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Rosencrantz & Guildenstern Are Dead

By Tom Stoppard

Heads.

Bet?

Heads I win.

Again...

Heads.

Heads.

Heads.

Heads.

Heads.

Whoops!

It must be indicative of something
besides the redistribution of wealth.

Heads.

A weaker man might be moved
to re-examine his faith,
for nothing else at least
in the law of probability...

Heads.

Consider.

One,
probability is a factor which
operates within natural forces.

Two, probability is not
operating as a factor.

Three, we are now held within um...
sub or supernatural forces.

Discuss!

What?

Look at it this way.

If six monkeys...

If six monkeys...

The law of averages,

if I have got this right means...

that if six monkeys were thrown

up in the air long enough...

they would land on their tails

about as often as they would

land on their...

Heads, getting a bit of

a bore, isn't it?

A bore?

Well...

What about the suspense?

What suspense?

It must be the law

of diminishing returns.

I still spell about to be broken.

Well, it was an even chance.

Seventy eight in a row.

A new record, I imagine.

Is that what you imagine?

A new record?

No questions?

Not a flicker of doubt?

I could be wrong.

No fear?

Fear?

Fear!

Seventy nine.

I think I have it.

Time has stopped dead.

The single experience of one coin
being spun once has been repeated.

A hundred and fifty six times.

On the whole, doubtful.

Or, a spectacular vindication
of the principle.

That each individual
coin spun individually is...
as likely to come down

heads as tails
and therefore should cause no
surprise each individual time it does.
Heads...
I've never known anything like it.
He has never known
anything like it.
But he has never known
anything to write home about.
Therefore it's just nothing
to write home about.
What's the first thing
you remember?
Oh, let's see, hm...
the first thing that comes
into my head, you mean?
No...
the first thing you remember...
No, it's not good. It's gone.
So long time ago.
You don't get my mean.
Most first thing after
all the things you forgot?
Oh, I see.
I've forgotten the question.
Are you happy?
What?
Content? At ease?
Well I suppose so.
What are you going to do now?
I don't know.
What do you want to do?
Look...
What about it?
We have been spinning coins
together since I don't know when...
and in all that time,
if it is all that time, one hundred
and fifty seven coins spun...
consecutively have come down heads
one hundred and fifty seven
consecutive times, and all you can do
is play with your food.
Wait a minute.

There was a messenger.
Rosencrantz... Guildenstern...
We were sent for.
Another curious scientific
phenomenon is the fact that
the fingernails grow after death
... as does the beard.
What?
Beard!
But you're not dead!
I didn't say they only started
to grow after death!
The fingernails also grow
before birth. Though not the beard.
What?
Beard! What's the matter with you?
The toenails on the other hand
never grow at all.
The toenails on the other foot
never grow at all.
Do you remember the first thing
that happened today?
Oh, I woke up, I suppose.
I've got it now...
That man, he woke us up.
A messenger.
That's it...
pale sky before dawn,
a man standing on his saddle
to bang on the shutters...
But then he called our names...
You remember, man woke us up.
We were sent for.
That's why we're here.
Traveling a matter of extreme
urgency... a royal summons,
his very words...
official business no questions asked
up, we get and off at the gallop,
fearful lest we come too late!
Too late for what?
How would I know?
We haven't got there yet.
What's that?

Halt!
An audience!
Don't move!
Perfect... well met, in fact,
and just in time.
Why's that?
Why, we grow rusty and you catch us
at the very point of decadence...
this time tomorrow we might have
forgotten everything we ever knew.
We'd be back where we started,
improvising.
Tumblers, are you?
We can give you a tumble,
if that's your taste,
and times being what they are.
Otherwise for a jingle of coin
we can do you a selection
of gory romances.
Pirated from the Italian
and it doesn't take much
to make a jingle...
even a single coin has music in it,
should it be gold.
Tragedians,
at your command.
My name is Guildenstern,
and this is Rosencrantz.
I'm sorry, his name's Guildenstern,
and I'm Rosencrantz.
We've played to bigger, but
quality counts for something.
Tragedians?
What exactly do you do?
Tragedy, sir.
Deaths and disclosures,
universal and particular,
denouements...
transvestite melodrama...
We transport you back into a world
of intrigue and illusion.
Clowns if you like...
murders...
We can do you ghosts...

and battles...
on the skirmish level...
heroes... villains...
tormented lovers...
set pieces in the poetic vein,
we can do you rapiers,
or rape...
or both,
by all means faithless wives
and ravished virgins...
flagrante delicto at a price.
For which there are special terms.
It costs little to watch,
and a little more to get
caught up in the action.
If that's your taste
and times being what they are.
What are they?
Indifferent.
Bad?
Wicked.
See anything you like?
Lucky thing we came along.
For us?
Also for you.
For some it is performance,
for others patronage,
they are two sides
of the same coin...
or being as there are so many
of us the same side of two coins.
It was luck, then?
Or fate.
Yours or ours?
It could hardly be one
without the other.
Fate then.
You said, caught up in the action?
I did! I did!
You're quicker than your friend.
For a handful of coins
I happen to have...
a private and uncut performance
of the Rape of the Sabine Women...

or rather woman...
or rather Alfred...
and for eight you can participate.
It could have been.
It didn't have to be obscene.
I was prepared.
But it's this, is it?
No enigma... no dignity,
nothing classical or poetic...
only this...
a comic pornographer
and a rabble of prostitutes.
You should have caught
us in better times.
We were purists then.
Excuse me!
Alfred.
You're not, ah,
exclusively players, then?
We're inclusively players, sir.
I had no idea--
No.
I mean I've heard of--,
but I've never actually seen...
I mean, what exactly do you do?
We keep to our usual stuff,
more or less, only inside out.
We do on stage the things
that are supposed to happen off.
Which is a kind of integrity,
if you look on every exit
as an entrance somewhere else.
Wait a minute.
What will you do for that?
Do you know any good plays?
Plays? Oh, yes.
One of the Greeks, perhaps?
You're familiar with the tragedies
of Antiquity, are you?
The great homicidal classics?
'Maidens aspiring to Godheads',
or vice versa? That's
your kind of thing, is it?
I can't say it is, really.

Eh we're more of the love,
blood and rhetoric school.
Well, we can do you blood
and love without the rhetoric
without the love...
and we can do you all three
concurrent or consecutive.
But we can't do you love
and rhetoric without the blood.
Blood is compulsory.
They're all blood, you see.
Is that what people want?
It's what we do.
Would you like a bet?
Double or nothing.
Heads.
Heads.
Double or... nothing.
Come on.
I say that was lucky.
It was "tails".
Welcome! Dear Rosencrantz
and Guildenstern.
Moreover that we much did
long to see you.
The need we have to use
you did provoke our hasty sending.
Something have you heard
of Hamlet's transformation,
so call it,
sith nor th' exterior
nor the inward men
resembles that it was.
What it should be,
more than his father's death,
that thus hath put him
so much from th' understanding
of himself.
I cannot dream of.
I entreat you both
that, being of so young days
brought up with him.
And sith so neighbored
to his youth and haviour,

that you vouch-safe your rest
here in our court some little time
so by your companies
to draw him on to pleasures
and to gather so much as
from occasion you may glean
whether aught to us
unknown afflicts him thus
that opened lies within our remedy.
Good...

Gentleman, he hath much
talked of you,
and sure I am, two men
there are not living
to whom he more adheres.
If it will please you
to show us so much gentry
and good will
as to extend your time
with us awhile for the supply
and profit of our hope,
your visitation shall
receive such thanks
as fits a king's remembrance.
Both your majesties might
by the sovereign power
you have of us,
put your dread pleasures
more into command
than to entreaty.
But we both obey,
and here give up ourselves
in the full bent
to lay our service freely
at your feet, to be commanded.
Thanks, Rosencrantz...
and gentle Guildenstern.
Thanks Guildenstern
and gentle Rosencrantz.
And I beseech you instantly to visit
my too much changed son.
Heaven make our presence
and our practises pleasant
and helpful to him!

Ah, amen!

I want to go home.

Don't let them confuse you.

We're in over our steps,
heading out of depth.

stepping out of the heads,
so heading to that step.

Stop there!

Hasn't it ever happened to you
that all of a sudden

and for no reason at all
you haven't the faintest idea
how to spell the word...

which or "house"...

because when you write it down
you just can't remember ever
having seen those letters
in that order before?

I remember...

What?

I remember when there were
no questions.

There were always questions.

Answers, yes.

There were answers to everything.

You've forgotten.

I haven't forgotten.

How I used to remember my own
name! And yours, Oh, yes!

There were answers
everywhere you looked.

There was no question about it--
people knew who we were
and if they didn't they asked
and we told them our names.

We did the trouble is,
each of them is plausible,
without being instinctive.

Instinctive?

All your life you live so close
to truth, it becomes a permanent
blur in the corner of your eye,
and when something nudges it into
outline it is like being ambushed

by a grotesque.
A man standing in his saddle
in the half-lit, half-alive dawn
banged in the shutters
and called two names.
And when he called we came.
That much is certain, we came.
Well, I can tell you
I'm sick to death of it.
I don't care which one I am.
So why don't you
make up your mind.
We didn't come all this way
for a christening. But we have been
comparatively fortunate.
We might have been left
to sift the whole field...
of human nomen-clature
like two blind men... looting
a bazaar for heir own portraits
at least we are presented
with alternatives.
Well, as from now my name is...
But not choice.
Your smallest action sets off
another somewhere else,
and is set off by it.
And I do think or else this brain of
mine hunts not the trail of policy...
We're going round in circles!
... so sure as it hath use to do
that I have found the very cause
of hamlet's lunacy!
Oh, speak of that!
That do I long to hear.
Give first admittance
to the ambassadors.
He tells me, my dear Gertrude,
he hath found the head and
source of all your son's distemper.
I doubt it is no other
but the main...
his father's death and
our o'er hasty marriage.

Well... we shall sift him.
It's all right.
There's a logic at work.
It's all done for you, don't worry.
Enjoy it. Relax.
Relax.
We have been briefed.
Have we?
Hamlet's transformation.
What do you recollect?
Well, he's changed, hasn't he?
The exterior and inward
man fails to resemble.
Draw him onto pleasures...
glean what afflicts him.
Something more than
his father's death.
He's always talking about us...
there aren't two people living
whom he dotes on more than us.
We cheer him up... find out
what's the matter.
Exactly.
It's a matter of asking the right
questions and giving away
as little as we can.
And then we can go?
And receive such thanks as fits
as king's remembrance.
Oh, I like the sound of that...
What do you think
she means by remembrance?
He doesn't forget his friend?
Would you care to estimate?
Some kings tend to be amnesiac,
others in the opposite, I suppose...
whatever that is...
How much?
Elephantine.
How much?
Retentive... he's a very
retentive king, a royal retainer.
What are you playing at?
Words... words

they're all we have to go on.
Look at this.
Leave things alone.
Sorry.
This is interesting.
You would think
that this would fall
faster than this, wouldn't you?
Well... and you'd be
absolutely right.
Fancy a game?
We're spectators.
Do you want to play questions?
How do you play that?
You have to ask questions.
Statement! One... love.
Cheating!
How?
I hadn't started yet.
Statement! Two... love.
Are you counting that?
What?
Are you counting that?
Foul! No repetitions.
Three... love and game.
I'm not going to play if you're
going to be like that.
Whose serve?
Err...
Hesitation! Love... one.
Whose go?
Why?
Why not?
What for?
Foul! No synonyms!
One... all.
What in God's name is going on?
Foul! No rhetoric!
Two... one.
What does it all add up to?
Can't you guess?
Were you addressing me?
Is there anyone else?
Who?

How would I know?
Why do you ask?
Are you serious?
Was that rhetoric?
No.
Statement! Two all.
Game point.
What's the matter with you today?
When?
What?
Are you deaf?
Am I dead?
Yes or no?
Is there a choice?
Is there a God?
Foul! No non sequiturs!
Three... two, one game all.
What's your name?
What's yours?
You first.
Statement! One... love.
What's your name
when you're at home?
What's yours?
When I'm at home?
Is it different at home?
What home?
Haven't you got one?
Why do you ask?
What are you driving at?
What's your name?
Repetition! Two... love.
Match point.
Who do you think you are?
Rhetoric!! Game and match!
Rosencrantz!
What?
There!
How was that?
Clever.
Natural?
Instinctive!
Now I'll try you!
Not yet! Catch me unawares!

Guilden...

Me unawares.

Ready?

Never mind.

... for I will use no art,
mad let us grant him then
and now remains.

That we find out the cause
of this effect, or rather say,
the cause of this defect.
For this effect defective,

comes by cause:

and the remainder thus.

Perpend. I have a daughter:

Have, while she mine.

Who in her duty and obedience,

mark. Hath given me this:

now gather, and surmise.

"To the Celestial,

and my souI's idol,

the most beautified Ophelia"

That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase,

beautified is a vile phrase:

but eh, you shall hear thus

"In her excellent white bosom..."

Came this from Hamlet to her?

Good Madam stay awhile,

I will be faithful.

"Doubt thou, the stars are fire."

"Doubt that the sun doth move,

but never doubt I love."

... this hot love on the wing,

as I perceived it,

I must tell you that.

Before my daughter told me,

what might you.

Or my dear Majesty

your Queen here, think,

If I had play'd the desk

or table-book. Or given

my heart a winking,

dump, or look'd upon this love,

with idle sight, what might you think?

No, I went round to work,
and my mistress thus I did bespeak,
Lord Hamlet is a Prince
out of thy star,
this must not be...
How does my good lord Hamlet?
Well, God have mercy.
Do you know me, my lord?
Excellent.
Excellent well.
You are a fishmonger.
Not I, my lord.
Then I would you were
so honest a man.
Honest my lord?
What do you read, my lord?
Words, words, words.
What is the matter, my lord?
Between who?
I mean the matter that
your read, my lord.
Statement.
But the satirical role it says here
that old man have grey beards...
Who was that?
Didn't you know him?
He didn't know me.
He didn't see you.
I didn't see him.
We shall see.
I hardly knew him, he's changed.
You could see that?
Transformed.
How do you know?
Inside and out.
I see.
He's not himself.
He's changed.
I could see that.
Glean what afflicts him!
Me?
Him.
How?
Question and answer.

He's afflicted.
You question, I answer.
He's not himself, you know.
I'm him, you see.
Who am I?
You're yourself.
And he's you?
Not a bit of it.
Are you afflicted?
That's the idea. Are you ready?
Let's go back a bit.
I'm afflicted.
I see.
Glean what afflicts me.
Right.
Question and answer.
How should I begin?
Address me.
My dear Guildenstern!
You've forgotten, haven't you?
My dear Rosencrantz!
I don't think you quite understand.
What we are attempting
is a hypothesis...
in which I answer for him
while you ask me question.
Ready?
You know what to do?
What?
Are you stupid?
Parden?
Are you deaf?
Did you speak?
Not now...
Statement!
Not now!
What sign?
What?
Well... uh, uh...
Would you like a bite?
No.
Thank you.
Oh, you mean you pretend to be him.
And I ask you questions!

Very good.
You had me confused.
I could see I had.
How should I begin?
Address me.
My honoured lord!
My dear Rosencrantz!
Am I pretending to be you, then?
Certainly not.
Well if you like.
Shall we continue.
My honoured lord!
My dear fellow!
How are you?
Afflicted!
Really? In what way?
Transformed.
Inside or out?
Both.
I see.
Not much new there.
Look go into details...
Delve.
Probe the background...
establish the situation.
So your uncle's
the king of Denmark?
That's right.
And my father before him.
His father before him.
No, my father before him.
But surely...
You may well ask.
Let me get it straight.
Your father was king. You were
his only son. Your father dies.
You are of age.
Your uncle becomes king.
Yes.
Unusual.
Undid me.
Undeniable.
He slipped in.
Which reminds me.

Well, it would.
I don't want to be personal.
It's common knowledge.
Your mother's marriage.
He slipped in.
His body was still warm.
So was hers.
Extraordinary.
Indecent.
It makes you think.
Don't think I haven't.
And with her husband's brother.
They were close.
She went to him.
Too close.
For comfort.
It looks bad.
It adds up.
Incest to adultery.
Would you go so far.
Never!
To sum up!
Your father, whom you love, dies,
you are his heir, you come back...
to find that hardly was the corpse
cold before his young brother...
popped onto his throne
and into his sheets,
thereby offending both
legal and natural practice.
Now... why exactly are you behaving
in this extraordinary manner?
I can't imagine!
And yet we were sent for.
And we did come.
Rosencrantz...
What?
Guildenstern.
What?
Don't you discriminate at all?
What?
Nothing!
Look at this!
Watch closely!

Interesting.
Will you walk out
of the air, my lord?
Into my grave?
Indeed that is out of the air.
My honourable lord.
I would, most humbly,
take my leave of you.
You cannot, sir, take
from me anything that I will
more willingly part with all.
Except my life.
Except my life.
Except my life.
Fare you well, my lord.
There tedious old fools.
You go to seek the lord Hamlet?
There he is.
What's he doing?
Talking... to himself.
My honoured lord!
My most dear lord!
My excellent good friends!
How dost thou, Guildenstern?
Ah, Rosencrantz!
Oh, good lads,
how do you both?
As the indifferent children
of the earth.
Happy in that we are not overhappy.
On Fortune's cap we are
not the very button.
Nor the soles of her shoes?
Neither, my lord.
Then you live about her waist,
or in the middle of her favours?
Faith, her privates we.
In the secret parts of fortune?
O, most true!
She is a strumpet.
Well what news?
None, my lord, but that
the world's grown honest.
Then is doomsday near.

But your news is not true.
Let me question more in particular.
What have you, my good friends
deserved at the hands of fortune
that she spends you to prison hither?
Prison, my lord?
Denmark's a prison.
Then is the world one.
A goodly one,
in which there are many confines,
wards and dungeons,
Denmark begin one of the worst.
We think not so, my lord.
Why, then 'tis none to you,
for there is nothing either
good or bad
but thinking makes it so.
To me it is a prison.
Why then your ambition makes it one.
'Tis too narrow for your mind.
O, God, I could be bounded in
a nutshell and count myself a king
of infinite space...
were it not that I have bad dreams.
But in the beaten way of friendship,
what make you at Elsinore?
To visit you, my lord:
no other occasion.
Beggard that I am,
I am even poor in thanks
but I thank you.
Were you not sent for?
Is it your own inclining?
Is it a free visitation?
Well... come, come,
nay, speak.
What should we say, my lord?
Why anything but to the purpose.
You were sent for.
And there is a kind of confession
in your looks which your modesties
have not craft enough to colour.
I know the good King and Queen
have sent for you.

To what end, my lord?
That you must teach me.
Be even and direct with me,
whether you were sent for or no.
My lord, we were sent for.
Ah... I will tell you why.
I know he finds it striking
too short at grief...
His antique sword the bearer
to his arms lies where it falls,
repugnant to command.
I have of late,
but wherefore I know not,
lost all my mirth, foregone
all custom of exercises,
and indeed, it goes so heavily
with my dispositions...
that this goodly frame, the earth,
seems to me a sterile promontory:
this most excellent canopy,
the air, look you, this brave
o'er hanging firmament...
this majestical roof
fretted with golden fire,
Why,
it appeareth nothing to me
but a foul and pestilent
congregation of vapours.
What a piece of
work is a man,
How noble in reason,
how infinite in faculties,
in form and moving
how express and admirable,
in action how like an angel,
in apprehension how like a god:
the beauty of the world,
the paragon of animals,
and yet to me,
what is this quint essence of dust?
Man delights not me...
nor woman neither though by your
smiling you seem to say so.
My lord, there was

no such stuff in my thoughts.
Why did ye laugh then,
when I said "Man delights not me"?
To think, my lord,
if you delight not in man...
what Lenten entertainment
the players shall receive from you.
We coted them on the way:
and hither are they coming
to offer you service.
Eh, he that plays
the king shall be welcome.
Gentleman, you are welcome to
Elsinore. Your hands, come then.
You are welcome.
But my uncle-father
and aunt-mother are deceived.
In what, my dear lord?
I am but mad north-northwest.
when the wind is southerly
I know a hawk from a handsaw.
Well be with you, gentleman.
Hark you... Guildenstern...
And eh you too, at each ear a hearer.
that great baby you see there is not
yet out of his swaddling clouts.
I will prophesy he comes
to tell me of the players.
My lord, I have news to tell you.
Eh my lord,
I have news to tell you.
When Roscius was
an actor in Rome.
The actors are come hither,
my lord.
Buzz, buzz.
Upon my honour--
Then came each actor on his ass.
The best actors in the world,
either for tragedy, comedy...
history, pastoral, pastoral-comical,
historical-pastoral,
tragical-historical.
I thought you...

No.
I say... look at this!
I think we can say
we made some progress.
You think so?
I think we can say that.
I think we can say
he made us look ridiculous.
We played it close
to the chest of course.
Question and answer!
He was scoring off us
all down the line.
He caught us on the wrong foot once
or twice, perhaps, but I think
we gained some ground.
He murdered us.
He might have had the edge.
Twenty-seven-three, and you think
he might have had the edge?
He murdered us.
What about our evasions?
Oh, our evasions were lovely.
You were sent for? He says.
"My lord, we were sent for."
I didn't know where to put myself.
He had six rhetorical-
It was question and answer alright.
And two repetitions.
Twenty-seven questions he got out
and answered three. I was waiting
for you to delve.
When is he going to start delving,
I asked myself.
We got his symptoms, didn't we?
Half of what he said meant
something else, and the other
half didn't mean anything at all.
Thwarted ambition a sense
of grievance, that's my diagnosis.
Six rhetorical and two repetition,
leaving nineteen of which
we answered fifteen.
And what did we get in return?

He's depressed!
Denmark's a prison and he'd
rather live in a nutshell.
Some shadow play about the nature of
ambition and finally one direct
question which might've led somewhere
and led in fact to his illuminating
claim to tell a hawk for a handbag.
Handsaw.
Handsaw.
When the wind is southerly.
And the weather's clear.
And when it isn't he can't.
He's at the mercy
of the elements.
Is that southerly?
We came from roughly south.
Which way is that?
In the morning the sun would be
easterly. I think we can assume that.
That it's morning?
If it is, and the sun is over there,
for instance,
that would be northerly.
On the other hand,
if it is not morning
and the sun is over there.
that would still be northerly.
To put it another way,
if we came from down there,
and it's morning, the sun
would be up there...
but if is actually, over there,
and it's still morning,
we must have come from back
there and if that is southerly,
and the sun is really over there...
then it's the afternoon.
However, if none of these
is the case.
Why don't you go and have a look?
Pragmatism!
Is that all you have to offer?
I merely suggest

the position of the sun...
if it is out, would give
you a rough idea of the time.
Alternatively, the clock,
if it is going,
would give you a rough idea
of the position of the sun.
I forget which you are
trying to establish.
I am trying to establish
the direction of the wind.
There isn't any wind.
Draught, yes.
Repugnant to command, unequal
match'd Pyrrhus at Priam drives,
in rage strikes wide.
but with the whiff
and wind of his fell sword,
the unnerved father falls.
Then senseless llium,
seeming to feel his blow,
with flaming top. Stoops to his base,
and with a hideous crash.
Takes prisoner Pyrrhus' ear.
For lo, his sword...
Of reverend Priam,
seem'd I the air to stick...
Mind the bottom of...
the step.
Sorry.
Aroused vengeance sets
him new a-word,
and never did the Cyclops'
hammers fall on Mars his armours,
forg'd for proof eterne,
with less remorse than
Pyrrhus bleeding sword. Priam.
Out... out thou
strumpet Fortune,
all you gods, in general
Synod take away her power,
break all the spokes
and fellies from her wheel,
and bowl the round nave down

the hill of Heaven, as low as
to the fiends.
This is too long.
It shall to the barber's,
with your beard.

Prithee say on:

or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps.
Say on, come to Hecuba.
But who, O who, had
seen the mobled Queen...
The mobled Queen?
That's good, mobled Queen is good.
This is interesting.
'Tis well.
I'll have thee speak
out the rest of this soon.
Good, my lord, will you see
the players well bestowed?
Do you hear?
Let them be well used, for
they are the abstract and
brief chronicles of the time.
After your death you were better
have a bad epitaph than their
ill report while you live.
My lord, I will use them
according to their desert.
God's bodkin, man, much better!
Use every man after his desert,
and who shall scape whipping?
Use them after your own
honour and dignity.
The less they deserve,
the more merit is in your bounty.
Take them in.
Come sirs.
Follow him, friends:
we'll hear a play tomorrow.
Can you play the
"Murder of Gonzago"?
Ay, my lord.
We'll have it tomorrow night.
You could for a need study a speech

of some 12 or 16 lines which I would
set down and insert in it.
Follow that lord and
look you mock him not.
My good friends,
I'll leave you till night.
You are welcome in Elsinore.
Good, my lord.
So you've caught up.
Not yet, sir.
Now mind your tongue,
or we'll have it out and
throw the rest of you away like
a nightingale at a Roman feast.
Took the words out of my mouth.
You'd be lost for words.
You'd be tongue tied.
Like a mute in a monologue.
Like a nightingale
at a Roman feast.
You left us.
Yes... on the road.
You don't understand the humiliation
of it... to be tricked out of
the single assumption
that makes our existence bearable.
That somebody is watching.
We are actors, we are
the opposite of people.
So?
We need an audience.
We had an appointment.
That is true.
You know why you're here.
We only know what
we're told and for all we
know it isn't even true.
One acts on assumptions.
What do you assume?
Hamlet is not himself outside or in.
We have to glean what afflicts him.
He's melancholy.
Melancholy?
Mad.

How is he mad?
How's he mad?
More morose than mad perhaps.
Melancholy.
Moody.
He had moods.
Of moroseness?
Madness and yet.
Quite.
For instance.
He talks to himself which
might be madness.
If he didn't talk sense,
which he does.
Which suggests the opposite.
Of what?
I think I have it.
A man talking sense to himself...
is no madder than a man talking
nonsense not to himself.
Or just as mad.
Or just as mad.
And he does both.
So there you are.
Start raving sane.
Why?
Ah. Why?
Exactly.
Exactly what?
Exactly why?
Exactly why what?
What?
Why?
Why what, exactly?
Why is he mad?
I don't know!
The old man thinks he's
in love with his daughter.
We're out of our depth here!
No, no, no, he hasn't
got a daughter,
the old man thinks he's in
love with his daughter.
The old man is?

Hamlet. In love.
Man's daughter.
The old man thinks.
It's beginning to make sense!
Unrequited passion!
Where are you going?
I can come and go as I please.
You know your way around.
I've been here before.
We're still finding our feet.
I should concentrate on
not losing your heads.
Do you speak from knowledge?
Precedent.
You've been here before.
And I know which way
the wind is blowing.
Wait! Back!
This place is a mad house.
Behind ye!
Are you familiar with this play?
No.
A slaughterhouse,
eight corpses all told.
Six.
Eight.
What are they?
They're dead.
Actor! What do you know about death?
The mechanics of cheap melodrama!
Cheap melodrama.
It doesn't bring
death home to anyone!
It's not at home to anyone!
Shut up!
Shut up!
You can't do death!
On the contrary,
it's what we do best.
We have to exploit
whatever talent is given to us
and our talent is for dying.
We can die heroically, comically,
ironically, sadly, suddenly, slowly...

disgustingly charmingly
or from a great height.
Audiences know what to expect,
and that is all they are
prepared to believe in.
Next...
And can you by no drift of
conference get from him why
he puts on his confusion?
He does confess he
feels himself distracted.
But from what cause
he will by no means speak.
(To be or not to be...)
that is the question.
Did he receive you well?
Most like a gentleman.
But with much forcing
of his disposition.
Niggard of question but of our
demands, most free in his reply.
Did you assay him
to any pastime?
Madam, it so fell out that certain
players we o'er-raught on the wat
of these we told him, and there
did seem in him a kind of joy
to hear of it.
They are here about the court,
this night to play before him.
'Tis most true,
and he beseeched me to entreat
your Majesties to here
and see the matter.
Good gentlemen,
give him a further edge and drive
his purpose into these delights.
We shall, my lord.
Sweet Gertrude, leave us too...
For we have closely
sent for Hamlet hither,
that he, as 'twere by accident
may here affront Ophelia.
Do you ever think of yourself

as actually dead lying in a box
with a lid on it?

No.

Nor do I really.

It's silly to be depressed by it.

I mean, one thinks of it
like being alive in a box,
and one keeps forgetting to take
into account the fact that
one is dead...

which should make all
the difference... shouldn't it?

I mean, you'd never know you
were in a box, would you?

It would be just like
you were asleep in a box.

Not that I'd like to sleep in a box,
mind you, not without any air,
you'd wake up dead for a start,
and then where would you be?

In a box. That's the bit I don't
like frankly. That's why don't
think of it.

Because you'd be helpless?
Stuffed in a box like that, I mean,
you'd be in there for ever.

Even taking into account the fact
that you're dead, it isn't
a pleasant thought.

Especially if you're dead,
really...

ask yourself,
if I asked you straight off...

I'm going to stuff you in this box
now, would you rather
be alive or dead.

Naturally, you prefer to be alive.

Life in a box is better than
no life at all. I expect.

You'd have a chance at least.

You could lie there thinking well,
at least I'm not dead!

In a minute somebody is
going to bang on the lid

and tell me to come out.
Hey, you! What's yer name!
Come out of there!
I think I'm going to kill you.
Nymph, in thy orisons be
all my sins remembered.
I wouldn't think about it,
if I were you. You'd only
get depressed.
My lord, I have
rememberances of yours
that I have long had
long to redeliver,
I pray you now receive them.
No, not I.
I never gave you ought.
My honoured lord, you know
right well you did.
And with them words of so
sweet breath composed as
made the things more rich.
Whatever became of the moment
when one first knew about death?
There must have been one,
a moment, in childhood,
when it first occurred to you that
you don't go on forever.
It must have been shattering
stamped into one's memory.
And yet I can't remember it.
It never occurred to me at all.
We must be born with
an intuition of mortality.
Before we know the word for it,
before we know
that there are words,
out we come,
bloodied and squalling...
with the knowledge that for all
the points of the compass,
there's only one direction
and time is its only measure.
What is the dumb show for?
It's a device, really,

it makes the action that follows
more or less comprehensible.
You understand,
we are tied down to a language
which makes up in obscurity
what it lacks in style.
Is this the "Murder of Gonzago"?
That's the least of it.
Who was that?
The king's brother
and uncle to the prince.
Not exactly fraternal.
Not exactly avuncular
as time goes on.
Go to, I'll no more on't,
it hath made me mad!
I say we will have
no more marriages!
Those that are married already
all but one shall live.
The rest shall keep as they are.
To a nunnery, go.
That didn't look like love to me.
Love!
His affections do not that way tend,
nor what he spake,
though it lacked form a little,
was not like madness.
How now Ophelia.
You need not tell us what
Lord Hamlet said, we heard it all.
There's something in his soul
o'er which his melancholy
sits on brood.
And I do doubt the hatch and
the disclose will be some danger,
which for to prevent
I have in quick determination.
Thus set it down:
he shall with speed to England.
Gentlemen! Gentlemen,
it doesn't seem to be coming.
We are not getting it at all
what do you think?

What was I supposed to think?
Wasn't that the end?
Do you call that an ending?
With practically everyone
still on his feet?
My goodness
no over your dead body.
There's a design at work in all
art surely you know that?
Events must play themselves
out to an aesthetic, moral
and logical conclusion.
And what's that in this case?
It never varies.
We aim for
the point where everyone
who is marked for death dies.
Marked?
Generally speaking things have
gone about as far as
they can possibly go
when things have got about as
bad as they can reasonably get.
Who decides?
Decides? It is written.
We're tragedians, you see.
We follow direction there
is no choice involved.
The bad end unhappily,
the good unluckily.
That is what tragedy means.
Next!
Having murdered his brother
and wooed the widow,
the Poisoner mounts the throne!
Here we see him.
And his queen give rein
to their unbridled passion!
Enter Lucianus,
nephew to the king!
Usurped by his uncle and shattered
by his mother's incestuous marriage...
He loses his reason.
Throwing the court into turmoil

and disarray staggering
from the suicidal to the merely idle.
He has a plan to catch
the conscience of the king.
The king rises!
What...
frighted with false fire!
How fares my lord?
Give o'er the play!
Give me some light!
Away!
That's so interesting play.
What a thing of the world!
It wasn't that bad...
There's something
they're not telling us.
What?
There's something
they're not telling us.
My lord...
My lord...
The Queen would speak with you.
And presently...
Do you see yonder cloud that's
almost in the shape of a camel?
By the mass, and this like
a camel indeed.
Me thinks it is like a weasel.
It is backed like a weasel.
Or like a whale?
Very like a whale.
Then I will come to
my mother by and by.
I will say so.
'By and by' is easily said.
Leave me, friends.
I like him not, nor stand it safe
with us to let his madness range.
Therefore prepare you.
I your commission will forthwith
despatch, and he to England
shall along with you.
No by the Rood, not so:
You are the Queen,

your husband's brother's wife,
but would you were not so.
You are my mother.
Nay, then I'll set those to you
than can speak.
Come come and sit you down,
you shall not budge.
You go not till I sent you up
a glass, where you may see
the in most part of you.
What wilt thou do thou:
wilt not murder me.
Help... help... ho.
How now! A rat?
Dead, for a ducat dead!
Oh, I am slain!
Oh me, what hast thou done?
Nay, I know not!
Is the king?
Oh, what a rash and
bloody deed is this?
A rash and bloody deed?
A bloody deed almost as bad,
good mother, as kill a king and
marry with his brother.
As kill a king?
Ay, lady, it was my word.
Thou wretched, rash,
intruding fool, farewell!
Is that you?
I don't know.
It's you.
We're not dead yet then?
Well we're here, aren't we?
Are we?
I can't see a thing.
We're on a boat.
I know.
Dark, isn't it?
Not for night.
No, not for night.
It's dark for day.
Oh, yes, it's dark for day.
Do you think death

could possibly be a boat?
No, no, no...
death is... not. Death isn't.
You take my meaning. Death is
the ultimate negative. Not being.
You can't not be on a boat.
I've frequently not been on boats.
No, no, no...
what you've been is not on boats.
I wish I was dead.
I could jump over the side.
That would put a spoke
in their wheel.
Unless they're counting on it.
I shall remain on board.
That will put a spoke in their wheel.
You all right?
Yes, why?
Would you like to come up now?
Yes all right, thank you.
Try to be more careful.
Sorry.
Nice bit of planking that.
Yes.
Lovely bilges.
Yes.
Beautiful bottom...
Yes. I'm very fond of boats myself.
I like the way
they're contained.
You don't have to worry
about which way to go,
or whether to go at all...
the question doesn't arise,
does it?
I think I'll spend the rest
of my life on boats.
Very healthy.
One is free on a boat.
For a time, relatively.
I think I'm going to be sick.
He's there!
What's he doing?
Sleeping.

It's all right for him.
What is?
He can sleep.
It's all right for him.
He's got us now.
He can sleep.
It's all done for him.
He's got us.
And we've got nothing.
And we've got nothing.
Why don't you say something original!
You don't take me up on anything...
you just repeat everything
I say in a different order.
I can't think of anything original.
I am only good in support.
I'm sick of making the running.
There it's all right.
I'll see we're all right.
But we've got nothing to go on.
We're out on our own.
We're on our way to England.
We're taking Hamlet
to the English King.
What for?
What for? Where have you been?
When?
We've got a letter.
You remember the letter.
Do I?
Everything is explained
in the letter.
Is that it, then?
What?
So we take Hamlet to the English
King, we hand over the letter,
what then?
That's it, we're finished.
Who is the English King?
That depends on
when we get there.
So we've got a letter
which explains everything.
You've got it.

I thought you had it.
I do have it.
You have it.
You've got it.
I don't get it.
You haven't got it.
I just said that.
I've got it.
Oh, I've got it.
Shut up.
Right.
What a shambles!
We're just not getting anywhere!
I don't believe in it anyway.
In what?
England.
Just a conspiracy of
cartographers, you mean?
I mean I don't believe it.
And even if it's true, the King of
England won't know what we're
taking about.
What are we going to say?
We say your majesty,
we have arrived.
And who are you?
We are Rosencrantz
and Guildenstern.
Never heard of you!
Well, we're nobody special.
What's your game?
We have our instructions...
First I've heard of it.
Let me finish.
We've come from Denmark.
What do you want?
Nothing...
We're delivering Hamlet...
Who's he?
You've heard of him.
Oh, I've heard of him all right
and I want nothing to do with it.
You march in here without
so much as a by your leave

and expect me to take in every lunatic you try to pass off with a lot of unsubstantiated.

We've got a letter!

I see... I see...

Well, this seems to support your story. Such as it is... it is an exact command from the King of Denmark. for several different reasons, importing Denmark's health and England's too, that on the reading of this letter, without delay, I should have Hamlet's head cut off!

We're his friends.

How do you know?

From our young days brought up with him.

You've only got their word for it. But that's what we depend on.

Well, yes... and then again no. Let us keep things in proportion. Assume, if you like, that they're going to kill him.

Well, he is a man, he is mortal. Death comes too, so on extra. And consequently he would have died anyway, sooner or later. And then again, what is so terrible about death? As Socrates so philosophically put it, since we don't know what death is, it is illogical to fear it. It might be... very nice.

Or to look at it another way, we are little men, we don't know the ins and outs of the matter, there are wheels within wheels, etc...

All in all, I think we'd be well advised to leave well alone. It's awful.

But it could have been worse. I was beginning to think it was.

Night.
Huh, all in the same boat then.
What do you make of it so far?
What's a happening?
Pirates.
Everyone on stage!
Hamlet!
Where's Hamlet?
Gone.
Gone where?
The pirates took him.
But they can't.
We're supposed to be...
we've got a letter which says...
the whole thing's pointless
without him, we need
Hamlet for our release!
I'll pretend to be...
You pretend to be him and...
I suppose we just go on.
Go where?
England.
England! I don't believe it!
Just a conspiracy
of cartographers you mean.
I mean I don't believe it and even
if it's true what do we say?
We say we've arrived!
Who are you?
We are Guildenstern
and Rosencrantz.
Which is which?
Well, I'm Guildenstern.
And then he's Rosencrantz. Exactly.
What does this have to do with me?
You turn up out of the blue
with some cock and bull story.
We have a letter!
A letter!
As England is Denmark's faithful
tributary as love between them
like the palm might flourish, etc.
That on the knowing of this contents,
without delay of any kind...

should those bearers Rosencrantz
and Guildenstern, put to
sudden death.
Not that letter.
Give him the other one.
I haven't got another one.
They've gone!
It's all over!
Where we went wrong?
Was getting on a boat.
They had it in for us didn't they?
Right from the beginning who'd have
thought that we were so important?
But why?
Was it all for this? Who are we
that so much should converge
on our little deaths?
You are Rosencrantz
and Guildenstern. That is enough.
No, it is not enough.
To be told so little to
such an end and still, finally,
to be denied an explanation.
In our experience,
almost everything ends in death.
Your experience! Actors!
You die a thousand casual deaths
and come back in a different hat.
But nobody gets up after death...
there's no applause only silence
and some secondhand
clothes, that's death!
If we have a destiny, then so
had he and this is ours,
then that was his
and if there are no explanations
for us, then let there
be none for him.
Oh, come, come gentlemen,
no flattery it was merely competent.
You see, it is the kind
you do believe in,
it's what is expected.
Deaths for all ages and occasions!

Deaths of king and princes
and nobodies...
That's it then, is it?
We've done nothing wrong.
We didn't harm anyone, did we?
I can't remember.
All right, then, I don't care.
I've had enough.
To tell you the truth,
I'm relieved.
There must have been
a moment at the beginning,
where we could have said no.
But somehow we missed it.
Well, we'll now better next time.
Till then.
The sight is dismal.
And our affairs from
England come too late.
The ears are senseless that should
give us hearing. To tell him his
commandment is fulfilled...
that Rosencratz
and Guildenstern are dead.