

Hamlet  
by william shakespeare  
adapted for the screen by angus macfadyen  
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INT. THEATRE – EVENING

An audience settles into its seats moments before a play begins. There sits Angus Macfadyen. The lights go down. And a play begins. The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

BERNARDO

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO

Long live the king!

FRANCISCO

Bernardo?

BERNARDO

He.

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BERNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring. Stand, ho! Who's there?

HORATIO. Who has been sitting next to Angus, gets up and pushes past a row of legs to walk down onto the stage. Good God, this is a bad production of the play. Cheap costumes, cheap sets and actors who give a new meaning to the word Ham.

HORATIO

Friends to this ground.

FRANCISCO

Say, What, is Horatio there?

HORATIO

A piece of him.

BERNARDO

Welcome, Horatio.

HORATIO

What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

FRANCISCO

I have seen nothing.

BERNARDO

Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy, And will not let belief take hold of him Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us: Therefore I have entreated him along With us That if again this apparition come, He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

A spotlight suddenly swings across the audience and the actors on stage point at it.

FRANCISCO

Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

BERNARDO

In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

The light has settled on Angus Macfadyen. The actors stare at him.

Uncomfortably, he looks around. The audience is staring at him.

FRANCISCO

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.

BERNARDO

It would be spoke to.

FRANCISCO

Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night, Together with that fair and warlike form In which the majesty of buried Denmark

Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!

Angus Macfadyen realizes with horror that he is utterly naked, from head to foot. He covers his private parts with the theatre programme, jumps up and lurches down the centre aisle heading quickly for the exit.

FRANCISCO

It is offended.

BERNARDO

See, it stalks away!

HORATIO

Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

The actors have blocked the exit. Angus runs onto the claustrophobic stage in a state of utter confusion and shame. He is surrounded by the three actors who hurl their Shakespearian dialogue at him.

HORATIO

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion! If thou hast any sound, or use of voice, Speak to me: If there be any good thing to be done, That may to thee do ease and grace to me, Speak to me: O, speak! stay, and speak!

Angus Macfadyen can't escape this nightmare. Naked and alive, he tries to hide in the drapes but the actors pull it away from him. They poke at him with their wooden stage spears.

FRANCISCO

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

BERNARDO

'Tis here!

HORATIO

'Tis here!

FRANCISCO

'Tis here!

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Angus Macfadyen wakes up from his nightmare with a start.

He is lying on a poolchair, dressed entirely in black. Disgracefully drunk.

A party is in progress. He looks around at the cast of characters; all dressed in contrasting gaudy colors, like figures out of Alice in Wonderland. The decor is lavish. The height of luxury.

KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HORATIO, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, LAERTES, Lords, and Attendants all celebrate the Royal Wedding as a yellow jazz band blares into the lazy blue sky. The King, who floats bare chested upon his floating pink rubber throne in the pool, motions for silence.

KING CLAUDIUS

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,—  
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,—  
Taken to wife—But now, my cousin Hamlet,  
and my son,—

As he turns to Angus Macfadyen.

KING CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:  
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives  
must die, Passing through nature to eternity.

As she speaks from her own matching rubber throne, the King feeds her chocolates and pinches her pink flesh.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

Hamlet gets up furiously and begins to throw off his mourning clothes. Attendants try to stop him from stripping off completely.

HAMLET

Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak,  
good mother, Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods,  
shapes of grief, That can denote me truly:  
these indeed seem, For they are actions  
that a man might play: But I have that within  
which passeth show; These but the trappings  
and the suits of woe. A silence. Dangerous.  
Hamlet is spoiling the party here. The King

paddles over to the edge of the pool and is helped out of his rubber throne by attendants. He approaches Hamlet.

KING CLAUDIUS

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, To give these mourning duties to your father: But, you must know, your father lost a father; That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound In filial obligation for some term To do obsequious sorrow: but to persevere In obstinate condolment is a course Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief.

He has raised his voice. Hamlet smiles hatefully, grabs a champagne bottle and stalks off into the gardens. King Claudius looks at his wife, the Queen, who entreats him with a look.

EXT. GARDENS – DAY

Claudius approaches. Holding Hamlet's discarded clothing. He attempts to reason with Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, A heart unfortified, a mind impatient, An understanding simple and unschool'd: For what we know must be and is as common As any the most vulgar thing to sense, Why should we in our peevish opposition Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven, A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, To reason most absurd: whose common theme Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried, From the first corpse till he that died to-day, 'This must be so.' We pray you, throw to earth This unprevailing woe, and think of us As of a father...

Claudius grabs him.

CLAUDIUS

For let the world take note, You are the most immediate to our throne; And with no less nobility of love Than that which dearest father bears his son, Do I impart toward you.

Claudius embraces him in a bear hug which Hamlet violently breaks free of. He makes a run for it. Claudius follows, now furious.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL – MOMENTS LATER

The crowd watches as Hamlet approaches, followed by a bellowing Claudius.

CLAUDIUS

For your intent In going back to school in Wittenberg, It is most retrograde to our desire: And we beseech you, bend you to remain Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye, Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

A silence. Hamlet throws up. His mother approaches and whispers urgently.

QUEEN 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 you, madam.

The crowd applauds this happy outcome, as an audience applauds a play unfolding before their eyes. The King raises his glass for a toast.

All others follow suit.

KING CLAUDIUS

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply: Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come; come away.

The King and Queen wander off, followed by their Court. Hamlet is alone.

Weeping silently, he starts to smash up the tables of food and drink, shattering glass and china. His O is a wail.

HAMLET

O, that this too too sullied flesh would melt Thaw and resolve itself into a dew! Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable, Seem to me all the uses of this world! Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden, That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature Possess it merely.

He stops, out of breath. He wanders off into the sunset.

INT. CASTLE - SUNSET

Hamlet wanders through the Castle in mourning.

HAMLET

That it should come to this! But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two: So excellent a king; that was, to this, Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother That he might not betem the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly.

He stops before a baby grand piano, sits, and starts to croon the words to tinkling chords.

HAMLET

Heaven and earth! Must I remember? why, she would hang on him, As if increase of appetite had grown By what it fed on: and yet, within a month-- Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!-- A little month, or ere those shoes were old With which she follow'd my poor father's body, Like Niobe, all tears:--why she, even she-- O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason, Would have mourn'd longer-- married with my uncle, My father's brother, but no more like my father Than I to Hercules: within a month: Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears Had left the flushing in her galled eyes, She married. O, most wicked speed, to post With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

He stands and walks away from the piano.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - NIGHT

Hamlet lies by the pool, now very drunk. He shouts at the Heavens.

HAMLET

It is not nor it cannot come to good: But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

Enter HORATIO.

HORATIO

Hail to your lordship!

HAMLET

I am glad to see you well: Horatio,--or I do forget myself.

HORATIO

The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

HAMLET

Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:  
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?

HORATIO

A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET

I would not hear your enemy say so, Nor shall you do mine ear that violence, To make it truster of your own report Against yourself: I know you are no truant. But what is your affair in Elsinore? We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio! My father!--methinks I see my father.

HORATIO

Where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO

I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

HAMLET

He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET

Saw? who?

HORATIO

My lord, the king your father.

HAMLET

The king my father!

HORATIO

Season your admiration for awhile With an attent ear, till I may deliver this marvel to you.

HAMLET

For God's love, let me hear.

HORATIO

Two nights together had two gentlemen, Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch, In the dead vast and middle of the night, Been thus encounter'd. A figure like your father, Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe, And I with them the third night kept the watch; Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,

Form of the thing, each word made true and good, The apparition comes:

I knew your father;  
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

My lord, I did; But answer made it none: yet once methought  
It lifted up its head and did address Itself to motion, like as it  
would speak; Then vanish'd from our sight.

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.

HORATIO

As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;

HAMLET

Indeed, indeed, sir, but this troubles me. Arm'd, say you?

HORATIO

Arm'd, my lord.

HAMLET

From top to toe?

HORATIO

My lord, from head to foot.

HAMLET

Then saw you not his face?

HORATIO

O, yes, my lord; he wore his beaver up.

HAMLET

What, look'd he frowningly?

HORATIO

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET

Pale or red?

HORATIO

Nay, very pale.

HAMLET

And fix'd his eyes upon you?

HORATIO

Most constantly.

HAMLET

I would I had been there.

HORATIO

It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET

Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

HORATIO

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

I warrant it will.

HAMLET

If it assume my noble father's person, I'll speak to it, though hell

itself should gape And bid me hold my peace. I pray you, If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight, Let it be tenable in your silence still; And whatsoever else shall hap to-night, Give it an understanding, but no tongue: I will requite your love. So, fare you well.

HORATIO

My duty to your honour.

HAMLET

Your love, as mine to you: farewell.

Hamlet is left alone. He douses his face in the cold pool water to sober up. A foot pushes him into the pool.

INT. POOL - NIGHT

Hamlet watches as Claudius at the deep end of the pool, beckons to him. Hamlet advances.

HAMLET (V.O.)

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;

I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!

Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

Suddenly Claudius seizes Hamlet and begins to attempt to drown him beneath the surface.

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Horatio is shaking Hamlet. He awakes. And shivers.

HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO

It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET

What hour now?

HORATIO

I think it lacks of twelve.

HAMLET

No, it is struck.

HORATIO

Look, my lord, it comes!

Enter Ghost. Or rather the camera flies at them with terrifying speed.

They stare straight into the lens and shrink from it.

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd, Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,

Be thy intents wicked or charitable, Thou comest in such a

questionable shape That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,

King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me! Let me not burst in ignorance.

HORATIO

It beckons you to go away with it, But do not go with it. No, by no means.

Hamlet seems to shrink from the shadow. Horatio pushes him forth.

HAMLET

It will not speak; then I will follow it.

HORATIO



Do not, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, what should be the fear?

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord, Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff And there assume some other horrible form And draw you into madness? think of it.

HAMLET

It waves me still. Go on; I'll follow thee.

HORATIO

You shall not go, my lord.

Hamlet is desperately trying to get away from the ghost/camera.

Horatio struggles with him, pushing him forward.

HAMLET

Hold off your hands.

HORATIO

Be ruled; you shall not go.

HAMLET

My fate cries out. Unhand me, Horatio. By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me! I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

HAMLET throws off HORATIO and runs away from the ghost, disappearing into the darkness. HORATIO sprints after him, then stops, drops to his knees and prays.

HORATIO

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. Heaven will direct it.

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM – DAY

Hamlet wakes out of this nightmare to see the ghost of his father staring at him. Now flesh and blood.

Intercut the ghost telling Hamlet his tale indoors, with Hamlet, rising and wandering insanely outside in the courtyard, swing a cross about his head like a sword, swearing vengeance, following the camera.

HAMLET

Where wilt thou lead me? speak; I'll go no further.

GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET

I will.

GHOST

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

HAMLET

Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing To what I shall unfold.

HAMLET

Speak; I am bound to hear.

GHOST

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET

What?

GHOST

I am thy father's spirit, Doom'd 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 thy soul, freeze thy young blood, Make  
thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres, Thy knotted and  
combined locks to part And each particular hair to stand on end, Like  
quills upon the fretful porpentine: But this eternal blazon must not  
be To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list! If thou didst ever  
thy dear father love--

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Hamlet faints.

HAMLET

O God!

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM - DAY

GHOST

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Hamlet sits up with a murderous look in his eye.

HAMLET

Murder!

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM - DAY

GHOST

Murder most foul, as in the best it is; But this most foul, strange  
and unnatural.

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

Hamlet begins to swing the cross like a sword about his head.

HAMLET

Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift As meditation or the  
thoughts of love, May sweep to my revenge.

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM - DAY

GHOST

I find thee apt; And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed That  
roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf, Wouldst thou not stir in this.  
Now, Hamlet, hear: 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard, A  
serpent stung me; so the whole ear of Denmark Is by a forged process  
of my death Rankly abused: but know, thou noble youth, The serpent  
that did sting thy father's life Now wears his crown.

HAMLET

O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, With witchcraft of his  
wit, with traitorous gifts,-- O wicked wit and gifts, that have the  
power So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust The will of my most  
seeming-virtuous queen: O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there! From  
me, whose love was of that dignity That it went hand in hand even with  
the vow I made to her in marriage, and to decline Upon a wretch whose  
natural gifts were poor To those of mine! But virtue, as it never will  
be moved, Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven, So lust,

though to a radiant angel link'd, Will sate itself in a celestial bed,  
And prey on garbage. But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;  
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard, My custom always of the  
afternoon, Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole, With juice of cursed  
hebenon in a vial, And in the porches of my ears did pour The leperous  
distilment; whose effect Holds such an enmity with blood of man That  
swift as quicksilver it courses through The natural gates and alleys  
of the body, And with a sudden vigour doth posset And curd, like eager  
droppings into milk, The thin and wholesome blood: so did it mine; And  
a most instant tetter bark'd about, Most lazar-like, with vile and  
loathsome crust, All my smooth body. Thus was I, sleeping, by a  
brother's hand Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd: Cut  
off even in the blossoms of my sin, Unhousel'd, disappointed,  
unanel'd, No reckoning made, but sent to my account With all my  
imperfections on my head: O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible! If  
thou hast nature in thee, bear it not; Let not the royal bed of  
Denmark be A couch for luxury and damned incest. But, howsoever thou  
pursuest this act, Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught: leave her to heaven And to those thorns that  
in her bosom lodge, To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!  
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near, And 'gins to pale his  
uneffectual fire: Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Hamlet lies prostrate on his bed, with the ghost of his father in his  
arms, kissing his cheek, his voice a whisper.

HAMLET

O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else? And shall I couple hell?  
O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart; And you, my sinews, grow not instant  
old, But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee! Ay, thou poor ghost, while  
memory holds a seat In this distracted globe. Remember thee! Yea, from  
the table of my memory I'll wipe away all trivial fond records, All  
saws of books, all forms, all pressures past, That youth and  
observation copied there; And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain, Unmix'd with baser matter:  
yes, by heaven! O most pernicious woman! O villain, villain, smiling,  
damned villain! My tables,—meet it is I set it down, That one may  
smile, and smile, and be a villain; At least I'm sure it may be so in  
Denmark: (Writing) So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word; It is  
'Adieu, adieu! remember me.' I have sworn 't.

HORATIO

[off] My lord, my lord,—

Hamlet hears Horatio. Puts his finger to his lips; the ghost smiles.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAWN

Hamlet stands there, peeing into the pool.

HAMLET

So be it!

HORATIO

Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!

HAMLET

Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.

Enter HORATIO. Hamlet pees still.

HORATIO

How is't, my noble lord? What news, my lord?

HAMLET

(zipping up) O, wonderful!

HORATIO

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No; you will reveal it.

HORATIO

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

HAMLET

How say you, then; would heart of man once think it? But you'll be secret?

HORATIO

Ay, by heaven, my lord.

HAMLET

There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark But he's an arrant knave.

HORATIO

There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave To tell us this.

HAMLET

Why, right; you are i' the right; And so, without more circumstance at all, I hold it fit that we shake hands and part: You, as your business and desire shall point you; For every man has business and desire, Such as it is; and for mine own poor part, Look you, I'll go pray.

HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET

I'm sorry they offend you, heartily; Yes, 'faith heartily.

HORATIO

There's no offence, my lord.

HAMLET

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio, And much offence too. Touching this vision here, It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you: For your desire to know what is between us, O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friend, Give me one poor request.

HORATIO

What is't, my lord? I will.

HAMLET

Never make known what you have seen to-night.

HORATIO

My lord, I will not.

HAMLET

Nay, but swear't.

HORATIO

In faith, My lord, not I.

HAMLET

Upon my sword.

HORATIO

I have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

And then the strangest thing happens. The ghost possesses Horatio and speaks through him.

GHOST IN HORATIO

Swear.

HAMLET

Ah, ha, boy! say'st thou so? art thou there, truepenny? Consent to swear.

HORATIO

Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET

Never to speak of this that you have seen, Swear by my sword.

GHOST IN HORATIO

Swear.

HAMLET

Hic et ubique? then we'll shift our ground. Never to speak of this that you have heard, Swear by my sword.

GHOST IN HORATIO

Swear.

HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come; Here, as before, never, so help you mercy, How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself, As I perchance hereafter shall think meet To put an antic disposition on, That you, at such times seeing me, never shall note That you know aught of me: Swear.

GHOST IN HORATIO

Swear.

Horatio collapses. Hamlet comforts him.

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

They swear on Hamlet's cross.

HAMLET

Let us go in together; And still your fingers on your lips, I pray. The time is out of joint: O cursed spite, That ever I was born to set it right! Nay, come, let's go together.

EXT. CASTLE GATE - DAY

Hamlet wanders out of his castle gates and into the "real" world.

EXT. STREETS OF DOWNTOWN LA - MONTAGE

Hamlet, like Buddha before him, has left the Kingdom that kept him closeted from the "mad" homeless on street corners, and he begins to adopt their ticks and tremors as his own.

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

Hamlet is reading the Bible. He is now dressed as a homeless man, muttering to himself.

A fleet of limousines pull up. Bodyguards jump out and cordon off the

area surreptitiously. Ophelia descends, watched by her father Polonius, and Claudius, the King, who hide behind tinted windows. Hamlet addresses Ophelia.

HAMLET

To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia, Doubt thou the stars are fire; Doubt that the sun doth move; Doubt truth to be a liar; But never doubt I love. O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to reckon my groans: but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu. Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet.

The mad Hamlet snarls and giggles, takes a long nail and thrusts it into the Bible. Then he hurries away. Ophelia is shocked. Polonius pulls her into the car and the fleet of cars follows him.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Hamlet has found another spot. The car pulls up. Bodyguards once again jump out and surround Hamlet. Lord Polonius climbs out and approaches him with careful trepidation.

LORD POLONIUS

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

LORD POLONIUS

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET

Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

LORD POLONIUS

Not I, my lord.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a man.

LORD POLONIUS

Honest, my lord!

HAMLET

Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

LORD POLONIUS

That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET

For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter?

LORD POLONIUS

I have, my lord.

Ophelia watches, with tears streaming down her cheeks, from behind tinted windows.

HAMLET

Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to 't.

LORD POLONIUS

What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET

Words, words, words.

LORD POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

LORD POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams: all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

Hamlet is backing away from Polonius.

LORD POLONIUS

[Aside] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Polonius opens the car door and gestures for him to enter.

HAMLET

Into my grave.

LORD POLONIUS

Indeed, that is out o' the air. My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET

You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

LORD POLONIUS

Fare you well, my lord.

Polonius closes the car door. It pulls away.

HAMLET

These tedious old fools!

GUILDENSTERN (V.O.)

My honoured lord!

Rosencrantz/Guildenstern, both played by the same actor, who intermittently may appear on either the right or left side of Hamlet, like some schizophrenic apparition. He screams and runs away from them. Straight through the doors of a strip bar.

INT. STRIP BAR – DAY

They follow him into the dark club. Hamlet is watching the dancing girls.

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy, in that we are not over-happy; On fortune's cap we are not the

very button.

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

GUILDENSTERN

'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET

In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she is a strumpet.

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. Let me question more in particular: what have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lord!

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

HAMLET

A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

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

Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ GUILDENSTERN



We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET

No such matter: I will not sort you with the rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended.

But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

Hamlet is asking them for their money. All of it. Reluctantly they part with the wad.

HAMLET

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you: and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET

Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color: I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET

That you must teach me. Be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ

[to Guildenstern] What say you?

HAMLET

Nay, then, I have an eye of you.--(He turns to Guildenstern) If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, we were sent for.

Hamlet uses their wad of cash to pay for private dances for all. The girls dance around them and grind their rear ends into their faces.

HAMLET

I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late--but wherefore I know not--lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! 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

My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET

Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET

He that plays the king shall be welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET

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

Enter POLONIUS into the strip joint. Shadowed by security.

LORD POLONIUS

Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET

Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer: I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so indeed.

LORD POLONIUS

My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET

My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome,--

LORD POLONIUS

The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET

Buzz, buzz!

Hamlet buys Polonius a lap dance.

LORD POLONIUS

Upon mine honour,--

HAMLET

Then came each actor on his ass,--

LORD POLONIUS

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

Yes! Turns out the girl dancers are transsexuals and transvestites.

These are the players. One of the players is also the actor who plays the ghost of Hamlet's father. Hamlet reaches into Polonius' pockets for more cash.

HAMLET

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well.

Welcome, good friends. Masters, you are all welcome; we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAYER

What speech, my lord?

HAMLET

I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; but it was an excellent play, one speech in it I chiefly loved: let me see, let me see--

'O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! Is it not monstrous that this player here, But in a fiction...

And the players take their cue, slowly building in intensity, while dancing around Hamlet.

FIRST PLAYER

...in a dream of passion, Could force his soul so to his own conceit That from her working all his visage wann'd, Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect, A broken voice, and his whole function suiting With forms to his conceit?

SECOND PLAYER

and all for nothing! For Hecuba!

THIRD PLAYER

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, That he should weep for her?

FOURTH PLAYER

What would he do, Had he the motive and the cue for passion That I have?

1ST PLAYER

He would drown the stage with tears And cleave the general ear with horrid speech, Make mad the guilty and appall the free, Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed The very faculties of eyes and ears.

2ND PLAYER

Yet I, A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak, Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, And can say nothing;

3RD PLAYER

no, not for a king, Upon whose property and most dear life A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?

LORD POLONIUS

This is too long.

The players are castigating Hamlet now.

4TH PLAYER

Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across? Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face? Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat, As deep as to the lungs? who does me this? Ha!

1ST PLAYER

'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall To make oppression bitter, or ere this I should have fatted all the region kites With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!

2ND PLAYER

Remorseless

3RD PLAYER

treacherous

4TH PLAYER

lecherous

1ST PLAYER

kindless villain!

LORD POLONIUS

Pray you, no more.

ALL

O, vengeance!

Silence. Because Hamlet's scream pierces through the speech. He rolls around on the floor with his head in his hands. Then he starts to laugh softly, and sits up. He gets on the dance floor and addresses the room.

HAMLET

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave, That I, the son of a dear father murder'd, Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words, And fall a-cursing, like a very drab, A scullion! Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! I have heard That guilty creatures sitting at a play Have by the very cunning of the scene Been struck so to the soul that presently They have proclaim'd their malefactions; For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players Play something like the murder of my father Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks; I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench, I know my course. The spirit that I have seen May be the devil: and the devil hath power To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps Out of my weakness and my melancholy, As he is very potent with such spirits, Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds More relative than this: the play 's the thing Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

Hamlet turns to Polonius.

HAMLET

Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time: after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

LORD POLONIUS

My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET

God's bodkins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

LORD POLONIUS

Come, sirs.

HAMLET

Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow.

Exit POLONIUS with all the Players but the First Player/Ghost

HAMLET

Dost thou hear me, old friend; can'st thou play The Murder of Gonzago?

1ST PLAYER

Ay, my Lord.

HAMLET

You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines,

which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord!

HAMLET

Ay, so, God be wi' ye;

Hamlet dismisses Rosencrantz/Guildenstern with marked contempt. Then he plays a chord at an old piano, smiles, and begins to speak.

HAMLET

To be, or not to be: that is the question:

EXT. BURBANK, LOS ANGELES - DAY

Hamlet marches down a street, pushing a shopping basket, still wearing ski hat and goggles, ranting to passersby like a seriously schizophrenic homeless man.

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 wish'd. 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: there's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin?

Hamlet has undone his trousers, and exposes himself to the world. He is cackling madly. A crowd has gathered. We hear police sirens approaching.

HAMLET

Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn  
No traveller returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
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  
With this regard their currents turn awry,  
And lose the name of action.

A clapperboard appears in front of Hamlet's face and claps down, a director's voice calls

DIRECTOR

action!

Hamlet takes a gun and thrusts it into his mouth with a hiss. A woman in the crowd screams. The cops are pouncing on Hamlet.

INT. HAMLET'S BEDROOM – DAY

Hamlet awakes from this unending nightmare with a cry. Ophelia lies there next to him, naked. She smiles and begins to play with his hair.

OPHELIA

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

HAMLET

I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours, That I have longed long to re-deliver; I pray you, now receive them.

She climbs onto him and starts trying to arouse him.

HAMLET

No, not I; I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

My honour'd lord, you know right well you did; And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed As made the things more rich: their perfume lost, Take these again; for to the noble mind Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind. There, my lord.

She is kissing him all over his body. He stops her abruptly.

HAMLET

Ha, ha! are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

HAMLET

That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty.

OPHELIA

Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

Hamlet roughly turns her over, pinning her down and proceeds to take her from behind. She does not enjoy his brutality.

HAMLET

Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.

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 thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud,

revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.

Hamlet notices a movement from behind a screen. Polonius is spying. Hamlet stops suddenly, and pulls the sheets over him.

HAMLET

Where's your father?

OPHELIA

At home, my lord.

And she smiles innocently. This enrages Hamlet. He slaps her.

HAMLET

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

He starts to climb out of bed, she clings to him.

OPHELIA

O, help him, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go: farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

OPHELIA

O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. Hamlet throws her off and exits. Ophelia renders up a heart-breaking speech.

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown! The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword; The expectancy and rose of the fair state, The glass of fashion and the mould of form, The observed of all observers, quite, quite down! And I, of ladies most deject and wretched, That suck'd the honey of his music vows, Now see that noble and most sovereign reason, Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh; That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me, To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Enter POLONIUS, he turns on a TV set.

There is Claudius, on his rubber throne, speaking to us through the TV.

KING CLAUDIUS

Love! his affections do not that way tend; Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little, Was not like madness. There's something in

his soul, O'er which his melancholy sits on brood; And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose Will be some danger: which for to prevent, I have in quick determination Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England, What think you on't?

LORD POLONIUS

It shall do well: To England send him.

KING CLAUDIUS

It shall be so:

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

LORD POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia! You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said; We heard it all.

A clapperboard boy appears and gently claps a cut to the end of the scene.

And Hamlet enters the scene again, puts his arm around Polonius in a friendly manner, whispers him some advice as an actor.

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness.

He has wandered with Polonius away from the set, past movie cameras, lights, and crew, all taking a five minute cigarette break.

HAMLET

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

POLONIUS

I warrant your honour.

Hamlet wanders back and sits down next to Ophelia, still crying. He puts his arm gently around her and kisses her cheek.

HAMLET

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

She nods. He hugs her again then stands up and addresses the other players all standing around waiting for direction. Hamlet is a perfectionist.

HAMLET



O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

PLAYER

I hope we have reformed that indifferently with us, sir.

HAMLET

O, reform it altogether.

A final piece of advice. To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET

And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them; for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too; though, in the mean time, some necessary question of the play be then to be considered: that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Hamlet smiles sarcastically at them.

HAMLET

Go, make you ready.

Hamlet sits in the director's chair and is handed a wad of paper by an assistant. Before him, the technical crew is busy dismounting the bedroom set, "hollywood style" and transforming it into the next set, where Hamlet will put up his play before the King. Hamlet meanwhile leafs through headshots of his cast of characters; King, Queen, Ghost, Horatio, Ophelia. He tears up the photo of Rosencrantz/ Guildenstern. Takes a marker, and on Horatio's photo, writes in "and Rosencrantz/ Guildenstern".

HAMLET

What ho! Horatio!

INT. TOILET - MOMENTS LATER

Horatio is sitting on the toilet.

Hamlet enters. Horatio covers his private parts with Shakespeare's Complete Works. Hamlet hands him his photo with the words "and Rosencrantz/Guildenstern".

HORATIO

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man As e'er my conversation coped withal.

HORATIO

O, my dear lord,--

HAMLET

Nay, do not think I flatter; For what advancement may I hope from thee That no revenue hast but thy good spirits, To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd? No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp, And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear? Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice And could of men distinguish, her election Hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been As one, in suffering all, that suffers

nothing, A man that fortune's buffets and rewards Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled, That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger To sound what stop she please. Give me that man That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart, As I do thee.--Something too much of this.-- There is a play to-night before the king; One scene of it comes near the circumstance Which I have told thee of my father's death: I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot, Even with the very comment of thy soul Observe mine uncle: if his occulted guilt Do not itself unkennel in one speech, It is a damned ghost that we have seen, And my imaginations are as foul As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note; For I mine eyes will rivet to his face, And after we will both our judgments join In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO

Well, my lord: If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing, And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

HAMLET

They are coming to the play.

INT. CASTLE - EVENING

The stage is set for a spectacle.

KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN/HORATIO, and others enter. They observe the stage, and behind it, the camera crew, with lights and cameras, ready to begin filming the audience reaction to the play itself.

HAMLET appears as a gaudy cross-dressing transvestite master of ceremonies. Some in the audience (not Claudius) are amused and applaud this grand entrance.

HAMLET

I must be idle. Get you a place.

He is ordering the King to sit down.

KING CLAUDIUS

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET

Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

KING CLAUDIUS

I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words are not mine.

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

And he gestures to OPHELIA, who enters dressed as HAMLET. She approaches her father, pretending to be the great Dane.

OPHELIA

My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?

LORD POLONIUS

That did I, my lord; and was accounted a good actor.

OPHELIA

What did you enact?

LORD POLONIUS

I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed i' the Capitol; Brutus killed

me.

Ophelia mock stabs Polonius several times. Polonius mock staggers and dies tragically in his chair.

OPHELIA

It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there. (More laughter) Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ/HORATIO

Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

She addresses Hamlet, but Ophelia answers.

OPHELIA

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

The audience oohs. Hamlet plays Ophelia.

HAMLET

No, my lord.

OPHELIA

I mean, my head upon your lap?

HAMLET

Ay, my lord.

OPHELIA

Do you think I meant cuntry matters?

Laughter.

HAMLET

I think nothing, my lord.

OPHELIA

That's a fair thought to lie between maids' legs.

Applause. The King and Queen are not amused.

HAMLET

What is, my lord?

OPHELIA

Nothing.

HAMLET

You are merry, my lord.

OPHELIA

Who, I?

HAMLET

Ay, my lord.

OPHELIA

O God, your lonely jig-maker. What should a man do but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Stunned silence. Ophelia carries on the act.

HAMLET

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

OPHELIA

So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half a year:

but, by'r lady, he must build churches, then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O, for, O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'

Ophelia mock rides Hamlet, thrusting at him with her hips. The King makes to rise but the Queen holds him back.

OPHELIA

Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?

HAMLET

'Tis brief, my lord.

OPHELIA

As woman's love.

Enter Player King and Player Queen, the Queen embraced by him very lovingly; she seems resistant. He kneels, and pulls her down upon a bank of flowers: he makes love to her, quite literally, pornographically, to a silent audience, as the cameras turn upon the King's reaction. Then the player queen, seeing him fall asleep, leaves him.

HAMLET

Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

The lady protests too much, methinks.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' the world.

KING CLAUDIUS

What do you call the play?

HAMLET

The Mouse-trap.

OPHELIA

You are good as a chorus, my lord.

HAMLET

I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.

OPHELIA

You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET

It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.

OPHELIA

Still better, and worse.

HAMLET

So you must take your husbands. Begin, murderer; pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come: 'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.'

Enter the villain, takes off the King's crown, kisses it, and spits upon the King's sleeping corpse. Hamlet mouths the 1st player's lines he has written.

VILLAIN (1ST PLAYER)

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing; Confederate season, else no creature seeing; Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds

collected, With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected, Thy natural magic and dire property, On wholesome life usurp immediately. Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears

He pours poison into the King's ear and withdraws into darkness. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and begins to wail. The Poisoner approaches her, seeming to lament with her. There, before the dead body, the Poisoner begins to caress the Queen's hair. Her cheek, her lips: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his kisses, his tongue. She takes the crown and puts it on his head as he puts his mouth to her breast. Their groans of agony turning to moans of pleasure.

OPHELIA

The king rises.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How fares my lord?

LORD POLONIUS

Give o'er the play.

Polonius grabs the script from the continuity girl and flips through it.

KING CLAUDIUS

Give me some light.

Several hands leap forward with lighters lit. The King slowly lights his big fat cigar, staring Hamlet steadily in the eye. He blows out a curling cloud of smoke.

KING CLAUDIUS

Away!

The King and Queen march away. Ophelia smiles at Hamlet and follows. Polonius looks him in the eye and just nods. Hamlet nods back.

LORD POLONIUS

Light! light! light!

One by one the set lights go out. The First Player/Ghost approaches Hamlet with a hand-held camera, documentary style. Hamlet looks straight into this camera, which never cuts away from Hamlet, circling him, circling him.

1ST PLAYER (SINGS)

"Why, let the stricken deer go weep, The hart ungalled play;  
For some must watch, while some must sleep: thus runs the world away.

HAMLET (SINGS)

For thou dost know, O Damon dear, This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here A very, very--peacock."  
I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

1ST PLAYER

Very well, my lord.

HAMLET

Upon the talk of poisoning?

1ST PLAYER

I did very well note him.

HAMLET

Ah, ha! Come, some music! come, the recorders! For if the king like not the comedy, Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy. Come, some music!

The other players begin to play instruments. Enter HORATIO. But Hamlet treats him like ROSENCRANZ/GUILDENSTERN.

HORATIO

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET

Sir, a whole history.

HORATIO

The king, sir,--

HAMLET

Ay, sir, what of him?

HORATIO

Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

HAMLET

With drink, sir?

HORATIO

No, my lord, rather with choler.

HAMLET

Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to his doctor; for, for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps plunge him into far more choler.

HORATIO

Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and start not so wildly from my affair.

HAMLET

I am tame, sir: pronounce.

HORATIO

The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.

HAMLET

You are welcome.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment: if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

HAMLET

Sir, I cannot.

HORATIO

What, my lord?

HAMLET

Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or, rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say,--

HORATIO

Then thus she says; your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAMLET

O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.

HORATIO

She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

HAMLET

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?

HORATIO

My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET

So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

HORATIO

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

HAMLET

Sir, I lack advancement.

HORATIO

How can that be, when you have the voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark?

HAMLET

Ay, but sir, 'While the grass grows,'--the proverb is something musty. To withdraw with you:--why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

HORATIO

O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAMLET

I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?

Hamlet takes out his penis.

HORATIO

My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET

I pray you.

HORATIO

Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET

I do beseech you.

HORATIO

I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET

'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

HORATIO

But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony; I have not the skill.

HAMLET

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this

little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me.

Enter POLONIUS.

HAMLET

God bless you, sir!

LORD POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

Hamlet is pointing at Horatio.

LORD POLONIUS

By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

HAMLET

Methinks it is like a weasel.

LORD POLONIUS

It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET

Or like a whale?

LORD POLONIUS

Very like a whale.

HAMLET

Then I will come to my mother by and by.

LORD POLONIUS

I will say so.

HAMLET

By and by is easily said.

Hamlet looks positively possessed as he walks through the darkened castle, accompanied by the GHOST, still filming him.

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.

GHOST

Soft!

HAMLET

Now to my mother.

GHOST

O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:

HAMLET

Let me be cruel!

GHOST

Not unnatural.

HAMLET

I will speak daggers to her...

GHOST

But use none!

HAMLET



My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites; How in my words soever she  
be shent, To give them seals

GHOST

Never!

HAMLET

My soul, consent!

Hamlet sees the King, praying at an altar. Hamlet is beside himself  
with the bloodlust.

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying; And now I'll do't.

Hamlet, unsheathing his sword/cross, ready to cut the villain down,  
approaches. The camera/ghost appears before him, blocking his path.

GHOST

And so he goes to heaven;

HAMLET

And so am I revenged.

GHOST

That would be scann'd:

Reason; Hamlet begins to pace the room, watched by both the camera/  
ghost and the King, out of the corner of his eye.

HAMLET

A villain kills my father; and for that, I, his sole son, do this same  
villain send to

KING CLAUDIUS

heaven.

HAMLET

O!

KING CLAUDIUS

This is hire and salary, not revenge.

HAMLET

He took my father grossly, full of bread; With all his crimes broad  
blown, as flush as May;

KING CLAUDIUS

And how his audit stands who knows save heaven? But in our  
circumstance and course of thought, 'Tis heavy with him:

HAMLET

and am I then revenged.

KING CLAUDIUS

To take him in the purging of his soul, When he is fit and season'd  
for his passage? No! Up, sword!

and know thou a more horrid hent: When he is drunk asleep, or in his  
rage...

HAMLET

Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed; At gaming, swearing, or  
about some act...

KING CLAUDIUS

...that has no relish of salvation in't; Then trip him...

HAMLET

That his heels may kick at heaven, And that his soul may be as damn'd  
and black As hell...

KING CLAUDIUS

whereto it goes.

HAMLET

My mother stays: This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. Mother, mother, mother!

Claudius quickly stands and slips away into the darkness, spared for now. His voice echoes...

KING CLAUDIUS

My words fly up my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to Heaven go.

The Queen approaches, as in a dream. She is aware of the camera as it begins to circle her, accusing her, threatening her. Hamlet is simply the spokesperson for the camera's movements.

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy 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

What's the matter now?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

No, by the rod, not so: You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife; And--would it were not so!--you are my mother.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

She tries to leave, but the camera blocks her path, then forces her to the bed that has miraculously appeared.

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.

The queen stares with horror into the lens of the camera as it gets closer and closer to her, showing us every line, every wrinkle, each imperfection...

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

Beneath the bed, a voice cries out.

LORD POLONIUS

What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET

How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

Hamlet thrusts his sword/cross beneath the bed several times. A voice

cries out.

VOICE

O, I am slain!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not: Is it the king?

He asks this to the camera.

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

As kill a king!

HAMLET

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

He pulls out the body by a leg. Polonius, still dying, taking that last long, drawn out death rattle.

HAMLET

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! I took thee for thy better: take thy fortune;

He dies a rather ham death, taking his time and seizing the glory of the moment. Repeating his earlier performance as Caesar. Hamlet gives him a final acting lesson.

HAMLET

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

Hamlet stabs him again. Polonius heeds the advice and quickly dies. Hamlet turns to look at his mother, consumed by anger and hatred, an intolerable confusion of passions.

HAMLET

Leave wringing of your hands: peace! sit you down, And let me wring your heart; for so I shall, If it be made of penetrable stuff,

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET

Such an act That blurs the grace and blush of modesty, Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose From the fair forehead of an innocent love And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed As from the body of contraction plucks The very soul, and sweet religion makes A rhapsody of words.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ay me, what act, That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

HAMLET

Look here, upon this picture, and on this, The counterfeit presentment of two brothers. See, what a grace was seated on this brow; Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself; An eye like Mars, to threaten and command; A combination and a form indeed, Where every god did seem to set his seal, To give the world assurance of a man: This was your

husband. Look you now, what follows: Here is your husband; like a mildew'd ear, Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes? Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes? You cannot call it love; for at your age The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble, And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have, Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err, Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd But it reserved some quantity of choice, To serve in such a difference. What devil was't That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind? Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all, O shame! where is thy blush? Hamlet is roughly shaking her like a rag doll. His fury is beyond control.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, speak no more: Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul; And there I see such black and grained spots As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET

Nay, but to live In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed, Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love Over the nasty sty,--

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

A murderer and a villain; A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings; A cutpurse of the empire and the rule!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No more!

HAMLET

A king of shreds and patches,--

Hamlet finds himself raging at the ghost who coldly stares back at him. He is flung back across the room as if by an alien entity.

HAMLET

Save me, and hover o'er me with your wings, You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

And now it is the Queen who sits there still, staring back in horror at her son.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, he's mad!

Hamlet sees only the ghost there, staring coldly at him.

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? O, say!

The ghost is suddenly whispering over his shoulder.

GHOST

Do not forget: this visitation Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose. But, look, amazement on thy mother sits: O, step between her

and her fighting soul: Speak to her, Hamlet.  
The Queen is once again trembling on the bed.

HAMLET

How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, how is't with you, That you do bend your eye on vacancy And with the incorporal air do hold discourse? O gentle son, Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look? Hamlet looks around him. There, surrounding the bed, is an entire camera crew, lights, 35mm camera filming the scene, and there in the director's chair, sits the Ghost, watching with an intent critical eye.

HAMLET

On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares! His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones, Would make them capable. Do not look upon me; Lest with this piteous action you convert My stern effects: then what I have to do Will want true color; tears perchance for blood.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET

Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

Hamlet stares at her. Is she lying?

HAMLET

Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET

Why, look you there! look, how it steals away! My father, in his habit as he lived! Look, where he goes, even now, out at the portal!

Hamlet is pointing, but now we see nothing there. No ghost, no crew, no camera, just the bed and the queen and a mad, tormented Hamlet.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

This the very coinage of your brain: This bodiless creation ecstasy Is very cunning in.

Exhausted, Hamlet sits next to her on the bed and takes her hand, gentle now, no histrionics, no camera influencing his performance, no self-consciousness.

HAMLET

Ecstasy!

Mother, for love of grace, Lay not that mattering unction to your soul, That not your trespass, but my madness speaks: It will but skin and film the ulcerous place, Whilst rank corruption, mining all within, Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven; Repent what's past; avoid what is to come; And do not spread the compost on the weeds, To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue; For in the fatness of these pury times Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg, Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O, throw away the worser part of it, And live the purer with the other half. Good night.

The queen and Hamlet smile at one another. She gets up and moves toward the head of the bed. Hamlet turns to see King Claudius brushing his teeth in a sink, getting ready for bed. The queen pulls back the sheets. Hamlet stands with urgency.

HAMLET

But go not to mine uncle's bed; Assume a virtue, if you have it not. Refrain to-night, And that shall lend a kind of easiness To the next abstinence: the next more easy; And when you are desirous to be bless'd, I'll blessing beg of you.

Hamlet moves to kiss her hand and trips over the dead Polonius.

HAMLET

For this same lord, I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so, To punish me with this and this with me, That I must be their scourge and minister. I must be cruel, only to be kind: Thus bad begins and worse remains behind. One word more, good lady.

Claudius has climbed into bed, and pulls the Queen on top of him. He is feeling her up, getting rampantly horny, ready to do the deed. The queen looks at Hamlet imploringly.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What shall I do?

KING CLAUDIUS

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do: Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed; Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse; And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses, Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers, Make you to ravel all this matter out, That I essentially am not in madness, But mad in craft.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Be thou assured, if words be made of breath, And breath of life, I have no life to breathe What thou hast said to me.

But she is getting carried away, and begins to ride the King distractedly. Hamlet tries to get her attention.

HAMLET

I must to England; you know that?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

This man shall set me packing: I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room. Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor Is now most still, most secret and most grave, Who was in life a foolish prating knave. Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you. Good night, mother.

But the queen is consumed by lust and Claudius winks at Hamlet, with a leering smile. HAMLET drags POLONIUS out of the room. The King and Queen make noisy love. The camera pulls away slowly into the dark.

Hamlet has placed Polonius in a chair. He crosses one leg over another and gives him a newspaper to read.

ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN/HORATIO

[off] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET

What noise? who calls on Hamlet? O, here they come.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, or is he HORATIO?

ROSENCRANTZ

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

GUILDENSTERN

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence And bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET

Do not believe it.

HORATIO

Believe what?

HAMLET

That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! what replication should be made by the son of a king?

HORATIO

Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET

Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the king best service in the end: he keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to be last swallowed: when he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROSENCRANTZ

I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET

I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the king.

HAMLET

The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing--

HORATIO

A thing, my lord!

HAMLET

Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.

Hamlet runs off, followed by ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN or is he

HORATIO?

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAWN

The King is doing his hundred morning laps. Hamlet is brought before him by the King's men, dressed in black. The King climbs out of the pool. And talks to him like a child who has not reached the age of reason yet.

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. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

KING CLAUDIUS

Alas, alas!

HAMLET

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and cat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING CLAUDIUS

What do you mean by this?

HAMLET

Nothing but to show you how a king may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.

KING CLAUDIUS

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET

In heaven; send hither to see: if your messenger find him not there, seek him i' the other place yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

KING CLAUDIUS

Go seek him there.

He says this to ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN, who exits, along with HORATIO of course.

HAMLET

He will stay till ye come.

The King points to a toy boat in the swimming pool. And to some men in white lab coats who approach him with caution and a syringe.

KING CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, prepare thyself; The bark is ready, and the wind at help, The associates tend, and every thing is bent For England.

HAMLET

For England!

KING CLAUDIUS

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good.

KING CLAUDIUS

So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

HAMLET

I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for England! Farewell, dear mother.

KING CLAUDIUS



Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET

My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England!

Hamlet plunges head first into the pool, pulling Claudius with him.

INT. SWIMMING POOL – CONTINUOUS

Beneath the surface, Claudius tries to drown Hamlet, who slips from his grasp and swims to the surface.

EXT. SWIMMING POOL – DAY

Hamlet comes up for air. No King. No attendants. Just a couple of boys floating in the pool with their separate toy fleets aligned for the mother of all Wars.

HAMLET

Good sir, whose powers are these?

BOY 1

They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET

How purposed, sir, I pray you?

BOY 1

Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET

Who commands them, sir?

BOY 1

The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET

Goes it against the main of Poland, sir, Or for some frontier?

BOY 1

We go to gain a little patch of ground That has in it no profit but the name.

HAMLET

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

BOY 2

Yes, it is already garrison'd.

Hamlet talks to the boy, looking for a sympathetic ear.

HAMLET

How all occasions do inform against me, And spur my dull revenge! What is a man, If his chief good and market of his time Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more. Sure, he that made us with such large discourse, Looking before and after, gave us not That capability and god-like reason To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple Of thinking too precisely on the event, A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom And ever three parts coward;

The boy loses interest in Hamlet and begins to wage war. It begins slowly, and builds in scope, as Hamlet speaks, becoming bloodier and bloodier, until the savagery is all encompassing. Footage of real wars intercut with the boys playing.

HAMLET

I do not know Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;' Sith I have cause and will and strength and means To do't. Examples gross as earth

exhort me: Witness this army of such mass and charge Led by a delicate and tender prince, Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd Makes mouths at the invisible event, Exposing what is mortal and unsure To all that fortune, death and danger dare, Even for an egg-shell.

Rightly to be great Is not to stir without great argument, But greatly to find quarrel in a straw When honour's at the stake.

Hamlet slips beneath the surface, and watches the battle rage from silent depths. Corpses sink past him to the bottom of the ocean.

HAMLET (V.O.)

How stand I then, That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd, Excitements of my reason and my blood, And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see The imminent death of twenty thousand men, That, for a fantasy and trick of fame, Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause, Which is not tomb enough and continent To hide the slain?

Hamlet watches as Ophelia sinks to her death smiling at him. He swims to the bottom of the pool but finds nothing there. He swims to the surface. Gasping for air.

HAMLET

O, from this time forth, My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! And he walks out of the pool, through the aftermath of the battle, his giant steps crushing what remains of the maimed and wounded toy soldiers. He disappears into the rising sun. Singing.

HAMLET

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.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Hamlet digs a grave. Hamlet IS the gravedigger. He has transcended thoughts. He will fulfill the author's will, which is that of the play he knows himself to be in. He is no longer troubled, nor at war with his opposites, he has surrendered now, and there is a calm enlightened state to Hamlet. Joyful.

The ghost sits watching him.

GHOST

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

GRAVEDIGGER/HAMLET

[Sings]But age, with his stealing steps, Hath claw'd me in his clutch, And hath shipped me into the land, As if I had never been such. Throws up a skull.

GHOST

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once: It might be the pate of a politician, one that would circumvent God, might it not?

GRAVEDIGGER HAMLET

It might, my lord.

GHOST

Or of a courtier; which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord! This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse, when he meant to beg it; might it not?

GRAVEDIGGER HAMLET

Ay, my lord.

The gravedigger, Hamlet throws up another skull.

GHOST

There's another: why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quilllets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries: is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box; and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

GRAVEDIGGER

Not a jot more, my lord.

GHOST

Whose grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER

Mine, sir.

GHOST

I think it be thine, indeed; for thou liest in't.

GRAVEDIGGER

You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not yours: for my part, I do not lie in't, and yet it is mine.

GHOST

'Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine: 'tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

GRAVEDIGGER

'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away gain, from me to you.

GHOST

What man dost thou dig it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

GHOST

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

GHOST

Who is to be buried in't?

GRAVEDIGGER

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

GHOST

How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

GRAVEDIGGER

Of all the days i' the year, I came to't that day that our last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

GHOST

How long is that since?

GRAVEDIGGER

Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was the very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

GHOST

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.

GHOST

Why?

GRAVEDIGGER

'Twill, a not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

GHOST

How came he mad?

GRAVEDIGGER

Very strangely, they say.

GHOST

How strangely?

GRAVEDIGGER

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

GHOST

Upon what ground?

GRAVEDIGGER

Why, here in Denmark.

GHOST

How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

GRAVEDIGGER

I' faith, if he be not rotten before he die--as we have many pocky corpses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in--he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

GHOST

Why he more than another?

GRAVEDIGGER

Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

GHOST

Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER

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

GHOST

Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! a' poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

GHOST

This?

GRAVEDIGGER

E'en that.

Hamlet kisses the skull's teeth. Climbs out of the grave.

GRAVEDIGGER/HAMLET

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? 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 chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. Prithee, father, tell me one thing.

The ghost is now digging the grave.

GHOST

What's that, my lord?

HAMLET

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' the earth?

GHOST

E'en so.

HAMLET

And smelt so? pah!

Throws the skull as far as he can.

GHOST

E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET

To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

GHOST

'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

HAMLET

Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer-barrel? Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay, Might stop a hole to keep the wind away: O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe, Should patch a wall to expel the winter flaw! But soft! but soft! here comes the king.

Enter Priest, and in procession; the Corpse of OPHELIA, LAERTES and Mourners following; KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, their attendants etc...

They are followed by an entire documentary film crew. Recording this for posterity.

They stop at the grave that Hamlet and the Ghost have dug.

LAERTES

Lay her i' the earth: And from her fair and unpolluted flesh May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest, A ministering angel shall my sister be, When thou liest howling.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Sweets to the sweet: farewell!  
Scattering flowers on Ophelia's corpse now laid to rest in the grave.

LAERTES

Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:  
He leaps into the grave.

LAERTES

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead.

HAMLET

This is I, Hamlet the Dane.

Hamlet says this to the film crew and then leaps into the grave. His tone here is mock-heroic. He is having fun with the story as it unfolds to its inevitable ending.

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

Hamlet and Laertes grapple. The ghost of Ophelia rises out of the grave with a hysterical shriek and begins to sing her ditties.

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

KING CLAUDIUS

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

OPHELIA

He is dead and gone, lady, He is dead and gone, at his head a grass green turf, At his heels a stone.

The Attendants part them, and they are dragged of the grave

HAMLET

Why I will fight with him upon this theme Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET

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

KING CLAUDIUS

O, he is mad, Laertes.

OPHELIA

Young men will do't if they come to't, By Cock they are to blame.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

For love of God, forbear him.

OPHELIA

Before you tumbled me you promised me to wed. So would I a done, by yonder sun, And thou had not come to my bed.

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself? Woo't drink up diesel? eat a crocodile? I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine? To outface me with leaping in her grave? Be buried quick with her, and so will I: And, if thou prate of mountains, let them throw Millions of

acres on us, till our ground, Singeing his pate against the burning zone, Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth, I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

This is mere madness.

HAMLET

Let Hercules himself do what he may, The cat will mew and dog will have his day.

OPHELIA

Good night ladies, good night. Sweet ladies, good night, good night. Exit Ophelia, Hamlet and the ghost, skipping hand in hand. The film crew follow them of course. Hamlet addresses the camera.

HAMLET

So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other; OSRIC/HORATIO/ROSENCRANTZ GUILDENSTERN approaches them, dressed in the latest fashions. Our merry trio make like the three stooges.

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir.

GHOST

Dost know this water-fly?

OPHELIA

No, my good lord.

HAMLET

Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile.

OPHELIA

Let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess.

GHOST

'Tis a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

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.

OPHELIA

'Tis for the head.

OSRIC

I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

HAMLET

No, believe me, 'tis very cold.

GHOST

he wind is northerly.

OSRIC

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET

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

OSRIC

Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,--as 'twere,--I cannot tell how. But, my lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head: sir, this is the matter,--

HAMLET

I beseech you, remember--

HAMLET moves him to put on his hat

OSRIC

Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing: indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

HAMLET

Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I know, to divide him inventorially would dizzy the arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article; and his infusion of such dearth and rareness, as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror; and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

OSRIC

Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

OPHELIA

The concernancy, sir?

HAMLET

Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

OSRIC

Sir?

GHOST

Is't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do't, sir, really.

HAMLET

What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSRIC

Of Laertes?

OPHELIA

His purse is empty already; all's golden words are spent.

HAMLET

Of him, sir.

OSRIC

I know you are not ignorant--

HAMLET

I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me.

OPHELIA

Well, sir?

OSRIC

You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is--



HAMLET

I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but, to know a man well, were to know himself.

OSRIC

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.

GHOST

That's two of his weapons.

HAMLET

But, well...

OSRIC

The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so: three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET

What call you the carriages?

OSRIC

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

GHOST

The phrase would be more german to the matter, if we could carry cannon by our sides.

OPHELIA

I would it might be hangers till then.

HAMLET

But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages.

OPHELIA

That's the French bet against the Danish.

HAMLET

Why is this 'imponed,' as you call it?

OSRIC

The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits: he hath laid on twelve for nine; and it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET

How if I answer 'no'?

OSRIC

I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET

Sir, 'tis the breathing time of day with me.

OPHELIA

Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose.

HAMLET

I will win for him an I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC

Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

HAMLET

To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC

I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET

Yours, yours.

HAMLET kisses him fully on the lips. Exit OSRIC.

GHOST

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET

There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will. The readiness is all.

EXT. TENNIS COURT – DAY

Enter with pomp and circumstance, KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, LAERTES, Lords, OSRIC/ HORATIO and Attendants with tennis rackets, balls and plenty of wine.

Hamlet, Ophelia and the ghost enter.

The cameras are set up for this big finale.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

KING CLAUDIUS puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET's

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong; But pardon't, as you are a gentleman. This presence knows, And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd With sore distraction. What I have done, That might your nature, honour and exception Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness. Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet: If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away, And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes, Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it. Who does it, then? His madness: if't be so, Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd; His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy. Give us the foils. Come on.

LAERTES

Come, one for me.

HAMLET

I'll be your foil, Laertes: in mine ignorance Your skill shall, like a star i' the darkest night, Stick fiery off indeed.

LAERTES

You mock me, sir.

HAMLET

No, by this hand.

KING CLAUDIUS

Give them the foils, young Osric.

LAERTES

This is too heavy, let me see another.

HAMLET

This likes me well.

Ophelia addresses the Queen, who tries to ignore her presence.

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i'th'cold ground.

They prepare to play the tennis match.

KING CLAUDIUS

Set me the stoops of wine upon that table. If Hamlet give the first or second hit, The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath; Give me the cups; And let the kettle to the trumpet speak, The trumpet to the cannoneer without, The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth, 'Now the king drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin: And you, the judge, bear a wary eye.

For Osric sits in the umpire seat.

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

LAERTES

Come, my lord.

They play tennis. Hamlet serves an ace. Without any tennis balls. A test of the superior imagination is at stake.

HAMLET

One.

LAERTES

No.

HAMLET

Judgment.

OSRIC

A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES

Well; again.

They finish out the game. Hamlet wins easily. Laertes goes to sit down but Hamlet leaps over the tennis net, ready to continue.

KING CLAUDIUS

Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine; Here's to thy health. Give him the cup.

The King drops poison in the drink. Silence. Everyone looks at Hamlet expectantly. The poison is in that cup. Hamlet knows it. The Queen also realizes it. Stares at the King. Hamlet lifts the cup to his lips, then decides not to drink, toying with the King.

HAMLET

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

They play. Laertes serves a scorcher but Hamlet is able to return it.

They rally. Hamlet wins. Laertes serves another scorcher but Hamlet keeps winning the points. Frustrated, Laertes attempts to lob Hamlet who leaps high up and smashes the ball, right into Laertes' face.

HAMLET

Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

OPHELIA

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

The King holds up the poisoned cup again. Hamlet takes it and prepares to drink.

KING CLAUDIUS

Our son shall win.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

He's fat, and scant of breath. Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows; The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

She snatches the cup from Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good madam!

KING CLAUDIUS

Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

The Queen drinks from the poisoned cup. She wipes her lips, smiles and beckons Hamlet over. He approaches her, and smiles sadly, knowing her sacrifice. There is love at last in the look they share.

OPHELIA

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come, let me wipe thy face.

Laertes hurries over to the King with his racket.

LAERTES

My lord, I'll hit him now.

At its tip, a deadly poison dart. The King looks at him with disdain.

KING CLAUDIUS

I do not think't.

Hamlet turns back to the game.

HAMLET

Come, for the third, Laertes: you but dally; I pray you, pass with your best violence; I am afraid you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES

Say you so? come on.

They play. Hamlet serves again with distinction. Laertes returns the shot with difficulty. Hamlet executes a tricky drop shot sending Laertes scurrying to the net, reaching the ball just in time and executing his own tricky drop shot. Hamlet rushes for the net and just reaches the ball, lobbing it deftly over Laertes' head.

Laertes reaches over the net with his racket and pricks Hamlet in the arm.

LAERTES

Have at you now!

Hamlet leaps over the net and grabs Laertes' racket. He wallops him with it, inadvertently pricking him with the poison dart.

KING CLAUDIUS

Part them; they are incensed.

HAMLET

Nay, come, again.

OPHELIA

Indeed, without an oath, I'll make an end on't.

QUEEN GERTRUDE falls off her throne.

OSRIC

Look to the queen there, ho!

How is't, Laertes?

LAERTES

Osric; I am justly kill'd 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 poison'd.

She dies. Hamlet performs all these lines with joyous relish.

HAMLET

O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd: Treachery! Seek it out.

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain; No medicine in the world can do thee good; In thee there is not half an hour of life; The treacherous instrument is in thy hand, Unbated and envenom'd: the foul practise Hath turn'd itself on me lo, here I lie, Never to rise again: thy mother's poison'd: I can no more: the king, the king's to blame.

HAMLET

The point!--envenom'd too! Then, venom, to thy work.

Hamlet stabs KING CLAUDIUS with the racket.

OSRIC

Treason! treason!

KING CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, Drink off this potion. Is thy union here? Follow my mother.

Hamlet feeds him the poison drink. KING CLAUDIUS dies. Ophelia places flowers on him.

OPHELIA

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance, pray you, love, remember.

LAERTES

He is justly served; Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet: Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, Nor thine on me.

Laertes dies. Hamlet collapses on the tennis court too.

Osric approaches Hamlet, cradles him in his arms.

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee. I am dead, Horatio.

Wretched queen, adieu!

Hamlet looks right into the camera which has been filming all this,

documentary war-zone style.

HAMLET

You that look pale and tremble at this chance, That are but mutes or audience to this act, Had I but time--as this fell sergeant, death, Is strict in his arrest--O, I could tell you-- But let it be. Horatio, I am dead; Thou livest; report me and my cause aright To the unsatisfied. As thou'rt a man, And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, To tell my story. The rest is silence.

Hamlet dies. Osric/Horatio cradles his head in his arms. Ophelia places a flower on Hamlet.

OPHELIA

And there is pansies, that's for thoughts. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end.

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart. Good night sweet prince: And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

OPHELIA

(sings) And will he not come again? And will he not come again? No, no, he is dead.

What is that sound? Like distant applause getting louder and louder. The camera rises like a spirit to survey the bloodbath. Higher and higher it rises. Above a tennis court littered with Shakespearian corpses. The applause is deafening now. As we turn away from the massacre below to gaze into the mysterious infinity of a blue heaven.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Angus Macfadyen suddenly wakes up. The applause is ending abruptly as he sees the cast finish their ovation and retreat into the wings.

The lights have come up and the audience is leaving.

Angus looks at their faces. Claudius. Gertrude. Ophelia. Laertes. Horatio. Who winks at him. The stage is bare.

EXT. THEATRE - NIGHT

Angus walks out, past the theatrical poster of "Hamlet". And down a Hollywood street.

The end.