

**THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET,  
PRINCE OF DENMARK**

by William Shakespeare

lightly abridged  
by Peter Gould  
for  
the Governor's Institute on the Arts  
2007  
...and for the SHAKESPEARE FREE LIBRARY

**THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK**  
by William Shakespeare

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

*Claudius, King of Denmark.*

*Marcellus, Officer.*

*Hamlet, son to the former, and nephew to the present king.*

*Polonius, Lord Chamberlain.*

*Horatio, friend to Hamlet.*

*Laertes, son to Polonius.*

*Rosencrantz, courtier.*

*Guildenstern, courtier.*

*Osrice, courtier.*

*A Gentleman, courtier.*

*A Priest.*

*Marcellus, officer.*

*Bernardo, officer.*

*Francisco, a soldier*

*Players.*

*Two Clowns, gravediggers.*

*English Ambassadors.*

*Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, mother to Hamlet.*

*Ophelia, daughter to Polonius.*

*Ghost of Hamlet's Father.*

*Lords, ladies, Officers, Soldiers, Sailors, Messengers, Attendants.*

**ACT I. Scene I.**

*Elsinore. A platform before the Castle.*

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

**Ber.** Who's there.?

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

**Ber.** Long live the King!

**Fran.** Bernardo?

**Ber.** He.

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

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

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

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

**Fran.** Not a mouse stirring.

**Ber.** Well, good night.

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

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

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

**Hor.** Friends to this ground.

**Mar.** And liegemen to the Dane.

**Fran.** Give you good night.

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

**Fran.** Bernardo hath my place.

Give you good night. *Exit.*

**Mar.** Holla, Bernardo!

**Ber.** Say-

What, is Horatio there ?

**Hor.** A piece of him.

**Ber.** Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

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

**Ber.** I have seen nothing.

**Mar.** Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us.

Therefore I have entreated him along,  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,

That, if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

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

**Ber.** Sit down awhile,

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

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

**Ber.** Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course t' illumine that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one- *Enter Ghost.*

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

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

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

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

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

**Ber.** It would be spoke to.

**Mar.** Question it, Horatio.

**Hor.** 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!

**Mar.** It is offended.

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

**Hor.** Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee speak! *Exit Ghost.*

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

**Ber.** How now, Horatio? You tremble and look pale.

Is not this something more than fantasy?

What think you on't?

**Hor.** Before my God, I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch

Of mine own eyes.

**Mar.** Is it not like the King?

**Hor.** As thou art to thyself.

Such was the very armour he used to wear--

'Tis strange.

**Mar.** Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

**Hor.** In what particular thought to work I know not;

But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,

This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

**Ber.** I think it be no other but e'en so.

That this portentous figure so like the King

That was, comes armed through our watch.

**Hor.** A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.

They say that ere the mightiest Caesar fell,

The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead

Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;

As stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,

Disasters in the sun; and the moist star

Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands

Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.

And even the like precursor of fierce events---*Enter Ghost again.*

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

I'll cross it, though it blast me.- Stay illusion! *Spreads his arms.*

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,

Speak to me.

If there be any good thing to be done,

That may to thee do ease, and, race to me,

Speak to me.

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,

Which happily foreknowing may avoid,

O, speak! Stop it, Marcellus!

**Mar.** Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

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

**Ber.** 'Tis here!

**Hor.** 'Tis here!

**Mar.** '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.

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

**Hor.** And then it started, like a guilty thing  
 Upon a fearful summons. I have heard  
 The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
 Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
 Awake the god of day; and at his warning,  
 Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
 Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies  
 To his confine; and of the truth herein  
 This present object made probation.

**Mar.** It faded on the crowing of the cock.

**Hor.** Aye, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill.  
 Break we our watch up; and by my advice  
 Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
 Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,  
 This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
 Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
 As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?  
 Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know  
 Where we shall find him most conveniently.      *Exeunt.*

*Scene II.*

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

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

**King.** Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
 That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
 Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
 Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
 Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,  
 With an auspicious, and a dropping eye,  
 With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,  
 In equal scale weighing delight and dole,  
 Taken to wife; nor have we herein barr'd  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Queen.** Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
 And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
 Do not for ever with thy vailed lids  
 Seek for thy noble father in the dust.  
 Thou know'st 'tis common. All that lives must die,  
 Passing through nature to eternity.

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

**Queen.** If it be,  
 Why seems it so particular with thee?  
**Ham.** Seems, madam, Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'  
 'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
 Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
 Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,  
 No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
 Nor the dejected havior of the visage,  
 Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
 That can denote me truly. These indeed seem,  
 For they are actions that a man might play;

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

**King.** '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 fault against the dead, a fault to nature,  
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme  
 Is death of fathers. 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. For your intent  
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
 It is most retrograde to our desire;  
 And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

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

**Ham.** I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

**King.** Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.  
 Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come.  
 This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet  
 Sits smiling to my heart; Come, come away.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

**Ham.** O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
 O God! God!  
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
 But two months dead! Nay, not so much, not two.  
 So excellent a king, 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? Frailty, thy name is woman!-  
 One month a widow, married with my uncle!  
 My father's brother, but no more like my father  
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,

Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
 She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
 But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

*Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo.*

**Hor.** Hail to your lordship!

**Ham.** Horatio! I am glad to see you well.

**Hor.** The same, my lord, and your poor servant ever.

**Ham.** Marcellus?

**Mar.** My good lord!

**Ham.** I am very glad to see you.- *[To Bernardo]* Good even, sir.-

My friends, what brings you all to Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

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

**Ham.** I prithee do not mock me, fellow student.

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

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

**Ham.** Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven

Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!

My father- methinks I see my father.

**Hor.** O, where, my lord?

**Ham.** In my mind's eye, Horatio.

**Hor.** I saw him once. He was a goodly king.

**Ham.** He was a man, take him for all in all.

I shall not look upon his like again.

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

**Ham.** Saw? who?

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

**Ham.** The King my father?

**Hor.** Season your admiration for a while

With an attent ear, till I may deliver

Upon the witness of these gentlemen,

This marvel to you.

**Ham.** For God's love let me hear!

**Hor.** Two nights together had these gentlemen

(Marcellus and Bernardo) on their watch

In the dead vast and middle of the night

Been thus encount'red. A figure like your father,

Armed at point exactly,

Appears before them and with solemn march

Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walk'd

By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,



Within his truncheon's length; whilst they distill'd  
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear,  
 Stand dumb and speak not to him. This to me  
 In dreadful secrecy impart they did,  
 And I with them the third night kept the watch;  
 I saw your father's ghost.

**Ham.** But where was this?

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

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

**Hor.** My lord, I did;  
 But answer made it none.

**Ham.** 'Tis very strange.

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

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

**Both [Mar. and Ber.]** We do, my lord.

**Ham.** I'll watch to-night. Perchance 'twill walk again.

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

**Ham.** If it assume my noble father's person,  
 I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape  
 And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,  
 If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,  
 Let it be tenable in your silence still;  
 And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,  
 Give it an understanding but no tongue.  
 I will requite your loves. So, fare you well.  
 Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,  
 I'll visit you.

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

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

My father's spirit! In arms! All is not well.

I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come! *Exit.*

### Scene III.

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

*Enter Laertes and Ophelia.*

**Laer.** My necessities are embark'd. Farewell.  
 And, sister, let me hear from you.

**Oph.** Do you doubt that?

**Laer.** For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,  
 Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;  
 Perhaps he loves you now,  
 But he himself is subject to his birth.

He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
Carve for himself, for on his choice depends  
The safety and health of this whole state.  
Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain  
If with too credent ear you list his songs,  
Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open  
To his unmast'ed importunity.  
Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,  
And keep you in the rear of your affection,  
Out of the shot and danger of desire.

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

**Laer.** O, fear me not!

*Enter Polonius.*

I stay too long. But here my father comes.

**Pol.** Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!  
The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
And you are stay'd for. There- my blessing with thee!  
And these few precepts in thy memory  
Look thou character.  
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar:  
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;  
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade. Beware  
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,  
Bear't that th' opposed may beware of thee.  
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
And they in France of the best rank and station  
Are most select and generous, chief in that.  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
This above all- to thine own self be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
Farewell. My blessing season this in thee!

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

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

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

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

**Laer.** Farewell. *Exit.*

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

**Oph.** So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

**Pol.** 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- ahem- I must tell you

You do not understand yourself so clearly

As it behoves my daughter and your honour.

What is between you? Give me up the truth.

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

**Pol.** Affection? Pooh! You speak like a green girl!

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

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

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

**Pol.** Ay, springs to catch woodcocks! I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows.

Ophelia, from this time  
Be something scanter of your maiden presence.

For Lord Hamlet, do not believe his vows;

Believe so much in him, that he's a man,

And with a larger tether may he walk

Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,

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

Have you so slander any moment leisure

As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.

Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

**Oph.** I shall obey, my lord. *Exeunt.*

#### **Scene IV.**

*Elsinore. The platform before the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.*

**Ham.** The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

**Hor.** It is a nipping and an eager air.

**Ham.** What hour now?

**Hor.** I think it lacks of twelve.

**Mar.** No, it is struck.

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

*A flourish of trumpets, and two pieces go off.*

What does this mean, my lord?

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

**Hor.** Is it a custom?

**Ham.** Ay, marry, is't;  
But to my mind, though I am native here  
And to the manner born, it is a custom  
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.  
This heavy-headed revel east and west  
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations;  
They call us drunkards and with swinish phrase  
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes  
From our achievements.

So oft it chances in particular men  
That, for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth,- wherein they are not guilty,  
Since nature cannot choose his origin,-  
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,  
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausible manners, that these men  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,  
Their virtues else- be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo-  
Shall in the general censure take corruption  
From that particular fault. This dram of evil---

*Enter Ghost*

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

**Ham.** Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,  
King, father, royal Dane. O, answer me!  
What may this mean

That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel,  
 Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,  
 So horridly to shake our disposition  
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?  
 Say, why is this? wherefore? What should we do?      *Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

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

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

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

**Ham.** It will not speak. Then will I follow it.

**Hor.** Do not, my lord!

**Ham.** Why, what should be the fear?

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

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

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

**Ham.** Hold off your hands!

**Hor.** Be rul'd. You shall not go.      [*Ghost beckons.*]

**Ham.** Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
 By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!-  
 I say, away!- Go on. I'll follow thee.      *Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*

**Hor.** He waxes desperate with imagination.

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

**Hor.** Have after. To what issue will this come?

**Mar.** Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.      *Exeunt.*

### Scene V.

*Elsinore. The Castle. Another part of the fortifications.  
 Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

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

**Ghost.** Mark me.

**Ham.** I will.

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

**Ham.** Alas, poor ghost!

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

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

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

If thou didst ever thy dear father love-

**Ham.** O God!

**Ghost.** Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

**Ham.** Murder?

**Ghost.** Murder most foul!

**Ham.** Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge.

**Ghost.** 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 abus'd. But know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

**Ham.** 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.

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 hemlock 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 it doth curd  
 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 dispatch'd;  
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
 With all my imperfections on my head.

**Ham.** O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!

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

Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
 But, howsoever thou pursuest this deed,  
 Act not 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 glowworm shows the morning to be near  
 And gins to pale his uneffectual fire.

Adieu! Remember me. *Exit.*

**Ham.** 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,  
 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!

**Hor.** (*within*) My lord, my lord!

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

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

**Ham.** O, wonderful!

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

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

**Hor.** Not I, my lord, by heaven!

**Mar.** Nor I, my lord.

**Ham.** Touching this vision here,  
 It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.

For your desire to know what is between us,  
 O'ermaster't as you may. And now, good friends,  
 As you are friends, scholars, and soldiers,  
 Give me one poor request.

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

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

**Both.** My lord, we will not.

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

*Ghost cries under the stage.*

**Ghost.** Swear.

**Ham.** Aha boy, say'st thou so? Art thou still there?

Come on! You hear this fellow in the cellarage.

Consent to swear.

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

**Ham.** Never to speak of this that you have seen.

Swear by my sword.

**Ghost.** [*beneath*] Swear.

**Ham.** Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword.

Never to speak of this that you have heard:

Swear by my sword.

**Ghost.** [*beneath*] Swear by his sword.

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

**Ham.** And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
 Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

But come! Swear.

*Ghost.* [*beneath*] Swear. [*They swear.*]

**Ham.** 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.

However strange or odd I bear myself

(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic disposition on),

Never, at such times seeing me,

Reveal my madness is but counterfeit.

Agreed?

**Hor. & Mar.** Agreed, my lord.

**Ham.** Then come, let's go together.

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite

That ever I was born to set it right!

*Exeunt.*



**Act II. Scene I.**

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

**Oph.** Father! Father! *Enter Polonius.*

**Pol.** How now, Ophelia? What's the matter?

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

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

**Oph.** My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,  
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,  
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,  
And with a look so piteous in purport  
As if he had been loosed out of hell  
To speak of horrors- he comes before me.

**Pol.** Mad for thy love?

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

**Pol.** What said he?

**Oph.** He took me by the wrist and held me hard;  
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,  
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,  
He falls to such perusal of my face  
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so.  
Then rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound  
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being. That done, he lets me go,  
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd  
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,  
For out o' doors he went without their help  
And to the last bended their light on me.

**Pol.** This is the very ecstasy of love,  
Whose violent property fordoes itself  
And leads the will to desperate undertakings  
As oft as any passion under heaven  
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.  
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

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

**Pol.** That hath made him mad.  
I am sorry that with better heed and judgment  
I had not noted him. I fear'd he did but trifle  
With thee; by heaven. Come, go we to the King.  
This must be known; which, if it were kept hid,  
Might bring more grief upon us. Come, Ophelia.

*Exeunt.*

**Scene IIa.***Elsinore. A room in the Castle.**Flourish. Enter King and Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, & others.*

**King.** Welcome, dear  
 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.  
 Moreover that we much did long to see you,  
 The need we have to use you did provoke  
 Our hasty sending. Something have you heard  
 Of Hamlet's transformation. So I call it,  
 Since not the outer nor the inward man  
 Resembles what it was. What it should be,  
 More than his father's death, that thus hath put him  
 So much from th' understanding of himself,  
 I cannot dream of. I entreat you both  
 That, being of so young days brought up with him,  
 You draw him on to pleasures, and to gather  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus  
 That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

**Queen.** Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,  
 And sure I am two men there are not living  
 To whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
 Thus 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.

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

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

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

**Queen.** 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.

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

**Queen.** Ay, amen!

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.**Enter Polonius.*

**King.** Polonius, good minister, what news?

**Pol.** Assure you, my good liege,  
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,  
Both to my God and to my gracious king;

**King.** Your drift, Polonius?

**Pol.** That I do think- or else this brain of mine  
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure  
As it hath us'd to do- that I have found  
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

**King.** O, speak of that! That do I long to hear.  
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

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

**King.** Well, we shall sift him. Proceed, dear counselor.

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

**Queen.** More matter, with less art.

**Pol.** 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.  
Consider.

I have a daughter (have while she is mine),  
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,  
Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.

*[Reads] the letter.*

'To the celestial, the most beautified Ophelia,'-  
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase.

**Queen.** Came this from Hamlet to her?

**Pol.** 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.

'O dear Ophelia, I have not art to reckon my groans; but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

'Thine evermore, HAMLET.'

This note my daughter showed me.

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

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

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

**Pol.** Even so!

When I had seen this hot love on the wing  
To my young mistress thus I did bespeak:  
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.  
This must not be.' And then I prescripts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,  
And he, repulsed, a short tale to make,  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And we all mourn for.

**King.** Do you think 'tis this?

**Queen.** It may be, very like.

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

**King.** Not that I know.

**Pol.** [*points to his head and shoulder*] Take this from this, if this be otherwise.

**King.** How may we prove this further?

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

**Queen.** So he does indeed.

**Pol.** 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 not made mad by her refusal,  
Let me be no assistant for a state,  
But keep a farm and cattle.

**King.** We will try it.       *Enter Hamlet, reading on a book.*

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

**Pol.** Away, I do beseech you, both away  
I'll board him presently. O, give me leave.

*Exeunt King and Queen, [with Attendants].*

**Pol.** How does my good Lord Hamlet?

**Ham.** Well, God-a-mercy.

**Pol.** Do you know me, my lord?

**Ham.** Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

**Pol.** Not I, my lord. *[aside]* He knows me not.

**Ham.** Hmmph. Have you a daughter?

**Pol.** I have, my lord.

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

**Pol.** *[aside]* How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. He is far gone, far gone! And truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love- very near this. I'll speak to him again.- What do you read, my lord?

**Ham.** Words, words, words.

**Pol.** What is the matter, my lord?

**Ham.** Between who?

**Pol.** I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

**Ham.** Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams. All which, sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir, should be old as I am if, like a crab, you could go backward.

**Pol.** *[aside]* Though this be madness, yet there is a method in't.-I will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.- My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.

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

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

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

**Ham.** These tedious old fools!

**Pol.** You go to seek the Lord Hamlet. There he is. *Exit [Polonius].*

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

**Ros.** My most dear lord!

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

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

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

**Ham.** Well, what news bring you?

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

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

**Guil.** Prison, my lord?

**Ham.** Denmark's a prison.

**Ros.** Then is the world one.

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

**Ros.** We think not so, my lord.

**Ham.** To me it is a prison.

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

**Ham.** O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. But tell me, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

**Ros.** To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

**Ham.** Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you. But: out with it, were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come! Nay, speak.

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

**Ham.** You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks, which your modesties have not craft enough to colour. I know the good King and Queen have sent for you.

**Ros.** [*aside*] What say you?

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

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

**Ham.** Ham. I will tell you why. So shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moult no feather. I have of late- but wherefore I know not- lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire- why, it appeareth no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me- no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

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

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

**Ros.** To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what humble compensation the players shall receive from you.

**Ham.** Players? What players?

**Ros.** Even those you used to take such delight in, the traveling tragedians.

**Guil.** Here they come now.

*Flourish for the Players.*

**Ham.** Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come! You are welcome. (*Beckons them closer.*) My uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceiv'd.

**Guil.** In what, my dear lord?

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

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

**Ham.** Hark you, Guildenstern. I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players. Mark it.-

[*Voice altered:*] You say right, sir; a Monday morning; twas so indeed.

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

**Ham.** My lord, I have news to tell you. Blah blah blah...

**Pol.** The players are arrived.

**Ham.** No!

**Pol.** Upon my honour-

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

*Enter four or five Players.*

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all.- I am glad to see thee well.- Welcome, good friends.- O, my old friend? Why, thy face is changed since I saw thee last. Com'st' thou to' beard me in Denmark?- What, my young lady and mistress? By'r Lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last.... Pray God your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring.- Masters, you are all welcome. We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech.

**1. Play.** What speech, my good lord?

**Ham.** I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted...

*The player speaks lines of an impassioned speech. (perhaps from "Othello?")*

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

**Ham.** 'Tis well. Well done. Good my lord, will you see the players well bestow'd? Do you hear? Let them be well us'd.

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

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

**Pol.** Come, sirs. *Exit Polonius.*

**Ham.** Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play to-morrow. *Hamlet detains two Players--* Dost thou hear me, old friends? Can you play 'The Murder of Gonzago'?

**1st Player.** Ay, my lord.

**Ham.** We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a mime, a dumb show, a few moments long, to perform tomorrow, could you not?

**2nd Player.** Ay, my lord.

**Ham.** Very well. I will teach it to you later. Follow that lord-and look you mock him not.

*[Exit Players.]*

My good friends, go with them. You are welcome to Elsinore.

**Ros.** Good my lord!

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

**Guil.** With you, my lord. *[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

## Scene IIb

*[Hamlet could be writing this in his journal while soliloquizing.]*

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 wann'd,

Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
 With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing!  
 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 appal the free,  
 Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
 The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I,  
 A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
 Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
 And can say nothing! No, not for a king,  
 Upon whose property and most dear life  
 A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?  
 Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?  
 Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?  
 Tweaks me by th' nose? gives me the lie i' th' throat  
 As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this, ha?  
 'Swounds, I should take it! for it cannot be  
 But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall  
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
 I should have fatted all the region's crows  
 With this slave's guts. Bloody bawdy villain!  
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!  
 O, vengeance!  
 Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! Hum, I have heard  
 That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene  
 Been struck so to the soul that presently  
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions;  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
 With most miraculous organ, I'll have these Players  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;  
 I'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench,  
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be a devil; and the devil hath power  
 T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
 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.*



**ACT III. Scene Ia.***Elsinore. A room in the Castle.**Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern.*

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

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

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

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

**Ros.** Most like a gentleman.

**Guil.** But with much forcing of his disposition.

**Ros.** Of our demands most free in his reply.

**Queen.** Did you interest him to any pastime?

**Ros.** Madam, it so fell out that certain players  
Come here to entertain. Of these we told him,  
And there did seem in him a kind of joy  
To hear of it. They are here about the court,  
And, as I think, they have already arranged  
This night to play before him.

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

**King.** With all my heart, and it doth much content me  
To hear him so inclin'd.

Good gentlemen, give him a further edge  
And drive his purpose on to these delights.

**Ros.** We shall, my lord.

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

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

**Queen.** I shall obey you;  
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause

Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues  
Will bring him to his wonted way again,  
To both your honours.

**Oph.** Madam, I wish it may. *[Exit Queen.]*

**Pol.** Ophelia, walk you here.- Gracious, so please you,  
We will bestow ourselves.- *[To Ophelia, giving her a Bible]*  
Read the Good Book,  
That prayerful exercise may hide  
Your upset.- Is it not well proved, my King,  
That with such show of pious action, of devotion,  
We may conceal our inward turmoil, though  
The Devil himself be in us?

**King.** *[aside]* O, 'tis true!

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!  
My deed lays hidden neath my painted words.  
O heavy burden!

**Pol.** I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.  
*Exeunt King and Polonius]. Enter Hamlet.*

### Scene Ib

**Ham.** 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 heartache, and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die- to sleep.  
To sleep- perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
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,  
When he can take himself to his own rest  
With his own bodkin? Who would these burdens bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death-  
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
No traveller returns- puzzles the will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of?  
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
And thus the native hue of resolution

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought....  
Soft you now!

The fair Ophelia!- Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins rememb'ed.

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

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

**Oph.** My lord, I have remembrances of yours  
That I have longed long to re-deliver.

I pray you, now receive them.

**Ham.** No, not I!

I never gave you aught.

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

There, my lord.

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

**Oph.** My lord?

**Ham.** Are you fair?

**Oph.** What means your lordship?

**Ham.** I did love you once.

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

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

**Oph.** I was the more deceived.

**Ham.** Get thee to a nunnery! Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am myself  
indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother  
had not borne me. I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious; with more offences at my beck  
than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them  
in. What should such fellows as I do? We are arrant knaves all; believe none of us. Go  
thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

**Oph.** At home, my lord.

**Ham.** Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere  
but in's own house. Farewell.

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

**Ham.** If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice,  
as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery. Go, farewell. Or if  
thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you  
make of them. To a nunnery, go; and quickly too. Farewell.

**Oph.** O heavenly powers, restore him!

**Ham.** 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.*

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

**Pol.** How now, Ophelia?  
 You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said.  
 We heard it all.-

**King.** And what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,  
 Was not like madness. There's something in his soul  
 O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;  
 And I do fear the hatch and the disclose  
 Will be some danger; which for to prevent,  
 I have in quick determination  
 Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England.  
 Haply the seas, and countries different,  
 With variable objects, shall expel  
 This something-settled matter in his heart,  
 Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus  
 From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

**Pol.** It shall do well. But yet do I believe  
 The origin and commencement of his grief  
 Sprung from neglected love.- 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 hide myself nearby  
 To hear their conference. If she find him not,  
 To England send him; or confine him where  
 Your wisdom best shall think.

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

## Scene II.

*Elsinore. hall in the Castle. Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and three of the Players.*

**Ham.** Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounc'd it to you, trippingly on the tongue.  
 But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I would as soon the town crier spoke my  
 lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the  
 very torrent, tempest, and (as I may say) whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and  
 beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. Go make you ready.

**Players.** We will, my Lord.      *Exeunt Players.*

**Ham.** Horatio!

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

**Ham.** 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,

Even with the very comment of thy soul

Observe my uncle. If his occulted guilt

Do not itself unkennel in one speech,

It is a damned ghost that we have seen.

Observe the king

While I mine eyes do rivet to his face,

And after we will both our judgments join.

**Hor.** Well, my lord.

If he steal anything while this play is playing,

And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

*Sound a flourish. [Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums. Danish march.*

*Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern,*

*and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.*

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

**King.** How fares our cousin Hamlet?

**Ham.** Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-cramm'd.

You cannot feed capons so.

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

**Ham.** No, nor mine now. Be the players ready?

**Ros.** Ay, my lord. They stay upon your patience.

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

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

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

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

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

**Oph.** No, my lord.

**Ham.** I mean, my head upon your lap?

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

**Ham.** Who, I?

**Oph.** Ay, my lord.

**Ham.** What should a man do but be merry?

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

**Oph.** Nay 'tis twice two months, my lord.

*The dumb show is mimed while an actor or two declaim lines describing the scene.*

**Prologue.** For us, and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently. *[Exit]*

*Enter [two Players who will speak--read lines-- as King and Queen. ]*

*Enter [two other Players who will mime actions of King and Queen.]*

*THE MIME: King and a Queen embrace very lovingly; the Queen embracing him and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck. He lays him down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him.*

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

**Ham.** Ooh, it means mischief.

**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,

Honour'd, belov'd, and haply one as kind

For husband shalt thou-

**Player Queen.** O, confound the rest!

Such love must needs be treason in my breast.

When second husband let me be accurst!

None wed the second but who killed the first.

**Ham.** [*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.

This world is not for aye, nor 'tis not strange

That even our loves should with our fortunes change;

Our wills and fates do so contrary run

That our devices still are overthrown;

Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our own.

So think thou wilt no second husband wed;

But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

**Player Queen.** Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,

If, once a widow, ever I be wife!

**Player King.** 'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here awhile.

My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile

The tedious day with sleep.

**Player Queen.** Sleep rock thy brain, [*He*] sleeps.

And never come mischance between us twain! *Exit.*

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

**Queen.** The lady doth protest too much, methinks.

**King.** What do you call this play?

**Ham.** 'The Mousetrap.' 'Tis a knavish piece of work; but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not.

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

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

*THE MIME CONTINUES: Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in the sleeper's ears, and leaves him. Enter villain.*

**Ham.** Here comes the villain, cousin to the King.

**Oph.** You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

**Player Villain.** 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!

**Ham.** Excellent! You shall see anon how the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

**Oph.** The King rises.

**Ham.** What, frighted with false fire?

**Queen.** How fares my lord? *Exit King, enraged. The Queen rises to follow; Hamlet detains her.*

**Ham.** Stay, Mother. The end is near.

*THE MIME CONTINUES: The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner with some three or four Mutes, comes in again, seem to condole with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts; she seems harsh and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love.*

**Queen:** No! I'll see no more!

**Pol.** Give o'er the play.

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

*Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.*

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

**Hor.** Very well, my lord.

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

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

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

**Guil.** Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

**Ham.** Sir, a whole history.

**Guil.** The King, sir-

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

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

**Ham.** With drink, sir?

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

**Ham.** I've collared him, you say?

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

**Ham.** I am tame, sirs; pronounce.

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

**Ham.** You are welcome.

**Ros.** Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the right breed. If it shall please you to make me a wholesome answer, I will do your mother's commandment; if not, your pardon and my return shall be the end of my business.

**Ham.** Sir, I cannot.

**Ros.** What, my lord?

**Ham.** Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseas'd. But to the matter!  
My mother, you say-

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

**Ham.** O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration? Impart.

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

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

**Ros.** My lord, you once did love me.

**Ham.** And do still, by these pickers and stealers!

**Ros.** 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.

**Ham.** Sir, I lack advancement.

**Ros.** How can that be, when you are the crown prince of Denmark?

**Ham.** Aha! Come, some music! Come, the recorders!

*Enter a player with recorder. Plays.*

**Ham.** Let me see one. Will you play upon this pipe?

**Guil.** My lord, I cannot.

**Ham.** I pray you.

**Guil.** Believe me, I cannot.

**Ham.** I do beseech you.

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

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

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

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

*Enter Polonius.*

**Ham.** God bless you, sir!

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

**Ham.** Do you see yonder cloud that's almost in shape of a camel?

**Pol.** By th' mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

**Ham.** Methinks it is like a weasel.

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

**Ham.** Or like a whale.

**Pol.** Very like a whale.

**Ham.** Then will I come to my mother by-and-by. I will come by-and-by.



**Pol.** I will say so. *Exit.*

Ham. 'By-and-by' is easily said.- 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!  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;  
I will speak daggers to her, but use none.  
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites-  
But if tongue's words destroy her, so be it. *Exit.*

### Scene III.

*A room in the Castle.*

*Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

**King.** I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;  
That he to England shall along with you.  
The terms of our estate may not endure  
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow  
Out of his lunacies.

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

**Ros.** Never alone  
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

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

**Both.** We will haste us. *Exeunt Gentlemen. Enter Polonius.*

**Pol.** My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.  
Behind the arras I'll convey myself.  
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear  
The speech. Fare you well, my liege.  
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed  
And tell you what I know.

**King.** Thanks, dear my lord.

*Exit [Polonius].*

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder! Pray can I not,  
Though inclination be as sharp as will.

My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent.  
 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? Then I'll look up;  
 My fault is past. (*tries to pray*) But, O, what form of prayer  
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?  
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd  
 Of those effects for which I did the murder-  
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.  
 May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?  
 In the corrupted currents of this world  
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,  
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
 Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above.  
 There is no shuffling; there the action lies  
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd,  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,  
 To give confession. O bosom black as death!  
 Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,  
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!  
 All may be well. Help me, angels!

*He kneels. Enter Hamlet.*

**Ham.** Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
 And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven,  
 And so am I reveng'd.

A villain kills my father; and for that,  
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send  
 Direct to heaven. And am I then reveng'd,  
 To take him in the purging of his soul,  
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
 No.

Up, sword.

When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage;  
 Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed;  
 At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
 That has no relish of salvation in't-  
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
 And that his soul may be as damn'd and black  
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother waits.  
 Though your prayers preserve you now, they come too late.

*Exit.*

**King.** [*rises*] My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.  
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go. *Exit.*

**Scene IV.**  
*The Queen's closet.*  
*Enter Queen and Polonius.*

**Pol.** He will come straight. Look you lay home to him.  
 Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,  
 And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood between  
 Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here.

**Ham.** *(within)* Mother!

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

*[Polonius hides behind the arras.] Enter Hamlet.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Queen.** Have you forgot me?

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

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

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

**Ham.** 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.** What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Queen.** As kill a king?

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

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.

Leave wringing of your hinds. Peace! sit you down

And let me wring your heart; for so I shall

If it be made of penetrable stuff.

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

**Ham.** Such an act  
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty.

**Queen.** Ay me, what act?

*Hamlet shows his mother a book or locket*

**Ham.** Look here upon th's 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 combination and a form indeed  
Where every god did seem to set his seal  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
This was your husband. Look you now what follows.  
Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,  
And batten on this moor? Ha! have you eyes  
You cannot call it love; for at your age  
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment  
Would step from this to this? What devil was't  
Hath robbed you of your judgment?  
O shame! where is thy blush?

**Queen.** O Hamlet, speak no more!  
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul--

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

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

**Ham.** 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.** No more!

*Enter the Ghost*

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

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

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

**Ghost.** Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.  
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

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

**Queen.** Alas, how is't with you,  
That stare at vacancy. O gentle son,  
Upon the beat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience! Whereon do you look?

**Ham.** On him, on him! Look you how pale he glares!

**Queen.** Of whom do you speak?

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

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

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

**Queen.** No, nothing but ourselves.

**Ham.** Why, look you there! Look how it steals away!  
My father, in his habit as he liv'd!

Look where he goes even now out at the portal!     *Exit Ghost.*

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

**Ham.** Ecstasy?

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have utt'red. Mother, for love of grace,  
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul  
That not your trespass but my madness speaks.  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,  
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;  
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds  
To make them ranker.

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

**Ham.** Then throw away the worser part of it,  
And live the purer with the other half,  
Good night- but go not to my uncle's bed.  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.  
Refrain to-night,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence; the next more easy;  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
And either tame the devil, or throw him out

With wondrous potency. Once more, good night;  
 And when you are desirous to be blest,  
 I'll blessing beg of you.- For this same lord,  
 I do repent; and I will answer well  
 The death I gave him. So again, good night.  
 I must be cruel, only to be kind;  
 Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind. *(Exit, then returns)*  
 One word more, good lady.

**Queen.** What shall I do?

**Ham.** Do not let the King know  
 That I essentially am not in madness,  
 But mad in craft. I would he did not know.

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

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

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

**Ham.** There's letters seal'd; and my two schoolfellows,  
 Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,  
 They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way  
 And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;  
 For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
 Hoist with his own petar; and 't shall go hard  
 But I will delve one yard below their mines  
 And blow them at the moon. Mother, good night.  
 I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.-  
 Indeed, this counsellor is now still, and grave  
 Who was in life a foolish prating knave.  
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.  
 Good night, mother. *Exit Hamlet, tugging in Polonius.*

#### ACT IV. Scene I.

*Elsinore. A room in the Castle. Enter King and Queen*

**King.** There's matter in these sighs. These profound heaves  
 You must translate; 'tis fit we understand them.

**Queen.** Ah, mine own lord, what have I seen to-night!

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

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

**King.** O heavy deed!  
 It had been so with us, had we been there.  
 His liberty is full of threats to all-  
 To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
 Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?  
 It will be laid to us, whose providence  
 Should have restrain'd this mad young man. But we  
 So loved young Hamlet that we protected him  
 And like the owner of a foul disease,  
 To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
 Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone?

**Queen.** To draw apart the body he hath kill'd.

**King.** 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--  
 Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
 And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him.  
 Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body  
 Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this.

*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.*

## Scene II.

*Elsinore. A passage in the Castle. Enter Hamlet.*

**Ham.** Safely stow'd.  
 Gentlemen. (within) Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

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

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

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

**Ham.** Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

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

**Ham.** And to be demanded by a sponge, what replication should be made by the son of a king?

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

**Ham.** Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance, his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the King best service in the end. When he needs what you have glean'd, it is but squeezing you and, Sponge, you shall be dry again.

**Ros.** I understand you not, my lord.

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

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

**Ham.** The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body.

The King is a thing-

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

**Ham.** Of nothing. Bring me to him. *Exeunt.*

### Scene III.

*Elsinore. A room in the Castle.*

*Enter King.*

**King.** I have sent to seek him and to find the body.

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

*Enter Rosencrantz.*

How now O What hath befall'n?

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

We cannot get from him.

**King.** But where is he?

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

**King.** Bring him before us.

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

*Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern [with Attendants].*

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

**Ham.** At supper.

**King.** At supper? Where?

**Ham.** Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain convocation of politic worms are even at him. That's the end.

**King.** Alas, alas!

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

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

**King.** Where is Polonius?

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

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

**Ham.** He will stay till you come. *[Exeunt Attendants.]*

**King.** Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,-  
This deed which thou hast done,- must send thee hence  
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself.  
The bark is ready and the wind at help,  
Th' associates tend, and everything is bent  
For England.



**Ham.** For England?

**King.** Ay, Hamlet.

**Ham.** Good.

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

**Ham.** I see an angel that sees them. But come, for England!

Farewell, dear mother.

**King.** Thy loving father, Hamlet.

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

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

Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night.

Away! for everything is seal'd and done

That else leans on th' affair. Pray you make haste.

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,-

As my great power may give thee sense, 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.*

#### Scene IV.

*Near Elsinore.*

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

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

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

*[Exeunt all but Hamlet. Sits & writes in journal.]*

How all occasions do inform against me

And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,

If his chief good and market of his time

Be but to sleep and feed? A beast, no more.

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,

Looking before and after, gave us not

That capability and godlike reason

To fust in us unus'd. Rightly to be great

Is not to stir without great argument,

But greatly to find quarrel in a straw

When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,

That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,

Excitements of my reason and my blood,

And let all sleep. O, from this time forth,

My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! *Exit.*

**Scene V.**

*Elsinore. A room in the Castle. Enter Queen.*

**Queen.** To my sick soul (as sin's true nature is)  
Each toy seems Prologue to some great amiss.  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt. *Enter Ophelia distracted.*

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

**Queen.** How now, Ophelia?

**Oph.** *(sings)*

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

**Queen.** Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

**Oph.** 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.** Nay, but Ophelia-

**Oph.** Pray you mark.

*(Sings)* White his shroud as the mountain snow-

*Enter King.*

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

**Oph.** *(Sings)*

Larded all with sweet flowers;

Which bewept to the grave did not go

With true-love showers.

**King.** How do you, pretty lady?

**Oph.** *(Sings)* To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,

All in the morning bedtime,

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine....

Then up he rose and donn'd his clo'es

And dupp'd the chamber door,

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

**King.** Pretty Ophelia! How long hath she been thus?

**Oph.** I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i' th' cold ground. My brother shall know of it; and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my coach! Good night, ladies. Good night, sweet ladies. Good night, good night. *Exit*

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

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 whispering  
 Of 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 Pictures or mere beasts;  
 And last, her brother has come home from France;  
 And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
 With pestilent speeches of his father's death-- *A noise within.*

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

**King.** The doors are broke.

*Enter Laertes with others.*

**Laer.** O thou vile king,  
 Give me my father!

**Queen.** Calmly, good Laertes.

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

**Laer.** Where is my father?

**King.** Dead.

**Queen.** But not by him!

**King.** Let him demand his fill.

**Laer.** How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:  
 I dare damnation. I will be reveng'd  
 Most thoroughly for my father.

**King.** Who shall stay you?

**Laer.** Not all the world!

**King.** Good Laertes,  
 If you desire to know the certainty  
 Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge  
 That you'll do battle with both friend and foe?

**Laer.** None but his enemies.

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

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

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

**Laer.** How now? What noise is that? *Enter Ophelia.*

O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt  
 Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!  
 By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight  
 Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!  
 Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!  
 O heavens! is't possible a young maid's wits  
 Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

**Oph.** (*sings*)

They bore him barefac'd on the bier  
 (Hey non nony, nony, hey nony)  
 And in his grave rain'd many a tear.  
 Fare you well, my dove!

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

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

**Laer.** A document in madness! Thoughts and remembrance fitted.

**Oph.** There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they wither'd all when my father died. They say he made a good end.

[*Sings*] And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead;  
 Go to thy deathbed;  
 He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,  
 All flaxen was his poll.  
 He is gone, he is gone,  
 And we cast away moan.

God 'a'mercy on his soul!

And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God b' wi', you. *Exit.*

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

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

**Laer.** Let this be so.

His means of death, his obscure funeral-  
 No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,

No noble rite nor formal ostentation,-  
 Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
 That I must call't in question.  
**King.** So you shall;  
 And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.  
 I pray you go with me.     *Exeunt*

### Scene VI.

*Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.  
 Enter Horatio with an Attendant.*

**Hor.** What are they that would speak with me?  
**Servant.** Seafaring men, sir. They say they have letters for you.  
**Hor.** Let them come in.     *[Exit Attendant.]*  
 I do not know from what part of the world  
 I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.  
        *Enter Sailors.*

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

**Hor.** Let him bless thee too.

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

**Hor.** *(reads the letter)* 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlook'd this, give these fellows  
 some means to the King. They have letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a  
 pirate gave us chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour,  
 and in the grapple I boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship; so I alone  
 became their prisoner. They have dealt with me with mercy; but they knew what they did:  
 I am to do a good turn for them. Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou  
 to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words to speak in thine ear  
 will make thee dumb. 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.  
 HAMLET.'

Come, I will show you to the King, the speedier that you may direct me to him from  
 whom you brought them.     *Exeunt.*

### Scene VII.

*Elsinore. Another room in the Castle. Enter King and Laertes.*

**King.** Now you must put me in your heart for friend,  
 Since you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
 That he who hath your noble father slain  
 Pursued my life.

**Laer.** It well appears. But tell me  
 Why you proceeded not against these feats  
 So crimeful and so capital in nature.

**King.** 'Tis for the love the Danish people bear him,  
 Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
 Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
 Convert his faults to graces; so that my arrows,  
 Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
 Would have reverted to my bow again,  
 And not where I had aim'd them.

**Laer.** And so have I a noble father lost;  
 A sister driven into desp'rate terms,  
 But my revenge will come.

*Enter a Messenger with letters.*

**King.** How now? What news?

**Mess.** Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:  
 This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

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

**Mess.** Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not.

**King.** Laertes, you shall hear them. Leave us. *Exit Messenger.*

*[Reads]* 'High and Mighty,-You shall know I am set naked on your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes; when I shall recount the occasion of my sudden and more strange return. 'HAMLET.'

What should this mean?

**Laer.** Know you the hand?

**King.** 'Tis Hamlet's character. Can you advise me?

**Laer.** I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come!

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

**King.** Will you be rul'd by me, Laertes?

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

**King.** To thine own peace. I will work him  
 To an exploit now ripe in my device,  
 Under the which he shall not choose but fall;  
 And his death-

Even his mother would call it accident.

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

**King.** It falls right.

You have been talk'd of since your travel much,  
 And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality  
 Wherein they say you shine. Your martial art,  
 And for your rapier most especially,  
 It is cried out 'twould be a sight indeed  
 If one could match you. Sir, this report of you  
 Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy

That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
Your sudden coming o'er to play with you.  
Now, out of this-

**Laer.** What out of this, my lord?

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

**Laer.** Why ask you this?

**King.** What would you undertake  
To show yourself your father's son in deed  
More than in words?

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

**King.** Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,  
Will you do this? Keep close within your chamber.  
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home.  
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence  
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  
An untipped sword, and, in a pass of practice,  
Requite him for your father.

**Laer.** I will do't!

And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.  
I bought an ointment of a mountebank,  
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,  
Where it draws blood no man be saved from death  
Who is but scratch'd withal. I'll touch my point  
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,  
It may be death.

**King.** If this should fall,  
And that our plan show through our bad performance.  
'Twere better not assay'd. Therefore this project  
Should have a back or second, that might hold  
If this did blast in proof. Soft! let me see.

When in your motion you are hot and dry-  
As make your bouts more violent to that end-  
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd him  
A wine goblet; whereon but sipping, he-  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there.- But stay, what noise, *Enter Queen. (or: an attendant on Ophelia)*

How now, sweet lady?

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

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

**Queen.** There is a willow grows aslant a brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream.  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,  
There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds  
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up;  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element; but long it could not be  
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death.

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

**Queen.** Drown'd, drown'd.

**Laer.** Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
Thus I forbid my tears. Adieu, my lord.

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

**King.** Let's follow, Gertrude.

How much I had to do to calm his rage.  
Now fear I this will give it start again; *Exeunt.*

### ACT V. Scene I.

*Elsinore. A churchyard.*

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

**Clown.** Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she wilfully takes her own life?

**Other.** I tell thee she is; therefore make her grave straight. The coroner hath sate on her,  
and finds it Christian burial.

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

**Other.** Why, 'tis found so.

**Clown.** It must be self defense; it cannot be else. Give me leave. Here lies the water;  
good. Here stands the man; good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will  
he nill he, he goes- mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he  
drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

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

**Clown.** Why, there thou say'st! And the more pity that great folk should have count'nance  
in this world to drown or hang themselves more than the likes of us. Come, my spade!  
We hold up Adam's profession.

**Other.** Was he a gentleman?

**Clown.** He was the first that ever bore arms.



**Other.** Why, he had none.

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

**Other.** Go to!

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

**Other.** I cannot tell.

**Clown.** Cudgel thy brains no more about it. When you are ask'd this question next, say 'a grave-maker.' The houses he makes lasts till doomsday. Go, fetch me a stoup of liquor.

*[Exit Second Clown.] [Clown digs and] sings. Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

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

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

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

*Clown Throws up skulls and bones*

**Ham.** That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground. This might be the pate of a Politician, might it not?

**Hor.** It might, my lord.

**Ham.** Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow, sweet lord!

How dost thou, good lord?'

**Hor.** Ay, my lord.

**Clown.** *(Sings) Throws up another skull.*

**Ham.** There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?

**Clown** Mine, sir.

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

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

**Ham.** What woman then?

**Clown.** For none neither.

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

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

**Hor.** How absolute the knave is! How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

**Clown.** Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't the very day that young Hamlet was born- he that is mad, and sent into England.

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

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

**Ham.** Why?

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

**Ham.** How came he mad?

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

**Ham.** How strangely?

**Clown.** By losing his wits.

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

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

A tanner will last you nine year.

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

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

**Ham.** Whose was it?

**Clown.** Whose do you think it was?

**Ham.** Nay, I know not.

**Clown.** This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

**Ham.** This?

**Clown.** E'en that.

**Ham.** Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand tunes. Where be your gibes 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? But soft! but soft! aside! Here comes the King-

*Enter [priests with] a coffin [in funeral procession],  
King, Queen, Laertes, with Lords attendant.]*

The Queen, the courtiers. Who is this they follow?

**Laer.** What ceremony else?

**Ham.** That is Laertes,  
A very noble youth. Mark.

**Laer.** What ceremony else?

**Priest.** Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd  
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful;  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,  
She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd  
Till the last trumpet.

**Laer.** 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.

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

**Ham.** What, the fair Ophelia?

**Queen.** Sweets to the sweet! Farewell.

*[Scatters flowers.]*

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife;  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

**Laer.** O, treble woe  
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense

Depriv'd thee of! Hold off the earth awhile,  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.  
Leaps in the grave.

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead-

**Ham.** [*comes forward*] What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,  
Hamlet the Dane.      *Leaps in after Laertes.*

**Laer.** The devil take thy soul!      *Grapples with him*].

**King.** Pluck them asunder.

**Queen.** Hamlet, Hamlet!

**All.** Gentlemen!

**Hor.** Good my lord, be quiet.

*The Attendants part them, and they come out of the grave.*

**Ham.** Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

**Queen.** O my son, what theme?

**Ham.** I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not (with all their quantity of love)  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

**King.** O, he is mad, Laertes.

**Queen.** For love of God, forbear him!

**Ham.** 'Swounds, show me what thou't do.

Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?

Woo't drink vinegar? eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

What is the reason that you use me thus?

I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.      *Exit.*

**King.** I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.

*Exit Horatio.*

[*To Laertes*] Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech.

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then in patience our proceeding be.      *Exeunt.*

## Scene II.

*Elsinore. A hall in the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

**Ham.** Horatio,

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,

Rough-hew them how we will-

**Hor.** That is most certain.

**Ham.** Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep. Up from my cabin,  
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark  
Grop'd I to find out them; had my desire,  
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew  
To mine own room again; making so bold  
(My fears forgetting manners) to unseal  
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio  
(O royal knavery!), an exact command,  
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,  
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,  
No, not to stay the finding of the axe,  
My head should be struck off.

**Hor.** Is't possible?

**Ham.** Here's the commission; read it.  
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

**Hor.** I beseech you.

**Ham.** I sat me down;  
Wrote out a new commission. Wilt thou know  
Th' effect of what I wrote?

**Hor.** Ay, good my lord.

**Ham.** An earnest conjuration from the King,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less,  
He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving time allow'd.

**Hor.** How was this seal'd?

**Ham.** Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.  
I had my father's signet in my purse,  
which was the model of that Danish seal;  
Folded the writ up in the form of th' other,  
Subscrib'd it, gave't th' impression, plac'd it safely,  
The changeling never known. Now, the next day  
Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent  
Thou know'st already.

**Hor.** So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

**Ham.** Why, man, they did make love to this employment!  
They are not near my conscience; their defeat  
Does by their own insinuation grow.

**Hor.** Why, what a king is this!

**Ham.** He kill'd my father, whor'd my mother;  
Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes;  
He angled for my life, -is't not right  
To quit him with this arm?

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

**Ham.** It will be short; the interim is mine,  
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 favours.  
But sure the bravery of his grief did put me  
Into a tow'ring passion.

**Hor.** Peace! Who comes here? *Enter young Osric, a courtier.*

**Os.** Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

**Ham.** I humbly thank you, sir. *[Aside to Horatio]* Dost know this waterfly?

**Hor.** *[aside to Hamlet]* No, my good lord.

**Os.** Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure,  
I should impart a thing to you from his Majesty.

**Ham.** I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit.  
Put your bonnet to his right use. 'Tis for the head.

**Os.** I thank your lordship, it is very hot.

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

**Os.** It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

**Ham.** But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

**Os.** Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, 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-

**Ham.** I beseech you remember. *Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.*

**Os.** Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman, 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.

**Ham.** Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though to divide him inventorially would dozy th' arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither in respect of his quick sail. But, in the verity of extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror, and who else would trace him, his umbrage, nothing more.

**Os.** Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

**Ham.** The concernancy, sir? What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

**Os.** Of Laertes?

**Hor.** *[aside]* His purse is empty already. All's golden words are spent.

**Ham.** Of him, sir.

**Os.** You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is reputed-sir, for his weapon; they say he is unfellowed.

**Ham.** What's his weapon?

**Os.** Rapier and dagger.

**Ham.** That's two of his weapons- but well.

**Os.** The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses; against the which Laertes has impon'd, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards. The King, sir, hath laid that, in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath laid

on twelve for nine, and it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

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

**Os.** Shall I redeliver you e'en so?

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

**Os.** I commend my duty to your lordship. *Exit.*

**Ham.** Yours, yours.

**Hor.** You will lose this wager, my lord.

**Ham.** 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.

**Hor.** Nay, good my lord -

**Ham.** It is but foolery; but it is troubling nonetheless.

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

**Ham.** 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. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be.

*Enter a Lord.*

**Lord.** My lord, his Majesty sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

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

**Lord.** The King and Queen and all are coming down.

**Ham.** In happy time.

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

**Ham.** She well instructs me. *[Exit Lord.]*

### Scene III.

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Osric, and Lords, with other Attendants with foils and gauntlets.  
A table and flagons of wine on it.*

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

*The King puts Laertes' hand into Hamlet's.*

**Ham.** Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong; But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows,  
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd

With sore distraction. What I have done  
 That might your nature, honour, and exception  
 Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.  
 Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet.  
 Sir, in this audience,  
 Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil  
 Free me so far in your most generous thoughts  
 That I have shot my arrow o'er the house  
 And hurt my brother.

**Laer.** I am satisfied in nature.  
 I do receive your offer'd love like love,  
 And will not wrong it.

**Ham.** I embrace it freely,  
 And will this brother's wager frankly play.  
 Give us the foils. Come on.

**Laer.** Come, one for me.

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

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

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

**Laer.** This is too heavy; let me see another.

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

*Prepare to play.*

**Os.** Ay, my good lord.

**King.** Give me the cups;  
 And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,  
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,  
 The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth,  
 'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin.  
 And you the judges, bear a wary eye.

**Ham.** Come on, sir.

**Laer.** Come, my lord. *They play.*

**Ham.** One.

**Laer.** No.

**Ham.** Judgment!

**Os.** A hit, a very palpable hit.

**King.** Hamlet, here's to thy health!

*[Drum; trumpets sound]*

Give him the cup.

**Ham.** I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.  
 Come. *(They play.)* Another hit. What say you?

**Laer.** A touch, a touch; I do confess't.

**King.** Your son shall win.

**Queen.** He's fat, and scant of breath.

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.  
The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

**Ham.** Good madam!

**King.** Gertrude, do not drink.

**Queen.** I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me. *Drinks.*

**King.** [*aside*] It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

**Ham.** I dare not drink yet, madam; by-and-by.

**Queen.** Come, let me wipe thy face.

**Laer.** My lord, I'll hit him now.

[*aside*] And yet it is almost against my conscience.

**Ham.** Come for the third, Laertes! You but dally.

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

**Os.** Nothing neither way.

**Laer.** Have at you now!

*Laertes wounds Hamlet; then] in scuffling, they  
change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.*

**King.** Part them! They are incens'd.

**Ham.** Nay come! again! *The Queen falls.*

**Os.** Look to the Queen there, ho!

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

**Os.** How is't, Laertes?

**Laer.** Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric.  
I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

**Ham.** How does the Queen?

**King.** She swoons to see them bleed.

**Queen.** No, no! the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!  
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. *Dies.*

**Ham.** O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd.  
Treachery! Seek it out. *Laertes falls.*

**Laer.** It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain;  
No medicine in the world can do thee good.

In thee there is not half an hour of life.

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,  
Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice

Hath turn'd itself on me. Lo, here I lie,  
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poison'd.

I can no more. The King, the King's to blame.

**Ham.** The point envenom'd too?

Then, venom, to thy work. *Hurts the King.*

**All.** Treason! treason!

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

**Ham.** Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane,  
Drink off this potion! Follow my mother! *King dies.*

**Laer.** He is justly serv'd.

It is a poison temper'd by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.



Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,  
Nor thine on me! *Dies.*

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

**Hor.** Never believe it.  
I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.  
Here's yet some liquor left.

**Ham.** As th'art a man,  
Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll ha't. *Throws the cup away.*  
O good Horatio, what a wounded name  
would live behind me!  
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story. I die, Horatio!  
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.  
The rest is-silence. *Dies.*

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

*Enter Two Ambassadors, with Drum & Colours.*

**Osric:** Ambassadors from England and Norway, Sir.

**Amb.** Where is this sight?

**Hor.** What is it you will see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

**Eng. Amb.** This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death,  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell  
That thou so many princes at a shot  
So bloodily hast struck. The sight is dismal;  
And our affairs from England come too late.  
The ears are senseless that should give us bearing  
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd  
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
Where should We have our thanks?

**Hor.** Not from these mouths.

But since, Ambassador, you from Norway,  
Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies  
High on a stage be placed to the view;  
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world

How these things came about. All this can I  
Truly deliver.

**Nor. Amb.** 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.

**Hor.** Of that I shall have also cause to speak,  
Now, while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance  
On plots and errors happen. Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage;  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have prov'd most royally; and for his passage  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him.

**Amb.** Take up the bodies.  
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

*Exeunt marching; sounds of cannon.*