

**Player** (*activated, arms spread, the professional*) Deaths for all ages and occasions! Deaths by suspension, convulsion, consumption, incision, execution, asphyxiation and malnutrition –! Climactic carnage, by poison and by steel –! Double deaths by duel –! Show!

*Alfred, still in his queen's costume, dies by poison: the Player, with rapier, kills the 'King' and duels with a fourth Tragedian, inflicting and receiving a wound: the two remaining Tragedians, the two 'Spies' dressed in the same coats as Ros and Guil, are stabbed, as before.*

*And the light is fading over the deaths which take place right upstage.*

*Dying amid the dying – tragically; romantically.*

So there's an end to that – it's commonplace: light goes with life, and in the winter of your years the dark comes early . . .

**Guil** (*tired, drained, but still an edge of impatience; over the mime*) No . . . no . . . not for us, not like that. Dying is not romantic, and death is not a game which will soon be over . . . Death is not anything . . . death is not . . . It's the absence of presence, nothing more . . . the endless time of never coming back . . . a gap you can't see, and when the wind blows through it, it makes no sound . . .

*The light has gone upstage. Only Guil and Ros are visible as Ros's clapping falters to silence.*

*Small pause.*

**Ros** That's it, then, is it? (*No answer, he looks out front.*) The sun's going down. Or the earth's coming up, as the fashionable theory has it. (*Small pause.*) Not that it makes any difference. (*Pause.*) What was it all about? When did it begin? (*Pause, no answer.*) Couldn't we just stay put? I

mean no one is going to come on and drag us off . . .  
They'll just have to wait. We're still young . . . fit . . .  
we've got years . . . (*Pause. No answer.*) (*A cry*) We've  
done nothing wrong! We didn't harm anyone. Did we?

**Guil** I can't remember.

*Ros pulls himself together.*

**Ros** All right, then. I don't care. I've had enough. To tell  
you the truth, I'm relieved.

*And he disappears from view.*

*Guil does not notice.*

**Guil** Our names shouted in a certain dawn . . . a message  
. . . a summons . . . there must have been a moment, at  
the beginning, where we could have said – no. But  
somehow we missed it. (*He looks round and sees he is  
alone.*) Rosen –? Guil –? (*He gathers himself.*) Well, we'll  
know better next time. Now you see me, now you –

*And disappears.*

*Immediately the whole stage is lit up, revealing,  
upstage, arranged in the approximate positions last held  
by the dead Tragedians, the tableau of court and  
corpses which is the last scene of Hamlet.*

*That is: The King, Queen, Laertes and Hamlet all  
dead. Horatio holds Hamlet. Fortinbras is there.*

*So are two Ambassadors from England.*

**Ambassador** 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 Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are dead.  
Where should we have our thanks?

**Horatio** Not from his mouth,  
Had it the ability of life to thank you:

**START**

He never gave commandment for their death.  
But since, so jump upon this bloody question,  
You from the Polack wars, and you from England,  
Are here arrived, give order that these bodies  
High on a stage be placed to the view;  
And let me speak to the yet unknowing world  
How these things came about: so shall you hear  
Of carnal, bloody and unnatural acts,  
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,  
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,  
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook  
Fallen on the inventors' heads: all this can I  
Truly deliver.

*But during the above speech the play fades, overtaken  
by dark and music.*