

**THEATRE GHOSTS:
DIRECTING HAMLET**

a play

by

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CHARACTERS

- CAITLYN (THE ACTOR) 23, above average in appearance but not so much so that it becomes distracting, to others or herself. Could blend into a crowd if she had to.
- THE DIRECTOR (LEE) A man anywhere from forty-five to sixty years. A seasoned veteran of the theatre.

SETTING

A rehearsal space. Preferably an actual stage. There is at least one chair involved. Otherwise the space can be barren or as cluttered as rehearsing on a stage set for another show, with all the props and furniture pushed to the walls to allow the Actor (CAITLYN) room in which to work. THE DIRECTOR (LEE) may be set up in the audience or on a corner of the stage. THE DIRECTOR may (or may not) have a table set up for his personal items and scripts. All is left up to the actual production's discretion.

TIME

The play takes place in the immediate present.

ACT I

A rehearsal space (Same Theatre as the actual production is taking place in.)

ACT II

Same location. Fifteen to twenty minutes (*intermission's length*) later.

NOTE:

The lines from Shakespeare's play Hamlet are presented in **BOLD** type when being performed by the ACTOR (CAITLYN).

"The rest is silence."

—*Hamlet to Horatio (Act 5, sc2)*

Hamlet

William Shakespeare

A NOTE ON THE DIALOGUE:

1. A slash “ / “ indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is unspoken, although the character is thinking it.
(please note these passages will also be highlighted in grey in this script)
3. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is spoken aloud but is an aside.
(also note that these passages are NOT highlighted and SHOULD BE read aloud)
4. Grammatical errors; sentences beginning in lower case; or UPPER CASE; used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), were, indeed, intended.

ACT I

(At rise:
CAITLYN, a young ACTOR in her late teens/early twenties, sits perched on the front of a folding chair, addressing a group of actors who clearly aren't there. She takes in a deep breath before she begins.)

CAITLYN

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you—

THE DIRECTOR

Talk.

CAITLYN

—trippingly on the tongue:—

THE DIRECTOR

Just say the words.

CAITLYN

—for if you mouth it,—

THE DIRECTOR

Just talk.

CAITLYN

Excuse me?

THE DIRECTOR

Keep going. [Just say the words]

CAITLYN

..Trippingly on the tongue—

THE DIRECTOR

"Trippingly on the tongue."

CAITLYN

Trippingly-on-the-tongue—

THE DIRECTOR

"TRIPPINGLY ON THE TONGUE!"

CAITLYN

(Takes another deep breath.)

Speak the speech, I pray you—

THE DIRECTOR

"Speak the speech": just [say] the words

CAITLYN

Speak the speech, I pray you.

THE DIRECTOR

{Start} again.

(CAITLYN takes another deep breath.)

THE DIRECTOR

What are you doing?

CAITLYN

What?

THE DIRECTOR

With your...shoulders.

CAITLYN

I'm breathing.

THE DIRECTOR

Don't breathe. Just do the words.

(CAITLYN hesitates.)

THE DIRECTOR

So, what are you saying—what are you trying to say—why are you saying it?

CAITLYN

She's talking to a group of actors—

THE DIRECTOR

I.

CAITLYN

What?

THE DIRECTOR

I: first person. You're him/her—whoever: "I'm talking to a group of actors."

CAITLYN

I'm talking to a group of actors...telling them not to overact?

THE DIRECTOR

Yeah; I don't see it.

CAITLYN

They're not here.

THE DIRECTOR

Then who's here?

CAITLYN

Nobody.

THE DIRECTOR

Then talk to me.

CAITLYN

And I'm telling you what? Not to overact?

THE DIRECTOR

Lighten up.

CAITLYN

Hamlet's not a light character.

THE DIRECTOR

Every character [has a—... No], you're right: Hamlet can be a brooder...[but] is this one of his brooding moments?

CAITLYN

..No?

THE DIRECTOR

No?

CAITLYN

No.

THE DIRECTOR

No. Then what are you trying to do?

CAITLYN

I haven't even done the first line.

THE DIRECTOR

Honey, it's over in the first line. It's all in the first line. / The rest of the—

CAITLYN

Don't call me, "Honey."

THE DIRECTOR

..got it. The rest of the speech is clarification.

CAITLYN

Why would he clarify?

THE DIRECTOR

You tell me.

CAITLYN

..He likes to hear himself talk?

THE DIRECTOR

[Maybe.] Why else?

CAITLYN

They don't get it.

THE DIRECTOR

Maybe that too. Try it.

CAITLYN

Now?

THE DIRECTOR

Good as time as any.

(CAITLYN starts again with a deep breath.)

THE DIRECTOR

Don't breathe!

(CAITLYN stops. She takes this in not knowing what to do. She tries not to breathe through the following:)

CAITLYN

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the t—

THE DIRECTOR

"For if you mouth it as many of your players do."

CAITLYN

For if you mouth it—

THE DIRECTOR

(Mouthing:)

"For-if-you-mouth it."

CAITLYN

(Mimicking the mouthing back:)

'For-if-you-mouth-it-as-many'—

THE DIRECTOR

"For-if-you-mouth it,—

(Drops the mouthing:)

"—as many of your players do."

CAITLYN

(Following along:)

—as many of your players do, I'd as lief the town-crier spoke my lines.

(Pre-emptive to his next interruption:)

What?

THE DIRECTOR

Nothing. Go on.

CAITLYN

Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends—

"Offended"? [Really? That's the problem?]

THE DIRECTOR

(moving his hand accordingly:)

[“saw the air too much with your hand”...‘with your hand’...thus...]

(once satisfied with his own thought he interrupts:)

Go back.

THE DIRECTOR

"With your hand, [thus.]" Move your hand on thus.

CAITLYN

(mimicking his hand movement appropriately:)

Thus. But use all gently for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say—

(Continues as The Director continues along with her:

CAITLYN grows frustrated as they BOTH CONTINUE:)

THE DIRECTOR & CAITLYN
(THE DIRECTOR quotes simultaneously with CAITLYN
but with more constraint:)

—as I may say whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a
(temperance?) that may give it smoothness—

CAITLYN

Do you want to do this?

THE DIRECTOR

Do you?

CAITLYN

Yes.

THE DIRECTOR

[Then] what's the problem? You need to take five?

CAITLYN

Thank you, / yes.

THE DIRECTOR

No: tough. You don't have five. You, Hamlet, don't have five.

CAITLYN

The name is Caitlyn.

THE DIRECTOR

You want to be Caitlyn?

CAITLYN

Cat's fine.

(CAITLYN does his best not to roll his eyes as The
Director continues; she's heard it before.)

THE DIRECTOR (*Continued:*)

—because I don't recall there being a 'Caitlyn' in the script. Did Caitlyn's father die? Is Caitlyn a prince—or a princess? Did Cat's uncle marry Cat's mother? So I think Hamlet is clearly the more interesting character here—Of course if you want we could name one of the spear carriers Cat. Or we could change around all the names. "My liege—I fear that Rosencrantz and Caitlyn are dead."

[You with me now?]

You have no time. You have one shot. You have a group of no talent actors come into town and you have paid them to act out your play. But if they overact it like they always do the whole damned thing will just be lost, right?

CAITLYN

[Yes.]

THE DIRECTOR

Then do it that way. Tell them to stop chewing up the scenery and do it right.
(We're here to rehearse)/

CAITLYN

Speak the speech I pray you as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: for if you—

THE DIRECTOR

Better but not so much anger.

CAITLYN

Speak the speech—

THE DIRECTOR

Too saccharin.

CAITLYN

Speak the speech—

THE DIRECTOR

You can't piss 'em off, here. You have to win them over.

THE DIRECTOR

(Goading Caitlyn along as she continues:)

Chide with them.

Earn their respect.

Get them to agree. Get them to laugh: Get them to want to do it your way. You have to earn their respect before you—

Stop. Stop. Go back. What was that?

CAITLYN

(incorporating all the instruction: *)

I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, *trippingly on the tongue*: but *if you mouth it*, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, *thus*, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion—

CAITLYN

Can I just do the speech thru once?

THE DIRECTOR

Is that [what you think this is]? A speech? [Kitty Cat, you're a genius. Thank you. Thank you. OK.] Sit down.

(She does.)

THE DIRECTOR

Thank you. Now, tell me a story.

CAITLYN

..what?

THE DIRECTOR

Tell me a story.

CAITLYN

about?

THE DIRECTOR

About you. About Caitlyn. Or Cat.

CAITLYN

(Now I'm Caitlyn?)

THE DIRECTOR

For the moment. Talk to me—tell me anything. Tell me about the time you—the first kissed a boy. You have kissed a boy?

CAITLYN

Yes.

THE DIRECTOR

Did you let him get to first base? Was there tongue?

(CAITLYN is stopped a moment.)

THE DIRECTOR

What was his name?

CAITLYN

Kevin...Watterman.

THE DIRECTOR

Go on.

CAITLYN

We were in the fourth grade. It was on a dare. He and...some of his friends...dared each other during recess and after school...Kevin walked me home and...when I wasn't looking he...kissed me...on the lips. So I hit him. No tongue.

(A beat.)

THE DIRECTOR

So, was that a speech?

CAITLYN

What?

THE DIRECTOR

Was that your whole speech?: You see, Cat, there are no "speeches" in the theatre; there are only dialogues. And sometimes one of the parties doesn't say anything but the opportunity to interrupt is always there. Or the information is so short—like your beating on poor Kevin that—

CAITLYN

OK, I get it.

THE DIRECTOR

Exactly.
OK?

CAITLYN

OK?

THE DIRECTOR

OK?

CAITLYN

OK?

THE DIRECTOR

OK. Good.
Go.

CAITLYN

Speak the speech,—

(She stops on the word: "speech".)

THE DIRECTOR

What?

CAITLYN

There are no "speeches"?

(THE DIRECTOR does not reply.)

CAITLYN

O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings—

THE DIRECTOR

Who are you talking about?

CAITLYN

Really?

(quoting as much as answering his question:)

groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise—who is Termagant?

THE DIRECTOR

Think of Jim Carey in Ace Ventura

CAITLYN

I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

THE DIRECTOR

"Pray you avoid it".

CAITLYN

Pray you, avoid it.

THE DIRECTOR

"Pray you avoid it."

CAITLYN

Pray you...avoid it. There's a comma.

THE DIRECTOR

Lose the comma.

CAITLYN

But there is one.

THE DIRECTOR

Who are you? The grammar police? I'll bet you Shakespeare never wrote a comma in his life. It was probably put there by some librarian in a powdered wig and orthopedic shoes.

CAITLYN

Pray you avoid it.

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion

THE DIRECTOR

Why did you pause?

CAITLYN

..She has a..change of—I have a change of thought.

THE DIRECTOR

No..Well, yes, he does—but why?:

(Up now and before she can answer!)

Because somebody said something to you, didn't they?

CAITLYN

(Moving slightly—putting distance back between them:)

Something; it doesn't matter.

THE DIRECTOR

Dialogue. [See?] Wha'd he say?

CAITLYN

Who?

THE DIRECTOR

The player.

CAITLYN

I don't know, she interrupts me.

THE DIRECTOR

You don't know your cue?

CAITLYN

It's an interjection.

THE DIRECTOR

(Referring to the script; either quoting or reading from the pages:)

First Player to Hamlet: "I warrant your honour."

(Puts down the script again.)

What do you think he means by that?

CAITLYN

(Annoyed:)

I get it.

THE DIRECTOR

Exactly.

CAITLYN

Can I go on now?

THE DIRECTOR

Perfect.

CAITLYN

Are you done mansplaining to me?

THE DIRECTOR

Yeah, I don't know what that means—In other words she just shut you down—so how do you respond?

CAITLYN

(Keeping her comment to herself:)

Be not too tame neither—

THE DIRECTOR

What if he were smiling? Not you: the player.

CAITLYN

(Adjusting to the thought:)

Be not too tame neither. / But let your own discretion be your tutor—

THE DIRECTOR

What do you think you see behind her smile?

CAITLYN

**let your own discretion be your tutor:
suit the—
—The action to the word, the word to
the action; with this special observance,
that you o'erstep not the modesty of
nature: for any thing so overdone is
from the purpose of playing, whose
end,—
I'm nineteen.**

THE DIRECTOR

You see, and this is the problem with doing Shakespeare. Idiots think he thought he was writing for a pimple faced school boy—he's thirty years old for godsakes—This is why Hamlet is never played by a anyone under twenty-five.

THE DIRECTOR

Case in point.

CAITLYN

Or maybe it's because I'm not a boy.

THE DIRECTOR

It's an all female cast; none of you are boys; you'd stand out like a sore thumb.

CAITLYN

Maybe because it's poetry.

THE DIRECTOR

This isn't poetry. This is a conversation—nobody's going to set music to it unless you're on Gilligan's Island. This is real people talking; having a genuine conversation. So, if you're upset: be upset—but not so upset that you make a fool out of yourself—and at the same time don't underplay it to the point you have nothing invested: because if you don't care why should they?

(CAITLYN chooses not to reply.)

THE DIRECTOR

That's the whole point you're trying to make here. Shakespeare is reaching through the ages through you to tell dumbshit kids like Caitlyn to stop acting and just be human for godsakes. And honey, if you can pull this off without going over the top or just floating on the surface you just might make something of yourself. Pick it up: the word to the action...

CAITLYN

(Holding back what she can:)

The action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. And *that's* poetry.

THE DIRECTOR

It's poetic, it's not poetry.

CAITLYN

Now this / overdone—

THE DIRECTOR

(Overlapping right behind her:)

This overdone—

CAITLYN

(—Now this overdone,) or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre / of others.

THE DIRECTOR

Focus in now.

Make it personal.

Get 'e,m where it hurts.

A whole theatre of others. —

CAITLYN

(Trying her best to continue:)

O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man...

(resigns herself to let him continue on solo.)

THE DIRECTOR

(overlapping along with her:)

O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably! Who do you think he's talking about?

CAITLYN

And the player says I hope we have reformed something differently or something.

THE DIRECTOR

Why?

CAITLYN

What?

THE DIRECTOR

Why?

CAITLYN

Why what?

THE DIRECTOR

Why does he respond? Why does she say anything?

(CAITLYN is at a loss for words; "which she are you talking about?")

THE DIRECTOR

Exactly. You have anything to add?

THE DIRECTOR

Until she can't hold it back any longer. And that's when she speaks.

CAITLYN

She says "reform it."

THE DIRECTOR

It's not just what she says: but how she says it. You're her meal ticket. And she's laughing; behind that smile. And beyond her: the other players they're smiling too, they're all laughing—Why are you sure the Player says “reform it”?

CAITLYN

Because I say “reform it” back / to her.

THE DIRECTOR

So, “reform it” means?

CAITLYN

(Choosing her words carefully not to let the dual meaning slip:)

...up yours.

THE DIRECTOR

(Smiling back at her...returning the volley:)

[Up yours :] reform it altogether.

CAITLYN

Reform it altogether.

THE DIRECTOR

"Reform it altogether."

CAITLYN

O, reform it altogether. And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them;

THE DIRECTOR

(Paraphrasing for her:)

No ad-libbing.

CAITLYN

***I know.* —for there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too;**

THE DIRECTOR

And now you just pissed them off.

CAITLYN

What do you want from me?

THE DIRECTOR

What do you want from me?