

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. 205  
 Nay come, let's go together. *Exeunt.*

[Act 2, Scene 1]

*Enter old Polonius, with his man or two.*

*Pol.* Give him this money, and these notes *Reynaldo*.

*Rey.* I will my Lord.

*Pol.* You shall do marvellous wisely good *Reynaldo*,  
 Before you visit him, to make inquire  
 Of his behaviour. 5

*Rey.* My Lord, I did intend it.

*Pol.* Marry well said, very well said; look you sir,  
 Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris,  
 And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,  
 What company, at what expense, and finding 10  
 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, 15  
 And in part him, do you mark this *Reynaldo*?

*Rey.* Ay, very well my Lord.

*Pol.* 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 20  
 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. 25

*Rey.* As gaming my Lord.

*Pol.* Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing,  
 Quarrelling, drabbing, you may go so far.

*Rey.* My Lord, that would dishonour him.

*Pol.* Faith no as you may season it in the charge. 30

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, 35

A savageness in unreclaimèd blood,

Of general assault.

*Rey.* But my good Lord.

*Pol.* Wherefore should you do this?

*Rey.* Ay my lord, I would know that. 40

*Pol.* Marry sir, here's my drift,

And I believe it is a fetch of warrant,

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 45

Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes

The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured

He closes with you in this consequence,

Good sir, (or so,) or friend, or gentleman,

According to the phrase, or the addition 50

Of man and country.

*Rey.* Very good my Lord.

*Pol.* 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? 55

*Rey.* At closes in the consequence.

*Pol.* At closes in the consequence, ay marry,

He closes thus, I know the gentleman,

I saw him yesterday, or th'other day,

Or then, or then, with such or such, and as you say, 60

There was a' gaming there, o'ertook in's rouse,

There falling out at 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 take this carp of truth, 65

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? 70  
*Rey.* My Lord, I have.  
*Pol.* God be wi' you, fare you well.  
*Rey.* Good my Lord.  
*Pol.* Observe his inclination in yourself.  
*Rey.* I shall my Lord. 75  
*Pol.* And let him ply his music.  
*Rey.* Well, my Lord. *Exit Rey.*

*Enter Ophelia.*

*Pol.* Farewell. How now Ophelia, what's the matter?  
*Ophe.* O my Lord, my Lord, I have been so affrighted.  
*Pol.* With what i' th' name of God? 80  
*Ophe.* My Lord, as I was sewing in my closet,  
 Lord *Hamlet* with his doublet all unbraced,  
 No hat upon his head, his stockings fouled,  
 Ungartered, and down-gyved to his ankle,  
 Pale as his shirt, his knees knocking each other, 85  
 And with a look so piteous in purport  
 As if he had been loosèd out of hell  
 To speak of horrors, he comes before me.  
*Pol.* Mad for thy love?  
*Ophe.* My Lord I do not know 90  
 But truly, I do fear it.  
*Pol.* What said he?  
*Ophe.* 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, 95  
 He falls to such perusal of my face  
 As he would draw it; long stay'd he so,  
 At last, a little shaking of mine arm,  
 And thrice his head thus waving up and down,  
 He raised a sigh so piteous and profound 100  
 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 helps, 105  
 And to the last bended their light on me.

*Pol.* 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 110  
 As oft as any passions under heaven  
 That does afflict our natures: I am sorry.  
 What, have you given him any hard words of late?  
*Ophe.* No, my good Lord, but as you did command  
 I did repel his letters, and denied 115  
 His access to me.  
*Pol.* That hath made him mad.  
 I am sorry, that with better heed and judgment  
 I had not quoted him, I fear'd he did but trifle  
 And meant to wrack thee, but beshrew my jealousy: 120  
 By heaven 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 125  
 More grief to hide, than hate to utter love,  
 Come. *Exeunt.*

[Act 2, Scene 2]

*Flourish: Enter King and Queen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.*

*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, something have you heard  
 Of *Hamlet's* transformation, so call it, 5  
 Sith 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 10  
 That being of so young days brought up with him,  
 And sith so neighbour'd to his youth and havior,  
 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 15  
 So much as from occasion you may glean,  
 Whether aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,  
 That, open'd lies within our remedy.

*Quee.* Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you,  
 And sure I am, two men there is not living 20  
 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 25  
 As fits a King's remembrance.

*Ros.* Both your Majesties  
 Might by the sovereign power you have of us,  
 Put your dread pleasures more into command  
 Than to entreaty. 30

*Guil.* But 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 *Guildestern*. 35

*Quee.* Thanks *Guildestern*, and gentle *Rosencrantz*.  
 And I beseech you instantly to visit  
 My too much changèd son, go some of you  
 And bring these gentlemen where *Hamlet* is.

*Guil.* Heavens make our presence and our practices 40  
 Pleasant and helpful to him.

*Quee.* Ay, amen. *Exeunt Ros. and Guil.*

*Enter Polonius.*

*Pol.* Th'ambassadors from *Norway* my good Lord,  
 Are joyfully return'd.

*King.* Thou still hast been the father of good news. 45

*Pol.* 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 50  
 As it hath used to do, that I have found  
 The very cause of *Hamlet's* lunacy.

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

*Pol.* Give first admittance to th'ambassadors,  
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast. 55

*King.* Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.  
He tells me my dear *Gertrude* he hath found  
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

*Quee.* I doubt it is no other but the main  
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage. 60

*Enter Ambassadors.*

*King.* Well, we shall sift him, welcome my good friends,  
Say *Voltimand*, what from our brother *Norway*?

*Vol.* Most fair return of greetings and desires;  
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress  
His Nephew's levies, which to him appear'd 65

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 70

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, 75

Gives him threescore 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,  
That it might please you to give quiet pass 80  
Through your dominions for this enterprise  
On such regards of safety and allowance  
As therein are set down.

*King.* It likes us well,  
And at our more considered time, we'll read, 85  
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 Ambassadors.*

*Pol.* This business is well ended. 90  
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, 95  
 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. 100

*Quee.* More matter, with less art.

*Pol.* 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. 105  
 Mad let us grant him then, 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 110  
 Perpend,

I have a daughter, have while she is mine,  
 Who in her duty and obedience, mark,  
 Hath given me this, now gather and surmise,  
*To the Celestial and my soul's Idol, the most 115*  
*beautified Ophelia, that's an ill phrase, a vile phrase,*  
*beautified is a vile phrase, but you shall hear: thus in*  
*her excellent white bosom, these, &c.*

*Quee.* Came this from *Hamlet* to her?

*Pol.* Good Madam, stay awhile, I will be faithful, 120  
*Doubt thou the stars are fire, Letter.*  
*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.*)

*Pol.* This in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,  
 And more above hath his solicitings  
 As they fell out by time, by means, and place, 130

All given to mine ear.

*King.* But how hath she receiv'd his love?

*Pol.* What do you think of me?

*King.* As of a man faithful and honorable.

*Pol.* I would fain prove so, but what might you think 135

When I had seen this hot love on the wing,

As I perceived 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, 140

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, 145

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 repell'd, a short tale to make, 150

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 mourn for. 155

*King.* Do you think 'tis this?

*Quee.* It may be very like.

*Pol.* Hath there been such a time, I would fain know that,

That I have positively said 'tis so,

When it prov'd otherwise? 160

*King.* Not that I know.

*Pol.* Take this, from this, if this be otherwise;

If circumstances lead me, I will find

Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed

Within the Center. 165

*King.* How may we try it further?

*Pol.* You know sometimes he walks four hours together

Here in the Lobby.

*Quee.* So he does indeed.

*Pol.* At such a time, I'll loose my daughter to him, 170

Be you and I behind an Arras then,  
 Mark 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. 175

*King.* We will try it.

*Enter Hamlet [reading on a book].*

*Quee.* But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

*Pol.* Away, I do beseech you both away, *Exit King and Queen.*  
 I'll board him presently, O give me leave.

How does my good Lord *Hamlet*? 180

*Ham.* Well, God a mercy.

*Pol.* Do you know me my Lord?

*Ham.* Excellent well, you are a Fishmonger.

*Pol.* Not I my Lord.

*Ham.* Then I would you were so honest a man. 185

*Pol.* Honest my Lord.

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

*Pol.* That's very true my Lord. 189

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

*Pol.* I have my Lord.

*Ham.* Let her not walk i' th' Sun, conception is a blessing,  
 But as your daughter may conceive, friend look to 't.

*Pol.* How say you by that, still harping on 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?

*Ham.* Words, words, words.

*Pol.* What is the matter my Lord? 200

*Ham.* Between who.

*Pol.* I mean the matter that you read my Lord.

*Ham.* Slanders sir; for the satirical rogue says here that old men  
 have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging  
 thick Amber, & plumtree gum, & 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 yourself sir shall grow old as I am: if like a  
 Crab you could go backward. 209

*Pol.* Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't, will you walk out of the air, my Lord? 211

*Ham.* Into my grave.

*Pol.* Indeed that's out of the air; how pregnant sometimes his replies 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 continue the means of meeting between him and my daughter. My Lord, I will take my leave of you.

*Ham.* You cannot take from me any thing that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life.

*Enter Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern.*

*Pol.* Fare you well my Lord. 220

*Ham.* These tedious old fools.

*Pol.* You go to seek the Lord *Hamlet*, there he is.

*Ros.* God save you sir. [*Exit Polonius.*]

*Guil.* My honor'd Lord.

*Ros.* My most dear Lord. 225

*Ham.* My excellent good friends, how dost thou, *Guildenstern*? Ah, *Rosencrantz*, good lads how do you both?

*Ros.* As the indifferent children of the earth.

*Guil.* Happy, in that we are not over happy on Fortune's cap. We are not the very button. 230

*Ham.* Nor the soles of her shoe.

*Ros.* Neither my Lord.

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

*Guil.* Faith her privates we. 235

*Ham.* In the secret parts of Fortune, O most true, she is a strumpet. What news?

*Ros.* None my Lord, but that the world's grown honest.

*Ham.* 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?

*Guil.* Prison, my Lord?

*Ham.* Denmarke's a Prison.

*Ros.* Then is the World one. 245

*Ham.* A goodly one in which there are many Confines, Wards, and Dungeons, Denmarke being one o' th' worst.

*Ros.* We think not so my Lord.

*Ham.* Why then 'tis none to you, for there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me it is a prison. 250

*Ros.* Why then, your Ambition makes it one: 'tis too narrow for your mind.

*Ham.* 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.

*Guil.* Which dreams indeed are ambition: for the very substance of the Ambitious, is merely the shadow of a Dream. 256

*Ham.* A dream itself is but a shadow.

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

*Ham.* Then are our Beggars bodies, and our Monarchs and out-stretched Heroes the Beggars' shadows: shall we to th' Court: for, by my faith I cannot reason? 262

*Both.* We'll wait upon you.

*Ham.* 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*? 267

*Ros.* To visit you my Lord, no other occasion.

*Ham.* 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: were you not sent for? is it your own inclining? is it a free visitation? come, come, deal justly with me, come, come, nay speak. 272

*Guil.* What should we say my Lord?

*Ham.* Why anything but to th' 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. 277

*Ros.* To what end my Lord?

*Ham.* 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 can charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for or no. 283

*Ros.* What say you.

*Ham.* Nay then I have an eye of you? if you love me hold not off.

*Guil.* My Lord we were sent for.

*Ham.* I will tell you why, so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the King & Queen moult no 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 appeareth nothing to me but a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a 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, nor woman neither, though by your smiling, you seem to say so. 300

*Ros.* My Lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

*Ham.* Why did ye laugh then, when I said man delights not me.

*Ros.* 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.

*Ham.* 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 tickled o' th' sear; and the Lady shall say her mind freely: or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they? 311

*Ros.* Even those you were wont to take such delight in, the Tragedians of the City.

*Ham.* How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation, and profit was better both ways.

*Ros.* I think their inhibition, comes by the means of the late innovation. 317

*Ham.* Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the City; are they so followed.

*Ros.* No indeed are they not.

*Ham.* How comes it? Do they grow rusty? 321

*Ros.* Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace; But there is Sir an eyrie of Children, little Eyases, that cry out on the top of question; and are most tyrannically clapp'd for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages (so they call them) that many wearing Rapiers are afraid of Goosequills, and dare scarce come thither. 327

*Ham.* 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. 333

*Ros.* 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.

*Ham.* Is't possible?

*Guil.* O there has been much throwing about of brains.

*Ham.* Do the boys carry it away? 340

*Ros.* Ay, that they do my Lord. *Hercules* & his load too.

*Ham.* It is not very strange, for my Uncle is King of Denmarke, 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, 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if Philosophy could find it out. *A Flourish.*

*Guil.* There are the players. 347

*Ham.* Gentlemen you are welcome to *Elsinore*, your hands, come then, th'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 outwards, should more appear like entertainment than yours? you are welcome: but my Uncle-father, and Aunt-mother, are deceived.

*Guil.* In what my dear Lord.

*Ham.* I am but mad North Northwest; when the wind is Southerly I know a Hawk, from a hand saw. 355

*Enter Polonius.*

*Pol.* Well be with you Gentlemen.

*Ham.* Hark you *Guildenstern*, and you too, at each ear a hearer, that great baby you see there is not yet out of his swaddling clouts.

*Ros.* Happily he is the second time come to them, for they say an old man is twice a child.

*Ham.* I will prophesy, he comes to tell me of the players, mark it, You say right sir, a Monday morning, 'twas then indeed.

*Pol.* My Lord I have news to tell you. 364

*Ham.* My Lord, I have news to tell you: when *Roscius* was an Actor in Rome.

*Pol.* The Actors are come hither my Lord.

*Ham.* Buz, buz.

*Pol.* Upon my honor.

*Ham.* Then came each Actor on his Ass. 370

*Pol.* 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, *Seneca* cannot be too heavy, nor *Plautus* too light for the law of writ, and the liberty: these are the only men.

*Ham.* O *Jeptha* Judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou?

*Pol.* What a treasure had he my Lord? 377

*Ham.* Why one fair daughter and no more, the which he loved passing well.

*Pol.* Still on my daughter. 380

*Ham.* Am I not i' th' right old *Jeptha*?

*Pol.* If you call me *Jeptha* my Lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

*Ham.* Nay, that follows not.

*Pol.* What follows then my Lord? 385

*Ham.* 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, for look, where my abridgement comes.

*Enter the Players.*

*Ham.* You are welcome masters, welcome all, I am glad to see thee well, welcome good friends, O old friend, why thy face is valenced since I saw thee last, com'st thou to beard me in Denmarke? what my young Lady and mistress, byr lady your Ladyship is nearer to heaven, then when I saw you last by the altitude of a chopine, pray God your voice like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not crack'd within the ring: 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. 397

*Player.* What speech my good Lord?

*Ham.* 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 caviary to the general, but it was as I received it & others, whose judgments 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. I remember one said there were no sallets in the lines, to make the matter savory, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation, but called it an honest

method, as wholesome as sweet, & by very much, more handsome  
 than fine: one speech in't I chiefly loved, 'twas *Aeneas*' tale to *Dido*,  
 & there about of it especially when 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'Hyrceanian beast, 'tis not so, it begins with  
*Pyrrhus*, the rugged *Pyrrhus*, he whose sable Arms, 412  
 Black as his purpose did the night resemble,  
 When he lay couchèd in th'ominous horse,  
 Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd, 415  
 With heraldy more dismal head to foot,  
 Now is he total Gules horridly trick'd  
 With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons,  
 Baked and impasted with the parching streets,  
 That lend a tyrannous and damnèd light 420  
 To their Lord's murder, 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.

*Pol.* For God my Lord well spoken, with good accent and good  
 discretion.

*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, 430  
*Pyrrhus* at *Priam* drives, in rage strikes wide,  
 But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword,  
 Th'unnervèd father falls: Then senseless Ilium,  
 Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top  
 Stoops to his base; and with a hideous crash 435  
 Takes prisoner *Pyrrhus*' ear, for lo his sword  
 Which was declining on the milky head  
 Of reverent *Priam*, seem'd i' th' air to stick,  
 So, as a painted tyrant *Pyrrhus* stood  
 And like a neutral to his will and matter, 440  
 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 445  
 Doth rend the region, so after *Pyrrhus*' pause,

Aroused vengeance sets him new awork,  
 And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall,  
 On *Mars's* Armor forg'd for proof eterne,  
 With less remorse then *Pyrrhus's* bleeding sword 450  
 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 455  
 As low as to the fiends.

*Pol.* This is too long.

*Ham.* 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*.

*Player.* But who, a woe, had seen the mobled Queen.

*Ham.* The mobled Queen.

*Pol.* That's good, mobled Queen is good.

*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, 465  
 About her lank and all o'erteemed loins,  
 A blanket in the alarm of fear caught up,  
 Who this had seen, with tongue in venom steep'd,  
 'Gainst fortune's state would treason have pronounced;  
 But if the gods themselves did see her then, 470  
 When she saw *Pyrrhus* make malicious sport  
 In mincing with his sword her Husband's limbs,  
 The instant burst of clamor that she made,  
 Unless things mortal move them not at all,  
 Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven 475  
 And passion in the gods.

*Pol.* Look where he has not turned his colour, and has tears in's  
 eyes, prithee no more.

*Ham.* '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 abstract and brief Chronicles  
 of the time; after your death you were better have a bad Epitaph than  
 their ill report while you live. 483

*Pol.* My Lord, I will use them according to their desert.

*Ham.* God's bodykin, man, much better, use every man after his  
 desert, & who shall 'scape whipping, use them after your own honor

and dignity, the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty.  
Take them in. 488

*Pol.* Come sirs.

[*Exit Pol.*]

*Ham.* Follow him friends, we'll hear a play tomorrow; dost thou  
hear me old friend, can you play the murder of *Gonzago*?

*Player.* Ay my Lord.

492

*Ham.* 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? 495

*Player.* Ay, my Lord.

*Ham.* Very well, follow that Lord, & look you mock him not. My  
good friends, I'll leave you till night, you are welcome to *Elsinore*.

*Exeunt Pol. and Players.*

*Ros.* Good my Lord!

*Exeunt.*

*Ham.* Ay so, God be wi' you, now I am alone, 500

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 wann'd, 505

Tears in his eyes, distraction in his 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*, 510

That he should weep 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 appall the free, 515

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, 520

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 525

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 ha' fatt'd all the region kites 530  
 With this slave's offal, bloody, bawdy villain,  
 Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain.  
 Oh, Vengeance!  
 Why what an Ass am I, this is most brave,  
 That I the son of a dear father murder'd, 535  
 Prompted to my revenge by heaven and hell,  
 Must like a whore unpack my heart with words,  
 And fall a-cursing, like a very drab; a Scullion, fie upon't, foh.  
 About, my brains; hum, I have heard  
 That guilty creatures sitting at a play, 540  
 Have by the very cunning of the scene,  
 Been struck so to the soul, that presently  
 They have proclaim'd their malefactions:  
 For murder, though it have no tongue will speak  
 With most miraculous organ: I'll have these Players 545  
 Play something like the murder of my father  
 Before mine Uncle, I'll observe his looks,  
 I'll tent him to the quick, if he do blench,  
 I know my course. The spirit that I have seen  
 May be the Devil, and the Devil hath power 550  
 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 555  
 Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the King. *Exit.*

[Act 3, Scene 1]

*Enter King, Queen, Polonius, Ophelia, Rosencrantz,  
 Guildenstern, Lords.*

*King.* And can you by no drift of circumstance,  
 Get from him why he puts on this confusion,