

SHAKESPEARIENCE!

Swords, Scenes & Soliloquies

HAMLET

Act II, scene 2: *Denmark's a Prison*
Hamlet, Rosencrantz & Guildenstern

GUILDENSTERN

My honoured lord!

ROSENCRANTZ

My most dear lord!

HAMLET

My excellent good friends! How dost thou, Guildenstern? Ah, Rosencrantz!
Good lads, how do ye both?

ROSENCRANTZ

As the indifferent children of the earth.

GUILDENSTERN

Happy, in that we are not over-happy;
On fortune's cap we are not the very button.

HAMLET

Nor the soles of her shoe?

ROSENCRANTZ

Neither, my lord.

HAMLET

Then you live about her waist, or in the middle of
her favours?

GUILDENSTERN

'Faith, her privates we.

HAMLET

What's the news?

ROSENCRANTZ

None, my lord, but that the world's grown honest.

HAMLET

Then is doomsday near: but your news is not true.
What have you, my good friends, deserved at the hands of fortune,
that she sends you to prison hither?

GUILDENSTERN

Prison, my lord!

HAMLET

Denmark's a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Then is the world one.

HAMLET

A goodly one; in which there are many confines,
wards and dungeons, Denmark being one o' the worst.

GUILDENSTERN

We think not so, my lord.

HAMLET

Why, then, 'tis none to you; for there is nothing
either good or bad, but thinking makes it so: to me
it is a prison.

ROSENCRANTZ

Why then, your ambition makes it one; 'tis too
narrow for your mind.

HAMLET

O God, I could be bounded in a nut shell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.

GUILDENSTERN

Which dreams indeed are ambition, for the very substance of the ambitious is merely the shadow of a dream.

HAMLET

A dream itself is but a shadow.

GUILDENSTERN

Truly, and I hold ambition of so airy and light a quality that it is but a shadow's shadow.

HAMLET

But, in the beaten way of friendship, what make you at Elsinore?

ROSENCRANTZ

To visit you, my lord; no other occasion!

HAMLET

Were you not sent for? Is it your own inclining? Is it a free visitation? Come, deal justly with me. Come, come, come; speak.

GUILDENSTERN

What should we say, my lord?

HAMLET

Why, any thing, but to the purpose. You were sent for; and there is a kind of confession in your looks...

I know the good king and queen have sent for you.

ROSENCRANTZ

To what end, my lord?

HAMLET

That you must teach me. Be even and direct with me, whether you were sent for, or no?

ROSENCRANTZ/GUILDENSTERN

My lord, we were sent for!

HAMLET

I will tell you why; I have of late—but wherefore I know not--lost all my mirth... man delights not me: no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so.

ROSENCRANTZ

My lord, there was no such stuff in our thoughts.

HAMLET

Why did you laugh then, when I said 'man delights not me'?

GUILDENSTERN

To think, my lord, if you delight not in man, what lenten entertainment the players shall receive from..... you: we coted them on the way; and hither are they coming, to offer you service.

ROSENCRANTZ

There are the players.

HAMLET

They are welcome: but my uncle-father and aunt-mother are deceived.

GUILDENSTERN

In what, my dear lord?

HAMLET

I am but mad north-north-west: when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.