

Longhand
Creator's Notes for

The Fall of a Sparrow

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"It was the quiet before the storm, before Hamlet spars with Laertes, propelling the story toward its tragic ending. The image of the sparrow had always captured my imagination in reading this scene in Hamlet, which eventually led it to becoming my favorite scene in the whole play.

The play itself was a world of grey areas and unanswered questions. To show this, my work employed numerous tones, dark corners, and incomplete faces. I felt that this particular scene showcased just how much Hamlet has developed as a character. It was a call into the void, desperately asking for answers; in the end, it was Hamlet realizing that to have his answers, he would have to be prepared to enter the void itself."

I drew "The Fall of a Sparrow" over six years ago, and I find it interesting how several points I raised in the short note above still ring true today. Act V, Scene II of *Hamlet* remains my favorite part of the entire play, and my appreciation for it has only deepened after revisiting this piece after many years. In this updated note, I would

like to give some background on my visual decisions in the comic and ponder a bit more on the themes presented in this particular scene.

Firstly, the struggle between fate and free will remains one of the most prominent themes explored in *Hamlet*. In this scene specifically, the play ponders on this theme most notably in Hamlet's famous quote, "*There's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow.*" The quote alone already presents a rich trove of ideas to unearth, but depicting the scene in comics format gave me an opportunity to explore this theme in the visual dimension as well.

In this comic adaptation, I took advantage of the gap between text and image to express the underlying tension in the theme. For example, on the sixth page of the comic, Hamlet says, "We defy augury," which exhibits free will. However, the characters and dialogue box are framed within the window, which asserts that they are still boxed within their destinies. As such, the visual interplay adds more nuance to the dialogue and also gives the scene another layer of meaning.

This leads to my next point: nuance. As I have mentioned previously, *Hamlet* is a play of greys and unanswered questions. So much so, that one of the questions raised to readers is whether Hamlet is a reliable narrator or not. I remember being fascinated by this idea while making the comic. As such, I intentionally drew him in a manner that kept his face partially hidden. It was only when he had seemingly

come to terms with his fate and decided to face it head on that his full face was revealed.

The slow reveal of Hamlet's face parallels his journey of self-actualization as he transforms from someone paralyzed by his questions and the unknown into somebody who realizes that, ultimately, one has to face them to find answers. Like the sparrow who continues to fly and survive the world, he too must face his questions firsthand and discover for himself what lies beyond. Knowing what comes after, it is befitting then, that the comic ended on a hopeful yet haunting note, "Let be."

Overall, adapting Act V, Scene II of *Hamlet* into a comic presented unique challenges. There are no flashy fight scenes, no dramatic exchanges, nor passionate monologues to showcase the intensity of the play's themes. Instead, there is a lot of nuance and underlying tension, which is not easily depicted visually. In creating this comic, I hope that I managed to convey some of that depth while making the most of a visual medium.

