

"Hamlet" at Brookfield Theatre

Sides: Older Man

CLAUDIUS

O, my offense is rank, it smells to heaven;
It hath the primal eldest curse upon 't,
A brother's murder. Pray can I not,
Though inclination be as sharp as will.
My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent,
And, like a man to double business bound,
I stand in pause where I shall first begin
And both neglect. Then I'll look up.
My fault is past. But, O, what form of prayer
Can serve my turn? "Forgive me my foul murder"?
That cannot be, since I am still possessed
Of those effects for which I did the murder:
My crown, mine own ambition, and my queen.
May one be pardoned and retain th' offense?
What then? What rests? Try what repentance can.
What can it not? Yet what can it, when one cannot repent?
Bow, stubborn knees, and heart with strings of steel
Be soft as sinews of the newborn babe. All may be well.