

# HAMLET

by William Shakespeare

## THE GHOST

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, son of the late King Hamlet

and Queen Gertrude

QUEEN GERTRUDE, widow of King Hamlet, now married to Claudius

KING CLAUDIUS, brother to the late King Hamlet

OPHELIA

LAERTES, her brother

POLONIUS, father of Ophelia and Laertes, councillor to King Claudius

REYNALDO, servant to Polonius

HORATIO, Hamlet's friend and confidant

VOLTEMAND	}	<i>courtiers at the Danish court</i>
CORNELIUS		
ROSENCRANTZ		
GUILDENSTERN		
OSRIC		
Gentlemen		
A Lord		

FRANCISCO	}	<i>Danish soldiers</i>
BARNARDO		
MARCELLUS		

FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway

A Captain in Fortinbras's army

Ambassadors to Denmark from England

Players who take the roles of Prologue, Player King, Player Queen, and Lucianus in *The Murder of Gonzago*

Two Messengers

Sailors

Gravedigger

Gravedigger's companion

Doctor of Divinity

Attendants, Lords, Guards, Musicians, Laertes's Followers, Soldiers, Officers

**ACT 1**

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**Act 1 Scene 1**

*Enter Barnardo and Francisco, two sentinels.*

BARNARDO Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

BARNARDO Long live the King!

FRANCISCO Barnardo.

BARNARDO He. 5

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BARNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

BARNARDO Have you had quiet guard? 10

FRANCISCO Not a mouse stirring.

BARNARDO Well, good night.

If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,  
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them.—Stand ho! Who is there? 15

HORATIO Friends to this ground.

MARCELLUS And liegemen to the Dane.

FRANCISCO Give you good night.

MARCELLUS

O farewell, honest *[soldier.]* Who hath relieved  
you?

20

FRANCISCO

Barnardo hath my place. Give you good night.

*Francisco exits.*

MARCELLUS Holla, Barnardo.

BARNARDO Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO A piece of him.

BARNARDO

Welcome, Horatio.—Welcome, good Marcellus.

25

HORATIO

What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

BARNARDO I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS

Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight twice seen of us.  
Therefore I have entreated him along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,  
That, if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

30

HORATIO

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

35

BARNARDO Sit down awhile,

And let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story,  
What we have two nights seen.

HORATIO Well, sit we down,

And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.

40

BARNARDO Last night of all,

When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
 Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven  
 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
 The bell then beating one—

45

*Enter Ghost.*

MARCELLUS

Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again.

BARNARDO

In the same figure like the King that's dead.

MARCELLUS , [to Horatio]

Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO

Looks he not like the King? Mark it, Horatio. 50

HORATIO

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS Speak to it, Horatio.

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,  
 Together with that fair and warlike form  
 In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
 Did sometimes march? By heaven, I charge thee,  
 speak.

55

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

BARNARDO See, it stalks away. 60

HORATIO

Stay! speak! speak! I charge thee, speak!

*Ghost exits.*

MARCELLUS 'Tis gone and will not answer.

BARNARDO

How now, Horatio, you tremble and look pale.  
 Is not this something more than fantasy?  
 What think you on 't?

65

HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe  
 Without the sensible and true avouch  
 Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS Is it not like the King?

HORATIO As thou art to thyself. 70

Such was the very armor he had on  
When he the ambitious Norway combated.  
So frowned he once when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'Tis strange. 75

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,  
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO

In what particular thought to work I know not,  
But in the gross and scope of mine opinion  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state. 80

MARCELLUS

Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon  
And foreign mart for implements of war, 85  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week.  
What might be toward that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint laborer with the day?  
Who is 't that can inform me? 90

HORATIO That can I.

At least the whisper goes so: our last king,  
Whose image even but now appeared to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride, 95  
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet  
(For so this side of our known world esteemed him)  
Did slay this Fortinbras, who by a sealed compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands 100  
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror.

Against the which a moiety competent  
 Was gagèd by our king, which had ‹returned›  
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras  
 Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same comart 105  
 And carriage of the article ‹designed,›  
 His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
 Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full,  
 Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
 Sharked up a list of lawless resolute 110  
 For food and diet to some enterprise  
 That hath a stomach in 't; which is no other  
 (As it doth well appear unto our state)  
 But to recover of us, by strong hand  
 And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands 115  
 So by his father lost. And this, I take it,  
 Is the main motive of our preparations,  
 The source of this our watch, and the chief head  
 Of this posthaste and rummage in the land.

#### ‹BARNARDO

I think it be no other but e'en so. 120  
 Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
 Comes armèd through our watch so like the king  
 That was and is the question of these wars.

#### HORATIO

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
 In the most high and palmy state of Rome, 125  
 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
 The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
 Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;  
 As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
 Disasters in the sun; and the moist star, 130  
 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands,  
 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
 And even the like precursor of ‹feared› events,  
 As harbingers preceding still the fates  
 And prologue to the omen coming on, 135

Have heaven and Earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climatures and countrymen.】

*Enter Ghost.*

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!  
I'll cross it though it blast me.—Stay, illusion!

*It spreads his arms.*

If thou hast any sound or use of voice, 140  
Speak to me.

If there be any good thing to be done  
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,  
Speak to me.

If thou art privy to thy country's fate, 145  
Which happily foreknowing may avoid,  
O, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,  
For which, they say, 〈you〉 spirits oft walk in death, 150  
Speak of it. *The cock crows.*

Stay and speak!—Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike it with my partisan?

HORATIO Do, if it will not stand.

BARNARDO 'Tis here. 155

HORATIO 'Tis here.

〈*Ghost exits.*〉

MARCELLUS 'Tis gone.

We do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence,  
For it is as the air, invulnerable, 160  
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BARNARDO

It was about to speak when the cock crew.

HORATIO

And then it started like a guilty thing  
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard

The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
 Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
 Awake the god of day, and at his warning,  
 Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
 Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies  
 To his confine, and of the truth herein  
 This present object made probation.

## MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
 Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
 Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,  
 This bird of dawning singeth all night long;  
 And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,  
 The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
 No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
 So hallowed and so gracious is that time.

## HORATIO

So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
 But look, the morn in russet mantle clad  
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.  
 Break we our watch up, and by my advice  
 Let us impart what we have seen tonight  
 Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,  
 This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
 Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it  
 As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

## MARCELLUS

Let's do 't, I pray, and I this morning know  
 Where we shall find him most convenient.

*They exit.*



**Act 1 Scene 2**

*Flourish. Enter Claudius, King of Denmark, Gertrude the Queen, [the] Council, as Polonius, and his son Laertes, Hamlet, with others, [among them Voltemand and Cornelius.]*

**KING**

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature 5  
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
 Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
 Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
 Have we (as 'twere with a defeated joy, 10  
 With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
 With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole)  
 Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15  
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
 Now follows that you know. Young Fortinbras,  
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth  
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame, 20  
 Colleague'd with this dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not failed to pester us with message  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
 To our most valiant brother—so much for him. 25  
 Now for ourself and for this time of meeting.  
 Thus much the business is: we have here writ  
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,  
 Who, impotent and bedrid, scarcely hears

Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress 30  
 His further gait herein, in that the levies,  
 The lists, and full proportions are all made  
 Out of his subject; and we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,  
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway, 35  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To business with the King more than the scope  
 Of these dilated articles allow.

[*Giving them a paper.*]

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty. 40

## CORNELIUS/VOLTEMAND

In that and all things will we show our duty.

## KING

We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.  
[*Voltemand and Cornelius exit.*]

And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?  
 You told us of some suit. What is 't, Laertes?  
 You cannot speak of reason to the Dane  
 And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, 45  
 Laertes,  
 That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
 The head is not more native to the heart,  
 The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
 Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father. 50  
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

## LAERTES

My dread lord,

Your leave and favor to return to France,  
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark  
 To show my duty in your coronation, 55  
 Yet now I must confess, that duty done,  
 My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
 And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

## KING

Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS

Hath, my lord, [wrung from me my slow leave  
By laborsome petition, and at last  
Upon his will I sealed my hard consent.]  
I do beseech you give him leave to go. 60

KING

Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will.—  
But now, my cousin Hamlet and my son— 65

HAMLET , [aside]

A little more than kin and less than kind.

KING

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

Not so, my lord; I am too much in the sun.

QUEEN

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not forever with thy vailèd lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity. 70 75

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN

If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET

“Seems,” madam? Nay, it is. I know not “seems.”  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, <good> mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods, [shapes] of grief,  
That can <denote> me truly. These indeed “seem,”  
For they are actions that a man might play; 80 85

But I have that within which passes show,  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,	90
To give these mourning duties to your father. But you must know your father lost a father, That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound In filial obligation for some term	95
To do obsequious sorrow. But to persever In obstinate condolement is a course Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief. It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, A heart unfortified, <i>&lt;a&gt;</i> mind impatient,	100
An understanding simple and unschooled. For what we know must be and is as common As any the most vulgar thing to sense, Why should we in our peevish opposition Take it to heart? Fie, 'tis a fault to heaven,	105
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, To reason most absurd, whose common theme Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried, From the first corse till he that died today, "This must be so." We pray you, throw to earth	110
This unprevailing woe and think of us As of a father; for let the world take note, You are the most immediate to our throne, And with no less nobility of love Than that which dearest father bears his son	115
Do I impart toward you. For your intent In going back to school in Wittenberg, It is most retrograde to our desire, And we beseech you, bend you to remain Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,	120
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.	

## QUEEN

Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet.  
I pray thee, stay with us. Go not to Wittenberg.

## HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

## KING

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply. 125  
Be as ourself in Denmark.—Madam, come.  
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
Sits smiling to my heart, in grace whereof  
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today  
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell, 130  
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,  
Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.

*Flourish. All but Hamlet exit.*

## HAMLET

O, that this too, too sullied flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,  
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed 135  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God,  
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on 't, ah fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden  
That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature 140  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this:  
But two months dead—nay, not so much, not two.  
So excellent a king, that was to this  
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother  
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven 145  
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and Earth,  
Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him  
As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on. And yet, within a month  
(Let me not think on 't; frailty, thy name is woman!), 150  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she followed my poor father's body,

Like Niobe, all tears—why she, *even she*  
 (O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason  
 Would have mourned longer!), married with my  
 155  
 uncle,  
 My father's brother, but no more like my father  
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
 Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,  
 160  
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

*Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Barnardo.*

HORATIO Hail to your Lordship. 165

HAMLET I am glad to see you well.  
 Horatio—or I do forget myself!

HORATIO  
 The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

HAMLET  
 Sir, my good friend. I'll change that name with you.  
 And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?—  
 170  
 Marcellus?

MARCELLUS My good lord.

HAMLET  
 I am very glad to see you. *['To Barnardo.']* Good  
 even, sir.—  
 But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?  
 175

HORATIO  
 A truant disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET  
 I would not hear your enemy say so,  
 Nor shall you do my ear that violence  
 To make it truster of your own report  
 Against yourself. I know you are no truant. 180  
 But what is your affair in Elsinore?  
 We'll teach you to drink *deep* ere you depart.

HORATIO

My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.

HAMLET

I prithee, do not mock me, fellow student.

I think it was to ~~see~~ my mother's wedding. 185

HORATIO

Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven

Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio! 190

My father—methinks I see my father.

HORATIO

Where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

HORATIO

I saw him once. He was a goodly king.

HAMLET

He was a man. Take him for all in all, 195

I shall not look upon his like again.

HORATIO

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

HAMLET Saw who?

HORATIO

My lord, the King your father.

HAMLET

The King my father? 200

HORATIO

Season your admiration for a while

With an attent ear, till I may deliver

Upon the witness of these gentlemen

This marvel to you.

HAMLET

For God's love, let me hear! 205

HORATIO

Two nights together had these gentlemen,

Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,

In the dead waste and middle of the night,  
 Been thus encountered: a figure like your father,  
 Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie, 210  
 Appears before them and with solemn march  
 Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked  
 By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes  
 Within his truncheon's length, whilst they, distilled  
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear, 215  
 Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me  
 In dreadful secrecy impart they did,  
 And I with them the third night kept the watch,  
 'Where, as' they had delivered, both in time,  
 Form of the thing (each word made true and good), 220  
 The apparition comes. I knew your father;  
 These hands are not more like.

HAMLET But where was this?

MARCELLUS

My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it? 225

HORATIO

My lord, I did,

But answer made it none. Yet once methought  
 It lifted up its head and did address  
 Itself to motion, like as it would speak;  
 But even then the morning cock crew loud, 230  
 And at the sound it shrunk in haste away  
 And vanished from our sight.

HAMLET 'Tis very strange.

HORATIO

As I do live, my honored lord, 'tis true.  
 And we did think it writ down in our duty 235  
 To let you know of it.

HAMLET Indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.  
 Hold you the watch tonight?

ALL We do, my lord.

HAMLET

Armed, say you? 240



ALL Armed, my lord.

HAMLET From top to toe?

ALL My lord, from head to foot.

HAMLET Then saw you not his face?

HORATIO

O, yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up. 245

HAMLET What, looked he frowningly?

HORATIO

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET Pale or red?

HORATIO

Nay, very pale.

HAMLET And fixed his eyes upon you? 250

HORATIO

Most constantly.

HAMLET I would I had been there.

HORATIO It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET Very like. Stayed it long?

HORATIO

While one with moderate haste might tell a 255  
hundred.

BARNARDO/MARCELLUS Longer, longer.

HORATIO

Not when I saw 't.

HAMLET His beard was grizzled, no?

HORATIO

It was as I have seen it in his life, 260  
A sable silvered.

HAMLET I will watch 't tonight.  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO I warrant it will.

HAMLET

If it assume my noble father's person, 265  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape  
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,  
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,

Let it be tenable in your silence still;  
 And whatsoever else shall hap tonight, 270  
 Give it an understanding but no tongue.  
 I will requite your loves. So fare you well.  
 Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,  
 I'll visit you.

ALL Our duty to your Honor. 275

HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.  
*「All but Hamlet」 exit.*  
 My father's spirit—in arms! All is not well.  
 I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!  
 Till then, sit still, my soul. *«Foul»* deeds will rise,  
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's  
 eyes. 280  
*He exits.*

### Act 1 Scene 3

*Enter Laertes and Ophelia, his sister.*

LAERTES

My necessities are embarked. Farewell.  
 And, sister, as the winds give benefit  
 And convey *«is»* assistant, do not sleep,  
 But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA Do you doubt that? 5

LAERTES

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,  
 Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,  
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute, 10  
 No more.

OPHELIA No more but so?

LAERTES Think it no more.

For nature, crescent, does not grow alone  
 In thews and bulk, but, as this temple waxes, 15  
 The inward service of the mind and soul  
 Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,  
 And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch  
 The virtue of his will; but you must fear,  
 His greatness weighed, his will is not his own, 20  
 For he himself is subject to his birth.  
 He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
 Carve for himself, for on his choice depends  
 The safety and the health of this whole state.  
 And therefore must his choice be circumscribed 25  
 Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
 Whereof he is the head. Then, if he says he loves  
 you,  
 It fits your wisdom so far to believe it  
 As he in his particular act and place 30  
 May give his saying deed, which is no further  
 Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.  
 Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs  
 Or lose your heart or your chaste treasure open 35  
 To his unmastered importunity.  
 Fear it, Ophelia; fear it, my dear sister,  
 And keep you in the rear of your affection,  
 Out of the shot and danger of desire.  
 The chariest maid is prodigal enough 40  
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon.  
 Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes.  
 The canker galls the infants of the spring  
 Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,  
 And, in the morn and liquid dew of youth, 45  
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
 Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear.  
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

## OPHELIA

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep

As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, 50  
 Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
 Whiles, *like* a puffed and reckless libertine,  
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads  
 And recks not his own rede. 55

LAERTES O, fear me not.

*Enter Polonius.*

I stay too long. But here my father comes.  
 A double blessing is a double grace.  
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame! 60  
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
 And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with  
 thee.  
 And these few precepts in thy memory  
 Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue, 65  
 Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,  
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment 70  
 Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage. Beware  
 Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,  
 Bear 't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment. 75  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
 But not expressed in fancy (rich, not gaudy),  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
 And they in France of the best rank and station  
*Are* of a most select and generous chief in that. 80  
 Neither a borrower nor a lender *be*,  
 For *loan* oft loses both itself and friend,

And borrowing ⟨dulls the⟩ edge of husbandry.  
 This above all: to thine own self be true,  
 And it must follow, as the night the day,  
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
 Farewell. My blessing season this in thee.

85

LAERTES

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS

The time invests you. Go, your servants tend.

LAERTES

Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well  
 What I have said to you.

90

OPHELIA 'Tis in my memory locked,  
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

LAERTES Farewell.

*Laertes exits.*

POLONIUS

What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

95

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching the Lord  
 Hamlet.

POLONIUS Marry, well bethought.

'Tis told me he hath very oft of late  
 Given private time to you, and you yourself  
 Have of your audience been most free and  
 bounteous.

100

If it be so (as so 'tis put on me,  
 And that in way of caution), I must tell you  
 You do not understand yourself so clearly  
 As it behooves my daughter and your honor.  
 What is between you? Give me up the truth.

105

OPHELIA

He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders  
 Of his affection to me.

POLONIUS

Affection, puh! You speak like a green girl  
 Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.  
 Do you believe his "tenders," as you call them?

110

OPHELIA

I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS

Marry, I will teach you. Think yourself a baby  
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay, 115  
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,  
Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,  
「Running」 it thus) you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA

My lord, he hath importuned me with love  
In honorable fashion— 120

POLONIUS

Ay, “fashion” you may call it. Go to, go to!

OPHELIA

And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,  
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS

Ay, «springs» to catch woodcocks. I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul 125  
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both  
Even in their promise as it is a-making,  
You must not take for fire. From this time  
Be something scanter of your maiden presence. 130  
Set your entreatments at a higher rate  
Than a command to parle. For Lord Hamlet,  
Believe so much in him that he is young,  
And with a larger «tether» may he walk  
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia, 135  
Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,  
Not of that dye which their investments show,  
But mere «implorators» of unholy suits,  
Breathing like sanctified and pious 「bawds」  
The better to «beguile.» This is for all: 140  
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth  
Have you so slander any moment leisure

As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.  
Look to 't, I charge you. Come your ways.

OPHELIA I shall obey, my lord.

145

*They exit.*

### Act 1 Scene 4

*Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.*

HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO

It is *⟨a⟩* nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET What hour now?

HORATIO I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS No, it is struck.

5

HORATIO

Indeed, I heard it not. It then draws near the season  
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

*A flourish of trumpets and two pieces goes off.*

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,  
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels;  
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,  
The kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out  
The triumph of his pledge.

10

HORATIO Is it a custom?

HAMLET Ay, marry, is 't,

15

But, to my mind, though I am native here  
And to the manner born, it is a custom  
More honored in the breach than the observance.

[This heavy-headed *⟨revel⟩* east and west  
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations.

20

They clepe us drunkards and with swinish phrase  
Soil our addition. And, indeed, it takes

From our achievements, though performed at  
 height,  
 The pith and marrow of our attribute. 25  
 So oft it chances in particular men  
 That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
 As in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,  
 Since nature cannot choose his origin),  
 By 'the' o'ergrowth of some complexion 30  
 (Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason),  
 Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens  
 The form of plausible manners—that these men,  
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
 Being nature's livery or fortune's star, 35  
 His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
 As infinite as man may undergo,  
 Shall in the general censure take corruption  
 From that particular fault. The dram of 'evil'  
 Doth all the noble substance of a doubt 40  
 To his own scandal.]

*Enter Ghost.*

HORATIO                      Look, my lord, it comes.

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!  
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,  
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from 45  
 hell,  
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
 Thou com'st in such a questionable shape  
 That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee "Hamlet,"  
 "King," "Father," "Royal Dane." O, answer me! 50  
 Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell  
 Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,  
 Have burst their cerements; why the sepulcher,  
 Wherein we saw thee quietly interred,  
 Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws 55



To cast thee up again. What may this mean  
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,  
 Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,  
 Making night hideous, and we fools of nature  
 So horridly to shake our disposition  
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?  
 Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?  
*⟨Ghost⟩ beckons.*

60

HORATIO

It beckons you to go away with it  
 As if it some impartment did desire  
 To you alone.

65

MARCELLUS    Look with what courteous action

It waves you to a more removèd ground.  
 But do not go with it.

HORATIO                      No, by no means.

HAMLET

It will not speak. Then I will follow it.

70

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET                      Why, what should be the fear?

I do not set my life at a pin's fee.  
 And for my soul, what can it do to that,  
 Being a thing immortal as itself?  
 It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

75

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord?  
 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
 That beetles o'er his base into the sea,  
 And there assume some other horrible form  
 Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason  
 And draw you into madness? Think of it.

80

[The very place puts toys of desperation,  
 Without more motive, into every brain  
 That looks so many fathoms to the sea  
 And hears it roar beneath.]

85

HAMLET

It waves me still.—Go on, I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS

You shall not go, my lord. *They hold back Hamlet.*

HAMLET

Hold off your hands.

HORATIO

Be ruled. You shall not go. 90

HAMLET

My fate cries out

And makes each petty arture in this body

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me! 95

I say, away!—Go on. I'll follow thee.

*Ghost and Hamlet exit.*

HORATIO

He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS

Let's follow. 'Tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO

Have after. To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. 100

HORATIO

Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS Nay, let's follow him.

*They exit.*

### Act 1 Scene 5

*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

HAMLET

Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no further.

GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET I will.

GHOST My hour is almost come 5  
When I to sulf'rous and tormenting flames  
Must render up myself.

HAMLET Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST  
Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing  
To what I shall unfold. 10

HAMLET Speak. I am bound to hear.

GHOST  
So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET What?

GHOST I am thy father's spirit,  
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night 15  
And for the day confined to fast in fires  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word 20  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their  
spheres,  
Thy knotted and combinèd locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand an end, 25  
Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.  
But this eternal blazon must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAMLET O God! 30

GHOST  
Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET Murder?

GHOST  
Murder most foul, as in the best it is,  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

HAMLET  
Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift 35

As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST I find thee apt;  
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf, 40  
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.  
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,  
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forgèd process of my death  
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth, 45  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET O, my prophetic soul! My uncle!

GHOST  
Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wits, with traitorous gifts— 50  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
O Hamlet, what *⟨a⟩* falling off was there!  
From me, whose love was of that dignity 55  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine.  
But virtue, as it never will be moved, 60  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
So, *⟨lust⟩* though to a radiant angel linked,  
Will *⟨sate⟩* itself in a celestial bed  
And prey on garbage.  
But soft, methinks I scent the morning air. 65  
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursèd hebona in a vial  
And in the porches of my ears did pour 70

The leprous distilment, whose effect  
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
 The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
 And with a sudden vigor it doth <posset> 75  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine,  
 And a most instant tetter barked about,  
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust  
 All my smooth body. 80  
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
 Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,  
 Cut off, even in the blossoms of my sin,  
 Unhouseled, disappointed, unaneled,  
 No reck'ning made, but sent to my account 85  
 With all my imperfections on my head.  
 O horrible, O horrible, most horrible!  
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.  
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
 A couch for luxury and damnèd incest. 90  
 But, howsomever thou pursues this act,  
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
 Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven  
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge  
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once. 95  
 The glowworm shows the matin to be near  
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.  
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me. <He exits.>

## HAMLET

O all you host of heaven! O Earth! What else?  
 And shall I couple hell? O fie! Hold, hold, my heart, 100  
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
 But bear me <stiffly> up. Remember thee?  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat  
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee?  
 Yea, from the table of my memory 105

I'll wipe away all trivial, fond records,  
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
 That youth and observation copied there,  
 And thy commandment all alone shall live  
 Within the book and volume of my brain, 110  
 Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!  
 O most pernicious woman!  
 O villain, villain, smiling, damnèd villain!  
 My tables—meet it is I set it down  
 That one may smile and smile and be a villain. 115  
 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark.

*[He writes.]*

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word.  
 It is "adieu, adieu, remember me."  
 I have sworn 't.

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

HORATIO My lord, my lord! 120  
 MARCELLUS Lord Hamlet.  
 HORATIO Heavens secure him!  
 HAMLET So be it.  
 MARCELLUS Illo, ho, ho, my lord!  
 HAMLET Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, *<bird>* come! 125  
 MARCELLUS  
 How is 't, my noble lord?  
 HORATIO What news, my lord?  
 HAMLET O, wonderful!  
 HORATIO  
 Good my lord, tell it.  
 HAMLET No, you will reveal it. 130  
 HORATIO  
 Not I, my lord, by heaven.  
 MARCELLUS Nor I, my lord.  
 HAMLET  
 How say you, then? Would heart of man once think  
 it?  
 But you'll be secret? 135

HORATIO/MARCELLUS    Ay, by heaven, ⟨my lord.⟩

HAMLET

There's never a villain dwelling in all Denmark  
But he's an arrant knave.

HORATIO

There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave  
To tell us this.

140

HAMLET    Why, right, you are in the right.

And so, without more circumstance at all,  
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part,  
You, as your business and desire shall point you  
(For every man hath business and desire,  
Such as it is), and for my own poor part,  
I will go pray.

145

HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET

I am sorry they offend you, heartily;  
Yes, faith, heartily.

150

HORATIO                There's no offense, my lord.

HAMLET

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,  
And much offense, too. Touching this vision here,  
It is an honest ghost—that let me tell you.  
For your desire to know what is between us,  
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,  
As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,  
Give me one poor request.

155

HORATIO    What is 't, my lord? We will.

HAMLET

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

160

HORATIO/MARCELLUS    My lord, we will not.

HAMLET    Nay, but swear 't.

HORATIO    In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS    Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET

Upon my sword.

165

MARCELLUS We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST *cries under the stage* Swear.

HAMLET

Ha, ha, boy, sayst thou so? Art thou there,  
truepenny? 170  
Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage.  
Consent to swear.

HORATIO Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET

Never to speak of this that you have seen,  
Swear by my sword. 175

GHOST, *‘beneath’* Swear.

HAMLET

*Hic et ubique?* Then we’ll shift our ground.  
Come hither, gentlemen,  
And lay your hands again upon my sword.  
Swear by my sword 180  
Never to speak of this that you have heard.

GHOST, *‘beneath’* Swear by his sword.

HAMLET

Well said, old mole. Canst work i’ th’ earth so fast?—  
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.

HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange. 185

HAMLET

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come.  
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,  
How strange or odd some’er I bear myself 190  
(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on)  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumbered thus, or this headshake,  
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase, 195



As “Well, well, we know,” or “We could an if we would,”

Or “If we list to speak,” or “There be an if they might,”

Or such ambiguous giving-out, to note

200

That you know aught of me—this do swear,

So grace and mercy at your most need help you.

GHOST, *‘beneath’* Swear.

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbèd spirit.—So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you,

205

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do t’ express his love and friending to you,

God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together,

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite

210

That ever I was born to set it right!

Nay, come, let’s go together.

*They exit.*

**ACT 2**

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**Act 2 Scene 1***Enter old Polonius with his man (Reynaldo.)*

POLONIUS

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO I will, my lord.

POLONIUS

You shall do marvelous wisely, good Reynaldo,  
Before you visit him, to make inquire  
Of his behavior.

5

REYNALDO My lord, I did intend it.

POLONIUS

Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir,  
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;  
And how, and who, what means, and where they  
keep,

10

What company, at what expense; and finding  
By this encompassment and drift of question  
That they do know my son, come you more nearer  
Than your particular demands will touch it.  
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him,  
As thus: "I know his father and his friends  
And, in part, him." Do you mark this, Reynaldo?

15

REYNALDO Ay, very well, my lord.

POLONIUS

"And, in part, him, but," you may say, "not well.

But if 't be he I mean, he's very wild,  
 Addicted so and so." And there put on him  
 What forgeries you please—marry, none so rank  
 As may dishonor him, take heed of that,  
 But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips  
 As are companions noted and most known  
 To youth and liberty.

REYNALDO                      As gaming, my lord.

POLONIUS    Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,  
 Quarreling, drabbing—you may go so far.

REYNALDO    My lord, that would dishonor him.                      30

POLONIUS  
 Faith, *(no,)* as you may season it in the charge.  
 You must not put another scandal on him  
 That he is open to incontinency;  
 That's not my meaning. But breathe his faults so  
 quaintly  
 That they may seem the taints of liberty,  
 The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,  
 A savageness in unreclaimèd blood,  
 Of general assault.

REYNALDO    But, my good lord—                      40

POLONIUS    Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO    Ay, my lord, I would know that.

POLONIUS    Marry, sir, here's my drift,  
 And I believe it is a fetch of wit.  
 You, laying these slight sullies on my son,  
 As 'twere a thing a little soiled *(i' th' )* working,  
 Mark you, your party in converse, him you would  
 sound,  
 Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes  
 The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured  
 He closes with you in this consequence:  
 "Good sir," or so, or "friend," or "gentleman,"  
 According to the phrase or the addition  
 Of man and country—

REYNALDO                      Very good, my lord.                      55

POLONIUS    And then, sir, does he this, he does—what  
                    was I about to say? By the Mass, I was about to say  
                    something. Where did I leave?

REYNALDO    At “closes in the consequence,” ‹at “friend,  
                    or so,” and “gentleman.”›                      60

POLONIUS  
                    At “closes in the consequence”—ay, marry—  
                    He closes thus: “I know the gentleman.  
                    I saw him yesterday,” or “th’ other day”  
                    (Or then, or then, with such or such), “and as you  
                    say,                      65

                    There was he gaming, there ‹o’ertook› in ’s rouse,  
                    There falling out at tennis”; or perchance  
                    “I saw him enter such a house of sale”—  
                    *Videlicet*, a brothel—or so forth. See you now  
                    Your bait of falsehood take this carp of truth;                      70

                    And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,  
                    With windlasses and with assays of bias,  
                    By indirections find directions out.  
                    So by my former lecture and advice  
                    Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?                      75

REYNALDO  
                    My lord, I have.

POLONIUS                      God be wi’ you. Fare you well.

REYNALDO    Good my lord.

POLONIUS  
                    Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO    I shall, my lord.                      80

POLONIUS    And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO    Well, my lord.

POLONIUS  
                    Farewell.                      *Reynaldo exits.*

*Enter Ophelia.*

How now, Ophelia, what’s the matter?

OPHELIA

O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted! 85

POLONIUS With what, i' th' name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
 Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced,  
 No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,  
 Ungartered, and down-gyvèd to his ankle, 90  
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,  
 And with a look so piteous in purport  
 As if he had been loosèd out of hell  
 To speak of horrors—he comes before me.

POLONIUS

Mad for thy love? 95

OPHELIA My lord, I do not know,  
 But truly I do fear it.

POLONIUS What said he?

OPHELIA

He took me by the wrist and held me hard.  
 Then goes he to the length of all his arm, 100  
 And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,  
 He falls to such perusal of my face  
 As he would draw it. Long stayed he so.  
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm,  
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down, 105  
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound  
 As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
 And end his being. That done, he lets me go,  
 And, with his head over his shoulder turned,  
 He seemed to find his way without his eyes, 110  
 For out o' doors he went without their helps  
 And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS

Come, go with me. I will go seek the King.  
 This is the very ecstasy of love,  
 Whose violent property fordoes itself 115

And leads the will to desperate undertakings  
 As oft as any passions under heaven  
 That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.  
 What, have you given him any hard words of late?

OPHELIA

No, my good lord, but as you did command 120  
 I did repel his letters and denied  
 His access to me.

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.

I am sorry that with better heed and judgment  
 I had not coted him. I feared he did but trifle 125  
 And meant to wrack thee. But beshrew my jealousy!  
 By heaven, it is as proper to our age  
 To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions  
 As it is common for the younger sort  
 To lack discretion. Come, go we to the King. 130  
 This must be known, which, being kept close, might  
 move  
 More grief to hide than hate to utter love.  
 Come.

*They exit.*

## Act 2 Scene 2

*Flourish. Enter King and Queen, Rosencrantz and  
 Guildenstern and Attendants.*

KING

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.  
 Moreover that we much did long to see you,  
 The need we have to use you did provoke  
 Our hasty sending. Something have you heard  
 Of Hamlet's transformation, so call it, 5  
 Sith nor th' exterior nor the inward man  
 Resembles that it was. What it should be,  
 More than his father's death, that thus hath put him

So much from th' understanding of himself  
 I cannot dream of. I entreat you both 10  
 That, being of so young days brought up with him  
 And sith so neighbored to his youth and havior,  
 That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court  
 Some little time, so by your companies  
 To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather 15  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 [Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus]  
 That, opened, lies within our remedy.

QUEEN

Good gentlemen, he hath much talked of you,  
 And sure I am two men there is not living 20  
 To whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
 To show us so much gentry and goodwill  
 As to expend your time with us awhile  
 For the supply and profit of our hope,  
 Your visitation shall receive such thanks 25  
 As fits a king's remembrance.

ROSENCRANTZ                      Both your Majesties

Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,  
 Put your dread pleasures more into command  
 Than to entreaty. 30

GUILDENSTERN    But we both obey,  
 And here give up ourselves in the full bent  
 To lay our service freely at your feet,  
 To be commanded.

KING

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern. 35

QUEEN

Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.  
 And I beseech you instantly to visit  
 My too much changèd son.—Go, some of you,  
 And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GUILDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practices 40  
 Pleasant and helpful to him!

QUEEN

Ay, amen!

*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exit*  
*「with some Attendants.」*

*Enter Polonius.*

POLONIUS

Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,  
 Are joyfully returned.

KING

Thou still hast been the father of good news. 45

POLONIUS

Have I, my lord? I assure my good liege  
 I hold my duty as I hold my soul,  
 Both to my God and to my gracious king,  
 And I do think, or else this brain of mine  
 Hunts not the trail of policy so sure 50  
 As it hath used to do, that I have found  
 The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING

O, speak of that! That do I long to hear.

POLONIUS

Give first admittance to th' ambassadors.  
 My news shall be the fruit to that great feast. 55

KING

Thyself do grace to them and bring them in.  
*「Polonius exits.」*

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found  
 The head and source of all your son's distemper.

QUEEN

I doubt it is no other but the main—  
 His father's death and our ⟨o'erhasty⟩ marriage. 60

KING

Well, we shall sift him.

*Enter Ambassadors ⟨Voltemand and Cornelius «with»*  
*Polonius.⟩*



Welcome, my good friends.  
Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

## VOLTEMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.  
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress 65  
His nephew's levies, which to him appeared  
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,  
But, better looked into, he truly found  
It was against your Highness. Whereat, grieved  
That so his sickness, age, and impotence 70  
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests  
On Fortinbras, which he, in brief, obeys,  
Receives rebuke from Norway, and, in fine,  
Makes vow before his uncle never more  
To give th' assay of arms against your Majesty. 75  
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three-score thousand crowns in annual  
fee  
And his commission to employ those soldiers,  
So levied as before, against the Polack, 80  
With an entreaty, herein further shown,  
*He gives a paper.*  
That it might please you to give quiet pass  
Through your dominions for this enterprise,  
On such regards of safety and allowance  
As therein are set down. 85

## KING

It likes us well,  
And, at our more considered time, we'll read,  
Answer, and think upon this business.  
Meantime, we thank you for your well-took labor.  
Go to your rest. At night we'll feast together. 90  
Most welcome home!  
*Voltemand and Cornelius exit.*

## POLONIUS

This business is well ended.  
My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
What majesty should be, what duty is,

Why day is day, night night, and time is time 95  
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.  
 Therefore, *since* brevity is the soul of wit,  
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
 I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.  
 “Mad” call I it, for, to define true madness, 100  
 What is ’t but to be nothing else but mad?  
 But let that go.

QUEEN More matter with less art.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.  
 That he’s mad, ’tis true; ’tis true ’tis pity, 105  
 And pity ’tis ’tis true—a foolish figure,  
 But farewell it, for I will use no art.  
 Mad let us grant him then, and now remains  
 That we find out the cause of this effect,  
 Or, rather say, the cause of this defect, 110  
 For this effect defective comes by cause.  
 Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.  
 Perpend.  
 I have a daughter (have while she is mine)  
 Who, in her duty and obedience, mark, 115  
 Hath given me this. Now gather and surmise.  
*He reads. To the celestial, and my soul’s idol, the  
 most beautified Ophelia—*  
 That’s an ill phrase, a vile phrase; “beautified” is a  
 vile phrase. But you shall hear. Thus: *He reads.* 120  
*In her excellent white bosom, these, etc.—*

QUEEN Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile. I will be faithful.  
*He reads the letter.*  
*Doubt thou the stars are fire,*  
*Doubt that the sun doth move,* 125  
*Doubt truth to be a liar,*  
*But never doubt I love.*

*O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not  
art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O  
most best, believe it. Adieu.*

130

*Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst  
this machine is to him, Hamlet.*

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,  
And more *<above>* hath his solicitings,  
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,  
All given to mine ear.

135

KING But how hath she received his love?

POLONIUS What do you think of me?

KING

As of a man faithful and honorable.

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,  
When I had seen this hot love on the wing  
(As I perceived it, I must tell you that,  
Before my daughter told me), what might you,  
Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,  
If I had played the desk or table-book  
Or given my heart a *<winking>* mute and dumb,  
Or looked upon this love with idle sight?  
What might you think? No, I went round to work,  
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:  
“Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.  
This must not be.” And then I prescripts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from *<his>* resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens;  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,  
And he, repelled (a short tale to make),  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to *<a>* lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves  
And all we mourn for.

140

145

150

155

160

KING, *‘to Queen’* Do you think *<’tis>* this?

QUEEN It may be, very like.

POLONIUS

Hath there been such a time (I would fain know  
that)

That I have positively said "'Tis so," 165  
When it proved otherwise?

KING Not that I know.

POLONIUS

Take this from this, if this be otherwise.  
If circumstances lead me, I will find  
Where truth is hid, though it were hid, indeed, 170  
Within the center.

KING How may we try it further?

POLONIUS

You know sometimes he walks four hours together  
Here in the lobby.

QUEEN So he does indeed. 175

POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.  
[To the King.] Be you and I behind an arras then.  
Mark the encounter. If he love her not,  
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,  
Let me be no assistant for a state, 180  
But keep a farm and carters.

KING We will try it.

*Enter Hamlet (reading on a book.)*

QUEEN

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes  
reading.

POLONIUS

Away, I do beseech you both, away. 185  
I'll board him presently. O, give me leave.  
*King and Queen exit (with Attendants.)*  
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS	Do you know me, my lord?	
HAMLET	Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.	190
POLONIUS	Not I, my lord.	
HAMLET	Then I would you were so honest a man.	
POLONIUS	Honest, my lord?	
HAMLET	Ay, sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.	195
POLONIUS	That's very true, my lord.	
HAMLET	For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a good kissing carrion—Have you a daughter?	
POLONIUS	I have, my lord.	200
HAMLET	Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but, as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to 't.	
POLONIUS, <i>aside</i>	How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. Yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger. He is far gone. And truly, in my youth, I suffered much extremity for love, very near this. I'll speak to him again.—What do you read, my lord?	205
HAMLET	Words, words, words.	210
POLONIUS	What is the matter, my lord?	
HAMLET	Between who?	
POLONIUS	I mean the matter that you read, my lord.	
HAMLET	Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have gray beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams; all which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for yourself, sir, shall grow old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.	215  220
POLONIUS, <i>aside</i>	Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't.—Will you walk out of the air, my lord?	

HAMLET	Into my grave?	225
POLONIUS	Indeed, that's out of the air. <i>Aside.</i> How pregnant sometimes his replies are! A happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and <i>sanity</i> could not so prosperously be delivered of. I will leave him <i>and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him</i> and my daughter.—My lord, I will take my leave of you.	230
HAMLET	You cannot, <i>sir</i> , take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal—except my life, except my life, except my life.	235
POLONIUS	Fare you well, my lord.	
HAMLET,	<i>aside</i> These tedious old fools. <i>Enter Guildenstern and Rosencrantz.</i>	
POLONIUS	You go to seek the Lord Hamlet. There he is.	
ROSENCRANTZ,	<i>to Polonius</i> God save you, sir. <i>Polonius exits.</i>	
GUILDENSTERN	My honored lord.	240
ROSENCRANTZ	My most dear lord.	
HAMLET	My <i>excellent</i> good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?	
ROSENCRANTZ	As the indifferent children of the earth.	245
GUILDENSTERN	Happy in that we are not <i>overhappy</i> . On Fortune's <i>cap</i> , we are not the very button.	
HAMLET	Nor the soles of her shoe?	
ROSENCRANTZ	Neither, my lord.	
HAMLET	Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?	250
GUILDENSTERN	Faith, her privates we.	
HAMLET	In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true! She is a strumpet. What news?	
ROSENCRANTZ	None, my lord, but <i>that</i> the world's grown honest.	255

HAMLET Then is doomsday near. But your news is not true. ¶ Let me question more in particular. What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither? 260

GUILDENSTERN Prison, my lord?

HAMLET Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ Then is the world one.

HAMLET A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons, Denmark being one o' th' worst. 265

ROSENCRANTZ We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET Why, then, 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me, it is a prison. 270

ROSENCRANTZ Why, then, your ambition makes it one. 'Tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. 275

GUILDENSTERN Which dreams, indeed, are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow. 280

HAMLET Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to th' court? For, by my fay, I cannot reason. 285

ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET No such matter. I will not sort you with the rest of my servants, for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. ¶ But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore? 290

ROSENCRANTZ To visit you, my lord, no other occasion.

- HAMLET Beggar that I am, I am *even* poor in thanks;  
 but I thank you, and sure, dear friends, my thanks  
 are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? 295  
 Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation?  
 Come, come, deal justly with me. Come, come; nay,  
 speak.
- GUILDENSTERN What should we say, my lord?
- HAMLET Anything but to th' purpose. You were sent 300  
 for, and there is a kind of confession in your looks  
 which your modesties have not craft enough to  
 color. I know the good king and queen have sent for  
 you.
- ROSENCRANTZ To what end, my lord? 305
- HAMLET That you must teach me. But let me conjure  
 you by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy  
 of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved  
 love, and by what more dear a better  
 proposer can charge you withal: be even and direct 310  
 with me whether you were sent for or no.
- ROSENCRANTZ, *to Guildenstern* What say you?
- HAMLET, *aside* Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If  
 you love me, hold not off.
- GUILDENSTERN My lord, we were sent for. 315
- HAMLET I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation  
 prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the  
 King and Queen molt no feather. I have of late, but  
 wherefore I know not, lost all my mirth, forgone all  
 custom of exercises, and, indeed, it goes so heavily 320  
 with my disposition that this goodly frame, the  
 Earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most  
 excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging  
 firmament, this majestical roof, fretted  
 with golden fire—why, it appeareth nothing to me 325  
 but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.  
 What *a* piece of work is a man, how noble in  
 reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving



how express and admirable; in action how like  
 an angel, in apprehension how like a god: the  
 beauty of the world, the paragon of animals—and  
 yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man  
 delights not me, *no,* nor women neither, though by  
 your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, there was no such stuff in my  
 thoughts. 335

HAMLET Why did you laugh, then, when I said “man  
 delights not me”?

ROSENCRANTZ To think, my lord, if you delight not in  
 man, what Lenten entertainment the players shall  
 receive from you. We coted them on the way, and  
 hither are they coming to offer you service. 340

HAMLET He that plays the king shall be welcome—his  
 Majesty shall have tribute on me. The adventurous  
 knight shall use his foil and target, the lover shall  
 not sigh gratis, the humorous man shall end his  
 part in peace, *the clown shall make those laugh*  
*whose lungs are tickle o’ th’ sear,* and the lady  
 shall say her mind freely, or the *blank* verse shall  
 halt for ’t. What players are they? 345

ROSENCRANTZ Even those you were wont to take such  
 delight in, the tragedians of the city. 350

HAMLET How chances it they travel? Their residence,  
 both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

ROSENCRANTZ I think their inhibition comes by the  
 means of the late innovation. 355

HAMLET Do they hold the same estimation they did  
 when I was in the city? Are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ No, indeed are they not.

*HAMLET* How comes it? Do they grow rusty? 360

ROSENCRANTZ Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted  
 pace. But there is, sir, an aerie of children, little  
 eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are  
 most tyrannically clapped for ’t. These are now the

fashion and so 'berattle' the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose quills and dare scarce come thither. 365

HAMLET What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players (as it is 'most like,' if their means are no better), their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession? 370

ROSENCRANTZ Faith, there has been much 'to-do' on both sides, and the nation holds it no sin to tar them to controversy. There was for a while no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question. 375

HAMLET Is 't possible? 380

GUILDENSTERN O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, that they do, my lord—Hercules and his load too. 385

HAMLET It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out. 390

*A flourish <for the Players.>*

GUILDENSTERN There are the players.

HAMLET Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then. Th' appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, <lest my> extent to the players, which, I tell you, must show fairly outwards, should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived. 395  
400

GUILDENSTERN In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET I am but mad north-north-west. When the  
wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*Enter Polonius.*

POLONIUS Well be with you, gentlemen.

HAMLET Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too—at 405  
each ear a hearer! That great baby you see there is  
not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

ROSENCRANTZ Haply he is the second time come to  
them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the 410  
players; mark it.—You say right, sir, a Monday  
morning, 'twas then indeed.

POLONIUS My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET My lord, I have news to tell you: when Roscius 415  
was an actor in Rome—

POLONIUS The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS Upon my honor—

HAMLET Then came each actor on his ass.

POLONIUS The best actors in the world, either for 420  
tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical,  
historical-pastoral, <tragic-historical,  
tragic-comical-historical-pastoral,> scene individable, or  
poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor  
Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, 425  
these are the only men.

HAMLET O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure  
hadst thou!

POLONIUS What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET Why, 430  
*One fair daughter, and no more,  
The which he lovèd passing well.*

POLONIUS, *[aside]* Still on my daughter.

HAMLET Am I not i' th' right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS If you call me “Jephthah,” my lord: I have a daughter that I love passing well. 435

HAMLET Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS What follows then, my lord?

HAMLET Why,  
*As by lot, God wot* 440  
 and then, you know,  
*It came to pass, as most like it was—*  
 the first row of the pious chanson will show you  
 more, for look where my abridgment comes.

*Enter the Players.*

You are welcome, masters; welcome all.—I am glad 445  
 to see thee well.—Welcome, good friends.—O *my*  
 old friend! Why, thy face is valanced since I saw thee  
 last. Com’st thou to beard me in Denmark?—What,  
 my young lady and mistress! *By ’r* Lady, your ladyship 450  
 is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by  
 the altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a  
 piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the  
 ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We’ll e’en to ’t  
 like *French* falconers, fly at anything we see. We’ll  
 have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your 455  
 quality. Come, a passionate speech.

*First* PLAYER What speech, my good lord?

HAMLET I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it  
 was never acted, or, if it was, not above once; for 460  
 the play, I remember, pleased not the million:  
 ’twas caviary to the general. But it was (as I  
 received it, and others whose judgments in such  
 matters cried in the top of mine) an excellent play,  
 well digested in the scenes, set down with as much  
 modesty as cunning. I remember one said there 465  
 were no sallets in the lines to make the matter  
 savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict  
 the author of affection, but called it an honest

method, [as wholesome as sweet and, by very much,  
 more handsome than fine.] One speech in 't I 470  
 chiefly loved. 'Twas Aeneas' <tale> to Dido, and  
 thereabout of it especially when he speaks of  
 Priam's slaughter. If it live in your memory, begin at  
 this line—let me see, let me see:  
*The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast— 475*  
 'tis not so; it begins with Pyrrhus:  
*The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,*  
*Black as his purpose, did the night resemble*  
*When he lay couchèd in th' ominous horse,*  
*Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared 480*  
*With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot,*  
*Now is he total gules, horridly tricked*  
*With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,*  
*Baked and impasted with the parching streets,*  
*That lend a tyrannous and a damnèd light 485*  
*To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,*  
*And thus o'ersizèd with coagulate gore,*  
*With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus*  
*Old grandsire Priam seeks.*  
 So, proceed you. 490

POLONIUS 'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good  
 accent and good discretion.

<FIRST> PLAYER *Anon he finds him*  
*Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,*  
*Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls, 495*  
*Repugnant to command. Unequal matched,*  
*Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide;*  
*But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword*  
*Th' unnervèd father falls. <Then senseless Ilium,>*  
*Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top 500*  
*Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash*  
*Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo, his sword,*  
*Which was declining on the milky head*  
*Of reverend Priam, seemed i' th' air to stick.*

*So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood* 505  
*⟨And,⟩ like a neutral to his will and matter,*  
*Did nothing.*  
*But as we often see against some storm*  
*A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,*  
*The bold winds speechless, and the orb below* 510  
*As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder*  
*Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,*  
*Arousèd vengeance sets him new a-work,*  
*And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall*  
*On Mars's armor, forged for proof eterne,* 515  
*With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword*  
*Now falls on Priam.*  
*Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods*  
*In general synod take away her power,*  
*Break all the spokes and ℞fellies℞ from her wheel,* 520  
*And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven*  
*As low as to the fiends!*

POLONIUS This is too long.

HAMLET It shall to the barber's with your beard.—  
 Prithee say on. He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or 525  
 he sleeps. Say on; come to Hecuba.

⟨FIRST ⟩ PLAYER  
*But who, ah woe, had seen the moblèd queen—*

HAMLET “The moblèd queen”?

POLONIUS That's good. ⟨“Moblèd ℞ queen℞ is good.⟩

⟨FIRST ⟩ PLAYER  
*Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames* 530  
*With ⟨bisson rheum,⟩ a clout upon that head*  
*Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,*  
*About her lank and all o'erteemèd loins*  
*A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up—*  
*Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,* 535  
*'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have*  
*pronounced.*  
*But if the gods themselves did see her then*

When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport  
 In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,  
 The instant burst of clamor that she made  
 (Unless things mortal move them not at all)  
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven  
 And passion in the gods.

540

POLONIUS Look whe'er he has not turned his color and  
 has tears in 's eyes. Prithee, no more.

545

HAMLET 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of  
 this soon.—Good my lord, will you see the players  
 well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used,  
 for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the  
 time. After your death you were better have a bad  
 epitaph than their ill report while you live.

550

POLONIUS My lord, I will use them according to their  
 desert.

HAMLET God's bodykins, man, much better! Use every  
 man after his desert and who shall 'scape  
 whipping? Use them after your own honor and  
 dignity. The less they deserve, the more merit is in  
 your bounty. Take them in.

555

POLONIUS Come, sirs.

560

HAMLET Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play  
 tomorrow. *[As Polonius and Players exit, Hamlet speaks to  
 the First Player.]* Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can  
 you play "The Murder of Gonzago"?

FIRST PLAYER Ay, my lord.

565

HAMLET We'll ha 't tomorrow night. You could, for a  
 need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen  
 lines, which I would set down and insert in 't,  
 could you not?

FIRST PLAYER Ay, my lord.

570

HAMLET Very well. Follow that lord—and look you  
 mock him not. *[First Player exits.]* My good friends,  
 I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ Good my lord.

## HAMLET

Ay, so, good-bye to you. 575

*“Rosencrantz and Guildenstern” exit.*

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here,

But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,

Could force his soul so to his own conceit 580

That from her working all *his* visage wanned,

Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect,

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting

With forms to his conceit—and all for nothing!

For Hecuba! 585

What’s Hecuba to him, or he to *Hecuba*,

That he should weep for her? What would he do

Had he the motive and *the cue* for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears

And cleave the general ear with horrid speech, 590

Make mad the guilty and appall the free,

Confound the ignorant and amaze indeed

The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause, 595

And can say nothing—no, not for a king

Upon whose property and most dear life

A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward?

Who calls me “villain”? breaks my pate across?

Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face? 600

Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i’ th’ throat

As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this?

Ha! ’Swounds, I should take it! For it cannot be

But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall

To make oppression bitter, or ere this 605

I should *have* fatted all the region kites

With this slave’s offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless

villain!



〈O vengeance!〉 610  
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words  
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab, 615  
 A stallion! Fie upon 't! Foh!  
 About, my brains!—Hum, I have heard  
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
 Have, by the very cunning of the scene,  
 Been struck so to the soul that presently 620  
 They have proclaimed their malefactions;  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks; 625  
 I'll tent him to the quick. If he do blench,  
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be a devil, and the devil hath power  
 T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy, 630  
 As he is very potent with such spirits,  
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds  
 More relative than this. The play's the thing  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

*He exits.*

**ACT 3****Act 3 Scene 1**

*Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz,  
Guildenstern, and Lords.*

KING

And can you by no drift of conference  
Get from him why he puts on this confusion,  
Grating so harshly all his days of quiet  
With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

ROSENCRANTZ

He does confess he feels himself distracted, 5  
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

GUILDENSTERN

Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,  
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof  
When we would bring him on to some confession  
Of his true state. 10

QUEEN

Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN

But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ

Niggard of question, but of our demands  
Most free in his reply. 15

QUEEN Did you assay him to any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ

Madam, it so fell out that certain players

We o'erraught on the way. Of these we told him,  
And there did seem in him a kind of joy  
To hear of it. They are here about the court, 20  
And, as I think, they have already order  
This night to play before him.

POLONIUS                'Tis most true,  
And he beseeched me to entreat your Majesties  
To hear and see the matter.

25

KING  
 With all my heart, and it doth much content me  
 To hear him so inclined.  
 Good gentlemen, give him a further edge  
 And drive his purpose into these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ  
We shall, my lord. *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern* 30  
*and Lords* exit.

KING Sweet Gertrude, leave us {too,}

For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,  
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here  
Affront Ophelia.

Her father and myself, {lawful espials,} 35  
{Will} so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,  
We may of their encounter frankly judge  
And gather by him, as he is behaved,  
If 't be th' affliction of his love or no  
That thus he suffers for. 40

QUEEN I shall obey you.  
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause  
Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues  
Will bring him to his wonted way again,  
To both your honors.

OPHELIA Madam, I wish it may.  
[*Queen exits.*]

POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here.—Gracious, so please you,

We will bestow ourselves. *['To Ophelia.']* Read on this  
book, 50  
That show of such an exercise may color  
Your *⟨loneliness.⟩*—We are oft to blame in this  
(’Tis too much proved), that with devotion’s visage  
And pious action we do sugar o’er  
The devil himself. 55

KING, *['aside']* O, ’tis too true!  
How smart a lash that speech doth give my  
conscience.  
The harlot’s cheek beautied with plast’ring art  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it 60  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burden!

POLONIUS

I hear him coming. *⟨Let’s⟩* withdraw, my lord.  
*['They withdraw.']*

*Enter Hamlet.*

HAMLET

To be or not to be—that is the question:  
Whether ’tis nobler in the mind to suffer 65  
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,  
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles  
And, by opposing, end them. To die, to sleep—  
No more—and by a sleep to say we end  
The heartache and the thousand natural shocks 70  
That flesh is heir to—’tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep—  
To sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there’s the rub,  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, 75  
Must give us pause. There’s the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th’ oppressor’s wrong, the proud man’s contumely,

The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office, and the spurns  
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscovered country from whose bourn  
No traveler returns, puzzles the will  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards <of us all,>  
And thus the native hue of resolution  
Is <sicklied> o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
And enterprises of great pitch and moment  
With this regard their currents turn awry  
And lose the name of action.—Soft you now,  
The fair Ophelia.—Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remembered.

OPHELIA                                Good my lord,  
How does your Honor for this many a day?                                100

HAMLET I humbly thank you, well.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours  
That I have longèd long to redeliver.  
I pray you now receive them.

HAMLET  
No, not I. I never gave you aught. 105

OPHELIA

My honored lord, you know right well you did,  
And with them words of so sweet breath composed  
As made ~~the~~ things more rich. Their perfume  
lost,  
Take these again, for to the noble mind  
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.  
There, my lord.

110

HAMLET	Ha, ha, are you honest?	
OPHELIA	My lord?	
HAMLET	Are you fair?	115
OPHELIA	What means your Lordship?	
HAMLET	That if you be honest and fair, <i>your honesty</i> should admit no discourse to your beauty.	
OPHELIA	Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?	120
HAMLET	Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness. This was sometime a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did love you once.	125
OPHELIA	Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.	
HAMLET	You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so <i>inoculate</i> our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.	
OPHELIA	I was the more deceived.	130
HAMLET	Get thee <i>to</i> a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offenses at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves <i>all;</i> believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?	135
OPHELIA	At home, my lord.	
HAMLET	Let the doors be shut upon him that he may play the fool nowhere but in 's own house. Farewell.	
OPHELIA	O, help him, you sweet heavens!	145
HAMLET	If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a	

nunnery, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry,  
marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what  
monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and  
quickly too. Farewell. 150

OPHELIA Heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET I have heard of your paintings <too,> well  
enough. God hath given you one face, and you  
make yourselves another. You jig and amble, and  
you <lisp;> you nickname God's creatures and make  
your wantonness <your> ignorance. Go to, I'll no  
more on 't. It hath made me mad. I say we will have  
no more marriage. Those that are married already,  
all but one, shall live. The rest shall keep as they are. 155  
To a nunnery, go. *He exits.* 160

OPHELIA

O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue,  
sword, 165  
<Th' expectancy> and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mold of form,  
Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That sucked the honey of his musicked vows, 170  
Now see <that> noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh;  
That unmatched form and stature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me  
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see! 175

KING, *advancing with* Polonius

Love? His affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,  
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,  
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose 180  
Will be some danger; which for to prevent,  
I have in quick determination

Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England  
 For the demand of our neglected tribute.  
 Haply the seas, and countries different, 185  
 With variable objects, shall expel  
 This something-settled matter in his heart,  
 Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus  
 From fashion of himself. What think you on 't?

## POLONIUS

It shall do well. But yet do I believe 190  
 The origin and commencement of his grief  
 Sprung from neglected love.—How now, Ophelia?  
 You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said;  
 We heard it all.—My lord, do as you please,  
 But, if you hold it fit, after the play 195  
 Let his queen-mother all alone entreat him  
 To show his grief. Let her be round with him;  
 And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear  
 Of all their conference. If she find him not,  
 To England send him, or confine him where 200  
 Your wisdom best shall think.

## KING

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not *unwatched* go.  
*They exit.*

## Act 3 Scene 2

*Enter Hamlet and three of the Players.*

HAMLET Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced  
 it to you, trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth  
 it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the  
 town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air  
 too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; 5  
 for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say,  
 whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and  
 beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O,



it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious,  
 periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very  
 rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the  
 most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable  
 dumb shows and noise. I would have such a fellow  
 whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-Herods  
 Herod. Pray you, avoid it.

PLAYER I warrant your Honor.

HAMLET Be not too tame neither, but let your own  
 discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the  
 word, the word to the action, with this special  
 observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of  
 nature. For anything so o'erdone is from the purpose  
 of playing, whose end, both at the first and  
 now, was and is to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to  
 nature, to show virtue her {own} feature, scorn her  
 own image, and the very age and body of the time  
 his form and pressure. Now this overdone or come  
 tardy off, though it makes the unskillful laugh,  
 cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure  
 of {the} which one must in your allowance o'erweigh  
 a whole theater of others. O, there be players that I  
 have seen play and heard others {praise} (and that  
 highly), not to speak it profanely, that, neither  
 having th' accent of Christians nor the gait of  
 Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and  
 bellowed that I have thought some of nature's  
 journeymen had made men, and not made them  
 well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

PLAYER I hope we have reformed that indifferently  
 with us, {sir.}

HAMLET O, reform it altogether. And let those that play  
 your clowns speak no more than is set down for  
 them, for there be of them that will themselves  
 laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators  
 to laugh too, though in the meantime some necessary

question of the play be then to be considered. 45  
 That's villainous and shows a most pitiful ambition  
 in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.  
*⟨Players exit.⟩*

*Enter Polonius, Guildenstern, and Rosencrantz.*

How now, my lord, will the King hear this piece of  
 work?

POLONIUS And the Queen too, and that presently. 50

HAMLET Bid the players make haste. *⟨Polonius exits.⟩*  
 Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, my lord. *They exit.*

HAMLET What ho, Horatio!

*Enter Horatio.*

HORATIO Here, sweet lord, at your service. 55

HAMLET  
 Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man  
 As e'er my conversation coped withal.

HORATIO  
 O, my dear lord—

⟨HAMLET⟩ Nay, do not think I flatter,  
 For what advancement may I hope from thee 60  
 That no revenue hast but thy good spirits  
 To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be  
 flattered?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp  
 And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee 65  
 Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice  
 And could of men distinguish, her election  
 Hath sealed thee for herself. For thou hast been 70  
 As one in suffering all that suffers nothing,  
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards  
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blessed are those  
 Whose blood and judgment are so well  
 commeddled

That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger 75

To sound what stop she please. Give me that man

That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him

In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,

As I do thee.—Something too much of this.—

There is a play tonight before the King. 80

One scene of it comes near the circumstance

Which I have told thee of my father's death.

I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,

Even with the very comment of thy soul

Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt 85

Do not itself unkennel in one speech,

It is a damnèd ghost that we have seen,

And my imaginations are as foul

As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note,

For I mine eyes will rivet to his face, 90

And, after, we will both our judgments join

In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO Well, my lord.

If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing

And 'scape ⟨detecting⟩, I will pay the theft. 95

⟨Sound a flourish.⟩

HAMLET They are coming to the play. I must be idle.

Get you a place.

*Enter Trumpets and Kettle Drums. ⟨Enter⟩ King, Queen,  
Polonius, Ophelia, ⟨Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and other  
Lords attendant with [the King's] guard carrying  
torches.⟩*

KING How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish. I

eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed 100

capons so.

KING I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These

words are not mine.

HAMLET No, nor mine now. [To Polonius.] My lord, you

played once i' th' university, you say? 105

POLONIUS That did I, my lord, and was accounted a  
good actor.

HAMLET What did you enact?

POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i' th'  
Capitol. Brutus killed me. 110

HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a  
calf there.—Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, my lord. They stay upon your  
patience.

QUEEN Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me. 115

HAMLET No, good mother. Here's metal more  
attractive. *「Hamlet takes a place near Ophelia.」*

POLONIUS, *「to the King」* Oh, ho! Do you mark that?

HAMLET Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA No, my lord. 120

《HAMLET I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA Ay, my lord.》

HAMLET Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA I think nothing, my lord.

HAMLET That's a fair thought to lie between maids'  
legs. 125

OPHELIA What is, my lord?

HAMLET Nothing.

OPHELIA You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET Who, I? 130

OPHELIA Ay, my lord.

HAMLET O God, your only jig-maker. What should a  
man do but be merry? For look you how cheerfully  
my mother looks, and my father died within 's two  
hours. 135

OPHELIA Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAMLET So long? Nay, then, let the devil wear black,  
for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens, die two  
months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's  
hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half  
a year. But, by 'r Lady, he must build churches, then, 140

or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with the  
hobby-horse, whose epitaph is “For oh, for oh, the  
hobby-horse is forgot.”

*The trumpets sounds. Dumb show follows.*

*Enter a King and a Queen, **<very lovingly>** the Queen* 145  
*embracing him and he her. **<She kneels and makes show of***  
*protestation unto him.* *He takes her up and declines his*  
*head upon her neck. He lies him down upon a bank of*  
*flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon*  
***<comes>** in another man, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours* 150  
*poison in the sleeper’s ears, and leaves him. The Queen*  
*returns, finds the King dead, makes passionate action. The*  
*poisoner with some three or four come in again, seem to*  
*condole with her. The dead body is carried away. The*  
*poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems harsh* 155  
*awhile but in the end accepts **<his>** love.*

*「Players exit.」*

OPHELIA What means this, my lord?

HAMLET Marry, this **<is miching>** mallecho. It means  
mischief.

OPHELIA Belike this show imports the argument of the 160  
play.

*Enter Prologue.*

HAMLET We shall know by this fellow. The players  
cannot keep **<counsel;>** they’ll tell all.

OPHELIA Will he tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET Ay, or any show that you will show him. Be 165  
not you ashamed to show, he’ll not shame to tell you  
what it means.

OPHELIA You are naught, you are naught. I’ll mark the  
play.

PROLOGUE 170  
*For us and for our tragedy,*  
*Here stooping to your clemency,*  
*We beg your hearing patiently. 「He exits.」*

HAMLET Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring?

OPHELIA 'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET As woman's love. 175

*Enter [the Player] King and Queen.*

PLAYER KING

*Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' {orbèd} ground,  
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen  
About the world have times twelve thirties been  
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands  
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.* 180

PLAYER QUEEN

*So many journeys may the sun and moon  
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!  
But woe is me! You are so sick of late,  
So far from cheer and from {your} former state,  
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must.  
[For women fear too much, even as they love,]  
And women's fear and love hold quantity,  
In neither aught, or in extremity 190.  
Now what my {love} is, proof hath made you know,  
And, as my love is sized, my fear is so:  
[Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;  
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.]*

PLAYER KING

*Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too.  
My operant powers their functions leave to do.  
And thou shall live in this fair world behind,  
Honored, beloved; and haply one as kind  
For husband shalt thou—* 195

PLAYER QUEEN *O, confound the rest!* 200

*Such love must needs be treason in my breast.  
In second husband let me be accurst.  
None wed the second but who killed the first.*

HAMLET That's wormwood!

PLAYER QUEEN

*The instances that second marriage move* 205  
*Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.*  
*A second time I kill my husband dead*  
*When second husband kisses me in bed.*

PLAYER KING

*I do believe you think what now you speak,*  
*But what we do determine oft we break.* 210  
*Purpose is but the slave to memory,*  
*Of violent birth, but poor validity,*  
*Which now, the fruit unripe, sticks on the tree*  
*But fall unshaken when they mellow be.*  
*Most necessary 'tis that we forget* 215  
*To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.*  
*What to ourselves in passion we propose,*  
*The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.*  
*The violence of either grief or joy*  
*Their own enactures with themselves destroy.* 220  
*Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;*  
*Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.*  
*This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange*  
*That even our loves should with our fortunes change;*  
*For 'tis a question left us yet to prove* 225  
*Whether love lead fortune or else fortune love.*  
*The great man down, you mark his favorite flies;*  
*The poor, advanced, makes friends of enemies.*  
*And hitherto doth love on fortune tend,*  
*For who not needs shall never lack a friend,* 230  
*And who in want a hollow friend doth try*  
*Directly seasons him his enemy.*  
*But, orderly to end where I begun:*  
*Our wills and fates do so contrary run*  
*That our devices still are overthrown;* 235  
*Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.*  
*So think thou wilt no second husband wed,*  
*But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.*

## PLAYER QUEEN

*Nor Earth to me give food, nor heaven light,  
Sport and repose lock from me day and night,  
[To desperation turn my trust and hope,  
‘An’ anchor’s cheer in prison be my scope.]  
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy  
Meet what I would have well and it destroy.  
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,  
If, once a widow, ever I be wife.*

240  
245

HAMLET If she should break it now!

## PLAYER KING

*’Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile.  
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile  
The tedious day with sleep.* *⟨Sleeps.⟩*

250

PLAYER QUEEN *Sleep rock thy brain,  
And never come mischance between us twain.  
[Player Queen exits.]*

HAMLET Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

HAMLET O, but she’ll keep her word.

255

KING Have you heard the argument? Is there no  
offense in ’t?

HAMLET No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest. No  
offense i’ th’ world.

KING What do you call the play?

260

HAMLET “The Mousetrap.” Marry, how? Tropically.  
This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna.  
Gonzago is the duke’s name, his wife Baptista. You  
shall see anon. ’Tis a knavish piece of work, but  
what of that? Your Majesty and we that have free  
souls, it touches us not. Let the galled jade wince;  
our withers are unwrung.

265

*Enter Lucianus.*

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

OPHELIA You are as good as a chorus, my lord.



HAMLET	I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see the puppets dallying.	270
OPHELIA	You are keen, my lord, you are keen.	
HAMLET	It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge.	
OPHELIA	Still better and worse.	275
HAMLET	So you mis-take your husbands.—Begin, murderer. <i>⟨Pox,⟩</i> leave thy damnable faces and begin. Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.	
LUCIANUS	<i>Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing, ⟨Confederate⟩ season, else no creature seeing, Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected, With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice ⟨infected,⟩ Thy natural magic and dire property On wholesome life ⟨usurp⟩ immediately. ⟨Pours the poison in his ears.⟩</i>	280       285
HAMLET	He poisons him i' th' garden for his estate. His name's Gonzago. The story is extant and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife. <i>⟨Claudius rises.⟩</i>	290
OPHELIA	The King rises.	
⟨HAMLET	What, frightened with false fire?⟩	
QUEEN	How fares my lord?	
POLONIUS	Give o'er the play.	
KING	Give me some light. Away!	295
POLONIUS	Lights, lights, lights! <i>All but Hamlet and Horatio exit.</i>	
HAMLET	<i>Why, let the stricken deer go weep, The hart ungallèd play. For some must watch, while some must sleep: Thus runs the world away.</i>	300

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers (if the  
rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me) with ~~two~~  
Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a  
fellowship in a cry of players?

HORATIO Half a share. 305

HAMLET A whole one, I.  
*For thou dost know, O Damon dear,  
This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself, and now reigns here  
A very very—pajock.* 310

HORATIO You might have rhymed.

HAMLET O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for  
a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

HORATIO Very well, my lord.

HAMLET Upon the talk of the poisoning? 315

HORATIO I did very well note him.

HAMLET Ah ha! Come, some music! Come, the  
recorders!  
*For if the King like not the comedy,  
Why, then, belike he likes it not, perdy.* 320  
Come, some music!

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word  
with you.

HAMLET Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN The King, sir— 325

HAMLET Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN Is in his retirement marvelous  
distempered.

HAMLET With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN No, my lord, with choler. 330

HAMLET Your wisdom should show itself more richer  
to signify this to the doctor, for for me to put him to  
his purgation would perhaps plunge him into more  
choler.

GUILDENSTERN	Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame and <i>start</i> not so wildly from my affair.	335
HAMLET	I am tame, sir. Pronounce.	
GUILDENSTERN	The Queen your mother, in most great affliction of spirit, hath sent me to you.	340
HAMLET	You are welcome.	
GUILDENSTERN	Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment. If not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of <i>my</i> business.	345
HAMLET	Sir, I cannot.	
ROSENCRANTZ	What, my lord?	
HAMLET	Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased. But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command—or, rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more but to the matter. My mother, you say—	350
ROSENCRANTZ	Then thus she says: your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.	355
HAMLET	O wonderful son that can so 'stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.	
ROSENCRANTZ	She desires to speak with you in her closet ere you go to bed.	360
HAMLET	We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade with us?	
ROSENCRANTZ	My lord, you once did love me.	
HAMLET	And do still, by these pickers and stealers.	
ROSENCRANTZ	Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty if you deny your griefs to your friend.	365
HAMLET	Sir, I lack advancement.	
ROSENCRANTZ	How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?	370

HAMLET Ay, sir, but “While the grass grows”—the proverb is something musty.

*Enter the Players with recorders.*

O, the recorders! Let me see one. *[He takes a recorder and turns to Guildenstern.]* To withdraw with you: why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil? 375

GUILDENSTERN O, my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.

HAMLET I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe? 380

GUILDENSTERN My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET I do beseech you. 385

GUILDENSTERN I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with your fingers and *[thumb,]* give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops. 390

GUILDENSTERN But these cannot I command to any utterance of harmony. I have not the skill.

HAMLET Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest note to *[the top of]* my compass; and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you *[can]* fret me, you cannot play upon me. 395  
400

*Enter Polonius.*

God bless you, sir.

POLONIUS My lord, the Queen would speak with you,  
and presently. 405

HAMLET Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in  
shape of a camel?

POLONIUS By th' Mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

HAMLET Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS It is backed like a weasel. 410

HAMLET Or like a whale.

POLONIUS Very like a whale.

⟨HAMLET⟩ Then I will come to my mother by and by.  
[Aside.] They fool me to the top of my bent.—I will  
come by and by. 415

⟨POLONIUS⟩ I will say so.

⟨HAMLET⟩ “By and by” is easily said. Leave me,  
friends.  
[All but Hamlet exit.]

'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn and hell itself ⟨breathes⟩  
out 420

Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot  
blood

And do such ⟨bitter⟩ business as the day  
Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother. 425  
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.

I will speak ⟨daggers⟩ to her, but use none.  
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites: 430  
How in my words somever she be shent,  
To give them seals never, my soul, consent.

*He exits.*

**Act 3 Scene 3***Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.***KING**

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
 To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you.  
 I your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
 And he to England shall along with you.  
 The terms of our estate may not endure  
 Hazard so near 's as doth hourly grow  
 Out of his brows. 5

**GUILDENSTERN** We will ourselves provide.

Most holy and religious fear it is  
 To keep those many many bodies safe  
 That live and feed upon your Majesty. 10

**ROSENCRANTZ**

The single and peculiar life is bound  
 With all the strength and armor of the mind  
 To keep itself from noyance, but much more  
 That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests  
 The lives of many. The cress of majesty  
 Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw  
 What's near it with it; or it is a massy wheel  
 Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,  
 To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
 Are mortised and adjoined, which, when it falls,  
 Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
 Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone  
 Did the king sigh, but with a general groan. 15 20

**KING**

Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage,  
 For we will fetters put about this fear,  
 Which now goes too free-footed. 25

**ROSENCRANTZ**

We will haste us.

*「Rosencrantz and Guildenstern」 exit.**Enter Polonius.*

## POLONIUS

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.  
 Behind the arras I'll convey myself 30  
 To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him  
 home;  
 And, as you said (and wisely was it said),  
 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
 Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear 35  
 The speech of vantage. Fare you well, my liege.  
 I'll call upon you ere you go to bed  
 And tell you what I know.

## KING

Thanks, dear my lord.

*Polonius exits.*

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;  
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,  
 A brother's murder. Pray can I not,  
 Though inclination be as sharp as will.  
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,  
 And, like a man to double business bound, 45  
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin  
 And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand  
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood?  
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy 50  
 But to confront the visage of offense?  
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force,  
 To be forestallèd ere we come to fall,  
 Or *pardoned* being down? Then I'll look up.  
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer 55  
 Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murder"?  
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed  
 Of those effects for which I did the murder:  
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.  
 May one be pardoned and retain th' offense? 60  
 In the corrupted currents of this world,  
 Offense's gilded hand may *shove* by justice,

And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above:  
 There is no shuffling; there the action lies 65  
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled,  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?  
 Try what repentance can. What can it not?  
 Yet what can it, when one cannot repent? 70  
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
 O limèd soul, that, struggling to be free,  
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay.  
 Bow, stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel  
 Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe. 75  
 All may be well. *He kneels.*

*Enter Hamlet.*

#### HAMLET

Now might I do it *pat,* now he is a-praying,  
 And now I'll do 't. *He draws his sword.*  
 And so he goes to heaven,  
 And so am I *revenged.* That would be scanned: 80  
 A villain kills my father, and for that,  
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
 To heaven.  
 Why, this is *hire* and *salary,* not revenge.  
 He took my father grossly, full of bread, 85  
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
 And how his audit stands who knows save heaven.  
 But in our circumstance and course of thought  
 'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged  
 To take him in the purging of his soul, 90  
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
 No.  
 Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.  
*He sheathes his sword.*  
 When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,



Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,  
 At game, a-swearing, or about some act  
 That has no relish of salvation in 't—  
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
 And that his soul may be as damned and black  
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.  
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

95  
100

*「Hamlet」 exits.*

KING, *「rising」*  
 My words fly up, my thoughts remain below;  
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

*He exits.*

**Act 3 Scene 4**  
*Enter «Queen» and Polonius.*

POLONIUS  
 He will come straight. Look you lay home to him.  
 Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear  
     with  
 And that your Grace hath screened and stood  
     between  
 Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here.  
 Pray you, be round «with him.

5

HAMLET, *within* Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN I'll «warrant» you. Fear me not. Withdraw,  
 I hear him coming.

10

*「Polonius hides behind the arras.」*

*Enter Hamlet.*

HAMLET Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN  
 Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET  
 Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue. 15

QUEEN

Why, how now, Hamlet?

HAMLET

What's the matter now?

QUEEN

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

No, by the rood, not so.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife, 20  
And (would it were not so) you are my mother.

QUEEN

Nay, then I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET

Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge.

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the *inmost* part of you. 25

QUEEN

What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, ho!

POLONIUS, *behind the arras* What ho! Help!

HAMLET

How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead.

*He kills Polonius by thrusting a rapier  
through the arras.*

POLONIUS, *behind the arras*

O, I am slain! 30

QUEEN

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

QUEEN

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET

A bloody deed—almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king and marry with his brother. 35

QUEEN

As kill a king?

HAMLET

Ay, lady, it was my word.

「*He pulls Polonius' body from behind the arras.*」

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell.  
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.  
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

「*To Queen.*」 Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit  
you down,  
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff,  
If damnèd custom have not brazed it so  
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN  
What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy tongue  
In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET	Such an act	
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,		50
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose		
From the fair forehead of an innocent love		
And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows		
As false as dicers' oaths—O, such a deed		
As from the body of contraction plucks		55
The very soul, and sweet religion makes		
A rhapsody of words! Heaven's face does glow		
O'er this solidity and compound mass		
With heated visage, as against the doom,		
Is thought-sick at the act.		60

QUEEN                                Ay me, what act  
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture and on this,  
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See what a grace was seated on this brow,  
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,  
An eye like Mars' to threaten and command,  
A station like the herald Mercury  
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,

65

A combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
This was your husband. Look you now what follows.  
Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed  
And batten on this moor? Ha! Have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love, for at your age  
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble  
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment  
Would step from this to this? [Sense sure you have,  
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense  
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,  
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd,  
But it reserved some quantity of choice  
To serve in such a difference.] What devil was 't  
That thus hath cozened you at hoodman-blind?  
[Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
Could not so mope.] O shame, where is thy blush?  
Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax  
And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame  
When the compulsive ardor gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason *⟨panders⟩* will.

QUEEN O Hamlet, speak no more!  
 Thou turn'st my eyes into my *very* soul, 100  
 And there I see such black and *grainèd* spots  
 As will *not* leave their tinct.

HAMLET    Nay, but to live  
In the rank sweat of an enseamèd bed,  
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty!

105

QUEEN O, speak to me no more!

These words like daggers enter in my ears.  
No more, sweet Hamlet!

HAMLET A murderer and a villain, 110

A slave that is not twentieth part the *<tithe>*  
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings,  
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,  
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole  
And put it in his pocket— 115

QUEEN No more!

HAMLET A king of shreds and patches—

*Enter Ghost.*

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly guards!—What would your gracious  
figure? 120

QUEEN Alas, he's mad.

HAMLET

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by  
Th' important acting of your dread command?  
O, say! 125

GHOST Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.  
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.  
O, step between her and her fighting soul.  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works. 130  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN Alas, how is 't with you,  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy  
And with th' incorporal air do hold discourse? 135  
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,  
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,  
Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,

Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper 140  
Sprinkle cool patience! Whereon do you look?

HAMLET

On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares.  
His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,  
Would make them capable. *['To the Ghost.']* Do not  
look upon me, 145  
Lest with this piteous action you convert  
My stern effects. Then what I have to do  
Will want true color—tears perchance for blood.

QUEEN To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET Do you see nothing there? 150

QUEEN

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET

Why, look you there, look how it steals away!  
My father, in his habit as he lived! 155  
Look where he goes even now out at the portal!  
*Ghost exits.*

QUEEN

This is the very coinage of your brain.  
This bodiless creation ecstasy  
Is very cunning in.

HAMLET *⟨Ecstasy?⟩* 160

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,  
And *⟨I⟩* the matter will reword, which madness  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace, 165  
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul  
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven, 170

Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,  
 And do not spread the compost on the weeds  
 To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,  
 For, in the fatness of these pursy times,  
 Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,  
 Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good. 175

QUEEN

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!

HAMLET

O, throw away the worser part of it,  
 And <live> the purer with the other half!  
 Good night. But go not to my uncle's bed.  
 Assume a virtue if you have it not. 180

[That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,  
 Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,  
 That to the use of actions fair and good  
 He likewise gives a frock or livery  
 That aptly is put on.] Refrain <tonight,>  
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness 185

To the next abstinence, [the next more easy;  
 For use almost can change the stamp of nature  
 And either "... the devil or throw him out  
 With wondrous potency.] Once more, good night,  
 And, when you are desirous to be blest,  
 I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord 190

*[Pointing to Polonius.]*

I do repent; but heaven hath pleased it so  
 To punish me with this and this with me,  
 That I must be their scourge and minister.  
 I will bestow him and will answer well  
 The death I gave him. So, again, good night.  
 I must be cruel only to be kind. 195

This bad begins, and worse remains behind.  
 [One word more, good lady.] 200

QUEEN

What shall I do?

## HAMLET

Not this by no means that I bid you do:  
 Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed,  
 Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his mouse, 205  
 And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses  
 Or paddling in your neck with his damned fingers,  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know, 210  
 For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
 Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,  
 Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so?  
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,  
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top, 215  
 Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep  
 And break your own neck down.

## QUEEN

Be thou assured, if words be made of breathe 220  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
 What thou hast said to me.

## HAMLET

I must to England, you know that.

## QUEEN

Alack,

I had forgot! 'Tis so concluded on.

## HAMLET

[There's letters sealed; and my two schoolfellows, 225  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fanged,  
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work,  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
 Hoist with his own petard; and 't shall go hard 230  
 But I will delve one yard below their mines  
 And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet  
 When in one line two crafts directly meet.]  
 This man shall set me packing.



I'll lug the guts into the neighbor room. 235  
Mother, good night indeed. This counselor  
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,  
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.—  
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.—  
Good night, mother. 240

「They」 exit, 〈Hamlet tugging in Polonius.〉

## ACT 4

## Act 4 Scene 1

*Enter King and Queen, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

KING

There's matter in these sighs; these profound heaves  
You must translate; 'tis fit we understand them.  
Where is your son?

QUEEN

[Bestow this place on us a little while.]  
[*Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exit.*]  
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen tonight!

5

KING What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

QUEEN

Mad as the sea and wind when both contend  
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit,  
Behind the arras hearing something stir,  
Whips out his rapier, cries "A rat, a rat,"  
And in this brainish apprehension kills  
The unseen good old man.

10

KING

O heavy deed!

It had been so with us, had we been there.  
His liberty is full of threats to all—  
To you yourself, to us, to everyone.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence

15

Should have kept short, restrained, and out of haunt  
 This mad young man. But so much was our love, 20  
 We would not understand what was most fit,  
 But, like the owner of a foul disease,  
 To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
 Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

QUEEN

To draw apart the body he hath killed, 25  
 O'er whom his very madness, like some ore  
 Among a mineral of metals base,  
 Shows itself pure: he weeps for what is done.

KING O Gertrude, come away!

The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch 30  
 But we will ship him hence; and this vile deed  
 We must with all our majesty and skill  
 Both countenance and excuse.—Ho, Guildenstern!

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

Friends both, go join you with some further aid.  
 Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain, 35  
 And from his mother's closet hath he dragged him.  
 Go seek him out, speak fair, and bring the body  
 Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

*⟨Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exit.⟩*

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends  
 And let them know both what we mean to do 40  
 And what's untimely done. [...] ]

[Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter,  
 As level as the cannon to his blank  
 Transports his poisoned shot, may miss our name  
 And hit the woundless air.] O, come away! 45  
 My soul is full of discord and dismay.

*They exit.*

**Act 4 Scene 2**  
*⟨Enter Hamlet.⟩*

HAMLET Safely stowed.

⟨GENTLEMEN, *within* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!⟩

HAMLET But soft, what noise? Who calls on Hamlet?  
 O, here they come.

*Enter Rosencrantz, ⟨Guildestern,⟩ and others.*

ROSENCRANTZ

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body? 5

HAMLET

⟨Compounded⟩ it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

ROSENCRANTZ

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence  
 And bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ Believe what? 10

HAMLET That I can keep your counsel and not mine  
 own. Besides, to be demanded of a sponge, what  
 replication should be made by the son of a king?

ROSENCRANTZ Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's countenance, 15  
 his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the  
 King best service in the end. He keeps them like ⟨an  
 ape⟩ an apple in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed,  
 to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have  
 gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you 20  
 shall be dry again.

ROSENCRANTZ I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET I am glad of it. A knavish speech sleeps in a  
 foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you must tell us where the 25  
 body is and go with us to the King.

HAMLET The body is with the King, but the King is not  
 with the body. The King is a thing—

GUILDENSTERN A “thing,” my lord?

HAMLET Of nothing. Bring me to him. (Hide fox, and  
all after!)

30

*They exit.*

### Act 4 Scene 3

*Enter King and two or three.*

KING

I have sent to seek him and to find the body.  
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!  
Yet must not we put the strong law on him.  
He's loved of the distracted multitude,  
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;  
And, where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weighed,  
But never the offense. To bear all smooth and even,  
This sudden sending him away must seem  
Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are relieved  
Or not at all.

5

10

*Enter Rosencrantz.*

How now, what hath befallen?

ROSENCRANTZ

Where the dead body is bestowed, my lord,  
We cannot get from him.

KING

But where is he? 15

ROSENCRANTZ

Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING

Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ

Ho! Bring in the lord.

*They enter with Hamlet.*

KING Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET At supper.

20

KING At supper where?

HAMLET Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A  
certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at  
him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet. We  
fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves 25  
for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar is  
but variable service—two dishes but to one table.  
That's the end.

[KING Alas, alas!

HAMLET A man may fish with the worm that hath eat 30  
of a king and eat of the fish that hath fed of that  
worm.]

KING What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET Nothing but to show you how a king may go a  
progress through the guts of a beggar. 35

KING Where is Polonius?

HAMLET In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger  
find him not there, seek him i' th' other  
place yourself. But if, indeed, you find him not  
within this month, you shall nose him as you go up 40  
the stairs into the lobby.

KING, *to Attendants.* Go, seek him there.

HAMLET He will stay till you come. *Attendants exit.*

KING  
Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety  
(Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve 45  
For that which thou hast done) must send thee  
hence  
(With fiery quickness.) Therefore prepare thyself.  
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,  
Th' associates tend, and everything is bent 50  
For England.

HAMLET For England?

KING Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET Good.

KING  
So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes. 55

HAMLET

I see a cherub that sees them. But come, for  
 England.  
 Farewell, dear mother.

KING

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET

My mother. Father and mother is man and wife, 60  
 Man and wife is one flesh, *<and>* so, my mother.—  
 Come, for England. *He exits.*

KING

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard.  
 Delay it not. I'll have him hence tonight.  
 Away, for everything is sealed and done 65  
 That else leans on th' affair. Pray you, make haste.

*['All but the King exit.']*

And England, if my love thou hold'st at aught  
 (As my great power thereof may give thee sense,  
 Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red  
 After the Danish sword, and thy free awe 70  
 Pays homage to us), thou mayst not coldly set  
 Our sovereign process, which imports at full,  
 By letters congruing to that effect,  
 The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England,  
 For like the hectic in my blood he rages, 75  
 And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,  
 Howe'er my haps, my joys will ne'er begin.

*He exits.*

#### Act 4 Scene 4

*Enter Fortinbras with his army over the stage.*

FORTINBRAS

Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king.  
 Tell him that by his license Fortinbras  
 Craves the conveyance of a promised march  
 Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.

If that his Majesty would aught with us,  
We shall express our duty in his eye;  
And let him know so. 5

CAPTAIN I will do 't, my lord.

FORTINBRAS Go softly on. *「All but the Captain exit.」*

*「Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, 「Guildenstern,」 and others.」*

HAMLET Good sir, whose powers are these? 10

CAPTAIN They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET How purposed, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET Who commands them, sir?

CAPTAIN  
The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras. 15

HAMLET  
Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,  
Or for some frontier?

CAPTAIN  
Truly to speak, and with no addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That hath in it no profit but the name.  
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it; 20  
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

HAMLET  
Why, then, the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN  
Yes, it is already garrisoned. 25

HAMLET  
Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats  
Will not debate the question of this straw.  
This is th' impostume of much wealth and peace,  
That inward breaks and shows no cause without  
Why the man dies.—I humbly thank you, sir. 30

CAPTAIN God be wi' you, sir. *「He exits.」*

ROSENCRANTZ Will 't please you go, my lord?



## HAMLET

I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.

*[All but Hamlet exit.]*

How all occasions do inform against me  
And spur my dull revenge. What is a man 35

If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

Sure He that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not 40

That capability and godlike reason  
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be

Bestial oblivion or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on th' event

(A thought which, quartered, hath but one part  
wisdom 45

And ever three parts coward), I do not know  
Why yet I live to say "This thing's to do,"

Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
To do 't. Examples gross as Earth exhort me: 50

Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,

Whose spirit with divine ambition puffed  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,

Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare, 55

Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,

But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honor's at the stake. How stand I, then,

That have a father killed, a mother stained,  
Excitements of my reason and my blood, 60

And let all sleep, while to my shame I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men

That for a fantasy and trick of fame  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot 65

Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,

Which is not tomb enough and continent  
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth  
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!

*He exits.]*

### Act 4 Scene 5

*Enter Horatio, Queen, and a Gentleman.*

QUEEN I will not speak with her.

GENTLEMAN She is importunate,  
Indeed distract; her mood will needs be pitied.

QUEEN What would she have?

GENTLEMAN

She speaks much of her father, says she hears 5  
There's tricks i' th' world, and hems, and beats her  
heart,  
Spurns enviously at straws, speaks things in doubt  
That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,  
Yet the unshapèd use of it doth move 10  
The hearers to collection. They aim at it  
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;  
Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield  
them,  
Indeed would make one think there might be 15  
thought,  
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

HORATIO

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may  
strew  
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds. 20

QUEEN Let her come in. *Gentleman exits.*

*Aside.* To my sick soul (as sin's true nature is),  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt. 25

⟨*Enter Ophelia distracted.*⟩

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN How now, Ophelia?

OPHELIA *「sings」*

*How should I your true love know  
From another one?  
By his cockle hat and staff  
And his sandal shoon.*

30

QUEEN

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA Say you? Nay, pray you, mark.

*「Sings.」 He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.*

35

Oh, ho!

QUEEN Nay, but Ophelia—

OPHELIA Pray you, mark.

40

*「Sings.」 White his shroud as the mountain snow—  
Enter King.*

QUEEN Alas, look here, my lord.

OPHELIA *「sings」*

*Larded all with sweet flowers;  
Which bewept to the ground did not go  
With true-love showers.*

45

KING How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA Well, God dild you. They say the owl was a  
baker's daughter. Lord, we know what we are but  
know not what we may be. God be at your table.

KING Conceit upon her father.

50

OPHELIA Pray let's have no words of this, but when  
they ask you what it means, say you this:

「Sings.」 *Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
 All in the morning betime,  
 And I a maid at your window,  
 To be your Valentine.* 55  
*Then up he rose and donned his clothes  
 And dugged the chamber door,  
 Let in the maid, that out a maid  
 Never departed more.* 60

KING Pretty Ophelia—

OPHELIA

Indeed, without an oath, I'll make an end on 't:  
 「Sings.」 *By Gis and by Saint Charity,  
 Alack and fie for shame,  
 Young men will do 't, if they come to 't;  
 By Cock, they are to blame.* 65  
*Quoth she "Before you tumbled me,  
 You promised me to wed."*  
 He answers:  
*"So would I 'a done, by yonder sun,  
 An thou hadst not come to my bed."* 70

KING How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA I hope all will be well. We must be patient,  
 but I cannot choose but weep to think they would  
 lay him i' th' cold ground. My brother shall know of 75  
 it. And so I thank you for your good counsel. Come,  
 my coach! Good night, ladies, good night, sweet  
 ladies, good night, good night. *«She exits.»*

KING

Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you.  
 「Horatio exits.」  
 O, this is the poison of deep grief. It springs 80  
 All from her father's death, and now behold!  
 O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
 When sorrows come, they come not single spies,  
 But in battalions: first, her father slain;  
 Next, your son gone, and he most violent author 85  
 Of his own just remove; the people muddled,

Thick, and unwholesome in ⟨their⟩ thoughts and  
whispers  
For good Polonius' death, and we have done but  
greenly 90

In hugger-mugger to inter him; poor Ophelia  
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,  
Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts;  
Last, and as much containing as all these,  
Her brother is in secret come from France, 95

Feeds on ⟨his⟩ wonder, keeps himself in clouds,  
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
With pestilent speeches of his father's death,  
Wherein necessity, of matter beggared,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign 100  
In ear and ear. O, my dear Gertrude, this,  
Like to a murd'ring piece, in many places  
Gives me superfluous death.

*A noise within.*

⟨QUEEN Alack, what noise is this?⟩

KING Attend! 105  
Where is my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

*Enter a Messenger.*

What is the matter?

MESSENGER Save yourself, my lord.  
The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
Eats not the flats with more impiteous haste 110

Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,  
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him "lord,"  
And, as the world were now but to begin,  
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,  
The ratifiers and props of every word, 115  
⟨They⟩ cry "Choose we, Laertes shall be king!"  
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,  
"Laertes shall be king! Laertes king!"

*A noise within.*

QUEEN

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry.  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

120

KING The doors are broke.

*Enter Laertes with others.*

LAERTES

Where is this king?—Sirs, stand you all without.

ALL No, let's come in!

LAERTES I pray you, give me leave.

ALL We will, we will.

125

LAERTES

I thank you. Keep the door. *[Followers exit.]* O, thou  
vile king,  
Give me my father!

QUEEN Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES

That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me  
bastard,  
Cries "cuckold" to my father, brands the harlot  
Even here between the chaste unsmirched brow  
Of my true mother.

130

KING What is the cause, Laertes,

135

That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—  
Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.  
There's such divinity doth hedge a king  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will.—Tell me, Laertes,  
Why thou art thus incensed.—Let him go,  
Gertrude.—  
Speak, man.

140

LAERTES Where is my father?

KING Dead.

145

QUEEN

But not by him.

KING Let him demand his fill.

LAERTES

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with.  
 To hell, allegiance! Vows, to the blackest devil!  
 Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit! 150  
 I dare damnation. To this point I stand,  
 That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
 Let come what comes, only I'll be revenged  
 Most throughly for my father.

KING Who shall stay you? 155

LAERTES My will, not all the world.  
 And for my means, I'll husband them so well  
 They shall go far with little.

KING Good Laertes,  
 If you desire to know the certainty 160  
 Of your dear father, is 't writ in your revenge  
 That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and  
 foe,  
 Winner and loser?

LAERTES None but his enemies.

KING Will you know them, then? 165

LAERTES  
 To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms  
 And, like the kind life-rend'ring pelican,  
 Repast them with my blood.

KING Why, now you speak 170  
 Like a good child and a true gentleman.  
 That I am guiltless of your father's death  
 And am most sensibly in grief for it,  
 It shall as level to your judgment 'pear  
 As day does to your eye. 175

*A noise within.* "Let her come in!"

LAERTES How now, what noise is that?

*Enter Ophelia.*

O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt  
 Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid with weight 180  
 Till our scale turn the beam! O rose of May,  
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!  
 O heavens, is 't possible a young maid's wits  
 Should be as mortal as *an old* man's life?  
*Nature is fine in love, and, where 'tis fine,* 185  
 It sends some precious instance of itself  
 After the thing it loves.)

OPHELIA *sings*  
*They bore him barefaced on the bier,*  
*Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny,*  
*And in his grave rained many a tear.* 190  
 Fare you well, my dove.

LAERTES  
 Hadst thou thy wits and didst persuade revenge,  
 It could not move thus.

OPHELIA You must sing "A-down a-down"—and you 195  
 "Call him a-down-a."—O, how the wheel becomes  
 it! It is the false steward that stole his master's  
 daughter.

LAERTES This nothing's more than matter.

OPHELIA There's rosemary, that's for remembrance.  
 Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies, 200  
 that's for thoughts.

LAERTES A document in madness: thoughts and remembrance  
 fitted.

OPHELIA There's fennel for you, and columbines.  
 There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we 205  
 may call it herb of grace o' Sundays. You *must* wear  
 your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would  
 give you some violets, but they withered all when  
 my father died. They say he made a good end.  
*Sings.* *For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.* 210

LAERTES  
 Thought and afflictions, passion, hell itself  
 She turns to favor and to prettiness.



OPHELIA *「sings」**And will he not come again?**And will he not come again?**No, no, he is dead.**Go to thy deathbed.**He never will come again.*

215

*His beard was as white as snow,**«All» flaxen was his poll.**He is gone, he is gone,**And we cast away moan.**God 'a mercy on his soul.*

220

And of all Christians' souls, «I pray God.» God be wi'  
you. *«She exits.»*

LAERTES Do you «see» this, O God?

225

KING

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,

Or you deny me right. Go but apart,

Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,

And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.

If by direct or by collateral hand

230

They find us touched, we will our kingdom give,

Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,

To you in satisfaction; but if not,

Be you content to lend your patience to us,

And we shall jointly labor with your soul

235

To give it due content.

LAERTES Let this be so.

His means of death, his obscure funeral

(No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,

No noble rite nor formal ostentation)

240

Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,

That I must call 't in question.

KING So you shall,

And where th' offense is, let the great ax fall.

I pray you, go with me.

245

*They exit.*

**Act 4 Scene 6**  
*Enter Horatio and others.*

HORATIO What are they that would speak with me?

GENTLEMAN Seafaring men, sir. They say they have letters for you.

HORATIO Let them come in. *「Gentleman exits.」* I do not know from what part of the world I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet. 5

*Enter Sailors.*

SAILOR God bless you, sir.

HORATIO Let Him bless thee too.

SAILOR He shall, sir, *⟨an 't⟩* please Him. There's a letter for you, sir. It came from th' ambassador that was bound for England—if your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is. *「He hands Horatio a letter.」* 10

HORATIO *⟨reads the letter⟩* Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this, give these fellows some means to the King. They have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor, and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant, they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy, but they knew what they did: I am to do a *⟨good⟩* turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too light for the *⟨bore⟩* of the matter. These good fellows will bring thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course for England; of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. 15  
20  
25

*⟨He⟩ that thou knowest thine, 30  
Hamlet.*

Come, I will *give* you way for these your letters  
 And do 't the speedier that you may direct me  
 To him from whom you brought them.

*They exit.*

**Act 4 Scene 7**  
*Enter King and Laertes.*

KING

Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,  
 And you must put me in your heart for friend,  
 Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
 That he which hath your noble father slain  
 Pursued my life. 5

LAERTES                    It well appears. But tell me

Why you *proceeded* not against these feats,  
 So criminal and so capital in nature,  
 As by your safety, greatness, wisdom, all things else,  
 You mainly were stirred up. 10

KING    O, for two special reasons,

Which may to you perhaps seem much unsinewed,  
 But yet to me they're strong. The Queen his mother  
 Lives almost by his looks, and for myself  
 (My virtue or my plague, be it either which), 15  
 She is so *conjunctive* to my life and soul  
 That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,  
 I could not but by her. The other motive  
 Why to a public count I might not go  
 Is the great love the general gender bear him, 20  
 Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
 Work like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
 Convert his gyves to graces, so that my arrows,  
 Too slightly timbered for so *loud a wind,*  
 Would have reverted to my bow again, 25  
 But not where I have aimed them.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost,

A sister driven into desp'rate terms,  
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,  
Stood challenger on mount of all the age  
For her perfections. But my revenge will come. 30

KING

Break not your sleeps for that. You must not think  
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
That we can let our beard be shook with danger  
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more. 35  
I loved your father, and we love ourself,  
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

*Enter a Messenger with letters.*

⟨How now? What news?

MESSENGER                      Letters, my lord, from  
Hamlet.⟩ 40  
These to your Majesty, this to the Queen.

KING    From Hamlet? Who brought them?

MESSENGER

Sailors, my lord, they say. I saw them not.  
They were given me by Claudio. He received them  
[Of him that brought them.] 45

KING                      Laertes, you shall hear  
them.—

Leave us.                      ⟨*Messenger exits.*⟩  
[*Reads.*] *High and mighty, you shall know I am set  
naked on your kingdom. Tomorrow shall I beg leave to  
see your kingly eyes, when I shall (first asking ⟨your⟩  
pardon) thereunto recount the occasion of my sudden  
⟨and more strange⟩ return. ⟨Hamlet.⟩*  
What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?  
Or is it some abuse and no such thing? 50  
55

LAERTES    Know you the hand?

KING    'Tis Hamlet's character. "Naked"—  
And in a postscript here, he says "alone."  
Can you ⟨advise⟩ me?

LAERTES

I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come. 60  
 It warms the very sickness in my heart  
 That I *shall* live and tell him to his teeth  
 “Thus didst thou.”

KING

If it be so, Laertes

(As how should it be so? how otherwise?), 65  
 Will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my lord,

So you will not o’errule me to a peace.

KING

To thine own peace. If he be now returned,  
 As *checking* at his voyage, and that he means 70  
 No more to undertake it, I will work him  
 To an exploit, now ripe in my device,  
 Under the which he shall not choose but fall;  
 And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,  
 But even his mother shall uncharge the practice 75  
 And call it accident.

[LAERTES My lord, I will be ruled,  
 The rather if you could devise it so  
 That I might be the organ.

KING

It falls right.

You have been talked of since your travel much,  
 And that in Hamlet’s hearing, for a quality  
 Wherein they say you shine. Your sum of parts  
 Did not together pluck such envy from him  
 As did that one, and that, in my regard,  
 Of the unworthiest siege. 80 85

LAERTES What part is that, my lord?

KING

A very ribbon in the cap of youth—  
 Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes  
 The light and careless livery that it wears 90  
 Than settled age his sables and his weeds,  
 Importing health and graveness. ] Two months since

Here was a gentleman of Normandy.  
I have seen myself, and served against, the French,  
And they can well on horseback, but this gallant 95  
Had witchcraft in 't. He grew unto his seat,  
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse  
As had he been encorpsed and demi-natured  
With the brave beast. So far he topped my thought  
That I in forgery of shapes and tricks 100  
Come short of what he did.

LAERTES                                  A Norman was 't?

KING     A Norman.

LAERTES  
Upon my life, Lamord.

KING                      The very same.                      105

LAERTES  
I know him well. He is the brooch indeed  
And gem of all the nation.

KING    He made confession of you  
           And gave you such a masterly report  
           For art and exercise in your defense, 110  
           And for your rapier most especial,  
           That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed  
           If one could match you. [The 'scrimers of their  
                                 nation  
           He swore had neither motion, guard, nor eye, 115  
           If you opposed them.] Sir, this report of his  
           Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy  
           That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
           Your sudden coming-o'er, to play with you.  
           Now out of this—

LAERTES                      What out of this, my lord?                      120

KING  
Laertes, was your father dear to you?  
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
A face without a heart?

LAERTES	Why ask you this?	125
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## KING

Not that I think you did not love your father,  
 But that I know love is begun by time  
 And that I see, in passages of proof,  
 Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.  
 [There lives within the very flame of love 130  
 A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it,  
 And nothing is at a like goodness still;  
 For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,  
 Dies in his own too-much. That we would do  
 We should do when we would; for this “would” 135  
 changes  
 And hath abatements and delays as many  
 As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;  
 And then this “should” is like a [spendthrift] sigh,  
 That hurts by easing. But to the quick of th’ ulcer:] 140  
 Hamlet comes back; what would you undertake  
 To show yourself indeed your father’s son  
 More than in words?

LAERTES To cut his throat i’ th’ church.

## KING

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize; 145  
 Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,  
 Will you do this? Keep close within your chamber.  
 Hamlet, returned, shall know you are come home.  
 We’ll put on those shall praise your excellence  
 And set a double varnish on the fame 150  
 The Frenchman gave you; bring you, in fine,  
 together  
 And wager ⟨on⟩ your heads. He, being remiss,  
 Most generous, and free from all contriving,  
 Will not peruse the foils, so that with ease, 155  
 Or with a little shuffling, you may choose  
 A sword unbated, and in a ⟨pass⟩ of practice  
 Requite him for your father.

[illegible]

KING                      Let's further think of this,

170

Weigh what convenience both of time and means  
May fit us to our shape. If this should fail,  
And that our drift look through our bad  
        performance,  
'Twere better not assayed. Therefore this project  
Should have a back or second that might hold  
175  
If this did blast in proof. Soft, let me see.  
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings—  
I ha' t!  
When in your motion you are hot and dry  
(As make your bouts more violent to that end)  
180  
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared  
        him  
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there.—But stay, what  
185  
        noise?

*Enter Queen.*

QUEEN  
One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow. Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

LAERTES      Drowned? O, where?

QUEEN  
There is a willow grows askant the brook 190



That shows his ‹hoar› leaves in the glassy stream.  
 Therewith fantastic garlands did she make  
 Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,  
 That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
 But our cold maids do “dead men’s fingers” call  
 them. 195

There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds  
 Clamb’ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,  
 When down her weedy trophies and herself  
 Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide, 200  
 And mermaid-like awhile they bore her up,  
 Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds,  
 As one incapable of her own distress  
 Or like a creature native and endued  
 Unto that element. But long it could not be 205  
 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
 Pulled the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
 To muddy death.

LAERTES                      Alas, then she is drowned.

QUEEN    Drowned, drowned. 210

LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
 And therefore I forbid my tears. But yet  
 It is our trick; nature her custom holds,  
 Let shame say what it will. When these are gone,  
 The woman will be out.—Adieu, my lord. 215  
 I have a speech o’ fire that fain would blaze,  
 But that this folly drowns it. *He exits.*

KING                              Let’s follow, Gertrude.

How much I had to do to calm his rage!  
 Now fear I this will give it start again. 220  
 Therefore, let’s follow.  
*They exit.*

## Act 5

### Act 5 Scene 1

*Enter [Gravedigger and Another.]*

[GRAVEDIGGER] Is she to be buried in Christian burial,  
when she willfully seeks her own salvation?

OTHER I tell thee she is. Therefore make her grave  
straight. The crowner hath sat on her and finds it  
Christian burial.

5

[GRAVEDIGGER] How can that be, unless she drowned  
herself in her own defense?

OTHER Why, 'tis found so.

[GRAVEDIGGER] It must be *se offendendo*; it cannot be  
else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself  
wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three  
branches—it is to act, to do, to perform. *Argal*, she  
drowned herself wittingly.

10

OTHER Nay, but hear you, goodman delver—

[GRAVEDIGGER] Give me leave. Here lies the water;  
good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to  
this water and drown himself, it is (will he, nill he)  
he goes; mark you that. But if the water come to him  
and drown him, he drowns not himself. *Argal*, he  
that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his  
own life.

15

20

OTHER But is this law?

[GRAVEDIGGER] Ay, marry, is 't—crowner's 'quest law.

OTHER Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been  
a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o'  
Christian burial. 25

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Why, there thou sayst. And the more  
pity that great folk should have count'nance in this  
world to drown or hang themselves more than  
their even-Christian. Come, my spade. There is no  
ancient gentlemen but gard'ners, ditchers, and  
grave-makers. They hold up Adam's profession. 30

OTHER Was he a gentleman?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 He was the first that ever bore arms.

「OTHER Why, he had none. 35

「GRAVEDIGGER」 What, art a heathen? How dost thou  
understand the scripture? The scripture says Adam  
dugged. Could he dig without arms?» I'll put another  
question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the  
purpose, confess thyself— 40

OTHER Go to!

「GRAVEDIGGER」 What is he that builds stronger than  
either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

OTHER The gallows-maker; for that «frame» outlives a  
thousand tenants. 45

「GRAVEDIGGER」 I like thy wit well, in good faith. The  
gallows does well. But how does it well? It does  
well to those that do ill. Now, thou dost ill to say the  
gallows is built stronger than the church. Argal, the  
gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come. 50

OTHER “Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright,  
or a carpenter?”

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

OTHER Marry, now I can tell.

「GRAVEDIGGER」 To 't. 55

OTHER Mass, I cannot tell.

*«Enter Hamlet and Horatio afar off.»*

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Cudgel thy brains no more about it,

for your dull ass will not mend his pace with  
beating. And, when you are asked this question  
next, say “a grave-maker.” The houses he makes 60  
lasts till doomsday. Go, get thee in, and fetch me a  
stoup of liquor.

*「The Other Man exits  
and the Gravedigger digs and sings.」*

*In youth when I did love, did love,  
Methought it was very sweet  
To contract—O—the time for—a—my behove, 65  
O, methought there—a—was nothing—a—meet.*

HAMLET Has this fellow no feeling of his business? He  
sings in grave-making.

HORATIO Custom hath made it in him a property of  
easiness. 70

HAMLET 'Tis e'en so. The hand of little employment  
hath the daintier sense.

*「GRAVEDIGGER」 (sings)*  
*But age with his stealing steps  
Hath clawed me in his clutch,  
And hath shipped me into the land, 75  
As if I had never been such.*  
*「He digs up a skull.」*

HAMLET That skull had a tongue in it and could sing  
once. How the knave jowls it to the ground as if  
'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder!  
This might be the pate of a politician which this ass 80  
now o'erreaches, one that would circumvent God,  
might it not?

HORATIO It might, my lord.

HAMLET Or of a courtier, which could say “Good  
morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, sweet lord?” 85  
This might be my Lord Such-a-one that praised my  
Lord Such-a-one's horse when he went to beg it,  
might it not?

HORATIO Ay, my lord.

HAMLET Why, e'en so. And now my Lady Worm's, 90

chapless and knocked about the mazard with a  
sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, an we had  
the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the  
breeding but to play at loggets with them? Mine  
ache to think on 't. 95

「GRAVEDIGGER」 *sings*

*A pickax and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding sheet,  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.*

「*He digs up more skulls.*」

HAMLET There's another. Why may not that be the 100

skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his  
quillities, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why  
does he suffer this mad knave now to knock him  
about the sconce with a dirty shovel and will not tell  
him of his action of battery? Hum, this fellow might 105  
be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes,  
his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers,  
his recoveries. *Is this the fine of his fines and the  
recovery of his recoveries,* to have his fine pate full  
of fine dirt? Will *his* vouchers vouch him no more 110  
of his purchases, and *double ones too,* than the  
length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very  
conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box,  
and must th' inheritor himself have no more, ha?

HORATIO Not a jot more, my lord. 115

HAMLET Is not parchment made of sheepskins?

HORATIO Ay, my lord, and of calves' skins too.

HAMLET They are sheep and calves which seek out  
assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow.—  
Whose grave's this, sirrah? 120

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Mine, sir.

「*Sings.*」 *O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.*

HAMLET	I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in 't.	
「GRAVEDIGGER」	You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours. For my part, I do not lie in 't, yet it is mine.	125
HAMLET	Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.	130
「GRAVEDIGGER」	'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again from me to you.	
HAMLET	What man dost thou dig it for?	
「GRAVEDIGGER」	For no man, sir.	
HAMLET	What woman then?	135
「GRAVEDIGGER」	For none, neither.	
HAMLET	Who is to be buried in 't?	
「GRAVEDIGGER」	One that was a woman, sir, but, rest her soul, she's dead.	
HAMLET	How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have took note of it: the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe.—How long hast thou been grave-maker?	140 145
「GRAVEDIGGER」	Of <del>all</del> the days i' th' year, I came to 't that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.	
HAMLET	How long is that since?	150
「GRAVEDIGGER」	Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was that very day that young Hamlet was born—he that is mad, and sent into England.	
HAMLET	Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?	
「GRAVEDIGGER」	Why, because he was mad. He shall recover his wits there. Or if he do not, 'tis no great matter there.	155
HAMLET	Why?	
「GRAVEDIGGER」	'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.	160

HAMLET How came he mad?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET How “strangely”?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Faith, e’en with losing his wits.

HAMLET Upon what ground? 165

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Why, here in Denmark. I have been  
sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAMLET How long will a man lie i’ th’ earth ere he rot?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Faith, if he be not rotten before he die  
(as we have many pocky corses 〈nowadays〉 that will  
scarce hold the laying in), he will last you some 170  
eight year or nine year. A tanner will last you nine  
year.

HAMLET Why he more than another?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his 175  
trade that he will keep out water a great while; and  
your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead  
body. Here’s a skull now hath lien you i’ th’ earth  
three-and-twenty years.

HAMLET Whose was it? 180

「GRAVEDIGGER」 A whoreson mad fellow’s it was.  
Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET Nay, I know not.

「GRAVEDIGGER」 A pestilence on him for a mad rogue!  
He poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. 185  
This same skull, sir, was, sir, Yorick’s skull, the  
King’s jester.

HAMLET This?

「GRAVEDIGGER」 E’en that.

HAMLET, 「*taking the skull*」 〈Let me see.〉 Alas, poor 190  
Yorick! I knew him, Horatio—a fellow of infinite  
jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath bore me on his  
back a thousand times, and now how abhorred in  
my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung  
those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. 195  
Where be your gibes now? your gambols? Your

songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to  
set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your  
own grinning? Quite chapfallen? Now get you to my  
lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch  
thick, to this favor she must come. Make her laugh  
at that.—Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing. 200

HORATIO What's that, my lord?

HAMLET Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this  
fashion i' th' earth? 205

HORATIO E'en so.

HAMLET And smelt so? Pah! *He puts the skull down.*

HORATIO E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET To what base uses we may return, Horatio!  
Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of  
Alexander till he find it stopping a bunghole? 210

HORATIO 'Twere to consider too curiously to consider  
so.

HAMLET No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither,  
with modesty enough and likelihood to lead it, as  
thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander  
returneth to dust; the dust is earth; of earth  
we make loam; and why of that loam whereto he  
was converted might they not stop a beer barrel?  
Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay, 215  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe  
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw! 220

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Lords attendant, and the  
corpse of Ophelia, with a Doctor of Divinity.*

But soft, but soft awhile! Here comes the King,  
The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?  
And with such maimèd rites? This doth betoken  
The corse they follow did with desp'rate hand  
Fordo its own life. 'Twas of some estate.  
Couch we awhile and mark. *They step aside.* 225



LAERTES    What ceremony else? 230

HAMLET That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark.

LAERTES     What ceremony else?

DOCTOR

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged  
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful,  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order, 235  
She should in ground unsanctified been lodged  
Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers  
〈Shards,〉 flints, and pebbles should be thrown on  
her.

Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants, 240  
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home  
Of bell and burial.

LAERTES

Must there no more be done?

DOCTOR                      No more be done.

We should profane the service of the dead                      245

To sing a requiem and such rest to her

As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES                                Lay her i' th' earth,  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,                                250  
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be  
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET, 'to Horatio'                      What, the fair Ophelia?

QUEEN    Sweets to the sweet, farewell!  
「*She scatters flowers.*」  
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife; 255  
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,  
And not have strewed thy grave.

LAERTES                                 O, treble woe  
Fall ten times ⟨treble⟩ on that cursèd head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense          260  
Deprived thee of!—Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.  
*⟨Leaps in the grave.⟩*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made  
T' o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus. 265

HAMLET, *「advancing」*  
What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wand'ring stars and makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I, 270  
Hamlet the Dane.

LAERTES, *「coming out of the grave」*  
The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET Thou pray'st not well. *「They grapple.」*  
I prithee take thy fingers from my throat,  
For though I am not splenitive *⟨and⟩* rash, 275  
Yet have I in me something dangerous,  
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.

KING Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN Hamlet! Hamlet!

ALL Gentlemen! 280

HORATIO Good my lord, be quiet.  
*「Hamlet and Laertes are separated.」*

HAMLET  
Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag!

QUEEN O my son, what theme?

HAMLET  
I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers 285  
Could not with all their quantity of love  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

KING O, he is mad, Laertes!

QUEEN For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET 'Swounds, show me what thou 't do. 290  
Woo't weep, woo't fight, woo't fast, woo't tear  
thyself,  
Woo't drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?

I'll do 't. Dost *thou* come here to whine?  
 To outface me with leaping in her grave? 295  
 Be buried quick with her, and so will I.  
 And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw  
 Millions of acres on us, till our ground,  
 Singeing his pate against the burning zone,  
 Make Ossa like a wart. Nay, an *thou* 'lt mouth, 300  
 I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN This is mere madness;  
 And *thus* awhile the fit will work on him.  
 Anon, as patient as the female dove  
 When that her golden couplets are disclosed, 305  
 His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET Hear you, sir,  
 What is the reason that you use me thus?  
 I loved you ever. But it is no matter.  
 Let Hercules himself do what he may, 310  
 The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

*Hamlet exits.*

KING I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.  
*Horatio exits.*

*['To Laertes.']* Strengthen your patience in our last  
 night's speech.  
 We'll put the matter to the present push.— 315  
 Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.—  
 This grave shall have a living monument.  
 An hour of quiet thereby shall we see.  
 Till then in patience our proceeding be.  
*They exit.*

**Act 5 Scene 2**  
*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

HAMLET

So much for this, sir. Now shall you see the other.  
You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO Remember it, my lord!

HAMLET

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep. *(Methought)* I lay 5  
Worse than the mutines in the *(bilboes.)* Rashly—  
And praised be rashness for it: let us know,  
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn  
us 10  
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will—

HORATIO That is most  
certain.

HAMLET Up from my cabin, 15  
My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark  
Groped I to find out them; had my desire,  
Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew  
To mine own room again, making so bold  
(My fears forgetting manners) to unfold 20  
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio,  
A royal knavery—an exact command,  
Larded with many several sorts of reasons  
Importing Denmark's health and England's too,  
With—ho!—such bugs and goblins in my life, 25  
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,  
No, not to stay the grinding of the ax,  
My head should be struck off.

HORATIO Is 't possible?

HAMLET

Here's the commission. Read it at more leisure. 30  
*(Handing him a paper.)*

But wilt thou hear now how I did proceed?

HORATIO I beseech you.

HAMLET

Being thus benetted round with 'villainies,'  
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,  
They had begun the play. I sat me down, 35  
Devised a new commission, wrote it fair—  
I once did hold it, as our statists do,  
A baseness to write fair, and labored much  
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now  
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know 40  
Th' effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET

An earnest conjuration from the King,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
As love between them like the palm might flourish, 45  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear  
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,  
And many suchlike 'ases' of great charge,  
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less, 50  
He should those bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving time allowed.

HORATIO How was this sealed?

HAMLET

Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.  
I had my father's signet in my purse, 55  
Which was the model of that Danish seal;  
Folded the writ up in the form of th' other,  
'Subscribed' it, gave 't th' impression, placed it  
safely,  
The changeling never known. Now, the next day 60  
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent  
Thou knowest already.

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

HAMLET

〈Why, man, they did make love to this employment.〉  
 They are not near my conscience. Their defeat  
 Does by their own insinuation grow.  
 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes  
 Between the pass and fell incensèd points  
 Of mighty opposites.

65

HORATIO     Why, what a king is this! 70

HAMLET

Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon—  
 He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,  
 Popped in between th' election and my hopes,  
 Thrown out his angle for my proper life,  
 And with such cozenage—is 't not perfect  
 conscience 75  
 〈To quit him with this arm? And is 't not to be  
    damned  
 To let this canker of our nature come  
 In further evil? 80

HORATIO

It must be shortly known to him from England  
 What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET

It will be short. The interim's mine,  
 And a man's life's no more than to say "one."  
 But I am very sorry, good Horatio,  
 That to Laertes I forgot myself, 85  
 For by the image of my cause I see  
 The portraiture of his. I'll 'court' his favors.  
 But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me  
 Into a tow'ring passion. 90

HORATIO                      Peace, who comes here?〉

*Enter 〈Osric,〉 a courtier.*

OSRIC     Your lordship is right welcome back to  
 Denmark.

HAMLET	I <i>humbly</i> thank you, sir. <i>Aside to Horatio.</i> Dost know this waterfly?	95
HORATIO,	<i>aside to Hamlet</i> No, my good lord.	
HAMLET,	<i>aside to Horatio</i> Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile. Let a beast be lord of beasts and his crib shall stand at the king's mess. 'Tis a chough, but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.	100
OSRIC	Sweet lord, if your Lordship were at leisure, I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty.	
HAMLET	I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. <i>Put</i> your bonnet to his right use: 'tis for the head.	105
OSRIC	I thank your Lordship; it is very hot.	
HAMLET	No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.	
OSRIC	It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.	110
HAMLET	But yet methinks it is very <i>sultry</i> and hot <i>for</i> my complexion.	
OSRIC	Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere—I cannot tell how. My lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter—	115
HAMLET	I beseech you, remember. <i>He motions to Osrice to put on his hat.</i>	
OSRIC	Nay, good my lord, for my ease, in good faith. <i>[Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes—believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing. Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.</i>	120
HAMLET	Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you, though I know to divide him inventorially would dozy th' arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail. But, in the	125

verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great  
article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness  
as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his  
mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage,  
nothing more. 130

OSRIC Your Lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAMLET The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the  
gentleman in our more rawer breath? 135

OSRIC Sir?

HORATIO Is 't not possible to understand in another  
tongue? You will to 't, sir, really.

HAMLET, *[to Osrice]* What imports the nomination of  
this gentleman? 140

OSRIC Of Laertes?

HORATIO His purse is empty already; all 's golden words  
are spent.

HAMLET Of him, sir. 145

OSRIC I know you are not ignorant—

HAMLET I would you did, sir. Yet, in faith, if you did, it  
would not much approve me. Well, sir?]

OSRIC You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes  
is— 150

[HAMLET I dare not confess that, lest I should compare  
with him in excellence. But to know a man well  
were to know himself.

OSRIC I mean, sir, for *[his]* weapon. But in the imputation  
laid on him by them, in his meed he's  
unfellowed.] 155

HAMLET What's his weapon?

OSRIC Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET That's two of his weapons. But, well—

OSRIC The King, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary  
horses, against the which he has impawned, as I  
take it, six French rapiers and poniards, with their  
assigns, as girdle, *[hangers,]* and so. Three of the  
carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very 160



responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.	165
HAMLET What call you the “carriages”?	
[HORATIO I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done.]	
OSRIC The {carriages,} sir, are the hangers.	170
HAMLET The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry a cannon by our sides. I would it {might} be “hangers” till then. But on. Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages— that’s the French bet against the Danish. Why is this all {“impawned,”} {as} you call it?	175
OSRIC The King, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits. He hath laid on twelve for nine, and it would come to immediate trial if your Lordship would vouchsafe the answer.	180
HAMLET How if I answer no?	
OSRIC I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.	185
HAMLET Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him, an I can. If not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.	190
OSRIC Shall I deliver you {e’en} so?	
HAMLET To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.	
OSRIC I commend my duty to your Lordship.	195
HAMLET Yours. {Osric exits.} {He} does well to commend it himself. There are no tongues else for ’s turn.	
HORATIO This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.	200

HAMLET He did <comply,> sir, with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he (and many more of the same breed that I know the drossy age dotes on) only got the tune of the time, and, out of an habit of encounter, a kind of <yeasty> collection, which carries them through and through the most <fanned> and <winnowed> opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

205

*[Enter a Lord.]*

LORD My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

210

HAMLET I am constant to my purposes. They follow the King's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

215

LORD The King and Queen and all are coming down.

HAMLET In happy time.

LORD The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

220

HAMLET She well instructs me. *[Lord exits.]*

HORATIO You will lose, my lord.

HAMLET I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds; <but> thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart. But it is no matter.

225

HORATIO Nay, good my lord—

HAMLET It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of <gaingiving> as would perhaps trouble a woman.

230

HORATIO If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither and say you are not fit.

HAMLET Not a whit. We defy augury. There is <a> special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be <now,> 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be

235

now; if it be not now, yet it *will* come. The  
readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves  
knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

*A table prepared. Enter Trumpets, Drums, and Officers  
with cushions, King, Queen, Osric, and all the state,  
foils, daggers, flagons of wine, and Laertes.*

KING

Come, Hamlet, come and take this hand from me.  
*He puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

HAMLET, *to Laertes*

Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong; 240  
But pardon 't as you are a gentleman. This presence  
knows,  
And you must needs have heard, how I am punished  
With a sore distraction. What I have done  
That might your nature, honor, and exception 245  
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.  
Was 't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.  
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,  
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,  
Then Hamlet does it not; Hamlet denies it. 250  
Who does it, then? His madness. If 't be so,  
Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged;  
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.  
*Sir, in this audience*  
Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil 255  
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts  
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house  
And hurt my brother.

LAERTES I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive in this case should stir me most 260  
To my revenge; but in my terms of honor  
I stand aloof and will no reconciliation  
Till by some elder masters of known honor  
I have a voice and precedent of peace  
To *keep* my name ungored. But *till* that time 265

I do receive your offered love like love  
And will not wrong it.

HAMLET                      I embrace it freely  
And will this brothers' wager frankly play.—  
Give us the foils. {Come on.} 270

LAERTES                      Come, one for me.

HAMLET  
I'll be your foil, Laertes; in mine ignorance  
Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,  
Stick fiery off indeed.

[illegible]

HAMLET    No, by this hand.

KING  
Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,  
You know the wager?

HAMLET                      Very well, my lord.  
Your Grace has laid the odds o' th' weaker side.

280

KING  
I do not fear it; I have seen you both.  
But, since he is better, we have therefore odds.

LAERTES  
This is too heavy. Let me see another.

HAMLET

This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

OSRIC    Ay, my good lord. 285

⟨*Prepare to play.*⟩

KING  
Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.—  
If Hamlet give the first or second hit  
Or quit in answer of the third exchange,  
Let all the battlements their ordnance fire.  
The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,  
And in the cup an union shall he throw,  
Richer than that which four successive kings  
In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups,

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,  
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,  
 The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,  
 “Now the King drinks to Hamlet.” Come, begin.  
 And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

295

*Trumpets the while.*

HAMLET Come on, sir.

LAERTES Come, my lord.

*⟨They play.⟩*

300

HAMLET One.

LAERTES No.

HAMLET Judgment!

OSRIC A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES Well, again.

305

KING

Stay, give me drink.—Hamlet, this pearl is thine.  
 Here’s to thy health.

*⟨He drinks and then drops the pearl in the cup.⟩**Drum, trumpets, and shot.*

Give him the cup.

HAMLET

I’ll play this bout first. Set it by awhile.

Come. *⟨They play.⟩* Another hit. What say you?

310

LAERTES

*⟨A touch, a touch.⟩* I do confess ’t.

KING

Our son shall win.

QUEEN He’s fat and scant of breath.—

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin; rub thy brows.

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

315

*⟨She lifts the cup.⟩*

HAMLET Good madam.

KING Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN

I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me.

*⟨She drinks.⟩*KING , *⟨aside⟩*

It is the poisoned cup. It is too late.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam—by and by. 320

QUEEN Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES, *to Claudius*

My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING

I do not think 't.

LAERTES, *aside*

And yet it is almost against my conscience.

HAMLET

Come, for the third, Laertes. You do but dally. 325

I pray you pass with your best violence.

I am *afear'd* you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES Say you so? Come on. *Play.*

OSRIC Nothing neither way.

LAERTES Have at you now! 330

*Laertes wounds Hamlet. Then in scuffling they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

KING Part them. They are incensed.

HAMLET Nay, come again.

*The Queen falls.*

OSRIC Look to the Queen there, ho!

HORATIO

They bleed on both sides.—How is it, my lord?

OSRIC How is 't, Laertes? 335

LAERTES

Why as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osrice. *He falls.*

I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

HAMLET

How does the Queen?

KING She swoons to see them bleed.

QUEEN

No, no, the drink, the drink! O, my dear Hamlet! 340

The drink, the drink! I am poisoned. *She dies.*

HAMLET

O villainy! Ho! Let the door be locked. *Osrice exits.*  
Treachery! Seek it out.

## LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet. *Hamlet,* thou art slain.  
 No med'cine in the world can do thee good. 345  
 In thee there is not half an hour's life.  
 The treacherous instrument is in *thy* hand,  
 Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice  
 Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,  
 Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned. 350  
 I can no more. The King, the King's to blame.

## HAMLET

The point envenomed too! Then, venom, to thy  
 work. *Hurts the King.*

ALL Treason, treason!

## KING

O, yet defend me, friends! I am but hurt. 355

## HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, *murd'rous,* damnèd Dane,  
 Drink off this potion. Is *thy union* here?  
*Forcing him to drink the poison.*  
 Follow my mother. *King dies.*

LAERTES He is justly served.

It is a poison tempered by himself. 360  
 Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.  
 Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,  
 Nor thine on me. *Dies.*

## HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it. I follow thee.—  
 I am dead, Horatio.—Wretched queen, adieu.— 365  
 You that look pale and tremble at this chance,  
 That are but mutes or audience to this act,  
 Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, Death,  
 Is strict in his arrest), O, I could tell you—  
 But let it be.—Horatio, I am dead. 370  
 Thou livest; report me and my cause aright  
 To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.  
 Here's yet some liquor left. *He picks up the cup.* 375

HAMLET As thou 'rt a man,  
 Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll ha't.  
 O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,  
 Things standing thus unknown, shall I leave behind  
 me! 380  
 If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
 Absent thee from felicity awhile  
 And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain  
 To tell my story.

*A march afar off and shot within.*  
 What warlike noise is this? 385

*Enter Osric.*

OSRIC  
 Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,  
 To th' ambassadors of England gives  
 This warlike volley.

HAMLET O, I die, Horatio!  
 The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit. 390  
 I cannot live to hear the news from England.  
 But I do prophesy th' election lights  
 On Fortinbras; he has my dying voice.  
 So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,  
 Which have solicited—the rest is silence. 395  
*O, O, O, O!* *Dies.*

HORATIO  
 Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,  
 And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.  
*March within.*  
 Why does the drum come hither?

*Enter Fortinbras with the English Ambassadors with  
 Drum, Colors, and Attendants.*

FORTINBRAS Where is this sight? 400



HORATIO     What is it you would see?  
                  If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

FORTINBRAS

                 This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death,  
                  What feast is toward in thine eternal cell  
                  That thou so many princes at a shot  
                  So bloodily hast struck? 405

AMBASSADOR                     The sight is dismal,  
                  And our affairs from England come too late.  
                  The ears are senseless that should give us hearing  
                  To tell him his commandment is fulfilled, 410  
                  That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
                  Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO                             Not from his  
                  mouth,  
                  Had it th' ability of life to thank you. 415  
                  He never gave commandment for their death.  
                  But since, so jump upon this bloody question,  
                  You from the Polack wars, and you from England,  
                  Are here arrived, give order that these bodies  
                  High on a stage be placed to the view, 420  
                  And let me speak to 'th' yet unknowing world  
                  How these things came about. So shall you hear  
                  Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,  
                  Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,  
                  Of deaths put on by cunning and 'forced' cause, 425  
                  And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
                  Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I  
                  Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS                     Let us haste to hear it  
                  And call the noblest to the audience. 430  
                  For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.  
                  I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,  
                  Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO  
                  Of that I shall have also cause to speak,

And from his mouth whose voice will draw *⟨on⟩* 435  
more.  
But let this same be presently performed  
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more  
mischance  
On plots and errors happen. 440

FORTINBRAS                      Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have proved most royal; and for his passage,  
The soldier's music and the rite of war 445  
Speak loudly for him.  
Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this  
Becomes the field but here shows much amiss.  
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.  
*They exit, ⟨marching, after the which, a peal of  
ordnance are shot off.⟩*