

Exit Polonius

Oh my offence is rank, it smells to heaven;
 It hath the primal eldest curse upon't,
 A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
 Though inclination be as sharp as will.
 My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent, 40
 And like a man to double business bound,
 I stand in pause where I shall first begin,
 And both neglect. What if this cursèd hand
 Were thicker than itself with brother's blood,
 Is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens 45
 To wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy
 But to confront the visage of offence?
 And what's in prayer but this two-fold force,
 To be forestallèd ere we come to fall,
 Or pardoned being down? Then I'll look up, 50
 My fault is past. But oh, what form of prayer
 Can serve my turn? 'Forgive me my foul murder'?
 That cannot be, since I am still possessed
 Of those effects for which I did the murder,
 My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen. 55
 May one be pardoned and retain th'offence?
 In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above; 60
 There is no shuffling, there the action lies
 In his true nature, and we ourselves compelled
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
 To give in evidence. What then? What rests?
 Try what repentance can. What can it not? 65
 Yet what can it when one cannot repent?
 Oh wretched state! Oh bosom black as death!
 Oh limèd soul that struggling to be free
 Art more engaged! Help, angels! – Make assay:
 Bow stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel 70
 Be soft as sinews of the new-born babe.
 All may be well.

[*He kneels*]

Enter HAMLET

HAMLET Now might I do it pat, now a is a-praying,
And now I'll do't – and so a goes to heaven,
And so am I revenged. That would be scanned. 75
A villain kills my father, and for that,
I his sole son do this same villain send
To heaven.

Why, this is hire and salary, not revenge. 80
A took my father grossly, full of bread,
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May,
And how his audit stands who knows save heaven?
But in our circumstance and course of thought
'Tis heavy with him. And am I then revenged
To take him in the purging of his soul, 85
When he is fit and seasoned for his passage?
No.

Up sword, and know thou a more horrid hent,
When he is drunk asleep, or in his rage,
Or in th'incestuous pleasure of his bed, 90
At game a-swearing, or about some act
That has no relish of salvation in't –
Then trip him that his heels may kick at heaven,
And that his soul may be as damned and black
As hell whereto it goes. My mother stays. 95

This physic but prolongs thy sickly days. *Exit*

CLAUDIUS My words fly up, my thoughts remain below.
Words without thoughts never to heaven go. *Exit*