

# Act I

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## Scene 1

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*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*

HORATIO:

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!

*Exit Ghost*

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,  
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 dares 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.

## Scene 2

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*A room of state in the castle.*

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

KINGCLAUDIUS:

Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death

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