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
Barnardoe?

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
Barnardoe 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
Barnardoe?

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.
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
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
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 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.
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!

The GHOST exits.

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 sledged 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
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 laborer 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 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.

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),
ot to be confused here with this play’s main character.