| **ACT IV SCENE 4** |
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| *FORTINBRAS enters with his army and a CAPTAIN.* |
| **FORTINBRAS**  Go, Captain, and give the Danish king my greetings. Tell him that Fortinbras asks permission to move his troops across Denmark. You know the meeting place we’ve arranged. If His Majesty wants us to do any favor for him, tell him his wish is my command. |
| **CAPTAIN**  I’ll tell him, my lord. |
| **FORTINBRAS**  Go ahead, then. |
| *Everyone except the CAPTAIN exits.* |
| ***HAMLET****,****ROSENCRANTZ****,****GUILDENSTERN****, and others enter.* |
| **HAMLET**  Sir, whose troops are these? |
| **CAPTAIN**  The king of Norway’s, sir. |
| **HAMLET**  What are they doing here, sir? |
| **CAPTAIN**  They’re on their way to invade some part of Poland. |
| **HAMLET**  Who’s commanding them, sir? |
| **CAPTAIN**  The nephew of the old king of Norway, Fortinbras. |
| **HAMLET**  Is he attacking the heartland of Poland or some frontier? |
| **CAPTAIN**  To tell the truth, we’re fighting to win a little patch of ground that’s not worth anything. I myself wouldn’t pay five ducats for it, if someone offered it to me to farm. And it won’t provide any more profits than that to either the Norwegian or the Pole. |
| **HAMLET**  So then the Poles won’t be willing to defend it. |
| **CAPTAIN**  Oh, yes they will. They’ve already stationed troops there. |
| **HAMLET**  (*to himself*) Even two thousand men and twenty-thousand ducats are just the beginning of what it will cost to settle this pointless matter. This is what happens when countries have too much money and peace. This quarrel is like an abcess that grows inside someone until it bursts and kills them, and no one knows why. (*to the*CAPTAIN) Thank you very much for the information, sir. |
| **CAPTAIN**  Good-bye, sir. |
| *The**CAPTAIN**exits.* |
| **ROSENCRANTZ**  Will you please come now, my lord? |
| **HAMLET**  I’ll be there in a minute. Start without me. |
| *Everyone except HAMLET**exits.* |
| My God! Everything I see shows me how wrong I am and tells me to hurry up and get on with my revenge. What is a human being if he just eats and sleeps? Nothing more than a beast. God didn’t create us with such a huge power of thought and a divine capacity for reason in order for us not to use them. Now, whether it’s animal-like mindlessness, or the cowardly hesitation that comes from thinking too much (thinking thoughts that are one part wisdom, three parts cowardice), I don’t know why I’m still alive to say “I have to do this deed” rather than having done it already. I have the motivation, the willpower, the ability, and the means to do it. It’s as plain as the ground beneath my feet that I must do it. Look at this massive army led by a delicate and tender prince who’s so puffed up with divine ambition that he puts his fragile life at risk, exposing it to danger and death, for a reason as thin as an eggshell. To be truly great doesn’t mean you’d only fight for a good reason. It means you’d fight over nothing if your honor was at stake. So where does that leave me, whose father has been murdered and mother defiled, ignoring these mental and emotional provocations and letting well enough alone? Meanwhile, to my shame, I watch twenty thousand men go marching to their deaths for an illusion and a little bit of fame, fighting for a tiny piece of land not even big enough to bury them all. From now on, if my thoughts aren’t violent I’ll consider them worthless.  *He exits.* |