

# The Spanish Tragedy



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF THOMAS KYD

Thomas Kyd was born in 1558 to Francis and Anna Kyd. Little is known about Kyd's life, but his father was a successful scrivener, so it is likely the Kyds were a comfortable middle-class family. In the late 1560s, Kyd enrolled in the Merchant Taylors' School, a new private boys' school in London that opened in 1561 and is still in operation today. It is not known if Kyd ever attended university, but there is evidence to suggest that he worked as a scrivener for a short time. In the 1580s, Kyd found fame as a respected playwright whose talent rivaled that of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Like Kyd himself, little is known about his work; however, a handful of plays have been positively attributed to him, including *The Spanish Tragedy*, which was initially published anonymously. While the exact time during which *The Spanish Tragedy* was written is not known, it is suspected to have been written in the mid- to late 1580s, with the earliest surviving edition printed in 1592. It is also known that Kyd wrote *The Householder's Philosophy*—a translation of Torquato Tasso's Italian play, *Padre di Famiglia*—in 1588, and in 1594, he published a translation of a French play by Robert Garnier entitled *Cornelia*. It is strongly suspected that Kyd was also the author of two other important Elizabethan plays—*King Leir* and the *Ur-Hamlet*—which were wildly popular in Kyd's day and served as the inspiration for Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *Hamlet*, respectively. In 1587, Kyd was commissioned by a nobleman, as Christopher Marlowe later was as well, to work as a secretary and write plays. The two playwrights shared living quarters for a time, until May 12, 1593, when Kyd was arrested on suspicion of heresy. The room that he shared with Marlowe was searched by authorities and heretical papers were discovered. Kyd was imprisoned and tortured, and he eventually told authorities that the papers in fact belonged to Marlowe and that Marlowe was indeed an atheist. Marlowe was killed just weeks later on May 30, 1593, under mysterious circumstances involving government officials. Kyd was eventually released from prison and fervently maintained his innocence, but he was never able to recover his reputation. Kyd died of unknown causes, alone and deeply in debt, sometime in December of 1594. He was just 35 years old.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*The Spanish Tragedy* takes place after an unnamed war between Spain and Portugal, at the end of which Spain is victorious and hopes to combine with the royal house of Portugal into one powerful force through the marriage of Balthazar and Bel-

Imperia. Historically speaking, the King of Portugal, King Sebastian, died during battle in 1578 without a living heir. Portugal was subsequently ruled by Sebastian's great-uncle, Henry of Portugal, until he died in 1580, also without a living heir. Henry's death resulted in a succession crisis, in which both King Phillip II of Spain and Anthony, Prior of Crato—the grandson of the Portuguese King Manuel I—vied for the crown of Portugal during the War of Portuguese Succession. Phillip II of Spain was ultimately crowned King of Portugal in 1581, but the war lasted until 1583. The kingdoms of Spain and Portugal were combined until the Portuguese Restoration War was sparked in 1640, after Phillip II's son, Phillip III, ascended the throne. Under Phillip III's rule, Portuguese aristocrats started to lose power and status, resulting in an uprising of Portuguese nobility and bourgeoisie. The Portuguese Restoration War ended in 1668 with Portugal's independence, at which time the royal House of Braganza—a dynasty of Portuguese rulers—was officially restored.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* is a classic example of Renaissance literature, which typically refers to literature written in Europe during the Renaissance—a period of history that spanned the 14th to the 17th centuries and marked Europe's transition from the Middle Ages to Modernity. This period, particularly within art and literature, is often defined as a return to classical Antiquity. Within literature specifically, there was an overall return to the tragedies of ancient Greece and Rome, like those by Sophocles—a Greek tragedian born in 496 BCE who wrote such classics as *Electra* and *Philoctetes*—and Livius Andronicus, a Greco-Roman dramatist from the 3rd century BCE who translated Greek works, like Homer's *Odyssey*, into Latin. Famous works of the Renaissance during Kyd's time include Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, a play first staged in 1590 that is based on Timur, a Central Asian emperor. *Tamburlaine* and *The Spanish Tragedy* are generally considered the first successful productions of the Elizabethan stage, which was later dominated by William Shakespeare. In 1592, the same year in which *The Spanish Tragedy* was first staged, Shakespeare staged *Henry VI* (parts one, two, and three), a trilogy about the reign of King Henry VI of England and the War of the Roses.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Spanish Tragedy, or Hieronimo is Mad Again*
- **When Written:** Unknown; likely in the mid- to late 1580s.
- **Where Written:** London, England

- **When Published:** Unknown; earliest surviving edition was published in 1592.
- **Literary Period:** The Renaissance
- **Genre:** Tragedy
- **Setting:** Spain and Portugal
- **Climax:** Hieronimo's play-within-a-play, in which he and Bel-Imperia exact their revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar for the murder of Horatio.
- **Antagonist:** Lorenzo

## EXTRA CREDIT

**Famous classmates.** Kyd attended the Merchant Taylors' School in the late 1560s with Edmund Spenser, who later became the famous English poet best known for his epic poem *The Faerie Queene*, first published in 1590.

**Return to the classics.** Kyd's plays are modeled after classical tragedies, especially those by Seneca, a Roman dramatist from the first century AD. Kyd was the first to successfully bring modern adaptations of classical works to the Elizabethan stage, and his original works, such as *The Spanish Tragedy*, are infused with this classical influence.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Revenge and the Ghost of Andrea enter. In life, Don Andrea was a Spanish courtier, but he was killed in battle by Balthazar, the son of the Viceroy of Portugal. Once Andrea was finally allowed to cross the river Acheron into the afterlife, Proserpine—the goddess of fertility and agriculture and the queen of the underworld—ordered Andrea's ghost to return with Revenge and observe the upcoming death of Balthazar at the hands of Bel-Imperia, Andrea's grieving lover and the niece of the King of Spain. As the play begins, Balthazar is brought to the Spanish court as a prisoner by Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia's brother and the son of the Duke of Castile, and Horatio, the son of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshall (or official judge) of Spain. Horatio was the one to capture Balthazar; however, Lorenzo insists on recognition for taking Balthazar's horse and weapons. The king rewards them both—Horatio is promised Balthazar's ransom and Lorenzo is given his horse and weapons—and orders Balthazar to be held at Castile's estate.

Later, Bel-Imperia asks Horatio to tell her about Andrea's death, and he relays the fight between Andrea and Balthazar, saying that Andrea was brave and courageous. After capturing Balthazar, Horatio administered Andrea's funeral rites and removed a **scarf** from his friend's body, which he has vowed to wear in Andrea's honor. Bel-Imperia knows the scarf well, as she gave it to Andrea before the war, and she asks Horatio to wear it in both her honor and Andrea's. Bel-Imperia has fallen in love with Horatio, whom she calls her "second love," and she

considers loving him a sort of revenge against Balthazar, who has also professed his love for Bel-Imperia. While Castile and the king are already considering a marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar to unite Spain and Portugal, Bel-Imperia tells Balthazar in no uncertain terms that she is not interested in his advances. Lorenzo, however, encourages Balthazar, telling him Bel-Imperia will eventually come around and accept him.

One evening, Bel-Imperia has her servant, Pedringano, guard the garden gates while she visits with Horatio, but Pedringano betrays her and alerts Lorenzo and Balthazar to the secret meeting. Lorenzo and Balthazar enter the garden, along with a disguised Pedringano and Balthazar's servant, Serberine. The men hang Horatio from an arbour and stab him to death. Bel-Imperia yells for Hieronimo, and the four attackers carry her away, leaving Horatio's body hanging in the garden. Hieronimo and his wife, Isabella, find their son dead in the garden and grieve their loss. Hieronimo removes Horatio's scarf and, drenching it in his son's blood, vows to keep it until Horatio's death is avenged. Isabella warns Hieronimo to be patient—revenge is ultimately heaven's responsibility, she says. Andrea's ghost looks on furiously. He is waiting for Balthazar's death, but instead he has witnessed the death of his best friend and the abuse of the love of his life. Revenge, too, tells Andrea to be patient. Balthazar's death will come soon enough.

As the Spanish plot unfolds, there is drama in the Portuguese court as well. After Balthazar is taken prisoner by Horatio, the Portuguese don't know what has come of Balthazar, and they fear he may be dead. Villuppo, a nobleman, tells Balthazar's father, the Viceroy of Portugal, that Balthazar has been shot in the back by Alexandro, another Portuguese nobleman. The viceroy immediately arrests Alexandro and sentences him to death upon the confirmation of Balthazar's death. When the Portuguese Ambassador returns from Spain with news that Balthazar lives, Villuppo confesses that he lied to earn glory and recognition. The viceroy releases Alexandro with an apology and a public reward, and Villuppo is tortured and executed for his betrayal.

Hieronimo enters, crying and lamenting Horatio's death, when a letter from Bel-Imperia falls from above. The letter, written in blood, claims that Horatio has been murdered by Lorenzo and Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia begs Hieronimo to seek revenge. Hieronimo sets out to prove that Lorenzo and Balthazar killed his son, and when he runs into Pedringano and asks where he can find Bel-Imperia, Lorenzo tells Hieronimo that Bel-Imperia has been sent away on account of a "disgrace." Hieronimo exits, but Lorenzo is suspicious, and he is convinced Serberine has betrayed them to Hieronimo. Lorenzo pays Pedringano to kill Serberine, but arranges for the authorities to catch Pedringano in the act. After Pedringano is imprisoned for Serberine's murder, Lorenzo refuses to obtain his pardon from the king and allows Pedringano to hang, thereby eliminating everyone who

knows about Lorenzo and Balthazar's murder of Horatio—except, of course, for Bel-Imperia. Isabella begins to spiral into insanity after Horatio's death, and once she commits suicide in the garden where Horatio was murdered, it seems as though Hieronimo is going mad, too. He vows to take the case of Horatio's murder to the king and seek justice through the appropriate legal channels, but Lorenzo blocks him at every turn. Lorenzo tells the king that Hieronimo is going insane and is only looking to take Balthazar's ransom money, which rightly belongs to Horatio. The king knows nothing of Horatio's murder and dismisses Hieronimo's complaints as the ramblings of a madman.

The Viceroy of Portugal comes to Spain for the upcoming wedding of Balthazar and Bel-Imperia, and the King of Spain asks Hieronimo—a known poet and playwright—to stage a play as entertainment. Hieronimo agrees, and after enlisting the help of Bel-Imperia, they convince both Lorenzo and Balthazar to act with them in the play. The play, Hieronimo says, tells the story of a wedding between a Spanish knight and a beautiful Italian woman, and it ends in murder and suicide. During the play, Bel-Imperia stabs and kills Balthazar before stabbing herself. Hieronimo similarly kills Lorenzo, confesses that the deaths are real, and runs offstage to hang himself. Hieronimo is apprehended and told to confess again under the threat of torture, and he bites off his own tongue so he can't be compelled to talk. When the Duke of Castile gives Hieronimo a pen and orders him to write his confession, Hieronimo stabs Castile to death with the pen and then stabs himself. The Ghost of Andrea and Revenge look on, pleased with the destruction of Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Castile, in addition to Pedringano and Serberine, who will now all live in eternal agony in the "deepest hell." Andrea goes on happily to the afterlife, where he will meet Bel-Imperia, Horatio, Hieronimo, and Isabella.



## CHARACTERS

**Hieronimo** – Horatio's father, Isabella's husband, and the protagonist of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Hieronimo is the Knight Marshall of Spain—a sort of official judge—as well as a poet and playwright, who occasionally stages plays to entertain the King of Spain. When Horatio is killed in the garden by Lorenzo and Balthazar, Bel-Imperia yells for Hieronimo, who comes running into the garden in his pajamas to find his son dead and the murderers gone. Hieronimo swears he'll seek revenge, but Isabella urges him to have patience. Revenge, she says, should be left to God and the law, and should not be taken into the hands of man. Later, Hieronimo finds a letter from Bel-Imperia written in blood, which claims that Horatio was killed by Lorenzo and Balthazar. Hesitant to accuse the prince of Portugal and the nephew of the King of Spain of murder, Hieronimo sets out to prove Lorenzo and Balthazar's guilt. After Hieronimo sentences Pedringano to hang for the murder

of Serberine, the hangman finds a letter to Lorenzo in Pedringano's pocket that implicates Lorenzo and Balthazar in Horatio's murder. Hieronimo tries to go to the king, but Lorenzo blocks him at every pass, and Hieronimo cannot get justice for Horatio. Still, Hieronimo is expected sit as a judge and dispense justice to others, which adds to his mounting insanity and desire for revenge. After Isabella commits suicide in her immense grief, Hieronimo finally decides to seek his revenge, which he does in the play-within-a-play that he stages near the end of the final act. After the king asks Hieronimo to entertain them with a play, Hieronimo enlists the help of Bel-Imperia, and they convince Lorenzo and Balthazar to participate as well. During the play, after Bel-Imperia kills Balthazar and herself, Hieronimo kills Lorenzo and commits suicide after killing the Duke of Castile. The character of Hieronimo reflects the dangers of seeking revenge, which Kyd argues is best left to God and the law. Even though the law fails to get justice for Horatio, Hieronimo's disastrous end suggests revenge simply isn't worth it.

**Lorenzo** – Bel-Imperia's brother, the Duke of Castile's son, and the antagonist of *The Spanish Tragedy*. Lorenzo is a despicable man who treats his sister badly and steals a fellow soldier's glory on the battlefield. He occasionally speaks his lines in Italian, lending him an air of Machiavellian evil. After Horatio captures Balthazar on the battlefield, Lorenzo lies and claims he was the one to take Balthazar's horse and weapons. Lorenzo befriends Balthazar when he is as a prisoner at Lorenzo's estate, and he encourages Balthazar to continue vying for Bel-Imperia's love, even though she has made it perfectly clear that she hates Balthazar and isn't interested. Lorenzo bribes Bel-Imperia's servant, Pedringano, to tell him who Bel-Imperia's love interest is, and after Pedringano tells him it is Horatio—whom Lorenzo disapproves of on account of his lower class status—Lorenzo murders Horatio with the help of Balthazar, Pedringano, and Serberine. Lorenzo holds his sister captive, and to tie up loose ends, he pays Pedringano to murder Serberine and abandons Pedringano at the gallows, where he is hung for his crime. Bel-Imperia manages to get a letter to Hieronimo about Horatio's murder, but Lorenzo blocks Hieronimo's efforts to get justice for his son. When Hieronimo tries to go to the King of Spain and plead Horatio's case, Lorenzo tells the king that Hieronimo is insane and his complaints are merely the ramblings of a madman. After Lorenzo finally releases Bel-Imperia, Lorenzo claims that he has really helped to maintain her honor. Horatio was below Bel-Imperia in class and social status, Lorenzo says, just like Andrea was, and neither was an appropriate match for her. Hieronimo finally gets revenge for Horatio's death and kills Lorenzo in the play-within-a-play during the last act, and Andrea requests that Lorenzo spend eternity on Ixion's wheel, which is to say that Lorenzo will be strapped to a fiery wheel that is forever spinning. Lorenzo represents betrayal within the play and deceives nearly everyone he comes into contact with. Kyd

argues that betrayal is everywhere in 16th-century society, and Lorenzo is evidence of this.

**Bel-Imperia** – Andrea and Horatio’s lover, the Duke of Castile’s daughter, and Lorenzo’s sister. When Andrea is killed by Balthazar, Bel-Imperia vows revenge, and she falls in love with Horatio soon after. For Bel-Imperia, loving Horatio is a form of revenge in itself, as Balthazar, who is a prisoner at her father’s estate, has fallen in love with Bel-Imperia, too. Horatio was Andrea’s best friend, and he was the one to capture Balthazar in battle, so Bel-Imperia knows that loving Horatio will anger Balthazar. When Bel-Imperia discovers that Horatio has taken the **scarf** that she gave Andrea before the war, she asks him to keep it and wear it in her honor. Neither Bel-Imperia’s father nor her brother, Lorenzo, approved of her relationship with Andrea, and they don’t approve of her relationship with Horatio either. When Bel-Imperia meets Horatio in the garden, she has her servant, Pedringano, keep watch by the gate, but Pedringano betrays her and alerts Lorenzo and Balthazar to their secret meeting. Lorenzo and Balthazar, along with Pedringano and Serberine, sneak into the garden and murder Horatio. They carry Bel-Imperia off and leave Horatio’s body behind, but Bel-Imperia manages to write a letter in her own blood and drop it out the window to Hieronimo below, telling him all about Lorenzo and Balthazar’s murder of Horatio. Hieronimo doesn’t initially believe Bel-Imperia’s letter, and she is locked away in a room on her father’s estate. When Lorenzo finally lets her out, the King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal are already arranging her marriage to Balthazar. Bel-Imperia finally exacts her revenge along with Hieronimo in the play-within-a-play during the last act, and she stabs Balthazar to death and before committing suicide. Andrea implies that Bel-Imperia will live in peace in the afterlife, but she is consumed in life by her desire for revenge. The character of Bel-Imperia illustrates the dangers of revenge—which Kyd ultimately argues should be left in the hands of God and law—and she also highlights the power of love to drive people to dire extremes, such as murder and suicide.

**Horatio** – Hieronimo and Isabella’s son, Andrea’s friend, and Bel-Imperia’s lover. After Andrea is killed by Balthazar in battle during the war with Portugal, Horatio performs Andrea’s funeral rites and mourns the loss of his friend. He removes a **scarf** from Andrea’s body and vows to wear it in his honor. Horatio captures Balthazar in battle and takes him prisoner back to Spain, where Balthazar is held captive at the Duke of Castile’s estate. The King of Spain rewards Horatio for Balthazar’s capture and promises to give him the ransom money, but the king gives Balthazar’s horse and weapons to Lorenzo, who claims to have taken them in battle. Horatio soon falls in love with Bel-Imperia, and she loves him, too. Bel-Imperia considers it part of her revenge for Andrea’s death to love Horatio and anger Balthazar, who is also vying for her affection. One night, as Bel-Imperia and Horatio visit in the

garden, they are betrayed by Bel-Imperia’s servant, Pedringano, who alerts Lorenzo and Balthazar to their secret meeting. Lorenzo and Balthazar, along with Pedringano and Serberine, sneak into the garden and hang Horatio from an arbour, stab him, and leave his dead body behind. Both Bel-Imperia and Hieronimo vow revenge, and their desire to make Balthazar and Lorenzo pay for Horatio’s murder drives the rest of the play. Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia finally get their revenge in the play-within-a-play during the last act, when they kill Lorenzo and Balthazar, but Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia are mentally destroyed in the process and both commit suicide. The character of Horatio represents love within the play, as he deeply loves and is loved by several characters, but he also underscores the pitfalls of revenge. Kyd ultimately argues that revenge is best left to God and the law and should not be sought by mortal man, and the disastrous end of Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia’s revenge on behalf of Horatio is evidence of this.

**The Ghost of Andrea** – A Spanish courtier and Bel-Imperia’s lover. Don Andrea is killed by Balthazar during a battle with Portugal before the play begins, and while it is not explicitly stated, it is implied that Balthazar’s actions in killing Andrea were dishonorable. It is three days before Andrea’s dear friend, Horatio, is able to administer Andrea’s funeral rites. As Horatio mourns his friend, he removes Andrea’s **scarf**—which was given to Andrea by Bel-Imperia before the war—and vows to wear it in Andrea’s honor. After his funeral, Andrea is finally allowed to pass the river Acheron into the afterlife. He swears revenge against Balthazar, and Proserpine, the queen of the underworld, orders Revenge to take Andrea back to earth to witness Bel-Imperia kill Balthazar to avenge Andrea’s death. As Revenge and Andrea’s ghost stand over the play, watching and waiting for Balthazar’s death, Andrea grows impatient. Instead of Balthazar’s death, Andrea is forced to watch Balthazar—who is supposed to be a prisoner—live in the lap of luxury at the Duke of Castile’s estate, and Andrea must also sit by as Balthazar and Lorenzo kill Horatio and abuse Bel-Imperia. Revenge, however, tells Andrea to be patient. Finally, Andrea and Revenge watch as Horatio’s father, Hieronimo, and Bel-Imperia exact their revenge during the play-within-a-play in the final act. Bel-Imperia kills Balthazar and then herself, and Hieronimo kills Lorenzo and the Duke of Castile before stabbing himself. Andrea looks forward to seeing both Bel-Imperia and Horatio in the afterlife, but he requests that Revenge send Balthazar, Lorenzo, and everyone else involved in Horatio’s murder to the “deepest hell” where they will suffer for eternity. Like Bel-Imperia and Hieronimo, the character of Andrea underscores the dangers of revenge. Andrea seeks revenge at any cost, and in this case, the cost is Bel-Imperia’s life. Both Bel-Imperia and Hieronimo commit suicide after finally getting revenge, which suggests that revenge just isn’t worth it and should be left to God and the law.

**Balthazar** – The son of the Viceroy of Portugal. Balthazar kills

Andrea, a Spanish courtier, during battle with Spain, and in death, Andrea vows revenge. After killing Andrea, Balthazar is captured by Horatio and taken to Spain as a prisoner, where he is kept in the lap of luxury at the Duke of Castile's estate. At Castile's estate, Balthazar waits for his ransom and falls in love with Bel-Imperia, Castile's daughter and Andrea's grieving lover. Bel-Imperia despises Balthazar for killing Andrea, and she barely hides her disgust; however, Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia's brother, convinces Balthazar to continue his advances. When Balthazar and Lorenzo discover that Bel-Imperia and Horatio are in love, Balthazar and Lorenzo—with the help of Serberine and Pedringano—murder Horatio. Soon after, the King of Spain and Balthazar's father negotiate Bel-Imperia and Balthazar's marriage to join the royal houses of Spain and Portugal, and the viceroy promises to make Balthazar king. When the viceroy arrives in Spain for the wedding, Hieronimo is tasked with staging a play for his entertainment, and Hieronimo convinces Balthazar to act in the show. Balthazar is given the part of Soliman, an honored guest at the wedding of a Spanish knight and a beautiful Italian woman named Perseda. After Soliman falls in love with Perseda and has the knight murdered, Perseda kills Soliman and herself. Bel-Imperia plays the part of Perseda, and when it comes time to kill Soliman, she stabs and kills Balthazar before killing herself. After Balthazar's death, Andrea requests that Balthazar be hanged from the neck of Chimaera—a three-headed monster of Greek mythology—for all of eternity as revenge for killing him in battle.

**Revenge** – The personification of revenge. Revenge and the Ghost of Andrea serve as the chorus of the play, as they observe the action and occasionally comment. After Andrea is killed by Balthazar and swears revenge in the afterlife, Revenge is ordered by Proserpine, the queen of the underworld, to take Andrea through the gates of horn and show him Balthazar's upcoming death at the hands of Bel-Imperia, Andrea's grieving lover who has sworn revenge on his behalf. The gates of horn and ivory are a literary device used since antiquity to separate true dreams from false dreams. True dreams are said to come through the gates of horn, whereas false dreams come through the gates of ivory. In ordering Revenge to take Andrea through the gates of horn, Proserpine means to show Andrea the truth behind what he seeks in desiring revenge against Balthazar. Kyd ultimately argues that revenge is God's responsibility—and the law's, which derives its power from God—and is not for mortal men to pursue. As Andrea looks down on the play, waiting for Bel-Imperia to avenge his death, Revenge urges Andrea to be patient and even falls asleep waiting. Revenge's delayed action gives the characters time to reconsider their desire for vengeance and instead leave justice to God and the law; however, Revenge is patiently waiting either way. At the end of the play, Revenge is there to send Balthazar—and everyone involved in the murder of Horatio—down to the “deepest hell” as punishment for their wrongdoing.

**Pedringano** – Bel-Imperia's servant. Pedringano is first introduced when Lorenzo bribes him to reveal Bel-Imperia's love interest. Pedringano easily betrays Bel-Imperia, takes Lorenzo's money, and reports that Bel-Imperia is in love with Horatio. Pedringano again betrays Bel-Imperia when he alerts Lorenzo and Balthazar to Bel-Imperia's secret meeting with Horatio in the garden, and Pedringano is present—albeit in disguise—when Balthazar and Lorenzo kill Horatio. After the murder, when Lorenzo grows suspicious that Serberine has betrayed them to Hieronimo, Lorenzo pays Pedringano to kill Serberine. Pedringano shoots Serberine and is immediately arrested, although Pedringano is not worried and believes Lorenzo will secure his pardon. Lorenzo indeed sends a page to the prison with a **box**, which supposedly contains Pedringano's pardon, but the box is empty. Pedringano believes until the very last minute that he will be saved; however, Lorenzo betrays Pedringano to keep the secret of Horatio's murder, and Pedringano is hanged. In death, Andrea requests that Pedringano be “dragged through boiling Acheron, / And there live, dying still in endless flames.” Like Lorenzo, Pedringano personifies betrayal within the play, and he, too, suffers eternal punishment for his wrongdoing.

**Cyprian, Duke of Castile** – Bel-Imperia and Lorenzo's father and the King of Spain's brother. The Duke of Castile is a rich and powerful man, and the king orders that Balthazar be held prisoner at Castile's estate because it is the largest and most luxurious in Spain. Castile does not approve of Bel-Imperia's relationship with Andrea—whom both Castile and Lorenzo consider to be of inferior social status—and after Andrea's death, Castile doesn't approve of Bel-Imperia's relationship with Horatio either. Castile knows nothing about Horatio's murder, but after Hieronimo exacts his revenge in the play-within-a-play near the end of the last act, Hieronimo stabs and kills the Duke of Castile before killing himself. In death, Andrea requests that Castile take the place of Tityus—a giant from Greek mythology, who, after an attempted rape, was punished by having vultures eat his liver each day, only for it to grow back each night—and assume Tityus's punishment as his own.

**Isabella** – Hieronimo's wife and Horatio's mother. Isabella runs into the garden after Hieronimo the night Horatio is murdered by Lorenzo and Balthazar, and she warns Hieronimo not to be hasty in seeking revenge. “The heavens are just,” Isabella says, “murder cannot be hid.” According to Isabella, revenge is God's responsibility, not Hieronimo's, and justice shall be served with His judgement. After Horatio's death, Isabella is consumed by grief and begins to slip into insanity, and she ultimately commits suicide in the garden in the very place where Horatio was murdered. Before she kills herself, Isabella curses the garden and the tree Horatio was hanged from, so it may never bear fruit again. Isabella's character underscores Kyd's primary argument that revenge is not for mortal man to seek, and she highlights the struggle of women in 16th-century society as

well. Isabella has no outlet for her grief, and she has no power to exact her own revenge or otherwise get justice for her son. Isabella's struggle leads directly to her insanity, and she is forced to take matters into her own hands in the only way she can.

**Alexandro** – A Portuguese nobleman. After the war with Spain, Alexandro returns to Portugal, where Villuppo, a fellow nobleman, accuses him of shooting Balthazar, the Viceroy of Portugal's son, in the back during battle. Balthazar isn't dead—he was taken prisoner by Horatio and is in Spain—but the viceroy doesn't know this and fears his son is dead. The viceroy orders Alexandro imprisoned until Balthazar's death can be confirmed, and once Balthazar is found alive and well in Spain, Alexandro is released with an apology and a public reward. The character of Alexandro and the false accusation made by Villuppo again underscores betrayal within the play, but he also illustrates the privilege of nobles and the upper class in 16th-century society. Alexandro, a nobleman, isn't immediately executed for his crime; however, Pedringano, a servant of the lower class, is promptly hanged after being accused of murder.

**Villuppo** – A Portuguese nobleman. After Balthazar is taken prisoner by Horatio during the war with Spain, Villuppo returns to Portugal and tells the Viceroy of Portugal that his son, Balthazar, has been shot in the back by Alexandro, another Portuguese nobleman. Villuppo later says that he has nothing against Alexandro; Villuppo simply wants recognition and reward, so he lies about Alexandro to make himself look good. After it is confirmed that Balthazar is alive, Villuppo is executed and Alexandro's name is cleared. The character of Villuppo also represents betrayal within the play, which Kyd ultimately argues is everywhere.

**Bazulto** – An old man who comes to see Hieronimo in his official capacity as Knight Marshall to seek justice for the murder of his own son. Drowning in grief and beginning to mentally unravel, Hieronimo corrects Bazulto and tells him that it is *his* son, Horatio, who has been killed. Hieronimo mistakes Bazulto for Horatio, and when Hieronimo offers the old man a handkerchief to dry his eyes, Hieronimo hands him Horatio's bloody **scarf**. Like Hieronimo, Bazulto never gets justice for his son. "Go back my son, complain to Aecus," Hieronimo says to Bazulto. "For here's no justice; gentle boy be gone." The character of Bazulto highlights Hieronimo's building insanity and bolsters Kyd's argument that justice for the lower classes is often unobtainable.

**Serberine** – Balthazar's servant. Serberine is with Balthazar, Lorenzo, and Pedringano the night they kill Horatio in the garden. Lorenzo is wrongly convinced that Serberine has betrayed them to Hieronimo, so Lorenzo pays Pedringano to kill Serberine. Lorenzo tells Serberine through a messenger to meet him at the park, and when Serberine arrives, Pedringano shoots him dead. Pedringano is arrested for Serberine's murder

and is later executed. At the end of the play, Andrea requests that Serberine be forced in death to "roll the fatal stone" of Sisyphus up the mountain for all of eternity. According to Greek mythology, Sisyphus was a king, who, after being punished by the gods for deceitfulness, was forced to push a massive boulder up a mountain each day, only to have it roll back down each night. As Serberine is complicit in Horatio's murder, Andrea condemns him to the very same fate.

**Viceroy of Portugal** – Balthazar's father and the ruler of Portugal. When Balthazar is taken prisoner by Horatio, the viceroy is certain that his son is dead. The viceroy is obviously relieved when his son is found alive, and he quickly agrees to the marriage between Balthazar and Bel-Imperia to join the royal houses of Spain and Portugal. Hieronimo stages the play-within-a-play—in which he exacts his revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar—to entertain the viceroy, and he unknowingly sits and watches as Hieronimo kills his son.

**King of Spain** – The Duke of Castile's brother and uncle to Bel-Imperia and Lorenzo. While little is known about the king, he arranges the marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar to unite the royal houses of Spain and Portugal into one large power. In preparation for the wedding, the king asks Hieronimo to stage a play to entertain the Viceroy of Portugal upon his arrival in Spain, and it is in this play that Hieronimo finally seeks his revenge for the murder of his son, Horatio.

**Lorenzo's Page** – One of Lorenzo's servants. After Pedringano is arrested for Serberine's murder, Lorenzo sends his page to the prison with a **box** containing Pedringano's pardon from the King of Spain. Lorenzo orders the page not to look inside the box, but he does anyway and discovers it empty. Fearing for his life, the page does not warn Pedringano that the box is empty, and Pedringano is ultimately hanged, having been betrayed by Lorenzo.

**Portuguese Ambassador** – A diplomat sent by the Viceroy of Portugal to Spain after the war. When the ambassador first arrives in Spain, he discovers that Balthazar is alive and a prisoner of the Spanish court. The ambassador returns to Portugal with word of Balthazar's imprisonment and is again sent back to Spain, this time with Balthazar's ransom, which the King of Spain has promised to Horatio as reward for Balthazar's capture.



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



## REVENGE AND JUSTICE

Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy* is widely regarded as the very first revenge play of the Elizabethan era. *The Spanish Tragedy* paved the way

for other revenge plays of the day—such as *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare and Thomas Middleton's *The Revenger's Tragedy*—and like other revenge plays, Kyd's tragedy explores revenge and the ethics of taking justice into one's own hands. Revenge motivates several of the characters, but the play focuses mainly on the story of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal of Spain. After Hieronimo's son, Horatio, a war hero and honorable man, is murdered by Lorenzo, the son of the Duke of Castile and the nephew of the King of Spain, Hieronimo swears justice for his son. Hieronimo demands revenge; however, he questions whose responsibility it is to seek it. Is it God's responsibility, or the law's? Or is it his own responsibility as a father? Eventually, Hieronimo reluctantly takes it upon himself to avenge Horatio's death, but through *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd suggests that even when revenge seems like the only way to get justice, it's still not worth it.

It is implied throughout the play that revenge is ultimately God's responsibility and is not to be taken into the hands of man. When Hieronimo finds Horatio hanged in the garden and swears revenge, his wife, Isabella, suggests he wait. "The heavens are just," she says, "murder cannot be hid: / Time is the author of both truth and right, / and time will bring this treachery to light." In other words, Isabella implies that Horatio's murderers will be punished by God's judgement. After Horatio's murder, as Hieronimo struggles with his own desire for revenge, he cries: "*Vindicta mihi!*" This Latin phrase, meaning "my punishment," is a reference to the New Testament of the Bible and Romans 12.19, in which God declares vengeance his exclusive responsibility rather than mortal man's. Hieronimo may want revenge, but with these words, he shows that he knows it isn't really his to take. Even when Hieronimo does decide to seek revenge himself in the tragic play-within-a-play at the play's conclusion, he acknowledges that he will likely be condemned for doing so. "Now shall I see the fall of Babylon," Hieronimo says. "Wrought by the heavens in this confusion. / And if the world like not this tragedy, / Hard is the hap of old Hieronimo." Hieronimo still knows that revenge is God's responsibility, but grief and injustice ultimately drive him to seek it anyway.

The play also suggests that the law, which during Kyd's time was believed to derive its power from God, has the power to seek justice through revenge. As the Knight Marshal of Spain, it is Hieronimo's responsibility to sit in judgement over all sorts of matters, including murder. After Pedringano—the servant of Lorenzo's sister, Bel-Imperia, and an accomplice in the murder of Horatio—is arrested for the murder of another servant named Serberine, Hieronimo says: "For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge, / Be satisfied, and the law be discharged."

The law, it seems, does not condemn revenge, and as an official judge, Hieronimo is sanctioned to dispense it. While Hieronimo obviously desires revenge after the murder of Horatio, he is initially determined to get it through the proper channels. "I will go plain me to me to my lord the king, / And cry aloud for justice through the court." In other words, Hieronimo will openly go to the court and plead Horatio's case for justice. Despite his grief and anger, Hieronimo first seeks justice legally. With proof of Lorenzo's guilt, Hieronimo goes to the king, but Lorenzo convinces the king that Hieronimo's pleas are merely the ramblings of a lunatic. Ironically, despite Hieronimo's role as a judge, he cannot find justice for his son.

Given the failures of these attempts at officially sanctioned justice, Hieronimo does eventually take justice into his own hands, but it is a decision that he takes seriously. He goes to great lengths to prove beyond a shadow of a doubt the identity of Horatio's murderer, and he waits so long to exact his revenge that Revenge—the ghost that personifies revenge in the play—actually falls asleep waiting for Hieronimo to act. When Hieronimo finally does seek revenge, it goes spectacularly wrong. The long-awaited revenge leads to the unexpected suicide of Bel-Imperia and ends with Hieronimo biting his own tongue out so he cannot be compelled to talk. Afterward, when Hieronimo is given a pen to write his confession, he uses it to stab and kill the Duke of Castile before stabbing himself to death. Hieronimo kills Lorenzo only after he has exhausted legal options, and as a grieving father, he seems justified in his actions, but the results are nevertheless disastrous. In this way, Kyd indicates that while revenge may at times seem justified, it should nonetheless remain the responsibility of God and the law, since individual acts of revenge like Hieronimo's will only lead to more death.



## CLASS, GENDER, AND SOCIETY

Social class and gender are major factors in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, especially when it comes to justice. As the Knight Marshall of Spain,

Hieronimo plays an important role in society as a civil servant and official judge; however, he is still only middle class (meaning he is a commoner of limited financial means), and in the social hierarchy, he falls far below noblemen and other royals—like Lorenzo, the nephew of the King of Spain, who murders Hieronimo's son, Horatio. Kyd implies that Hieronimo is denied justice because he is of lower social standing, and he isn't the only one who suffers because of social status. The play also follows Bel-Imperia, Lorenzo's sister, and her own desire for revenge. First, she seeks revenge for Don Andrea, her lover slain during battle with Portugal; later, she seeks revenge for the murder of Horatio, Andrea's best friend, whom Bel-Imperia falls in love with after Andrea's death. Though she is the niece of a king and obviously of higher social standing than Hieronimo, Bel-Imperia is also denied justice—not because of

her class, but because of her gender. Through *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd underscores inequalities and injustices within society based on class and gender, and he ultimately argues that there is rarely justice for women or those of lower classes.

The play highlights the preferential treatment of the upper class within Elizabethan society. Both Bel-Imperia's brother Lorenzo and their father, the Duke of Castile, disapprove of Bel-Imperia's relationship with Don Andrea, and they later disapprove of her relationship with Horatio as well, because of class standing. Lorenzo fears that the "old disgrace" of Bel-Imperia's relationship with Andrea will continue with Horatio. As mere soldiers of the middle class, neither Andrea nor Horatio is good enough for Bel-Imperia in Lorenzo's eyes, and he would rather see her marry Balthazar, the son of the Viceroy of Portugal. When Lorenzo and Balthazar—both members of the upper class—murder Horatio, they are protected from the law. As his nephew, Lorenzo has the king's ear, and he can filter what is officially brought before his uncle. However, when Pedringano, Bel-Imperia's servant and an obvious member of the lower class, murders Serberine, Balthazar's servant, he is promptly hanged for his crime. There is no stay of execution or protection for those of the lower class. Conversely, when Alexandro, a Portuguese nobleman, is falsely accused of killing Balthazar, Alexandro is held prisoner—with a promise that his punishment will be a "second hell" if he is guilty—until the death of Balthazar is confirmed. Of course, Balthazar is not dead, and Alexandro is ultimately released with an apology and honored publicly. Had Alexandro been of the lower class like Pedringano, he likely would not have lived long enough to be vindicated.

Women, too, struggle for fair treatment in *The Spanish Tragedy* and are often denied justice in the same way that people of lower classes are. After Horatio is killed by Lorenzo, Horatio's mother, Isabella, slowly goes insane. While she initially doesn't want her husband, Hieronimo, to seek revenge, Isabella begins to mentally unravel as her son's murder goes unavenged. She frantically runs about her room, babbling nonsensically about revenge and the men who murdered her son. As a woman, Isabella has no outlet for her grief, and she has no power to seek justice or exact revenge on behalf of her son. Ultimately, Isabella commits suicide in the very place where Horatio was murdered. "I will revenge myself upon this place / Where thus they murdered my beloved son." Denied justice and distraught, Isabella takes matters into her own hands in the only way she can. Bel-Imperia, too, ultimately commits suicide, even though she finally gets revenge and kills Balthazar during the play-within-a-play staged by Hieronimo near the end of Kyd's play. Like Hieronimo, Bel-Imperia must seek her own revenge, and this leads to her ending her own life as well; it seems that for women, finding justice also means accepting one's own destruction.

As Hieronimo unsuccessfully seeks justice for Horatio, he begins to doubt that it even exists. "The sham'st thou not,

Hieronimo, to neglect / The sweet revenge of thy Horatio?" Hieronimo asks. "Though on the earth justice will not be found." As Hieronimo's attempts to get justice for his son are thwarted by Lorenzo and those of the upper classes, Hieronimo knows there will not be any justice for Horatio. "For here's no justice; gentle boy be gone," Hieronimo says. "For justice is exiled from the earth." While justice is not wholly absent from *The Spanish Tragedy*, it is consistently denied to those of lower social standing, whether that social standing is due to class or gender.



## LOVE AND MADNESS

While *The Spanish Tragedy* is first and foremost focused on revenge, the play also examines love—love in a romantic sense and love between family members and friends. As the play opens, Don Andrea, a Spanish soldier, has just been murdered in battle by Balthazar, the son of the Viceroy of Portugal. When Andrea passes before Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth—the judges of the underworld—Minos claims that Andrea "both lived and died in love." In life, Andrea was in love with Bel-Imperia, the daughter of the Duke of Castile, and Andrea's ghost loves her still in death. Love is one of the most motivating factors for many of the characters in *The Spanish Tragedy*. For instance, after Andrea is slain in battle, his dear friend and fellow soldier, Horatio, makes sure Andrea has proper funeral rites and mourns his loss, all out of love for his dear friend. But while love is often presented as beautiful and honorable, it also causes untold torment and pain for the characters and leads them to dire extremes, such as murder and suicide. Through *The Spanish Tragedy*, Kyd highlights the beauty of love and its ability to enrich one's life and relationships, but he also argues that love can be a maddening force.

In addition to Andrea and Bel-Imperia's love and the brotherly love between Horatio and Andrea, there are several other examples of deep love in *The Spanish Tragedy*. This wide variety of examples suggests that all kinds of love can be equally strong and motivating. After the death of Andrea, Bel-Imperia is comforted by Horatio, and she soon falls in love with him, too. Horatio is Bel-Imperia's "second love," and she loves him just as fiercely as she does Andrea. Even though it is not reciprocated, Balthazar—who killed Andrea in battle and later helps Bel-Imperia's brother, Lorenzo, kill Horatio—is also in love with Bel-Imperia, and he plans to marry her (with the blessing of her father and the King of Spain) to join the main royal houses of Spain and Portugal together in a single power. Horatio is also deeply loved by his parents, Hieronimo and Isabella, who greatly mourn the loss of their "sweet boy." The love that Hieronimo especially has for his son drives most of the plot of play, leading to the revenge play-within-a-play that ends in tragedy. Alongside revenge, love is the largest motivating factor within Kyd's play, and many of the characters are driven by it in

one way or another.

Many of Kyd's characters, however, are also driven insane by love, which suggests that while love can be comforting and motivating, it can also be maddening and destructive. After the murder of her son, Isabella spirals into madness over the loss of her beloved Horatio. Before Isabella stabs herself to death at the very spot where Horatio was hanged, she "runs lunatic" alone in her room. While Bel-Imperia doesn't go insane in quite the same way as Isabella, she commits suicide at the end of the play all the same. Bel-Imperia stabs herself to death while acting in Hieronimo's play-within-a-play, even though her suicide was not part of the script. "But love of him whom they did hate too much," Hieronimo says, "Did urge her resolution to be such." In other words, Bel-Imperia loves Horatio so much, she is driven to suicide by his death. Hieronimo, too, seems to be unraveling mentally when two strangers inquire about Lorenzo—he launches into a nonsensical speech about "guilt," "murderers," and the "blood of innocents." When Hieronimo bursts into inappropriate laughter, the men are taken aback. "Doubtless this man is passing lunatic," they say before moving on. Even to complete strangers, it is clear that Hieronimo isn't well.

Despite the convincing nature of Hieronimo's madness, he also implies that his "brainsick lunacy" is only a ruse to ease his ultimate revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar, which he achieves during the play-within-a-play. As entertainment for the King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal, Hieronimo stages his original play, and casts in it both Lorenzo and Balthazar. After Bel-Imperia, who also acts in the play, stabs Balthazar to death, Hieronimo kills Lorenzo, and his revenge is ostensibly complete. Yet afterward, when Hieronimo's attempt to hang himself fails, he bites out his own tongue to avoid talking and murders Lorenzo's father with a pen before finally committing suicide. Even after his revenge, Hieronimo still behaves in a way that suggests he has been driven mad by losing Horatio. Kyd thus implies that despite the genuine beauty of love, it nonetheless has the power to cause tragic outcomes like madness and death.



## BETRAYAL

While it is certainly a lesser theme within *The Spanish Tragedy*, betrayal is nevertheless an important part of Thomas Kyd's tragic play.

Betrayal between the characters is integral in setting the plot in motion, and it remains a crucial part of the play until the dramatic end, when five of the play's limited cast of characters are killed, each of them a victim of betrayal in a different way. There is also a subplot within *The Spanish Tragedy*, which takes place in Portugal after the war with Spain (whereas the main plot takes place in Spain). The Portuguese subplot involves the false accusation of Alexandro, a nobleman, for the murder of Balthazar, the son of the Viceroy of Portugal. Balthazar isn't

actually dead—he was captured during the war and is being held prisoner by the Spanish—but Alexandro is betrayed by Villuppo, a fellow nobleman, for a chance at glory and recognition. Indeed, betrayal permeates most of *The Spanish Tragedy*, and by highlighting it in a variety of contexts, Kyd effectively argues that betrayal is everywhere.

Betrayal is rampant in the main plot of *The Spanish Tragedy*, which establishes betrayal as a common occurrence. After the war with Portugal, when Horatio and Lorenzo return to Spain with Balthazar as a prisoner, Lorenzo betrays Horatio and tells the King of Spain that he was the one to apprehend the enemy's son, even though it was Horatio who really captured Balthazar. Horatio and Lorenzo are brothers in arms, yet Lorenzo easily betrays Horatio. Bel-Imperia's servant, Pedringano, betrays her as well by agreeing to help Lorenzo kill Horatio, even though Pedringano knows that his mistress is in love with Horatio and will be devastated. Despite being supposedly devoted to Bel-Imperia, Pedringano jumps sides with little thought and easily joins forces with Lorenzo. Lorenzo later betrays Pedringano and Serberine, Balthazar's servant, even though both men helped Lorenzo kill Horatio. Lorenzo tricks Serberine and orders Pedringano to kill him, and after Lorenzo sets Pedringano up to be arrested, he refuses to help him get a pardon. At the end of the play, Bel-Imperia betrays both Lorenzo (her brother) and Balthazar (the man she is supposed to marry) when she agrees to act in Hieronimo's play-within-a-play and lure both men to their deaths. Hieronimo, too, is guilty of betrayal—he betrays his country when he kills the Duke of Castile, an innocent man and the brother of the king. Betrayal, it seems, is connected to nearly every Spanish character, no matter their desires or motivations.

Betrayal, too, is central in Kyd's Portuguese subplot, which further suggests the widespread nature of betrayal in 16th-century society. After Alexandro and Villuppo return from war, Villuppo tells the Viceroy of Portugal that Alexandro, "Under the colour of a duteous friend, / Discharged his pistol at the prince's back," killing Balthazar, the viceroy's son. Alexandro has not actually killed Balthazar, but Alexandro is nevertheless arrested, held prisoner, and threatened with unspeakable violence should Balthazar be found dead. As Alexandro is hauled away to prison, Villuppo says in a short aside: "Thus have I with an envious, forged tale / Deceived the king, betrayed mine enemy, / And hope for guerdon of my villainy." Plainly put, Villuppo betrays Alexandro and the viceroy simply in the hope of being rewarded. Indeed, once Balthazar is found alive in Spain, the viceroy asks Villuppo why he attempted to "falsely betray Lord Alexandro's life," and Villuppo responds simply: "But for reward and hope to be preferred." Villuppo betrays Alexandro, and in doing so risks Alexandro's life, all for his own selfish glory.

Arguably, the Portuguese subplot exists only to offer another view of betrayal and thus demonstrate how widespread

betrayal is. Other than the drama that unfolds between Villuppo and Alexandro, there is little else to remark upon regarding the Portuguese subplot. In fact, save for this betrayal, the entire subplot could easily be removed with little impact on the play as a whole, which suggests that Kyd chose to include it expressly in order to emphasize how common betrayal is in all corners of Elizabethan society.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### BEL-IMPERIA'S SCARF

Bel-Imperia's scarf first appears in *The Spanish Tragedy* when Horatio takes it from Andrea's body after Andrea is killed by Balthazar. The scarf symbolizes love—the love between Bel-Imperia and Andrea, Andrea and Horatio, and Horatio and Bel-Imperia—but after Horatio's death, the scarf also comes to represent revenge. When Horatio returns from war with Portugal wearing the scarf, which he has vowed to keep in the memory of his dear friend, Bel-Imperia explains that she gave the scarf to Andrea to wear in her honor before he left for war. Bel-Imperia, who has fallen in love with Horatio since Andrea's death, therefore asks him to wear the scarf in both her honor and Andrea's. Horatio, who also loves Bel-Imperia, accepts, and he is wearing the scarf the night he is murdered by Lorenzo and Balthazar in the garden. When Hieronimo finds his son dead in the garden, he takes the scarf from his body and, drenching it in Horatio's blood, vows to keep it until Horatio's death is avenged. Hieronimo indeed keeps the bloody scarf, even as he begins to spiral into insanity over the grief of losing his beloved son. When Hieronimo, who serves as Spain's Knight Marshall, hears the case of Bazulto, an old man who is seeking justice for the murder of his own son, Hieronimo accidentally hands Bazulto the bloody scarf to dry his eyes instead of a handkerchief, metaphorically indicating how hard it is to separate the pursuit of justice from the bloodiness of revenge. After Hieronimo exacts his revenge in the play-within-a-play during the last act, which results in the murder of Lorenzo and Balthazar and the unexpected suicide of Bel-Imperia, Hieronimo produces the bloody scarf and shows the audience, proof of the justification of his bloody crime. While the scarf initially symbolizes the deep love shared by several of the characters, it is ultimately associated with Hieronimo's revenge, which, like the scarf, is soaked in the blood of others. The beauty of love, the scarf suggests, can easily transform into the stain of madness and revenge.



### THE BOX

After Pedringano is imprisoned for the murder of Serberine, Lorenzo sends a page to Hieronimo with a box supposedly containing Pedringano's pardon, and this box symbolizes betrayal in *The Spanish Tragedy*. Lorenzo pays Pedringano to kill Serberine because Lorenzo is convinced that Serberine betrayed them to Hieronimo and revealed Horatio's murder. When Pedringano is arrested for Serberine's murder, he isn't worried in the least. Pedringano is sure that Lorenzo, the nephew of the King of Spain and the son of the Duke of Castile, will secure his pardon. Lorenzo indeed sends the page with a box containing Pedringano's pardon, but he orders the page not to open the box on pain of death. The page is full of curiosity and opens the box anyway; however, the box is empty, revealing that Lorenzo has betrayed Pedringano and has no intention of securing his pardon. Pedringano goes before Hieronimo, the Knight Marshall of Spain, and is sentenced to hang—all the while convinced that the page, who sits nearby with the box in his lap, is holding his pardon. Pedringano is promptly hanged, and neither the page nor the box is mentioned again. By ensuring Pedringano's execution, Lorenzo tries to be certain that no one will find out about Horatio's murder. With Pedringano and Serberine dead, only Bel-Imperia knows the truth about Balthazar and Lorenzo's murder of Horatio (except for Hieronimo, of course), and Lorenzo's betrayal of both Pedringano and Serberine is represented by the empty box. The box also reflects the page's betrayal of Lorenzo, when he ignores Lorenzo's order and opens the box, as well as the page's betrayal of Pedringano, when he discovers the box is empty but does not warn his fellow servant for fear of his own life. Thus, the box, while literally empty, is metaphorically full of betrayal.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Bloomsbury edition of *The Spanish Tragedy* published in 2009.

### Act 1, Scene 1 Quotes

●● Not far from hence, amidst ten thousand souls,  
Sat Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth,  
To whom no sooner 'gan I make approach,  
To crave a passport for my wandering ghost,  
But Minos, in graven leaves of lottery,  
Drew forth the manner of my life and death.  
“This knight,” quoth he, “both lived and died in love.  
And for his love tried fortune of the wars.  
And by war's fortune lost both love and life.”

**Related Characters:** The Ghost of Andrea (speaker), Balthazar, Bel-Imperia

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 6

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs at the very beginning of *The Spanish Tragedy*, when the Ghost of Andrea explains his death and arrival in the underworld, and it is important because it reflects Andrea's deep love for Bel-Imperia. This passage also reflects Kyd's classical influence and his connection to ancient Greek and Roman literature. There are frequent references to Greek and Roman mythology throughout the play, which begin with the reference to Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth, the judges of the underworld. These judges decide where Andrea will go in death—that is, what part of the underworld he will live in—and their judgements is Andrea's "passport" of sorts to the underworld.

Minos's claim that Andrea "both lived and died in love" is a reference to Andrea's love for Bel-Imperia. Minos implies that Andrea's life was driven by love, and while Andrea is certainly driven by revenge in the afterlife, this revenge is closely associated with love. Minos says Andrea "lost both love and life" in war, which suggests that Andrea lost his love, Bel-Imperia, in death; however, this also hints to the possibility that Balthazar killed Andrea because he wanted to clear a path to Bel-Imperia, and war was merely a convincing cover. While it is never confirmed that Balthazar's killing of Andrea was anything more than a casualty of war, Kyd plants sufficient doubt in the reader's mind. Since betrayal is rampant throughout the play, it is feasible that Balthazar's murder of Andrea was an attempt for Balthazar to get closer to Bel-Imperia.

☞☞ Then know, Andrea, that thou art arrived  
Where thou shalt see the author of thy death,  
Don Balthazar, the prince of Portingale,  
Deprived of life by Bel-Imperia.  
Here sit we down to see the mystery,  
And serve for Chorus in this tragedy.

**Related Characters:** Revenge (speaker), Bel-Imperia, Balthazar, The Ghost of Andrea

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 8

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs at the beginning of the play, after Revenge takes Andrea's ghost back to Earth to witness Bel-Imperia avenge Andrea's death, and it is important because it introduces the theme of revenge in the play and establishes the Ghost of Andrea and Revenge as the chorus of the play. Andrea and Revenge look over the action throughout the entire play and occasionally offer commentary. Revenge offers a bit of foreshadowing here and explicitly states that Andrea will witness Balthazar's death at the hands of Bel-Imperia near the end of the play.

It is known from the very beginning that Balthazar is the one who killed Andrea, and that Bel-Imperia will ultimately get her revenge and kill Balthazar, and it is this desire for vengeance that drives most of the plot. Revenge, however, is delayed for nearly the entire play and doesn't occur until the end of the last act, giving ample time for Kyd to thoroughly explore the ethics of revenge. Kyd ultimately argues that revenge should be left up to God and the law, and Revenge's delayed action gives Bel-Imperia plenty of time to change her mind. Of course, she doesn't, and her revenge ends tragically when she kills herself, as well, which implies that revenge will always end tragically.

### Act 1, Scene 3 Quotes

☞☞ Thus have I with an envious, forged tale  
Deceived the king, betrayed mine enemy,  
And hope for guerdon of my villainy.

**Related Characters:** Villuppo (speaker), Viceroy of Portugal, Balthazar, Alexandro

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 20

### Explanation and Analysis

This short quote occurs as Kyd introduces the Portuguese subplot, after Villuppo falsely accuses Alexandro of shooting Balthazar in the back, and it is important because it reflects Kyd's central argument that betrayal is rampant in 16th-century society. Here, Villuppo tells the Viceroy of Portugal that Alexandro has maliciously murdered the viceroy's son, Balthazar, for no reason other than "hope for guerdon for [his] villainy." Plainly put, Villuppo is looking to be rewarded for turning in Balthazar's killer—whether or not it is true.

In telling this lie, Villuppo betrays Alexandro—whom the viceroy threatens to torture and hang for his crime—but Villuppo also betrays Balthazar and the viceroy. Villuppo's

actions and the viceroy's appreciation are based wholly on deceit and Villuppo's jealousy. Villuppo badly wants to be recognized by the viceroy for some sort of honor or reward, and he is willing to lie and risk Alexandro's life to do so. In carrying betrayal, which is so prominent in the Spanish plot, into the Portuguese subplot, Kyd implies that betrayal is common and widespread. Betrayal is not limited to Spain but instead is everywhere, and the Portuguese subplot reflects this.

## Act 1, Scene 4 Quotes

☝ I took him up, and wound him in mine arms,  
And welding him unto my private tent,  
There laid him down, and dewed him with my tears,  
And sighed and sorrowed as became a friend.  
But neither friendly sorrow, sighs nor tears  
Could win pale Death from his usurped right.  
Yet this I did, and less I could not do:  
I saw him honoured with due funeral.  
This scarf I plucked from off his lifeless arm,  
And wear it in remembrance of my friend.

**Related Characters:** Horatio (speaker), Balthazar, Bel-Imperia, The Ghost of Andrea

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 22

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Horatio explains Don Andrea's death to Bel-Imperia, and this quote is important because it reflects Horatio's deep love for his friend, Andrea, and also introduces Bel-Imperia's scarf, a symbol of love and revenge within the play. Horatio is driven by his love for Andrea when he collects Andrea's slain body and performs his funeral rites. Horatio says he "wound [Andrea] in [his] arms." He doesn't merely pick Andrea up or move his body; he holds him tightly and encompasses him in his arms, a gesture that clearly exhibits the tenderness and protectiveness he feels for Andrea. Horatio cries over his friend and "dews him with [his] tears." Indeed, Horatio deeply loves his friend.

The scarf that Horatio takes from Andrea's body is an important symbol of love in the play. Bel-Imperia first gave the scarf to Andrea before the war as a sign of her love and honor, and when Horatio takes the scarf and vows to "wear it in remembrance of [his] friend," he does so out of love as

well. Love and revenge are closely associated within the play—as if revenge is a condition or requirement of love—and when Hieronimo later takes the scarf from Horatio's dead body, it becomes a symbol of Hieronimo's desire for revenge.

☝☝ Ay, go Horatio, leave me here alone,  
For solitude best fits my cheerless mood.  
Yet what avails to wail Andrea's death,  
From whence Horatio proves my second love?  
Had he not loved Andrea as he did,  
He could not sit in Bel-Imperia's thoughts.  
But how can love find harbour in my breast,  
Till I revenge the death of my beloved?  
Yes, second love shall further my revenge.

**Related Characters:** Bel-Imperia (speaker), Balthazar, The Ghost of Andrea, Horatio

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 23

### Explanation and Analysis

This short soliloquy occurs just after Horatio has left the garden and Bel-Imperia is alone, and it is significant because it reveals Bel-Imperia's love for Horatio. Bel-Imperia is clearly grief-stricken and mourning the loss of Andrea, which is why she is in a "cheerless mood." She has obvious reservations about falling in love with Horatio, but she ultimately implies that Andrea would approve. After all, had Andrea and Horatio not been such good friends, it is unlikely she would have fallen in love with Horatio in the first place. The Ghost of Andrea never remarks on Bel-Imperia and Horatio's love one way or another, but he certainly does not appear angered by it either.

Bel-Imperia's "second love" with Horatio has an added benefit to "further [her] revenge" in that it is sure to enrage Balthazar. Bel-Imperia has vowed revenge against Balthazar for Andrea's death, and since Horatio was the one to capture and defeat Balthazar in war, she knows she can further get to him by loving the man he sees has his enemy. While loving Horatio is part of Bel-Imperia's plan of revenge, she can't fully love Horatio until she has avenged Andrea's death. This again implies that revenge is required when a loved one is wronged, and Bel-Imperia can't possibly move on in her life without fulfilling this requirement for her beloved Andrea.

Now, lordings, fall to; Spain is Portugal,  
 And Portugal is Spain, we both are friends,  
 Tribute is paid, and we enjoy our right,  
 But where is old Hieronimo, our marshal?  
 He promised us, in honour of our guest.  
 To grace our banquet with some pompous jest.

**Related Characters:** King of Spain (speaker), Hieronimo, Portuguese Ambassador

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 26

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after the Portuguese Ambassador arrives to pay tribute to Spain, and it is significant because it reflects the combining powers of Spain and Portugal, but it also establishes Hieronimo as a poet and playwright— a crucial component of his eventual revenge. Historically speaking, Spain and Portugal combined into one power during Kyd's lifetime when Phillip II of Spain became the king of Portugal in 1581. The two kingdoms were combined for some 60 years afterward, and this union is reflected in the king's language, as "Spain is Portugal, / And Portugal is Spain." Now that the tribute has been paid by Portugal, the war is officially over, and the two kingdoms can move forward and build anew.

To entertain the Spanish court "in hour of [their] guest," the Portuguese Ambassador, the king has asked Hieronimo to "grace [their] banquet with some pompous jest," which is to say the king has asked Hieronimo to entertain them with a play. Hieronimo's identity as a playwright becomes important later in the play when Hieronimo exacts his revenge for Horatio's death in the form of the play-within-a-play in the last act. Without this staged play, Hieronimo would be unable to obtain justice for Horatio any other way (Hieronimo is denied legal justice through the king) and the "pompous jest" Hieronimo stages here introduces his connection to plays and the stage.

## Act 2, Scene 1 Quotes

I have already found a stratagem,  
 To sound the bottom of this doubtful theme.  
 My lord, for once you shall be ruled by me:  
 Hinder me not whate'er you hear or see.  
 By force or fair means will I cast about  
 To find the truth of all this question out.  
 Ho, Pedringano!

**Related Characters:** Lorenzo (speaker), Pedringano, Bel-Imperia, Balthazar

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 30

### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Lorenzo reveals his plan to discover who Bel-Imperia's love interest is, and this passage is important because it reflects the ease with which Lorenzo betrays those around him. Bel-Imperia has made it known in no uncertain terms that she is not interested in Balthazar, and Balthazar is convinced that Bel-Imperia will never love him; however, Lorenzo says she isn't interested because she loves someone else. If they can find out who that person is, they can eliminate him and get closer to their goal: Balthazar and Bel-Imperia as a wedded pair.

Lorenzo's plan is sure to reveal the truth, or "sound the bottom of this doubtful theme," but Balthazar must put his trust in Lorenzo and let him call the shots. Balthazar must allow himself to be "ruled" by Lorenzo, which, as the son of viceroy and a future king, surely isn't easy for Balthazar. Lorenzo will find the truth "by force or fair means," including bribery—which he plans to do to Pedringano—and even murder. Lorenzo has no problem betraying whomever he must in order to advance his plan to join Balthazar and Bel-Imperia, and his betrayal of Pedringano, Bel-Imperia's trusted servant, is just the beginning.

Both well, and ill: it makes me glad and sad:  
 Glad, that I know the hinderer of my love,  
 Sad, that I fear she hates me whom I love,  
 Glad, that I know on whom to be revenged,  
 Sad, that she'll fly me if I take revenge.  
 Yet must I take revenge or die myself,  
 For love resisted grows impatient.  
 I think Horatio be my destined plague:  
 First, in his hand he brandished a sword,  
 And with that sword he fiercely waged war,  
 And in that war he gave me dangerous wounds,  
 And by those wounds he forced me to yield,  
 And by my yielding I became his slave.

**Related Characters:** Balthazar (speaker), Horatio, Bel-Imperia, Lorenzo

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 33

**Explanation and Analysis**

This quote occurs when Balthazar discovers that Bel-Imperia is in love with Horatio, and it is significant because it illustrates how Balthazar is motivated by both love and revenge. Balthazar claims to be both “glad and sad” because he is happy to finally know who Bel-Imperia’s love interest is, but he knows that Bel-Imperia still hates him. However, Balthazar now has a place to focus his anger and revenge in relation to Bel-Imperia’s denial of his love. Lorenzo has convinced Balthazar that the only reason Bel-Imperia resists him is because she loves another. Thus, the first step to winning Bel-Imperia’s love is the removal of this other love. Still, Balthazar knows Bel-Imperia will “fly [him]”—or hate him even more and distance herself further—if he takes revenge on Horatio, although this hardly seems to matter.

Balthazar’s desire for revenge against Horatio goes much deeper than simply Bel-Imperia’s love for Horatio. As Horatio was the one to capture Balthazar in battle, Balthazar has an added reason to hate him. Furthermore, Horatio didn’t just capture Balthazar, he humiliated him—a particularly difficult pill to swallow for a future king. Horatio “fiercely” took Balthazar with his sword, which he used to give him “dangerous wounds.” Then, Horatio “forced him to yield” and made Balthazar his “slave.” Balthazar is driven equally by love (for Bel-Imperia) and hate (for Horatio)—and these dual emotions fuel his desire for revenge.

**Act 2, Scene 3 Quotes**

☛☛ Brother of Castile, to the prince’s love  
What says your daughter Bel-Imperia?

Although she coy it as becomes her kind,  
And yet dissemble that she loves the prince,  
I doubt not, I, but she will stoop in time.  
And were she froward, which she will not be,  
Yet herein shall she follow my advice,  
Which is to love him or forgo my love.

**Related Characters:** Cyprian, Duke of Castile, King of Spain (speaker), Balthazar, Bel-Imperia

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 37

**Explanation and Analysis**

This quote occurs after the King of Spain decides to arrange a marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar in order to join the royal houses of Spain and Portugal, and it is

important because it underscores the oppression of Bel-Imperia as a woman in 16th-century society. The king wants to know how Bel-Imperia feels about her match with Balthazar, but instead of asking Bel-Imperia how she feels, the king asks her father the Duke of Castile. This suggests that what Bel-Imperia thinks or wants doesn’t matter—she will ultimately be forced to marry whoever the king and her father decide.

Castile says that Bel-Imperia is “coy,” or shy, in response to Horatio’s advances—which is to say that she isn’t interested. Castile sees Bel-Imperia’s resistance as something all women do “as becomes her kind,” and even though he admits that she isn’t fond of Balthazar, he says she will “stoop in time,” or eventually come around. She will have to, Castile implies, because Castile has already told Bel-Imperia that his love as a father is contingent upon her finally accepting Balthazar’s love. Bel-Imperia has no agency or choice in whom she loves or marries—at least not if she wants to salvage her father’s love—and this reflects how powerless she is in 16th-century society.

**Act 2, Scene 4 Quotes**

☛☛ What, will you murder me?

Ay, thus, and thus; these are the fruits of love.

**Related Characters:** Lorenzo, Horatio (speaker), Serberine, Pedringano, Balthazar, Bel-Imperia

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 41

**Explanation and Analysis**

This short exchange between Horatio and Lorenzo occurs just before Lorenzo—along with Balthazar, Pedringano, and Serberine—kills Horatio, and this quote is important because it reflects Kyd’s overreaching argument that love can lead people to do terrible things. Lorenzo and the others have just bombarded Horatio and Bel-Imperia during their secret meeting in the garden, and Horatio seems to immediately know that their presence isn’t good. It isn’t a secret that Lorenzo deeply disapproves of Bel-Imperia’s love affair with Horatio, and he is willing to kill Horatio to keep them apart.

Lorenzo’s reply that “these are the fruits of love” suggests that love has driven them all here—Bel-Imperia and Horatio’s love, Lorenzo’s supposed love for his sister (his harsh treatment of her suggests otherwise), and Balthazar’s love for Bel-Imperia. Bel-Imperia and Horatio’s love is a

hindrance to Balthazar's feelings for Bel-Imperia, and thus their love drives Balthazar to murder. Likewise, Balthazar's love for Bel-Imperia has driven him to this place as well. If not for the deep love Balthazar has for Bel-Imperia, he would likely not seek revenge against Horatio—at least not to the extent of murder—which supports Kyd's argument that love can drive one to dire extremes, similar to Isabella and Bel-Imperia's suicides later in the play.

## Act 2, Scene 5 Quotes

☞ See'st thou this handkercher besmeared with blood?  
It shall not from me till I take revenge.  
See'st thou those wounds that yet are bleeding fresh?  
I'll not entomb them till I have revenged.  
Then will I joy amidst my discontent,  
Till then my sorrow never shall be spent.

**Related Characters:** Hieronimo (speaker), Horatio, Isabella

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 44-5

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs after Hieronimo and Isabella find Horatio's dead body in the garden, and it is important because it reflects Hieronimo's desire to avenge his son's death. Furthermore, this passage underscores the continued importance of Bel-Imperia's scarf within the play. Here, Hieronimo refers to the scarf as a "handkercher," but it is implied that it is the same scarf. The image of the scarf soaked in Horatio's blood is a particularly powerful end to Bel-Imperia and Horatio's love, but Hieronimo's immediate attraction to the scarf reflects his own love for his son.

While it can certainly be said that the scarf is symbolic of Hieronimo's love for Horatio—it is Hieronimo's deep love as Horatio's father that drives his desire for revenge—the scarf, in Hieronimo's hands at least, is symbolic of vengeance. Hieronimo's desire for blood revenge against his son's killers is reflected in the bloody scarf, and he vows to keep the scarf with him until his revenge is realized. Hieronimo indeed produces the scarf at key moments in the play, and after the play-within-a-play in which his revenge is finally complete, Hieronimo takes out the bloody scarf and shows the audience. Hieronimo suggests that his sadness will resolve after he seeks revenge; however, this does not prove to be the case. After Hieronimo's revenge is

complete, he commits suicide, which suggests that revenge is not an appropriate route to overcome grief after a tragedy such as the murder of a loved one.

☞ The heavens are just, murder cannot be hid:  
Time is the author both of truth and right,  
And time will bring this treachery to light.

**Related Characters:** Isabella (speaker), Horatio, Hieronimo

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 45

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage, spoken by Isabella, occurs after Hieronimo vows revenge for Horatio's death, and it is significant because it reflects Kyd's primary argument that revenge is ultimately God's responsibility and is not for mortal men to seek. After Horatio's murder, Hieronimo wants to find the murderers and seek blood for blood justice. The only way for the murderers to atone for their actions is to die, and Hieronimo vows to find them and kill them, thereby taking both revenge and justice into his own hands.

Isabella, on the other hand, urges Hieronimo to be patient and implies that it isn't his place to seek vengeance for Horatio's death. Isabella claims the "heavens are just, murder cannot be hid," which is to say that Horatio's killers will ultimately have to answer to God, who will deliver both revenge and justice in his judgment. This delayed action of revenge allows time for both "truth and right." In not rushing to exact immediate revenge, there is less chance a mistake will be made, and revenge will be exacted on the wrong person. This delayed action, Kyd also implies, allows time for one to reconsider and realize that revenge is the sole responsibility of God.

## Act 3, Scene 1 Quotes

☞ Say, treacherous Villuppo, tell the king,  
Wherein hath Alexandro used thee ill?  
Rent with remembrance of so foul a deed,  
My guilty soul submits me to thy doom:  
For not for Alexandro's injuries,  
But for reward and hope to be preferred,  
Thus have I shamelessly hazarded his life.

**Related Characters:** Villuppo, Alexandro (speaker),

Balthazar, Viceroy of Portugal

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 51

### Explanation and Analysis

This is part of the Portuguese subplot, and it is significant because it again reflects Kyd's argument that betrayal is widespread and easily executed. Here, Alexandro calls Villuppo "treacherous" because he has falsely accused Alexandro of shooting Balthazar in the back. Alexandro asks Villuppo to tell the viceroy what he has done to warrant such a betrayal. Villuppo's answer is simple: Alexandro has done nothing; betraying Alexandro simply suited Villuppo's selfish desires.

"Rent" is an obsolete form of the word "rend," which means to tear or break apart, and Villuppo's use of this word suggests that he is torn up by what he has done. Villuppo seems ashamed to admit that the reason he accused Alexandro of such a terrible thing—and in doing so risked Alexandro's life—actually has nothing to do with Alexandro. Villuppo accused Alexandro to make himself look better. In being the one to witness the murder of the prince and coming forward to report such an affront and seek justice, Villuppo gains favor with the viceroy. Villuppo's betrayal is impersonal and done out of convenience, and it reflects Kyd's argument that betrayal is common in the 16th century, both in Spain and in Portugal.

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears when Hieronimo asks about Bel-Imperia's whereabouts after Horatio's murder, and it is important because it reflects the despicable nature of Lorenzo's character and his intention to betray everyone to ensure he is never implicated in Horatio's murder. Lorenzo is suspicious of Hieronimo because he is suspicious of everyone. Lorenzo is a man who betrays nearly everyone he comes into contact with; therefore, he is understandably worried that he, too, will be betrayed. Lorenzo's "suspicion bodes a further ill" because it means that he will have to kill Pedringano and Serberine—or at least arrange for their deaths—to ensure that he is not exposed as Horatio's killer.

Lorenzo knows he will have to kill them, and he suggests that Pedringano and Serberine suspect this as well. Lorenzo, however, is quick to point out that Pedringano and Serberine are hardly innocent. Lorenzo did pay them to betray Bel-Imperia and Horatio, and it was "for coin" that they "endangered" their souls. In this way, Kyd implies that betrayal is even easier when money is involved. Pedringano forgets his scruples and easily betrays Bel-Imperia when Lorenzo flashes gold. As such, Pedringano is a "base companion," and Lorenzo feels almost justified in killing him. Lorenzo basically says, "Better them than me," and since he is a nobleman and Pedringano and Serberine are his servants, Lorenzo considers them "slaves" with whom he can do whatever he wants.

## Act 3, Scene 2 Quotes

☛☛ This sly enquiry of Hieronimo  
For Bel-Imperia breeds suspicion,  
And this suspicion bodes a further ill,  
As for myself, I know my secret fault;  
And so do they, but I have dealt for them.  
They that for coin their souls endangered,  
To save my life, for coin shall venture theirs:  
And better it's that base companions die,  
Than by their life to hazard our good haps.  
Nor shall they live, for me to fear their faith:  
I'll trust myself, myself shall be my friend,  
For die they shall, slaves are ordained to no other end.

**Related Characters:** Lorenzo (speaker), Serberine, Pedringano, Horatio, Bel-Imperia, Hieronimo

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 57

## Act 3, Scene 5 Quotes

☛☛ My master hath forbidden me to look in this box, and by my troth 'tis likely, if he had not warned me, I should not have had so much idle time; for we men's-kind in our minority are like women in their uncertainty: that they are most forbidden, they will soonest attempt. So I now. By my bare honesty, here's nothing but the bare empty box. Were it not sin against secrecy, I would say it were a piece of gentleman-like knavery. I must go to Pedringano, and tell him his pardon is in this box; nay, I would have sworn it, had I not seen the contrary. I cannot choose but smile to think how the villain will flout the gallows, scorn the audience, and descant on the hangman, and all presuming of his pardon from hence. Will't not be an odd jest, for me to stand and grace every jest he makes, pointing my finger at this box, as who would say, 'Mock on, here's thy warrant.' Is't not a scurvy jest that a man should jest himself to death? Alas, poor Pedringano, I am in a sort sorry for thee, but if I should be hanged with thee, I cannot weep.

**Related Characters:** Lorenzo's Page (speaker), Serberine, Pedringano, Lorenzo

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 65

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs when Lorenzo sends his page to deliver the empty box to Pedringano after Serberine's murder, and it is significant because it further underscores betrayal within the play. Both Pedringano and the page are at an increased risk of being betrayed by Lorenzo because they are his servants. They are of a lower social status, and Lorenzo therefore sees them as disposable. The page's lower class standing is reflected in the change to prose for the page's lines. Most of the play is written in blank verse—poetry, usually in iambic pentameter, which generally doesn't rhyme—but the page's lines abandon poetry in lieu of a more relaxed style of speaking.

The page, too, betrays Lorenzo when he looks inside the box, which is itself symbolic of betrayal within the play. But even the page's betrayal is Lorenzo's fault, as it is prompted by Lorenzo's threatening order not to look inside the box. The empty box, of course, means that Lorenzo has no intention of securing a pardon for Pedringano and has been betraying him from the very beginning. Lorenzo is truly evil—a "villain," according to the page—and the empty box is proof of this. The empty box means Pedringano will certainly hang, and the page can do nothing about it. He clearly wants to warn Pedringano that Lorenzo has betrayed him, but he doesn't, and in doing so, the page betrays Pedringano as well.

## Act 3, Scene 6 Quotes

☞☞ Thus must we toil in other men's extremes,  
That know not how to remedy our own;  
And do them justice, when unjustly we, |  
For all our wrongs, can compass no redress.  
But shall I never live to see the day  
That I may come, by justice of the heavens,  
To know the cause that may my cares allay?  
This toils my body, this consumeth age,  
That only I to all men just must be,  
And neither gods nor men be just to me.

**Related Characters:** Hieronimo (speaker), Horatio

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 66

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears as Hieronimo continues to seek justice for Horatio, and it is significant because it underscores Hieronimo's inability to obtain justice through legal channels. As the Knight Marshal of Spain, it is highly ironic that Hieronimo can't get justice for his own son. Hieronimo is a judge, and he is literally expected to dispense justice to others, yet he can't seem to get it himself. He "toil[s] in other men's extremes" (i.e. their legal problems) but doesn't know how to "remedy [his] own." In other words, Hieronimo has to solve everyone problems and ensure them justice, but the same is not afforded to Hieronimo.

Hieronimo says that he won't see the day that, "by justice of the heavens," his revenge is realized. This, too, suggests that revenge is the responsibility of the "the heavens," or God, and that it should not be left up to mortal man. Hieronimo exacts his revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar only after he is unable to get it any other way. Hieronimo is incredibly frustrated and his official capacity as judge only makes this worse. Hieronimo must always be just, but "neither gods nor men be just to [Hieronimo]."

☞☞ Peace, impudent, for thou shalt find it so:  
For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge,  
Be satisfied, and the law discharged.  
And though myself cannot receive the like,  
Yet will I see that others have their right.  
Despatch, the fault's approved and confessed,  
And by our law he is condemned to die.

**Related Characters:** Hieronimo (speaker), Lorenzo's Page, Serberine, Horatio, Pedringano

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 67

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote occurs as Hieronimo sentences Pedringano to death after the murder of Serberine, and it is significant because it reflects Hieronimo's power to exact revenge as an official agent of the law. This quote also highlights Hieronimo's "blood with blood" idea of justice. The only way

that Pedringano can atone for the murder of Serberine is to pay with his life, just as the only way Lorenzo and Balthazar can atone for Horatio's death is with their own deaths. In this way, justice and revenge are closely linked in Hieronimo's view and are impossible to separate.

Even though it is Hieronimo's responsibility to make sure justice is dispensed to others, he cannot secure it for himself, but he is still determined to see his responsibility through. Everyone else has "the right" to justice, but Hieronimo seems to be exempt from this right. In the case of Pedringano, however, deciding justice isn't difficult, as Pedringano confesses to Serberine's murder. Pedringano can see Lorenzo's page from where he sits, and he holds the box which contains Pedringano's pardon. Since Pedringano believes he is about to be pardoned, he readily admits to his crime. Of course, the box is empty, and Lorenzo has betrayed Pedringano, which again reflects Lorenzo's evil nature and his ability to easily betray others with little thought.

### Act 3, Scene 13 Quotes

☛☛ And art thou come, Horatio, from the depth,  
To ask for justice in this upper earth?  
To tell thy father thou art unrevenged,  
To wring more tears from Isabella's eyes,  
Whose lights are dimmed with over-long laments?  
Go back my son, complain to Aeacus,  
For here's no justice; gentle boy be gone,  
For justice is exiled from the earth;  
Hieronimo will bear thee company.  
Thy mother cries on righteous Rhadamanth  
For just revenge against the murderers.

**Related Characters:** Hieronimo (speaker), The Ghost of Andrea, Isabella, Horatio, Bazulto

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 93

#### Explanation and Analysis

Here, Bazulto comes to Hieronimo in Hieronimo's official capacity of Knight Marshal to seek justice for his own son's death, and Hieronimo mistakes him for Horatio. This quote is significant because it underscores Hieronimo worsening insanity and also highlights Kyd's central claim that justice, especially for the lower classes, is unobtainable. The fact that Hieronimo has confused an old man for his son, who is a young man, suggests that Hieronimo's insanity is not only genuine, but worsening as well. While Hieronimo later

implies that his insanity is only a ruse, his confusion here suggests otherwise. Hieronimo implies that Horatio has come back from the underworld to seek his own vengeance since his death remains "unrevenged." Hieronimo asks if Horatio has come to make his mother cry some more and add to her already fragile condition.

Just as Andrea says in the beginning of the play, Aeacus is one of the judges of the underworld, and Hieronimo tells Horatio to go back to Aeacus and seek justice there, because there is none to be found on Earth. "For justice is exiled from the earth," Hieronimo tells Horatio by way of Bazulto. Like Hieronimo, Bazulto doesn't get justice for his son either, as Hieronimo sends him away without remedy. As a member of the lower class, Bazulto likely doesn't have another avenue for justice; thus, his son's murder will remain unavenged, too.

### Act 3, Scene 14 Quotes

☛☛ Welcome, Balthazar,  
Welcome brave prince, the pledge of Castile's peace;  
And welcome Bel-Imperia. How now, girl?  
Why com'st thou sadly to salute us thus?  
Content thyself, for I am satisfied;  
It is not now as when Andrea lived.  
We have forgotten and forgiven that,  
And thou art graced with a happier love.

**Related Characters:** Cyprian, Duke of Castile (speaker), Horatio, Hieronimo, The Ghost of Andrea, Bel-Imperia, Balthazar

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 99

#### Explanation and Analysis

This quote appears after Bel-Imperia and Balthazar's wedding is announced, and it is significant because it reflects the fact that Bel-Imperia has little agency over her life and marriage, and she has even less control to seek revenge on behalf of Andrea. Bel-Imperia arrives "sadly to salute" her father because he is forcing her to marry Balthazar against her will. Not only is Bel-Imperia unable to exact her revenge for Andrea's death because of the oppression she suffers as a woman in the 16th century, she is being forced to marry a man she hates.

Castile's mention of Andrea suggests Castile did not approve of Bel-Imperia's relationship with him. Castile is the king's brother, and Castile and his children are respected

royals. Andrea, by contrast, was a courtier, and as far as Castile is concerned, Andrea was well below their social standing as royals. Castile assures Bel Imperia he isn't angry anymore about Andrea—he is “satisfied” now and has “forgotten and forgiven that.” According to Castile, Bel-Imperia's relationship with Balthazar is a “happier love” because it means that she will be queen. Bel-Imperia's future is based on what Castile and the king want, not what Bel-Imperia wants, which reflects her unhappiness and inability to obtain revenge, and likely adds to the misery that leads to her suicide.

## Act 4, Scene 4 Quotes

●● And you, my lord, whose reconciled son  
 Marched in a net, and thought himself unseen  
 And rated me for brainsick lunacy.  
 With “God amend that mad Hieronimo!”—  
 How can you brook our play's catastrophe?  
 And here behold this bloody handkercher,  
 Which at Horatio's death I weeping dipped  
 Within the river of his bleeding wounds:  
 It as propitious, see I have reserved,  
 And never hath it left my bloody heart,  
 Soliciting remembrance of my vow  
 With these, O these accursed murderers:  
 Which now performed, my heart is satisfied.

**Related Characters:** Hieronimo (speaker), Bel-Imperia, Balthazar, Lorenzo, Horatio, King of Spain

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 120

### Explanation and Analysis

This passage occurs at the end of *The Spanish Tragedy*, after Hieronimo exacts his revenge in the play-within-a-play during the last act, and it is significant because it suggests that Hieronimo's insanity is just an act. This quote further reflects the significance of Bel-Imperia's scarf and implies that Hieronimo has finally found justice. Here, Hieronimo is speaking to the king, even though he refers to Lorenzo as the king's son, and he refers to Lorenzo's attempts to block Hieronimo from the king. When Hieronimo tries to get the king's attention, Lorenzo tells the king that Hieronimo is insane and should be ignored, thereby robbing Hieronimo of his only outlet for justice.

The bloody scarf that Hieronimo takes from Horatio's body is symbolic of his desire for revenge, and when he shows the scarf to the audience and explains its significance, this implies that Hieronimo has achieved justice and avenged Horatio's murder. Just as Hieronimo promises, he holds the bloody scarf close until his revenge is complete, and now that both Balthazar and Lorenzo are dead, Hieronimo's “heart is satisfied.” But Hieronimo's heart *isn't* satisfied, because as soon he says this, Hieronimo rushes up the mountain to hang himself. Like Bel-Imperia's revenge, Hieronimo's revenge ends with his suicide, which implies that even though Hieronimo didn't have another choice for justice, revenge still isn't worth it.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## ACT 1, SCENE 1

The Ghost of Andrea and Revenge enter. In life, Don Andrea was a Spanish courtier, and he served the court with duty and honor. He was secretly in love with Bel-Imperia, and she loved him as well, but their relationship was cut short by Andrea's death during the latest conflict with Portingale. Directly after Andrea's death, Charon denied Andrea's passage over the river Acheron because proper funeral rites had not been performed. Then, three days later, Andrea's dear friend, Horatio, performed the funeral ritual, and Andrea was allowed to pass into the afterlife to sit before Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth.

According to Minos, Andrea "both lived and died in love," and Aeacus suggested they send him to the fields of love, but Rhadamanth disagreed. Andrea died in war, Rhadamanth reminded them, and he must therefore be sent to the martial fields with Achilles' Myrmidons and Hector. As Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth could not agree on where to send Andrea, they sent him to the court of Pluto, where Pluto allowed Proserpine to decide Andrea's fate. Proserpine ordered Revenge to take Andrea through the gates of horn, which has brought them to the present moment. Now, Revenge says, Andrea shall see his murderer, Balthazar, killed by Bel-Imperia. Revenge and Andrea will watch the events unfold, and serve as the Chorus of the tragedy.

## ACT 1, SCENE 2

The King of Spain enters, along with his brother, the Duke of Castile; a general; and Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal of Spain. The general informs the king that they have been victorious in war and have suffered few losses. The Portingales, the general says, will pay "tribute" and "homage." The general goes on to tell the king about the battle. Both Spain and Portingale were well-equipped, and they were locked in battle for hours, until the brave Don Andrea broke through the Portingale's line. The Portingales began to retreat, but their prince, Balthazar, killed Andrea and "insulted" him.

*As piece of Renaissance literature, The Spanish Tragedy is heavily influenced by classical Greek and Roman literature, and this influence is seen in Kyd's multiple references to Greek and Roman mythology. Minos, Aeacus, and Rhadamanth are the judges of the underworld, and they decide where Andrea goes in death, and Charon is the ferryman who brings the newly dead across the river Acheron and into the underworld. Without Horatio's love for Andrea and his desire to complete his funeral rites, Andrea would not have been allowed to pass into the afterlife.*



*Andrea "lived and died in love" because he fiercely loves Bel-Imperia, and Balthazar presumably kills Andrea so that he himself can get closer to Bel-Imperia. Proserpine is the queen of the underworld, and in ordering Revenge to take Andrea through the gates of horn, she implies that she wants Andrea to see the truth regarding his desire for revenge. Only true dreams come through of the gates of horn (false dreams come through the gates of ivory), and this suggests that Andrea's desire for revenge is ill-advised. Again, Kyd's play is full of illusions to ancient Greece and Rome, as Achilles and his Myrmidons fought against Hector during the Trojan War.*



*Portingales is another term for the Portuguese, who the Spanish have defeated in this most recent war. The general's reference to "tribute" and "homage" suggests that the two countries have placed bets on their battles, and now Portugal must pay. Balthazar's "insult" of Andrea in death suggests that Balthazar's actions were not entirely honorable, hence Andrea's desire for revenge.*

The general tells the King of Spain, that Hieronimo's son, Horatio, challenged Balthazar and easily knocked the prince from his horse. He took Balthazar prisoner, and the Portugales retreated. A trumpet sounds to announce the return of the soldiers. Horatio enters with Lorenzo, another soldier and the son of the Duke of Castile, holding Balthazar as their prisoner. They bring Balthazar before the king, who welcomes the prince to his country. The king addresses Horatio as well, and he thanks him for his duty and for honoring Spain.

The King of Spain tells Balthazar that if the truce between Spain and Portugale is honored, peace between the two countries is sure to grow. In the meantime, the king says, Balthazar will remain their prisoner, and while he won't be free, he will be kept in luxury. Both Lorenzo and Horatio are restraining Balthazar, so the king asks which one of them subdued the prince. Lorenzo and Horatio both claim to have taken Balthazar prisoner. Lorenzo claims to have captured Balthazar's horse, but Horatio claims to have knocked Balthazar from his horse in the first place. Lorenzo then says he is the one who secured Balthazar's weapons, yet Horatio says he was the one to disarm Balthazar.

The King of Spain asks Balthazar if he surrendered to Lorenzo or Horatio, and Balthazar claims to have surrendered to both. As such, the king says that both Horatio and Lorenzo shall be rewarded. He awards Lorenzo, his nephew, Balthazar's weapons and horse, and he tells Horatio that he will be rewarded Balthazar's ransom. As they all exit, the king says they shall feast with their prisoner as their guest.

### ACT 1, SCENE 3

The Viceroy of Portugal enters with two attendants, Alexandro and Villuppo. Alexandro confirms that the Portuguese Ambassador has been dispatched to Spain to deliver the tribute payment. The viceroy is clearly upset that Portugal has lost the war, and he falls to the ground, moaning. Fortune has stolen the viceroy's crown, and his son, Balthazar, has surely been killed as well. No, Alexandro says. It is more likely that Balthazar has been taken prisoner and is alive in Spain. Balthazar's ransom alone will keep the Spanish from killing him, Alexandro says.

*Interestingly, the general says that Horatio knocked Balthazar from his horse, but Lorenzo later claims that he unhorsed Balthazar and recovered his weapons during battle. Presumably, Lorenzo is lying, like Villuppo does later in the Portuguese subplot. Like Villuppo, Lorenzo betrays Horatio to steal his glory and impress the king.*



*Again, Lorenzo is lying to betray Horatio and impress the king. When Horatio later tells Bel-Imperia about his capture of Balthazar, he doesn't even mention Lorenzo being there. Likely, Lorenzo and Balthazar are already in cahoots, and Lorenzo is trying to ensure that Horatio doesn't get any of the credit for taking Balthazar down. Kyd ultimately argues that betrayal is everywhere, and this begins immediately with Lorenzo's betrayal of Horatio and the lies Lorenzo tells the king.*



*As Balthazar, too, lies and claims to have been subdued by Lorenzo and Horatio, this also suggests that Balthazar and Lorenzo are already colluding together. If Balthazar and Lorenzo didn't already have plans to join forces and convince Bel-Imperia to marry Balthazar, it is unlikely Balthazar would lie to help Lorenzo.*



*A viceroy is someone who rules in place of a king, which means the viceroy does not rule by birthright. During the time Kyd wrote The Spanish Tragedy, Portugal was going through a succession crisis, as two kings had died without living heirs. The presence of the viceroy in the play implies that this fictional Portugal is having similar problems. While Alexandro doesn't know it, Villuppo is getting ready to betray him to the viceroy.*



Villuppo interrupts. He saw Balthazar killed in battle: he watched as Alexandro shot the prince in the back. Alexandro immediately speaks up and says that Villuppo's accusation is a lie. The Viceroy silences them both and asks what became of Balthazar's body. Villuppo claims it was taken by the Spanish. Alexandro asks the viceroy for the chance to speak and defend his innocence, but the viceroy immediately dismisses him. Alexandro will be imprisoned, and if Balthazar is confirmed dead, Alexandro will die as well. Alexandro is hauled off by two attendants and the viceroy exits, leaving Villuppo alone. He has told such a lie, Villuppo claims, in hopes of obtaining a reward.

*Villuppo selfishly betrays Alexandro for his own glory and recognition. Balthazar is obviously not dead and is being held prisoner by the Spanish, but the viceroy has no way of knowing this until the ambassador returns with news. The Portuguese subplot revolves around Villuppo's betrayal, which suggests that betrayal is common in Portugal just as it is in Spain. Thus, Kyd implies, betrayal is everywhere.*



## ACT 1, SCENE 4

Bel-Imperia enters with Horatio. She says that she must know how Andrea died, and Horatio agrees to tell her, provided she excuse his "tears and sighs." During battle, Andrea came up against Balthazar. Their fight was long and great, but Nemesis, struck with jealousy of Andrea's bravery, cut his life short, and Balthazar overtook him. Horatio arrived too late, but he was able to take Balthazar prisoner. Horatio claimed Andrea's body and performed his funeral rites in mourning. Horatio then removed the **scarf** tied to Andrea's arm, which he now wears in honor of his friend.

*Horatio's "tears and sighs" are evidence of the great love he has for Andrea, as is the scarf that he takes from Andrea's body to remember his friend in death. This scarf, which was given to Andrea by Bel-Imperia is symbolic of love and returns several times throughout the play. Nemesis is the Greek goddess who enacts retribution against those with excessive pride, and this passage implies that Andrea was guilty of hubris, which directly led to his death.*



Bel-Imperia tells Horatio that she knows the **scarf** well. She gave it to Andrea before he left for war, and he promised to wear it for her. Now, she wants Horatio to keep the scarf and wear it in her honor as well as Andrea's. Horatio agrees and vows to faithfully serve Bel-Imperia, but now he must excuse himself, as Bel-Imperia's father, the Duke of Castile, has put Horatio in charge of Balthazar.

*The scarf that Bel-Imperia initially gives Andrea and now Horatio is symbolic of love within the play—love between Bel-Imperia and Andrea, Andrea and Horatio, and Horatio and Bel-Imperia. Later in the play, it will come to symbolize revenge. This dual meaning reflects the similarities of love with madness or vengeance, as these passionate emotions are closely tied within the play.*



After Horatio exits, Bel-Imperia claims that Horatio is her "second love," but she can't fully give herself to him until she avenges Andrea's death. On the other hand, loving Horatio does further her revenge. Balthazar is clearly interested in Bel-Imperia and has even spoke of marriage, but she has resisted him with contempt. She will love Horatio, Andrea's friend and Balthazar's captor, to spite Balthazar.

*Interestingly, as Andrea looks on at Bel-Imperia and Horatio's budding romance, he seems to approve of their coupling. As the alternative is Balthazar, Andrea's killer, it makes sense the Andrea would rather see Bel-Imperia with his good friend, Horatio.*



Lorenzo enters with Balthazar, and Lorenzo asks Bel-Imperia why she seems so sad. Bel-Imperia tells her brother that she prefers to be alone, but Lorenzo says that the price has come to visit her and profess his love. Balthazar confirms this. He can think of nothing but Bel-Imperia and her beauty. Bel-Imperia goes to leave, dropping her glove, and Horatio appears and picks it up. She gives it to him for his trouble, and Lorenzo turns to Balthazar, telling him not to worry. Woman are funny, Lorenzo says, but Bel-Imperia will eventually come around to Balthazar's advances.

Horatio says that the King of Spain is coming to feast at banquet with the Portuguese Ambassador, and Balthazar is excited to receive news of his country. Trumpets sound, and the king enters with the ambassador and the banquet. The king tells the ambassador that Balthazar has been treated well, and they all sit for the banquet. The King of Spain looks around for Hieronimo, who has promised to entertain them with a play. Suddenly, Hieronimo enters with several knights, who perform a masque. The king thanks Hieronimo and offers him a drink. He takes the cup sitting in front of Horatio and gives it to Hieronimo. They drink and exit.

## ACT 1, SCENE 5

As the Ghost of Andrea looks on, he grows increasingly angry. Balthazar, his murderer and the supposed prisoner of Spain, sits at banquet in luxury. Revenge tells Andrea to be patient. Revenge will soon turn their joy to sadness.

*Bel-Imperia despises Balthazar, and she won't come around to his advances. Lorenzo likely knows this, which is why he consorts with Balthazar to kill Horatio and eliminate his competition for Bel-Imperia's love. It is likely that Balthazar and Lorenzo are already scheming to ensure that Bel-Imperia marries Balthazar. As the viceroy plans to make Balthazar king, this means that Bel-Imperia would be the queen.*



*A masque is a type of play popular during the 16th and 17th centuries that usually involves dancing and masked actors. This passage establishes Hieronimo as a poet and playwright, which sets the stage for the production of the play-within-a-play at the end of the last act, which two characters will use to seek revenge against those who have betrayed him.*



## ACT 2, SCENE 1

Lorenzo enters with Balthazar and again tells the prince not to worry. Bel-Imperia will soon accept Balthazar's love, Lorenzo promises. Balthazar disagrees. He confesses that that is his own fault that Bel-Imperia does not love him, but Lorenzo isn't so sure. Perhaps Bel-Imperia loves someone else, Lorenzo says, and Balthazar shudders at the thought. Lorenzo claims that he has a plan, and calls Pedringano, his sister's servant, into the room. Lorenzo tells Pedringano that he will reward him with gold coins if he tells them who loves Bel-Imperia.

*Revenge's delayed action gives Andrea plenty of time to reconsider his desire for vengeance. This interaction makes it clear that seeking revenge is a choice rather than a necessity, and one that is potentially detrimental. It remains to be seen whether Andrea will heed Revenge's advice or pursue vengeance.*



*Pedringano, who should be loyal to Bel-Imperia as her servant, betrays her easily enough for a few gold coins and Lorenzo's special treatment. This, too, underscores how common betrayal is and suggests that anyone can be tempted to betray another, regardless of the circumstances. This passage also reflects Balthazar's love for Bel-Imperia. Despite the dishonor Balthazar display throughout the play, he does appear to actually love Bel-Imperia, even though he goes about expressing it in the wrong way.*



At first, Pedringano tells Lorenzo and Balthazar that he doesn't know who loves Bel-Imperia. Lorenzo draws his sword, and Pedringano says that Bel-Imperia is in love with Horatio. Lorenzo doesn't believe it, and Balthazar, speechless, is taken aback. Pedringano insists it is true. He claims that he read the letters Bel-Imperia entrusted him to deliver to Horatio, and he knows for a fact that Bel-Imperia loves Horatio, not Balthazar.

Pedringano exits, leaving Lorenzo and Balthazar alone. Balthazar is upset, but he is also pleased. He is upset that Bel-Imperia, whom he deeply loves, seems to hate him; however, Balthazar is pleased to know who his competition is. Now, Balthazar knows where to focus his revenge—on Horatio—and he vows to either win Bel-Imperia's love or lose his life trying. Lorenzo tells Balthazar it is time to go and win Bel-Imperia's favor, which can only "be won by [Horatio's] remove."

## ACT 2, SCENE 2

Horatio enters with Bel-Imperia, and Pedringano shows Lorenzo and Balthazar to a hiding place above, where they are able to spy on the couple below. Bel-Imperia confesses her love to Horatio, and Balthazar says that his heart has died. Lorenzo tells Balthazar that his heart will soon live in the joy of Horatio's death. Horatio tells Bel-Imperia that she must return to her father, the Duke of Castile, before she raises any suspicion. They all exit.

## ACT 2, SCENE 3

The King of Spain enters with the Duke of Castile and the Portuguese Ambassador. The king asks Castile if his daughter, Bel-Imperia, is accepting of Balthazar's love. Castile claims that Bel-Imperia is resistant but will bend in due time, as he has already informed her that to deny the prince's love is to forgo her father's love as well. The king turns to the ambassador and tells him to advise the Viceroy of Portugal of Bel-Imperia and Balthazar's marriage. Bel-Imperia has a large dowry, and if she gives birth to Balthazar's son, he will be the future king. As they exit, the king reminds the ambassador that even though Spain will pay Bel-Imperia's dowry, Portugal is still responsible to pay Balthazar's ransom. The ransom money, the king says, has been promised to Horatio.

*Pedringano doesn't actually betray Bel-Imperia until Lorenzo draws his sword and threatens Pedringano's life. However, as Pedringano continues to betray Bel-Imperia, he does so only for money and not to save his life as he initially does. Balthazar is visibly affected by Bel-Imperia's relationship with Horatio, which again reflects Balthazar's strong love for her.*



*Lorenzo's comment that Bel-Imperia can only "be won by Horatio's remove" hints to the fact that Lorenzo plans to kill Horatio to get him out of the way. Like Bel-Imperia, Andrea, and Hieronimo, Balthazar is motivated by a desire for revenge, as well as his love for Bel-Imperia.*



*Spying, which is another form of Pedringano's betrayal of Bel-Imperia, is a popular device in Elizabethan plays. Kyd was one of the first playwrights to use spying within a scene to advance plot, and this technique was heavily used by Shakespeare and other Elizabethan playwrights as well.*



*This passage reflects what little power Bel-Imperia has in dictating the events of her own life. She is forced by the king and her father to accept Balthazar as her husband, and she has no agency over her own life or who she will marry. What's worse, the Duke of Castile's love for his daughter is dependent on her doing what he wants and marrying Balthazar, which also highlights Bel-Imperia's powerlessness and oppression as a woman in the 16th century.*



## ACT 2, SCENE 4

Horatio, Bel-Imperia, and Pedringano enter the garden, where Horatio and Bel-Imperia can visit while Pedringano guards the gate. Bel-Imperia fully trusts Pedringano, she says, and he will alert them to anyone else coming into the garden. As Pedringano exits to the gate, he says in a short aside that instead of guarding the gate like Bel-Imperia has asked, he will earn more gold by alerting Lorenzo to their presence in the garden.

Horatio and Bel-Imperia sit in the garden and speak of their love. Horatio kisses her, and Bel-Imperia suddenly hears someone else enter the garden. “Pedringano!” she yells. “We are betrayed!” Lorenzo enters with Balthazar and his servant, Serberine. Pedringano is with them as well, but he wears a disguise. The men quickly push Bel-Imperia aside and hang Horatio from an arbour. Horatio asks if they are there to murder him, and Lorenzo confirms. “[T]hese are the fruits of love,” Lorenzo says, as the men stab Horatio. Bel-Imperia begins to scream and yell for Horatio’s life. She shouts “Murder!” and screams for Horatio’s father, Hieronimo. Lorenzo quiets Bel-Imperia and drags her away, leaving Horatio’s body behind.

## ACT 2, SCENE 5

Hieronimo enters the garden in his pajamas. He knows he has heard a woman cry his name, but the garden is deserted. He sees that a man has been hanged from the arbour, yet his murderers are nowhere in sight. Hieronimo cuts the man down and discovers with despair that it is his son, Horatio. Hieronimo cries over his son’s body, as his wife, Isabella, enters.

Hieronimo says that knowing the identity of Horatio’s murderers will ease his pain, for only revenge will heal his heart. He notices a **scarf** that Horatio is wearing and removes it, soaking it first in his son’s blood. Hieronimo vows to keep the scarf with him until he gets revenge for Horatio’s murder, but Isabella tells him to be patient. “The heavens are just, murder cannot be hid,” she says. “Time is the author both of truth and right, / And time will bring this treachery to light.”

Hieronimo and Isabella pick up Horatio’s dead body, and Hieronimo draws his sword, putting it to his chest. He speaks in Latin, citing a pastiche of lines written by Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid, and says he wishes to die with his son, but will not consent to death until he has revenge. Hieronimo throws his sword to the side and exits with Isabella, carrying Horatio’s body.

*This is more evidence of Pedringano’s obvious betrayal of Bel-Imperia. She trusts him explicitly, and she has likely known him for most, if not all, of her life—yet he easily betrays her for money. In this way, Kyd suggests that nobody can be trusted not to betray one another, regardless of the circumstances.*



*Pedringano is obviously wearing a disguise so that Bel-Imperia won’t know that he has betrayed her and Horatio. In a disguise, Pedringano can continue to betray Bel-Imperia without drawing attention to himself and revealing his identity. Lorenzo’s comment that Horatio’s murder is “the fruits of love” refers to Balthazar’s love for Bel-Imperia. Lorenzo implies that Balthazar’s love is why they are murdering Horatio, which suggests that love can push one to do awful and violent things, like murder.*



*Hieronimo’s immediate despair upon finding Horatio’s body is evidence of the deep love Hieronimo has for his son. Given this love and subsequent grief, Hieronimo and Isabella are likely to experience a decline in mental health as they try to cope with Horatio’s death.*



*Isabella’s comment that “the heavens are just” suggests that revenge and justice should be left up to God. God will serve justice upon His judgement, thus Isabella implies that revenge isn’t Hieronimo’s responsibility to take. However, from this point on, Hieronimo is driven by his desire for revenge, and Horatio’s scarf—the same scarf he took from Andrea—is symbolic of this desire for revenge.*



*This passage, too, reflects Hieronimo’s love for Horatio, since in the acute pain of losing his son, Hieronimo contemplates suicide. Hieronimo, however, decides to live to get his revenge. Kyd’s reference to Lucretius, Virgil, and Ovid—all classical Roman or Greek writers—reflects Kyd’s classical influence.*



**ACT 2, SCENE 6**

The Ghost of Andrea looks to Revenge and asks if he has been brought here only to increase Andrea's pain. Andrea wants to see the death of Balthazar, but he has seen only the death of his dear friend, Horatio, and the abuse of Bel-Imperia. Revenge again encourages Andrea to have patience and assures him that the death of Balthazar is coming.

*Again, Revenge's delayed action allows time for Andrea and Hieronimo to reconsider their desire for revenge, but Andrea and Hieronimo's desire for revenge only seems to grow the longer they are forced to wait.*

**ACT 3, SCENE 1**

The Viceroy of Portugal enters with several nobles, including Villuppo. The viceroy laments the tragic death of his son, Balthazar, and bemoans the fact that they are left without a suitable heir. They will wait no longer to execute Alexandro, the viceroy says, and Alexandro enters, flanked by armed guards. Alexandro again says he is innocent, but the viceroy will not be swayed. He orders the guards to bind Alexandro to the stake and burn him.

*Alexandro is a nobleman and part of the upper class, which is why the viceroy doesn't kill Alexandro right away after he is accused of killing Balthazar. If Alexandro had been of a lower class, it is likely he would have been executed much sooner, and he would have already been dead by the time Balthazar was discovered alive.*



Suddenly, the Portuguese Ambassador enters, having just returned from Spain. Balthazar is alive and being treated well in the court of Spain, the ambassador says. The ambassador hands the Viceroy of Portugal several letters proving his claims, and the viceroy immediately orders the guards to release Alexandro. The viceroy asks Villuppo why he lied and betrayed Alexandro, and Villuppo admits he did it only for reward and glory. The viceroy tells Villuppo that he will be severely punished as a traitor, and he orders the guards to take him away. Alexandro exits with the ambassador and the viceroy, who promises to publically reward Alexandro for his loyalty.

*Villuppo's betrayal of Alexandro is not personal and seems almost random. Villuppo has nothing against Alexandro—he simply wants to make himself look good to the viceroy, and he is willing to sacrifice Alexandro's life to do it. Villuppo must know that his betrayal will result in Alexandro's death, but he doesn't give this any consideration when he first decides to betray him. This again underscores how frequent, and easy, betrayal is in 16th-century society.*

**ACT 3, SCENE 2**

Hieronimo enters, crying and mourning the unjust death of Horatio. Hieronimo again vows to find the murderers and exact revenge, and a letter suddenly falls from above. Hieronimo picks it up and discovers that it has been written in blood. It is a letter from Bel-Imperia to Horatio, and it claims that Lorenzo and Balthazar have killed Horatio and abducted Bel-Imperia. "Hieronimo," Bel-Imperia writes, "revenge Horatio's death."

*Here, Bel-Imperia tells Hieronimo directly to seek revenge against Lorenzo and Balthazar. The fact that Bel-Imperia's letter is written in blood underscores how serious she is in getting her revenge. Bel-Imperia was not physically hurt during Horatio's death, which this suggests that she harmed herself in order to write the letter.*



Hieronimo can't believe Bel-Imperia's letter, and he wonders why Lorenzo and Balthazar would want to kill Horatio. Still, Hieronimo has vowed revenge, and he must find out if the letter is true. He is near the home of the Duke of Castile, so he decides to find Bel-Imperia and ask her. Pedringano enters, and Hieronimo asks where he can find Bel-Imperia. Lorenzo appears and claims that Bel-Imperia has been sent away due to a vague dishonor. Hieronimo, not wanting to tell Lorenzo about the letter, bids them goodnight and exits.

*The fact that Hieronimo does not initially believe Bel-Imperia's letter underscores how powerless Bel-Imperia is as a woman in 16th-century society. She witnessed Horatio's murder firsthand, but Hieronimo requires additional proof before taking revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar, both of whom are royalty and highly respected.*



Lorenzo, suspicious of Hieronimo, tells Pedringano that Serberine must have told Hieronimo about Horatio's murder. Pedringano insists that Serberine has been with him all day and could not have said a word, but Lorenzo says Serberine has betrayed them. He gives Pedringano some gold coins and tells him to meet Serberine later in the park. Serberine has betrayed them and must die, Lorenzo says, and Pedringano must kill him. Pedringano agrees and exits.

A messenger enters and Lorenzo orders him to go to Serberine and tell him to meet Lorenzo that evening in the park. The messenger exits, and Lorenzo is left alone. He is suspicious of Hieronimo and his inquiry about Bel-Imperia's whereabouts. Lorenzo must make sure that he is not identified as Horatio's killer, which means he must dispose of Pedringano and Serberine. If the servants live, then Lorenzo must worry about their faithfulness and fear their betrayal. As Lorenzo exits, he says that Pedringano and Serberine must die.

### ACT 3, SCENE 3

Pedringano arrives at the park with a pistol. Lorenzo has given him more gold, and Pedringano plans to kill Serberine just as Lorenzo has ordered him to. Pedringano is not afraid of being arrested for Serberine's murder, since he knows that Lorenzo will make sure that he is given a pardon. Three watchmen enter, followed by Serberine, who wonders why Lorenzo wanted to meet in the park so late.

Pedringano fires the pistol, shooting Serberine dead, and he is immediately apprehended by the watchmen. They ask why Pedringano has killed Serberine, and Pedringano says he did it because Serberine was out walking so late at night. The watchmen tell Pedringano that they must take him before Hieronimo, the marshal, but Pedringano is not concerned.

### ACT 3, SCENE 4

Lorenzo and Balthazar enter, and Balthazar asks Lorenzo why he is up so early. Lorenzo tells him that he can't sleep for fear they have been betrayed. Balthazar can't believe they have been betrayed, and Lorenzo's page enters the room with news of Serberine's murder. Balthazar is shocked and asks who murdered him, and the page reports that it was Pedringano, who has been apprehended for the crime. Lorenzo feigns disbelief, and Balthazar, claiming he will go to the marshal's and ensure Pedringano's execution, exits.

*Presumably, Pedringano knows that Serberine has not betrayed them to Hieronimo, but Pedringano still betrays him easily enough for a little bit of money. In this way, Kyd identifies money as a major motivator of betrayal. Pedringano is obviously friendly with Serberine, but it makes little difference when it comes time to kill him.*



*Lorenzo, it seems, expects Pedringano and Serberine to betray him, which is precisely why he feels he must kill them. Interestingly, Lorenzo does not worry about Balthazar betraying him. Balthazar and Lorenzo are of the same social class and status, and Balthazar has just as much to lose if he betrays Lorenzo. This again underscores how common betrayal is in 16th-century society.*



*Just like Bel-Imperia assumes that Pedringano will never betray her, Pedringano assumes that Lorenzo will never betray him, and they are both wrong. Pedringano easily betrays Bel-Imperia, and Lorenzo easily betrays Pedringano, which again implies that betrayal is widespread in 16th-century society.*



*Presumably, Lorenzo sends the watchmen to the park so that Pedringano will be caught red-handed murdering Serberine. Lorenzo knows that Pedringano will be hanged for his crime, which effectively gets rid of Pedringano, too, moving Lorenzo closer to the realization of his plan.*



*Here, Lorenzo betrays Balthazar as well as Pedringano and Serberine. Serberine is Balthazar's servant, and he is clearly upset by the news. Presumably, Lorenzo expects Balthazar to get upset and go to ensure Pedringano's death, thereby adding an extra layer of protection to Lorenzo's plan. Pedringano is sure to be executed especially if a Portuguese prince is demanding his death.*



Lorenzo reflects on the beauty of his plan. He has “set the trap,” and Balthazar has fallen right in. Balthazar is running to ensure the death of the very man Lorenzo helped to catch, only no one knows that this has been his plan all along. Lorenzo trusts no one and knows that every man has his own secrets. Suddenly, a messenger enters with a letter from Pedringano. In the letter, Pedringano says he hopes Lorenzo will come to his aid in his time of need. Lorenzo dismisses the messenger and tells him to report back to Pedringano that he has received the letter. The messenger exits.

Lorenzo turns to his page and tells him to go to Pedringano in prison. He is to tell Pedringano that his pardon has been signed and not to worry, but Pedringano must remain silent. Lorenzo gives the page a **box**, and threatens him with death should he look inside. The box contains Pedringano’s pardon, Lorenzo says, and the page is to show the box to Pedringano. The page agrees and exits, and Lorenzo is left alone. “And what I want, nobody knows; it is enough that I alone understand,” Lorenzo says in Italian before exiting.

*Lorenzo’s paranoia that everyone will betray him again underscores Kyd’s primary argument that betrayal is rampant in 16th-century society. Lorenzo betrays everyone he comes into contact with, and he expects them to betray him in return. His claim that he has “set the trap” for Balthazar to fall into proves that Lorenzo has willingly and knowingly betrayed Balthazar to selfish ends.*



*Lorenzo’s tendency to lapse into occasional Italian imbues him with an air of Machiavellian evil. Lorenzo’s plan is his alone—it serves his needs and desires and is known by no one else—and he will do anything to see his evil plan come to fruition. The box, which serves as a symbol of Lorenzo’s betrayal, is empty. Lorenzo has no intention of helping Pedringano; Lorenzo just wants Pedringano to think he is helping him, so that Pedringano will stay quiet about Horatio’s murder.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 5

Lorenzo’s page enters with the **box** and curses Lorenzo for telling him not to look inside. Had Lorenzo said nothing and just told him to show it to Pedringano, chances are he would have never thought of opening it. But now that Lorenzo has told him not to, the page is compelled to look inside. He opens the box and discovers it is empty. He feels sorry for Pedringano, but the page knows that if he doesn’t do as Lorenzo orders, he will be hanged as well. The page exits.

*The page obviously feels some sort of kinship with Pedringano as they are both servants of Lorenzo’s estate. The page wants to warn Pedringano and tell him the box is empty, but Lorenzo’s evil appears well known. In refusing to tell Pedringano that the box is empty, the page betrays Pedringano as well, and the page’s guilt is evidence of this.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 6

Hieronimo enters with a deputy. “Thus must we toil in other men’s extremes,” Hieronimo says, “That know not how to remedy our own; / And do them justice, when unjustly we, / For all our wrongs, can compass no redress.” Pedringano enters, bound and led by officers, and the deputy orders him to step forward. Pedringano openly confesses the murder of Serberine and claims he does not fear death. Hieronimo tells him to be silent. “For blood with blood shall, while I sit as judge, / Be satisfied, and the law discharged,” Hieronimo says.

*Hieronimo’s words reflect his frustration at being the kingdom’s official judge and not being able to get justice for his own son. Hieronimo is expected to deliver justice on demand for others, but his own needs are ignored. Hieronimo has a clear policy in dispensing justice, and his “blood with blood” rule has clear connotations of revenge. One who kills, Hieronimo suggests, must himself be killed.*



A hangman enters and asks Pedringano if he is ready, and Pedringano asks for what. The hangman reminds Pedringano that it is time for him to die, and Pedringano wonders what the rush is. He points in the direction of Lorenzo's page sitting with the **box** and says the box contains his salvation. Hieronimo, claiming he has never seen a man so foolish, tells the hangman to hurry on with the execution and exits. Pedringano tells the hangman that he has been pardoned by the King of Spain, but the hangman ignores him and leads him outside, where he hangs Pedringano, killing him.

*Pedringano believes until the very last minute that Lorenzo will save him. This belief, engineered specifically by Lorenzo, again illustrates how evil Lorenzo is and how far he will go in his betrayals to keep Horatio's murder a secret. Lorenzo's page has presumably already told Pedringano that the box contains his pardon, and Pedringano is sarcastic and insolent in his interactions with Hieronimo and the hangman because he is sure he is about to be pardoned.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 7

Hieronimo enters, lamenting the injustice of Horatio's murder. He says again that he must seek revenge, and the hangman enters with a letter taken from Pedringano's dead body. He hands Hieronimo the paper and exits. The letter is written by Pedringano to Lorenzo, and it implicates Lorenzo and Balthazar in Horatio's murder. Hieronimo knows now that Bel-Imperia's letter is true after all. He says again that only blood can right the wrong of Horatio's murder, and he promises to go to the King of Spain "[a]nd cry aloud for justice through the court."

*Again, Hieronimo makes it clear that his idea of justice is death, which reflects his "blood with blood" policy. The fact that Hieronimo needs additional proof to believe Bel-Imperia's letter again reflects how difficult it can be for women to seek justice through normal legal channels. Bel-Imperia was an eye-witness to Horatio's murder, yet Hieronimo does not accept her word alone.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 8

Isabella enters with her maid. The maid has given Isabella herbs to calm her, but she has nothing to ease Isabella's heartache. There is no medicine that can cure her disease, Isabella says. She "runs lunatic" around the room, crying for Horatio, and exits.

*Isabella is clearly going insane. Her love for her son and the pain of his loss is too much to bear. She has no real outlet for her grief, nor does she have the power as a woman to seek justice for Horatio.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 9

Bel-Imperia sits alone at a window. She is furious that she has been taken from court and locked away by Lorenzo. She doesn't know why Hieronimo has not yet avenged Horatio's death. As Bel-Imperia cries to Andrea, one of Lorenzo's servants enters and tells Bel-Imperia to come with him.

*Bel-Imperia wrongly believes that Hieronimo has not yet avenged Horatio's death because he doesn't want to. Bel-Imperia's forced imprisonment again underscores the struggles of women in 16th-century society. Not only is Bel-Imperia unable to seek justice or revenge on her own, she is held against her will and forced to marry a man she doesn't love.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 10

Balthazar enters with Lorenzo and Lorenzo's page. Lorenzo asks the page if he is sure he saw Pedringano's dead body, and the page insists he has. The page exits, and a servant enters with Bel-Imperia. She immediately turns to Lorenzo and verbally attacks him. He is not her brother, Bel-Imperia says, but her enemy. Lorenzo tells her to calm down, and she will see that he has done her a favor and saved her honor and his.

Bel-Imperia can't possibly see how Lorenzo has saved her honor, so he explains. Their father (the Duke of Castile) and the King of Spain wanted to see Hieronimo about some legal matters and had sent Lorenzo along first. When he arrived at Hieronimo's, Lorenzo found Bel-Imperia in the garden with Horatio. In light of Bel-Imperia's "old disgrace" with Don Andrea, which was sure to be sustained with her relationship with Horatio, Lorenzo killed Horatio.

Bel-Imperia asks Lorenzo why he has kept her locked up all this time, and Lorenzo says that her sadness over Andrea's death has angered their father, the Duke of Castile. Lorenzo leans in and whispers into Bel-Imperia's ear, telling her to consider Balthazar again. Balthazar loves her, Lorenzo says. Balthazar confirms and again professes his love to Bel-Imperia, asking again for her to accept him. Bel-Imperia refuses and exits, followed by Balthazar and Lorenzo.

## ACT 3, SCENE 11

Hieronimo enters, followed by two men from Portugal. They ask Hieronimo where they might find the Duke of Castile's house, and when Hieronimo points it out, they ask if they might find Castile's son there. Hieronimo asks if they are looking for Lorenzo, and when they say that they indeed are, Hieronimo tells them that he knows just where to find him. He tells the men that there is a path just to the left, which leads "from a guilty conscience / Unto a forest of distrust and fear." The path is a dark and dangerous, Hieronimo says, and it is full of sad thoughts that harken to "despair and death."

*Lorenzo is so paranoid that he will be betrayed, he must make sure that Pedringano is really dead. Lorenzo's claim that he has saved Bel-Imperia's honor implies that Horatio was a threat to her honor. Horatio was of a lower social standing and was not a nobleman, which, to Lorenzo, means that he was not good enough for Bel-Imperia.*



*Lorenzo and Bel-Imperia are royalty—their father is a duke and their uncle the king—and Hieronimo is merely a civil servant. His position as judge is surely important, but it does not make him or his son, Horatio, on the same social level as Lorenzo and Bel-Imperia. Andrea was not noble either, and Lorenzo and Castile similarly disapproved of him.*



*In reality, Bel-Imperia doesn't have any power to accept or refuse Balthazar. The King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal have already decided Bel-Imperia and Balthazar will marry. Lorenzo appears to give Bel-Imperia a choice as if to torture her, as he surely knows that the marriage is already set.*



*The men from Portugal are presumably there for the wedding between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar. At the mention of Lorenzo's name, Hieronimo is clearly upset. His descriptive, and quite imaginative, directions are obviously evidence of his worsening insanity as a grieving father, but they also reflect Lorenzo's guilt. Furthermore, Hieronimo's language reflects his identity as a poet and playwright, which will come into play when he finally exacts his revenge.*



Just up the path, Hieronimo tells the Portuguese men, is where the murderers have constructed the dwelling for their wretched souls. At this dwelling is a “brazen cauldron, fixed by Jove,” and there, Hieronimo says, is where they will find Lorenzo, bathing himself in “boiling lead and blood of innocents.” The men laugh, and Hieronimo laughs as well, bidding them farewell as he exits. “Doubtless this man is passing lunatic,” the men say as they exit.

*Again, Hieronimo seems to be going insane, although he later implies that his insanity is just a ruse to get his revenge. To the men, Hieronimo’s words seem like complete nonsense, but they clearly illustrate Lorenzo’s guilt in murdering Horatio, an innocent man. Jove, or Jupiter, is the king of the gods in Roman mythology, which further reflects Kyd’s classical influence. Jove is often associated with suffering, and Hieronimo hopes that this will be the fate that awaits Lorenzo.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 12

Hieronimo enters with a dagger and a rope. He has come to see the King of Spain and plead his case to get justice for Horatio’s murder. Hieronimo throws down the dagger and rope. If he stabs or hangs himself, there will be no one to avenge Horatio’s death. He hears the arrival of the king and picks the dagger and rope up again. The king enters with the Portuguese Ambassador, the Duke of Castile, and Lorenzo.

*This is the second time Hieronimo contemplates suicide, which reflects his pain and despair over losing his beloved son and suggests that he really is mentally unraveling despite his implication that he is of sound mind. Hieronimo first tries to seek justice for his son through legal channels, which suggests that Hieronimo knows it is not his responsibility to seek revenge.*



The King of Spain asks the Portuguese Ambassador if the Viceroy of Portugal has received the king’s recent letters. “Justice, O, justice to Hieronimo,” Hieronimo interrupts. Lorenzo holds Hieronimo back, telling him the king is busy. The king asks who has interrupted, but Hieronimo tells him to carry on. The ambassador says that the viceroy was very happy to learn that Balthazar is alive and being treated so well in the Spanish court, and he happily agrees to the marriage between his son and Bel-Imperia. The viceroy will come to Spain himself for the marriage, which he hopes will forge a lasting connection between Spain and Portugal. At the wedding, the viceroy will give his crown to Balthazar and make Bel-Imperia a queen.

*Again, Hieronimo tries to seek justice for Horatio’s murder through the proper channels, but Lorenzo blocks him, which again reflects the power of the upper class to withhold justice to those of the lower class. There is little Hieronimo can do to overcome Lorenzo, so he doesn’t even try. If Hieronimo is to accuse Lorenzo, there is little evidence to suggest that he would be taken seriously or even believed. Likely, Lorenzo would talk his way out of it, and Hieronimo would be out of luck—and likely Lorenzo’s next target for murder.*



The Portuguese Ambassador tells the King of Spain that he has the ransom money due Horatio, and Hieronimo immediately speaks up at the mention of his son’s name. “Justice, O justice, justice, gentle king!” Hieronimo cries. Lorenzo again blocks Hieronimo and tells him to stop, but Hieronimo will not be silenced. “Give me my son, you shall not ransom him!” Hieronimo yells. He threatens to rip up the earth and begins to tear and dig at the ground with his dagger. The king asks Hieronimo what he means by such an outburst, and Lorenzo says it is just Hieronimo’s pride. Hieronimo wants Horatio’s ransom money for himself, Lorenzo tells the king.

*Hieronimo appears quite insane here, which again points to worsening madness. Hieronimo demands that Lorenzo give him back his son, which suggests that Horatio is still alive. Likely, Hieronimo means that Horatio’s justice shall not be ransomed, but his words are nevertheless frantic and confused. Lorenzo’s claim that Hieronimo only wants Horatio’s ransom money also implies that Horatio is still alive, which helps Lorenzo’s plan—if no one knows Horatio is dead, no one will know Lorenzo killed him.*



Lorenzo tells the King of Spain that Hieronimo is “in a manner lunatic,” and the king is sorry to hear it. The king tells Lorenzo to give Hieronimo the gold. As Horatio’s father, it is surely his due, the king says. Lorenzo says that they should see about replacing Hieronimo as marshal and claims the post should be given to someone with “more discretion.” The king worries that relieving Hieronimo of his post would be too painful for him, and he tells Lorenzo that they will instead wait and see. They all exit to go tell Balthazar and Bel-Imperia of their impending marriage.

*Pretending Hieronimo is insane is the perfect cover for Lorenzo’s murder of Horatio. No matter what Hieronimo says, Lorenzo can just claim Hieronimo is insane. Lorenzo wants to give Hieronimo’s job to someone with “more discretion,” which is to say he wants to give it to someone who isn’t insane, but the king disagrees. The king has no reason to suspect that Horatio is dead, yet he still says to give Hieronimo his gold and won’t let Lorenzo replace Hieronimo at this job. This behavior suggests that the king isn’t an entirely bad person, and he clearly cares about Hieronimo.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 13

Hieronimo enters with a book. “*Vindicta mihi!*” he cries. He knows revenge is heaven’s responsibility, but he still desires it. “*Per scelus semper tutum est sceleribus iter,*” Hieronimo says and decides he will seek revenge for Horatio’s death. All times are not fit for revenge, Hieronimo notes, as the sound of a servant distracts him. The servant enters and tells Hieronimo that some citizens have come to argue legal disputes.

*The book in Hieronimo’s hand is a copy of the play that he will stage later to exact his revenge. “Vindicta mihi!” is Latin for “my punishment,” and is a reference to Romans 12.19 in the Bible, in which God declares vengeance his sole responsibility. Hieronimo’s next Latin line—“The safe way with crime is more crime”—is a line from a play written by Seneca, a playwright from ancient Rome, which, in addition to reflecting Kyd’s classical influence, also highlights Hieronimo’s “blood with blood” policy of justice. Hieronimo knows that revenge is God’s responsibility and not his to take, but he is determined to seek it anyway.*



Two citizens come in fighting about a lease, and they hand Hieronimo their legal papers. Hieronimo asks who the quiet man behind them with the “mournful eyes” is, and he tells the man to step forward. His name is Bazulto, and he has come to find justice for his son’s murder. Hieronimo corrects Bazulto. It is his own son, Hieronimo says, Horatio, who has been murdered. He tells Bazulto to dry his eyes and offers him a handkerchief, handing him Horatio’s bloody **scarf** by mistake. Hieronimo apologizes and digs in his purse for a different handkerchief. That was Horatio’s scarf, Hieronimo explains.

*The presence of Horatio’s bloody scarf symbolizes Hieronimo’s determination for revenge, and Hieronimo’s confused behavior again suggests that he is slipping into insanity. Hieronimo thinks Bazulto must be mistaken, for it is Hieronimo’s son, not Bazulto’s, who has been murdered. Hieronimo doesn’t initially consider that Bazulto’s son has been murdered, too, because Hieronimo is too wrapped up in his own grief.*



Hieronimo launches into a soliloquy about his grief and sorrow. He must get revenge for Horatio, he says, and he promises to torture Lorenzo and Balthazar for killing his son. He threatens to tear them limb from limb, ripping the legal documents in his hands for effect. Hieronimo exits, and the citizens run after him, complaining about their documents and wasted money. Hieronimo enters again and speaks directly to Bazulto. “Go back my son, complain to Aeacus, / For here’s no justice; gentle boy be gone.” Bazulto tells Hieronimo that he is not his son; he has come only to get justice for his own son. Hieronimo says he knows and leads Bazulto away.

*Hieronimo’s confusion that Bazulto is Horatio again suggests that he is going insane. Bazulto is an old man and looks nothing like Horatio, but Hieronimo, lost in his soliloquy, is in a different world. Hieronimo gets carried away and rips up the legal documents, which again suggests he is going mad, but it also implies that Hieronimo has little time for frivolous arguments when murder goes unavenged. Like Hieronimo, Bazulto doesn’t get justice either, which reflects Kyd’s argument that justice for the lower classes can be difficult to come by in 16th-century society.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 14

The King of Spain enters, along with the Duke of Castile, the Viceroy of Portugal, Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia. The king welcomes the viceroy to Spain and informs him that Balthazar and Bel-Imperia will be married tomorrow. The viceroy says he is pleased about the upcoming marriage, and they all exit, except for Castile and Lorenzo. Castile tells Lorenzo that he wants to talk to him. He doesn't want anything to jeopardize Bel-Imperia's happiness or wedding—including Lorenzo's misunderstanding with Hieronimo—and he urges Lorenzo to fix whatever disagreement he has with Hieronimo.

Balthazar and Bel-Imperia enter, and Castile tells Bel-Imperia to cheer up. "It is not now as when Andrea lived," Castile says. "We have forgotten and forgiven that, / And thou art graced with a happier love." Hieronimo enters, and Castile says that he knows Hieronimo is angry because Lorenzo has denied him access to the king, but Castile is hoping that Hieronimo can forgive him. Hieronimo draws his sword, but Lorenzo swears he never gave him cause for such treatment. Castile tells them to embrace and be friends. Hieronimo agrees to be friends with them all, and Lorenzo says he hopes that Hieronimo has forgotten his grudge. They all exit except for Hieronimo. "Pha!" Hieronimo says, as he exits alone. He knows Lorenzo can't be trusted.

*The Duke of Castile's request for Lorenzo to fix whatever beef he has with Hieronimo again suggests that Castile, like the king, is fond of Hieronimo and even respects him. However, his fondness doesn't mean that Hieronimo is likely to get justice. No matter how much the king and Castile like Hieronimo, they will never side with him against Lorenzo, which again suggests that justice is difficult to achieve for the lower classes.*



*Castile's comment to Bel-Imperia again suggests that he did not approve of Don Andrea because he was of a lower social standing, and this further suggests that Castile would not approve of Horatio either—had Castile known about Bel-Imperia and Horatio's relationship. Drawing his sword on Lorenzo makes Hieronimo appear even more insane, as if he is challenging Lorenzo to a duel. Hieronimo's "Pha!" clearly means that he doesn't really forgive Lorenzo, and he knows that Lorenzo will betray him as soon as he gets the chance.*



## ACT 3, SCENE 15

Meanwhile, Revenge has fallen asleep and the Ghost of Andrea, who is growing more and more impatient, wakes him. Revenge tells Andrea to leave him alone, but Andrea insists he wake up. Hieronimo is in league with Lorenzo, Andrea says, but Revenge assures him that he is not. Hieronimo will not forget about Horatio, and Revenge has not forgotten either.

Suddenly, a Dumb Show enters, performs a silent masque, and leaves. The Ghost of Andrea is confused, and he asks Revenge to explain. Revenge says that the actors have just performed a wedding, in which Hymen, the god of marriage, wearing a black robe over his saffron ones, extinguished the wedding torches in pots of blood.

*Even Andrea believes that Hieronimo and Lorenzo's embrace is sincere, but Hieronimo is only making nice so he can exact his revenge. The delayed action of revenge gives Hieronimo time to change his mind, but it also gives Lorenzo time to get comfortable and let his guard down. Hieronimo can't enact his revenge if Lorenzo is suspicious, so he must make him think they are friends—yet another form of betrayal in the play.*



*A Dumb Show is a type of play, like the one Hieronimo stages in the beginning of the play, and this Dumb Show foreshadows the play-within-a-play from the last act, in which Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia finally exact their revenge against Balthazar and Lorenzo.*



## ACT 4, SCENE 1

Bel-Imperia enters with Hieronimo and asks if this is how he shows his love for Horatio. Hieronimo is yet to avenge Horatio's death, and Bel-Imperia can't understand Hieronimo's inaction. "Hieronimo, for shame," she says. Hieronimo asks Bel-Imperia to forgive him for not believing her letter about how Horatio died. He begs her not to think that he will leave Horatio's death unavenged, and he vows again to kill Lorenzo and Balthazar. Bel-Imperia says she would like to help him, and Hieronimo says he already has a plan.

Balthazar and Lorenzo enter. They are looking for Hieronimo and need his help. Balthazar asks Hieronimo if he will entertain the Viceroy of Portugal the same way he did the Portuguese Ambassador and stage a play. Hieronimo instantly agrees and says he already has a play in mind. He shows them the book in his hand and asks them all if they will act in the play. They each agree, and Balthazar asks what the play is about. Hieronimo says it is about a Spanish knight who is set to marry a beautiful Italian woman named Perseda. Perseda is loved by all, including Soliman, the most important guest. Soliman tries to win Perseda's love but fails, so he has his friend kill the knight. In a rage, Perseda kills Soliman and herself.

Balthazar asks Hieronimo what happens to Soliman's friend, and Hieronimo says he runs into the mountains and hangs himself. Balthazar asks who will play the part of the friend, and Hieronimo says he will play it himself. Balthazar will play Soliman, Hieronimo says, Lorenzo will be the knight, and Bel-Imperia will play Perseda. Balthazar says that he thinks a comedy would be much better, but Hieronimo disagrees. Tragedies are for kings, Hieronimo insists.

Hieronimo tells Balthazar, Lorenzo, and Bel-Imperia that they will each perform their parts in a different language. Balthazar will speak in Latin, Hieronimo will speak in Greek, Lorenzo will speak in Italian, and Bel-Imperia will speak in French. Balthazar says that the play is sure to be confusing, but Hieronimo says it must be that way, "for the conclusion." Everyone exits, except to Hieronimo. "Now shall I see the fall of Babylon," he says. "Wrought by the heavens in this confusion. / And if the world like not this tragedy, / Hard is the hap of hold Hieronimo."

*Bel-Imperia clearly thinks that Hieronimo has not exacted his revenge because he doesn't love Horatio, which is something Bel-Imperia says he should be ashamed of. In this way, Bel-Imperia, unlike Hieronimo, thinks revenge is Hieronimo's responsibility, and she further thinks it is something that Hieronimo must do to prove his love. Hieronimo, on the other hand, has only agreed to revenge because he has been unable to obtain justice legally.*



*Here, Hieronimo finally explains the book he has been carrying for the last few scenes. The fact that Hieronimo has been carrying the play around suggests that his plan to kill Balthazar and Lorenzo during the play is premeditated. The plot of Hieronimo's plan is quite similar to the circumstances of Bel-Imperia and Balthazar's upcoming wedding, but neither Balthazar nor Lorenzo seem to realize this.*



*Ironically, Lorenzo and Balthazar have no idea that they are discussing their own upcoming deaths. Like the script says, Hieronimo runs toward the mountains to hang himself after he murders Lorenzo, but he is apprehended and brought back.*



*Hieronimo wants the audience to be confused, since Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia plan on actually killing Lorenzo and Balthazar during the play, and the differing languages helps to disorient the audience. Furthermore, the use of different languages mirrors the Latin and Italian used throughout the play, which again reflects Kyd's classical influence. Hieronimo's comment implies that he knows the audience won't like his tragedy, and this, too, suggests that revenge is not Hieronimo's responsibility.*



## ACT 4, SCENE 2

Isabella enters the garden with a knife. “I will revenge myself upon this place / Where thus they murdered my beloved son,” she says and begins to cut down the arbour where Horatio’s body was found hanging. She curses the tree, so it will no longer bear fruit, and then she stabs herself to death.

*Isabella’s suicide is further evidence of her mental and emotional suffering after Horatio’s death. She must “revenge herself” as she can’t find justice any other way. The cursed tree that will no longer bear fruit harkens to Isabella’s own womb, which is metaphorically killed when her son is murdered.*



## ACT 4, SCENE 3

Hieronimo enters, followed by the Duke of Castile. Hieronimo asks Castile if he will give a copy of the play to the King of Spain. Castile agrees and exits. Hieronimo calls to Balthazar and asks if he is ready. He tells him to bring a padded chair out for the king, and Balthazar enters with a chair. He puts the chair down and exits, leaving Hieronimo alone. “The plot is laid of dire revenge,” he says. “On then, Hieronimo, pursue revenge, / For nothing want but acting of revenge.”

*The play is Hieronimo’s revenge, which has been set into motion. The fact that Hieronimo gives the king a copy of the play suggests that the king will have a copy that is written in English, so he can better follow along with the play. Hieronimo wants the king front and center to see the murders that are about to take place.*



## ACT 4, SCENE 4

The King of Spain enters with the Viceroy of Portugal and the Duke of Castile. Balthazar, Bel-Imperia, and Hieronimo enter and begin to perform their parts. The king points out Balthazar and tells the viceroy that his son is meant to be Soliman, the emperor. Lorenzo enters, and the king looks on excitedly. They continue acting, reciting their foreign lines, and then Hieronimo stabs Lorenzo, followed by Bel-Imperia stabbing Balthazar and then herself to death.

*The foreign lines create such confusion that no one realizes the murders that have just taken place on the stage are actually real. The viceroy and the king are excited to see Balthazar and Lorenzo on stage, but, ironically, they have no idea that they are watching their deaths unfold in real time. Ostensibly, Hieronimo’s revenge is complete.*



The King of Spain cheers and declares the play well done. Suddenly, Hieronimo breaks character and addresses the audience in English. He says that the play is a farce and claims that he is only the grieving father of an unlucky son. The curtain raises, revealing the dead body of Horatio. Hieronimo says that Lorenzo and Balthazar killed Horatio simply because he loved Bel-Imperia. They all rated Hieronimo for “brainsick lunacy,” he says and pulls Horatio’s bloody **scarf** from his pocket. Now, Hieronimo says, his “heart is satisfied.”

*Hieronimo’s mention of his “brainsick lunacy” suggests that he was only pretending to be insane in order to exact his revenge on Lorenzo and Balthazar. The bloody scarf, which Hieronimo has vowed to keep until his revenge is realized, is symbolic of his vengeance. Hieronimo’s “heart is satisfied” because he finally has his revenge and justice for Horatio’s murder.*



Hieronimo tells the audience that Bel-Imperia was not supposed to kill herself. This script does call for it, he says, but they had agreed she wouldn't do it. "But love of him whom they did hate too much / Did urge her resolution to be such," Hieronimo says and runs off to hang himself. "We are betrayed!" the Viceroy of Portugal yells. Soldiers enter, holding Hieronimo. The King of Spain insists that Hieronimo talk and tell them everything, but Hieronimo refuses. The king calls for the torturers, and Hieronimo bites out his own tongue, so he cannot be forced to talk.

The Duke of Castile hands Hieronimo a pen and tells Hieronimo he doesn't need a tongue to write a confession. Hieronimo takes the pen and stabs Castile to death, and then Hieronimo stabs himself. The trumpets sound, announcing the start of the death march, and the King of Spain and the Viceroy of Portugal mourn the deaths of Lorenzo and Balthazar.

## ACT 4, SCENE 5

The Ghost of Andrea is pleased with the end of Hieronimo's play. Horatio is dead, Andrea says to Revenge, as are Serberine and Pedringano. Isabella, is dead too, and so is Balthazar, the Duke of Castile, and Lorenzo. Bel-Imperia has killed herself, Andrea says, and so has Hieronimo. Andrea promises to lead Isabella, Hieronimo, Horatio, and Bel-Imperia to the afterlife, but he asks Revenge what will happen to the others. Revenge claims he will send them to the "deepest hell," where the Furies will torture them for all eternity and "begin their endless tragedy."

*Bel-Imperia is driven to suicide because of her love for Horatio and her grief over his death, even though they had decided that she wouldn't kill herself. The viceroy's comment underscores the fact that in order for Hieronimo to get his revenge, he, too, must betray everyone—Lorenzo, Balthazar, the viceroy, the king, and Castile—which again reflects the pervasive nature of betrayal in 16th-century society.*



*The biting off of Hieronimo's own tongue to avoid talking further suggests that he has gone insane, as does the murder of Castile. Castile had nothing to do with Horatio's murder and didn't even know that he was dead, yet Hieronimo kills him anyway. This additional murder suggests that revenge doesn't solve anything—it inevitably leads to more death.*



*Naming off all the characters who have been killed underscores just how bloody the play really is. Revenge only breeds more killing, Kyd implies, and this is reflected in Andrea's long list of murders and suicides. Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia are not punished in death, but Revenge punishes those who were involved with Horatio's death. Revenge's punishment, however, would have occurred without Hieronimo and Bel-Imperia's vengeance, which again implies that revenge is not the responsibility of mortal man.*





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