

ACT III

SCENE I. A room in the castle.

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA,
ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN

King Claudius

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

Rosencrantz

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

Guildenstern

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

Queen Gertrude

Did he receive you well?

Rosencrantz

Most like a gentleman.

Guildenstern

But with much forcing of his disposition.

Rosencrantz

Niggard of question; but, of our demands,

Most free in his reply.

Queen Gertrude

Did you assay him?

To any pastime?

Rosencrantz

Madam, it so fell out, that certain players

We o'er-raught on the way: of these we told him;

And there did seem in him a kind of joy

To hear of it: they are about the court,

And, as I think, they have already order

This night to play before him.

Polonius

'Tis most true:

And he beseech'd me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the matter.

King Claudius

With all my heart; and it doth much content me

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

Rosencrantz
We shall, my lord.
Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

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

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

Ophelia

Madam, I wish it may.

Exit QUEEN GERTRUDE

Polonius

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

We will bestow ourselves.

To OPHELIA

Read on this book;

That show of such an exercise may colour

Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this,—

'Tis too much proved—that with devotion's visage

And pious action we do sugar o'er

The devil himself.

King Claudius

[*Aside*] O, 'tis too true!

How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,

Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it

Than is my deed to my most painted word:

O heavy burthen!

Polonius

I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS

Enter HAMLET

Hamlet

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be 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,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The 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,

And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action.—Soft you now!
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

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

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

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

Hamlet
No, not I;
I never gave you aught.

Ophelia
My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed
As made the things more rich: their perfume lost,
Take these again; for to the noble mind

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

There, my lord.

Hamlet

Ha, ha! are you honest?

Ophelia

My lord?

Hamlet

Are you fair?

Ophelia

What means your lordship?

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

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

Hamlet

Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner
transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the

force of honesty can translate beauty into his
likeness: this was sometime a paradox, but now the
time gives it proof. I did love you once.

Ophelia

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet

You should not have believed me; for virtue cannot
so inoculate our old stock but we shall relish of
it: I loved you not.

Ophelia

I was the more deceived.

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

At home, my lord.

Hamlet

Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool no where but in's own house. Farewell.

Ophelia

O, help him, you sweet heavens!

Hamlet

If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry: be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. 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.

Ophelia

O heavenly powers, restore him!

Hamlet

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and

nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness
your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't; it hath
made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages:
those that are married already, all but one, shall
live; the rest shall keep as they are.
To a nunnery, go.
Exit

Ophelia
O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed 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,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!
Re-enter KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS

King Claudius
Love! his affections do not that way tend;
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness. There's something in his soul,
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood;
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose

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

Polonius

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

King Claudius

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

SCENE II. A hall in the castle.

Enter HAMLET and Players

Hamlet

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue: but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, the whirlwind of passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings, who for the most part are capable of nothing but inexplicable dumbshows and noise: I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant; it out-herods Herod: pray you, avoid it.

1st Player

I warrant your honour.

Hamlet

Be not too tame neither, but let your own discretion be your tutor: suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special o'erstep not

the modesty of nature: for any thing so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve; the censure of the which one must in your allowance o'erweigh a whole theatre of others. O, there be players that I have seen play, and heard others praise, and that highly, not to speak it profanely, that, neither having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have thought some of nature's journeymen had made men and not made them well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

1st Player

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

Hamlet

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

that's villanous, and shows a most pitiful ambition
in the fool that uses it. Go, make you ready.

Exeunt Players

Enter POLONIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN

How now, my lord! I will the king hear this piece of work?

Polonius

And the queen too, and that presently.

Hamlet

Bid the players make haste.

Exit POLONIUS

Will you two help to hasten them?

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern

We will, my lord.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Hamlet

What ho! Horatio!

Enter HORATIO

Horatio

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

Hamlet

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

Horatio
O, my dear lord,—

Hamlet
Nay, do not think I flatter;
For what advancement may I hope from thee
That no revenue hast but thy good spirits,
To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flatter'd?
No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,
And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks: and blest are those
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,
That they are not a pipe for fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please. Give me that man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.—Something too much of this.—
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 mine uncle: if his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.

Horatio

Well, my lord:
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay the theft.

Hamlet

They are coming to the play; I must be idle:
Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE,
POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others

King Claudius

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

Hamlet

Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish: I eat
the air, promise-crammed: you cannot feed capons so.

King Claudius

I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet; these words
are not mine.

Hamlet

No, nor mine now.

To POLONIUS

My lord, you played once i' the university, you say?

Polonius

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

Hamlet

What did you enact?

Polonius

I did enact Julius Caesar: I was killed i' the
Capitol; Brutus killed me.

Hamlet

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

Rosencrantz

Ay, my lord; they stay upon your patience.

Queen Gertrude

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

Hamlet

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

Polonius

[*To KING CLAUDIUS*] O, ho! do you mark that?

Hamlet

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Lying down at OPHELIA's feet

Ophelia

No, my lord.

Hamlet

I mean, my head upon your lap?

Ophelia

Ay, my lord.

Hamlet

Do you think I meant country matters?

Ophelia

I think nothing, my lord.

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

What is, my lord?

Hamlet

Nothing.

Ophelia

You are merry, my lord.

Hamlet

Who, I?

Ophelia

Ay, my lord.

Hamlet

O God, your only jig-maker. What should a man do
but be merry? for, look you, how cheerfully my

mother looks, and my father died within these two hours.

Ophelia

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

Hamlet

So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for
I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens! die two
months ago, and not forgotten yet? Then there's
hope a great man's memory may outlive his life half
a year: but, by'r lady, he must build churches,
then; or else shall he suffer not thinking on, with
the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is 'For, O, for, O,
the hobby-horse is forgot.'

Hautboys play. The dumb-show enters

Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the Queen embracing him, and he her. She kneels, and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up, and declines his head upon her neck: lays him down upon a bank of flowers: she, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exit. The Queen returns; finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The Poisoner, with some two or three Mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The Poisoner wooes the Queen with gifts: she seems loath and unwilling awhile, but in the end accepts his love

Exeunt

Ophelia

What means this, my lord?

Hamlet

Marry, this is miching mallecho; it means mischief.

Ophelia

Belike this show imports the argument of the play.

Enter Prologue

Hamlet

We shall know by this fellow: the players cannot
keep counsel; they'll tell all.

Ophelia

Will he tell us what this show meant?

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

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

Prologue

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

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

'Tis brief, my lord.

Hamlet

As woman's love.

Enter two Players, King and Queen

Player King

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

Player Queen

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done!
But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you. Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity;
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now, what my love is, proof hath made you know;
And as my love is sized, my fear is so:

Where love is great, the littlest doubts are fear;
Where little fears grow great, great love grows there.

Player King

'Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

Player Queen

O, confound the rest!
Such love must needs be treason in my breast:
In second husband let me be accurst!
None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

Hamlet

[*Aside*] Wormwood, wormwood.

Player Queen

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

Player King

I do believe you think what now you speak;

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

Player Queen

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

Hamlet

If she should break it now!

Player King

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

Player Queen

Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance between us twain!
Exit

Hamlet

Madam, how like you this play?

Queen Gertrude

The lady protests too much, methinks.

Hamlet

O, but she'll keep her word.

King Claudius

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

Hamlet

No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest; no offence
i' the world.

King Claudius

What do you call the play?

Hamlet

The Mouse-trap. Marry, how? Tropically. This play
is the image of a murder done in Vienna: Gonzago is
the duke's name; his wife, Baptista: you shall see
anon; 'tis a knavish piece of work: but what o'
that? your majesty and we that have free souls, it
touches us not: let the galled jade wince, our
withers are unwrung.

Enter LUCIANUS

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the king.

Ophelia

You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

Hamlet

I could interpret between you and your love, if I
could see the puppets dallying.

Ophelia

You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

Hamlet

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

Ophelia

Still better, and worse.

Hamlet

So you must take your husbands. Begin, murderer;
pox, leave thy damnable faces, and begin. Come:
'the croaking raven doth bellow for revenge.'

Lucianus

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing;
Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds collected,
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property,

On wholesome life usurp immediately.
Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears

Hamlet
He poisons him i' the garden for's estate. His
name's Gonzago: the story is extant, and writ in
choice Italian: you shall see anon how the murderer
gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

Ophelia
The king rises.

Hamlet
What, frightened with false fire!

Queen Gertrude
How fares my lord?

Polonius
Give o'er the play.

King Claudius
Give me some light: away!

All
Lights, lights, lights!

Exeunt all but HAMLET and HORATIO

Hamlet

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,
The hart ungalled play;
For some must watch, while some must sleep:
So runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers— if
the rest of my fortunes turn Turk with me—with two
Provincial roses on my razed shoes, get me a
fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

Horatio

Half a share.

Hamlet

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

Horatio

You might have rhymed.

Hamlet

O good Horatio, I'll take the ghost's word for a

thousand pound. Didst perceive?

Horatio

Very well, my lord.

Hamlet

Upon the talk of the poisoning?

Horatio

I did very well note him.

Hamlet

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

For if the king like not the comedy,

Why then, belike, he likes it not, perdy.

Come, some music!

Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Guildenstern

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

Hamlet

Sir, a whole history.

Guildenstern

The king, sir,—

Hamlet

Ay, sir, what of him?

Guildenstern

Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.

Hamlet

With drink, sir?

Guildenstern

No, my lord, rather with choler.

Hamlet

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

Guildenstern

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

Hamlet

I am tame, sir: pronounce.

Guildestern

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

Hamlet

You are welcome.

Guildestern

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.

Hamlet

Sir, I cannot.

Guildestern

What, my lord?

Hamlet

Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased: but, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or, rather, as you say, my mother: therefore no more, but to the matter: my mother, you say,—

Rosencrantz

Then thus she says; your behavior hath struck her
into amazement and admiration.

Hamlet

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

Rosencrantz

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

Hamlet

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

Rosencrantz

My lord, you once did love me.

Hamlet

So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

Rosencrantz

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you

do, surely, bar the door upon your own liberty, if
you deny your griefs to your friend.

Hamlet

Sir, I lack advancement.

Rosencrantz

How can that be, when you have the voice of the king
himself for your succession in Denmark?

Hamlet

Ay, but sir, 'While the grass grows,'—the proverb
is something musty.

Re-enter Players with recorders

O, the recorders! let me see one. To withdraw with
you:—why do you go about to recover the wind of me,
as if you would drive me into a toil?

Guildestern

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

Hamlet

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

Guildestern

My lord, I cannot.

Hamlet

I pray you.

Guildenstern

Believe me, I cannot.

Hamlet

I do beseech you.

Guildenstern

I know no touch of it, my lord.

Hamlet

'Tis as easy as lying: govern these ventages with
your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your
mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music.
Look you, these are the stops.

Guildenstern

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

Hamlet

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

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

Enter POLONIUS

God bless you, sir!

Polonius

My lord, the queen would speak with you, and
presently.

Hamlet

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

Polonius

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

Hamlet

Methinks it is like a weasel.

Polonius

It is backed like a weasel.

Hamlet

Or like a whale?

Polonius

Very like a whale.

Hamlet

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

Polonius

I will say so.

Hamlet

By and by is easily said.

Exit POLONIUS

Leave me, friends.

Exeunt all but HAMLET

Tis now the very witching time of night,

When churchyards yawn and hell itself breathes out

Contagion to this world: now could I drink hot blood,

And do such bitter business as the day

Would quake to look on. Soft! now to my mother.

O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever

The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:

Let me be cruel, not unnatural:

I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites;
How in my words soever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent!
Exit

SCENE III. A room in the castle.

Enter KING CLAUDIUS, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN

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

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

Rosencrantz
The single and peculiar life is bound,
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from noyance; but much more

That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many. The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but, like a gulf, doth draw
What's near it with it: it is a massy wheel,
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoin'd; which, when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boisterous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

King Claudius

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

Rosencrantz & Guildenstern

We will haste us.

Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN

Enter POLONIUS

Polonius

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet:
Behind the arras I'll convey myself,
To hear the process; and warrant she'll tax him home:
And, as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear

The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege:
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

King Claudius

Thanks, dear my lord.

Exit POLONIUS

O, my offence is rank it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent;
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul 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 the offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,

And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law: 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 in evidence. What then? what rests?
Try what repentance can: what can it not?
Yet what can it when one can not repent?
O wretched state! O bosom black as death!
O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay!
Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel,
Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe!
All may be well.
Retires and kneels
Enter HAMLET

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

To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?
No!
Up, sword; and know thou a more horrid hent:
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in the incestuous pleasure of his bed;
At gaming, swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in'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 stays:
This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.
Exit

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

SCENE IV. The Queen's closet.

Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE and POLONIUS

Polonius
He will come straight. Look you lay home to him:
Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear with,
And that your grace hath screen'd and stood between
Much heat and him. I'll sconce me even here.
Pray you, be round with him.

Hamlet

[*Within*] Mother, mother, mother!

Queen Gertrude

I'll warrant you,

Fear me not: withdraw, I hear him coming.

POLONIUS hides behind the arras

Enter HAMLET

Hamlet

Now, mother, what's the matter?

Queen Gertrude

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Hamlet

Mother, you have my father much offended.

Queen Gertrude

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Hamlet

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Queen Gertrude

Why, how now, Hamlet!

Hamlet

What's the matter now?

Queen Gertrude

Have you forgot me?

Hamlet

No, 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 Gertrude

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

Hamlet

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

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

Queen Gertrude

What wilt thou do? thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

Polonius

[*Behind*] What, ho! help, help, help!

Hamlet

[*Drawing*] How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

Makes a pass through the arras

Polonius

[*Behind*] O, I am slain!

Falls and dies

Queen Gertrude

O me, what hast thou done?

Hamlet

Nay, I know not:

Is it the king?

Queen Gertrude

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

Hamlet

A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,

As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

Queen Gertrude

As kill a king!

Hamlet

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

Lifts up the array and discovers 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 hands: peace! sit you down,

And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,

If it be made of penetrable stuff,

If damned custom have not brass'd it so

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

Queen Gertrude

What have I done, that thou darest wag thy tongue

In noise so rude against me?

Hamlet

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose

From the fair forehead of an innocent love

And sets a blister there, makes marriage-vows

As false as dicers' oaths: O, such a deed

As from the body of contraction plucks

The very soul, and sweet religion makes

A rhapsody of words: heaven's face doth glow:

Yea, this solidity and compound mass,

With tristful visage, as against the doom,

Is thought-sick at the act.

Queen Gertrude

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

Hamlet

Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See, what a grace was seated on this brow;
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;
A station like the herald Mercury
New-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill;
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 hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgment: and what judgment
Would step from this to this? Sense, sure, you have,
Else could you not have motion; but sure, that sense
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd

But it reserved some quantity of choice,
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire: proclaim no shame
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn
And reason panders will.

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

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

Queen Gertrude
O, speak to me no more;

These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet!

Hamlet
A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord; a vice of kings;
A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
And put it in his pocket!

Queen Gertrude
No more!

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

Queen Gertrude
Alas, he's mad!

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

Ghost

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

Hamlet

How is it with you, lady?

Queen Gertrude

Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Starts up, and stands on end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience. Whereon do you look?

Hamlet

On him, on him! Look you, how pale he glares!
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to stones,
Would make them capable. Do not look upon me;
Lest with this piteous action you convert

My stern effects: then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for blood.

Queen Gertrude
To whom do you speak this?

Hamlet
Do you see nothing there?

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

Hamlet
Nor did you nothing hear?

Queen Gertrude
No, nothing but ourselves.

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

Queen Gertrude
This the very coinage of your brain:

This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Hamlet
Ecstasy!
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music: it is not madness
That I have utter'd: bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that mattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks:
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;
And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue;
For in the fatness of these pursy times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

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

Hamlet
O, throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night: but go not to mine uncle's bed;

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on. Refrain 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 master the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night:
And when you are desirous to be bless'd,
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,
Pointing to POLONIUS
I do repent: but heaven hath pleased it so,
To punish me with this and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

Queen Gertrude
What shall I do?

Hamlet
Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat king tempt you again to bed;

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

Queen Gertrude

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

Hamlet

I must to England; you know that?

Queen Gertrude

Alack,
I had forgot: 'tis so concluded on.

Hamlet

There's letters seal'd: and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way,
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work;
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard: and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines,
And blow them at the moon: O, 'tis most sweet,
When in one line two crafts directly meet.
This man shall set me packing:
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
Mother, good night. Indeed this counsellor
Is now most still, most secret and most grave,
Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
Good night, mother.
Exeunt severally; HAMLET dragging in POLONIUS