

Like if we start right here with you. [*Indicating a member of the audience.*] You take it, read it, enjoy it, then pass it to the person next to you and so on down the row, and then you pass it behind you, and so on, back and forth and back and forth and back, and then if *you* wouldn't mind running it up to the balcony? Thanks, and then . . . forth and back and forth and back, and by the time it gets to *you* [*In the back.*] Jess and Adam should be back. So, Bob, if we could have some house lights, please? Ready? Ladies and gentlemen, Shakespeare's sonnets! [*Hands the card to first person in the audience.*] That first one's really good. [*Begins to hum a 'waiting tune' on a kazoo.*]

[JESS and ADAM enter at the back of the house and approach the stage.]

ADAM Honey, we're home!

DANIEL Jess and Adam, ladies and gentlemen! [*Retrieves the sonnet card.*]

ADAM [*Excited.*] We're back and ready to do *Hamlet*! Woo-hoo! H-E-L! M-E-T! H-E-L! M-E-T! What's that spell?

DANIEL/JESS/AUDIENCE Helmet.

ADAM Yeah! I gotta go put on my helmet! Woo-hoo! H-E-L . . . [*Exits.*]

DANIEL You gave him sugar, didn't you?

JESS No, I told him if he did *Hamlet*, I'd take him to Disneyland.

[DANIEL shrugs and exits.]

Right, where were we? Thirty-six plays down, one to go. Bob, could you please set the scene for perhaps the greatest play ever written in the English language. [*The lights change to a moody night scene.*] Helmet, the trag—*Hamlet . . . the Tragedy . . . of the Prince . . . of Denmark*. The place: Denmark.

The battlements of Elsinore castle. Midnight. Two guards enter.

[Exits. Enter A/BERNARDO and D/HORATIO, opposite.]

A/BERNARDO "Who's there?"

D/HORATIO Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

A/BERNARDO Long live the king.

D/HORATIO Bernardo?

A/BERNARDO He. 'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Fellatio.

D/HORATIO [Correcting him.] Horatio. For this relief, much thanks.

A/BERNARDO Well, good night.

D/HORATIO Peace, break thee off. Look where it comes!

[The ghost of Hamlet's father enters. Well, it's actually just a sweat sock with a happy face drawn on it with a marker, dangling from a fishing line upstage center. JESS makes ghostly moaning sounds from backstage.]

A/BERNARDO Mark it, Horatio. It would be spoke to.

D/HORATIO What art thou? By heaven, I charge thee, speak!

[JESS makes the sound of a cock crowing, and the sock disappears.]

'Tis gone.

A/BERNARDO It was about to speak when the sock crew.

D/HORATIO Break we our watch up; and by my advice, let us impart what we have seen tonight unto . . .

BOTH Hamlet, prince of Denmark!

[They exit together. Lights change to day. JESS enters as HAMLET.]

J/HAMLET O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew.  
That it should come to this, but two months dead.  
So loving to my mother. [*Pointing to a woman in the audience.*]

Frailty, thy name is woman."

Yeah, you!

"Married with mine uncle, my father's brother.  
The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth  
The marriage tables.

[HORATIO and BERNARDO appear in the up left doorway, observing HAMLET's fit of melancholy. BERNARDO nods for HORATIO to approach him. HORATIO enters as BERNARDO disappears.]

D/HORATIO My lord!

J/HAMLET Horatio!

[*They exchange a very silly Wittenberg University Danish Club handshake. Then.*]

Methinks I see my father.

D/HORATIO Where, my lord?

J/HAMLET In my mind's eye, Horatio.

D/HORATIO My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

J/HAMLET Saw who?

D/HORATIO The king, your father.

J/HAMLET The king my father? But where was this?

D/HORATIO Upon the platform where we watched.

J/HAMLET 'Tis very strange. I will watch tonight.

Perchance 'twill walk again. All is not well.

Would the night were come.



*[The stage lighting changes suddenly from day to night. JESS and DANIEL are impressed. They give a thumbs-up to the light booth, and commence pretending to be cold.]*

J/HAMLET The air bites shrewdly. It is very cold.

D/HORATIO Look, my lord, it comes!

J/HAMLET Angels and ministers of grace defend us.  
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

*[ADAM enters as the GHOST OF HAMLET'S FATHER. Beneath his armor he wears a ghostly robe that is somewhat reminiscent of a giant sweat sock.]*

A/GHOST Mark me!

J/HAMLET Speak. I am bound to hear.

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

J/HAMLET Murder!

D/HORATIO Murder!

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

J/HAMLET My uncle.

D/HORATIO Your uncle!

A/GHOST Let not the royal bed of Denmark  
Become a couch for incest."

J/HAMLET Incest!

D/HORATIO A couch!

A/GHOST "Adieu, Hamlet, remember me! *[Exits.]*

D/HORATIO My lord, this is strange.

J/HAMLET There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." So . . . [*Slapping*  
*him.*] piss off.

[HORATIO *exits.*]

"I hereafter shall think meet to put an antic disposition on.  
The time is out of joint. O cursed spite that ever I was born to  
exit right!

[HAMLET *exits left, then, embarrassed, re-enters and exits*  
*right. Lights change to day. DANIEL enters as POLONIUS. He*  
*takes his time, totters slowly downstage center, wheezing,*  
*until finally . . .*]

D/POLONIUS Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

[*He is tremendously satisfied with himself. He waddles*  
*toward the upstage right door, where he is run over by ADAM,*  
*entering screaming as OPHELIA.*]

D/POLONIUS How now, Ophelia. What's the matter?

A/OPHELIA My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,  
No hat upon his head, pale as his shirt,  
His knees knocking each other, and with a look  
So piteous in purport as if he had been loosed  
Out of hell to speak of horrors, he comes before me.

D/POLONIUS Mad for thy love?

A/OPHELIA I know not.

D/POLONIUS: Why, this is the very ecstasy of love.

I have found the cause of Hamlet's lunacy.  
Since brevity is the soul of wit, I will be brief:  
He is mad.

[HAMLET *enters reading a book, feigning madness.*]

Look you where the poor wretch comes reading.  
Away, I do beseech you.

5:10  
3  
Ends

5:10