Hamlet, Prince of Denmark CHARACTERS Claudius, King of Denmark Hamlet, son of the last king, and nephew of the present one Horatio, friend of Hamlet Polonius, Minister of State Laertes, son of Polonius Marcellus, a guard Ghost of Hamlet's father A group of Actors Gertrude, Queen of Denmark and mother of Hamlet Ophelia, daughter of Polonius Less than two months after the sudden death of King Hamlet, Gertrude, Queen of Denmark, married his brother Claudius. This was judged by everyone at that time to be a strangely unwise or unfeeling act, or even worse. But young Hamlet had strong suspicions that Claudius himself was the snake, and that the snake that had bitten his father now wore his crown. Being of a most honourable character himself, he was greatly troubled by the shame of his mother's marriage; shame, and grief at his father's death, made him fall into a state of deep 54 sadness. Although the loss of the crown was a bitter wound to this young prince, it was not this that troubled him and took away all his cheerful spirits – it was the fact that his mother had shown herself to be so forgetful of his father's memory. This in itself was a very improper and unlawful marriage, as they were such close relations, but it was made much worse by the speed with which it was done and by the unkingly character of the man whom she had chosen. In this way he was able to prevent young Hamlet, the son of the buried king and his lawful heir, from becoming king. Claudius was in no way like her first husband in the qualities of his person or his mind.o