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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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Hamlet Goes Hollywood

INTERACTIVE FARCE. Determined to make *Hamlet* a Hollywood blockbuster, a director elicits the help of Shakespeare to make a few “minor” changes to the script. Thinking the original script is trite and cliché, the director orders the cast to perform *Hamlet* as a zombie movie, a spy thriller, a puppet show, a science fiction movie, a home improvement show, a feminist movie, a western, a police drama, a vaudevillian/juggling show, a Broadway musical, an opera, and even a kung fu action flick. As the director swaps costumes and characters, chaos on the set intensifies when Ophelia insists on brandishing a sword, Laertes vies for a bigger part, and Shakespeare transforms himself into a rapper! This play is a fun way to introduce the story of *Hamlet* to students, and the even audience can join in on the fun!

Performance Time: Approximately 75-90 minutes.

~~Characters~~

(9 M, 4 F, 8 flexible, extras)

(With doubling: 8 M, 4 F, 5 flexible)

DIRECTOR: Hollywood director who wants to produce a hip movie version of *Hamlet*; flexible.

SHAKESPEARE: Hired to work with the director on script changes; male.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Director's assistant who has to read the script in 15 minutes and find all the exciting parts; flexible.

COSTUME MISTRESS: In charge of providing the cast with costumes; female.

HAMLET: Cast member who plays the character of Hamlet, the Prince of Denmark and Claudius's nephew; male.

CLAUDIUS: Cast member who plays the character of Claudius, the King of Denmark and husband to Gertrude; male.

GERTRUDE: Cast member who plays the character of Gertrude, Hamlet's mother and the Queen of Denmark; female.

OPHELIA: Annoying cast member who desperately wants a role with a sword and plays the character of Ophelia, Polonius's daughter who is in love with Hamlet; female.

LAERTES: Cast member who wants a bigger role and plays the character of Laertes, Polonius's son and Ophelia's brother; male.

POLONIUS: Cast member who plays the character of Polonius, Claudius's chief counselor and Ophelia and Laertes's father; male.

BERNARDO: Cast member who plays the characters of Hamlet and Bernardo; Bernardo is a sentry at Elsinore Castle; male.

MARCELLUS: Cast member who plays the character of Marcellus, a sentry at Elsinore Castle; male.

HORATIO: Cast member who plays the character of Horatio, Hamlet's close friend; male.

ROSENCRANTZ: Cast member who plays the character of Rosencrantz, Hamlet's friend; wears a fancy gown with a trench coat; female.

GUILDENSTERN: Cast member who plays the character of Guildenstern, Hamlet's friend; wears tuxedo with a trench coat; male.

GHOST: Cast member who plays a ghost and a lab scientist; flexible.

ZOMBIE: Cast member who plays a zombie; flexible.

ROBOT: Cast member who plays a robot; wears a robot costume covered with tin foil; flexible.

PUPPETEER 1: Puppeteer who works the King puppet; flexible.

PUPPETEER 2: Puppeteer who works the Uncle puppet; flexible.

PRODUCER: Hollywood dealmaker; flexible.

EXTRAS: As Chorus Line.

Options for Doubling

POLONIUS/GUILDENSTERN (male)

PUPPETEER 1/ROBOT (flexible)

PUPPETEER 2/ZOMBIE (flexible)

PRODUCER/GHOST (flexible)

Costumes

Modern-day clothing for all
Elizabethan costumes for Bernardo, Marcellus, Horatio,
Hamlet, Ophelia, and Laertes
Science-fiction costumes for Hamlet, Horatio, Bernardo, and
Marcellus
Lab coat for Ghost
Police uniforms for Marcellus, Bernardo, Horatio
Trench coats for Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
Fancy gown for Rosencrantz
Tuxedo for Guildenstern
Karate uniform for Ophelia
Home improvement/construction costumes for Horatio,
Gertrude
Fairy godmother costume for Gertrude
Swimsuit for Ophelia
Vaudeville-style jacket and cane for Horatio
Western garb for Gertrude, Horatio, Claudius, Ophelia, and
Laertes
Mobster outfits for Horatio and Gertrude
Fairy godmother costume for Gertrude
Chorus line outfits for chorus line
Rapper's costume with lots of gold jewelry for Shakespeare

Setting

Set of a Hollywood movie production of *Hamlet*.

Set

Hollywood set. There is a director's chair.

Props

Script	Wand
Pen	Minnesota Vikings football
Curtain for Polonius to be hide behind	helmet (or any helmet with a Viking insignia)
Director's chair to be broken over someone's head	Opera helmet with horns
2 Swords (plastic)	Rapper's "gold" jewelry, for Shakespeare
Cross	Flowers
Chicken leg	Several chocolate bars
3 Skulls	Glass of water
Vial of "poison"	Pool cues
Violin case	Pool chalk
Toy pistol	King puppet
	Uncle puppet

Sound Effects

Gunshot
Splash

*“Ah,
you Englishmen,
you have such
a dry wit about you.”*

—Director

Hamlet Goes Hollywood

(AT RISE: A Hollywood director looks at a script and flips through it, cutting out the parts he doesn't like. He tosses the pages on the floor.)

DIRECTOR: Trite! Trite! Cliché! Trite! What's this skull thing all about anyway? It's got to go.

(Producer and Shakespeare enter.)

PRODUCER: Ah, there you are! I thought you'd like to meet our script writer. This is the fellow I've been telling you so much about.

DIRECTOR: Ah, yes...the famous Mr. Shakeshaft.

SHAKESPEARE: (Correcting.) Uh, it's *Shakespeare*.

DIRECTOR: Whatever.

PRODUCER: So, I thought you two might like to do lunch...get to know each other...talk about the whole vision thing, you know, before you get started with the big production.

DIRECTOR: Ah, right. Good to have you onboard, Bill.

SHAKESPEARE: (Correcting.) It's *William*.

DIRECTOR: Whatever. Well, first, we've got some script changes to go over.

PRODUCER: (To Shakespeare.) Oh, this is going to be really good. You're really going to enjoy working with Max. He's one of the best in the business.

SHAKESPEARE: Uh, script changes?

PRODUCER: (Quickly.) Well, got to go! Don't want to keep Marlowe waiting! (Exits.)

SHAKESPEARE: (To Director.) What kind of script changes?

DIRECTOR: Oh, nothing major. Just a couple of scenes I thought we could lose...tighten up the story a bit. You

know, lose that whole skull thing. It doesn't make any sense—

SHAKESPEARE: No, not the skull!

DIRECTOR: And, of course, we'll be changing the title. You know, to something a bit more marketable for the big screen.

SHAKESPEARE: Uh, the title's "Hamlet."

DIRECTOR: Yes, yes, very quaint...but too old-fashioned. We need something that can connect with a modern audience...something contemporary, something hip, something—

SHAKESPEARE: Um, the themes in "Hamlet" are pretty timeless, I think.

DIRECTOR: Something— *(Stops and considers what Shakespeare has said.)* Themes? This isn't one of those message plays, is it? *(With disgust.)* Like "Death of a Salesman"? I never could sit through that one.

SHAKESPEARE: You've got lust, you've got greed, you've got ambition, you've got violence...lots of violence.

DIRECTOR: *(Surprised.)* What? All that's in there?

SHAKESPEARE: Sure. Haven't you read the script?

DIRECTOR: Just kidding, Bill. Of course, I've read the script.

SHAKESPEARE: *(Correcting.)* William.

DIRECTOR: Well, I've read a treatment, anyway. *(Calls.)* Production assistant! I need a production assistant here!

(Production Assistant enters.)

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Yes, sir?

DIRECTOR: Here, take this a copy of the script and read it over. *(Hands Production Assistant the script.)* See if you can find that lust part, okay?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Oh, and I need that in 15 minutes.

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Right-o.

(Production Assistant gathers up the pages of the script that the Director had tossed on the floor and exits.)

SHAKESPEARE: What? You can't read "Hamlet" in 15 minutes!

DIRECTOR: What century are you from, man?

SHAKESPEARE: Um, the 16th century, mostly.

DIRECTOR: Well, things have changed, Willie.

SHAKESPEARE: *(Correcting.)* William.

DIRECTOR: Audiences today want things quick, brief. Get to the point, and get out. You know what I'm saying?

SHAKESPEARE: Uh, well, you see that's all well and good, but—

DIRECTOR: Good, good. Because that's what we're going to do for your play. We're gonna turn it into a blockbuster.

SHAKESPEARE: Um, it already is a blockbuster.

DIRECTOR: A *Hollywood* blockbuster! Ah, you Englishmen, you have such a dry wit about you. Well, you know what they say, "Brevity is the soul of wit."

SHAKESPEARE: What? No. *They* didn't say that.

DIRECTOR: Well, somebody said that.

SHAKESPEARE: *I* said that!

DIRECTOR: Well, then, there you have it. We're on the same page then. *(Realizes.)* Well, except for all those pages I cut out.

SHAKESPEARE: It's in act two, scene two of "Hamlet"!

DIRECTOR: Problem is...I didn't find "Hamlet" to be either brief or witty. We'll have to work on that. So, let's get on with those script changes, shall we?

SHAKESPEARE: Look, I really don't think we need any script changes.

DIRECTOR: We'll talk later, okay? Right now, let's get everybody out there so we can do a run-through. *(Calls.)* Production assistant! Where's my production assistant?

(Production Assistant rushes on.)

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: Right here, sir! I'm up to act two...but it's pretty complicated and... *(Holding up loose pages of the script.)* ...I don't know where these pages go.

DIRECTOR: Never mind that right now. I need actors! Where are the actors?

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT: I'll get them, sir. Right away, sir. *(Exits in a hurry.)*

DIRECTOR: *(Shouts.)* And tell them to hurry! We're burning daylight here!

SHAKESPEARE: Actually, that's one of my lines, you know.

DIRECTOR: "Tell them to hurry"?

SHAKESPEARE: No, the other one, "burning daylight." From "Romeo and Juliet."

DIRECTOR: Hmm...never saw that one.

[END OF FREEVIEW]