

OVER BLACK:

Silence.

HAMLET (O.S.)
Who am I?

Silence.

FADE IN:

EL SINORE CITY - DENMARK - MEDIEVAL TIMES

INT. HOUSE OF POLONIUS - HALL - DAY

A LITTLE BIT OF MUSIC.

In a rich hall, OPHELIA, a pretty girl of 19, is learning to dance pas.

LAERTES, 27, dressed in a traveling suit, enters the hall.

LAERTES
My things are already on the ship.
Goodbye, Ophelia, my little sister,
goodbye. And let me hear from you -
write!

He hugs the girl.

OPHELIA
Oh, Laertes, don't doubt.

LAERTES
As for Hamlet and his attention to
you - it's nice, but he won't last
long. Hot passion will fade sooner
or later.

OPHELIA
Will fade?

She asks sadly.

LAERTES
Well, at least try to think so. He
may love you now, but...

He looks at her more closely.

LAERTES (CONT'D)

Remember, he belongs to the royal family and is their slave. He can't make his own *choices* like ordinary people can, because the whole country depends on what he does. And marriage, too, must be consistent with what the nation wants.

OPHELIA

I'll keep your words close to my heart, my dear brother...

She answers with humility.

LAERTES

Thank you, dear, I appreciate it.

Laertes broadly smiles and pats her on the cheek.

EXT. KING HAMLET'S GRAVE - MAGIC HOUR

Hamlet, 30, with a bouquet of flowers in his hand, looks thoughtfully at a fresh grave.

On the massive headstone is written: "To Dear King Hamlet of Denmark, who died at the age of 69, from his beloved wife, son, and brother"

HAMLET

(under his breath)

Why are we born, live, and die?

(beat)

Feed the worms?

He grins through his tears.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Oh father, my dear father! Less than a month after your death, before the tears had dried on her cheeks, your wife and my mother remarried. Her new husband is your brother Claudius, who also now wears your crown and rules over your kingdom.

He sighs heavily.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
 Forgive me, father, if in our
 disputes I was unnecessarily hot
 and adamant. But I always respected
 you, God is my witness.

He carefully lays flowers on the headstone.

THUMP!

Hamlet turns his head towards the sound.

THUMP!

EXT. CEMETERY - CONTINUOUS

Hamlet sees MAGNUS, a casually dressed middle-aged man,
 digging a grave.

THUMP!

MOMENTS LATER

Hamlet comes closer to the gravedigger.

THUMP!

MAGNUS
 (singing)
 In youth, when I loved, loved, I
 thought it was very sweet...

He throws a human skull out of the grave.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
 To set-ohh-a date was-ahh-my duty,
 oh, although I thought it-ahh-was
 not right.

Hamlet picks up the skull thrown away by the gravedigger.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
 (on the background)
 But the old age has sneaked up on
 me and grabbed me in his claws...

Hamlet straightens up and carefully examines the skull.

HAMLET
 (mumbling)
 And this skull had a tongue, and it
 could also sing.
 (MORE)

HAMLET (CONT'D)

And this crook throws it on the ground, as if it were the skull of Cain, who committed the murder of his own brother!

MAGNUS

(on the background)

And has shipped me into the land as if I'd never been like that.

THUMP!

HAMLET

(to Magnus)

Excuse me, sir!

MAGNUS

(singing under his breath)

A pickaxe and a shovel, a shovel,
And linen for a funeral shroud...

He pays no attention to the prince.

HAMLET

(louder)

Excuse me! Whose grave is this?

MAGNUS

Mine, sir.

He answers seriously, without turning his head to Hamlet.

THUMP!

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

(singing under his breath)

O, a pit of dirt is what we need
for a guest like this...

THUMP!

HAMLET

I think the grave really must be yours since you're the one lying in it.

MAGNUS

And you're lying outside of it, so it's not yours. As for me, I am not lying to you in it - it's mine.

HAMLET

But the grave is not for the living. So you are lying.

MAGNUS

As you wish, my lord. But the lie
is so alive, sir, like this dirt -
it jumps so quickly from you to me.

He grins.

THUMP!

HAMLET

And what man are you digging it
for?

MAGNUS

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

No man? What woman, then?

MAGNUS

For no woman, either.

HAMLET

But for whom then?

MAGNUS

For the dead, sir.

THUMP!

Hamlet grins and throws the skull to the ground.

HAMLET

And how long have you been a
gravedigger here?

MAGNUS

I started from the day when the
late King Hamlet defeated
Fortinbras, the King of Norway.

HAMLET

Defeated the King of Norway...

He sighs and frowns.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

He was great on the battlefield,
but now he's dead...

He turns sad.

MAGNUS
The body is dead, but the spirit
still roams here, sir.

He crawls out of the grave.

HAMLET
What?

He starts up.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
What do you mean?

He looks at the gravedigger in bewilderment.

MAGNUS
Two nights in a row the ghost of
king appears here.

He wipes his dirty hands with a rag.

HAMLET
Oh, nonsense!

He winces.

MAGNUS
I guess it'll come again...

He winks at the prince and takes a piece of bread from his
pocket.

HAMLET
What? Why? Tell me what you know!

He commands.

MAGNUS
Of course, my sir!

He narrows his eyes slyly.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
And a good reward always loosens
the tongue.

The gravedigger whispers conspiratorially as he bites off a
piece of bread.

HAMLET
Here! Take the coin and tell me!

He tosses a coin to the man, which he picks up on the fly.

MAGNUS

Well...

He swallows the bread and hides the coin in his bosom.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Well, listen carefully, sir.

He clears his throat.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Two nights in a row, late at night,
a ghost appeared here, one to one
dead King Hamlet.

HAMLET

King?

He darkens.

MAGNUS

Yes, king.

Gravedigger nods and licks his lips.

HAMLET

Please... Tell me more!

He tosses another coin.

MAGNUS

Well... The king-ghost was wearing
exactly that armor when he fought
the king of Norway!

With satisfaction on his face, the man hides the reward.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

And it was frowning just like the
king was doing when he was alive.

He bites another piece of bread.

HAMLET

(whispers)

It's unbelievable...

He thinks.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

And... what happened next?

MAGNUS

Well, I ordered him to speak.

HAMLET

You?

MAGNUS

Me.

He proudly nods.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

By the name of God, of course.

The man answers, chewing bread.

HAMLET

And?

MAGNUS

He didn't want to answer. Went back
to where he came from.

HAMLET

Ah!

He stares at the storyteller in disbelief.

SILENCE.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Is this... your imagination only?

He looks at Magnus suspiciously.

MAGNUS

I saw him with my own eyes!

The gravedigger answers confidently.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

I saw the dead king, I swear to
God!

He raises his chin and assumes a majestic pose, imitating the
king.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

I saw him as I see you right now.

HAMLET

(mumbling)

Why did he come?

Hamlet thinks.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
(to Magnus)
Was he worried about something?

MAGNUS
Maybe... I heard that in the great
Roman Empire, shortly before the
assassination of Julius Caesar,
corpses rose from their graves and
ran through the streets of Rome!

He looks meaningfully at Hamlet.

HAMLET
Oh God! Oh heavens! Oh, father!

As Hamlet shakes his head, Magnus looks at him carefully.

MAGNUS
(mumbling to himself)
Whoops! And I didn't recognize *his*
son.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
(to Hamlet)
And if he has a message to deliver,
he will come again.

Magnus convinces the prince.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
Come tonight to see it with your
own eyes! Come at twelve!

Hamlet looks at him incredulously.

INT. HOUSE OF POLONIUS - HALL - DAY

Ophelia sits by the window with a book. However, she does not
read but looks at the sea in thought.

POLONIUS (70's) comes to her.

POLONIUS
What are you thinking, my beautiful
daughter? Did Laertes say anything
to you in parting?

OPHELIA
Well, father... He told me about
Hamlet.

POLONIUS

Ah, good thing he did, by God. I heard that Hamlet spent a lot of time alone with you. Have you made yourself available to him? Tell me the truth.

OPHELIA

Hamlet's offered me a lot of affection lately.

POLONIUS

Affection!? You are talking like an innocent girl who doesn't understand the ways of the world. And do you believe his "offers"?

OPHELIA

I don't know what to believe, father.

POLONIUS

Then I'll tell you. Only a stupid little kid can think these "offers" are real. Show yourself more respect!

OPHELIA

He's always talked about love in a honorable fashion...

POLONIUS

Yes, "fashion" is the right word for that - a passing whim. Go on!

OPHELIA

Well, he's made the holiest vows to me, to back up what he says.

POLONIUS

These vows are just traps for stupid birds. Don't mistake that for true love. From now on, make yourself a more expensive commodity...

As he looks at his daughter - she lowers her eyes.

POLONIUS (CONT'D)

And spend less time with him.
Do as I say.

He commands.

OPHELIA

I will do as you say, father.

She answers humbly.

EXT. KING HAMLET'S GRAVE - NIGHT

Magnus, wrapped in a warm scarf, and Hamlet, dressed in a jacket, jump up and down for warmth around the grave of the late King Hamlet.

HAMLET

So cold!

MAGNUS

Indeed.

They gnash their teeth in the cold.

HAMLET

The clock must strike already.

He tries to warm himself up with his hands. Magnus nods dancing around the grave.

FAR IN THE CITY: PLAY OF TRUMPETS. TWO CANNONS ARE FIRED.

MAGNUS

What does it mean? This is not the clock.

He stops his warm-up movements, perplexed, and listens for the SOUNDS.

HAMLET

It's the new king.

His expression becomes squeamish.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

He is staying all night drinking and dancing. When he finishes another cup of wine, his entourage bustles around to celebrate this victory by cannons.

MAGNUS

Oh, hell! That's why other countries call us drunks!

He GIGGLES.

Somewhere in the distance, a clock strikes. The men look at each other and COUNT THE CLOCK STRIKES OUT.

As soon as the clock strikes the twelfth time, a giant figure of the GHOST of the dead King Hamlet, 50s, materializes from the thick fog.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
(in a loud whisper)
It is he! Came.

He points his finger at the ghost.

HAMLET
It is he! King!
(beat)
Oh, father!

Forgetting about coldness he stares in amazement at the ghost.

MAGNUS
(loudly)
Holy angels, protect us!

HAMLET
(to Ghost)
Whether you're a good spirit or a
cursed demon, whether you bring
heavenly breezes or blasts of
hellfire, I want to talk to you!

The ghost doesn't answer but points Hamlet somewhere far away.

MAGNUS
(to Hamlet)
It wants you to go off with it.

HAMLET
(to Magnus)
And should I go?

He frowns.

MAGNUS
Why not? You came to speak with it
or what?

He shrugs.

HAMLET
But what if he tempts me to jump
into the sea? Or drives me crazy?
(MORE)

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Or he has terrible intentions for
my soul?

Hamlet hesitates.

MAGNUS

Well, be careful, of course. As for
your soul, how can a ghost endanger
it if your soul is as immortal as a
ghost?

HAMLET

Your words are reasonable and give
me strength.

MAGNUS

Look, it's waving to you again.

He shakes his head toward the ghost.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Follow him and I follow you.

Hamlet nods.

EXT. SEASHORE - CONTINUOUS

Strong gusts of wind ruffle Hamlet's jacket. The giant ghost
in full armor goes further and further away.

HAMLET

Where are you taking me?

(beat)

Speak! I'm not going any further!

The ghost turns to Hamlet.

GHOST

Listen to me!

HAMLET

I listen.

GHOST

The hour has almost come when I
have to return to the horrible
flames of purgatory.

HAMLET

Ah, poor you!

GHOST

Don't pity me, but just listen
carefully to what I have to tell
you.

HAMLET

Speak!

GHOST

You must be ready for revenge, when
you hear me out.

HAMLET

Revenge?

GHOST

I am your father's ghost! I'm
doomed for a time to walk the earth
at night and during the day locked
in the fires of purgatory until I
atone for my sins.

HAMLET

Oh God!

GHOST

Listen! If you ever loved your
father - take revenge for his
murder!

HAMLET

Murder?

He is smitten with the word "murder".

GHOST

The worst murder ever, weird and
unnatural!

HAMLET

Hurry to tell me all about it, so I
can take revenge right away.

GHOST

I'm glad you're eager. Now listen.
Everyone was told that a poisonous
snake bit me. But in fact, the real
snake is now wearing my crown!

HAMLET

My uncle?

He is horrified.

GHOST

Yea, that incestuous, adulterous
animal!

His voice is sad.

GHOST (CONT'D)

With his clever words and fancy
gifts, he seduced my queen,
persuading her to give in to his
lust.

HAMLET

Oh, mother... no!

GHOST

Oh, Hamlet, how low she has sunk!
She left me, who loved her with
dignity and devotion, for a
scoundrel whose natural gifts are
so insignificant compared to mine.

HAMLET

Oh, mother!

GHOST

But hang on, I think I smell the
morning air.

He looks at the horizon.

HAMLET

Be brief.

GHOST

Listen!

The ghost GROWS IN SIZE.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Your uncle snuck up to me while I
was sleeping, and poured a vial of
henbane poison into my ear - that
poison that moves like quicksilver
through the veins and curdles the
blood!

HAMLET

Oh, heaven!

GHOST

My whole body was immediately
covered with a scaly rash and I
died instantly.

HAMLET

Oh, father! My poor father!

GHOST

And that's how my brother robbed me
of my life, my crown, and my queen -
all at once... But most
importantly, I had no opportunity
to repent of my sins or receive the
last rites! That's why the hell is
so hot for me.

HAMLET

Oh my God!

Somewhere in the distance, a rooster CROWS.

GHOST

But goodbye, my son. I have to go.
But no matter how you take revenge,
please don't harm your mother.
Leave her to God and her own guilt.

The second CROWING of a rooster is heard.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Remember me! Remember me!

And with these words, the ghost DISAPPEARS.

MOMENTS LATER

Magnus walks over to Hamlet, who is looking in the direction
where the ghost has disappeared.

MAGNUS

Sir?

(beat)

Are you all right?

HAMLET

Hej! It's you!

He comes out of his thoughts.

MAGNUS

Aye. It's me. Whom else? The ghost
is gone.

HAMLET

That's right.

He nods and becomes sad again.

MAGNUS

Well? Do you believe now that it
was the king himself?

HAMLET

The king? I don't know what to
believe.

He pauses.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

But what I believe for sure is that
any villain is going to be... well,
a villain.

MAGNUS

You don't need a ghost back from
the grave to reveal that, sir.

He grins.

HAMLET

Yes, I don't...

He glances at Magnus.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

He...

He shakes his head in the direction of the vanished ghost.

HAMLET (CONT'D)

Told me terrible things.

MAGNUS

I heard.

He reacts calmly.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

But on the other hand, he did not
drown you in the sea, as you
feared.

He winks at Hamlet.

HAMLET

What?

For a moment Hamlet looks at the gravedigger in bewilderment.

THEN: He LAUGHS.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
Indeed, lucky me, indeed!
(beat)
I love you, pal.

MOMENT LATER

Hamlet stares at the gravedigger.

HAMLET (CONT'D)
Magnus, what do you think? What's
you would do at my place?

MAGNUS
Well, first of all, I would be
afraid of those who are alive, not
dead.

As he grins Hamlet nods.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
But, on the other hand...

He continues with a serious facial expression.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)
We don't know if the ghost told the
lie or the truth. Who sent him -
hell or heaven?

HAMLET
Hell or heaven...

He frowns.

MAGNUS
So, you need to check it out.

HAMLET
Then tell me more.

MAGNUS
Do what I will tell you...

INT. POLONIUS HOUSE - OPHELIA'S ROOM - DAY

Beautifully dressed Ophelia embroiders.

MOMENT LATER

She puts aside her unfinished work and opens a chic
letterbox. Finding the right letter, she opens and reads it.