THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

By

William Shakespeare

Act 2, Scene 1
SCENE. A room in POLONIUS' house.

(Enter POLONIUS and REYNALDO)

LORD POLONIUS
Give him this money and these notes, Reynaldo.

REYNALDO
I will, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS
You shall do marvellous wisely, good Reynaldo,
Before you visit him, to make inquire
Of his behavior.

REYNALDO
My lord, I did intend it.

LORD POLONIUS
Marry, well said; very well said. Look you, sir,
Inquire me first what Danskers are in Paris;
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:
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.

LORD POLONIUS
'And in part him; but' you may say 'not well:
But, if 't be he I mean, he's very wild;  
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.

LORD POLONIUS  
Ay, or drinking, fencing, swearing, quarrelling,  
Drabbing: you may go so far.

REYNALDO  
My lord, that would dishonour him.

LORD 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,—  

LORD POLONIUS  
Wherefore should you do this?
REYNALDO
Ay, my lord,
I would know that.

LORD POLONIUS
Marry, sir, here's my drift;
And I believe, it is a fetch of wit:
You laying these slight sullies on my son,
As 'twere a thing a little soil'd i' the working, Mark you,
Your party in converse, him you would sound,
Having ever seen in the prenominate crimes
The youth you breathe of guilty, be assured
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.

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.'

LORD POLONIUS
At 'closes in the consequence,' ay, marry;
He closes 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 a' 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 windlasses 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?

REYNALDO
My lord, I have.

LORD POLONIUS
God be wi' you; fare you well.

REYNALDO
Good my lord!

LORD POLONIUS
Observe his inclination in yourself.

REYNALDO
I shall, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS
And let him ply his music.

REYNALDO
Well, my lord.

LORD POLONIUS
Farewell!

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(Exit REYNALDO)

(Enter OPHELIA)

How now, Ophelia! what's the matter?

OPHELIA
O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted!

LORD POLONIUS
With what, i' the name of God?

OPHELIA
My lord, as I was sewing in my closet, 
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced; 
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.

LORD POLONIUS
Mad for thy love?

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

LORD 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 raised 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 helps,  
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

LORD 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 fetters and denied  
His access to me.

LORD 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!  
By heaven, it is 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)