

Hamlet abbreviated

Act 1, Scene 1

Observation

Situation: On a cold winter night, high on the walls of the castle at Elsinore, a ghost “in the same figure like the king that’s dead” appears to Horatio (Hamlet’s friend) and Marcellus and Barnardo (soldiers). But the men are upset with the ghost because he won’t talk to them. Horatio offers his views to the soldiers as to why the image of the late king returns as a ghost.

MARCELLUS: Is it not like the king?

HORATIO: As thou art to thyself. ‘Tis strange.

MARCELLUS: Thus twice before, and exactly at this dead hour. With martial stalk hath he gone by our watch.

HORATIO: In the 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 most observant watch so nightly toils the subject of the land. Who is ‘t that can inform me?

HORATIO: That can I.

Horatio to Marcellus and Barnardo

**Our last king, whose image here now appeared
To us, was to fatal combat challenged
By the daring and overconfident
Fortinbras of Norway, a king who lacked
Fighting skills, losing lands to our valiant
Hamlet, who took the king’s life, through a pact
Sealed, against which lands pledged by our king would
By bargain have gone to Fortinbras should
He have been vanquisher. Young Fortinbras,
We hear, hath drawn a list of poorly led
Resolutes, himself without fear of loss,
Determined to recover those foresaid
Lands so by his father lost. I now take
It, ‘tis why this readiness we now make.**

BARNARDO: I think it be no other but e’en so.

HORATIO: A mote it is to trouble the mind’s eye. The foreshadowing of feared events, as harbingers preceding still the fates and prologue to the omen coming on, unto our regions and countrymen.

The Ghost enters.

HORATIO: But soft, behold! Lo, where it comes again!