

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 7

Proposal

Situation: Setting up a new plan to have Hamlet eliminated, Hamlet having survived the odyssey at sea, Claudius easily convinces an angry Laertes, by now a skilled swordsman, to challenge Hamlet to a duel. To assure their success, they plan to poison the tip of Laertes' foil.

KING: Here was a gentleman of Normandy. I have seen him myself. He made confession of you and gave you such a masterly report for your rapier most especial, that he cried out 'twould be a sight indeed if one could match you. This report of his did Hamlet so envenom with his envy that he could nothing do but wish and beg your sudden coming-o'er. Laertes, was your father dear to you? Or are you like the painting of a sorrow, a face without a heart?

LAERTES: Why ask you this?

Claudius to Laertes, No. 1

Laertes, know that I think you did then
Love your father, but there is a time when
Love begins, and, with proof from my past, I
Know that time qualifies the spark and fire
Of it. In the very flames of love lie
Snuff that will abate it. Goodness doth tire
In its own too-much. We should right-away
Do what we would for "would" can find delay,
And delay feeds on itself finding ways
To abate and postpone action, changing
Woulds to inactions. Then what should be stays
Undone. To the quick, Hamlet's back. Using
More than words, what processes should be done
To show yourself indeed your father's son?

LAERTES: To cut his throat i' th' church.

Claudius to Laertes, No. 2

No safe place should protect a murderer.
Good Laertes, stay within your chamber.
Hamlet shall know you have returned. We'll praise
The fame attached to thy French-learned fencing
Skills, and with Hamlet's guilelessness, he'll raise
Unaware a foil. By then anointing
Your sword with that rare poison that can bring
Death to one scratched withal, you serve the king.
But if this should fail, make your motions more
Violent that he soon becomes hot and dry,
Calling for drink. I'll have a chalice for

**The prince, whereon but sipping, if he by
Chance escapes your venom stuck, will give us
The second chance to achieve our purpose.**

LAERTES: I will do it. And for that purpose I'll anoint my sword. I'll touch my point with this poison, that, if I scratch him slightly, it may be death.