

# **LET'S BAN HAMLET**

By Maggie Smith

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Draft Three

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## **THE UNDERGROUND QUEER ALLIANCE**

**ASH** (they/them) — senior; the president of the Underground Queer Alliance; strong, loud, a natural-born leader; must be played by a non-binary, agender, genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

**RICHIE** (he/him) — sophomore; has only recently come out; lighthearted, kind, stubborn when he wants to be; still gives everyone the benefit of the doubt; must be played by a transgender performer

**LAINE** (they/them) — junior; viewed as a rebel, doesn't care enough to be one; always lounging, constantly getting written up for violating the uniform, must be played by a non-binary, agender, genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

**WILDE** (she/her) — senior; outspoken and hardworking; always ready to say yes to anything; thinks outside of the box

**PERCY** (she/he/they) — junior; all smiles but unfortunately cares about being polite more than his own well-being; not yet out to their parents; always has snacks or a pen to lend someone; must be played by a transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, or otherwise gender non-conforming performer

**CAM** (he/him) — senior; the absolute most fun to be around; full of energy, goofy; must be played by a transgender performer

## **THE FACULTY**

**BELLAMY DAWSON** (she/her) — a former student who now teaches at the school; the new advisor of the Underground Queer Alliance; a fighter

**MIA ROCKWELL** (she/her) — a guidance counselor who is genuinely good at her job; keeps everything students tell her confidential, even if it could come at the cost of her job; must be played by a transgender performer

**AMANDA GARRETT** (she/her) — the head of administration stuck between following the policies set in place by the archdiocese and protecting her students

## **SETTING**

A Catholic high school in a midwest town

## NOTES

There's a lot to go over here. First of all, I know what I said a while back, how I don't want my stories with queer characters to have the main conflict be about their queer identity. And that's true, I don't. Until some shit went down in the education system, and now here we are, making an exception.

I say what I say always— Race and (dis)ability are not reasons to not cast a performer. This show calls for a diverse cast. Don't be a dick. I don't describe my characters physically ever because of this. "Well, the playwright says,"— Shut the fuck up. No I didn't. The playwright says make it real. And real is diverse.

Gender is very important to this piece, as I'm sure you can tell. I've specified which actors should be trans, which ones should be gender non-conforming, genderfluid, nonbinary, etc. And then the rest are open. But there are specific roles for non-cis performers, here. Do not cast a cis person. I'm not being polite about this. I'm not saying please. Just don't do it, and we won't have a problem.

Switching gears, this play is meant to make a statement on something very real and very harmful. I'm not here to say, "Anyone identifying as a Christian is bad." That's not the case, I know very nice, kind, Christian people who are genuine allies, I know nice, kind Christian people who are queer. This isn't a thing to say that religion as a whole is bad. This is meant to talk about an intersection of religion and queer identities, having to do with sexuality and gender. I grew up Catholic. I'm queer. I still believe in God. And if you don't, that's totally cool, too! But this isn't a play that's meant to critique a religion, it's meant to critique anti-LGBTQ+ policies put into place by the people in charge of religions. It's meant to open eyes and hopefully start a real conversation to explain why so many queer people feel ostracized by the Church.

Finally, I'm aware that this play has strong language. I don't want that to deter anyone from performing it. If there's a high school student that's like, "Please, High School Theater Director, can we perform *Let's Ban Hamlet*?" YOU CAN AND YOU SHOULD! Take out curse words if it means your admin will let you perform it. I'm giving permission. You should do that, for sure! I do ask, though, that you keep everything I've written above in mind when censoring these words. You cannot change the identities of any characters without explicit permission, and you cannot change the identities of these characters to silence any particular voices.

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE ONE**  
**IT FEELS LIKE THIS IS GOING WELL**

*[The office of Dean of Students AMANDA GARRETT. BELLAMY DAWSON sits across from her at her desk. We are halfway through a meeting.]*

GARRETT

And since you've graduated? What have you been doing?

BELLAMY

Graduated from... here? Or college?

GARRETT

Both, I suppose?

BELLAMY

Right. Well, so I graduate high school, right? That would have been... Ten-ish years ago. Give or take. And then... I go to college. And I graduated from there. And, uh... Well, I mean, now I'm here. I did some TA'ing, too, obviously. With younger students. But this would be my first time working at a high school.

GARRETT

That can't be right, you graduated ten years ago?

BELLAMY

From here, yeah.

GARRETT

We've established that you've graduated from here.

BELLAMY

I can be repetitive, at times. That would probably be my top weakness, if you asked me for that.

GARRETT

You do realize you're applying for a position as an English teacher?

BELLAMY

Yes. And repetition... Is in poetry? It's in poetry. Which I would also teach, as an English teacher. You know, maybe. Maybe not, who knows, I don't have a syllabus developed, yet.

GARRETT

If I recall, you were one of the top students in your class.

BELLAMY

Yes. The top, if you're looking at my literature grades specifically.

GARRETT

I'll admit, I was a bit surprised when you applied for the job, Bellamy. Don't get me wrong, we remember you as a remarkably creative student, but... Teaching never crossed our minds as being a fit for you.

BELLAMY

What can I say? I'm good at surprising people.

GARRETT

Oh, we were aware. What was that senior prank, again?

BELLAMY

The corgis.

GARRETT

Right, yes. Corgis. I'll have to admit, that one was well-planned. One of the most coordinated senior pranks I'd seen in a long time. Who came up with it?

BELLAMY

Uh, me.

GARRETT

You?

BELLAMY

Well, yeah, it was me. But I wasn't the one who put them in the uniforms.

GARRETT

Well, regardless. Remarkable leadership.

BELLAMY

Not the reaction I was expecting.

GARRETT

I'm known to surprise, too. So, applying to teach Senior Literature. Any reason for that particular interest?

BELLAMY

It was one of my favorite classes. One of the ones I genuinely never dreaded going to, honestly. Not that I don't love learning, I can be very studious, but you know—

GARRETT

You don't need to explain that to me. I know what it's like to be a student.

BELLAMY

Right. Well, I loved the atmosphere. I loved what we learned. And having the chance to teach more students what I learned would be amazing. And I know literature. I know the way that it changes with each perspective and student reading it. I know it's creative and it's meant to move. And there's so many stories to be told, and I want to hear what the girls think of them.

GARRETT

I agree. The school itself is well-known for its academics but... I have an inkling that English is the favorite around here. If not for the material then for the people teaching it.

BELLAMY

That, too.

GARRETT

Well, Bellamy. It's been lovely seeing you, again. You've seemed to have grown into the exact kind of person we want to see leaving our school. Mature. Ambitious. The like.

BELLAMY

Thank you. It was great being back here.

GARRETT

We'll reach out to you soon with your application status. Regardless of the answer, we love keeping in touch with alumni.

BELLAMY

Of course. Any time. Love you.

*[BELLAMY starts to exit, then immediately turns around.]*

BELLAMY

I didn't mean "I love you," love you— It was an accident— I meant to say goodbye! If you think about it, what I said is actually / really normal—

GARRETT

You can leave, now, Bellamy.

BELLAMY

Yes. Thank you. I love— No— Goodbye. Have a nice day.

*[BELLAMY leaves GARRETT in her office. GARRETT smirks and writes something down on a piece of paper. Transition into:]*

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE TWO**  
**DO YOU REMEMBER FANTINE IN LES MIS?**

*[Underneath a stairwell, in a cramped and windowed nook, sits the Underground Queer Alliance. It is filled with couches, armrest touching armrest. Each student is wearing a variation of the school uniform, except for LAINE, who is wearing a pair of pants made out of the same fabric as the uniform skirts. That is not allowed. The kids are clustered around ASH, who is sitting on the back of a couch against the wall, and RICHIE, who is sitting in a chair in front of them. They're cutting his hair.]*

ASH

Would you stop moving around? It's going to be uneven.

RICHIE

I'm trying! The hair keeps getting underneath my collar.

ASH

Well, if it's uneven I'm going to have to buzz it.

PERCY

It's already uneven.

RICHIE

It's what?

WILDE

They said it's already uneven.

RICHIE

No, I heard what they said. I just need some clarification as to whether this haircut is or is not uneven.

ASH

It is not uneven!

LAINE

It looks fine from the front. Just make sure no one is behind you and you're good to go.



RICHIE

I'm in the front row of all of my classes!

CAM

Don't have a last name that starts with an A and you won't have that problem.

WILDE

It looks like he has a bald patch.

ASH

It's not a bald patch!

WILDE

What is it, then?

ASH

It's just... A part of his hair that's shorter than the other.

RICHIE

So, it's uneven?

ASH

No!

CAM

Hand me the scissors.

WILDE

Don't hand him the scissors.

CAM

I've done this, like, fifty times since I came out. I'm a professional.

RICHIE

You have to wear a hat for at least a week after cutting your hair!

CAM

You could pull off a hat.

PERCY

Hats aren't allowed with the uniform.

RICHIE

But Laine gets to wear a hat.

PERCY

Laine doesn't get to wear a hat. Laine chooses to wear a hat.

LAINE

The consequences don't outweigh the actions.

ASH

Does someone have a comb?

PERCY

I have a comb.

ASH

Give it.

*[PERCY pulls out a comb from their bag. ASH takes it and uses it to align the edge of RICHIE'S hair. Their hand slips.]*

ASH

Uh oh.

RICHIE

"Uh oh" what?

*[The kids are silent, looking at his hair.]*

RICHIE

"Uh oh" what? "Uh oh" what? Someone tell me what the "uh oh" is!

WILDE

I don't... Want to.

ASH

Shut up, I can fix this.

CAM

Good luck.

RICHIE

What happened?

PERCY

I don't think it's that bad.

CAM

That wasn't convincing.

PERCY

No, it wasn't, was it? Richie, do you want a fruit snack?

RICHIE

Why?

PERCY

I always feel better about bad news if I have a fruit snack before I hear it.

RICHIE

What?

LAINE

Oh, for Christ's sake, give me the scissors.

*[No one fights LAINE on this. It takes them three snips. The kids murmur to themselves that, yeah, LAINE actually fixed the problem.]*

RICHIE

I want to see!

*[PERCY hands him a mirror that was sitting to the side.]*

RICHIE

Oh, yeah, that actually looks pretty good. Nice job, Laine.

ASH

I laid the groundwork.

RICHIE

My bad. Mediocre job, Ash.

ASH

Mediocre? What do you mean, “mediocre,” I did fine. The haircut was fine. You said it looks good, how the hell can it / be mediocre?

WILDE

Does anyone have a broom?

CAM

Do I look like I carry around a broom?

PERCY

Hold on, there’s a dustpan somewhere under the couch. Cam, get it.

ASH

Are we going to acknowledge what Richie just said to me?

*[CAM is half underneath the couch, searching for the dustpan.]*

CAM

Play stupid games, win stupid prizes.

WILDE

And in this case the stupid game is...?

*[CAM emerges from underneath the couch with the dustpan.]*

CAM

Cutting Richie’s hair.

WILDE

And the stupid prize?

*[CAM hands the dustpan to ASH.]*

CAM

They get to clean up the hair on the ground.

ASH

This is what I get for being kind?

WILDE

This is what you get for being bad at what you volunteer to do.

*[MIA ROCKWELL walks by, clearly intending on passing the students, only to see the mess on the floor.]*

MIA

*[Excited]* Richie! Your hair!

RICHIE

We just cut it.

MIA

I can see that. It's all over the floor.

ASH

Yeah, I'm working on it.

MIA

Well, I'd work faster, the bell's ringing soon.

ASH

I'll just leave it. It's not like they can prove whose hair it is.

WILDE

You're going to lose your mind when you find out about DNA testing.

MIA

I think it looks great. Very you.

LAINE

Thank you.

MIA

But, you know, normally students get their haircuts before the first day of school, not during it.

PERCY

Yeah, but this was cooler. And there's nothing against it in the handbook. Not this year's, at least.

MIA

Just clean up the evidence and it won't show up in next year's, either.

*[The bell rings.]*

MIA

Alright, just sweep it under the couch for now, then.

*[ASH does exactly that. The rest of the students grab their backpacks and begin to exit.]*

MIA

Hey, Laine. Ms. Garrett's making rounds today, checking to see who's out of uniform. I'd suggest you don't let her see the pants you made.

LAINE

I don't have time to change. I'm going to be late for physics.

*[MIA sighs and pulls a notepad from her pocket. She scribbles a note, then hands it to LAINE.]*

MIA

Give this to your teacher. Just... Don't be super late, okay?

*[Everyone exits. Before leaving, LAINE grabs approved uniform pants. Transition into:]*

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE THREE**  
**WELCOME TO YOUR NEW JOB, YOU'RE MY MOM NOW**

*[BELLAMY in her classroom, looking at every decoration she's set up. She adjusts them repeatedly, occupying herself before her students' arrival. ASH, CAM, and WILDE enter the classroom, carrying on a conversation from the hall.]*

WILDE

...So the boy fell in the cage and they had to put down the gorilla.

ASH

And when was this?

WILDE

2016. That's why a ton of people voted for the gorilla for president

*[BELLAMY turns to see the students.]*

BELLAMY

Oh. Oh, hi.

CAM

You look scared.

BELLAMY

I am.

CAM

Cool.

ASH

Are you... Ms. Dawson?

BELLAMY

I am. Where's the rest of you?

CAM

The rest of... Who?

BELLAMY

Your class. Where's the rest of your class?

WILDE

This is it.

BELLAMY

What? Three people?

ASH

We're the only ones who qualified for AP Senior Lit. Did they not tell you that?

BELLAMY

Three of you? Out of a class of...?

ASH

Eighty-seven.

CAM

It's eighty-six.

ASH

Right. Eighty-six.

BELLAMY

So, eighty-three of you didn't get a 96% or above last year?

CAM

*The Grapes of Wrath* really screwed a lot of people over.

BELLAMY

Well, I don't like to teach Steinbeck, so you don't have to worry about that.

ASH

And I don't like to read Steinbeck, so I wasn't worried to begin with.

*[The bell rings.]*

BELLAMY

Well, I guess we should... Start class? I don't really know how to do this.



CAM

Have you never taught a class before?

BELLAMY

Never a class where the students were old enough to judge me.

WILDE

Most teachers start with writing their name on the board.

BELLAMY

They still do that? Alright.

*[BELLAMY writes her full name on a whiteboard.]*

ASH

Most teachers also don't willingly tell us their first name.

CAM

Yeah, we tend to just figure it out on our own and then use it disrespectfully behind your back.

*[BELLAMY erases her first name from the board.]*

BELLAMY

Great. Well, I'm Ms. Dawson. And... I guess I do attendance, now? Is that what they do?

*[The students nod their heads. BELLAMY picks up a sheet of paper.]*

BELLAMY

Cam Grants?

CAM

That's me.

BELLAMY

Great. Ash Kelley?

*[ASH raises their hand, saying nothing.]*

BELLAMY

So then, you must be Wilde Robinson?

WILDE

The one and only. Maybe.

BELLAMY

Awesome. I'd probably go over the syllabus now, but you've all bought your books for class already. You know what you're reading. We start *Hamlet* next week. Read the first act by tomorrow. Class dismissed.

WILDE

Class what?

ASH

Cool. Bye.

BELLAMY

What else am I supposed to do? I know all of your names today. I'll ask them again tomorrow. We'll talk about Shakespeare. That's pretty much it, yeah?

CAM

Did you actually go to school for teaching?

BELLAMY

Listen. I'm not going to keep you any longer than I need to. I've done school. I know you'd rather be anywhere else than here. So goodbye.

WILDE

What about the syllabus?

BELLAMY

Syllabus is online. Read through it. Or don't. I'm not going to quiz you on it. Again, goodbye.

*[The students sit in their seats, some kind of combination between sarcasm and defiance.]*

BELLAMY

That's fine. Do what you want. Stay here.

*[BELLAMY returns to her desk, doing some kind of work or reading. It's silent for a moment.]*

CAM

Do you want to come to my house after school today?

WILDE

Yeah. My mom dropped me off today, though. Do you have your car?

CAM

I walked today.

WILDE

That's, like, a twenty minute walk.

CAM

Thirty. I stopped for coffee on the way.

WILDE

And are you stopping again on the way back home?

CAM

Probably.

WILDE

Okay, that works, then.

ASH

I'm assuming this invitation is not extended to me?

CAM

I mean, if you want to come you can.

ASH

No, I'm busy.

CAM

Alright, then.

WILDE

Are we having a meeting after school tomorrow?

ASH

No. We're starting meetings on Thursday. I'll let everyone know at lunch.

WILDE

I thought we were doing Tuesdays and Thursdays, though?

ASH

Yeah, I know. Laine and I just thought it would be better to give everyone time to adjust to classes again before we started. We'll do Tuesday and Thursday next week.

WILDE

Oh, but I cleared my whole schedule for a meeting tomorrow.

ASH

I mean, we could still hang out tomorrow, if you wanted to? Just unofficially.

WILDE

I guess.

BELLAMY

What is this, like, a little club you have going on?

*[The students silently look at each other.]*

BELLAMY

What? If you're going to talk about it in my classroom then I'm going to ask questions about it.

ASH

If we tell you, do you promise not to tell Ms. Garrett?

BELLAMY

Uh... Sure?

CAM

It's sort of an unsanctioned club.

BELLAMY

Unsanctioned how?

WILDE

As in we don't have a faculty mentor and without one we can't have official meetings.

ASH

Or an official location where we can hold those meetings.

CAM

And we're not really allowed to hold those meetings on school grounds... But...

BELLAMY

Where are you holding them?

ASH

Under the stairwell by the cafeteria.

BELLAMY

Why?

ASH

No one really checks under there.

CAM

And we can all fit down there.

WILDE

And sometimes there are mice under the couches and I get to hold them.

BELLAMY

Hmmm. What club is it?

CAM

Uh...

ASH

I mean, it's kind of... Technically a Queer Alliance?

BELLAMY

Okay...

ASH

But Ms. Garrett doesn't know about it. And it's also part of the reason why no teacher wants to mentor it. It's kind of against the rules.

BELLAMY

And what's the other part of the reason why no one wants to mentor?

ASH

Because I'm a lot to handle.

BELLAMY

Why don't you just have your meetings in here?

CAM

What, really?

BELLAMY

Yeah. You said Tuesdays and Thursdays? I'm already staying late to do work here those days anyway. And, I mean, I can be your faculty mentor. Unofficially.

ASH

Wow. Okay, yeah. That'd be great.

BELLAMY

How many of you are there?

CAM

Six.

BELLAMY

Okay. I'll bring snacks, then.

ASH

Uh, thanks. For doing this.

BELLAMY

You're welcome. Now can you please leave my classroom?

*[Transition into:]*

**ACT ONE**  
**SCENE FOUR**  
**OH GROSS, SO I HAVE TO GO AGAINST MY JOB TITLE?**

*[GARRETT sits in her office with MIA across from her, in the middle of a heated discussion.]*

GARRETT

While I appreciate your concern, Ms. Rockwell, I don't think you have much say in the matter regarding these policies.

MIA

Much say? I'm here to counsel teenagers. I feel like any ruling made by the Archdiocese that directly inhibits my ability to do my job gives me a lot of say, wouldn't you?

GARRETT

I am not the decision-maker on what is and is not allowed in the Catholic Church. While it may be well-within your boundaries to discuss this issue, I am not the one to take it up with.

MIA

These policies are targeting queer and trans teenagers in your school.

GARRETT

And I am sorry to the students that this affects. But, unfortunately, the Church is entirely within its right when making rules for students while on school grounds.

*[MIA pulls a copy of the document that is sitting in front of her.]*

MIA

But it's not just on school grounds. The final rule paragraph on page 7: "All students are expected to be representatives of not only the school of which they attend, but the Catholic Church as a whole. Schools should not tolerate any behavior that challenges any Catholic beliefs, whether that be verbal, physical, or through social media." They can't do that. Students deserve a private life.

GARRETT

A student can be expelled for bullying online. This is no different.

MIA

It's severely different. This whole document is based on discriminating against students. It's dividing.

GARRETT

There is no discrimination. Look.

*[GARRETT pulls the document from MIA.]*

GARRETT

On page 3. There is a specific note that no student will be denied entry because of their gender identity.

MIA

Right. Considering that that student will be willing to ignore that gender dysphoria and agree to be dead-named and misgendered for the next four years. Glad we have that covered.

GARRETT

And then on the final page— “At its core, Catholicism fundamentally teaches that every creature on earth is worthy of love. As such, all members of any Catholic institution, regardless of identity, are expected to follow this teaching. Should a student experience any dysphoria in regards to their gender they are still worthy of God’s love.”

MIA

Right. And then it goes on to say that gender dysphoria isn’t real and can be fixed. Because that’s how God’s love works.

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, please.

MIA

Because nothing is more dignifying than telling someone that the way they exist isn’t valid— That they as people are not valid.

GARRETT

It is not them as people.

MIA

No, just their love, and their gender, and their bodies, and their minds—

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, it is—



MIA

It is endangering them. It is telling them that there's something wrong with them. It is telling other students that there's something wrong with them. It is creating a divide and othering students and regardless of the anti-bullying policies schools have, it won't stop anything. You know that. They know that.

GARRETT

I assure you, we will take any complaints of harassment seriously.

MIA

And what about the cases where it's too late. What about the teenagers who this destroys? Are you prepared for the effect a student's death will have on this community?

GARRETT

No students will die.

MIA

Can you guarantee that?

GARRETT

I am not asking you to turn away students in need of support. I'm asking you to do your job.

MIA

My job is to help.

GARRETT

Your job is to watch the kids, advise them, and tell their parents if they become a threat to themselves or our community.

*[A beat.]*

GARRETT

My... Apologies, Ms. Rockwell. It wasn't my intention to be so forceful on the matter. I understand you're upset about this situation—

MIA

Upset?

GARRETT

But my hands are tied, here. This ruling didn't come from me. It came from the Archdiocese. I didn't write it, and I never would have. But we are walking a very fine line here when it comes to following these rulings. And if I hear of you or any other teacher breaking these rulings, then the only options left will be to fire you or lose our official standing as a Catholic institution.

MIA

But the students—

GARRETT

Can choose what is right for them. If we have a student who disagrees with the ruling, they are more than welcome to enroll with a different school. And I don't doubt some will. And we will hold nothing against those students who choose to remain true to themselves.

MIA

So they can be true to themselves. Just not here.

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell, I'm not telling you what to do. If you choose to break the rulings, that is your own choice. But I had to make you aware of the consequences you'd be facing if you choose to do so.

MIA

Thank you for your time.

*[MIA gets up to leave.]*

GARRETT

Ms. Rockwell. I also wish it didn't have to be this way.

MIA

Then do something about it.

*[MIA exits the office. Transition into:]*

**[END OF SAMPLE. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:  
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