| **ACT IV SCENE 5** |
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| *HORATIO, GERTRUDE, and a GENTLEMAN enter.* |
| **GERTRUDE**  I won’t speak to her. |
| **GENTLEMAN**  She’s insistent. In fact, she’s crazed. You can’t help feeling sorry for her. |
| **GERTRUDE**  What does she want? |
| **GENTLEMAN**  She talks about her father a lot, and says she hears there are conspiracies around the world, and coughs, and beats her breast, and gets angry over tiny matters, and talks nonsense. Her words don’t mean anything, but her babbling causes her listeners to draw conclusions. They hear what they want to hear. Her winks and nods and gestures do suggest that she means to convey a message, and not a happy one. |
| **HORATIO**  It’s a good idea to speak to her, since she might lead those with evil intentions to dangerous conclusions. |
| **GERTRUDE**  Show her in. |
| *The* ***GENTLEMAN*** *exits.* |
| *(to herself)* To my sick soul (since sin is always a sickness), every detail looks like an omen of disaster to come. Guilt makes you so full of stupid suspicions that you give yourself away because you’re trying so hard not to. |
| ***OPHELIA*** *enters, insane.* |
| **OPHELIA**  Where is the beautiful queen of Denmark? |
| **GERTRUDE**  What are you doing, Ophelia? |
| **OPHELIA**  *(sings)*  How can you tell the difference    Between your true lover and some other?  Your true one wears a pilgrim’s hat    And a pilgrim’s sandals and staff. |
| **GERTRUDE**  Oh heavens, what does that song mean, my dear? |
| **OPHELIA**  I’m sorry, did you say something? Please just listen.  *(sings)*  He is dead and gone, lady,    He is dead and gone.   At his head is a patch of green grass,    And at his feet there is a tomb stone.  Oh, ho! |
| **GERTRUDE**  No, Ophelia— |
| **OPHELIA**  Just listen, please.  *(sings)*  His death shroud was as white as snow— |
| **CLAUDIUS** *enters.* |
| **GERTRUDE**  My lord, look at this poor girl. |
| **OPHELIA**  *(sings)*  Covered with sweet flowers   Which did not fall to the ground    In true-love showers. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  How are you doing, my pretty lady? |
| **OPHELIA**  I’m quite well, and may God give you what you deserve. They say the baker’s daughter was turned into an owl for refusing Jesus' bread. My lord, we know what we are now, but not what we may become. May God be at your table. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  She’s talking about her dead father. |
| **OPHELIA**  Oh, let’s not talk about that, but when they ask you what it means, just say:  *(sings)*  Tomorrow is St. Valentine’s Day    And early in the morning   I’m a girl below your window    Waiting to be your Valentine.   Then he got up and put on his clothes    And opened the door to his room.   He let in the girl, and when she left    She wasn’t a virgin anymore. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Pretty Ophelia— |
| **OPHELIA**  Hang on, I’ll end it soon, I promise:  *(sings)*  By the name of Jesus and Saint Charity,    My goodness, what a shame it is,   Young men will do it if they get a chance:    By God, they’re very bad.   She said, “Before you got me into bed,    You promised to marry me.”   He answers:   “I would have married you, I swear,    If you hadn’t gone to bed with me.” |
| **CLAUDIUS**  How long has she been like this? |
| **OPHELIA**  I hope everything will turn out fine. We must be patient, but I can’t help crying when I think of him being laid in the cold ground. My brother will hear about this. And so I thank you for your good advice. Come, driver! Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night. |
| **OPHELIA** *exits.* |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Follow her. Keep an eye on her, please. |
| *HORATIO**exits.* |
| Oh, her grief has poisoned her mind. Her father died and now look at her! Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude, when bad things happen, they don’t come one at a time, like enemy spies, but all at once like an army. First her father was killed, then your son was taken away—because of his own violent actions. The people are confused and spreading nasty rumors about Polonius’s death, and I was a fool to bury him in a hurry, without a proper state funeral. Poor Ophelia has been robbed of her sanity, without which we’re just pictures, or animals. Last but not least, her brother has secretly returned from France and is surrounded by gossip-mongers, who fill his ears with wicked stories about his father’s death. Deprived of proper evidence, he’ll naturally attribute the murder to me. Oh, dear Gertrude, I feel as though I’m being murdered many times over. |
| *A noise offstage.* |
| **GERTRUDE**  Oh, no—what’s that noise? |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Listen! Where are my bodyguards? Let them guard the door. |
| *A**MESSENGER**enters.* |
| What is it? |
| **MESSENGER**  You must save yourself, my lord. The young Laertes, like the ocean when it floods the shore and devours the lowlands, is leading a rebellion against your government. The crowd calls him “lord” and shouts, “We want Laertes to be king!” It’s as if they were starting the world from scratch right now, throwing out the traditions and ancient customs that are the support of every word we utter. They throw their caps in the air and yell, “Laertes will be king! Laertes king!” |
| **GERTRUDE**  They sound so cheerful as they hunt down the wrong prey! Oh, you’re on the wrong track, you disloyal Danish dogs! |
| *A noise offstage.* |
| **CLAUDIUS**  The doors have been smashed open. |
| *LAERTES**enters with others.* |
| **LAERTES**  Where’s this so-called king? Men, wait outside. |
| **ALL**  No, let us in! |
| **LAERTES**  Please wait. |
| **ALL**  All right, we will, we will. |
| *LAERTES' FOLLOWERS**exit.* |
| **LAERTES**  Thank you. Guard the door. (*to* CLAUDIUS)Oh, you vile king, give me my father! |
| **GERTRUDE**  Calm down, good Laertes. |
| **LAERTES**  I’ve got exactly one calm drop of blood in my body, and it proclaims that I’m a bastard , says my father was betrayed, and stamps the label “whore” on the pure forehead of my devoted mother. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Laertes, what makes you so rebellious? Let him go, Gertrude. Don’t worry about my getting hurt. God protects the king, so traitors can’t hurt him.—Tell me, Laertes, why you’re so angry.—Gertrude, let him go.—Tell me, man. |
| **LAERTES**  Where’s my father? |
| **CLAUDIUS**  He’s dead. |
| **GERTRUDE**  But the king didn’t kill him. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Let him ask what he wants to ask. |
| **LAERTES**  How did he end up dead? Don’t mess with me. To hell with my vows of allegiance to you! Vows can go to hell! Conscience, too! I don’t care if I’m damned. I don’t care what happens to me in this world or the next. Whatever happens, happens, but I’ll get revenge for my father’s murder. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Who’s stopping you? |
| **LAERTES**  Only my free will—nothing else. What little means I have, I’ll use against you. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  My dear Laertes, in your eagerness to know the truth about your father’s death, are you determined to hurt your father’s friends and enemies alike? |
| **LAERTES**  No, only his enemies. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Do you want to know who they are, then? |
| **LAERTES**  I’ll open my arms wide to his true friends, and like a mother pelican with her brood, I’ll even give my life for them. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Why, now you’re talking like a good son and a true gentleman. I’ll prove to you as clearly as daylight that I’m innocent of your father’s death, and am struck with grief over it. |
| *A voice offstage, “Let her in!”* |
| **LAERTES**  What’s that noise? |
| *OPHELIA**enters.* |
| Oh, heat, dry up my brains! Salty tears, burn my eyes! By heaven, I’ll get revenge for your madness! Oh, you springtime rose, dear maiden, kind sister, sweet Ophelia! Is it possible that a young woman’s mind could fade away as easily as an old man’s life? Human nature is refined and thoughtful—person graciously gives a valuable part of herself away to her beloved, as Ophelia has sent off her sanity to her dead father. |
| **OPHELIA**  *(sings)*  They carried him uncovered in the coffin,    Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny.   And tears poured down into his grave.  Good-bye, honey. |
| **LAERTES**  If you were sane and could urge me to take revenge, you couldn’t be more persuasive than you are now. |
| **OPHELIA**  You’re supposed to sing, “A down a-down,” and you, “Call him a-down-a.” Oh, how it turns around like a wheel! Like the worker who stole his boss’s daughter. |
| **LAERTES**  This nonsense means more than rational speech. |
| **OPHELIA**  Look at my flowers. There’s rosemary, that’s for remembering. Please remember, love. And there are pansies, they’re for thoughts. |
| **LAERTES**  A case study in madness, to connect memory and thought. |
| **OPHELIA**  (*to* GERTRUDE) Here are fennel and columbines for you—they symbolize adultery. (t*o* CLAUDIUS) And here’s rue for you—it symbolizes repentance. We can call it the merciful Sunday flower. You should wear it for a different reason. And here’s a daisy, for unhappy love. I’d give you some violets, flowers of faithfulness, but they all dried up when my father died. They say he looked good when he died. *(sings)* For good sweet Robin is all my joy. |
| **LAERTES**  Sadness and torment, suffering, hell itself—she makes them almost pretty. |
| **OPHELIA**  *(sings)*  And won’t he come again?   And won’t he come again?    No, no, he’s dead.    Go to your deathbed.   He’ll never come again.   His beard was white as snow,   His hair was all white too.    He’s gone, he’s gone,    And we moan as we’re cast away.   God have mercy on his soul.  And on the souls of all good Christians, I hope. Goodbye, God be with you. |
| **OPHELIA** *exits.* |
| **LAERTES**  Do you see this, oh, God? |
| **LAERTES**  All right, then. The way he died, his secret funeral, no funeral rites or military display, no noble rites or formal ceremony—shout out from heaven and earth that I must call the way he died into question**.** |
| **CLAUDIUS**  And you’re right to do so. May the guilty party be punished by death. Please, come with me. |
| *They exit.* |