

Gertrude's Lament - a monologue

I've always had a bad press... 'Frailty thy name is woman,' and all that, but they don't know what it's like to have a son like Hamlet. Okay, so I helped murder his father and married his uncle, which doesn't exactly foster good family relations; but ladies and gentlemen, I was provoked! By the way the father issue has come back to haunt me, literally. Ghostly prowlings on the battlements by night, pouring poison about me into Hamlet's ear. Which is ironic considering that's how we despatched his father; you know, the poison...in the ear....thing. But that doesn't give Hamlet the right to behave like a petulant teenager.

I blame his friends; he got in with a bad crowd, like those celebrity wannabes Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. I wouldn't be surprised if they appeared in their own play one of these days. But hanging about in graveyards all the time – that can't be healthy. And the girlfriend, Ophelia, always floating around whimsically, posing in ponds for that Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Bunch of radicals. Mark my words; she'll come to a bad end! He'd have been better off with one of those strong cross-dressing women like Portia or Rosamund – they'd have made a man of him.

I have to admit though – that speech of his was a stroke of genius. Much as I love him, let's face it, who would have remembered Hamlet without that catchphrase of his, 'To be or not to be?' Sheer self indulgence. If he were a real man, or indeed a woman, he'd have just got on with it. And he's always prattling on about nobility, but what was so noble about trying to flush out his uncle and me with a badly acted play – anyone could see where that one was going. Very sneaky. If anyone's suffering from 'outrageous fortune it's me!

It's so frustrating to think he'll be the one to be remembered whereas I'll probably be written off as the dysfunctional mother. I wonder who'll play me in the movie – it would have to be a woman of a certain age, maybe Meryl Streep if she can master the accent, or Helen Mirren, she's good at queens isn't she? Hamlet would have to be played by someone...sensitive, shall we say, maybe even a woman.

Regrets? Of course I have regrets. I mean the Polonius incident was unfortunate, but think of it as collateral damage. Lurking around behind curtains is never a good idea. Being a queen isn't easy you know – Hamlet's dad never once asked for my opinion on anything. Don't get me wrong, I've never had a lust for power like my counterpart, that Macbeth woman. All I did was succumb to my smooth-talking brother-in-law whispering sweet nothings in my ear about equality. And Hamlet doesn't like me talking like this, but his dad really wasn't 'all that' in the bedroom department - at least his uncle Claudius knows how to treat a woman. Hamlet says I drive him mad. He's mad? How does he think I feel!

Oh dear, I don't think this is going to end well.

