

ACT FIVE

SCENE 1

Enter a GRAVEDIGGER and the OTHER gravedigger

GRAVEDIGGER
Is she to be buried in Christian burial when she willfully seeks her own salvation?

OTHER
I tell thee she is. Therefore make her grave straight. The crowner hath sat on her and finds it Christian burial.

GRAVEDIGGER
How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her own defense?

OTHER
Why, 'tis found so.

GRAVEDIGGER
It must be *se offendendo*. It cannot be else. For here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it argues an act. And an act hath three branches—it is to act, to do, to perform. Argal, she drowned herself wittingly.

OTHER
Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver—

GRAVEDIGGER
Give me leave. Here lies the water. Good. Here stands the man. Good. If the man go to this water and drown himself, it is, will he nill he, he goes. Mark you that. But if the water come to him and drown him, he drowns not himself. Argal, he that is not guilty of his own death shortens not his own life.

OTHER
But is this law?

ACT FIVE

SCENE 1

A GRAVEDIGGER and the OTHER gravedigger enter.

GRAVEDIGGER
Ave they really going to give her a Christian burial after she killed herself?

In Shakespeare's time, people who committed suicide were not given a Christian burial.

OTHER
I'm telling you, yes. So finish that grave right away. The coroner examined her case and says it should be a Christian funeral.

GRAVEDIGGER
But how, unless she drowned in self-defense?

OTHER
That's what they're saying she did.

GRAVEDIGGER
Sounds more like "self-offense," if you ask me. What I'm saying is, if she knew she was drowning herself, then that's an act. An act has three sides to it: to do, to act, and to perform. Therefore she must have known she was drowning herself.

OTHER
No, listen here, gravedigger sir—

GRAVEDIGGER
Let me finish. Here's the water, right? And here's a man, okay? If the man goes into the water and drowns himself, he's the one doing it, like it or not. But if the water comes to him and drowns him, then he doesn't drown himself. Therefore, he who is innocent of his own death does not shorten his own life.

OTHER
Is that how the law sees it?

20 GRAVEDIGGER
Ay, marry, is 't. Crowner's quest law.

OTHER
Will you ha' the truth on 't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial.

25 GRAVEDIGGER
Why, there thou sayst. And the more pity that great folk should have countenance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentleman but gardeners, ditchers, and grave-makers. They hold up Adam's profession.

OTHER
Was he a gentleman?

GRAVEDIGGER
He was the first that ever bore arms.

OTHER
Why, he had none.

GRAVEDIGGER
What, art a heathen? How dost thou understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam digged. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the purpose, confess thyself—

OTHER
Go to.

GRAVEDIGGER
What is he that builds stronger than either the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

40 OTHER
The gallows-maker, for that frame outlives a thousand tenants.

GRAVEDIGGER
I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows does well, but how does it well? It does well to those that do ill. Now thou

GRAVEDIGGER
It sure is. The coroner's inquest law.

OTHER
Do you want to know the truth? If this woman hadn't been rich, she wouldn't have been given a Christian burial.

GRAVEDIGGER
Well there, now you've said it. It's a pity that the rich have more freedom to hang or drown themselves than the rest of us Christians. Come on, shovel. The most ancient aristocrats in the world are gardeners, ditch-diggers, and gravediggers. They keep up Adam's profession.

OTHER
Was he an aristocrat? With a coat of arms?

GRAVEDIGGER
He was the first person who ever had arms.

OTHER
He didn't have any.

GRAVEDIGGER
What, aren't you a Christian? The Bible says Adam dug in the ground. How could he dig without arms? I'll ask you another question. If you can't answer it—

OTHER
Go ahead!

GRAVEDIGGER
What do you call a person who builds stronger things than a stonemason, a shipbuilder, or a carpenter does?

OTHER
The one who builds the gallows to hang people on, since his structure outlives a thousand inhabitants.

GRAVEDIGGER
You're funny, and I like that. The gallows do a good job. But how? It does a good job for those who do bad.

45 dost ill to say the gallows is built stronger than the church.
Argal, the gallows may do well to thee. To 't again, come.

OTHER
"Who builds stronger than a mason, a shipwright, or a
carpenter?"

GRAVEDIGGER
Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

OTHER
Marry, now I can tell.

50 GRAVEDIGGER
To 't.

OTHER
Mass, I cannot tell.

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO afar off

GRAVEDIGGER
Cudgel thy brains no more about it, for your dull ass will
not mend his pace with beating. And when you are asked
this question next, say "A grave-maker." The houses that
55 he makes last till doomsday. Go, get thee in. Fetch me a
stoup of liquor.

Exit OTHER

(*digs and sings*)
*In youth when I did love, did love,
Methought it was very sweet
To contract—o—the time, for—a—my behove,
60 Oh, methought, there—a—was nothing—a—meet.*

HAMLET
Has this fellow no feeling of his business? He sings at grave-
making.

ACT 5, SCENE 1 NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

Now, it's wrong to say that the gallows are stronger
than a church. Therefore, the gallows may do you
some good. Come on, your turn.

OTHER
Let's see, "Who builds stronger things than a stone-
mason, a shipbuilder, or a carpenter?"

GRAVEDIGGER
That's the question, so answer it.

OTHER
Ah, I've got it!

GRAVEDIGGER
Go ahead.

OTHER
Damn, I forgot.

HAMLET and HORATIO enter in the distance.

GRAVEDIGGER
Don't beat your brains out over it. You can't make a
slow donkey run by beating it. The next time someone
asks you this riddle, say "a gravedigger." The houses
he makes last till Judgment Day. Now go and get me
some booze.

The OTHER GRAVEDIGGER exits.

(*the GRAVEDIGGER digs and sings*)
*In my youth I loved, I loved,
And I thought it was very sweet
To set—oh—the date for—ahh—my duty
Oh, I thought it—ahh—was not right.*

HAMLET
Doesn't this guy realize what he's doing? He's singing
while digging a grave.

HORATIO

Custom hath made it in him a property of easiness.

HAMLET

'Tis e'en so. The hand of little employment hath the daintier sense.

GRAVEDIGGER

(sings)

*But age with his stealing steps
Hath clawed me in his clutch,
And hath shipped me into the land
As if I had never been such.
(throws up a skull)*

HAMLET

That skull had a tongue in it and could sing once. How the knave jowls it to the ground, as if it were Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder! It might be the pate of a politician, which this ass now o'erreaches, one that would circumvent God, might it not?

HORATIO

It might, my lord.

HAMLET

Or of a courtier, which could say, "Good morrow, sweet lord!" "How dost thou, good lord?" "This might be my Lord Such-a-one that praised my Lord Such-a-one's horse when he meant to beg it, might it not?"

HORATIO

Ay, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, e'en so. And now my Lady Worm's, chapless and knocked about the mazard with a sexton's spade. Here's fine revolution, an we had the trick to see 't. Did these bones cost no more the breeding but to play at loggets with them? Mine ache to think on 't.

HORATIO

He's gotten so used to graves that they don't bother him anymore.

HAMLET

Yes, exactly. Only people who don't have to work can afford to be sensitive.

GRAVEDIGGER

(sings)

*But old age has sneaked up on me
And grabbed me in his claus,
And has shipped me into the ground
As if I'd never been like that.
(he throws up a skull)*

HAMLET

That skull had a tongue in it once and could sing. That jackass is throwing it around as if it belonged to Cain, who did the first murder! It might be the skull of a politician once capable of talking his way around God, right? And now this idiot is pulling rank on him.

HORATIO

Indeed, my lord.

HAMLET

Or a courtier, who could say things like, "Good night, my sweet lord! How are you doing, good lord?" This might be the skull of Lord So-and-So, who praised Lord Such-and-Such's horse when he wanted to borrow it, right?

HORATIO

Yes, my lord.

HAMLET

Exactly. And now it's the property of Lady Worm, its lower jaw knocked off and thwacked on the noggin with a shovel. That's quite a reversal of fortune, isn't it, if we could only see it? Are these bones worth nothing more than bowling pins now? It makes my bones ache to think about it.

GRAVEDIGGER

(sings)

*A pickax and a spade, a spade,
For and a shrouding sheet,
Oh, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.
(throws up another skull)*

HAMLET

There's another. Why may not that be the skull of a lawyer? Where be his quiddities now, his quillities, his cases, his tenures, and his tricks? Why does he suffer this rude knave now to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel and will not tell him of his action of battery? Hum! This fellow might be in 's time a great buyer of land, with his statutes, his recognizances, his fines, his double vouchers, his recoveries. Is this the fine of his fines and the recovery of his recoveries, to have his fine pate full of fine dirt? Will his vouchers vouch him no more of his purchases, and double ones too, than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures? The very conveyances of his lands will hardly lie in this box, and must the inheritor himself have no more, ha?

HORATIO

Not a jot more, my lord.

HAMLET

Is not parchment made of sheepskins?

HORATIO

Ay, my lord, and of calfskins too.

HAMLET

They are sheep and calves which seek out assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow.—Whose grave's this, sirrah?

GRAVEDIGGER

Mine, sir.

ACT 5, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

GRAVEDIGGER

(sings)

*A pickax and a shovel, a shovel,
And a sheet for a funeral shroud,
Oh, a pit of dirt is what we need
For a guest like this one here.
(he throws up another skull)*

HAMLET

There's another. Could that be a lawyer's skull? Where's all his razzle-dazzle legal jargon now? Why does he allow this idiot to knock him on the head with a dirty shovel, instead of suing him for assault and battery? Maybe this guy was once a great landowner, with his deeds and contracts, his tax shelters and his annuities. Is it part of his deed of ownership to have his skull filled up with dirt? Does he only get to keep as much land as a set of contracts would cover if you spread them out on the ground? The deeds to his properties would barely fit in this coffin—and the coffin's all the property he gets to keep?

HORATIO

No more than that, my lord.

HAMLET

Isn't the parchment of a legal document made of sheepskin?

HORATIO

Yes, my lord, and calfskin too.

HAMLET

Anyone who puts his trust in such documents is a sheep or a calf. I'll talk to this guy.—Excuse me, sir, whose grave is this?

GRAVEDIGGER

It's mine, sir.

110 (sings)

*Oh, a pit of clay for to be made
For such a guest is meet.*

HAMLET

I think it be thine, indeed, for thou liest in 't.

GRAVEDIGGER

115 You lie out on 't, sir, and therefore it is not yours. For my part, I do not lie in 't, and yet it is mine.

HAMLET

Thou dost lie in 't, to be in 't and say it is thine. 'Tis for the dead, not for the quick. Therefore thou liest.

GRAVEDIGGER

'Tis a quick lie, sir. 'Twill away gain from me to you.

HAMLET

What man dost thou dig it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For none, neither.

HAMLET

Who is to be buried in 't?

GRAVEDIGGER

One that was a woman, sir, but, rest her soul, she's dead.

HAMLET

125 How absolute the knave is! We must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. By the Lord, Horatio, these three years I have taken a note of it. The age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.—How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

(sings)

*Oh, a pit of dirt is what we need
For a guest like this one here.*

HAMLET

I think it really must be yours, since you're the one lying in it.

GRAVEDIGGER

And you're lying outside of it, so it's not yours. As for me, I'm not lying to you in it—it's really mine.

HAMLET

But you are lying in it, being in it and saying it's yours. It's for the dead, not the living. So you're lying.

GRAVEDIGGER

That's a lively lie, sir—it jumps so fast from me to you.

HAMLET

What man are you digging it for?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no man, sir.

HAMLET

What woman, then?

GRAVEDIGGER

For no woman, either.

HAMLET

Who's to be buried in it?

GRAVEDIGGER

One who used to be a woman but—bless her soul—is dead now.

HAMLET

How literal this guy is! We have to speak precisely, or he'll get the better of us with his wordplay. Lord, Horatio, I've been noticing this for a few years now. The peasants have become so clever and witty that they're nipping at the heels of noblemen.—How long have you been a gravedigger?

130 GRAVEDIGGER
Of all the days i' the year, I came to 't that day that our last

King Hamlet overcame Fortinbras.

HAMLET
How long is that since?

135 GRAVEDIGGER
Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell that. It was the very
day that young Hamlet was born, he that is mad and sent
into England.

HAMLET
Ay, marry, why was he sent into England?

GRAVEDIGGER
Why, because he was mad. He shall recover his wits there,
or, if he do not, it's no great matter there.

HAMLET
Why?

140 GRAVEDIGGER
'Twill not be seen in him there. There the men are as mad
as he.

HAMLET
How came he mad?

GRAVEDIGGER
Very strangely, they say.

HAMLET
How "strangely"?

145 GRAVEDIGGER
Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

HAMLET
Upon what ground?

GRAVEDIGGER
Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and
boy, thirty years.

HAMLET
How long will a man lie i' the earth ere he rot?

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 5, SCENE 1

GRAVEDIGGER
Of all the days in the year, I started the day that the
late King Hamlet defeated Fortinbras.

HAMLET
How long ago was that?

GRAVEDIGGER
You don't know that? Any fool could tell you, it was
the day that young Hamlet was born—the one who
went crazy and got sent off to England.

HAMLET
Why was he sent to England?

GRAVEDIGGER
Because he was crazy. He'll recover his sanity there.
Or if he doesn't, it won't matter in England.

HAMLET
Why not?

GRAVEDIGGER
Because nobody will notice he's crazy. Everyone there
is as crazy as he is.

HAMLET
How did he go crazy?

GRAVEDIGGER
In a strange way, they say.

HAMLET
What do you mean, "in a strange way"?

GRAVEDIGGER
By losing his mind.

HAMLET
On what grounds?

GRAVEDIGGER
Right here in Denmark. I've been the church warden
here for thirty years, since childhood.

HAMLET
How long will a man lie in his grave before he starts to
rot?

GRAVEDIGGER

150 Faith, if he be not rotten before he die—as we have many
pocky corsers nowadays that will scarce hold the laying in—
he will last you some eight year or nine year. A tanner will
last you nine year.

HAMLET

Why he more than another?

GRAVEDIGGER

155 Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade that he will
keep out water a great while, and your water is a sore
decayer of your whoreson dead body. (*Indicates a skull*)
Here's a skull now. This skull has lain in the earth three-
and-twenty years.

HAMLET

160 Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER

A whoreson mad fellow's it was. Whose do you think it was?

HAMLET

Nay, I know not.

GRAVEDIGGER

165 A pestilence on him for a mad rogue! He poured a flagon of
Rhenish on my head once. This same skull, sir, was Yorick's
skull, the king's jester.

HAMLET

This?

GRAVEDIGGER

E'en that.

HAMLET

170 Let me see. (*takes the skull*) Alas, poor Yorick! I knew him,
Horatio, a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.
He hath borne me on his back a thousand times, and now,
how abhorred in my imagination it is! My gorge rises at it.
Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft.
—Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your songs?

ACT 5, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

GRAVEDIGGER

Well, if he's not rotten before he dies (and there are a
lot of people now who are so rotten they start falling to
pieces even before you put them in the coffin), he'll
last eight or nine years. A leathernaker will last nine
years.

HAMLET

Why does he last longer?

GRAVEDIGGER

Because his hide is so leathery from his trade that he
keeps the water off him a long time, and water is what
makes your goddamn body rot more than anything.
Here's a skull that's been here twenty-three years.

HAMLET

Whose was it?

GRAVEDIGGER

A crazy bastard. Who do you think?

HAMLET

I really don't know.

GRAVEDIGGER

Damn that crazy madman! He poured a pitcher of
white wine on my head once. This is the skull of
Yorick, the king's jester.

HAMLET

This one?

GRAVEDIGGER

Yes, that one.

HAMLET

Let me see. (*he takes the skull*) Oh, poor Yorick! I used
to know him, Horatio—a very funny guy, and with an
excellent imagination. He carried me on his back a
thousand times, and now—how terrible—this is him.
It makes my stomach turn. I don't know how many
times I kissed the lips that used to be right here.
Where are your jokes now? Your pranks? Your songs?

175 Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning? Quite chapfallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favor she must come. Make her laugh at that.—Prithee, Horatio, tell me one thing.

180 HORATIO
What's that, my lord?

HAMLET
Dost thou think Alexander looked o' this fashion i' th' earth?

HORATIO
E'en so.

HAMLET
And smelt so? Pahl (*puts down the skull*)

185 HORATIO
E'en so, my lord.

HAMLET
To what base uses we may return, Horatio. Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander till he find it stopping a bunghole?

HORATIO
'Twere to consider too curiously, to consider so.

190 HAMLET
No, faith, not a jot. But to follow him thither with modesty enough, and likelihood to lead it, as thus: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returneth to dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make loam—and why of that loam, whereto he was converted, might they not stop a beer barrel?

195
Imperious Caesar, dead and turned to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.
Oh, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,
Should patch a wall t' expel the winter's flaw!
200 But soft, but soft a while.

ACT 5, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

Your flashes of wit that used to set the whole table laughing? You don't make anybody smile now. Are you sad about that? You need to go to my lady's room and tell her that no matter how much makeup she slathers on, she'll end up just like you some day. That'll make her laugh. Horatio, tell me something.

HORATIO
What's that, my lord?

HAMLET
Do you think Alexander the Great looked like this when he was buried?

HORATIO
Exactly like that.

HAMLET
And smelled like that, too? Whew! (*he puts down the skull*)

HORATIO
Just as bad, my lord.

HAMLET
How low we can fall, Horatio. Isn't it possible to imagine that the noble ashes of Alexander the Great could end up plugging a hole in a barrel?

HORATIO
If you thought that you'd be thinking too much.

HAMLET
No, not at all. Just follow the logic: Alexander died, Alexander was buried, Alexander returned to dust, the dust is dirt, and dirt makes mud we use to stop up holes. So why can't someone plug a beer barrel with the dirt that used to be Alexander? The great emperor Caesar, dead and turned to clay, might plug up a hole to keep the wind away. Oh, to think that the same body that once ruled the world could now patch up a wall! But quiet, be quiet a minute.

Enter King claudius, Queen gertrude, laertes, and a coffin, with a priest and other lords attendant.

205 Here comes the king,
The queen, the courtiers—who is this they follow,
And with such maimed rites? This doth betoken
The corse they follow did with desperate hand
Fordo its own life. 'Twas of some estate.
Couch we a while and mark.

Hamlet and Horatio withdraw

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

HAMLET

That is Laertes, a very noble youth, mark.

LAERTES

What ceremony else?

PRIEST

210 Her obsequies have been as far enlarged
As we have warrant. Her death was doubtful,
And, but that great command o'ersways the order,
She should in ground unsanctified have lodged
Till the last trumpet. For charitable prayers
Shards, flints and pebbles should be thrown on her.
Yet here she is allowed her virgin crants,
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home
215 Of bell and burial.

LAERTES

Must there no more be done?

PRIEST

220 No more be done.
We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a requiem and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls.

LAERTES

Lay her i' th' earth,
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh

ACT 5, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

claudius enters with gertrude, laertes, and a coffin, with a priest and other lords attendant.

Here comes the king, the queen, and the noblemen of court. Who are they following? And with such a plain and scrawny ceremony? It means the corpse they're following took its own life. Must have been from a wealthy family. Let's stay and watch a while.

Hamlet and Horatio step aside.

LAERTES

What other rites are you going to give her?

HAMLET

That's Laertes, a very noble young man. Listen.

LAERTES

What other rites are you going to give her?

PRIEST

I've performed as many rites as I'm permitted. Her death was suspicious, and were it not for the fact that the king gave orders to bury her here, she'd have been buried outside the church graveyard. She deserves to have rocks and stones thrown on her body. But she has had prayers read for her and is dressed up like a pure virgin, with flowers tossed on her grave and the bell tolling for her.

LAERTES

Isn't there any other rite you can perform?

PRIEST

No, nothing. We would profane the other dead souls here if we sang the same requiem for her that we sang for them.

LAERTES

Lay her in the ground, and let violets bloom from her lovely and pure flesh!

223 May violets spring! I tell thee, churchly priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling.

HAMLET
(to HORATIO) What, the fair Ophelia?

225 GERTRUDE
Sweets to the sweet. Farewell! (*scatters flowers*)
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife.
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
230 And not have strewed thy grave.

LAERTES
Oh, treble woe
Fall ten times treble on that cursèd head,
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth awhile
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.
(*leaps into the grave*)
235 Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
T' o'er top old Pelion or the skyish head
Of blue Olympus.

HAMLET
(*comes forward*) What is he whose grief
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow
Conjures the wandering stars, and makes them stand
240 Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,
Hamlet the Dane. (*leaps into the grave*)

LAERTES
The devil take thy soul!

HAMLET and LAERTES grapple

245 HAMLET
Thou pray'st not well.
I prithee, take thy fingers from my throat,
For though I am not splenitive and rash,

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 5, SCENE 1

I'm telling you, you jerk priest, my sister will be an
angel in heaven while you're howling in hell.

(to HORATIO) What, the beautiful Ophelia?

225 QUEEN
Sweet flowers for a sweet girl. Goodbye! (*she scatters
flowers*) I once hoped you'd be my Hamlet's wife. I
thought I'd be tossing flowers on your wedding bed,
my sweet girl, not on your grave.

LAERTES
Oh, damn three times, damn ten times the evil man
whose wicked deed deprived you of your ingenious
mind. Hold off burying her until I've caught her in my
arms once more.
(*he jumps into the grave*)
235 Now pile the dirt onto the living and the dead alike, till
you've made a mountain higher than Mount Pelion or
Mount Olympus.

HAMLET
(*coming forward*) Who is the one whose grief is so loud
and clear, whose words of sadness make the planets
stand still in the heavens as if they've been hurt by
what they've heard? It's me, Hamlet the Dane. (*he
jumps into the grave*)

LAERTES
To hell with your soul!

HAMLET and LAERTES wrestle with each other.

245 HAMLET
That's no way to pray. (*they fight*) Please take your
hands off my throat. I may not be rash and quick to

Yet have I something in me dangerous,
Which let thy wisdom fear. Hold off thy hand.

CLAUDIUS

Pluck them asunder.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet, Hamlet!

ALL

Gentlemen—

HORATIO

(to HAMLET) Good my lord, be quiet.

Attendants separate HAMLET and LAERTES

HAMLET

Why, I will fight with him upon this theme
Until my eyelids will no longer wag.

GERTRUDE

O my son, what theme?

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers
Could not with all their quantity of love
Make up my sum. What wilt thou do for her?

CLAUDIUS

O, he is mad, Laertes.

GERTRUDE

For love of God, forbear him.

HAMLET

'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.
Woo't weep? Woo't fight? Woo't fast? Woo't tear thyself?
Woo't drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?
I'll do 't. Dost thou come here to whine,
To outface me with leaping in her grave?
Be buried quick with her?—and so will I.
And if thou prate of mountains let them throw
Millions of acres on us, till our ground,
Singeing his pate against the burning zone,

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

anger, but I have something dangerous in me which
you should beware of. Take your hands off.

CLAUDIUS

Pull them apart.

GERTRUDE

Hamlet! Hamlet!

ALL

Gentlemen!

HORATIO

(to HAMLET) Please, my lord, calm down.

Attendants separate HAMLET and LAERTES.

HAMLET

I'll fight him over this issue till I don't have the
strength to blink.

GERTRUDE

Oh, my son, what issue is that?

HAMLET

I loved Ophelia. Forty thousand brothers, if you
added all their love together, couldn't match mine.
What are you going to do for her?

CLAUDIUS

Oh, he's crazy, Laertes!

GERTRUDE

For the love of God, be patient with him.

HAMLET

Damn it, show me what you're going to do for her.
Will you cry? Fight? Stop eating? Cut yourself?
Drink vinegar? Eat a crocodile? I'll do all that. Did
you come here to whine? To outdo me by jumping
into her grave so theatrically? To be buried alive with
her? So will I. And if you rattle on about mountains,
then let them throw millions of acres over us. It will
be so high a peak that it scrapes against heaven and

270 Make Ossa like a wart! Nay, an thou'lt mouth,
I'll rant as well as thou.

GERTRUDE

This is mere madness.
And thus a while the fit will work on him.
Anon, as patient as the female dove
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.

HAMLET

275 Hear you, sir.
What is the reason that you use me thus?
I loved you ever. But it is no matter.
Let Hercules himself do what he may,
The cat will mew and dog will have his day.

Exit HAMLET

CLAUDIUS

I pray thee, good Horatio, wait upon him.

Exit HORATIO

280 *(to LAERTES)* Strengthen your patience in our last night's
speech.

We'll put the matter to the present push.—
Good Gertrude, set some watch over your son.—
This grave shall have a living monument.
An hour of quiet shortly shall we see.
Till then in patience our proceeding be.

Exeunt

ACT 5, SCENE 1
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

makes Mount Ossa look like a wart. See? I can talk
crazy as well as you.

GERTRUDE

This is pure insanity. He'll be like this for a little
while. Then he'll be as calm and quiet as a dove wait-
ing for her eggs to hatch.

HAMLET

Listen, sir, why do you treat me like this? I always
loved you. But it doesn't matter. Even a hero like Her-
cules can't keep cats from acting like cats, and dogs
like dogs.

HAMLET exits.

CLAUDIUS

Please, Horatio, go with him.

HORATIO exits.

(to LAERTES) Don't forget our talk last night, and try
to be patient. We'll take care of this problem soon.
—Gertrude, have the guards keep an eye on your son.
A monument shall be built for Ophelia that will last
forever, I promise. We'll have the quiet we need soon.
In the meantime, let's proceed patiently.

They exit.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

Enter HAMLET and HORATIO

HAMLET

So much for this, sir. Now shall you see the other.
You do remember all the circumstance?

HORATIO

Remember it, my lord?

HAMLET

Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting
That would not let me sleep. Methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly—
And praised be rashness for it: let us know
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well
When our deep plots do pall, and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will—

HORATIO

That is most certain.

HAMLET

Up from my cabin,
My sea-gown scarfed about me, in the dark
Groped I to find out them, had my desire,
Fingered their packet, and in fine withdrew
To mine own room again, making so bold
(My fears forgetting manners) to unseal
Their grand commission, where I found, Horatio—
O royal knavery!—an exact command,
Larded with many several sorts of reasons
Importing Denmark's health, and England's too,
With—ho!—such bugs and goblins in my life
That, on the supervise (no leisure bated,
No, not to stay the grinding of the ax)
My head should be struck off.

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 5, SCENE 2

HAMLET and HORATIO enter.

HAMLET

That's enough about that. Now I'll tell you the other
story about my journey. Do you remember the cir-
cumstances?

HORATIO

How could I forget, my lord!

HAMLET

There was a kind of war in my brain that wouldn't let
me sleep. It was worse than being a captive in chains.
Sometimes it's good to be rash—sometimes it works
out well to act impulsively when our careful plans lose
steam. This should show us that there's a God in
heaven who's always guiding us in the right direction,
however often we screw up—

HORATIO

Well, of course.

HAMLET

So I came up from my cabin with my robe tied around
me, groped in the dark to find what I was looking for,
found it, looked through their packet of papers, and
returned to my cabin again. I was bold enough (I guess
my fears made me forget my manners) to open the
document containing the king's instructions. And
there I found, Horatio, such royal mischief—a pre-
cisely worded order, sugared with lots of talk about
Denmark's well-being and England's too, to cut off
my head, without even waiting to sharpen the ax.

HORATIO

Is 't possible?

HAMLET

(shows HORATIO a document)

Here's the commission. Read it at more leisure.

But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

HORATIO

I beseech you.

HAMLET

Being thus benetted round with villainies—

Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,

They had begun the play—I sat me down,

Devised a new commission, wrote it fair.

I once did hold it, as our statists do,

A baseness to write fair, and labored much

How to forget that learning, but, sir, now

It did me yeoman's service. Wilt thou know

Th' effect of what I wrote?

HORATIO

Ay, good my lord.

HAMLET

An earnest conjuration from the king,

As England was his faithful tributary,

As love between them like the palm might flourish,

As peace should stiff her wheaten garland wear

And stand a comma 'tween their amities,

And many suchlike "as's" of great charge,

That, on the view and knowing of these contents,

Without debatement further, more or less,

He should the bearers put to sudden death,

Not striving time allowed.

HORATIO

How was this sealed?

HORATIO

Is it possible?

HAMLET

(he shows HORATIO a document) Here's the document.

Read it in your free time. But do you want to hear what

I did then?

HORATIO

Yes, please tell me.

HAMLET

So there I was, caught in their evil net. Before I could even start processing the situation, they had started the ball rolling. I sat down and wrote out a new official document with new instructions. I wrote it in a bureaucrat's neat handwriting. I used to think having nice handwriting was for servants, just like our politicians think, and I had to work hard to overcome that prejudice—but it sure came in handy then. Do you want to know what I wrote?

HORATIO

Yes, my lord.

HAMLET

A sincere plea from the king, who commands the respect of England, and who hopes that the love between the two countries can flourish, and that peace can join them in friendship—and other fancy mumbo jumbo like that—saying that, once they read this document, without any debate, the ones delivering the letter should be put to death immediately, without giving them time to confess to a priest.

HORATIO

But how could you put an official seal on it?

HAMLET

Why, even in that was heaven ordiant.
 I had my father's signet in my purse,
 Which was the model of that Danish seal.
 Folded the writ up in form of th' other,
 Subscribed it, gave 't th' impression, placed it safely,
 The changeling never known. Now, the next day
 Was our sea fight, and what to this was sequent
 Thou know'st already.

HORATIO

So Guildenstern and Rosencrantz go to 't.

HAMLET

Why, man, they did make love to this employment.
 They are not near my conscience. Their defeat
 Does by their own insinuation grow.
 'Tis dangerous when the baser nature comes
 Between the pass and fell incensèd points
 Of mighty opposites.

HORATIO

Why, what a king is this!

HAMLET

Does it not, think thee, stand me now upon—
 He that hath killed my king and whored my mother,
 Popped in between th' election and my hopes,
 Thrown out his angle for my proper life
 (And with such cozenage!)—is 't not perfect conscience
 To quit him with this arm? And is 't not to be damned
 To let this canker of our nature come
 In further evil?

HORATIO

It must be shortly known to him from England
 What is the issue of the business there.

HAMLET

Heaven helped me out with that too. I had my father's
 signet ring in my pocket, with the royal seal of Den-
 mark on it. I folded up the new document, signed it,
 sealed it, and put it safely back so that no one noticed
 any difference. The next day we had our fight at sea,
 and you know what happened after that.

HORATIO

So Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are in for it.

HAMLET

Man, they were asking for it. I don't feel guilty about
 them at all. They got what they deserved. It's always
 dangerous when little people get caught in the cross-
 fire of mighty opponents.

HORATIO

What a king Claudius is!

HAMLET

Don't you think it's my duty now to kill him with this
 weapon? This man who killed my king, made my
 mother a whore, took the throne that I hoped for, and
 set a trap to kill me. Isn't it completely moral to kill
 him now with this sword—and an easy conscience?
 And wouldn't I be damned if I let this monster live to
 do more harm?

HORATIO

He'll find out soon what happened in England.

HAMLET

It will be short. The interim's mine.
And a man's life's no more than to say "one."
But I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself,
For by the image of my cause I see
The portraiture of his. I'll court his favors.
But sure the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion.

HORATIO

Peace.—Who comes here?

Enter young osric, a courtier, hat in hand

OSRIC

Your lordship is right welcome back to Denmark.

HAMLET

I humbly thank you, sir. *(aside to HORATIO)* Dost know this
water-fly?

HORATIO

(aside to HAMLET) No, my good lord.

HAMLET

(aside to HORATIO) Thy state is the more gracious, for 'tis a
vice to know him. He hath much land, and fertile. Let a
beast be lord of beasts and his crib shall stand at the king's
mess. 'Tis a chough, but, as I say, spacious in the possession
of dirt.

OSRIC

Sweet lord, if your lordship were at leisure, I should impart
a thing to you from His Majesty.

HAMLET

I will receive it, sir, with all diligence of spirit. Put your
bonnet to his right use. 'Tis for the head.

OSRIC

I thank your lordship. It is very hot.

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET

Soon enough. But I have the meantime. A human life
is hardly long enough to count to one in. But I really
feel bad, Horatio, about losing control of myself with
Laertes. His situation is very much like my own. I'll be
nice to him. It was just that the showiness of his grief
sent me into a fury.

HORATIO

Hang on a minute—who are you?

OSRIC, a young courtier, enters with his hat in his hand.

OSRIC

Welcome back to Denmark, my lord.

HAMLET

Thank you kindly, sir. *(speaking so that only HORATIO
can hear)* Do you know this insect?

HORATIO

(speaking so that only HAMLET can hear) No, my lord.

HAMLET

(speaking so that only HORATIO can hear) You're lucky,
since knowing him is most unpleasant. He owns a lot
of good land. Give an animal a lot of money, and he'll
be welcome at the king's table. He's a jerk, but he owns
a whole lot of dirt, so he's treated well.

OSRIC

My lord, if you have a free moment, I have a message
from His Majesty.

HAMLET

I'll hang on every word you say. Put your hat back on,
where it belongs: it's for your head, not for your hands
to hold.

OSRIC

No thank you, my lord. It's very hot.

100 HAMLET
No, believe me, 'tis very cold. The wind is northerly.

OSRIC
It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.

HAMLET
But yet methinks it is very sultry and hot for my complexion.

OSRIC
Exceedingly, my lord. It is very sultry—as 'twere—I cannot tell how. My lord, his majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head. Sir, this is the matter—

HAMLET
I beseech you, remember—(*indicates that osric should put on his hat*)

OSRIC
110 Nay, good my lord, for mine ease, in good faith. Sir, here is newly come to court Laertes, believe me, an absolute gentleman, full of most excellent differences, of very soft society and great showing. Indeed, to speak feelingly of him, he is the card or calendar of gentry, for you shall find in him the continent of what part a gentleman would see.

HAMLET
115 Sir, his defilement suffers no perdition in you, though I know to divide him inventorially would dizzy th' arithmetic of memory, and yet but yaw neither, in respect of his quick sail.

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET
No, I'm telling you, it's very cold, with a northerly wind.

OSRIC
It is rather cold, indeed, my lord.

HAMLET
And yet I feel it's very hot and humid, which is bad for my complexion.

OSRIC
Yes indeed it is, sir. Very humid, I can't tell you how humid it is. My lord, His Majesty wanted me to tell you that he's placed a large bet on you. This is what it's all about—

HAMLET
Please, I beg you—(*he points to osric's hat*)

OSRIC
No, my lord, I'm comfortable like this, thank you. Sir, there's someone named Laertes who's recently come to the court. He's an absolute gentleman, totally outstanding in so many respects, very easy in society, and displaying all his excellent qualities. If I were to expose my true feelings about him, I'd have to say he's like a business card for the upper classes—he's that wonderful. You'll find that he's the sum total of what a perfect gentleman should be.

HAMLET
Sir, your description of him doesn't detract from his good qualities, though I know that trying to list them all would make your head spin, and even so you wouldn't be able to keep up with him.

Osric's language is vague and bluster, and Hamlet's is too when he mimics Osric. Together they sometimes make almost no sense.

120 But in the verity of extolment I take him to be a soul of great article, and his infusion of such dearth and rareness as, to make true diction of him, his semblable is his mirror. And who else would trace him? His umbrage, nothing more.

OSRIC Your lordship speaks most infallibly of him.

HAMLET The concernancy, sir? Why do we wrap the gentleman in our more raver breath?

OSRIC Sir?

HORATIO *(aside to HAMLET)* Is 't not possible to understand in another tongue? You will do 't, sir, really.

HAMLET What imports the nomination of this gentleman?

OSRIC Of Laertes?

HORATIO *(aside to HAMLET)* His purse is empty already. All's golden words are spent.

HAMLET Of him, sir.

OSRIC I know you are not ignorant—

HAMLET I would you did, sir. Yet in faith, if you did, it would not much approve me. Well, sir?

OSRIC You are not ignorant of what excellence Laertes is—

Speaking the very truth of high praise. I can honestly say that I find him to possess a soul of such great importance, and so rare and unique in every respect, that—to speak the absolute truth—he can find an equal only when he gazes into a mirror. Anyone else is just a pale copy of him.

OSRIC You speak absolutely correctly, sir.

HAMLET And what's the point, sir? Why are we talking about him like this?

OSRIC Sorry, sir?

HORATIO *(speaking so that only HAMLET can hear)* Can't you talk to him in a different way?

HAMLET *(to OSRIC)* What is the significance of referring to this individual?

OSRIC Laertes, you mean?

HORATIO *(speaking so that only HAMLET can hear)* All his fancy language has run out finally; his pockets are empty.

HAMLET Yes, Laertes, sir.

OSRIC I know you know something—

HAMLET Thanks for the compliment, I'm happy you know that. But in fact it doesn't say much. I'm sorry, you were saying?

OSRIC I know you know something about how excellent Laertes is—

HAMLET

I dare not confess that lest I should compare with him in excellence, but to know a man well were to know himself.

OSRIC

I mean, sir, for his weapon. But in the imputation laid on him by them, in his meed he's unfellowed.

HAMLET

What's his weapon?

OSRIC

Rapier and dagger.

HAMLET

That's two of his weapons. But well.

OSRIC

The king, sir, hath wagered with him six Barbary horses, against the which he has impawned, as I take it, six French rapiers and poniards with their assigns—as girdle, hangers, and so. Three of the carriages, in faith, are very dear to fancy, very responsive to the hilts, most delicate carriages, and of very liberal conceit.

HAMLET

What call you the carriages?

HORATIO

(*aside to HAMLET*) I knew you must be edified by the margin ere you had done.

OSRIC

The carriages, sir, are the hangers.

HAMLET

The phrase would be more germane to the matter if we could carry cannon by our sides. I would it might be hangers till then. But, on: six Barbary horses against six French swords, their assigns, and three liberal-conceited carriages—that's the French bet against the Danish. Why is this "impawned," as you call it?

HAMLET

I can't admit that, since you'd have to compare his excellence to mine. But knowing a person well is a bit like knowing oneself.

OSRIC

Excellent in fencing, I mean, sir. His reputation in fencing is unrivaled.

HAMLET

What kind of weapon does he use?

OSRIC

The rapier and the dagger.

HAMLET

Those are only two of his weapons. But, go on.

OSRIC

The king has bet six Barbary horses, and he has prepared six French rapiers and daggers with all their accessories. Three of the carriages are very imaginatively designed, and they match the fencing accessories.

HAMLET

What do you mean by "carriages"?

HORATIO

(*speaking so that only HAMLET can hear*) I knew you'd have to look something up in the dictionary before we were finished.

OSRIC

The carriages, sir, are the hangers—where the swords hang.

HAMLET

"Carriage" makes it sound like it's pulling around a cannon. I prefer to call it a "hanger." But anyway. Six Barbary horses, six French swords with accessories, and three imaginatively designed carriages—sounds like a French bet against the Danish. Why has all this been put on the table?

OSRIC

The king, sir, hath laid that in a dozen passes between yourself and him, he shall not exceed you three hits. He hath laid on twelve for nine, and it would come to immediate trial if your lordship would vouchsafe the answer.

HAMLET

How if I answer "No"?

OSRIC

I mean, my lord, the opposition of your person in trial.

HAMLET

Sir, I will walk here in the hall. If it please His Majesty, 'tis the breathing time of day with me. Let the foils be brought, the gentleman willing, and the king hold his purpose. I will win for him an I can. If not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

OSRIC

Shall I redeliver you e'en so?

HAMLET

To this effect, sir, after what Flourish your nature will.

OSRIC

I commend my duty to your lordship.

HAMLET

Yours, yours.

Exit OSRIC

He does well to commend it himself. There are no tongues else for 's turn.

HORATIO

This lapwing runs away with the shell on his head.

HAMLET

He did comply, sir, with his dug before he sucked it. Thus has he—and many more of the same bery that I know the drossy age doles on—only got the tune of the time and outward habit of encounter, a kind of yeasty collection, which carries them through and through the most fond and winnowed opinions; and do but blow them to their trial, the bubbles are out.

OSRIC

The king, sir, has bet that in a dozen rounds between you and Laertes, he won't beat you by more than three hits. You could get started immediately if you'll give me your answer.

HAMLET

But what if my answer's no?

OSRIC

I mean, if you'd agree to play against Laertes, sir.

HAMLET

Sir, I'm going to go for a walk in the hall here whether the king likes it or not. It's my exercise time. Bring in the swords, if the king still wants to go through with it and if Laertes is still willing. I'll have the king win his bet if I can. If not, I'll only have suffered some embarrassment and a few sword hits.

OSRIC

Shall I quote you in those exact words, sir?

HAMLET

Just get the point across, however flowery you want to be.

OSRIC

My services are at your command.

HAMLET

Thank you.

OSRIC exits.

It's a good thing he's here to recommend himself. No one else would.

HORATIO

That crazy bird's only half-hatched.

HAMLET

He used to praise his mother's nipple before he sucked it. He's like so many successful people in these trashy times—he's patched together enough fancy phrases and trendy opinions to carry him along. But blow a little on this bubbly talk, and it'll burst. There's no substance here.

Enter a LORD

LORD

My lord, his majesty commended him to you by young Osric, who brings back to him that you attend him in the hall. He sends to know if your pleasure hold to play with Laertes, or that you will take longer time.

HAMLET

I am constant to my purpose. They follow the king's pleasure. If his fitness speaks, mine is ready, now or whensoever, provided I be so able as now.

LORD

The king and queen and all are coming down.

HAMLET

In happy time.

LORD

The queen desires you to use some gentle entertainment to Laertes before you fall to play.

Exit LORD

HAMLET

She well instructs me.

HORATIO

You will lose this wager, my lord.

HAMLET

I do not think so. Since he went into France, I have been in continual practice. I shall win at the odds. But thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my heart. But it is no matter.

HORATIO

Nay, good my lord---

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

A LORD enters.

LORD

My lord, Osric has told the king about your agreeing to the fencing match. The king wishes to know if you want to play against him right away, or wait awhile.

HAMLET

I'll do whatever the king wants. If he's ready now, so am I. Otherwise, I'll do it anytime, as long as I'm able.

LORD

The king and queen are coming down with everyone else.

HAMLET

Right on cue.

LORD

The queen wants you to chat with Laertes—politely—before you begin your match.

The LORD exits.

HAMLET

She's full of good advice.

HORATIO

You're going to lose this bet, my lord.

HAMLET

I don't think so. I've been practicing fencing constantly since he went off to France. With the handicap they've given me, I think I'll win. But I have a sinking feeling anyway. Oh well.

HORATIO

Wait, my lord---

HAMLET

It is but foolery, but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would perhaps trouble a woman.

HORATIO

If your mind dislike anything, obey it. I will forestall their repair hither and say you are not fit.

HAMLET

Not a whit. We defy augury. There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come. If it be not to come, it will be now. If it be not now, yet it will come—the readiness is all. Since no man of aught he leaves knows, what is 't to leave betimes? Let be.

Enter King CLAUDIUS, Queen GERTRUDE, LAERTES, OSRIC, lords, and other attendants with trumpets, drums, foils, a table, and flagons of wine

CLAUDIUS

Come, Hamlet, come, and take this hand from me. *(puts LAERTES' hand into HAMLET'S)*

HAMLET

Give me your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong. But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows,

And you must needs have heard, how I am punished With sore distraction. What I have done,

That might your nature, honor, and exception Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was 't Hamlet wronged Laertes? Never Hamlet.

If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,

Then Hamlet does it not. Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness. If 't be so,

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 5, SCENE 2

HAMLET

I know I'm being foolish, but I have the kind of vague misgiving women often get.

HORATIO

If something is telling you not to play, listen to it. I'll say you're not feeling well.

HAMLET

You'll do no such thing. I thumb my nose at superstitions. God controls everything—even something as trivial as a sparrow's death. Everything will work out as it is destined. If something is supposed to happen now, it will. If it's supposed to happen later, it won't happen now. What's important is to be prepared. Since nobody knows anything about what he leaves behind, then what does it mean to leave early? Let it be.

CLAUDIUS enters with GERTRUDE, LAERTES, OSRIC, lords, and other attendants with trumpets, drums, fencing swords, a table, and pitchers of wine.

CLAUDIUS

Come shake hands with Laertes, Hamlet. *(CLAUDIUS places LAERTES' and HAMLET'S hands together)*

HAMLET

(to LAERTES) I beg your pardon, sir. I've done you wrong. Forgive me as a gentleman. Everyone here knows—and I'm sure you've heard—that I'm suffering from a serious mental illness. When I insulted you it was due to insanity. Was Hamlet the one who insulted Laertes? No, not Hamlet. If Hamlet is robbed of his own mind, and insults Laertes when he's not really himself, then Hamlet's not guilty of the offense. Who is guilty, then? Hamlet's mental illness is.

225

Hamlet is of the faction that is wronged.
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil

Free me so far in your most generous thoughts

That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house

And hurt my brother.

230

LAERTES

I am satisfied in nature,

Whose motive in this case should stir me most

To my revenge. But in my terms of honor

I stand aloof, and will no reconciliation

Till by some elder masters, of known honor,

I have a voice and precedent of peace

To keep my name ungored. But till that time

I do receive your offered love like love

And will not wrong it.

235

HAMLET

I embrace it freely,

And will this brother's wager frankly play.—

Give us the foils. Come on.

240

LAERTES

Come, one for me.

HAMLET

I'll be your foil, Laertes. In mine ignorance

Your skill shall, like a star i' th' darkest night,

Stick fiery off indeed.

LAERTES

You mock me, sir.

245

HAMLET

No, by this hand.

CLAUDIUS

Give them the foils, young Osric.—Cousin Hamlet,

You know the wager?

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

And if that's true, then Hamlet is the victim of his own illness—his illness is his enemy. Sir, with this audience as witness, let me declare that I'm as innocent of premeditated evil against you as I would be if I had happened to shoot an arrow over my house and accidentally hit my brother.

LAERTES

My feelings are satisfied—even though what you have done to my father and sister should drive me to revenge. Yet when it comes to my honor, I can't forgive you so fast. I will accept no apology until experts in matters of honor show me how to make peace with you without straining my own reputation in doing so. Until then I will accept your love as love.

HAMLET

I'm grateful for your love. Come on, give us the swords, and we will play this friendly fencing match enthusiastically.

LAERTES

Yes, hand me one too.

HAMLET

I'm going to make you look sharp, Laertes. I'm so bad at the game that your skill will shine like the brightest star in the darkest night.

LAERTES

You're making fun of me.

HAMLET

No, I swear I'm not.

CLAUDIUS

Give them the swords, Osric. Hamlet, you know the bet?

HAMLET

Very well, my lord.

Your grace hath laid the odds o' th' weaker side.

CLAUDIUS

I do not fear it. I have seen you both.

But since he is better we have therefore odds.

LAERTES

(tests a rapier) This is too heavy. Let me see another.

HAMLET

(tests a rapier) This likes me well. These foils have all a length?

OSRIC

Ay, my good lord.

HAMLET and LAERTES prepare to play

CLAUDIUS

Set me the stoups of wine upon that table.

If Hamlet give the first or second hit

Or quit in answer of the third exchange,

Let all the battlements their ordnance fire!

The king shall drink to Hamlet's better breath,

And in the cup an union shall he throw

Richer than that which four successive kings

In Denmark's crown have worn. Give me the cups.

And let the kettle to the trumpet speak,

The trumpet to the cannoneer without,

The cannons to the heavens, the heavens to earth,

"Now the king dunks to Hamlet." Come, begin.—

And you, the judges, bear a wary eye.

Trumpets

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET

Yes, my lord, quite well. You've bet on the weaker fencer.

CLAUDIUS

I'm not worried. I've seen both of you fence. But since Laertes is better, we've given him a handicap. He's got to outdo you by three hits to win.

LAERTES

This sword's too heavy. Show me another one.

HAMLET

I like this one. Are they all the same length?

OSRIC

Yes, my lord.

HAMLET and LAERTES get ready to fence.

CLAUDIUS

Put the goblets of wine on that table. If Hamlet makes the first or second hit, or gets back at Laertes by making the third hit, then let my soldiers give him a military salute. I'll drink to Hamlet's health, and into his goblet I'll drop a pearl even more costly than those in the crowns of the last four Danish kings. Give me the goblets. And now let the drum and the trumpet play, and the trumpet signal the cannon out-side to fire, and let the cannon tell the heavens, and the heavens tell all the earth that the king is drinking now to Hamlet's health. Come on, let's begin. Judges, pay close attention.

Trumpets play.

HAMLET

Come on, sir.

LAERTES

Come, my lord.

HAMLET and LAERTES play

HAMLET

270 One.

LAERTES

No.

HAMLET

Judgment?

OSRIO

A hit, a very palpable hit.

LAERTES

Well, again.

CLAUDIUS

275 Stay, give me drink.—Hamlet, this pearl is thine.
Here's to thy health.*Drums, trumpets sound, shot goes off*
CLAUDIUS drops pearl into cup

Give him the cup.

HAMLET

I'll play this bout first. Set it by a while.
Come.*HAMLET and LAERTES play*

Another hit. What say you?

LAERTES

280 A touch, a touch, I do confess 't.

CLAUDIUS

Our son shall win.

GERTRUDE

He's fat, and scant of breath.—
Here, Hamlet, take my napkin, rub thy brows.ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

LAERTES

Come on, my lord.

HAMLET and LAERTES fence.

HAMLET

That was one hit.

LAERTES

No, it wasn't.

HAMLET

Referee!

OSRIO

It was obviously a hit.

LAERTES

Well, let's go on.

CLAUDIUS

Give me a goblet.—Hamlet, this pearl's yours. Here's
to your health.*Drums and trumpets play, and a gun is fired.*
CLAUDIUS drops a pearl into a cup.

Give him the goblet.

HAMLET

Let me just finish this round. Set it down awhile. Let's
play.*HAMLET and LAERTES fence.*

Another hit. What do you say?

LAERTES

You got me, I admit it.

CLAUDIUS

My son will win.

GERTRUDE

He's flabby and out of breath.—Here, Hamlet, take
my handkerchief and wipe your forehead.

The queen carouses to thy fortune, Hamlet.
(picks up the cup with the pearl)

285 HAMLET
Good madam.

CLAUDIUS

Gertrude, do not drink.

GERTRUDE

I will, my lord. I pray you, pardon me. (drinks)

CLAUDIUS

(aside) It is the poisoned cup. It is too late.

HAMLET

I dare not drink yet, madam. By and by.

GERTRUDE

290 Come, let me wipe thy face.

LAERTES

(aside to claudius) My lord, I'll hit him now.

CLAUDIUS

I do not think 't.

LAERTES

(aside) And yet it is almost 'gainst my conscience.

HAMLET

300 Come, for the third, Laertes. You do but dally.

I pray you, pass with your best violence.

I am afraid you make a wanton of me.

LAERTES

Say you so? Come on.

HAMLET and LAERTES play

OSRIC

Nothing, neither way.

LAERTES

Have at you now!

LAERTES wounds HAMLET

In scuffling, they change rapiers. HAMLET wounds LAERTES

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

The queen drinks to your good luck and happiness,
Hamlet. (she lifts the cup with the pearl)

HAMLET
Thank you, madam.

CLAUDIUS

Gertrude, don't drink that.

GERTRUDE

Excuse me. I'll drink it if I like. (she drinks)

CLAUDIUS

(to himself) That was the poisoned drink. It's too late.

HAMLET

I'd better not drink now. I'll drink later.

GERTRUDE

Come on, let me wipe your face.

LAERTES

(to claudius) I'll get him now.

CLAUDIUS

I doubt it.

LAERTES

(to himself) But I almost feel guilty.

HAMLET

Get ready for the third hit, Laertes. You're just playing around. Come on, give me your best shot. I sense you're treating me like a child.

LAERTES

You think so? Come on.

HAMLET and LAERTES fence.

OSRIC

They're neck and neck.

LAERTES

Take this!

LAERTES wounds HAMLET. Then in a scuffle they end up with each other's swords, and HAMLET wounds LAERTES.

CLAUDIUS

Part them! They are incensed.

HAMLET

305 Nay, come, again.

GERTRUDE falls

OSRIC

Look to the queen there, ho!

HORATIO

They bleed on both sides.—How is it, my lord?

OSRIC

How is 't, Laertes?

LAERTES

Why, as a woodcock to mine own springe, Osric. I am justly killed with mine own treachery. *(falls)*

HAMLET

310 How does the queen?

CLAUDIUS

She swoons to see them bleed.

GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink!—O my dear Hamlet!
The drink, the drink! I am poisoned. *(dies)*

HAMLET

O villainy! Ho, let the door be locked.

Treachery! Seek it out.

Exit osric

LAERTES

315 It is here, Hamlet. Hamlet, thou art slain.
No medicine in the world can do thee good.
In thee there is not half an hour of life.
The treacherous instrument is in thy hand,
Unbated and envenomed. The foul practice
Hath turned itself on me. Lo, here I lie,
Never to rise again. Thy mother's poisoned.
I can no more. The king, the king's to blame.

320

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

CLAUDIUS

Separate them. They're overdoing it.

HAMLET

No, come on, one more time.

GERTRUDE collapses.

OSRIC

Take care of the queen!

HORATIO

Both fencers are bleeding—how do you feel, my lord?

OSRIC

How do you feel, Laertes?

LAERTES

Like a mouse caught in my own trap, Osric. *(he collapses)*
I've been killed by my own evil tricks.

HAMLET

How's the queen?

CLAUDIUS

She fainted at the sight of them bleeding.

GERTRUDE

No, no, the drink, the drink! Oh, my dear Hamlet!
The drink, the drink! I've been poisoned. *(she dies)*

HAMLET

Oh, what evil! Lock the door.

osric exits.

We've been betrayed! Find out who did it!

LAERTES

I'm the one, Hamlet. Hamlet, you're dead. No medicine in the world can cure you. You don't have more than half an hour to live. The treacherous weapon is right in your hand, sharp and dipped in poison. The foul plan backfired on me. Here I lie and will never get up again. Your mother's been poisoned. I can't speak anymore. The king, the king's to blame.

HAMLET

The point envenomed too!—Then, venom, to thy work.

HAMLET *hurts* CLAUDIUS

ALL

Treason! Treason!

CLAUDIUS

O, yet defend me, friends. I am but hurt.

HAMLET

Here, thou incestuous, murderous, damned Dane,
Drink off this potion. Is thy union here?
Follow my mother.

HAMLET *forces* CLAUDIUS *to drink*

CLAUDIUS *dies*

LAERTES

He is justly served.

It is a poison tempered by himself.

Exchange forgiveness with me, noble Hamlet.

Mine and my father's death come not upon thee,

Nor thine on me. (*dies*)

HAMLET

Heaven make thee free of it: I follow thee.—

I am dead, Horatio.—Wretched queen, adieu!—

You that look pale and tremble at this chance,

That are but mutes or audience to this act,

Had I but time (as this fell sergeant, Death,

Is strict in his arrest), O, I could tell you—

But let it be.—Horatio, I am dead.

Thou livest. Report me and my cause aright

To the unsatisfied.

HORATIO

Never believe it.

I am more an antique Roman than a Dane.

Here's yet some liquor left.

(*lifts the poisoned cup*)

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 5, SCENE 2

HAMLET

The blade poisoned! Then get to work, poison!

HAMLET *wounds* CLAUDIUS.

ALL

Treason! Treason!

CLAUDIUS

Protect me, my friends. I've only been hurt, not killed.

HAMLET

Here, you goddamn incest-breeding Danish murderer, drink this. Is your little pearl in there? Follow my mother.

HAMLET *forces* CLAUDIUS *to drink*. CLAUDIUS *dies*.

LAERTES

He got what he deserved. He mixed that poison himself. Please forgive me as I forgive you, Hamlet. You're not responsible for my death and my father's, and I'm not responsible for yours. (*he dies*)

HAMLET

God will free you from blame. I'll follow you to heaven in a minute.—I'm dying, Horatio.—Goodbye, miserable queen.—And all you people watching, pale and trembling, speechless spectators of these acts, I could tell you a thing or two if I had the time (though this cruel officer, Death, doesn't allow much free time). Let it be.—Horatio, I'm dying. You're alive. Tell everyone what happened; set the story straight.

HORATIO

Not for a second. I'm more like an ancient Roman than a corrupt modern Dane. Some of this liquor's still left in the goblet. (*he picks up the poisoned cup to drink*)

HAMLET

As thou'rt a man,
Give me the cup. Let go! By heaven, I'll have't.
(*takes cup from HORATIO*)

345

O God, Horatio, what a wounded name,
Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me!
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
To tell my story.

350

March afar off and shout within

What warlike noise is this?

Enter OSRIC

OSRIC

Young Fortinbras, with conquest come from Poland,
To th' ambassadors of England gives
This warlike volley.

HAMLET

355

O, I die, Horatio.
The potent poison quite o'ercrows my spirit.
I cannot live to hear the news from England.
But I do prophesy the election lights
On Fortinbras. He has my dying voice.
So tell him, with th' occurrents, more and less,
Which have solicited. The rest is silence.
O, O, O, O. (*dies*)

360

HORATIO

Now cracks a noble heart.—Good night, sweet prince,
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!—
Why does the drum come hither?

332

ORIGINAL TEXT

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET

Please, give me that goblet, if you love me. Let go of it!
I'll get it from you, I swear. Oh God, Horatio, what a
damaged reputation I'm leaving behind me, as no one
knows the truth. If you ever loved me, then please
postpone the sweet relief of death awhile, and stay in
this harsh world long enough to tell my story.

*A military march is heard from offstage,
and a cannon fires.*

What are these warlike noises?

OSRIC enters.

OSRIC

Young Fortinbras, returning in triumph from Poland,
is firing his guns to greet the English ambassadors.

HAMLET

Oh, I'm dying, Horatio! This strong poison's over-
powering me. I will not live to hear the news from
England. But I bet Fortinbras will win the election to
the Danish crown. He's got my vote as I die. So tell
him that, given the recent events here—oh, the rest is
silence. Oh, oh, oh, oh. (*he dies*)

HORATIO

Now a noble heart is breaking. Good night, sweet
prince. May hosts of angels sing you to sleep.—Why
are those drums approaching?

MODERN TEXT

333

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

*Enter FORTINBRAS and the English AMBASSADOR,
 with drummer and attendants*

365 FORTINBRAS
 Where is this sight?

HORATIO
 What is it ye would see?
 If aught of woe or wonder, cease your search.

370 FORTINBRAS
 This quarry cries on havoc. O proud death,
 What feast is toward in thine eternal cell,
 That thou so many princes at a shot
 So bloodily hast struck?

AMBASSADOR
 The sight is dismal,
 And our affairs from England come too late.
 The ears are senseless that should give us hearing,
 To tell him his commandment is fulfilled,
 That Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.
 Where should we have our thanks?

380 HORATIO
(indicates CLAUDIUS) Not from his mouth,
 Had it th' ability of life to thank you.
 He never gave commandment for their death.
 But since so jump upon this bloody question,
 You from the Polack wars, and you from England,
 Are here arrived, give order that these bodies
 High on a stage be placèd to the view,
 And let me speak to th' yet-unknowing world
 How these things came about. So shall you hear
 Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
 Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
 Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
 And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
 Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
 Truly deliver.

*Fortinbras and the English AMBASSADOR
 enter with a drummer and attendants.*

FORTINBRAS
 What do I see here?

HORATIO
 What would you like to see? If it's a tragedy, you've
 come to the right place.

FORTINBRAS
 These corpses suggest mayhem. Oh, proud Death,
 what banquet are you preparing that you've needed to
 knock off so many princes at one stroke?

AMBASSADOR
 This is a horrible sight. Our news arrives from
 England too late, since the people that should have
 heard it are dead. We meant to tell the king that his
 orders have been carried out, and Rosencrantz and
 Guildenstern are dead. Who will thank us now?

HORATIO
(indicates CLAUDIUS) Not the king, even if he were still
 alive to thank you. He never ordered their deaths. But
 since you've come so soon after this bloodbath, you
 from battles in Poland and you from England, then give
 your men orders to display these corpses on a high plat-
 form, and let me tell the world how all this hap-
 pened. You'll hear of violent and unnatural acts, terrible
 accidents, casual murders, deaths caused by trickery
 and by threat, and finally murderous plans that back-
 fired on their perpetrators. All this I can explain.

FORTINBRAS

Let us haste to hear it,
And call the noblest to the audience.
For me, with sorrow I embrace my fortune.
I have some rights of memory in this kingdom,
Which now to claim my vantage doth invite me.

HORATIO

Of that I shall have also cause to speak,
And from his mouth whose voice will draw on more.
But let this same be presently performed,
Even while men's minds are wild, lest more mischance
On plots and errors happen.

FORTINBRAS

Let four captains
Bear Hamlet like a soldier to the stage,
For he was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally. And, for his passage,
The soldiers' music and the rites of war
Speak loudly for him.
Take up the bodies. Such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.
Go, bid the soldiers shoot.

*Exeunt marching, carrying the bodies,
after the which a peal of ordnance are shot off*

ACT 5, SCENE 2
NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

FORTINBRAS

Let's hear about it right away and invite all the noble-
men to listen. As for me, I welcome my good luck with
sadness. I have some rights to claim this kingdom, and
by arriving at this moment I have an opportunity to
put them into effect.

HORATIO

I also have a few things to say about that, which Ham-
let just told me. But let's get down to business—even
though people are in a frenzy of grief—to avoid any
further plots and mishaps.

FORTINBRAS

Let four captains carry Hamlet like a soldier onto the
stage. He would have been a great king if he had had
the chance to prove himself. Military music and mil-
itary rites will speak for his heroic qualities. Pick up
the corpses. A sight like this suits a battlefield, but
here at court it shows that much went wrong. Go out-
side and tell the soldiers to fire their guns in honor of
Hamlet.

*They exit marching, carrying the bodies.
Cannons are fired.*