

*Dramatis Personae*

*GHOST of Hamlet, the former King of Denmark*  
*CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark, the former King's brother*  
*GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark, widow of the former King and*  
*now wife of Claudius*  
*HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, son of the late King and of*  
*Gertrude*

*POLONIUS, councillor to the King*  
*LAERTES, his son*  
*OPHELIA, his daughter*  
*REYNALDO, his servant*

*HORATIO, Hamlet's friend and fellow student*

*VOLTIMAND,*  
*CORNELLIUS,*  
*ROSENCRANTZ,*  
*GUILDENSTERN,*  
*OSRIC,*  
*A GENTLEMAN,*  
*A LORD,*

} *members of the Danish court*

*BERNARDO,*  
*FRANCISCO,*  
*MARCELLUS,*

} *officers and soldiers on watch*

*FORTINBRAS, Prince of Norway*  
*CAPTAIN in his army*

*Three or Four PLAYERS, taking the roles of PROLOGUE, PLAYER*  
*KING, PLAYER QUEEN, and LUCIANUS*

*TWO MESSENGERS*  
*FIRST SAILOR*  
*Two CLOWNS, a gravedigger and his companion*  
*PRIEST*

*FIRST AMBASSADOR from England*

*Lords, Soldiers, Attendants, Guards, other Players, Followers of*  
*Laertes, other Sailors, another Ambassador or Ambassadors*  
*from England*

SCENE: Denmark]

1.1 *Enter Bernardo and Francisco, two sentinels, [meeting].*

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.

*Enter Horatio and Marcellus.*

FRANCISCO

I think I hear them.—Stand, ho! Who is there?

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 hath my place. Give you good night.

*Exit Francisco.*

MARCELLUS Holla! Bernardo!

BERNARDO Say, what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO A piece of him.

1.1. Location: Elsinore castle. A guard platform.

2 me (Francisco emphasizes that *he* is the sentry currently on watch.)

unfold yourself reveal your identity 14 rivals partners 16 ground  
country, land 17 liegemen to the Dane men sworn to serve the Danish  
king 18 Give i.e., may God give

BERNARDO Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus.

BERNARDO Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, good Marcellus?  
 Welcome, appeared again tonight?

HORATIO What, has this thing appeared again tonight?  
 I have seen nothing.

BERNARDO What, has this thing appeared again tonight?  
 I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy,  
 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 He may approve our eyes and speak to it.  
 He may approve our eyes and speak to it.

Tush, tush, 'twill not appear. Sit down awhile,

BERNARDO Tush, tush, 'twill not appear. Sit down awhile,  
 And let us once again assail your ears,

And let us once again assail your ears,  
 And let us once again assail your ears,

That are so fortified against our story,  
 That are so fortified against our story,

What we have two nights seen. Well, sit we down,

HORATIO What we have two nights seen. Well, sit we down,  
 And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.  
 And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO Last night of all, When yond same star that's westward from the pole

When yond same star that's westward from the pole  
 Had made his course t'illumine that part of heaven

Had made his course t'illumine that part of heaven  
 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,

Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,  
 The bell then beating one—

*Enter Ghost.*

MARCELLUS Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again!  
 Peace, break thee off! Look where it comes again!

BERNARDO In the same figure like the King that's dead.  
 In the same figure like the King that's dead.

MARCELLUS Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.  
 Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.

BERNARDO Looks 'a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.  
 Looks 'a not like the King? Mark it, Horatio.

27 fantasy imagination 30 along i.e., to come along 31 watch i.e.,  
 keep watch during 33 approve corroborate 37 What i.e., with what

39 Last . . . all i.e., this very last night. (Emphatic.) 40 pole polestar,  
 north star 41 his its. illumine illuminate 46 scholar one learned

enough to know how to question a ghost properly 47 'a he

HORATIO

Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BERNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS

Speak to it, Horatio.

49

HORATIO

What art thou that usurp'st this time of night,

50

Together with that fair and warlike form

In which the majesty of buried Denmark

52

Did sometime march? By heaven, I charge thee speak!

53

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?

59

HORATIO

Before my God, I might not this believe

Without the sensible and true avouch

Of mine own eyes.

61

MARCELLUS

Is it not like the King?

HORATIO

Such was the very armor he had on

When he the ambitious Norway combated.

65

So frowned he once when, in an angry parle,

66

He smote the sledded Polacks on the ice.

67

'Tis strange.

MARCELLUS

Thus twice before, and jump at this dead hour,

With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

69

HORATIO

In what particular thought to work I know not,

71

49 It . . . to (It was commonly believed that a ghost could not speak until spoken to.) 50 usurp'st wrongfully takes over 52 buried Denmark the buried King of Denmark 53 sometime formerly 59 on 't of it 61 sensible confirmed by the senses. avouch warrant, evidence 65 Norway King of Norway 66 parle parley 67 sledded traveling on sleds. Polacks Poles 69 jump exactly 71 to work i.e., to collect my thoughts and try to understand this

But in the gross and scope of mine 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-laborer 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 appeared to us,  
Was, as you know, by Fortinbras of Norway,  
Thereto pricked on by a most emulate pride,  
Dared to the combat; in which our valiant Hamlet—  
For so this side of our known world esteemed him—  
Did slay this Fortinbras; who by a sealed 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 returned  
To the inheritance of Fortinbras  
Had he been vanquisher, as, by the same covenant  
And carriage of the article designed,  
His fell to Hamlet. Now, sir, young Fortinbras,  
Of unimprovèd mettle hot and full,

- 72 gross and scope** general drift **74 Good now** (An expression denoting entreaty or expostulation.) **76 toils** causes to toil. **subject** subjects  
**77 cast** casting **78 mart** buying and selling **79 impress** impressment, conscription **81 toward** in preparation **87 Thereto . . . pride** (Refers to old Fortinbras, not the Danish King.) **pricked on** incited.  
**emulate** emulous, ambitious **89 this . . . world** i.e., all Europe, the Western world **90 sealed** certified, confirmed **93 seized** possessed  
**94 Against the** in return for. **moiety competent** sufficient portion  
**95 gaged** engaged, pledged **97 covenant** i.e., the *sealed compact* of 1. 90 **98 carriage** import, bearing. **article designed** article or clause drawn up or prearranged **100 unimprovèd** unrestrained, undisciplined

101 Hath in the skirts of Norway here and there  
 102 Sharped up a list of lawless resolute  
 103 For food and diet to some enterprise  
 104 That hath a stomach in 't, which is no other—  
 105 As it doth well appear unto our state—  
 106 But to recover of us, by strong hand  
 107 And terms compulsory, those foresaid lands  
 108 So by his father lost. And this, I take it,  
 109 Is the main motive of our preparations,  
 110 The source of this our watch, and the chief head  
 111 Of this posthaste and rummage in the land.

BERNARDO

111 I think it be no other but e'en so.  
 112 Well may it sort that this portentous figure  
 113 Comes armed through our watch so like the King  
 114 That was and is the question of these wars.  
 115

HORATIO

116 A mote it is to trouble the mind's eye.  
 117 In the most high and palmy state of Rome,  
 118 A little ere the mightiest Julius fell,  
 119 The graves stood tenantless and the sheeted dead  
 120 Did squeak and gibber in the Roman streets;  
 121 As stars with trains of fire and dews of blood,  
 122 Disasters in the sun; and the moist star  
 123 Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands  
 124 Was sick almost to doomsday with eclipse.  
 125 And even the like precurse of feared events,  
 126 As harbingers preceding still the fates,  
 127 And prologue to the omen coming on,  
 128 Have heaven and earth together demonstratèd  
 129 Unto our climatures and countrymen.

129 **101 skirts** outlying regions, outskirts **102 Sharped up** got together in irregular fashion. **list** i.e., troop. **resolutes** desperadoes. **103 For food and diet** i.e., they are to serve as *food*, or means, *to some enterprise* **104 stomach** (1) a spirit of daring (2) an appetite that is fed by the *lawless resolutes* **110 head** source **111 rummage** bustle, commotion **113 sort** suit **115 question** focus of contention **116 mote** speck of dust **117 palmy** flourishing **119 sheeted** shrouded **121 As** (This abrupt transition suggests that matter is possibly omitted between ll. 120 and 121.) **122 Disasters** unfavorable signs or aspects. **moist star** i.e., moon, governing tides **123 Neptune** god of the sea. **stands depends** **124 sick** . . . **doomsday** (See Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12.) **125 precurse** heralding, foreshadowing **126 harbingers** forerunners. **still** continually **127 omen** calamitous event **129 climatures** regions

*Enter Ghost.*

But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!  
I'll cross it, though it blast me. (*It spreads his arms.*)

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!

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! (*The cock crows.*) 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.

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,

Th' extravagant and erring spirit hies

**130 soft** i.e., enough, break off **131 cross** stand in its path, confront.

**blast** wither, strike with a curse **s.d. his** its **138 happily** haply, per-

**chance 144 partisan** long-handled spear **156 trumpet** trumpeter

**160 extravagant and erring** wandering beyond bounds. (The words have similar meaning.)

To his confine; and of the truth herein  
This present object made probation.

162

MARCELLUS

It faded on the crowing of the cock.

Some say that ever 'gainst that season comes  
Wherein our Savior's birth is celebrated,

164

This 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 hallowed and so gracious is that time.

168

169

170

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 tonight

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.*

**1.2** *Flourish. Enter Claudius, King of Denmark, Gertrude the Queen, [the] Council, as Polonius and his son Laertes, Hamlet, cum aliis [including Voltimand and Cornelius].*

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

1

**162 probation** proof   **164 'gainst** just before   **168 strike** destroy by evil influence   **169 takes** bewitches   **170 gracious** full of grace

**1.2. Location: The castle.**

s.d. as i.e., such as, including. **cum aliis** with others   **1 our** my. (The royal "we"; also in the following lines.)

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,  
 Th' 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 barred  
 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,  
 Colleaguèd with this dream of his advantage,  
 He hath not failed 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 bedrid, 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

**8** *some time* former **9** *jointress* woman possessing property with her husband **11** *With . . . eye* with one eye smiling and the other weeping  
**13** *dole* grief **17** *know* be informed (that) **18** *weak supposal* low estimate **21** *Colleaguèd with* joined to, allied with. **dream . . . advantage** illusory hope of success. (His only ally is this hope.) **23** *Importing* pertaining to **24** *bonds* contracts **29** *impotent* helpless **31** *His* i.e., Fortinbras's. **gait** proceeding **31–33** *in that . . . subject* since the levying of troops and supplies is drawn entirely from the King of Norway's own subjects

Of these dilated articles allow. [He gives a paper.] 38  
 Farewell, and let your haste commend your duty. 39

CORNELIUS, VOLTIMAND

In that, and all things, will we show our duty.

KING  
 We doubt it nothing. Heartily farewell. 41

[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 44  
 And lose your voice. What wouldst thou beg, Laertes, 45  
 That shall not be my offer, not thy asking?  
 The head is not more native to the heart, 47  
 The hand more instrumental to the mouth, 48  
 Than is the throne of Denmark to thy father.  
 What wouldst thou have, Laertes?

LAERTES

My dread lord,  
 Your leave and favor to return to France,  
 From whence though willingly I came to Denmark 51  
 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. 56

KING

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

POLONIUS

H'ath, my lord, wrung from me my slow leave 58  
 By laborsome petition, and at last  
 Upon his will I sealed my hard consent. 60  
 I do beseech you, give him leave to go.

KING

Take thy fair hour, Laertes. Time be thine, 62  
 And thy best graces spend it at thy will! 63

38 dilated set out at length 39 commend recommend to friendly remembrance. (Their haste will impress the King with their attention to duty.) 41 nothing not at all 44 the Dane the Danish king 45 lose your voice waste your speech 47 native closely connected, related 48 instrumental serviceable 51 leave and favor kind permission 56 leave and pardon permission to depart 58 H'ath he has 60 sealed (as if sealing a legal document). hard reluctant 62 Take thy fair hour enjoy your time of youth 63 And . . . will and may your finest qualities guide the way you choose to spend your time

But now, my cousin Hamlet, and my son—

HAMLET  
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 in the sun.

QUEEN  
Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off,  
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark.  
Do not forever with thy veiled 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 inked 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 passes show;  
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.

- 64** *cousin* any kin not of the immediate family **65** *A little . . . kind* i.e., closer than an ordinary nephew (since I am stepson), and yet more separated in natural feeling (with pun on *kind* meaning "affectionate" and "natural," "lawful." This line is often read as an aside, but it need not be. The King chooses perhaps not to respond to Hamlet's cryptic and bitter remark.) **67** *the sun* i.e., the sunshine of the King's royal favor (with pun on *son*) **68** *nighted color* (1) mourning garments of black (2) dark melancholy **69** *Denmark* the King of Denmark  
**70** *veiled lids* lowered eyes **72** *common* of universal occurrence. (But Hamlet plays on the sense of "vulgar" in l. 74.) **75** *particular* personal **78** *customary* (1) socially conventional (2) habitual with me  
**79** *suspiration* sighing **80** *fruitful* abundant **81** *havior* expression  
**82** *moods* outward expressions of feeling