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## **Cast of Characters**

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark

HAMLET, son of the late King, nephew to the new King

POLONIUS, Lord Chamberlain

HORATIO, friend to Hamlet

LAERTES, son to Polonius

VANDEGUARDE

CORNELIUS

GHOST of Hamlet's father

GERTRUDE, Hamlet's mother, Queen of Denmark

OPHELIA, daughter of Polonius

BERNARDO, guard

FRANCISCO, guard

MARCELLUS, guard

VAMPIRE

OLD MAID

MAN

KNIGHT

SQUIRE

YOUNG FORTINBRAS OF NORWAY

COURTIERS

GUARDS

# CANNED HAMLET

## by Tim Kochenderfer

### Scene 1

*(A guard platform at night. Enter BERNARDO and FRANCISCO.)*

**BERNARDO.** Who's there?

**FRANCISCO.** Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold thyself.

**BERNARDO.** I'm sorry, I don't speak Elizabethan English.

**FRANCISCO.** I wasn't talking to you Bernardo, I was talking to Ambidextri the contortionist. He's tied himself into a knot and refuses to take my post for me.

**BERNARDO.** I'll take your post for you. It's past twelve, get thee to bed Francisco.

**FRANCISCO.** Who are you, my mother?

**BERNARDO.** What?

**FRANCISCO.** Who do you think you are telling me when to go to bed? I'll go to bed whenever I want!

**BERNARDO.** I just...

**FRANCISCO.** Maybe I want to stay up a little longer. Maybe I still have things I want to do.

**BERNARDO.** Like what?! This is medieval Denmark! I thought you...

**FRANCISCO.** You don't think I can handle it do you? You don't think I can guard past midnight. Well I've got news for you, I'm going to stay up all night and guard this place like it's never been guarded before, and you can't stop me!

**BERNARDO.** Fine, suit yourself.

*(The two stand at post for a couple of seconds. FRANCISCO nods off and starts to snore.)*

Francisco? Francisco!

**FRANCISCO.** (*Snores abruptly:*) Huh... wha... buenos noches. Uh... leave me alone.

(*He goes back to sleep. Enter MARCELLUS and HORATIO.*)

**MARCELLUS.** Hello good Bernardo, how farest thou?

**BERNARDO.** I'm sorry, what?

**MARCELLUS.** How doest thoust fare?

**BERNARDO.** I don't understand.

**MARCELLUS.** How are you doing?

**BERNARDO.** Oh, how am I doing? Fine, fine. I've just taken over Francisco's post for him. Is that Horatio I see?

**MARCELLUS.** Aye.

**BERNARDO.** You're Horatio?

**MARCELLUS.** No this is Horatio.

**HORATIO.** Hello.

**MARCELLUS.** Has the thing appeared again tonight?

**BERNARDO.** What thing?

(*Sleeping FRANCISCO falls off the platform, others don't notice.*)

**MARCELLUS.** The ghost.

**BERNARDO.** Oh right, the ghost. Not yet.

**MARCELLUS.** Horatio thinks it's all in our imaginations, but he has no idea what we have witnessed.

**HORATIO.** (*Sarcastically:*) If that ghost doesn't show up maybe a couple of goblins will.

**MARCELLUS.** Don't pay attention to him Bernardo, we know what we saw.

**HORATIO.** Oh look, I think I see some leprechauns and fairies over there!

**MARCELLUS.** You'll be sorry you're ridiculing us!

**HORATIO.** Oh look, some witches flew by, and I think I see a zombie over there. You guys are right, this place is spooky!

**MARCELLUS.** Shut up! I'm warning you...

**HORATIO.** Marcellus, you can't expect me to believe that a ghost just keeps appearing before you guys. I really think it's all in your heads. It's quite ridiculous, the next thing I know you'll be seeing little trolls and midgets running around.

**BERNARDO.** Actually Horatio, there are such things as midgets.

**HORATIO.** See what I mean? You two have overactive imaginations. If you believe in things like ghosts and midgets you're bound to start seeing them.

**BERNARDO.** We did see a ghost last night. It was just past the stroke of one...

*(Enter GHOST. The GHOST looks really fake, like a person with a sheet over his body and holes cut out for the eyes and mouth.)*

**GHOST.** BOOOOOOOO!!!!!!!

*(MARCELLUS and BERNARDO jump.)*

**MARCELLUS.** See how horrible it is!

**BERNARDO.** He looks just like the dead King!

**HORATIO.** He does not! He looks like a person with a sheet over his body and holes cut out for the eyes and the mouth.

**MARCELLUS.** Horatio, have thee no fear?! A ghost whose figure echoes the dead King and you still doubt its existence?

**HORATIO.** It's not a ghost, it's just a person with a sheet over his body. Ah look, it's still got the tags on its sheets. I'll take care of that for him.

*(He walks towards GHOST.)*

**MARCELLUS and BERNARDO.** Horatio! No!

**HORATIO.** Come here Ghosty!

*(HORATIO walks up to the GHOST and rips off the sheet. There is another sheet under that sheet. Takes second sheet off, there is still another sheet under that sheet.)*

**GHOST.** BOO!

**HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO.** Ahhhh!

*(HORATIO runs back.)*

**MARCELLUS.** Now you've done it! We're all dead men! Horatio, tell it that you're sorry.

**HORATIO.** *(To GHOST:)* What art thou that wanderest through the night like an insomniactic rooster waiting to wake up the hen house?

*(BERNARDO and MARCELLUS just stare at HORATIO.)*

**BERNARDO.** What a stupid simile.

**MARCELLUS.** Look, you've made the ghost angry. He's leaving!

**HORATIO.** Wait! Speak! I pray thee speak!

*(Exit GHOST.)*

**BERNARDO.** It's gone.

**MARCELLUS.** Still don't believe us, Horatio?

**MARCELLUS.** What's the matter, too frightened to speak?

*(Enter GHOST.)*

**BERNARDO.** Look, it returns!

*(GHOST walks over, stares at the three men and grabs the sheets off the ground and exits again.)*

**MARCELLUS.** Dare you now deny that you saw a ghost, Horatio?

**HORATIO.** I did see a ghost, and look over there, a vampire!

**BERNARDO.** Horatio, you saw a ghost with your own two eyes and you still carry on with the sarcasm?!

**HORATIO.** I do see a vampire! Oh wait, I think that's a shrub. That ghost did indeed bear the King's likeness. That look on his face was

the same look his Highness would always carry with him in battle. Perhaps he came to give some sort of warning.

**MARCELLUS.** Hey, I think I see the vampire.

**BERNARDO.** (*To HORATIO:*) What kind of message would the dead King have for us?

**HORATIO.** As you know, his son, the young Prince Hamlet, did in battle slay Fortinbras of Norway and acquire several miles of Norwegian land. Word has it that the son of Fortinbras seeks revenge upon Denmark. Perhaps the ghost seeks to warn us about an attack!

**MARCELLUS.** Good sirs, the vampire's getting closer!

**HORATIO.** Marcellus please! Come Bernardo, we must tell Lord Hamlet of the unforgettable events we have witnessed tonight.

*(The two exit. VAMPIRE sneaks up from behind MARCELLUS. He speaks with a Transylvanian accent.)*

**VAMPIRE.** Good evening.

**MARCELLUS.** (*Whips head around:*) Wha...

*(VAMPIRE lifts cape up over MARCELLUS, making a hissing sound. Lights fade out.)*

**Scene 2**

*(The Castle. Enter KING, POLONIUS, QUEEN, CORNELIUS, VANDEGUARDE, LAERTES, HAMLET, and several GUARDS.)*

**KING.** *(Addressing everyone from the throne:)* Lords, Ladies, although we still grieve the death of a great King, Hamlet's father, and my dear brother, I believe we as a nation must move on. The physicians tell us that he died from eating a tomato. O if only he had been more schooled in modern science he would have known that tomatoes are deadly poisonous. I know this is especially hard on you, young Hamlet, but if it's any consolation I'm sure your father is much happier being dead than he would be if he were still alive. The King himself confided in me that his life was not worth living and he hated being King. "Claudius," he told me, "I hope I die, and I hope I die soon; and, if you could find it in your heart, please marry my wife shortly after my death." All of these requests I have fulfilled for my dear brother. Today we find ourselves facing a different concern. Word has reached me that young Fortinbras is on his way to Denmark with several hundred troops to regain his lands. *(To CORNELIUS and VANDEGUARDE:)* Cornelius, Vandeguarde, deliver this message to young Fortinbras. Tell him that he had better not get cocky, our troops are already stationed on Sumptor ridge waiting to surprise him and the Norwegians before they can even get to us.

**CORNELIUS and VANDEGUARDE.** Yes sir, in this and in all things we show our duty.

*(Exit CORNELIUS and VANDEGUARDE.)*

**KING.** And as to the question of national security, let no citizen go without rest...

**POLONIUS.** Uhh...your Highness?

**KING.** Yes good Polonius?

**POLONIUS.** You just sent Cornelius and Vandeguarde to give our secret battle plans away to the Norwegians.

**KING.** What?! Oh dear. Guards, after Cornelius and Vandeguarde. I want them destroyed. Last thing we need are traitorous subjects

giving our secret battle plans away. (*Turning to LAERTES:*) Ah, my beloved Laertes, thou hast been a great aide to me. Is there anything I can grant thee?

**LAERTES.** Um... (*Looks uncomfortably at POLONIUS:*) ...yes I guess. I returned to Denmark for your crowning, and if it would please you, I'd like permission to return to my schooling in France.

**KING.** Is it all right with your father? Polonius?

**POLONIUS.** Yes your Highness. I will miss him dearly, but he begged me to go back, and, well, they've got to grow up sometime.

**KING.** And what are you learning in school, young Laertes?

**LAERTES.** (*Stares for a second:*) What? Um... philosophy... and... um...

**KING.** What kind of philosophy?

**LAERTES.** Um... look, I don't really want to go back to school, I'm not learning...

**POLONIUS.** (*Interrupts:*) Whoa, you've had a long day, you better start packing.

(*POLONIUS escorts LAERTES to the door.*)

Come son, we'll get thee started. Good day, sire.

**KING.** Good day, Polonius.

(*Exit POLONIUS and LAERTES.*)

Hamlet my nephew, my son, why the long face?

**HAMLET.** I'm upset about the death of my father.

**KING.** No, I mean why does your face seem to be so much longer in length than other people's?

(*HAMLET looks up, offended.*)

**QUEEN.** Hamlet, you mustn't get so down about your father's death. People die all the time. Why just the other day I was talking to Lady Margaret when she was run over and killed by a chariot—a Roman chariot! Can you believe that? What's a Roman chariot

doing all the way out in Denmark? Anyway sweetie, people die all the time, it's just something you have to get used to.

**KING.** Yes, and to help you adapt to that fact I have arranged a little demonstration. (*Yells to GUARD:*) You there! Yes you! Slay that guard to the right of you, in the King's name I demand it!

*(GUARD pulls out his sword and kills the GUARD to his right. HAMLET looks disgusted.)*

See, that wasn't so bad. Hamlet, you mustn't let people see you mourning like this, what will they think of you?

**HAMLET.** Am I the only person concerned with my father's death? Why is it that the two of you show no remorse over his passing?

**KING.** Whoa, one o'clock! (*To QUEEN:*) Come Sweetie, 'tis Denmarkian tea time.

*(Exit KING and QUEEN.)*

**HAMLET.** O that this sullied flesh would melt from my body and set me free. The foul, incestuous stench that infests this castle burns my nostrils to the bone.

*(GUARDS in background look at each other disgustedly.)*

O the air seems to be filled with the flies of conspiracy. The walls seem to be crawling with the maggots of treason.

**GUARD #1.** Sick!

*(Other GUARDS look like they are going to throw up.)*

**HAMLET.** My chest has been ripped open and my bloody, dripping, still-beating heart has been torn out.

*(GUARDS are getting sicker.)*

**GUARD #2.** Oh come on Hamlet, you're making us sick!

**HAMLET.** My guts have been slowly wrenched from the depths of my stomach...

*(GUARDS are getting sicker by the second.)*

**GUARD #3.** Ah, we just ate!

**HAMLET.** Happier would I be if my flesh would melt like cheese from my bones.

*(GUARDS now on the ground with nausea.)*

**GUARD #2.** Oh man, I had melted cheese for lunch!

**HAMLET.** Why is it that my mother, not even one month after the death of my father, marries that vile incestuous worm I call uncle?

*(GUARDS are doubled over.)*

Damn those adulterous sheets that ooze the puss of treachery!

**GUARD #1.** That's it, we're outta here!

*(GUARDS exit. Enter HORATIO and BERNARDO.)*

**HORATIO.** Hail to you good Lord Hamlet!

**HAMLET.** My good friend Horatio, seeing your face makes the sun shine upon my heart like a...uh...big burning rock in outer space shining...um...oh never mind. Bernardo, 'tis good to see you. Where's Marcellus?

**BERNARDO.** That I don't know good sir, we haven't seen him since last night.

**HAMLET.** What brings the two of you here this morning?

**HORATIO.** Lord Hamlet, we have urgent news to tell you that just couldn't wait to be told.

**HAMLET.** Well then, I prithee thee, tell me at once.

**HORATIO.** Prithee, sir?

**HAMLET.** I'm sorry, please tell me at once.

**HORATIO.** Tell you what, sir?

**GHOST.** The urgent news you couldn't wait to tell me.

**HORATIO.** Right, I have urgent news for you that is so urgent that it could not wait another day to be told.

*(The two stand there and don't say anything for a second.)*

**HAMLET.** Yes Horatio, the news?

**HORATIO.** Ah, the urgent news. Last night I...um...I uh I...what was I going to say? That's right, the other night I...no that's not it. What was the important news? Do you remember, Bernardo?

**BERNARDO.** How could I forget. It happened around one in the morning. Horatio, Marcellus, and I...

**HORATIO.** (*Interrupting:*) Never mind, I got it, I remember! 'Twas last night, the clock had just struck one when... uh... um... when... Oh I don't remember. Must not have been that important.

**BERNARDO.** But sirs, on the contrary...

**HAMLET.** 'Tis no matter, you'll remember good Horatio.

**HORATIO.** Is something bothering you sir?

**HAMLET.** Horatio, you attended the funeral of my father. Does it not seem odd to you that my mother, not even after one month of being a widow, should fall in love with my uncle so soon?

**HORATIO.** Does seem rather speedy sir.

**HAMLET.** O that my father were seeing this...

**HORATIO.** That's it, I remember!

**HAMLET.** Remember what?

**HORATIO.** The urgent news I had to tell you. Last night after the stroke of one, Bernardo, Marcellus and...uh...the...person...uh...

*(Looks away and stares off into space.)*

**HAMLET.** Horatio?

**BERNARDO.** Sir Hamlet, if I may, I remember every detail of what Horatio is trying to tell you. 'Twas last night, around the stroke of one, Horatio, Marcellus and...

**HORATIO.** (*Interrupting:*) Let me tell him Bernardo. 'Twas last night around the stroke of one, Bernardo in his gown and I in my cap, had just settled down for a long winter's nap, when out on the lawn there arose such a clatter...

**BERNARDO.** Horatio, that's not it!

**HAMLET.** 'Tis no matter. Better to tell me at another time when I am not so stricken. Right now all I see is my father's eyes lighting up in anger...

**HORATIO and BERNARDO.** AHHHH!!

**HORATIO.** Where do you see him my lord?

**HAMLET.** In my mind.

**HORATIO.** That's it! I remember! Last night Bernardo, Marcellus, and I witnessed your father's spirit appearing before us. You must believe us sir, we wouldn't jest about such matters.

**HAMLET.** Where did you see it?

**HORATIO.** While we were guarding the west platform he did appear before us with a look of battle in his eyes. I saw him for myself my lord, he looked just like your father. He had the same face, same pale skin, same soft features, everything!

**HAMLET.** Did you speak to it?

**HORATIO.** Yes.

**HAMLET.** Well, what did it say?

**HORATIO.** It said, um, it said...oh boy...it uh...

**HAMLET.** Horatio this is no time for memory lapses!

**HORATIO.** I know sir, I know, it's just um...uh. Wait, I remember!

**HAMLET.** What did it say?

**HORATIO.** *(With pride in his voice for remembering:)* It said boo!

**HAMLET.** Boo?

**HORATIO and BERNARDO.** *(Startled:)* AHH!!

**HORATIO.** Sir you mustn't do that, you sound too much like your father.

**HAMLET.** Boo is what it said?

**HORATIO.** By my grave I swear it!

**BERNARDO.** And mine sir!

**HAMLET.** (*Thinking:*) Boo...

**HORATIO and BERNARDO.** (*Startled:*) AHH!!

**HORATIO.** My liege, please!

**HAMLET.** Sorry. You must take me to see this thing for myself good sirs. If it be my father I must speak to it at once.

**HORATIO.** As you wish Lord Hamlet, we shall go to the west platform tonight.

(BERNARDO and HORATIO *exit.*)

**HAMLET.** My father's spirit up in arms? Something is wrong.  
O were it not that this day were so long,  
As the sun doth set and the moon doth rise,  
I shall bear witness to this spirit with mine own eyes.

(*Lights start to fade out.*)

Hey that rhymes!

(*Exits.*)

### Scene 3

(*A room. Enter LAERTES and his sister OPHELIA.*)

**LAERTES.** How art thou, dear Ophelia?

**OPHELIA.** Distressed over Hamlet, sweet brother.

**LAERTES.** And how is that, my sister?

**OPHELIA.** My feelings for Hamlet are confused, like the flight paths of a June bug; sometimes they seem to make sense, but mostly they just seem to smash themselves into doors and drill themselves into the ground for no good reason. O dear brother, thou hast been to the university, please share your wisdom and advise me as to what course I should plot with Hamlet.

**LAERTES.** Ophelia, I don't think that's such a good idea. To be honest with you, I haven't really learned anything at the...

**OPHELIA.** O good brother, do not hide from me the great knowledge which thou hast acquired at the university. I beg thee, share thine advice in my time of need.

**LAERTES.** Well, all right I guess. Um, well, ah, a man is like a...like a fish, he can swim upstream or he can swim downstream. Swimming upstream is a lot harder than...oh boy, that's no good. Um, a man is like um, like a horse, except for a man has two legs instead of four, but he does have arms.

*(OPHELIA looks confused but she is listening intently. Enter POLONIUS.)*

**POLONIUS.** Laertes shouldn't you be packing right now? You have to depart in the morning.

**LAERTES.** But Father, why send me back to that place? I'm not learning anything!

**POLONIUS.** You're not learning anything because you're not trying.

**LAERTES.** I am trying Father, I just can't understand a word they say. They don't speak English there.

**POLONIUS.** *(Doesn't believe LAERTES:)* They don't speak English? And what language, pray tell, do they speak in France?

**LAERTES.** French.

**POLONIUS.** *(Sarcastically:)* Of course, I guess it only makes sense. Any other tall tales you'd like to tell me?

**LAERTES.** They aren't tales Father, they do speak a different language. The word "we" for example, doesn't mean "you and I" in France. Guess what it means.

**POLONIUS.** Enlighten me.

**LAERTES.** It means "yes."

**POLONIUS.** Well if you're going to pull one leg why not pull both? Laertes I will not take anymore of these lies! Now return to your packing!

**LAERTES.** But Father...

**POLONIUS.** Return to your packing!

*(Exit LAERTES, frustrated.)*

What seems to be troubling you, sweet daughter?

**OPHELIA.** My feelings for Lord Hamlet. I feel that he is right for me, and he has indeed treated me sweetly, but lately he seems withdrawn.

**POLONIUS.** Sweetness means nothing, dear Ophelia.

**OPHELIA.** What should I do, dear Father?

**POLONIUS.** If a woman really wants a man she must play hard to get. That's how your mother won me over.

**OPHELIA.** Really?

**POLONIUS.** No, not really. Actually your mother won me in a bet. She bet me five gold shillings that I couldn't marry her. Well, she had another thing coming. By the end of the day I was five gold shillings richer, but for some reason I don't feel like I won. *(Pauses contemplatively.)*

**OPHELIA.** O Father, you are so wise! I shall visit Hamlet first thing in the morning. I thank thee for thy sweet advice.

*(Lights fade.)*

#### **Scene 4**

*(A guard platform at night. Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and BERNARDO.)*

**HAMLET.** This air has a bitterness to it that reminds me of fresh raspberries in the morning dew.

*(Everyone stares at HAMLET confused.)*

Really bitter raspberries that is.

**HORATIO.** 'Tis a quarter past twelve.

*(Enter MARCELLUS looking like a vampire.)*

**MARCELLUS.** *(With a Transylvanian accent:)* Good evening.

**HORATIO.** Marcellus, how farest thou?

**BERNARDO.** Where hast thou been? We haven't seen thee since last night.

**MARCELLUS.** Let's just say I've been flying around—much like a bat, ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

**HAMLET.** *(To HORATIO:)* I don't remember Marcellus having an accent.

**HORATIO.** Who knows with him?

**HAMLET.** If the King doth wake tonight I shall inquire...

*(While HAMLET is saying this, MARCELLUS is sneaking up from behind him trying to take a bite out of his neck when BERNARDO takes out a clove of garlic and goes to take a bite. MARCELLUS falls back terrified.)*

**HORATIO.** Bernardo what art thou doing?

**BERNARDO.** I just brought something along to munch on.

**HAMLET.** A piece of garlic?

**HORATIO.** Yuck!

**BERNARDO.** To each his own, okay? I don't expect you guys to eat it. Besides, it keeps the vampires away.

**HAMLET.** Vampires?

**BERNARDO.** Yes, vampires. You get bitten by one of those suckers you're a vampire for life!

**HORATIO.** There are no vampires out here Bernardo.

**HAMLET.** Just put the garlic away, it's disgusting.

**MARCELLUS.** Yes, please put it away!

**BERNARDO.** Fine!

**HAMLET.** My father, being of noble character, I hope shall speed his arrival, if he doth indeed show himself this evening.

*(While HAMLET is saying this MARCELLUS tries once again to bite HAMLET'S neck.)*

Bernardo, where did you get that wonderful necklace?

**BERNARDO.** This?

*(Pulls up necklace, it is a large cross.)*

It's a hand carved crucifix given to me by my aunt.

*(At the sight of the crucifix MARCELLUS falls back terrified and then falls off of the platform.)*

**HAMLET.** It's very nice, it reminds me of...

*(Enter GHOST.)*

**HORATIO.** Look my lord, there it is!

**HAMLET.** Sweet bags of beans! What art thou that appearest in the dark like a ghost that appears in the night?

**HORATIO.** Sir, it is a ghost that appears in the night.

**HAMLET.** Art thou a spirit of Heaven or a ghost of Hell? Whatever thou art, if you have a message may it be delivered.

*(GHOST beckons HAMLET.)*

**HORATIO.** Look sir, it beckons you!

**HAMLET.** Then I shall go to it.

**HORATIO.** Sir, I beg you not to go!

**HAMLET.** I must go Horatio.

**HORATIO.** Sir you mustn't, it's a ghost, ghosts are super-scary.

**HAMLET.** Step aside Horatio, my destiny awaits me.

*(HAMLET walks to GHOST. Fade lights. Exit.)*

## Scene 5

*(A battle field. Enter GHOST and HAMLET.)*

**HAMLET.** Where are you taking me? Speak or I'll go no further.

**GHOST.** BOOO!

**HAMLET.** *(Jumps, startled:)* Speak...

**GHOST.** BOOO! BOO! BOOO!

**HAMLET.** *(Jumps:)* Listen...

**GHOST.** BOOO! BOO!

**HAMLET.** Look, if you brought me all the way here just to try to scare me, I'm leaving! I thought you were going to have some sort of message for me.

**GHOST.** Boo? *(Pulls out book from under sheet and looks inside:)* Ahem, I'm sorry dear Hamlet, I forgot you don't speak ghost. Hear me and hear me well, young Hamlet.

**HAMLET.** I will.

**GHOST.** I am thy father's spirit doomed to walk through the fires of torture and the coldness of this world until all my sins be cleansed from me.

**HAMLET.** Poor soul.

**GHOST.** Hamlet, you must avenge my murder.

**HAMLET.** Murder?

**GHOST.** Yes, I was murdered. I know the story they told you: I was poisoned to death when I ate a tomato in the garden. Well let me tell you, they reveal many secrets of the universe to you when you die, and one of them is that tomatoes aren't poisonous, but instead rather tasty.

**HAMLET.** O my prophetic soul!

**GHOST.** What? You knew tomatoes weren't poisonous?

**HAMLET.** No, I suspected that you might have been murdered.

**GHOST.** Yes, I was murdered by a snake in the garden. It was that serpent you call uncle!

**HAMLET.** I knew it!

**GHOST.** That incestuous vulture! That murderous fiend! There I was sleeping in my orchard, as I usually do in the afternoon, when

thy uncle wheeled a cannon over to my body and fired it point blank in my face!

**HAMLET.** No wonder your body was in so many pieces. The doctor said that that was one of the effects of eating a tomato. Come to think of it, that doctor looked an awful lot like my uncle with a fake beard!

**GHOST.** Yes my son, and because I died before my sins were forgiven, I am stuck in purgatory. That vile, adulterous woman you call mother, I gave her everything she ever wanted. When she desired exotic furs to wear, I gave them to her. When she wanted me to attack France so we could get cheaper French bread, I attacked. When she asked me to shave my beard so I'd look more like my brother, I did it. I did everything for her! Who'd have thought she'd turn out to be an adulterous wench?! That is why, my son, I need you to avenge my death. I'd do it myself but *someone* blew my body into a million pieces!

**HAMLET.** O dear Father, this news burns me with a saddening rage! As sure as the sun revolves around the earth, so shall I avenge your death!

**GHOST.** Actually Hamlet, another thing they teach you when you die is that the earth actually revolves around... *(A bell is heard.)* Hark! I hear the clock strikes two. I bid thee farewell, Hamlet. Remember all that I have told you.

*(Exit GHOST.)*

**HAMLET.** I shall, dear Father! O vile, damnable adultery! That wretched scorpion that wears the crown! That vile, damnable woman! By my father I swear revenge!

*(Enter HORATIO and BERNARDO.)*

**BERNARDO.** Lord Hamlet!

**HORATIO.** Are you all right?

**HAMLET.** Right as rain.

**BERNARDO.** What happened?

**HORATIO.** Did it have a message for you?

**HAMLET.** Yes, but first I must ask you to swear that you will never mention this night to another soul.

**HORATIO and BERNARDO.** We swear, my lord.

**HAMLET.** We have a villain dwelling in Denmark.

**HORATIO.** We don't need a ghost to tell us that, sir, we already know.

**BERNARDO.** Yeah, you're talking about Nielson the used horse salesman.

**HORATIO.** No you idiot, he's talking about the King.

**HAMLET.** Yes, I am talking about a vile man who walks around like a thief who steals fruit from the local fruit stand, not because he's hungry, not because he needs to feed starving children, but because he's trying to make a giant hat out of fruit!

*(HORATIO and BERNARDO stare at each other confused.)*

**HORATIO.** What sir?

**HAMLET.** Dear brothers, swear to me once more that you'll never mention the events of this evening to another soul.

**HORATIO and BERNARDO.** We swear it.

**HAMLET.** Good, then gentlemen I must be off,  
Before the horse wakes to feed from the trough.  
My heart is discomfited and full of spite.  
I must transform a wrong, and set it to right.

*(Lights start to fade.)*

Hey that rhymed too!

**HORATIO.** Sir, did you ever consider being a poet?

**Scene 6**

*(A room. Enter HAMLET.)*

**HAMLET.** O that my life amounts to this, my beloved father, slain by my uncle. My beloved mother, a foul adulterous wench. To be, or not to be, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer the slings and arrows of...

*(There is a knock at the door.)*

Who is it?!

**SQUIRE.** *(Enters:)* Just the Squire sir, here to bring your vest back from the cleaners.

**HAMLET.** All right, thank you. Now if you'll please excuse me...

**SQUIRE.** Yes sir. *(Leaves.)*

**HAMLET.** *(Paces about for a second:)* To be, or not to be, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the...

*(There is another knock on the door.)*

Who is it?!

**KNIGHT.** *(Enters:)* Don't mind me my lord, just left me sword here. Ah, there it is. Good day. *(Leaves.)*

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

*(Another knock on the door.)*

Who's there?

**MAN.** Boo.

**HAMLET.** Boo who?!

**MAN.** Why are you crying? It was only a joke. A ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha.

**HAMLET.** Arrghhh!!!

*(Talks super fast in a run on sentence.)*

To be or not to be that is the question whether 'tis nobler in...

*(Knock at door:)*

...Go away!!!

*(Groans and walks around again. Slows talking down to normal:)*

To be, or not to be, that is the question. Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to...

*(Spot light shines on OLD MAID, revealing her cleaning the floor.)*

**OLD MAID.** Who are you talking to?

**HAMLET.** *(Embarrassed:)* What?

**OLD MAID.** Who are you talking to?

**HAMLET.** No one. I was just talking to myself.

**OLD MAID.** No you weren't! If you were talking to yourself you wouldn't talk out loud, you'd think it in your brain. That's why we have brains. Were you talking to me?

**HAMLET.** No really, I was...

**OLD MAID.** Good, because if you were talking to me it made no sense.

**HAMLET.** Look, just leave will you?

**OLD MAID.** But what about the floor?

**HAMLET.** Never mind that, just leave.

**OLD MAID.** Fine. *(Leaves.)*

*(HAMLET walks around, spreads arms to start soliloquy.)*

**HAMLET.** To be...

*(Another spotlight comes on to reveal RICHARD III who interrupts HAMLET.)*

**RICHARD III.** Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York...

**HAMLET.** Who are you?!

**RICHARD III.** Dear boy, do not interrupt. *(Continues:)* And all the clouds that...

**HAMLET.** I said, who are you?

**RICHARD III.** Young lad, I am Richard III, son of York.

**HAMLET.** What are you doing in Denmark?

**RICHARD III.** Denmark?

**HAMLET.** Yes.

**RICHARD III.** This isn't England?

**HAMLET.** No.

**RICHARD III.** I'm terribly sorry, good day. *(Leaves.)*

**HAMLET.** To be, or not to—oh never mind.

*(Enter OPHELIA.)*

**OPHELIA.** How farest my lord?

**HAMLET.** 'Tis best not to inquire today, dear Ophelia.

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet, I have come to propose a bet to thee. I bet you five gold shillings that you couldn't marry me to save your life!

**HAMLET.** Dear lady, I am not in the betting spirit.

**OPHELIA.** O Hamlet, no longer can I hide my love for thee! I am humbly sorry if I ever did.

**HAMLET.** Ophelia, you mustn't get caught up with a guy like me.

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet, tell me what troubles thee?

**HAMLET.** I cannot.

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet please!

**HAMLET.** Ophelia there is no way I can reveal what is troubling me to you. I have made a sacred oath swearing that I would not.

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet you act like a madman!

**HAMLET.** A madman?! You try living knowing that your uncle, who was having an affair with your mother, murdered your father! Whoops, I have just given too much information away.

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet what are you talking about?

**HAMLET.** Erase it from your memory Ophelia and get thee to a nunnery.

**OPHELIA.** A what?

**HAMLET.** A nunnery.

**OPHELIA.** What's that?

**HAMLET.** You know, a convent.

**OPHELIA.** Oh right, I thought you meant a place where they make and manufacture nuns. You know, like a bootery makes and manufactures boots.

**HAMLET.** Yes, well it's nothing like that. We must never be, Ophelia, for I am like poison to thee.

**OPHELIA.** But Hamlet...

**HAMLET.** Ophelia, from this day forward I will see thee as a tick; fun to look at, but I will not let thee get attached to me. Good-bye.

*(HAMLET exits. OPHELIA starts to cry. Enter POLONIUS.)*

**POLONIUS.** Ophelia, what is the matter?

**OPHELIA.** Hamlet, he does not love me!

**POLONIUS.** Did you try the bet?

**OPHELIA.** Yes, but he said he wasn't of spirit. He just babbled on with lame excuses. He said something about his adulterous uncle killing his father.

*(POLONIUS looks up in terror.)*

Yeah, like I'm going to believe that! He just doesn't love me, that's all.

**POLONIUS.** There, there, sweet daughter, you're probably right. 'Tis no matter, Hark! I think I hear the King call. I had better go to him.

**OPHELIA.** I didn't hear anything.

**POLONIUS.** You are too grief-stricken to hear anything. I will comfort thee later sweet daughter.

*(Exit.)*

### Scene 7

*(The Castle. Enter POLONIUS. The KING is sitting on the throne.)*

**POLONIUS.** *(Exasperated:)* Your Highness, Hamlet knows!

**KING.** Knows what?

**POLONIUS.** That you killed his father!

**KING.** What?! How'd he know that?!

**POLONIUS.** That I don't know, Sire. He revealed it to Ophelia.

**KING.** I feared something like this would happen. Here's what we'll do: We will call Hamlet to the throne room. When he opens the door he will be greeted by a cannon blast!

**POLONIUS.** Sir, with all due respect, don't you think we should be a little more discreet this time?

**KING.** You're right, Polonius, where would I be without thee? How about this—

*(KING pulls out glasses and pours wine into them.)*

—we shall invite Hamlet to the throne room for a drink. What Hamlet won't know is that I have laced the wine with the most deadly poison on the continent

*(KING pours poison into wine.)*

**POLONIUS.** Good thinking, sir!

*(Enter QUEEN.)*

**QUEEN.** Good day Claudius, Polonius.

**POLONIUS.** Hello my lady.

**KING.** Gertrude, Hamlet knows about our little murder, I don't know how. I'm sorry, but we're going to have to kill him.

## **THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!**

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