

What are the palace intrigues hatched by Claudius against Hamlet?

Writer: William Shakespeare | Generated: Jan 26, 2026

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"Hamlet" (1603) is the most iconic play by William Shakespeare. In the play, King Claudius has ascended to the throne of Denmark by murdering his brother (Hamlet's father). King Claudius creates several palace intrigues against his nephew Hamlet. Here's a breakdown of his main schemes:

Spying on Hamlet: Claudius is suspicious of Hamlet's erratic behaviour and perceived threat to his power. He employs Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, Hamlet's childhood friends, to spy on him. He hopes they can uncover Hamlet's true feelings and perhaps his intentions.

The Play within the Play: After the arrival of the players at Elsinore, Hamlet devises a plan to expose Claudius's guilt through a staged play called The Murder of Gonzago. Hamlet thinks

"The play's the thing

Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king."

It mirrors how Claudius murdered Hamlet's father. Claudius's reaction to the play confirms his guilt, as he storms out during the performance.

Sending Hamlet to England: Following the disruption of the play and Hamlet's accidental killing of Polonius, Claudius sees an opportunity to rid himself of Hamlet without dirtying his own hands. He sends Hamlet to England with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. They carry sealed letters instructing the King of England to execute Hamlet upon his arrival.

The Duel with Laertes: After the plan to have Hamlet killed in England fails, Claudius conspires with Laertes, Polonius's son. He seeks vengeance for his father's death and his sister Ophelia's madness and subsequent death. Claudius and Laertes plot to kill Hamlet during a

rigged fencing match. Laertes uses a poisoned blade, and as a backup, Claudius prepares a poisoned drink to offer Hamlet during the duel.

Hence, Claudius' intricate plotting ultimately leads to the tragic end of nearly all main characters, including himself.

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