

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 5

Fear

Situation: Ophelia walks across the stage singing incoherent verses. Her actions give the others the impression that she is beyond help, the king saying “she is thinking about her father.” Others may well think her problem is Hamlet.

OPHELIA SINGS: “Tomorrow is Saint Valentine’s day, all in the morning betime, and I a maid at your window, to be your Valentine.”

KING: Pretty Ophelia.

OPHELIA SINGS: “You promised me to wed.”

KING: How long hath she been thus?

OPHELIA: I hope all will be well. We must be patient, but I cannot choose but weep to think they would lay him i’ th’ cold ground. My brother shall know of it. Good night, ladies, good night.

She exits.

KING: Follow her close; give her good watch, I pray you.

Horatio exits.

Claudius to Gertrude

O, Gertrude, this is the poison of deep
Grief; it’s from her father’s death. Sorrows keep
Coming; her father’s slain and your son’s gone,
The author of his removal. People
Are talking and the whispering goes on;
These sudden events are taking their toll.
By not having properly interred him
And with Ophelia split by this ill whim,
We’re but the picture of mere beasts. And her
Brother has in secret come from France, feeds
On these rumors, hearing each gossiper
Draw it to me. I know not where this leads.
O, dear Gertrude, these are frightening days
Murd’ring me piece by piece in many ways.