

Read the following (“Hamlet” and “Gertrude Talks Back”), and answer the questions which follow.

Hamlet - Act 3, Scene 4 (Excerpts - The Closet Scene)

QUEEN

14 Have you forgot me?

HAMLET

14 No, by the rood, not so:
15 You are the queen, your husband's brother's wife;
16 And—would it were not so!—you are my mother.

QUEEN

17 Nay, then, I'll set those to you that can speak.

HAMLET

18 Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge;
19 You go not till I set you up a glass
20 Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN

51 Ay me, what act,
52 That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

HAMLET

53 Look here, upon this picture, and on this,
54 The counterfeit presentment of two brothers.

QUEEN

88 O Hamlet, speak no more:
89 Thou turn'st mine eyes into my very soul;
90 And there I see such black and grained spots
91 As will not leave their tinct.

HAMLET

91 Nay, but to live
92 In the rank sweat of an enseamed bed,
93 Stew'd in corruption, honeying and making love
94 Over the nasty sty—

QUEEN

94 O, speak to me no more;
95 These words, like daggers, enter in mine ears;
96 No more, sweet Hamlet!

HAMLET

96 A murderer and a villain;
97 A slave that is not twentieth part the tithe
98 Of your precedent lord, a vice of kings,
99 A cutpurse of the empire and the rule,
100 That from a shelf the precious diadem stole,
101 And put it in his pocket!

QUEEN

101 No more!

Gertrude Talks Back

By Margaret Atwood

I always thought it was a mistake, calling you Hamlet. I mean, what kind of a name is that for a young boy? It was your father's idea. Nothing would do but that you had to be called after him. Selfish. The other kids at school used to tease the life out of you. The nick-names! And those terrible jokes about pork.

I wanted to call you George.

I am *not* wringing my hands. I'm drying my nails.

Darling, please stop fidgeting with my mirror. That'll be the third one you've broken.

Yes, I've seen those pictures, thank you very much. I *know* your father was handsomer than Claudius. High brow, aquiline nose and so on, looked great in uniform. But handsome isn't everything, especially in a man, and far be it from me to speak ill of the dead, but I think it's about time I pointed out to you that your Dad just wasn't a whole lot of fun. Noble, sure, I grant you. But Claudius, well, he likes a drink now and then. He appreciates a decent meal. He enjoys a laugh, know what I mean? You don't always have to be tiptoeing around because of some holier-than-thou principle or something.

By the way, darling, I wish you wouldn't call your stepdad the *bloat king*. He does have a slight weight-problem, and it hurts his feelings.

The rank sweat of a *what?* My bed is certainly not *enseamed*, whatever that might be! A nasty sty, indeed! Not that it's any of your business, but I change those sheets twice a week, which is more than you do, judging from that student slum pigpen in Wittenberg. I'll certainly never visit you *there* again without prior warning! I see that laundry of yours when you bring it home, and not often enough either, by a long shot! Only when you run out of black socks.

And let me tell you, everyone sweats at a time like that, as you'd find out very soon if you ever gave it a try. A real girlfriend would do you a heap of good. Not like that pasty-faced what's-her-name, all trussed up like a prize turkey in those touch-me-not corsets of hers. If you ask me there's something off about that girl. Borderline. Any little shock could push her right over the edge.

Go get yourself someone more down-to-earth. Have a nice roll in the hay. Then you can talk to me about nasty sties.

No, darling, I am not mad at you. But I must say you're an awful prig sometimes. Just like your Dad. *The Flesh*, he'd say. You'd think it was dog dirt. You can excuse that in a young person, they are always intolerant, but in someone his age it was getting, well, very hard to live with, and that's the understatement of the year.

Some days I think it would have been better for both of us if you hadn't been an only child. But you realize who you have to thank for that. You have no idea what I used to put up with. And every time I felt like a little, you know, just to warm up my ageing bones, it was like I'd suggested murder.

Oh! You think *what?* You think Claudius murdered your Dad? Well, no wonder you've been so rude to him at the dinner table!

If I'd known *that*, I could have put you straight in no time flat.

It wasn't Claudius, darling.

It was me.

