

SCENE IV. The platform.

Enter 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.

HAMLET

No, it is struck.

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 ordnance shot off, within

What does this mean, my lord?

HAMLET

The king doth wake to-night and takes his rouse,
Keeps wassail, and the swaggering up-spring reels;
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:
But to my mind, though I am native here
And to the manner born, it is a custom
More honour'd in the breach than the observance.
This heavy-headed revel east and west
Makes us traduced and tax'd of other nations:
They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase
Soil our addition; and indeed it takes
From our achievements, though perform'd at height,
The pith and marrow of our attribute.

HORATIO

Look, my lord, it comes!

Enter Ghost

HAMLET

Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
 Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
 Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
 Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
 Thou comest in such a questionable shape
 That I will speak to thee: I'll call thee Hamlet,
 King, father, royal Dane: O, answer me!

Ghost beckons HAMLET

HORATIO

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

MARCELLUS

Look, with what courteous action
 It waves you to a more removed ground:
 But do not go with it.

HORATIO

No, by no means.

HAMLET

It will not speak; then I will follow it.

HORATIO

Do not, my lord.

HAMLET

My fate cries out,
 And makes each petty artery in this body
 As hardy as the Nemean lion's nerve.
 Still am I call'd. Unhand me, gentlemen.
 By heaven, I'll make a ghost of him that lets me!
 I say, away! Go on; I'll follow thee.

Exeunt Ghost and HAMLET

HORATIO

He waxes desperate with imagination.

MARCELLUS

Let's follow; 'tis not fit thus to obey him.

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