| **ACT IV SCENE 3** |
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| *CLAUDIUS enters with two or three of his attendants.* |
| **CLAUDIUS**  I’ve sent men to find him and retrieve the body. How dangerous to have this madman on the loose! But we can’t throw him in jail. The people love him, because they judge based on appearance rather than reason. They’ll pay attention to the severity of the punishment, not the severity of the crime. No, we must seem calm and fair-minded, and our sending him away must seem like a carefully considered move. But a terminal disease requires extreme treatment, or nothing at all. |
| *ROSENCRANTZ enters.* |
| So what’s happened? |
| **ROSENCRANTZ**  We can’t get him to tell us where he’s put the body. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  But where is he? |
| **ROSENCRANTZ**  Outside, my lord, under guard, waiting for your orders. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Bring him to me. |
| **ROSENCRANTZ**  Hey, Guildenstern! Bring in my lord. |
| *GUILDENSTERN enters with HAMLET.* |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Now, Hamlet, where’s Polonius? |
| **HAMLET**  At dinner. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  At dinner where? |
| **HAMLET**  Not where he’s eating, but where he’s being eaten. A certain conference of worms is chowing down on him. Worms are the emperor of all diets. We fatten up all creatures to feed ourselves, and we fatten ourselves for the worms to eat when we’re dead. A fat king and a skinny beggar are just two dishes at the same meal. That’s all I have to say. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Oh no, oh no! |
| **HAMLET**  A man can fish with the worm that ate a king, and then eat the fish he catches with that worm. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  What do you mean by that? |
| **HAMLET**  Nothing much, just to demonstrate that a king can move through the bowels of a beggar. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Where is Polonius? |
| **HAMLET**  In heaven. Send a messenger there if you want to be sure. If your messenger can’t find him, you can check hell yourself. But seriously, if you don’t find him within the next month, you’ll be sure to smell him as you go upstairs into the main hall. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  (*to attendants*) Go look for him there. |
| *Some attendants exit.* |
| **HAMLET**  No need to hurry, he’s not going anywhere. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Hamlet, I care for you just as much as I grieve for Polonius. For your own protection, I must send you to England at once. So get ready to leave. The ship is set to sail, the wind is favorable, your servants are waiting for you—everything is ready for you to go to England. |
| **HAMLET**  To England? |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Yes, Hamlet. |
| **HAMLET**  Good. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Yes, you’d think so, if you knew why I was sending you. |
| **HAMLET**  I know an angel who can read your mind. But okay, off to England! Good-bye, dear mother. |
| **CLAUDIUS**  I’m your father, Hamlet—your father who loves you. |
| **HAMLET**  You’re my mother. When you married my mother, the two of you became one flesh, so if you’re my father you’re also my mother. Come on, off to England! |
| *HAMLET* *exits.* |
| **CLAUDIUS**  Follow him on foot, and get him on board as quickly as possible. Don’t waste any time. I want him out of here tonight. Go now; everything else is ready. Please hurry. |
| *Everyone except**CLAUDIUS**exits.* |
| And you, dear king of England, if you care about me at all—and you should, since you can still feel the damage that Denmark has done to you in the past and, so, fear and respect us—then you won’t ignore my letters instructing you to kill Hamlet immediately. Do it, English king, since he’s raging like a fever in my brain, and you must cure me. Until I know it’s been done, I’ll never be happy, no matter how much luck I have. |
| *He exits.* |