

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

William Shakespeare

Dramatis Personae

Hamlet, *Prince of Denmark*

Claudius, *King of Denmark*

The Ghost of the dead king, *Hamlet's father*

Gertrude, *the Queen, Hamlet's mother, now Claudius's wife*

Polonius, *councillor*

Laertes, *Polonius's son, Ophelia's brother*

Ophelia, *Polonius's daughter, Laertes's sister*

Horatio, *Hamlet's friend*

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, *Hamlet's school friends*

A priest

Actors

Player king

Player queen

Lucianus

Act I

Scene I

Night. Battlements of the castle.

Enter Horatio, then Hamlet.

Horatio: Good evening, my Lord, Hamlet.

Hamlet: Good evening, my friend Horatio. It's midnight and it's cold. Why am I here? My father the king died three days ago and I'm very sad.

Horatio: Yes, my Lord, I see the melancholy in your eyes. The soldiers say that a ghost appears here every night. The ghost doesn't speak but I think that, if you are here, he will speak to you.

Hamlet: Why do you think that the ghost will speak to me, Horatio?

Horatio: Because the soldiers say that he looks like your dead father. Look, there's light over there!

The ghost appears and calls Hamlet with his hand. Exit Horatio.

Hamlet: Speak, ghost. What do you want?

Ghost: Listen to my story, Hamlet. I am your father's ghost. You are my son and you must revenge me.

Hamlet: Revenge? What for?

Ghost: I was killed. I was sleeping in the garden and my brother Claudius put some poison in my ear.

Hamlet: Are you saying that you are my father and that your brother Claudius, who is now the king, killed you?
Ghost: Hamlet, my son: My brother Claudius killed me and now he is the king and my wife is now his wife.
Hamlet: Oh, no, it's impossible! My uncle and my mother are criminals!
Ghost: You must kill him and revenge me! Goodbye.

Exit Ghost.

Hamlet: Wait, wait! Explain a little more! Oh, no, he's gone! But, was this really my father's ghost? Is it true that my uncle Claudius killed my father? I don't know, I don't know. Is this true or not? Was this ghost my father or not? Did my uncle kill him or not? What can I do? Let me think... Yes! I will say stupid things and everybody will think that I'm a fool and I will say things that only fools say and I will ask questions that only fools ask. Everybody will think that I'm a fool. I will look at my uncle Claudius and at my mother Gertrude. If it's true, I will revenge my father.

Enter Horatio.

Horatio: So, Hamlet. What did the ghost say?
Hamlet: Are you my friend, Horatio?
Horatio: Of course I am!
Hamlet: Well, then. There is no ghost. If they ask you, there was no ghost.
Horatio: But, my lord, I saw it.
Hamlet: No, you didn't see anything. Forget about it.
Horatio: Hamlet, I insist. You are my friend. If it is something bad, I want to help you.
Hamlet: Very well, Horatio. It's a secret. Swear that you won't speak about it.
Horatio: I swear.
Hamlet: Swear by my sword.
Horatio: I swear.
Hamlet: There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than we know of. Swear again.
Horatio: I swear, I swear.
Hamlet: Come with me now.

Exeunt.

Act II

Scene I

Enter Ophelia and Polonius.

Polonius: Explain a little more, Ophelia, daughter.
Ophelia: Father, I was in my room and Hamlet came. He didn't speak, he just looked at me for several minutes with a sad face. I asked him 'What's the matter, Hamlet', but he didn't answer. He took my hand, like this, and looked at it with his eyes very open, but he didn't say anything. Finally, he moved his

head up and down three times and he left.

Polonius: That's very strange. I will go and speak to King Claudius. I think he's in love with you and that's why he's so sad. Go back to your room now.

Exit Ophelia.

Enter Hamlet, reading a book.

book

Polonius: How are you today, Lord Hamlet?

Hamlet: Five o'clock.

Polonius: Huh? Do you know me?

Hamlet: Yes. You are a nurse.

Polonius: No, I'm not.

Hamlet: Are you an honest man?

Polonius: Yes, of course, I'm honest.

Hamlet: Have you got a daughter?

Polonius: I have, my lord.

Hamlet: Well, tell her not to walk in the sun because she can grow fat.

Polonius: *[aside]* He's really mad. He talks about my daughter Ophelia but he doesn't know me. I'm sure this is love. *[to Hamlet]* What do you read, my lord?

Hamlet: Word, words, words.

Polonius: Ah, are they interesting?

Hamlet: I don't know, but I don't like tea.

Polonius: *[aside]* What? He's mad! *[to Hamlet]* Have a nice day, my lord.

Hamlet: Goodbye and good life.

Exeunt.

Enter Claudius, Gertrude and Polonius.

Polonius: King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, I have important news for you.

Claudius: What is it, Polonius? Tell us.

Polonius: It's about your son, prince Hamlet.

Gertrude: Tell us, Polonius. I'm worried about him. He was happy and everybody loved him. Now he's sad and he doesn't want to talk to anybody.

Polonius: Well, my King, my Queen, I think I know. Look: Prince Hamlet is in love with my daughter Ophelia. I think that his love for Ophelia has made him mad.

Claudius: So, you think that Hamlet is mad because he's in love with Ophelia. That's possible... but what can we do?

Polonius: I have an idea: We can hide while Hamlet and Ophelia are talking. We will listen to their conversation and we will discover the truth.

Claudius: Very well. We will hide and listen to them while they're talking and then perhaps we can have an answer. Go and speak to your daughter.

Exit Polonius.

Scene II

Gertrude: Two of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in the castle. I saw them this morning and they are coming to say hello to you. Perhaps they can help us.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Rosencrantz,

Guildenstern: Good afternoon, my lord. Good afternoon, my lady.

Gertrude: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Claudius, do you remember Rosencrantz and Guildenstern?

Claudius: Yes, of course, you are Hamlet's friends from university. Has the queen explained Hamlet's problem to you?

Rosencrantz: Yes, sir. She's explained that our friend Hamlet, your son, is transformed and that he does strange things.

Claudius: Yes. I'm afraid he's mad and we don't know the reason. You are his best friends and perhaps, if you talk to him, you can find out what his real problem is and then we can all help him.

Guildenstern: We're happy to help the king and the queen and our friend Hamlet.

Claudius: Very well, then. Go and talk to him. Ask him questions and see what the problem is with him.

Rosencrantz,

Guildenstern: Yes, sir.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Scene III

Enter Polonius.

Polonius: I have some bad news, my lord.

Claudius: What is it, Polonius?

Polonius: The king of Norway, Fortinbras, is preparing for war. Our spies in Norway say that he's planning to invade Denmark.

Claudius: That's very bad. I'll have to prepare for war.

Polonius: I have some good news, too.

Claudius: What is it?

Polonius: A company of actors has arrived to the castle.

Claudius: Very well. We can watch a play. I'll go now and talk to my generals.

Exeunt Claudius and Polonius.

Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Polonius: My lord, I have news to tell you.

Hamlet: Are you a baby?

Polonius: No! I'm an old man.

Hamlet: You're right. They say an old man is twice a baby, so you're two babies.

Polonius: The news is that a company of actors is in the castle. They were in this

castle several times and you know them. You like plays and they are very good actors. They can do tragedy, comedy, history,...

Hamlet: Can they make daughters, old Leonardo?

Polonius: *[aside]* He's talking about my daughter again. But he calls me Leonardo. *[to Hamlet]* I think...

Hamlet: Because daughters are very difficult. Tell these actors to come and see me.

Polonius: Very well, sir. *[Out]* Come in, gentlemen.

Enter actors.

Hamlet: I'm happy to see you again, my friends. Do you have any new plays?

1st Actor: Yes, good Prince Hamlet. We have new tragedies, new comedies and new stories.

Hamlet: *[Aside]* I have an idea. *[To the actors]* Can you play *The Murder of Gonzago*?

1st Actor: Yes, my lord. It's a sad and terrible story.

Hamlet: Very well. You'll do it tomorrow. Could you study some 10 or twenty lines which I'll write and include them in the play?

1st Actor: Yes, my lord, there's no problem.

Hamlet: Go now, I'll give you these lines tonight.

1st Actor: Goodbye, my lord.

Exeunt Polonius and actors.

Hamlet: This is my idea: I can't ask Claudius if he killed my father, but I can play his crime and look at his face. If his face shows horror, I'll know that he killed my father and I'll kill him. But... what if his face doesn't show any emotion?

Act III

Scene I

Enter Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern.

Claudius: Tell me. Do you know what the problem with Hamlet is?

Rosencrantz: Not really. He is distracted and when we ask him what his problems are he doesn't answer. He speaks about something different.

Claudius: Is he nice to you?

Rosencrantz: Yes, he's very nice.

Guildenstern: But he's not the same as before.

Gertrude: Do you know anything that interests him?

Rosencrantz: Yes, my lady. A company of actors is in the castle and he was very interested in watching a play. He asked them to do a play tonight.

Claudius: Very good, very good. We will all watch this play tonight. Go, and be with him, gentlemen.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Claudius: Gertrude. Go now, because Polonius and me are going to hide here and watch Hamlet when he sees Ophelia.

Exit Gertrude.

Polonius: So, remember, Ophelia, sit here and read this book. When you see Hamlet, talk to him. We'll be hiding.
Ophelia: Yes, father.
Polonius: Quickly, here he comes. Pretend you are reading.

Claudius and Polonius hide. Ophelia sits down. Enter Hamlet, thinking.

Hamlet: To be, or not to be? That's the question. What shall we do when we have problems? Ignore the problems or fight them? To die is like to sleep? When we sleep, we dream and all the problems finish. But, if we die, do we dream? Yes, that's the problem: When we die and sleep, we dream. Why, if we have too many problems, don't we kill ourselves? Because we are afraid of the dreams we have when we die. We are cowards. - (Enter Ophelia, reading a book). But, who is here? Ah, Ophelia, sweet Ophelia. (To the audience). There's something strange in Ophelia today.
Ophelia: Hello, Hamlet, how are you today?
Hamlet: Ah, Ophelia, darling. Did you know that I loved you?
Ophelia: Yes, I love you too.
Hamlet: No, Ophelia, I never loved you. All women are stupid. They paint their faces and say stupid things. Go to a convent.

Exit Hamlet.

Ophelia: Oh, what a pity! A good man, a man I love, and he's mad. I'm very sad. Poor Hamlet. Everybody loved him and I was in love with him. He was the perfect prince. Now he's mad. *[Cries]*

Enter Claudius and Polonius.

Claudius: Love? A strange love it is! He's mad and he can be dangerous. Polonius, I don't think that love is the reason for Hamlet's madness. I'll send him to England. The king of England is my friend. Perhaps the English weather will be good for him.
Polonius: Perhaps, but I still think that his problem is love. Come, Ophelia.

Exeunt.

Scene II

Enter Hamlet and three of the actors.

Hamlet: Do you know the words?
1st Actor: Yes, my lord. They aren't difficult.
Hamlet: Are you ready for the play, then?
1st Actor: Yes, my lord, we're ready.
Hamlet: Go, then and get ready.

Exeunt actors.

Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Hamlet: Would the king like to watch a play?
Polonius: Yes, my lord, and the queen too.
Hamlet: Tell them to come and watch it.

Exit Polonius.

Hamlet: You two, go and help the actors.
Rosencrantz: Yes, sir.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Enter Horatio.

Horatio: Did you call me, my lord?
Hamlet: Yes, Horatio, my friend.
Horatio: What do you want?
Hamlet: Horatio, you are my friend and an intelligent man. There's a play tonight; one scene of this play is similar to what I've told you about my father's death. When you see it, look at my uncle, the king. Look at his face and think if you see in it that he killed my father.
Horatio: I'll do it. *[Music]*. Here they come.

Enter Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Claudius: How are you, Hamlet?
Hamlet: I eat the air.
Gertrude: *[To Hamlet]* Come and sit here with me.
Hamlet: No, mother, I prefer sitting here. *[To Ophelia]* Can I sit here with you?
Ophelia: Yes, please, sit here with me.
Hamlet: I don't want to sit down near you. I'll sit here.
Claudius: What's the title of the play?
Hamlet: It's *The Murder of Gonzago*. Do you know it?
Claudius: Yes, I know, it's a tragedy.
Hamlet: It's not a tragedy that you know it.
Claudius: What do you mean?
Hamlet: I mean that... Listen... the tragedy starts.

Music. Enter a king and a queen, hand in hand and happy. He lies down and goes to sleep. She leaves him. A man comes in, takes the king's crown, kisses it, puts poison in the king's ears and leaves. The queen returns, finds the king dead and is sad. The man comes in again and condole with her. They take the body away. The man gives the queen presents. At first she doesn't like them but then she accepts. Exeunt.

Tree
bottle

Ophelia: I don't recognize the story. I thought it was different.
Hamlet: It is different if different actors play it.
Ophelia: It's strange.
Hamlet: Woman's love is strange, too.

Enter the player king and queen.

Player king: Oh, what a beautiful morning!

Player queen: Oh, what a beautiful day! The sun is shining and this garden is very nice.

Player king: We are happy and I love you. Now I'm tired. I think I'll lie down and I'll sleep a few minutes. *[Lies down and goes to sleep].*

Player queen: Sleep well, darling. *[Exit].*

Hamlet: Do you like the play?

Queen: I don't like the lady much.

Claudius: I thought I knew the play, but it's different. What's the title, again?

Hamlet: *The Mousetrap*. It's a story in Vienna about a trap... for a mouse.

Enter Lucianus

Hamlet: This is Lucianus, the king's brother.

Ophelia: You know the play well.

Hamlet: I want to know, I want to know.

Lucianus: Ah, here is the king. This is my hand. This is poison. This is the king's ear.

Ophelia: King Claudius is getting up.

Hamlet: Any problem, sir?

Gertrude: Are you well, darling?

Claudius: No, I'm not well.

Polonius: Stop the play.

Claudius: I'm not well. I'm leaving.

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.

Hamlet: Did you see, Horatio, did you see? The ghost was right. Did you see King Claudius's face?

Horatio: Very well, my lord.

Hamlet: Did you see him getting up when the actor was going to put the poison in the king's ear?

Horatio: I did, my lord.

Hamlet: Claudius didn't like this comedy. For him, it's not a comedy, but a tragedy.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Guildenstern: My lord, can we talk?

Hamlet: Well, I can talk since I was a little child, and you?

Guildenstern: The king, sir...

Hamlet: He isn't very happy.

Hamlet: Why? Did he drink too much?

Guildenstern: No, my lord, he's angry.

Rosencrantz: And the queen is angry too. She asked us to tell you that she wants to talk to you in her bedroom.

Hamlet: Very well.

Enter the actors with recorders.

Hamlet: Give me that recorder. *[To Guildenstern]* Play.

Recorders

Guildenstern: Sir, I can't play.
Hamlet: It's easy. Cover the holes with your fingers, put the recorder in your mouth and blow, like this. *[Plays the recorder and hands it to Guildenstern].*
Guildenstern: Sir, I can't play.
Hamlet: You can't play a simple instrument and you want to play with me? I'm not an instrument. Don't play with me. Go now.

Scene III

Enter King, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Claudius: I don't like what Hamlet is doing. I've decided to send him to England. Go with him. Here's a letter for the king of England. Go and make ready.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Enter Polonius.

Polonius: My lord, Hamlet is going to his mother's bedroom. I will hide behind a curtain and listen. When they finish I'll come back and tell you what I heard.

Claudius: Thanks, Polonius.

Exit Polonius.

Claudius: Oh, what's in my head? Why am I so worried? I killed my brother, I am a criminal and there's blood in my hands. Can I go to church? Can I pray to God? Can God forgive me? Help, angels! *[He kneels.]*

Enter Hamlet with a sword.

Hamlet: Now is the time to kill Claudius, who killed my father and married my mother. Father, this is your revenge! But, what is Claudius doing? He's praying! Now, stop, Hamlet: He's speaking to God. If I kill him now, he'll go to Heaven and, no, I want him to go to Hell. Wait, Hamlet, and go to speak to your mother.

sword

Scene IV

Enter Gertrude and Polonius.

Polonius: Hamlet's coming. Talk to him. I'll hide behind those curtains. *[He hides.]*

Enter Hamlet.

Hamlet: Now, mother, what's the matter?
Gertrude: Hamlet, your father is very angry with you.
Hamlet: Mother, my father is very angry with you.
Gertrude: What are you saying? That's a bad answer.
Hamlet: That's a bad question.
Gertrude: What's the problem with you, Hamlet? I am your mother.

Hamlet: You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife and, yes, you're my mother.
Gertrude: You are impossible, Hamlet!

Polonius makes a noise behind the curtain.

Hamlet: A rat! There, behind the curtain. I'll kill it. *[Thrusts his sword through the curtain.]*
Polonius: O, I'm dead.
Gertrude: O me, what have you done?
Hamlet: I don't know. Is it the king? *[Lifts the curtain and discovers Polonius, dead.]*
Gertrude: You have killed him.
Hamlet: That's not as bad as kill a king and marry his brother.
Gertrude: Kill a king?
Hamlet: Yes, hypocrite. Two brothers, one a king, the other not. The king was your husband, but he's dead now. Who's the king now? Your new husband.
Gertrude: Stop. Don't speak to me. I'm crying.

Enter Ghost.

Hamlet: *[To the ghost.]* What do you want?
Gertrude: He's mad, he's speaking to the wall.
Ghost: Look at your mother. He married my brother, but I love her. Don't kill her. Speak to her.
Gertrude: Hamlet, son, why are you speaking to the wall. There's nobody there.
Hamlet: Look at him, mother.
Gertrude: Who are you speaking to?
Hamlet: Do you see nothing there?
Gertrude: Nothing at all.
Hamlet: Didn't you hear anything?
Gertrude: No, nothing.
Hamlet: Well, look, he's going – my father.

Exit Ghost.

Gertrude: You're mad, my son.
Hamlet: No, mother, I'm not mad. You must confess and repent. Good night. But don't go to my uncle's bed. Promise that you won't. I must go to England, you know that?
Gertrude: Yes, Claudius told me. You have to go with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They have a letter for the king of England.
Hamlet: Good night, mother.

Exit lugging in Polonius.

Act IV

Scene I

Gertrude, enter Claudius, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

- Claudius: Where's Hamlet? Why are you crying?
Gertrude: Ah, he's mad.
Claudius: What's happened?
Gertrude: He heard a noise behind the curtain and cried 'A rat, a rat' and killed Polonius.
Claudius: Oh, no, what a disgrace! He's mad. We loved him and we didn't know. Where's he now?
Gertrude: He took Polonius's body.
Claudius: Come, darling. This is so terrible.

Exeunt.

Scene II

Enter Gertrude and Ophelia.

- Gertrude: How are you, dear Ophelia?
Ophelia: *[Singing]* How should I your true love know
From another one?
By his cockle hat and staff
And his sandal shoon.
Gertrude: Why are you singing this song?
Ophelia: *[Singing]* He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone,
At his head a grass-green turf,
At his heels a stone.
Gertrude: But, Ophelia, what are you singing?

Enter Claudius

- Gertrude: Claudius, look at her.
Claudius: *[To Ophelia]* How are you, dear Ophelia?
Ophelia: *[Singing]* Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,
To be your Valentine.
Claudius: *[To Gertrude]* How long has she been like this?
Ophelia: Everything is going to be all right. My brother. Thank you. Come. Good night, ladies, good night. Sweet ladies, good night, good night. *[Exit]*
Claudius: Oh, what a disgrace! Ophelia is sick because her father died. When problems come, it's not just one, it's many: First, Ophelia's father, Polonius, killed. Then, your son, Hamlet, gone to England. And the people of Denmark

are worried now because they don't understand anything. Poor Ophelia! Her brother, Laertes, is coming from France.

Enter Laertes.

Laertes: *[Furious]* Oh, Claudius, my king. Where's my father? Why is he dead? Who killed him? I want revenge.
Claudius: Quiet, good Laertes.
Laertes: Quiet? My father is dead. I want revenge. Who killed him?
Claudius: Prince Hamlet.

Enter Ophelia.

Ophelia: O rose of May! My sister, Ophelia. A man's life is short. Spring, summer, autumn and winter. Spring... *[Sings.]*
Laertes: What are you saying, Ophelia?
Ophelia: Here, some flower. These roses are for you, these violets are for me. Here's a daisy. *[Sings] He is gone, he is gone, And we cast away moan. God a mercy on his soul. [Exit]*
Laertes: What? My sister Ophelia is mad? Why? Do you see this, my king?
Claudius: Laertes, I'm very sorry. Calm down now and get ready for your father's funeral.

flowers

Exeunt.

Scene III

Enter Horatio.

Horatio: A letter from Hamlet. Let's open it and read. *Dear Horatio. I was going to England in a ship but some pirates attacked us and I'm their prisoner. They didn't take any other prisoners, so Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are still going to England. But these pirates are good people and they will not kill me. I'll write again soon. Your friend, Hamlet. How strange! [Exit.]*

letter

Scene IV

Enter Claudius and Laertes.

Laertes: Again, my king. Why don't you arrest and kill the man who killed my father?
Claudius: For two reasons: One: His mother loves him. Two: The people of Denmark love him. That's why I've sent him to England, where he can't do anything bad to us.
Laertes: I don't like this. I have to accept it because you're the king.

Enter Gertrude.

Gertrude: Laertes, Laertes! Oh, what a disgrace! Your sister Ophelia has drowned in the river!

Laertes: What? Where? How?
Gertrude: Do you remember the flowers? She was by the river, singing about roses, and violets and daisies. She saw some flowers and wanted to take them, but she fell into the river. Horatio, who was with her, couldn't save her.
Laertes: First a father, now a sister!

Exeunt.

Act V

Scene I

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

Horatio: It's cold and dark in this cemetery.
Hamlet: *[Picking up a skull]* Look at this skull. This could be... a politician.
Horatio: Yes, it could.
Hamlet: Or a teacher, or an actor. Look at this tomb. It's Yorick's tomb.
Horatio: Who was Yorick?
Hamlet: A clown in the castle. A very intelligent man. He always played with me when I was a baby. Look at him now. We all die.
Horatio: Sh! Someone's coming.
Hamlet: Let's hide and see who they're burying today. *[They hide.]*

Skull
tombstone

Enter a priest, Claudius, Queen, Laertes; with a coffin.

Hamlet: Look, it's the king and the queen.
Horatio: And Laertes, a young man. He is Polonius's son.
Hamlet: Why are they here today?
Horatio: I don't know.
Laertes: Goodbye, my sister. We bury here today. We all love you and you are in heaven now.
Hamlet: What, the beautiful Ophelia!
Gertrude: *[Scattering flowers]* Flowers for a beautiful young girl.
Hamlet: *[To the queen and the others]* What's happening? Why is Ophelia dead? I am Hamlet. I was going to England but I'm back now.
Laertes: *[Grappling with him]* What are you doing here? You must go to hell!
Hamlet: Take your hands off me. I am dangerous.
Claudius: Quit, you two!
Gertrude: Hamlet, Hamlet!
Horatio: Be quiet, my lord.
Hamlet: Nobody's going to stop me. I loved Ophelia.
Claudius: He's mad, Laertes. Stop.
Hamlet: Mad? Ophelia is dead and I want to be dead with her. *[Exit]*
Claudius: Horatio, go after him.

Coffin
flowers

Exit Horatio.

Claudius: Gertrude, go home and rest. Priest, go with her.

Exeunt Gertrude and Priest.

Claudius: Laertes, come here. You want revenge, don't you.
Laertes: Yes, I want to revenge my father Polonius and my sister Ophelia.
Claudius: But you can't kill Hamlet, I told you.
Laertes: Yes sir, but...
Claudius: I have an idea. Listen. I know you're good with the sword.
Laertes: I am, sir.
Claudius: This is my idea. Tell Hamlet that you are friends again. One day, suggest that you have a friendly fight with the swords. Nobody can die, because it's a game. But... I'll put some poison in your sword. You just, accidentally, touch him. You finish the game and you go home, but in fifteen minutes the poison will kill Hamlet. If you don't touch him, I will put some poison in his glass of wine, too.
Laertes: That's a great idea, sir. We'll do that.

Exeunt.

Scene II

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

Horatio: Tell me what happened on the way to England.
Hamlet: One night in the ship I couldn't sleep. I got up and walked. I saw a letter from Claudius to the king of England.
Horatio: Did you read it?
Hamlet: Yes. It said: *England and Denmark are friends. I ask you to kill Hamlet.*
Horatio: What?! And what did you do?
Hamlet: I wrote a different letter. It said: *England and Denmark are friends. I ask you to kill the people who give you this letter.* The next day, the pirates attacked our ship.
Horatio: So the king of England killed Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Hamlet: I suppose so. They were my friends when we were at university, but then they were Claudius's friends, not mine. It was their destiny.

Enter Laertes

Laertes: Hamlet, I come as a friend.
Hamlet: A friend?
Laertes: Yes, Hamlet. We were friends when we were children. We can be friends again. Look. I know you like fighting with swords. Why don't we play tonight?
Hamlet: Very well. We'll meet tonight.

Exeunt.

A table prepared. Music. Enter Claudius, Gertrude, Hamlet, Horatio and Laertes, with swords.

Table
swords
bottles (2)
glasses

Claudius: Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me. *[Puts Laerte's hand into Hamlet's.]*

Hamlet: I'm very sorry, Laertes. I killed your father, Polonius, but it was an accident, and I really loved your sister Ophelia.

Laertes: I know, Hamlet. It was an accident.

Claudius: Give me the swords, Horatio. Which one do you prefer, Hamlet?

Hamlet: Any of them. *[Claudius gives him one of them and the other one to Laertes, putting some poison on its tip.]*

 Come on, Laertes.

Laertes: Come on, Hamlet. *[They play.]*

Hamlet: One.

Laertes: No.

Hamlet: Judgment.

Claudius: A hit, yes, a hit.

Laertes: Well, again.

Claudius: Stop. I'm going to drink. Hamlet, drink.

Hamlet: I'll play first. *[They play again.]*

 Another hit.

Laertes: Yes.

Gertrude: I'm going to drink.

Claudius: No!

Gertrude: Of course, I want to drink. *[She drinks.]* Do you want to drink, Hamlet?

Claudius: *[Aside]* Oh, no!, Too late! It's the glass with the poison.

Hamlet: No, thanks, mother. *[They play again. Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change swords.]*

Claudius: Stop. You must be tired.

Hamlet: No, we'll continue. *[He wounds Laertes. The Queen falls.]*

Horatio: Look at the queen!

Laertes: I'm dying!

Gertrude: The drink, the drink! Oh, my dear Hamlet! The drink, the drink! It's poison.

Hamlet: What? Who?

Laertes: You're going to die, Hamlet. With your sword. It has poison. I'm going to die too. Your mother drank poison, too, and she's going to die.

Hamlet: What? Poison in the sword? Then, poison, work! *[He wounds Claudius.]*

Claudius: Oh, I'm going to die!

Hamlet: Here, you, who killed my father and married my mother, drink this poison. Die. *[Claudius dies.]*

Laertes: I'm very sorry, Hamlet. Sorry. You are a good man. Your father is dead and my father is dead, too. Claudius was a bad man and a bad king. Sorry. *[He dies.]*

Hamlet: Goodbye, Laertes. You were a good man, too. Goodbye, mother. Horatio, I'm dying. You're alive. Tell my story. The rest is silence.

Marching music.

Horatio: Listen. That's the Norwegian army. They come to see the king. But there's no king. The old king is dead, the new king is dead, and Hamlet, would be the future king and, perhaps the best one, is dead too. This tragedy is the end of the kings of Denmark, and this is the true story of carnal, bloody, unnatural acts, of accidental judgements, killings and deaths.