

HAUNTED HAMLET

By Steve Cross

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CHARACTER LIST

in order of appearance

Wilma Shakespeare/Nurse: Romance writer, descendant of the bard. She decides to write and star in her own play "Haunted Hamlet".

Chorus: A group with as many people as you wish with a minimum of two. Gender does not matter. The chorus comments on the action and appears throughout the play.

Hamlet: A young man who is generally confused and after the purported death of his love, a little crazy.

Ophelia: The woman Hamlet loves; she is supposed to be dead.

Romeo: Hamlet's friend and a bit of a rogue.

Juliet: a young woman who is very spunky and can usually take care of herself.

Kate: a shrew, devious and destructive. She wants to destroy Romeo and Juliet's romance.

Tybalt: Juliet's cousin. A cad only interested in money and fast living.

Lady Capulet: Juliet's mother, dignified and shrewd.

Chorus members 1 and 2: any of the chorus members can step forth and say the lines these two have. Number 1 is a rebel.

Felonius: Capulet family lawyer.

STAGING

For the most part, follow the stage directions included in the script. There are a few other things that will be helpful in the staging.

THE SET

Mostly bare except for furniture. You can use backdrops and flats for atmosphere, but they aren't really necessary. The three exits are left, right, and upstage center. The scene changes or shifts in mood can be accomplished through curtains or fades.

Scene 1:

A bare stage except for a bench for Romeo and Hamlet to sit on. This scene uses full lighting.

Scene 2:

The chorus stands either in front of the closed curtain or on the darkened stage in a spotlight.

When the chorus exits, Hamlet and Romeo enter. As they pass the two groups can greet each other. The curtain remains closed as Hamlet and Romeo speak.

For the costume party, Romeo should wear a cloak and hood, something similar to what a monk would wear.

After the cue "party with the Capulet Clan" the curtains should open immediately or the lights should go on. Dance music plays.

A few essential props should be on stage including a large table covered with a tablecloth that's big enough for Hamlet to hide behind.

There has to be a stereo or some source of music. If possible you can have someone posing as a DJ. A strobe light or disco ball, if available, would lend a lot of atmosphere to this scene.

Several couples should be dancing. You can use extras or members of the chorus if you have a good mix of males and females.

In this scene, at the cue, "not really hungry for romance" Ophelia enters wearing a white bed sheet with the eyes cut out.

Juliet exits completely after she says, "Hit the road. Is that clear enough?"

When Hamlet reenters after following Ophelia out, he should be in costume. The costume doesn't have to be extravagant; a simple mask would suffice.

The fight between Kate and Juliet should be practiced several times. If possible, read a book or view a videotape on methods of making slaps, kicks, etc. look real. Essentially the burden of making a blow look real relies on the person who receives the blow.

For a slap, the recipient can hold up his/her right hand and place it just to the right and in front of the face. The slapper hits the hand as the person being slapped reacts by jerking the head away.

With a stomach kick, the kicker starts the kick fast but slows it right before contact. The contact should come from the top of the foot not the toes. Upon contact, the one kicked rolls away.

Hair pulling can be done simply without losing realism. The one who is pulling the hair places his/her hands on the sides of the other's head. The one whose hair is being pulled reaches up and grabs the wrists. While the one who is pulling the hair in the script does nothing, the "victim" shakes his/her head from side to side as if it is being jerked around. Hair pulling can also be staged to where it looks as if one person is dragging the other around by the hair. Once again, the secret lies in the one whose hair is being pulled. That person scoots across the stage while the other keeps his/her hand on the other's head. This scene should end with a fade.

Scene 3:

The set can be changed either during a small intermission after scene two or while the chorus is speaking before the curtain or in the spotlight on a darkened stage. The changes for this scene are minor. The stereo, large table, and strobe, if used, should be removed and a smaller table, such as one that would be used in a patio or sun-room should be added. At least two chairs need to be with the table. Near the back of the stage should be enough benches to seat 8 people. The beginning of the scene is Juliet and Tybalt talking.

Make sure that Hamlet enters the scene just after Tybalt exits. It is also important that Ophelia does not come on too soon. She does not enter until after the nurse exits. Lights should fade to about half or three quarters for Ophelia's soliloquy.

When the nurse and Hamlet meet onstage, the stage should still be semi-dark. They can stand down left while Ophelia hides behind the chairs and table or behind the curtain. After she overhears Hamlet and the nurse, she exits. The lights come up as Lady Capulet, Juliet, and Tybalt enter and sit together at the table.

Later in the scene, Ophelia sneaks back on stage and hides behind a bench or the table where Juliet, Tybalt, and Lady Capulet sat. Juliet should walk down center beside the nurse and Hamlet as Tybalt exits. The other entrances and exits are detailed in the script.

Scene 4:

The table should be removed. On stage you should have one center chair where Lady Capulet will sit. A nice leather, padded chair or a velvet one would work. There should still be benches on each side of her for the others to sit on.

The chorus comes on with lights up full at the beginning of the scene. After the first ending, when the curtains are starting to close or the lights are beginning to dim, chorus member one comes on and the curtains stop about halfway closed. They should reopen as the chorus member calls to the rest of the chorus.

It might be easier if you continued to use a gun in the second ending instead of changing it to a sword. That would be up to the individual director's discretion.

In the short scuffle between Hamlet and Tybalt, the two should grab each other, drop to their knees, and then roll on the stage floor. Do not try to fall from a standing position to the floor in one movement unless you have a couch or something soft to cushion the blow.

In the second ending, Ophelia enters from the Upstage Center and to one side of the others. The others should not notice her at first.

PROPS

- A piece of candy lying on the floor
- A stereo for the party scene
- Strobes and/or disco ball for party (optional)
- Table with food on it
- Four benches for sitting
- A white sheet for Ophelia at the party
- A small breakfast table with chairs
- A necklace for Hamlet
- Gloves for Romeo
- A gun for Romeo in scene 4
- A serving platter with wine glasses
- A sword for Hamlet

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SETTING: The stage is bare. There is no furniture, no props, nothing.

The number of members of the chorus can vary according to what the school, company, whatever has to work with. There should be at least three I'd think. Sex does not matter.

SCENE 1

(WILMA SHAKESPEARE enters. SHE comes DC)

WILMA: I'm Wilma Shakespeare, a romance writer ... unpublished, yes, but not untalented. You don't know me but you do my ancestor, you know, the one who called himself an actor and playwright but was an obviously untalented hack.

Uh, never mind. My folks named me after Bill. It is my goal in life to surpass his — I hesitate to call them these— skills and reputation. I want people to think of Wilma when they think of the Bard.

Face it. Bill's plays are all the same. Everyone either dies or gets married. 400 year old soaps are what they are. I can AND will continue to do better than that. Any woman can.

Of course, women never got the chance. I never could understand Queen Beth's reasoning behind that. Probably has something to do with the fragile, male ego.

I decided it's time for my play to take the annals of literary history, so here it is: Haunted Hamlet for your viewing pleasure. By the way, if Bill can act in his own plays, so can I. You'll see me later as the nurse.

Before I leave, I would like to introduce you to the chorus.

(SHE exits. CHORUS enters.)

CHORUS: Greetings all you fair and gentle folk. Hearken to the tale we tell. We hope that some feelings we invoke and some rancid rumors we dispel. Haunted Hamlet is a tale of woe that touches on Hamlet,

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Ophelia, Juliet, and Romeo. Even Tybalt and shrewish Kate play their part in this dramatic art. First, we have to say Ophelia isn't dead, but Hamlet thinks her toast. So please don't feel misled when, in dread, Hamlet thinks he sees her ghost.

We'll wade through tears, schemes and grief, but at the end you'll find relief. Happy endings are our stock and store. Heavy-handed drama is quite a bore. We'd rather see you smile than to hear you snore. In scene one you'll get a treat, for Romeo, Ophelia, and Hamlet you'll chance to meet.

(HAMLET enters. HE walks on stage, bends down, picks up something and pops it in HIS mouth. HE then faces the audience and looks up as if HE's staring at the stars. HE chews.)

HAMLET: Cherry Skittle, I think. Ophelia's favorite. Woe is me.

(OPHELIA enters, walks close to HAMLET who is still staring into space, holding one hand over his heart and wiping his eye with the other.)

OPHELIA: Uh, hum.

HAMLET: Leave me alone. I'm grieving.

OPHELIA: Over what?

HAMLET: My poor Ophelia. Dead, drowned. Gone to rest in a stormy sea. Her soul set free.

OPHELIA: Hamlet, look at me.

(HE turns, sees her.)

HAMLET: Oh, no, not you! Save me. Me thinks I see a ghost, which could be either good or bad, from heaven or from hell. But you sure look like Ophelia, and seeing you makes me sad.

OPHELIA: I've had enough of this 'Though this be madness, there is method in it' act. Of course, it's me.

HAMLET: Oh, darling one, please answer me. Let me not burst in ignorance.

OPHELIA: Too late for that. The sorrow thy have borne for thy loss has loosed the dark shadows of melancholy to overshadow your countenance and turn your brains to mush. It's true, so true. Thou art as crazy as a loon. I'm outa here before you start howling at the moon.

(SHE exits as ROMEO enters.)

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HAMLET: My, oh my, what a sight. Ophelia's ghost haunts the night.

ROMEO: Say, Hamlet. What's up?

HAMLET: Oh, Romeo. Ophelia's soul is once more up from her grave to walk the earth, to torture my —

ROMEO: Don't you get it, bud. Ophelia isn't dead. She didn't drown in that creek. Tybalt gave her mouth to mouth. They ran off together. She dumped you ...

(HE pauses, thinks about this.)

ROMEO: Of course, that too is just as bleak.

HAMLET: O, Ophelia, why do you haunt me so?

(HE stares at the place from which SHE exited.)

ROMEO: She ain't there.

HAMLET: Oh, fie, hold, hold my heart, and legs don't break and make me fall to the ground. I've already had three concussions and a crack in my princely crown.

ROMEO: Oh, man. Are you seeing Ophelia now?

HAMLET: Leave her to heaven — fare thee well at once.

(ROMEO slaps him.)

ROMEO: Snap out of it. You're talking to the air.

HAMLET: My Ophelia's ghost was there.

ROMEO: Your Ophelia is sipping martinis in the Caribbean.

HAMLET: Oh, Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo? You have every girl in fair Verona watching your every move. You can pick and choose. While I, haunted Hamlet, had just one love and that love I did lose.

ROMEO: Surely thou doth know that every girl in town could go and their loss I would not regret. I only want the fair Juliet.

HAMLET: Only one problem, buddy. Juliet hates your guts.

ROMEO: What do you know? You're nuts.

HAMLET: Perhaps it was that time thou didst stand under her balcony professing your love and she dropped her bowling ball from above and missed your skull by one mere inch.

ROMEO: She's quite a spirited little wench.

HAMLET: And then there was the time you hoped to meet her in the park and when she saw you, she crawled past you in the dark.

ROMEO: She's playing hard to get.

HAMLET: She plays for keeps.

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ROMEO: Look, here comes Juliet's nurse. Find out how it goes with my fair Juliet. I'll flee me hence to hide.

(ROMEO exits.)

HAMLET: How now, lovely lady?

NURSE: False flattery will get you nowhere, you lunatic. What do you want? I'm fresh out of straight jackets and the rubber room is full.

HAMLET: Your love for me is fresher than an endless pool. I wondered how Juliet was doing.

NURSE: Fair is fair and foul is foul and fair is foul and —

HAMLET: I'm confused enough as it is. Speak thy speech clearly, trippingly on the tongue.

NURSE: Juliet is happy and sad, mournful and glad.

HAMLET: What are you trying to say?

NURSE: Her father, Andy Capulet passed away, but her beloved cousin Tybalt is back home.

HAMLET: Tybalt is home. I must see this princely prince. I hear he last saw my Ophelia alive.

NURSE: That's certainly no lie.

HAMLET: Then it's true.

NURSE: I don't think he'll want to talk to you.

HAMLET: I just have to talk to him about my love so true.

NURSE: I just bet you do. Listen, I don't want you to ruin the party or the funeral.

HAMLET: Party? Funeral?

NURSE: We're throwing one big bash for both occasions, but you didn't hear that from me.

HAMLET: I didn't?

NURSE: Listen. Tybalt was supposed to be a princely guy but that's a lie; he done you wrong. I never liked that boy, and the only reason he's back now is he wants his uncle's money. Andy had no sons so Tybalt stands to inherit a lot of it. I know you're crazy. Crazy like a fox. You know what to do.

HAMLET: I do?

NURSE: The party's a costume party. Tybalt says he wants to surprise everyone — you know, make a big deal of revealing his identity after a while — but if you ask me, he just wants to hide his face...from you.

HAMLET: Hide? From me?

NURSE: Go to the party. See for yourself. **(SHE starts to leave.)** Just don't bring that bum, Romeo.

FADE OUT

SCENE 2

(The first part of this scene should take place in front of the curtain or in a single spotlight.)

CHORUS: In scene 2 the plot begins to spin. Imagine in your mind's eye the streets of Verona, a starlit sky. A celebration and a funeral will soon begin. Andy Capulet had died but Tybalt's come back. People don't know whether to cry or laugh.

A costume party is to be held behind these curtains where the Capulets do dwell. Imagine when the curtains roll aside the opulence and splendor that lies inside. You'll have to imagine it because our director's cheap. He won't spend any money he can keep.

Romeo has been forbidden to come to the party because with Kate he once partied hearty. It was all a regrettable mistake, but Juliet still boils with hate. Everyone thinks Hamlet is harmless but mad, someone to laugh at when things go bad. So without further delay, let's get on with our play.

(CHORUS exits)

HAMLET: What are you going to wear to the ball?

ROMEO: I will dress as a holy man with burlap robes and hood pulled high until I my Juliet espie. Then, approaching nigh I will drop my guise and plant a big, wet one on her lips.

HAMLET: Truly, thou art a dip. If on fair Juliet you make a pass you'd be better off dressed as an ass.

ROMEO: Hamlet, you were once a grand prince but your crude humor makes me wince. You could wear nothing to the ball and that selfsame name is what you'd be called. I think your mind is as empty as a glass. You are the one who is an —

HAMLET: A costume I will not wear. I will just mess up my hair ... like this.

(HAMLET messes up his hair)

HAMLET: I'll go as a lovelorn man with his mind amiss.

ROMEO: Going as yourself; what a plan.

HAMLET: Let us mourn and party with the Capulet Clan.

(At this point the curtain goes up or lights go up all over. Loud, outrageous music — preferably dance mixes or disco — blares. Several couples, as many as you have extras for, are dancing.)

(The stage setting should be simple. Perhaps two columns at the back of the stage, a table, a large stereo system. The table should be covered with a large cloth because later, HAMLET will need a place to hide.)

ROMEO: If music be the food of love, then I'll dance.

HAMLET: Music doesn't fill my tummy. The tango isn't all that yummy. You don't see a food table by chance. I'm not really hungry for romance.

(A figure, OPHELIA dressed in a sheet as a ghost, comes on stage. On his way to the food table, HAMLET sees her.)

HAMLET: Oh my, oh me. Who is this angel that I see?

ROMEO: All I see is a sheet.

HAMLET: We have to meet. That hand, that eye. Oh me, oh my. If she won't love me, I shall die.

ROMEO: Go for it. Ah, I see Juliet over there. If you want to see how to capture a woman, just watch me work.

(The ghost exits. ROMEO goes after JULIET. JULIET should be wearing a simple costume with some kind of mask, something that can be easily duplicated because later in the scene, KATE comes out wearing the same costume.)

HAMLET: A man can not capture a woman's soul. He might as well cage a summer's breeze. He can beg and plead and cajole, but a woman's heart cannot be seized. She will do as she will please.

(HAMLET exits after the ghost. ROMEO goes to JULIET and touches HER cheek.)

ROMEO: If I profane with my unworthiest hand this holy shrine, the gentle sin is this, my two lips two blushing pilgrims ready stand to smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

JULIET: Listen, Buddy, you're in my space.

ROMEO: So that I might bask in your grace.

JULIET: You are no holy man, this I know.

ROMEO: I am just a common Joe, come here to have a go at your heart to overthrow.

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JULIET: You sound like that idiot Romeo.

ROMEO: Upon your cheek my lips do tap.

(HE kisses her cheek.)

JULIET: Upon your cheek my hand doth slap.

(SHE slaps him.)

ROMEO: Hit me again. I love it when your passion seethes.

JULIET: It won't be so nice when you cease to breathe ... I swear by love's blind arrow, I will break you apart bone and marrow if you don't leave me alone.

ROMEO: What are you saying my love? What are you cooing my dove?

JULIET: Get lost. Drop dead. Hit the road. Is that clear enough?

(JULIET turns and walks away.)

ROMEO: She still loves me.

(Enter NURSE who walks up to HIM.)

NURSE: If you believe that, you're crazier than Hamlet.

ROMEO: O, Nurse, you know fair Juliet's innermost parts as closely as I know my own nose. I try to win back her lovely heart but angrier and angrier she grows and reigns on my cheeks such killing blows. What happened to our match the heavens blessed? Why has she become so upset?

NURSE: Don't you think it might have something to do with your fling with Kate? How when Juliet was out of town you took her on a date? It's no wonder that the thought of you makes her bristle with hate.

ROMEO: Oh, that... How can I make it up to her? How can I make her forgive me and take me back?

NURSE: That knowledge I do lack.

ROMEO: With her you can reason. When I saw Kate, my mind was out of season. It was a brief lapse into madness leaving only this black sadness overthrowing my soul.

NURSE: Do you regret your awful deed?

ROMEO: So much that my heart doth bleed. Talk to her, fair Nurse, beg and plead for me.

(NURSE sighs)

NURSE: You are handsome, smart, and mostly kind ... except for that occasional insanity which blinds your mind. Testosterone will do it every time. At one time Juliet did pine for you until you proved untrue. I will speak for you and do what I may, but if you hurt her again, you will not see the dawning of another day.

(NURSE exits. ROMEO goes to food table. Ghost, with HAMLET following enters, goes DC.)

HAMLET: O vision beauteous and fair floating like mist on soft, summer air, speak to me with promises of love, and I will stay as close to your side as a hand doth a glove and worship you till death silently steals my last breath.

(OPHELIA should disguise her voice. SHE could speak in an exaggerated high pitch or a low pitch, one which is humorous but as unrecognizable as possible.)

OPHELIA: Aren't you the romantic knave, so wonderful, so marvelous and so brave. Though I thought that the angelic Ophelia was your dear, not some stranger wandering near.

HAMLET: Thou has cleft my heart in twain. Ophelia, my Ophelia, don't mention her name.

OPHELIA: You hate her that much I see.

HAMLET: On the contrary; please don't jab a sword in me. True I did love her once — more than once actually and I can report that factually — but she has flown her earthly form and given her body to the worm. I cannot love her soul — though it remains — I've seen her ghostly frame — It just wouldn't be the same.

OPHELIA: So you hit on the first chick that passes by.

HAMLET: That is a most grievous lie. For months I have seen chicks whose wings will not fly — whose beaks, feathers and thighs were not meant for one like I.

OPHELIA: Your grammar twists my visage in wincings.

HAMLET: Leave my grammar out of this. She was a dear old princess.

OPHELIA: You don't have a lot of smarts.

HAMLET: But I have a loving heart.

OPHELIA: So what about Ophelia?

HAMLET: Your eyes are like hers and your hands — I can only guess about the rest, but if your heart be as pure as hers, I will love you as you have never been loved.

OPHELIA: Talk is cheap, Hamlet. Can you prove the strength of your love?

HAMLET: I await the chance. I hunger for romance.

OPHELIA: Not quite yet. I have news of such a crime it will constrict your heart into a ball of tangled twine. I know that Ophelia's death was no accident. Tybalt did your love slay because he wanted to play.

Revenge Ophelia of this wrong and you can have my love for a song.

HAMLET: Tybalt, that grand lad! A prince gone bad. I will search your news with utmost care. Then, I'll get back to you.

(OPHELIA leans forward and kisses him through the sheet.)

HAMLET: Oh, my knees are weak. Your kiss doth tweak my heart strings and plays such sweet notes, I could dance the whole night long.

OPHELIA: Remember. Do what I ask, and I'm yours for a song.

(SHE exits as HAMLET, in a stupor, stares.)

HAMLET: Wait, I didn't get your name. Or your number. Oh, well, what's in a name? Hold on here. How did she get my name?

(ROMEO approaches.)

ROMEO: Did you get under the sheets?

HAMLET: I did bend her ear and she mine. I gazed into her eyes — blue and clear as crystal skies. Her lips brushed my cheek and left such joy —

ROMEO: No luck, huh?

HAMLET: She tossed me aside like an old toy.

ROMEO: You didn't, by chance, mention Ophelia, did you?

HAMLET: I merely spoke the truth.

ROMEO: What did you tell her?

HAMLET: That she looked like Ophelia and that if she were half as sweet —

ROMEO: Open mouth and insert feet. Don't you know better than to mention a faded bloom when a fresh flower is in the room?

HAMLET: You don't know a flower from a weed. You've plucked from every field around because of your insatiable greed.

ROMEO: Once I have my Juliet, I will be appeased.

(KATE enters. SHE wears the same costume as JULIET. It doesn't matter if the two look similar or totally dissimilar.)

ROMEO: Merry, here comes the fair maiden e'en now. I must get her to pledge her love somehow.

HAMLET: To you? Good luck. A word of caution. When she draws back her hand this time, duck.

(ROMEO goes toward KATE.)

HAMLET: To the once good man Tybalt I must go. And if my love speaks true, the blood shall flow.

(HAMLET exits.)

ROMEO: My love; it's you. The dressing on my salads. My inspiration for lyrical ballads. Your smile has launched a thousand ships. Oh, if I could kiss those ruby lips and linger in your embrace. If I could stroke your gentle face, my soul might fly this body in peace and the agony that binds my mind would be released. Say you'll dance with me before I die; be my gal and I'll be your guy. O sweet rose —

KATE: Please, grant me some repose. Do you want to talk all night or do you want to swing? If you keep this up, it will be spring before you close your mouth and open your arms. Enough talk, I already know your charms.

(They slow dance even though the song is fast. Music goes up and then fades out. TYBALT and JULIET enter.)

KATE: Give me a kiss, you hunk of juicy beef. It is my sincere belief, I could sink my teeth into your buff bod and eat you alive. You are like some god to me. You are my miracle, my rushing sea — which like our love will always flow through stormy seas both high and low —

TYBALT: As you can see, cous, this cad has confirmed my fears.

JULIET: You block, you stone, you worse than senseless thing. Already you are off on some new fling. To think I might have loved you once again. In my own home, you play me like a violin. Be gone! I'll hear no more music from you.

NURSE: Leave with your tramp for some new rendezvous.

ROMEO: Something here goes awry. I must have you, Juliet, before I cry.

JULIET: I'd rather die.

KATE: Well, maybe you should, you ugly witch. You should be tossed in some sewer-filled ditch. Romeo has made sweet vows of love to me.

NURSE: Who are you anyway? How dare you enter our gates?

(HAMLET enters, now costumed, and lurks in the back of the room.)

TYBALT: Fair Nurse, don't you see, this is the shrew — Kate!

JULIET: The very witch I sorely hate. Romeo, you wretched ingrate.

(SHE steps to HIM and swings. ROMEO ducks. The slap hits KATE.)

JULIET: This mark is just as fair as the first.

(KATE shoves ROMEO aside.)

KATE: I will give you worse.

(SHE slaps JULIET. They slap each other several times.)

(Enraged. JULIET chokes KATE who breaks free, chokes JULIET. More slaps, more chokes. JULIET falls to the ground. KATE grabs her hair and drags HER around the stage.)

(JULIET breaks free, pulls KATE down, and kicks her in the stomach. KATE groans, lies there.)

JULIET: Everyone, out of here.

(SHE darts offstage as everyone stares in disbelief.)

TYBALT: You heard her. Get out.

(HE shakes a finger at ROMEO.)

TYBALT: Especially you.

ROMEO: It's all a big mistake. I didn't know —

(TYBALT motions. Two men grab ROMEO.)

TYBALT: Out you go.

(They haul HIM offstage. NURSE and others exit. HAMLET ducks behind a table or a curtain and hides. HE overhears the following conversation.)

(TYBALT looks around and thinks everyone is gone.)

TYBALT: Get on your feet.

(KATE stands.)

TYBALT: Your acting was quite a treat. Very convincing. Now any possibility of union between Romeo and Juliet has disappeared. And I, whom Uncle Andy revered, will not have to split my share of the fortune with some snot-nosed heir.

KATE: You never told me my help would cause me this kind of trouble. With my bruises and swollen eye causing me such distress there is only one way I'll stay involved with this mess. My acting fee will double. Good night, sweet prince.

(SHE exits.)

TYBALT: My sweet Kate, how dare your mutiny. I will arrange some mishap just for thee. Tomorrow, I will announce the untimely second death of Ophelia, whom I could not save from drowning, though I tried valiantly and was extremely brave. Oh, the effort I gave. I threw her an anchor when her head went under the wave.

(HE laughs at this.)

TYBALT: Juliet will mourn so much for her she won't know I'm planning her own demise. As for you, my shrewish Kate, I will smother the fire in those eyes. To bed, to bed. To sleep. Perchance to dream. But first, to the kitchen. I want some ice cream.

(HE exits. HAMLET leaves his hiding place.)

HAMLET: There's something rotten in the state of Verona.

FADE OUT

SCENE 3

(CHORUS comes on first)

CHORUS: In this scene, you'll see some meetings to advance the plot. First, Tybalt meets with his cousin Juliet. He tells her Ophelia's dead and will soon rot. His words send Juliet to the parapet. She screams and runs away — crying woe is me. It's part of Tybalt's plan to drive her crazy.

Then HAMLET and the NURSE converse. HAMLET says HE can keep things from getting worse. The NURSE consents to his hearing the will. HE has a plan to console JULIET, but it might at first upset her mother LADY CAPULET. But there's more to this act still.

We'll not be the ones to spoil the surprise. You'll have to see it with your own eyes. When the NURSE leaves poor HAMLET alone, the real OPHELIA — whom HAMLET believes is a ghost and who was actually the girl under the sheet — Oh, well never mind. You'll catch the drift. Too much confusion makes the mind to rift. The real OPHELIA appears to HAMLET's sight. Of course, HE nearly keels with fright.

The first scene takes place before the curtain.

An outer court of the Capulet estates. TYBALT sits at a table — picnic or rattan.

(JULIET enters.)

JULIET: It's strange, Cousin, to see you awake at dawn's glittering return.

TYBALT: I could not sleep because of great concerns. They crash into me like the ocean crashes into the shore. With all our woes and ill betides, I am afraid to say, there's even more.

JULIET: More? What more? My heart is already about to break. Your foreboding words doth make me quake ... Wait a minute; where is my dear friend Ophelia? Did you not bring her back with you?

TYBALT: I left her and my heart in Cancun. We left on a boat for a three hour cruise. There arose such a tempest that it did sink our boat and the dark, dreary ocean took Ophelia down its throat. Alas, my love is dead. Enough said.

JULIET: Ophelia dead and gone? Why is heaven so unkind? What other calamities might it find to reign down on my most unfortunate house?

TYBALT: I know, Cous. First, your daddy dies. Then you catch Romeo the louse entrapped in the most insipid lies. Now Ophelia is truly drowned in a watery grave. What a stroke of rotten luck.

JULIET: I can't take these woes upon woes. I am reeling from the gods' unkindly blows.

(SHE exits as the NURSE enters.)

NURSE: What have you proclaimed to Julietta? Be truthful now or you'll regret it.

TYBALT: The very truthfulness of my news sent her thus. Ophelia's dead, and plagues alight on us.

NURSE: Ophelia's dead?

TYBALT: She drowned.

NURSE: Again?

TYBALT: In a tempest her body was swept to sea, and Poseidon opened his watery mouth and sucked her into the deep. I couldn't find her corpse. She swims with angels e'en now. When I come home, I find sad upon sad. Ophelia dead, then Uncle Andy who's been like my dad. Then I find my dear cousin in such straits. Romeo, whom she loved, she now hates because of his romance with Kate. Ah, me. It is enough to make me mad.

NURSE: I'm sure all of Andy's money will make you glad.

TYBALT: I care not for money — just how much did Uncle Andy have any way? Cash? Bonds? Money Market Certificates?

NURSE: The will shall be read tonight.

TYBALT: I better go prepare myself ... for Uncle's funeral, I mean. May he rest in peace, forever serene.

(TYBALT exits.)

NURSE: You hypocrite, you thing obscene. All you care about is his green, and I don't mean plants.

(HAMLET comes out from L.)

HAMLET: Good Nurse, may I have a word with you?

NURSE: That word better be goodbye.

HAMLET: It's a matter of the utmost importance touching Tybalt and Juliet.

NURSE: Juliet has been touched enough. What of Tybalt?

HAMLET: I don't know how to speak what I must relate. My story — like rotten meat — will only nauseate.

NURSE: Like all rotten meat, you just spit it out.

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HAMLET: I'll try to be subtle. Tybalt is an ingrate, a murderer, and a thief. Upon this house he has brought and will bring unending grief.

NURSE: Tell me something I don't know.

HAMLET: He means to bring even more woe. But first, let me speak for young Romeo.

(NURSE slaps him)

NURSE: Out, out damn blot. I'll not hear the name of that ignorant clot.

HAMLET: Come on, dear Nurse, chill out. You do but dream. Romeo is just a victim of a vile scheme. You know he's not too bright.

NURSE: You got that right; he's as dim as dark midnight.

HAMLET: Tybalt and Kate are playing him for a fool. You know that just ain't cool.

NURSE: Playing Romeo for a fool is not much of a challenge.

HAMLET: After every guest left the party yesternight I overheard Tybalt and Kate bargain and fight. Tybalt paid her quite a bit of dough to come dressed like Juliet to trap Romeo. Kate with Tybalt got pretty tough. Then Kate left the place in a huff. Then Tybalt said my dear Ophelia had drowned twice, and that soon, the hand of death would strike thrice by killing Kate and finally your dear Juliet.

NURSE: This is an amazing tale and for a madman, you tell it well.

Furthermore, I believe your every word no matter if they seem absurd.

However, I doubt if we will get Juliet to believe. For one, all she does is grieve. Two, Tybalt she loves like a brother.

HAMLET: This same Tybalt slew my lover.

NURSE: How will we convince Juliet that Tybalt is a fiend?

HAMLET: Leave that up to me. May I hear the will tonight?

NURSE: For what reason would you get an invite?

HAMLET: Don't worry; I have a terrific plan, with the pieces fitting together like ... oh, well, never mind, I can't think of a rhyme.

Sometimes poets just can't scan. At any rate, try this on your plate. I will come as a surprise and I will test that ingrate.

NURSE: You will find what mettle makes this man.

HAMLET: Relax, Nurse, ease your brain. I, Hamlet, can. And I will also have satisfaction for my Ophelia.

NURSE: I'm not sure it's worth the trouble. That girl is — was — double trouble. You're better off with her sunk in an ocean bubble. Farewell; hopefully we can sift through all the rubble.

(NURSE exits UC. OPHELIA, now uncostumed, enter R, stares at HAMLET. HE sees her.)

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HAMLET: Oh, no, oh spirit. Why do you appear here? I don't know but I do fear it.

OPHELIA: I'm a little hacked off. I'm tired of all the deceit.

HAMLET: I know why your soul flames in heat. It must be because of the girl in the sheet.

OPHELIA: If you really wish my soul peace, forget you ever saw me and go seek some other wench to love. I am — was — not some pure dove — here on earth or above. Remember, to you, I am dead. Find some other girl who'll lose her head.

HAMLET: Would you crush what remains of my spirit?

OPHELIA: You are too noble. Do you hear it? You were a prince. I was enthralled. But then Tybalt called. I nearly drowned but he saved me.

HAMLET: All along you didn't care for me.

OPHELIA: I loved you once. Then Tybalt —

HAMLET: Tybalt you loved not.

OPHELIA: Tell me something I don't know.

HAMLET: I will avenge him for your death.

OPHELIA: I won't hold my breath.

HAMLET: So, most embittered ghost, why do you still walk the earth?

OPHELIA: I'll leave soon but I must attend some business first. I too wish Tybalt the worst. In fact, I want to destroy him utterly.

HAMLET: On that, we can agree. I will hear Andy Capulet's will tonight and then begin my plan.

OPHELIA: I will assist you in any way I can. Meet me here later under the light of the moon.

(HAMLET exits. Lights dim. Spot on OPHELIA)

OPHELIA: I had the handsome prince Hamlet eating from my hand, then along came Tybalt, something I hadn't planned. When I nearly drowned in the lake, my fragile body he did take and breathed back into me the breath of life. My heart underwent such strife, my two loves slicing it like knives. Hamlet, Tybalt. Tybalt, Hamlet. Weigh the names; one is just as fair as the other. What's in a name ... they were both hot. Then Tybalt pressed his lips on mine. Hamlet I forgot. Next thing I knew, Tybalt and I were in Cancun.

(SHE sighs and glances at the place where HAMLET has just exited.)

OPHELIA: Hamlet, I have wronged you in every way — but what Tybalt did to me was my pay, what I deserved and no less. Now, I confess, he has caused me such distress I will make his life a mess. Be wary, Tybalt, there is nothing worse than the wrath of a woman scorned.

(SHE exits as lights come up on the CHORUS.)

CHORUS: We'll hear the will. We'll hear the will.
We'll watch and see what hearts go chill.
The second part of this act is a runaway train.
On you such excitement will rain
That your heart will be sopped to the very core.
Yo'll scream for relief but we'll give you more.
Hamlet has a plan to test Tybalt's corrupt mind.
To our hero Hamlet, life has been unkind.
His mother, father, and girl all supposedly dead
And poor Hamlet himself off in the head.
He came to Verona to start a new life
And has only fallen into more and more strife.
Yet, all he wants is to help those he loves.
The princely Hamlet is more caring than the gods above.
All right, I know this is getting a little preachy
But you must admit, Hamlet is pretty peachy.
However, in each peach there is a pit.
And Hamlet is about to swallow it and get into
Some deep ... doo, doo.
But for now, that's all we will reveal to you,
So for now, the Chorus bids you adieu.

(NURSE enters L. HAMLET enters R. OPHELIA starts to enter as the two huddle together. SHE ducks off stage, her head peeks out from behind the curtains.)

NURSE: Before you go in to hear the will, I want to hear what you plan.
I'll not just bury my head in the sand.

HAMLET: If you'll prepare the way for me, we shall soon see what part
Tybalt had in making this history. I will go to the reading and claim to
be a long lost son of the Capulet family. We can convince Lady
Capulet of this art for she knows the lustiness of a man's heart.

NURSE: You'll just make your claim on the Capulet wealth, and I'll just
bet Tybalt won't drink to your health.

HAMLET: It shall be done as we say and we'll see how goes the fray.

NURSE: I'll let you inside at the crack of ten. We'll see what happens
then.

(HAMLET and NURSE exit in opposite directions. OPHELIA comes DC.)

OPHELIA: I'll not see Hamlet tonight. His conscience has taken flight. The hand of corruption has tainted the man I once thought pure. Hamlet would cheat a lonely widow and her sweet daughter too. This is one crime I'll not endure. For once in my life I'll do what I ought to. I too will go to the reading of the will.

(SHE exits. Lights go up all over the stage. The curtain opens. LADY CAPULET, JULIET, NURSE, TYBALT enter together and move toward the seats.)

LADY CAPULET: Andy wanted me to read the will to his heirs. He has quite generously provided for each one of you. When I die you will have wealth beyond compare, and endless sources of revenue. Most of the estate goes to lovely Juliet but Tybalt too will be given a piece.

(NURSE exits)

LADY CAPULET: If something happens to Juliet, which we would all regret, and she joins her papa in the great beyond, then Tybalt of whom Andy was quite fond will with the fortune be fully blest. Now, if there be no other claim.

(NURSE enters with HAMLET.)

HAMLET: Pardon me thou great and honorable dame, but I have some news I must report.

LADY CAPULET: Who are you? Why are you here? It is beyond my belief that this stranger has barged in on our deep grief.

NURSE: You must hear him, Lady, and get a grip on your pain, for it takes just one drop of trouble to begin a rain.

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