

# Hamlet

## 5.1

*Enter two Clowns [carrying a spade and a pickaxe]*

**FIRST CLOWN** Is she to be buried in Christian burial that wilfully seeks her own salvation?

**SECOND CLOWN** I tell thee she is, and therefore make her grave straight. The coroner hath sat on her, and finds it Christian burial. 5

**FIRST CLOWN** How can that be unless she drowned herself in her own defence?

**SECOND CLOWN** Why, 'tis found so.

**FIRST CLOWN** It must be *se offendendo*, it cannot be else; for here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly, it 10 argues an act; and an act hath three branches: it is to act, to do, and to perform. Argal she drowned herself wittingly.

**SECOND CLOWN** Nay, but hear you, Goodman Delver.

**FIRST CLOWN** Give me leave. Here lies the water±±good. 15 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. 20

**SECOND CLOWN** But is this law?

**FIRST CLOWN** Ay, marry, is't: coroner's quest law.

**SECOND CLOWN** Will you ha' the truth on't? If this had not been a gentlewoman, she should have been buried out o' Christian burial. 25

**FIRST CLOWN** Why, there thou sayst, and the more pity that great folk should have count'nance in this world to drown or hang themselves more than their even Christian. Come, my spade. There is no ancient gentlemen but gardeners, ditchers, and gravemakers; 30 they hold up Adam's profession.

*[First Clown digs]*

**SECOND CLOWN** Was he a gentleman?

**FIRST CLOWN** A was the first that ever bore arms.

**SECOND CLOWN** Why, he had none.

**FIRST CLOWN** What, art a heathen? How dost thou 35  
understand the Scripture? The Scripture says Adam  
dugged. Could he dig without arms? I'll put another  
question to thee. If thou answerest me not to the  
purpose, confess thyself±±

**SECOND CLOWN** Go to. 40

**FIRST CLOWN** What is he that builds stronger than either  
the mason, the shipwright, or the carpenter?

**SECOND CLOWN** The gallows-maker; for that frame outlives  
a thousand tenants.

**FIRST CLOWN** I like thy wit well, in good faith. The gallows 45  
does well. But how does it well? It does well to those  
that do ill. Now thou dost ill to say the gallows is built  
stronger than the church, argal the gallows may do  
well to thee. To't again, come.

**SECOND CLOWN** `Who builds stronger than a mason, a 50  
shipwright, or a carpenter?'

**FIRST CLOWN** Ay, tell me that, and unyoke.

**SECOND CLOWN** Marry, now I can tell.

**FIRST CLOWN** To't.

**SECOND CLOWN** Mass, I cannot tell. 55

*Enter Prince Hamlet and Horatio afar off*

**FIRST CLOWN** 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 he makes lasts till doomsday. Go, get  
thee to Johan. Fetch me a stoup of liquor. 60

*Exit Second Clown*

*(Sings)*

In youth when I did love, did love,  
Methought it was very sweet  
To contract-O-the time for-a-my behove,  
O methought there-a-was nothing-a-meet.

**HAMLET** Has this fellow no feeling of his business that a 65  
sings at grave-making?

**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. 70

**FIRST CLOWN** *(sings)*

But age with his stealing steps  
Hath caught me in his clutch,  
And hath shipped me intil the land,  
As if I had never been such.

*[He throws up a skull]*

**HAMLET** That skull had a tongue in it and could sing 75  
once. How the knave jowls it to th' ground as if 'twere  
Cain's jawbone, that did the first murder! This might  
be the pate of a politician which this ass o'er-offices,  
one that would circumvent God, might it not?

**HORATIO** It might, my lord. 80

**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 a meant to beg it, might it not?

**HORATIO** Ay, my lord. 85

**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 loggats with 'em? Mine ache to think on't. 90

**FIRST CLOWN** (*sings*)

A pickaxe and a spade, a spade,  
For and a shrouding-sheet;  
O, a pit of clay for to be made  
For such a guest is meet.

*[He throws up another skull]*

**HAMLET** There's another. Why might not that be the skull 95  
of a lawyer? Where be his quiddits now, his quilllets,  
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? H'm! This fellow might be in 's time 100  
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, 105  
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 th'inheritor himself  
have no more, ha?

**HORATIO** Not a jot more, my lord. 110

**HAMLET** Is not parchment made of sheepskins?

**HORATIO** Ay, my lord, and of calf-skins too.

**HAMLET** They are sheep and calves that seek out  
assurance in that. I will speak to this fellow. (*To the  
First Clown*) Whose grave's this, sirrah? 115

**FIRST CLOWN** Mine, sir.  
(*Sings*)

O, 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.

**FIRST CLOWN** You lie out on't, sir, and therefore it is not 120  
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 'tis thine.  
'Tis for the dead, not for the quick; therefore thou liest.

**FIRST CLOWN** 'Tis a quick lie, sir, 'twill away again from  
me to you. 125

**HAMLET** What man dost thou dig it for?

**FIRST CLOWN** For no man, sir.

**HAMLET** What woman, then?

**FIRST CLOWN** For none, neither.

**HAMLET** Who is to be buried in't? 130

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

**HAMLET** 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 note of it. The 135  
age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant  
comes so near the heel of the courtier he galls his kibe.  
(*To the First Clown*) How long hast thou been a grave-  
maker?

**FIRST CLOWN** Of all the days i'th' year I came to't that 140  
day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

**HAMLET** How long is that since?

**FIRST CLOWN** Cannot you tell that? Every fool can tell  
that. It was the very day that young Hamlet was  
born±±he that was mad and sent into England. 145

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

**FIRST CLOWN** Why, because a was mad. A shall recover  
his wits there; or if a do not, 'tis no great matter there.

**HAMLET** Why?

**FIRST CLOWN** 'Twill not be seen in him there. There the 150  
men are as mad as he.

**HAMLET** How came he mad?

**FIRST CLOWN** Very strangely, they say.

**HAMLET** How strangely?

**FIRST CLOWN** Faith, e'en with losing his wits. 155

**HAMLET** Upon what ground?

**FIRST CLOWN** Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton  
here, man and boy, thirty years.

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

**FIRST CLOWN** I'faith, if a be not rotten before a die±±as 160  
we have many pocky corpses nowadays, that will scarce  
hold the laying in±±a will last you some eight year or  
nine year. A tanner will last you nine year.

**HAMLET** Why he more than another?

**FIRST CLOWN** Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade 165  
that a will keep out water a great while, and your  
water is a sore decayer of your whoreson dead body.  
Here's a skull, now. This skull has lain in the earth  
three-and-twenty years.

**HAMLET** Whose was it? 170

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

**HAMLET** Nay, I know not.

**FIRST CLOWN** A pestilence on him for a mad rogue±±a  
poured a flagon of Rhenish on my head once! This 175  
same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the King's jester.

**HAMLET** This?

**FIRST CLOWN** E'en that.

**HAMLET** Let me see.

*He takes the skull*

Alas, poor Yorick. I knew him, Horatio±±a fellow of 180  
infinite jest, of most excellent fancy. He hath borne me  
on his back a thousand times; and now, how abhorred  
my imagination 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, your 185

flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table  
on a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning?  
Quite chop-fallen? Now get you to my lady's chamber  
and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour  
she must come. Make her laugh at that. Prithee,  
Horatio, tell me one thing. 190

**HORATIO** What's that, my lord?

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

**HORATIO** E'en so. 195

**HAMLET** And smelt so? Pah!  
*[He throws the skull down]*

**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 a find it stopping a bung-hole? 200

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

**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 into dust, the dust is earth, of earth we make 205  
loam, and why of that loam whereto he was converted  
might they not stop a beer-barrel?  
Imperial Caesar, dead and turned to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.  
O, that that earth which kept the world in awe 210  
Should patch a wall t'expel the winter's flaw!  
But soft, but soft; aside.

*Hamlet and Horatio stand aside. Enter King  
Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Laertes, and a coffin,  
with a Priest and lords attendant*

Here comes the

King,

The Queen, the courtiers±±who is that they follow,  
And with such maimeÁd rites? This doth betoken  
The corpse they follow did with desp'rate hand 215  
Fordo it own life. 'Twas of some estate.  
Couch we a while, and mark.

**LAERTES** What ceremony else?

**HAMLET** *(aside to Horatio)*

That is Laertes, a very noble youth. Mark.

**LAERTES** What ceremony else?

**PRIEST**

Her obsequies have been as far enlarged 220  
As we have warrantise. 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, 225  
Yet here she is allowed her virgin rites,  
Her maiden strewments, and the bringing home  
Of bell and burial.

**LAERTES** Must there no more be done?

**PRIEST** No more be done. 230

We should profane the service of the dead  
To sing sage requiem and such rest to her  
As to peace-parted souls.

**LAERTES** Lay her i'th' earth,  
And from her fair and unpolluted flesh  
May violets spring. I tell thee, churlish priest, 235  
A minist'ring angel shall my sister be  
When thou liest howling.

**HAMLET** (*aside*) What, the fair Ophelia!

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** (*scattering flowers*)

Sweets to the sweet. Farewell.  
I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet's wife. 240  
I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,  
And not t'have strewed thy grave.

**LAERTES** O, treble woe

Fall ten times treble on that curse! Ad head  
Whose wicked deed thy most ingenious sense  
Deprived thee of! Hold off the earth a while, 245  
Till I have caught her once more in mine arms.

*He leaps into the grave*

Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead  
Till of this flat a mountain you have made  
To o'ertop old Pelion, or the skyish head  
Of blue Olympus.

**HAMLET** (*coming forward*) What is he whose grief 250  
Bears such an emphasis, whose phrase of sorrow

Conjures the wand'ring stars and makes them stand  
Like wonder-wounded hearers? This is I,  
Hamlet the Dane.

*[Hamlet leaps in after Laertes]*

**LAERTES** The devil take thy soul. 255

**HAMLET** Thou pray'st not well.

I prithee take thy fingers from my throat,  
For though I am not splenative and rash,  
Yet have I something in me dangerous,  
Which let thy wiseness fear. Away thy hand. 260

**KING CLAUDIUS** *(to Lords)*

Pluck them asunder.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** Hamlet, Hamlet!

**ALL [THE LORDS]**

Gentlemen!

**HORATIO** *(to Hamlet)* Good my lord, be quiet.

**HAMLET**

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

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** O my son, what theme? 265

**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?

**KING CLAUDIUS** O, he is mad, Laertes.

**QUEEN GERTRUDE** *(to Laertes)* For love of God, forbear him. 270

**HAMLET** *(to Laertes)* 'Swounds, show me what thou'lt do.

Woot weep, woot fight, woot fast, woot tear thyself,  
Woot drink up eisel, eat a crocodile?

I'll do't. Dost thou come here to whine,  
To outface me with leaping in her grave? 275

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,  
Make Ossa like a wart. Nay, an thou'lt mouth, 280  
I'll rant as well as thou.

**KING CLAUDIUS** *[to Laertes]* 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** *(to Laertes)* Hear you, sir, 285

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*

**KING CLAUDIUS**

I pray you, good Horatio, wait upon him. 290

*Exit Horatio*

*(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; 295

Till then, in patience our proceeding be.

*Exeunt*