



“Ophelia:

*There’s rosemary, that’s for remembrance.
Pray you, love, remember. And there is pansies,
that’s for thoughts. . . .*

There’s fennel for you, and columbines.

*There’s rue for you, and here’s some for me; we
may call it herb of grace o’ Sundays. You must wear
your rue with a difference. There’s a daisy. I would
give you some violets, but they withered all when
my father died. They say he made a good end.”*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)
HAMLET, ACT 4, SCENE 5, LINES 199–201; 204–209
Folger Library Edition
New York: Washington Square Press, 1992

IN ACT 4, SCENE 5 OF *HAMLET*, Ophelia in her madness names plants that were known for their capacity to ease pain, particularly inwardly felt pain. For example, the other names for rue and pansies, “herb of grace” and “heart’s ease,” respectively point to their ability to bring psychological comfort. At this moment so close to the end of the play, their failure to comfort is one sign of the tragedy’s certainty.

