

ACT 1, SCENE 5

Enter GHOST and HAMLET

HAMLET
Where wilt thou lead me? Speak, I'll go no further.

GHOST
Mark me.

HAMLET
I will.

GHOST
My hour is almost come
When I to sulphurous and tormenting flames
Must render up myself.

HAMLET
Alas, poor ghost!

GHOST
Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing
To what I shall unfold.

HAMLET
Speak. I am bound to hear.

GHOST
So art thou to revenge when thou shalt hear.

HAMLET
What?

GHOST
I am thy father's spirit,
Doomed for a certain term to walk the night
And for the day confined to fast in fires,
Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purged away. But that I am forbid
To tell the secrets of my prison house,
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

ACT 1, SCENE 5

The GHOST and HAMLET enter.

HAMLET
Where are you taking me? Speak. I'm not going any farther.

GHOST
Listen to me.

HAMLET
I will.

GHOST
The hour has almost come when I have to return to the horrible flames of purgatory.

HAMLET
Ah, poor ghost!

GHOST
Don't pity me. Just listen carefully to what I have to tell you.

HAMLET
Speak. I'm ready to hear you.

GHOST
You must be ready for revenge, too, when you hear me out.

HAMLET
What?

GHOST
I'm the ghost of your father, doomed for a certain period of time to walk the earth at night, while during the day I'm trapped in the fires of purgatory until I've done penance for my past sins. If I weren't forbidden to tell you the secrets of purgatory, I could tell you stories that would slice through your soul, freeze your blood,

According to Catholic doctrine, purgatory is a place where souls go to be punished for their sins before going to heaven.

SILSA 17

Make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres,
 Thy knotted and combined locks to part
 And each particular hair to stand on end,
 Like quills upon the fearful porpentine.
 But this eternal blazon must not be
 To ears of flesh and blood. List, list, O, list!
 If thou didst ever thy dear father love—

HAMLET

O God!

GHOST

Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder.

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

Murder most foul, as in the best it is.
 But this most foul, strange and unnatural.

HAMLET

Haste me to know 't, that I, with wings as swift
 As meditation or the thoughts of love,
 May sweep to my revenge.

GHOST

I find thee apt,
 And duller shouldst thou be than the fat weed
 That roots itself in ease on Lethæ wharf,
 Wouldst thou not stir in this. Now, Hamlet, hear.
 'Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard,
 A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark
 Is by a forged process of my death
 Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,
 The serpent that did sting thy father's life
 Now wears his crown.

HAMLET

O my prophetic soul! My uncle?

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make your eyes jump out of their sockets, and your hair stand on end like porcupine quills. But mortals like you aren't allowed to hear this description of the afterlife. Listen, listen! If you ever loved your poor dear father—

HAMLET

Oh God!

GHOST

Take revenge for his horrible murder, that crime against nature.

HAMLET

Murder?

GHOST

His most horrible murder. Murder's always horrible, but this one was especially horrible, weird, and unnatural.

HAMLET

Hurry and tell me about it, so I can take revenge right away, faster than a person falls in love.

GHOST

I'm glad you're eager. You'd have to be as lazy as a weed on the shores of Lethæ not to get riled up here. Now listen, Hamlet. Everyone was told that a poisonous snake bit me when I was sleeping in the orchard. But in fact, that's a lie that's fooled everyone in Denmark. You should know, my noble son, the real snake that stung your father is now wearing his crown.

HAMLET

I knew it! My uncle?

GHOST

Ay, that incestuous, that adulterate beast,
 With witchcraft of his wit, with traitorous gifts—
 O wicked wit and gifts, that have the power
 So to seduce!—won to his shameful lust
 The will of my most seeming-virtuous queen.
 O Hamlet, what a falling off was there!
 From me, whose love was of that dignity
 That it went hand in hand even with the vow
 I made to her in marriage, and to decline
 Upon a wretch whose natural gifts were poor
 To those of mine.
 But virtue, as it never will be moved,
 Though lewdness court it in a shape of heaven,
 So lust, though to a radiant angel linked,
 Will sate itself in a celestial bed
 And prey on garbage.
 But soft! Methinks I scent the morning air.
 Brief let me be. Sleeping within my orchard,
 My custom always of the afternoon,
 Upon my secure hour thy uncle stole
 With juice of cursed hebenon in a vial,
 And in the porches of my ears did pour
 The leperous distilment, whose effect
 Holds such an enmity with blood of man
 That swift as quicksilver it courses through
 The natural gates and alleys of the body
 And with a sudden vigor doth posset
 And curd, like eager droppings into milk,
 The thin and wholesome blood. So did it mine.
 And a most instant tetter barked about,
 Most lazar-like, with vile and loathsome crust
 All my smooth body.
 Thus was I, sleeping, by a brother's hand
 Of life, of crown, of queen at once dispatched,
 Cut off even in the blossoms of my sin,

GHOST

Yes, that incestuous, adulterous animal. With his
 clever words and fancy gifts, he seduced my seem-
 ingly virtuous queen, persuading her to give in to his
 lust. They were evil words and gifts to seduce her like
 that! Oh, Hamlet, how far she fell! She went from me,
 who loved her with the dignity and devotion that suits
 a legitimate marriage, to a wretch whose natural gifts
 were poor compared to mine. But just as you can't cor-
 rupt a truly virtuous person no matter how you try, the
 opposite is also true: a lustful person like her can sat-
 isfy herself in a heavenly union and then move on to
 garbage. But hang on, I think I smell the morning air.
 So let me be brief here. Your uncle snuck up to me
 while I was sleeping in the orchard, as I always used to
 do in the afternoon, and poured a vial of hebenon poi-
 son into my ear—that poison that moves like quick-
 silver through the veins and curdles the blood, which
 is just what it did to me. I broke out in a scaly rash that
 covered my smooth body with a revolting crust. And
 that's how my brother robbed me of my life, my
 crown, and my queen all at once. He cut me off in the
 middle of a sinful life.

Unhoused, disappointed, unaneled.
 No reckoning made, but sent to my account
 With all my imperfections on my head.
 Oh, horrible, oh, horrible, most horrible!
 If thou hast nature in thee, bear it not.
 Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
 A couch for luxury and damned incest.
 But howsoever thou pursuest this act,
 Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
 Against thy mother aught. Leave her to heaven
 And to those thorns that in her bosom lodge
 To prick and sting her. Fare thee well at once.
 The glowworm shows the matin to be near,
 And 'gins to pale his uneffectual fire.
 Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me.

Exit

HAMLET

O all you host of heaven! O earth! What else?
 And shall I couple hell? Oh, fie! Hold, hold, my heart,
 And you, my sinews, grow not instant old,
 But bear me stiffly up. Remember thee!
 Ay, thou poor ghost, whiles memory holds a seat
 In this distracted globe. Remember thee!
 Yea, from the table of my memory
 I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
 All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
 That youth and observation copied there,
 And thy commandment all alone shall live
 Within the book and volume of my brain,
 Unmixed with baser matter. Yes, by heaven!
 O most pernicious woman!
 O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!
 My tables!—Meet it is I set it down
 That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain.
 At least I'm sure it may be so in Denmark. *(writes)*
 So, uncle, there you are. Now to my word.

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I had no chance to repent my sins or receive last rites.
 Oh, it's horrible, horrible, so horrible! If you are
 human, don't stand for it. Don't let the Danish king's
 bed be a nest of incest. But however you go about your
 revenge, don't corrupt your mind or do any harm to
 your mother. Leave her to God and her own guilt.
 Now, good-bye. The glowworm's light is beginning to
 fade, so morning is near. Good-bye, good-bye, good-
 bye. Remember me.

The ghost exits.

HAMLET

Ah, all you up in heaven! And earth! What else? Shall
 I include hell as well? Damn it! Keep beating, my
 heart, and muscles, don't grow old yet—keep me
 standing. Remember you! Yes, you poor ghost, as long
 as I have any power of memory in this distracted head.
 Remember you! Yes, I'll wipe my mind clean of all
 trivial facts and memories and preserve only your
 commandment there. Yes, by God! Oh, you evil
 woman! Oh, you villain, villain, you damned, smiling
 villain! Where's my notebook?—It's a good idea for
 me to write down that one can smile and smile, and be
 a villain. At least it's possible in Denmark. *(he writes)*
 So, uncle, there you are. Now it's time to deal with the
 vow I made to my father.

SILSA 17

It is "Adieu, adieu. Remember me."
I have sworn 't.

Enter HORATIO and MARCELLUS

HORATIO

My lord, my lord!

MARCELLUS

Lord Hamlet—

HORATIO

Heaven secure him!

HAMLET

So be it.

HORATIO

Illo, ho, ho, my lord!

HAMLET

Hillo, ho, ho, boy. Come, bird, come.

MARCELLUS

How is 't, my noble lord?

HORATIO

What news, my lord?

HAMLET

Oh, wonderful!

HORATIO

Good my lord, tell it.

HAMLET

No. You'll reveal it.

HORATIO

Not I, my lord, by heaven.

MARCELLUS

Nor I, my lord.

HAMLET

How say you, then? Would heart of man once think it?

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But you'll be secret?

HORATIO, MARCELLUS

Ay, by heaven, my lord.

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He said, "Remember me." I swore I would.

MARCELLUS and HORATIO enter.

HORATIO

Sir, sir!

MARCELLUS

Lord Hamlet.—

HORATIO

Please let him be all right!

HAMLET

I'm all right.

HORATIO

Oh-ho-ho, sir!

HAMLET

Oh-ho-ho, kid! Come here.

MARCELLUS

So how did it go, sir?

HORATIO

What happened, sir?

HAMLET

It was incredible!

HORATIO

Oh, please, tell us, sir.

HAMLET

No, you'll talk.

HORATIO

I swear I won't, sir.

MARCELLUS

I won't either, sir.

HAMLET

Okay. But you promise you can keep a secret?

HORATIO, MARCELLUS

Yes, I swear.

SILSA 17

HAMLET

There's ne'er a villain dwelling in all Denmark
But he's an arrant knave.

HORATIO

There needs no ghost, my lord, come from the grave
To tell us this.

HAMLET

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Why, right, you are in the right.
And so, without more circumstance at all,
I hold it fit that we shake hands and part.
You, as your business and desire shall point you—
For every man has business and desire,
Such as it is—and for my own poor part,
Look you, I'll go pray.

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HORATIO

These are but wild and whirling words, my lord.

HAMLET

I'm sorry they offend you, heartily.
Yes faith, heartily.

HORATIO

There's no offense, my lord.

HAMLET

Yes, by Saint Patrick, but there is, Horatio,
And much offense too. Touching this vision here,
It is an honest ghost, that let me tell you.
For your desire to know what is between us,
O'ermaster 't as you may. And now, good friends,
As you are friends, scholars and soldiers,
Give me one poor request.

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HORATIO

What is 't, my lord? We will.

HAMLET

Never make known what you have seen tonight.

HORATIO, MARCELLUS

My lord, we will not.

NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

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HAMLET

Any villain in Denmark is going to be, well, a villain.

HORATIO

You don't need a ghost returning from the grave to tell
you that, sir.

HAMLET

Yes, you're absolutely right. So, without further ado,
the best thing to do now is probably just to shake
hands and go our separate ways. You go and take care
of your business (since everybody has some business
to take care of, whatever it is worth), and I'll go and
pray.

HORATIO

You're talking in such a crazy way, sir.

HAMLET

I'm sorry if I offended you; yes, very sorry.

HORATIO

Oh, don't worry about it, sir. No offense taken.

HAMLET

Ah, but there is, Horatio, there's a lot of offense. As
for this ghost we just saw, he's a real one, I can tell you
that much. But regarding what happened between us,
don't ask—I can't tell you. And now, my friends, my
courageous and educated friends, do me one small
favor.

HORATIO

What is it, sir? Of course we will.

HAMLET

Don't ever tell anyone what you've seen tonight.

HORATIO, MARCELLUS

We won't, sir.

HAMLET

Nay, but swear 't.

HORATIO

In faith, my lord, not I.

MARCELLUS

Nor I, my lord, in faith.

HAMLET

Upon my sword.

MARCELLUS

We have sworn, my lord, already.

HAMLET

150 Indeed, upon my sword, indeed.

GHOST

(cries under the stage) Swear!

HAMLET

Ha, ha, boy! Sayst thou so? Art thou there, truepenny?

Come on, you hear this fellow in the cellarage.

Consent to swear.

HORATIO

155 Propose the oath, my lord.

HAMLET

Never to speak of this that you have seen.

Swear by my sword.

GHOST

(beneath) Swear.

HAMLET

Hic et ubique? Then we'll shift our ground.

Come hither, gentlemen,

And lay your hands again upon my sword.

Swear by my sword

Never to speak of this that you have heard.

GHOST

(beneath) Swear by his sword.

HAMLET

Well said, old mole! Canst work i' th' earth so fast?

165 A worthy pioneer! Once more remove, good friends.

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HAMLET

No, you have to swear it.

HORATIO

I swear to God I won't.

MARCELLUS

Me too, I won't, I swear to God.

HAMLET

Swear by my sword.

MARCELLUS

But we already swore, sir.

HAMLET

Yes, but swear by my sword this time.

GHOST

(calls out from under the stage) Swear!

HAMLET

Ha ha, is that what you say, kid? Are you down there, my man?—Come on, you hear this guy down in the basement. Agree to swear.

HORATIO

Tell us what to swear, sir.

HAMLET

You swear never to mention what you've seen. Swear by my sword.

GHOST

(from under the stage) Swear.

HAMLET

You're everywhere, aren't you? Maybe we should move. Come over here, gentlemen, and put your hands on my sword again. Swear by my sword you'll never mention what you've heard.

GHOST

(from under the stage) Swear by his sword.

HAMLET

You said it right, old mole. You're pretty busy down there in the dirt, aren't you? What a tunneler! Let's move again, my friends.

HORATIO

O day and night, but this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET

And therefore as a stranger give it welcome.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy. But come,

170 Here, as before, never, so help you mercy,

How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself

(As I perchance hereafter shall think meet

To put an antic disposition on),

That you, at such times seeing me, never shall—

With arms encumbered thus, or this headache,

Or by pronouncing of some doubtful phrase,

As "Well, well, we know," or "We could an if we would,"

Or "If we list to speak," or "There be an if they might,"

Or such ambiguous giving out—to note

180 That you know aught of me. This not to do,

So grace and mercy at your most need help you,

Swear.

GHOST

(*beneath*) Swear!

HAMLET

Rest, rest, perturbed spirit!—So, gentlemen,

With all my love I do commend me to you,

And what so poor a man as Hamlet is

May do, to express his love and friendship to you,

God willing, shall not lack. Let us go in together,

And still your fingers on your lips, I pray.

The time is out of joint. O cursed spite,

That ever I was born to set it right!

190 Nay, come, let's go together.

Exeunt

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NO FEAR SHAKESPEARE

HORATIO

My God, this is unbelievably strange.

HAMLET

Then give it a nice welcome, as you would give to any

stranger. There are more things in heaven and earth,

Horatio, than you've even dreamed of. But now listen

to me. No matter how strangely I act (since I may find

it appropriate to act a little crazy in the near future),

you must never, ever let on—with a gesture of your

hands or a certain expression on your face—that you

know anything about what happened to me here

tonight. You must never say anything like, "Ah, yes,

just as we suspected," or "We could tell you a thing or

two about him," or anything like that. Swear you

won't.

GHOST

(*from under the stage*) Swear.

HAMLET

Okay, then, unhappy ghost, you can rest now. So,

gentlemen, I thank you heartily and with all my love,

and I'll repay you however I can some day. Let's go

back to court together, but *shh*, please. No talking

about this. There is so much out of whack in these

times. And damn the fact that I'm supposed to fix it!

Come on, let's go.

They exit.