

## ACT I

### SCENE I. Elsinore. A platform before the castle.

*FRANCISCO at his post. Enter to him BERNARDO*

**BERNARDO**

Who's there?

**FRANCISCO**

Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

**BERNARDO**

Long live the king!

**FRANCISCO**

Bernardo?

**BERNARDO**

He.

**FRANCISCO**

You come most carefully upon your hour.

**BERNARDO**

'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

**FRANCISCO**

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

**BERNARDO**

Have you had quiet guard?

**FRANCISCO**

Not a mouse stirring.

**BERNARDO**

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

**FRANCISCO**

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

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS*

**HORATIO**

Friends to this ground.

**MARCELLUS**

And liegemen to the Dane.

**FRANCISCO**

Give you good night.

**MARCELLUS**

O, farewell, honest soldier:  
Who hath relieved you?

**FRANCISCO**

Bernardo has my place.  
Give you good night.

*Exit*

**MARCELLUS**

Holla! Bernardo!

**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?

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

**HORATIO**

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

**BERNARDO**

Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one,--

*Enter Ghost*

**MARCELLUS**

Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

**BERNARDO**

In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

**MARCELLUS**

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

**BERNARDO**

Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.

**HORATIO**

Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

**BERNARDO**

It would be spoke to.

**MARCELLUS**

Question it, Horatio.

**HORATIO**

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

**MARCELLUS**

It is offended.

**BERNARDO**

See, it stalks away!

**HORATIO**

Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

*Exit Ghost*

**MARCELLUS**

'Tis gone, and will not answer.

**BERNARDO**

How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:  
Is not this something more than fantasy?  
What think you on't?

**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 the ambitious Norway combated;  
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'Tis strange.

## 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.

## 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?

## 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,  
Dared 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 seized of, to the conqueror:  
Against the which, a moiety competent  
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd  
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant,  
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 resolute,  
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 compulsory, those foresaid lands  
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,  
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:  
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.  
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  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:  
And even the like precurse of fierce events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen coming on,  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climatures and countrymen.--  
But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!

### *Re-enter Ghost*

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!  
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me:  
If there be any good thing to be done,  
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,  
Speak to me:

### *Cock crows*

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid, O, speak!  
Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,  
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,  
Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

## MARCELLUS

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

## HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

## BERNARDO

'Tis here!

## HORATIO

'Tis here!

**MARCELLUS**

'Tis gone!

*Exit Ghost*

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

**BERNARDO**

It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

**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,  
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
The 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.  
Some say 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 dares stir abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
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:  
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,  
Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

**MARCELLUS**

Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know  
Where we shall find him most conveniently.

## **SCENE II. A room of state in the castle.**

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, and Attendants*

### **KING CLAUDIUS**

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,--  
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,--  
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,  
Collegued with the 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 bonds of law,  
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.  
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 bed-rid, scarcely hears  
Of this his nephew's purpose,--to suppress  
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, Voltimand,  
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;  
Giving to you no further personal power  
To business with the king, more than the scope  
Of these delated articles allow.  
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

### **CORNELIUS VOLTIMAND**

In that and all things will we show our duty.

### **KING CLAUDIUS**

We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell.

*Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS*

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

#### **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,  
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

#### **KING CLAUDIUS**

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

#### **LORD POLONIUS**

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

#### **KING CLAUDIUS**

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

#### **HAMLET**

[Aside] A little more than kin, and less than kind.

#### **KING CLAUDIUS**

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

#### **HAMLET**

Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.

#### **QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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

#### HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

#### QUEEN GERTRUDE

If it be,  
Why seems it so particular with thee?

#### HAMLET

Seems, madam! nay it is; I know not 'seems.'  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,  
For they are actions that a man might play:  
But I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

#### KING CLAUDIUS

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,  
To give these mourning duties to your father:  
But, you must know, your father lost a father;  
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound  
In filial obligation for some term  
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persevere  
In obstinate condolement is a course  
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,  
An understanding simple and 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,  
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  
As of a father: for let the world take note,  
You are the most immediate to our throne;

And with no less nobility of love  
Than that which dearest father bears his son,  
Do I impart toward you. For your intent  
In going back to school in Wittenberg,  
It is most retrograde to our desire:  
And we beseech you, bend you to remain  
Here, in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

#### QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

#### HAMLET

I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

#### KING CLAUDIUS

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply:  
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come;  
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
Sits smiling to my heart: in grace whereof,  
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,  
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
And the king's rouse the heavens all bruit again,  
Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come away.

*Exeunt all but HAMLET*

#### HAMLET

O, that this too too solid flesh would melt  
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew!  
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd  
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! God!  
How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
Seem to me all the uses of this world!  
Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!  
But two months dead: nay, not so much, not two:  
So excellent a king; that was, to this,  
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother  
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven  
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!  
Must I remember? why, she would hang on him,  
As if increase of appetite had grown  
By what it fed on: and yet, within a month--  
Let me not think on't--Frailty, thy name is woman!--  
A little month, or ere those shoes were old  
With which she follow'd 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  
Than I to Hercules: within a month:  
Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears  
Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,  
She married. O, most wicked speed, to post  
With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!  
It is not nor it cannot come to good:  
But break, my heart; for I must hold my tongue.

*Enter HORATIO, MARCELLUS, and BERNARDO*

**HORATIO**

Hail to your lordship!

**HAMLET**

I am glad to see you well:  
Horatio,--or I do forget myself.

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

Sir, my good friend; I'll change that name with you:  
And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio? Marcellus?

**MARCELLUS**

My good lord--

**HAMLET**

I am very glad to see you. Good even, sir.  
But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

**HORATIO**

A truant disposition, good my lord.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

Indeed, my lord, it follow'd hard upon.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

Where, my lord?

**HAMLET**

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

**HORATIO**

I saw him once; he was a goodly king.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

My lord, I think I saw him yesternight.

**HAMLET**

Saw? who?

**HORATIO**

My lord, the king your father.

**HAMLET**

The king my father!

**HORATIO**

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

## HAMLET

For God's love, let me hear.

## HORATIO

Two nights together had these gentlemen,  
Marcellus and Bernardo, on their watch,  
In the dead vast and middle of the night,  
Been thus encounter'd. 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, distilled  
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.

## 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.

## 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.

**HAMLET**

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

**MARCELLUS BERNARDO**

We do, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Arm'd, say you?

**MARCELLUS BERNARDO**

Arm'd, my lord.

**HAMLET**

From top to toe?

**MARCELLUS 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?

**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.

**HAMLET**

I would I had been there.

**HORATIO**

It would have much amazed you.

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

**MARCELLUS BERNARDO**

Longer, longer.

**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;  
Perchance 'twill walk again.

**HORATIO**

I warrant it will.

**HAMLET**

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

**All**

Our duty to your honour.

## HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

*Exeunt all but HAMLET*

My father's spirit in arms! all is not well;  
I doubt some foul play: would the night were come!  
Till then sit still, my soul: foul deeds will rise,  
Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eyes.

*Exit*

## SCENE III. A room in Polonius' house.

*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.

### 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,  
The perfume and suppliance of a minute; No more.

### OPHELIA

No more but so?

### LAERTES

Think it no more;  
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,  
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

The safety and health of this whole state;  
And therefore must his choice be circumscribed  
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  
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  
To his unmaster'd 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,  
If she unmask her beauty to the moon:  
Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes:  
The canker galls the infants of the spring,  
Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,  
And in the morn and liquid dew of youth  
Contagious blastments are most imminent.  
Be wary then; best safety lies in fear:  
Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

#### OPHELIA

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

#### LAERTES

O, fear me not.  
I stay too long: but here my father comes.

*Enter POLONIUS*

A double blessing is a double grace,  
Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

#### LORD 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  
See thou character. Give thy thoughts no tongue,  
Nor any unproportioned thought his act.  
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.  
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,

Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;  
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment  
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade. Beware  
Of entrance to a quarrel, but being in,  
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.  
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,  
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;  
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,  
And they in France of the best rank and station  
Are of a most select and generous chief in that.  
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;  
For loan oft loses both itself and friend,  
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.  
This above all: to thine ownself be true,  
And it must follow, as the night the day,  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.  
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee!

**LAERTES**

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

The time invites you; go; your servants tend.

**LAERTES**

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

**OPHELIA**

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

**LAERTES**

Farewell.

*Exit*

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**OPHELIA**

So please you, something touching the Lord Hamlet.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Marry, well bethought:  
'Tis told me, he hath very oft of late

Given private time to you; and you yourself  
Have of your audience been most free and bounteous:  
If it be so, 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 behoves my daughter and your honour.  
What is between you? give me up the truth.

**OPHELIA**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**OPHELIA**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

Marry, I'll teach you: 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.

**OPHELIA**

My lord, he hath importuned me with love  
In honourable fashion.

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**OPHELIA**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,  
When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul  
Lends the tongue vows: 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 somewhat 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,  
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,  
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*

#### SCENE IV. The platform.

*Enter HAMLET, HORATIO, and MARCELLUS*

#### HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

#### HORATIO

It is a nipping and an eager air.

#### HAMLET

What hour now?

#### HORATIO

I think it lacks of twelve.

#### HAMLET

No, it is struck.

#### HORATIO

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

*A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off, within*

What does this mean, my lord?

#### HAMLET

The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,  
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;

And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,  
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out  
The triumph of his pledge.

## HORATIO

Is it a custom?

## HAMLET

Ay, marry, is'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 traduced and tax'd of other nations:  
They clepe 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'er-leavens  
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 eale  
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt  
To his own scandal.

## HORATIO

Look, my lord, it comes!

*Enter Ghost*

## 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,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou comest in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,  
King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!  
Let me not burst in ignorance; but tell  
Why thy canonized bones, hearsed in death,  
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,

Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,  
 Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws,  
 To cast thee up again. What may this mean,  
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel  
 Revisit'st 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?  
 Say, why is this? wherefore? what should we do?

*Ghost beckons HAMLET*

## HORATIO

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

## MARCELLUS

Look, with what courteous action  
 It waves you to a more removed ground:  
 But do not go with it.

## HORATIO

No, by no means.

## HAMLET

It will not speak; then I will follow it.

## HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

## HAMLET

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

## HORATIO

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

**HORATIO**

Be ruled; you shall not go.

**HAMLET**

My fate cries out,  
And makes each petty artery in this body  
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.  
Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.  
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!  
I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

*Exeunt Ghost and HAMLET*

**HORATIO**

He waxes desperate with imagination.

**MARCELLUS**

Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

**HORATIO**

Have after. To what issue will this come?

**MARCELLUS**

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

**HORATIO**

Heaven will direct it.

**MARCELLUS**

Nay, let's follow him.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE V. Another part of the platform.**

*Enter GHOST and HAMLET*

**HAMLET**

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

**Ghost**

Mark me.

**HAMLET**

I will.

**Ghost**

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

**HAMLET**

Alas, poor ghost!

**Ghost**

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

**HAMLET**

Speak; I am bound to hear.

**Ghost**

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

**HAMLET**

What?

**Ghost**

I am thy father's spirit,  
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,  
And for the day confined to fast in fires,  
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature  
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid  
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,  
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word  
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,  
Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,  
Thy knotted and combined locks to part  
And each particular hair to stand on end,  
Like quills upon the fretful porpentine:  
But this eternal blazon must not be

To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!  
If thou didst ever thy dear father love--

**HAMLET**

O God!

**Ghost**

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

**HAMLET**

Murder!

**Ghost**

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

**HAMLET**

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

**Ghost**

I find thee apt;  
And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed  
That roots itself in ease on Lethe wharf,  
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 abused: but know, thou noble youth,  
The serpent that did sting thy father's life  
Now wears his crown.

**HAMLET**

O my prophetic soul! My uncle!

**Ghost**

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,  
With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts,--  
O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power  
So to seduce!--won to his shameful lust  
The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen:  
O Hamlet, what a falling-off was there!  
From me, whose love was of that dignity  
That it went hand in hand even with the vow  
I made to her in marriage, and to decline  
Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor  
To those of mine!

But virtue, as it never will be moved,  
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.

But, soft! methinks I scent the morning air;  
Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,  
My custom always of the afternoon,  
Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole,  
With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,  
And in the porches of my ears did pour  
The leperous distilment; whose effect  
Holds such an enmity with blood of man  
That swift as quicksilver it courses through  
The natural gates and alleys of the body,  
And with a sudden vigour doth posset  
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,  
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,  
Unhousel'd, disappointed, unanel'd,  
No reckoning made, but sent to my account  
With all my imperfections on my head:  
O, horrible! O, horrible! most horrible!  
If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not;  
Let not the royal bed of Denmark be  
A couch for luxury and damned incest.  
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,  
To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once!  
The glow-worm shows the matin to be near,  
And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire:  
Adieu, adieu! Hamlet, remember me.

*Exit*

## HAMLET

O all you host of heaven! O earth! what else?  
And shall I couple hell? O, fie! Hold, hold, my heart;  
And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,  
But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!  
Ay, thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat  
In this distracted globe. Remember thee!  
Yea, from the table of my memory  
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,  
All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past,  
That youth and observation copied there;

And thy commandment all alone shall live  
Within the book and volume of my brain,  
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,  
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain;  
At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark:

*Writing*

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

**MARCELLUS HORATIO**

[Within] My lord, my lord,--

**MARCELLUS**

[Within] Lord Hamlet,--

**HORATIO**

[Within] Heaven secure him!

**HAMLET**

So be it!

**HORATIO**

[Within] Hillo, ho, ho, my lord!

**HAMLET**

Hillo, ho, ho, boy! come, bird, come.

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS*

**MARCELLUS**

How is't, my noble lord?

**HORATIO**

What news, my lord?

**HAMLET**

O, wonderful!

**HORATIO**

Good my lord, tell it.

**HAMLET**

No; you'll 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?  
But you'll be secret?

**HORATIO MARCELLUS**

Ay, by heaven, my lord.

**HAMLET**

There's ne'er 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.

**HAMLET**

Why, right; you are i' the right;  
And so, without more circumstance at all,  
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part:  
You, as your business and desire shall point you;  
For every man has business and desire,  
Such as it is; and for mine own poor part,  
Look you, I'll go pray.

**HORATIO**

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

**HAMLET**

I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;  
Yes, 'faith heartily.

**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:  
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.

**HAMLET**

Never make known what you have seen to-night.

**HORATIO MARCELLUS**

My lord, we will not.

**HAMLET**

Nay, but swear't.

**HORATIO**

In faith,  
My lord, not I.

**MARCELLUS**

Nor I, my lord, in faith.

**HAMLET**

Upon my sword.

**MARCELLUS**

We have sworn, my lord, already.

**HAMLET**

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

**Ghost**

[Beneath] Swear.

**HAMLET**

Ah, ha, 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.

**HAMLET**

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

**Ghost**

[Beneath] Swear.

**HAMLET**

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

**Ghost**

[Beneath] Swear.

**HAMLET**

Well said, old mole! canst work i' the earth so fast?  
A worthy pioner! Once more remove, good friends.

**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. 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,  
That you, at such times seeing me, never shall,  
With arms encumber'd thus, or this headshake,  
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,'  
Or such ambiguous giving out, to note  
That you know aught of me: this not to do,  
So grace and mercy at your most need help you, Swear.

**Ghost**

[Beneath] Swear.

**HAMLET**

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!

*They swear*

So, gentlemen,  
 With all my love I do commend me to you:  
 And what so poor a man as Hamlet is  
 May do, to express his love and friending to you,  
 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.

*Exeunt*

## ACT II

### SCENE I. A room in POLONIUS' house.

*Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO*

**LORD POLONIUS**

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

**REYNALDO**

I will, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,  
 Before you visit him, to make inquire  
 Of his behavior.

**REYNALDO**

My lord, I did intend it.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,  
 Inquire 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  
 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.

**LORD POLONIUS**

'And in part him; but' you may say 'not well:  
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.

**REYNALDO**

As gaming, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,  
Drabbing: you may go so far.

**REYNALDO**

My lord, that would dishonour him.

**LORD 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.

**REYNALDO**

But, my good lord,--

**LORD POLONIUS**

Wherefore should you do this?

**REYNALDO**

Ay, my lord,  
I would know that.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Marry, sir, here's my drift;  
And I believe, it is a fetch of wit:  
You laying these slight sullies on my son,  
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the 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 assured  
 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.

**REYNALDO**

Very good, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

And then, sir, does he this--he 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.'

**LORD 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?

**REYNALDO**

My lord, I have.

**LORD POLONIUS**

God be wi' you; fare you well.

**REYNALDO**

Good my lord!

**LORD POLONIUS**

Observe his inclination in yourself.

**REYNALDO**

I shall, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

And let him ply his music.

**REYNALDO**

Well, my lord.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Farewell!

*Exit REYNALDO*

*Enter OPHELIA*

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

**OPHELIA**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

With what, i' the name of God?

**OPHELIA**

My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced;  
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,  
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ancle;  
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.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Mad for thy love?

**OPHELIA**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

What said he?

**OPHELIA**

He took me by the wrist and held me hard;  
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;  
At last, a little shaking of mine arm  
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound  
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk  
And end his being: that done, he lets me go:  
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,  
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes;  
For out o' doors he went without their helps,  
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

#### LORD POLONIUS

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

#### OPHELIA

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

#### LORD POLONIUS

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

*Exeunt*

#### SCENE II. A room in the castle.

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and Attendants*

#### KING CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, Entire Play

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

### QUEEN 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  
As to expend your time with us awhile,  
For the supply and profit of our hope,  
Your visitation shall receive such thanks  
As fits a king's remembrance.

### ROSENCRANTZ

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

### GUILDENSTERN

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

### KING CLAUDIUS

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

### QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

## GUILDENSTERN

Heavens make our presence and our practises  
Pleasant and helpful to him!

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

Ay, amen!

*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and some Attendants*

*Enter POLONIUS*

## LORD POLONIUS

The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,  
Are joyfully return'd.

## KING CLAUDIUS

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

## LORD POLONIUS

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

## KING CLAUDIUS

O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

## LORD POLONIUS

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

## KING CLAUDIUS

Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

*Exit POLONIUS*

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

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

## KING CLAUDIUS

Well, we shall sift him.

*Re-enter POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS*

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

#### **VOLTIMAND**

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  
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,  
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  
Makes vow before his uncle never more  
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.  
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,  
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,  
And his commission to employ those soldiers,  
So levied as before, against the Polack:  
With an entreaty, herein further shown,

*Giving a paper*

That it might please you to give quiet pass  
Through your dominions for this enterprise,  
On such regards of safety and allowance  
As therein are set down.

#### **KING CLAUDIUS**

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

*Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS*

#### **LORD POLONIUS**

This business is well ended.  
My liege, and madam, to expostulate  
What majesty should be, what duty is,  
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,  
Were nothing but to waste night, day and time.  
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,  
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,  
I will be brief: your noble son is mad:

Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,  
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?  
But let that go.

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

More matter, with less art.

## LORD POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.  
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;  
And pity 'tis 'tis true: a foolish figure;  
But farewell it, for I will use no art.  
Mad let us grant him, then: and now remains  
That we find out the cause of this effect,  
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,  
For this effect defective comes by cause:  
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus. Perpend.  
I have a daughter--have while she is mine--  
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,  
Hath given me this: now gather, and surmise.

*Reads*

'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most  
beautified Ophelia,'--  
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is  
a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

*Reads*

'In her excellent white bosom, these, & c.'

## QUEEN GERTRUDE

Came this from Hamlet to her?

## LORD POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

*Reads*

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;  
Doubt that the sun doth move;  
Doubt truth to be a liar;  
But never doubt I love.  
'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.'  
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.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

But how hath she  
Received his love?

**LORD POLONIUS**

What do you think of me?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

As of a man faithful and honourable.

**LORD POLONIUS**

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,  
When I had seen this hot love on the wing--  
As I perceived 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,  
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 precepts gave her,  
That she should lock herself from his resort,  
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.  
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice;  
And he, repulsed--a short tale to make--  
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,  
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,  
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,  
Into the madness wherein now he raves,  
And all we mourn for.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Do you think 'tis this?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

It may be, very likely.

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Not that I know.

### LORD POLONIUS

[Pointing to his head and shoulder]  
Take this from this, if this be otherwise:  
If circumstances lead me, I will find  
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed  
Within the centre.

### KING CLAUDIUS

How may we try it further?

### LORD POLONIUS

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

### QUEEN GERTRUDE

So he does indeed.

### LORD POLONIUS

At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:  
Be you and I behind an arras then;  
Mark the encounter: if he love her not  
And be not from his reason fall'n thereon,  
Let me be no assistant for a state,  
But keep a farm and carters.

### KING CLAUDIUS

We will try it.

### QUEEN GERTRUDE

But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

### LORD POLONIUS

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

*Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, and Attendants*

*Enter HAMLET, reading*

O, give me leave:  
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

### HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Do you know me, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Not I, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Then I would you were so honest a man.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Honest, my lord!

**HAMLET**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

That's very true, my lord.

**HAMLET**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

I have, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to 't.

**LORD POLONIUS**

[Aside] How say you by that? Still harping on my daughter: yet he knew me not at first; he said I was a fishmonger: he is far gone, far gone: and truly in my youth I suffered much extremity for love; very near this. I'll speak to him again. What do you read, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Words, words, words.

**LORD POLONIUS**

What is the matter, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Between who?

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**HAMLET**

Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here  
that old men have grey beards, that their faces are  
wrinkled, 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  
yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like a crab  
you could go backward.

**LORD POLONIUS**

[Aside] Though this be madness, yet there is method  
in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Into my grave.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Indeed, that is out o' the 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.

**HAMLET**

You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will  
more willingly part withal: except my life, except  
my life, except my life.

**LORD POLONIUS**

Fare you well, my lord.

**HAMLET**

These tedious old fools!

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

**LORD POLONIUS**

You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

[To POLONIUS] God save you, sir!

*Exit POLONIUS*

**GUILDENSTERN**

My honoured lord!

**ROSENCRANTZ**

My most dear lord!

**HAMLET**

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

**ROSENCRANTZ**

As the indifferent children of the earth.

**GUILDENSTERN**

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

**HAMLET**

Nor the soles of her shoe?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Neither, my lord.

**HAMLET**

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

**GUILDENSTERN**

'Faith, her privates we.

**HAMLET**

In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she  
is a strumpet. What's the news?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

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

**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?

**GUILDENSTERN**

Prison, my lord!

**HAMLET**

Denmark's a prison.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Then is the world one.

**HAMLET**

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

**ROSENCRANTZ**

We think not so, my lord.

**HAMLET**

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

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too  
narrow for your mind.

**HAMLET**

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

**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.

**HAMLET**

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

**ROSENCRANTZ 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?

**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.

**GUILDENSTERN**

What should we say, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Why, any thing, but to the 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.

**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?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

[Aside to GUILDENSTERN] What say you?

**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 moult no feather. I have of late--but  
wherefore I know not--lost all my mirth, forgone all  
custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily  
with my disposition that this goodly frame, the  
earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most  
excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave  
o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted  
with golden fire, why, it appears 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 faculty! in form and moving how  
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!  
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the  
world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me,  
what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not  
me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling  
you seem to say so.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

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

**HAMLET**

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

**ROSENCRANTZ**

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

**HAMLET**

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 humourous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Even those you were wont to take 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.

**HAMLET**

Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

No, indeed, are they not.

**HAMLET**

How comes it? do they grow rusty?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages--so they call them--that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

**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?

## 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.

## 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.

## HAMLET

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

*Flourish of trumpets within*

## GUILDENSTERN

There are the players.

## HAMLET

Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands,  
come then: the 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 outward, should more appear like  
entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my  
uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

## GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lord?

**HAMLET**

I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is  
southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

*Enter POLONIUS*

**LORD 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.

**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: o' Monday morning;  
'twas so indeed.

**LORD 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,--

**LORD POLONIUS**

The actors are come hither, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Buz, buz!

**LORD POLONIUS**

Upon mine honour,--

**HAMLET**

Then came each actor on his ass,--

**LORD POLONIUS**

The best actors in the world, either for tragedy,  
comedy, history, pastoral, pastoral-comical,

historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited: Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.

**HAMLET**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

What a treasure had he, my lord?

**HAMLET**

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

**LORD POLONIUS**

[Aside] Still on my daughter.

**HAMLET**

Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

**LORD POLONIUS**

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

**HAMLET**

Nay, that follows not.

**LORD POLONIUS**

What follows, then, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Why,  
'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 abridgement comes.

*Enter four or five Players*

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad  
to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old  
friend! thy face is valenced since I saw thee last:  
comest 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 altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like apiece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.

### First Player

What speech, my lord?

### HAMLET

I heard thee speak me a speech once, but it was never acted; or, if it was, not above once; for the play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviare to the general: but it was--as I received 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 called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: '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 the Hyrcanian beast,'--  
 it is 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  
 With heraldry more dismal; head to foot  
 Now is he total gules; horridly trick'd  
 With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
 Baked and impasted with the parching streets,  
 That lend a tyrannous and damned light  
 To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,  
 And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,  
 With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus  
 Old grandsire Priam seeks.'  
 So, proceed you.

### LORD 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,  
 Repugnant to command: unequal match'd,  
 Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;  
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword  
 The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,  
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top  
 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' the air to stick:  
 So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,  
 And like a neutral to his will and matter,  
 Did nothing.  
 But, as we often see, against some storm,  
 A silence in the heavens, the rack stand still,  
 The bold winds speechless and the orb below  
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder  
 Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus' pause,  
 Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;  
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall  
 On Mars's armour forged for proof eterne  
 With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword  
 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,  
 As low as to the fiends!'

## LORD 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.

## First Player

'But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen--'

## HAMLET

'The mobled queen?'

## LORD POLONIUS

That's good; 'mobled queen' is good.

## First Player

Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames  
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head  
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,  
About her lank and all o'er-teemed 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  
pronounced:  
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,  
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,  
And passion in the gods.'

#### LORD POLONIUS

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

#### HAMLET

'Tis well: I'll have thee speak out the rest soon.  
Good my lord, will you see the players well  
bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used; for  
they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the  
time: after your death you were better have a bad  
epitaph than their ill report while you live.

#### LORD POLONIUS

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

#### HAMLET

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

#### LORD POLONIUS

Come, sirs.

#### HAMLET

Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow.

*Exit POLONIUS with all the Players but the First*

Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the  
Murder of Gonzago?

#### First Player

Ay, my lord.

## 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.

*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 be wi' ye;

*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,

Could force his soul so to his own conceit

That from her working all his visage wann'd,

Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting

With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!

For Hecuba!

What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,

That he should weep for her? What would he do,

Had he the motive and the cue for passion

That I have? He would drown the stage with tears

And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,

Make mad the guilty and appal the free,

Confound the ignorant, and amaze indeed

The very faculties of eyes and ears. Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak,

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,

And can say nothing; no, not for a king,

Upon whose property and most dear life

A damn'd defeat was made. Am I a coward?

Who calls me villain? breaks my pate across?

Plucks off my beard, and blows it in my face?  
 Tweaks me by the nose? gives me the lie i' the throat,  
 As deep as to the lungs? who does me this?  
 Ha!  
 'Swounds, I should take it: for it cannot be  
 But I am pigeon-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!  
 O, vengeance!  
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,  
 That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words,  
 And fall a-cursing, like a very drab,  
 A scullion!  
 Fie upon't! foh! About, my brain! I have heard  
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene  
 Been struck so to the soul that presently  
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions;  
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak  
 With most miraculous organ. I'll have these players  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks;  
 I'll tent him to the quick: if he but blench,  
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be the devil: and the devil hath power  
 To assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps  
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,  
 As he is very potent with such spirits,  
 Abuses me to damn me: I'll have grounds  
 More relative than this: the play 's the thing  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

*Exit*

## ACT III

### SCENE I. A room in the castle.

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

#### KING CLAUDIUS

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

#### ROSENCRANTZ