

Hamlet - 3/22/2016 - Evening Star Cafe

*Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES.
HAMLET is somewhat apart. CLAUDIA is speechifying.*

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Though yet of Hamlet our dear sister's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on Her,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,--
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone [*"Your" is the audience, probably*]
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes?

LAERTES

Your leave and favour to return to France;
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,
To show my duty in your coronation,
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.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

LADY POLONIUS

She hath, my queen, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition, and at last
Upon her will I seal'd my hard consent:
I do beseech you, give her leave to go.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my daughter,--

HAMLET

[Aside] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

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 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: *[option: make something of the word "man" here]*
 But I have that within which passeth show
 These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,
 To give these mourning duties to your mother:
 But, you must know, your mother lost a mother;
 That mother lost, lost hers, and the survivor bound
 In filial obligation for some term
 To do obsequious sorrow: but to persever
 In obstinate condolement is a course
 Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief; *[option: as above with "unmanly," or we can change the word]*
 This must be so: We pray you, throw to earth

This unprevailing woe, and think of us
 As of a mother: for let the world take note,
 You are the most immed'ate to our throne;
 And with no less nobility of love
 Do I impart toward you. 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 court'ier, cousin, and our daughter.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:
 Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;
 This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
 Sits smiling to my heart:

Exeunt all but HAMLET

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!
 Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
 But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:
 So excellent a Queen; that was, to this,
 Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother.
 Must I remember? why, she would hang on her,
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--
 Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!--
 O, God! a beast, that wants discourse of reason,
 Would have mourn'd longer--married with my auntie, [*"auntie" is more diminutive than
 uncle, can be spat with disdain*]
 My Mother's sister, but no more like my Mother
 Than I to Hercules: within a month:

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.

Exit

Enter LAERTES and OPHELIA

LAERTES

My necessaries are embark'd: 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 her favour,
 Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute; No more.

OPHELIA

No more but so?

LAERTES

Think it no more; Perhaps she loves you now.
 Her greatness weigh'd, her will is not her own;
 For she herself is subject to her birth:
 She may not, as unvalued persons do,
 Carve for herself; Then if she says she loves you,
 It fits your wisdom so far to believe it.
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain,
 If with too credent ear you list her songs,
 Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
 ["ewwww" or "bitch please, that ship has sailed"]
 To her unmaster'd importunity.
 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.

OPHELIA *[probably heavily implying what Laertes gets up to in France]*

I shall th'effect of this good lesson keep,
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my sister,

Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven;
 Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,
 Herself the primrose path of dalliance treads,
 And recks not her own rede.

LAERTES

O, fear me not. [*I'm on the pill yo*"]
 I stay too long; but here my mother comes.

Enter POLONIUS

LADY POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes! aboard, aboard, for shame!
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
 And you are stay'd for. There; my blessing with thee!
 And these few precepts in thy memory
 See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,
 Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
 Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
 Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware
 Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
 Bear't that th'opposèd may beware of thee.
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
 But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
 For the apparel oft proclaims the woman,
 And they in France of the best rank and station
 Are of a most select and gen'rous chief in that.
 Neither a borrower nor a lender be;
 For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
 And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
 This above all: to thine ownself be true,
 And it must follow, as the night the day,
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.
 Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

LAERTES [*trying really hard to leave*]

Most humbly do I take my leave, madam.
 Farewell, Ophelia; and remember well
 What I have said to you.

OPHELIA

'Tis in my memory lock'd,
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES

Farewell.

Exit

LADY POLONIUS

What is't, Ophelia, she hath said to you?

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching Lady Hamlet.

LADY POLONIUS

Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me, she hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:
What is between you? give me up the truth.

OPHELIA

She hath, madam, of late made many tenders
Of her affection to me.

LADY POLONIUS

Do you believe her tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA

I do not know, madam, what I should think.

LADY POLONIUS

Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby;
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly;
Or--not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, [*wait, is this a fart joke?*]
Running it thus--you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA

But ma'am, she hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion.

LADY POLONIUS

Ay, springè to catch woodcocks. I do know,
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows: these blazes, daughter,

Giving more light than heat. For Ms. Hamlet,
Believe so much in her, that she is young
And with a larger tether may she walk
Than may be given you: in few, Ophelia,
Do not believe her vows; This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,
Have you so slander any moment leisure,
As to give words or talk with Lady Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you: come your ways.

OPHELIA

I shall obey, my lady.

Exeunt

Enter HAMLET from house; Enter HORATIO. They've seen a ghost, and are pants-pissing scared to tell HAMLET about it.

HORATIO

Hail to your ladyship!

HAMLET

I am very glad to see you. Good even, gurl. [*what? it's appropriately familiar!*]
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO

A truant disposition, good my lady.

HAMLET

I would not hear your enemy say so,
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence
Against yourself: I know you are no truant.
But what is your affair in Elsinore?
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart. [*feel free to break the fourth wall on this one*]

HORATIO

Lady, I came to see your Mother's funeral.

HAMLET

I think it was to see my mother's wedding. [*"my other... mother... YOU KNOW WHO I MEAN"*]

HORATIO

Indeed, my friend, it follow'd hard upon't.

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! the funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
My Mother!--methinks I see my Mother.

HORATIO

Where, my lady? [*"ghostwhereohhellno" or "uh, wait, which mother?"*]

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO

My friend, I think I saw her yesternight.

HAMLET

Saw? who? [*JEFFERSON: whaaaaaaaaaat*]

HORATIO

Lady, the queen your Mother.
[*ad lib something like: "The dead one. Not your other... you know what I mean"*]

HAMLET

The queen my Mother!

HORATIO

In the dead vast and middle of the night,
I thus encounter'd: A figure like your mother,
Appears before me, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by me. I knew your mother;
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

Lady, I did;
But answer made it none, And vanish'd from my sight.

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.
Hold you the watch to-night?

HORATIO

I do, my friend.

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

I warrant it will.

HAMLET

My Mother's spirit in arms! all is not well;
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

Exeunt

Enter POLONIUS, mumbling while composing a letter or text message out loud to nobody in particular; OPHELIA runs in and interrupts this at any point

LADY POLONIUS

And then, ma'am, does he this-he does-what was I about to say? By the mass, I was about to say something: where did I leave?

Enter OPHELIA, losing her shit

LADY POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

OPHELIA

O, mother, mother, I have been so affrighted!

LADY POLONIUS

With what, i' the name of God?

OPHELIA

Mother, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lady Hamlet, with her doublet all unbraced; [*bonus points: describe her ACTUAL clothing*]
Pale as her shirt; her knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if she had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,--she comes before me.

LADY POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA

Mother, I do not know;
But truly, I do fear it.

LADY POLONIUS

What said she?

OPHELIA

She took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then falls to such perusal of my face
As she would draw it. Long stay'd she so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm
And thrice her head thus waving up and down,
She raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all her bulk
And end her being: that done, she lets me go:
And, with her head over her shoulder turn'd,
She seem'd to find her way without her eyes;
For out o' doors she went without their helps,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

LADY POLONIUS

Come, go with me: I will go seek the queens.
This is the very ecstasy of love... [*"jump cut" becomes "new thought interruption," maybe*]
What, have you given her any hard words of late?

OPHELIA

No, my lady, but, as you did command,
I did repel her fetters and denied
Her access to me.

LADY POLONIUS

That hath made her mad.
Come, go we to the queens:
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

Exeunt

Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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. Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so call it,
Sith nor the exterior nor the inward woman
Resembles that it was.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good gentlefolk, she hath much talk'd of you;
And sure I am two friends there are not living
To whom she more adheres. If it will please you,
Your visitation shall receive such thanks
As fits a queen's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ

Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
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.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changèd child. Go, some of you,
And bring these ladies to where Hamlet is.

GUILDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practises
Pleasant and helpful to her!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ay, amen!

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN

Enter POLONIUS. GERTRUDE cannot stand her. CLAUDIA finds her to be a useful idiot.

LADY POLONIUS

I assure my good liege,
I hold my duty, as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious queen:
And 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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main;
Her Mother's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Well, we shall sift her.

LADY POLONIUS

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.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief: your noble daughter's mad:
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

More matter, with less art.

LADY POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That she is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant her, then: and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause:
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.

Pulls out a letter or possibly OPHELIA's phone, reads

'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most
 beautified Ophelia,'--
 That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is
 a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

Reads

'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.' [*mercifully, there's no chance of there being a dick pic*]

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

LADY POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

Reads

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
 Doubt that the sun doth move;
 Doubt truth to be a liar;
 But never doubt I love. [*jokes about the non-rhyme in modern english are tacitly approved (e.g. LURVE)*]
 Thine evermore most dear lady, whilst
 this machine is to her, HAMLET!
 This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

But how hath she received her love?

LADY POLONIUS

What do you think of me?

QUEEN CLAUDIA

As a woman faithful and hon'rabl. [*decide whether you mean this*]

LADY POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. I went round to work,
 And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
 'Ms. Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star;
 This must not be:' and then I precepts gave her,
 That she should lock herself from her resort,
 And she, repulsed--a short tale to make--
 Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
 Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,

Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
 Into the madness wherein now she raves,
 And all we mourn for.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

It may be, very likely.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How may we try it further?

LADY POLONIUS

You know, sometimes she walks four hours together
 Here in the lobby. [*feel free to change 'lobby' to match your surroundings*]

QUEEN GERTRUDE

So she does indeed.

LADY POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to her:
 Be you and I behind an arras then; [*"What's an arras?" "That thingy over there."*]
 Mark the encounter: if she love her not
 And be not from her reason fall'n thereon,
 Let me be no assistant for a state,
 But keep a farm and carters.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

We will try it.

Enter HAMLET, reading. Someone's Arden or Pelican? A bar menu?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

LADY POLONIUS

Away, I do beseech you, both away:

Exeunt QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE

How does my Lady Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

LADY POLONIUS

Do you know me, lady?

HAMLET

Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

LADY POLONIUS

Not I, my lady.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a woman.

LADY POLONIUS

Honest, my lady!

HAMLET

Ay, ma'am; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one woman picked out of ten thousand.

LADY POLONIUS

That's very true, my lady.

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

I have, my lady.

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

[Aside] Still harping on my daughter.
What do you read, my lady?

HAMLET

Words, words, words.

LADY POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lady?

HAMLET

Between who?

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Slanders, ma'am: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards [*option: change to some kind of menopause crack at Polonius' expense, e.g. "hot flashes"*], 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, ma'am, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, ma'am, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Into my grave.

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

Fare you well, my lady.

HAMLET

These tedious old fools!

Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

LADY POLONIUS

You go to seek the Lady Hamlet; there she is.

ROSENCRANTZ

[To POLONIUS] God save you, ma'am!

Exit POLONIUS, to house or off SR

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lady!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lady!

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lady.

HAMLET

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

GUILDENSTERN

'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lady, 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? [*obvious OitNB joke for the taking here*]

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lady!

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

GUILDENSTERN

We think not so, my lady.

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. O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count myself a queen of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore? [*but seriously, wtf are you doing here*]

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lady; no other occasion.

HAMLET

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation?

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lady?

HAMLET

Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to colour.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end, my lady?

HAMLET

That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserv'd love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you

were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ

[Aside to GUILDENSTERN] What say you?

GUILDENSTERN

My lady, 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, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. *[feel free to make something of the gendering here, since all three of these characters are at least a little gay]*

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

To think, my lady, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

HAMLET

What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

Friends, you are welcome to Elsinore. But my uncle-mother and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lady?

HAMLET

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

Enter POLONIUS.

LADY POLONIUS

Well be with you, gentlewomen!

HAMLET

Hark you, Guildenstern; and you too: at each ear a hearer: that great baby you see there is not yet out of her swaddling-clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ

Happily she's the second time come to them; for they say an old woman is twice a child.
["Depends"]

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

My lady, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

The actors are come hither, my lady.

HAMLET

Buz, buz!

LADY POLONIUS

Upon mine honour,--

HAMLET

Then came each actor on her ass,--

LADY POLONIUS

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only women.

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

What a treasure had he, my lady?

HAMLET

Why, 'One fair daughter and no more, The which he loved passing well.'

LADY POLONIUS

[Aside] Still on my daughter.

Enter Players. HAMLET knows them well.

HAMLET

You are welcome, mistresses; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. *[to Polonius]* Good my lady, will you see the players well bestowed?

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

God's bodykins, woman, much better: use every woman after her desert, and who should 'scape whipping? Take them in.

LADY POLONIUS

Come on.

HAMLET

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

Exit POLONIUS with all the Players but the First Player

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

First Player

Ay, my lady.

HAMLET

We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

First Player

Ay, my lady.

HAMLET

Very well. Follow that lady; and look you mock her not. [*by which we mean "totally, totally mock her"*]

Exit First Player

My good friends, I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lady!

HAMLET

Ay, so, God be wi' ye;

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

What would she do, [*originally this was in reference to First Player's Hecuba speech; make it about some audience*]

Had she the motive and the cue for passion
That I have? She would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the gen'ral ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty and appal the free.
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing; no, not for a queen.
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!

Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, daughter of a dear mother murder'd,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words.
Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have by the very cunning of the scene
Been struck so to the soul that presently
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;
For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my mother
Before mine auntie: I'll observe her looks;
I'll tent her to the quick: if she 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 queen.
[I have no idea how to preserve this rhyming couplet]

Exit

[1st BEER BREAK - announced by Polonius]

*Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ,
and GUILDENSTERN*

QUEEN CLAUDIA

And can you, by no drift of circumstance,
Get from her why she puts on this confusion,
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ

She does confess she feels herself distracted;
But from what cause she will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN

Nor do we find her forward to be sounded,
But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof.
When we would bring her on to some confession
Of her true state.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Did you assay her to any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ

Madam, it so fell out, that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told her;
And there did seem in her a kind of joy
To hear of it: they are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before her.

LADY POLONIUS

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

QUEEN CLAUDIA

With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear her so inclined.
Good gentlefolk, give her a further edge,

And drive her purpose on to these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ

We shall, my lady.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Sweet Gertrude, leave us too;
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That she, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia: Her mother and myself
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing, unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
If 't be the affliction of her love or no
That thus she suffers for.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I shall obey you.*[snark, if you're feeling it]*
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness.

OPHELIA

Madam, I wish it may.

Exit QUEEN GERTRUDE

LADY POLONIUS

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

[QUEEN CLAUDIA and POLONIUS hide behind that glass thing by the bathrooms, or somewhere else glaringly obvious.]

Enter HAMLET

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 wish'd. To die, to sleep;
 To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
 For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
 When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
 Must give us pause: there's the respect
 That makes calamity of so long life;
 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
 The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office and the spurns
 That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
 When he himself might his quietus make
 With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,
 The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 And enterprises of great pith and moment
 With this regard their currents turn awry,
 And lose the name of action. [*OPHELIA approaches her*] --Soft you now!
 The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
 Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA

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

HAMLET

I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

OPHELIA

My lady, I've remembrances of yours,
 That I have longèd long to re-deliver;
 I pray you, now receive them.

HAMLET

No, not I;
 I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

Honour'd lady, 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.
[hands over the stuff] There, my lady.

HAMLET

Ha, ha! are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lady?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

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

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lady, you made me believe so.

HAMLET

You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it: I loved you not.

OPHELIA

I was the more deceived.

HAMLET

[the implications of "breeder" don't make sense here, consider cutting]

Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent

honest; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your mother?

OPHELIA

At home, my lady.

HAMLET

Let the doors be shut upon her, that she may play the fool no where but in her own house. Farewell.

OPHELIA

O, help her, you sweet heavens!

HAMLET

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

OPHELIA

O heavenly powers, restore her!

HAMLET

Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages: those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

Exit

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

Re-enter QUEEN CLAUDIA and POLONIUS

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Love! Her affections do not that way tend;
Nor what she spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in her soul,
O'er which her melancholy sits on brood.

LADY POLONIUS

But yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of her grief

Sprung from neglected love. Do as you please;
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let her queen mother all alone entreat her
To show her grief: let her be round with her;
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

It shall be so:
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

Exeunt

Enter HAMLET and Players

HAMLET

[If you can do better than "periwig-pated fellow" and comment on whatever they're wearing, go for it]

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently. 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.

First Player

I warrant your honour.

Exeunt Players

HAMLET

What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO

HORATIO

Here, madam, at your service.

HAMLET

There is a play to-night before the queen;
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my Mother's death:
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
Observe mine auntie: if her occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damnèd ghost that we have seen.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

They are coming to the play; I must be idle:
Get you a place.

*Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ,
GUILDENSTERN*

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

To POLONIUS

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

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, my lady; they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET

No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.

Gets all up in OPHELIA's personal space somehow; try to remain visible

LADY POLONIUS

[To QUEEN CLAUDIA] O, ho! do you mark that?

HAMLET

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA

No, my lady.

HAMLET

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lady.

HAMLET

Do you think I meant country matters? *[Vaginas! Get it?!]*

OPHELIA

I think nothing, my lady.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

What is, my lady?

HAMLET

Nothing. *[Still talking about vaginas!]*

OPHELIA

You are merry, my lady.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lady.

HAMLET

So long? O heavens! die two months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's hope a great woman's memory may outlive her life half a year.

OPHELIA

What means this, my lady?

HAMLET

Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

Enter Second Player

Second Player

For us, and for our tragedy,
Here stooping to your clemency,
We beg your hearing patiently.

Exit [they're not ready yet]

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

'Tis brief, my lady.

HAMLET

As woman's love.

[The PLAYERS come in with sock puppets; they do an improv bit a la The Simpsons Treehouse of Horrors version of Hamlet]

HAMLET

He poisons him i' the garden for's estate. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

PLAYER QUEEN *[responding angrily to HAMLET]*

In second husband let me be the accurst!
None wed the second but who killed first!

HAMLET *[heckling]*

Wormwood, wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN [*still sniping with HAMLET*]

Both here and hence pursue me with lasting strife
If, once a widow, ever I be a wife.

HAMLET [*to GERTRUDE*]

Madam, how like you the play?

GERTRUDE

The lady protests too much, me thinks.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

What do you call the play?

HAMLET

"The Mousetrap." Marry, how? Tropically! This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna. 'Tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not.

OPHELIA

You are a good chorus my lady.

HAMLET

I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying. [*puppet sex jokes!*]

[*PLAYERS do their thing, at some point reaching the ear-poisoning; QUEEN CLAUDIA jumps up at this*]

OPHELIA

The queen rises.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How fares my liege?

LADY POLONIUS

Give o'er the play. [*probably shooing the Players out*]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Give me some light: away!

All

Lights, lights, lights!

Exeunt all but HAMLET and HORATIO; ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN attend CLAUDIA; POLONIUS with GERTRUDE

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

Very well, my lady.

HAMLET

Upon the poisoning?

HORATIO

I did very well note her.

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

GUILDENSTERN

Good my lady, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET

Girl, a whole history. [*starting wildly, I guess*]

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

I am tame, ma'am: pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN

The queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you. [*"which queen?"*]

HAMLET

You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN

Nay, good my lady, 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

Ma'am, I cannot.

GUILDENSTERN

What, my lady?

HAMLET

Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased.

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. Have you any further trade with us?

ROSENCRANTZ

My lady, you once did love me.

HAMLET

So I do still, by these pickers and stealers. *[there's a lewd fingering joke here if you want it]*

Enter POLONIUS

God bless you, ma'am!

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

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

LADY POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Methinks it is like a weasel.

LADY POLONIUS

It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET

Or like a whale?

LADY POLONIUS

Very like a whale.

HAMLET

Then I will come to my mother by and by. They fool me to the top of my bent. I will come by and by.

LADY POLONIUS

I will say so.

HAMLET

By and by is easily said.

Exit POLONIUS

Leave me, friends.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

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.
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!

Exit

Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA and POLONIUS

LADY POLONIUS

My queen, she's going to her mother's closet:
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process; and warrant she'll tax her home.
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Thanks, dear lady.

Exit POLONIUS

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven;
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
 A sister's murder. Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp as will:
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition and my queen.
 May one be pardon'd and retain the offence?
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
 O limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged! 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.

*Retires and kneels**Enter HAMLET***HAMLET***[decide whether "but she'd go to heaven" is cover for squeamishness or a sincere hangup]*

Now might I do it pat, now she is praying;
 And now I'll do't. And so she goes to heaven;
 A villain kills my Mother; and for that,
 I, Her daughter, do this same villain send
 To heaven.
 O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
 To take her in the purging of her soul,
 When she is fit and season'd for her passage?
 No!
 Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:
 When she is drunk asleep, or in her rage,
 Or in the incestuous pleasure of her bed;
 Then trip her, that her heels may kick at heaven,
 And that her soul may be as damn'd and black
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays:
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

*Exit***QUEEN CLAUDIA**

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

Exit

Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE and POLONIUS

LADY POLONIUS

She will come straight. Pray you, be round with her.

HAMLET

[Within] Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I'll warrant you,
Fear me not: withdraw, I hear her coming.

POLONIUS hides under a provided muumuu. Enter HAMLET

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy mother much offended. [*uh, which one?*]

HAMLET

Mother, you have my Mother much offended. [*...uh, which one?*]

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

LADY POLONIUS

[hidden] What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET

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

[half-nelsons Polonius, who slowly chokes to death]

LADY POLONIUS

O, I am slain!

Falls and dies

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not:
Is it the queen?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET

A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a Queen, and marry with her sister.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

As kill a Queen!

HAMLET

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

identifies POLONIUS

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Such an act
 That blurs the grace and blush of modesty.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Look here, upon this picture, and on this, *[cell phone, photo on the wall, whatever you got]*
 The counterfeit presentment of two sisters.
 This was your wife. Look you now, what follows:
 Here is your "wife;" like a mildew'd ear,
 Blasting her wholesome sister. Have you eyes?
 O shame! where is thy blush? Nay, but to live
 In the rank sweat of an enseam'd bed,
 Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
 Over the nasty sty,-

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

A queen of shreds and patches,--

She sees the ghost, somewhere... the rest of us do not. Work it.

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, she's mad!

HAMLET

Do you not come your tardy child to chide,
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by
The important acting of your dread command? O, say!

HAMLET

How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?

HAMLET

On her, on Her! Look you, how pale She glares!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET

Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET

Exit "Ghost"

Why, look you there! look, how it steals away!
My Mother, in her habit as she lived!

QUEEN 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 utter'd.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to that woman's bed;
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

Pointing to POLONIUS

For this lady,
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this and this with me.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, ma'am, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.

HAMLET touches POLONIUS with a foot, actor gets up and exits; HAMLET follows, then GERTRUDE exits in another direction

Enter HAMLET from wherever she just left POLONIUS

HAMLET

Safely stowed.

Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

ROSENCRANTZ: GUILDENSTERN:

[Within] Hamlet! Lady Hamlet!

HAMLET

What noise? who calls on Hamlet?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin. To be demanded of a sponge! what replication should be made by the daughter of a queen?

ROSENCRANTZ

Take you me for a sponge, my lady?

HAMLET

Ay, Miss, that soaks up the queen's countenance, her rewards, her authorities. She keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of her jaw; first mouth'd, to be last swallowed: when she needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROSENCRANTZ

I understand you not, my lady.

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

My lady, you must tell us where the body is, and go with us to the queen.

Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How now! what hath befall'n?

ROSENCRANTZ

Where the dead body is bestow'd, my queen,
We cannot get from her.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

At supper! where?

HAMLET

Not where she eats, but where she is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at her. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat queen and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

What dost you mean by this?

HAMLET

Nothing but to show you how a queen may go a progress through the guts of a beggar.
["Progress" as in a royal tour]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Go seek her there.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN

HAMLET

[calls after them] She will stay till ye come.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,--
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,--must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and every thing is bent
For England.

HAMLET

For England! *[hey, in this cutting, this is actually new information!]*

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

HAMLET

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

Exit

QUEEN CLAUDIA

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught--
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
...thou mayst not coldly set
Our sov'reign process; which imports at full,
By letters congruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood she rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

Exit

[2nd BEER BREAK - announced by Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]

Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE, HORATIO

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I will not speak with her.

HORATIO

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What would she have?

HORATIO

She speaks much of her mother; says she hears
There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt...
'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Let her come in.

Enter OPHELIA. She's thoroughly shithoused.

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How now, Ophelia!

OPHELIA

[Sings something like the theme some from Friends, probably very loudly]

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA

Say you? nay, pray you, mark.
[more Friends]

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nay, but, Ophelia,--

OPHELIA

Pray you, mark.
[yet more singing]

Enter QUEEN CLAUDIA

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, look here, my queen.

OPHELIA

[even yet more singing]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA

Well, God 'ild 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!

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Conceit upon her mother.

OPHELIA

Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they ask you what it means, say you this:
[more loud singing]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Pretty Ophelia!

OPHELIA

Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:
[more loud singing, probably with sexual undertones]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay her i' the cold ground. My sister shall know of it: and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies; good night, good night.

Exit

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

Exit HORATIO

Her sister is in secret come from France;
With pestilent speeches of her mother's death
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.

Enter LAERTES, like a tiny tornado of fury

QUEEN CLAUDIA

The doors are broke. *[no shit]*

LAERTES

O thou vile queen,
Give me my mother!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?
[to Gertrude] There's such divinity doth hedge a queen,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of her will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed. Let her go, Gertrude.
Speak, girl.

LAERTES

Where is my mother?

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Dead.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

But not by her.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Good Laertes,
If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear mother's death, is't writ in your revenge,
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,
Winner and loser?

LAERTES

None but her enemies.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Will you know them then?

LAERTES

To her good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms;

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a gentlewoman.
That I am guiltless of your mother's death,
And am most sensible in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgment pierce
As day does to your eye.

Re-enter OPHELIA, lookin' nutty, possibly carrying a tray of shots

LAERTES

How now! what noise is that?
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

OPHELIA

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies. that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA

There's fennel for you, and columbines: there's rue for you; and here's some for me: we may call it herb-grace o' Sundays: O you must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my mother died: they say she made a good end,--
[bursts into a Justin Bieber ballad]

LAERTES

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

OPHELIA

[continues to be, tragically, a Belieber]

Exit off SR; GERTRUDE follows

LAERTES

Do you see this, O God?

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Now must your conscience my acquaintance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That she which hath your noble mother slain
Pursued my life.

LAERTES

It well appears: but tell me
Why you proceeded not against these feats.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsew'd,
But yet to me they are strong. The queen her mother
Lives almost by her looks; and for myself-
My virtue or my plague, be it either which-
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in her sphere,
I could not but by her.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble mother lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

If it be so, Laertes--
Will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my liege;
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

To thine own peace. I will work her
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which she shall not choose but fall:
And for her death no wind of blame shall breathe,
But even her mother shall uncharge the practise
And call it accident.

LAERTES

My queen, I will be ruled;

QUEEN CLAUDIA

What would you undertake,
To show yourself your mother's girl in deed
More than in words?

LAERTES

To cut her throat i' the church.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

[remember, because of cuts, "Hamlet comes back" is new information here]
 Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:
 We'll put on those shall praise your excellence
 And wager on your arms.

LAERTES

I will do't:
[..and a new idea]
 I bought an unction of a mountebank,
 So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
 Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare
 Under the moon, can save the thing from death
 That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point
 With this contagion, that, if I gall her slightly,
 It may be death.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Soft! let me see:
 We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings: I ha't.
 When in your motion you are hot and dry--
 As make your bouts more violent to that end--
 And that she calls for drink, I'll have prepared her
 A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
 If she by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
 Our purpose may hold there.

Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE

How now, sweet queen!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
 So fast they follow; your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

LAERTES

Drown'd! O, where? *[the bathroom, apparently]*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
 That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;
 There with fantastic garlands did she come
 Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
 That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
 But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
 There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds

Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;
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,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES

Alas, then, she is drown'd?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Drown'd, drown'd.

LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears. Adieu, my queen:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.

Exit

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Let's follow, Gertrude:
How much I had to do to calm her rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow.

Exeunt

Enter GRAVEDIGGER; she sits down to play solitaire and mind her own business; perhaps there is a "skull" Kilroying at the table (First Player)

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO

GRAVEDIGGER

[whistles a jaunty tune]

HAMLET

Whose grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER

Mine, ma'am.

HAMLET

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

GRAVEDIGGER

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

HAMLET

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

GRAVEDIGGER

'Tis a quick lie, ma'am; 'twill away again, from me to you.

HAMLET

What man dost thou dig it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, ma'am.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in't?

GRAVEDIGGER

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

HAMLET

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

GRAVEDIGGER

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

[pulls out glass skull full of gummy worms]

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

HAMLET

Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER

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

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! He poured a flagon of Rhenish [*you can substitute "cheap vodka" if you like*] on my head once. This same skull, ma'am, was Yorick's skull, the queen's jester.

HAMLET

This?

GRAVEDIGGER

E'en 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; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come; make her laugh at that. To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

HORATIO

'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

Enter in procession. LAERTES, QUEEN CLAUDIA, QUEEN GERTRUDE, the latter carrying an urn full of OPHELIA. GRAVEDIGGER and skulls flee.

HAMLET

That is Laertes,
A very noble youth: mark.

LAERTES

Lay her i' the earth:
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring!

HAMLET

What, the fair Ophelia!

LAERTES

O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursèd head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms:

[snatches the urn from GERTRUDE and cradles it]

HAMLET

[Advancing] What is she whose grief
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.

[tries to wrestle the urn away from LAERTES; they spill ashes everywhere]

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

[pins HAMLET to the table by the back of the neck; this should be shockingly fast and scary]

HAMLET

Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat;
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,
Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear: hold off thy hand.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

HORATIO

Good my lady, quiet.

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O daughter, what theme?

HAMLET

[blow the roof off with realness here; everyone respect this moment]

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

QUEEN CLAUDIA

O, she is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

For love of God, forbear her.

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do:
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?
I'll rant as well as thou. Hear you, ma'dam;
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.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon her.

[pulls LAERTES aside and whispers]

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech;

[address the room]

We'll put the matter to the present push.

HORATIO

[pulls HAMLET aside]

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: since no woman has aught of what she leaves, what is't to leave betimes?

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

[QUEEN CLAUDIA puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET's]

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, ma'am: I've done you wrong;
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most gen'rous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my sister.

LAERTES

I am satisfied in nature,
I do receive your offer'd love like love,
And will not wrong it.

[GRAVEDIGGER/PLAYER actors will be responsible for delivering trays of shots for HAMLET and LAERTES to race with]

HAMLET

I embrace it freely;
And will this sister's wager frankly play.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

You know the wager?

HAMLET

Very well, my queen.
Your grace hath laid the odds o' the weaker side.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

I do not fear it; I have seen you both:
But since she is better'd, we have therefore odds.
Set me the stoops of wine upon that table.
'Now the queen dunks to Hamlet.' Come, begin:
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAMLET

Come on, ma'am.

LAERTES

Come, my lady.

[ALL chanting: "SHOTS SHOTS SHOTS" or similar]

[Hamlet wins the first round]

HAMLET

One.

LAERTES

No.

HAMLET

Judgment.

JUDGE [First Player actor]

A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES

Well; again.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

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

HAMLET

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

[ALL: again with the chanting]

[Hamlet wins again]

Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Our child shall win.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Good madam!

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

LAERTES

My queen, I'll hit her now.

QUEEN CLAUDIA

I do not think't.

LAERTES

[Aside] And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my conscience.

[slips poison (from fake Everclear airplane bottle) into HAMLET's first shot; it may have red dye to distinguish it]

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

Have at you now!

[they start the next round of drinks; HAMLET drinks part of her shot and immediately realizes something's wrong with it, and flings it into LAERTES' face, then squares up as if to fight for real]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Part them; they are incensed.

HAMLET

[threatening] Nay, come, again.

[GERTRUDE falls, poisoned; the PLAYER actors should rush to take care of her]

QUEEN CLAUDIA

Look to the queen there, ho!

LAERTES

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

HAMLET

How does the queen?

QUEEN CLAUDIA

She swoons to see them fight.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink,--O my dear Hamlet,--
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd.

[Dies.]

HAMLET

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

LAERTES

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

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damnèd Dane,
Drink off this potion. Follow my mother.

[QUEEN CLAUDIA dies; work out in advance with HAMLET actor whether she is forced to drink the poison, or whether it's a defiant "fuck it" moment of voluntary suicide]

LAERTES

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

Dies

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO

Never believe it:
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane:
Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET

Give me the cup: let go; by heaven, I'll have't.
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.
O, I die, Horatio;
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
The rest is silence.

Dies

HORATIO

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

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage;
For she was likely, had she been put on,
To have proved most royally: and, for her passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for her.
Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

[everyone still alive does a shot of something]