

HAMLET

by

William Shakespeare

&

Kenneth Branagh

Based on the play

by

William Shakespeare

PART ONE

EXTERIOR / MONUMENT NIGHT

Darkness. Uneasy silence. The deep of a Winter's Night. A huge plinth, with the screen-filling legend carved deep in the stone, HAMLET. The Camera creeping, like an animal, pans left to reveal, a hundred yards away, ELSINORE, a gorgeous Winter Palace. Effortlessly elegant, yet powerful in its coat of snow. The bell begins to toll the first deep ring of the midnight hour, as we

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST NIGHT

We see the lonely FRANCISCO as he passes before the huge palace gates. A brazier steaming. Quick unsettled cuts to FRANCISCO's POV of unending darkness, reinforced by the intimidating sounds of the night.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / MONUMENT NIGHT

The immense statue of a military hero. We glimpse only part of the sculpture as the Camera climbs higher, for we are chiefly aware, a way off, of the confident twinkling-windowed eyes of this majestic seat of government; a Versailles-like tribute to the power of the Danish Royal Family, here in the midst of the Nineteenth Century. Each toll of the bell seems deeper and louder as still the Camera moves, tracking right now to lose the palace behind the stone countenance of OLD HAMLET. The sculptor has caught the glamour and ferocity of the late King's face, and noted also a hint of sadness.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST NIGHT

A noise. Tight on FRANCISCO, terrified, straining to hear where or what it might be. FRANCISCO slowly points his halberd out into the darkness. We inter-cut between the Sentry Post and the Monument until

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / MONUMENT NIGHT

The Camera now cranes down to take in the detail of the granite uniform in all its splendour. The last stroke of midnight hits as we settle on the huge hand, which holds a

sword hilt and just as we would seem to cut, a great rasping noise like fingernails on a blackboard sears through the night and we see the statue's hand pull the sword from the scabbard with a savage rip!

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST NIGHT

FRANCISCO frozen in terror.

BARNARDO O/S
Who's there?

FRANCISCO whips around to his left, but not quickly enough. CRASH! A body, from right of frame, bundles him forcibly to the ground.

On the frozen ground they struggle, dangerous flashing blades in the gloom. FRANCISCO gets the upper hand.

FRANCISCO
Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

The other, equally terrified, pants out an answer.

BARNARDO
Long live the King?

Beat. Almost relief. Silence. Heavy breaths.

FRANCISCO
Barnardo?

BARNARDO
He.

Massive relief. FRANCISCO continues, with no little understatement.

FRANCISCO
You come most carefully upon your hour.

He helps his comrade up to his feet. Both now rather embarrassed by this unorthodox changing of the guard.

BARNARDO
'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO
For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

BARNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?

A look between them. Bath heard the noise. FRANCISCO avoids the issue.

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring.

Another look. Neither wants to lose the company of the other. Eventually,

BARNARDO

Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

CRACK! They start at another sharp noise. Weapons up like quicksilver. These men are terrified. Then, more in hope than anything else,

FRANCISCO

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

A comforting voice rings out of the darkness, same distance away.

HORATIO O/S

Friends to this ground.

We see HORATIO and MARCELLUS approaching in the background.

MARCELLUS O/S

And liegemen to the Dane.

Huge relief once more. FRANCISCO in a hurry, bids his farewell to BARNARDO, before heading towards the new arrivals.

FRANCISCO

Give you good night.

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST APPROACH NIGHT

He reaches the stalwart, kindly MARCELLUS, who is somewhat taken aback by the eagerness of the soldier to return to barracks. What happened?

MARCELLUS

O farewell, honest soldier. Who hath relieved you?

FRANCISCO (grimly)

Barnardo has my place. Give you good night.

He nods to HORATIO, before rushing off towards the lights of the Sentries' mess. MARCELLUS decides to hold his ground and calls into the night.

MARCELLUS
Holla, Barnardo!

BARNARDO O/S
Say what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO, a natural scholar, not soldier, is the calmest of them all. He decides to be ironic about the bitter cold.

HORATIO
A piece of him.

He gives the fretful MARCELLUS a gentle pat on the shoulder and smiles as they move off.

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST NIGHT

BARNARDO
(warmly, relieved)
Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS
What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

BARNARDO
I have seen nothing.

So far, MARCELLUS shares BARNARDO's keen apprehension.

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

HORATIO, shuffling and stamping against the cold, is still faintly amused.

HORATIO
Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BARNARDO leads them over to a brazier on the other side of the sentry post, where there are some munition boxes.

BARNARDO

Sit down a while,
And let us once again assail your ears,
That are so fortified against our story,
What we two nights have seen.

HORATIO feigns 'Here we go again... '

HORATIO

Well, sit we down,
And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.

But there is no shaking these men with irony. BARNARDO recall the terrible events of last night with a stillness and possession that compel HORATIO's attention.

BARNARDO

Last night of all,

As he continues, we see their point of view. A mystical and disturbing night sky.

BARNARDO V/O

When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course t'illuminate that part of heaven
Where now it burns,

We have been aware of the wind picking up speed through this last dialogue. We see BARNARDO's gaze drift away in the direction of what is now a fierce, icy blast. He has to fight to be heard above the ominous rush.

BARNARDO

Marcellus and myself,
The bell then beating one -

Then, almost as one, the three men throw back their heads to look high in the air. We see the terror on their faces at the size and height of this... thing. But it all happens in an instant, before MARCELLUS yanks them from this spot and yells savagely.

MARCELLUS

Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes again.

EXTERIOR / MAIN COURTYARD NIGHT

The statue come to life! They run for their lives! We are way above them in the night air. THE GHOST's POV as the Camera rushes from a great height, swooping down on the retreating figures racing across the snow. We almost reach them, but no! Just in time they fling themselves behind a pillar.

EXTERIOR / COURTYARD NIGHT

They speak in a terrified, whispered rush, with their halberds raised, and ready to die.'

BARNARDO

In the same figure like the King that's dead.

MARCELLUS

Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO

Looks it not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

A fierce wind still blasts them each time they turn to look at it, and as we see their faces emerge from behind the pillar to gaze up at the great mass.

BARNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS

Speak to it, Horatio.

EXTERIOR / MAIN COURTYARD NIGHT

HORATIO, tentatively from their hiding place. He begins, nervously.

HORATIO (to The Ghost)

What art thou that usurps't this time of night,
Together with that fair and warlike form
In which the majesty of buried Denmark
Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee speak.

We look down on him from THE GHOST's POV.

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

Our high POV retreats and the little figures grow smaller and smaller.

BARNARDO
See, it stalks away.

HORATIO (to The Ghost)
Stay, speak, speak,

We quickly glimpse the image of THE GHOST.

HORATIO (continuing)
I charge thee speak.

THE GHOST disappears. The new silence is intense. The palace has not awoken. This visitation was just for them. A kind of sanity returns.

MARCELLUS
'Tis gone, and will not answer.

HORATIO's legs start to buckle. The two men catch him, grateful for something practical to do.

BARNARDO
How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale.
Is not this something more than fantasy?
What think you on't?

HORATIO
Before my God, I might not this believe
Without the sensible and true avouch
Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS
Is it not like the King?

HORATIO recovers with some help from BARNARDO's hip flask.

HORATIO
As thou art to thyself.
Such was the very armour he had on
When he th' ambitious Norway combated.
So frowned he once when in an angry parle
He smote the sledged Polacks on the ice.
'Tis strange.

HORATIO takes a large swig from Barnardo's hip flask.

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO

In what particular thought to work I know not,
But in the gross and scope of my opinion
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

Temporarily recovered. They attempt to walk in order to make the blood flow again. The conversation is building in intensity, as the post-hysteria relief subsides.

EXTERIOR / COLONNADE WALK NIGHT

We track with them as they walk past various doors.

MARCELLUS

Good now, look here, and tell me, he that knows,
Why this same strict and most observant watch
So nightly toils the subject of the land,

MARCELLUS is now heated and angry. He stops at one of the doors and pulls back a small spy flap. HORATIO looks. We see his Pov. An arms factory in high production.

MARCELLUS (continuing)

And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
And foreign mart for implements of war,
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
Does not divide the Sunday from the week:
What might be toward that this sweaty haste
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day,
Who is't that can inform me?

HORATIO is grateful to be diverted from his ghostly fears by MARCELLUS's obvious and genuine anguish about the fate of his country. He explains the background to this warlike state with obvious authority and passionate interest. He leads them off along the colonnade.

HORATIO

That can I -
At least the whisper goes so: our last King,
Whose image even but now appeared to us,
Was as you know by Fortinbras of Norway,
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet -
For so this side of our known world esteemed him -
Did slay this Fortinbras,

HORATIO fully into his stride now is getting carried away with detail. MARCELLUS and BARNARDO exchange looks.

HORATIO (continuing)

Who by a sealed compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit with his life all those his lands
Which he stood seized of to the conqueror;
Against the which a moiety competent
Was gaged by our King, which had returned
To the inheritance of Fortinbras
Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same cov'nant
And carriage of the article designed,
His fell to Hamlet.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / COUNCIL CHAMBER NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We see but cannot hear the dark, wild young man, as he leans yelling across a table. Placed upon it are military flags and toy soldiers. He is surrounded by frightened advisers, whom he is clearly haranguing. This is a group of surly mercenaries.

HORATIO V/O (continuing)

Now sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there
Sharked up a list of landless resolute
For food and diet to some enterprise
That hath a stomach in't, which is no other -
And it doth well appear unto our state -

The Camera rushes with the crazed FORTINBRAS from his campaign table to a board where we see him rip off and tear up a map of Denmark. This ferocious young man wants revenge.

HORATIO V/O (continuing)

But to recover of us by strong hand
And terms compulsory those foresaid lands
So by his father lost.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / COURTYARD NIGHT

Back to real time, around a brazier and in sombre mood. MARCELLUS's fears are well-founded. HORATIO has lost his

academic enthusiasm and all three men contemplate the awful reality of imminent war.

HORATIO (continuing)

And this, I take it,
Is the main motive of our preparations,
The source of this our watch, and the chief head
Of this post-haste and rummage in the land.

BARNARDO

I think it be no other but e'en so.
Well may it sort that this portentous figure
Comes armed through our watch so like the King
That was and is the question of these wars.

HORATIO

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;
And even the like precurse of feared events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climatures and countrymen.
As stars with trains of fire. And dews of blood,
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star,
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.

We look up. THE GHOST has returned!

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / MAIN COURTYARD NIGHT

HORATIO

But soft, behold - to where it comes again!
I'll cross it though it blast me. Stay, illusion.

Again the Camera provides THE GHOST's POV. We are high above HORATIO and tracking back as he tentatively moves towards us. With each of his steps, we (THE GHOST) retreat. He talks to it as if talking to a frightened young person who has a gun trained on him. BARNARDO and MARCELLUS follow behind, weapons raised.

HORATIO (continuing)

If thou hast any sound or use of voice,
 Speak to me.
 If there be any good thing to be done
 That may to thee do ease and grace to me,
 Speak to me.
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate
 Which happily foreknowing may avoid,
 O speak!
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life
 Extorted treasure in the womb of earth -
 For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,

The Cock crows.

Speak of it, stay and speak. - Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO

Do if it will not stand.

All is chaos as MARCELLUS and BARNARDO both throw their
 partisans at THE GHOST.

BARNARDO

'Tis here.

HORATIO

'Tis here.

But too late. We glimpse THE GHOST disappearing.

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / MONUMENT NIGHT

The Statue of Old Hamlet. Unmoved. Impressive.

MARCELLUS V/O

We do it wrong, being so majestical, To
 offer it the show of violence,

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST NIGHT

Again, thick silence. And shame.

MARCELLUS

For it is as the air invulnerable,
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

The sound of larks begins to cut across the awed silence.

BARNARDO

It was about to speak when the cock crew.

HORATIO

And then it started like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat
Awake the god of day, and at his warning,
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,
Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine; and of the truth herein
This present object made probation.

All the men have been changed by this experience. MARCELLUS
picks up on the mystical atmosphere.

EXTERIOR / SENTRY POST DAWN

MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated
The bird of dawning singeth all night long;
And then, they say, no spirit can walk abroad,
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed and so gracious is the tillle.

HORATIO

So have I heard and do in part believe it.

We see the dawn sky.

HORATIO (continuing)

But look, the morn in russet mantle clad
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.
Break we our watch up, and by my advice
Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto young Hamlet; for upon my life,
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MARCELLUS

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

They move off as, we move towards the Danish Royal Crest,
atop the gates. The dawn light starts to appear.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

A glorious procession of the new KING CLAUDIUS and his QUEEN GERTRUDE. We move with them into a packed gathering of smiling Courtiers and Commoners. The men are crisp, sexy. The military cut - all dashing clothes and hair. The women's clothes colourful, gloriously textured, shapely and flesh-revealing.

They walk from the enormous doors through rows of bleachers. It's like the House of Commons. Everyone stands. The guard of honour salutes. CLAUDIUS in full military regalia. Severe, cropped hair, brushed back, standing to attention atop a striking face that bears a crisp beard. GERTRUDE, complete with veil and generous bosom on show, also trim and vigorous. This irresistibly sexy, confident couple reach the throne. They face their AUDIENCE of bright festive colours and supportive faces.

The King begins to speak. Measured, compassionate, intelligent. All listen attentively, particularly the Prime Minister, POLONIUS, his son LAERTES, and his beautiful daughter OPHELIA.

CLAUDIUS

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole
Kingdom To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

Moist eyes. A man of genuine compassion.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen

She, also moved, emotions very close to the surface.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Th' imperial jointress of this warlike state,
Have we as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage, In
equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife.

(He kisses her hand.)

Nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.

Slow, then quickening and intense applause. He overrides this reaction with his clearly genuine gratitude to this court. Now to business and a serious public policy statement for a worried nation. MARCELLUS is not alone in his fears.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Now follows that you know young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Co-leagued with the dream of his advantage,
He hath not failed to pester us with message

An Attendant gives him a paper.

Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother.

He tears up the paper. There is a gasp from the CROWD, then applause. He's playing them well.

So much for him.

Now, tougher still. He's into Norman Schwarzkopf mode. There be no messing with the Danish King. He plays it out confidently: the gallery, taking another paper.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting,
 Thus much the business is: we have here writ
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras -

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / BEDROOM NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

We see the wizened, frightened old man.

CLAUDIUS V/O
 Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
 Of this his nephew's purpose - to suppress
 The face grows dark. We see the surly young FORTINBRAS
 tearing up the map.

CLAUDIUS V/O
 His further gait herein, in that the levies,
 The lists, and full proportions are all made
 Out of his subject;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY (REAL TIME)

CLAUDIUS
 and we here dispatch
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
 The two wise men, also in military garb move to the throne.

CLAUDIUS
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
 Giving to you no further personal power
 To business with the King more than the scope
 Of these dilated articles allow.
 Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

VOLTEMAND takes the papers.

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

CLAUDIUS
 We doubt it nothing, heartily farewell.

The AUDIENCE applauds. No hysteria this time, but all are
 quietly impressed by this statesmanship. Time now to turn on
 the charm with the young aristocrats. Also a good show for

the ladies, who crane their necks on the balconies to see which of the bright young things around the throne will be indulged with a public favour.

CLAUDIUS

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?
You told us of some suit.

A darkly handsome young man steps forward. In the uniform of a cadet.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

What is't, Laertes?
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.

He turns to POLONIUS, once again letting the court know how the power structure stands. Then on with a smile.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES (nervous)

My dread lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,

Knowing looks from around the court. The phrase 'sowing wild oats' comes to people's minds. LAERTES responds quickly.

LAERTES

From whence, though willingly I came to Denmark
To show my duty in your coronation,
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,
My thoughts and wishes bend again towards France
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

The King teases it out for a moment.

CLAUDIUS

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

Dad joins in with the gentle ribbing.

POLONIUS

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laboursome petition and at last
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

CLAUDIUS steps down to LAERTES.

CLAUDIUS

Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.

As the AUDIENCE applauds, the Camera tracks slowly past them and comes to a halt under the right hand balcony. There at the other end of the hall is a black silhouette of a man. We make an abrupt Cut. The humorous applause that has greeted LAERTES's departure is stopped by a big Close-up on CLAUDIUS and his firm tone.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son -

We make another abrupt Cut back to the lonely figure behind the bleachers.

HAMLET

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

From CLAUDIUS's POV we see HAMLET move forward and sit down.

HAMLET

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

We see reaction on the AUDIENCE's faces. This is embarrassing. The QUEEN moves away from the throne and we see her and her son in profile 2-shot. She attempts intimacy. This should not be public.

GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

GERTRUDE

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

In his shocked reaction he raises his voice, so that the CROWD can almost hear the hissed reproaches that he shoots at her grief-free demeanour.

HAMLET

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

There are whispers now through the CROWD. They're witnessing a scene that should take place behind closed doors. CLAUDIUS has had enough. Time for action.

CLAUDIUS

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,

He goes towards the Prince bringing in the CROWD with his voice. This will now be a very public conversation.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

To give these mourning duties to your father;
But you must 'know your father lost a father;
That father lost, lost his; and the survivor bound
In filial obligation for some term
To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere
In obstinate condolement is a course
Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief,
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,

As CLAUDIUS gives this rough lecture, he directs his injunctions to the physically immobile Prince. The great gallery of Courtiers behind, packed to the rafters. The power and strength of the King's position chillingly clear.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
 An understanding simple and unschooled;
 For what we know must be, and is as common
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
 Why should we in our peevish opposition
 Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried
 From the first corpse till he that died today,
 'This must be so'.

CLAUDIUS puts his arm around HAMLET. An invasion of intimacy.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 We pray you throw to earth
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us
 As of a father; for let the world take note

He drags HAMLET out onto the dais and produces the next information with a great Churchillian flourish. HAMLET eventually will be King - CLAUDIUS has nominated him here and now - all is well. The CROWD respond.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 You are the most immediate to our throne,

Huge applause from the CROWD.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 And with no less nobility of love
 Than that which dearest father bears his son
 Do I impart towards you.

Now, the atmosphere changes.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 For your intent
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,

The great issue comes up. LAERTES, OPHELIA, GERTRUDE all wanting to see HAMLET take his rightful place.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 It is most retrograde to our desire,
 And we beseech you bend you to remain
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

Quiet again. The AUDIENCE straining to overhear.

GERTRUDE

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

We see HAMLET's crushed body language. The sense of a head bowed. Nevertheless he is a Prince and this is clear in the manner of his reply.

HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

CLAUDIUS

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark.
(To Gertrude)
Madam, come.

He takes her hand and moves to the front of the Dais. They effectively mask HAMLET from the Court. Peace is restored. Finally neither foreign upstarts nor truculent nephews have thrown this new King off balance, at this formal opening of his new parliament. He is intimate with her now. Happily letting the Court share their obvious intoxication with each other.

CLAUDIUS

This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the King's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

Confetti begins to fall.

CLAUDIUS

Come, away.

Cheers, trumpets. The Royal Couple race out like the hungry newlyweds they are. The happy CROWD chase them like a drunken wedding party. The huge hall empties almost by magic. We see the end doors shut and then we see HAMLET still standing at the throne. His body collapses, leaning on the arms of the thrones as we hear him start to speak we move slowly around him.

HAMLET

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

The Camera moves with HAMLET down the hall.

HAMLET (continuing)

But two months dead - nay, not so much, not two -
 So excellent a King, that was to this
 Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
 That he might not betem the winds of heaven
 Visit her face too roughly! Heaven and earth,
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on, and yet within a month -
 Let me not think on 't; frailty, thy name is woman -

He turns to face away from the door.

HAMLET (continuing)

A little month, or ere those shoes were old
 With which she followed my poor father's body,
 Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she -
 O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
 Would have mourned longer! - married with mine uncle,
 My father's brother, but no more like my father
 Than I to Hercules, within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
 She married. O most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

He looks back down the almost empty state hall. We see the melancholic profile of a young man in black military cadet uniform. flaxen hair and a single tear trailing down a face more used to miles.

HAMLET (continuing)

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

His eyes close as he hears a door open and readies himself for one more invasion of his non-existent privacy; a princely sigh.

HORATIO

Hail to your lordship.

HAMLET

I am glad to see thee well.

He makes to leave quickly and go to his room but good manners are part of his character and he looks again. His face changes. He spells slowly. Not quite believing.

HAMLET (continuing)

Horatio - or I do forget myself.

We track with the three men as they walk quickly towards HAMLET.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

Sir, my good friend,

A gentle tentative hug. HORATIO allows HAMLET to break the protocol.

HAMLET (continuing)

I'll change that name with you.

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio? - Marcellus.

A warm handshake. These two know each other of old.

MARCELLUS

My good lord.

HAMLET

I am very glad to see you.

And he means it.

(to Barnardo)

Good even, sir. -

A slightly more formal but kind greeting for BARNARDO, before returning to his fascination with HORATIO's sudden appearance.

HAMLET (continuing)

But what in faith make you from Wittenberg?

HORATIO (dodging)
A truant disposition, good my lord.

That is absurd. He's beginning to suspect the real, disappointing truth. His bitterness starts to return.

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

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

Oh. Come on.

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

HORATIO (squirming)
Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

HAMLET
Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

The bitter humour of the remark is replaced by the genuine hurt he feels. And the loss'.

HAMLET (continuing)
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Ere I had ever seen that day, Horatio.
My father - methinks I see my father.

The three men look at each other while the Prince experiences this reverie. Unless, of course, he too...

HORATIO
Where, my lord?

HORATIO checks for spies; will he have the courage to tell his grief-stricken friend?

HAMLET (still distracted)
In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO
I saw him once. He was a goodly King.

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

This has been a moment of such gentleness and quiet pain that
HORATIO and the others can hardly bear it. He has to jump in.

HORATIO
My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET
Saw?

We track into Close shot on the two of them as the import of
the remark sinks in. He really is serious.

HAMLET
Who?

HORATIO (urgent whisper)
My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET
The King my father?

HORATIO
Season your admiration for a while
With an attent ear till I may deliver
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,
This marvel to you.

HAMLET
For God's love let me hear!

HAMLET pulls himself together enough to bring the three men
out of the State Hall and into his apartments. They enter
through a mirrored door close to the throne dais. The door
slams shut.

INTERIOR / HAMLET'S APARTMENT DAY

The four men stand close together in the dark doorway.

HORATIO

Two nights together had these gentlemen,
 Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,
 In the dead waste and middle of the night,
 Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,
 Armed at all points exactly, cap-a-pie,
 Appears before them, and with solemn march
 Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked

HAMLET's astonished reaction is met with nods from the two other men. It did happen.

HORATIO (continuing)

By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes
 Within his truncheon's length, whilst they distilled
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
 Stand dumb and speak not to him.
 This to me In dreadful secrecy impart they did,
 And I with them the third night kept the watch,
 Where, as they had delivered, both in time,
 Form of the thing, each word made true and good,
 The apparition comes. I knew your father;
 These hands are not more like.

HAMLET

But where was this?

MARCELLUS

My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

HAMLET almost aggressive in his thirst for the information.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

My lord, I did,
 But answer made it none; yet once methought
 It lifted up it head and did address
 Itself to motion like as it would speak,
 But even then the morning cock crew loud,
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away
 And vanished from our sight.

Even HAMLET cannot resist the black humour of the situation.

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.

HORATIO

As I do live, my honoured lord, 'tis true;
And we did think it writ down in our duty
To let you know of it.

HAMLET pours out the words, nervous, highly unsettled.

HAMLET

Indeed, indeed, sirs; but this troubles me.
Hold you the watch tonight?

BARNARDO

My lord, we do.

HAMLET

Armed, say you?

This is sinister.

ALL

Armed, my lord.

HAMLET

From top to toe?

MARCELLUS

My lord, from head to foot.

He tries to catch them out. It can't be true.

HAMLET

Then saw you not his face.

HORATIO

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

But if it was his father, how was he? The pain returns. He is intensely vulnerable.

HAMLET

What looked he? Frowningly?

HORATIO

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET

Pale, or red?

HORATIO

Nay, very pale.

HAMLET

And fixed his eyes upon you?

This is beyond comprehension.

HORATIO

Most constantly.

HAMLET (heartfelt)

I would I had been there.

HORATIO

It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET

Very like, very like. Stayed it long?

HORATIO

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

BARNARDO AND MARCELLUS

Longer, longer.

HORATIO

Not when I saw't.

One last attempt to test them.

HAMLET

His beard was grizzled, no?

HORATIO

It was as I have seen it in his life
A sable silvered.

A deep breath before making the unavoidable decision. He is struggling to maintain control.

HAMLET

I will watch tonight.
Perchance 'twill walk agah.

HORATIO

I warrant you it will.

HAMLET

If it assume my noble father's person,
I'll speak to it though hell itself should gape
And bid me hold my peace.

We see a practical man of action.

HAMLET (continuing)

I pray you all,
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,
Let it be tenable in your silence still,
And whatsoever else shall hap tonight,
Give it an understanding but no tongue.
I will requite your loves. So fare ye well.

They move to go out of the main door, but HAMLET stops them and leads them a different way.

HAMLET

Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve
I'll visit you.

HORATIO

Our duty to your honour.

HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.

He opens the door in a bookcase to let them out, which reveals another exit. He ushers them out and as the door closes he rushes up the steps of his study library. The shelves are crammed with books, but he makes for a particular section. He talks quietly to himself, still trying to control his breathing.

HAMLET

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

He goes back to the ancient tome, whipping the pages back. Our Camera moves down onto the page to reveal a heavily bound treatise on demons and demonology. We move closer onto the pages. They stop moving at a grotesque illustration of skeletons and we

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE GROUNDS DAY

We pan down the great South Front of the Palace to find a horse and carriage with luggage being packed aboard. OPHELIA and ATTENDANT enter the shot and we move with them to LAERTES checking his luggage. OPHELIA gives him his gloves.

LAERTES

My necessities are embarked. Farewell.

The Camera leads them as they move away from the house.

LAERTES

And sister, as the winds give benefit
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep
But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA

Do you doubt that?

As they walk with their arms around each other, they are very, some might say unnaturally, close.

LAERTES

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,
Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
A violet in the youth of primy nature,
Forward not permanent, sweet not lasting,
The perfume and suppliance of a minute,
No more.

OPHELIA

No more but so?

LAERTES

Think it no more.

This last exchange has been lighthearted, but the young man is determined to make a serious point.

LAERTES (continuing)

For nature crescent does not grow alone
In thews and bulk, but as his temple waxes
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,
And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
The virtue of his will;

She knows she is being lectured. She begins to defend herself. He's having none of it.

LAERTES (continuing)

but you must fear,
His greatness weighed, his will is not his own,
For he himself is subject to his birth.
He may not, as unvalued persons do,
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
The sanity and health of the whole state;
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head.

This is becoming impossible. She tries to interrupt again. Or at least tease him. They twinkle at each other but still he goes on.

LAERTES (continuing)

Then if he says he loves you,
It fits' your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed, which is no further
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.

They enter the Palace's wondrous Water Gardens. Now we see the real seriousness of his intent. He really does love his sister. She is touched by his concern. And his genuine fear.

LAERTES (continuing)

Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain
If with too credent ear you list his songs,
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open
To his unmastered importunity.
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister, And
keep within the rear of your affection, Out of
the shot and danger of desire.

They continue their walk and we take in the enormous spectacle of Elsinore's rolling gardens and lakes and sheer vastness. But now he's become pompous. A little too much his father's son, and she's started to get irritated.

LAERTES (continuing)

The chariest maid is prodigal enough
If she unmask her beauty to the moon.
Virtue itself scapes not calumnious strokes.

In the background we see HAMLET, a lone black figure, watching fencers in white at practice.

LAERTES (continuing)

The canker galls the infants of the spring
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth
Contagious blastments are most imminent.

They watch HAMLET, at fencing practice, shaking hands, 'being good' with people. Not being alone or his normal self.
LAERTES turns to OPHELIA

LAERTES

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

OPHELIA

I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep
As watchman to my heart;

Genuine. Real. But she's not letting him off the hook.

OPHELIA (continuing)

but, good my brother,
Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven
Whilst like a puffed and reckless libertine
Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
And recks not his own rede.

He know he's been caught. A big smile and a kiss on the lips.

LAERTES

O fear me not.
I stay too long.

POLONIUS V/O

Yet here, Laertes?

LAERTES (continuing)

But here my father comes.
Oh dear. This could be trouble.

LAERTES (continuing)

A double blessing is a double grace;
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS approaches. He walks very quickly. He cuts a dapper figure. His greying hair we suspect is tinted. The expanding waist, corseted in. A vain, brilliant man. One not consigned to doddering and waffling. Unless it suits him.

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
And you are stayed for. There - my blessing with thee,

He kisses him on the cheek. As we

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL DAY

The POLONIUS family sit, holding hands, as the organ plays softly in the background.

POLONIUS

And these few precepts in thy memory
See thou character.
Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
Be thou familiar but by no means vulgar.
The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with 'hoops of steel',
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear't that th' opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear but few thy voice.
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgement.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,

POLONIUS pats LAERTES's cravat, OPHELIA smiles.

POLONIUS (continuing)

But not expressed infancy; rich not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of all most select and generous chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be,
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all -

POLONIUS turns LAERTES's head to face him. He speaks quietly and with great love.

POLONIUS (continuing)

to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.

The young man struggles to remain composed.

POLONIUS (continuing)
Farewell - my blessing season this in thee.

POLONIUS kisses his son on the forehead.

LAERTES
Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS
The time invites you. Go; your servants tend.

POLONIUS tries to bluff it out. Apparently offhand. He moves away. Brother and sister take a tiny moment together. Highly charged.

LAERTES
Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well
What I have said to you.

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

They kiss affectionately.

LAERTES
Farewell.

LAERTES stands and moves briskly out of the chapel. POLONIUS and OPHELIA watch him go and then POLONIUS, very deliberately, closes the gates to the chapel. She is alarmed. POLONIUS's tone is quiet, but menacing.

POLONIUS
What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA (frightened)
So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS
Marry, well bethought.

He moves her away from the gates, and they walk slowly towards the confessional.

POLONIUS (continuing)
'Tis told me he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you, and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.
If it be so -

The quiet threat is unmistakable.

POLONIUS (continuing)
as so 'tis put on me,
And that in way of caution - I must tell you
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.
What is between you? Give me up the truth.

He pushes her into the confessional.

OPHELIA (rising panic)
He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS
Affection, pooh! You speak like a green girl
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
Do you believe his 'tenders' as you call them?

She, utterly panicked and embarrassed.

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

FLASH CUT TO:

INTERIOR / BEDROOM NIGHT

Close on HAMLET and OPHELIA as they make tender love.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL DAY

POLONIUS (continuing)
Marry, I'll teach you: think yourself a baby
That you have ta 'en his tenders for true pay,
Which are not sterling.

FLASH CUT TO:

INTERIOR / BEDROOM NIGHT

HAMLET and OPHELIA both naked, in her bedroom. They touch lightly, beautifully.

POLONIUS V/O (continuing)
Tender yourself more dearly,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL DAY

POLONIUS (continuing)
Or - not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,
Running it thus - you'll tender me a fool.

She is near to tears now. Awkward and unhappy.

OPHELIA
My lord, he hath importuned me with love
In honourable fashion -

She tries to stand but he pushes back again.

POLONIUS (contemptuous)
Ay, fashion' you may call it. Go to, go to.
More spirited now. Starts to give as good as she gets.

OPHELIA
And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

He explodes.

POLONIUS
Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.

This man knows about forbidden love.

POLONIUS (continuing)
I do know

FLASH CUT TO:

INTERIOR / BEDROOM NIGHT

HAMLET and OPHELIA as they make love.

POLONIUS V/O (continuing)
When the blood burns how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL DAY

POLONIUS (continuing)
These blazes, daughter,
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both
Even in their promise as it is a-making,
You must not take for fire.

He recovers slightly from his outburst.

POLONIUS (continuing)
From this time, daughter,
Be somewhat scanter of your maiden presence.
Set your entreatments at a higher rate
Than a command to parley.

He realizes he has gone too far and tries to be more sympathetic.

POLONIUS (continuing)
For Lord Hamlet,
Believe so much in him, that he is young,
And with a larger tether may he walk
Than may be given you.

He goes still further.

POLONIUS (continuing)
In few, Ophelia,
Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,
Not of the dye which their investments show,
But mere implorators of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds
The better to beguile. This is for all -
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

He leaves.

FLASH CUT TO:

INTERIOR / BEDROOM NIGHT

HAMLET and OPHELIA lying together in bed, entwined. HAMLET asleep, OPHELIA tenderly and gently kisses his head.

OPHELIA V/O
I shall obey, my lord.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL DAY

OPHELIA closes her eyes in despair.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ARMOURY NIGHT

HAMLET leads HORATIO and MARCELLUS through the Armoury. Nerves are fragile. Nothing but jumpy small talk.

HAMLET
The air bites shrewdly, it is very cold.

HORATIO
It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET
What hour now?

HORATIO
I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS
No, it is struck.

HORATIO
Indeed? I heard it not. Then it draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

Crash! An enormous explosion goes off. After a moment's panic it becomes clear that it is a ceremonial cannon (albeit, bloody close). They move over to look out of the door towards the Palace.

HORATIO
What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET (contemptuous)
The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

We track with CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE from his apartments, through carousing courtiers egging them on, drinking as they go, and end with a ritualistic sweep into her chambers and onto the bridal bed.

HAMLET V/O
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO V/O
Is it a custom?

HAMLET V/O
Ay, marry is't,
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honoured in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / WEAPONS ROOM NIGHT

HAMLET (continuing)
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though performed at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute,

He begins to ruminate.

HAMLET (continuing)
So, oft it chances in particular men

They move off along the corridor.

HAMLET (continuing)
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, wherein they are not guilty
Since nature cannot choose his origin,

He is talking as if he were asking questions of himself.

HAMLET (continuing)

By their o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausible manners - that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault.

He leads them off.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE GATES NIGHT

HAMLET (continuing)

The dram of evil
Doth all the noble substance over-daub
To his own scandal.

Suddenly, THE GHOST appears.

HORATIO

Look my lord, it comes.
It beckons you to go away with it
As if it some impartment did desire
To you alone.

THE GHOST signals, pleading, attempting to speak. A pitiable noise.

MARCELLUS

(to Hamlet)

Look with what courteous action
It waves you to a more removed ground.
But do not go with it.

HAMLET struggles to get away from them.

HORATIO

(to Hamlet)

No, by no means.

HAMLET

It will not speak. Then will I follow it.

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

There is a terrifying look in HAMLET's eye now. A man with,
as he thinks, nothing to lose.

HAMLET

Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee,
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?

Another great, unearthly yell. Even sadder.

HAMLET (continuing)

It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

He goes through the gate. The men follow him, now desperate
to restrain him.

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
And there assume some other horrible form
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness? Think of it.
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.

Close as he is to HAMLET, the words have not had an effect.
HAMLET has eyes for one thing.

HAMLET

It wafts me still.
(To The Ghost)
Go on, I'll follow thee.

Almost violent now.

MARCELLUS

You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET

Hold off your hands.

HORATIO

Be ruled. You shall not go.

HAMLET

My fate cries out.
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.

HAMLET makes one great physical effort to escape this pinioning. He savagely pulls out his sword and trains it on them. He will not be stopped.

HAMLET (continuing)

By heav'n, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.
I say, away!
(To The Ghost)
Go on, I'll follow thee.

HAMLET chases off into the woods. The two men remain, shaken to the core.

HORATIO

He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS

Let's follow. 'Tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO

Have after. To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO

Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS

Nay, let's follow him.

EXTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT

We pan and track with HAMLET as he runs through a wood exploding with terror.

HAMLET V/O

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

On and on through the wood we race with our Camera. Explosions through the trees, cracks in the ground, the very earth itself shaking, but still no GHOST.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)

I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance,

Flash cuts of his dead father sear through his mind as his urgent thoughts continue in voice over.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)

but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre
Wherein we saw thee quietly enurned
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,
That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel,
Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,
Making night hideous, and we fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?
Where wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no further.

Silence at last. We pan around the wood as Hamlet's eerie POV. THE GHOST's agonized voice cuts through the darkness like a knife.

THE GHOST O/S

Mark me.

HAMLET V/O

I will.

Still no sign of this 'thing'. Suspense building. HAMLET's neryous eyes betray the mounting dread.

THE GHOST O/S

My hour is almost come
When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAMLET V/O

Alas, poor Ghost!

The response is stern.

THE GHOST O/S

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

HAMLET V/O

Speak, I am bound to hear.

THE GHOST

So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET

What?

HAMLET wheels around in surprise as the voice comes from yet another part of the wood. **Crash.** A great hand grasps his neck and with some force throws him against a tree. We move in now on the looming figure that has finally revealed itself. The light comes up on a face of distressing pallor, lit as if from within by two piercing blue eyes.

THE GHOST

I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,

He looks to the ground, where we track across the floor. It cracks open to reveal an ominous gateway to hell. Agonized voices from beyond pierce the night's dull ear.

THE GHOST (continuing)

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.
But this eternal blazon must not be
To ears of flesh and blood.

THE GHOST becomes quietly impassioned.

THE GHOST (continuing)

List, Hamlet, list, O list!
If thou didst ever thy dear father love -

HAMLET

O God!

HAMLET now gets to his knees, moving nearer THE GHOST.

WE CUT TO:

Close on THE GHOST's mouth.

THE GHOST
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

CUT TO:

An ear receiving poison.

HAMLET
Murder?

CUT TO:

The skin of the ear expanding.

HAMLET seems overcome.

THE GHOST
Murder

CUT TO:

Blood, pus, awfulness.

THE GHOST (continuing)
most foul, as in the best it is,
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

HAMLET tries to rally his father, with his resolution.

HAMLET
Haste me to know it, that I with wings as swift
As meditation or the thoughts of love
May sweep to my revenge.

THE GHOST
I find thee apt,
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / ORCHARD DAY (FLASHBACK)

OLD HAMLET asleep in his wintry orchard.

THE GHOST V/O

'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT (REAL TIME)

THE GHOST (continuing)

But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET

O my prophetic soul! My uncle?

CUT TO:

The man himself. CLAUDIUS. Smug - self-satisfied. Eyes on the
QUEEN.

THE GHOST

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL CORRIDOR DAY

We see the Royal party in a curling competition, HAMLET
throws a disc. OLD HAMLET instructs. He takes HAMLET off and
GERTRUDE watches.

THE GHOST V/O (continuing)

With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts -
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
So to seduce! - won to his shameful lust
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT (REAL TIME)

THE GHOST almost in tears now, very much less ghostly and
very much more human.

THE GHOST (continuing)
 O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there! -
 From me, whose love was of that dignity

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL CORRIDOR DAY (FLASHBACK)

CLAUDIUS moves to GERTRUDE and she throws a disc, they embrace and GERTRUDE joins her men. CLAUDIUS watches her as POLONIUS joins him.

THE GHOST V/O
 That it went hand-in-hand even with the vow
 I made to her in marriage, and to decline
 Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
 To those of mine.
 But virtue, as it never will be moved,
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
 So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed,
 And prey on garbage.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT (REAL TIME)

Panic in THE GHOST's voice.

THE GHOST (continuing)
 But soft, methinks I scent the morning's air.
 Brief let me be.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / ORCHARD DAY (FLASHBACK)

Camera moves slowly back to reveal the sleeping peaceful monarch resting under a tree.

THE GHOST V/O (continuing)
 Sleeping within mine orchard,
 My custom always in the afternoon,

A figure walks towards OLD HAMLET.

Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,

Very Close Shot of the poison entering the ear.

And in the porches of mine ear did pour
 The leperous distilment, whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That swift as quicksilver

A Jump-cut rhythm of the King's convulsions. Fluid and blood
 bubbling out of the ear. Skin blistering in an instant. Fingers
 contracting arthritically. Writhing on the ground in agony.

THE GHOST V/O (continuing)
 It courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,
 And with a sudden vigour it doth posset
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;
 And a most instant tetter barked about,
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust,
 All my smooth body.

CLAUDIUS moves away, removing his footprints as he goes. He
 stops, watches OLD HAMLET the last time and then runs off.

THE GHOST V/O (continuing)
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
 Unhouseled, dis-appointed} unaneled,
 No reck'ning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head.

We are now Close on the distorted face, a picture of pain

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT (REAL TIME)

THE GHOST (CONTINUING)
 O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!

The two faces close together now.

THE GHOST (CONTINUING)
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
 But howsoever thou pursuest this act,

He is especially gentle now. Regretful, compassionate.

THE GHOST (continuing)
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
 Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven,
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
 To prick and sting her.

The sounds of the dawn intrude ominously.

THE GHOST (continuing)
 Fare thee well at once.
 The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
 Adieu, adieu, Hamlet. Remember me.

The Camera tracks away from THE GHOST. From HAMLET. Their hands reach for each other. HAMLET makes a desperate clutch for his father's hand but as the fingers curl around the ghostly armour, it ... vanishes.

HAMLET
 O all you host of heaven!

He looks to the sky, then falls flat on to the ground. His head close to the soil.

HAMLET (continuing)
 O earth! What else?
 And shall I couple hell?

He feels for where his father was. He is in agony.

HAMLET (continuing)
 O fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee?

Almost laughing now with the hysterical grief. He is aware of wanting to speak to the earth.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,
 That youth and observation copied there,
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain
 Unmixed with baser matter. Yes,

He gets up onto his knees.

HAMLET (continuing)
 by heaven.
 O most pernicious woman!
 O villain, villain, Smiling, damned villain!
 My tables, meet it is I set it down
 That one may smile and smile and be a villain.
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.
 (he writes)
 So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word:
 It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me'.
 I have sworn 't.

The dawn almost upon us and HAMLET is sobering up fast. The sounds of cries from MARCELLUS and HORATIO ring through the grey wood.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS O/S
 My lord, my lord!

We cut to the two men and track with them for a beat.

MARCELLUS (calling)
 Lord Hamlet.

HORATIO
 Heaven secure him.

Cut to a Close shot of HAMLET as he stands up - holding his sword in front of him. A still, mystic moment.

HAMLET
 So be it.

He runs off towards them. Meets them on the way, they change direction to follow him. He seems, quite frankly, mad.

HORATIO (calling)
 Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

HAMLET
 Hilla, ho, ho, boy; come, bird, come.

MARCELLUS
 How is't, my lord?

HORATIO (to Hamlet)
 What news, my lord?

HAMLET

O wonderful!

He is all inscrutable smiles and naughtiness, hiding behind trees and avoiding everything.

HORATIO

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No, you'll reveal it.

HORATIO

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS

Nor I, my lord.

Will he or won't he?

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

Ay, by heav'n, my lord.

The mad enigma continues.

HAMLET

There's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.

His friends are too tired and frightened for all this.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET

I am sorry they offend you heartily
Yes, faith, heartily.

He really is appalled to have offended. He just doesn't know what to do.

HORATIO

There's no offence, my lord.

HAMLET

Yes by Saint Patrick but there is, Horatio,

Urgent now, real. But the necessary secrecy has started already.

HAMLET (continuing)

And much offence, too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster't as you may.

He turns to MARCELLUS too.

And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

HORATIO

What is't, my lord? We will.

HAMLET

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO

My lord, we will not.

Not good enough.

HAMLET

Nay, but swear't.

HORATIO

In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS

Nor I, my lord, not I.

HAMLET

Upon my sword.

He is deadly serious.

MARCELLUS

We have sworn, my lord, already.

This man is dangerous.

HAMLET

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

THE GHOST O/S

Swear!

Without warning the ground under HORATIO's foot splits apart, smoke rising from the depths.

Everyone appalled. HAMLET's hysteria mounts.

HAMLET

Ah ha, boy, sayst thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?
Come on. You hear this fellow in the cellarage.
Consent to swear.

HORATIO

Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET

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

They hear the chilling noise afar off. The earth explodes.

THE GHOST O/S

Swear.

HAMLET

Hic et ubique? Then we'll shift our ground. -
Come hither, gentlemen,

They move off in the direction of THE GHOST's voice.

HAMLET (continuing)

And lay your hands again upon my sword.
Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword.

The earth explodes as

THE GHOST O/S

Swear.

The trees around them are starting to move.

HAMLET (continuing)
Well said, old mole. Canst work
i'th' earth so fast?

The trees still shaking. The earth smouldering.

HAMLET (continuing)
A worthy pioneer. - Once more
remove, good friends.

They move again to another part of the woods. The ground moving under their feet, the trees aquiver. Smoke spurting out behind them as they run through the woods.

HORATIO
O day and night, but this is wondrous strange.

HAMLET
And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in our philosophy. But come,

He leads them off again. He brings them to their knees amid the earth-moving chaos. Raises his sword aloft.

HAMLET (continuing)
Here as before, never, so help you mercy,
How strange or odd soe 'er I bear myself -
As I perchance hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on -
That you at such time seeing me never shall,
With arms encumbered thus, or with this headshake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase
As 'Well, we know' or 'We could an' if we would',
Or 'If we list to speak', or 'There be, an' if
they might',
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note
That you know aught of me - this not to do,
So grace and mercy at your most need help you, swear.
Laying the sword on the ground.

THE GHOST O/S
Swear.

They place their hands on the sword and swear. At last, all is quiet. HAMLET speaks in quiet, heartfelt tones. Kindness itself to his two friends.

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit. - So, gentlemen,
 With all my love I do commend me to you,
 And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
 May do t'express his love and friending to you,
 God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together,
 And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.
 The time is out of joint. O cursed spite
 That ever I was born to set it right!
 Nay, come, let's go together.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

Meantime the seat of power appears to sleep, but some people
 are still at work.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR / POLONIUS'S ROOM NIGHT

The room is dark but we see the foxy face of REYNALDO.
 Debauched of look, drinking and smoking. In the background we
 see a prostitute, work over, frightened to move from the bed.
 POLONIUS, shirt partly undone, corset visible, crosses the
 room still doing up his trousers, pulling up braces.
 Completely unembarrassed by the situation. He takes his time,
 goes to a desk, throws a packet to his pimp.

POLONIUS

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO does not move. His attitude barely civil. These men
 have a deal, that's all.

REYNALDO

I will, my lord.

POLONIUS is over-polite with him. Heavily ironic. There is a
 perverse pleasure to be had from this low-life sparring match.

POLONIUS

You shall do marv'lous wisely, good Reynaldo,
 Before you visit him, to make inquire
 Of his behaviour.

REYNALDO all feigned humility and 'but of course'-ness.

REYNALDO

My lord, I did intend it.

POLONIUS continues the cruel patronage. A certain relish, but he wants this thing done. He pours himself a drink.

POLONIUS

Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir,
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding
By this encompassment and drift of question
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it.
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him,
As thus: 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him' - do you mark this, Reynaldo?

REYNALDO

Ay, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS

'And in part him, but', you may say, 'not well,
But if't be he I mean, he's very wild,
Addicted so and so'; and there put on him
What forgeries you please - marry, none so rank
As may dishonour him,

A cynical smile between them. What have these men done in the past? They reek of corruption.

POLONIUS (continuing)

take heed of that -
But, sir, stich wanton, wild, and ustlal slips
As are companions noted and most known
To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO

As gaming, my lord?

POLONIUS

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
Quarrelling, drabbing -

He remembers the girl in the bed, almost as an afterthought.
Clicks his fingers for her to go.

POLONIUS (continuing)

you may go so far.

As she is passing REYNALDO, he grabs her, signalling for her to keep her mouth shut. He enjoys the irony of the situation.

REYNALDO

My lord, that would dishonour him.

REYNALDO brutally pushes her away. She leaves through a secret door in the wall.

POLONIUS

Faith, no, as you may season it in the charge.
 You must not put another scandal on him,
 That he is open to incontinency -
 That's not my meaning -
 But breathe his faults so quaintly
 That they may seem the taints of liberty,
 (he crosses to sit down)
 The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
 A savageness in unreclaimed blood.
 Of general assault.

REYNALDO

But, my good lord -

POLONIUS

Wherefore should you do this?

He wants to hear REYNALDO's poisonous irony.

REYNALDO

Ay, my lord.
 I would know that.

POLONIUS very happy now. Physically satisfied, relishing his smoke and drink he expands on his theory of information gathering.

POLONIUS

Marry, sir, here's my drift,
 And I believe it is a fetch of warrant.
 You laying these slight sullies on my son,
 As 'twere a thing a little soiled i'th' working,
 Mark you, your party in converse, him you would sound,
 Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
 The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
 He closes with you in this consequence:
 'Good sir', or so, or 'friend', or 'gentleman',
 According to the phrase and the addition
 Of man and country.

REYNALDO

Very good, my lord.

POLONIUS has started to lose interest himself. More interested in the effects of sex and substance.

POLONIUS

And then, sir, does he this - he does -
what was I about to say? By the mass, I
was about to say something. Where did I
leave?

REYNALDO repeats with relish and contempt. Almost an impersonation. He manages to stay this side of getting a smack in the face.

REYNALDO

At 'closes in the consequence', at 'friend,
Or so', and 'gentleman'.

POLONIUS

At 'closes in the consequence'- ay, marry,
He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman,
I saw him yesterday' - or t 'other day,
Or then, or then - 'with such and such, and, as you say,
There was a gaming, there o'ertook in's rouse,
There falling out at tennis', or perchance
'I saw him enter such a house of sale',
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth. See you now,

He enjoys over-elaborating this to a man who has no need of such instruction. He talks gently, kindly, as if to a bad, stupid child.

POLONIUS (continuing)

Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach
With windlasses and with assays of bias
By indirections find directions out.
So, by my former lecture and advice,
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

REYNALDO

My lord, I have.

POLONIUS

God be with you. Fare ye well.

REYNALDO stands up, picks up the money and crosses the room.

REYNALDO

Good my lord.

Another beat. A look.

POLONIUS

Observe his inclination in yourself.

These two men, like mafiosi, very wary of each other. Neither is one on whom you turn your back.

REYNALDO

I shall, my lord

Then, very gently, almost feminine.

POLONIUS

And let him ply his music.

This raises a smile.

REYNALDO

Well, my lord.

He exits through another hidden door.

POLONIUS

Farewell.

As it closes OPHELIA rushes through yet another hidden door.

POLONIUS starts up and goes to her. She is very, very distressed.

POLONIUS (continuing)

How now, Ophelia, what's the matter?

OPHELIA

Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted.

POLONIUS

With what, i'th' name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,
No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,
Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS
Mad for thy love?

She thinks probably yes. But not in a way she can remotely understand. And now there is no one to talk to except her father.

Her concern is for HAMLET as much as herself.

OPHELIA
My lord, I do not know,
But truly I do fear it.

POLONIUS
What said he?

OPHELIA
He took me by the wrist and held me hard,
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,
And with his other hand thus o'er his brow
He falls to such perusal of my face
As 'a would draw it. Long stayed he so.
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,
And, with his head over his shoulder turned,
He seemed to find his way without his eyes,
For out o'doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS moves over to her at the door.

POLONIUS
Come, go with me. I will go seek the King.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures.

He had no idea this was so serious. He's also relieved to be back in his daughter's attention. Apparently. He holds her and is tender with her. Kisses and squeezes. She is agonized over her own reaction and now about whether she's done the right thing.

POLONIUS (continuing)

I am sorry -

What, have you given him any hard words of late?

This is too much. She explodes with righteous indignation.

OPHELIA

No, my good lord, but as you did command

I did repel his letters and denied

His access to me.

OPHELIA rushes over to the bed and curls up on it. POLONIUS, now tremendously understanding.

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.

I am sorry that with better heed and judgement

I had not quoted him. I feared he did but trifle

And meant to wreck thee. But beshrew my jealousy!

By heaven, it is as proper to our age

To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions

As it is common for the younger sort

To lack discretion.

He sits on the bed next to her, gently stroking her hair.

POLONIUS (CONTINUING)

Come, go we to the King.

This must be known, which, being kept close, might move

More grief to hide than hate to utter love. Come.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE DAY

Elsinore, serene and majestic. What could disturb its peaceful state?

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR / QUEEN'S APARTMENTS DAY

A Wide shot of the palatial bedroom. ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN are waiting. The KING, slightly dishevelled, crosses over to them, doing up the buttons on his tunic. In the background the ATTENDANTS are making up the marital bed. GERTRUDE and CLAUDIUS have not been discussing the weather! During the first part of the scene they are being dressed, combed and spruced, the room is being tidied.

CLAUDIUS

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
 Moreover that we much did long to see you,
 The need we have to use you did provoke
 Our hasty sending. Something have you heard
 Of Hamlet's transformation - so I call it,
 Since not th' exterior nor the inward man
 Resembles that it was. What it should be,
 More than his father's death, that thus hath put him
 So much from th' understanding of himself,
 I cannot dream of. I entreat you both

He moves away to sit on the bed. An ATTENDANT brings CLAUDIUS
 a drink.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

That, being of so Young days brought up with him,
 And since so neighbored to his youth and humour,
 That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court
 Some little time, so by your companies
 To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather,
 So much as from occasions you may glean,
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus
 That, opened, lies within our remedy.

The QUEEN emerges, still dressing. She takes them by the hand.
 Woos them. They are both weak-kneed with desire for her.

GERTRUDE

Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you,
 And sure I am, two men there is not living
 To whom he more adheres. If it will please you
 To show us so much gentry and good will
 As to expend your time with us a while
 For the supply and profit of our hope,
 Your visitation shall receive such thanks
 As fits a King's remembrance.

GERTRUDE and CLAUDIUS lead them out of the room. ROSENCRANTZ,
 slightly more prone to justifications, starts timidly.

ROSENCRANTZ

Both your majesties
 Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
 Put your dread pleasures more into command
 Than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN knows when they're on to a winner. Besides they
 have no choice. Quickly.

GUILDENSTERN

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

Right. Now on with business. The KING, far less able to disguise his indifference to the pair, leads the way out.

CLAUDIUS

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

INTERIOR / CORRIDOR DAY

Now they are in the main corridor on the way to the State Hall and work. Attended by a retinue. Very efficient, brisk.

GERTRUDE

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too-much changed son. -

She sends them off down a side corridor.

GERTRUDE (continuing)

Go, some of ye,
And bring the gentlemen where Hamlet is.

The two men hardly know what's happening to them as they are almost bundled away. The 'audience' is over.

GUILDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practices
Pleasant and helpful to him.

GERTRUDE

Ay, amen.

The Royal Party still moving. No time wasted. Like a shadow POLONIUS emerges from another door to join the progress. It feels like a team of spin doctors, media advisers, and security experts briefing the President on the way to a White House press conference. Still the Camera keeps moving.

POLONIUS (confidentially)

Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.

CLAUDIUS

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

They have reached the main door.

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

We see a fencing practice occupying the State Hall. Arranged in symmetrical patterns. All dressed in white, it's like an Olympic opening ceremony. The moves are viciously elegant. The fencers file out as the Royal Group moves through without pause.

POLONIUS

Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,
Both to my God and to my gracious King.
And I do think -

We continue to track with them down the hall.

POLONIUS (continuing)

or else this brain of mine
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure
As it hath used to do - that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

A brief pause. An intimate moment.

CLAUDIUS

o speak of that, that do I long to hear!

The Prime Minister even more confidential. Conscious of his power as King-maker over CLAUDIUS.

POLONIUS

Give first admittance to th' ambassadors.
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

A look that says CLAUDIUS knows he's being 'handled'.

CLAUDIUS

Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

POLONIUS moves off and CLAUDIUS goes back to GERTRUDE. He whispers.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

She barely looks at him. Preoccupied, ready for work.

GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main
His father's death and our o'er-hasty marriage.

CLAUDIUS

Well, we shall sift him.

They have now reached the thrones and take their places,
glamorous as ever. From another hidden door, POLONIUS leads
VOLTEMAND and CORNELIUS over to the throne.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Welcome, my good friends.
Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / WOODS NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG FORTINBRAS on horseback, with his men.

VOLTEMAND V/O

Upon our first he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appeared

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / COUNCIL ROOM NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

OLD NORWAY reading the news of FORTINBRAS's misdemeanours.

VOLTEMAND V/O (continuing)

To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But better looked into, he truly found

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / ELSINORE NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Yes. This is what the Norwegian Prince wants.

VOLTEMAND V/O (continuing)

It was against your highness;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / COUNCIL ROOM NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

OLD NORWAY turns and we see the young troublemaker FORTINBRAS, head bowed. He suddenly receives a crashing blow from the old man.

VOLTEMAND V/O (continuing)
 whereat grieved
 That so his sickness, age, and impotence
 Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
 On Fortinbras, which he, in brief, obeys,
 Receives rebuke from Norway,

We see FORTINBRAS on his knees asking for forgiveness and eventually the old man does so and hugs him. Now he gives him written permission to approach Poland, not Denmark.

VOLTEMAND V/O (continuing)
 and, in fine,
 Makes vow before his uncle never more
 To give th' essay of arms against your majesty;
 Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
 Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee
 And his commission to employ those soldiers
 So levied as before, against the Polack,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY (REAL TIME)

VOLTEMAND (continuing)
 With an entreaty herein further shown,
 (he gives Claudius a letter)
 That it might please you to give quiet pass
 Through your dominions for his enterprise
 On such regards of safety and allowance
 As therein are set down.

CLAUDIUS (impressed)
 It likes us well,
 And at our more considered time we'll read,
 Answer, and think upon this business.
 Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour.
 Go to your rest;

VOLTEMAND and CORNELIUS turn and walk away. CLAUDIUS stands.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 at night we'll feast together.
 Most welcome home.

The ambassadors leave. GERTRUDE stands up.

POLONIUS

This business is well ended.
My liege and madam,

They move off, away from the thrones.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ANTE STATE ROOM DAY

This is clearly a top-secret discussion and ought to be urgent. But POLONIUS knows he has them in his thrall. Documents are being signed.

POLONIUS (continuing)

to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief.

The signing is over. ATTENDANTS leave. CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE are very pissed off with this waffling. POLONIUS changes the tone, leaning forwards onto the desk and adds brutally.

POLONIUS (continuing)

Your noble son is mad -

Close on their reactions. But wait, there's more.

POLONIUS (continuing)

'Mad' call I it, for to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?

He remains cold, sinister.

POLONIUS (continuing)

But let that go.

The Queen replies through gritted teeth.

GERTRUDE

More matter with less art.

He won't be put off by a woman, least of all an adulterous wife and insensitive mother.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity 'tis 'tis true - a foolish figure,
But farewell it, for I will use no art.

They exchange looks. She has no choice but to listen to this man who momentarily has them in his power. He stands up.

POLONIUS (continuing)

Mad let us grant him, then; and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect -
Or rather say 'the cause of this defect',
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.

He is pushing his luck now. To the limit.

POLONIUS (continuing)

Perpend.

He walks over to a hidden door and calls.

POLONIUS

Ophelia.

The door opens and OPHELIA comes out, she hands a letter to POLONIUS and he brings her over to the desk.

POLONIUS

I have a daughter - have whilst she is mine -
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather and surmise.

He hands the letter to OPHELIA. With enormous difficulty she begins to read.

OPHELIA

'To the celestial and my soul's idol,
The most beau tified Ophelia.'

POLONIUS

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase, 'beautified'
is a vile phrase. But you shall hear -

His daughter now almost on the point of breakdown.

OPHELIA

'these in her excellent white bosom, these'.

This is too much for OPHELIA and she runs from the room.

GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay a while. I will be faithful.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / OPHELIA'S BEDROOM DAY (FLASHBACK)

HAMLET, undressed, and OPHELIA, in her nightgown, are sitting at the piano.

HAMLET

'Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move,
Doubt truth to be a liar,
But never, never,
But never doubt I love.'

They smile and kiss. He has to go.

HAMLET

'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these
numbers. I have not art to reckon my
groans. But that I love thee best, O
most best, believe it. Adieu.'

He's almost gone, she won't let him go.

HAMLET (continuing)

'Thine evermore,

He has one final kiss and leaves, she watches him go.

WE CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ANTE STATE ROOM DAY

CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE a little more relaxed but still suspicious of POLONIUS's leery triumph.

POLONIUS

'most dear lady, whilst this
machine is to him,
Hamlet. '
This in obedience hath my daughter showed me,
And more above hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

CLAUDIUS

But how hath she
Receiv'd his love?

POLONIUS

What do you think of me?

CLAUDIUS

As of a man faithful and honourable.

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
As I perceived it - I must tell you that -
Before my daughter told me, what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had played the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking mute and dumb,
Or looked upon this love with idle sight -
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star.
This must not be'.

The QUEEN finds this hard to believe.

POLONIUS (continuing)

And then I precepts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens;
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,
And he, repulsed - a short tale to make -
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we wail for.

The pair of them are strangely vulnerable. Guilt-ridden,
desperately hopeful.

CLAUDIUS (to Gertrude)
Do you think 'tis this?

Genuinely at a loss.

GERTRUDE
It may be; very like.

POLONIUS
Hath there been such a time - I'd fain know that -
That I have positively said 'Tis so'
When it proved otherwise?

If so, he is reluctant to admit it. Ditto GERTRUDE.

CLAUDIUS
Not that I know.

POLONIUS (pointing to his head and shoulder)
Take this from this if this be otherwise.
If circumstances lead me I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

CLAUDIUS stands up.

CLAUDIUS
How may we try it further?

POLONIUS joins him.

POLONIUS
You know sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

GERTRUDE (standing up)
So he does indeed.

POLONIUS
At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.
Be you and I behind an arras then..
Mark the encounter. If he love her not,
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

Entrapment for the heir to the throne.

CLAUDIUS
We will try it.

Suddenly GERTRUDE sees a figure appear on the gallery above the chapel.

GERTRUDE
But look where sadly the poor wretch
comes reading.

POLONIUS
Away, I do beseech you both away.
I'll board him presently. O give me leave.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / GALLERY DAY

POLONIUS heading up the stairs

POLONIUS
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

Boo! A great skull appears around the pillar. It is HAMLET wearing a grotesque commedia dell'arte mask. He takes the mask off, and attempts a zany dismissal. Eyes bulging.

HAMLET
Well, God-a-mercy.

He leads off, through a door and onto the state hall gallery. POLONIUS follows.

INTERIOR / UPPER GALLERY DAY

They walk along the Upper Gallery. POLONIUS rushes to keep up with him. HAMLET is constantly on the look-out for other spies. Paranoia intense.

POLONIUS
Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET
Excellent well. You are a
fishmonger.

POLONIUS
Not I, my lord.

HAMLET
Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS
Honest, my lord?

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

POLONIUS
That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET
For if the sun breed maggots in a dead
dog, being a god kissing carrion -

HAMLET (continuing)
Have you a daughter?

POLONIUS
I have, my lord.

He steps and looks at him. Here comes something significant.

HAMLET
Let her not walk i'th' sun. Conception
is a blessing, but as your daughter may
conceive - Friend, look to't.

He walks on. POLONIUS turns and talks to Camera.

POLONIUS
How say you by that? Still harping on
my daughter. Yet he knew me not
atfirst; he said I was a fishmonger. He
isfar gone, far gone. And truly in my
youth I suffered much extremity for
love, very near this. I'll speak to him
again.

He chases down the gallery after him.

POLONIUS
- What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET
Words, words, words.

POLONIUS
What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

POLONIUS

I mean the matter you read, my lord.

Time to get rid of him, with bitter irony and some proper madness - the antic disposition. He enjoys the chance to be cruel to this man.

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS (aside)

Though this be madness, yet there is method in't -

They have reached a door at the end of the Upper Gallery.

POLONIUS

Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET

Into my grave?

POLONIUS

Indeed, that's out of the air -

HAMLET goes.

POLONIUS (continuing)

How pregnant sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will take my leave of him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.

POLONIUS exits, in pursuit of the Prince.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / RAILWAY Paddock DAY

We find POLONIUS, finally catching up with HAMLET, annoyed now.

POLONIUS

- My lord, I will take my leave of you.

HAMLET turns and faces him. He cannot resist this one.

HAMLET

You cannot, sir, take from me anything
that I will more willingly part withal -

Nor can he resist the slide into suicidal despair.

HAMLET (continuing)

except my life, except my life, except my life.

POLONIUS (going)

Fare you well, my lord.

We Cut to a horizon through which a charming miniature train now starts to choo, choo. ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN hanging from it. POLONIUS moves off towards the train. HAMLET enraged with himself for having let POLONIUS get to him.

HAMLET

These tedious old fools!

POLONIUS calls to the steaming caterpillar.

POLONIUS

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet. There he is.

Two of the KING'S ATTENDANTS approach POLONIUS and they all move back towards the house. We see the childishly excited faces of ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, who make their re-entrance into HAMLET's life precariously perched aboard a primitive miniature steam train - a toy of the new King.

ROSENCRANTZ

God save you, sir.

GUILDENSTERN (to Polonius)

Mine honoured lord.

HAMLET approaches them amazed.

ROSENCRANTZ (to Hamlet)
My most dear lord.

They get off the train as HAMLET approaches.

HAMLET
My excellent good friends. How dost
thou, Guildenstern?
(shaking hands)
Ah, Rosencrantz, Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ
As the indifferent children of the earth.

They were instructed to draw him on to pastimes.

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

HAMLET plays the bantering game, but determined to extract
real information.

HAMLET
Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ
Neither, my lord.

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

GUILDENSTERN
Faith, her privates we.

He indulges this weak, bawdy banter. They are clearly very
nervous.

HAMLET
In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most
true, she is a strumpet. What news?

A tiny beat. They hadn't banked on him being quite so
inquisitive so soon. Isn't he supposed to be mad?

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

Not good enough.

HAMLET

Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true. Let me question, more in particular. What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither?

A note of genuine alarm in GUILDENSTERN's voice. After all, the Danish crown is not secure.

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lord?

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

Oh. Metaphors. Thank Christ for that.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

His genuine melancholy returns.

HAMLET

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

Oh come on. Cheer up. We're your friends.

ROSENCRANTZ

We think not so, my lord.

Oh really. The disappointment grows.

HAMLET

Why, then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison.

He starts to walk away from the little railway line towards the palace, they have to run to catch him up.

ROSENCRANTZ

Why, then your ambition makes it
one; 'tis too narrow for your mind

HAMLET speaks the first phrase with a weariness so intense
it's as if he's been wounded.

HAMLET

O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell
and count myself a King of infinite space,
were it not that I have bad dreams.

Oh no you don't. We've got you sussed. We're just as clever,
for all your little enigmas.

GUILDENSTERN

Which dreams indeed are ambition; for
the very substance of the ambitious
is merely the shadow of a dream.

He puts the ball back. Work that one out.

HAMLET

A dream itself is but a shadow.

But we're still on your side, remember.

ROSENCRANTZ

Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy
and light a quality that it is but a
shadow's shadow.

HAMLET

Then are our beggars bodies, and our
monarchs and outstretched heroes the
beggars' shadows.

He has had enough. Let's get rid of them. He starts to run.

HAMLET (continuing)

Shall we to th' court? For, by my fay,
I cannot reason.

No, they mean business, following him at a run.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

We'll wait upon you.

He stops with his back to them in the gateway.

HAMLET

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

He turns to face them. Let's try again. Banter out of the way
now. The pleading is heartfelt.

HAMLET (continuing)

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

A beat. A look between the two of them. A little shiftier now.

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lord, no other occasion.

HAMLET

Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks
but I thank you;

He steps up the pressure now. Resentment building.

HAMLET (continuing)

and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too
dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for?
Is it your own inclining? Is it a free
visitation? Come, deal justly with me.
Come, come. Nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET (fiercely)

Anything but to th' purpose. You were sent
for, and there is a kind of confession in
your looks, which your modesties have not
craft enough to colour.

Heavy with sarcasm.

HAMLET (continuing)

I know the good King and Queen have sent
for you.

ROSENCRANTZ (innocent)

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET (sinister)
That you must teach me.

One last chance for whatever there was of their friendship to endure.

HAMLET (continuing)
But let me conjure you by the rights of
our fellowship, by the consonancy of
our youth, by the obligation of our
ever-preserved love, and by what more
dear a better proposer could charge you
withal, be even and direct with me
whether YOft were sent for or no.

They are paralysed with guilt and fear.

ROSENCRANTZ (to Guidenstern)
What say you?

HAMLET (swiftly)
Nay then, I have an eye of you - if you
love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN (ashamed)
My lord, we were sent for.

All HAMLET's spleen seems to disappear. He just needed to know. With the knowledge that his paranoia is not without foundation he seems to relax. He has led them now to -

EXTERIOR / COLONNADE DAY

They climb the steps to the colonnade.

HAMLET
I will tell you why. So shall my
anticipation prevent your discovery,
and your secrecy to the King and Queen
moult no feather.

He seems quite simply like a child who has become lost. He talks quietly and without self-pity. His melancholy seems almost serene.

HAMLET (continuing)

I have of late - but wherefore I know not -
lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of
exercise; and indeed it goes so heavily
with my disposition that this goodly frame,
the earth, seems to me a sterile
promontory.

He looks out to a glorious blue sky.

HAMLET (continuing)

This most excellent canopy the air, look
you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this
majestical roof fretted with golden fire -
why, it appears no other thing to me but a
foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.

He turns to his two 'friends' and still manages to be naively
enthusiastic. Inspired for a moment and inspiring to hear.

HAMLET (continuing)

What a piece of work is a man! How noble in
reason, how infinite in faculty, in form
and moving how express and admirable, in
action how like an angel, in apprehension
how like a god - the beauty of the world,
the paragon of animals! And yet

The crushing weight of his situation comes home once more.

HAMLET (continuing)

to me what is this quintessence of dust?
Man delights not me -

He sees them smile and turns on them sharply.

HAMLET (continuing)

no, nor woman neither, though by your
smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

He that plays the King shall be welcome;
his majesty shall have tribute of me. The
adventurous Knight shall use his foil and
target, the Lover shall not sigh gratis,
the Humorous Man shall end his part in
peace, the Clown shall make those laugh
whose lungs are tickle o 'th 'sear, and
the Lady shall say her mind freely, or
the blank verse shall halt for't. What
players are they?

The two 'friends' are now delighted that they've finally
struck the right note.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

Terrific. They start to make a bee-line back to the Palace.
HAMLET now his true self, completely intrigued by the news.
He talks at a gallop.

HAMLET

How chances it they travel? Their
residence, both in reputation and
projit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ

I think their inhibition comes by the
means of the 'late innovation'.

HAMLET is now transformed into a gossip theatrical.

HAMLET

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

This is fun. ROSENCRANTZ starts to camp it up.

ROSENCRANTZ

No, indeed, they are not.

At last we see how they might have been friends. At least on a superficial level.

HAMLET

How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ very pleased with his inside knowledge.

ROSENCRANTZ

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace. But there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapped for't.

He pulls out a newspaper to prove his point.

ROSENCRANTZ (continuing)

These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages - so they call them - that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills, and dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET seizes the paper and scans the article. He is shocked.

HAMLET

What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players - as it is most like, if their means are not better - their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?

ROSENCRANTZ

Faith, there has been much to-do on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question.

HAMLET (genuinely baffled)

Is't possible?

GUILDENSTERN

O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET

Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

Having seemed that he was 'with' them, it's now clear that HAMLET very much retains his own mind.

HAMLET

It is not very strange; for mine uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

They run off towards the Palace.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL GALLERY DAY

GUILDENSTERN, a little discomfited by these last remarks follows HAMLET onto the balcony above the state hall.

GUILDENSTERN

There are the players.

HAMLET gazes down onto the floor of the hall to this motley troupe who look like the 'Crummles' from Nicholas Nickleby - a real family affair. Tatty grand. He turns to his pals, beaming.

HAMLET

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

He pulls them close to him, whispers.

You are welcome. But my uncle-father
and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN (uneasily)
In what, my dear lord?

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

POLONIUS appears on the other side of the gallery.

POLONIUS
Well be with you, gentlemen.

HAMLET is speeding with excitement. He turns and walks away
from the smug Prime Minister. POLONIUS tries to keep up with
him from the other end of the balcony.

HAMLET (aside)
Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too -
at each ear a hearer - that great baby
you see there is not yet out of his
swaddling-clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ (aside)
Haply he's the second time come to them,
for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET (aside)
I will prophesy he comes to tell me of
the players.
(he speaks loudly)
Mark it. - You say right, sir, O'
Monday morning, 'twas then indeed.

POLONIUS calls to them.

POLONIUS
My lord, I have news to tell you.

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

POLONIUS will obviously now have to deal with a raving idiot.

POLONIUS

The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET

Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS

Upon mine honour -

HAMLET

Then came each actor on his ass.

POLONIUS

The best actors in the world,

He indicates the group below, who have now noticed HAMLET's presence.

POLONIUS (continuing)

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

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS

What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET (mock-sinister)

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

POLONIUS (to camera)

Still on my daughter.

HAMLET

Am I not i'th' right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS still desperate to crack HAMLET's mad 'code'.

POLONIUS

If you call me jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAMLET (harsh)
Nay, that follows not

POLONIUS (irritated)
What follows then, my lord?

HAMLET
Why
'As by lot, God wot',
and then you know
'It came to pass
As most like it was' -
the first row of the pious chanson will show
you more, for look where my abridgement comes.

He rushes down the stairs towards the players. Whirls about them with genuine glee. The Camera glides with him, capturing the joy.

HAMLET (continuing)
You're welcome, masters, welcome all. -
I am glad to see thee well. - Welcome,
good friends.

He goes first to the leader of the troupe.

HAMLET (continuing)
O, my old friend! Thy face is valanced
since I saw thee last. Com'st thou to
beard me in Denmark?

Then to the child actress, whom he picks up in his arms.

HAMLET (continuing)
What, my young lady and mistress.

He checks out her footwear.

HAMLET (continuing)
By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer heaven
than when I saw you last by the altitude
of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a
piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked
within the ring.

He obviously knows them all intimately and likes them.

HAMLET (continuing)
Masters, you are all welcome.

He walks them up the State Hall to the throne area. He and the FIRST PLAYER stand on the platform.

HAMLET (continuing)
We'll e'en to't like French falconers,
fly at anythillg we see. We'll have a
speech straight. Come, give us a taste of
your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

They're all terribly excited. This, although unusual, looks as if it will be a good gig.

FIRST PLAYER
What speech, my good lord?

HAMLET thinks very specifically about this. He's aware, as always, of being watched, not just by the actors but by POLONIUS, attendants, etc. Still, his enthusiasm is unbridled.

HAMLET
I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it
was never acted, or, if it was, not above
once; for the play, I remember, pleased not
the million.

The Players know about that kind of reaction.

HAMLET (continuing)
'Twas caviare to the general.

He throws a look at POLONIUS oblivious.

HAMLET (continuing)
But it was - as I received it, and others
whose judgements in such matters cried in
the top of mine - an excellent play, well
digested in the scenes, set down with as
much modesty as cunning.

He really is getting into his stride now and we see a real aficionado of drama.

HAMLET (continuing)
I remember one said there was no sallets in
the lines to make the matter savoury, nor
no matter in the phrase which might indict
the author of affectation, but called it an
honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and
by very much more handsome than fine.

Once again we see the eyes sparkle.

HAMLET (continuing)

One speech in it I chiefly loved, 'twas
Aeneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it
especially where he speaks of Priam's
slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin
at this line - let me see, let me see:

HAMLET begins slowly, modestly, aware of his audience.

HAMLET (continuing)

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast' -
'tis not so.

FIRST PLAYER

It begins with Pyrrhus.

He is quietly possessed, the delivery assured. He loves the
language, savours the sounds.

HAMLET

It begins with Pyrrhus -
'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot
Now is he total gules, horridly tricked
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,
Baked and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and damned light
To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire.
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

A beat as the CROWD take the moment. This was good.

HAMLET (continuing)

So, proceed you.

Spontaneous applause.

POLONIUS cannot resist the chance to patronize.

POLONIUS

Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good
accent and good discretion.

A look between them that almost interrupts. But Dr Theatre is
at work and immediately the FIRST PLAYER goes into action.

FIRST PLAYER

'Anon he finds him,

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / TROY NIGHT

OLD PRIAM, battling in blood and gore to stay alive.

FIRST PLAYER V/O (continuing)

Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls,
Repugnant to command. Unequal match,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide;

We see the action in violent, gory detail, amid the smoke and
flames.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

For appalled reactions.

FIRST PLAYER (continuing)

But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
Th' unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel his blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo, his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seemed i' th' air to stick.
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And, like a neutral to his will and matter,
Did nothing.

The Player has them enthralled. He is in tremendous form.

FIRST PLAYER (continuing)
 But as we often see against some storm
 A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,
 The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 Doth rend the region: so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
 A roused vengeance sets him new a-work;
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
 On Mars his armour, forged for proof eterne,
 With less remorse

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / TROY NIGHT

We see PRIAM dying.

FIRST PLAYER V/O (continuing)
 than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
 Now falls on Priam.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

FIRST PLAYER (CONTINUING)
 Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,
 In general synod, take away her power,
 Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,
 And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven,
 As low as to the fiends!'

POLONIUS
 This is too long.

HAMLET barely keeps control.

HAMLET
 It shall to the barber's, with your beard.
 (to First Player)
 Prithee, say on. He's for a jig or a tale
 of bawdry, or he sleeps. Say on, come to
 Hecuba.

FIRST PLAYER
 'But who, O who had seen the mobbled queen'-

HAMLET had forgotten about this part of the tragedy.

HAMLET

'The mobbled queen '?

POLONIUS

That's good; 'mobbled queen' is good.

HAMLET, and all, shoot him a look.

FIRST PLAYER

'Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames
With bisson rhe~tm; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
About her lank and all o'er-teemed loins,

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / TROY NIGHT

To find the distracted and hysterical HECUBA running among the debris.

FIRST PLAYER V/O (continuing)

A blanket in th' alarm of fear caught up -
Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
'Gainst Fortune's state would reason have pronounced.

We track into her face as she sees the savage murder of her husband. She opens her mouth to scream. No sound emerges. Just empty, aching grief.

FIRST PLAYER V/O (continuing)

But if the gods themselves did see her then,
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

We cut back to the face of the Player who is profoundly moved by her plight. So are they all.

FIRST PLAYER (continuing)

And passion in the gods. '

POLONIUS (genuinely amazed)
 Look whe' er he has not turned his colour,
 and has tears in's eyes.
 (to the First Player)
 Prithee, no more.

Applause.

HAMLET (to First Player)
 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the
 rest soon.
 (To Polonius)
 Good my lord, will you see the players
 well bestowed? Do ye hear? - let them be
 well used, for they are the abstracts and
 brief chronicles of the time. After your
 death you were better have a bad epitaph
 than their ill report while you live.

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

HAMLET (furious)
 God's bodykins, man, much better. Use
 every man after his desert, and who
 should scape whipping?

A passionate plea for kindness.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Use them after your own honour and
 dignity - the less they deserve, the more
 merit is in your bounty. Take them in.

POLONIUS
 Come, sirs.

HAMLET (to the players)
 Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play tomorrow.

As they leave, he takes aside the FIRST PLAYER. Whispers.

HAMLET
 Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you
 play the Murder of Gonzago?

FIRST PLAYER
 Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

We'll ha't tomorrow night.

He is about to go but once more HAMLET stops him.

HAMLET (continuing)

You could for a need study a speech of
some dozen or sixteen lines which I
would set down and insert in't, could
you not?

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well. Follow that lord, and

His evenness of temper has returned. Enough to make him instruct
the Player not to emulate his treatment of the Prime Minister.

HAMLET (CONTINUING)

look you mock him not.

He walks down the Hall with HORATIO and the ever-clinging
ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

HAMLET (continuing)

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

Reluctantly, they bow and go.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord.

HAMLET

Ay, so. God b' wi' ye.

He is at the door of his apartments, which he enters in a
rush and snaps shut.

INTERIOR / HAMLET'S APARTMENTS DAY

HAMLET

Now I am alone.

He says it with intense relief. Moves slowly into the room.

HAMLET (continuing)
 what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
 Is it not monstrous that this player here,
 But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,
 Could force his soul so to his own conceit
 That from her working all his visage wanned,
 Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
 A broken voice, and his whole function suiting
 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing.
 For Hecuba!

He asks the question with genuine astonishment. He moves away through the apartment now, pacing.

HAMLET (continuing)
 What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
 That he should weep for her? What would he do
 Had he the motive and the cue for passion
 That I have?

He opens the doors of a beautiful model theatre.

HAMLET (continuing)
 He would drown the stage with tears,
 And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
 Make mad the guilty and appal the free,
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed
 The very faculty of eyes and ears. Yet I,
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
 Like john-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
 And can say nothing - no, not for a King
 Upon whose property and most dear life
 A damned defeat was made.

He moves across to the wardrobe.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Am I a coward?
 Who calls me villain, breaks my pate across,
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face,
 Tweaks me by th' nose, gives me the lie i'th' throat
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?
 Ha? 'Swounds, I should take it;

Enraged now, he smashes bottles and furniture.

HAMLET (continuing)
 for it cannot be
 But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this
 I should ha' fattened all the region kites
 With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!

He leans back against the wardrobe.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless
 villain! O, vengeance! -

He rushes to the window, eager to shout it to the heavens.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Why, what an ass am I? This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
 A scullion! Fie upon 't, foh!
 About, my brain. I have heard
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play
 Have by the very cunning of the scene
 Been struck so to the soul that presently
 They have proclaimed their malefactions;

He drags himself into action and looks again at the model
 theatre. Ideas, ideas.

HAMLET (continuing)
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players
 Play something like the murder of my father
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks,
 I'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench,
 I know my course.

The haunted look returns.

HAMLET (continuing)
 The spirit that I have seen
 May be the devil, and the devil hath power
 T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy -
 As he is very potent with such spirits -
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 More relative than this.

He sinks behind the theatre so that his face is level with the stage. Yes! That's it.

HAMLET (continuing)
The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

We move closer in on the tiny stage where the figure of the King stands over the trapdoor, which HAMLET releases with a violent **snap!** The Model King is dispatched to 'the other place' as

WE CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL NIGHT

The doors open to reveal the real CLAUDIUS at the head of the royal group, no longer stage models, but alive. It's another furtive meenng. The tension in this court is building. CLAUDIUS, GERTRUDE. POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN. All picking up on CLAUDIUS's barely concealed impatience with the two men's work.

CLAUDIUS
And can you by no drift of conference
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ (placatory)
He does confess he feels himself distracted,
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

All right. It's not their fault. But GUILDENSTERN decides to twist the knife.

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

Well, give us some details then. Anything.

GERTRUDE
Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ
Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN

But with much forcing of his disposition.

A little irritation building between the two over-eager school friends.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

The QUEEN getting quite firm with them now too.

GERTRUDE

Did you assay him
To any pastime?

Ah. A chance to give some good news at last.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

POLONIUS knows that this will be the key to it all and wants
to get on with it.

POLONIUS

'Tis most true,
And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.

It really does seem as though this might help.

CLAUDIUS

With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ

We shall, my lord.

The two men exit faintly relieved. There was more at stake
than they realized.

CLAUDIUS (tentatively)
 Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,
 For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither
 That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
 Affront Ophelia.

This is news. And faintly distasteful. Rather more spying
 goes on in this court than in OLD HAMLET's.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 Her father and myself, lawful espials,
 Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
 We may of their encounter frankly judge,
 And gather by him, as he is behaved,
 If't be th' affliction of his love or no
 That thus he suffers for.

The last remark lingers. It may be something more sinister.
 GERTRUDE takes a moment to decide.

GERTRUDE
 I shall obey you.

She goes to OPHELIA, who looks more frightened than ever at
 this strange turn of events.

GERTRUDE (continuing)
 And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish
 That your good beauties be the happy cause
 Of Hamlet's wildness; so shall I hope your virtues
 Will bring him to his wonted way again,
 To both your honours.

OPHELIA
 Madam, I wish it may.

We see GERTRUDE react slightly to the indignity of having to
 leave them.

POLONIUS
 Ophelia, walk you here. -

He moves her over to one of the pillars, giving her a book.

POLONIUS (continuing to the King)
 Gracious, so please you,
 We will bestow ourselves. -

He instructs OPHELIA again.

Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.

(to The King)

We are oft to blame in this:
'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er The devil himself.

CLAUDIUS

O, 'tis too true.

He turns back into the room while POLONIUS moves away, watching for Hamlet

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience.
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.
O a heavy burden!

POLONIUS

I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

They rush off, watched by OPHELIA. POLONIUS bundles CLAUDIUS into a room as -

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

HAMLET emerges from a door at the throne end of the Hall. OPHELIA hides behind a pillar as HAMLET walks slowly down the side of the Hall. He is directly under the Gallery. As he passes each of the mirrored doors, he casts a look at them, gradually slowing down until he stops directly in front of the mirrored door behind which CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS wait.

All the passionate bravado of the previous scene is gone. All the reacting, all the emotion, all the certainty about what to do. Now the play has been set up and the awful spectre of what he might prove, and therefore have to do, is very real. There is nothing indulgent or mildly ruminative in this most famous moment. Here is a man faced with the prospect of murder or his own death. He faces both as absolute realities and it is the most quiet and terrifying dread he has ever known. He looks directly into the mirror.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ANTE-ROOM DAY

With great care we see POLONIUS pull back a panel to reveal a two-way mirror on their side of the door. Now CLAUDIUS and HAMLET are face to face but the latter is unaware. We Cut between the two.

HAMLET

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms axairlst a sea of troubles,
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep -
No more, and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to - 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep.
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub,

HAMLET moves into the mirror, really asking the question of himself.

HAMLET (continuing)

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life,

HAMLET seems to spell out the whips and scorns as if CLAUDIUS was personally responsible.

HAMLET (continuing)

For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

He whips out a dagger with the swiftness of a trained soldier. He points it for a moment at the mirror/CLAUDIUS, his face very close to the glass.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Who would fardels bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,
 The undiscovered country from whose bourn
 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 And enterprises of great pith and moment
 With this regard their currents turn awry,
 And lose the name of action.

OPHELIA moves out from her hiding place, into the hall and
 HAMLET turns to see her.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Soft you, now,
 The fair Ophelia! -

He walks towards her.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Nymph, in thy orisons?

They stand facing each other for a moment.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / HALL STAIRS DAY

HAMLET
 Be all my sins remembered?

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

It's a huge relief to see her. But this is a very formal
 greeting. Strange, even despite recent events.

HAMLET
 I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

He moves to her and they embrace and kiss, a moment of bliss
 but then she breaks away. She is still cool, trying to hold
 herself together.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver.

She hands him a package of his love letters and poems.

OPHELIA (continuing)

I pray you now receive them.

This is not like her. Or if it is, he won't play this adolescent game. He is petulant.

HAMLET

No, not I, I never gave you aught.

Starting to have more of a conversation with him now, instead of worrying about the listeners. She lowers her voice, she is annoyed and hurt by him in her own right. She wants him to know the truth of her feelings. Not what she's been told to do.

OPHELIA

My honoured lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd
As made the things more rich.

She tries to be hard.

OPHELIA (continuing)

Their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There, my lord.

He lashes out at the letters, sending them flying from her hand across the hall.

HAMLET

Ha, ha? Are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord.

Come on.

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

Oh, really.

HAMLET

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

She tries to give as good as she gets but she is still brittle, on her dignity, and never unaware of being watched.

OPHELIA

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

He replies fiercely and with a heart-rending disillusion.

HAMLET

Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof.

Don't you **realize** what was between us?

HAMLET (continuing)

I did love you once.
I don't know any more. I hoped so. I hope so.

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

He seems to understand her confusion and berates himself. She is right. He is unworthy. He ought to end it now.

HAMLET

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

Ah, the truth at last.

OPHELIA

I was the more deceived.

But of course it isn't the truth. It's much more complex than that. He can't tell her why it has ended, of his terrible personal situation, but he can warn someone he loves to

beware of CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS. and even him, a man unworthy of her love. He wants her to be safe. To escape.

HAMLET

Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves, all. Believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery.

A tiny noise! She glances across the room. And then it dawns. The Hall is empty. As never before. It's a trap. She has been unable to be purely honest - almost an impossibility with her - surely she is not part of a trap? Not her ... not her ...

HAMLET (continuing)

Where's your father?

The most agonizing decision of her young life.

OPHELIA

At home, my lord.

And with that phrase their love is dead. We seem to see both their hearts break before us. Both their hearts and, apparently, his mind.

HAMLET

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

We are Close on her agonized face.

OPHELIA

O help him, you sweet heavens!

He explodes with fury. He picks her up by the arm with great force. He then starts to drag her down the opposite side of the Hall to the spying pair. As he does so he flings open each mirrored door. We track with them and see many pairs of

HAMLETS and OPHELIAs as the inner and outer mirrors add visual chaos to the already savage race around the Hall.

HAMLET

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

He has run off for a moment, leaving her sobbing.

OPHELIA

Heavenly powers, restore him.

He rushes back to her and drags her to the other side of the hall.

HAMLET

I have heard of your paintings, too, well enough.
God hath given you one face,

He flings her around like a rag doll.

HAMLET (continuing)

and you make yourselves another.
You jig, you amble, and you lisp,
and nickname God's creatures,

He shoves her hard against the mirrored door behind which her father stands.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ANTE-ROOM DAY

POLONIUS inside is appalled. CLAUDIUS stops him opening the door.

HAMLET (continuing)

and make your wantonness your ignorance.

All passion almost spent. We see from inside the two faces against the mirror. Hers contorted against the glass.

HAMLET (continuing)

Go to, I'll no more on't. It hath made me mad.
I say we will have no more marriages. Those
that are married already - all but one -
shall live. The rest shall keep as they are.

He flings open the door and drags OPHELIA into the room and pushes her to 'the floor. He catches sight of one of the hidden doors just before it snaps shut!

INTERIOR / ANTE-ROOM DAY

He moves back to OPHELIA. He speaks quietly to her now. Their heads very close together. It's over.

HAMLET (continuing)

To a nunnery, go.

Hamlet goes back into the State Hall and away.

OPHELIA stays where he has pushed her, wrecked in every sense.

OPHELIA

O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite, down!

She is in a state of utter shock.

OPHELIA (continuing)

And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy. O woe is me,
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

From the other hidden door enter CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS. The national crisis steps up a gear. This man is dangerous. POLONIUS goes to the prostrate OPHELIA and cradles her in his arms. He is severely shaken.

CLAUDIUS

Love? His affections do not that way tend,
Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger; which to prevent
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall
with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute.

He calms down a little after this outburst. Rationalizes.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Haply the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something-settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

POLONIUS (strangely quiet)

It shall do well. But yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of this grief
Sprung from neglected love.

He continues to stroke her head like a parent singing a lullaby to a baby.

POLONIUS (continuing)

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

He quietly offers the following advice.

POLONIUS (continuing)

My lord, do as you please,
But, if you hold it fit, after the play
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his griefs. Let her be round with him,
And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference. If she find him not,

To England send him, or confine him where Your wisdom best shall think.

CLAUDIUS

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

He closes his eyes for a moment, behind him we see the father's and daughter's silent distress.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / MONUMENT DAY

HORATIO, reading a newspaper detailing YOUNG FORTINBRAS's ongoing incursions across Northern Europe. The proximity of war is clear in his worried face. He folds up the paper and moves off back towards the Palace.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL STAIRS-THEATRE NIGHT

The stairs' end of the State Hall has been transformed into a theatre, based to some extent on the Elizabethan model - no doubt to HAMLET's instructions. The re-decoration is still taking place across this scene.

Curtains across the Gallery and Inner Stage. Chairs being taken up to the Bridge Gallery, where the Royal Box will be. Bleachers being rolled in underneath to create the auditorium. We see the magic of theatre happening before our very eyes. HAMLET loves it and we constantly move with him through the scene. His advice is urgent. Very firm, lives are at stake. A very bossy writer, director. He enters with the actor who will play LUCIANUS. They walk around the Gallery of the State Hall.

HAMLET

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

He is demonstrating with his hand.

HAMLET (continuing)
 thus, but use all gently; for in the
 very torrent, tempest, and as I may say
 the whirlwind of your passion, you must
 acquire and beget a temperance that may
 give it smoothness.

He pauses in the doorway to his apartments to see HORATIO
 inside, signalling to him that it's time to get ready.

HAMLET (continuing)
 O, it offends me to the soul to hear a
 robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a
 passion to tatters, to very rags, to
 split the ears of the groundlings) who
 for the most part are capable of
 nothing but inexplicable dumb shows and
 noise. I would have such a fellow
 whipped for o'erdoing Tamagant. It out-
 Herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.

LUCIANUS
 I warrant your honour.

HAMLET the worrier is never far away.

A couple of the other actors join the conversation.

HAMLET
 Be not too tame, neither; but let your own
 discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to
 the word, the word to the action, with this
 special observance:

Hugely important point. If this doesn't happen, he may not
 obtain the proof of murder.

HAMLET (CONTINUING)
 That you o'erstep not the modesty of nature.
 For anything so overdone is from the purpose
 of playing, whose end, both at the first and
 now, was and is to hold as 'twere the mirror
 up to nature, to show virtue her own feature,
 scorn her own image, and the very age and body
 of the time his form and pressure. Now this
 overdone, or come tardy off, though it make
 the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the
 judicious grieve;

And make my task even harder.

HAMLET (continuing)

The censure of the which one must in your allowance O 'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

They join the rest of the company, who sit amongst their props and costumes in last-minute preparation.

HAMLET (continuing)

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

FIRST PLAYER (rather smug)

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

HAMLET

O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them;

He picks out the obvious cheeky chappie. He's not joking.

HAMLET (continuing)

for there be of them that will themselves laugh to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.

HAMLET walks away and into POLONIUS.

HAMLET (continuing)

How now, my lord? Will the King hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS (guarded)
And the Queen too, and that presently.

Well then, get on with it!

HAMLET
Bid the players make haste.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN join them.

HAMLET (continuing)
Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN
We will, my lord.

HAMLET disappears before they have a chance to finish their bow.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / HAMLET'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

HORATIO is waiting in the apartment as HAMLET comes in to surprise him, entering from, yes, another hidden door.

HAMLET
What ho, Horatio!

HORATIO
Here, sweet lord, at your service.

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

HORATIO, embarrassed and slightly thrown by the intimacy,

HORATIO
O my dear lord -

HAMLET
Nay, do not think I flatter;

He will go on. He moves away, putting on his waistcoat.

HAMLET (continuing)
For what advancement may I hope from thee
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits
To feed and clothe thee?

There is a knock at the door, HAMLET goes over to greet a cadet.

HAMLET (continuing)
Why should the poor be flattered?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning.

He leads HORATIO over to the desk and HORATIO sits down.

HAMLET (continuing)
Dost thou hear? -
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath sealed thee for hmelf; for thou hast been
As one in suff'ring all that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Has ta'en with equal thanks;

HAMLET means this compliment. Very tender.

HAMLET (continuing)
and blest are those
Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

A beat.

HAMLET (continuing)
Something too much of this.
There is a play tonight before the King.
One scene of it comes near the circumstance
Which I have told thee of my father's death.
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy.

This is a truly grim thought.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Give him heedful note,
 For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
 And after, we will both our judgements join
 In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO
 Well, my lord.
 If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing
 And scape detecting,

He flourishes the glasses.

HORATIO (continuing)
 I will pay the theft.

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

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL-THEATRE NIGHT

The far end of the State Hall is unrecognizable. An elegant Court Theatre is in its place with drapes and raked seating, candles and servants with programmes.

Close on CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE who kiss and then feign embarrassment at being 'caught out' but the moment is delicious for all. Applause, they smile and sit down as do the rest of the AUDIENCE.

HORATIO takes up the position for his spying, seeing CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE settling into their chairs.

HAMLET now appears to huge applause. Is he in the play?

CLAUDIUS
 How fares our cousin Hamlet?

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

CLAUDIUS
 I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet.
 These words are not mine.

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

POLONIUS enters the auditorium. HAMLET rushes down to drag POLONIUS on stage, playing to the Gallery as warm-up man. They play this like a double-act. Quickly with lots of AUDIENCE reactions.

HAMLET (to Polonius)

My lord, you played once i'th' university,
you say.

POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

And what did you enact?

POLONIUS

I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed
i'th' Capitol. Brutus killed me.

HAMLET (mock heroic)

It was a brute part of him to kill so
capital a calf there.-

Boom Boom. Applause. Then urgently to ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN who are coming from 'backstage'.

HAMLET

Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, my lord, they stay upon your patience.

They move off towards their seats. We cut backstage to see the PLAYERS doing their last-minute preparations. HAMLET makes his way up the stairs to take his place beside OPHELIA. GERTRUDE calls to him before he sits down.

GERTRUDE

Come hither, my good Hamlet. Sit by me.

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS has now moved up into position in the Royal Box behind them. He whispers to them.

POLONIUS (aside)
O ho, do you mark that?

We are Close on HAMLET and OPHELIA. His voice a little too loud for comfort. Courtiers pretending not to hear.

HAMLET (to Ophelia)
Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Desperate to maintain her dignity.

OPHELIA
No, my lord.

HAMLET
I mean my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA
Ay, my lord.

HAMLET (goadling)
Do you think I meant country matters?

Quite firm with him now.

OPHELIA
I think nothing, my lord.

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

She's becoming exasperated.

OPHELIA
What is, my lord?

HAMLET
No thing.

OPHELIA
You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET
Who, I?

OPHELIA
Ay, my lord.

HAMLET
O God, your only jig-maker!

He ups the volume.

HAMLET (continuing)

What should a man do but be merry? For
look you how cheerfully my mother looks,
and my father died within's two hours.

The auditorium falls completely silent. Reactions all round.
At such a moment, she can only feel profoundly sorry for him.
She whispers gently.

OPHELIA

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

He will not let it go. Not even in public.

HAMLET

So long? Nay then, let the devil wear
black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O
heavens, die two months ago and not
forgotten yet! Then there's hope a great
man's memory may outlive his life half a
year. But, by'r lady, a must build
churches then, or else shall a suffer
not thinking on, with the hobby-horse,
whose epitaph is 'For O, for O, the
hobby-horse is forgot.'

He is interrupted by the ACTORS coming onto the stage. This
is not what he'd planned. A Dumb Show. This kind of diversion
is useless. Already he senses the attention of the AUDIENCE
wandering. Already the King and Queen are in conversation,
ignoring it. After all it is not the play. Typical bloody
actors!

THE DUMB SHOW

The King lies down. The Queen, seeing him asleep, leaves him.
A man enters, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours
poison in the King's ears, and exits. The Queen returns,
finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The
poisoner comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The
poisoner woos the Queen. She seems loath and unwilling a
while, but in the end accepts his love.

There is mild applause from the few who tore themselves away
from their drinks and sweets long enough to take it in.

During the Dumb Show HAMLET and OPHELIA are discussing it.

OPHELIA

What means this, my lord?

HAMLET (annoyed)

Marry, this miching malicho. It means mischief.

OPHELIA beginning to relax a little. At least this is a diversion. At least they're sitting together.

OPHELIA

Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

One of the actors appears.

HAMLET

We shall know all by this fellow. The players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all.

Rather excited.

OPHELIA

Will he tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET (vicious shut-up)

Ay, or any show that you will show him: be not you ashamed to show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.

OPHELIA

You are naught, you are naught.
I'll mark the play.

PROLOGUE

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

Even the introduction is crap. Why can't they just get on with HAMLET's bit of the play? He heckles aggressively.

HAMLET

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

The AUDIENCE turn around shocked at what they hear.

OPHELIA (understanding)

'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET

As woman's love.

Bloody hell. Everyone knows who that's meant for. The AUDIENCE, especially the Royal Couple, are completely focused on the play.

The PLAYER KING sits down in a chair. The PLAYER QUEEN now enters, she kneels down beside the KING.

PLAYER KING

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

PLAYER QUEEN

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done.
But woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you my lord it nothing must.
For women's fear and love holds quantity,
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now what my love is, proof hath made you know,
And as my love is sized, my fear is so.
Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

HAMLET watches them both, now the ACTRESS, now GERTRUDE.

PLAYER KING

Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too.
My operant powers their functions leave to do,
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honoured, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou -

PLAYER QUEEN

O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
In second husband let me be accurst;
None wed the second but who killed the first.

HAMLET now really caught up in the play.

HAMLET

That's wormwood, wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN

The instances that second marriage move
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.
A second time I kill my husband dead
When second husband kisses me in bed.

More head turning and tutting in the AUDIENCE. This is too much. The ACTOR continues very naturalistic.

PLAYER KING

I do believe you think what now you speak;
But what we do determine oft we break.
Purpose is but the slave to memory,
Of violent birth but poor validity,
Which now like fruit unripe sticks on the tree,
But falls unshaken when they mellow be.
Most necessary 'tis that we forget
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.
What to ourselves in passion we propose,
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

POLONIUS also has something to learn from HAMLET's play.

PLAYER KING (continuing)

The violence of either grief or joy
Their own enactures with themselves destroy.
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;.

GERTRUDE knows this only too well.

PLAYER KING (continuing)

Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.
This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes change;

A special meaning for OPHELIA.

PLAYER KING (continuing)

For 'tis a question left us yet to prove
Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies;

CLAUDIUS sneaks a look to GERTRUDE on this.

PLAYER KING (continuing)

Poor men advanced make friends of enemies.
 And hitherto doth love on fortune tend,
 For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
 And who in want a hollow friend doth try
 Directly seasons him his enemy.
 But orderly to end where I begun,
 Our wills and fates do so contrary run
 That our devices still are overthrown;
 Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.
 So think thou wilt no second husband wed;
 But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead

PLAYER QUEEN (impassioned)

Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light,
 Sport and repose lock from me day and night,.
 To desperation turn my trust and hope,
 An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope,
 Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
 Meet what I would have well and it destroy,
 Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife
 If, once a widow, ever I be wife.

We see GERTRUDE, fuming.

HAMLET

If she should break it now!

PLAYER KING (to Player Queen)

'Tis deeply sworn.
 Sweet, leave me here a while.
 My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
 The tedious day with sleep.

PLAYER QUEEN

Sleep rock thy brain.
 And never come mischance between us twain.

PLAYER QUEEN exits. PLAYER KING sleeps. HAMLET takes the stage.

HAMLET (to Gertrude)

Madam, how like you this play?

GERTRUDE

The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

HAMLET

O, but she'll keep her word.

CLAUDIUS leans forward. The Court turn around. There's more drama here than there was in the play.

CLAUDIUS (abrupt)
Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?

HAMLET
No, no, they do but jest, poison injest.
No offence i' th' world.

CLAUDIUS
What do you call the play?

HAMLET (sharp)
The Mousetrap.

Then he rattles on at speed, gleefully. Rushing up the steps towards the Royal Box.

HAMLET (continuing)
Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a m~trder done in Vienna - Gonzago is the Duke's name, his wife Baptista. You shall see anon. 'Tis a knavish piece of work; but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us l10t. Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

Enter Lucianus.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

HORATIO, looking through the glasses, takes them from the stage and trains them on the KING. OPHELIA tries to re-establish contact.

OPHELIA
You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

HAMLET (brutally)
I could interpret between you and your love if I could see the puppets dallying,

She's a little more confident now. She will stand up to him.

OPHELIA
You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET

It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge,
A lot of disdainful tutting at that. It really isn't seemly,

OPHELIA

Still better, and worse

HAMLET

So you mis-take your husbands,

HAMLET (moving down to the stage)

Begin, murderer, Pox, leave thy damnable
faces and begin. Come: 'the croaking raven
doth bellow for revenge',

HAMLET now on the stage, the AUDIENCE certain something is
amiss, Threat is in the air.

LUCIANUS

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing,
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

HAMLET grabs the poison phial from the actor, and turns on
CLAUDIUS.

Through the following we track faster and faster towards HAMLET
and the KING. Flash Cuts of the poisoning. The Courtiers
reacting. CLAUDIUS's mind reeling. HAMLET possessed.

HAMLET

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

The AUDIENCE wheels around to see the KING's reaction. He
stands up. The AUDIENCE follows suit.

OPHELIA

The King rises.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire?

GERTRUDE (to Claudius)
How fares my lord?

POLONIUS
Give o 'er the play.

What will the KING do? A loaded pause.

CLAUDIUS
Give me some light. Away.

COURTIER
Lights, lights, lights!

The KING and his party leave the balcony as candles are brought to light his way.

In the theatre there is total pandemonium. A Piccadilly of panic.

HAMLET is ecstatic and most dangerous. He was right. He was right. He shouts for HORATIO.

HAMLET
Horatio, Horatio!

He runs half way up the stairs and turns and as he speaks HORATIO appears from the balcony behind him.

HAMLET
Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play,
For some must watch, while some must sleep,
Thus runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers,
if the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me,
with two Provençal roses on my razed shoes, get
me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

His friend isn't nearly so able to join in.

HORATIO
Half a share.

HAMLET (unabashed)
A whole one, I.
For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
This realm dismantled was
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here
A very, very - peacock.

Then a strained attempt at humour.

HORATIO
You might have rhymed.

HAMLET finally, snaps out of it. He wants the proof from HORATIO.

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

HORATIO
Very well, my lord.

HAMLET
Upon the talk of the pois'ning?

HORATIO
I did very well note him.

He still won't commit himself to the horror of what is likely to follow this 'proof'. There is a moment between them, a distancing moment. HAMLET has changed. Triumph and blood lust possess him. HORATIO does not like it. Suddenly HAMLET sees the PLAYERS coming and instigates a diversionary tactic. ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN close behind them. He is physically restless, they have to chase him all round the stage.

HAMLET
Ah hal Come, some music, come, the recorders,
For if the King like not the comedy,
Why then, belike he likes it not, pardie.
Come, some music.

GUILDENSTERN (firm)
Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET (delighted)
Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN
The King, sir -

HAMLET (surprised)
Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN tries to match him for sarcasm and understatement.

GUILDENSTERN
Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

HAMLET
With drink, sir?

Ta-dah!

GUILDENSTERN
No, my lord, rather with choler.

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

GUILDENSTERN (very annoyed)
Good my lord, put your discourse into
some frame, and start not so wildly from
my affair.

HAMLET (mousey)
I am tame, sir. Pronounce.

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

HAMLET (very polite)
You are welcome.

The thuggish side of GUILDENSTERN's personality very close to
the surface now.

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

Ooo. A bit narked are we?

HAMLET
Sir, I cannot.

GUILDENSTERN
What, my lord?

HAMLET

Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased.

Remember ... ?

HAMLET (continuing)

But, sir, such answers as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the matter. My mother, you say?

ROSENCRANTZ

Then thus she says: your behaviour hath struck her into amazement and admiration.

HAMLET (very camp)

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

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET (sinister)

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother.

A beat. If looks could kill.

HAMLET (continuing)

Have you any further trade with us?

He tries a different tack.

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET returns the understanding tone.

HAMLET

And do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET (poisonous irony)
Sir, I lack advancement.

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

HAMLET
Ay, but 'while the grass grows... ' - the
proverb is something musty.

One of the actors returns with a recorder.

HAMLET (continuing)
O, the recorder. Let me see one.

To GUILDENSTERN, taking him aside.

HAMLET (continuing)
To withdraw with you, why do you go
about to recover the wind of me as if
you would drive me into a toil?

They realize they've gone too far. They want to leave this
country in one piece.

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

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

He thrusts it in his face.

GUILDENSTERN
My lord, I cannot.

More threateningly.

HAMLET
I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN
Believe me, I cannot.

It might be a dagger.

HAMLET

I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN

I know no touch of it, my lord.

He has pinned him in a corner of the stage now. His tone still, quiet, menacing.

HAMLET

It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN

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

His lips are now an inch away from GUILDENSTERN's ear. HORATIO watches for any move from ROSENCRANTZ to help.

HAMLET

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me. You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak.

Then he explodes with passion.

HAMLET (continuing)

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

POLONIUS enters the back of the 'auditorium'.

HAMLET (continuing)

God bless you, sir.

POLONIUS

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

HAMLET looks up to an imaginary sky. Happy to mock his alleged madness with these people who treat him with similar contempt.

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS (barely civil)

By th' mass, and 'tis: like a camel, indeed.

HAMLET (provoking)

Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS

It is backed like a wease/.

HAMLET (cold-eyed)

Or like a whale.

POLONIUS (vicious)

Very like a whale.

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS

will say so.

HAMLET

'By and by' is easily said.

Exit POLONIUS.

HAMLET (continuing)

Leave me. 'Friends'.

They go. HORATIO waits for a moment, but HAMLET races up the stairs through a door and out onto the balcony.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / KING'S APARTMENT NIGHT

KING CLAUDIUS marches into the room, taking off his jacket, and attended by his valets. ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN following. It's as if a war were in expectation.

CLAUDIUS

like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you.
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you.
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

CLAUDIUS crosses the room and sits at his table.

These men are now terrified. They can't stop themselves from talking.

GUILDENSTERN

We will ourselves provide.
Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
That live and feed upon your majesty.

ROSENCRANTZ

The single and peculiar life is bound
With all the strength and armour of the mind
To keep itself from noyance; but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests
The lives of many.

He tries to soothe CLAUDIUS. CLAUDIUS drinks. We can see the burden of responsibility.

ROSENCRANTZ (continuing)

The cease of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel
Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoined, which when it falls
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

His look thanks them.

CLAUDIUS

Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,
For we will fetters put upon this fear
Which now goes too free-footed.

GUILDENSTERN

We will haste us.

POLONIUS comes in and CLAUDIUS moves off.

POLONIUS

My lord.

They leave through one of the secret doors.

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

POLONIUS and CLAUDIUS moving down the steps towards the chapel.

POLONIUS

He's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll convey myself
To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home.
And, as you said - and wisely was it said -
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech of vantage. Fare you well, my liege.
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

CLAUDIUS

Thanks, dear my lord.

POLONIUS hurries off and CLAUDIUS moves into the chapel.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR-EXTERIOR / BALCONY NIGHT

A new demonic HAMLET smells the midnight air and talks to
Camera. His mood is chilling - unpleasant.

HAMLET

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.

He says this with ominous relish.

HAMLET (continuing)
 O heart, lose not thy nature! Let not ever
 The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
 Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
 I will speak daggers to her, but use none.
 My tongue and soul

INTERIOR / BALCONY NIGHT

Whilst HAMLET continues we see CLAUDIUS in the chapel. He moves to the confessional, checks there is no one there and then enters the wooden booth, a little drunk and utterly tormented.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)
 in this be hypocrites -
 How in my words somever she be shent,
 To give them seals never my soul consent.

CLAUDIUS
 O, my offence is rank! It smells to heaven.
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
 A brother's murder. Pray can I not.
 Though inclination be as sharp as will,
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
 And like a man to double business bound
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
 To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
 Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up.

He does, but more in hope than anything else.

CLAUDIUS
 (continuing)
 My fault is past - but O, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder -
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.

This last said with real tenderness and longing.

CLAUDIUS

(continuing)

May one be pardoned and retain th' offence?
 In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above.
 There is no shuffling, there the action lies
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
 Try what repentance can. What can it not?
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
 O wretched state, O bosom black as death,
 O limed soul that, struggling to be free,
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay.
 Bow, stubborn knees;

He kneels down. His head inches away from the grille. We can hear his guilty breathing.

CLAUDIUS

and heart with strings of steel,

We see, but he does not, a hand on the other side of the grille.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
 All may be well.

His eyes close and we move slowly to the other side of the booth to find HAMLET.

As the voice/over begins he slowly brings out his dagger.

HAMLET V/O

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

He puts the long thin dagger through one of the grille holes and moves it very slowly to a centimetre away from CLAUDIUS's ear. He puts the palm of his hand against the hilt ready to hammer it into CLAUDIUS's skull.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)

and so he goes to heaven,
 And so am I revenged.

And he does! We see the blood spurt before an abrupt cut we are back in real time as before - CLAUDIUS is still praying - HAMLET fine-tuning his revenge. Wait, just a minute.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)
That would be scanned.
A villain kills my father, and for that
I, his sale son, do this same villain send
To heaven.
this is hire and salary, not revenge!
He took my father grossly,

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / GARDEN DAY (FLASHBACK)

OLD HAMLET in the snow-covered Palace garden, clutching his ear in pain, and collapsing on the floor - dead.

HAMLET V/O (CONTINUING)
full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

Close-up on his eyes.

HAMLET (continuing)
as flush as May;
And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PIT NIGHT

The Entrance to Hell.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)
'Tis heavy with him.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

CLAUDIUS's eyes closed and praying.

HAMLET (continuing)
 And am I then revenged
 To take him in the purging of his soul,
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
 No.

He lifts the dagger to his head.

HAMLET (continuing)
 Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hint.

We see quick cuts of CLAUDIUS, drinking, arguing with POLONIUS,
 in bed with GERTRUDE, kissing GERTRUDE, talking, hiding.

HAMLET V/O
 When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
 Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
 At game, a-swearing, or about some act
 That has no relish of salvation in't,
 Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven,
 And that his soul may be as damned and black

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PIT NIGHT

The gates to Hell shut fast.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

HAMLET V/O (continuing)
 As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays.
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

CLAUDIUS knows there is no absolution, his prayer has not worked.

CLAUDIUS V/O
 My words fly up, my thM/ghts remain below.
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

He hears a noise and slowly turns to look through the grille.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / GERTRUDE'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

GERTRUDE, ravishing as ever in her nightwear, is joined by an
 anxious POLONIUS.

POLONIUS

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

GERTRUDE

I'll warr'nt you. Fear me not.

HAMLET O/S

Mother, mother, mother!

GERTRUDE

Withdraw; I hear him coming.

POLONIUS goes behind some of the drapes in which the room is lavishly and beautifully decked.

She gathers herself for the interview which should have occurred three months ago.

HAMLET enters slowly and deliberately through one of the hidden doors.

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

He moves towards her.

HAMLET

Mother, you have my father much offended.

GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

She is becoming anxious.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

GERTRUDE

Why, how now, Hamlet?

HAMLET

What's the matter now?

By this time she is enraged.

GERTRUDE
Have you forgot me?

HAMLET
(vicious)
No, by the rood, not so.
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife.
And - would it were not so - you are my mother.

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

She rushes for the door, he grabs her in an instant and pulls her down onto a chair.

HAMLET
Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

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

POLONIUS (behind the drapes)
What ho! Help, help, help!

HAMLET looks over his shoulder to see movement behind the drapes. He is outraged. At last.

HAMLET
How now, a rat?

He rushes across the room and grabs the figure behind the drapes. He thrusts, and thrusts the dagger into POLONIUS's jacket, which is quickly drenched in blood.

HAMLET (continuing)
Deadfor a ducat, dead.

POLONIUS
O, I am slain!

HAMLET steps away and the body falls, pulling the drape down with it onto the floor. The QUEEN incredulous, shocked, crosses over to it.

GERTRUDE (to Hamlet)
O me, what hast thou done?

He can hardly speak. He has killed.

HAMLET
Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

GERTRUDE
what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Don't even start.

HAMLET
A bloody deed - almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king and marry with his brother.

She cannot believe what she has heard.

GERTRUDE
As kill a king?

HAMLET
Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

GERTRUDE unwraps the drapes around the bleeding mass on the floor to reveal it is POLONIUS. HAMLET is damned again. His wretchedness is complete.

HAMLET (continuing)
Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.
Thou find 'st to be too busy is some danger. -
Leave wringing of your hands.

He pulls her up onto her feet and throws her onto the bed.
GERTRUDE watches him in horror as he paces around the bed.

HAMLET (continuing)
Peace, sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall
If it be made of penetrable stuff,
If damned custom have not brassed it so
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

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

He cannot believe her audacity.

HAMLET

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

He moves slowly to her. Talks as if he were a priest about to pronounce eternal damnation.

HAMLET (continuing)

Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths - o, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth
glow, Yea, this solidity and compound mass

He indicates the very world itself, the earth.

HAMLET (continuing)

With trisiful visage, as against the doom,
is thought-sick at the act.

GERTRUDE (furious exasperation)

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

For a moment it seems as though he will kill her. He jumps onto the bed and shows her two miniatures, one of CLAUDIUS, the other of his Father. He is very close .to her.

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture, and on this,

Showing her the portrait of his Father.

HAMLET (continuing)

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow -
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,
A station like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
A combination and a form indeed
Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man.
This was your husband.

Now showing her the portrait of CLAUDIUS.

HAMLET (continuing)

Look you now what follows.
 Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear
 Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?
 Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
 And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?
 You cannot call it love, for at your age
 The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,
 And waits upon the judgement; and what judgement
 Would step from this to this?

He throws her back down on the bed and leaps off to pace the room.

HAMLET (continuing)

Sense, sure you have,
 Else you could not have motion. But sure that sense
 Is apoplexed; for madness would not err,
 Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
 But it reserved some quantity of choice
 To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
 That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?
 Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
 Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
 Or but a sickly part of one true sense
 Could not so mope. O shame, where is thy blush?
 Rebellious hell,
 If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
 To flaming youth let virtue be as wax
 And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame
 When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
 Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
 And reason panders will.

She is stricken.

GERTRUDE

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

HAMLET

Nay, but to live In the sweat of an enseamed bed,

He leans nearer her.

HAMLET (continuing)

Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
 Over the nas ty sty!

This is too much for flesh and blood.

GERTRUDE

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

The fire and brimstone continues.

HAMLET

 A murderer and a villain,
 A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
 Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings,
 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
 And put it in his pocket -

GERTRUDE

 No more.

HAMLET

 A king of shreds and patches -

Suddenly his eyes open wide, the atmosphere has changed. He slowly pulls away from his mother and we see THE GHOST, with them by the window. HAMLET moves across the room.

HAMLET (continuing)

 Save me and hover o'er me with
 your wings, You heavenly guards!
 (to The Ghost)
 What would you, gracious figure?

GERTRUDE sees nothing of the spectre. Only her son responding with sheer lunacy ... to ... nothing.

GERTRUDE (to herself)

 Alas, he's mad.

HAMLET (to The Ghost)

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

THE GHOST replies, firm in his instruction. But the tone is weary and sad. As if he had expected HAMLET's vacillation.

THE GHOST

Do not forget. This visitation
 Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
 But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
 O, step between her and her fighting soul.
 Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.
 Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET hardly dare look at her, in case his Father disappears while he does so.

HAMLET

How is it with you, lady?

She is genuinely concerned for him. Perhaps it really is madness.

GERTRUDE

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

She goes to him, takes his head in her hands, as if realizing for the first time the extent of his illness.

GERTRUDE (continuing)

Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,
 And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,
 Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
 Start up and stand on end.

Very tender now. This is so disturbing to witness.

GERTRUDE (continuing)

O gentle son,
 Upon the heat and flame of thy
 distemper Sprinkle cool patience!
 Whereon do you look?

HAMLET

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

And he does. We see all three close. The complete family, now all unable to reach each other and all heartbroken by the frustration of the attempt.

HAMLET (continuing)

His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable.

(to The Ghost)

Do not look upon me
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects. Then what I have to do
Will want true colour - tears perchance for blood.

GERTRUDE (more practical now)

To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET (agonized)

Do you see nothing there?

GERTRUDE (compassionate)

Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.

HAMLET (incredulous)

Nor did you nothing hear?

GERTRUDE

No, nothing but ourselves.

THE GHOST has started to move away. His expression bleaker and sadder than ever.

HAMLET (desperate)

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

THE GHOST disappears.

Now she feels she knows the truth. She is dealing with a genuine lunatic. She pities him. She is calmer now.

GERTRUDE

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

His manner turns to ice. She won't get away with that tack.

HAMLET

Ecstasy!

He pulls her across the room and down onto the sofa.

HAMLET

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness
That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,

Go on, try it.

HAMLET (continuing)

And I the matter will reword, which madness
Would gambol from. Mother,

Don't even think of looking for a way out of facing your guilt.

HAMLET (continuing)

for love of grace
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.

Who are you trying to kid?

HAMLET (continuing)

It will but skin and film the ulcerous place
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen.

You have one choice.

HAMLET (continuing)

Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,
And do not spread the compost on the weeds
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

She looks at him and in some perceptible way she looks into herself.

GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!

We know that she means it, and we cannot but feel compassion for a woman who has undoubtedly paid a heavy price for her actions. HAMLET is pleased with this tangible shift but has no mercy.

He is gentler now. But that's almost worse.

HAMLET

O, throwaway the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half!
Good night -

He pauses.

HAMLET (continuing)

but go not to mine uncle's bed.
Assume a virtue if you have it not.
That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on. Refrain tonight,
And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence. The next more easy;
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either shame the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night;

At last he concedes something of filial affection.

HAMLET (continuing)

And when you are desirous to be blest,
I'll blessing beg of you.

To the dead POLONIUS.

HAMLET (continuing)

For this same lord, I do repent.
But heaven hath pleased it so
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel only to be kind.
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

She is strangely vulnerable. The child almost, to his
scolding father. She seems on the edge of a breakdown. Her
voice fragile. The question, endlessly resonant.

GERTRUDE

What shall I do?

HAMLET

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse,

He particularly despises these words as he says them.

HAMLET (continuing)

And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damned
fingers, Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know,
For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?

No, let's abandon caution.

HAMLET (continuing)

No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and, like the famous ape,
To try conclusions in the basket creep,
And break your own neck down.

THE QUEEN is still trying to contain her reactions. His effect on her, his madness (whatever form), the awful notion that her new husband killed to have her.

GERTRUDE

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

They now sit side by side, like two lost children.

HAMLET

I must to England, you know that?

GERTRUDE

Alack, I had forgot. 'Tis so concluded on.

HAMLET

There's letters sealed; and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,
They bear the mandate, they must sweep my way
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard; and't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing.
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night indeed.

They have one last hug and he stands and moves away towards
POLONIUS.

HAMLET (continuing)

This counsellor
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave. -

He crouches down by the body.

HAMLET

Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you. -
A last look. The last ever?

HAMLET (continuing)

Good night, mother.

He exits with the body. GERTRUDE stands. The strain overwhelming.
She sobs.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CORRIDOR NIGHT

To see CLAUDIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN plus GUARDS,
striding along the corridor as GERTRUDE comes out of her
apartment.

CLAUDIUS goes straight to his wife.

CLAUDIUS

There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves,
You must translate. 'Tis fit we understand them.
Where is your son?

GERTRUDE (to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)
Bestow this place on us a little while.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN and the ATTENDANTS move away and
CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE move into the King's apartments.

INTERIOR / KING'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

We follow them as CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE face each other.

GERTRUDE (shaking)
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen tonight!

He touches her, holds her. But she does not respond.

CLAUDIUS (gently but firmly)
What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

She talks as if her mind were somewhere else. Which it
probably is.

GERTRUDE
Mad as the sea and wind when both contend
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

GERTRUDE moves away.

CLAUDIUS (appalled)
O heavy deed!
It had been so with us had we been there.

CLAUDIUS moves back into GERTRUDE's apartment to the pool of
blood on the floor and searches behind the arras.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
His liberty is full of threats to all -
To you yourself, to us, to everyone.

Angry now. Paranoid. He kneels down by the blood.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrained, and out of haunt
This mad young man.

Rationalizing at a thousand miles an hour.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 But so much was our love,
 We would not understand what was most fit,
 But, like the owner of a foul disease,
 To keep it from divulging, let it feed
 Even on the pith of life.

He snaps at GERTRUDE as she enters her apartments.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 Where is he gone?

She pulls herself out of her reverie to make some desperate attempt at a defence of the son she cannot but love.

GERTRUDE
 To draw apart the body he hath killed,
 O'er whom - his very madness, like some ore
 Amongst a mineral of metals base,
 Shows itself pure - a weeps for what is
 done.

He will have none of this. It's action stations. National crisis. The heir to the throne has killed the Prime Minister.

CLAUDIUS
 O, Gertrude, come away!
 The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch
 But we will ship him hence; and this vile deed
 We must with all our majesty and skill Both
 countenance and excuse.

He moves out into the corridor where ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN stand, aghast.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 Ho, Guildenstern!
 Friends both, go join you with some further aid.
 Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,

This is all much more than they can deal with.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him.
 Go seek him out, speak fair, and bring the body
 Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN go.

He tries to be gentle again with her as she joins him.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends
 And let them know both what we mean to do
 And what's untimely done. So envious slander,
 Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,
 As level as the cannon to his blank,
 Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name
 And hit the woundless air. O, come away!

He pulls her to him, comforting each other.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
 My soul is full of discord and dismay.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE ROOMS-MONTAGE NIGHT

Soldiers on red alert.

Alarms go off.

The hunt for HAMLET is on!

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

Guards break into OPHELIA's room. She is terrified. Her bed
 is searched, with her still in it!

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL STAIRS NIGHT

HAMLET finishes disposing of POLONIUS's body.

HAMLET
 Safely stowed.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN O/S
 Hamlet, Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET
 But soft. What noise? Who calls on Hamlet?

He rushes through and into the adjoining Ante-Room.

INTERIOR / ANTE-ROOM NIGHT

HAMLET

O, here they come.

Where here he is joined by a panting ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.
What a surprise.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

They circle each other in the large room. Wary of a quick move.

HAMLET (cheerful)

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

COURTIERS and SOLDIERS arrive throughout the scene, cornering
the Prince. HAMLET leads them around the Hall, through the
remains of the theatre.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET fixes him with a particularly contemptuous glare.

HAMLET

Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ

Believe what?

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ can barely tolerate this so-called 'wit'.

ROSENCRANTZ

Take you me jor a sponge, my lord?

He talks as if filling him in on a particularly useful piece
of information. Meantime the room starting to fill up with
other guards, and their dogs.

HAMLET

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

With this HAMLET grabs ROSENCRANTZ around the neck, taking him hostage against the growing CROWD.

ROSENCRANTZ

I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET

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

They start to move in on him.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

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

HAMLET throws ROSENCRANTZ back to the CROWD.

GUILDENSTERN

A thing, my lord?

HAMLET

Of nothing. Bring me to him.

He appears to go with them willingly. They go towards the stairs as OPHELIA runs down

OPHELIA

My lord!

HAMLET

Hide fox and all after.

HAMLET escapes, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN and the soldiers begin the chase.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / LOWER HALL ROOMS NIGHT

Chaos. Close shots of the dogs, the troops, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN. HAMLET runs through room after room, hidden door after hidden door, we track beside them. Surely he, who knows this spy-infested rabbit warren, can escape?

But no, as he closes the door in his apartment, apparently safe ... a gun barrel trains itself on his head.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / KING'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

CLAUDIUS talks to Camera. Quiet, grim, drinking.

CLAUDIUS

I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him.
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement but their eyes,
And where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weighed,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

ROSENCRANTZ comes straight in.

CLAUDIUS (urgent)

How now,

He stands and crosses over to ROSENCRANTZ.

CLAUDIUS

what hath befall'n?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

CLAUDIUS

But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ

Without, my lord, guarded, to know your pleasure.

CLAUDIUS

Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ

Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

They drag in a badly shaken HAMLET, spirit intact. HORATIO is dragged through another door.

CLAUDIUS (menacing)

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET (deadpan)

At supper.

CLAUDIUS (patient)

At supper? Where?

HAMLET (jolly)

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten.
A certain convocation of politic worms
are e'en at him. Your worm is your only
emperor for diet. We fat all creatures
else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for
maggots. Your fat King and your lean
beggar is but variable service - two
dishes, but to one table. That's the end.

CLAUDIUS

Alas, alas!

This last for the company.

HAMLET (still blabbering)

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

CLAUDIUS

What dost thou mean by this?

He looks straight at him.

HAMLET

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

With this the KING explodes and gives HAMLET a mighty whack.

CLAUDIUS
Where is Polonius?

Pause. The Prince unruffled.

HAMLET
In heaven. Send thither to see. If your
messenger find him not there, seek him
i 'th 'other place yourself. But indeed,
if you find him not this month, you shall
nose him as you go up the stairs into the
lobby.

CLAUDIUS (to Rosencrantz)
Go seek him there.

HAMLET makes a little cough. ROSENCRANTZ delays.

HAMLET (to Rosencrantz)
He will stay till you come.

Exit ROSENCRANTZ.

CLAUDIUS
Hamlet, this deed of thine, for thine especial safety -
Which we do tender as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done - must send thee hence
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself.
The barque is ready, and the wind at help,
Th' associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET
For England?

CLAUDIUS
Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET
Good.

CLAUDIUS will not give in to Mr Smart-arse.

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

HAMLET

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

And now even CLAUDIUS thinks that perhaps HAMLET is mad.

CLAUDIUS

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET (brightly)

My mother. Father and mother is man and
wife, man and wife is one flesh, and so
my mother.

This last with real hatred.

HAMLET (continuing)

Come, for England.

He turns and is about to leave when HORATIO moves to him. He
looks at his old friend and whispers.

HAMLET

Stay.

With that he is dragged from the room.

CLAUDIUS (to Guildenstern) (shaken)

Follow him at foot. Tempt him with speed aboard.
Delay it not. I'll have him hence tonight.
Away, for everything is sealed and done
That else leans on th' affair. Pray you, make haste.

GUILDENSTERN leaves and CLAUDIUS closes the door. At the
point of collapse.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught -
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us - thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process, which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet.

Almost in tears now.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Do it, England,
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

WE CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

The Camera still moving, this time with the body of POLONIUS as it is carried into the Chapel. OPHELIA being restrained by GUARDS. A gr~ primal yell and then she flings herself at the body, held back by the Chapel gates. We move in on her screaming face. A scene of ugly grief.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

We see a distant Elsinore, we are reminded once again of its massivity, its loneliness. Still moving, we Dissolve again, to grey misty dawn:

EXTERIOR / PLAIN DAY

A low Wide Shot with grass in foreground and misty suggestions of landscape in the far distance. Slowly out of the mist and like a great god comes a chillingly calm FORTINBRAS. After a moment, he is joined by a second RIDER. He speaks with quiet authority, barely looking at his CAPTAIN, watching always.

FORTINBRAS

Go, captain, from me greet the Danish King.
Tell him that by his licence Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his Kingdom. You know the rendezvous.

The following carries an air of quiet menace.

FORTINBRAS (continuing)

If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye,
And let him know so.

One look to the CAPTAIN which says, 'Don't even think of making a mistake.'

CAPTAIN

I will do't, my lord.

Then with surprising gentleness. Almost whispered.

FORTINBRAS

Go softly on.

FORTINBRAS exits Shot.

We cut back to the Wide Shot to see an awesome number of Soldiers appear through the mist. They seem to go on and on. The CAPTAIN rides across and out of Frame Right.

We pick him up entering Camara Left having cantered up to a hill, from which we can see, moving right to left this vast army. We have Close Shots of 'softly' marching feet, the set expressions, hands on weapons, the commanders Of'. horses. From the hill it's like seeing a massive army of deadly ants, dotting and cutting through the mist with silent, ominous power.

Above the army on the plain, HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN appear on a ridge. The CAPTAIN walks his horse up to them.

HAMLET stops him. Polite to strangers as ever.

HAMLET

Good sir, whose powers are these?

CAPTAIN

They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET

How purposed, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN

Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET

Who commands them, sir?

CAPTAIN

The nephew of Old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET

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

Well, there's a question indeed, and this grizzled campaigner feels he can offer his opinion on the issue to this noblemen so clearly intrigued by the massive troop movement at a time of so-called peace.

CAPTAIN

Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats - five - I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate should it be sold in fee.

HAMLET is utterly astonished. It simply doesn't make sense.

HAMLET

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN

Yes, it is already garrison' d.

The news hits HAMLET like a hammer blow. It is madness.

HAMLET

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw!
This is th' impostume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

The Captain gives him a last look before riding off.

CAPTAIN

God be with you, sir.

ROSENCRANTZ

Will't please you go, my lord?

HAMLET (sharply)

I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.

The two friends move away. HAMLET stands looking out at the mass of the travelling army and talks partly to Camera, partly for himself. The tone is simple, grave. The Camera slowly moves away from him.

HAMLET (continuing)

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge.

He asks the question directly to us.

HAMLET (continuing)

What is a man
 If his chief good and market of his time
 Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.
 Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
 Looking before and after, gave us not
 That capability and godlike reason
 To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
 Of thinking too precisely on th' event -
 A thought which, quartered, hath but one part wisdom
 And ever three parts coward - I do not know
 Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means
 To do 't. Examples gross as earth 'exhort me,
 Witness this army of such mass and charge,
 Led by a delicate and tender prince,
 Whose spirit, with divine ambition puffed,
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,

HAMLET becomes smaller and smaller in frame as we continue to move away, the ARMY behind him still marching past.

HAMLET (CONTINUING)

Exposing what is mortal and unsure
 To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
 Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great
 Is not to stir without great argument,
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
 When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,
 That have a father killed, a mother stained,
 Excitements of my reason, and my blood,
 And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
 The imminent death of twenty thousand men
 That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
 Which is not tomb enough and continent
 To hide the Slain? O from this time forth

We are higher now. HAMLET raises his arms with a great cry -

HAMLET (continuing)

My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.

The huge scream of resolution hangs in the air as we pull further back and see the now tiny figure in the vast landscape, the music reaches its climax and we fade to black.

Intermission

PART TWO

EXTERIOR / ELSINORE DAY

A windswept Elsinore looks bleak in the winter light. A huge shadow is cast across its face. As we hear the grim tones of the King, we see the images of the tragedy to date.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)
When sorrows come they come not single spies,
But in battalions

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / GERTRUDE'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

We relive POLONIUS's horrific stabbing.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.) (continuing)
First, her father slain;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CLAUDIUS'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

HAMLET dragged away to England.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.) (continuing)
Next, your son gone, and he most violent author
Of his own remove;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

A gaggle of gossiping courtiers share domestic looks.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)
(continuing)
the people muddled,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers
For good Polonius, death;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

The blood-stained body of the Prime Minister bundled away.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)
 (continuing)
 poor Ophelia
 Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
 Without the which we are pictures or mere breasts;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

We see the noble features of a young LAERTES, fresh as he was at the recent wedding.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)(continuing)
 Last, and as much containing as all these,
 Her brother is in secret from France,
 Feeds on this wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
 And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
 With pestilent speeches of his father's death;

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CHAPEL NIGHT

A distraught CLAUDIUS looks to his God for guidance, then paces the room.

CLAUDIUS (V.O.)(continuing)
 Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,
 Will nothing stick our persons to arrain
 In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
 Like to a murd'ring-piece, in many places
 Gives me superfluous death.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / OPHELLIA'S CELL DAY

We look down from above into a padded cell. OPHELIA straitjacketed runs around the room banging herself at the walls. We tilt up from the trap door opening, to find three observerers, GERTRUDE, HORATIO and DOCTOR.

INTERIOR / STATE HALL GALLERY DAY

GERTRUDE
 I will not speak with her.

HORATIO (pleading)
 She is importunate,
 Indeed distract. Her mood will needs be pitied.

GERTRUDE

What would she have?

HORATIO (gently)

She speaks much of her father, says she hears
There's tricks i' th' world, and hems, and
beats her heart,

DOCTOR

Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt
That carry but half sense.

HORATIO

Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection.

DOCTOR

They aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts,
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

GERTRUDE is shattered.

HORATIO

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

GERTRUDE

Let her come in.

HORATIO and the DOCTOR move off. We move in on GERTRUDE. Close
on her troubled face.

GERTRUDE (continuing)

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems Prologue to some great amiss,
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

The lower mirrored door to OPHELIA's 'cell' is opened and she
now lies on the floor. She pushes her squashed face along the
floor, unable to get up, still in straitjacket.

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

GERTRUDE walks over to her, kneels down and speaks gently.

GERTRUDE

How now, Ophelia?

OPHELIA turns over onto her back.

OPHELIA (she sings)

How should I your true love know
From another one? -
By his cockle bat and staff
And his sandal shoon.

The QUEEN tries again.

GERTRUDE

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA

Say you?

OPHELIA makes conscious reference to her predicament with the jacket. GERTRUDE undoes the strap binding her.

OPHELIA

Nay, pray you, mark.
(she sings)
He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone.
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.

GERTRUDE

Nay, but Ophelia -

The KING enters the Hall.

OPHELIA

Pray you, mark.
(she sings)
White his shroud as the mountain snow -

GERTRUDE

Alas, look here, my lord.

The KING walks over to where this wriggling wreck now sits up.

OPHELIA

Larded all with sweet flowers,
Which bewept to the grave did - not - go
With true-love showers.

Much moved, he helps her up a little.

CLAUDIUS

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA

(brightly now)

Well God 'ield you!

They say the owl was a baker's daughter

Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

God be at your table!

CLAUDIUS

(to Gertrude)

Conceit upon her father.

He tries to hold her but she wriggles free. Screaming she runs to the other end of the hall. She begins a demented dance. A grotesque ballet.

OPHELIA

Pray you, let's have no words of this, but when
They ask you what it means, say you this.

(she sings)

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,

All in the morning bedtime,

And I a maid at your window

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,

And dugged the chamber door;

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

CLAUDIUS

Pretty Ophelia -

OPHELIA

Indeed, la? Without an oath, I'll make an end on't.

She quickly moves back to CLAUDIUS's side. And stands uncomfortably close to him.

OPHELIA

(she sings)

By Gis, and by Saint Charity,
Alack, and fie for shame!
Young men will do't if they come to't,

OPHELIA thrusts lewdly at CLAUDIUS then flings herself to the floor.

OPHELIA

(continuing)

By cock, they are to blame.
Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,
You promised me to wed.'

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / OPHELLIA'S BEDROOM DAY

Flashback to HAMLET and OPHELIA together.

OPHELIA (continuing)

So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

OPHELLIA crumbles into tears once more.

CLAUDIUS (to Gertrude)

How long hath she been thus?

She starts to get up. Quietly, sensibly. Sorted out.

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well. We must be patient. But I
cannot choose but weep to think they should lay him
i' th' cold ground. My brother shall know of it.

CLAUDIUS tries to restrain her. She breaks away from him and then starts to run.

OPHELIA (continuing)

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

She flies through the main doors. HORATIO and the DOCTOR follow.

CLAUDIUS (to Horatio)
Follow her close, give her good watch, I pray you.

The door closes. CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE are alone.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
O, this is the poison of deep grief! It springs
All from her father's death. And now behold -
O Gertrude, Gertrude.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE CORRIDOR DAY

Many bodies rushing past. Running along the corridors - weapons
in hands.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR/ STATE HALL DAY

A great shout goes up from somewhere in the Palace.

GERTRUDE
Alack, what noise is this?

From one of the hidden doors, a breathless ATTENDANT enters.

CLAUDIUS
Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.
(to the Messenger)
What is the matter?

ATTENDANT
Save yourself, my lord.
The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats flat the fiats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / CORRIDOR DAY

A great tide of rebellion sweeps away everything in its
violent wake - Guards included.

ATTENDANT V/O (continuing)
O 'erbears your officers.

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

ATTENDANT (continuing)
 The rabble call him lord,
 And, as the world were now but to begin,
 Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
 The ratifiers and props of every word,
 They cry 'Choose/we! Laertes shall be King.'
 Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,

INTERIOR / PALACE DAY

The rebels charge towards the doors, along the corridor.

ATTENDANT V/O (continuing)
 'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king.'

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE move away from the doors.

GERTRUDE
 How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!
 O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

CLAUDIUS
 The doors are broke.

And with that, they run for the thrones as more ATTENDANTS run into the hall and we see the Mob smash their way in. From the depths of the rabble emerges LAERTES.

LAERTES
 Where is this King? - Sirs, stand you all without.

FOLLOWERS
 No, let's come in.

No, this one is his. He takes command, firmly.

LAERTES
 I pray you, give me leave.

FOLLOWERS
 We will, we will.

They understand the personal nature of his grief. Reluctantly they go.

LAERTES

I thank you. Keep the door.

The doors close with an ominous crack and LAERTES runs towards the KING, his sword raised.

LAERTES (continuing)

O thou vile King,
Give me my father.

GERTRUDE intercepts him, placing her body between LAERTES and the KING.

GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES

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

CLADIUS

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like? -

He opts for bravado. He will face him out.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.
There's such divinity doth hedge a King
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incensed.

Even firmer now.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Let him go, Gertrude. -
Speak, man.

He will not be tricked. He stays sane.

LAERTES

Where is my father?

CLAUDIUS

Dead.

The QUEEN intercepts quickly, moving to CLAUDIUS.

GERTRUDE

But not by him.

CLAUDIUS

Let him demand his fill.

The 'fearless' persona is working. He knows the shock of the final knowledge has stopped the young man in his tracks.

LAERTES (struggling)

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.
To hell, allegiance! Vows to the blackest devil!
Conscience and grace to the profoundest pit!

He reaches for a dangerous courage.

LAERTES (continuing)

I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
That both the worlds I give to negligence,
Let come what comes. Only I'll be revenged
Most thoroughly for my father.

CLAUDIUS

Who shall stay you?

LAERTES (venomously)

My will, not all the world;
And for my means, I'll husband them so well
They shall go far with little.

CLAUDIUS

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

The KING is manipulating this unbalance young man already. He can see the confusion of feeling in this grief-struck lad.

LAERTES

None but his enemies.

He remains tough with him.

CLAUDIUS

Will you know them then?

LAERTES

To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms,
And, like the kind life-rend'ring pelican,
Repast them with my blood.

CLAUDIUS

Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.

He slowly pushes the sword away from his throat.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensibly in grief for it,
It shall as level to your judgement pierce
As day does to your eye.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / ANTE-ROOM DAY

OPHELIA in full flight from her DOCTOR careers down the passage
towards us, turns and flings open the door into the main hall.

HORATIO

Let her come in.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

OPHELIA bursts into the hall and LAERTES turns.

LAERTES

How now, what noise is that?

She almost floats by him, heading for one of the mirrored
doors as we linger on the aggrieved face of her brother.

LAERTES (continuing)

O heat dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!

He kneels down beside her.

LAERTES (continuing)

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight
Till our scale turns the beam. O rose of May,
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

He touches her face but she continues to make an imaginary wreath.

LAERTES (continuing)

O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

OPHELIA (sings)

They bore him barefaced on the bier,
Hey non nony, nony, hey nony,
And on his grave rained many a tear -
Fare you well, my dove.

LAERTES (whispers)

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

OPHELIA

You must sing 'Down, a-down', and you, 'call
him a-down-a'. O, how the wheel becomes it! It
is the false steward that stole his master's
daughter.

The young man looks to the others for the truth of this.

LAERTES

This nothing's more than matter.

She pretends to pass out flowers.

OPHELIA

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.
Pray, love, remember.
And there is pansies; that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

A document in madness - thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA

There 's fennel for you, and columbines.
There's rue for you, and here's some for me.
We may call it herb o' grace o' Sundays. o,
you must wear your rue with a difference.
There's a daisy. I would give you some
violets, but they withered all when my
father died. They say he made a good end.

She starts to sing.

OPHELIA

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAERTES

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

She turns away to leans back against the mirror, for all the world like a five-year-old. She sings with utter simplicity.

OPHELIA (sings)

And will a not come again,
And will a not come again?
No, no, he is dead,
Go to thy death-bed,
He never will come again.
His beard as white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll.
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan.
God 'a' mercy on his soul.
And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God by you.

She stands up and walks into her cell.

LAERTES follows her and looks in.

LAERTES

Do you see this, O God?

The KING arrives as LAERTES is on the point of madness himself.

CLAUDIUS

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touched, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,
To you in satisfaction. But if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

The trauma barely lets him speak.

LAERTES

Let this be so.
His means of death, his obscure burial -
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,
No noble rite nor formal ostentation -
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,
That I must call't in question.

For a moment he is almost as childlike as his sister.

CLAUDIUS

So you shall;
And where th' offence is, let the great axe fall.
I pray you go with me.

He leads him off. Two GUARDS enter the cell and take OPHELIA away.

WE DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE DAY

A vicious snowstorm engulfs the battered Palace.

DISSOLVE TO:

INTERIOR / CORRIDOR-WASH DOWN CELL DAY

HORATIO and ATTENDANT on their way to OPHELIA's latest accommodation. HORATIO's interested in OPHELIA but distracted by this news.

HORATIO

What are they that would speak with me?

ATTENDANT

Sailors, sir. They say they have letters for you.

HORATIO opens a spy hole and we see her, being doused down with a hose. He decides reluctantly to leave her for the time being. We Cut to inside the cell where OPHELIA cowers in the corner. The hose-down stops and the GUARD leaves. She holds the haunted look towards the door and then slowly, from under her tongue OPHELIA produces a small key.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE COLONNADE EVENING

HORATIO and Two ATTENDANTS in the colonnade, fight the vicious wind and whirling snow.

HORATIO

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

He reaches the SAILORS.

SAILOR

God bless you, sir.

HORATIO

Let him bless thee too.

SAILOR

He shall, sir, an't please him. There's
a letter for you, sir. It comes from th'
ambassador that was bound for England -
if your name be Horatio, as I am let to
know it is.

He takes the letter and starts to read.

HORATIO (reads)

'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked
this, give these fellows some means to the
King. they have letters for him.

He moves away from the SAILORS a little to continue. This is
intriguing.

HORATIO (continuing)

'Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of
very warlike appointment gave us chase.
Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on
a compelled valour, and in the grapple I
boarded them. On the instant they got clear of
OI,lr ship, so I alone became their prisoner.
They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy;
but they knew what they did: I am to do a good
turn for them. Let the King have the letters I
have sent, and repair thou to me with as much
haste as thou wouldst fly death. I have words
to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb, yet
are they much too light for the bore of the
matter. These good fellows will bring thee
where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold
their course for England. Of them I have much
to tell thee. Farewell, He that thou knowest
thine, Hamlet.'

He turns back to the SAILORS.

HORATIO

Come, I will give you way for these your letters,
And do't the speedier that you may direct me.
To him from whom you brought them.

He leads them towards the Palace.

WE DISSOLVE:

INTERIOR / KING'S APARTMENTS NIGHT

The KING pours LAERTES yet another drink. The KING is beginning to disintegrate, but he is a survivor and, in battle against HAMLET, LAERTES may be his greatest weapon.

CLAUDIUS

Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,
And you must put me in your heart for friend,
Since you have heard, and with a knowing ear,
That he which hath your noble father slain
Pursued my life,

LAERTES (still cautious)

It well appears.
But tell me Why you proceeded not against these feats,
So crimeful and so capital in nature,
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,
You mainly were stirred up.

CLAUDIUS

for two special reasons

He strikes the intimate friendly tone now.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinewed,
And yet to me they're strong. The Queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself -
My virtue or my plague, be it either which -

And for a moment he is also vulnerable. Everyone in this Palace knows about the awful power of love.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

She's so conjunctive to my life and soul
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her.

Then the return of the ultra-realistic politician.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

The other motive
Why to a public count I might not go
Is the great love the general gender bear him,
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves to graces;

Bitter now.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

so that my arrows,
Too slightly timbered for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aimed them.

None of this changes anything. The terrible facts remain.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost,
A sister driven into desp'rate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger, on mount, of all the age
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

CLAUDIUS

Break not your sleeps for that.

A comforting tap on the shoulder. The KING prowling around
LAERTES's chair, ready to check any new outburst.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

You must not think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more.

CLAUDIUS kneels to be level with LAERTES.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

I loved your father, and we love ourself.
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine -

The door opens, an ATTENDANT comes in.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

How now? What news?

ATTENDANT

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet;

The two men exchange glances.

ATTENDANT (continuing)

This to your majesty; this to the Queen.

CLAUDIUS (highly suspicious)

From Hamlet? Who brought them?

ATTENDANT

Sailors, my lord, they say. I saw them not.
They were given me by Claudio. He received them
Of him that brought them.

A moment's hesitation, then.

CLAUDIUS

Laertes, you shall hear them.

(to the attendant)

Leave us.

The MESSENGER leaves and closes the door.

CLAUDIUS (reads)

'High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked on
your kingiiom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see
your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking your
pardon, thereunto recount th' occasions of my
sudden and more strange return.

Hamlet.'

What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAERTES

Know you the hand?

CLAUDIUS

'Tis Hamlet's character.

'Naked' - and in a postscript here he says

'Alone'. Can you advise me?

LAERTES

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

CLAUDIUS

If it be so, Laertes -
As how should it be so, how otherwise? -
Will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my lord, if so you will not o'errule me to
a peace.

CLAUDIUS

To thine own peace. If he be now returned,
As checking at his voyage, and that he means
No more to undertake it, I will work him
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe;
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice
And call it accident.

LAERTES

My lord, I will be ruled;
The rather if you could devise it so
That I might be the organ.

CLAUDIUS

It falls right.
You have been talked of since your travels much -
And that in Hamlet's hearing - for a quality
Wherein they say you shine. Your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one; and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.

LAERTES

What part is that, my lord?

CLAUDIUS

A very ribbon in the cap of youth,
 Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes
 The light and careless livery that it wears
 Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
 Importing health and graveness. Some two months since
 Here was a gentleman of Normandy.
 I've seen myself, and served against, the French,
 And they can well on horseback; but this gallant
 Had witchcraft in't. He grew into his seat,
 And to such wondrous doing brought his horse
 As had he been incorpsed and dorni-natured
 With the brave beast. So far he topped my thought
 That I in forgery of shapes and tricks
 Come short of what he did.

LAERTES

A Norman was't?

CLAUDIUS

A Norman.

LAERTES

Upon my life, Lamord.

CLAUDIUS

The very same.

LAERTES

I know him well. He is the brooch indeed
 And gem, of all the nation.

CLAUDIUS

He made confession of you,
 And gave you such a masterly report
 For art and exercise in your defence,
 And for your rapier most especial,
 That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed
 If one could match you. The scrimers of their nation
 He swore had neither motion, guard, nor eye,
 If you opposed them, sir. This report of his
 Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy
 That he could nothing do but wish and beg
 Your sudden coming o'er to play with him.
 Now, out of this -

LAERTES

What out of this, my lord?

The drink has made the young man slower than usual.

CLAUDIUS

Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow, A face without a heart?

LAERTES

Why ask you this?

CLAUDIUS

Not that I think you did not love your father,
But that I know love is begun by time,
And that I see, in passages of proof,
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.
There lives within the very flame of love
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;
And nothing is at a like goodness still;
For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,
Dies in his own too-much. That we would do,
We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes,
And hath abatements and delays as many
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents,
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh
That hurts by easing. But to the quick of th' ulcer.
Hamlet comes back. What would you undertake
To show yourself in deed your father's son
More than in words?

LAERTES

To cut his throat i' th' church.

Even CLAUDIUS pauses at the vehemence of this.

CLAUDIUS

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize.
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this? - Keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet returned shall know you are come home.
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,
And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine, together,
And wager on your heads. He, being remiss,
Most generous, and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and, in a pass of practice,
Requite him for your father.

LAERTES

I will do't.

And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.

He is possessed by the following images.

LAERTES (continuing)

I bought an unction of a mountebank
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
That is but scratched withal. I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

CLAUDIUS

Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail,

He's still not convinced he can rely on the volatility of
LAERTES's temper.

CLAUDIUS (CONTINUING)

And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'Twere better not essayed. Therifore this project
Should have a back or second that might hold
If this should blast in proof. Soft, let me see.
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings

He thinks for a moment.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

I ha't! When in your motion you are hot and dry -
As make your bouts more violent to that end -
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there. But stay, what noise?

The QUEEN enters and walks slowly towards LAERTES who stands.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

How now, sweet Queen?

GERTRUDE (quiet, even)

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

He can hardly take it in, and yet what more might he expect?

LAERTES

Drowned? O, where?

The Camera moves in to the QUEEN as she tells her tale.

GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows askant the brook
That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.
Therewith fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.
There on the pendent boughs her crownet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down the weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook.
Her clothes spread wide,
And mermaid-like a while they bore her up;
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and endued
Unto that element. But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

He can barely speak.

LAERTES

Alas, then is she drowned.

GERTRUDE

Drowned, drowned.

LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

He cannot stop the downfall.

LAERTES (continuing)

But yet It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will. When these are gone,
The woman will be out.

He gathers whatever vestige of pride and sanity he can as CLAUDIUS joins him.

LAERTES (continuing)
 Adieu, my lord.
 I have a speech of fire that fain would blaze,
 But that this folly douts it.

GERTRUDE watches as the young man leaves the room. CLAUDIUS has other things on his mind.

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

She stares after him in disbelief. She will not follow. Never again.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / WILLOW WEIR DAY

Close on the drowned OPHELIA as she lies under the surface of the water. A beautiful, ghostly corpse.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / ELSINORE DAY

OPHELIA's watery home in foreground and back, away from the lake, the shimmery evening presence of Elsinore.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / GRAVEYARD NIGHT

We track through a graveyard of sorts. But not a royal one. The atmosphere is secret, eerie. The silhouette of two men half in, half out of the ground. It's tough, wet work. Although the rain has stopped it's still not very pleasant. The men are not used to working at this late hour, even at Royal Command.

The FIRST GRAVEDIGGER, a gold medallist at the irony Olympics, and pedant to boot, is engaged in a bizarre ritual of making sure that he will not get his bottom wet, that there will be space for his midnight lunch box and crucially, that he will do less work than his sidekick. Still, for all this the man, who could be any age from forty upwards is rather a jolly old sod. He throws up the first rhetorical ball. Reads from the newspaper. He's going to find a way of enjoying this shitty

night's work. He speaks with great precision and clarity. Very dry. He puts his paper down.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

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

His friend just wants to get on with the bloody thing and get home. He's already hard at work, whilst the Maestro sits and smokes.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

I tell thee she is, therefore make her grave
straight. The coroner hath sat on her, and
finds it Christian burial.

So shut up.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

How can that be unless she drowned herself
in her own defence?

Says Judge Ito.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Why, 'tis found so.

Read the papers, would you?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

It must be se offendendo, it cannot be else.
For here lies the point: if I drown myself
wittingly, it argues an act; and an act hath
three branches: it is to act, to do, and to
perform. Argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

The SECOND GRAVEDIGGER not in the mood for this.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (firm)

Give me leave. Here lies the water - good.

He does a series of what he thinks are quite blindingly good mimes with his hands. These consist mainly of waving them a bit.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)
 Here stands the man - good. If the man go to
 this water and drown himself, it is, will he
 nill he, he goes. Mark you that. But if the
 water come to him and drown him, he drowns not
 himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his
 own death shortens not his own life.

All right, clever-ish clogs.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER
 But is this law?

Shut your ignorant mouth. Their friendship is based on a kind
 of good-hearted contempt.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER
 Ay, marry, is't: coroner's quest law.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER weighs in with the National Enquirer view.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER
 Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not
 been a gentlewoman, she should have been
 buried out o' Christian burial.

Nudge, nudge.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER
 Why, there thou sayst, Abso-bloody-lutely.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)
 and the more pity that great folk should have
 count'nance in this world to drown or hang
 themselves more than their even Christian.

I hate the bloody Royals.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)
 Come, my spade.

He stands up. A little pride at work now.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)
 There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners,
 ditchers, and gravemakers; they hold up Adam's
 profession.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER rather intrigued by this last remark.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Was he a gentleman?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

He was the first that ever bore arms.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Why, he had none.

I.e. coat of arms, get it?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms?

Ho, ho. Yes, I know, they get worse. He sits down

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)

I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself -

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Go to.

You're gonna like this one. Not a lot. But you'll like it.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

Very pleased with himself.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

I like thy wit well, in good faith.

Yes, I like your wit about as much as I like eating turds.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)

The gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church; argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come.

Please.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright,
or a carpenter?'

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Marry, now I can tell.

Get on with it then, Einstein. I haven't asked you to move Denmark
a bit to the right, have I?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

To't.

Another long pause.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER

Mass, I cannot tell.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER withers him to within an inch of his life.
Then pities him.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull
ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when
you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-
maker'. The houses that he makes lasts till
doomsday.

Ho-bleeding-ho, yes I know it's not a belter but look what
I'm working with. Go on, push off.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)

Go, get thee to Johan. Fetch me a stoup of liquor.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER goes with a grin that rather suggests he
enjoys this treatment from his superior. As he leaves, the
FIRST GRAVEDIGGER climbs down into the grave, ready finally
to start work.

Wide Shot of FIRST GRAVEDIGGER on his own, singing as he
works. Into the foreground come a rougher looking HAMLET,
casually clothed, and HORATIO.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (sings)
 In youth when I did love, did love,
 Methought it was very sweet
 To contract-O-the time for-a-my behove,
 O methought there-a-was nothing-a-meet.

They remain far off.

HAMLET (taken aback)
 Has this fellow no feeling of his business that he
 sings at grave-making?

HORATIO (shrugs)
 Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAMLET (agrees)
 'Tis e'en so; the hand of little employment
 hath the daintier sense.

They walk a little closer to him.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (sings)
 But age with his stealing steps
 Hath caught me in his clutch,
 And hath shipped me intil the land,
 As if I had never been such.

We watch in close detail the filthy skulls and the treatment
 they receive at the hands of the Jack Benny of Denmark.

HAMLET
 That skull had a tongue in it and could sing
 once. How the knave jowls it to th' ground as
 if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first
 murder! This might be the pate of a politician
 which this ass now o'er reaches, one that would
 circumvent God, might it not?

HORATIO
 It might, my lord.

HAMLET getting rather carried away with the notion of
 maggot-strewn lords.

HAMLET
 Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow,
 sweet lord. How dost thou, sweet lord?' this
 might be my Lord Such-a-one, that praised my Lord
 Such-a- one's horse when he meant to beg it,
 might it not?

HORATIO

Ay, my lord.

This is making terrific sense to the new unromantic HAMLET.
The Killer. The man who must die.

HAMLET

Why, even so, and now my Lady Worm's,
chapless, and knocked about the mazard
with a sexton's spade. Here's fine
revolution, an we had the trick to
see't. Did these bones cost no more
the breeding but to play at loggats
with 'em?

And then the thought overpowers him.

HAMLET (continuing)

Mine ache to think on 't.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (sings)

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding-sheet;
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

HAMLET

There's another.

If there were any more of these bloody things he could set up
a skull shop.

HAMLET (continuing)

Why might not that be the skull of a lawyer?
Where be his quiddits now, his quilletts, his
cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he
suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the
sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him
of his action of battery? H 'm! This fellow might
be in's time a great buyer of land, with his
statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double
vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his
fines and the recovery of his recoveries, to have
his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers
vouch him no more of his purchases, and double
ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of
indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will
scarcely lie in this box; and must th' inheritor
himself have no more, ha?

HORATIO
Not a jot more, my lord.

HAMLET
Is not parchment made of sheepskins ~

HORATIO
Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

HAMLET (REMOTE)
They are sheep and calves which seek out
assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow.

They move off towards the GRAVEDIGGER. The GRAVEDIGGER moves
over to his skulls and starts to pack the bones into a bag as
HAMLET kneels down by the grave.

HAMLET
Whose grave's this, sirrah?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER
Mine, sir.
(sings)
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

A wry smile from HAMLET at that very, very funny remark.

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

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

All right, Mr Smarty, I can twist words with the best of them.

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

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER
'Tis a quick lie, sir, 'twill away
again from me to you.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER, is enjoying this. He has found a much better
sparring partner than his usual stooge.

HAMLET

What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in't?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

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

Christ, it's not possible to get a straight answer out of anyone
in this country these days!

HAMLET

How absolute the knave is! We must speak by
the card, or equivocation will undo us. By
the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have
taken note of it. The age is grown so picked
that the toe of the peasant comes so near the
heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.

HAMLET's very tone of voice, changes the mood. No larks for a
moment.

HAMLET (to First Gravedigger)

How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Of all the days i' th' year I came to't that
day that our last King, Hamlet, o'ercame
Fortinbras.

HAMLET wants to be told. Reminded.

HAMLET

How long is that since?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Cannot you tell that? Every fool
can tell that. It was the very day
that young Hamlet was born - he
that was mad and sent into England.

A quick look to HORATIO. Has THE FIRST GRAVEDIGGER spotted this
new seafaring HAMLET?

HAMLET (cautious)

Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

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

HAMLET

Why?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

'Twill not be seen in him there.
There the men are as mad as he.

Actually, that's fair enough. HORATIO and HAMLET nod a smug
Danish agreement.

HAMLET

How came he mad?

Ooo. Into the very juicy gossip now. FIRST GRAVEDIGGER stops
what he's doing.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (quietly)

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET joins him in this tone.

HAMLET

How strangely?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

He should have seen that one coming. Still he'll press on.

HAMLET

Upon what ground?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Why, here in Denmark.

A shared groan between them all. Still, quite jolly bantering fun, given that it's the middle of a cold wet night and the FIRST GRAVEDIGGER has every reason to be wary of two strangers interrupting his illicit work. But no, they like each other. After a beat,

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)

I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAMLET, who has become more obsessed with the skulls now that he's closer, asks with keen interest.

HAMLET

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

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

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

Seems weird.

HAMLET

Why he more than another?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will keep out water a great while, and your water is a so~e decayer of your whoreson dead body.

He fetches out yet another ex-person's head.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER (continuing)

Here's a skull, now. This skull has lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

HAMLET slightly dubious about how the FIRST GRAVEDIGGER recognizes someone in this condition, but intrigued just the same.

HAMLET

Whose was it?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER is clearly amused by the remembrance of this one.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

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

The name strikes HAMLET's ears like a blow.

HAMLET

This?

FIRST GRAVEDIGGER

E'en that.

HAMLET

Let me see.

He takes the skull and holds it very delicately, awe-struck. FIRST GRAVEDIGGER is fascinated.

HAMLET (continuing)

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio - a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is!

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / PALACE DAY (FLASHBACK)

We see the mobile face of this classic clown. The instant appeal of a comic's vulnerability. YOUNG HAMLET appears behind YORICK to grab him around the neck and YORICK pulls him onto his knee, laughing.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)

My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / GRAVEYARD NIGHT

As before.

HAMLET

Where be your gibes now, your gambols,

Flashback again to see YORICK, in full swing, as OLD HAMLET, GERTRUDE, CLAUDIUS and YOUNG HAMLET roar with laughter at one of his jokes.

HAMLET (continuing)

your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO

What's that, my lord?

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

E'en so.

HAMLET

And smelt so? Pah!

He throws the skull down and FIRST GRAVEDIGGER gets back on with his work.

HORATIO

E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET

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

HORATIO

'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

HAMLET

No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither
with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it,
as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried,
Alexander returneth into dust, the dust is earth,
of earth we make loam, and why of that loam
whereto he was converted, might they not stop a
beer-barrel?

He is now quietly taken by this idea of the cycle of
greatness and nothingness.

HAMLET (continuing)

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!
But soft,

HAMLET throws the skull to the FIRST GRAVEDIGGER, then he and
HORATIO run off to hide behind a tree.

SECOND GRAVEDIGGER rushes back to tell FIRST GRAVEDIGGER to
get a move on. They scurry out of the way, getting the grave
ready for the funeral.

HAMLET (continuing)

but soft, aside. Here comes the King,
The Queen, the Courtiers - who is that they follow,
And with such maimed rites?

LAERTES leads FOUR BEARERS who carry the coffin ahead of a
PRIEST, the KING and the QUEEN.

HAMLET shocked at the hugger-mugger nature of this.

HAMLET (continuing)

This doth betoken
The corpse they follow did with desp'rate hand
Fordo its own life. 'Twas of some estate.
Couch we awhile, and mark.

The Coffin is laid on the planks and the PALLBEARERS move back.
CLAUDIUS takes off his hat, and LAERTES and the GRAVEDIGGERS
follow suit. The PRIEST closes his Bible. LAERTES snaps.

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

HAMLET (aside to Horatio)
That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark.

LAERTES
What ceremony else?

The PRIEST tries to make this conversation private and quick.

PRIEST
Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warrantise. Her death was doubtful,
And but that great command O 'ersways the order
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,
Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.
Yet here she is allowed her virgin rites,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

It still isn't good enough.

LAERTES
Must there no more be done?

PRIEST (harsh)
No more be done.
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing sage requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES
Lay her i' th' earth,

The PALLBEARERS move in and lift the tapes. The GRAVEDIGGERS move in and pull out the planks and the Coffin is lowered into the ground.

LAERTES
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring.

LAERTES suddenly grabs the Bible from the PRIEST.

LAERTES
I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET (aside)
What, the fair Ophelia!

The PRIEST moves off, passing CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE and leaving the graveyard. GERTRUDE steps forward.

GERTRUDE (scattering flowers)
Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
And not t'have strewed thy grave.

The GRAVEDIGGERS now start to shovel the earth into the hole.

LAERTES (uncontainable)
O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! - hold off the earth awhile,

He immediately jumps into the grave and throws open the lid of the coffin to pull to his bosom the lifeless OPHELIA.

LAERTES (continuing)
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.
Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAMLET steps out, the group gasps.

HAMLET (coming forward)
What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars and makes them stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane.

LAERTES
The devil take thy soul.

He throws the Bible at HAMLET and then leaps out of the grave attacks HAMLET, pushing him to the ground.

HAMLET

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

CLAUDIUS (to the Lords)

Pluck them asunder.

The PALLBEARERS weigh in.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

ALL

Gentlemen!

The PALLBEARERS seize LAERTES. HORATIO and another PALLBEARER lift the enraged HAMLET up onto his feet.

HORATIO

Good my lord, be quiet.

HAMLET

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

GERTRUDE is a blur of emotions. Overjoyed to see her son again, but terrified for him also.

GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET (impassioned)

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

CLAUDIUS

he is mad, Laertes.

GERTRUDE

For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET (to Laertes)

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.
 Woo't weep, woo'tfight, woo'tfast, woo't tear thyself,
 Woo't drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?
 I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine,
 To outface me with leaping in her grave?
 Be buried quick with her, and so will I.
 And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw
 Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
 Singeing his pate against the burning zone,
 Make Ossa like a wart. Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
 I'll rant as well as thou.

GERTRUDE (to Laertes)

This is mere madness,
 And thus awhile the fit will work on him.
 Anon, as patient as the female dove
 When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
 His silence will sit drooping.

But now his puff has gone and only despair comes flooding in.

HAMLET (to laertes)

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

He goes.

CLAUDIUS

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.

HORATIO follows his friend. GERTRUDE moves to watch them leave. CLAUDIUS speaks to LAERTES.

CLAUDIUS

Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech.
 We'll put the matter to the present push. -
 Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son. -

GERTRUDE moves off to follow her son, the PALLBEARERS escort her.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)

This grave shall have a living monument.
 An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;
 Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

CLAUDIUS moves away and LAERTES kneels down beside the grave to pray. The GRAVEDIGGERS lower their heads in respect.

WE DISSOLVE TO:

EXTERIOR / ESTABLISHING-SHOT PALACE DAY

A misty morning. We establish FRANCISCO back in place as formal sentry by the gate. We note too that he is once again uneasy. He will become for us, like the Gert Frobe character in The Longest Day - the German soldier having his breakfast in the coastal bunker who then sees the massive flotilla coming across the Channel at him.

WE DISSOLVE AGAIN:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL BALCONY DAY

HORATIO and HAMLET walk the balcony towards his apartments.

HAMLET

So much for this, sir. Now shall you see the other.
You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO

Remember it, my lord!

HAMLET

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.
Rashly - And praised be rashness for it: let us know
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall, and that should learn us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will -

HORATIO

That is most certain.

HAMLET

Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarfed about me in the dark,
Groped I to find out them, had my desire,
Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again, making so bold,
My fears forgetting manners, to im-seal
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio -
O royal knavery!

A grim look as we enter HAMLET's apartments. They walk along the library gallery and down the steps into the apartment.

HAMLET (continuing)
 - an exact command,
 Larded with many several sorts of reasons
 Importing Denmark's health, and England's, too,
 With hot Such bugs and goblins in my life,
 That on the supervise, no leisure bated,
 No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
 My head should be struck off.

This is genuinely shocking.

HORATIO
 Is't possible?

HAMLET (giving it to him)
 Here's the commission, read it at more leisure
 But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO
 I beseech you.

HAMLET
 Being thus benetted round with villainies -
 Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
 They had begun the play - I sat me down,
 Devised a new commission, wrote it fair.
 I once did hold it, as our statist do,
 A baseness to write fair, and laboured much
 How to forget that learning; but, sir, now
 It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know
 Th' effect of what wrote?

HORATIO
 Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET
 An earnest conjuration from the King,
 As England was his faithful tributary,
 As love between them like the palm might flourish,
 As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
 And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
 And many such like as'es of great charge,

There is an awful glee in HAMLET's re-telling.

HAMLET (continuing)

That on the view and know of these contents,
Without debatement further more or less,

He should the bearers put to sudden death, Not shriving-time
allowed.

HORATIO

How was this sealed?

HAMLET

Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal;
Folded the writ up in the form of th' other,
Subscribed it, gave't th' impression, placed it safely,
The changeling never known. Now the next day
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

HORATIO is still taking this information in.

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

A brief beat, before the new wiser, harder HAMLET speaks.

HAMLET

Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
Doth by their own insinuation grow.
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO has little choice but to agree. Or change the subject.

HORATIO

Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET

Does it not, think'st thee, stand me now upon -
He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,
Popped in between th' election and my hopes, Thrown
out his angle for my proper life,
And with such coz 'nage - is't not perfect conscience
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damned
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HORATIO will not give that final assurance to HAMLET, as after the play scene, that what he's doing could be right .. He evades again.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET recognizes the difference between them. It's OK. He knows he's on his own. And he knows now what that means. It's all right. He speaks to himself.

HAMLET

It will be short. The interim is mine,
And a man's life's no more than to say 'one'.
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,

And he truly is, however ironic it seems.

HAMLET (continuing)

That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his.

You can say that again.

HAMLET (continuing)

I'll court his favours.
But sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a tow'ring passion.

A knock at the door.

HORATIO

Peace, who comes here?

HORATIO stands and OSRIC enters and removes his hat.

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HORATIO and HAMLET share a look, who on earth is this?

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir.
(to Horatio)
Dost know this water-fly?

HORATIO

No, my good lord.

OSRIC remains in the doorway.

HAMLET

Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile. Let a beast be lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the King's mess. 'Tis a chuff, but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

OSRIC throws him what he imagines to be a winning smile.

OSRIC

Sweet lord, if your friendship were at leisure I should impart a thing to you from his majesty.

HAMLET

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

OSRIC

I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

It's not of course, and anyway he's indoors.

HAMLET

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

Tricky customers, these mad Princes. Humour them, I think.

OSRIC

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

He decides to humour HAMLET and puts his hat on.

HAMLET

Methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

OSRIC losing his way rapidly. And rather touchingly. He's not so bad. A fashion victim with a talent for real estate.

OSRIC

Exceedingly, my lord. It is very sultry, as 'twere -

Taking his hat off again.

I cannot tell how.

Anyway. look, let me get on with this.

But, my lord, his majesty bade me
signify to you that he has laid a
great wager on your head.

Which is rather exciting, isn't it?

Sir, this is the matter.

HAMLET

I beseech you, remember.

HAMLET points to the hat. OSRIC can't remember whether it's
supposed to be cold or hot or what, but decides it'll be
easier if he keeps the bloody thing off.

OSRIC

Nay, good my lord, for mine ease, in good faith.

Now please, let me get back to my speech.

OSRIC (continuing)

Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes. Believe
me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent
differences, of very soft society and great
showing. Indeed} to speak feelingly of him} he is
the card or calendar of gentry; for you shall
find in him the continent of what part a
gentleman would see.

Anything you can do ...

HAMLET

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

Yes, all right I've got the point.

OSRIC

Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAMLET

The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

OSRIC

Sir?

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSRIC

Of Laertes?

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

Of him, sir.

OSRIC

I know you are not ignorant -

HAMLET

I would you did, sir. Yet, in faith if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

OSRIC

You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is -

HAMLET

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

OSRIC

I mean, sir, for his weapon. But in the imputation laid on him, by them in his meed, he's unfellowed.

HAMLET

What's his weapon?

OSRIC

Rapier and dagger.

You see, didn't get me there, did you?

HAMLET

That's two of his weapons. But well.

Don't you just hate people like that? Never mind. I will go **on**.

OSRIC

The King, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses, against the which he has 'imponed',

He **loves** saying this word. It's the kind of word that reveals his quite brilliant intelligence.

OSRIC (CONTINUING)

as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hanger, or so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET

What call you the carriages?

HORATIO

I knew you must be edified by the margin ere you had done.

Oh. Better make a stab at this.

OSRIC

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAMLET

The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry cannon by our sides. I would it might be hangers till then. But on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages - that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this 'imponed', as you call it?

OSRIC reckons he's got the measure of him now. Few sticky moments, but nothing he can't deal with.

OSRIC

The King, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between you and him he shall not exceed you three hits.

He ends with a flourish.

OSRIC (continuing)
He hath laid on twelve for nine, and it would
come to immediate trial if your lordship would
vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET (ominously)
How if I answer no?

Oh. That's thrown him. OSRIC-ian computer malfunction. Wasn't
he clear enough?

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

A beat. HAMLET knows what this is leading up to.

HAMLET
Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please
his majesty, 'tis the breathing time of day with
me. Let the foils be brought; the gentleman
willing, an' the King hold his purpose, I will win
for him if I can. If not, I'll gain nothing but my
shame and the odd hits.

Is that a 'yes' then?

OSRIC
Shall I re-deliver you e 'en so?

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

Thrilled to be getting away now.

OSRIC
I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET
Yours, yours.

OSRIC bows, hitting the chair with his sword, and goes out.

HAMLET (continuing)
He does well to commend it himself, there are
no tongues else for's turn.

HORATIO

This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

HAMLET

He did comply with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he - and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on - only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter, a kind of yeasty collection which carries them through and through the most fanned and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trials, the bubbles are out.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

FRANCISCO, at the gates, still pacing. He stops and looks.

Movement in a bush? The sound of a horse? The flash of metal? But there is nothing there.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / HAMLET'S APARTMENTS DAY

A YOUNG LORD steps in, unannounced. He gives off an atmosphere that makes REYNALDO seem like Mother Theresa. He's here because clearly no one trusts lovely OSRIC to get it right.

LORD

My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall; he sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time?

The KING really is getting twitchy. The moment of truth is nigh.

HAMLET

I am constant to my purposes; they follow the King's pleasure: if his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

He still wants him to get a move on.

LORD

The King and Queen and all are coming down.

All right, I heard you the first time.

HAMLET

In happy time.

And on a more intimate note. Mum has a message.

LORD

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

HAMLET

She well instructs me.

The LORD goes, and a very anxious HORATIO turns to his friend.

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET (distracted)

I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have
been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds.

He moves to the window.

HAMLET (continuing)

But thou wouldst not think how all here about my heart

Snaps out of it a little.

HAMLET (continuing)

but it is no matter.

HORATIO (worried)

Nay, good my lord -

HAMLET (smiling)

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

HORATIO (very firm)

If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will
forestall their repair hither, and say you are not
fit. But no. It's gone way beyond that. This is a
moment where his destiny will reveal itself. Whatever,
it will be the right moment.

HAMLET

Not a whit. We defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?

He has spoken with the heart-rending simplicity of a man who knows that he is going to die and probably very soon. He accepts the inevitability of it. No more resistance, to people, to things, to circumstance, to himself. No more suffering. Acceptance. At last. Peace.

WE CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

Great shafts of light make the massive space look like a cathedral.

The Royal chairs have been placed in the middle of the hall, to one side, placed to be right in the centre of the action. There is a sizable CROWD of Courtiers. HAMLET and HORATIO stand at one end, LAERTES and YOUNG LORD at the other. OSRIC will be judge.

The two opponents start to walk towards each other. It's a friendly atmosphere with a little Dodgers stadium thrown in, in expectation of the sport. Perhaps it is a chance at reconciliation. GERTRUDE waits while the KING formally presents the men to each other.

CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET (to Laertes)

Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong;
But pardon't as you are a gentleman.

WE CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE NIGHT

HAMLET V/O

This presence knows,
And you must needs have heard, how I am punished
With a sore distraction. What I have done
That might your nature, honour, and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

This speech is intercut with images of the outside attack. Poor FRANCISCO surprised frolll behind, just as we see FORTINBRAS's Army crest the hill. Close on FORTINBRAS as he gives the order to charge, ending on an epic view of the thousands of Norwegian troops silently engulfing the palace.

HAMLET V/O (continuing)

Was't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.
If Hamlet from himself be ta 'en away,
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.
Who does it then? His madness.
If't be so, Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged.
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL DAY

HAMLET

Sir, in this audience
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house
And hurt my brother.

LAERTES uncertain how to respond to what has been delivered with great humility and heart.

LAERTES (slowly)

I am satisfied in nature,
Whose motive in this case should stir me most
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation
Till by some elder masters of known honour
I have a voice and precedent of peace
To keep my name ungored; but till that time
I do receive your offered love like love,
And will not wrong it.

That is enough. How could he do other?

HAMLET

I do embrace it freely
And will this brothers' wager frankly play.

CLAUDIUS leads the applause. GERTRUDE embraces both players. She and CLAUDIUS return to their thrones.

HAMLET

Give us the foils. Come on.

They take off their gowns to reveal a sort of high-tech combination of a modern fencing jacket with a Roman gladiator's breast plate. They could be two graduates of the Robocop academy.

LAERTES (to attendants)

Come, one for me.

HAMLET (jolly relaxed)

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

LAERTES (jumpy)

You mock me, sir.

HAMLET (sincere)

No, by this hand.

CLAUDIUS

Give them the foils, young Osric.

OSRIC pushes his sword trolley towards the opponents.

CLAUDIUS

Cousin Hamlet,
You know the wager?

HAMLET (grinning)

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

CLAUDIUS

I do not fear it; I have seen you both.
But since he is bettered, we have therefore odds.

LAERTES (taking a foil)

This is too heavy; let me see another.

We see LAERTES and HAMLET choose their weapons.

HAMLET (taking a foil)

This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

OSRIC

Ay, my good lord.

HAMLET and LAERTES move back to the mat and face each other.

CLAUDIUS (to attendants)
Set me the stoup of wine upon that table.
If Hamlet give the first or second hit,
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire.
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,
And in the cup an union shall he throw
Richer than that which four successive Kings
In Denmark's crown have worn.

He holds up the pearl which is to be the prize. The AUDIENCE
applauds.

CLAUDIUS
Give me the cup,
And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,
The trumpet to the cannoneer without,
The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,
'Now the King drinks to Hamlet'.

More applause while he drinks.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
Come, begin.
And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HORATIO and YOUNG LORD acknowledge CLAUDIUS. HAMLET and HORATIO
take their fencing masks and turn to face each other, the ritual
almost complete.

HAMLET (to Laertes)
Come on, sir.

LAERTES
Come, my lord.

They cross their swords for the start of the First Bout.

OSRIC steps forward, glances at each of them, and splits the
swords with his sword. Then, Boo!

HAMLET attacks with the speed of a greyhound, pushing and
pushing LAERTES up the long mat. It's one long sustained
aggressive surprise attack and it's successful. LAERTES falls on
his back onto the mat and HAMLET touches LAERTES on the chest.

HAMLET
One.

LAERTES (standing up)
No.

HAMLET (to Osric)
Judgement.

OSRIC
A hit, a very palpable hit.

The Crowd erupts!

LAERTES looks to the KING. Things not going absolutely as to plan. He picks up his sword.

LAERTES (very eager)
Well, again.

No you don't. Let's do this properly. Let's poison him. **Now.**

CLAUDIUS
Stay. Give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine.
Here's to thy health.

Drum and trumpets sound and shot goes off. The CROWD applaud.
CLAUDIUS drops the pearl into the cup.

CLAUDIUS (continuing)
Give him the cup.

A momentary pause. He suspects nothing of the poison, he just doesn't want anything from this man. LAERTES looks again at CLAUDIUS as do GERTRUDE and the CROWD. No problem.

HAMLET
I'll play this bout first. Set it by a while. -

They move back to the centre of the mat to begin the Second Bout.

HAMLET
Come.

CUT TO:

EXTERIOR / PALACE MORNING

Quick Cuts of FORTINBRAS's Army taking complete control of the inner courtyard. Powerful, silent stealth.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR / STATE HALL NIGHT

The Second Bout. Masks off. More cat and mouse this time. Lunges and stretches and trips. The CROWD on the edge of their seats as the pace builds. HAMLET falls! But yes, he's up again. LAERTES increasingly aggressive, blades flashing at incredible speed. Finally, LAERTES takes a great run at the Prince, who manages to swerve at the last minute, LAERTES passes him and as he does so HAMLET manages to make one last swipe at LAERTES's body.

HAMLET

Another hit. What say you?

OSRIC throws himself down onto the floor to see and signals

LAERTES

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

The CROWD erupt. HORATIO moves over to HAMLET to help him take off his jacket, and LAERTES goes over to CLAUDIUS.

CLAUDIUS

Our son shall win.

GERTRUDE grabs the goblet from CLAUDIUS before he has time to stop her and makes her way over to HAMLET, and LAERTES moves to the YOUNG LORD.

GERTRUDE (smiling)

He's fat and scant of breath. -

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin. Rub thy brows.

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

Whilst they do this to the delight of the CROWD, we see the YOUNG LORD lift the tip of LAERTES's sword and wipe it with poison.

HAMLET

Good madam.

She lifts the poisoned cup to her lips.

CLAUDIUS (panicked)

Gertrude, do not drink.

This cuts across all the public chat. The CROWD listens.

No. She is her own woman now. And for a moment, all too brief, she and her son are happy.

GERTRUDE

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

She drinks, then offers the cup to Hamlet.

CLAUDIUS V/O

It is the poisoned cup; it is too late.

HAMLET shakes his head.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam; by and by.

GERTRUDE (to Hamlet)

Come, let me wipe thy face.

CLAUDIUS (to Osric)

Part them, they are incensed.

HAMLET (possessed)

Nay, come again.

He races after LAERTES along the balcony, leaping over a torchere of candles LAERTES has pulled down.

GERTRUDE tries to stand up but falls to the floor, among the running CROWD.

OSRIC

Look to the Queen there, ho!

Her ATTENDANTS rush to her as does CLAUDIUS.

The fight continues along the balcony and onto the bridge HAMLET kicks LAERTES in the stomach and as he doubles up, HAMLET manages to cut LAERTES on the shoulder with the poisoned sword. HORATIO sees this.

HORATIO

They bleed on both sides.

LAERTES stares at HAMLET in horror for a few moments and then races at HAMLET who steps out of the way and LAERTES, unable to stop, trips and falls over the balustrade and down onto the floor below. HAMLET stays aloft looking down at LAERTES. HORATIO calls up to him.

HORATIO (continuing)
How is it, my lord?

OSRIC rushes over to LAERTES, the YOUNG LORD joins them.

OSRIC
How is't, Laertes?

Close on him, as he lies in his arms.

LAERTES
Why, as a woodcock to my own springe, Osric.
I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

HAMLET moves across the balcony to check on his mother.

HAMLET
How does the Queen?

CLAUDIUS
She swoons to see them bleed.

She looks into the face of her husband.

GERTRUDE
No, no, the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet,
The drink, the drink! - I am poisoned.

She dies.

HAMLET
O villany! Ho! let the door be locked!
Treachery! seek it out.

LAERTES pulss him up short.

LAERTES
It is here, Hamlet: Hamlet, thou art slain.
No med'cine in the world can do thee good.
In thee there is not half an hour of life.

The YOUNG LORD moves away.

LAERTES
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed.

The few people who are left, stand round appalled.

LAERTES (continuing)
 The foul practice
 Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,
 Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned.

OSRIC moves away from the dying man and runs for one of the secret doors.

LAERTES (continuing)
 I can no more. The king,

He rolls over to look at CLAUDIUS.

LAERTES (continuing)
 the king's to blame.

ATTENDANTS
 Treason! treason!

CUT TO:

INTERIOR ANTE-ROOM / DAY

OSRIC, still trying to escape, tries another secret door and closes it. Safe! His eyes open wide and we gib down to see a knife embedded in his abdomen.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR STATE HALL / DAY

HAMLET stares at the rapier.

HAMLET
 The point envenomed too! Then, venom,

All eyes go to CLAUDIUS. He starts to move slowly then runs towards the throne dias. As he runs HAMLET moves across the balcony.

HAMLET (continuing)
 to thy work.

He throws the poisoned sword, javelin like, across the Hall. WHOOSH! It goes through CLAUDIUS and pins him to the back of the throne. He struggles to get away, trying to pull the sword out.

CLAUDIUS
 O, yet defend me, friends! I am but hurt.

And HAMLET picks up his fallen rapier, and severs a rope, which sends the chandelier plummeting towards CLAUDIUS.

CLAUDIUS manages to release himself from the sword and turns in the chair to see the chandelier flying directly towards him. It hits him with great force.

HAMLET swings down on the rope to the floor. He grabs the poisoned goblet, rushes to the helpless CLAUDIUS. He feeds the poison down his uncle's throat.

HAMLET

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

LAERTES calls down the hall.

LAERTES

He is justly serv'd.
It is a poison tempered by himself.
Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.
Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,
Nor thine on me!

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.

LAERTES dies.

EXTERIOR PALACE COURTYARD / DAY

The palace secured, we see the stately procession of FORTINBRAS through the courtyard, towards the massive front doors.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR STATE HALL / DAY

HAMLET moves away from the dais, passing HORATIO and giving him the cup.

HAMLET

I am dead, Horatio. Wretched Queen, adieu!

He looks around the court.

HAMLET (continuing)

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,
That are but mutes or audience to this act,
Had I but time -

He has collapsed with pain.

HAMLET (continuing)
as this fell sergeant Death
Is strict in his arrest - O, I could tell you -
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead,
Thou liv'st. Report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

This is too much for his friend.

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

HAMLET stops him with whatever power is left in his voice.

HAMLET
As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup. Let go. By heaven, I'll ha't.

HORATIO throws it down. He continues quietly impassioned.

HAMLET (continuing)
O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.--

Terrifying noises are heard outside the Hall.

HAMLET (continuing)
What warlike noise is this?

OSRIC emerges from one of the hidden doors. Dignity intact.

OSRIC
Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from
Poland, To the ambassadors of England gives

OSRIC shows his bloodied hand.

OSRIC (continuing)
This warlike volley.

HAMLET (very quiet)

O, I die, Horatio!
 The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
 I cannot live to hear the news from England,
 But I do prophesy th' election lights
 On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.
 So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,
 Which have solicited. The rest is silence.

And the Court is silent too.

HORATIO

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

A great drum beat.

HORATIO (continuing)

Why does the drum come hither?

Because it's to mark an attack. BOOM! Through every door in the room, by force, emerges FORTINBRAS's Army in SAS style. The Soldiers from the top gallery break through the doors in a shower of glass, already on ropes with which they abseil down into the hall. Within seconds they are in control. Immediately we hear the sound of approaching footsteps.

They reveal FORTINBRAS marching towards us with military precision.

FORTINBRAS

Where is this sight?

HORATIO

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

The new ruler starts to take in the scene.

FORTINBRAS

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

The ENGLISH AMBASSADOR enters through one of the mirrored doors. What he sees, shakes him to the core.

AMBASSADOR

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

HORATIO

Not from his mouth,
 Had it th' ability of life to thank you.
 He never gave commandment for their death.
 But since, so jump upon this bloody question
 You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
 Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies
 High on a stage be placed to the view;
 And let me speak to the yet unknowing world
 How these things came about. So shall you hear
 Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
 Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
 Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause;
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
 Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
 Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS

Let us haste to hear it
 And call the noblest to the audience.
 For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.

FORTINBRAS moves across the court to the throne, now vacated
 by CLAUDIUS. He sits in it, as if to the manner born.

FORTINBRAS (continuing)

I have some rights of memory in this Kingdom,
 Which now, to claim my vantage doth invite me.

A Crown is placed on FORTINBRAS's

HORATIO

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

The ENGLISH AMBASSADOR slowly leaves.

FORTINBRAS

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

We see the body lifted aloft. The CAPTAINS carry it away down the hall. As they reach the end of the Hall we are high above the body, held high in the crucifix position. As it disappears out of the bottom of frame...

EXT. PALACE FRONT - DAY

Through the huge doors we Dissolve and see it again, but this time fully dressed and in a coffin. As we pull back we see HAMLET lying in state in front of the Great Palace. FORTINBRAS's Army pay their respects. A line of Soldiers preparing to fire a volley above it.

We Dissolve to see a platoon of Soldiers, at a quick march away from the palace towards the Monument. The Soldiers climb the statue covering it in ropes. FORTINBRAS's men tear at the Great statue.

Our final frame is the legend on the plinth, clear and strong for a monument, before, in Slow Motion, the great broken pieces of stone come falling into shot, the great head first, and gradually obliterate the name HAMLET. For ever. As we ... fade to black.