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## Cast of Characters

ROBERTA, 14	A tall, intimidating girl	Guildenstern
MISS MYLENBUSH, 30s	Their teacher	
BRITTNEE, 13	A very perky girl	Rosencrantz
LUNA, 13	Catatonic girl	Tree, Fortinbras
MELANIE, 14	A bad actor	Polonius
MR. JACOBS, 40	An administrator	
KAYLIE, 13	Fairly normal	Hamlet
JAMIE, 14	A lifer	Laertes
ANNIE, 14	A lovable orphan	Claudius
GOOPER, 13	Roberta's Thug	Sugar Gumdrop
SAM, 14	Hates everything	Sugar Gumdrop
MORGAN, 13	Actually a boy	Sugar Gumdrop
LILLY, 14	A pyromaniac	Sugar Gumdrop
AMBER, 12	Confused Girl	Ophelia
TIFFANY, 13	Preppie Girl	The Ghost
DORIS, 13	Violent girl	Talking Bear

## Setting

Miss Polly's Institute for Criminally Damaged Young Ladies.  
A home for at-risk young girls somewhere nearby.

## Time

The present.

## Acknowledgments

*Miss Polly's Institute for Criminally Damaged Young Ladies Puts on a Show* was first produced at North Oaks Middle School in Haltom City, TX, on March 4-6, 2005. The cast was as follows:

ROBERTA.....	Telisha Smith
MISS MYLENBUSH.....	Courtney Clark
BRITTNEE.....	Ashton O'Reilly
LUNA.....	Rose Thompson
MELANIE.....	Hannah Lightsey
MS. JACOBS.....	Elizabeth Song
KAYLIE.....	Jenna McDade
JAMIE .....	Kelsey Turk
ANNIE.....	Chloe Gobeau
GOOPER.....	Rebecca Dalton
SAM .....	Megan Kirby
AMBER .....	Amy Priebe
TIFFANY .....	Bre Gibson
DORIS .....	Arielle Mobley
MORGAN .....	Chris Yorek
LILLY .....	Alicia Reyes

# MISS POLLY'S INSTITUTE FOR CRIMINALLY DAMAGED YOUNG LADIES PUTS ON A SHOW

by Don Zolidis

*(Miss Polly's Institute for Criminally Damaged Young Ladies. Somewhere nearby. A drab, institutional place without much in the way of furniture or decoration. At rise, we are located in the cafeteria, which is pretty much just what it sounds like. TIFFANY, a preppie teenage girl, stands center-stage. She looks around for a moment.)*

**TIFFANY.** Do I start now?

*(Pause. TIFFANY looks around.)*

When do I start?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Now!

**TIFFANY.** Oh.

*(Pause.)*

Line.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* We're not saying that today!

**TIFFANY.** I just totally forgot everything.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* I am your father's spirit, doomed for a certain time to walk the earth!

**TIFFANY.** What?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* I am your father's spirit, doomed for a certain time to walk the earth!

**TIFFANY.** Oh.

*(She forgets the line.)*

I am... line.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Don't break character!

**TIFFANY.** Sorry.

*(TIFFANY looks confused.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* You're scary! You're a ghost!

**TIFFANY.** I'm a ghost?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Yes! You are Hamlet's father, your soul is consumed in flames because you were murdered while you were sleeping with your wife!

*(Pause.)*

**TIFFANY.** How do I do that?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Act scary!

**TIFFANY.** Oh.

*(TIFFANY tries to act scary in an unconvincing manner.)*

Ooooooh. Hamlet, I am...

*(She forgets her lines.)*

Boooooooo.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* All right stop!

*(MISS MYLENBUSH comes on stage. She is a mean-looking woman in her late-thirties.)*

Listen, Tiffany. Let me explain this to you in words you can understand. You were the king, right? You were king of Denmark and your brother decided that he was in love with your wife, so one night while you were sleeping, he poured poison in your ear—

**TIFFANY.** In my ear? Gross.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes. In your ear. And you died. In fact, all of your blood kind of goosed up like mucus and you choked to death. And once you were dead, you didn't go to Heaven because you hadn't had your sins forgiven, so instead you are burning in hellfire for the rest of eternity. Every day you wake up and your skin melts off and your eyes pop out of their sockets, and so you have one chance to rest in peace and you have to make your son chase down your brother and kill him. Okay?

*(TIFFANY is extremely confused.)*

Look, use your own life as an example. Has there ever been a time when you were betrayed by a close relative who killed you and stole your wife?

*(TIFFANY thinks about it.)*

**TIFFANY.** I'm thirteen.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Right. Use that. Go.

*(MISS MYLENBUSH skitters off-stage.)*

Remember. Hellfire. Every day.

*(Pause. TIFFANY looks around.)*

**TIFFANY.** Boooo?

**GOOPER.** *(Off-stage:)* You stink!

**SAM.** *(Off-stage:)* This is retarded!

*(Other grumbling can be heard from off-stage. MISS MYLENBUSH is back on stage in a second.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** All right circle up!

*(TIFFANY takes one step out toward being in a circle. ANNIE enters and grabs her hand. MISS MYLENBUSH waits for a second. Then she screams.)*

**GET YOUR BUTTS OUT HERE AND CIRCLE UP MAGGOTS!**

*(The other girls, ROBERTA, MELANIE, MORGAN [who is actually a boy], KAYLIE, JAMIE, GOOPER, LILLY, SAM, AMBER, and DORIS saunter on slowly, forming into a haphazard circle.)*

That's better. All right, is this a circle? Jamie is this a perfect circle?

**JAMIE.** It's more like an oval.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Then let's get in a circle!

*(They adjust.)*

All right, listen—where's Luna? Who's supposed to be watching Luna?

**KAYLIE.** I'll go get her.

*(KAYLIE exits.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Okay. Join hands. Close your eyes. I want you to breathe in. And out. In.

**JAMIE.** Somebody touched me.

*(JAMIE and a bunch of the girls crack up laughing.)*

**ROBERTA.** Shut up!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** And out. Reach to the sky. Stretch. Feel the stretch. And... stop! Sit down.

*(The girls don't sit. MISS MYLENBUSH screams.)*

**SIT DOWN!!!!**

*(They sit down suddenly.)*

Now, listen... Some of you may be finding the material difficult.

**SAM.** It's retarded.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** It's not retarded—

**SAM.** It's gay then.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** What did I tell you about that word?

**SAM.** What? It means happy and excited. Look it up in the dictionary.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You... children may not understand this, but Hamlet is the greatest play ever written by mankind. Ever. The greatest.

**JAMIE.** Why?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Because I said so.

**ROBERTA.** Because of its epic beauty, skank!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Okay, all right.

**AMBER.** Well I don't get it at all.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Well, yes, some of you are going to have trouble getting this because you aren't very smart. And that's not your fault, that's just genetics—your parents are probably dumb too.

*(KAYLIE comes back with LUNA, who doesn't speak. They sit down at the edge of the circle.)*

But we have a responsibility to literature here, you understand?

**ROBERTA.** Yes.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Someone besides Roberta?

**ROBERTA.** *(Threatening:)* Someone besides me?

*(The other girls grumble in approval.)*

That's better.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** My talents are wasted on you! You're scum! You're—

*(MISS MYLENBUSH stops, shaking.)*

I need to leave.

*(She exits quickly. The other girls watch her go.)*

**KAYLIE.** This is stupid. She's insane.

**JAMIE.** Well, yeah.

*(ROBERTA and GOOPER come over.)*

**ROBERTA.** You guys working on your lines?

**KAYLIE.** Sure.

**ROBERTA.** 'Cause I was noticin' you weren't getting 'em all right in practice, you know what I'm saying?

**KAYLIE.** No, not really.

**GOOPER.** Oh no you didn't!

*(ROBERTA leans in.)*

**ROBERTA.** First off, you're too short for Hamlet.

**KAYLIE.** I'm also a thirteen-year-old girl.

**ROBERTA.** I don't think you can handle the psychological complexity, frankly. And that saddens me.

**GOOPER.** Yeah! Psychological... complex—what?

**ROBERTA.** You know what I do when I'm saddened?

**GOOPER.** Tell 'em!

**ROBERTA.** I get really mad and then I start hurting things... like other people. I twist off their fingernails and shove them down their throat.

**JAMIE.** Hey, listen—

**ROBERTA.** Was I talking to you? If I may continue... you either fully express the self-doubt and all-consuming ambiguity—

**GOOPER.** (*Overlapping:*) Ambiguity, wench!

**ROBERTA.** (*Continuing:*) —of Hamlet's self-torture, or I'm going to eat your face. You understand?

**KAYLIE.** You're going to eat my face?

**ROBERTA.** That was just an expression. But it will hurt bad. And you will no longer be pretty.

(*ROBERTA walks off. GOOPER remains.*)

**GOOPER.** Yeah! Skank!

(*GOOPER follows after ROBERTA.*)

**JAMIE.** That's messed up right there. Don't worry about it.

**KAYLIE.** Yeah, well you weren't here when she chewed off one girl's nose after she couldn't explain all four causes behind the Civil War. She's crazy.

(*MR. JACOBS enters with BRITTNEE, a new girl, who is cheerful and happy.*)

**MR. JACOBS.** Okay, everybody—

(*He looks around.*)

Where's Miss Mylenbush?

**SAM.** She's having a private moment.

**MR. JACOBS.** Okay, then—I wanted to bring a new student by...

*(BRITTNEE steps forward and waves happily.)*

This is Brittnee.

**BRITTNEE.** Hi! I'm Brittnee!

**MR. JACOBS.** And Brittnee is going to be staying with us for a while. Until she sorts a few things out. So, Brittnee, this is...

*(The girls raise their hands as they are mentioned.)*

Kaylie, Jamie, Melanie, the quiet girl—

**KAYLIE.** Luna.

**MR. JACOBS.** Whatever. Roberta, Nancy—

*(GOOPER grimaces.)*

Amber, Tiffany, Morgan, Annie, Sam, and... Doris.

*(The girls laugh.)*

**MORGAN.** Hi Doris.

**DORIS.** You call me that again and I'll stab you!

**MR. JACOBS.** Doris has a few issues.

**MORGAN.** Doris.

**DORIS.** That's it!

*(DORIS lunges at MORGAN.)*

**MR. JACOBS.** Okay, all right, girls!

*(He separates them.)*

Hey Morgan, um...

**MORGAN.** What?

**MR. JACOBS.** Are you feeling all right?

**MORGAN.** Yes. *(Speaking in a higher voice:)* Yes.

**MR. JACOBS.** Okay, then. Carry on, ladies.

*(He walks off.)*

**MORGAN.** That was close.

**MELANIE.** You're so gonna get busted.

**DORIS.** I'm gonna kick you in the nuts and then they'll figure it out.

**MORGAN.** They will not.

**MELANIE.** Why are you in here, anyway?

**MORGAN.** They made a mistake when they put me away. And then I showed up here and they didn't want to fill out all the paperwork to send me back... so they're just kind of pretending I'm a girl.

**MELANIE.** Huh.

**MORGAN.** I don't mind. I think maybe they just think I'm really masculine.

**JAMIE.** Yeah, that's it.

**MORGAN.** Shut up.

**BRITTNEE.** Hi!

*(No one says anything to her.)*

I'm so excited to be here! It's like I've got ten new sisters! And a new brother, sort of.

**MORGAN.** Thank you.

**SAM.** Look, what's your name, Barbie?

**BRITTNEE.** Brittnee! But I love playing Barbies!

**SAM.** Okay, look, Brittnee, you're gonna have to understand something. This isn't church camp. We're not here to play Barbies.

**MELANIE.** Yeah, we prefer Lil' Bratz!

*(Everyone looks at MELANIE.)*

Oh. I mean. We don't play with dolls.

**SAM.** We're doin' hard time. So you better shut up and get with the program or somebody's gonna beat you down. Got it?

**BRITTNEE.** Sure!

**SAM.** The attitude isn't helping.

**BRITTNEE.** Sorry! I just want to be friends!

**SAM.** You can shut up, that would help.

**AMBER.** What are you in for, anyway?

**BRITTNEE.** I killed a man in Georgia!

*(AMBER and SAM back away.)*

Let's play Barbies!

*(BRITTNEE takes out a Barbie and Ken doll. She begins playing with them. KAYLIE takes JAMIE aside.)*

**KAYLIE.** I really am starting to hate this place, I gotta tell you.

**JAMIE.** Yeah, well, it's temporary.

**KAYLIE.** I'm here till I'm sixteen.

**JAMIE.** Well...

*(In the background, we hear BRITTNEE playing Barbies.)*

**BRITTNEE.**

*(Ken:)* "Why, Hello, there little girly, you sure look purty."

*(Barbie:)* "My mother told me not to talk to strangers."

*(Ken:)* "Why she didn't mean me, I'm sure."

*(Barbie:)* "Yes she did! I'm going to take a sewing needle and stab it through your eye!"

*(Barbie savagely attacks Ken.)*

*(Ken:)* "Aaaah! You're crazy! Aaaaaah! My eye!"

*(Barbie:)* "Die Die Die Die!"

*(A new Ken appears.)*

*(Ken:)* “Hello there little girl, we’re the police.”

*(Barbie:)* “You’re strangers!”

*(Ken:)* “No we’re not—aaaaah!”

*(BRITTNEE continues playing with the Barbies in the background.)*

*(MISS MYLENBUSH returns.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Okay, everyone, I’ve spent some time giving myself paper cuts and I feel a lot better—let’s get back to work!

*(She sees BRITTNEE.)*

Who are you? It doesn’t matter—you’re going to be Rosencrantz.

**BRITTNEE.** Who?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You’re an old friend of Hamlet’s who’s been paid off by the evil king to find out whether or not Hamlet is crazy or just acting crazy, and then you decide to kill him, but instead Hamlet kills you first. Okay?

**BRITTNEE.** Okay!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Okay, we’re doing Act One, Scene Two. We need Claudius, Hamlet, Gertrude, and... the tree.

*(ANNIE, KAYLIE, and MORGAN come over. LUNA stands there.)*

Tree! In the background.

*(LUNA moves over near the background.)*

Everybody else off stage.

*(The others leave.)*

All right everyone... Go!

*(MISS MYLENBUSH leaves. Everyone stands there.)*

**MORGAN.** Line?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Just go with it!

**MORGAN.** Oh... um... Hamlet—you're looking all pissed off lately.

**KAYLIE.** Yes I am. I am pissed off.

**ROBERTA.** *(Off-stage:)* Where's the psychological complexity!!

**GOOPER.** *(Off-stage:)* Yeah! Psycho—something or other!

**KAYLIE.** *(Flustered:)* Mom?

**MORGAN.** Yes, son?

**KAYLIE.** Didn't you love Dad?

**MORGAN.** I did. But... um...

**KAYLIE.** Why did you marry his brother then, who's... ugly.

**ANNIE.** Hey! I am not!

**MORGAN.** I think she's cute.

**ANNIE.** Thank you.

**MORGAN.** What are you doing after this?

**ANNIE.** Nothing.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Keep going!

**KAYLIE.** Oh, um...

**MORGAN.** So, um... Hamlet, what's your deal?

**KAYLIE.** I'm pissed off.

**MORGAN.** Right. Well, um... Claudius, don't you have a line?

**ANNIE.** What?

**MORGAN.** Don't you have a line?

**ANNIE.** I think I do.

**MORGAN.** Well?

**ANNIE.** Um...

*(ANNIE breaks into song:)*

“Tomorrow, tomorrow, I love ya, tomorrow! You’re only... a DAY A-WAYYYYYY!!!”

(MISS MYLENBUSH *storms back on stage.*)

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Wait, wait, whoa! What are you doing?

**ANNIE.** I thought this was the spot where I started singing.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** No.

**ANNIE.** So it’s later then?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** We’re not doing Annie.

**ANNIE.** We’re not?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** No.

**ANNIE.** I thought we were doing a musical about a lovable orphan with red hair who meets up with a rich benefactor and goes on to live happily ever after.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** No, we’re doing a troubling play about the consequences of self-doubt and the impossibility of acting with certainty in a cruel and uncaring world. And everyone dies at the end.

(*Pause.*)

**ANNIE.** Is there singing?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** No. You are playing Claudius, who murdered his brother by pouring poison into his ear—

**TIFFANY.** (*Off-stage:*) That’s gross!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** And marrying his widow in order to become King of Denmark.

**KAYLIE.** Is this why I’m pissed off?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes.

**KAYLIE.** Oh. Now I get it.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** All right, let's move on to another scene. Hamlet, Claudius, Gertrude—off, tree, stay right there. And let's get ready for the entrance of the Sugar Gumdrops. Okay?

*(Everyone exits. LUNA remains on stage alone.)*

Okay—the wind is blowing... it's a dark night in Denmark...

*(LUNA doesn't do anything.)*

The wind is blowing!

*(LUNA waves her arms a little bit.)*

Okay... ready... Go!

*(GOOPER, LILLY, and SAM enter slowly.)*

**SAM.** What are we supposed to be doing here?

**LILLY.** I want to burn stuff!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You're dancing.

**SAM.** Why?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Because you only exist inside Hamlet's mind—and Hamlet's mind wants you to dance!

*(GOOPER, LILLY, and SAM dance sadly.)*

Enter Hamlet!

*(KAYLIE enters.)*

**KAYLIE.** Okay... um... to be or—

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Stop!

*(Everybody stops.)*

What are you doing? What are you doing?

**GOOPER.** Are you talking to us?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes! You are the physical manifestation of his doubt! Act like it!

*(They look confused.)*

That's better. Now—again—

**KAYLIE.** Um... to be or—

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Stop!

*(She stops.)*

To be! Like this!

*(She moves the Sugar Gumdrops into the right position.)*

Then... not to be! Like this!

*(She moves them into a second position.)*

Got it? To be!

*(The Gumdrops move into the first position.)*

Not to be!

*(They move to the second position. With each successive phrase getting faster and faster the gumdrops continue to move, getting faster and faster as well.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** To be! Not to be! To be! Not to be! To be! Not to be! Not to be! Not to be! To be! Not to be! To be! To be! To be! To be! Not to be!

*(The Gumdrops are exhausted.)*

Good. Now—you're acting.

*(To KAYLIE:)*

Go.

**KAYLIE.** Um... to be or... line?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* Not to be!

*(The Gumdrops move.)*

Not you!

**KAYLIE.** Not to be.

*(The Gumdrops move again.)*

Whether... 'tis nobler in the mind—

*(The Gumdrops act this out.)*

To suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to... take arms against a sea of troubles...

*(The Gumdrops continue to perform.)*

All right, okay—look—I don't know that I can work with these people.

*(The Gumdrops continue to physically act out every word KAYLIE says.)*

I mean, is this really Hamlet? Would you—would you stop that please?! Seriously, it's really annoying.

*(MISS MYLENBUSH comes back out on stage.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** What is your problem?

**KAYLIE.** This is stupid!

**SAM.** It's retarded!

**AMBER.** *(Off-stage:)* I don't get it!

**SAM.** You're retarded too!

**LILLY.** Now can I burn stuff?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** All right all right! I can't help it if you're not very smart!

**KAYLIE.** It's not that I'm not—

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Quiet!

**KAYLIE.** No you need to listen—

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Little girl, I will decide where and when we will we will interpret Shakespeare!

**KAYLIE.** Sugar Gumdrops? Can you show me in the script where it calls for Sugar Gumdrops?!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Well there's no talking bear either but we've got one!

*(DORIS—as the talking bear—enters.)*

**DORIS.** Is it my turn? Hamlet—I am the—

**KAYLIE.** It's not your turn!

**DORIS.** Get your hand out of my honey jar.

**KAYLIE.** The talking bear isn't until Act Four!

**DORIS.** Oh.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** The talking bear enters whenever I say she does! And right now she's going to come on stage!

**KAYLIE.** You know what? You know what? I quit! Find a new Hamlet!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You can't quit!

**KAYLIE.** Watch me!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You're making a big mistake, missy! You quit this show and I'll make sure you won't get out of here till you're fifty!

**KAYLIE.** I don't care!

*(She starts to storm off.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Where are you going?!

**KAYLIE.** I'm leaving!

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You're dead, you hear me? I can do Shakespeare without you! I can do it without any of you!

*(MELANIE enters.)*

**MELANIE.** Can I have her part?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes. I need you.

*(Lights fade.)*

*(Later. Back in the girls' dorm room. A plain, unadorned bed and little else. KAYLIE has a bag and is stuffing things into it. JAMIE enters. She watches KAYLIE for a while.)*

**JAMIE.** What are you packing for?

**KAYLIE.** What do you think?

**JAMIE.** You're taking off?

**KAYLIE.** Yup.

**JAMIE.** Had enough, huh?

**KAYLIE.** Pretty much.

*(KAYLIE gets her things together and starts for the door.)*

**JAMIE.** You figure they'll let you just walk out of here?

**KAYLIE.** I'm getting out, one way or another.

**JAMIE.** What's that mean?

**KAYLIE.** I'm not sticking around here—to jump through hoops for that psycho.

**JAMIE.** Hey, come on—

**KAYLIE.** What? You heard her. She's crazy. And you guys are all following orders like some kind of stupid little army—

**JAMIE.** Better than sitting here doing nothing.

**KAYLIE.** Well I'm not doing that either.

**JAMIE.** You're not gonna make it.

**KAYLIE.** Watch me.

**JAMIE.** Before you got here, there was another girl who tried the same thing. Four times actually. They kept on adding a year to her sentence each time—the last time, they were tackling her, and she was screaming and yelling and everything, and she bit this guard in the cheek and held on—we didn't see her anymore after that.

**KAYLIE.** What'd they do?

**JAMIE.** They sent her to straight-up prison—no more kids stuff. And she went from getting out at eighteen to getting out at thirty.

**KAYLIE.** Well I'm not planning on biting anyone.

**JAMIE.** Yeah, but once you start down the road, you never know. The lure of human flesh and all...

**KAYLIE.** Shut up. You've been here too long, that's your problem. You don't even question anything.

**JAMIE.** What's that supposed to mean?

**KAYLIE.** Just what I said. You just follow along, no matter what. She tells you to jump, you jump. She tells you that Hamlet has a talking bear and a bunch of dancing gumdrops in it and you just accept it—

**JAMIE.** What do I care if there's a talking bear in the show?

**KAYLIE.** I'm sick of it. I'm sick of this place.

**JAMIE.** You should come back to the show. It's better with you in it.

**KAYLIE.** It sucks anyway.

**JAMIE.** We could do it better—you could do it better—they've got Melanie in there now—

**KAYLIE.** Melanie? She's the worst one.

**JAMIE.** I know. You should've seen her at rehearsal after you left.

*(On the other side of the stage, MELANIE begins a new soliloquy. MISS MYLENBUSH hovers nearby.)*

**MELANIE.** What a piece of work is a man? What does that mean?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You're frustrated with mankind.

**MELANIE.** Really?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes. They've disappointed you. So you turn... to the bears.

*(DORIS enters as the talking bear.)*

**MELANIE.** What a piece of work is a man... and what a better piece of work is a bear.

**DORIS.** Uh-oh, Hamlet.

**MELANIE.** What is it, talking bear?

**DORIS.** Well, we bears have a saying: “Sometimes you stick your paw in and you get honey, and sometimes you get stung by bees. And then sometimes you steal the Park Ranger’s lunch.”

**MELANIE.** (*Overacting:*) The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals, in action, how like an angel, in apprehension, how like a god. And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me. Only bears.

**DORIS.** Now you’re talking!

**MELANIE.** I feel like hibernating all the time.

**DORIS.** Me too.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** And scene! Brilliant! You guys are amazing! I should fire the whole rest of the cast.

*(Lights switch back to KAYLIE and JAMIE.)*

**JAMIE.** And she’s adding the bear into every scene. Now, instead of Hamlet getting poisoned and killed at the end, the bear eats everyone except for Hamlet, and Hamlet rides the bear off into the sunset.

**KAYLIE.** That’s messed up.

**JAMIE.** I know. None of us have any idea what’s going on. You gotta come and like restore order or something.

**KAYLIE.** Sorry.

*(Pause.)*

**JAMIE.** The show needs you.

**KAYLIE.** Tough.

*(She starts to leave.)*

**JAMIE.** What am I gonna do here if you take off?

*(KAYLIE stops.)*

**KAYLIE.** I don’t know. Same as what you did before I got here.

**JAMIE.** You’re my only friend in this place.

**KAYLIE.** So come on and leave with me. We'll both break out of here.

**JAMIE.** And go where? Do what?

**KAYLIE.** I got some friends—we could crash on their couch—I mean, don't you got anybody? Like, family or anything?

**JAMIE.** Family?

**KAYLIE.** Yeah.

**JAMIE.** No. My dad took off before I was born... and my mom—I'm not going back to my mom.

**KAYLIE.** If it makes you feel any better, I'm not going back to my Mom either. She doesn't want me back. She's glad I'm in here. One less thing to slow her down. One less thing to worry about.

**JAMIE.** Yeah.

**KAYLIE.** But what I'm saying is you gotta make it yourself, you know? You can't just sit back and wait for these people to make all the decisions for you. Like they're gonna protect you. No one's gonna protect you. All anyone ever wants is to get something outta you or else just make you go away. It's like we're all at this table, and there's just one piece of bread in the middle, and it's who're you gonna climb over to get it? To eat, you know? To live. I'm tired of living in a cage. Locked up, waiting for somebody to drop some crumbs in front of my face and ask me for gratitude.

**JAMIE.** So you're gonna live out there?

**KAYLIE.** I'm not scared. It's just me. I'm gonna be fine. You'll be fine too.

*(Pause.)*

**JAMIE.** You got no idea.

**KAYLIE.** What?

**JAMIE.** Before I was here—I mean my mom hates me—and I knew that even when I was little. I don't know how I knew, but I just did. 'Cause she just didn't... love me, you know? I remember I would just sit in the corner and cry—all the time, I would put my head to

the wall, and I'd smell the old paint, and I just wanted to die. Like, this is, this is kindergarten. I wanted to die in kindergarten. And I grew up, and I grew up with this hole in me, and all I ever wanted to do was fill it with something, anything. So I just started doing whatever I could just to not feel anything—I mean, in sixth grade I was strung out on all kinds of stuff—all the time—and it still didn't help—I mean it helped for a minute while I was on it but then as soon as I wasn't messed up anymore, that old empty spot in the middle of the me would come right back and I'd feel like being in that corner again. She didn't care. She saw it all, she didn't care. So maybe I wanted to kill myself—but I got lucky and I ended up here instead—and I'm alive now 'cause I came here, and I've got a little bit of self-esteem now, just a touch of it, and that's new to me, and that's pretty cool. So I'm not really ready to go back out there yet. 'Cause it may not be great here, but I know what's out there.

**KAYLIE.** Okay.

**JAMIE.** You'll stay?

**KAYLIE.** I'll think about it.

*(MISS MYLENBUSH is heard off-stage.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(Off-stage:)* All right! Time for rehearsal!

**KAYLIE.** I gotta go.

*(KAYLIE exits. Lights shift back to the cafetorium. MISS MYLENBUSH comes out on stage, followed by LUNA, AMBER and MELANIE.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** *(To LUNA:)* Tree, stay there. It's windy. Yes. Good.

*(She turns to AMBER.)*

Okay, in this scene you have gone crazy becomes Hamlet is pretending to be crazy.

**AMBER.** What?

**MELANIE.** Am I really crazy or just pretending to be crazy?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Well, you start out pretending to be crazy, but then pretending to be crazy drives you insane, so you're pretty much nuts by this point.

**AMBER.** This doesn't make any sense.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** And you have gone insane because you love Hamlet—but then he dumped you because your father is working with his mother, who he's angry with because she dumped his father to go out with his uncle. And he killed your dad. For no reason.

**AMBER.** What?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** And now you're so upset with the whole thing that you've gone insane and you're going to throw yourself into a small stream and drown.

**AMBER.** This is crazy.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Right. Go.

**MELANIE.** Um... Hey, Ophelia. Take off, eh? You hoser.

**AMBER.** Aaaaaaaaah.

*(She stops and looks at MISS MYLENBUSH who motions for her to continue.)*

Aaaaaaaaah? You're a jerk, Hamlet.

**MELANIE.** You're a jerk.

**AMBER.** Nobody likes you.

**MELANIE.** At least I'm not going to kill myself by throwing myself in a river.

**AMBER.** At least I'm not gonna... shut up.

**MELANIE.** You're not gonna shut up? Good one. Moron.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Okay. The pain has become too great.

**AMBER.** Now I'm going to kill myself. Aaaaaah.

*(She is about to fall on the ground.)*

Do I have to fall?

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Yes, you're dead.

**AMBER.** Can I die like propped up against something? I don't want to get dirty.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You're dead! You can't stay standing!

**AMBER.** Can I die against the tree?

*(AMBER collapses onto LUNA.)*

Aaaaah. Now I'm dead.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** All right—and scene. Good. Can I get everybody out here please?

*(Nothing happens.)*

**I NEED EVERYBODY OUT HERE RIGHT NOW YOU SCUM!!!**

*(The other girls, without Kaylie, come on stage.)*

Okay, if you could please sit in a circle?

*(No one sits down.)*

**TIFFANY.** *(Overlapping:)* The floor's dirty.

**BRITTNEE.** *(Overlapping:)* I'm wearing a skirt.

**GOOPER.** *(Overlapping:)* I have problems with my knees.

**SAM.** *(Overlapping:)* I hate sitting.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** SIT!!!

*(They do so. MISS MYLENBUSH walks around them, circling the group from the outside.)*

All right, now listen up. This is going to be our final dress rehearsal. Tomorrow night we're going to perform in front of the Board of Trustees of this institution. It will be the greatest night of your lives. Some day, when you're old, when you're living in a assisted living center that will probably resemble this place quite a bit, you're going to look back on your wasted, sad, little lives, and you're going to think: where did the time go? Did I ever really do anything? Was I ever good at anything? And maybe a tear will roll down your withered cheek, and for a moment you'll believe that nothing was

worth it, that life was meaningless, that your children have forgotten you, that all hope is lost... but then... you'll remember one day. You'll remember one day, when you were a kid, when you had the chance to seize your destiny—to take arm against a sea of troubles—to play your part in the greatest play ever written, to achieve art—and a smile will crack your withered lips as you remember your brilliant turn as the talking bear, or maybe the majesty of being a Sugar Gumdrops, and you will laugh, and you will think, “my life has meaning, if only because of that one day.”

*(She pauses for effect.)*

That day is tomorrow. You will never be the same. And every day forward you will carry with you the memory of *Hamlet*, you will live, breath, and sleep *Hamlet*, you will be *Hamlet* and you will LIVE! BY GOD YOU WILL LIVE!!!

*(ROBERTA—and only ROBERTA—leaps to her feet.)*

**ROBERTA.** YESSSSS! HAM-LETTTTT!

*(She lets out a terrific Primal Scream like a football player juiced for the big game—she grabs SAM, pulls her to feet, and chest bumps her.)*

**SAM.** Ow!

*(ROBERTA runs off screaming. We hear her off-stage.)*

**ROBERTA.** HAMLET!! RARRR! HAMLET!!!

*(Pause. JAMIE gets up.)*

**JAMIE.** Now's our chance guys!

*(MORGAN, AMBER, and DORIS get up suddenly, grab MISS MYLENBUSH and tackle her.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** Ah! What's going on!

**JAMIE.** You guys get Gooper!

**GOOPER.** What?

*(ANNIE and TIFFANY grab GOOPER and cover her mouth. She tries to struggle.)*

**JAMIE.** Who's got the rope?

*(LUNA produces two lengths of rope. She tosses one to each set of girls, who begin tying up their prisoners.)*

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** You'll never get away with this!

**JAMIE.** Oh we will. You see... some of us got to thinking. You're a really bad director. And maybe we should give Shakespeare a shot anyway. Maybe it wasn't Shakespeare that was annoying and crazy and a big pain in the butt, maybe it was just you. And since we can't tie up Shakespeare cause he's dead, we're gonna tie up you instead, and we're going to do the play our way. In a way that makes sense.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** It won't make sense!

**JAMIE.** Oh we think it will.

**MISS MYLENBUSH.** That's the great secret! None of it makes sense! It really is confusing and annoying and mean—but we make you study it anyway because we're really horrible people who had hard childhoods and didn't get elected homecoming queen even though we were so much cuter than that tramp Vicki Coudert with her stupid red hair and French name and boyfriend who could break-dance! And we're taking it out on you! And we're going to make your lives horrible in exchange! And that's the Circle of Life!

**JAMIE.** Take her away, girls. And Morgan.

**LILLY.** Let's burn the witch!

*(MORGAN and the girls drag her off-stage.)*

**JAMIE.** All right—listen up—

*(JAMIE notices KAYLIE standing on stage.)*

**KAYLIE.** Hey. Can I have a part?

**JAMIE.** Sure.

**KAYLIE.** We still gotta deal with Roberta—she's gonna be angry, and she's gonna try and eat all of our faces.

**BRITTNEE.** No problem! I've been poisoning her food the last few days—she's so weak she couldn't beat up a fly!

*(Everyone stops and looks at BRITTNEE.)*

What?

**JAMIE.** Nothing.

**BRITTNEE.** Can there be Barbies in the show?

**JAMIE.** *(Scared:)* Anything you want, Brittnee.

**BRITTNEE.** Yay!

**JAMIE.** All right, then, let's do this thing from the top. Kaylie, you're Hamlet.

**MELANIE.** I was Hamlet—

**SAM.** Yeah, but you're terrible.

**MELANIE.** Hey.

**JAMIE.** Sam's right, Melanie. We're trying to do this good. Okay, so we start with the ghost—

*(TIFFANY and KAYLIE enter—everyone else exits.)*

**TIFFANY.** Hamlet...

*(Pause.)*

Boooooooo.

**KAYLIE.** Ah! A ghost!

**TIFFANY.** Get revenge on my murderer.

*(She starts to leave.)*

**KAYLIE.** Wait! I need answers to so many questions!

**TIFFANY.** Boooo. And get me a ham sandwich...

*(She exits. MORGAN and ANNIE enter.)*

**ANNIE.** Hey Hamlet. What's up?

**KAYLIE.** My father's ghost just came back from the grave and told me you poured poison in his ear.

**TIFFANY.** (*Off-stage:*) Gross!

**BRITTNEE.** (*Off-stage:*) It really works!

**ANNIE.** Yeah, I did it, so what, what are you gonna do about it?

**MORGAN.** I love your honesty.

**ANNIE.** Thank you.

**MORGAN.** It's refreshing.

**KAYLIE.** You know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna think about it for a while and think about killing myself—then I'm going to dump my girlfriend.

**MORGAN.** We'll leave you alone so you can have a monologue.

**KAYLIE.** That's very kind of you.

(*MORGAN and ANNIE leave.*)

So... um... to be or not to be. So... life is pretty bad. And I'd kill myself except I'm worried that the afterlife would be worse than this. So that's pretty much it.

(*AMBER runs in.*)

**AMBER.** Hamlet, I love you!

(*MELANIE enters.*)

**MELANIE.** Hi, I'm Polonius, Ophelia's father. Just thought I'd introduce myself in case there was any confusion.

**KAYLIE.** Die!!

(*KAYLIE stabs MELANIE with an imaginary sword. MELANIE dies.*)

**AMBER.** Ah! Why did you do that?

**KAYLIE.** I really have no idea. It seemed like a good idea at the time.

(*TIFFANY enters quickly.*)

**TIFFANY.** Booo. What in the heck are you doing?

*(She exits.)*

**AMBER.** I'm going to go throw myself in the river!

**KAYLIE.** You do that.

*(AMBER exits. MELANIE lies there on the floor, dead.)*

Can somebody take care of this body please?

*(BRITTNEE enters, Barbie in hand.)*

**BRITTNEE.** *(As the Barbie:)* Hi there!

**KAYLIE.** Um... hello. Who are you?

**BRITTNEE.** My name is Rosencrantz, the Magical Fairy Unicorn Pony Girl. And I'm here to tell you something!

**KAYLIE.** *(Utterly confused:)* What are you going to tell me?

**BRITTNEE.** After you kill someone, the best way to dispose of a dead body is by pouring acid on it! Hee hee!

*(She dances off.)*

**KAYLIE.** Um...

*(JAMIE enters.)*

**JAMIE.** Hey Hamlet. You may not remember me, but I'm Laertes, I'm Ophelia's brother.

**KAYLIE.** Oh. Hey, how's it going?

**JAMIE.** Not so good. You killed my dad and then you made my sister throw herself in the river. I've got a bone to pick with you.

**KAYLIE.** Can't we just be friends?

*(MORGAN and ANNIE enter.)*

**ANNIE.** Hey I've got an idea. How 'bout you guys have a duel with swords?

**JAMIE.** That sounds great!

**ANNIE.** Here, Laertes, I'll put poison on your sword so if you hit Hamlet with it, it'll kill him.

**KAYLIE.** I'm still here you know.

**ANNIE.** And here's a glass of poison you can give him if he's thirsty.

**KAYLIE.** I'm not going to drink that.

**ANNIE.** Are you thirsty Hamlet?

**KAYLIE.** No thanks.

**ANNIE.** Are you thirsty now?

**KAYLIE.** No.

**MORGAN.** I am!

*(He grabs the cup and drinks from it.)*

Aaaah! Poison!

*(He dies.)*

**ANNIE.** Whoops.

**KAYLIE.** Mom!

**ANNIE.** Why does this keep happening to me?

**KAYLIE.** Now we're going to fight again.

*(KAYLIE and JAMIE fight with imaginary swords.)*

**KAYLIE.** Ah! I've been hit!

**JAMIE.** Ah! I've dropped my imaginary sword!

**KAYLIE.** Ha ha! Now I've picked up your imaginary sword!

**JAMIE.** You have not!

**KAYLIE.** Now I've stabbed you with it!

**JAMIE.** What!

**KAYLIE.** It's like ten feet long!

**JAMIE.** Shield!

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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