

ACT IV

SCENE I. A room in the castle.

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, and
GUILDENSTERN

King Claudius

There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves:

You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.

Where is your son?

Queen Gertrude

Bestow this place on us a little while.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

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

King Claudius

What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Queen Gertrude

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend

Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,

Behind the arras hearing something stir,

Whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat!'

And, in this brainish apprehension, kills

The unseen good old man.

King Claudius

O heavy deed!

It had been so with us, had we been there:

His liberty is full of threats to all;

To you yourself, to us, to every one.

Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?

It will be laid to us, whose providence

Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,

This mad young man: but so much was our love,

We would not understand what was most fit;

But, like the owner of a foul disease,

To keep it from divulging, let it feed

Even on the pith of Life. Where is he gone?

Queen Gertrude

To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:

O'er whom his very madness, like some ore

Among a mineral of metals base,

Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

King Claudius

O Gertrude, come away!

The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,

But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed

We must, with all our majesty and skill,

Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:

Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,

And from his mother's closet hath he 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. Another room in the castle.

Enter HAMLET

Hamlet
Safely stowed.

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern
[*Within*] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

Hamlet
What noise? who calls on Hamlet?
O, here they come.
Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

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

Hamlet

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

Rosencrantz

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence

And bear it to the chapel.

Hamlet

Do not believe it.

Rosencrantz

Believe what?

Hamlet

That I can keep your counsel and not mine own.

Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! what
replication should be made by the son of a king?

Rosencrantz

Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

Hamlet

Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his
rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the
king best service in the end: he keeps them, like

an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to
be last swallowed: when he needs what you have
gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you
shall be dry again.

Rosencrantz

I understand you not, my lord.

Hamlet

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

Rosencrantz

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

Hamlet

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

Guildenstern

A thing, my lord!

Hamlet

Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.
Exeunt

SCENE III. Another room in the castle.

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, attended

King Claudius

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

Enter ROSENCRANTZ

How now! what hath befall'n?

Rosencrantz

Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

King Claudius

But where is he?

Rosencrantz

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

King Claudius

Bring him before us.

Rosencrantz

Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN

King Claudius

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

Hamlet

At supper.

King Claudius

At supper! where?

Hamlet

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

King Claudius

Alas, alas!

Hamlet

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

King Claudius

What dost you mean by this?

Hamlet

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

King Claudius

Where is Polonius?

Hamlet

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

King Claudius

Go seek him there.

To some Attendants

Hamlet

He will stay till ye come.

Exeunt Attendants

King Claudius

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—

Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve

For that which thou hast done,—must send thee hence

With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;

The bark is ready, and the wind at help,

The associates tend, and every thing is bent

For England.

Hamlet

For England!

King Claudius

Ay, Hamlet.

Hamlet

Good.

King Claudius

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

Hamlet

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

King Claudius

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

Hamlet

My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man
and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England!
Exit

King Claudius

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.
Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN
And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us—thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters congruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

Exit

SCENE IV. A plain in Denmark.

Enter FORTINBRAS, a Captain, and Soldiers, marching

Fortinbras

Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;
Tell him that, by his licence, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.

Captain

I will do't, my lord.

Fortinbras

Go softly on.

Exeunt FORTINBRAS and Soldiers

Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others

Hamlet

Good sir, whose powers are these?

Captain

They are of Norway, sir.

Hamlet

How purposed, sir, I pray you?

Captain

Against some part of Poland.

Hamlet

Who commands them, sir?

Captain

The nephews to old Norway, Fortinbras.

Hamlet

Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,

Or for some frontier?

Captain

Truly to speak, and with no addition,

We go to gain a little patch of ground

That hath in it no profit but the name.

To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;

Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole

A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

Hamlet

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

Captain

Yes, it is already garrison'd.

Hamlet

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

Captain

God be wi' you, sir.

Exit

Rosencrantz

Wilt please you go, my lord?

Hamlet

I'll be with you straight go a little before.
Exeunt all except HAMLET
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 god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on the event,
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom
And ever three parts coward, I do not know
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:
Witness this army of such mass and charge
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. 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? while, to my shame, I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!
Exit

SCENE V. Elsinore. A room in the castle.

Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE, HORATIO, and a Gentleman

Queen Gertrude

I will not speak with her.

Gentleman

She is importunate, indeed distract:

Her mood will needs be pitied.

Queen Gertrude

What would she have?

Gentleman

She speaks much of her father; says she hears

There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;

Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,

That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,

Yet the unshaped use of it doth move

The hearers to collection; they aim at it,

And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;

Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures

yield them,

Indeed would make one think there might be thought,

Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

Horatio

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

Queen Gertrude

Let her come in.

Exit HORATIO

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.
Re-enter HORATIO, with OPHELIA

Ophelia

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

Queen Gertrude

How now, Ophelia!

Ophelia

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

Queen Gertrude

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

Ophelia

Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

[*Sings*] He is dead and gone, lady,

He is dead and gone;

At his head a grass-green turf,

At his heels a stone.

Queen Gertrude

Nay, but, Ophelia,—

Ophelia

Pray you, mark.

[*Sings*] White his shroud as the mountain snow,—

Enter KING CLAUDIUS

Queen Gertrude

Alas, look here, my lord.

Ophelia

[*Sings*]

Larded with sweet flowers

Which bewept to the grave did go

With true-love showers.

King Claudius

How do you, pretty lady?

Ophelia

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

King Claudius

Conceit upon her father.

Ophelia

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

[*Sings*] To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,

All in the morning betime,

And I a maid at your window,

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,

And dupp'd the chamber-door;

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

King Claudius

Pretty Ophelia!

Ophelia

Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

[*Sings*] By Gis and by Saint Charity,

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

King Claudius
How long hath she been thus?

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

King Claudius
Follow her close; give her good watch,
I pray you.
Exit HORATIO
O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,
When sorrows come, they come not single spies
But in battalions. First, her father slain:
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author

Of his own just remove: the people muddied,
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:
Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France;
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.
A noise within

Queen Gertrude
Alack, what noise is this?

King Claudius
Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.
Enter another Gentleman
What is the matter?

Gentleman
Save yourself, my lord:
The ocean, overpeering of his list,

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

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

King Claudius
The doors are broke.
Noise within
Enter LAERTES, armed; Danes following

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

Danes
No, let's come in.

Laertes
I pray you, give me leave.

Danes

We will, we will.

They retire without the door

Laertes

I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,

Give me my father!

Queen Gertrude

Calmly, good Laertes.

Laertes

That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,

Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot

Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow

Of my true mother.

King Claudius

What is the cause, Laertes,

That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?

Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:

There's such divinity doth hedge a king,

That treason can but peep to what it would,

Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,

Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.

Speak, man.

Laertes

Where is my father?

King Claudius

Dead.

Queen Gertrude

But not by him.

King Claudius

Let him demand his fill.

Laertes

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

King Claudius

Who shall stay you?

Laertes

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

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

Laertes
None but his enemies.

King Claudius
Will you know them then?

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

King Claudius
Why, now you speak
Like a good child and a true gentleman.
That I am guiltless of your father's death,
And am most sensible in grief for it,

It shall as level to your judgment pierce
As day does to your eye.

Danes

[*Within*] Let her come in.

Laertes

How now! what noise is that?

Re-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 moral as an old man's life?
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,
It sends some precious instance of itself
After the thing it loves.

Ophelia

[*Sings*] They bore him barefaced on the bier;
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;
And in his grave rain'd many a tear:—
Fare you well, my dove!

Laertes

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,

It could not move thus.

Ophelia

[*Sings*] You must sing a-down a-down,
An you call him a-down-a.
O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false
steward, that stole his master's daughter.

Laertes

This nothing's more than matter.

Ophelia

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray,
love, remember: and there is pansies. that's for thoughts.

Laertes

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

Ophelia

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

Laertes

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

Ophelia

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

And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead:

Go to thy death-bed:

He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his poll:

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan:

God ha' mercy on his soul!

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

Exit

Laertes

Do you see this, O God?

King Claudius

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,

Or you deny me right. Go but apart,

Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will.

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

If by direct or by collateral hand

They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,

Our crown, our life, and all that we can 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.

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

King Claudius
So you shall;
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.
I pray you, go with me.
Exeunt

SCENE VI. Another room in the castle.

Enter HORATIO and a Servant

Horatio
What are they that would speak with me?

Servant
Sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.

Horatio

Let them come in.

Exit Servant

I do not know from what part of the world

I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors

1st Sailor

God bless you, sir.

Horatio

Let him bless thee too.

1st Sailor

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

Horatio

[*Reads*] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked
this, give these fellows some means to the king:
they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old
at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us
chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on
a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded

them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so
I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with
me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they
did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king
have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me
with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I
have words to speak in thine ear will make thee
dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of
the matter. These good fellows will bring thee
where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their
course for England: of them I have much to tell thee.
Farewell.

'He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.'

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

SCENE VII. Another room in the castle.

Enter KING CLAUDIUS and LAERTES

King Claudius

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

Laertes

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

King Claudius

O, for two special reasons;
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,
But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself—
My virtue or my plague, be it either which—
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her. The other motive,
Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him;
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,
Convert his gyves 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.

Laertes

And so have I a noble father lost;
A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age

For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

King Claudius

Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think

That we are made of stuff so flat and dull

That we can let our beard be shook with danger

And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:

I loved your father, and we love ourself;

And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

Enter a Messenger

How now! what news?

Messenger

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:

This to your majesty; this to the queen.

King Claudius

From Hamlet! who brought them?

Messenger

Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:

They were given me by Claudio; he received them

Of him that brought them.

King Claudius

Laertes, you shall hear them. Leave us.

Exit Messenger

[*Reads*] 'High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on
your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see
your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your
pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden

and more strange return. 'HAMLET.'
What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

Laertes
Know you the hand?

King Claudius
'Tis Hamlets character. 'Naked!
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone.'
Can you advise me?

Laertes
I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;
It warms the very sickness in my heart,
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus didest thou.'

King Claudius
If it be so, Laertes—
As how should it be so? how otherwise?—
Will you be ruled by me?

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

King Claudius

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

Laertes

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

King Claudius

It falls right.
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts
Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one, and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.

Laertes

What part is that, my lord?

King Claudius

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

Laertes
A Norman was't?

King Claudius
A Norman.

Laertes
Upon my life, Lamond.

King Claudius
The very same.

Laertes

I know him well: he is the brooch indeed
And gem of all the nation.

King Claudius

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

Laertes

What out of this, my lord?

King Claudius

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

Laertes

Why ask you this?

King Claudius

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

Laertes

To cut his throat i' the church.

King Claudius

No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence

And set a double varnish on the fame
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,
Most generous and free from all contriving,
Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practise
Requite him for your father.

Laertes

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

King Claudius

Let's further think of this;
Weigh what convenience both of time and means
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad performance,
'Twere better not assay'd: therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold,
If this should blast in proof. Soft! let me see:

We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings: I ha't.
When in your motion you are hot and dry—
As make your bouts more violent to that end—
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there.
Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE
How now, sweet queen!

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

Laertes
Drown'd! O, where?

Queen Gertrude
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 crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds
Clambering 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.

Laertes

Alas, then, she is drown'd?

Queen Gertrude

Drown'd, drown'd.

Laertes

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.
Exit

King Claudius

Let's follow, Gertrude:

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

Therefore let's follow.

Exeunt