



Sample Pages from Hamlette

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HAMLETTE

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY
Allison Williams



Hamlette

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Characters

Actor 1: (M or F) HOST, QUEEN/KING, FRANCISCO, REFEREE

Actor 2: (M or F) HORATIO, 2nd PLAYER

Actor 3: (M) GHOST, POLONIUS

Actor 4: (M or F) BERNARDO, LAERTES, OPHELIA, PLAYER

Actor 5: (F) HAMLETTE

Author's Note

A note on the acting style: Hamlette should be a little more realistic than the others—in a sense, they are the obstacles within her play. Her soliloquies should not be over-dramatic, but a chance to use Shakespeare's words to genuinely express her problem. The humour should come from the characters' genuine attempts to get what they need and their enormous commitment to their tactics to achieve their needs, rather than from mugging.

The Ghost's theme music can be a sound cue or the actors can hum *The Twilight Zone* theme or other suitable music (note that permission must be secured for the use of any copyrighted music). Other sound cues can also be done by actors or as cues.

If a prop is called for and it's not possible to have the actor carry it on, feel free to have another actor hand them the prop. The smoother and less remarked on this is, the better—like surgeons whose instruments automatically appear when they need them.

Hamlette absolutely may not be played by a man in drag.

Set is a bare stage, with or without backdrop, and a bench. Actors can change in the wings or behind the backdrop, or pull costume pieces from a rack or table at the side of the stage.

ACTORS enter gravely and with purpose, and take up positions across the front of the stage. Each one freezes in a hugely dramatic “actor” pose. The HOST enters.

HOST: Lords and Ladies, welcome to _____ (name of theatre). We, the players, proudly present that classic tale of tragedy, William Shakespeare’s Hamlet! This is a story of Mystery. (strikes dramatic pose)

ACTOR 5: This is a story of Madness. (changes to Madness pose)

ACTOR 2: This is a story of Betrayal. (changes to Betrayal pose)

ACTOR 3: This is a story of a Sword Fight. (changes to En Garde stance)

ACTOR 4: Oh man, wait ‘til you see the sword fight! See, _____ (Actor 5’s first name) and I took this stage combat workshop, and we have this one move where she gets on the floor and I kick her in the face, only I don’t really kick her in the face, see, it’s all an illusion ‘cause no-one really gets hurt in stage combat and—

HOST: Ahem!

ACTOR 4: Sorry.

HOST: This is the story of Hamlet! Prince of Denmark!

HAMLETTE: (indicating her female body) Hamlette! Hamlette, Princess of Denmark!

HOST: Whatever. Actors, prepare yourselves!

ACTORS begin doing push-ups, reciting bits of monologues, making improbable ‘vocal warm-up’ sounds, etc.

HOST: Atten-shun! Acting Drills! Laugh! Cry! Laugh! Cry! Go Mad! On your marks, get set, action!

ACTORS run to their places.

HOST: A long, long time ago, in a country far, far away... Denmark.

ACTOR 4 holds up sign that says “Welcome to Denmark” with umlauts over all the vowels and the K. ACTOR 4 also has several flashlights in a bandolier [one of those sash-style belts used by cowboys to carry bullets] and at least one rubber chicken under her arm.

HOST: Midnight.

ACTOR 4 flips the sign to show a moon, then becomes BARNARDO.

HOST: On the battlements of Elsinore Castle...

FRANCISCO and BARNARDO take places. HORATIO enters and trips noisily.

BARNARDO: Who's there?!

HORATIO: Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

BARNARDO: Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself!

HORATIO: Barnardo?

BARNARDO: Mayhap—who's asking?

HORATIO: 'Tis I, Horatio, friend of Hamlet the Dane.

FRANCISCO: Horatio!

HORATIO: Barnardo!

BARNARDO: Francisco!

FRANCISCO: Horatio!

HORATIO: Dude!

Complicated handshakes all around.

FRANCISCO: You come most carefully upon your hour.

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

FRANCISCO: For this relief much thanks.

GHOST theme music, FRANCISCO, BARNARDO, HORATIO look around nervously.

BARNARDO: Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes!

GHOST enters, tries to speak but is cut off repeatedly.

GHOST: (*spooky voice*) Ham—

BARNARDO: In the same figure like the King that's dead.
Looks it not like the King?

GHOST: Ham—

FRANCISCO: (*punches HORATIO in the arm*) Mark it, Horatio. It would be spoke to.

GHOST: Ham—

HORATIO: What art thou? By Heaven, I charge thee speak.

BARNARDO holds up a rubber chicken and makes it crow like a rooster, as if the chicken lives. BARNARDO shushes the chicken.

BARNARDO: It was about to speak when the cock crew.

The frustrated GHOST exits. As GHOST exits, HORATIO grabs GHOST's sheet.

HORATIO: Wait! Wait!

As GHOST vanishes offstage, HORATIO is left with the sheet in his hands.

GHOST: (*offstage*) Hey!

HORATIO, BARNARDO, FRANCISCO look at sheet, look at GHOST, see GHOST—offstage—"naked."

HORATIO/BARNARDO/FRANCISCO: Ewwww!

HORATIO: Break we our watch up, and by my advice
Let us impart what we have seen tonight
Unto...

Fanfare, HAMLETTE enters.

HORATIO: Hamlet, Prince of Denmark!

HAMLETTE: Hamlette! Hamlette! Prin-**cess** of Denmark!

HORATIO/BARNARDO/FRANCISCO: Whatever.

HORATIO, BARNARDO, FRANCISCO exit. QUEEN enters.

QUEEN: Hamlet, why do you look so sad?

HAMLETTE: Mom, it's Ham-**lette**!

QUEEN: Now, son—

HAMLETTE: And I'm your daughter!

QUEEN: Hamlet! How many times do we have to go over it?

HAMLETTE looks sullen.

QUEEN: Now, what do little girls do?

HAMLETTE mumbles.

QUEEN: I can't hear you!

HAMLETTE: They get married.

QUEEN: And?

HAMLETTE: And they act as social figureheads in backward Central European kingdoms.

QUEEN: And?

HAMLETTE: (*reciting*) And due to the overbearing patriarchal system their husbands are endowed with any property they leave, forcing women into a lifetime of financial dependency, petty household concerns, and an early death from excessive childbearing.

QUEEN: And what do little boys do?

HAMLETTE: Inherit lands, money and titles granted to them solely because of an accident of genetics.

QUEEN: And that's why sometimes Mother History needs a little help. Now tighten your codpiece and stand up straight! Now where were we? Oh yes—Daddy's dead, you have a new stepfather, so let's all lighten up and play happy families until school starts, OK? Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Waits for the KING to enter.

QUEEN: Let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Waits for the KING.

QUEEN: Ahem! Denmark!

To backstage, trying to stay in character.

QUEEN: Where is the King?

HORATIO: He couldn't make it today. Use this!

Gives QUEEN the KING puppet—all the KING's lines are done by the QUEEN, acted out with the puppet as much as possible. As the play goes on, the KING

puppet develops a personality, as if he's a horror-movie ventriloquist dummy that starts to take over.

KING: We beseech you, Hamlet, remain here and comfort your eyes with cheer.

QUEEN sweeps out, HAMLETTE remains onstage.

HAMLETTE: O that this too, too sullied flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
That it should come to this! My father
But two months dead, so loving to my mother.
Frailty, thy name is woman!
Married with my uncle, my father's brother.
The funeral bak'd meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
How tacky!

Enter HORATIO.

HORATIO: Good day my Lord Hamlet, well met.

HAMLETTE: Horatio, it's Lady Hamlette.

HORATIO: (*he's determined to stick to the script*) Good day my Lord Hamlet, well met.

HAMLETTE: Lady Hamlette.

HORATIO: (*this effort is causing him pain*) Good day my Lo— Lo—

HAMLETTE: Laaaady...

HORATIO: Looooord...

HAMLETTE: Lady! Lady Hamlette! Princess Hamlette! The Dane!
(*yanks HORATIO around, grabs his mouth and shapes the words.*)
Lady Hamlette! Say it! Say it! Say it!

HORATIO starts to get weepy.

HORATIO: (*all in one breath, very childish and ending in tears*) But Shakespeare and the place of women in British society during the Renaissance despite the presence of a powerful Queen who pretended to be a virgin to manipulate her people and the succession to the Danish throne is patrilinear so you couldn't inherit and besides if you're a girl we can't be friends because there will be sexual tension and things will chaaaaaaange— (*unintelligible weeping*) —and girls are scary! (*more weeping*)

HAMLETTE: (*resigned*) There, there. Good day, Horatio, well met. It is I. (*sighs*) Lord Hamlette.

HORATIO: Hamlet.

HAMLETTE: Met me halfway on this, buddy. (*back in gear*) Horatio, Methinks I see my father.

HORATIO: (*Wheels around terrified*) Where!?! Where!?!

HAMLETTE: In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO: My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLETTE: Saw? Who?

HORATIO: My lord, the King your father.

HAMLETTE: He's dead, Horatio. Six feet under. Pushing up daisies. Crawling with worms. Dripping with disgusting slime and pus and...

HORATIO: He had a freckle on his butt!

HAMLETTE: I have that same freckle! It's the Hamlet family freckle! Wherefore is my father wandering from his grave—in the nude? Horatio, we will watch tonight. Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO: We shall wait for night to fall.

ACTOR 4 appears with moon sign and hands out flashlights. To get her hands free, she hands a rubber chicken to HAMLETTE. HORATIO and HAMLETTE click on flashlights.

GHOST theme music. GHOST enters.

HORATIO: Look, my Lord, it comes.

HAMLETTE: Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

GHOST: Boo!

HAMLETTE and HORATIO scream and jump into each other's arms, then calm down.

GHOST: Boo!

HAMLETTE and HORATIO scream and jump into each other's arms again.

GHOST: Hamlette, I am your father. Come here.

HAMLETTE: (*starts toward GHOST*) It calls me forth, I'll follow it.

HORATIO: (*yanks her back*)

What if it tempt you forth to the dreadful summit of some cliff
And there assume some horrible form
And draw you into madness?
How do you know it's really your father?

HAMLETTE: Good point. Why don't you go?

GHOST walks over, grabs HAMLETTE by the ear and pulls her away from HORATIO.

GHOST: Hamlette! Mark me! Why art thou wearing so much eyeliner?
And I thought I told you to stay away from that Horatio!

HAMLETTE: (*whiny*) Speak, I am bound to hear.

GHOST: So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLETTE: Murder!

GHOST: Murder most foul.

HAMLETTE: (*contemplating rubber chicken*) Fowl!

GHOST: Most foul, strange, and unnatural!

HAMLETTE: I will revenge you by murdering strange and unnatural fowls! (*strangles chicken*)

GHOST: The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLETTE: (*in a tizzy*) I will murder strange and unnatural serpent fowls!

Moves the chicken like a snake and strangles it again.

GHOST: (*snatches chicken, hits HAMLETTE with it and tosses chicken offstage*) No! Your uncle, my brother, get it!

GHOST acts out the following.

GHOST: Look. Me, your father, good. Your uncle, now the king, bad.
Me, father, take nap. Uncle, bad, pour poison in my ear. I wake up
dead. Now he's the king. And he married my wife!

HAMLETTE: Wait a minute—he poured poison in your ear?

GHOST: The Eustachian tubes connect to the throat. Didn't you learn anything at Wittenberg? Sheesh, for the money I paid for tuition—

HAMLETTE: You were murdered?

GHOST: I mean, if you'd paid attention, you could have been a doctor. Or even a lawyer! But no—

HAMLETTE: Uncle Claudius killed you!!

GHOST: Duh! (*spooky voice*) Remember me, Hamlette. And kill your uncle, or you're grounded for eternity!

GHOST theme music, GHOST exits.

HAMLETTE pulls up the cowering HORATIO.

HAMLETTE: I have a plan, Horatio.

Hereafter I shall think meet to put an antic disposition on.

HORATIO: But where will we find an antic disposition in your size, and the right colour? You're an autumn, you know.

HAMLETTE: I shall feign madness, to deceive my uncle until his conscience fails!

O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right.

HORATIO and HAMLETTE exit. Enter POLONIUS and LAERTES.

LAERTES: It is I, Laertes, son of Polonius, brother of Ophelia, plot device of Shakespeare, and I'm off to University!

POLONIUS: Shut up already, you're hogging the stage.

LAERTES: Good my father, I—

POLONIUS: Look what I'm stuck with. I said, "Willy, scrap that Hamlet play. Too long, too wordy, too many deaths. Write "Polonius, King of the High Seas!" Sword, ships, scantily clad women!

LAERTES: But Father, I—

POLONIUS: Hey kid, this is my moment. You want a moment, write your own play. Now where was I?

LAERTES: Scantily-clad women.

POLONIUS: Oh yeah. You're off to college. Son, I have some parting advice for you.

Neither a borrower nor a lender be. Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,
Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee.
Never lick a frozen pole in winter, and never stick a Q-tip directly
into your ear. If you've got an itch, scratch it, but be discreet.
(*looks around*) Hey, where's your sister Ophelia?

LAERTES: Mayhap my sister is sewing in her closet.

POLONIUS: Well, fetch you her. A little good advice never hurt anyone. Besides, I'd like to have a word with her about what's going on with Lord Hamlet. Oh, excuse me, Ham-**lette**.

LAERTES: I think Ophelia might be in the shower.

POLONIUS: Well, tell her to come here.

LAERTES: Polonius, she can't be here right now!

Gestures to indicate that he/she is OPHELIA.

POLONIUS: What do you mean? Oh. Oh! Why don't you go get her!

LAERTES turns back, rips off moustache, is now OPHELIA.

OPHELIA: Good my father, I, like, am here.

QUEEN and KING enter.

QUEEN: Good Polonius, we would seek your counsel as our advisor.

KING: And can you by no drift of conference
Get from Hamlet why he puts on this confusion?

OPHELIA: Excuse me, Father, like, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, like, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, pale as his shirt,
Came in, and like, threw a fit.
So please you, something is, like, touching, Lord Hamlet.

POLONIUS: Touching? Touching?! Since brevity is the soul of wit, I will be brief. He is mad. Nuts, crazy, loony, screwball, off his rocker, a few bricks short of a load, the lights are on but nobody's home, the wheel is spinning but the hamster is dead! He thinks he's a girl!

QUEEN: He does not. He's just sensitive. Probably just going through a phase. Didn't you?

OPHELIA: Maybe he wants to be a cabaret singer.

POLONIUS: Look you, the poor wretch comes reading.

Enter HAMLETTE with book.

POLONIUS: How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLETTE: Hamlette! Lady Hamlette!

POLONIUS: (*looks at QUEEN and OPHELIA and does 'he's crazy' gesture*)
Do you know me, my Lord?

HAMLETTE: *Piss off.*

OPHELIA simpers at HAMLETTE.

HAMLETTE: Get thee to a nunnery.

OPHELIA bursts into tears. HORATIO runs on.

HORATIO: Good my Lords and Ladies, there is come a band of
travelling players who wish to put on a show for the King.

OPHELIA: A show!

QUEEN: A show!

KING: I have an old barn they can use!

OPHELIA: I have an eggbeater they can use as a prop!

POLONIUS: Maybe we can get Mickey Rooney and Judy Garland!

All but HAMLETTE exit.

HAMLETTE: Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I.
I, the daughter of a dear father murdered,
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell.
I'll have these Players
Play something like the murder of my father
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;
If he do but blench,
I know my course. The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

HORATIO: (*from backstage*) We're not ready yet!

HAMLETTE: What am I supposed to do?

ALL: (*backstage*) Keep stalling!

HAMLETTE: (*pauses a moment before beginning*)

To be, or not to be, that is the question:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
 And by opposing end them.

If a coach leaving London is traveling at thirty miles per hour, and a coach leaving Dover is traveling at twenty miles per hour, and a fly traveling at sixty miles per hour is traveling back and forth between them, who is buried in Grant's Tomb?

REFEREE blows whistle, throws yellow flag on stage, and enters.

REFEREE: (*lots of referee arm gestures*) Foul! Inappropriate use of anachronism in a Shakespearean play! 10 line penalty! On to the Play-Within-a-Play Scene!

Exit REFEREE. Upbeat "TV" music.

Enter QUEEN, KING, HAMLETTE who sit on bench and form audience.

Enter PLAYER, wearing a loud blazer and a novelty tie, and 2nd PLAYER, dressed like the KING puppet. If you're really high tech, you could lower in a glitter curtain and disco ball. Music fades out.

PLAYER: And we're back! (*To 2nd PLAYER, who is playing the Uncle*) Have we ever met before?

2nd PLAYER: We've never met before!

PLAYER: We've never met before! Have I got a deal for you today. What would you say if I told you that you could go into the orchard, see your brother the King asleep, pour poison in the porches of his ears, kill him, and become King yourself!

2nd PLAYER: I could become King myself? Well, I don't know—

PLAYER: But wait, there's more! You not only get to become King, you get to marry your brother's wife, disinherit his cross-dressing son, and take over Denmark! Now, how much would you expect to pay for that?

2nd PLAYER: A thousand ducats?

PLAYER: (*encouraging audience to shout along*) Lower! Lower!

2nd PLAYER: Five hundred ducats?

PLAYER: Lower! Lower! (*silences audience with a sweeping gesture*) In fact, if you act now, it's absolutely free! And, we'll even throw in your own crown! (*gets audience to "ooooo"*) It has a special space-age polymer finish. (*audience "aaahhhh"*) You can scratch it, you can dent it, you can even set it on fire—it doesn't hurt the finish! And, if you act now, you also get a special curly fry maker! (*audience "ooooo"*) And an orange juicer! (*audience "aaahhh"*)

2nd PLAYER: (*to audience*) Should I do it? Should I do it? I'll do it! (*big gesture that silences audience*) I'll pour the poison in his ears and become the new King!

KING: Auugh! Give me some light! Away!

*QUEEN throws KING over the backdrop or into wings.
All but QUEEN and POLONIUS exit.*

POLONIUS: I will come straight.

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with.

Pray you be round.

If he was my kid, he wouldn't be too big to spank!

QUEEN: I'll warrant you, fear me not.

By pleasant words I shall devise the cause of Hamlet's madness.

POLONIUS: What makes you think he'll tell you?

QUEEN: I'm his mother! We have a special relationship.

Sound of HAMLETTE singing and coming nearer.

QUEEN: Withdraw, I hear him coming.

Scuffle, POLONIUS becomes a bench, QUEEN sits on him and strikes a "sad" pose.

HAMLETTE: Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLETTE: Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN: Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLETTE: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN: Have you forgot me?

HAMLETTE: No, not so!

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife.

And, would it were not so, you are my mother.

You are the sister-in-law of my Uncle, now his wife, making your brother-in-law now my father, you my aunt, and myself my own cousin. What are you, the Queen of Pasco County? (*use local hick town reference*)

HAMLETTE spots POLONIUS, draws dagger.

QUEEN: What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me? (*gets up*) Help, ho!

POLONIUS: (*crawling away*) What ho! Help!

HAMLETTE: How now? A rat! Dead for a ducat, dead.

HAMLETTE stabs POLONIUS. Big death scene.

POLONIUS: O, I am slain.

QUEEN: O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLETTE: Nay, I know not. (*pulls up POLONIUS' body by the hair to see the face*) Is it the King? Aw, nuts.

QUEEN: O what a rash and bloody deed is this! Hamlet, go to your room! If your uncle hadn't killed your father, you'd be in for such a spanking!

HAMLETTE: What?

QUEEN: Oops!

QUEEN exits. POLONIUS gets up.

POLONIUS: We're running a little short on time, and there's still a lot to cover, so we'll just hit some of the highlights for you.

Other actors rush in, acting out their parts as appropriate—this must be fast and tight.

HAMLETTE: (*with toy boat*) Hamlette is sent to England!

QUEEN and KING wave goodbye.

OPHELIA: (*with flowers and a bucket of obvious, sloshy water*) Ophelia goes mad! (*sings*) Hey nonny, nonny.

HORATIO and POLONIUS: (*with daggers*) Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.

They stab each other.

HAMLETTE: Hamlette returns home!

OPHELIA: (*sings, still slopping water, flinging flowers at actors and front row of audience*) Hey, nonny nonny here, Hey nonny, nonny there.

OPHELIA exits.

HORATIO: There's some business about a skull.

Tosses skull to HAMLETTE, football scrimmage with HAMLETTE, HORATIO, QUEEN, POLONIUS. At end of scrimmage, QUEEN exits, POLONIUS exits, HORATIO throws skull to HAMLETTE who catches it heading offstage.

HAMLETTE: Alas, poor Yorick, I knew him—Ow!

Offstage crash.

OPHELIA: (*enters singing with "same" heavy bucket*) Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme!

As she shrieks "thyme" she empties the bucket over the front row of audience. It now contains confetti.

QUEEN: (*enters with original bucket, now about ¼ full*) Ophelia drowns.

QUEEN empties water on OPHELIA. QUEEN exits to drop bucket and get KING puppet.

POLONIUS enters, tosses 'spring break' beach towel to OPHELIA who wipes her face, tosses the towel onto the puddle, and puts on her LAERTES moustache.

LAERTES: Laertes returns home for Spring Break, finds his Father and Sister dead, and blames Hamlette!

QUEEN and KING re-enter.

KING: The King formulates an evil and cunning plan!

HAMLETTE: (*runs back onstage and spikes skull if possible, otherwise spikes rubber chicken*) Touchdown!

QUEEN becomes HOST while everyone tidies the stage for the duel.

HOST: The King arranges a duel between Hamlette and Laertes. The King gives Laertes a poisoned sword to help Laertes win. The King also poisons a glass of wine for Hamlette to drink. All the court gathers to see this exciting duel. Meanwhile, Fortinbras is on his way from Norway to invade Denmark, since, in a little-known subplot, he's supposed to be the King!



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