

“RUBY OF ELSINORE”
One Act Play
by Bruce Kane

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22448 Bessemer St.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
PH: 818-999-5639
E-mail: bkane1@socal.rr.com

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“RUBY OF ELSINORE”
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SETTING: Ruby's House of Beauty - Elsinore, Denmark

CHARACTERS:

RUBY – Hairdresser. Late thirties. Lots of hair. Lots of attitude.
OPHELIA – Hamlet's sometime girlfriend. Young and naïve
GERTRUDE – Hamlet's mother. Haughty, self involved
CLAUDIUS – Hamlet's lusty, but suspicious stepfather
HAMLET – Prince of Denmark. Sullen, indecisive
GHOST – Angry and bloodthirsty.

(AT RISE: Ophelia fusses with her hair, while Ruby tries to style it.)

RUBY: Stop playin' with your hair girl. That's my job.

OPHELIA: Oh Ruby, you have to make me especially beautiful.

RUBY: Honey, this is a comb, not a magic wand.

OPHELIA: I mean it. I have to look really good tonight.

RUBY: What's the big occasion?

OPHELIA: I'm going to be a princess.

RUBY: Trust me honey, you've been a princess for a long time.

OPHELIA: No, I mean a real princess... With the tiara and everything.

RUBY: Who died?

OPHELIA: Nobody died.

RUBY: I thought with you people, every time someones dies, you all move up one.

OPHELIA: I'm going to marry a prince.

RUBY: A prince? You're going to marry a prince.

OPHELIA: That's right. I'm going to be Princess Ophelia.

RUBY: He told you he was a prince.

OPHELIA: He is a prince.

RUBY: I'd be careful if I were you, child. A lot of frogs walkin' around these days claimin' to be princes.

OPHELIA: This one's no frog.

RUBY: I'd run a background check. At least google him. Every guy nowadays with a pair of tights and a sword says he's a prince.

OPHELIA: Ruby, I'm going to marry Prince Hamlet.

RUBY: Hold on here... You are going to marry the Prince of Darkness?

OPHELIA: You shouldn't say those things about him.

RUBY: Honey, that man could depress a laughing hyena.

OPHELIA: He's got a lot on his mind.

RUBY: He's a friggin' prince. He doesn't do jack. What the hell he could he have on his mind?

OPHELIA: It's his father.

RUBY: Unless they went to a lot of expense to bury the wrong guy, your boyfriend's father is dead.

OPHELIA: That's the problem.

RUBY: What are you tellin' me, the old guy's not dead.

OPHELIA: Oh no... He's dead, alright.

RUBY: That's what's the friggin' problem?

OPHELIA: Hamlet thinks... (*she fidgets*)

RUBY: What? He thinks what?

OPHELIA: I really shouldn't say anything.

RUBY: Fine with me child. Whatever it is, I wouldn't pay much attention. If you ask me, all these royals are a couple of raisins short of a Danish. It's what happens when cousins marry cousins.

OPHELIA: Hamlet doesn't think his father died of natural causes.

RUBY: Hell, girl, this is Elsinore. Nobody dies of natural causes.

OPHELIA: You have to promise not to tell a soul.

RUBY: My lips are sealed.

OPHELIA: Well, Hamlet thinks that his step father...

RUBY: You mean, the new king.

OPHELIA: Right... Claudius... Hamlet thinks the new king had something to do with his father's... Well, you know. (*fidgets some more*)

RUBY: He thinks King Claudius croaked his old man.

OPHELIA: Something like that.

RUBY: That'd be my guess.

OPHELIA: You think the king could do something so gross?

RUBY: Like I said honey, this is Denmark. There's always something rotten goin' on somewhere. And you can quote me on that. So tell me, did the prince of indecision figure this out all by his lonesome?

OPHELIA: Not exactly.

RUBY: Just how, exactly.

OPHELIA: You have to promise not to whisper a word of this to anyone.

RUBY: You know what I always say, child. What happens at Ruby's, stays at Ruby's.

OPHELIA: His father told him.

RUBY: His father is dead.

OPHELIA: That's why you can't tell anyone.

RUBY: Why would I want to?

OPHELIA: I know it's hard to believe.

RUBY: Oh no... Hard to believe? Hamlet's dead father told him that Claudius bumped him off?

OPHELIA: That's it in a nutshell.

RUBY: I'd say "nutshell" was an excellent choice of word. And you're going to marry this guy?

OPHELIA: When he asks me.

RUBY: Hold on just a cotton pickin' minute here... He hasn't asked you to marry him?

OPHELIA: Not in so many words.

RUBY: Well, if he does, it'll be in so many words you won't understand what the hell he's talking about. How well do you know Prince Hamlet?

OPHELIA: Well.... Let's just say... "well enough."

RUBY: Take it from someone who's been there honey... Sometimes "well enough" ain't good enough.

OPHELIA: I know he loves me.

RUBY: He told you that.

OPHELIA: Well...

RUBY: Not in so many words. For the life of me, I'll never understand why women let men off the hook when it comes to saying "I love you."

OPHELIA: Because I know he does.

RUBY: At your age, you don't know jack. Especially when it comes to men.

OPHELIA: I know how he feels from the way he looks at me.

RUBY: Don't confuse myopia with interest.

OPHELIA: (adamantly) He loves me and I am going to marry him.

RUBY: Okay... It's your life. I'd just be careful if I was you, child . The prince just never seemed the marryin' kind, if you know what I mean.

OPHELIA: No, I don't know what you mean.

RUBY: Him always hanging around with those two guys.... Y'know Rosenberg Guildencrantz.

OPHELIA: Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

RUBY: Whatever... They're both a little light in leotards if you ask me.

OPHELIA: They were all friends in college. And there's nothing wrong with Hamlet.

RUBY: I just never seem him with any girls. No offense, honey, but he always seemed a real mama's boy to me.

OPHELIA: Hamlet loves his mother.

RUBY: So did Oedipus.

OPHELIA: Well, he must have been a very good son, this Oedipus.

RUBY: And for a while, not a bad husband.

OPHELIA: Hamlet is just not too happy with his mother these days.

RUBY: What's his problem?

OPHELIA: He thinks she married his uncle too soon after his father's death

RUBY: Oh really? He thinks the next day was too soon?

OPHELIA: Don't make jokes Ruby.

RUBY: Who's making jokes? They used the leftovers from the funeral to cater the wedding.

OPHELIA: Hamlet thinks there may have been something going on between Claudius and Gertrude even before.

RUBY: He thinks? He thinks? Hell, everybody in Elsinore knew Gertrude was steamin' up the sheets with Claudius.

OPHELIA: Well, I didn't know it.

RUBY: Are you blind, child? Even at the funeral, Claudius had his hand firmly planted on her royal ass. Have you thought of suggesting to the prince, that maybe he seek a little professional help. I mean... "I see dead people." Give me a friggin' break here.

OPHELIA: Ruby, what do you think I should do?

RUBY: What does your father say?

OPHELIA: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

RUBY: Why, does your old man think you're going into business with Prince Hamlet?

OPHELIA: No, that's just the way my father talks. "To thine own self be true and it follows as the night the day" ... yadada, yadada, yadada. (Ruby holds up a mirror in front of Ophelia) Oh Ruby, you're a dream.

RUBY: We are all such stuff as dreams are made on. And you can quote me on that .

OPHELIA: Ruby, if Hamlet doesn't ask me to marry him, I swear I'll kill myself.

RUBY: Now, now child... You musn't talk that way. You listen to Ruby. Men are like ferry boats. If you miss one, there'll be another one along in an hour. Now, run along... (Ophelia gives Ruby a hug and runs off.)

OPHELIA: Wish me luck.

RUBY: Luck. (to herself) You're gonna need it. (Calls out) Next. (From the opposite side of the stage Gertrude, Hamlet's mother enters.) Your majesty.

GERTRUDE: Rosie, how are you?

RUBY: Ruby.

GERTRUDE: What?

RUBY: Ruby... My name is Ruby, highness. Not Rosie.

GERTRUDE: Are you contradicting your queen?

RUBY: No, ma'am. I was merely pointing out...

GERTRUDE: One does not "point out" to their queen.

RUBY: Yes, your haughtiness. (Gertrude sits in the chair. Ruby drapes the smock over her.)
Well, what'll it be today?

GERTRUDE: Just a touch up.

RUBY: Want me to do something with those roots?

GERTRUDE: I am the Queen. I do not have roots. I have transitions.

RUBY: Whatever you say. (she begins working on Gertrude) So, how are you majesty? I haven't seen you in here since just before your wedding.. I suppose congrats are in order.

GERTRUDE: Thank you, Rita.

RUBY: As well as condolences.

GERTRUDE: Condolences? What are you talking about?

RUBY: Condolences on the death of your husband.

GERTRUDE: Claudius is not dead. He is alive... Very much alive. In fact, we only just had....

RUBY: I meant your first husband, highness. The late king. The one before this one.

GERTRUDE: Oh... Him... Yes... The late king... Yes, of course... He is dead... And buried.

RUBY: Although still active from what I hear.

GERTRUDE: What are you talking about, Ruthie?

RUBY: Nothing, your grace. So everything is satisfactory with you and the new king?

GERTRUDE: Everything is very satisfactory, Rhonda.

RUBY: Happy to hear it.

GERTRUDE: Things couldn't be more satisfactory.

RUBY: That's good.

GERTRUDE: As a matter of fact, I can't remember when I have been so satisfied and on such a regular basis.

RUBY: Well, you go highness.

GERTRUDE: Are you married, Rhoda?

RUBY: Ruby.

GERTRUDE: Who's Ruby?

RUBY: Not important, majesty. And to answer your question... I was married once.

GERTRUDE: Was he a loving man?

RUBY: That's what every woman I caught him with said.

GERTRUDE: My first husband was not a loving man.

RUBY: I'm sorry to hear that ma'am.

GERTRUDE: In fact my late husband was a cold man. A very cold man.

RUBY: Couldn't be much colder than he is right now.

GERTRUDE: Perhaps there are women who prefer a man who pays them no attention... Leaves them completely alone... A man who never... how should put it...? A man who never...

RUBY: Shows them the respect and tenderness they deserve.

GERTRUDE: (Her voice drops an octave. Her breathing becomes heavy) Tenderness, shmenderness... I'm talking about a man who never slips them the high, hard one. Sweeps out the chimney... Threads the ole needle. Lays a little pipe now and then.

RUBY: Of course, majesty. What could I be thinking?

GERTRUDE: Indeed. Then along came Claudius.

RUBY: (*sings and does a little dance*) "Slow walkin' Claudius... Slow talkin' Claudius" (*Gertrude clears her throat. Ruby straightens up*) You're speaking, of course, of the new king. Your present husband. Your late husband's brother. Your son's new...

GERTRUDE: (*annoyed*) Yes, yes, yes. Claudius is different than his brother.

RUBY: For one thing, he's alive.

GERTRUDE: Claudius is warm.

RUBY: Warm is a good thing in a man.

GERTRUDE: He's considerate

RUBY: A rare trait these days.

GERTRUDE: And loving. Very, very, very, very, very loving.

RUBY: There's certainly a new glow in the royal cheeks.

GERTRUDE: I can tell you this because you are a woman Rachel. You are a woman?

RUBY: One hundred and ten percent.

GERTRUDE: With someone in your profession, one can't always be sure.

RUBY: Oh, you can be sure, your homophobicness.

GERTRUDE: When I am with him all I want to do is... How can I say it? All I want to do is...

RUBY: Enjoy his company. Rest in his arms. Bask in his adulation.

GERTRUDE: (*breathing heavily again*) Do the horizontal mambo... Excavate the tunnel of love. Clean the carpet... Parallel park... Ride the pony... Slurp the...

RUBY: I get the picture, your humpingness.

GERTRUDE: My son doesn't understand that.

RUBY: He's young. He'll learn.

GERTRUDE: Do you really think so?

RUBY: Give him time.

GERTRUDE: Perhaps you're right.

RUBY: Time heals all wounds.

GERTRUDE: How quaint. Is that what they call peasant wisdom?

RUBY: I suppose.

GERTRUDE: Maybe if he had someone in his life, he'd understand my need to... How should I say it?

RUBY: I think that lawn's already been mowed, your horniness. (Holds up a mirror for Gertrude) I think that's it.

GERTRUDE: Are you coming to the play tonight?

RUBY: What play is that your majesty?

GERTRUDE: Hamlet has commissioned a play to be performed in the castle tonight. It's called "The Moustrap." You must come.

RUBY: Thank you. But plays really ain't my thing. I like something with a little action... Somethin' I can get down with... Somethin'... How should I put it? Somethin' funky.

GERTRUDE: One does not turn down an invitation from her queen just because the subject doesn't rise, or sink, to the required level of... "funkiness"

RUBY: Yes, your superciliousness.

GERTRUDE: I'll leave two tickets for you at... "will call." (She exits)

RUBY: (*calls out*) Okay, send in the next sucker.

(*Claudius, The King, enters*)

CLAUDIUS: Ruby, Ruby, Ruby.

RUBY: King, King, King.

CLAUDIUS: Ruby, Ruby, Ruby

RUBY: King, King, King.

CLAUDIUS: You're a sight for sore eyes, Ruby.

RUBY: You're looking very regal, yourself.

CLAUDIUS: I'm feeling very regal.

RUBY: I haven't seen you since your coronation.

CLAUDIUS: Has it been that long Ruby?

RUBY: At least. Is it true what they say, highness?

CLAUDIUS: What's that, Ruby?

RUBY: That it's good to be the king.

CLAUDIUS: It doesn't suck. I can tell you that. The power... The wealth... The respect. But, mostly the power. God, I love the power... People stand when you walk into a room. They don't sit until you sit. They do what you tell them to do. They laugh at all your jokes. Ruby, right now, back in the castle, there are actually people lining up just to kiss my.....ring.

(The play continues...)

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