

# 1 Hamlet



Hamlet was the only son of the King of Denmark. He loved his father and mother dearly—and was happy in the love of a sweet lady named Ophelia. Her father, Polonius, was the King’s Chamberlain.

While Hamlet was away studying at Wittenberg, his father died. Young Hamlet hastened home in great grief to hear that a serpent<sup>1</sup> had stung the King, and that he was dead. The young Prince had loved his father so tenderly that you may judge what he felt when he found that the Queen, before yet the King had been laid in the ground a month, had determined to marry again—and to marry the dead King’s brother.

Hamlet refused to put off mourning<sup>2</sup> for the wedding.

“It is not only the black I wear on my body,” he said, “that proves my loss. I wear mourning in my heart for my dead father. His son at least remembers him, and grieves<sup>3</sup> still.”

Then said Claudius the King’s brother, “This grief is unreasonable. Of course you must sorrow at the loss of your father, but . . .”

“Ah,” said Hamlet, bitterly, “I cannot in one little month forget those I love.”

1 serpent [ˈsɜːr.pənt] (n.) a snake, especially a large one 大蛇

2 mourning [ˈmɔːr.nɪŋ] (n.) the period during which somebody’s death is mourned 服喪

3 grieve [ɡriːv] (v.) to feel or express great sadness 悲傷

002) With that the Queen and Claudius left him, to make merry over their wedding, forgetting the poor good King who had been so kind to them both.

And Hamlet, left alone, began to wonder and to question as to what he ought to do. For he could not believe the story about the snake-bite. It seemed to him all too plain that the wicked Claudius had killed the King, so as to get the crown and marry the Queen. Yet he had no proof, and could not accuse Claudius. And while he was thus thinking came Horatio, a fellow student of his, from Wittenberg.

“What brought you here?” asked Hamlet, when he had greeted his friend kindly.



Hamlet, Prince of Denmark



“I came, my lord, to see your father’s funeral<sup>4</sup>.”

“I think it was to see my mother’s wedding,” said Hamlet, bitterly. “My father! We shall not look upon his like again.”

“My lord,” answered Horatio, “I think I saw him yesternight<sup>5</sup>.”

Then, while Hamlet listened in surprise, Horatio told how he, with two gentlemen of the guard, had seen the King’s ghost on the battlements<sup>6</sup>.

Hamlet went that night, and true enough, at midnight, the ghost of the King, in the armor he had been wont<sup>7</sup> to wear, appeared on the battlements in the chill<sup>8</sup> moonlight.

Hamlet was a brave youth. Instead of running away from the ghost he spoke to it—and when it beckoned<sup>9</sup> him he followed it to a quiet place, and there the ghost told him that what he had suspected was true.

4 funeral [ˈfjuːnərəl] (n.) a ceremony for burying or burning the body of a dead person 喪禮

5 yesternight [ˈjestərnait] (ad.) on the last night 〔古〕昨天夜裡

6 battlements [ˈbætlmənts] (n.) (pl.) a low wall around the top of a castle, that has spaces to shoot guns or arrows through 設有槍砲眼的城垛

7 wont [wɔːnt] (a.) be accustomed 習慣於

8 chill [tʃɪl] (a.) unpleasantly cold 寒冷的

9 beckon [ˈbɛkən] (v.) to move your hand or head in a way that tells someone to come nearer 招手示意