

HAMLET'S CHRISTMAS PARTY,
A TRAGEDY?

By Veronica Brush

A play in 2 acts

Cast of Characters

Hamlet	Prince of Denmark, son of Gertrude and nephew of Claudius, desperate to prove that his uncle is a murderer. Moody and consumed with his need for revenge. (From <i>Hamlet</i>)
Horatio	Put-upon friend of Hamlet. Honorable and loyal. (From <i>Hamlet</i>)
Lady Macbeth	A Scottish noble woman determined to help her husband become king by whatever means necessary. (From <i>Macbeth</i>)
Macbeth	Lady Macbeth's worn-down husband (From <i>Macbeth</i>)
Romeo	A lonely, single friend of Hamlet's and lover of love. (From <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>).
Ophelia	Intelligent, but fed up girlfriend of Hamlet. Daughter of Polonius. (From <i>Hamlet</i>).
Carl	The only non-Shakespearean character, a cheap Santa-for-hire, often confused.
Viola	Sister to Sebastian, she is an intelligent and well spoken woman. (From <i>12th Night</i>)
Helena	A tall, somewhat self-conscious party girl, frenemy of Hermia. (From <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>)
Hermia	A short, somewhat self-conscious party girl, frenemy of Helena. (From <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>)
Chorus 1&2	The Chorus were narrators (not singers) most often appearing in Shakespeare's historical works. Chorus 1 & 2 take their narrating responsibilities very seriously.
Chorus 3	The bored and somewhat eccentric member of the Chorus. Quirky, often silly.
Hero	Ophelia's friend; innocent but with an impish streak. (From <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i>)
Orsino	A duke friend of Hamlet's, lonely and attracted to women who don't like him. (From <i>12th Night</i>)
Richard III	Murderous, whiney, and self-centered man who became king of England by leaving a trail of bodies in his wake. (From <i>Richard III</i>)
Katharina	Stubborn, man-hating friend of Ophelia (From <i>Taming of the Shew</i>)

King Claudius	Hamlet's evil uncle who killed his own brother to take the crown and marry his brother's wife. (From <i>Hamlet</i>)
Gertrude	Hamlet's mother and new wife to Claudius, loving and wise. (From <i>Hamlet</i>)
Polonius	Ophelia's father and loyal subject to King Claudius, who thinks he's smarter than he actually is. (From <i>Hamlet</i>)
Sebastian	Brother of Viola and an upstanding and intelligent man. (From <i>12th Night</i>)

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Setting: Hamlet's house, around Christmas time

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This play is anachronistic, so the setting and costumes can be modern, period, or a combination of both. For example, Hamlet's home could be a modern bachelor-pad, with mismatched modern furniture, but with the stone walls of a castle. Romeo says he is wearing jeans.

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In the script, **bold lines** denote quotes from Shakespeare.

Act I

(The curtain opens on Hamlet's living room. There are multiple seating areas, a door to Hamlet's bedroom, a door to the kitchen, and 2 hallways. HAMLET is putting up the last of the decorations when Horatio enters with a grocery bag.)

HAMLET: **Who's there?**

HORATIO: **Friend to this ground.**

HAMLET: Horatio, my good friend!

HORATIO: Wow! You have really gone all out on this Christmas thing.

HAMLET: This party must be perfect!

HORATIO: I had no idea you were so into Christmas, Hamlet.

HAMLET: I'm not! But given all that's happened this year, it felt important; with my father dying and my mother marrying my uncle, *(snidely/mockingly)* King Claudius.

HORATIO: Well, I think it's great. The way you've been moping around and isolating yourself really had me worried. So, I'm glad to see you taking interest in things again, and not talking about the ghost of your dead father.

HAMLET: But that's just it, Hortio. This party was inspired by the ghost of my dead father!

HORATIO: You're telling me after your father died, he came back as a ghost specifically to tell you to throw a Christmas party?

HAMLET: Don't be ridiculous! The Christmas party was entirely my idea! The ghost of my dead father came to tell me that my uncle had poisoned him with ear poison.

HORATIO: And that information...made you want to throw a Christmas party.

HAMLET: **The spirit that I have seen may be the devil: and the devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps out of my weakness and my melancholy abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds more relative than this.**

HORATIO: I don't get it.

HAMLET: It would be crazy to accuse the king of all Denmark of murder just on hearsay from a ghost!

HORATIO: Right. I'm with you so far.

HAMLET: I need some further evidence. Maybe some signs of guilt from my uncle.

HORATIO: Great idea. *(Pause.)* So?

HAMLET: So, the Christmas party's **the thing wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king!**

HORATIO: How?

HAMLET: My uncle, *(snidely/mockingly)* King Claudius, thinks he's coming to an ordinary Christmas party. He's talking with the guests, probably having a few drinks. Then, my man dressed as Santa Claus announces that he knows someone at the party is at the top of the naughty list and if the guilty party doesn't confess, he's going to expose his secret in front of everyone!

(HAMLET looks excitedly at HORATIO, who is clearly not as impressed by HAMLET's plan.)

HORATIO: And you think that will make the king confess to murdering your father?

HAMLET: He doesn't have to confess! **I'll observe his looks; I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench, I know my course.** Also, I'm making gingerbread men and I'm going to put red frosting leaking out of their ears.

HORATIO: This all seems awfully complicated. Couldn't you just put on a play or something?

HAMLET: That's a stupid idea, Horatio!

HORATIO: Who did you even get to agree to play Santa Claus and risk their life by threatening the king of all Denmark?

(HAMLET holds out a Santa hat to HORATIO and smiles at him. After a minute, HORATIO reluctantly takes the Santa hat.)

HORATIO: **Oh, day and night**, you are **wondrous strange** sometimes, Hamlet.

HAMLET: I've got a few different sizes of Santa suits in my bedroom. Go find one that fits before people start arriving.

(HORATIO exits into Hamlet's bedroom. The doorbell rings.)

HAMLET: **The time is out of joint.** Who would be here so early?

(HAMLET answers the door. LADY MACBETH and MACBETH enter.)

HAMLET: Hail, Lord and Lady Macbeth! How fare you both?

LADY MACBETH: Noble Hamlet, you won't believe our good fortune! My husband's now the Thane of Cawdor. I don't want to brag, but it's kind of a big deal!

HAMLET: Congratulations, good Macbeth! You're both welcome to my castle, but you're early. The party doesn't start for a while.

LADY MACBETH: I just thought you might need a hand setting up. When are you going to start decorating?

HAMLET: I've started and finished.

LADY MACBETH: (*Judgementally*) Oh.

HAMLET: Is something wrong?

LADY MACBETH: It seems a little simple for a royal occasion. Let us take care of it. Husband, Thane of Cawdor, go to the party store and get some decorations worthy of a king!

HAMLET: You don't have to...

LADY MACBETH: Nonsense! We're always happy to help a royal family in whatever humble way we can!

MACBETH: But he said...

(*LADY MACBETH pushes MACBETH to the door.*)

LADY MACBETH: **Hie thee hither, that I may pour my spirits in thine ear!** This is our chance to get in good with the king of Denmark, which could do wonders for your career! Or are you content to spend the rest of your life living off the old glory days of that one time you became Thane of Cawdor?

MACBETH: That happened yesterday!

LADY MACBETH: (*Shushing MACBETH*) **Lay it to thy heart and farewell!**

MACBETH: (*Resigned*) Yes, dear.

LADY MACBETH: And while you're out, hire a Santa Claus. That will be a fun surprise and could prove useful to our plot.

MACBETH: What plot?

(LADY MACBETH shoots him a look.)

MACBETH: Yes, dear.

(MACBETH exits.)

LADY MACBETH: *(To HAMLET)* Now, what do you have for food?

HAMLET: Well, **the funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables**, and people seemed to like that. So I thought we'd use the rest of it up.

LADY MACBETH: Leftovers? Oh, no, no, no. Let me go see what I can whip up!

HAMLET: But...

LADY MACBETH: It's no problem! All I could ever ask in return is for you to put in a good word with your father the king.

(LADY MACBETH exits into the kitchen.)

HAMLET: He's not my real father!

(The doorbell rings. HAMLET checks the time again. LADY MACBETH rushes back in.)

LADY MACBETH: I'll get it! It could be the king! *(She answers the door.)* **Who's there, what ho?**

ROMEO: Uh...hi. I'm Romeo. Is Hamlet home?

LADY MACBETH: You're a little early, good sir. Let me just check with the prince. *(To HAMLET)* A Mr. Romeo is here. Do you have a guest list or anything?

HAMLET: No, but Romeo's a friend. He can come in.

(LADY MACBETH lets ROMEO enter.)

LADY MACBETH: Alright, well, do fetch me right away if the king arrives. And I saw you had cookies baking in the oven; Adorable little gingerbread men that you've given ears for some reason. Don't forget to check on those. They can get too dark quickly.

(Then LADY MACBETH exits to the kitchen.)

HAMLET: You're awfully early, Romeo.

ROMEO: *(Sighing)* **Is the day so young? Ay me! sad hours seem long.**

HAMLET: Don't tell me you're having woman problems again?

ROMEO: I thought she was the one, man! I really did.

HAMLET: You always do.

ROMEO: This one was different! **What, shall I groan and tell thee?**

HAMLET: Actually, I'm kind of in the middle...

ROMEO: Our eyes met from across the room, our souls blending in just that look. The most angelic creature I've ever seen. She floated across the room to me, like she was carried on a cloud. And then, in the most pure heavenly voice, spoke to me, saying sweetly, "Did you want whole milk or almond milk in your latte, sir?" I was struck so hard by cupid's arrow, I could scarcely answer. I planned our whole future as I watched her gracefully foam the milk. But then when she handed my latte to me, that's when I saw her wedding ring.

HAMLET: That sucks, man. But I'm sure you'll get over it.

ROMEO: Not this time. This time my heart is broken beyond repair.

(The doorbell rings.)

HAMLET: *(Glad to get out of the conversation)* I should get that.

(LADY MACBETH rushes in.)

LADY MACBETH: **Pray you keep seat!** I've got it!

(LADY MACBETH answers the door. OPHELIA enters. ROMEO sees her.)

ROMEO: **What lady is that? O, she doth teach the Christmas lights to burn bright! It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night!**

HAMLET: That's my girlfriend, Ophelia. Excuse me.

(HAMLET goes to greet OPHELIA. LADY MACBETH exits back into the kitchen.)

ROMEO: *(To himself)* I'm going to die alone.

HAMLET: Ophelia! I'm so glad you decided to come after all!

(HAMLET tries to kiss her, but she stops him.)

OPHELIA: Slow your roll, my good lord. We are still broken up.

HAMLET: Then what are you doing here?

OPHELIA: I wasn't going to attend, but then I realized that **I have remembrances of yours, that I have longed long to re-deliver; I pray you, now receive them.**

(OPHELIA hands HAMLET a small box of the stuff she's returning.)

HAMLET: I don't remember loaning you a phone charger and some gum?

OPHELIA: **My honour'd lord, you know right well you did; and, with them, words of so sweet breath composed as made the things more rich: their perfume lost, take these again; for to the noble mind, rich gifts wax poor when givers prove** to be a total jerkface!

HAMLET: I'm sorry! I didn't mean to forget your birthday! I've just had a lot on my mind.

OPHELIA: It's too late, Hamlet! We are through! I'm just going to go compose myself in the kitchen, and then I am out of your life forever! My father was so right about you!

(OPHELIA exits to the kitchen. HORATIO enters from Hamlet's bedroom, dressed as Santa. HAMLET goes to meet him.)

HORATIO: The other two suits were way too small, but this one fits alright.

HAMLET: You look great! Now remember, when my uncle arrives, follow him around and listen to everything he says, in case he spills the beans to anyone. Then when I give you the signal, you let him have it!

HORATIO: Let him have it? What am I supposed to say?

HAMLET: You know, something like **O, your offense is rank, it smells to heaven**, Mr. Murder McMurderface!

HORATIO: I'm not going to call the king "Murder McMurderface!"

HAMLET: Okay, I'll write you something to say. **Go make you ready.** Oh, and also, if you see Ophelia, maybe you could put in a good word for me. She's still really mad about the whole birthday thing.

(HORATIO exits down the hall. HAMLET grabs a yellow notepad and exits out the other hall. MACBETH enters through the front door, carrying a bag of decorations, with CARL, who is carrying a dress bag/suitcase. LADY MACBETH enters from the kitchen, scrubbing a pan.)

LADY MACBETH: **What, will these pans ne'er be clean?** *(To MACBETH)* Who the heck is this?

CARL: I'm Carl.

MACBETH: He's our Santa.

LADY MACBETH: **Was the hope drunk wherein you dress'd yourself?** I asked you to bring me Santa. He doesn't even have a beard!

CARL: I have a fake beard.

MACBETH: He has a fake beard.

LADY MACBETH: You want us to present the King of Denmark a Santa Claus with a fake beard? **Art thou afeard to be the same in thine own act and valour as thou art in desire?** Are you trying to screw this up for me...I mean, us?

MACBETH: It was very last minute, so it was hard to find a Santa that was free and I didn't know the beard had to be real!

LADY MACBETH: Oh, nevermind! **He that's coming must be provided for: and you shall put this night's great business into my dispatch.** Just go somewhere and stay out of trouble until I tell you what to do next.

MACBETH: Yes, dear.

(MACBETH gives her the decorations and wanders away.)

LADY MACBETH: And you, Santa...

CARL: I prefer Carl.

LADY MACBETH: Don't cross me, Santa. Just go put your suit on. And it had better be a convincing fake beard, or so help me, I will not be responsible for my actions!

(CARL exits down the hall. LADY MACBETH starts hanging up the new decorations. VIOLA enters, sneaking in the front door. Once she's inside, she pulls out her cellphone and makes a call. Meanwhile, ROMEO sees her.)

ROMEO: *(To himself)* **It is my lady, O, it is my love! O, that she knew she were! She speaks yet she says nothing: what of that? O, that I were that cell phone, that I might touch her cheek!**

VIOLA: Voicemail, again? Seriously, Sebastian! *(Into her phone)* Hey, it's your sister, Viola, again. Don't know where you are. We were supposed to crash this party together. Get your butt over here. Call me back as soon as you can. Let me know you're okay. *(Hangs up phone.)*

(ROMEO sidles up to her as she does something on her phone.)

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