

KING Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET At supper.

KING At supper? Where?

HAMLET Not where he eats, but where 'a 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 Alas, alas!

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

KING What dost thou mean by this?

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

KING Where is Polonius?

HAMLET In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself.

(IV iii: 16 – 35)

GENTLEMAN

She speaks much of her father, says she hears  
There's tricks i' th' 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 unshapèd 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

Let her come in.

[Exit Gentlem

[Aside]

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.

(IV v: 4 – 20)

QUEEN

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 unsmirchèd brows  
Of my true mother.

(IV v: 116 – 120)

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 godlike reason  
To fust in us unused. Now, whether it be  
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple  
Of thinking too precisely on th' event –  
A thought which, quartered, 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 puffed,  
Makes mouths at the invisible event,  
Exposing what is mortal and unsure  
To all that fortune, death, and danger dare,  
Even for an eggshell. Rightly to be great  
Is not to stir without great argument,  
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw  
When honor's at the stake. How stand I then,  
That have a father killed, a mother stained,  
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!

(IV iv: 32 – 66)

KING

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 beggared,  
Will nothing stick our person to arraign  
In ear and ear. O my dear Gertrude, this,  
Like to a murd'ring piece, in many places  
Gives me superfluous death.

(IV v: 78 – 96)