

1.2 *Flourish. Enter* CLAUDIUS *King of Denmark*, GERTRUDE *the Queen*,
HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, OPHELIA, [VOLTEMAND, CORNELIUS,
LORDS *attendant*

CLAUDIUS Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature 5
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,
Together with remembrance of ourselves.
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,
Th'imperial jointress to this warlike state,
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy, 10
With one auspicious and one dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole,
Taken to wife; nor have we herein barred
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone 15
With this affair along – for all, our thanks.
Now follows that you know: young Fortinbras,
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame, 20
Colleaguèd with this dream of his advantage,
He hath not failed to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bands of law,
To our most valiant brother. So much for him. 25
Now for ourself and for this time of meeting
Thus much the business is: we have here writ
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras,
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears
Of this his nephew's purpose, to suppress 30
His further gait herein, in that the levies,
The lists, and full proportions, are all made
Out of his subject; and we here dispatch
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltemand,
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway, 35
Giving to you no further personal power
To business with the king, more than the scope

Of these dilated articles allow.

Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS } In that and all things will we show our duty. 40
VOLTEMAND }

CLAUDIUS We doubt it nothing, heartily farewell.

Exeunt Voltemand and Cornelius

And now Laertes, what's the news with you?

You told us of some suit, what is't Laertes?

You cannot speak of reason to the Dane

And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg Laertes, 45

That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?

The head is not more native to the heart,

The hand more instrumental to the mouth,

Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.

What wouldst thou have Laertes?

LAERTES My dread lord, 50

Your leave and favour to return to France,

From whence though willingly I came to Denmark

To show my duty in your coronation,

Yet now I must confess, that duty done,

My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France, 55

And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

CLAUDIUS Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS He hath my lord wrung from me my slow leave

By laboursome petition, and at last

Upon his will I sealed my hard consent. 60

I do beseech you give him leave to go.

CLAUDIUS Take thy fair hour Laertes, time be thine,

And thy best graces spend it at thy will.

But now my cousin Hamlet, and my son –

HAMLET (*Aside*) A little more than kin, and less than kind. 65