



**Sample Pages from
Shreds and Patches**

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SHREDS AND PATCHES

A re-imagining of Shakespeare's Hamlet

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Robert Wing



Shreds and Patches

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Characters

2W+4M+2 Either

- MR. KING:** (M) aka Claude. A bully, through and through. He takes what he wants.
- DR. OSRIC:** (Either) Possesses a special relationship with her/his patients; still young, she/he has complete faith in her/his patients—and pride in how well they have worked together to arrive at the truth. She/He believes Hamlet completely.
- MRS. KING:** (F) aka Gertrude. A self-centered and hedonistic woman who has made her son's depression all about her.
- HAMLET/DANE:** (M) The son of Gertrude King; the nephew/stepson of Claude King. Spurred on and supported by Dr. Osric and his fellow patients at the Elsinore Youth Wellness Facility, he confronts his indulgent mother and murderous uncle/stepfather.
- OPHELIA:** (F) Though she frequently acts as the “peacekeeper,” she is not opposed to provoking Mr. King. Ophelia is one of a couple; she is always on the lap of, draped on, or within reaching distance of Marcellus.
- MARCELLUS:** (M) Marcellus is sweet to his girl, Ophelia, and faithful to his friend, Hamlet. Yorick drives him crazy, but his “slugs” don't really hurt. In fact, he bristles when Mr. King goes after Yorick. The way Marcellus sees it, Yorick is family—and he has his Yorick's back.
- HORATIO:** (Either) Hamlet's closest friend at Elsinore. He/She has been there for Hamlet over the past few weeks, knows what Mr. King has done, and wants to make him squirm.
- YORICK:** (M) Yorick uses humor as a defense mechanism—and it doesn't always work. He is exasperating, but loved.

Direction

Directors are encouraged to be as creative as they wish with the stage directions.

Shreds and Patches is broken up into scenes for rehearsal purposes only. There should be no disruption between scenes when performed.

When the stage directions say that Yorick “sings,” it means silly, over-the-top singing, “crazy” singing. No singing talent is actually required.

Production Design and Tech

Directors may stage *Shreds and Patches* any way they wish. It may be as minimal as placing eight chairs on an empty stage, or directors may create an entire recreation room in a “youth wellness facility.” No special lighting or sound effects are required.

Costumes

The patients are dressed like high-school-aged students.

Dr. Osric is wearing a white coat.

Mr. King is dressed in a suit, and has a checkbook and clickable pen in his breast pocket.

Mrs. King is dressed in an elegant day outfit, something befitting the wife of a powerful businessman. She is wearing a sweater or light coat and carrying a purse.

“Talkin’ Shakespeare”

It’s important to understand that the young adult characters in the play (sometimes referred to as “patients” in the script) are not “talkin’ Shakespeare”—they are simply talking. At no point should it register on Gertrude or Claude’s faces that they don’t understand what the patients are saying. This is intentional on the part of the author to emphasize the notion that teens and adults don’t always “speak the same language,” except for Dr. Osric, who is fluent in both “languages.”

It must be noted that the lines spoken by the patients are not faithful to their characters in *Hamlet*. The author has “shredded” the original play and “patched” it back together, hence the title. (The title is also metaphorical; life has shredded these young adults, and Dr. Osric is trying to patch them back together.)

Finally, it should be noted that only three words spoken by the patients do not appear in the original text of *Hamlet*: “cuckoo,” “woooooo,” and “oooooo.” Great effort was made to remain faithful to the Bard’s words—though many, *many* liberties were taken. The author extends his apologies to the great man himself, and to any Shakespeare purist reading this.

Enjoy.

Production History

“Shreds and Patches” was first performed at North Country Union High School in Newport, VT on May 15, 2016 under the direction of Cheri Skurdall with the following cast:

MR. KING: Emmett Erwin

DR. OSRIC: Mattie Matthews-Austin

MRS. KING: Keirstan Lague

HAMLET: Ronald St. John III

OPHELIA: Kortnie Brook Gentry / Cadence Shuman

MARCELLUS: Briar LaRose / William Bailey-Rowe

HORATIO: Hannah Chitamber / Olivia Lemieux

YORICK: Gaylon Handy / Zachary Lisner

Dedication

To the memory of Marya Anne Wing, my beloved mother, who, were she here, would certainly say to me, “So, it’s all the mother’s fault, eh?”

SCENE I: GROUP DYNAMICS

LIGHTS up on the recreation room of the Elsinore Youth Wellness Facility. PATIENTS are onstage. HAMLET is sitting next to HORATIO; OPHELIA is sitting on MARCELLUS's lap, not in her own seat, which is to MARCELLUS's right. YORICK is sitting to the left of MARCELLUS. ENTER DR. OSRIC, hastily, followed by MR. and MRS. KING—not hastily. MR. KING is texting. MRS. KING looks uncomfortable and displeased.

MARCELLUS: (*playfully*) Well, well, well!

DR. OSRIC: (*knowing she's not really in trouble*) I know! I know! I'm late!

OPHELIA: (*playfully*) Time is time!

DR. OSRIC: My bad—apologies all around!

HORATIO: (*less playfully: he wants to get down to business*) And the time is out of joint!

DR. OSRIC: (*indulging them in their playful censure*) Again, I apologize. (*making introductions*) Guys, this Mr. and Mrs. King—Hamlet's parents. We were chatting and I lost all track of time. (*knowing that HAMLET is very anxious about what's coming up*) Hamlet, it's your meeting—I apologize for making you wait. (*smiling*) Forgive me?

HAMLET: (*Smiles. He knows how much DR. OSRIC cares for him.*) I forgive you. (*thinks for a second*) Give me one poor request?

DR. OSRIC: Of course. (*comfortingly*) What do you need me to do?

HAMLET: (*nervous*) Will you...bear me up?

DR. OSRIC: Hamlet, we're all here to "bear you up." Right guys?

HORATIO: Ay, by heaven!

OPHELIA: Assuredly!

MARCELLUS: Yes, friend, heartily!

YORICK: (*trying to be funny; speaking in the voice of a robot*) I shall obey, my lord. (*MARCELLUS slugs YORICK in the arm, irritated by his lameness*) Hey!

MRS. KING: (*to DR. OSRIC, not impressed with the playful banter*) If you don't mind me saying, you seem very young to me.

HORATIO: Seems, madam? Nay, it is, I know not “seems.”

DR. OSRIC: (*good-naturedly*) Yes, I am still pretty young, but I assure you I am a fully qualified doctor.

OPHELIA: I praise your excellence!

HAMLET: (*with attempted confidence*) I too!

DR. OSRIC: (*genuinely*) Why, thank you Ophelia—and Hamlet.

MRS. KING: And another thing, why “Hamlet”? Why does my son want to go by his father’s name? It can’t be healthy.

DR. OSRIC: The way I see it—

MRS. KING: (*cutting off DR. OSRIC*) Frankly, I find it morbid. (*she looks to MR. KING to help her take off her coat; he is too busy texting to notice*)

DR. OSRIC: Well, Hamlet is trying to redefine himself in a world without his father—

MRS. KING: (*cutting off DR. OSRIC again as she takes off her own coat*) I, for one, am going to call him “Dane,” the name I gave him, thank you very much.

DR. OSRIC: (*taking a different approach*) Hamlet, perhaps you’d like to explain to your mother why you want to go by your dad’s name?

HAMLET: (*takes a moment to compose himself*) My father—I shall not look upon his like again. Methinks—

MRS. KING: (*interrupting HAMLET; going on self-pityingly*) Yes! Yes! I’ve heard this all before—*no one* could match your father. (*in full victim mode*) I certainly never had a chance.

MR. KING: (*still texting*) Now, Gertrude—relax. You know Dane likes nothing better than getting you all worked up. Don’t give him the satisfaction.

DR. OSRIC: (*the slightest of “telling” pauses*) And, Mr. King, I believe, you are...or were...Hamlet’s father’s brother...Hamlet’s uncle?

MR. KING: (*still texting*) What of it? Look, this whole mopey-dopey “depression” of Dane’s is just an act.

HAMLET is deflated; the other PATIENTS, all who understand depression, bristle at MR. KING’S insensitivity.

DR. OSRIC: (*sensing the tension*) Okay, how about we all make ourselves comfortable? (*indicates seats to MR. and MRS. KING; they sit—and then DR. OSRIC sits*) Let's start off today's session by sharing the work we've done on expressing what depression feels like. Hamlet, would you like to tell your father—

MR. KING: (*cutting off DR. OSRIC*) Stepfather!

DR. OSRIC: (*She pauses. She's quickly "getting the measure" of MR. KING.*) Hamlet, how do you feel when your stepfather says that your depression is just an act?

HORATIO gives HAMLET a look that says, "You can do it." HAMLET musters his courage.

HAMLET: O, that this too too solid flesh would melt, thaw and resolve itself into a dew!

MR. KING: (*finally stops texting*) Just kill me now...

MR. KING puts his phone away. An awkward silence ensues. HORATIO breaks the silence.

HORATIO: What an ass!

HORATIO and MR. KING lock eyes; HORATIO shows no fear.

DR. OSRIC: (*kindly, but authoritatively*) Horatio—language, please.

MR. KING breaks eye contact with HORATIO. HORATIO smiles, happy for it.

OPHELIA: (*wanting to diffuse the situation, and wanting to comfort HAMLET*) 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, to give these mourning duties to your father. But, you must know, your father lost a father; That father lost, lost his.

DR. OSRIC: But remember, Ophelia, everyone deals with grief in his or her own way.

MARCELLUS: (*trying to cheer HAMLET up*) Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off. Do not for ever with thy veiled lids seek for thy noble father in the dust.

YORICK: (*in a raspy, from-grave voice*) Ay, he is dead and gone! (*MARCELLUS slugs YORICK on the arm*) Hey!

HORATIO: (*reassuringly, but forcefully to HAMLET*) All that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity. Throw to earth this unprevailing woe—and act! Now!

YORICK: (*seeking attention*) Ay, he is dead and gone!

YORICK makes a gurgling noise, crosses his eyes, clutches his throat, and slumps over in his chair. MARCELLUS slugs him on the arm, which jolts him back to alertness.

Hey!

MARCELLUS: (*indicating YORICK*) I like him not!

OPHELIA: (*soothingly*) Marcellus...

YORICK: (*undeterred; still seeking attention; leaping dramatically from his seat*) He is dead and gone!

MARCELLUS: (*YORICK is driving him crazy*) It offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig pated fellow tear a passion to tatters!

OPHELIA: (*soothing MARCELLUS*) Let him ply his music.

YORICK “sings” and melodramatically staggers about the stage. Though the actors on stage don’t find this funny, the audience should.

YORICK: They bore him barefaced on the bier,
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny,
And in his grave rained many a tear.

YORICK has reached the apron of the stage; he drops to his knees.

MRS. KING: This can't be healthy.

YORICK: (*comically singing; “dying” as he does so*)
And will he not come again?
And will he not come again?
No, no, he is dead.
Go to thy deathbed.
He will never come again!

YORICK drops dead, one leg hanging over the apron. Gives a couple of death kicks. MR. and MRS. KING look horrified; the PATIENTS look bored — DR. OSRIC a little bit too. A moment of awkward silence passes and YORICK leaps to his feet, arms raised in melodramatic splendor.

And... scene!

He bows to the audience, blows kisses, and returns to his seat, completely pleased with himself. A quiet moment passes. MARCELLUS slugs him on the thigh.

Hey!

MR. KING: *(still stunned)* What the hell was that?

DR. OSRIC: *(slightly tired, but proud)* That, Mr. King, is the result of a lot of hard work.

MRS. KING: *(unimpressed)* Work?

DR. OSRIC: Coming to terms with death is never easy, especially for young adults, who see themselves as invincible. What you just saw was, in fact, very therapeutic.

MR. KING: “Therapeutic?” My wife and I interrupted our honeymoon to indulge this, this... *(indicating HAMLET)* spoiled brat—So let’s get this “therapy” over with—and we can be on our way.

DR. OSRIC pauses and thinks. She doesn’t like this man, but she never drops her professional demeanor.

DR. OSRIC: Okay, let’s move on. Hamlet, I want to revisit something you said in yesterday’s group. You said that you felt your grief, somehow, paralyzed you, made you feel like a coward—

YORICK: *(interrupting explosively)* Am I a coward!

YORICK is in attention-seeking mode again. The faces of the other PATIENTS register their frustration. YORICK gets uncomfortably close to MARCELLUS.

I am pigeon-livered and lack gall! *(over-the-top)* Conscience makes cowards of us all!

MARCELLUS: I would have such a fellow whipped for o’erdoing it!

MARCELLUS lunges threateningly at YORICK. OPHELIA holds him back. YORICK scrambles out of MARCELLUS’s range.

DR. OSRIC: *(authoritatively; stepping between MARCELLUS and YORICK)* Yorick, remember our talk we had in my office the other day?

YORICK: *(lying)* I cannot.

DR. OSRIC: The talk about the way you use humor to hide from your real feelings? And how it doesn’t always work?

YORICK: (*reluctantly*) I will say so.

DR. OSRIC: Well, I'd like you to be mindful of that conversation today as we help Hamlet. Okay?

YORICK: (*putting*) I shall the effect of this good lesson keep.

SCENE 2: ADVICE

MR. KING: (*exasperated*) Look, can I just say something? (*doesn't wait for a response*) I don't go in for all this "touchy-feely" stuff. (*to HAMLET*) You know what, Dane? You lost a father—and I lost a brother. Do you see me crying about it? No. (*anger rising*) You know why? Because I've got what it takes to survive in this world, something that you don't have—guts. And it's guts that separate kings (*indicating himself*) from beggars (*indicating HAMLET*).

MRS. KING: Claude, your blood pressure...

HAMLET: (*nervously; he is standing up to his bully stepfather for the first time*) A king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar!

MR. KING: (*surprised by his stepson's boldness; locks eyes with him*) Well, did you hear that Gertrude? Little man's going to teach me a lesson. Tell me, "Hamlet," you talk the talk... but can you walk the walk?

HAMLET: (*with a little more confidence; not breaking eye contact with his stepfather*) Suit the action to the word, the word to the action?

MR. KING: That's what I'm talking about. But let me give you some advice first, kid—

MRS. KING: (*cutting off MR. KING*) You should listen to your uncle—I mean stepfather, Hamlet. He's a very practical man and I have—

HAMLET: (*angry and exasperated at MR. and MRS. KING*) These tedious old fools!

DR. OSRIC: (*sensing danger*) Hamlet, remember how important it is to choose your words carefully? Would you like to try that again?

HAMLET nods his head. Takes a deep breath—then speaks louder announcing each syllable. Looking MR. KING right in the eye.

HAMLET: These tee-dee-us old fools.

MRS. KING: Dane! Don't speak to your father—

HORATIO: Uncle!

MRS. KING: (*flustered*) Uncle—I mean father!

HORATIO: Uncle father!

MRS. KING: (*flustered and angry*) I mean stepfather! Don't talk to your stepfather like that!

MR. KING: (*soothingly*) No, no Gertrude—relax! I can take anything these kids dish out. (*addressing HAMLET and PATIENTS, changing back to his normal aggressive know-it-all tone*) Listen, boys and girls, I'm going to give you some advice whether you want to hear it or not.

HORATIO: Words, words, words...

MR. KING: (*ignoring HORATIO*) Whatever life throws at you—suck it up—and shut up about it!

OPHELIA: Give thy thoughts no tongue.

MR. KING: You got, it, little lady. (*pauses*) You know, I'm an observant man, and I noticed you and this fella (*indicating MARCELLUS*) are... really good “friends.”

MARCELLUS: (*pulling her onto his lap*) Aye! My soul's idol!

OPHELIA: (*with her arms about him*) This is the very ecstasy of love!

YORICK: (*seeking attention; pretending to be scandalized by OPHELIA's behavior; leaps up from seat and points at her*) Harlot! Get thee to a nunnery!

MARCELLUS: (*explosively*) His hide is so tanned! (*OPHELIA holds him back*) Hold off your hands! (*breaks free and begins chasing YORICK around the stage*)

YORICK: (*to OPHELIA, while being pursued about the stage*) To a nunnery, go, and quickly too!

MARCELLUS: (*still in pursuit*) I like him not!

YORICK: (*still being chased*) To a nunnery, go!

MARCELLUS: (*still in pursuit*) A pestilence on him!

MRS. KING: (*to DR. OSRIC*) Do something, will you?

DR. OSRIC: (*Calmly. She's seen this before.*) No need. They'll wear themselves out in a moment. (*as if on cue, MARCELLUS stops*)

chasing YORICK and they flop into their chairs) Good. Have you guys got it out of your system?

MARCELLUS: Ay.

YORICK: Ay. (MARCELLUS slugs YORICK on the arm) Hey!

DR. OSRIC: (warningly) Marcellus... (MARCELLUS gives her an innocent “What, me?” look) Mr. King, why don’t you finish what you wanted to say and then Hamlet has some things he’d like to say. (HAMLET looks frightened, like he’s having second thoughts) But you don’t have to, Hamlet—

HAMLET: (HORATIO gives him a look of encouragement) No! I am constant in my purposes! I was born to set it right!

DR. OSRIC: (calmly, reassuringly) Okay, Hamlet. (to MR. KING) Mr. King, let’s pick up where you left off. I believe you were talking about the value of friendship?

MR. KING: That’s right. Friendship is very important. We all want to be liked, right? That’s fine, but take my advice—always keep your distance just a little bit.

YORICK: Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.

YORICK makes a loud farting noise—a failed attempt at humor. No one laughs. MARCELLUS raises his fist as to deliver a slug. YORICK braces for it; MARCELLUS loses interest, shrugs his shoulders as if to say “meh” and relaxes.

MR. KING: (to YORICK) Listen, kid—nobody likes a clown. Clowns are lonely and sad. (going in for the kill) I bet you don’t have any friends, do you?

This has an immediate depressing effect on YORICK. MARCELLUS bristles. It’s okay for him to insult YORICK, but not MR. KING.

No, I didn’t think so. But, if you did have, you’d know to keep them very, very close. You know why? (pause) So you can watch them—because you should never trust anyone.

MRS. KING: Well, not everyone.

MR. KING: (loving the sound of his own voice) Here’s some more important advice: don’t start fights—but be damn well sure you finish any started with you.

OPHELIA: Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the oppressed beware of thee!

MR. KING: (*responding to the OPHELIA's alertness*) That's right, little lady. (*eyeing OPHELIA...There's a creepiness to it*) And never lend money!

OPHELIA: (*she's "playing" him a bit here—and he's falling for it*) Neither a borrower or a lender be.

MR. KING: (*with rising creepiness*) You're pretty and smart, aren't you? (*MARCELLUS gives him a very disapproving look and puts his arms a bit tighter around OPHELIA's waist*) And, above all else, how do kids nowadays say it? "Keep it real."

OPHELIA: (*mocking MR. KING, who's oblivious*) To thine own self be true.

MR. KING: (*locking eyes with OPHELIA; full creeper mode*) My, my—you really are a catch, aren't you?

DR. OSRIC: (*uncomfortable with MR. KING's flirtatiousness with OPHELIA*) Is there any more advice you'd like to share before Hamlet speaks, Mr. King?

MR. KING: (*without breaking eye contact with OPHELIA*) Yes. If you want something—take it.

DR. OSRIC: Thank you, Mr. King. Your point is...well, clear.

MR. KING sits. DR. OSRIC looks at HAMLET. He is visibly nervous.

Are you ready, Hamlet?

HAMLET nods in the affirmative. He is nervous, but he is ready. He stands.

SCENE 3: FAMILY VALUES

HAMLET: That it should come to this! Let me not think on it! (*indicates his mother*) Frailty, thy name is woman! (*anger growing*) God! A beast would have mourn'd longer! Married with my uncle, my father's brother—within a month! O, most wicked speed, to post with such dexterity to incestuous sheets! It is not nor it cannot come to good!

MR. KING: Whoa, whoa, whoa! We're not going through this again. Yes, your mom and I married soon after your father's death but you just have to get over that. Some day, when you're an adult,

you'll understand. Sometimes... (*trying to sound wise—and failing*)
the heart wants what it wants.

*HAMLET and PATIENTS burst out in laughter
at the corniness of this remark; MR. KING looks
embarrassed and offended.*

MRS. KING: Dane! Apologize this instant! You have offended your father!

HAMLET: Mother, you have *my* father much offended.

MRS. KING: Young man! Have you forgotten who you're speaking to?

HAMLET: No, you are your husband's brother's wife, and—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

MRS. KING: (*indicating MR. KING*) Your father and I—

HORATIO: Uncle!

OPHELIA/MARCELLUS/YORICK: Uncle father!

MRS. KING: (*exasperated but still holding it together*) Your step father and I didn't interrupt our honeymoon to be harassed and... and vilified by you! Perhaps we should leave—

HAMLET: (*forcefully*) You shall not budge; you go not till I set you up a glass where you may see the inmost part of you!

MRS. KING: (*scoffing*) See? It's always the mother's fault. What did I ever do to deserve this awful treatment from you?

HORATIO: Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty, calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose from the fair forehead of an innocent love—and sets a blister there.

OPHELIA: O, such a deed!

YORICK: It smells to heaven!

MRS. KING: (*to DR. OSRIC*) Is it really necessary to have all these strangers be a part of this session?

MR. KING: We're paying you a lot of money to fix this boy—or at least keep him under control. Do your job!

DR. OSRIC pauses for a moment and thinks before proceeding.

DR. OSRIC: Hamlet, what would you like to say to your mother right now?

HAMLET: (*his anger just barely under control*) Look here, upon this picture (*indicates MR. KING*). You cannot call it love; for at your age the hey-day in the blood is tame. O shame! where is thy blush?

MRS. KING: Dane! That's enough!

MR. KING: We do not have to justify our relationship to you.

HAMLET: (*still to MRS. KING; his anger growing*) To live in the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty,—

MRS. KING: Not another word!

MR. KING: You'd better watch it, pal!

HAMLET: (*indicating MR. KING*) A slave that is not twentieth part the title of your precedent lord, (*looking directly at MR. KING*) a king of shreds and patches,—

MR. KING: You are way, way out of line, kid.

MRS. KING: Dane—stop! (*with a tinge of threat*) Don't make me choose between you and your stepfather. (*in full victim mode*) What would I do with a heart torn in two?

HAMLET: (*to MRS. KING*) Throw away the worser part of it and live the purer with the other half. Go not to mine uncle's bed!

MR. KING: Boy, I will knock you into next week!

HAMLET: (*cruelly to MRS. KING*) Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

MRS. KING: I beg your pardon!

HAMLET: (*to MRS. KING*) I must be cruel, only to be kind, thus bad begins and worse remains behind. One word more, good lady, that I bid you no means do: let the bloat king tempt you again to bed!

MRS. KING slaps HAMLET's face. HAMLET slowly lowers himself to the floor. He sits, head down, hand on the cheek that's been slapped. The slap to HAMLET's face signifies a change in the PATIENTS—from this point on they have one purpose: to help their friend HAMLET.

MRS. KING: (*to HAMLET*) Why? Why are you doing this to us? (*to DR. OSRIC*) and why are you letting him?

DR. OSRIC: Frankly, your hasty marriage has led Hamlet to wonder if you ever loved his father.

MR. KING: Oh, boo-hoo.

MRS. KING: Of course I loved his father! But he died—and I was alone.

DR. OSRIC: (*with the slightest edge*) So was Hamlet.

MRS. KING: (*not appreciating OSRIC's insinuation*) His name is Dane! And I do not like this “therapy.”

DR. OSRIC: (*ignoring her; addressing the PATIENTS*) Guys, I want you to tell Mr. and Mrs. King what it feels like when you're at your lowest point. Take a moment and focus on what depression feels like. (*gently*) Hamlet, you're up first.

HAMLET slowly stands. Pauses.

HAMLET: To be, or not to be—that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them? To die: to sleep—no more. And by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep; to sleep—perchance to dream.

MARCELLUS: (*Rises from his seat. Moves upstage.*) What is a man, if his chief good and market of his time be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

OPHELIA: (*Rises from seat. Moves upstage. Takes MARCELLUS's hand.*) Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, looking before and after, gave us not that capability and god-like reason to fust in us unused.

HORATIO: (*Rises from his seat. Moves upstage, next to HAMLET; puts his hand on HAMLET's shoulder.*) To grunt and sweat under a weary life, but that the dread of something after death, the undiscover'd country from whose bourn no traveller returns, puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of?

HAMLET puts his hand on HORATIO's shoulder to comfort him. YORICK rises from his seat and moves upstage near MARCELLUS. For the first time, he speaks with real emotion, with no attempt at humor.

YORICK: O God! God! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on't! Ah fie! 'tis an unweeded

garden, that grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature possess it merely. (*with none of his typical desperate humor*) I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth.

MARCELLUS puts his hand on YORICK's shoulder, comforting him.

DR. OSRIC: Well done, boys and girls—well done.

PATIENTS (except for HAMLET) “snap out of it” and return quietly to their seats. HAMLET, in his own world, still stands. DR. OSRIC speaks gently to him.

Hamlet, is there something else you'd like to say?

HAMLET nods; he walks to the apron of the stage.

HAMLET: And indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. This most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! The paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me.

Silence. Then the sound of MR. KING slow-clapping.

MR. KING: Woo-hoo! Let's hear it for teen angst. Hamlet and this assortment of misfit toys are depressed. Come on, Doc! Give 'em a pill—or maybe a couple of zaps with the ol' electroshock machine, whatever floats your boat, but for God's sake, stop letting them wallow in their own self-pity! It'll only make it worse.

DR. OSRIC: Depression is a very complicated issue.

MR. KING: Hell! Life is a complicated issue! Just get to the root of the problem and weed it out!

HAMLET “snaps out” of his reverie; he shoots a look at DR. OSRIC; DR. OSRIC nods.

HAMLET: (*still looking at DR. OSRIC*) My hour is come. I'll do it now.

DR. OSRIC: Yes, Hamlet, it is time. (*breaks eye contact with HAMLET and addresses PATIENTS*) Players, I do believe that's your cue.

DR. OSRIC exchanges a look with all the PATIENTS; they scramble to their rehearsed “places” on the stage and strike “theatrical” poses.

You know, Mr. and Mrs. King, role playing is a very effective technique for helping young people deal with trauma. Hamlet responded very well to this approach. In fact, I think he made a powerful breakthrough in getting to the “root of his problem.” *(she takes her seat)* Players—you’re on.

SCENE 4: THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

PATIENTS: *(making a spooky ghost sound)* Wooooooooooooooooooooo!

OPHELIA: Look! *(indicating HORATIO who is the “ghost” of HAMLET’s father)* It comes again!

MARCELLUS: The king that’s dead!

YORICK: It harrows me with fear and wonder!

MR. KING: *(rolling eyes)* What now?

HAMLET: Angels and ministers of grace defend us! King, father—answer me! Tell why thy canonized bones have burst their cerements.

HORATIO: Lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold. If thou didst ever thy dear father love—revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

MARCELLUS/OPHELIA/YORICK: Murder!

HORATIO: Now, Hamlet, hear: the serpent that did sting thy father’s life now wears his crown.

HAMLET: My uncle!

HORATIO: If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not. Let not the royal bed be a couch for luxury and damned incest. But, howsoever thou pursuest this act, taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother. Leave her to heaven and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge, to prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once! Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.

MRS. KING: Dane! This is preposterous! Your stepfather did not kill your father!

OPHELIA: The lady doth protest too much...

MRS. KING: Excuse me, young lady? Who do you think you are?

OPHELIA: Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!

PATIENTS: (*picking up the chant*) “Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Cuckoo!”

HAMLET and the other PATIENTS run around the room, stand on chairs, roughhouse, all while yelling “Cuckoo!” They stop as unexpectedly as they started. MARCELLUS rushes up to MR. KING.

MARCELLUS: I will be brief: your noble son is mad!

MR. KING: Tell me something I don’t know.

All PATIENTS make a loud trumpet sound

OPHELIA: (*to HAMLET*) The actors are come hither, my lord, the best actors in the world. (*Indicates MARCELLUS and YORICK*)

HAMLET: Welcome, all! Can you play the Murder of Gonzago? You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in’t, could you not?

HAMLET hands MARCELLUS and YORICK imaginary paper, steps to the edge of the stage, and breaks the fourth wall by speaking directly to the audience.

I’ll have these players play something like the murder of my father before mine uncle: I’ll observe his looks; if he but blench, I know my course. The play’s the thing wherein I’ll catch the conscience of the king.

MRS. KING: Hamlet—this is in very, very bad taste.

All PATIENTS make a loud trumpet sound and scramble to create the tableau for their play

MR. KING: (*suspicious*) How long is this going to last?

OPHELIA: ‘Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET: (*looking at MRS. KING*) As woman’s love.

HORATIO/MARCELLUS/OPHELIA/YORICK: (*responding to the “burn”*)
Oooooooooooooooooo!

MR. KING: (*the “burn” registers*) We get it already! We should have waited before we married.

MRS. KING: (*to MR. KING, with something like uncertainty in her voice*)
Why didn’t we wait?



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