

[4.4] *Enter FORTINBRAS with his army over the stage*

FORTINBRAS Go captain, from me greet the Danish king.
Tell him that by his licence, Fortinbras
Craves the conveyance of a promised march
Over his kingdom. You know the rendezvous.
If that his majesty would aught with us,
We shall express our duty in his eye,
And let him know so.

5

CAPTAIN I will do't, my lord.

FORTINBRAS Go softly on.

[Exit Fortinbras, with the army]

[Enter HAMLET, ROSENCRANTZ, etc.]

HAMLET Good sir, whose powers are these?

CAPTAIN They are of Norway sir.

10

HAMLET How purposed sir I pray you?

CAPTAIN Against some part of Poland.

HAMLET Who commands them sir?

CAPTAIN The nephew to old Norway, Fortinbras.

HAMLET Goes it against the main of Poland sir,
Or for some frontier?

15

CAPTAIN Truly to speak, and with no addition,
We go to gain a little patch of ground
That hath in it no profit but the name.
To pay five ducats, five, I would not farm it,
Nor will it yield to Norway or the Pole
A ranker rate, should it be sold in fee.

20

HAMLET Why then the Polack never will defend it.

CAPTAIN Yes, it is already garrisoned.

HAMLET Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats
Will not debate the question of this straw.
This is th'impostume of much wealth and peace,
That inward breaks, and shows no cause without
Why the man dies. I humbly thank you sir.

25

CAPTAIN God buy you sir.

[Exit]

ROSENCRANTZ

Will't please you go my lord?

30

HAMLET I'll be with you straight; go a little before.

[*Exeunt all but 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. 35
Sure he that made us with such large discourse,
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and god-like reason
To fust in us unused. Now whether it be
Bestial oblivion, or some craven scruple 40
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 45
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, 50
Exposing what is mortal and unsure
To all that fortune, death and danger dare,
Even for an egg-shell. Rightly to be great
Is not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw 55
When honour'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, 60
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. Oh from this time forth, 65
My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth.

Exit]