

## **CHARACTERS (15 - 18):**

### Female (7 - 9):

1. BERNADETTE: Late Teens-Early 20s, Disguises herself as Bernardo. Snarky.
2. FRANCESCA: Late Teens-Early 20s, Disguises herself as Francisco. Also plays CORNELIUS, REYNALDO and GARFUNKEL. Enthusiastic, resourceful.
3. MARCELLA: Late Teens-Early 20s, Disguises herself as Marcellus. Smart, Type A.
4. HORATIA: Late Teens-Early 20s, Disguises herself as Horatio. Bookish, nerdy, stuffy. Likes Hamlet.
5. GERTRUDE: 40s-50s, Hamlet's mom. Overbearing, embarrassing.
6. OPHELIA: Late Teens-Early 20s, Polonius' daughter. Increasingly feisty.
7. FIRST PLAYER: Runs a troupe of actors. (Can also play FIRST GRAVEDIGGER AND FORTINBRAS)
8. FIRST GRAVEDIGGER: Digs graves. It's a living.
9. FORTINBRAS: Late Teens-Early 20s, Prince of Norway. Sheepish.

### Male (5):

10. GHOST: 40s-60s, The Ghost of Hamlet's father.
11. CLAUDIUS: 40s-60s The current King. Not very bright. Talks like a 1920's gangster.
12. LAERTES: Late Teens-Early 20s, Ophelia's brother, Polonius' son. Kind of a hot-head.
13. POLONIUS: 40s-60s Advisor to the King. Ophelia and Laertes' father. An overconfident fool.
14. HAMLET: Late Teens-Early 20s, Prince of Denmark. Nice, but a little out of his depth.

### Gender Neutral (3-4):

15. ROSENCRANTZ: Late Teens-Early 20s, School Friend of Hamlet
16. GUILDENSTERN: Late Teens-Early 20s, School Friend of Hamlet
17. VOLTEMAND: Ambassador to Norway. (Can also play OSRIC.)
18. OSRIC: A local Lord. Kind of an idiot.

### Optional Cast Members

Courtiers, Players, Pirates and various others as you wish.

All lines by the "People In Black" can be divided up and spoken by the actual crew.

A note about casting: This play is not about race, and a diverse cast is encouraged.

SCENE ONE

Elsinore. A platform before the Castle. FRANCESCA (disguised as a man, "Francisco") paces up and down at her post.  
BERNADETTE (disguised as a man, "Bernardo") approaches.

BERNADETTE

*(Declaiming, very Shakespeare-y)* Who's there?

FRANCESCA

*(Also very Shakespeare-y)* Nay, answer me, stand and unfold yourself.

BERNADETTE

*(Suddenly speaking like a normal person)* ...What?

FRANCESCA

*(unsure)* Stand and unfold yourself!

BERNADETTE

...I have no idea what that means.

FRANCESCA

*(now breaking and speaking like a normal person)* Look, I'm the guard. You don't say "Who's there?", I say "Who's there?".

BERNADETTE

So say it already! I'm still trying to unfold myself.

FRANCESCA

Fine. Who's there?

BERNADETTE

Bernardo!

FRANCESCA

Bernardo?

BERNADETTE

I'm literally two feet away from you.

FRANCESCA

Hush. It's theater. Pretend it's dark. And foggy. Hi 'Nardo!

They do a complicated manly handshake-greeting.

BERNADETTE

What's doing, 'Cisco?

FRANCESCA

Absolutely nada.

BERNADETTE

Hey, did you ever wonder why two Spanish guys are guarding a castle in Denmark?

FRANCESCA

I know! Maybe Shakespeare went out for gazpacho that night.

BERNADETTE

Seriously. *(looks at her watch)* 'Tis now struck twelve. Get outta here, you crazy Spaniard.

FRANCESCA

Well, actually... I'm tired of pretending. *(taking her helmet off, revealing herself to be female)*  
I'm not Francesco. The name's actually Francesca. Don't tell anyone, okay?

BERNADETTE

Don't worry-- *(taking her helmet off, revealing herself to be female too)* I won't.

FRANCESCA

You too?!

BERNADETTE

Uh huh! Bernadette. *(they high-five)*

FRANCESCA

It was just easier to get a job this way.

BERNADETTE

Tell me about it. Oh well. Adios!

FRANCESCA

Yeah, yeah, buenas noches yourself.

Enter Horatia (disguised as a man, "Horatio") and Marcella (disguised as a man, "Marcellus").

BERNADETTE

*(Trying to be Shakespearean again)* If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus, the rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCESCA

They're right over there.

BERNADETTE

I know.

FRANCESCA

*(waving to the audience as she exits)* And that's it, folks! That's my entire part. Thank you! Goodnight!

Francesca exits. Bernadette puts her helmet back on.  
Marcella and Horatia approach.

MARCELLA

Hola, Bernardo!

BERNADETTE

Say-- What, is Horatio there?

HORATIA

A piece of her. -- Him! *(lowers voice)* Him.

BERNADETTE

Aha! *(she takes off Horatia's hat)* Another one!

HORATIA

Don't tell Hamlet, okay?

BERNADETTE

*(taking her helmet off again)* Not a chance. I'm Bernadette.

HORATIA

*(to Marcella)* I guess you're the only real guy here tonight.

MARCELLA

Well actually... *(takes off her helmet to reveal herself too)* Marcella.

BERNADETTE

Oh man, you're a woman too?

MARCELLA

Of course I'm a woman! We're the only ones who can get anything done around here!

HORATIA

And we all have to pretend we're men to do it.

MARCELLA

It can't be helped. Until we get some equal rights here in Denmark, we have to pretend we're men.

HORATIA

Is everyone in Denmark a girl?

BERNADETTE

You don't suppose Hamlet is--?

MARCELLA

Not a chance!

HORATIA

He's so dreamy.

Horatia sighs at the thought of Hamlet. Bernadette makes an "Eh" sound.

BERNADETTE

Anyway it doesn't matter -- he's Ophelia's boyfriend.

HORATIA

Yeah, yeah.

MARCELLA

What about the ghost? Has this thing appear'd again to-night?

BERNADETTE

Nope. Zippo. Of course, I've only been on guard for like 20 seconds, so...

MARCELLA

Horatio says--... I mean--?

HORATIA

Horatia.

BERNADETTE

Seriously? Horatia?

HORATIA

Yep. Horatia. And you wonder why I disguise myself.

MARCELLA

Well, anyway... Horatia here says 'tis but our fantasy, and will not let belief take hold of her. But it's the truth!

The Ghost enters.

MARCELLA (CONT'D)

Peace! Break thee off! Look where it comes again!

BERNADETTE

Ay, Dios mio!

MARCELLA

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatia.

BERNADETTE

Oh, she's in college, so she can talk to ghosts?

MARCELLA

I mean--

BERNADETTE

What, is she majoring in Ectoplasm?

MARCELLA

No, she--

BERNADETTE

Just 'cause I go to Elsinore Community, doesn't mean I can't talk to ghosts.

MARCELLA

I'm just saying--

The Ghost looks at his watch impatiently.

BERNADETTE

Look, I'll talk to a Ghost if I want to.

MARCELLA

Who's stopping you? Say something! *(she pushes Bernadette toward The Ghost)*

BERNADETTE

*(terrified but approaches Ghost)* Hi. How ya doin'?

Marcella facepalms.

MARCELLA

That's your opening? "Hi, how ya doin'?"

BERNADETTE

*(to Horatia)* Okay, talk to it, College Girl. Come on.

HORATIA

*(also terrified, but clears her throat and approaches the Ghost and says, very Shakespearean:)*  
What art thou that usurp'st this time of night together with that fair and warlike form in which the majesty of buried Denmark did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee speak! *(then, to the audience)* And that's how you talk to a ghost.

The Ghost shakes his head with disbelief and exits.

BERNADETTE

Way to go, Einstein.

HORATIA

Hey, at least mine was poetry.

BERNADETTE

A couple years at Wittenburg, suddenly she's an expert on the supernatural.

MARCELLA

Well now do you believe us? Was that a ghost, or was that a ghost?

HORATIA

That was a ghost.

MARCELLA

Is it not like the King?

HORATIA

Very much. Such was the very armour he had on when he smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

BERNADETTE

Sledded Polacks On Ice! I saw that show.

MARCELLA

*(ignoring Bernadette)* He's come by twice before, always in armor.

BERNADETTE

*(to the audience)* Which is never good. When the Ghosts need armor, it's not a good sign.

MARCELLA

Speaking of armor, what's with all the guys building cannons and warships night and day?

HORATIA

That I can tell you. We got in a war with Norway a while back and we won. Now their prince is getting all macho and blah blah blah, basically some Norwegian named Fortinbras is coming with a gigantic army to kill us all.

MARCELLA

Wow, you just saved like three pages of exposition.

BERNADETTE

Yep. *(to the audience:)* We'll have you folks out of here in an hour.

HORATIA

*(getting Shakespearean again)* But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad--

BERNADETTE

*(to the audience:)* ...Hour and a half, tops.

HORATIA

--walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.

BERNADETTE

What'd she say?

MARCELLA

"The sun's coming up."

BERNADETTE

Why didn't she just say that?

MARCELLA

It's poetry!

HORATIA

*(still trying to be Shakespearean)* Let us impart what we have seen to-night unto young Hamlet, for, upon my life, this spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.

BERNADETTE

Why, does he go to college?

MARCELLA

Let it go, Bernadette.

They begin to exit.

BERNADETTE

Is it me, or did it just go from midnight to morning in like six minutes?

MARCELLA

Shhh. It's theater!

BERNADETTE

*(as they exit)* I mean I just said "Tis now struck twelve", and suddenly "the morn in russet mantle clad" is stomping all over the place.

Exit. Or Exeunt. Whichever's faster.

A bunch of people in dressed in black come and change the set for...

## SCENE TWO

Elsinore. The throne room in the Castle. Flourish. Two flourishes, if you can afford it. The same actor who played Francesca enters, now playing Cornelius. Optional: Courtiers and Additional Guards are also there.

FRANCESCA (AS CORNELIUS)

*(to the Audience)* Hi, I'm back! Now I'm playing Cornelius, one of the king's ambassadors.

The King, CLAUDIUS (a not-very-bright 1920's gangster type) shushes the crowd and speaks.

CLAUDIUS

Alright youse guys! Settle down. Let's get all this cockamie B-story stuff outta the way first. As you know, this Fortinbras fella is coming with a gigantic army to kill us all! *(general scream from crowd)* But don't worry! I'm sendin' a little message to his Uncle, he'll straighten the boy out. I'm givin' this letter to Lord Cornelius and Lord Voltemand *(more screams from the crowd)*. No, no, no: Voltemand! Voltemand! Not...Voldemort... *(general relief)*

He gives Voltemand and Cornelius the letter, and motions for them to leave.

VOLTEMAND

*(as they exit)* That's it? That's our whole part?

FRANCESCA (AS CORNELIUS)

I didn't even get a line this time...

Cornelius and Voltemand stomp off angrily.

CLAUDIUS

Now, Laertes, kid. C'mere. I hear you're plannin' to split this joint and go to France.



LAERTES

Yes, my lord. I understand there's going to be a huge bloodbath in Act Five and I want to be as far away as possible when it happens.

CLAUDIUS

Smart kid. Did ya get your Daddy's permission?

POLONIUS

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave by --

CLAUDIUS

Yeah, yeah...this part's just to show here everybody you're his daddy, Polonius. (*showing the family to the audience:*) Polonius here is this boy's daddy. And also Ophelia's father. Which means Laertes and Ophelia are brother and sister. Got it? Awright. (*to Laertes*) Get outta here!

Laertes exits.

CLAUDIUS (CONT'D)

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son--

HAMLET

(*aside*) A little more than kin, and less than kind!

CLAUDIUS

I hoid that! I dint understand it, but I hoid it. Now, what's the matter with you, boy?! You're ruinin' the festive mood of this fine establishment.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet! What's with the long face? You'll get wrinkles. Can't you smile for your mama? (*as if to a baby*) Come on! Give us a smile, Hamhock.

HAMLET

Mother, please, the whole court is here.

GERTRUDE

(*to everyone*) He hates it when I call him that.

CLAUDIUS

Pardon my two cents, but I have to say you're going off the rails with this mournin' thing!

HAMLET

Well, if it's all the same to you, I think I'll just go back to Wittenberg. I'm going to sit around and wear black clothes and eyeliner and join a goth metal band.

CLAUDIUS

Actually, kid, your mama wants you to stay here in Denmark. Ya know what I mean? And a guy's gotta listen to his mama.

GERTRUDE

(*clinging to him*) I don't want my baby boy to go! Is that so wrong? Say you'll stay.

HAMLET

Well that's just...perfect.

CLAUDIUS

*(slapping Hamlet painfully on the back)* I knew I could count on ya! Alright ever'body, let's go celebrate! I'm buyin'!

Exeunt all but Hamlet. Hamlet sits and starts eating from a tray of food, and drinking from a goblet placed nearby.

HAMLET

O that this too too solid flesh would melt in my mouth and not in my hands. *(pause, frowns, shakes his head. That line can't be right)* That it should come to this! But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue! *(he holds his tongue with his fingers)*

Enter Horatia, Marcella, and Bernadette, all in their male disguises.

HORATIA

*(obviously in love with Hamlet)* Hi.....

HAMLET

*(still holding his tongue)* I ah glah to thee oo well!

HORATIA

What?

HAMLET

Thorry. *(lets his tongue go)* Horatio! Or I do forget myself.

He shakes her hand with the same hand he was holding his tongue with. She wipes the slobber off on her pants.

HORATIA

The same, my lord.

Hamlet shakes hands with Marcella. Bernadette holds her hand out but she is left hanging.

HAMLET

Marcellus! What make you from Wittenberg? Is anyone actually at Wittenberg? It seems like we're all here.

HORATIA

My lord, I came for your father's funeral.

HAMLET

I think you mean my mother's wedding.

HORATIA

Well, you know, so it shouldn't be a total loss...

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

BERNADETTE

And who doesn't like cold cuts?

HAMLET

We've still got some food left. *(he offers the tray)* Danish?

HORATIA

Yes. Yes, I am.

HAMLET

My father. Methinks I see my father.

Horatia, Marcella and Bernadette all hit the deck.

HORATIA

O, where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

They all stand up and dust themselves off.

MARCELLA

Don't do that, my lord.

HORATIA

He was a goodly king. I saw him once. Well, twice if you count last night.

HAMLET

*(not catching that last part)* He was a man, take him for all in all. I shall not look upon his like again.

Bernadette, Marcella and Horatia all make "I'm not so sure about that" noises and gestures. Hamlet drinks from the goblet.

HORATIA

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

Hamlet does a spit-take.

HAMLET

Saw who?

HORATIA

The King your father.

HAMLET

The King my father?

BERNADETTE

The King his father?

Marcella hits Bernadette.

HAMLET

Tell me!

MARCELLA

Okay, long story short, we're standing guard and here comes your father floating by. And he's wearing armor.

HORATIA

He looked like he was going to say something, and then (*going into poetry mode again*) the morn, in russet mantle clad--

MARCELLA

(*hastily interrupting*) So anyway, we thought he might talk to you.

HAMLET

Arm'd you say?

HORATIA

Arm'd my lord.

HAMLET

From top to toe?

HORATIA

From head to foot.

MARCELLA

From nose to toes.

BERNADETTE

From eyes to thighs.

Marcella hits Bernadette. Bernadette hits Marcella.

HAMLET

This, I gotta see. I will watch with you to-night. Perchance 'twill walk again. I pray you all, whatsoever else shall hap to-night, give it an understanding but no tongue.

He exits. Bernadette stands confused for a moment.

BERNADETTE

"Give it an understanding but no tongue"? What the heck does that mean?

MARCELLA

"Keep your mouth shut."

BERNADETTE

I just want to know what he said!

MARCELLA  
"Keep your mouth shut."

They start to exit.

BERNADETTE  
But I don't understand what he--

MARCELLA  
"Keep your mouth shut!!!"

And they are gone. The people in black come out and change the set to...

### SCENE THREE

A room in the house of Polonius. Laertes and Ophelia enter.

LAERTES  
Well, Ophelia, I'm off to France. I'm gonna try to get into a Moliere play. There's a lot less killing in his stuff.

OPHELIA  
Good luck!

LAERTES  
Oh, and by the way -- you know, you and Hamlet? He's just messing around with you.

OPHELIA  
What?!

LAERTES  
Oh yeah. It's nothing serious.

OPHELIA  
It...isn't?

LAERTES  
Come on! He's a Prince! You're just...y'know...you.

OPHELIA  
*(hurt noise)* Aah.

LAERTES  
So don't take his love that seriously.

OPHELIA  
But--