

THE FICTIONAL DETECTIVE

Written by

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"The Fictional Detective" is a script in hand, live on stage recreation of an old time radio broadcast or a brand new comedy mystery podcast. The play is written to be performed by actors at microphones reading from scripts.

The set may be as minimal as a row of chairs for the actors and two or three microphones for them to speak into. The set can be as elaborate as a full recreation of a recording studio or anything in between.

The cast can be a full compliment of actors or a minimal number playing all the parts and changing their vocal characteristics to represent the characters they are playing.

Because the actors will be reading from scripts rehearsal times can be reduced although performances should be honed before going on stage.

Sound effects and music can be performed live on stage or recorded and played back electronically. The latter may provide you with more variety and flexibility.

However you choose to mount your production of The Fictional Detective, it is a comedy, so hopefully you will have as much performing it as the audience will have watching you perform it.

CAST

DICK SHAMUS - Hard boiled private eye

EFFIE - Shamus's secretary

KING HAMLET - Dying King of Denmark

OPHELIA - Femme Fatale

HAMLET - Young, ambivalent Prince Of Denmark

GERTRUDE - Queen of Denmark

CLAUDIUS - New husband and new King of Denmark.

POLONIUS - Doddering old man

ONE EYE - Scurvy sea dog

LAERTES - Hamlet's nemesis

KING HAMLET'S GHOST - Spooky and haunted

HERALD - Ring announcer

PLAYER KING

VARIOUS GUARDS AND OTHERS

ACT ONE

LIGHTS UP

(Cast enters, scripts in hand, and take their seats behind a row of stand up microphones. The actors playing the Stage Manager and Shamus approach the microphones)

STAGE MANAGER

We go in five...four... three... two...

(Points at Shamus)

SHAMUS

It ended like most of my cases with everybody dead. The King was dead. The Queen was dead. The prince was almost dead.

HAMLET

The potent poison o'er crows my spirit...
(the rest is spoken
in a highly dramatic
fashion)
...and the rest is silence.

SHAMUS

Unfortunately, for a guy who was checking out, Prince Hamlet had a lot to say.

HAMLET

O' good friend, if thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, absent thee from felicity awhile and in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain to tell my story.

SHAMUS

Sure, I owe you that much. I'll tell your story. Or, better yet, I'll make it an episode of my big hit radio show (or..big hit podcast.)

(Stirring music up and under)

ANNOUNCER

(dramatic)

It's The Adventures of Dick Shamus, Fictional Detective starring Jason Tindal as Dick Shamus. Tonight's episode... "Murder At Elsinore."

(Stirring music out. After a a beat we hear a bluesy film noir saxophone up and under)

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus... Dick Shamus. I work for the F.B.I. The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature. That's right. I'm a fictional detective.

(Saxophone out)

SHAMUS

It was raining that Monday I got back to the office. I'd just wrapped up "The Garden Of Eden Murder Case" and I was feeling pretty good about myself. The brother did it in the field with a rock. A big rock. A very big rock. I had slipped in to my chair and was about to light one up when Effluenza Wachowski, my overdeveloped secretary with the underdeveloped typing skills, pulsed in.

(SFX: Drumbeats to underscore Effie's walk)

SHAMUS

She perched herself on the edge my desk and crossed her legs. They were good and she knew it. She took a wooden match from a holder, struck it on the inside of her thigh...

(SFX: Match being struck)

SHAMUS

and lit up my smoke, among other things.

EFFIE

You got a message.

SHAMUS

She said in a voice that made grown men glad they were grown men.

SHAMUS

Who from? I asked.

EFFIE

The King of Denmark. She answered.

SHAMUS

What'd he want? I inquired.

EFFIE

You.

SHAMUS

She murmured monosyllabically.

SHAMUS

Who doesn't? I wheezed ironically.

EFFIE

You want me to make list?

SHAMUS

She purred sarcastically.

SHAMUS

Did he say what it was about? I probed, probingly.

EFFIE

Said he thinks someone is trying to kill him.

SHAMUS

She sighed.

SHAMUS

Did this king say where I could find him?

EFFIE

Elsinore. And before you ask, it's in Denmark. I looked it up.

SHAMUS

Thanks, apple hips.

NARRATOR

I watched her undulate to the door.

(SFX: Drumbeats)

SHAMUS

I never knew a dame who could exit a room like Effie.

SHAMUS

Come Christmas, remind me to put a little something extra in your stocking.

EFFIE

You tried that once, remember?

SHAMUS

She said glancing back over one of her two shoulders. That's another thing I liked about her. The girl had two of everything. I watched her go, grabbed my trench coat, cued my saxophone accompaniment...

(MUSIC: Bluesy saxophone begins to play.)

SHAMUS

...and headed for thirteenth century Denmark. The directions were pretty straight forward. Turn right at Belgium. But finding Elsinore was a whole different story.

(Saxophone fades out)

I was told to look for a castle perched on a cliff overlooking a stark and angry sea. The problem was Denmark was lousy with castles perched on a cliff overlooking a dark and angry sea. A hay wagon, which passed for Danish public transport, dropped me at the foot of the castle. The joint gave me the willies. It was dark, dank, dingy, damp, decaying, dreary, dismal and depressing. It reminded me of a dame I was once crazy about. I announced myself at the gate. The guard told me I was expected.

GUARD

(gruff voice)

You're expected.

SHAMUS

He told me I'd find the king resting in the garden.

GUARD

You'll find the king resting in the garden.

SHAMUS

I found the king in the garden alright, but he wasn't resting.

KING HAMLET

(his voice choking)

Murder most foul.

SHAMUS

Yeah, it usually is.

KING HAMLET

In my ear.

SHAMUS

(bellowing)

Yeah, it usually is.

KING HAMLET

You don't have to shout. I'm dying, not deaf.

SHAMUS

You said in your ear.

KING HAMLET

Poison in my ear.

SHAMUS
That'd do it.

KING HAMLET
Hamlet.

SHAMUS
You were poisoned by a small village?

KING HAMLET
My son.

SHAMUS
Oh, you're son poisoned you.

KING HAMLET
No, no. My son didn't poison me. He must avenge me. Help him Shamus. Help Hamlet avenge me. Promise me, Shamus. Promise me.

SHAMUS
Yeah... Sure... I'll get the guy who poisoned you. Just one question.

KING HAMLET
Yes?

SHAMUS
Who poisoned you?

KING HAMLET
It was... It was...

SHAMUS
Yeah? It was..?

(King hamlet chokes, coughs and dies.)

SHAMUS
How do you spell that? He didn't answer. He was dead. And one thing you learn in the detective game is that dead men give lousy answers. At the beginning of every case I look to look around. See what I can see and what I can't see. What you can't see is sometimes more important than what you can't see. Only problem is you can't see it.

(MUSIC: Bluesy saxophone plays)

SHAMUS
And then she walked into my life. Suddenly what I could see beat the hell out of whatever it was I couldn't see.

OPHELIA

Well, hello, there tall, dark and out of place.

SHAMUS

She was wearing a diaphanous gown that was dropping more
hins than a bad game show.

(Saxophone out)

SHAMUS

She told me her name was Ophelia.

OPHELIA

My name is Ophelia.

SHAMUS

But her friends called her... Feelya.

OPHELIA

But my friends call me... Feelya.

SHAMUS

She said I must be the...

OPHELIA

Could you please stop doing that.

SHAMUS

Sorry, sweet knees, force of habit.

OPHELIA

My father warned me about men like you.

SHAMUS

Oh yeah? What did he say?

OPHELIA

He said you were T...R...O...U...B...L...E.

SHAMUS

Looks and brains. Dames like this always spelled trouble.
I'm looking for a prince named Hamlet. You know him?

OPHELIA

Intimately.

NARRATOR

The way she said "intimately" led me to believe she knew the
prince... "pretty well."

SHAMUS

Know where I can find him?

OPHELIA

Through that door, down the corridor, past the turret, through the main hall, turn right at the armory, left at the keep, right at the chapel, right again at the throne room, down the next corridor and around the second west tower. It will be the third door on your right.

SHAMUS

Is there a shortcut?

OPHELIA

That is the short cut.

SHAMUS

Thanks, sweet cheeks.

OPHELIA

Anytime... And I do mean "anytime."

SHAMUS

I watched her walk away on legs that began where you'd expect legs to begin, around floor level and end where you don't expect them to end... just below her ears. I followed her directions to find Prince Hamlet.

(Stretch the following SFX sequence as long as you can. The longer the run the more the laughs.)

SFX: Footsteps, more footsteps and even more footsteps. A door opens. A door closes. More footsteps. Even more footsteps. Door open. A WOMAN SCREAMS. Door closes. More footsteps. More footsteps. Even more footsteps. Door opens.)

SHAMUS

Oh, I'm sorry.

WOMAN

(seductively)

On, that's alright. Quite alright.

(Door closes... More footsteps. Even more footsteps. Door opens)

MAN

It's back that way.

SHAMUS

Damn.

(More footsteps)

SHAMUS

(out of breath)

Out of breath, ten pounds lighter and vowing to join a gym, I stumbled into a room where I found the prince talking to the strangest bunch of men I'd ever seen.

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it trippingly on the tongue.

SHAMUS

Some were dressed as fools.

HAMLET

But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had a lief the town crier spoke my lines.

SHAMUS

Some were wearing women's clothes.

HAMLET

Nor do not saw the air much with your hand too much.

SHAMUS

And all of them were wearing make up.

HAMLET

Thus by use all gently...

SHAMUS

This could only mean one thing.
(voice dripping with disdain)

They were actors.

(calls out)

Prince Hamlet.

HAMLET

Not now, man. Can't you see I'm...
(with a flourish)
...directing.

SHAMUS

You're father sent me.

HAMLET

Alright everyone take five.

HAMLET

How is dear old popsy?

SHAMUS

Dear old popsy is dear old deadsy.

HAMLET

Deadsy?

SHAMUS

As a door nail.

HAMLET

Oh, poppycock. There must be some mistake.

SHAMUS

No mistake prince. He's dead. Bought the farm. Checked into the wooden Waldorf. Achieved room temperature.

HAMLET

If I had a florin for every time I've heard that.

SHAMUS

Trust me. This time he's dead. Murdered.

HAMLET

Murdered?

SHAMUS

Murdered. Any idea who'd want to zotz your old man?

HAMLET

You mean outside of a few neighboring kings, the husbands of the women he defiled, the entire royal court and the peasants whose land he stole?

SHAMUS

Yeah, outside of that.

HAMLET

Nobody I cant think of.

SHAMUS

There's one more thing.

HAMLET

What's that?

SHAMUS

Before he died, he told me he wanted you to avenge his murder.

HAMLET

He wants me to do what?

SHAMUS

Avenge his murder.

HAMLET

You mean as in kill someone?

SHAMUS

I don't think he wanted you to take 'em dancing.

HAMLET

Me? Kill someone? Don't be ridiculous. I'm a prince. A member of the royal family. We don't go around killing, willy nilly. We have people for that. And what makes you think my father was murdered?

SHAMUS

Just the word of a dying man.

HAMLET

Tell you what. You bring me proof my father was murdered and the name of murderer and we'll talk about it. Until then...

(spoken with a
theatrical flourish)

...the theatre beckons.

SHAMUS

Most homicides are committed by someone the victim knew. It could be someone who loved him. It could be someone who hated him. Or, it could be someone who, from time to time, just wanted him dead. The wife was the logical place to start.

(Musical transition)

GERTRUDE

Yes, yes, sit Lord and Lady Godiva where you think best. Just make sure the slut knows the affair isn't clothing optional.

SECRETARY

Yes, majesty.

GERTRUDE

That will be all.

SECRETARY

Yes, majesty.

NARRATOR

I'd been told the Queen was once the most beautiful women in Scandinavia, which is no small potatoes when it comes to good looking dames. And there she was... as advertised. Tall, blonde and throwing more curves my way than the Yankees bullpen.

SHAMUS

Your majesty.

GERTRUDE

Yes, yes, what is it?

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus. I was with your late husband when he died.

GERTRUDE

My late husband?

SHAMUS

King Hamlet.

GERTRUDE

Oh, that husband.

SHAMUS

I was wondering if you could spare a few moments.

GERTRUDE

I suppose. But make it short. I'm very busy.

SHAMUS

I can well imagine planning a state funeral on such short notice would be stressful.

GERTRUDE

State funeral?

SHAMUS

Your husband.

GERTRUDE

My husband?

SHAMUS

The late king.

GERTRUDE

Oh, of course. That husband. Oh, no. All of the funeral arrangements have been made. No, I was talking about my wedding.

SHAMUS
Wedding?

GERTRUDE
Yes, my wedding.
(sings)
I'm getting married in the morning. Ding dong the bells are gonna chime.

SHAMUS
Congratulations.

GERTRUDE
Oh, thank you. You're very kind.

SHAMUS
Who's the lucky guy?

GERTRUDE
Claudius.

SHAMUS
Claudius?

GERTRUDE
Oh, I'm sorry. You're new to Elsinore, aren't you? Claudius... the late king's brother.

SHAMUS
You're marrying King Hamlet's brother?

GERTRUDE
Yes, I am.

SHAMUS
Won't that make you your own sister in law?

GERTRUDE
I know it might seem a little unusual to marry with King Hamlet being dead only three days.

SHAMUS
Twelve hours.

GERTRUDE
Twelve hours. Really? It seems so much longer. You must understand mister... uh?

SHAMUS
Shamus.

GERTRUDE

Shamus. Yes, of course. You see the late king and I were not what you would close... No, not close at all. Perhaps there are some women who prefer a man who ignores them. Treats them badly. Flaunts other women in front of them

SHAMUS

I'm counting on it.

GERTRUDE

A man who never... How should I put it?

(Her voice drops
about three sultry
octaves)

A man who never slips them the high, hard one. Sweeps out the chimney. Threads the old needle. Lays a little pipe now and then.

NARRATOR

I thought Gertrude was done. But I was wrong. The Queen was on a roll.

GERTRUDE

And then along came Claudius. Slow walking Claudius. Slow talking Claudius.

(dreamily)

He is so different from his brother. Warm. Loving.

SHAMUS

Alive.

GERTRUDE

An important quality in a man, wouldn't you say Mr. Shamus. Now, what is it you wanted to talk to me about?

SHAMUS

Just wondered if you knew who'd want to murder your husband?

GERTRUDE

Murder King Hamlet? Ridiculous. Everyone loved King Hamlet.

SHAMUS

Except for you.

GERTRUDE

Of course. But I was married to him. If you have no further questions.

SHAMUS

Just one. With your husband dead, who gets to be king?

GERTRUDE

Claudius will ascend to the throne.

SHAMUS

I'm sure he will. But who gets to be king?

GERTRUDE

Claudius.

SHAMUS

But isn't your son Hamlet next in line?

GERTRUDE

Have you met my son, Mr. Shamus?

SHAMUS

Yes, I have.

GERTRUDE

Then you understand. A king must be commanding. Decisive. My son couldn't figure out which way to go on a one way street. Which is why I always wondered.

SHAMUS

Wondered what, your majesty?

GERTRUDE

Wondered if the king really was his father.

*(Musical transition.
SFX: Muffled crowd noise)*

PRIEST

(chanting)

I can beat you at domino.....ooohhhhs.

MOURNERS

(chanting in response)

Oh no you caa...annn't.

PRIEST

Ashes to ashes. Dust to dust. King Hamlet will soon be rust.

MOURNER

Amen to that brother.

SHAMUS

The Queen didn't waste any time planting the old man. But King Hamlet's funeral service turned out to be just the opening act. Gertrude had a surprise up her sleeve.

PRIEST

Will her majesty please prepare herself.

SHAMUS

The one thing you don't expect at a funeral is a surprise

GERTRUDE

Ladies, if you will.

SHAMUS

Like a well oiled Nascar pit crew, the Queen's ladies in waiting stripped off the hooded black robe she'd been wearing

MOURNERS

Ooooooooo.

SHAMUS

There was the Queen in all her glory. Well, not exactly all her glory but damn close. She was wearing a curve hugging, neck line plunging, full length wedding gown that showed off a body that wouldn't quit or even take five minutes off.

(A loud round applause and cheers from the Mourners.)

MOURNER

A standing ovation. Something else you don't usual get at a burial. Gertrude had put the fun back in funeral.

SHAMUS

Hamlet wasn't happy.

HAMLET

I can believe she's doing this.

SHAMUS

But Hamlet was never happy.

SHAMUS

Ophelia was appalled.

OPHELIA

I can't believe she wore white.

SHAMUS

After the usual boilerplate chatter about the sanctity of marriage, love, honor, fidelity that only reinforced my take that marriage was a mug's game.

PRIEST

Do you Gertrude, Queen of Denmark take Claudius to be your lawfully wedded husband, to love and honor, forsaking all others.

GERTRUDE

Especially the forsaking all others part.

PRIEST

And you do you Claudius...?

CLAUDIUS

I'll take it from here, father. I Claudius do take thee Gertrude to be my lawfully bedded wife.

PRIEST

Sir, that is hardly...

CLAUDIUS

You do it your way padre and I'll do it mine.

SHAMUS

Before the priest could say "You many kiss the bride" Claudius laid one of her.

(Oooooing and ahhing from the spectators)

SHAMUS

The way they were going at it, you wondered if the happy couple were going to consummate the marriage right there on the old man's grave. Not wanting to ruin a romantic moment, I waited patiently for Claudius to remove his tongue from the queen's mouth before stepping in to offer my best wishes. Congratulations, Gert. That was quite a ceremony. Never saw anything like it.

GERTRUDE

Well, with everyone here we thought we would kill two birds with one stone.

CLAUDIUS

And who is this... this person?

GERTRUDE

Oh, dear me, where are my manners? Claudius this is Mr..

SHAMUS

Shamus.

GERTRUDE

Yes, of course, Mr. Shamus. He was with my dear departed husband when he dear... departed.

CLAUDIUS

Really?

SHAMUS

Yeah, really.

CLAUDIUS
Tell me Mr... uh?

SHAMUS
Shamus.

CLAUDIUS
Shamus. Yes, of course. Did my brother say anything while he was...?

SHAMUS
Dying?

CLAUDIUS
Yes, while he was... as you put it... dying.

SHAMUS
I coulda told him his brother was poisoned. I coulda told him the poison was poured in his ear. I coulda told him the King wanted his son...

CLAUDIUS
(impatiently)
Well sir, did my brother say anything before he shuttled off this mortal coil?

SHAMUS
He didn't do no shuffling, Claude. I can tell ya that. Just coughed and died.

CLAUDIUS
Coughed and died.

SHAMUS
Coughed and died.

CLAUDIUS
That's good to know. Well, it was nice meeting you mister...

SHAMUS
Shamus.

CLAUDIUS
Shamus. If you'll excuse us now, it's time I made my ascension to the throne.

SHAMUS
And with that, Claudius placed his hand firmly on the Queen's royal keester and announced for all to hear...

CLAUDIUS
Once more into the breach, dear friends. Once more into the breach.

GERTRUDE

Oh, Claudius, you are such a bad boy.

(Musical transition)

ARISTOCRAT

Liar

PEASANT

Thief

WOMAN

Reprobate

SHAMUS

Those were the nice things people had to say about the old king. But so far nobody was pointing a finger except straight up. I was getting nowhere and I was getting there fast. I needed to make the killer come to me. It was time to shake things up, stir the pot, throw a few bombs.

HAMLET

You want to do what?

SHAMUS

Shake things up. Stir the pot. Throw a few bombs.

HAMLET

What's this?

SHAMUS

It's a scene.

HAMLET

A scene?

SHAMUS

A scene. For a play. For your play.

HAMLET

And you wrote this.

SHAMUS

That's right. I wrote it.

HAMLET

And you want me to put this in my play.

SHAMUS

That's exactly what I want you to do.

HAMLET

I'll tell you what. Why don't you leave these pages with me and I'll get back to you.

SHAMUS

This ain't an audition, kid. You ain't Cecil B. DeMille and I don't do second drafts, polishes or a punch ups. This scene goes as is. We got one chance to smoke out the killer and I don't intend to blow it.

HAMLET

If you ask me, this is all much ado about nothing. My father was the king. Someone was going to do it sooner or later. Here in Denmark, we don't call it homicide or regicide or whatever fancy word you want to use.

SHAMUS

What do you call it?

HAMLET

Tradition.

SHAMUS

Well, someone cares. Me. Now, I may be lousy at a lot of stuff and there are a few things I've done in my life that I'm not too proud of. But, going back on a promise to a dying king ain't one of them. Do we understand each other, kid?

HAMLET

I suppose you'll want a writing credit.

SHAMUS

Relax, Shakespeare. The only thing I care about is nailing the the guy who offed your old man. The way I see it, the killer had to be someone who had easy access to your father. Someone he trusted. Someone who could get close to him. Someone who had the three M's.

HAMLET

The three M's? What in the world are the three M's?

SHAMUS

Method, motive and..

HAMLET

And what?

SHAMUS

Mopportunity.

HAMLET
What's this scene of yours have to do with any of this?

SHAMUS
It's a ploy.

HAMLET
What's a ploy?

SHAMUS
The play.

HAMLET
What about the play.

SHAMUS
It's the ploy.

HAMLET
The play's the ploy.

SHAMUS
And the ploy's the play.

HAMLET
Let me get this straight. The play's the ploy and the ploy's the play'

SHAMUS
Actually, that's the play within the play.

HAMLET
What's the play within the play?

SHAMUS
The ploy.

HAMLET
The ploy?

SHAMUS
I call it The Mousetrap.

HAMLET
Call what The Mousetrap?

SHAMUS
The play within the play.

HAMLET
I thought that was the ploy.

SHAMUS
It is.

HAMLET
The play within the play

SHAMUS
That's what makes it a ploy.

HAMLET
The play?

SHAMUS
The play within the play.

HAMLET
The Mousetrap.

SHAMUS
Which is the play within the play.

HAMLET
Let me see if I've got this right. The play is a ploy and the ploy is the play and The Mousetrap is the play within the play that makes the play a ploy.

SHAMUS
We don't want to tip our hand, so whatever you do, don't repeat that to anyone.

HAMLET
I don't think I could if I wanted to.

SHAMUS
Remember my young friend, the play's the think wherein we'll catch the conscience of the...

HAMLET
The what?

SHAMUS
The dirtbag who did it.

*(Musical transition
SFX: Crowd murmuring)*

SHAMUS
It was showtime at the palace. The curtain was about to go up on Hamlet's play. Everyone who was anyone, or wanted to be anyone, was there. I'd put all my cards on The Mousetrap to flush out the killer. Like I always say, conscience does make cowards of us all. Gertrude was center stage as usual
(MORE)

SHAMUS (cont'd)

showing off the rock that occupied most of her fourth finger.

GERTRUDE

Claudius got it for me. He ripped it off the finger of the queen of some country he was pillaging. He's so thoughtful, that way.

SHAMUS

Claudius, now King Claudius, was surrounded by ladies both young and not so young, laughing... flirting...fawning.

YOUNG WOMAN

(flirtatiously)

Oh, your majesty.

SHAMUS

The position of royal mistress was now open and Claudius was accepting applications.

SECOND WOMAN

(flirtatiously)

Well, I really shouldn't.

SHAMUS

Royal mistress was an appointed post in the Danish government. Like ambassador to France, but with different responsibilities. I was backstage watching Hamlet give his actors their final instructions.

HAMLET

Speak the speech I pray you...

SHAMUS

When Feelya walked in on the arm of a doddering old man. She was wearing a black gown that clung to her like saran wrap. She looked good in black. The color accented her cherry red lips, brought out the apple in her cheeks and complimented her peaches and cream complexion. I couldn't be sure if I was falling for the dame or just low on vitamin C.

OPHELIA

Mr. Shamus, I'd like you to meet my father, Polonius.

SHAMUS

Nice to meet you Pole. Any father of Ophelia is a father...

POLONIUS

(interrupting)

Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

SHAMUS

With what I make, there's no...

POLONIUS

(interrupting again)

To thine own self be true...

OPHELIA

Later for the wise sayings, father. Why don't you find our seats.

POLONIUS

Yes, yes, our seats.

(wandering off)

There's no business like show business.

OPHELIA

Will you be attending the after party Mr. Shamus?

SHAMUS

I don't know. Who's gonna be there?

OPHELIA

I'll be there and if you show up that will make two of us.

SHAMUS

I'll look forward to it Lady Ophelia.

OPHELIA

Please... Feelya.

SHAMUS

I'll be looking forward to that as well.

OPHELIA

Until later.

SHAMUS

There was something about the girl that drew me to her like a moth to a flame. Like iron filings to a magnet. Like something that draws something to something else.

PLAYER KING

(full out ham

actorish performance)

Full thirty times hath Phoebus cart gone round Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground.

SHAMUS

Five acts, four hours and a thousand yawns later, Hamlet's production crept in its petty pace to its sleep inducing conclusion. I had no idea if anyone had stayed awake long enough to see the Mousetrap, let alone have their conscience stirred.

HAMLET

Well, Mr. Shamus what did you think?

SHAMUS

What did I think? I thought I was glad I didn't have any money in this turkey. That's what I thought. What I said was "It's too soon to tell."

HAMLET

I thought you of all people would be more encouraging.

SHAMUS

I was talking about my scene.

HAMLET

So you do want a writing credit.

SHAMUS

I want to catch a killer.

HAMLET

Of course... The killer... It's always about the killer. Well, do you know who it is?

SHAMUS

I have my suspicions.

HAMLET

What are you going to do now?

SHAMUS

Now that the killer knows you know how the old man was poisoned?

HAMLET

Yes. I suppose. Now that the killer knows that I know how the old man was killed.

SHAMUS

Wait.

HAMLET

Wait? Wait for what?

SHAMUS

For someone to try to kill you.

HAMLET

Kill me??? I don't want someone to kill me!!! You never said anything about someone trying to kill me!!!

SHAMUS

Would you have gone along if I had?

HAMLET

Of course not!

SHAMUS

That's why I didn't tell you.

(MUSIC: Bluesy saxophone)

OPHELIA

Well, Shamus, aren't you going to ask how it was for me?

SHAMUS

Why should I?

OPHELIA

Because men like you always ask girls like me how it was.

(Saxophone out)

SHAMUS

Let's get one thing straight, tangerine knees, I ain't a guy like me. Besides I know how it was for you.

OPHELIA

You do?

SHAMUS

That somersault you did off the canopy with a full twist said it all.

OPHELIA

I did nail the landing.

SHAMUS

That's why I gave you a ten.

OPHELIA

I must admit you're different from the other men I've been with.

SHAMUS

How so?

OPHELIA

For one thing you're not a relative.

SHAMUS

There's a big world out there. A dame like you could have it all.

OPHELIA

I'm not a dame.

SHAMUS

No offense intended.

OPHELIA

None taken. My mother was a dame. Dame Eleanor. I'm a lady. But someday I'll be Queen.

SHAMUS

You? The Queen?

OPHELIA

Yes, me. And when I am, I could do you a lot of good.

SHAMUS

You're doing me a lot of good right now.

*(Musical transition.
SFX: Creaking wooden boards)*

SHAMUS

I fell asleep in a deep feather bed surrounded by candles with the scent of Feelya in my nostrils. I woke up in total darkness on a hard wooden floor to the smell of stinking fish. I took the lighter from my inside pocket and fired it up. In the flickering light, I could make out crates, barrels and miles of fishnet. I tried to stand, lost my balance and tripped over the lump next to me. It stirred.

HAMLET

To sleep perchance to dream.

SHAMUS

You can dream later, prince. Wake up.

HAMLET

Shamus?

SHAMUS

Yeah, it's me.

HAMLET

Where are we?

SHAMUS

From I what I can tell, we're on a ship bound for hell.

HAMLET

A ship bound for hell??? I don't want to be on a ship bound for hell!!! What are we doing here?

SHAMUS

What's the last thing you remember?

HAMLET

Rolling over and falling asleep. What about you?

SHAMUS

Pretty much the same thing, especially the rolling over part.

HAMLET

Where are you going?

SHAMUS

To see where that ladder leads.

HAMLET

I'm going with you.

(SFX: Hamlet and Shamus climb up four or five rungs of the creaking ladder)

SHAMUS

Let me just slide the hatch cover back.

(SFX: Wooden hatch cover sliding back)

HAMLET

Can you see anything?

SHAMUS

It looks like two guys in black handing the captain a letter and a pouch. Much be coins, the way he's hefting it.

HAMLET

Let me see. Wait.

SHAMUS

What?

HAMLET

I know those two. The ones in black.

SHAMUS

Who are they?

HAMLET

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

SHAMUS

Rosenberg and...

HAMLET

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET

They were in college with me.

SHAMUS

Let me guess. Accounting majors.

HAMLET

They were at my play.

SHAMUS

What were they doing at your play?

HAMLET

They said someone invited them. Even sent them money to make the trip.

SHAMUS

They say who?

HAMLET

They thought it was me.

SHAMUS

I don't like the looks of this. We'll wait till the sun comes up. I want to find out why money was changing hands. I don't think it was to bump us up to first class.

(Musical transition.)

SHAMUS

Okay, it's daylight. I'm gonna give it a shot.

(SFX: Shamus and Hamlet climbing the creaky ladder.)

SHAMUS

Give me a hand with this hatch cover.

(SFX: Hatch cover sliding open)

HAMLET

Can you see anything?

SHAMUS

Just some of the crew swabbing the deck. Here, hold my hat and coat.

HAMLET

What you want me to do?

SHAMUS

Stay outta sight. And don't do anything stupid. Here I go.

(SFX: Sea birds)

Hey, matey.

MATEY

Who are you?

SHAMUS

I came aboard last night. Didn't want to. You know how it is. Not exactly a Princess Cruise, is it?

MATEY

And you ain't exactly a princess. Where'd you get them funny clothes.

SHAMUS

Finland.

MATEY

Thought I recognized them. Well, go on. Grab a mop. .
Everyone's here gotta earn their keep around here. Ain't that right, ya scurvy scum.

(Crew members grumble)

SHAMUS

Whatever you say...

(hums a little
tune, then sings)

"So you've been promising the ladies a night of loving bliss. But truth be told you'll not be getting a bloody kiss."

MATEY

Where'd'ya learn that one?

SHAMUS

On a ship called the Pequod.

MATEY

Never heard of it. Keep goin'. It's catchy.

SHAMUS

(sings)

You're a bunch of bloody sots, bound for the next stockade.
And the sooner that you mop this deck, the sooner you'll get paid.

MATEY

Come on lads, whattya say?

SHAMUS AND CREW

(sing)

"So, bugger off, you blackguards, bugger off. So bugger off, you blackguards, bugger off. Like a herd of bloody swine who refuse to leave the trough. You'll get no more this morning, so you blackguards bugger off."

SHAMUS

There was no time like the present to start a little diversion. Hey, matey, is it true your mother is so ugly she made an onion cry?

MATEY

What did you say about me sainted mother?

SHAMUS

Hey, easy pal. I'm only repeating what I heard.

MATEY

What bilge sucking son of a sea dog told you me mother was ugly?

SHAMUS

Uh... him. That bilge sucking son of a sea dog.

MATEY

Hey you.

CREWMAN

Me?

MATEY

Yeah, you. Prepare to meet Davy Jones you pox faced, yellow bellied, scurvy infested, dung diggin', chimp faced, bladder suckin', pee soaked, pant waisty, back stabbin', scabby arsed, snot rag, fork faced, screw eye, putred rat spawned, worm suckin', son of a chum bucket.

CREWMAN

Who you callin' a son of a chum bucket?

MATEY

You, you crab crawlin', oyster suckin'

(Sound of a punch landing)

SHAMUS

A punch to Matey's good eye started the party rolling.

(Sounds of a brawl)

Mops dropped. Bucket were turned over. Fists and bodies began flying.

*(Sounds of brawl fade.
Musical transition)*

HAMLET

Kill me??? Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are going to kill me??? I don't want Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to kill me.

SHAMUS

Not them. During the brawl I slipped down to the captain's quarters and found the letter your two college buddies handed over. It has instructions for the captain of this ship to, and I quote, take Prince Hamlet and his companion to the top of the highest yardarm and throw their sorry asses overboard.

HAMLET

Overboard??? I don't want my sorry ass thrown overboard!

SHAMUS

Relax.

HAMLET

Relax? How can I relax? What did you do with the letter?

SHAMUS

I left it on the captain's desk.

HAMLET

What??? You left the letter with our death warrant on the captain's desk? Are you completely crazy?

SHAMUS

I said relax. I changed a couple of things in the letter.

HAMLET

What things?

SHAMUS

In place of your name I wrote in Rosencrantz.

(SFX: A distant scream grows louder and louder ending with a very loud splash)

SHAMUS

And in place of Guildenstern, I wrote in my name.

(Loud, distant scream, grows louder and louder ending with a very loud splash)

(Transitional music)

(Sound of lapping water, sea birds)

SHAMUS

We'll be ashore in minutes.

HAMLET

Why are we going back to Elsinore?

SHAMUS

To catch a killer.

HAMLET

It's Claudius. Who else could it be? He's the only one with the three M's.

SHAMUS

I need proof.

HAMLET

You know he's going to try to kill me. And this time he won't fail.

SHAMUS

That's a chance I'm willing to take.

(Musical transition)

SHAMUS

Hamlet was back in his room under twenty four hour guard by order of the Queen and implemented by Claudius. To say Hamlet was nervous was like a clever and colorful analogy for someone being nervous.

MESSENGER

Mr. Shamus?

SHAMUS

I'm Shamus.

MESSENGER

Prince Hamlet sent me. He wants to see you.

SHAMUS

Now.

MESSENGER

Right now. It says it's a matter of life and death. If you'll follow me.

(Here we go again.. Footsteps, more footsteps, door opens, door closes, more footsteps)

SHAMUS

Isn't there a shorter way?

MESSENGER

This is the shorter way?

(Even more footsteps, door opens, door closes, more footsteps)

MESSENGER

Here we are.

SHAMUS

The guards at Hamlet's door patted me down. When they couldn't find a hidden bow and arrow, one of them opened the door to the Prince's room.

(SFX: Door opening. Door closing)

HAMLET

Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I.

SHAMUS

Knock off the Bartlett's Quotations. What did you want to see me about?

HAMLET

I've killed Polonius.

SHAMUS

You killed Polonius? Hamlet the prince of what should I do now?

HAMLET

It's true. I didn't mean to.

SHAMUS

Are we talking about the same Polonius?

HAMLET

How many Polonius's do you think there are?

SHAMUS

Ophelia's father, Polonius?

HAMLET

He's not really her father.

SHAMUS

She introduced me to him as her father.

HAMLET

He took her in when her real father died.

SHAMUS

How did he die? Her real father.

HAMLET

He fell on a sword.

SHAMUS

What happened to her mother.

HAMLET

She ran off with the guy holding the sword.

SHAMUS

Okay, where is it?

HAMLET

I don't know. I assume he took it with him.

SHAMUS

I'm talking about the corpus delecti. The recently departed.
The stiff.

HAMLET

He's not here.

SHAMUS

What'd he do, get up and walk away?

HAMLET

Come with me. I'll show you.

SHAMUS

This better not be another shortcut.

HAMLET

As a matter of fact.

SHAMUS

Hamlet pushed a bookcase to one side to reveal a hidden
opening in the wall.

HAMLET

Follow me.

*(The voices take on a slight
echo)*

SHAMUS

What is this?

HAMLET

A tunnel my father built when he first became king.

SHAMUS

Smart. A way to escape from invading armies in the middle of an attack.

HAMLET

A way to meet women in the middle of the night.

SHAMUS

Even better.

(Voice no longer echo.)

HAMLET

Here we are.

SHAMUS

What is this?

HAMLET

My mother's bedroom.

SHAMUS

What are we doing here?

HAMLET

My mother sent me a note. She said she for me to come here. She had something to tell me.

SHAMUS

So you came? What then?

HAMLET

When she didn't show up, I started to leave. And then I heard a noise coming from behind the curtain.

SHAMUS

Which curtain.

HAMLET

The third one.

SHAMUS

What did you do?

HAMLET

I panicked.

SHAMUS

Of course you did. You're Hamlet. Then what?

HAMLET

I thought it was Claudius's men come to kill me so I picked up that sword and stabbed the curtain.

SHAMUS

When I looked behind curtain number three, it made me wish Hamlet had chosen curtain number one or curtain number two. Someone will have to tell Ophelia. It won't be easy.

HAMLET

Don't be so sure.

SHAMUS

What are you talking about?

HAMLET

Ophelia only cares about one thing. Being Queen.

SHAMUS

She did mention that.

HAMLET

Before my father died, she was always telling people that we were going to be married. I'd be king someday and she'd be the queen. After my father died and Claudius became king she never spoke of it again.

SHAMUS

How many times did you stab the curtain?

HAMLET

Three... or four.

SHAMUS

Then you didn't kill Polonius.

HAMLET

How could that be?

SHAMUS

You can't kill a dead man. Polonius was already dead when you stabbed the curtain.

HAMLET

How do you know?

SHAMUS

He's got more stab wounds in him than a pin cushion. Somebody's fitting you for a frame. The note you got from your mother was probably a forgery to get you here. Then Claudius's henchmen, or somebody's henchmen, bust in, find you standing over the corpse and before you can say "Bob's
(MORE)

SHAMUS (cont'd)
 your uncle" or some other incomprehensible colloquialism,
 you're dancing from the end of a rope.

HAMLET
 Dancing from the end of a rope??? I don't want to dance from
 the end of a rope.

SHAMUS
 Nobody followed you. That leaves one question. Why?

HAMLET
 I came through the tunnel.

SHAMUS
 Then the guards never knew you left your room. That's good.
 Very good. Now, listen to me. You never got the note and
 you never left your room. Got that?

HAMLET
 Got that.

SHAMUS
 Good. Now let's get out of here.

(Musical transition)

SHAMUS
 They buried Polonius a few days later. The local sawbones
 said he's been stabbed twenty seven times. His death was
 chalked up to natural causes. I learned later that in
 Elsinore, getting stabbed twenty seven times was considered
 natural causes. Hamlet was off the hook, or so I thought. I
 was holed in my room taking a hot bath when...

(SFX: Knocking on door)

SHAMUS
 I hopped out of the bath, put my feet on the floor, wrapped
 a towel around me, then I opened the door.

(SFX: Door opening)

OPHELIA
 (highly agitated)
 Shamus, I've got bad news.

SHAMUS
 I'd never seen Ophelia in such a state. Her hair was wild
 and uncombed. Her eyes were ablaze like those a feral cat.
 Her cheeks were red with a moist and feverish glows. She
 looked fantastic.

OPHELIA
Did you hear me Shamus? I've got terrible news.

SHAMUS
You're pregnant.

OPHELIA
Worse.

SHAMUS
Thank God.

OPHELIA
I don't know how to say this.

SHAMUS
Why don't you try stringing a few nouns and verbs together
and see what comes out.

OPHELIA
Laertes is going to kill Hamlet.

SHAMUS
Who the hell is Laertes?

OPHELIA
My brother.

SHAMUS
I didn't know you had a brother.

OPHELIA
He's not actually my brother. He's Polonius's son. We were
raised together.

SHAMUS
By the way, my condolences.

OPHELIA
For what?

SHAMUS
Your loss.

OPHELIA
What loss?

SHAMUS
Your father.

OPHELIA
My father died years ago.

SHAMUS

I meant Polonius.

OPHELIA

He really wasn't my father. So, officially, it doesn't count as a loss.

SHAMUS

Why does your brother want to kill Hamlet?

OPHELIA

Revenge.

SHAMUS

Revenge. Of course. The second leading cause of death in Denmark. If you ask me, this whole country could do with a crash course in anger management. Revenge for what?

OPHELIA

For killing Polonius.

SHAMUS

Why does Laertes think Hamlet killed Polonius?

OPHELIA

Someone told him.

SHAMUS

Someone told him. That's it? Someone told him?

OPHELIA

This is Denmark. That's all it takes.

SHAMUS

I'd better tell Hamlet. If it comes from anybody else, there's no telling what he might do.

OPHELIA

(seductively)

Shamus.

OPHELIA

Yes.

Before you go.

SHAMUS

What is it apple hips?

OPHELIA

You might want to put on some clothes.

(Transitional music)

HAMLET

Kill me??? Laertes wants to kill me??? I don't want Laertes to kill him!!!

SHAMUS

Hamlet was taking it better than I expected.

HAMLET

Wait a minute. I thought Claudius wanted to kill me.

SHAMUS

The line just got longer.

HAMLET

Why does Laertes want to kill me.

SHAMUS

He thinks you murdered his father.

HAMLET

I didn't kill his father. You know I didn't kill his father. Why does he think I killed his father?

SHAMUS

Someone told him.

HAMLET

That makes sense. Claudius. It was Claudius. Claudius told him so Laertes will do the dirty work for him. What are we going to do, Shamus? You're the genius that got us into this.

(mockingly)

It's a play. It's a ploy. The play's the thing..

(SFX: Loud knocking on door)

HAMLET

Don't open it. It's Laertes come to kill me.

SHAMUS

You gotta open the door sometime. You can't spend the rest of your life holed up here like a rat in a trap.

HAMLET

Why not?

*(SFX: Loud knocking on door.
Sound of door opening)*

GUNSEL

(deep, echoing voice)

The king wants to see Prince Hamlet.

SHAMUS

Who's the monosyllabic mountain?

HAMLET

Name's Gungsel. He's the King's muscle.

GUNSEL

The king wants to see Prince Hamlet.

HAMLET

Perhaps another time, Gungsel. I'm busy right now. I'm writing my will.

GUNSEL

The king wants to see Prince Hamlet.

HAMLET

I'm leaving you my collection of skulls. It'll make a lovely gift for Mrs. Gungsel.

GUNSEL

The king wants to see Prince Hamlet.

(Musical transition)

CLAUDIUS

Mr. Shamus, I wasn't expecting to see you.

SHAMUS

Gungsel, here, insisted.

CLAUDIUS

You must forgive Gungsel, Mr. Shamus. He can be overzealous at time. But he does what he'd told.

SHAMUS

Dumb and ugly. You sure hit the daily double with this one king.

GUNSEL

Keep ridin' me Shamus and you'll be picking my speak out of your liver.

SHAMUS

The cheaper the serf, the gaudier the patter.

CLAUDIUS

As long as you're here, Mr. Shamus, I'd like you to meet our dear cousin Laertes.

SHAMUS

Nice to to meet you Lay. Heard a lot good things about you.

LAERTES

Can we get on with this?

CLAUDIUS

Of course. Hamlet, my dearest nephew slash stepson, please come say hello to Laertes, newly returned to the bosom of his family.

HAMLET

I'd like to clear something up before...

*(SFX: Sound of a glove
slapping Hamlet's face)*

HAMLET

You slapped me.

LAERTES

With my glove.

HAMLET

It will still leave a bruise.

LAERTES

You do know why I slapped you with my glove.

HAMLET

You didn't want to hurt your hand.

LAERTES

It means that I am challenging you to a duel to the death.

HAMLET

A duel to the death??? I don't want to fight a duel to the death!!

LAERTES

You know the rule, Hamlet.

HAMLET

What rule?

LAERTES

You either accept my challenge or leave Denmark in disgrace never to return again.

HAMLET

I never heard of that rule.

CLAUDIUS

You should have played closer attention to your duties as a prince of the realm, the rules of chivalry and the customs of the court, instead of wasting your time putting on butt numbing plays about kings being poisoned. You have until this time tomorrow to give us your decision.

(Transitional music)

SHAMUS

What do you think you're doing?

HAMLET

What does it look like I'm doing?

SHAMUS

Packing.

HAMLET

Your powers of observation never cease to amaze me.

SHAMUS

Where do you think you can go?

HAMLET

London. I understand they have a very active theatre scene there. And it's always been my dream to direct for the London stage.

SHAMUS

You're running away.

HAMLET

I prefer to think of as running to.

SHAMUS

How about doing something important for once in your life and stand up for something?

HAMLET

You mean like that avenging nonsense? My father is dead and I'm alive and I intend to keep it that. And why on God's green earth would I want to avenge that man, of all people.

SHAMUS

Because he was your father.

HAMLET

We only have my mother's word for that.

SHAMUS

And even she has her doubts.

HAMLET

Someone was bound to whack him as you so colorfully put it. Everybody hated the King and the feeling was mutual. You know why he named me Hamlet?

SHAMUS

Because he wanted his only son to have his name.

HAMLET

Because it was the only name he could remember.

SHAMUS

You run now kid and you'll spend the rest of your life running. You got a choice here. Suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune or take arms against a sea of troubles and by opposing end them.

HAMLET

Mmmmmm. I'll go with slings and arrows.

SHAMUS

Running away ain't the answer.

HAMLET

That depends on the question.

SHAMUS

To be or not to be, that is the question.

HAMLET

In that case, I'll go with not to be as in not be killed.

SHAMUS

Remember this Prince. A coward dies a thousand deaths. A soldier dies but once.

HAMLET

Sound like pretty good odds to me.

(Transitional music)

SHAMUS

I left Hamlet to his packing. It looked I had hit a dead end. There was nothing left for me to do in Elsinore.

GHOST

(ghostly voice)

Shamus... Shamus..

SHAMUS

Or was there?

Shamus... GHOST

Who said that? SHAMUS

I did. GHOST

Where are you? SHAMUS

I'm right here. GHOST

Where? SHAMUS

Here. GHOST

Where's here? SHAMUS

Right in front of you. GHOST

I don't see anything. SHAMUS

Are you sure? GHOST

Believe me, if I saw something, I'd tell you. SHAMUS

Hold on. I'm still trying to get the hang of the apparition stuff. GHOST

Tell you what, when you figure it out... SHAMUS

Now can you see me? GHOST

King Hamlet? SHAMUS

In the flesh. Well, not exactly in the flesh. GHOST

SHAMUS

I thought you were dead. You are dead, aren't you?

GHOST

Do I look like I'm in the pink of health?

SHAMUS

You look like you just escaped from a burning building. Am I hallucinating here or are you really a ghost?

GHOST

Of course, I'm a ghost. What else would I be? Don't you get haunted by ghosts where you come from?

SHAMUS

The closest thing we have are ex-wives.

GHOST

Tell me about it.

SHAMUS

Why are you here?

GHOST

Unless I am avenged, I am doomed to walk the night. And for the day confined to fast in fires till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away.

SHAMUS

You mind translating?

GHOST

Hamlet must avenge my murder. How's that?

SHAMUS

Well, that ain't gonna happen. Your son hates you. As far as I could determine, everybody hated you.

GHOST

Being king isn't a popularity contest. You promised me you'd help Hamlet avenge my murder.

SHAMUS

You never told me your son was a pussy.

GHOST

Would you have agreed if I had?

SHAMUS

No.

GHOST

That's why I didn't tell you. Talk to him Shamus.

SHAMUS

I tried. It's your turn. He's your son.

GHOST

You said yourself he hates me.

SHAMUS

You might start by telling him you love him.

GHOST

I don't love him. I don't love anybody. I couldn't afford to.

SHAMUS

Well, tell him anyway.

GHOST

Do you think it would work?

SHAMUS

I don't know about kids. But, it sure works with dames.

GHOST

Now he tells me.

SHAMUS

Give it a shot. Whattya got to lose? You're already dead.

(Transitional music)

SHAMUS

From where I stood, the ghost didn't stand a ghost of chance convincing Hamlet.

HAMLET

Shamus.

SHAMUS

Prince Hamlet. What is it? You look like you've seen a ghost.

HAMLET

I have. The ghost of my father.

SHAMUS

Really? You saw the Ghost of your father?

HAMLET

He said he loved me.

SHAMUS

That was nice.

HAMLET

Of course, that was right after he called me a pussy. That's how I knew it was really him.

SHAMUS

At least, the old king was consistent. Even dead he was still a complete jerk. Did he say anything else?

HAMLET

Unless he is avenged he is doomed to walk the night. And for the day confined to fast in fires, till the crimes...

SHAMUS

Done in his days of nature are burnt and purged away.

HAMLET

How did you know?

SHAMUS

Lucky guess.

HAMLET

You were right Shamus.

SHAMUS

That goes without saying.

HAMLET

I can't go through life suffering the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.

SHAMUS

Glad to hear it.

HAMLET

I've decided to rise up against that sea of bubbles.

SHAMUS

Troubles.

HAMLET

Troubles. And by opposing, end them.

SHAMUS

Your old man would be proud of you.

HAMLET

You think I'm doing this because some apparition shows up in the middle of the night spreading a load of pig manure about how it loves me?

SHAMUS

Then why are you doing it?

HAMLET

Because I'm tired of running and hiding. I've made a decision.

SHAMUS

That should screw up about ten thousand Ph.D. theses. What did you decide?

HAMLET

I have decided to be...

SHAMUS

Yes.

HAMLET

(very dramatic))

Not... a pussy.

SHAMUS

That's a start. What are you going to do?

HAMLET

First I am going to accept Laertes challenge. Then I'm going to kill Claudius. And after that I'm going to direct an all Danish version of "Fiddler On The Roof.

(Transitional music)

SHAMUS

The night of the big duel brought out the cream of Elsinore society, all looking forward to a fun evening of blood and death.

*(SFX: Crowd murmuring.
Trumpets)*

HERALD

Lords and ladies. His majesty King Claudius and her majesty Queen Gertrude.

*(Trumpets out.
SFX: Herald's staff banging
three times.)*

HERALD

Will everyone please rise for the singing of the Danish national anthem.

ALL SING

Hail to mighty Denmark
Land of sky and sea.
Crushing all our neighbors
From the Finns to the Zuider Zee.

(MORE)

ALL SING (cont'd)

We smash them with our axes.
 We bleed them with our taxes.
 We crush them with our legions.
 The Swedes, the Dutch and Norwegians.
 Hail to mighty Denmark.
 Land of sea and sky.
 Leading Scandinavia
 In war and nymphomania.
 We're the Danish Danes of Denmark.
 Of our pastry we are fond.
 We're big and tall and zaftig.
 But, mostly we are... blonde.

*(SFX: Herald's staff banged
 three times.)*

HERALD

Hear yee... Hear yee... Hear yee... Let's get ready to
 rumble...eth. Presenting a fifteen round duel to the death.

(Crowd cheers)

HERALD

In the blue corner, the greatest swordsman in all of
 Denmark. Let's give it up for Lay...Air...Tees.

CROWD

(chanting)

Lay...Air...Tees. Lay...Air...Tees. Lay...Air...Tees.

HERALD

And and in the red corner, The Prince Formerly Known As
 Hamlet.

*(A few murmurs, maybe one
 person clapping)*

HERALD

His majesty the King will now preside over the baptism of
 the swords.

CLAUDIUS

Thank you, gentle sir. Prince Hamlet will you please select
 one of the swords you see before you.

HAMLET

I think I'll go with... No, maybe I'll choose... On second
 thought this one likes it might be...

CLAUDIUS

Will you pick one already!

HAMLET

I'll take sword..... A.

CLAUDIUS

Finally... Dear cousin, Laertes... Is sword B to your satisfaction?

LAERTES

Float like a butterfly. Sting like a bee. Prince Hamlet goes down in three.

CLAUDIUS

I'll take that as a yes. And now, if the Lady Ophelia will please bring forth the goblets wine.

SHAMUS

There she was again, in a low cut gown with undulating hips that cried out "Hello, Sailor." She was carrying two silver goblets chest high.

(Murmurs from the crowd. A few wolf whistles. Then a voice calls out.)

VOICE IN CROWD

Whoa... Nice goblets.

CLAUDIUS

Prince Hamlet, if you will please dip you tip.

HAMLET

Excuse me?

CLAUDIUS

Your tip.

HAMLET

My tip?

CLAUDIUS

Your tip. Dip it.

HAMLET

Dip my tip?

CLAUDIUS

In the goblet of wine the Lady Ophelia is holding out to you.

HAMLET

You want me to dip my tip in this wine goblet.

CLAUDIUS

Yes... The tip of your sword in the wine goblet.

HAMLET

Oh! My sword.

CLAUDIUS

Yes. What else?

HAMLET

No problem.

CLAUDIUS

Very good. And now dear cousin Laertes, if you will dip the tip of your sword in the second goblet. Nicely done... Well, now that the baptising of the swords is over, let the duel begin. May the better man emerge in one piece.

HERALD

If the combatants will face each other. En garde. Duel.

(SFX: Clash of swords, sounds of the duelists grunting as they thrust and parry)

SHAMUS

Surprisingly, the kid was holding his own. He knew how to handle a sword. Which got me to thinking. Would Claudius take a chance on the Prince actually taking out Laertes? He must have hedged his bet. But how. And then it hit me like a building falling on a passing pedestrian and crushing him to death.

(SFX: Sound of a gong)

HERALD

That is the end of round one.

SHAMUS

Listen to me kid. The fix is in.

HAMLET

What fix?

SHAMUS

We gotta switch swords with Laertes.

HAMLET

What are you talking about?

SHAMUS

The cup Laertes dipped his tip in.

HAMLET

The bowl with the scroll.

SHAMUS

No. The cup with the pup.

HAMLET

The cup with the pup?

SHAMUS

It had the rickey with mickey.

HAMLET

The what?

SHAMUS

The drink with the zinc... The quench with the wrench...
That glass with the gas.

(finally out of
frustration)

The poison.

HAMLET

Poison???

SHAMUS

Not so loud.

HAMLET

(quietly)

Poison.

SHAMUS

My guess is that it's the same poison that was poured in
your father's ear. If Laertes so much as scratches you,
you're a dead man.

HAMLET

A dead man??? I don't want to be a dead man!!!

SHAMUS

It's okay, I got a plan. When you get back out there, just
work Laertes around to me.

HAMLET

That's your plan?

SHAMUS

That and don't let him scratch you.

(SFX: Sound of gong)

HERALD

Round two.

(SFX: Clash of swords)

SHAMUS

Good kid... You're doin' good. Work him around... Keep him coming... A little closer and... now!

(SFX: Bodies falling, swords crashing to the floor.)

LAERTES

You clumsy oaf.

SHAMUS

Apologies my good lord.

LAERTES

My sword. Where is my sword?

SHAMUS

I believe this is your sword, my lord.

LAERTES

Give me that. Now, out of my way while I split this cowardly cur from crotch to cranium.

(SFX: Swords clashing)

HAMLET

Owwwwwwwwww.

CROWD

Oooooooooo.

LAERTES

A ha!

HAMLET

You scratched me.

LAERTES

My father is avenged. My sister is avenged. And I am avenged.

HAMLET

No you're not.

LAERTES

Yes, I am.

CLAUDIUS
A toast.

CROWD
A toast.

CLAUDIUS
To my brave nephew slash stepson. Everyone drink up.
(Sounds of Gertrude coughing and choking followed by the sound of a goblet hitting the floor)

HAMLET
Mother, what is it?

GERTRUDE
Murder most foul.

SHAMUS
Seems to be a recurring theme around here.

GERTRUDE
Poison... I've been...

HAMLET
Mother... Mother...

SHAMUS
I'm sorry, kid. The Queen is dead.

HAMLET
You... It was you.

CLAUDIUS
Why would I poison the Queen? I loved her. In my way.

HAMLET
It was you.

CLAUDIUS
No, son. It wasn't me.

AMLET
I am not your son. I am Prince Hamlet. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

CLAUDIUS
I suggest you think this over very carefully.

HAMLET
I am Prince Hamlet. You killed my father. Prepare to die.

SHAMUS

Hey, kid. You ain't Indigo Montoya and this ain't "The Princess Bride."

HAMLET

Draw your sword.

CLAUDIUS

If you insist. It's your funeral.

*(Sounds of a sword fight.
Hamlet screams in pain)*

SHAMUS

Kid are you alright?

HAMLET

I am stabbed.

CLAUDIUS

I warned you. Owwww.

CROWD

Oooooooooo.

HAMLET

A ha!

CLAUDIUS

That hurt.

HAMLET

My mother is avenged. My father is avenged. And I am avenged.

CLAUDIUS

No, you're not.

HAMLET

Yes, I am.

CLAUDIUS

No, you're not.

Am too.

CLAUDIUS

Am not.

HAMLET

Am.

It's only a scratch. CLAUDIUS

Yes, but my sword. HAMLET

What about your sword? CLAUDIUS

Tell him Shamus. HAMLET

The tip. SHAMUS

The tip? CLAUDIUS
(losing strength)

It was dipped in the cup with the pup. SHAMUS

The cup with the pup? CLAUDIUS

The cup with the pup. It had the rickey with the mickey. SHAMUS

The what? CLAUDIUS
(voice getting weaker)

The gulp with the pulp. HAMLET

The swig with the rig. SHAMUS

The shot with the rot. HAMLET

What the hell are you two talking about? CLAUDIUS
(fading fast)

The poison. SHAMUS/HAMLET

What poison? CLAUDIUS

HAMLET
The poison you poured in my father's ear.

CLAUDIUS
That wasn't me.

HAMLET
Yes, it was.

CLAUDIUS
No, it wasn't.

HAMLET
Yes, it was.

CLAUDIUS
No, it wasn't.

HAMLET
Uh huh.

CLAUDIUS
Uh uhh.

HAMLET
You poisoned my father and you sent Rosencrantz and
Guildenstern to have me killed.

CLAUDIUS
Who the hell are Rosenberg and...?

HAMLET
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

SHAMUS
I made the same mistake.

CLAUDIUS
I didn't send anybody to kill you.

SHAMUS
If it wasn't you...

HAMLET
Then who was it.

CLAUDIUS
(coughing and choking)
It was... It was..

SHAMUS
Yeah?

(Claudius chokes, coughs and dies)

SHAMUS

How do you spell that? Claudius was dead. And one thing you learn in the detective game is the dead men still give lousy answers.

HAMLET

I did it Shamus.

SHAMUS

You did it kid.

HAMLET

I was a soldier.

SHAMUS

You were a soldier.

HAMLET

I rose up against a sea of tribbles.

SHAMUS

Troubles.

HAMLET

Whatever.

SHAMUS

And with that Prince Hamlet collapsed into my arms and made a twenty minute speech in iambic pentameter.

HAMLET

You that look pale and tremble at this chance, that but mutes or audience to this act...

(his voice fading)

Had I but time, O, I could tell you...

OPHELIA

Shamus... Shamus...

SHAMUS

Ophelia.

OPHELIA

Take me with you Shamus. There's no one left for me in Elsinore. Literally, there is no one left for me in Elsinore. I mean, look around.

SHAMUS

You're good paprika toes. Real good.

OPHELIA

What are you talking about?

SHAMUS

It was you. All the time it was you.

OPHELIA

I don't know what that means.

SHAMUS

Old King Hamlet was afraid. Afraid someone was going to kill him. But he didn't know who and he didn't know when. He'd've been on his guard with everyone but you.

OPHELIA

You're just making this up.

SHAMUS

Sure, he'd've gone into that garden with you. He was just old enough and lecherous enough to do that.

OPHELIA

If you're trying to frighten me, you're doing a very good job.

SHAMUS

He'd have looked you up and down, licked his lips and followed you, grinning from ear to ear.

OPHELIA

Stop talking like that.

SHAMUS

And then, while he was looking you up and down and grinning from ear to ear, you could have lulled him to sleep like a little lecherous baby and poured the poison in one of those ears he was grinning from... or to.

OPHELIA

That's not true. You know that's not true.

SHAMUS

Claudius was ambitious, but not as ambitious as you. You knew that Hamlet never wanted to be king. So you set your sights on Claudius. You knew that he and Gertrude had been steaming up the Wamsuttas for some time. All you had to do was poison the the old king. Poison, that's a dame's M.O. That stands for modus operandi. It's Latin for...

OPHELIA

I know what it's Latin for.

SHAMUS

With King Hamlet dead and buried you'd watch Claudius ascend to the throne. Then all you to do was bump off Gert and become Claudius's very young, very willing, very will built queen.

OPHELIA

You're just making this up.

SHAMUS

You arranged for Hamlet and I to take that little sea cruise. You even knocked off poor old Polonius, then told you brother Hamlet did it. And tonight you were going for the daily double. First Hamlet and then the Queen.

OPHELIA

I did it for us Shamus. You and me.

SHAMUS

I'm gonna send you over cinnamon knees.

OPHELIA

You don't mean it Shamus. I know you don't. You're just playing with me.

(Bluesy saxophone up and under)

SHAMUS

This ain't a game tangelo ears. You're going to the tower. And if they ever let you out, I'll be waitin' for you.

OPHELIA

And, if they don't.

SHAMUS

Well, we'll always have Elsinore

(Saxophone out)

SHAMUS

She walked out of my life the way she walked into it. On legs like an elevator that started in the basement and went all the way up to the penthouse. Then down again. Then back up.

GHOST

Nicely done, Mr. Shamus.

SHAMUS

King Hamlet?

GHOST

In the flesh. Well, not exactly in the flesh. But a reasonable facsimile.

SHAMUS

You are still dead, aren't you?

GHOST

Very much so. Although, now that I'm avenged I'm no longer burning in the fires of purgatory.

SHAMUS

I can tell. You look almost life like.

GHOST

And I owe it all to you, Shamus. No longer am I doomed to walk the night. And for the day confined to fast in...

SHAMUS

Save me the free verse. You know a lot of people had to die for your get out of purgatory free card.

GHOST

You know what they say?

SHAMUS

No. What do they say?

KING HAMLET

All's well that end's well. Thanks again Shamus. I owe you one. Seen you soon.

(Bluesy saxophone up and under)

SHAMUS

The Case of Murder In Elsinore was closed. A tragedy for all concerned. Claudius was dead. A victim of circumstances or a willing participant? We'll never know. The Queen was dead. Her only crime was loving not wisely, but too well. Not that I ever had the pleasure. Ophelia? Ambitious, ruthless, devious, homicidal. For a guy like me, the stuff that dreams are made of. As for Prince Hamlet...

ACTOR

(doing a very bad reading)

Captain of our fairy band, Helen is here at hand. And the youth...

HAMLET

No. No. No. Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue.

SHAMUS

All he wanted to do... was direct.

*(Bluesy saxophone takes us
out)*

THE END