

## Hangman, the play

Below are the dialogue lines from the poem "The Hangman". There are some stage directions. Feel free to add more action and to improvise further lines. This dialogue is a great start for a class improvised play or radio play.

Sounds of a crowd commenting on the gallows.

Voice one: *Hangman, who is he for whom you raise the gallows-tree?"*

Hangman: *He who serves me best shall earn the rope on the gallows-tree.*

Sound effect of a body dropping and gasps from a group. The Hangman is seen preparing his rope as if for another hanging.

Voice two: *Hangman, have you not done yesterday with the alien one?"*

Hangman: *Oh, not for him was the gallows raised. .Did you think I'd gone to all this fuss to hang one man? That's a thing I do to stretch a rope when the rope is new.*

Several voices: "Murder!" "Shame!"

The Hangman moves into the crowd.

Hangman: *Do you hold with him that was meant for the gallows-tree? What, have you to do with the gallows-bound, and he a Jew?*

Voice three: *Is this one he who has served you well and faithfully?*

Hangman: *No, it's a clever scheme to try the strength of the gallows-beam. And what concern have you for the doomed--the doomed and black?*

Several voices: *Hangman, Hangman, is this the last?*

Hangman: *No, it's a trick that we hangmen know for easing the trap when the trap springs slow.*

All leave except for one person. Whispered voices from the side are heard calling out one name (Peter or Brian... make one up). The whispered name gets louder.

Voice four: (looking around) *There is no one left at all for hanging. And so he calls to me to help pull down the gallows-tree.*

Hangman approaches beckoning to Voice four.

Voice four continues in a panic:

*You tricked me Hangman that your scaffold was built for other men and I no henchman of yours. You lied to me Hangman, foully lied!*

Hangman: *Lied to you? Tricked you? Not I. For I answered straight and I told you true. The scaffold was raised for none but you. For who has served me more faithfully than you with your coward's hope? And where are the others that might have stood side by your side in the common good?*

Voice four softly: *Dead.*

Hangman: *Murdered! First the alien, then the Jew..I did no more than you let me do.*

Echoed sound of a body falling. The Hangman with his noose advances into the audience. Sounds from the side whisper out the names of people known to the group. Whispers fade.