

William Shakespeare

Hamlet

the complete play — original text and a plain modern English translation, side by side

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Act 1, Scene 1

ELSinORE. A PLATFORM BEFORE THE CASTLE

Midnight on the guard platform of Elsinore castle. Barnardo relieves Francisco and, with Marcellus, persuades the skeptical scholar Horatio to keep watch — and a ghost in the armor of the dead King Hamlet appears twice, refusing to speak. Horatio reads it as an omen tied to the war scare with young Fortinbras of Norway, and decides to tell Prince Hamlet, whom the spirit may answer.

Original

Translation

Enter Francisco and Barnardo, two sentinels.

BARNARDO

Who's there?

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me.

No — you answer me.

Stand and unfold yourself.

Halt and identify yourself.

BARNARDO

Long live the King!

Long live the King!

FRANCISCO

Barnardo?

Barnardo?

BARNARDO

He.

It's me.

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

You're right on time, to the minute.

BARNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve.

It's just struck twelve.

Get thee to bed,

Go to bed, Francisco.

Francisco.

FRANCISCO

For this relief much thanks.

Thanks for taking over.

'Tis bitter cold,

It's bitterly cold, and I'm sick at heart.

And I am sick at heart.

BARNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?

Has your watch been quiet?

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring.

Not a mouse stirring.

BARNARDO

Well, good night.

All right, good night.

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

If you run into Horatio and Marcellus, my
partners on this watch, tell them to hurry.

Enter Horatio and Marcellus.

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them.

I think I hear them now.

Stand, ho!

Halt!

Who is there?

Who's there?

HORATIO

Friends to this ground.

Friends of this country.

MARCELLUS

And liegemen to the Dane.

And loyal subjects of the King of Denmark.

FRANCISCO

Give you good night.

Good night to you.

MARCELLUS

O, farewell, honest soldier,

who hath reliev'd
you?

FRANCISCO

Barnardo has my place.

Give you good-night.

Exit.

MARCELLUS

Holla, Barnardo!

BARNARDO

Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO

A piece of him.

BARNARDO

Welcome, Horatio.

Welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

What, has this thing appear'd again tonight?

BARNARDO

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.

Ah, goodbye, honest soldier.

Who has taken your place?

Barnardo has my post.

Good night to you.

Hey — Barnardo!

Yes — is Horatio there?

A part of him, anyway.

Welcome, Horatio.

Welcome, good Marcellus.

So — has that thing shown up again tonight?

I haven't seen anything.

Horatio says it's only our imagination, and he
refuses to believe a word about this terrible sight
we've now seen twice.
So I've begged him to come and stand watch
with us through the night,
and if the apparition comes back, he can
confirm what our eyes saw and speak to it.

HORATIO

Tush, tush,

'twill not appear.

BARNARDO

Sit down awhile,

And let us once again assail your ears,

That are so fortified against our story,

What we two nights have seen.

HORATIO

Well, sit we down,

And let us hear Barnardo speak of this.

BARNARDO

Last night of all,

When yond same star that's westward from the
pole,

Had made his course t'illumine that part of
heaven

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,

The bell then beating one—

MARCELLUS

Peace, break thee off.

Look where it comes

again.

Enter Ghost.

BARNARDO

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

MARCELLUS

Thou art a scholar;

Speak to it, Horatio.

Nonsense.

It won't come.

Sit down a while and let us attack those ears of
yours again — they're so barricaded against our
story — with what the two of us have seen these
last two nights.

Fine, let's sit, and hear Barnardo tell it.

Last night, when that same star just west of the
pole star had traveled around to light up the part
of the sky where it's burning now, Marcellus and
I — with the bell just striking one—

Quiet, stop.

Look, here it comes again.

In the same shape — like the dead King.

You're the educated one.

Speak to it, Horatio.

BARNARDO

Looks it not like the King?

Mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO

Most like.

It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

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.

BARNARDO

See, it stalks away.

HORATIO

Stay!

Speak, speak!

I charge thee speak!

Exit Ghost.

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone, and will not answer.

Doesn't it look like the King?

Look closely, Horatio.

Exactly like him.

It terrifies me and amazes me at once.

BARNARDO: Someone should speak to it.

Question it, Horatio.

What are you, that trespasses on this hour of
night wearing the noble, warlike shape in which
the buried majesty of Denmark used to march?

In heaven's name, I order you to speak.

We've offended it.

Look, it's walking away.

Stop!

Speak — speak!

I order you to speak!

It's gone, and it won't answer.

BARNARDO

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 th'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

Well, Horatio?

You're shaking and you've gone white.

Isn't this rather more than imagination?

What do you make of it?

Before God, I would never have believed this

without the solid evidence of my own eyes.

Doesn't it look like the King?

As much as you look like yourself.

That was the very armor he wore when he fought
the ambitious King of Norway.

That's the exact frown he wore once, when a
diplomatic quarrel turned angry and he smashed
the sledded Poles onto the ice.

It's uncanny.

Twice before now, at exactly this dead hour, it

has marched past our watch with that soldier's
stride.

I can't say what it means in detail,

but taking it broadly, my opinion is that it

forecasts some violent upheaval in our country.

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,
Dar'd to the combat;

in which our valiant
Hamlet,
For so this side of our known world esteem'd
him,
Did slay this Fortinbras;

who by a seal'd
compact,
Well ratified by law and heraldry,
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands
Which he stood seiz'd of, to the conqueror;

All right, sit down, and whoever knows the
answer can tell me: why this strict, unblinking
nightly watch that wears out the King's
subjects?

Why the daily casting of bronze cannon and the
buying of weapons abroad?

Why the drafting of shipwrights, whose brutal
schedule doesn't even give them Sunday off?

What's coming, that this sweating rush makes
the night work alongside the day?
Who can explain it to me?

I can — or at least this is the rumor.

Our late King, whose image just appeared to us,
was challenged to single combat by Fortinbras
of Norway, who was driven to it by jealous pride.

In that fight our brave Hamlet — and this whole
side of the known world considered him brave
— killed Fortinbras.

By a sealed agreement, properly ratified in law
and by the heralds, Fortinbras forfeited along
with his life all the lands he held, and they went
to the winner.

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
cov'nant
And carriage of the article design'd,
His fell to Hamlet.

Now, sir, young Fortinbras,
Of unimproved mettle, hot and full,
Hath in the skirts of Norway, here and there,
Shark'd up a list of lawless 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 rummage in the land.

BARNARDO

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.

Our King had staked an equal portion of his
own, which would have gone to Fortinbras had
he won; by the same contract and the terms
drawn up in it, the Norwegian's lands fell to
Hamlet.

Now, sir, young Fortinbras — untested, hot-
blooded and reckless — has scraped together a
gang of lawless thugs from the edges of Norway,
paying them in nothing but meals, for some
enterprise that takes a strong stomach.

And it's clear enough to our government what it
is: to take back from us by force and hard terms
those very lands his father lost.

That, as I understand it, is the main reason for
all our preparations, the reason for this watch of
ours, and the source of all this frantic rush and
turmoil in the country.

I think that must be it exactly.

It fits that this ominous figure should come
armed through our watch, looking so like the
King who was and still is the cause of these
wars.

It's a speck of dust that troubles 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 precursor of fierce events,
As harbingers preceding still the fates
And prologue to the omen coming on,
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated
Unto our climates and countrymen.

Re-enter Ghost.

HORATIO

But, soft, behold!

Lo, where it comes again!

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.

If thou art privy to thy country's fate,
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,
O speak!

In Rome at the height of its glory, just before the
mighty Julius Caesar was killed, the graves stood
empty and the dead in their shrouds squealed
and babbled in the Roman streets.

There were stars trailing fire, dew like blood, ill
omens in the sun, and the moon — which rules
the tides of Neptune's sea — went dark in
eclipse as if the world were ending.

And exactly that kind of warning of terrible
events, the messengers that always run ahead of
fate and act as prologue to the disaster on its
way, heaven and earth have shown together to
our region and our countrymen.

Wait — look!

See, here it comes again!

I'll block its path, even if it destroys me.

Stand still, illusion!

If you can make any sound, if you have a voice,
speak to me.

If there's some good deed to be done that would
bring you peace and me grace, speak to me.

If you know something of our country's fate
that we might avoid by knowing it in advance,
oh, 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!

The cock crows.

HORATIO

Stop it, Marcellus!

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

BARNARDO

'Tis here!

HORATIO

'Tis here!

Exit Ghost.

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone!

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.

BARNARDO

It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HORATIO

And then it started, like a guilty thing
Upon a fearful summons.

Or if you hoarded stolen treasure in the earth
during your life — which they say is why you
spirits often walk after death — tell me about it.

Stay, and speak!

Stop it, Marcellus!

Should I take a swing at it with my spear?

Do it, if it won't stand still.

It's here!

It's here!

It's gone!

We're wronging something so majestic by
offering it violence, because it's like the air,
impossible to wound, and our futile blows are
nothing but a spiteful joke.

It was about to speak when the rooster crowed.

And then it flinched, like a guilty man
summoned to court.

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,
Th'extravagant and erring spirit hies
To his confine.

And of the truth herein

This present object made probation.

MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.

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 dare 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 tonight
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?

I've heard that the rooster, the trumpeter of the
morning, wakes the god of day with his high,
piercing call,

and at that warning every wandering spirit out
of bounds — whether in sea or fire, earth or air
— hurries back where it belongs.

What just happened proves the story true.

It faded at the crowing of the cock.

Some say that in the season when we celebrate
our Savior's birth, the bird of dawn sings all
night long, and then no spirit dares walk abroad.

The nights are healthy, no planet does harm, no
fairy steals anyone away, no witch has the power
to cast a spell — the time is that holy and that
blessed.

So I've heard, and I half believe it.

But look — morning, dressed in a russet cloak, is
walking over the dew on that high hill to the
east.

Let's end our watch, and my advice is that we
tell young Hamlet what we've seen tonight.

I'd stake my life that this spirit, silent with us,
will speak to him.

Do you agree we should tell him, as our
affection requires and our duty demands?

MARCELLUS

Let's do't, I pray,

and I this morning know

Where we shall find him most conveniently.

Let's do it, please.

And I know where we can most easily find him

this morning.

Exeunt.

Act 1, Scene 2

EL SINORE. A ROOM OF STATE IN THE CASTLE

Claudius holds his first court as King of Denmark: he announces his marriage to Gertrude, his dead brother's widow, sends ambassadors to defuse young Fortinbras's threat, grants Laertes leave to return to France, and orders Hamlet to stop mourning and stay at Elsinore instead of returning to university. Left alone, Hamlet delivers his first soliloquy, sickened by his mother's remarriage barely two months after his father's death. Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo then tell him about the ghost, and Hamlet arranges to stand watch that night.

Original

Translation

Enter Claudius King of Denmark, Gertrude the Queen, Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Voltemand, Cornelius, Lords and Attendant.

KING

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.

Although the memory of the death of Hamlet,

our dear brother, is still fresh, and it would have
been fitting for us to hold our hearts in grief and
for the whole kingdom to draw itself into a

single frown of sorrow, good sense has fought

so hard against natural feeling that we now

think of him with a measured, intelligent sorrow

while also remembering our duty to ourselves.

and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
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 dilated articles allow.
Farewell; and let your haste commend your duty.
CORNELIUS and VOLTEMAND.
In that, and all things, will we show our duty.

KING

We doubt it nothing:

heartily farewell.

Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius.

KING

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 lose your voice.

What wouldst thou beg,

Laertes,

That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?
The head is not more native to the heart,
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES

Dread my lord,
Your leave and favour to return to France,

And we hereby send you, good Cornelius, and
you, Voltemand, to carry this message to old
Norway, giving you no personal authority to
negotiate with the King beyond what these
detailed articles permit.

Farewell, and let your speed prove your loyalty.
CORNELIUS and VOLTEMAND: In this and in
everything, we'll do our duty.

We have no doubt of it.

A warm farewell.

And now, Laertes — what news do you have?
You mentioned a request.

What is it, Laertes?

You can't make a reasonable request to the King
of Denmark and be refused.

What could you ask for, Laertes, that I wouldn't
offer before you had to ask?

The head is not more naturally joined to the
heart, nor the hand more useful to the mouth,
than the throne of Denmark is to your father.
What do you want, Laertes?

My revered lord, your permission and blessing to
go back 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

Have you your father's leave?

What says

Polonius?

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

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—

Aside.

HAMLET

A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

I came to Denmark willingly enough, to show
my loyalty at your coronation

— but now, I have to admit, with that duty done
my thoughts and wishes turn toward France
again, and I lay them before your gracious
permission and pardon.

Do you have your father's consent?

What does Polonius say?

He does, my lord — he dragged my reluctant
permission out of me with relentless pleading,
and in the end I stamped my grudging approval
on his wish.

I beg you, let him go.

Then enjoy your time, Laertes; it's yours, and
may your best qualities spend it as you like.
But now, my nephew Hamlet — and my son—

A bit more than a nephew, and a good deal less
than a son — and nothing like my kind.

How is it that the clouds are still hanging over
you?

HAMLET

Not so, my lord,

I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,

And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy veiled 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

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 forc'd breath,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,

Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,

Together with all forms, moods, shows of grief,

That can denote me truly.

These indeed seem,

For they are actions that a man might play;

Not at all, my lord.

I'm out in too much sun.

Good Hamlet, throw off that night-black color
and look at the King of Denmark like a friend.

Don't spend the rest of your life with your eyes
lowered, hunting for your noble father in the
dirt.

You know it's an ordinary thing — everything
that lives has to die, passing out of nature into
eternity.

Yes, madam, it's ordinary.

If it is, then why does it seem so special in your
case?

Seem, madam?

No — it is.

I don't know anything about seeming.

It isn't only my black coat, good mother, nor the
usual formal mourning clothes, nor gusty
sighing, nor floods of tears in the eye, nor a
downcast expression, nor any of the other forms
and moods and displays of grief that can really
show what I am.

Those things can only seem, because they're all
actions a man could put on.

But I have that within which passeth show;

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING

'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 today,
'This must be so.'

We pray you throw to earth
This unprevailing woe, and think of us
As of a father;

What I have inside goes beyond any
performance.

All that other stuff is just the costume and props
of sorrow.

It's sweet, Hamlet, and it does you credit, to pay
these mourning duties to your father.

But you should recognize that your father lost a
father, and that father lost his, and each
survivor was bound by a son's obligation to
grieve dutifully for a certain period.

But to keep it up in stubborn mourning is a kind
of ungodly obstinacy.

It's unmanly grief.

It shows a will that refuses to accept heaven's
plan, a heart with no defenses, an impatient
mind, a shallow and uneducated understanding.
When something has to happen and is as
common as the most ordinary thing we can
perceive, why should we take it personally in
petulant resistance?

For shame — it's an offense against heaven, an
offense against the dead, an offense against
nature, and absurd to reason, whose constant
subject is the death of fathers, and which has
always said, from the first corpse down to the
man who died today, 'This is how it must be.'
Please throw off this useless grief and think of
me as 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

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

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark.

Madam, come;
This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart;
in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks today
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit
again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.
Come away.

Let the world take note that you stand nearest to
my throne, and that I feel toward you a love no
less noble than the love the fondest father has
for his son.

As for your plan to go back to school in
Wittenberg, that runs completely counter to
what we want.

Please, bring yourself to stay here, where we can
look on you and be cheered and comforted — as
our chief courtier, our nephew, and our son.

Don't let your mother's prayers go to waste,
Hamlet.

Please stay with us.
Don't go to Wittenberg.

I'll do my best to obey you, madam.

There — that's a loving and gracious answer.
Live in Denmark as I do.

Madam, come.
Hamlet's gentle, uncoerced agreement makes
my heart smile,
and to mark it, every cheerful toast the King of
Denmark drinks today will be announced by the
great cannon to the clouds, and the sky will
echo the King's drinking back, repeating the
earth's 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! O God!

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on't! Oh 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!

Oh, if only this all-too-solid flesh of mine would
melt, thaw, and dissolve itself into dew — or if
only God hadn't set his law against suicide.

God, God!

How exhausting, stale, pointless and useless
everything in this world seems to me.
It's disgusting — disgusting.
The world is a garden nobody weeds, running to
seed, and coarse, rank things have taken it over
completely.

That it should come to this!
Barely two months dead — no, not that long,
not two.
Such an outstanding king; compared to this
one, Apollo next to a goat.
So loving to my mother that he wouldn't let the
winds of heaven blow on her face too roughly.

Heaven and earth, do I have to remember?

She used to cling to him as though feeding her
appetite only made it grow
— and yet within a month — let me not think
about it.

Weakness, your name is woman.

A little month, or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears.—

Why she, even she—

O God! A beast that wants discourse of reason
Would have mourn'd longer,—married with
mine 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 Barnardo.

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:

A single month, before the shoes she wore
following my poor father's coffin were even
worn out — weeping like Niobe, all tears —
and she, of all people, she — God, an animal
without the power of reason would have
mourned longer — married my uncle, my
father's brother, but no more like my father than
I'm like Hercules.

Within a month, before the salt of her false tears
had stopped stinging her raw eyes, she married.

Such vicious speed, to leap so nimbly into
incestuous sheets!

It isn't good and it can't come to any good.
But break, my heart, because I have to keep my
mouth shut.

Greetings, my lord.

I'm glad to see you well — Horatio, or I've
forgotten my own name.

The same, my lord, and always your humble
servant.

Sir, my good friend — I'll trade titles with you
and be yours.

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 my 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 prithee 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

And what are you doing away from Wittenberg,

Horatio?

Marcellus?

My good lord.

I'm very glad to see you.

Good evening, sir.

But seriously, what are you doing away from
Wittenberg?

A truant streak, my good lord.

I wouldn't let your worst enemy say that about
you, and you won't do my ear the violence of
making it believe your own slander against
yourself.

I know you're no truant.

But what's your business in Elsinore?

We'll teach you to drink hard before you leave.

My lord, I came for your father's funeral.

Don't mock me, fellow student.

I think you came for my mother's wedding.

It's true, my lord, the one followed close after
the other.

Thrift, thrift, Horatio!

The funeral bak'd meats

Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.

Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven

Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio.

My father,—methinks I see my father.

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

Economy, Horatio, economy!

The leftovers baked for the funeral were served
cold at the wedding banquet.

I'd rather have met my worst enemy in the
afterlife than ever seen that day, Horatio.

My father — I think I see my father.

Where, my lord?

In my mind's eye, Horatio.

I saw him once.

He was a fine king.

He was a man, taking him all together, and I
won't see his equal again.

My lord, I think I saw him last night.

Saw?

Saw who?

My lord, the King, your father.

The King, my father!

Season your admiration for a while
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 Barnardo, on their watch
In the dead waste and middle of the night,
Been thus encounter'd.

A figure like your father,
Armed at point exactly, cap-à-pie,
Appears before them, and with solemn march
Goes slow and stately by them:

thrice he walk'd
By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes,
Within his truncheon's length; whilst they,
distill'd
Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
Stand dumb, and speak not to him.

This to me
In dreadful secrecy impart they did,
And I with them the third night kept the watch,
Where, as they had deliver'd, both in time,
Form of the thing, each word made true and
good,
The apparition comes.

I knew your father;
These hands are not more like.

HAMLET

Hold back your astonishment for a moment and
listen carefully, until I can tell you this
extraordinary thing, with these gentlemen as
witnesses.

For God's sake, let me hear it.

Two nights running, these gentlemen —
Marcellus and Barnardo — were on watch in the
dead, empty middle of the night when they met
this.

A figure exactly like your father, fully armed from
head to foot, appears in front of them, and with
a solemn tread walks slowly and grandly past
them.

Three times he walked past their frightened,
staring eyes, close enough to touch with his
baton, while the two of them, practically melted
to jelly with fear, stood dumbstruck and said
nothing to him.

They told me this in terrified secrecy, and on the
third night I kept the watch with them — and
just as they had described it, at the same hour,
in the same shape, every word of theirs proved
exact, the apparition came.

I knew your father; these two hands are not
more alike than that figure was to him.

But where was this?

MARCELLUS

My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

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 tonight?

MARCELLUS and BARNARDO.

We do, my lord.

HAMLET

Arm'd, say you?

Both.

Arm'd, my lord.

But where was this?

My lord, on the platform where we stand guard.

Didn't you speak to it?

I did, my lord, but it gave no answer.

Once, though, I thought it lifted its head and
turned as if to speak.

But right then the morning rooster crowed

loudly, and at the sound it shrank away in a

hurry and vanished from our sight.

That's very strange.

As I live, my honored lord, it's true, and we

thought it was our clear duty to let you know
about it.

Yes, yes, gentlemen — but this disturbs me.

Are you on watch tonight?

MARCELLUS and BARNARDO: We are, my lord.

Armed, you say?

BOTH: Armed, my lord.

HAMLET

From top to toe?

From head to foot?

BOTH

My lord, from head to foot.

My lord, from head to foot.

HAMLET

Then saw you not his face?

So you didn't see his face?

HORATIO

O yes, my lord, he wore his beaver up.

Oh yes, my lord — he had his visor raised.

HAMLET

What, look'd he frowningly?

What, did he look angry?

HORATIO

A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.

An expression more sorrowful than angry.

HAMLET

Pale, or red?

Pale, or flushed?

HORATIO

Nay, very pale.

No, very pale.

HAMLET

And fix'd his eyes upon you?

And he kept his eyes fixed on you?

HORATIO

Most constantly.

The whole time.

HAMLET

I would I had been there.

I wish I'd been there.

HORATIO

It would have much amaz'd you.

It would have shocked you badly.

HAMLET

Very like, very like.

Very likely, very likely.

Stay'd it long?

Did it stay long?

HORATIO

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

MARCELLUS and BARNARDO.

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 tonight;

Perchance 'twill walk again.

HORATIO

I warrant you 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 tonight,

Give it an understanding, but no tongue.

I will requite your loves.

So, fare ye well.

Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve,

I'll visit you.

About as long as it takes to count to a hundred at a moderate pace.

MARCELLUS and BARNARDO: Longer, longer.

Not while I was watching.

His beard was grey-streaked, wasn't it?

It was, just as I saw it in his lifetime — black

shot through with silver.

I'll stand watch tonight.

Maybe it will walk again.

I guarantee you it will.

If it takes on my noble father's shape, I'll speak

to it, even if hell itself opens up and orders me to

keep quiet.

I ask all of you: if you've kept this sight secret so

far, go on holding it in your silence.

And whatever else happens tonight, take note of

it, but say nothing.

I'll repay your loyalty.

So, goodbye.

I'll come to you on the platform between eleven

and twelve.

ALL

Our duty to your honour.

Our duty to your honor.

HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you: farewell.

Your friendship, as mine is to you. Goodbye.

Exeunt Horatio, Marcellus and Barnardo.

HAMLET

My father's spirit in arms!

My father's spirit — in armor!

All is not well;

Something is wrong.

I doubt some foul play:

I suspect there's been some vile crime.

would the night were

I wish the night would come!

come!

Till then sit still, my soul:

Until then be patient, my soul.

foul deeds will rise,

Foul deeds will surface where men can see them,

Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's
eyes.

even if the whole earth is piled on top of them.

Exit.

Act 1, Scene 3

A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE

Laertes, leaving for France, warns his sister Ophelia that Hamlet's affection is a passing fancy and that a prince cannot choose his own wife anyway. Polonius arrives, loads Laertes with a string of maxims ending in "to thine own self be true," and then interrogates Ophelia about Hamlet, dismissing his vows as traps and forbidding her to speak to him again. Ophelia obeys — the order that will help push both her and Hamlet toward disaster.

Original

Translation

Enter Laertes and Ophelia.

LAERTES

My necessities are embark'd.

My luggage is on board.

Farewell.

Goodbye.

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 unvalu'd persons do,
Carve for himself; for on his choice depends
The sanctity and health of this whole state;

And sister — whenever the winds are favorable
and there's a ship going, don't be lazy; write to
me.

Do you doubt I will?

As for Hamlet and his flirting with you, treat it as
a passing fashion, a bit of hot blood — a violet
blooming in the first flush of spring, early but
not lasting, sweet but not durable, the fragrance
and amusement of a single minute.
Nothing more.

Nothing more than that?

Take it as nothing more.

When a person grows, it isn't only the muscles
and frame that get bigger; as the body's temple
expands, the mind and soul inside it expand too.

Perhaps he loves you now, and perhaps right
now no dishonesty or trickery taints his
intentions.

But you have to be afraid: given his rank, his will
isn't his own.

He's a prisoner of his own birth.

He can't help himself to whatever he wants the
way ordinary people can, because the safety and
health of this whole country depend on his
choice.

And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
Unto the voice and yielding of that body
Whereof he is the head.

Then if he says he loves
you,
It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
As he in his particular act and place
May give his saying deed;
Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.

which is no further
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 disclos'd,
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

So his choice has to be limited by the consent of
the nation he's the head of.

If he says he loves you, you're wise to believe it
only so far as he, in his particular position, can
actually act on what he says — which is no
further than the general will of Denmark
permits.

So consider what damage your reputation might
take if you listen too trustingly to his songs, or
lose your heart, or open the treasure of your
chastity to his uncontrolled pressure.

Be afraid of it, Ophelia, be afraid, my dear sister.
Stay behind your own feelings, out of range of
desire.

The most careful girl in the world is being
reckless if she so much as lets the moon see her
beauty.

Even virtue can't dodge slander.

The worm eats the buds of spring too often
before they've opened, and in the morning dew
of youth, blighting infections are always closest.

So be careful.

Fear is your best protection — young people
rebel against themselves even with no one else
around.

I shall th'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;
Whilst 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.

LAERTES

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

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
you.

Laying his hand on Laertes's head.

POLONIUS

And these few precepts in thy memory
Look thou character.

I'll keep the point of this good sermon as a
guard over my heart.

But, my dear brother, don't be like those
hypocrite preachers who point out the steep,
thorny road to heaven while they themselves
stroll down the flowery path of pleasure,
swollen and reckless, and pay no attention to
their own advice.

Oh, don't worry about me.

I'm staying too long.

But here comes my father.

Two blessings are twice the good luck.

Chance is smiling on me, giving me a second
goodbye.

Still here, Laertes?

Get aboard, get aboard, for shame.

The wind's filling your sail and they're waiting
for you.

There — my blessing on you.

And make sure you write these few rules in your
memory.

Give thy thoughts no
tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption
tried,
Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledg'd comrade.

Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel;
but being in,
Bear't that th'opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice:
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy
judgement.
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 own self be true;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.
Farewell: my blessing season this in thee.

LAERTES

Don't say everything you think, and don't act on
any half-formed thought.

Be friendly, but never cheap.
Once you've got friends and tested that they're
worth keeping, clamp them to your soul with
steel bands
— but don't wear out your hand shaking hands
with every unfledged acquaintance you meet.

Be careful about getting into a fight,

but once you're in it, handle it so that your
opponent is careful of you.
Listen to everyone, speak to few.
Take everyone's opinion, but keep your own
judgment to yourself.
Dress as expensively as your money allows, but
not showily — rich, not gaudy, because clothes
often announce the man, and the French of the
best rank and position have very refined and
generous taste in exactly that.
Don't borrow and don't lend: lending often
loses you the money and the friend as well, and
borrowing blunts your habits of thrift.
Above all this: be true to your own self, and it
will follow as surely as night follows day that you
can't then be false to anyone else.
Goodbye — may my blessing help this take root
in you.

Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.

POLONIUS

The time invites you;
go, your servants tend.

LAERTES

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

OPHELIA

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

LAERTES

Farewell.

Exit.

POLONIUS

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

OPHELIA

So please you, something touching the Lord
Hamlet.

POLONIUS

Marry, well bethought:
'Tis told me he hath very oft of late
Given private time to you; and you yourself
Have of your audience been most free and
bounteous.
If it be so,—as so 'tis put on me,
And that in way of caution,—I must tell you
You do not understand yourself so clearly
As it behoves my daughter and your honour.

I take my leave most humbly, my lord.

Time's calling you.

Go — your servants are waiting.

Goodbye, Ophelia, and remember carefully what
I've said to you.

It's locked up in my memory, and you'll keep the
key to it yourself.

Goodbye.

What is it he's said to you, Ophelia?

If you don't mind, something concerning Lord
Hamlet.

Well, that's a good reminder.

I'm told he's very often been spending private
time with you lately, and that you yourself have
been generous and free about receiving him.

If that's true — and it's been reported to me,
and reported as a warning — then I have to tell
you that you don't understand your own
position as clearly as my daughter and your own
honor require.

What is between you?

Give me up the truth.

OPHELIA

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

POLONIUS

Affection! Pooh!

You speak like a green girl,
Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.

Do you believe his tenders, as you call them?

OPHELIA

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

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 importun'd me with love
In honourable fashion.

POLONIUS

Ay, fashion you may call it;

go to, go to.

What's going on between you?

Give me the truth.

My lord, he has lately made me many offers of
his affection.

Affection! Nonsense.

You're talking like an inexperienced girl who's
never been tested in a dangerous situation like
this.

Do you believe these offers, as you call them?

I don't know, my lord, what I'm supposed to
think.

Well, I'll teach you.

Think of yourself as an infant, since you've taken
these offers as real currency when they aren't
legal tender.

Offer yourself at a higher price

— or, not to run this poor word into the ground,
you'll offer me up as a fool.

My lord, he has pressed his love on me in an
honorable way.

Yes, you can call it a way, all right.

Come on, come on.

OPHELIA

And hath given countenance to his speech, my
lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS

Ay, springes to catch woodcocks.

I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
Lends the tongue vows:

these blazes, daughter,

Giving more light than heat, extinct in both,

Even in their promise, as it is a-making,

You must not take for fire.

From this time

Be something scanter of your maiden presence;

Set your entreatments at a higher rate

Than a command to parley.

For Lord Hamlet,

Believe so much in him that he is young;

And with a larger tether may he walk

Than may be given you.

In few, Ophelia,

Do not believe his vows;

for they are brokers,

Not of that dye which their investments show,

But mere implorators of unholy suits,

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;

And he has backed up what he said, my lord,
with just about every sacred vow in heaven.

Yes — snares to catch stupid birds.

I know very well how generously the soul lends
the tongue vows when the blood is up.

These flare-ups, daughter, give more light than

heat and go out in both even as they're being

promised, right while they're being made —

don't mistake them for a real fire.

From now on, be a little more sparing of your
company.

Set the price of your attention higher than a
mere summons to talk.

As for Lord Hamlet, believe this much about

him: he's young, and he's allowed a longer leash
than you'll ever be given.

In short, Ophelia, don't believe his vows.

They're pimps — not the pure color their

clothing suggests, but agents begging on behalf

of unholy desires, sounding as holy and pious as

a well-spoken madam, all the better to deceive

you.

Here's the sum of it: from now on, in plain

words, I don't want you disgracing a single free

moment by talking with Lord Hamlet or trading

a word with him.

See to it — that's an order.

come your ways.

Come along.

OPHELIA

I shall obey, my lord.

I'll obey, my lord.

Exeunt.

Act 1, Scene 4

THE PLATFORM

Just before midnight on the guard platform, Hamlet waits with Horatio and Marcellus while Claudius's drunken celebration booms from the castle below, prompting Hamlet's disgust at Denmark's reputation for drinking. The Ghost appears and beckons him away alone; Horatio warns it may be a demon luring him to the cliff edge and madness, but Hamlet threatens to kill anyone who holds him back and follows it. Marcellus's line as they go after him — "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark" — names the play's central diagnosis.

Original

Translation

Enter Hamlet, Horatio and Marcellus.

HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly;

it is very cold.

The air has a real bite to it.

It's very cold.

HORATIO

It is a nipping and an eager air.

It's a raw, cutting wind.

HAMLET

What hour now?

What time is it now?

HORATIO

I think it lacks of twelve.

Not quite twelve, I think.

MARCELLUS

No, it is struck.

No, it's already struck.

HORATIO

Indeed?

Has it?

I heard it not.

I didn't hear it.

It then draws near the
season

Then it's getting close to the hour when the
spirit usually walks.

Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

A flourish of trumpets, and ordnance shot off within.

HORATIO

What does this mean, my lord?

What does that mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering upspring
reels;
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

The King is up drinking tonight, holding a party,
staggering through his wild dances, and every
time he knocks back another cup of Rhine wine,
the kettledrum and trumpet blare out like that
to celebrate his toast.

HORATIO

Is it a custom?

Is that a custom here?

HAMLET

Ay marry is't;
And to my mind, though I am native here,
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the
observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduc'd and tax'd of other nations:

Oh, it certainly is.
And in my opinion, even though I was born here
and raised to it, it's a custom better broken than
kept.
This muddle-headed carousing makes us the
target of insults from other countries east and
west.

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 their o'ergrowth of some complexion,
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens
The form of plausible manners;—that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being Nature's livery or Fortune's star,—
His 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 evil

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!

They call us drunkards and stick pig words on
our name, and it genuinely subtracts from our
achievements — however brilliantly performed
— the very core of the credit we deserve.

The same thing often happens to individual
men.

Some single flaw in their nature, whether from
birth, which they can't be blamed for, since
nobody chooses his own origin; or from some
temperament that has grown out of proportion
and keeps smashing through the fences and
defenses of reason; or from a habit that
overworks their otherwise pleasant manners —
these men, carrying the stamp of one defect,
whether it was nature's uniform or fortune's
bad luck, will find that all their other virtues,
however pure and however many a man can
possess, are ruined in public opinion by that one
particular fault.

A tiny drop of evil casts doubt on all the noble
substance, and drags it down into disgrace.

Look, my lord — here it comes!

Angels and messengers of God protect 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 com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.

I'll call thee Hamlet,
King, father, royal Dane.

O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance;

but tell
Why thy canoniz'd bones, hearsed in death,
Have burst their cerements; why the sepulchre,
Wherein we saw thee quietly inurn'd,
Hath op'd his ponderous and marble jaws
To cast thee up again!

What may this mean,
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

Whether you're a good spirit or a damned
demon, whether you bring air from heaven or
fumes from hell, whether your intentions are
evil or kind, you come in a shape I can question,
so I'm going to speak to you.

I'll call you Hamlet, King, father, royal Dane

— oh, answer me!

Don't let me choke on ignorance.

Tell me why your consecrated bones, laid to rest
in death, have burst out of their burial cloths;
why the tomb where we saw you quietly sealed
has opened its heavy marble jaws to spit you out
again.

What can it mean, that you, a dead body, come
back in full armor to walk in the moonlight,
making the night hideous and shaking us —
nature's fools — this horribly with thoughts that
go beyond anything our souls can grasp?

Say it: why is this happening?

For what purpose?

What are we supposed to do?

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 will I follow it.

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, what should be the fear?
I do not set my life at a pin's fee;
And for my soul, what can it do to that,
Being a thing immortal as itself?
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.

It's beckoning you to go off with it, as though it
wants to tell you something privately.

Look how politely it's waving you toward a more
secluded spot.
But don't go with it.

No, absolutely not.

It won't speak here, so I'll follow it.

Don't, my lord.

Why, what's there to be afraid of?
I don't value my life at the price of a pin.
And as for my soul — what can it do to that,
which is immortal like itself?
It's waving me on again.
I'll follow it.

What if it lures you toward the water, my lord, or
to that terrifying clifftop that juts out over its
own base into the sea — and there takes on
some other hideous shape that overthrows the
rule of reason in you and drives you mad?

Think about 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 rul'd;
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.

Ghost beckons.

HAMLET

Still am I call'd.
Unhand me, gentlemen.

Breaking free from them.

HAMLET

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.

That place alone puts reckless impulses into any
head that looks down so many fathoms to the
sea and hears it roaring below, no other cause
needed.

It's still waving me on.
Lead on — I'll follow you.

You're not going, my lord.

Take your hands off me.

Listen to us.
You're not going.

My fate is calling out, and it makes every small
vein in this body as tough as the sinews of the
Nemean lion.

I'm still being called.
Let go of me, gentlemen.

By heaven, I'll turn whoever stops me into a
ghost himself.

Get back, I tell you.
Lead on — I'll follow you.

HORATIO

He waxes desperate with imagination.

His imagination is driving him wild.

MARCELLUS

Let's follow;

Let's go after him.

'tis not fit thus to obey him.

It's wrong to obey him in this.

HORATIO

Have after.

Come on, then.

To what issue will this come?

Where is this going to end?

MARCELLUS

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

HORATIO

Heaven will direct it.

Heaven will sort it out.

MARCELLUS

Nay, let's follow him.

No — let's follow him.

Exeunt.

Act 1, Scene 5

A MORE REMOTE PART OF THE CASTLE

The Ghost tells Hamlet he is the spirit of his murdered father: Claudius poured poison in his ear as he slept in the orchard, and the story of a snake bite was a lie. He orders Hamlet to avenge the murder but to leave Gertrude to heaven. Alone, Hamlet vows to erase everything from his memory but this command, then makes Horatio and Marcellus swear on his sword to say nothing — the Ghost echoing "Swear" from under the stage — and warns them he may begin acting insane.

Original

Translation

Enter Ghost and Hamlet.

HAMLET

Whither wilt thou lead me?

Where are you taking me?

Speak,

Speak.

I'll go no

I'm going no further.

further.

GHOST

Mark me.

Pay attention to me.

HAMLET

I will.

I will.

GHOST

My hour is almost come,

When I to sulph'rous and tormenting flames

Must render up myself.

My time is almost up, when I have to give myself
back to the sulphurous, tormenting flames.

HAMLET

Alas, poor ghost!

Poor ghost!

GHOST

Pity me not,

but lend thy serious hearing

To what I shall unfold.

Don't pity me.

Just listen seriously to what I'm about to reveal.

HAMLET

Speak,

I am bound to hear.

Speak.

I'm bound to listen.

GHOST

So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear.

And bound to take revenge, once you've heard.

HAMLET

What?

What?

GHOST

I am thy father's spirit,
Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd away.

But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison-house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul; freeze thy young
blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their
spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand on end
Like quills upon the fretful 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

I am your father's spirit, sentenced for a fixed
term to walk at night and to fast in fire by day,
until the foul sins I committed in my lifetime are
burned away.

If I weren't forbidden to reveal the secrets of my
prison, I could tell you a story whose gentlest
word would tear up your soul, freeze your young
blood, make your two eyes shoot out of their
sockets like meteors, part your neat combed hair
and make every single strand stand up like the
spines on a bristling porcupine.

But this description of eternity isn't for ears of
flesh and blood.
Listen, listen, oh listen!
If you ever loved your dear father—

God!

—avenge his foul and utterly unnatural murder.

Murder!

Murder most foul, as murder is even at its best
— but this one foul, bizarre and unnatural
beyond all of them.

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 rots 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 abus'd;

but know, thou noble youth,

The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

HAMLET

O my prophetic soul!
Mine 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.

Tell me fast, so that on wings as quick as
thought or as a lover's imagination I can sweep
to my revenge.

I see you're ready.

You'd have to be duller than the fat weed that
rots in idleness on the banks of Lethe not to be
roused by this.

Now listen, Hamlet.

The official story is that a snake bit me while I
slept in my orchard.

All of Denmark's ears have been foully deceived
by that invented account of my death.

But know this, noble boy: the snake that stung
your father's life to death is now wearing his
crown.

Oh, my soul knew it!
My uncle!

Yes — that incestuous, adulterous animal.
With the witchcraft of his cleverness and with
treacherous gifts — oh, what evil cleverness and
gifts, to have such power to seduce — he won
over to his shameful lust the will of my queen,
who seemed so virtuous.

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
mov'd,
Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven;
So lust, though to a radiant angel link'd,
Will sate itself in a celestial bed
And prey on garbage.
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 it doth posset
And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
The thin and wholesome blood.

So did it mine;
And a most instant tetter bark'd about,
Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
All my smooth body.

Oh Hamlet, what a fall that was!
To turn away from me, whose love was so
honorable that it kept perfect step with the vow
I made her at our wedding, and to sink down to
a wretch whose natural gifts were nothing next
to mine.

But just as virtue can never be tempted, even
when vice courts it in the shape of an angel, so
lust, even when it's married to a shining angel,
will get bored in a heavenly bed and go feeding
on garbage.

But wait — I think I smell the morning air.
I have to be quick.
I was asleep in my orchard, as I always was in
the afternoon, and in that unguarded hour your
uncle crept in with a vial of cursed henbane
juice and poured that leprous distillation into
the openings of my ears.

It's a poison so hostile to human blood that it
races like mercury through all the natural doors
and passages of the body, and with a sudden
violence it curdles the thin healthy blood the
way acid drops curdle milk.

That's what it did to mine.
Instantly a scab crusted over my whole smooth
body like a leper's, in a vile and disgusting rind.

Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand,
Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatch'd:
Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,
Unhous'led, disappointed, unanel'd;
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 pursu'st 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, adieu.

Remember me.

Exit.

HAMLET

O all you host of heaven!

O earth!

What else?

And shall I couple hell?

O, fie!

Hold, my heart;

And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
But bear me stiffly up.

So, while I slept, I was robbed of life, crown and
queen all at once by my own brother's hand
— cut down with my sins still in full bloom, with
no last communion, no preparation, no last
rites: no accounting made, but sent to face
judgment with all my faults on my head.
Horrible! Horrible! Utterly horrible!
If you have any natural feeling in you, don't
tolerate it.

Don't let the royal bed of Denmark be a couch
for lechery and damnable incest.
But however you go about this, don't corrupt
your own mind, and don't let your soul plot
anything against your mother.
Leave her to heaven and to the thorns lodged in
her conscience, to prick and sting her.

Now, goodbye, right away.

The glow-worm's fading light shows dawn is
near.

Farewell, farewell, farewell.

Remember me.

All you armies of heaven!

And earth!

What else — do I add hell to the list?

No, shame on me.

Hold together, my heart, and you, my muscles,
don't grow old on me all at once; hold me
upright.

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 am sure it may be so in Denmark.

Writing.

HAMLET

So, uncle, there you are.

Now to my word;

It is 'Adieu, adieu, remember me.'

I have sworn't.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS.

Within.

HAMLET

My lord, my lord.

Within.

MARCELLUS

Remember you? Yes, you poor ghost, as long as
memory has any place in this reeling head of
mine.

Remember you? Yes — I'll wipe from the
notebook of my memory every trivial,
sentimental entry, every proverb out of a book,
every image and impression that youth and
observation copied there.

Only your command will live in the pages of my
brain, unmixed with anything cheaper.

Yes, by heaven!

What a poisonous woman!

Villain, villain, smiling damned villain!

My notebook

— I ought to write this down: that a man can
smile, and smile, and still be a villain.

At least I'm sure that's possible in Denmark.

So, uncle, there you are — recorded.

Now to my watchword: 'Farewell, farewell,
remember me.'

I've sworn to it.

[Horatio and Marcellus, offstage] My lord, my
lord.

Lord Hamlet.

Within.

HORATIO

Heaven secure him.

HAMLET

So be it!

Within.

MARCELLUS

Illo, 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.

Lord Hamlet.

God keep him safe.

So be it!

Hey, hallo, my lord!

Hallo, hey, my boy!

Come here, bird, come.

How is it, my noble lord?

What's the news, my lord?

Oh — extraordinary.

Tell us, my good lord.

No, you'll give it away.

Not I, my lord, I swear.

Nor I, my lord.

HAMLET

How say you then, would heart of man once
think it?—

But you'll be secret?

HORATIO and 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 hath business and desire,

Such as it is;—and for my own poor part,

Look you, I'll go pray.

HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET

I'm sorry they offend you, heartily;

Yes faith, heartily.

HORATIO

There's no offence, my lord.

HAMLET

Well then — could any human heart have
imagined it?

But you'll keep it secret?

HORATIO and MARCELLUS: Yes, by heaven, my
lord.

There isn't a single villain living anywhere in
Denmark who isn't an out-and-out scoundrel.

There's no need of a ghost coming out of the
grave to tell us that, my lord.

Quite right, you're absolutely right.

And so, with no further ceremony, I think we
should shake hands and go our separate ways:
you where your business and your wishes take
you — since every man has business and wishes
of some kind — and as for me, well, I'll go and
pray.

These are wild, spinning words, my lord.

I'm sorry they offend you. Truly, I am.

Sincerely.

There's no offense, my lord.

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 tonight.

HORATIO and 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.

Yes there is, by Saint Patrick, Horatio — a great
deal of offense.

About this apparition: it's an honest ghost, I can
tell you that much.

As for your wanting to know what passed
between us, master that curiosity as best you
can.

And now, good friends — as you are friends,
scholars and soldiers — grant me one small
request.

What is it, my lord?

Of course.

Never tell anyone what you've seen tonight.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS: We won't, my lord.

No — swear it.

On my honor, my lord, I won't tell.

Nor will I, my lord, on my honor.

On my sword.

We've already sworn, my lord.

HAMLET

Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

Cries under the stage.

GHOST

Swear.

HAMLET

Ha, ha boy, sayst 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.

Beneath.

GHOST

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.

Beneath.

GHOST

On my sword, though. Do it.

Swear.

Ha, old boy, is that what you say?

Are you down there, honest fellow?

Come on, you can hear him in the cellar.

Agree to swear.

Name the oath, my lord.

Never to speak of what you've seen.

Swear on my sword.

Swear.

Here and everywhere at once?

Then we'll move.

Come over here, gentlemen, and put your hands
on my sword again:

never to speak of what you've heard.

Swear on my sword.

Swear.

HAMLET

Well said, old mole!

Canst work i' th'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.

Swear.

Well said, old mole!

Can you dig through the earth that fast?

A first-rate tunneler.

Let's move once more, my friends.

By day and night, this is astonishingly strange.

Then welcome it the way you'd welcome any
stranger.

There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio, than your philosophy has ever
imagined.

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 head-shake,
Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,
As 'Well, we know', or 'We could and if we
would',
Or 'If we list to speak'; or 'There be and 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.

Beneath.

GHOST

Swear.

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit.

So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you;
And what so poor a man as Hamlet is
May do t'express his love and friending to you,
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.

But come — here, as before, swear again, as you
hope for mercy, that no matter how strangely or
oddly I behave — because I may decide from
now on that it suits me to put on an act of
madness — you will never, on seeing me like
that, fold your arms this way, or shake your head
like this, or drop some knowing phrase like
'Well, we know,' or 'We could tell you if we
wanted to,' or 'If we felt like speaking,' or 'There
are those who could, if they were allowed' — no
hint of any kind that you know something about
me. Swear it, as you hope for grace and mercy
when you most need them.

Swear.

Rest, rest, troubled spirit.

So, gentlemen, I commend myself to you with all
my love.

And whatever a man as poor as Hamlet can do to
show his love and friendship for you, God
willing, he'll do.

Let's go in together — and keep your fingers on
your lips, please.

The world has come out of joint.

What a cursed piece of bad luck, that I was ever
born to put it back.

Nay, come, let's go together.

No — come, let's go in together.

Exeunt.

Act 2, Scene 1

A ROOM IN POLONIUS'S HOUSE

Polonius sends his servant Reynaldo to Paris with money for Laertes and elaborate instructions to spread mild slanders about him in order to trick strangers into revealing what Laertes is really up to. Ophelia then rushes in, terrified: Hamlet came to her room half-dressed and white-faced, gripped her wrist, stared at her face and left without a word. Polonius decides Hamlet has been driven mad by love because Ophelia obeyed his order to refuse him, and hurries off to tell the King.

Original

Translation

Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.

POLONIUS

Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

Give him this money and these letters, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO

I will, my lord.

I will, my lord.

POLONIUS

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

It would be exceptionally clever of you, good
Reynaldo, to ask around about how he's
behaving before you go and see him.

REYNALDO

My lord, I did intend it.

My lord, that was my plan.

POLONIUS

Marry, well said; very well said.

Well said. Very well said.

Look you, sir,
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
And how, and who, what means, and where they
keep,
What company, at what expense;

Look here, sir: first find out for me which Danes
are in Paris — how they're living, who they are,
what money they have, where they're staying,
who they're with, what they're spending.

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.

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?

POLONIUS

Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,
Quarrelling, drabbing.
You may go so far.

And if this roundabout, drifting sort of
questioning turns up someone who knows my
son, go in closer than any direct question would
take you.

Pretend you know him only slightly.

Say something like, 'I know his father and his
friends, and I know him a bit.'
Are you following this, Reynaldo?

Yes, very well, my lord.

'And him a bit — but,' you can say, 'not well.
Though if it's the one I mean, he's very wild, he's
addicted to this and that.'
And then hang whatever inventions you like on
him.
Nothing so vile that it would actually disgrace
him, mind
— be careful of that —
just the loose, wild, everyday slips that are the
well-known companions of youth and freedom.

Gambling, my lord?

Yes, or drinking, dueling, swearing, brawling,
whoring.
You can go that far.

REYNALDO

My lord, that would dishonour him.

POLONIUS

Faith no, as you may season it in the charge.

You must not put another scandal on him,
That he is open to incontinency;
That's not my meaning:

but breathe his faults so
quaintly
That they may seem the taints of liberty;
The flash and outbreak of a fiery mind,
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

REYNALDO

But my good lord—

POLONIUS

Wherefore should you do this?

REYNALDO

Ay, my lord, I would know that.

POLONIUS

Marry, sir, here's my drift,
And I believe it is a fetch of warrant.

My lord, that would disgrace him.

No, not really — not if you flavor the accusation properly.

You mustn't add the further scandal that he
can't control himself sexually;
that's not what I mean.

Breathe out his faults so delicately that they
seem like the smudges freedom leaves, the flare-
up of a passionate mind, a wildness in blood
that hasn't been tamed yet — the sort of thing
that gets at everybody.

But my good lord—

Why should you do this?

Yes, my lord, that's what I'd like to know.

Well, sir, here's what I'm driving at — and I
believe it's an entirely legitimate maneuver.

You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' th' working,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so; or 'friend,' or 'gentleman'—
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

REYNALDO

Very good, my 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.'

POLONIUS

At 'closes in the consequence' ay, marry!

He closes with you thus: 'I know the gentleman,

I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,

Or then, or then, with such and such; and, as
you say,

There was he gaming, there o'ertook in's rouse,
There falling out at tennis':

Once you've smeared these little stains on my
son, as if he were something slightly soiled in
the making, then, mark me, the man you're
talking to, the one you're sounding out, will — if
he has ever seen the young man you're
describing guilty of any of those offenses I listed
— join in with you, you can be certain, like this:
'Good sir,' or 'friend,' or 'gentleman,' depending
on how men in that country address each other.

Very good, my lord.

And then, sir, he does this — he does —

what was I about to say?

By the mass, I was going to say something.

Where did I leave off?

At 'joins in with you.'

At 'friend or something,' and 'gentleman.'

At 'joins in with you' — yes, exactly!

He'll join in like this: 'I know the gentleman. I
saw him yesterday, or the other day, or then, or
then, with so-and-so; and just as you say, there
he was gambling, there he was drunk out of his
senses, there he was fighting over a game of
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.

POLONIUS
God b' wi' you, fare you well.

REYNALDO
Good my lord.

POLONIUS
Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO
I shall, my lord.

POLONIUS
And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO
Well, my lord.

POLONIUS
Farewell.

Exit Reynaldo.

Or possibly, 'I saw him go into a certain house of
business'
— that is, a brothel, or something of the kind.
You see now?
Your bait of lies hooks this fish of truth.
That's how those of us with brains and range
work: by roundabout routes and glancing shots,
we find the straight answer by going crooked.
So, following the lecture and advice I've just
given you, you'll find out about my son.
You've got me, haven't you?

I have, my lord.

God be with you. Goodbye.

My good lord.

And observe his tastes for yourself.

I will, my lord.

And let him keep up his music.

Very well, my lord.

Goodbye.

Enter Ophelia.

POLONIUS

How now, Ophelia, what's the matter?

OPHELIA

Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted.

POLONIUS

With what, in the name of God?

OPHELIA

My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbrac'd,
No hat upon his head, his stockings foul'd,
Ungart' red, and down-gyved to his ankle,
Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other,
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors, he comes before me.

POLONIUS

Mad for thy love?

OPHELIA

My lord, I do not know, but truly I do fear it.

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,

Well now, Ophelia — what's the matter?

Oh, my lord, I've had such a fright.

By what, in God's name?

My lord, I was sewing in my room, and Lord
Hamlet came in front of me with his jacket
hanging open, no hat on, his stockings dirty,
without garters and slipping down around his
ankles, his face as white as his shirt, his knees
knocking together, and with a look so pitiful
that he might have been let out of hell to
describe its horrors.

Mad with love for you?

My lord, I don't know, but I honestly fear so.

What did he say?

He took me by the wrist and gripped it hard.
Then he stepped back to arm's length, put his
other hand over his brow like this, and started
studying my face as though he meant to draw it.

He stayed like that a long time.

At last,—a little shaking of mine arm,
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being.

That done, he lets me go,
And with his head over his shoulder turn'd
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes,
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

POLONIUS

Come, go with me.

I will go seek the King.

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 letters and denied
His access to me.

POLONIUS

That hath made him mad.

I am sorry that with better heed and judgement
I had not quoted him.

Finally he shook my arm a little, nodded his head
up and down three times like this, and let out a
sigh so pitiful and deep that it seemed to shake
his whole body apart and finish him off.

Then he let me go, and with his head turned
back over his shoulder he seemed to find his way
without using his eyes, because he went out the
door without their help and kept them fixed on
me until the last moment.

Come with me.

I'm going to find the King.

This is the very ecstasy of love — a passion
whose own violence destroys it, and which
drives the will into desperate acts as often as any
passion under heaven that afflicts us.

I'm sorry —

tell me, have you said anything harsh to him
lately?

No, my good lord.

But, as you ordered, I sent back his letters and
refused to see him.

That's what has driven him mad.

I'm sorry I didn't watch him more closely and
judge him more carefully.

I fear'd he did but trifle,
And meant to wreck thee.

But beshrew my
jealousy!
It seems 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.

I was afraid he was only trifling with you and
meant to ruin you.

Curse my suspicions!

It seems it's as natural for men my age to
overshoot in our opinions as it is common for
young people to have no discretion.

Come, let's go to the King.
This has to come out. Keeping it quiet could
cause more grief than telling it will cause anger.

Act 2, Scene 2

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Claudius and Gertrude recruit Hamlet's old schoolfriends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to spy on him, while Polonius announces he has solved the mystery — Hamlet is mad with thwarted love for Ophelia — and proposes to prove it by using her as bait while he and the King eavesdrop. Hamlet baits Polonius as a fishmonger, forces his two friends to admit they were sent for, and welcomes a troupe of travelling actors. Alone, he savages himself for feeling less than an actor does over a fictional queen, and plans a play that will mirror his father's murder and test Claudius.

Original

Translation

Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and Attendants.

KING

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.

Welcome, dear Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
Quite apart from how much we wanted to see
you, our need for your help made us send for
you in a hurry.

Something have you heard
Of Hamlet's transformation; so I call it,
Since nor th'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 th'understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of.

I entreat you both
That, being of so young days brought up with
him,
And since so neighbour'd to his youth and
humour,
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

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.

You'll have heard something of Hamlet's
transformation — that's what I call it, since
neither the outer man nor the inner one is what
he was.

What it can be, beyond his father's death, that
has knocked him so far out of any
understanding of himself, I can't begin to guess.

I'm asking you both, since you were brought up
with him from such an early age and have been
so close to his youth and his temperament, to
agree to stay here at our court for a little while.

Your company might draw him back toward
some enjoyment, and might let you gather, as far
as chance allows, whether there's something we
don't know about that's afflicting him —
something we could cure, if it were brought into
the open.

Good gentlemen, he has talked about you a
great deal, and I'm certain there are no two men
alive he's more attached to.

If you would be gracious and generous enough
to spend a little time with us, to feed and further
our hope, your visit will be rewarded as a king's
gratitude requires.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

GUILDENSTERN

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

KING

Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN

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 practices
Pleasant and helpful to him.

QUEEN

Ay, amen.

Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and some Attendants.

Enter Polonius.

POLONIUS

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

KING

Your majesties could both, given the royal power
you have over us, deliver your fearsome wishes
as orders rather than requests.

We both obey, and here surrender ourselves
completely, laying our service freely at your feet
to be commanded.

Thank you, Rosencrantz and good Guildenstern.

Thank you, Guildenstern and good Rosencrantz.
And I beg you to go and see my terribly changed
son at once.
Some of you — take these gentlemen to where
Hamlet is.

May heaven make our presence and our efforts
pleasant and helpful to him.

Yes, amen.

The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
are back, and in high spirits.

Thou still hast been the father of good news.

POLONIUS

Have I, my lord?

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

KING

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

POLONIUS

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

KING

Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

Exit Polonius.

KING

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

QUEEN

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

KING

Well, we shall sift him.

Enter Polonius with Voltemand and Cornelius.

You've always been the father of good news.

Have I, my lord?

I assure you, my gracious sovereign, I hold my
duty as I hold my soul — owed both to my God
and to my gracious King.
And I believe — or else this brain of mine no
longer follows the scent of statecraft as reliably
as it used to — that I have found the actual
cause of Hamlet's madness.

Oh, tell me that.

I'm longing to hear it.

Let the ambassadors in first.

My news will be the dessert after that great
feast.

Do them the honor yourself, and bring them in.

He tells me, my sweet queen, that he has found
the root and source of your son's disorder.

I doubt it's anything but the obvious: his
father's death and our too-hasty marriage.

Well, we'll sift him for it.

KING

Welcome, my good friends!

Say, Voltemand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTEMAND

Most fair return of greetings and desires.

Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies, which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your Highness;

whereat griev'd,

That so his sickness, age, and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys,
Receives rebuke from Norway; and in fine,
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give th'assay of arms against your Majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three thousand crowns in annual fee,
And his commission to employ those soldiers
So levied as before, against the Polack:
With an entreaty, herein further shown,

Gives a paper.

VOLTEMAND

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

Welcome, my good friends!

Tell me, Voltemand — what word from our
brother of Norway?

The warmest return of your greetings and
requests.

At our first audience, he sent out orders to stop
his nephew's recruiting, which he had believed
was a build-up against Poland.

But on closer inspection he found it really was
aimed at Your Highness.

Grieved that his illness, age and weakness had
been so exploited, he issued warrants for
Fortinbras's arrest — which, in short, Fortinbras
obeyed.

He was reprimanded by his uncle, and in the end
swore in his presence never to take up arms
against Your Majesty again.

At that, old Norway, overjoyed, granted him
three thousand crowns a year and authority to
use the troops he'd already raised against
Poland — with a request, set out in more detail
here,

that you would kindly grant safe passage
through your territory for this campaign, under
whatever guarantees of safety and conduct are
specified in the document.

It likes us well;

And at our more consider'd time we'll 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 Voltemand and Cornelius.

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

More matter, with less art.

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.

That suits us well.

When we have more time to consider it, we'll

read it, reply, and think the business over.

Meanwhile, thank you for a job well done.

Go and rest; tonight we'll dine together.

Welcome home.

This business has ended well.

My lord and madam, to expound on what

majesty should be, what duty is, why day is day,

night is night, and time is time, would be

nothing but a waste of night, day and time.

So, since being brief is the essence of good

sense, and long-windedness is only its limbs and decorations, I'll be brief.

Your noble son is mad.

Mad I call it, since to define real madness —

what is it but to be nothing other than mad?

But let that pass.

More substance, less style.

Madam, I swear I'm using no style at all.

That he's mad is true; it's true it's a pity, and it's

a pity it's true.

A foolish figure of speech — but goodbye to it,

since I'll use no style.

Let's agree, then, that he's mad.

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 whilst she is mine—
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this.

Now gather, and surmise.

Reads.

POLONIUS

_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.

Reads.

POLONIUS

_these; in her excellent white bosom, these,
&c._

QUEEN

Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS

Good madam, stay awhile;
I will be faithful.

Reads.

What remains is to find the cause of this effect
— or rather, the cause of this defect, since this
defective effect has a cause.

So that's what remains, and the remainder is
this.

Consider. I have a daughter — have, while she's
still mine — who out of duty and obedience,
note, has given me this.

Now take it in, and draw your own conclusions.

'To the heavenly one, the idol of my soul, the
most beautified Ophelia'
— that's a bad phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified'
is a vile phrase.

But listen on.

'these lines; to be delivered into her excellent
white bosom, these,' and so on.

Did this come from Hamlet to her?

Good madam, wait a moment.
I'll read it exactly.

POLONIUS

_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 show'd me;
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

KING

But how hath she receiv'd his love?

POLONIUS

What do you think of me?

KING

As of a man faithful and honourable.

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so.

'Doubt that the stars are made of fire, doubt
that the sun moves, doubt that truth itself is a
liar — but never doubt that I love you.

Oh dear Ophelia, I'm no good at these verses.

I don't have the skill to put my groans into
meter.

But that I love you best, oh best of all — believe
that.

Goodbye.

Yours forever, dearest lady, as long as this body
is still his machine. HAMLET.'

My daughter showed me this out of obedience,
and beyond that she has poured into my ear all
his advances — when, how and where they
happened.

But how has she received his love?

What do you think of me?

As a loyal and honorable man.

I'd like to prove it.

But what might you think,

When I had seen this hot love on the wing,
As I perceiv'd it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me, what might you,
Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,
If I had play'd the desk or table-book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
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 wait for.

KING

Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN

It may be, very likely.

POLONIUS

But what would you have thought if, when I'd
seen this hot love taking flight — and I did
notice it, I have to tell you, before my daughter
told me — what would you, or my dear queen
here, have thought if I'd played the writing-desk
or the notebook, mutely storing it up and saying
nothing, or winked at my own heart, or looked
on this love with a lazy eye? What would you
have thought?

No — I got straight to work, and this is what I
said to the young lady:

'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of your orbit.
This mustn't happen.'

And then I gave her instructions to shut herself
away from his visits, admit no messengers,
accept no gifts.

She did that; she took in the fruit of my advice.
And he, rejected — to make a long story short —
fell into sadness, then into fasting, then into
sleeplessness, then into weakness, then into a
lightheadedness, and by that decline into the
madness he now raves in, and that we all grieve
over.

Do you think that's it?

It may well be. Very likely.

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

KING

Not that I know.

POLONIUS

Take this from this, if this be otherwise.

Points to his head and shoulder.

POLONIUS

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

KING

How may we try it further?

POLONIUS

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

QUEEN

So he does indeed.

POLONIUS

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

Be you and I behind an arras then,
Mark the encounter.

Has there ever been a time — I'd genuinely like
to know — when I've stated flatly 'This is how it
is,' and it turned out otherwise?

Not that I know of.

Then take this off this, if it turns out to be
otherwise.

If the evidence leads me, I'll find where the truth
is hidden, even if it's hidden at the center of the
earth.

How can we test it further?

You know that sometimes he walks for four
hours at a stretch here in the lobby.

He does, indeed.

At one of those times, I'll turn my daughter
loose on him.

You and I will be behind a tapestry, watching 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

We will try it.

Enter Hamlet, reading.

QUEEN

But look where sadly the poor wretch comes
reading.

POLONIUS

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

O, give me leave.

Exeunt King, Queen and Attendants.

POLONIUS

How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET

Well, God-a-mercy.

POLONIUS

Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET

Excellent well.

You are a fishmonger.

POLONIUS

Not I, my lord.

HAMLET

Then I would you were so honest a man.

If he doesn't love her, and hasn't lost his reason
over her, then take me off the King's council and
let me run a farm and drive carts.

We'll try it.

But look — here comes the poor wretch,
reading, and so sad.

Away, I beg you, both of you away.

I'll approach him right now.

Please, leave me to it.

How is my good Lord Hamlet?

Well, thank God.

Do you know who I am, my lord?

Perfectly well.

You're a fishmonger.

Not I, my lord.

Then I wish you were as honest a man as one.

POLONIUS

Honest, my lord?

Honest, my lord?

HAMLET

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

Yes, sir. To be honest, the way this world runs, is
to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

POLONIUS

That's very true, my lord.

That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET

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

Well, if the sun can breed maggots in a dead dog
— that being good flesh to kiss —
do you have a daughter?

POLONIUS

I have, my lord.

I do, my lord.

HAMLET

Let her not walk i' th' sun.

Don't let her walk in the sun.

Conception is a
blessing, but not as your
daughter may conceive.

Conceiving is a blessing, but not the way your
daughter might conceive.

Friend, look to't.

Watch out for that, friend.

POLONIUS

How say you by that?

What do you make of that?

[_Aside._] Still harping on
my daughter.

[Aside] Still going on about 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.

POLONIUS

What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET

Between who?

POLONIUS

I mean the matter that you read, my lord.

HAMLET

Slanders, sir.

And yet he didn't recognize me at first — he said
I was a fishmonger.

He's far gone, far gone.

And to be fair, in my own youth I suffered
terribly for love, very nearly this badly.

I'll speak to him again.

What are you reading, my lord?

Words, words, words.

What is the matter, my lord?

Between whom?

I mean the subject matter you're reading, my
lord.

Slanders, sir.

For the satirical slave says here that
old men have grey
beards; that their faces are wrinkled; their eyes
purging thick amber
and plum-tree gum; and that they have a
plentiful lack of wit, together
with most weak hams.

All which, sir, though I
most powerfully and
potently believe, yet I hold it not honesty to have
it thus set down.
For you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if like
a crab you could
go backward.

Aside.

POLONIUS

Though this be madness, yet there is method
in't.—

Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET

Into my grave?

POLONIUS

Indeed, that is out o' the air.

[_Aside._] How
pregnant sometimes his
replies are!

The sarcastic wretch who wrote this says here
that old men have grey beards, that their faces
are wrinkled, that their eyes ooze thick amber
and plum-tree gum, and that they have an
abundant absence of brains, along with very
feeble thighs.

All of which, sir, I most powerfully and potently
believe — but I don't think it's decent to have it
written down like this.

Because you yourself, sir, would be as old as I
am, if you could walk backwards like a crab.

Even if this is madness, there's a system in it.

Would you come in out of the open air, my lord?

Into my grave?

Well, that certainly is out of the air.

[Aside] How loaded his answers sometimes 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 anything that I will
more willingly part
withal, except my life, except my life, except my
life.

POLONIUS

Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET

These tedious old fools.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

POLONIUS

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

To Polonius.

ROSENCRANTZ

God save you, sir.

Exit Polonius.

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lord!

Madness often hits on a stroke of luck like that,
which reason and sanity couldn't have produced
half so successfully.

I'll leave him and go straight off to arrange a
meeting between him and my daughter.

My honored lord, I'll most humbly take my leave
of you.

You can't, sir, take anything from me that I'd
give up more gladly — except my life, except my
life, except my life.

Goodbye, my lord.

These tiresome old fools.

You're looking for Lord Hamlet.
There he is.

God keep you, sir.

My honored lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends!

My excellent good friends!

How dost thou,

How are you, Guildenstern?

Guildenstern?

Ah, Rosencrantz.

Ah,

Rosencrantz.

Good lads, how do ye both?

Good lads — how are you both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

Ordinary enough, like everyone else on earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy in that we are not over-happy;

Happy in that we're not too happy.

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

We're certainly not the button on Fortune's cap.

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

Nor the soles of her shoes?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET

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

Then you live somewhere around her waist — in
the middle of her favors?

GUILDENSTERN

Faith, her privates we.

Well, we're her private parts, so to speak.

HAMLET

In the secret parts of Fortune?

In Fortune's private parts?

is a strumpet.
O, most true; she

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' th' worst.

Oh, that's exactly right — she's a whore.

What's the news?

None, my lord, except that the world has grown
honest.

Then the end of the world must be close.

But your news isn't true.

Let me ask more specifically:

what have you two done, my good friends, to
deserve Fortune sending you to prison here?

Prison, my lord?

Denmark's a prison.

Then so is the world.

A fine one, with plenty of cells, wards and
dungeons in it — Denmark being one of the
worst.

ROSENCRANTZ

We think not so, my lord.

We don't see it that way, my lord.

HAMLET

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

Well then, it isn't one for you, because nothing
is good or bad in itself; thinking makes it so.

To me it is a prison.

To me, it's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Why, then your ambition makes it one;

Then it's your ambition that makes it one.

'tis too
narrow for your mind.

It's too cramped 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.

God, I could be shut up in a nutshell and still
count myself the king of infinite space — if it
weren't for my bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN

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

And those dreams are precisely ambition, since
the whole substance of an ambitious man is
only a dream's shadow.

HAMLET

A dream itself is but a shadow.

A dream itself is only a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

True — and I think ambition is so weightless and
insubstantial that it's only a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET

Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs
and outstretch'd heroes
the beggars' shadows.

Shall we to th' court?

by my fay, I cannot
reason.

ROSENCRANTZ and 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.

Then our beggars are the solid bodies, and our
kings and towering heroes are the beggars'
shadows.

Shall we go to the court?

For, Because, on my faith, I can't argue any further.

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN: We'll
attend you.

Nothing of the sort.

I won't lump you in with the rest of my servants
— because, to speak to you as an honest man, I
am dreadfully attended.

But, keeping to the well-worn path of
friendship, what are you doing at Elsinore?

Visiting you, my lord. No other reason.

Beggar that I am, I'm poor even in thanks — but
I thank you.

And truly, dear friends, my thanks aren't worth 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, anything.

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?

Weren't you sent for?

Is this your own idea?

Is it a voluntary visit?

Come, be straight with me.

Come on, come on — speak.

What should we say, my lord?

Why, anything

— as long as it's to the point.

You were sent for.

There's a sort of confession in your faces, and
you're not devious enough to disguise it.

I know the good King and Queen sent for you.

For what purpose, 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.

To Guildenstern.

ROSENCRANTZ

What say you?

Aside.

HAMLET

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.

That's what you have to tell me.

But let me beg you, by the bond between us, by
the fact that we grew up together, by the duty of
a friendship we've always kept, and by anything
more precious that a better speaker could hold
you to — be plain and direct with me. Were you
sent for or not?

What do you say?

Ah — then I've got my eye on you.

If you love me, don't hold back.

My lord, we were sent for.

I'll tell you why, and then my guess will spare
you the confession, so your promise of secrecy
to the King and Queen won't lose a single
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 man, how
noble in reason, how infinite
in faculties, in form and moving, how express
and admirable; in action
how like an angel, in apprehension, how like a
god: the beauty of the
world, the paragon of animals.

And yet, to me,
what is this
quintessence of dust?

Man delights not me; no,
nor woman neither,
though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Lately — and I don't know why — I've lost all my
cheerfulness, given up all my usual exercise.

And in fact my mood weighs so heavily that this
splendid structure, the earth, seems to me a
barren rock; this magnificent canopy of air, look
at it, this glorious sky arching over us, this
majestic roof inlaid with golden fire — to me it's
nothing but a foul, disease-carrying fog.

What a piece of work a human being is: how
noble in reason, how limitless in ability, how
precise and admirable in form and movement,
how like an angel in action, how like a god in
understanding — the wonder of the world, the
model of all animals.

And yet, to me, what is this refined dust?

Human beings don't delight me — no, nor
women either, though from your smiling you
seem to think I meant otherwise.

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 humorous man shall
end his part in peace;
the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs
are tickle o' th' sere;
and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the
blank verse shall halt
for't.

My lord, there was nothing of that sort in my
mind.

Then why did you laugh when I said humans
don't delight me?

I was thinking, my lord, that if you take no
pleasure in people, the actors are going to get a
very thin welcome from you.

We overtook them on the road, and they're
coming here to offer you their services.

The one who plays the king will be welcome —
His Majesty will get his due from me.

The adventurous knight can use his sword and
shield;
the lover won't sigh for free;

the eccentric character can finish his part in
peace;
the clown can make the ones with ticklish lungs
laugh;
and the lady can speak her mind freely, or the
verse will limp for it.

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?

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, they are not.

HAMLET

How comes it?

Do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ

Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace;

What company is it?

The very ones you used to enjoy so much — the tragic actors from the city.

How does it happen they're on the road?

Staying put was better for them both ways — reputation and money.

I think they've been shut out because of the recent new fashion.

Are they still as highly regarded as when I was in the city?

Do they still draw crowds?

No, honestly, they don't.

How so?

Are they getting stale?

No, their work is up to its usual standard.

but there is, sir, an
aerie 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

But there's a nest of children, little unfledged
hawks, who screech their lines at the top of
their range and get outrageously applauded for
it.

They're the fashion now, and they make so much
noise against the ordinary theaters — as they
call them — that plenty of men who wear
swords are frightened of writers' pens and
hardly dare go there.

What, they're children?

Who's paying for them?

How are they funded?

Will they give up acting as soon as their voices
break?

Won't they say later, when they've grown into
ordinary actors themselves — which is most
likely, if they've no better income — that their
own writers wronged them by making them
shout down the very profession they'd end up
in?

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 my uncle is King of
Denmark, and those that
would make mouths at him while my father
lived, give twenty, forty,
fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in
little.

Honestly, there's been plenty of trouble on both
sides, and the country thinks it no sin to egg
them on into a fight.

For a while nobody would pay for a play unless
the playwright and the actor came to blows over
the argument in it.

Is that possible?

Oh, there's been a great deal of brainwork flung
about.

And the boys are winning?

They are indeed, my lord

— Hercules and his globe along with them.

It isn't so strange.

My uncle is King of Denmark, and the same
people who pulled faces at him while my father
was alive now pay twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred
ducats each for a miniature portrait of him.

'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.

hands, come.
Your

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?

God's blood, there's something in this beyond
nature, if philosophy could work it out.

There are the players.

Gentlemen, welcome to Elsinore.

Your hands — come.

The proper trappings of a welcome are manners
and ceremony.

Let me go through the formalities with you, in
case my greeting to the actors — which I warn
you has to look generous — should seem
warmer than what I gave you.

You are welcome.

But my uncle-father and aunt-mother are
mistaken.

Mistaken about what, my dear lord?

HAMLET

I am but mad north-north-west.

I'm only mad when the wind's north-northwest.

When the wind
is southerly, I know a
hawk from a handsaw.

When it's in the south, I can tell a hawk from a
handsaw.

Enter Polonius.

POLONIUS

Well be with you, gentlemen.

Good day to you, gentlemen.

HAMLET

Hark you, Guildenstern, and you too, at each ear
a hearer.

Listen to me, Guildenstern — and you too, a
listener at each ear.

That great
baby you see there is not yet out of his
swaddling clouts.

That great baby over there isn't out of his
nappies yet.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

Or perhaps he's come back to them a second
time, since they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET

I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the
players.

I'll predict he's coming to tell me about the
players.

Watch.

Mark it.—

You say
right, sir: for a Monday morning 'twas so indeed.

— You're quite right, sir: it was on a Monday
morning, exactly as you say.

POLONIUS

My lord, I have news to tell you.

My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET

My lord, I have news to tell you.

My lord, I have news to tell you.

When Roscius

was an actor in Rome—

When Roscius was an actor in Rome—

POLONIUS

The actors are come hither, my lord.

The actors have arrived, my lord.

HAMLET

Buzz, buzz.

Old news, old news.

POLONIUS

Upon my honour.

On my honor.

HAMLET

Then came each actor on his ass—

'Then every actor came riding on his donkey—'

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.

The best actors in the world, whether for
tragedy, comedy, history, pastoral, comic-
pastoral, historical-pastoral, tragical-historical,
tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, plays that
keep the unities or poems that ignore all limits.

Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor

Plautus too light, for the
law of writ and the liberty.

Seneca can't be too heavy for them, nor Plautus
too light, whether it's scripted work or
improvisation.

These are the only

men.

They're unmatched.

HAMLET

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

POLONIUS

What treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET

Why—

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

Aside.

POLONIUS

Still on my daughter.

HAMLET

Am I not i' th' right, old Jephthah?

POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

Nay, that follows not.

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.

Oh Jephthah, judge of Israel — what a treasure
you had!

What treasure did he have, my lord?

Why — 'One fair daughter, and no more, whom
he loved exceedingly well.'

Still on about my daughter.

Aren't I right, old Jephthah?

If you're calling me Jephthah, my lord, I do have
a daughter I love exceedingly well.

No, that isn't what follows.

What follows then, my lord?

Why: 'As the lot fell, God knows,'

and then, you know, 'It came to pass, as it was
likely to.'

The first stanza of that pious ballad will tell you
the rest

— but look, here come my interrupters.

For look where
my abridgement comes.

Enter four or five Players.

HAMLET

You are welcome, masters, welcome all.

Welcome, masters, welcome all.

I am
glad to see thee well.
Welcome, good friends.

I'm glad to see you well.
Welcome, good friends.

O, my old friend!

Oh, my old friend!

Thy
face is valanc'd since I
saw thee last.

Your face has grown a fringe since I saw you last

Com'st thou to beard me in
Denmark?

— have you come to challenge me to my beard in
Denmark?

What, my young lady
and mistress!

And 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.

By our Lady, your ladyship is closer to heaven
than when I last saw you, by the height of a
platform shoe.

Pray
God your voice, like a
piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within
the ring.

Pray God your voice hasn't cracked like a coin
that's split past the ring and gone out of
currency.

Masters, you
are all welcome.

We'll e'en to't like French
falconers, fly at anything
we see.

We'll have a speech straight.

Come, give
us a taste of your
quality.

Come, a passionate speech.

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 judgements 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.

Masters, you're all welcome.

We'll go at it like French falconers — fly at
anything we see.

Let's have a speech right away.

Come, give us a sample of your quality.

Come, a passionate speech.

Which speech, my lord?

I once heard you recite me a speech, but it was
never performed — or if it was, no more than
once, because the play, as I recall, didn't please
the crowd. It was caviar to the general public.

But it was — in my judgment, and in the
judgment of others whose opinion on such
things outranked mine — an excellent play, well-
organized in its scenes, written with as much
restraint as skill.

I remember one said there were no
sallets in the lines to make
the matter savoury, nor no matter in the phrase
that might indite 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 th' 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.

I remember someone saying the lines had no
spice in them to make the matter tasty, and
nothing in the phrasing that could convict the
author of showing off; he called it an honest
style, as wholesome as it was pleasant, and far
more handsome than pretty.

One speech in it I especially loved:

Aeneas's story to Dido, and particularly the part
where he describes the killing of Priam.

If it's still in your memory, start at this line — let
me see, let me see:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, like the Hyrcanian beast—'

No, that isn't it. It begins with Pyrrhus:

'The rugged Pyrrhus, whose black armor was as
dark as his intent, the color of the night he
crouched inside the ominous wooden horse, has
now smeared that dreadful black complexion
with a more terrible coat of arms.

Head to foot
Now is he total gules, horribly trick'd
With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters,
sons,
Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets,
That lend a tyrannous and a damned light
To their vile murders.

Roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'ersized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks._
So, proceed you.

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
Th'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' th'air to stick.

From head to foot he's now entirely red,
hideously decorated with the blood of fathers,
mothers, daughters, sons, baked into a crust by
the burning streets, which cast a cruel,
damnable light on their vile murders.

Roasted in rage and fire, glazed over with clotted
gore, his eyes like burning jewels, the hellish
Pyrrhus hunts for the old grandfather, Priam.'

Now you go on.

Before God, my lord, well spoken, with good
delivery and good judgment.

'Soon he finds him, striking at the Greeks and
falling short.

His ancient sword rebels against his arm, drops
where it falls and refuses to obey.

Grossly overmatched, Pyrrhus lunges at Priam,
and misses in his fury — but the mere rush of
wind from that murderous blade knocks the
feeble old father down.

Then Troy itself, as if it felt the blow, sinks its
blazing towers to its own foundations, and the
hideous crash captures Pyrrhus's ear.

Look: his sword, which was coming down on
Priam's white head, seemed to stick fast in mid-
air.

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, forg'd 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._

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

So Pyrrhus stood like a tyrant in a painting, and,
suspended between his will and his purpose, did
nothing.
But just as we often see before a storm — a
silence in the sky, the clouds motionless, the
bold winds struck dumb, and the world below as
quiet as death, and then the terrible thunder
splits the air — so after Pyrrhus's pause, his
roused vengeance set him working again.
The Cyclops' hammers never fell on the armor of
Mars, forged to last forever, with less pity than
Pyrrhus's bleeding sword now falls on Priam.

Out, out, you whore Fortune!

All you gods, in full assembly, strip her of her
power.

Break every spoke and rim off her wheel and roll
the round hub down the hill of heaven, all the
way to the devils below.'

This is too long.

It can go to the barber's along with your beard.

Please, carry on.

He wants a dance number or a dirty story, or he
falls asleep.

Go on — get to Hecuba.

_But who, O who, had seen the mobled queen,
—_

HAMLET

'The mobled queen'?

POLONIUS

That's good!

'Mobled queen' is good.

FIRST PLAYER

_Run barefoot up and down, threat'ning the
flames

With bisson rheum.

A clout upon that head

Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,

About her lank and all o'erteemed loins,

A blanket, in th'alarm of fear caught up—

Who this had seen, with tongue in venom
steep'd,

'Gainst Fortune's state would treason have
pronounc'd.

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._

POLONIUS

Look, where he has not turn'd his colour, and
has tears in's eyes.

'But who — oh, who — had seen the muffled
queen—'

'The muffled queen'?

That's good!

'Muffled queen' is good.

'—running barefoot up and down, threatening
to put out the flames with blinding tears;

a rag on the head where the crown had lately
sat, and for a robe, snatched up in the panic, a
blanket around her thin, worn-out body.

Anyone who had seen that would have dipped
his tongue in poison and pronounced Fortune's
rule treason.

But if the gods themselves had watched her
then, when she saw Pyrrhus making a spiteful
game of hacking her husband's limbs apart, the
sudden howl she let out — unless human
suffering means nothing at all to them — would
have wet the burning eyes of heaven and moved
the gods to pity.'

Look — hasn't he changed color, and he has
tears in his eyes.

Pray

you, no more.

HAMLET

'Tis well.

I'll have thee speak out the rest of this
soon.—

Good my

lord, will you see the players well bestowed?

Do

you hear, let them be
well used; for they are the abstracts and brief
chronicles of the time.

After your death you were better have a bad
epitaph than their ill
report while you live.

POLONIUS

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

HAMLET

God's bodikin, man, much better.

Use every

man after his desert, and who
should 'scape whipping?

Use them after your

own honour and dignity.

Please, no more.

That's fine.

I'll have you speak the rest of this later.

My good lord, will you see that the players are
properly looked after?

Do you hear me — see they're well treated,
because they are the summaries and short
chronicles of the age.

It would be better for you to have a bad epitaph
after you're dead than a bad report from them
while you're alive.

My lord, I'll treat them according to what they
deserve.

God's little body, man — much better than that.

Treat every man according to what he deserves,
and who would escape a whipping?

Treat them according to your own honor and
dignity:

The
less they deserve, the more merit is in your
bounty.

Take them in.

POLONIUS

Come, sirs.

HAMLET

Follow him, friends.

We'll hear a play tomorrow.

Exeunt Polonius with all the Players but the First.

HAMLET

Dost thou hear me, old friend?

Can you play
The Murder of Gonzago?

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.

the less they deserve, the more credit there is in
your generosity.

Take them in.

Come along, gentlemen.

Go with him, friends.

We'll hear a play tomorrow.

Listen to me, old friend

— can you perform The Murder of Gonzago?

Yes, my lord.

We'll have it tomorrow night.

If need be, you could learn a speech of some
twelve or sixteen lines that I would write and
insert into it — couldn't you?

Yes, my lord.

HAMLET

Very well.

Follow that lord, and look you mock
him not.

Exit First Player.

To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

HAMLET

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,
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 wan'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?

Very good.

Follow that gentleman, and mind you don't
mock him.

My good friends, I'll leave you until tonight.

You're welcome at Elsinore.

Certainly, my lord.

Right, then — God be with you.

Now I'm alone.

What a wretch and a lowborn slave I am!
Isn't it monstrous that this actor here, working
from a fiction, from an imagined passion, could
bend his whole soul to what he was imagining
so completely that his face went pale from the
effort — tears in his eyes, anguish in his
expression, his voice breaking, his whole body
shaped to fit his idea?

And all for nothing!

For Hecuba!

What is Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba, that he
should cry 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' th'
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!

What would he do if he had the reason and the
prompt for passion that I have?

He'd flood the stage with tears and split the
audience's ears with terrible words, drive the
guilty mad and horrify the innocent, bewilder
the ignorant, and utterly astound the very
faculties of sight and hearing.

And yet I — a dull, muddy-spirited creature —
mope about like a daydreamer, not pregnant
with my own cause, unable to say a word.

Not even for a king whose property and precious
life were destroyed by a damned crime.

Am I a coward?
Who calls me a villain?
Cracks me over the head?
Rips off my beard and blows it in my face?
Tweaks my nose, calls me a liar to the back of my
throat and down into my lungs?

Who does this to me?
Ha
— by God's wounds, I'd take it.
It must be that I'm pigeon-livered and have no
bile to make an injury bitter, or before now I'd
have fattened every carrion bird in the sky with
this slave's guts.

Bloody, obscene villain!

The spirit that I have seen
May be the 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
More relative than this.

The play's the thing
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King.

Exit.

The spirit I saw may be a devil, and the devil has
the power to take a pleasing shape — and
perhaps, working on my weakness and my
melancholy, since he's very powerful with minds
in that state, he's deceiving me in order to damn
me.

I'll have evidence more solid than this.

The play is the trap in which I'll catch the
conscience of the King.

Act 3, Scene 1

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Claudius and Polonius plant Ophelia in a corridor and hide to eavesdrop, hoping to prove that lovesickness is behind Hamlet's strange behaviour. Alone, Hamlet delivers the "To be, or not to be" soliloquy, weighing whether to go on living. When Ophelia tries to return his gifts he turns savage, denies ever having loved her, and repeatedly orders her to a nunnery; Claudius, unconvinced by the love theory, decides to ship him to England.

Original

Translation

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

KING

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

ROSENCRANTZ

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

GUILDENSTERN

And you can't find any roundabout way to get
him to say why he's putting on this disordered
act, tearing up his own peace of mind with this
wild and dangerous madness?

He admits he feels unbalanced,
but he refuses to say what's causing it.

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

QUEEN

Did he receive you well?

ROSENCRANTZ

Most like a gentleman.

GUILDENSTERN

But with much forcing of his disposition.

ROSENCRANTZ

Niggard of question, but of our demands,
Most free in his reply.

QUEEN

Did you assay him to any pastime?

ROSENCRANTZ

Madam, it so fell out that certain players
We o'er-raught on the way.

Of these we told
him,
And there did seem in him a kind of joy
To hear of it.

They are about the court,
And, as I think, they have already order
This night to play before him.

And he isn't willing to be probed.

Whenever we steer him toward admitting what's
really wrong, he slips away with a cunning kind
of madness.

Did he receive you kindly?

Very much like a gentleman.

But he was clearly forcing himself to be
pleasant.

He gave us little, but when we asked him things
he answered readily enough.

Did you try to interest him in any
entertainment?

Madam, it happened that we overtook a
company of actors on the road.

We told him about them, and he seemed
genuinely pleased to hear it.

They're here at court, and I believe they've
already been booked to perform for him tonight.

POLONIUS

'Tis most true;

And he beseech'd me to entreat your Majesties
To hear and see the matter.

KING

With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclin'd.

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

ROSENCRANTZ

We shall, my lord.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

Sweet Gertrude, leave us too,
For we have closely sent for Hamlet hither,
That he, as 'twere by accident, may here
Affront Ophelia.
Her father and myself, lawful espials,
Will so bestow ourselves that, seeing unseen,
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behav'd,
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:

That's quite true.

And he asked me to invite your Majesties to
come and watch it with him.

Gladly — and it's a relief to hear he's interested
in something.

Gentlemen, keep encouraging him, and push
him further toward these amusements.

We will, my lord.

Sweet Gertrude, you leave us as well.

We've quietly sent for Hamlet to come here, so
that he can run into Ophelia as though it were
by chance.

Her father and I will hide ourselves — spying,
but legally — where we can see without being
seen, and judge their meeting honestly.
From how he behaves toward her we'll work out
whether it really is lovesickness that's
tormenting him.

I'll do as you ask.

And as for you, Ophelia, I hope it is your beauty
that has driven Hamlet wild —

so shall I hope your
virtues
Will bring him to his wonted way again,
To both your honours.

OPHELIA

Madam, I wish it may.

Exit Queen.

POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here.

Gracious, so please
you,
We will bestow ourselves.

[_To Ophelia._]
Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness.

We are oft to blame in this,
'Tis too much prov'd,
that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er
The devil himself.

Aside.

KING

O 'tis too true!
How smart a lash that speech doth give my
conscience!
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word.

and that your good qualities can bring him back
to his old self, to the credit of you both.

Madam, I hope so too.

Ophelia, walk over here.

Your Majesty, if you'll come with me, we'll take
our places.

[To Ophelia] Read this prayer book; looking
devout will explain why you're alone.

We're all guilty of this, and it's been proved too
often:
with a pious face and holy gestures we sweeten
over the devil himself.

[Aside] That's far too true!
How that line whips my conscience.

A prostitute's cheek, prettied up with thick
makeup, is no uglier under the paint than my
deed is beneath my painted words.

O heavy burden!

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,
And by opposing end them?

To die—to sleep,

No more;

and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache, and the thousand natural
shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd.

To die, to sleep.

To sleep, perchance to dream—

ay, there's the

rub,

For in that sleep of death what dreams may
come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.

There's the respect

That makes calamity of so long life.

What a heavy burden!

I hear him coming.

Let's step out of sight, my lord.

To exist, or to stop existing — that is the
question.

Is it nobler to endure whatever cruel luck throws
at you, or to fight back against an ocean of
troubles and, by fighting, end them?

To die is only to sleep — nothing more.

And if a sleep could end the heartache and the
thousand shocks that come with having a body,
that's an ending anyone would pray for.

To die, to sleep.

To sleep — and maybe to dream.

There's the catch.

Because what dreams might come in that sleep
of death, once we've shed the tangle of this life,
is what stops us short.

That's the thought that makes us put up with
suffering for so many years.

For who would bear the whips and scorns of
time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's
contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin?

Who would these fardels
bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns,

puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia!

Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember'd.

OPHELIA

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

Otherwise, who would carry the beatings and
insults of the years, the tyrant's injustice, the
arrogant man's contempt, the ache of love
that's thrown back at you, the courts that never
rule, the rudeness of officials, and all the abuse
that a patient decent person takes from
worthless people — when he could settle the
whole account himself with a bare blade?

Who would bear these loads, grunting and
sweating through an exhausting life, except that
we're afraid of something after death — that
undiscovered country from which no traveler
ever comes back?

It confuses the will, and makes us put up with
the evils we already know rather than run
toward ones we don't.

So thinking too much turns us all into cowards,
and the natural color of our resolve goes pale
and sickly under the shadow of thought,
and plans of real weight and consequence get
diverted by it and never become actions at all.

But quiet now — the lovely Ophelia.

Beautiful girl, remember all my sins in your
prayers.

My good lord, how have you been these many
days?

HAMLET

I humbly thank you;

well, well, well.

I thank you humbly.

Well, well, well.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours

That I have longed long to re-deliver.

I pray you, now receive them.

My lord, I have keepsakes of yours that I've been

wanting to give back for a long time.

Please take them now.

HAMLET

No, not I.

I never gave you aught.

No, not me.

I never gave you anything.

OPHELIA

My honour'd lord, you know right well you did,

And with them words of so sweet breath

compos'd

As made the things more rich;

My honored lord, you know perfectly well you

did — and with them words so sweetly made

that they made the gifts worth more.

their perfume

lost,

Take these again;

for to the noble mind

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

There, my lord.

That sweetness is gone now, so take them back.

To anyone with a decent heart, rich presents

turn worthless once the giver turns cold.

Here, my lord.

HAMLET

Ha, ha!

Are you honest?

Ha!

Are you honest?

OPHELIA

My lord?

My lord?

HAMLET

Are you fair?

Are you beautiful?

OPHELIA

What means your lordship?

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

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

HAMLET

Ay, truly; for the power of beauty will sooner
transform honesty from
what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty
can translate beauty
into his likeness.

This was sometime a paradox,
but now the time gives
it proof.

I did love you once.

OPHELIA

Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

HAMLET

You should not have believed me;

for virtue
cannot so inoculate our old
stock but we shall relish of it.

I loved you not.

OPHELIA

I was the more deceived.

What do you mean, my lord?

That if you're both honest and beautiful, your
honesty shouldn't let your beauty anywhere
near it.

Could beauty keep better company than
honesty, my lord?

Yes, certainly — because beauty will turn
honesty into a pimp long before honesty can
make beauty resemble itself.

That used to sound like a paradox, but these
days it's simply proved.

I did love you once.

You certainly made me believe so, my lord.

You shouldn't have believed me.

Goodness can't be grafted onto our rotten
human stock without the old taste coming
through.

I didn't love you.

Then I was all the more fooled.

HAMLET

Get thee to a nunnery.

Why wouldst thou be a
breeder of sinners?

I am
myself indifferent honest; but yet I could accuse
me of such things
that it were better my mother had not borne me.

I am very proud,
revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my
beck than I have
thoughts to put them in, imagination to give
them shape, or time to act
them in.

What should such fellows as I do
crawling between earth and
heaven?

We are arrant knaves all, believe none of
us.

Go thy ways to a
nunnery.

Where's your father?

OPHELIA

At home, my lord.

HAMLET

Get yourself to a convent.

Why would you want to give birth to sinners?

I'm reasonably decent myself, and still I could
accuse myself of things so bad it would have
been better if my mother had never had me.

I'm very proud, vengeful, ambitious, with more
offences at my command than I have thoughts
to hold them, imagination to shape them, or
time to carry them out.

What are men like me doing crawling around
between earth and heaven?

We're all complete villains — don't believe any of
us.

Go on, get to a convent.

Where's your father?

At home, my lord.

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!

HAMLET

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

Get

thee to a nunnery, go:

farewell.

Or if thou wilt

needs marry, marry a
fool; for wise men know well enough what
monsters you make of them.

To

a nunnery, go; and quickly too.

Farewell.

OPHELIA

O heavenly powers, restore him!

HAMLET

I have heard of your paintings too, well enough.

Then lock the doors on him, so he can only play
the fool in his own house.

Goodbye.

Sweet heaven, help him!

If you do get married, here's the curse I'll give
you as a wedding present: be as chaste as ice, as
pure as snow, and you still won't escape being
slandered.

Get to a convent, go.

Goodbye.

Or if you absolutely must marry, marry an idiot
— because clever men know all too well what
monsters you make of them.

To a convent, go, and quickly.

Goodbye.

Heavenly powers, make him well again!

I've heard all about your face-painting, too.

God hath given you one
face, and you make yourselves another.

You jig,
you amble, and you
lisp, and nickname God's creatures, and make
your wantonness your
ignorance.

Go to, I'll no more on't, it hath made
me mad.

I say, we
will have no more marriages.

Those that are
married already, all but
one, shall live;

the rest shall keep as they are.

To
a nunnery, go.

Exit.

OPHELIA

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

God gives you one face and you make yourselves
another.

You sway and sashay and lisp, you give cute
nicknames to God's creatures, and you pass off
your loose behavior as innocence.

Enough — I'll have no more of it. It's driven me
mad.

I tell you, there will be no more marriages.

Those who are already married — all but one —
can live.

The rest will stay as they are.

To a convent, go.

Oh, what a magnificent mind has been wrecked
here!

The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue,
sword,
Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th'observ'd of all observers, quite, quite down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh,
That unmatch'd form and feature of blown
youth
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,
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd form a little,
Was not like madness.

There's something in his
soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger,
which for to prevent,
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute:

The courtier's eye, the soldier's sword, the
scholar's tongue, the hope and flower of this
whole country, the model everyone copied, the
man every eye followed — ruined, utterly ruined.

And I, the most miserable and cast-off of
women, who drank in the honey of his promises,
now have to watch that noble, commanding
mind clang like beautiful bells knocked out of
tune, that matchless shape and face of a young
man in full bloom blighted by madness.

Oh, how wretched I am, to have seen what I saw
and to see what I see now.

Love?

His feelings don't run that way.
And what he said, though it was a bit shapeless,
wasn't really madness.

There's something buried in his soul that his
depression is sitting on like a hen on an egg, and
I suspect that whatever hatches from it will be
dangerous.

To head that off, I've made a quick decision: he'll
be sent to England at once, to collect the tribute
money they owe us.

Haply the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel
This something settled matter in his heart,
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus
From fashion of himself.

What think you on't?

POLONIUS

It shall do well.

But yet do I believe
The origin and commencement of his grief
Sprung from neglected love.

How now, Ophelia?

You need not tell us what Lord Hamlet said,
We heard it all.

My lord, do as you please,
But if you hold it fit, after the play,
Let his queen mother all alone entreat him
To show his grief, let her be round with him,
And I'll be plac'd, so please you, in the ear
Of all their conference.

If she find him not,
To England send him; or confine him where
Your wisdom best shall think.

KING

It shall be so.

Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

Exeunt.

Perhaps new seas and foreign countries, and the
change of scene, will drive out whatever has
settled in his heart — the thing his brain keeps
hammering at, that has knocked him so far out
of himself.

What do you think of that?

It's a good plan.

But I still believe the source and beginning of his
misery is love that was pushed away.

— Well, Ophelia?

You don't have to tell us what Lord Hamlet said;
we heard all of it.

My lord, do as you like, but if you think it's wise,
after the play let his mother the Queen get him
alone and beg him to explain his misery. Let her
be blunt with him — and I'll be hidden, with
your permission, where I can hear everything
they say.

If she can't get to the bottom of him, send him
to England, or shut him up wherever you judge
best.

So it will be.

Madness in important people can't be left
unwatched.

Act 3, Scene 2

A HALL IN THE CASTLE

Hamlet coaches the visiting actors and asks Horatio to watch Claudius while they perform 'The Mousetrap', a play staged to mirror the murder of Hamlet's father. Claudius bolts from the room when the poisoning is acted out, which Hamlet takes as proof of the Ghost's story. Afterwards Hamlet mocks Rosencrantz and Guildenstern for trying to play him like a recorder, and steels himself to confront his mother without harming her.

Original

Translation

Enter Hamlet and certain Players.

HAMLET

Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it
to you, trippingly on
the tongue.

Deliver the speech, please, the way I read it to
you — lightly, off the tongue.

But if you mouth it, as many of your
players do, I had as
lief the town-crier spoke my lines.

If you bellow it the way a lot of actors do, I'd
rather have the town crier read my lines.

Nor do not
saw the air too much
with your hand, thus, but use all gently;

And don't saw the air with your hand like this;
keep everything under control.

for in
the very torrent,
tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of
passion, you must acquire and
beget a temperance that may give it
smoothness.

Even in the middle of the flood, the storm, the
whirlwind of feeling, you have to find and
maintain a restraint that makes it flow.

O, it offends me to the
soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow
tear a passion to
tatters, to very rags, to split the ears of the
groundlings, who, for
the most part, are capable of nothing but
inexplicable dumb shows and
noise.

I would have such a fellow whipped for
o'erdoing Termagant.

It
out-Herods Herod.

Pray you avoid it.

FIRST PLAYER

I warrant your honour.

HAMLET

Be not too tame neither;

but let your own
discretion be your tutor.

Suit the action to the word, the word to the
action, with this special
observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty
of nature;

It offends me to the core to hear some loud
fellow in a wig rip a passion into shreds, into
rags, to blast the ears of the people standing in
the pit, who mostly can't take in anything but
incomprehensible mime and noise.

I'd have a man like that whipped for out-ranting
the ranting devils of the old plays.
It out-Herods Herod.

Please avoid it.

You have my word, sir.

But don't go too flat either —

let your own judgement guide you.

Match the gesture to the word and the word to
the gesture, with this one rule above all: never
step outside what's natural.

for anything
so overdone is from the purpose of playing,
whose end, both at the
first and now, was and is, to hold as 'twere the
mirror up to nature;
to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own
image, and the very age
and body of the time his form and pressure.

Now, this overdone, or come
tardy off, though it make the unskilful laugh,
cannot but make the
judicious grieve;

the censure of the which one
must in your allowance
o'erweigh a whole theatre of others.

O, there be
players that I have
seen play—and heard others praise, and that
highly—not to speak it
profanely, that, neither having the accent of
Christians, nor the gait
of Christian, pagan, nor man, have so strutted
and bellowed that I have
thought some of Nature's journeymen had made
men, and not made them
well, they imitated humanity so abominably.

FIRST PLAYER

Anything overdone defeats the whole point of
acting, which was and still is to hold a mirror up
to life — to show virtue its own face, contempt
its own image, and to catch the exact shape and
pressure of the age we live in.

Overplay that, or underplay it, and you may get a
laugh from the ignorant, but you'll pain anyone
who knows better —

and one of them should outweigh a whole
theatre of the others in your judgement.

I've watched actors — and heard them praised,
praised highly — who, and I say this without
meaning any blasphemy, had neither the speech
of a Christian nor the walk of a Christian, a
pagan, or a human being. They swaggered and
roared so badly that I thought some apprentice
of Nature's had assembled men and botched the
job, they imitated humanity so appallingly.

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

HAMLET

O reform it altogether.

And let those that play
your clowns speak no
more than is set down for them.

For there be of
them that will
themselves laugh, to set on some quantity of
barren spectators to laugh
too, though in the 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, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET

How now, my lord?

Will the King hear this piece of work?

POLONIUS

And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET

Bid the players make haste.

I hope we've more or less corrected that in our
company, sir.

Correct it completely.

And don't let the actors playing the clowns say
more than what's written for them.

Some of them will laugh at their own jokes just
to get a few empty-headed spectators laughing
too, right when the audience should be taking in
something important in the plot.

It's despicable, and it shows a pathetic kind of
vanity in the fool who does it.

Go and get ready.

Well, my lord?

Will the King come and watch this piece?

The Queen too, and right away.

Tell the actors to hurry.

Exit Polonius.

HAMLET

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.

We will, my lord.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

HAMLET

What ho, Horatio!

Enter Horatio.

HORATIO

Here, sweet lord, at your service.

HAMLET

Horatio, thou art e'en as just a man

As e'er my conversation cop'd withal.

HORATIO

O my dear lord.

HAMLET

Nay, do not think I flatter;

For what advancement may I hope from thee,

That no revenue hast, but thy good spirits

To feed and clothe thee?

Why should the poor be
flatter'd?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,

And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee

Where thrift may follow fawning.

Dost thou
hear?

Will you two go and hurry them along? —

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN: We will,
my lord.

Horatio! Where are you?

Right here, my good lord, at your service.

Horatio, you're the most level, decent man I've
ever had dealings with.

Oh, my dear lord.

No, don't think I'm flattering you.

What could I possibly gain from you, when you
have no income at all but your own good spirits
to feed and clothe you?

Why would anyone flatter a poor man?

No — let sugared tongues lick at ridiculous
grandeur, and let people bend the ready hinges
of their knees where kneeling pays.

Listen to me.

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish, her election
Hath seal'd thee for herself.

For thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks.

And blessed are
those
Whose blood and judgement are so well co-
mingled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune's finger
To sound what stop she please.

Give me that
man
That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him
In my heart's core, ay, in my heart of heart,
As I do thee.

Something too much of this.
There is a play 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 see'st that act a-foot,
Even with the very comment of thy soul
Observe mine uncle.

If his occulted guilt
Do not itself unkennel in one speech,
It is a damned ghost that we have seen;
And my imaginations are as foul
As Vulcan's stithy.

Ever since my soul was old enough to choose for
itself and tell one man from another, it has
picked you out for its own.

You've been someone who suffers everything
and lets none of it touch him, a man who takes
Fortune's blows and Fortune's gifts with equal
gratitude.

Blessed are the people whose feelings and
judgement are so well balanced that they aren't
a pipe for Fortune to play whatever tune she
likes on.

Give me a man who isn't a slave to his own
passions, and I'll carry him at the centre of my
heart, in the heart of my heart, the way I carry
you.

— That's enough of that.
There's a play tonight in front of the King.
One scene in it comes very close to the
circumstances of my father's death, which I told
you about.
When you see that scene begin, watch my uncle
with your whole soul's concentration.

If his hidden guilt doesn't bolt out of its hole
during that one speech, then the ghost we saw
was a devil and my imagination is as filthy as a
blacksmith's forge.

Give him heedful note;

For I mine eyes will rivet to his face;
And after we will both our judgements join
In censure of his seeming.

HORATIO

Well, my lord.

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

HAMLET

They are coming to the play.

I must be idle.

Get you a place.

Danish march. A flourish. Enter King, Queen,
Polonius, Ophelia,
Rosencrantz, Guildenstern and others.

KING

How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET

Excellent, i' faith; of the chameleon's dish:

I eat
the air,
promise-crammed:
you cannot feed capons so.

KING

I have nothing with this answer, Hamlet;

these
words are not mine.

Watch him closely.

I'll have my eyes nailed to his face, and
afterwards we'll put our two judgements
together and decide what his reaction meant.

Very well, my lord.

If he gets away with anything while the play is
running, and I miss it, I'll pay for what was
stolen.

They're coming in for the play.

I need to look aimless.

Find yourself a seat. —

Danish march. A flourish. Enter the King,
Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz,
Guildenstern and others.

How is our nephew Hamlet doing?

Excellently, truly — on the chameleon's diet.

I eat air, stuffed full of promises.

You couldn't fatten poultry on it.

That answer means nothing to me, Hamlet.

Those words aren't mine.

HAMLET

No, nor mine now.

No, and they're not mine any more either.

[_To Polonius._] My lord, you
play'd once i'
th' university, you say?

[To Polonius] My lord, you say you acted once, at
the university?

POLONIUS

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

I did, my lord, and I was thought a good actor.

HAMLET

What did you enact?

What part did you play?

POLONIUS

I did enact Julius Caesar.

I played Julius Caesar.

I was kill'd i' th'
Capitol.

I was killed in the Capitol.

Brutus killed
me.

Brutus killed me.

HAMLET

It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf
there.

It was a brutish thing of him, to butcher such a
prize calf there.

— Are the actors ready?

Be the
players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ

Ay, my lord;
they stay upon your patience.

Yes, my lord.

They're waiting on your word.

QUEEN

Come hither, my dear Hamlet, sit by me.

Come here, my dear Hamlet, sit next to me.

HAMLET

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

To the King.

POLONIUS

O ho! do you mark that?

HAMLET

Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

Lying down at Ophelia's feet.

OPHELIA

No, my lord.

HAMLET

I mean, my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Do you think I meant country matters?

OPHELIA

I think nothing, my lord.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

What is, my lord?

HAMLET

Nothing.

OPHELIA

You are merry, my lord.

No, good mother, there's a stronger magnet over here.

[To the King] Aha! Did you notice that?

My lady, may I lie in your lap?

No, my lord.

I only meant my head on your lap.

Yes, my lord.

Did you think I meant something dirty?

I wasn't thinking anything, my lord.

That's a nice thought to lie between a girl's legs.

What is, my lord?

Nothing.

You're in a cheerful mood, my lord.

HAMLET

Who, I?

Who, me?

OPHELIA

Ay, my lord.

Yes, my lord.

HAMLET

O God, your only jig-maker!

God, I'm the world's greatest comedian.

What should a man
do but be merry?

What else should a man do but be cheerful?

For look
you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my
father died within's two
hours.

Look how happy my mother is, and my father
died two hours ago.

OPHELIA

Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

No, it's been four months, my lord.

HAMLET

So long?

That long?

Nay then, let the devil wear black, for
I'll have a suit of
sables.

Then let the devil wear black, because I'll get
myself a suit trimmed with expensive fur.

O heavens! die two months ago, and not
forgotten yet?

Good heavens — dead two months and still not
forgotten?

Then
there's hope a great man's memory may outlive
his life half a year.

Then there's hope a great man's memory might
outlast him by half a year.

But

by'r lady, he must build churches then; or else
shall he suffer not

thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose
epitaph is 'For, O, for O, the
hobby-horse is forgot!'

Trumpets sound. The dumb show enters.

_Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly; the
Queen embracing him and he
her.

She kneels, and makes show of protestation
unto him.

He takes her
up, and declines his head upon her neck.

Lays
him down upon a bank of
flowers.

She, seeing him asleep, leaves him.

Anon comes in a fellow,
takes off his crown, kisses it, pours poison in
the King's ears, and
exits.

But by the Virgin, he'd better fund some
churches first, or he'll be forgotten like the
hobby-horse in the old parades, whose epitaph
runs, 'Oh, oh, the hobby-horse is forgotten!' —

Trumpets sound. The dumb show enters.

A King and Queen enter very lovingly, embracing
each other.

She kneels and makes gestures of devotion to
him.

He raises her up and rests his head on her neck,

then lies down on a bank of flowers.

Seeing him asleep, she leaves.

A man comes in, takes off the King's crown,
kisses it, pours poison into the King's ears, and
leaves.

The Queen returns, finds the King dead,
and makes passionate
action.

The Poisoner with some three or four
Mutes, comes in again,
seeming to lament with her.

The dead body is
carried away.

The Poisoner
woos the Queen with gifts.

She seems loth and
unwilling awhile, but in
the end accepts his love._

Exeunt.

OPHELIA

What means this, my lord?

HAMLET

Marry, this is mitching mallecho;

it means
mischief.

OPHELIA

Belike this show imports the argument of the
play.

Enter Prologue.

HAMLET

The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and
mimes wild grief.

The Poisoner comes back in with three or four
silent attendants and appears to mourn with
her.

The body is carried away.

The Poisoner courts the Queen with gifts.

She seems reluctant and unwilling for a while,
but in the end accepts him.

What does this mean, my lord?

Well now, this is sneaking wickedness.

It means trouble.

I suppose this show gives us the plot of the play.

We shall know by this fellow:

the players cannot
keep counsel; they'll
tell all.

OPHELIA

Will they tell us what this show meant?

HAMLET

Ay, or any show that you'll show him.

Be not you
ashamed to show, he'll
not shame to tell you what it means.

OPHELIA

You are naught, you are naught:

I'll mark the
play.

PROLOGUE

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

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET

As woman's love.

We'll find out from this fellow.

Actors can't keep a secret; they'll tell you
everything.

Will they tell us what that show meant?

Yes — or whatever else you're willing to show
him.

If you're not ashamed to show it, he won't be
ashamed to tell you what it means.

You're wicked, you're wicked.

I'm going to watch the play.

On behalf of us and of our tragedy, bowing here
for your mercy, we ask you to listen patiently.

Is this a prologue, or a motto engraved inside a
ring?

It's short, my lord.

Like a woman's love.

Enter a King and a Queen.

PLAYER KING

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

PLAYER QUEEN

So many journeys may the sun and moon
Make us again count o'er ere love be done.

But, woe is me, you are so sick of late,
So far from cheer and from your former state,
That I distrust you.

Yet, though I distrust,
Discomfort you, my lord, it nothing must:
For women's fear and love holds quantity,
In neither aught, or in extremity.

Now what my love is, proof hath made you
know,

And as my love is siz'd, my fear is so.

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

PLAYER KING

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

Thirty times now the sun's chariot has gone
round the salt sea and the round earth, and
three hundred and sixty borrowed-light moons
have circled the world, since love joined our
hearts and the god of marriage joined our hands
in that most sacred bond.

May the sun and moon make us count out just
as many journeys again before our love is
finished.

But it grieves me — you've been so ill lately, so
far from cheerful, so unlike yourself, that I'm
worried about you.

Still, though I'm worried, it mustn't distress
you, my lord:

a woman's fear and her love come in matching
amounts — either both are nothing, or both are
extreme.

You know from experience how great my love is,
and my fear is sized to match it.

Where love is great, the smallest doubts turn
into fears, and where small fears grow large, that
is where great love is.

The truth is, I must leave you, my love, and soon.
My body is giving up its work.

You'll go on living in this beautiful world,
honoured and loved, and perhaps some man as
kind as I am will be your —

PLAYER QUEEN

O confound the rest.

Such love must needs be treason in my breast.

In second husband let me be accurst!

None wed the second but who kill'd the first.

Aside.

HAMLET

Wormwood, wormwood.

PLAYER QUEEN

The instances that second marriage move

Are base respects of thrift, but none of love.

A second time I kill my husband dead,

When second husband kisses me in bed.

PLAYER KING

I do believe you think what now you speak;

But what we do determine, oft we break.

Purpose is but the slave to memory,

Of violent birth, but poor validity:

Which now, like fruit unripe, sticks on the tree,

But fall unshaken when they mellow be.

Most necessary 'tis that we forget

To pay ourselves what to ourselves is debt.

What to ourselves in passion we propose,

The passion ending, doth the purpose lose.

The violence of either grief or joy

Their own enactures with themselves destroy.

Where joy most revels, grief doth most lament;

Grief joys, joy grieves, on slender accident.

Stop, don't finish it.

A love like that would be treason in my heart.

Let me be damned if I take a second husband —

nobody marries a second but the woman who

killed the first.

[Aside] Bitter as poison. Bitter as poison.

The reasons that push a woman into a second

marriage are sordid calculations of profit, never love.

I murder my dead husband a second time every

time a second husband kisses me in bed.

I believe you mean what you're saying now.

But we often break what we've resolved.

Good intentions are only memory's servants — violently born and feeble in practice.

They cling to us now like unripe fruit on a branch, but they'll fall of their own accord once they've ripened.

It's inevitable that we forget to pay ourselves what we owe ourselves.

What we promise in a moment of passion loses its force once the passion ends.

Grief and joy alike destroy their own resolutions by their own violence: where joy laughs loudest, grief wails hardest, and the smallest accident tips one into the other.

This world is not for aye; nor 'tis not strange
That even our loves should with our fortunes
change,
For 'tis a question left us yet to prove,
Whether love lead fortune, or else fortune love.
The great man down, you mark his favourite
flies,
The poor advanc'd makes friends of enemies;
And hitherto doth love on fortune tend:
For who not needs shall never lack a friend,
And who in want a hollow friend doth try,
Directly seasons him his enemy.
But orderly to end where I begun,
Our wills and fates do so contrary run
That our devices still are overthrown.
Our thoughts are ours, their ends none of our
own.
So think thou wilt no second husband wed,
But die thy thoughts when thy first lord is dead.

PLAYER QUEEN

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

Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife,
If, once a widow, ever I be wife.

To Ophelia.

HAMLET

This world isn't permanent, and it isn't
surprising that even our loves change along with
our fortunes.
It's still an open question whether love steers
fortune or fortune steers love.
When a great man falls, watch his favourites
run; when a poor man rises, his enemies
suddenly become his friends.
So far, love follows money: the man who needs
nothing never lacks for friends, and the man in
need who tests a false friend turns him instantly
into an enemy.
But to finish where I started: our wishes and our
fates pull so hard in opposite directions that our
plans are always wrecked.
The thoughts are ours; the outcomes never are.

So you think now you'll never remarry — but let
that thought die when your first husband does.

Then let the earth give me no food and heaven
no light, let pleasure and rest be locked away
from me day and night, let my trust and hope
curdle into despair, let a hermit's cell in prison
be the whole of my world, let every misery that
drains the joy out of a face come and destroy
whatever I hope for.
Here and in the world to come, let endless
suffering hunt me down if, once a widow, I ever
become a wife again.

If she should break it now.

PLAYER KING

'Tis deeply sworn.

Sweet, leave me here awhile.

My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile
The tedious day with sleep.

Sleeps.

PLAYER QUEEN

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

Exit.

HAMLET

Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN

The lady protests too much, methinks.

HAMLET

O, but she'll keep her word.

KING

Have you heard the argument?

Is there no
offence in't?

HAMLET

No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest;

no
offence i' th' world.

KING

[To Ophelia] If she breaks that promise now —

That's a solemn oath.

Sweetheart, leave me here for a while.

I'm feeling heavy; I'd like to sleep off this long
day.

Let sleep soothe your mind,
and may nothing ever come between the two of
us.

Madam, how do you like this play?

The lady swears too much, I think.

Oh, but she'll keep her word.

Have you heard the plot?

Is there anything offensive in it?

No, no, they're only joking — poisoning in fun.

Nothing offensive at all.

What do you call the play?

HAMLET

The Mousetrap.

Marry, how?

Tropically.

This

play is the image of a
murder done in Vienna.

Gonzago is the Duke's
name, his wife Baptista:
you shall see anon;

'tis a knavish piece of work:
but what o' that?

Your majesty, and we that have free souls, it
touches us not.

Let the
gall'd jade wince; our withers are unwrung.

Enter Lucianus.

HAMLET

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

OPHELIA

You are a good chorus, my lord.

HAMLET

What do you call the play?

The Mousetrap.

How so, you ask?

In a figurative sense.

This play is a picture of a murder committed in
Vienna.

The duke's name is Gonzago, his wife's Baptista.

You'll see in a moment.

It's a nasty piece of business — but so what?

Your Majesty and the rest of us with clear
consciences have nothing to worry about.

Let the horse with the saddle sore flinch; our
backs aren't rubbed raw.

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

You'd make a good narrator, my lord.

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

OPHELIA

You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET

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

OPHELIA

Still better, and worse.

HAMLET

So you mistake your husbands.—

Begin,
murderer.

Pox, leave thy damnable
faces, and begin.

Come, the croaking raven doth
bellow for revenge.

LUCIANUS

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

Pours the poison into the sleeper's ears.

I could provide the commentary between you
and your lover, if I could watch the two of you
going at it like puppets.

You're sharp, my lord, very sharp.

It would cost you a groan to blunt my edge.

Better and worse at once.

That's exactly how you take your husbands, for
better or worse.
— Begin, murderer.

Damn it, stop pulling those hideous faces and
get on with it.

Come on — the croaking raven is bellowing for
revenge.

Black thoughts, ready hands, the right drug, the
right moment, the time conspiring with me, and
no living creature watching.
You foul brew, gathered from midnight weeds,
three times cursed and three times poisoned by
the goddess of witchcraft — let your natural
venom and deadly power seize a healthy life this
instant.

HAMLET

He poisons him i' th' garden for's estate.

name's Gonzago.

The story

is extant, and written in very choice Italian.

His

shall see anon how

the murderer gets the love of Gonzago's wife.

You

He poisons him in the garden to get his property.

The dead man's name is Gonzago.

The story still exists, written in very elegant Italian.

In a moment you'll see how the murderer wins the love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA

The King rises.

The King is getting up.

HAMLET

What, frightened with false fire?

What — frightened by a blank shot?

QUEEN

How fares my lord?

How are you, my lord?

POLONIUS

Give o'er the play.

Stop the play.

KING

Give me some light.

Bring me a light.

Away.

Let's go. —

All.

ALL: Lights, lights, lights!

Lights, lights, lights.

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio.

HAMLET

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play;

Let the wounded deer go off and weep; the unhurt one can keep playing.

For some must watch, while some must sleep,
So runs the world away.
Would not this, sir, and a forest of feathers, if
the rest of my
fortunes turn Turk with me; with two Provincial
roses on my razed
shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry of players, sir?

HORATIO
Half a share.

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

HORATIO
You might have rhymed.

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

Didst
perceive?

HORATIO
Very well, my lord.

HAMLET
Upon the talk of the poisoning?

HORATIO
I did very well note him.

Some of us stay awake while others sleep —
that's how the world goes.
Wouldn't this performance of mine, sir, plus a
hatful of feathers and a pair of rosettes on my
slashed shoes, get me a partnership in a troupe
of actors, if the rest of my luck turns against
me?

Half a share.

A whole one, I say.
Because you know, my dear friend, this kingdom
was stripped of Jove himself, and now the one
who reigns here is a very, very — peacock.

You could have rhymed it.

Oh, good Horatio, I'd stake a thousand pounds
on the ghost's word now.
Did you see it?

Very clearly, my lord.

When the poisoning was mentioned?

I watched him very closely.

HAMLET

Ah, ha!

Come, some music.

Come, the recorders.

For if the king like not the comedy,

Why then, belike he likes it not, perdie.

Come, some music.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

GUILDENSTERN

Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with you.

HAMLET

Sir, a whole history.

GUILDENSTERN

The King, sir—

HAMLET

Ay, sir, what of him?

GUILDENSTERN

Is in his retirement, marvellous distempered.

HAMLET

With drink, sir?

GUILDENSTERN

No, my lord; rather with choler.

HAMLET

Your wisdom should show itself more richer to
signify this to the
doctor,

Aha!

Come on, music.

Bring the recorders.

Because if the King doesn't like the comedy,

then, well, presumably he doesn't like it.

Come on, music.

My good lord, allow me a word with you.

Sir, you can have a whole history.

The King, sir —

Yes, sir, what about him?

— has gone to his rooms, in a terrible state.

From drink, sir?

No, my lord, more from rage.

It would be wiser of you to report that to his
doctor.

for me to put him to his purgation would
perhaps plunge him
into far more choler.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

I am tame, sir, pronounce.

GUILDENSTERN

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

HAMLET

You are welcome.

GUILDENSTERN

Nay, good my lord, this courtesy is not of the
right breed.

If it shall
please you to make me a wholesome answer, I
will do your mother's
commandment;

if not, your pardon and my
return shall be the end of my
business.

HAMLET

Sir, I cannot.

If I gave him a purge, it might well throw him
into far more rage.

My good lord, put your remarks in some kind of
order and stop lurching away from my business.

I'm quiet, sir. Speak.

The Queen your mother, in great distress, has
sent me to you.

You're very welcome.

No, my good lord, this politeness isn't the
genuine article.

If you're willing to give me a sane answer, I'll
carry out your mother's instructions;

if not, then your permission to leave and my
going will be the end of my errand.

Sir, I can't.

GUILDENSTERN

What, my lord?

Can't what, my lord?

HAMLET

Make you a wholesome answer.

Give you a sane answer.

My wit's

My mind is sick.

diseased.

But such answers as I can give, you're welcome
to — or rather, as you say, my mother is.

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.

So no more of this; to the point.

My

My mother, you say —

mother, you say,—

ROSENCRANTZ

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

This is what she says: your behaviour has left her
astonished and bewildered.

HAMLET

O wonderful son, that can so stonish a mother!

What a marvellous son, who can astonish his
mother like that!

But is there no sequel
at the heels of this mother's admiration?

But isn't there something that comes trailing
after this maternal astonishment?

ROSENCRANTZ

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

She wants to speak with you in her room before
you go to bed.

HAMLET

We shall obey, were she ten times our mother.

We shall obey, even if she were ten times over
our mother.

Have you any further
trade with us?

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET

And so I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ

Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper?

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

HAMLET

Sir, I lack advancement.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

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

Re-enter the Players with recorders.

HAMLET

O, the recorders.

Do you have any more business with us?

My lord, you used to be fond of me.

And I still am — I swear it by these hands of
mine, thieving fingers and all.

My good lord, what's the cause of your trouble?

You're certainly locking yourself out of your own
freedom if you refuse to tell your griefs to a
friend.

Sir, I'm not being promoted.

How can that be, when the King himself has
publicly named you his successor in Denmark?

Yes, sir, but 'while the grass grows' — the rest of
that proverb is a bit stale.

Ah, the recorders.

Let me see one.—

Let me see one. —

To withdraw

[Taking Guildenstern aside] Why are you circling to get downwind of me, as if you were driving me into a net?

with you, why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?

GUILDENSTERN

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

Oh my lord, if I'm being too forward in my duty, it's because my affection is too clumsy.

HAMLET

I do not well understand that.

I don't quite follow that.

Will you play

Will you play on this pipe?

upon this pipe?

GUILDENSTERN

My lord, I cannot.

My lord, I can't.

HAMLET

I pray you.

Please.

GUILDENSTERN

Believe me, I cannot.

Believe me, I can't.

HAMLET

I do beseech you.

I'm begging you.

GUILDENSTERN

I know no touch of it, my lord.

I don't know the first thing about it, my lord.

HAMLET

'Tis as easy as lying:

It's as easy as lying.

govern these ventages with
your finger and
thumb, give it breath with your mouth, and it
will discourse most
eloquent music.

Look you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN

But these cannot I command to any utterance of
harmony.

I have not the
skill.

HAMLET

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

You would play
upon me;

you would seem to know my stops;

you would pluck out the heart
of my mystery;

you would sound me from my
lowest note to the top of my
compass;

Cover these holes with your fingers and thumb,
blow into it with your mouth, and it will speak
the most eloquent music.

Look — these are the stops.

But I can't make them produce any harmony.

I don't have the skill.

Well then, look how worthless a thing you make
of me.

You want to play me;

you pretend to know where my stops are;

you want to pull the heart out of my secret;

you'd sound me from my lowest note to the top
of my range.

and there is much music, excellent
voice, in this little
organ, yet cannot you make it speak.

'Sblood, do
you think I am easier
to be played on than a pipe?

Call me what
instrument you will, though
you can fret me, you cannot play upon me.

Enter Polonius.

HAMLET
God bless you, sir.

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

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

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

HAMLET
Methinks it is like a weasel.

POLONIUS
It is backed like a weasel.

HAMLET
Or like a whale.

POLONIUS

And there's a lot of music, a fine voice, in this
little instrument here — yet you can't make it
speak.

God's blood, do you think I'm easier to play than
a pipe?

Call me any instrument you like: you can rattle
me, but you can't play me.

God bless you, sir.

My lord, the Queen wants to speak with you,
right away.

Do you see that cloud over there, almost shaped
like a camel?

By the mass, it really is like a camel.

It looks like a weasel to me.

It's got the back of a weasel.

Or like a whale.

Very like a whale.

Very like a whale.

HAMLET

Then will I come to my mother by and by.—

Then I'll come to my mother shortly.

fool me to the top of my
bent.—

They

— They stretch my patience as far as it will go.

I will come by and by.

— I'll come shortly.

POLONIUS

I will say so.

I'll tell her so.

Exit.

HAMLET

By and by is easily said.

'Shortly' is easy to say.

Leave me, friends.

Leave me, friends.

Exeunt all but Hamlet.

HAMLET

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes
out
Contagion to this world.

This is the witching hour of the night, when
graveyards gape open and hell itself breathes
contagion out into the world.

Now could I drink hot
blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.

Right now I could drink hot blood and do things
so bitter that daylight would shudder to look at
them.

Soft now, to my
mother.

Steady — now to my mother.

O heart, lose not thy nature; let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom:
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.

Heart, don't lose your nature; never let Nero's
soul into this solid chest.
Let me be cruel but not unnatural.

I will speak daggers to her, but use none;
My tongue and soul in this be hypocrites.

How in my words somever she be shent,
To give them seals never, my soul, consent.

Exit.

I'll speak knives to her, but use none.
In this my tongue and my soul will be
hypocrites:

however much my words wound her, may my
soul never agree to make them real.

Act 3, Scene 3

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Claudius orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to escort Hamlet to England, and Polonius leaves to hide behind the tapestry in Gertrude's room. Alone, Claudius admits to murdering his brother and tries to pray, but realizes he cannot repent while still keeping the crown and the queen he killed for.

Hamlet finds him kneeling and draws his sword, then sheathes it — killing Claudius at prayer would send him to heaven — and leaves for his mother's room, not knowing Claudius never actually prayed.

Original

Translation

Enter King, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

I like him not,
nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range.

Therefore prepare you,

I your commission will forthwith dispatch,
And he to England shall along with you.
The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so near us as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.

GUILDENSTERN

We will ourselves provide.

I don't like him,

and it isn't safe for us to let his madness run
loose.

So get ready.

I'll have your travel papers drawn up
immediately, and he'll go to England with you.
Our position as king can't tolerate a danger this
close, and his fits of lunacy breed a new one
every hour.

We'll get ourselves ready.

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

ROSENCRANTZ

The single and peculiar life is bound
With all the strength and armour of the mind,
To keep itself from 'noyance;
but much more
That spirit upon whose weal depend and rest
The lives of many.

The cease of majesty
Dies not alone; but like a gulf doth draw
What's near it with it.

It is a massy wheel
Fix'd on the summit of the highest mount,
To whose huge spokes ten thousand lesser
things
Are mortis'd and adjoin'd;
which when it falls,
Each small annexment, petty consequence,
Attends the boist'rous ruin.

Never alone
Did the King sigh, but with a general groan.

KING

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

ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.
We will haste us.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Enter Polonius.

It's a sacred duty to protect the countless
people who live and depend on your Majesty.

Any ordinary private man is bound to use every
bit of his mental strength and armor to keep
himself safe from harm —
but far more so a man on whose well-being the
lives of thousands rest.

When a king dies, he doesn't die alone: he pulls
everything near him down like a whirlpool.

He's a massive wheel mounted at the top of the
highest mountain, with ten thousand smaller
parts fitted and pinned to its enormous spokes;

when it falls, every attachment and small fitting
comes crashing down with it.

A king has never sighed without the whole
country groaning.

Please, get ready for this quick voyage.
We're going to put chains on this danger, which
is running around far too freely.
ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN: We'll
hurry.

POLONIUS

My lord, he's going to his mother's closet.
Behind the arras I'll convey myself
To hear the process.

I'll warrant she'll tax him

home,
And as you said, and wisely was it said,
'Tis meet that some more audience than a
mother,
Since nature makes them partial, should
o'erhear
The speech of vantage.

Fare you well, my liege,

I'll call upon you ere you go to bed,
And tell you what I know.

KING

Thanks, dear my lord.

Exit Polonius.

KING

O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,—
A brother's murder!

Pray can I not,

Though inclination be as sharp as will:
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
And both neglect.

My lord, he's on his way to his mother's room.
I'll hide myself behind the tapestry and listen to
how it goes.

I promise you she'll take him to task.

And as you said — and it was wisely said — it
makes sense that someone besides his mother
should overhear the conversation from a good
vantage point, since a mother is naturally
biased.

Goodbye, my king.

I'll come to you before you go to bed and tell you
what I've learned.

Thank you, my lord.

My crime stinks; the smell of it reaches heaven.
It carries the oldest curse of all — a brother's
murder.

I can't pray, though I want to as badly as I
intend to.

My guilt is stronger than my resolve, and like a
man with two tasks at once I stand there
wondering which to start with, and do neither.

What if this cursed hand
Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens
To wash it white as snow?

Whereto serves mercy
But to confront the visage of offence?
And what's in prayer but this twofold force,
To be forestalled ere we come to fall,
Or pardon'd being down?

Then I'll look up.
My fault is past.

But O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn?

Forgive me my foul murder!
That cannot be; since I am still possess'd
Of those effects for which I did the murder,—
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardon'd and retain th'offence?
In the corrupted currents of this world
Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
Buys out the law.

But 'tis not so above;
There is no shuffling,
there the action lies
In his true nature, and we ourselves compell'd
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence.

What then?
What rests?
Try what repentance can.
What can it not?

What if this cursed hand of mine were caked in a
layer of my brother's blood thicker than the
hand itself — isn't there enough rain in the
merciful heavens to wash it white as snow?

What is mercy for, if not to face down crime?

And what are the two powers of prayer, if not to
stop us before we fall and to pardon us once we
have?

Then I'll look up.

My sin is behind me.

But — what words could I possibly pray?

"Forgive me my filthy murder"?

That won't work, since I still have everything I
committed the murder to get: my crown, my
ambition satisfied, my queen.

Can a man be forgiven and keep what he stole?
In this world's crooked dealings, a criminal's
gold-filled hand can shove justice aside, and
we've all seen the stolen money itself buy off the
law.

But it isn't like that up above.

There's no dodging there.

There the deed is seen exactly as it is, and we're
forced to testify against ourselves, face to face
with our own crimes.

So what now?

What's left?

Try what repentance can do.

What can't it do?

Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?

O wretched state!

O bosom black as death!

O limed soul, that struggling to be free,

Art more engag'd!

Help, angels!

Make assay:

Bow, stubborn knees; and heart with strings of steel,

Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.

All may be well.

Retires and kneels.

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET

Now might I do it pat, now he is praying.

And now I'll do't.

And so he goes to heaven;

And so am I reveng'd.

That would be scann'd:

A villain kills my father, and for that

I, his sole son, do this same villain send

To heaven.

O, this is hire and salary, not revenge.

He took my father grossly, full of bread,

With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May;

And how his audit stands, who knows save heaven?

But in our circumstance and course of thought,

'Tis heavy with him.

And yet what good is it, when a man can't repent?

What a miserable state I'm in.

My heart is as black as death.

My soul is like a bird caught in glue, struggling and getting more stuck the harder it fights.

Help me, angels —

let me try.

Bend, you stubborn knees; and you, my heart, with your steel cords, go soft as a newborn baby's muscles.

It may all come right yet.

I could do it easily right now, while he's praying.

I'll do it now —

and he goes straight to heaven.

And that's my revenge?

That needs a closer look.

A villain murders my father, and in return I, my father's only son, send that same villain to heaven.

That's doing him a favor and paying him for it.

That isn't revenge.

He caught my father coarse and unready, stuffed with dinner, with all his sins in full bloom, lush as May.

Nobody but heaven knows how his account stands, but by everything we can see and reason out, it's heavy against him.

And am I then reveng'd,
To take him in the purging of his soul,
When he is fit and season'd for his passage?

No.

Up, sword, and know thou a more horrid hent:

When he is drunk asleep; or in his rage,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed,
At gaming, swearing; or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't,
Then trip him, that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damn'd and black
As hell, whereto it goes.

My mother stays.

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days.

Exit.

HAMLET

The King rises and advances.

KING

My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.

Words without thoughts never to heaven go.

Exit.

So am I really avenged if I take this man while
he's cleansing his soul, when he's prepared and
ready for the journey?

No.

Back in the sheath, sword, and wait for a more
terrible moment:

when he's passed out drunk, or in a rage, or in
the incestuous pleasures of his bed, gambling,
swearing, doing something with no trace of
salvation in it.

Then knock his legs out from under him, so his
heels kick at heaven and his soul is as damned
and black as the hell it's falling into.

My mother's waiting.

This medicine only stretches out your sick days a
little longer.

The King gets up from his knees and comes
forward.

My words go flying upward; my thoughts stay
down here.

Words without thoughts behind them never
reach heaven.

Act 3, Scene 4

ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

In Gertrude's private room, Hamlet confronts his mother so violently that she fears for her life;
when Polonius cries out from behind the tapestry, Hamlet stabs through it and kills him, hoping it

was Claudius. He forces Gertrude to compare portraits of her two husbands until she admits her guilt, and the Ghost appears — visible to Hamlet but not to her — to sharpen his revenge. Hamlet leaves dragging Polonius's body, warning her not to return to Claudius's bed and revealing that he knows the England trip is a trap.

Original

Translation

Enter Queen and Polonius.

POLONIUS

He will come straight.

Look you lay home to him,

Tell him his pranks have been too broad to bear
with,

And that your Grace hath screen'd and stood
between

Much heat and him.

I'll silence me e'en here.

Pray you be round with him.

Within.

HAMLET

Mother, mother, mother.

QUEEN

I'll warrant you,

Fear me not.

Withdraw, I hear him coming.

Polonius goes behind the arras.

Enter Hamlet.

HAMLET

Now, mother, what's the matter?

QUEEN

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

HAMLET

He'll be here any moment.

Make sure you come down hard on him.

Tell him his behaviour has been too outrageous
to put up with, and that you have shielded him
and stood between him and a great deal of
anger.

I'll keep quiet right here.

Please, be blunt with him.

[Within] Mother, mother, mother.

I promise you I will.

Don't worry about me.

Get out of sight — I hear him coming.

Now then, mother, what's this about?

Hamlet, you have badly offended your father.

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?

HAMLET

No, by the rood, not so.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's
wife,

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

QUEEN

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

HAMLET

Come, come, and sit you down,

you shall not
budge.

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN

Mother, you have badly offended my father.

Come now, you're answering me with a foolish
tongue.

Go on, you're questioning me with a wicked one.

What has got into you, Hamlet?

What's the trouble now?

Have you forgotten who I am?

No — by the cross, not at all.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's
wife, and — I wish it weren't true — you are my
mother.

All right, then I'll bring in people who can make
you listen.

Come on, sit down.

You're not going anywhere.

You don't leave until I've held up a mirror where
you can see the deepest part of yourself.

What wilt thou do?

Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

Behind.

POLONIUS

What, ho! help, help, help!

HAMLET

How now? A rat? [_Draws._]

Dead for a ducat, dead!

Makes a pass through the arras.

Behind.

POLONIUS

O, I am slain!

Falls and dies.

QUEEN

O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

Is it the King?

Draws forth Polonius.

QUEEN

O what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET

A bloody deed.

Almost as bad, good mother,

As kill a king and marry with his brother.

QUEEN

As kill a king?

What are you going to do?

You're not going to murder me?

Help, help!

[Behind the tapestry] Help! Help, help!

What's that? A rat? [Draws his sword]

I'll bet a gold coin it's dead — dead!

[Behind the tapestry] Oh, I'm killed!

God, what have you done?

I don't know myself.

Is it the King?

Oh, what a reckless, bloody thing this is!

A bloody thing —

almost as bad, dear mother, as killing a king and
marrying his brother.

Killing a king?

HAMLET

Ay, lady, 'twas my word.—

To Polonius.

HAMLET

Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!

I took thee for thy better.

Take thy fortune,

Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.—

Leave wringing of your hands.

Peace, sit you

down,

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

If it be made of penetrable stuff;

If damned custom have not braz'd it so,

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN

What have I done, that thou dar'st wag thy
tongue

In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET

Such an act

That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,

Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose

From the fair forehead of an innocent love,

And sets a blister there.

Makes marriage vows

As false as dicers' oaths.

Yes, madam, that's what I said.

[To Polonius] You miserable, rash, interfering
fool, goodbye.

I thought you were someone better.

Take what your luck brought you; you've learned
that being too busy can be dangerous.

— Stop wringing your hands.

Be still, sit down, and let me wring your heart
instead — which I will, if it's still made of
anything that can be pierced, if habitual
wickedness hasn't plated it in brass so nothing
can get through.

What have I done, that you dare speak to me in a
voice as ugly as this?

An act that smears the grace and the blush off
modesty, that turns virtue into a hypocrite, that
pulls the rose from the fair forehead of innocent
love and leaves a sore there instead.

It makes wedding vows as worthless as a
gambler's promises.

O such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words.

Heaven's face doth glow,
Yea this solidity and compound mass,
With tristful visage, as against the doom,
Is thought-sick at the act.

QUEEN

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

HAMLET

Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.
See what a grace was seated on this brow,
Hyperion's curls, the front of Jove himself,
An eye like Mars, to threaten and command,
A station like the herald Mercury
New lighted on a heaven-kissing hill:

A combination and a form indeed,
Where every god did seem to set his seal,
To give the world assurance of a man.
This was your husband.

Look you now what
follows.

Here is your husband, like a mildew'd ear
Blasting his wholesome brother.

Have you eyes?
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed,
And batten on this moor?

A deed that tears the very soul out of the
marriage contract and turns religion into empty
noise.

Heaven itself is flushed with anger, and even the
solid earth looks sick with grief, as though
Judgement Day had come, at the thought of
what you did.

Oh God, what act, that roars so loudly before
you've even said what it is?

Look here at this portrait, and at this one — the
painted likenesses of two brothers.
Look at the grace that sat on this face: curls like
the sun god's, the forehead of Jove himself, an
eye like Mars, made to threaten and to
command, and a bearing like Mercury the
messenger just landing on a hilltop that touches
the sky.

Every god seemed to have stamped his approval
on that combination, to guarantee to the world
that this was a man.
That was your husband.

Now look at what came next.

Here is your husband, like a mildewed head of
grain rotting the healthy one beside it.
Do you have eyes?
How could you stop grazing on that beautiful
mountain and stuff yourself on this swamp?

Ha! have you eyes?

You cannot call it love; for at your age
The hey-day in the blood is tame, it's humble,
And waits upon the judgement:

and what

judgement

Would step from this to this?

Sense sure you

have,

Else could you not have motion; but sure that
sense

Is apoplex'd, for madness would not err
Nor sense to ecstasy was ne'er so thrall'd
But it reserv'd some quantity of choice
To serve in such a difference.

What devil was't

That thus hath cozen'd you at hoodman-blind?
Eyes without feeling, feeling without sight,
Ears without hands or eyes, smelling sans all,
Or but a sickly part of one true sense
Could not so mope.

O shame! where is thy

blush?

Rebellious hell,
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax,
And melt in her own fire.

Do you have eyes at all?

You can't call it love — at your age the fever in
the blood has quieted, it behaves, it follows
judgement.

And what judgement would step down from this
man to this one?

You have senses, obviously, or you couldn't
move — but those senses must be paralysed,
because not even madness makes a mistake like
this.

Madness never enslaved the senses so
completely that it couldn't tell a difference this
large.

What devil tricked you so badly in this game of
blind man's bluff?

Eyes without touch, touch without sight, ears
without hands or eyes, smell alone, even one
sick fragment of one working sense could not
blunder like this.

Shame, where is your blush?

If hell can riot in the bones of a woman your age,
then let chastity in the young melt like wax in its
own fire.

Proclaim no shame

When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,
And reason panders will.

QUEEN

O Hamlet, speak no more.

Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,
And there I see such black and grained spots
As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET

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

QUEEN

O speak to me no more;
These words like daggers enter in mine ears;
No more, sweet Hamlet.

HAMLET

A murderer and a villain;
A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
Of your precedent lord.

A vice of kings,

A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
That from a shelf the precious diadem stole
And put it in his pocket!

QUEEN

No more.

HAMLET

A king of shreds and patches!—

Say there's no shame in giving in to desire, when
the frost burns as hot as the flame and reason
itself pimps for lust.

Oh Hamlet, stop.

You're turning my eyes around to look into my
own soul, and I see stains there so black and so
deep-dyed that they'll never wash out.

No, but to go on living in the greasy sweat of a
filthy bed, soaked in corruption, whispering
endearments and making love in that pigsty —

Oh, stop talking to me.

These words go into my ears like knives.
No more, sweet Hamlet.

— a murderer and a criminal.

A lowlife not worth a twentieth of a tenth of the
husband you had before.

A parody of a king.

A pickpocket who stole a whole empire, who
lifted the priceless crown off a shelf and slipped
it into his pocket —

Stop.

— a king made of scraps and rags! —

Enter Ghost.

HAMLET

Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,
You heavenly guards!

What would your gracious
figure?

QUEEN

Alas, he's mad.

HAMLET

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

GHOST

Do not forget.

This visitation
Is but to whet thy almost blunted purpose.
But look, amazement on thy mother sits.
O step between her and her fighting soul.

Conceit in weakest bodies strongest works.

Speak to her, Hamlet.

HAMLET

How is it with you, lady?

QUEEN

Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?

Save me, and cover me with your wings, you
guardian angels!

What do you want, gracious figure?

God help him, he's mad.

Have you come to scold your slow son, who has
let time and feeling drift and failed to carry out
your terrible command?
Speak!

Don't forget.

I've come only to sharpen your purpose, which
has almost gone blunt.
But look — your mother is horrified.
Get between her and the war going on in her
soul.

Imagination works hardest in the weakest
bodies.

Talk to her, Hamlet.

How are you, madam?

How are you?

You're staring at empty air and holding a
conversation with nothing.

Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep,
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hairs, like life in excrescences,
Start up and stand an end.

O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience.

Whereon do you look?

HAMLET

On him, on him!

Look you how pale he glares,
His form and cause conjoin'd, preaching to
stones,
Would make them capable.—

Do not look upon
me,
Lest with this piteous action you convert
My stern effects.

Then what I have to do
Will want true colour; tears perchance for
blood.

QUEEN

To whom do you speak this?

HAMLET

Do you see nothing there?

QUEEN

Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.

HAMLET

Your spirit is looking wildly out through your
eyes, and like soldiers jolted awake by an alarm,
your hair is standing up on end as if it were alive.

Oh, my gentle son, sprinkle cool patience on the
fever burning in you.

What are you looking at?

At him, at him!

Look how pale he glares. His shape and his
grievance together would move stones to act, if
he preached to them.

— Don't look at me, or the pity on your face will
soften what I have to do,

and then my revenge will lose its true colour —
I'll be shedding tears instead of blood.

Who are you saying this to?

You see nothing there?

Nothing at all — though I can see everything
that's there.

Nor did you nothing hear?

QUEEN

No, nothing but ourselves.

HAMLET

Why, look you there!

look how it steals away!

My father, in his habit as he liv'd!

Look where he goes even now out at the portal.

Exit Ghost.

QUEEN

This is the very coinage of your brain.

This bodiless creation ecstasy

Is very cunning in.

HAMLET

Ecstasy!

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,

And makes as healthful music.

It is not madness

That I have utter'd.

Bring me to the test,

And I the matter will re-word; which madness

Would gambol from.

Mother, for love of grace,

Lay not that flattering unction to your soul

That not your trespass, but my madness speaks.

It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,

Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,

Infects unseen.

Confess yourself to heaven,

And you heard nothing?

Nothing but the two of us.

Look, there!

Look how it slips away!

My father, dressed exactly as he was alive!

Look, he's going out through the doorway right now.

This is entirely your own mind's invention.

Madness is very good at manufacturing figures out of nothing.

Madness!

My pulse keeps time as steadily as yours, and

beats just as healthily.

What I've said is not insanity.

Test me: I'll repeat the whole thing word for

word, and madness would go skipping off the point.

Mother, for the love of God, don't soothe your

soul with the flattering idea that it's my

madness talking and not your own sin.

That will only close a thin skin over the ulcer,

while the infection eats away underneath, out of sight.

Confess yourself to heaven.

Repent what's past, avoid what is to come;

And do not spread the compost on the weeds,
To make them ranker.

Forgive me this my virtue;

For in the fatness of these pury times
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg,
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

QUEEN

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain.

HAMLET

O throw away the worser part of it,
And live the purer with the other half.
Good night.

But go not to mine uncle's bed.

Assume a virtue, if you have it not.

That monster custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits evil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery
That aptly is put on.

Refrain tonight,

And that shall lend a kind of easiness
To the next abstinence.

The next more easy;

For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency.

Repent what you've done, and stay clear of
what's coming.

Don't pour manure on the weeds and make
them grow thicker.

Forgive me for being decent — in these bloated,
corrupt times decency has to beg pardon from
vice, and bow and plead for permission to do it
any good.

Oh Hamlet, you've split my heart in two.

Then throw away the worse half and live more
cleanly with the other.

Good night —

but don't go to my uncle's bed.

Put on the appearance of virtue, if you haven't
got the real thing.

That monster habit, which eats up all our better
instincts when it comes to bad behaviour, is at
least an angel in this one way: with good and
decent actions, it also supplies a uniform that
fits easily.

Hold back tonight, and that will make the next
abstinence a little easier —

and the next easier still.

Repetition can almost recast a person's nature;
it can rein in the devil, or throw him out
altogether, with astonishing force.

Once more, good
night,
And when you are desirous to be bles'd,
I'll blessing beg of you.

For this same lord

Pointing to Polonius.

HAMLET

I do repent;
but heaven hath pleas'd it so,
To punish me with this, and this with me,
That I must be their scourge and minister.
I will bestow him, and will answer well
The death I gave him.
So again, good night.
I must be cruel, only to be kind:
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.
One word more, good lady.

QUEEN

What shall I do?

HAMLET

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do:
Let the bloat King tempt you again to bed,
Pinch wanton on your cheek, call you his
mouse,
And let him, for a pair of reechy kisses,
Or paddling in your neck with his damn'd
fingers,
Make you to ravel all this matter out,
That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft.
'Twere good you let him know,

Once more, good night — and when you want to
be blessed, I'll come and ask your blessing.

As for this gentleman here,

I am sorry —
but heaven has arranged it this way, to punish
me with him and him with me, making me
heaven's whip and its agent.
I'll dispose of the body and answer properly for
the death I caused.
So — good night again.
I have to be cruel only in order to be kind.
This is the bad beginning; worse is still to come.
One more thing, madam.

What should I do?

Absolutely not what I'm about to tell you to do.
Let the bloated King coax you into bed again,
pinch your cheek suggestively, call you his pet,
and let him — for a couple of stale kisses, or a
bit of pawing at your neck with those damned
fingers — get you to unravel the whole thing and
tell him that I'm not really insane, only faking it.

Yes, you'd better let him know.

For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,
Such dear concernings hide?

Who would do so?

No, in despite of sense and secrecy,
Unpeg the basket on the house's top,
Let the birds fly, and like the famous ape,
To try conclusions, in the basket creep
And break your own neck down.

QUEEN

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

HAMLET

I must to England, you know that?

QUEEN

Alack,
I had forgot.

'Tis so concluded on.

HAMLET

There's letters seal'd: and my two schoolfellows,
Whom I will trust as I will adders fang'd,—
They bear the mandate, they must sweep my way
And marshal me to knavery.

Let it work;

For 'tis the sport to have the engineer
Hoist with his own petard, and 't shall go hard
But I will delve one yard below their mines
And blow them at the moon.

After all, what queen — beautiful, sober,
intelligent — would keep such important secrets
from a toad, a bat, a tomcat?

Who would do that?

No: forget good sense and secrecy, open the
cage on the roof, let the birds fly off, and then,
like the ape in the story, climb into the basket to
see what happens and break your own neck
falling out.

You can be certain of this: if words are made out
of breath and breath out of life, I have no life left
to breathe a word of what you've told me.

I have to go to England — you know that?

Oh no — I'd forgotten.

Yes, it's been decided.

There are sealed orders, and my two old
schoolmates — whom I trust the way I'd trust a
pair of fanged snakes — are carrying them.
They're to clear the path ahead of me and escort
me neatly into a trap.

Let it play out.

There's real pleasure in seeing the bomb-maker
blown up by his own bomb, and it'll be hard
luck if I can't dig a yard deeper than their tunnel
and blast them at the moon.

O, 'tis most sweet,
 When in one line two crafts directly meet.
 This man shall set me packing.
 I'll lug the guts into the neighbour room.
 Mother, good night.
 Indeed, this counsellor
 Is now most still, most secret, and most grave,
 Who was in life a foolish prating knave.
 Come, sir, to draw toward an end with you.
 Good night, mother.

It's a fine thing when two schemes run straight
 into each other on the same line.
 This man will get me moving.
 I'll haul the guts into the next room.
 Mother, good night.
 This councillor is now very quiet, very discreet,
 and very serious indeed, who in life was a
 chattering old fool.
 Come along, sir, let's finish up with you.
 Good night, mother.

Exit Hamlet dragging out Polonius.

Act 4, Scene 1

A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Immediately after the closet scene, Gertrude tells Claudius that Hamlet, in a fit of madness, stabbed Polonius through the tapestry believing him to be a rat. Claudius realizes he could have been the one killed and that he will be blamed for having failed to restrain Hamlet, so he orders Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to find the body and speeds up the plan to ship Hamlet to England. Gertrude protects her son by presenting the murder as pure insanity and stressing that he wept for it.

Original

Translation

Enter King, Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

There's matter in these sighs.

There's something behind these sighs.

These profound
 heaves
 You must translate;
 'tis fit we understand them.
 Where is your son?

You have to explain these deep groans of yours;
 we ought to understand them.
 Where is your son?

QUEEN

Bestow this place on us a little while.

To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who go out.

QUEEN

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen tonight!

KING

What, Gertrude?

How does Hamlet?

QUEEN

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier.

In his lawless fit
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
Whips out his rapier, cries 'A rat, a rat!'
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man.

KING

O heavy deed!

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

His liberty is full of threats to all;
To you yourself, to us, to everyone.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?

It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of
haunt
This mad young man.

But so much was our love
We would not understand what was most fit,

Give us the room for a few minutes.

Oh, my good lord, what I've seen tonight!

What is it, Gertrude?

How is Hamlet?

As mad as the sea and the wind when they're
fighting to see which is stronger.

In one of his uncontrollable fits he heard
something moving behind the tapestry, pulled
out his sword, shouted "A rat, a rat!" and in that
crazed delusion killed the good old man he
couldn't see.

What a terrible thing.

It would have happened to us, if we'd been
standing there.

Leaving him free is a threat to everybody — to
you, to me, to anyone.

How on earth are we going to answer for this
killing?

People will blame us: we should have had the
foresight to keep this disturbed young man on a
short leash, shut away, out of company.

But we loved him so much that we refused to
see what needed doing.

But like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life.

Where is he gone?

QUEEN

To draw apart the body he hath kill'd,
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore
Among a mineral of metals base,
Shows itself pure.

He weeps for what is done.

KING

O Gertrude, come away!
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch
But we will ship him hence,
and this vile deed
We must with all our majesty and skill
Both countenance and excuse.

Ho,

Guildenstern!

Re-enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd
him.
Go seek him out, speak fair, and bring the body
Into the chapel.

I pray you haste in this.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

We behaved like someone with a shameful
disease who keeps it secret rather than have it
known, and lets it eat him to the marrow.
Where has he gone?

To drag away the body of the man he killed.
Even in his madness a streak of pure feeling
shows through, the way a vein of gold shows in a
seam of cheap ore.
He's crying over what he's done.

Gertrude, come away.
The moment the sun touches the mountains
tomorrow we'll put him on a ship —
and we'll have to use all our royal authority and
cleverness to both back this ugly business and
explain it away.

— Guildenstern!

You two, take some extra men with you.
Hamlet in his madness has killed Polonius and
dragged the body out of his mother's room.
Go find him, speak to him gently, and take the
body to the chapel.
Please hurry.

What noise?

What's that noise?

Who calls on Hamlet?

Who's calling for Hamlet?

O, here they

Ah, here they come.

come.

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

My lord, what have you done with the body?

HAMLET

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

Mixed it back into the dirt it's related to.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

Tell us where it is, so we can take it out of there
and carry it to the chapel.

HAMLET

Do not believe it.

Don't count on it.

ROSENCRANTZ

Believe what?

Count on what?

HAMLET

That I can keep your counsel, and not mine own.

That I'd keep your secrets and not my own.

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

Besides, when a sponge asks a question — what
kind of answer should a king's son give it?

ROSENCRANTZ

Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

You think I'm a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET

Ay, sir; that soaks up the King's countenance,
his rewards, his
authorities.

But such officers do the King best
service in the end:

he
keeps them, like an ape, in the corner of his jaw;
first mouthed, to be
last swallowed:

when he needs what you have
gleaned, it is but
squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall be dry
again.

ROSENCRANTZ

I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET

I am glad of it.

A knavish speech sleeps in a
foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ

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

HAMLET

The body is with the King, but the King is not
with the body.

Yes, sir — one that soaks up the King's good
opinion, his handouts, his powers.

But officers like that serve him best in the end.

He parks you in the corner of his cheek the way
an ape stores food: first into the mouth, last to
be swallowed.

When he wants what you've collected for him,
all he has to do is squeeze, and you're a dry
sponge again.

I don't follow you, my lord.

Glad to hear it.

A sharp remark goes to sleep in a stupid ear.

My lord, you have to tell us where the body is
and come with us to the King.

The body is with the King, but the King is not
with the body.

The King is a thing —

The King

is a thing—

GUILDENSTERN

A thing, my lord!

A thing, my lord!

HAMLET

Of nothing.

— of nothing.

Bring me to him.

Take me to him.

Hide fox, and all

Hide and seek — run, everyone!

after.

Exeunt.

Act 4, Scene 3

ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Claudius admits he cannot punish Hamlet openly because the people love him, so exile must be dressed up as a considered decision. Hamlet is brought in and, instead of revealing where Polonius's body is, delivers a run of macabre jokes about worms eating kings and beggars alike, before being told he is being shipped to England. Alone, Claudius reveals that the sealed letters travelling with Hamlet order the English king to execute him on arrival.

Original

Translation

Enter King, attended.

KING

I have sent to seek him and to find the body.

How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!

Yet must not we put the strong law on him:

I've sent men to find him and to find the body.

How dangerous it is, letting this man run loose

—

and yet I can't come down on him with the full force of the law.

He's lov'd of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgement, but their eyes;
And where 'tis so, th'offender's scourge is
weigh'd,
But never the offence.

To bear all smooth and
even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause.

Diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are reliev'd,
Or not at all.

Enter Rosencrantz.

KING
How now?

What hath befall'n?

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

KING
But where is he?

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

KING
Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ
Ho, Guildenstern!
Bring in my lord.

The unstable crowd adores him, and crowds
judge with their eyes, not their minds;
where that's true, all anyone weighs is the
punishment, never the crime.

So to keep everything smooth, this sudden
shipping him abroad has to look like a decision
we've thought carefully about.

Desperate illnesses are cured by desperate
treatment, or not cured at all.

Well?
What's happened?

We can't get him to tell us where he's put the
body, my lord.

But where is he?

Outside, my lord, under guard, waiting to hear
what you want done.

Bring him in to us.

Guildenstern!
Bring my lord in.

Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern.

KING

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

KING

At supper?

Where?

HAMLET

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten.

A

certain convocation of
politic worms are e'en at him.

Your worm is your
only emperor for diet.

We fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat
ourselves for maggots.

Your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable
service,—two dishes,
but to one table.

That's the end.

KING

Alas, alas!

HAMLET

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

KING

Now, Hamlet — where is Polonius?

At dinner.

At dinner?

Where?

Not where he's eating, but where he's being
eaten.

A whole political convention of worms is
meeting over him right now.

When it comes to eating, the worm is the one
true emperor.

We fatten every other animal to fatten ourselves,
and we fatten ourselves for maggots.

A fat king and a skinny beggar are just two
courses off the same menu — two dishes, one
table.

That's how it ends.

God help us.

A man can fish with a worm that has eaten a
king, and then eat the fish that ate the worm.

What dost thou mean by this?

HAMLET

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

KING

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET

In heaven.

Send thither to see.

If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself.

But indeed, if you find him not within this month, you shall nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

To some Attendants.

KING

Go seek him there.

HAMLET

He will stay till you come.

Exeunt Attendants.

KING

What are you getting at?

Nothing, except to point out that a king can make a royal tour through a beggar's intestines.

Where is Polonius?

In heaven.

Send someone up to check.

If your messenger doesn't find him there, go look in the other place yourself.

But honestly, if you haven't found him within the month, you'll smell him as you climb the stairs to the lobby.

[To some attendants] Go and look for him there.

He'll wait for you. He's in no hurry.

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,—must send thee
hence
With fiery quickness.

Therefore prepare thyself;

The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
Th'associates tend, and everything is bent
For England.

HAMLET

For England?

KING

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good.

KING

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

HAMLET

I see a cherub that sees them.

But, come; for

England!

Farewell, dear

mother.

KING

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Hamlet, what you've done means you have to
leave here immediately — for your own safety,
which matters to us as much as we grieve over
the act itself.

So get ready.

The ship is waiting, the wind is right, your
companions are standing by, and everything is
set for England.

For England?

Yes, Hamlet.

Good.

It is good — if you knew what we intend by it.

I see an angel who knows what you intend.

But fine — off to England.

Goodbye, dear mother.

Your loving father, Hamlet.

My mother.

Father and mother is man and wife;
man and wife is one
flesh; and so, my mother.

Come, for England.

Exit.

KING

Follow him at foot.

Tempt him with speed
aboard;
Delay it not;

I'll have him hence tonight.
Away, for everything is seal'd and done
That else leans on th'affair.
Pray you make haste.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

KING

And England, if my love thou hold'st at aught,—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us,—thou mayst not coldly set
Our sovereign process,
which imports at full,
By letters conjuring to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet.
Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me.

My mother.

Father and mother are husband and wife;
husband and wife are one flesh; therefore, my
mother.

Come on — England.

Follow him closely.

Get him onto that ship quickly and don't let him
stall;

I want him out of Denmark tonight.
Go — everything else the business depends on is
signed and finished.
Please, hurry.

And you, England — if my goodwill is worth
anything to you (and my power should have
taught you that it is, since the scar the Danish
sword left on you still looks raw and you pay us
tribute out of plain fear) — you had better not
treat our royal order casually.

The letters spell it out completely: Hamlet is to
be put to death at once.

Do it, England.

He burns in my blood like a fever, and you have
to cure me.

Till I know 'tis done,

Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

Until I know it's done, nothing that happens to

me will feel like happiness at all.

Exit.

Act 4, Scene 4

A PLAIN IN DENMARK

Fortinbras marches his army across Denmark on the way to fight Poland, and Hamlet, being escorted to the ship for England, stops the Norwegian captain and learns that twenty thousand men are about to die over a worthless patch of land. Left alone, he delivers his last soliloquy, "How all occasions do inform against me," measuring his own inaction against their pointless courage. He ends by swearing that from now on his thoughts will be bloody or worth nothing — and then leaves Denmark without having acted at all.

Original

Translation

Enter Fortinbras and Forces marching.

FORTINBRAS

Go, Captain, from me greet the Danish king.

Tell him that by his license, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promis'd march
Over his kingdom.

You know the rendezvous.

If that his Majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye;
And let him know so.

CAPTAIN

I will do't, my lord.

FORTINBRAS

Go softly on.

Exeunt all but the Captain.

Enter Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern &c.

Captain, go and give the Danish king my
greetings.

Tell him that Fortinbras asks his permission for
the safe passage he promised us across his
kingdom.

You know where we're meeting.

If his Majesty wants anything from us, we'll
come and pay our respects in person
— tell him that too.

I'll see to it, my lord.

Move out slowly.

HAMLET

Good sir, whose powers are these?

CAPTAIN

They are of Norway, sir.

HAMLET

How purpos'd, sir, I pray you?

CAPTAIN

Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET

Who commands them, sir?

CAPTAIN

The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET

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

CAPTAIN

Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

HAMLET

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN

Yes, it is already garrison'd.

HAMLET

Excuse me, sir — whose troops are these?

Norway's, sir.

And what's their objective, if I may ask?

Some part of Poland.

Who's in command?

Old Norway's nephew, Fortinbras.

Are they going against the heart of Poland, sir, or
just some border territory?

To be honest, without any exaggeration: we're
going to take a little scrap of land that's worth
nothing except the name of it.

I wouldn't rent it for five ducats — five —
and if it were sold outright it wouldn't bring
Norway or Poland a penny more.

Then the Poles will never bother defending it.

They already have. There's a garrison on it.

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand
ducats

Will not debate the question of this straw!

This is th'imposthume of much wealth and
peace,

That inward breaks, and shows no cause
without

Why the man dies.

I humbly thank you, sir.

CAPTAIN

God b' wi' you, sir.

Exit.

ROSENCRANTZ

Will't please you go, my lord?

HAMLET

I'll be with you straight.

Go a little before.

Exeunt all but Hamlet.

HAMLET

How all occasions do inform against me,
And spur my dull revenge.

What is a man

If his chief good and market of his time

Be but to sleep and feed?

A beast, no more.

Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and godlike reason
To fust in us unus'd.

Two thousand lives and twenty thousand ducats
won't settle an argument over this worthless
straw.

This is what too much wealth and too much
peace produce — an abscess that bursts inside a
man and kills him with nothing showing on the
outside.

Thank you very much, sir.

God be with you, sir.

Shall we go, my lord?

I'll catch up with you.

Go on ahead.

Everything that happens accuses me and prods
my sluggish revenge along.

What is a man, if the best use he makes of his
time is sleeping and eating?

An animal, nothing more.

Surely whoever made us with such a wide-
ranging mind, able to look backward and
forward, didn't give us that power and that
godlike reasoning to let it rot inside us unused.

Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple
Of thinking too precisely on th'event,—
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part
wisdom
And ever three parts coward,—I do not know
Why yet I live to say this thing's to do,
Sith I have cause, and will, and strength, and
means
To do't.

Examples gross as earth exhort me,

Witness this army of such mass and charge,
Led by a delicate and tender prince,
Whose spirit, with divine ambition puff'd,
Makes mouths at the invisible event,
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,
Even for an eggshell.

Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake.

How stand I then,
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,
Excitements of my reason and my blood,
And let all sleep, while to my shame I see
The imminent death of twenty thousand men
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,
Which is not tomb enough and continent
To hide the slain?

Now, whether it's animal forgetfulness or some
cowardly hesitation that comes from analysing
the outcome too finely — a thought that, if you
cut it in four, is one part wisdom and three parts
fear — I don't know why I'm still alive saying
"this has to be done," when I have the reason,
the will, the strength and the means to do it.

Examples as huge and obvious as the earth push
me on.

Look at this army — enormous, expensive, led by
a refined young prince whose spirit is so swollen
with heaven-sent ambition that he makes faces
at the outcome he can't see, staking everything
mortal and uncertain against luck, death and
danger, and all for an eggshell.

Real greatness isn't refusing to move without a
great cause; it's finding a cause worth fighting
over in a straw, when honour is on the line.

So where does that leave me, with a murdered
father and a defiled mother, reasons to fire up
both my mind and my blood, and I let it all sleep
— while to my shame I watch twenty thousand
men march to their deaths for a fantasy and a
scrap of reputation, going to their graves as if
they were beds, fighting for a piece of ground
too small to hold the armies contesting it, too
small even to be a big enough grave to bury the
dead in?

O, from this time forth,
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.

From now on, my thoughts had better be
bloody, or they're worth nothing.

Exit.

Act 4, Scene 5

EL SINORE. A ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Ophelia, driven mad by her father's death and Hamlet's disappearance, is let in to see Gertrude and Claudius, and sings broken songs about a dead man and a girl seduced and abandoned. Claudius tells Gertrude that sorrows are arriving in battalions — and then Laertes smashes through the palace doors at the head of a mob that wants him crowned king, demanding to know how Polonius died and swearing he will damn himself to get revenge. Ophelia returns handing out flowers, each with its own meaning, before Claudius persuades Laertes to let him prove his innocence.

Original

Translation

Enter Queen, Horatio and a Gentleman.

QUEEN

I will not speak with her.

I won't see her.

GENTLEMAN

She is importunate, indeed distract.

She won't take no for an answer, and she really
has lost her mind.

Her mood will needs be pitied.

You have to feel sorry for her.

QUEEN

What would she have?

What does she want?

GENTLEMAN

She speaks much of her father;

says she hears

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

Spurns enviously at straws,

She talks constantly about her father.

She says the world is full of trickery, she groans,
she beats at her chest, she takes offense at
nothing at all.

speaks things in
doubt,
That carry but half sense. Her speech is nothing,
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move
The hearers to collection;
they aim at it,
And botch the words up fit to their own
thoughts,
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures
yield them,
Indeed would make one think there might be
thought,
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.
'Twere good she were spoken with, for she may
strew
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

QUEEN

Let her come in.

Exit Gentleman.

QUEEN

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss.

So full of artless jealousy is guilt,
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

Enter Ophelia.

OPHELIA

Where is the beautiful Majesty of Denmark?

QUEEN

How now, Ophelia?

What she says is half-nonsense — it doesn't add
up to anything.

But the very shapelessness of it makes people
listen and start piecing it together.
They guess, and they patch her words into
whatever they already suspect.

Add her winks and nods and gestures, and you'd
think there was some meaning in it — nothing
definite, but something bad.

She ought to be talked to, because she could
plant dangerous ideas in minds that are already
looking for trouble.

Let her in.

To a soul as sick as mine, guilt being what it is,
every little thing looks like the opening act of
some disaster.

Guilt is so clumsily suspicious that it gives itself
away by trying not to.

Where is the lovely Queen of Denmark?

What is it, Ophelia?

Sings.

OPHELIA

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

QUEEN

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

OPHELIA

Say you?
Nay, pray you mark.

Sings.

OPHELIA

He is dead and gone, lady,
He is dead and gone,
At his head a grass green turf,
At his heels a stone.

QUEEN

Nay, but Ophelia—

OPHELIA

Pray you mark.

Sings.

OPHELIA

White his shroud as the mountain snow.

Enter King.

QUEEN

Alas, look here, my lord!

Sings.

[She sings.] How can I tell your true love
from any other man?
By his pilgrim's hat and walking staff
and the sandals on his feet.

Poor girl, what does this song mean?

What's that?
No, listen.

He's dead and gone, my lady,
he's dead and gone.
Green grass above his head,
and at his feet a stone.

Ophelia, please —

Listen, please.

His shroud was white as snow on a mountain —

Look at her, my lord!

OPHELIA

Larded all with sweet flowers;
Which bewept to the grave did not go
With true-love showers.

KING

How do you, pretty lady?

OPHELIA

Well, God dild you!

They say the owl was a
baker's daughter.

Lord, we
know what we are, but know not what we may
be.

God be at your table!

KING

Conceit upon her father.

OPHELIA

Pray you, let's have no words of this;

but when
they ask you what it
means, say you this:

Sings.

OPHELIA

Tomorrow is Saint Valentine's day,
All in the morning betime,
And I a maid at your window,

covered over with sweet flowers,
which went down to the grave unwept,
with no loving tears at all.

How are you, sweet girl?

Well enough, God reward you.

They say the owl used to be a baker's daughter.

Lord, we know what we are now, but not what
we'll turn into.

God bless your dinner.

She's brooding on her father.

Please, let's not argue about it.

But when people ask you what it means, tell
them this:

Tomorrow is Valentine's Day,
and early in the morning
I'll be a girl at your window

To be your Valentine.

Then up he rose and donn'd his clothes,

And dupp'd the chamber door,

Let in the maid, that out a maid

Never departed more.

KING

Pretty Ophelia!

OPHELIA

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

Sings.

OPHELIA

By Gis and by Saint Charity,

Alack, and fie for shame!

Young men will do't if they come to't;

By Cock, they are to blame.

Quoth she, before you tumbled me,

You promis'd me to wed.

So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,

An thou hadst not come to my bed.

KING

How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA

I hope all will be well.

We must be patient.

to be your Valentine.

So he got up and put his clothes on

and unlatched the bedroom door,

and let the girl in — and she never

left a girl any more.

Poor Ophelia!

Honestly, I'll finish it without swearing about it.

By Jesus and by holy Charity,

what a shame, for shame!

Young men will do it if they get the chance —

by God, it's their fault.

She said: before you took me to bed

you promised you would marry me.

And he answers: I meant to, by that sun up
there,

if you hadn't come to my bed first.

How long has she been like this?

I'm sure it will all come right.

We have to be patient.

cannot choose but
weep, to think they would lay him i' th' cold
ground.

My brother shall
know of it.

And so I thank you for your good
counsel.

Come, my coach!
Good night, ladies;

good night, sweet ladies;

good night, good night.

Exit.

KING
Follow her close;

give her good watch, I pray
you.

Exit Horatio.

KING
O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs
All from her father's death.

But I
But I can't help crying when I think of them
putting him down in the cold ground.

My brother will hear about it.

And so, thank you for your kind advice.

Bring my carriage!

Good night, ladies.

Good night, sweet ladies.

Good night, good night.

Stay close to her.

Keep a careful watch on her, please.

This is what deep grief does to a person — it all
comes from her father's death.

O Gertrude,

Gertrude,

When sorrows come, they come not single spies,
But in battalions.

First, her father slain;

Next, your son gone; and he most violent author
Of his own just remove;

the people muddled,

Thick, and unwholesome in their thoughts and
whispers

For good Polonius' death; and we have done but
greenly

In hugger-mugger to inter him.

Poor Ophelia

Divided from herself and her fair judgement,
Without the which we are pictures or mere
beasts.

Last, and as much containing as all these,
Her brother is in secret come from France,
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear
With pestilent speeches of his father's death,

Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,
Will nothing stick our person to arraign
In ear and ear.

O my dear Gertrude, this,

Like to a murdering piece, in many places
Gives me superfluous death.

A noise within.

QUEEN

Alack, what noise is this?

Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude, when troubles come,
they don't come as single scouts, they come as
whole armies.

First her father is killed.

Then your son is gone — and he brought that
banishment on himself, violently and deservedly.
The people are stirred up, muddy and unhealthy
in what they think and whisper about Polonius's
death — and we handled it badly, burying him in
a hurry and in secret.

Poor Ophelia is cut off from herself and from
her own good sense, without which we're no
better than paintings or animals.

And last, and as heavy as all the rest put
together: her brother has come back from
France in secret, brooding on all this, keeping
himself hidden, and there's no shortage of
gossips to poison his ear with stories about his
father's death.

Those stories, having no real facts to work with,
won't hesitate to accuse me personally,
whispering it from one ear to the next.

Oh, my dear Gertrude, all this is like a
scattershot cannon — it kills me over and over in
a dozen places at once.

God, what's that noise?

KING

Where are my Switzers?

Let them guard the
door.

Enter a Gentleman.

KING

What is the matter?

GENTLEMAN

Save yourself, my lord.

The ocean, overpeering of his list,
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,
O'erbears your offices.

The rabble call him lord,

And, as the world were now but to begin,
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,
The ratifiers and props of every word,
They cry 'Choose we! Laertes shall be king!'

Caps, hands, and tongues applaud it to the
clouds,
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king.'

QUEEN

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

A noise within.

KING

The doors are broke.

Where are my Swiss guards?

Have them guard the door.

What's happening?

Save yourself, my lord.

The ocean bursting past its shoreline doesn't
swallow the flats any faster than young Laertes
and his mob are sweeping your officers aside.

The rabble are calling him lord.

As if the world were starting over from scratch
— history forgotten, tradition unheard of, the
things that make any word mean anything —
they're shouting, "We choose! Laertes will be
king!"

Caps in the air, clapping, cheering to the sky:
"Laertes will be king, King Laertes!"

How happily they bay after the wrong scent.
You're chasing it backwards, you treacherous
Danish dogs.

They've broken the doors down.

Enter Laertes, armed; Danes following.

LAERTES

Where is this king?

Sirs, stand you all without.

Danes.

No, let's come in.

LAERTES

I pray you, give me leave.

DANES

We will, we will.

They retire without the door.

LAERTES

I thank you.

Keep the door.

O thou vile king,

Give me my father.

QUEEN

Calmly, good Laertes.

LAERTES

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

KING

What is the cause, Laertes,
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?—
Let him go, Gertrude.

Do not fear our person.

Where is the king?

— The rest of you, stay outside.

Please, let me handle this.

We will, we will.

Thank you.

Guard the door.

— You vile king, give me back my father.

Calm down, Laertes.

One calm drop of blood in me would mean I'm a
bastard; it would call my father a cuckold and
stamp "whore" on my mother's forehead, right
here between her clean and honest eyes.

Laertes, why has your rebellion swollen to this
size?

— Let go of him, Gertrude.

Don't be afraid for me.

There's such divinity doth hedge a king,
That treason can but peep to what it would,
Acts little of his will.—

Tell me, Laertes,
Why thou art thus incens'd.—

Let him go,
Gertrude:—
Speak, man.

LAERTES
Where is my father?

KING
Dead.

QUEEN
But not by him.

KING
Let him demand his fill.

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

KING
Who shall stay you?

A king is fenced round with so much divine
protection that treason can only glance at what
it wants and never gets to do it.
— Tell me, Laertes, why you're so enraged.

— Let go of him, Gertrude.
— Speak, man.

Where is my father?

Dead.

But not killed by him.

Let him ask whatever he likes.

How did he die?
I won't be played with.
To hell with loyalty!
Let my oaths go to the blackest devil, conscience
and grace down to the deepest pit!
I'll risk damnation.
This is where I stand: I don't care about this
world or the next, whatever happens happens —
I only want to be revenged, completely, for my
father.

And who's going to stop you?

LAERTES

My will, not all the world.

And for my means, I'll husband them so well,
They shall go far with little.

KING

Good Laertes,

If you desire to know the certainty
Of your dear father's death,

is't writ in your
revenge
That, sweepstake, you will draw both friend and
foe,
Winner and loser?

LAERTES

None but his enemies.

KING

Will you know them then?

LAERTES

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

KING

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

Within.

My own will — nothing else on earth.

And I'll manage what little I have so carefully
that it will go a long way.

Good Laertes, if what you want is the truth
about your father's death,

does your revenge require that you sweep the
whole table — friend and enemy, guilty and
innocent, all together?

Only his enemies.

Do you want to know who they are, then?

To his real friends I'll open my arms this wide —
and like the pelican that feeds its young with its
own blood, I'll give them mine.

Now you're talking like a good son and a true
gentleman.

That I had nothing to do with your father's
death, and that I grieve for it deeply, will be as
plain to your judgment as daylight is to your eye.

DANES

Let her come in.

[Offstage.] Let her come in.

LAERTES

How now!

What noise is that?

What now?

What's that noise?

Re-enter Ophelia, fantastically dressed with straws and flowers.

LAERTES

O heat, dry up my brains.

Tears seven times salt,

Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye.

By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,

Till our scale turn the beam.

O rose of May!

Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

O heavens, is't possible a young maid's wits

Should be as mortal as an old man's life?

Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,

It sends some precious instance of itself

After the thing it loves.

Sings.

OPHELIA

They bore him barefac'd on the bier,

Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny

And on his grave rain'd many a tear.—

Fare you well, my dove!

LAERTES

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade

revenge,

It could not move thus.

Heat, dry up my brain.

Tears seven times as salty, burn out my eyes and
their power to see.

By heaven, I will make them pay for your

madness ounce for ounce until our side of the
scale slams down.

Oh, rose of May!

Dear girl, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!

God, is it possible a young girl's mind can die as
easily as an old man's body?

Love makes us delicate, and where love is that

fine, it sends some precious part of itself after
the person it loves.

[She sings.] They carried him with his face
uncovered on the bier,

hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny,

and many tears rained down on his grave.—

Goodbye, my sweetheart.

If you had your wits and were begging me to
take revenge, it couldn't move me more than
this.

OPHELIA

You must sing 'Down a-down, and you call him
a-down-a.'

O, how the
wheel becomes it!

It is the false steward that
stole his master's
daughter.

LAERTES

This nothing's more than matter.

OPHELIA

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance;

love, remember.
pray

And
there is pansies, that's for thoughts.

LAERTES

A document in madness, thoughts and
remembrance fitted.

OPHELIA

There's fennel for you, and columbines.

There's
rue for you; and here's
some for me. We may call it herb of grace o'
Sundays.

You have to sing "down a-down" — and you call
to him, "a-down-a."

Oh, how well the refrain fits!

It's about the dishonest steward who stole his
master's daughter.

This nonsense means more than sense would.

Here's rosemary — that's for remembering.

Please, love, remember.

And here are pansies, for thoughts.

Even her madness is teaching us something —
thoughts and remembrance, matched to the
right flowers.

Here's fennel for you, and columbines.

Here's rue for you, and some for me — we can
call it the herb of grace on Sundays.

O you must wear
your rue with a difference.

There's a daisy.

I
would give you some
violets, but they wither'd all when my father
died.

They say he made a
good end.

Sings.

OPHELIA

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

LAERTES

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

Sings.

OPHELIA

And will he not come again?

And will he not come again?

No, no, he is dead,

Go to thy death-bed,

He never will come again.

His beard was as white as snow,

All flaxen was his poll.

He is gone, he is gone,

And we cast away moan.

God ha' mercy on his soul.

You have to wear your rue differently from mine.

And here's a daisy.

I'd give you violets, but they all withered when
my father died.

They say he made a good end.

Because bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

Grief, suffering, rage, hell itself — she turns it all
into something graceful and pretty.

[She sings.] And will he not come back again?

And will he not come back again?

No, no, he is dead,

go down to your deathbed,

he is never coming back again.

His beard was as white as snow,

his hair was pale as flax.

He is gone, he is gone,

and we throw our grief away.

God have mercy on his soul.

And of all Christian souls, I pray God.

ye.

Exit.

LAERTES

Do you see this, O God?

KING

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,
Or you deny me right.

Go but apart,
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you
will,
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me.
If by direct or by collateral hand
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,
Our crown, our life, and all that we call ours
To you in satisfaction;
but if not,
Be you content to lend your patience to us,
And we shall jointly labour with your soul
To give it due content.

LAERTES

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

KING

And on all Christian souls, I pray to God.

God be with you.

God, do you see this?

Laertes, let me share your grief, or you're
denying me what I'm owed.

Go apart with whichever of your wisest friends
you choose, and let them hear us both out and
judge between us.

If they find I had any part in it, directly or
indirectly, I'll hand over my kingdom, my crown,
my life, and everything I call mine to you as
payment.

But if they don't, then be willing to lend me your
patience, and I'll work alongside you to give your
soul the satisfaction it deserves.

Agreed.

But the way he died, the hole-in-the-corner
burial — no memorial, no sword laid on him, no
coat of arms above his bones, no proper rites, no
public ceremony — all of it cries out, loud
enough to be heard from heaven to earth, that I
have to demand an answer.

So you shall.

And where th'offence is let the great axe fall.

I pray you go with me.

Exeunt.

And you shall have one.

And let the executioner's axe fall wherever the guilt lies.

Please, come with me.

Act 4, Scene 6

ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Sailors arrive at Elsinore with a letter for Horatio from Hamlet, who reports that a pirate ship attacked his vessel on the way to England and took him prisoner when he boarded it alone. The pirates have treated him well in exchange for a favour, and he is back in Denmark; he asks Horatio to deliver the enclosed letters to the King and come to him at once. He also hints that he has much to say about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are sailing on without him.

Original

Translation

Enter Horatio and a Servant.

HORATIO

What are they that would speak with me?

Who are these people who want to speak to me?

SERVANT

Sailors, sir.

Sailors, sir.

They say they have letters for you.

They say they have letters for you.

HORATIO

Let them come in.

Show them in.

Exit Servant.

HORATIO

I do not know from what part of the world
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

I can't think where in the world anyone would
be writing to me from, unless it's Lord Hamlet.

Enter Sailors.

FIRST SAILOR

God bless you, sir.

God bless you, sir.

HORATIO

Let him bless thee too.

And bless you as well.

FIRST SAILOR

He shall, sir, and't please him.

He will, sir, if it suits him.

There's a letter for

There's a letter for you, sir.

you, sir.

It comes from the ambassador who was on his way to England —

It comes from th'ambassador that was bound for England;

if your name is Horatio, which I'm told it is.

if your name be
Horatio, as I am let to know it is.

Reads.

HORATIO

'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked this,
give these
fellows some means to the King.

[Reading] "Horatio, once you've read this
through, get these men access to the King;

They have
letters for him.

they have letters for him.

Ere we were
two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike
appointment gave us
chase.

We weren't two days out at sea before a heavily
armed pirate ship came after us.

Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put
on a compelled
valour, and in the grapple I boarded them.

We were too slow to outrun them, so we made
ourselves brave because we had to, and when
the ships locked together I boarded theirs.

On
the instant they got
clear of our ship, so I alone became their
prisoner.

They have dealt
with me like thieves of mercy.

But they knew
what they did;

I am to do
a good turn for them.

Let the King have the
letters I have sent,

and
repair thou to me with as much haste as thou
wouldst fly death.

I have
words to speak in thine ear will make thee
dumb;

yet are they much too
light for the bore of the matter.

These good
fellows will bring thee
where I am.

They pulled away that same moment, so I ended
up their only prisoner.

They've treated me like thieves with a conscience
—

but they knew what they were doing;

I owe them a favour in return.

Make sure the King gets the letters I've sent,
and come to me as fast as you'd run from death.

I have things to tell you privately that will leave
you speechless —

and even they are too small for the size of the
matter.

These men will bring you to me.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold
their course for England:

of them I have much to tell thee.

Farewell.

He that thou knowest thine,

HAMLET.'

Come, I will give you way for these your letters,

And do't the speedier, that you may direct me

To him from whom you brought them.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are still sailing for
England;

I have a great deal to tell you about them.

Goodbye.

Yours, as you know, Hamlet."

Come on, I'll get you in to deliver these letters —

and I'll do it quickly, so you can take me to the

man who sent them.

Exeunt.

Act 4, Scene 7

ANOTHER ROOM IN THE CASTLE

Claudius convinces Laertes that Hamlet killed Polonius and is now coming for the King, then talks him into a rigged fencing match: Laertes will use a sharpened blade, which he offers to smear with a poison he bought from a quack, and Claudius adds a poisoned cup of wine as a backup. Before they can finish, Gertrude arrives with the news that Ophelia has drowned, and describes her death under the willow tree.

Original

Translation

Enter King and Laertes.

KING

Now must your conscience my acquittance seal,

And you must put me in your heart for friend,

Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,

That he which hath your noble father slain

Pursu'd my life.

Now your own conscience has to clear my name,

and you have to take me into your heart as a

friend, since you've heard — and understood —

that the man who killed your noble father was

trying to kill me.

LAERTES

It well appears.

That does seem clear.

But tell me

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

KING

O, for two special reasons,
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much
unsinew'd,
But yet to me they are strong.

The Queen his

mother

Lives almost by his looks;
and for myself,—
My virtue or my plague, be it either which,—
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,
I could not but by her.

The other motive,

Why to a public count I might not go,
Is the great love the general gender bear him,
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,
Would like the spring that turneth wood to
stone,

Convert his gyves to graces;

so that my arrows,

Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,
Would have reverted to my bow again,
And not where I had aim'd them.

LAERTES

And so have I a noble father lost,

But tell me why you took no action against
crimes as vicious and as capital as those, when
your own safety, and common sense, and
everything else pushed you so hard to do it.

For two particular reasons, which may look
weak to you but are strong ones to me.

His mother the Queen practically lives on the
sight of him.

And as for me — call it my virtue or my sickness,
whichever you like — she's so bound into my life
and soul that I can't move except through her,
the way a star can only move within its own
sphere.

The other reason I couldn't bring him to a public
trial is the ordinary people's great love for him.

They dip all his faults in their affection, and like
the spring that turns wood to stone, they'd turn
his chains into decorations.

My arrows are too lightly built for a wind that
strong; they'd have blown back at my own bow
instead of hitting the target.

So I've lost a noble father,

A sister driven into desperate terms,
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,
Stood challenger on mount of all the age
For her perfections.

But my revenge will come.

KING

Break not your sleeps for that.

You must not
think
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull
That we can let our beard be shook with danger,
And think it pastime.

You shortly shall hear
more.
I lov'd your father, and we love ourself,
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine—

Enter a Messenger.

KING

How now?

What news?

MESSENGER

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.
This to your Majesty; this to the Queen.

KING

From Hamlet!

Who brought them?

MESSENGER

and my sister has been driven to the edge — a
girl whose worth, if I may praise what's already
gone, stood at the summit of the age daring
anyone to match her.

But my revenge is coming.

Don't lose sleep over that.

Don't imagine I'm made of such flat, dull stuff
that I'll let danger grab me by the beard and call
it a game.

You'll hear more shortly.

I loved your father, and I love myself, and I hope
that lets you guess —

What is it?

What's the news?

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet.

This one for your Majesty, this one for the
Queen.

From Hamlet!

Who delivered them?

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

They were given me by Claudio. He receiv'd them
Of him that brought them.

KING

Laertes, you shall hear them.

Leave us.

Exit Messenger.

Reads.

KING

'High and mighty, you shall know I am set naked
on your
kingdom.

Tomorrow shall I beg leave to see your
kingly eyes. When I
shall, first asking your pardon thereunto,
recount the occasions of my
sudden and more strange return.

HAMLET.'

What should this mean?

Are all the rest come
back?

Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

LAERTES

Know you the hand?

KING

'Tis Hamlet's character.

'Naked!'

And in a postscript here he says 'alone.'

Sailors, my lord, or so they say — I didn't see
them.

Claudio gave them to me, and he had them from
the man who brought them.

Laertes, you'll hear these.

— Leave us.

[Reading] "High and mighty sir, you should
know that I have been set down naked on your
soil.

Tomorrow I will ask permission to look on your
royal face, when — first begging your pardon for
it — I will explain the circumstances of my
sudden and very strange return.

Hamlet."

What is this supposed to mean?

Have all the others come back too?

Or is it a trick, and there's nothing in it?

Do you recognize the handwriting?

It's Hamlet's hand.

"Stripped bare"!

And in a postscript here he writes "alone."

Can you advise me?

LAERTES

I am lost in it, my lord.

But let him come,

It warms the very sickness in my heart
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,
'Thus diest thou.'

KING

If it be so, Laertes,—
As how should it be so? How otherwise?—
Will you be rul'd by me?

LAERTES

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

KING

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

LAERTES

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

KING

Can you make sense of it?

I can't, my lord.

But let him come.

It warms the sickness in my heart that I'll live to
tell him to his face, "This is how you die."

If that's how it is, Laertes — and how could it
be, yet how could it not? — will you let me direct
you?

Yes, my lord
— as long as you don't direct me into making
peace.

Peace for yourself, that's all.
If he really has come back, breaking off his
voyage and refusing to go on with it, I'll steer
him into an undertaking I've just now got ripe in
my head, one he can't survive.

And no one will breathe a word of blame over his
death — even his mother will call it an accident
and clear us of any scheming.

My lord, I'll be directed by you — all the more if
you can arrange it so that I'm the instrument.

It falls right.

You have been talk'd of since your travel much,
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality
Wherein they say you shine.

Your sum of parts

Did not together pluck such envy from him
As did that one, and that, in my regard,
Of the unworthiest siege.

LAERTES

What part is that, my lord?

KING

A very riband in the cap of youth,
Yet needful too, for youth no less becomes
The light and careless livery that it wears
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,
Importing health and graveness.

Two months

since

Here was a gentleman of Normandy,—
I've seen myself, and serv'd against, the French,
And they can well on horseback, but this gallant
Had witchcraft in't.

He grew unto his seat,

And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,
As had he been incorp'd and demi-natur'd
With the brave beast.

So far he topp'd my

thought

That I in forgery of shapes and tricks,
Come short of what he did.

That works out perfectly.

You've been talked about a great deal since your
travels, and in Hamlet's hearing, for one skill
they say you shine at.

All your other accomplishments together didn't
pull as much envy out of him as that single one
— and in my opinion it's the least important of
them.

Which skill is that, my lord?

Just a ribbon in the cap of a young man
— but necessary all the same, because light,
careless clothes suit the young exactly as well as
furs and heavy black suit older men and signal
their health and dignity.

Two months ago there was a gentleman here
from Normandy.

I've seen the French myself and fought against
them, and they ride well — but this man was
uncanny.

He seemed to grow into the saddle, and he made
the horse do such extraordinary things that the
two of them looked like one creature, half man
and half animal.

He went so far past anything I'd imagined that
whatever tricks and shapes I invent in my head, I
come up short of what he actually did.

LAERTES

A Norman was't?

KING

A Norman.

LAERTES

Upon my life, Lamord.

KING

The very same.

LAERTES

I know him well.

He is the brooch indeed

And gem of all the nation.

KING

He made confession of you,

And gave you such a masterly report

For art and exercise in your defence,

And for your rapier most especially,

That he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed

If one could match you.

The scrimers of their

nation

He swore had neither motion, guard, nor eye,

If you oppos'd them.

Sir, this report of his

Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy

That he could nothing do but wish and beg

Your sudden coming o'er to play with him.

Now, out of this,—

LAERTES

He was a Norman?

A Norman.

I'll bet my life it was Lamord.

That's the man.

I know him well.

He's the jewel of the whole country.

He spoke about you, and gave you such an

expert's report for your training and technique

in fencing — especially with the rapier — that he

burst out that it would really be something to

see if anyone could match you.

He swore the fencers of his own country had no

footwork, no defense, no eye at all against you.

Sir, that report of his so poisoned Hamlet with

envy that he could do nothing but wish and beg

for you to come home and fence with him.

Now, out of that —

What out of this, my lord?

KING

Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,

A face without a heart?

LAERTES

Why ask you this?

KING

Not that I think you did not love your father,

But that I know love is begun by time,

And that I see, in passages of proof,

Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.

There lives within the very flame of love

A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;

And nothing is at a like goodness still,

For goodness, growing to a pleurisy,

Dies in his own too much.

That we would do,

We should do when we would; for this 'would'
changes,

And hath abatements and delays as many

As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;

And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh

That hurts by easing.

But to the quick o'

th'ulcer:

Hamlet comes back:

what would you undertake

To show yourself your father's son in deed,

More than in words?

What out of that, my lord?

Laertes, was your father dear to you?

Or are you like a painting of grief — a face with
nothing behind it?

Why do you ask me that?

Not because I think you didn't love your father.

But I know love begins at a particular moment
in time, and I've seen proof that time cools its
spark and its fire.

In the very flame of love there's a kind of wick or
burnt residue that dims it,
and nothing stays at the same pitch of goodness
for long — because goodness, swelling too
much, dies of its own excess.

What we mean to do, we should do while we still
mean it, because "I mean to" changes, and gets
weakened and delayed by as many things as
there are tongues to talk you out of it, hands to
stop you, accidents to intervene.

And then "I should have" is like a self-pitying
sigh: it relieves you and damages you at the
same time.

But to the heart of the sore:

Hamlet is coming back.

What would you be willing to do to prove you're
your father's son in action, not just in words?

LAERTES

To cut his throat i' th' church.

KING

No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;

Revenge should have no bounds.

But good

Laertes,

Will you do this, keep close within your
chamber.

Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:

We'll put on those shall praise your excellence,

And set a double varnish on the fame

The Frenchman gave you,

bring you in fine

together

And wager on your heads.

He, being remiss,

Most generous, and free from all contriving,

Will not peruse the foils;

so that with ease,

Or with a little shuffling, you may choose

A sword unbated, and in a pass of practice,

Requite him for your father.

LAERTES

I will do't.

And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword.

Cut his throat in a church.

True enough — no place should shelter a

murderer, and revenge should have no limits.

But, good Laertes, if you're going to do this, stay
shut in your room.

When Hamlet gets back he'll be told you're
home.

We'll set people on to praise your skill and put a
second coat of varnish on the reputation the
Frenchman gave you.

In the end we'll bring the two of you together
and put bets on your heads.

He's careless, generous-minded, incapable of
suspecting a plot — he won't inspect the
swords.

So easily, or with a little sleight of hand, you can
pick out a blade that isn't blunted, and with one
treacherous thrust pay him back for your father.

I'll do it.

And to make sure of it, I'll poison my sword.

I bought an unction of a mountebank
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,
Collected from all simples that have virtue
Under the moon, can save the thing from death
This is but scratch'd withal.

I'll touch my point
With this contagion, that if I gall him slightly,
It may be death.

KING

Let's further think of this,
Weigh what convenience both of time and
means
May fit us to our shape.

If this should fail,
And that our drift look through our bad
performance.
'Twere better not assay'd.

Therefore this project
Should have a back or second, that might hold
If this did blast in proof.

Soft, let me see.
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings,—
I ha't!

When in your motion you are hot and dry,
As make your bouts more violent to that end,
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepar'd him
A chalice for the nonce;
whereon but sipping,
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,
Our purpose may hold there.

Enter Queen.

I bought an ointment from a traveling quack so
deadly that if you dip a knife in it, then wherever
it draws blood there's no medicine on earth —
not made from every healing herb under the
moon — that can save whatever it scratched.

I'll smear my point with that filth, so that even a
graze may kill him.

Let's think this through further, and weigh what
timing and what means will best fit our purpose.

If it went wrong, and our intention showed
through a clumsy performance, it would be
better never attempted.

So this plan needs a backup, a second one to
hold if the first blows up under pressure.

Wait — let me think.
We'll bet solemnly on which of you is better.
I have it!

When the fighting has made you hot and thirsty
— and make your attacks fierce enough to
guarantee it — and he asks for a drink, I'll have a
cup prepared for exactly that moment.
One sip, and even if he somehow escapes your
poisoned thrust, we'll still have him.

KING

How now, sweet Queen?

QUEEN

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,
So fast they follow.

Your sister's drown'd,

Laertes.

LAERTES

Drown'd!

O, where?

QUEEN

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,
That shows his hoary leaves in the glassy stream.
There with fantastic garlands did she make
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long
purples,
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call
them.

There on the pendant boughs her coronet weeds
Clamb'ring to hang, an envious sliver broke,
When down her weedy trophies and herself
Fell in the weeping brook.

Her clothes spread

wide,

And mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up,
Which time she chaunted snatches of old tunes,
As one incapable of her own distress,
Or like a creature native and indued
Unto that element.

What is it, my dear Queen?

One grief comes treading on the heels of the
last, they follow so fast.

Your sister has drowned, Laertes.

Drowned!

Where?

There's a willow that leans out over a brook,
showing its pale underleaves in the glassy water.
She came there with strange garlands she'd
made of buttercups, nettles, daisies, and the
long purple flowers that coarse-mouthed
shepherds have a ruder name for, though our
modest girls call them dead men's fingers.

There, as she was climbing to hang her crown of
weeds on the drooping branches, a spiteful limb
snapped, and down she and her flowers came
into the weeping stream.

Her clothes spread out wide and held her up for
a while like a mermaid,

and all that time she sang scraps of old songs, as
if she had no idea what danger she was in, or as
though she'd been born to live in water.

But long it could not be
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay
To muddy death.

LAERTES

Alas, then she is drown'd?

QUEEN

Drown'd, drown'd.

LAERTES

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,
And therefore I forbid my tears.

But yet

It is our trick; nature her custom holds,
Let shame say what it will.

When these are gone,

The woman will be out.

Adieu, my lord,

I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,
But that this folly douts it.

Exit.

KING

Let's follow, Gertrude;
How much I had to do to calm his rage!
Now fear I this will give it start again;
Therefore let's follow.

Exeunt.

But it couldn't last long. Before long her clothes,
heavy with all they'd drunk, dragged the poor
girl out of her singing down into the mud, and
death.

So she's drowned, then?

Drowned, drowned.

You've had too much water already, poor
Ophelia, so I won't let myself cry.

But tears come anyway — it's what we do,
nature keeps its habits no matter what shame
says about it.

Once these are out of me, there'll be nothing
womanly left.

Goodbye, my lord.

I have a speech of fire in me that wants to blaze
up, but this weeping puts it out.

Let's go after him, Gertrude.

It took everything I had to calm his rage — now
I'm afraid this will set it going again.

Come on.

Act 5, Scene 1

A CHURCHYARD

Two gravediggers joke about whether Ophelia, a probable suicide, deserves a Christian burial, while Hamlet and Horatio look on. Hamlet is handed the skull of Yorick, the jester he loved as a child, and reflects that death reduces everyone — even Alexander the Great — to the same dust. Ophelia's funeral procession arrives, and when Laertes leaps into her grave, Hamlet reveals himself and the two men grapple, each insisting he loved her more.

Original

Translation

Enter two Clowns with spades, &c.

FIRST CLOWN

Is she to be buried in Christian burial, when she wilfully seeks her own salvation?

Is she supposed to get a Christian burial, when she deliberately went looking for salvation ahead of schedule?

SECOND CLOWN

I tell thee she is, and therefore make her grave straight.

I'm telling you she is, so dig her grave and be quick about it.

The coroner held an inquest on her and ruled it a Christian burial.

The crowner

hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

How can that be, unless she drowned herself in self-defence?

SECOND CLOWN

Why, 'tis found so.

Well, that's what was ruled.

FIRST CLOWN

It must be *_se offendendo_*, it cannot be else.

It has to have been self-offence, it can't be anything else.

For here lies the point:

if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act: and an act hath three branches.

Here's the crux of it: if I drown myself on purpose, that constitutes an act, and an act has three branches —

It is to act, to do, and to perform:

namely to act, to do, and to perform.

argal, she drowned
herself wittingly.

Therefore, she drowned herself on purpose.

SECOND CLOWN

Nay, but hear you, goodman delver,—

Now hold on there, mister digger —

FIRST CLOWN

Give me leave.

Let me finish.

Here lies the water; good.

Here lies the water — good.

Here

Here stands the man — good.

stands the man; good.

If

the man go to this water and drown himself, it
is, will he nill he, he
goes,—mark you that.

If the man goes to the water and drowns
himself, then like it or not, he's the one who
went. Note that.

But if the water come to
him and drown him, he
drowns not himself.

But if the water comes to him and drowns him,
then he hasn't drowned himself.

Argal, he that is not guilty
of his own death
shortens not his own life.

Therefore, the man who isn't guilty of his own
death hasn't shortened his own life.

SECOND CLOWN

But is this law?

But is that actually the law?

FIRST CLOWN

Ay, marry, is't, crowner's quest law.

It certainly is — coroner's inquest law.

SECOND CLOWN

Will you ha' the truth on't?

If this had not been a
gentlewoman, she
should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

FIRST CLOWN

Why, there thou say'st.

And the more pity that
great folk should have
countenance in this world to drown or hang
themselves more than their
even Christian.

Come, my spade.

There is no
ancient gentlemen but
gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers:

they hold
up Adam's profession.

SECOND CLOWN

Was he a gentleman?

FIRST CLOWN

He was the first that ever bore arms.

SECOND CLOWN

Why, he had none.

FIRST CLOWN

You want the truth of it?

If she hadn't been a lady of good family, she'd
have been buried outside consecrated ground.

There, now you've said it.

And it's all the more of a shame that important
people should have more licence in this world to
drown or hang themselves than their fellow
Christians do.

Hand me my spade.

There are no gentlemen older than gardeners,
ditch-diggers and gravediggers —

they carry on Adam's line of work.

Was Adam a gentleman?

He was the first man ever to bear arms.

No he wasn't, he didn't have any.

What, art a heathen?

How dost thou understand
the Scripture?

The
Scripture says Adam digg'd.

Could he dig
without arms?

I'll put another
question to thee.

If thou answerest me not to
the purpose, confess
thyself—

SECOND CLOWN
Go to.

FIRST CLOWN
What is he that builds stronger than either the
mason, the shipwright,
or the carpenter?

SECOND CLOWN
The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives a
thousand tenants.

FIRST CLOWN
I like thy wit well in good faith, the gallows does
well.

What, are you a heathen?

Don't you know your Bible?

Scripture says Adam dug.

Could he have dug without arms?

Let me put another question to you.

If you don't answer it properly, confess yourself
—

Get on with it.

Who builds stronger than the stonemason, the
shipbuilder or the carpenter?

The gallows-builder, because that frame outlasts
a thousand tenants.

I like your wit, honestly, that's a good one. The
gallows does well.

But how does
it well?

It does well to those that do ill.

Now,
thou dost ill to say
the gallows is built stronger than the church;

argal, the gallows may
do well to thee.

To't again, come.

SECOND CLOWN

Who builds stronger than a mason, a
shipwright, or a carpenter?

FIRST CLOWN

Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

SECOND CLOWN

Marry, now I can tell.

FIRST CLOWN

To't.

SECOND CLOWN

Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter Hamlet and Horatio, at a distance.

FIRST CLOWN

But how does it do well?

It does well by those who do badly.

Now, you're doing badly to say the gallows is
built stronger than the church —

so the gallows may end up doing well by you.

Have another go.

Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright
or a carpenter?

That's it. Answer that and you can knock off for
the day.

By God, I've got it now.

Go on then.

No — I can't tell.

Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull
ass will not mend his
pace with beating;

and when you are asked this
question next, say 'a
grave-maker'.

The houses he makes last till
doomsday.

Go, get thee to
Yaughan; fetch me a stoup of liquor.

Exit Second Clown.

Digs and sings.

FIRST CLOWN

In youth when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet;
To contract, O, the time for, a, my behave,
O methought there was nothing meet.

HAMLET

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that
he sings at
grave-making?

HORATIO

Custom hath made it in him a property of
easiness.

HAMLET

'Tis e'en so;

Then stop hammering your brains about it, since
a slow donkey won't speed up for a beating.

And next time somebody asks you that question,
say 'a gravedigger' —

the houses he builds last till Judgement Day.

Now go on to Yaughan's and fetch me a jug of
drink.

When I was young and in love, in love, I thought
it was very sweet —
to shorten, oh, the time, ah, for my own good,
oh, I thought there was nothing better.

Has this fellow no sense of what he's doing,
singing while he digs a grave?

Habit has made it easy work for him.

That's true enough.

the hand of little employment hath
the daintier sense.

Sings.

FIRST CLOWN

But age with his stealing steps
Hath claw'd me in his clutch,
And hath shipp'd me into the land,
As if I had never been such.

Throws up a skull.

HAMLET

That skull had a tongue in it, and could sing
once.

How the knave jowls
it to th' ground, as if 'twere Cain's jawbone, that
did the first
murder!

This might be the pate of a politician
which this ass now
o'er-offices, one that would circumvent God,
might it not?

HORATIO

It might, my lord.

HAMLET

Or of a courtier, which could say 'Good morrow,
sweet lord! How dost
thou, good lord?'

It's the hand that does the least work that has
the most delicate feelings.

But old age with its sneaking steps has got its
claws into me,
and shipped me off into the ground, as if I'd
never been young at all.

That skull had a tongue in it and could sing
once.

Look how the rascal slams it into the ground, as
if it were the jawbone Cain used for the first
murder.

This might be the head of a politician that this
donkey is now ordering around — someone
who'd have out-manoeuvred God himself, don't
you think?

It might, my lord.

Or a courtier's, who could say 'Good morning,
sweet lord! How are you, good lord?'

This might be my lord such-a-one, that praised my lord such-a-one's horse when he meant to beg it, might it not?

HORATIO

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, e'en so: and now my Lady Worm's; chapless, and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade.

Here's fine
revolution, an we had the
trick to see't.

Did these bones cost no more the
breeding but to play
at loggets with 'em?

Mine ache to think on't.

Sings.

FIRST CLOWN

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding-sheet;
O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Throws up another skull.

HAMLET

There's another.

Why may not that be the skull
of a lawyer?

This might be Lord So-and-so, who
complimented Lord Such-and-such's horse
when he was angling to be given it. Couldn't it?

Yes, my lord.

Exactly so — and now it belongs to my Lady
Worm, jawless, and knocked about the head
with a gravedigger's spade.

That's a fine reversal of fortune, if we had the
knack of seeing it.

Did it cost so little to raise these bones that
they're only good for a game of skittles?

Mine ache thinking about it.

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade, and a winding
sheet as well —
oh, a pit of clay is the right thing to make for a
guest like this.

There's another.

Why couldn't that be a lawyer's skull?

Where be

his quiddits now, his quillets, his cases, his
tenures, and his tricks?

Why does he suffer this rude knave now to
knock him about the sconce
with a dirty shovel, and will not tell him of his
action of battery?

Hum.

This fellow might be in's time a great
buyer of land, with his
statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double
vouchers, his
recoveries.

Is this the fine of his fines, and the
recovery of his
recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt?

Will his vouchers
vouch him no more of his purchases, and
double ones too, than the
length and breadth of a pair of indentures?

The
very conveyances of his
lands will scarcely lie in this box;

and must the
inheritor himself
have no more, ha?

Where are his fine distinctions now, his
quibbles, his cases, his land titles, his tricks?

Why does he let this rude fellow knock him
about the head with a filthy shovel, and not sue
him for assault?

Hm.

This man in his day might have been a great
buyer of property, with all his contracts, his
bonds, his settlements, his double guarantees,
his recoveries.

Is this the end result of all his settlements and
the recovery of all his recoveries — to have his
fine head full of fine dirt?

Will all his guarantors, doubled up as they were,
guarantee him no more of his purchases than
the length and width of a pair of legal
documents?

The deeds to his land would barely fit in this box
of a skull —

and the owner himself gets no more than that?
Really?

HORATIO

Not a jot more, my lord.

Not an inch more, my lord.

HAMLET

Is not parchment made of sheep-skins?

Isn't parchment made from sheepskin?

HORATIO

Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

Yes, my lord, and calfskin too.

HAMLET

They are sheep and calves which seek out
assurance in that.

Then they're sheep and calves who look for
security in it.

I'll speak to this fellow.

I will

— speak to this fellow.—

Whose grave's this, sir?

— Whose grave is this, sir?

FIRST CLOWN

Mine, sir.

Mine, sir.

Sings.

FIRST CLOWN

O, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.

Oh, a pit of clay is the right thing to make for a
guest like this.

HAMLET

I think it be thine indeed, for thou liest in't.

I suppose it is yours, since you're lying in it.

FIRST CLOWN

You lie out on't, sir, and therefore 'tis not yours.
For my part, I do not lie in't, yet it is mine.

And you're lying outside it, sir, so it isn't yours.
As for me, I'm not lying in it, and yet it is mine.

HAMLET

Thou dost lie in't, to be in't and say it is thine.

You're lying in it, all right — you're in it and you
say it's yours.

'Tis for the dead,
not for the quick;

therefore thou liest.

FIRST CLOWN

'Tis a quick lie, sir; 't will away again from me to
you.

HAMLET

What man dost thou dig it for?

FIRST CLOWN

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman then?

FIRST CLOWN

For none neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in't?

FIRST CLOWN

One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul,
she's dead.

HAMLET

How absolute the knave is!

We must speak by
the card, or equivocation
will undo us.

It's for the dead, not the living,

so you're lying.

It's a lively lie, sir; it'll jump straight back from
me to you.

What man are you digging it for?

No man, sir.

What woman, then?

No woman either.

Who's going to be buried in it?

Someone who was a woman, sir — but God rest
her, she's dead.

How precise the fellow is!

We'll have to speak by the book, or word-
splitting will be the end of us.

By the Lord, Horatio, these three
years I have taken note
of it, the age is grown so picked that the toe of
the peasant comes so
near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.—

How long hast thou
been a grave-maker?

FIRST CLOWN

Of all the days i' th' year, I came to't that day
that our last King
Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

HAMLET

How long is that since?

FIRST CLOWN

Cannot you tell that?

Every fool can tell that.

It
was the very day
that young Hamlet was born,—he that is mad,
and sent into England.

HAMLET

Ay, marry,

why was he sent into England?

FIRST CLOWN

Why, because he was mad;

By God, Horatio, I've noticed this over the last
three years: the age has grown so sharp that the
peasant's toe treads on the courtier's heel and
rubs his chilblain raw.

— How long have you been a gravedigger?

Of all the days in the year, I started on the very
day our late King Hamlet beat Fortinbras.

And how long ago was that?

You don't know that?

Every idiot knows that.

It was the very day young Hamlet was born —
the one who went mad and was shipped off to
England.

Yes, of course.

And why was he sent to England?

Why, because he was mad.

he shall recover his
wits there;

or if he do
not, it's no great matter there.

HAMLET

Why?

FIRST CLOWN

'Twill not be seen in him there;

there the men
are as mad as he.

HAMLET

How came he mad?

FIRST CLOWN

Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET

How strangely?

FIRST CLOWN

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAMLET

Upon what ground?

FIRST CLOWN

Why, here in Denmark.

I have been sexton here,
man and boy, thirty
years.

He'll get his wits back there —

and if he doesn't, it hardly matters there.

Why not?

Nobody will notice it in him there.

The men there are all as mad as he is.

How did he go mad?

Very strangely, they say.

Strangely how?

Well — by losing his mind.

On what grounds?

Why, here in Denmark.

I've been sexton here, boy and man, for thirty
years.

HAMLET

How long will a man lie i' th'earth ere he rot?

How long does a man lie in the ground before he rots?

FIRST CLOWN

Faith, if he be not rotten before he die,—as we have many pocky corsers nowadays that will scarce hold the laying in,—he will last you some eight year or nine year.

Well, if he isn't rotten before he dies — and we get plenty of pox-ridden corpses these days that barely hold together long enough to be laid in — he'll last you eight or nine years.

A tanner will last you nine year.

A tanner will last you nine.

HAMLET

Why he more than another?

Why him longer than anyone else?

FIRST CLOWN

Why, sir, his hide is so tann'd with his trade that he will keep out water a great while.

Because, sir, his hide is so tanned by his trade that it keeps the water out for a good long while

And your water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body.

and water is a terrible destroyer of your damned dead body.

Here's a skull now;

Here's a skull now.

this skull hath lain in the earth three-and-twenty years.

This one has been in the earth twenty-three years.

HAMLET

Whose was it?

Whose was it?

FIRST CLOWN

A whoreson, mad fellow's it was.

A crazy devil of a fellow's, it was.

Whose do you
think it was?

Who do you think it was?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

No, I don't know.

FIRST CLOWN

A pestilence on him for a mad rogue!

Plague take him for a mad rogue —

A pour'd a
flagon of Rhenish on my
head once.

he poured a whole jug of Rhine wine over my
head once.

This same skull, sir, was Yorick's
skull, the King's jester.

This skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's
jester.

HAMLET

This?

This one?

FIRST CLOWN

E'en that.

That very one.

HAMLET

Let me see. [_Takes the skull._]

Let me look. [Takes the skull]

Alas, poor
Yorick.

Oh, poor Yorick.

I knew him,
Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most
excellent fancy.

I knew him, Horatio — a man of endless jokes
and wonderful imagination.

He hath
borne me on his back a thousand times; and
now, how abhorred in my
imagination it is!

My gorge rises at it.

Here hung
those lips that I
have kiss'd I know not how oft.

Where be your
gibes now?

your gambols?
your songs?

your flashes of merriment, that
were wont to set the table
on a roar?

Not one now, to mock your own
grinning?

Quite chop-fallen?
Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her,
let her paint an inch
thick, to this favour she must come.

Make her
laugh at that.—

He carried me on his back a thousand times, and
now — how sickening the thought of it is.

It turns my stomach.

Here hung the lips that I kissed I don't know
how many times.

Where are your jokes now?

Your leaping about?

Your songs?

Those flashes of humour that used to send the
whole table into an uproar?

Nothing left, not even one joke to laugh at your
own grinning face?

Jaw dropped off entirely?

Now go to my lady's dressing room and tell her
that she can put her makeup on an inch thick
and she'll still end up with this face.

Get a laugh out of her with that.

— Please, Horatio, tell me one thing.

Prithee,

Horatio, tell me one thing.

HORATIO

What's that, my lord?

What's that, my lord?

HAMLET

Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion
i' th'earth?

Do you think Alexander the Great looked like
this in the ground?

HORATIO

E'en so.

Just like that.

HAMLET

And smelt so?

And smelled like this?

Pah!

Ugh.

Throws down the skull.

HORATIO

E'en so, my lord.

Just like that, my lord.

HAMLET

To what base uses we may return, Horatio!

What low uses we may come back to, Horatio!

Why

may not imagination trace
the noble dust of Alexander till he find it
stopping a bung-hole?

Why couldn't the imagination follow the noble
dust of Alexander until it turns up plugging the
hole of a barrel?

HORATIO

'Twere to consider too curiously to consider so.

That would be examining it far too closely.

HAMLET

No, faith, not a jot.

No, honestly, not in the least.

But to follow him thither
with modesty enough,
and likelihood to lead it; as thus.

Alexander died,
Alexander was
buried, Alexander returneth into dust; the dust
is earth; of earth we
make loam;

and why of that loam whereto he
was converted might they not
stop a beer-barrel?
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw.

But soft! but soft! aside!

Here comes the King.

You just follow him there with some restraint
and let probability lead you. Like this:

Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander
turned back into dust; dust is earth; from earth
we make clay;

and why couldn't the clay he turned into be
used to stopper a beer barrel?

Mighty Caesar, dead and turned to clay, might
plug a hole to keep the wind away.
Oh, that the same earth which once terrified the
world should patch a wall to keep out a winter
draught.

But quiet, quiet — step aside.

Here comes the King.

Enter priests, &c, in procession; the corpse of Ophelia, Laertes and Mourners following; King, Queen, their Trains, &c.

HAMLET

The Queen, the courtiers.

Who is that they
follow?

And with such maimed rites?

This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo it own life.

'Twas of some estate.

The Queen, the courtiers.

Who is it they're following?

And with such a cut-down ceremony?

That suggests the body they're following took its
own life in despair.

It was someone of rank.

Couch we awhile and mark.

Retiring with Horatio.

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

HAMLET

That is Laertes, a very noble youth.

Mark.

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

PRIEST

Her obsequies have been as far enlarg'd
As we have warranties.

Her death was doubtful;

And but that great command o'ersways the
order,

She should in ground unsanctified have lodg'd
Till the last trumpet.

For charitable prayers,

Shards, flints, and pebbles should be thrown on
her.

Yet here she is allowed her virgin rites,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
Of bell and burial.

LAERTES

Must there no more be done?

PRIEST

No more be done.

We should profane the service of the dead
To sing sage requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

Let's crouch here for a moment and watch.

What other rites are there?

That's Laertes, a very fine young man.

Listen.

What other rites are there?

Her funeral has been extended as far as we're
permitted.

Her death was suspicious, and if orders from
high up hadn't overruled the normal procedure,
she'd have been left in unconsecrated ground
until Judgement Day.

Instead of prayers, she'd have had broken
pottery, flints and stones thrown down on her.

And yet here she's allowed the rites of a virgin,
the flowers strewn for a maiden, and the bell
and burial that bring her home.

Can nothing more be done?

Nothing more.

We'd be defiling the burial service to sing a
solemn requiem over her and pray for the rest
granted to those who died at peace with God.

LAERTES

Lay her i' th'earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring.

I tell thee, churlish priest,
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET

What, the fair Ophelia?

Scattering flowers.

QUEEN

Sweets to the sweet.

Farewell.

I hop'd thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's
wife;
I thought thy bride-bed to have deck'd, sweet
maid,
And not have strew'd thy grave.

LAERTES

O, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursed head
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Depriv'd thee of.

Hold off the earth a while,
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.

Leaps into the grave.

LAERTES

Put her in the ground, and let violets grow out of
her lovely, unstained body.

I tell you, you heartless priest, my sister will be
an angel in heaven while you lie howling in hell.

What — the lovely Ophelia?

[Scattering flowers] Sweet things for the sweet
girl.

Goodbye.

I hoped you would have been my Hamlet's wife.

I expected to be decorating your wedding bed,
sweet girl, not scattering flowers on your grave.

Oh, let a triple sorrow, ten times tripled, fall on
the cursed head whose wicked act robbed you of
your brilliant mind.

— Hold off the earth a moment, until I've held
her in my arms one more time.

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
To o'er top old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

Advancing.

HAMLET

What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis?

whose phrase of
sorrow
Conjures the wand'ring stars, and makes them
stand
Like wonder-wounded hearers?

This is I,

Hamlet the Dane.

Leaps into the grave.

Grappling with him.

LAERTES

The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET

Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee take thy fingers from my throat;
For though I am not splenative and rash,
Yet have I in me something dangerous,
Which let thy wiseness fear.
Away thy hand!

KING

Pluck them asunder.

QUEEN

Now heap your dirt on the living and the dead together, until you've piled this flat ground into a mountain higher than old Pelion or the sky-touching summit of blue Olympus.

Who is this whose grief is so loud?

Whose cries of sorrow summon the wandering
planets and stop them dead like an audience
stunned by a marvel?

This is I, Hamlet, King of Denmark.

[Grappling with him] The devil take your soul!

That's a poor sort of prayer.
Please take your fingers off my throat.
I'm not hot-tempered or reckless, but there's
something dangerous in me that your good
sense should be afraid of.
Get your hand away.

Pull them apart.

woul't

Tear yourself apart?

tear thyself?

Woul't drink up eisel?

eat a crocodile?

I'll do't.

Dost thou come here to whine?

To outface me with leaping in her grave?

Be buried quick with her, and so will I.

And if thou prate of mountains, let them throw

Millions of acres on us, till our ground,

Singeing his pate against the burning zone,

Make Ossa like a wart.

Nay, an thou'lt mouth,

I'll rant as well as thou.

QUEEN

This is mere madness:

And thus awhile the fit will work on him;

Anon, as patient as the female dove,

When that her golden couplets are disclos'd,

His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET

Hear you, sir;

What is the reason that you use me thus?

I lov'd you ever.

But it is no matter.

Let Hercules himself do what he may,

The cat will mew, and dog will have his day.

Exit.

KING

Drink vinegar?

Eat a crocodile?

I'll do it too.

Have you come here to wail?

To upstage me by jumping into her grave?

Be buried alive with her, and so will I.

And if you're going to talk about mountains, let them shovel millions of acres over us, until our burial mound scorches its head against the sun's fiery zone and makes Mount Ossa look like a pimple.

If you're going to rant, I can rant just as well as you.

This is nothing but madness.

The fit will work on him a while, and then, as patient as a mother dove when her pair of golden chicks has hatched, he'll fall silent and sit drooping.

Listen, sir.

Why do you treat me like this?

I always liked you.

But it doesn't matter.

Let Hercules himself do whatever he can — the cat will still meow and the dog will still have his day.

I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.

Exit Horatio.

To Laertes

KING

Strengthen your patience in our last night's
speech;

We'll put the matter to the present push.—

Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.

This grave shall have a living monument.

An hour of quiet shortly shall we see;

Till then in patience our proceeding be.

Exeunt.

Please, good Horatio, keep an eye on him.

Hold on to the patience I asked of you in our talk
last night;

we'll bring the matter to a head immediately.

— Good Gertrude, set someone to watch your
son.

This grave will have a living monument.

We'll see a quiet hour before long;

until then, let's proceed patiently.

Act 5, Scene 2

A HALL IN THE CASTLE

Hamlet tells Horatio how he discovered Claudius's order for his execution at sea and forged a replacement condemning Rosencrantz and Guildenstern instead. He accepts Claudius's fencing wager against Laertes, ignoring a premonition, and in the duel Gertrude drinks the poisoned wine while Hamlet and Laertes are both cut with the envenomed sword. Laertes confesses the plot before dying; Hamlet kills Claudius, gives his dying vote to Fortinbras, and charges Horatio with telling his story.

Original

Translation

Enter Hamlet and Horatio.

HAMLET

So much for this, sir.

Now let me see the other;

You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO

Remember it, my lord!

So much for that, sir.

Now let me tell you the rest.

You remember all the circumstances?

Remember them, my lord!

HAMLET

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep.

Methought I lay
Worse than the mutinies in the bilboes.

Rashly,

And prais'd be rashness for it,—let us know,
Our indiscretion sometime serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall; and that should
teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.

HORATIO

That is most certain.

HAMLET

Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
Grop'd I to find out them;

had my desire,

Finger'd their packet, and in fine, withdrew
To mine own room again,

making so bold,

My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
Their grand commission;

Sir, there was a kind of battle going on in my
chest that wouldn't let me sleep.

I felt worse off than mutineers in leg-irons.

On impulse — and thank God for impulse,
because it's worth knowing that our
recklessness sometimes serves us well when our
carefully laid schemes collapse, and that should
teach us there's a divine power shaping the
outcome of our lives, however roughly we cut
them out ourselves —

That's certainly true.

— up I got out of my cabin, my sailor's coat
thrown round me, and groped through the dark
to find them.

I got what I wanted: I lifted their packet, and
finally went back to my own room,

and was bold enough — fear making me forget
my manners — to break the seal on their official
commission.

where I found,

Horatio,

Oh royal knavery! an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
That on the supervise, no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
My head should be struck off.

HORATIO

Is't possible?

HAMLET

Here's the commission, read it at more leisure.
But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO

I beseech you.

HAMLET

Being thus benetted round with villainies,—
Or I could make a prologue to my brains,
They had begun the play,—I sat me down,
Devis'd a new commission, wrote it fair:

I once did hold it, as our statists do,
A baseness to write fair, and labour'd much
How to forget that learning;

but, sir, now

It did me yeoman's service.

Wilt thou know

The effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO

And there, Horatio, I found — oh, royal villainy!
— an exact order, dressed up with all sorts of
reasons about the security of Denmark and of
England too, and full of dire warnings about
what a monster I was, that on reading it,
without any delay at all, not even long enough to
sharpen the axe, my head should be cut off.

Is that possible?

Here's the document — read it at your leisure.
But do you want to hear what I did next?

Please.

Being caught in a net of villainy like that —
before I could even brief my own brain, it had
started the play — I sat down and drafted a new
commission, and wrote it out in a fine clerk's
hand.

I used to think, like our statesmen do, that neat
handwriting was beneath me, and I worked hard
to unlearn it.

But this time, sir, it did me solid service.

Do you want to know what I wrote?

Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET

An earnest conjuration from the King,
As England was his faithful tributary,
As love between them like the palm might
flourish,
As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
And stand a comma 'tween their amities,

And many such-like 'as'es of great charge,

That on the view and know of these contents,
Without debatement further, more or less,
He should the bearers put to sudden death,
Not shriving-time allow'd.

HORATIO

How was this seal'd?

HAMLET

Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
I had my father's signet in my purse,
Which was the model of that Danish seal:
Folded the writ up in the form of the other,
Subscrib'd it: gave't th'impression; plac'd it
safely,
The changeling never known.

Now, the next day

Was our sea-fight, and what to this was sequent
Thou know'st already.

HORATIO

Yes, my good lord.

A solemn plea from the King of Denmark,
given that England was his loyal tributary state,
given that the friendship between them should
flourish like the palm tree,
given that peace should keep wearing her
wheat-sheaf crown and stand as a link joining
their two nations —
and plenty more heavy-weighted 'givens' like
that —
that on reading and understanding these
contents, the bearers should be put to
immediate death without any further discussion
at all, and not even given time to confess their
sins.

How did you seal it?

Even in that, heaven was arranging things.
I had my father's signet ring in my purse, which
is the original of the Danish state seal.
I folded the letter the same way as the other one,
signed it, stamped it, and put it back safely —
the swap never noticed.

The next day was our sea-battle, and you already
know what followed from that.

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to't.

HAMLET

Why, man, they did make love to this
employment.

They are not near my conscience;
their defeat

Does by their own insinuation grow.

'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
Between the pass and fell incensed points
Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO

Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET

Does it not, thinks't thee, stand me now upon,

—
He that hath kill'd my king, and whor'd my
mother,

Popp'd in between th'election and my hopes,
Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage—

is't not perfect
conscience
To quit him with this arm?

And is't not to be
damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz are going to
their deaths.

Man, they courted this job.

They're nowhere near my conscience.

Their destruction came out of their own
meddling.

It's dangerous when small men get in between
the lunges and the murderous sword-points of
great opponents.

What a king this is!

So don't you think it's now up to me?

He killed my king, made a whore of my mother,
cut in between the election and my hopes of the
throne, cast his line to catch my own life, and
used this kind of trickery to do it.

Isn't it a perfectly clear conscience to settle with
him by my own hand?

And wouldn't it be damnable to let this disease
in human form go on doing more harm?

It must be shortly known to him from England
What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET

It will be short.

The interim is mine;

And a man's life's no more than to say 'One'.

But I am very sorry, good Horatio,

That to Laertes I forgot myself;

For by the image of my cause I see

The portraiture of his.

I'll court his favours.

But sure the bravery of his grief did put me

Into a tow'ring passion.

HORATIO

Peace, who comes here?

Enter Osric.

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to

Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir.

Dost know this

waterfly?

HORATIO

No, my good lord.

HAMLET

Thy state is the more gracious; for 'tis a vice to
know him.

He'll soon hear from England what the outcome
of that business was.

It will be soon.

But the time until then is mine —

and a man's life is over in the time it takes to say
'one'.

Still, I'm very sorry, good Horatio, that I lost

control of myself with Laertes.

Looking at my own situation, I can see the shape
of his.

I'll try to win him round.

But it was the showiness of his grief that threw

me into such a towering rage.

Quiet — who's this?

Your lordship is very welcome back to Denmark.

I thank you humbly, sir.

— Do you know this water-fly?

No, my good lord.

You're the better for it, because knowing him is
a bad habit.

He hath
much land, and fertile;

let a beast be lord of
beasts, and his crib
shall stand at the king's mess;

'tis a chough;

but, as I say, spacious
in the possession of dirt.

OSRIC

Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I
should impart a thing
to you from his Majesty.

HAMLET

I will receive it with all diligence of spirit.

Put
your bonnet to his
right use; 'tis for the head.

OSRIC

I thank your lordship, 'tis very hot.

HAMLET

No, believe me, 'tis very cold, the wind is
northerly.

OSRIC

It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

He owns a lot of land, and good land too.

Make an animal lord over other animals and his
feeding trough will be set at the king's own
table.

He's a jackdaw —

but as I say, he has a vast holding of dirt.

Sweet lord, if your lordship has a moment, I
have something to convey to you from his
Majesty.

I'll take it in with complete attention.

Put your hat to its proper use — it's for your
head.

Thank you, your lordship, but it's very hot.

No, believe me, it's very cold. The wind's from
the north.

It is rather cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET

Methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

OSRIC

Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,—as 'twere—I cannot tell how.

But, my lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head.

Sir, this is the matter,

—

HAMLET

I beseech you, remember,—

Hamlet moves him to put on his hat.

OSRIC

Nay, in good faith; for mine ease, in good faith.

Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes;

believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing.

Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry;

And yet it seems close and hot to me, for my constitution.

Extremely so, my lord — it's very close, as if — I can't quite say how.

But my lord, his Majesty asked me to tell you that he's placed a large bet on you.

Sir, this is the matter —

Please, remember —

No, honestly, I'm more comfortable this way, honestly.

Sir, Laertes has just arrived at court —

and believe me, he's the complete gentleman, full of the finest qualities, wonderfully easy company and very impressive.

Really, to speak of him with any feeling, he's the map and calendar of good breeding:

for

you shall find in him the continent of what part
a gentleman would see.

HAMLET

Sir, his definement suffers no perdition in you,

though I know, to
divide him inventorially would dizzy
th'arithmetic of memory, and yet
but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail.

But,

in the verity of
extolment, I take him to be a soul of great article
and his infusion of
such dearth and rareness as, to make true
diction of him, his semblable
is his mirror and who else would trace him his
umbrage, nothing more.

OSRIC

Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAMLET

The concernancy, sir?

Why do we wrap the
gentleman in our more rawer
breath?

OSRIC

you'll find in him the whole continent of
everything a gentleman would want to see.

Sir, his description loses nothing in your hands

—
although I know that itemising him would dizzy
memory's arithmetic, and even then it would
only be yawing off course, given how fast he
sails.

But in the honesty of praise, I take him to be a
soul of great substance, and his make-up of
such rare and scarce quality that, to describe
him truly, his only match is his own reflection,
and anyone else who tried to follow him would
be his shadow, nothing more.

Your lordship speaks of him with perfect
accuracy.

But what's the relevance, sir?

Why are we wrapping the gentleman up in our
own coarser breath?

Sir?

HORATIO

Is't not possible to understand in another tongue?

You will do't, sir,
really.

HAMLET

What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSRIC

Of Laertes?

HORATIO

His purse is empty already, all's golden words are spent.

HAMLET

Of him, sir.

OSRIC

I know you are not ignorant,—

HAMLET

I would you did, sir; yet in faith if you did, it would not much approve me.

Well, sir?

OSRIC

You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is,—

HAMLET

Sir?

Isn't it possible to understand him if you speak another language?

You can manage it, sir, really.

What's the point of bringing up this gentleman's name?

Laertes's?

His purse is empty; he's spent all his golden words.

His, sir.

I know you are not unaware —

I wish you did know, sir — though even if you did, it wouldn't say much for me.

Well, sir?

You are not unaware of how excellent Laertes is —

I dare not confess that, lest I should compare
with him in excellence;
but to know a man well were to know himself.

OSRIC

I mean, sir, for his weapon;

but in the
imputation laid on him, by them
in his meed he's unfellowed.

HAMLET

What's his weapon?

OSRIC

Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET

That's two of his weapons.

But well.

OSRIC

The King, sir, hath wager'd with him six Barbary
horses, against the
which he has imponed, as I take it, six French
rapiers and poniards,
with their assigns, as girdle, hangers, and so.

Three of the carriages,
in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to
the hilts, most
delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET

I don't dare admit that, in case I seem to be
comparing myself with him in excellence —
but to know another man well you'd have to
know yourself.

I mean, sir, with a weapon.

By the reputation given him by those who serve
alongside him, he has no equal.

What's his weapon?

Rapier and dagger.

That's two of his weapons.

But never mind.

The King, sir, has bet six Barbary horses against
six French rapiers and daggers that Laertes has
staked, with all their fittings — belts, straps and
so on.

Three of the carriages, honestly, are lovely to
look at, very well suited to the hilts, most
delicate carriages, and of very elegant design.

What call you the carriages?

HORATIO

I knew you must be edified by the margin ere
you had done.

OSRIC

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAMLET

The phrase would be more german to the matter
if we could carry cannon
by our sides.

I would it might be hangers till
then.

But on.

Six

Barbary horses against six French swords, their
assigns, and three
liberal conceited carriages: that's the French bet
against the Danish.

Why is this all imponed, as you call it?

OSRIC

The King, sir, hath laid that in a dozen passes
between you and him, he
shall not exceed you three hits.

He hath laid on
twelve for nine.

What do you mean, carriages?

I knew you'd need the footnotes before you
were through.

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

The word would be more appropriate if we
carried cannon at our sides.

Until then, I'd rather they were hangers.

But go on.

Six Barbary horses against six French swords
with their fittings and three elegantly designed
carriages — that's the French bet against the
Danish.

Why is all this staked, as you call it?

The King, sir, has bet that in a dozen exchanges
between you and Laertes, he won't beat you by
more than three hits.

He's wagered on twelve to nine.

And

it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET

How if I answer no?

OSRIC

I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET

Sir, I will walk here in the hall.

If it please his

Majesty, it is the breathing time of day with me.

Let the foils be

brought, the gentleman willing, and the King hold his purpose, I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC

Shall I re-deliver you e'en so?

HAMLET

To this effect, sir; after what flourish your nature will.

OSRIC

I commend my duty to your lordship.

And it could be tried immediately, if your lordship would give an answer.

What if my answer is no?

I mean, my lord, that you'd meet him in person for the trial.

Sir, I'll be walking here in the hall.

If it suits his Majesty, this is my exercise time of day.

Have the swords brought in, and if the gentleman is willing and the King holds to his plan, I'll win for him if I can; if not, all I'll get out of it is my shame and a few extra hits.

Shall I report you in those words?

To that effect, sir — with whatever flourishes come naturally to you.

I commend my service to your lordship.

HAMLET

Yours, yours.

Exit Osric.

HAMLET

He does well to commend it himself, there are
no tongues else for's
turn.

HORATIO

This lapwing runs away with the shell on his
head.

HAMLET

He did comply with his dug before he suck'd it.

Thus has he,—and many
more of the same bevy that I know the drossy
age dotes on,—only got
the tune of the time and outward habit of
encounter; a kind of yeasty
collection, which carries them through and
through the most fanned and
winnowed opinions;

and do but blow them to
their trial, the bubbles are
out.

Enter a Lord.

LORD

Yours, yours.

He does well to commend it himself; there's no
other tongue that will do it for him.

This chick runs off with the eggshell still on his
head.

He was flattering his mother's breast before
he'd suck it.

This is how he — and plenty of others out of the
same flock, the ones I know this shallow age
dotes on — has picked up only the fashionable
tune and the outward manners of polite
company: a kind of frothy compound that
carries them right through even the most
refined and carefully sifted opinions.

But just blow on them to test them, and the
bubbles are gone.

My lord, his Majesty commended him to you by
young Osric, who brings
back to him that you attend him in the hall.

He
sends to know if your
pleasure hold to play with Laertes or that you
will take longer time.

HAMLET

I am constant to my purposes, they follow the
King's pleasure.

If his
fitness speaks, mine is ready.

Now or
whensoever, provided I be so able
as now.

LORD

The King and Queen and all are coming down.

HAMLET

In happy time.

LORD

The Queen desires you to use some gentle
entertainment to Laertes
before you fall to play.

HAMLET

She well instructs me.

Exit Lord.

My lord, his Majesty sent his greetings by young
Osric, who reports back that you're waiting for
him in the hall.

He wants to know whether you still intend to
fence with Laertes, or would rather take more
time.

I don't change my mind; it follows the King's
pleasure.

If he's ready, I am.

Now or whenever, provided I'm as fit as I am at
this moment.

The King and Queen and all the rest are coming
down.

Good timing.

The Queen asks you to say something friendly to
Laertes before you begin.

That's good advice.

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, my lord.

You'll lose this bet, my lord.

HAMLET

I do not think so.

I don't think so.

Since he went into France, I
have been in continual
practice.

Since he went to France, I've been practising
constantly.

I shall win at the odds.

I'll win at those odds.

But thou
wouldst not think how ill
all's here about my heart:
but it is no matter.

But you wouldn't believe how uneasy I feel here,
around my heart.
It doesn't matter, though.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord.

No, my good lord —

HAMLET

It is but foolery;

It's only foolishness —

but it is such a kind of gain-
giving as would
perhaps trouble a woman.

but it's the kind of misgiving that might worry a
woman.

HORATIO

If your mind dislike anything, obey it.

If something in your mind objects, listen to it.

I will
forestall their repair
hither, and say you are not fit.

I'll go and head them off, and say you're not up
to it.

HAMLET

Not a whit,

we defy augury.

There's a special
providence in the fall of
a sparrow.

If it be now, 'tis not to come;

if it be
not to come, it
will be now;

if it be not now, yet it will come.

The
readiness is all.
Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what
is't to leave betimes?

Enter King, Queen, Laertes, Lords, Osric and Attendants with foils &c.

KING

Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from
me.

The King puts Laertes's hand into Hamlet's.

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir.

I have done you
wrong;
But pardon't as you are a gentleman.

Not at all.

We don't believe in omens.

There's a special providence in the fall of a single
sparrow.

If it's going to happen now, it isn't going to
happen later;

if it isn't going to happen later, it will happen
now;

if it isn't now, it will still come.

Being ready is everything.

Since no man knows anything of what he leaves
behind, what does it matter to leave early?

Come, Hamlet, come — take this hand from me.

Forgive me, sir.

I have wronged you.

But pardon it, as a gentleman.

This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,

How I am punish'd with sore distraction.

What I have done

That might your nature, honour, and exception

Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes?

Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then?

His madness.

If't be so,

Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;

His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purpos'd evil

Free me so far in your most generous thoughts

That I have shot my arrow o'er the house

And hurt my brother.

LAERTES

I am satisfied in nature,

Whose motive in this case should stir me most

To my revenge.

But in my terms of honour

I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation

Till by some elder masters of known honour

I have a voice and precedent of peace

To keep my name ungor'd.

Everyone here knows, and you must have heard,
how badly I've been afflicted with mental illness.

What I did that might roughly have shaken your

nature, your honour and your sense of

grievance, I declare here was madness.

Was it Hamlet who wronged Laertes?

Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet is taken away from himself, and while

he's not himself does Laertes wrong, then

Hamlet isn't the one doing it — Hamlet disowns the act.

Who does it, then?

His madness.

And if that's so, Hamlet is on the side of the wronged:

his madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in front of all these people, let my denial of

any deliberate wrong clear me in your generous

thoughts — as though I had shot an arrow over

the roof of the house and hit my own brother.

As far as my feelings go, I'm satisfied, and

feeling is what should drive me hardest toward revenge here.

But where honour is concerned, I keep my

distance, and I won't be reconciled until some

older authorities on honour give me a ruling and

a precedent for peace that leaves my name

unstained.

But till that time

I do receive your offer'd love like love,

And will not wrong it.

HAMLET

I embrace it freely,

And will this brother's wager frankly play.—

Give us the foils; come on.

LAERTES

Come, one for me.

HAMLET

I'll be your foil, Laertes;

in mine ignorance

Your skill shall like a star i' th' darkest night,

Stick fiery off indeed.

LAERTES

You mock me, sir.

HAMLET

No, by this hand.

KING

Give them the foils, young Osric.

Cousin

Hamlet,

You know the wager?

HAMLET

Very well, my lord.

Your Grace has laid the odds o' the weaker side.

KING

Until then, I take your offered friendship as

friendship, and I won't abuse it.

I accept that gladly, and I'll play this brotherly
wager honestly.

— Give us the swords. Come on.

Yes, one for me.

I'll set off your skill, Laertes.

Against my clumsiness, yours will stand out like
a star burning in the darkest night.

You're mocking me, sir.

No — I swear it.

Give them the swords, young Osric.

Cousin Hamlet, you know the terms of the bet?

Very well, my lord.

Your Grace has given the odds to the weaker
fencer.

I do not fear it.

I have seen you both;

But since he is better'd, we have therefore odds.

LAERTES

This is too heavy.

Let me see another.

HAMLET

This likes me well.

These foils have all a length?

They prepare to play.

OSRIC

Ay, my good lord.

KING

Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit,

Or quit in answer of the third exchange,

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire;

The King shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,

And in the cup an union shall he throw

Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn.

Give me the

cups;

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,

The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to

earth,

'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.'

Come, begin.

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

I'm not worried.

I've seen you both.

But since he has improved, we get the odds.

This one's too heavy.

Let me see another.

This one suits me.

Are these swords all the same length?

Yes, my good lord.

Set the wine jugs on that table.

If Hamlet scores the first or second hit, or evens
the score in the third exchange, let every cannon
on the battlements fire.

The King will drink to Hamlet's stamina, and
he'll drop a pearl into the cup worth more than
the one four successive Danish kings have worn
in the crown.

Give me the cups.

And let the kettledrum speak to the trumpet, the
trumpet to the gunner outside, the cannon to
the heavens and the heavens back to earth:
'Now the King drinks to Hamlet.'

Come, begin.

And you, the judges, keep a careful eye.

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

Come on, sir.

LAERTES

Come, my lord.

Come on, my lord.

They play.

HAMLET

One.

One.

LAERTES

No.

No.

HAMLET

Judgement.

Judges' ruling.

OSRIC

A hit, a very palpable hit.

A hit — a very obvious hit.

LAERTES

Well; again.

All right. Again.

KING

Stay, give me drink.

Wait — give me a drink.

Hamlet, this pearl is thine;

Hamlet, this pearl is yours.

Here's to thy health.

Here's to your health.

Trumpets sound, and cannon shot off within.

KING

Give him the cup.

Give him the cup.

HAMLET

I'll play this bout first; set it by awhile.

I'll fight this round first. Set it aside for a moment.

They play.

HAMLET

Come.

Come on.

Another hit; what say you?

LAERTES

A touch, a touch, I do confess.

KING

Our son shall win.

QUEEN

He's fat, and scant of breath.

Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.

The Queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good madam.

KING

Gertrude, do not drink.

QUEEN

I will, my lord;

I pray you pardon me.

Aside.

KING

It is the poison'd cup; it is too late.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam.

By and by.

QUEEN

Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES

My lord, I'll hit him now.

Another hit — what do you say?

A touch, a touch, I admit it.

Our son will win.

He's out of condition and short of breath.

Here, Hamlet, take my handkerchief and wipe
your forehead.

The Queen drinks to your success, Hamlet.

Thank you, madam.

Gertrude, don't drink.

I will, my lord.

Please excuse me.

[Aside] That's the poisoned cup. It's too late.

I don't dare drink yet, madam.

In a moment.

Come, let me wipe your face.

My lord, I'll hit him this time.

KING

I do not think't.

[Aside] I doubt it.

Aside.

LAERTES

And yet 'tis almost 'gainst my conscience.

And yet it goes almost against my conscience.

HAMLET

Come for the third, Laertes.

Come for the third round, Laertes.

You do but dally.

You're only toying with me.

I pray you pass with your best violence.

Please, come at me with everything you've got.

I am afeard you make a wanton of me.

I'm afraid you're treating me like a spoiled child.

LAERTES

Say you so?

You think so?

Come on.

Come on.

They play.

OSRIC

Nothing neither way.

Nothing either way.

LAERTES

Have at you now.

Take that.

Laertes wounds Hamlet; then, in scuffling, they change rapiers, and Hamlet wounds Laertes.

KING

Part them; they are incens'd.

Separate them — they've lost their tempers.

HAMLET

Nay, come again!

No, come on again!

The Queen falls.

OSRIC

Look to the Queen there, ho!

Look to the Queen there!

HORATIO

They bleed on both sides.

They're both bleeding.

How is it, my lord?

How are you, my lord?

OSRIC

How is't, Laertes?

How are you, Laertes?

LAERTES

Why, as a woodcock to my own springe, Osric.

I am justly kill'd with mine own treachery.

Caught like a bird in my own snare, Osric.

I've been justly killed by my own treachery.

HAMLET

How does the Queen?

How is the Queen?

KING

She swoons to see them bleed.

She's fainted at the sight of the blood.

QUEEN

No, no, the drink, the drink!

O my dear Hamlet!

The drink, the drink!

I am poison'd.

No, no — the drink, the drink!

Oh, my dear Hamlet!

The drink, the drink —

I've been poisoned.

Dies.

HAMLET

O villany!

Ho! Let the door be lock'd:

Treachery! Seek it out.

Villainy!

Lock the doors!

Treachery — find out where it came from!

Laertes falls.

LAERTES

It is here, Hamlet.

Hamlet, thou art slain.

No medicine in the world can do thee good.

In thee there is not half an hour of life;

The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,

Unbated and evenom'd.

It's here, Hamlet.

Hamlet, you're a dead man.

No medicine in the world can help you.

You have less than half an hour of life left in you.

The treacherous weapon is in your own hand —

unblunted and poisoned.

The foul practice

Hath turn'd itself on me.

Lo, here I lie,

Never to rise again.

Thy mother's poison'd.

I can no more.

The King, the King's to blame.

HAMLET

The point envenom'd too!

Then, venom, to thy work.

Stabs the King.

HAMLET

OSRIC and LORDS.

Treason! treason!

KING

O yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned

Dane,

Drink off this potion.

Is thy union here?

Follow my mother.

King dies.

LAERTES

He is justly serv'd.

It is a poison temper'd by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon

thee,

Nor thine on me.

The foul scheme has turned back on me.

Look, here I lie, never to get up again.

Your mother has been poisoned.

I can't say any more.

The King — the King is to blame.

The point poisoned as well!

Then, poison, get to work.

OSRIC and LORDS: Treason! Treason!

Defend me, friends — I'm only wounded.

Here, you incestuous, murdering, damned Dane

— drink this down.

Is your pearl in there?

Go after my mother.

He got what he deserved.

It was a poison he mixed himself.

Let's exchange forgiveness, noble Hamlet.

May my death and my father's not be charged

against you, nor yours against me.

Dies.

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it!

I follow thee.

I am dead, Horatio.

Wretched Queen, adieu.

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,

That are but mutes or audience to this act,

Had I but time,—as this fell sergeant, death,

Is strict in his arrest,—O, I could tell you,—

But let it be.

Horatio, I am dead,

Thou liv'st;

report me and my cause aright

To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO

Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor left.

HAMLET

As th'art a man,

Give me the cup.

Let go;

by Heaven, I'll have't.

O good Horatio, what a wounded name,

Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind
me.

If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,

Absent thee from felicity awhile,

And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,

To tell my story.

Heaven clear you of it.

I'm coming after you.

— I'm dying, Horatio.

Wretched Queen, goodbye.

And you who look pale and shake at what's

happened, who are only silent extras and

spectators at this scene — if I had the time, but

this brutal officer, death, makes his arrest

without delay — oh, I could tell you — but let it
go.

Horatio, I'm dying; you're alive.

Report me and my cause truthfully to those who

don't understand.

Never.

I'm more an ancient Roman than a Dane —

there's still some liquid left here.

As you're a man, give me the cup.

Let go.

By heaven, I'll have it.

Oh, good Horatio, what a damaged reputation

I'll leave behind me if things stay unexplained
like this.

If you ever held me in your heart, keep yourself

away from the peace of death a while longer, and

go on breathing painfully in this harsh world, to
tell my story.

March afar off, and shot within.

HAMLET

What warlike noise is this?

OSRIC

Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from
Poland,
To the ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

HAMLET

O, I die, Horatio.

The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
I cannot live to hear the news from England,
But I do prophesy th'election lights
On Fortinbras.

He has my dying voice.

So tell him, with the occurrents more and less,
Which have solicited.

The rest is silence.

Dies.

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart.

Good night, sweet
prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.
Why does the drum come hither?

March within.

Enter Fortinbras, the English Ambassadors and others.

FORTINBRAS

Where is this sight?

What's that warlike noise?

Young Fortinbras, back victorious from Poland,
is firing this military salute for the ambassadors
from England.

Oh, I'm dying, Horatio.

The powerful poison is overwhelming my spirit.
I won't live to hear the news from England,
but I predict the election will fall on Fortinbras.

He has my dying vote.

Tell him that, along with the details, large and
small, that brought this about.

The rest is silence.

Now a noble heart breaks.

Good night, sweet prince, and may flights of
angels sing you to your rest.

— Why is that drum coming this way?

Where is this scene?

HORATIO

What is it you would see?

If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

FORTINBRAS

This quarry cries on havoc.

O proud death,

What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,

That thou so many princes at a shot

So bloodily hast struck?

FIRST AMBASSADOR

The sight is dismal;

And our affairs from England come too late.

The ears are senseless that should give us
hearing,

To tell him his commandment is fulfill'd,

That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.

Where should we have our thanks?

HORATIO

Not from his mouth,

Had it th'ability of life to thank you.

He never gave commandment for their death.

But since, so jump upon this bloody question,

You from the Polack wars, and you from England

Are here arriv'd, give order that these bodies

High on a stage be placed to the view,

And let me speak to th' yet unknowing world

How these things came about.

What is it you want to see?

If it's anything sorrowful or astonishing, stop
looking — you've found it.

This heap of dead cries out for slaughter.

Oh, proud Death, what feast is being prepared
in your eternal chamber, that you've struck
down so many princes at one bloody blow?

The sight is grim, and our news from England
has come too late.

The ears that should hear us are past hearing —
we came to tell him that his order has been
carried out, that Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
are dead.

Who is going to thank us now?

Not his mouth, even if it had life enough left to
thank you.

He never ordered their deaths.

But since you've both arrived so exactly at this
bloody moment — you from the Polish wars and
you from England — give orders for these bodies
to be laid out high on a platform where everyone
can see them,

and let me tell the world, which knows nothing
yet, how all this came about.

So shall you hear

Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgements, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forc'd cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads.

All this can I

Truly deliver.

FORTINBRAS

Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO

Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on
more.
But let this same be presently perform'd,
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more
mischance
On plots and errors happen.

FORTINBRAS

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have prov'd most royally;

You'll hear of acts that were carnal, bloody and
unnatural, of judgements that fell by accident,
of killings that happened by chance, of deaths
brought on by cunning and by pressure — and,
in this final act, of plots that misfired and came
down on the heads of the men who devised
them.

All of this I can report truthfully.

Let's hurry to hear it, and call the nobility to
listen.

As for me, I take up my fortune with sorrow.
I have some remembered claims on this
kingdom, which my position now invites me to
press.

I'll have reason to speak of that too, and to pass
on the vote of a man whose voice will bring more
with it.
But let this be done at once, while people's
minds are still wild, in case any more disaster
comes of plots and mistakes.

Let four captains carry Hamlet up onto the
platform like a soldier, because if he'd been
given the chance to rule, he would very likely
have proved a great king.

and for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies.

Such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

A dead march.

Exeunt, bearing off the bodies, after which a peal of ordnance is shot off.

And for his funeral, let military music and the
rites of war speak loudly on his behalf.

— Take up the bodies.

A sight like this belongs on a battlefield; here it
looks all wrong.
Go, order the soldiers to fire.

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