

# The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

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## SCENE I. A room in the castle.

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, POLONIUS, OPHELIA, ROSENCRANTZ, and GUILDENSTERN*

### KING CLAUDIUS

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 he will by no means speak.

### 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.

### 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?  
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.

#### **LORD POLONIUS**

'Tis most true:  
And he beseech'd 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, 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;  
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,  
We may of their encounter frankly judge,  
And gather by him, as he is behaved,  
If 't be the 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  
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 QUEEN GERTRUDE*

## LORD POLONIUS

Ophelia, walk you here. Gracious, so please you,  
We will bestow ourselves.

*To OPHELIA*

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  
The devil himself.

## KING CLAUDIUS

[Aside] O, 'tis too true!  
How smart a lash that speech doth give my conscience!  
The harlot's cheek, beautied with plastering art,  
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it  
Than is my deed to my most painted word:  
O heavy burthen!

## LORD POLONIUS

I hear him coming: let's withdraw, my lord.

*Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS*

*Enter 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,  
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 heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks  
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation  
Devoutly to be wish'd. 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  
That makes calamity of so long life;  
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,  
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,  
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,

When he himself might his quietus make  
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,  
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,  
But that the dread of something after death,  
The undiscover'd 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;  
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!  
The fair Ophelia! Nymph, in thy orisons  
Be all my sins remember'd.

### **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,  
That I have longed long to re-deliver;  
I pray you, now receive them.

### **HAMLET**

No, not I;  
I never gave you aught.

### **OPHELIA**

My honour'd lord, you know right well you did;  
And, with them, words of so sweet breath composed  
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?

### **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.

**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: 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 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 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 earth and heaven? 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 no where but in's own house. Farewell.

## 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; 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; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another: you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name 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 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;  
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,  
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down!  
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,  
That suck'd the honey of his music vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,  
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh;

That unmatch'd form and feature of blown youth  
Blasted with ecstasy: O, woe is me,  
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see!

*Re-enter KING CLAUDIUS and POLONIUS*

## **KING CLAUDIUS**

Love! his affections do not that way tend;  
Nor what he spake, though it lack'd 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 for to prevent,  
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  
This something-settled matter in his heart,  
Whereon his brains still beating puts him thus  
From fashion of himself. What think you on't?

## **LORD POLONIUS**

It shall do well: but yet do I believe  
The origin and commencement of his grief  
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  
To show his grief: 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:  
Madness in great ones must not unwatch'd go.

*Exeunt*