The Ingénue Slumber Party Hauntening

Scene 1

Juliet sits in her pajamas on the bed, flipping through a parchment magazine. From offstage, voices.

Father: (*Voice*) What Juliet! Thy mother and I are going to couple's counseling. We should be back in a couple of weeks.

Juliet: Okay.

Mother: (*Voice*) I've left some ducats for pizza on the counter. Dominos has a special on their star-shaped stuffed-crust. You're a star-crust lover, aren't you?

Juliet: Just go already, geez!

Father: (*Voice*) The number for the friar department is on the fridge. Ask for Lawrence.

Juliet: I'm not a little kid, Dad, I know how to shrive.

Mother: (*Voice*) And remember the rules. No masquerades, no murder, and *no* / Mont—

Juliet: (*Overlapping*) / No Montagues, I know! GODDDDDD.

Mother: (*Voice*) Bye, honey, hope you're not still a little asshole when we get back!

A door closes. Juliet waits a second and then runs over to the window.

Juliet: They're gone!

Desdemona: (*Climbing into the room*) Finally.

Juliet: Omigod, Desdemona, we are gonna have so much fun. Sleepovers every day!

Desdemona: Right. Maybe you can invite your cousin over…

Juliet: Tybalt?!

Desdemona: Yasss, wench! Me-ow.

Juliet: Thou art gross. Besides, I thought you had a boyfriend.

Desdemona: Whatever, I was but kidding. Man, I can't believe your parents just leave you unsupervised. My dad doesn't even like it when I sneak out of the house for a couple hours.

Juliet: I guess they just realized that I'm pretty mature for my age.

Desdemona: Is that why they're always trying to set you up with middle-aged counts?

Juliet: Not anymore! For the next two weeks, thou and I are gonna rule Verona.

The Nurse steps into the room. She is cool and has just started college. Perhaps she has a cigarette behind her ear.

Nurse: Aaaaand scene.

Juliet: What are you doing here?

Nurse: Didst thou think thy parents were gonna entrust their Italian *piazza* to two little meatballs who aren't even old enough to die in childbirth?

Juliet: We are so!

Desdemona: (*Aside to Juliet*) You didn't tell me your old babysitter was gonna be here! (*To Nurse*) Hey girl! I haven't seen thee since you graduated. How's Nursing school?

Nurse: Tis fine. I already finished my bloodletting practicum, though I'm thinking I might change my minor to Intergenerational Bullying instead. Speaking of which, I don't recall Mama Capulet saying thou couldst have friends over.

Juliet: O please, good Nurse?

Desdemona: Let me stay!

Nurse: Hmm, I guess if you're distracting one another, you won't be annoying *me* as much… But then again, your unhappiness *does* sustain me… (*The girls start to object*) Alright, tell you what. Desdemona can sleep over—

Juliet & Desdemona: Yay!

Nurse: *If* you invite that foreign exchange student too.

Juliet & Desdemona: Nay!

Juliet: Wherefore?

Nurse: Because-fore I said so. Jeez. Also I was supposed to babysit her too. Nursie double-booked herself. That's my bad.

Desdemona: But she's so weird.

Nurse: Exactly. She ought to fit right in.

Scene 2

Juliet and Desdemona sit opposite Ophelia. Pizza crusts, parchment plates, and soda goblets are littered around the room.

Juliet: So… Ophelia, is it?

Ophelia: Yes.

Desdemona: And you're from…

Ophelia: Denmark, born and bred.

Juliet: What brings you to Italy?

Ophelia: I am part of an Ingénue Exchange Program.

Desdemona: Dost thou have a boyfriend?

Ophelia: Many have asked the same thing. There is a boy in my village, but 'tis complicated.

Desdemona: Well, is he nice to you?

Ophelia: Not really.

Desdemona: Then he is your boyfriend. Get it!

Ophelia: What about you?

Desdemona: Yea, I have a boyfriend. But you don't know him. He's older, in the army.

Juliet: Yes, Desdemona has this amazing boyfriend that coincidentally none of us have ever met.

Desdemona: Shut up, he is totally real.

Ophelia: What's his name?

Desdemona: Othello. He loves travelling, and war, and handkerchiefs, and he never ever gets jealous.

Ophelia: Methinks the lady doth protest too much.

Desdemona: Whatever, thou dost not even go here. Besides, what Otello and I have is real.

Juliet: "O-tello"? You just said his name was "O-*thell*o"!

Desdemona: Whatever, I call him both names, shut up.

Ophelia: (*To Juliet*) And thou? (*Desdemona scoffs*) What?

Desdemona: Juliet's never had a boyfriend. Unless we count Paris. And trust me, we don't.

Juliet: 'Tis not true!

Desdemona: Hast thou even kissed a boy?

Juliet: Yea! Remember those two gentlemen from Verona who crashed homecoming?

Desdemona: You didn't!

Juliet: Not *both* of them.

Desdemona: And? Didst thou finally go to the Township of Poundship???

Juliet: Nay, twas but a little hand stuff.

Ophelia: What is this "hand stuff"?

Juliet: O, like palm-to-palm old timey-dancing.

Ophelia is scandalized. *The Nurse enters.*

Nurse: You all seem to be getting along… which is a bit of a bummer, if I'm being honest. Anyways, time for bed.

Desdemona: Already?

Nurse: What do you want me to do? It's 1584 and it's *dark*, so our options are kinda limited. (*Exiting*) Now pipe down or I'll murder you all.

Juliet: (*Fondly*) O Nurse.

Ophelia: I guess we should brush our teeth.

Desdemona: Jeez, Ophelia, do you always do exactly as you're told?

Ophelia: Yes. Always. Without question.

Desdemona: Well, maybe you shouldn't.

Ophelia: Okay, I won't. Thank you, Desdemona.

A transition. The maids sit around a candle.

Juliet: What should we do? Play troth or dare?

Desdemona: How about a *pillow fight!!!*

She whacks Juliet.

Ophelia: Back in Denmark, we tell ghost stories to pass the time. I know a good one. Get comfortable: it is four hours long. Act One: a man kills the king his brother, and steals his wife—

Juliet & Desdemona: Ewwww!

Ophelia: But then the prince sees his father's ghost 'pon the battlements, moaning—

A spooky noise is heard. The girls freeze. They shush.

Juliet: *Whatwasthat???*

Desdemona: *HowshouldIknow???*

Ophelia: Perchance 'tis the ghost of a murdered loved one.

The moaning continues. Tense huddled silence. Suddenly, the Nurse jumps out.

Nurse: Boo! Got thee! O you stupid, stupid little ingénues, you should have seen your visages.

Juliet: What is thy damage, Nurse?

Nurse: Heard thee virgins telling ghost stories. Figured I'd show you how 'tis done. Candle me. (*She holds the flame beneath her chin like a flashlight*) Hast thou ever heard of Queen Mab? (*They shake their heads; she continues creepily*) She is the fairies' midwife and comes athwart men's noses as they lie asleep.

The girls cover their noses.

Ophelia: Is this true?

Desdemona: No. Maybe. Yes. Shut up.

Nurse: Her wagon-spokes are made of spiders' legs, her whip of cricket's bone; her wagoner a small grey-coated gnat—

Juliet: Nurse, stop, thou knowest I am scared of small grey-coated gnats.

Nurse: Her chariot is an empty hazel-nut—

Ophelia: I am allergic to the nuts!

Nurse: And in this state she gallops night by night through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love.

Ingénues: Aww.

Nurse: And sometimes she driveth o'er a soldier's neck and then dreams he of cutting throats!

Ingénues: Aaugh!

Nurse: This is that very Mab that plats the manes of horses in the night and bakes the elflocks in sluttish hairs—

Desdemona: (*Scandalized*) Juliet, she said "sluttish"! This is the best night of my life.

Nurse: This is the hag—

Juliet: Peace, Nurse, peace! Thou talk'st of nothing.

Nurse: True, I talk of dreams, which are the children of an idle brain, you big dummies. But whatever thou dost… say not her name three times, or else will she appear and brutally murder all those who summoned her… (*Exiting*) Now go to sleep or I'm sending you all to the nunnery.

Ophelia: ("*If I had a nickel!*") If I had a kroner!

Juliet: Like I'm gonna get any sleep tonight. "Plats the manes of horses…" (*Shudders*)

Ophelia: Desdemona, may I sleep next to you?

Desdemona: Only if you promise not to wet the bed, Ophelia.

They lie down. Silence. Then:

Desdemona: (*Mischievously*) Queen Mab.

Juliet: Des! What are you doing?!

Desdemona: What, art thou scared?

Juliet: Were you not listening?! Her wagon spokes are made out of spiders' legs! SPIDERS. LEGS.

Ophelia: Queen Mab.

Juliet: Ophelia!

Ophelia: Sorry, I am highly susceptible to the peer pressures.

Desdemona: Two down, one to go…

Juliet: I'm not saying it.

Desdemona: (*To Ophelia*) I knew she'd be too scared—

Juliet: Queen Mab. (*Silence*) There. Happy?

The candle goes out.

Ophelia: I think I made the bed wet.

Scene 3

Cold, blue, surveillance-camera-y light. The girls sleep, tossing and turning as though in fast forward. Then, lights and speed return to normal as the strange, haggard figure of Queen Mab appears, silhouetted in the light. A spooky requiem plays. Fairy wings twitch in the air. Mab reaches down towards Ophelia. She shakes Ophelia's head violently, weirdly, screaming in shrill and forgotten fairy tongues. Desdemona and Juliet continue to snooze. Mab disappears. Blue light again. As though in fast forward, Ophelia stands and looms over the bed, hair hanging down in front of her face. Juliet awakes; the fast forward effect stops again.

Juliet: Ophelia? What's wrong?

Ophelia: She's heeeere…

Juliet: Who?

Ophelia: (*Singing creepily, a lullaby*) *And will she not come again? And will she not come again?*

Juliet: Who dost thou mean?

Ophelia: *Aye, aye, thou art dead; go unto thy death-bed...*

Juliet: (*To Desdemona*) Wake up, Ophelia's acting all spooky— Gasp! It must be Queen… thou knoweth who.

Desdemona: Latifah?

Juliet: Just get up!

Desdemona: (*To Ophelia)* Art thou looking for the bathroom? Just use Juliet's closet, 'tis what I've been doing.

Juliet: What? No! Ophelia! Snap thee out of it!

She jumps up and shakes Ophelia. Ophelia roars like a monster and flips Juliet onto the bed. She has become the horrifying Queen Mab - but still dressed in Ophelia's jammies., with her hair, etc.

Mab: (*Terrifyingly*) You called?

Juliet: (*Getting it*) It's you!

Mab: The name so nice thou saidst it thrice.

Desdemona: Holy shite! We need an adult!

Nurse: (*Entering*) What in the bad quarto is going on in here?

Desdemona: 'Tis Ophelia! Wethinks she's possessed by Queen—

Nurse: Latifah?

Desdemona: Shut up, 'tis what I said!

Juliet: (*Still grappling with Ophelia*) A little help?

Nurse: Listen girls, I was but fucking with thee. Queen Mab isn't real. So, if Ophelia is acting like she's possessed by some sort of violent demon, 'tis probably because one of you did something to piss her off. Frankly I'm not surprised.

Juliet: (*Tapping out*) That's very reassuring.

Nurse: I'm gonna leave ye maidens to settle it amongst thyselves. (*Exiting*) You'll thank me when you're older.

Juliet: Help…

Mab: (*To Desdemona*) After I kill her, I'm gonna fuck your imaginary boyfriend! Ha ha ha!

Desdemona: (*Intense green light on her face*) Othello? O hell no!

She leaps into action, smoking Mab with the pillow. Juliet gets free and pins Mab.

Juliet: Help!

Desdemona and Juliet bind Mab to the headboard.

Mab: RAAARRGH! Release me, wench!

Desdemona: Call Friar Lawrence! Perchance he can perform an exorcism.

Juliet: O sure, and then he'll call my parents and I'll be grounded for the rest of my life. Great idea, Des.

Mab: Thy mother quotes King Richard in Hell!

Desdemona: Well we gotta do something! Where's thy bible?

Juliet: At the repair shop.

Desdemona: Juliet!!!

Juliet: 'Tis not my fault they make the pages so thin!

Mab: (*Still monstrously*) Will someone scratch my nose please?

Desdemona: Find another book.

Juliet: I don't think that's how it works—

Desdemona: Well I don't hear thee offering up any suggestions! Gallop apace, girl!

Juliet: (*Grabbing a book*) *Taming of the Shrew*. 'Twill serve. (*Waving the book over Ophelia*) The power of institutionalized misogyny compels you! The power of institutionalized misogyny compels you!

Desdemona: Are we really sure we want her to be "compelled" by the power of institutionalized misogyny?

Juliet: Not now.

The Nurse re-enters, wearing one of those exfoliating face masks that makes you look like Hannibal Lecter.

Nurse: Man, you guys are worse than *The Sisterhood of the Travelling Corset*— Holy shit! Did I miss the part where she projectile vomits everywhere?

Mab sees the Nurse and screams in terror. They flail against the bed frame, convulsing as Mab leaves Ophelia's body.

Mab: Hell is empty and all the devils are here! Exeunt, exeunt! AAAaughhhhhhuuughhhh……..

There is an otherworldly cacophony, after which Ophelia lies still, restored to her normal form. Juliet and Desdemona rush to her side and untie her.

Ophelia: (*Coming to, groggily*) This house is shakes-clear…

Juliet: Ophelia? You're restored!

Desdemona: Nurse, art thou okay?

Nurse: You mean, am I pumped that a demon took one look at me and ran screaming back to Hell? Not especially. But I'm glad it's behind us. However, I did warn thee that if you didn't go to sleep, I'd have no choice but to punish thee. Come, 'tis off to the covent with the lot of you. (*The girls groan*) On the double, to a nunnery go.

Desdemona: This is the worst slumber party ever.

Juliet: At least it can't get any worse.

Ophelia: When we get to the nunnery, can we be roommates?

Juliet and Desdemona groan again.