Act II.

Scene I. A room in Polonius's house.

[Enter Polonius and Reynaldo.]

Polonius
Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

Reynaldo
I will, my lord.

Polonius
You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo, 3
Before You visit him, to make inquiry
Of his behaviour.

Reynaldo
My lord, I did intend it.

Polonius
Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Enquire me first what Danskers are in Paris; 7
And how, and who, what means, and where they keep,
What company, at what expense; and finding,
By this encompassment and drift of question,
That they do know my son, come you more nearer
Than your particular demands will touch it: 12
Take you, as 'twere, some distant knowledge of him;
As thus, 'I know his father and his friends,
And in part him;--do you mark this, Reynaldo?

Reynaldo
Ay, very well, my lord.

Polonius
'And in part him;--but,' you may say, 'not well:
But if't be he I mean, he's very wild; 19
Addicted so and so;' and there put on him
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.

Reynaldo
As gaming, my lord.
Polonius
Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,
Drabbing:—you may go so far.

Reynaldo
My lord, that would dishonour him.

Polonius
Faith, no; as you may season it in the charge.
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;
A savageness in unreclaimed blood,
Of general assault.

Reynaldo
But, my good lord,—

Polonius
Wherefore should you do this?

Reynaldo
Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

Polonius
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' the wor'king,
Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assur'd
He closes with you in this consequence;
'Good sir,' or so; or 'friend,' or 'gentleman'—
According to the phrase or the addition
Of man and country.

Reynaldo
Very good, my lord.

Polonius
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?
Reynaldo
At 'closes in the consequence,' at 'friend or so,' and gentleman.'

Polonius
At--closes in the consequence'--ay, marry!
He closes with you thus:--'I know the gentleman;
I saw him yesterday, or t'other day,
Or then, or then; with such, or such; and, as you say,
There was he 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 takes this carp of truth:
And thus do we of wisdom and of reach,
With windlaces, 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? 69

Reynaldo
My lord, I have.

Polonius
God b' wi' you, fare you well.

Reynaldo
Good my lord!

Polonius
Observe his inclination in yourself.

Reynaldo
I shall, my lord. 74

Polonius
And let him ply his music.

Reynaldo
Well, my lord.

Polonius
Farewell!

[Exit Reynaldo.]

[Enter Ophelia.]
Hamlet

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

Ophelia
Alas, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

Polonius
With what, i' the name of God?

Ophelia
My lord, as I was sewing in my chamber,
Lord Hamlet,--with his doublet all unbrac'd;
No hat upon his head; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle;
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,--he comes before me.

Polonius
Mad for thy love?

Ophelia
My lord, I do not know;
But truly I do fear it.

Polonius
What said he?

Ophelia
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,
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 rais'd a sigh so piteous and profound
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 help,
And to the last bended their light on me.

Polonius
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,
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry,—
What, have you given him any hard words of late?

Ophelia
No, my good lord; but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me.

Polonius
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 wreck thee; but beshrew my jealousy!
It seems it 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
More grief to hide than hate to utter love.

[Exeunt.]
Scene II. A room in the Castle.

[Enter King, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and Attendants.]

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 I call it,
Since 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 since so neighbour'd to his youth and humour,
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.
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
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 Guildenstern.
Hamlet

Queen.
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 practices pleasant and helpful to him!

Queen.
Ay, amen!

[Exeunt Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and some Attendants].

[Enter Polonius.]

Polonius
Th' ambassadors from Norway, my good lord,
Are joyfully return'd.

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

Polonius
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
As it hath us'd to do,—that I have found
The very cause of Hamlet's lunacy.

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

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

King.
Thyself do grace to them, and bring them in.

[Exit Polonius.]

He tells me, my sweet Queen, he hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper.
Queen.
I doubt it is no other but the main,--
His father's death and our o'erhasty marriage.

King.
Well, we shall sift him.

[Enter Polonius, with Voltimand and Cornelius.]

Welcome, my good friends!
Say, Voltimand, what from our brother Norway?

Volt.
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 griev'd,--
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 th' 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,
[Give 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.
It likes us well;
And at our more consider'd time we'll 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.]

Polonius
This business is well ended.--
My liege, and madam,—to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night is 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.
More matter, with less art.

Polonius
Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity;
And pity '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 whilst 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, etc.

Queen.
Came this from Hamlet to her?

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 show'd me;
And more above, hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

King.
But how hath she
Receiv'd his love?

Polonius
What do you think of me?

King.
As of a man faithful and honourable.

Polonius
I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing,--
As I perceiv'd 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 sphere;
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 wail for.

King.
Do you think 'tis this?

Queen.
It may be, very likely.
Polonius
Hath there been such a time,—I'd fain know that—
That I have positively said "Tis so,"
When it prov'd otherwise?  

King.
Not that I know.

Polonius
Take this from this, if this be otherwise:
[Points to his head and shoulder.]
If circumstances lead me, I will find
Where truth is hid, though it were hid indeed
Within the centre.

King.
How may we try it further?

Polonius
You know sometimes he walks for hours together
Here in the lobby.

Queen.
So he does indeed.

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 he not from his reason fall'n thereon
Let me be no assistant for a state,
But keep a farm and carters.

King.
We will try it.

Queen.
But look where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.  

Polonius
Away, I do beseech you, both away
I'll board him presently:—O, give me leave.

[Exeunt King, Queen, and Attendants.]

[Enter Hamlet, reading.]  

How does my good Lord Hamlet?
Hamlet
Well, God-a-mercy.

Polonius
Do you know me, my lord?

Hamlet
Excellent well; you're a fishmonger.

Polonius
Not I, my lord.

Hamlet
Then I would you were so honest a man.

Polonius
Honest, my lord!

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

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?

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.

Polonius
How say you by that?--[Aside.] 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.

Polonius
What is the matter, my lord?

Hamlet
Between who?

Polonius
I mean, the matter that you read, my lord.

Hamlet
Slanders, sir: for the satirical slave 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 you yourself, sir, should be old as I am, if, like a crab, you could go backward.

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

Hamlet
Into my grave?

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 anything that I will more willingly part withal,—except my life, except my life, except my life.

Polonius
Fare you well, my lord.

Hamlet
These tedious old fools!

[Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

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 nutshell, 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 outstretch'd heroes the beggars' shadows. Shall we to the court? for, by my fay, I cannot reason.

Rosencrantz and Guild.
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, anything--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
[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

53
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 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; 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 humorous man shall
end his part in peace; the clown shall make those laugh whose
lungs are tickle 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 such 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 awhile, 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 my uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived, give twenty, forty, fifty, a 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.]
Guildestern
There are the players.

Hamlet
Gentlemen, you are welcome to Elsinore. Your hands, come: 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.

Guildestern
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.]

Polonius
Well be with you, gentlemen!

Hamlet
Hark you, Guildestern;--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.

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,--

Polonius
The actors are come hither, my lord.

Hamlet
Buzz, buzz!
Polonius
Upon my honour,—

Hamlet
Then came each actor on his ass,—

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!

Polonius
What treasure had he, my lord?

Hamlet
Why--
'O one fair daughter, and no more, 'The which he loved passing well.'

Polonius
[Aside.] Still on my daughter.

Hamlet
Am I not i' the right, old Jephthah?

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

Hamlet
Nay, that follows not.

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 abridgment 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 valanèd 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 uncurrenct gold, be not cracked 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.

I Play.
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 indite 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 th' 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 be total gules; horridly trick'd With blood of fathers, mothers, daughters, sons, Bak'd and impasted with the parching streets, That lend a tyrannous and a damned light To their vile murders: 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.

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

I Play.
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,
A roused vengeance sets him new a-work;
And never did the Cyclops' hammers fall
On Mars's armour, forg'd 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!

Polonius
This is too long.

Hamlet
It shall to the barber's, with your beard.—Pr'ythee say on.—
He's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps.—say on; come
to Hecuba.

I Play.
But who, O who, had seen the mobled Queen,--

Hamlet

"The mobled Queen'? 

Polonius

That's good! 'Mobled Queen' is good.

I Play.
Run barefoot up and down, threatening the flames
With bison rheum; a clout upon that head
Where late the diadem stood, and for a robe,
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 pronounc'd:
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.

Polonius

Look, whether he has not turn'd his colour, and has tears in's eyes.--Pray you, no more!

Hamlet

'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 abstracts and brief chronicles of the time; after your death you were better have a bad epitaph than their ill report while you live.

Polonius

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

Hamlet

Odd's bodikin, man, 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.
Hamlet
Follow him, friends. we'll hear a play to-morrow.

[Exeunt Polonius with all the Players but the First.]

Dost thou hear me, old friend? Can you play 'The Murder of Gonzago'?

I Play.
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?

I Play.
Ay, my lord.

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

[Exit First Player.]

--My good friends [to Rosencrantz and Guild.], I'll leave you till
night: you are welcome to Elsinore.

Rosencrantz
Good my lord!

[Exeunt Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.]

Hamlet
Ay, so, God b' wi' ye!
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 wan'd;
Tears in his eyes, distraction in's 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,
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.]