

Hamlet

3.2

Enter Prince Hamlet and two or three of the Players

HAMLET Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you±±trippingly on the tongue; but if you mouth it, as many of your players do, I had as lief the town-crier had spoke my lines. Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand, thus, but use all gently; for in 5 the very torrent, tempest, and as I may say the whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness. O, it offends me to the soul to hear a robustious, periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split 10 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.

A PLAYER I warrant your honour. 15

HAMLET Be not too tame, neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action, with this special observance: that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature. For anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, 20 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 25 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 30 having the accent of Christians nor the gait of Christian, pagan, nor no 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. 35

A PLAYER I hope we have reformed 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 40
on some quantity of barren spectators to laugh too,
though in the mean time some necessary question of
the play be then to be considered. That's villainous,
and shows a most pitiful ambition in the fool that uses
it. Go make you ready. 45

Exeunt Players

Enter Polonius, Guildenstern, and Rosencrantz

(To Polonius) How now, my lord? Will the King hear
this piece of work?

POLONIUS And the Queen too, and that presently.

HAMLET Bid the players make haste.

Exit Polonius

Will you two help to hasten them?

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN We will, my lord. 50

Exeunt

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 coped withal.

HORATIO

O my dear lord±±

HAMLET Nay, do not think I flatter;

For what advancement may I hope from thee, 55

That no revenue hast but thy good spirits

To feed and clothe thee? Why should the poor be

flattered?

No, let the candied tongue lick absurd pomp,

And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee

Where thrift may follow feigning. Dost thou hear?±± 60

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice

And could of men distinguish, her election

Hath sealed thee for herself; for thou hast been

As one in suff'ring all that suffers nothing,
 A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards 65
 Hath ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
 Whose blood and judgement are so well commingled
 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 70
 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. 75
 I prithee, when thou seest that act afoot,
 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 damneÁd ghost that we have seen, 80
 And my imaginations are as foul
 As Vulcan's stithy. Give him heedful note,
 For I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
 And after, we will both our judgements join
 To censure of his seeming.

HORATIO Well, my lord. 85
 If a steal aught the whilst this play is playing
 And scape detecting, I will pay the theft.
[Sound a flourish]

HAMLET
 They are coming to the play. I must be idle.
 Get you a place.
[Danish march. Enter King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and other lords attendant, with the King's guard carrying torches]

KING CLAUDIUS How fares our cousin Hamlet?

HAMLET Excellent, i'faith, of the chameleon's dish. I eat 90
 the air, promise-crammed. You cannot feed capons so.

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

HAMLET No, nor mine now. *(To Polonius)* My lord, you
 played once i'th' university, you say. 95

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

HAMLET And what did you enact?

POLONIUS I did enact Julius Caesar. I was killed i'th' Capitol. Brutus killed me. 100

HAMLET It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.±±Be the players ready?

ROSENCRANTZ Ay, my lord, they stay upon your patience.

QUEEN GERTRUDE

Come hither, my good Hamlet. Sit by me.

HAMLET No, good-mother, here's mettle more attractive. 105
He sits by Ophelia

POLONIUS (*aside*) O ho, do you mark that?

HAMLET (*to Ophelia*) Lady, shall I lie in your lap?

OPHELIA No, my lord.

HAMLET I mean my head upon your lap?

OPHELIA Ay, my lord. 110

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 No thing. 115

OPHELIA You are merry, my lord.

HAMLET Who, I?

OPHELIA Ay, my lord.

HAMLET O God, your only jig-maker! What should a man do but be merry? For look you how cheerfully my mother looks, and my father died within 's two hours. 120

OPHELIA Nay, 'tis twice two months, my lord.

HAMLET So long? Nay then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables. O heavens, die two months ago and not forgotten yet! Then there's hope a great¹²⁵ man's memory may outlive his life half a year. But, by'r Lady, a must build churches then, or else shall a suffer not thinking on, with the hobby-horse, whose epitaph is `For O, for O, the hobby-horse is forgot.'

Hautboys play. The dumb show enters. Enter a King and a Queen very lovingly, the Queen embracing him. She kneels and makes show of protestation unto him. He takes her up and declines his head upon her neck.

He lays him down upon a bank of flowers. She, seeing him asleep, leaves him. Anon comes in a fellow, takes off his crown, kisses it, and pours poison in the King's ears, and exits. The Queen returns, finds the King dead, and makes passionate action. The poisoner, with some two or three mutes, comes in again, seeming to lament with her. The dead body is carried away. The poisoner woos the Queen with gifts. She seems loath and unwilling a while, but in the end accepts his love. Exeunt the Players

OPHELIA What means this, my lord? 130

HAMLET Marry, this is miching *malhecho*. That means mischief.

OPHELIA Belike this show imports the argument of the play.
Enter Prologue

HAMLET We shall know by this fellow. The players cannot keep counsel, they'll tell all. 135

OPHELIA Will a 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 140 play.

PROLOGUE

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

Exit

HAMLET Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring? 145

OPHELIA 'Tis brief, my lord.

HAMLET As woman's love.

Enter the Player King and his Queen

PLAYER KING

Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orbeÁd ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrowed sheen 150
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. 155
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, 160
In neither aught, or in extremity.
Now what my love is, proof hath made you know,
And as my love is sized, my fear is so.

PLAYER KING

Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too.
My operant powers their functions leave to do, 165
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honoured, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou±±

PLAYER QUEEN

O, confound the rest!

Such love must needs be treason in my breast.
In second husband let me be accurst; 170
None wed the second but who killed the first.

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 175
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, 180
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, 185
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. 190
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; 195
The poor advanced 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. 200
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; 205
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,
Each opposite that blanks the face of joy
Meet what I would have well and it destroy, 210
Both here and hence pursue me lasting strife
If, once a widow, ever I be wife.

HAMLET If she should break it now!

PLAYER KING *(to Player Queen)*

'Tis deeply sworn. Sweet, leave me here a while.
My spirits grow dull, and fain I would beguile 215
The tedious day with sleep.

PLAYER QUEEN Sleep rock thy brain,
And never come mischance between us twain.

Player King sleeps. Player Queen exits

HAMLET *(to Gertrude)* Madam, how like you this play?

QUEEN GERTRUDE The lady protests too much, methinks.

HAMLET O, but she'll keep her word. 220

KING CLAUDIUS Have you heard the argument? Is there
no offence in't?

HAMLET No, no, they do but jest, poison in jest. No offence
i'th' world.

KING CLAUDIUS What do you call the play? 225

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. 230
Let the galled jade wince, our withers are unwrung.

Enter Player Lucianus

This is one Lucianus, nephew to the King.

OPHELIA You are as good as a chorus, my lord.

HAMLET I could interpret between you and your love if I
could see the puppets dallying. 235

OPHELIA You are keen, my lord, you are keen.

HAMLET It would cost you a groaning to take off mine edge.

OPHELIA Still better, and worse.

HAMLET So you mis-take your husbands. *(To Lucianus)*
Begin, murderer. Pox, leave thy damnable faces and 240
begin. Come: 'the croaking raven doth bellow for
revenge'.

PLAYER LUCIANUS

Thoughts black, hands apt, drugs fit, and time
agreeing,

Confederate season, else no creature seeing;
Thou mixture rank of midnight weeds collected, 245
With Hecate's ban thrice blasted, thrice infected,
Thy natural magic and dire property
On wholesome life usurp immediately.

He pours the poison in the Player King's ear

HAMLET A poisons him i'th' garden for 's estate. His
name's Gonzago. The story is extant, and writ in choice 250
Italian. You shall see anon how the murderer gets the
love of Gonzago's wife.

OPHELIA The King rises.

HAMLET What, frightened with false fire?

QUEEN GERTRUDE *(to Claudius)* How fares my lord? 255

POLONIUS Give o'er the play.

KING CLAUDIUS Give me some light. Away.

[COURTIERS] Lights, lights, lights!

Exeunt all but Hamlet and Horatio

HAMLET

Why, let the stricken deer go weep,

The hart ungalled play, 260
 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 Provencal
 roses on my razed shoes, get me a fellowship in a cry 265
 of players, sir?
HORATIO Half a share.
HAMLET A whole one, I.
 For thou dost know, O Damon dear,
 This realm dismantled was 270
 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? 275
HORATIO Very well, my lord.
HAMLET Upon the talk of the pois'ning?
HORATIO I did very well note him.
Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern
HAMLET Ah ha! Come, some music, come, the recorders,
 For if the King like not the comedy, 280
 Why then, belike he likes it not, pardie.
 Come, some music.
GUILDENSTERN Good my lord, vouchsafe me a word with
 you.
HAMLET Sir, a whole history. 285
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. 290
HAMLET Your wisdom should show itself more richer to
 signify this to his doctor, for 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 295
 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. 300

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. 305

HAMLET Sir, I cannot.

GUILDENSTERN What, my lord?

HAMLET Make you a wholesome answer. My wit's diseased. But, sir, such answers as I can make, you shall command; or rather, as you say, my mother. 310
Therefore no more, but to the matter. My mother, you say?

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

HAMLET O wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother! 315
But is there no sequel at the heels of this mother's admiration?

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

HAMLET We shall obey, were she ten times our mother. 320
Have you any further trade with us?

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you once did love me.

HAMLET So I do still, by these pickers and stealers.

ROSENCRANTZ Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? You do freely bar the door of your own 325
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, but `while the grass grows . . .'±±the proverb 330
is something musty.

Enter one with a recorder

O, the recorder. Let me see. *(To Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, taking them aside)* To withdraw with you, why do you go about to recover the wind of me as if you would drive me into a toil? 335

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

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

GUILDENSTERN My lord, I cannot. 340

HAMLET I pray you.

GUILDENSTERN Believe me, I cannot.

HAMLET I do beseech you.

GUILDENSTERN I know no touch of it, my lord.

HAMLET 'Tis as easy as lying. Govern these ventages with 345
your fingers and thumb, give it breath with your
mouth, and it will discourse most excellent music. Look
you, these are the stops.

GUILDENSTERN But these cannot I command to any
utterance of harmony. I have not the skill. 350

HAMLET Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you
make of me! You would play upon me, you would
seem to know my stops, you would pluck out the heart
of my mystery, you would sound me from my lowest
note to the top of my compass; and there is much 355
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. 360

Enter Polonius

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? 365

POLONIUS By th' 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 Very like a whale. 370

HAMLET Then will I come to my mother by and by. (*Aside*)
They fool me to the top of my bent. (*To Polonius*) I will
come by and by.

POLONIUS I will say so.

HAMLET 'By and by' is easily said. 375

Exit Polonius

Leave me, friends.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world. Now could I drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day 380
Would quake to look on. Soft, now to my mother.
O heart, lose not thy nature! Let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom.
Let me be cruel, not unnatural.
I will speak daggers to her, but use none. 385
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