

THE HAMLET TRIANGLE

by Stefanie Giebert

This is copyrighted material. You may use this script for performance. You may print it out and make copies for your private use. However, you are not allowed to sell this script or to rent it out or to put it on your website without the author's permission.

© Stefanie Giebert 2007

Characters:

Hamlet (a Danish prince and a therapist)

Receptionist

Juliet Capulet (an Italian noblewoman, divorced from Romeo Montague. Hamlet's patient)

Ophelia (Hamlet's girlfriend, also a therapist)

On the main stage: a desk with a telephone, some folders and a skull on it, two chairs, a couch

At the side: receptionist's desk with telephone

Lights up on receptionist's desk, which is somewhere at the side of the main stage, the main stage remains dark. The receptionist is just getting her coat and just about to leave for the evening as the phone rings. She picks up:

Receptionist: Elsinore and Elsinore, practice for psychotherapy, group-therapy, couples-therapy, what can I do for you? *(Pause)* Hello Mr. Montague. Your ex-wife? *(checking schedule)* Yes, she did have an appointment today. *(Pause)* Yes, I'll have a look. Hang on a second. *(puts receiver beside phone, goes over to main stage, and mimes opening a door just about an inch. Lights come on slowly on main stage, revealing a man and a woman on a therapist's couch. He is kneeling on top of her, kissing her. Receptionist carefully closes door and goes back to the phone. Man and woman freeze)* No, she's not here. Yes, she left about half an hour ago. *(Pause)* Yes, I'll do that. Bye. *(hangs up, takes her bag and leaves)*

Man and woman unfreeze.

Juliet *(startled)*: I hear some noise within. *(trying to push him off and to get up)* Dear love, adieu.

Hamlet *(pushing her back)*: One kiss and I'll descend.

Juliet *(trying to get up again)*: A thousand times good night.

Hamlet: O wilt thou leave me so unsatisfied? Come on. You're still too much in denial. *(kisses her)*

Juliet: It is too rash, too unadvised, too sudden.

Hamlet: It is your only chance to forget about your husband. Ex-husband. Remember, I saved you both from your serial suicide-attempts. Do you not remember, when you first came to me, you had just almost killed yourself? You were both pretty close to really getting it done by that time. You had almost perfected your timing. Not like before, when they stitched you together again and managed to get all the poison out of your veins. The next time both of you would have been dead. Then it would have been too late for couples-therapy. *(she protests)* Yes, it *was* already too late. But better divorced and alive than married and dead is what I always say. And you are very much alive, I think. *(Pushes her back on the couch, kisses her)*

Juliet (*giving in after initial struggle*) Thy lips are warm. (*they begin again whatever they had been interrupted in before, but then she pushes him away again*) Dost thou love me?

Hamlet (*sits up, as there is a noise*): Oh shit! Did you hear that too?

Juliet (*disappointed*): Well, do not swear.

Hamlet: Goddamn it.

Juliet: Do not swear at all. (*They both listen*) It was the nightingale and not the lark.

Hamlet: What?

Juliet: Just a saying. (*Pause*) Dost thou love me, Hamlet?

Hamlet: I think Ophelia is coming.

Juliet: Nightly she sings on yond pomegranate tree. Believe me love, it was the nightingale. And not Ophelia. (*now she takes the initiative, pulling him down.*)

Hamlet: I think it would be better if you left now. Quickly. Don't you hear that noise?

Juliet: Yea, noise? Then I'll be brief. (*goes for him again*).

Hamlet (*panicking, fending her off*): Juliet! Please! You're forgetting that I am still officially your therapist. And apart from that I am still a member of a noble family whose members are always in danger to find themselves and their, ahem, affairs, ah, unlucky choice of words, but you know what I mean, grossly misrepresented in the yellow press. I still have a noble name to preserve.

Juliet: O be some other name! What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other word would smell as sweet.

Hamlet: (*trying to push her off the sofa*) Yes, but be a good girl and my sweet-smelling rose or any other flower now and go.

Juliet (*giving up and reluctantly getting ready to leave*): O, thinkest thou we shall ever meet again?

Hamlet: Yeah, I'll call you.

Juliet: I must hear from thee every day in the hour, for in a minute there are many days.

Hamlet: Getting a bit confused, are we, hmm? Days, hours, minutes... I'll see you next week for your next therapy session, okay? It's all fixed already.

Juliet: Dost thou love me? If that thy bent of love be honourable, thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow, where and what time thou wilt perform the rite, and all my fortunes at thy foot I'll lay and follow thee my lord throughout the world.

Hamlet: Yes, yes. (*about to urge her gently out of office door, then stops dead*) Um. What? You want me to marry you?

Ophelia (*offstage*): Honey?

Hamlet (*panicking*): I'll think about it, right? Just don't do anything unreasonable. Promise me. I'll call you. (*drops into his chair at his desk, shortly before Ophelia enters stage-left with shopping bags, Juliet is about to protest. To Juliet, businesslike.*) Yes, let's make an appointment, if you'd- (*Ophelia drops her shopping bags on his desk*) Oh, hi! (*to Juliet*) Um, my receptionist will call you. Okay? (*motions her to go*)

Juliet: Oh, I, umm. Well. (*Pause, then, sweetly*) Pardon, I beseech you. Henceforward I am ever ruled by you. (*goes out, stage right*)

Hamlet (*pretending to be a tired but professional therapist*): Tiresome woman. Messes up her couples-therapy sessions, never being there when her ex-husband is and now she comes and expects me to have time for her.

Ophelia embraces him: Hey, why don't we get out of here? I really managed to take the afternoon off! (*sinks into a chair, rubbing her feet*) I would have had that Scottish guy today, you know, (*he tries to say something, she doesn't notice*) the one I told you of, severe depression, thinks he's not ambitious enough, (*he tries to say something*) totally dominated by his wife. Has sometimes strange hallucinations about walking trees. We're getting on nicely, though, I think we're close to uncovering his childhood trauma. (*he tries to say something*) I think he likes it when he is allowed to do the talking for once. (*She turns back to him, he has given up wanting to say something.*) Well. Where do you want to go? I discovered a nice little macrobiotic Vietnamese restaurant just a few streets off: Must be new. They use only rice that has been farmed according to Feng-Shui principles and- (*he moves away from her, uneasy*) No? Oh, you're in a bad mood? Come on, it's almost the weekend! What about our cycling-tour?

Hamlet: I am too much in the sun.

Ophelia: What? You sit in your office all day long... We could drive out to the garden.

Hamlet: 'Tis an unweeded garden!

Ophelia: If you spent less time pondering over your patients it wouldn't look so overgrown.

Hamlet (*severely*): I must, with speed, to Italy! Tomorrow.

Ophelia: What? You? Is there a conference? Why didn't you tell me? That article I'm working on at the moment - "The Influence of the quality of the father-daughter relationship on the suicide rate of young female adults in Northern Denmark" - I could turn it into a lecture any time. What do you think? We could give a joint lecture. Why not? It would really be a good opportunity for both of us to keep our publication list up to date. (*He is silent, she looks at him questioningly*) Okay. It's not a conference. So what is it?

Hamlet: (*wearily*): Get thee to a nunnery...

Ophelia: I beg your pardon?

Hamlet: (*sighs, to the skull on his desk*) To see, or not to see, that is the question...

Ophelia: Hey, wait a minute. I thought we had left all this behind! (*Pause, he plays with the skull*) Have you forgotten anything you ever learned about the 11 rules of effective pair-communication? Why can psychologists never apply their findings to themselves? That's so typical of you. You try to confuse me. You always do that. That's so uncooperative of you! (*Pause*) What do you mean? Do you think I can read your thoughts?

Hamlet: Obstinacy, thy name is woman!

Ophelia: Oh, don't talk in riddles, will you. I recognize this. It's not a good sign. Is there something you need to tell me?

Hamlet: There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in *your* philosophy!

Ophelia: Ah. (*long pause, then suddenly, startling him*) Who is she? Italy... Italy... It's that Capulet woman! I knew it! You were talking about her way too much!

Hamlet: To an nunnery, go...

Ophelia: Oh God! You're so, so... so 16th century, you know? Did you really like me better when I was still going "Yes my lord." "I shall obey my lord". "I think nothing my lord"? You men are all the same inside!

Hamlet: Ay madam, it is common.

Ophelia: Is that really what you expect of a woman? (*Pause*) You're no better than the rest of them. I thought you loved me.

Hamlet: (*embarrassed*) You should not have believ'd me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

Ophelia: Didn't you write me a love letter once? On parchment? "Roses are red, violets are blue, Ophy dear, I love thee true". Well?

Hamlet:: Words, words, words.

Ophelia: And didn't you welcome me back when I came back from college?

Hamlet: Yes, sure! But you shouldn't have run away in the first place! Nobody knew where you were and when they found that drowned woman, everybody thought it was you. I almost died of grief then!

Ophelia: If it wasn't for me, you'd all be dead anyway! If I hadn't gotten my degree in psychology and taken this course in conflict-mediation, then you'd all be dead! You and your old-fashioned family! Without me you'd never lived to get your degree in psychology either! They'd have torn you to bits! (*He attempts to say something*) I saved your life! And that of your mother and your uncle. Hah! It's them. They're behind all this. They never liked me anyway. Maybe I should have let you all slaughter yourselves. (*Pause*) And now you start an

affair with a hysterical infantile woman with a tendency towards violence. (*furiously*) With that woman? You're mad!

Hamlet: I am but mad North-North West. When the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw. (*grins*)

Ophelia: Well maybe. But obviously you can't even tell a suicidal psychopath from a passionate woman! O most pernicious woman!

Hamlet (*rather taken aback. Weakly*) Um. That was my line.

Ophelia (*worried, trying to get close to him*): What? Oh, so what. But why? Why her? Why? What's wrong? Have we been too close? Have I been too dominant, too confining?

Hamlet (*fending her off*): I could be bounded in a nut-shell and count myself king of infinite space... we're it not that I have bad dreams

Ophelia: (*suddenly professional, snatches a writing pad and pen*) Dreams? Oh. Did you analyze them?

Hamlet (*gets up*): A dream is but a shadow...

Ophelia: Now you're making no sense at all. It's no use talking to you when you're like that, do you know that? And I won't try to any longer. (*sits in Hamlet's chair*) But do you really know what you're doing? I mean, you know what it usually leads to with that kind of woman! Traumatized, neurotic, unable to deal with the demands of everyday life- You of all people should know what they are like. God, you probably even think you are helping her, huh, turning her mind away from her disturbed husband? Oh, it'll never work. Just wait and see.

Hamlet: I must be cruel only to be kind.

Ophelia (*has had enough*): And I'm sick of you.

Hamlet looks at his watch, fumbles with it uneasily The time is out of joint...

Ophelia: You want to leave? Well. I'm not keeping you-

Hamlet: Why, right... (*realizes that she's not going to leave but expects him to go*) you are i' the right; --And so, without more circumstance at all, I hold it fit that we shake hands and part: --You, as your business and desires shall point you,--For every man -- um, and woman -- hath business and desire, Such as it is;-- (*embarrassed silence*) The rest is ... well, silence... I guess. (*Pause*)

Both: And may you live happily ever after! (*he goes off*)

Ophelia (*shouts after him*) But don't you ever come to *me* for couples-therapy!