



How now? A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

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Hamlet:

"How now? A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!"

[Hamlet \(III, iv, 23\)](#)

Hamlet slays Polonius, whom he mistakes for the King hiding behind the arras in Gertrude's room. Earlier, the King, realizing that Hamlet has deduced that it was he who killed his father, sent Polonius to Gertrude's chamber. Hamlet comes storming down the hall screaming "mother, mother, mother!" Polonius hides behind the wall hanging, intending to spy on the conversation and report back to the King. The queen is terrified that Hamlet intends to murder her, however, and so cries out for help. Foolishly, Polonius also cries for help, and Hamlet, thinking the King has followed him into the chamber, thrusts his sword into the drapery and kills Polonius. In the aftermath of this mistaken murder, Hamlet seems strangely untouched by his own deed, which argues for the authenticity of his madness.

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