

**HAMLET AND THE PIRATES**

**LAY OVER IN CALAIS**

Charles Campbell

## Hamlet and the Pirates Lay Over In Calais

### Programme Notes

Understandably frustrated with Hamlet's tedious grandstanding and endless pontificating from Act I right through to Act IV, Scene iii, Claudius, packs him off to England with a secret message to the King, instructing that he, Hamlet, should be put to death upon his arrival. But Hamlet escapes, as recounted in his note to Horatio (Act IV, Scene vi,) and ends up back in Denmark *before* the end of Act IV. And not only back in Denmark but a 'new man', cured of what ailed him, eager to fight for his throne, not to mention two murder wraps ... before he hits home turf! The standard Shakespearean text provides only the slightest of explanations *how* Hamlet escaped, *how* he was transformed and *how* he returned to Denmark. (see footnotes) And *then* ... that text has him lose the famous duel and morph into the *quintessential* tragic hero.

Not to mention - Fortinbras. Or did you fall asleep in the middle of Act IV? He's the Norwegian Prince, ("nephew to old Norway" - Voltaman) who suddenly appears in Act IV, Scene iv, *on his way* to Poland. By Act IV, Scene vi, he's already *on his way back!* And by the end of the play – he's King of Denmark!

Who believes any of this? Not this trial lawyer! Nor the scholars who have been troubled for centuries by what they call 'continuity issues'. It is self evident that the whole truth is not being told.

And if you think about it, who would have even *want* Hamlet for a king - a bipolar, dithering, self-centred, windbag, sexual retard, mommy's boy, and a jerk-loser to boot, *even if* he was not bad with a rapier.

As it turns out, this was not Shakespeare's real Hamlet.

### *The lost text*

Recently the *original* Shakespearean text of *Hamlet*, was found in a large, unmarked, clay pot in a Laundromat in south central Devon. That text has now been reconstructed – from an estimated ten million dust-like *fragmentia* - and translated into the modern idiom by the noted scholar of middle Norse history, C.M. Campbell, V.B.B.S. (FoS). In this meticulously researched new play Hamlet's lost four weeks (in Calais) are now revealed and Hamlet's transformative experience with the noted extortionist, therapist and spin doctor, Captain Jack Flash, is vividly and movingly recreated in **Act One**.

But even more intriguing, in **Act Two** Campbell has reconstructed the 'true' ending of the famous tale from the Devon fragments, an ending which challenges every known interpretation of Hamlet in the history of literary criticism.

### *Footnotes*

*Act IV, Scene vi* – ll. 11 – 25 – Hamlet's letter to Horatio telling of his escape.

“... in the grapple I boarded them [the pirates] ... I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me as thieves of mercy ... I am to do a good turn for them ...”

*Act IV, Scene vii* – ll.42 – Hamlet's note to Claudius announcing his return, “alone”.

*Act V Scene ii* – ll. 53 -54 – Hamlet to Horatio, before the duel.

“The next day was our sea fight ...”

ll. 220 et seq. “Since he went into France I have been in continual practice, I shall win at the odds.”

## **Act I**

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## **Act II**

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Scene Six	The Next Day (p. 68)
Scene Seven	The Throne Room (p. 76)

## CAST

ACT I	ACT II
Hamlet	Hamlet
Phantom of Gertrude - Madam	Gertrude
Ghost of Old King Hamlet - Smee - Old King Hamlet in Brothel Play - Brothel Bouncer	Gravedigger #1 Polonius
Captain Jack Flash - Claudius in Brothel Play	Captain Spin
Jake	Fortinbras
Hank - Little Hamlet in Brothel Play	Gravedigger #2 Albert, Polonius' Servant (Security)
(Pirate)	Claudius
Patti - Ophelia in Brothel Play	Patti - Reporter
(Whore)	Ophelia
(Pirate)	Laertes
(Pirates)	Vlad (Security) (Servant)
	(Non-speaking)

## Act I

### Scene One *Deck of the Pirate Ship*

*Dark stage lightens slowly. We hear the noise of ships crashing together, canons, and muskets. Sword fights - a battle. Figures are running, fighting ...*

Voices      Pirates, pirates ... off the starboard ... there ... grab him ... Grab him ... They're getting away ... Take that ...  
                  Damn ... Damn ...

*Pirates now seen, rushing about in the dim light. Smoke drifts. On board Hamlet appears, faintly, hiding behind a railing on the lower level of the stage. As the noise dies down Jake, Hank and Patti with a lantern, come upon him. Jake draws his sword. Patti is not recognizable as a woman.*

Jake      Hello ... hello ... What have we here! ... Well, I'll be damned! You're on the wrong ship, mate! *We're the pirates!*  
                  Lookie here, Hank Lookie here!

*The noise of battle fades rapidly. The Ghost of Old King Hamlet appears on the bridge of the ship. Only Hamlet sees and hears it. He cowers. [The pirates think Hamlet thinks, that they will kill him.]*

Ghost/OK Hamlet      Revenge ... Revenge ...

*Smee gestures and Jake puts away his sword[ but Hamlet is still crazed with fear. The pirates now try to calm him.]*

Hank      Relax, *(looking around)* Relax.

*The Phantom of Gertrude now appears, sneering at the old King.*

Phantom/Gertrude      Oh ... Hammie ... Don't listen to him! .... Come and snuggle ... I miss you so much ... Come and snuggle ....

Ghost      Murder most foul ... Murder .... Revenge ... revenge ...

*Ghost and Phantom glare at each other.*

Gertrude/ Phantom .... Hammie ... come and snuggle.

*Hamlet clings to Jake, who humors him.*

Hamlet *(To Phantom, angry, defiant)* Snuggle!

Patti *(Looking around)* Who are you talking to?

Hank What the ...?!

Captain *(From off stage)* SMEE ... SMEE ...

*Ghost and Phantom instantly disappear. Hamlet calms.*

Patti Where you heading, bub? Maybe we could drop you somewhere?

Hamlet *(Sheepishly)* Ah ... How about Antwerp ... or Hamburg ... No ... Dunkirk ... Lisbon ... Anywhere, but England!

Patti Make up your mind!

Hank How about ... overboard.

Hamlet Where are you going? Maybe I could go there?

Jake You better ask the Captain. Take him below, boys.

*Patti and Hank hustle Hamlet off stage. Patti fondles Hamlet elegant black frock coat and compares it to 'her' shabby clothes*

Hank *(Aside to Jake as they exit)* Total fruitcake, if you ask me.

*Lights dim on lower stage then come up on the Captain's Quarters which is the upper level of the stage. Hank and Patti lead Hamlet in and place him, now with a sack over his head, on a wooden stool in the middle of the room. Jake follows them into the Captain's room. Patti, Hank and Jake watch from the side as the Captain lifts the hood and sees the face.*

Captain *(shocked then delighted)* Hamlet ... Prince of Denmark ... as I live and breathe! My, my, my ... *(Grinning to his fellows)* ... Won't you be worth a pretty penny!

Hamlet *(Very apologetic)* Who? Me? ...

Captain Welcome, Prince, to our humble ship. Make yourself at home. Somebody pour the Prince a ... Chardonnay.  
*Hank jumps to the liquor cabinet and pours as the Captain does the introductions.*  
 Jake, our Master at Arms. *(nods sullenly)* And 'Patrick', our Summer Intern for Special Projects.

Patti *(bowing modestly)* We met up top, Cap.  
*Hamlet sips the tinniest amount. The pirates, note his abstemiousness, with hidden snickers.*

Captain Hank, the master of hospitality. And where is Smee! And, I am ... Captain Jack Flash ... at your service. The boys call me, Captain. The ship is yours ... in a manner of speaking ... while we ... Not exactly our specialty, but we've had a few, right, boys? And how is that uncle of yours? King now ... is he?  
*(Hamlet rises in anger then slumps back)*  
 Quite the lady's man ... as I recall.

Hamlet Don't! *(Hamlet is close to tears)*

Captain *(Sharp and sarcastic)* It's the talk of the Baltic, Hamlet. I mean, really.  
*Hamlet shrugs.*  
*(Thoughtfully)* Maybe you have enough money ... with you?  
*Hamlet looks puzzled.*  
 Did you bring any with you? Money? Gold? Jewels? Stuff for pirates?  
*Patti and Jake frisk him. Hamlet is annoyed.*  
*Captain watches.*  
 Never mind! We'll send a note to your folks. Let them know you're well ... but you need a little ... well ... quite a lot, actually ... to continue your holiday.

Hamlet *(Cautiously)* They won't pay.

Captain *(Sharply)* You telling me how to run my business! Do I tell you how to be a prince? We'll send them an ear! They'll pay!

Hamlet They don't even like me.

Captain *(smarmy, oily)* Oh, come on! These things blow over. It doesn't mean they won't send money. A good time in London ... for a Prince!

Hamlet You might as well kill me now.  
*Hamlet is about to start crying. Hank reacts with contempt. Jake barely hides his disgust. The Captain puts his arm around Hamlet.*

Captain That's awfully negative about the family. *(He pulls up a chair.)* You want to talk about it. Might feel better to share.

Hamlet *(Pulling himself together but then withering again)* Well ... Oh ... It's mother.

Captain It's always the mother!

Hamlet Ever since I was a little boy, my mother was always ... you know ... I thought ... It's so hard to be a good prince .... She never told me about ...  
*Lights dim as he starts into his story. Smee enters. The pirates gather close to hear, encouraging him to spill.*  
 My friend, Laertes ... like one time his little sister ... she's not so little any more ... she me ...  
*Lights fade to black, as Hamlet trails off.*  
*Suddenly the lights come back up. The Captain is recapitulating.*

Captain *(Scornful and mocking)* A ghost! ... Two ghosts ... That's rich! ...

Hamlet There were! He said ...

Captain You dimwit!

Hamlet But ...

Captain Ghosts ... On the bridge of my ship ... Ha! ... Ha! Smee did you see the ghosts? Smee?! ... Patrick? Jake?  
*They shake - no.*  
 Who said he was your father ... old King Hamlet ... of Denmark ... And told you that his brother ... that sniveling skirt chaser, ... poured poison in his ear ... when he was sleeping in the garden ... then married your mother ...

Hamlet With unseemly haste ...

Captain Ah, yes ... with unseemly haste ... and was chosen King ... when you were ... away at school. And you didn't even make the short list!  
This Ophelia, your girl friend ... she sounds pretty strange!

Hamlet She has issues.

Captain (*hissing*) You!

Hamlet You're rude! You know that!

Captain (*sarcastic rising to abusive*) I'm a pirate ... Mr. Prince ... in case you didn't notice! So you got these actors ... actors! ... to ... Ridiculous! Then you pretended to flip out. And while you were pretending, you stabbed the Prime Minister, who just happened to be Ophelia's father, who was hiding behind the curtains ... but you didn't mean to stab him ... Have I got that straight! While you were IN BED WITH YOUR MOTHER!!??

Hamlet NO! ... just near ... close ... sort of ... in it ... almost.

Captain And then they sent you to England ... with a letter ...

Hamlet (*quivering*) With a letter!

Captain ... to be executed!

Hank (*Aside to audience*) About f-ing time!

Captain (*sarcastic*) You have to admit it would seem like a pretty good plan at the time.  
I mean, really ... This is so over the top, Hamlet ... so ridiculous! Free advice ... Don't you ever utter a single word of this idiotic fable ... again! They'll laugh you off the stage.

Hamlet It's true!

Captain Someone wrote this for you? Right?  
*Hamlet looks at him blankly then shakes his head vigorously, 'no'.*  
One of those actors? It's not *you*! You're a Prince!

Hamlet This is so depressing. Claudius won't pay.

Captain Did it ever occur to you that you should be the King ... right now!

Hamlet King? Who Me?

Captain Yes ... You! The only son! Primogenitor! Divine succession! Once you're eighteen, it's automatic! Did you know? You are eighteen? *(Hamlet nods)* Maybe they didn't notice.  
*Hamlet is bewildered. He sinks back into passive resignation.*  
*(Intensely)* You! King!

Hamlet I feel so lost.

Captain Smee, he thinks he's a 'lost boy'! Run off to join the pirates! Have you ever heard of such a thing, Smee?

Smee It's been playing for years, Captain.

Captain *(sympathetic)* Hamlet, Hamlet, Hamlet ... listen. That ghost came to you out of your subconscious. *(Hamlet looks dumb.)* ... Actually a rather interesting passive aggressive manifestation of your super ego.

Hamlet What?

Captain Haven't you had any therapy at all! No wonder royalty is in trouble, Smee.

Hamlet He was very, very mad. HE just said, ... he TOLD me ... 'revenge'! I mean how do you have 'revenge' ... and still be a moral person? And what does 'revenge', as an imperative gerund *actually* mean?  
*Hank steps forward and does a throat slitting gesture with his dagger. Revenge is obvious to him. Hamlet shudders and turns away. Patti and Jake are disgusted.*  
 Ohhh ... I mean ... and still be a moral person?

Captain Ah ... you studied philosophy and grammar.

Hamlet I mean ... maybe ... some other ... it's so depressing.

Captain *(Aside to Patti, very clinical)* Depression and delusion, together, are very, difficult to treat. But not impossible.  
*(To Hamlet)* Do you really, really, want to beat this? I'll make a commitment, if your will? You and me, together.

*Hamlet looks blank, barely comprehending. Jake shakes*

his head 'no' to the Captain. The Captain comforts Hamlet. Hamlet shakes 'yes'.

Jake	( <i>Aside to Captain</i> ) He's a loser, Cap.
Captain	It may hurt, deep down. Be prepared ... be prepared for ... pain ...
Hank	( <i>Aside to Jake</i> ) Bet he's a fag! Ten bob!
Hamlet	I'm so pathetic.
Captain	That's a start. Hamlet, King of Denmark! Has a ring, don't you think!
Hamlet	( <i>wishing</i> ) King!
Captain	Yes .... Go on.
Hamlet	No! What are you driving at?
Captain	I see ... clear as day ... a therapeutic fulcrum!
Smee	A what?
Hank	[ <i>fart noise</i> ]
Captain	The bright light of insight and ... appreciation. ( <i>Hamlet is not comprehending</i> ). The light at the end of a long dark tunnel. A 'goal' - King Hamlet!
Hamlet	( <i>wistfully then shocked</i> ) They've got a King. I can't kill him!
Captain	We'll work that out later. Isn't it about time to ... open up ... about mother.
Hamlet	No!
Captain	Get particular.
Hamlet	No!
Captain	She won't eat you.
Hamlet	You don't know her!
Captain	What? What? Did she make you take <i>lute</i> lessons? Did she have big breasts? Out with it!

Hamlet (panicked) I have no money.

Captain Hamlet, sometimes, with committed clients ... regarding payment, we develop intimate 'special arrangements' ... *in small print*. It's part of therapy in action ... the intimate process of working together.

Hamlet I don't know what you're talking about.

Captain We'll go to Denmark ... together ... and face this thing ... head on. You, me, us ... you will a need proper staff, of course.

Hamlet Mother wouldn't allow pirates in the castle!

Captain Pirates! Heavens ... noooooo! ... We clean up very nicely.

Hamlet This is all a joke, right?

Captain An excellent Appointments secretary, Speechwriter and Protocol – Mr Smee. Top drawer tax collection. (*He points to Patti*). General Enforcement. (*Jake nod curtly, Hank bows, mockingly*) And as your Personal Coach and advisor on Strategy, Public Relations and Sound Bites ... yours truly, Captain Spin.

Hamlet (*Hamlet looks skeptical, then wilts*) This is too much.

Captain Ah ... The black dogs again. Well, I'll leave you to think it over. Take him below, boys. And watch him closely. (*To Hamlet, deeply sympathetic*) We'll get there, Hamlet. We will. Trust me, my boy! Lost no longer.

*Jake, Hank and Patti start to lead Hamlet off.*

Jake (*Aside to Captain as they exit*) You think you can make this little ... King of Denmark?!

*Captain waves them off, impatient*

Captain (*to Hamlet*) Don't you worry. King you will be! *Hamlet, Jake, Hank and Patti exit. Then Smee exits and the Captain shouts after him*

Smee. We'll lay over in Calais. This may take some time.

## *Lights*

**Scene Two***Captain's Cabin then Hamlet's Cell**Smee rushes in*

Smee                    Captain, all he does is talk to himself.

Captain                How do you know that?

Smee                    We can hear him, Captain.

Captain                If you can hear him, he's not talking to himself.

Smee                    You know what I mean! He didn't know we were listening!

Captain                I think, Smee ... I think ... that he wasn't talking to himself at all. Smee. He was performing ... his innermost anguish, which a normal person would keep to himself, Smee. Because, Smee? Because, he's a Prince, Smee, and a Prince is hard wired to think people, *the people*, want to know all that internal drivel. He's entertaining *them*. (*pointing to the audience*) And don't get ideas, Smee. You try it, and they walk right out.

Smee                    I don't get it.

Captain                (*oily sarcasm*) If God had meant you to get it, Smee, he would have made you an actor, Smee, an actor.

Smee                    You gotta come and hear him, Captain.

*Smee and the Captain go downstairs. Lights brighten in Hamlet's cell. Hamlet is standing on a chair with a noose of bed sheets round his neck. Hank has his sword drawn, as if that might stop Hamlet. Patti, and Jake are standing to the side. Captain enters and gestures for Hank to put away his sword. He does and moves to the side of the stage. Hamlet starts his famous speech.*

Hamlet                To be or not to be ... that is the question.  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer  
The slings and ...

Captain                (*mocking*) That has a ring!

Hamlet                ... arrows of outrageous fortune  
Or take up arms against a sea of troubles ...



Hamlet                   Leave me alone.

Captain                  Next point.

Hamlet                  I want to die!

Captain                  We're ready when you are.

Hamlet                  I could never be King.

Captain                  You just need someone to lean on.

Hamlet                  (resuming his soliloquy) ... What dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil ...

Captain                  Why don't I have Smee write you something ... less morose.  
Who'd want a king who blabbers such self-pitying junk.  
Something uplifting, for the little people. Something ... regal ...  
grand ...

Hamlet                  (Pondering) I don't understand.

Captain                  I mean a real speech!  
If you're going to be king ... and pay our 'fees' ... pay your own  
ransom, if you must be vulgar ... you ... we ... need something ...  
uplifting ... to rally the people ...  
Smee? What do you think?  
'Once a great nation ... rise up against the marauding foreigners ...  
my promise to the people' ... sort of thing ...  
Smee ... Smee ... Work with me!

Smee                    (Thinking out loud) 'I come to bury ... Claudius ... not to praise  
him.'

Captain                  Not quite it, Smee. But you're close. More ... (pondering,  
reaching) English ... 'block of stone ... sceptred isle ... ?

Smee                    That's not it, Cap, if I may say. Denmark's pretty much a swamp.

Captain                  Details, Smee, details.  
Jake? ... Aren't there Viking thugs in Denmark? ... Looting ...  
carrying off the virgins?

Jake                    That'd be Fortinbras, Cap. But, last I heard, he was heading for  
Poland ... to crush the peasants. Every other spring.

Captain	Fortinbras ... ( <i>lighting up</i> ) A threat to family values! Right?
Jake	Have to ask the virgins, Cap.
Captain	But he's not in Denmark ... now, you say?
Patti	He might be, Captain. You never know.
Captain	'Might' is good enough. Right! ( <i>turning to Smee</i> ) Try ... 'Save our virgins ... families ... from ... foreign scum? ... Vermin? ... Germs! Viking germs! 'Hamlet, the Exterminator.' What do you think, Smee?
Smee	Right O, Cap.
Jake	Hamlet ... the Exterminator?!
Captain	( <i>To Hamlet</i> ) Hamlet ... are you with us?
Hamlet	Are you talking to me?
Captain	Certainly am! King!
Hamlet	( <i>He brightens, hearing the magic word and continues his famous speech as if it is victory anthem.</i> ) For who would bear the whips and scorn of time The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely, The pangs of disp'z'd love, the law's delay, The insolence of office, and the spurns That patient merit of th' unworthy takes ...
Captain	Enough ... enough ... ( <i>Captain starts taking the noose off</i> )
Hamlet	( <i>Now happy and laughing</i> ) THE KING! ... To be or not to be ... KING!
Captain	... King!
Hamlet	KING! <i>Captain helps him down from the chair. Congratulatory Handshakes all round.</i> <i>Jake bows deep and hands him a dagger as a gesture of his new position as King. Hamlet recoils and lapses back into cowardly despair.</i>
	I can't. I can't.

Captain	Oh, yes you can!
<i>Smee leads Hamlet off. Exit</i>	
Jake	He's a loser, Jack.
Captain	Nooo ... he's an opportunity.
Hank	He's a fag, Captain, ten bob.
Captain	Is that such a problem ... in this ...
Hank	A King's gotta bonk the Queen!
Jake	Basic
Patti	Standard operative procedure, Cap!
Hank	Fuckin' eh!
Captain	Isn't that some kind of discriminatory stereotyping. You're right! You're right! We'll check it out. Hank, Jake ... Patti and I ... are going to talk.
	<i>(As Jake and Hank are leaving, the Captain says to them.)</i> We'll take him to Madam Kazam's. No fag could survive ten minutes in that ...
	<i>Jake exits</i>
	<i>Captain turns to Patti</i>
Patti	In management, my dear, one must be adaptable, flexible. Consider all the different approaches. There's always more than one way to steal the horse.
	What would you do here? Your Plan A and your Plan B?
Patti	<i>(thinking)</i> If Claudius won't pay to get him back ...?
Captain	<i>(prodding)</i> Who does Claudius <i>not</i> want to see in Denmark?
Patti	The rightful heir to the throne!
Captain	Standing up straight ... dressed like a King.
Patti	Instead of an undertaker! You're not thinking to ...
Captain	Speaking like a King ... Some kick ass marketing ...

*Captain exits*

Patti *(She shrugs and turns to the audience)*  
 Just let me tell you that just about every time he's gone wacko like this, we've all doubled our money. So cut him some slack. He's very clever.  
 And if you're wondering how I manage, as a girl pirate?  
 Very nicely, thank you very much.  
 Beefy treats whenever I want.  
 If the Captain steps out of line ... 'help, Jake'. If Jake steps out of line ... 'help, Hank'. If ... you get the picture.  
 I pull my weight. That's key. I'm very light.  
 But then, we don't do much,  
 except sail around. The guys scrub the deck, sew up the sails.  
 Do the cooking. I do strategy with the Captain ... once a week.  
 And I've got more gold in my sock than you do, I bet.

*Exit, Lights*

### Scene Three

### *Calais / Trouble*

*The neon sign in the window tells we're in the famous Calais brothel called Trouble, (if you can read backwards). It is much like a western saloon, long bar, small stage for the bump and grind, a few tables, and honky-tonk music from a player piano that starts or stops magically. Upstairs there are a few cubicles, separated by curtains. The Bouncer, Herbie, should be recognizable as the Ghost of Old King Hamlet. He sits on a stool at the bottom of the stairs (later at the top) checking the patrons in and out, if and when they take the girls upstairs. A few girls hang about. There are no customers yet.*

*The Captain, Hank and Patti are at the bar conferring with the Madam.*

Captain *(Pleading with the Madam)* A favor. Please! One favor. After all these years. All the money! Is it too much to ask? From your most loyal customer?

Madam By the quarter hour, Captain.

Captain A play. Can we do a little play tonight? I have a special guest.

Madam *(Shocked)* A play!

Captain A play.

Madam What kind of a place do you think this is?

Captain ... I, we ... are not actors!

Captain You fooled me.

Madam But that's not hard, Jack.

Captain Just a few scenes. You know, Gertrude, Queen of the Danes?

Madam 'Queen of the Dames' you wrote it for me, darling!

Captain The Danes!

Madam I knew that.

*Madam snuggles up to the Captain, cooing ...*

Alright, just for you. Just once.

*... as she searches his pockets, extracting some coins.*

*He notices, but does nothing to stop her.*

But we need a King. We need a King. (*She calls to the bouncer*)

Herbie, you want to be King of Denmark, tonight.

Bouncer Been there ...

Madam Don't be bitter. Just a few scenes. For the Captain. Herbie. Herbie!

Come on. Come on.

Captain Just a few lines. I've written them out for you. Just say the words.

Madam What are you up to, Jack? Who is this special guest?

Captain (*whisper*) Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

*Madam is floored, and then excited for the fun of it.*

Madam Come on, Herbie, this'll be fun.

Bouncer Is Claudius in the play?

Captain Well ... yes.

Bouncer Then I'm not.

Madam Herbie!

Bouncer Hamlet?

Captain Of course, he's in the play.

*He gestures to Hank, who will play Little Hamlet.*

Bouncer                    He's a little wiener.

Madam                    Don't talk like that. I will be Gertrude, Queen of the Danes, his mother! Herbie. You and me ... together at last, as King and Queen, Herbie! Just like you promised.

Bouncer                    And Ophelia?  
*Captain whips a flimsy white gown out of his gym bag. It's the standard Ophelia number, ballerina style, but very unlikely brothel wear. He holds it up in front of Patti.*

Captain                    I brought my own. What do you think?

Madam                    (enticing) Herbie!

Bouncer                    OOOOh ...All right!

Captain                    (to Hank, aside, hissing) Do exactly as I said. Let's just see what he's made of.

Patti and Hank exit, to put on their costumes.  
 There is pounding on the door.  
*Madam Kazam opens the door cautiously but then seeing her good customers, Jake and Smee (and some others) she welcomes them effusively. They stumble in, rather drunk, with Hamlet who is cold sober and scared shitless.*

Captain                    (to Jake)  
 Observe the lad close.  
*The music starts. The whores jump to it. One is doing bump and grind on stage, others hustle the pirates. Some head upstairs.  
 Smee tends bar.  
 Jake guides Hamlet to a chair where he sits, very prim. He takes out a book and tries not to be noticed.  
 One of the pirates sits with Hamlet and put his arm around him. He is not just uninterested but uncomfortable and wants him out of the way so he peak at the whores. Patti glides by in her Ophelia dress. Hamlet stares at her. Jake and Captain observe.*

Captain                    You satisfied that he'd motivated? Satisfied?

Jake                    Ten four, Captain.

Captain                Well, we're not done ... not yet.  
 (To Smee, the bartender) Our friend, here, needs a drink.

*Hamlet gesticulates madly to Smee, behind the bar, 'no drink' then, seeing he's going to get one anyhow, that it be a 'short one'. To no avail. A huge tankard is prepared. The Captain slips some drugs into the drink, with a wink to Jake and the Madam.*

Smee/ Bartender      Coming right up.

Jake                    This will fix you up, Prince. Down the hatch!

*Hamlet drinks a very little and quickly becomes tipsy. He stares at Madam/Gertrude and the Bouncer, trying to place them.*  
*The Madam approaches Hamlet.*

Madam                 So this is ... (mouthing the words – 'Prince Hamlet')! Well, how do you do!

Jake                    Genuine article ... we think.

Madam                 Does he...?

Jake                    We're checking.

Madam                 He's cute. Looks like ... Herbie.

*Madam and Bouncer exit*

Captain                (Announcing) Ladies ... Are there any ladies? ... And gentlemen ... Guys ... We have a rare privilege this evening and a great privilege. Madam Kazam, Calais' biggest ... and baddest ... and oldest ... and best ... establishment ... presents ... not the usual acting ... for which we pay plenty ... but then does anybody who gets into Trouble ever expect the usual! ... For your entertainment ... your edification ... your enlightenment ... this evening, on our stage, our own, the one, the only, Madam Kazam in the great Norse classic, Gertrude - Queen of the Danes, specially adapted by yours truly ... For our very special guest ...

*He gestures to Hamlet but doesn't say his name. Captain*

exits.

*Lights dim in the saloon and lights up on the small saloon stage. Curtains open.*

*Gertrude/Madam and Old King Hamlet/Bouncer are seated on a bench/throne in mock Greek king and queen costumes. Little Hamlet, played by Hank, dressed all in black, sits between them. The 'adults' are on raised cushions or boxes to make Hank/Little Hamlet smaller, child sized by comparison. Gertrude fusses over him obscenely. The Old King tries to reach over and touch his wife but Little Hamlet pushes him away. Their push-and-shove continues through out the playlet.*

*Hamlet is woozy and stares pie eyed at the stage.*

Bouncer/O.K.Hamlet

Goths and Celts and Normans bold  
Will bow to you and yield their gold.  
Viking thugs I'll bring to dust  
And make safe our land from their cruel lust.

Gertrude/Madam

King of kings, my warrior god,  
All Denmark doth your ventures laud.  
Duty to Denmark is you fate.  
But always know that Hamlet waits  
*Who is biting his arm*  
With me, your loyal Queen ... at Ellsinore.  
(*Gesturing to Hamlet*) Your son.

Bouncer/O.K Hamlet

Woe that I am gone from here  
To my life of danger and of fear...

Gertrude/Madam

And pity him (*gesturing to little Hamlet*) our little lark  
The glorious sun of great Denmark.

Bouncer/O.K. Hamlet

Guard him safe, my Queen.

Gertrude/Madam

Adieu, my king, adieu!  
Alone, alone, I will do my duty.  
And Brother Claudius will guard the booty.

*Old King Hamlet ostentatiously takes the Crown from his head and puts it on Little Hamlet. He is thrilled. Then OK Hamlet puts it on a hat stand, conveniently close to the throne and beyond the reach of Little Hamlet.*

Bouncer/O.K Hamlet

Adieu Adieu. (*Exit*)

Gertrude/Madam (To Little Hamlet) Come and cuddle ... come and cuddle .... Hammie ...

*She covers his ears and says to the departed OK Hamlet ...*

And may the whores of all the Baltic rot your cock off.

Hamlet (shocked) Mother!

Gertrude/Madam So here am I, but never lonely!

*Captain as Claudius enters the little stage.*  
For ... comes to me ... my one and only!

*Hamlet, sitting with and Jake, has to be restrained from jumping up.*

Claudius/Captain My Queen.

*Gertrude and Claudius embrace on stage. Little Hamlet is even more agitate, at now being pushed aside by Claudius. Claudius tries on the crown. Gertrude smiles. Little Hamlet tries to get it away from him. Claudius holds it high over his head and Little Hamlet can't reach it. Simultaneously Claudius is kissing Gertrude. Little Hamlet is in fury.*

Gertrude Uncle Claudie, will keep that safe for you, Button.

*As Gertrude and Claudius make out on stage Ophelia enters, slutting about the saloon and then up on to the stage. Little Hamlet, on stage, is torn between her and the crown. But when he tries to get up and go to her he is yanked back by a collar and chain round his waist, which keeps him secured to Gertrude's throne. Ophelia is always just of reach. The crown is closer. All this dumbfounds big Hamlet.*

Gertrude How long must I wait? How long?

Claudius/Captain Not a moment longer.

*They embrace passionately and head to the brothel stairs.*

*Claudius puts the crown back on the hat stand. They*

*exit up the stairs and into one of curtained cubicles. Little Hamlet is left on the stage. He finally reaches the crown and puts it on his head and loses interest in Ophelia.*

*Hamlet, entranced by Ophelia, slowly gets up. Jake tugs at his sleeve and gives him a few coins. Hamlet looks puzzled but puts them in his pocket.*

*OK Hamlet, enters at the top level and takes his place as the Bouncer on a stool at the top of the stairs.*

*Ophelia entices Hamlet to the stairs. [Music – honk tonk Bolero] and moves up the stairs and disappears into a curtained room. Hamlet follows very nervously.*

*Jake and Smee move so they can see what's happening upstairs. The Captain re-enters, also watching closely.*

Captain *(to Smee)* Observe him close.

Bouncer Not so fast, hot stuff! This'll cost you.

Hamlet I don't have any...

*Then he remembers Jake's coins which he takes from his pocket, fumbling. He pays.*

*The Bouncer, grinning, gestures to Hamlet that he can enter. Hamlet draws the curtain and goes in. We see a covered figure in bed awaiting him.*

*Hamlet strips, nervously, folds his cloths, [Ham it up, Hamlet!] He goes to the bed.*

*The figure in the bed lifts the sheet to welcome him.  
It is.... Gertrude!*

*Hamlet grabs his pants and runs downstairs and leaps into Jake's arms.*

*Upstairs Patti/Ophelia peaks out from the other curtained room, looking for him and is very annoyed as she sees him fleeing. Madam and the Bouncer are in stitches. The whole bar is laughing. Even the Captain.*

*Hamlet takes his pants and runs from the stage.*

Patti That was mean! *(She exits.)*

Madam Not a bad, tush, honey. I'm sure you'll get another shot.

Captain That wasn't in the script!

Madam What's a script, Jack? (*She smooches him.*) Just a little fun.

*The piano resumes*

## *Lights*

## Scene Four *Hamlet's Cell*

*Lights up dimly on Hamlet in his cell.*

*There is a small observation window with a sliding panel in the door so the prisoner can be observed. It is apparent from the backlighting that no one is then observing.*

*Hamlet, on his small cot, slowly wakes, very hung over. He tries to sit up and discovers he is collared round the neck and chained to the wall, low down. He can barely sit and certainly cannot stand.*

*Patti appears in pirate garb.*

Patti You're talking to yourself

Hamlet I have a tendency ... You're a girl?

Patti The guys think you're ... crackers

Hamlet      It's not fair! ... It's just not fair! ... You remind of ... Were you at  
the bar last night!  
(*pining*) Ophelia.

*She strikes a harlot pose from her performance in the last scene. Hamlet looks, remembering, then aghast.*

Hamlet (shocked and angry, coldly changing the subject) Would you be so kind as to bring me something to eat. (Patti doesn't move.) Please. Please. Dear sweet angel ... angel among ... the beasts ... devils ... thieves.

Patti Watch your mouth, Prince. I am certainly a thief, but ... a beast ... ummm? (She taunts him sexually, he recoils) So what would you like? To eat. You have to choose.

*Captain appears at the observation window in the cell door to observe. Hamlet can't see him.*

Hamlet Chose! Chose! Please don't make me chose!

Patti What would you like for breakfast, Prince?

Hamlet Oh, that this too, too solid flesh would melt ... That was mean, last night. You know that.

Patti We have Eggs Benedict, Mexican Omelets, Oatmeal, Hash Browns, fresh Grapefruit Compote, Mangos, Rib eye, Granola ... Rice Krispies ...

Hamlet Stop ... stop ... stop.... You chose for me ... dear sweet ... tell me you're name ... angel of mercy ...

Patti First, you tell me what you want for breakfast. Captain says you have to chose, and quickly.

Hamlet Oh God ... the Captain!

Patti Make up your mind!

Hamlet Oh ... I don't know! Sometimes ... oatmeal is ... when you're ... you know ... but once it made gag ... My father loved hash browns but I think they're just too heavy for first thing ... Are the mangos fresh? Do you do the omelets with purple or white onions? ... Oh ... I don't know! What do pirates eat?

Patti Make up your mind! Do you have one?

Hamlet (Trying to changing the subject) So ... do you like the work? Pirating? What do you do, actually?

Patti Slit throats ... count the money ... the usual pirate stuff.

What do you want for breakfast? You have to decide. It's an exercise. The Captain says.

Hamlet Then ... just bring me the average pirate breakfast, on a gold plate!

Patti So ... do you like *your* work ... Prince? What do you do ... actually? Other than mooching off pirates?

Hamlet I ... prince ... mostly. It's quite difficult. Not like the magazines ... I don't count the money personally.... matter of fact I've never even seen the counting. There's a money counter to do that. A specialist. ... I don't know him personally. Come to think of it ... I don't think I've ever actually seen the money! ... Isn't that something?

Patti Any girl money counters?

Hamlet I don't know? Why not? Why not!

*Patti approaches him and starts bump and grind then fondling him.*  
*Gertrude/Phantom appears.*

Patti You got a special ... Princess?

*Hamlet is responsive but he can't stand up.*

Phantom/Gertrude Naughty, naughty ...

Hamlet Well ... yes and no ...  
*Patti moves away*

Mostly no ...

*She returns*

Being a Prince is pretty stupid. You know what a virgin is?

Phantom/Gertrude Hammie, what a thing to say!

*Patti shakes 'no'. We see the Captain laughing silently at the window. Phantom/Gertrude disappears.*

Patti *(Getting sexually more aggressive)* What's a virgin?

Hamlet *(Aroused, confused)* A Prince ... must marry ... Mother ... Mother!

Patti You made up your mind what you want for breakfast?

Hamlet Dear God ... Too soon! Take this burden ...

Patti I'm out of here! Got to go!

*Exits quickly. Slams the door.*

Hamlet (Shouting) Scrambled eggs ... scrambled eggs!

*Patti re-enters instantly with an elaborate tray and stand and scrambled eggs. She strokes him like a dog.*

Patti Good boy. Good boy. That wasn't too hard, was it?

*Hamlet eats ravenously.*  
*Captain enters. Hamlet tries to get up, stumbles, and spills his food. Patti cleans up Hamlet and the Captain speaks then exits with the tray.*

Captain Please don't get up.

Hamlet Thank you.

Captain Well, it has been decided ... though not by you ... that you will assume the throne of Denmark in three weeks! We land in two! We have a lot of work to do in the mean time, my boy. A lot!

Hamlet What are you talking about?

Captain In no particular order ... you're too fat ... you talk to yourself ... have no self confidence ... you've left your people in the lurch ... You can't fight ... down right indifferent to the theft of your crown ... what else?

Hamlet (dejected) Obsessed with my mother.

Captain Glad you brought that up.

Hamlet ... Pigeon livered and lack gall ...

Captain Of course. Lassitude ... Oh, let's be frank, depression. I hear voices! That's bad.

Captain A veritable garbage dump of mental ... a total wreck. But ... we're going to fix you up! Can't have the king slouching around the castle like a zombie. I ... slipped a little something in the eggs.

A little picker-upper.

Hamlet I thought I was supposed to *choose* my breakfast!

Captain You did! You did! The Zing was in everything! Double dose to start. Whatever you chose. The hash browns the oatmeal ... You'll love it! Trust me.

Hamlet I can't even think what to say!

Captain Then ... we're making progress already. Smee will have your speech ... a grand speech ... ready soon ... Just *say* what we tell you! You'll do fine. And ... no more thinking, please!

Hamlet Did I tell you you're ... impudent ... presumptuous ... illegal and you don't need to keep me chained up like a dog!

Captain But what if you run away?

Hamlet Run away!

Captain How would we collect the fees, dear boy?

Hamlet You don't trust me!

Captain Well ... no.

Hamlet (*Getting angry and loud*) This is ridiculous! Get this f-ing thing off my neck ... or ...

Captain (*Yanking his chain*) Or ... you'll ... what?

Hamlet You know who you're messing with!

Captain Your day begins at six. Calisthenics before breakfast. Dueling, eight to eleven ... with Jake ... he's exceptional ...

Hamlet My uncle is King of Denmark!!!!

Captain Not for long!  
Light lunch. Nap - one to two-thirty. We work quite late.

Hamlet You've got no right to treat me like a dog!

Captain Two-thirty, everyday, you and I, one on one, *talk* about how you're

feeeeeeling, focussing, getting in touch ... motivation ... bonding.

Hamlet I'm not your ...

Captain After that - Rhetoric and Public Speaking ... Advanced Baltic Politics ... Media Management ... four to six ... every day ... You'll be ready, Hamlet ... you'll be set! You'll be King!

Hamlet Get this fucking thing OFF MY NECK!!!! I am a Prince!!!  
*Captain flips the collar snap and he is free in a flash.*

Captain I brought you our first flyer. Want to see? The Copenhagen agency will it have them all over Denmark four days before we land. Every household gets Two! What do you think?

Hamlet *(Reading)* 'Claudius, the usurper, is dead meat! Hamlet for King. Rally at Ellsinore. Saturday.'  
*(Hamlet slumps)*  
 They'll kill me!

Captain If you don't kill them first!

Hamlet You can't do that!

Captain Well, it's too late now.

Hamlet What do you mean, 'it's too late, now?'

Captain It's gone. Ten thousand copies left last night. Can't be recalled. Done. The fix is in. No tuning back.

Hamlet Don't I have any say in this?

Captain Hamlet, what's the point of retaining professional advisors if you ignore their very expensive advice!

Hamlet What if I say 'no'.

Captain Is that a firm and final, utterly definitive statement? Or just a hypothetical, albeit menacing sounding, rhetorical question?  
*(Hamlet hesitates)*  
 We could always send you to England.  
 I have a note for Immigration. Right here. Should I read it to you?  
 "Dear Sirs, This is to introduce Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, whose earlier scheduled arrival was unfortunately delayed ... by circumstances. Please refer to, and implement, my earlier

instructions attached as Appendix A. Yada, yada, Sincerely, Jack  
Fla ... Claudius, King of Denmark.”

## Hamlet NO!

Captain Denmark or England? Chose!

Hamlet You are a sneaky bastard.

If you have a problem with England ... I have nothing to do with those entirely personal grievances.

Hamlet You are taking advantage of the situation.

Captain To our mutual advantage, Prince ... King ... We'll make you King!

Captain *You invaded our ship. Nobody asked you.*

Hamlet I'm being abducted.

Captain ... and attending upon you, at your request, in lovely Denmark, as your 'support team'. Get you settled on the throne ... as King ... A worthy, strictly professional challenge for me.

And for you ... your rightful place ... Guardian of the Realm ... and Keeper of Keys! And, not coincidentally either ... in a position to look after the little matter ... not so little ... of our fees ... (*reading proudly*) "For consultation and advice ... re throne of Denmark, regime change ... etc etc. Plus Disbursements."

Captain (oily) Oh, that's premature. We haven't landed. Trust me. You're on deck in ten minutes. Don't keep Jake waiting, if you want my ... free ... advice. Big mistake.

*Captain bows and exits*

*Hamlet slumps to his cot. Patti re-enters and sits beside him, and starts a shoulder rub, that becomes very sexual. Hamlet is slow to react, but he does.*

Hamlet                    This is depressing.

Patti                    Feel anything?

Hamlet                    Like what? A loosening of the cervical vertebrae ...

*Phantom/Gertrude appears again. She is shouting, 'stop ... no, Hamlet ... stop ... Come and cuddle'. But we hear no sound. Hamlet eventually notices her and gestures, 'buzz off'.*

Patti                    Like a little ... zing?

Hamlet                    Sort of ... like ... itchy?  
*Hamlet gets rambunctious.*  
 Hey ... this is cool ...  
*She tickles him.*  
 Stop that!  
*He tickles back. Their play gets sexual with a strong hint of climax as the lights fade.*  
*The Captain is watching at the window, smiling broadly.*

*Lights*

**Scene Five    *Deck of the Ship - The Dueling Lesson***

*Lights up. Dueling mat rolled out across the stage. Hank is buckling Jake into his chest protector. They both wear classic ruffled pirate shirts.*  
*Jake warms up, doing some practice thrusts, parries.*  
*Hamlet rushes in, trailed by Patti.*  
*He is now noticeably hyper.*

Hamlet                    Up for a little zip zip, Jakey, boy! I'm hot! Let's do it!

Jake                    A little 'zip zip'?

Hamlet                    Think you can you handle me?

Jake                    Oh ... I think so.

*Hank hands Hamlet a chest protector.*

Hamlet Well, bring it on, big guy. Give it your best shot. (*Handling, mocking, the chest protector*) So ... you wear this shit when you ... like ... attack another boat? Or what!

Hank We attack ships, Prince. Ships.

Hamlet (*eying Jake*) So ... why do you wear it *over* the pirate shirt? Spoils the effect?

*Patti and Hank are trying to get Hamlet into his. Jake watches Hamlet struggling, politely scornful.*

Hank Ouch. Not so tight!

Hank It's supposed to be tight!

Hamlet Ohhhh.... I didn't know. I've never been a pirate before! ... Tighter ... tighter!

Hank You're not a pirate!

Hamlet Am so! Pirate ship. Pirate food. Smell like a pirate. Pirate captain. Pirate duel.  
(*Pointing to Patti*) If she can be a pirate, I can be a pirate! Equal rights!

Hank For pirates, not for princes!

Hamlet What's the difference?

Hank The shirt, man, the pirate shirt!  
Us ... you. Us ... you. Get it.

Hamlet Well, I'll buy a shirt, then. Can't be that much.

Jake You don't got any money, remember!

*Hamlet starts warming up, parry and thrust up and down the mat, surprisingly impressive. Jake takes notice. Captain enters upper level, the bridge of the ship, and watches.*

Hamlet I'll pay you when we get to Denmark. Just *right now*, I don't have any money.

*They don't respond.*

OOO Kay ... Jake.... you're about my size. Two out of three ... four out of five ... seven out twelve? Can you last? For your best ... pirate ... shirt! What do you say, mate?

Jake Mate! You saying, you think you can take me?

Hamlet Not the one you're wearing, either. It'll be all ripped ... and smelly.

Jake Go for it, Prince ... if you got the balls!

*They take en guard position and start dueling Hamlet never stops talking. He's trying to show off for Patti.*

Hamlet So how long you been a pirate, Jake? ... Think I could get the hang of it? I mean I really like the feel of the ship ... up and down ... up and down (*as he bobs and weaves in the dueling - showing off*) And up the rigging ... swinging in the breeze. Sleeping out on the deck. Great sunsets. (*Hamlet briefly has Jake on the defensive*) Attacking bad guys in their *ships*! ... That was a hit!

*They pause. Jake is shocked. Other Pirates now gather to watch. As the match resumes the pirates start to cheer on Hamlet.*

Counting the gold! That's pirate work ... I could get into it.  
*(Hamlet winks at Patti)*

*Their back and forth takes them off stage, then back on.*

*Jake now realizes Hamlet is more worthy and he visibly steps up the pace and starts to dominate.*

And I loved the brothel scene! Great piano. Chick in there (*looking to Patti*) ... just like Ophelia. Spitting image. Go there often?

*Jake scores a point!*

Ohhhhhhhh ... the Prince takes a hit!

My shirt! My shirt. My kingdom for a shirt!

*Pirates laugh. The duel resumes. Their fencing takes them off stage again.*

*Smee enters on the bridge. Lights shifts to Smee and the Captain.*

Smee I thought for an opening ... to strike the right note ... for the first day ... The 'first footprint of the new regime' ... sort of thing ... something with a ring ... short ... quotable ... to the point ... not too dry ... or glib ... or funny ... but not dour ... memorable

without being pompous ..

Captain Short and to the point, yes...

Smee ... Defiant ... brave ... but not foolhardy ... classical ring ... but still not too elevated ... not the least acknowledgment that the odds are against us ... not mawkish...

Captain Smee ...

Smee He's a Prince! ... Has to be grand ...

Captain ... Smee ... Smee ...

Smee ... 'new dawn' ... sort of thing ...

Captain SMEE!

Smee 'Let the word go forth ... to all nations' ... 'we will fight on the beaches ...' Are we are landing on a beach, Captain? ...A big rock be would better. 'One small step for man, one ...'

Captain SMEE!

Smee Yes Captain.

Captain Something about 'Viking thugs'. Remember.

**Smee** Captain ... we're the Viking thu-

Captain SMEE!

Smee Yes Captain?

Captain We're 'creative maritime entrepreneurs'. ... Our mission statement is 'the liberation of dead capital'! Smee ... *They* are ... foreign ... germ ... thugs!

Smee (slowly absorbing) Foreign thug germs

Captain Fortinbras is ‘nasty greedy and ugly’! ... Remember! And the virgins, Smee, remember the virgins! ... Stay on message, Smee! You’ll confuse the Prince.

Smee Let me work on this some more

Captain

You do that, Smee.

*Smee exits. Lights down on Captain though he remains in place.*

*The duelers re-enter, cut and thrust back and forth across the stage. Hamlet is talking a mile a minute as they duel and still doing well enough against the expert, Jake .*

Hamlet

*[The Hamlet's Rant]*

Ellsinore. I hate that damn castle, Jake. No privacy. Zero. You know ... It didn't matter where I was ... there was *always* somebody listening. I'd take a hovel in the forest any day! And the Tours! Claudius had us on summer hours until November! English teachers at every f-ing key hole! (*A mighty thrust*) Like they'd never seen a prince before!

Why me! Why me!

Talk about pressure!

And the stupid questions! 'Do you think you would have been happier if you had a Collie dog?'

One guy with a beard followed me around for a month, writing down every word I said! Every word! Can you believe it!

I mean, leave me alone! Can't a prince just babble ... a little ... in private! (*Waving his sword at the invisible tourists*) Leave me alone!

*They resume the dueling. Jake does a fencing move.*

*(To Jake) Good one. Show me that again!*

*[The rant continues]*

And the scholars! Oh my God! *The worst!* (*Hamlet mimics the scholars*) 'Freud, Jung and the Bipolar Hamlet'. 'Hamlet and the Pirates, Not Where, But Why?' 'The Nordic Mother and the Black Prince.'

*Hamlet loses it, stops the duel and shouts at the audience.* Stop staring at me! You try being Prince! (*He chokes back tears*) Yes ... I have to learn to cope... but you're not making it any easier!

*(Shouting) Three thousand word by Friday! 'Compare and Contrast ... Hamlet and Moby Dick'!*

*Jake puts his arm around Hamlet's shoulder and comforts him.*

Jake

Hey, Bud, it must be tough but ... you're all right. Give the guy a shirt, Hank. He's all right.

*Hank, of course, has a pirate shirt handy, in a beautiful gift box. Hamlet calms down, opens the box. He is thrilled. He*

*recovers his edge. He kisses the shirt, raises the shirt over his head in triumph. Pirates give him a hand.*

Jake Let's take a break, kid! ... Then I'll teach you some real pirate tricks! For a Prince, you're ... all right!

*Hamlet rips off the chest protector (Velcro straps) and puts on the pirate shirt. He glows, very proud. He races up the steps to the bridge to show the Captain. Lights shift to the upper stage.*

Captain Very good! Very good! Caught Jake by surprise! That doesn't happen often. 'Prince impressed pirates'. Good on you! Are you proud of yourself? *Feel* good about your day, so far?

*Lights focus on Captain and Hamlet*

Hamlet *(triumphant)* The Pirate Prince!

Captain Let's keep that to ourselves.

Captain So.... how you are feeling ... so far? Deep down?

Hamlet *(Pause, sly)* More fully human ... more alive to the ironies of the existential terror and to man's ... to a Prince's ... inability to control his fate ... and to the futility, but simultaneous essentiality, of his quest for justice ... having regard, of course, to the fundamental illusion of the very notion of free will.  
And yourself?

Captain Zing does bring out something in you, Hamlet, my boy.  
But maybe we should cut back to one tab ... just for the first few days?

Hamlet No!

Captain Hamlet, my boy, my boy ... We're going to make magic in Denmark, you and I! Magic! The Come Back King. They'll be telling the story for a thousand years! The Speech on the Beach. The Great Apology. The People Rally. The Throne Room scene! The new Hamlet ... confident, decisive, bold, charming ... My greatest triumph!

Hamlet Me!

Captain It is written! Just stay on message. And ... what would you like

for breakfast tomorrow?

Hamlet (*Very snappy*) Scrambled eggs and one sausage, Sir. And two hits of Zing!

Captain One Zing is enough.

Hamlet Two! Haven't felt so good in months ... years. I feel like a ... king!  
... Bold, confident, decisive ... Two ... (*imperious*) I'll have two!  
. I mean, if Jake's that good, I better have three!

Captain Hamlet ... decisive, bold, confident ... but ... just a little speedy.  
Speedy equals reckless. You won't be able to think ... process,  
plan, calculate ... internally ... quietly ... to yourself.

Hamlet Is that how you do it?

Captain I'm always weighing the odds. Calculating the options. Silently to myself.

Hamlet Pondering the consequences, silently ... to yourself.

Captain A huge decision tree ... in my head.

Hamlet Reasoning backward ... from the desired result to the effective strategy to operative instructions to subordinates.

Captain Entirely situational. Flip in a flash. Expediency rules ... for pirates.

Hamlet Goal driven and totally focused.

Captain But entirely flexible. Captain or king. Same technique, I would say.

Hamlet Leaving to the last possible moment the decision...

Captain ... who gets the gold ...

Hamlet ... and who get up close with Jake and takes the short knife.

Captain A bit crude ... but ...

Hamlet And, however difficult ... in the clinch, at the last minute ... always weighing and governed by the moral consequences of your every deed.

Captain ... Hamlet ... Noooo! ... Hamlet ... Whatever gave you *that* idea!

Hamlet Not the 'moral consequences'? Or not 'governing your every deed'? Just 'some deeds'. No 'weighing'? What?

Captain Hamlet, Hamlet, Hamlet ... I'm a pirate.

Hamlet I'm a Prince.

Captain Nooooo you're not! Not any more! Look at your shirt ... mate.

Hamlet Ba! Wardrobe! The heart of a prince! Here!

Captain Hold that pose! Very grand. I like it! But you're not King, yet! Get it! The point of the exercise! Save the moral consequences jive for later. Get it! Gets in the way of tactical operations.  
Hamlet ... tomorrow we will *decide* ... in anticipation of our arrival on the Danish shore ... I will define the options for you ... and *you will decide* ... boldly, confidently ... which one of your many enemies you will stab ... first.

Hamlet Oh no I ... we ... won't!

Captain Oh, yes you will!

Hamlet NO, I WON'T!

Captain Hamlet! I'll make it easy. I'll do a short list and you ...  
*Jake returns to the stage below and Hamlet runs away from the Captain and down to Jake.*  
YOU CAN DO THE SHORT LIST ...SMEE ... SMEE ...  
*Smee joins the captain*  
*Hamlet races to put his chest protector back on.*

Jake (Approaches) All set for some serious action, mate?

*He hands Hamlet a small dagger in a scabbard with straps and motions to the similar one he wears strapped to his thigh. Hamlet straps it on.*

Hamlet Sexy. In-close action. Two blades at once. Super cool.

Jake This is a Fortinbras speciality. Ever heard of him?

Hamlet Oh yeah. His Uncle and my Dad ... like this. (Gestures with

*(crossed fingers)* But Fortinbras ... he's just ... just an oily, muscle-bound, wus. At least that's what I hear. You only know what you hear.

Jake Think again, Prince.

Captain Jake! For God's sake, don't get him *thinking!*

*They start dueling. Jake stops the action and starts instructing on position, form, etc., a stern, even brutal teacher. Hamlet is good but Jake is far better. They wear daggers strapped to their thighs like six guns for advanced dueling techniques that Jake is teaching.*

*[The following dialogue can be arranged to fit with the stages of the duel.]*

Hamlet I can take him. No sweat.

Jake Get your butt in!  
Elbows down.  
Parry forward ... forward ...  
Now if this were Fortinbras ... just suppose ... he'd (*he demonstrates a move*)  
Fortinbras is seriously excellent. Just hope you don't get matched up with him. Pray.

*Jake flips Hamlet's rapier out of his hand then is on him with dagger drawn ready to stab in the gut.*

Hamlet That was ... dirty!

Jake I'm not a prince.

Hamlet Show me that again.

*Jake demonstrates the wrist twist which dislodged the rapier. Hamlet practices, and then tries it on Jake, at first slowly, then faster.*

Jake Parry forward ... drive forward ...

Hamlet When should I get the dagger out?

Jake Don't try to fight with it. Experts only. It's only there to stab him when he's down ... defenseless.

Hamlet Right. Defenseless.

Jake Fortinbras ... saw him twice ... once in a duel ... once in a battle ... he's quick, mate, very quick ... on the right side ... But not on the left. There's an opening there.

Captain *Watching from the bridge, he shouts to Hamlet*  
THE WINNER IS ... CLAUDIUS! ... HAMLET, OH ...  
HAMLET

*Hamlet ignores him*

Jake What's that about?

Hamlet Oh ... he's on my case ... about Denmark. You know...

Jake The man is a nag. But he gets the job done.

Hamlet Show me that again.  
I get it. Fake right ... thrust from the left.  
Cool.

*They duel back and forth. Hamlet is holding his own, which means doing very well indeed. Suddenly he stops.*

*(Confidentially, aside, to Jake) Jake, do you like your job. I mean ... killing guys, for money?*

Jake The work itself is usually challenging, interesting. Pay is good.  
Travel. The clients are little odd.

Hamlet But the ... target ... do you care ... what he did? I mean ... the 'why'?

Jake I'm just the knife. Do what who I'm told ... mostly.

Hamlet Doesn't it trouble your conscience? Killing. Murder.

Jake Captain looks after those details.

Hamlet but ... but ...

Jake Ham, it's simple. This Claude dude poisoned your old man.  
Fucked your mother. Stole your country. Right? So ... kill the bastard. If you're afraid ... hire a professional!

Hamlet But it was months ago. And I have no proof.

Jake I don't need proof. I need a retainer.

And by the way, there's a risk premium for doing a king. Time and a half.

Hamlet I can't ...

Jake You can't ... therefore I exist. To do your dirty work.

Hamlet That's very metaphysical.

Jake Tell the Captain ... he'll set it up ... if the price is right ... I get a rush ... you get the Crown ... Captain gets some gold ... I get some gold ... maybe there's even some gold left for you.

Hamlet This is impossible! I can't ask you to do that!

Jake So ... do it yourself! It's a personal rush! I'll train you up, for a flat fee. I got lots of other contracts. Don't bother me  
*They resume their practice, then Hamlet stops, again beset by doubts.*

Hamlet How can I ...? Whadda ya ... just go up and ...

Jake Jesus Christ, man, challenge him to a duel! Stab him in an f-ing duel! For the honor of Denmark! Blah, blah, blah. It doesn't have to be in back alley, if you're squeamish about ... the morality of it!

Hamlet A duel!

Jake A duel! Set up a duel! It's morally ambiguous ... perfect for you! You can take the old fart easy as pie.

Hamlet (*pondering*) ... A duel. Show me that move again!

Captain (*from the Bridge*)  
One last chance. You pick ... Hank or Jake ... I'll chose who they stab ... first.

Hamlet No!

Captain Smee will pick a name from a hat.

Hamlet NO!

Captain You don't even need to know who ... for Pete's sake!

Hamlet NO! NO! NO!

Captain	SMEE ... SMEE ... <i>Smee and Hank enter</i> Put him in irons! In irons! To England, Smee! ENGLAND!
Hamlet	NOOOOOO!
Captain	<i>(in a towering rage)</i> Get out the GANGPLANK!
	<i>Hank, Smee and Jake (reluctantly) tie Hamlet's hands behind his back. Smee and other pirates set up the gangplank, protruding out from the bridge.</i> <i>Hank and Jake drag him up the steps by the Captain and station him at the foot of the gangplank.</i>
	<i>Patti enters</i>
Captain	<i>(to Patti)</i> Time to cut my loses. <i>(To Hamlet)</i> You're hopeless!
Hamlet	I ... we ... will NOT murder Claudius!
Captain	Who said anything about murder? Not I ... not I!
Hamlet	Oh, come on! We're heading straight for Denmark, to seize the throne; kill the king ... and the Queen ... steal the gold! What would you call it?!
Captain	<i>('spinning')</i> What would I <i>call</i> it? 'Just deserts' ... 'Delayed speedy trial' ... 'spontaneous moral correction' ... 'post hoc self-defense' ... 'Pre-emptive second strike' ... 'Post-traumatic stress revenge'. 'Murder!' Why, the word would never pass my lips.
Hamlet	People won't buy that!
Captain	Why not! You're better looking than he is!
	<i>Captain takes out his sword and starts pricking Hamlet's bum, forcing him out on to the gangplank.</i>
Hamlet	Ouch! Quit it!
Captain	I've given you every opportunity. You want the throne, or don't you?
Hamlet	Stop that! Ouch! I'm thinking!

Captain You are pathetically indecisive!

Hamlet Maybe ... Stop that! Quit it! Ouch!

Captain You are denying your destiny! Too much thinking! Be gone, Prince!

Hamlet *(Hamlet turns to face the Captain)*  
I mean, *what* would I say? 'Hi folks. I'm back! Fabulous trip! Hey let's kill the King! Fall in, guys!'

Captain Baaaa ... 'false blood stains the nation ... mourning forty days in the dessert of my soul ... summoned to duty ... destiny demands ...' What's the PROBLEM!

*Hamlet is driven down the gangplank*

Hamlet Ouch! Ouch! You just don't send Jake, to do your dirty work!

Captain Options?

Hamlet It's your dirty work. You do it!

Captain Mine! Mine! All I want is the gold! It's your throne!  
Get going!!!!

*Hamlet is now at the end of the gangplank*

Hamlet Ouch! Ouch! All right! I'll do it! Alright! I'll do it!

Captain Repeat.

Hamlet I'll do it.

*Everybody brightens up. Hank brings him back from the gangplank. Jake undoes his wrists. Patti hugs him.*

Captain Good boy. In the right circumstances you can be very decisive.  
Take him below. Tomorrow we land in Denmark!

*Jake and Patti take Hamlet below to his cell. Jake leaves.  
Hamlet and Patti embrace.*

Hamlet You're coming, right?

Patti Well ...

Hamlet You promised!

Patti We never discussed the details.

Hamlet What details?

Patti Let's be frank ... what about ... Ophelia?

Hamlet She doesn't need to know. You could be ... my 'administrative assistant for domestic affairs'. Is that a job?

Patti I'd need a place in the country.

Hamlet So would I!

Patti Ah ... *My* place in the country.

Hamlet Well, yes, I guess. *Your* place ... that I could visit.

Patti But not unannounced. I might be busy. (*She kisses him*) Bearing little sparklies in gold boxes ... for your sweet.

Hamlet Well, yes, I guess. You wouldn't tell my mother, would you?

Patti Would our arrangement upset her?

Hamlet Only if she notices that some of her sparklies are missing. She counts them, every morning.

*They embrace again, Patti exits.*

Hamlet Tomorrow, Denmark, your Pirate Prince returns.  
 My pirates ... bring me to my duty.  
 My pirates ... who train me to be a King.  
 ... My pirates!  
 My pirates ... more true and direct  
 Than all in Claudius' court.  
 More harsh and kind, stronger and more fair,  
 Mocking and more gentle ...  
 How sweet the life.  
 And my Captain ... exceeding sharp, but basically a prick.  
 More cunning than a King? I think not.  
 Tomorrow Denmark.  
 I shall have my throne ... a Queen for the Castle ...  
 and a second helping in the country.

*He kneels at his cot to say his prayers*  
.... Dear God, forgive me, for I know  
Exactly what I do. And I will do it.

*Lights dim on Hamlet as he seems to fall asleep.  
Captain appears on the bridge. He looks down benignly on  
Hamlet.*

Captain *(To the audience)*  
Ladies and Gentlemen, Prince Hamlet is resting  
and unavailable for further comment.  
He has asked me to take your questions.  
The itinerary for tomorrow will be available  
first thing ... tomorrow ... with your Danish.  
*Patti enters and joins the Captain to field questions*  
Third row ...  
*An inaudible question from the audience*  
His qualifications?  
You mean, other than pure blood, 100% rightful heir, legitimacy?  
You want to say a few words on that? *(He hands the mike to Patti)*

Patti He's handsome, an excellent public speaker, fabulous athlete, very thoughtful, definitely doesn't rush into things ... and energy!!! We all think he'll make a fabulous King.

Captain At the back. Can you all hear? ... 'The rumors about ...' I can tell you categorically the rumors circulating about a so-called 'brothel bust' ... with a beautiful art student from Lyon ... who was virtually stalking him ... Is that the one you heard? ... Or the one in the bar? We can say this much ... it's only a rumor ... a rumor, pure and simple gossip. It happens to every eligible prince of his age. Next question.  
At the front.

*Another inaudible question from the audience*

Patti Our numbers show he's well ahead in four of seven demographics, tied in two and trailing only in one. We're sure the people will welcome him with open arms. Period. On the aisle.

A Voice (a barely intelligible remark from the back, ... Mother ... whore! ...)

Captain NO questions on his mother. No. No comment.

*(the voice at the back is seized by security guards and*

*hustled out of the theatre, shouting about 'free speech')*  
Well then, I claim the last word here, speaking as the Captain,  
I, we, are all very, very proud of him.  
Really. I mean that from the very, very bottom  
of the darkest corner, of my heart.  
Who would have thought that sniveling wimp  
who jumped ship in scene one, would have the spunk,  
the drive, the passion, the damn fool recklessness,  
to take on nothing less than the conquest of Denmark!?  
We are proud, damn proud - as guys!  
We'll get him into Denmark and set up as King, just as I promised.  
And before anybody notices we're there, we're gone.  
A totally and completely professional operation.

*Lights up dimly on Hamlet who is now awake watching.*

Hamlet                    Who are you talking to?  
Captain                    Them.  
Hamlet                    Who?  
Captain                    Out there, in the darkness. Those who judge.  
Hamlet                    You're trying to be famous!  
Captain                    Heavens, no!  
Hamlet                    Are you talking to yourself?  
Captain                    NO, I am not!  
                                  Go to sleep.

*Lights*

## Act II

## Scene 1

*Gertrude's Bed Chamber*

*A very large, royal bed is center stage. Gertrude is sitting, propped up, her hair in curler. Someone lies covered beside her. We see only the side of the head, the ear. She is mixing some poison and about to pour it in his ear when the body stirs. She sighs and puts the poison on the night table. Claudius emerges from under the covers. Before he is sitting, she is talking.*

Gertrude

And what choice do we have? Answer me that? What choice?  
 What choice do I have? I, Gertrude, Queen of the Danes?  
 'Just passing through! On my way to Poland.' So he says.  
 'Passing through'! With a thousand troopers! 'Peasant rebellions.'  
 And you say - 'Right this way, Prince Fortinbras. My castle is your castle. Come on in, for a brew. Stay the weekend. Try the wenches, Fortie!'  
 What a wimp - Claude! What a wimp!  
 My real husband had more guts! Other things, he was lacking ...  
 but he would never have ... He spent his life ... he gave his life ...  
 God bless his dear, dear, departed soul ... driving those thugs out of Denmark the last time! And you! You! You come along and (*indignantly*) seduce his wife ... and tell the marauding thug nephew of his worst enemy ... you tell him ... 'Fortie, stay the weekend'!

*Claudius is now sitting, rubbing his ear, listening, with decreasing patience.*

Claudius

*I did not say ... 'my castle is your castle' ... He arrived ... unannounced ... with the cream of his troopers ... and they ... and they ... said, 'We're here to try the wenches'. Not ME! And they invited themselves in ... after they were in! And what did you expect me to do, sweet Queen? What, exactly? Me and what army?!*

Gertrude

Well, you should have an army!

Claudius

Sweetie pie, you said, *you* would supply the army.

Gertrude

No ... I said you could be *in charge* of the army ... So how was I to know! How was I to know! You should have known! You were his brother!

Claudius In charge of marketing boards ... and ...

Gertrude I can't believe you didn't know.

Claudius For the thousandth time ... I did not know there was ... is ... no army. Period. I just didn't.

Gertrude He just took the army budget and *paid* it over to the Norwegians! *Paid* them to stay away! He didn't fight them! The lying snake. What kind of a King is ...! What was he *doing* all those years?  
*(She imperiously silences Claudius before he gives the answer)*  
 He was a lying snake *and* a whoring slob!

Claudius You have to admit the exchange had a certain elegant simplicity.  
 ... But I swear, I did not know.

Gertrude Once or twice a month ... after a big battle ... to relax ... Would I complain? But what battles! Every night! Every night! ... No army! No army! I can't believe it!  
 And *you* make excuses for him! You're just as bad! Weak!  
 Useless!  
 What about the poor, people of Denmark. And what about me!

Claudius *(Aside)* Remind me not to fall asleep in the garden.

Gertrude What was that!

Claudius Nothing, lovie, Nothing. Just talking to myself.

Gertrude Not a good thing to do in Denmark!  
 I am the Queen. I have a position to maintain.  
 You are the King! Do you know what that word means! It means – do something! I don't care what; just get rid of those thugs and that - Fortinbras.

Claudius Well, we could just pay him the 'rent'. 'The arrangement, as he calls it.' He's smooth. 'Really hate to be a bother ...', he says.  
 Quite a nice chap about it ... more or less.

Gertrude Well ...

Claudius The problem is ...

Gertrude Excuses, excuses ... you're as bad as Polonius!

Claudius                    That's really low!

Gertrude                    So pay him.

Claudius                    Ahhhh ... There's no money.

Gertrude                    No money!

Claudius                    Nada. Zippo. Zero. I checked in the cellar. It's all gone.

Gertrude                    Gone!

Claudius                    And the liege lords ... they're the one's who send in the money, in case you've forgotten ... they aren't sending it ... the money ... gold ... to us ... you and me ... the King and Queen ... anymore.

Gertrude                    How dare they!

Claudius                    Well, they dare ... because ... they *say* they won't pay until we get rid of the Viking thugs, who are behaving very badly. Or so they say.

Gertrude                    Are they bargaining with us! With the King and Queen! Bargaining?

Claudius                    Well ... yes.

Gertrude                    If they don't send the money, then ... how can they expect you protect the virgins!?

Claudius                    Why don't you ask them? They're rather rude to me.

Gertrude                    His uncle ... Voltamand ... yes ... I remember him ... he had a way ... with the ladies.

Claudius                    Well ... it seems old Voltie has let the boy loose to do his dirty work. Looking at him ... young Fortinbras, no doubt, has a way with the ladies too. All too good looking for a 'rent collector'... if I may say.

Gertrude                    Really ... Maybe I should talk to him.

Claudius                    Your charms, my dear, are extraordinary ... but ... how can I put it ... delicately ... he's not nearly as mature as yourself.

Gertrude You know *nothing*! Young Princes, away from home, often prefer a mature voluptuousness, with its depth and substance. Skinny girls are boring!

Claudius He does have his eye on ... Ophelia.

Gertrude She's a clotheshorse and an airhead!  
But I'm sure I can reason with Prince Fortinbras. I knew his uncle ... quite well.

Claudius Why am I not surprised?

*She gets out of bed and puts on a very regal housecoat and lets her hair down. There is an obvious rustling behind the curtain hanging between the pillars behind the bed. They both look, and shake their heads knowingly.*

Gertrude And ... how is Polonius doing?

Claudius Oh ... I hear, he's up and about ... (*We see a crutch through the curtain*) ... on crutches and, I hear, more or less, up to full ... wind.

Gertrude He's ... so loyal to the family ... through thick and thin.

Claudius It's just amazing how he seems to know absolutely everything that goes on in the castle. Everything!

*Claudius draws the curtains and Gertrude rushes to Polonius*

Gertrude Oh, and there he is... Polonius ... You've been hiding on us. You old dog, you! And ... you are on the mend. This is so wonderful. It was such a nasty fall. Hamlet was so sorry. Really. You were so good about it!  
You know, he ... he didn't know it was *you*! He thought it was ... (*she stops herself*) I mean, if he's known it was *you*! He loves you like his own father! I can't stop telling you how grateful the whole family was ... is. And Hamlet ... too ... of course ... but he's out of town.

Polonius Ah ... nothing ... nothing ... but a nick ... a scratch ... on the transverse colon ... missed the liver completely ... Nothing ... nothing ... Good for me! Lost thirty pounds. Thirty big ones. Can't thank that boy enough!  
But ... but ... but ... My lady ... let's not dwell on this old thing ... this decrepit wreck ... this bag of guts ... It walks ... it talks ...

Claudius As we hear.  
Ah, Polonius, we have a question. About the ... in the ... cellar ...  
Where is the (*he looks around then whispers*) ... 'gold'... You  
know ...

Polonius Ah ... the ... It is safe! (*quickly changing the subject*) But ... the  
news! The news! Stupendous news! Of the greatest importance ...  
that shakes the country ... good news, if you will ... perhaps ...  
depending. ... Though I would not pretend to ... verily it may be  
bad ... depending on the constellation of affairs and the prism of  
particularity ... I would not distress you ... if distress it be ... or  
unduly excite ... if you ... if it be ... for I ... a humble servant ...  
would not presume to know ... though some things I know ... But  
...

Claudius Six words! Start now.

Polonius Hamlet has returned to Denmark (*counts five on his fingers and adds ...*) ... yesterday.

*Gertrude and Claudius are shocked. They wave Polonius off and he exits.*

Gertrude Send Prince Fortinbras up to see ... me.

*Claudius exits*  
*Lights*

**Scene Two** *The Graveyard*

*Lights up on two gravediggers in the misty graveyard,  
standing idly, leaning on their shovels.  
Captain Spin enters, followed by the Reporter.*

Captain (*To the Reporter*) And here are two average Danes, *vox populaire*,  
... 'writhing under the yoke of illegitimacy and foreign oppression'.  
Let's ask them the way to Elsinore?

Grave #2 Yer almost at it, Cap.

Captain Which way?  
Grave #1 You think we be just average, Cap?

Captain Well, not just 'average'. It's an expression. Statistically *mean*.

Grave #2            We not be *mean*, Cap'n.

Grave #1            Aye, very gentle.

Grave #2            Lay you to rest gentle as a baby.

Grave #1            Kindly, kindly, we covers you up ...

Captain            Just a turn of phrase, a statistical abstraction ...

Grave #2            Aye, like a most loverly nurse.

Captain            Ellsinore?

Grave #1            And sings to you, for a ... little extra.

Captain            Ellsinore!

Grave #2            Intrapranneurs, we is. (*He gives them some coins*)

Grave #1            That way, Cap'n. And calls us when ye needs us.

Captain            Thank you! And ... Gentlemen, just behind us, coming shortly, Hamlet of Prince of Denmark ... returned, to claim his throne.

Grave #2            (*Sounding coached*) Ohhh ...that be great news for we peoples of Danemark!

Grave #1            (*Also sounding coached*) Hurray to Hamlet!

Reporter            And how do you think the rest of Denmark will react to Hamlet's return?

Grave #1            Well ... we writhes 'n suffers in the yoke of the aduldering king and the foreign germs.

Grave #2            To arms ... to arms! (*They raise their shovels*)

*Captain and the Reporter proceed on*

Captain            As you can see, the people yearn for Hamlet, desperately. There's no controlling it. You don't need to believe me. Go up to the Castle ... and see for yourself, the totally spontaneous outpouring ... of patriotic love ... for Hamlet ... at three. South Gate. Even money Claudius will be on the midnight train to Zurich.

Reporter                   Three?

Captain                   South gate.

*Jake enters, gives the gravediggers a few coins on the sly and they exit right. The Reporter exits left. As soon as the Reporter is gone, the Gravediggers come back and stand grinning, waiting for their next task.*

*Hamlet enters left. He is half dressed and reading something. Jake is chasing him with the jacket of the formal wear for his debut at the castle. Jake struggles to get the distracted Hamlet into the jacket.*

Hamlet                   This is just fantastic. The 'speech on the beach'. Did I say this? 'My forty days of anguish in the ... desert of my soul ... have ended. I have returned to Denmark's shore. Renewed and strong ... to lift the yoke of tyranny ... claim my crown ... and sing !!!!! of truth ... and justice ... and liberty for all!' Fabulous! Fabulous! *(as Jake finally gets him into the jacket.)*

Jake                   Would the Captain put words in your mouth, they weren't true?

Hamlet                   Sure ... *(Looking to the Captain, cheerily)* ... why not? *The Captain gestures and the gravediggers approach Hamlet. One carries a skull, which he hands Hamlet. He receives it with some disgust.*

                         What's this?

Grave #1               Yorick.

Hamlet                   *(Confused pause)* ... Who?

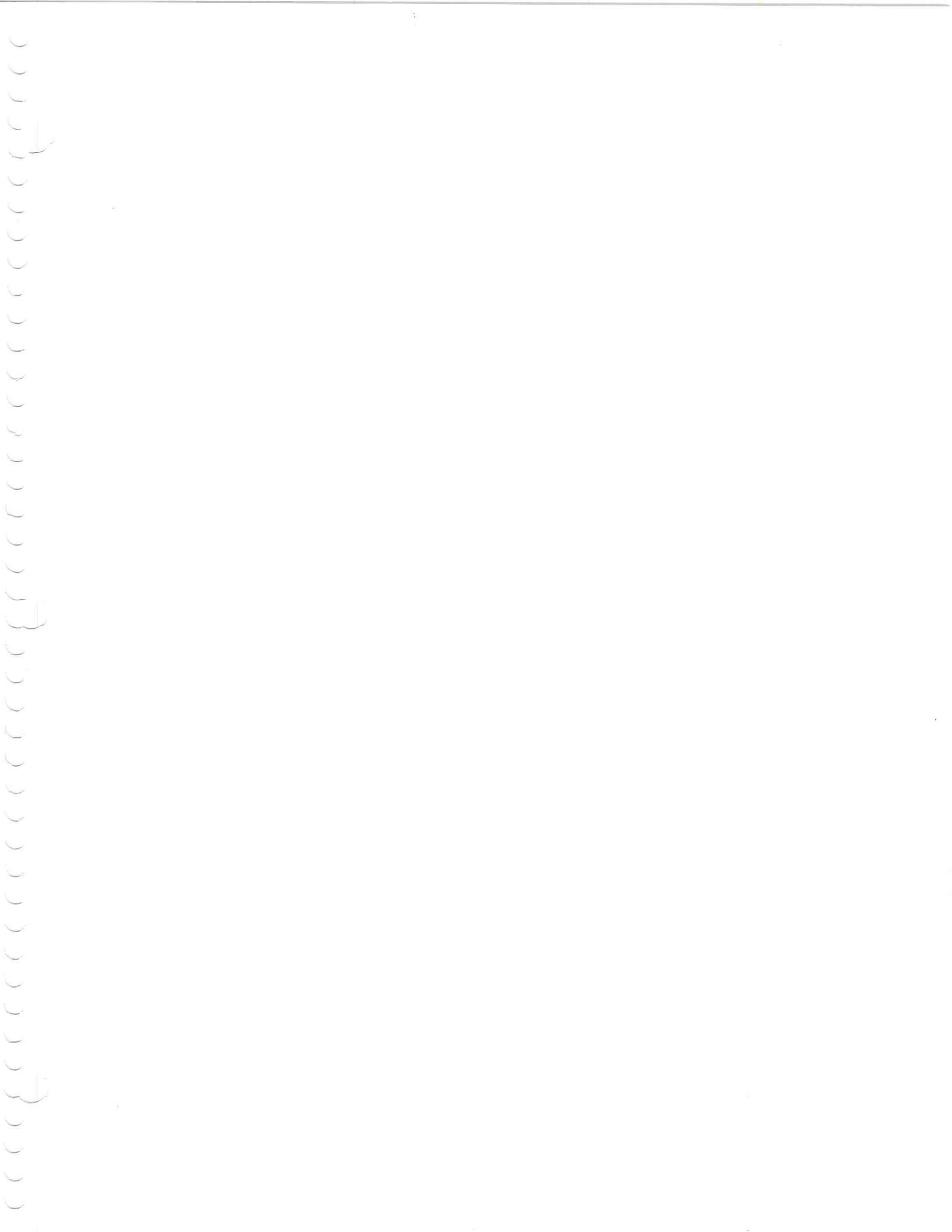
Grave #2               *(Knowingly)* Yorick!

Hamlet                   Who?

Grave #1               'Im what raised you. The Jester ... Yorrrick.

Hamlet                   *(Very embarrassed)* Ahhhhh ... Yorick? Did I know a Yorick?

Captain                   *(Reading from a press release)* 'On his way from his triumphant landing to Ellsinore, where huge spontaneous crowds awaited, Hamlet stopped at the local



graveyard and chatted with the attendants about his dear departed tutor, the famous jester, Yorick.'

*Hamlet holding the skull aloft in the pose, totally puzzled, and the gravediggers assume positions of profound reverence and admiration. Jake snaps the picture. The gravediggers shake hands with Hamlet; get a couple more coins from the Jake and then exit. Hamlet doesn't know what to do with the disgusting skull. He tosses it off stage.*

Jake Ready, then?

Hamlet (*Hamlet pops a Zing*) Of course I'm ready. When have I not been ready? I've been ready since yesterday! Claude is going down! Goin' down!

Patti Just stick to the script.

Hamlet If there's one thing Hamlet *never* does, it's forget his lines! Let's roll!

*Patti and Jake take Hamlet off stage. Gravediggers reenter. Captain Spin motions the Gravediggers forward. We see him coaching one of the Gravediggers in the pronunciation of a word. Lights up on another elevation of the stage where the Radio Host sits at a table with a radio mike. A sign above says 'All talk, all the time'. King Claudius is his 'guest' on the daily phone-in show.*

Radio Host We're live!

Claudius ...So, in all these very difficult circumstances, as well as the budget cutbacks, we're *very proud* of cheese production in the fourth quarter, up almost ...

Host Cut the crap, Claude, let's talk about the serpent thing. Just exactly *where*, do you say, were the bite marks? And why was there no autopsy?

RING  
*The Captain, having placed the call, hands his cell phone to Gravedigger #1*

Host Next caller ... You're on the air.

Gravedigger #1 'at be the King?

Host Live King, at your mercy! What's your question, bud?

Grave #1 I 'as seen young 'amlet at the docks dis mooorning. With me mate, what got da (*struggles with the pronunciation*) leper – acy and da scurvy.

Host Sorry about you bud, bud, but what the question?

Grave #1 He touched 'amlet's robe and the ... laper-acy disappeared. Wut say you?

Claudius What! ...cure leprosy! scarvy?

Grave #1 A army, he got, King. Ten thousand troopers!

*Claudius sputters*

RING

Host Next caller ... you're on the air.

*Captain hands Gravedigger #2 the cell phone and he speak to Claudius.*

Grave #2 He be very handsome. No pox marks.

Claudius Well ... well ... he's young ...

Grave #2 How old be you? We give cheap rates ... if ye comes along without wigglin'.

*Claudius flees the stage.*

Host We'll be back after these messages.

*Lights*

**Scene Three** *Gertrude's Bedchamber*

*As lights come up we see Gertrude sitting on a throne like chair. Her bed is to one side. Handsome Fortinbras is kneeling before her, kissing her outstretched hand, very gallantly.*

Gertrude      Oh, come, come, my gallant Prince. You flatter me and I am ... much too old to give in to the flowery blandishments of a handsome Prince, do you think?

Fortinbras    ...Without exaggeration, Your Majesty, My Uncle, the King, said he remembered your charms vividly, and insisted that I convey his fondest regards.

Gertrude      You have his dash, his eyes ... his hips ... But, of course, I can tell ... neither are you the shallow sort ... to be flattered by some Danish Queen. On your way to Poland, is it?

Fortinbras    Ah, yes, some business discussions with the peasants, you understand.

Gertrude      Fortie ... may I call you Fortie? .... Of course I can ... maturity has its privileges .... You should have sent word *in advance*, that you were coming. I had no chance to get your rooms ready. But ... anything ... anything at all ... you or your troopers want or need ... please ... tell me, personally. Your uncle never hesitated to let me know what he wanted. And I expect you to be the same.

Fortinbras    Indeed.

Gertrude      Funny thing ... I was thinking ... what I was thinking ... even before your most timely visit ... was ... what a strange twist of fate ... fate ... that your uncle and I ... so fond of one another, back then ... almost ... he and I. You understand. And then ... he and my eventual betrothed, the late King Hamlet, should end up fighting, fighting, fighting ... all that time. And now this dreadful misunderstanding about the rent. Had I known? And he and I were just this close to one united Denmark and Norway. It's ironic, don't you think?

Fort           Uncle said I would find you ... insightful ... shrewd. And, about the rent.

Gertrude      And your troopers! They have cut quite a swath!

Fort           They are not so eager to get at Poland, now. What can I say!

Gertrude      I had no idea my dearly departed had fallen behind. And now, Claudius! No idea. The Queen is always the last to know, that's what they say in Denmark. And it's true. But my confession is that ... I am expensive. There. I've said it! Expensive. Very expensive.

I think, I think, that was ... your father's insight! ... That's why he didn't ... I've always thought that! ... I shouldn't have said that! Please don't tell him! Please. Ironic, isn't it! He's the only one who could afford me!

Fort Perhaps, if my uncle had known ... before you remarried ... it was so sudden.

Gertrude I admit, it was a little rushed! What can I say? Claudius is so protective.  
He does try hard for Denmark. He spends hours on the Cheese Board ... hours!  
But let's face it, about the rent; he has to share the responsibility with his brother.  
It must be so upsetting to your very gracious uncle ... who sent you to visit with me ... and yourself, of course. And I feel just terrible about it. Just terrible.  
Oh ... It's me! I'm ... the cause ... the source ...

Fort A regal Queen of a great nation ... cannot be denied her privileges.

Gertrude But, *really*, in the end ... it *is* all Claudius' fault, isn't it!

Fort And your son, Hamlet?

Gertrude I am so worried about him, Fortie. He just took off three weeks ago, with some friends from school. I think they've gone to England! And not a word!

Fort Did you know ... he is raising an army ... in the north?

Gertrude My Hamlet? It must be another one! Fighting?

Fort I didn't think he was the sort.

Gertrude Oh, he's not! He just hates ... fighting ... palace intrigue.  
He gets that from me. Did you know he is getting a Diploma in mediation?  
Oh my! An army! Goodness gracious. I wonder how he's paying for an army?  
Fortie, can I say something to you, in deepest, deepest confidence. We are being frank. Hamlet ...and Claudius. They are not close. Not even friendly. Not even on speaking terms. I think there could be trouble.

Fort Trouble! Between the King and the heir apparent?

Gertrude What if Hamlet challenges him to a duel ... and wins!

Fort Hamlet?

Gertrude Well ... he does dueling at his school ... instead of squash. And Claudius is pretty much out of shape. He's so fat he can hardly ... What do you think?

Fort You would be free to marry who wish ... from those who seek your hand. And a Regency. Uncle would be ... no doubt!

Gertrude I had never thought of that! And the dreadful matter of the rent ... would be ... resolved! And you could take my adorable little Hamlet on one of your adventures. Something very, very dangerous and far, far away.

Fort But ... if Claudius should win the duel ... we still would have to collect ... the rent. You understand.

Gertrude Claudius won't win. I just know ... alas.

Fort (*eying her knowingly*) Not ... poison swords!

Gertrude Heavens, I have never ever even touched a sword. I was thinking of the poison cups.

Fort The anguish for you! Husband and son!

Gertrude I will survive.

Fort Poland will wait a few days, no doubt. (*He gets up to leave.*)

Gertrude Well, then ... ta ta, for now, Fortie. We'll speak again, shortly. My home is your home. And your troopers here in the castle? Your best?

Fort Biggest. Quickest. Strongest. You will be safe.

Gertrude The very thought makes me *tingle* with safety ... in this dangerous time! But their quarters must be so cramped!

Fort Shall I send one ... for your personal protection?

Gertrude Oh ... I'm sure they have other things ... more important than ...

As Fortinbras exits Vlad, a large 'trooper', appears, they exchange words and Vlad takes up a position as a guard. Gertrude sizes him up, smiles at him fetchingly, takes off her housecoat and slides back into bed leaving the covers open. Vlad moves swiftly to the bed, dropping his clothes along the way and slips under the covers.

*Lights out*

## Scene Four

## *Outside Ellsinore*

*Polonius, Ophelia, the Gravediggers and others, await the arrival of Hamlet. Gravediggers have placards, 'Hamlet for King!' 'Vikings out Now!' Similar placards are piled close by.*

*Ophelia is nervously preening herself. She is dressed formally for a royal tea, big hat, tight dress, upper class vulgar.*

Laertes (Rushing on) They're coming! They're coming! (He keeps looking off stage, very excited.)

Polonius Devine. Devine. Why would you even ask, my angel?  
*She frets. Laertes is exasperated.*

A confection of ideal beauty! More lovely than my dream of heaven. More dazzling than the sun! More radiant than...

Laertes Just don't start with the singing

Laertes You'll flip him out!

Ophelia I'll flip him out! Ohhh! If you knew what I went through!  
What I go through every day!

Laertes Ya ... ya.... the nails, the hair, the soaks, the scrubs....

*Laertes exits*

Polonius                    A gossamer of pixie dust ... a ... How much was that dress?

Ophelia                    Daddy!

*Laertes re-enters with a placard – 'Hamlet the Terminator!'*

Laertes                    They're at the bridge! (*Very excited*) He's taking over, Pop! He's taking over!

*Laertes shoves a leaflet in his father's hand. Polonius looks at it, and read in shock, sputtering ...*

Polonius                    'Viking Thugs ... Out Now ... Hamlet for King!'

*Polonius, exasperated, crumples it and stuffs it in his pocket, then grabs the placard from Laertes and throws it off stage.*

The KING is coming, any minute! You don't want him to see this!

*Trumpet blasts and roaring crowd from off stage.*  
*The gravediggers start waving their placards.*  
*Hamlet's security staff (Patti and some of the pirates, now dressed as an FBI presidential security detail, discrete walkie-talkies etc.) enter first and case the crowd very carefully.*

Ophelia                    (*To Polonius*) Don't introduce me as if I were a school girl! And don't make me seem too eager!

Polonius                    Introduce? You know Hamlet, darling.

Ophelia                    I mean Fortinbras, Daddy. Hamlet ... yawn!

Polonius/Laertes            Ophelia!

*Another trumpet blast. Captain Spin enters, now in a sharp black pin-striped suit, wearing a remote headset with mike, giving directions to his crew. He is clearing a path for Hamlet's entrance.*  
*Hamlet enters, dressed in a spiffy red cutaway jacket, with gold piping, over frilly pirate shirt, tight black pants and high, black, suede boots. He's just this side of 'grand danseur'.*  
*Hamlet acknowledges the deafening cheers of the crowd, waves and shakes hands, like a seasoned campaigner.*

### *Captain wheels in a podium*

Crowd *(On and off stage)* ... Hamlet ... Hamlet...

Hamlet *(At the podium and walking around, waving)* ... Thank you ... thank you ... *(Hamlet is wired but in control, slick, working the Crowd)*

*Shouting dies down and he starts the stump speech ... which he fumbles badly.*

My forty days of anguish, at the desert ...

*He loses his place. The Captain, aghast, gestures to Hamlet to continue.*

... are strong and renewed with tyranny and justice for all.

### *The Crowd saves him*

Crowd Hamlet ... Hamlet ...

Hamlet Hey folks! ... Your Prince is back!

Let the land be free ... and the people ... Danish!

I hear the King (*with scorn*) has some Viking visitors up at the Castle!

*The Captain is trying to direct Hamlet back on message but he seems to be doing fine on his own, but not for long. The Captain starts to relax.*

Crowd 'Out now! Out now!'

Hamlet But, not for long! Not for long

Crowd ... 'Out now! ... Out now!

Crowd (chanting) 'Let us in! .... Let us in!

*Hamlet leads this chant and the Captain cringes  
The crowd onstage moves off to the castle, herded by the  
security staff.  
Captain Spin, trying to manage a recovery, motions for*

*Hamlet to 'meet and greet'.  
Laertes rushes up. They hug.*

Hamlet      Larry, baby!!! Good to see you bud!  
*(to the assembled) Who's the quickest Dane of all! And the most famous nose in all of Denmark! (Grabs him in a butch embrace)*

Laertes      *(Aside) Who are the dudes? (Pointing to Captain Spin, who nods.)*

Hamlet      *(Aside in reply) Security ... you know ... (further aside) advance men, writers, wardrobe, fencing coach ... This is big! We'll talk.*  
*Laertes is giddy with the prospects and grabs a placard and rushes off after the crowd.*  
 And Polonius ... dear, dear Polonius ... words can not convey how sorry I am ... for that terrible accident ... I felt so bad ... It put me in touch with something much deeper ... It was a ... I learned so much ... Can you find it in your heart?

Polonius      A nick, nothing my boy, nothing at all, better man for it, lost fifty pounds! The task at hand! The task at hand! Seize the day.  
*(Aside to Hamlet) Fortinbras is no friend of Denmark.*

Hamlet      Your loyalty to Denmark must be rewarded.  
*(Aside, to Polonius) Where's the gold?*  
*Trumpet blasts, Gertrude and Claudius enter. She wears a lot of jewelry. He is plainly dressed and follows two steps behind.*

Claudius      Hamlet, what a surprise!

Gertrude      A kiss for your old mum.  
*Hamlet bows, almost mockingly.*

Claudius      Rosencrantz and Guildenstern ... they're well?

Hamlet      Gentle Gildencranz and clever Rosenstern?

Gertrude      Oh, not that!

Hamlet      I can't say, really. I changed ships. They didn't. Pirates.

Gertrude      Rosie and Guildie will be so worried! They were supposed to look after you!

Hamlet      Oh .... I left a note.

Anyhow, I stopped over in Calais. With the pirates. Smashing time. Low life, kind of thing. You know.

Claudius Your father was in a lot of trouble in Calais long ago.

Hamlet Been there! So ... how ya been? How's things? I hear the Vikings are bad this year. You seen any? Vikings?

*Another trumpet blast. Fortinbras enters, attended by Vlad. Large. In black, lots of leather. Tall. Evil. Laertes follows. Captain Spin confers with Security in a worried huddle. They did not expect Fortinbras.*

*Hamlet marches right up, invades his space ...*  
Prince Fortinbras, I presume!

Fortinbras *(with a look of great surprise to Gertrude)* Prince Hamlet ... I'm charmed.

Hamlet Just passing through, I presume!

*Captain Spin is gesturing to Hamlet to cool it.*

Claudius Prince Fortinbras is our guest at the castle, Hamlet.

Hamlet So I hear. *(to Fortinbras)* ... well ... on your way ... to Poland. This is my country, dude!  
(To Claudius) Hear that, Mr. King!

*Hamlet struts around, very cocky. Captain Spin cringes.*

Gertrude *(to Hamlet)* Hamlet, darling, Prince Fortinbras is here on business. We're having a dinner tonight. Do join us.  
*(Aside to Hamlet)* Don't be so rude! He's very nice when you get to know him!  
*(To all)* Just a little 'get acquainted' thing.  
Tell us about your trip, darling. Calais! And pirates! Weren't you scared, lovie? I love to hear about pirates! How tall were they? But you must be exhausted, Button!

Hamlet Not a bit! And don't call me Button!

*Fortinbras spies Ophelia. Polonius panics.*

Fortinbras *(to Polonius)* I would be honored, Mr. Prime Minister, to be introduced to this ravishingly beautiful young lady ... who is...?

Polonius Who is? ... Oh yes ... shouldn't we all be getting ... ah ... up to

...who is my ... castle ... daughter.

*Fortinbras, interrupting, bows grandly to Ophelia who extends her hand, a bit too quickly, fearing her father will blow it.*

Fortinbras Jonathan, Albert, Frederick, Mortimer ... Henry, Edward, Charles ... Fortinbras ... the Younger, Prince of Norway, Nephew to Voltamand ... At your service!

Ophelia Good, my Lord.

Fortinbras May I have the honor of your company ... any time ... soon?

Polonius Yes ... well ... this is my ... My daughter!

Fortinbras Yes ... well ... when?

Hamlet *(jumping between them)* She's busy!

*Gertrude drags Hamlet aside.*

Gertrude You're going to get yourself into a fight! Is that what you want! He's quite the swordsman! Is that what you want? Get killed! Go right ahead! See if I care!

Hamlet *(To Gertrude)* We'll see about that!

*(To Fortinbras)* She's busy! And it's my country, dude!

*Hamlet draws his rapier. Fortinbras draws his. They cross swords, glaring. Captain Spin cringes again. Polonius and Laertes try to pull Hamlet away. He's wild! Fortinbras is steely calm. Ophelia faints.*

Claudius Yes, well, let's all go up the castle, then, shall we, now? For a Spritzer. Relax. Long trip. Tell us about Poland, Prince. Never been there, myself. I'm interested in cheese marketing ...

*(Trying and slowly succeeding in leading them off)*  
Gertrude ... Polonius ... Prince ... Vladimir...

*Laertes and Patti succeed in pulling Hamlet away. Vlad merely touches Fortinbras on the shoulder and he sheathes his rapier. Gertrude grabs Fortinbras and leads him away. Claudius and Vlad follow. Hamlet takes the fallen Ophelia in his arms. Seeing this, Polonius leaves, dragging Laertes after him. Captain Spin reluctantly seems to follow the group. Hamlet and Ophelia are left alone on stage.*

*Hamlet takes her up tenderly. Captain Spin reappears, Off to the side, visible to Hamlet but not Ophelia. He signals to Hamlet to pour it on.*

Hamlet                    My sweet, my nymph...  
*Ophelia comes to, very quickly, looking around for Fortinbras.*

                          My vision...

Ophelia                  Hammie ...are you on something?

Hamlet                  I missed you so much!

Ophelia                  Oh, pleeeeze! Look, I like you all right ...but I don't want you to get hurt, alright!

Hamlet                  Goddess. Angel...

Ophelia                  Duh ... Aren't you a little late? Fortie's in the castle already!

Hamlet                  My Queen!

Ophelia                  Of what?

Hamlet                  He's leaving for Poland!

Ophelia                  Ham, Fortie could dice you in ten seconds!

Hamlet                  (*Standing*) I don't think so!  
*Without taking out his sword he starts dueling with an invisible opponent.*  
*She gets up. He looks to see if she's impressed. She's not.*  
*You prefer him to me! That dumb thug!*  
*What? What? Taller? Bigger arms? What? What?*

Ophelia                  (*Shrugs*) Somebody has to win.

Hamlet                  You're looking at him!

Ophelia                  Hamlet ... can't we just be friends?

*Hamlet seizes her and kisses her. She resists, gives in, and then breaks away, haughtily. Hamlet is still wild. Captain Spin throws his hands in the air and leaves the stage.*

Hamlet                  He'll have to kill me before I'll let him have you ... or Denmark!

I am going to drive him and his thugs into the sea!

Ophelia When that happens ... (*she kisses him demurely ...then breaks off*)  
... call me.

*She straightens her gown and exits.*

*Hamlet watches her go then rushes madly off in the other direction and exits.*

*Very quickly Hamlet and Fortinbras enter the stage from opposite sides and collide.*

Hamlet She's my girl!

Fortinbras She, like Denmark, needs a real man.

Hamlet You're looking at him!

Fortinbras Going for 'hero', are you?

Hamlet You and you germ thugs better clear out now! Before we...

Fortinbras We! We! Who is we, Prince?

Hamlet This is a matter of honor. I challenge you to a duel! A duel!

Fortinbras Are you mad! You! And I! Does your mother know how crazy you are!

Hamlet Absolutely!

Fortinbras A fool and his kingdom are soon parted. And Ophelia agrees?

Hamlet Certainly. She'll back a winner!

Fortinbras I accept, of course. You make things very simple for me, for which I thank you, as a gentleman.

Hamlet Tomorrow at four!

*They exit opposite directions.*

*Lights*

### Scene Five

### *Inside the Castle*

*Lights up. Hamlet sits, sprawls across an arm chair - in the*

*famous Hamlet pose - a moment of false calm. Hamlet shakes his bottle of pills – the sound of a rattle snake – and he pops a Zing. He is wired like race horse. Captain Spin enters, followed by Patti.*

Hamlet (Jumps up) How'd I do?

Captain Magnificent! Magnificent ... except...

Hamlet I loved it!

Captain They were dazzled.

Hamlet Right on! Is Claudius having a bird, or what!

Captain One little thing.

Hamlet (To Patti) What do you think about Ophelia? Isn't she gorgeous!

Patti Perfect ...for Queen.

Hamlet Fortinbras is way too tall for her.

Captain About Fortinbras ...

Hamlet I'll chop that muscle-bound 'wegan into ...

Patti Don't you think you were a bit rash?

Hamlet How'd you like my line, 'it's my country, dude!' Great, huh!

Captain Frankly, my Hamlet would never have said that! It was not in the script!

Hamlet So, neither was Fortinbras. So we cut him out, right?  
I gotta fight him for the girl! Right?  
No point in being King if I gotta lick the boots of some overgrown  
'wegan!  
You and me ... together, right! Where is Jake, anyhow?

Captain Why don't we deal with King Claudius first.

Patti One enemy at a time.

Hamlet That fat-assed, sniveling worm of a king! I'm gonna challenge  
him to a duel!

Captain, Fortinbras is the main danger here. He's gonna get the girl if I don't act decisively and fast ... right! No dithering! Right Captain!

Captain I don't think two duels at once is such a good idea ... Hamlet ... just a bit ambitious ... for the second day.

Hamlet Why not! I've got two knives ... swords. (*He exposes the dagger strapped to his thigh*)

Captain Did Jake let you keep that!

Hamlet You know, Captain, somebody listening ... them ... (*pointing to the audience*) just might think you're *chicken*, to take on the 'wegains! You want to be Prime Minister, *or what*!

Captain Prime Minister!?

Hamlet Yea ... Prime Minister.

Captain Why ... me ... I couldn't. You mean ... Denmark?

Hamlet Make up your mind, Captain? You said you cleaned up very nice. Why not? Look after the *Treasury*, Captain. The *keys* to the cellar. Tons and tons of it ... in the basement. Patti can coordinate between us.

Captain But your mother ...

Hamlet Will have NO say! ... Ah, and speaking of the Prime Minister ... *Polonius rushes in, on his crutches, followed by Laertes.* ... here he is now.

Polonius Prince Hamlet, my boy, like a son, the flower of Denmark, my boy ... I'll be direct, forthright to the point, no beating around the bush with me, especially on this occasion, like all others where so much depends on my ...

Laertes (*Aside to Hamlet*) Ham, who are the guys in the suits?

Polonius It is a real and unique pleasure that you're home. And I believe we need to discuss ...

*Laertes sniffs*

Laertes (*aside*) ... tar ... hemp ... salt ...

... Hamlet?

Hamlet Gentlemen, may I present Mr. Jack Flash. And his Associate, Lady ... Patrina Passionata.

Laertes (*Sniffing, then aside, with glee*) The Pirates!

Polonius Mr. Flash, always a pleasure. Welcome to Ellsinore. On behalf of ... the whole royal family ...and myself in my official capacity ...welcome to Ellsinore. No place like it.

Hamlet And his son, Laertes, my old bud, (*aside to the Captain*) and pretty good at the zip zip, Cap. Give him a look. And a nose like a bloodhound!

Captain Gentlemen, my great and rare privilege and honor.

Polonius We are the loyal servants of ... Denmark!

Captain Mr. Prime Minister, your long career of illustrious service is a legend of the Baltic. But you must be exhausted. Can we get you a chair?

Hamlet (*Aside to Polonius*) That Viking ... chap ... Mr. Prime Minister ... did you catch ... he's after your ... Ophelia. Did you notice that!

Polonius (*To Hamlet*) I was just going to mention that.  
(*To the Captain, curtly*) No chair, not for me, thank you, ever so much.  
(*To Hamlet*) It was right on the tip of my tongue.

Hamlet You told him that she's not available, taken, spoken for. Right?  
Right!

Captain (*To Polonius*) Mr. Prime Minister ...Prince Hamlet desires ... the question is...  
(*Calling off stage*) ... some one bring the old man a chair!  
(*To Polonius*) If you can't handle the heat...

Polonius The Norwegian! Yes ... Well ... Well ... Hamlet ...our country is in peril!  
(*To the Captain*) The crutches are fine, thank you very much!

Laertes (*Aside to Hamlet*) Ham, Ophelia is flying, man. Stratosphere ...way out there! I told Pop to, like, lock her up! Or get her some downers.

*The Captain overhears this. Hamlet looks over to him.*

Captain                   Don't look at me!

Hamlet                   (fretting) Oh ...she won't be happy with a leather guy!

Captain                   Hamlet is very intense on this subject, Mr. Prime Minister.

Hamlet                   I'm going to kill him. The only way.

Polonius/Laertes       Hamlet? Kill!

Hamlet                   A duel. Yes. Tomorrow. Four. It's all set up.

Laertes                   What about Claudius?

Hamlet                   Him too! Same time!

Laertes                   Hamlet?

Polonius                  

Captain                   

Hamlet                   Now, off you go, all of you!

*(Aside to the Captain as he leaves) Get this organized, will you, Jack ... Everything depends on you. What ever it takes. You'll be in charge in the new regime. Count on it!*

*Captain and Patti exit left*

*(Aside to Polonius as he leaves) Polonius, you're my main man. Counting on your steady hand to ... steer the ship. I need quality time with Ophelia. You understand.*

*Polonius bows extravagantly and exits. Laertes follows.*

Patti                   And am I in charge too?

Hamlet                   Only of me.

*Patti exits.*

*Hamlet, now alone on the stage, sits back in his chair and smiles inscrutably.*

*Lights*

## Scene Six

*The next day - Inside Elsinore Castle*

*The 'rooms' in this scene are just various parts of the stage demarcated by curtains. Things should flow swiftly from one*

*sub-scene to the next - this is farce.*

*Lights up on Polonius and Laertes in one room*

Polonius                    A d-d-duel with Fortinbras!

Laertes                    We did a warm up this morning, pop. He's great! Says the pirates taught him. Beat me easy! But I don't think he can take Fortinbras! Five'll get you three. How much are ya in for?

Polonius                    Maybe we could get Fortinbras ... to stand behind a curtain.

Laertes                    Maybe ... we let Fortinbras marry Ophelia. That'll kill him!

Polonius                    Be serious for once in your life!

Laertes                    If you got a plan, Pop, I'm your man!

Polonius                    (*Delphic*) I have a plan.

*Curtains close on Polonius and Laertes*  
*Open on another room, on Gertrude and Hamlet*

Gertrude                    Claudius and I are not amused by all this bravado and rushing about, Hamlet, not amused at all, at all!

Hamlet                    What are you doing letting that oily, thug-germ into the castle!

Gertrude                    Mind your tongue, young man! I know his uncle very well. Hamlet, there are problems, issues, things you don't know. Claudius and I have spared you, out of charity. You have to trust us.

Hamlet                    Claudius! (*He spits*)

Gertrude                    He is your King!

Hamlet                    (*Fiercely*) He murdered my father!

Gertrude                    Oh ... thhaaaaat! Are you still on about that ... ancient history! Besides, he did not ... or there's no proof.  
*Hamlet pulls out his rapier and parries a little on the stage.*  
 And put that knife away!

Hamlet                    I will have my throne!

Gertrude Well, well, well ...where did that come from? Hamlet, my little philosopher prince. Button wants his throne!

Hamlet I WILL HAVE IT!

Gertrude PUT THAT AWAY! They're sharp.  
*Hamlet's parries. His footwork is impressive.*  
 Somebody will stab you and you will DIE! Is that what you want?

Hamlet Or I will stab someone and THEY will die.  
*(Hamlet continues to display fine fencing form.)*

Gertrude Where did you learn that?

Hamlet The pirates taught me! Lay over in Calais.

Gertrude Do that again. That's quite good. I'm a bit of connoisseur of ... swordsmanship.

Hamlet *(Supremely confident)* Claudius must die! And Fortinbras.

Gertrude You really think you can beat Claudius?

Hamlet Of course!

Gertrude Well, how about a duel ... this afternoon? Settle this once and for all! Then we will have peace in our time.

Hamlet At four.

Gertrude Claudius will be there.  
*Hamlet exits*  
 Men are so violent.  
*Curtains behind her part and Vlad emerges. He has been listening and shakes his head as he enters. She smiles at him broadly.*  
 That is not a safe place to stand.  
*A very sexual embrace.*  
*Another curtain opens slightly. Polonius is watching. Then it closes.*  
*Gertrude closes curtains on 'her room'.*  
*Curtains open, next door, on Fortinbras as Vlad enters.*

Fortinbras He's mad. Utterly mad. Two duels!

Vlad I saw him warming up with that Laertes guy, really going at it.

He's hot stuff!

*Fortinbras, shrugs, takes out a vile of poison and pours some on a rag. He hands the rag and his rapier to Vlad, very matter of fact. Vlad expertly applies the poison.*

Fortinbras

Double dose.

And how was the Queen?

Vlad

She's hot stuff! Saw her this morning. She really goes at it!

Fortinbras

Vlad ... would you like to be King of Denmark?

Vlad

Anything you say, boss.

*Curtain behind opens slightly. Polonius is watching. They finish the rapier and close the curtains. Another set of curtains open on Polonius and Laertes*

Polonius

*(Sputtering)* The curs! Poison swords! They're going to use poison swords! I saw them! Just a minute ago.

Laertes

Wow! That's really dirty! Hamlet is good ... but not that good!  
Poor Hamlet!

*(Sniffing the air)* The poison they're using ... were they wiping it on their swords? You saw it?

Polonius

Yes, yes, right here!

Laertes

*(sniffing)* Valarius sapiro!

Polonius

That's it! That's it! *(To Laertes)* You learned something at college!

Laertes

... which acts quickly ... just a scratch ... and ...  
*He gestures death. Laertes despairs.*

We must warn Hamlet!

Polonius

*(Ignoring him)* And the antidote ...  
*He whips out a small leather pouch*  
*... is sapirica delixa!*

Laertes

*(Affirming with excitement)* ... to be drunk within a minute ... if it is to have any effect!

Polonius

Indeed!

Laertes	Pop ... you carry <i>that</i> around with you? ( <i>Polonius nods.</i> ) Wow!
Polonius	Laertes, you're his second! If he gets a scratch ... get him to drink some of this! We'll put it in a red goblet.
Laertes	We better tell him!
Polonius	Yes, tell Hamlet ... drink from the red goblet if he gets scratched by the black sword!
	<i>Curtains behind open, slightly. Gertrude has been watching. Polonius and Laertes rush off in opposite directions. Gertrude flings open the curtains. She has a tray of jeweled goblets on a small table in front of her. Fortinbras joins Gertrude.</i>
Fortinbras	Is our Queen safe? Do my men treat you ... well?
Gertrude	Extremely. But tell me ... is Vladimir your biggest? He was certainly quick!
Fortinbras	<i>(Ignoring this) I duel with Hamlet ... this afternoon at four ... for the hand of Ophelia ... and ... with your Majesty's blessing ... due and proper succession to the throne of Denmark. (He bows grandly.)</i>
Gertrude	Oh ... you men ... and your sword fighting!
Fortinbras	We could go back to other arrangement.
Gertrude	What I mean is ... that it is <i>so</i> risky! What if ... what if ... a slip, a slight distraction, a little ache, a twinge, and ... zip, zip, zap! ( <i>She shrugs</i> ) So much is at stake. And your Uncle would <i>never</i> forgive me, if you were <i>even</i> scratched. I hope you won't feel patronized if I inject a little motherly care into this folly.
Fortinbras	I sense you have an idea ...
	<i>Gertrude gestures grandly to set of goblets. Green. Yellow. Brown. Amber. Blue.</i>
Gertrude	As hostess ... I will, of course, provide refreshments. <i>She takes out a satchel of poison and pours some in all the goblets, except the yellow.</i>

*Morpheus delectum!* Prince Fortinbras, the yellow goblet is much preferred as a refreshment. Much!

Fortinbras

Indeed.

*Gertrude and Fortinbras exit, leaving the tray glittering at center stage. Curtain behind parts.*

*Captain Spin has been watching through the curtains. He approaches the goblets, takes out his sachet of antidote and pours some in the blue and amber goblets. He smiles and exits.*

*Lights out on this room and lights up on the room next door.*

*Fortinbras and Vlad have a rack of swords of different colors. They are working methodically, putting poison on all of them. They don't speak. Polonius watches through the curtains, worried. Vlad closes the curtains on this 'room'.*

*Lights up on Hamlet and Laertes in another room where Hamlet is warming up and talking a mile a minute. Laertes watches.*

Hamlet

You think too much, Larry. That's your problem. Too much brainwork. And for God's sake, if you must think about it, don't talk about it! Pirates taught me that, Larr. If you gotta think, just shut up about it. Don't talk. Be inscrutable. Like me.

Laertes

Just remember ... I will have a red goblet. But don't drink from it ... unless you get a nick.

Hamlet

What about the brown, or the amber or ...?

Laertes

They're poison.

Hamlet

Don't be ridiculous! ... Really! ... All the goblets?

Laertes

Except the yellow.

Hamlet

I thought you said red.

Laertes  
remember ...

That's the side cups. *Their* yellow. And *our* red ... but ...

Hamlet

I'm listening ... Larry ... (*He's not listening, he's remembering*

*Jake's instructions) parry right ... down up down ... flip ... twist ... stab LEFT! ...*

Laertes

The swords ...

Hamlet

I suppose they're poison too!

Laertes

Well ... yes ... but ...

Hamlet

*(Very cheery) That's ridiculous.*

Laertes

You're not depressed?

Hamlet

*(Hamlet rattles his vial of pills, Zing, in his face.)* Don't worry.

Laertes

But only if you get a nick from the black sword. Then drink from the red goblet. It's the perfect antidote! If you drink it quickly!

Hamlet

*(Resuming)* Perfect. You think of everything.

Laertes

But don't drink from the red goblet unless you get a nick. All by itself the red goblet is a poison.

Hamlet

Perfect.

*Captain enters with the Reporter.*

Hey ... Cap ... Watch this...

*Hamlet shows off his moves.*

Captain

(To the Reporter) And here's the Prince now.

*He gestures and the Reporter writes down the 'buzz' phrases he feeds her. She is not successful in getting Hamlet's attention.*

'In top shape' ... 'Friend of the people' ... 'ready to settle down.'  
(calling to Hamlet) Hamlet ... Hamlet ...

He's very busy...

This is Miss ? ... She's doing an exclusive for the Times. The Times!

'Plans for the new regime are well advanced.' 'Clean sweep.'  
Isn't that right Hamlet! *(He nods)* 'From the top down.'  
'An end to Viking thuggery!'

*Captain starts hustling the Reporter off stage. She tries to get in close to ask Hamlet some questions. Hamlet continues his dueling practice. She can't get near him. Just before she exits she catches the spot light, primes herself for an 'on air' report, and then delivers it, into the*

*spotlight, as if it was the TV camera.*

Reporter I met with Prince Hamlet for an hour today in an exclusive, one on one, at his secret training camp. He's definitely in top shape. I can attest to that. He told me he was eager for the big duel. 'I've been training for this all my life', were his exact words. And, he said, afterwards, he's 'looking for the right girl to settle down.' No one would say, on the record, whether he plans to take over the Norwegian position in Poland but informed sources say, off the record and not for attribution, that the temptation is almost irresistible ... if he takes down the mighty Fortinbras, tomorrow.

Captain *(Urging her further)* 'Clean sweep!'

Reporter And what will Hamlet will be wearing for the big match? If you know ... and we don't ... call us at 391 8452! We'll be there... FOR YOU! Live! From the Castle ... at four!

*Reporter exits.*

*Captain takes Hamlet aside*

Captain *(Very knowing)* I've made an 'adjustment'. You can drink from the blue and the amber goblets. Blue and amber.

Hamlet You're the greatest, Captain! That's why you get the big bucks! Worth every penny. Right then. Red if I'm nicked by the black sword. Yellow blue or amber if I'm thirsty. Perfect!

*All nod in confident satisfaction.*  
*Lights out on this room.*

*Light up on Gertrude and Claudius*

Gertrude It's all set up. Count your lucky stars you have me to do the strategic planning!

Claudius But I haven't been in a duel for thirty years.

Gertrude There's nothing to it. That's what you always say.

Claudius Misquote! That's NOT what I always say ... about *dueling*!

Gertrude Well, we can't refuse!

Claudius Who's this 'we'?

Gertrude You, darling. The royal 'you'!  
We've got to get things settled. He challenged the King! You can't refuse! And you didn't! Four o'clock!

Claudius I hear the pirates ...

Gertrude Oh, you big baby! Not to worry, Claudi! Would I leave my coochie-coochie in peril, for even a single second.  
*She takes him over to the tray of goblets.*

Drink *As she speaks she gestures to the goblets one after another. Her gestures do not however correspond to the poison she put in place.*  
Don't Drink. Drink Drink. Don't drink. Don't drink. Get it.

Claudius Ohhh ... you're ... so ...  
*He sinks to his knees and kisses her hand then hugs her, desperately, around her knees. She is bored. Vlad appears, spying through the curtains. She gestures him - 'give me five'. Claudio sees this. He stifles a sob.*

Gertrude I've got to go, lovie. You rest up.  
*Gertrude exits.*  
*Claudius stays on his knees, now in despair.*

Claudius Ohh ... god ...  
It's time to talk of graves and worms,  
And tell sad stories of the death of kings,  
To chose executors and talk of wills,  
.... Of sons with knives and queens with quills.  
*Claudius now collapses prostrate to the floor. He weeps. Hamlet is watching through the curtains. He grins.*

*Lights*

## Scene Seven

*The Throne Room*

*On the upper level there is a set of French doors, which open to the exterior. On the lower level there is a bench type throne, for two, the same as in the brothel playlet.*

*Same coat tree is beside the throne. The room is set for the duel, red diagonal mat in place. The rack of swords is ready to go - all different colors.*

*We hear the dull roar of the crowd outside - 'Ham - let ... Ham - let'.*

*Gertrude and Claudius enter. She is heavily jeweled. He wears a standard white dueling outfit. A servant follows carrying the tray of jeweled goblets, which is placed on a small table beside the Queen. She sits regally. He paces, very distressed.*

Gertrude                    Green. Just remember ... Green!

Claudius                    *(Looking to the swords and then the goblets, confused)* I want green? Or I don't ... which sword...?

Gertrude                    The green goblet ... you fool! Drink from the green goblet. Not the yellow!

Claudius                    Is this what you want, my sweet?

*She dismisses his doubts with a wave.*  
*Ophelia enters, looking ravishing in the ballerina outfit, flowers in her hair, (as if ready for her mad scene).*  
*Gertrude gestures for her sit on a very small chair beside her.*

Gertrude                    You look stunning, my dear ... simply stunning!

*Trumpet blasts. Fortinbras enters, followed by Vald.*  
*Fortinbras is all in black. He wears a long black leather coat over his dueling outfit. He takes off his coat and hangs it on the coat tree by the throne. Vlad has a yellow goblet which he places on a small table in their corner. He bows gallantly to the King and Queen and then gallantly and extravagantly to Ophelia. She acknowledges with enthusiasm.*

Ophelia                    Good, my Lord ... good luck.

Fortinbras                    My congratulations, Claudius. Such a civilized way to settle differences. All of them. At once.  
*Claudius nods curtly*  
Denmark and Norway ... soon to be united ...

*Fortinbras signals Vlad to approach and bow. He does. He and Gertrude linger a moment too long. Claudius notices and despairs.*

Claudius Time will tell on that, Prince. Time will tell!

*Fortinbras turns to Ophelia.  
Polonius rushes in and interposes himself between  
Fortinbras and Ophelia*

Polonius Daughter, never have you been more lovely, more radiant, more  
Where is Hamlet! WHERE IS HAMLET? ...

*The loudest and most glorious of the trumpet blasts...  
Hamlet enters, dressed in a red and gold jacket, over the  
pirate shirt, with a white rapier and a dagger strapped to  
his thigh. He is followed by Laertes, in matching but  
subordinate attire. Laertes has a red goblet which he  
places in his corner on a small table.  
Captain Spin and Patti slip in discretely. They find no  
opportunity to calm Hamlet. They despair.  
The roar of the crowd from outside is deafening and  
Polonius has a servant close the French door above to  
dampen the sound. Hamlet makes the rounds, bowing to all.*

Hamlet Mother, Claudius, Ophelia, Polonius, Prince Fortinbras and  
Vladimir, was it.

Polonius Gentlemen, gentlemen ... Danish rules ... all rapiers to the rack.  
All rapiers to the rack.

*Polonius, very authoritative, makes Fortinbras and Hamlet  
put their black and white rapiers on the rack. Fortinbras  
surrenders grandly but with a worried glance to Vlad.  
Gertrude remains supremely confident.  
The servant brings in a Bingo wheel and some rags.*

Polonius Danish Rules.  
*The servant spins the wheel. Polonius draws.*

Blue.  
*Polonius directs the servant to wipe the blue rapier with the  
rag. They repeat*

Red.

Gertrude What are you doing?

Polonius Just in case ...

Gertrude/Vlad/  
Fortinbras/Claudius      In case, *what!?*

Polonius      In case ... well, perhaps ... the possibility is ...that one of the ... might be ... dipped ... or wiped ... yes wiped ... with ... something ... *wicked!*

Gertrude      How could you *think* such a thought! In Denmark!

Polonius      Oh ... well ... a thousand pardons, your Majesty ... whatever came over ... yes then ... so be it!  
Let's get started then.

Claudius      But what about the others?!

Polonius      Oh ... how could you think such a thing ... in Denmark, Your Majesty!

*He gestures to the servant who puts the two balls back in the wheel and spins.*

Now let's see ... who gets which?  
Prince Fortinbras. You first.

Fortinbras      I prefer my own - the black.

Polonius      Not today. Danish rules. (*He draws*) You get ... blue. And don't give me any Viking guff.

*Fortinbras pretends to be confident. He glances at Gertrude and she to the goblets. Polonius draws two more balls.*

Hamlet! The Brown!  
And Claudius. The White!

Gertrude      Polonius, dear Polonius ... a libation ... to calm the nerves.

*The servant takes him the tray. He takes the Blue and downs it confidence.*

Polonius      Delicious.  
Hamlet, Prince Fortinbras, Claude ... a quick snort before we start?  
Quicken the pulse?

Laertes/Vlad      (*holding up their private goblets*) ... no thanks.

*They each have a goblet. Laertes' is red. Vlad's is black.*

Polonius

Ah, ah, ah ... Danish Rules! Danish Rules! Gentlemen.

*Polonius snatches the two goblets away and puts them on Gertrude's tray. The servant quickly wheels in a table with a chest high curtain and brings the tray of jeweled goblets over. They are now hidden. Polonius goes behind the curtain. He tosses the contents of one of the goblets - no one see which one - to the side. He then lifts the black goblet high and in view and pours its content into the other unknown goblet, hidden from view. He does it again with the red goblet. Then, with a flourish he whips away the curtain to reveal the tray of jeweled goblets plus the two extras the black and red.*

Under Revised Danish Rules, if you take a hit, you take a drink. All set, then.

Anyone want to change their mind about a libation, before we start ... anyone?

*No one takes a drink.*

*(Now, loudly, like a fight announcer).*

And ... in the first match ... ladies and gentlemen...

*He reaches into his pocket and brings out a card which he Reads:*

For the throne of Denmark ... in the red and gold ... with the brown rapier ... From the rack ... and the white dagger ... Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

And in the muslin ... from Denmark ... with the White rapier ... from the rack ... King Claudius ...

Gentlemen ... *en garde* ...

*Claudius is obviously fearful. Gertrude drags and pushes him into the duel.*

*Fortinbras eyes Ophelia with supreme confidence.*

*The match begins. Claudius is game but clumsy. Hamlet is fast and relentless. Claudius tires quickly.*

Various

Good one ... Well done ... the King is good...

Hamlet, Hamlet, Hamlet

...Wow...

Hamlet

In you ear, Claude!

Claudius

Arrogant ...

Hamlet

... treacherous, lecherous unkindly villain!  
... My kingdom!

*Polonius calls a break for the exhausted Claudius.*

*Gertrude offers him a drink from the tray. He takes one without thinking. The red. (Doesn't matter) He suddenly realized what he has done. He panics - waits - seems all right and heaves a sigh of relief.*

*Hamlet grabs the black goblet, downs it recklessly, toasting Fortinbras.*

*Claudius now staggers and dies. Hamlet, seeing that he has fallen, stabs him with the dagger.*

*Hamlet offers Gertrude a drink. She declines. She looks pleadingly to Vlad. Hamlet retreats to his corner and huddles with Laertes.*

*Servants haul the body of Claudius to the side.*

Hamlet

Next! Next!

Polonius

And now, ladies and gentlemen ... the match you've all been Waiting for ... the main event ... for Kingdom of the Denmark ... and the gold ...

With a fresh rapier ... Albert...

*Albert, the servant, draws from the spinning wheel and hands Polonius the next ball*

The draw ... Hamlet takes the Black rapier!

And from Norway ... in the black ... the Viking Prince –Fortinbras The Younger ...

*Another draw*

The green rapier!

Gentlemen ... you're up! ... *En garde...*

*Fortinbras steps forward and grandly downs a goblet.*

*Hamlet matches him. Nothing happens to either.*

*Fortinbras scratches himself with the rapier. Nothing happens. He chooses another goblet and down it. Hamlet matches him.*

*The cheering is wild as they play 'Russian roulette'.*

*They both bow to Ophelia. She is near hysterics.*

*She nods and the duel begins.*

*It is fierce and skilled. After a bit the duelers draw back to their seconds to rest. Laertes and Vlad are more worked up than Hamlet and Fortinbras.*

*Gertrude gestures to her servant to offer another round of drinks.*

*Vlad drinks, without thinking. Nothing happens. Hamlet's corner passes.*

*Now Ophelia, offers the distraught Gertrude a drink from the tray. Gertrude chooses, she thinks, carefully, and drinks. Nothing happens.*

*The duel resumes - fiercely.*

*Vlad dies.*

Various Good one ... a hit ... no ...no ... zounds...  
*Hamlet takes a scratch. Nothing happens. They fight fiercely. Fortinbras tosses away his rapier and takes another from the rack and the duel continues.*

Hamlet Viking dog ... My kingdom! My bride!

Fortinbras ... dumb pup ...  
*After a few more passes, Hamlet stabs him with the move Jake taught. Fortinbras dies. Laertes and others mob Hamlet. The crowd goes wild. Gertrude is aghast. Ophelia is shocked but recovers quickly and runs to Hamlet.*

Ophelia Can I be Queen?

Hamlet (cynically) Darling.  
*Polonius is ecstatic. He cues the music and immediately we hear the trumpets of the Wedding March. Confetti rains down. Polonius leads Ophelia up the steps to the French doors. Hamlet follows. Polonius throws the windows open. The crowd roars. Below, Gertrude pines over the dead Vlad. She drinks from goblet after goblet, though most are drained. She is furious. Above, Hamlet silences the crowd and starts to speak. At first he stumbles.*

Hamlet Friends, Danes, countrymen and women,  
 Lend me your ... children. Bless our children.  
 And let us teach them, our sons and daughter ...  
 And our children's children, and their children after them ...  
 Of this great day.  
 That this day be remembered ... even to the ending of the world.  
 That *you* were here, with *me*, on this great day.

Crowd '... Ham - let ...Ham- let ...'

*The Captain, hands him some notes. Hamlet glances quickly, recovers and carries on.*

Hamlet For today is a day of honor, and honor ... some say, we treasure

honor above all else.

Today is a day of freedom - from Viking thuggery - and some say we treasure freedom even more than honor.

And some say ... I say ... a rightful King ... is honor and freedom is the eternal glory of Denmark ... is truth and justice ... and joy forever, in this great land.

*Cheers*

Today we set fresh sails ... chart a on a new course ... for that new horizons ... renewal our faith ... in this great land, our Denmark ...

*As Hamlet speaks and the crowd interrupts with cheers*

*Gertrude is proceeding through the goblets. Finally she gets to the last, which she drinks. She dies, as the crowd outside cheers wildly.*

*Ophelia notices and goes down stairs to the body.*

*Ophelia fondles the jewels. But one of the security guards is there, on guard that she doesn't take them. A stand off.*

I am honored to be your champion.

*Polonius places the crown on his head.*

And your King!

*More cheers which slowly die down. The windows are finally closed. Hamlet now turns, does a little jig then comes down the stairs. He puts his crown on the coat tree. As a servant helps him off with the foppish red and gold jacket he quickly assesses the standoff over the jewels, snaps his fingers that the jewels be put in a box, and handed over to him. They are. He holds the box till Ophelia is off stage.*

Get these bodies out of here!

*Servants work feverishly to remove the bodies, Gertrude last.*

*Ophelia approaches.*

Ophelia

Good, my lord.

Hamlet

*(salaciously, fantasizing) Ah, my beauty bud, my radiant rose, my ... Get thee to my nookery ... and there lie naked ... under a single, very thin, sheet ... eyes closed ... and ... wait for me.*

*Hamlet gives her a single trinket. She pouts but exits.*

*The Reporter rushes in and starts talking to the imaginary camera, trying to get Hamlet on screen for an interview. He ignores her and the Captain takes her to one side for spin.*

*Hamlet notices Fortinbras long black leather coat.*

Reporter

Hamlet, Hamlet ... For the folks at home ... How do you feel?

*Hamlet takes Polonius to the other side of the stage*

At this very moment. Right NOW. Fabulous, right! ... except for your mother ...

*Gertrude's body is dragged in front of her at this instant, but not off stage ... Hamlet sneers.*

Who is finally dead. You've triumphed over your worst enemies in two fabulous duels, your personal ghosts are sated ... and you ARE ... right now ... King of Denmark! Any comments? 'Fabulous!' Right?

Hamlet *(aside to Polonius, very commanding)* Where is the gold?

Polonius *(Polonius draws breath, to start one of his evasive speeches. Hamlet menaces.)*

Ah ... well, my lord ... yes ... Safe for Denmark ... at my house! *Polonius gives him a key. Hamlet nods with approval.*

Captain Spin *(Steps up to the Reporter, spinning)* Indeed, 'Hamlet feels ... fabulous!' Upset about his mother, of course ... but there were problems there. Omelet, sort of thing. Collateral damage. ... 'Young, handsome ... confident ... returned from banishment in glory' ... 'leader ... orator' ... etc. etc. ... 'a King for our times' ... 'vanquished the Viking thugs' ... with an 's' ... 'Claudius ... honored for his contribution' ... 'Gertrude 'feisty' ... yes, 'feisty' ... 'Demark ... free at last ... free at last ...'

Reporter Is that on the record?

Captain ... 'sources said' ...

*She exits.*

*Gertrude's body is dragged past Hamlet*

Hamlet *(exasperated more than sad)*

Oh, Mother, mother, mother ...

Sleep, sleep, sweet lips, kind arms,  
Let the ... devils bear you hence.

(To servants) Lug the guts out of here ... and prepare the feast.

(Turning to the Captain) Well, my Captain ...

Your work is done!

The King of Denmark thanks you ...  
and bids adieu!

Captain *(with a knowing twinkle)* Ah, but our work has just begun!

Hamlet Alas, I must bid adieu, my Captain.  
My troopers ...

*Laertes draws his knife.*

*Hamlet picks up Fortinbras' black leather coat.*

will see you to your ship.

Polonius will handle the details.

Captain But ... but ... we had an arrangement ...

Hamlet Flexibility, Captain, flexibility ... A rule for pirates ... and for kings. Flip in flash. Expediency rules.

Captain But...

Hamlet Did you think I would let you loot my kingdom?!

Captain But Hamlet such a precedent ... the moral consequences ...

Hamlet The *last* moment is not a good *moment* for thinking about the moral consequences, would you say, Captain?

Captain *(lunging at Hamlet but Polonius steps between)*

Our agreement ...

Hamlet I don't know you, old man!  
Who will rid me of this ...?

*Laertes is quick to seize the Captain*

Ah, thank you, Laertes.

And the lads ... at the dock, as they depart  
... A proper fee ... for their services, Laertes, Polonius.

*Laertes hustles the Captain off stage.*

Polonius ... about Poland ...

Captain Hamlet ... Hamlet ...

*Polonius snaps his fingers and servants bring in a large map of Poland on a rolling demo board.*

*A servant takes the black leather coat from Hamlet and stands by to help him on with it.*

Polonius Yes, well, Your Majesty ... Your father ... thought, sometimes ... I mean he thought often ... though not necessarily on this ... I agreed, of course, always, when it was my suggestion ... and other times too ... about Poland ... the Danish minority in ... Warsaw ... or was Krakow ... their rights ... might ... yes ... would ... to be protected ... help from the homeland ... heroic sort of thing ... unite the people ... Poland ... yes, well ...

*From off stage the Captain screams*

Captain Hamlet ... oh my god ... I am stabbed. Hamlet! Ham...  
Murder most fowl.

*Hamlet ignores the cries.  
He studies the map of Poland.  
Albert helps him on with the black leather coat.*

Hamlet (decisively) Father said Leipzig is first ... but *not* in the spring.  
Krakow is too far for a first strike.  
*Polonius gestures and the servant helps Hamlet on with the coat. His indecision melts away quickly.*  
*Polonius hands him a black magic marker. Hamlet struts around a bit as the Captain dies loudly and then decisively marks an invasion route. Laertes re-enters, all bloody.*

Hamlet We march into Leipzig September 12. Warsaw, the 18<sup>th</sup>, then Krakow.

*Laertes enters, all bloody.*

Laertes Anything else, boss?

Hamlet Yes, at the docks...  
*Laertes takes out his dagger but Hamlet gestures to put it away.*  
Find the Pirate called Jake and tell him I'll have plenty of work for him ... if he wants to stay.  
And the 'wegian troopers ... Assign then a wench or two ...  
... and tell them, if they pledge true and clear to *me* ...  
They can march with us on Poland, in September.

Laertes You got it, boss.  
*Laertes exits*

Hamlet (To Polonius)  
A parade tomorrow, with a band. Double time. Brass or silver, you chose. Chose brass.  
*Polonius nods gravely. Hamlet smiles broadly.*  
(To those remaining on stage and the audience)  
Good friends, good friends,  
I will rest now.  
Come, tomorrow ...  
Denmark ... will be open for business.

*Stage empties obediently, quickly.*

*Hamlet takes up the box of jewels and sinks to his bed. He opens the box and plays with the jewels.*

*Patti enters with a valise. He offers her a large necklace. She inspects it, is pleased, puts it in her valise but stands her ground. Hamlet gives her another. She takes it, puts it in the valise and locks it. Now she disrobes and joins him on the bed in a rough embrace.*

*Lights*

**The End**