

Hamlet

4.2

Enter Prince Hamlet

HAMLET Safely stowed.

ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN (*within*)

Hamlet, Lord Hamlet!

HAMLET

What noise? Who calls on Hamlet?

Enter Rosencrantz and Guildenstern

O,

here they come.

ROSENCRANTZ

What have you done, my lord, with the dead body?

HAMLET

Compounded it with dust, whereto 'tis kin. 5

ROSENCRANTZ

Tell us where 'tis, that we may take it thence

And bear it to the chapel.

HAMLET Do not believe it.

ROSENCRANTZ Believe what?

HAMLET That I can keep your counsel and not mine own. 10

Besides, to be demanded of a sponge±±what replication
should be made by the son of a king?

ROSENCRANTZ Take you me for a sponge, my lord?

HAMLET Ay, sir, that soaks up the King's countenance,
his rewards, his authorities. But such officers do the 15
King best service in the end. He keeps them, like an
ape an apple in the corner of his jaw, first mouthed to
be last swallowed. When he needs what you have
gleaned, it is but squeezing you, and, sponge, you shall
be dry again. 20

ROSENCRANTZ I understand you not, my lord.

HAMLET I am glad of it. A knavish speech sleeps in a
foolish ear.

ROSENCRANTZ My lord, you must tell us where the body
is, and go with us to the King. 25

HAMLET The body is with the King, but the King is not
with the body. The King is a thing±±

GUILDENSTERN A thing, my lord?

HAMLET Of nothing. Bring me to him. Hide fox, and all
after.

30

Exit running, pursued by the others