

## Dr. Faustus Summary and Analysis Scene 10

### Summary

Faustus begins to be concerned that the end of his allotted time is drawing near. Suddenly, a horse-courser enters and wants to know if Faustus will sell his horse for forty dollars. Faustus willingly agrees to sell his horse but warns the horse-courser that he must never ride the horse into water.

When the horse-courser departs, Faustus resumes contemplating that he is condemned to die and then falls asleep. The horse-courser returns in a great fluster and accuses Faustus of cheating him. He thought the horse had some magical quality, so he proceeded to ride the animal into a pond. When the horse disappeared under him, he found himself sitting on a bundle of hay and he almost drowned.

Mephistophilis cautions the horse-courser to be quiet because Faustus has just fallen asleep for the first time in eight days. The horse-courser pulls on Faustus' legs, awakens him, and demands that Faustus pay him back his money. He is astounded when Faustus' entire leg comes off. He is so frightened that he promises to pay Faustus forty more dollars.

Wagner enters to tell Faustus that the Duke of Vanholt desires his company, and Faustus agrees to see the noble gentleman.

### Analysis

For the first time in many scenes, we see Faustus pondering his ultimate fate. He becomes very aware that time is running out and that his magical powers will soon end. Faustus' consciousness of the passing of time is later dramatized at greater length in the final devastating scene of the play when Faustus watches the minutes and seconds pass.

In his second period of contemplation, Faustus returns to the idea of death itself. Earlier he had spurned the idea of death and thought of ways to escape it. Now he is fully aware of the reality of death that quickly approaches him. At this moment, Faustus also recognizes that he is still a man. In earlier scenes, he had lamented that he was only a man and not a god. In his dealings with Lucifer, he had hoped to acquire a godlike position. But at this period of inward meditation, he realizes he is nothing "but a *man* condemned to die."

This scene is constructed differently from other scenes in the play. In many other Elizabethan plays, a comic scene is alternated with a serious scene. In this scene, both comic and tragic elements occur together. Scenes of Faustus contemplating the idea of his death are interspersed with scenes of low comedy involving the horse-courser.

The comic scenes again show the tragic waste of Faustus' powers. Whereas earlier he had thought in terms of large and vast sums of wealth and power, here he is concerned with the insignificant sum of forty dollars. Faustus blackmails the horse-courser for an additional forty dollars for attempting to awake him.

Another indication that Faustus is beginning to be conscious of his approaching fate is the fact that he has not slept for eight days. To an Elizabethan, this would indicate the spiritual and mental condition of a person. For example, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, Lady Macbeth is not able to sleep when her conscience begins to bother her. Thus, the audience would automatically know that Faustus is deeply troubled by his condition.