



# The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

## (complete text)

<b>Act I</b> 1. Elsinore. A platform before the Castle. 2. Elsinore. A room of state in the Castle. 3. Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius. 4. Elsinore. The platform before the Castle. 5. Elsinore. The Castle. Another part of the fortifications.	<b>Act II</b> 1. Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius. 2. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.	<b>Act III</b> 1. Elsinore. A room in the Castle. 2. Elsinore. hall in the Castle. 3. A room in the Castle. 4. The Queen's closet.	<b>Act IV</b> 1. Elsinore. A room in the Castle. 2. Elsinore. A passage in the Castle. 3. Elsinore. A room in the Castle. 4. Near Elsinore. 5. Elsinore. A room in the Castle. 6. Elsinore. Another room in the Castle. 7. Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.	<b>Act V</b> 1. Elsinore. A churchyard. 2. Elsinore. A hall in the Castle.
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### Act I, Scene 1

*Elsinore. A platform before the Castle.*

*Enter two Sentinels-[first,] Francisco, [who paces up and down at his post; then] Bernardo, [who approaches him].*

**Bernardo.** Who's there?

**Francisco.** Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

**Bernardo.** Long live the King!

**Francisco.** Bernardo? 5

**Bernardo.** He.

**Francisco.** You come most carefully upon your hour.

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

**Francisco.** For this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart. 10

**Bernardo.** Have you had quiet guard?

**Francisco.** Not a mouse stirring.

**Bernardo.** Well, good night.  
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,  
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste. 15

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus*

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

**Francisco.** I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who is there?

**Horatio.** Friends to this ground.

**Marcellus.** And liegemen to the Dane.

**Francisco.** Give you good night. 20

**Marcellus.** O, farewell, honest soldier.  
Who hath reliev'd you?

**Francisco.** Bernardo hath my place.  
Give you good night. Exit.

**Marcellus.** Holla, Bernardo! 25

**Bernardo.** Say-  
What, is Horatio there ?

**Horatio.** A piece of him.

**Bernardo.** Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

**Marcellus.** What, has this thing appear'd again to-night? 30

**Bernardo.** 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, 35  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,  
That, if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

**Horatio.** Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

**Bernardo.** Sit down awhile, 40  
And let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story,  
What we two nights have seen.

**Horatio.** Well, sit we down,  
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this. 45

**Bernardo.** 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, 50  
The bell then beating one-

*Enter Ghost.*

**Marcellus.** Peace! break thee off! Look where it comes again!

**Bernardo.** In the same figure, like the King that's dead.

**Marcellus.** Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

**Bernardo.** Looks it not like the King? Mark it, Horatio. 55

**Horatio.** Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

**Bernardo.** It would be spoke to.

**Marcellus.** Question it, Horatio.

**Horatio.** What art thou that usurp'st this time of night  
Together with that fair and warlike form 60  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes march? By heaven I charge thee speak!

**Marcellus.** It is offended.

**Bernardo.** See, it stalks away!

**Horatio.** Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee speak! 65

*Exit Ghost.*

**Marcellus.** 'Tis gone and will not answer.

**Bernardo.** How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale.  
Is not this something more than fantasy?  
What think you on't? 70

**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. 75  
Such was the very armour he had on  
When he th' ambitious Norway combated.  
So frown'd he once when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'Tis strange. 80

**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 my opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state. 85

**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; 90  
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-labourer with the day?  
Who is't that can inform me? 95

**Horatio.** That can I.  
At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,  
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride, 100  
Dar'd to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet  
(For so this side of our known world esteem'd him)  
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,

Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands 105  
 Which he stood seiz'd of, to the conqueror;  
 Against the which a moiety competent  
 Was gaged by our king; which had return'd  
 To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
 Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same cov'nant 110  
 And carriage of the article design'd,  
 His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
 Of unimproved mettle hot and full,  
 Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,  
 Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute, 115  
 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 compulsory, those foresaid lands 120  
 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 post-haste and romage in the land.

**Bernardo.** I think it be no other but e'en so. 125  
 Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
 Comes armed 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. 130  
 In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
 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 135  
 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
 And even the like precursor of fierce events,  
 As harbingers preceding still the fates 140  
 And prologue to the omen coming on,  
 Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
 Unto our climature and countrymen.  
*[Enter Ghost again.]*  
 But soft! behold! Lo, where it comes again!  
 I'll cross it, though it blast me.- Stay illusion! 145  
*[Spreads his arms.]*  
 If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
 Speak to me.  
 If there be any good thing to be done,  
 That may to thee do ease, and, grace to me, 150  
 Speak to me.  
 If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
 Which happily foreknowing may avoid,  
 O, speak!  
 Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life 155  
 Extorted treasure in the womb of earth  
 (For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death),  
*[The cock crows.]*  
 Speak of it! Stay, and speak!- Stop it, Marcellus!

**Marcellus.** Shall I strike at it with my partisan? 160

**Horatio.** Do, if it will not stand.

**Bernardo.** 'Tis here!

**Horatio.** 'Tis here!

**Marcellus.** 'Tis gone!

*[Exit Ghost.]*

165

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

**Bernardo.** It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

170

**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.

175

**Marcellus.** It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
Some say that ever, 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The 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 hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

180

185

**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 to-night  
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?  
Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know  
Where we shall find him most conveniently.

190

195

*Exeunt.*

## Act I, Scene 2

*Elsinore. A room of state in the Castle.*

*Flourish. [Enter Claudius, King of Denmark, Gertrude the Queen, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes and his sister Ophelia, [Voltemand, Cornelius,] Lords Attendant.*

**Claudius.** 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  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.

205

Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
 Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, 210  
 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 barr'd  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 215  
 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, 220  
 Colleague'd with this dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bands of law,  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 225  
 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 230  
 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, 235  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To business with the King, more than the scope  
 Of these dilated articles allow. [*Gives a paper.*]  
 Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

**Cornelius.** [*with Voltemand*] In that, and all things, will we show our duty. 240

**Claudius.** We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.  
 [*Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.*]  
 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 245  
 And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, 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. 250  
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

**Laertes.** My dread lord,  
 Your leave and favour to return to France;  
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark  
 To show my duty in your coronation, 255  
 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.

**Claudius.** Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

**Polonius.** He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave 260  
 By laboursome petition, and at last  
 Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent.  
 I do beseech you give him leave to go.

**Claudius.** Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,  
 And thy best graces spend it at thy will!

And my poor glass is broke, and I am dead.  
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son-

265

**Hamlet.** [*aside*] A little more than kin, and less than kind!

**Claudius.** How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

**Hamlet.** Not so, my lord. I am too much i' th' sun.

**Gertrude.** Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

270

Do not for ever with thy veiled lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou know'st 'tis common. All that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

275

**Hamlet.** Ay, madam, it is common.

**Gertrude.** 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 forc'd 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;  
But I have that within which passeth show-  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

280

285

**Claudius.** 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,

290

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

To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere  
In obstinate condolement is a course  
Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief;

295

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and unschool'd;

300

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,  
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 to-day,  
'This must be so.' We pray you throw to earth

305

This unprevailing woe, and think of us

310

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

315

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,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

320

**Gertrude.** 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.

**Claudius.** Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.  
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come. 325  
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet  
Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,  
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day  
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, 330  
Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd 335  
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 340  
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 345  
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!- 350  
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 mourn'd longer) married with my uncle; 355  
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 galled eyes,  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post 360  
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 Bernardo.*

**Horatio.** Hail to your lordship! 365

**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? 370  
Marcellus?

**Marcellus.** My good lord!



**Hamlet.** I am very glad to see you.- *[To Bernardo]* Good even, sir.-  
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

**Horatio.** A truant disposition, good my lord. 375

**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. 380  
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.

**Horatio.** Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon. 385

**Hamlet.** Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd 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!  
My father- methinks I see my father. 390

**Horatio.** O, 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.  
I shall not look upon his like again. 395

**Horatio.** My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

**Hamlet.** Saw? who?

**Horatio.** My lord, the King your father.

**Hamlet.** The King my father?

**Horatio.** Season your admiration for a while 400  
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!

**Horatio.** Two nights together had these gentlemen 405  
(Marcellus and Bernardo) on their watch  
In the dead vast and middle of the night  
Been thus encount'ed. A figure like your father,  
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,  
Appears before them and with solemn march 410  
Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walk'd  
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,  
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they distill'd  
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,  
Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me 415  
In dreadful secrecy impart they did,  
And I with them the third night kept the watch;  
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,  
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,

The apparition comes. I knew your father.  
These hands are not more like.

420

**Hamlet.** But where was this?

**Marcellus.** My lord, upon the platform where we watch'd.

**Hamlet.** Did you not speak to it?

**Horatio.** My lord, I did;  
But answer made it none. Yet once methought  
It lifted up it head and did address  
Itself to motion, like as it would speak;  
But even then the morning cock crew loud,  
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away  
And vanish'd from our sight.

425

430

**Hamlet.** 'Tis very strange.

**Horatio.** As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;  
And we did think it writ down in our duty  
To let you know of it.

435

**Hamlet.** Indeed, indeed, sirs. But this troubles me.  
Hold you the watch to-night?

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* We do, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Arm'd, say you?

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* Arm'd, my lord.

440

**Hamlet.** From top to toe?

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* My lord, from head to foot.

**Hamlet.** Then saw you not his face?

**Horatio.** O, yes, my lord! He wore his beaver up.

**Hamlet.** What, look'd he frowningly.

445

**Horatio.** A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

**Hamlet.** Pale or red?

**Horatio.** Nay, very pale.

**Hamlet.** And fix'd his eyes upon you?

**Horatio.** Most constantly.

450

**Hamlet.** I would I had been there.

**Horatio.** It would have much amaz'd you.

**Hamlet.** Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?

**Horatio.** While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* Longer, longer.

455

**Horatio.** Not when I saw't.

**Hamlet.** His beard was grizzled- no?

**Horatio.** It was, as I have seen it in his life,  
A sable silver'd.

**Hamlet.** I will watch to-night.  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

460

**Horatio.** I warr'nt it will.

**Hamlet.** If it assume my noble father's person,  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape  
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,  
If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,  
Let it be tenable in your silence still;  
And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,  
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.

465

470

**All.** Our duty to your honour.

**Hamlet.** Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.  
*[Exeunt [all but Hamlet].]*  
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.

475

*Exit.*

### Act I, Scene 3

*Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius.*

*Enter Laertes and Ophelia.*

**Laertes.** My necessities are embark'd. Farewell.  
And, sister, as the winds give benefit  
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,  
But let me hear from you.

485

**Ophelia.** Do you doubt that?

**Laertes.** For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,  
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;  
No more.

490

**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,  
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

495

THE VIRTUE OF HIS WILL, BUT YOU MUST FEAR,  
 His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;  
 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 health of this whole state,  
 And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd  
 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  
 May give his saying deed; which is no further  
 Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.  
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs,  
 Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open  
 To his unmask'd 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  
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon.  
 Virtue itself scopes not calumnious strokes.  
 The canker galls the infants of the spring  
 Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,  
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
 Be wary then; best safety lies in fear.  
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

**Ophelia.** I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep  
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,  
 Do not as some ungracious pastors do,  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
 Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads  
 And recks not his own rede.

**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!  
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
 And you are stay'd for. There- my blessing with thee!  
 And these few precepts in thy memory  
 Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
 Nor any unproportion'd 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  
 Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware  
 Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,  
 Bear't that th' opposed may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;  
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
 But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
 And they in France of the best rank and station  
 Are most select and generous, chief in that.

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, 565  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
Farewell. My blessing season this in thee!

**Laertes.** Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

**Polonius.** The time invites you. Go, your servants tend.

**Laertes.** Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well 570  
What I have said to you.

**Ophelia.** 'Tis in my memory lock'd,  
And you yourself shall keep the key of it.

**Laertes.** Farewell. Exit.

**Polonius.** What is't, Ophelia, he hath said to you? 575

**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. 580  
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 honour.  
What is between you? Give me up the truth. 585

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

**Polonius.** Affection? Pooh! You speak like a green girl,  
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.  
Do you believe his tenders, as you call them? 590

**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,  
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,  
Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase, 595  
Running it thus) you'll tender me a fool.

**Ophelia.** My lord, he hath importun'd me with love  
In honourable fashion.

**Polonius.** Ay, fashion you may call it. Go to, go to!

**Ophelia.** And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord, 600  
With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

**Polonius.** Ay, springes to catch woodcocks! I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both 605  
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.

Set your entreatments at a higher rate  
 Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,  
 Believe so much in him, that he is young, 610  
 And with a larger tether may he walk  
 Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,  
 Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,  
 Not of that dye which their investments show, 615  
 But mere implorators of unholy suits,  
 Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,  
 The better to beguile. This is for all:  
 I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth  
 Have you so slander any moment leisure 620  
 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.

*Exeunt.*

## Act I, Scene 4

*Elsinore. The platform before the Castle.*

*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. 630

**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 go off.]*  
 What does this mean, my lord?

**Hamlet.** The King doth wake to-night 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. 635

**Horatio.** Is it a custom? 640

**Hamlet.** Ay, marry, is't;  
 But to my mind, though I am native here  
 And to the manner born, it is a custom  
 More honour'd in the breach than the observance.  
 This heavy-headed revel east and west 645  
 Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations;  
 They clip us drunkards and with swinish phrase  
 Soil our addition; and indeed it takes  
 From our achievements, though perform'd at height,  
 The pith and marrow of our attribute. 650  
 So oft it chances in particular men  
 That, for some vicious mole of nature in them

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, 655  
 Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
 Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens  
 The form of plausive manners, that these men  
 Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
 Being nature's livery, or fortune's star, 660  
 Their 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 e'il  
 Doth all the noble substance often dout To his own scandal. 665

*Enter Ghost.*

**Horatio.** Look, my lord, it comes!

**Hamlet.** Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,  
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell, 670  
 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?  
 Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell 675  
 Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,  
 Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre  
 Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,  
 Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws  
 To cast thee up again. What may this mean 680  
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,  
 Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,  
 Making night hideous, and we fools of nature  
 So horribly to shake our disposition  
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls? 685  
 Say, why is this? wherefore? What should we do?

*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

**Horatio.** It beckons you to go away with it,  
 As if it some impartment did desire  
 To you alone. 690

**Marcellus.** Look with what courteous action  
 It waves you to a more removed ground.  
 But do not go with it!

**Horatio.** No, by no means!

**Hamlet.** It will not speak. Then will I follow it. 695

**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? 700  
 It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

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

705

710

**Hamlet.** It waves me still.  
Go on. I'll follow thee.

**Marcellus.** You shall not go, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Hold off your hands! 715

**Horatio.** Be rul'd. You shall not go.

**Hamlet.** My fate cries out  
And makes each petty artire in this body  
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.  
*[Ghost beckons.]*  
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!-  
I say, away!- Go on. I'll follow thee.

720

*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*

**Horatio.** He waxes desperate with imagination. 725

**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.

**Horatio.** Heaven will direct it.

**Marcellus.** Nay, let's follow him. 730

*Exeunt.*

## Act I, Scene 5

***Elsinore. The Castle. Another part of the  
fortifications.***

*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

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

**Father's Ghost.** Mark me.

**Hamlet.** I will. 735

**Father's Ghost.** My hour is almost come,  
When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames  
Must render up myself.

**Hamlet.** Alas, poor ghost!



**Father's Ghost.** Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing  
To what I shall unfold. 740

**Hamlet.** Speak. I am bound to hear.

**Father's Ghost.** So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

**Hamlet.** What?

**Father's Ghost.** I am thy father's spirit, 745  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purg'd away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison house, 750  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,  
And each particular hair to stand on end 755  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.  
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! 760

**Father's Ghost.** Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

**Hamlet.** Murder?

**Father's 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 765  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

**Father's Ghost.** I find thee apt;  
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed 770  
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
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 forged process of my death 775  
Rankly abus'd. But know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

**Hamlet.** O my prophetic soul!  
My uncle?

**Father's Ghost.** Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, 780  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts-  
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, 785  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
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! 790

But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,  
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
 So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed  
 And prey on garbage. 795  
 But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.  
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
 My custom always of the afternoon,  
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
 With juice of cursed hebona in a vial, 800  
 And in the porches of my ears did pour  
 The leperous 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, 805  
 And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;  
 And a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust 810  
 All my smooth body.  
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
 Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd;  
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
 Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd, 815  
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
 With all my imperfections on my head.

**Hamlet.** O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

**Father's Ghost.** If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be 820  
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
 But, howsoever thou pursuest 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 825  
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once.  
 The glowworm shows the matin to be near  
 And gins to pale his uneffectual fire.  
 Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me. Exit.

**Hamlet.** O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? 830

And shall I couple hell? Hold, hold, my heart!  
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?  
 Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee? 835  
 Yea, from the table of my memory  
 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 840  
 Within the book and volume of my brain,  
 Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!  
 O most pernicious woman!  
 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!  
 My tables! Meet it is I set it down 845  
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;  
 At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. *[Writes.]*  
 So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word:  
 It is 'Adieu, adieu! Remember me.'  
 I have sworn't. 850

**Horatio.** *[within]* My lord, my lord!

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

**Marcellus.** Lord Hamlet!

**Horatio.** Heaven secure him!

**Hamlet.** So be it!

855

**Marcellus.** Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

**Hamlet.** Hillo, ho, ho, boy! Come, bird, come.

**Marcellus.** How is't, my noble lord?

**Horatio.** What news, my lord?

**Marcellus.** O, wonderful!

860

**Horatio.** Good my lord, tell it.

**Hamlet.** No, you will reveal it.

**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?

865

**Marcellus.** *[with Horatio]* Ay, by heaven, my lord.

**Hamlet.** There's neer 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.

870

**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 desires shall point you,  
For every man hath business and desire,  
Such as it is; and for my own poor part,  
Look you, I'll go pray.

875

**Horatio.** These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

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

880

**Horatio.** There's no offence, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,  
And much offence 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.

885

**Horatio.** What is't, my lord? We will.

890

**Hamlet.** Never make known what you have seen to-night.

**Marcellus.** *[with Horatio]* My lord, we will not.

**Hamlet.** Nay, but swear't.

**Horatio.** In faith,  
My lord, not I.

895

**Marcellus.** Nor I, my lord- in faith.

**Hamlet.** Upon my sword.

**Marcellus.** We have sworn, my lord, already.

**Hamlet.** Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

*Ghost cries under the stage.*

**Father's Ghost.** Swear.

**Hamlet.** Aha boy, say'st thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?  
Come on! You hear this fellow in the cellarage.  
Consent to swear.

**Horatio.** Propose the oath, my lord.

905

**Hamlet.** Never to speak of this that you have seen.  
Swear by my sword.

**Father's Ghost.** *[beneath]* Swear.

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

910

**Father's 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."

915

**Horatio.** O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

**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 soe'er I bear myself  
(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on),  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumb'ed thus, or this head-shake,  
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,  
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  
That you know aught of me- this is not to do,  
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,  
Swear.

920

925

930

**Father's Ghost.** [*beneath*] Swear.

935

[*They swear.*]

**Hamlet.** Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! So, gentlemen,  
With all my love I do commend me to you;  
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 cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!  
Nay, come, let's go together.

940

945

*Exeunt.*

## Act II, Scene 1

*Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius.*

*Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.*

**Polonius.** Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

**Reynaldo.** I will, my lord.

**Polonius.** You shall do marvell's wisely, good Reynaldo,  
Before You visit him, to make inquire  
Of his behaviour.

950

**Reynaldo.** My lord, I did intend it.

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

955

960

**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 dishonour him- take heed of that;  
But, sir, such wanton, wild, and usual slips  
As are companions noted and most known  
To youth and liberty.

965

970

**Reynaldo.** As gaming, my lord.

**Polonius.** Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,  
Drabbing. You may go so far.

975

**Reynaldo.** My lord, that would dishonour him

**Reynaldo.** My lord, that would dishonour him.

**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

980

That they may seem the taints of liberty,

The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,

A savageness in unreclaimed blood,

Of general assault.

**Reynaldo.** But, my good lord-

985

**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 warrant.

990

You laying these slight sullies on my son

As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' th' working,

Mark you,

Your party in converse, him you would sound,

Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes

995

The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd

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-

1000

**Reynaldo.** Very good, my lord.

**Polonius.** And then, sir, does 'a this- 'a 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.'

1005

**Polonius.** At 'closes in the consequence'- Ay, marry!

He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman.

I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,

Or then, or then, with such or such; and, as you say,

There was 'a gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;

1010

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 takes this carp of truth;

1015

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?

1020

**Reynaldo.** My lord, I have.

**Polonius.** God b' wi' ye, fare ye well!

**Reynaldo.** Good my lord! *[Going.]*

**Polonius.** Observe his inclination in yourself.

**Reynaldo.** I shall, my lord.

1025

**Polonius.** And let him ply his music.

**Reynaldo.** Well, my lord.

**Polonius.** Farewell!

*[Exit Reynaldo.]*

*[Enter Ophelia.]*

How now, Ophelia? What's the matter?

1030

**Ophelia.** O my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

**Polonius.** With what, i' th' name of God?

**Ophelia.** My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,

Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,

No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,

Ungart'ed, and down-gyved to his ankle;

Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,

And with a look so piteous in purport

As if he had been loosed out of hell

To speak of horrors- he comes before me.

1035

1040

**Polonius.** Mad for thy love?

**Ophelia.** My lord, I do not know,

But truly I do fear it.

**Polonius.** What said he?

1045

**Ophelia.** He took me by the wrist and held me hard;

Then goes he to the length of all his arm,

And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,

He falls to such perusal of my face

As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so.

At last, a little shaking of mine arm,

And thrice his head thus waving up and down,

He rais'd 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 turn'd

He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,

For out o' doors he went without their help

And to the last bended their light on me.

1050

1055

**Polonius.** Come, go with me. I will go seek the King.

This is the very ecstasy of love,

Whose violent property fordoes itself

And leads the will to desperate undertakings

As oft as any passion under heaven

That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.

What, have you given him any hard words of late?

1060

1065

**Ophelia.** No, my good lord; but, as you did command,

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 quoted him. I fear'd he did but trifle

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 vounder sort

1070

1075

To lack discretion. Come, go we to the King.  
 This must be known; which, being kept close, might move  
 More grief to hide than hate to utter love.  
 Come.

1080

*Exeunt.*

## Act II, Scene 2

### *Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

*Flourish. [Enter King and Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern,  
 cum aliis.*

**Claudius.** 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 I call it,  
 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  
 That, being of so young days brought up with him,  
 And since so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour,  
 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  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus  
 That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

1085

1090

1095

1100

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

1105

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

1110

**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.

1115

**Claudius.** Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

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

1120



**Guildestern.** Heavens make our presence and our practices  
Pleasant and helpful to him!

**Gertrude.** Ay, amen!

1125

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildestern, [with some Attendants].*

*Enter Polonius.*

**Polonius.** Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,  
Are joyfully return'd.

**Claudius.** Thou still hast been the father of good news.

1130

**Polonius.** Have I, my lord? Assure you, 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  
As it hath us'd to do- that I have found  
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

1135

**Claudius.** 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.

1140

**Claudius.** Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

*[Exit Polonius.]*

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

**Gertrude.** I doubt it is no other but the main,  
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

1145

**Claudius.** Well, we shall sift him.

*[Enter Polonius, Voltemand, and Cornelius.]*

Welcome, my good friends.

Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

1150

**Voltemand.** Most fair return of greetings and desires.

Upon our first, he sent out to suppress  
His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd  
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,  
But better look'd into, he truly found  
It was against your Highness; whereat griev'd,  
That so his sickness, age, and impotence  
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.  
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee  
And his commission to employ those soldiers,  
So levied as before, against the Polack;  
With an entreaty, herein further shown,  
*[Gives a paper.]*

1155

1160

1165

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.

1170

**Claudius.** It likes us well;  
 And at our more consider'd time we'll read,  
 Answer, and think upon this business. 1175  
 Meantime we thank you for your well-took labour.  
 Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together.  
 Most welcome home! Exeunt Ambassadors.

**Polonius.** This business is well ended. 1180  
 My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
 What majesty should be, what duty is,  
 Why day is day, night is night, and time is time.  
 Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.  
 Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,  
 And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes, 1185  
 I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.  
 Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,  
 What is't but to be nothing else but mad?  
 But let that go.

**Gertrude.** More matter, with less art. 1190

**Polonius.** Madam, I swear I use no art at all.  
 That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;  
 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 1195  
 That we find out the cause of this effect-  
 Or rather say, the cause of this defect,  
 For this effect defective comes by cause.  
 Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.  
 Perpend. 1200  
 I have a daughter (have while she is mine),  
 Who in her duty and obedience, mark,  
 Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.  
 [Reads] the letter.]  
 'To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'- 1205  
 That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase.  
 But you shall hear. Thus:  
 [Reads.]  
 'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.'

**Gertrude.** Came this from Hamlet to her? 1210

**Polonius.** Good madam, stay awhile. I will be faithful. [Reads.]  
 'Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
 Doubt that the sun doth move;  
 Doubt truth to be a liar;  
 But never doubt I love. 1215  
 '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.  
 'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to  
 him, HAMLET.' 1220  
 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.

**Claudius.** But how hath she 1225  
 Receiv'd his love?

**Polonius.** What do you think of me?

**Claudius.** As of a man faithful and honourable.

**Polonius.** I would fain prove so. But what might you think,  
 When I had seen this hot love on the wing 1230  
 (As I perceiv'd 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 play'd the desk or table book,  
 Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb, 1235  
 Or look'd 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, 1240  
 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, repulsed, a short tale to make,  
 Fell into a sadness, then into a fast, 1245  
 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.

**Claudius.** Do you think 'tis this? 1250

**Gertrude.** it may be, very like.

**Polonius.** Hath there been such a time- I would fain know that-  
 That I have Positively said 'Tis so,'  
 When it prov'd otherwise.?

**Claudius.** Not that I know. 1255

**Polonius.** [*points to his head and shoulder*] Take this from this, if this be  
 otherwise.  
 If circumstances lead me, I will find  
 Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed  
 Within the centre.

**Claudius.** How may we try it further? 1260

**Polonius.** You know sometimes he walks for hours together  
 Here in the lobby.

**Gertrude.** So he does indeed.

**Polonius.** At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.  
 Be you and I behind an arras then. 1265  
 Mark the encounter. If he love her not,  
 And he not from his reason fall'n thereon  
 Let me be no assistant for a state,  
 But keep a farm and carters.

**Claudius.** We will try it. 1270

*Enter Hamlet, reading on a book.*

**Gertrude.** But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

**Polonius.** Away, I do beseech you, both away  
 I'll board him presently. O, give me leave.  
 [*Exeunt King and Queen, [with Attendants].*] 1275  
 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.

**Polonius.** Not I, my lord.

1280

**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  
pick'd out of ten thousand.

**Polonius.** That's very true, my lord.

1285

**Hamlet.** For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god  
kissing carrion- Have you a daughter?

**Polonius.** I have, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but not  
as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't.

1290

**Polonius.** *[aside]* 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, far gone! And truly in my youth I suff'ered much extremity  
for love- very near this. I'll speak to him again.- What do you  
read, my lord?

1295

**Hamlet.** Words, words, words.

**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 grey 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 you yourself, sir,  
should be old as I am if, like a crab, you could go backward.

1300

1305

**Polonius.** *[aside]* Though this be madness, yet there is a method in't.-  
Will You walk out of the air, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Into my grave?

**Polonius.** Indeed, that is out o' th' air. *[Aside]* How pregnant sometimes  
his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which  
reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I  
will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between  
him and my daughter.- My honourable lord, I will most humbly take  
my leave of you.

1310

1315

**Hamlet.** You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more  
willingly part withal- except my life, except my life, except my  
life,

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

**Polonius.** Fare you well, my lord.

**Polonius.** I am you well, my lord.

1320

**Hamlet.** These tedious old fools!

**Polonius.** You go to seek the Lord Hamlet. There he is.

**Rosencrantz.** *[to Polonius]* God save you, sir!

*Exit [Polonius].*

**Guildestern.** My honour'd lord!

1325

**Rosencrantz.** My most dear lord!

**Hamlet.** My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildestern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

**Rosencrantz.** As the indifferent children of the earth.

**Guildestern.** Happy in that we are not over-happy.  
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.

1330

**Hamlet.** Nor the soles of her shoe?

**Rosencrantz.** Neither, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favours?

1335

**Guildestern.** 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 that the world's grown honest.

**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?

1340

**Guildestern.** Prison, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Denmark's a prison.

1345

**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.

**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.

1350

**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.

1355

**Guildestern.** 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. 1360

**Hamlet.** Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to th' court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

**Rosencrantz.** [*with 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? 1365

**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? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come! Nay, speak. 1370

**Guildenstern.** What should we say, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Why, anything- but to th' purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good King and Queen have sent for you. 1375

**Rosencrantz.** To what end, my lord?

**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 could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no. 1380

**Rosencrantz.** [*aside to Guildenstern*] What say you? 1385

**Hamlet.** [*aside*] Nay then, I have an eye of you.- If you love me, hold not off.

**Guildenstern.** My lord, we were sent for.

**Hamlet.** I will tell you why. So shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moults 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 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 no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. 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 woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. 1390  
1395  
1400

**Rosencrantz.** My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

**Hamlet.** Why did you laugh then, when I said 'Man delights not me'? 1405

**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.

**Hamlet.** He that plays the king shall be welcome- his Majesty shall have tribute of 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 whose lungs are tickle o' th' sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they? 1410 1415

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

**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. 1420

**Hamlet.** Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? Are they so follow'd?

**Rosencrantz.** No indeed are they not.

**Hamlet.** How comes it? Do they grow rusty? 1425

**Rosencrantz.** Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question and are most tyrannically clapp'd for't. These are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goosequills and dare scarce come thither. 1430

**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. 1435

**Rosencrantz.** Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre 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. 1440

**Hamlet.** Is't possible?

**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. 1445

**Hamlet.** It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows 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. 1450

*Flourish for the Players.*

**Guildestern.** There are the players.

**Hamlet.** Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come! 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 deceiv'd. 1455

**Guildestern.** 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. 1460

*Enter Polonius.*

**Polonius.** Well be with you, gentlemen!

**Hamlet.** Hark you, Guildestern- and you too- at each ear a hearer! That great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts. 1465

**Rosencrantz.** Happily he's 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 players. Mark it.- You say right, sir; a Monday morning; twas so indeed. 1470

**Polonius.** My lord, I have news to tell you.

**Hamlet.** My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome-

**Polonius.** The actors are come hither, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Buzz, buzz!

**Polonius.** Upon my honour- 1475

**Hamlet.** Then came each actor on his ass-

**Polonius.** The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-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, these are the only men. 1480

**Hamlet.** O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

**Polonius.** What treasure had he, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Why,  
'One fair daughter, and no more,  
The which he loved passing well.' 1485

**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. 1490



**Hamlet.** Nay, that follows not.

**Polonius.** What follows then, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Why,

'As by lot, God wot,' 1495  
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 four or five Players.]* 1500

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all.- I am glad to see thee  
well.- Welcome, good friends.- O, my old friend? Why, thy face is  
valanc'd since I saw thee last. Com'st' thou to' beard me in  
Denmark?- What, my young lady and mistress? By'r Lady, your  
ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the 1505

altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of  
uncurrent gold, be not crack'd 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 quality. Come, a passionate speech. 1510

**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 the play, I remember, pleas'd  
not the million, 'twas caviary to the general; but it was (as I  
receiv'd it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in 1515  
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 were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury,  
nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of

affectation; but call'd it an honest method, as wholesome as 1520  
sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in't  
I chiefly lov'd. 'Twas AEneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it  
especially where 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-' 1525

'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 couched in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd 1530  
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot  
Now is be total gules, horridly trick'd  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,

That lend a tyrannous and a damned light 1535  
To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you. 1540

**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,  
Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd, 1545  
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide;  
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword

But when the mind and hand of his ten sword  
 Th' unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,  
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top  
 Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash **1550**  
 Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo! his sword,  
 Which was declining on the milky head  
 Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air to stick.  
 So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,  
 And, like a neutral to his will and matter, **1555**  
 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  
 As hush as death- anon the dreadful thunder **1560**  
 Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
 Aroused vengeance sets him new awork;  
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
 On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,  
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword **1565**  
 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,  
 And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven, **1570**  
 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 he sleeps. Say on; come to  
 Hecuba. **1575**

**First Player.** 'But who, O who, had seen the mobled queen-'

**Hamlet.** 'The mobled queen'?

**Polonius.** That's good! 'Mobled queen' is good.

**First Player.** 'Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames  
 With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head **1580**  
 Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,  
 About her lank and all o'erteemed loins,  
 A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up-  
 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd  
 'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have pronounc'd. **1585**  
 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 clamour that she made  
 (Unless things mortal move them not at all) **1590**  
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven  
 And passion in the gods.'

**Polonius.** Look, whe'r he has not turn'd his colour, and has tears in's  
 eyes. Prithee no more!

**Hamlet.** 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.- **1595**  
 Good my lord, will you see the players well bestow'd? Do you  
 hear? Let them be well us'd; 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.

**Polonius.** My lord, I will use them according to their desert. **1600**

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

**Polonius.** Come, sirs.

1605

**Hamlet.** Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play to-morrow.

*[Exeunt Polonius and Players [except the First].]*

Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play 'The Murther of Gonzago'?

**First Player.** Ay, my lord.

1610

**Hamlet.** We'll ha't to-morrow 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.

**Hamlet.** Very well. Follow that lord- and look you mock him not.

1615

*[Exit First Player.]*

My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

**Rosencrantz.** Good my lord!

**Hamlet.** Ay, so, God b' wi' ye!

1620

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

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,

1625

Could force his soul so to his own conceit

That, from her working, all his visage wann'd,

Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting

With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!

1630

For Hecuba!

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

1635

And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;

Make mad the guilty and appal the free,

Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed

The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,

1640

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak

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

And can say nothing! No, not for a king,

Upon whose property and most dear life

A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?

1645

Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?

Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?

Tweaks me by th' 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

1650

But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall

To make oppression bitter, or ere this

I should have fatted all the region kites

With this slave's offal. Bloody bawdy villain!

Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!

1655

O, vengeance!

Why what an ass am I! This is most brave

why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
 That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must (like a whore) unpack my heart with words 1660  
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,  
 A scullion!  
 Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! Hum, I have heard  
 That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene 1665  
 Been struck so to the soul that presently  
 They have proclaim'd 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 1670  
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;  
 I'll tent him to the quick. If he but 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 1675  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
 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. Exit. 1680

### Act III, Scene 1

#### *Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

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

**Claudius.** And can you by no drift of circumstance  
 Get from him why he puts on this confusion,  
 Grating so harshly all his days of quiet 1685  
 With turbulent and dangerous lunacy?

**Rosencrantz.** He does confess he feels himself distracted,  
 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 1690  
 When we would bring him on to some confession  
 Of his true state.

**Gertrude.** Did he receive you well?

**Rosencrantz.** Most like a gentleman.

**Guildenstern.** But with much forcing of his disposition. 1695

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

**Gertrude.** Did you assay him  
 To any pastime?

**Rosencrantz.** Madam, it so fell out that certain players 1700

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,  
And, as I think, they have already order  
This night to play before him. 1705

**Polonius.** 'Tis most true;  
And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties  
To hear and see the matter.

**Claudius.** With all my heart, and it doth much content me  
To hear him so inclin'd. 1710  
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge  
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

**Rosencrantz.** We shall, my lord.

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

**Claudius.** Sweet Gertrude, leave us too; 1715  
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,  
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here  
Affront Ophelia.  
Her father and myself (lawful espials)  
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen, 1720  
We may of their encounter frankly judge  
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,  
If't be th' affliction of his love, or no,  
That thus he suffers for.

**Gertrude.** I shall obey you; 1725  
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 honours. 1730

**Ophelia.** Madam, I wish it may.

*[Exit Queen.]*

**Polonius.** Ophelia, walk you here.- Gracious, so please you,  
We will bestow ourselves.- *[To Ophelia]* Read on this book,  
That show of such an exercise may colour 1735  
Your loneliness.- We are oft to blame in this,  
'Tis too much prov'd, that with devotion's visage  
And pious action we do sugar o'er  
The Devil himself.

**Claudius.** *[aside]* O, 'tis too true! 1740  
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  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burthen! 1745

**Polonius.** I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

*Exeunt King and Polonius].*

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** To be, or not to be- that is the question:  
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer 1750  
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 1755  
 That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation  
 Devoutly to be wish'd. 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, 1760  
 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 despis'd love, the law's delay, 1765  
 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 these fardels bear,  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life, 1770  
 But that the dread of something after death-  
 The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns- puzzles the will,  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of? 1775  
 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 pith and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry 1780  
 And lose the name of action.- Soft you now!  
 The fair Ophelia!- Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins rememb'ed.

**Ophelia.** Good my lord,  
 How does your honour for this many a day? 1785

**Hamlet.** I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

**Ophelia.** My lord, I have remembrances of yours  
 That I have longed long to re-deliver.  
 I pray you, now receive them.

**Hamlet.** No, not I! 1790  
 I never gave you aught.

**Ophelia.** My honour'd lord, you know right well you did,  
 And with them words of so sweet breath compos'd  
 As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,  
 Take these again; for to the noble mind 1795  
 Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.  
 There, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Ha, ha! Are you honest?

**Ophelia.** My lord?

**Hamlet.** Are you fair? 1800

**Ophelia.** What means your lordship?

**Hamlet.** That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no  
 discourse to your beauty.

**Ophelia.** Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

**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. 1805

**Ophelia.** Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

**Hamlet.** You should not have believ'd me; for virtue cannot so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not. 1810

**Ophelia.** I was the more deceived.

**Hamlet.** Get thee to 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 offences 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 all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father? 1815

**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. 1820

**Ophelia.** O, help him, you sweet heavens!

**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. Go, 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. 1825

**Ophelia.** O 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, you 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 marriages. Those that are married already- all but one- shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. Exit. 1830

**Ophelia.** O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword,  
Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
Th' observ'd of all observers- quite, quite down! 1845  
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;  
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me 1850  
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

*Enter King and Polonius.*

**Claudius.** Love? his affections do not that way tend;

Nor what he spake, though it lack'd 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  
 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,  
 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?

1855

1860

1865

**Polonius.** It shall do well. But yet do I believe  
 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  
 Let his queen mother all alone entreat him  
 To show his grief. Let her be round with him;  
 And I'll be plac'd so please you, in the ear  
 Of all their conference. If she find him not,  
 To England send him; or confine him where  
 Your wisdom best shall think.

1870

1875

**Claudius.** It shall be so.  
 Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. Exeunt.

1880

## Act III, Scene 2

### *Elsinore. hall in the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet and three of the Players.*

**Hamlet.** Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you,  
 trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our  
 players do, I had as live the town crier spoke my lines. Nor do  
 not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all  
 gently; 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 cars of the groundlings, who  
 (for the most part) are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb  
 shows and noise. I would have such a fellow whipp'd for o'erdoing  
 Termagant. It out-herods Herod. Pray you avoid it.

1885

1890

**First Player.** I warrant your honour.

1895

**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 overdone 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

1900



form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though  
 it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious  
 grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance  
 o'erweigh a whole theatre 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 the 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.

1905

1910

**First Player.** I hope we have reform'd 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 mean time some necessary  
 question of the play be then to be considered. That's villanous  
 and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go  
 make you ready.  
*[Exeunt Players.]*  
*[Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.]*  
 How now, my lord? Will the King hear this piece of work?

1915

1920

**Polonius.** And the Queen too, and that presently.

**Hamlet.** Bid the players make haste, *[Exit Polonius.]* Will you two  
 help to hasten them?

1925

**Rosencrantz.** *[with Guildenstern]* We will, my lord.

*Exeunt they two.*

**Hamlet.** What, ho, Horatio!

*Enter Horatio.*

**Horatio.** Here, sweet lord, at your service.

**Hamlet.** Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man  
 As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

**Horatio.** O, my dear lord!

**Hamlet.** Nay, do not think I flatter;  
 For what advancement may I hope from thee,  
 That no revenue hast but thy good spirits  
 To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?  
 No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,  
 And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee  
 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 seal'd thee for herself. For thou hast been  
 As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers nothing;  
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards  
 Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those  
 Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled  
 That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger  
 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 I  
 There is a play to-night before the King.

1935

1940

1945

1950

One scene or it comes near the circumstance,  
Which I have told thee, of my father's death. 1955  
I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,  
Even with the very comment of thy soul  
Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt  
Do not itself unkennel in one speech, 1960  
It is a damned 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,  
And after we will both our judgments join 1965  
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.  
Sound a flourish. *[Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums. Danish* 1970  
*march. [Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern,*  
*and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.]*

**Hamlet.** *They are coming to the play. I must be idle.*  
*Get you a place.*

**Claudius.** *How fares our cousin Hamlet?* 1975

**Hamlet.** *Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air,*  
*promise-cramm'd. You cannot feed capons so.*

**Claudius.** *I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not*  
*mine.*

**Hamlet.** *No, nor mine now. [To Polonius] My lord, you play'd once* 1980  
*i' th' university, you say?*

**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 kill'd i' th' Capitol; Brutus*  
*kill'd me.* 1985

**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.*

**Gertrude.** *Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.*

**Hamlet.** *No, good mother. Here's metal more attractive.* 1990

**Polonius.** *[to the King] O, ho! do you mark that?*

**Hamlet.** *Lady, shall I lie in your lap?*

*[Sits down at Ophelia's feet.]*

**Ophelia.** *No, my lord.*

**Hamlet.** *I mean, my head upon your lap?* 1995

**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.*

**Ophelia.** *What is, my lord?*

2000

**Hamlet.** *Nothing.*

**Ophelia.** *You are merry, my lord.*

**Hamlet.** *Who, I?*

**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.*

2005

**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; or else  
shall he suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose  
epitaph is 'For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot!'*

2010

*[Hautboys play. The dumb show enters.]*

2015

*Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen 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 lays him down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing  
him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his  
crown, kisses it, pours poison in the sleeper's ears, and  
leaves him. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes  
passionate action. The Poisoner with some three or four Mutes,  
comes in again, seem to condole with her. The dead body is  
carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts; she  
seems harsh and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts  
his love.*

2020

2025

*Exeunt.*

**Ophelia.** *What means this, my lord?*

**Hamlet.** *Marry, this is miching malhecho; it means mischief.*

2030

**Ophelia.** *Belike this show imports the argument of the 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?*

2035

**Hamlet.** *Ay, or any show that you'll show him. Be not you asham'd to  
show, he'll not shame to tell you what it means.*

**Ophelia.** *You are naught, you are naught! I'll mark the play.*

*Pro. For us, and for our tragedy,*

*Here stooping to your clemency,*

*We beg your hearing patiently. [Exit.]*

2040

**Hamlet.** *Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?*

*Hamlet is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring:*

**Ophelia.** 'Tis brief, my lord.

**Hamlet.** As woman's love.

*Enter [two Players as] King and Queen.*

**Player King.** Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round  
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbed 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 comutual in most sacred bands. 2050

**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. 2055  
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,  
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must;  
For women's fear and love holds quantity,  
In neither aught, or in extremity.  
Now what my love is, proof hath made you know;  
And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so. 2060  
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. 2065  
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,  
Honour'd, belov'd, and haply one as kind  
For husband shalt thou-

**Player Queen.** O, confound the rest!  
Such love must needs be treason in my breast. 2070  
When second husband let me be accurst!  
None wed the second but who killed the first.

**Hamlet.** [aside] Wormwood, wormwood!  
Queen. The instances that second marriage move  
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love. 2075  
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. 2080  
Purpose is but the slave to memory,  
Of violent birth, but poor validity;  
Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,  
But fall unshaken when they mellow be.  
Most necessary 'tis that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt. 2085  
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.  
Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;  
Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident. 2090  
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,  
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love. 2095  
The great man down, you mark his favourite flies,

*The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies;  
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend,  
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,  
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,* 2100  
*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;  
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.* 2105  
*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,* 2110  
*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!* 2115

**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.*

**Player Queen.** *Sleep rock thy brain,* 2120

*He sleeps.]*

**Player Queen.** *And never come mischance between us twain!*

*Exit.*

**Hamlet.** *Madam, how like you this play?*

**Gertrude.** *The lady doth protest too much, methinks.* 2125

**Hamlet.** *O, but she'll keep her word.*

**Claudius.** *Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?*

**Hamlet.** *No, no! They do but jest, poison in jest; no offence i' th'  
world.*

**Claudius.** *What do you call the play?* 2130

**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 o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free  
souls, it touches us not. Let the gall'd jade winch; our withers  
are unwrung.* 2135

*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.* 2140

**Ophelia.** *You are keen, my lord, you are keen.*

**Hamlet.** *It would cost you a groaning to take off my edge.*

**Ophelia.** *Still better, and worse.*

**Hamlet.** *So you must take your husbands.- Begin, murtherer. Pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin! Come, the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.* 2145  
*Luc. 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.*

**Hamlet.** *He poisons him i' th' garden for's estate. His name's Gonzago. The story is extant, and written in very choice Italian. You shall see anon how the murtherer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.* 2150

**Ophelia.** *The King rises.*

**Hamlet.** *What, frightened with false fire?*

**Gertrude.** *How fares my lord?*

**Polonius.** *Give o'er the play.* 2155

**Claudius.** *Give me some light! Away!*

**All.** *Lights, lights, lights!*

*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.*

**Hamlet.** *Why, let the stricken deer go weep, The hart ungalled play; For some must watch, while some must sleep: Thus runs the world away. 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 raz'd shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?* 2160 2165

**Horatio.** *Half a share.*

**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.* 2170

**Horatio.** *You might have rhym'd.*

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

**Horatio.** *Very well, my lord.* 2175

**Hamlet.** *Upon the talk of the poisoning?*

**Horatio.** *I did very well note him.*

**Hamlet.** *Aha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders! For if the King like not the comedy, Why then, belike he likes it not, perdy.* 2180

*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-* 2185

**Hamlet.** *Ay, sir, what of him?*

**Guildenstern.** *Is in his retirement, marvellous distemper'd.*

**Hamlet.** *With drink, sir?*

**Guildenstern.** *No, my lord; rather with choler.*

**Hamlet.** *Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to  
the doctor; for me to put him to his purgation would perhaps  
plunge him into far more choler.* 2190

**Guildenstern.** *Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame, and start  
not so wildly from my affair.*

**Hamlet.** *I am tame, sir; pronounce.* 2195

**Guildenstern.** *The Queen, your mother, in most great affliction of spirit  
hath sent me to you.*

**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 my business.* 2200

**Hamlet.** *Sir, I cannot.*

**Guildenstern.** *What, my lord?*

**Hamlet.** *Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseas'd. 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-* 2205

**Rosencrantz.** *Then thus she says: your behaviour hath struck her into  
amazement and admiration.* 2210

**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.*

**Hamlet.** *We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any  
further trade with us?* 2215

**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.* 2220

**Hamlet.** *Sir, I lack advancement.*

**Rosencrantz.** *How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself for your succession in Denmark?*

**Hamlet.** *Ay, sir, but 'while the grass grows'- the proverb is something musty.* 2225  
[Enter the Players with recorders. ]  
*O, the recorders! Let me see one. To withdraw with you- why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?*

**Guilденstern.** *O my lord, if my duty be too bold, my love is too unmannerly.* 2230

**Hamlet.** *I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?*

**Guilденstern.** *My lord, I cannot.*

**Hamlet.** *I pray you.*

**Guilденstern.** *Believe me, I cannot.*

**Hamlet.** *I do beseech you.* 2235

**Guilденstern.** *I know, no touch of it, my lord.*

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

**Guilденstern.** *But these cannot I command to any utt'rance of harmony. I have not the skill.* 2240

**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 play'd on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.* 2245  
[Enter Polonius.] 2250  
*God bless you, sir!*

**Polonius.** *My lord, the Queen would speak with you, and presently.*

**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.* 2255

**Polonius.** *It is back'd like a weasel.*

**Hamlet.** *Or like a whale.*

**Polonius.** *Very like a whale.*

**Hamlet.** *Then will I come to my mother by-and-by.- They fool me to the top of my bent.- I will come by-and-by.* 2260

**Polonius.** *I will say so. Exit.*

**Hamlet.** *'By-and-by' is easily said.- Leave me, friends.*

[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]



*[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]*

'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out  
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!  
O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever  
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom. 2265  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.  
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites-  
How in my words somever she be shent,  
To give them seals never, my soul, consent! Exit. 2275

### Act III, Scene 3

#### A room in the Castle.

*Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

**Claudius.** 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. 2280  
The terms of our estate may not endure  
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow  
Out of his lunacies.

**Guildenstern.** We will ourselves provide.  
Most holy and religious fear it is 2285  
To keep those many many bodies safe  
That live and feed upon your Majesty.

**Rosencrantz.** The single and peculiar life is bound  
With all the strength and armour of the mind  
To keep itself from noyance; but much more 2290  
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests  
The lives of many. The cesse of majesty  
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw  
What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,  
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount, 2295  
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; 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. 2300

**Claudius.** Arm you, I pray you, to this speedy voyage;  
For we will fetters put upon this fear,  
Which now goes too free-footed.

**Rosencrantz.** *[with Guildenstern]* We will haste us.

*Exeunt Gentlemen.*

*Enter Polonius.*

**Polonius.** My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.  
Behind the arras I'll convey myself

To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home;  
 And, as you said, and wisely was it said, 2310  
 'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
 Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear  
 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. 2315

**Claudius.** Thanks, dear my lord.

*[Exit [Polonius].]*

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;  
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
 A brother's murmur! Pray can I not, 2320  
 Though inclination be as sharp as will.  
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,  
 And, like a man to double business bound,  
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand 2325  
 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  
 But to confront the visage of offence?  
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force, 2330  
 To be forestalled ere we come to fall,  
 Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;  
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer  
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murmur'?  
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd 2335  
 Of those effects for which I did the murmur-  
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.  
 May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?  
 In the corrupted currents of this world  
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice, 2340  
 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  
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd,  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults, 2345  
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?  
 Try what repentance can. What can it not?  
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?  
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
 O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, 2350  
 Art more engag'd! Help, angels! Make assay.  
 Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,  
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!  
 All may be well. He kneels.

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
 And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven,  
 And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd.  
 A villain kills my father; and for that,  
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send 2360  
 To heaven.  
 Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge!  
 He took my father grossly, full of bread,  
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
 And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven? 2365  
 But in our circumstance and course of thought,  
 'Tis heavy with him; and am I then reveng'd,  
 To take him in the purging of his soul,  
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?

When he is fit and season'd for his passage.

No.

2370

Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.

When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage;

Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed;

At gaming, swearing, or about some act

That has no relish of salvation in't-

2375

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,

And that his soul may be as damn'd and black

As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. Exit.

**Claudius.** [*rises*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.

2380

Words without thoughts never to heaven go. Exit.

### Act III, Scene 4

#### *The Queen's closet.*

*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 screen'd and stood between

Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here.

2385

Pray you be round with him.

**Hamlet.** [*within*] Mother, mother, mother!

**Gertrude.** I'll warrant you; fear me not. Withdraw; I hear him coming.

*[Polonius hides behind the arras.]*

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** Now, mother, what's the matter?

**Gertrude.** Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

**Hamlet.** Mother, you have my father much offended.

**Gertrude.** Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

2395

**Hamlet.** Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

**Gertrude.** Why, how now, Hamlet?

**Hamlet.** What's the matter now?

**Gertrude.** Have you forgot me?

**Hamlet.** No, by the rood, not so!

2400

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,

And (would it were not so!) you are my mother.

**Gertrude.** 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

2405

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

**Gertrude.** What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?  
Help, help, ho!

**Polonius.** *[behind]* What, ho! help, help, help!

**Hamlet.** *[draws]* How now? a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead! 2410

*[Makes a pass through the arras and] kills Polonius.*

**Polonius.** *[behind]* O, I am slain!

**Gertrude.** O me, what hast thou done?

**Hamlet.** Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

**Gertrude.** O, what a rash and bloody deed is this! 2415

**Hamlet.** A bloody deed- almost as bad, good mother,  
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

**Gertrude.** As kill a king?

**Hamlet.** Ay, lady, it was my word.  
*[Lifts up the arras and sees Polonius.]* 2420

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.  
Leave wringing of your hands. Peace! sit you down  
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall 2425  
If it be made of penetrable stuff;  
If damned custom have not braz'd it so  
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

**Gertrude.** What have I done that thou dar'st wag thy tongue  
In noise so rude against me? 2430

**Hamlet.** Such an act  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;  
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows 2435  
As false as dicers' oaths. O, such a deed  
As from the body of contraction plucks  
The very soul, and sweet religion makes  
A rhapsody of words! Heaven's face doth glow;  
Yea, this solidity and compound mass, 2440  
With tristful visage, as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act.

**Gertrude.** Ah me, what act,  
That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

**Hamlet.** Look here upon th's picture, and on this, 2445  
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 2450  
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill:  
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*

THIS WAS YOUR HUSBAND. LOOK YOU NOW WHAT FOLLOWS.

Here is your husband, like a mildew'd 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 reserv'd some quantity of choice  
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't  
That thus hath cozen'd 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 ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason panders will.

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

**Hamlet.** Nay, but to live  
In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,  
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty!

**Gertrude.** O, speak to me no more!  
These words like daggers enter in mine ears.  
No more, sweet Hamlet!

**Hamlet.** A murderer and a villain!  
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!

**Gertrude.** No more!

*Enter the Ghost in his nightgown.*

**Hamlet.** A king of shreds and patches!-  
Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

**Gertrude.** Alas, he's mad!

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

**Father's Ghost.** Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.

But look, amazement on thy mother sits. 2510  
O, step between her and her fighting soul  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

**Hamlet.** How is it with you, lady?

**Gertrude.** Alas, how is't with you, 2515  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,  
And with th' encorporal air do hold discourse?  
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th' alarm,  
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrements, 2520  
Start up and stand an end. O gentle son,  
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience! Whereon do you look?

**Hamlet.** On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares!  
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones, 2525  
Would make them capable.- Do not look upon me,  
Lest with this piteous action you convert  
My stern effects. Then what I have to do  
Will want true colour- tears perchance for blood.

**Gertrude.** To whom do you speak this? 2530

**Hamlet.** Do you see nothing there?

**Gertrude.** Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

**Hamlet.** Nor did you nothing hear?

**Gertrude.** No, nothing but ourselves.

**Hamlet.** Why, look you there! Look how it steals away!  
My father, in his habit as he liv'd! 2535  
Look where he goes even now out at the portal!

*Exit Ghost.*

**Gertrude.** This is the very coinage of your brain.  
This bodiless creation ecstasy 2540  
Is very cunning in.

**Hamlet.** Ecstasy?  
My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have utt'red. Bring me to the test, 2545  
And I the matter will reword; which madness  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,  
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, 2550  
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;  
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; 2555  
For in the fatness of these pury times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg-  
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

**Gertrude.** O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

**Hamlet.** O, throw away the worser part of it, 2560  
 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.  
 That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
 Of habits evil, is angel yet in this, 2565  
 That to the use of actions fair and good  
 He likewise gives a frock or livery,  
 That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,  
 And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
 To the next abstinence; the next more easy; 2570  
 For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
 And either [*master*] 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, 2575  
 I do repent; but heaven hath pleas'd 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. 2580  
 I must be cruel, only to be kind;  
 Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.  
 One word more, good lady.

**Gertrude.** What shall I do?

**Hamlet.** Not this, by no means, that I bid you do: 2585  
 Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed;  
 Pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse;  
 And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,  
 Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd fingers,  
 Make you to ravel all this matter out, 2590  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know;  
 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? 2595  
 No, in despite of sense and secrecy,  
 Unpeg the basket on the house's top,  
 Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,  
 To try conclusions, in the basket creep  
 And break your own neck down. 2600

**Gertrude.** Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,  
 And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
 What thou hast said to me.

**Hamlet.** I must to England; you know that?

**Gertrude.** Alack, 2605  
 I had forgot! 'Tis so concluded on.

**Hamlet.** There's letters seal'd; and my two schoolfellows,  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,  
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work; 2610  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
 Hoist with his own petar; and 't shall go hard  
 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. 2615  
 This man shall set me packing.  
 I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.-  
 Mother, good night. Indeed, this councillor

mother, good night.- indeed, this counsellor  
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,  
Who was in life a foolish peating knave. 2620  
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.  
Good night, mother.

*[Exit the Queen. Then] Exit Hamlet, tugging in  
Polonius.*

## Act IV, Scene 1

### *Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

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

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

**Gertrude.** Bestow this place on us a little while.  
*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]* 2630  
Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen to-night!

**Claudius.** What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

**Gertrude.** Mad as the sea and wind when both contend  
Which is the mightier. In his lawless fit  
Behind the arras hearing something stir, 2635  
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'  
And in this brainish apprehension kills  
The unseen good old man.

**Claudius.** O heavy deed!  
It had been so with us, had we been there. 2640  
His liberty is full of threats to all-  
To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt 2645  
This mad young man. But so much was our love  
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? 2650

**Gertrude.** To draw apart the body he hath kill'd;  
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore  
Among a mineral of metals base,  
Shows itself pure. He weeps for what is done.

**Claudius.** O Gertrude, come away! 2655  
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch  
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.]* 2660  
Friends both, go join you with some further aid.  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him.



Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body  
Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this. 2665  
*[Exeunt [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern].]*  
Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends  
And let them know both what we mean to do  
And what's untimely done. *[So haply slander-]*  
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter, 2670  
As level as the cannon to his blank,  
Transports his poisoned shot- may miss our name  
And hit the woundless air.- O, come away!  
My soul is full of discord and dismay.

*Exeunt.*

## Act IV, Scene 2

### *Elsinore. A passage in the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** Safely stow'd.

**Gentlemen.** *[within]* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

**Hamlet.** But soft! What noise? Who calls on Hamlet? O, here they  
*come.*

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

**Rosencrantz.** What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

**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. 2685

**Hamlet.** Do not believe it.

**Rosencrantz.** Believe what?

**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? 2690

**Rosencrantz.** Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards,  
his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in  
the end. He keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw;  
first mouth'd, to be last swallowed. When he needs what you have  
glean'd, it is but squeezing you and, sponge, you shall be dry  
again. 2695

**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 body is and go with us to 2700  
the King.

**Hamlet.** The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.  
The King is a thing-

**Guildestern.** A thing, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.

2705

*Exeunt.*

### Act IV, Scene 3

*Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

*Enter King.*

**Claudius.** 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.

2710

He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,

Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;

And where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weigh'd,

But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,

This sudden sending him away must seem

2715

Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown

By desperate appliance are reliev'd,

Or not at all.

*[Enter Rosencrantz.]*

How now O What hath befall'n?

2720

**Rosencrantz.** Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,

We cannot get from him.

**Claudius.** But where is he?

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

**Claudius.** Bring him before us.

2725

**Rosencrantz.** Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

*Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern [with Attendants].*

**Claudius.** Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

**Hamlet.** At supper.

**Claudius.** At supper? Where?

2730

**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 for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar  
is but variable service- two dishes, but to one table. That's the  
end.

2735

**Claudius.** Alas, alas!

**Hamlet.** A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and eat

or the fish that hath red or that worm.

**Claudius.** What dost thou mean by this?

2740

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

**Claudius.** 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 indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stair, into the lobby.

2745

**Claudius.** Go seek him there. *[To Attendants.]*

**Hamlet.** He will stay till you come.

*[Exeunt Attendants.]*

**Claudius.** Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,-  
Which we do tender as we dearly grieve  
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  
For England.

2755

**Hamlet.** For England?

**Claudius.** Ay, Hamlet.

**Hamlet.** Good.

2760

**Claudius.** So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

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

**Claudius.** Thy loving father, Hamlet.

**Hamlet.** My mother! Father and mother is man and wife; man and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England!

2765

*Exit.*

**Claudius.** Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard.

Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night.  
Away! for everything is seal'd and done  
That else leans on th' affair. Pray you make haste.

2770

*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

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  
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,  
And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,  
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. Exit.

2775

2780

**Act IV, Scene 4*****Near Elsinore.***

*Enter Fortinbras with his Army over the stage.*

**Fortinbras.** Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king. 2785  
Tell him that by his license Fortinbras  
Craves the conveyance of a promis'd march  
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.  
If that his Majesty would aught with us,  
We shall express our duty in his eye; 2790  
And let him know so.

**Norwegian Captain.** I will do't, my lord.

**Fortinbras.** Go softly on.

*Exeunt [all but the Captain].*

*Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, [Guildenstern,] and others.*

**Hamlet.** Good sir, whose powers are these?

**Norwegian Captain.** They are of Norway, sir.

**Hamlet.** How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

**Norwegian Captain.** Against some part of Poland.

**Hamlet.** Who commands them, sir? 2800

**Norwegian Captain.** The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

**Hamlet.** Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,  
Or for some frontier?

**Norwegian Captain.** Truly to speak, and with no addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground 2805  
That hath in it no profit but the name.  
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;  
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. 2810

**Norwegian Captain.** Yes, it is already garrison'd.

**Hamlet.** Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats  
Will not debate the question of this straw.  
This is th' imposthume of much wealth and peace,  
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without 2815  
Why the man dies.- I humbly thank you, sir.

**Norwegian Captain.** God b' wi' you, sir. *[Exit.]*

**Rosencrantz.** Will't please you go, my lord?

**Hamlet.** I'll be with you straight. Go a little before.  
*[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]* 2820  
How all occasions do inform against me

And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,  
 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, **2825**  
 Looking before and after, gave us not  
 That capability and godlike reason  
 To fust in us unus'd. Now, whether it be  
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
 Of thinking too precisely on th' event,- **2830**  
 A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom  
 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. **2835**  
 Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
 Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
 Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,  
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure **2840**  
 To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
 Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
 Is not to stir without great argument,  
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
 When honour's at the stake. How stand I then, **2845**  
 That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
 Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
 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 **2850**  
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
 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! Exit. **2855**

## Act IV, Scene 5

### *Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

*Enter Horatio, Queen, and a Gentleman.*

**Gertrude.** I will not speak with her.

**Gentleman.** She is importunate, indeed distract.  
 Her mood will needs be pitied.

**Gertrude.** What would she have? **2860**

**Gentleman.** She speaks much of her father; says she hears  
 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 unshaped use of it doth move **2865**  
 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 thought,  
 Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily. **2870**

**Horatio.** 'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew  
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

**Gertrude.** Let her come in.

*[Exit Gentleman.]*

*[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.

2875

*Enter Ophelia distracted.*

**Ophelia.** Where is the beauteous Majesty of Denmark?

2880

**Gertrude.** How now, Ophelia?

**Ophelia.** *[sings]*

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

2885

**Gertrude.** 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.  
O, ho!

2890

**Gertrude.** Nay, but Ophelia-

**Ophelia.** Pray you mark.

(Sings) White his shroud as the mountain snow-

2895

*Enter King.*

**Gertrude.** Alas, look here, my lord!

**Ophelia.** *[Sings]*

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

2900

**Claudius.** 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!

2905

**Claudius.** Conceit upon her father.

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

(Sings) To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning bedtime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.

2910

Then up he rose and donn'd his clo'es  
And dupp'd the chamber door,  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

2915

**Claudius.** Pretty Ophelia!

**Ophelia.** Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't!

[Sings] By Gis and by Saint Charity, 2920  
 Alack, and fie for shame!  
 Young men will do't if they come to't  
 By Cock, they are to blame.  
 Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,  
 You promis'd me to wed.' 2925  
 He answers:  
 'So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,  
 An thou hadst not come to my bed.'

**Claudius.** How long hath she been thus?

**Ophelia.** I hope all will be well. We must be patient; but I cannot 2930  
 choose but weep to think they would lay him i' th' cold ground.  
 My brother shall know of it; and so I thank you for your good  
 counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies. Good night, sweet  
 ladies. Good night, good night. Exit

**Claudius.** Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. 2935  
 [Exit Horatio.]

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs  
 All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
 When sorrows come, they come not single spies.  
 But in battalions! First, her father slain; 2940  
 Next, your son gone, and he most violent author  
 Of his own just remove; the people muddied,  
 Thick and and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers  
 For good Polonius' death, and we have done but greenly  
 In hugger-mugger to inter him; poor Ophelia 2945  
 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;  
 Feeds on his wonder, keeps, himself in clouds, 2950  
 And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
 With pestilent speeches of his father's death,  
 Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,  
 Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
 In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this, 2955  
 Like to a murd'ring piece, in many places  
 Give me superfluous death. A noise within.

**Gertrude.** Alack, what noise is this?

**Claudius.** Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door. 2960  
 [Enter a Messenger.]  
 What is the matter?

**Messenger.** Save Yourself, my lord:  
 The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
 Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste 2965  
 Than Young Laertes, in a riotous head,  
 O'erbears Your offices. 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,  
 They cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!' 2970  
 Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,  
 'Laertes shall be king! Laertes king!'

*A noise within.*

**Gertrude.** How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs! 2975

**Claudius.** The doors are broke.

*Enter Laertes with others.*

**Laertes.** Where is this king?- Sirs, staid you all without.

**All.** No, let's come in!

**Laertes.** I pray you give me leave. 2980

**All.** We will, we will!

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

**Gertrude.** Calmly, good Laertes. 2985

**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 brows  
Of my true mother.

**Claudius.** What is the cause, Laertes, 2990  
That thy rebellion looks so giantlike?  
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, 2995  
Why thou art thus incens'd. Let him go, Gertrude.  
Speak, man.

**Laertes.** Where is my father?

**Claudius.** Dead.

**Gertrude.** But not by him! 3000

**Claudius.** 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!  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand, 3005  
That both the world, I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd  
Most throughly for my father.

**Claudius.** Who shall stay you?

**Laertes.** My will, not all the world! 3010  
And for my means, I'll husband them so well  
They shall go far with little.

**Claudius.** Good Laertes,  
If you desire to know the certainty  
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge 3015  
That sweepstake you will draw both friend and foe,



Winner and loser?

**Laertes.** None but his enemies.

**Claudius.** Will you know them then?

**Laertes.** To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms 3020  
And, like the kind life-rend'ring pelican,  
Repast them with my blood.

**Claudius.** Why, now You speak  
Like a good child and a true gentleman.  
That I am guiltless of your father's death, 3025  
And am most sensibly in grief for it,  
It shall as level to your judgment pierce  
As day does to your eye.

*A noise within: 'Let her come in.'*

**Laertes.** How now? What noise is that? 3030  
*[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 by weight  
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May! 3035  
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,  
It sends some precious instance of itself 3040  
After the thing it loves.

**Ophelia.** *[sings]*  
They bore him barefac'd on the bier  
(Hey non nony, nony, hey nony)  
And in his grave rain'd many a tear. 3045  
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 call him a-down-a.' O,  
how the wheel becomes it! It is the false steward, that stole his 3050  
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, that's for thoughts.

**Laertes.** A document in madness! Thoughts and remembrance fitted. 3055

**Ophelia.** There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you,  
and here's some for me. We may call it herb of grace o' Sundays.  
O, you must wear your rue with a difference! There's a daisy. I  
would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father  
died. They say he made a good end. 3060  
*[Sings]* For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

**Laertes.** Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,  
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

**Ophelia.** *[sings]*

And will he not come again? 3065  
And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead;  
Go to thy deathbed;  
He never will come again. 3070  
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!  
And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God b' wi' you. 3075

*Exit.*

**Laertes.** Do you see this, O God?

**Claudius.** Laertes, I must commune with your grief,  
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,  
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will, 3080  
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.  
If by direct or by collateral hand  
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,  
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours,  
To you in satisfaction; but if not, 3085  
Be you content to lend your patience to us,  
And we shall jointly labour with your soul  
To give it due content.

**Laertes.** Let this be so.  
His means of death, his obscure funeral- 3090  
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,  
No noble rite nor formal ostentation,-  
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
That I must call't in question.

**Claudius.** So you shall; 3095  
And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.  
I pray you go with me.

*Exeunt*

## Act IV, Scene 6

### *Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.*

*Enter Horatio with an Attendant.*

**Horatio.** What are they that would speak with me? 3100

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

**Horatio.** Let them come in.  
[Exit Attendant.]  
I do not know from what part of the world  
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet. 3105

*Enter Sailors.*

**Sailor.** God bless you, sir.

**Horatio.** Let him bless thee too.

**Sailor.** 'A shall, sir, an't please him. There's a letter for you,  
sir,- it comes from th' ambassador that was bound for England- if  
your name be Horatio, as I am let to know it is. 3110

**Horatio.** [*reads the letter*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlook'd  
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 3115  
slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, 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 3120  
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. 3125  
'He that thou knowest thine, 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. Exeunt.

## Act IV, Scene 7

### *Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.*

*Enter King and Laertes.*

**Claudius.** 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. 3135

**Laertes.** It well appears. But tell me  
Why you proceeded not against these feats  
So crimeful and so capital in nature,  
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,  
You mainly were stirr'd up. 3140

**Claudius.** O, for two special reasons,  
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,  
But yet to me they are strong. The Queen his mother  
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,-  
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,- 3145  
She's 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, 3150  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
Convert his gives to graces; so that my arrows,  
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
Would have reverted to my bow again, 3155

And not where I had aim'd 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. 3160

**Claudius.** 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. 3165  
I lov'd 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: 3170  
This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

**Claudius.** From Hamlet? Who brought them?

**Messenger.** Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not.  
They were given me by Claudio; he receiv'd them  
Of him that brought them. 3175

**Claudius.** Laertes, you shall hear them.  
Leave us.  
[Exit Messenger.]  
[Reads]'High and Mighty,-You shall know I am set naked on your  
kingdom. To-morrow 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? 3180

**Laertes.** Know you the hand? 3185

**Claudius.** '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!  
It warms the very sickness in my heart  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
'Thus didest thou.' 3190

**Claudius.** If it be so, Laertes  
(As how should it be so? how otherwise?),  
Will you be rul'd by me? 3195

**Laertes.** Ay my lord,  
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

**Claudius.** To thine own peace. If he be now return'd  
As checking at his voyage, and that he means  
No more to undertake it, I will work him  
To exploit now ripe in my device, 3200  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;  
And for his death no wind shall breathe  
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice  
And call it accident. 3205

**Laertes.** My lord, I will be rul'd;  
The rather, if you could devise it so  
That I might be the organ.

**Claudius.** It falls right.  
You have been talk'd of since your travel much, 3210  
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. 3215

**Laertes.** What part is that, my lord?

**Claudius.** A very riband in the cap of youth-  
Yet needfull too; for youth no less becomes  
The light and careless livery that it wears  
Than settled age his sables and his weeds, 3220  
Importing health and graveness. Two months since  
Here was a gentleman of Normandy.  
I have seen myself, and serv'd against, the French,  
And they can well on horseback; but this gallant  
Had witchcraft in't. He grew unto his seat, 3225  
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse  
As had he been incorps'd and demi-natur'd  
With the brave beast. So far he topp'd my thought  
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,  
Come short of what he did. 3230

**Laertes.** A Norman was't?

**Claudius.** A Norman.

**Laertes.** Upon my life, Lamound.

**Claudius.** The very same.

**Laertes.** I know him well. He is the broach indeed 3235  
And gem of all the nation.

**Claudius.** He made confession of you;  
And gave you such a masterly report  
For art and exercise in your defence,  
And for your rapier most especially, 3240  
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,  
If you oppos'd them. Sir, this report of his  
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy 3245  
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?

**Claudius.** Laertes, was your father dear to you? 3250  
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
A face without a heart,'

**Laertes.** Why ask you this?

**Claudius.** Not that I think you did not love your father;  
But that I know love is begun by time, 3255

And that I see, in passages of proof,  
 Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.  
 There lives within the very flame of love  
 A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it; 3260  
 And nothing is at a like goodness still;  
 For goodness, growing to a pluriy,  
 Dies in his own too-much. That we would do,  
 We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes,  
 And hath abatements and delays as many 3265  
 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 o' th' ulcer!  
 Hamlet comes back. What would you undertake  
 To show yourself your father's son in deed  
 More than in words? 3270

**Laertes.** To cut his throat i' th' church!

**Claudius.** No place indeed should murther sanctuarize;  
 Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,  
 Will you do this? Keep close within your chamber.  
 Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home. 3275  
 We'll put on those shall praise your excellence  
 And set a double varnish on the fame  
 The Frenchman gave you; bring you in fine together  
 And wager on your heads. He, being remiss,  
 Most generous, and free from all contriving, 3280  
 Will not peruse the foils; so that with ease,  
 Or with a little shuffling, you may choose  
 A sword unbated, and, in a pass of practice,  
 Requite him for your father.

**Laertes.** I will do't! 3285  
 And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.  
 I bought an unction of a mountebank,  
 So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,  
 Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,  
 Collected from all simples that have virtue 3290  
 Under the moon, can save the thing from death  
 This is but scratch'd withal. I'll touch my point  
 With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,  
 It may be death.

**Claudius.** Let's further think of this, 3295  
 Weigh what convenience both of time and means  
 May fit us to our shape. If this should fall,  
 And that our drift look through our bad performance.  
 'Twere better not assay'd. Therefore this project  
 Should have a back or second, that might hold 3300  
 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- 3305  
 And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd 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 noise,  
 [*Enter Queen.*] 3310  
 How now, sweet queen?

**Gertrude.** One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
 So fast they follow. Your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

**Laertes.** Drown'd! O, where?

**Gertrude.** There is a willow grows aslant a brook, 3315  
 That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.  
 There with fantastic garlands did she come  
 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. 3320  
 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  
 And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up; 3325  
 Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,  
 As one incapable of her own distress,  
 Or like a creature native and indued  
 Unto that element; but long it could not be  
 Till that her garments, heavy with their drink, 3330  
 Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
 To muddy death.

**Laertes.** Alas, then she is drown'd?

**Gertrude.** Drown'd, drown'd.

**Laertes.** Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, 3335  
 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.  
 I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze 3340  
 But that this folly douts it. Exit.

**Claudius.** Let's follow, Gertrude.  
 How much I had to do to calm his rage I  
 Now fear I this will give it start again;  
 Therefore let's follow. 3345

*Exeunt.*

## Act V, Scene 1

### *Elsinore. A churchyard.*

*Enter two Clowns, [with spades and pickaxes].*

**First Clown.** Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she wilfully seeks her own salvation?

**Second Clown.** I tell thee she is; therefore make her grave straight.  
 The crowner hath sate on her, and finds it Christian burial. 3350

**First Clown.** How can that be, unless she drown'd herself in her own defence?

**Second Clown.** Why, 'tis found so.

**First Clown.** 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 3355

act hath three branches-it is to act, to do, and to perform;  
argal, she drown'd herself wittingly.

**Second Clown.** Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver!

**First Clown.** 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, 3360  
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.

**Second Clown.** But is this law?

**First Clown.** Ay, marry, is't- crowner's quest law. 3365

**Second Clown.** Will you ha' the truth an't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

**First Clown.** Why, there thou say'st! 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 3370  
ancient gentlemen but gard'ners, ditchers, and grave-makers. They hold up Adam's profession.

**Second Clown.** Was he a gentleman?

**First Clown.** 'A was the first that ever bore arms.

**Second Clown.** Why, he had none. 3375

**First Clown.** What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digg'd. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself-

**Second Clown.** Go to! 3380

**First Clown.** What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

**Second Clown.** The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

**First Clown.** I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows does well. 3385  
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!

**Second Clown.** Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter? 3390

**First Clown.** Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

**Second Clown.** Marry, now I can tell!

**First Clown.** To't.

**Second Clown.** Mass, I cannot tell.

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio afar off.*

**First Clown.** Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are ask'd this



question next, say 'a grave-maker.' The houses he makes lasts  
till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of  
liquor.

3400

*[Exit Second Clown.]*

*[Clown digs and] sings.*

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

3405

**Hamlet.** Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at  
grave-making?

**Horatio.** Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

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

3410

**First Clown.** *[sings]*  
But age with his stealing steps  
Hath clawed me in his clutch,  
And hath shipped me intil the land,  
As if I had never been such.

3415

*[Throws 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 murther! This might be the pate of a Politician,  
which this ass now o'erreaches; one that would circumvent God,  
might it not?

3420

**Horatio.** It might, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord!  
How dost thou, good lord?' This might be my Lord Such-a-one, that  
prais'd my Lord Such-a-one's horse when he meant to beg it- might  
it not?

3425

**Horatio.** Ay, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Why, e'en so! and now my Lady Worm's, chapless, and knock'd  
about the mazzard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution,  
and we had the trick to see't. Did these bones cost no more the  
breeding but to play at loggets with 'em? Mine ache to think  
on't.

3430

**First Clown.** *[Sings]*  
A pickaxe 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.  
Throws up *[another skull]*.

3435

**Hamlet.** There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?  
Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures,  
and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude 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 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

3440

3445

his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine  
pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more 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? 3450

**Horatio.** Not a jot more, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Is not parchment made of sheepskins?

**Horatio.** Ay, my lord, And of calveskins too. 3455

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

**First Clown.** Mine, sir.  
*[Sings]* O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet. 3460

**Hamlet.** I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in't.

**First Clown.** You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours.  
For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

**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. 3465

**First Clown.** 'Tis a quick lie, sir; 'twill away again from me to you.

**Hamlet.** What man dost thou dig it for?

**First Clown.** For no man, sir.

**Hamlet.** What woman then?

**First Clown.** For none neither. 3470

**Hamlet.** Who is to be buried in't?

**First Clown.** 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 taken 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 a grave-maker? 3475

**First Clown.** Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't that day that our  
last king Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

**Hamlet.** How long is that since? 3480

**First Clown.** Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the  
very day that young Hamlet was born- he that is mad, and sent  
into England.

**Hamlet.** Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

**First Clown.** Why, because 'a was mad. 'A shall recover his wits there;  
or, if 'a do not, 'tis no great matter there. 3485

**Hamlet.** Why?

**First Clown.** 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad as he.

**Hamlet.** How came he mad?

3490

**First Clown.** Very strangely, they say.

**Hamlet.** How strangely?

**First Clown.** Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

**Hamlet.** Upon what ground?

**First Clown.** Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy thirty years. 3495

**Hamlet.** How long will a man lie i' th' earth ere he rot?

**First Clown.** Faith, if 'a be not rotten before 'a die (as we have many pocky corses now-a-days that will scarce hold the laying in, I will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner will last you nine year. 3500

**Hamlet.** Why he more than another?

**First Clown.** Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade that 'a will keep out water a great while; and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body. Here's a skull now. This skull hath lien you i' th' earth three-and-twenty years. 3505

**Hamlet.** Whose was it?

**First Clown.** A whoreson, mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

**Hamlet.** Nay, I know not.

**First Clown.** A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! 'A pour'd a flagon of Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester. 3510

**Hamlet.** This?

**First Clown.** E'en that.

**Hamlet.** Let me see. *[Takes the skull.]* Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne 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 kiss'd I know not how oft. 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 chap- fall'n? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing. 3515  
3520  
3525

**Horatio.** What's that, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Dost thou think Alexander look'd o' this fashion i' th' earth?

**Horatio.** E'en so.

**Hamlet.** And smelt so? Pah!

*[Puts down the skull.]*

**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 bung-hole?

**Horatio.** 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so. 3535

**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 into 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? 3540

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
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!

But soft! but soft! aside! Here comes the King-  
Enter *[priests with] a coffin [in funeral procession], King,*  
*[Queen, Laertes, with Lords attendant.]* 3545

The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?  
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken  
The corse they follow did with desp'rate hand  
Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate. 3550  
Couch we awhile, and mark.

*[Retires with Horatio.]*

**Laertes.** What ceremony else?

**Hamlet.** That is Laertes,  
A very noble youth. Mark. 3555

**Laertes.** What ceremony else?

**Priest.** Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd  
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful;  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order, 3560  
She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd  
Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,  
Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.

Yet here she is allow'd her virgin rites,  
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home  
Of bell and burial. 3565

**Laertes.** Must there no more be done?

**Priest.** No more be done.  
We should profane the service of the dead  
To sing a requiem and such rest to her 3570  
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,  
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be 3575  
When thou liest howling.

**Hamlet.** What, the fair Ophelia?

**Gertrude.** Sweets to the sweet! Farewell.

*[Scatters flowers.]*

3580

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

**Laertes.** O, treble woe

Fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense  
Depriv'd thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.

3585

*[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.

3590

**Hamlet.** *[comes forward]* 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,  
Hamlet the Dane. *[Leaps in after Laertes.]*

3595

**Laertes.** The devil take thy soul!

*[Grapples with him.]*

**Hamlet.** Thou pray'st not well.

3600

I prithee take thy fingers from my throat;  
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,  
Yet have I in me something dangerous,  
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand!

**Claudius.** Pluck them asunder.

3605

**Gertrude.** Hamlet, Hamlet!

**All.** Gentlemen!

**Horatio.** Good my lord, be quiet.

*[The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.]*

**Hamlet.** Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

3610

**Gertrude.** O my son, what theme?

**Hamlet.** I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not (with all their quantity of love)  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

3615

**Claudius.** O, he is mad, Laertes.

**Gertrude.** For love of God, forbear him!

**Hamlet.** 'Swords, show me what thou't do.

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?  
Woo't drink up esill? eat a crocodile?  
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?  
To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
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,

3620

3625

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,  
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,  
I'll rant as well as thou.

**Gertrude.** This is mere madness;  
And thus a while the fit will work on him. 3630  
Anon, as patient as the female dove  
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,  
His silence will sit drooping.

**Hamlet.** Hear you, sir!  
What is the reason that you use me thus? 3635  
I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.  
Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

*Exit.*

**Claudius.** I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him. 3640  
*[Exit Horatio.]*  
*[To Laertes]* Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech.  
We'll put the matter to the present push.-  
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.-  
This grave shall have a living monument. 3645  
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;  
Till then in patience our proceeding be.

*Exeunt.*

## Act V, Scene 2

### *Elsinore. A hall in the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

**Hamlet.** So much for this, sir; now shall you see the other. 3650  
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  
Worse than the mutinies in the bilboes. Rashly- 3655  
And prais'd be rashness for it; let us know,  
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us  
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will- 3660

**Horatio.** That is most certain.

**Hamlet.** Up from my cabin,  
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark  
Grop'd I to find out them; had my desire,  
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew 3665  
To mine own room again; making so bold  
(My fears forgetting manners) to unseal  
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio  
(O royal knavery!), an exact command,

Larded with many several sorts of reasons,  
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,  
With, hoo! such bugs and goblins in my life-  
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,  
No, not to stay the finding of the axe,  
My head should be struck off. 3670  
3675

**Horatio.** Is't possible?

**Hamlet.** Here's the commission; read it at more leisure.  
But wilt thou bear me how I did proceed?

**Horatio.** I beseech you.

**Hamlet.** Being thus benetted round with villanies,  
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,  
They had begun the play. I sat me down;  
Devis'd a new commission; wrote it fair.  
I once did hold it, as our statist do,  
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much  
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now  
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know  
Th' effect of what I wrote? 3680  
3685

**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,  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear  
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,  
And many such-like as's of great charge,  
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less,  
He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving time allow'd. 3690  
3695

**Horatio.** How was this seal'd? 3700

**Hamlet.** Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.  
I had my father's signet in my purse,  
Which was the model of that Danish seal;  
Folded the writ up in the form of th' other,  
Subscrib'd it, gave't th' impression, plac'd it safely,  
The changeling never known. Now, the next day  
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent  
Thou know'st already. 3705

**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 incensed points  
Of mighty opposites. 3710  
3715

**Horatio.** Why, what a king is this!

**Hamlet.** Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon-  
He that hath kill'd my king, and whor'd my mother;  
Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes;  
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,  
3720

And with such coz'nage- is't not perfect conscience  
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd  
To let this canker of our nature come  
In further evil?

**Horatio.** It must be shortly known to him from England  
What is the issue of the business there. 3725

**Hamlet.** It will be short; the interim is mine,  
And a man's life is no more than to say 'one.'  
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,  
That to Laertes I forgot myself, 3730  
For by the image of my cause I see  
The portraiture of his. I'll court his favours.  
But sure the bravery of his grief did put me  
Into a tow'ring passion.

**Horatio.** Peace! Who comes here? 3735

*Enter young Osric, a courtier.*

**Osric.** Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

**Hamlet.** I humbly thank you, sir. *[Aside to Horatio]* Dost know this  
waterfly?

**Horatio.** *[aside to Hamlet]* No, my good lord. 3740

**Hamlet.** *[aside to Horatio]* 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.

**Osric.** Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart  
a thing to you from his Majesty. 3745

**Hamlet.** I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your  
bonnet to his right use. 'Tis for the head.

**Osric.** I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

**Hamlet.** No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly. 3750

**Osric.** It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

**Hamlet.** But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

**Osric.** Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere- I cannot  
tell how. But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that  
he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter- 3755

**Hamlet.** I beseech you remember.

*[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.]*

**Osric.** Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. 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 3760  
or calendar of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of  
what part a gentleman would see.

**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 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. 3765

**Osric.** Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him. 3770

**Hamlet.** The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more rawer breath?

**Osric.** Sir?

**Horatio.** [*aside to Hamlet*] Is't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do't, sir, really. 3775

**Hamlet.** What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

**Osric.** Of Laertes?

**Horatio.** [*aside*] His purse is empty already. All's golden words are spent.

**Hamlet.** Of him, sir. 3780

**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-

**Hamlet.** I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in excellence; but to know a man well were to know himself. 3785

**Osric.** I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

**Hamlet.** What's his weapon?

**Osric.** Rapier and dagger. 3790

**Hamlet.** That's two of his weapons- but well.

**Osric.** The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses; against the which he has impon'd, 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 responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit. 3795

**Hamlet.** What call you the carriages?

**Horatio.** [*aside to Hamlet*] I knew you must be edified by the margent ere you had done. 3800

**Osric.** The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

**Hamlet.** The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry 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 3805

bet against the Danish. Why is this all impon'd, as you call it?

**Osric.** The King, sir, hath laid 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. 3810

**Hamlet.** How if I answer no?

**Osric.** I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

**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 if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits. 3815

**Osric.** Shall I redeliver you e'en so?

**Hamlet.** To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.

**Osric.** I commend my duty to your lordship. 3820

**Hamlet.** Yours, yours. *[Exit Osric.]* 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.

**Hamlet.** He did comply with his dug before he suck'd it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter—a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fann'd and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial—the bubbles are out, 3825

*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.

**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. 3835

**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. 3840

**Hamlet.** She well instructs me.

*[Exit Lord.]*

**Horatio.** You will lose this wager, 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. 3845

**Horatio.** Nay, good my lord—

**Hamlet.** It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gaingiving as  
would perhaps trouble a woman. 3850

**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's 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 now; if it be not now, yet it will come: 3855  
the readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves,  
what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Osric, and Lords, with other*

*Attendants with foils and gauntlets.*

*A table and flagons of wine on it.*

**Claudius.** Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

*[The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.]*

**Hamlet.** Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong;  
But pardon't, as you are a gentleman. 3865  
This presence knows,  
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd  
With sore distraction. What I have done  
That might your nature, honour, and exception  
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.  
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet. 3870  
If Hamlet from himself be taken away,  
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,  
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.  
Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,  
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd; 3875  
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.  
Sir, in this audience,  
Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil  
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts  
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house 3880  
And hurt my brother.

**Laertes.** I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive in this case should stir me most  
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour 3885  
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation  
Till by some elder masters of known honour  
I have a voice and precedent of peace  
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that time  
I do receive your offer'd love like love,  
And will not wrong it. 3890

**Hamlet.** I embrace it freely,  
And will this brother's wager frankly play.  
Give us the foils. Come on.

**Laertes.** Come, one for me.

**Hamlet.** I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance 3895  
Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,  
Stick fiery off indeed.

**Laertes.** You mock me, sir.

**Hamlet.** No, by this hand.

**Claudius.** Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet,  
You know the wager? 3900

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

**Claudius.** I do not fear it, I have seen you both;  
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds. 3905

**Laertes.** This is too heavy; let me see another.

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

*Prepare to play.*

**Osric.** Ay, my good lord.

**Claudius.** Set me the stoups of wine upon that table. 3910  
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 3915  
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, 3920  
'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin.  
And you the judges, bear a wary eye.

**Hamlet.** Come on, sir.

**Laertes.** Come, my lord. They play.

**Hamlet.** One. 3925

**Laertes.** No.

**Hamlet.** Judgment!

**Osric.** A hit, a very palpable hit.

**Laertes.** Well, again!

**Claudius.** Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine;  
Here's to thy health. 3930  
*[Drum; trumpets sound; a piece goes off [within].]*  
Give him the cup.

**Hamlet.** I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.  
Come. *[They play.]* Another hit. What say you? 3935

**Laertes.** A touch, a touch; I do confess't.

**Claudius.** Our son shall win.

**Gertrude.** He's fat, and scant of breath.  
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

3940

**Hamlet.** Good madam!

**Claudius.** Gertrude, do not drink.

**Gertrude.** I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me. Drinks.

**Claudius.** *[aside]* It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

**Hamlet.** I dare not drink yet, madam; by-and-by.

3945

**Gertrude.** Come, let me wipe thy face.

**Laertes.** My lord, I'll hit him now.

**Claudius.** I do not think't.

**Laertes.** *[aside]* And yet it is almost against my conscience.

**Hamlet.** Come for the third, Laertes! You but dally.

3950

Pray you pass with your best violence;  
I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

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

**Osrice.** Nothing neither way.

**Laertes.** Have at you now!

3955

*[Laertes wounds Hamlet; then] in scuffling, they change rapiers, [and Hamlet wounds Laertes].*

**Claudius.** Part them! They are incens'd.

**Hamlet.** Nay come! again! The Queen falls.

**Osrice.** Look to the Queen there, ho!

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

3960

**Osrice.** How is't, Laertes?

**Laertes.** Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osrice. I am justly kill'd  
with mine own treachery.

**Hamlet.** How does the Queen?

**Claudius.** She sounds to see them bleed.

**Gertrude.** No, no! the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!

3965

The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. *[Dies.]*

**Hamlet.** O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd.  
Treachery! Seek it out.

*[Laertes falls.]*

**Laertes.** It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain;  
No medicine in the world can do thee good.  
In thee there is not half an hour of life.  
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,  
Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice

3970

Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd.  
I can no more. The King, the King's to blame. 3975

**Hamlet.** The point envenom'd too?  
Then, venom, to thy work. Hurts the King.

**All.** Treason! treason! 3980

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

**Hamlet.** Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane,  
Drink off this potion! Is thy union here?  
Follow my mother. King dies.

**Laertes.** He is justly serv'd. 3985  
It is a poison temper'd by himself.  
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. 3990  
I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!  
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- 3995  
But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;  
Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright  
To the unsatisfied.

**Horatio.** Never believe it. 4000  
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.  
Here's yet some liquor left.

**Hamlet.** As th'art a man,  
Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll ha't.  
O good Horatio, what a wounded name  
(Things standing thus unknown) shall live behind me! 4005  
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. [*March afar off, and shot within.*]  
What warlike noise is this? 4010

**Osric.** Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,  
To the ambassadors of England gives  
This warlike volley.

**Hamlet.** O, I die, Horatio!  
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit. 4015  
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. Dies. 4020

**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 and English Ambassadors, with Drum, Colours, and  
Attendants. 4025

**Fortinbras.** Where is this sight?

**Horatio.** What is it you will 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.

4030

**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 fulfill'd  
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
Where should we have our thanks?

4035

**Horatio.** Not from his mouth,  
Had it th' ability of life to thank you.  
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 arriv'd, give order that these bodies  
High on a stage be placed to the view;  
And let me speak to the 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 forc'd cause;  
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I  
Truly deliver.

4040

4045

4050

**Fortinbras.** Let us haste to hear it,  
And call the noblest to the audience.  
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.

4055

**Horatio.** Of that I shall have also cause to speak,  
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.  
But let this same be presently perform'd,  
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance  
On plots and errors happen.

4060

**Fortinbras.** Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage;  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have prov'd most royally; and for his passage  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
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.

4065

4070

*Exeunt marching; after the which a peal of ordnance are shot off.*

**THE END**