*UNIT V*

*THE SPANISH TRAGEDY*

*The Spanish Tragedy* begins with the ghost of Don Andrea, a Spanish nobleman killed in a recent battle with Portugal. Accompanied by the spirit of Revenge, he tells the story of his death; he was killed in hand-to-hand combat with the Portuguese prince Balthazar, after falling in love with the beautiful Bel-Imperia and having a secret affair with her. When he faces the judges who are supposed to assign him to his place in the underworld, they are unable to reach a decision and instead send him to the palace of Pluto and Proserpine, King and Queen of the Underworld. Proserpine decides that Revenge should accompany him back to the world of the living, and, after passing through the gates of horn, this is where he finds himself. The spirit of Revenge promises that by the play's end, Don Andrea will see his revenge.

Andrea returns to the scene of the battle where he died, to find that the Spanish have won. Balthazar was taken prisoner shortly after Andrea's death, by the Andrea's good friend Horatio, son of Hieronimo, the Knight Marshal of Spain. But a dispute ensues between Horatio and Lorenzo, the son of the Duke of Castile and brother of Bel-Imperia, as to who actually captured the prince. The King of Spain decides to compromise between the two, letting Horatio have the ransom money to be paid for Balthazar and Lorenzo keep the captured prince at his home. Back in Portugal, the Viceroy (ruler) is mad with grief, for he believes his son to be dead, and is tricked by Villuppo into arresting an innocent noble, Alexandro, for Balthazar's murder. Diplomatic negotiations then begin between the Portuguese ambassador and the Spanish King, to ensure Balthazar's return and a lasting peace between Spain and Portugal.

Upon being taken back to Spain, Balthazar soon falls in love with Bel-Imperia himself. But, as her servant Pedringano reveals to him, Bel-Imperia is in love with Horatio, who returns her affections. The slight against him, which is somewhat intentional on Bel-Imperia's part, enrages Balthazar. Horatio also incurs the hatred of Lorenzo, because of the fight over Balthazar's capture and the fact that the lower-born Horatio (the son of a civil servant) now consorts with Lorenzo's sister. So the two nobles decide to kill Horatio, which they successfully do with the aid of Pedringano and Balthazar's servant Serberine, during an evening rende-vous between the two lovers. Bel-Imperia is then taken away before Hieronimo stumbles on to the scene to discover his dead son. He is soon joined in uncontrollable grief by his wife, Isabella.

In Portugal, Alexandro escapes death when the Portuguese ambassador returns from Spain with news that Balthazar still lives; Villuppo is then sentenced to death. In Spain, Hieronimo is almost driven insane by his inability to find justice for his son. Hieronimo receives a bloody letter in Bel-Imperia's hand, identifying the murderers as Lorenzo and Balthazar, but he is uncertain whether or not to believe it. While Hieronimo is racked with grief, Lorenzo grows worried by Hieronimo's erratic behavior and acts in a Machiavellian manner to eliminate all evidence surrounding his crime. He tells Pedringano to kill Serberine for gold but arranges it so that Pedringano is immediately arrested after the crime. He then leads Pedringano to believe that a pardon for his crime is hidden in a box brought to the execution by a messenger boy, a belief that prevents Pedringano from exposing Lorenzo before he is hanged. Negotiations continue between Spain and Portugal, now centering on a diplomatic marriage between Balthazar and Bel-Imperia to unite the royal lines of the two countries. Ironically, a letter is found on Pedringano's body that confirms Hieronimo's suspicion over Lorenzo and Balthazar, but is able to deny Hieronimo access to the king, thus making royal justice unavailable to the distressed father. Hieronimo then vows to revenge himself privately on the two killers, using deception and a false show of friendship to keep Lorenzo off his guard.

The marriage between Bel-Imperia and Balthazar is set, and the Viceroy travels to Spain to attend the ceremony. Hieronimo is given responsibility over the entertainment for the marriage ceremony, and he uses it to exact his revenge. He devises a play, a tragedy, to be performed at the ceremonies, and convinces Lorenzo and Balthazar to act in it. Bel-Imperia, by now a confederate in Hieronimo's plot for revenge, also acts in the play. Just before the play is acted, Isabella, insane with grief, kills herself.

The plot of the tragedy mirrors the plot of the play as a whole (a sultan is driven to murder a noble friend through jealousy over a woman). Hieronimo casts himself in the role of the hired murderer. During the action of the play, Hieronimo's character stabs Lorenzo's character and Bel-Imperia's character stabs Balthazar's character, before killing herself. But after the play is over, Hieronimo reveals to the horrified wedding guests (while standing over the corpse of his own son) that all the stabbings in the play were done with real knives, and that Lorenzo, Balthazar, and Bel-Imperia are now all dead. He then tries to kill himself, but the King and Viceroy and Duke of Castile stop him. In order to keep himself from talking, he bites out his own tongue. Tricking the Duke into giving him a knife, he then stabs the Duke and himself and then dies.

###### **EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR**

###### **Every Man in His Humour is a 1598 comedy by the English playwright, Ben Jonson, who is particularly famous for his satires. In the play, every major character is defined by an over-riding obsession, known as a humour. Humours were four bodily fluids--black bile, yellow bile, phlegm and blood--which formed the basis of early sytems of medicine. Each of these four fluids were associated with particular characteristics that were thought to influence a person's temperament, as well as their health. In the prologue, the speaker announces that the play was written due to the popularity of the theater. The goal of playwrights is to please their audience. This play, the prologue continues, will not take the audience to a place far away, but will show a current time and place that will make people laugh. The opening scene finds Knowell, an old man, at his house. He tells Brainworm, his servant, to fetch his son, Edward. The father is happy that Edward is a scholar, as he himself once was, but he does not approve of his son’s taste for the “fruitless” arts. Master Stephen, an easily duped countryman, then arrives to visit relatives. Knowell gives him advice on how to be a better man. Shortly thereafter, Stephen departs. A servant then gives Knowell a letter meant for Edward. When he reads it, he realizes it is not for him and takes offense at the impolite, informal tone of the letter. He has the letter given to his son and decides he will encourage him, but not force him, to try to be a good man.**

###### **The next scene of Act I finds Edward receiving the letter and learning that his father has read it. Stephen enters and asks about the man who delivered the letter, who is now long gone. Stephen and Edward, who are cousins, talk and then go to the city to meet the man who sent the letter. Scene three introduces the characters Mathew and Cob at the latter’s house. Cob talks about respectable ancestors and Mathew asks about locating a man named Captain Bobadill, whom Cob says is his guest. Mathew does not believe this. Cob tells him the man slept on his bench the previous night. Cob ends the scene with a monologue that tells of the drama in his house and of Bobadill owing him money. Scene four, the final scene of Act I, unfolds in Cob’s house, where Bobadill lies on the bench. Mathew and Bobadill talk and Mathew agrees not to mention that Bobadill spent the night there. Mathew shares a new play, which they discuss before leaving for a tavern.**

###### **Act II opens in another part of the city. Kitely, a merchant, enters, along with his cashier, Cash, and Kitley’s brother-in-law, Downright, who is a squire. Kitely tells the squire that Wellbred, his brother, has been disrespectful. Wellbred is angered. Bobadill and Mathew look for, but do not find Wellbred. Next, in the moorfields of London, Brainworm is disguised as a soldier. He wants to stop Knowell’s pursuit of his son. Stephen and Knowell enter. Stephen has lost a purse containing a ring from his mistress. As the act continues, Knowell delivers a monologue about his youth and the way parents often influence their children in negative ways. He is happy that he has not been a bad influence on his son, although he believes his son has gone down the wrong path. In Act III Mathew, Bobadill, and Wellbred are in a tavern. While Mathew and Bobadill talk of disliking Wellbred’s brother, Downright, Edward and Stephen arrive. Wellbred, it turns out, is the one who wrote the letter to Edward. They go on to discuss Stephen and Bobadill’s military experiences. Cash and Kitely are engaged in a shady exchange of money. Kitely sends Cash on another job and asks to be informed if Wellbred or anyone else comes to his house. An upset Cob enters and Cash tells him it is his “humour” that is making him feel distressed. The next scene is at Justice Clement’s house. Cob tells Kitely that some men have arrived at his house and Kitely worries about his wife and sister giving in to their desires. Cob attempts to put his mind at ease. Cob also wants revenge, as Bobadill has used his wife. Justice Clement and Roger his clerk arrive. Cob asks the Justice to punish Bobadill, but the Justice orders Cob jailed for his character and previous actions. Further complications and interactions continue to drive the story until the final act, which takes place at the home of Justice Clement. Clement, Knowell, Kitely, Dame Kitely, Cash, Cob, and some servants enter. They are trying to sift through the sequence of false messages they have received. Bobadill and Mathew join the group and announce they have a warrant for Downright. Stephen, Downright, and Brainworm, who is in disguise, also arrive. Clement wants Brainworm jailed for not serving warrants in the right way. Brainworm reveals himself and his deceitful actions are exposed. In attempting to bring closure to everything, Justice Clement instructs every person to rid themselves of the emotions that are weighing them down and they start to celebrate.**