SHAKESPEARIENCE!

Hamlet

Hamlet/Rosencrantz/Guildenstern, Act II Scene 2

GUILDENSTERN
My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ
My most dear lord!

HAMLET
My excellent good friends! How dost thou,
Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz! Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ
As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN
Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET
Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ
Neither, my lord.

HAMLET
Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of
her favours?

GUILDENSTERN
'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET
In the secret parts of fortune? O, most true; she
is a strumpet. What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ
None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET
Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true.
Let me question more in particular: what have you,
my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune,
that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN
Prison, my lord!

HAMLET
Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ
Then is the world one.

HAMLET
A goodly one; in which there are many confines,
wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

ROSENCRANTZ
We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET
Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing
either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me
it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ
Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too
narrow for your mind.

HAMLET
O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count
myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I
have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN
Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very
substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET
A dream itself is but a shadow.

ROSENCRANTZ
Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a
quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET
But, in the
beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ
To visit you, my lord; no other occasion.

HAMLET
Beggar that I am, I am even poor in thanks; but I
thank you. Were you not sent for? Is it
your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come,
deal justly with me: come, come; nay, speak.

GUILDENSTERN
What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET
Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent
for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks
which your modesties have not craft enough to colour:
I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ
To what end, my lord?

HAMLET
That you must teach me. But let me conjure you, be even and direct with me,
whether you were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN
My lord, we were sent for.

HAMLET
I will tell you why; so shall my anticipation
prevent your discovery, and your secrecy to the king
and queen moult no feather. I have of late--but
wherefore I know not--lost all my mirth, forgone all
custom of exercises; and indeed it goes so heavily
with my disposition that this goodly frame, the
earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most
excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave
o'erhanging firmament, this majestical roof fretted
with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to
me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours.
What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason!
how infinite in faculty! in form and moving how
express and admirable! in action how like an angel!
in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the
world! the paragon of animals! And yet, to me,
what is this quintessence of dust? man delights not
me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling
you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ
My lord, there was no such stuff in my thoughts.

HAMLET
Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

ROSENCRANTZ
To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what
lenten entertainment the players shall receive from
you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they
coming, to offer you service.

GUILDENSTERN
There are the players.

HAMLET
They are welcome: but my
uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN
In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET
I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is
southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.