

The Sword of Damocles

Damocles once said to his king, / "You have everything a man could want! // You must be the happiest man alive."//

"Would you like to change places with me?"//

"No, my king, / I wouldn't dream of **replacing** you!// But, if I could only taste / your **luxury** for one day, / I might die happy."//

"Very well.// You shall taste it."//

The next day, / Damocles was led into the **palace**,/ and all the servants treated him as king.// He ate the king's food, / heard the best music, / and sat on the **throne**.//

When he looked up, / he saw a sword / dangling over his head / by a single **thread**.// At any moment it might **snap**, / permanently fixing him to the seat.// He went pale.//

"Oh, have you noticed the sword?" / asked the king, / "Isn't it a nice touch? // I must always worry about **assassins**, you know.// It's much more **authentic** this way."// Damocles begged to be allowed / to return to his place, / and did not enjoy the pleasures of a king / for even one day.//

ダモクレスはかつて王に言った。/ 「あなたは男の望むものをすべて持っている。//
あなたがこの世で一番幸せな男に違いありません。」//

「そなたは私と地位を入れ替わることを欲するのか」//

「いいえ、王様。/ あなたと**入れ替わる**なんて夢にも思いません！// しかし、味わえるなら/
一日だけでもあなたの**贅沢**を/私は幸せに死ぬるかもしれません」//

「よい。// 君はそれを味わうとよい。」//

翌日、/ ダモクレスは**宮殿**内に案内されて、/ 使用人たちは皆、彼を王としてもてなした（扱った）// 彼は王の食事を食べ、/ 最高の音楽を聴き、/ そして**玉座**に座った。//

ふと顔を上げると、/ 彼は、1本の剣を見た/ 頭上にぶら下がっている / 一本の**糸**のみで// いまにも剣はぱちんと**切れて**しまい / 彼を永久に王座に釘付けにすることになりそうだった。// 彼は青ざめた//

「ああ、その剣に気づいたか？」/ 王は尋ねた、/ 「いい感じ（趣向、おもむき）だろう？// 私は常に**暗殺者**の心配をしなければならないのだ、なあ。// この方がずっと**本物**（の王様）らしい」// ダモクレスは許されるよう懇願し / 自分の居場所に戻ることを / 王の楽しみを味わうことはなかった / 1日たりとも。//

Vocabulary

| | |
|---------|-------|
| replace | 入れ替わる |
| luxury | 贅沢 |
| palace | 宮殿 |
| throne | 王座 |

| | |
|-----------|-------------|
| thread | 糸 |
| snap | 折れる/ぷちっと切れる |
| assassin | 暗殺者 |
| authentic | 本物らしい |

TIPS ダモクレスの剣

イタリアシチリア島南部の都市、シラクサの王ディオニシオスの廷臣ダモクレスが王位の幸福をほめそやしたギリシア神話の一説。登場する糸は馬の毛1本であり、「繁栄・歓楽の中でも常に危険がつきまとう」ことの例えとして用いられる。

Damocles once said to his king, "You have _____ a man could want! You must be the _____."

"Would you like to change places with me?"

"No, my king, I wouldn't dream of _____ you! But, if I could only taste your luxury for one day, I might die happy."

"Very well. You shall taste it."

The next day, Damocles was led into the palace, and all the _____ treated him as king. _____ the king's food, heard the best music, and sat on the throne. When he looked up, he saw a sword dangling over his head by a single thread. At any moment it might snap, _____ fixing him to the seat. He went pale.

"Oh, have you noticed the sword?" asked the king, "_____? I must always worry about assassins, you know. It's much more authentic this way."

Damocles begged to be allowed to return to his place, and did not _____ the pleasures of a king for even one day.

Question 1: What does Damocles ask of the king?

Question 2: Where does Damocles sit?

Question 3: Why does Damocles no longer want to be king?

Summarize:



*** Background knowledge:**

Damocles lived in the 4th century BCE, and served king Dionysius I in Syracuse. Dionysius I built the walls of the city, and became a local power, rising to this dignity from a career in the civil service. Widely hated, his military regime was extremely brutal, and the Syracuse pavilion was vandalized by an indignant mob at the Olympic games of 388.

*** Q&A Sample Answer**

Q1: He asks to be treated as king for a day.

Q2: He sits on the throne.

Q3: Damocles does not enjoy the danger of being king.

*** Summary Sample Answer**

(Very Short)

Damocles asks to have the joys of kingship for a day, but sits on a throne under a sword held by a single thread. He does not want both the pleasure and the danger of kingship.

(50 ~80 words)

Damocles mentions the pleasures of kingship. His king offers him a taste for one day, which he accepts. Delighted by the food and entertainment, Damocles is led to the throne, but is horrified to discover a sword held by a single thread over his head. He does not want both the pleasure and the danger of kingship, and resigns his peculiar honour before the day is done.