

**Ministry of Higher Education and  
Scientific Research/University of Tikrit  
College of Education for Humanities  
Department of English**



# **Dr .Faustus / Drama**

## **Second Stage**

**Summary 2**

**By**

**Lect. Assist.. Mohammed Khalaf Hamdan**

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# **Doctor Faustus**

**Christopher Marlowe**

## **Summary: Scene 2**

At the court of the emperor, two gentlemen, Martino and Frederick, discuss the imminent arrival of Bruno and Faustus. Martino remarks that Faustus has promised to conjure up Alexander the Great, the famous conqueror. The two of them wake another gentleman, Benvolio, and tell him to come down and see the new arrivals, but Benvolio declares that he would rather watch the action from his window, because he has a hangover.

Faustus comes before the emperor, who thanks him for having freed Bruno from the clutches of the pope. Faustus acknowledges the gratitude and then says that he stands ready to fulfill any wish that the emperor 21

might have. Benvolio, watching from above, remarks to himself that Faustus looks nothing like what he would expect a conjurer to look like.

The emperor tells Faustus that he would like to see Alexander the Great and his lover. Faustus tells him that he cannot produce their actual bodies but can create spirits resembling them. A knight present in the court is skeptical, and asserts that it is as untrue that Faustus can perform this feat as that the goddess Diana has transformed the knight into a stag.

Before the eyes of the court, Faustus creates a vision of Alexander embracing his lover. Faustus conjures a pair of antlers onto the head of the knight. The knight pleads for mercy, and the emperor entreats Faustus to remove the horns. Faustus complies, warning Benvolio to have more respect for scholars in the future.

With his friends Martino and Frederick and a group of soldiers, Benvolio plots an attack against Faustus. His friends try to dissuade him, but he is so furious at the damage done to his reputation that he will not listen to reason. They resolve to ambush Faustus as he leaves the court of the

emperor and to take the treasures that the emperor has given Faustus. Frederick goes out with the soldiers to scout and returns with word that Faustus is coming toward them and that he is alone. When Faustus enters, Benvolio stabs him and cuts off his head. He and his friends rejoice, and they plan the further indignities that they will visit on Faustus's corpse. But then Faustus rises with his head restored. Faustus tells them that they are fools, since his life belongs to Mephistophilis and cannot be taken by anyone else. He summons Mephistophilis, who arrives with a group of lesser devils, and orders the devils to carry his attackers off to hell. Then, reconsidering, he orders them instead to punish Benvolio and his friends by dragging them through thorns and hurling them off of cliffs, so that the world will see what happens to people who attack Faustus. As the men and devils leave, the soldiers come in, and Faustus summons up another clutch of demons to drive them off.

Benvolio, Frederick, and Martino reappear. They are bruised and bloody from having been chased and harried by the devils, and all three of them now have horns sprouting from their heads. They greet one another 22



unhappily, express horror at the fate that has befallen them, and agree to conceal themselves in a castle rather than face the scorn of the world.

### **Analysis: 2**

Twenty-four years pass between Faustus's pact with Lucifer and the end of the play. Yet, for us, these decades sweep by remarkably quickly. We see only three main events from the twenty-four years: Faustus's visits to Rome, to the emperor's court, and then to the Duke of Vanholt. While the Chorus assures us that Faustus visits many other places and learns many other things that we are not shown, we are still left with the sense that Faustus's life is being accelerated at a speed that strains belief. But Marlowe uses this acceleration to his advantage. By making the years pass so swiftly, the play makes us feel what Faustus himself must feel—namely, that his too-short lifetime is slipping away from him and his ultimate, hellish fate is drawing ever closer. In the world of the play, twenty-four years seems long when Faustus makes the pact, but both he and we come to realize that it passes rapidly. (Important quotes by the Chorus that help fill in the details of Faustus's story)

Meanwhile, the use to which Faustus puts his powers is unimpressive. In Rome, he and Mephistophilis box the pope's ears and disrupt a dinner party. At the court of Emperor Charles V (who ruled a vast stretch of territory in the sixteenth century, including Germany, Austria, and Spain), he essentially performs conjuring tricks to entertain the monarch. Before he makes the pact with Lucifer, Faustus speaks of rearranging the geography of Europe or even making himself emperor of Germany. Now, though, his sights are set considerably lower. His involvement in the political realm extends only to freeing Bruno, Charles's candidate to be pope. Even this action seems largely a lark, without any larger political goals behind it. Instead, Faustus occupies his energies summoning up Alexander the Great, the heroic Macedonian conqueror. This trick would be extremely impressive, except that Faustus tells the emperor that "it is not in my ability to present / before your eyes the true substantial bodies of those two deceased / princes" . In other words, all of Mephistophilis's power can, in Faustus's hands, produce only impressive illusions. Nothing of substance emerges from Faustus's magic, in this scene or 23



anywhere in the play, and the man who earlier boasts that he will divert the River Rhine and reshape the map of Europe now occupies himself with revenging a petty insult by placing horns on the head of the foolish knight. (The corrupting influence of power on Faustus's grand ambitions)

The B-text scene outside the emperor's court, in which Benvolio and his friends try to kill Faustus, is utterly devoid of suspense, since we know that Faustus is too powerful to be murdered by a gang of incompetent noblemen. Still, Faustus's way of dealing with the threat is telling: he plays a kind of practical joke, making the noblemen think that they have cut off his head, only to come back to life and send a collection of devils to hound them. With all the power of hell behind him, he takes pleasure in sending Mephistophilis out to hunt down a collection of fools who pose no threat to him and insists that the devils disgrace the men publicly, so that everyone will see what happens to those who threaten him. This command shows a hint of Faustus's old pride, which is so impressive early in the play; now, though, Faustus is entirely concerned with his reputation as a fearsome wizard and not with any higher goals. Traipsing from court to court,

doing tricks for royals, Faustus has become a kind of sixteenth-century celebrity, more concerned with his public image than with the dreams of greatness that earlier animate him. (Important quotes that trace the degradation