

I WILL BE HAMLET!

A GAME WITH ROLE-PLAY

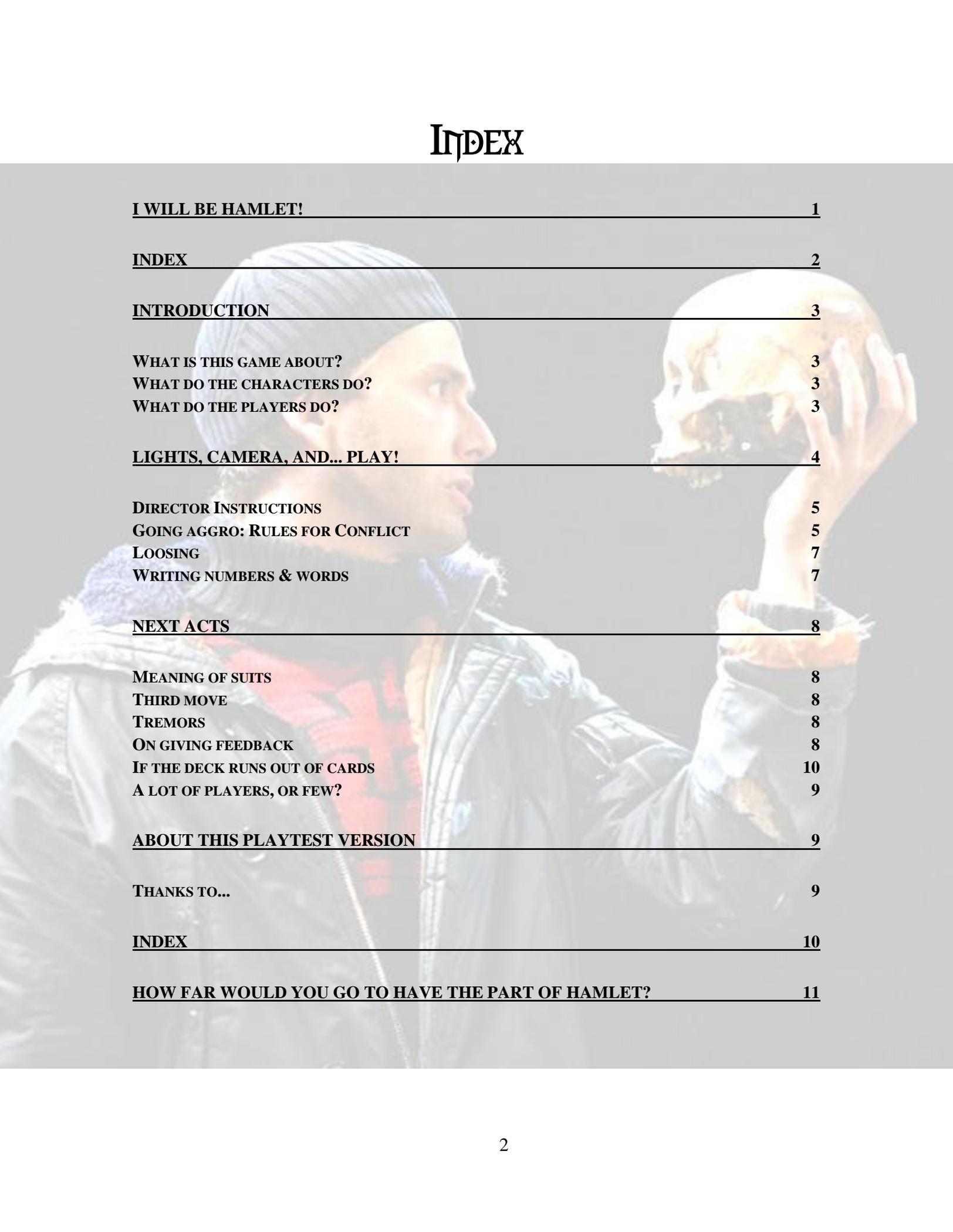
By Martin Van Houtte

A man with a beard, wearing a blue beanie and a dark jacket over a red and black patterned shirt, is shown in profile. He is holding a human skull in his right hand, looking at it with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light color.

“⊕ G⊕D, I C⊕ULD BE B⊕UNDED IN A NUTSHELL
AND C⊕UNT MY~SELF A KING ⊕F INFINITE SPACE WERE
IT N⊕T THAT I HAVE BAD DREAMS”

SHAKESPEARE, HAMLET, SECOND ACT, SCENE 2.

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A person wearing a blue beanie and a dark winter jacket with a red plaid scarf is shown in profile, looking towards the right. They are holding a human skull in their right hand, which is raised to eye level. The background is a plain, light color.

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INTRODUCTION

Here is a game I would like to call Role-Playing Game. Since I do not have enough time or space to explain what does that mean or why do I consider the game a RPG, I had better apologise for my English, which is so bad that... you will give yourselves an idea as you keep reading.

But now I have to explain some things:

What is this game about?

This is about how far will you go to get the part of Hamlet in the free version that the very prestigious James Maryon wants to perform.

What do the characters do?

The characters are actors who, based on their drives, will try to get The Part while being bound in a medieval castle, forced to coexist with each other; and they will perform their monologues, suspect from their rivals and sabotage their soliloquies —or maybe kill them!

What do the players do?

The players will take different roles, because one of them will be the dealer and the Judge and the others will be the Actor¹'s players. They all will play the part of one character (Mr. Keeton, the Butler for the Judge and the Actors for the rest). They will describe whatever they may be interested, requested, or needed, trying to make their character win; the rules, based in cards games, are made for getting this done properly.

As a note for notice, you will need no sheets of paper & no pencils except for the Judge, and players must NOT have read this book entirely; this is a game to be learned as you play it. I tried to write this booklet in a way that should make things easier for you, the Judge. Have fun, ☺.

¹ Masculine gender is for laziness, not for sexism.

LIGHTS, CAMERA, AND... PLAY!

If you and your friends will play this game (thanks!), you can make this stand up or sit down, or whatever way you want to. As you, the Judge, will need to write down numbers and words sometimes, it's better to have at least one place where you can do this comfortable.

First, you & your friends will need a deck of Spanish cards. It is OK if you don't have one, as you can use English ones too, taking away the 10s and counting "J"s as 10s, "Q"s as 11s, and "K"s as 12s; also, the suits will be different: instead of Clubs, Spades, Cups, & Coins ("Oros"), you will have, respectively, Clubs, Spades, Hearts, & Diamonds. This is important to remember, as I will write the first way.

Shuffle the deck; then, **deal three cards to each** other player (not to you). Tell them to see only their cards, and tell them to keep them in secret as well. They can share their hands of cards to others, but it's better not to do so in the first round. You all will learn why in a while.

Now, the game has **seven (7) rounds or Acts**, one for each day in the castle. Say it loud, so everybody can hear you. In each Act, you, the Judge, will give some Instructions—the Director James Maryon's Instructions. Do not say them these right now; first, you have to **describe the firsts impressions of the castle**, you have to ask them about the travel, the weather, how they feel when they enter the castle, what's the first thing each one will do, etcetera (encourage them to invent some details). Detail as long and deep as you and your fellows want to. Encourage them to do so, too. **Ask like you were crazy.**

One little thing: as you will learn later, **the castle is haunted**. Don't tell them this directly, but suggest it: maybe the armours in the corridors make strange noises "because they need oil, obviously"; maybe a door opens suddenly, "because of the wind, clearly". You have to be gentle and subtle; hide the insinuations with "rationale thinking". "There **MUST** be an explanation for THIS". The players may ask and guess, but you have to be strict with yourself: "no, I can't answer that now, man; I'm in something important here; ask later". Or, better enough, **do not react to the questions or guesses.**

Now you have a solid fiction to build on; ask each one **why they want The Part of Hamlet**, why are they (their characters, in fact) here (in the castle). This will be their **Drives**. You can do it subtle too, in order **not to break the Suspension of Disbelief**. But it's not bad if you ask them this frankly; it is very important, and they must know it soon or later. To give an advance, if they describe a scene in which their characters do something directly bound to their Drives, they can draw a card and then discard another. This can be very helpful sometimes, **so make them know what their Drives are**. As a matter of fact, **they only can benefit from their Drives once per Act.**

But, you know, all people have some fears, some things that make them tremor; ask the players **what their character fear** when they are performing their acting. This will be their **Tremors**. This is important to the others players, but don't call attention to it right now; it may be their best weapon against the other characters, but it can't be used until their character knows it. There are rules for this, so don't be afraid. Oh, and you can make other questions at will, as long as you are interested enough; these can make the Tremors question fade in their memories; but, please, you take a note of each Tremors and Drive, pointing to which character they belongs to (and point which character belongs to each player as well, if you need). Tremors can be stage fright, fear to improvisation, etcetera.

Now breathe deeply. Relax. Do it frequently. Ready? I will continue now.

Director Instructions

Maryon leaves them Instructions, one for each day. There is a Butler in the castle to serve the character, but now he will present them the holy Instructions. Remember this: **always talk in first person** when playing your character. **Now, play Mr. Keeton, the Butler, in order to give them the guides**. One thing: remember the castle is haunted, so maybe he is like Lurch in *The Addams Family*². And, by the way, a little secret: **he is Maryon dressed up**. As nobody has seen him in person and there are no photos of him, he is only famous for his name and career. **The players must not know this ever**; it has to be a doubt. In fact, I could simply not to say it; but if I did so, you wouldn't play Mr. Keeton as a very important character or at least not as important as it is; but the final decision about the identity of Mr. Keeton or Maryon is you. So, where was I? Oh, yes, the Instructions. So you say one at the beginning of the first Act (and each subsequent); try, as before, to **embellish the announcement with description and questions**. Then, let them play their characters.

I will give some examples of instructions in the **Appendices** in the finished version of the game. But they all have to be ridiculous tests, to perform crazy improvisations.

Going aggro: Rules for Conflict

If they ask for the utility of the cards in their hands, **smile scarily and tell them to make a monologue**; if they don't ask, they will make the monologue soon or later. They may ask Mr. Keeton to help them, and so they may include him in a scene in which they describe some situation that fits their Drives; do it, by all means: he want the character to fight each others, and knowing them and their reasons is the first step; now start to talk about the possible sabotages from other, or the talent of them; you can stand up and look in the hand of cards of each player (they can and should let you see them) before, so they think you're more than pretending. They will think on sabotage the other characters too

² No bad intentions, no attack to ABC, owner of the ©. I mention it only for illustrative motives.

then. When someone wants to perform a soliloquy or to sabotage other character, stop the flow of the descriptions a little to explain some rules; you can read them just like they are written next:

First: you will have cards played in your Field. **If the sum of them is greater than 21, you loose this round.**

Second: while being lesser than 21, the greater the best. So, if you do not loose till the end of the round (which is when all the rest have lost), you sum up your cards and receive a score; the grater this score is, the closer you are to The Part.

Third: you have to describe your intention (what do you want to happen in the fiction) and your task (how your character is trying to accomplish such a goal) always, before declaring any move or playing any card. **You almost never declare the effect (what happens after your task).** You can do this when a card is played in your Field. The rest of the time, it is the Judge the one who has the **Privilege** of describing the effects.

Fourth: there are two main moves, two main actions you can do that need to be defined right now: the Soliloquy and the Sabotage.

*In the **Soliloquy**, you have to improvise following the Instructions given to you before (Mr. Keeton's pleasure) a monologue or soliloquy; the Judge will look at your hand and will play, after you finish your improvisation, one card of your hand on your Field; you then draw a card from the deck³. There must be at least one Soliloquy for each character in a scene, so it's better to hurry up!*

*Then it is the **Sabotage**. In it, you describe as said in the Third Rule how you sabotage one character (or more) and for what end; then, you play a card on your opponent's Field. He has the right to discard one card from his hand and then draw another from the deck. There can be as many Sabotages as you want, but there has to be a different scene between two Sabotages! This means, a colour scene, a Soliloquy scene, a Drive scene, or something. The scenes of other players count too!*

Fifth: you can give ideas to the other players, but you can't declare for them, and you had better not to interrupt them to make your move; be patient, your scene will come at one time or another.

So, there are as many Rules for Conflict as your fingers in one hand. This may help you for now.

Another advice for you, the Judge: your players will want, soon or later, a moment of camera; but you should be careful about that player in the corner who seems a little shy;

³ You draw a single card, no matter how many characters you sabotaged at once; so, you, the Judge, can advice them to do one thing at a time.

try to make him bright! It's important, over all, that **all people have a good time. Be organized**; I can't give you a better advice, nor I can a clear one. Sorry about that. It's the problem with groups with different agendas.

Loosing

Just because a player loose doesn't means he can't play any longer in this Act. So, when someone loose, you should read the next square:

When you have lost you can't accumulate more cards in your Field, and your score is considered 0 for this round. You can't play Soliloquies neither.

What you can still do is Sabotage your rivals (and you may play a Drive-scene too, if you didn't before).

Keep this in the mind of the players.

Writing numbers & words

When a player wins, write down his score next to his name.

When you give the players the Instructions, you give them the key for what Maryon wants from them. This is very important: do you remember the four suits we will be using? We will use Clubs, Spades, Cups, & Coins. Well, each one of them has a significance: the Club represents the middle age peasant, so it will be used for Friendship; the Spade represent de military class, so let there be the Intimidation; the Cup is the noble symbol: it's Seduction. And Coins are a clear allusion to merchants, and therefore they are used for Cheating.

This **four methods of manipulation** (Friendship, Intimidation, Seduction and Cheating) are the ones this rules support. When a character is Sabotaging other, either he is trying to be a sincere Friend of the other (you do not want him suffer consciously, but you do in the edge), or he wants to Intimidate the other, or he thought that by Seducing the other he would succeed, or he is clearly Cheating the other.

So, when a player Sabotage another character, he must play a card according to the method he is using.

Now you are thinking, "Hey, dude, what has this to be with the Instructions?" Well, my answer is: **in each Act, you will give advantage to those who use your guides** (you define a suit; every card that has this suit gives the player who played it 1 point to add to his score, even if he loose or has lost). Write down these modifiers as you need them to remember this later.

When the Act ends, write down these scores for each player; you don't have to say them loud, but it's not prohibited either.

NEXT ACTS

Meaning of suits

In the following Acts, you will do much the same; but here you should explain what means each suit. And they are meaningful for the Soliloquies too! The suit means the quality of the monologue, while the number would determine the intensity of that quality. The qualities correspond this way with the suits: Clubs for the Talent and Spades for the Passion and Cups for the Studies and Coins for that *Je-ne-sais-quoi* you need to be a good actor. (The idea was born when I didn't know what top air with Coins, xD.)

Third move

As well, here is another move for the Fourth Rule of Conflict, which is NOT optional (this meaning you must present this move in the second Act so it is available to be used):

When someone tries to Sabotage you, you can say "I Distrust!" If you do so, the card that was about to be played in your Field will be discarded, but you must include that character in a scene where you tell him your Tremors before this Act ends.

Don't forget to describe!

Tremors

If one character knows the Tremors of other character, the player of the first one can draw one card whenever he is trying to Sabotaging the second one, and decide which card to play (so, if your character knows the Tremors of other character, he can try to Sabotage him whenever he wants).

Just remember two things: **Mr. Keeton is a character too, and he is the Director!** If you want, you can use this benefit too when someone make a very bad Soliloquy and **MUST** be punished. And remember one thing too: **if the Judge can choose, he will NOT play a card to get a character loose.**

On giving feedback

You must give feedback to a player after he performs a Soliloquy. Fictionally ("you see Mr. Keeton pressing with his middle finger to his ear; he then says: [etcetera]") & Actually ("you should have done this; this suit represent this, not that other thing you do; also, give it more enthusiasm! Don't be shy! [Etcetera]!").

If the deck runs out of cards

If such a situation comes to happen, then you should take the discarded cards and shuffle them as the new deck.

A lot of players, or few?

This game is thought for a minimum of 5 players + Judge, and a maximum of 8 players + Judge. If there's less players, you can quit a figure; for example, if you have 4 + Judge, you won't use 12s; if you have 3 + Judge you won't be using 11s; and if you are 2 + Judge, you will not use 10s as well. You can play with more than extra 8 players if you shuffle two decks without figures, or with figures if you are, like, 40. But don't let my words influence you; this game wouldn't be fun with more than 10 players (and good luck even if you have 7 or 8!).

ABOUT THIS PLAYTEST VERSION

This is a playtest version; I haven't playtested it yet.

I had the idea on a Tuesday, on May the 8th, at 6 o'clock in the morning; I've started to write the rough draft the next day, literally (12 o'clock on May 9th). And I've finished (ergo, I'm writing this very words) at 9:20 on May 9th. I hope I can participate in the project, but, well, I will understand if you don't count it. At least, y beg you for play this game with your friends, and tell me if you had a great time or an awful time, to give me a kind of feedback, :D.

If it's not a lot to ask for, ^^.

Thanks to...

...Shakespeare (like you didn't know, xD).

..my dad, who recently has gone to work, but not before making me laugh and relax a little.

...Julián L. Moreno, who gave me the idea of the castle.

...Carlos Pelaes, who gave me the idea of the Tremorss.

...Troy Costisick, who gave me the idea of the card deck.

...and Florencia Müller, who helped me with some English terms.

(I should thank a lot of people that gave me other advices and ideas in the past, because that advices and ideas remains in this text. But, the fact, is that I don't remember who they where, I mix people with ideas and my head explode; better to know I had come with this, at least, :D.)

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Repeated because some look for it at the beginning, and some at the end.

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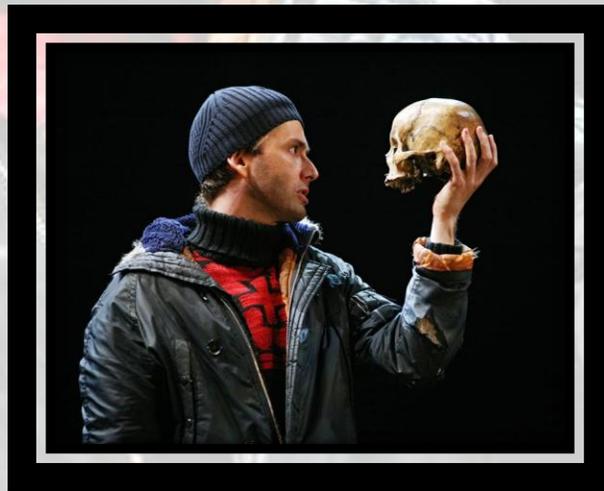
HOW COME YOU DIDN'T HEAR IT? The whole world is talking about it! Are you serious, dude? Do you live in a *nutshell*?

Well I have to tell you right now: James Maryon will make a free-version of Hamlet (the Shakespeare's play, and don't dare to tell me you don't know who he is)! And he needs good actors!

But hear this: he's going to lock them in a castle with a butler for seven days. Yes, as you heard: L-O-C-K! Weird, don't you think? They say it's because he needs a really good actor, and rivalry and stuff make you do better and that sort of shit. For me, it's too much long and strange a casting, you know?

So, why are you still in here? You should be flying to the computer so you postulate for the casting! It's your dream! Yes, it is far away, but you need it! Just answer:

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO TO HAVE THE PART OF



HAMLET?