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The Hamlet Thrill-ma-geddon

A play in two acts

By Don Zolidis

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Cast of Characters

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Full-length comedy
10-30+ actors

To sell out or not to sell out? Not really much of a question. After their budget is slashed, the drama club turns to Shakespeare's greatest tragedy to raise cash, but it's not tickets that are going to fund this year's show: It's sweet, sweet corporate sponsorship and mid-play commercial advertising. The sponsors demand changes in the stodgy old script, but who cares if Shakespeare never wrote musical numbers with back-up dancers or post-apocalyptic zombie battles? He's dead and he can't complain. Or sue. A lightning-quick, hilarious perversion of the greatest play in the English language.

Cast of Characters

CHIP, the male narrator
JULIE, the female narrator

STUDENTS 1-6
BROOKS CHARLIE, the consultant

HAMLET
GERTRUDE
CLAUDIUS
The GHOST
GHOST 2-3
ROSENCRANTZ
GUILDENSTERN
VILLAGERS
HERALD
ACTOR
ESMERELDA
PLAYERS
POLONIUS
LAERTES
OPHELIA
SERVANTS 1-5
GRAVEDIGGER
HORATIO
LOUNGE SINGER
BACK-UP DANCERS 1-3

(Feel free to doublecast as many parts as necessary. Some of the roles may be cross-cast without losing anything. I could easily see ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, HORATIO, the GRAVEDIGGER, and the LOUNGE SINGER being female.)

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON APPROPRIATENESS: Hamlet is a spectacularly bloody and often sexually charged play. I have no doubt that if this play were written today and staged in high

schools, it would bring about the condemnation of the "morals police". In any event, I have great love for Hamlet: I make lots of jokes about it, but I do consider it to be the greatest play written in English. In making this loony adaptation, I have found myself fighting between the desire to be true to the spirit of the original play, and the knowledge that some of the jokes are probably going to give administrators indigestion.

In the full-length version, I have erred on the side of fidelity to the original script. (In the one-act version, I've erred on the opposite side, so if you wish to see a cleaned-up version of this play, look there.) So there are some jokes with sexual innuendo, and there are heaps of dead bodies at the end. (Although, perversely, heaps of dead bodies are less likely to give administrators pause than sexual innuendo. Can someone explain this to me?) If you need to remove a joke here or there in order to make your production appropriate for your audience, do so with my blessing.

AUTHOR'S NOTE ON COPYRIGHT: This play is meant as parody.

Act One

*(A banner unfurls proclaiming the school musical, "Little Shop of Horrors.")**
**Feel free to make this specific to your school and your most recent or upcoming musical.*

(Lights up on CHIP and JESSIE, the narrators.)

CHIP *(talking to the audience)*
Are you ready to see the musical?!
(Audience gives muted and confused reaction.)

JESSIE
I don't think they're ready.

CHIP
I SAID: ARE YOU READY TO SEE THE MUSICAL?!
(Audience gives slightly less muted and slightly more confused reaction.)

JESSIE
Well – funny story, we were all set to bring you Little Shop of Horrors.

CHIP
Awesome, amazing show, so much better than the show we're actually going to show you.

JESSIE
Shut up, Chip. But…

CHIP
You would have loved it: There's this plant, and it's like evil, and it's eating people – aaaah! People die all over the place. Great for the kids.

JESSIE
Chip. Seriously. Stop it. We totally wanted to do that show – but it turns out –

CHIP
It's really expensive.

JESSIE
Right. Which is normally not a problem for the drama club, but…

CHIP
BIG BUT –

JESSIE
Was that directed at me, Chip?

CHIP
No! I meant big exception.

JESSIE
As some of you might know, we're a little financially strapped at the moment –

CHIP
A little –

JESSIE
A lot, actually. Let's call it a financial crisis.

CHIP
That's what your parents called it.

JESSIE
So the school has been forced to trim –

CHIP
Or hatchet –

JESSIE
The budget of various extracurricular groups.

CHIP
We now have a budget of eight dollars.

JESSIE
They were going to give us ten, but apparently one of us egged the superintendent's dog.

CHIP
Why are you looking at me? By the way, if you want to see a great YouTube video of a dog being egged, check out –

JESSIE
Keep digging that hole, Chip.

CHIP
Anyway, the plant for this show costs three thousand bucks to rent.

JESSIE

So we'll be saving our budget for the next four hundred years, and then we'll have enough to do that show. When the world is a steaming, blasted ruin.

CHIP

Yay!

JESSIE

But I don't want to sound like we're the only part of the school that's having a budget crisis.

CHIP

I've heard the offense and defense on the football team have to share pants. They switch them in between plays.

JESSIE

I can't even go to the games anymore. It's too sad to watch.

CHIP

And the building is doing cost-saving measures as well:

JESSIE

For instance, who needs heat when you can wear sweaters?

CHIP

And do we really need all those lightbulbs? Those just spoil the eyes.

JESSIE

And why splurge on all that fancy cafeteria food when there are mice readily available?

CHIP

Tastes like chicken! Mmm.

JESSIE

So we here at the drama club put our heads together to come up with a low-cost alternative to that big, expensive show. And what we came up with was:

(Two ACTORS run out, one carrying a cardboard box, and the other with a basket of sock puppets.)

CHIP

The Tony-nominated Broadway Smash: WICKED!

(short pause)

As performed by sock puppets.

(ACTOR 1 puts up a GLINDA sock puppet)

GLINDA SOCK PUPPET *(singing)*

Popular
We're gonna make you popular

So it's very very shrewd to be
Very very pop-u-lar
Like me!
(ACTOR 1 puts up a second hand as the ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET)

ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET

You mean it?

GLINDA SOCK PUPPET

I do! Let' s hug.

ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET

But I'm still green.
(launches into song for no reason)
I'LL TRY
DEFYING GRAVITY
(ACTOR 2 produces two FLYING MONKEY SOCK PUPPETS)

FLYING MONKEY SOCK PUPPETS

Flying monkeys attack! Flying Monkeys attack!
(The FLYING MONKEYS ATTACK, rip the GLINDA SOCK PUPPET off ACTOR 1's hand and toss it over the wall.)

JESSIE

But then we decided that idea was stupid.
(ACTOR 1 and 2 run off with puppet theatre.)
So we kept putting our heads together, which wasn't helpful. It went like this:
(Other ACTORS emerge.)

ACTOR 3

Let's do *Miss Saigon*!

CHIP

That show has a helicopter.

ACTOR 3

My uncle used to be in the air force and now he's a criminal. He could steal us a helicopter for free.

JESSIE

No.

ACTOR 4

Peter Pan.

CHIP

That involves people flying.

ACTOR 4

Oh but there's this horror version called *Peter Pain*, there's these spikes –

CHIP

Also no.

SUPER-ENTHUSIASTIC ACTOR 5

I know! We'll do the greatest play every written! HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL.

EVERYONE

NO.

SUPER-ENTHUSIASTIC ACTOR 5

YOU'LL REGRET THIS!

JESSIE

Guys, you don't understand the –

ACTOR 6

The Lion King.

JESSIE

We don't have any money to –

ACTOR 6

The Little Mermaid.

JESSIE

There's no money to -

ACTOR 6

Spiderman!

CHIP

All right you're all stupid! We have eight dollars. We need a play we can put on for eight dollars.

ACTOR 3

Wait! I have another uncle who's a criminal!

JESSIE

How many criminal uncles do you have?

ACTOR 3

Four. But I only talk to three of them. But this uncle – he's a white-collar criminal so he's okay –

JESSIE *(back to the audience)*
So, luckily for us, helping us counted as community service –

CHIP
So we used our eight dollars to hire…

JESSIE
A consultant!
(BROOKS CHARLIE, wearing a suit and an ankle monitor, enters.)

BROOKS
How ya doin? How ya doin? Brooks Charlie. Consultant. I hear you got a cash flow problem.

CHIP
We have no cash.

BROOKS
That's a problem.

JESSIE
So we were wondering if you could help us raise some money. Maybe organize a bake sale, or babysitting night –

CHIP
Car wash –

JESSIE
We could sell candy bars.
(Pause. BROOKS looks at them with contempt.)

BROOKS
What are you, children?

CHIP
…yes.

BROOKS
We ain't gonna do any of that namby-pamby hoo-ha. You are sitting on a gold mine here: It's called youth. You wanna do a show? We're gonna do the biggest money-maker this school's ever seen.

CHIP
Bigger than Beauty and the Beast?

JESSIE

Cause we made lots of money with that one.

BROOKS

With the amount of money I'm going to make you, you'll be able to buy nuclear material on the black market, lock a kid in a room with it, and mutate him into the beast. Then do the show again, and hire actual Swedish models to be the beauties.

JESSIE

There's only one.

BROOKS

In my version, there are five. Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, and the Beast. That's what the audience wants to see.

JESSIE

I don't know. There's something about your ankle bracelet that tells me you're untrustworthy.

BROOKS

Two things: Is Lindsay Lohan untrustworthy? And two: This school has been here for forty-seven* years and it has never turned a profit. If I ran a business that way, I would be in prison.

**or however long your school has been around*

CHIP

He makes a good point about Lindsay Lohan.

JESSIE

Maybe we could just ask the school for more money.

BROOKS

The school doesn't have any money, all right? The taxpayers are saving it to pay for the prisons that they're going to need to build for all the kids that drop outta school. Priorities. No, you need me if you're gonna be rich.

JESSIE

That's not why I'm doing theatre.

CHIP

But that is why I'm doing theatre.

BROOKS

Do we have a deal?

JESSIE

I guess.

(BROOKS steps back as JESSIE and CHIP talk to the audience)

Now some of his ideas took some getting used to:

BROOKS:
What's the first word that comes into your mind when I say this:
(pause)
William.
(pause)
Shakespeare.

CHIP
Kill me.

JESSIE
Genius.

CHIP
Genius who kills me from boredom.

BROOKS
Nope, nope, and that was a lot more than one word. Here's the word you shoulda been thinking: Dead.

CHIP
I was gonna get to that.

BROOKS
Which means it's free, it's famous, and you can do anything you want to it and no one can sue you because he's dead. You want vampires in the show for the middle school chicks? Done. You want zombie battles? Done. You want Dancing numbers with Lady Whats-Her-Face?

JESSIE
Gaga.

BROOKS
Is she like a baby or something?

JESSIE
SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL ARIST WHO IS MISUNDERSTOOD!

BROOKS
Whatever. My point is: You will make money.

CHIP
Yeah, but the language is hard to understand.

BROOKS
Are you an idiot?

Skipping Forward

CHIP

Live from the Gatorade Theatre!

JESSIE

Sponsored by the good people at Tucks Medicated Pads!

(Lights up on the stage. A vague representation of a castle, perhaps with a few advertisements prominently displayed.)

CHIP

Hamlet, act One –

JESSIE

Brought to you by GlaxoSmithKline, improving your life through pharmaceuticals since 1954.

CHIP

It was a dark and stormy night, and the guards patrolling Dr. Pepper castle were worried.

(BERNARDO enters, holding a spear and a can of Dr. Pepper.)

BERNARDO

Who goes there?

(MARCELLUS enters from the opposite side of the stage, holding a spear and a 2-liter bottle of Dr. Pepper.)

MARCELLUS

It is I, Marcellus. And who are you?

BERNARDO

Bernardo. It's a dark and stormy night tonight, isn't it?

MARCELLUS

Indeed.

(MARCELLUS takes a long swig from his bottle.)

Ahhhhhh. It is a cold night here in Denmark, but these twenty-three flavors keep me warm.

BERNARDO

As they do me.

(he takes a drink)

I've also noticed myself growing more attractive to women since I started drinking this.

MARCELLUS

Yes. I've also discovered that. It truly is the Lord's drink.

BERNARDO

Last night I filled my bathtub with it. My skin is as supple as a baby's rear end. Go ahead touch my face.

MARCELLUS

That's just weird.

(He touches BERNARDO's face.)

That is nice, though.

(There's a creepy sound from off-stage.)

BERNARDO

Aaaaaaaaaah!

MARCELLUS

Calm yourself, man!

(BERNARDO calms himself by taking another drink from his Dr. Pepper.)

(THE GHOST appears.)

MARCELLUS

IT'S A GHOST!!!!

BERNARDO

AAAAAAAAAAAH!

(They freeze and CHIP and JESSIE stop the action mid-scream.)

CHIP

Let's stop this for a second, shall we? I think this is a moment that some great pharmaceutical products could help.

JESSIE

You see – let's say you've encountered something that, for lack of a better word, blows your mind.

CHIP

Maybe it's a meteor about to hit the earth -

JESSIE

Or Angelina Jolie has rescued another child from a third world country –

CHIP

Or you've just seen the walking corpse of the former king of your country.

JESSIE

Well, we've got something for you to keep you functional – Shlizzbot.

CHIP

Oh yeah – Shlizzbot is the shlizzbot. Take it and you won't care what happens. Let's watch what happens if these guards were psychologically adjusted with Shlizzbot.

(The GHOST exits.)

BERNARDO

Go ahead touch my face.

MARCELLUS

That's weird.

(He touches BERNARDO's face.)

That is nice, though.

(The GHOST enters.)

Hey check it out: there's a ghost.

BERNARDO

Nice. You know what's really supernatural, though? I used to have back acne, but with my Dr. Pepper bath, it cleared up.

MARCELLUS

Niiiice.

(The GHOST points at them.)

Hey you know what? That looks like the visage of our recently dead king.

BERNARDO

Yeah. Looks like his spirit is doomed to walk amongst the living.

MARCELLUS

Maybe we should tell somebody.

BERNARDO

Maybe we should.

(They slowly saunter off-stage.)

CHIP

And scene! Much better!

JESSIE

Meanwhile, inside the Throne Room of Dr. Pepper castle, the new king addresses his subjects.

(Enter CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE, the king and queen. CLAUDIUS speaks like a politician.)

CLAUDIUS

My royal subjects! I know that there have been some difficult times out there lately – we're all hurting right now after my brother's death, but this is a time for this nation to come together. Let's be honest: we all liked him. He had a great beard. I was always envious of that beard. Not so envious that I would kill, let's put that rumor to bed. My opponents out there always want to turn this into a political issue – and I think it's become a distraction for us. Read my lips: I did not have murderous relations with my brother. I'm glad we can put that issue to rest, and I hope that the people who were saying those things enjoy their time being tortured.

(far-off scream)

Now, I'm not here to talk about my personal wife, I mean life, but – again – people have been talking, so yes, I have married Gertrude. She's a stone cold fox and once she was back on the market I knew I was going to have to act fast. And some of you sickos out there think it's a little weird that I married my brother's wife two days after he died, but you should be ashamed of yourselves and you will also be tortured.

(far-off scream)

So to sum up: Time of a great personal tragedy, Gertrude is a stone cold fox, if you don't like it I hope you enjoy spikes. And I'm lowering taxes which will exempt me from any of your moral concerns forever. Now my new wife would like to say a few words.

(GERTRUDE steps forward.)

GERTRUDE

My people. I loved my dead husband very much which is why I married his brother. They kind of look similar. I know there's an ewww factor out there – but we'll all get over it – and now to take your mind off of that… bunnies. Thank you.

(HAMLET enters, with a slow clap.)

HAMLET

Bravo, mother. Bravo.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet. How good to see you out of your room.

CLAUDIUS

What's the good news, son?

HAMLET *(in whiny, Luke Skywalker voice)*

You'll never be my father!

CLAUDIUS

Whoah, chill out.

HAMLET

Never!

GERTRUDE

Don't talk to your new Dad that way! And stop all this moping around.

HAMLET

You don't understand me.

GERTRUDE

Why are you wearing black? Don't you have other colors in your wardrobe? It's springtime, you would look great in blue.

HAMLET

I'm never wearing blue! I hate blue! I hate it I hate it I hate it!

CLAUDIUS

You're such a whiner. Geez. Suck it up.

HAMLET

Dad died last week.

GERTRUDE

This is Denmark. People die all the time.

CLAUDIUS

We have terrible health care.

GERTRUDE

And most of the people don't even have insurance. But if they had a choice in health care, I think they should choose TIAA-CREF, which provides an excellent low-cost option.

HAMLET

I hate you and I hate my family! I hope you all die!

(JESSIE stops in.)

JESSIE

Whoah! Let's put the brakes on this. I think I smell the need for more pharmacological adjustment!

CHIP

Oops. That was me.

JESSIE

What I'm saying is, this is some pretty rough stuff.

CHIP

You can say that again Jessie!

JESSIE *(annoyed)*

This is some pretty rough stuff.

CHIP

Ha ha ha. You're clever. And lovely to look at.

JESSIE

What are you doing?

CHIP

We're supposed to banter. The drug companies like it when we banter. It's in the agreement.
(he takes out a contract and shows it to her.)

JESSIE

Fine.

CHIP

You're clever. And lovely to look at.

JESSIE

Thank you Chip. You're not so bad yourself.

CHIP

I've had a lot of work done.

JESSIE

Good thinking! Now, I know what you parents out there are thinking – my teenager is out of control. I know that's what Claudius is thinking.

CHIP

Ha ha ha.

JESSIE

That wasn't a joke.

CHIP

Whoops.

JESSIE

The fact is, Hamlet is suffering from teenage rebellion syndrome. Some symptoms include:

CHIP

Wearing black clothing.

JESSIE

Clever wordplay.

CHIP

Long soliloquies.

JESSIE

Tendency to make death threats.

CHIP

And sleeping.

JESSIE

It's more common than you might think.

CHIP

Especially if your father is murdered, and then the murderer remarries your mother, and then your father's ghost comes back from the underworld and enlists you to get revenge.

JESSIE

Especially then.

CHIP

But just because you have a teenager in a difficult emotional state, that doesn't mean that you have to endure these outbursts.

JESSIE

Because the good people at GlaxoSmithKline have just developed a new drug that will help in situations like this. It's called Refixor.

CHIP

Refixor.

JESSIE

That's right.

CHIP

Now don't start believing the rumors that the only way it passed FDA approval is because they paid them a lot of money – that's ridiculous.

JESSIE

Ridiculous.

CHIP

It depends on how you define a lot of money.

JESSIE

Was it a lot of money in comparison to the national debt?

CHIP

Nope.

JESSIE

I'd say it was a little bit of money then.

CHIP

I would too!

JESSIE

What does Refixor do? Well –

CHIP

It fixes everything! That's why it's called Refixor!

JESSIE

But to be more specific about it, Refixor enters the bloodstream and attacks the parts of the brain that cause suspicion, anger, and whininess. Refixor attaches itself to those emotions and savagely eliminates them. Like a big dog chewing on the carcass of a dead squirrel.

CHIP

Sweet!

JESSIE

Your teenager will no longer be the out-of-control, black-clothing-wearing drain on your resources that they've been since the age of thirteen. Instead – well – maybe it's better just to show you. Let's watch this scene again, but this time – Hamlet has taken a double dose of Refixor.

CHIP

Not recommended.

JESSIE

Well, in cases of severe depression, you can take two or three times the recommended dosage.

CHIP

You may experience side effects.

JESSIE

We'll get to those later. All right, let's back this up, shall we!

CHIP

Ha ha ha! I love watching you back things up.

JESSIE

I thought you weren't going to say things like that anymore, Chip.

CHIP

I'm sorry. I get lonely.

JESSIE

That's not the kind of banter I'd like to have with you.

CHIP

Maybe after all this is over –

JESSIE

No.

CHIP *(back to the audience)*

All right! Good thing they make drugs for rejection too!

JESSIE

So let's rewind to be kind!

(HAMLET exits. CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE go back to their opening positions.)

GERTRUDE

My people. I loved my dead husband very much which is why I married his brother. They kind of look similar. I know there's an ewww factor out there – but we'll all get over it – and now to take your mind off of that… bunnies. Thank you.

(HAMLET enters, wearing something much sunnier.)

HAMLET

Good job, Mom!

GERTRUDE

Thanks, son.

HAMLET

High five new Dad!

(HAMLET high fives CLAUDIUS.)

CLAUDIUS

Oh Hamlet, you're such a boon to me in my old age.

HAMLET

You're not that old!

CLAUDIUS

I know, I know.

(he puts his hand on GERTRUDE's thigh. (or around her shoulder.))

HAMLET

Wow! You two are really in love!

GERTRUDE

I'll say!

HAMLET

Well I think that's great. It's just wonderful that my Mom is able to move on with her life after Dad died so mysteriously from that poison. It's a good thing I don't have any suspicions!

CLAUDIUS
Hamlet have I ever told you that your Mom is a stone cold fox?

HAMLET
That doesn't bother me at all!

CLAUDIUS
She is.

GERTRUDE
Stop it, Claudius. Not in front of the boy.

HAMLET
I'm glad this doesn't cause me any psychological harm!

CLAUDIUS
Hey son – tell you what? There are some people spreading nasty rumors about me – can you please arrest them and kill them?

HAMLET
Sure thing new Dad! I'll get right on that! It's a good thing my moral center has been erased!

CLAUDIUS
All right then.

JESSIE
And scene.

CHIP
That was sweet.

JESSIE
Indeed it was. Now your teenager will no longer question your indiscretions or moral failings!

CHIP
Wow!

JESSIE
Refixor.

CHIP
You should know that Refixor does include certain side effects:

JESSIE *(quickly)*

Skipping Forward

JESSIE
Let's watch this little scene again, but this time let's give Ophelia a pharmacological adjustment!
(OPHELIA and HAMLET rewind.)

CHIP
And go!
(HAMLET enters. OPHELIA approaches.)

OPHELIA
Hey!

HAMLET
Hey.
(Pause.)
So have you been thinking about our relationship?

OPHELIA
Nope.

CHIP
And Bingo! Perfect girlfriend.

JESSIE
Some side effects include uncontrollable weight gain and suicidal tendencies.

CHIP
But tests are inconclusive!

JESSIE
And finally – we do have one more scene to show you.

CHIP
It was a dark and stormy night.
(Thunder. HAMLET enters in black, outside.)

JESSIE
And Hamlet wasn't taking any pills.

HAMLET
All right – I'm starting to get depressed again, and that's when I start talking to myself, which is a problem, but I'm not going crazy – I'm not –
(The GHOST enters.)
What the heck is that?!
(The GHOST holds up a hand.)
What are you?!

GHOST *(ghostly)*

Ham-lettttt…

HAMLET

How do you know my name?!

GHOST *(ghostly)*

Ham-lettt….

HAMLET

That's my name again! Are you some kind of ghost?

GHOST

Follllow Meeee…

(The GHOST walks a little ways.)

HAMLET

Do I follow? He knows my name. What could this be? Is it a trick?

(The GHOST beckons.)

It's doing it again. But what could it mean?

GHOST

Just shut up and get over here.

HAMLET

Dad?

GHOST

Yes.

HAMLET

But… you're dead!

GHOST

Yeah, I know. Bummer. **But… I have come back to tell you… I was murdered!**

HAMLET

No way!

GHOST

Yes!

HAMLET

Are you serious?

GHOST

Yes I am very serious I was murdered.

HAMLET

Who could have done this?

GHOST

Is it really so hard to figure out? Let's see – who had a motive to kill me? Who could it have been? Who could possibly have had a motive to murder me?

HAMLET

I don't know.

GHOST

Seriously, you don't know?

HAMLET

No.

GHOST

Claudius.

HAMLET

It was Claudius?!

GHOST

Yes!

HAMLET

I never would have suspected him!

GHOST

You are the dumbest person ever to live! All right look – it was him –

HAMLET

How did he do it?

GHOST

You want all the gory details?

HAMLET

I'm just curious.

GHOST

I was sleeping and he poured poison into my ear – and then my blood turned into cement and I died and went to the bad place.

HAMLET

The bad place?

GHOST

You know, with the fire, and the pitchforks, and the screaming torture for eternity. We're not allowed to the say the word anymore because it frightens the children. But just imagine my stomach being sliced open and my entrails being pulled out and made into a jump rope for demons. And they don't even let me play.

HAMLET

Oh.

GHOST

Yeah. It's not fun. Unlike the products of Fisher-Price, which are a lot of fun: I highly recommend the Fisher Price Farm Playset for all the youngsters out there.

(produces Fisher Price playset.)

`Baa. Baa.' I'm a sheep. `And I'm a cow.' `And I'm a sheep that was murdered by the pig so the pig could steal the sheep's wife.'

(pig murders sheep and cozies up to another sheep.)

HAMLET

Dad. That was a good playset. But how can I help you?

GHOST *(as the sheep)*

`Avenge meeeeee… Kill the pig.'

HAMLET

Who's the pig?

GHOST

Claudius! Claudius is the pig! Kill him.

HAMLET

Well –

GHOST

Kill him kill him kill him kill him!

HAMLET

You're right.

GHOST

Kill him!

HAMLET

Yes! I will! I will avenge you, father! Claudius must die! And Mom too!

GHOST

Eh – I'm on the fence about killing your mother.

HAMLET

No! Everyone associated with this dies! From now on, no more Mr. Nice Hamlet! I'll pretend to be insane, and then spend a lot of time worrying about this, and then I'll kill them all! All of them! Moo ah ha ha ha ha!

(CHIP and JESSIE pop in as HAMLET freezes in maniacal laughing position.)

CHIP

This is what we like to refer to as:

JESSIE

A psychotic break with reality.

CHIP

How do you know you've had a psychotic break with reality?

JESSIE

The first clue might be when the voices in your head tell you to kill.

CHIP

The second clue might be when you think the voices in your head make a lot of sense.

JESSIE

The third clue might be when you start pretending to be insane, just to see if that will work.

CHIP

News flash: if you pretend to be insane, you're probably insane.

JESSIE

But luckily for you and all the psychotics in the audience, GlaxoSmithKline have a new drug that can prevent episodes just like this: Moop.

CHIP

It's called Moop?

JESSIE

They found that if they made the name too long, the psychotics started killing people.

CHIP

Moop it is. How does it work?

JESSIE

Well – whenever you're about to have a psychotic break, Moop summons other voices in your head to tell you nice things. Let's watch with Hamlet!

(HAMLET backs up.)

CHIP

It was a dark and stormy night. Again. It rains a lot in Denmark.

(Thunder. HAMLET enters.)

HAMLET

All right – I'm starting to get depressed again, and that's when I start talking to myself, which is a problem, but I'm not going crazy – I'm not –

(The GHOST enters.)

What the heck is that?!

(The GHOST holds up a hand.)

What are you?!

GHOST *(ghostly)*

Ham-lettttt…

HAMLET

How do you know my name?!

GHOST *(ghostly)*

Ham-lettt….

(A second GHOST appears on the opposite side of the stage. He seems a lot happier.)

GHOST 2

Hey Hamlet!

HAMLET

Whoah! Two ghosts?

(GHOST 3 appears next to GHOST 2.)

GHOST 3

Hey Hamlet! Over here! Come here! We've got something to say to you!

GHOST *(ghostly)*

Ham-lettt….

GHOST 2

Booo

GHOST 3

Boooooo

GHOST *(ghostly)*

I am your father…

GHOST 2

Boooobs

HAMLET

What?

GHOST 3

Boooobs.

(HAMLET is distracted by GHOST 2 and 3. He starts walking towards them.)

GHOST

Avenge me…

GHOST 2

Booooobs.

GHOST 3

Booooobs.

HAMLET

What about boobs?

GHOST

Dang it…

(GHOST gives up and leaves.)

JESSIE

And there you have it folks! Psychotic break averted!

CHIP

But what happens if there's a female psychotic?

JESSIE

Easy.

(OPHELIA enters, with three ghosts again.)

GHOST

Ophelia – avenge me –

GHOST 2

Shooooooes.

GHOST 3

Shooooooes.

(OPHELIA turns toward GHOST 2 and 3.)

JESSIE

See? Easy.

CHIP

All right! Well I feel better about everything. It's nice to know there's a pill for just about every problem I could have. If only they made something that made me more attractive to women.

JESSIE

Ha ha ha! There's no hope for that, Chip!

CHIP

Well thanks folks, you've been a great audience out there and remember –

JESSIE

Most of these drugs are perfectly safe!

(The lights go down. Stirring music plays. Perhaps a rainbow flies across the stage. CHIP and JESSIE's personalities change.)

CHIP *(in the dark)*

Once upon a time, there was a young man.

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

A prince.

CHIP *(in the dark)*

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark.

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

Oh how I've waited for a prince!

CHIP *(in the dark)*

Hamlet, Act Two.

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

Brought to you by Disney.

(Lights up on the courtyard of the castle. Everything is bright and slightly cartoony. Perhaps music plays in the background.)

*(*Note: All of the singing in this section may be done A Capella. You are welcome to create your own tunes. It doesn't have to be especially great. In my mind, this resembles the music in Beauty and the Beast.)*

(Clean and happy VILLAGERS enter, carrying baskets of foodstuffs. They are very, very cheerful people.)

VILLAGER 1

Good morning to you!

FEMALE VILLAGER

And good morning to you, sir!

VILLAGER 3

It's another beautiful day in Denmark!

VILLAGER 4

Every day is another beautiful day in Denmark! Except when it rains!

(The VILLAGERS laugh.)

FEMALE VILLAGER

And that only happens at night!

(HAMLET enters, wandering, his head in a book.)

VILLAGER 1

Good Morning, Prince Hamlet!

(HAMLET doesn't really notice VILLAGER 1.)

FEMALE VILLAGER

What a fine Prince he is!

(more VILLAGERS enter.)

VILLAGER 5

Good morning, Prince Hamlet!

VILLAGER 6

Always have your head in a book.

(The VILLAGERS gather on the side of the stage. They begin to sing their lines now.)

FEMALE VILLAGER *(singing)*

Look at him there
A prince A prince

VILLAGER 6 *(talking)*

A Prince with his head too much in the books if you ask me.

FEMALE VILLAGER *(singing)*

Look at him there
My prince my prince

VILLAGERS *(singing)*

There's something wrong with him
There's something wrong with the Prince there is
There's something wrong with the Prince

VILLAGER 2 *(talking)*
They say he eats bacon all day!

VILLAGER *(talking)*
And he's independent-minded!

VILLAGER 5 *(talking)*
That'll get you into trouble every time!

VILLAGER 6 *(talking)*
It's the books I tell you!

FEMALE VILLAGER *(singing)*
Look at him there
My prince my prince

VILLAGERS *(singing)*
He's been acting funny
He's been acting strange

VILLAGER 3 *(singing)*
He often says it's sunny

VILLAGER 4 *(singing)*
Even when it rains

FEMALE VILLAGER *(singing)*
My prince my prince

VILLAGERS *(singing)*
He's acting kind of loony
In a crazy sort of way

VILLAGER 3 *(singing)*
He says he sees the moon-y

VILLAGE 4 *(singing)*
Even when it's day

VILLAGER 5 *(talking)*
I hear it's because his father was murdered and now his mother has married the new king!

Skipping Forward

GUILDENSTERN
But don't you remember us, Prince Hamlet?

HAMLET
Do I know you?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN *(in unison)*
We're Rosencrantz and Guildenstern!
(doesn't ring a bell)
Your childhood friends!

ROSENCRANTZ
Actually, I was your childhood friend, he was your childhood enemy.

GUILDENSTERN
But I was a very friendly enemy! And he was a very enemious friend!

ROSENCRANTZ
There's no such word as enemious.

GUILDENSTERN
There is now. I just said it. Huzzah.

HAMLET
I do remember you. You were the annoying ones.

ROSENCRANTZ
That's us!

GUILDENSTERN
See? He remembers!

HAMLET
Well – what do you want with me?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN *(in unison)*
We want to make you happy!

ROSENCRANTZ
Do a dance for him, Guildenstern.

GUILDENSTERN
No you do a dance for him, Rosencrantz.

ROSENCRANTZ
I'll bash you in the head.

GUILDENSTERN

And I will kick you in the shins.

ROSENCRANTZ

I always liked your mother.

(GUILDENSTERN attacks him.)

Stop! This is madness.

HAMLET

Really? I'm afraid I don't have time for you right now.

(They're suddenly right next to him, on either shoulder.)

GUILDENSTERN

Really? What are you up to?

ROSENCRANTZ

Schemes?

GUILDENSTERN

Plans?

ROSENCRANTZ

Scheming plans?

GUILDENSTERN

Planning schemes?

ROSENCRANTZ

Planning scheming plans?

GUILDENSTERN

Scheming planning schemes?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN *(in unison)*

Scheming planning scheming plans?
Planning scheming planning scheming plans?

HAMLET

Shut up!

(They put their hands over the mouths.)

Who sent you?

GUILDENSTERN

The king. Whoops. I didn't mean to say that. I mean no one.

HAMLET

Well tell the king that I'm insane now. And he's no king. My father was the king. Until he was run over by a stampede of wildebeests.

ROSENCRANTZ

This sounds familiar, my lord.

GUILDENSTERN

Indeed it does.

HAMLET

Or poisoned. I can't remember which. If there was only some dramatic way to confront him.

ROSENCRANTZ

You see, that's your problem, Hamlet, right there:

GUILDENSTERN

Confrontation. We have a saying:

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN *(in unison)*

Who cares?

(They launch into a song)

ROSENCRANTZ *(singing)*

Your father's dead and your Mom's a fox

GUILDERSTERN *(singing)*

Who cares?

ROSENCRANTZ *(singing)*

Your girlfriend's dumb as a box of rocks

GUILDERSTERN *(singing)*

Who cares?

HAMLET

I don't know, guys. It just doesn't seem –

(They intercept him trying to walk away.)

GUILDENSTERN *(singing)*

Your uncle's king and he's not too nice

ROSENCRANTZ *(singing)*

Who cares?

GUILDENSTERN *(singing)*

Your dinner consists of a bunch of mice
(GUILDENSTERN grabs a mouse and takes a bite.)

ROSENCRANTZ *(singing)*
Who cares?

HAMLET
You are making a good point.

ROSENCRANTZ *(singing)*
You burned your face and your friend's too blame

GUILDENSTERN *(singing)*
Who cares?

HAMLET *(singing)*
The prince has finally gone insane

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN *(singing)*
Who cares?

ALL THREE
Who cares?
Who cares?
Who-ooo—oo cares!
(ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN bow.)

ROSENCRANTZ
Listen – let's go off someplace nice, like…

GUILDENSTERN
England.

ROSENCRANTZ
They have muffins!

HAMLET
You know what? Let me just take care of something around here and then I'll want to leave the country.

GUILDERNSTERN
We are all ears!

ROSENCRANTZ
And noses!

GUILDERSTERN

I'm sorry. He's stupid.

ROSENCRANTZ

You're stupid.

HAMLET

I'll catch up with you later. Get out of here.

GUILDENSTERN

We can't wait, and remember:

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Who cares?

(They scamper off.)

HAMLET

If only I had some kind of dramatic inspiration right now.

(A HERALD blows a trumpet.)

HERALD

Make way! Make way! The dramatically inspiring Players are here!

(The PLAYERS enter. They are quite silly and probably should have at least one hippo amongst them.)

HEAD PLAYER

Citizens of Denmark! I am here to present to you the most brilliantest, most amazingacious, most stupendously incredible group of actors your puny nation has ever seen!

(An ACTOR runs up and bows. He's quite silly. If he were an animal, he would be a bird.)

Behold the actor Crookinghall. The finest dramatic actor the world has ever seen. Watch! Watch as he performs the role of Priam from Eurpidies' smash hit, "Hecuba!"

ACTOR

Hecuba! Hecuuuubaaaa! Hecuba Hecuba Hecuba Hecuba! Oh oh oh oh oh oh!
Aaaaaaaaaggrhghgghg!

(He stabs himself.)

Acccck! I'm killing myself! I'm killing myself now! It hurts a lot!

(He stabs himself again.)

Oh so much! Why do I keep on stabbing myself!? Why?!

(stab stab stab)

Hecuuuuu-baaa!

(he gets up, spins around, then dies again.)

Now I'm dead.

POLONIUS *(entering)*

That was quite wonderful.

HEAD PLAYER
Thank you my lord. Perhaps we could perform a play for the new king?

POLONIUS
Great idea. We could use some entertainment around here. Things have been awfully dreary since the last king died mysteriously and the new king was crowned and then took the last king's wife in a suspicious manner.

HEAD PLAYER
Behold! Esmerelda! The most comically gifted actress ever to perform!
(ESMERELDA (played by a boy) enters.)
By the way, I should mention that she's actually a boy because we have a lot of issues regarding women on the stage, but no problems whatsoever with cross-dressing.

ESMERELDA
Oh! Oh! I am in love with a knight!

POLONIUS
Yes yes that was very funny stop that. Get out of here. We'll employ you later.

HEAD PLAYER
Wonderful! Come Dramatically Inspiring Players!
(The PLAYERS gather their things and exit quickly.)

POLONIUS
Ah, Hamlet, it's good to see you up and moving around again.

HAMLET *(aside to the audience)*
This devil serves my uncle. I'll pretend to be crazy just to throw him off.
(HAMLET puts on a silly face.)
Do I know you?

POLONIUS
Know me? Why, I'm Polonius!

HAMLET
Bolognius?

POLONIUS
No. Polonius. With a P.

HAMLET
My name is Ham. And you are Bologna.

POLONIUS *(aside, to the audience)*

He's gone mad!

(HAMLET launches into the "I am crazy" song.)

HAMLET *(singing)*

Mad sir mad sir you think me mad sir?
No sir no sir just kind of bad sir?
You think I am craaa-zee?
You're right I am craaa-zeee

POLONIUS

It cannot be true!

HAMLET *(singing)*

Up is down and left is right
Fish is fowl and black is white
But there's one thing I know more than you
Watermelon pop tarts muffin shoe!

(a bunch of VILLAGERS pop up)

VILLAGERS *(singing)*

Watermelon pop tarts muffin shoe!

(HAMLET grabs POLONIUS and begins dancing with him aggressively.)

HAMLET *(singing)*

Ohhhhhhh
There's a frog in the air there's a song in my hair
And I'm crazy crazy crazy crazy!
Yes I'm crazy crazy crazy crazy!

POLONIUS *(talking)*

The man's crazy!

HAMLET

You sell fish and I sell blue
Watermelon pop tarts muffin shoe!

VILLAGERS *(singing)*

Watermelon pop tarts muffin shoe!

(They all bow and clap for HAMLET.)

POLONIUS

Are you done, my prince?

HAMLET

Done? No, sir, my father is done. My mother is well-done. Ba-doom ching.

VILLAGER 2

That was clever!

HAMLET

Don't you have something to do?

VILLAGER 2

I do!

HAMLET

So get to it.

VILLAGER 2

Okay!

(The VILLAGERS scamper off.)

POLONIUS

Perhaps I could be of some assistance.

HAMLET

Oh you just might. I could use some fish.

POLONIUS

Some fish?

HAMLET

They have scales. They live in water. I'm not sure if they ever sleep.

POLONIUS

I believe they do sleep.

HAMLET

Well this fish never sleeps, old man. This fish never sleeps. Got it?

POLONIUS

Um… The reason I wanted to talk to you is I was wondering about your intentions towards my daughter.

HAMLET

And which daughter would that be?

POLONIUS

Ophelia.

HAMLET

Is she the pig?

POLONIUS

No she's a girl.

HAMLET

I could have sworn she was a pig. With a bonnet or something. Maybe a bow in her hair. Pigs don't have hair.

POLONIUS

She's not a pig.

HAMLET

There's a lot of pigs talking these days. Strange days.

POLONIUS

But do you still like her?

HAMLET

If she were a side of bacon, I would love her very much. If she were a ham steak, she would please my middle, and if she was just hooves and snouts, I would have to spit her out.

POLONIUS

Are you saying she's fat?

HAMLET

My dear man, I never say anything twice. It makes people wonder. Now get out of here and leave me to my musings.

POLONIUS

I will, my prince.

HAMLET

Good. Get. Go. Come on now. Move it. Go.

(POLONIUS scampers off.)

If only there was someone I could confide in.

(HORATIO, dressed as a large, talking sword, enters. (Think Mrs. Potts if Mrs. Potts were a sword instead of a pot.) He also has a British accent.)

HORATIO

Does someone need a friend?

HAMLET

What kind of strange creature are you?

HORATIO

Allow me to introduce myself.

HAMLET

No.

(Pause)

HORATIO

Well I can't even tell you my name if I can't introduce myself.

HAMLET

Fine, I'll allow you to introduce yourself.

HORATIO

I am Horatio, the blade. I used to be a man, sir, but an evil witch cursed me, and now, I walk the earth as a talking sword. I fear no man except the rain. May I be of assistance?

HAMLET

You're a talking sword?

HORATIO

It appears so.

HAMLET

I may have need of you.

(HAMLET puts his arm around HORATIO and is cut.)

Ow.

HORATIO

I am sharp, sir.

HAMLET

You must have a difficult time on dates.

HORATIO

Most end in tragedy. Well, the good ones.

HAMLET

Very well, Horatio, I will call upon you when I need you.

HORATIO

Don't you need me now, sir?

HAMLET

Can't think of why.

HORATIO

Aren't we planning on killing the king? I'm very good at killing. Even though I should be a poet instead of a soldier, oh the irony of that witches' curse, if only –

HAMLET

I'll call you when I need you. Get out.

HORATIO

Very well.

(He bows, hitting HAMLET with the point of his blade.)

HAMLET

Ow!

HORATIO

Sorry about that.

(He scampers off.)

HAMLET

Finally some alone time so I can talk to myself.

(VILLAGER 5 comes back.)

VILLAGER 5

Prince Hamlet, may I –

HAMLET *(sticking out his tongue)*

Aaaaah I'm crazy!

VILLAGER 5

Help!

(VILLAGER 5 runs.)

HAMLET

Well. All this pretending to be crazy is getting on my nerves. I must have the truth of it. Did my Uncle really set up that wildebeest stampede? How can I be sure? If only there was some way to know it for certain.

(The GHOST enters, to stirring music. The GHOST is now blue and has more than a passing resemblance to the genie from Aladdin.)

GHOST

Hamm—letttt.

HAMLET

Father?

GHOST

What do you need a road map?

(The GHOST produces a road map and assumes the role of a tourist, probably with a Minnesotan accent.)
`Um… yeah could you tell me the best way to revenge?'
`Oh yeah sure – you take a right over there at the castle and a left at the hot dog stand and go straight to STABBING THE GUY.'
(back to normal voice)
Wattarya stoopid?

HAMLET
Well, no I just –

GHOST *(three stooges)*
`Wise guy, eh? Wise guy."
(He tries to poke HAMLET in the eyes.)
Come here, you. Come here. I got something to say to you.

HAMLET
Maybe you're just a spirit sent to confuse me.

GHOST
Are you calling me a liar? Youuuuuu dirty rat. I outta waste you right here and now.

HAMLET
But how can I be sure?

GHOST *(singing a deodorant jingle)*
Confidant, dry, and secure! When you're Sure!

HAMLET
What?

GHOST
Okay, let me recreate the scene for you – I'm walking along minding my own business when I heard it – my uncle
(becomes CLAUDIUS, who now sounds a lot like an evil lion)
`Kill him, my wildebeests.'
(back to himself)
Stroll stroll stroll – and the wildebeests go
(funny wildebeest voice)
`There's a sale at Macy's! Seventy percent off! Seventy percent off!'
`This is gonna be a STAMPEDE!'
(acts this out with his hands)
Here comes the king – stroll stroll – wildebeests coming – Macy's Macy's Macy's – the king – stroll stroll – AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHH!
(suddenly serious)
Son, do you know what it feels like to have a hundred and one wildebeests step on your head?

HAMLET

No.

GHOST

It feels like this!

(THE GHOST starts bopping him on the head.)

HAMLET

Ow ow ow ow!

GHOST

I didn't want to have to do that. But it was for your own good.

HAMLET

But for a second there I thought that Claudius poured poison in your ear?

GHOST

Yeah, he did that too.

HAMLET

Before or after the stampede?

GHOST

About the same time. He's very thorough, my brother. He gets that from our Dad, who once hunted down a gazelle until it died of old age. Ba-doom ching! Thank you, thank you, I'll be here all week! Catch me June 23rd at Ceasar's Palace! I'll be the one eating the Christians they throw in the Coliseum! Was that joke too soon? Too soon.

HAMLET

I have a lot to think about.

GHOST

Think about this: Kill.

(Somewhere a bell chimes.)

Ack! Gotta go! I'm late for a massage.

HAMLET

I thought you were in the bad place?

GHOST

It's shiatsu. Ha! Hurts like the bejeesus. And the masseuse is a real crab. Seriously, an actual crab. Ouch ouch ouch. Remember what I said Hamlet.

(The GHOST leaves.)

HAMLET

I never liked my Dad.

GHOST *(off-stage)*

I heard that!

HAMLET

Well – what to do now? I suppose I could talk to myself some more. That could help. If only there was some way to be more certain that just having my father's spirit walk the earth and tell me flat-out that my uncle did it.

(one of the PLAYERS enters.)

Wait a minute.

PLAYER

Hey I left a prop here somewhere? I'm supposed to keep track of props. I always lose them.

HAMLET

You've just give me an idea.

PLAYER

It is about props? Cause that's what I'm looking for.

HAMLET

No – my friend – no – Would you do me the honor of rounding up your compatriots? I have a show for the king in mind.

PLAYER

Um… hey aren't you crazy Prince Hamlet?

HAMLET

Yes I am.

PLAYER

You're kind of insane, right?

HAMLET

That makes me perfect for the theatre.

PLAYER

You're right. I'll go get my friends.

(He dashes off. Music begins. HAMLET launches into an act-ending number, "The play's the thing.")

HAMLET *(singing, slow and powerful at first)*

I always wanted to be a playwright
To write the plays and some fans
And now it's time to be a playwright

To make my uncle wet his pants
(he turns it into a soft shoe number)
The play's the thing!
Da da da da da da da da!
The plays' the thing!
Da da da da da da da da!
To catch the king!
Da da da da da da da da!
And now I sing
Da da da da da da da da!

THE PLAY'S THE THIIIIIIIING!
(He bows.)

(Lights down. End of act one.)

Act Two

(Perhaps some booming music. CHIP and JESSIE are now dressed like sports coaches. Perhaps they speak into echoing microphones.)

CHIP *(in the dark)*

Are you ready for Act Three?

JESSIE *(overlapping, in the dark)*

Are you ready for Act Three?

CHIP *(in the dark)*

In life there are no second acts!

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

Or third acts!

CHIP *(in the dark)*

So you need to be prepared –

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

And hydrated!

CHIP *(in the dark)*

Witness: Hamlet Act Three!

JESSIE *(in the dark)*

Brought to you by Gatorade.

CHIP *(in the dark)*

And also Nike because they're kind of the same company.

(Lights up. Hamlet enters, perhaps wearing underarmour, holding a tennis racket. Claudius is opposite him, also with tennis racket. They play in slow motion as JESSIE and CHIP narrate.)

CHIP

In the stone age, men drank water. During physical exertion the body loses electrolytes –

JESSIE

Carbohydrates –

CHIP

Vitamins –

JESSIE

Nutrients.

CHIP

These need to be replaced to maintain maximum performance.

(HAMLET grunts and smashes a "winner" past CLAUDIUS.)

CLAUDIUS

That was a crazy shot.

HAMLET

Was it, father? Or was it just pretending to be a crazy shot?

CLAUDIUS

You think you can beat me, boy?

(He drinks a bottle of water.)

HAMLET

It's not about winning or losing. It's about the climb.

(He takes a bottle of Gatorade and drinks some of it, then pours some of it on his head.)

Yeah.

CLAUDIUS

What?

HAMLET

My serve. Forty. Love. Match. Point.

(stirring music. He goes into slow motion again. CHIP and JESSIE narrate.)

CHIP

The strain of battle.

JESSIE

Muscles pumping.

CHIP

Lactic acid build – up.

JESSIE

It is your time.

CHIP

Your time.

JESSIE

To act.

(HAMLET serves the ball – the forces of it knocks CLAUDIUS down. HAMLET points up to God, to acknowledge that all his awesomeness comes from the clouds, and strides in slow motion to CLAUDIUS, holding his tennis racket like a sword. He's about to chop him down, when CLAUDIUS also points up. HAMLET stops, then turns away.)

HAMLET *(aside)*
Not when he's acknowledging that all his power comes from above. Not now. Not now.

CLAUDIUS
Good match, Hamlet. I have to say, drinking only water, I found myself growing weaker towards the end of the match – perhaps I didn't have enough electrolytes and was building up lactic acid.

HAMLET
Water is stupid, Claudius. Just like you. And I'm also kind of crazy. Just so you know.

CLAUDIUS
I'm a little intimidated by you, I have to admit.

HAMLET
I won this match before it even started. With my impressive stretching. You want to watch?

CLAUDIUS
I have to go.

(CLAUDIUS exits.)

(HAMLET goes back to his room.)

CHIP
Just remember –

JESSIE
There is someone out there outworking you right now –

CHIP
Getting stronger –

JESSIE
Getting better –

CHIP
So that when you match up again – they'll beat you.

JESSIE
And also, after a match, you can replace lost hydration with Gatorade finisher.

CHIP

It's blue. Which means it's awesome.

(HAMLET takes a drink. Then is about to pour some on his head again.)

JESSIE

Don't pour it on your head, though.

CHIP

That would be a waste of Gatorade finisher. Although you may sweat it out later.

(The PLAYERS enter, in some combination of athletic gear and costumes.)

JESSIE

Before the game –

CHIP

Before the performance –

JESSIE

Prepare –

CHIP

For domination.

(HAMLET talks to his actors.)

HAMLET

All right men. Let's take a moment before the performance. You might get nervous out there. You might tremble and think, `can I do it?' And my answer to you, friends, is yes, you can –

(he stops. Then walks towards one of his players.)

What is this?

(he rips a water bottle from the Players' hand.)

PLAYER

Water?

HAMLET

Water? You're drinking water?

PLAYER

Well I just… I just… I get thirsty… and then I need –

HAMLET

This is disgusting!

(he furiously tosses the water bottle away.)

When you're in a pressure situation, do you want water running through your veins? Do you want water, with its measly zero calories, with its complete lack of sugar and artificial coloring? I say no! I say no more water! Ever! We must be at the peak of performance, men! We must stand upon the stage and shout out truth to the world, and not, I repeat, NOT, get dehydrated!

Skipping Forward

PLAYER CLAUDIUS

Well, I'm back from my trip clubbing baby seals. Look, I've made you a necklace out of their cute little noses. Also, have I mentioned that I am afraid of the dark, that dogs hate me, and that I pushed a little old lady down while she tried to cross the street? In addition, a six-year old girl beat me at armwrestling earlier. Truly, I am beneath scum. I am less than a man, more like an ant in man's clothing.

HAMLET

Ha ha ha! This is good writing!

PLAYER GERTRUDE

Well, I love you because I am stupid and frail and a woman.

HAMLET

True! That's true!

PLAYER CLAUDIUS

Give me some sugar.

PLAYER GERTRUDE

Ooh! Claudius! Not here! Not with my husband in the next room.

PLAYER CLAUDIUS

Ooh, I think I have a little something something for your husband. Moo ah ha ha ha! I can't challenge him in physical combat since I am pathetic and weak, but I have the next best thing:

(He takes a Powerade bottle labeled "POISON XXXX".)

HAMLET

Oh this is getting good! I wonder what's going to happen!

CLAUDIUS

This play is pretty awful.

HAMLET

Let's watch!

(the PLAYER CLAUDIUS sneaks up to the sleeping PLAYER KING and pours the poison into his ear. PLAYER KING dies horribly.)

PLAYER KING

Aarrhgghghgghghghghg!

CLAUDIUS

You know, that's just gross.

(He storms out.)

GERTRUDE

Hamlet. That was a terrible play.
(she leaves.)

HAMLET

You just didn't understand the symbolism!
(he turns to the actors.)
High fives everyone.
(The lights change. CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE are in a room alone.)

CLAUDIUS

I'm going to be sick.

GERTRUDE

Have you tried Gatorade Tyrant? It's for when you need extra carbohydrates to –

CLAUDIUS

Don't speak to me of sports drinks, woman! Can't you see that he's on to us?

GERTRUDE

It could have been a coincidence?

CLAUDIUS

A coincidence?! On the very day the king died, I lost an armwrestling match to a six year-old girl, and he just *happens* to write that into the play? No! That girl talked! I'm going to pour boiling oil on her. And how did he know about the baby seal nose necklace?

GERTRUDE

I might have mentioned it.

CLAUDIUS

We've got to kill him. Polonius, get in here!
(POLONIUS is there in a heartbeat.)

POLONIUS

Yes, your evilness?

CLAUDIUS

Only call me that in private.

GERTRUDE

Don't worry, darling. Your evilness turns me on.

CLAUDIUS

Really?

POLONIUS

Is there something you want, your Majesty?

CLAUDIUS

My stepson Hamlet is dangerously insane. I want you to watch him, then kill him. Or kill him, then watch him. Whichever. Use your best judgment.

POLONIUS

Got it, your vileness.

(He exits.)

GERTRUDE

He's coming! Get out of here Claudius!

CLAUDIUS

Done.

(He flees.)

GERTRUDE

Maybe I can do some quick aerobic exercise to improve my conditioning. Perhaps water will be sufficient for my rehydration needs.

(She begins to exercise as HAMLET enters.)

HAMLET

Mother.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet.

HAMLET

Didn't you like my play?

GERTRUDE

I'm not going to lie to you: That play was terrible.

HAMLET

Too close to home?

GERTRUDE

You presume too much. Your new father wishes to play you in a game of tennis.

HAMLET

I have already defeated Claudius in tennis. A winner doesn't fear the rematch. Not when I have Gatorade drinks to increase my power level.

GERTRUDE

Your new father enjoys Powerade. He thinks it gives him a special boost.

HAMLET

Ha! I say ha again! Mom. How can you be with him? Don't you remember Dad?

(The GHOST enters, opposite, dressed for basketball. He is defended by two other basketball playing GHOSTS , (2 and 3). The GHOST is pure awesomeness.)

Last season he averaged twenty-nine points per game.

(GHOST dunks on GHOST 2 and 3.)

Eleven point six rebounds. I remember watching him. The grace. The beauty. The power. Also his ability to flop and draw bogus charging calls on his opponents.

(a bogus charging foul is called on GHOST 2. He protests in slow motion.)

And then there is Claudius. Your new husband. The Jeremy to his Jason Giambi. The Taylor to his Blake Griffin.

(CLAUDIUS enters, completely inept. Also in slow motion. He is posterized by GHOST 2. Perhaps someone runs out a tiny stepladder to help with the slow-motion posterizing.)

Sad. So so sad.

(Lights down on the basketball game.)

GERTRUDE

What did you want me to do, son?

HAMLET

Maybe not marry my uncle two days after my father died?

GERTRUDE

I saw a chance. I took it. Maybe you should do the same.

HAMLET

Maybe I should.

(Dramatic pause.)

GERTRUDE

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go back to blasting my abs. Just because I'm an older woman doesn't mean I don't like exercise, and as a result I choose new Gatorade Cougar*, which rehydrates and rejuvenates.

*(*This can be called Gatorade Mature, if necessary)*

HAMLET

Does that come in Mountain Ice flavor?

GERTRUDE

It does. And I like it that way.

HAMLET

Just like a chick.

(HAMLET leaves. Lights down on Gertrude.)

(Lights up on CLAUDIUS, practicing his free throws in patnomime. After each "made" basket, he points up to the sky to give thanks.)

(HAMLET watches.)

HAMLET

I should do it now. I know the truth. He reacted badly to my play. But then again, maybe the play was just bad. No, it was him, he saw the truth, and then he left. Time to die, uncle. Oh wait, what's he doing? He's giving props to God? Again? It can't be! If I kill him while he's giving props, then he'll go straight up to heaven. I know that doesn't make a lot of sense, considering that he murdered his own brother, but giving props is weird like that. I'll wait. Soon, my uncle. Soon, and when you least expect it, I will be slowly, slowly gaining on you.

(CLAUDIUS finishes his last shot.)

CLAUDIUS

Time to hit the showers.

HAMLET

Except I'm not going in there.

(POLONIUS is sneaking in.)

POLONIUS *(talking to himself)*

It's a good thing Hamlet won't notice me talking to myself over here. I used to think he might be a good match for my daughter, but after that play, I don't think he's got a lot of earning potential. And also the king wants him dead. So that's probably not a good sign either. I'll just hide over here.

(he hides)

HAMLET

I should have finished him, just like my Gatorade finisher which replenishes lost electrolytes and tastes great. It comes in several flavors: berry blast, mountain ice, and cherry swamp. I prefer – wait? I hear something.

(He stabs backward his tennis racket (or perhaps knocks POLONIUS on the head with it))

POLONIUS

Aaaacck! I'm slain!

(he dies.)

HAMLET

Polonius? Hey. Are you all right?

(POLONIUS is dead.)

Dead? Whoops.

CHIP

In the heat of battle you don't have time for second thoughts.

JESSIE

You act. React.

CHIP

Primal.

HAMLET

Well – You shouldn't have been in my room. The room of a champion. Because if you can't be a champion, you should probably just be killed.

(HAMLET throws the curtain over POLONIUS. He exits to GERTRUDE's room.)

(HAMLET has a moment alone.)

HAMLET

To do it… or not to do it… that is the question.

(Dramatic pause.)

Just. Do it.

(Lights down on him.)

CHIP *(in a hip, cool voice)*

And now… Hamlet, Act Four.

JESSIE *(in a flirty voice)*

Brought to you… by MTV.

(Lights up on JESSIE, looking fantastic.)

Hey everyone! How's it going out there!?

CHIP

Awesome!

JESSIE

We got a show for you – you thought Teen Mom was crazy –

CHIP

Cra-zeee!

JESSIE

Hamlet Act Four is even more off the hook, yo.

CHIP

Indeed.

(short pause)

I mean, word. So check this: Hamlet and his bud, Horatio –

JESSIE

Who's Horatio?

CHIP

We haven't seen him much yet cause he's not really all that important. But Hamlet and his bud Horatio are like, so bummed his Dad died and his Uncle married his Mom –

JESSIE

Sick!

CHIP

I know! Messed up, yo. So his ladyfriend, Ophelia, she's like, oh no, does my baby love me, blah blah blah you know how the ladies is –

JESSIE

Word!

CHIP

So Hamlet's like, get yo'self to a nunnery – bam!

JESSIE

Oh no he didn't!

CHIP

And so anyway, the ghost comes down, yo, I was murdered, kill that goon, and Hamlet's like, heck yes, son, and then he doesn't do anything for a while, and then, bam, he kills Ophelia's Dad. For no reason.

JESSIE

Cause that's how Hamlet rolls.

CHIP

You best check yourself! Or Hamlet's gonna go medieval on ya!

JESSIE

Unless he's actually supposed to kill you, in which case, he'll probably equivocate for a while.

CHIP

What?

JESSIE

Equivocate.

CHIP

What?

JESSIE

It's a word. It means to delay. Kind of like temporize.

CHIP

Are you studying for the SAT again?

JESSIE

I'm thirty-two years old.
(snaps back into it)
But I act like a teenager, woo! All right, let's get this party started!
(Lights up on HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN on a boat.)

ROSENCRANTZ

Wooooo!

GUILDENSTERN

Boat party!

ROSENCRANTZ

Boat party!

GUILDENSTERN

Woooo!
(HAMLET talks to the audience, reality show confessional-style.)

HAMLET

So I'm stuck on a boat to England with these two morons. I didn't even want to go. But now my uncle is like, you killed Polonius, go to London. So like, whatever, fine, I'll go. And he's like, by the way, take these guys with you. Fine. No prob.

ROSENCRANTZ

Hamlet!!!

GUILDENSTERN

Party time party time party time!
(he falls over.)

ROSENCRANTZ

Dude!
(tries to lift GUILDENSTERN up.)

GUILDENSTERN

Don't touch me, dude!

ROSENCRANTZ

You just totally wiped out!

GUILDERSTERN

What did you just say to me? I will knock you out, son!

ROSENCRANTZ

Bring it!

(They start fighting, then both pass out. HAMLET speaks to the camera again.)

HAMLET

So then I checked this letter they were sending to the King of England. It says, "Yo King of England – Hamlet is crazy. Kill him. XX. King Claud." So that's not cool. These are my buds – sending my buds to have me axed. They prolly didn't know what was in the letter I guess. Not their fault. So I'm just gonna change this to "Yo King of England - Rosencrantz and Guildenstern is crazy. Kill them. XX. King Claud." Moral of the story: Don't mess with Hamlet. Boo-ya.

(HAMLET exits as the lights change to OPHELIA.)

OPHELIA *(in the confessional)*

So it's been kind of a tough week. My boyfriend went totally nuts and started thinking he was a playwright, which was lame. And then he stopped showering. Which was a real problem. And then I had a break-out. Luckily, I've got new extra-strength Clearasil, which opens my pores and helps clean my skin at the same time. In just two days time, no new breakouts. Awesome. Thanks, Clearasil! Oh yeah, and then my boyfriend stabbed and killed my Dad. Not cool. So now what am I gonna do?

(CLAUDIUS enters.)

CLAUDIUS

What's up?

OPHELIA

Your majesty.

CLAUDIUS

No don't play me like that. You can just call me your highness.

OPHELIA

Sorry, your highness. I'm actually having some alone time.

CLAUDIUS

Cool. Cool.

OPHELIA

So can I please keep going?

CLAUDIUS

I ain't stopping ya.

OPHELIA

You're kinda like right there.

CLAUDIUS

So? I'm the king. I be where I be. That's how things get done in Denmark.

OPHELIA

All right um… so I'm sad now.

CLAUDIUS

You know what I do when I'm sad, yo?

OPHELIA

What?

CLAUDIUS

I think really hard about throwing myself into a river. Just a suggestion.

OPHELIA

But I can't swim.

CLAUDIUS

Exactly.

OPHELIA

But I'd probably drown.

CLAUDIUS

Yup.

OPHELIA

So you want me to kill myself?

CLAUDIUS

What? Don't be tripping. Just go jump in a river. And see if you float. If you float, come on back, we'll talk. If you drown, then, you know – what are you really missing out on? Your father got axed, your boyfriend's dead –

OPHELIA

Hamlet? He's dead?

CLAUDIUS

Oh yeah. He be serious dead. I'm big on justice. But hey – I wanted to tell you – your skin looks awesome.

OPHELIA

Thanks.

CLAUDIUS

What's your secret?

OPHELIA

Clearasil Ultra. It's gentle and powerful.

CLAUDIUS

Maybe I could use some.

OPHELIA

You know what – you can try new Clearasil Old Man Cleanser – it really helps to rub out liver spots, dark circles, and evil old man smell. Try it today.

CLAUDIUS

Thanks, I will. And remember what I said about killing yourself: no shame in it. Prolly a good idea. Nobody likes you. Sweet, sweet arms of death. Do it. All right I'm gonna peace out.

(He leaves. OPHELIA looks at the camera.)

OPHELIA

He thinks he's all that cause he's king and all. I'll show him.

(She exits.)

CHIP

All right: awesome!

JESSIE

Remember: depression hurts.

CHIP

And check out Jersey Shore, airing Sunday nights at ten p.m. MTV: Profiting from other people's misery. And remember: if you're loud and stupid, we have a show for you. And now a word from some of the sponsors that make our network great.

(Lights up on the graveyard. HAMLET enters in disguise, with the GRAVEDIGGER, who sounds suspiciously like a pirate.)

(Somewhere, a bell tolls.)

HAMLET

What are you doing there?

Skipping Forward

(he pokes his fingers into the eye-sockets.)
Hey check this out.
(He puts the skull on his hand like a finger puppet and moves the jaw to speak.)
`Hey I'm Yorick. Somebody hit me in the face with a bat!'

GRAVEDIGGER

You're a funny one.

HAMLET

No, this guy – this guy right here – he's still smiling. Ha!
(He tosses the skull.)

CHIP

And thus begins the promo for…

JESSIE

Ultra-violent video game Three! Bloodbath Massacre Storm of the Future!

CHIP

The legions of the dead will rise –
(Several POST-APOCALYPTIC ZOMBIES enter, holding skulls.)

JESSIE

You are a space marine in the year 2610.
(The GRAVEDIGGER takes out a pulse rifle and hands it to HAMLET. They both put on helmets and move in slow motion, firing at the zombies.)

CHIP

The game the New York Times labeled, "sick, disgusting, and damaging to the adolescent mind"

JESSIE

From the Los Angeles Times: "We have gone too far. We have gone too far."

CHIP

And from Gamemaster Online: "Awesome."

JESSIE

The world has crumbled. The dead have risen. Sea levels have risen nineteen inches. And you and your team of genetically engineered space marines are the only thing standing between civilization and –

CHIP

And the Bloodbath Massacre Storm of the Future!

GRAVEDIGGER

There's too many of them!

HAMLET

Cover me!

GRAVEDIGGER

I can't!

HAMLET

Cover me, fool!

(HAMLET charges the zombies, perhaps doing a somersault and screaming at the same time. The zombies catch him and eat his brain.)

CHIP

And most awesome – when you die –

JESSIE

Because you will die –

CHIP

You get to become a space zombie and kill your friends.

JESSIE

Yes!

CHIP

Bloodbath Massacre Storm of the Future is not intended for children and may cause unpleasant side effects, we are not responsible for seizures, mental conditions, or physical deteroriation.

JESSIE

Coming soon!

(The lights change back to the graveyard scene.)

GRAVEDIGGER

You know, you shouldn't play with skulls, it's disrespectful.

HAMLET

Sor-ree.

(HAMLET steps into the confessional.)

I felt pretty bad about playing with the dead guy's skull. But I mean, come on, he's dead. Who cares? And who is the gravedigger guy to tell me what to do? I'm the prince. Plus, I'm insane now, so I'm not legally responsible for any of my actions, which rocks. And okay, I guess I should have killed Claudius like two acts ago, but I'm having too much fun. Being crazy is awesome, yo. Don't mess with me.

(HAMLET walks back into the scene.)

So who's the grave for, anyway?

GRAVEDIGGER

Some girlfriend of Prince Hamlet's. Apparently she threw herself into the river after he went crazy and killed her Dad.

(HAMLET pauses for a moment, then steps back into the confessional.)

HAMLET *(dissolving in tears)*

Aasshgghghgghghgh… why?! Why?!

(He starts coughing and sniffling and cannot continue)

Life isn't fair, man!

(He walks back to the GRAVEDIGGER.)

Dude.

GRAVEDIGGER

Here they come now.

(CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE enter. Two SERVANTS carry a coffin.)

CLAUDIUS

Put it down over there.

SERVANT 1

You're not the boss of me.

CLAUDIUS

Servant 2, kill Servant 1.

SERVANT 2

Yes sir. Thank you sir.

(SERVANT 2 smacks SERVANT 1 in the head and he dies.)

(SERVANT 2 steps into the confessional.)

SERVANT 2

At first I was like, what? Kill Servant 1? But he's my best friend. Me and Servant 1 are tight, you know? But then I was like, pshh, whatever. So I killed him. What? Don't judge me.

(He steps out as CLAUDIUS steps in.)

CLAUDIUS

Look, I'm paid to make quick decisions, right? I mean, frankly, this guy's name was Servant 1. And he's gonna talk back to me? No sir. No sir. That ain't gonna happen in my kingdom, know what I'm saying? I can't have that. Plus, I hadn't killed anybody for a while, so I was getting rusty.

(He steps out as GERTRUDE steps in.)

GERTRUDE

What was that about? If he thinks that just killing random people is going to make me fall in love with him again, he's only a little bit right about that.

(She steps back into the scene.)

CLAUDIUS

It's a sad day here today. This young lady was the daughter of my dear friend, Polonius, and…

(SERVANT 1 gets up.)

SERVANT 1

Man that hurt. Why you gotta hit me in the head like that?

CLAUDIUS

We're in the middle of something.

SERVANT 1

So?

CLAUDIUS

Servant 2?

SERVANT 2

Yes sir, thank you sir.

(SERVANT 2 smacks SERVANT 1 again, who dies again.)

CLAUDIUS

Is he dead this time?

SERVANT 2

I got him good, your majesty.

CLAUDIUS

But like, check, okay?

(SERVANT 2 checks.)

SERVANT 2

He's totally dead.

CLAUDIUS

If he's not dead, I'm gonna have him kill you next time.

(SERVANT 2 smacks SERVANT 1 in the head again, just to make sure.)

Gertrude, kill Servant 2.

SERVANT 2

Oh come on!

GERTRUDE

I'm the queen!

CLAUDIUS *(taking GERTRUDE aside)*

Can I talk to you a second?

GERTRUDE

What?

CLAUDIUS

What was that about?

GERTRUDE

I'm not killing Servant 2.

CLAUDIUS

If you disrespect me in front of the servants, pretty soon no one is going to listen to me.

GERTRUDE

I don't happen to think we should just kill servants just because they're slow about killing other servants.

CLAUDIUS

It doesn't matter what you think – we have to present a united front on this –

GERTRUDE

I don't agree with your kingly methods.

CLAUDIUS

I'm the villain, okay? Can you understand that? That means I need to kill random people for no reason whatsoever. That's what villains do. Hamlet has been out-villaining me for at least three acts now. He's killed like three random people and I haven't killed anyone.

GERTRUDE

I see your point.

CLAUDIUS

And as soon as you don't agree with me, whenever I order to have a servant killed, they're just going to run to you and ask you not to kill them. Then they get two messages. And that's not fair to our subjects.

GERTRUDE

You're right.

CLAUDIUS

I love you.

GERTRUDE

I love you too.

(They return to SERVANT 2.)
Servant 2, the King and I talked it over and –
(She smacks SERVANT 2 in the head and he dies.)

CLAUDIUS

Okay, then. Let's bury the chick.
(LAERTES enters.)

LAERTES

Yo, I'm back from Spring Break, what's goin' on?

CLAUDIUS

Um… Hamlet killed your Dad and then your sister killed herself because Hamlet killed your Dad.

LAERTES

Duuuuuuuude. Can I step into the confessional for a minute?
(LAERTES steps into the confessional and talks to the audience.)
Not. Cool.
(He steps back to CLAUDIUS.)

CLAUDIUS

Have no fear, though, because I have meted out justice upon Hamlet. I have had him killed off-stage.
(SERVANT 3 rushes in.)

SERVANT 3

Your majesty!

CLAUDIUS

Not now.

SERVANT 3

I have some news regarding Prince Hamlet!

CLAUDIUS

Did you hear me when I said not now?

SERVANT 3

But your majesty –

CLAUDIUS

What's your name?

SERVANT 3

Servant 3?

CLAUDIUS

Gertrude, kill Servant 3.

GERTRUDE

Gladly.

(She smacks SERVANT 3 in the head and he dies.)

CLAUDIUS

Now, as I was saying, it was so important to me that Hamlet was killed, that I made sure to entrust it to two incompetent followers, and had them do the killing off-stage. That way, I could be sure that he was dead and not have to go through all the tedium of confirming it with my own eyes. I mean, what could possibly go wrong with my plans?

LAERTES

Sounds good.

(SERVANT 4 runs in, yells out his line, and runs away without stopping.)

SERVANT 4

Hamlet killed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern and he's coming here right now!

CLAUDIUS

Wait, come back here!

(But SERVANT 4 is already gone.)

(SERVANT 4 steps into the confessional.)

SERVANT 4

I was in track in high school. No way I'm slowing down long enough for that fool to kill me. No way. Servant 4 forever.

(He leaves.)

LAERTES

This was your plan? This?! Hamlet lives and my sister and father are dead!

CLAUDIUS

We're trying to kill him.

LAERTES

Try harder!

CLAUDIUS

Look, you're upset right now, and I get that, but maybe there's a way you can get over your grief. How about this? Kill Hamlet.

GERTRUDE

Sweetheart, can I talk to you for a second?

CLAUDIUS

Challenge him to a duel, and kill him.

GERTRUDE

Darling.

CLAUDIUS

Hold on.
(They step away.)
What?

GERTRUDE

I'm not really comfortable with you killing my son.

CLAUDIUS

Okay.

GERTRUDE

So maybe you could not do that?

CLAUDIUS

Um… or maybe I could do that and you could shut up. How about that? Love you.
(He walks into the confessional.)
Women, man. Women. That's all I gotta say. Dang.
(He walks back to LAERTES.)
So?

LAERTES

All right.
(They shake hands.)

CLAUDIUS

Moo ah ha ha ha!
(no one else laughs evilly with him.)
Laertes. Come on.

LAERTES

I'm not really an evil character, I'm really just trying to get revenge for my Dad.

CLAUDIUS

Yeah, but… you're on the dark side now. You're expected to do the laugh.

LAERTES

Fine.

CLAUDIUS and LAERTES

Moo ah ha ha! Mooo ah ha ha ha ha!

(Lights down on them.)

CHIP

And that brings us to…

JESSIE

The stunning conclusion –

CHIP

Hamlet, Act Five!

JESSIE

Act Five!

CHIP

The Bloodbath! Everybody dies!

JESSIE

Brought to you by…

(she looks at a sheet of paper)

Um…

CHIP

What?

JESSIE

Ooh. Umm… maybe we should have checked this one out first.

(he looks at the sheet.)

CHIP

Brought to you by Carnival Cruise Lines… and Beaches Family Resort. Hmmm. Well… let's um… let's try it.

JESSIE

Okay. Hamlet Act Five, brought to you by Carnival Cruise Lines and Beaches Family Resort!

(Seagulls squawking. LAERTES, CLAUDIUS, and GERTRUDE enter, in beach attire.)

CLAUDIUS

It sure is nice to get away from Denmark.

GERTRUDE

You're telling me. That weather is terrible for my skin. Here, in the sun, the world looks a lot better.

CLAUDIUS

And so do you.

GERTRUDE

Oh Claudius. This second honeymoon has rekindled my love for you. Let's laugh.

CLAUDIUS

Wonderful. Simply wonderful.
(They laugh.)

GERTRUDE

You know what I enjoy about this place? You can't see any of the native poverty.

CLAUDIUS

I like how they built that wall. Reminds me of home. What say you, Laertes?

LAERTES

Well, I guess I'll check out the singles mixer later. The resort's not just for families –

CLAUDIUS

Ha ha. But it is acceptable for families.

GERTRUDE

Which is why we've been vacationing here for years. Oh I remember when we brought young prince Hamlet –

CLAUDIUS

I don't remember that –

GERTRUDE

That's because I was here with your brother, my first husband, who you killed and then replaced – but I think one way to heal old wounds is to come to a nice family resort and spend time on the beach.

LAERTES

Ding ding ding! Time out. It says here that Beaches Family Resort would prefer it if there were no mention of the word death in this act.

JESSIE

That's gonna be tough.

LAERTES

They're paying the bills.

GERTRUDE

That's because I was here with your brother, my first husband, who you encouraged to pass away, and then replaced – but I think the way to heal old wounds is to come to a nice family resort and spend time on the beach.

CLAUDIUS

Right. And then kill someone.

CHIP

Ding!

CLAUDIUS

And then move someone from this life into the next. Just like I always say: The best way to heal old wounds is to kill-remove- the person with the old wound. That way, it doesn't hurt any more.

GERTRUDE

So true.

CLAUDIUS

I'm just glad I've made the right financial decisions to be able to afford this vacation. Thanks, Charles Schwab.

LAERTES

And they've helped me make the right investments after my family passed away. The financial waters can get pretty choppy out there, and it's nice to have a financial advisor there to help. Thanks, Charles Schwab.

GERTRUDE

I love Charles Schwab.

CLAUDIUS

What do you mean by that?

GERTRUDE

He's been a lot of help with my… money.

CLAUDIUS

I don't want you talking to Charles Schwab.

GERTRUDE

I wasn't. It was just one time. Maybe two times.
(CLAUDIUS glares at her.)
What? My husband expired. It was a difficult time! I needed advice!

CLAUDIUS

I want him dead.

CHIP

Ding!

CLAUDIUS

Someone bring me the head of Charles Schwab! I want his head on a pike on top of the Beaches Family Resort! Let the children look upon it and wail in terror and despair as his blood drips upon their suntanned faces!

CHIP

Ding ding ding ding ding!

CLAUDIUS *(to CHIP)*

What?

(SERVANT 4 sprints in)

SERVANT 4

As you wish, sire.

(He sprints off.)

CHIP

Just to jump in here –

(heavy thud from off-stage.)

Beaches Family Resort does not condone murder –

JESSIE

But they do condone a good time!

GERTRUDE

Darling – please. I am one hundred percent faithful. I have never been unfaithful to anyone in my entire life –

LAERTES

Except your last husband –

GERTRUDE

Okay, all right, one time, I had my last husband shepherded into the great hereafter, that's it – but otherwise, one hundred percent faithful. Do you believe me? My financial advisor helped me with my investment portfolio, that's all.

CLAUDIUS

All right, I believe you.

(They hug. SERVANT 4 runs in with the severed head of Charles Schwab tied up in a bundle)

SERVANT 4

Here it is!

CLAUDIUS

Oh there you are! Listen: Don't kill Charles Schwab. He's a trusted financial advisor. Really helpful. Stand-up guy.

SERVANT 4 *(looking at the bundle in his hands)*

Um…

CLAUDIUS

Now what is that you have there?

SERVANT 4

It's a new uh… soccer ball… I guess… for the fun.

LAERTES

Is there no end to the fun at Beaches Family Resort?

SERVANT 4

Nope. No end to the fun. I'm gonna go kick this somewhere else then.
(He runs off.)

CLAUDIUS

I like that Servant 4.

GERTRUDE

Really the best of the first five or so. The others keep getting… their souls freed to join their Creator in the blessed abundance of heaven. Which is not unlike Beaches Family Resort.

CLAUDIUS

And now we wait… Our cruise takes off this evening and we shall meet Hamlet at the All-you-can-eat Buffet and Hawaiian-style Luau, which is surprisingly affordable and has options for the kids.

LAERTES

I like the macaroni and cheese buffet.

CLAUDIUS

After you have eaten your fill, we shall each order Mai Tais, which are made by the inestimable Chef Teodoro – they're really, really, wonderful – They've got those little umbrellas in them in case it rains a tiny amount in a very localized spot.

LAERTES

Is that when I challenge him to the shuffleboard duel?

CLAUDIUS

Indeed.

GERTRUDE
They have shuffleboard here too? I was hoping to listen to some of the entertaining singers. I've heard that some of them tried out for Broadway shows and almost got parts!

CLAUDIUS
Don't worry, my sweet. The moderately talented singers and dancers are also a part of my plan.

CHIP
Whoah whoah whoah! First of all – Carnival Cruise Lines hires the best singers and dancers out there.

JESSIE
They sure do! And people who have really great hearts!

CHIP
And second, they only hire the top chefs –

JESSIE
You would be amazed at how good the food is!

CHIP
People gain like twenty pounds on each trip.

JESSIE
But you can always work it off in one of three fully equipped fitness centers! That way you're bikini-ready in no time!

CHIP
And since a lot of the people are Europeans, that means the guys can be bikini-ready too!

JESSIE
Ewww.

CHIP
It's cool in Europe to wear a speedo. Especially if you're like sixty.

JESSIE
Double ewww.

CHIP
And hairy. And overweight.

JESSIE
Okay stop.

CHIP *(wistfully)*

Someday, that will be me.

JESSIE

Any-way-

LAERTES

What if Hamlet defeats me at Shuffleboard?

CLAUDIUS

Well, then we shake hands and then we put this whole thing behind us. I've got a happy kingdom to run. And if you defeat Hamlet at Shuffleboard, I have no doubt that your honor will be restored, Hamlet will feel bad about his… encouraging of other people to ascend to the Holy Kingdom, and we'll all buy time shares down here.

GERTRUDE

I like this plan a lot.

(JESSIE stops the action.)

JESSIE

I'm sorry I can't do this. No death in Act five of Hamlet? Are you kidding me?

CHIP

These guys are paying good money to have their product pitched.

JESSIE

Hamlet ends with a pile of corpses on the stage! There is no one left alive by the time it's over! You can't just make a happy ending out of that.

CHIP

That's what the people want.

JESSIE

Oh please! Look at this audience! These people are hungry for killing! We should give them Hamlet as Hamlet was meant to be done!

CHIP

Look, I'm not returning my mink coat.

JESSIE

You bought a mink coat?

CHIP

I'm trying to live like a professional football player. I've heard that half of their salaries go to manly fur coats and sunglasses.

JESSIE

Too bad! From now on – no more pandering to our corporate masters! I want extra death in act five! Let's end this play with the bloodbath it deserves!

CHIP

Can we still have a happy ending?

JESSIE

Let's get it on!

CLAUDIUS

Here's the plan: We poison everything. That way, if Hamlet touches anything, he'll die within seconds. We wipe poison on the shuffleboard stick, and since we're at sea, we're technically not under Federal Guidelines for Food Preparation, so it's probably likely the pulled pork will kill him. If that doesn't work, we poison the mai tais.

JESSIE

Time for the showdown!

(The LOUNGE SINGER enters for the climactic showdown.)

LOUNGE SINGER *(singing)*

It's time for a show-down
Time for a show-down!

CLAUDIUS

Enough! I thought I hired back-up dancers.

LOUNGE SINGERS

They're coming.

CLAUDIUS

Good. I'd like this to be as dramatic as possible.

(THREE back-up dancers enter.)

BACK-UP DANCER 1

Hiii!

BACK-UP DANCER 2

I'm Keri from California! Yay!

BACK-UP DANCER 3

We're ready for the show!

CLAUDIUS

Okay, back-up dancers. Stay still while I coat you with poison. That way, if Hamlet defeats Laertes in the Shuffleboard duel, you can hug him – the result will be death.

BACK-UP DANCER 1

Um… Is the poison going to hurt me?

CLAUDIUS

It's SPF 50, don't worry.

BACK-UP DANCER 2

I'm Keri from California!

CLAUDIUS

Silence.

(He hands them sunscreen.)

LOUNGE SINGER

So I can really do any kind of singing you want. I can do standards from Broadway, I can do singer-songwriter stuff, I can even do Lady Gaga. I'm actually a Lady Gaga impersonator in my spare time.

(singing)

My Poker-Face
My my poker-face

CLAUDIUS

Shut up.

LOUNGE SINGER

Yes sire.

CLAUDIUS

But I do love me some Gaga.

LOUNGE SINGER

Your wish is my command.

(HAMLET enters in beach attire.)

CLAUDIUS

Here he is! Prince Hamlet!

HAMLET

I don't know why you've invited me on this family cruise, uncle, but I'll let you know that my dark mood has been somewhat improved by the great friendly atmosphere and wonderful food. I give Carnival Cruise Lines two thumbs up!

(He gives two thumbs up)

But I still hate you.

CLAUDIUS

Oh come now – let's be friends, shall we. Let us partake of the all-you can eat buffet!

GERTRUDE

Ooh I'll have some!

CLAUDIUS

No Gertrude!

GERTRUDE

Oh. Whoops. Sorry.

HAMLET

I'm not eating that garbage.

CHIP

Let me interject here to remind everyone that the food on Carnival Cruise Lines is –

JESSIE

We got it, Chip.

HAMLET

I bought potato chips at the last island we were at. I only eat those now.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet –

HAMLET *(turning to the audience)*

Did you know that Pringles come in twenty-nine flavors? I didn't! I've been trying a new one each day and boy are they delicious! My favorites so far are soft-shelled crab and blueberry!

JESSIE

Side note: Actual Pringles flavors. Check it out on the internet.

(HAMLET is back in character)

LAERTES *(entering)*

Hamlet!

HAMLET

Laertes, my good friend!

LAERTES

Good friend? You killed my father and drove my sister to suicide!

HAMLET

Yeah… but if it makes you feel any better, killing your Dad was totally an accident.

LAERTES

It doesn't.

HAMLET

Then… um… would you like some potato chips?

LAERTES

I would!

(LAERTES takes the potato chips from Hamlet and eats one.)

Wow… These are tangy and delicious!

HAMLET

And only twenty calories.

LAERTES

Incredible. But these incredibly good potato chips aren't going to keep me from exacting my revenge!

HAMLET

Bring it on.

LOUNGE SINGER

All right – that's a challenge if I ever heard one! And here on Carnival Cruise Lines, we love a good challenge, don't we?

BACK-UP DANCERS

Yay!

LOUNGE SINGER

Oh come on, that's not good enough! I said, we like a challenge, don't we?

EVERYONE

YAY!

LOUNGE SINGER

All right, challenge number 1! Shuffleboard!

LAERTES

If I win, you throw yourself off the boat, okay?

HAMLET

Fine. And if I win, we're still friends.

LAERTES

Agreed. But I must warn you I have my fingers crossed.

HAMLET

Very well!

(LAERTES produces two shuffleboard cues.)

LAERTES

Here's yours.

HAMLET

No thanks.

LAERTES

I'm sorry?

HAMLET

I never go anywhere without my own stick.

(HAMLET produces his own shuffleboard stick.)

LAERTES

Have it your way. Now we begin the overly-dramatic shuffleboard match!

CLAUDIUS

BEGIN!

LAERTES

I just said that.

CLAUDIUS

Oh. Well. Carry on then.

(The LOUNGE SINGER and the BACK UP DANCERS launch into it.)*

**Be very judicious about the time you spend on musical numbers here in act Five. They shouldn't last more than twenty or thirty seconds.)*

LOUNGE SINGER *(singing)*

P-p-p-poker face p-p-p-poker face
Mmm Mmuh Mmuh Muhh Mmmuh
P-p-p-poker face p-p-p-poker face
Mmm Mmuh Mmuh Muhh Mmmuh

(they stop.)

And it's Laertes with the first biscuit. He's ready. He's ready. He's waiting to send the biscuit. The drama is intense. Sweat beads upon his forehead – it's as if life and death were in the balance.

LAERTES

Do you mind?

LOUNGE SINGER

This is twice as exciting as watching fishing. There he goes.

(LAERTES pushes the "biscuit.")

WOW!

(The BACK-UP dancers scream and cheer.)

AMAZING! SIMPLY AMAZING!

(HAMLET stretches, perhaps does some knee-bends and hops, then gets in position.)

And now it is Prince Hamlet's turn to send the biscuit. The tension is staggering.

(HAMLET measures it like he's lining up a golf putt.)

Laertes is clearly within the 7 point line, Hamlet has to knock him out in order to keep the score at zero-zero. Can he do it?

(HAMLET pushes the "biscuit." Ad lib overly-dramatic reaction from LAERTES, HAMLET, and BACK-UP Dancers depending on the result. Example below if HAMLET misses.)

LAERTES

HA! HA! IN YOUR FACE! IN YOUR WEASELY WEASEL FACE!

(LAERTES steps up for his second shot.)

LOUNGE SINGER

The all-important second shot. Impossibly, the tension has risen even more to a degree that was inconceivable for the previous shot. I am about to faint. In fact, I am going to faint. I am shocked that I did not faint just then.

(LAERTES pushes the "biscuit." Big reaction. Here's an example if he makes the shot.)

LAERTES

BOO YA! BOO YA! BOO BOO BOO YA YA YA! WHO'S THE PRINCE NOW? HUH? WHO'S THE PRINCE NOW?! I AM! I AM THE PRINCE OF SHUFFLEBOARD!

LOUNGE SINGER

And now, a musical number.

(LOUNGE SINGER and BACK-UP DANCERS launch into a song not unlike "Telephone.")

HAMLET

Stop it!

(With a dramatic flourish, HAMLET approaches the shuffleboard again.)

LOUNGE SINGER

And now… Hamlet's second shot. The sweat drips down his forehead. His fingers are growing tense. Will he miss? Will he fail? At this point it would be nice to have complete confidence in yourself and no ambiguity whatsoever. Perhaps he would be better off dead. Perhaps he should avoid the awful and incredible tension by ending it all, then this nightmare would be over – but what would happen after death then? Would he be cursed for all eternity to relive these moments on the shuffleboard court, watching the highlights over and over again and thinking about his wasted, miserable life? Would he pray for the darkness that –

HAMLET

Stop it.

(HAMLET pushes the puck. If he succeeds…)

AH HA! VICTORY IS MINE!

LOUNGE SINGER

And that will do it for the first frame. Only nineteen more to go.

JESSIE

ARE YOU KIDDING ME? I'm going to swallow my eyeballs just to avoid dying of boredom!

CHIP

Hey – do you want a true-to-life shuffleboard match or not?

JESSIE

I WANT BLOOD! Come on, somebody hit somebody with something!

HAMLET

I have had enough of this charade.

LAERTES

As have I, Hamlet. You die now!

(He brandishes his shuffleboard cue like a sword and swings it around.)

CHIP

Again, might I point out that on Carnival Cruise Lines –

(LAERTES takes a swing at him.)

LAERTES

Out of my way, worm!

(HAMLET wields his shuffleboard cue like a sword.)

HAMLET

You want some of this?

(He swings it around.)

LAERTES

Have at thee!

HAMLET

Bring it!

(They battle wildly with the shuffleboard sticks.)

CLAUDIUS

Well this is much more exciting than the stupid shuffleboard thing. Bring us drinks!

(A WAITER arrives with two Mai Tais.)

GERTRUDE

I'm feeling thirsty. Perhaps I should –

CLAUDIUS

No wait! HAMLET! Stop! Enough of this battle!

(HAMLET and LAERTES stop. LAERTES waits a second, then pokes HAMLET lightly with his shuffleboard stick.)

HAMLET

Hey.

CLAUDIUS

You must be thirsty from your deckside exertions. Would you like a drink? Mai Tai?

HAMLET

That's too fruity for me Claudius.

(The LOUNGE SINGER and BACK-UP DANCERS launch into something similar to "Born this Way" or, alternately, something from Cher.)

CLAUDIUS

Shut up.

(They shut up.)

BACK-UP DANCER 2

I'm Keri from California!

LOUNGE SINGER

Perhaps we can settle this the old-fashioned way: Limbo.

BACK-UP DANCERS

YAY!

CLAUDIUS

Fine! But allow me to supply the limbo stick.

(CLAUDIUS puts on some gloves and produces a limbo stick he has handy. Then he spreads poison on the limbo stick. Ideally, this is something that is obvious, perhaps dry ice that smokes.)

HAMLET

Hey what exactly are you doing there?

CLAUDIUS

Nothing. Nothing at all.

(He puts the poison away.)

Allow me to hold the limbo stick.

HAMLET

Why?

CLAUDIUS

Cause I want to. Why do you have to read into everything?

GERTRUDE

I'm really thirsty.

CLAUDIUS

Honey, remember the P O I S O N.

HAMLET

If only I could spell!

GERTRUDE

Thanks, darling.

CLAUDIUS

I love you.

(The LOUNGE SINGER begins a song like "Bad Romance")

Stop that!

LOUNGE SINGER

Fine! Limbo BEGIN!

(He swings his arms and the Back-up Dancers begin to do the limbo song.)

BACK-UP DANCERS

Every limbo boy and girl
All around the limbo world
Gonna do the limbo rock
All around the limbo clock
Jack be limbo, Jack be quick
Jack go unda limbo stick
All around the limbo clock
Hey, let's do the limbo rock

(LAERTES goes under first. HAMLET follows, when HAMLET is under the stick, CLAUDIUS tries to bring it down on his chest, but HAMLET dodges out of the way.)

HAMLET

Ah ha!

CLAUDIUS

Ah ha ha!

LAERTES

Ah ha ha ha!

LOUNGE SINGER

Everybody limbo!

HAMLET

Drop the stick!

CLAUDIUS

Drop your face!

HAMLET

I don't even know what that means!

CLAUDIUS

Good! Neither do I!

HAMLET

I've had enough of this!

(HAMLET runs and grabs a sword. He approaches CLAUDIUS.)

JESSIE

Yes! Now we're talking! I've been waiting an hour and a half for this!

GERTRUDE

He's got a sword!

BACK-UP DANCER 2 *(panicking)*

I'm Keri from California!

(LAERTES grabs his own sword.)

LAERTES

If you want to get to the king, you've got to go through me.

HAMLET

Why?

LAERTES

I'm sort of an evil guy now. Although if you think about it, you're the evil guy since you killed my father –

HAMLET

Yeah, well he killed my father.

LAERTES

So that makes him evil, you evil, and me good. Therefore, I will win this battle.

HAMLET

Ah, but you are defending the evil guy, so therefore you are on the side of evil, ergo, making you evil.

LAERTES

So we're both evil? I hadn't considered that. Boy this has a lot of philosophical implications.

CLAUDIUS

Would you just fight already and get it over with? I'm getting bored over here!

(The GHOST enters.)

THE GHOST

Seriously, Hamlet, it's like I've died twice watching this!

HAMLET

Very well!

CLAUDIUS

Wait hold on!

(CLAUDIUS runs up to LAERTES and puts poison on his sword.)

What? It's sword-sharpener.

(He runs back behind LAERTES.)

LAERTES

Time to dance.

LOUNGE SINGER

Hit it!

(The LOUNGE SINGER and back-up dancers begin something like "Just Dance" or another popular song with dance in the title.)

(HAMLET and LAERTES battle again. It goes back and forth. It goes around the lounge singers. It goes through the backup dancers. HAMLET hides behind BACK-UP DANCER 2. (but doesn't touch her))

BACK-UP DANCER 2

I'm Keri from Aaaaaaargh—

(LAERTES stabs her. She dies.)

HAMLET

Whoah, whoah, hold on!

(LAERTES doesn't. He swings again and misses.)

(HAMLET runs away, hides behind BACK-UP DANCER 1.)

BACK-UP DANCER 1

No! Don't hide behind me!

(HAMLET dodges, and LAERTES knocks the sword out of his hand.)

LAERTES

You're beaten, Hamlet. Admit it. You have no sword.

HAMLET

That's what you think!

(HORATIO enters.)

HORATIO

Allow me to be of service, Hamlet.

LAERTES

A talking sword!

(HORATIO charges LAERTES. They fight. HORATIO must use his entire body. Finally, LAERTES stabs him.)

HORATIO

Aw dang it. Arrrrrrrrrrgh.

(he dies.)

HAMLET *(retrieving his own sword)*

You killed Horatio!

LAERTES

So?

(The GHOST approaches HAMLET.)

THE GHOST

Uuuuuse the sword, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Don't tell me what to do, Dad.

THE GHOST

Close your eyes. Uuuuse the sword. Avenge me.

HAMLET

Just let me live my own life!

(The GHOST OF POLONIUS enters from the opposite side of the stage.)

GHOST OF POLONIUS

Uuuuse the sword, Laertes. Avenge me.

LAERTES

You always do this, Dad.

GHOST OF POLONIUS

Uuuuuse the sword.

HAMLET

Your Dad has a ghost too?

LAERTES

Oh, so only kings get ghosts? The common man can't have a ghost?
(He attacks, misses HAMLET, but stabs THE GHOST.)

THE GHOST

Aw dannnng it.
(The GHOST dies.)

HAMLET

Jerk! You just killed my father's ghost!
(HAMLET runs and stabs the GHOST OF POLONIUS.)

GHOST OF POLONIUS

Aaaaaaaaargh.
(The GHOST OF POLONIUS dies.)

(SERVANT 5 enters, with sword.)

SERVANT 5

All right, gentlemen, time to pay the piper.

LAERTES

Who are you?

SERVANT 5

I'm servant 5 – but perhaps I'd be better known as the son of Back-up Dancer 2.
(They don't know who that is.)
Keri from California.

End of Excerpt.
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