

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 2, Scene 2

Revenge

Situation: A group of players has arrived at Elsinore, there to entertain the king and queen and other royalty. Hamlet asks them “Can you play The Murder of Gonzago?” They say they can, prompting the prince to say “we’ll ha ‘t tomorrow night.”

HAMLET TO ROSENCRANTZ AND GUILDENSTERN: My good friends, I’ll leave you till night. You are welcome to Elsinore.

ROSENCRANTZ: Good my lord.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern exit.

HAMLET: Now I am alone.

Hamlet to himself, No. 2

O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!
How can this actor force his eyes to cry,
His voice to break, his face to wan, when all
A fiction be, for nothing? What would he
Do had he my just motive and could call
On the passion that is mine. Yet I be
A pigeon-livered knave, like John-a-dreams
And can say nothing. Do I lack the means
To make oppression bitter? Hum, I’ve heard
That guilty creatures sitting at a play
Have proclaimed their malefactions when the word,
Though it hath no tongue, speaks for itself. May
The devil hath a role and the play ring
Truth. I’ll then catch the conscience of the king.