

# Hamlet

## 1.2

*Flourish. Enter Claudius, King of Denmark,  
Gertrude the Queen, members of the Council, such  
as Polonius, his son Laertes and daughter Ophelia,  
Prince Hamlet dressed in black, with others*

### KING CLAUDIUS

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 5  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
Th'imperial jointress of this warlike state,  
Have we as 'twere with a defeated joy, 10  
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,  
Taken to wife. Nor have we herein barred  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15  
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
Now follows that you know young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame, 20  
Co-league'd with the dream of his advantage,  
He hath not failed to pester us with message  
Importing the surrender of those lands  
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 25

*Enter Valtemand and Cornelius*

Now for ourself, and for this time of meeting,  
Thus much the business is: we have here writ  
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras±±  
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears  
Of this his nephew's purpose±±to suppress 30

His further gait herein, in that the levies,  
The lists, and full proportions are all made  
Out of his subject; and we here dispatch  
You, good Cornelius, and you, Valtemand,  
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway, 35  
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.

**VALTEMAND**

In that and all things will we show our duty. 40

**KING CLAUDIUS**

We doubt it nothing, heartily farewell.

*Exeunt Valtemand and Cornelius*

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, 45  
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, 50

Your leave and favour to return 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 towards France 55  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

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 sealed my hard consent. 60  
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

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±±

**HAMLET**

A little more than kin and less than kind. 65

**KING CLAUDIUS**

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

**HAMLET**

Not so, my lord, I am too much i'th' sun.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Good Hamlet, cast thy nightly colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.

Do not for ever with thy vaileÁd lids 70

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 GERTRUDE** If it be,

Why seems it so particular with thee? 75

**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 forced breath,

No, nor the fruitful river in the eye, 80

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;

But I have that within which passeth show±± 85

These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

'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 90

In filial obligation for some term

To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere

In obstinate condolment is a course

Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief,

It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, 95

A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,

An understanding simple and unschooled;  
 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 100  
 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 corpse till he that died today, 105  
 'This must be so'. We pray you throw to earth  
 This unprevailing woe, and think of us  
 As of a father; for let the world take note  
 You are the most immediate to our throne,  
 And with no less nobility of love 110  
 Than that which dearest father bears his son  
 Do I impart towards 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 115  
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

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. 120

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.  
 Be as ourself in Denmark. (*To Gertrude*) Madam, come.  
 This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet  
 Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,  
 No jocund health that Denmark drinks today 125  
 But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,  
 And the King's rouse the heavens shall bruit again,  
 Re-speaking earthly thunder. Come, away.

*[Flourish.] Exeunt all but Hamlet*

**HAMLET**

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,  
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew, 130  
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixed

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, ah fie, fie! 'Tis an unweeded garden 135  
 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 140  
 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±± 145  
 Let me not think on't; frailty, thy 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 150  
 Would have mourned 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 of her galleÁd eyes, 155  
 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. 160

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.  
 And what make you from Wittenberg, Horatio?±±  
 Marcellus.

**MARCELLUS** My good lord. 165

**HAMLET**  
I am very glad to see you. (*To Barnardo*) Good even,  
sir.±±  
But what in faith make you from Wittenberg?

**HORATIO**  
A truant disposition, good my lord.

**HAMLET**  
I would not have your enemy say so,  
Nor shall you do mine ear that violence 170  
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. 175

**HAMLET**  
I prithee do not mock me, fellow-student;  
I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

**HORATIO**  
Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.

**HAMLET**  
Thrift, thrift, Horatio. The funeral baked meats  
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables. 180  
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven  
Ere I had ever seen that day, Horatio.  
My father±±methinks I see my father.

**HORATIO**  
O where, my lord?

**HAMLET** In my mind's eye, Horatio.

**HORATIO**  
I saw him once. A was a goodly king. 185

**HAMLET**  
A 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. 190

**HAMLET** The King my father?

**HORATIO**

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! 195

**HORATIO**

Two nights together had these gentlemen,  
Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,  
In the dead waste and middle of the night,  
Been thus encountered. A figure like your father,  
Armed at all points exactly, cap-a-pie, 200  
Appears before them, and with solemn march  
Goes slow and stately by them. Thrice he walked  
By their oppressed and fear-surprised eyes  
Within his truncheon's length, whilst they distilled  
Almost to jelly with the act of fear 205  
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 delivered, both in time,  
Form of the thing, each word made true and good, 210  
The apparition comes. I knew your father;  
These hands are not more like.

**HAMLET** But where was this?

**MARCELLUS**

My lord, upon the platform where we watched.

**HAMLET**

Did you not speak to it?

**HORATIO**

My lord, I did,  
But answer made it none; yet once methought 215  
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 vanished from our sight.

**HAMLET** 'Tis very strange. 220

**HORATIO**

As I do live, my honoured 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?

**BARNARDO AND MARCELLUS** We do, my lord. 225

**HAMLET**

Armed, say you?

**BARNARDO AND MARCELLUS** Armed, my lord.

**HAMLET**

From top to toe?

**BARNARDO AND MARCELLUS**

My lord, from head to foot.

**HAMLET** Then saw you not his face.

**HORATIO**

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

**HAMLET**

What looked he? Frowningly?

**HORATIO** A countenance more

In sorrow than in anger.

**HAMLET** Pale or red? 230

**HORATIO**

Nay, very pale.

**HAMLET** And fixed his eyes upon you?

**HORATIO** Most constantly.

**HAMLET** I would I had been there.

**HORATIO** It would have much amazed you.

**HAMLET**

Very like, very like. Stayed it long? 235

**HORATIO**

While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.

**BARNARDO AND MARCELLUS** Longer, longer.

**HORATIO** Not when I saw't.

**HAMLET** His beard was grizzly, no?

**HORATIO**

It was as I have seen it in his life, 240

A sable silvered.

**HAMLET** I'll 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, 245  
If you have hitherto concealed this sight,  
Let it be treble 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. 250  
Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve  
I'll visit you.

**ALL THREE** Our duty to your honour.

**HAMLET**

Your love, as mine to you. Farewell.

*Exeunt all but Hamlet*

My father's spirit in arms! All is not well.

I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come. 255

Till then, sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,

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

*Exit*