

Hamlet by William Shakespeare

Adapted for young actors by

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1 INTRODUCTION- A FUNERAL AND A WEDDING

*(HAMLET, GERTRUDE, CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS, BISHOP OF JUTTLAND,
SOLDIERS AND DANISH NOBLES)*

Music. A sad funeral march. One hears wailing from off. Enter the Royal Court of Denmark in mourning. Two soldiers carry the body of the old King Hamlet. A bishop leads the procession, followed by Gertrude in black accompanied by the new king, Claudius. Then comes Polonius with a staff, a noble also with a staff and the two soldiers with the dead king on two poles. Hamlet follows the procession in deep grief. All are dressed in black. After once circling the stage the two soldiers stop to reveal the dead king down stage. The rest of the procession is up stage. Hamlet looks sadly on his dead father.

Hamlet- What a grace was seated on this brow: Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself, an eye like Mars...

Hamlet turns away overcome with grief. King Claudius snaps his fingers and the old king's body is thrown onto the audience. Hamlet is shocked while up stage a wedding ceremony is taking place. All the black has been thrown away. Gertrude marries her brother-in-law Claudius.

Bishop- Omnia Gallia in tres partes divisa est?

Gertrude and Claudius-We do!

Gertrude and Claudius exchange rings and the others make an arch with their sticks. the newly weds walk down stage through the arches. The music changes and all begin to dance. Hamlet watches his mother dancing with his uncle with disbelief. The Queen notices her mourning son and offers to dance with him.

Gertrude- Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off, and let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Hamlet- My father was a man, Take him for all in all, I shall not look on his like again.

Gertrude- Oh, Hamlet, thou knowest 'tis common. All that lives must die. `passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet-Ay, madame, it is common.

Hamlet casts his mother a dirty look. An embarrassed silence. Claudius intervenes.

Claudius-How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

Hamlet- Not so, my lord, I am too much in the "son"

Gertrude tries to stroke his cheek.

Gertrude-Comfort of our eye, Our chiefest courtier

Claudius- My cousin Hamlet, and my son.

Claudius and Gertrude move their heads back to kiss and Hamlet speaks between them.

Hamlet-(aside) A little more than kin, and less than kind

Hamlet moves his head back and Gertrude and Claudius kiss and then dance off with the whole court. Hamlet is left in disbelief on stage alone.

Hamlet- Frailty thy name is woman!

2 ACT ONE- SCENE ONE- THE FIRST SIGHTING OF THE GHOST

(BERNARDO, FRANCISCO, HORATIO, GHOST AND MARCELLUS)

Announcer- Dear ladies and gentlemen, we find ourselves in foggy Elsinore in Denmark. The old king has died and his brother Claudius has taken power and married his widow, Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. But up on the battlements strange things are beginning to happen. Hamlet, Act One, Scene One!

We see two armed soldiers trying to find their way through the thick fog.

Bernardo- Who's there?

Francisco attacks.

Francisco- Nay, stand and unfold yourself.

Bernardo- Long live the king!

Francisco- Bernardo?

Bernardo- He.

Francisco-You come most carefully upon your hour.

Bernardo- 'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed Francisco.

Francisco- For this relief much thanks.' Tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart.

Bernardo- Have you had a quiet guard?

Francisco- Not a mouse stirring.

Francisco goes and we see Horatio and Marcellus enter. marcellus gestures to Horatio that he will scare Bernardo from behind.

Marcellus- Boo!

Bernardo explodes in fear.

Horatio- Has this thing appeared again tonight?

Bernardo- I have seen nothing.

Marcellus- Horatio says that it is but a fantasy and will not let belief take hold of him.

Horatio- Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

Enter the ghost.

Marcellus- Look where it comes again!

The three look over to the thing.

Bernardo- Oh, a ghost!

Horatio- A ghost?

A terrified Bernardo gives his spear to Horatio and then jumps into the arms of Marcellus.

Bernardo- In the same figure like the King that's dead!

Horatio- Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

Bernardo- It would be spoken to.

Marcellus- Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.

Horatio shakes with fear between the spears. He opens them apart and leans

forward to the ghost when he tries to speak to it.

Horatio- What at thou that usurpest this time of night, together in that fair warlike form in which the majesty of buried Denmark did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee, speak.

A rooster crows. The ghost goes.

Marcellus- It is offended.

Bernardo- See, it stalks away.

Horatio- Stay. Speak, speak. I charge thee, speak!

Marcellus- 'Tis gone and will not speak.

Bernardo- How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale. is this not something more than fantasy?

Horatio- Let us impart what we have seen tonight to Prince Hamlet. For upon my life, this spirit dumb to us, will speak to him.

They rush off to relate the night's events to Hamlet who has been standing in a melancholy pose up stage.

Hamlet- My father's spirit (in arms!) All is not well.

3 ACT ONE-SCENE TWO- LAERTES LEAVES FOR FRANCE

(LAERTES, OPHELIA AND POLONIUS)

Announcer- Meanwhile the young lord Laertes prepares for his voyage to France. "The wind sits in the shoulder of his sail." Hamlet, Act One, Scene Two!

Music. Enter Laertes and Ophelia. He is packing his bag for the journey. Ophelia watches on sadly.

Laertes- My necessaries are embarked. Farewell. And sister, as the winds give benefit and convoy is assistant, do not sleep, but let me hear from you.

Ophelia-Do you doubt that?

Laertes- For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour, hold it as a fashion and a toy in blood, a violet in the youth of primy nature, forward not permanent, sweet, not lasting, the perfume and suppliance of a minute, no more.

Ophelia-No more but so?

Laertes-Be wary then. Best safety lies in fear

Ophelia- I shall the effect of this good lesson keep as a watchmen to my heart. But, good brother, do not as ungracious pastors do, show me the steep and thorny way to heaven, whiles like a puffed and reckless libertine himself the primrose path of dalliance treads and recks not his own rede.

Laertes- I have stayed too long.

Enter Polonius like the white rabbit in Alice in Wonderland. He looks now and again to his "Nuremberg egg" worrying that his only son will miss the boat to France.

Polonius- Yet, here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame! There, my blessing with thee. And these few precepts to thy memory.

Trust is good, condoms are better.

Ophelia puts a pack of condoms in her brothers bag.

Laertes- Indeed, father.

Ophelia- Yes, father.

Polonius-Speech is silver, but silence is gold.

Ophelia puts a tooth brush in her brothers bag.

Laertes- Very true , father.

Ophelia- Yes, father

Polonius- And when you think you just can't go on, a little light will appear from further on.

Ophelia brings her brother a lighter and puts it in his bag. Laertes bows to his father.

Laertes-Most humbly I do take my leave, my lord.

Polonius-The time invites you. Go.

Laertes starts to leave then turns back to his little sister.

Laertes- Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well what I have said to you

Ophelia- 'Tis locked in my memory locked, and you yourself shall keep the key of it.

Laertes- Farewell!

Laertes puts his bag over his shoulder. He takes out a little paper boat, puts it on his finger and blows himself away to France as Polonius and Ophelia wave sadly goodbye.

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

Ophelia- So please you, something touching the Prince Hamlet.

Polonius- Marry, well bethought. 'Tis told me he hath very oft of late given private time to you, and you yourself have of your audience been most free and bounteous.

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

Polonius- Affection? Pooh! You speak like a green girl, unsifted in such perilous circumstance. Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

Ophelia- I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

Polonius-Think yourself a baby that you have ta'en these tenders for true pay which were not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly.

Ophelia- My lord, he hath me importuned me with love in an honourable fashion.

Polonius- Ay, 'fashion' you may call it. Go to, go to.

Ophelia- ...with almost holy vows of heaven.

Polonius- Ay, snares to catch woodcocks. Do not believe his vows! Be something scanted of your maiden presence with the prince.

Ophelia- But father!

Polonius- I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth have you slander any moment leisure as to give words or talk with the Prince Hamlet.

Ophelia- I shall obey, my lord.

Exeunt Polonius and Ophelia.

4 ACT ONE, SCENE THREE- HAMLET AND THE GHOST OF HIS FATHER

(HAMLET AND THE GHOST OF HIS FATHER)

Announcer- Hamlet, the melancholy prince of Denmark, walks sad and alone over the battlements of Elsinore. Hamlet Act One, Scene Three!

Hamlet stands with a skull in a classic pose. Melancholy music. The skull will talk with him during the scene.

Hamlet- To be or not to be?

Skull- Yes, that is here the question.

Hamlet- Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or...or...or

Hamlet forgets his text but the skull prompts him. The skull whispers the text to him.

Skull- or to take up arms...

Hamlet- or to take up arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them. To die, to sleep- no more

Skull- To sleep, to die, to sleep, to die, always the same answer to the same old question. Hamlet, come here. Closer!

Hamlet moves closer to the mouth of the skull. The skull opens his jaws and burps in his royal face and laughs. Hamlet is appalled by the ancient, fetid smell.

Hamlet- Something is rotten in the state of Denmark!

Enter the ghost. Music.

Ghost- Hamlet!

Hamlet- Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Ghost- Hamlet, Hamlet! I am thy father's spirit!

Hamlet- Papa you?

Ghost- As I slept in the garden...

Hamlet- In the garden?

Ghost- Poison was poured into porches of my ears

Hamlet- Poison into your ears?

Ghost- It was your Uncle Claudius.

Hamlet- My uncle Claudius! Oh my prophetic soul!

Ghost- If ever thou didst thy father love, revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

The ghost gives Hamlet a sword. A rooster crows. The ghost turns and leaves.

Ghost- Remember me!... Remember me!Remember me!

Hamlet- The time is out of joint. O, cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right! Revenge!

5 ACT TWO, SCENE ONE- THE ANTIC DISPOSITION

(HAMLET, POLONIUS GERTRUDE, CLAUDIUS AND THE FAIR OPHELIA)

Announcer-After meeting his dead father, Hamlet puts on" an antic disposition."
Hamlet Act two, Scene one!

Polonius enters the stage reading a love letter Hamlet wrote to his daughter.

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

An evidently mad Hamlet skates by the worthy old man.

Polonius-The prince is as mad as a March hare. The love for my daughter has driven him crazy!

Fanfare. Enter Gertrude and Claudius.

Polonius- Your Majesties, since brevity is the soul of wit, And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes. I will be brief. Your noble son is mad....mad call I it. For, to define true madness, what is't but to be nothing else but mad?

Gertrude- More matter, with less art.

Polonius- Madam, I swear I use no art at all. I have a daughter- have while she is mine- who in her duty and obedience, mark, hath given me this.

Claudius takes the letter and reads.

Claudius- "Doubt that the stars are fire, doubt that the sun doth move, doubt truth to be a liar. But never doubt I love"

Polonius- An ill rhyme, "move" and "love", a vile rhyme

Gertrude- Came this from Hamlet to her?

Polonius nods and Gertrude takes the letter out of Claudius' hand and reads further. Hamlet crosses the stage in a most mad manner. Gertrude and Claudius make a sign that the boy is crazy. Gertrude takes the letter and reads it out loud.

Gertrude- Let me look deep into your heart and tell me, if you will you go out with me. If yes, make a mark by the "yes", if not, cross the "no", if you're not sure, make a mark between the "yes" and "no". I can wait.

Claudius- The boy is head over heels in love!

Gertrude- It may be, very like.

Polonius- You know how often walks for hours up and down in the lobby

Gertrude-So he does indeed

Hamlet crosses madly again.

Claudius- Madness in great ones should not go unwatched

Polonius- Indeed, my Lord. At such a time I'll loose daughter to him in this very lobby. Be you and I behind an arras then.

Gertrude- But look where sadly the poor wretch comes.

Enter Hamlet.

Polonius- Away, I do beseech you both, away.

Polonius and Claudius go behind an arras while Gertrude exits. Polonius pushes Ophelia out to meet Hamlet, so he and the king can watch the encounter. Ophelia is carrying a Teddy Bear.

Hamlet- I'll have these actors play something like the murder of my father before my uncle, if he but blench, I'll know my course

Ophelia- Hamlet!

Hamlet- The fair Ophelia!

Ophelia- My lord, I have remembrances of yours that I have longed to re- deliver. I pray you now receive them.

Hamlet- I never gave you aught.

Ophelia- My honored lord, you know right well you did.

Hamlet-I loved you... once.

Ophelia- Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Ophelia turns away and starts to cry.

Hamlet- You should not have believed me. I loved not you.

Ophelia- I was the more deceived.

Hamlet- Get thee to a nunnery!

The king and Polonius shake their heads. It is certainly not love that is the cause of Hamlet's "antic disposition". They leave the arras and exit.

Ophelia- Oh, heavenly powers restore him!

Hamlet- Get thee to a nunnery! Why would'st thou be a breeder of sinners? We are errant knaves all. Believe none of us!

Ophelia-O, what a great mind is here o'erthrown!

Fanfare. Enter Queen Gertrude. Hamlet bows before her.

Hamlet- My royal mother.

Gertrude- Hamlet, my most royal son.

Ophelia bows before her and kisses her hand.

Ophelia-Your Majesty.

Gertrude- Ahh, the fair Ophelia.

Music. Hamlet, Gertrude and Ophelia dance an elegant court dance(Suzato) while the following dialog is spoken

Hamlet- Mother, I have a surprise for you.

Ophelia- A surprise?

Gertrude- I love surprises

Hamlet- It's pure theatre.

Ophelia- theatre?

Gertrude- I love theatre!

Hamlet- It's called the Mouse Trap

Ophelia- The Mouse Trap?

Gertrude- I love the Mouse Trap! I saw it London years ago!

Hamlet- Mother, there in the royal box. You, (coldly) Ophelia on the side

6 ACT TWO SCENE TWO- THE MOUSE TRAP

(GERTRUDE AND CLAUDIUS, HAMLET, A CRY OF PLAYERS)

Hamlet-(aside) The play's the thing in which I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Fanfare. Enter King Claudius. He is in a an excellent mood. As he moves to embrace Hamlet, the prince bows and the king is left embracing the air. In his embarrassment he looks to Gertrude.

Claudius- Gertrude, once our sister, now our queen.

Hamlet winces. The king joins his wife in the royal box.

Hamlet- Darling mother and dear uncle, The Mouse Trap!

Claudius-Let the play begin!

Enter the players. Hamlet joins in the play to present The Mouse Trap, an old Italian masked play in which the evil Duke of Gonzago, poisons his older brother and takes his kingdom and his wife.

Player 1- The best players in the world, either for tragedy

Player 2- Comedy

Player 3-History

Player 4 -Pastoral

Hamlet- Pastoral- comical

Player 4-Historical-pastoral

Player 3-Tragical -historical

Player 2-Tragical- comical-historical- pastoral

Player 1- Seneca cannot be too heavy,

Player 2- nor Plautus too light.

Hamlet- For exquisite production values, these are the only men. I shall myself, present an Italian pear tree, then the evil Duke of Gonzaga.

The players run for their costumes and masks. Hamlet plays a tree.

Claudius -Darling, what do they play tonight?

Gertrude- The Mouse Trap. I think it's a musical.

Claudius-As long as it isn't political.

A masked dumb show. Percussion. An old king and his young wife come down stage like wind up dolls. They kiss and the old king grows tired and falls asleep under the tree. His wife turns and leaves him and goes back up stage.

Gertrude-- I already like it better than Phantom of the Opera.

Claudius- Shhh!

Tamborine. The tree turns to become the evil Count Gonzago played by Hamlet. He slinks through the garden and checks if any witnesses might be there. He sees the sleeping king. Then he pulls out a bottle of deadly poison and pours it into the old king's ear. The poison slowly starts to move in the old king's ear. The poison burns deep into his aged brains and the old king dies in agony. The Player Queen comes down and weeps for her dead husband.

Gertrude- The lady doth protest too much!

Claudius- Shhh!

The evil count takes the crown of the old king and places it on his head. He then takes the player queen by the hand and kicks the old dead king away. The dead king rolls back up stage.

Slowly Claudius and Gertrude get the idea of the performance. They try to maintain their royal dignity. But when the evil count and the Player Queen make obscene erotic movements, King Claudius explodes. He rushes up onto the stage and forcefully separates the couple.

Claudius-Stop!

Gertrude rushes up to Hamlet.

Gertrude-Hamlet, you've insulted your father. Apologize to the king at once!

Hamlet and Claudius turn to each other. Claudius is furious. Hamlet takes off his mask and goes to apologize to the king. At the last second, he spits in the king's face. Claudius grabs Hamlet by the jugular vein and tries to strangle him. The

queen rushes to pull Claudius off her son, Ophelia tries to pull her boyfriend away from the angry king. Polonius grabs his daughter and the Player Queen tries to help Gertrude. It is a free for all.

Gertrude-Not before our subjects!

Instantly we get the picture of a happy royal family smiling ear to ear. A photographer takes a group photo. Claudius tries to maintain his cool, but again explodes in anger. He runs off followed by Gertrude and the court. (From off)

Claudius-Lights! Lights! Hamlet is herefore banished!

Gertrude- But Hamlet is my most royal son!

Claudius-To England! It stands not safe with us to let his madness rage!

Claudius leaves the hall furiously with the court following him in panic. Hamlet is left alone on stage smiling. His plan has worked.

Hamlet- The trap is sprung!

7 ACT THREE-SCENE ONE- THE CHAPEL

(HAMLET, CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS AND THE VIRGIN MARY)

Announcer- After watching the Mouse Trap, King Claudius is "marvelous distempered". He rushes to his private chapel. Hamlet, Act three- Scene one!

Enter a raging Claudius. From the other side of the stage comes Polonius.

Claudius- I like him not; nor stands it safe with us to let his madness range. I'll banish him to England.

Polonius-My lord, he's going to his mother's closet. Behind the arras I'll convey myself to hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home.

Claudius-Thanks, dear my lord.

Exit Polonius. Sacred music. We see a royal chapel. On a pedestal stands an actress who plays Maria. King Claudius kneels before the statue.

Claudius- O, my offence is rank. It smells to heaven.

Maria holds her nose

Claudius- It hath the primal eldest curse upon it, a brother's murder.

Maria nods. Enter Hamlet.

Hamlet- Now might I do it pat, now that he is praying. And now I'll do it.

Hamlet raises his sword to kill the king.

Claudius- *(mumbling)* O, wretched state! O, bosom black as death!

Hamlet- And so he goes to heaven and thus am I avenged?

Hamlet lets his sword drop.

Claudius-*(mumbling)* O, snared soul struggling to be free...

Hamlet- No, down sword, and know thou a more horrid hent. When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, or in the incestuous pleasures of his bed, that his soul may be as damned and black, as hell whereto he goes. Then shall I strike. Soft now to my mother. The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom. Let me be cruel, but not unnatural.

Hamlet goes off to his mother's bedroom. The king is left alone in his chapel.

Claudius- My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go

Maria nods in agreement. Claudius gets up and exits.

8 ACT THREE- SCENE TWO - IN THE QUEEN'S BEDROOM

(HAMLET, GERTRUDE, POLONIUS AND GHOST)

Announcer- Meanwhile the Queen is in "most great affliction of spirit". Hamlet, burning with anger, bursts into his royal mother's bedroom. Hamlet, Act three, Scene two!

We see Gertrude and a handmaiden. The handmaiden is combing Gertrude's hair. She is trying to calm down her mistress. Gertrude has a mirror in her hand.

Enter Polonius.

Polonius-The Prince will come to you straight. Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with. Pray you be round with him!

Gertrude- Fear me not. withdraw. I hear him coming.

She sends her handmaiden away, while Polonius hides behind an arras in back of her.

Hamlet- Now, mother, what's the matter?

Gertrude- Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet- Mother, you have my father much offended.

Gertrude- Come, come you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet- Go, go, you answer with a wicked tongue.

Gertrude-Have you forgotten me?

Hamlet- No, by Jesu, not so! You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife, and, were it not so, you are my mother.

Gertrude- Nay, I'll send those to you that can speak.

Hamlet- Come, come and sit you down. You shall not budge till I set up a glass where you see the inmost part of you.

Hamlet forces the queen to the ground. She is frightened for her life.

Gertrude- What wilt thou do? Thou wilt murder me? Help, ho!

Polonius-(From the arras) What, Ho! help!

Hamlet-(drawing his sword) How now? A rat? Dead for a ducat!

Hamlet stabs through the arras and kills Polonius. Polonius reveals his face.

Polonius- O, I am slain!

Polonius falls dead with the arras over his face.

Gertrude- O me, what hast thou done?

Hamlet- Nay, I know not. is it the king?

Gertrude- O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet removes the cloth from the face of Polonius.

Hamlet- Shit! Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! I took thee for thy better.

Gertrude wrings her hands in despair.

Gertrude- O, Hamlet!

Hamlet- Leave wringing your hands. Peace, sit you down and let me wring your heart.

Gertrude- What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue in noise so rude against me?

Hamlet- Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty; calls virtue hypocrite; makes marriage vows as false as dicers' oaths...

Enter the Ghost. Gertrude can't see the spirit, but her son can.

Ghost- Hamlet, remember me! Remember me!

Hamlet falls to his knees as the ghost leaves. He keeps staring at airy nothing.

Gertrude- Alas, he's mad. Whereupon do you look?

Hamlet- On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares. Do you see nothing there?

Gertrude- Nothing at all.

Hamlet- Nor did you nothing hear?

Gertrude- Nothing but ourselves.

Gertrude tries to soothe her troubled son.

Hamlet- Look where he goes, even now out at the portal!

Gertrude- O gentle son, upon the heat and flame of thy distemper sprinkle cool patience.

Hamlet- My father, in his habit as he lived!

Gertrude- Shh! This is the very coinage of your brain. This bodily creation ecstasy is very cunning in.

Hamlet- Ecstasy? It is not madness that I have uttered. Mother, for love of grace, lay not that flattering unction to your soul, that your trespass to your soul, but my madness speaks. Confess yourself to heaven. Repent what's past. Avoid what is to come. Assume a virtue if you have it not. Go not to my uncle's bed.

Gertrude- O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

Hamlet- I must be cruel to be kind. Farewell, mother. I am banished to England.

He politely kisses her hand and then carries the body of Polonius out of her bedroom.

Gertrude- O, he is as mad as the sea and wind when both contend which is the mightier.

9 ACT FOUR-SCENE ONE- THE DEATH OF OPHELIA

(OPHELIA, 2 ACTORS, GIRL GROUP AND DEATH)

Announcer- Meanwhile in Elsinore the Lady Ophelia wanders along the slippery banks of madness. Perhaps because of Prince Hamlet...

Ophelia laughs

Announcer- Perhaps because of the death of her father...

She laughs again.

Announcer- Who knows?" There is a willow grows askant a brook, that shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream, there with fantastic garlands did she come."
Hamlet Act Four- Scene One!

Music. Ophelia goes through the audience giving out flowers.

Ophelia-There's rosemary, that's for remembrance. Pray love, remember. And rue for you, but you must wear yours with a difference. I would have given you violets, but they withered all when my father died.

On stage two actors hold a wide light blue cloth, the river. In the background to the side three girls in swimming hats form a girl group. Ophelia starts to sing from Amy Winehouse-"Rehab." She dances and sings. The cloth rises behind her. At the end of Rehab song the cloth falls to reveal Death holding the poor girl in his arms. The actors holding the cloth leave the stage. The girl group runs off in fear. Death slowly carries off the fair maiden to his ever dark mansion.

10 ACT FOUR - SCENE TWO - THE GRAVE DIGGERS

(HAMLET, TWO GRAVEDIGGERS)

Announcer- In spite of his banishment and plots against him, Prince Hamlet returns to Denmark. Before he arrives in Elsinore, he decides to visit his favorite local cemetery.

Hamlet, Act four Scene Two!

Enter two gravediggers. They begin to shovel a grave.

Gravedigger 1- Is she to be given a Christian burial? I heard it was suicide.

Gravedigger 2- I tell you she is. Therefore make her grave straight and narrow. The crowner hath sat on her and finds it a Christian burial.

Gravedigger 1- How can that be, unless she drowned herself in self defense?

Gravedigger 2- Will you have the truth of it? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she would have been buried out of Christian burial.

Gravedigger 1- Why, there thou sayest. 'Tis the way of the world, the way of the world.

Gravedigger 2- Now if you'll excuse me. I got to see a man about a dog.

Gravedigger Two goes and Gravedigger one sings merrily-"16 Men on a Dead Man's Chest" Enter Hamlet.

Hamlet- Has this fellow no feeling for his business? He sings in grave-making.

Gravedigger 2- (sings) "Drink to the devil and none to the rest, ho, ho ho, and a bottle of rum!"

Hamlet- What man dost thou dig for?

Gravedigger 2- For no man, sir.

Hamlet- For what woman then?

Gravedigger 2- For none neither.

Hamlet- Who is to be buried in it?

Gravedigger 2- One that *was* a woman, sir. But God rest her soul, she's dead.

Hamlet- How absolute the knave is! How long will a man lie in the earth 'ere he rot?

Gravedigger 2- By my Faith, if ain't already rotten like Gert Wilders, it will take eight to nine years. A West Friesian ten. Genever is a great preservative of the rotting body.

The grave digger finds a skull

Hamlet- That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once.

Gravedigger 2- Right you are, sir. This here was Yorrick the old king's jester.

Hamlet- Yorrick!

Gravedigger 2- Right you are again, sir and still smiling. If you'll excuse me, I have to see a man about a dog.

Gravedigger 2 goes off to relieve himself and Hamlet raises the skull of Yorrick.

Hamlet- Alas, poor Yorrick. I knew him well. A fellow of infinite wit, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his back a thousand times. Here hung those lips I have kissed I know not how oft. Where are your gibes now?... Your songs?... Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop fallen?

Now get thee to my lady's plastic surgeon and tell her to let her botox herself like a porcupine, to this favour she must finally come. Make her laugh at that.

11 ACT FOUR SCENE THREE- THE BURIAL OF THE FAIR OPHELIA

(HAMLET, LAERTES, OPHELIA, CLAUDIUS AND GERTRUDE, BISHOP, DANISH NOBLES)

Enter a funeral procession led by the same bishop as the first funeral. He is followed by a mourning Laertes, Gertrude and Claudius and various courtiers. They carry the fair Ophelia on their shoulders. Music. Hamlet hides himself to the side.

Hamlet- Here comes the king, the queen, the courtiers. Who is this they carry? And with such maimed rites?

Bishop- Here is holy ground. Her death was doubtful. She can't be buried here.

Laertes- Lay her in the earth and from her fair unpolluted flesh may violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest, a ministering angel shall my sister be, while thou liest howling in Hell!

The Bishop leaves insulted. They lay Ophelia in her grave. Gertrude gently scatters rose petals on the girls grave.

Gertrude- Sweets to the sweet! Farewell. I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife. I thought thy bride bed to have decked, sweet maid, and not have strewed thy grave.

Hamlet comes forth to reveal himself.

Hamlet- This is I!

All eyes turn to him.

Hamlet- Hamlet the Dane!

Laertes eyes flash with hate at the murderer of his father and sister.

Laertes- O, treble woe fall ten times double on your cursed head, Hamlet!

Laertes goes for Hamlet's throat

Hamlet- I prithee take thy fingers from my throat

Claudius- Pluck them assunder!

Gertrude- Hamlet, Hamlet!

The courtiers pull the struggling youths away from one another. Claudius takes Laertes on his arm. Gertrude goes to Hamlet.

Claudius-Gertrude set some watch over your son.

(*to Laertes*) What would you undertake to show yourself in deed your father's son, more than in words?

Laertes- Cut his throat in the church!

Claudius-Revenge should have no bounds.

They all go.

12 ACT FIVE- SCENE ONE- THE FATAL DUEL

(OPHELIA, LAERTES, HAMLET, OSRICK, CLAUDIUS AND GERTRUDE)

Announcer- Ladies and gentlemen we are once again in Elsinore where the actors are preparing for the last act of Hamlet.

Actor-(from off) Where's my sword?

Announcer- See, the young Prince Hamlet

Hamlet enters to the left of the announcer

Announcer-He has become totally insane.

Hamlet strikes an insane pose.

Announcer- And see, the young lord Laertes

Enter Laertes stage right.

Announcer- He is foaming at the mouth with anger

Laertes- Hamlet, may the devil take your soul!

Announcer-Over the death of his sister...

Enter Ophelia.

Announcer-The fair Ophelia.

Ophelia- Ahh.

Announcer- She is..

Ophelia goes to her brother

Ophelia- Ahh.

Announcer- Quite simply...

Ophelia jumps into the arms of her brother.

Announcer-Dead!

Ophelia- Ahh.

Ophelia makes a death rattle and falls dead in her brother's arms.

Announcer-Hamlet, the last act!

The announcer goes and Hamlet and Laertes both hold the dead Ophelia between them.

Laertes- Look, Hamlet. Your dead beloved.

Hamlet- I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up my sum.

Laertes- You killed her!

The young men carry the dead girl's body upstage. Fanfare. The king and queen appear.

They set Ophelia's body before the king. Laertes kneels before King Claudius.

Laertes- Vengeance, my lord, vengeance!

Claudius- Laertes come to me. Gertrude see to your son.

Claudius snaps his fingers and Osrick appears with swords and poison.

Claudius- Sword!

Laertes- Sword?

Claudius- Poison!

Claudius pours poison on one of the swords

Laertes- Poison?

Claudius/Laertes/ Osrick- Instant death!

Claudius returns to center stage over Ophelia holding the two swords. The poison one in his left hand. He looks over to Gertrude.

Claudius- Gertrude, leave the boy, he's 24!

Gertrude returns to the side of her husband. Claudius steps over the dead Ophelia.

Claudius- Let the duel begin!

Hamlet and Laertes come downstage.

Claudius- Hamlet, good luck!

As Hamlet comes forward to grab the nearest sword, Claudius crosses his arms and gives the prince the unpoisoned sword.

Claudius- Laertes, good luck!

Claudius gives Laertes the poisoned sword and returns to his place next to Gertrude in center stage. The two young men come together to shake hands.

Hamlet- May the best man win.

Laertes- I shall!

Osrick hits his gong.

Osrick- Round one!

Hamlet and Laertes fight and Hamlet is scratched by Laertes' poisoned sword.

Osrick- A hit!

Claudius and Gertrude- A palpable hit!

Hamlet- Just a scratch.

Gertrude rushes to Hamlet with a band-aid and covers his wound.

Claudius- Gertrude!

Osrick hits his gong.

Osrick- The second round!

During this round of fighting the swords get switched

Claudius-The swords are switched!

Osrick-Time out!

Claudius snaps his fingers and Osrick brings the king a gleaming cup.

Gertrude- Hamlet, come let me wipe your face.

Gertrude wipes Hamlet's sweating brow. Claudius confers with Laertes.

Claudius-Wine!

Laertes-Wine?

Claudius pours poison into the cup.

Claudius- Poison!

Laertes- Poison?

Claudius/Laertes/ Osrick- Instant death!

Gertrude returns to her position in the middle

Claudius- Hamlet, your royal father drinks to your health!

The king crosses to give the poisoned drink to Hamlet when suddenly Gertrude moves forward to take the drink.

Gertrude- No, your royal mother drinks to your health.

Claudius- Gertrude, no!

Gertrude drinks the wine. It has a strange aftertaste. The king and queen return to center stage behind Ophelia.

Claudius- The last round.

Osrick hits his gong while Gertrude feels something strange in her stomach.

Osrick- The last round!

The duel begins again. Laertes is now terrified. He only tries to defend himself from Hamlet's poisonous sword.

Hamlet- Come for the third, Laertes. You do but dally.

In this round Laertes is stabbed almost by mistake.

Osrick- A hit!

Claudius and Gertrude- A palpable hit!

Hamlet- Pardon!

Hamlet pulls his sword out of Laertes' side.

Laertes- I am justly killed with my own treachery

The poison works quickly on Laertes and he falls while Gertrude suffers severe gastric pains. Hamlet still doesn't understand what is happening around him.

Osrick- Look to the queen!

Gertrude is swooning.

Hamlet- Mother?

Claudius- She swoons to see them bleed.

Gertrude- No, no!

The poisoned queen staggers toward her son.

Gertrude- Hamlet! Wine! ...poison!the king!

She falls dead into her son's arms

Hamlet- Wine? Poison?... (the penny drops)...the KING!

Hamlet takes up his sword again and turns to Claudius. He moves deliberately to the king. Just when he tries to run Claudius through, the king pushes Osrick in front of him. Hamlet kills Osrick.

Osrick- A hit, a palpable hit!

Osrick falls dead over Ophelia. Claudius moves back from the prince in fear.

Claudius- The Switzers, where are my Switzers?

Hamlet chases the king around the stage. The king falls backward over the legs of Osrick. Hamlet stabs him again and again.

Hamlet- Thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane!

Hamlet surveys the bloody scene. Melancholy music. Everyone he once loved is now dead. Laertes returns slowly to life. Hamlet runs to the fallen Laertes and takes his bleeding friend into his arms to comfort him.

Laertes- The king is justly served. It is a poison tempered by himself. Yes, my sword was also envenomed. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. mine and my father's death come not upon thee.

Laertes stabs Hamlet with his last life's strength, then dies laughing. Hamlet gets up but can feel the poison working inside him. He is burning on the inside. He looks around again and realizes life's great joke is on him. The Mouse Trap has snapt on him.

Hamlet- Not to be that is the answer!

Hamlet falls dead.

13 ACT FIVE- SCENE TWO- EPILOG- FORTINBRAS TAKES DENMARK

(OPHELIA, LAERTES, HAMLET, OSRICK, CLAUDIUS AND GERTRUDE, FORTINBRAS)

Fanfare. Enter Fortinbras in armor with a Norwegian flag. He looks around shocked at the slaughter.

Fortinbras- O. proud Death, what feast is toward in thine eternal cell that thou so many princes at a shot so bloodily hast struck?

The following speeches will be made by actors rising themselves up from their dead positions.

Osric- How these things came about. So shall you hear...

Gertrude- Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts

Ophelia- Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,

Laertes- Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause...

Claudius- Purposes mistook fallen on th' inventor's head

Hamlet- The rest is silence.

Osric hits his gong. The Danish court again falls dead. Fortinbras is left staring on the bloody slaughter as the lights fall.

THE END

George Isherwood, August, 2008

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