

Hamlet

3.1

*Enter King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Polonius,
Ophelia, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and lords*

KING CLAUDIUS *(to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern)*

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 a will by no means speak.

5

GUILDENSTERN

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.

10

QUEEN GERTRUDE 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 GERTRUDE Did you assay him

15

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.

20

POLONIUS

'Tis most true,

And he beseeched me to entreat your majesties
To hear and see the matter.

KING CLAUDIUS

With all my heart; and it doth much content me
To hear him so inclined.±±Good gentlemen,

25

Give him a further edge, and drive his purpose on
To these delights.

ROSENCRANTZ We shall, my lord.

Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

KING CLAUDIUS Sweet Gertrude, leave us too, 30
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, 35
We may of their encounter frankly judge,
And gather by him, as he is behaved,
If't be th'affliction of his love or no
That thus he suffers for.

QUEEN GERTRUDE I shall obey you.
And for your part, Ophelia, I do wish 40
That your good beauties be the happy cause
Of Hamlet's wildness; 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 Gertrude

POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here.±±Gracious, so please you, 45
We will bestow ourselves.±±Read on this book,
That show of such an exercise may colour
Your loneliness. We are oft to blame in this:
'Tis too much proved that with devotion's visage
And pious action we do sugar o'er 50
The devil himself.

KING CLAUDIUS O, 'tis too true.

(Aside) How smart a lash that speech doth give my
conscience.

The harlot's cheek, beautied with plast'ring art,
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word. 55
O heavy burden!

POLONIUS

I hear him coming. Let's withdraw, my lord.

Exeunt Claudius and Polonius

Enter Prince 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, 60
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 heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to±±'tis a consummation 65
Devoutly to be wished. 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 70
That makes calamity of so long life,
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of disprized love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns 75
That patient merit of th'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, 80
The undiscovered 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, 85
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, 90
The fair Ophelia!±±Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

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

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, well, well, well.

OPHELIA

My lord, I have remembrances of yours

95

That I have longed long to redeliver.

I pray you now receive them.

HAMLET

No, no, I never gave you aught.

OPHELIA

My honoured lord, you know right well you did,

And with them words of so sweet breath composed

100

As made the things more rich. Their perfume lost,

Take these again; for to the noble mind

Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.

There, my lord.

HAMLET Ha, ha? Are you honest?

105

OPHELIA My lord.

HAMLET Are you fair?

OPHELIA What means your lordship?

HAMLET That if you be honest and fair, your honesty

should admit no discourse to your beauty.

110

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.

115

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

120

of it. I loved you not.

OPHELIA I was the more deceived.

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

125

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 heaven and

130

earth? 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 Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may
play the fool nowhere but in 's own house. Farewell. 135

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; 140
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. 145
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 150
that are married already±±all but one±±shall live. The
rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go.

Exit

OPHELIA

O what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
Th'expectancy and rose of the fair state, 155
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
Th'observed of all observers, quite, quite, down!
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That sucked the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason 160
Like sweet bells jangled out of tune and harsh;
That unmatched 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 Claudius and Polonius

KING CLAUDIUS

Love? His affections do not that way tend, 165
Nor what he spake, though it lacked form a little,

Was not like madness. There's something in his soul
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood,
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger; which to prevent 170
I have in quick determination
Thus set it down: he shall with speed to England
For the demand of our neglected tribute.
Haply the seas and countries different,
With variable objects, shall expel 175
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 this grief 180
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 185
To show his griefs. Let her be round with him,
And I'll be placed, 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 CLAUDIUS It shall be so. 190

Madness in great ones must not unwatched go.

Exeunt