

Shakespeare: Hamlet

Act 1, Scene 2

[Trumpet call.] [Enter Claudius, King of Denmark, Gertrude The Queen; Hamlet, Polonius; Laertes, Voltemand, Cornelius, Lords attendant]

King 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,
5 Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th' imperial jointress to this warlike state,
10 Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious, and a 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 barr'd
15 Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone
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
20 Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,
Co-leagued with this dream of his advantage,
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bands of law,
25 To our most valiant brother. So much for him.
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
30 Of this his nephew's purpose—to suppress
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, Voltemand,
35 For bearers of this greeting to old Norway,
Giving to you no further personal power

To business with the King, more than the scope
Of these delated articles allow.

[Giving a paper.]

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.
In that, and all things, will we show our duty.
We doubt it nothing; heartily farewell.

[Exeunt Voltemand 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
45 And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes,
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.
50 What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

Laertes My dread lord,
Your leave and favor 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,
55 My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France,
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.
King Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?
Polonius Hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave
By laborsome petition, and at last
60 Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent.
I do beseech you give him leave to go.

King 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 *[Aside.]* A little more than kin, and less than kind.
King How is it that the clouds still hang on you?
Hamlet Not so, my lord, I am too much in the sun.
Queen Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.
70 Do not for ever with thy vailed lids

	Seek for thy noble father in the dust. Thou know'st 'tis common, all that lives must die, Passing through nature to eternity.	115	In going back to school in Wittenberg, It is most retrograde to our desire, And we beseech you bend you to remain Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye, Our chiefest courtier, cousin, and our son.
	Hamlet Ay, madam, it is common.		Queen Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet, I pray thee stay with us, go not to Wittenberg.
75	Queen If it be, Why seems it so particular with thee?		Hamlet I shall in all my best obey you, madam.
	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 forc'd breath, 80 Nor the fruitful river in the eye, Nor the dejected havior of the visage, Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief, That can denote me truly. These indeed seem, For they are actions that a man might play, 85 But I have that within which passes show, These but the trappings and the suits of woe.	120	King Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply. Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam, come. This gentle and unforc'd accord of Hamlet Sits smiling to my heart, in grace whereof, No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day, But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell, And the King's rouse the heaven shall bruit again, Respeaking earthly thunder. Come away.
	King '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, 90 That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound In filial obligation for some term To do obsequious sorrow. But to persevere In obstinate condolement is a course Of impious stubbornness, 'tis unmanly grief, 95 It shows a will most incorrect to heaven, A heart unfortified, or mind impatient, An understanding simple and unschool'd: For what we know must be, and is as common As any the most vulgar thing to sense, 100 Why should we in our peevish opposition 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, 105 From the first corse till he that died to-day, 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, 110 And with no less nobility of love Than that which dearest father bears his son Do I impart toward you. For your intent	125	<i>[Flourish. Exeunt all but Hamlet.]</i> Hamlet O that this too too solid flesh would melt, Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew! Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God, God, How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable Seem to me all the uses of this world! 135 Fie on't, ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden 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 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth, Must I remember? Why, she should hang on him As if increase of appetite had grown 140 By what it fed on, and yet, within a month -- 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— 145 O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle, My father's brother, but no more like my father Than I to Hercules. Within a month,

155 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
 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.]

160 **Horatio** Hail to your lordship!
Hamlet I am glad to see you well.
 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?

165 **Marcellus** Marcellus
Hamlet My good lord.
 I am very glad to see you. *[To Barnardo.]* Good even,
 sir.
 But what, in faith, make you from Wittenberg?

170 **Horatio** A truant disposition, good my lord.
Hamlet I would not hear your enemy say so,
 Nor shall you do my ear that violence
 To make it truster of your own report
 Against yourself. I know you are no truant.
 But what is your affair in Elsinore?

175 **Horatio** We'll teach you to drink deep ere you depart.
Hamlet My lord, I came to see your father's funeral.
Hamlet I prithee do not mock me, fellow student,
 I think it was to see my mother's wedding.

180 **Horatio** Indeed, my lord, it followed hard upon.
Hamlet Thrift, thrift, Horatio, the funeral bak'd meats
 Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
 Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
 Or ever I had seen that day, Horatio!
 My father—methinks I see my father.

185 **Horatio** Where, my lord?
Hamlet In my mind's eye, Horatio.
Horatio I saw him once, 'a was a goodly king.
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.

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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.

195 **Hamlet** For God's love let me hear!

Horatio Two nights together had these gentlemen,
 Marcellus and Barnardo, on their watch,
 In the dead waste and middle of the night,
 Been thus encount'ed: a figure like your father,
 Armed at point exactly, cap-a-pe,
 Appears before them, and with solemn march
 Goes slow and stately by them; thrice he walk'd
 By their oppress'd and fear-surprised eyes
 Within his truncheon's length, whilst they, distill'd
 Almost to jelly with the act of fear,
 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,
 The apparition comes. I knew your father,
 These hands are not more like.

200 **Hamlet** But where was this?

Marcellus My lord, upon the platform where we watch.

Hamlet Did you not speak to it?

205 **Hamlet** My lord, I did,
 But answer made it none. Yet once methought
 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 vanish'd from our sight.

210 **Hamlet** 'Tis very strange.

Horatio As I do live, my honor'd 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 to-night?

215 **Mar & Bar** We do, my lord.

Hamlet Arm'd, say you?

Mar & Bar Arm'd, my lord.

Hamlet From top to toe?

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230 **Mar & Bar** 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, look'd he frowningly?
Horatio A countenance more in sorrow than in anger.
Hamlet Pale, or red?
Horatio Nay, very pale.
Hamlet And fix'd his eyes upon you?
Horatio Most constantly.
Hamlet I would I had been there.
 235 **Horatio** It would have much amaz'd you.
Hamlet Very like, very like. Stay'd it long?
Horatio While one with moderate haste might tell a hundred.
Mar & Bar Longer, longer.
Horatio Not when I saw't.
Hamlet His beard was grisl'd, no?
 240 **Horatio** It was, as I have seen it in his life,
 A sable silver'd.
Hamlet I will watch to-night,
 Perchance 'twill walk again.
Horatio I warr'nt it will.
Hamlet If it assume my noble father's person,
 I'll speak to it though hell itself should gape
 245 And bid me hold my peace. I pray you all,
 If you have hitherto conceal'd this sight,
 Let it be tenable in your silence still,
 And whatsoever else shall hap to-night,
 Give it an understanding but no tongue.
 250 I will requite your loves. So fare you well.
 Upon the platform 'twixt eleven and twelve
 I'll visit you.
All Our duty to your honor.
Hamlet Your loves, as mine to you; farewell.
[Exeunt all but Hamlet.]
 255 My father's spirit—in arms! All is not well,
 I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!
 Till then sit still, my soul. Foul deeds will rise,
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's eye
[Exit.]

