

HAMLET: Words, words, words.

POLONIUS: What is the matter, my lord?

190 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 plumtree gum, and that they have a plentiful lack of wit, together with most
195 weak hams⁸—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, shall grow old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

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

200 HAMLET: Into my grave?

POLONIUS: [*Aside.*] Indeed, that's out of the air. How pregnant sometime 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 honorable
205 lord. I will most humbly take my leave of you.

HAMLET: You cannot take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal—except my life, except my life, except my life.

[*Enter GUILDENSTERN and ROSENCRANTZ.*]

POLONIUS: Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET: These tedious old fools!

210 POLONIUS: You go to seek the Lord Hamlet. There he is.

ROSENCRANTZ: [*To POLONIUS.*] God save you, sir! [*Exit POLONIUS.*]

GUILDENSTERN: My honored lord!

ROSENCRANTZ: My most dear lord!

HAMLET: My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern?

215 Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do you both?

ROSENCRANTZ: As the indifferent⁹ children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN: Happy in that we are not over-happy;

On Fortune's cap we are not the very button.¹

HAMLET: Nor the soles of her shoe?

220 ROSENCRANTZ: Neither, my lord.

HAMLET: Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of her favors?

GUILDENSTERN: Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET: In the secret parts of Fortune? O, most true, she is a strumpet.² What news?

225 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?

8. Limbs. 9. Ordinary. 1. That is, on top.

2. Prostitute. Hamlet is indulging in characteristic ribaldry. Guildenstern means that they are "privates" = ordinary citizens, but Hamlet takes him to mean "privates" = sexual organs and "middle of her favors" = waist = sexual organs.

GUILDENSTERN: Prison, my lord?

HAMLET: Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ: Then is the world one. 230

HAMLET: A goodly one, in which there are many confines, wards³ 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. 235

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. 240

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. 245

HAMLET: Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to th' court? for, by my fay,⁴ I cannot reason.

BOTH: We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET: No such matter. I will not sort⁵ 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? 250

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.⁶ Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, come, deal justly with me. Come, come, nay speak. 255

GUILDENSTERN: What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET: 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 color. I know the good king and queen have sent for you. 260

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 pre-served love, and by what more dear a better proposer can charge you withal, be even and direct⁷ with me whether you were sent for or no. 265

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,⁸ and your secrecy to the king and queen moult no feather. I have of late— 270
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'er-hanging firmament, this majestical roof

3. Cells. 4. Faith. 5. Include. 6. Not worth a halfpenny. 7. Straightforward. 8. Disclosure.

275 fretted⁹ with golden fire, why it appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapors. What a piece of work is a man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving, how express¹ 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
280 quintessence of dust? Man delights not me, 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 ye 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 coted² them on the way, and
285 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 humorous³ man shall end his part in peace; the clown
290 shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickle o' th' sere;⁴ 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 such delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET: How chances it they travel? Their residence, both in reputation and
295 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?

300 ROSENCRANTZ: No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET: How comes it? Do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ: Nay, their endeavor keeps in the wonted pace; but there is, sir, an eyrie of children, little eyases,⁵ that cry out on the top of question,⁶ and are
305 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 quills⁷ and dare scarce come thither.⁸

HAMLET: What, are they children? Who maintains 'em? How are they escoted?⁹ 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
310 like, if their means are no better), their writers do them wrong to make them exclaim against their own succession?¹

ROSENCRANTZ: Faith, there has been much todo on both sides; and the nation holds it no sin to tarre² them to controversy. There was for a while no money
bid for argument,³ unless the poet and the player went to cuffs⁴ in the
315 question.

9. Ornamented with fretwork. 1. Well built. 2. Passed. *Lenten*: scanty.

3. Eccentric. *Foil and target*: sword and shield. 4. Easily set off.

5. Little hawks. 6. With a loud, high delivery. 7. Pens of satirical writers.

8. The passage refers to the emergence at the time of the play of theatrical companies made up of children from London choir schools. Their performances became fashionable and hurt the business of the established companies. Hamlet says that if they continue to act ("pursue the quality") when they are grown, they will find that they have been damaging their own future careers.

9. Supported. 1. Future careers. 2. Urge. 3. Paid for a play plot. 4. Blows.

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.⁵

HAMLET: It is not very strange, for my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths⁶ at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little.⁷ 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

[A flourish.]

GUILDENSTERN: There are the players.

HAMLET: Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands. Come then, th' appurtenance of welcome is fashion and ceremony. Let me comply with you in this garb, lest my extent⁸ to the players, which I tell you must show fairly outwards should more appear like entertainment⁹ 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.¹

[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.²

ROSENCRANTZ: Happily he is 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 then indeed.

POLONIUS: My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET: My lord, I have news to tell you. When Roscius was an actor in Rome³—

POLONIUS: The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET: Buzz, buzz.

POLONIUS: Upon my honor—

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-toral, pastoral-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.⁴

5. During one of his labors Hercules assumed for a time the burden of the Titan Atlas, who supported the heavens on his shoulders. Also a reference to the effect on business at Shakespeare's theater, the Globe. 6. Sneer. 7. Miniature. 8. Fashion. *Comply with*: welcome. 9. Cordiality. 1. A "hawk" is a plasterer's tool; Hamlet may also be using "handsaw" = hernshaw = heron. 2. Wrappings for an infant. 3. Roscius was the most famous actor of classical Rome. 4. Seneca and Plautus were Roman writers of tragedy and comedy, respectively. The "law of writ" refers to plays written according to such rules as the classical unities, the "liberty" to those written otherwise.

HAMLET: O Jephtha, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!⁵

POLONIUS: What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET: Why—

355 "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 Jephtha?

360 POLONIUS: If you call me Jephtha, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing
 well.

HAMLET: Nay, that follows not.

POLONIUS: What follows then, my lord?

HAMLET: Why—

 "As by lot, God wot"

365 and then, you know,

 "It came to pass, as most like it was."

The first row of the pious chanson⁶ will show you more, for look where my
abridgement⁷ comes.

 [*Enter the PLAYERS.*]

370 You are welcome, masters; welcome, all.—I am glad to see thee well.—
 Welcome, good friends.—O, old friend! Why, thy face is valanced⁸ 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 altitude of a chopine.⁹ Pray God your voice, like a piece of
375 uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring.—Masters, you are all wel-
 come. 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,¹ come a passionate
 speech.

FIRST PLAYER: What speech, my good lord?

380 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
 caviary to the general.² But it was—as I received it, and others whose judg-
 ments in such matters cried in the top of³ mine—an excellent play, well
 digested⁴ in the scenes, set down with as much modesty as cunning. I remem-
385 ber one said there were no sallets⁵ in the lines to make the matter savory, nor
 no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation, but called

5. To ensure victory, Jephtha promised to sacrifice the first creature to meet him on his return. Unfortunately, his only daughter outstripped his dog and was the victim of his vow. The biblical story is told in Judges 11. 6. Song. Row: stanza. 7. That which cuts short by interrupting.

8. Fringed (with a beard).

9. Reference to the contemporary theatrical practice of using boys to play women's parts. The company's "lady" has grown in height by the size of a woman's thick-soled shoe ("chopine") since Hamlet saw him last. The next sentence refers to the possibility, suggested by his growth, that the young actor's voice may soon begin to change. 1. Trade. 2. Caviar to the masses (i.e., pearls before swine).

3. Were weightier than. 4. Arranged. 5. Spicy passages.

it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in't I chiefly loved. 'Twas Æneas' tale to Dido, and thereabout of it especially where he speaks of Priam's slaughter.⁶ If it live in your memory, begin at this line—let me see, let me see:

"The rugged Pyrrhus, like th' Hyrcanian beast"⁷—

390

'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 th' ominous horse,⁸
Hath now this dread and black complexion smeared

395

With heraldry more dismal; head to foot
Now is he total gules, horridly tricked⁹

With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,

Baked and impasted with the parching¹ streets,

That lend a tyrannous and a damnèd light

400

To their lord's murder. Roasted in wrath and fire,

And thus o'er-sized with coagulate² gore,

With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus

Old grandsire Priam seeks."

405

So proceed you.

POLONIUS: Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and good discretion.

FIRST PLAYER:

"Anon he finds him"³

Striking too short at Greeks. His antique⁴ sword,

410

Rebellious⁵ to his arm, lies where it falls,

Repugnant to command. Unequal matched,

Pyrrhus at Priam drives, in rage strikes wide.

But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword

Th' unnervèd father falls. Then senseless⁶ Ilium,

415

Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top

Stoops⁷ to his base, and with a hideous crash

Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear. For, lo! his sword,

Which was declining⁸ on the milky head

Of reverend Priam, seemed i' th' air to stick.

420

So as a painted tyrant Pyrrhus stood,

And like a neutral to his will and matter,⁹

Did nothing.

But as we often see, against some storm,

A silence in the heavens, the rack¹ stand still,

6. Aeneas, fleeing with his band from fallen Troy (Ilium), arrives in Carthage, where he tells Dido, the queen of Carthage, of Troy's fall. Here he is describing the death of Priam, the aged king of Troy, at the hands of Pyrrhus, the son of the slain Achilles. 7. Tiger. 8. That is, the Trojan horse.
9. Adorned. Total gules: completely red. 1. Burning. Impasted: crusted.
2. Clotted. O'er-sized: glued over. 3. That is, Pyrrhus finds Priam.
4. Which he used when young. 5. Refractory. 6. Without feeling. 7. Falls. 8. About to fall.
9. Between his will and the fulfillment of it. 1. Clouds.

425 The bold winds speechless, and the orb below
 As hush as death, anon the dreadful thunder
 Doth rend the region; so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
 A rousèd vengeance sets him new awork,²
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
 430 On Mars's armor, forged for proof eterne,³
 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,
 435 Break all the spokes and fellies⁴ from her wheel,
 And bowl the round nave⁵ down the hill of heaven
 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,⁶
 440 or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps. Say on; come to Hecuba.⁷

FIRST PLAYER: "But who, ah woe! had seen the moblèd⁸ queen—"

HAMLET: "The moblèd queen"?

POLONIUS: That's good. "Moblèd queen" is good.

FIRST PLAYER: "Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the flames
 445 With bisson rheum, a clout⁹ upon that head
 Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
 About her lank and all o'er-teemèd loins,
 A blanket, in the alarm of fear caught up—
 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steeped,
 450 'Gainst Fortune's state¹ would treason have pronounced.
 But if the gods themselves did see her then,
 When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport
 In mincing² with his sword her husband's limbs,
 The instant burst of clamor that she made,
 455 Unless things mortal move them not at all,
 Would have made milch³ the burning eyes of heaven,
 And passion in the gods."

POLONIUS: Look whe'r⁴ he has not turned his color, and has tears in's eyes.
 Prithee no more.

460 HAMLET: 'Tis well. I'll have thee speak out the rest of this soon.—Good my lord,
 will you see the players well bestowed?⁵ Do you hear, let them be well used,
 for they are the abstract⁶ and brief chronicles of the time; after your death
 you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

2. To work.

3. Mars, as befits a Roman war god, had armor made for him by the blacksmith god Vulcan and his assistants, the Cyclopes. It was suitably impenetrable (of "proof eterne"). 4. Parts of the rim.

5. Hub. Bowl: roll. 6. A comic act.

7. Hecuba was the wife of Priam and queen of Troy. Her "loins" are described below as "o'erteemèd" because of her unusual fertility. The number of her children varies in different accounts, but twenty is a safe minimum. 8. Muffled (in a hood). 9. Cloth. *Bisson rheum*: blinding tears.

1. Government. 2. Cutting up. 3. Tearful (literally, milk-giving). 4. Whether. 5. Provided for. 6. Summary.

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

HAMLET: God's bodkin, man, much better. Use every man after his desert, and
who shall 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honor and dignity. The
less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty. Take them in. 465

POLONIUS: Come, sirs.

HAMLET: Follow him, friends. We'll hear a play tomorrow.

Dost thou hear me, old friend, can you play "The Murder of Gonzago"? [Aside to FIRST PLAYER.] 470

FIRST PLAYER: Ay, my lord.

HAMLET: We'll ha't tomorrow 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. 475

[Exeunt POLONIUS and PLAYERS.]

My good friends, I'll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ: Good my lord. [Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

HAMLET: Ay, so God b'wi'ye. Now I am alone.

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!

Is it not monstrous that this player here, 480

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 wanned;⁸

Tears in his eyes, distraction in his aspect?

A broken voice, and his whole function suiting 485

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, 490

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. 495

Yet I,

A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak¹

Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant² of my cause,

And can say nothing; no, not for a king

Upon whose property and most dear life 500

A damned 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' th' throat

As deep as to the lungs? Who does me this? 505

Ha, 'swounds, I should take it; for it cannot be

7. Imagination. 8. Grew pale. 9. Face. 1. Mope. Muddy-mettled: dull-spirited.

2. Not quickened by. John-a-dreams: a man dreaming.

But I am pigeon-livered and lack gall³
 To make oppression bitter, or ere this
 I should 'a fatted all the region kites⁴
 510 With this slave's offal. Bloody, bawdy villain!
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless⁵ villain!
 O, vengeance!
 Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
 That I, the son of a dear father murdered,
 515 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,
 Must like a whore unpack⁶ my heart with words,
 And fall a-cursing like a very drab,
 A scullion!⁷ Fie upon't! foh!
 About, my brains. Hum—I have heard
 520 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 proclaimed⁸ their malefactions;
 For murder, though it have no tongue, will speak
 525 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 'a do blench,⁹
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
 530 May be a devil, and the devil hath power
 T' assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
 Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
 As he is very potent with such spirits,
 Abuses me to damn me. I'll have grounds
 535 More relative¹ than this. The play's the thing
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king. [Exit.]

ACT III

Scene 1

A room in the castle. Enter KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

KING: And can you by no drift of conference²
 Get from him why he puts on this confusion,
 Grating so harshly all his days of quiet
 With turbulent³ and dangerous lunacy?

5 ROSENCRANTZ: He does confess he feels himself distracted,
 But from what cause 'a will by no means speak.

3. Bitterness. 4. Birds of prey of the area. 5. Unnatural. 6. Relieve.

7. In some versions of the play, the word "stallion," a slang term for prostitute, appears in place of "scullion." 8. Admitted. 9. Turn pale. *Tent*: try. 1. Conclusive. 2. Line of conversation.

3. Disturbing.

GUILDENSTERN: Nor do we find him forward to be sounded,⁴
But with a crafty madness keeps aloof
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state.

QUEEN: Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ: Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN: But with much forcing of his disposition.⁵

ROSENCRANTZ: Niggard of question, but of our demands⁶
Most free in his reply.

QUEEN: Did you assay⁷ him
To any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ: Madam, it so fell out that certain players

We o'er-raught⁸ 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.

POLONIUS: 'Tis most true,

And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties

To hear and see the matter.⁹

KING: With all my heart, and it doth much content me

To hear him so inclined.

Good gentlemen, give him a further edge,

And drive his purpose¹ into these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ: We shall, my lord. [*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.*]

KING: Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,

For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,

That he, as 'twere by accident, may here

Affront² Ophelia.

Her father and myself (lawful espials³)

Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,

We may of their encounter frankly judge,

And gather by him, as he is behaved,

If't be th' affliction of his love or no

That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN: I shall obey you.—

And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish

That your good beauties be the happy cause

Of Hamlet's wildness. So shall I hope your virtues

Will bring him to his wonted⁴ way again,

To both your honors.

Madam, I wish it may.

[*Exit QUEEN.*]

OPHELIA: Madam, I wish it may.

POLONIUS: Ophelia, walk you here.—Gracious,⁵ so please you,

We will bestow ourselves.—[*To OPHELIA.*] Read on this book,

4. Questioned. *Forward*: eager. 5. Mood. 6. To our questions. 7. Tempt. 8. Passed.
9. Performance. 1. Sharpen his intention. 2. Confront. 3. Justified spies. 4. Usual.
5. Majesty.

45 That show of such an exercise may color⁶
 Your loneliness.—We are oft to blame in this,
 'Tis too much proved, that with devotion's visage
 And pious action we do sugar o'er
 The devil himself.

50 KING: [*Aside.*] O, 'tis too true.
 How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!
 The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring⁷ art,
 Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
 Than is my deed to my most painted word.
 O heavy burden!

55 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:
 Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
 60 And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—
 No more; and by a sleep to say we end
 The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
 That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
 Devoutly to be wished—to die, to sleep—
 65 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 coil⁸
 Must give us pause—there's the respect⁹
 That makes calamity of so long life.
 70 For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
 Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,¹
 The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
 The insolence of office, and the spurns²
 That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
 75 When he himself might his quietus³ make
 With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels⁴ bear,
 To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
 But that the dread of something after death,
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourn⁵
 80 No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have
 Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native⁶ hue of resolution

6. Explain. *Exercise*: act of devotion. 7. Thickly painted. 8. Turmoil. 9. Consideration.
 1. Insulting behavior. 2. Rejections. 3. Settlement. 4. Burdens. *Bodkin*: dagger.
 5. Boundary. 6. Natural.

Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment⁷
 With this regard their currents turn awry
 And lose the name of action.—Soft you now,
 The fair Ophelia.—Nymph, in thy orisons⁸
 Be all my sins remembered.

OPHELIA: Good my lord,
 How does your honor for this many a day?

HAMLET: I humbly thank you, well, well, well.

OPHELIA: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
 That I have longèd long to re-deliver.
 I pray you now receive them.

HAMLET: No, not I,
 I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA: My honored lord, you know right well you did,
 And with them words of so sweet breath composed
 As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,
 Take these again, for to the noble mind
 Rich gifts wax⁹ poor when givers prove unkind.
 There, my lord.

HAMLET: Ha, ha! are you honest?¹

OPHELIA: My lord?

HAMLET: Are you fair?

OPHELIA: What means your lordship?

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

OPHELIA: Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce² than with honesty?

HAMLET: Ay, truly, for the power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from
 what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his
 likeness. This was sometimes a paradox, but now the time gives it proof. I did
 love you once.

OPHELIA: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET: You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate³ 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.⁴ Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?

I am myself indifferent⁵ honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things

that it were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revenge-

ful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck⁶ 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 arrant⁷

knaves all; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your

father?

OPHELIA: At home, my lord.

7. Importance. *Pitch*: height. 8. Prayers. 9. Become. 1. Chaste. 2. Intercourse.
 3. Change by grafting. 4. Hamlet uses "nunnery" in two senses, the second as a slang term for brothel.
 5. Moderately. 6. Command. 7. Thorough.

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

OPHELIA: O, help him, you sweet heavens!

130 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, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise men know well enough what monsters⁸ you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

135 OPHELIA: 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 amble, and you lisp;⁹ you nickname God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance.¹ Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made me mad. I say we will have no more marriage. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live. The rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go. [Exit.]

OPHELIA: O, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,

Th' expectancy and rose² of the fair state,

145 The glass of fashion and the mould³ of form,

Th' observed of all observers, quite quite down!

And I of ladies most deject and wretched,

That sucked the honey of his music⁴ vows,

Now see that noble and most sovereign reason

150 Like sweet bells jangled, out of time and harsh;

That unmatched form and feature of blown⁵ youth

Blasted with ecstasy. O, woe is me

T' have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

[Enter KING and POLONIUS.]

KING: Love! His affections do not that way tend,

155 Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,

Was not like madness. There's something in his soul

O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,⁶

And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose⁷

Will be some danger; which to prevent,

160 I have in quick determination

Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England

For the demand of our neglected tribute.

Haply the seas and countries different,

With variable objects, shall expel

165 This something-settled matter in his heart

Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus

From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

8. Horned because cuckolded. 9. Walk and talk affectedly.

1. Hamlet means that women call things by pet names and then blame the affectation on ignorance.

2. Ornament. *Expectancy*: hope. 3. Model. *Glass*: mirror. 4. Musical. 5. Full-blown.

6. That is, like a hen. 7. Result. *Doubt*: fear.

POLONIUS: It shall do well. But yet do I believe
 The origin and commencement of his grief
 Sprung from neglected love.—How now, Ophelia? 170
 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 round⁸ with him, 175
 And I'll be placed, so please you, in the ear⁹
 Of all their conference. If she find him not,¹
 To England send him; or confine him where
 Your wisdom best shall think.

KING: It shall be so.
 Madness in great ones must not unwatched go. [Exeunt.] 180

Scene 2

A public room in the castle. Enter HAMLET and three of the PLAYERS.

HAMLET: Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on
 the tongue; but if you mouth it as many of our players do, I had as lief the
 town-crier spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand
 thus, but use all gently, for in the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say, whirl
 wind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give 5
 it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated²
 fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the groundlings,
 who for the most part are capable of³ nothing but inexplicable dumb shows
 and noise. I would have such a fellow whipped for o'erdoing Termagant. It out-
 herods Herod.⁴ Pray you avoid it. 10

FIRST PLAYER: I warrant your honor.

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 obser-
 vance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature; for anything so o'erdone is 15
 from⁵ 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.⁶ Now this overdone, or come tardy off, though it makes the unskil-
 ful⁷ laugh, cannot but make the judicious grieve, the censure⁸ of the which 20
 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 th' accent of Christians, nor the gait
 of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted and bellowed that I have

8. Direct. 9. Hearing. 1. Does not discover his problem. 2. Bewigged. *Robustious*: noisy.
 3. That is, capable of understanding. *Groundlings*: the spectators who paid least and had to stand.
 4. Termagant, a "Saracen" deity, and the biblical Herod were stock characters in popular drama noted
 for the excesses of sound and fury used by their interpreters. 5. Contrary to. 6. Shape.
 7. Ignorant. 8. Judgment.

thought some of nature's journeymen⁹ had made men, and not made them
 25 well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

FIRST PLAYER: I hope we have reformed that indifferently¹ 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 barren² spectators to laugh too, though in
 30 the meantime some necessary question of the play be then to be considered.
 That's villainous, and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses it.
 Go, make you ready. [Exeunt PLAYERS.]

[Enter POLONIUS, GUILDENSTERN, and ROSENCRANTZ.]

How now, my lord? Will the king hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS: And the queen too, and that presently.

35 HAMLET: Bid the players make haste. [Exit POLONIUS.]

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ: Ay, my lord.

[Exeunt they two.]

HAMLET: What, ho, Horatio!

[Enter HORATIO.]

HORATIO: Here, sweet lord, at your service.

40 HAMLET: Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man

As e'er my conversation coped³ withal.

HORATIO: O my dear lord!

HAMLET:

Nay, do not think I flatter,

For what advancement may I hope from thee,

That no revenue hast but thy good spirits

45 To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be flattered?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,

And crook the pregnant⁴ hinges of the knee

Where thrift⁵ may follow fawning. Dost thou hear?

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice

50 And could of men distinguish her election,

S'hath sealed thee for herself, for thou hast been

As one in suff'ring all that suffers nothing,

A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards

Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those

55 Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled

That they are not a pipe⁶ for Fortune's finger

To sound what stop⁷ she please. Give me that man

That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him

In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,

60 As I do thee. Something too much of this.

There is a play tonight before the king.

One scene of it comes near the circumstance

Which I have told thee of my father's death.

I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,

9. Inferior craftsmen. 1. Somewhat. 2. Dullwitted. 3. Encountered. 4. Quick to bend.
 5. Profit. 6. Musical instrument. 7. Note. Sound: play.

Even with the very comment⁸ of thy soul
Observe my uncle. If his occulted⁹ guilt
Do not itself unkennel¹ in one speech,
It is a damnèd ghost that we have seen,
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note,²
For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.³

HORATIO: Well, my lord.
If 'a steal aught the whilst this play in playing,
And 'scape detecting, I will pay⁴ the theft.

[Enter Trumpets and Kettledrums, KING, QUEEN, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and other LORDS attendant.]

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

KING: How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET: Excellent, i' faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons⁵ so.

KING: I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet. These words are not mine. 80

HAMLET: No, nor mine now. [To POLONIUS.] My lord, you played once 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 Cæsar. I was killed i' th' Capitol; Brutus killed me.⁶ 85

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.⁷

QUEEN: Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

HAMLET: No, good mother, here's metal more attractive. 90

POLONIUS: [To the KING.] O, ho! do you mark that?

HAMLET: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

[Lying down at OPHELIA's feet.]

OPHELIA: No, my lord.

HAMLET: I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA: Ay, my lord. 95

HAMLET: Do you think I meant country matters?⁸

OPHELIA: I think nothing, my lord.

8. Keenest observation. 9. Hidden. 1. Break loose. 2. Careful attention. *Stithy*: smithy.

3. Manner. 4. Repay.

5. Castrated male chickens fattened for slaughter; also a term for fool. *Chameleon's dish*: reference to a popular belief that the chameleon subsisted on a diet of air. Hamlet has deliberately misunderstood the king's question.

6. Julius Caesar's assassination by Brutus and others is the subject of another play by Shakespeare.

7. Leisure. *Stay*: wait.

8. Presumably, rustic misbehavior, but here and elsewhere in this exchange Hamlet treats Ophelia to some ribald double meanings.

HORATIO: Half a share.

245 HAMLET: A whole one, I.

For thou dost know, O Damon dear,⁷

This realm dismantled was

Of Jove himself, and now reigns here

A very, very—peacock.

250 HORATIO: You might have rhymed.

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

HORATIO: Very well, my lord.

HAMLET: Upon the talk of the poisoning.

255 HORATIO: I did very well note⁸ him.

HAMLET: Ah, ha! Come, some music. Come, the recorders.⁹

For if the king like not the comedy.

Why then, belike he likes it not, perdy.¹

Come, some music.

[Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

260 GUILDENSTERN: Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET: Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN: The king, sir—

HAMLET: Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN: Is in his retirement marvellous distempered.²

265 HAMLET: With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN: No, my lord, with choler.³

HAMLET: Your wisdom should show itself more richer to signify this to the doctor, for for me to put him to his purgation⁴ would perhaps plunge him into more choler.

270 GUILDENSTERN: Good my lord, put your discourse into some frame,⁵ and start not so wildly from my affair.

HAMLET: I am tame, sir. Pronounce.

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

275 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 wholesome⁶ answer, I will do your mother's commandment. If not, your pardon and my return⁷ shall be the end of my business.

280 HAMLET: Sir, I cannot.

ROSENCRANTZ: What, my lord?

7. Damon was a common name for a young man or a shepherd in pastoral poetry. Jove was the chief god of the Romans. Readers may supply for themselves the rhyme referred to by Horatio.

8. Observe. 9. Wooden, end-blown flutes. 1. That is, *par Dieu* (French for "by God").

2. Vexed. *Retirement*: place to which he has retired. 3. Bile (anger).

4. Treatment with a laxative. 5. Order. *Discourse*: speech. 6. Reasonable.

7. That is, to the queen.

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

ROSENCRANTZ: Then thus she says: your behavior hath struck her into amazement and admiration.⁸ 285

HAMLET: O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother! But is there no sequel at the heels of his mother's admiration? Impart.⁹

ROSENCRANTZ: She desires to speak with you in her closet¹ ere you go to bed.

HAMLET: We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. Have you any further trade² with us? 290

ROSENCRANTZ: My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET: And do still, by these pickers and stealers.³

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. 295

HAMLET: Sir, I lack advancement.

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

HAMLET: Ay, sir, but "while the grass grows"—the proverb⁴ is something musty.

[Enter the PLAYERS with recorders.]

O, the recorders! Let me see one. To withdraw with you⁵—why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?⁶ 300

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

HAMLET: I do not well understand that. Will you play upon this pipe?⁷

GUILDENSTERN: My lord, I cannot.

HAMLET: I pray you. 305

GUILDENSTERN: Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET: I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN: I know no touch of it,⁸ my lord.

HAMLET: It is as easy as lying. Govern these ventages⁹ with your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it will discourse most eloquent music. Look you, these are the stops.¹ 310

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

HAMLET: Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me, you would seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart of my mystery, you would sound² me from my lowest note to the top of my compass;³ and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ, yet cannot you make it speak. 'Sblood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret⁴ me, you cannot play upon me. 315 320

8. Wonder. 9. Tell me. 1. Bedroom. 2. Business. 3. Hands.

4. The proverb ends "the horse starves." 5. Let me step aside.

6. The simile refers to hunting. Hamlet asks why Guildenstern is attempting to get windward of him, as if he would drive him into a net. 7. Recorder. 8. Have no ability.

9. Holes. Govern: cover and uncover. 1. Windholes. 2. Play. 3. Range.

4. "Fret" is used in a double sense, to annoy and to play a guitar or similar instrument using the "frets" or small bars on the neck.

[Enter POLONIUS.]

God bless you, sir!

POLONIUS: My lord, the queen would speak with you, and presently.⁵

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

POLONIUS: By th' mass, and 'tis like a camel indeed.

325 HAMLET: Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS: It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET: Or like a whale.

POLONIUS: Very like a whale.

HAMLET: Then I will come to my mother by and by. [Aside.] They fool me to the
330 top of my bent.⁶—I will come by and by.

POLONIUS: I will say so.

HAMLET: "By and by" is easily said. Leave me, friends. [Exeunt all but HAMLET.] [Exit.]

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
335 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 Nero⁷ enter this firm bosom.

340 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,⁸

To give them seals⁹ never, my soul, consent! [Exit.]

Scene 3

A room in the castle. Enter KING, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN.

KING: I like him not,¹ nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range.² Therefore prepare you.

I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you.

5 The terms of our estate³ may not endure
Hazard so near's as doth hourly grow
Out of his brows.

GUILDENSTERN: We will ourselves provide,⁴

Most holy and religious fear it is
To keep those many many bodies safe
10 That live and feed upon your majesty.

ROSENCRANTZ: The single and peculiar⁵ life is bound
With all the strength and armor of the mind

5. At once. 6. Treat me as an utter fool.

7. The Roman emperor Nero, known for his excesses, was believed responsible for the death of his mother. 8. Shamed. 9. Fulfillment in action.

To keep itself from noyance,⁶ but much more
That spirit upon whose weal⁷ depends and rests
The lives of many. The cess⁸ of majesty
Dies not alone, but like a gulf⁹ doth draw
What's near it with it. It is a massy¹ wheel
Fixed on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser things
Are mortised and adjoined,² which when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends³ the boist'rous ruin. Never alone
Did the king sigh, but with a general groan.

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

ROSENCRANTZ: We will haste us.
[*Exeunt* ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.]

[*Enter* POLONIUS.]

POLONIUS: My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll convey⁴ myself
To hear the process. I'll warrant she'll tax him home,⁵
And as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should o'erhear
The speech, of vantage.⁶ Fare you well, my liege.
I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

KING: Thanks, dear my lord. [*Exit* POLONIUS.]

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse⁷ upon't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will.
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And like a man to double business⁸ bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
To confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestallèd⁹ ere we come to fall,
Or pardoned being down?¹ Then I'll look up.
My fault is past, But, O, what form of prayer

6. Harm. 7. Welfare. 8. Cessation. 9. Whirlpool. 1. Massive. 2. Attached. 3. Joins in.
4. Station. 5. Sharply. *Process*: proceedings. 6. From a position of vantage.
7. That is, of Cain. 8. Two mutually opposed interests. 9. Prevented (from sin). 1. Having sinned.

Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murder"?
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed
 Of those effects² for which I did the murder—
 55 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
 May one be pardoned and retain th' offence?³
 In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded⁴ hand may shove by justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 60 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above.
 There is no shuffling; there the action⁵ lies
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled,
 Even to the teeth and forehead of⁶ our faults,
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?⁷
 65 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 limèd⁸ soul, that struggling to be free
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay.
 70 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,⁹ now 'a is a-praying,
 And now I'll do't—and so 'a goes to heaven,
 75 And so am I revenged. That would be scanned.¹
 A villain kills my father, and for that,
 I, his sole son, do this same villain send
 To heaven.
 Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge.
 80 'A took my father grossly, full of bread,²
 With all his crimes broad blown, as flush³ as May;
 And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
 But in our circumstance and course of thought
 'Tis heavy with him; and am I then revenged
 85 To take him in the purging of his soul,
 When he is fit and seasoned⁴ for his passage?
 No.
 Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent.⁵
 When he is drunk, asleep, or in his rage,
 90 Or in th' incestuous pleasure of his bed,
 At game a-swearing, or about some act
 That has no relish⁶ of salvation in't—

2. Gains. 3. That is, benefits of the offense. 4. Bearing gold as a bribe.
 5. Case at law. 6. Face-to-face with. 7. Remains. 8. Caught as with birdlime. 9. Easily.
 1. Deserves consideration. 2. In a state of sin and without fasting.
 3. Vigorous. *Broad blown*: full blown. 4. Ready. 5. Opportunity. 6. Flavor.

Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
 And that his soul may be as damned and black
 As hell, whereto it goes. My mother stays.
 This physic⁷ but prolongs thy sickly days.

95

[Exit.]

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

[Exit.]

Scene 4

The Queen's chamber. Enter QUEEN and POLONIUS.

POLONIUS: 'A will come straight. Look you lay home to⁸ him.
 Tell him his pranks have been too broad⁹ to bear with,
 And that your grace hath screen'd¹ and stood between
 Much heat and him. I'll silence me even here.
 Pray you be round with him.

5

HAMLET: [Within.] Mother, mother, mother!

QUEEN: I'll warrant you. Fear² me not.

Withdraw, I hear him coming.

[POLONIUS goes behind the arras. Enter HAMLET.]

HAMLET: Now, mother, what's the matter?

10

QUEEN: Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET: Mother, you have my father much offended.

QUEEN: Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

HAMLET: Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

QUEEN: Why, how now, Hamlet?

HAMLET:

What's the matter now?

QUEEN: Have you forgot me?

15

HAMLET: No, by the rood,³ not so.

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

And would it were not so, you are my mother.

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

HAMLET: Come, come, and sit you down. You shall not budge.

20

You go not till I set you up a glass⁴
 Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN: What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, ho!

POLONIUS: [Behind.] What, ho! help!

25

HAMLET: [Draws.] How now, a rat?

Dead for a ducat, dead!

[Kills POLONIUS with a pass through the arras.]

POLONIUS: [Behind.] O, I am slain!

QUEEN: O me, what hast thou done?

7. Medicine. 8. Be sharp with. 9. Outrageous. 1. Acted as a fire screen. 2. Doubt.
 3. Cross. 4. Mirror.