

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark

William Shakespeare

Dramatis Personae

Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. Son of the late King Hamlet and Queen Gertrude.

Polonius, Father of Ophelia and Laertes, councillor to King Claudius.

ACT II

SCENE 2

[...]

Enter HAMLET, reading.

LORD POLONIUS 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!