

ACT 1

Scene 1

*(Francisco is at his post before the castle in Elsinore.
Bernardo enters.)*

BERNARDO: The clock has struck 12.

I'll take over the watch now, Francisco.

FRANCISCO: Thank you for relieving me.

It is bitter cold, and I am sick at heart.

BERNARDO: Has it been quiet tonight?

FRANCISCO: Not a mouse stirring.

BERNARDO: Well, good night. Tell my
Partners on watch to hurry.

FRANCISCO: I think I hear them now.

(Horatio and Marcellus enter as Francisco exits.)

MARCELLUS: Hello, Bernardo!

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio and Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: Has it appeared again—the *thing*?

BERNARDO: I have seen nothing.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says it is only our fantasy.
He will not believe that we saw it twice!
By standing watch with us tonight, he can
See it for himself.

HORATIO: It will not appear.

BERNARDO: Sit down awhile,
And let us once again tell you about
What we have seen two nights in a row.
Last night, about this same time,
The clock was striking one—

MARCELLUS: Quiet! It's coming again!

*(The **Ghost** enters, dressed in armor.)*

BERNARDO: It looks just like the dead King!

MARCELLUS: Speak to it, Horatio!

HORATIO *(to the Ghost):* Who are you?
Why do you wear the armor in which
Our buried King did sometimes march?
By heaven, I order you to speak!

MARCELLUS: It seems to be offended.

BERNARDO: See, it stalks away!

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

*(The **Ghost** exits.)*

MARCELLUS: It will not answer. It is gone.

BERNARDO: What do you think now, Horatio?
You tremble and look pale.
Isn't this something more than fantasy?

HORATIO: Before my God,
I would never have believed it
Unless I saw it with my own eyes.

MARCELLUS: Isn't it like the King?

HORATIO: As like as you are to yourself!
That was the very armor he had on when
He fought the ambitious King of Norway.
And he frowned just like that once,
When angry. It is strange.
I have no idea what to think.
But it seems like a bad sign.

MARCELLUS: Tell me, if you know,
Why this quiet and watchful ghost
Has come here these past nights.
And why does our country seem
To be preparing for war?

HORATIO: I'll tell what I've heard.
Our last King, whose image just appeared,
Killed King Fortinbras of Norway.
Along with his life,
Fortinbras lost all the lands
He had risked in the battle.
If Fortinbras had won, our good King
Would have had to give up his lands.
That was their agreement, so it was only fair.
Now, sir, young Fortinbras, his son,
Rash, hot, and foolish,
Has raised an army of lawless men
To recover the land lost by his father.
This must be why we are preparing for war,
And the reason we must keep watch at night.

BERNARDO: I think you must be right.

HORATIO: Quiet! Look! Here it comes again!

*(The **Ghost** enters again.)*

Stay, illusion! If you have any use of voice,
Speak to me. If I may help you in any way,
Speak to me. If you know anything about
Your country's fate, which,
By knowing in advance, we may avoid,
Oh, speak!

*(A rooster crows. The **Ghost** exits.)*

BERNARDO: It was about to speak,
When the rooster crowed.

HORATIO: I have heard that spirits
Must leave the earth during the day,
And what we just saw proves that story!
The sun is rising. Our watch is over.
Let us report what we have seen tonight
To young Hamlet. I think that
This spirit, silent to us, will speak to him.

MARCELLUS: Let's do it. I know where he is.

(All exit.)

Scene 2

*(King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Prince Hamlet,
Polonius, Laertes, Voltimand, Cornelius, Lords, and
Attendants enter a room of state in the castle at Elsinore.)*