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
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
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
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
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
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.
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
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 of all,
When yond same star that's westward from the pole
Had made his course t' illume that part of heaven
Where now it burns,
Marcellus and myself,
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
Most like. It harrows me with fear and wonder.

BARNARDO
It would be spoke to.

MARCELLUS
Question it, Horatio.

©2020 LitCharts LLC v.007
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.

BARNARDO
See, it stalks away.

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

MARCELLUS
'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
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 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,
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
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
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,

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.

The GHOST exits.

MARCELLUS
It's gone, and won't answer.