

## 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.**FRANCISCO**  
For 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.**BARNARDO**  
Well, 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.**BARNARDO**  
Well, 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.*