



# The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

## (complete text)

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### Act I

1. Elsinore. A platform before the Castle.
2. Elsinore. A room of state in the Castle.
3. Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius.
4. Elsinore. The platform before the Castle.
5. Elsinore. The Castle. Another part of the fortifications.

### Act II

1. Elsinore. A room in the house of Polonius.
2. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.

### Act III

1. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.
2. Elsinore. hall in the Castle.
3. A room in the Castle.
4. The Queen's closet.

### Act IV

1. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.
2. Elsinore. A passage in the Castle.
3. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.
4. Near Elsinore.
5. Elsinore. A room in the Castle.
6. Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.
7. Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.

### Act V

1. Elsinore. A churchyard.
2. Elsinore. A hall in the Castle.

[Play menu](#)

## Act I, Scene 1

[next scene ▼](#)

**Elsinore. A platform before the Castle.**

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

**Bernardo.** Who's there?

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

**Bernardo.** Long live the King!

**Francisco.** Bernardo?

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**Bernardo.** He.

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

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

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

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

**Francisco.** Not a mouse stirring.

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

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*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

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

**Horatio.** Friends to this ground.

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

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** Holla, Bernardo! 25

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

**Horatio.** A piece of him.

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

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

**Bernardo.** I have seen nothing.

**Marcellus.** Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us.  
Therefore I have entreated him along, 35  
With us to watch the minutes of this night,  
That, if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

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

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

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

**Bernardo.** Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one- 50

*Enter Ghost.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** Question it, Horatio.

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

**Marcellus.** It is offended.

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

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

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*Exit Ghost.*

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

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

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**Horatio.** Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.

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

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

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**Marcellus.** Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,  
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

**Horatio.** In what particular thought to work I know not;  
But, in the gross and scope of my opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

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**Marcellus.** Good now, sit down, and tell me he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon  
And foreign mart for implements of war;  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week.  
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day?  
Who is't that can inform me?

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**Horatio.** That can I.

At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,  
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,  
Dar'd to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet  
(For so this side of our known world esteem'd him)  
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
Which he stood seiz'd of, to the conqueror;  
Against the which a moiety competent

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Was gaged by our king; which had return'd  
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same cov'nant  
And carriage of the article design'd,  
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,  
Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,  
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolutes,  
For food and diet, to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in't; which is no other,  
As it doth well appear unto our state,  
But to recover of us, by strong hand  
And terms compulsatory, those foresaid lands  
So by his father lost; and this, I take it,

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Is the main motive of our preparations,  
The source of this our watch, and the chief head  
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.

**Bernardo.** I think it be no other but e'en so. 125  
Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
Comes armed through our watch, so like the King  
That was and is the question of these wars.

**Horatio.** A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye. 130  
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless, and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;  
As stars with trains of fire, and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star 135  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
And even the like precursor of fierce events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen coming on, 140  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climature and countrymen.

*[Enter Ghost again.]*

But soft! behold! Lo, where it comes again!  
I'll cross it, though it blast me.- Stay illusion! 145  
*[Spreads his arms.]*

If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me.  
If there be any good thing to be done,  
That may to thee do ease, and, grace to me, 150  
Speak to me.

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
Which happily foreknowing may avoid,  
O, speak!  
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life 155  
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth  
(For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death),  
*[The cock crows.]*  
Speak of it! Stay, and speak!- Stop it, Marcellus!

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

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

**Bernardo.** 'Tis here!

**Horatio.** 'Tis here!

**Marcellus.** 'Tis gone! 165  
*[Exit Ghost.]*

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

**Bernardo.** It was about to speak, when the cock crew. 170

**Horatio.** And then it started, like a guilty thing  
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard  
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
Awake the god of day; and at his warning, 175  
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.

**Marcellus.** It faded on the crowing of the cock. 180

Some say that that ever, 'gainst that season comes  
 Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
 The bird of dawning singeth all night long;  
 And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad,  
 The nights are wholesome, then no planets strike, 185  
 No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
 So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

**Horatio.** So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
 But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
 Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill. 190  
 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, 195  
 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.*

## Act I, Scene 2

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

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

**Claudius.** Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
 The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
 To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom  
 To be contracted in one brow of woe, 205  
 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, 210  
 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 215  
 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
 With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
 Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,  
 Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
 Or thinking by our late dear brother's death 220  
 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,  
 Colleagued with this dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not fail'd to pester us with message  
 Importing the surrender of those lands  
 Lost by his father, with all bands of law,  
 To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 225  
 Now for ourself and for this time of meeting.  
 Thus much the business is: we have here writ  
 To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,  
 Who, impotent and bedrid, scarcely hears  
 Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress 230  
 His further gait herein, in that the levies,  
 The lists, and full proportions are all made  
 Out of his subject; and we here dispatch  
 You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,  
 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway, 235  
 Giving to you no further personal power  
 To business with the King, more than the scope  
 Of these dilated articles allow. [*Gives a paper.*]

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

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

**Claudius.** We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell.  
[*Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.*]  
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?  
You told us of some suit. What is't, Laertes?  
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane 245  
And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
The head is not more native to the heart,  
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father. 250  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

**Laertes.** My dread lord,  
Your leave and favour to return to France;  
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark  
To show my duty in your coronation, 255  
Yet now I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

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

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

**Claudius.** Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will! 265  
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son-

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

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

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

**Gertrude.** Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off, 270  
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. 275

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

**Gertrude.** If it be,  
Why seems it so particular with thee?

**Hamlet.** Seems, madam, Nay, it is. I know not 'seems.'  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother, 280  
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, 285  
'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.

**Claudius.** 'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet, 290  
To give these mourning duties to your father;  
But you must know, your father lost a father;  
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound  
In filial obligation for some term



To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere 295  
 In obstinate condolement is a course  
 Of impious stubbornness. 'Tis unmanly grief;  
 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
 A heart unfortified, a mind impatient, 300  
 An understanding simple and unschool'd;  
 For what we know must be, and is as common  
 As any the most vulgar thing to sense,  
 Why should we in our peevish opposition  
 Take it to heart? Fie! 'tis a fault to heaven,  
 A fault against the dead, a fault to nature, 305  
 To reason most absurd, whose common theme  
 Is death of fathers, and who still hath cried,  
 From the first corse till he that died to-day,  
 'This must be so.' We pray you throw to earth  
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us 310  
 As of a father; for let the world take note  
 You are the most immediate to our throne,  
 And with no less nobility of love  
 Than that which dearest father bears his son  
 Do I impart toward you. For your intent 315  
 In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
 It is most retrograde to our desire;  
 And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son. 320

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

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

**Claudius.** Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.  
 Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come. 325  
 This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet

Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,  
 No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day  
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
 And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, 330  
 Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.

*Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd 335  
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable  
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
 Fie on't! ah, fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden  
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature 340  
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
 But two months dead! Nay, not so much, not two.  
 So excellent a king, that was to this  
 Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother  
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven 345  
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him  
 As if increase of appetite had grown  
 By what it fed on; and yet, within a month-  
 Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman!- 350  
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
 With which she followed my poor father's body  
 Like Niobe, all tears- why she, even she  
 (O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason  
 Would have mourn'd longer) married with my uncle;  
 My father's brother, but no more like my father 355  
 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,  
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears

Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post 360  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not, nor it cannot come to good.  
But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue!

*Enter Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo.*

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

**Hamlet.** I am glad to see you well.  
Horatio!- or I do forget myself.

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

**Hamlet.** Sir, my good friend- I'll change that name with you.  
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio? 370  
Marcellus?

**Marcellus.** My good lord!

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

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

**Hamlet.** I would not hear your enemy say so,  
Nor shall you do my ear that violence  
To make it truster of your own report  
Against yourself. I know you are no truant. 380  
  
But what is your affair in Elsinore?  
We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.

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

**Hamlet.** I prithee do not mock me, fellow student.  
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

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

**Hamlet.** Thrift, thrift, Horatio! The funeral bak'd meats  
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.  
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven  
Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!  
My father- methinks I see my father. 390

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** He was a man, take him for all in all.  
I shall not look upon his like again. 395

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

**Hamlet.** Saw? who?

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

**Hamlet.** The King my father?

**Horatio.** Season your admiration for a while 400  
With an attent ear, till I may deliver  
Upon the witness of these gentlemen,  
This marvel to you.

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



**Horatio.** Two nights together had these gentlemen  
(Marcellus and Bernardo) on their watch  
In the dead vast and middle of the night  
Been thus encount'ed. A figure like your father,  
Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,  
Appears before them and with solemn march  
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;  
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,  
Form of the thing, each word made true and good,  
The apparition comes. I knew your father.  
These hands are not more like. 405 410 415 420

**Hamlet.** But where was this?

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

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

**Horatio.** My lord, I did;  
But answer made it none. Yet once methought  
It lifted up its head and did address  
Itself to motion, like as it would speak;  
But even then the morning cock crew loud,  
And at the sound it shrunk in haste away  
And vanish'd from our sight. 425 430

**Hamlet.** 'Tis very strange.

**Horatio.** As I do live, my honour'd lord, 'tis true;  
And we did think it writ down in our duty  
To let you know of it. 435

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* Arm'd, my lord. 440

**Hamlet.** From top to toe?

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** What, look'd he frowningly. 445

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

**Hamlet.** Pale or red?

**Horatio.** Nay, very pale.

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

**Horatio.** Most constantly. 450

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

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** *[with Bernardo]* Longer, longer. 455

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** I will watch to-night. 460  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

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

**Hamlet.** If it assume my noble father's person,  
I'll speak to it, though hell itself should gape  
And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all, 465  
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. 470  
Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,  
I'll visit you.

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

**Hamlet.** Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell. 475  
*[Exeunt [all but Hamlet].]*  
My father's spirit- in arms? All is not well.  
I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!  
Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

*Exit.*

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### Act I, Scene 3

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

*Enter Laertes and Ophelia.*

**Laertes.** My necessities are embark'd. Farewell.  
And, sister, as the winds give benefit  
And convoy is assistant, do not sleep,  
But let me hear from you. 485

**Ophelia.** Do you doubt that?

**Laertes.** For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favour,  
Hold it a fashion, and a toy in blood;  
A violet in the youth of primy nature,  
Forward, not permanent- sweet, not lasting; 490  
The perfume and suppliance of a minute;  
No more.

**Ophelia.** No more but so?

**Laertes.** Think it no more. 495  
For nature crescent does not grow alone  
In thews and bulk; but as this temple waxes,

The inward service of the mind and soul  
 Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,  
 And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch  
 The virtue of his will; but you must fear, 500  
 His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own;  
 For he himself is subject to his birth.  
 He may not, as unvalued persons do,  
 Carve for himself, for on his choice depends 505  
 The safety and health of this whole state,  
 And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd  
 Unto the voice and yielding of that body  
 Whereof he is the head. Then if he says he loves you,  
 It fits your wisdom so far to believe it 510  
 As he in his particular act and place  
 May give his saying deed; which is no further  
 Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.  
 Then weigh what loss your honour may sustain  
 If with too credent ear you list his songs,  
 Or lose your heart, or your chaste treasure open 515  
 To his unmast'red importunity.  
 Fear it, Ophelia, fear it, my dear sister,  
 And keep you in the rear of your affection,  
 Out of the shot and danger of desire.  
 The chariest maid is prodigal enough 520  
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon.  
 Virtue itself scopes not calumnious strokes.  
 The canker galls the infants of the spring  
 Too oft before their buttons be disclos'd,  
 And in the morn and liquid dew of youth 525  
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
 Be wary then; best safety lies in fear.  
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

**Ophelia.** I shall th' effect of this good lesson keep  
 As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother, 530  
 Do not as some ungracious pastors do,  
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,  
 Whiles, like a puff'd and reckless libertine,  
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads  
 And recks not his own rede. 535

**Laertes.** O, fear me not!  
*[Enter Polonius. ]*  
 I stay too long. But here my father comes.  
 A double blessing is a double grace;  
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave. 540

**Polonius.** Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!  
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,  
 And you are stay'd for. There- my blessing with thee!  
 And these few precepts in thy memory  
 Look thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue, 545  
 Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.  
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar:  
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,  
 Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;  
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment 550  
 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. 555  
 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. 560  
 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!

565

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

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

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

570

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

**Laertes.** Farewell. Exit.

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

575

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

**Polonius.** Marry, well bethought!  
'Tis told me he hath very oft of late  
Given private time to you, and you yourself  
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous.  
If it be so- as so 'tis put on me,  
And that in way of caution- I must tell you  
You do not understand yourself so clearly  
As it behooves my daughter and your honour.  
What is between you? Give me up the truth.

580

585

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

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

590

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

**Polonius.** Marry, I will teach you! Think yourself a baby  
That you have ta'en these tenders for true pay,  
Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,  
Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,  
Running it thus) you'll tender me a fool.

595

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

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

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

600

**Polonius.** Ay, springes to catch woodcocks! I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,  
Giving more light than heat, extinct in both  
Even in their promise, as it is a-making,  
You must not take for fire. From this time  
Be something scanter of your maiden presence.  
Set your entreatments at a higher rate  
Than a command to parley. For Lord Hamlet,  
Believe so much in him, that he is young,  
And with a larger tether may he walk  
Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,  
Do not believe his vows; for they are brokers,  
Not of that dye which their investments show,  
But mere implorators of unholy suits,

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615

Breathing like sanctified and pious bawds,  
The better to beguile. This is for all:  
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth  
Have you so slander any moment leisure

620

As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.  
Look to't, I charge you. Come your ways.

**Ophelia.** I shall obey, my lord.

*Exeunt.*

## Act I, Scene 4

[▲ previous scene](#)

[next scene ▼](#)

### *Elsinore. The platform before the Castle.*

*Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.*

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

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

**Hamlet.** What hour now?

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

**Marcellus.** No, it is struck.

630

**Horatio.** Indeed? I heard it not. It then draws near the season  
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.  
*[A flourish of trumpets, and two pieces go off.]*  
What does this mean, my lord?

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

635

**Horatio.** Is it a custom?

640

**Hamlet.** Ay, marry, is't;  
But to my mind, though I am native here  
And to the manner born, it is a custom  
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.  
This heavy-headed revel east and west  
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations;  
They clip us drunkards and with swinish phrase  
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes  
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,  
The pith and marrow of our attribute.  
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. The dram of e'il  
Doth all the noble substance often dout To his own scandal.

645

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

**Hamlet.** Angels and ministers of grace defend us!

Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell, 670  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet,  
King, father, royal Dane. O, answer me?  
Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell 675  
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,  
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre  
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,  
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws  
To cast thee up again. What may this mean 680  
That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,  
Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,  
Making night hideous, and we fools of nature  
So horridly to shake our disposition  
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls? 685  
Say, why is this? wherefore? What should we do?

*Ghost beckons Hamlet.*

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

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Why, what should be the fear?  
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;  
And for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal as itself? 700  
It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

**Horatio.** What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord,  
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,  
And there assume some other, horrible form 705  
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason  
And draw you into madness? Think of it.  
The very place puts toys of desperation,  
Without more motive, into every brain  
That looks so many fadoms to the sea 710  
And hears it roar beneath.

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** My fate cries out  
And makes each petty artire in this body  
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

[Ghost beckons.]  
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!-  
I say, away!- Go on. I'll follow thee.

720

*Exeunt Ghost and Hamlet.*

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

725

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

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

**Marcellus.** Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

**Horatio.** Heaven will direct it.

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

730

*Exeunt.*

## Act I, Scene 5

▲ previous scene

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

next scene ▼

*Enter Ghost and Hamlet.*

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

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

**Hamlet.** I will.

735

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

**Hamlet.** Alas, poor ghost!

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

740

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

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

**Hamlet.** What?

**Father's Ghost.** I am thy father's spirit,  
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 on end  
Like quills upon the fretful porcupine.  
But this eternal blazon must not be  
To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love-

745

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755

**Hamlet.** O God!

760



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

**Hamlet.** Murder?

**Father's Ghost.** Murder most foul, as in the best it is;  
But this most foul, strange, and unnatural.

**Hamlet.** Haste me to know't, that I, with wings as swift  
As meditation or the thoughts of love,  
May sweep to my revenge. 765

**Father's Ghost.** I find thee apt;  
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That rots itself in ease on Lethe wharf, 770  
Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.  
'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,  
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark  
Is by a forged process of my death  
Rankly abus'd. But know, thou noble youth, 775  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

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

**Father's Ghost.** Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast, 780  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts-  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce!- won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.  
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there, 785  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine! 790  
But virtue, as it never will be mov'd,  
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,  
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,  
Will sate itself in a celestial bed  
And prey on garbage. 795  
But soft! methinks I scent the morning air.  
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebona in a vial, 800  
And in the porches of my ears did pour  
The leperous distilment; whose effect  
Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
The natural gates and alleys of the body, 805  
And with a sudden vigour it doth posset  
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,  
The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine;

And a most instant tetter bark'd about,  
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust 810  
All my smooth body.  
Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand  
Of life, of crown, of queen, at once dispatch'd;  
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,  
Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd, 815  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head.

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

**Father's Ghost.** If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be 820  
A couch for luxury and damned incest.

But, howsoever thou pursuest this act,  
Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive  
Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven,  
And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge 825  
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once.  
The glowworm shows the matin to be near  
And gins to pale his uneffectual fire.  
Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me. Exit.

**Hamlet.** O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else? 830  
And shall I couple hell? Hold, hold, my heart!

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee?  
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
In this distracted globe. Remember thee? 835

Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past  
That youth and observation copied there,  
And thy commandment all alone shall live 840

Within the book and volume of my brain,  
Unmix'd with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!  
O most pernicious woman!

O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!  
My tables! Meet it is I set it down 845

That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;  
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark. *[Writes.]*

So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word:  
It is 'Adieu, adieu! Remember me.'  
I have sworn't. 850

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

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

**Marcellus.** Lord Hamlet!

**Horatio.** Heaven secure him!

**Hamlet.** So be it! 855

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

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** O, wonderful! 860

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

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

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

**Marcellus.** Nor I, my lord.

**Hamlet.** How say you then? Would heart of man once think it? 865  
But you'll be secret?

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

**Hamlet.** There's neer a villain dwelling in all Denmark  
But he's an arrant knave.

**Horatio.** There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave  
To tell us this. 870

**Hamlet.** Why, right! You are in the right!  
And so, without more circumstance at all,  
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part;  
You, as your business and desires shall point you, 875  
For every man hath business and desire,  
Such as it is; and for my own poor part,  
Look you, I'll go pray.

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

**Hamlet.** I am sorry they offend you, heartily;  
Yes, faith, heartily. 880

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

**Hamlet.** Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,  
And much offence too. Touching this vision here,  
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you. 885  
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.

**Horatio.** What is't, my lord? We will. 890

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

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

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

**Horatio.** In faith,  
My lord, not I. 895

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

**Hamlet.** Upon my sword.

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

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

*Ghost cries under the stage.*

**Father's Ghost.** Swear.

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

**Horatio.** Propose the oath, my lord. 905

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

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

**Hamlet.** Hic et ubique? Then we'll shift our ground.  
Come hither, gentlemen, 910  
And lay your hands again upon my sword.  
Never to speak of this that you have heard:  
Swear by my sword.

**Father's Ghost.** [*beneath*] Swear by his sword.

**Hamlet.** Well said, old mole! Canst work i' th' earth so fast?  
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends." 915

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

**Hamlet.** And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.  
There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. 920  
But come!  
Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,  
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself  
(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet  
To put an antic disposition on), 925  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumb'ed thus, or this head-shake,  
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,  
As 'Well, well, we know,' or 'We could, an if we would,'  
Or 'If we list to speak,' or 'There be, an if they might,' 930  
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note  
That you know aught of me- this is not to do,  
So grace and mercy at your most need help you,  
Swear.

**Father's Ghost.** [*beneath*] Swear. 935

[*They swear.*]

**Hamlet.** Rest, rest, perturbed spirit! So, gentlemen,  
With all my love I do commend me to you;  
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is  
May do t' express his love and friending to you, 940  
God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together;  
And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.  
The time is out of joint. O cursed spite  
That ever I was born to set it right!  
Nay, come, let's go together. 945

*Exeunt.*

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## Act II, Scene 1

[▲ previous scene](#)

[next scene ▼](#)

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

*Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.*

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

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

**Polonius.** You shall do marvell's wisely, good Reynaldo, 950  
Before You visit him, to make inquire  
Of his behaviour.

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

**Polonius.** Marry, well said, very well said. Look you, sir, 955  
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;  
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,  
What company, at what expense; and finding  
By this encompassment and drift of question  
That they do know my son, come you more nearer 960  
Than your particular demands will touch it.  
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;  
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,  
And in part him.' Do you mark this, Reynaldo?

**Reynaldo.** Ay, very well, my lord.

**Polonius.** 'And in part him, but,' you may say, 'not well. 965  
But if't be he I mean, he's very wild  
Addicted so and so'; and there put on him  
What forgeries you please; marry, none so rank

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

970

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

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

975

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

**Polonius.** Faith, no, as you may season it in the charge.  
You must not put another scandal on him,  
That he is open to incontinency.  
That's not my meaning. But breathe his faults so quaintly  
That they may seem the taints of liberty,  
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,  
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,  
Of general assault.

980

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

985

**Polonius.** Wherefore should you do this?

**Reynaldo.** Ay, my lord,  
I would know that.

**Polonius.** Marry, sir, here's my drift,  
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant.  
You laying these slight sullies on my son  
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' th' working,  
Mark you,  
Your party in converse, him you would sound,  
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes  
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd  
He closes with you in this consequence:  
'Good sir,' or so, or 'friend,' or 'gentleman'-  
According to the phrase or the addition  
Of man and country-

990

995

1000

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

**Polonius.** And then, sir, does 'a this- 'a does- What was I about to say?  
By the mass, I was about to say something! Where did I leave?

**Reynaldo.** At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and  
gentleman.'

1005

**Polonius.** At 'closes in the consequence'- Ay, marry!  
He closes thus: 'I know the gentleman.  
I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,  
Or then, or then, with such or such; and, as you say,  
There was 'a gaming; there o'ertook in's rouse;  
There falling out at tennis'; or perchance,  
'I saw him enter such a house of sale,'  
Videlicet, a brothel, or so forth.  
See you now-  
Your bait of falsehood takes this carp of truth;  
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,  
With windlasses and with assays of bias,  
By indirections find directions out.  
So, by my former lecture and advice,  
Shall you my son. You have me, have you not?

1010

1015

1020

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

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

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

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

**Reynaldo.** I shall, my lord. 1025

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

**Reynaldo.** Well, my lord.

**Polonius.** Farewell!

*[Exit Reynaldo.]*

*[Enter Ophelia.]*

How now, Ophelia? What's the matter? 1030

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

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

**Ophelia.** My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd, 1035

No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,  
Ungart' red, and down-gyved to his ankle;  
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,  
And with a look so piteous in purport  
As if he had been loosed out of hell  
To speak of horrors- he comes before me. 1040

**Polonius.** Mad for thy love?

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

**Polonius.** What said he? 1045

**Ophelia.** He took me by the wrist and held me hard;  
Then goes he to the length of all his arm,  
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,  
He falls to such perusal of my face  
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so. 1050  
At last, a little shaking of mine arm,  
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound  
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being. That done, he lets me go, 1055  
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.

**Polonius.** Come, go with me. I will go seek the King. 1060

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. 1065  
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

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

**Polonius.** That hath made him mad. 1070

I am sorry that with better heed and judgment  
I had not quoted him. I fear'd he did but trifle  
And meant to wrack thee; but beshrew my jealousy!  
By heaven, it is as proper to our age  
To cast beyond ourselves in our opinions 1075  
As it is common for the younger sort  
To lack discretion. Come, go we to the King.  
This must be known; which, being kept close, might move  
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

*Exeunt.*

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**Act II, Scene 2**[▲ previous scene](#)[next scene ▼](#)***Elsinore. A room in the Castle.***

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

**Claudius.** Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.  
Moreover that we much did long to see you, 1085  
The need we have to use you did provoke  
Our hasty sending. Something have you heard  
Of Hamlet's transformation. So I call it,  
Sith nor th' exterior nor the inward man  
Resembles that it was. What it should be, 1090  
More than his father's death, that thus hath put him  
So much from th' understanding of himself,  
I cannot dream of. I entreat you both  
That, being of so young days brought up with him,  
And since so neighbour'd to his youth and haviour, 1095  
That you vouchsafe your rest here in our court  
Some little time; so by your companies  
To draw him on to pleasures, and to gather  
So much as from occasion you may glean,  
Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus 1100  
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

**Gertrude.** Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,  
And sure I am two men there are not living  
To whom he more adheres. If it will please you  
To show us so much gentry and good will 1105  
As to expend your time with us awhile  
For the supply and profit of our hope,  
Your visitation shall receive such thanks  
As fits a king's remembrance.

**Rosencrantz.** Both your Majesties 1110  
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,  
Put your dread pleasures more into command  
Than to entreaty.

**Guildenstern.** But we both obey,  
And here give up ourselves, in the full bent, 1115  
To lay our service freely at your feet,  
To be commanded.

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

**Gertrude.** Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz.  
And I beseech you instantly to visit 1120  
My too much changed son.- Go, some of you,  
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

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

**Gertrude.** Ay, amen! 1125

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

*Enter Polonius.*

**Polonius.** Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,



Are joyfully return'd.

**Claudius.** Thou still hast been the father of good news. 1130

**Polonius.** Have I, my lord? Assure you, my good liege,  
I hold my duty as I hold my soul,  
Both to my God and to my gracious king;  
And I do think- or else this brain of mine  
Hunts not the trail of policy so sure 1135  
As it hath us'd to do- that I have found  
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

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

**Polonius.** Give first admittance to th' ambassadors.  
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast. 1140

**Claudius.** Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.  
*[Exit Polonius.]*  
He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

**Gertrude.** I doubt it is no other but the main,  
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage. 1145

**Claudius.** Well, we shall sift him.  
*[Enter Polonius, Voltemand, and Cornelius.]*  
Welcome, my good friends.  
Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway? 1150

**Voltemand.** Most fair return of greetings and desires.  
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress  
His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd  
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack,  
But better look'd into, he truly found 1155  
It was against your Highness; whereat griev'd,  
That so his sickness, age, and impotence  
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests  
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,  
Receives rebuke from Norway, and, in fine, 1160  
Makes vow before his uncle never more  
To give th' assay of arms against your Majesty.  
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee  
And his commission to employ those soldiers, 1165  
So levied as before, against the Polack;  
With an entreaty, herein further shown,  
*[Gives a paper.]*  
That it might please you to give quiet pass  
Through your dominions for this enterprise, 1170  
On such regards of safety and allowance  
As therein are set down.

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

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

But let that go.

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

**Polonius.** Madam, I swear I use no art at all.  
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;  
And pity 'tis 'tis true. A foolish figure!  
But farewell it, for I will use no art.  
Mad let us grant him then. And now remains 1195  
That we find out the cause of this effect-  
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,  
For this effect defective comes by cause.

Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.  
Perpend. 1200

I have a daughter (have while she is mine),  
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,  
Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.  
[Reads] the letter.]  
'To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'- 1205  
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase.  
But you shall hear. Thus:  
[Reads.]  
'In her excellent white bosom, these, &c.'

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

**Polonius.** Good madam, stay awhile. I will be faithful. [Reads.]  
'Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
Doubt that the sun doth move;  
Doubt truth to be a liar;  
But never doubt I love. 1215  
'O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers; I have not art to  
reckon my groans; but that I love thee best, O most best, believe  
it. Adieu.  
'Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to  
him, HAMLET.' 1220  
This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me;  
And more above, hath his solicitings,  
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,  
All given to mine ear.

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

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

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

**Polonius.** I would fain prove so. But what might you think,  
When I had seen this hot love on the wing 1230  
(As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that,  
Before my daughter told me), what might you,  
Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,  
If I had play'd the desk or table book,  
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb, 1235  
Or look'd upon this love with idle sight?  
What might you think? No, I went round to work  
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:  
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.  
This must not be.' And then I prescripts gave her, 1240  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,  
And he, repulsed, a short tale to make,  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast, 1245  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And all we mourn for.

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

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

**Polonius.** Hath there been such a time- I would fain know that-  
That I have Positively said 'Tis so,'

When it prov'd otherwise.?

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

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

If circumstances lead me, I will find  
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed  
Within the centre.

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

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

**Gertrude.** So he does indeed.

**Polonius.** At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him.

Be you and I behind an arras then. 1265  
Mark the encounter. If he love her not,  
And he not from his reason fall'n thereon  
Let me be no assistant for a state,  
But keep a farm and carters.

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

*Enter Hamlet, reading on a book.*

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

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

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

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

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

**Polonius.** Not I, my lord. 1280

**Hamlet.** Then I would you were so honest a man.

**Polonius.** Honest, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Ay, sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man  
pick'd out of ten thousand.

**Polonius.** That's very true, my lord. 1285

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

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

**Hamlet.** Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a blessing, but not  
as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to't. 1290

**Polonius.** [*aside*] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter. Yet  
he knew me not at first. He said I was a fishmonger. He is far  
gone, far gone! And truly in my youth I suff'ed much extremity

for love- very near this. I'll speak to him again.- What do you

1295

read, my lord?

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

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

**Hamlet.** Between who?

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

**Hamlet.** Slanders, sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men  
have grey beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes  
purging thick amber and plum-tree gum; and that they have a  
plentiful lack of wit, together with most weak hams. All which,  
sir, though I most powerfully and potently believe, yet I hold it  
not honesty to have it thus set down; for you yourself, sir,  
should be old as I am if, like a crab, you could go backward. 1300  
1305

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

**Hamlet.** Into my grave?

**Polonius.** Indeed, that is out o' th' air. *[Aside]* How pregnant sometimes  
his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which  
reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of. I  
will leave him and suddenly contrive the means of meeting between  
him and my daughter.- My honourable lord, I will most humbly take  
my leave of you. 1310  
1315

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

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

**Polonius.** Fare you well, my lord. 1320

**Hamlet.** These tedious old fools!

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

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

*Exit [Polonius].*

**Guildenstern.** My honour'd lord! 1325

**Rosencrantz.** My most dear lord!

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

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

**Guildenstern.** Happy in that we are not over-happy.  
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button. 1330

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

**Rosencrantz.** Neither, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her  
favours? 1335

**Guildenstern.** Faith, her privates we.

**Hamlet.** In the secret parts of Fortune? O! most true! she is a

strumpet. What news ?

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

**Hamlet.** Then is doomsday near! But your news is not true. Let me question more in particular. What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of Fortune that she sends you to prison hither? 1340

**Guildenstern.** Prison, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Denmark's a prison. 1345

**Rosencrantz.** Then is the world one.

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

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

**Hamlet.** Why, then 'tis none to you; for there is nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so. To me it is a prison. 1350

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

**Hamlet.** O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams. 1355

**Guildenstern.** Which dreams indeed are ambition; for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

**Hamlet.** A dream itself is but a shadow.

**Rosencrantz.** Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow. 1360

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

**Rosencrantz.** [*with Guildenstern*] We'll wait upon you.

**Hamlet.** No such matter! I will not sort you with the rest of my servants; for, to speak to you like an honest man, I am most dreadfully attended. But in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore? 1365

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

**Hamlet.** Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I thank you; and sure, dear friends, my thanks are too dear a halfpenny. Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come! Nay, speak. 1370

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** That you must teach me. But let me conjure you by the rights of our fellowship, by the consonancy of our youth, by the obligation of our ever-preserved love, and by what more dear a better proposer could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no. 1380

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** I will tell you why. So shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King and Queen moults no feather. I have of late- but wherefore I know not- lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises; and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted with golden fire- why, it appeareth no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals! And yet to me what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me- no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so. 1390 1395 1400

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** He that plays the king shall be welcome- his Majesty shall have tribute of me; the adventurous knight shall use his foil and target; the lover shall not sigh gratis; the humorous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' th' sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they? 1410 1415

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

**Hamlet.** How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.

**Rosencrantz.** I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation. 1420

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted? Will they pursue the quality no longer than they can sing? Will they not say afterwards, if they should grow themselves to common players (as it is most like, if their means are no better), their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession. 1435



**Rosencrantz.** Faith, there has been much to do on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre them to controversy. There was, for a while, no money bid for argument unless the poet and the player went to cuffs in the question. 1440

**Hamlet.** Is't possible?

**Guildenstern.** O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

**Hamlet.** Do the boys carry it away?

**Rosencrantz.** Ay, that they do, my lord- Hercules and his load too. 1445

**Hamlet.** It is not very strange; for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out. 1450

*Flourish for the Players.*

**Guildenstern.** There are the players.

**Hamlet.** Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come! Th' appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent to the players (which I tell you must show fairly outwards) should more appear like entertainment than yours. You are welcome. But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceiv'd. 1455

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

**Hamlet.** I am but mad north-north-west. When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw. 1460

*Enter Polonius.*

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

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

**Rosencrantz.** Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

**Hamlet.** I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players. Mark it.- You say right, sir; a Monday morning; twas so indeed. 1470

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Buzz, buzz!

**Polonius.** Upon my honour- 1475

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

**Polonius.** The best actors in the world, either for tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral; scene individable, or poem unlimited. Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men. 1480



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

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

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

**Polonius.** [*aside*] Still on my daughter.

**Hamlet.** Am I not i' th' right, old Jephthah?

**Polonius.** If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I 1490  
love passing well.

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

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

**Hamlet.** Why, 1495  
'As by lot, God wot,'  
and then, you know,  
'It came to pass, as most like it was.'  
The first row of the pious chanson will show you more; for look  
where my abridgment comes.

[*Enter four or five Players.*] 1500

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all.- I am glad to see thee  
well.- Welcome, good friends.- O, my old friend? Why, thy face is  
valanc'd since I saw thee last. Com'st' thou to' beard me in  
Denmark?- What, my young lady and mistress? By'r Lady, your  
ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last by the 1505  
altitude of a chopine. Pray God your voice, like a piece of  
uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring.- Masters, you are  
all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at  
anything we see. We'll have a speech straight. Come, give us a  
taste of your quality. Come, a passionate speech. 1510

**First Player.** What speech, my good lord?

**Hamlet.** I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted;  
or if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleas'd  
not the million, 'twas caviary to the general; but it was (as I 1515  
receiv'd it, and others, whose judgments in such matters cried in  
the top of mine) an excellent play, well digested in the scenes,  
set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remember one said  
there were no sallets in the lines to make the matter savoury,

nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of  
affectation; but call'd it an honest method, as wholesome as 1520  
sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in't  
I chiefly lov'd. 'Twas AENEAS' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it  
especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter. If it live in  
your memory, begin at this line- let me see, let me see:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast-' 1525

'Tis not so; it begins with Pyrrhus:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,  
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble  
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,  
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd 1530  
With heraldry more dismal. Head to foot  
Now is be total gules, horridly trick'd  
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,  
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light 1535  
To their lord's murther. Roasted in wrath and fire,  
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,  
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'

So, proceed you. 1540

**Polonius.** Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

**First Player.** 'Anon he finds him,  
Striking too short at Greeks. His antique sword,  
Rebellious to his arm, lies where it falls, 1545  
Repugnant to command. Unequal match'd,  
Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide;  
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword  
Th' unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,  
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top 1550  
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash  
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For lo! his sword,  
Which was declining on the milky head  
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' th' air to stick.  
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,  
And, like a neutral to his will and matter, 1555  
Did nothing.  
But, as we often see, against some storm,  
A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
The bold winds speechless, and the orb below  
As hush as death- anon the dreadful thunder 1560  
Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
Aroused vengeance sets him new awork;  
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
On Mars's armour, forg'd for proof eterne,  
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword 1565  
Now falls on Priam.  
Out, out, thou strumpet Fortune! All you gods,  
In general synod take away her power;  
Break all the spokes and fellies from her wheel,  
And bowl the round nave down the hill of heaven, 1570  
As low as to the fiends!

**Polonius.** This is too long.

**Hamlet.** It shall to the barber's, with your beard.- Prithee say on.  
He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps. Say on; come to Hecuba. 1575

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

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.- 1595  
Good my lord, will you see the players well bestow'd? Do you hear? Let them be well us'd; for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time. After your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

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

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

**Polonius.** Come, sirs. 1605

**Hamlet.** Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play to-morrow.  
*[Exeunt Polonius and Players [except the First].]*  
Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play 'The Murther of Gonzago'?

**First Player.** Ay, my lord. 1610

**Hamlet.** We'll ha't to-morrow night. You could, for a need, study a speech of some dozen or sixteen lines which I would set down and insert in't, could you not?

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

**Hamlet.** Very well. Follow that lord- and look you mock him not. 1615  
*[Exit First Player.]*  
My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

**Rosencrantz.** Good my lord!

**Hamlet.** Ay, so, God b' wi' ye! 1620  
*[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern]*  
Now I am alone.

O what a rogue and peasant slave am I!  
Is it not monstrous that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion, 1625  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit

That, from her working, all his visage wann'd,  
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,  
A broken voice, and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing! 1630  
For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,  
That he should weep for her? What would he do,  
Had he the motive and the cue for passion  
That I have? He would drown the stage with tears 1635  
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech;  
Make mad the guilty and appal the free,  
Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed  
The very faculties of eyes and ears.

Yet I, 1640

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak  
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,  
And can say nothing! No, not for a king,  
Upon whose property and most dear life  
A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward? 1645

Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?  
Plucks off my beard and blows it in my face?  
Tweaks me by th' nose? gives me the lie i' th' throat  
As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this, ha?  
'Swounds, I should take it! for it cannot be 1650  
But I am pigeon-liver'd and lack gall  
To make oppression bitter, or ere this  
I should have fatted all the region kites  
With this slave's offal. Bloody bawdy villain!  
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain! 1655

O, vengeance!  
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
That I, the son of a dear father murther'd,  
Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,

Must (like a whore) unpack my heart with words	1660
And fall a-cursing like a very drab,	
A scullion!	
Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! Hum, I have heard	
That guilty creatures, sitting at a play,	
Have by the very cunning of the scene	1665
Been struck so to the soul that presently	
They have proclaim'd their malefactions;	
For murther, though it have no tongue, will speak	
With most miraculous organ, I'll have these Players	
Play something like the murther of my father	1670
Before mine uncle. I'll observe his looks;	
I'll tent him to the quick. If he but blench,	
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen	
May be a devil; and the devil hath power	
T' assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps	1675
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,	
As he is very potent with such spirits,	
Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds	
More relative than this. The play's the thing	
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. Exit.	1680

### Act III, Scene 1

[▲ previous scene](#)

[next scene ▼](#)

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

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

<b>Claudius.</b> 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?	1685
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**Rosencrantz.** He does confess he feels himself distracted,  
But from what cause he will by no means speak.

<b>Guildenstern.</b> 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.	1690
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**Gertrude.** Did he receive you well?

**Rosencrantz.** Most like a gentleman.

<b>Guildenstern.</b> But with much forcing of his disposition.	1695
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**Rosencrantz.** Niggard of question, but of our demands  
Most free in his reply.

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

<b>Rosencrantz.</b> Madam, it so fell out that certain players We o'errought on the way. Of these we told him, And there did seem in him a kind of joy To hear of it. They are here about the court, And, as I think, they have already order This night to play before him.	1700     1705
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**Polonius.** 'Tis most true;  
And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties  
To hear and see the matter.

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

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

*Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

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

**Gertrude.** I shall obey you; 1725  
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish  
That your good beauties be the happy cause  
Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues  
Will bring him to his wonted way again,  
To both your honours. 1730

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

*[Exit Queen.]*

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

**Claudius.** *[aside]* O, 'tis too true! 1740  
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!  
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted word.  
O heavy burthen! 1745

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

*Exeunt King and Polonius].*

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** To be, or not to be- that is the question: 1750  
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 1755  
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die- to sleep.  
To sleep- perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub!  
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil, 1760  
Must give us pause. There's the respect  
That makes calamity of so long life.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despis'd love, the law's delay, 1765  
The insolence of office, and the spurns

That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,  
 When he himself might his quietus make  
 With a bare bodkin? Who would these fardels bear,  
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life, 1770  
 But that the dread of something after death-  
 The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns- puzzles the will,  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of? 1775  
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
 And enterprises of great pith and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry 1780  
 And lose the name of action.- Soft you now!  
 The fair Ophelia!- Nymph, in thy orisons  
 Be all my sins rememb'red.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Ophelia.** My lord?

**Hamlet.** Are you fair? 1800

**Ophelia.** What means your lordship?

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

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

**Hamlet.** Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner transform 1805  
 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 believ'd me; for virtue cannot so 1810  
 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 1815  
 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? 1820

**Ophelia.** At home, my lord.

**Hamlet.** Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool  
nowhere but in's own house. Farewell. 1825

**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 1830  
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 hath  
given you one face, and you make yourselves another. You jig, you 1835  
amble, and you lisp; you nickname God's creatures and make your  
wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't! it hath made  
me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages. Those that are  
married already- all but one- shall live; the rest shall keep as  
they are. To a nunnery, go. Exit. 1840

**Ophelia.** O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!  
The courtier's, scholar's, soldier's, eye, tongue, sword,  
Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form, 1845  
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 1850  
Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me  
T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

*Enter King and Polonius.*

**Claudius.** Love? his affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little, 1855  
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 1860  
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, 1865  
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? 1870  
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; 1875  
And I'll be plac'd so please you, in the ear  
Of all their conference. If she find him not,  
To England send him; or confine him where



Your wisdom best shall think.

**Claudius.** It shall be so.

1880

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go. Exeunt.

## Act III, Scene 2

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

*Enter Hamlet and three of the Players.*

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

1885

1890

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

1895

**Hamlet.** Be not too tame neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show Virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure. Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though 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.

1900

1905

1910

**First Player.** I hope we have reform'd that indifferently with us, sir.

**Hamlet.** O, reform it altogether! And let those that play your clowns speak no more than is set down for them. For there be of them that will themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too, though in the mean time some necessary question of the play be then to be considered. That's villanous and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it. Go make you ready.

1915

1920

*[Exeunt Players.]*

*[Enter Polonius, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.]*

How now, my lord? 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?

1925

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

*Exeunt they two.*

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

*Enter Horatio.*

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Nay, do not think I flatter; 1935  
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 1940  
Where thrift may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?  
Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice  
And could of men distinguish, her election  
Hath seal'd thee for herself. For thou hast been  
As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers nothing; 1945  
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 1950  
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him  
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,  
As I do thee. Something too much of this I  
There is a play to-night before the King.  
One scene of it comes near the circumstance, 1955  
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, 1960  
It is a damned ghost that we have seen,  
And my imaginations are as foul  
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note;  
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,  
And after we will both our judgments join 1965  
In censure of his seeming.

**Horatio.** Well, my lord.  
If he steal aught the whilst this play is playing,  
And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.  
Sound a flourish. [*Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums. Danish* 1970  
*march. [Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern,*  
*and other Lords attendant, with the Guard carrying torches.]*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** What did you enact?

**Polonius.** I did enact Julius Caesar; I was kill'd i' th' Capitol; Brutus

kill'd me.

1985

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

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

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

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

1990

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

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

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

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

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

1995

**Ophelia.** *Ay, my lord.*

**Hamlet.** *Do you think I meant country matters?*

**Ophelia.** *I think nothing, my lord.*

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

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

2000

**Hamlet.** *Nothing.*

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

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

**Ophelia.** *Ay, my lord.*

**Hamlet.** *O God, your only jig-maker! What should a man do but be merry? For look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within 's two hours.*

2005

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

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

2010

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

2015

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

2020

2025

*Exeunt.*

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

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

2030

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

Enter Prologue.

**Hamlet.** We shall know by this fellow. The players cannot keep counsel;  
they'll tell all.

**Ophelia.** Will he tell us what this show meant?

2035

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

**Ophelia.** You are naught, you are naught! I'll mark the play.  
Pro. For us, and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently. [Exit.]

2040

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

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

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

Enter [two Players as] King and Queen.

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

2050

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

2055

2060

**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-

2065

**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.

2070

**Hamlet.** [aside] Wormwood, wormwood!  
Queen. The instances that second marriage move  
Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.  
A second time I kill my husband dead

2075

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,

2080

*But fall unshaken when they mellow be.*

*Most necessary 'tis that we forget  
To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.*

2085

*What to ourselves in passion we propose,  
The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.*

*The violence of either grief or joy*

*Their own enactures with themselves destroy.*

*Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;*

2090

*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.*

2095

*The great man down, you mark his favourite flies,*

*The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies;*

*And hitherto doth love on fortune tend,*

*For who not needs shall never lack a friend,*

*And who in want a hollow friend doth try,*

2100

*Directly seasons him his enemy.*

*But, orderly to end where I begun,*

*Our wills and fates do so contrary run*

*That our devices still are overthrown;*

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

2105

*So think thou wilt no second husband wed;*

*But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.*

**Player Queen.** *Nor earth to me give food, nor heaven light,*

*Sport and repose lock from me day and night,*

*To desperation turn my trust and hope,*

2110

*An anchor's cheer in prison be my scope,*

*Each opposite that blanks the face of joy*

*Meet what I would have well, and it destroy,*

*Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,*

*If, once a widow, ever I be wife!*

2115

**Hamlet.** *If she should break it now!*

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

*My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile*

*The tedious day with sleep.*

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

2120

*He sleeps.]*

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

*Exit.*

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

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

2125

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

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

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

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

2130

**Hamlet.** *'The Mousetrap.' Marry, how? Tropically. This play is the image of a murder done in Vienna. Gonzago is the duke's name; his wife, Baptista. You shall see anon. 'Tis a knavish piece of work; but what o' that? Your Majesty, and we that have free souls, it touches us not. Let the gall'd jade winch; our withers are unwrung.*

2135



Enter Lucianus. This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

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

**Hamlet.** I could interpret between you and your love, if I could see  
the puppets dallying. 2140

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** So you must take your husbands.- Begin, murtherer. Pox, leave  
thy damnable faces, and begin! Come, the croaking raven doth 2145  
bellow for revenge.  
Luc. Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time agreeing; Confederate  
season, else no creature seeing; Thou mixture rank, of midnight weeds  
collected, With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected, Thy natural  
magic and dire property On wholesome life usurp immediately.

Pours the poison in his ears.

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

**Ophelia.** The King rises.

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

**Gertrude.** How fares my lord?

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

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

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

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.

**Hamlet.** Why, let the stricken deer go weep,  
The hart ungalled play; 2160  
For some must watch, while some must sleep:  
Thus runs the world away.  
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers- if the rest of my  
fortunes turn Turk with me-with two Provincial roses on my raz'd  
shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir? 2165

**Horatio.** Half a share.

**Hamlet.** A whole one I!

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,  
This realm dismantled was  
Of Jove himself; and now reigns here 2170  
A very, very- pajock.

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

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

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

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

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

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

*For if the King like not the comedy,  
Why then, belike he likes it not, perdy.  
Come, some music!  
Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

2180

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

**Hamlet.** Sir, a whole history.

**Guildenstern.** The King, sir-

2185

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

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

**Hamlet.** With drink, sir?

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

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

2190

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

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

2195

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

**Hamlet.** You are welcome.

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

2200

**Hamlet.** Sir, I cannot.

**Guildenstern.** What, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseas'd. But, sir, such answer as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother. Therefore no more, but to the matter! My mother, you say-

2205

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

2210

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

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

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

2215

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

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

**Rosencrantz.** Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do surely bar the door upon your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend.

2220

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

**Rosencrantz.** How can that be, when you have the voice of the King himself



**Hamlet.** Ay, sir, but 'while the grass grows'- the proverb is something  
musty. 2225

[Enter the Players with recorders. ]

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

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

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

**Guilденstern.** My lord, I cannot.

**Hamlet.** I pray you.

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

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

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

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

**Guilденstern.** But these cannot I command to any utt'rance of harmony. I 2240  
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, 2245  
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.] 2250  
God bless you, sir!

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Methinks it is like a weasel. 2255

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

**Hamlet.** Or like a whale.

**Polonius.** Very like a whale.

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

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

**Hamlet.** 'By-and-by' is easily said.- Leave me, friends.  
[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]  
'Tis now the very witching time of night,  
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out 2265  
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. 2270  
Let me be cruel, not unnatural;

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

2275

### Act III, Scene 3

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

*Enter King, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

**Claudius.** I like him not, nor stands it safe with us  
To let his madness range. Therefore prepare you;  
I your commission will forthwith dispatch,  
And he to England shall along with you. 2280  
The terms of our estate may not endure  
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow  
Out of his lunacies.

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

**Rosencrantz.** The single and peculiar life is bound  
With all the strength and armour of the mind  
To keep itself from noyance; but much more 2290  
That spirit upon whose weal depends and rests  
The lives of many. The cesse of majesty  
Dies not alone, but like a gulf doth draw  
What's near it with it. It is a massy wheel,  
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount, 2295  
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things  
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd; which when it falls,  
Each small annexment, petty consequence,  
Attends the boist'rous ruin. Never alone  
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan. 2300

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

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

*Exeunt Gentlemen.*

*Enter Polonius.*

**Polonius.** My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.  
Behind the arras I'll convey myself  
To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home;  
And, as you said, and wisely was it said, 2310  
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,  
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear  
The speech, of vantage. Fare you well, my liege.  
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed  
And tell you what I know. 2315

**Claudius.** Thanks, dear my lord.  
[*Exit [Polonius].*]  
O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;  
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,  
A brother's murder! Pray can I not, 2320  
Though inclination be as sharp as will.  
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,  
And, like a man to double business bound,

I stand in pause where I shall first begin,  
 And both neglect. What if this cursed hand 2325  
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,  
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens  
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy  
 But to confront the visage of offence?  
 And what's in prayer but this twofold force, 2330  
 To be forestalled ere we come to fall,  
 Or pardon'd being down? Then I'll look up;  
 My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer  
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murther'  
 That cannot be; since I am still possess'd 2335  
 Of those effects for which I did the murther-  
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.  
 May one be pardon'd and retain th' offence?  
 In the corrupted currents of this world  
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice, 2340  
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself  
 Buys out the law; but 'tis not so above.  
 There is no shuffling; there the action lies  
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd,  
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults, 2345  
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?  
 Try what repentance can. What can it not?  
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?  
 O wretched state! O bosom black as death!  
 O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, 2350  
 Art more engag'd! Help, angels! Make assay.  
 Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,  
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe!  
 All may be well. He kneels.

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** Now might I do it pat, now he is praying;  
 And now I'll do't. And so he goes to heaven,  
 And so am I reveng'd. That would be scann'd.  
 A villain kills my father; and for that,  
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send 2360  
 To heaven.  
 Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge!  
 He took my father grossly, full of bread,  
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;  
 And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven? 2365  
 But in our circumstance and course of thought,  
 'Tis heavy with him; and am I then reveng'd,  
 To take him in the purging of his soul,  
 When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?  
 No. 2370  
 Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.  
 When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage;  
 Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed;  
 At gaming, swearing, or about some act  
 That has no relish of salvation in't- 2375  
 Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,  
 And that his soul may be as damn'd and black  
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.  
 This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. Exit.

**Claudius.** *[rises]* My words fly up, my thoughts remain below. 2380  
 Words without thoughts never to heaven go. Exit.

---

Act III, Scene 4

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

Enter Queen and Polonius.

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

2385

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

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

*[Polonius hides behind the arras.]*

Enter Hamlet.

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

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

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

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

2395

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

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

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

**Gertrude.** Have you forgot me?

**Hamlet.** No, by the rood, not so!  
You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife,  
And (would it were not so!) you are my mother.

2400

**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.

2405

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

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

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

2410

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

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

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

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

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

2415

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

**Gertrude.** As kill a king?

**Hamlet.** Ay, lady, it was my word.

*[Lifts up the arras and sees Polonius.]*

2420

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!  
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune.  
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.  
Leave wringing of your hands. Peace! sit you down

And let me wring your heart; for so I shall  
If it be made of penetrable stuff;  
If damned custom have not braz'd it so  
That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

2425

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

2430

**Hamlet.** Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty;  
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose  
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,  
And sets a blister there; makes marriage vows  
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.

2435

2440

**Gertrude.** Ah me, what act,

That roars so loud and thunders in the index?

**Hamlet.** Look here upon th's picture, and on this,

2445

The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.  
See what a grace was seated on this brow;  
Hyperion's curls; the front of Jove himself;  
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command;  
A station like the herald Mercury  
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 heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgment; and what judgment  
Would step from this to this? Sense sure you have,  
Else could you not have motion; but sure that sense  
Is apoplex'd; for madness would not err,  
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd  
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice  
To serve in such a difference. What devil was't  
That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?  
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,  
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,  
Or but a sickly part of one true sense  
Could not so mope.  
O shame! where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax  
And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame  
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason panders will.

2450

2455

2460

2465

2470

2475

2480

**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

2485

In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,  
Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love

Over the nasty sty!

**Gertrude.** O, speak to me no more!  
These words like daggers enter in mine ears. 2490  
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, 2495  
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole  
And put it in his pocket!

**Gertrude.** No more!

*Enter the Ghost in his nightgown.*

**Hamlet.** A king of shreds and patches!- 2500  
Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly guards! What would your gracious figure?

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

**Hamlet.** Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by 2505  
Th' important acting of your dread command?  
O, say!

**Father's Ghost.** Do not forget. This visitation  
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.  
But look, amazement on thy mother sits. 2510  
O, step between her and her fighting soul  
Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.  
Speak to her, Hamlet.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Exit Ghost.*



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

**Hamlet.** Ecstasy?  
My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have utt'red. Bring me to the test, 2545  
And I the matter will reword; which madness  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,  
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul

That not your trespass but my madness speaks.  
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place, 2550  
Whiles rank corruption, mining all within,  
Infects unseen. Confess yourself to heaven;  
Repent what's past; avoid what is to come;  
And do not spread the compost on the weeds  
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue; 2555  
For in the fatness of these pursy times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg-  
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

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

**Hamlet.** O, throw away the worser part of it, 2560  
And live the purer with the other half,  
Good night- but go not to my uncle's bed.  
Assume a virtue, if you have it not.  
That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat  
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this, 2565  
That to the use of actions fair and good  
He likewise gives a frock or livery,  
That aptly is put on. Refrain to-night,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence; the next more easy; 2570  
For use almost can change the stamp of nature,  
And either [*master*] the devil, or throw him out  
With wondrous potency. Once more, good night;  
And when you are desirous to be blest,  
I'll blessing beg of you.- For this same lord, 2575  
I do repent; but heaven hath pleas'd it so,  
To punish me with this, and this with me,  
That I must be their scourge and minister.  
I will bestow him, and will answer well  
The death I gave him. So again, good night. 2580  
I must be cruel, only to be kind;  
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.  
One word more, good lady.

**Gertrude.** What shall I do?

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

**Gertrude.** Be thou assur'd, if words be made of breath,



And breath of life, I have no life to breathe  
What thou hast said to me.

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

**Gertrude.** Alack, 2605

I had forgot! 'Tis so concluded on.

**Hamlet.** There's letters seal'd; and my two schoolfellows,  
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,  
They bear the mandate; they must sweep my way  
And marshal me to knavery. Let it work; 2610  
For 'tis the sport to have the engineer  
Hoist with his own petar; and 't shall go hard  
But I will delve one yard below their mines  
And blow them at the moon. O, 'tis most sweet  
When in one line two crafts directly meet. 2615  
This man shall set me packing.  
I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.-  
Mother, good night.- Indeed, this counsellor  
Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,  
Who was in life a foolish peating knave. 2620  
Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.  
Good night, mother.

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

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**Act IV, Scene 1**

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Claudius.** O heavy deed!  
It had been so with us, had we been there. 2640  
His liberty is full of threats to all-  
To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt 2645  
This mad young man. But so much was our love  
We would not understand what was most fit,  
But, like the owner of a foul disease,  
To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
Even on the pith of life. Where is he gone? 2650

**Gertrude.** To draw apart the body he hath kill'd;  
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore

Among a mineral of metals base,  
Shows itself pure. He weeps for what is done.

**Claudius.** O Gertrude, come away! 2655  
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch  
But we will ship him hence; and this vile deed  
We must with all our majesty and skill  
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!  
[Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.] 2660  
Friends both, go join you with some further aid.  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him.  
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body  
Into the chapel. I pray you haste in this. 2665  
[Exeunt [Rosencrantz and Guildenstern].]  
Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends  
And let them know both what we mean to do  
And what's untimely done. [So haply slander-]  
Whose whisper o'er the world's diameter, 2670  
As level as the cannon to his blank,  
Transports his poisoned shot- may miss our name  
And hit the woundless air.- O, come away!  
My soul is full of discord and dismay.

*Exeunt.*

---

## Act IV, Scene 2

[▲ previous scene](#)

[next scene ▼](#)

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

*Enter Hamlet.*

**Hamlet.** Safely stow'd.

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

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

*Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

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

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

**Rosencrantz.** Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence  
And bear it to the chapel. 2685

**Hamlet.** Do not believe it.

**Rosencrantz.** Believe what?

**Hamlet.** That I can keep your counsel, and not mine own. Besides, to be  
demanded of a sponge, what replication should be made by the son  
of a king? 2690

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

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

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

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

**Rosencrantz.** My lord, you must tell us where the body is and go with us to the King. 2700

**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. 2705

*Exeunt.*

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### Act IV, Scene 3

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

*Enter King.*

**Claudius.** I have sent to seek him and to find the body.  
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!  
Yet must not we put the strong law on him. 2710  
He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,  
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;  
And where 'tis so, th' offender's scourge is weigh'd,  
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,  
This sudden sending him away must seem 2715  
Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,  
Or not at all.  
[Enter Rosencrantz.]  
How now O What hath befall'n? 2720

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

**Claudius.** But where is he?

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

**Claudius.** Bring him before us. 2725

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

*Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern [with Attendants].*

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

**Hamlet.** At supper.

**Claudius.** At supper? Where? 2730

**Hamlet.** Not where he eats, but where he is eaten. A certain  
convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your  
only emperor for diet. We fat all creatures else to fat us, and  
we fat ourselves for maggots. Your fat king and your lean beggar  
is but variable service- two dishes, but to one table. That's the 2735  
end.

**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.

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

2740

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

**Claudius.** Where is Polonius?

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

2745

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

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

*[Exeunt Attendants.]*

**Claudius.** Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,-  
Which we do tender as we dearly grieve  
For that which thou hast done,- must send thee hence  
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself.  
The bark is ready and the wind at help,  
Th' associates tend, and everything is bent  
For England.

2755

**Hamlet.** For England?

**Claudius.** Ay, Hamlet.

**Hamlet.** Good.

2760

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

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

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

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

2765

*Exit.*

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

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

Away! for everything is seal'd and done

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

*[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.*

2770

2775

2780

**Act IV, Scene 4**

 previous scene

next scene 

*Enter Fortinbras with his Army over the stage.*

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

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

**Fortinbras.** Go softly on.

*Exeunt [all but the Captain].*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Norwegian Captain.** Truly to speak, and with no addition, 2805  
 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. 2810

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** I'll be with you straight. Go a little before. 2820  
*[Exeunt all but 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. 2825  
 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. Now, whether it be  
 Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
 Of thinking too precisely on th' event,- 2830  
 A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom

And ever three parts coward,- I do not know  
 Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do,'  
 Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and means  
 To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me. 2835  
 Witness this army of such mass and charge,  
 Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
 Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,  
 Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
 Exposing what is mortal and unsure 2840  
 To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
 Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
 Is not to stir without great argument,  
 But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
 When honour's at the stake. How stand I then, 2845  
 That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
 Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
 And let all sleep, while to my shame I see  
 The imminent death of twenty thousand men  
 That for a fantasy and trick of fame 2850  
 Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
 Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
 Which is not tomb enough and continent  
 To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,  
 My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth! Exit. 2855

## Act IV, Scene 5

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

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

*Enter Horatio, Queen, and a Gentleman.*

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

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

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

**Gentleman.** She speaks much of her father; says she hears  
 There's tricks i' th' world, and hems, and beats her heart;  
 Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,  
 That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,  
 Yet the unshaped use of it doth move 2865  
 The hearers to collection; they aim at it,  
 And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;  
 Which, as her winks and nods and gestures yield them,  
 Indeed would make one think there might be thought,  
 Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily. 2870

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

**Gertrude.** Let her come in.  
*[Exit Gentleman.]*  
*[Aside]* To my sick soul (as sin's true nature is) 2875  
 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.*

**Ophelia.** Where is the Beauteous Majesty of Denmark? 2880

**Gertrude.** How now, Ophelia?

**Ophelia.** *[sings]*

How should I your true-love know  
From another one?  
By his cockle bat and' staff  
And his sandal shoon. 2885

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

**Ophelia.** Say you? Nay, pray You mark.  
(Sings) He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone; 2890  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.  
O, ho!

**Gertrude.** Nay, but Ophelia-

**Ophelia.** Pray you mark. 2895  
(Sings) White his shroud as the mountain snow-

*Enter King.*

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

**Ophelia.** [*Sings*]  
Larded all with sweet flowers; 2900  
Which bewept to the grave did not go  
With true-love showers.

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

**Ophelia.** Well, God dild you! They say the owl was a baker's daughter.  
Lord, we know what we are, but know not what we may be. God be at 2905  
your table!

**Claudius.** Conceit upon her father.

**Ophelia.** Pray let's have no words of this; but when they ask, you what  
it means, say you this:  
(Sings) To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day, 2910  
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, 2915  
  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

**Claudius.** Pretty Ophelia!

**Ophelia.** Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't!  
[*Sings*] By Gis and by Saint Charity, 2920  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't if they come to't  
By Cock, they are to blame.  
Quoth she, 'Before you tumbled me,  
You promis'd me to wed.' 2925  
He answers:  
'So would I 'a' done, by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed.'

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

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

**Claudius.** Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you. 2935



[Exit Horatio.]

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs  
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies.  
But in battalions! First, her father slain; 2940  
Next, your son gone, and he most violent author  
Of his own just remove; the people muddied,  
Thick and and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers  
For good Polonius' death, and we have done but greenly  
In hugger-mugger to inter him; poor Ophelia 2945  
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,  
Without the which we are pictures or mere beasts;  
Last, and as much containing as all these,  
Her brother is in secret come from France;  
Feeds on his wonder, keeps, himself in clouds, 2950  
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
With pestilent speeches of his father's death,  
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this, 2955  
Like to a murd'ring piece, in many places  
Give me superfluous death. A noise within.

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

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

**Messenger.** 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, 2965  
O'erbears Your offices. The rabble call him lord;  
And, as the world were now but to begin,  
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,  
The ratifiers and props of every word,  
They cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!' 2970  
Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the clouds,

'Laertes shall be king! Laertes king!'

*A noise within.*

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

**Claudius.** The doors are broke.

*Enter Laertes with others.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Laertes.** That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard;  
Cries cuckold to my father; brands the harlot  
Even here between the chaste unsmirched brows  
Of my true mother.

**Claudius.** What is the cause, Laertes, 2990  
That thy rebellion looks so giantlike?  
Let him go, Gertrude. Do not fear our person.  
There's such divinity doth hedge a king  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes, 2995  
Why thou art thus incens'd. Let him go, Gertrude.  
Speak, man.

**Laertes.** Where is my father?

**Claudius.** Dead.

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

**Claudius.** Let him demand his fill.

**Laertes.** How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:  
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil  
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand, 3005  
That both the world, I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be reveng'd  
Most thoroughly for my father.

**Claudius.** Who shall stay you?

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

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

**Laertes.** None but his enemies.

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

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

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

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

**Laertes.** How now? What noise is that? 3030  
*[Enter Ophelia. ]*  
O heat, dry up my brains! Tears seven times salt  
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!  
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight  
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May! 3035  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!  
O heavens! is't possible a young maid's wits  
Should be as mortal as an old man's life?  
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,  
It sends some precious instance of itself 3040  
After the thing it loves.

**Ophelia.** *[sings]*  
They bore him barefac'd on the bier

(Hey non nony, nony, hey nony)

And in his grave rain'd many a tear.

Fare you well, my dove!

3045

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

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

3050

**Laertes.** This nothing's more than matter.

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

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

3055

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

3060

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

**Ophelia.** [sings]

3065

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.

3070

3075

*Exit.*

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

**Claudius.** Laertes, I must commune with your grief,  
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,  
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will,  
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.

3080

3085

**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.

3090

**Claudius.** So you shall;

And where th' offence is let the great axe fall.

I pray you go with me.

3095

*Exeunt*

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**Act IV, Scene 6**[▲ previous scene](#)[next scene ▼](#)**Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.**

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*Enter Horatio with an Attendant.*

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

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

**Horatio.** Let them come in.

*[Exit Attendant.]*

I do not know from what part of the world  
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet. 3105

*Enter Sailors.*

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

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

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

**Horatio.** *[reads the letter]* 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlook'd  
this, give these fellows some means to the King. They have  
letters for him. Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of  
very warlike appointment gave us chase. Finding ourselves too 3115  
slow of sail, we put on a compelled valour, and in the grapple I  
boarded them. On the instant they got clear of our ship; so I  
alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with me like thieves  
of mercy; but they knew what they did: I am to do a good turn for  
them. Let the King have the letters I have sent, and repair thou 3120  
to me with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I have words  
to speak in thine ear will make thee dumb; yet are they much too  
light for the bore of the matter. These good fellows will bring  
thee where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their course  
for England. Of them I have much to tell thee. Farewell. 3125  
'He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.'  
Come, I will give you way for these your letters,  
And do't the speedier that you may direct me  
To him from whom you brought them. Exeunt.

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**Act IV, Scene 7**[▲ previous scene](#)[next scene ▼](#)**Elsinore. Another room in the Castle.**

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*Enter King and Laertes.*

**Claudius.** Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,  
And You must put me in your heart for friend,  
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
That he which hath your noble father slain  
Pursued my life. 3135

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

**Claudius.** O, for two special reasons,

Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,  
But yet to me they are strong. The Queen his mother  
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself,-  
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,- 3145  
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul  
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,  
I could not but by her. The other motive  
Why to a public count I might not go  
Is the great love the general gender bear him, 3150  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
Convert his gives to graces; so that my arrows,  
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
Would have reverted to my bow again, 3155  
And not where I had aim'd them.

**Laertes.** And so have I a noble father lost;  
A sister driven into desp'rate terms,  
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,  
Stood challenger on mount of all the age 3160  
For her perfections. But my revenge will come.

**Claudius.** Break not your sleeps for that. You must not think  
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,  
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more. 3165  
I lov'd your father, and we love ourself,  
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine-  
*[Enter a Messenger with letters.]*  
How now? What news?

**Messenger.** Letters, my lord, from Hamlet: 3170  
This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

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

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

**Claudius.** Laertes, you shall hear them.  
Leave us.  
*[Exit Messenger.]*  
*[Reads]* 'High and Mighty,-You shall know I am set naked on your  
kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see your kingly eyes;  
when I shall (first asking your pardon thereunto) recount the 3180  
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? 3185

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

**Laertes.** I am lost in it, my lord. But let him come!  
It warms the very sickness in my heart 3190  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
'Thus didest thou.'

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

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

**Claudius.** To thine own peace. If he be now return'd  
As checking at his voyage, and that he means

No more to undertake it, I will work him  
To exploit now ripe in my device,  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall;  
And for his death no wind shall breathe  
But even his mother shall uncharge the practice  
And call it accident. 3200  
3205

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

**Claudius.** It falls right.  
You have been talk'd of since your travel much, 3210  
  
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality  
Wherein they say you shine, Your sum of parts  
Did not together pluck such envy from him  
As did that one; and that, in my regard,  
Of the unworthiest siege. 3215

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

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

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

**Claudius.** A Norman.

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

**Claudius.** The very same.

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

**Claudius.** He made confession of you;  
And gave you such a masterly report  
For art and exercise in your defence,  
And for your rapier most especially, 3240  
That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed  
If one could match you. The scrimers of their nation  
He swore had neither motion, guard, nor eye,  
If you oppos'd them. Sir, this report of his  
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy 3245  
That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
Your sudden coming o'er to play with you.  
Now, out of this-

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

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

**Laertes.** Why ask you this?

**Claudius.** Not that I think you did not love your father;

But that I know love is begun by time,  
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,

3255

3260

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' th' ulcer!  
Hamlet comes back. What would you undertake  
To show yourself your father's son in deed  
More than in words?

3265

3270

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

**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 practice,  
Requite him for your father.

3275

3280

**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  
This is but scratch'd withal. I'll touch my point  
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,  
It may be death.

3285

3290

**Claudius.** Let's further think of this,  
Weigh what convenience both of time and means  
May fit us to our shape. If this should fall,  
And that our drift look through our bad performance.  
'Twere better not assay'd. Therefore this project  
Should have a back or second, that might hold  
If this did blast in proof. Soft! let me see.  
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunning-  
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 prepar'd him  
A chalice for the nonce; whereon but sipping,  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there.- But stay, what noise,  
*[Enter Queen.]*  
How now, sweet queen?

3295

3300

3305

3310

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

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

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

3315



There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crowflowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples,  
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,

3320

But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them.  
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 chaunted snatches of old tunes,  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element; but long it could not be  
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death.

3325

3330

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

**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.

3335

3340

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

3345

*Exeunt.*

## Act V, Scene 1

▲ previous scene

next scene ▼

### *Elsinore. A churchyard.*

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

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

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

3350

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

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

**First Clown.** It must be se offendendo; it cannot be else. For here lies  
the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act; and an  
act hath three branches-it is to act, to do, and to perform;  
argal, she drown'd herself wittingly.

3355

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

**First Clown.** Give me leave. Here lies the water; good. Here stands the  
man; good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is,  
will he nill he, he goes- 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.

3360

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

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

3365

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

**First Clown.** Why, there thou say'st! And the more pity that great folk should have count'nance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even-Christian. Come, my spade! There is no ancient gentlemen but gard'ners, ditchers, and grave-makers. They hold up Adam's profession.

3370

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

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

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

3375

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

**Second Clown.** Go to!

3380

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

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

**First Clown.** I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows does well. But how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now, thou dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church. Argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To't again, come!

3385

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

3390

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

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

**First Clown.** To't.

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

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio afar off.*

**First Clown.** Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will not mend his pace with beating; and when you are ask'd this question next, say 'a grave-maker.' The houses he makes lasts till doomsday. Go, get thee to Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor.

3400

*[Exit Second Clown.]*

*[Clown digs and] sings.*

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

3405

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

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

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

3410

**First Clown.** *[sings]*

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

3415

*[Throws up a skull.]*

**Hamlet.** That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that did the first murther! This might be the pate of a Politician, which this ass now o'erreaches; one that would circumvent God, might it not?

3420

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

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

3425

**Horatio.** Ay, my lord.

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

3430

**First Clown.** *[Sings]*

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding sheet;  
O, a Pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.  
Throws up *[another skull]*.

3435

**Hamlet.** There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer?

3440

Where be his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines, and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will scarcely lie in this box; and must th' inheritor himself have no more, ha?

3445

3450

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

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

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

3455

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

**First Clown.** Mine, sir.

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

3460

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

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

**Hamlet.** Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest. 3465

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** What woman then?

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it, the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.- How long hast thou been a grave-maker? 3475

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

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Why?

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

**Hamlet.** How came he mad? 3490

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

**Hamlet.** How strangely?

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

**Hamlet.** Upon what ground?

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

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

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** Whose was it?

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

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

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

**Hamlet.** This?

**First Clown.** E'en that.

**Hamlet.** Let me see. [*Takes the skull.*] Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me on his back a thousand times. And now how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kiss'd I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now? your gambols? your songs? your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? Quite chap- fall'n? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing. 3515 3520 3525

**Horatio.** What's that, my lord?

**Hamlet.** Dost thou think Alexander look'd o' this fashion i' th' earth?

**Horatio.** E'en so.

**Hamlet.** And smelt so? Pah!

[*Puts down the skull.*]

**Horatio.** E'en so, my lord.

**Hamlet.** To what base uses we may return, Horatio! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bung-hole?

**Horatio.** 'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so. 3535

**Hamlet.** No, faith, not a jot; but to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it; as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust is

earth; of earth we make loam; and why of that loam (whereto he was converted) might they not stop a beer barrel? 3540

Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,

Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.

O, that that earth which kept the world in awe

Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!

But soft! but soft! aside! Here comes the King-

Enter [*priests with*] a coffin [*in funeral procession*], King, 3545

[*Queen, Laertes, with Lords attendant.*]

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

And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken

The corse they follow did with desp'rate hand

Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.

Couch we awhile, and mark. 3550

[*Retires with Horatio.*]

**Laertes.** What ceremony else?

**Hamlet.** That is Laertes, A very noble youth. Mark. 3555

**Laertes.** What ceremony else?

**Priest.** Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd  
As we have warranty. Her death was doubtful;  
And, but that great command o'ersways the order, 3560  
She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd  
Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers,  
Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on her.  
Yet here she is allow'd her virgin rites,  
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home 3565  
Of bell and burial.

**Laertes.** Must there no more be done?

**Priest.** No more be done.  
We should profane the service of the dead  
To sing a requiem and such rest to her 3570  
As to peace-parted souls.

**Laertes.** Lay her i' th' earth;  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring! I tell thee, churlish priest,  
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be 3575  
When thou liest howling.

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

**Gertrude.** Sweets to the sweet! Farewell.  
[Scatters flowers.]  
I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife; 3580  
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet maid,  
And not have strew'd thy grave.

**Laertes.** O, treble woe  
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense 3585  
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  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made 3590  
T' o'ertop old Pelion or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus.

**Hamlet.** [comes forward] What is he whose grief  
Bears such an emphasis? whose phrase of sorrow  
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them stand 3595  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,  
Hamlet the Dane. [Leaps in after Laertes.]

**Laertes.** The devil take thy soul!

[Grapples with him.]

**Hamlet.** Thou pray'st not well. 3600  
I prithee take thy fingers from my throat;  
For, though I am not splenitive and rash,  
Yet have I in me something dangerous,  
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand!

**Claudius.** Pluck them asunder. 3605

**Gertrude.** Hamlet, Hamlet!

**All.** Gentlemen!

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

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



**Hamlet.** Why, I will fight with him upon this theme  
Until my eyelids will no longer wag. 3610

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

**Hamlet.** I lov'd Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers  
Could not (with all their quantity of love)  
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her? 3615

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

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

**Hamlet.** 'Swounds, show me what thou't do.  
Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?  
Woo't drink up esill? eat a crocodile? 3620  
I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine?  
To outface me with leaping in her grave?  
Be buried quick with her, and so will I.  
And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw  
Millions of acres on us, till our ground, 3625  
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,  
Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,  
I'll rant as well as thou.

**Gertrude.** This is mere madness;  
And thus a while the fit will work on him. 3630  
Anon, as patient as the female dove  
When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,  
His silence will sit drooping.

**Hamlet.** Hear you, sir!  
What is the reason that you use me thus? 3635  
I lov'd you ever. But it is no matter.  
Let Hercules himself do what he may,  
The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

*Exit.*

**Claudius.** I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him. 3640  
*[Exit Horatio.]*  
*[To Laertes]* Strengthen your patience in our last night's speech.  
We'll put the matter to the present push.-  
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.-  
This grave shall have a living monument. 3645  
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;  
Till then in patience our proceeding be.

*Exeunt.*

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## Act V, Scene 2

▲ [previous scene](#)

***Elsinore. A hall in the Castle.***

*Enter Hamlet and Horatio.*

**Hamlet.** So much for this, sir; now shall you see the other. 3650  
You do remember all the circumstance?

**Horatio.** Remember it, my lord!

**Hamlet.** Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting  
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay  
Worse than the mutinies in the bilboes. Rashly- 3655  
And prais'd be rashness for it; let us know,  
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well  
When our deep plots do pall; and that should learn us

There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough-hew them how we will-

3660

**Horatio.** That is most certain.

**Hamlet.** Up from my cabin,  
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark  
Grop'd I to find out them; had my desire,  
Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew  
To mine own room again; making so bold  
(My fears forgetting manners) to unseal  
Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio  
(O royal knavery!), an exact command,  
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,  
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,  
With, hoo! such bugs and goblins in my life-  
That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,  
No, not to stay the finding of the axe,  
My head should be struck off.

3665

3670

3675

**Horatio.** Is't possible?

**Hamlet.** Here's the commission; read it at more leisure.  
But wilt thou bear me how I did proceed?

**Horatio.** I beseech you.

**Hamlet.** Being thus benetted round with villanies,  
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,  
They had begun the play. I sat me down;  
Devis'd a new commission; wrote it fair.  
I once did hold it, as our statist do,  
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much  
How to forget that learning; but, sir, now  
It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know  
Th' effect of what I wrote?

3680

3685

**Horatio.** Ay, good my lord.

**Hamlet.** An earnest conjuration from the King,  
As England was his faithful tributary,  
As love between them like the palm might flourish,  
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear  
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,  
And many such-like as's of great charge,  
That, on the view and knowing of these contents,  
Without debatement further, more or less,  
He should the bearers put to sudden death,  
Not shriving time allow'd.

3690

3695

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

3700

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

3705

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

**Hamlet.** Why, man, they did make love to this employment!  
They are not near my conscience; their defeat  
Does by their own insinuation grow.  
'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes  
Between the pass and fell incensed points  
Of mighty opposites.

3710

3715

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

**Hamlet.** Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon-  
He that hath kill'd my king, and whor'd my mother;  
Popp'd in between th' election and my hopes;  
Thrown out his angle for my proper life, 3720  
And with such coz'nage- is't not perfect conscience  
To quit him with this arm? And is't not to be damn'd  
To let this canker of our nature come  
In further evil?

**Horatio.** It must be shortly known to him from England 3725  
What is the issue of the business there.

**Hamlet.** It will be short; the interim is mine,  
And a man's life is no more than to say 'one.'  
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,  
That to Laertes I forgot myself, 3730  
For by the image of my cause I see  
The portraiture of his. I'll court his favours.  
But sure the bravery of his grief did put me  
Into a tow'ring passion.

**Horatio.** Peace! Who comes here? 3735

*Enter young Osric, a courtier.*

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

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

**Horatio.** *[aside to Hamlet]* No, my good lord. 3740

**Hamlet.** *[aside to Horatio]* Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a  
vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile. Let a beast be  
lord of beasts, and his crib shall stand at the king's mess. 'Tis  
a chough; but, as I say, spacious in the possession of dirt.

**Osric.** Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart 3745  
a thing to you from his Majesty.

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

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

**Hamlet.** No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly. 3750

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

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

**Osric.** Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry, as 'twere- I cannot  
tell how. But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that  
he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter- 3755

**Hamlet.** I beseech you remember.

*[Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.]*

**Osric.** Nay, good my lord; for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is  
newly come to court Laertes; believe me, an absolute gentleman,  
full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and 3760  
great showing. Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card  
or calendar of gentry; for you shall find in him the continent of  
what part a gentleman would see.

**Hamlet.** Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you; though, I  
know, to divide him inventorially would dozy th' arithmetic of 3765

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.

**Osric.** Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him. 3770

**Hamlet.** The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more  
rawer breath?

**Osric.** Sir?

**Horatio.** [*aside to Hamlet*] Is't not possible to understand in another  
tongue? You will do't, sir, really. 3775

**Hamlet.** What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

**Osric.** Of Laertes?

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

**Hamlet.** Of him, sir. 3780

**Osric.** I know you are not ignorant-

**Hamlet.** I would you did, sir; yet, in faith, if you did, it would not  
much approve me. Well, sir?

**Osric.** You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is-

**Hamlet.** I dare not confess that, lest I should compare with him in  
excellence; but to know a man well were to know himself. 3785

**Osric.** I mean, sir, for his weapon; but in the imputation laid on him  
by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

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

**Osric.** Rapier and dagger. 3790

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

**Osric.** The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary horses;  
against the which he has impon'd, as I take it, six French  
rapiers and poniards, with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and  
so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy,  
very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of  
very liberal conceit. 3795

**Hamlet.** What call you the carriages?

**Horatio.** [*aside to Hamlet*] I knew you must be edified by the margent  
ere you had done. 3800

**Osric.** The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

**Hamlet.** The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could  
carry cannon by our sides. I would it might be hangers till then.  
But on! Six Barbary horses against six French swords, their  
assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages: that's the French  
bet against the Danish. Why is this all impon'd, as you call it? 3805

**Osric.** The King, sir, hath laid that, in a dozen passes between  
yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits; he hath  
laid on twelve for nine, and it would come to immediate trial  
if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer. 3810

**Hamlet.** How if I answer no?

**Osric.** I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

**Hamlet.** Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please his Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits. 3815

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

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

**Osric.** I commend my duty to your lordship. 3820

**Hamlet.** Yours, yours. *[Exit Osric.]* He does well to commend it himself; there are no tongues else for's turn.

**Horatio.** This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

**Hamlet.** He did comply with his dug before he suck'd it. Thus has he, and many more of the same bevy that I know the drossy age dotes on, only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter—a kind of yesty collection, which carries them through and through the most fann'd and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial—the bubbles are out, 3825

*Enter a Lord.*

**Lord.** My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him, that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

**Hamlet.** I am constant to my purposes; they follow the King's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready; now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now. 3835

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

**Hamlet.** In happy time.

**Lord.** The Queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play. 3840

**Hamlet.** She well instructs me.

*[Exit Lord.]*

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

**Hamlet.** I do not think so. Since he went into France I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart. But it is no matter. 3845

**Horatio.** Nay, good my lord—

**Hamlet.** It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gaingiving as would perhaps trouble a woman. 3850

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

**Hamlet.** Not a whit, we defy augury; there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all. Since no man knows aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be. 3855

*Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Osric, and Lords, with other*

*Attendants with foils and gauntlets.*

*A table and flagons of wine on it.*

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

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

**Hamlet.** Give me your pardon, sir. I have done you wrong;  
But pardon't, as you are a gentleman.  
This presence knows, 3865  
And you must needs have heard, how I am punish'd  
With sore distraction. What I have done  
That might your nature, honour, and exception  
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.  
Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet. 3870  
If Hamlet from himself be taken away,  
And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,  
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.  
Who does it, then? His madness. If't be so,  
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd; 3875  
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.  
Sir, in this audience,  
Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil  
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts  
That I have shot my arrow o'er the house 3880  
And hurt my brother.

**Laertes.** I am satisfied in nature,  
Whose motive in this case should stir me most  
To my revenge. But in my terms of honour  
I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation 3885  
Till by some elder masters of known honour  
I have a voice and precedent of peace  
To keep my name ungor'd. But till that time  
I do receive your offer'd love like love,  
And will not wrong it. 3890

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

**Laertes.** Come, one for me.

**Hamlet.** I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance 3895  
Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,  
Stick fiery off indeed.

**Laertes.** You mock me, sir.

**Hamlet.** No, by this hand.

**Claudius.** Give them the foils, young Osric. Cousin Hamlet, 3900  
You know the wager?

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

**Claudius.** I do not fear it, I have seen you both; 3905  
But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.

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

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

*Prepare to play.*

**Osric.** Ay, my good lord.



**Claudius.** Set me the stoups of wine upon that table. 3910  
 If Hamlet give the first or second hit,  
 Or quit in answer of the third exchange,  
 Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,  
 And in the cup an union shall he throw 3915  
 Richer than that which four successive kings  
 In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups;  
 And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,  
 The trumpet to the cannoneer without,  
 The cannons to the heavens, the heaven to earth, 3920  
 'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.' Come, begin.  
 And you the judges, bear a wary eye.

**Hamlet.** Come on, sir.

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

**Hamlet.** One. 3925

**Laertes.** No.

**Hamlet.** Judgment!

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

**Laertes.** Well, again!

**Claudius.** Stay, give me drink. Hamlet, this pearl is thine; 3930  
 Here's to thy health.  
*[Drum; trumpets sound; a piece goes off [within].]*  
 Give him the cup.

**Hamlet.** I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.  
 Come. *[They play.]* Another hit. What say you? 3935

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

**Claudius.** Our son shall win.

**Gertrude.** He's fat, and scant of breath.  
 Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.  
 The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet. 3940

**Hamlet.** Good madam!

**Claudius.** Gertrude, do not drink.

**Gertrude.** I will, my lord; I pray you pardon me. Drinks.

**Claudius.** *[aside]* It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

**Hamlet.** I dare not drink yet, madam; by-and-by. 3945

**Gertrude.** Come, let me wipe thy face.

**Laertes.** My lord, I'll hit him now.

**Claudius.** I do not think't.

**Laertes.** *[aside]* And yet it is almost against my conscience.

**Hamlet.** Come for the third, Laertes! You but dally. 3950  
 Pray you pass with your best violence;  
 I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

**Laertes.** Say you so? Come on. Play.

**Osric.** Nothing neither way.

**Laertes.** Have at you now!

3955

*[Laertes wounds Hamlet; then] in scuffling, they change rapiers, [and Hamlet wounds Laertes].*

**Claudius.** Part them! They are incens'd.

**Hamlet.** Nay come! again! The Queen falls.

**Osric.** Look to the Queen there, ho!

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

3960

**Osric.** How is't, Laertes?

**Laertes.** Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric. I am justly kill'd  
with mine own treachery.

**Hamlet.** How does the Queen?

**Claudius.** She sounds to see them bleed.

**Gertrude.** No, no! the drink, the drink! O my dear Hamlet!  
The drink, the drink! I am poison'd. *[Dies.]*

3965

**Hamlet.** O villany! Ho! let the door be lock'd.  
Treachery! Seek it out.

*[Laertes falls.]*

**Laertes.** It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain;  
No medicine in the world can do thee good.  
In thee there is not half an hour of life.  
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,  
Unbated and envenom'd. The foul practice  
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.

3970

3975

**Hamlet.** The point envenom'd too?  
Then, venom, to thy work. Hurts the King.

**All.** Treason! treason!

3980

**Claudius.** O, yet defend me, friends! I am but hurt.

**Hamlet.** Here, thou incestuous, murd'rous, damned Dane,  
Drink off this potion! Is thy union here?  
Follow my mother. King dies.

**Laertes.** He is justly serv'd.  
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.

3985

**Hamlet.** 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-

3990

3995

But let it be. Horatio, I am dead;  
Thou liv'st; report me and my cause aright  
To the unsatisfied.

**Horatio.** Never believe it.

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

4000

**Hamlet.** As th'art a man,  
Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll ha't.  
O good Horatio, what a wounded name  
(Things standing thus unknown) shall live behind me!  
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,  
Absent thee from felicity awhile,  
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,  
To tell my story. [*March afar off, and shot within.*]  
What warlike noise is this?

4005

4010

**Osric.** Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,  
To the ambassadors of England gives  
This warlike volley.

**Hamlet.** O, I die, Horatio!  
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.  
I cannot live to hear the news from England,  
But I do prophesy th' election lights  
On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.  
So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,  
Which have solicited- the rest is silence. Dies.

4015

4020

**Horatio.** Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince,  
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!  
[*March within.*]  
Why does the drum come hither?  
Enter Fortinbras and English Ambassadors, with Drum, Colours, and  
Attendants.

4025

**Fortinbras.** Where is this sight?

**Horatio.** What is it you will see?  
If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

**Fortinbras.** This quarry cries on havoc. O proud Death,  
What feast is toward in thine eternal cell  
That thou so many princes at a shot  
So bloodily hast struck.

4030

**Ambassador.** The sight is dismal;  
And our affairs from England come too late.  
The ears are senseless that should give us hearing  
To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd  
That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
Where should we have our thanks?

4035

**Horatio.** Not from his mouth,  
Had it th' ability of life to thank you.  
He never gave commandment for their death.  
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,  
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,  
Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies  
High on a stage be placed to the view;  
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
How these things came about. So shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts;

4040

4045

Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters;  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause;  
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I  
Truly deliver.

4050

**Fortinbras.** Let us haste to hear it,  
And call the noblest to the audience.  
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.  
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom

4055

Which now, to claim my vantage doth invite me.

**Horatio.** Of that I shall have also cause to speak,  
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.  
But let this same be presently perform'd,  
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance  
On plots and errors happen.

4060

**Fortinbras.** Let four captains  
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage;  
For he was likely, had he been put on,  
To have prov'd most royally; and for his passage  
The soldiers' music and the rites of war  
Speak loudly for him.  
Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this  
Becomes the field but here shows much amiss.  
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

4065

4070

*Exeunt marching; after the which a peal of ordnance are shot off.*

THE END

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