

39

Let it be tenable in your silence still;
 And whatsoever else shall hap tonight, 270
 Give it an understanding but no tongue.
 I will requite your loves. So fare you well.
 Upon the platform, 'twixt eleven and twelve,
 I'll visit you.

Our duty to your Honor. 275

ALL

HAMLET

Your loves, as mine to you. Farewell.

[All but Hamlet] exit.

My father's spirit—in arms! All is not well.
 I doubt some foul play. Would the night were come!
 Till then, sit still, my soul. *(Foul)* deeds will rise,
 Though all the earth o'erwhelm them, to men's 280
 eyes.

He exits.

⟨Scene 3⟩

Enter Laertes and Ophelia, his sister.

LAERTES

My necessaries are embarked. Farewell.
 And, sister, as the winds give benefit
 And convey *(is)* assistant, do not sleep,
 But let me hear from you.

OPHELIA

Do you doubt that? 5

LAERTES

For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor,
 Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood,
 A violet in the youth of primy nature,
 Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
 The perfume and suppliance of a minute, 10
 No more.

OPHELIA

No more but so?

Think it no more.

LAERTES

41

For nature, crescent, does not grow alone
 In thews and (bulk,) but, as this temple waxes,
 The inward service of the mind and soul
 Grows wide withal. Perhaps he loves you now,
 And now no soil nor cautel doth besmirch
 The virtue of his will; but you must fear,
 His greatness weigh'd, his will is not his own,
 (For he himself is subject to his birth.)

15

20

He may not, as unvalued persons do,
 Carve for himself, for on his choice depends
 The safety and health of this whole state.
 And therefore must his choice be circumscrib'd
 Unto the voice and yielding of that body
 Whereof he is the head. Then, if he says he loves

25

you,

It fits your wisdom so far to believe it
 As he in his particular act and place
 May give his saying deed, which is no further
 Than the main voice of Denmark goes withal.
 Then weigh what loss your honor may sustain
 If with too credent ear you list his songs
 Or lose your heart or your chaste treasure open
 To his unmaster'd importunity.

30

35

Fear it, Ophelia; fear it, my dear sister,
 And keep you in the rear of your affection,
 Out of the shot and danger of desire.

40

The chariest maid is prodigal enough
 If she unmask her beauty to the moon.
 Virtue itself 'scapes not calumnious strokes.
 The canker galls the infants of the spring
 Too oft before their buttons be disclosed,
 And, in the morn and liquid dew of youth,
 Contagious blastments are most imminent.
 Be wary, then; best safety lies in fear.
 Youth to itself rebels, though none else near.

45

OPHELIA

I shall the effect of this good lesson keep

- 14-15. **nature . . . bulk:** i.e., a growing human
 does not increase only in strength and size
 15. **this temple:** the body; **waxes:** grows larger
 17. **withal:** at the same time
 18. **soil:** moral stain; **cautel:** deceit
 20. **greatness:** high rank
 21. **birth:** noble lineage
 23. **Carve:** i.e., choose
 26. **voice and yielding:** judgment and consent;
 that body: i.e., the Danish state
 31. **give his saying deed:** put his words into action
 32. **withal:** along with
 34. **credent:** gullible; **list:** listen to
 35-36. **your chaste . . . importunity:** i.e., surren-
 der your chastity to his uncontrolled pleading
 38. **keep . . . affection:** i.e., hold yourself back
 from actions your feelings would lead you into (The
 metaphor is from warfare, and is continued in the
 next line.)
 40. **chariest:** most careful; **maid:** maiden, virgin
 42. **strokes:** blows
 43. **The canker . . . spring:** i.e., the cankerworm
 destroys the early spring blossoms (See picture,
 page 38.)
 44. **buttons be disclosed:** buds have opened
 46. **Contagious:** noxious, pernicious; **blast-**
ments: withering blights
 48. **Youth . . . else near:** i.e., youth loses self-
 control even without a tempter

40

43

As watchman to my heart. But, good my brother,
 Do not, as some ungracious pastors do,
 Show me the steep and thorny way to heaven,
 Whiles, (like) a puffed and reckless libertine,
 Himself the primrose path of dalliance treads
 And recks not his own rede.
 O, fear me not.

LAERTES

Enter Polonius.

I stay too long. But here my father comes.
 A double blessing is a double grace.
 Occasion smiles upon a second leave.

POLONIUS

Yet here, Laertes? Aboard, aboard, for shame!
 The wind sits in the shoulder of your sail,
 And you are stayed for. There, my blessing with
 thee.

And these few precepts in thy memory
 Look thou character: Give thy thoughts no tongue,
 Nor any unproportioned thought his act.
 Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
 Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
 Grapple them unto thy soul with hoops of steel,
 But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
 Of each new-hatched, unfledged courage. Beware
 Of entrance to a quarrel, but, being in,
 Bear 't that th' opposèd may beware of thee.
 Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice.
 Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
 Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
 But not expressed in fancy (rich, not gaudy),
 For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
 And they in France of the best rank and station
 (Are) of a most select and generous chief in that.
 Neither a borrower nor a lender (be,)
 For (loan) oft loses both itself and friend,

51. ungracious: ungodly

52-54. Show me . . . treads: i.e., show me how to live a strict and virtuous life while he himself follows a life of self-indulgence (See Matthew 7.13-14.)

55. recks not his own rede: does not heed his own advice

58. A double . . . grace: i.e., to receive one's father's blessing twice is a double favor from heaven

59. Occasion smiles upon: i.e., opportunity (personified as Occasion) kindly grants me; leave: leave-taking

65. Look thou character: see that you inscribe

66. unproportioned: immoderate; his: its

67. familiar: friendly; vulgar: i.e., indiscriminate

71. unfledged courage: spirited youngster

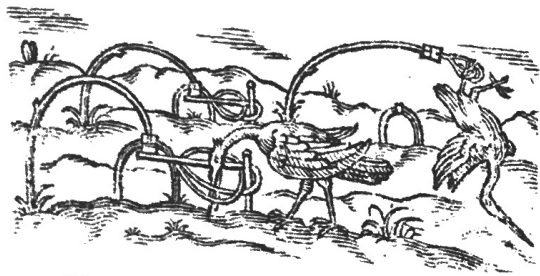
74. voice: approval, support

75. censure: synonymous with judgment

76. habit: clothing

80. Are . . . in that: This puzzling line reads, in Q2, "Or of a most select and generous, chiefe in that"; in F it reads, "Are of a most . . . cheff in that." The line seems to mean, generally: the French show their refinement chiefly in the way they choose their apparel.

83. **husbandry**: management of one's money
 89. **invests**: i.e., presses upon (Many editors prefer the Folio's "invites.") **tend**: i.e., await you
 98. **Marry**: a mild oath derived from "By the Virgin Mary"; **bethought**: considered
 103. **so 'tis put on me**: so I have been told
 108-9. **tenders . . . to me**: offers to me of his affection
 110. **green**: gullible; inexperienced
 111. **Unsifted in**: i.e., naive about



Woodcocks in a springe. (1.3.124; 5.2.336)
 From Henry Parrot, *Laquei ridiculosi* . . . (1613).

- 45
 And borrowing (dulls the) edge of husbandry.
 This above all: to thine own self be true, 85
 And it must follow, as the night the day,
 Thou canst not then be false to any man.
 Farewell. My blessing season this in thee.
 LAERTES
 Most humbly do I take my leave, my lord.
 POLONIUS
 The time invests you. Go, your servants tend.
 LAERTES
 Farewell, Ophelia, and remember well 90
 What I have said to you.
 OPHELIA 'Tis in my memory locked,
 And you yourself shall keep the key of it.
 LAERTES Farewell. *Laertes exits.*
 POLONIUS
 What is 't, Ophelia, he hath said to you? 95
 OPHELIA
 So please you, something touching the Lord
 Hamlet.
 POLONIUS Marry, well bethought.
 'Tis told me he hath very oft of late
 Given private time to you, and you yourself 100
 Have of your audience been most free and
 bounteous.
 If it be so (as so 'tis put on me,
 And that in way of caution), I must tell you
 You do not understand yourself so clearly 105
 As it behooves my daughter and your honor.
 What is between you? Give me up the truth.
 OPHELIA
 He hath, my lord, of late made many tenders
 Of his affection to me.
 POLONIUS
 Affection, puh! You speak like a green girl 110
 Unsifted in such perilous circumstance.
 Do you believe his "tenders," as you call them?

115. **tenders:** coins that should be "legal tender" but are not because they are not sterling (line 116)
116. **Tender yourself** are not sterling (line 116) self at a higher rate
- 117-18. **not to** as if it were a horse, so hard that it becomes winded
118. **tender me a fool:** (1) show yourself to me with a grandchild (The word "fool" was used as a term of endearment for a child.)
122. **given** . . . to: supported, backed up
124. **springes:** snares; **woodcocks:** birds thought to be stupid and easily captured (See picture, page 44.)
- 127-28. **extinct** . . . a-making: i.e., both the light and the heat of such blazes dying out almost as soon as they appear
131. **Set** . . . rate: i.e., place a greater value on your conversation
132. **command to parle:** summons to speak (Entreatments and parle usually referred to military negotiations for truce or surrender.)
135. **In few:** i.e., in short
- 136-40. **brokers** . . . **beguile:** See longer note, page 289. **brokers:** agents **investments:** clothing, vestments **implorators:** solicitors **Breathing:** speaking **beguile:** deceive; entice (**Bawds** was suggested by Lewis Theobald; Q2 and F read "bonds.")
142. **slander:** disgrace by misusing

Hamlet

ACT 1. SC. 3

47

OPHELIA I do not know, my lord, what I should think.

POLONIUS I will teach you. Think yourself a baby

Marry, I have ta'en these tenders for true pay,

That you have ta'en sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,

Which are not sterling. Tender yourself more dearly,

Or (not to crack the wind of the poor phrase,

Running 't it thus) you'll tender me a fool.

OPHELIA My lord, he hath importuned me with love

In honorable fashion—

POLONIUS Ay, "fashion" you may call it. Go to, go to!

OPHELIA And hath given countenance to his speech, my lord,

With almost all the holy vows of heaven.

POLONIUS

Ay, (springes) to catch woodcocks. I do know,

When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul

Lends the tongue vows. These blazes, daughter,

Giving more light than heat, extinct in both

Even in their promise as it is a-making.

You must not take for fire. From this time

Be something scanted of your maiden presence.

Set your entreatments at a higher rate

Than a command to parle. For Lord Hamlet,

Believe so much in him that he is young,

And with a larger (tether) may he walk

Than may be given you. In few, Ophelia,

Do not believe his vows, for they are brokers,

Not of that dye which their investments show,

But mere (implorators) of unholy suits,
Breathing like sanctified and pious 'bawds'¹
The better to (beguile-) This is for all:
I would not, in plain terms, from this time forth
Have you so slander any moment leisure

1.4 While Claudius drinks away the night, Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus are visited by the Ghost, Hamlet, following the Ghost, but Hamlet will not be held back.

1. **shrewdly**: keenly, intensely
2. **eager**: sharp (from the French *aigre*)
7. **held his wont**: has been accustomed
- 7 SD. **pieces**: i.e., pieces of artillery (to create the sound of the great cannon promised by Claudius at 1.2.130)
9. **doth . . . rouse**: stays awake tonight drinking
10. **Keeps wassail**: carouses; **upspring**: a German dance, particularly associated with heavy drinking
11. **Rhenish**: Rhine wine
13. **triumph of his pledge**: his feat of emptying the cup in one draft
17. **to the manner born**: destined through birth to accept this custom
20. **taxed of**: censured by
21. **clepe**: call; **swinish phrase**: Proverbial: "as drunk as a pig"
22. **addition**: titles of honor

49
As to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet.
Look to 't, I charge you. Come your ways.
I shall obey, my lord.
OPHELIA They exit.

145

[Scene 4]

Enter Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus.

HAMLET The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold.

HORATIO It is (a) nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET What hour now?

HORATIO I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS No, it is struck.

5

HORATIO Indeed, I heard it not. It then draws near the season
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

A flourish of trumpets and two pieces goes off.

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels;
And, as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge.

10

HORATIO Is it a custom?

HAMLET Ay, marry, is 't,

15

But, to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honored in the breach than the observance.
[This heavy-headed 'revel' east and west
Makes us traduced and taxed of other nations.
They clepe us drunkards and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition. And, indeed, it takes

20

25. **pith and marrow:** essence; **attribute:** reputation

26. **So:** in the same way; **oft it chances in:** it often happens with

27. **mole of nature:** natural fault

30. **o'ergrowth . . . complexion:** i.e., the increase of one of the four humors, which were thought to control man's physical and emotional being

31. **pales and forts:** palings and ramparts

32. **o'erleavens:** radically changes

33. **plausible:** pleasing

35. **nature's livery:** i.e., something by which one is marked by nature (as in their birth [line 28], or the o'ergrowth of some complexion [line 30]);

fortune's star: something determined by luck (as in the accidental forming of some habit [line 32])

36. **His virtues else:** the other virtues of these men (line 33)

37. **undergo:** experience

39–41. **The dram . . . scandal:** These difficult lines have never been satisfactorily repaired, but the general sense may be that a small amount of evil makes even something admirable seem disreputable.

44. **goblin:** demon

48. **questionable:** problematic

52. **canonized:** i.e., buried in accord with the canons of the church (accent on the second syllable); **hearsèd:** placed in or under a hearse (an elaborate framework covering the coffin of a distinguished person during the funeral)

53. **cerements:** a waxed cloth used to wrap a corpse for burial (pronounced as "seerments") See picture, page 52.

51
From our achievements, though performed at height,

The pith and marrow of our attribute.

So oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,
Since nature cannot choose his origin),

By 'the 1 o'ergrowth of some complexion
(Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason),
Or by some habit that too much o'erleavens

The form of plausible manners—that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,
Being nature's livery or fortune's star,
His virtues else, be they as pure as grace,

As infinite as man may undergo,
Shall in the general censure take corruption
From that particular fault. The dram of 'evil'
Doth all the noble substance of a doubt
To his own scandal.]

Enter Ghost.

Look, my lord, it comes.

HORATIO

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace, defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,

Thou com'st in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee "Hamlet,"
"King," "Father," "Royal Dane." O, answer me!
Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell
Why thy canonized bones, hearsèd in death,

Have burst their cerements; why the sepulcher,
Wherein we saw thee quietly interred,
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws

53

To cast thee up again. What may this mean
 That thou, dead corse, again in complete steel,
 Revisits thus the glimpses of the moon,
 Making night hideous, and we fools of nature
 So horridly to shake our disposition
 With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?
 Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?
 (Ghost) beckons.

60

HORATIO

It beckons you to go away with it
 As if it some impartment did desire
 To you alone.

65

MARCELLUS

Look with what courteous action
 It waves you to a more removed ground.
 But do not go with it.

No, by no means.

HORATIO

HAMLET

It will not speak. Then I will follow it.

70

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, what should be the fear?
 I do not set my life at a pin's fee.
 And for my soul, what can it do to that,
 Being a thing immortal as itself?
 It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

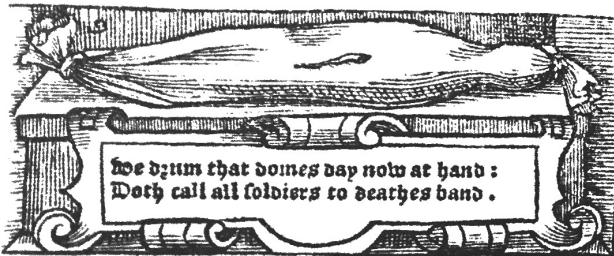
75

HORATIO

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord?
 Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff
 That beetles o'er his base into the sea,
 And there assume some other horrible form
 Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
 And draw you into madness? Think of it.
 [The very place puts toys of desperation,
 Without more motive, into every brain
 That looks so many fathoms to the sea
 And hears it roar beneath.]

85

59-61. **and we . . . our souls:** and causing us
 weak humans to agitate our minds **with thoughts**
 that go **beyond** what even **our souls** can reach to
 64. **some . . . desire: did desire** to impart some-
 thing

73. **a pin's fee:** the cost of a pin74. **And for: and as for**77. **flood:** sea79. **beetles . . . base:** i.e., overhangs its **base** (as
 if it were a face with beetle brows—prominent jut-
 ting eyebrows)81. **deprive your sovereignty of reason:** depose
 reason as ruler of your mind83. **toys of desperation:** desperate impulses

A corpse in a shrouding sheet or cerements. (1.4.53; 5.1.97)
 From Richard Day, *A booke of Christian prayers . . .* (1590).

55

HAMLET
It waves me still.—Go on, I'll follow thee.

MARCELLUS
You shall not go, my lord. *['They hold back Hamlet.']*
Hold off your hands.

HAMLET
Be ruled. You shall not go. 90

HORATIO
My fate cries out
And makes each petty arture in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.
By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me! 95
I say, away!—Go on. I'll follow thee.
Ghost and Hamlet exit.

HORATIO
He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS
Let's follow. 'Tis not fit thus to obey him.

HORATIO
Have after. To what issue will this come?

MARCELLUS
Something is rotten in the state of Denmark. 100

HORATIO
Heaven will direct it.

MARCELLUS
Nay, let's follow him. *They exit.*

['Scene 5']

Enter Ghost and Hamlet.

HAMLET
Whither wilt thou lead me? Speak. I'll go no
further.

GHOST
Mark me.

92. **arture:** artery (Arteries were believed to carry the body's invisible vital spirits. Here, the word may have its more obscure meaning of "ligament.")

93. **the Nemean lion's nerve:** the sinews of the lion killed by Hercules as one of his twelve labors

95. **lets me:** holds me back

99. **Have after:** let's follow

1.5 The Ghost tells Hamlet a tale of horror. Saying that he is the spirit of Hamlet's father, he demands that Hamlet avenge King Hamlet's murder at the hands of Claudius. Hamlet, horrified, vows to "remember" and swears his friends to secrecy about what they have seen.

3. **Mark me:** pay attention to me