

# Hamlet

## 4.3

*Enter King Claudius*

**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 judgement but their eyes, 5  
And where 'tis so, th'offender's scourge is weighed,  
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, 10  
Or not at all.

*Enter Rosencrantz*

How now, what hath befall'n?

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Where the dead body is bestowed, 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. 15

**ROSENCRANTZ**

Ho, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord.

*Enter Prince 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 a is eaten. A certain 20  
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. 25

**KING CLAUDIUS** Alas, alas!

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

**KING CLAUDIUS** What dost thou mean by this?

**HAMLET** Nothing but to show you how a king may go a 30  
progress through the guts of a beggar.

**KING CLAUDIUS** Where is Polonius?

**HAMLET** In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger  
find him not there, seek him i'th' other place yourself.  
But indeed, if you find him not this month, you shall 35  
nose him as you go up the stairs into the lobby.

**KING CLAUDIUS** *[to Rosencrantz]* Go seek him there.

**HAMLET** *[to Rosencrantz]* A will stay till ye come.  
*Exit [Rosencrantz]*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

Hamlet, this deed of thine, for thine especial safety±±  
Which we do tender as we dearly grieve 40  
For that which thou hast done±±must send thee hence  
With fiery quickness. Therefore prepare thyself.  
The barque is ready, and the wind at help,  
Th'associates tend, and everything is bent  
For England. 45

**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 50  
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. 55

*Exit*

**KING CLAUDIUS** *[to Guildenstern]*

Follow him at foot. Tempt him with speed aboard.  
Delay it not. I'll have him hence tonight.  
Away, for everything is sealed and done  
That else leans on th'affair. Pray you, make haste.

*Exit [Guildenstern]*

And, England, if my love thou hold'st at aught±± 60

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, 65  
By letters conjuring 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. 70

*Exit*