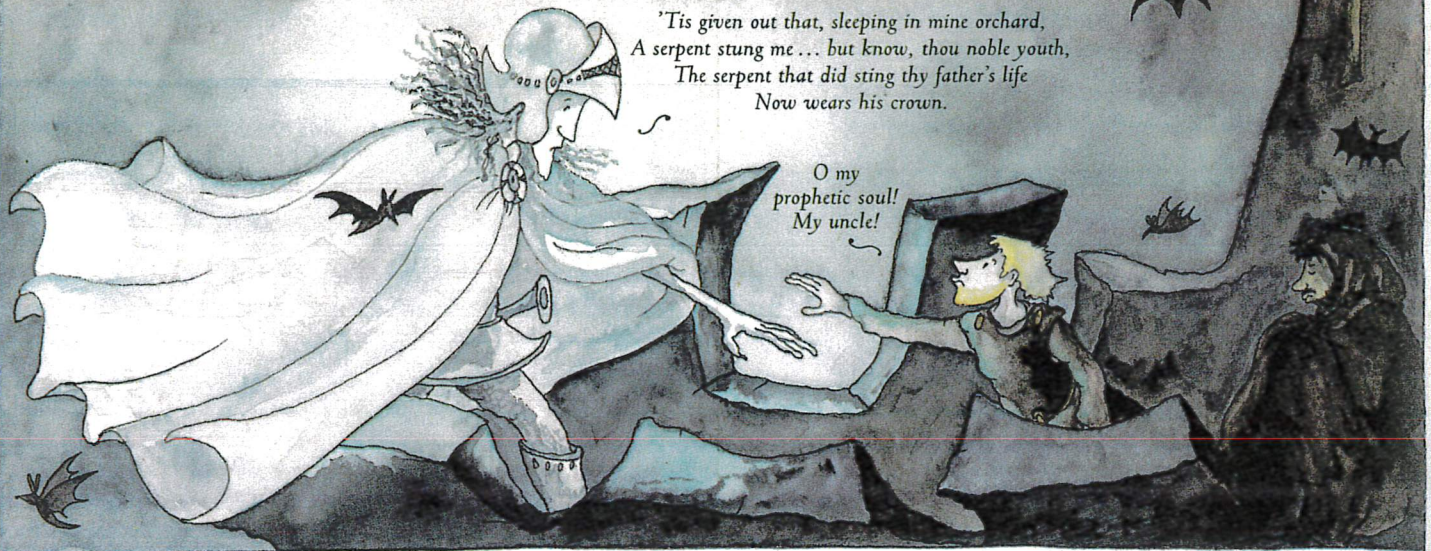


HAMLET

Prince of Denmark



'Tis given out that, sleeping in mine orchard,
A serpent stung me... but know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father's life
Now wears his crown.

O my
prophetic soul!
My uncle!

As Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, kept watch with his friend Horatio on the battlements of Elsinore Castle, his father's ghost appeared to him. The dead king told Hamlet that he had been murdered by his brother, Claudius, and urged Hamlet to take revenge.



But now, my cousin Hamlet,
and my son,
How is it that the clouds still
hang on you?

Not so, my lord;
I am too much i' the sun.

Do not for ever with
thy vailed lids
Seek for thy noble
father in the dust.

Gentle Hamlet had idolized his father and was outraged when his mother, Queen Gertrude, married his Uncle Claudius, who then became king. But Hamlet had not suspected his uncle of murder.



Do you
know me,
my lord?

Excellent well; you are a fishmonger.



Not I,
my lord.

Then I would you
were so honest
a man.

Hamlet kept the ghost's secret but all at court, including the king's chamberlain, Polonius, noticed how unstable Hamlet had become.

He often exaggerated his madness, so that his Uncle Claudius and Polonius would not realize that he was suspicious.

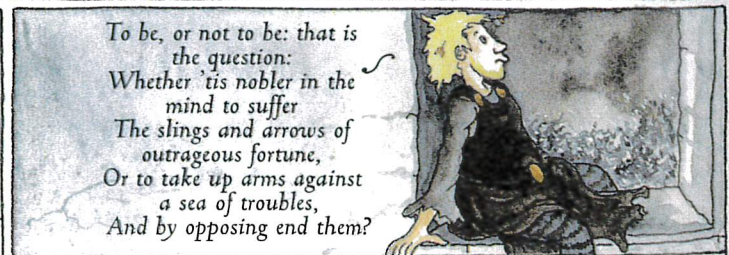


I did love
thee once.

Indeed, my lord,
you made me
believe so.

You should not
have believed me...
I loved you not.

I was the
more
deceived.



To be, or not to be: that is
the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the
mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of
outrageous fortune,
Or to take up arms against
a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them?

Even Ophelia, Polonius' daughter, suffered Hamlet's erratic behaviour. Hamlet's feelings for her fluctuated between tenderness and scorn.

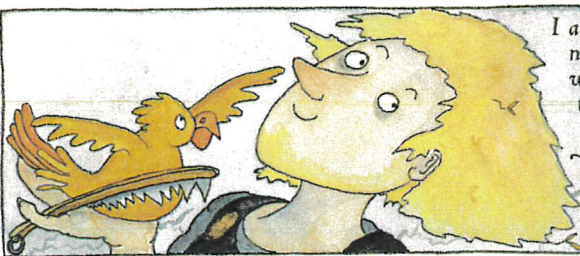
Unable to trust anyone at court, Hamlet felt miserable and confused. Should he take his own life or that of his father's murderer, Claudius?

Thou know'st 'tis common: All that live must die.



Hamlet's mother, unaware that Claudius had murdered Hamlet's father, thought his madness was grief for the good king's death.

I am but mad north-north-west: When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw.



Polonius was sure that Hamlet's madness stemmed from his love for Ophelia. Only Claudius feared a more sinister reason.

I'll have these players Play something like the murder of my father Before mine uncle: I'll observe his looks.



Meanwhile Hamlet's distress grew daily as he watched his mother, so recently widowed, and his murderous uncle together. Yet he hesitated to take revenge without more evidence. Then the arrival of an acting troupe gave Hamlet an idea of how to unmask King Claudius.

Thy natural magic and dire property, on wholesome life usurp immediately.

Give me some light: away!

Give o'er the play.

O good Horatio! I'll take the ghost's word for a thousand pound.



Before the assembled court, the actors, on Hamlet's orders, put on a play mimicking the ghost's story of his murder and its consequences. Claudius was so affected by the murder scene that he rushed from the room; Hamlet no longer doubted his uncle's guilt.

He's going to his mother's closet: Behind the arras I'll convey myself.

Thanks.



Claudius realized that he had been discovered and, hoping to learn more, encouraged Polonius to spy on Hamlet and Queen Gertrude.

Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.

Mother, you have my father much offended.

Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.

Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

Help, help, ho!

What, ho! Help, help, help!



From behind the drapes, Polonius overheard Hamlet grow violent when his mother spoke of Claudius as his "father". He cried out in alarm.

How now! A rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

O! I am slain.

O me! What hast thou done?



Hamlet, thinking it was Claudius' voice, plunged his sword through the drapes, killing Polonius. Anger made Hamlet unrepentant.

Do you not come your tardy son to chide?

Do not forget!

Alas! He's mad.



Hamlet continued to chide his mother until his father's ghost appeared, urging him to be gentler, but to avenge his death.

I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range...
He to England shall along with you.



Polonius' death gave Claudius an excuse to be rid of Hamlet. Claudius sent the Prince to England with two of his spies, who carried a letter ordering the English to execute Hamlet upon arrival. But Hamlet found the letter and exchanged the spies' names for his own.



On the journey, their ship was attacked by pirates. Hamlet leapt aboard to fight, while his companions fled to England – and their deaths.



The pirates, discovering that they had Prince Hamlet on board, returned him safely to Denmark, hoping for future favours.



Sweets to the sweet: farewell!

A ministering angel shall my sister be.

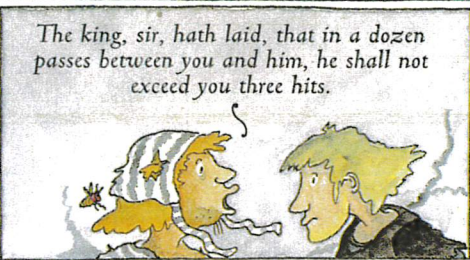
What! The fair Ophelia!

This same skull, sir, was Yorick's skull, the king's jester.

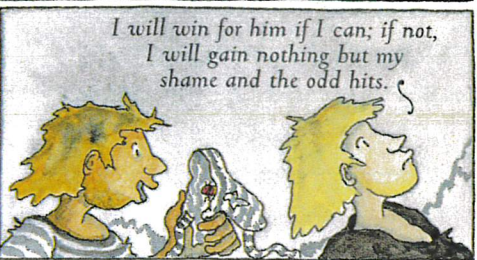
At Elsinore, Hamlet was greeted with the news of Ophelia's death. Deranged by her father's violent end, Ophelia had been garlanding a willow tree when she fell into the brook below and drowned. Hamlet was heartbroken. So too was Laertes, who mourned her loss as only a brother can.



Revenge should have no bounds.



The king, sir, hath laid, that in a dozen passes between you and him, he shall not exceed you three hits.



I will win for him if I can; if not, I will gain nothing but my shame and the odd hits.

In fact, Laertes blamed Hamlet for killing both his father and his sister and he longed for Hamlet's death as much as Claudius did. The pair therefore plotted to kill Hamlet and make his death look like an accident. To this end they issued a challenge to the Prince.



Gertrude, do not drink.

Have at you now!

Nay, come, again.

They bleed on both sides.

I will, my lord; I pray you, pardon me.

Hamlet was tempted into a fencing match with Laertes, who fought with a poisoned sword instead of a blunt foil. When Laertes drew blood, Hamlet let fly his fury and, in the scuffle, the swords changed hands. Then Laertes too was wounded by his own deadly weapon.

Come Hamlet rever

I'm c only ca see Oj

Harv You ma



She swoons to see them bleed.

No, no, the drink, the drink.

O villainy! Ho! Let the door be lock'd. Treachery!

Pray for a happy ending!

Just then, the queen cried out. Unwittingly, she had drunk from a poisoned cup, prepared for Hamlet by Claudius in case Laertes failed to kill him. Queen Gertrude collapsed on the floor. Hamlet at once suspected his treacherous uncle.



The treacherous instrument is in thy hand... Thy mother poison'd. I can no more. The king, the king's to blame.

The point evenom'd too!



Then, venom, to thy work!

O! Yet defend me, friends; I am but hurt!

What friends?

As Laertes lay dying, he told Hamlet that they had both been mortally wounded, and he confessed his part in Claudius' plot.

Reacting to his uncle's fresh villainy, Hamlet stabbed Claudius with the lethal sword, then forced him to drink from the cup of poison.



I am dead, Horatio. Wretched queen, adieu!

Here's yet some liquor left.



Give me the cup... And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain. To tell my story.

O sad Hamlet.

At last Hamlet had avenged his father's, and now his mother's, murders. As death drew near, he saw Horatio reach for the poison.

Horatio wished to join his friend in death. But Hamlet persuaded him that he must live to tell the true story of Prince Hamlet.



Goodnight, sweet prince. And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest!

She's no with m

I hope th guns do set fire the theat

This Horatio did when, moments later, the Prince of Norway arrived. After hearing the story, the prince ordered his cannons to fire a salute. For all who heard the tale knew that, had the fates allowed, Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, would have been a most royal and noble king.