

Side 16: Claudius – O, my offence is rank

	CLAUDIUS	<p>O, my offence 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:</p> <p>My stronger guilt defeats my strong intent; What if this cursed hand were thicker than itself with brother's blood, is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash it white as snow? Whereto serves mercy but to confront the visage of offence? 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 possess'd of those effects for which I did the murder, my crown, mine own ambition and my queen. May one be pardon'd and retain the offence? What then? what rests? Try what repentance can: what can it not? Yet what can it when one can not repent? O wretched state! O bosom black as death! O limed soul, that, struggling to be free, art more engaged! Help, angels! Make assay! Bow, stubborn knees; and, heart with strings of steel, be soft as sinews of the newborn babe! All may be well.</p>
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