begged for her forgiveness. I wish I could be a man, just for this, or at least that I had some friend that would do it for me, but there is only one man I am on good enough terms with to ask, and he is the damn liar’s best friend. How can I make sure that the bastard doesn’t get away with it?

- Helpless

Dear Helpless,

Your feeling for your cousin does you credit, but I doubt that beating up her ex will actually do any good. It’s natural to think so, of course: he hurt someone you love, and you want to retaliate. I’m sure if you really try, you’ll find a way to punish him even if you can’t beat him up. But does your cousin want it? And what will it accomplish? It’s unlikely to bring him back to her, even if she still wants him, or prove to anyone that she didn’t cheat on him. So **quench your fiery indignation**, give your cousin a shoulder to cry on and a caring ear, and help her move on.

-Abby

T – Arthur, King John - “Too fairly, Hubert, for so foul effect”

Dear Abby,

My best friend was trying to do something terrible to me. He has always been very kind, and I have been kind to him, but he works for someone who hates me, and he’s got new instructions. I couldn’t believe it at first, but he was determined to follow orders, despite our friendship. I begged him for a long time, and finally, he relented, said he couldn’t do it, and promised to hide me. But can I trust him, Abby? I do, but what if it’s just my youth speaking? Am I being naive?

- Pitied

Dear Pitied,

I think you can probably trust him for now, but be careful. It sounds like you need him, but don’t rely on him unconditionally. He almost put his employer before your friendship once, so next time, he might go through with it. On the other hand, he would probably get in trouble if his boss found out he helped you, so he’ll do his best not to let that happen. It’s difficult to say how genuine his friendship is without knowing him, so **let me not name** him untrustworthy, but do watch him, and be careful.

- Abby

H - Othello - It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul

Dear Abby,

My wife has been cheating on me. I am certain of it, and it is reason enough for me to kill her - otherwise things will only get worse. If she lives, she will betray others, but she is so lovely that I don’t want to spill her blood. I must kill her, though I love her, because she is not truly what she appears, not truly the one I love, and I can love her just as well after I kill her.

- Unhappy

Dear Unhappy,

I wish you had written me about all of this earlier, because then the police would have caught up with you *before* you killed your wife. Unfortunately, it took them too long to trace back your letter - too long both for her and for you.

Your story is a perfect example of why it is important to trust the people you love. As it turned out, your wife was completely innocent and faithful. If you had not been so suspicious, you would have known that she loved you **before her family and next to high heaven**. If you had talked to her before you condemned her, she would still be alive. And if you decided not to trust her, but not to kill her either, you could have fixed things after you found out she was innocent.

- Abby

A – Helena, All's Well That Ends Well - Then, I confess,/ Here on my knee

Dear Abby,

I am in love with a man who will never return my love. It's just impossible. He's from a rich family, accepted in the highest ranks of society, whereas I'm a doctor's daughter. In other words, nobody, compared to him. He has never even noticed me. It's true that his mother has been very kind to me, practically bringing me up after my father died, but that barely improves things - if she found out about my love, she might start hating me. She's called me her daughter! That makes my love practically incestuous. What can I do?

- Aurora

Dear Aurora,

First of all, calm down. Just because his mother thinks of you as a daughter doesn't mean he's your brother, and it doesn't make your love incest. It may actually be in your favor, since his family knows and likes you already. It's true, however, that revealing your feelings at this point would cause a lot of problems. What you need, if you really want him to like you, is some way to level the field a little, to make the status difference not matter. Let him get to know you better so that he doesn't care about it, or perhaps find a way to better your own position. It's possible that the best solution is simply to forget about him and find yourself someone else. But whatever you do, remember this above all: **be true to yourself**, and do not lie to yourself about your feelings.

-Abby

I – Polonius, Hamlet - Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!

Dear Abby,

My son just left to go abroad for a time. I gave him a lot of advice before he left. The usual stuff: think before you act, hold on to your true friends, avoid getting into fights but stand up for yourself if you do, listen more than you speak, and so on. And don't trust people you don't really know. Don't borrow money or let others borrow yours. You know.

I'm still worried about him, though. What if he starts drinking? Or gambling? Or sleeping around? Maybe I should send someone to check up on him.

-Veracity

Dear Veracity,

It is natural for a father to worry about his son and to want to do everything possible for him. If you could, you would **offer love's full sacrifice** for him. But you can't. He is a grown man, and there is very little you can do for him except give him advice, which you have already done, and let him go, which you have also done. There is nothing else you can do. Let him make his own mistakes.

-Abby

S- Cressida, Troilus and Cressida - "Words, vows, gifts, tears, and love's full sacrifice"

Dear Abby,

There is a guy who I really fancy, and the more I see of him, the more I like him. But I'm worried that if I say yes the first time he asks me out, he'll just get bored of me quickly and dump me. Boys seem to enjoy pursuing a girl more than they enjoy actually being in a relationship, and they seem to prize a girl more if they had to go to a lot of trouble to get her to accept them. So I plan to not show that I like him until he is really desperate. Do you think this will work?

- Blushful

Dear Blushful,

While it's sadly true that many men prefer girls they need to work to get, many others do not. You can't know which category he belongs to. If you make him wait too long, he might lose interest altogether and find a different girl. If he finds out you are manipulating him, not genuinely uninterested, he may be angry at you. And most importantly, even if things work out, you will have wasted a lot of time that you could have spent together. Life is short enough as is, and you never know when something may happen. If you waste it like this, you may find that **the fault is not in the stars but in yourself** when your time together ends.

- Abby

C – Cassius, Julius Caesar - he doth bestride the narrow world

Dear Abby,

There's this man that lives in this city, and he's going to take it over if no one stops him. He's no better than any of us, but you can't tell that by the way he acts or by the way the whole city worships him. I hate his guts, but that's not important. What's important is that there are those in the city that could thwart him from taking over, but they are doing nothing, because they are his personal friends, or because they don't care about their principles as much as people used to, or because they love him so much they don't care. And so it will be our own fault if we do not stop him. I am determined to do whatever it takes.

- Crowded

Dear Crowded,

I am not so certain that it is not important that you hate this man. It may be that you overestimate the danger to your city if he does 'take over' or that you overestimate the chances that he will do so; and it is definitely possible that you will do something you will regret if you do 'whatever it takes'. Think about it. Make sure what you do is actually the best thing to be done. That being said, I'm glad you are not simply giving up. Too many people in difficult situations simply **choose executors and talk of wills**. You intend to fight, and I am glad of that.

-Abby

I – Richard II - 'of comfort no man speak'

Dear Abby,

I'm not writing to try and get some kind of false comfort from your answer, I just want to be able to tell someone how miserable I am. Until last week, I was the boss of a successful company. But when I went away on holiday, my chief competitor took the opportunity to launch a hostile takeover. He has even managed to convince my Board of Directors to back him. I should be using this time to sort out my financial position, except thanks to my competitor, I can't even do that! I guess I shouldn't be surprised. When I think about it, lots of leaders get backstabbed by people jealous of them. Some have even been murdered to gain control of a company! It seems like becoming successful just makes you a target for disaster! I still have the title, for now, but it seems ridiculous when anyone uses it.

-Pitiful

Dear Pitiful,

I'm sorry that this has happened to you, and that you don't think you can be helped. It looks like you've been thinking a lot about the **progeny of evils** that comes from being successful; perhaps you should think more about what you can do about it? As things are, you're intending to just give up, and that means things will only get worse.

- Abby.

I – Titania, Midsummer Night's Dream - 'these are the forgeries of jealousy'

Dear Abby,

Me and my husband have been fighting recently. He is terribly jealous, and whenever I go anywhere with a certain male friend of mine, he turns up and starts an argument. It doesn't matter where we go - the sea, a garden, a mountain - he still turns up and claims that my friend is my lover! Not that he's faithful to me himself, the hypocrite. And all of this is not even the root cause of our quarrel.

As if this wasn't enough, there are hundreds of people who are harmed while we fight, because we both have great influence. The consequences have been severe - flooding, sickness, bad harvest...

I am in the right, and he is in the wrong. I will not give in, but I do so want to end this mess! How can we do that, Abby?

- Discord

Dear Discord,

It is very rare that the truth is all on one side in an argument between husband and wife. Think carefully: are you sure that you aren't also at fault? You didn't give me the details so I can't know for certain, but I suspect it is less straightforward than you think. If the consequences have been so severe, you need to make up now, before more people get hurt, even if it means sacrificing your pride. Do not **prove false traitor to yourself** by continuing a fight you don't want. This, of course, is assuming that you do want to stay together and fix things, as you say.

-Abby

I – Julia, Two Gentlemen of Verona - 'how many women would do such a message'

Dear Abby,

I gave my boyfriend a present when he moved away temporarily, so that he wouldn't forget me while I wasn't there. Then I saw how much I missed him, and decided to go visit. When I arrived, I saw that *he* wasn't missing *me* at all: he was busy trying to catch another girl's attention! I decided to disguise myself, and when he saw me, not only did he not recognize me, he asked me to take the other girl a message and a gift. The gift being the same gift I gave him, and the message being that he asked her out again. And he asked me to try and put in a good word for him. Honestly, I almost felt sorry for him: he didn't know how unlikely his errand was to succeed with such a messenger. Still, I promised him I would try, even though that's the last thing I want to do. What should I do?

- Mimic

Dear Mimic,

I'm sorry, but your boyfriend really doesn't seem to be worth your time. In circumstances like these, I would advise you to end the relationship. Tell him the truth - that you know that he's been cheating on you. If he actually does care about you, then maybe when he finds out you know, you can fix things. Chances are, though, that **this is the end**.

- Abby