

# Hamlet

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



 TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE

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## - 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, Hamlet's father's ghost appears and tells his son who murdered him. He urges Hamlet to seek revenge. As the play unfolds, Hamlet tries to convince himself that he should murder Claudius.

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

## - CAST OF CHARACTERS -

**HAMLET, PRINCE OF DENMARK** Son of the dead King Hamlet, and nephew of the present King of Denmark

**CLAUDIUS, PRINCE OF DENMARK** Hamlet's uncle

**GERTRUDE** Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother

**GHOST** The ghost of Hamlet's murdered father

**POLONIUS** Chief adviser to Claudius

**HORATIO** A commoner and loyal friend of Hamlet

**LAERTES** Son of Polonius and the brother of Ophelia

**OPHELIA** Daughter of Polonius and the sister of Laertes

**ROSENCRANTZ** and **GUILDENSTERN** Former classmates of Hamlet

**VOLTIMAND** and **CORNELIUS** Danish courtiers

**MARCELLUS, BERNARDO,** and **FRANCISCO** Guards at the castle

**REYNALDO** Polonius's servant

**OSRIC** A Danish courtier

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

# 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.)*

**KING:** The memory of our dear brother's death  
 Is still fresh. Our hearts are full of grief.  
 Yet, we must think of our kingdom,  
 Which needs a leader in this warlike time.  
 Therefore we have taken as wife  
 Our former sister-in-law.  
 Now, as you know, young Fortinbras  
 Thinks that we are weak. He thinks that  
 Our late dear brother's death  
 Has left our state in confusion and chaos.  
 Thinking he has an advantage, he has been  
 Pestering us to surrender those lands  
 Lost by his father to our brother.  
 That is the reason for this meeting.  
 We have written to the King of Norway,  
 The uncle of young Fortinbras.  
 He is sick and bedridden. He knows little  
 Of his nephew's actions. We asked him  
 To order his nephew to leave us alone.  
 We want you, Cornelius and Voltimand,  
 To take this letter to the King of Norway.  
 Now farewell—and do your duty quickly!

*(King Claudius hands them a letter.)*

**CORNELIUS AND VOLTIMAND:** Yes, my lord.

*(They bow and exit.)*

**KING:** Now, Laertes, what's the news with you?  
 You mentioned a request. What is it?

**LAERTES:** My good lord, I ask your permission



To return to France. I came here willingly  
To show my support for your coronation.  
Now, I must confess, that duty done,  
My wishes bend again toward France.

**KING:** Do you have your father's permission?  
What does Polonius say?

**POLONIUS:** My lord, he has my permission.

**KING:** Enjoy your youth, Laertes. Time is yours,  
And you may spend it as you like!  
But now, my nephew Hamlet, and my son—

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

**KING:** Why are you still so gloomy?

**QUEEN:** Good Hamlet, cast off your dark mood.  
You know that all living things must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

**HAMLET:** Yes, madam, I know.

**KING:** It is sweet of you, Hamlet,  
To mourn this way for your father.  
But, your father lost a father.  
And that lost father also lost his.  
You must mourn for a time. But to keep on  
Mourning so long is stubborn and unmanly.  
It shows a weak heart, an impatient mind.  
It is a fault against heaven, against the dead,  
And against nature. Please stop grieving.  
Think of us as a father. Let all see that

You are heir to the throne, and I love you  
 No less than the dearest father loves his son!  
 Your wish to return to school in Wittenberg  
 Goes against our wishes. We ask you to stay  
 Here in the cheer and comfort of our eye,  
 Our chief courtier, nephew, and our son.

**QUEEN:** Please, Hamlet, stay here with us.

**HAMLET:** I shall obey you, Mother.

**KING:** Why, it is a loving and fair reply.

*(to the Queen):* Madam, come.

*(All exit but Hamlet.)*

**HAMLET:** Oh, that this too, too solid flesh  
 Would melt, thaw, and turn into a dew!  
 Or if only suicide were not a sin!  
 Oh, God! Oh, God!  
 How weary, stale, flat, and useless  
 The world seems! It is an unweeded garden,  
 Gone to seed. That it should come to this!  
 Not even two months dead, so fine a king!  
 He loved my mother so much that  
 He wouldn't allow the wind to blow too hard  
 On her face. She would hang on him  
 As if her appetite grew by what it fed on.  
 Yet, within a month—let me not think of it!  
 Frailty, your name is woman!  
 Oh, God! A beast with no power to reason  
 Would have mourned longer! Now,

# Julius Caesar

William Shakespeare

TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE



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## - INTRODUCTION -

It is 44 B.C. in Rome. Julius Caesar, an army general, has defeated a Roman aristocrat named Pompey in a fierce battle. A public celebration is being held as the play opens. But some of the noblemen who had supported Pompey are fearful of Caesar's growing popularity. They're afraid that the ambitious Caesar wants to be named king—which would mean the end of the great Roman Republic. To protect their own power, they begin to conspire against him.

## - CAST OF CHARACTERS -

**JULIUS CAESAR** Roman statesman and army general

**OCTAVIUS** A Roman politician; later called Augustus  
Caesar, first Emperor of Rome

**MARK ANTONY** A Roman politician, general, and  
friend of Caesar

**LEPIDUS** A Roman politician

**MARCUS BRUTUS, CASSIUS, CASCA, TREBONIUS, LIGARIUS,  
DECIOUS BRUTUS, METELLUS CIMBER, and CINNA** Plotters  
against Caesar

**CALPURNIA** Caesar's wife

**PORTIA** Brutus's wife

**CICERO, POPILIUS, and POPILIUS LENA** Senators

**FLAVIUS** and **MARULLUS** Tribunes

**CATO, LUCILIUS, TITINIUS, MESSALA, and VOLUMNIUS**  
Supporters of Brutus

**ARTEMIDORUS** A teacher of rhetoric

**PUBLIUS** An elderly gentleman

**STRATO** and **LUCIUS** Servants to Brutus

**PINDARUS** Servant to Cassius

**THE GHOST OF CAESAR**

A **SOOTHSAYER**, a **POET**, **SENATORS**, **CITIZENS**, **SOLDIERS**,  
**COMMONERS**, **MESSENGERS**, and **SERVANTS**

# ACT 1

## | Scene 1 |

(A street in Rome. **Flavius**, **Marullus**, and certain **commoners** enter.)

**FLAVIUS:** Go home, you idle creatures!  
Is this a holiday? Don't you know you're  
Not allowed to walk around on a workday  
Without some sign of your profession?  
Tell me, what is your trade?

**COMMONER 1:** Why, sir, I am a carpenter.

**MARULLUS:** Where are your tools?  
Why are you wearing your best clothes?  
And you, sir—what is your trade?

**COMMONER 2:** Sir, I am a cobbler.  
I work with a clear conscience,  
For I am, sir, a mender of bad soles.  
If you are out of sorts, sir, I can mend you.

**MARULLUS:** What do you mean by that? Hmm.  
Mend *me*, you saucy fellow?

**COMMONER 2:** Why, sir—repair your shoes.

**FLAVIUS:** Why aren't you in your shop? Why  
do you lead these men about the streets?

**COMMONER 2:** To wear out their shoes, sir.

Then I'll get more work. But, indeed,  
sir, we've taken a holiday to see Caesar  
and to rejoice in his triumph.

**MARULLUS:** Why rejoice? What has he won?  
What captives does he bring home?  
You blocks, you stones, you worse than  
senseless things!  
Oh, you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome!  
Do you not remember Pompey? Many a  
Time you've climbed up walls and towers,  
Your infants in your arms. There you've sat  
All day long, waiting patiently to  
See great Pompey pass the streets of Rome.  
And when you saw his chariot appear,  
Didn't you shout so loud that the  
River Tiber trembled under her banks  
With the echo of your sounds?  
And now you put on your best clothes?  
You call out a holiday and  
Lay flowers before him who comes  
In triumph over Pompey's blood?  
Be gone!  
Run to your houses, fall upon your knees!  
Beg the gods to stop the plague  
That will surely punish you for such  
ingratitude.

**FLAVIUS:** Go, go, good countrymen—and,  
For this fault, gather all the men like you.  
Draw them to the banks of the Tiber, and

Weep into the river until the  
Lowest stream kisses the highest shores.

*(All the commoners exit.)*

See how they vanish, silent in their guilt.  
You go down that way toward the Capitol.  
I'll go this way. Remove any banners  
You see that honor Caesar.

**MARULLUS:** May we do so?

You know it is the feast of Lupercal.

**FLAVIUS:** It doesn't matter. Let no statues  
Be hung with Caesar's trophies. I'll drive  
The commoners from the streets.  
You do the same, where you see them thick.  
We must pluck these feathers from  
Caesar's wing before he can soar so high  
We'll have even more to fear.

*(Flavius and Marullus exit.)*

## | Scene 2 |

*(A public place. The sound of trumpets. Caesar enters, followed by Antony, Calpurnia, Portia, Decius, Cicero, Brutus, Cassius, and Casca. A crowd follows, among them a soothsayer.)*

**CAESAR:** Calpurnia!

**CALPURNIA:** Here, my lord.



**CAESAR:** Stand directly in Antony's way,  
When he runs his course. Antony!  
Do not forget to touch Calpurnia  
As you race past her. The elders say that  
Childless women, touched in this holy race  
On the feast of Lupercal, will soon be able  
To have children.

**ANTONY:** I shall remember.  
When Caesar says "Do this," it is performed.

*(Trumpets sound.)*

**SOOTHSAYER** *(from the crowd):* Caesar!  
Beware the ides of March.

**CAESAR:** Who said that?

**BRUTUS:** A soothsayer warns you to be careful  
on March 15.

**CAESAR:** Let me see his face.

**CASSIUS:** Fellow, come out of the crowd!

**CAESAR:** Speak once again.

**SOOTHSAYER:** Beware the ides of March.

**CAESAR:** He is a dreamer. Let us leave him.

*(All but Brutus and Cassius exit.)*

**CASSIUS:** Will you go watch the race?

**BRUTUS:** I am not interested in games. I lack  
That quick spirit that is in Antony.  
But don't let me stop you, Cassius.  
I'll leave, and you can watch.



**CASSIUS:** Brutus, I have noticed that  
You seem to be avoiding me lately.

**BRUTUS:** No, Cassius. It's just that I've been  
Concerned with some personal matters.  
But do not let my good friends—of which,  
Cassius, you are one—worry too much  
about me.

My neglect of friends is only because  
Poor Brutus is at war with himself.

**CASSIUS:** Then I have been mistaken.  
I have kept my thoughts to myself.  
Tell me, good Brutus, can you see your face?

**BRUTUS:** No, for the eye does not see itself  
Except by reflection in other things.

**CASSIUS:** It is very sad, Brutus,  
That you have no mirrors to reveal  
Your hidden worth to your own eyes.  
I have heard many respected Romans,  
Except immortal Caesar, praising you.  
Groaning under these troubled times, they  
Wish that noble Brutus had Caesar's eyes.

**BRUTUS:** Into what dangers would you lead me,  
Cassius? Would you have me  
Seek in myself that which is not there?

**CASSIUS:** Good Brutus,  
Since you know you cannot see yourself  
Except by reflection, let me be your mirror.  
I will show you things about yourself  
That you do not yet know.

*(Trumpets and shouting from offstage.)*

**BRUTUS:** What does this shouting mean?  
I do fear the people are calling out for  
Caesar to be their king.

**CASSIUS** *(slyly)*: Oh, do you fear it?  
Then I must think you would not have it so.

**BRUTUS:** I would not—yet I love him well.  
But why do you hold me here so long?  
What is it that you want to say to me?  
If it is not toward the general good,  
Set honor in one eye and death in the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently.

For let the gods be my witness that I love  
The name of honor more than I fear death.

**CASSIUS:** I know that virtue to be in you,  
as well as I know your face.  
Well, honor is the subject of my story.  
I cannot tell what you and other men  
May think of this life—but, for my part,  
I would rather not live than to stand  
In awe of one no better than myself.  
I was born as free as Caesar, and so were you.  
We both have eaten as well, and we can both  
Endure the winter's cold as well as he.  
Once, upon a raw and gusty day,  
Caesar said to me, "Do you dare, Cassius,  
To leap into the angry Tiber along with me  
And swim across?" Upon the word,  
Dressed as I was, I plunged in  
And told him to follow. So indeed he did.  
The wild river roared, and we fought it  
With straining muscles and brave hearts.  
But before we could get across,  
Caesar cried, "Help me, Cassius, or I sink!"  
So I carried the weary Caesar  
From the waves of the Tiber. Now this man  
has become a god—and Cassius is  
A wretched creature who must bow  
If Caesar carelessly nods at him!  
He had a fever when he was in Spain, and  
How he shook when the fit was upon him!