

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 4

Honor

Situation: Young Fortinbras and his Norwegian army are marching through Denmark to secure in Poland “a little patch of ground that hath in it no profit but the name.” This effort causes Hamlet to ask himself what is the purpose and honor in such an exercise.

HAMLET: Two thousand souls and twenty thousand ducats will not debate the question of this straw. This is th' abscess of much wealth and peace, that inward breaks and shows no cause on the outside why the man dies.

CAPTAIN: God be wi' you, sir.

He exits.

ROSENCRANTZ: Will 't please you to go, my lord?

All exit but Hamlet.

HAMLET: How all occasions do inform against me and spur my dull revenge.

Hamlet to himself, No. 5

Is man no more than a beast if his chief
Good is to sleep and feed during his brief
Stay? Since God gave us the power of thought,
Surely he didn't intend we grow stale
From unuse. Why do I say “This I ought
Do” and yet not do it? Norway doth rail
And this tender prince doth risk all for his
Country, even for an eggshell. It is
To find quarrel in a straw when honor's
At stake; otherwise fight only if the
Argument is great. This trick of fame bores
Me, knowing they to die for fantasy.
O, for the rest of my pale life on earth
I'll hold bloody thoughts or be nothing worth.