

HAMLET

A line-by-line translation

Act 1, Scene 1

Shakespeare

*Two watchmen, BARNARDO and FRANCISCO, enter.***BARNARDO**

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

Nay, answer me. Stand and unfold yourself.

BARNARDO

Long live the king!

FRANCISCO

Barnardo?

BARNARDO

5 He.

FRANCISCO

You come most carefully upon your hour.

BARNARDO

'Tis now struck twelve. Get thee to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCOFor this relief much thanks. 'Tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.**BARNARDO**

10 Have you had quiet guard?

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirring.

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

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

*HORATIO and MARCELLUS enter.***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

20 Barnardo has my place. Give you good night.

Shakescleare Translation

*Two watchmen, BARNARDO and FRANCISCO, enter.***BARNARDO**

Who's there?

FRANCISCO

No, you answer me. Stop and reveal yourself.

BARNARDO

Long live the king!

FRANCISCO

Barnardo?

BARNARDO

Yes, me.

FRANCISCO

You arrived right on schedule.

BARNARDO

The clock just struck twelve. Go to bed, Francisco.

FRANCISCO

Thanks for relieving me. It's bitterly cold, and I'm miserable.

BARNARDO

Has your guard duty been quiet?

FRANCISCO

Not a mouse stirred.

BARNARDOWell, good night. If you see Horatio and Marcellus—who are
going to stand guard with me—tell them to hurry.**FRANCISCO**

I think I hear them. Stop! Who's there?

*HORATIO and MARCELLUS enter.***HORATIO**

Friends of this country.

MARCELLUS

And loyal servants of the Danish king.

FRANCISCO

Good night to you.

MARCELLUS

Oh, goodbye, honorable soldier. Who's relieved you?

FRANCISCO

Barnardo's taken my place. Good night.

*FRANCISCO exits.***MARCELLUS**

Holla, Barnardo.

BARNARDO

Say what, is Horatio there?

HORATIO

A piece of him.

BARNARDO

Welcome, Horatio.—Welcome, good Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

25 What, has this thing appeared again tonight?

BARNARDO

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.
 30 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.

BARNARDO

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

HORATIO

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

BARNARDO

Last night of all,
 When yond same star that's westward from the pole
 Had made his course t' illumine that part of heaven
 Where now it burns, Marcellus and myself,
 45 The bell then beating one—

*The GHOST enters.***MARCELLUS**

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

BARNARDO

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

MARCELLUS*[to HORATIO]* Thou art a scholar. Speak to it, Horatio.**BARNARDO**

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

HORATIO

50 Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS

Question it, Horatio.

*FRANCISCO exits.***MARCELLUS**

Hello, Barnardo.

BARNARDO

Say, is Horatio here too?

HORATIO

More or less.

BARNARDO

Welcome, Horatio. Welcome, Marcellus.

MARCELLUS

So, has the thing appeared again tonight?

BARNARDO

I haven't seen anything.

MARCELLUS

Horatio says it's all our imagination, and he won't let
 himself believe in this awful thing we've now seen twice. I
 asked him to join us in our guard duty tonight, so that if the
 ghost appears he can confirm what we see and speak to it.

HORATIO

Oh, come now. It's not going to appear.

BARNARDO

Sit down for a while, and let us tell you again the story you
 refuse to believe, about what we've seen the last two
 nights.

HORATIO

Sure, let's sit down and listen to Barnardo tell us about it.

BARNARDO

Last night, when that star to the west of the North Star had
 moved across the heavens to brighten that spot in the sky
 where it's shining now, at precisely one o'clock, Marcellus
 and I—

*The GHOST enters.***MARCELLUS**

Quiet, stop talking! Look, it's come again.

BARNARDO

Looking exactly like the dead king.

MARCELLUS*[To HORATIO]* You're well-educated. Speak to it, Horatio.**BARNARDO**

Doesn't he look like the king, Horatio?

HORATIO

Exactly like him. It fills me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO

It wants us to speak to it.

MARCELLUS

Ask it something, Horatio.

HORATIO

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

MARCELLUS

It is offended.

BARNARDO

See, it stalks away.

HORATIO

Stay! Speak, speak! I charge thee, speak!

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS

60 'Tis gone and will not answer.

BARNARDO

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
 65 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
 70 When he the ambitious Norway combated.
 So frowned 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,
 75 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 mine opinion
 This bodes some strange eruption to our state.

MARCELLUS

Good now, sit down and tell me, he that knows,
 80 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
 85 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.
 90 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
 95 (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,

HORATIO

Who are you, disturbing this time of night, and appearing
 just like the dead king of Denmark, dressed in his battle
 armor? By God, I order you to speak.

MARCELLUS

You've offended it.

BARNARDO

Look, it's moving away.

HORATIO

Stay! Speak! Speak! I order you, speak!

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS

It's gone, and won't answer.

BARNARDO

How are you, Horatio? You're pale and trembling. Isn't this
 something more than just our imagination? What do you
 think about it?

HORATIO

I swear by God, I would never have believed this if I hadn't
 seen it with my own eyes.

MARCELLUS

Doesn't it look like the king?

HORATIO

As much as you look like yourself. That was the same armor
 the king wore when he fought the ambitious king of
 Norway. And the ghost frowned just like the king did once
 when he fought the Poles, who traveled on the ice in sleds.
 It's eerie.

MARCELLUS

It's happened like this twice before, always at this time of
 night. Dressed like a warrior, the ghost walks by us at our
 guard post.

HORATIO


I don't know exactly what this means, but I have a general
 feeling it signals that something bad is about to happen to
 our country.

MARCELLUS

Speaking of that, let's sit down so that, whoever knows
 about it, can tell me why we've been keeping such a strict
 schedule of nightly watches. And why we've been building
 so many cannons, and buying so many weapons from other
 countries. And why the shipbuilders are kept so busy that
 they don't even rest on Sunday. What's coming that forces
 us to work day and night in this way? Who can tell me?

HORATIO

I can do that. At least, I can tell you the rumors: the
 greatness of our former king—whose ghost just now
 appeared to us—inspired the competitive pride of King
 Fortinbras of Norway. Fortinbras challenged him to hand-
 to-hand combat. During that fight, our courageous Hamlet
 (as we Danes thought of him) killed old King Fortinbras,
 who—on the basis of a signed and sealed agreement and in
 full accordance with the law and rules of
 combat—surrendered, along with his life, all the lands he

 *Hamlet is also the name of the titular character's father (the ghost), not to be confused here with this play's main character.*