

# Hamlet

## 3.4

*Enter Queen Gertrude and Polonius*

**POLONIUS**

A 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 screened and stood between  
Much heat and him. I'll silence me e'en here.  
Pray you be round with him. 5

**HAMLET** (*within*) Mother, mother, mother!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

I'll warr'nt you. Fear me not. Withdraw; I hear him  
coming.

*Polonius hides behind the arras.*

*Enter Prince Hamlet*

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

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

**HAMLET**

Mother, you have my father much offended. 10

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

**HAMLET**

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Why, how now, Hamlet?

**HAMLET** What's the matter now?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Have you forgot me?

**HAMLET** No, by the rood, not so.

You are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife. 15

But±±would you were not so±±you are my mother.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

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

You go not till I set you up a glass

Where you may see the inmost part of you. 20

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?

Help, help, ho!

**POLONIUS** (*behind the arras*)      What ho! Help, help, help!

**HAMLET**

How now, a rat? Dead for a ducat, dead.

*He thrusts his sword through the arras*

**POLONIUS**

O, I am slain!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** (*to Hamlet*)      O me, what hast thou done?

**HAMLET**

Nay, I know not. Is it the King? 25

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

**HAMLET**

A bloody deed±±almost as bad, good-mother,

As kill a king and marry with his brother.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

As kill a king?

**HAMLET**      Ay, lady, 'twas my word.

(*To Polonius*)      Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool,  
farewell. 30

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, 35

If damneÁd custom have not brassed it so

That it is proof and bulwark against sense.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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, 40

Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose

From the fair forehead of an innocent love

And sets a blister there, makes marriage vows

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

As from the body of contraction plucks 45

The very soul, and sweet religion makes

A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face doth glow,

Yea, this solidity and compound mass

With tristful visage, as against the doom,  
Is thought-sick at the act.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** Ay me, what act, 50  
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, 55  
An eye like Mars, to threaten or 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 60  
To give the world assurance of a man.  
This was your husband. Look you now what follows.  
Here *is* your husband, like a mildewed ear  
Blasting his wholesome brother. Have you eyes?  
Could you on this fair mountain leave to feed, 65  
And batten on this moor? Ha, have you eyes?  
You cannot call it love, for at your age  
The heyday in the blood is tame, it's humble,  
And waits upon the judgement; and what judgement  
Would step from this to this? What devil was't 70  
That thus hath cozened you at hood-man blind?  
O shame, where is thy blush? Rebellious hell,  
If thou canst mutine in a matron's bones,  
To flaming youth let virtue be as wax  
And melt in her own fire. Proclaim no shame 75  
When the compulsive ardour gives the charge,  
Since frost itself as actively doth burn,  
And reason panders will.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** O Hamlet, speak no more!  
Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul,  
And there I see such black and graineÁd spots 80  
As will not leave their tinct.

**HAMLET** Nay, but to live  
In the rank sweat of an enseameÁd bed,  
Stewed in corruption, honeying and making love  
Over the nasty sty±±

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** O, speak to me no more!  
These words like daggers enter in mine ears. 85  
No more, sweet Hamlet.

**HAMLET** A murderer and a villain,  
A slave that is not twenti'th 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 90  
And put it in his pocket±±

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** No more.

**HAMLET** A king of shreds and patches±±  
*Enter the Ghost in his nightgown*  
Save me and hover o'er me with your wings,  
You heavenly guards! *(To the Ghost)* What would  
you, gracious figure? 95

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** Alas, he's mad.

**HAMLET** *(to the Ghost)*  
Do you not come your tardy son to chide,  
That, lapsed in time and passion, lets go by  
Th'important acting of your dread command?  
O, say!

**GHOST** Do not forget. This visitation 100  
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. 105

**HAMLET** How is it with you, lady?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** Alas, how is't with you,  
That you do bend your eye on vacancy,  
And with th'incorporal air do hold discourse?  
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep, 110  
And, as the sleeping soldiers in th'alarm,  
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,  
Start up and stand on end. O gentle son,  
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper  
Sprinkle cool patience! Whereon do you look? 115

**HAMLET**  
On him, on him. Look you how pale he glares.  
His form and cause conjoined, preaching to stones,

Would make them capable. (*To the Ghost*) Do not look  
upon me,  
Lest with this piteous action you convert  
My stern effects. Then what I have to do 120  
Will want true colour±±tears perchance for blood.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

To whom do you speak this?

**HAMLET**

Do you see nothing there?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Nothing at all, yet all that is I see.

**HAMLET**

Nor did you nothing hear?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

No, nothing but ourselves.

**HAMLET**

Why, look you there. Look how it steals away. 125  
My father, in his habit as he lived.  
Look where he goes even now out at the portal.

*Exit the Ghost*

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

Ecstasy? 130

My pulse as yours doth temperately keep time,  
And makes as healthful music. It is not madness  
That I have uttered. Bring me to the test,  
And I the matter will reword, which madness  
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace 135  
Lay not a 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; 140  
Repent what's past, avoid what is to come,  
And do not spread the compost o'er the weeds  
To make them ranker. Forgive me this my virtue,  
For in the fatness of these pursy times  
Virtue itself of vice must pardon beg, 145  
Yea, curb and woo for leave to do him good.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

O Hamlet, thou hast cleft my heart in twain!

**HAMLET**

O, throw away the worser part of it,  
And live the purer with the other half!  
Good night±±but go not to mine uncle's bed. 150  
Assume a virtue if you have it not.  
Refrain tonight,  
And that shall lend a kind of easiness  
To the next abstinence. Once more, good night;  
And when you are desirous to be blest, 155  
I'll blessing beg of you. For this same lord,  
I do repent. But heaven hath pleased it so  
To punish me with this, and this with me,  
That I must be their scourge and minister.  
I will bestow him, and will answer well 160  
The death I gave him. So, again, good night.  
I must be cruel only to be kind.  
Thus bad begins, and worse remains behind.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** What shall I do?

**HAMLET**

Not this, by no means, that I bid you do: 165  
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 damned fingers,  
Make you to ravel all this matter out, 170  
That I essentially am not in madness,  
But mad in craft. 'Twere good you let him know,  
For who that's but a queen, fair, sober, wise,  
Would from a paddock, from a bat, a gib,  
Such dear concernings hide? Who would do so? 175  
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. 180

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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

**HAMLET**

I must to England.

You know that?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** Alack, I had forgot.

'Tis so concluded on.

**HAMLET** This man shall set me packing. 185

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.±± 190

Good night, mother.

*Exit, tugging in Polonius*