

# Hamlet

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## HAMLET SYNOPSIS

Hamlet's father, the King of Denmark, has died. Hamlet has returned from his studies in Wittenberg to attend his father's funeral and his mother Gertrude's subsequent marriage to his uncle, the newly crowned, King Claudius. Bernardo and Francisco, two soldiers who guard the palace at night, have invited the scholar and friend of Hamlet, Horatio, to verify what looks like the nightly appearance of Hamlet's dead father's ghost. They once again encounter this frightening apparition and Horatio tells Hamlet of their experience.

After attending the coronation of King Claudius, Laertes, the son of Claudius' first minister, Polonius, is about to return to school. Before he leaves he advises his sister, Ophelia, not to take Hamlet's romantic overtures to her seriously. Polonius questions Ophelia about her conversation with Laertes and then orders her to stay away from Hamlet.

When Hamlet watches with Horatio and Marcellus at night, he talks to what appears to be his father's ghost, learning that his uncle Claudius has murdered his father, stolen the crown and seduced his mother. He pledges to revenge his father's death and swears his companions to silence.

Hamlet's behavior becomes erratic, which causes Claudius and Gertrude to summon two of his old school chums, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. Claudius and Gertrude implore them to discover what ails Hamlet and to entice him to participate in activities that might lighten his dark and disturbing moods. Polonius is convinced that Hamlet is deeply depressed at being spurned by Ophelia, and hopes to prove his hypothesis by secretly witnessing an encounter between Hamlet and Ophelia. A group of actors that Hamlet admires arrive at court, and the leading actor performs a passionate speech for the Prince. Left alone, Hamlet chastises himself for his lack of passion and action, but also reveals that he is unsure whether the Ghost is really his father's spirit or a demon sent to trick him and capture his soul. He plots to have the actors perform a play reenacting his father's murder, whereby watching Claudius' reactions he can become certain of the King's guilt.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are unable to discover what ails Hamlet. When observed being alone with Ophelia, Hamlet's cruelty to her convinces Claudius that spurned love is not the cause of Hamlet's growing madness. King Claudius plans to send his disturbing young nephew to England for supposed rest and relaxation. Hamlet gives the players some acting advice before they begin. During their performance Claudius becomes highly agitated and angrily leaves for his chamber. Hamlet and Horatio celebrate the fact that their suspicions appear true. Hamlet is summoned to his mother's bedchamber. Claudius then plots to have Hamlet executed when he arrives in England. On his way to visit his mother, Hamlet comes across Claudius unsuccessfully trying to pray for forgiveness. Hamlet passes up the excellent opportunity to kill Claudius, reasoning that killing him while he is praying will only send his soul to heaven.

Polonius has hidden himself behind an arras in Gertrude's room, and when he cries out, fearing for her safety, Hamlet stabs him with his sword, hoping he is Claudius. While Hamlet is then chastising his mother for her lustful behavior, his father's ghost appears and warns him to leave Gertrude to heaven's judgment and to carry through with his pledge to exact revenge on Claudius. After finally revealing where he has hidden the body of Polonius, Hamlet is sent to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Ophelia has become mad with the death of her father and Hamlet's rejection of her. Laertes returns in open rebellion, swearing revenge for his father's death. Ophelia drowns herself and Claudius turns Laertes' anger at losing his sister and father against Hamlet. They plan to murder Hamlet with a poisoned rapier Laertes will use while fencing, or a poisoned cup of wine that Claudius will prepare. Hamlet returns to Denmark with the help of pirates just as Ophelia is being buried. He later reveals to Horatio Claudius' plot to have him executed in England and his own forgery and switching of Claudius' letter. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are to be executed in England in his place.

Hamlet welcomes the opportunity to test his fencing skills with Laertes. During the bout both Laertes and Hamlet are scratched by the poisoned rapier and Queen Gertrude drinks from the poisoned wine. Laertes confesses the plot and accuses Claudius of treachery. Hamlet kills Claudius, stops Horatio from committing suicide and dies. The newly arrived English ambassador reports the executions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, and Fortinbras, who is returning home from a battle in Poland, is now the likely successor to the throne of Denmark.

## Hamlet Prince of Denmark

### List of Characters

GHOST	Hamlet's dead father, the former King of Denmark
KING CLAUDIUS	King of Denmark
QUEEN GERTRUDE	Queen of Denmark, widow of the late King Hamlet and now wife of his brother, King Claudius
HAMLET	Son of the late King Hamlet and of Queen Gertrude
POLONIUS	Lord Chamberlain
OPHELIA	Daughter of Polonius
LAERTES	Son of Polonius
HORATIO	Friend to Hamlet
ROSENCRANTZ	Courtier, old schoolfellow to Hamlet
GUILDENSTERN	Courtier, old schoolfellow to Hamlet
VOLTEMAND	Danish councilor, ambassador to Norway
CORNELIUS	Danish councilor, ambassador to Norway
REYNALDO	Servant to Polonius
OSRIC	A courtier
FRANSISCO	A soldier
BERNARDO	A soldier
MARCELLUS	A soldier
FIRST CLOWN	A gravedigger
SECOND CLOWN	A gravedigger
PRIEST	
FORTINBRAS	Prince of Norway
ENGLISH AMBASSADOR	
FIRST PLAYER	Leader of troupe of actors: enacts the role of a king
SECOND PLAYER	Enacts the role of a queen
THIRD PLAYER	Enacts the role of Lucianus, nephew to the King
FOURTH PLAYER	Speaks the prologue to "The Murder of Gonzago"

Messenger, sailors, lords, ladies, guards and Danes (supporting Laertes)

Scene Denmark

**Act 1, Scene 1    Elsinore. A platform before the castle**

*(FRANCISCO at his post. Enter BERNARDO.)*

BERNARDO  
Who's there?

FRANCISCO  
Nay, answer me. Stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO  
Long live the King!

FRANCISCO  
Bernardo?

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.\*

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.

FRANCISCO  
I think I hear them.  
Stand, ho! Who's there?

*(Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.)*

HORATIO  
Friends to this ground.

*carefully* - punctually, *sick at heart* - thoroughly wretched, *rivals* - partners

MARCELLUS  
And liegemen to the Dane.

FRANCISCO  
Give you good night.\*

MARCELLUS  
Farewell, honest soldier.

*(Exit FRANCISCO.)*

MARCELLUS  
Holla! Bernardo!

BERNARDO  
Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS  
What, has this thing appeared again to night?

BERNARDO  
I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS  
Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy, and will not let belief take hold of him.

HORATIO  
Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BERNARDO  
Sit down awhile,  
and let us once again assail your ears, that are so fortified against our story, what we have two nights seen.

HORATIO  
Well, sit we down, and let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO  
Last night of all,\* Marcellus and myself, 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.

*Give you good night.* - God give you good night., *last night of all* - only last night

MARCELLUS

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

BERNARDO

Looks it not like the King?

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 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!

*(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 it?

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?

*Thou art a scholar* - it was believed that ghosts spoke Latin, and therefore Horatio, as a scholar, would be able to converse with the ghost, *harrows* - distresses, *buried Denmark* - the buried King of Denmark (Hamlet's father)

HORATIO

As thou art to thyself.

Such was the very armor he had on when he the ambitious Norway combated.\*

'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, 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 my opinion, this bodes some strange eruption to our state.

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!

*(Re enter GHOST.)*

I'll cross it,\* though it blast me. Stay, illusion!

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, speak to me.

*(Cock crows.)*

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

Stay and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?\*

HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

BERNARDO

'Tis here!

HORATIO

'Tis here!

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone!

*(Exit GHOST.)*

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.

*ambitious Norway combated* - Hamlet's father killed the King of Norway (Fortinbras' father) in single combat,

*cross it* - cross its path, *partisan* - pike



## 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, the extravagant\* and erring spirit hies to his confine.\*

For look, the morn in russet mantle clad\* walks over 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.

## MARCELLUS

Let's do it, I pray, and I this morning know where we shall find him most conveniently.

*(Exeunt.)*

*extravagant* - wandering out of bounds, *hies to his confine* - returns to his place of confinement,  
*russet mantle clad* - wearing a reddish brown cloak, *dumb* - silent

## Act 1, Scene 2 A room of state in the castle

(*KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, lords and attendants.*)

KING 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.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our Queen, have we with mirth in funeral and with dirge\* in marriage,  
in equal scale weighing delight and dole,\* taken to wife.  
Nor have we herein barred\* your better wisdoms, which have freely gone with this affair along.  
For all, our thanks.  
Now, 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,\*  
hath not failed to pester us with message importing the surrender of those lands lost by his father.\*  
We have here writ to Norway,\* uncle of young Fortinbras—  
who, impotent and bed rid, scarcely hears of this his nephew's purpose—  
to suppress his further gait herein.\*  
We here dispatch you, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand, for bearers of this greeting to old Norway.  
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS, VOLTIMAND

In that and all things will we show our duty.

KING CLAUDIUS

We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell. (*Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.*)  
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you? You told us of some suit.\* What is it, Laertes?  
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.  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES

My dread lord, your leave and favor to return to France,  
from whence though willingly I came to Denmark to show my duty in your coronation,  
my thoughts and wishes bend again.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

LORD POLONIUS

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave and I do beseech you give him leave to go.

*dirge* - a song of grief or mourning, *dole* - sorrow, *barred* - excluded,  
*disjoint and out of frame* - disordered and in a mess,  
*lands lost by his father* - the lands were lost when Hamlet's father defeated Fortinbras' father in single combat,  
*Norway* - King of Norway, *suppress his further gait herein* - stop his intended march towards Denmark, *suit* - request

KING CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

(*Aside.*) A little more than kin, and less than kind.\*

KING CLAUDIUS

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color\* off, and let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.\*  
Do not for ever with thine vailèd\* lids seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
Thou knowest 'tis common—all that lives must die, passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN 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 forced breath, nor the fruitful river in the eye, nor the dejected havior of the visage,\*  
together with all forms, moods, shows 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.

KING CLAUDIUS

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, 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 condolment\* is a course of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief.  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, a heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
an understanding simple and unschooled.  
We pray you, throw to earth this unprevailing woe, and think of us as of a father;  
for let the world take note you are the most immediate to our throne,  
and with no less nobility of love than that which dearest father bears his son, do I impart toward you.

*Take thy fair hour* - leave whenever you like, *A little more than kin, and less than kind.* - Claudius is now Hamlet's uncle and father, but he also seems less than human,  
*nighted color* - mourning garments and gloomy behavior, *Denmark* - the country; King Claudius,  
*vailèd* - downcast, *suspiration* - a long deep sigh, *havior of the visage* - expression of the face,  
*play* - counterfeit, *passeth* - surpasses, *trappings and the suits* - outward appearances,  
*obsequious sorrow* - sorrow befitting his father's death, *condolment* - grieving

For your intent in going back to school in Wittenberg, it is most retrograde to\* our desire, and we beseech you to remain here in the cheer and comfort of our eye, our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

QUEEN 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.

KING CLAUDIUS

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.

Be as ourself in Denmark.

Madam, come. This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet sits smiling to my heart, in grace whereof, no jocund health that Denmark drinks to day, but the great cannon to the clouds shall tell.\*  
Come away.

*(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 fixed 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 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 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 it; frailty, thy name is woman—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— God, a beast that wants discourse\* of reason would have mourned longer—

married with my uncle, my father's brother, but no more like my father than I to Hercules.

O, most wicked speed, to post\* with such dexterity to incestuous sheets!

It is not nor it cannot come to good.

*(Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS and BERNARDO.)*

But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

*retrograde to* - against, *no jocund health...clouds shall tell* - every time a merry and high-spirited toast is made while drinking today, the cannon will be fired, *canon'gainst self-slaughter* - law against suicide, *merely* - completely, *Hyperion* - the sun god, *satyr* - half man, half goat (drunken and lustful), *beteem* - allow, *Niobe* - in Greek mythology the personification of bereavement, *discourse* - the power, *post* - to ride from station to station (often exchanging horses)

HORATIO

Hail to your lordship!

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

My good friend.

And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?

Marcellus?

MARCELLUS

My good lord.

HORATIO

A truant\* disposition, good my lord.

HAMLET

I would not hear your enemy say so. I know you are no truant.

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 pray thee do not mock me, fellow student. I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

HORATIO

Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.\*

HAMLET

Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral baked meats did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!

My father—methinks I see my father.

HORATIO

Where, my lord?

HAMLET

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

*truant* - one who stays away from school without permission; lazy, *followed hard upon* - came soon after

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.

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 awhile 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, on their watch, in the dead of the night, been thus encountered.  
A figure like your father, armed at point\* exactly, cap-a-pe,\* appears before them,  
and with solemn march goes slow and stately by them.  
They, distilled almost to jelly with fear, stand dumb and speak not to him.  
This to me in dreadful secrecy impart they did, and I with them the third night kept the watch,  
where, as they had delivered, both in time and form of the thing, the apparition comes.

HAMLET

But where was this?

MARCELLUS

My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

HAMLET

Did you not speak to it?

HORATIO

My lord I did, but answer made it none.  
Yet once methought it lifted up its head and did address itself to motion like as it would speak,  
but then the morning cock crew loud, and at the sound it shrunk in haste away and vanished from our sight.

*Season your admiration* - Control your wonder, *at point* - completely, *cap-a-pe* - from head to foot

HAMLET

'Tis very strange.

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

Indeed, indeed, sirs, but this troubles me.

Hold you the watch tonight?

MARCELLUS

We do, my lord.

HAMLET

Armed, say you?

BERNARDO

Armed, my lord.

HAMLET

From top to toe?

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, looked he frowningly?

HORATIO

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

HAMLET

Pale or red?

HORATIO

Nay, very pale.

HAMLET

And fixed his eyes upon you?

*beaver* - visor

HORATIO  
Most constantly.

HAMLET  
I would I had been there.

HORATIO  
It would have much amazed you.

HAMLET  
Very like, very like. Stayed it long?

HORATIO  
While one with moderate haste might tell\* a hundred.

MARCELLUS  
Longer, longer.

HORATIO  
Not when I saw it.

HAMLET  
His beard was grizzled, no?

HORATIO  
It was as I have seen it in his life, a sable silvered.\*

HAMLET  
I will watch to night. Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO  
I warrant 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 concealed 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.

ALL  
Our duty to your honor.

HAMLET  
Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.

*tell* - count, *sable silvered* - black mixed with white, *tenable* - held firmly, *requite* - repay



*(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.

*(Exit HAMLET.)*

**Act 1, Scene 3 A room in Polonius' house***(LAERTES and OPHELIA.)*

LAERTES

My necessaries are embarked.\* Farewell.  
And sister, do not sleep but let me hear from you.

OPHELIA

Do you doubt that?

LAERTES

For Hamlet and the trifling of his favor,\* hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,  
a violet in the youth of primy\* nature, forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,  
the perfume of a minute, no more.

OPHELIA

No more but so?

LAERTES

Think it no more.  
Perhaps he loves you now, but you must fear, his greatness weighed, his will is not his own.  
For he is subject to his birth, and on his choice depends the safety and health of this whole state.  
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 honor may sustain, if with too credent\* ear you list\* his songs,  
or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure\* open to his unmastered importunity.\*  
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, and keep you out of the shot and danger of desire.

OPHELIA

I shall the 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 puffed and reckless libertine himself the primrose path of dalliance treads.

LAERTES

O, fear me not.  
I stay too long.  
Here my father comes.

*(Enter POLONIUS.)*

LORD POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!  
The wind sits in the shoulder\* of your sail, and you are stayed\* for.

*necessaries are embarked* - luggage is loaded, *the trifling of his favor* - his frivolous attention,  
*primy* - springtime? sexual?, *credent* - trustful, *list* - listen to, *treasure* - virginity,  
*importunity* - insistent demands, *in the shoulder* - at the back, *stayed* - waited

There - my blessing with thee, and these few precepts in thy memory see thou character.\*  
 Give thy thoughts no tongue, nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.\*  
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,\* grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel,  
 but do not dull\* thy palm with entertainment of\* each new hatched, unfledged\* comrade.  
 Beware of entrance to a quarrel, but being in, bear it that the opposed may beware of thee.  
 Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.  
 Costly thy habit\* as thy purse can buy, but not expressed in fancy;  
 rich, not gaudy, for the apparel oft proclaims the man.  
 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 ownself be true,  
 and it must follow as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man.  
 Farewell. My blessing season\* this in thee!

LAERTES

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS

The time invites you. Go, your servants tend.

LAERTES

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

OPHELIA

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

LAERTES

Farewell.

*(Exit LAERTES.)*

LORD POLONIUS

What is it, Ophelia, he hath said to you?

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

LORD 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.  
 If it be so, I must tell you you do not understand yourself so clearly as it behoves my daughter and your honor.  
 What is between you? Give me up the truth.

*character* - engrave, *Be...vulgar.* - associate easily but never promiscuously  
*adoption tried* - suitability as friends proven, *dull* - make callous, *with entertainment of* - by giving a friendly  
 reception to, *unfledged* - untried, *habit* - clothing, *husbandry* - thriftiness,  
*season* - ripen and make fruitful, *audience* - time spent listening to him

OPHELIA

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

LORD POLONIUS

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

OPHELIA

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

LORD POLONIUS

Marry, I'll teach you. Tender yourself more dearly,\* or you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA

My lord, he hath importuned\* me with love in honorable fashion.

LORD POLONIUS

Ay, fashion you may call it. Go to, go to.

OPHELIA

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

LORD POLONIUS

Ay, springes\* to catch woodcocks.\*

I do know, when the blood burns, how prodigal\* the soul lends the tongue vows.

From this time be somewhat scater of your maiden presence.

Set your entreatments\* at a higher rate than a command to parley.\*

For Lord Hamlet, he is young and with a larger tether may he walk than may be given you.

Ophelia, do not believe his vows,

for they are brokers,\* breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,\* the better to beguile.\*

I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth,

have you so slander any moment leisure as to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

Look to it, I charge you.

OPHELIA

I shall obey, my lord.

(*Exeunt.*)

*tenders* - offers, *unsifted* - untried; untested

*dearly* - expensively, *importuned* - urged, *countenance* - confirmation,

*springes* - traps, *woodcocks* - stupid birds easily trapped,

*prodigal* - lavishly, *entreatments* - interviews, *parley* - discuss,

*brokers* - middlemen, *bawds* - usually women who keeps houses of prostitution, *beguile* - deceive

## Act 1, Scene 4 The platform

(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.

HAMLET

No, it is struck.

HORATIO

Indeed? I heard it not. Then it draws near the season wherein the spirit held his wont\* to walk.

(A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance\* are shot off.)

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The King doth wake to night and takes his rouse,\* and, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish\* down, the kettle drum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO

Is it a custom?

HAMLET

Ay, marry, is it, but to my mind, though I am native here and to the manner born, it is a custom more honored in the breach than the observance.\* This heavy-headed revel east and west makes us traduced\* and taxed of other nations. They clepe\* us drunkards, and with swinish phrase soil our addition;\* and indeed it takes from our achievements.

HORATIO

Look, my lord, it comes!

(Enter GHOST.)

*shrewdly* - wickedly, *held his wont* - is accustomed, *ordnance* - a canon, *takes his rouse* - enjoys a bout of drinking, *Rhenish* - Rhine wine, *custom...observance* - a custom better broken than maintained, *traduced* - disgraced, *clepe* - call, *addition* - reputation

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,\* bring with thee airs\* from heaven or blasts\* from hell, be thy intents wicked or charitable, thou comest 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 why thy canonized\* bones, hearsed in death, have burst their cerements;\* why the sepulcher,\* wherein we saw thee quietly interred, hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws, to cast thee up again.

What may this mean that thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel, revisitest thus the glimpses of the moon? 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.

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 I will follow it.

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, what should be the fear?

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

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the dreadful summit of the cliff that beetles\* over his base into the sea, and there assume some other horrible form, which might deprive your sovereignty of reason and draw you into madness?

*spirit of health or a goblin damned* - The Catholics and the Protestants were the two major competing religious groups in Elizabethan times. Catholics believed, upon death, one's soul went to heaven, hell or purgatory. In purgatory (where the Ghost will claim he resides) one could cleanse one's soul enough to finally enter heaven. Catholics might interpret this being as a spirit of health. Protestants believed the dead stayed dead until Christ came back on judgment day. Then one's soul was either sent to everlasting life in heaven or damnation in hell. A Protestant belief system could only interpret this being as a goblin damned. Perhaps Hamlet's inability to act has much to do with the two warring religious belief systems of Elizabethan times.

*airs* - pleasant (Catholic) breezes, *blasts* - diseased (Protestant) winds, *canonized* - consecrated; bones buried according to the rules of the Church, *cerements* - burial cloth, *sepulcher* - burial vault, *impartment* - communication, *beetles* - juts out

HAMLET

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

MARCELLUS

You shall not go, my lord.

HAMLET

Hold off your hands.

HORATIO

Be ruled. You shall not go.

HAMLET

Unhand me, gentlemen.

By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets\* me! I say, away!

*(To the GHOST.)* Go on. I'll follow thee.

*(Exeunt GHOST and HAMLET.)*

HORATIO

He waxes\* desperate with imagination.\*

MARCELLUS

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

HORATIO

Have after.

To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO

Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS

Nay, let's follow him.

*(Exeunt.)*

*lets* - hinders, *waxes* - grows, *imagination* - delusions

**Act 1, Scene 5 Another part of the platform**

(Enter GHOST and HAMLET.)

HAMLET

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

GHOST

Mark me.

HAMLET

I will.

GHOST

My hour is almost come, when I to sulphurous and tormenting flames must render up myself.

HAMLET

Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold.

HAMLET

Speak. I am bound to hear.

GHOST

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET

What?

GHOST

I am thy father's spirit, doomed for a certain term to walk the night, and for the day confined to fast\* in fires, till the foul crimes done in my days of nature are burnt and purged away.

But\* that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison house,

I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow\* up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,

make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,

thy knotted locks to part and each particular hair to stand on end like quills upon the fretful porpentine.\*

But this eternal blazon\* must not be to ears of flesh and blood.

List, list, O, list!

If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAMLET

O God!

*fast* - do penance, *But* - Except, *harrow* - a heavy frame with spikes for leveling or breaking up plowed ground, *porpentine* - porcupine, *eternal blazon* - revelation of eternity



GHOST

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

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

HAMLET

Haste me to know it, that I, with wings as swift as meditation or the thoughts of love,  
may sweep to my revenge.

GHOST

I find thee apt.

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 rankly abused.

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!

GHOST

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate\* beast, 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!

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.

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 hebenon\* in a vial,

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,

and with a sudden vigour doth posset,\* like eager droppings into milk, the thin and wholesome blood.

So did it mine.

Thus was I sleeping by a brother's hand of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatched,

cut off even in the blossoms of my sin, unhouseled,\* disappointed,\* unaneled,\*

no reckoning made, but sent to my account with all my imperfections on my head.

O, horrible! O, horrible! Most horrible!

If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be a couch for luxury\* and damned incest.

*forged process* - falsified official report, *adulterate* - adulterous, *secure* - unsuspecting,

*hebenon* - some poisonous plant, *enmity* - hostility, *posset* - curdle, *unhouseled* - without the Sacrament,

*disappointed* - unprepared spiritually, *unaneled* - without last rites, *luxury* - lechery

But howsoever thou pursuest this act, taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive against thy mother.  
Leave her to heaven and to those thorns that in her bosom lodge to prick and sting her.

Fare thee well at once!

The glow worm shows the matin\* to be near and begins to pale his uneffectual fire.\*

Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

*(Exit GHOST.)*

HAMLET

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? And shall I couple\* hell?

O fie! 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? 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 within the book and volume of my brain.

O most pernicious woman! O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!

HORATIO

*(Within.)* My lord, my lord—

MARCELLUS

*(Within.)* Lord Hamlet—

HORATIO

*(Within.)* Heaven secure him!

HAMLET

So be it!

*(Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.)*

MARCELLUS

How is it, my noble lord?

HORATIO

What news, my lord?

HAMLET

O, wonderful!

HORATIO

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No, you'll reveal it.

*matin* - morning, *uneffectual fire* - fire that no longer gives light, *couple* - include,  
*distracted globe* - confused head, *saws* - wise sayings, *forms* - concepts, *pressures* - impressions

HORATIO  
Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS  
Nor I, my lord.

HAMLET  
Good friends, as you are friends, scholars and soldiers, give me one poor request.

HORATIO  
What is it, my lord? We will.

HAMLET  
Never make known what you have seen to night.

HORATIO  
My lord, we will not.

HAMLET  
Nay, but swear it.

HORATIO  
In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS  
Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET  
Upon my sword.\*

MARCELLUS  
We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET  
Indeed, upon my sword!

GHOST  
(*Beneath.*) Swear.

HAMLET  
Ah ha, boy! Sayest thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?\*

Come on. You hear this fellow in the cellarage. Consent to swear.

HORATIO  
Propose the oath, my lord.

*Upon my sword.* - oaths were often sworn on a sword because the hilt is in the form of a cross,  
*truepenny* - trusty fellow

HAMLET

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

GHOST

*(Beneath.)* Swear.

*(They swear.)*

HAMLET

Swear by my sword never to speak of this that you have heard.

GHOST

*(Beneath.)* Swear.

*(They swear.)*

HAMLET

Well said, old mole! Canst work in the earth so fast? A worthy pioner!\*

HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET

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 so-ever 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 encumbered 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 such ambiguous giving out, to note that you know aught\* of me— this do swear, so grace and mercy at your most\* need help you.

GHOST

*(Beneath.)* Swear.

*(They swear.)*

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

So, gentlemen, with all my love I do commend me to you.

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.

*(Exeunt.)*

*pioner* - pioneer; miner, *meet* - appropriate, *antic* - mad,  
*list* - chose, *aught* - anything, *most* - greatest, *still* - always

## Act 2, Scene 1 A room in Polonius' house

(*POLONIUS and REYNALDO.*)

LORD POLONIUS

Give Laertes this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO

I will, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS

You shall do wisely, good Reynaldo, before you visit him, to make inquire of his behavior: such as gaming, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling, or drabbing—\* companions noted and most known to youth and liberty.

You have me,\* have you not?

REYNALDO

My lord, I have.

LORD POLONIUS

God be with you. Fare you well.

REYNALDO

Good my lord!

(*Exit REYNALDO.*)

(*Enter OPHELIA.*)

LORD POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia! What's the matter?

OPHELIA

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

LORD POLONIUS

With what, in the name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,\* lord Hamlet, with his doublet\* all unbraced,\* no hat upon his head, his stockings fouled, ungartered, and down-gyved\* to his ankle, pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, and with a look as if he had been loosed out of hell to speak of horrors, he comes before me.

LORD POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?

*drabbing* - whoring, *have me* - understand me,

*closet* - bedroom, *doublet* - jacket, *unbraced* - unlaced, *down-gyved* - fallen down

OPHELIA

My lord, I do not know, but truly I do fear it.

LORD POLONIUS

What said he?

OPHELIA

He took me by the wrist and held me hard and falls to such perusal of my face as he would draw it.

Long stayed he so.

At last, he raised a sigh so piteous and profound as it did seem to shatter all his bulk and end his being.

That done, he lets me go, and with his head over his shoulder turned he seem'd to find his way without his eyes, for out of doors he went without their helps, and to the last bended their light on me.

LORD 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.

Have you given him any hard words of late?

OPHELIA

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

LORD POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.

I feared he did but trifle, and meant to wreck\* thee; but, beshrew my jealousy!\*

By heaven, it is as proper to our age\* to cast beyond ourselves\* in our opinions as it is common for the younger sort to lack discretion.

Come, go we to the King.

*(Exeunt.)*

*fordoes* - destroys, *wreck* - ruin, *beshrew my jealousy* - curse my suspicion,  
*proper to our age* - natural to old men, *cast beyond ourselves* - make something more significant than it is

## Act 2, Scene 2 A room in the castle

*(Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN and attendants.)*

KING 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—

I call it, sith\* nor the 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 the understanding of himself, I cannot dream of.

I entreat you both, that being of so young days brought up with him, and so neighbored to his youth and havior, that you vouchsafe\* your rest here in our court some little time,

so by your companies to draw him on to pleasures, and to gather so much as from occasion you may glean, whether aught\* to us unknown afflicts him thus, that opened,\* lies within our remedy.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Good gentlemen, he hath much talked 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.

ROSENCRANTZ

Both your majesties might, by the sovereign power you have of us, put your dread pleasures more into command than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN

But we both obey,

and here give up ourselves in the full bent\* to lay our service freely at your feet, to be commanded.

KING CLAUDIUS

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN 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.

*(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN and some attendants.)*

*(Enter POLONIUS.)*

LORD POLONIUS

The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord, are joyfully returned.

*Moreover that* - Besides the fact that, *sith* - since, *vouchsafe* - condescend to grant,

*aught* - anything, *opened* - revealed, *he more adheres* - he is more devoted,

*gentry* - courtesy, *in the full bent* - with the utmost willingness

KING CLAUDIUS

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

LORD POLONIUS

Have I, my lord?

I assure my good liege, I hold my duty as I hold my soul, both to my God and to my gracious King. And I do think—or else this brain of mine hunts not the trail of policy so sure as it hath used to do—that I have found the very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

LORD POLONIUS

Give first admittance to the ambassadors. My news shall be the fruit\* to that great feast.

KING 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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I doubt it is no other but the main, his father's death and our overhasty marriage.

KING CLAUDIUS

Well, we shall sift him.\*

*(Re enter POLONIUS, with VOLTEMAND and CORNELIUS.)*

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltmand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.

Upon our first,\* he sent out to suppress his nephew's levies,\* which to him appeared to be a preparation against the Polack, but better looked into, he truly found it was against your highness, whereat grieved, he 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 the 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, *(Giving a paper.)* that it might please you to give quiet pass through your dominions for this enterprise, on such regards of safety and allowance as therein are set down.

*still* - always, *fruit* - dessert, *sift him* - examine Polonius closely,

*our first* - our first raising the matter, *levies* - compulsory enlistment for military service,

*in fine* - in the end, *give the assay of arms* - go to war



## KING CLAUDIUS

It likes us well; and at our more considered time we'll read, answer, and think upon this business.  
 Meantime we thank you for your well-took labor.  
 Go to your rest; at night we'll feast together.  
 Most welcome home!

*(Exeunt VOLTEMAND and CORNELIUS.)*

## LORD POLONIUS

This business is well ended.  
 My liege and madam, to expostulate\* what majesty should be, what duty is,  
 why day is day, night night, and time is time, were nothing but to waste night, day and time.  
 Therefore, since brevity\* is the soul of wit, and tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes, I will be brief.  
 Your noble son is mad.  
 Mad call I it, for, to define true madness, what is it but to be nothing else but mad? But let that go.

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

More matter, with less art.

## LORD 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 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.\*  
 I have a daughter who in her duty and obedience hath given me this.  
 Now gather, and surmise.  
*(Reads.)* 'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'—  
 That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase.  
 But you shall hear. Thus: *(Reads.)* 'In her excellent white bosom, these, etc.'

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

## LORD 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.  
 Thine evermore most dear lady, HAMLET.'  
 This in obedience hath my daughter shown me.

## KING CLAUDIUS

But how hath she received his love?

*expostulate* - examine, *brevity* - contraction into few words, *Perpend.* - Ponder.

LORD POLONIUS

What do you think of me?

KING CLAUDIUS

As of a man faithful and honorable.

LORD POLONIUS

I would fain\* prove so.

But what might you think, when I had seen this hot love on the wing and looked upon this love with idle sight?  
What might you think?

No, I went round\* to work and my young mistress thus I did bespeak:

'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star. This must not be.'

And then I precepts gave her, that she should lock herself from his resort,  
admit no messengers, receive no tokens.

Which done, he fell into a sadness, 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.

KING CLAUDIUS

Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

It may be, very likely.

LORD POLONIUS

Hath there been such a time that I have positively said 'Tis so,' when it proved otherwise?

KING CLAUDIUS

Not that I know.

LORD POLONIUS

*(Pointing to his head and shoulder.)* Take this from this, if this be otherwise.

KING CLAUDIUS

How may we try it\* further?

LORD POLONIUS

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

LORD POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him. Be you and I behind an arras then. Mark\* the encounter.

If he love her not and be not from his reason fallen thereon, let me be no assistant for a state but keep a farm.

*fain* - gladly, *round* - plainly, *watch* - sleepless state, *lightness* - lightheadedness,  
*declension* - deterioration, *try it* - test this theory, *Mark* - Watch

KING CLAUDIUS

We will try it.

*(Enter HAMLET, reading.)*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

LORD POLONIUS

Away, I do beseech you both, away. I'll board him presently.\*

*(Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE and attendants.)*

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God a mercy.

LORD POLONIUS

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET

Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

LORD POLONIUS

Not I, my lord.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a man.

LORD POLONIUS

Honest, my lord?

HAMLET

Ay, sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

LORD POLONIUS

That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET

Have you a daughter?

LORD POLONIUS

I have, my lord.

HAMLET

Let her not walk in the sun.

*I'll board him presently.* - I'll speak to him immediately.

Conception\* is a blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend, look to it.

LORD 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.

I'll speak to him again.

*(To HAMLET.)* What do you read, my lord?

HAMLET

Words, words, words.

LORD POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

LORD 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, that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams.\*

All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down, for yourself, sir, should be old\* as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

LORD POLONIUS

*(Aside.)* Though this be madness, yet there is method in it.

Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET

Into my grave?

LORD POLONIUS

Indeed, that is out of the air.

*(Aside.)* How pregnant sometimes his replies are.

I will leave him, and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.

*(To HAMLET.)* My honorable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET

You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part with—except my life, except my life, except my life.

LORD POLONIUS

Fare you well, my lord.

**Conception** - the ability to form ideas; the ability to become pregnant,

**hams** - back of the thighs; buttocks, **be old** - become as old

HAMLET

These tedious old fools!

*(Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

LORD POLONIUS

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet? There he is.

ROSENCRANTZ

*(To POLONIUS.)* God save you, sir!

*(Exit POLONIUS.)*

GUILDENSTERN

My honored lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent\* children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy, in that we are not over happy. On fortune's cap we are not the very button.\*

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?

GUILDENSTERN

'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET

In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true—she is a strumpet.\*

What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

*indifferent* - ordinary, *button* - knob at the top (and so the summit), *strumpet* - prostitute

HAMLET

Then is doomsday near.

What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune, that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lord?

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

HAMLET

A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards\* and dungeons, Denmark being one of the 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.

But what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET

Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation?

Come, deal justly with me. Come, come. Nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET

Why, anything but to the purpose.\*

There is a kind of confession in your looks which your modesties have not craft enough to color.

I know the good King and Queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET

That you must teach me.

Be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

*wards* - cells, *anything but to the purpose* - any lie you like

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET

I will tell you why.

I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth,\* forgone all custom of exercises; and 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 majestic roof fretted with golden fire—why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors.

What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculty,\* 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.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

Why did you laugh then, when I said, 'Man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

*(Flourish.)*

GUILDENSTERN

There are the players now.

HAMLET

Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore, but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET

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

*(Enter POLONIUS.)*

*mirth* - happiness, *goes...disposition* - I am so depressed, *faculty* - bodily and mental power, *quintessence* - essence, *lenten entertainment* - poor reception, *coted* - overtook, *hawk* - bird; a pickaxe, *handsaw* - saw; bird (heron)

LORD POLONIUS

Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players.

LORD POLONIUS

My lord, I have news to tell you. The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET

Buz, buz!\*

LORD 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,\* these are the only men.

*(Enter the PLAYERS.)*

HAMLET

You are welcome, masters, welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well.

O, my old friend! Thy face is valenced\* since I saw thee last.

What, my young lady\* and mistress!

By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven\* than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine.\*

Pray God, your voice be not cracked.

Give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

FIRST PLAYER

What speech, my 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, pleased not the general.\*

'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:

'With eyes like carbuncles,\* the hellish Pyrrhus old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you.

FIRST PLAYER

'Anon Pyrrhus finds Priam.

At him he drives, in rage strikes wide, but with the whiff and wind of his fell\* sword the unnerved father falls.

Then his sword, which was declining on the milky head of reverend Priam, seemed in the air to stick.

*Buz, buz!* - Old news!, *scene individable* - plays with no intermissions?,

*poem unlimited* - a play not conforming to the unities of time and place?,

*valenced* - fringed (with a beard), *young lady* - a boy who plays woman's parts,

*nearer to heaven* - taller, *chopine* - women's thick-soled shoes, *general* - common audience,

*Aeneas' tale* - Aeneas' account of the fall of Troy,

*carbuncles* - mythical gems of fiery color supposed to give off light in the dark, *fell* - cruel



So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood, and like a neutral to his will and matter\* did nothing.  
 But as we often see, against\* some storm, a silence in the heavens, the bold winds speechless,  
 and soon the dreadful thunder doth rend the region,  
 so after Pyrrhus' pause, aroused vengeance sets him new a work,  
 and never did the Cyclops'\* hammers fall on Mars' armor with less remorse  
 than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword now falls on Priam.  
 But who, O, who had seen the mobled\* Queen run barefoot up and down,  
 a clout\* upon that head where late the diadem\* stood, and for a robe about her lank loins a blanket,  
 in the alarm of fear caught up?  
 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,  
 would have made milch\* the burning eyes of heaven, and passion in the gods.'

LORD POLONIUS

Look, whether he has not turned his color and has tears in his eyes. Pray you, no more.

HAMLET

'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest soon.

Good my lord, will you see the players well bestowed?\*

Let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time.

After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

LORD POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

God's bodykins,\* man, much better! Use every man after his desert, and who should escape whipping?

Take them in.

LORD POLONIUS

Come, sirs.

HAMLET

Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play tomorrow.

*(Exit POLONIUS with all the PLAYERS but the FIRST PLAYER.)*

Old friend, can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

We'll have it tomorrow night.

Could you study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines, which I would set down and insert in it?

*a neutral to his will and matter* - indifferent to his purposed business, *against* - just before,  
*Cyclops* - three one-eyed giants who made armor for the gods, *mobled* - muffled, *clout* - cloth,  
*diadem* - crown, *milch* - milk-yielding i.e. tearful, *bestowed* - lodged, *God's bodykins* - by God's dear body

FIRST PLAYER

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well. Follow that lord, and look you mock him not.

*(Exit FIRST PLAYER.)*

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

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord.

*(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

HAMLET

Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here, but in a fiction, in a dream of passion, could force his soul so to his own conceit that from her working all his visage waned,\* tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect, a broken voice, and his whole function suiting with forms to his conceit?\* And all for nothing! For Hecuba! What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he should weep for her?

What would he do, had he the motive and the cue\* for passion that I have?

He would drown the stage with tears and cleave the general ear with horrid speech, make mad the guilty and appall the free, confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed the very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I, a dull and muddy-mettled\* rascal, can say nothing.

No, not for a king, upon whose property and most dear life a damned defeat was made.

Am I a coward? Who calls me villain? Breaks my pate\* across? Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face? Tweaks me by the nose? Gives me the lie in the throat, as deep as to the lungs? Who does me this? Ha? 'Swounds,\* I should take it,

for it cannot be but I am pigeon livered and lack gall\* to make oppression bitter, or ere this I should have fatted all the region kites\* with this slave's offal.\*

Bloody, bawdy villain! Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless\* villain! O, vengeance!

Why, what an ass am I.

This is most brave, that I, the son of a dear father murdered, prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell, must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words, and fall a cursing like a very drab,\* a scullion!\*

Fie upon it! Foh!

About,\* my brain.

*visage waned* - face turned pale,

*function...conceit* - all his bodily powers responding with physical expressiveness to his imagination,

*cue* - stimulus, *muddy-mettled* - dull spirited, *pate* - head, *gives me...lungs* - calls me an out-and-out liar,

'*Swounds* - God's wounds, *pigeon-livered and lack gall* - pigeons are meek and it was believed their livers didn't secrete gall, the supposed source of anger, *kites* - predatory birds of the hawk family, *offal* - entrails,

*kindless* - inhuman; not of our kind, *drab* - whore, *scullion* - the lowest kitchen servant,

*About* - Turn about (think in a different direction)

I have heard that guilty creatures sitting at a play have by the very cunning of the scene  
 been struck so to the soul that presently they have proclaimed their malefactions.\*  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak with most miraculous organ.  
 I'll have these players play something like the murder of my father before mine uncle.  
 I'll observe his looks. I'll tent\* him to the quick.\* If he do blench,\* I know my course.  
 The spirit that I have seen may be the devil, and the devil hath power to assume a pleasing shape,  
 yea, and perhaps 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 HAMLET.)

*malefactions* - crimes, *tent* - probe (a tent was a roll of lint used to search and cleanse a wound),  
*quick* - exposed flesh; vital core, *blench* - flinch,  
*The spirit... to damn me* - the spirit may not be his father's Catholic spirit sent to help Hamlet, but a disguised  
 Protestant devil sent to take advantage of Hamlet's vulnerable state to trick him and capture his soul,  
*relative* - relevant

**Act 3, Scene 1    A room in the castle**

*(KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

And can you by no drift of circumstance\* get from him why he puts on this confusion?

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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ

Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN

But with much forcing of his disposition.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Did you assay\* him to any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ

Madam, it so fell out that certain players newly arrived did give him joy to hear of, and, as I think, they have already order this night to play before him.

LORD POLONIUS

'Tis most true, and he beseeched me to entreat your majesties to hear and see the matter.

KING CLAUDIUS

With all my heart, and it doth much content me to hear him so inclined.  
Good gentlemen, give him a further edge\* and drive his purpose on to these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ

We shall, my lord.

*(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,  
for we have sent for Hamlet hither, that he, as 'twere by accident, may here affront Ophelia,  
that we may of their encounter frankly judge if it be the affliction of his love or no that thus he suffers for.

*drift of circumstance* - manipulation of conversation, *forward to be sounded* - at all inclined to be probed,  
*assay* - tempt, *edge* - encouragement

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I shall obey you.

And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish that your good beauties be the happy cause of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues will bring him to his wanted\* way again, to both your honors.

OPHELIA

Madam, I wish it may.

*(Exit QUEEN GERTRUDE.)*

LORD POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here.

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

*(KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS hide so they may watch the encounter.)*

*(Enter HAMLET.)*

HAMLET

To be, or not to be—that is the question:

whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer 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 heart ache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to.

'Tis a consummation devoutly to be wished.

To die, to sleep—to sleep—perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,\*

for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil,\*  
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, the oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,\*  
the pangs of despised love, the law's delay, the insolence of office,  
and the spurns that patient merit of the unworthy takes,

when he himself might his quietus make\* with a bare bodkin?\*

Who would fardels\* bear, to grunt and sweat under a weary life,

but that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country, from whose bourn\* no traveller returns,  
puzzles the will and makes us rather bear those ills we have than fly to others that we know not of?

Thus conscience\* does make cowards of us all,

and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied over with the pale cast of thought,

and enterprises of great pith and moment\* with this regard their currents turn awry,

and lose the name of action.

Soft you now, the fair Ophelia.

Nymph, in thy orisons\* be all my sins remembered.

*wanted* - customary, *rub* - obstacle, *mortal coil* - turmoil of living, *respect* - consideration,  
*makes calamity of so long life* - makes severe distress last so long, *contumely* - haughty rudeness,  
*quietus make* - release from life, *bodkin* - dagger, *fardels* - burdens,  
*ourn* - frontier, *conscience* - the idea of suicide, *pith and moment* - gravity and importance, *orisons* - prayers

OPHELIA

Good my lord, how does your honor for this many a day?

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, I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

My honored lord, you know right well you did,  
and with them words of so sweet breath composed as made the things more rich.  
There, my lord.

HAMLET

Ha, ha! Are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

HAMLET

I did love you once.

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET

You should not have believed me. I loved you not.

OPHELIA

I was the more deceived.

HAMLET

Get thee to a nunnery. Wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?  
I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious,  
with more offences 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.

*remembrances* - love-tokens

Go thy ways to a nunnery.  
Where's your father?

OPHELIA  
At home, my lord.

HAMLET  
Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house.  
Farewell.

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.\*  
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.

OPHELIA  
O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET  
I have heard of your paintings too. God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another.  
You jig, you amble, and you lisp, and make your wantonness your ignorance.\*  
Go to, I'll no more on it; 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 HAMLET.)*

OPHELIA  
O, what a noble mind is here overthrown!

*(Re enter KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS.)*

KING CLAUDIUS  
Love? His affections do not that way tend, nor what he spoke was not like madness.  
There's something in his soul over which his melancholy sits on brood,  
and I do doubt\* the hatch and the disclose\* will be some danger;  
which for to prevent he shall with speed to England.  
Haply the seas and countries different, shall expel this something settled matter in his heart.  
What think you on it?

*calumny* - slander, *monsters* - i.e. cuckolds (a man married to an unfaithful wife),  
*make your wantonness your ignorance* - try to make others believe your unchaste behavior is just ignorance,  
*doubt* - fear, *disclose* - revealing of it

LORD 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.

I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear of all their conference.

If she find him not,\* to England send him, or confine him where your wisdom best shall think.

KING CLAUDIUS

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

*(Exeunt.)*

*find him not* - does not find out what the matter with him is



## Act 3, Scene 2 A hall in the castle

(HAMLET and PLAYERS.)

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly\* on the tongue.  
 But if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief\* the town crier spoke my lines.  
 Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently,  
 for in the very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion,  
 you must acquire a smoothness.  
 O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious\* periwig pated\* fellow tear a passion to tatters,  
 to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,  
 who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise.  
 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 overstep not the modesty of nature.  
 For any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing,  
 whose end, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature:  
 to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image,  
 and the very age and body of the time\* his form and pressure.\*  
 Now this overdone, or come tardy off,\*  
 though it make the unskillful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve,  
 the censure\* of the which one\* must in your allowance overweigh a whole theatre of others.  
 O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly,  
 that neither having the accent of Christians, nor the gait\* of Christian, pagan, nor no 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.  
 Go, make you ready.

(Exeunt PLAYERS.)

(Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)

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

LORD POLONIUS

And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET

Bid the players make haste.

(Exit POLONIUS.)

Will you two help to hasten them?

*trippingly* - easily, *as lief* - rather, *robustious* - noisy, *periwig-pated* - wig wearing,  
*very age and body of the time* - the true state of things as they are now, *pressure* - likeness (literally, impression  
 made in wax), *come tardy off* - inadequately or timidly carried out, *censure* - disapproval,  
*one* - one individual, *gait* - walk, *journeymen* - workmen not yet masters of their trade (not God)

ROSENCRANTZ

We will, my lord.

*(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

HAMLET

What ho, Horatio!

HORATIO

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET

Horatio, thou art even as just a man as ever my conversation coped 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 flattered?

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.

There is a play to night before the King.

One scene of it comes near the circumstance which I have told thee of my father's death.

I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot, observe mine uncle.

If his occulted\* guilt do not itself unkennel\* in one speech, it is a damned ghost\* that we have seen.

Give him heedful note, for I mine eyes will rivet to his face,

and after we will both our judgments join in censure\* of his seeming.

HORATIO

Well, my lord.

HAMLET

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

Get you a place.

*(A flourish. Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN and others.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

*Horatio...withal* - Horatio, you are as honest a man as I have had dealings with,  
*occulted* - supernaturally revealed, *unkennel* - reveal (as dogs let out of their kennel),  
*damned ghost* - i.e. a Protestant demon, *censure* - judgment; criticizing

HAMLET

Excellent, in faith, of the chameleon's dish.\* I eat the air, promise crammed.\* You cannot feed capons\* so.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

(*To POLONIUS.*) My lord, you played once in the university, you say?

LORD POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

What did you enact?

LORD POLONIUS

I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed in the Capitol; Brutus killed me.

HAMLET

It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.

Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, my lord. They stay upon your patience.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET

No, good mother, here's metal more attractive.\*

LORD POLONIUS

(*To KING CLAUDIUS.*) O, ho! Do you mark that?

HAMLET

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

(*Lying down at OPHELIA'S feet.*)

OPHELIA

No, my lord.

*chameleon's dish* - chameleons could exist for a long time without eating and therefore were thought to live on air,

*the air, promise crammed* - the air is crammed with the promise of the unmasking of Claudius,

*capons* - castrated male chickens, *not mine* - not for me as the asker of the question,

*metal more attractive* - conventional Elizabethan love poetry often described women as magnets

HAMLET

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA

I think nothing, my lord.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

What is, my lord?

HAMLET

Nothing.

OPHELIA

You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET

Who, I?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

What should a man do but be merry?

For look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

OPHELIA

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAMLET

So long? 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.

*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 lies down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off the King's crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exits.*

*The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner woos the Queen with gifts; she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.*

*Exeunt players in dumb show.*

OPHELIA

What means this, my lord?

HAMLET

Marry, it means mischief.\*

OPHELIA

Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

*(Enter PROLOGUE.)*

HAMLET

We shall know by this fellow.

OPHELIA

Will he tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

You are naught,\* you are naught: I'll mark the play.

PROLOGUE

For us, and for our tragedy, here stooping to your clemency,\* we beg your hearing patiently.

*(Exit PROLOGUE.)*

HAMLET

Is this a prologue?

OPHELIA

'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET

As woman's love.

*(Enter PLAYER KING and PLAYER QUEEN.)*

PLAYER KING

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart\* gone round Neptune's salt wash,\*  
since love our hearts and Hymen\* did our hands unite commutual\* in most sacred bands.

PLAYER QUEEN

So many journeys\* may the sun make us again count over ere love be done!

*mischief* - wicked deeds, *naught* - indecent, *clemency* - mercy,

*Phoebus' cart* - the sun, *Neptune's salt wash* - the sea,

*Hymen* - God of marriage, *commutual* - mutually, *so many journeys* - i.e. thirty years

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,  
 so far from cheer and from your former state.  
 Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;  
 where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

PLAYER KING

'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;  
 my operant powers their functions leave to do.\*  
 And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,  
 honored, beloved; and haply one as kind  
 for husband shalt thou—

PLAYER QUEEN

O, confound the rest!  
 Such love must needs be treason in my breast.  
 In second husband let me be accurst!\*

None wed the second but who killed the first.\*

HAMLET

(*Aside.*) Wormwood,\* wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN

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

PLAYER KING

I do believe you think what now you speak,  
 but what we do determine oft we break.  
 What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
 the passion ending, doth the purpose lose.  
 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,  
 both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,  
 if, once a widow, ever I be wife!

HAMLET

If she should break it now!

*my...do* - my vital bodily functions cease to work,  
*in...accurst* - if I marry a second husband let him be a curse to me,  
*None...first* - no woman should marry a second husband unless she has killed the first,  
*Wormwood* - a bitter herb (used figuratively), *instances* - motives,  
*but die thy thoughts* - but you may change your mind, *repose* - rest,

PLAYER KING

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,

*(He sleeps.)* and never come mischance between us twain!

*(Exit PLAYER QUEEN.)*

HAMLET

Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

The lady protests too much, methinks.

HAMLET

O, but she'll keep her word.

KING CLAUDIUS

Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in it?

HAMLET

No, no, they do but jest. No offence in the world.

KING CLAUDIUS

What do you call the play?

HAMLET

The Mouse trap.

This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna.

Gonzago is the Duke's name; his wife, Baptista. You shall see anon.

'Tis a knavish piece of work, but what of that? Your majesty and we that have free souls, it touches us not.

*(Enter LUCIANUS.)*

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

LUCIANUS

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.

*beguile* - cheat, *confederate season* - the occasion being my ally, *else* - and,

*Hecate* - Goddess of witchcraft, *ban* - curse, *usurp* - take away

*(He pours the poison into the sleeper's ears.)*

HAMLET

He poisons him in the garden for his estate.  
You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA

The King rises.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire?\*

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How fares my lord?

LORD POLONIUS

Give over the play.

KING CLAUDIUS

Give me some light. Away!

POLONIUS

Lights, lights, lights!

*(Exeunt all but HAMLET and HORATIO.)*

HAMLET

Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers\* get me a fellowship\* in a cry\* of players?

HORATIO

Half a share.

HAMLET

A whole one, I.  
O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word\* for a thousand pound. Didst perceive?

HORATIO

Very well, my lord.

HAMLET

Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO

I did very well note him.

*false fire* - discharge of firearms with blank cartridges, *forest of feathers* - plumes for actors' costumes, *fellowship* - position, *cry* - pack, *take the ghost's word* - (and believe it is a Catholic ghost in purgatory)



HAMLET

Ah, ha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!  
Come, some music!

*(Re enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

GUILDENSTERN

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET

Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN

The King, sir—

HAMLET

Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN

Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.\*

HAMLET

With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN

No, my lord, rather with choler.\*

HAMLET

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

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

I am tame, sir; pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN

The Queen, your mother says, your behavior hath struck her into amazement.

HAMLET

O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother!

ROSENCRANTZ

She desires to speak with you in her closet, ere you go to bed.

*distempered* - out of temper, *choler* - anger,  
*purgation* - the act of purging (Hamlet could mean medical (blood-letting), spiritual or legal)

HAMLET

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

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET

So I 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.

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.

*(Re enter players with recorders.)*

O, the recorders! Let me see one.  
To withdraw with you.\*  
Will you play upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET

I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN

Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET

I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN

I know no touch of it, my lord.

*pickers and stealers* - hands, *succession* - right to be the next king,  
*while the grass grows* - the proverb ends with "the horse starves.", *To withdraw with you.* - Let's speak privately.

HAMLET

'Tis as easy as lying.

Govern these ventages\* with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth,  
and it will discourse most eloquent music.

Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me!

You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery,\*  
and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak.

'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe?

Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret\* me, yet you cannot play upon me.

*(Enter POLONIUS.)*

God bless you, sir!

LORD 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?

LORD POLONIUS

By the mass, and 'tis like a camel, indeed.

HAMLET

Methinks it is like a weasel.

LORD POLONIUS

It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET

Or like a whale?

LORD POLONIUS

Very like a whale.

HAMLET

Then I will come to my mother by and by.

They fool me to the top of my bent.\*

I will come by and by.

*ventages* - holes, *mystery* - personal secret, *fret* - irritate; fret fingering of certain stringed musical instruments,  
*fool me to the top of my bent* - play along with me to my limit (an archery metaphor where the bow can bend no further)

LORD POLONIUS

I will say so.

HAMLET

By and by is easily said.

*(Exit POLONIUS.)*

Leave me, friends.

*(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.

Let me be cruel, not unnatural. I will speak daggers to her, but use none.

*(Exit HAMLET.)*

*Nero* - (Nero had his mother murdered)

### Act 3, Scene 3 A room in the castle

(*KING CLAUDIUS, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*)

KING CLAUDIUS

It stands not safe with us to let his madness range. Therefore prepare you.  
I your commission\* will forthwith dispatch,\* and he to England shall along with you.  
The terms of our estate\* may not endure hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow out of his lunacies.

ROSENCRANTZ

We will haste us.

(*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*)

(*Enter POLONIUS.*)

LORD POLONIUS

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.  
Behind the arras I'll convey myself, to hear the process.  
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed, and tell you what I know.

KING CLAUDIUS

Thanks, dear my lord.

(*Exit POLONIUS.*)

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven; it hath the primal eldest curse\* upon it, a brother's murder.  
Pray can I not, though inclination be as sharp as will.  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,  
and like a man to double business bound\* I stand in pause where I shall first begin, and both neglect.  
What if this cursed hand were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow?  
Whereto serves mercy but to confront the visage of offence?\*

And what's in prayer but this two fold force, to be forestalled ere we come to fall, or pardoned 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 murder'?

That cannot be, since I am still possessed of those effects for which I did the murder,  
my crown, mine own ambition and my Queen.  
May one be pardoned and retain the offence?\*

In the corrupted currents of this world offence's gilded hand\* may shove by justice,  
and oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself buys out the law.

*commission* - official orders, *dispatch* - prepare, *terms of our estate* - responsibilities as King,  
*primal eldest curse* - that of Cain, who also murdered his brother (Abel),  
*double business bound* - faced with two different tasks,  
*whereto...offence* - what purpose does mercy serve if not to oppose sin face to face?,  
*retain the offence* - keep what one gained from the crime,  
*offence's gilded hand* - offenders hand carrying a bribe of gold

But 'tis not so above. There is no shuffling, there the action lies in his true nature,  
and we ourselves compelled, even to the teeth and forehead of our faults, to give in evidence.  
What then? What rests?  
O wretched state! O bosom black as death! O limed\* soul, that struggling to be free art more engaged!  
Help, angels! Make assay!\*  
Bow, stubborn knees, and, heart with strings of steel, be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!  
All may be well.

(*KING CLAUDIUS kneels.*)

(*Enter HAMLET.*)

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat,\* now he is praying, and now I'll do it.  
And so he goes to heaven, and so am I revenged.  
That would be scanned.\*  
A villain kills my father, and for that I, his sole son, do this same villain send to heaven.  
Why, this is hire and salary,\* not revenge.  
He took my father grossly, full of bread, with all his crimes broad blown, as flush\* as May;  
and am I then revenged, to take him in the purging of his soul, when he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
No!  
Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.\*  
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage, or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed,  
at gaming, swearing, or about some act that has no relish of salvation in it—then trip him,  
that his heels may kick at heaven, and that his soul may be as damned and black as hell, whereto it goes.  
My mother stays.\*  
This physic\* but prolongs thy sickly days.

(*Exit HAMLET.*)

KING CLAUDIUS

(*Rising.*) My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

(*Exit KING CLAUDIUS.*)

*limed* - caught by bird lime (a glutinous substance spread on twigs), *Make assay!* - Speak on my behalf!,  
*pat* - immediately, *would be scanned* - needs careful consideration,  
*hire and salary* - payment of wages, *flush* - full of lusty growth,  
*hent* - occasion to be grasped, *stays* - waits,  
*physic* - medicine of Claudius' praying; medicine of Hamlet's decision not to kill him now

## Act 3, Scene 4 The Queen's closet

(*QUEEN GERTRUDE and POLONIUS.*)

LORD POLONIUS

He will come straight.

Tell him his pranks have been too broad\* to bear with,  
and that your grace hath screened and stood between much heat\* and him.  
Pray you, be round\* with him.

HAMLET

(*Within.*) Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN 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?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET

Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Why, how now, Hamlet!

HAMLET

What's the matter now?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

No, you are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife, and, would it were not so, you are my mother.

*broad* - unrestrained, *heat* - anger, *round* - plain spoken

QUEEN 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\* where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

LORD POLONIUS

*(Behind.)* What, ho! Help, help, help!

HAMLET

*(Drawing his sword.)* How now? A rat? Dead, for a ducat,\* dead!

*(HAMLET stabs his sword through the arras.)*

LORD POLONIUS

*(Behind.)* O, I am slain!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET

A bloody deed! Almost as bad, good mother, as kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

As kill a king?

HAMLET

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

*(Lifts up the arras and discovers POLONIUS.)*

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell! I took thee for thy better.

Leave wringing of your hands. Peace! Sit you down, and let me wring your heart.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What have I done?

*glass* - mirror, *for a ducat* - I would stake a ducat on it



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 as false as dicers' oaths.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ay me, what act, that roars so loud?

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture, and on this, the counterfeit presentment of two brothers. See what a grace was seated on this brow: Hyperion's curls, the front\* of Jove himself, an eye like Mars, to threaten and command, a station\* like the herald Mercury new-lighted on a heaven kissing hill— a form indeed where every god did seem to set his seal to give the world assurance of a man. This was your husband. Look you now what follows. Here is your husband, like a mildewed ear blasting\* his wholesome brother. Have you eyes? Could you from 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 hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble, and waits upon\* the judgment, and what judgment would step from this to this? O shame, where is thy blush?

QUEEN 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, stewed in corruption, honeying and making love over the nasty sty—

QUEEN 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!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No more!

HAMLET

A king of shreds and patches—

*act* - adultery joined to incest, *blister* - branding on the forehead with a red hot iron was a common punishment for whores, *front* - forehead, *station* - stance, *blasting* - blighting (Claudius is like a diseased cob of corn, infecting his brother), *batten* - glut yourself, *waits upon* - is servant to, *grained* - deeply ingrained, *will not leave their tinct* - cannot be removed, *enseamed* - soaked with grease, *tithe* - tenth part

(Enter *GHOST*.)

Save me, and hover over me with your wings, you heavenly guards!  
What would your gracious figure?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Alas, he's mad!

HAMLET  
Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
that, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by the important acting of your dread command?  
O, say!

GHOST  
Do not forget.  
This visitation is but to whet\* thy almost blunted purpose.  
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.  
O, step between her and her fighting soul! Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET  
How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Alas, how is it with you, that you do bend your eye on vacancy and with the incorporal\* air do hold discourse?\*

HAMLET  
On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!  
Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET  
Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET  
Why, look you there! Look, how it steals away! My father, in his habit as he lived!\*

(Exit *GHOST*.)

*whet* - sharpen, *incorporal* - bodiless, *discourse* - conversation,  
*his habit as he lived* - not in his armor but his everyday clothes

QUEEN GERTRUDE

This is the very coinage\* of your brain.

HAMLET

It is not madness that I have uttered.

Mother, for love of grace, lay not that flattering unction\* to your soul,  
that not your trespass, but my madness speaks.

Confess yourself to heaven, repent what's past, avoid what is to come.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O, throw away the worser part of it, and live the purer with the other half.

Go not to mine uncle's bed. Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

Refrain to night, and that shall lend a kind of easiness to the next abstinence; the next more easy.

Good night, and when you are desirous to be blessed, I'll blessing beg of you.

For this same lord, I do repent.

I'll lug the guts into the neighbor room.

Indeed this counselor is now most still, most secret and most grave, who was in life a foolish prating knave.

Good night, mother.

*(Exeunt severally; HAMLET dragging POLONIUS.)*

**Act 4, Scene 1    The King's closet**

*(KING CLAUDIUS. QUEEN GERTRUDE enters.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves you must translate.  
Where is your son?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to night!

KING CLAUDIUS

What, Gertrude?  
How does Hamlet?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend which is the mightier.  
In his lawless fit, behind the arras hearing something stir, whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat!'  
and in this brainish\* apprehension kills the unseen good old man.

KING CLAUDIUS

O heavy deed! It had been so with us, had we been there.  
His liberty is full of threats to all, to you yourself, to us, to every one.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answered?\*

It will be laid to us, whose providence\* should have restrained this mad young man.  
Where is he gone?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

To draw apart the body he hath killed.

KING CLAUDIUS

O Gertrude, come away!  
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.)*

Friends both, go join you with some further aid.  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain, and from his mother's closet hath he dragged him.  
Go seek him out; and bring the body into the chapel.  
I pray you, haste in this. *(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.  
O, come away! My soul is full of discord and dismay. *(Exeunt.)*

*brainish* - deluded, *answered* - explained, *providence* - foresight, *countenance* - somehow justify

**Act 4, Scene 2    Another room in the castle**

*(Enter HAMLET.)*

HAMLET  
Safely stowed.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN  
*(Within.)* Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

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

*(Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

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

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

GUILDENSTERN  
A thing, my lord?

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

*(HAMLET runs off and others follow him.)*

***Hide fox, and all after.*** - well known words from some game of hide and seek

**Act 4, Scene 3 Another room in the castle**

(Enter KING CLAUDIUS, attended.)

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:  
 he's loved of the distracted multitude, who like not in their judgment, but their eyes,  
 and where tis so, the offender's scourge\* is weighed, but never the offence.  
 To bear all smooth and even,\* this sudden sending him away must seem deliberate pause.\*

(Enter ROSENCRANTZ.)

How now! What hath befallen?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

KING CLAUDIUS

But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

KING CLAUDIUS

Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ

Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

(Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN.)

KING CLAUDIUS

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

KING CLAUDIUS

At supper? Where?

HAMLET

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

*scourge* - punishment, *To bear all smooth and even* - To handle the matter with every appearance of composure and impartiality, *deliberate pause* - the result of careful deliberation, *politic* - shrewd, *e'en* - even, *service* - food served up

That's the end.

KING CLAUDIUS

Alas, alas!

HAMLET

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

KING CLAUDIUS

What dost you mean by this?

HAMLET

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

KING CLAUDIUS

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET

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

KING CLAUDIUS

Go seek him there.

HAMLET

He will stay till ye come.

*(Exeunt attendants.)*

KING 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, the wind at help, and every thing is bent for England.

HAMLET

For England?

KING CLAUDIUS

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good.

KING CLAUDIUS

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

*tender* - value, *bark* - ship

HAMLET

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

KING 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!

*(Exit HAMLET.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard. Delay it not; I'll have him hence tonight.  
Pray you, make haste.

*(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.)*

And, England,\* if my love thou hold'st at aught,\* 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 CLAUDIUS.)*

**cherub** - The cherubim, or second order of angels excelled in knowledge and keenness of vision,  
**England** - King of England, **ought** - anything,  
**coldly set our sovereign process** - coolly disregard our royal command (at this time in history Denmark maintained considerable political power over England),  
**congruing** - agreeing, **hectic** - fever



## Act 4, Scene 5    Elsinore. A room in the castle

(Enter *QUEEN GERTRUDE*, *HORATIO* and a *GENTLEMAN*.)

QUEEN GERTRUDE

I will not speak with her.

GENTLEMAN

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

What would she have?

GENTLEMAN

She speaks much of her father, says she hears there's tricks\* in the world, and hems, and beats her heart. Her speech is nothing, yet the unshaped use of it doth move the hearers to collection;\* they aim\* at it, and botch\* the words up fit to their own thoughts.

HORATIO

'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may strew\* dangerous conjectures in ill breeding minds.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Let her come in.

(Exit *HORATIO*.)

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is, each toy\* seems prologue to some great amiss.\*

(Re enter *HORATIO*, with *OPHELIA*.)

OPHELIA

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How now, Ophelia?

OPHELIA

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

*importunate* - insistent, *distract* - insane, *tricks* - deceits, *collection* - attempts at shaping meaning, *aim* - guess, *botch* - patch, *strew* - spread, *toy* - trifle, *amiss* - calamity, *cockle hat* - hat bearing a cockle shell, worn by a pilgrim who had been to the shrine of St. James of Compostela, *shoon* - shoes

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!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Nay, but, Ophelia—

OPHELIA

Pray you, mark.

(Sings.) White his shroud as the mountain snow—

(Enter KING CLAUDIUS.)

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alas, look here, my lord.

OPHELIA

(Sings.) Larded\* with sweet flowers;

Which bewept to the grave did go

With true love showers.

KING CLAUDIUS

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA

Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be.

KING CLAUDIUS

Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA

Pray you, 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 betime,\*

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donned his clothes,

And duffed\* the chamber door;

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

KING CLAUDIUS

Pretty Ophelia!

*Larded* - Garnished, *betime* - early, *duffed* - opened

OPHELIA

(Sings.) By Gis\* and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't, if they come to't;  
By cock,\* they are to blame.  
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.  
So would I have done, by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

KING CLAUDIUS

How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well.  
We must be patient.  
But I cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him in the 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 OPHELIA.)

KING CLAUDIUS

Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you.

(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; next, your son gone, and he most violent author of his own just remove;  
the people muddied,\* thick 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 divided from herself and her fair judgment, without the which we are mere beasts;  
last, and as much containing as all these,  
her brother is in secret come from France, feeds on this wonder,\* keeps himself in clouds,  
and wants not buzzers\* to infect his ear with pestilent speeches of his father's death.

(A noise within.)

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Alack, what noise is this?

*Gis* - Jesus, *cock* - God, *muddied* - stirred up and confused, *greenly* - foolishly, like a novice,  
*in hugger-mugger* - secretly; clandestinely, *inter* - bury, *wonder* - the popular mood of bewildered curiosity,  
*wants not buzzers* - is well supplied with scandal-mongers

KING CLAUDIUS

Where are my Switzers?\* Let them guard the door.

*(Enter another GENTLEMAN.)*

What is the matter?

GENTLEMAN

Save yourself, my lord.

Young Laertes, in a riotous head,\* overbears your officers.

The rabble call him lord. They cry, 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!'

Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds, 'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'

QUEEN GERTRUDE

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!\*

*(Enter LAERTES, armed; DANES following.)*

LAERTES

Sirs, stand you all without.

DANES

No, let's come in.

LAERTES

I pray you, give me leave.

DANES

We will, we will.

*(The DANES retire without the door.)*

LAERTES

I thank you.

O thou vile King, give me my father!

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES

That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,  
cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot of my true mother.

KING CLAUDIUS

What is the cause, Laertes, that thy rebellion looks so giant like?

Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.

*Switzers* - hired Swiss guards, *head* - armed force, *false trail they cry* - (as hounds bark after a false scent),

There's such divinity doth hedge\* a king, that treason can but peep to what it would.  
 Tell me, Laertes, why thou art thus incensed.  
 Let him go, Gertrude.  
 Speak, man.

LAERTES  
 Where is my father?

KING CLAUDIUS  
 Dead.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
 But not by him.

KING 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! I dare damnation!  
 To this point I stand, I'll be revenged most thoroughly for my father.

KING CLAUDIUS  
 Who shall stay\* you?

LAERTES  
 Not all the world.

KING CLAUDIUS  
 Good Laertes, if you desire to know the certainty of your dear father's death,  
 is it writ in your revenge that, swoopstake\* you will draw\* both friend and foe, winner and loser?

LAERTES  
 None but his enemies.

KING CLAUDIUS  
 Will you know them then?

LAERTES  
 To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms.

KING CLAUDIUS  
 Why, now you speak like a good child and a true gentleman.  
 That I am guiltless of your father's death, it shall as level to your judgment appear as day does to your eye.

*hedge* - guard, *stay* - stop,  
*swoopstake* - indiscriminately, like gambler who takes all the money off the table, winners' and losers',  
*draw* - eviscerate

DANES

(*Within.*) Let her come in.

LAERTES

How now! What noise is that?

(*Re enter OPHELIA.*)

O rose of May! Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

O heavens! Is it possible, a young maid's wits should be as mortal as an old man's life?

OPHELIA

(*Sings.*) They bore him barefaced on the bier

Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;

And in his grave rained many a tear—

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'.

There's rosemary,\* that's for remembrance. Pray, love, remember.

And there is pansies,\* that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA

There's fennel for you, and columbines.\*

There's rue\* for you, and here's some for me. We may call it herb-grace o' Sundays.

O you must wear your rue with a difference.

There's a daisy.\* I would give you some violets,\* but they withered all when my father died.

They say he made a good end—

(*Sings.*) For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAERTES

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself, she turns to favor\* and to prettiness.

*rosemary and pansies* - perhaps Ophelia gives these to Laertes,

*fennel...columbines* - perhaps Ophelia gives fennel (flatterers) and columbine (cuckoldry) to Claudius,

*rue* - (sorry memories) perhaps she also gives Claudius some rue, sets some aside for herself and gives some to Gertrude, that must be worn with a difference,

*daisy* - (dissemblers) perhaps she gives the daisies to Gertrude,

*violets* - (faithfulness) all the violets withered when Polonius died,

*favor* - something charming

OPHELIA

(*Sings.*) And will he not come again?  
 And will he not come again?  
 No, no, he is dead;  
 Go to thy death bed;  
 He never will come again.  
 His beard was as white as snow,  
 All flaxen was his poll.\*  
 He is gone, he is gone,  
 And we cast away moan.  
 God have mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be with ye.

(*Exit OPHELIA.*)

LAERTES

O God!

KING 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,  
 and they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.  
 If by direct or by collateral\* hand they find us touched,\*  
 we will our kingdom give, our crown, our life, and all that we call ours, to you in satisfaction;  
 but if not, be you content to lend your patience to us,  
 and we shall jointly labor with your soul to give it due content.

LAERTES

Let this be so.  
 His means of death, his obscure funeral cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
 that I must call it in question.

KING CLAUDIUS

So you shall; and where the offence is, let the great axe fall.  
 I pray you, go with me.

(*Exeunt.*)

*poll* - head, *commune* - participate in, *collateral* - indirect, *touched* - (with the crime)

**Act 4, Scene 6    Another room in the castle**

*(Enter HORATIO and a SERVANT.)*

HORATIO  
What are they that would speak with me?

SERVANT  
Sailors, sir. They say they have letters for you.

HORATIO  
Let them come in.

*(Exit SERVANT.)*

I do not know from what part of the world I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

*(Enter SAILORS.)*

FIRST SAILOR  
God bless you, sir.

HORATIO  
Let him bless thee too.

FIRST SAILOR  
He shall, sir, and it please him.  
There's a letter for you, sir. It comes from the ambassador that was bound for England.

HORATIO  
*(Reads.)* 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this,  
give these fellows some means to the King. They have letters for him.  
Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment\* gave us chase.  
Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valor, and in the grapple I boarded them.  
On the instant\* they got clear of our ship; so I alone became their prisoner.  
They have dealt with me like thieves of mercy and I am to do a good turn for them.  
Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death.  
I have words to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb.  
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.  
He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.'  
Come, I will give you way for these your letters,  
and do it the speedier that you may direct me to him from whom you brought them.

*(Exeunt.)*

*appointment* - equipment,    *on the instant* - at that moment



## Act 4, Scene 7 Another room in the castle

(*KING CLAUDIUS and LAERTES.*)

KING CLAUDIUS

You must put me in your heart for friend,  
sith you have heard that he which hath your noble father slain pursued my life.

LAERTES

It well appears.  
But tell me why you proceeded not against these feats so crimeful and so capital in nature?

KING CLAUDIUS

O, for two special reasons.  
The Queen his mother lives almost by his looks, and for myself—my virtue or my plague—  
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.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost and a sister driven into desperate terms.  
But my revenge will come.

KING 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.  
I loved your father, and we love ourself, and that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

(*Enter a MESSENGER.*)

How now? What news?

MESSENGER

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet. This to your majesty; this to the Queen.

KING CLAUDIUS

From Hamlet? Who brought them?

MESSENGER

Sailors, my lord.

KING CLAUDIUS

Laertes, you shall hear them. Leave us.

(*Exit MESSENGER.*)

(*Reads.*) 'High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked\* on your Kingdom.

*conjunctive* - closely connected to, *general gender* - common people, *naked* - destitute

To morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes, when I shall, first asking your pardon, 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?

LAERTES

Know you the hand?\*

KING CLAUDIUS

'Tis Hamlet's character.

'Naked!' And in the postscript here, he says 'alone'.

Can you advise me?

LAERTES

I'm 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.'

KING CLAUDIUS

Will you be ruled by me?

LAERTES

Ay, my lord, so you will not overrule me to a peace.

KING CLAUDIUS

To thine own peace.

If he be now returned, I will work him to an exploit now ripe in my device,

under the which he shall not choose but fall;

and for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,

but even his mother shall uncharge the practice\* and call it accident.

LAERTES

My lord, I will be ruled; the rather, if you could devise it so that I might be the organ.

KING CLAUDIUS

It falls right.

You have been talked of since your travel much, and that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality wherein you shine.

There was a gentleman here of Normandy, one Lamord?

LAERTES

I know him well.

KING CLAUDIUS

He gave you such a masterly report for art and exercise in your defence and for your rapier most especially, that he cried out, 'It would be a sight indeed, if one could match you!'

Sir, this report of his did Hamlet so envenom with his envy

that he could nothing do but wish and beg your sudden coming over to play\* with him.

Laertes, what would you undertake to show yourself your father's son in deed more than in words?

*hand* - handwriting, *uncharged the practice* - acquit the stratagem of being a plot, *play* - spar

LAERTES

Cut his throat in the church.

KING CLAUDIUS

No place indeed should murder sanctuarize;\* revenge should have no bounds.

But, good Laertes, will you do this? Keep close within your chamber?

Hamlet returned shall know you are come home.

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence and set a double varnish on the fame the Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together and wager on your heads.

He, being remiss,\* most generous and free from all contriving, will not peruse the foils, so that with ease, 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 it, and for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.

I bought an unction\* of a mountebank,\* so mortal that, but dip a blade in it, if I gall\* him slightly, it may be death.

KING CLAUDIUS

If this should fail, this project should have a back or second.

Soft! Let me see.

If he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him a chalice for the nonce,\* whereon but sipping, if he by chance escape your venom'd stuck, our purpose may hold there.

But stay, what noise?

*(Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE.)*

How now, sweet Queen?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

One woe doth tread upon another's heel, so fast they follow.

Your sister's drowned, Laertes.

LAERTES

Drowned?

QUEEN GERTRUDE

There is a willow grows aslant\* a brook, that shows his hoar\* leaves in the glassy stream.

There, on the pendent boughs her fantastic garlands clambering to hang, an envious sliver\* broke, and down her weedy trophies and herself fell in the weeping brook.

Her clothes spread wide, and mermaid like awhile they bore her up,

which time\* she chanted snatches of old tunes, as one incapable of\* her own distress.

*sanctuarize* - protect from punishment, *remiss* - careless; negligent, *unbated* - not blunted, *pass of practice* - treacherous thrust, *requite* - repay, *unction* - ointment, *mountebank* - quack doctor, *gall* - scratch, *nonce* - occasion, *aslant* - slanting across, *hoar* - grey, *envious sliver* - spiteful little branch, *which time* - during which, *incapable of* - insensible to

But long it could not be till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
pulled the poor wretch\* from her melodious lay to muddy death.

LAERTES

Alas, then she is drowned.

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia, and therefore I forbid my tears.

Adieu, my lord.

I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze, but that this folly drowns it.

*(Exit LAERTES.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Let's follow, Gertrude.

Much I had to do to calm his rage!

Now fear I this will give it start again; therefore let's follow.

*(Exeunt.)*

*pulled the poor wretch* - (Perhaps Gertrude didn't rescue Ophelia because she witnessed the drowning from a turret of the castle.)

## Act 5, Scene 1 A churchyard

(Two CLOWNS.)

FIRST CLOWN

Is she to be buried in Christian burial\* that wilfully seeks her own salvation?\*

SECOND CLOWN

I tell thee she is. And therefore make her grave straight.\*

The crowner\* hath sat\* on her, and finds it Christian burial.\*

FIRST CLOWN

If I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act, and an act hath three branches—  
it is to act, to do, to perform. Argal,\* she drowned herself wittingly.

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, will he nill he, he goes.

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

Will you have the truth of it?

If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out of Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN

Why, there thou sayest.

And the more pity that great folk should have countenance\* in this world to drown or hang themselves,  
more than their fellow Christian.

Come, my spade.

I'll put another question to thee.

If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

SECOND CLOWN

Go to.

FIRST CLOWN

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

*Christian burial* - in consecrated ground with the prescribed services of the Church (a burial denied to suicides),

*salvation* - he means damnation, *straight* - at once, *crowner* - coroner, *sat* - held an inquest,

*finds it a Christian burial* - finds Ophelia not guilty of suicide,

*Argal* - therefore (a vulgar perversion of the Latin ergo), *have countenance* - be privileged

## 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.  
But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill.  
To it again, come.

## SECOND CLOWN

'Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a carpenter?'

## FIRST CLOWN

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.\*

## SECOND CLOWN

Marry, now I can tell.

## FIRST CLOWN

To it.

## SECOND CLOWN

Mass, I cannot tell.

*(Enter HAMLET and HORATIO, at a distance.)*

## FIRST CLOWN

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating.  
And when you are asked this question next, say 'a grave-maker.' The houses that he makes last till doomsday.  
Go, get thee in, and fetch me a stoup\* of liquor.

*(Exit SECOND CLOWN.)*

*(FIRST CLOWN digs and sings.)* In youth, when I did love, did love,  
Methought it was very sweet,  
To contract,\* O, the time, for, ah, my betrothed,  
O, methought, there was nothing meet.

## 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 even so. The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.\*

*unyoke* - unharness your powers of thought, *stoup* - large mug, *contract* - shorten,  
*a property of easiness* - a job about which he has no qualms, *hath the daintier sense* - is more sensitive

## FIRST CLOWN

(Sings.) For age, with stealing steps,  
 Hath clawed me in his clutch,  
 And hath shipped into the land,  
 As if I had never been such.\*

(FIRST CLOWN 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 it were Cain's jaw-bone, that did the first murder!  
 It might be the pate of a politician,\* which this ass now over-reaches.\*  
 Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord?'  
 Might it not?

## HORATIO

Ay, my lord.

## FIRST CLOWN

(Sings.) A pick axe, and a spade, a spade,  
 And eke a shrouding sheet;  
 A pit of clay for to be made  
 For such a guest is meet.\*

(Throws up another skull.)

## HAMLET

There's another.  
 Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?  
 Where be his quiddities\* now, his quilllets,\* 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?  
 I will speak to this fellow.  
 Whose grave's this, sirrah?

## FIRST CLOWN

Mine, sir.  
 (Sings.) A house of clay for to be made  
 For such a guest is meet.

## HAMLET

I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in it.

## FIRST CLOWN

You lie out on it, sir, and therefore it is not yours.  
 For my part, I do not lie in it, and yet it is mine.

*such* - i.e. a young man in love, *jowls* - dashes, *politician* - unprincipled schemer, *over-reaches* - gets the better of,  
*meet* - appropriate, *quiddities* - subtleties, *quilllets* - quibbles, *tenures* - holdings of properties, *sconce* head

HAMLET

'Thou dost lie in it, to be in it and say it is thine.  
'Tis for the dead, not for the quick;\* therefore thou liest.

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.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in it?

FIRST CLOWN

One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET

How absolute\* the knave is!  
By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken a 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?

FIRST CLOWN

Of all the days in the year, I came to it that day that our last King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

HAMLET

How long is that since?

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 he was mad. He shall recover his wits there; or, if he do not, it's no great matter.

*quick* - living, *absolute* - a stickler for accuracy, *picked* - refined, *kibe* - chilblain (painful swelling of the feet)



HAMLET

Why?

FIRST CLOWN

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

HAMLET

How came he mad?

FIRST CLOWN

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET

How strangely?

FIRST CLOWN

Faith, even with losing his wits.

HAMLET

Upon what ground?

FIRST CLOWN

Why, here in Denmark.

I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

HAMLET

How long will a man lie in the earth ere he rot?

FIRST CLOWN

In faith, if he be not rotten before he die

(as we have many pocky\* corpses now a days that will scarce hold the laying in\*)

he will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner will last you nine year.

HAMLET

Why he more than another?

FIRST CLOWN

Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will keep out water a great while,  
and your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body.

Here's a skull now has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

HAMLET

Whose was it?

FIRST CLOWN

A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

*pocky* - pox-ridden; syphilitic, *hold the laying in* - hold together while being buried

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

FIRST CLOWN

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

HAMLET

This?

FIRST CLOWN

Even that.

HAMLET

Let me see.

*(HAMLET 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.

Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.

Where be your gambols\* now, your songs, your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar?

Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chapfallen.\*

Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor\* she must come.

Make her laugh at that.

Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO

What's that, my lord?

HAMLET

Dost thou think Alexander looked of this fashion in the earth?

HORATIO

Even so.

HAMLET

And smelt so? Pah!

*(HAMLET puts down the skull.)*

HORATIO

Even so, my lord.

HAMLET

To what base uses we may return, Horatio!

*gambols* - playful skipping, *chapfallen* - lacking a lower jaw, *favor* - appearance

Imperious Caesar, dead and turned 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.

*(HAMLET and HORATIO stand aside. Enter PRIEST, etc. in procession; the corpse of OPHELIA, LAERTES and mourners following; KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, their trains, etc.)*

Couch\* we awhile, and mark.

LAERTES  
 What ceremony else?

HAMLET  
 That is Laertes, a very noble youth.

LAERTES  
 What ceremony else?

PRIEST  
 Her obsequies\* have been as far enlarged as we have warranty.\*  
 Her death was doubtful;  
 and, but that great command overweighs the order,\* she should in ground unsanctified have lodged.

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 as to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES  
 Lay her in the earth, and from her fair and unpolluted flesh may violets spring!  
 I tell thee churlish priest, a ministering angel shall my sister be when thou liest howling.

HAMLET  
 What, the fair Ophelia?

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
 Sweets to the sweet! Farewell!  
*(Scattering flowers.)* I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.  
 I thought thy bride bed to have decked, sweet maid, and not have strewed thy grave.

*aside* - stand aside, *couch* - hide, *obsequies* - funeral rites,  
*warranty* - official authorization, *order* - laws of the church

LAERTES

O, treble woe fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense\* deprived thee of!  
Hold off the earth awhile, till I have caught her once more in mine arms.

*(LAERTES leaps into the grave.)*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead  
till of this flat a mountain you have made to overtop blue Olympus.\*

HAMLET

*(Advancing.)* What is he whose grief bears such an emphasis,  
whose phrase of sorrow conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand like wonder-wounded hearers?  
This is I, Hamlet the Dane.

*(HAMLET leaps into the grave.)*

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

*(LAERTES grapples with HAMLET.)*

HAMLET

Thou prayest not well.  
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat!

KING CLAUDIUS

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

ALL

Gentlemen—

HORATIO

Good my lord—

*(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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?

*ingenious sense* - quick intelligence,

*Olympus* - a mountain in Greece believed to be the dwelling place of the ancient Greek gods

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers could not with all their quantity of love make up my sum.

KING CLAUDIUS

O, he is mad, Laertes.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

For love of God, forbear him.\*

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou wilt do.

Would weep? Would fight? Would fast? Would tear thyself? Would drink up eisel? \* Eat a crocodile? I'll do it.

Dost thou come here to whine? To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

This is mere madness.

HAMLET

Hear you, sir. What is the reason that you use me thus? I loved you ever.

But it is no matter.

*(Exit HAMLET.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him.

*(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.

*(Exeunt.)*

*forbear him* - don't take up his challenge, *eisel* - vinegar, *present push* - immediate trial

## Act 5, Scene 2 A hall in the castle

(Enter HAMLET and HORATIO.)

HAMLET

So much for this, sir; now shall you see the other.

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting that would not let me sleep.

Up from my cabin, my sea gown scarfed about me, in the dark groped I to find out them, had my desire, fingered\* their packet, and in fine withdrew to mine own room again.

There did I 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, that on the supervise, no leisure bated,\* no, not to stay the grinding of the axe, my head should be struck off.

HORATIO

Is it possible?

HAMLET

Here's the commission; read it at more leisure.

But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO

I beseech you.

HAMLET

I sat me down, devised a new commission, wrote it fair.

An earnest conjuration from the King, as England was his faithful tributary,\* that on the view and knowing of these contents, he should the bearers put to sudden death.

HORATIO

How was this sealed?

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 form of the other, subscribed\* it, gave it the impression,\*

placed it safely, the changeling\* never known.

Now, the next day was our sea fight and what to this was sequent thou knowest already.

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to it.

HAMLET

Why, man, they did make love to this employment. They are not near my conscience.

*fingered* - stole, *larded* - enriched, *bated* - allowed,

*tributary* - subject (England, at this time, was controlled by the Danish), *ordinant* - in control, *signet* - ring,

*model* - exact likeness, *subscribed* - signed, *impression* - (of the signet), *changeling* - substitute

HORATIO

Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET

Does it not, think'st thee, stand\* me now upon—  
he that hath killed my King, and whored my mother, popped in between the election\* and my hopes,  
thrown out his angle\* for my proper\* life, and with such cozenage\*—  
is it not perfect conscience to quit\* him with this arm?

HORATIO

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

HAMLET

It will be short; the interim is mine, and a man's life's no more than to say 'One.'  
But I am very sorry, good Horatio, that to Laertes I forgot myself,  
for by the image of my cause I see the portraiture of his.  
I'll court his favors.

HORATIO

Peace! Who comes here?

*(Enter OSRIC.)*

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir. *(Aside to Horatio.)* Dost know this water-fly?\*

HORATIO

No, my good lord.

HAMLET

'Tis a vice to know him.  
He hath much land, and fertile. '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.

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.

*stand* - demand, *election* - (the Danish king being elected),  
*angle* - fishing hook, *proper* - own, *cozenage* - trickery, *quit* - kill,  
*water-fly* - worthless nuisance?, *chough* - jackdaw; chatterer, *bonnet* - hat

HAMLET

No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.

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—

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\* 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 dizzy the arithmetic of memory. Why do we wrap the gentleman in our rawer breath?

OSRIC

Sir?

HAMLET

What imports the nomination\* of this gentleman?

OSRIC

Of Laertes?

HORATIO

His purse is empty already. All's golden words are spent.

HAMLET

Of him, sir.

OSRIC

I know you are not ignorant—

*excellent differences* - special qualities, *soft society* - gentle manners, *great showing* - noble appearance, *card* - map, *calendar* - guide, *continent* - epitome, *definement* - definition, *perdition* - loss, *nomination* - mention



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 known for his weapon.

HAMLET

What's his weapon?

OSRIC

Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET

That's two of his weapons—but well.

OSRIC

The King, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses,  
against the which he has impawned\* six French rapiers and poniards, with their girdles and hangers\* and so.  
The King, sir, hath laid, sir, that in a dozen passes between yourself and him,  
he shall not exceed you three hits.\*  
And it would come to immediate trial, if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET

Sir, I will walk here in the hall.  
If it please his majesty, 'tis the breathing time of day with me.  
Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him an I can;  
if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC

Shall I deliver you even so?

HAMLET

To this effect, sir, after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC

I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET

Yours, yours.

*(Exit OSRIC.)*

He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for his turn.

*impawned* - staked, *hangers* - straps by which the sword hangs from the belt, *dozen...hits* - if Laertes wins 8 of the 12 bouts, Hamlet will win only 4 and Laertes will surpass him by more than 3 bouts and win. If Laertes wins 7 and Hamlet 5, Laertes will only surpass Hamlet by 2 and he will lose the wager. Even if Hamlet wins all his bouts, Laertes will have at least 5 chances to scratch Hamlet with his poisoned blade. Also, the odds should sting Hamlet's pride into competing.

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.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord—

HAMLET

It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain giving\* as would perhaps trouble a woman.

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.

The readiness is all.

Let be.

*(Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, LAERTES, lords, OSRIC, and attendants with foils, etc.)*

KING CLAUDIUS

Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me.

*(KING CLAUDIUS puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET'S hand.)*

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong.

What I have done, that might your nature, honor and exception roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was it Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.

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.

LAERTES

I am satisfied, and I do receive your offered love like love, and will not wrong it.

HAMLET

I embrace it freely, and will this wager frankly play.

Give us the foils. Come on.

*gain-giving* - misgiving, *augury* - omens

LAERTES

Come, one for me.

HAMLET

I'll be your foil,\* Laertes.

In mine ignorance your skill shall, like a star in the darkest night, stick fiery off\* indeed.

LAERTES

You mock me, sir.

HAMLET

No, by this hand.

KING CLAUDIUS

Give them the foils, young Osric.

Cousin Hamlet, you know the wager?

HAMLET

Very well, my lord. Your grace hath laid the odds on\* the weaker side.

KING CLAUDIUS

I do not fear it, I have seen you both. But since he is bettered,\* we have therefore odds.

LAERTES

This is too heavy, let me see another.

HAMLET

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

*(They prepare to spar.)*

OSRIC

Ay, my good lord.

KING CLAUDIUS

Set me the stoops of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit, let all the battlements their ordnance fire.

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath and in the cup an union\* shall he throw, richer than that which four successive kings in Denmark's crown have worn.

Give me the cups.

Come, begin. And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

*foil* - sword; setting that displays a jewel advantageously, *sick fiery off* - show in brilliant relief, *laid the odds on* - bet, *given the odds to bettered* - pronounced by public opinion to be better, *have all a length* - are equal length, *union* - pearl

LAERTES  
Come, my lord.

*(They spar.)*

HAMLET  
One.

LAERTES  
No.

HAMLET  
Judgment.

OSRIC  
A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES  
Well, again.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Stay; give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine. Here's to thy health.

*(Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.)*

Give him the cup.

HAMLET  
I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile. Come.

*(They spar.)*

Another hit. What say you?

LAERTES  
A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING CLAUDIUS  
Our son shall win.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
He's fat, and scant of breath.  
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.  
The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAMLET  
Good madam!

KING CLAUDIUS  
Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me. (*GERTRUDE drinks.*)

KING CLAUDIUS  
(*Aside.*) It is the poisoned cup; it is too late.

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

QUEEN GERTRUDE  
Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES  
My lord, I'll hit him now.

KING CLAUDIUS  
I do not think it.

LAERTES  
(*Aside.*) And yet 'tis almost against my conscience.

HAMLET  
Come, for the third, Laertes. You but dally.  
I pray you, pass with your best violence; I am afeard you make a wanton\* of me.

LAERTES  
Say you so? Come on.

(*They spar.*)

OSRIC  
Nothing, neither way.

LAERTES  
Have at you now!

(*LAERTES wounds HAMLET; then in scuffling, they change rapiers.*)

KING CLAUDIUS  
Part them. They are incensed.

HAMLET  
Nay, come, again.

*wanton* - pampered child

*(HAMLET wounds LAERTES.)*

*(QUEEN GERTRUDE falls.)*

OSRIC

Look to the Queen there, ho!

HORATIO

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

OSRIC

How is it, Laertes?

LAERTES

Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric. I am justly killed with mine own treachery.

HAMLET

How does the Queen?

KING CLAUDIUS

She swounds to see them bleed.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet! The drink, the drink! I am poisoned.

*(QUEEN GERTRUDE dies.)*

HAMLET

O villany! Ho! Let the door be locked. Treachery! Seek it out.

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 envenomed.

The foul practice hath turned itself on me.

Lo, here I lie, never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned.

The King, the King's to blame.

HAMLET

The point envenomed too?

Then venom, to thy work.

*(HAMLET stabs KING CLAUDIUS.)*

ALL

Treason! Treason!

KING CLAUDIUS

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

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane, drink off this potion.

*(HAMLET forces KING CLAUDIUS to drink from the poisoned cup of wine.)* Follow my mother.

*(KING CLAUDIUS dies.)*

LAERTES

He is justly served. It is a poison tempered\* by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee, nor thine on me.

*(LAERTES dies.)*

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it! I follow thee.

I am dead, Horatio.

Wretched Queen, adieu!

Horatio, thou livest; report me and my cause aright to the unsatisfied.

HORATIO

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane. Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET

Give me the cup. Let go. By heaven, I'll have it.

O good Horatio, what a wounded name, things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart, tell my story.

*(March afar off, and shot within.)*

What warlike noise is this?

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 over-crows\* my spirit.

I cannot live to hear the news from England, but I do prophesy the election lights on Fortinbras.

He has my dying voice.

The rest is silence.

*(HAMLET dies.)*

*tempered* - mixed, *over-crows* - triumphs over, as in cockfighting

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart.  
Good night sweet Prince, and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.  
Why does the drum come hither?

*(March within.)*

*(Enter FORTINBRAS, the ENGLISH AMBASSADOR and others.)*

PRINCE FORTINBRAS

Where is this sight?

HORATIO

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

ENGLISH AMBASSADOR

The sight is dismal; and our affairs from England come too late.  
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing, that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO

Not from his\* mouth. He never gave commandment for their death.  
But since, you from the Polack wars, and you from England, are here arrived  
give order that these bodies high on a stage be placed to the view,  
and let me speak to the yet unknowing world how these things came about.

PRINCE 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.

HORATIO

Of that I shall have also cause to speak.

PRINCE FORTINBRAS

Let four captains bear Hamlet, like a soldier, to the stage,  
for he was likely, had he been put on,\* to have proved most royally.  
Take up the bodies.

*(A dead march. Exeunt, bearing off the dead bodies; after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.)*

*his* - Claudius',

*rights of memory* - traditional rights; the land the father of Fortinbras forfeited when he lost his single combat with Hamlet's father, *vantage* - favorable opportunity, *put on* - put to the test (by becoming King)