“HAMLET”

By

William Shakespeare

Adaptation by

Nora Marris

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EXT. ELSINORE MANSION - NIGHT

A lavish mansion at the top of a hill sits in the center of upscale New York neighborhood, Denmark Heights.

A man with a handlebar mustache and a security guard uniform stands on the left side of the mansion’s front door. He is slightly overweight, shivering, and stern. He is FRANCISCO.

FOOTSTEPS SPLASH on the wet path approaching where Francisco stands.

Francisco squints into the darkness. A voice cuts through the darkness.

BERNARDO (O.S)

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

A tall, thin man, late teens, steps into the lamplight. He wears the same security guard uniform, and round wire-rimmed glasses. He is BERNARDO.

BERNARDO

Long live the King!

FRANCISCO

Bernardo?

BERNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?
FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring.

BERNARDO

Well, good night. If you do meet Horatio, bid him make haste.

FOOTSTEPS in the puddles can be heard again.

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who's there?

A boy (18, quiet, dark reddish hair, long black overcoat) approaches the two guards. He is HORATIO.

HORATIO

Friends to this ground.

FRANCISCO

Give you good night.

BERNARDO

Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO

A piece of him.

BERNARDO

Welcome, good Horatio.

HORATIO

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

BERNARDO

I have seen nothing.
FRANCISCO

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 to watch the minutes of this night; that if again this apparition come, he may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BERNARDO

Sit down awhile, and let us once again assail your ears, that are so fortified against our story what we have two nights seen.

HORATIO

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

CUT TO:

A white light emerges from the bushes. Within the light appears to be a man with an old-fashioned cane and a business suit. He is HAMLET KING, A GHOST.

BERNARDO (O.S)

(frantically)

Last night of all, had made his course to illume that part of heaven where now it burns, the bell then beating one,--

CUT TO:

The three men standing in front of the mansion. They have noticed the ghost emerging from the bushes.

FRANCISCO

Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!
BERNARDO
In the same figure, like the King that's dead. Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO
Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

FRANCISCO
Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO
(speaking louder than he's used to)

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!

CUT TO:

The ghost, its light fading, begins to slip into the darkness.

BERNARDO
It is offended. See, it stalks away!

CUT TO:

The three distraught young men stand with their eyes wide.

HORATIO
Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

FRANCISCO
'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO
How now, Horatio! You tremble and look pale. Is not this something more than fantasy? What think you on it?
HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe without the sensible and true avouch of mine own eyes. Let us impart what we have seen to-night unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life, this spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him. Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it, as needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

FRANCISCO

Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know where we shall find him most conveniently.

Horatio enters the house. Francisco leaves by way of the path, looking over his shoulder, paranoid, as he goes.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - DINING HALL

A long dining table is filled with all the most successful moguls of Denmark Heights. They are all standing in front of their place settings, dressed in black and white elegant clothing. At the head of the table stands a strongly built man, with a golden flower attached to his suit’s lapel. He is Claudius King. To his right stands a woman with a golden dress and a black veil. She is his wife, Gertrude Queen.

CLAUDIUS KING

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, with mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage--

(Clau dius and Gertrude look fondly upon each other.)

--in equal scale weighing delight and dole, taken to wife: nor have we herein barred your better wis doms, which have freely gone with this affair along. For all, our thanks. Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras--
CUT TO:

INT. FORTINBRAS MANSION

A young man (23), stands with his back facing us. He is Henry Fortinbras Junior. His name can be noted from the nameplate at the edge of his desk. He paces, turns, then sits down at the mahogany desk, and begins to type an email on a desktop computer.

"SURRENDER ALL LANDS LOST BY MY FATHER"

Claudius describes this in voiceover.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)

Holding a weak supposal of our worth, or thinking by our late dear brother's death our state to be disjoint and out of frame, colleagueed with the dream of his advantage, he hath not failed to pester us with message, importing the surrender of those lands lost by his father, with all bonds of law, to our most valiant brother. So much for him.

CUT TO:

INT. NORWAY MEADOWS HOSPITAL

A fairly elderly man, (74) lies in a hospital bed, his face filled with a sickly complexion. He is Henry Fortinbras’ uncle, William Fortinbras.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)

Now for ourself and for this time of meeting: Thus much the business is: we have here writ to Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras, who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress his further gait herein—

CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - DINING HALL

Claudius continues to address his colleagues.
CLAUDIUS

--in that the levies, the lists and full proportions, are all made out of his subject: and we here dispatch you--

Identical twins CORNELIUS and VOLTIMAND (slipped back blonde hair, beady eyes) stand on either side of the table in the seats closest to Claudius. Claudius hands Cornelius a sealed envelope.

CLAUDIUS (CONT.)

--good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand, for bearers of this greeting to old Norway; giving to you no further personal power to business, more than the scope of these delated articles allow. Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS: VOLTIMAND:

In that and all things will we show our duty. In that and all things will we show our duty.

CLAUDIUS

(grandly)

We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

All guests applaud Cornelius and Voltimand as they exit the room. After they’ve gone, all the guests sit and begin to eat.

Claudius turns to LAERTES (18, smirk permanently etched on his face, self-important, pretentious). He sits in the seat previously filled by Cornelius. To his right sits POLONIUS (late 50s, balding, wears an ascot, stout, flamboyant).

CLAUDIUS

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you? You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes? What wouldst thou beg, Laertes, that shall not be my offer, not thy asking? What wouldst thou have, Laertes?
LAERTES

My dread lord, your leave and favor to return to France; from whence though willingly I came to Denmark, yet now, I must confess, that duty done, my thoughts and wishes bend again toward France and bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

CLAUDIUS

Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave by laborsome petition, and at last upon his will I seal'd my hard consent: I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

CLAUDIUS

(loudly; rising from his chair)

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine, and thy best graces spend it at thy will!

(secondary greeting; almost forgetting Hamlet)

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

CUT TO:

Across the table sits a boy (18) with dark hair which hangs in front of his eyes, a pale complexion, and who is trying to remain invisible to the guests. He wears an entirely black suit, including the shirt and tie, and resembles a shadow. He is Hamlet King, Junior. Beside him sits Horatio.

HAMLET

(quietly; to Horatio)

A little more than kin, and less than kind.
CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

(without looking up)

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

GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off, thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity.

A beat.

HAMLET

(glares at his mother; offended)

Ay, madam, it is common.

GERTRUDE

(oblivious)

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

Hamlet grows more and more upset, standing, and releasing his grief upon his mother as he says:

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.
The room has gone completely silent, and all guests are now staring at the seething Hamlet.

**CLAUDIUS**

(scolding; patronizing Hamlet)

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 condolence is unmanly grief. 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! 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.

Hamlet slumps back in his chair, defeated.

**GERTRUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

(sarcastically)

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

**CLAUDIUS**

(proudly; to Gertrude)

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

CUT TO:
INT. ELSINORE MANSION – HAMLET’S BATHROOM

The dinner party has mostly ended, but a few LAUGHS of straggling GUESTS can still be heard off-screen. Hamlet removes his suit, frustrated and grieving, and steps into the shower.

He stands with his eyes closed and lets the water hit the back of his head.

HAMLET

O, that this too too solid 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! 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 beteem the winds of heaven visit her face too roughly.

(rubbing his eyes)

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

A KNOCK at the door.

HORATIO (O.S.)

Hail to your lordship!

Hamlet quickly dries himself off and pulls a towel around his waist. He opens the door and steps into--
INT. ELSINORE MANSION - HALLWAY

Hamlet stands with Horatio and Bernardo in a hallway with gilded wallpaper and paintings of Hamlet’s relatives. Hamlet leads his friends toward his living quarters.

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.

The three boys have reached—

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - HAMLET’S QUARTERS

White leather couches and glass end tables. Comic book posters and vinyl album covers clutter the walls. Hamlet opens his liquor cabinet and removes a bottle of clear alcohol. He removes the cap and takes a swig as he says:

HAMLET

I know you are no truant. 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 followed hard upon.

Hamlet sprawls himself across one of the couches and closes his eyes.

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven or ever I had seen that day, Horatio! My father!--methinks I see my father.

ON HORATIO: Is it the ghost?

HORATIO

Where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind’s eye, Horatio.

HORATIO

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET

(eyes snapping open)

Saw? Who?

HORATIO

My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET

The King my father?

HORATIO

Two nights together had this gentleman, Bernardo, on his watch, in the dead vast and middle of the night, been thus encountered. A figure like your father, armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe, appears before him, and with solemn march goes slow and stately by them.

(MORE)
HORATIO (CONT’D)

And I with them the third night kept the watch; where, as they had delivered, 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

But where was this?

BERNARDO

Upon the platform where we watched.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

(Shaking his head)

Tis very strange.

HAMLET

Then saw you not his face?

HORATIO

O, yes, my lord.

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 fixed 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. Stayed it long?

HORATIO
While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

BERNARDO
Longer, longer.

HORATIO
Not when I saw it.

HAMLET
His beard was grizzled--no?

HORATIO
It was, as I have seen it in his life, a sable silvered.

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 all, if you have hitherto concealed this sight, let it be tenable in your silence still. Tomorrow, upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve, I'll visit you.

BERNARDO

Our duty to your honor.

Bernardo and Horatio leave the room, and Hamlet is left alone, drinking.

HAMLET

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 overwhelm them, to men's eyes.

EXT. POLONIUS' HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAWN

Laertes is preparing to leave for France to continue his studies and his packing his books and other school things into the backseat of a red Mustang. OPHELIA (17, bleach-blonde) leans against the hood of the car, displeased.

LAERTES

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

OPHELIA

Do you doubt that?

LAERTES

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor, hold it a fashion and a toy in blood, not permanent, sweet, not lasting, the perfume and suppliance of a minute. No more.
OPHELIA

No more but so?

LAERTES

Perhaps he loves you now, and now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch the virtue of his will: but you must fear, his greatness weighed, his will is not his own; for he himself is subject to his birth: He may not, as unvalued persons do, carve for himself. Then if he says he loves you, it fits your wisdom so far to believe it as he in his particular act and place may give his saying deed; which is no further than the main voice of Denmark goes withal. Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain. Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister, and keep you in the rear of your affection, out of the shot and danger of desire.

(gets into the car)

Be wary then; best safety lies in fear: Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

OPHELIA

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep, as watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, do not, as some ungracious pastors do, show me the steep and thorny way to heaven; whiles himself the primrose path of dalliance treads, and wrecks not his own rede.

LAERTES

O, fear me not. I stay too long: but here my father comes.

Laertes drives off in a successful attempt to avoid his father just as Polonius comes down the steps into the driveway.
POLONIUS
What is't, Ophelia, be hath said to you?

OPHELIA
So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS
You do not understand yourself so clearly as it behooves my daughter and your honor. What is between you? Give me up the truth.

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

Ophelia and Polonius make their way back into the house, up the long marble staircase.

POLONIUS
Affection! You speak like a green girl! Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA
I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS
Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby, that you have taken these tenders for true pay, which are not sterling.

OPHELIA
My lord, he hath importuned me with love in honorable fashion! And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord, with almost all the holy vows of heaven!

POLONIUS
I do know, when the blood burns, how prodigal the soul lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter, you must not take for fire. From this time be somewhat
scanter of your maiden presence; set your entreatments at a higher rate. Hamlet is young and with a larger tether may he walk than may be given you: in few, Ophelia, do not believe his vows; for they are brokers, not of that dye which their investments show, but mere implorators of unholy suits! I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth, have you so slander any moment leisure, as to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

Ophelia is stunned. Yet, not wanting to disappoint her father, she says:

**OPHELIA**

I shall obey.

Ophelia and Polonius reach the front doors, where two security guards open them and let the pair inside.

**EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - ESTABLISHING - MIDDAY**

An upper class private school with large turrets and dark brickwork. The parking lot is full, students are walking around campus.

**INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - AUDITORIUM**

Ophelia sits in the center of the stage in a black wire chair. She plays the first movement of Elgar’s Cello Concerto (clearly talented). Hamlet leans against the side of her chair, his eyes closed, listening to her play, a book lying on his lap as if he’s forgotten about it.

**EXT. ELSINORE MANSION - NIGHT**

Hamlet and Horatio stand in stolen security guard uniforms in front of the main entry to the mansion. Snow continues to fall on the path, but they are guarded from it by the porch overhang. The sound of muffled, thumping music is coming from inside the house. Hamlet and Horatio pass a large bottle of alcohol between them.

**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
Indeed? I heard it not: then it draws near the season wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

A loud shattering of glass comes from inside, followed by cheering.

HORATIO
What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET
The King doth wake to-night and takes his rouse, keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels; and, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down, the kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO
Is it a custom?

HAMLET
Ay, marry, is it. This heavy-headed revel east and west makes us traduced and taxed of other nations. They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase soil our addition.

Pause. Hamlet and Horatio appear tired and slightly drunk.

CUT TO:
The familiar light of the ghost emerging from the bushes.

CUT TO:

Hamlet and Horatio are suddenly awake as the light comes into view.

HORATIO

Look, Hamlet, it comes!

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! 
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned, 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: O, answer me!

The ghost motions for Hamlet to come with him.

HORATIO

Look, with what courteous action it waves you to a more removed ground: but do not go with it!

HAMLET

It will not speak; then I will follow it.

Hamlet steps off of the porch and follows after the ghost as Horatio calls after him in protest.

HORATIO (O.S.)

Do not, my lord! What if it tempt you toward the flood, or to the dreadful summit of the cliff that beetles o'er his base into the sea, and there assume some other horrible form!

(to himself)

He waxes desperate with imagination. 
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. Nay, I must follow him.
EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS – STREET – NIGHT

Hamlet continues to follow after the ghost. The ghost floats about a foot above the ground and glides a few paces in front of Hamlet. The street is eerily quiet, with no cars or people to be seen.

After a few beats, Hamlet grows impatient. He finally says:

HAMLET

Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak. I’ll go no further.

GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET

I will.

The ghost finally stops in the middle of the deserted road.

GHOST

My hour is almost come when I to sulf’rous 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

(in confusion)

What?
GHOST

I am thy father’s spirit, confined to walk fast in fires till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away. 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—

HAMLET

O God!

GHOST

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder!

The ghost’s voice echoes in the quiet street. A beat.

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

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

HAMLET

Haste me to know it, that I may sweep to my revenge.

GHOST

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!

CUT TO:
INT. ELSINORE MANSION – ATRIUM – TWENTY YEARS EARLIER

A grand, rounded entryway is shown, with white walls and tall windows. On either side of the space are staircases which wrap symmetrically against the wall.

YOUNG CLAUDIUS, dressed in dark clothing, kisses the neck of YOUNG GERTRUDE against the side of the left grand staircase. She wears a wedding dress.

GHOST (V.O.)

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beats, with witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts won to his shameful lust the will of my most-seeming virtuous Queen.

Gertrude seems to hear someone calling her, and she ducks away from Claudius’s embrace. Gertrude runs up the stairs, glancing back at Claudius, torn.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – CHAPEL – TWENTY YEARS EARLIER

A large chapel with stained glass windows. A priest stands at the altar with a YOUNG HAMLET KING, and a young Gertrude Queen as they hold hands and make their wedding vows. A small number of close relatives are present.

GHOST (V.O.)

O Hamlet, what a falling off was there! I made to her in marriage, and to decline upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor to those of mine. So, lust though to a radiant angel linked will sate itself in a celestial bed and prey on garbage! Brief, let me be.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELSINORE MANSION – GARDENS – A FEW MONTHS EARLIER

HAMLET KING, SENIOR (the same age as the ghost) lies in a hammock, asleep, surrounded by white flowers. Claudius slips into the gardens, attempting to make no sound. He pulls a small bottle from his pocket, which is filled with deep purple liquid. He approaches his sleeping brother and pours the poisonous liquid into Hamlet King’s ear.
GHOST (V.O.)

Sleeping within my orchard, thy uncle stole with juice in a vial and in the porches of my ears did pour the leprous distilment—

In a few moments Hamlet King falls from his hammock, foaming at the mouth and seizing. Blood pours from his eyes, nose, and ears. The blood stains the white flowers.

GHOST (V.O.)

--whose effect holds the blood of man that swift as quicksilver it comes though the natural gates and alleys of the body and curd the thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine.

CUT TO:

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS FUNERAL PARLOR - DAY

All the same guests from the dinner party are present at a funeral, held for Hamlet King, Senior. Gertrude kneels before the closed casket, crying. Claudius rushes to kneel next to her, places his arm around her and grasps her hand. She looks up at him, and gives him a grateful smile.

GHOST (V.O.)

Thus was I, sleeping by a brother’s hand of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched. No reckoning made, but sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head!

CUT TO:

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS - STREET - PRESENT DAY - EARLY MORNING

The ghost floats next to young Hamlet. The sky is beginning to turn faintly pink as the sun rises.

GHOST (V.O.)

O horrible, O horrible, most horrible! If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not! Fare thee well at once.

(MORE)
The glowworm shows the matin to be near and begins to pale his ineffectual fire. Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

The ghost dissolves in the early light. Hamlet falls to his knees in the middle of the street.

**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? I’ll wipe away all trivial, fond records, all saws of books, all forms, all pressures past within the book and volume of my brain. O most pernicious woman! O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain! Uncle, there you are.

Hamlet pulls himself together and stands. He begins to return home, walking down the center of the road, determined.

**HAMLET**

Now to my word. I have sworn it.

Horatio can be seen approaching Hamlet from a distance.

**HORATIO**

(shouting from far away)

Lord Hamlet!

Horatio breaks into a jog and begins to walk in stride with Hamlet, returning in the way they both came.

**HORATIO**

What news?

**HAMLET**

O, wonderful!
HORATIO

Good, my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No, you will reveal it.

HORATIO

Not I, Hamlet, by heaven.

HAMLET

How say you, then? Would heart of man once think it? But you’ll be secret?

HORATIO

Ay, by heaven.

HAMLET

There’s never a villain dwelling in all Denmark, but he’s an arrant knave.

HORATIO

There needs no ghost come from the grave to tell us this.

HAMLET

Why, you are in 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, I will go pray.

Hamlet begins to walk at a faster pace in an attempt to avoid Horatio’s questions. Horatio walks quickly and remains in stride with Hamlet.

HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words!

HAMLET

I am sorry they offend you, heartily.
HORATIO

There’s no offense, my lord.

HAMLET

But there is, and much offense, too. It is an honest ghost, let me tell you. For your desire to know what is between us, and now, my friend, give me one poor request.

HORATIO

What is it? I will.

HAMLET

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO

I will not.

Hamlet draws a switchblade from his coat.

HAMLET

Upon my sword.

Hamlet pulls out his right hand and faces it upwards, and holds the blade over it.

HORATIO

I have sworn already!

HAMLET

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

HORATIO

Propose the oath.

HAMLET

Consent to swear to never to speak of this that you have seen, swear by the sword.
HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

Hamlet slices the palm of his hand open, and looks expectantly at Horatio. Horatio holds out his palm and follows suit, also slicing his palm open. The pair shake hands.

HAMLET

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Hamlet starts walking quickly toward the mansion again, Horatio following close behind.

HAMLET

But come, here, as before, never, so help you mercy, how strange or odd some’re 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: this not to do, so grace and mercy at your most need help you, swear.

Horatio nods, he will not give Hamlet away.

HAMLET

With all my love I do commend me to you: And what so poor a man as Hamlet is may do, to express his love and friending to you, God willing, shall not lack. 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!

WIDE SHOT - Hamlet and Horatio enter through the main gates to the mansion.
INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - DAY.

INSERT - PLAQUE

Plaque at the entrance to the school, which reads: “DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY FOR THE GIFTED ELITE.”

A long hallway with dark wooden paneling, void of students—they have all left for the day. The large grandfather clock at the end of the hall reads 4:15. Everything is silent.

Suddenly, a confused, upset Ophelia bursts from one of the classrooms adjacent to the hall, hugging her arms tightly into herself as she walks toward camera quickly.

Hamlet exits the classroom a few moments after she’s gone, and sighs heavily. He turns away from camera, and walks toward the door next to the grandfather clock.

INT. POLONIUS’ HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY.

Polonius lies on his stomach on a massage table in the middle of the room with a towel over his backside. A man in an entirely pink uniform is massaging him. He is Reynaldo.

POLONIUS

You shall do marvelous wisely, good Reynaldo.

REYNALDO

My lord, I did intend it.

Ophelia can be seen hurrying past the entrance to the living room, clearly distressed. Her father notices her.

OPHELIA

I have been so affrighted!

POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?

Ophelia hesitates before she steps into the room. Reynaldo continues to massage Polonius.

OPHELIA

With what, in the name of God?
OPHELIA

Lord Hamlet, pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other; and with a look so piteous in purport as if he had been loosed out of hell to speak of horrors,--he comes before me.

POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA

I do not know; but truly, I do fear it.

POLONIUS

What said he?

OPHELIA

He took me by the wrist and held me hard; He falls to such perusal of my face as he would draw it. Long stayed he so; At last, a little shaking of mine arm and thrice his head thus waving up and down, he raised a sigh so piteous and profound as it did seem to shatter all his bulk and end his being! That done, he lets me go. He seemed to find his way without his eyes...

Polonius holds up a hand in signal for Reynaldo to cease massaging. Polonius sits up.

POLONIUS

Come, go with me: I will go seek the King. This is the very ecstasy of love that does afflict our natures. What, have you given him any hard words of late?

A beat. Ophelia sounds as if she’s reciting lines, not wanting to disappoint her father, but lying all the same.

OPHELIA

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

That hath made him mad. I am sorry that with better heed and judgment I had not quoted him: I feared he did but trifle, and meant to wreck thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!

Polonius stands, seemingly unaware that he isn’t fully dressed.

POLONIUS

Come, go we to the king: this must be known; which, being kept close, might move more grief to hide than hate to utter love.

Reynaldo quickly grabs Polonius’ arm to stop him from leaving the house undressed. Reynaldo bends over and hands Polonius a neat pile of folded clothing. Polonius’ eyes widen, and he quickly takes the clothes from Reynaldo and shoos the other two from the room. As Ophelia leaves, a paper falls out of her backpack, and Polonius picks it up. He reads its contents and frowns.

EXT. ELSINORE MANSION - GARDENS - EVENING

The sun is setting in the sky as Gertrude and Claudius spend time in the garden (ironically the same one where Hamlet Senior was murdered). Claudius waters the white flowers while Gertrude lies back in a chair and receives an odd-colored facial treatment from an attendant.

From over the black metal fence, two teenage boys (both 16) can be seen playing hacky-sack. While attempting to kick the hacky-sack, the boy on the left loses his balance and falls into a hedge. He is Lucius Guildenstern. The other boy laughs at Guildenstern and throws the hacky-sack at him. He is Arthur Rosencrantz.

Claudius notices the two boys and waves them over. Guildenstern pulls Rosencrantz from the hedge, and they both climb over the fence. Guildenstern, of course, falls from the top.

CLAUDIUS

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern! Moreover that we much did
long to see you, the need we have to use you did provoke our hasty sending.

Guildenstern brushes himself off and gives Claudius a comical salute.

**CLAUDIUS**

Something have you heard of Hamlet's transformation; so call it, sith nor the exterior nor the inward man resembles that it was. I entreat you both to draw him on to pleasures, and to gather, so much as from occasion you may glean, whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus.

**GERTRUDE**

Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you, and sure I am two men there are not living to whom he more adheres.

Rosencrantz elbows Guildenstern in the stomach.

**GERTRUDE**

Your visitation shall receive such thanks as fits a king's remembrance.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Put your dread pleasures more into command than to entreaty.

**GUILDENSTERN**

But we both obey, and here give up ourselves, in the full bent to lay our service freely at your feet, to be commanded.

Rosencrantz rolls his eyes.

**GERTRUDE**

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz, and I beseech you instantly to visit my too much changed son.
GUILDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practices pleasant and helpful to him!

Guildenstern curtsies, and Rosencrantz pushes him onto the ground. Guildenstern chases Rosencrantz back over the fence into the adjacent backyard.

Gertrude purses her lips, slightly aggravated that she’s just placed her trust in these immature teenagers.

Polonius bursts from the mansion into the garden.

POLONIUS

The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord, are joyfully returned.

CLAUDIUS

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POLONIUS

Have I, my lord? I do think, or else this brain of mine hunts not the trail of policy so sure as it hath used to do, that I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

Claudius drops the watering can.

CLAUDIUS

O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

POLONIUS

Give first admittance to the ambassadors; my news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

Claudius turns to the attendant giving Gertrude her facial, and says:

CLAUDIUS

Bring them in.
The attendant enters the house and returns with the twins, Cornelius and Voltimand. They are both dressed in traditional golfing attire, and each of them carry a bag of golf clubs. Claudius enthusiastically shakes both their hands.

**CLAUDIUS**

Welcome, my good friends! Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

**VOLTIMAND**

Most fair return of greetings and desires. Upon our first, he sent out to suppress his nephew's levies sends out arrests on Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys; receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine makes vow before his uncle never more to give the assay of arms against your majesty. Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy, gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee, and his commission to employ those soldiers.

Voltimand pulls an envelope from his golfing bag and hands it to Claudius.

**CLAUDIUS**

It likes us well; and at our more considered time well read, answer, and think upon this business. Meantime we thank you for your well-took labor: Go to your rest! Much thanks.

The twins nod, start to return into the mansion, before realizing that they should not reenter. Instead they climb over the fence much like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Claudius turns to Polonius, expectant for his other news.

**POLONIUS**

This business is well ended. My liege, and madam, to expostulate what majesty should be, what duty is, why day is day, night night, and time is time, were nothing but to waste night, day and time.

(MORE)
POLONIUS (CONT’D)

I will be brief: your noble son is mad: mad call I it; for, to define true madness, what is it but to be nothing else but mad?

Gertrude groans in impatience.

GERTRUDE

More matter, with less art.

Polonius frowns at Gertrude, slightly offended.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all. That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity; and pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure. Thus it remains, and the remainder thus. Perpend. I have a daughter--have while she is mine--who, in her duty and obedience, mark, hath given me this: now gather, and surmise.

Polonius displays the letter before Claudius, and Gertrude stands from her chair to look at the letter. She removes the two pieces of dragonfruit which were previously on her eyes.

INSERT: The letter from Hamlet to Ophelia.

POLONIUS

(reading)

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

(he stops reading to comment, much to Claudius and Gertrude’s annoyance)

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

(he continues reading)

“In her excellent white bosom—“
Gertrude makes a noise of disapproval and interjects:

GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile, I will be faithful.

(he turns back to the letter and reads, in a slight mocking tone)

"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 three look up from the letter.

POLONIUS

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me.

CLAUDIUS

But how hath she received his love?

POLONIUS

I precepts gave her, that she should lock herself from his resort, admit no messengers, receive no tokens. Which done, she took the fruits of my advice; and he, repulsed--a short tale to make--Fell into a sadness and, by this declension, into the madness wherein now he raves, and all we mourn for.

Claudius gives a concerned look to Gertrude.

CLAUDIUS

Do you think tis this?
GERTRUDE
It may be, very likely.

CLAUDIUS
How may we try it further?

Polonius turns to Claudius, and explains his plan.

POLONIUS
Sometimes he walks four hours together in the lobby—at such a time I'll loose my daughter to him: Be you and I behind an arras then; mark the encounter: if he love her not and be not from his reason fallen thereon, let me be no assistant for a state.

CLAUDIUS
We'll try it.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - HAMLET’S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Hamlet lies on his back on one of the white couches. He holds his book in front of his face, reading.

Time passes. A shadow of the door opening can be seen on the floor, and Polonius can be seen standing over Hamlet.

POLONIUS
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

Hamlet starts in surprise.

HAMLET
Well, God-a-mercy.

Hamlet looks distant, not really looking at Polonius.

POLONIUS
Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET
Excellent well, you...are a fishmonger!
Hamlet begins tearing the pages from his book and throwing them up in Polonius’ face.

POLONIUS

Not I.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS

Honest?

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS

That's very true.

HAMLET

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

Polonius is confused by his changing of the subject.

POLONIUS

I have, my lord.

HAMLET

Let her not walk in the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive.

Hamlet tears up a page into small pieces, holds them in his cupped hands, then throws them like confetti, laughing. Polonius shakes his head, saying to himself:

POLONIUS

How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter.

(MORE)
POLONIUS (CONT’D)

Yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone...

(turns back to Hamlet)

What do you read?

Hamlet throws the book in the air.

HAMLET

Words, words, words.

POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

POLONIUS

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

Hamlet picks the book up and clears his throat, eyes wild.

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 falls into a fit of maniacal laughter. Polonius squints at him, suspicious, and begins to leave the room.

POLONIUS

(shakes his head; to himself)

Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.
As soon as Polonius shuts the door behind him, Hamlet stops laughing and begins picking up the shreds of paper scattered around him. He rubs his face and hair with his hands, exhausted and distraught.

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - AP PHYSICS ROOM - DAY

Twelve lab tables are set up, and eleven tables of students are paired up, completing a geometric optics lab. Hamlet sits alone in the back of the room, the odd-numbered student. He has ignored the assigned lab completely and has busied himself with connecting wires and batteries together, creating electric sparks. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern sit together at the table in front of him. They turn around and address him.

GUILDENSTERN

My honored lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

Hamlet looks at the two of them, not aware of who they are. A beat. He remembers.

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.

Guildenstern leans forward too far in his stool and falls off. Hamlet peers down at him.

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.
HAMLET
Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?

GUILDENSTERN
Faith, her privates we.

Hamlet laughs maniacally. He touches two wires together, making a large electric spark. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern jump in surprise.

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

There is a lull in the conversation—it’s slightly awkward, as Hamlet doesn’t really know these two boys.

HAMLET
(finally)
What’s the news?

ROSENCRANTZ
None, 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?

Hamlet looks around at the unhappy, working students.

HAMLET
Denmark’s a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ
We think not so.
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.

The bell rings, marking the end of the school day.

ROSENCRANTZ

We’ll wait upon you.

HAMLET

No such matter. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you here?

GUILDENSTERN

To visit you, no other occasion.

Hamlet knows why they are speaking with him, but wishes for them to admit it. Hamlet begins exiting the classroom, with the two boys close behind.

HAMLET

Beggar that I am, but I thank you. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me!

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say?

HAMLET

Why, anything, but to the purpose! You were sent for, and there is kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color! I know that King and Queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end?

HAMLET

That you must teach me.
Rosencrantz opens his mouth to answer, but instead turns to Guildenstern, signaling for him to answer.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

What say you?

Hamlet walks into---

**INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – HALLWAY – DAY**

Students are putting their books in their lockers, getting ready to leave school for the day. Hamlet has for the time being escaped from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and is pushing through the groups of students around him.

**HAMLET**

(to himself)

Nay, then, I have an eye of you...

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern run after him and are suddenly walking on either side of Hamlet. They are winded and panting.

**GUILDENSTERN**

We were sent for.

**HAMLET**

I will tell you why, so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery. I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth 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 overhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. Man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are giggling.
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 if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you, we coted them on the way...

HAMLET

What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

INSERT - FLYER

Features a student-made drawing of a crying woman standing over a city skyline. The text on the poster reads: “THE TRAGEDIANS OF THE CITY: DENMARK HEIGHTS DRAMA CLUB”

HAMLET

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ

No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET

How comes it? Do they grow rusty? Who maintains them?

ROSENCRANTZ

Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds in no sin to tarre them to controversy.
HAMLET

Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, that they do, my lord, Hercules and his load too.

HAMLET

There are the players.

Hamlet suddenly turns down a side hallway, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern keep walking straight down the same hall, unaware that Hamlet has turned. Rosencrantz trips Guildenstern.

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – AUDITORIUM – DAY

A grand auditorium, with a mezzanine and a balcony, all seats coated with black velvet. The stage is surrounded by large white petals, and resembles something between a flower and the Sydney Opera House.

At the foot of the stage are the members of The Tragedians of the City, each dressed in stage makeup and costumes. Among the costumes are a businessman with a mustache, a flapper, an ostrich, a fisherman, and a group of dancers who are dressed in identical flesh suits and butterfly wings. Hamlet enters the auditorium, and addresses the players immediately:

HAMLET

Players, you are welcome to Denmark. Your hands, come then: the appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony: let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outward, should more appear like entertainment than yours.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern scramble into the auditorium and congregate behind Hamlet.

HAMLET

You are 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.

Hamlet leads Rosencrantz and Guildenstern up to the lighting booth above the balcony. Hamlet sits down at the chair behind the glass and starts adjusting the auditorium lights. Polonius can be seen entering the auditorium with a clipboard, and begins shouting to the actors. He is clearly the director of the production.

POLONIUS

Well be with you, players!

HAMLET

(to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

Hark you, that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ

Happily he’s the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

Polonius looks up at the lighting booth and waves to Hamlet cheerfully. Hamlet forces a grimace and waves back to Polonius. Polonius points to a headset and puts his on his head, motioning that Hamlet should do the same. Before Hamlet copies this movement, he says to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern:

HAMLET

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it.

Hamlet puts on the headset and says to Polonius through it:

HAMLET

You say right, sir!
I have news to tell you.

Hamlet smiles at Rosencrantz.

Buzz buzz!

One of the actors falls off the stage, and Polonius groans in aggravation.

Upon mine honor!

Hamlet continues to mock Polonius, and seem “mad.”

Then came each actor on his ass—

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene indivisible, or poem unlimited!

Hamlet leans back in his chair and begins reciting lines from a play he clearly knows, but in a comical and mocking tone.

O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

What a treasure had he, my lord?
HAMLET

Why, “One fair daughter and no more, the which he loved passing well.”

Polonius removes his headset and says to himself:

POLONIUS

Still on my daughter…

He puts the headset back on, and addresses the players.

POLONIUS

Come, players!

Hamlet addresses Polonius through the headset.

HAMLET

Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

POLONIUS (MIC)

Ay, of course!

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern have grown bored of the rehearsal and leave through the stage door. Hamlet dims the lights and says to himself, pleased with his good fortune:

HAMLET

We'll have it tomorrow night. I could, for a need, give the lead player a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in it.

Hamlet, as he cues the lighting, begins to write a speech for the play on a sheet of notebook paper.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - AUDITORIUM - LATER

The rehearsal ends, and Hamlet rushes down to the main auditorium area and hands the written speech to the student dressed as a businessman.
HAMLET
You could, study this speech and insert it tomorrow night, could you not?

BUSINESSMAN
Ay, my lord.

HAMLET
God be with ye.

Hamlet turns and exits the auditorium through the side door marked with an exit sign which leads to—

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - PARKING LOT - EVENING

From the outside, the school looks extravagant, standing out ridiculously from the modest-sized homes in the surrounding neighborhood. A few cars are scattered throughout the parking lot. Hamlet pulls his keys from his pocket and unlocks a black Mustang which is parked at the edge of the parking lot.

INT. HAMLET’S CAR - EVENING

Hamlet pulls the ceiling mirror thing down and stares at his own reflection. He rubs his hands over his eyes.

HAMLET
Now I am alone.

Embarrassed with himself, he closes the mirror and starts the car, pulls away from the parking lot. The windows are down, and it starts to rain. Hamlet can’t close the windows, they are jammed, so he continues driving, all while rain pelts him.

HAMLET
O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! But I am pigeon-livered 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! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! O, vengeance! Why, what an ass am I!

(MORE)
HAMLET (CONT’D)

This is most brave, that I, the son of a dear father murdered, 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!

Hamlet pulls his car into the mansion’s driveway. He is determined and upset with himself, and his fate. He parks his car and steps out into the rain, still talking to himself.

HAMLET

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 proclaimed their malefactions; For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ. These players will 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. I'll have grounds more relative than this: the play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - CLAUDIUS' OFFICE - EVENING

Claudius sits at a glass desk in an entirely mint-green room. One wall is lined with locked metal vaults, another with windows. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are squeezed together on a couch with Polonius in front of the desk. Ophelia stands in the corner next to a window, and stares out the window at the rain. Gertrude paces in front of the couch.

CLAUDIUS

And can you, by no drift of circumstance, get from him why he puts on this confusion, grating so harshly all his days of quiet with turbulent and dangerous lunacy?
ROSENCRANZ

He does confess he feels himself distracted; but from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN

Niggard of question; but, of our demands, most free in his reply.

ROSENCRANZ

It so fell out, that certain players we over-raught on the way—

POLONIUS

'Tis most true: And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties to hear and see the matter.

CLAUDIUS

With all my heart; and it doth much content me to hear him so inclined.

Gertrude opens the door for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and motions for them to leave the room.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, clearly uncomfortable, stand and escape the room as quickly as they can. Gertrude leaves with them.

POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you, we will bestow ourselves.

Ophelia looks uneasy, but approaches her father. Polonius takes a book from Claudius' desk.

POLONIUS

Read on this book; that show of such an exercise may color your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage and pious action we do sugar o'er the devil himself.
Ophelia nods and takes the book. She leaves the room, with Polonius following close behind.

Claudius whispers to himself, as he follows:

CLAUDIUS

O, 'tis too true! How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience! O heavy burden!

The door shuts behind him, and only the sound of the SHOWER can be heard coming from—

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - HAMLET’S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hamlet washes his hair in the shower, his eyes red and wild.

HAMLET

To be, or not to be: that is the question: Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or to take arms against a sea of troubles, and by opposing end them? To die: to sleep; no more; and by a sleep to say we end the heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to, tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

CUT TO:

INT. HAMLET’S CAR - NIGHT

Hamlet drives himself to school, the light from the streetlamps illuminating and flickering across his face.

HAMLET

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.

(MORE)
HAMLET (CONT’D)

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?

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET

A car follows Hamlet at a cautious distance, with a license plate reading: “PLNIUS.”

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Hamlet sits on the trunk of his car, his legs crossed, playing with his black suede wristband.

HAMLET

Who would fardels bear, to grunt and sweat under a weary life, but that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler 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 over 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 car can be seen pulling into the parking lot, and Hamlet recognizes it.

HAMLET

Soft you now! The fair Ophelia!

CUT TO:

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY. LOBBY. NIGHT.

The school which Hamlet attends is clearly empty, as it’s nearing eleven o’clock PM.
A room, which contains mostly tall windows and dark wood paneling, is lit by the moon. A shadow can be seen at large lobby window, which stretches from the high ceiling to the floor. After a slight struggle, the window swings open, and Hamlet steps through it, a book in hand. He sprawls out in the middle of the lobby floor, in the center of the Denmark Heights Academy seal (“FOR THE GIFTED ELITE”) which features a golden bird.

Dissolve to:

INT. LOBBY – 15 MINUTES LATER

Light shines across the floor as the front door to the school opens, and the shadow of a figure can be seen through the doorway. It is Ophelia. She enters the room, and begins to pretend to read to herself. When she sees that Hamlet hasn’t noticed her, she stands next to him and stares at his emotionless body. Hamlet sees her, and jerks up in surprise.

HAMLET

Nymph, in thy orisons be all my sins remembered!

Polonius and Claudius can be seen slipping through the door to hide in the custodial closet.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

Good my lord, how does your honor for this many a day?

HAMLET (O.S.)

I humbly thank you, well, well, well.

Ophelia pulls off the golden hummingbird pendant which hangs from a chain around her neck. She holds it out to Hamlet.

OPHELIA

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

Hamlet turns back to his book, feigning disinterest.
HAMLET

No, not I; I never gave you aught.

Ophelia crosses her arms, becoming upset.

OPHELIA

My honored 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.

She holds the pendant out to Hamlet again.

HAMLET

Ha, ha! Are you honest? Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

Ophelia pulls the pendant to her closed fist, and turns away from Hamlet. Hamlet stands up behind her.

HAMLET

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

Polonius and Claudius are squeezed uncomfortably close together in the custodial closet.

OPHELIA (O.S.)

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

A mop in a bucket nearly gets knocked over by Polonius, but Claudius catches it, and glares at Polonius.

HAMLET (O.S.)

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 likeness, but now time gives it proof. I did love you once.
ON OPHELIA AND HAMLET.

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 is now more frustrated than upset.

OPHELIA

I was the more deceived.

Hamlet begins to feel guilty for lying to Ophelia. He grabs her arm and spins her around to look at him as he admits:

HAMLET

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.

Polonius knocks a bottle of cleaning fluid off of a shelf.

HAMLET

Where's your father?

OPHELIA

At home.

Hamlet speaks loudly, in a manic tone, so that Polonius can hear him clearly.

HAMLET

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's own house. Farewell.
OPHELIA
(to herself)

O help him, you sweet heavens!

Hamlet suddenly speaks to Ophelia as himself, losing the crazed stare that he previously gave. He steps close to Ophelia.

HAMLET
(sotto voce)

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. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. Farewell.

Hamlet steps away from Ophelia suddenly, and laughs loudly. He steps through the window again, and is gone.

OPHELIA
(to herself)

O heavenly powers, restore him! I, of ladies most deject and wretched, that sucked the honey of his music vows, now see that noble and most sovereign reason, like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh; that unmatched form and feature of blown youth blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me, to have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

Polonius and Claudius burst from the closet, stepping away from each other quickly, and brushing themselves off.

CUT TO:

INT. CLAUDIUS’ CAR. NIGHT.

Claudius and Polonius sit in the front seats of the car, while Ophelia rides in the back, staring wordlessly at the hummingbird pendant.
CLAUDIUS

Love! His affections do not that way tend; nor what he spoke, though it lacked form a little, was not like madness. There's something in his soul, over 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, for the demand of our neglected tribute haply the seas and countries different with variable objects shall expel this something-settled matter in his heart. What think you on it?

POLONIUS

It shall do well: but yet do I believe the origin and commencement of his grief sprung from neglected love.

Polonius turns around in his seat and tells his daughter:

POLONIUS

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

Polonius turns back around in his seat and continues speaking to Claudius as if Ophelia isn’t seated behind him.

POLONIUS

My lord, do as you please; but, if you hold it fit, after the play let his queen mother all alone entreat him to show his grief: let her be round with him; and I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear of all their conference. If she find him not, to England send him, or confine him where your wisdom best shall think.

CLAUDIUS

It shall be so. Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.
INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY - BACKSTAGE (AUDITORIUM) - NIGHT - THE NEXT DAY

It is the night of the performance of the play. Hamlet stands behind a curtain leg with members of the cast of the Murder of Gonzago.

He pulls the actor dressed as a BUSINESSMAN aside.

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue 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. 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 overdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

BUSINESSMAN

I warrant your honor.

HAMLET

Go, make you ready.

INT. AUDITORIUM

Hamlet scrambles up to the lighting booth in the balcony, sitting directly behind where Ophelia, Polonius, Gertrude, and Claudius are seated. Horatio sits beside Hamlet in the lighting booth.

HAMLET

What ho! Horatio! Thou art even as just a man as ever my conversation coped withal.

HORATIO

O, my dear lord—
HAMLET

Nay, do not think I flatter. 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. 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

If he steal aught whilst this play is playing, and escape detecting, I will pay the theft.

Hamlet nods his thanks to Horatio. Claudius turns in his seat and taps on the glass. Hamlet slides the window up to talk to his uncle.

CLAUDIUS

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET

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

Claudius gives a sideways glance to Polonius.

CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

He turns to Polonius, disinterested in Claudius’ conversation.

HAMLET

You played once in the university, you say?
POLONIUS

I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

HAMLET

Be the players ready?

POLONIUS

Ay, they stay upon your patience.

Hamlet taps Ophelia’s shoulder and motions for her to sit in the booth with him. As she stands and comes to sit with him, Hamlet dims the auditorium main lights with the light board. The play begins, with an ostrich running across the stage and the dancers in flesh suits and wings running wildly across the stage in a sort of modern interpretive dance. Hamlet whispers to Ophelia:

HAMLET

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA

No, my lord.

HAMLET

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

Hamlet turns himself in his chair and lays back with his head across Ophelia’s lap.

HAMLET

Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia raises her eyebrows at him, trying not to laugh.

OPHELIA

I think nothing, my lord.
HAMLET

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

He winks.

OPHELIA

What is?

HAMLET

Nothing!

OPHELIA

You are merry, my lord!

HAMLET

Who, I?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

O God, your only 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.

OPHELIA

Nay, 'tis twice two months.

HAMLET

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?

A recording of a pleasant string quartet begins to play. Hamlet sits up in his seat and watches his uncle as the scene begins.

A student dressed as a king and another as a QUEEN enter the stage together. They look at each other fondly.
Next the king sleeps among the dancers dressed in flesh suits, as they sway around him like flowers. The businessman enters the stage, now wearing a mask, and pours poison in the king’s ear. The businessman takes the crown and kisses the queen.

PLAYER QUEEN

Such love must needs be treason in my breast: In second husband let me be accurst! None wed the second but who killed the first. The instances that second marriage move are base respects of thrift, but none of love: A second time I kill my husband dead, when second husband kisses me in bed.

BUSINESSMAN

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own: so think thou wilt no second husband wed; but die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PLAYER QUEEN

Each opposite that blanks the face of joy Meet what I would have well and it destroy! Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife, if, once a widow, ever I be wife!

Hamlet leans forward to where Gertrude sits.

HAMLET

Madam, how like you this play?

GERTRUDE

The lady protests too much, methinks.

The businessman removes the mask and speaks to the audience.

BUSINESSMAN

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!

Hamlet leans over to Ophelia and tells her:

**HAMLET**

He poisons him i' the garden for's estate. His name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and writ in choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

Claudius, overhearing this, stands, shocked.

**OPHELIA**

The King rises.

Claudius looks as if he’s going to vomit, his face blanching.

Polonius, alarmed, turns to Hamlet.

**POLONIUS**

Give over the play.

**CLAUDIUS**

(panicking)

Give me some light, away! Lights, lights, lights!

Hamlet quickly turns up the house lights. The audience looks around, confused, chattering. The actors onstage scuttle offstage, feeling exposed. Claudius stumbles out of the auditorium, Gertrude, Polonius, and Ophelia following close behind.

Hamlet and Horatio follow them, keeping a safe distance as not to be overheard.

**HAMLET**

O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?
HORATIO

Very well, my lord.

HAMLET

Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO

I did very well note him.

HAMLET

Ah, ha! Come, some music!

CUT TO:

INT. DANCE CLUB - NIGHT

The room is dark, and colored strobe lights are the only illumination of the crowd of people dancing to the MUSIC. At the front of the room is a woman with dyed-white hair singing in French to an electronic beat. The crowd is dancing wildly. Hamlet and Horatio enter the club, and join in the dancing.

Guildenstern, followed by Rosencrantz notice Hamlet and pull him into a booth along the side of the room. They must shout in order to hear each other over the music.

GUILDENSTERN

Vouchsafe me a word with you.

Hamlet leans forward in his seat, intrigued.

HAMLET

Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN

The King, sir,--

HAMLET

Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN

Is in his retirement marvelous distempered.
HAMLET

With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN

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.

Hamlet begins to leave in a frenzy, but Rosencrantz pulls him back into the booth.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

I am tame, sir: pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN

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.
GUILDENSTERN

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,--

ROSENCRANTZ

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.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. I will come to my mother by and by.

CUT TO:

INT. HAMLET’S CAR - NIGHT

Hamlet drives himself and Horatio home. Horatio stares out of the passenger side window as Hamlet mutters to himself, obsessed with exacting his revenge upon his mother.

HAMLET

Tis now the very witching time of night, when churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood, and do such bitter business as the day would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.

(MORE)
HAMLET (CONT’D)

O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever the soul of Nero enter this firm bosom: Let me be cruel, not unnatural: I will speak daggers to her, but use none; my tongue and soul in this be hypocrites; How in my words soever she be shent, to give them seals never, my soul, consent!

INT. CLAUDIUS’ OFFICE — NIGHT

Claudius sits in his swivel office chair with his back to us. He speaks to Guildenstern on the phone, on speaker. Claudius wears a deep purple bathrobe, and his sweating profusely. Though he is stressed and upset, he keeps his voice steady and businesslike when talking to Guildenstern.

CLAUDIUS

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us to let his madness range. Therefore prepare you; I your commission will forthwith dispatch, and he to England shall along with you: the terms of our estate may not endure hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow out of his lunacies.

GUILDENSTERN (V.O.)

(on the phone)

We will ourselves provide: Most holy and religious fear it is to keep those many, many bodies safe that live and feed upon your majesty.

CLAUDIUS

Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage.

GUILDENSTERN (V.O.)

(on the phone)

We will haste us.

Claudius spins around in his chair and hangs up the phone. A KNOCK on the door.
CLAUDIUS

Enter.

Polonius comes through the door, speaking as soon as he sees Claudius.

POLONIUS

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet. Behind the arras I'll convey myself, to hear the process; and warrant she'll tax him home: and, as you said, and wisely was it said, tis meet that some more audience than a mother, since nature makes them partial.

CLAUDIUS

Thanks, dear my lord.

Polonius nods and leaves Claudius alone in his office again. Claudius stands and walks in front of his desk.

CLAUDIUS

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven; It hath the primal eldest curse upon it, a brother's murder. Pray can I not, though inclination be as sharp as will: my stronger guilt defeats my strong intent. What if this cursed hand were thicker than itself with brother's blood, is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy but to confront the visage of offence?

Claudius pulls a book from his shelves, and removes a book entitled, "New York State Legislature." He flips through it, looking for a way out of the murder charge he would most definitely receive.

CLAUDIUS

What form of prayer can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'? That cannot be; since I am still possessed of those effects for which I did the murder, my crown, mine own ambition and my queen. May one be pardoned and retain the offence?
He shuts the book in frustration, throwing it across the room.

CLAUDIUS

Tis seen the wicked prize itself buys out the law: but 'tis not so above; There is no shuffling, there the action lies in his true nature; and we ourselves compelled, even to the teeth and forehead of our faults, to give in evidence. What then? what rests? Try what repentance can: what can it not? Yet what can it when one cannot repent?

Claudius turns to the window, his eyes pointed up to the sky, praying.

CLAUDIUS

Help, angels! Make assay! Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel, be soft as sinews of the newborn babe! All may be well.

He falls to his knees, crying.

Hamlet stands above him on a ledge next to the vaults. He clasps a switchblade tightly in one hand.

He contemplates whether to attack Claudius now, and exact his revenge.

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying; and now I'll do it. And so he goes to heaven; and so am I revenged. That would be scanned: A villain kills my father; and for that, I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven. O, this is hire and salary, not revenge. I then revenged, to take him in the purging of his soul, when he is fit and seasoned for his passage? No!

Hamlet clicks the blade back inside of the holder, and holds it behind his back.
HAMLET

When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed; at gaming, swearing, or about some act that has no relish of salvation in it, then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven, and that his soul may be as damned and black as hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays: This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

Hamlet swings around the railing on the ledge and slips through a small door in the wall, and out of sight.

Claudius stands, and mutters to himself:

CLAUDIUS

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below: words without thoughts never to heaven go.

He sits back in his chair, fully composed, and leans back, closing his eyes and sleeping.

INT. GERTRUDE’S CLOSET – NIGHT

Gertrude stands in the middle of a vast walk-in closet, with shoes and dresses lining the walls in neat order. All the dresses seem to be either black or white, with the occasional gold item.

Polonius peeks his head from between a group of long dresses.

POLONIUS

He will come straight. Look you lay home to him: Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with, and that your grace hath screened and stood between much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here. Pray you, be round with him.

Polonius slips back behind the dresses as Hamlet calls from the hallway.

HAMLET (O.S.)

Mother, mother, mother!
GERTRUDE

I hear him coming!

Hamlet opens the door to the closet and leans on the doorframe, skeptical.

HAMLET

Now, mother, what’s the matter?

GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET

Mother, you have my father much offended.

GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

GERTRUDE

Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET

What's the matter now?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

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

GERTRUDE

Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.
Hamlet pulls the switchblade from behind his back and points it at Gertrude threateningly.

**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!

Gertrude backs into the group of dresses where Polonius is hidden. Her eyes are wide and horrified, laughing nervously.

**GERTRUDE**

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

**POLONIUS**

(from behind the dresses)

What, ho! Help, help, help!

Polonius attempts to jump out from behind the dresses, but is caught in the fabric. Polonius thrashes around wildly, grabbing out at Gertrude, who looks grateful for his presence. Hamlet turns toward the figure behind the dresses, murderous and smiling.

**HAMLET**

How now! A rat?

(begins stabbing Polonius and shouting)

Dead, for a ducat, dead!

Gertrude shoves Hamlet away from the dresses. He falls on the ground, his eyes still wild.

**GERTRUDE**

O me, what hast thou done?

**HAMLET**

Is it the King?

Gertrude pulls open the arras of dresses.
GERTRUDE

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Polonius falls through the dresses, limp and near-death. Blood covers his white suit and all the white dresses around him.

POLONIUS

(wheezing; shuddering)

I am slain.

Polonius coughs violently, then goes still, his eyes glazing over as life leaves his body.

Hamlet is stunned as he discovers who he’s just killed. He gets up and kicks Polonius’ corpse, more upset with his own actions than with Polonius.

HAMLET

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! I took thee for thy better! Take thy fortune, thou find’st to be too busy is some danger.

(he turns to his mother)

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, if damned custom have not brassed it so that it is proof and bulwark against sense.

GERTRUDE

(still in shock)

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

HAMLET

Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty, calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose from the fair forehead of an innocent love and sets a blister there.

(MORE)
HAMLET (CONT’D)

Who 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: heaven's face doth glow: yea, this solidity and compound mass, with tristful visage, as against the doom, is thought-sick at the act.

Hamlet sits on the floor, his hands holding his head. He speaks quietly, dangerously.

HAMLET

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 mildewed ear, blasting his wholesome brother.

(now shouting)

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? What devil was it that thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind? Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight, ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all, or but a sickly part of one true sense could not so mope. O shame! Where is thy blush? Rebellious hell, if thou canst mutine in a matron's bones, to flaming youth let virtue be as wax, and melt in her own fire--

Gertrude turns away from Hamlet, exasperated and shaking.

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, stewed in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty--

Gertrude bursts into tears, covering her eyes with one hand turning her back to camera.

GERTRUDE

O, speak to me no more, these words, like daggers, enter mine ears!

(turning back to Hamlet; stroking his face)

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; that from a shelf the precious diadem stole, and put it in his pocket---

GERTRUDE

No more!

HAMLET

A King of shreds and patches--

The ghost of Hamlet King appears in front of Hamlet, and Hamlet stops speaking for a moment, in awe and grief.

HAMLET

Save me, and hover over me with your wings, you heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

Gertrude cannot see the ghost.

GERTRUDE

Alas, he’s mad!
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: Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works: Speak to her, Hamlet.

Hamlet spins to face his mother, and forces a smile.

HAMLET

How is it with you, lady?

GERTRUDE

Alas, how is't with you, that you do bend your eye on vacancy and with the incorporeal air do hold discourse? O gentle son, upon the heat and flame of thy distemper sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

HAMLET

(pointing to the ghost)

On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!

CLOSE ON GHOST’S EYES

BACK TO SCENE

HAMLET

Do you see nothing there?

GERTRUDE

No, nothing at all, yet all that is I see.

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!

The ghost hovers backwards, and dissolves.
ON GERTRUDE

GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Ecstasy! My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time, and makes as healthful music: it is not madness that I have uttered.

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: but go not to mine uncle's bed; assume a virtue, if you have it not.

(points to Polonius' dead body)

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 will bestow him, and will answer well the death I gave him. So, again, good night. I must be cruel, only to be kind: thus bad begins and worse remains behind.

(grabs Polonius arm and drags the body to the door)

I'll lug the guts into the neighbor room.

(places hand on the doorknob)

I must to England, you know that?

GERTRUDE

I had forgot, tis concluded on.
HAMLET

There’s letters sealed---

CUT TO:

EXT. ELSINORE MANSION - DRIVeway - THE NEXT DAY

Hamlet climbs into the backseat of a car, driven by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, suitcases beside him.

INSERT - ENVELOPE

A sealed envelope from Claudius to the friends in England.

HAMLET (V.O.)

---my two schoolfellows, whom I will trust as I will adders fanged, they bear the mandate; they must sweep my way, and marshal me to knavery.

CUT TO:

EXT. JFK AIRPORT

Hamlet, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern bring their luggage across the sidewalk and through the revolving doors.

INT. JFK AIRPORT

The three stand in a short line to board the flight.

INSERT - A FLIGHT NEWS BOARD

In electronic lettering, the board reads: “FLIGHT 485 TO: LONDON, ENGLAND”

BACK TO SCENE

Hamlet hands his ticket to an elderly female flight attendant—white haired, uptight, 70s—and walks into the jet bridge and onto—

INT. PLANE

A barely-booked flight, with a few upper class executives who are already reading paperwork, typing on laptops, and talking on Bluetooth headsets.
Hamlet sits by a window, and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pile in next to him, knocking their bags into several passengers as they walk to their seat.

During this sequence, Hamlet’s voice says:

HAMLET (V.O.)

Let it work; for 'tis the sport to have the engineer hoist with his own petard: and it shall go hard but I will delve one yard below their mines, and blow them at the moon: O, 'tis most sweet, when in one line two crafts directly meet. This man shall set me packing.

Hamlet draws a hummingbird on a cocktail napkin in remembrance of Ophelia.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Uncomfortable white leather furniture. Claudius and a distant Gertrude sit across from each other on opposite sofas.

CLAUDIUS

Where is your son?

GERTRUDE

Gone from this place a little while.

CLAUDIUS

How does Hamlet?

GERTRUDE

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend which is the mightier: in his lawless fit, behind the arras hearing something stir, whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat!' and, in this brainish apprehension, kills the unseen good old man!

Claudius stands in disbelief.
CLAUDIUS

O heavy deed! It had been so with us, had we been there! O Gertrude, come away! The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch, and this vile deed we must both countenance and excuse.

Claudius dials his phone.

CLAUDIUS

Ho, Guildenstern!

CUT TO:

INT. ENGLAND HOTEL – EVENING

An ordinary hotel room, with 2 queen-sized beds, a window, and hideous drapes. Hamlet sits cross-legged, facing the closed drapes. Guildenstern sits on one of the beds, and answers the phone.

GUILDENSTERN

Yes, my King.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)

(on phone)

Go join you with some further aid: Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain, and from his mother's closet hath he dragged him: Go seek him out; speak fair.

GUILDENSTERN

As you wish.

Guildenstern hangs up the phone.

ON HAMLET: His eyes are closed, and he tries to steady his breaths. In the background, we see Guildenstern whisper Claudius' instructions to Rosencrantz.

ROSENCRANTZ

Hamlet!

Hamlet’s head snaps around wildly.
HAMLET
What noise? Who calls on Hamlet?

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

HAMLET
Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROSENCRANTZ
Tell us where 'tis, that your parents may take it thence and bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET
Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ
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?

ROSENCRANTZ
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.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing—

GUILDENSTERN

A thing, my lord!

HAMLET

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

Rosencrantz snatches the phone from Guildenstern and dials.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - LIVING ROOM

Claudius picks up the phone, eager for good news.

CLAUDIUS

How now! What hath befallen?

ROSENCRANTZ (V.O.)

(on phone)

Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord, we cannot get from him.

CLAUDIUS

Bring him before me.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGLAND HOTEL

Rosencrantz hands the phone, now displaying Claudius’ close-up face in a skype call, to Hamlet.
Hamlet sets the phone facing him on the hotel room desk, disinterested.

CLAUDIUS

(on video)

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

Claudius drops his phone, and the video shakes around wildly.

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.

CLAUDIUS

Alas, alas!

HAMLET

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

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.
INT. ELSINORE MANSION - LIVING ROOM

Claudius stands, phone in hand, and addresses a servant dusting the fireplace nearby (30s, long sideburns, stiff posture).

CLAUDIUS

Go seek him there.

The servant rushes to find the body.

HAMLET

(on video)

He will stay until ye come.

Claudius looks back into the phone at Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS

Everything is bent for England.

HAMLET

Good.

CLAUDIUS

(to himself)

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

CUT TO:

INT. ENGLAND HOTEL

Hamlet pretends not to hear Claudius. He passive-aggressively ends the conversation.

HAMLET

Farewell, dear mother.

CLAUDIUS

(on video)

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 presses the “END CALL” button on the phone screen.

A beat. The phone rings, and Rosencrantz picks it up.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - LIVING ROOM

Claudius now holds the phone at his ear. On the opposite side of the room, medical personnel carry the dead body of Polonius on a stretcher.

CLAUDIUS

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard; Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night. Away! for everything is seal'd and done that else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.

ROSENCRANTZ (V.O.)

Ay, my lord.

Claudius hangs up the phone. He sits on one of the sofas and watches the medical crews, muttering to himself and rubbing a toothpick in between his teeth.

CLAUDIUS

(sotto voice)

By letters congruing to that effect, the present death of Hamlet. Do it, England; for like the hectic in my blood he rages, and thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done, however my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

The toothpick snaps.

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS COURTHOUSE - DAY

Henry Fortinbras Jr. exits the front doors of the courthouse, met with a flurry of reporters and lawyers and onlookers.
FORTINBRAS’ POV
Cameras flashing, reporters shouting questions.

PRESS CAMERA POV
Along the bottom of the screen reads the headline, “NORWAY MEADOWS’ LANDOWNER SECURES POLAND SUBURBS IN COURT CASE”

Fortinbras silences the press with a raise of his hand. He takes a microphone from a feeble-looking young reporter nearby and speaks into camera threateningly.

FORTINBRAS
Go, captain, from me greet that Danish King. Tell him that, by his licence, Fortinbras craves the conveyance of a promised march over his kingdom.

BACK TO SCENE
Laertes gets out of a car a short way from the courthouse. He notices the swarm of people and grabs a passing female pedestrian (50s, magenta hair, frequent jogger) by the arm.

LAERTES
Whose powers are these?

PEDESTRIAN
They are of Norway, sir.

LAERTES
How purposed?

PEDESTRIAN
Against some part of Poland.

LAERTES
Who commands them?

PEDESTRIAN
The nephews to old Norway, Fortinbras.

The pedestrian wrenches her arm from Laertes’ grip and continues jogging away from the courthouse.
LAERTES’ POV

A newspaper dispenser along the side of the road.

INSERT – NEWSPAPER

The headline reads: “LOCAL DRAMA TEACHER DIES AFTER UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT”

BACK TO SCENE

A distraught Laertes bends to take a closer look at the article without purchasing a paper.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. ENGLAND HOTEL – BATHROOM

Hamlet, whose eyes give away his lack of sleep, stands in front of a condensation-coated bathroom mirror at his distorted reflection, leaning over the sink counter for support.

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.

(clearing the condensation to reveal his face in the mirror)

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, 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.

Hamlet’s phone buzzes in his pocket.
ON THE SCREEN:

A news alert reading, “VIDEO: FORTINBRAS SECURES POLAND SUBURBS IN COURT”

Hamlet opens the notification, and the video of Fortinbras speaking to camera plays on the screen.

BACK TO SCENE

HAMLET

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 puffed 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 honor's at the stake.

He slams his phone on the counter, it cracks.

HAMLET

How stand I then--

(looking at his own reflection again)

--that have a father killed, a mother stained, excitements of my reason and my blood, and let all sleep, while, to my shame, I see men, that, for a fantasy and trick of fame, fight for a plot whereon the numbers cannot try the cause?

(punches the mirror)

O, from this time forth, my thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

He studies his broken knuckles, breathing heavily, wincing from the pain.
EXT. ELSINORE MANSION - DAY - ESTABLISHING

A perfect spring day, May flowers, the whole world is smiling.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - CELLAR

From the dark bottom of a water-stained cement staircase, a door at the top of the stairs swings open, flooding the cellar with light. Gertrude, led by Horatio and a girl (mid-teens, auburn braid, hands behind her back) stand in the light.

The girl gestures for Gertrude to go downstairs. Gertrude shakes her head, and steps back.

GERTRUDE

I will not speak with her.

GIRL

She is importunate, indeed distract. Her mood will needs be pitied.

GERTRUDE

What would she have?

GIRL

She speaks much of her father; says she hears there's tricks in the world; and hems, and beats her heart; spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt that carry but half sense: her speech is nothing, yet the unshaped use of it doth move the hearers to collection; they aim at it, and botch the words up fit to their own thoughts; which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them, indeed would make one think there might be thought, though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

HORATIO

'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.
Gertrude opens her mouth to argue, but submits, and instead stalks down the stairs.

**OPHELIA (O.S.)**

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

Gertrude’s eyes widen in horror at the sight of Ophelia.

**GERTRUDE**

How now, Ophelia!

**DOWN ANGLE - OPHelia**

Ophelia (sporting an old t-shirt and pajama pants, pale and sickly) sits on the cement cellar floor, tying knots in a piece of old rope.

Ophelia lies on her back, not noticing her visitors.

**ON CELLAR WINDOW**

It’s been opened from the outside, Ophelia clearly broke into the cellar.

**BACK TO SCENE**

Ophelia starts to sing.

**OPHELIA**

“How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff,
And his sandal shoon.”

Gertrude bends down to console Ophelia.

**GERTRUDE**

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

Ophelia doesn’t notice Gertrude, and speaks to no one in particular, distracted.

**OPHELIA**

Say you, nay, pray you, mark.

(singing)

(MORE)
OPHELIA (CONT’D)

“He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.”

Claudius’ footsteps can be heard coming down the stairs. Gertrude addresses him as he enters the shot, standing.

GERTRUDE

Alas, look here, my lord.

OPHELIA

“White his shroud as the mountain snow,  
Larded with sweet flowers  
Which bewept to the grave did go  
With true-love showers.”

Claudius squats next to Ophelia.

CLAUDIUS

(as if he’s speaking to a small child)

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA

(alooof)

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

CLAUDIUS

Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA

“Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,  
And dupped the chamber-door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.  
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.”
OPHELIA (CONT’D)

“So would I ha’ done, by yonder sun, 
An thou hadst not come to my bed.”

CLAUDIUS

(to Gertrude)

How long hath she been thus?

Gertrude shakes her head slightly: How should I know?

OPHELIA

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

(stands; shouts out the window; starts climbing out of the window)

Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night.

Ophelia has successfully climbed out.

Claudius turns quickly to Horatio.

CLAUDIUS

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

Horatio nods and bolts up the stairs.

Gertrude and Claudius follow him at a slower pace into--

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – KITCHEN

Three kitchen staff (a cook and two assistants) work in white uniforms with black pinstriped aprons. They don’t hear their employers’ conversation.

MOVING WITH CLAUDIUS AND GERTRUDE

Claudius laments what Polonius’ could do to their current social status.
CLAUDIUS

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs all from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude, when sorrows come, they come not single spies but in battalions. First, her father slain. Next, your son gone; and he most violent author of his own just remove: the people muddied, thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers, for good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly, in hugger-mugger to inter him. Poor Ophelia, divided from herself and her fair judgment, without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts.

Claudius and Gertrude pass into the next room—

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – LIVING ROOM

The flat-screen wall tv is already on.

ON THE SCREEN

Laertes is being interviewed by a blonde woman with a large nose. The headline caption reads: “SON OF DRAMA TEACHER CALLS FOR INVESTIGATION AGAINST CLAUDIUS KING”

BACK TO SCENE

Claudius takes note of this broadcast, and says:

CLAUDIUS

Last, and as much containing as all these, her brother is in secret come from France; feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds, and wants not buzzers to infect his ear with pestilent speeches of his father's death; wherein necessity, of matter beggared, will nothing stick our person to arraign in ear and ear.

(embracing his wife)

O my dear Gertrude, this, like to a murdering-piece, in many places gives me superfluous death.
THE SHOUTS OF A CROWD suddenly echo through the mostly-silent house.

Gertrude pulls Claudius off of her and stands, ready for battle.

GERTRUDE

Alack, what noise is this?

A YOUNG SERVANT (20s, petite) enters the room, frazzled.

CLAUDIUS

What is the matter?

YOUNG SERVANT

Save yourself, my lord: young Laertes, in a riotous head, overbears your officers. The rabble call him lord; and, as the world were now but to begin, antiquity forgot, custom not known, the ratifiers and props of every word, they cry “Choose we: Laertes shall be king!”

Claudius blanches.

CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – ATRIUM

The front door has been wrenched from its hinges, and Laertes stands between the two staircases with about ten PROTESTERS, who hold signs which say things like, “JUSTICE FOR LAERTES” and “AVENGE POLONIUS.”

LAERTES

Where is King?

(to the protesters)

Sirs, stands you all without.

PROTESTER #1

No, let’s come in.

LAERTES

I pray you, give me leave.
PROTESTER #2

We will, we will.

He grabs the Protester #1 by the arm, and leads the party back outside through the doorway.

Laertes walks upstairs with purpose.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – LIVING ROOM

Laertes storms into the room.

LAERTES

O thou, vile King, give me my father!

Claudius stands and turns to face Laertes. Gertrude holds a hand up to her husband and approaches Laertes.

GERTRUDE

(placing a comforting hand on Laertes’ arm)

Calmly, good Laertes.

Laertes shakes off Gertrude’s touch.

LAERTES

That drop of blood that’s calm proclaims me bastard, cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow of my true mother.

CLAUDIUS

What is the cause, Laertes, that thy rebellion looks so giant-like? Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person. Tell me, Laertes, why thou art thus incensed.

LAERTES

Where is my father?

CLAUDIUS

Dead.
GERTRUDE
(pleading)
But not by him!

CLAUDIUS
(almost too calm)
Let him demand his fill.

Laertes pushes past Gertrude and gets in Claudius’ face.

LAERTES
How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with: to hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil! Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! I dare damnation. To this point I stand, that both the worlds I give to negligence, let come what comes; only I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father.

CLAUDIUS
I am guiltless of your father’s death, and am most sensible in grief for it. It shall as level to your judgement pierce as day does to your eye.

A COMMOTION in the front yard. Claudius opens the blinds to investigate.

CLAUDIUS’ POV
Ophelia runs around the protesters like a bat out of Hades. A worn-out Horatio chases after her into the mansion.

BACK TO SCENE

LAERTES
What noise is that?

A feral Ophelia runs into the room, twigs and brambles stuck in her hair, and belly-flops onto one of the sofas.

Laertes rushes over to his sister, embracing her.
LAERTES

O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt, burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye! By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight, till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May! Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! O heavens! Is't possible, a young maid's wits should be as moral as an old man's life?

Ophelia slips out of her brother’s embrace and falls off of the couch, remaining on the floor as she sings.

OPHELIA

"They bore him barefaced on the bier; Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny; And in his grave rained many a tear—"

(noticing Laertes; not recognizing him)

Fare you well, my dove!

LAERTES

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge, it could not move thus.

Ophelia bolts up, and pulls a twig from her hair, smiling at it.

OPHELIA

There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance, pray, love, remember.

(pulling out another twig; sotto)

And there is pansies, that’s for thoughts.

LAERTES

(feeling the loss who his sister once was)

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Ophelia stands and begins handing twigs to people.
OPHELIA

(hands Claudius a twig)
There’s fennel for you, and columbines.

(hands Gertrude another)
There’s rue for you—

(pulls one from her hair; clutches it to her chest)
And here’s some for me! We may call it herb-grace of Sundays. O you must wear rue with a difference.

(hands Horatio a twig)
There’s a daisy.

(beat)
I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. They say he made a good end...

Her voice trails off, and she starts muttering nonsense to herself.

LAERTES

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself. She turns to favor and to prettiness.

ON OPHELIA

OPHELIA

(quickly; muttering; sing-song voice)
And will he not come again? And will he not come again? No, no, he is dead, go to thy death-bed. He will never come again.

She sits cross-legged, facing the wall.
LAERTES

(incredulous)

Do you see this, O God?

CLAUDIUS

(sitting next to Laertes; comforting him)

Laertes, I must commune with your grief. Go but apart, make choice of whom your wisest friends you will. And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me: If by direct or by collateral hand they find us touched, we will our kingdom give, our crown, our life, and all that we can ours, to you in satisfaction; but if not, be you content to lend your patience to us, and we shall jointly labour with your soul to give it due content.

LAERTES

(agitated)

Let this be so; his means of death, his obscure funeral—No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones, no noble rite nor formal ostentation—cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth, that I must call it in question.

CLAUDIUS

So you shall; and where the offence is let the great axe fall.

INT. POLONIUS’ HOUSE – EVENING – OPHELIA’S BEDROOM

A teenage girl’s bedroom featuring large pop-art canvases of Marilyn Monroe, Madonna, and Rosie the Riveter. Fairy lights hang along the walls. A music stand and a cello, surrounded by a mess of sheet music and rock-stops, sit in a corner. A twin-size bed at the other side of the room.

Ophelia appears to be asleep in her bed, and Horatio closes the door, having finished his duty of making sure that she’s alright.
As soon as he leaves, her eyes open slowly, and she cries.

She stands and walks onto the—

EXT. POLONIUS’ HOUSE – BALCONY

Ophelia looks into her backyard, down at the azure waters of the in-ground pool below. She tries to wipe her tears away and pull herself together, but continues to sob.

EXT. POLONIUS’ HOUSE – FRONT PATH

Horatio walks down the white stone path leading from the front door into the street.

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – LUNCHROOM – THE NEXT DAY

A collegiate-looking lunchroom, with tall windows and dark-toned wood paneling, is full of students eating lunch at long tables.

On an interior windowsill sits Horatio, his face buried in a book. He now wears dark-rimmed reading glasses.

A STUDENT approaches Horatio and taps him on the shoulder. She says something inaudible to him, and he quickly takes his glasses off and stows his book in his backpack. He follows her out of the lunchroom.

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – HALLWAY

The student opens a door, and Horatio follows. As it closes, we see the title plate in the middle of the door.

INSERT – TITLE PLATE

The plate reads: “INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OFFICE.”

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OFFICE

Flags from every nation hang from the ceiling. A receptionist sits behind a blue desk, focused on her blue computer screen. Horatio is sitting in a red armchair next to the student.

HORATIO

What are they that would speak with me?
STUDENT

Sailor, sir. He says he has letters for you.

HORATIO

(to himself)

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

VOICE (O.S.)

Let them come in.

Horatio and the student stand, and walk into a smaller office next to the receptionist’s desk. Opposite them sits a plain, clean-shaven administrator with a nametag introducing him as GEOFFREY SAILOR, the head of foreign exchange. Sailor gestures for Horatio and the student to sit down.

SAILOR

There's a letter for you, sir; it comes from the ambassador that was bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

Horatio nods, leaning forward in his chair, intrigued. Sailor digs around in his desk before finding a crumpled piece of notebook paper and handing it to Horatio.

INSERT - HAMLET’S LETTER TO HORATIO

HORATIO (O.S.)

(reading)

Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the King; they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at SEA---

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. S.E.A. FESTIVAL - DAY

In a large park, a banner hangs from two trees over a path reading: “S.E.A.: SMIDWORTH ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS FESTIVAL.”
Along the path are different booths displaying sculptures, pop art, abstract pieces, and photography. A musician (20s, dreadlocks, exotic eye makeup) plays the cello (the Dvorak Cello Concerto in B Minor) in the middle of the path, and people stand around her, listening and placing money in her open case.

Hamlet walks along the path with a very intoxicated Rosencrantz and Guildenstern following a few paces behind. Hamlet stops and listens to the cellist for a moment, remembering Ophelia.

Hamlet becomes paranoid for a moment, and turns his head over his shoulder as inconspicuously as possible. Over his shoulder, a man wearing a skull & crossbones t-shirt is watching Hamlet menacingly.

Hamlet quickly leads Rosencrantz and Guildenstern down the path, in between two booths, and across the park into some woods. A van pulls up behind them, and the man and his cronies jump out, attacking Hamlet and the others.

**HAMLET (V.O.)**

(continuing his own words from the letter to Horatio)

—a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. We put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded them—

Hamlet sneaks away from Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are waving their arms around aimlessly (Guildenstern vomits on one of the men), and jumps into the back of the van.

**HAMLET (V.O.)**

--so I alone became their prisoner.

**INT. PIRATE VAN**

Skull-and-crossbones hops into the drivers’ seat as his friends follow. Hamlet realizes he is outnumbered, and starts to manipulate them into letting him live. He appears to be describing murdering Polonius as leverage. The men are impressed.
HAMLET (V.O.)

They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am.

EXT. S.E.A. FESTIVAL

Rosencrantz shouts for Hamlet in the crowd, dragging a stumbling, vomit-covered Guildenstern with him. Guildenstern trips over a stake which is holding an exhibition tent down, and his head goes through a painting’s canvas.

HAMLET (V.O.)

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course in England. Of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. He that thou knowest thine, Hamlet.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OFFICE

Horatio looks up from the letter and addresses Sailor.

HORATIO

Come, I will make you way for these your letters, and do’t the speedier, that you may direct me to him from whom you brought them.

Sailor nods, digs around in his desk for a moment, and pulls out a few more crumpled pieces of paper. Sailor opens his laptop and begins typing as Horatio stands to assist him in delivering Hamlet’s message to Claudius.
INT. ELSINORE MANSION – CLAUDIUS’ OFFICE – DAY

Claudius and Laertes sit in front of the window playing chess. Claudius, drinking wine, is trying to make Laertes more interested in the game, but Laertes is constantly checking his phone and being generally disinterested in hanging out with this grown man.

CLAUDIUS

Now must your conscience my acquaintance seal, and you must put me in your heart for friend, for he which hath your noble father slain pursued my life.

LAERTES

(shrugs)

It well appears. But tell me why you proceeded not against these feats, so crimeful and capital in nature.

CLAUDIUS

O, for two special reasons: The queen his mother lives almost by his looks; and for myself--my virtue or my plague, be it either which--she's so conjunctive to my life and soul. The other motive is the great love the general gender bear him, who, dipping all his faults in their affection, work like the spring that turneth wood to stone.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost, a sister driven into desperate terms, but my revenge will come.

He knocks a few pieces onto the floor in his bloodthirsty excitement.

CLAUDIUS

Break not your sleeps for that. You shortly shall hear more. I loved your father, and we love ourself, and that, I hope, will teach you to imagine---
Claudius’ phone pings.

CLAUDIUS

(eager to see if something horrible has happened to Hamlet)

How now! What news?

Laertes stands to see what the message says.

LAERTES

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS

From Hamlet? Who brought them?

Claudius and Laertes squint at the email.

“FROM: SAILOR, GEOFFREY. SUBJECT: LETTERS FROM HAMLET.”

Claudius and Laertes study what Hamlet has sent. Claudius starts to perspire, rubbing his brow in sudden anxiety. They scan the email.

“...I am set naked on your kingdom...”

Laertes takes a sharp breath in.

“...I shall beg leave to see your kingly eyes...”

Claudius sets his phone down on the table, disappointed.

LAERTES

I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come; it warms the very sickness in my heart, that I shall live and tell him to his teeth: “Thus diest thou.”

CLAUDIUS

(carefully; manipulating)

If it be so, Laertes, as how should it be so? how otherwise? Will you be ruled by me?
LAERTES

Ay, so you will not overrule me to a peace.

CLAUDIUS

I will work him to an exploit, now ripe in my device, under the which he shall not choose but fall: and for his death no wind of blame shall breathe, but even his mother shall uncharge the practice and call it accident.

LAERTES

If you could devise it so that I could be the organ.

CLAUDIUS

(smiles; grips Laertes’ shoulder in approval)

It falls right. You have been talk’d of since your travel much, and that in Hamlet’s hearing, for a quality wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts did not together pluck such envy from him as did that one, and that, in my regard, of the unworthiest siege.

LAERTES

What part is that?

CLAUDIUS

(sits; moves a pawn)

Here was a gentleman of Normandy I've seen myself--this gallant had witchcraft in it. He grew unto his seat, he topped my thought, that I, in forgery of shapes and tricks, come short of what he did.

LAERTES

A Norman, was it?
CLAUDIUS
A Norman.

LAERTES
Upon my life—Lamord!

CLAUDIUS
The very same.

LAERTES
I know him well! He is the brooch indeed and gem of all the nation.

CLAUDIUS
He made a confession of you, that it would be a sight indeed if he could match you. Those of their nation, he swore, had neither motion, guard, nor eye if you opposed them.

(takes a long drink of wine)

This report of his did Hamlet so envenom with his envy that he could nothing do but wish and beg your sudden coming over to play with you.

LAERTES
What out of this, my lord?

CLAUDIUS
Was your father dear to you?

LAERTES
(taken aback)

Why ask you this?

CLAUDIUS
Not that I think you did not love your father, but that I know love is begun by time and that I see, in passages of proof, time qualifies the spark and fire of it.

(MORE)
CLAUDIUS (CONT’D)

That we would do we should do when we would, for this “would” changes. What would you undertake to show yourself indeed your father’s son more than in words?

LAERTES

(without much thought)
To cut his throat in the church.

CLAUDIUS

Revenge should have no bounds. Will you do this, keep close within your chamber. Hamlet returned shall know you are come home. We'll put on those shall praise your excellence bring you in fine together and wager on your heads: he, being remiss, most generous and free from all contriving, will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease, or with a little shuffling---

(removes a switchblade from his pocket; hands it to Laertes)

---you may choose a sword unbated, and in a pass of practice, requite him for your father.

LAERTES

(studying the blade)
I will do it. And, for that purpose, I’ll anoint my sword with an unction of a mounteback, so mortal that, but dip a knife in it, if I gall him slightly, it may be death.
CLAUDIUS

(paces; conniving)

Let’s further think of this. If this should fail...

(a beat)

I have it.

(rushes over to his desk; searches through drawers; mad with excitement)

When in your motion you are hot and dry, make your bouts more violent to that end. He calls for drink, I'll have prepared him a chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping, if he by chance escape your venomed stuck, our purpose may hold there.

He removes a small vile of poison, identical to the one he used on Hamlet’s father.

Suddenly, the door bursts open, and Gertrude rushes into the room, surprised and shaken.

Claudius quickly slips the vile into his pocket.

CLAUDIUS

How now, sweet queen!

GERTRUDE

(voice shaking)

One woe doth treat on another’s heel! So fast they follow! Your sister’s drowned, Laertes!

Laertes is horrified. He begins to sweat, his upper lip trembles.

LAERTES

(a beat)

Drowned? O, where?
GERTRUDE

There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke; when down her weedy trophies and herself fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide, and, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up, which time she chanted snatches of old tunes, as one incapable of her own distress, or like a creature native and indued unto that element: but long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with their drink, pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay to muddy death.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. POLONIUS HOUSE – POOL

SERIES OF SHOTS

Ophelia’s body lies face down in the middle of the pool. Her body floats along, her clothes ballooning around her like a parachute.

Police and EMTs arrive.

Ophelia’s corpse is removed from the pool.

EXT. POLONIUS’ HOUSE – EVENING

Police and medical personnel are crowded around the house. Laertes stands with his hand over his mouth, trembling violently as EMTs roll Ophelia’s dead corpse in a body bag past him on a stretcher. Gertrude and Claudius stand with him for moral support.

LAERTES

Alas, then, she is drowned?

GERTRUDE

(covers her mouth; shakes her head)

Drowned, drowned!
LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, and therefore I...

(swallowing a sob)

...forbid my tears.

Ophelia’s body is loaded into the back of an ambulance. Laertes wanders toward the ambulance, staring blankly at it.

CLAUDIUS

Let’s follow, Gertrude. How much I had to do to calm his rage! Now fear I this will give it start again...

He and Gertrude follow Laertes and stand with him as the ambulance drives away.

CUT TO:

INT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – AUDITORIUM – LIGHTING BOOTH

The door to the lighting booth opens, and Horatio steps in. Hamlet, who has been sleeping in a sleeping bag beneath the lighting board, stands and embraces him. Both are elated in their reunion.

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS GRAVEYARD – MORNING

Two women in overalls sit in a backhoe. Their faces are shaded with dirt and suntan. GRAVEDIGGER #2 has her feet resting on the dash, her dark hair is tied in a knot on her head. GRAVEDIGGER #1 is operating the machine, shaggy brown hair blowing in her eyes.

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Is she to be buried in Christian burial that willfully seeks her own salvation?

GRAVEDIGGER #2

I tell thee she is: and therefore make her grave straight.
GRAVEDIGGER #1
How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

GRAVEDIGGER #2
Why, 'tis found so.

GRAVEDIGGER #1
It must be 'se offendendo;' it cannot be else.

GRAVEDIGGER #2
Nay, but hear you---

Horatio and Hamlet walk together from the woods, talking. Hamlet laughs loudly at something Horatio said, his face red.

GRAVEDIGGER #1 (O.S.)
Give me leave. Here lies the water; good: here stands the man; good; if the man go to this water, and drown himself, it is, will he, nill he, he goes,—mark you that; but if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

(finishes digging with the backhoe)

Go, get thee in, fetch me a stoup of liquor.

Gravedigger #2 hops out of the backhoe and runs off to the small hut at the edge of the graveyard. Gravedigger #1 rests her feet up on the other seat and sings to herself.

GRAVEDIGGER #1

“In youth, when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet,
To contract, the time, my behove
Methought there was nothing meet.”
Hamlet and Horatio are finally within earshot of the gravedigger’s singing.

HAMLET

(muttering to Horatio)

Has this lady no feeling of her business, that she sings at grave-making?

HORATIO

Custom hath made it in her a property of easiness.

Hamlet notices some skulls poking out from the freshly-made grave.

HAMLET

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. Did these bones cost no more than the breeding but to play at loggets with them? Mine ache to think on it...

The gravedigger’s singing makes Hamlet wince in annoyance.

HAMLET

(noticing another skull)

There’s another! Why may not that be a skull of a lawyer? Hum, this fellow might be in his time a great buyer of land, with his statues, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries.

(to the gravedigger)

Whose grave’s this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

(smiling at her own wit)

Mine, sir.

She continues singing to herself.

HAMLET

How long hast thou been a grave-maker?
GRAVEDIGGER #1

Of all the days in the year, I came to it that day that our last King, Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

HAMLET

How long is that since?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

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.

HAMLET

Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

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

HAMLET

Why?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

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

She hops from the backhoe to speak with the two boys.

HAMLET

How came he mad?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET

How strangely?

GRAVEDIGGER #1

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.
HAMLET
Upon what ground?

GRAVEDIGGER #1
Why, here in Denmark: I have been sexton here thirty years.

(picking up an oddly-shaped skull from the pile of dirt created by the backhoe)

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

HAMLET
Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER #1
A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

HAMLET
Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER #1
This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, King's jester.

HAMLET
This?

GRAVEDIGGER #1
Even that.

HAMLET
Let me see.

(takes the skull)

Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio: a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy: he hath borne me on his back a thousand times.

(MORE)
HAMLET (CONT’D)

And now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rims 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?

Hamlet sets the skull back in the dirt pile thoughtfully.

VOICES ECHO across the graveyard. Hamlet turns to see who they could be.

HAMLET’S POV

A PRIEST leads mourners who carry a casket, including Laertes, Claudius, Gertrude, and the girl, Ophelia’s friend.

HAMLET

But soft! Here comes the King. Who is this they follow?

(pulls Horatio behind a gravestone; hiding)

Couch we awhile, and mark.

LAERTES (O.S.)

What ceremony else?

HAMLET

That is Laertes, a very noble youth, mark.

Laertes continues badgering the priest.

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

The casket is lowered into the grave.
PRIEST

Her death was doubtful. Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her. Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants, her maiden strewments and the bringing home of bell and burial.

LAERTES

(furious)

I tell the, churlish priest, a ministering angel shall my sister me, when thou liest howling!

Hamlet’s eyes widen, his world is falling apart.

HAMLET

What, the fair Ophelia?

Gertrude begins scattering flowers on the casket.

GERTRUDE

Sweets to the sweet: farewell! I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife...

LAERTES

O, treble woe fall ten times treble on that cursed head, whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense deprived thee of!

Laertes leaps into the grave and throws open the casket. The mourners gasp in horror. Laertes holds Ophelia’s dead body close to him, stroking her hair.

LAERTES

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead, till of this flat a mountain you have made, to overtop old Pelion, or the skyish head of blue Olympus.

Hamlet cannot hide himself any longer, and shaking with rage and grief, makes his presence known.
HAMLET

What is he whose grief bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand like wonder-wounded hearers?

A murderous Laertes emerges from the grave.

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

Laertes punches Hamlet in the face. Hamlet recoils, spitting blood at Laertes’ feet. Laertes launches himself at Hamlet, attempting to strangle him.

HAMLET

Take thy fingers from my throat!

CLAUDIUS

(pointing at the fighting boys; to the mourners)

Pluck them asunder!

GERTRUDE

Hamlet! Hamlet!

HORATIO

(emerging from behind the gravestone; pulling Laertes off of Hamlet)

Good my lord, be quiet!

Hamlet gasps for air, hyperventilating.

HAMLET

(pointing a finger at Laertes menacingly)

Why, I will fight with him upon this theme until my eyelids will no longer wag!

GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?
Hamlet falls to his knees next to Ophelia’s grave and stares down at her corpse.

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia: forty thousand brothers could not, with all their quantity of love, make up my sum.

(to Laertes)

What wilt thou do for her?

CLAUDIUS

O, he is mad, Laertes.

GERTRUDE

(exasperated)

For the love of God, forbear him.

Hamlet stands and begins taunting Laertes.

HAMLET

Show me what thou'lt do: Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself? Woo't drink up eisel? 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.

GERTRUDE

This is mere madness: and thus awhile the fit will work on him; anon, as patient as the female dove, when that her golden couplets are disclosed, his silence will sit drooping.
HAMLET

Hear you, sir; what is the reason that you use me thus? I loved you ever: but it is no matter; let Hercules himself do what he may, the cat will mew and dog will have his day.

Hamlet gives one last look on Ophelia’s dead body, and walks away from the mourning party, Horatio following him close behind.

Claudius approaches the seething Laertes cautiously.

CLAUDIUS

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech. We'll put the matter to the present push.

(to Gertrude)

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son. This grave shall have a living monument: An hour of quiet shortly shall we see, till then, in patience our proceeding be.

The mourners take turns throwing dirt on the casket.

Laertes throws the last shovelful of dirt, and finally, he weeps for the losses he’s suffered.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – HAMLET’S QUARTERS – EVENING – THE SAME DAY

Hamlet and Horatio sit on the couch together, watching a black and white film. Each of them holds a bottle of white liquor, drinking. Hamlet’s eyes are red with grief.

HAMLET

You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO

Remember it?
HAMLET

Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well, when our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us there's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will---

HORATIO

That is most certain.

HAMLET

---out from my cabin, in the dark groped I to find out them, had my desire.

CUT TO:

INT. ENGLAND HOTEL - MORNING - A FEW DAYS EARLIER

Hamlet is alone in the hotel room, lying in bed. A piece of blue cardstock poking out of Rosencrantz’ suitcase catches his eye. Hamlet picks up the piece of paper and reads it.

HAMLET (V.O.)

My fears forgetting manners, I unsealed their grand commission; where I found, Horatio--O royal knavery!--an exact command, larded with many several sorts of reasons importing Denmark's health and England's too, with, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life, that, on the supervise, no leisure bated, my head should be struck off.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. ELSINORE MANSION - HAMLET’S QUARTERS

Resume the previous scene. Horatio’s eyes widen in surprise.

HORATIO

Is it possible?

Hamlet stands and pulls the paper from the luggage strewn across his bed.
HAMLET

Here’s the commission. Read it at more leisure.

(set the paper on the coffee table)

But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO

(taking a long drink)

I beseech you.

HAMLET

Being thus be-netted round with villanies,--ere I could make a prologue to my brains, they had begun the play--I sat me down, devised a new commission, wrote it fair.

(pompous; mocking)

An earnest conjuration from the king, as England was his faithful tributary, as love between them like the palm might flourish, as peace should stiff her wheaten garland wear---on the view and knowing of these contents---

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. ENGLAND HOTEL - THE DAY OF HAMLET’S ESCAPE

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern stand outside the hotel, wearing S.E.A. Festival merchandise. Guildenstern hands a blue piece of cardstock (nearly identical to the one in the bag) to a man wearing all black (who has the physical build of an assassin). Rosencrantz says something to the man, looking back over his shoulder in paranoia. The man nods, and pulls out a gun with a silencer attached to the end, showing it to Rosencrantz. Rosencrantz nods in approval.

The man holds the gun to Rosencrantz head forehead and shoots him dead. Before Guildenstern has time to react, a bullet has gone through his forehead too.

The man gets into a dark sports car, and speeds away.
HAMLET (V.O.)

Without debatement further, more or less, he should the bearers put to sudden death, not shriving-time allowed.

INT. ELSINORE MANSION – HAMLET’S QUARTERS

Horatio sets his drink down.

HORATIO

(disappointed)

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to it.

HAMLET

(seeing he’s let his friend down)

Why, man, they did make love to this employment. They are not near my conscience, their defeat does by their own insinuation grow!

HORATIO

Why, what a King is this?

HAMLET

Does it not, stand me now upon he that hath killed my king and whored my mother, to quit him with this arm?

HORATIO

It must be shortly known to him from England what is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET

It will be short. But I am very sorry, good Horatio, that to Laertes I forgot myself. The bravery of his grief did put me into a towering passion...

A KNOCK at the door. Hamlet and Horatio quickly hide the liquor under the sofa cushions.
HORATIO

Peace! Who comes here?

Bernardo enters the room, wearing a raccoon-skin hat, and
hugs Hamlet in greeting.

BERNARDO

Your lordship is right welcome back to
Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir.

BERNARDO

I should impart a thing to you from the
King.

HAMLET

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

BERNARDO

(removing his hat)

I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

HAMLET

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

BERNARDO

(putting his hat back on)

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

Horatio snorts.

HAMLET

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

(removing his hat again)

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.

(speaking quickly)

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

What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

HORATIO

His purse is empty already, all’s golden words are spent.

Bernardo opens and shuts his mouth, looking for a reply.

BERNARDO

(sputtering)

I know 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.

BERNARDO

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?

BERANARDO

A dagger. The King, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses: against the which he has imponed.

HAMLET

Why is this imponed?

BERNARDO

He 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'?

BERNARDO

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

HAMLET

(in false homage of Claudius)

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

BERNARDO

I commend my duty to you.

(starts to leave; turns back around)

The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.
HAMLET

(waving Bernardo away)

She well instructs me.

Bernardo nods to him and leads the room. Horatio immediately grabs Hamlet and begins to plead with him.

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, Hamlet.

HAMLET

(not really listening to him)

I do not think so: since he went into France, I have been in continual practice: I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart: but it is no matter.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord!

HAMLET

It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HORATIO

If your mind dislike any thing, obey it: I will forestall their repair hither, and say you are not fit.

HAMLET

Not a whit, we defy augury: 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. The readiness is all.

Hamlet’s phone buzzes on the coffee table, and he picks it up. He reads the text.
"LAERTES: Come to the tennis courts, if thou art willing."

Hamlet shows Horatio the text, and they both stand. Hamlet picks up his switchblade and puts it in his pocket on their way out of the room.

EXT. DENMARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY – TENNIS COURTS – NIGHT

The lights around the court switch on, illuminating site for the mock-fight between Hamlet and Laertes. The gate opens and Hamlet, Laertes, Claudius, Horatio, Gertrude, Bernardo, and various onlookers enter the court. Hamlet and Laertes stand opposite each other, with Claudius between them, in the middle of one side of the court. The onlookers stand on the other side of the net.

CLAUDIUS

(taking Hamlet’s hand in one hand, and Laertes’ hand in the other)

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

Hamlet takes Laertes’ hand in both of his.

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong. But pardon it, as you are a gentleman. This presence knows, and you must needs have heard, how I am punished with sore distraction. What I have done, that might your nature, honor and exception roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Hamlet lets go of Laertes’ hand.

LAERTES

(still bitter)

I am satisfied in nature, whose motive, in this case, should stir me most to my revenge: but in my terms of honor I stand aloof; and will no reconcilement.
HAMLET

I embrace it freely, and will this brother’s wager frankly play.

Laertes and Hamlet remove their switchblades from their pockets, the blades are not extended from inside the handle.

CLAUDIUS

Cousin Hamlet, you know the wager?

HAMLET

Very well, my lord, your grace hath laid the odds on the weaker side.

Laertes weighs his switchblade in his hand.

LAERTES

(to Claudius)

This is too heavy, let me see another.

Claudius hands Laertes his own switchblade from his pocket. Laertes releases the blade and examines it. It glows slightly green with poison in the light. The blade slips back into the handle, which has a small “C” engraved in the end.

LAERTES

This likes me well.

CLAUDIUS

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire. The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath! Come, begin!

Claudius steps away from the pair, and they point their mock-blades at each other.

HAMLET

(mocking)

Come on, sir.
LAERTES

Come, my lord.

For a moment, they stand a small distance from each other, before Hamlet punches Laertes in the jaw. Laertes stumbles backward, and kicks Hamlet’s feet out from under him. Hamlet stands and dodges a swipe from Laertes’ blade, then sticks Laertes in the side with his own mock-blade.

BERNARDO

(cheering)

A hit! A very palpable hit!

Laertes wipes the blood from his split lip, and gets back into position.

LAERTES

Well, again.

Claudius raises his hands up to stop the fight momentarily. He motions to one of the onlookers.

CLAUDIUS

Stay, give me drink.

An onlooker passes a bottle of champagne to him.

CLAUDIUS

(holding up the champagne bottle)

Here’s to thy health!

The onlookers applaud, and Hamlet looks unimpressed. As the crowd cheers, Claudius pours the vile of poison into the bottle, all while shielding his actions with his overcoat.

CLAUDIUS

(hands the bottle to Horatio)

Give him the cup.

He motions toward Hamlet.
HAMLET
I’ll play this bout first, set it by awhile.

(to Laertes)
Come.

Claudius sets the bottle of champagne on the ground.

Laertes takes a swing at Hamlet with his blade, and Hamlet dodges it, retaliating with a swing of his fist at Laertes’ stomach. Laertes gasps for air for a moment, swinging his blade around aimlessly. Hamlet takes this opportunity to swing with his blade at Laertes. It touches Laertes’ chest.

HAMLET
Another hit, what say you?

LAERTES

CLAUDIUS

(to Gertrude)
Our son shall win!

Gertrude pulls a towel from her purse.

GERTRUDE

He’s scant of breath. Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.

Hamlet takes the towel and rubs the sweat from his face.

Gertrude picks up the bottle of champagne, and holds it up in a toast.

GERTRUDE

I carouse to thy fortune, Hamlet!
CLAUDIUS

(panicked; grabs Gertrude’s arm; tries to play it off as mild concern)

Gertrude, do not drink.

GERTRUDE

(slightly aggravated)

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

Gertrude holds the bottle to her mouth and takes a large swig. Claudius turns white in horror.

CLAUDIUS

(turning away; to himself)

It is the poisoned cup. It is too late.

Gertrude holds the bottle out to Hamlet, but he shakes his head.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam.

GERTRUDE

Come, let me wipe thy face.

Gertrude takes the towel back from Hamlet and uses it to scrub the remaining sweat from his face.

LAERTES

(to Claudius; in reassurance)

My lord, I’ll hit him now.

CLAUDIUS

(snaps at him)

I do not think it.
LAERTES

(returning to his position; to himself)

And yet tis almost against my conscience.

Hamlet returns to his position, now overly confident.

HAMLET

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

LAERTES

(taunting him)

Say you so? Come on.

Laertes punches Hamlet in the stomach, then knees him in the groin. While Hamlet is doubled over, Laertes exposes the blade on his knife and slashes Hamlet’s arm. Hamlet, furious at Laertes’ will to cheat and use the blade, releases his own blade from the handle. They make a few swings at each other, until Hamlet elbows Laertes in the stomach, and they both drop their knives.

The blades fall so close together that they aren’t aware when they swap blades. It is clear that Hamlet has grabbed the blade with the “C” engraved on the handle.

LAERTES

Have at you now!

Hamlet punches Laertes in the face, then slashes Laertes in the stomach, cutting Laertes’ shirt open and revealing a large, bleeding gash.

CLAUDIUS

Part them! They are incensed!

HAMLET

Nay! Come, again.

Hamlet beckons Laertes to stand and continue to fight him.
Suddenly Gertrude falls to the ground, foaming at the mouth and gagging. Blood pours from her eyes and nose. Hamlet drops his dagger and rushes to his mother.

GERTRUDE

(gasping)

The drink! The drink! O my dear Hamlet, I am poisoned.

Gertrude’s head swings to the side as life leaves her body. Hamlet stands, his mother’s blood all over his hands.

HAMLET

O villainy! Treachery! Seek it out!

LAERTES (O.S.)

It is here, Hamlet.

Hamlet turns to see Laertes standing slowly, holding his stomach.

LAERTES

Hamlet, thou art slain. No medicine in the world can do thee good. In thee there is not half an hour of life.

(pointing to the switchblade Hamlet had dropped)

The treacherous instrument, unbated and envenomed. The foul practice hath turn’d itself on me lo, here I lie, never to rise again: thy mother's poisoned. I can no more.

(turning toward Claudius; in defiance)

The King, the King's to blame.

Hamlet picks up the dagger, examining it.
HAMLET
(emotionless)

The point, envenomed too. Then, venom, to thy work.

Hamlet turns to Claudius and stabs him in the stomach. Claudius gasps in pain and falls to his knees, looking around helplessly at the onlookers.

CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

(spits in Claudius’ face)

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, drink off this potion.

(grabs the bottle of champagne; forces the rest of it down Claudius’ throat)

Is thy union here? Follow my mother.

He slits Claudius’ throat. Blood falls like a sheet from the cut, and Claudius falls forward, his face smashing into the tennis court, dead. Blood continues to pool around his head and body.

Hamlet drops the knife, his hands shaking. The poison has finally caught up with him. Tears run down his cheeks as he realizes his life is over.

Laertes coughs blood onto the tennis court. A few onlookers are holding his upper body up.

LAERTES

(smiling through the pain)

He is justly served. It is a poison tempered by himself. Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father’s death come not upon thee, nor thine on me.
Hamlet drags his own body over to Laertes, and nods, agreeing to forgive him.

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it!

Hamlet holds one of Laertes’ hands as Laertes shakes violently and gasps for air, taking his last breaths. His head rolls forward, dead.

HAMLET

(looks sadly at Laertes’ corpse)

I follow thee.

Hamlet lets go of Laertes’ hand, and struggles to stand. Horatio helps him up, and helps him walk to the edge of the court.

HAMLET

I am dead, Horatio.

They pass Gertrude’s dead body, which was laid out next to Claudius’ on the court. Horatio picks up the bottle of champagne.

HAMLET

Wretched queen, adieu! 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 and Hamlet reach the edge of the court, and Horatio helps the weakened Hamlet sit against the fence.

HAMLET

Horatio, I am dead, thou livest. Report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied.

HORATIO

Never believe it. I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

(MORE)
HORATIO (CONT’D)

(pulling out the bottle of champagne)

Here’s yet some liquor left.

Some onlookers have begun to watch Hamlet’s final minutes.

HAMLET

(looking up fondly at Horatio)

As thou'rt a man, give me the cup, I'll have't. O good Horatio, what a wounded name, things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me! If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart absent thee from felicity awhile, and in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain, to tell my story.

Hamlet holds the bottle up in toast to Horatio before draining the remaining contents.

Off in the distance, a crowd of PROTESTERS marches toward the tennis courts from around the school.

PROTESTERS

(from far away; chanting)

Fortinbras! Fortinbras! Fortinbras!

HAMLET

What warlike noise is this?

BERNARDO

Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland, gives this warlike volley.

Hamlet starts coughing violently into his hand, and when he’s stopped, his hand is soaked with his own blood.

HORATIO

(crying)

O, I die, Horatio! The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit.
HAMLET (CONT’D)

I cannot live to hear the news, but I do prophesy the election lights on Fortinbras. He has my dying voice, so tell him, with the occurrents, more and less, which have solicited.

(starts shaking violently; grips Horatio for support; chokes out his last words)

The rest is silence.

Horatio holds Hamlet’s body as he dies. Horatio looks down at his dead friend and cries.

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart.

(closing Hamlet’s eyelids)

Good night, sweet prince. And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

The protesters are now visible in the lights of the tennis court, and it is clear that they are following Fortinbras. Fortinbras holds his hands up to cease their shouting.

Fortinbras takes in the violent sight, and looks at Horatio, who still holds dead Hamlet in his arms.

FORTINBRAS

Where is this sight?

HORATIO

What is it ye would see? If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

FORTINBRAS

This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death, what feast is toward in thine eternal cell, that thou so many princes at a shot so bloodily hast struck?

A LAWYER of Fortinbras steps forward, dressed in a dark suit and carrying a briefcase, and adds:
LAWYER

The sight is dismal, and our affairs from England come too late. The ears are senseless that should give us hearing, to tell him his commandment is fulfilled, that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead. Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO

(determined to carry out Hamlet’s final request)

Not from his mouth, had it the ability of life to thank you. He never gave commandment for their death. But since, so jump upon this bloody question, are here arrived give order that these bodies high on a stage be placed to the view, and let me speak to the yet unknowing world how these things came about. So shall you hear of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts, of accidental judgments, casual slaughters, of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause, and, in this upshot, purposes mistook fallen on the inventors’ reads. All this can I truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS

(diss dismissive)

Let us haste to hear it, and call the noblest to the audience. For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune. I have some rights of memory in this kingdom, which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

Horatio lays Hamlet’s body down gently, and stands.

HORATIO

Of that I shall have also cause to speak, and from his mouth whose voice will draw on more. But let this same be presently performed, even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance on plots and errors, happen.
Fortinbras beckons the protesters.

**FORTINBRAS**

Let four captains bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage. For he was likely, had he been put on, to have proved most royally, and, for his passage, the soldiers’ music speaks loudly for him.

Ambulances pull up, and medical technicians run in with stretchers to remove the bodies from the tennis court. Policemen put up crime scene tape.

Horatio stands in the middle of the court as Hamlet’s body is taken away. All the people around him are running, moving bodies and talking to detectives, but he stands still, silent and alone.

CUT TO BLACK.

END CREDITS