

Act IV, scene 3

A Hall in Elsinore Castle

Claudius, attendants, Hamlet, Rosencrantz, Guildenstern

Enter Claudius and two or three attendants

C. 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, th' offender's scourge is weigh'd,

scourge: punishment

But never the offense. To bear all smooth and even,

This sudden sending him away must seem

Deliberate pause. Diseases desperate grown

By desperate appliance are reliev'd

Or not at all.

[Enter Rosencrantz]

How now, what hath befall'n?

R. Where the dead body is bestow'd, my lord,

We cannot get from him.

C. But where is he?

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

C. Bring him before us.

R. Ho! Bring in the lord. Enter Hamlet and Guildenstern

C. [gruff] Now, Hamlet, where's Polonius?

H. [flippant, dismissive] At supper.

C. [shocked, stupefied] At supper!? . . . [demanding] Where?

19

prose

H. Not where he eats, but where 'a 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.

C. Alas, Alas!

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

C. [irritated] What dost thou mean by this?

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

king may go a progress: royal state journey

C. [trying not to appear threatened; demanding] Where is Polonius?

H. In heaven. Send thither to see. If your messenger find him not there, seek him i' th' other place yourself.

But if, indeed, you find him not within this month, you shall nose him **as you go up the stairs** into the lobby.

C. [to Attendants] Go, seek him there.

H. 'A will stay till you come. Exeunt Attendants

C. Hamlet, this deed, for thine *especial safety* – *esp. safety*: hoping to conceal murderous intent
 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,
 Th' associates tend, and everything is bent
 For England. 40

H. [*feigning surprise*] For England?

C. Ay, Hamlet.

H. Good.

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

prose

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

C. Thy loving father, Hamlet.

H. My mother. Father and mother is man and wife,
 Man and wife is one flesh, so, my mother. –
 Come, for England. *Exit*

C. Follow him at foot; tempt him with speed aboard. *at foot*: his heels: close behind
 Delay it not. I'll have him hence *tonight*.

Away, for everything is seal'd and done

That else leans on th' affair. Pray you, make haste. *Exeunt all but the King*

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 *cicatrice*: scar

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, 60 *hectic*: burning fever

And thou must cure me. Till I know 'tis done,

Howe'er my haps, my joys were ne'er begun. *Exit* *haps*: happinesses, good fortune