



THE TRAGEDY OF HAMLET

By

William Shakespeare

Act 4, Scene 3

SCENE. Another room in the castle.

(Enter KING CLAUDIUS, attended)

KING CLAUDIUS

I have sent to seek him, and to find the body.
How dangerous is it that this man goes loose!
Yet must not we put the strong law on him:
He's loved of the distracted multitude,
Who like not in their judgment, but their eyes;
And where tis so, the offender's scourge is weigh'd,
But never the offence. To bear all smooth and even,
This sudden sending him away must seem
Deliberate pause: diseases desperate grown
By desperate appliance are relieved,
Or not at all.

(Enter ROSENCRANTZ)

How now! what hath befall'n?

ROSENCRANTZ

Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,
We cannot get from him.

KING CLAUDIUS

But where is he?

ROSENCRANTZ

Without, my lord; guarded, to know your pleasure.

KING CLAUDIUS

Bring him before us.

ROSENCRANTZ

Ho, Guildenstern! bring in my lord.

(Enter HAMLET and GUILDENSTERN)

KING CLAUDIUS

Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

HAMLET

At supper.

KING CLAUDIUS

At supper! where?

HAMLET

Not where he eats, but where he is eaten: a certain convocation of politic worms are e'en at him. Your worm is your only emperor for diet: we fat all creatures else to fat us, and we fat ourselves for maggots: your fat king and your lean beggar is but variable service, two dishes, but to one table: that's the end.

KING CLAUDIUS

Alas, alas!

HAMLET

A man may fish with the worm that hath eat of a king, and cat of the fish that hath fed of that worm.

KING CLAUDIUS

What dost you mean by this?

HAMLET

Nothing but to show you how a king may go a
progress through the guts of a beggar.

KING CLAUDIUS

Where is Polonius?

HAMLET

In heaven; send hither to see: if your messenger
find him not there, seek him i' the other place
yourself. But indeed, if you find him not within
this month, you shall nose him as you go up the
stairs into the lobby.

KING CLAUDIUS

[To some Attendants] Go seek him there.

HAMLET

He will stay till ye come.

(Exeunt Attendants)

KING CLAUDIUS

Hamlet, this deed, for thine especial safety,—
Which we do tender, as we dearly grieve
For that which thou hast done,— must send thee hence
With fiery quickness: therefore prepare thyself;
The bark is ready, and the wind at help,
The associates tend, and every thing is bent
For England.

HAMLET

For England!

KING CLAUDIUS

Ay, Hamlet.

HAMLET

Good.

KING CLAUDIUS

So is it, if thou knew'st our purposes.

HAMLET

I see a cherub that sees them. But, come; for
England! Farewell, dear mother.

KING CLAUDIUS

Thy loving father, Hamlet.

HAMLET

My mother: father and mother is man and wife; man
and wife is one flesh; and so, my mother. Come, for England!

(Exit)

KING CLAUDIUS

Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard;
Delay it not; I'll have him hence to-night:
Away! for every thing is seal'd and done
That else leans on the affair: pray you, make haste.

(Exeunt ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN)

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught—
As my great power thereof may give thee sense,
Since yet thy cicatrice looks raw and red
After the Danish sword, and thy free awe
Pays homage to us—thou mayst not coldly set

Our sovereign process; which imports at full,
By letters congruing to that effect,
The present death of Hamlet. Do it, England;
For like the hectic in my blood he rages,
And thou must cure me: till I know 'tis done,
Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun.

(Exit)