

Hamlet

Narrator 1: The king of Denmark is dead! Supposedly struck by a poisonous snake as he lay sleeping in his garden. The kind and noble king was suddenly overcome by a high fever which caused a painful and terrible death. The people of Denmark grieved for their king, but none grieved as deeply as his only son, Prince Hamlet.

Narrator 2: Hamlet was a handsome and sensitive young man. He loved his father and mother, Queen Gertrude, deeply. Although sorrowed over the death of his father, Hamlet was even more grieved when his mother married her dead husband's brother, Claudius, less than a month after her husband's death. Hamlet refused to take off his black mourning clothes saying that at least he would remember his dead father and grieve for him.

Narrator 3: The royal castle was at Elsinore on Denmark's northern coast. One bitter, winter's night, not long after the funeral of the dead king, two guards stationed on the castle battlement, along with Horatio, Hamlet's best friend, were about to experience a strange happening.

Scene 1: A Platform on the Wall of Elsinore Castle

(Francisco is pacing back and forth on the platform.)

Bernardo: *(Entering)* Halt! Who's there?

Francisco: Nay. Answer me. Stand and unfold yourself!

Bernardo: Long live the king!

Francisco: Bernardo?

Bernardo: Yes?

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.

Bernardo: Well, good night. If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus, bid them make haste.

Francisco: I think I hear them. Stand! Who's there?

(From off stage)

Horatio: Friends to this ground.

Marcellus: And liegeman to the Dane!

(Enter Marcellus)

Marcellus: Yes.

Bernardo: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

Marcellus: What? Has this thing appeared again tonight?

Bernardo: I have seen nothing.

Marcellus: Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy and will not believe what dreaded sight we have twice seen. I have entreated him to watch with us this night, that if this apparition come, he may believe our eyes and speak to it.

Horatio: Tush, tush. 'Twill not appear.

Bernardo: Sit down awhile, and let us once again tell you what we have two nights seen.

Horatio: Well, sit down, and let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

Bernardo: Last night of all, Marcellus and myself, the bell then bearing one, and...

(Enter the ghost.)

Marcellus: Peace! Break thee off! Look, where it comes again!

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

Marcellus: Thou art a scholar! Speak to it, Horatio.

Bernardo: Looks it not like the king? Mark it, Horatio.

Horatio: Most like! It harrows me with fear and wonder! *(Speaking to the ghost.)* What art thou that seize this time of night? By heaven I charge thee, speak!

Marcellus: It is offended!

Bernardo: See! It stalks away!

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

(Exit ghost.)

Marcellus: 'Tis gone and will not answer.

Narrator 1: The cock crows, signaling daylight, and the ghost disappears. As Marcellus, Bernardo, and Horatio discuss the frightening occurrence, they become certain that this is the ghost of the dead king.

Narrator 2: The three frightened men, still scarcely believing what they have just seen, decide to tell Lord Hamlet about the ghost. Although this apparition won't speak to them, they hope, perhaps, it will speak with its own son.

Scene 2: A Room Inside the Castle, Later That Same Morning.

*(Claudius and Gertrude are seated on thrones.
Hamlet, Laertes, Ophelia, and Polonius are in attendance.)*

Narrator 3: Later, that same morning, King Claudius and Queen Gertrude are holding court. Hamlet is present, along with Polonius, an old courtier of Claudis, and Polonius' son, Laertes. Hamlet and Laertes are the same age and have been friends since childhood. Hamlet is still wearing mourning clothes for his father, much to the irritation of Claudius and Gertrude.

Claudius: Though Hamlet still holds our dear brother's death in his memory, yet so far our discretion has fought with nature and kept us from excessive grief. And now, Laertes, what's the news with you? What is your wish, Laertes?

Laertes: Your permission to return to France from whence I came to Denmark for your coronation.

Claudius: Have you your father's permission? What says Polonius?

Polonius: He hath, my lord, wrung from me my consent! I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

Claudius: Go as you will, Laertes. But now, my cousin Hamlet, and now my son.

Hamlet: *(Aside)* 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 mourning off, and let thine eye look like a friend on the King. Do not forever seek for thy noble father in the dust. Thou know'st is common, all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity.

Hamlet: Ay, Mother, it is common.

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

Hamlet: “Seems” Mother? Nay, it is. I know not “seems.” These shows of grief denote me truly.

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 his father, but to preserve this unmanly grief! Fie! We pray you, think of us as a father, for you are the most immediate to our throne!

Gertrude: Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet. I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg.

Hamlet: I shall in all my best obey thee, Mother.

Claudius: Why ‘tis a loving and a fair reply. Madam, come, come away!

(All exit except Hamlet.)

Hamlet: O, that this too, too solid flesh, would melt. How weary seems all the world, that it should come to this. So excellent a king, so loving to my mother. Yet within a month...let me not think of it! Frailty, thy name is woman! Within a month she married my uncle, my father’s brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules. But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

(Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo.)

Horatio: Hail to your lordship!

Hamlet: I am glad to see you well, Horatio, Marcellus, Bernardo. *(He greets each.)* But what, in faith, is your affair in Elsinore?

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

Hamlet: I prithee, do not mock me, fellow student; I think it was to see my mother’s wedding.

Horatio: Indeed, my lord, it followed closely.

Hamlet: Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral meats did furnish the marriage table! Me thinks I see my father in my mind’s eye.

Horatio: My lord, I think I saw your father yesternight.

Hamlet: Saw who?

Horatio: The king, your father.

Hamlet: The king, my father? Let me hear!

Horatio: For two nights these gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch in the dead of night saw a figure like your father. Thrice he walked by while they stood dumb, too afraid to speak. This they told to me, in dreadful secrecy, and I with them the third night kept the watch. Where, as they had said, the ghost came.

Hamlet: But where was this?

Marcellus: My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

Hamlet: Did you speak to it?

Horatio: My lord, I did, but answer made it none.

Hamlet: 'Tis very strange. I will watch tonight; perhaps 'twill walk again. If it assumes my noble father's shape, I'll speak to it. Fare you well. I will visit you.

All: Our duty to your honor!

(All exit except Hamlet.)

Hamlet: My father's spirit... all is not well. Foul deeds will rise though all the earth overwhelm them to men's eyes.

(Exit Hamlet.)

Narrator 4: For some time, Hamlet has been in love with Polonius' daughter, Ophelia, and she with him. Hamlet writes letters and poems to Ophelia telling her how beautiful she is, and Ophelia dreams of the day she will marry Hamlet. The love between Hamlet and Ophelia angers Polonius and worries Laertes, who is preparing to return to France. Being very protective of Ophelia, Laertes warns his sister not to take Hamlet's attentions seriously.

Scene 3: The Throne Room, That Afternoon

(Laertes and Ophelia are talking together.)

Laertes: I am ready to embark. And my sister, do not sleep, but let me hear from you.

Ophelia: Do you doubt that?

Laertes: Hamlet and his love are not permanent. The perfume of a minute - no more.

Ophelia: No more than that?

Laertes: Think it no more. Perhaps he loves you now, for now no duties call him, but you must fear. His will is not his own. He may not love whom he pleases, for on his choice depends the sanity and health of the whole state. Therefore if he says he loves you, fear it, Ophelia. Be wary then, best safety lies in fear.

Ophelia: I shall this good lesson keep as watchman to my heart, my good brother.

(Enter Polonius.)

Polonius: Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame! But let me give you some advice. Beware of entrance into a quarrel. Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice. Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment. Neither a borrower nor a lender be. This above all, to thine own self be true. Farewell, my son.

Laertes: Farewell, Father. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well what I have said to you.

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

Laertes: Farewell!! *(He exits.)*

Polonius: What is it, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

Ophelia: So please you, something about Lord Hamlet.

Polonius: I thought so...'Tis told to me he hath spent much time with you. What is it between you and Lord Hamlet? Give me the truth!

Ophelia: He hath of late made many tenders of his affection to me.

Polonius: Affection! Pooh! You speak like a child. Do not believe his vows. I would from this time forth not have you give words or talk with Lord Hamlet. Look to it, I charge you! Change your ways!

Ophelia: I shall obey, my father. (*Exits crying.*)

(*Exit Polonius*)

Scene 4: The Platform on Castle Wall at Midnight

(Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.)

Narrator 5: As another midnight approaches, Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus meet on the platform near the castle to await the appearance of the ghost.

Hamlet: The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold. What hour now?

Horatio: I think it nearly twelve.

Marcellus: No, it has struck midnight.

(Enter the ghost of Hamlet's father.)

Horatio: Look, my lord! It comes!

Hamlet: Angels and ministers of grace, defend us! Be though a spirit of health or a goblin damned? King, Father, O royal Dane! O answer me. What should we do?

Horatio: It beckons you to go away with it, as if it did desire to speak to you alone.

Marcellus: Look...it waves to you to follow, but do not go with it.

Horatio: No, by no means!

Hamlet: It will not speak, so I will follow it.

Horatio: Do not, my lord.

Hamlet: Why? What should be the fear? It waves me forth again. I'll follow it!

Marcellus: *(Clutching at Hamlet)* You shall not go, my lord!

Hamlet: Hold off your hands! My fate cries out. Unhand me, gentlemen! By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that holds me back! *(To ghost)* Go on, I'll follow thee.

(Exit Hamlet and ghost.)

Marcellus: Let's follow. 'Tis not fit to obey him.

Horatio: O, to what end will this come?

Marcellus: Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

Scene 5: Another Part of the Platform

(Enter Hamlet and ghost)

Hamlet: Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak! I'll go no further.

Ghost: Mark me, my hour is almost come when I to tormenting flames must render up myself.

Hamlet: Alas, poor Ghost.

Ghost: Pity me not. I am thy father's spirit. Listen...If thou didst ever thy dear father love.

Hamlet: O, Father!

Ghost: Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder.

Hamlet: Murder?

Ghost: Murder most foul, strange, and unnatural. Now, Hamlet, listen. 'Tis said that sleeping in my orchard a serpent stung me. **That is false!** The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown!

Hamlet: My uncle?

Ghost: Ay, that beast won to his side the will of my most beloved queen, your mother. O Hamlet! Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard, your uncle stole close and in my ears did pour a cursed poison. O horrible! Most horrible! If thou didst love thy father, bear it not! Let not the throne of Denmark go unrevenged! But, let thy soul contrive nothing against thy mother. Leave her to heaven. Fair thee well. Remember me, my son. Remember me!

(Exit ghost.)

Hamlet: O fie! Remember thee? Thou poor ghost! Thy commandment alone shall live within my brain.

(Enter Horatio and Marcellus.)

Marcellus: Lord Hamlet!

Horatio: What is it, my lord?

Hamlet: My good friends, give me one poor request. Never make known what you have seen tonight. Swear by my sword.

Horatio and Marcellus: My lord, we will not.

(Exit all.)

Narrator 6: Hamlet trembles at the thought of what he has to do... kill Claudius to avenge his father's death. This is too much for Hamlet to bear. He decides to pretend to be mad so people would think he has become unbalanced over the sorrow of his father's death. This would well hide his hatred of Claudius and would keep his plans a secret.

Narrator 4: The change in Hamlet has been of great concern to Ophelia who now fears her former love. Polonius tells his daughter that Hamlet suffers from love madness brought on by Ophelia's refusal to give him any attention.

Narrator 5: In the meantime, the King and Queen have sent for two of Hamlet's schoolmates, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, in the hopes that they might help Hamlet overcome his grief and unbalanced mental state. They have obeyed the summons to court and are welcomed by Claudius and Gertrude.

Scene 6: In the Castle

(Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

Claudius: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern! I'm sure you have heard of Hamlet's transformation. I entreat you both, as his friends that you rest here in our castle a short time, so you may glean what afflicts him that lies within our remedy.

(Rosencrantz and Guildenstern bow.)

Gertrude: Good gentlemen, your visit shall receive our royal thanks. I beseech you instantly to visit my too-changed son.

Guildenstern: Heaven makes our presence pleasant and helpful to him.

Gertrude: Amen!

(Exit Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Enter Polonius and Ophelia.)

Polonius: My good king, I do think that I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

Claudius: Speak! That do I long to hear.

Gertrude: I doubt it is no other than his father's death and our hasty marriage.

Polonius: Your noble son, Lord Hamlet, is mad! 'Tis true, 'tis pity. I have a daughter who in her duty hath given me this note.

Gertrude: Came this from Hamlet to her?

Polonius: Yes. Good madam, patience. I will read it to you. *(He reads the note.)*

*“Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never doubt I love.*

*Oh, Ophelia, I am ill. I have not the art to cure myself.
But, I love thee best. Goodbye...Hamlet."*

I told my daughter that she should lock herself in her room, admit no messengers, receive no tokens. She took my advice and Hamlet, repulsed, fell into a sadness, then into the madness wherein now he raves.

Claudius: Do you think 'tis this?

Gertrude: It may be, very likely.

Polonius: You know, sometimes he walks for hours in the lobby. At such a time, I'll send my daughter to him. You and I behind an arras will mark the encounter. If he loves her not, and is not mad, let me lose my office.

Gertrude: (*Pointing to where Hamlet will enter*) But look where sadly the poor boy comes now.

Polonius: Away, I do beseech you, both away! I'll speak to him.

(Exit Claudius, Gertrude. Enter Hamlet.)

How goes it with my good Hamlet?

Hamlet: Well, God-a-mercy!

Polonius: Do you know me, my lord?

Narrator 6: Polonius greets Hamlet, who then begins to call the old man a fishmonger and teases him with word puzzles and riddles, making sure Polonius thinks he is mad indeed. Hamlet's questions are really designed to make Polonius look foolish. Polonius is so certain that he has diagnosed Hamlet's condition correctly, that he is unaware of Hamlet's scheme.

Polonius: What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Words, words, words.

Polonius: What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet: Between who?

Polonius: I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

Hamlet: That you, sir, shall grow as old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

Polonius: *(To audience)* Though this be madness, yet there is a method in it. I will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter. *(To Hamlet)* Lord Hamlet, I will take my leave of you.

Hamlet: You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part with except my life, my life... my life.

Polonius: Farewell, my Lord Hamlet.

(Exit Polonius.)

Hamlet: These tedious old fools!

(Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.)

Guildenstern: My honored lord.

Rosencrantz: My most dear lord.

Hamlet: My excellent good friends. How are you, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz. Good lads, how are you both? What brings you to Castle Elsinore?

Guildenstern: We come to visit you, my lord.

Hamlet: Were you sent for? Is this visit of your own inclination? come, deal justly with me. There is a kind of confession in your looks. I know the good king and queen have sent for you. Be honest.

Rosencrantz: My lord, we were sent for.

Hamlet: I will tell you why, so your word to the king and queen be not broken. I have of late, but I know not why, lost all my mirth. Nothing delights me.

Rosencrantz: To think, my lord, if you delight in nothing, what little satisfaction the players will receive.

Hamlet: They are welcome, but what players are they?

Guildenstern: They are those who used to delight you so - the actors and actresses of the city. Here are the players!

(Enter players.)

Narrator 7: Hamlet continues to welcome the actors whom he now plans to use in his revenge against Claudius. Turning to his friends, Hamlet explains his emotional state by saying that his mother and “uncle-father,” are deceived about his madness. Says Hamlet, “I am mad north-northwest.”

Narrator 8: Hamlet's mind is indeed still very shrewd and clever. He remembers a play called “The Murder of Gonzago” in which a king is killed in much the same way his father died. He decides to have the players perform this play, with some lines of his own added to the script, so that he may watch Claudius' reaction to the events. After the play, Hamlet will be able to chart his course.

(All exit except first player and Hamlet.)

Hamlet: Can you perform the play entitled “The Murder of Gonzago”?

First Player: Ay, my lord.

Hamlet: Good! We will hear it tomorrow night. You could study a speech of some dozen lines which I would write and insert in the play, could you not?

First Player: Ay, my lord.

Hamlet: Very well. You are welcome in Elsinore.

(First player exits.)

I'll have these players play something like the murder of my father before my uncle. I'll observe his looks. If he but turn pale, I know my course. I must have proof. The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

(Hamlet exits.)

Scene 7: The Throne Room in the Castle

Narrator 9: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern report to the king and queen that Hamlet is indeed distracted, but they have not been able to determine why Hamlet is acting with such crafty madness. The king is frustrated by this. Polonius then suggests that he and the king hide so they may secretly observe the planned meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia.

(Polonius and Claudius hide behind curtain. Ophelia enters and begins reading a book to herself. Hamlet enters from opposite side of stage.)

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, to sleep, perchance to dream aye, there's the rub, for in that sleep of death what dreams may come?
(Sees Ophelia) Soft, you now! Fair Ophelia.

Ophelia: My Lord Hamlet, how are you this day?

Hamlet: I humbly thank you, well, well, well.

Ophelia: My lord, I have gifts from you that I have longed to return. I pray you now receive them. *(Ophelia attempts to return bracelets, rings, etc.)*

Hamlet: No, not I. I never gave you anything.

Ophelia: My honored lord, you know right well you did, and with them sweet words. Take these again, for rich gifts become poor when givers prove unkind. *(Ophelia places jewels at Hamlet's feet.)*

Hamlet: Ha, ha! Are you honest? Are you beautiful?

Ophelia: What means your lordship?

Hamlet: I truly did love you once.

Ophelia: You made me believe so, my lord.

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

Ophelia: I was the more deceived!

Hamlet: Get thee to a nunnery. (*Whispers*) Believe none of this. Where's your father?

Ophelia: At home, my lord.

Hamlet: Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house.

Ophelia: (*Aside*) O help him, sweet heavens!

Hamlet: If thou wilt marry, marry a fool for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery go, and quickly. Farewell!

(*Hamlet quickly exits.*)

Ophelia: O heavenly powers restore him!

(*Enter Polonius and Claudius from behind drapes.*)

Ophelia: O what a noble mind is here overthrown! There is something in his soul over which he broods. I fear there will be some danger. What think you of it?

Polonius: I do believe his madness springs from neglected love. After the play let his Queen Mother talk to Hamlet alone and I'll be placed so that I may hear their conversation.

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

(*Exit Claudius, Polonius, and Ophelia. Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*)

Scene 8: The Throne Room, That Evening

Narrator: 7 Hamlet has instructed the actors to do justice to the play's script. His chief concern is that the play be performed so realistically that it will hold a mirror up to nature. Only then will it be a true test of Claudius' conscience.

Hamlet: The actors are ready for the play tonight before the king. One scene of it comes near the circumstances of my father's death. I prithee, when you see that scene, observe my uncle-father. Watch him closely. After we will compare judgments of him.

Horatio: Very well, my lord.

Hamlet: They are coming to the play. Get you a place!

(Trumpets are sounded. Enter King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and attendants. Everyone else is seated, and the play begins. The play is done in pantomime. A player lies down on stage. Players act out the scene as Narrator 8 speaks.)

Narrator 8: The guests are most eager to be entertained by the players. As the play proceeds, Hamlet explains the plot to Claudius and Gertrude. Gonzago, the King, goes to sleep in his garden. His nephew, Lucianus, who wants Gonzago's estate, steals into the garden and pours poison the king's ears. Lucianus then takes the king's crown from his head and leaves. The queen enters to find her husband dead and is stricken with grief. The murderer returns, bringing gifts for the queen, which, after some protest, she accepts. Eventually, he gains the love of the queen.

(After watching this, Claudius jumps up.)

Ophelia: The king rises!

Hamlet: What? Frightened with false fire?

Gertrude: How is my lord?

Claudius: Give me some light. Away! *(Runs off stage.)*

Hamlet: Lights, lights, lights!

Polonius: Stop the play!

(All exit except Hamlet and Horatio.)

Hamlet: O good Horatio, the ghost was telling the truth. Did you see the face of the king upon the talk of the poisoning?

Horatio: I did notice him very well, my lord.

(Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.)

Guildenstern: The king is greatly disturbed. He is ill.

Hamlet: You should tell this to the doctor, not to me.

Guildenstern: My lord, the Queen, your mother, in great distress hath sent me to you.

Rosencrantz: She says your behavior struck her into amazement. She desires to speak with you.

Hamlet: I shall obey were she ten times my mother!

(All exit except Hamlet.)

Let me be firm, not cruel. 'Tis now the very witching time of night. I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

Scene 9: The King's Chambers

Narrator 9: Claudius is finally beginning to realize the horror of the deed he has committed. In despair, he goes to the castle chapel where he cries out in remorse. As Hamlet goes to his mother's chamber, he sees Claudius. Is this the perfect time to avenge his father's death?

Claudius: O my crime is rank; it smells to heaven, a brother's murder. I cannot pray though I want to. Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow? "Forgive me my foul murder?" That cannot be, for I am still possessed with those things for which I did murder, my crown, my own ambition, and my queen. May one be pardoned and retain the offenses? Help me, angels! Bow, stubborn knees and heart, be soft as a newborn babe.

(Claudius kneels before an altar. Hamlet steals up behind him, sword drawn.)

Narrator 10: Hamlet's sword makes no sound as he draws it from his belt. It would be so easy. He should drive the blade down past the side of the king's neck straight into the heart. But, no. This is not the time. Claudius is praying and asking for forgiveness, which means, that, should he die now, he would go to heaven, while Hamlet's father would remain in hell. Hamlet decides to wait for a better time when Claudius' soul will be damned.

(Hamlet puts the sword away and quietly goes out of the room. Claudius remains kneeling until Hamlet is gone.)

Scene 10: Queen's Room in the Castle

(Enter Gertrude and Polonius.)

Polonius: He will be here soon. Look you, scold him soundly. I'll hide myself in here. Pray you, be firm with him.

Gertrude: I will, fear not.

Hamlet: *(From offstage)* Mother! Mother! Mother!

Gertrude: *(To Polonius)* Withdraw. I hear him coming.

(Polonius hides behind drapes as Hamlet enters.)

Hamlet: Now, Mother, what's the matter?

Gertrude: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet: Mother, you have my father much offended!

Gertrude: Have you forgotten who I am?

Hamlet: Heavens no! You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife; and would it were not so, you are my mother.

Gertrude: Nay, then. I'll send those to you that can deal with you.

(She stands and begins to leave.)

Hamlet: Come and sit you down! You shall not budge!

Gertrude: What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? Help! Help!

Polonius: *(From behind drapery)* Help! Help!

Hamlet: *(Drawing his sword)* How now...a rat? *(Hamlet kills Polonius by plunging his sword through the drapes.)* Dead for a penny...dead!

Polonius: Oh, I am slain!

Gertrude: Oh me! What hast thou done?

Hamlet: I know not. Is it the king?

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.

Narrator 11: Hamlet proceeds to pull back the curtain, but, instead of seeing Claudius lying dead, he sees Polonius. "Thou wretched, rash intruding fool!" Hamlet says in despair. He then turns to his mother and shows her pictures of her two husbands and asks her which one she really prefers. How could she ever have married a creature like Claudius? Hamlet tells her that Claudius is a murderer and a villain that is not a twentieth part as good as his father, a thief that stole a kingdom and put it in his pocket.

Gertrude: No more!

Hamlet: A king of shreds and patches!

(Enter ghost.)

O heavens save me...what do you desire, gracious figure?

Gertrude: Alas, he is mad!

Hamlet: *(To ghost)* Do not come to scold your son.

Ghost: Do not forget your mission. I come to remind you. But look, thy mother is afraid. O, step between her and her fighting soul. Speak to her, Hamlet.

Hamlet: What is the matter, mother?

Gertrude: What are you looking at? Whom are you talking to?

Hamlet: On him, on him! Look how pale he is! *(To ghost)* Do not look upon me with such sadness.

(Exit ghost)

Why, look how he steals away! My father as he lived. Look where he goes, even now out the door!

Gertrude: You're mad! O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in two.

Narrator 12: Hamlet tries to convince his mother that he is not mad and begs her to repent and confess to heaven to avoid the tragedy that surely is to come. Finally, Hamlet truly repents the death of Polonius and tells his mother he knows Claudius is preparing to send him to his death in England. He leaves his mother, saying, "I must be cruel, only to be kind."

(Exit Hamlet, dragging Polonius. Enter Claudius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.)

Claudius: What's the matter that you do cry so?

Gertrude: Ah, my lord, what I have seen tonight!

Claudius: What Gertrude? How is Hamlet? Where is your son?

Gertrude: Mad as the sea. In his lawless fit, he has killed good Polonius!

Claudius: O heavy deed! It was meant for me. His liberty is dangerous to us all. This mad young man ...where has he gone?

Gertrude: To remove the body he hath killed. 'Tis very madness shows itself pure. He weeps for what he has done.

Claudius: O Gertrude! Come away! Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, go get help! Hamlet in his madness has killed Polonius. Go find Hamlet and bring the body of Polonius into the chapel. I pray you, hurry!

(Exit Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Gertrude.)

How dangerous it is that Hamlet goes loose!

(Enter Rosencrantz)

How now, what has happened?

Rosencrantz: Where the dead body is hidden my lord, we cannot get from him.

Claudius: But where is Hamlet?

Rosencrantz: Ho, Guildenstern, bring in the Lord Hamlet!

(Enter Guildenstern and Hamlet.)

Claudius: Now, Hamlet, where is Polonius?

Hamlet: At supper.

Claudius: Where?

Hamlet: Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. He is being eaten by the worms. If you not find him within the month, you will smell him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

Claudius: *(To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and Hamlet.)* Go seek him there.

(Exit Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Hamlet.)

Claudius: Somehow I must contrive the present death of Hamlet. 'Til I know it is done, my joys will be none.

(Exit Claudius.)

Narrator 10: Claudius now deeply fears Hamlet and devises a plan to have him killed. He tells Hamlet that the people of Denmark are angry over Polonius' death and that they want Hamlet put to death. At the insistence of Claudius, Hamlet sets sail for England the next day.

Narrator 11: Hamlet suspects he is in danger, so under the cover of night, he takes the letter from his friends as they are sleeping and realizes he will face certain death in England. He writes another letter in which he demands the death of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and tears up the original letter. The next day, the

travelers are attacked by a pirate ship. Hamlet explains his plight to the pirates, who then agree to return him to Denmark.

Narrator 12: Meanwhile, the lovely Ophelia, despondent over the death of her father and the loss of Hamlet's love, has become insane. Queen Gertrude tries to avoid seeing Ophelia, but the mad Ophelia finally gains an audience with the queen.

Scene 11: Throne Room in the Castle

(Enter Gertrude and Ophelia from opposite sides of stage.)

Ophelia: Where is the beautiful Queen of Denmark?

Gertrude: How, now, Ophelia?

Ophelia: *(Singing)* He is dead and gone, lady.
 He is dead and gone.
 At his head a grass green turf,
 At his heels a stone.

(Enter Claudius.)

Gertrude: Alas, look here, my lord.

Ophelia: *(Singing)* He is dead and gone, lady.
 He is dead and gone.
 At his head a grass green turf,
 At his heels a stone.

Claudius: She sings about her father.

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, Laertes, shall know of it! And so I thank you for your good council. Good night!

(Exit Ophelia, running out madly.)

Claudius: Follow her close. First her father slain, next your son gone, poor Ophelia near madness, and last, her brother, Laertes, has come from France in secret seeking the answer to his father's death.

(Noise is heard offstage.)

Gertrude: Alack! What noise is this? What is the matter?

Lady in Waiting: My lord, young Laertes in a riotous mood hath over powered your guards. They cry, "Laertes shall be King." The doors are broke!

Narrator 13: Laertes, armed with his sword, approaches the king. He is obviously upset and very angry. When Claudius asks Laertes why he is so enraged, Laertes demands to know where his father, Polonius, is. Claudius tells him that his father is dead, killed by Hamlet. Laertes claims he will be revenged for his father's murder and that nothing can stop him.

Claudius: Good Laertes, if you desire to know the truth about your dear father's death, will you punish both friend and foe?

Laertes: None but his enemies. To his good friends thus wide I'll open my arms.

Claudius: I am not guilty of your father's death.

(Noise is heard. Ophelia enters very upset.)

Laertes: How now, what noise is that? *(Sees Ophelia)* O heat dry up my brain! By heaven, thy madness shall be paid for! O dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

Ophelia: There's rosemary for remembrance. Pray, love, remember. And there are pansies; that's for thoughts. *(Drops flowers as she talks.)*

(Gertrude leads Ophelia offstage.)

Laertes: Do you see this?

Claudius: Laertes, I feel your grief. You must know that Hamlet did not intend to kill your father, but did wish to take my life.

Narrator 14: Laertes demands to know why Hamlet has not been punished for his father's murder. Claudius tells him that, to have punished Hamlet would have destroyed Gertrude. Also, the public holds Hamlet in high regard and Claudius feared the reaction of a public punishment. Claudius assures Laertes that Hamlet is being dealt with in a manner that will not cause any embarrassment to the Danish crown.

Narrator 15: As Claudius and Laertes are talking, Gertrude rushes in and announces that Ophelia, while weaving garlands and hanging them on the limbs of

a willow tree, has fallen in a muddy brook and has drowned. Laertes is again grief stricken and Claudius is afraid that the "madness" may start itself all over again.

(All exit, with Laertes rushing out first, followed by Claudius and Gertrude.)

Scene 12: Outside of the Castle

Narrator 13: The pirate ship has dropped hamlet off along the Danish coast, not far from Elsinore. As Hamlet makes his way back to the castle, he notices a funeral procession approaching. Unaware of Ophelia's death, Hamlet is overcome with grief when he sees her body being carried past him. Hamlet hides in the shadows and weeps, and then makes his way to the castle.

Narrator 14: It doesn't take long for Claudius to discover that Hamlet has returned to Elsinore. He realized that his plot to have Hamlet killed has failed, but he now thinks of a very clever plan to have Hamlet eliminated once and for all.

Scene 13: The Throne Room

(Enter Claudius and Laertes.)

Claudius: If Hamlet has returned, I will work a plot under which he shall die. Even his mother shall call it an accident. What would you undertake to revenge your father's death?

Laertes: I would cut Hamlet's throat in a church!

Narrator 15: Claudius tells Laertes to keep close to his room. Claudius plans to praise Laertes' skill at fencing to Hamlet and then to put a wager on each of the men.

Narrator 13: One of the swords to be used will be poisoned, and Hamlet will not suspect a thing. Laertes says he has a poison so deadly that nothing can save anyone from death who has been scratched with the potion.

Narrator 14: Should this plan fail, Claudius tells Laertes, he has a second way planned. Surely Hamlet will become thirsty from the fencing and will want a drink. Claudius will put poison in the wine and give it to Hamlet, thus certainly causing his death.

Narrator 15: Laertes agrees to the plan and the two begin preparations.

(Exit Claudius and Laertes. Enter Horatio and Hamlet. They are talking as Osrice enters.)

Osrice: My Lord Hamlet, I have a message from his majesty.

Hamlet: I will receive it, sir.

Osrice: My lord, the king has laid a great wager on your head. He hath said that you are a better swordsman than this Laertes.

Hamlet: Has he indeed?

Osrice: Indeed he has, my lord. Sir, you know of what excellence Laertes has with his weapon. The king, sir has bet Laertes he shall not exceed you three hits.

Hamlet: What's his weapon?

Osrice: Rapier and dagger.

Hamlet: Sir, if it pleases his majesty, let the foils be brought. I will win for him and I can!

Osrice: Your lordship. *(He bows and exits.)*

Horatio: You will lose this wager, my lord.

Hamlet: I do not think so. I have practiced often. But I am heartsick about the death of Ophelia.

Horatio: My good lord, if your mind is troubled, I will tell them you are not fit for this match.

Hamlet: No, Horatio, There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. Let them come!

(Enter Claudius, Gertrude, Laertes, Osrice, all the attendants and guests. King stands between Hamlet and Laertes. Queen and attendants are seated.)

Claudius: *(Placing Laertes' hand in Hamlet's)* Come, Hamlet, come and take this hand from me.

Hamlet: *(To Laertes)* Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong. Was it Hamlet that wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet, but Hamlet's madness. Sir, forgive me.

Laertes: I am satisfied. I do receive your offered friendship and will not wrong it.

Hamlet: Give us the foils! Come on!

Claudius: Give them the foils.

(Osric hands Laertes and Hamlet each a sword.)

Claudius: Hamlet, you know the wager?

Hamlet: Very well, my lord. Your grace hath laid odds on the weaker side.

Claudius: I do not fear it; I have seen you both.

Laertes: This is too heavy; let me see another.

Hamlet: This likes me well.

Claudius: Set the wine on the table.

(Enter servant with wine and goblets.)

The king shall drink to Hamlet's better health. *(Takes a sip of drink)* Come, begin, begin!

(Osric officially begins the match, as Hamlet and Laertes begin to fight. Hamlet makes the first touch.)

Osric: A hit. A very hit!

Claudius: Stay, give me drink! Hamlet, this pearl is thine. Here's to thy health! *(King drops the poisoned pearl into a cup.)* Here, give him the cup!

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

(They play, and Hamlet touches Laertes again with the sword.)

Another hit. What say you?

Laertes: A touch, a touch, I do confess.

Gertrude: He's out of breath. Here, Hamlet, take my handkerchief and rub thy brow. The Queen toasts thy fortune, Hamlet!

(Gertrude picks up the poisoned cup.)

Claudius: Gertrude, do not drink.

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

(She drinks, then offers the cup to Hamlet.)

Claudius: *(Aside)* It is the poisoned cup...It is too late.

Hamlet: I dare not drink yet, Madam.

Gertrude: Come, let me wipe thy face.

Laertes: *(Whispering to the king.)* My lord, I'll hit him now, yet it is almost against my conscience.

(Hamlet and Laertes fight again. Laertes wounds Hamlet with the poisoned-tipped sword.)

Laertes: I have you now!

(The fight begins in earnest. Hamlet knocks the poisoned sword from Laertes' hand. Laertes tries to pick up his sword, but Hamlet steps on it and gives Laertes his unpoisoned sword.)

Claudius: Part them! They are incensed!

Hamlet: Nay, come again!

Osric: Look to the Queen!

(Hamlet wounds Laertes with the poisoned sword.)

Horatio: They bleed on both sides. *(To Hamlet)* How is it, my lord?

Osric: How is it, Laertes?

Laertes: *(To Osric)* Osric...I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

Hamlet: How is the Queen?

Claudius: She swoons to see you bleed.

Gertrude: No...no! The drink... O my dear Hamlet...the drink... I am poisoned!
(Gertrude dies at Hamlet's feet.)

Hamlet: O villainy! Ho! Let the doors be locked! Treachery, I'll seek you out!

Laertes: I am he, Hamlet... Hamlet, thou art slain. No medicine in the world can do thee good. In thee there is not half a hour of life. The treacherous instrument is in thy poisoned hand, and I am killed by it. Thy mother's poisoned... I can speak no more. The king! The king's to blame!

Hamlet: The point poisoned too! Then poison do thy work!

(Hamlet stabs the king with the poisoned sword.)

Attendants/Narrators: Treason! Treason!

Claudius: O defend me, friends. I am but hurt!

Hamlet: Here thou murderous villain... Drink this potion... Follow my mother!

(Hamlet pours the poisoned drink down the king's throat, and the king dies.)

Laertes: He is justly served. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet! Mine and my father's death come not upon you, nor yours on me. *(Laertes dies.)*

Hamlet: I am dying, Horatio. Poor mother, I follow thee! Good-bye! Horatio, thou livest... Tell all who doubt me that what I did was right.

Horatio: I'll die with thee!

(Horatio attempts to drink from the poisoned cup.)

Hamlet: Give me the cup! Let go! If thou didst ever call me friend, live to tell my story! O, I die, Horatio... *(Hamlet dies.)*

Horatio: Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince, and flights of angels sing thee to they rest!

(Curtain closes.)

Hamlet

Cast of Characters

Narrator 1
Narrator 2
Narrator 3
Narrator 4
Narrator 5
Narrator 6
Narrator 7
Narrator 8
Narrator 9
Narrator 10
Narrator 11
Narrator 12
Narrator 13
Narrator 14
Narrator 15
Bernardo
Francisco
Horatio
Marcellus
Claudius
Laertes
Polonius
Hamlet
Gertrude
Ophelia
Ghost
Guildenstern
Rosencrantz
First Player
Lady in Waiting
Osric
Attendants