Scene 5

Enter Ghost and Hamlet

Hamlet
Whither 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 sulph'rous 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,

Hamlet
And for the day confin'd to fast in fires,

Hamlet
What?

Ghost
I could a tale unfold whose lightest word
Would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end

Porpentine: porcupine.

Eternal blazon: heraldic description of eternity; the Ghost's vagueness adds to the terror of his situation.

List: listen; the incantatory repetitions compel attention.

Doom'd for a certain term to walk the night,

Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature
Are burnt and purg'd 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,
Make thy two eyes like stars start from their spheres,
Thy knotted and combined locks to part,
And each particular hair to stand an end
Like quills upon the fretful 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—