

ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN ARE DEAD AUDITION SIDES:

The following scenes can be studied in advance if you wish. After the monologue round, some actors will be asked to read scenes.

'ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN SIDE # 1

GUIL (with urgency): Do you remember the first thing that happen today?

ROS : I woke up, I suppose. (Pause) Oh - I've got it now - that man, a foreigner, he woke us up –

GUIL: A messenger.

ROS: That's it - pale sky before dawn, a man standing on his saddle to bang on the shutters - shouts - What's all the row about?! Clear off! – but then he called our names. You remember that - this man woke us up.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS: We were sent for.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS: That's why we're here. (He looks round, doubtful, then explains.) Travelling.

GUIL: Yes.

ROS (dramatically): It was urgent - a matter of extreme urgency, a royal summons, his very words: official business and no questions asked - lights in the stable-yard; saddle up and off headlong and hotfoot across the land, our guides outstripped in breakneck pursuit of our duty! Fearful lest we come too late. (Small pause.)

GUIL: Too late for what?

ROS: How do I know? We haven't got there yet.

GUIL: Then what are we doing here, I ask myself.

ROS: You might well ask.

GUIL: We better get on.

ROS: You might well think.

GUIL: Without much conviction; we better get on.

ROS: Right! (Pause.) On where?

GUIL: Forward.

ROS : Ah. (Hesitates.) Which way do we - (He turns round.) Which way did we - ?

GUIL: Practically starting from scratch...

ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN SIDE # 2:

ROS (starts up. Snaps fingers.): Oh! You mean - you pretend to be him, and I ask you questions!

GUIL (dry): Very good.

ROS: You had me confused.

GUIL: I could see I had.

ROS: How should I begin?

GUIL: Address me.

(They stand and face each other, posing.)

ROS: My honored Lord!

GUIL: My dear Rosencrantz! (Pause.)

ROS: Am I pretending to be you, then?

GUIL: Certainly not. If you like. Shall we continue?

ROS: Question and answer.

GUIL: Right.

ROS: Right. My honored Lord!

GUIL: My dear... fellow!

ROS: How are you?

GUIL: Afflicted!

ROS: Really? In what way?

GUIL: Transformed.

ROS: Inside or out?

GUIL: Both.

ROS: I see. (Pause.) Not much new there.

ROSENCRANTZ & GUILDENSTERN SIDE # 3.

ROS: We could play at questions.

GUIL: What good would that do?

ROS: Practice!

GUIL: Statement! One-love.

ROS: Cheating!

GUIL: How?

ROS: I hadn't started yet.

GUIL: Statement. Two-love.

ROS: Are you counting that?

GUIL: What?

ROS: Are you counting that?

GUIL: Foul! No repetitions. Three-love. First game to...

ROS: I'm not going to play if you're going to be like that.

GUIL: Whose serve?

ROS: Hah?

GUIL: Foul! No grunts. Love-one.

ROS: Whose go?

GUIL: Why?

ROS: Why not?

GUIL: What for?

ROS: Foul! No synonyms! One-all.

Player & Tragedians & R & G Side

R&G start on stage. Enter Tragedians; bedraggled, clapping and dancing as traveling along to a made-up dance and beat. Player enters last.

PLAYER: Halt! (The GROUP turns and halts.) (Joyously.) An audience! (ROS and GUIL half rise.) Don't move! (They sink back. He regards them fondly.) Perfect! A lucky thing we came along.

ROS: For us?

PLAYER: Let us hope so. But to meet two gentlemen on the road – we would not hope to meet them off it.

ROS: No?

PLAYER: Well met, in fact, and just in time.

ROS: Why's that?

PLAYER: Why, we grow rusty and you catch us at the very point of decadence - by this time tomorrow we might have forgotten everything we ever knew. That's a thought, isn't it? We'd be back where we started - improvising.

ROS: Tumblers, are you?

PLAYER: We can give you a tumble if that's your taste and times being what they are... Otherwise, for a jingle of coin we can do you a selection of gory romances, full of fine cadence and corpses, pirated from Italian; and it doesn't take much to make a jingle - even a single coin has music in it. (They ALL flourish and bow, raggedly.) Tragedians, at your command.

ROS: My name is Guildenstern, and this is Rosencrantz. (GUIL confers briefly with him.) (Without embarrassment.) I'm sorry - his name's Guildenstern, and I'm Rosencrantz.

PLAYER: A pleasure. We've played to bigger, of course, but quality counts for something. I recognised you at once -

ROS: And who are we?

PLAYER: - as fellow artists.

ROS: I thought we were gentlemen.

PLAYER: For some of us it is performance, for others, patronage. They are two sides of the same coin, or, let us say, being as there are so many of us, the same side of two coins. (Bows again.) Don't clap too loudly - it's a very old world.

TRAGEDIANS & PLAYER SIDE:

Tragedians improvise theatricalizing everything described by the Player – have fun ! – Use one another! Move from murderous or dying pose to pose holding in a freeze for the next direction)

PLAYER (pause between “deaths” for the TRAGEDIANS to change to a new pose): Deaths for all ages and occasions! Deaths by suspension (pause), convulsion (pause), consumption (pause), incision (pause), execution (pause), asphyxiation (pause) and malnutrition (pause)! Climatic carnage, by poison and by steel! Double deaths by duel! Show!

(TRAGEDIANS now battle -inflict and receive wounds dueling with imaginary swords, stab one another with knives, and die glorious exaggerated deaths)

PLAYER: (Dying amid the dying-tragically; romantically.) So there's an end to that-it's commonplace: light goes with life, and in the winter of your years the dark comes early...

(Pause) PLAYER: Applause! (jumping up)

(TRAGEDIANS get up and take theatrical bows all around, silently congratulating one another celebrating their terrific acting skills.)

CLAUDIUS GERTRUDE & POLONIUS SIDE # 1 (with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)

CLAUDIUS: Welcome, dear Rosencrantz... (he raises a hand at GUIL while ROS bows - GUIL bows late and hurriedly.)... and Guildenstern. (He raises a hand at ROS while GUIL bows to him - ROS is still straightening up from his previous bow and half way up he bows down again.) Moreover that we did much long to see you, The need we have to use you did provoke Our hasty sending. Something have you heard of Hamlet's transformation, so call it, Sith nor th'exterior nor inward man Resembles that it was. What it should be, More than his father's death, that thus hath put him, So much from th'understanding of himself, I cannot dream of. I entreat you both That, being of so young days brought up with him And sith so neighbored to his youth and haviour That you ... safe your rest here on our court Some little time, so by your companies To draw him on to pleasures and to gather So much as from occasion you may glean, Whether ought to us unknown afflicts him thus, That opened lies within our remedy.

GERTRUDE: Good (fractional suspense) gentlemen... (They both bow.) He hath much talked of you, and sure I am, two men there is not living to whom he more adheres. If it will please you to show us so much gentry and good will as to expand your time with us awhile for the supply and profit of our hope, your visitation shall receive such thanks as fits the king's remembrance.

ROS: Both your majesties might, by the sovereign power you have on us, put your dread pleasure more into command than to entreaty.

GUIL: But we both obey, And here give up ourselves in the full bent to lay our service freely at your feet, to be commanded.

CLAUDIUS: Thanks, Rosencrantz (turning to ROS who is caught unprepared, while GUIL bows) and gentle Guildenstern (turning to GUIL who is bent double).

GERTRUDE (correcting): Thanks, Guildenstern (turning to ROS, who bows as GUIL checks upward movement to bow too - both bent double, squinting at each other)... and gentle Rosencrantz. (Both straightening up - GUIL checks again and bows again.) And I beseech you instantly to visit My too much changed son. Go, some of you, and bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is. (To ATTENDANTS exit backwards, indicating that ROS and GUIL should follow.)

GUIL: Heaven make our presence and our practices pleasant and helpful to him.

GERTRUDE: Ay, amen! (ROS and GUIL move towards and downstage wing. Before they get there,

(POLONIUS enters. They stop and bow to him. He nods and hurries upstage to CLAUDIUS. They turn to look at him but lose interest and come down to footlights. POLINIUS meanwhile calling to CLAUDIUS.)

POLONIUS: The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord, are joyfully returned.

CLAUDIUS: Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POLONIUS: Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege, I hold my duty as I hold my soul, Both to my God and to my gracious King; And I do think or else this brain of mine Hunts not the trail of policy for sure As it hath used to do, that I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy... (Exeunt - leaving ROS and GUIL)

Hamlet & Ophelia & Claudius Side # 2

(We hear the wail of a woman in torment and OPHELIA appears, wailing, closely followed by HAMLET in a hysterical state, shouting at her, circling her, both midstage.)

HAMLET: Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath made me mad! (She falls on her knees weeping.) I say we will have no more marriage! Those that are married already all but one shall live. (He smiles briefly without mirth, and starts to back out) The rest shall keep as they are. (As he leaves, OPHELIA tottering upstage) To a nunnery, go.

(He goes out. OPHELIA falls on her knees upstage, her sobs barely audible. A slight silence.)

(CLAUDIUS enters with POLONIUS and goes over to OPHELIA and lifts her to her feet.)

CLAUDIUS: Love? His affections do not that way tend, Or what he spake, though it lacked form a little, Was not like madness. There's something in his soul o'er which his melancholy sits on brood, and I do doubt the hatch and the disclose will be some danger; which for to prevent I have in quick determination thus set it down: he shall with speed to England....

(CLAUDIUS, POLONIUS, OPHELIA exit).

Hamlet & Ophelia Side # 1

OPHELIA runs on in some alarm, holding up her skirts - followed by HAMLET OPHELIA has been sewing and she holds the garment. They are both mute. HAMLET, with his doublet all unbraced, no hat upon his head, his stockings fouled, ungartered and double-gyved to his ankle, pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other... and with a look so piteous, he takes her by the wrist and holds her hard, then he goes to the length of his arm and with his other hand over his brow, falls to such perusal of her face as he would draw it... At last, with a little shaking of his arm, and thrice his head waving up and down, he raises a sigh so piteous and profound that it does seem to shatter all his bulk and end his being. That done he lets her go, and with his head over his shoulder turned, he goes backwards without taking his eyes off her... she runs off in the opposite direction.

Hamlet & Rosencrantz & Guildenstern & Claudius Side # 3

GUIL: Death's death, isn't it? (Pause.) Perhaps he'll come back this way. Pause.)

ROS: Give him a shout.

GUIL: I thought we'd been into all that.

ROS (shouts): Hamlet!

GUIL: Don't be absurd.

ROS (shouts): Lord Hamlet! (HAMLET enters.)

ROS (a little dismayed.): What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET: Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROS: Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence and bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET: Do not believe it.

ROS: Believe what?

HAMLET: That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king?

ROS: Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET: Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. He keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed, to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have gleaned, it is but squeezing you and, sponge, you shall be dry again.

ROS: I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET: I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a foolish ear.

ROS: My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the King.

HAMLET: The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body. The King is a thing-

GUIL: A thing, my lord -?

HAMLET: Of nothing. Bring me to him.

(HAMLET moves resolutely towards one wing. They move with him, shepherding. Just before they reach the exit, HAMLET, apparently seeing CLAUDIUS approaching from off stage, bends low in a sweeping bow. ROS and GUIL, cued by HAMLET, also bow deeply-a sweeping ceremonial bow with their cloaks swept round them. HAMLET, however, continues the movement into an about-turn and walks off in the opposite direction. ROS and GUIL, with their heads low, do not notice. No one comes on.

ROS and GUIL squint upwards and find that they are bowing to nothing. CLAUDIUS enters behind them. At his first words they leap up and do a double-take.)

CLAUDIUS: How now? What hath befallen?

ROS: Where the body is bestowed, my lord, we cannot get from him.

CLAUDIUS: But where is he?

ROS (fractional hesitation): Without, my lord; guarded to know your pleasure.

CLAUDIUS (moves): Bring him before us. (This hits ROS between the eyes but only his eyes show it. His hesitation is fractional. And then with great deliberation he turns to GUIL.)

ROS: Ho! Bring in the lord.