

Hamlet

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



HAMLET

William Shakespeare

- ADAPTED BY -

Patricia Hutchison



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— Cast of Characters —

HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK

Son of the dead king; nephew of the present king

CLAUDIUS, KING OF DENMARK

Hamlet's uncle

GERTRUDE, QUEEN OF DENMARK

Hamlet's mother; now married to Claudius

GHOST Hamlet's murdered father

POLONIUS Chief adviser to Claudius

HORATIO Hamlet's loyal friend

LAERTES Polonius's son; Ophelia's brother

— Cast of Characters —

OPHELIA Polonius's daughter;
Laertes's sister

ROSENCRANTZ and
GUILDENSTERN Hamlet's former
classmates

VOLTIMAND, CORNELIUS, and
OSRIC Danish courtiers

MARCELLUS, BERNARDO, and
FRANCISCO Castle guards

REYNALDO Polonius's servant

GRAVEDIGGERS, LORDS,
ATTENDANTS, ACTORS, SAILORS,
and **SERVANTS**

Introduction

About 500 years ago, Hamlet's father, the king of Denmark, was murdered by his own brother, Claudius. Then Claudius quickly married Hamlet's mother, Gertrude. As the play opens, the ghost of Hamlet's father appears. He tells his son who murdered him. And he tells Hamlet to get revenge. As the play unfolds, Hamlet tries to talk himself into murdering Claudius.

This is Shakespeare's most famous play, known for the troubled character of Hamlet.

ACT 1

— Scene 1 —

(Francisco is at his post. He's guarding Elsinore castle. Bernardo enters.)

BERNARDO: The clock has struck 12. I'll take over the watch now, Francisco.

FRANCISCO: Thank you. It's so cold. I'm upset.

BERNARDO: Has it been quiet tonight?

FRANCISCO: Yes.

BERNARDO: Goodnight. Tell my partners to hurry. They are guarding too.

FRANCISCO: I think I hear them now.

(Horatio and Marcellus enter. Francisco exits.)

MARCELLUS: Hello, Bernardo!

BERNARDO: Welcome, Horatio and Marcellus.

MARCELLUS: Has the *thing* come again?

BERNARDO: I haven't seen it.

MARCELLUS: Horatio says it's all in our minds. He doesn't believe we saw it twice! Maybe he'll see it for himself tonight.

HORATIO: It won't appear.

MARCELLUS: Quiet! It's coming!

(The Ghost enters, dressed in armor.)

BERNARDO: It looks like the dead king!

HORATIO *(to the Ghost):* Who are you?
Are you our dead king? Speak!

BERNARDO: It's leaving.

HORATIO: Stay! Speak!

(The Ghost exits.)

BERNARDO: What do you think now, Horatio? You saw it too. You look pale.

HORATIO: I would not have believed it. But I saw it with my own eyes.

MARCELLUS: Isn't it the king?

HORATIO: It looked just like him. It seems like a bad sign.

MARCELLUS: Why do you think he's come here? And why does our country seem to be getting ready for war?

HORATIO: I'll tell you what I've heard. Our last king killed King Fortinbras of Norway. We took all their land. His son is young Fortinbras. He has a temper. And

he's foolish. Now he's raised an army. He wants the land back. That's why we're getting ready.

BERNARDO: I think you're right.

HORATIO: Here it comes again!

(The Ghost enters again.)

HORATIO: Please stay! Speak to me. Can I help you in any way? Can you help your country somehow? Please speak!

(A rooster crows. The Ghost exits.)

BERNARDO: It was about to speak. Then the rooster crowed.

HORATIO: Ghosts don't come during the day. Let's tell young Hamlet what we've seen tonight. Maybe this ghost will speak to him.

(All exit.)

— Scene 2 —

(King Claudius, Queen Gertrude, Prince Hamlet, Polonius, Laertes, Voltimand, Cornelius, lords, and attendants enter a room in Elsinore castle.)

KING: The memory of our dear brother's death is still fresh. We are very sad. Yet, we must think of our kingdom. We need a leader in wartime. So I have married my former sister-in-law. Young Fortinbras thinks we're weak. He thinks our late brother's death has left us puzzled. He's trying to win back the land his father lost.

We have written a letter to the king of Norway. He's the uncle of young Fortinbras. But he's ill. He doesn't know what his nephew is doing. We asked him to order his nephew to leave us alone. Cornelius and Voltimand, take this letter to the king of Norway. Quickly!

(King Claudius hands them a letter.)

CORNELIUS and VOLTIMAND: Yes,
my lord.

(They bow and exit.)

KING: Now, Laertes, what's your news?
You have a request.

LAERTES: I ask your permission, my
lord, to return to France. I gave you my
support. Now I wish to go.

KING: Do you have your father's okay?
What does Polonius want?

LAERTES: Yes, he approves.

KING: Enjoy your youth, Laertes. Do what
you want. Now, my nephew and my son,
Hamlet ...

HAMLET *(aside)*: I may be your nephew.
But I will never be your son!

KING: Why are you still so upset?

QUEEN: Hamlet, cheer up! All living things must die.

HAMLET: Yes, I know.

KING: It is sweet of you, Hamlet, to miss your father. But to keep on crying is unmanly. It shows weakness. Please stop being so sad. Think of me as a father. I love you like my own son! Please stay with us.

QUEEN: Yes, please stay. Don't go back to school in Wittenberg.

HAMLET: I will obey you, Mother.

(All exit but Hamlet.)

HAMLET: I wish I could kill myself! I can't believe my father has been dead for two months. He was a fine king. And he loved my mother so much. But within a

month, she married my uncle! What a weak woman! This marriage won't work. But I must be quiet!

(Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo enter.)

HORATIO: Hello, Hamlet!

HAMLET: Hello, Horatio! What brings you here?

HORATIO: I think I saw your father last night.

HAMLET: What? Tell me about it.

HORATIO: A ghostly form came while we were standing watch. It looked just like your father. It didn't speak to us.

HAMLET: That's very odd. Are you on watch tonight?

MARCELLUS and BERNARDO: Yes, we are.

HAMLET: I'll go with you. If it comes, I'll speak to it. Don't tell anyone else about this. I'll see you tonight.

ALL: Good-bye.

(Horatio, Marcellus, and Bernardo exit.)

HAMLET: My father's spirit—dressed in armor! This isn't good. I'll see him tonight!

(Hamlet exits.)

— Scene 3 —

(Laertes and Ophelia enter a room in Polonius's house.)

LAERTES: Farewell. I am returning to France. Sister, please write to me.

OPHELIA: Of course I will.

LAERTES: Be careful of Hamlet and his love. It won't last.

OPHELIA: Is that true?

LAERTES: He may love you now. But remember his position. He can't do everything he'd like to. The safety of this country depends on his choices. He must think of Denmark before he can marry. Stay in control. Watch out for desire. Or you might lose your honor. And your heart.

OPHELIA: I'll be careful. But you should take your own advice.

(Polonius enters.)

POLONIUS: It's time for you to go, son.

(laying his hands on Laertes's head):
Let me give you some advice. Be nice. Keep the friends you have. Don't make new friends too easily. Listen. But don't talk too much. Don't judge others. Don't borrow from others. Don't lend them anything. Above all, be true to yourself. Then you won't be fake with anyone. Good-bye. My blessings go with you!

LAERTES: Good-bye, Father. Good-bye, Ophelia. Remember what I've told you.

OPHELIA: I will.

(Laertes exits.)

POLONIUS: What did he say to you?

OPHELIA: Something about Hamlet.

POLONIUS: I thought so. I've heard that you have been spending a lot of time with Hamlet lately. People are talking. What's between you?

OPHELIA: He has told me he has feelings for me.

POLONIUS: Feelings? Do you believe him?

OPHELIA: Yes. He's telling the truth.

POLONIUS: Don't let him trap you. Don't take him seriously. Don't spend any time alone with him. In fact, don't even talk to him. That's an order!

OPHELIA: Yes, sir.

(Polonius and Ophelia exit.)

— Scene 4 —

(Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus enter.)

HAMLET: It's very cold. What time is it?

HORATIO: I think it's almost midnight.

MARCELLUS: No, it's past that.

HORATIO: Then the spirit should be coming soon.

(The Ghost enters.)

HORATIO: Look, here it comes!

HAMLET: I will speak to you. I'll call you Hamlet, King, Father. Please answer me! Why are you here? Why are you dressed in armor? What should we do?

(The Ghost motions to Hamlet.)

MARCELLUS: Do not go after it!

HAMLET: It will not speak to us unless I follow it. Why should I be afraid? My life is worth nothing. I'll follow it.

(to the Ghost): Go on. I'll follow you.

MARCELLUS *(holding him back):* I won't let you go!

HAMLET: Let go of me.

HORATIO: Listen to us. Don't go!

HAMLET: I have to. Don't try to stop me!

(The Ghost and Hamlet exit.)

MARCELLUS: Let's go after him.
Something is rotten here in Denmark.

HORATIO: Heaven will take care of it!

MARCELLUS: No, let's follow him.

(Horatio and Marcellus exit.)

— Scene 5 —

*(The **Ghost** and **Hamlet** enter a remote part of the castle.)*

HAMLET: Where are you taking me?
Speak! Or I'll stop.

GHOST: Listen to me. It is almost time for me to go. I must give myself up to the flames. Listen. And when you hear, you will need to take revenge.

HAMLET: What?

GHOST: I am your father's spirit. If you ever loved me, you must make someone pay for my murder!

HAMLET: Murder! Tell me what happened.
I'll take revenge.

GHOST: The story is that a snake bit me while I was sleeping in the orchard. All

Denmark has been told this lie. But the snake now wears my crown.

HAMLET: My uncle! I thought so.

GHOST: Yes, that beast. While I was sleeping in the orchard, he put poison in my ear. I died fast. In seconds, I lost my life. My crown. My queen. You must get revenge. But don't hurt your mother. Thinking about what she has done. That will be her punishment. It is almost morning. Good-bye! Hamlet, remember me!

(The Ghost exits.)

HAMLET: Remember you! I'll wipe away all other memories. Your wish will live in my brain. Oh, evil woman! Oh, smiling, evil villain! Father, I swear I'll remember you!

HORATIO *(from offstage):* My lord!



MARCELLUS (*from offstage*): Lord Hamlet!

(*Horatio and Marcellus enter.*)

MARCELLUS: What happened?

HORATIO: What did he say to you?

HAMLET: Good news!

HORATIO: Tell us!

HAMLET: No, you'll tell the secret.

HORATIO: I promise I won't.

MARCELLUS: I won't either.

HAMLET: Then keep this secret. There's
a villain living in Denmark.

HORATIO: We don't need a ghost to tell
us that.

HAMLET: You're right. Let's shake hands
and part. But promise me one thing.

HORATIO: What is it?

HAMLET: Don't tell anyone what you
have seen tonight.

HORATIO and MARCELLUS: We won't.

HAMLET: Swear to it. On my sword.

GHOST (*from beneath the stage*): Swear.

HAMLET: Put your hands on my sword.
Promise to never tell what you've heard.

GHOST (*from beneath*): Swear.

HAMLET: Rest, troubled spirit!

(*Horatio and Marcellus swear.*)

HAMLET: Thank you, gentlemen. Let's all
go. And remember, not a word.

(*All exit.*)

yes



Hamlet, Act 1

no



believe 	appear 	quiet 	watch 	ghost 	armor
speak 	kill 	dead 	king 	sign 	war
crow 	marry 	weak 	army 	Hamlet 	Claudius
love 	dress 	upset 	kingdom 	spirit 	advice
trap 	swear 	afraid 	revenge 	poison 	secret

Within each category, pictures are listed from left to right in the order in which they appear in the text.