

The Tragedy of King Hamlet, Prince Claudius, and Queen Gertrude

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Act 1.1

(King Hamlet stands behind his medical practitioner, looks over the practitioner's shoulder and the glasses and containers on the rather massive table that dominates center stage. They are in the king's private quarters—his closet)

King:

What do you see about my health my best of all soothsayers? Do my entrails speak to you in some language to me foreign? What is your knowledge of my better parts? Does my body offer wealth? What can you tell me from your medical stealth? Am I whole, or am I broken? My health is more than mine alone, as Hamlet King all Denmark needs to know if I'm robust. Much turns upon my cast of health, in me the nation trusts. I cannot fail in my aged self, no matter my strains unuttered. Through the task of rule, I am the nation's tool, and in fame and danger suffer.

Practitioner:

My liege, I do not say the sooth, for mine is art and science. I act in ways that I hope persuade; I do so in all conscience. I know the gravitas with which I must take my task. For the honest truth I will speak; you need only now to ask.

King:

And ask I did and do again and get on with your medical stammer. I want an answer straight and true not some pleasing banter. I am the king and grief I can bring but not for simple truth. Get on with it. Just get it out, and do it now—forsooth.

Practitioner:

I take your urine up to the light, and thus I can observe the colors therein you do produce which tells a tale in truth. I swirl and sniff and hold it for inspection, so I see its makes, and shades, and tints. Thus I make my first detection. There are five shades of yellow, four of red, and five of green (from a rainbow to a leek). There are two shades but nearly black; one translucent; and another the white of milk or sheet. In all of this, there's still the smell from sweet down to the fetid. I examine close and to the most to get the whole investigated.

King:

And from this ponderous examination, can you tell the tale? Do you say what I must know as all my thoughts grow pale? I need an answer for my health in full and in its part. Will I live and what will give full strength within my heart? Your urinal meditation, I find most fascinating, but now I want an answer smart, and no more hesitating.

Practitioner:

My king I do not hesitate but to tell the truth of tests. It's through these tests that I know best how to detect condition. All in my art, I can see what what's, and who is who, the better. I do these things but to your aid and not to make you fret. I have given thought as I am ought lest you that forget. I study

out your urine, and finger excreta of the stool. I engage even in swirls of spit as a diagnostic tool.

King:

And in the end, do you know a thing, something that tells me truth. If medicine means just to make more tests, for me it is no use.

Practitioner:

I swear by the god Asclepius and by serpent and staff entwined, that medicine will seek to know, and will always find.

King Hamlet

When you find still vexes me, and what you'll do is worse. Is what you swear unto your god something like a curse? I know the symbol of that snake quite well, and it leaves me troubled. By the tongue and the serpent's breath you can heal, but you can still make some poison doubled.

Practitioner:

I poison not! Have you forget, I have made you oft times better?

King: (Showing a rising anger)

Than was then and now is now and lest you muster courage, to speak what you know or forever keep your silence and then go, or you must treat my cholera.

Practitioner:

I must admit, in all of this, I see there no deep rumors. I find no ill wind that would disturb the balance of your humors.

King:

But I am aged and have not made a son and heir to leave behind me. Ironic that I have not filled this most essential duty. Time departs and ends grow near. Can ought be done, or do I need to fear?

Practitioner:

Yearly depredations come to you and me alike. This we must afford, but you are not diminished by your years of life, my lord.

King:

Not diminished in many ways, and desire serves me strongly. But I am aged, and near enraged, and age does do me wrongly. What can there be done?

Practitioner:

In age comes wisdom, sire, if not always sons.

King:

If in age comes wisdom, does it follow that wisdom thus brings age and its infirmities? If that's the case, I'd best escape, and live as a young and healthy fool. Now in wisdom, I am aged and have no son, and is there no balm for that? Are your arts a useless tool?

Practitioner:

That is the fact, and I can't detract, the balm for age is death. In the end, all of us must rest.

King:

You say that you have cured my ills and have made me feel some better. Can you keep to this vow and remove my heirless fetter?

Practitioner:

I have proved but many cures, and that is sure, but as for sons, when things are done, we must leave that full to God.

King: (Calms in acceptance and desperation)

Your operation has succeeded. You have assured me of my health, and you have killed my hope. Leave me surgeon and cut me no more on my diminished scope.

Practitioner: (Bowing himself out)

Sire. (Exits)

King:

This foolish man, he prates and prates and all he spouts is wind. I have a need, a faulted seed, and he cannot deliver. His ministrations and their kin have failed, and now I ask myself where I'll go hither.

Act 1.2

(King Hamlet sits at his table and stares down at his hands. He takes up a pitcher and pours wine into a chalice. He drinks)

King:

I now am aged, but it's specter has long haunted. Even in my very youth, the thought of it has taunted. For age reduced my father beyond all recognition. Age has always whispered thus: "You'll die in his condition." Will madness come as years do come, and I will go that way? Thus pass into some dream? Without an heir of my own blood many plotters will then scheme. I am aged and if the age reduces me and drives me to confusion, to what will Denmark come? Suffer to say—plotters will not stay from acts of outright treason. As we age, the crown grows large and it, too, grows heavy. I need a son, an heir to come, who will keep my kingdom steady.

I have married youth, and if I speak some truth, she enlivens my desire. All the love she makes, she acts for my own sake, and still no heir of mine is sired. I know, in truth, I fail to produce in me the needed seed. It is not her in a youth so bright that has the fault of this sore need.

A palace guard enters:

Guard:

My Lord, the queen begs admission.

King: (Stands and torn to the door)

She need not beg even in formality. She has my heart and she has my mind, and she's the core of my reality. Let her pass, and I will greet the wonder of my heart. The greatest sadness of this old life is that death will make us part.

(Gertrude enters. She is very young, fifteen or sixteen. She moves toward Hamlet and curtsies toward him. He crosses to her and raises her to an upright position)

King:

Do not kneel to me, Gertrude, my love. It is I who should kneel to you.

Gertrude:

I do show a respect that you must get as the man who has seen me through the hardest times and darkest times and been calm and full of light. Without your aid, I would have lived forever in an endless, dark filled night.

King:

It's you who brought much light to me to shine on every sight. You give me strength that might have failed without you by my side.

Gertrude: We both have suffered; that is true, but in love we can abide.

King:

Your father left you in my custody when he died as a noble man. He got his wounds against Fortinbras in defense of my realm and our land.

Gertrude:

And I grew within your care, and flourished as your daughter even in my grief. The queen did offer me her love, and in each other, we all felt relief. The hard vicissitudes of life can often leave us daunted, but your good grace gave me a place where I was no longer haunted.

King:

Your mother died at your being born. Your father dead in battle. In those early days, you were quite grave, no talk in childish prattle. We as childless took you in, and in that taking gained.

Gertrude:

When you did, the love you gave quite relieved me from much pain.

King:

Born of death you lived to love, to make all life renewed. With you I have found much of life that I never knew. I never knew the joy of love that combined all manner of our living. I never knew the joy I'd feel when I was freely giving. Yet I have given free to you in ways I scarce can credit. Yet I have not, for a single jot, lived thus to regret it.

Gertrude:

You cannot regret the love I give to you, my husband and my father. I have grown within your love as a child and I hope a mother. I know that my most full gift will come in a son an heir.

King:

That is not a gift you give alone, no matter how you care. You need a man with a seed that's true, both you and he need share. The moment of conception is complex in its actions--

(She takes his hand, places on her breast)

Gertrude:

It starts with this, comes in my bliss when I feel your strong attraction.

King:

Please to stand my love, my wife, my queen and daughter. Stand by me in pride.

Gertrude:

I will my lord, and will be here and ever by your side

(Standing, they embrace)

King:

But in your youth you use words left better to one of age

Gertrude:

But love replace at its swift pace the counting of our days

King:

I scarce believe your depth of love for one who is so old.

Gertrude:

It is not of age that love will speak. It's the man and of his actions. That you have treated me with care has made the start of my attraction. Since we wed, you have been kind in ways most unexpected. Not one wish that I've expressed has ever been rejected. You respected my virginity and gave honor to my innocence. You are the essence of a gentle man and in me have raised concupiscence. I feel a yearning deep in me to hold you and your son. I know my life is not fulfilled until this task is done.

King:

It's in your arms I can know relief from the fear and pain I feel as I think of an heirless time when I am called to death. Before that day, I must find a way to make someone suited for the throne. You cannot hold our kingdom fast, not do so alone.

Gertrude:

Let us find our way to bed, my love, where we can ease your worry's stone. With God's consent, a child is this way sent, and your childlessness atoned. I am your child who will make a child in any way I can. I know that you have within your scope, you are the only man.

King:

Gertrude, from all my old history, only you release me from my misery.

(They kiss passionately. Lights dim go out.)

Act 1.3

King:

Polonius, in all your wisdom, you still talk as the wind does to the skies. We now will speak of things none can despise although not one would of them would seek. And in the throes of such a conversation nothing must be remembered. If either one shall speak of this, be in soul and mind dismembered. Even passed my very death, this secret beyond the king shall reign. I do not need repeat myself for you, my friend, are sane. And sanity is what I need, a voice of right and clarity. I think of you as someone true and will speak in all due brevity.

Polonius:

You honor me, my lord, in this—a dialogue that will not happen. Its gravity I understand and its vacancy does threaten. You can surely trust in me to lose what never was. And so we can proceed from here to some place I will not go. And going there, I can but be aware, of what I will not know. Not knowing, sire, is the hardest thing that I shall never do. And that I will and will not in loyalty to you.

King:

Well and truly spoken, sir, if we do speak at all. One breath of this can mean the worst and very like the angels once, we from heaven fall.

I am childless, as you know, and I can't say how that serves. Will it do what must be done and to Denmark's purpose serve?

Polonius:

Childless is as childless does, and you are not quite such. It's not that you feel too small or too much in parental love. You have a daughter who is true your wife and then, in truth, your queen. You have a son who's your brother, too, and that love I have seen. You are as father most a father apt in such a task, and so confusion can arise from the question that you ask.

King:

I am not fathered as you have done. Laertes is from your loins and by fortune's chance. I have not added to make such a sum. You can tell that at a glance. For it appears I'm not capable and that would seem quite blatant. I have tasted full and free of Denmark's female fruit, and for this, as king, I field no rebut but at cooking show no talent. I have not, as the English say, made some pudding come as you have done and see in your son, and so I fail this challenge.

Polonius:

If I may speak to your exhaustive plea, I think I find within that armor you have struck a chink. There may be something of the provident, and of that now I think. For thinking is as thinking does, and now this thought gives birth. You are, in fact, childless in this way, but to be—but, to be exact, perhaps it could be worse. What if you had sprouted progeny through all over your fair kingdom? Such a sea of bastards free to roam about's a ruin. Every one might declare as heir and cook up all kinds of treason.

Perhaps better still you held back your skill until a better season. It maybe that providence has held your seed at bay until you find a better time to put that seed in play.

King:

What if providence should slip, and I die before my seed has blossomed into an heir? What king will come and keep you all from touching deep despair?

Polonius:

There are those who would move to elect a king, a most despised of things. As Plato spoke, we can lose all hope within the hand of politics. Not appointed by skill or grace but by slight of hand and tricks. There is no one, but you, my lord, that has any of the stature of a noble king of whom poets sing, and hold us all in rapture. When the mass can move the state, the state begins to falter. In its appearance it can last but then alas, has internally no structure. Like a pillar infested deep with worms, so ever keeping ravenous, the result is a disaster. The danger from within is great when a king should die quite heirless. If you cannot secure the throne, it would at last seem careless. As a man who cares for all, and for all is full of caring, I can see why you descry, so it almost seems despairing.

The danger from within remains and ever true 'tween nations. Each and every one insists on some other ones full rations. Old Norway you have brought to death, but young Fortinbras is growing. In the end, he will seek revenge for which he feels you're owing. He will come and take it then if he sees weakness in the throne. At long last, he'll take Denmark then to task, and all of it will own.

King:

What do you think of the queen in this? Can she take up the thrown?

Polonius:

That's not a thing, if in press you bring, to which, in truth, I now can own. The queen's charms may bring some calm, but that is not enough alone. No woman's got, and not by a jot, enough to rule a kingdom, no matter what others do, especially in England. In Denmark we need quite a man, and a man in men in fact. We are as such an aggressive lot, a thought I'll not retract. A leader must inspire fear, as no woman can predict. The control over life is still a man's and that by divine edict. The divine must enter to a king, by His powers thus imbued. I cannot think of Eve as a one who can bare such a heavy truth. Women are a fickle lot, and we need a king's who's steady. If a queen arise, find no surprise, there are others who are ready to counter such a royal state with a claim they will make. As much as I admire her in all her female beauty, I cannot claim to give her king's name and still do for you my duty.

King:

And what do you say of Claudius, my brother at least by half. Is he enough of royal blood to take up the kingdom's staff?

Polonius:

He is a man of studious mien, and a most admired fellow. He sports a disposition calm, indeed, he

seems quite mellow. But is that the nature of a king in this aggressive country? Such mellowness may not bear fruit that's always at the ready. The kingdom needs a man of active haste and not one of great leisure. Although I find him honest true, it's not always what we treasure. A king must have a shrewder head which sometimes shift the truth. If that's need the king must indeed at worst a lie to use. He has no reputation in battle but in peace. A king must raise the banner high when the dogs of war release. Will the others follow him, a man without reputation of fight, not by arms of right, but in quiet disputation? And then there is the question of a thing most troublesome. It troubles me, and I must here plea, for some other execution. To make a king of blood by half, his mother being common, will make some cause against his staff and make his reign a problem.

King:

Your address scarce leaves me breath. I must continue on in hope one seed will do its deed and make a king anon.

Polonius:

In providence then we much trust, and there is no greater hand. We speak of what's divinely made and not a thing by man. So we will pray, and come the day, the queen will thus true carry. You'll make a king, all bells will ring, and all Denmark will be merry.

King:

Until that day, you must not stay; you have tasks to which you hurry.

Polonius:

And so, me liege, now I must leave, by the grace of your dispensation. I will go now, and you will see I do so with no hesitation. I leave you with my heart felt wish for you and your peace of mind. I must go, for you do know, I'm not the dawdling kind.

(Polonius bows out backing away. King Hamlet sits and pours more wine.)

King:

Not medicine nor philosophy nor love will give me guidance. I must act alone in prudence. I see there is no help for me from counselor or advisor. Thus there is scheme that I must dream, become its true deviser.

End

Act 1. 4

(Polonius enters to find Claudius in study)

Polonius:

Claudius, do I disturb you?

Claudius:

Polonius, a good friend never disturbs but brings the peace of companionship.

Polonius:

I fear now I must say a word that will bring some sorrow in its release.

Claudius:

If you do bring sorrow, so be it. I trust you know its worth. If acted swift, perhaps on the morrow, we'll make better from the worse.

Polonius:

I thank you for your confidence, and to it I submit (carefully removes his chain of office and places it carefully on the table). I have come simply as a friend, and I hope you will admit. I come not as a counselor to your brother and the king. I come to you in belief that you bring new light upon some thing, a thing that worries me severe. It touches on the country and the king, two things I hold most dear.

Claudius:

You take off your chain, I see, so this talk is ours alone. That will make it a different tale than how you speak when you have it on. When enchained, your words sound like some winds that bluster inside Elsinore while outside and unchained, they come as gentle breezes. Your foolish voice seems to come and go any time it pleases.

Polonius:

My life and fortune do abide in our prince's favor. I find it wise to let him surmise some of a foolish savor. If my wit seems to taste too sharp, it might signal the king some danger, and so I talk in an aimless walk until my point is made. Thus I serve as a harmless jester, and at once, I also can still advise. In this I make a balance act, and thus I do survive.

Claudius:

In here (points to head), we have not need of rule, nor here (points to heart) no political ambition, nor in this place (he gestures at their immediate surroundings) where I feel no competition. You come to me just as an honest friend, and as such you can speak. When I answer as best I can, I, too, honesty will seek. Indeed, I seek no gain in heart, in mind, or place that will not come with my studies done in

a sure and steady pace.

Polonius:

In your honesty and integrity I would stake my all. You seem like the very best of men untouched by sin's dark pall.

Claudius:

Enough of this our admiration, the kind of speech that brings its own temptation. Open your mind and express your burden, I can but hear, and share, and care for it and you, and failing help, that I can do for certain.

Polonius:

(Turns away from Claudius) The king, whose mind is often broad, has narrowed to a point. It makes it hard to find a balance sound, and it puts him out of joint. There's worry for his obsession.

Claudius:

All kings will, indeed, give must thought to their succession. It will pass when he knows at last his young wife will fill his ambition. His worry is but natural, but when she change condition, it will pass along soon enough.

Polonius:

We do not speak much ill of our dead kings, and still I feel the same. When your father fell into such a state of mind, he was no longer sane. Each day the queen does childless stay forms one more day of strain. We cannot know what strain he feels for only he can know. I only say, that every day, the danger may true grow.

Claudius:

My brother and my father, too, the mainstay of my life. I cannot think of his trouble deep without internal strife.

King Hamlet throws a shadow long and dark and with deeds and history. I am content within its shade and in its protection. These come to me as no mystery. I have studies that I pursue, and they take time and introspection. I am not a man for the world as such, but one for careful thought. I strive to do what's right and true, to act as I've been taught. He'll find no danger here with me in his worry of succession. I would support any choice he makes if the rule falls not to me.

Polonius: He does not feel he has a choice between you and, mayhap, the queen. He sees no other succession that will stand, no one else feels quite clean. They smell of rank ambition and the smell makes madness worse. He sees a king outside his blood for his nation will come as curse.

Claudius: Then whatever reluctance I may feel, the crown will come to me. The blood is there, if not quite so fair, cannot such a thought simply set him free?

Polonius:

Half brother to the king and so near his son is not enough, in this regard for succession to base on. Your mother, your father's second wife, was just a pregnant common. Her charm in self was well renown, but her blood was far from royal. For many that will make a chance, and one they will not spoil. There are others who in relation stand, in some ways to the king. At his death and your sure rise, their warring suits will bring. Such civil strife will take the life from the very heart of Denmark. And that heart will befall some dark and danger to us all. For when internal strife's enough, the kingdom will surely fall.

Claudius:

My claim is still the better claim. My blood's not pure but still is sure to bear the mark of kings.

Polonius:

You and I are not made for king but for thought and contemplation. Such duties as the king must face would bring us naught but consternation. We but think of what and why. A king must act on the where and how. We will ponder with all delay, but the king takes actions now. The kingship is not blood alone. It stands as much political. You are slight known but liked therein, for a scholar that's most typical. It does not make for loyalty from others who need reasons to stand beside you in support in any given season.

Claudius:

My brother bade me as a scholar serve in which he took some pride in my creation. He kept me from the priesthood where I might go and hide from the world that surrounds and fills life with temptations. However I will say without a pause, I would serve my brother in any cause that would ease his state of mind. I know how to learn and can earn the kingship if must I find.

Polonius:

I can conceive of such a thing, your mind brought to places alien. I know these things that I can teach and all that is quite salient. You would need to study tasks and thoughts that will bring you little comfort, and much of self you will repress in making all this effort. You would thus survey ill famed Machiavelli whom both of us despise. Yet in ways political, of power he can be wise. That is the taint of politics and of war as well. To serve as king, for you my friend, might be akin to hell.

Claudius:

The portrait of a king you make, it's true I find quite daunting. But to disprove my brother's ruin, I would take on such a haunting. The ghosts of power might me possess so I can act as king. All I ask if I take on this task is that peace will it my brother bring.

Polonius:

I feel impressed with what you'll sacrifice. To enter in a world of sin that you would not devise. But such would take so many years for in truth to climb. It might be well, we cannot tell, but the king feels he has not time. He fears his death will enter soon, and you are not near ready. He needs an act that

©will comfort him and for years will make him steady.

Claudius:

I do not know the nature of this act in which I must engage, but I will answer to any call to which I am but paged.

Polonius:

In this act he takes me not into his confidence. He must seek a plan that he stands to keep in deepest silence. I do not know where his mind will go, but deliver him from distemper. What e'er he ask, please fulfill the task. Whatever asked, please enter.

Claudius:

(Goes to Polonius and takes his hand) I must admit, I will acquit as best I can but with some trepidation. To a kingship I feel no call nor the least elation. But I will serve as best I can, and this to you I pledge. I will do all that I can to balance the king my brother and my father too, this man from his very edge.

(They embrace)

Polonius:

(Carefully and slowly puts on the weight of his chain) The king will undoubtedly sure to come to thee anon. Although it's hard to say when anon will come. But when it does, and I can trust, your honor in your word. For words are what words will do, and you will do but serve.

Claudius:

And you return to your half fool role as advisor and of jester thus the king to serve. It may do but all you want from it, but it's nothing you deserve.

Act 1. 5

(King Hamlet alone on stage in room, pondering and waiting. He looks into a mirror)

King:

Who am I? Am I a man who leaves behind him no posterity? Does my name become a life long lost in with immediate celerity? Am I thus just a sterile hybrid then, who grows once but in death is simply gone? Or still become an empty tune that lost the words of song? How can I stand this emptiness if childlessness undone, if I've no one who is of my blood to sit upon my throne?

Who am I? That is a phrase I've heard before from man who'd lost his way. In mind and spirit he did fade and all his wits were frayed. Yet he exists beyond his death although in he life he faltered. Here am I, his first born son, and in me he's not much altered. Am I bound for madness too, to follow him to death? If I cannot resolve my life, I never will find rest. Without such rest will my mind fly? Will it, too, proceed to die and leave me to his torture? He left me that as legacy as part of my great fortune. Left me here but half a man full of boast and no becoming. I need to know whither I will go if I leave no son aborning. Half a man with a young wife and half a brother, too. Can I make a plot for them to end and to see my horror through? Can I pass on my blood this way if by a route bizarre circuitous? Am I so desperate to forge a plot that I know as dangerous?

What is an act of desperation but desperation in itself? There must be an end to exasperation if there be nothing else. I have a need that takes me far beyond our simple reason. The aid I need must be free of greed and any thought of treason. I need someone whom I can trust, a man for every season. He is here in Claudius, both my son and brother. Here is a man who will always stand when others will just falter. I find him loyal but to no fault, like a free man not one haltered. If in desperation act, I can do so with assurance my brother will stand by me and offer his endurance. He will come and abide with me. He will suffer and do my bidding. I know that I give him no choice but to sin one way or in another way still sinning.

I have sent for him and thus he comes to find himself enwebbed. I do only hope that he must do this awful thing I need, and I also dread.

(Claudius enters through a secret door)

Claudius:

My lord, I have come.

King:

Do you come here as a ghost as well unseen here in the dark before dawn?

Claudius: I stalked the halls most carefully and did as I was bidden.

King:

In that you did succeed and remained quite hidden?

Claudius:

I can to you in in my best stealth, and that is how I leave. I do not know why this is so, and I could scarce but breathe.

King:

The way you came will be just the same when you've swiftly gone. You must go by all unseen and return before the dawn. The cock will crow, and you will know the matter of your coming.

Claudius:

I remain but at your will and at your bidding come. Why you've made such a secret, grave, I can hardly tell, but your will be done.

King:

It is most grave for I am aged and there are those who look for me to falter. The danger that befalls a crown is something no one can alter. I cannot be seen to come to you in some fearful supplication.

Claudius:

Thus am I come a secret here, but I do appear in some fearful apprehension.

King:

Your apprehension has some ground for this is a fearful time. I am aged, and that will not change, and I need my will be done. But it has come to a fearful place, this thing that I have planned. I ask of you to wait a while and I will my mind uncover. In the end, you will soon bend to that which you discover.

Claudius:

You, as in all things, will lead and I will follow. In absolute trust, that I must, or my faith will have proved hollow.

King:

There are in my body but two kings, one of them is natural. It is the man who serves as king in a way we see as factual. I take the throne. I use the power. I exercise its might, but I'm rounded in myself for I have frail limits in my life. I will surely die one day and before my aging humble. In some way, this natural king, will, at last, full stumble. In that I'll fall from my crown, but the essence of rule persever, so God's dominion come to ending here in Denmark never. The other is the body politic, the one that is the spiritual. It comes replete as the divine seat and essence of king's power. My body dies, but the king survives, as all around will cry: "The king is dead. Long live the king," and so the king's forever.

Claudius:

You do embody these two kings in ways I see as splendid. I feel rule by example true will never full be ended. You set a standard for a king that touches the divine. No one will come to take away that

sunlight as it shines. And shine it will in history evading our shared mortality.

King:

That must depend on how this ends and who on the throne succeed. If you wish my ideals of a king held true, the king but must remain our breed. He must breed true in fact and disposition, for others stand in full command of a strong ambition and will beshrew before they're through the truth of our tradition.

Claudius:

Our tradition but Denmark is and as it is, it thrives. I hate to foresee the fate of these if tradition does not survive.

King:

Tradition holds and can be bold if its hero stands beside. That is why we must try to rectify the disruptions that occur. Even in the natural king such disorders come unasked. Even our father, who once was king, brought such things to pass.

Claudius:

What you have made has thus rectified the damage that he did. That you should blame yourself in this is something to forbid.

King:

But I have sinned in such strong ways that I forever feel this guilt. I acted right in all my might, but still my soul feels ill. I acted on my own behalf, for you, and for the kingdom. Still I feel this pain is real and speaks beyond all reason.

I am aged as our father aged. In his decrepitude he was destroyed
By a mind that long had been strong, no longer was he buoyed
In his confusion, he hated me and did endless harm
Until his death I feared my life, one of countless, pained alarm

He degraded his fair rule when his mind did fill with fear. How a man so fearless once against the greatest foe could feel such fear of what was not real, we can never truly know. In truth, he did not know himself, thus from himself was lost. He lived in horror of you then and on fear's fire he was tossed. He would have killed you for a plot that did not in the least exist. We argued to the point of death, and still he did persist. I feared, my brother, for your life, and perforce, I did a thing I had not known I'd dare.

When you were born I took his place for our father soon after then had died.
Your mother, too, was lost to you, and you made a plaintive cry.
Although you were my brother, half, the half I almost hated
I wished your life to be in calm, the old gods propitiated
You have grown into the man I see, filled with thought about the mysteries
Of life and love which are all oblique but for their answers you do seek.

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