**ACT IV**

**SCENE I. A room in the castle.**

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

**KING CLAUDIUS**

There's matter in these sighs, these profound heaves:  
You must translate: 'tis fit we understand them.  
Where is your son?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Bestow this place on us a little while.

*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

Ah, my good lord, what have I seen to-night!

**KING CLAUDIUS**

What, Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend  
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,  
Behind the arras hearing something stir,  
Whips out his rapier, cries, 'A rat, a rat!'  
And, in this brainish apprehension, kills  
The unseen good old man.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

O heavy deed!  
It had been so with us, had we been there:  
His liberty is full of threats to all;  
To you yourself, to us, to every one.  
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd?  
It will be laid to us, whose providence  
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,  
This mad young man: but so much was our love,  
We would not understand what was most fit;  
But, like the owner of a foul disease,  
To keep it from divulging, let it feed  
Even on the pith of Life. Where is he gone?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

To draw apart the body he hath kill'd:  
O'er whom his very madness, like some ore  
Among a mineral of metals base,  
Shows itself pure; he weeps for what is done.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

O Gertrude, come away!  
The sun no sooner shall the mountains touch,  
But we will ship him hence: and this vile deed  
We must, with all our majesty and skill,  
Both countenance and excuse. Ho, Guildenstern!

*Re-enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

Friends both, go join you with some further aid:  
Hamlet in madness hath Polonius slain,  
And from his mother's closet hath he dragg'd him:  
Go seek him out; speak fair, and bring the body  
Into the chapel. I pray you, haste in this.

*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

Come, Gertrude, we'll call up our wisest friends;  
And let them know, both what we mean to do,  
And what's untimely done. O, come away!  
My soul is full of discord and dismay.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE II. Another room in the castle.**

*Enter HAMLET*

**HAMLET**

Safely stowed.

**ROSENCRANTZ:** **GUILDENSTERN:**

[Within] Hamlet! Lord Hamlet!

**HAMLET**

What noise? who calls on Hamlet?  
O, here they come.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

**ROSENCRANTZ**

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

**HAMLET**

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence  
And bear it to the chapel.

**HAMLET**

Do not believe it.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Believe what?

**HAMLET**

That I can keep your counsel and not mine own.  
Besides, to be demanded of a sponge! what  
replication should be made by the son of a king?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

**HAMLET**

Ay, sir, that soaks up the king's countenance, his  
rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the  
king best service in the end: he keeps them, like  
an ape, in the corner of his jaw; first mouthed, to  
be last swallowed: when he needs what you have  
gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you  
shall be dry again.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

I understand you not, my lord.

**HAMLET**

I am glad of it: a knavish speech sleeps in a  
foolish ear.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

My lord, you must tell us where the body is, and go  
with us to the king.

**HAMLET**

The body is with the king, but the king is not with  
the body. The king is a thing--

**GUILDENSTERN**

A thing, my lord!

**HAMLET**

Of nothing: bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE III. Another room in the castle.**

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS, attended*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.  
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!  
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:  
He's loved of the distracted multitude,  
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;  
And where tis so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,  
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,  
This sudden sending him away must seem  
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown  
By desperate appliance are relieved,  
Or not at all.

*Enter ROSENCRANTZ*

How now! what hath befall'n?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,  
We cannot get from him.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

But where is he?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Bring him before us.

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

*Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

**HAMLET**

At supper.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

At supper! where?

**HAMLET**

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain  
convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your  
worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all  
creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for  
maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but  
variable service, two dishes, but to one table:  
that's the end.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Alas, alas!

**HAMLET**

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a  
king, and cat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

What dost you mean by this?

**HAMLET**

Nothing but to show you how a king may go a  
progress through the guts of a beggar.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Where is Polonius?

**HAMLET**

In heaven; send hither to see: if your messenger  
find him not there, seek him i' the other place  
yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within  
this month, you shall nose him as you go up the  
stairs into the lobby.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Go seek him there.

*To some Attendants*

**HAMLET**

He will stay till ye come.

*Exeunt Attendants*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,--  
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve  
For that which thou hast done,--must send thee hence  
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;  
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,  
The associates tend, and every thing is bent  
For England.

**HAMLET**

For England!

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Ay, Hamlet.

**HAMLET**

Good.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

**HAMLET**

I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for  
England! Farewell, dear mother.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

**HAMLET**

My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man  
and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England!

*Exit*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;  
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:  
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done  
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.

*Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN*

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught--  
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,  
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red  
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe  
Pays homage to us--thou mayst not coldly set  
Our sovereign process; which imports at full,  
By letters congruing to that effect,  
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;  
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,  
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,  
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

*Exit*

**SCENE IV. A plain in Denmark.**

*Enter FORTINBRAS, a Captain, and Soldiers, marching*

**PRINCE FORTINBRAS**

Go, captain, from me greet the Danish king;  
Tell him that, by his licence, Fortinbras  
Craves the conveyance of a promised march  
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.  
If that his majesty would aught with us,  
We shall express our duty in his eye;  
And let him know so.

**Captain**

I will do't, my lord.

**PRINCE FORTINBRAS**

Go softly on.

*Exeunt FORTINBRAS and Soldiers*

*Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, GUILDENSTERN, and others*

**HAMLET**

Good sir, whose powers are these?

**Captain**

They are of Norway, sir.

**HAMLET**

How purposed, sir, I pray you?

**Captain**

Against some part of Poland.

**HAMLET**

Who commands them, sir?

**Captain**

The nephews to old Norway, Fortinbras.

**HAMLET**

Goes it against the main of Poland, sir,  
Or for some frontier?

**Captain**

Truly to speak, and with no addition,  
We go to gain a little patch of ground  
That hath in it no profit but the name.  
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it;  
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole  
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

**HAMLET**

Why, then the Polack never will defend it.

**Captain**

Yes, it is already garrison'd.

**HAMLET**

Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats  
Will not debate the question of this straw:  
This is the imposthume of much wealth and peace,  
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without  
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you, sir.

**Captain**

God be wi' you, sir.

*Exit*

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Wilt please you go, my lord?

**HAMLET**

I'll be with you straight go a little before.

*Exeunt all except HAMLET*

How all occasions do inform against me,  
And spur my dull revenge! What is a man,  
If his chief good and market of his time  
Be but to sleep and feed? a beast, no more.  
Sure, he that made us with such large discourse,  
Looking before and after, gave us not  
That capability and god-like reason  
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be  
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on the event,  
A thought which, quarter'd, hath but one part wisdom  
And ever three parts coward, I do not know  
Why yet I live to say 'This thing's to do;'  
Sith I have cause and will and strength and means  
To do't. Examples gross as earth exhort me:  
Witness this army of such mass and charge  
Led by a delicate and tender prince,  
Whose spirit with divine ambition puff'd  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,  
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honour's at the stake. How stand I then,  
That have a father kill'd, a mother stain'd,  
Excitements of my reason and my blood,  
And let all sleep? while, to my shame, I see  
The imminent death of twenty thousand men,  
That, for a fantasy and trick of fame,  
Go to their graves like beds, fight for a plot  
Whereon the numbers cannot try the cause,  
Which is not tomb enough and continent  
To hide the slain? O, from this time forth,  
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!

*Exit*

**SCENE V. Elsinore. A room in the castle.**

*Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE, HORATIO, and a Gentleman*

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

I will not speak with her.

**Gentleman**

She is importunate, indeed distract:  
Her mood will needs be pitied.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

What would she have?

**Gentleman**

She speaks much of her father; says she hears  
There's tricks i' the world; and hems, and beats her heart;  
Spurns enviously at straws; speaks things in doubt,  
That carry but half sense: her speech is nothing,  
Yet the unshaped use of it doth move  
The hearers to collection; they aim at it,  
And botch the words up fit to their own thoughts;  
Which, as her winks, and nods, and gestures  
yield them,  
Indeed would make one think there might be thought,  
Though nothing sure, yet much unhappily.

**HORATIO**

'Twere good she were spoken with; for she may strew  
Dangerous conjectures in ill-breeding minds.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Let her come in.

*Exit HORATIO*

To my sick soul, as sin's true nature is,  
Each toy seems prologue to some great amiss:  
So full of artless jealousy is guilt,  
It spills itself in fearing to be spilt.

*Re-enter HORATIO, with OPHELIA*

**OPHELIA**

Where is the beauteous majesty of Denmark?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

How now, Ophelia!

**OPHELIA**

[Sings]  
How should I your true love know  
From another one?  
By his cockle hat and staff,  
And his sandal shoon.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Alas, sweet lady, what imports this song?

**OPHELIA**

Say you? nay, pray you, mark.

*Sings*

He is dead and gone, lady,  
He is dead and gone;  
At his head a grass-green turf,  
At his heels a stone.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Nay, but, Ophelia,--

**OPHELIA**

Pray you, mark.

*Sings*

White his shroud as the mountain snow,--

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS*

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Alas, look here, my lord.

**OPHELIA**

[Sings]  
Larded with sweet flowers  
Which bewept to the grave did go  
With true-love showers.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

How do you, pretty lady?

**OPHELIA**

Well, God 'ild you! They say the owl was a baker's  
daughter. Lord, we know what we are, but know not  
what we may be. God be at your table!

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Conceit upon her father.

**OPHELIA**

Pray you, let's have no words of this; but when they  
ask you what it means, say you this:

*Sings*

To-morrow is Saint Valentine's day,  
All in the morning betime,  
And I a maid at your window,  
To be your Valentine.  
Then up he rose, and donn'd his clothes,  
And dupp'd the chamber-door;  
Let in the maid, that out a maid  
Never departed more.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Pretty Ophelia!

**OPHELIA**

Indeed, la, without an oath, I'll make an end on't:

*Sings*

By Gis and by Saint Charity,  
Alack, and fie for shame!  
Young men will do't, if they come to't;  
By cock, they are to blame.  
Quoth she, before you tumbled me,  
You promised me to wed.  
So would I ha' done, by yonder sun,  
An thou hadst not come to my bed.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

How long hath she been thus?

**OPHELIA**

I hope all will be well. We must be patient: but I  
cannot choose but weep, to think they should lay him  
i' the cold ground. My brother shall know of it:  
and so I thank you for your good counsel. Come, my  
coach! Good night, ladies; good night, sweet ladies;  
good night, good night.

*Exit*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Follow her close; give her good watch,  
I pray you.

*Exit HORATIO*

O, this is the poison of deep grief; it springs  
All from her father's death. O Gertrude, Gertrude,  
When sorrows come, they come not single spies  
But in battalions. First, her father slain:  
Next, your son gone; and he most violent author  
Of his own just remove: the people muddied,  
Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,  
For good Polonius' death; and we have done but greenly,  
In hugger-mugger to inter him: poor Ophelia  
Divided from herself and her fair judgment,  
Without the which we are pictures, or mere beasts:  
Last, and as much containing as all these,  
Her brother is in secret come from France;  
Feeds on his wonder, keeps himself in clouds,  
And wants not buzzers to infect his ear  
With pestilent speeches of his father's death;  
Wherein necessity, of matter beggar'd,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,  
Like to a murdering-piece, in many places  
Gives me superfluous death.

*A noise within*

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Alack, what noise is this?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Where are my Switzers? Let them guard the door.

*Enter another Gentleman*

What is the matter?

**Gentleman**

Save yourself, my lord:  
The ocean, overpeering of his list,  
Eats not the flats with more impetuous haste  
Than young Laertes, in a riotous head,  
O'erbears your officers. The rabble call him lord;  
And, as the world were now but to begin,  
Antiquity forgot, custom not known,  
The ratifiers and props of every word,  
They cry 'Choose we: Laertes shall be king:'  
Caps, hands, and tongues, applaud it to the clouds:  
'Laertes shall be king, Laertes king!'

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

How cheerfully on the false trail they cry!  
O, this is counter, you false Danish dogs!

**KING CLAUDIUS**

The doors are broke.

*Noise within*

*Enter LAERTES, armed; Danes following*

**LAERTES**

Where is this king? Sirs, stand you all without.

**Danes**

No, let's come in.

**LAERTES**

I pray you, give me leave.

**Danes**

We will, we will.

*They retire without the door*

**LAERTES**

I thank you: keep the door. O thou vile king,  
Give me my father!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Calmly, good Laertes.

**LAERTES**

That drop of blood that's calm proclaims me bastard,  
Cries cuckold to my father, brands the harlot  
Even here, between the chaste unsmirched brow  
Of my true mother.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

What is the cause, Laertes,  
That thy rebellion looks so giant-like?  
Let him go, Gertrude; do not fear our person:  
There's such divinity doth hedge a king,  
That treason can but peep to what it would,  
Acts little of his will. Tell me, Laertes,  
Why thou art thus incensed. Let him go, Gertrude.  
Speak, man.

**LAERTES**

Where is my father?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Dead.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

But not by him.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Let him demand his fill.

**LAERTES**

How came he dead? I'll not be juggled with:  
To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!  
Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!  
I dare damnation. To this point I stand,  
That both the worlds I give to negligence,  
Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged  
Most thoroughly for my father.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Who shall stay you?

**LAERTES**

My will, not all the world:  
And for my means, I'll husband them so well,  
They shall go far with little.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Good Laertes,  
If you desire to know the certainty  
Of your dear father's death, is't writ in your revenge,  
That, swoopstake, you will draw both friend and foe,  
Winner and loser?

**LAERTES**

None but his enemies.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Will you know them then?

**LAERTES**

To his good friends thus wide I'll ope my arms;  
And like the kind life-rendering pelican,  
Repast them with my blood.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Why, now you speak  
Like a good child and a true gentleman.  
That I am guiltless of your father's death,  
And am most sensible in grief for it,  
It shall as level to your judgment pierce  
As day does to your eye.

**Danes**

[Within] Let her come in.

**LAERTES**

How now! what noise is that?

*Re-enter OPHELIA*

O heat, dry up my brains! tears seven times salt,  
Burn out the sense and virtue of mine eye!  
By heaven, thy madness shall be paid by weight,  
Till our scale turn the beam. O rose of May!  
Dear maid, kind sister, sweet Ophelia!  
O heavens! is't possible, a young maid's wits  
Should be as moral as an old man's life?  
Nature is fine in love, and where 'tis fine,  
It sends some precious instance of itself  
After the thing it loves.

**OPHELIA**

[Sings]  
They bore him barefaced on the bier;  
Hey non nonny, nonny, hey nonny;  
And in his grave rain'd many a tear:--  
Fare you well, my dove!

**LAERTES**

Hadst thou thy wits, and didst persuade revenge,  
It could not move thus.

**OPHELIA**

[Sings]  
You must sing a-down a-down,  
An you call him a-down-a.  
O, how the wheel becomes it! It is the false  
steward, that stole his master's daughter.

**LAERTES**

This nothing's more than matter.

**OPHELIA**

There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray,  
love, remember: and there is pansies. that's for thoughts.

**LAERTES**

A document in madness, thoughts and remembrance fitted.

**OPHELIA**

There's fennel for you, and columbines: there's rue  
for you; and here's some for me: we may call it  
herb-grace o' Sundays: O you must wear your rue with  
a difference. There's a daisy: I would give you  
some violets, but they withered all when my father  
died: they say he made a good end,--

*Sings*

For bonny sweet Robin is all my joy.

**LAERTES**

Thought and affliction, passion, hell itself,  
She turns to favour and to prettiness.

**OPHELIA**

[Sings]  
And will he not come again?  
And will he not come again?  
No, no, he is dead:  
Go to thy death-bed:  
He never will come again.  
His beard was as white as snow,  
All flaxen was his poll:  
He is gone, he is gone,  
And we cast away moan:  
God ha' mercy on his soul!  
And of all Christian souls, I pray God. God be wi' ye.

*Exit*

**LAERTES**

Do you see this, O God?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Laertes, I must commune with your grief,  
Or you deny me right. Go but apart,  
Make choice of whom your wisest friends you will.  
And they shall hear and judge 'twixt you and me:  
If by direct or by collateral hand  
They find us touch'd, we will our kingdom give,  
Our crown, our life, and all that we can ours,  
To you in satisfaction; but if not,  
Be you content to lend your patience to us,  
And we shall jointly labour with your soul  
To give it due content.

**LAERTES**

Let this be so;  
His means of death, his obscure funeral--  
No trophy, sword, nor hatchment o'er his bones,  
No noble rite nor formal ostentation--  
Cry to be heard, as 'twere from heaven to earth,  
That I must call't in question.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

So you shall;  
And where the offence is let the great axe fall.  
I pray you, go with me.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE VI. Another room in the castle.**

*Enter HORATIO and a Servant*

**HORATIO**

What are they that would speak with me?

**Servant**

Sailors, sir: they say they have letters for you.

**HORATIO**

Let them come in.

*Exit Servant*

I do not know from what part of the world  
I should be greeted, if not from Lord Hamlet.

*Enter Sailors*

**First Sailor**

God bless you, sir.

**HORATIO**

Let him bless thee too.

**First Sailor**

He shall, sir, an't please him. There's a letter for  
you, sir; it comes from the ambassador that was  
bound for England; if your name be Horatio, as I am  
let to know it is.

**HORATIO**

[Reads] 'Horatio, when thou shalt have overlooked  
this, give these fellows some means to the king:  
they have letters for him. Ere we were two days old  
at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us  
chase. Finding ourselves too slow of sail, we put on  
a compelled valour, and in the grapple I boarded  
them: on the instant they got clear of our ship; so  
I alone became their prisoner. They have dealt with  
me like thieves of mercy: but they knew what they  
did; I am to do a good turn for them. Let the king  
have the letters I have sent; and repair thou to me  
with as much speed as thou wouldst fly death. I  
have words to speak in thine ear will make thee  
dumb; yet are they much too light for the bore of  
the matter. These good fellows will bring thee  
where I am. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern hold their  
course for England: of them I have much to tell  
thee. Farewell.  
'He that thou knowest thine, HAMLET.'  
Come, I will make you way for these your letters;  
And do't the speedier, that you may direct me  
To him from whom you brought them.

*Exeunt*

**SCENE VII. Another room in the castle.**

*Enter KING CLAUDIUS and LAERTES*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Now must your conscience my acquaintance seal,  
And you must put me in your heart for friend,  
Sith you have heard, and with a knowing ear,  
That he which hath your noble father slain  
Pursued my life.

**LAERTES**

It well appears: but tell me  
Why you proceeded not against these feats,  
So crimeful and so capital in nature,  
As by your safety, wisdom, all things else,  
You mainly were stirr'd up.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

O, for two special reasons;  
Which may to you, perhaps, seem much unsinew'd,  
But yet to me they are strong. The queen his mother  
Lives almost by his looks; and for myself--  
My virtue or my plague, be it either which--  
She's so conjunctive to my life and soul,  
That, as the star moves not but in his sphere,  
I could not but by her. The other motive,  
Why to a public count I might not go,  
Is the great love the general gender bear him;  
Who, dipping all his faults in their affection,  
Would, like the spring that turneth wood to stone,  
Convert his gyves to graces; so that my arrows,  
Too slightly timber'd for so loud a wind,  
Would have reverted to my bow again,  
And not where I had aim'd them.

**LAERTES**

And so have I a noble father lost;  
A sister driven into desperate terms,  
Whose worth, if praises may go back again,  
Stood challenger on mount of all the age  
For her perfections: but my revenge will come.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Break not your sleeps for that: you must not think  
That we are made of stuff so flat and dull  
That we can let our beard be shook with danger  
And think it pastime. You shortly shall hear more:  
I loved your father, and we love ourself;  
And that, I hope, will teach you to imagine--

*Enter a Messenger*

How now! what news?

**Messenger**

Letters, my lord, from Hamlet:  
This to your majesty; this to the queen.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

From Hamlet! who brought them?

**Messenger**

Sailors, my lord, they say; I saw them not:  
They were given me by Claudio; he received them  
Of him that brought them.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Laertes, you shall hear them. Leave us.

*Exit Messenger*

*Reads*

'High and mighty, You shall know I am set naked on  
your kingdom. To-morrow shall I beg leave to see  
your kingly eyes: when I shall, first asking your  
pardon thereunto, recount the occasion of my sudden  
and more strange return. 'HAMLET.'  
What should this mean? Are all the rest come back?  
Or is it some abuse, and no such thing?

**LAERTES**

Know you the hand?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

'Tis Hamlets character. 'Naked!  
And in a postscript here, he says 'alone.'  
Can you advise me?

**LAERTES**

I'm lost in it, my lord. But let him come;  
It warms the very sickness in my heart,  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
'Thus didest thou.'

**KING CLAUDIUS**

If it be so, Laertes--  
As how should it be so? how otherwise?--  
Will you be ruled by me?

**LAERTES**

Ay, my lord;  
So you will not o'errule me to a peace.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

To thine own peace. If he be now return'd,  
As checking at his voyage, and that he means  
No more to undertake it, I will work him  
To an exploit, now ripe in my device,  
Under the which he shall not choose but fall:  
And for his death no wind of blame shall breathe,  
But even his mother shall uncharge the practise  
And call it accident.

**LAERTES**

My lord, I will be ruled;  
The rather, if you could devise it so  
That I might be the organ.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

It falls right.  
You have been talk'd of since your travel much,  
And that in Hamlet's hearing, for a quality  
Wherein, they say, you shine: your sum of parts  
Did not together pluck such envy from him  
As did that one, and that, in my regard,  
Of the unworthiest siege.

**LAERTES**

What part is that, my lord?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

A very riband in the cap of youth,  
Yet needful too; for youth no less becomes  
The light and careless livery that it wears  
Than settled age his sables and his weeds,  
Importing health and graveness. Two months since,  
Here was a gentleman of Normandy:--  
I've seen myself, and served against, the French,  
And they can well on horseback: but this gallant  
Had witchcraft in't; he grew unto his seat;  
And to such wondrous doing brought his horse,  
As he had been incorpsed and demi-natured  
With the brave beast: so far he topp'd my thought,  
That I, in forgery of shapes and tricks,  
Come short of what he did.

**LAERTES**

A Norman was't?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

A Norman.

**LAERTES**

Upon my life, Lamond.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

The very same.

**LAERTES**

I know him well: he is the brooch indeed  
And gem of all the nation.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

He made confession of you,  
And gave you such a masterly report  
For art and exercise in your defence  
And for your rapier most especially,  
That he cried out, 'twould be a sight indeed,  
If one could match you: the scrimers of their nation,  
He swore, had had neither motion, guard, nor eye,  
If you opposed them. Sir, this report of his  
Did Hamlet so envenom with his envy  
That he could nothing do but wish and beg  
Your sudden coming o'er, to play with him.  
Now, out of this,--

**LAERTES**

What out of this, my lord?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Laertes, was your father dear to you?  
Or are you like the painting of a sorrow,  
A face without a heart?

**LAERTES**

Why ask you this?

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Not that I think you did not love your father;  
But that I know love is begun by time;  
And that I see, in passages of proof,  
Time qualifies the spark and fire of it.  
There lives within the very flame of love  
A kind of wick or snuff that will abate it;  
And nothing is at a like goodness still;  
For goodness, growing to a plurisy,  
Dies in his own too much: that we would do  
We should do when we would; for this 'would' changes  
And hath abatements and delays as many  
As there are tongues, are hands, are accidents;  
And then this 'should' is like a spendthrift sigh,  
That hurts by easing. But, to the quick o' the ulcer:--  
Hamlet comes back: what would you undertake,  
To show yourself your father's son in deed  
More than in words?

**LAERTES**

To cut his throat i' the church.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

No place, indeed, should murder sanctuarize;  
Revenge should have no bounds. But, good Laertes,  
Will you do this, keep close within your chamber.  
Hamlet return'd shall know you are come home:  
We'll put on those shall praise your excellence  
And set a double varnish on the fame  
The Frenchman gave you, bring you in fine together  
And wager on your heads: he, being remiss,  
Most generous and free from all contriving,  
Will not peruse the foils; so that, with ease,  
Or with a little shuffling, you may choose  
A sword unbated, and in a pass of practise  
Requite him for your father.

**LAERTES**

I will do't:  
And, for that purpose, I'll anoint my sword.  
I bought an unction of a mountebank,  
So mortal that, but dip a knife in it,  
Where it draws blood no cataplasm so rare,  
Collected from all simples that have virtue  
Under the moon, can save the thing from death  
That is but scratch'd withal: I'll touch my point  
With this contagion, that, if I gall him slightly,  
It may be death.

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Let's further think of this;  
Weigh what convenience both of time and means  
May fit us to our shape: if this should fail,  
And that our drift look through our bad performance,  
'Twere better not assay'd: therefore this project  
Should have a back or second, that might hold,  
If this should blast in proof. Soft! let me see:  
We'll make a solemn wager on your cunnings: I ha't.  
When in your motion you are hot and dry--  
As make your bouts more violent to that end--  
And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him  
A chalice for the nonce, whereon but sipping,  
If he by chance escape your venom'd stuck,  
Our purpose may hold there.

*Enter QUEEN GERTRUDE*

How now, sweet queen!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

One woe doth tread upon another's heel,  
So fast they follow; your sister's drown'd, Laertes.

**LAERTES**

Drown'd! O, where?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples  
That liberal shepherds give a grosser name,  
But our cold maids do dead men's fingers call them:  
There, on the pendent boughs her coronet weeds  
Clambering to hang, an envious sliver broke;  
When down her weedy trophies and herself  
Fell in the weeping brook. Her clothes spread wide;  
And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up:  
Which time she chanted snatches of old tunes;  
As one incapable of her own distress,  
Or like a creature native and indued  
Unto that element: but long it could not be  
Till that her garments, heavy with their drink,  
Pull'd the poor wretch from her melodious lay  
To muddy death.

**LAERTES**

Alas, then, she is drown'd?

**QUEEN GERTRUDE**

Drown'd, drown'd.

**LAERTES**

Too much of water hast thou, poor Ophelia,  
And therefore I forbid my tears: but yet  
It is our trick; nature her custom holds,  
Let shame say what it will: when these are gone,  
The woman will be out. Adieu, my lord:  
I have a speech of fire, that fain would blaze,  
But that this folly douts it.

*Exit*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Let's follow, Gertrude:  
How much I had to do to calm his rage!  
Now fear I this will give it start again;  
Therefore let's follow.

*Exeunt*