

**FRIEDRICH VON  
SCHILLER**

DEMETRIUS

**Friedrich Schiller**  
**Demetrius**

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*Demetrius: A Play:*

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# Friedrich Schiller

## Demetrius: A Play

### ACT I

#### SCENE I

##### THE DIET AT CRACOW.

On the rising of the curtain the Polish Diet is discovered, seated in the great senate hall. On a raised platform, elevated by three steps, and surmounted by a canopy, is the imperial throne, the escutcheons of Poland and Lithuania suspended on each side. The KING seated upon the throne; on his right and left hand his ten royal officers standing on the platform. Below the platform the BISHOPS, PALATINES, and CASTELLANS seated on each side of the stage.

Opposite to these stand the Provincial DEPUTIES, in a double line, uncovered. All armed. The ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN, as the primate of the kingdom, is seated next the proscenium; his chaplain behind him, bearing a golden cross.

## ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN

Thus then hath this tempestuous Diet been  
Conducted safely to a prosperous close;  
And king and commons part as cordial friends.  
The nobles have consented to disarm,  
And straight disband the dangerous Rocoss<sup>1</sup>;  
Whilst our good king his sacred word has pledged,  
That every just complaint shall have redress.  
And now that all is peace at home, we may  
Look to the things that claim our care abroad.  
Is it the will of the most high Estates  
That Prince Demetrius, who hath advanced  
A claim to Russia's crown, as Ivan's son,  
Should at their bar appear, and in the face  
Of this august assembly prove his right?

## CASTELLAN OF CRACOW

Honor and justice both demand he should;  
It were unseemly to refuse his prayer.

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<sup>1</sup> An insurrectionary muster of the nobles.

# **BISHOP OF WERMELAND**

The documents on which he rests have been  
Examined, and are found authentic. We  
May give him audience.

## **SEVERAL DEPUTIES**

Nay! We must, we must!

## **LEO SAPIEHA**

To hear is to admit his right.

## **ODOWALSKY**

And not  
To hear is to reject his claims unheard.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

Is it your will that he have audience?  
I ask it for the second time – and third.

## **IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR**

Let him stand forth before our throne!

## **SENATORS**

And speak!

## **DEPUTIES**

Yes, yes! Let him be heard!

[The Imperial GRAND MARSHAL beckons with his baton to the doorkeeper, who goes out.

## **LEO SAPIEHA (to the CHANCELLOR)**

Write down, my lord,  
That here I do protest against this step,  
And all that may ensue therefrom, to mar  
The peace of Poland's state and Moscow's crown.

[Enters DEMETRIUS. Advances some steps towards the throne, and makes three bows with his head uncovered, first to the KING, next to the SENATORS, and then to the DEPUTIES, who all severally answer with an inclination of the head. He then takes up his position so as to keep within his eye a great portion of the assemblage, and yet not to turn his back upon the throne.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

Prince Dmitri, son of Ivan! if the pomp  
Of this great Diet scare thee, or a sight  
So noble and majestic chain thy tongue,  
Thou may'st – for this the senate have allowed —  
Choose thee a proxy, wheresoe'er thou list,  
And do thy mission by another's lips.

## **DEMETRIUS**

My lord archbishop, I stand here to claim  
A kingdom, and the state of royalty.  
'Twould ill beseem me should I quake before  
A noble people, and its king and senate.  
I ne'er have viewed a circle so august,  
But the sight swells my heart within my breast  
And not appals me. The more worthy ye,  
To me ye are more welcome; I can ne'er  
Address my claim to nobler auditory.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

..        The august republic  
Is favorably bent.    ..

## **DEMETRIUS**

Most puissant king! Most worthy and most potent

Bishops and palatines, and my good lords,  
The deputies of the august republic!  
It gives me pause and wonder to behold  
Myself, Czar Ivan's son, now stand before  
The Polish people in their Diet here.  
Both realms were sundered by a bloody hate,  
And, whilst my father lived, no peace might be.  
Yet now hath Heaven so ordered these events,  
That I, his blood, who with my nurse's milk  
Imbided the ancestral hate, appear before you  
A fugitive, compelled to seek my rights  
Even here in Poland's heart. Then, ere I speak,  
Forget magnanimously all rancors past,  
And that the Czar, whose son I own myself,  
Rolled war's red billows to your very homes.  
I stand before you, sirs, a prince despoiled.  
I ask protection. The oppressed may urge  
A sacred claim on every noble breast.  
And who in all earth's circuit shall be just,  
If not a people great and valiant, – one  
In plenitude of power so free, it needs  
To render 'count but to itself alone,  
And may, unchallenged, lend an open ear  
And aiding hand to fair humanity.

## ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN

You do allege you are Czar Ivan's son;  
And truly, nor your bearing nor your speech  
Gainsays the lofty title that you urge,  
But shows us that you are indeed his son.  
And you shall find that the republic bears  
A generous spirit. She has never quailed  
To Russia in the field! She loves, alike,  
To be a noble foe – a cordial friend.

## DEMETRIUS

Ivan Wasilowitch, the mighty Czar  
Of Moscow, took five spouses to his bed,  
In the long years that spared him to the throne.  
The first, a lady of the heroic line  
Of Romanoff, bare him Feodor, who reigned  
After his father's death. One only son,  
Dmitri, the last blossom of his strength,  
And a mere infant when his father died,  
Was born of Marfa, of Nagori's line.  
Czar Feodor, a youth, alike effeminate  
In mind and body, left the reins of power

To his chief equerry, Boris Godunow,  
Who ruled his master with most crafty skill.  
Feodor was childless, and his barren bride  
Denied all prospect of an heir. Thus, when  
The wily Boiar, by his fawning arts,  
Had coiled himself into the people's favor,  
His wishes soared as high as to the throne.  
Between him and his haughty hopes there stood  
A youthful prince, the young Demetrius  
Iwanowitsch, who with his mother lived  
At Uglitsch, where her widowhood was passed.  
Now, when his fatal purpose was matured,  
He sent to Uglitsch ruffians, charged to put  
The Czarowitsch to death.  
One night, when all was hushed, the castle's wing,  
Where the young prince, apart from all the rest,  
With his attendants lay, was found on fire.  
The raging flames engulfed the pile; the prince  
Unseen, unheard, was spirited away,  
And all the world lamented him as dead.  
All Moscow knows these things to be the truth.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

Yes, these are facts familiar to us all.  
The rumor ran abroad, both far and near,

That Prince Demetrius perished in the flames  
When Uglitsch was destroyed. And, as his death  
Raised to the throne the Czar who fills it now,  
Fame did not hesitate to charge on him  
This murder foul and pitiless. But yet,  
His death is not the business now in hand!  
This prince is living still! He lives in you!  
So runs your plea. Now bring us to the proofs!  
Whereby do you attest that you are he?  
What are the signs by which you shall be known?  
How 'scaped you those were sent to hunt you down  
And now, when sixteen years are passed, and you  
Well nigh forgot, emerge to light once more?

## **DEMETRIUS**

'Tis scarce a year since I have known myself;  
I lived a secret to myself till then,  
Surmising naught of my imperial birth.  
I was a monk with monks, close pent within  
The cloister's precincts, when I first began  
To waken to a consciousness of self.  
My impetuous spirit chafed against the bars,  
And the high blood of princes began to course  
In strange unbidden moods along my veins.  
At length I flung the monkish cowl aside,

And fled to Poland, where the noble Prince  
Of Sendomir, the generous, the good,  
Took me as guest into his princely house,  
And trained me up to noble deeds of arms.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

How? You still ignorant of what you were?  
Yet ran the rumor then on every side,  
That Prince Demetrius was still alive.  
Czar Boris trembled on his throne, and sent  
His sassafs to the frontiers, to keep  
Sharp watch on every traveller that stirred.  
Had not the tale its origin with you?  
Did you not give the rumor birth yourself?  
Had you not named to any that you were  
Demetrius?

## **DEMETRIUS**

I relate that which I know.  
If a report went forth I was alive,  
Then had some god been busy with the fame.  
Myself I knew not. In the prince's house,

And in the throng of his retainers lost,  
I spent the pleasant springtime of my youth.

In silent homage

My heart was vowed to his most lovely daughter.  
Yet in those days it never dreamed to raise  
Its wildest thoughts to happiness so high.  
My passion gave offence to her betrothed,  
The Castellan of Lemberg. He with taunts  
Chafed me, and in the blindness of his rage  
Forgot himself so wholly as to strike me.  
Thus savagely provoked, I drew my sword;  
He, blind with fury, rushed upon the blade,  
And perished there by my unwitting hand.

## **MEISCHEK**

Yes, it was even so.

## **DEMETRIUS**

Mine was the worst mischance! A nameless youth,  
A Russian and a stranger, I had slain  
A grandee of the empire – in the house  
Of my kind patron done a deed of blood,

And sent to death his son-in-law and friend.  
My innocence availed not; not the pity  
Of all his household, nor his kindness – his,  
The noble Palatine's, – could save my life;  
For it was forfeit to the law, that is,  
Though lenient to the Poles, to strangers stern.  
Judgment was passed on me – that judgment death.  
I knelt upon the scaffold, by the block;  
To the fell headsman's sword I bared my throat,  
And in the act disclosed a cross of gold,  
Studded with precious gems, which had been hung  
About my neck at the baptismal font.  
This sacred pledge of Christian redemption  
I had, as is the custom of my people,  
Worn on my neck concealed, where'er I went,  
From my first hours of infancy; and now,  
When from sweet life I was compelled to part,  
I grasped it as my only stay, and pressed it  
With passionate devotion to my lips.

[The Poles intimate their sympathy by dumb show.

The jewel was observed; its sheen and worth  
Awakened curiosity and wonder.  
They set me free, and questioned me; yet still  
I could not call to memory a time  
I had not worn the jewel on my person.  
Now it so happened that three Boiars who  
Had fled from the resentment of their Czar

Were on a visit to my lord at Sambor.  
They saw the trinket, – recognized it by  
Nine emeralds alternately inlaid  
With amethysts, to be the very cross  
Which Ivan Westislowsky at the font  
Hung on the neck of the Czar's youngest son.  
They scrutinized me closer, and were struck  
To find me marked with one of nature's freaks,  
For my right arm is shorter than my left.  
Now, being closely plied with questions, I  
Bethought me of a little psalter which  
I carried from the cloister when I fled.  
Within this book were certain words in Greek  
Inscribed there by the Igumen himself.  
What they imported was unknown to me,  
Being ignorant of the language. Well, the psalter  
Was sent for, brought, and the inscription read.  
It bore that Brother Wasili Philaret  
(Such was my cloister-name), who owned the book,  
Was Prince Demetrius, Ivan's youngest son,  
By Andrei, an honest Diak, saved  
By stealth in that red night of massacre.  
Proofs of the fact lay carefully preserved  
Within two convents, which were pointed out.  
On this the Boiars at my feet fell down,  
Won by the force of these resistless proofs,  
And hailed me as the offspring of their Czar.  
So from the yawning gulfs of black despair  
Fate raised me up to fortune's topmost heights.

And now the mists cleared off, and all at once  
Memories on memories started into life  
In the remotest background of the past.  
And like some city's spires that gleam afar  
In golden sunshine when naught else is seen,  
So in my soul two images grew bright,  
The loftiest sun-peaks in the shadowy past.  
I saw myself escaping one dark night,  
And a red lurid flame light up the gloom  
Of midnight darkness as I looked behind me  
A memory 'twas of very earliest youth,  
For what preceded or came after it  
In the long distance utterly was lost.  
In solitary brightness there it stood  
A ghastly beacon-light on memory's waste.  
Yet I remembered how, in later years,  
One of my comrades called me, in his wrath  
Son of the Czar. I took it as a jest,  
And with a blow avenged it at the time.  
All this now flashed like lightning on my soul,  
And told with dazzling certainty that I  
Was the Czar's son, so long reputed dead.  
With this one word the clouds that had perplexed  
My strange and troubled life were cleared away.  
Nor merely by these signs, for such deceive;  
But in my soul, in my proud, throbbing heart  
I felt within me coursed the blood of kings;  
And sooner will I drain it drop by drop  
Than bate one jot my title to the crown.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN**

And shall we trust a scroll which might have found  
Its way by merest chance into your hands  
Backed by the tale of some poor renegades?  
Forgive me, noble youth! Your tone, I grant,  
And bearing, are not those of one who lies;  
Still you in this may be yourself deceived.  
Well may the heart be pardoned that beguiles  
Itself in playing for so high a stake.  
What hostage do you tender for your word?

## **DEMETRIUS**

I tender fifty, who will give their oaths, —  
All Piasts to a man, and free-born Poles  
Of spotless reputation, – each of whom  
Is ready to enforce what I have urged.  
There sits the noble Prince of Sendomir,  
And at his side the Castellan of Lublin;  
Let them declare if I have spoke the truth.

## ARCHBISHOP OF GNESEN

How seem these things to the august Estates?  
To the enforcement of such numerous proofs  
Doubt and mistrust, methinks, must needs give way.  
Long has a creeping rumor filled the world  
That Dmitri, Ivan's son, is still alive.  
The Czar himself confirms it by his fears.  
– Before us stands a youth, in age and mien  
Even to the very freak that nature played,  
The lost heir's counterpart, and of a soul  
Whose noble stamp keeps rank with his high claims.  
He left a cloister's precincts, urged by strange,  
Mysterious promptings; and this monk-trained boy  
Was straight distinguished for his knightly feats.  
He shows a trinket which the Czarowitsch  
Once wore, and one that never left his side;  
A written witness, too, by pious hands,  
Gives us assurance of his princely birth;  
And, stronger still, from his unvarnished speech  
And open brow truth makes his best appeal.  
Such traits as these deceit doth never don;  
It masks its subtle soul in vaunting words,  
And in the high-glossed ornaments of speech.  
No longer, then, can I withhold the title  
Which he with circumstance and justice claims

And, in the exercise of my old right,  
I now, as primate, give him the first voice.

## **ARCHBISHOP OF LEMBERG**

My voice goes with the primate's.

## **SEVERAL VOICES**

So does mine.

## **SEVERAL PALATINES**

And mine!

## **ODOWALSKY**

And mine.

## **DEPUTIES**

And all!

## **SAPIEHA**

My gracious sirs!  
Weigh well ere you decide! Be not so hasty!  
It is not meet the council of the realm  
Be hurried on to —

## **ODOWALSKY**

There is nothing here  
For us to weigh; all has been fully weighed.  
The proofs demonstrate incontestably.  
This is not Moscow, sirs! No despot here  
Keeps our free souls in manacles. Here truth  
May walk by day or night with brow erect.  
I will not think, my lords, in Cracow here,

Here in the very Diet of the Poles,  
That Moscow's Czar should have obsequious slaves.

## DEMETRIUS

Oh, take my thanks, ye reverend senators!  
That ye have lent your credence to these proofs;  
And if I be indeed the man whom I  
Protest myself, oh, then, endure not this  
Audacious robber should usurp my seat,  
Or longer desecrate that sceptre which  
To me, as the true Czarowitsch, belongs.  
Yes, justice lies with me, – you have the power.  
'Tis the most dear concern of every state  
And throne, that right should everywhere prevail,  
And all men in the world possess their own.  
For there, where justice holds uncumbered sway,  
There each enjoys his heritage secure,  
And over every house and every throne  
Law, truth, and order keep their angel watch.  
It is the key-stone of the world's wide arch,  
The one sustaining and sustained by all,  
Which, if it fail, brings all in ruin down.

(Answers of SENATORS giving assent to DEMETRIUS.)

## DEMETRIUS

Oh, look on me, renowned Sigismund!  
Great king, on thine own bosom turn thine eyes.  
And in my destiny behold thine own.  
Thou, too, hast known the rude assaults of fate;  
Within a prison camest thou to the world;  
Thy earliest glances fell on dungeon walls.  
Thou, too, hadst need of friends to set thee free,  
And raise thee from a prison to a throne.  
These didst thou find. That noble kindness thou  
Didst reap from them, oh, testify to me.  
And you, ye grave and honored councillors,  
Most reverend bishops, pillars of the church,  
Ye palatines and castellans of fame,  
The moment has arrived, by one high deed,  
To reconcile two nations long estranged.  
Yours be the glorious boast, that Poland's power  
Hath given the Muscovites their Czar, and in  
The neighbor who oppressed you as a foe  
Secure an ever-grateful friend. And you,  
The deputies of the august republic,  
Saddle your steeds of fire! Leap to your seats!  
To you expand high fortune's golden gates;  
I will divide the foeman's spoil with you.  
Moscow is rich in plunder; measureless

In gold and gems, the treasures of the Czar;  
I can give royal guerdons to my friends,  
And I will give them, too. When I, as Czar,  
Set foot within the Kremlin, then, I swear,  
The poorest of you all, that follows me,  
Shall robe himself in velvet and in sables;  
With costly pearls his housings shall he deck,  
And silver be the metal of least worth,  
That he shall shoe his horses' hoofs withal.

[Great commotion among the DEPUTIES. KORELA, Hetman of the Cossacks, declares himself ready to put himself at the head of an army.]

## ODOWALSKY

How! shall we leave the Cossack to despoil us  
At once of glory and of booty both?  
We've made a truce with Tartar and with Turk,  
And from the Swedish power have naught to fear.  
Our martial spirit has been wasting long  
In slothful peace; our swords are red with rust.  
Up! and invade the kingdom of the Czar,  
And win a grateful and true-hearted friend,  
Whilst we augment our country's might and glory.

## **MANY DEPUTIES**

War! War with Moscow!

## **OTHERS**

Be it so resolved!  
On to the votes at once!

## **SAPIEHA (rises)**

Grand marshal, please  
To order silence! I desire to speak.

## **A CROWD OF VOICES**

War! War with Moscow!

# **SAPIEHA**

Nay, I will be heard.  
Ho, marshal, do your duty!

[Great tumult within and outside the hall.

## **GRAND MARSHAL**

'Tis, you see,

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