
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Shakespeare Speaks

In a pickle



Narrator

It was a chilly November evening. William Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, full of music, magic and monsters, is being performed for the first time. King James I and the Queen are having dinner while they watch.

King James

I do like a good play... mmm... and this meat is delicious - bring me more of that pickle... Mmmm... I love a bit of pickle with my dinner... and a nice glass of wine...

Queen

Don't you think you've had enough wine, dear?

King James

Oh do be quiet dear: I can't hear the actors. Now, Mr Shakespeare, is that a King I see on the stage?

Will

Your Majesty, that is King Alonso of Naples. He is lost on a magical island.

King James

And who is this fellow in the jester's costume?

Will

Your Majesty, that is Trinculo. He drinks a lot, and plans to murder people.

King James

A drunken jester? Murder? No good will come of it... does the King know about this?

Will

Yes, your Majesty. Now, the King is going to find Trinculo - in a drunken mess. Your Majesty might care to listen...

King James I

Ooh yes, yes, I want to hear this, be quiet everybody.

Alonso

How camest thou in this pickle?

Robert Harley as Trinculo

I have been in such a pickle since I saw you last that, I fear me, will never out of my bones: I shall not fear fly-blowing.

King James I

Hahaha! He's in a pickle! I like it, Will, very good, very good!

Narrator

We'll leave them there for now. Pickles are a very messy food, made from fruit and vegetables, crushed and preserved in vinegar and spices - sometimes with alcohol too. When Trinculo says he is **in a pickle**, he's probably saying that he is very drunk - but he's also got himself into a mess - a very difficult situation. Nowadays, when someone has drunk a lot of alcohol, they can say: **I'm pickled** - and when they've got problems, they can say: **I'm in a pickle**. Take The Hunger Games actor Liam Hemsworth, who said:

Clip 1

Most of the time if I'm in a pickle I'll call one of my brothers. They've usually got somewhat uplifting advice.

Clip 2

Ooh, you're in a pickle with those bags aren't you? Let me help.

King James I

Now Mr Shakespeare, sit down and eat with us. Have some cold meat!

Servant

Anything with that?

Will

Hmmm... To pickle, or not to pickle: that is the question.