

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 4

Observation

Situation: Late on another cold winter's night, at the castle at Elsinore, Hamlet and Horatio wait patiently for the hoped-for return of the ghost of the late King Hamlet. The only sounds are the trumpets announcing that the king is awake and drinking.

HAMLET: The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold. What hour now?

A flourish of trumpets.

HORATIO: What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET: The king stays awake tonight drinking. As he drains his draughts of Rhine wine down, the kettledrum and trumpet thus bray out the triumph of emptying the cup in one draft.

HORATIO: Is it a custom?

HAMLET: Ay, marry, is 't.

Hamlet to Horatio, No. 1

This heavy-headed drinking goes a bit
Too far, much defamed as we are for it.
It takes from our great feats, Horatio,
Fair Dane; loyal, good friend. It is a custom
Better breached in honor than observed. So
Oft it seems inherited, as if some
Are guilty by birth, yet man can't choose his
Origin or this trait that leads him. 'Tis
Sad, for other virtues, be they pure as
Grace, as infinite as any man may
Have, he'll be publicly censured and has
To live with it, because of it; the way
Of misfortune's star. That dram of evil
O'ergrows the noble to our own scandal.