

*DARK HAMLET*  
THE TEXT OF *HAMLET* BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE  
DECONSTRUCTED/ADAPTED BY STEPHEN A. SCHRUM

**Characters in the Play**

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, son of the late King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude

HORATIO, Hamlet's friend and confidant

THE GHOST

QUEEN GERTRUDE, widow of King Hamlet, now married to Claudius

KING CLAUDIUS, brother to the late King Hamlet

OPHELIA

LAERTES, her brother

POLONIUS, father of Ophelia and Laertes, councillor to King Claudius

ROSENCRANTZ

GUILDENSTERN

OSRIC

Players who take the roles of Player King and Player Queen, and Lucianus in *The Murder of Gonzago*

GRAVEDIGGER

SCENE 1

*(Darkness. Hamlet appears, seated, holding a book, looking down at the pages open before him. He speaks, and as he does we hear an echo of his first two words.)*

HAMLET  
Words.... Words....

*(The echo dies; Hamlet then speaks the third word)*

HAMLET  
Words!

*(He picks up a syringe, and crosses downstage to sit in a chair, facing the audience. His face is lighted, his body in darkness.)*

HAMLET  
To be, or not to be—that is the question.

*(He removes his jacket, and rolls up his sleeve. He stares at the syringe, as he continues the speech.)*

HAMLET  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,  
And by opposing end them?—To die,—to sleep—  
No more; and by a sleep to say we end  
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die,—to sleep,—  
To sleep! perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause.

*(He completes the injection. The lights change as he begins to drift into the hallucinatory world of Elsinore. Music and sound effects; we hear “words” spoken by live actors and on tape, a building collage of sound that includes the following phases.)*

HORATIO  
'Tis now struck twelve.

ROSENCRANTZ  
'Tis bitter cold, And I am sick at heart.

POLONIUS  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

OPHELIA

Lord Hamlet—As if loosed out of hell  
To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.

GHOST.

Murder most foul, strange, and unnatural.

POLONIUS

Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.

GUILDENSTERN

Denmark's a prison? Then the world is one.

HORATIO

There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, you have cleft my heart in twain.

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince:  
And flights of angels sing you to your rest!

POLONIUS

This above all: to your own self be true,

*(Hamlet starts at these words. The collage ends. Horatio appears.)*

HORATIO

In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:  
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:  
As prologue to the omen coming on.

*(Horatio fades away. Hamlet, Claudius and Gertrude appear.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son,—

HAMLET

*(Muttering)* A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast your nighted colour off,  
And let your eye look like a friend on Denmark.

HAMLET

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING CLAUDIUS

'Tis unmanly grief;  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven...

*(Claudius and Gertrude fade away.)*

HAMLET

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon against self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
That it should come to this!  
But two months dead: and married with my uncle,  
O, most wicked speed, to post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

*(Claudius and Gertrude reappear.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Let not your mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:  
I pray you, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

KING CLAUDIUS

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:  
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;  
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
Sits smiling to my heart.

*(Claudius and Gertrude fade away. Horatio appears.)*

HORATIO

Hail to your lordship!

HAMLET

I am glad to see you well: Horatio!  
And what is your affair in Elsinore?

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

I pray you, do not mock me, fellow-student;  
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO

Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats  
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.  
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.  
In the dead vast and middle of the night:  
A figure like your father,  
Appeared before us, and with solemn march  
Goes slow and stately by.

HAMLET

I will watch to-night;  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO

I warrant it will.

HAMLET

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth overwhelm them, to men's eyes.

*(Music plays, and a clock chimes. They look around.)*

HAMLET

What hour now?

HORATIO

I think it lacks of twelve.

HAMLET

No, it is struck.

HORATIO

Look, my lord, it comes!

*(Ghost appears. Horatio fades away.)*

GHOST

Mark me. *(Pause)*

My hour is almost come,  
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames  
Must render up myself.

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!-  
Be you a spirit of health or goblin damned,  
You come in such a questionable shape,  
That I will speak to you: I'll call you Hamlet,  
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!  
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell  
Why the sepulcher has cast you up again!

GHOST

I am your father's spirit;  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word  
Would harrow up your soul; freeze your young blood;  
Make your two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres;  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine:  
But listen:  
If you did ever your dear father love—  
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET.

Murder!

Haste me to know it, that I, with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST.

Now, Hamlet, hear:  
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,  
A serpent stung me;  
But know, you noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting your father's life

Now wears his crown.

HAMLET.

O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST.

Brief let me be.—*(Masked dumb show with King sleeping and Claudius pouring poison in his ear.)*

Sleeping within my orchard,

Upon my secure hour your uncle stole,

With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,

And in the porches of mine ears did pour

The leperous distilment;

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand

Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched:

*(Masked characters disappear.)*

No reckoning made, but sent to my account

With all my imperfections on my head:

O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be

A couch for luxury and damned incest.

Fare you well at once!

The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,

And 'gins to pale his ineffectual fire:

Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me. *(Fades away.)*

HAMLET.

Remember you!

Ay, poor ghost, your command alone shall live

Within the book and volume of my brain.

*(Horatio appears.)*

HORATIO

What news, my lord?

HAMLET

O, wonderful!

HORATIO

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No; you'll reveal it.

HORATIO

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

HAMLET

Then now, good friend, give me one poor request:

Never to speak of this that you have seen:

Nay, but swear it.

GHOST  
*(Unseen)* Swear.

HORATIO  
O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come;  
Hereafter I shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on.

GHOST  
*(Unseen)* Swear.

HORATIO  
*(Raises right hand.)* My lord, I will not.

HAMLET  
Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!  
The time is out of joint: O cursed spite,  
That ever I was born to set it right!  
Nay, come, let's go together.

*(Hamlet and Horatio fade away. Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear.)*

KING CLAUDIUS  
Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!  
Something have you heard  
Of Hamlet's transformation; I entreat you both,  
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,  
So much as from occasion you may glean,  
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
For the supply and profit of our hope,  
Your visitation shall receive such thanks  
As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ  
Both your majesties might command—

GUILDENSTERN  
—But we both obey,  
To freely be commanded.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.



QUEEN GERTRUDE

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz!

*(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fade away.)*

POLONIUS

My liege, and madam:  
Since brevity is the soul of wit,  
I will be brief: your noble son is mad:  
My daughter, such precepts I gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
And he, repulsed—a short tale to make—  
Fell into the madness where now he raves,

KING CLAUDIUS

Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

It may be, very likely.

KING CLAUDIUS

How may we try it further?

LORD POLONIUS

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

LORD POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:  
Be you and I behind an arras then;  
And mark the encounter.

KING CLAUDIUS

We will try it.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

*(Hamlet appears. Claudius and Gertrude fade away. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear.)*

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends! Guildenstern?  
Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

HAMLET

And what's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET

Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true.  
And to me, Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing  
either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me  
it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too  
narrow for your mind.

HAMLET

O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count  
myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I  
have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN

Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very  
substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET

A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ

Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a  
quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET

But let me conjure you, be even and direct with me,  
whether you were sent for, or no?

*(R & G exchange a glance.)*

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET

*(Aside)* I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*(To them)* I will tell you why; I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth.

What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, What lenten entertainment the players shall receive From you: we coted them on the way; And hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET

What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET

How comes it? do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace.

*(Flourish of trumpets.)*

GUILDENSTERN

There are the players.

HAMLET

Gentlemen, they are welcome to Elsinore.

*(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fade away.)*

*HAMLET*

Now I am alone.

*(Ophelia appears.)*

*HAMLET*

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

OPHELIA  
Good my lord,  
How does your honour for this many a day?

HAMLET  
I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

*(Claudius and Polonius, appear, hiding.)*

OPHELIA  
My lord, I have remembrances of yours,  
That I have longed long to re-deliver;  
I pray you, now receive them. *(She offers letters.)*

HAMLET  
*(He knocks them from her hand.)* 'Doubt you the stars are fire;  
Doubt that the sun does move;  
Doubt truth to be a liar;  
But never doubt I love.

OPHELIA  
Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET  
You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot  
so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of  
it: I loved you not.

OPHELIA  
I was the more deceived.

HAMLET  
Get you to a nunnery: why would you be a  
breeder of sinners? *(Beat)* Where's your father?

*(Claudius and Polonius start, exchange a glance.)*

OPHELIA  
At home, my lord.

HAMLET  
Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the  
fool nowhere but in's own house.  
To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

*(Hamlet fades away.)*

OPHELIA  
O, what a noble mind is here overthrown!  
O, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

KING CLAUDIUS

Love! his affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spoke was not like madness.  
There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood.  
He shall with speed to England;  
What think you on it?

LORD POLONIUS

It shall do well.  
To England send him, or confine him where  
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING CLAUDIUS

It shall be so:  
Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

*(Claudius and Ophelia fade away. Hamlet appears, looks around, then speaks to Polonius.)*

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS

And the queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET

Bid the players make haste.

*(Polonius fades away; Horatio appears.)*

HAMLET

I have heard  
That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
Have proclaimed their malefactions.  
I'll have these players  
Play something like the murder of my father  
Before my uncle: I'll observe his looks;  
I pray you, when you see that act afoot,  
If he but blench, I know my course.  
The play's the thing  
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

HORATIO

Well, my lord:  
I will my eyes rivet to his face.

HAMLET

They are coming to the play; I must be idle:  
Get you a place.

*(King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern appear.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET

No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.  
Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA

No, my lord.

HAMLET

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA

I think nothing. *(Pause)*  
You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET

Who, I?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

*(Music plays. The dumb-show appears: a masked King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen makes a gesture of love, which he returns: making a heart with fingers, then blowing a kiss (in profile). He yawns, and she makes an "Okay" gesture (palm toward him), and leaves the screen. He rests on his arms. Another masked character enters with a vial of poison, steals the King's crown, and pours the poison in the King's ear, then exits. The Queen reappears and is horrified to find the King dead. Re-enter the poisoner, who makes the loving gestures to her; she wipes away a tear and, after a pause, makes the gestures back to him. They exit. Note: all movements should be smooth and lyrical.)*

OPHELIA

What means this, my lord?

HAMLET

Marry, it means mischief. *(Aside.)* Wormwood, wormwood.  
*(To her)* He poisons him in the garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA

The king rises.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire!

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
How fares my lord?

LORD POLONIUS  
Give over the play.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Give me some light: away!

*(Claudius fades away; the rest then fade away except Hamlet and Horatio.)*

HAMLET  
O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a  
thousand pounds. Did you perceive?

HORATIO  
I did very well note him.

*(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear.)*

GUILDENSTERN  
Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.  
The king, sir,—

HAMLET  
Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN  
Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

HAMLET  
With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN  
No, my lord, rather with choler.

ROSENCRANTZ  
The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of  
spirit, has sent me to you.  
Thus she says: your behavior has struck her  
into amazement and admiration.  
She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you  
go to bed.

HAMLET  
We shall obey, were she ten times our mother.

*(Polonius appears.)*

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

HAMLET

Then I will come to my mother by and by.

LORD POLONIUS

I will say so.

*(Polonius fades away.)*

HAMLET

Leave me, friends.

*(All fade away but Hamlet.)*

HAMLET

Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out  
Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,  
And do such bitter business as the day  
Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none;  
My tongue and soul in this are hypocrites;

*(Exit Hamlet. King Claudius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern appear.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;  
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
And he to England shall along with you.

GUILDENSTERN

We will ourselves provide.

KING CLAUDIUS

Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;  
For we will fetters put upon this fear,  
Which now goes too free-footed.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN

We will haste us.

*(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern fade away. Polonius appears.)*

LORD POLONIUS

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:  
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,  
To hear the process. Fare you well, my liege:  
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,  
And tell you what I know.



*(Polonius fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven;  
It has the primal eldest curse upon it,  
A brother's murder. But, O, what form of prayer  
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'? —>  
That cannot be; since I am still possessed  
Of those effects for which I did the murder,  
My crown, my own ambition and my queen.  
May one be pardoned and retain the offence?  
In the corrupted currents of this world?  
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,  
Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!  
All may be well.

*(Claudius kneels. Hamlet appears.)*

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying... *(Assumes a pose to strike with dagger)*

*(The Player KING appears.)*

PLAYER KING

*(In same striking pose as Hamlet)* For, lo! his sword,  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam, seemed in the air to stick:  
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,  
And like a neutral to his will and matter,  
Did nothing.

HAMLET

And now I'll do it. And so he goes to heaven;  
And so am I revenged.  
A villain kills my father; and for that,  
I, do this same villain send to heaven.  
Up, sword; and know you a more horrid chance:  
When he is drunk asleep, or about some act  
That has no relish of salvation in it;  
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
And that his soul may be as damned and black  
As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:  
This physic but prolongs your sickly days.

*(Hamlet fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

*(Rising)* My words fly up, my thoughts remain below:  
Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

*(Claudius fades away. Queen Gertrude and Polonius appear.)*

LORD POLONIUS

He will come straight. I'll sconce me even here.  
Pray you, be round with him.

HAMLET

*(Off)* Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I'll warrant you,  
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

*(Polonius hides behind the arras. Hamlet appears.)*

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, you have your father much offended.

HAMLET

Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET

Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;  
You go not till I set you up a glass  
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What will you do? You will not murder me?  
Help, help, ho!

LORD POLONIUS

*(Behind)* What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET

*(Drawing)* How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead! *(Makes a stab out of frame.)*

LORD POLONIUS

*(Behind)* O, I am slain! *(Falls and dies.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O me, what have you done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not: Is it the king?

QUEEN 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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O, speak to me no more;  
These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;  
No more, sweet Hamlet!

GHOST

*(Unseen)* Leave her to heaven,  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
To prick and sting her.

HAMLET

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by  
The important acting of your dread command?

GHOST

Do not forget: this visitation  
Is but to whet your almost blunted purpose.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, how is it with you,  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy  
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?

HAMLET

Do you see nothing there?  
Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nothing at all.  
No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET

It is not madness that I have uttered.  
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;  
Good night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.  
I must to England; you know that?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alack, I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.

HAMLET

There's letters sealed: and my two schoolfellows,  
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,  
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,  
And marshal me to knavery.  
Mother, good night.

*(Hamlet, Gertrude and the body of Polonius fade away. King Claudius appears.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.  
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

*(Hamlet and Guildenstern appear.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

KING CLAUDIUS

At supper! where?

HAMLET

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain  
convocation of politic worms are e'en at him.

KING CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, this deed, for yours especial safety—  
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve  
For that which you have done,—must send you hence  
With fiery quickness—

HAMLET

For England!

KING CLAUDIUS

So is it, if you knew our purposes.

HAMLET

*(Aside)* How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge!  
*(To Claudius)* Come, for England!

*(Hamlet and Guildenstern fade away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

And, England, if my love you hold at all—  
You may not coldly set  
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,

By letters congruing to that effect,  
The present death of Hamlet.

*(King Claudius fades away. Queen Gertrude and Horatio appear.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
I will not speak with her.

HORATIO  
Her mood will needs be pitied.  
'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew  
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Let her come in.

*(Horatio fades away.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

*(Horatio and Ophelia appear.)*

OPHELIA  
Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
How now, Ophelia!

OPHELIA  
*[Sings]* He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Nay, but, Ophelia—

*(King Claudius appears.)*

KING CLAUDIUS  
How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA  
*(Sings)* To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and dunned his clothes,  
And opened the chamber-door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

KING CLAUDIUS

Pretty Ophelia!

*(To Gertrude)* How long has she been thus?

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I  
cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him  
in the cold ground. My brother shall know of it:  
and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my  
coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies;  
good night, good night.

*(Ophelia fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Follow her close; give her good watch,  
I pray you.

*(Horatio fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs  
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies  
But in battalions.

*(A noise within.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alack, what noise is this?

*(LAERTES, appears, armed.)*

LAERTES

Where is this vile king?  
Give me my father!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

KING CLAUDIUS

Tell me, Laertes, why you are thus incensed.  
Speak, man.

LAERTES  
Where is my father?

KING CLAUDIUS  
Dead.

LAERTES  
How came he dead? To this point I stand,  
Only I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father.

KING CLAUDIUS  
That I am guiltless of your father's death,  
And am most sensible in grief for it.

*(A cry within.)*

LAERTES  
How now! what noise is that?

*(Ophelia appears.)*

LAERTES  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

OPHELIA  
*(Sings)* They bore him barefaced on the bier;  
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;  
And in his grave rained many a tear:—  
Fare you well, my dove!  
*(Speaking)* There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray,  
love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts.  
There's fennel for you, and columbines: there's rue  
for you; there's a daisy: I would give you  
some violets, but they withered all when my father  
died: they say he made a good end—

LAERTES  
A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA  
*(Sings)* And will he not come again?  
And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead:  
Go to your death-bed:  
He never will come again.  
*(Speaks)* God ha' mercy on his soul!

*(Ophelia fades away.)*

LAERTES  
Do you see this, O God?

KING CLAUDIUS

Laertes, I must commune with your grief.  
Be you content to lend your patience to us,  
And we shall jointly labour with your soul  
To give it due content.

LAERTES

Let this be so;

KING CLAUDIUS

So you shall;  
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.  
I pray you, go with me.

*(All fade away. Horatio appears, reading a letter.)*

HORATIO

*(Reading a letter)* “Horatio, when we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king have the letters I have sent; and repair you to me with as much speed as you would fly death. I have words to speak in your ear will make you dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring you where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England: of them I have much to tell you. Farewell. Hamlet.”  
Come, I will make you way for these your letters.

*(Horatio fades away; King Claudius and Laertes appear.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

*(Reading a letter.)*

“High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. HAMLET.”

*(To Laertes)*

Now must your conscience my acquaintance seal,  
And you must put me in your heart for friend.  
Laertes: will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my lord;  
So you will not overrule me to a peace.



KING CLAUDIUS

If he be now returned, I will work him  
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:  
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,  
But even his mother shall call it accident.

LAERTES

My lord, I will be ruled;  
The rather, if you could devise it so  
That I might be the organ,  
To cut his throat in the church.

KING CLAUDIUS

No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;  
Yet revenge should have no bounds.  
We'll put a wager on your heads: he, being remiss,  
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 it:  
And, for that purpose, I'll anoint my sword.  
I bought an unction of a mountebank;  
I'll touch my point with this contagion,  
That, if I gall him slightly, it may be death.

KING CLAUDIUS

Let's further think of this; soft! Let me see:  
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunning;  
When in your motion you are hot and dry—  
As make your bouts more violent to that end—  
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him  
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there.

*(Queen Gertrude appears.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

How now, sweet queen!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

One woe does tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow; your sister's drowned, Laertes.

LAERTES

Drowned! O, where?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows aslant a brook;  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
There, and down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
But long it could not be,  
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pulled the poor wretch to muddy death.

LAERTES

Alas, then, she is drowned?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Drowned, drowned.

LAERTES

Too much of water have you, poor Ophelia,  
And therefore I forbid my tears:

*(Laertes fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Let's follow, Gertrude:  
How much I had to do to calm his rage!

*(All fade away. Sound of a grave being dug. Gravedigger appears.)*

GRAVEDIGGER

*(Sings)* In youth, when I did love, did love,  
Methought it was very sweet,  
To contract, O, the time, for, ah, my behove,  
O, methought, there was nothing meet.

*(Hamlet and Horatio appear.)*

HAMLET

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he  
sings at grave-making?

HORATIO

Custom has made it in him a property of easiness.

GRAVEDIGGER

*[Sings]* But age, with his stealing steps,  
Has clawed me in his clutch,  
And has shipped me into the land,  
As if I had never been such.

HAMLET

Whose grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER

Mine, sir.

HAMLET

I think it be yours, indeed; for you lie in it.

GRAVEDIGGER

For my part, I do not lie in it, and yet it is mine.

HAMLET

You do lie in it, to be in it and say it is yours:  
'tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore you lie.

GRAVEDIGGER

Then 'tis a quick lie, sir.

HAMLET

What man do you dig it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in it?

GRAVEDIGGER

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

HAMLET

How absolute the knave is! How long have you been a  
grave-maker?

GRAVEDIGGER

It was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that  
is mad, and sent into England.

HAMLET

Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

GRAVEDIGGER

Why, because he was mad: he shall recover his wits  
there; or, if he do not, it's no great matter there.

HAMLET

Why?

GRAVEDIGGER

It will not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

*(Sound of the shovel hitting something.)*

Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth  
three and twenty years.

HAMLET

Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER

A whorson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER

This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

HAMLET

Let me see. *(Takes the skull. Gravedigger fades away..)*

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow  
of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

Do you think Alexander looked of this fashion in  
the earth?

HORATIO

Even so.

HAMLET

To what base uses we may return, Horatio!

But soft! but soft! *aside: here comes the king.*

*(Laertes, King Claudius, Queen Gertrude appear, with the corpse of Ophelia, veiled.)*

HAMLET

The queen, the courtiers: who is this they follow?

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

CLAUDIUS

Her death was doubtful;

No more to be done:

We should profane the service of the dead

To sing a requiem and such rest to her

As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES

Lay her in the earth:  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring

HAMLET

What, the fair Ophelia!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Sweets to the sweet: farewell!  
I hoped you should have been my Hamlet's wife;  
I thought your bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,  
And not have strewed your grave.

LAERTES

O, treble woe  
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head,  
Whose wicked deed your most ingenious sense  
Deprived you of! Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:

HAMLET

*(Advancing)* What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis?

LAERTES

The devil take your soul!

HAMLET

You pray not well.  
I pray you, take your fingers from my throat;

KING CLAUDIUS

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

HORATIO

Good my lord, be quiet.

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers  
Could not, with all their quantity of love,  
Make up my sum.  
What will you do for her?

KING CLAUDIUS

O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

This is mere madness!

HAMLET

Hear you, sir;

What is the reason that you use me thus?

I loved you ever: but it is no matter;

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew and dog will have his day.

*(Hamlet fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.

*(Horatio fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

*(To Gertrude)* Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.

*(Gertrude fades away.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

*(To Laertes)* Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;

We'll put the matter to the present push.

This grave shall have a living monument:

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

*(Claudius and Laertes fade away. Hamlet and Horatio appear.)*

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to it.

HAMLET

Being thus be-netted round with villainies—

I sat me down, devised a new commission:

An earnest conjuration from the king,

That, on the view and knowing of these contents,

He should the bearers put to sudden death,

Not shriving-time allowed.

*(Osric appears, hat in hand.)*

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir.

OSRIC

Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

HAMLET

I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your bonnet to his right use; 'tis for the head.

OSRIC

I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

HAMLET

No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.

OSRIC

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET

But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

*(Aside to Horatio)* Do know this water-fly?

HORATIO

*(Aside to Hamlet)* No, my good lord.

OSRIC

My lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head.

Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman.

And I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

HAMLET

What's his weapon?

OSRIC

Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET

That's two of his weapons: but, well.

OSRIC

The king, sir, has wagered with him that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET

Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC

I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET

Yours, yours.

*(Osric fades away.)*

HAMLET

He does well to commend it himself; there are no  
tongues else for his turn.

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET

I do not think so: since he went into France, I  
have been in continual practise: I shall win at the  
odds.

*(King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Laertes, and Osric appear.)*

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong.

LAERTES

I am satisfied in nature.  
I do receive your offered love like love,  
And will not wrong it.

HAMLET

I embrace it freely;  
And will this brother's wager frankly play.  
Give us the foils. Come on.

LAERTES

Come, one for me.

KING CLAUDIUS

Set me the stoops of wine upon that table.  
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,  
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,  
The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath;

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

LAERTES

Come, my lord.

*(They duel; sounds of the duel.)*



HAMLET  
One.

LAERTES  
No.

HAMLET  
Judgment.

OSRIC  
A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES  
Well; again.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is yours;  
Here's to your health.  
*(Claudius drops a pearl into the goblet.)*  
Give him the cup.

HAMLET  
I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile. Come.

*(They duel; sounds of the duel.)*

HAMLET  
Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES  
A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Our son shall win.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
*(Lifting the goblet.)* The queen carouses to your fortune, Hamlet.

HAMLET  
Good madam!

KING CLAUDIUS  
Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

KING CLAUDIUS  
*[Aside]* It is the poisoned cup: it is too late.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

LAERTES

*(Aside to Claudius)* My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING CLAUDIUS

I do not think it.

LAERTES

*(Aside)* And yet 'tis almost against my conscience.

HAMLET

Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally;  
I pray you, pass with your best violence.

LAERTES

Say you so? come on. Have at you now!

*(They duel; sounds of the duel. Laertes wounds Hamlet who exclaims in pain; then in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes, who exclaims in pain.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Part them; they are incensed.

*(Queen Gertrude swoons.)*

OSRIC

Look to the queen there, ho!

HORATIO

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

OSRIC

How is it, Laertes?

LAERTES

I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

HAMLET

How does the queen?

KING CLAUDIUS

She swoons to see them bleed.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink,—O my dear Hamlet,—  
The drink, the drink! I am poisoned.

*(Gertrude dies.)*

HAMLET

O villainy! Ho! let the door be locked:  
Treachery! Seek it out.

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, you are slain;  
No medicine in the world can do you good;  
The treacherous instrument is in your hand,  
Unbated and envenomed: lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again: your mother's poisoned:  
The king, the king's to blame.

HAMLET

The point!—envenomed too!  
Then, venom, to your work.

*(Stabs KING CLAUDIUS)*

KING CLAUDIUS

O, yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt.

HAMLET

Here, you incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,  
Drink off this potion. Is your poison here?  
Follow my mother.

*(Hamlet forces Claudius to drink from the goblet; King Claudius dies.)*

LAERTES

He is justly served;  
It is a poison tempered by himself.  
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet:  
Mine and my father's death come not upon you,  
Nor yours on me.

*(Laertes dies.)*

HAMLET

Heaven make you free of it! I follow you.  
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!  
*(Pause)* Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;  
And enterprises of great pith and moment,  
Their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.  
*(Pause)* The rest is silence.

*(Hamlet is dead, crumpled in his chair. Horatio stares out as Hamlet fades away. Finally, Horatio raises a syringe and contemplates it, then fades away, leaving only Osric. Music. Curtain.)*