

# Hamlet

## 1.4

*Enter Prince Hamlet, Horatio, and Marcellus*

HAMLET

The air bites shrewdly, it is very cold.

HORATIO

It is a nipping and an eager air.

HAMLET     What hour now?

HORATIO     I think it lacks of twelve.

MARCELLUS     No, it is struck. 5

HORATIO

Indeed? I heard it not. Then it draws near the season  
Wherein the spirit held his wont to walk.

*A flourish of trumpets, and two pieces of ordnance  
goes off*

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The King doth wake tonight and takes his rouse,  
Keeps wassail, and the swagg'ring upspring reels, 10  
And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down  
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out  
The triumph of his pledge.

HORATIO     Is it a custom?

HAMLET     Ay, marry is't, 15

And to my mind, though I am native here  
And to the manner born, it is a custom  
More honoured in the breach than the observance.

*Enter the Ghost, as before*

HORATIO     Look, my lord, it comes.

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us! 20  
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou com'st in such a questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee. I'll call thee Hamlet, 25  
King, father, royal Dane. O answer me!  
Let me not burst in ignorance, but tell

Why thy canonized bones, hearseÁd in death,  
Have burst their cerements, why the sepulchre  
Wherein we saw thee quietly enurned 30  
Hath oped his ponderous and marble jaws  
To cast thee up again. What may this mean,  
That thou, dead corpse, again in complete steel,  
Revisitst thus the glimpses of the moon,  
Making night hideous, and we fools of nature 35  
So horridly to shake our disposition  
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls?  
Say, why is this? Wherefore? What should we do?  
*The Ghost beckons Hamlet*

**HORATIO**

It beckons you to go away with it  
As if it some impartment did desire 40  
To you alone.

**MARCELLUS** (to Hamlet) Look with what courteous action  
It wafts you to a more removeÁd ground.  
But do not go with it.

**HORATIO** (to Hamlet) No, by no means.

**HAMLET**

It will not speak. Then will I follow it.

**HORATIO**

Do not, my lord.

**HAMLET** Why, what should be the fear? 45

I do not set my life at a pin's fee,  
And for my soul, what can it do to that,  
Being a thing immortal as itself?

*The Ghost beckons Hamlet*

It waves me forth again. I'll follow it.

**HORATIO**

What if it tempt you toward the flood, my lord, 50  
Or to the dreadful summit of the cliff  
That beetles o'er his base into the sea,  
And there assume some other horrible form  
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason  
And draw you into madness? Think of it. 55

*The Ghost beckons Hamlet*

**HAMLET**

It wafts me still. (To the Ghost) Go on, I'll follow thee.

**MARCELLUS**

You shall not go, my lord.

**HAMLET**

Hold off your hand.

**HORATIO**

Be ruled. You shall not go.

**HAMLET**

My fate cries out,

And makes each petty artere in this body

As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.

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*The Ghost beckons Hamlet*

Still am I called. Unhand me, gentlemen.

By heav'n, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me.

I say, away! *(To the Ghost)* Go on, I'll follow thee.

*Exeunt the Ghost and Hamlet*

**HORATIO**

He waxes desperate with imagination.

**MARCELLUS**

Let's follow. 'Tis not fit thus to obey him.

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**HORATIO**

Have after. To what issue will this come?

**MARCELLUS**

Something is rotten in the state of Denmark.

**HORATIO**

Heaven will direct it.

**MARCELLUS**

Nay, let's follow him.

*Exeunt*