

**SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDY
OF HAMLET,
PRINCE OF DENMARK.**

PERSONS REPRESENTED

CLAUDIUS, King of Denmark

HAMLET, Prince of Denmark, Claudius's nephew

POLONIUS, Councillor of State

HORATIO, Hamlet's friend

LAERTES, Polonius's son

*ROSENCRANTZ and GUILDENSTERN, courtiers,
Hamlet's schoolfellows*

OSRIC, a courtier

FORTINHRAS, Prince of Norway

MARCELLUS and BERNARDO, officers

FRANCISCO, a soldier

TWO GRAVE-DIGGERS

GHOST of Hamlet's father

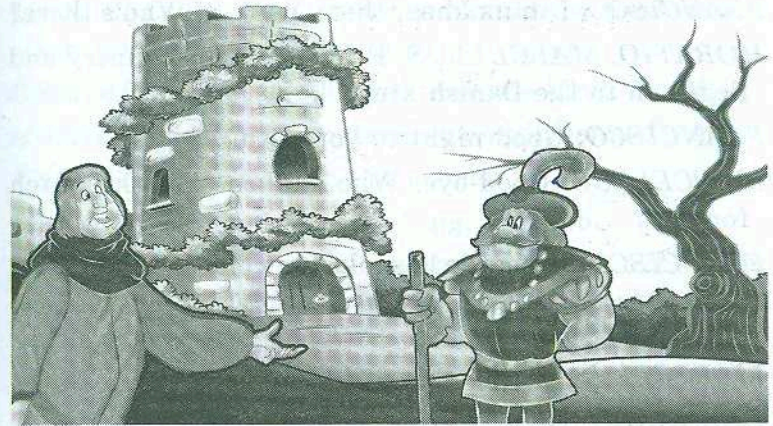
*GERTRUDE, Queen of Denmark, Hamlet's mother,
Claudius's new wife OPHELIA, Polonius's daughter*

LORDS, LADIES,

OFFICERS, SOLDIERS,

SAILORS, MESSENGERS,

ATTENDANTS



**Act I
Scene 1**

(The Elsinore Castle grounds, at night)

BERNARDO and FRANCISCO, two watchmen, enter.

BERNARDO: Who's there?

FRANCISCO: No, who are you? Stop and identify yourself.

BERNARDO: Long live the king!

FRANCISCO: Is that Bernardo?

BERNARDO: Yes, it's me.

FRANCISCO: You are right on time.

BERNARDO: It's midnight; go home to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO: Thanks for letting me go. It's bitterly cold, and I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO: Has it been a quiet night?

FRANCISCO: I haven't even heard a mouse squeak.

BERNARDO: Well, good night. If you happen to see Horatio and Marcellus, who are supposed to stand guard with me tonight, tell them to hurry.

FRANCISCO: I think I hear them. — Halt! Who's there?

HORATIO, MARCELLUS: Friends to this country and liegemen to the Danish king.

FRANCISCO: Good night to you both.

MARCELLUS: Good-bye. Who's taken over the watch for you?

FRANCISCO: Bernardo has taken my place. Good night.

FRANCISCO *exits*.

MARCELLUS: Hello, Bernardo.

BERNARDO: Hello. Is Horatio here too?

HORATIO: More or less.

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: So, tell us, did you see that thing again tonight?

BERNARDO: I haven't seen anything.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says it's not true. He will stay and watch with us so that if the ghost appears he can see what we see and speak to it.

HORATIO: Oh, nonsense. It's not going to appear.

BERNARDO: Sit down for a while, and we will tell you again the story you don't want to believe, about what we have seen out here on two nights.

HORATIO: We'll sit down then. And let us hear Bernardo speak of this.

BERNARDO: Last night, as the clock struck one, Marcellus and I —

The GHOST enters.

MARCELLUS: Be quiet, not a word! Over there! Look where it comes again.

BERNARDO: Looking just like the dead king.

MARCELLUS (*to HORATIO*): You are well-educated, Horatio. Say something to it.

BERNARDO: Doesn't he look like the king, Horatio?

HORATIO: Very much so. It fills me with fear and wonder.

BERNARDO: It wants to be spoken to.

MARCELLUS: Ask it something, Horatio.

HORATIO: What are you, so that you walk out so late at night, looking like the dead king of Denmark in the armour he wore in battle? By God, I order you to speak.

MARCELLUS: It seems you have offended it.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away.

HORATIO: Stay! Speak! Speak! I order you to speak!

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS: It's gone and will not answer.

BERNARDO: What's going on, Horatio? You are pale and trembling. Do you still think that this is no more than just fantasy? What do you think about it?

HORATIO: I swear to God, if I hadn't seen this with my own eyes I'd never believe it.

MARCELLUS: Doesn't it look like the king?

HORATIO: Most certainly, as much as you look like yourself. It was the armour King Hamlet had on when he battled with the King of Norway. And the ghost frowned just like the King. It's strange.

MARCELLUS: As I said, on two previous nights and exactly at this hour it has appeared in that very form and stalked by us.

HORATIO: I don't know exactly how to explain this, but I feel this means bad news for our country.

MARCELLUS: Somebody tells me why we are out day and night, why so many bronze cannons are being made in Denmark, and lots of weapons are be-

ing bought from abroad. Why are the shipbuilders so busy they don't even rest on Sunday? Is there something about to happen that makes us work for days on end? Who can tell me?

HORATIO: I believe I can provide an answer. At least the rumours. Our last King, whose form appeared to us just now, was, as you know, challenged by Fortinbras of Norway. In that fight, our brave King Hamlet killed old King Fortinbras, who, by official agreement, surrendered the lands he possessed, along with his life, to the victor. If our king had lost, he would have had to do the same. The son of the King of Norway, Prince Fortinbras, was enraged by the outcome and raised an army of the outlaws from around the remote parts of Norway for food eager to fight us to get the country back. As far as I understand, that's why we are out here on watch duty and that's the reason for such turmoil in Denmark lately.

BERNARDO: I think that explains why the ghost would haunt us now in the form of our dead King, who is the cause of these wars.

HORATIO: The ghost is definitely something to worry about. In the high and mighty Roman Empire, just before the emperor Julius Caesar was murdered, the dead rose out of the graves and their wailing could be heard everywhere. There were comets and astrological signs. There was an eclipse of the moon. There have been similar omens of terrible things to come, as if heaven and earth have joined together to warn us what's going to happen.

The GHOST enters.

HORATIO: Wait, look! It has come again. I'll meet it if it's the last thing I do. Stay!

The GHOST spreads his arms.

HORATIO: If you have a voice or can make sounds, speak to me. If there's any good deed I can do that will bring you peace and me honour, speak to me. If you have some secret knowledge of your country's sad fate — which might be avoided if we knew about it — then, please, speak. Or if you've got some buried treasure somewhere, which they say often makes ghosts restless, then tell us about it. Stay and speak!

A rooster crows.

HORATIO: Keep it from leaving, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: Should I strike it with my spear?

HORATIO: Yes, if it doesn't stand still.

BERNARDO: It's over here.

HORATIO: There it is.

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS: It's gone. We were wrong to threaten it with violence, since it looks so much like a king. Besides, we can't hurt it more than we can hurt the air. Our attack was stupid, useless, and wicked.

BERNARDO: It was about to say something when the rooster crowed.

HORATIO: And then it looked startled, like a guilty person caught by the law. I've heard that the rooster awakens the god of day with its trumpetlike crowing, and makes all wandering ghosts, wherever they are, hurry back to their hiding places. We've just seen proof of that.

MARCELLUS: It faded as the cock crew. Some people say that just before Christmas the rooster crows all night long, so that no ghost dares to wander beyond its normal confines, and the night is safe. The planets