

# **SHAKESPEARIENCE!**

## *Hamlet*

### **Hamlet/Horatio/Gravedigger, Act V Scene 1**

#### **Gravedigger**

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

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

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.

*Enter HAMLET and HORATIO, at a distance, Gravedigger digs and sings*

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

#### **HAMLET**

Has this fellow no feeling of his business, that he 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.

**HAMLET**

That skull might be the pate of a politician, which this ass  
now o'er-reaches; 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**

I will speak to this fellow. Whose grave's this, sirrah?

**Gravedigger**

Mine, sir.

**HAMLET**

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

**Gravedigger**

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.

**HORATIO**

How absolute the knave is! we must speak by the card, or equivocation will undo us. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

**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?

**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.

**HORATIO**

Why?

**Gravedigger**

'Twill, a not be seen in him there; there the men are as mad as he.

**HAMLET**

How came he mad?

**Gravedigger**

Very strangely, they say.

**HORATIO**

How strangely?

**Gravedigger**

Faith, e'en with losing his wits.

**HAMLET**

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

**Gravedigger**

I' faith, if he be not rotten before he die--as we have many pocky corses now-a-days, that will scarce hold the laying in--he will last you some eight year or nine year: a tanner will last you nine year.

**HORATIO**

Why he more than another?

**Gravedigger**

Why, sir, his hide is so tanned with his trade, that he will keep out water a great while; Here's a skull now; this skull has lain in the earth three and twenty years.

**HAMLET**

Whose was it?

**Gravedigger**

A whoreson mad fellow's it was: whose do you think it was?

**HAMLET**

Nay, I know not.

**Gravedigger**

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

**HORATIO**

This?

**Gravedigger**

E'en that.

**HAMLET**

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 rims 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 flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar? Not one now, to mock your own grinning? quite chap-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.

**HORATIO**

What's that, my lord?

**HAMLET**

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

**HORATIO**

E'en so.

**HAMLET**

And smelt so? pah!

*Puts down the skull*

**HORATIO**

E'en so, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Alexander died, Alexander was buried,  
Alexander returneth into 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?  
Imperious Caesar, dead and turn'd to clay,  
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away:  
O, that that earth, which kept the world in awe,  
Should patch a wall to expel the winter flaw!