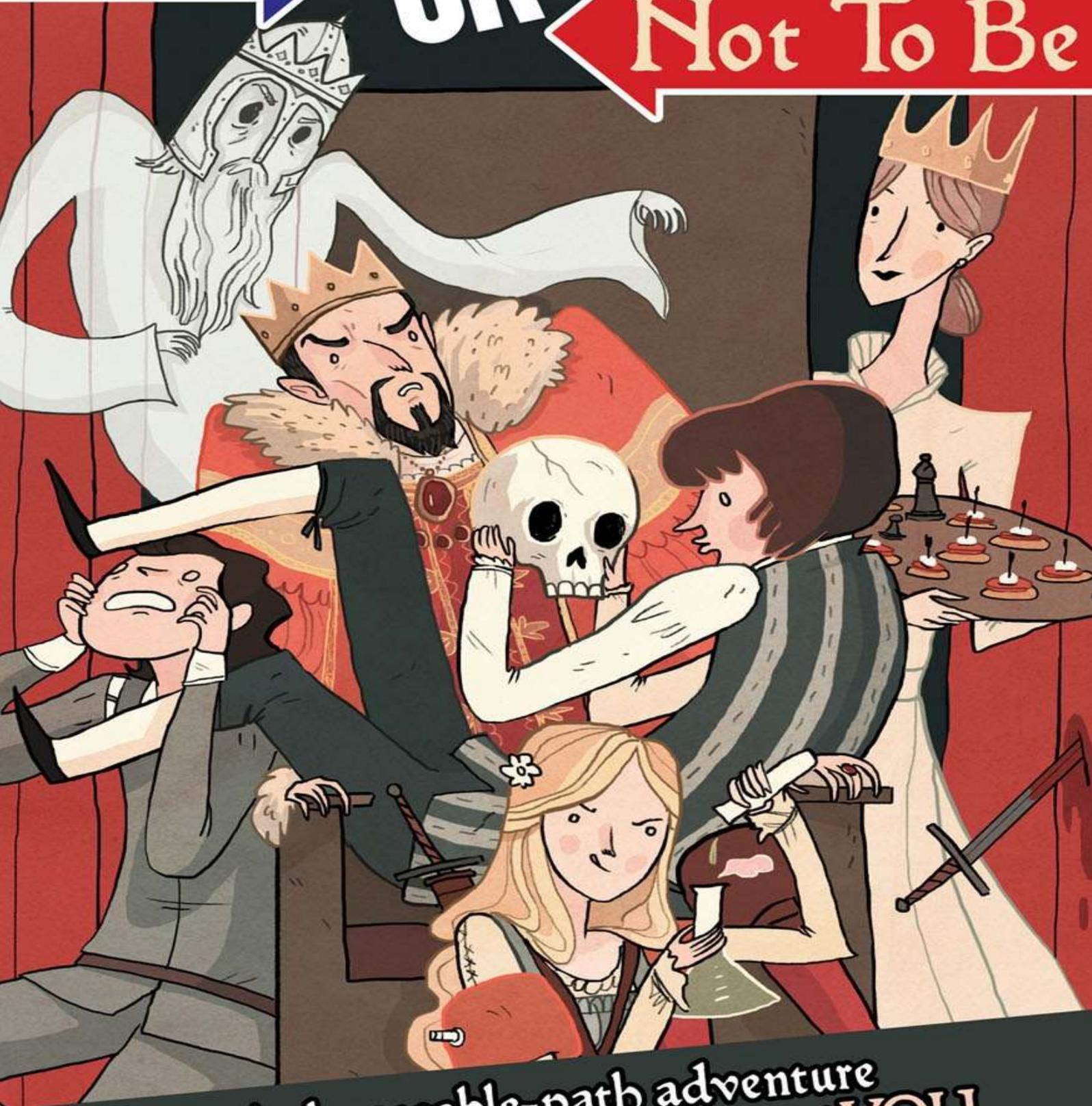


To Be

OR

Not To Be



A chooseable-path adventure
by Ryan North, William Shakespeare, and YOU.

Hold Up, This Book Is Crazy

Don't read this book like a regular book! You'll get confused and angry.

This is a choose-your-own path kind of book, which means that at the end of each node, you'll either die and the story will be over and you should start over, or you'll have a choice of what to do next.

To make things easy, each story node begins and ends with a horizontal line. So keep reading through the pages presented until you see that ending line! When you see it, you'll either make a choice or, if there's no choices, you can start the story over.

Your reader also has a back button (either a physical button on the device or one that appears on the screen). This button returns you to the page you just came from, which is insanely useful whenever you want to take a move back!

Okay, I think we're ready. Let's make our first choice:

[» Start the book «](#)



You're Doing It Wrong

Don't just go to the next page: when you see that horizontal line, you need to make a choice or stay over! Otherwise everything will be ruined forever.

Press the back button to go back to the previous page: this time, follow the link instead and everything will be perfect!

You can also just follow this link instead:

[» Okay, I got this, let me try again «](#)



Are You Serious

I told you not to go to the next page and you did it anyway? Okay, fine, WHATEVER. Ignore my instructions to follow links and just flip through this book linearly. SEE IF I CARE.

You know, it's not too late. You can still start over and do this correctly.

[» Okay, let me take it from the top «](#)



Why Are You Doing This

I don't understand what you're trying to prove.

Please. You can still pull this out:

» **Alright alright, I'll start over. I have it within me to understand how to read a book. I PROMISE.** «



Hey Everyone! This Person Sucks At Reading Books Properly!!

HAHAH IT'S TOTALLY TRUE!!

EVERYONE MAKE FUN OF THE PERSON READING THIS BOOK RIGHT NOW
AND CONTINUE DOING IT FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES

THANKS IN ADVANCE



William Shakespeare (1564 AD – whenever he died) was well known for borrowing from existing literature when writing his plays. *Romeo and Juliet* is pretty much lifted entirely from Arthur Brooke's poem "The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet": dude didn't even change the names. And, as recent Shakespeare scholarship has established, the famed play *William Shakespeare Presents: Hamlet!* was lifted wholesale from the volume you are about to enjoy, *To Be or Not To Be*.

To Be or Not To Be is both the earliest recorded example of the "books as game" genre, as well as the first instance ever in the then-newish English language that was kicking around of an adventure being chosen by YOU, the reader.

We've gone ahead and added illustrations, plus we've taken the liberty of marking with tiny Yorick skulls the choices Shakespeare himself made when he plagiarized this book back in olden times. They look like this: ☠. They're there in case you wish to put yourself in Shakespeare's shoes, reading this book as he did, stealing plot elements wholesale, and classing up the language as he / you went / go. However, that is not the only way to read this book! Feel free to explore your other options as each time you read this book you can go on a different adventure, assuming you don't read the book 3,001,181,439,094,525 times at which point the adventures will start to repeat and they'll probably seem pretty familiar long before then anyway.

Now, take yourself back to History, when ghosts walked the Earth and nobody knew velociraptors were ever even a thing. Steel yourself to experience the magic of Shakespeare as it was meant to be experienced: in a non-deterministic narrative structure where you end up thinking maybe you made a wrong decision so you mark the pages you were just on so you can always go back and make a different choice if you die for some dumb reason.

To be, or not to be: *that is the adventure*.

Ryan North

Noted Shakespeare Scholar / Enthusiast

Make your choice...



 Choose your character! 

» Man, what if I just read the acknowledgements instead «



Whoah, whoah, slow down there, cowboy! At the end of that last bit, you were supposed to make a choice, and then jump to the page that reflects that choice. Instead of following those instructions, you just kept reading what came next like this is an ordinary book! THIS BOOK IS CRAZY INSANE; HOW ARE YOU EVEN ACTING LIKE THIS IS AN ORDINARY BOOK??

You die without even having chosen your character, THE END, and your final score is “maybe learn to read books better sometime” out of 1000.

Dude!

That’s not a very good score, I gotta say!!



THE END



[» Restart? «](#)

You have just been born! Congratulations, good work on that thing! Now ~~SURPRISE~~, babies are boring, so we're going to jump ahead in time to a point where you're an adult and you've already lived a bunch of your life, but I promise most of what we're skipping over was really dull. You ate a lot and slept a lot and made some friends, tears were shed, makeouts were totally had, etc. It was a bunch of high school stuff: the awesome stuff starts now!

So! Let's begin, my friend!

Um...remind me again who you are?

Are you...



OPHELIA? She's an awesome lady in her late 20s, with a calm, competent, and resourceful demeanour. She's got a +1 bonus to science, but she's also got a -1 weakness against water, so heads up!



HAMLET? He's an emo teen in his early 30s. Also, he's the prince of Denmark. Hamlet has a +1 resistance to magic, but there's no magic in this adventure, so this never gets mentioned again as of right...NOW.



HAMLET SR.? He's the King of Denmark, 50 years old. He's super good at fighting and leading men into battle and naps. Let's say...+1 to each? Look, bottom line: he's an unstoppable machine of death, and should you choose to be him, you MAY experience kingly glory.

Make your choice...



[» Play as Ophelia «](#)

[☠ Play as Hamlet ☠](#)

[» Play as Hamlet Sr. «](#)



~~You are Hamlet! You're 30 years old and you're back living at home, but it's okay, because your home is a castle. That's right, ladies, you're a PRINCE.~~

Things have been rough lately. You had been trying to focus on your studies at Wittenberg University where you and your bros Horatio, Rosencrantz, and Guildenstern all hang out, but you were called home because your father died. Then your dead dad's brother (Claudius!) married your mom (Gertrude!) two weeks later. Yep. It's made you kind of upset. You raced home to comfort her but she's married your uncle and that is weird. You feel weird.

Right now you're in the audience chamber of your father's castle, here in sunny Denmark. King Claudius is here, addressing his court. Laertes and Polonius are here too; Laertes is kind of a jerk and Polonius is his father. Polonius is also the father of Ophelia, whom you're totally sweet on. She's not here though. Who knows what adventures she's having as we speak, while you're stuck in this drafty castle room listening to other people talk about their feelings??

Speaking of speaking, just now Laertes says something about how now that Claudius is king and he's attended the coronation, is it okay for him to go back to France? Claudius says, "Sure."

Wait a minute. You'd love to leave too and go back to school, away from this weird incesty thing your mother's gotten herself into! It's so gross and weird!

Make your choice...



[☠ Ask Claudius for permission to go back to school ☠](#)
[» Hold your tongue and just wait around «](#)



~~You stay silent, but King Claudius addresses you anyway. He says he's king now and it's time for you to stop mourning, as your father is dead and everyone has to die sometime, right? Man up, he says. Walk it off, he says. Drop me a letter about it at "Not My Problem, #1 Cheer Up Already Lane, Dopesville, Denmark," he says. Your mom agrees with him, and then when they're done insulting you they leave.~~

You kinda wish you'd insulted him when you had the chance?

In the meantime, you're alone in an empty council room and feeling pretty sad! An empty room offers a ton of possibilities, WHICH INCLUDE THINGS YOU CAN DO INSIDE THIS EMPTY ROOM, SUCH AS:

Make your choice...



» Talk to yourself about how your life is in ruins and how everything just suuuuucks «

» Leave the room «

» You're finally home, and it's been weeks since you embarked. Sit on the throne as the prince of Denmark. «



Okay. You sit on the throne. And since I like you, I'm going to describe your situation in rhyming verse!

Now this was gonna be a story all about how
Your life got flipped, turned upside down,
But instead you're gonna sit your butt down in this chair,
And ignore how you're really Denmark's rightful heir.

Whoah! My flow is so awesome that it infects even you! You begin rapping to yourself, about yourself. Here's the lyrical truth you lay down:

In west Denmark I was born and raised,
On the battlefield is where I spent most of my days,
Chilling out with dad times, stabbing all the fools
And all swordfighting Norwegians outside of my school,
When a couple of armies, they were up to no good,
Started repulsing our invasion of their neighbourhood,
Dad died one little time and my mom got scared,
And said, "I'm marrying your dad's brother, but we weren't having an affair."

You feel like you could keep spitting some extremely tight rhymes, but you also feel like you've brought yourself pretty much up to speed on your own life! Well done, Prince Hamlet. You certainly are...fresh?

Make your choice...



» Continue sitting on the throne «



~~You look around and see Hamlet's friend Horatio nearby. He looks like he's freaking out.~~

"Hey," you say. "Listen — Horatio, right? Listen, don't freak out."

He seems to freak out a little less. That's good.

"Hey, when Hamlet wakes up, can you tell him my own brother murdered me?" you ask. "Tell him I'm looking for a little revenge."

Horatio nods meekly. "If he doesn't want to do it, then I'll make sure to revenge you, Mr. Your Majesty's Ghost, sir."

"Just 'sir' is fine," you say, smiling in what you hope is a reassuring way. You look at Horatio for a moment. "Well — great," you say. "Perfect."

Horatio looks at you. You look at him. He scuffs his feet a little.

"So, uh, I guess that's it," you say. "With my unfinished work now, um, finished, I suppose it's time for me to die for real now."

You fade away in a shimmering light, certain that with Hamlet's intensity and Horatio's probable competence at actually achieving goals, you'll be revenged in no time. What could possibly go wrong, right? Exactly. This is most assuredly 100% solved for real.

It's too bad you couldn't stick around to watch the revenging go down, but you don't make the rules.

Hey!

I guess you're about to find out who, if anyone, does?



THE END

» [Restart?](#) «

~~You stare at the ghost intently and your brain shuts down, and you collapse, unconscious. Um, surprise?~~

You are now the ghost!

Before you is the unconscious body of your son, Hamlet. It looks like maybe he tripped too many balls. Yes, that's definitely what happened. There were a lot of balls lying around and Hamlet tripped on one too many of them. Maybe several. Bottom line: too many balls were DEFINITELY tripped, right here.

You expected more from your son than this. To be precise, you expected to be able to tell him that you were murdered by your brother, and that he should, oh I don't know, *revenge your death*. Instead you're staring at a dude you can't even touch. You stick a finger inside Hamlet's head, thinking that maybe if you touch his brain he'll wake up? But brains don't work that way, at least not with immaterial fingers made out of ectoplasm or whatever. And you don't make your finger solid, which is good, because that definitely would've killed him.

Make your choice...



» Wait for him to wake up «

» See if there's anyone else you can tell about your murder «



~~You sit down and wait for him to wake up. You're a ghost. You have all the time in the world.~~

After a few moments, you look up and see Hamlet's friend Horatio standing beside you. He's staring at you, a little too intently, and then he passes out too.

Terrific.

Eventually the sun starts to come up and nobody can see you anymore. You stick around though, and soon Hamlet and Horatio wake up, rubbing their eyes in the early morning sunlight.

"Whoah," says Hamlet. "Did you have the same CRAZY GHOST DREAM that I did?"

"I did!!" says Horatio. "Oh my gosh, it was SO SPOOKY!"

Oh no, you think. Hamlet and his friend are stupid dudes.

They go back and forth, excitedly discussing their "dream" with each other. You sigh and start to thinking.

Here's what you think: you think, hey, I'm a ghost now. You think, hey, I can travel the world for free, I don't have to worry about being hungry. I can see what happens to Denmark in the future — heck, I can see what happens to the WORLD in the future!

You think maybe life's too short for revenge. Maybe — maybe even an immortal afterlife is too short for revenge? You think this is a great opportunity to learn all you can about the world around you. And you think that if Earth ever gets boring, all you have to do is float up to the moon and see what's there.

Also, there are ghost beasts from Earth's prehistoric past all over the place, and there's something that looks like an enormous but friendly building-sized lizard munching on trees over that hill. It's kind of hard to be focused on revenge when a) you're already dead and b) you could be taming dinosaurs and riding them across the universe.

So that's what you do!

Many years later, when you look back on it all, you have precisely this many regrets: UM, NONE??

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