**Hamlet: PLOT OVERVIEW**

Outside Elsinore Castle in Denmark, two months after the death of King Hamlet, a ghost has begun haunting the night. The watchmen who discover the ghost show Horatio, a friend of Prince Hamlet's, who suggests they show the prince.

King Hamlet's ghost tells Hamlet that he was murdered by his brother Claudius, and begs Hamlet to avenge his murder. Claudius is currently the king, having married the former King Hamlet's wife Gertrude and taken the throne.

Hamlet is determined to take revenge. Mired in doubt, he decides to pretend to be insane. His mother, Queen Gertrude, and his stepfather, King Claudius, enlist two of Hamlet's friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to discover what's wrong with Hamlet.

Polonius, Claudius’ closest advisor, suspects that Hamlet may be mad with denied love for Polonius’ daughter Ophelia.

Claudius and Polonius decide to spy on Hamlet while he talks to Ophelia, and Hamlet rejects her.

An acting troupe arrives at the castle. Hamlet decides to use the players to discover if Claudius is truly guilty. He directs the actors to enact a play depicting the supposed events of King Hamlet's murder, as told by the ghost. True to Hamlet's expectations, Claudius jumps up when the murder is shown, and quickly leaves the room.

Hamlet plans to kill Claudius, but when he finds him praying, he changes his mind and decides to wait and kill him later, [Claudius, by praying, guarantees his own entry into

Heaven; Hamlet wants to make sure Claudius goes straight to Hell for his sins.].

Soon after, Hamlet and his mother Gertrude talk in her private room. He tells her about his suspicions and scolds her for her disloyalty to his father, not realizing that Polonius is hiding behind the curtain. He hears a noise and immediately stabs the intruder to death, believing it to be the King. After accidentally killing Polonius, Hamlet is sent away to England immediately. However, the King has secretly arranged for Hamlet to killed, by sending sealed letters with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Shortly after setting sail, they are attacked by pirates. Hamlet manages to escape and return to Denmark. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern continue sailing for England, unaware that Hamlet has switched out the sealed letters they carry with orders that they be put to death instead.

Scorned by Hamlet and orphaned by Polonius' death, Ophelia loses her mind. Her brother Laertes returns from France, determined to avenge the death of his father Polonius. His heartbreak and anger intensifies when Ophelia drowns shortly after his return.

Claudius convinces Laertes to seek his revenge against Hamlet. Together they scheme to arrange a fencing match between Laertes and Hamlet, [wherein Laertes will cover the tip of his sword with poison with which to kill Hamlet.] If

Hamlet wins, the King will supply a poisoned cup from which

Hamlet may drink.

Shortly after returning to Denmark, Hamlet chances upon

Ophelia's funeral and is stricken with grief, insisting that he always loved her. Back at the castle, the sword-fighting match begins between Laertes and Hamlet. Hamlet is initially winning. Queen Gertrude drinks to his success and is killed by the poisoned cup. Meanwhile, Laertes wounds Hamlet. They accidentally exchange swords, and then Hamlet wounds Laertes. When Hamlet perceives that he, Laertes, and Gertrude have been poisoned, he stabs Claudius with the poisoned blade and makes him drink the rest of the poisoned drink. Laertes

absolves Hamlet of guilt in his and Polonius' murder. Laertes, Hamlet, and the King all die within a few minutes of one

another.