

HAMLET
(in 10 Minutes)

Abridged by
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SETTING: Denmark

CHARACTERS: (7-13 actors)

HAMLET

HORATIO

KING can double as Ghost

QUEEN

LAERTES can double as Voltemand and Rosencrantz or Guildenstern

OPHELIA can double as Marcellus and Rosencrantz or Guildenstern

POLONIUS can double as Osric

OSRIC can double as Polonius

GHOST can double as King

MARCELLUS can double as Ophelia and Rosencrantz or Guildenstern

VOLTEMAND can double as Laertes and Rosencrantz or Guildenstern

ROSENCRANTZ can double as Ophelia and Marcellus

GUILDENSTERN can double as Ophelia and Marcellus

PLAYERS can be double by everyone except Hamlet, Horatio, King, and Queen

THE PLAY:

Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

MARCELLUS Tell me, why this same watch nightly?

HORATIO Our last king was, by Fortinbras of Norway, dared to combat; in which our Hamlet did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact did forfeit all which he stood of. Now, Young Fortinbras, of unimproved mettle appear unto our state.

Enter GHOST.

 But soft, behold!

GHOST exits. They exit. Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET O, that this too sullied flesh would melt. How stale and unprofitable seem to me all the uses of this world! Two months dead –so excellent a king; so loving to my mother that he might not beteem the winds of heaven. Must I remember? Within a month, most unrighteous tears had left her eyes, she married. But, break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

Enter HORATIO.

HORATIO My lord, I think I saw the King your father. Two nights together had and Marcellus, on watch, encounter a figure like your father and I with them kept the watch, the apparition comes.

HAMLET Hold you the watch tonight? If it assume my noble father's person, I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape and bid me hold my peace.

All exit. Enter LAERTES and OPHELIA. Enter POLONIUS.

LAERTES Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord. Farewell, Ophelia, and remember what I have said to you.

LAERTES exits.

POLONIUS What is't he hath said to you?

OPHELIA Something touching the Lord Hamlet. He hath made many tenders of his affection to me.

POLONIUS Do you believe his "tenders," as you call them? When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul lends the tongue vows. I would not have you slander any moment leisure or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

OPHELIA I shall obey.

They exit. Enter HAMLET. Enter GHOST.

HAMLET I'll call thee "King," "Father." O, answer me!

GHOST I am thy father's spirit. If thou didst ever thy dear father love –revenge his most foul and unnatural murder. The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown.

HAMLET O, my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole with juice of cursed hebona and in my ears did pour. Let not Denmark be a couch for damned incest. But taint not thy mind against thy mother. Leave her to heaven. Adieu. Remember me.

HAMLET I have sworn't. I bear myself hereafter to put an antic disposition on that you, seeing me pronouncing of some doubtful phrase, or such ambiguous giving out, to note that you know aught of me.

They exit. Enter KING and QUEEN, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

KING Dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's transformation hath put him from th' understanding of himself.

QUEEN I beseech you instantly to visit my too much changèd son.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN exit. Enter POLONIUS.

POLONIUS My good lord, I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

QUEEN I doubt it is no other but his father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

Enter VOLTEMAND.

KING Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND Fortinbras makes vow before his uncle never more to give assay of arms against your majesty. *(He gives a paper.)*

(VOLTEMAND exit.)

POLONIUS Since brevity is the soul of wit, I will be brief. Your son is mad. I have a daughter who hath given me this. *(He reads) To the most beautified Ophelia, Never doubt I love. I have not art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.*

KING But how hath she received his love?

POLONIUS My young mistress thus I did bespeak: "Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star. This must not be." Sometimes he walks in the lobby. At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him. *(To the King)* Be you and I behind an arras then.

KING We will try it.

Enter HAMLET. KING and QUEEN exit. A flourish. Enter the PLAYERS.

HAMLET You are welcome, masters; welcome all. We'll hear a play tomorrow. *(As POLONIUS and PLAYERS exit, HAMLET speaks to the FIRST PLAYER.)* Can you play "The Murder of Gonzago?" You could, for need, study a speech which I would insert, could you not?

PLAYER Ay, my lord. *(FIRST PLAYER exits.)*

HAMLET The play's the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

(He exits.) Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN.

ROSENCRANTZ He does confess himself distracted, but from what cause he will by no means speak. Like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN exit.

KING Sweet Gertrude, leave us, for we have closely sent for Hamlet hither; that he may here affront Ophelia.

QUEEN I shall obey you. (*QUEEN exits.*)

POLONIUS I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord. (*They withdraw.*)

Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET To be or not to be –

OPHELIA My lord, how does your Honor for this day?

HAMLET Ha, are you honest? Are you fair? If you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to your beauty. Get thee to a nunnery. Or marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too.

He exits.

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

KING advancing with POLONIUS.

KING Love? His affections do not that way tend.

POLONIUS I believe the commencement of his grief sprung from neglected love. Let his mother alone entreat him. I'll be placed in the ear of their conference.

(They exit. Enter HAMLET. Enter HORATIO.)

HAMLET There is a play tonight. One scene of it comes near the circumstance of my father's death. I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot, observe my uncle. If his guilt do not itself unkennel, it is a damnèd ghost that we have seen.

Enter KING, QUEEN. The trumpets sound. Dumb show follows.

Enter a King. He lies down upon a bank of flowers. Anon comes in another Man, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the sleeper's ears, and leaves him. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, makes passionate action. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems harsh awhile but in the end accepts his love.

HAMLET How like you this play?

QUEEN The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

KING Away!

All exit. Enter KING.

KING O, my offense is rank. My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer can serve my turn? I am still possessed of those effects for which I did the murder. Help, angels! Make assay. Bow, stubborn knees, and all may be well. *(He kneels)*

Enter HAMLET.

HAMLET Now he is praying. *(He draws his sword.)* A villain kills my father, and I do this same villain send to heaven. *(He sheathes his sword.)* When he is about some act that has no relish of salvation in't –his soul may be damned as hell, whereto it goes.

(HAMLET exits.)

KING *(Rising.)* My words fly up, my thoughts remain below; words without thoughts never to heaven go.

He exits. Enter QUEEN and POLONIUS. POLONIUS hides behind the arras. Enter HAMLET.

QUEEN Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET Mother, you have my father much offended. You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife, and would it were not so you are my mother.

QUEEN What wilt thou do? Help, ho!

POLONIUS *(Behind the arras)* What ho! Help!

HAMLET How now, a rat? *(He kills POLONIUS through the arras.)*

POLONIUS O, I am slain!

QUEEN What hast thou done?

HAMLET A bloody deed –almost as bad as kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN Kill a king?

HAMLET Have you eyes?

QUEEN Speak no more! Thou turn'st my eyes into my soul there I see such black.

HAMLET Confess yourself to heaven, repent what's past, avoid what is to come. I must be cruel only to be kind.

They exit, HAMLET tugging POLONIUS. Enter KING. Enter LAERTES.

LAERTES O, vile king, give me my father!

KING I am guiltless of your father's death and am in grief for it.

A noise within: "Let her come in!" Enter OPHELIA.

LAERTES Is't possible a young maid's wits should be as mortal as a man's life?

OPHELIA *(Sings) Hey non nonny, nonny, hey. Fare you well, my dove. (She exits.)*

KING You must put me in your heart for friend, that he which hath your noble father slain pursued my life.

LAERTES It well appears. But tell me why you proceeded not against these feats.

KING Two reasons, the Queen his mother lives almost by his looks, I could not but by her. The other motive is the great love general gender bear him.

LAERTES And so have I a noble father lost, a sister driven into desp'rate terms. My revenge will come. And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword an unction of a mountenbank so mortal it may be death.

Enter QUEEN.

QUEEN Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

LAERTES Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, therefore I forbid my tears.

They exit. Enter HAMLET and HORATIO. Enter OSRIC.

OSRIC If your Lordship were at leisure, his Majesty bade me to you that he has laid a great wager on your head.

Enter KING, QUEEN, and LAERTES.

KING Hamlet, take this hand from me. (*He puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET'S.*)

HAMLET (*to LAERTES*) Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong. I here proclaim it was madness. His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

LAERTES I am unsatisfied in nature, to my revenge; I stand aloof and will no reconciliation.

KING Give them the foils, Osric.

They play.

OSRIC A hit, a very palpable hit.

KING Stay, Hamlet. Here's to thy health. (*He drinks and then drops the pearl in the cup.*) Give him the cup.

HAMLET I'll play this bout first. Set it by awhile.

QUEEN The Queen carouses thy fortune, Hamlet. (*She lifts the cup.*)

KING Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me. (*She drinks.*)

KING (*Aside*) It is the poisoned cup. It is too late.

HAMLET I dare not drink yet, madam –by and by.

QUEEN Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES *(to CLAUDIUS)* My lord, I'll hit him now. *(aside)* And yet it is almost
against my conscience.

Play.

LAERTES Have at you now!

*(LAERTES wounds HAMLET. Then in scuffling they change rapiers, and HAMLET wounds
LAERTES. The QUEEN falls.)*

OSRIC Look to the Queen there, ho!

LAERTES *(He falls)* I am justly killed by my own treachery.

HAMLET How does the queen?

QUEEN The drink! I am poisoned. *(She dies. OSRIC exits.)*

HAMLET Treachery! Seek it out!

LAERTES Hamlet, thou art slain. The King's to blame.

HAMLET The point evenomed too! Then, venom, to thy work. *(Hurts the KING.
Forces him to drink the poison. KING dies.)*

LAERTES Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet. Mine and my father's death
come not upon thee. *(Dies.)*

HAMLET Heaven make thee free of it –Horatio, I am dead. If thou didst ever hold me
in thy heart, tell my story.

Enter OSRIC.

OSRIC Young Fortinbras come from Poland.

HAMLET O, I die, Horatio! I cannot live to hear the news. On Fortinbras; he has my
dying voice. So tell him th' occurents which have solicited –the rest is silence.
(Dies.)

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