

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing
(As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me), what might you,
Or my dear majesty your queen here, think,
If I had played the desk or table book,
Or given my heart a winking, mute and dumb,
Or looked upon this love with idle sight?
What might you think? No, I went round to work
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:
'Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star.
This must not be.' And then I prescripts gave her,
That she should lock herself from his resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens.
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice,
And he, repellèd, a short tale to make,
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves,
And all we mourn for.

(II ii: 131-151)

POLONIUS

My liege and madam, to expostulate
What majesty should be, what duty is,
Why day is day, night night, and time is time,
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, since brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
Mad call I it, for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN More matter, with less art.

POLONIUS

Madam, I swear I use no art at all.
That he is mad, 'tis true: 'tis true 'tis pity,
And pity 'tis 'tis true – a foolish figure.
But farewell it, for I will use no art.
Mad let us grant him then, and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect –
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus.
Perpend.
I have a daughter (have while she is mine),
Who in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather, and surmise.
[Reads the] letter.

'To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified
Ophelia,' –
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; 'beautified' is a vile
phrase. But you shall hear.

(II ii: 86-112)

POLONIUS Do you know me, my lord?

HAMLET Excellent well. You are a fishmonger.

POLONIUS Not I, my lord.

HAMLET Then I would you were so honest a man.

POLONIUS Honest, my lord?

HAMLET Ay, sir. To be honest, as this world goes, is to be
one man picked out of ten thousand.

POLONIUS That's very true, my lord.

HAMLET For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog,
being a good kissing carrion – Have you a daughter?

POLONIUS I have, my lord.

HAMLET Let her not walk i' th' sun. Conception is a
blessing, but as your daughter may conceive, friend,
look to't.

POLONIUS [aside] How say you by that? Still harping on
my daughter. Yet he knew me not at first. 'A said I was a
fishmonger. 'A 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.

POLONIUS What is the matter, my lord?

HAMLET Between who?

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 you yourself, sir,
should be old as I am if, like a crab, you could go back-
ward.

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?

POLONIUS Indeed, that's out of the air. [aside] How preg-
nant 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 sud-
denly contrive the means of meeting between him and
my daughter. – My honorable lord, I will most humbly
take my leave of you.

HAMLET You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I
will more willingly part withal – except my life, except
my life, except my life.

(II ii: 173-215)