

HAMLET

Written by

William Shakespeare

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Coram Shakespeare Schools Foundation

1

INT. THE ROYAL PALACE AT ELSINORE - DAY

1

It is a sombre time, the King of Denmark is dead. Here to mourn him are HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, the King's only son. He is a university student, young, ideological and philosophical, but now rather cynical and melancholy. He is joined by:

CLAUDIUS, the dead King's brother who has married his widow and taken his throne. Claudius is shrewd, greedy and conniving.

GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother, she is, above all, a good person, but has strong desires that can distract her.

POLONIUS is a trusted member of Claudius' court, a wise elder and shrewd political operator.

Finally there is LAERTES, a similar age to Hamlet, he is Polonius' son and obsessed with his family's honour - not a great trait for someone so hotheaded.

Hamlet has only just returned to Denmark following his father's death, but Claudius has little sympathy.

CLAUDIUS

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son -

HAMLET

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun .

GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast thy knighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark .
Thou know'st 'tis common: all that lives must die,
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

GERTRUDE

If it be, why seems it so
particular with thee?

HAMLET

Seems, madam? Nay, it is. I know
not 'seems'.

CLAUDIUS

'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 -
We pray you throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of
us
As of a father.

Everyone leaves but Hamlet, who contemplates the scene he has
returned to. He is not impressed.

HAMLET

O that this too too sullied flesh
would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew.
O God! God! That it should come to
this!
A little month, or ere those shoes
were old
With which she follow'd my poor
father's body -
O God, a beast that wants discourse
of reason
Would have mourn'd longer - married
with my uncle.
O most wicked speed!
It is not, nor it cannot come to
good.
But break, my heart , for I must
hold my tongue.

After a moment more, Hamlet is joined by HORATIO - a fellow
student and his best, most loyal friend. Horatio is a logical
and pragmatic man, not easily overcome by passions or
emotions. He is accompanied by the old King and Hamlet, to
whom he often gives counsel.

HORATIO

Hail to your lordship.

HAMLET

I am glad to see you well. Horatio,
Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

My good lord.

HAMLET

I am very glad to see you - But
what is your affair in Elsinore?

HORATIO

My lord, I came to see your
father's funeral.

HAMLET

I think it was to see my mother's
wedding.

HORATIO

Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard
upon.

HAMLET

My father - methinks I see my
father -

HORATIO

Where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO

My lord, I think I saw him
yesternight.

HAMLET

Saw? Who?

HORATIO

My lord, the king your father.

HAMLET

The king my father?

Hamlet is dumbfounded.

HORATIO

Two nights together has this
gentleman,
On his watch
Been thus encounter'd: a figure
like your father

(MORE)

HORATIO (CONT'D)

Appears before him, and with solemn
march
Goes slow and stately by.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

My lord, I did, But answer made it
none.

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.
I will watch tonight.
Perchance 'twill walk again.

Horatio and Marcellus leave Hamlet pondering this latest
development.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

My father's spirit! All is not
well.
I doubt some foul play .

2

EXT. DOCKS BY A SHIP - DAY

2

Polonius and his daughter OPHELIA, a bright young woman who
has had romantic entanglements with Hamlet, are there to wave
goodbye to Laertes.

POLONIUS

Aboard, aboard for shame, my son.
The wind sits in the shoulder of
your sail.

LAERTES

Farewell, Ophelia, fair sister, and
remember well
What I have said to you.

OPHELIA

'Tis in my memory lock'd,
And you yourself shall keep the key
of it.

LAERTES

Farewell.

Laertes boards the ship and leaves. Immediately Polonius
grills Ophelia.

POLONIUS

What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS

Marry, 'tis told me he hath very oft of late Given private time to you.

OPHELIA

He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders Of his affection to me.

Despite Hamlet being the Prince, Polonius is not keen on this as a match, he does not like Hamlet.

POLONIUS

Affection? Pooh, you speak like a green girl.
Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

OPHELIA

I shall obey, my lord.

3 INT. HALLWAY AT ELSINORE - NIGHT

3

Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus are chatting, waiting, hoping to see a ghost. They are clearly chilly.

HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

BEAT

What hour now?

HORATIO

I think it lacks of twelve.

Down the hall a GHOST appears. The men seem more concerned than afraid.

HORATIO (CONT'D)
 Look, my lord, it comes.

HAMLET
 Angels and ministers of grace
 defend us!

The Ghost stops and beckons Hamlet over, he follows him until away from his friends but then stops as the Ghost continues.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 Speak, I'll go no further.

The Ghost talks plainly, always to the point.

GHOST
 I am thy father's spirit,
 If thou didst ever thy dear father
 love -

HAMLET
 O God!

GHOST
 Revenge his foul and most unnatural
 murder.

HAMLET
 Murder!

GHOST
 Murder most foul.
 The serpent that did sting thy
 father's life
 Now wears his crown.

HAMLET
 O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

Hamlet listens intently as the Ghost explains all.

GHOST
 Ay, that incestuous, that
 adulterate beast!
 Sleeping within my orchard,
 My custom always of the afternoon,
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle
 stole,
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a
 vial,
 And in the porches of my ears did
 pour
 The leprous distilment.

(MORE)

GHOST (CONT'D)

Thus was I, sleeping, by a
 brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen at once
 dispatch'd.
 Oh horrible! O horrible! Most
 horrible!
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear
 it not.
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

The Ghost leaves, Hamlet is enraged.

HAMLET

O villain, villain, smiling damned
 villain!
 That one may smile, and smile, and
 be a villain.
 So uncle, there you are. Now to my
 word.
 It is 'Adieu, Adieu, remember me.'
 I have sworn it.

Hamlet is energised by his anger and runs from the place.

4

INT. A ROOM AT ELSINORE - LATER

4

Ophelia looks shocked and disturbed, her father is concerned.

POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia, what's the
 matter?

OPHELIA

O my lord, my lord, I have been so
 affrighted.

POLONIUS

With what, i'th' name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my
 closet,
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all
 unbrac'd,
 Pale as his shirt, and with a look
 so piteous-
 He comes before me.

POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?
 What said he?

Ophelia acts out the scene.

OPHELIA

He took me by the wrist and held me
hard,
And rais'd a sigh so piteous and
profound
As it did seem to shatter all his
bulk
And end his being.

POLONIUS

This is the very ecstasy of love.
Have you given him any hard words
of late?

OPHELIA

No, my good lord, but as you did
command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

Polonius isn't the sort to mess about, he grabs his daughter
and they head to the King.

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.
Come, go we to the King.
This must be known. Come.

5

INT. KING'S CHAMBER AT ELSINORE - LATER

5

Claudius and Gertrude are sat with their Attendants in
waiting, Polonius hurries in and begins immediately.

POLONIUS

My liege, since brevity is the soul
of wit,
I will be brief. Your noble son
is mad.
That he is mad 'tis true; 'tis true
'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true.

Gertrude isn't convinced.

GERTRUDE

More matter with less art .

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
And now remains
That we find out the cause of this
effect,

(MORE)

POLONIUS (CONT'D)

Or rather say the cause of this
defect,
For this effect defective comes by
cause.
Now mark and surmise.

Polonius produces a letter and begins to read from it,
leaning heavily into the text to give it more meaning.

POLONIUS (CONT'D)

(reading)

To the celestial and my soul's
idol, the most
beautified Ophelia -

GERTRUDE

(interrupting)

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

This in obedience hath my daughter
shown me,
And, more above. To her I
prescripts gave,
That she should lock herself from
his resort,
And he, repelled, fell into a
sadness,
Into the madness wherein now he
raves
And all we mourn for.

CLAUDIUS

Do you think 'tis this?

The Queen's doubts have dissipated, this is not unusual for
her son.

GERTRUDE

It may be; very like.

CLAUDIUS

How may we try it further?

POLONIUS

You know sometimes he walks four
hours together
Here in the lobby.

GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my
daughter to him .
Be you and I behind an arras then,
Mark the encounter.

CLAUDIUS

We will try it.

6 INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

6

Two of Hamlet's oldest and best friends, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN await him. They are both alike, fearful and foolish, a bit daft - but immature and quick to anger.

Their friend Hamlet enters the scene reading a book, he is lost in it and doesn't notice the pair.

ROSENCRANTZ

God save you, sir.

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lord.

Hamlet escapes from his book and is delighted by the unexpected sight.

HAMLET

My excellent good friends. How
dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah,
Rosencrantz. Gentlemen, you are
welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, we coted some players on
the way, and hither are they coming
to offer you service.

Hamlet considers this for a moment.

HAMLET

He that plays the king shall be
welcome.

A group of PLAYERS enter, they are travelling entertainers, and as such are not dressed in the finery of many of the royal household and guests.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Welcome, good friends. We'll hear a
play tomorrow.

Hamlet turns to the actor who will play the King.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Old friend, can you play the murder
of Gonzago?

PLAYER KING

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

(questioningly)

We'll ha't tomorrow night. You
could for a need, study a piece
which I would set down and insert
in't, could you not?

PLAYER KING

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well.

Hamlet is pleased that a part of his plan is in place, he
turns to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

My good friends, I'll leave you
till night.
You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord.

Everyone leaves aside from Hamlet, who thinks through his
plot aloud.

HAMLET

Ay, so, God be with you.
Now I am alone. I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a
play
Have, by the very cunning of the
scene,
Been struck so to the soul that
presently
They have proclaim'd their
malefactions.
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.

7 INT. HALLWAY AT ELSINORE - DAY

7

Claudius and Polonius are guiding Ophelia into position. Polonius hands his daughter a book, he is trying to set the scene perfectly.

POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here. -
 Read on this book.
 I hear him coming. Let's withdraw,
 my lord.

Claudius and Polonius move to a place where they are unseen but can still hear all. Ophelia sits and pretends to read as ordered.

Hamlet walks down the hall, deep in thought and talking to himself he is ponderous and philosophical. Ophelia watches him but he hasn't noticed her.

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. To die, to
 sleep;
 To sleep, perchance to dream - ay,
 there's the rub:
 For in that sleep of death what
 dreams may come?
 It is the dread of something after
 death
 That makes us rather bear those
 ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not
 of.

He snaps out of his self involvement and notices Ophelia.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
Soft you now, the fair Ophelia!

Ophelia produces letters from the book.

OPHELIA
My lord, I have remembrances of
yours
That I have longed long to
redeliver.

HAMLET
No, not I.
I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA
My honour'd lord, you know right
well you did,
And with them words of so sweet
breath compos'd -

HAMLET
(interrupting, cold)
You should not have believed me; I
loved you not.

Ophelia is a little crestfallen.

OPHELIA
I was the more deceived.

While Hamlet is erratic, his mood turning on a sixpence as he moves from coldness to anger and bitterness.

HAMLET
Get thee to a nunnery . Why,
wouldst thou be a breeder of
sinners?
We are arrant knaves all, believe
none of us. Go thy ways to a
nunnery.

Ophelia is visibly sad for her friend.

OPHELIA
O help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET
Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath
made me mad. I say we will have no
more marriage. To a nunnery, go.

Hamlet leaves. Ophelia is shocked by what she has just experienced.

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here
o'erthrown!

Claudius and Polonius appear from the shadows. They too are concerned for Hamlet and begin to plan what to do with him. They offer no solace to Ophelia.

CLAUDIUS

There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on
brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the
disclose
Will be some danger; which for the
prevent,
He shall with speed to England
What think you on't?

POLONIUS

My lord, do as you please,
But if you hold it fit, after the
play
Let his queen-mother all alone
entreat him
To show his grief,
And I'll be plac'd, so please you,
in the ear
Of all their conference. If she
find him not,
To England send him.

CLAUDIUS

It shall be so.
Madness in great ones must not
unwatch'd go.

8

INT. BANQUET HALL - EVENING

8

The place is ready for food and entertainment, a makeshift stage of sorts. Hamlet is looking over it all as Polonius approaches.

HAMLET

How now, my lord? Will the King
hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS

And the queen too.

HAMLET

Bid the players make haste.

As Polonius leaves Hamlet summons Horatio.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
What ho, Horatio!

Who hurries in.

HORATIO
Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Hamlet speaks in hushed tones, it is an important message he is imparting, but only for Horatio's ears.

HAMLET
Horatio,
There is a play tonight before the
King:
One scene of it comes near the
circumstance
Which I have told thee of my
father's death.
I prithee, observe my uncle. Give
him heedful note.
They are coming to the play. I
must be idle .
Get you a place.

Everyone begins to enter, first Claudius and Gertrude take to their seats, followed by Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and all their Attendants.

Gertrude signals to Hamlet.

GERTRUDE
Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by
me.

But Hamlet has his eyes on Ophelia, and he is flirtatious with her.

HAMLET
No, good mother, here's metal more
attractive.

POLONIUS
(hushed to Claudius)
O ho! Do you mark that?

Hamlet playfully lays at Ophelia's feet.

HAMLET
Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Ophelia is confused by his mood.

OPHELIA
You are merry, my lord.

Hamlet starts to lay it on thick.

HAMLET
What should a man do but be merry?
For look you how cheerfully my
mother looks and my father died
within's two hours.

OPHELIA
Nay, 'tis twice two months, my
lord.

There is a heavy sarcasm to his tone.

HAMLET
So long? O heavens, die two months
ago and not forgotten yet!

The Players enter.

CLAUDIUS
Have you heard the argument? Is
there no offence in't?

HAMLET
No, no, they do but jest - poison
in jest. No offence i'th' world.

As the Players enact a mimed play we keep one eye on the play and another on the reactions of Claudius and Hamlet, who's eyes dart between the two.

A PLAYER KING and a PLAYER QUEEN woo each other.

The PLAYER KING goes to sleep. The PLAYER QUEEN leaves.

Enter PLAYER POISONER, with a vial of poison which he pours into the PLAYER KING's ear.

The QUEEN returns and discovers the king is dead. She raises the alarm and in comes the POISONER. He consoles the QUEEN, then begins to woo her.

At first she rejects his advances but then is quickly seduced by his increasing overtures.

Claudius is uncomfortable, he stands.

OPHELIA
The King rises.

HAMLET
 (pointed, to all)
 What, frightened with false fire?

GERTRUDE
 How fares my lord?

POLONIUS
 Give o'er the play.

CLAUDIUS
 Give me some light. Away.

POLONIUS
 Lights, lights, lights.

Attendants provide light for their King, who promptly leaves.
 He is followed by all except Hamlet and Horatio.

HAMLET
 O good Horatio, didst perceive?

HORATIO
 I did very well note him.

Polonius returns to Hamlet.

POLONIUS
 My lord, the Queen would speak with
 you, and presently.

HAMLET
 Then I will come to my mother by
 and by.

POLONIUS
 I will say so.

Polonius leaves again.

HAMLET
 'By and by' is easily said. Leave
 me, friend.

Horatio leaves, once again Hamlet utters his plan aloud.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
 I will speak daggers to her, but
 use none.

And then leaves to see his mother.

9

INT. KING'S CHAMBER AT ELSINORE - LATER

9

Claudius is alone, and tormented by the messages of the play.

CLAUDIUS

O, my offence is rank, it smells to
heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse
upon't -
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as
will,
But O, what form of prayer can
serve my turn?
'Forgive me my foul murder?'
Bow stubborn knees, all may be
well.

Claudius drops to his knees, desperate for divine forgiveness.

Hamlet enters the chamber and sees Claudius at prayer and vulnerable. He draws his weapon.

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat, now is a-
praying.
And so he goes to heaven.

Hamlet moves to kill Claudius but has a change of heart at the last second, he puts his weapon away and silently backs off.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

A villain kills my father, and for
that
I, his sole son, do this same
villain send
To heaven. No.

10

INT. A ROOM AT ELSINORE - LATER

10

A room with hanging tapestries, Gertrude is sat, talking to Polonius who is poking out from behind one of the nearby hangings.

POLONIUS

I'll silence me even here.

GERTRUDE

Withdraw, I hear him coming.

Polonius hides behind the tapestry as Gertrude greets her son.

HAMLET
Now, mother, what's the matter?

GERTRUDE
Have you forgot me?

HAMLET
You are the Queen, your husband's
brother's wife,
And, would it were not so, you are
my mother.

Insulted, GERTRUDE gets up to leave.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
Come, come,

Hamlet forcibly sits her down at a different seat, in front of a mirror.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
You go not till I set you up a
glass
Where you may see the inmost part
of you.

Gertrude panics taking this to mean he will cut her open.

GERTRUDE
What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not
murder me?
Help, ho!

A voice calls out from behind the tapestry.

POLONIUS
(unseen)
What ho! Help!

Hamlet immediately draws and stabs at the unseen figure through the hanging.

HAMLET
How now? A rat! Dead for a
ducat, dead.

POLONIUS
(unseen)
O, I am slain.

Gertrude's panic returns.

GERTRUDE

O me, what hast thou done?

While Hamlet remains calm.

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.
Is it the King?

Hamlet lifts the tapestry to discover he has killed Polonius.
He seems unmoved.

GERTRUDE

O what a rash and bloody deed is
this!

HAMLET

A bloody deed. Almost as bad, good
mother,
As kill a king and marry with his
brother.

GERTRUDE

As kill a king?

HAMLET

Ay, lady, it was my word. -
Leave wringing of your hands.
Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart.

GERTRUDE

What have I done?

HAMLET

O, such a deed.
Heaven is thought-sick at the act.

GERTRUDE

Ay me, what act
That roars so loud?

Hamlet produces a portrait of his father and one of Claudius,
using them as props in this manic trial of his mother.

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture, and on
this.
This was your husband. Here is
your husband.
Would step from this to this?
O shame, where is thy blush?

This upsets Gertrude.

GERTRUDE
No more, sweet Hamlet.

HAMLET
A murderer and a villain .

The King's Ghost enters the room, Gertrude cannot see it. To Hamlet it is as real as his mother.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
(to Ghost)
Do you not come your tardy son to
chide ?

GERTRUDE
Alas, he's mad.

GHOST
Do not forget. This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted
purpose.

HAMLET
How is it with you, lady?

GERTRUDE
Alas! To whom do you speak?

Hamlet points to the very clear and obvious Ghost in the room. Gertrude sees empty space.

HAMLET
Why, look you there, look how it
steals away.
My father.

The Ghost leaves.

GERTRUDE
This is the very coinage of your
brain.
O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart
in twain.

HAMLET
O throw away the worser part of it
And live the purer with the other
half.
Good night. But go not to my
uncle's bed.

Hamlet looks down to the body of fallen Polonius. He is regretful, but not necessarily saddened.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 For this same lord, I do repent.
 This bad begins, and worse remains
 behind.

Hamlet leaves, dragging the corpse behind him.

11 INT. KING'S CHAMBER AT ELSINORE - NIGHT

11

Claudius is contemplating when Gertrude walks in.

GERTRUDE
 Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen
 tonight!

CLAUDIUS
 What, Gertrude, how does Hamlet?

GERTRUDE
 Mad as the sea and wind when both
 contend
 Which is the mightier. In his
 lawless fit,
 Behind the arras hearing something
 stir,
 Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat,
 a rat',
 And kills the unseen good old man.

CLAUDIUS
 O heavy deed! Ho, Guildenstern!

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern enter.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
 Friends, both;
 Hamlet in madness hath Polonius
 slain.
 Go seek him out and bring the body
 Into the chapel. I pray you haste
 in this.

They leave.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
 How dangerous is it that this man
 goes loose!
 Yet must not we put the strong law
 on him.
 He's loved of the distracted
 multitude.
 This sudden sending him away must
 seem

Claudius pauses for more than a beat, and then sees Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

How now...

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern re-enter with Hamlet. Claudius' delivery is as urgent as his message.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

Hamlet, this deed, for thine
 especial safety -
 - must send thee hence
 With fiery quickness. Therefore
 prepare thyself.
 The bark is ready, and the wind at
 help,
 Th'associates tend, and everything
 is bent
 For England.

HAMLET

For England?

CLAUDIUS

Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet takes this all very matter of factly.

HAMLET

Good. Farewell, dear mother.

CLAUDIUS

Thy loving father, Hamlet .

HAMLET

Father and mother is man and wife,
 man and wife is one flesh; so my
 mother. Come, for England.

Hamlet departs.

CLAUDIUS

Follow him. I'll have him hence
 tonight.

Everyone leaves except for Claudius who plots aloud.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

And England - thou mayst not
 coldly set
 Our sovereign process, which
 imports at full,
 By letters congruing to that
 effect,

(MORE)

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
The present death of Hamlet. Do
it, England.

12 INT. A ROOM AT ELSINORE - THE NEXT DAY

12

Gertrude is overwhelmed by what her son has done, meanwhile
Ophelia enters singing a terribly sad song.

OPHELIA
He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone,
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.
O ho!

Claudius enters the room.

GERTRUDE
Alas, look here, my lord.

Ophelia stops singing but starts talking nonsense.

OPHELIA
They say the owl was a baker's
daughter . Lord, we know what we
are, but know not what we may be.

CLAUDIUS
How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA
I cannot choose but weep to think
they would lay him i'th'cold
ground. My brother shall know of
it.

She starts to sing again.

HAMLET
(singing)
White his shroud as the mountains
snow -

Ophelia skips off, still singing.

CLAUDIUS
(to himself)
O, this is the poison of deep
grief: it springs
All from her father's death

We hear noises, but nobody can identify their source.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

And now behold -
O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not
single spies,
But in battalions.

An angry and grieving Laertes enters the chamber.

LAERTES

O thou vile king, give me my
father.

GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

CLAUDIUS

Why art thou incens'd? - Speak,
man.

LAERTES

Where is my father?

CLAUDIUS

Dead.

GERTRUDE

But not by him.

LAERTES

How came he dead? I'll not be
juggled with.

CLAUDIUS

Good Laertes,
I am guiltless of your father's
death
And am most sensibly in grief for
it.

Ophelia enters the chamber carrying flowers which she
distributes around. Her mind is clearly elsewhere as she
approaches her brother.

OPHELIA

There's rosemary, that's for
remembrance - pray you, love,
remember. And there is pansies,
that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

O heavens, is't possible a young
maid's wits

(MORE)

LAERTES (CONT'D)

Should be as mortal as an old man's
life?

Now Ophelia approaches Claudius.

OPHELIA

I would give you some violets , but
they withered all when my father
died.

And she leaves, signing away...

OPHELIA (CONT'D)

For bonny sweet Robin is all my
joy.
He is gone, he is gone...

LAERTES

Do you see this, O God?

CLAUDIUS

I pray you go with me.

13 INT. A ROOM AT ELSINORE - NIGHT

13

Horatio is sat, gripped by the events. His servant disturbs
his thoughts.

SERVANT

Seafaring men, sir. They say they
have letters for you.

HORATIO

Let them come in.

The Servant leaves.

I do not know from what part of the
world
I should be greeted, if not from
Lord Hamlet.

A small group of SAILORS enter.

SAILOR

There's a letter for you, sir - if
your name be Horatio.

Horatio roughly opens the letter and begins to read aloud
from it.

HORATIO

Horatio, Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldest fly death. These good fellows will bring you where I am. Farewell.
Hamlet.

Horatio hurries away with the Sailors.

HORATIO (CONT'D)

Come, I will give you way for these your letters...

14

INT. KING'S CHAMBER AT ELSINORE - NIGHT

14

Claudius is trying to talk to Laertes

CLAUDIUS

Now you must put me in your heart for friend,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life...

Enter a MESSENGER with letters.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

How now, what news?

MESSENGER

These to your Majesty.

CLAUDIUS

From Hamlet! Who brought them?

MESSENGER

Sailors, my lord.

CLAUDIUS

Laertes, you shall hear them. -
Leave us.

The Messenger leaves and Claudius begins reading aloud from the letters.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, alone.

(MORE)

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

Hamlet
What should this mean?

The content has confused them both.

LAERTES

I am lost in it, my lord. But let
him come.

CLAUDIUS

If it be so, Laertes -
Will you be rul'd by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my lord.

Claudius moves closer to Laertes as the pair plot Hamlet's
murder together.

CLAUDIUS

I will work him to an exploit,
Under the which he shall not choose
but fall.
Even his mother shall call it
accident .

LAERTES

My lord, I will be rul'd.

CLAUDIUS

We'll put on those shall praise
your swordsmanship
And wager o'er your heads.
Hamlet will not peruse the foils,
so that with ease -
Or with a little shuffling - you
may choose
A sword unbated , and in a pass of
practice
Requite him for your father .

LAERTES

I will do't.
And for that purpose, I'll anoint
my sword.
I bought an unction of a mountebank
So mortal that if I but gall him
slightly,
It may be death.

CLAUDIUS

When in your motion you are hot and
dry -

(MORE)

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

And that he calls for drink, I'll
 have prepar'd him
 A chalice, whereon but sipping,
 If he by chance escape your venom'd
 stuck,
 Our purpose may hold there. But
 stay, what noise?

Gertrude enters, she is distressed as yet another tragedy has emerged.

GERTRUDE

One woe doth tread upon another's
 heel,
 So fast they follow. Your sister's
 drown'd, Laertes.

LAERTES

Drown'd? O, where?

GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows aslant the
 brook.
 There with fantastic garlands did
 she come
 Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies,
 and long purples
 There on the pendent boughs her
 coronet weeds
 Clamb'ring to hang, an envious
 sliver broke,
 When down her weedy trophies and
 herself
 Fell in the weeping brook. Her
 clothes spread wide,
 And mermaid-like awhile they bore
 her up.
 But long it could not be
 Till that her garments, heavy with
 their drink,
 Pull'd the poor wretch to muddy
 death.

LAERTES

Alas, then she is drown'd.

GERTRUDE

Drown'd, drown'd.

Laertes is heartbroken, but steels himself.

LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor
Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

Laertes leaves, his mood uncertain.

CLAUDIUS

How much I had to do to calm his
rage.
Now fear I this will give it start
again.

15 EXT. GRAVEYARD - MORNING

15

Hamlet and Horatio come across a GRAVE DIGGER who is quick witted and of a happy disposition for someone in his role.

HAMLET

Who's grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVE-DIGGER

Mine, sir.

HAMLET

Who's to be buried in 't?

GRAVE-DIGGER

One that was a woman, sir; but rest
her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET

Here comes the King, the Queen, the
courtiers. Who is this they follow?

Leading the procession is a group of BEARERS carrying a coffin. It is followed by a PRIEST, his head bowed. Claudius, Gertrude and Laertes lead the mourners, followed by LORDS and their ATTENDANTS.

Hamlet is curious.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Couch we awhile and mark.

As they approach the grave site Gertrude begins scattering flowers.

GERTRUDE

Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.

HAMLET
 (shocked, to himself)
 What, the fair Ophelia!

LAERTES
 O, treble woe
 Fall ten times treble on that
 cursed head
 Whose wicked deed thy most
 ingenious sense
 Depriv'd thee of.
 Hold off the earth awhile
 Till I have caught her once more in
 mine arms.

Laertes throws himself into the grave, beside himself with grief.

Hamlet comes forward, eager to let everyone know that his sadness is just as great.

HAMLET
 What is he whose grief
 Bears such an emphasis? I lov'd
 Ophelia!

Hamlet throws himself into the grave alongside Laertes.

LAERTES
 The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET
 Forty thousand brothers
 Could not with all their quantity
 of love
 Make up my sum.

The two wrestle, everyone watches on in shock until Claudius decides to bring the charade to an end.

CLAUDIUS
 Pluck them asunder.

Hamlet and Laertes are pulled apart.

Hamlet leaves the scene, quickly followed by Horatio. Claudius talks in hushed tones with Laertes as he pretends to comfort him.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)
 Strengthen your patience in our
 last night's speech:
 We'll put the matter to the present
 push

16 INT. BANQUET HALL - LATER

16

Hamlet has calmed and is chatting things through with Horatio.

HAMLET

I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself.

HORATIO

Peace, who comes here?

OSRIC, a wealthy and showy courtier, enters.

OSRIC

My lord, his Majesty bade me
signify to you that he has laid a
great wager on your head - that in
a dozen passes between yourself and
Laertes he shall not exceed you
three hits.

HAMLET

Sir, let the foils be brought.

Osric leaves. Horatio knows immediately this is a terrible idea.

HORATIO

You will lose, my lord.

HAMLET

I do not think so; but is no
matter.

HORATIO

If your mind dislike anything, obey
it. I will say you are not fit.

HAMLET

Not a whit. There is a special
provenance in the fall of a
sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to
come; if it be not to come, it will
be now; if it be not now, yet it
will come. The readiness is all.

Claudius and Gertrude enter the room, followed by a steely focused Laertes. Just behind Osric leads attendant who carry the weapons.

Claudius ushers both men to the middle of the room.

CLAUDIUS
Come, Hamlet, and take this hand
from me.

Claudius puts Laertes hand in Hamlets. Hamlet is cocky.

HAMLET
I embrace it freely,
And will this brother's wager
frankly play. -
Give us the foils.

Laertes is ready for the fight.

LAERTES
Come, one for me.

Osric brings the weapons over and offers them to Laertes. He lifts one and tries it out.

LAERTES (CONT'D)
This is too heavy. Let me see
another.

He discards the weapon, and Hamlet picks it up.

HAMLET
This likes me well.
They prepare to play.

CLAUDIUS
Now the King drinks to Hamlet.
Come, begin.

Hamlet wants to begin immediately, urging Laertes to attack.

HAMLET
Come on, sir.

LAERTES
Come, my lord.

They play. Hamlet scores a hit on Laertes.

HAMLET
One.

LAERTES
No.

HAMLET
Judgement.

OSRIC

A hit, a very palpable hit.

Laertes is put out, but readies himself to go again.

LAERTES

Well, again.

We see Claudius add poison to a cup. He toasts Hamlet and offers the cup forward.

CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, here's to thy health.
Give him the cup.

But the young Dane's eyes are on the prize. Claudius places the poisoned cup down.

HAMLET

I'll play this bout first. Set it
by awhile.
Come.

They play again and Hamlet scores another hit.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Another hit. What say you?

LAERTES

I do confess't.

CLAUDIUS

Our son shall win.

Gertrude picks up the poisoned cup and toasts her son.

GERTRUDE

The Queen carouses to thy fortune,
Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good madam.

Claudius is gripped by panic

CLAUDIUS

Gertrude, do not drink.

GERTRUDE

I will, my lord, I pray you pardon
me.

She drinks heartily and offers the cup to Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS
 (to himself, disappointed)
 It is the poison'd cup. It is too
 late.

HAMLET
 I dare not drink yet, madam - by
 and by.

GERTRUDE
 Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES
 (psyching himself up,
 talking to himself)
 I'll hit him now. And yet it is
 almost against my conscience

HAMLET
 Come for the third, Laertes. You
 do but dally.

LAERTES
 Come on.

They play once more

LAERTES (CONT'D)
 Have at you now.

Laertes wounds Hamlet and the aggression he shows prompts a violent scuffle. As a result of the scuffle the pair end up with each other's weapons.

CLAUDIUS
 Part them; they are incensed.

Hamlet won't have it.

HAMLET
 Nay, come again.

Hamlet now attacks with more aggression and wounds Laertes with the poisoned sword.

Just after the poison she drank takes effect, and Gertrude falls.

Chaos descends on the room.

OSRIC
 Look to the Queen there, ho!

HORATIO

They bleed on both sides. How is
it, my lord?

OSRIC

How is't, Laertes?

LAERTES

Why, as a woodcock to mine own
springe , Osric.
I am justly kill'd with mine own
treachery.

HAMLET

How does the Queen?

CLAUDIUS

She swoons to see them bleed.

GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink! O my
dear Hamlet!
The drink, the drink! I am
poison'd.

Gertrude dies, Hamlet's anger at his uncle is multiplied.

HAMLET

O villainy! Ho! Let the door be
lock'd.
Treachery! Seek it out.

Osric flees.

Laertes, now dying, has lost his fight. He shows some pity to
Hamlet and confesses all.

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou
art slain.
No medicine in the world can do
thee good.
The treacherous instrument is in
thy hand,
Unbated and envenom'd. The foul
practice
Hath turn'd itself on me. Thy
mother's poison'd.
The King - the King's to blame.

HAMLET

Then venom, to thy work.

Hamlet grabs the poisoned cup and forces Claudius to drink from it.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous,
 damned Dane,
 Drink off this potion. Follow my
 mother.

He makes sure Claudius drinks heartily and then drops the cup.

Claudius quickly dies.

Amidst this scene of devastation and death, Laertes tries to make peace.

LAERTES
 Exchange forgiveness with me, noble
 Hamlet.
 Mine and my father's death come not
 upon thee,
 Nor thine on me.

Laertes dies.

Hamlet grabs the cup. He just wants this to be over.

HAMLET
 Give me the cup.
 O good, Horatio, what a wounded
 name,
 Shall live behind me.

He downs what is left.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy
 heart
 Then in this harsh world draw thy
 breath in pain
 To tell my story.
 I die, Horatio - the rest is
 silence.

Hamlet dies.

FADE TO BLACK.