

# Hamlet



William Shakespeare



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*Dramatis Personae*

*Claudius, king of Denmark*

*Hamlet, son to the late, and nephew to the present king*

*Polonius, lord chamberlain*

*Horatio, friend to Hamlet*

*Laertes, son to Polonius*

*Voltimand, courtier*

*Cornelius, courtier*

*Rosencrantz, courtier*

*Guildestern, courtier*

*Osric, courtier*

*A gentleman, courtier*

*A priest*

*Marcellus, officer*

*Bernardo, officer*

*Francisco, a soldier*

*Reynaldo, servant to Polonius*

*Players*

*Two clowns, grave-diggers*

*Fortinbras, prince of Norway*

*A Captain*

*English Ambassadors*

*Gertrude, queen of Denmark, and mother to Hamlet*

*Ophelia, daughter to Polonius*

*Lords, ladies, officers, soldiers, sailors, messengers, and other  
attendants*

*Ghost of Hamlet's father*

*Scene: Denmark.*

# ACT I

## SCENE I

Elsinore. A platform before the castle.

*FRANCISCO at his post. Enter to him BERNARDO.*

BERNARDO

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO

Long live the king!

FRANCISCO

Bernardo?

BERNARDO

He.

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BERNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO

Have you had quiet guard?

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring.

BERNARDO

Well, good night.  
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,  
The rivals of my watch, bid them make haste.

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them. Stand, ho! Who's there?

*Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS.*

HORATIO

Friends to this ground.

MARCELLUS

And liegemen to the Dane.

FRANCISCO

Give you good night.

MARCELLUS

O, farewell, honest soldier:  
Who hath relieved you?

FRANCISCO

Bernardo has my place.  
Give you good night. *Exit.*

MARCELLUS

Holla! Bernardo!

BERNARDO

Say,  
What, is Horatio there?

HORATIO

A piece of him.

BERNARDO

Welcome, Horatio: welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?

BERNARDO

I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS

Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
And will not let belief take hold of him  
Touching this dreaded sight, twice seen of us:  
Therefore I have entreated him along  
With us to watch the minutes of this night;  
That if again this apparition come,  
He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

HORATIO

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear.

BERNARDO

Sit down awhile;  
And let us once again assail your ears,  
That are so fortified against our story  
What we have two nights seen.

HORATIO

Well, sit we down,  
And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO

Last night of all,  
When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
Had made his course to illume that part of heaven  
Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
The bell then beating one—

*Enter GHOST.*

MARCELLUS

Peace, break thee off; look, where it comes again!

BERNARDO

In the same figure, like the king that's dead.

MARCELLUS

Thou art a scholar; speak to it, Horatio.

BERNARDO

Looks it not like the king? mark it, Horatio.

HORATIO

Most like: it harrows me with fear and wonder.

BERNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS

Question it, Horatio.

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,  
Together with that fair and warlike form  
In which the majesty of buried Denmark  
Did sometimes march? by heaven I charge thee, speak!

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

BERNARDO

See, it stalks away!

HORATIO

Stay! speak, speak! I charge thee, speak! *Exit GHOST.*

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone, and will not answer.

BERNARDO

How now, Horatio! you tremble and look pale:  
Is not this something more than fantasy?  
What think you on't?

HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe  
Without the sensible and true avouch  
Of mine own eyes.

MARCELLUS

Is it not like the king?

HORATIO

As thou art to thyself:  
Such was the very armour he had on  
When he the ambitious Norway combated;  
So frown'd he once, when, in an angry parle,  
He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.  
'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,  
With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO

In what particular thought to work I know not;  
But in the gross and scope of my opinion,  
This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS

Good now, sit down, and tell me, he that knows,  
Why this same strict and most observant watch  
So nightly toils the subject of the land,  
And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,  
And foreign mart for implements of war;  
Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task  
Does not divide the Sunday from the week;  
What might be toward, that this sweaty haste  
Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day:  
Who is't that can inform me?

HORATIO

That can I;  
At least, the whisper goes so. Our last king,  
Whose image even but now appear'd to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto prick'd on by a most emulate pride,  
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet—  
For so this side of our known world esteem'd him—  
Did slay this Fortinbras; who, by a seal'd compact,  
Well ratified by law and heraldry,  
Did forfeit, with his life, all those his lands  
Which he stood seized of, to the conqueror:  
Against the which, a moiety competent  
Was gaged by our king; which had return'd  
To the inheritance of Fortinbras,  
Had he been vanquisher; as, by the same covenant,  
And carriage of the article design'd,  
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
Of unimproved mettle hot and full,



Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
Shark'd up a list of lawless resolute,  
For food and diet, to some enterprise  
That hath a stomach in't; which is no other—  
As it doth well appear unto our state—  
But to recover of us, by strong hand  
And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands  
So by his father lost: and this, I take it,  
Is the main motive of our preparations,  
The source of this our watch and the chief head  
Of this post-haste and romage in the land.

BERNARDO

I think it be no other but e'en so:  
Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
Comes armed through our watch; so like the king  
That was and is the question of these wars.

HORATIO

A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets:  
As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
Disasters in the sun; and the moist star  
Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse:  
And even the like precursor of fierce events,  
As harbingers preceding still the fates  
And prologue to the omen coming on,  
Have heaven and earth together demonstrated  
Unto our climatures and countrymen.—  
But soft, behold! lo, where it comes again!

*Re-enter GHOST.*

I'll cross it, though it blast me. Stay, illusion!  
If thou hast any sound, or use of voice,  
Speak to me:  
If there be any good thing to be done,  
That may to thee do ease and grace to me,  
Speak to me: *Cock crows.*  
If thou art privy to thy country's fate,  
Which, happily, foreknowing may avoid,  
O, speak!

Or if thou hast uphoarded in thy life  
Extorted treasure in the womb of earth,  
For which, they say, you spirits oft walk in death,  
Speak of it: stay, and speak! Stop it, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

Shall I strike at it with my partisan?

HORATIO

Do, if it will not stand.

BERNARDO

'Tis here!

HORATIO

'Tis here!

MARCELLUS

'Tis gone! *Exit GHOST.*

We do it wrong, being so majestic,  
To offer it the show of violence;  
For it is, as the air, invulnerable,  
And our vain blows malicious mockery.

BERNARDO

It was about to speak, when the cock crew.

HORATIO

And then it started like a guilty thing  
Upon a fearful summons. I have heard,  
The cock, that is the trumpet to the morn,  
Doth with his lofty and shrill-sounding throat  
Awake the god of day; and, at his warning,  
Whether in sea or fire, in earth or air,  
The extravagant and erring spirit hies  
To his confine: and of the truth herein  
This present object made probation.

MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.  
Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,  
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:  
And then, they say, no spirit dare stir abroad;  
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,  
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,  
So hallow'd and so gracious is the time.

HORATIO

So have I heard and do in part believe it.  
But, look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,  
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill:  
Break we our watch up; and by my advice,

Let us impart what we have seen to-night  
Unto young Hamlet; for, upon my life,  
This spirit, dumb to us, will speak to him.  
Do you consent we shall acquaint him with it,  
As needful in our loves, fitting our duty?

MARCELLUS

Let's do't, I pray; and I this morning know  
Where we shall find him most conveniently. *Exeunt.*

## SCENE II

A room of state in the castle.

*Enter KING, QUEEN, HAMLET, POLONIUS, LAERTES, VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, Lords, and Attendants.*

KING

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death  
The memory be green, and that it us befitted  
To bear our hearts in grief and our whole kingdom  
To be contracted in one brow of woe,  
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature  
That we with wisest sorrow think on him,  
Together with remembrance of ourselves.  
Therefore our sometime sister, now our queen,  
The imperial jointress to this warlike state,  
Have we, as 'twere with a defeated joy—  
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,  
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,  
In equal scale weighing delight and dole—  
Taken to wife: nor have we herein barr'd  
Your better wisdoms, which have freely gone  
With this affair along. For all, our thanks.  
Now follows, that you know, young Fortinbras,  
Holding a weak supposal of our worth,  
Or thinking by our late dear brother's death  
Our state to be disjoint and out of frame,  
Colleagu'd with the dream of his advantage,  
He hath not fail'd to pester us with message,  
Importing the surrender of those lands  
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,  
To our most valiant brother. So much for him.

Now for ourself and for this time of meeting:  
Thus much the business is: we have here writ  
To Norway, uncle of young Fortinbras—  
Who, impotent and bed-rid, scarcely hears  
Of this his nephew's purpose—to suppress  
His further gait herein; in that the levies,  
The lists and full proportions, are all made  
Out of his subject: and we here dispatch  
You, good Cornelius, and you, Voltimand,  
For bearers of this greeting to old Norway;  
Giving to you no further personal power  
To business with the king, more than the scope  
Of these delated articles allow.  
Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty.

CORNELIUS  
VOLTIMAND

In that and all things will we show our duty.

KING

We doubt it nothing: heartily farewell. *Exeunt VOLTIMAND and CORNELIUS.*  
And now, Laertes, what's the news with you?  
You told us of some suit; what is't, Laertes?  
You cannot speak of reason to the Dane,  
And lose your voice: what wouldst thou beg, Laertes,  
That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
The head is not more native to the heart,  
The hand more instrumental to the mouth,  
Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.  
What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES

My dread lord,  
Your leave and favour to return to France;  
From whence though willingly I came to Denmark,  
To show my duty in your coronation,  
Yet now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My thoughts and wishes bend again toward France  
And bow them to your gracious leave and pardon.

KING

Have you your father's leave? What says Polonius?

POLONIUS

He hath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave  
By laboursome petition, and at last  
Upon his will I seal'd my hard consent:  
I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING

Take thy fair hour, Laertes; time be thine,  
And thy best graces spend it at thy will!  
But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET

*Aside.* A little more than kin, and less than kind.

KING

How is it that the clouds still hang on you?

HAMLET

Not so, my lord; I am too much i' the sun.

QUEEN

Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted colour off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not for ever with thy vailed lids  
Seek for thy noble father in the dust:  
Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

HAMLET

Ay, madam, it is common.

QUEEN

If it be,  
Why seems it so particular with thee?

HAMLET

Seems, madam! nay, it is; I know not "seems."  
'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,  
Nor customary suits of solemn black,  
Nor windy suspiration of forced breath,  
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,  
Nor the dejected 'havior of the visage,  
Together with all forms, moods, shapes of grief,  
That can denote me truly: these indeed seem,  
For they are actions that a man might play:  
But I have that within which passeth show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

KING

'Tis sweet and commendable in your nature, Hamlet,  
To give these mourning duties to your father:  
But, you must know, your father lost a father;  
That father lost, lost his, and the survivor bound  
In filial obligation for some term  
To do obsequious sorrow: but to persevere  
In obstinate condolement is a course  
Of impious stubbornness; 'tis unmanly grief;  
It shows a will most incorrect to heaven,  
A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,