THE TRAGEDY
OF
HAMLET

By

William Shakespeare

Act 2, Scene 1
SCENE. A room in the castle.

(Enter KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and Attendants)

KING CLAUDIUS
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,
Sith nor the 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 the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of: I entreat you both,
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,
So much as from occasion you may glean,
Whether aught, to us unknown, afflicts him thus,
That, open'd, lies within our remedy.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Good gentlemen, he hath much talk'd of you;
And sure I am two men there are not living
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
As fits a king's remembrance.
ROSENCRANTZ
Both your majesties
Might, by the sovereign power you have of us,
Put your dread pleasures more into command
Than to entreaty.

GUILDENSTERN
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 CLAUDIUS
Thanks, Rosencrantz and gentle Guildenstern.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Thanks, Guildenstern and gentle Rosencrantz:
And I beseech you instantly to visit
My too much changed son. Go, some of you,
And bring these gentlemen where Hamlet is.

GUILDENSTERN
Heavens make our presence and our practises
Pleasant and helpful to him!

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Ay, amen!

(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and some Attendants)

(Enter POLONIUS)

LORD POLONIUS
The ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.
KING CLAUDIUS
Thou still hast been the father of good news.

LORD POLONIUS
Have I, my lord? I assure 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
As it hath used to do, that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

KING CLAUDIUS
O, speak of that; that do I long to hear.

LORD POLONIUS
Give first admittance to the ambassadors;
My news shall be the fruit to that great feast.

KING CLAUDIUS
Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

(Exit POLONIUS)

He tells me, my dear Gertrude, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
I doubt it is no other but the main;
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.

KING CLAUDIUS
Well, we shall sift him.

(Re-enter POLONIUS, with VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS)
Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

VOLTIMAND
Most fair return of greetings and desires.
Upon our first, he sent out to suppress
His nephew's levies; which to him appear'd
To be a preparation 'gainst the Polack;
But, better look'd into, he truly found
It was against your highness: whereat grieved,
That so his sickness, age and impotence
Was falsely borne in hand, sends out arrests
On Fortinbras; which he, in brief, obeys;
Receives rebuke from Norway, and in fine
Makes vow before his uncle never more
To give the assay of arms against your majesty.
Whereon old Norway, overcome with joy,
Gives him three 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,

(Giving a paper)

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

KING CLAUDIUS
It likes us well;
And at our more consider'd time well read,
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 VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS)

LORD POLONIUS
This business is well ended.
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,
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.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
More matter, with less art.

LORD POLONIUS
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.
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. 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.
(Reads)

'To the celestial and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia,'—
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile phrase: but you shall hear. Thus:

(Reads)

'In her excellent white bosom, these, & c.'

QUEEN GERTRUDE
Came this from Hamlet to her?

LORD POLONIUS
Good madam, stay awhile; I will be faithful.

(Reads)

'Doubt thou the stars are fire;
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.'
This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means and place,
All given to mine ear.
KING CLAUDIUS
But how hath she
Received his love?

LORD POLONIUS
What do you think of me?

KING CLAUDIUS
As of a man faithful and honourable.

LORD POLONIUS
I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
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,
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;
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, repulsed—a short tale to make—
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.
KING CLAUDIUS
Do you think 'tis this?

QUEEN GERTRUDE
It may be, very likely.

LORD POLONIUS
Hath there been such a time— I'd fain know that—
That I have positively said 'Tis so,'
When it proved otherwise?

KING CLAUDIUS
Not that I know.

LORD POLONIUS
[Pointing to his head and shoulder]
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 centre.

KING CLAUDIUS
How may we try it further?

LORD POLONIUS
You know, sometimes he walks four hours together
Here in the lobby.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
So he does indeed.

LORD POLONIUS
At such a time I'll loose my daughter to him:
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.

KING CLAUDIUS
We will try it.

QUEEN GERTRUDE
But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

LORD POLONIUS
Away, I do beseech you, both away:
I'll board him presently.

(Exeunt KING CLAUDIUS, QUEEN GERTRUDE, and Attendants)

(Enter HAMLET, reading)

O, give me leave:
How does my good Lord Hamlet?

HAMLET
Well, God-a-mercy.

LORD POLONIUS
Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET
Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.

LORD POLONIUS
Not I, my lord.

HAMLET
Then I would you were so honest a man.
LORD POLONIUS
Honest, my lord!

HAMLET
Ay, sir; to be honest, as this world goes, is to be one man picked out of ten thousand.

LORD POLONIUS
That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET
For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,—Have you a daughter?

LORD POLONIUS
I have, my lord.

HAMLET
Let her not walk i' the sun: conception is a blessing: but not as your daughter may conceive. Friend, look to 't.

LORD POLONIUS
[Aside] 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?

HAMLET
Words, words, words.

LORD POLONIUS
What is the matter, my lord?
HAMLET
Between who?

LORD POLONIUS
I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

HAMLET
Slanders, sir: for the satirical rogue says here that old men have grey beards, that their faces are wrinkled, their eyes purging thick amber and plum-tree gum and 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, should be old as I am, if like a crab you could go backward.

LORD POLONIUS
[Aside] Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

HAMLET
Into my grave.

LORD POLONIUS
Indeed, that is out o' the air.

[Aside] 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 contrive the means of meeting between him and my daughter.—My honourable lord, I will most humbly take my leave of you.
HAMLET
You cannot, sir, take from me any thing that I will
more willingly part withal: except my life, except
my life, except my life.

LORD POLONIUS
Fare you well, my lord.

HAMLET
These tedious old fools!

(Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN)

LORD POLONIUS
You go to seek the Lord Hamlet; there he is.

ROSENCRANTZ
[To POLONIUS] God save you, sir!

(Exit POLONIUS)

GUILDENSTERN
My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ
My most dear lord!

HAMLET
My excellent good friends! How dost thou,
Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ
As the indifferent children of the earth.
GUILDENSTERN
Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET
Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ
Neither, my lord.

HAMLET
Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of
her favours?

GUILDENSTERN
'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET
In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she
is a strumpet. What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ
None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET
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?

GUILDENSTERN
Prison, my lord!

HAMLET
Denmark's a prison.
ROSENCRANTZ
Then is the world one.

HAMLET
A goodly one; in which there are many confines, wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROSENCRANTZ
We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET
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.

ROSENCRANTZ
Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

HAMLET
O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN
Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET
A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ
Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.
HAMLET
Then are our beggars bodies, and our monarchs and outstretched heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

ROSENCRANTZ GUILDENSTERN
We'll wait upon you.

HAMLET
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?

ROSENCRANTZ
To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET
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, deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN
What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET
Why, any thing, but to the 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.

ROSENCRANTZ
To what end, my lord?
HAMLET
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 could charge you withal, be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ
[Aside to GUILDENSTERN] What say you?

HAMLET
[Aside] Nay, then, I have an eye of you.—If you love me, hold not off.

GUILDENSTERN
My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET
I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king and 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 appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculty! 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: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ
My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET
Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ
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.

HAMLET
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 humourous man shall end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose lungs are tickled o' the sere; and the lady shall say her mind freely, or the blank verse shall halt for't. What players are they?

ROSENCRANTZ
Even those you were wont to take delight in, the tragedians of the city.

HAMLET
How chances it they travel? their residence, both in reputation and profit, was better both ways.
ROSENCRANTZ
I think their inhibition comes by the means of the late innovation.

HAMLET
Do they hold the same estimation they did when I was in the city? are they so followed?

ROSENCRANTZ
No, indeed, are they not.

HAMLET
How comes it? do they grow rusty?

ROSENCRANTZ
Nay, their endeavour keeps in the wonted pace: but there is, sir, an aery of children, little eyases, that cry out on the top of question, and are most tyrannically clapped for't: these are now the fashion, and so berattle the common stages—so they call them—that many wearing rapiers are afraid of goose-quills and dare scarce come thither.

HAMLET
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?

ROSENCRANTZ
'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.

HAMLET
Is't possible?

GUILDENSTERN
O, there has been much throwing about of brains.

HAMLET
Do the boys carry it away?

ROSENCRANTZ
Ay, that they do, my lord; Hercules and his load too.

HAMLET
It is not very strange; for mine uncle is king of Denmark, and those that would make mows at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, an hundred ducats a-piece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

(Flourish of trumpets within)

GUILDENSTERN
There are the players.

HAMLET
Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come then: the 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 outward, should more appear like
entertainment than yours. You are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN
In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET
I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.

(Enter POLONIUS)

LORD POLONIUS
Well be with you, gentlemen!

HAMLET
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.

ROSENCRANTZ
Happily he's the second time come to them; for they say an old man is twice a child.

HAMLET
I will prophesy he comes to tell me of the players; mark it. You say right, sir: o' Monday morning; 'twas so indeed.

LORD POLONIUS
My lord, I have news to tell you.

HAMLET
My lord, I have news to tell you.
When Roscius was an actor in Rome,—
LORD POLONIUS
The actors are come hither, my lord.

HAMLET
Buz, buz!

LORD POLONIUS
Upon mine honour,—

HAMLET
Then came each actor on his ass,—

LORD POLONIUS
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.

HAMLET
O Jephthah, judge of Israel, what a treasure hadst thou!

LORD POLONIUS
What a treasure had he, my lord?

HAMLET
Why,
'One fair daughter and no more,
The which he loved passing well.'

LORD POLONIUS
[Aside] Still on my daughter.
HAMLET
Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

LORD POLONIUS
If you call me Jephthah, my lord, I have a daughter that I love passing well.

HAMLET
Nay, that follows not.

LORD POLONIUS
What follows, then, my lord?

HAMLET
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 four or five Players)

You are welcome, masters; welcome, all. I am glad to see thee well. Welcome, good friends. O, my old friend! thy face is valenced since I saw thee last: comest thou to beard me in Denmark? What, my young lady and mistress! By'r lady, your ladyship is nearer to heaven than when I saw you last, by the altitude of a chopine. Pray God, your voice, like a piece of uncurrent gold, be not cracked within the ring. Masters, you are all welcome. We'll e'en to't like French falconers, fly at any thing we see: we'll have a speech straight: come, give us a taste of your quality; come, a passionate speech.
First Player
What speech, my lord?

HAMLET
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 caviare to the general: but it was—as I received it, and 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 savoury, nor no matter in the phrase that might indict the author of affectation; but called it an honest method, as wholesome as sweet, and by very much more handsome than fine. One speech in it I chiefly loved: 'twas Aeneas' tale to Dido; and thereabout of it especially, where 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 the Hyrcanian beast,'—it is not so:—it begins with Pyrrhus:—
'The rugged Pyrrhus, he whose sable arms,
Black as his purpose, did the night resemble
When he lay couched in the ominous horse,
Hath now this dread and black complexion smear'd
With heraldry 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 damned light
To their lord's murder: roasted in wrath and fire,
And thus o'er-sized with coagulate gore,
With eyes like carbuncles, the hellish Pyrrhus
Old grandsire Priam seeks.'
So, proceed you.

LORD POLONIUS
'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and
good discretion.

First 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,
Pyrrhus at Priam drives; in rage strikes wide;
But with the whiff and wind of his fell sword
The unnerved father falls. Then senseless Ilium,
Seeming to feel this blow, with flaming top
Stoops to his base, and with a hideous crash
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear: for, lo! his sword,
Which was declining on the milky head
Of reverend Priam, seem'd i' the air to stick:
So, as a painted tyrant, Pyrrhus stood,
And like a neutral to his will and matter,
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
Doth rend the region, so, after Pyrrhus' pause,
Aroused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour forged for proof eterne
With less remorse than Pyrrhus' bleeding sword
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,  
As low as to the fiends!'

LORD POLONIUS  
This is too long.

HAMLET  
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.

First Player  
'But who, O, who had seen the mobled queen—'

HAMLET  
'The mobled queen?'

LORD POLONIUS  
That's good; 'mobled queen' is good.

First Player  
'Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames  
With bisson rheum; a clout upon that head  
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,  
About her lank and all o'er-teemed 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  
When she saw Pyrrhus make malicious sport  
In mincing with his sword her husband's limbs,  
The instant burst of clamour that she made,
Unless things mortal move them not at all,
Would have made milch the burning eyes of heaven,
And passion in the gods.'

LORD POLONIUS
Look, whether he has not turned his colour and has tears in's eyes. Pray you, no more.

HAMLET
'Tis well: I'll have thee speak out the rest 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.

LORD POLONIUS
My lord, I will use them according to their desert.

HAMLET
God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping?
Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty.
Take them in.

LORD POLONIUS
Come, sirs.

HAMLET
Follow him, friends: we'll hear a play to-morrow.

(Exit POLONIUS with all the Players but the First)
Dost thou hear me, old friend; can you play the Murder of Gonzago?

First Player
Ay, my lord.

HAMLET
We'll ha't to-morrow 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?

First Player
Ay, my lord.

HAMLET
Very well. Follow that lord; and look you mock him not.

(Exit First Player)

My good friends, I'll leave you till night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ
Good my lord!

HAMLET
Ay, so, God be wi' ye;

(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN)

Now I am alone.
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,
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,
A broken voice, and his whole function suitting
With forms to his conceit? and all for nothing!
For Hecuba!
What's Hecuba to him, or he to Hecuba,
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 appal the free,
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,
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' the throat,
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 have fatted all the region kites
With this slave's offal: bloody, bawdy villain!
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!
O, vengeance!
Why, what an ass am I! This is most brave,
That I, the son of a dear father murder'd,
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 brain! I have heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
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
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 but blench,
I know my course. The spirit that I have seen
May be the devil: and the devil hath power
To 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
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

(Exit)