Hamlet: When I got off the plane I smelt her; on the runway, in his welcoming embrace in the guards' salute I smelt her. On his hand and on his cheek — her scent — on his neck and on his back and on his balls her scent. Oh God, I can smell her now. Oh filth, filth, he enters her, he goes inside, he does, he goes inside her again and again... I'll stay! (Hamlet votes.) I'll stay!

Claudius: Glorious solidarity blesses our nation's first assembly. Let enemies beware of the Nation United, let Fortinbras skulk upon our borders, I declare three days National Holiday in celebration of our New Democracy.

Polonius: Come, secretaries and ministers: the press, the people, the world awaits.

A bell announces the end of the session.

Exit all except Hamlet and Ophelia.

2:

Hamlet, Ophelia. Prayers in the distance from many sides.

Hamlet: Why are you spying on me?
Ophelia: I'm looking at you.
Hamlet: And I... am looking at you.
Ophelia: I will go, then.
Polonius: Breakfast with the Russians first thing, press conference, then it's the opening of the New Parliament. Madame will be with us.
Gertrude: Yes.

Ophelia returns to her desk.

A bell announces the beginning of the session.

Claudius: (At his desk.) What remains for today, Polonius?
Polonius: My son, my Lord, asks your permission to leave the city.
Claudius: Why?
Laertes: To join the ranks of the valiant defenders of our nation's sovereignty.
Claudius: Good, a young man like him needs to see some action. Let him be stationed in the South, in front of Fortinbras and overseeing the militias.
Laertes: I will do all in my power to be worthy of this honour.
Claudius: I'll make him a general.
Polonius: My Lord!
Claudius: Nothing is too much for the son of Polonius.
Polonius: I am forever yours.
Claudius: I thank you all for your devotion. Time is neither with us nor against us, our enemies are vigilant, they scurry while we sleep. I bid you all good night.

A bell announces the end of the session.

Exit Hamlet, Laertes, Ophelia.

Gertrude: I have a proposal. It concerns Ophelia.
Polonius: What has she done?
Gertrude: Laertes is leaving. She will be so alone.
Polonius: She has many pursuits; she is an excellent pianist, reads profusely, rides regularly, speaks French, German and Czech.
Claudius: She is very beautiful.
Gertrude: Hamlet, given that he's staying with us, is likely to have far too much time on his hands: Ophelia is vulnerable.
Polonius: Do you suspect my daughter of anything?
Gertrude: I am a woman, Polonius, and I sense the seeds of scandal before they are blasted on to the wind. I am also a mother and a wife. My son has long been of an inclination towards your French-speaking, piano-riding, horse-playing daughter and now he is of an age. I propose their marriage. Claudius?
Claudius: What has this to do with the New Democracy?
Polonius: It would be one of its symbols.
Claudius: It would entertain the press?
Polonius: A sense of shared responsibility, my Lord, may help the Prince overcome this negativity towards the New Order.
Claudius: Marriage would gild him.
Polonius: Madame, our house is no stranger to royalty; honour and blood have tied us together over centuries; my daughter will be delighted.

They vote. Motion carried.

Gertrude: Excellent.
Polonius: Marvellous.
4:

Hamlet, alone, contemplating a sacred area in the playing space.

Hamlet: This empty space. Why is it empty? This pit that our words fall into to die. This is where our secrets are buried, where our crimes gather — here in this space that nobody crosses. (Standing on the edge of the empty space.) At this point our feet tremble and we turn away our gazes from this Empty Quarter that... (Enters the empty space.) Here. This is where I shall dig and dance; unearth the foundations of this palace and summon up the little shreds of truth from this mass grave of lies. I'll have them up and out; I want them screamed across the corridors, screaming naked across the gardens, then who could say that Hamlet stood by and did nothing?

5:

Enter Polonius reading a map.

Gertrude: Here?
Polonius: Yes.
Gertrude: Are you sure, Polonius?
Polonius: He was most insistent, Madame, he even drew me a map!
Gertrude: Let me see.

Enter Claudius.

Claudius: You're joking!
Gertrude: Claudius, it's his last night.
Claudius: Find somewhere else.
Gertrude: Don't be ridiculous!
Claudius: I have never stood there, no one has ever stood there, I do not see why I should stand there to humour the whims of your sick child.
Gertrude: Claudius, please!

Claudius: Polonius, get out of there immediately!

Enter Arms Dealer.

Arms Dealer: Good evening, your majesties.
Gertrude: Hello! What a surprise.

Claudius enters the sacred space.

Claudius: We have been waiting for you.
Arms Dealer: Hamlet told me you were having a little occasion.
Claudius: I am so happy you could make it.
Arms Dealer: You look splendid, Madame.
Gertrude: Merci. (Enter Ophelia.) God, Ophelia, you look half-dead.
Polonius: She has been a little under the weather.
Ophelia: I have been throwing up all afternoon.
Arms Dealer: Poor child, do you have a fever?
Ophelia: Don't touch me!
Gertrude: She is upset that Hamlet is leaving.
Polonius: On the contrary, she is upset because she is leaving tomorrow.
Arms Dealer: I'm only trying to help.
Polonius: Thank you!
Claudius: Television been arranged?
Polonius: They're filming as we speak. Delayed transmission, of course.
Claudius: What's the order of events?
Polonius: We'll shake hands and embrace, swig some juice and before you know it he'll be on the plane.
Claudius: I'm sweating.
Polonius: I'm sorry. (Polonius dabs Claudius's brow with a handkerchief.)

Enter Hamlet on a papier-mâché horse. This scene is played by Hamlet with hysterical speed.
be the Redeemer! To raise support among the people, he'll go to the Holy Mosque to lead the Friday prayers; you will meet him there with one thousand men dressed in the nation's colours. Half accidentally, your men will trample on the holy grounds and cause such brazen offence to his zealots that they will revolt there and then with stones, with tyres, with –

Laertes: What for?!

Claudius: A third of the nation.

Laertes: A third for me and a third for my father.

Claudius: Half!

Laertes: I'll do it. And if you lie, I'll kill you.

Enter Gertrude with a scream.

Gertrude: Your sister, Laertes. She came into the palace when the sun fell into the trees. When the guards were warm and droopy like the oranges her eyes were blazing and alive, her dress swollen with the wind as if with a phantom child, with fantastic wailing she moved beyond the guards into the courtyard, a swollen angel against the black sweep of the tarmac; I went towards her and as she raised her arms as if to salute the world; a button came loose from her shirt and tittered onto the steps, I remember this button, Laertes, this little disc of mother of pearl, and leaning over to retrieve it on my way home when – no – when I was there, then in the rolling flesh in the twitching limbs and her body was as well I washed myself in: how hot it felt across my face, how hot her lungs, her intestines how hot.

No one is exempt.

Exemption is impossible.

I carry my guilt, I carry it.

But, but, but...

Am I still beautiful?

Black out.

END OF ACT FOUR

Act Five: Al-Isha'a – Supper

1:

At Ophelia's desk, delegates laying flowers. Islamic prayers.

Hamlet enters in a short white thowb, with a long beard.

Hamlet: I loved her, with a noble love, and I killed him. I killed your father and mine. Yes, you can look at me now, Mother. I did this out of love. What is the death of the father, Laertes, what is it, when defeat is the very secret of our rebirth?

Gertrude: Hamlet!

Hamlet: Mourn your father's death to salute the living, but do not mourn to salute the King! I want you with me in the reshaping of our nation.

Laertes: You bastard!

Hamlet: Is this fidelity, Laertes? Standing next to the King in your father's very shoes — you are not the shadow of the dead, you are death's double! (Laertes strikes him.) So be it! What now? Do we saddle our horses, sharpen our swords, make prayers and prepare for Kufa, thus do we rise again? Can that be? Can it be?

The other delegates return swiftly to their desks.

Arms Dealer: Your father would be proud.

Hamlet: He's dead and you — still here?

Arms Dealer: I'm leaving. My work's done. I am happy to have been of assistance.

Hamlet: I will make you regret your assistance.
Arms Dealer: Destiny makes dark plans –
Hamlet: Get out.
Arms Dealer: However we curse and spit, kick and writhe –
Hamlet: Out!
Arms Dealer: We nudge each other towards its manifestation!
Hamlet: Out!
Arms Dealer: Fortinbras will be so pleased!
Hamlet: Depart!
Arms Dealer: Farewell.

2:

Hamlet: He who can speak without tables, without chairs, without lies let them speak. (Silence.) This silence will bury us all.

A bell announces the beginning of the session.

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammed is his messenger. I, Hamlet, son of Hamlet, son of Hamlet am the rightful heir to the throne of this nation. My rule will crush the fingers of thieving bureaucrats, neutralise the hypocrites, tame the fires of debauchery that engulf our cities and return our noble people to the path of God. Our enemies comprehend only the language of blood, for this, the time for the pen has passed and we enter the era of the sword. Do not pretend amazement! Violence breeds princes and princes breed violence, that is our curse!
And may God raise the souls of his martyrs to the gardens of heaven.

All vote. Gertrude hesitates.

Gertrude: Where to this madness, Hamlet, where to?
Hamlet: No more words please, Mother, words are dead, they died on our tongues, council is the weakest form of faith, now we must mouth meaning with our flesh.

Gertrude votes. War has been declared. The bell begins to iterate.

Enter a messenger.

Messenger: The world community represented in the UN has sent you this message: that it is prepared to send peacekeeping troops to the region and organise a summit meeting chaired by disinterested political figures to discuss the differences between your parties.

Hamlet: Invite your masters to a private showing to see the dead dancing before their killers, perhaps you can teach us the art of slaughter and acquittal of the slaughterer.

Messenger: You will die, Hamlet.

Hamlet: No, I hurry to the dignity of life and the eternity of death.

Exit messenger.

Claudius: History lays its greatest challenge before us. Just two hours ago, our forces –

A pre-recording (sound or video) of Claudius's address to the nation begins to play and overtake Claudius's words in the event sphere on stage. Claudius falls silent.

Each delegate, realising what has happened, rises from his/her desk, clears away the last objects of value to them, opens the munitions box beside them, takes out the weapon inside it and walks forward, listening blankly yet astutely to the speech being broadcast overhead.

As they walk forward, press reports intercut into Claudius's speech, reporting the latest developments of the civil war. Amongst these gathering mounds of information, each delegate waits for the confirmation of their own death. When they hear it, they collapse, dead. To be performed in a manner as simple and unforced as possible.
Claudius's recorded address to the Nation: Just two hours ago, our forces began an attack on terrorist positions belonging to Hamlet and his army. These continue as I speak.

This conflict began when Hamlet laid siege to our democracy, our values and our people through a brutal series of kidnappings and terrorist bombings that have killed many innocent victims and shocked the world community. Tonight this battle has been joined.

The following news reports, intercut into Claudius's address, should be broadcast in Arabic:

**News Report:** The streets of the capital are in flames, buildings have collapsed through the endless onslaught of air attacks from the F-16 fighter planes still loyal to the King. Meanwhile, Hamlet the Crown Prince, and leader of the People's Liberation Brigade—

**Claudius’s recorded address to the Nation:** As I report to you, air attacks are under way against military targets within the city. We are determined to knock out his lethal, nuclear potential; destroy his chemical facilities; much of his artillery and tanks will be destroyed.

**News Report:** In an unconfirmed report, The Queen Gertrude has been killed whilst trying to prevent the King’s tanks from surrounding her son, who is trapped inside The Grande Mosque.

Gertrude dies.

**Claudius’s recorded address to the Nation:** We will crush the terror not with books and speeches, but with courage and good judgement and responsibility. Some may ask, why act now? Why not wait? The answer is clear: the world can wait no longer.

**News Report:** As the Multinational Peacekeeping Force sent by the United Nations arrived off the coast yesterday, General Laertes and Hamlet's forces were engaged in arm-to-arm combat throughout the streets. At 10 am this morning reports arrived that Laertes was struck by mortar fire and his condition is described as critical.

Laertes dies.

**Claudius’s recorded address to the Nation:** I had hoped that when we took our decision in historic debate to exile him that would be the end of this criminal life, but I have been proved wrong, and today the world will see that error corrected.

**News Report:** The Army is sparing no one. Hamlet is firing mortars from the Mosque and Claudius is firing from the Palace.

Claudius dies.

**Hamlet:** In the name of God I have invented a curse that writes the history of other nations in my own people's blood. Perhaps the hardest thing is to find the courage to wake in the morning and face this landscape of ruins that are our lands. This perception of truth too late, is hell.

Hamlet dies.

Enter Fortinbras.

**Fortinbras:** Faeces, intestines and sweat. Only dead humans can smell like that. I have biblical claims upon this land, it is empty and barren and my presence here is a fact that has not been invented. It won't be easy, terrorism is not yet defeated, but the pipeline will be completed within a year, and hunger will be eradicated, the homeless will find refuge, the old will die and the young will forget, the poor will find wealth and this barren land will be seen to bloom. What we see here can never happen to us. For this is the dawn and the birth of the Greater

Is — r as l

White noise fills the conference room censoring Fortinbras's voice. Fortinbras repeats the attempt and, each time, his voice is overwhelmed by white noise.

Iz...

Izzzzz... Izzzzzzzz... aaaaa.

Sudden silence.