

# **HVMLET**

Adapted by Tatiana Baccari  
Edited by Wednesday Sue Derrico

## Characters in the Play

THE GHOST, former King of Denmark, Hamlet's father (VO)

HAMLET, female early 20's. Princess of Denmark, daughter of the late King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude. Uses she/they pronouns.

GERTRUDE, female 40's-60's. Former Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother. Traditional Femme. Uses she/her pronouns.

QUEEN CLAUDIA, female 40's-60's. Queen and ruler of Denmark, sister to the late King Hamlet, Hamlet's Aunt. Traditional Butch. Uses she/her pronouns.

OPHELIOUS, male early 20's. Polonius' son and Hamlet's ex. Uses he/him pronouns.

LAERTES, female early 20's. Polonius' daughter, sister to Ophelious. Uses she/her pronouns.

POLONIUS, male 40's-60's. Father of Ophelious and Laertes, councillor to Queen Claudia. Uses he/him pronouns.

HORATIO, non-binary 20's. Hamlet's new best friend and fellow student. Uses they/them pronouns.

VOLTEMAND, male 20's-30's. Ambassador to Norway. Uses he/him pronouns.

CORNELIA, female 20's-30's. Ambassador to Norway. Uses she/her pronouns.

ROSENCRANTZ, female 20's. Social climber and family friend of Hamlet's. Uses she/her pronouns.

GUILDENSTERN, female 20's. Social climber and family friend of Hamlet's. Uses she/her pronouns.

BARNARDO, queer male/non-binary 20's. Family friend and schoolmate of Hamlet's. Uses he or they pronouns.

MARCELLA, queer female/non-binary 20's. Family friend and former schoolmate of Hamlet's. Uses she or they pronouns.

FORTINBRAS, male 20's-30's. Military conqueror and Prince of Norway. Uses he/him pronouns.

Players (Lead Player & Player King, Player Queen, and Luciana in *The Murder of Gonzago*)

Two Messengers

Sailors

Gravedigger

Doctor of Divinity

Place:

Our “Denmark” is based on a several places in the world where patriarchal authoritarian oppression has been dominant in the 21st century. In particular, Russia, China, and America.

Time:

Now.

# **ACT 1**

## **Prologue**

*A university classroom in Wittenberg. Several students sit in table-arm desk chairs, their backs to the audience. Projected onto a screen is a video compilation of the evolution of the feminist movement, from 1950's housewives to Hillary Clinton's concession speech and the Women's March in January of 2017.*

## **Scene 1**

**BARNARDO**  
Stand! Who's there?

**HORATIO**  
Friend to this ground.

**MARCELLA**  
And liegemen to the Dane. Holla! Barnardo!

**BARNARDO**  
Say, what, is Horatio there?

**HORATIO**  
A piece of them.

**BARNARDO**  
Welcome, Horatio.

**HORATIO**  
What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

**BARNARDO**  
I have seen nothing.

**MARCELLA**  
Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy  
And will not let belief take hold of them  
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.  
Therefore I have entreated them along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,

That, if again this apparition come,  
They may approve our eyes and speak to it.

**HORATIO**

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

**BARNARDO**

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

**HORATIO**

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

**BARNARDO**

Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course to illumine that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcella and myself,  
The bell then beating one—

*Enter Ghost.*

**BARNARDO**

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

**HORATIO**

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

**BARNARDO**

It stalks away.

**HORATIO**

Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!

*Ghost exits.*

**BARNARDO**

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

**HORATIO**

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

**MARCELLA**

Is it not like the King?

**HORATIO**

As thou art to thyself.  
'Tis strange  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

*Enter Ghost.*

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!  
If thou hast any sound or use of voice,  
Speak to me.  
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
Which happily foreknowing may avoid,  
O, speak!  
—Stop it, Marcella.

**MARCELLA**

Shall I strike it?

**HORATIO**

Do, if it will not stand.

**BARNARDO**

'Tis here.

**HORATIO**

'Tis here.

*Ghost exits.*

**MARCELLA**

'Tis gone.  
We do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence,

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

**BARNARDO**

It was about to speak.

**HORATIO**

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

**MARCELLA**

Let's do't, I pray, and I this morning know  
Where we shall find her most convenient.

Scene 2

*Flashback to the same university classroom. Hamlet sits alone asleep at her desk. Footage from 2nd Wave Feminists burning their bras and protesting in the street plays behind her. As she sleeps, her dream takes flight.*

**GHOST**

Mark me.

**HAMLET**

I will.

**GHOST**

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

**HAMLET**

Alas, poor ghost!

**GHOST**

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

**HAMLET**

Speak. I am bound to hear.

**GHOST**

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

**HAMLET**

What?

**GHOST**

I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away.  
List, list, O list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

**HAMLET**

O God!

**GHOST**

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

**HAMLET**

Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

**GHOST**

I find thee apt;  
Now, Hamlet, hear.  
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,  
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forgèd process of my death  
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

**HAMLET** O, my prophetic soul! Mine Aunt!

**GHOST**

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce!—won to her shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!  
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch for luxury and damnèd incest.  
But, howsoever thou pursues this act,  
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once.  
Adieu, adieu, Hamlet: remember me.

*He exits. Hamlet awakens.*

**HAMLET**

O all you host of heaven! O Earth! What else?  
Remember thee?  
Yes, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial, fond records,

That youth and observation copied there,  
And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmixed with baser matter.  
O most pernicious woman!  
That one may smile and smile and be a villain?  
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark.

### Scene 3

*A cacophony of lights and sounds. We hear cheering, chanting, electric guitar. We hear a soft moan that builds into cries of ecstasy. Gertrude comes into focus as she reaches climax. Polonius, his daughter Laertes, Hamlet, Voltemand, Cornelia and their feminist followers watch. Suddenly Claudia, Queen of Denmark, emerges from underneath Gertrude's dress. Claudia pulls out a hanky, wipes her mouth, and begins:*

#### QUEEN CLAUDIA

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole  
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
Now follows that you know. Young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth  
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,  
Colleaguèd with this dream of his advantage,  
He hath not failed to pester us with message  
Importing the surrender of those lands  
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
To our most valiant brother—so much for him.

Now for ourself and for this time of meeting.  
Thus much the business is: we have here writ  
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,  
Who, impotent and bedrid, scarcely hears  
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress  
His further gait herein, in that the levies,  
The lists, and full proportions are all made  
Out of his subject; and we here dispatch  
You, good Cornelia, and you, Voltmand,  
For bearing of this greeting to old Norway,  
Giving to you no further personal power  
To business with the king more than the scope  
Of these dilated articles allow.

*Giving them a paper.*

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

**CORNELIA**

In that and all things will we show our duty.

**QUEEN CLAUDIA**

We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.

*Voltmand and Cornelia exit.*

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?  
You told us of some suit. What is it, Laertes?  
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane  
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

**LAERTES**

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

**QUEEN CLAUDIA**

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

**POLONIUS**

She hath, my *liege*, wrung from me my slow leave  
By laborsome petition, and at last  
Upon her will I sealed my hard consent.  
I do beseech you give her leave to go.

**QUEEN CLAUDIA**

Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.—  
But now, my cousin Hamlet and my child—

**HAMLET**

A little more than kin and less than kind.

**QUEEN CLAUDIA**

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

**HAMLET**

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

**GERTRUDE**

Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly color off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

**HAMLET**

Ay, madam, it is common.

**GERTRUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

“Seems,” madam? Nay, it is. I know not “seems.”  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly. These indeed “seem,”

For they are actions that a girl might play;  
But I have that within which passes show,  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

**QUEEN CLAUDIA**

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,  
To give these mourning duties to your father.  
But to persevere in obstinate condolment  
Is a course of impious stubbornness.  
An understanding simple and unschooled.  
For what we know must be and is as common  
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,  
Why should we in our peevish opposition  
Take it to heart? We pray you, throw to earth  
This unprevailing woe and think of us  
As of a father; for let the world take note,  
You are the most immediate to our throne,  
And with no less nobility of love  
Than that which dearest father bears his son  
Do I impart toward you. For your intent  
In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
It is most retrograde to our desire,  
And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our daughter.

**GERTUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

**QUEEN**

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

*All but Hamlet exit.*

**HAMLET**

O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,  
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on it, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this:  
Let me not think on it; frailty, thy name is woman!  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she followed my poor father's body,  
Like Niobe, all tears—why she, even she  
O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason  
Would have mourned longer—married with my aunt,  
My father's sister, but no more like my father  
Than I to Hercules. Within a month?  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,  
She married. O, most wicked speed! To post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

*Enter Horatio, Marcella, and Barnardo.*

**MARCELLA**

Tell me, they that know,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
And foreign mart for implements of war,  
What might be toward that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint laborer with the day?

**HORATIO**

At least the whisper goes so: our last king,  
Whose image even but now appeared to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet  
Did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact,  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror.

Now, see, young Fortinbras,  
Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full,  
Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
Sharked up a list of lawless resolute  
For food and diet to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in it; which is no other  
But to recover of us, by strong hand  
And terms compulsory-

**HAMLET**

-those foresaid lands  
So by his father lost.

**HORATIO** Hail to your Lordship.

**HAMLET** I am glad to see you well, Horatio.

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

Sir, my good friend, I'll change that name with you.  
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?—

**HORATIO**

A truant disposition.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

**HAMLET**

Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats  
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.  
My father—methinks I see my father.

**HORATIO**

Where, my lord?

**HAMLET**

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

**HORATIO**

I saw him once. He seemed a goodly king.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

**HAMLET**

Saw who?

**HORATIO**

My lord, the King your father.

**HAMLET**

The King my father?

**HORATIO**

Two nights together had these gentlefolx,  
Marcella and Barnardo, on their watch,  
In the dead waste and middle of the night,  
Been thus encountered: a figure like your father,  
Appears before them and with solemn march  
Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked  
And I with them the third night kept the watch,  
Where, as they had delivered, both in time,  
Form of the thing (each word made true and good),

The apparition comes.

**HAMLET**

But where was this?

**MARCELLA**

Upon the platform where we watch.

**HAMLET**

Did you not speak to it?

**HORATIO**

My lord, I did, but answer made it none.

**HAMLET**

'Tis very strange.

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

Hold you the watch tonight?

**MARCELLA**

We do.

**HAMLET**

I'll watch tonight. Perchance 'twill walk again.

**HORATIO**

I warrant it will.

**HAMLET**

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

*They exit.*