ACT IV SCENE 1

| *CLAUDIUS and GERTRUDE enter with ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN.* |
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| **CLAUDIUS**  *(to* GERTRUDE*)* These deep, heaving sighs of yours mean something. You have to tell me what. I need to know. Where’s your son? |
| **GERTRUDE**  *(to* ROSENCRANTZ *and* GUILDENSTERN*)* Let us speak privately awhile, please. |
| *ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN exit.* |
| Ah, my lord, you wouldn’t believe what I’ve witnessed tonight! |
| **CLAUDIUS**  What, Gertrude? How is Hamlet? |
| **GERTRUDE**  As mad as the waves and the wind when they struggle together in a storm. In an insane rage, he hears something behind the tapestry, whips out his sword, shouts, “A rat, a rat!” and in his deranged state of mind he kills the good old man, who is still hidden. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Oh, this is terrible! It would’ve happened to me if I’d been there. His wildness is a threat to all of us—to you, to me, to everyone. How will we deal with this violent deed? I’m the one who will be blamed for not restraining and confining this mad young man. But I loved him so much I didn’t want to think about what I had to do. So, like someone suffering from a nasty disease who refuses to divulge his condition and lets it infect him to the core, I kept Hamlet’s condition secret and let it grow more and more dangerous. Where has he gone? |
| **GERTRUDE**  To remove the corpse of the man he killed. His madness allows a glimmering of morality to shine through, like a vein of gold in a chunk of coal. He weeps for what he has done. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Oh, Gertrude, let’s go. As soon as the sun sets we’ll ship him off to England. It’ll take all my diplomatic know-how to explain and excuse the murder he’s committed. Hey, Guildenstern! |
| *ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN**enter.* |
| My friends, go find others to help you. Hamlet in his madness has killed Polonius and dragged him out of his mother’s bedroom. Go find him and speak nicely to him, and bring the corpse into the chapel. Please hurry. |
| *ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN**exit.* |
| Come, Gertrude. We’ll confer with our wisest friends and tell them what we’re going to do, and what terrible deed has been done already. Let’s hope slander—a bullet that can travel halfway around the world and still hit its exact target—spares us. Oh, we must go. I’m full of confusion and despair. |
| *They exit.* |