

Act 1 Scene 1

A Prologue of evil: the three witches arrange to meet Macbeth when the fighting is over.

- 3 *hurly-burly*: turmoil, tumult.
- 4 *When . . . won*: Winning and losing will become a major theme in the play.
- 7 *heath*: moorland, wilderness.
- 9 *Graymalkin*: grey cat; the Witch answers her attendant spirit ('familiar').
- 10 *Paddock*: toad.
- 11 *anon*: I'm coming.
- 12 *Fair . . . fair*: This paradox (= contradiction in terms) will recur throughout the play.
- 13 *Exeunt*: Directors of the play have found many different ways for the witches to leave the stage—either on foot through a stage door or a trapdoor, or by some kind of flying. See 1, 5, 4–5.

SCENE 1

The battlefield: thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

First Witch

When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurly-burly's done,
When the battle's lost, and won.

Third Witch

5 That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin.

Second Witch

10 Paddock calls.

Third Witch

Anon.

All

Fair is foul, and foul is fair,
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

[*Exeunt*]

Act 1 Scene 2

King Duncan hears good news of the battle: Banquo and Macbeth have fought valiantly against his enemies, and the king rewards Macbeth with a new title.

Os.d. *Alarum*: A trumpet call to arms; this is enough to identify the scene's location.
within: offstage.

2 *as . . . plight*: his condition suggests.

3 *newest*: latest.
sergeant: This was a higher rank than it is today.

5 *'Gainst my captivity*: so that I was not captured.

6 *broil*: conflict.

8 *spent*: exhausted.

9 *choke their art*: defeat their own efforts.

10 *Worthy . . . rebel*: only fit to be a traitor.
for to that: because.

11 *villainies of nature*: evils within creation.

12-13 *from . . . supplied*: had reinforcements of foot-soldiers ('kerns') and fighting-men with battle-axes ('galloglasses') from Ireland and the Hebrides ('the Western Isles').

14 *damned*: damnèd.

15 *a rebel's whore*: a treacherous prostitute.

18 *smok'd*: steamed.

19 *minion*: favourite.

21 *ne'er shook hands*: never parted from him.

22 *unseam'd . . . chaps*: ripped him open from navel to jaws.

25-8 *As . . . swells*: just as stormy weather can come from the east, so further trouble arose from a source which should have brought help.

25 *'gins his reflection*: begins shining.

SCENE 2

The king's headquarters: alarum within. Enter King Duncan, Malcolm, Donaldbain, Lennox, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Captain

Duncan

What bloody man is that? He can report,
As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
The newest state.

Malcolm

This is the sergeant
Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
5 'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend;
Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
As thou didst leave it.

Captain

Doubtful it stood,
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonald—
10 Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
The multiplying villainies of nature
Do swarm upon him—from the Western Isles
Of kerns and galloglasses is supplied,
And Fortune on his damned quarrel smiling,
15 Show'd like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak,
For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
Disdaining Fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
Which smok'd with bloody execution,
Like Valour's minion carv'd out his passage
20 Till he fac'd the slave,
Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseam'd him from the navel to th'chaps
And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

Duncan

O valiant cousin, worthy gentleman.

Captain

25 As whence the sun 'gins his reflection,
Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders,
So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come,
Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark,

30 *Compell'd . . . heels*: forced these panic-stricken ruffians to run away.
 31 *the Norwegian lord*: i.e. Sweno, King of Norway (who invaded Scotland in 1041).
surveying vantage: seizing his advantage.
 32 *furberish'd arms*: reinforced armaments.

36 *sooth*: truth.
 37 *double cracks*: twice as much ammunition as usual.
 39 *Except*: unless.
reeking: steaming with blood.
 40 *memorize . . . Golgotha*: make this scene of bloodshed as memorable as the scene of Christ's crucifixion.

44 *smack*: taste.

45 *Thane*: the head of the clan (= Scottish family or tribe).

46 *What . . . eyes*: his eyes look as though he is in a hurry.

49 *flout*: mock; the Norwegian flags had no right to be in Fife.

51 *Norway himself*: the king of Norway.
 54 *Bellona's bridegroom*: Macbeth, looking like the husband of the Roman goddess of war.
lapp'd in proof: clad in strong armour.

No sooner justice had, with valour arm'd,
 30 Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
 But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,
 With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men
 Began a fresh assault.

Duncan

Dismay'd not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

Captain

35 Yes, as sparrows, eagles, or the hare, the lion.
 If I say sooth, I must report they were
 As cannons over-charg'd with double cracks;
 So they doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe.
 Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds
 40 Or memorize another Golgotha,
 I cannot tell.
 But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

Duncan

So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
 They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons.

[Exit Captain, attended

Enter Ross and Angus

45 Who comes here?

Malcolm

The worthy Thane of Ross.

Lennox

What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look
 That seems to speak things strange.

Ross

God save the king.

Duncan

Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

Ross

From Fife, great king,

Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky
 50 And fan our people cold.
 Norway himself, with terrible numbers,
 Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,
 The Thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict,
 Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof,

55 *self-comparisons*: equal terms.

56 *Point*: sword.

57 *lavish*: unrestrained, impetuous.

59 *craves composition*: seeks to make peace.

61 *disbursed*: disbursed; paid.
Saint Colm's Inch: Inchcolm, an island in the Firth of Forth.

62 *dollars*: silver coins (German *thaler*).

64 *bosom interest*: trusting confidence.
present death: immediate death sentence.

65 *former title*: i.e. 'Thane of Cawdor'; see '*Macbeth*: the source', p.101.

67 *lost . . . won*: See 1, 1, 4.

Act 1 Scene 3

The Witches speak strange prophecies to Macbeth and Banquo—and the first prophecy comes true.

2 *Killing swine*: Witches were often accused of harming livestock.

4 *quoth*: said.

5 *Aroint*: get away with you.

rump-fed runnion: fat-bottomed old woman; the abusive expression (Shakespeare's own coinage) has no specific meaning.

6 *Aleppo*: A trading city in northern Syria.

master: captain.

Tiger: A common name for a ship.

7 *sieve . . . sail*: This was thought to be common practice for witches.

9 *do*: work on him; the witch probably intends some kind of fornication.

55 Confronted him with self-comparisons,
Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,
Curbing his lavish spirit. And to conclude,
The victory fell on us—

Duncan

Great happiness!—

Ross

That now Sweno,

The Norways' king, craves composition.

60 Nor would we deign him burial of his men
Till he disbursed at Saint Colm's Inch
Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

Duncan

No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive
Our bosom interest. Go pronounce his present death

65 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

Ross

I'll see it done.

Duncan

What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won. [*Exeunt*]

SCENE 3

The heath: thunder. Enter the three Witches

First Witch

Where hast thou been, sister?

Second Witch

Killing swine.

Third Witch

Sister, where thou?

First Witch

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap
And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd. 'Give me',
quoth I.

5 'Aroint thee, witch', the rump-fed runnion cries.
Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o'th'Tiger:
But in a sieve I'll thither sail,
And like a rat without a tail,
I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

10 *give . . . wind*: Witches were believed to have power to control the winds.

13 *the other*: i.e. the other winds.

14 *the very . . . blow*: even the ports where these winds blow (so that the ships cannot take refuge).

15 *quarters*: directions.

16 *card*: compass, chart.

17 *drain him*: exhaust him (probably with enforced sexual intercourse).

19 *penthouse lid*: eyelid (overhanging his eye).

20 *forbid*: cursed.

21 *sennights*: weeks.

22 *peak, and pine*: waste away.

23 *bark*: ship.

cannot be lost: The witches could injure human beings, but not kill them.

30 *weird*: supernatural, mystic.

31 *Posters*: high-speed travellers.

33 *to thine*: in your direction.

35 *wound up*: complete.

Second Witch

10 I'll give thee a wind.

First Witch

Thou'rt kind.

Third Witch

And I another.

First Witch

I myself have all the other,

And the very ports they blow,

15 All the quarters that they know

I'th'shipman's card.

I'll drain him dry as hay:

Sleep shall neither night nor day

Hang upon his penthouse lid;

20 He shall live a man forbid.

Weary sennights nine times nine,

Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine.

Though his bark cannot be lost,

Yet it shall be tempest-toss'd.

25 Look what I have.

Second Witch

Show me, show me.

First Witch

Here I have a pilot's thumb,

Wreck'd as homeward he did come.

Drum within

Third Witch

A drum, a drum;

Macbeth doth come.

All

30 The weird sisters, hand in hand,

Posters of the sea and land,

Thus do go, about, about,

Thrice to thine, and thrice to mine,

And thrice again, to make up nine.

35 Peace, the charm's wound up.

Enter Macbeth and Banquo

Macbeth

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Banquo

How far is't called to Forres? What are these,

So wither'd and so wild in their attire,

That look not like th'inhabitants o'th'earth,

40 And yet are on't?—Live you, or are you aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,

By each at once her choppy finger laying

Upon her skinny lips; you should be women,

And yet your beards forbid me to interpret

45 That you are so.

Macbeth

Speak if you can: what are you?

First Witch

All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.

Second Witch

All hail Macbeth, hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.

Third Witch

All hail Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter.

Banquo

Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear

50 Things that do sound so fair?—I'th'name of truth

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed

Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner

You greet with present grace and great prediction

Of noble having and of royal hope

55 That he seems rapt withal. To me you speak not.

If you can look into the seeds of time

And say which grain will grow and which will not,

Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear

Your favours nor your hate.

First Witch

60 Hail.

Second Witch

Hail.

36 *foul and fair*: i.e. the weather has been foul but their fighting has been successful.

37–67 See '*Macbeth*: the source', p.101.

37 *How . . . Forres*: how far do you reckon we are from Forres.

42 *choppy*: chapped.

46 *Glamis*: This word is usually pronounced as a single syllable, 'Glahms'.

47 *Thane of Cawdor*: The audience knows already that Macbeth has been given this title (see 1, 2, 65).

49 *start*: flinch, recoil.

51 *fantastical*: imaginary.

52–5 *My . . . withal*: you greet my noble friend with the title he already has and with such prophecy of further ennoblement and even royal status that he seems amazed with it all.

56 *seeds of time*: sources of the future.

Third Witch

Hail.

First Witch

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

Second Witch

Not so happy, yet much happier.

Third Witch

65 Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

So all hail Macbeth and Banquo.

First Witch

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail.

Macbeth

Stay, you imperfect speakers. Tell me more.

By Finel's death, I know I am Thane of Glamis,

70 But how of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives

A prosperous gentleman, and to be king

Stands not within the prospect of belief,

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence, or why

75 Upon this blasted heath you stop our way

With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

Witches *vanish*

Banquo

The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,

And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?

Macbeth

Into the air, and what seem'd corporal,

80 Melted, as breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd.

Banquo

Were such things here as we do speak about?

Or have we eaten on the insane root,

That takes the reason prisoner?

Macbeth

Your children shall be kings.

Banquo

You shall be king.

Macbeth

85 And Thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?

64 *happy*: fortunate.

65 *get*: beget, father.

68 *imperfect*: obscure, ambiguous.

69 *Finel*: Macbeth's father.

70-1 *The Thane . . . gentleman*:
Shakespeare seems to have forgotten
that Macbeth has just been fighting
Cawdor (1, 2, 54-7).

72 *Stands . . . belief*: is unbelievable.

74 *intelligence*: information.

75 *blasted*: blighted, barren.

76 *charge*: command.

79 *corporal*: substantial, having a body.

80 *Would*: I wish.

82 *insane root*: hemlock (which was
thought to cause madness).

Banquo

To th'selfsame tune and words—who's here?

Enter Ross and Angus

Ross

The king hath happily receiv'd, Macbeth,
The news of thy success, and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' sight,
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his. Silenc'd with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o'th'selfsame day,
He finds thee in the stout Norwegian ranks,
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,
Strange images of death. As thick as tale
Came post with post, and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before him.

Angus

We are sent

To give thee from our royal master thanks;
100 Only to herald thee into his sight,
Not pay thee.

Ross

And for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor:
In which addition, hail most worthy thane,
105 For it is thine.

Banquo

What, can the devil speak true?

Macbeth

The Thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me
In borrow'd robes?

Angus

Who was the thane, lives yet,

But under heavy judgement bears that life
Which he deserves to lose.

110 Whether he was combin'd with those of Norway,
Or did line the rebel with hidden help
And vantage, or that with both he labour'd
In his country's wrack, I know not,

88 *reads*: recognizes.

89 *venture*: achievement.

90–1 *His wonders . . . his*: he doesn't
know whether to be silent in wonder or
speak out in your praises.

92 *selfsame*: that very same.

93 *stout*: valiant.

94 *Nothing afeard*: not at all frightened.

95–6 *As thick . . . post*: one messenger
(“post”) followed another, and every
one brought a new tale.

98–101 *We . . . thee*: Ross and Angus
have been sent to bring Macbeth into
the king's presence and to express
Duncan's thanks—which will not be
Macbeth's only reward.

102 *earnest*: foretaste.

104 *addition*: title.

106–7 *dress . . . robes*: Clothes and
images of clothing are very important
throughout the play—and perhaps
Ross invests Macbeth with some
garment symbolic of his new title.

107 *Who*: he who.

111 *line*: reinforce (like the lining of a
garment).

112 *vantage*: advantage (perhaps the
traitor provided a base in Scotland for
the foreign enemy's attack).

113 *wrack*: ruin, overthrow.

- 114 *capital*: deserving capital punishment.
- 116 *The greatest is behind*: the greatest prophecy is the last one, and has yet to come true.
pains: trouble.
- 118 *those . . . me*: those who promised me the title 'Thane of Cawdor'.
- 119 *home*: completely.
- 120 *enkindle . . . crown*: fire you to strive for the crown.
- 122–5 *oftentimes . . . consequence*: often, to bring about our damnation, the agents of evil tell us simple truths to make us trust them, then they can deceive us in important matters.
- 126 *Cousins*: friends.
- 127–8 *prologues . . . theme*: Macbeth anticipates a mighty drama on the theme of kingship.
- 129–36 *This . . . nature*: Macbeth's uncertainty expresses itself in the 'seesaw' rhythms of these disturbing lines.
- 129 *soliciting*: persuasion.
- 135 *seated*: firmly fixed.
- 138–40 *My thought . . . surmise*: the very thought—although it's only a fantasy—shakes my entire being, and I can do nothing without thinking of it; Macbeth's state of mind is expressed as much in the irregular grammar as in the meanings of his words.
- 140–1 *nothing . . . is not*: nothing matters now except what is yet to come.
- 141 *rapt*: entranced; Banquo has already used this word to describe Macbeth (line 55).
- 143 *Without my stir*: Without any effort from me.

- But treasons capital, confess'd and prov'd,
115 Have overthrown him.
Macbeth
[*Aside*] Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor:
The greatest is behind.—Thanks for your pains.—
[*To Banquo*] Do you not hope your children shall be
kings,
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me
Promis'd no less to them?
Banquo
That trusted home,
120 Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the Thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange,
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
125 In deepest consequence.—
Cousins, a word, I pray you.
Macbeth
[*Aside*] Two truths are told,
As happy prologues to the swelling act
Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.—
This supernatural soliciting
130 Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor.
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion,
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
135 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings.
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man that function
140 Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is,
But what is not.
Banquo
Look how our partner's rapt.
Macbeth
If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me
Without my stir.

Banquo

New honours come upon him

Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould,

145 But with the aid of use.

Macbeth

Come what come may,

Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

Banquo

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

Macbeth

Give me your favour. My dull brain was wrought

With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains

150 Are register'd where every day I turn

The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.

[To Banquo] Think upon what hath chanc'd and at

more time,

The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak

Our free hearts each to other.

Banquo

Very gladly.

Macbeth

155 Till then, enough.—Come, friends.

[Exeunt

144-5 *Like . . . use*: like new clothes that don't fit our bodies until we are used to them.

cleave: cling.

146 *Time . . . day*: 'The longest day has an end' (proverbial).

147 *stay . . . leisure*: wait until you're free.

148 *favour*: indulgence.

wrought: agitated, perplexed.

149 *pains*: kindnesses, services.

150-1 *register'd . . . them*: recorded in my memory like a book that I read every day.

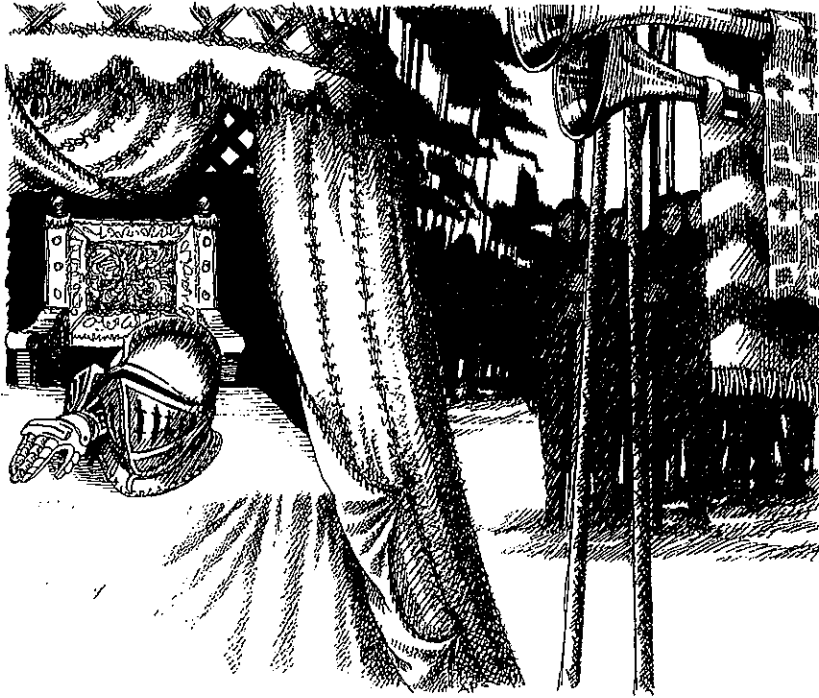
151 *leaf*: page of a book.

152 *chanc'd*: happened.

at more time: when we have more time, later.

153 *The . . . weigh'd it*: having thoroughly considered it in the meantime ('interim').

154 *free hearts*: what we really feel.

**Act 1 Scene 4**

King Duncan receives Macbeth and Banquo with gratitude for their achievements, then announces that his son Malcolm will succeed him on the throne of Scotland.

Os.d. *Flourish*: A fanfare heralding the approach of royalty.

- 1 *done*: carried out.
or not: or are not.
 2 *in commission*: in charge of the execution.
liege: lord.

6 *set forth*: showed, professed.

8 *Became*: graced, befitted.

9 *studied*: practised.

10 *ow'd*: owned.

11 *As 'twere*: as though it were.

SCENE 4

The king's headquarters. Flourish. Enter King Duncan, Lennox, Malcolm, Donaldbain, and Attendants

Duncan

Is execution done on Cawdor, or not
 Those in commission yet return'd?

Malcolm

My liege,
 They are not yet come back. But I have spoke
 With one that saw him die, who did report
 5 That very frankly he confess'd his treasons,
 Implor'd your highness' pardon, and set forth
 A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
 Became him like the leaving it. He died
 As one that had been studied in his death,
 10 To throw away the dearest thing he ow'd
 As 'twere a careless trifle.

- 11-12 *There's . . . face*: there's no way of telling what's in a man's mind just by looking on his face; the truth of this judgement will be demonstrated many times during the play.
 12 *construction*: composition.

Duncan

There's no art
 To find the mind's construction in the face.
 He was a gentleman on whom I built
 An absolute trust.

Enter Macbeth, Banquo, Ross, and Angus

- 16 *before*: in doing deeds of merit.

- 18-20 *Would . . . mine*: I wish you deserved less, so that my rewards might have been in proportion.

- 23 *pays itself*: is its own reward.

- 26-7 *Which . . . honour*: it is no more than our duty to do everything we can to protect your love and honour.

- 30-1 *nor . . . less*: and must also be recognized to have deserved as much.

- 34 *Wanton*: lavish, profuse.

- 36 *nearest*: most closely related.
 39 *Prince of Cumberland*: The title of the Scottish heir apparent (the equivalent of the English 'Prince of Wales'); see 'Macbeth: the source', p.101.

- O worthiest cousin,
 15 The sin of my ingratitude even now
 Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before,
 That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
 To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserv'd,
 That the proportion both of thanks and payment
 20 Might have been mine. Only I have left to say,
 More is thy due than more than all can pay.

Macbeth

- The service and the loyalty I owe,
 In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
 Is to receive our duties, and our duties
 25 Are to your throne and state, children and servants,
 Which do but what they should by doing everything
 Safe toward your love and honour.

Duncan

Welcome hither.

- I have begun to plant thee and will labour
 To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,
 30 That hast no less deserv'd, nor must be known
 No less to have done so, let me enfold thee
 And hold thee to my heart.

Banquo

There if I grow,
 The harvest is your own.

Duncan

- My plenteous joys,
 Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves
 35 In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
 And you whose places are the nearest, know:
 We will establish our estate upon
 Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
 The Prince of Cumberland, which honour must

42 *Inverness*: i.e. to Macbeth's castle.

44 *The . . . you*: everything is labour unless it is done for you.

45 *harbinger*: An officer of the royal household sent ahead to procure accommodation for the king.

52 *wink at the hand*: not see what the hand is doing.

54 *True . . . valiant*: Banquo seems to have been praising Macbeth to Duncan—whilst the audience was listening to Macbeth's thoughts, spoken '*aside*'.

40 Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness like stars shall shine
On all deservers. [*To Macbeth*] From hence to
Inverness
And bind us further to you.

Macbeth

The rest is labour which is not us'd for you;
45 I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach.
So humbly take my leave.

Duncan

My worthy Cawdor.

Macbeth

[*Aside*] The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
50 For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires,
The eye wink at the hand. Yet let that be,
Which the eye fears when it is done to see. [*Exit*]

Duncan

True, worthy Banquo, he is full so valiant,
55 And in his commendations I am fed;
It is a banquet to me. Let's after him,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:
It is a peerless kinsman.

Flourish

[*Exeunt*]

Act 1 Scene 5

Lady Macbeth reads her husband's letter before welcoming him home and preparing to receive the king.

2 *perfectest*: most reliable.

5 *rapt*: entranced: compare *I*, 3, 141.

6 *missives*: messengers.

all-hailed me: greeted me with 'All hail'.

SCENE 5

Inverness: Macbeth's castle. Enter Lady Macbeth alone, with a letter

Lady Macbeth

[*Reads*] 'They met me in the day of success, and I have learned by the perfectest report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into
5 which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the king who all-hailed me

- 7 *weird*: mystic.
- 10 *deliver*: report to.
- 11 *dues of rejoicing*: your share of the rejoicing.
- 16 *milk . . . kindness*: natural compassion characteristic of human beings.
- 17 *catch*: snatch at.
- 19 *illness*: wickedness, cruelty.
attend: accompany.
highly: dearly.
- 20 *holily*: righteously.
- 24 *Hie thee*: hurry.
- 27 *the golden round*: the crown.
- 28 *metaphysical*: supernatural.
- 29 *tidings*: news.
- 32 *have . . . preparation*: have given warning so that we could make preparations.
- 34 *had . . . him*: travelled faster than he did.
- 35 *for breath*: for lack of breath.

Thane of Cawdor, by which title before these weird sisters saluted me and referred me to the coming on of time, with "Hail, king that shalt be." This have I thought good to deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart and farewell.

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be

15 What thou art promis'd; yet do I fear thy nature,
It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
20 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'dst have, great
Glamis,
That which cries, 'Thus thou must do' if thou have it;
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
25 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear
And chastise with the valour of my tongue
All that impedes thee from the golden round,
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
To have thee crown'd withal.

Enter Attendant

What is your tidings?

Attendant

30 The king comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth

Thou'rt mad to say it.

Is not thy master with him? Who, were't so,
Would have inform'd for preparation.

Attendant

So please you, it is true: our thane is coming.

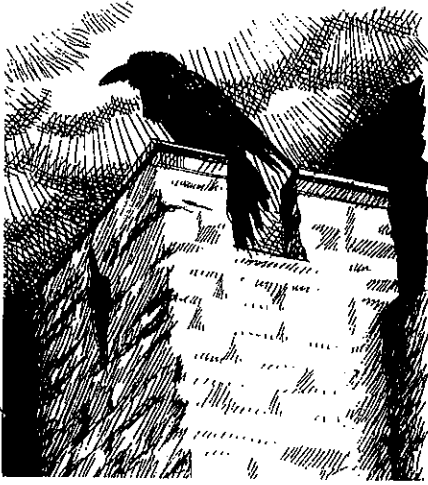
One of my fellows had the speed of him;

35 Who almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
Than would make up his message.

Lady Macbeth

36 *tending*: care, attention.

37 *The raven . . . hoarse*: Lady Macbeth compares the breathless messenger to a bird of ill omen, a carrion-eater always found on battlefields.



- 40 *unsex me*: take away everything that makes me a woman.
 43 *remorse*: pity, compassion.
 44 *compunctious . . . nature*: natural feelings of conscience.
 45 *fell*: fierce.
 46 *Th'effect and it*: the intention and its consequence.
 47 *gall*: bile (a bitter fluid secreted in the liver).
murdering ministers: agents of evil.
 48 *sightless substances*: Although the spirits are real ('substances'), they are invisible.
 49 *wait . . . mischief*: lie in wait for something to go wrong in nature.
thick: dense, darkest.
 50 *pall thee*: shroud yourself.
dunniest: murkiest.
 54 *by . . . hereafter*: by the salutation 'That shalt be king hereafter' (1, 3, 48).
 57 *The future in the instant*: the future greatness in the present moment.
 62 *beguile*: deceive.
 63 *Look like the time*: put on the appropriate appearance (i.e. of a host welcoming his guest).

He brings great news.

Give him tending,

[*Exit Attendant*

The raven himself is hoarse

- That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
 40 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here
 And fill me from the crown to the toe topfull
 Of direst cruelty; make thick my blood,
 Stop up th'access and passage to remorse
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 45 Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between
 Th'effect and it. Come to my woman's breasts
 And take my milk for gall, you murder'ring ministers,
 Wherever in your sightless substances
 You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,
 50 And pall thee in the dunniest smoke of hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry, 'Hold, hold.'

Enter Macbeth

- Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor,
 Greater than both by the all-hail hereafter,
 55 Thy letters have transported me beyond
 This ignorant present, and I feel now
 The future in the instant.

Macbeth

My dearest love,

Duncan comes here tonight.

Lady Macbeth

And when goes hence?

Macbeth

Tomorrow, as he purposes.

Lady Macbeth

O never

- 60 Shall sun that morrow see.
 Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
 May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
 Look like the time, bear welcome in your eye,



- 66 *provided for*: prepared for.
 67 *dispatch*: control, management.
 69 *solely sovereign sway*: absolute regal command.
 70 *clear*: honestly, cheerfully.
 71 *To . . . fear*: fear always shows itself in a change of facial expression.

Act 1 Scene 6

King Duncan and his followers approach the castle and are welcomed by Lady Macbeth.

Os.d. *Hautboys*: reed instruments, ancestors of the modern oboe.
torches: An indication that the scene takes place at night.

- 1 *seat*: setting, situation.
 2 *Nimbly*: freshly.
 4 *martlet*: house-martin, a summer migrant bird that often nests in churches.
approve: witness, give evidence.



- 5 *mansionry*: nest-building.
 6 *jutty*: projecting part of building.
frieze: decorative band underneath cornice.
 7 *coign of vantage*: convenient corner.
 8 *pendent*: hanging.
procreant cradle: nest.

Your hand, your tongue; look like th'innocent flower,
 65 But be the serpent under't. He that's coming
 Must be provided for, and you shall put
 This night's great business into my dispatch,
 Which shall to all our nights and days to come
 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

Macbeth

70 We will speak further—

Lady Macbeth

Only look up clear;

To alter favour ever is to fear.

Leave all the rest to me.

[*Exeunt*]

SCENE 6

Inverness: approaching Macbeth's castle. Hautboys, and torches. Enter King Duncan, Malcolm, Donaldbain, Banquo, Lennox, Macduff, Ross, Angus, and Attendants

Duncan

This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
 Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
 Unto our gentle senses.

Banquo

This guest of summer,

The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
 5 By his lov'd mansionry that the heaven's breath
 Smells wooingly here. No jutty, frieze,
 Buttress, nor coign of vantage but this bird
 Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle;
 Where they most breed and haunt, I have observ'd
 10 The air is delicate.

Enter Lady Macbeth

Duncan

See, see, our honour'd hostess.—The love
That follows us sometime is our trouble,
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
How you shall bid God yield us for your pains
15 And thank us for your trouble.

Lady Macbeth

All our service,
In every point twice done and then done double,
Were poor and single business to contend
Against those honours deep and broad wherewith
Your majesty loads our house. For those of old,
20 And the late dignities heap'd up to them,
We rest your hermits.

Duncan

Where's the Thane of Cawdor?

We cours'd him at the heels and had a purpose
To be his purveyor, but he rides well,
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him
25 To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
We are your guest tonight.

Lady Macbeth

Your servants ever

Have theirs, themselves, and what is theirs in count
To make their audit at your highness' pleasure,
Still to return your own.

Duncan

Give me your hand;

30 Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly
And shall continue our graces towards him.
By your leave, hostess.

{*Exeunt*

11–12 *The love . . . love*: sometimes it's a nuisance to have people offering me kindness, but I am always ('still') grateful for it.

13–14 *Herein . . . trouble*: this is my way of teaching you to ask God to reward me for the trouble you are having to take, and also to thank me for providing the occasion for that trouble.

13 *yield*: reward.

16 *In . . . double*: if every part were done twice, and then twice again; Lady Macbeth continues the language of duplication and multiplication begun by the Captain (1, 2, 37–8), repeated by the weird sisters (1, 3, 33–4), and soon to be reiterated by Macbeth (1, 7, 12).

17 *single*: simple.

contend: compete.

19 *those of old*: those honours bestowed in the past.

20 *late*: recent.

21 *hermits*: persons bound by vow or fee to pray for someone.

22 *cours'd*: chased.

23 *purveyor*: official responsible for provisions and accommodation in the royal household.

24 *holp*: helped.

26–9 *Your . . . own*: your majesty's servants hold everything in trust ('in count') for your majesty; they will give an account ('make their audit') whenever you ask, and will always ('still') return everything back to you.

32 *By your leave*: with your permission (a courteous indication that Duncan is ready to enter the castle).

Act 1 Scene 7

Macbeth leaves the state dinner, suddenly worried by what he is planning to do. But Lady Macbeth stirs up his spirits again.

Os.d. The scene takes place in the passageway between dining hall and kitchen:

Sewer: butler.

divers: various.

service: course of a meal.

over: across, from side to side.

1-2 *If . . . quickly:* if the business of the murder were ended ('done') as soon as the deed is performed ('done'), then it would be a good thing to have it carried out ('done') quickly.

2-4 *if . . . success:* if the assassination could prevent ('trammel up') any further consequences and achieve its success with Duncan's death ('surcease').

4 *that but this blow:* this single blow.

5 *be-all . . . end-all:* all that is needed to end everything.

5-6 *here . . . time:* in this life; Macbeth imagines himself standing in the shallow water ('shoal') of a river-bank.

7 *We'd . . . come:* I would risk the chance of any life after death; Macbeth uses the 'royal plural' when speaking in soliloquy.

jump: hazard, risk; leap over.

8-9 *We . . . instructions:* we are always ('still') punished here because we only ('but') teach others our own crimes—which they commit against us ('the inventor').

10 *even-handed:* impartial.

11 *Commends:* recommends, prescribes.

ingredience: mixture of ingredients.

chalice: ceremonial cup.

12 *in double trust:* a) as a monarch and kinsman; b) as a guest.

16 *Besides:* in addition to that.

17 *borne . . . meek:* exercised his royal powers so modestly.

18 *clear:* faultless, honourable.

18-25 *his virtues . . . wind:* The suggestiveness of these lines is more powerful than their logical sense.

19 *trumpet-tongu'd:* sounding like trumpets.

20 *taking-off:* murder.

21-2 *pity . . . blast:* Macbeth visualizes pity with all the weakness of a human baby yet able to soar over the blasts of the 'trumpet-tongu'd angels'.

SCENE 7

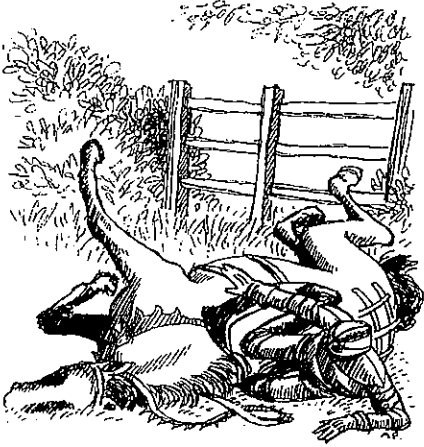
Inside Macbeth's castle. Hautboys. Torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers Servants with dishes and service over the stage. Then enter Macbeth

Macbeth

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
 It were done quickly. If th'assassination
 Could trammel up the consequence and catch
 With his surcease, success, that but this blow
 5 Might be the be-all and the end-all—here,
 But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
 We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases,
 We still have judgement here that we but teach
 Bloody instructions, which being taught, return
 10 To plague th'inventor. This even-handed justice
 Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice
 To our own lips. He's here in double trust:
 First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
 Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
 15 Who should against his murderer shut the door,
 Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
 Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
 So clear in his great office, that his virtues
 Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd against
 20 The deep damnation of his taking-off.
 And pity, like a naked newborn babe
 Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin hors'd
 Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
 Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
 25 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
 To prick the sides of my intent, but only
 Vaulting ambition which o'erleaps itself
 And falls on th'other—



- 22-3 *cherubin . . . air*: angels riding on the invisible winds.
 26 *intent*: intention (to murder Duncan).
 27-8 *Vaulting . . . other*: Macbeth's excessive ambition is like a horse that tries to jump too high and falls on the other side of the fence.



- 29 *supp'd*: finished dining.
 32-4 *I have . . . gloss*: Macbeth wants to enjoy the praises he has earned ('bought') as though they were new clothes (compare 1, 3, 106-7).
 33 *sorts*: social ranks.
 35-6 *Was . . . yourself*: Here 'hope' is both a person, and the garment he wears.
 37 *green and pale*: sickly (as if the 'hope' had a hangover).
 39 *Such*: i.e. as a cowardly drunk with a hangover, scared at what he had planned to do when he was drunk.
afear'd: afraid.
 45 *adage*: Lady Macbeth refers to the proverb ('The cat would eat fish, but will not wet her feet').
Prithee: I pray you.
 46 *become*: be fitting for.
 47 *is none*: is not a man (i.e. he is subhuman or monstrous).
 48 *break*: reveal, mention.
 49 *durst*: dared.
 51-4 *Nor . . . you*: neither time nor place was suitable then, yet you would make them suitable; now they are both right—and the very fact that they are right ('that their fitness') makes you lose your nerve ('unmake you').
 52 *adhere*: agree.

Enter Lady Macbeth

How now? What news?

Lady Macbeth

He has almost supp'd. Why have you left the chamber?

Macbeth

30 Hath he ask'd for me?

Lady Macbeth

Know you not, he has?

Macbeth

We will proceed no further in this business.
 He hath honour'd me of late, and I have bought
 Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
 Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
 35 Not cast aside so soon.

Lady Macbeth

Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
 And wakes it now to look so green and pale
 At what it did so 'freely? From this time,
 Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
 40 To be the same in thine own act and valour,
 As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
 Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
 And live a coward in thine own esteem,
 Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would',
 45 Like the poor cat i'th'adage?

Macbeth

Prithee, peace.

I dare do all that may become a man;
 Who dares do more is none.

Lady Macbeth

What beast was't then

That made you break this enterprise to me?
 When you durst do it, then you were a man.
 50 And to be more than what you were, you would
 Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place
 Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.
 They have made themselves and that their fitness now
 Does unmake you. I have given suck and know

60 *screw . . . sticking-place*: tighten your courage to the limit; the metaphor is from tightening the strings of a lute (or modern guitar) to tune the instrument.



62-3 *Whereto . . . him*: and his long journey today will all the more quickly encourage him to sleep soundly.

63-7 *his . . . only*: I will overpower ('convince') his two attendants with wine and liquor so that their memory, which should guard the brain, shall be an intoxicated haze ('fume'), and the brain itself—the receptacle of reason—shall be of no more use than an alchemist's distilling-flask ('limbeck').



63 *chamberlains*: attendants in the royal bedchamber.

65 *warder*: guard, watchman.

67 *in swinish sleep*: sleeping like pigs.

68 *drenched*: drenchèd; soaked, sozzled.

70 *put*: blame.

71 *spongy*: sponge-like.

72 *quell*: kill, bloodshed.

73 *mettle*: spirit, courage.

74 *receiv'd*: believed.

76 *very*: own.

55 How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

Macbeth

If we should fail?

Lady Macbeth

We fail?

60 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep,
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey
Soundly invite him, his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince

65 That memory, the warder of the brain,
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
A limbeck only. When in swinish sleep,
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon

70 Th'unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spongy officers, who shall bear the 'guilt
Of our great quell?

Macbeth

Bring forth men-children only,

For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males. Will it not be receiv'd,

75 When we have mark'd with blood those sleepy two
Of his own chamber, and us'd their very daggers,
That they have done't?

77-9 *Who . . . death*: who will dare
believe anything else, since we shall
cry out about his death with so much
grief and noise.

79 *settled*: decided.
bend: brace.

80 *corporal agent*: physical faculty.

81 *mock*: deceive.

Lady Macbeth

Who dares receive it other,
As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar
Upon his death?

Macbeth

I am settled and bend up
80 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
Away, and mock the time with fairest show,
False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT 2

Act 2 Scene 1

Banquo and his son Fleance are going to bed when they encounter Macbeth, who is preparing himself for his grim task.

SCENE 1

Macbeth's castle: enter Banquo, and Fleance, with a Torch-bearer before him

Banquo

How goes the night, boy?

Fleance

The moon is down; I have not heard the clock.

Banquo

And she goes down at twelve.

Fleance

I take't, 'tis later, sir.

Banquo

Hold, take my sword.—There's husbandry in heaven,

5 Their candles are all out.—Take thee that too.

A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,

And yet I would not sleep; merciful powers,

Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature

Gives way to in repose.

Enter Macbeth, and a Servant with a torch

Give me my sword—

10 Who's there?

Macbeth

A friend.

Banquo

What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's abed.

He hath been in unusual pleasure

And sent forth great largess to your offices.

15 This diamond he greets your wife withal,

Gives Macbeth a diamond

3 *she*: the moon.

4 *husbandry*: economy, good housekeeping.

5 *candles*: the stars.

that: Banquo, preparing for bed, perhaps gives his cloak to Fleance.

6-7 *A heavy . . . sleep*: I feel as heavy as lead, and my bed is calling to me, but yet I don't want to sleep.

8-9 *Restrain . . . repose*: control the nightmares ('those cursed thoughts') that come when the body is at rest; Banquo is afraid of the thoughts provoked by the witches' prophecies.

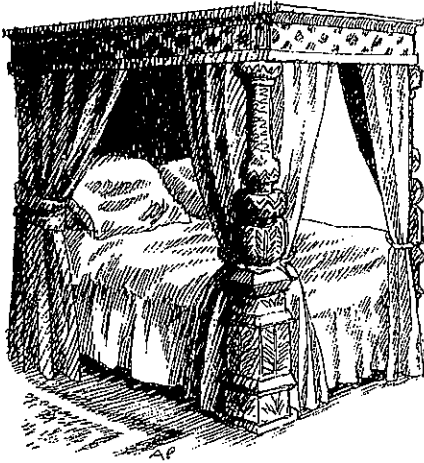
8 *cursed*: cursèd.

9 *Give . . . sword*: Banquo is tense and alert even inside the castle.

14 *largess*: presents.
offices: staff.

15 *withal*: with (a form often used to end a clause or sentence).

16 *shut up*: went to bed, closed up the curtains of his bed.



17–19 *Being . . . wrought*: because we were not prepared, we had to manage with very little ('defect' = deficiency) and could not be as generous ('free') as we wished.
 25 *If . . . 'tis*: if you will follow my advice, when the time comes.
 26–7 *So . . . augment it*: provided that I don't lose honour by trying to increase it.
 28 *bosom franchis'd*: heart free from obligation.
clear: loyal (to the king).

29 *the while*: meanwhile.

36–7 *sensible . . . sight*: able to be felt as well as seen.

39 *heat-oppresed*: heat-oppresed; overheated, disturbed.

By the name of most kind hostess; and shut up
 In measureless content.

Macbeth

Being unprepar'd,
 Our will became the servant to defect,
 Which else should free have wrought.

Banquo

All's well.

20 I dream'd last night of the three weird sisters;
 To you they have show'd some truth.

Macbeth

I think not of them;
 Yet when we can entreat an hour to serve,
 We would spend it in some words upon that business,
 If you would grant the time.

Banquo

At your kind'st leisure.

Macbeth

25 If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,
 It shall make honour for you.

Banquo

So I lose none
 In seeking to augment it, but still keep
 My bosom franchis'd and allegiance clear,
 I shall be counsell'd.

Macbeth

Good repose the while.

Banquo

30 Thanks, sir; the like to you.

[*Exeunt* Banquo, Fleance, and Torch-bearer]

Macbeth

[*To* Servant] Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is
 ready,

She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed. [*Exit* Servant]
 Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee:

35 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppresed brain?

- 40 *yet*: still
palpable: tangible.
- 42 *marshall'st me*: are guiding me, beckon me.
- 44–5 *Mine . . . rest*: either my eyes are deceived, or else they are better than all my other senses.
- 46 *dudgeon*: hilt, handle.
gouts: splashes (from the French *goutte* = drop).
- 48–9 *informs . . . eyes*: takes shape in this way before my eyes.
- 51 *celebrates*: performs the rites ('offerings').
- 52 *Hecate*: goddess of the moon and of witchcraft; the name has only two syllables here.
- 53 *Alarum'd*: aroused, called to action (see 1, 2, Os.d.).
- 54 *Whose . . . watch*: i.e. the wolf's howl tells the time to Murder.
- 55 *Tarquin's . . . strides*: Murder, personified in line 52, is now compared to the Roman tyrant, Tarquin, who came in the night to ravish (= rape) his friend's wife, Lucrece; the story is told in Shakespeare's narrative poem *The Rape of Lucrece*.
design: aim.
- 56 *firm-set*: stable.
- 58 *prate*: blab, tell tales.
- 59 *take . . . time*: break this deadly silence which is so appropriate for the present moment.
- 61 *Words . . . gives*: the cold breath of words only cools down hot deeds.
- 63 *knell*: funeral bell rung to announce a death.

- 40 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o'th'other senses,
45 Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world
50 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
The curtain'd sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
Pale Hecate's off'rings, and wither'd murder,
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
55 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design
Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear
Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,
And take the present horror from the time,
60 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threath, he lives;
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

A bell rings

I go, and it is done. The bell invites me.
Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
That summons thee to heaven or to hell.

[Exit

Act 2 Scene 2

Duncan has been murdered. Macbeth is already regretting his action, and Lady Macbeth takes the daggers away from him.

1-2 *That . . . fire*: Like Duncan's two chamberlains, Lady Macbeth has been drinking.

3 *owl*: The owl (like the raven) was thought to be a bird of ill omen and is now compared to the night watchman who rings his bell outside the cells of prisoners condemned to death.

4 *the . . . night*: the last good-night.
about it: doing the deed.

5 *surfeited grooms*: drunken servants.

6 *possets*: hot milky drinks with added liquor and spices, 'nightcaps'.

7-8 *death . . . die*: death and life are struggling to decide whether the attendants live or die.

9-13 *Alack . . . done't*: Lady Macbeth does not immediately see her husband—perhaps because he enters upstage behind her, or because the scene is in (imaginary) darkness.

10 *th'attempt*: the attempt to kill Duncan.

11 *confounds*: ruins.

15 *crickets*: The Elizabethans believed that the chirping of these insects was a herald of death.

SCENE 2

Macbeth's castle; enter Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth

That which hath made them drunk, hath made me bold;

What hath quench'd them, hath given me fire.

An owl shrieks

Hark, peace!

It was the owl that shriek'd, the fatal bellman
Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.

5 The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms
Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugg'd their
possets,

That death and nature do contend about them,
Whether they live, or die.

Enter Macbeth with two bloody daggers

Macbeth

Who's there? What ho?

Lady Macbeth

Alack, I am afraid they have awak'd,
10 And 'tis not done; th'attempt and not the deed
Confounds us. Hark! I laid their daggers ready,
He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't. My husband?

Macbeth

I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?

Lady Macbeth

15 I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Did not you speak?

Macbeth

When?

Lady Macbeth

Now.

Macbeth
As I descended?
Lady Macbeth

20 Ay.

Macbeth
Hark, who lies i'th'second chamber?

Lady Macbeth
Donaldbain.

Macbeth
This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth
A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth
25 There's one did laugh in's sleep, and one cried
'Murder!'

That they did wake each other; I stood, and heard
them,

But they did say their prayers and address'd them
Again to sleep.

Lady Macbeth

There are two lodg'd together.

Macbeth

One cried 'God bless us!' and 'Amen' the other,

30 As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.

List'ning their fear, I could not say 'Amen'

When they did say 'God bless us.'

Lady Macbeth

Consider it not so deeply.

Macbeth

But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?

35 I had most need of blessing and 'Amen'

Stuck in my throat.

Lady Macbeth

These deeds must not be thought

After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

Macbeth

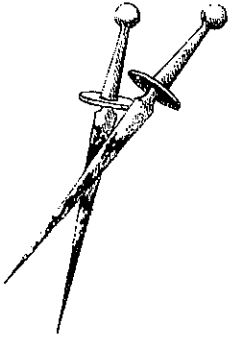
Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more:

Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,

40 Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,

The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,

23 *a sorry sight*: a miserable sight; Macbeth is probably looking at his hands, which are holding the daggers.



27 *address'd them*: prepared themselves.

28 *lodg'd together*: sharing one bed (a common Elizabethan practice).

30 *As*: as if.

hangman's hands: The hangman's duties included disemboweling the body of the hanged man.

36 *thought*: considered.

38 *Methought*: it seemed to me.

40 *ravell'd*: frayed; twisted.

sleeve: part of garment; filament of silk (*sleave*).

42 *second course*: main dish (following the 'starter').

48 *unbend*: slacken, weaken; the word continues the metaphor started in 1, 7, 60 and 79.

50 *witness*: evidence.

58 *a painted devil*: the picture of a devil.

59–60 *gild . . . guilt*: Lady Macbeth makes a cruel pun.

60s.d. *Knock within*: The offstage knocking is the first sign that the outside world is reacting (without yet knowing it) to the crime that has been committed.

61 *appals*: terrifies, dismays.

62 *they . . . eyes*: Macbeth's eyes seem to be falling out of his head at the sight of his bloody hands.

65 *multitudinous seas*: numerous oceans, all the world's many seas.
incarnadine: stain red. See 'About the Play', p.v.

Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

Lady Macbeth

What do you mean?

Macbeth

Still it cried, 'Sleep no more' to all the house;
45 'Glamis hath murder'd sleep', and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more: Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Lady Macbeth

Who was it, that thus cried? Why, worthy thane,
You do unbend your noble strength to think
So brain-sickly of things. Go get some water
50 And wash this filthy witness from your hand.
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there. Go carry them and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

Macbeth

I'll go no more.

I am afraid to think what I have done;
55 Look on't again, I dare not.

Lady Macbeth

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
60 For it must seem their guilt. [Exit

Knock within

Macbeth

Whence is that knocking?

How is't with me, when every noise appals me?
What hands are here? Ha: they pluck out mine eyes.
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand? No: this my hand will rather
65 The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Enter Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth

My hands are of your colour, but I shame
To wear a heart so white.

67 *I shame*: I would be ashamed.

68 *white*: bloodless.

Knock within

I hear a knocking

At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber;

70 A little water clears us of this deed.

How easy is it then! Your constancy

Hath left you unattended.

71-2 *your . . . unattended*: your strength of purpose has deserted you, you've lost your nerve.

Knock within

Hark, more knocking.

Get on your night-gown, lest occasion call us

And show us to be watchers. Be not lost

75 So poorly in your thoughts.

73 *night-gown*: dressing-gown.

lest . . . us: in case there is need to call for us.

74 *to be watchers*: to be awake.

Macbeth

To know my deed, 'twere best not know my self.

76 *To know . . . myself*: to recognize what I have done it would be better if I forgot who I am; as a murderer, Macbeth will have a new identity.

Knock within

Wake Duncan with thy knocking: I would thou
couldst.

[*Exeunt*]

'I pray you, remember the porter.'
(2, 3, 18–19) Adrian Schiller as the Porter,
Royal Shakespeare Company, 1996.



Act 2 Scene 3

All is discovered. The Porter is roused from his drunken sleep by Macduff and Lennox, who try to wake the king and find he has been murdered. Macbeth panics, and kills Duncan's attendants—and Duncan's sons, afraid for their own safety, slip away secretly.

1–2 *hell-gate*: the entrance to hell.

2 *old*: plenty of.

4 *Beelzebub*: A popular (biblical) name for the devil.

4–19 *Here's . . . porter*: The Porter (a part played by the company's chief comic actor) introduces a selection of imaginary characters as they come through 'hell-gate'.

5 *plenty*: a good harvest (which would bring down the price of corn).

8 *Faith*: by my faith (a mild oath).

8–11 *an equivocator . . . heaven*: The Porter seems to be referring to the Jesuit Father Garnet, who tried to save his life with his specious arguments but who was executed in 1606 for complicity in the Gunpowder Plot: see 'Source, Date, and Text', p.xxix.

9 *scales*: weighing-scales, scales of justice.

10 *for God's sake*: A common oath, but perhaps specifically referring to the Jesuit priest's equivocal oaths.

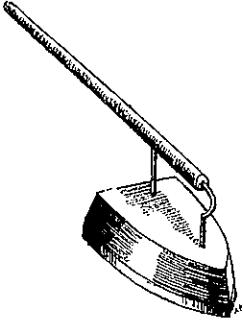
SCENE 3

Macbeth's castle: enter a Porter. Knocking within

Porter

Here's a knocking indeed: if a man were porter of hell-gate, he should have old turning the key. [*Knock*] Knock, knock, knock. Who's there i'th' name of Beelzebub? Here's a farmer that hanged himself on th' expectation of plenty. Come in time—have napkins enough about you, here you'll sweat for't. [*Knock*] Knock, knock. Who's there in th' other devil's name? Faith, here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against either scale, who committed treason 5 enough for God's sake, yet could not equivocate to 10

- 12-13 *English tailor . . . French hose:*
English fashions often imitated the French, and the tailor might have been over-economical with fabric.
- 14 *roast your goose:* heat up your iron ('goose' = tailor's long-handled iron).



- 17 *primrose:* easy, attractive.
- 18 *Anon:* immediately, I'm coming.
- 19 *remember:* i.e. with a tip for opening the gate.
- 22 *carousing:* celebrating, drinking.
till . . . cock: until the cock crowed for a second time (i.e. about 3 a.m.).
- 23 *a great . . . things:* The Porter, hoping for another tip, tries to engage the callers in a riddle.
- 24 *What . . . provoke:* Macduff picks up the cue and plays straight man to the Porter.
- 25 *Marry:* an abbreviated form of the mild oath 'By the Virgin Mary'.
nose-painting: making the nose red.
equivocator: double-dealer.
- 28-9 *makes . . . mars him:* rouses him to sexual activity, then makes him impotent.
- 31-2 *equivocates . . . sleep:* fulfils his desire only in a dream.
- 32 *giving . . . lie:* cheating him; throwing him down (as in wrestling); making him lose his erection; forcing him to urinate.
- 34 *i'the very throat:* utterly.
requited him: paid him back.
- 36 *took up my legs:* made me fall down.
shift: stratagem.
- 37 *cast him:* throw him to the ground, vomit him up.

- heaven. O, come in, equivocator. [*Knock*] Knock, knock, knock. Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor, here you may roast your goose. [*Knock*] Knock, knock.
- 15 Never at quiet: what are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further: I had thought to have let in some of all professions that go the primrose way to th'everlasting bonfire. [*Knock*] Anon, anon. I pray you, remember the porter. [*Opens door*]

Enter Macduff and Lennox

Macduff

- 20 Was it so late, friend, ere you went to bed,
That you do lie so late?

Porter

Faith, sir, we were carousing till the second cock, and drink, sir, is a great provoker of three things.

Macduff

What three things does drink especially provoke?

Porter

- 25 Marry, sir, nose-painting, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it provokes, and unprovokes: it provokes the desire, but it takes away the performance. Therefore much drink may be said to be an equivocator with lechery: it makes him, and it mars him; it sets him on, and it takes him
30 off; it persuades him and disheartens him, makes him stand to and not stand to. In conclusion, equivocates him in a sleep, and giving him the lie, leaves him.

Macduff

I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

Porter

- That it did, sir, i'the very throat on me, but I requited
35 him for his lie, and, I think, being too strong for him, though he took up my legs sometime, yet I made a shift to cast him.

37s.d. *Enter Macbeth*: The Porter's comedy has given the actor time to wash his hands and change costume.

38 *stirring*: awake.

42 *timely*: early.

43 *slipp'd the hour*: missed the time.

46 *limited*: appointed.

52 *prophesying*: people have been prophesying.

53-4 *dire . . . time*: terrible confusion and strange new happenings that have come out of this dreadful time; Lennox refers to the war with Norway—but his words have a more immediate application.

54 *The obscure bird*: the owl, which is usually seen and heard only at night.

55 *the livelong night*: throughout the whole long night.

Enter Macbeth

Macduff

Is thy master stirring?
Our knocking has awak'd him: here he comes.

[*Exit Porter*]

Lennox

40 Good morrow, noble sir.

Macbeth

Good morrow, both.

Macduff

Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

Macbeth

Not yet.

Macduff

He did command me to call timely on him;
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

Macbeth

I'll bring you to him.

Macduff

I know this is a joyful trouble to you, but yet 'tis one.

Macbeth

45 The labour we delight in physics pain. This is the door.

Macduff

I'll make so bold to call, for 'tis my limited service.

[*Exit*]

Lennox

Goes the king hence today?

Macbeth

He does—he did appoint so.

Lennox

The night has been unruly: where we lay,

50 Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th'air, strange screams of death

And prophesying with accents terrible

Of dire combustion and confus'd events,

New hatch'd to th'woeful time. The obscure bird

55 Clamour'd the livelong night. Some say, the earth

Was feverous and did shake.

Macbeth

'Twas a rough night.

57-8 *My . . . to it:* I can't remember a night like this in all my young life.

Lennox
My young remembrance cannot parallel
A fellow to it.

Enter Macduff

Macduff
O horror, horror, horror,
60 Tongue nor heart cannot conceive, nor name thee.

Macbeth and Lennox
What's the matter?

62 *Confusion:* chaos.
63 *sacrilegious:* unholy.
ope: open.
64 *The . . . temple:* The king's body (which had been anointed with holy oil at his coronation, to signify that he was God's deputy on earth).

Macduff
Confusion now hath made his masterpiece:
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke ope
The Lord's anointed temple and stole thence
65 The life o'th'building.

Macbeth
What is't you say, the life?

Lennox
Mean you his majesty?

69 *a new Gorgon:* In Greek mythology the Gorgon Medusa, a monster with snakes for hair, turned every man to stone who looked on her; the sight of Duncan's murdered body will have the same effect.

Macduff
Approach the chamber and destroy your sight
With a new Gorgon. Do not bid me speak:
70 See and then speak yourselves.

*[Exeunt Macbeth and Lennox
Awake, awake!*

73-4 *Shake . . . itself:* Macduff calls everybody to wake from sleep, which is only an imitation ('counterfeit') of death, to look on the real thing.

73 *downy:* soft, comfortable (because their pillows would be stuffed with 'down' = a bird's soft under-feathers).

74-5 *see . . . image:* see a sight like a picture of the Last Judgement (the 'great doom').

76 *As . . . sprites:* rise up like ghosts from their graves (and as the Christian dead will do at the Last Judgement).

77 *countenance:* come face to face with.

78 *trumpet:* alarum bell (perhaps sounding like the 'last trumpet' which will arouse the dead on Judgement Day—1 Corinthians 15:52).
parley: conference.

Ring the alarum bell! Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donaldbain! Malcolm, awake,
Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,
And look on death itself. Up, up, and see
75 The great doom's image. Malcolm, Banquo,
As from your graves rise up and walk like sprites
To countenance this horror.

Bell rings. Enter Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth
What's the business
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley
The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak.

Macduff

O gentle lady,

80 'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak.
The repetition in a woman's ear
Would murder as it fell.—

81–2 *The . . . fell*: to repeat this matter to a woman would kill her as the words fell from my mouth.

Enter Banquo

O Banquo, Banquo,

Our royal master's murder'd.

Lady Macbeth

Woe, alas,

What, in our house?

Banquo

Too cruel, anywhere.

85 Dear Duff, I prithee contradict thyself
And say it is not so.

Enter Macbeth and Lennox

Macbeth

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blessed time, for from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality.

87 *before this chance*: before this happened.

88 *blessed*: blessed.

89 *nothing . . . mortality*: nothing important in life.

90 *toys*: trivialities, rubbish.

91–2 *The wine . . . of*: Macbeth compares the earth to a wine-cellar ('vault') from which the best wine has been 'drawn' (= drained from the cask), so that now it can boast ('brag') only of the dregs ('lees').

90 All is but toys; renown and grace is dead,
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

Enter Malcolm and Donaldbain

Donaldbain

What is amiss?

Macbeth

You are, and do not know't.

The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
95 Is stopp'd, the very source of it is stopp'd.

Macduff

Your royal father's murder'd.

Malcolm

O, by whom?

98 *badg'd*: wearing the badges of their profession (as murderers).

100 *distracted*: confused.

Lennox

Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had done't.
Their hands and faces were all badg'd with blood,
So were their daggers which, unwip'd, we found
100 Upon their pillows. They star'd and were distracted;
No man's life was to be trusted with them.

Macbeth

O, yet I do repent me of my fury
That I did kill them.

Macduff

Wherefore did you so?

103 *Wherefore*: why.

Macbeth

Who can be wise, amaz'd, temp'rate, and furious,
105 Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.
Th'expedition of my violent love
Outran the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature,
110 For ruin's wasteful entrance. There the murderers,
Steep'd in the colours of their trade; their daggers
Unmannerly breech'd with gore. Who could refrain,
That had a heart to love and in that heart
Courage to make's love known?

Lady Macbeth

Help me hence, ho.

104 *temp'rate*: temperate, restrained.

106-7 *Th'expedition . . . reason*: in my passionate love, I didn't stop to think.

107 *pauser*: that which should make me hesitate.

108 *His . . . blood*: Macbeth's imagery seems to cover Duncan with a rich garment.

109-10 *his . . . entrance*: Duncan's wounds were like a break in the shoreline where the sea's destruction has broken in.

110-11 *the murderers . . . trade*: the murderers wearing the coloured uniforms of their trade: Macbeth develops the image that Lennox began in line 98.

111 *Steep'd*: dyed.

112 *Unmannerly breech'd*: improperly dressed, wearing indecent clothing.
gore: blood.

refrain: stop himself from acting.

114 *make's*: make his.

116-17 *that . . . ours*: when the matter concerns us more than anyone else.

Macduff

115 Look to the lady. [Exit Lady Macbeth, helped

Malcolm

[To Donaldbain] Why do we hold our tongues, that
most may claim

This argument for ours?

Donaldbain

[To Malcolm] What should be spoken here,
Where our fate hid in an auger hole may rush
And seize us? Let's away. Our tears are not yet brew'd.

Malcolm

120 [To Donaldbain] Nor our strong sorrow upon the foot
of motion.

Banquo

Look to the lady,
And when we have our naked frailties hid

117-19 *What . . . us*: what can we say here, where our own fate may be secretly hiding, ready to rush out and seize upon us.

118 *auger hole*: hole made with a sharp-pointed tool.

119 *brew'd*: ready to be poured out (i.e. like ale).

120 *upon . . . motion*: ready to move, ready to express itself.

122 *naked frailties*: bare bodies.

126 *In . . . God*: under God's great protection.

127 *undivulg'd pretence*: unrevealed claim (to the crown).

131 *consort*: associate.

132-3 *To show . . . easy*: a hypocrite can easily show a sorrow that he doesn't feel.

134-5 *Our separated . . . safer*: we'll both be safer if we keep apart.

136-7 *the nea'er . . . bloody*: the more closely related (to Duncan), the more likely to be killed.

138 *lighted*: landed, found its target.

140 *be . . . leave-taking*: make a fuss about saying a formal goodbye.

141 *shift*: get away quietly.

141-2 *there's . . . left*: it's an authorized theft, to steal (oneself) away from a place where there is no mercy; Malcolm closes the scene with a rhyme and a grim pun.

That suffer in exposure, let us meet
And question this most bloody piece of work
125 To know it further. Fears and scruples shake us:
In the great hand of God I stand and thence
Against the undivulg'd pretence I fight
Of treasonous malice.

Macduff

And so do I.

All

So all.

Macbeth

Let's briefly put on manly readiness

130 And meet i'th' hall together.

All

Well contented.

[*Exeunt all but Malcolm and Donaldbain*]

Malcolm

What will you do? Let's not consort with them.

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office

Which the false man does easy. I'll to England.

Donaldbain

To Ireland, I. Our separated fortune

135 Shall keep us both the safer. Where we are,

There's daggers in men's smiles; the nea'er in blood,

The nearer bloody.

Malcolm

This murderous shaft that's shot

Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way

Is to avoid the aim. Therefore to horse,

140 And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,

But shift away. There's warrant in that theft

Which steals itself when there's no mercy left.

[*Exeunt*]

Act 2 Scene 4

Ross and an Old Man discuss the unnatural events that occurred on the night of Duncan's murder. They learn from Macduff that the king's two sons have fled, and that Macbeth has been chosen to be the next king.

- 1 *Old Man*: This unnamed character speaks for the common man who is affected by the situation but not involved in the action.
- 3 *sore*: severe, harsh.
- 4 *trifled former knowings*: made the things I knew before seem trivial.
father: A title of respect.
- 5-6 *the heavens . . . stage*: In Shakespeare's day it was generally believed that events in the greater world of nature (the 'macrocosm') reflected, or were affected by, events in the little world of man (the 'microcosm').
- 5 *act*: deed; performance.
- 6 *his bloody stage*: the scene of his bloodthirsty performance.
- 7 *travelling lamp*: the sun.
- 8 *predominance*: superior influence.
- 9 *entomb*: bury.
- 12 *pride of place*: the highest point of flight.
- 13 *mousing*: mouse-hunting.
hawk'd at: snatched up on the wing (as a hawk takes its prey).
- 15 *minions of their race*: best of their breed.
- 16 *broke their stalls*: broke out of their stables.
- 17 *Contending 'gainst obedience*: rebelling against the training that had made them obedient.
- 18 *eat*: ate.

SCENE 4

Somewhere in Scotland: enter Ross, with an Old Man

Old Man

Threescore and ten I can remember well;
Within the volume of which time, I have seen
Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings.

Ross

Ha, good father,

- 5 Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threatens his bloody stage. By th'clock 'tis day
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb
- 10 When living light should kiss it?

Old Man

'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon tow'ring in her pride of place
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

Ross

- And Duncan's horses, a thing most strange and certain,
15 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience as they would
Make war with mankind.

Old Man

'Tis said, they eat each other.





- 19–20 *They . . . upon't*: Ross confirms the rumour with the evidence of his own eyes.
- 24 *What . . . pretend*: what good did they think it would do for them.
suborn'd: bribed.
- 27 *'Gainst nature still*: like all those other unnatural happenings.
- 28 *Thriftless*: wasteful.
ravin up: devour.
- 29 *Thine . . . means*: that which was necessary to give you life.
- 31 *nam'd*: chosen.
Scone: Once the capital of Scotland, and the traditional site of Scottish coronations.
- 32 *invested*: installed ceremonially.
- 33 *Colmkill*: the island of Iona.
- 36 *Fife*: Macduff's ancestral home.
will thither: will go there.

Ross
They did so, to th'amazement of mine eyes
20 That looked upon't.

Enter Macduff

Here comes the good Macduff.
How goes the world, sir, now?

Macduff

Why, see you not?

Ross

Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

Macduff

Those that Macbeth hath slain.

Ross

Alas the day,

What good could they pretend?

Macduff

They were suborn'd.

25 Malcolm and Donaldbain, the king's two sons,
Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them
Suspicion of the deed.

Ross

'Gainst nature still.

Thriftless ambition that will ravin up
Thine own life's means. Then 'tis most like

30 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

Macduff

He is already nam'd and gone to Scone
To be invested.

Ross

Where is Duncan's body?

Macduff

Carried to Colmkill,

The sacred storehouse of his predecessors

35 And guardian of their bones.

Ross

Will you to Scone?

Macduff

No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

Ross

Well, I will thither.

Macduff

Well may you see things well done there. Adieu,
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new.

Ross

Farewell, father.

Old Man

40 God's benison go with you, and with those
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes.

[Exeunt

40 *benison*: blessing.

ACT 3

Act 3 Scene 1

Banquo is suspicious—and Macbeth arranges to have him murdered.

2 *weird*: mystic, supernatural.

4 *stand . . . posterity*: be inherited by your descendants.

5–6 *father . . . kings*: According to popular legend, King James was one of Banquo's descendants.

7 *shine*: look favourably.

8 *verities . . . good*: prophecies that have come true in your case.

10s.d. *Sennet*: A distinctive set of musical notes played on trumpet to herald a specific individual, (like a modern signature tune).

13 *all thing unbecoming*: quite improper.

14 *solemn supper*: formal dinner.

16 *to the which*: to which command.

17–18 *with . . . knit*: bound with a tie that cannot be broken.

19 *Ride . . . afternoon*: Macbeth is beginning to lay his plans.

SCENE 1

Macbeth's castle: enter Banquo dressed for riding

Banquo

Thou hast it now, King, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promis'd, and I fear
Thou played'st most foully for't; yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
5 But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—
As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—
Why by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well
10 And set me up in hope? But hush, no more.

Sennet sounded. Enter Macbeth as King, Lady Macbeth as Queen, Lennox, Ross, Lords, and Attendants

Macbeth

Here's our chief guest.

Lady Macbeth

If he had been forgotten,
It had been as a gap in our great feast
And all thing unbecoming.

Macbeth

Tonight we hold a solemn supper, sir,
15 And I'll request your presence.

Banquo

Let your highness
Command upon me, to the which my duties
Are with a most indissoluble tie
Forever knit.

Macbeth

Ride you this afternoon?

22 *still*: always.

grave and prosperous: serious and profitable.

23 *council*: i.e. meeting of the Privy Council.

26–8 *Go not . . . twain*: if my horse won't go any faster, I shall have to take up one or two ('twain') hours of darkness.

31 *bloody*: stained with the blood of Duncan.

are bestow'd: have taken refuge.

33 *parricide*: murder of their father.

34 *invention*: tales they have invented.

34–6 *of that . . . jointly*: we will talk about that tomorrow, when there will also be affairs of state that demand our joint attention.

38 *our time . . . upon's*: we're in rather a hurry.

42 *master of his time*: be free to do as he wants.

46 *Sirrah*: A condescending form of address to a social inferior.

48 *without*: outside.

Banquo

20 Ay, my good lord.

Macbeth

We should have else desir'd your good advice
Which still hath been both grave and prosperous
In this day's council: but we'll take tomorrow.
Is't far you ride?

Banquo

25 As far, my lord, as will fill up the time
'Twixt this and supper. Go not my horse the better,
I must become a borrower of the night
For a dark hour, or twain.

Macbeth

Fail not our feast.

Banquo

30 My lord, I will not.

Macbeth

We hear our bloody cousins are bestow'd
In England and in Ireland, not confessing
Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers
With strange invention. But of that tomorrow,

35 When therewithal we shall have cause of state
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse; adieu,
Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

Banquo

Ay, my good lord; our time does call upon's.

Macbeth

I wish your horses swift and sure of foot,

40 And so I do commend you to their backs.

Farewell.

[Exit Banquo]

Let every man be master of his time

Till seven at night; to make society

The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself

45 Till supper-time alone. While then, God be with you.

[Exeunt all but Macbeth and a Servant]

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men

Our pleasure?

Servant

They are, my lord, without the palace gate.

Macbeth

Bring them before us.

[Exit Servant]

- 49-50 *To be . . . thus*: it is nothing to be king as I am now - I must be king in safety.
- 51 *stick deep*: are deeply rooted.
- 51-2 *in his . . . fear'd*: there's something overpowering in his natural nobility of character that I should be afraid of.
- 53 *to . . . temper*: in addition to that courageous spirit.
- 56-8 *under . . . Caesar*: Mark Antony was told by a soothsayer that his guiding spirit ('genius') was not powerful enough to oppose that of Octavius Caesar (see *Antony and Cleopatra*, 2, 3, 20-3).
- 58 *chid*: chided, reproved.
- 62-3 *Upon . . . gripe*: put a crown on my head and a sceptre in my hand ('gripe' = grasp) that could not be passed on to my descendants.
- 64 *unlineal hand*: not in my line of descent, not descended from me.
- 66 *issue*: descendants.
fil'd: defiled.
- 68 *rancours*: bitter ill-feelings.
vessel: drinking-vessel, chalice.
- 69 *eternal jewel*: immortal soul.
- 70 *common . . . man*: i.e. the devil (who is the enemy of everybody).
- 72 *come . . . list*: let Fate come into combat like a medieval knight into the tournament.
- 73 *champion . . . utterance*: challenge me to deadly combat.
- 77-92 *Well then . . . forever*: Macbeth begins to speak in prose, to win the Murderers' confidence.
- 78 *he*: i.e. Banquo.
- 79 *under fortune*: below what you deserved.
- 80 *made good*: explained.
- 81 *passed in probation*: proved, demonstrated.
- 82 *borne in hand*: deceived, deliberately misled.
crossed: frustrated.
the instruments: the means that were used.
- 83 *wrought*: worked.

- To be thus is nothing,
50 But to be safely thus. Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be fear'd. 'Tis much he dares,
And to that dauntless temper of his mind,
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour
55 To act in safety. There is none but he,
Whose being I do fear; and under him
My genius is rebuk'd, as it is said
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters
When first they put the name of king upon me
60 And bade them speak to him. Then prophet-like,
They hail'd him father to a line of kings.
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
65 No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
For them, the gracious Duncan have I murder'd,
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace
Only for them, and mine eternal jewel
70 Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seeds of Banquo kings.
Rather than so, come Fate into the list,
And champion me to th'utterance. Who's there?

Enter Servant and two Murderers

[To Servant] Now go to the door and stay there till we call. [Exit Servant]

- 75 Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

Murderers

It was, so please your highness.

Macbeth

- Well then, now have you considered of my speeches? Know, that it was he in the times past which held you so under fortune, which you thought had been our innocent self. This I made good to you in our last conference; passed in probation with you how you were borne in hand, how crossed; the instruments, who wrought with them, and all things else that might to

84 *soul*: mind.
notion: intellect.

90 *gospelled*: influenced by the teaching of the Christian Gospels ('Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you', Matthew 5:44).

94-103 *in the catalogue . . . men*: you are classified as 'men' in any general list of creatures, just as different breeds of dog are all included under 'dogs'; but a more valuable listing is that which notes the precise qualities of the animals, according to their natural abilities; this list, where the dog receives individual description ('Particular addition'), is distinct from the inventory ('bill') that counts them all alike. The same is true of men.

96 *Shoughs*: a kind of lap-dog.
water-rugs: probably a kind of long-haired retriever useful in water.
demi-wolves: cross-breeds, half wolf and half dog.
clept: called.

99 *housekeeper*: domestic guard dog.

104 *station*: position, rank.

106-7 *I will . . . off*: I will tell you secretly ('in your bosoms') of a plan which, when it is carried out, removes your enemy.

108 *Grapples . . . us*: fastens you firmly to my affections (as grappling-irons hold fighting ships together in battle).

109-10 *Who . . . perfect*: Macbeth will feel ill as long as Banquo is alive, but he would be perfectly healthy if Banquo were dead.

109 *wear*: Macbeth continues to use clothing metaphors.

115 *set . . . chance*: gamble my life on anything.

half a soul and to a notion crazed say, 'Thus did
85 Banquo.'

First Murderer

You made it known to us.

Macbeth

I did so, and went further, which is now our point of second meeting. Do you find your patience so predominant in your nature, that you can let this go?

90 Are you so gospelled, to pray for this good man and for his issue, whose heavy hand hath bowed you to the grave and beggared yours forever?

First Murderer

We are men, my liege.

Macbeth

Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men,

95 As hounds, and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, Shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are clept

All by the name of dogs. The valu'd file Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,

The housekeeper, the hunter, every one

100 According to the gift which bounteous nature Hath in him clos'd, whereby he does receive Particular addition from the bill

That writes them all alike. And so of men.

Now, if you have a station in the file

105 Not i'th'worst rank of manhood, say't,

And I will put that business in your bosoms,

Whose execution takes your enemy off,

Grapples you to the heart and love of us

Who wear our health but sickly in his life,

110 Which in his death were perfect.

Second Murderer

I am one, my liege,

Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world

Hath so incens'd that I am reckless what I do

To spite the world.

First Murderer

And I another,

So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,

115 That I would set my life on any chance

To mend it or be rid on't.

Macbeth

Both of you know

Banquo was your enemy.

Murderers

True, my lord.

Macbeth

So is he mine, and in such bloody distance

That every minute of his being thrusts

120 Against my near'st of life; and though I could
With barefac'd power sweep him from my sight

And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,

For certain friends that are both his and mine,

Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall

125 Who I myself struck down. And thence it is

That I to your assistance do make love,

Masking the business from the common eye

For sundry weighty reasons.

Second Murderer

We shall, my lord,

Perform what you command us.

First Murderer

Though our lives—

Macbeth

130 Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at
most,

I will advise you where to plant yourselves,

Acquaint you with the perfect spy o'th'time,

The moment on't, for't must be done tonight,

And something from the palace: always thought,

135 That I require a clearness. And with him,

To leave no rubs nor botches in the work,

Fleance, his son that keeps him company,

Whose absence is no less material to me

Than is his father's, must embrace the fate

140 Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart,

I'll come to you anon.

Murderers

We are resolv'd, my lord.

118 *distance*: dissension.

119 *thrusts*: i.e. like a fencer's sword.

120 *near'st of life*: very existence, vital organs.

120-2 *though . . . avouch it*: although I have the power to kill him without giving any excuse, and say I did it just because I wanted to.

123 *For*: for the sake of.

124 *but wail*: but I must lament.

132 *perfect spy o'th'time*: best time I can see for the murder.

134 *something*: some distance.
thought: remembered.

135 *a clearness*: to be kept in the clear, to be free from all suspicion.

136 *rubs*: mistakes, impediments.
botches: bungling.

138 *Whose . . . to me*: whose death is just as important to me.

140 *Resolve . . . apart*: make up your minds about it (i.e. the additional murder of Fleance) in private.

142 *straight*: immediately

Act 3 Scene 2

Lady Macbeth is also uneasy; Macbeth assures her that he will take some action—but he refuses to tell her more.

3-4 *I would . . . words*: I would like to have a few words with him when he has time.

4-5 *Nought's had . . . content*: we have gained nothing and lost everything when we are not satisfied with what we have got.

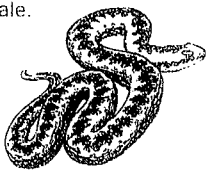
6-7 *'Tis safer . . . joy*: it is better to be the one who is killed than to live in such insecurity because we have killed him.

10-11 *Using . . . on*: living with those thoughts that should have died when the subject of them (i.e. Duncan) was killed.

13-15 *We have . . . tooth*: In killing Duncan, Macbeth has only been partially successful: the royal dynasty, like a wounded snake, will recover, and Macbeth's feeble violence ('poor malice') will be again in danger of reprisals from its power. Macbeth may be speaking here as a king (using the 'royal plural'), or as a husband (including Lady Macbeth in the action).

13 *scorch'd*: notched, scored.

13-14 *snake . . . herself*: Although the 'snake' represents Duncan and his male heirs, Macbeth still thinks of it as female.



14 *close*: rejoin, heal up.

15 *tooth*: power.

16 *frame of things*: structure of the entire universe.

both the worlds: earth and heaven.

Macbeth

I'll call upon you straight; abide within.

[*Exeunt Murderers*]

It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,

If it find heaven, must find it out tonight. [Exit]

SCENE 2

Macbeth's castle: enter Lady Macbeth, and a Servant

Lady Macbeth

Is Banquo gone from court?

Servant

Ay, madam, but returns again tonight.

Lady Macbeth

Say to the king, I would attend his leisure
For a few words.

Servant

Madam, I will.

[Exit]

Lady Macbeth

Nought's had, all's spent

Where our desire is got without content.

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.

Enter Macbeth

How now, my lord, why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,

Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard; what's done, is done.

Macbeth

We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it;
She'll close, and be herself, whilst our poor malice

Remains in danger of her former tooth.

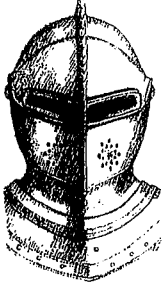
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds
suffer,

Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep

In the affliction of these terrible dreams

That shake us nightly. Better be with the dead

- 25 *domestic*: at home, in Scotland.
foreign levy: armies gathered (levied) abroad.
- 27 *Gentle my lord*: my gentle lord.
- 28 *sleek o'er*: smooth down.
- 30 *remembrance*: regard, thought.
- 31 *present him eminence*: treat him with the highest respect.
- 32-3 *unsafe . . . streams*: in this insecure time we must wash ('lave') our royal titles in floods of flattery (to make them appear honourable).
- 34 *vizards*: masks; the part of helmet that covers the face.



- 38 *in them . . . eterne*: they are not immortal; Nature (or Life) does not hold an eternal copyright on Banquo and Fleance.
eterne: eternal.
- 39 *are assailable*: can be assaulted, attacked.
- 40 *jocund*: merry.
- 41 *cloister'd flight*: flight around the cloisters (= covered walks with open sides).
- 41-3 *ere . . . peal*: before the dung-beetle responds to the call of darkness, humming like an evening curfew-bell to call yawning people to sleep.
- 41 *black Hecate*: goddess of witchcraft.
- 42 *shard-born*: born in dung; an alternative spelling '*borne*' permits a different meaning—'carried aloft by its wing-cases'.
- 45 *chuck*: chick (a term of endearment still used in England in parts of the Midlands).
- 46 *seeling*: stitching up; in falconry this refers to the sewing together of a young bird's eyelids for the purpose of training.
- 47 *Scarf up*: blindfold (as with a scarf over the eyes).

- 20 Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
 Than on the torture of the mind to lie
 In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave.
 After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well;
 Treason has done his worst; nor steel nor poison,
 25 Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing
 Can touch him further.

Lady Macbeth

Come on. Gentle my lord,
 Sleek o'er your rugged looks, be bright and jovial
 Among your guests tonight.

Macbeth

So shall I, love,

- 30 And so I pray be you. Let your remembrance
 Apply to Banquo, present him eminence
 Both with eye and tongue; unsafe the while, that we
 Must lave our honours in these flattering streams
 And make our faces vizards to our hearts,
 35 Disguising what they are.

Lady Macbeth

You must leave this.

Macbeth

O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife!
 Thou know'st that Banquo and his Fleance lives.

Lady Macbeth

But in them Nature's copy's not eterne.

Macbeth

- 40 Then be thou jocund: ere the bat hath flown
 His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecate's summons
 The shard-born beetle with his drowsy hums
 Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done
 A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macbeth

What's to be done?

Macbeth

- 45 Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
 Till thou applaud the deed. Come, seeling night,
 Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day
 And with thy bloody and invisible hand

49 *Cancel . . . bond*: put an end to the lives of Banquo and Fleance; from a pun on 'seeling'/'sealing', Macbeth has led to the metaphor of a legal contract.

50 *keeps me pale*: restrains me; the 'pale' was the boundary dividing one country's territory from the next. *Light thickens*: it's getting dark.

51 *rooky*: filled with rooks; crows and rooks, both black birds, are almost identical.

53 *night's black . . . rouse*: wicked creatures that work by night are waking up to hunt their prey.

54 *hold thee still*: carry on as you have been doing.

55 *Things . . . ill*: deeds that begin with evil grow stronger with more evil.

Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
 50 Which keeps me pale. Light thickens,
 And the crow makes wing to th'rooky wood;
 Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,
 Whiles night's black agents to their preys do rouse.
 Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still;
 55 Things bad begun, make strong themselves by ill.
 So prithee, go with me. [Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 3
 Banquo is murdered—but Fleance escapes.

SCENE 3

Some distance from Macbeth's castle: enter three Murderers

First Murderer

But who did bid thee join with us?

Third Murderer

Macbeth.

Second Murderer

He needs not our mistrust, since he delivers
 Our offices and what we have to do
 To the direction just.

First Murderer

[To Third Murderer] Then stand with us.

5 The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day;
 Now spurs the lated traveller apace
 To gain the timely inn, and near approaches
 The subject of our watch.

Third Murderer

Hark, I hear horses.

Banquo

[Within] Give us a light there, ho!

1 *Third Murderer*: Perhaps Macbeth cannot trust even the Murderers he has chosen.

2 *He . . . mistrust*: there's no need for him to mistrust us.

3 *offices*: duties; see 'Macbeth: the source', p.101.

4 *just*: exactly.

6 *lated*: belated.

7 *To . . . inn*: to get to the inn in time (before dark).

9–10 *the rest . . . expectation*: the other expected guests.

11 *go about*: are going a long way round.

14 *Make . . . walk*: After a long journey the horses would be sweating, and it would be necessary for grooms to walk with them until they were cool.

Second Murderer

Then 'tis he; the rest

10 That are within the note of expectation
Already are i'th' court.

First Murderer

His horses go about.

Third Murderer

Almost a mile; but he does usually,
So all men do, from hence to th'palace gate
Make it their walk.

Enter Banquo and Fleance, with a torch

Second Murderer

15 A light, a light!

Third Murderer

'Tis he.

First Murderer

Stand to't.

Banquo

It will be rain tonight.

First Murderer

Let it come down.

The Murderers attack. First Murderer strikes out the light

Banquo

O, treachery!

20 Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!
Thou mayst revenge—O slave!

Dies. Fleance escapes

Third Murderer

Who did strike out the light?

First Murderer

Was't not the way?

Third Murderer

There's but one down; the son is fled.

Second Murderer

We have lost best half of our affair.

First Murderer

25 Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

[*Exeunt, with Banquo's body*]

Act 3 Scene 4

Macbeth and his wife welcome the guests to their state banquet. The Ghost of Banquo appears but only Macbeth can see it, and his strange behaviour startles his wife and their guests.

Os.d. *Banquet prepared*: This might be an elaborate arrangement of fruit and sweets with wine, or else a full state dinner.

1 *degrees*: social ranks (which would determine the seating-order).
at first and last: to one and all.

5 *keeps her state*: remains seated on the throne of state.

9 *encounter*: respond to.

10 *Both . . . even*: there are equal numbers of people on both sides of the table.

11 *large*: unrestrained.

11 12 *drink . . . round*: drink a toast with each person around the table.

SCENE 4

The Banqueting Hall. Banquet prepared. Two thrones are placed on stage. Enter Macbeth as King, Lady Macbeth as Queen, Ross, Lennox, Lords, and Attendants. Lady Macbeth sits

Macbeth

You know your own degrees, sit down; at first and last, the hearty welcome.

The Lords sit

Lords

Thanks to your majesty.

Macbeth

Our self will mingle with society and play the humble
5 host; our hostess keeps her state, but in best time we will require her welcome.

Lady Macbeth

Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends, for my heart speaks they are welcome.

Enter First Murderer

Macbeth

See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.

10 Both sides are even; here I'll sit i'th' midst.

Be large in mirth, anon we'll drink a measure

The table round. [*To First Murderer*] There's blood upon thy face.

First Murderer

'Tis Banquo's then.

15 *dispatch'd*: dealt with--i.e. killed.

18 *the like*: the same.

19 *the nonpareil*: the best, without equal.

20 *scap'd*: escaped.

21 *fit*: spasm of fear.

perfect: completely safe.

22 *Whole . . . rock*: solid as marble, firm as a rock.

23 *broad . . . air*: free and unconfined as the air surrounding us.

24 *cabin'd*: cramped into a small space.

cribb'd: shut up in a stall.

25 *saucy*: intrusive, distracting.

27 *trenched*: trenchèd; hacked out.

28 *The least . . . nature*: even the smallest would kill a man.

29 *worm*: grub.

30-1 *nature . . . present*: will become poisonous in the natural course of things, but is harmless at present.

33 *give the cheer*: entertain your guests.

33-5 *the feast . . . welcome*: a banquet is no better than a meal that has to be paid for unless, during the feasting ('while 'tis a-making'), the guests are often told how welcome they are.

35 6 *to feed . . . ceremony*: it's better to eat at home, but the social rituals of a formal occasion add an extra sauce to a meal eaten away from home.

37 *Meeting . . . it*: a gathering of people needs these social rituals of courtesy.

Macbeth

'Tis better thee without, than he within.

15 Is he dispatch'd?

First Murderer

My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

Macbeth

Thou art the best o'th'cut-throats,

Yet he's good that did the like for Fleance;

If thou didst it, thou are the nonpareil.

First Murderer

20 Most royal sir, Fleance is scap'd.

Macbeth

Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect;

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,

As broad and general as the casing air:

But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in

25 To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

First Murderer

Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,

With twenty trenched gashes on his head,

The least a death to nature.

Macbeth

Thanks for that.

There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled

30 Hath nature that in time will venom breed,

No teeth for th'present. Get thee gone; tomorrow

We'll hear ourselves again. [Exit First Murderer]

Lady Macbeth

My royal lord,

You do not give the cheer; the feast is sold

That is not often vouch'd while 'tis a-making,

35 'Tis given with welcome. To feed were best at home:

From thence, the sauce to meat is ceremony,

Meeting were bare without it.

Enter the Ghost of Banquo and sits in Macbeth's place

Macbeth

Sweet remembrancer!
Now good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both.

Lennox

May't please your highness, sit.

Macbeth

- 40 *our . . . roof'd*: the nobility of our country complete (as a house is completed when the roof is put on).
42 *challenge for unkindness*: rebuke for lack of courtesy.
43 *pity for mischance*: be sorry for any accident that has happened to him.
43-4 *His absence . . . promise*: if he can't be here, he should not have promised to come.
44 *Please't*: may it please.

40 Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,
Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present,
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance.

Ross

His absence, sir,
Lays blame upon his promise. Please't your highness
45 To grace us with your royal company?

Macbeth

The table's full.

Lennox

Here is a place reserv'd, sir.

Macbeth

Where?

Lennox

Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your
highness?

Macbeth

Which of you have done this?

Lords

What, my good lord?

Macbeth

- 47 *Where?*: Only Macbeth can see the Ghost.
48 *moves*: distresses.

50 Thou canst not say I did it; never shake
Thy gory locks at me!



'Never shake Thy gory locks at me!' (3, 4, 50-1) Bob Peck as Macbeth. Royal Shakespeare Company, 1982.

Ross

Gentlemen, rise, his highness is not well.

Lady Macbeth *joins the Lords*

Lady Macbeth

Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often thus,
 And hath been from his youth. Pray you, keep seat.
 55 The fit is momentary; upon a thought
 He will again be well. If much you note him
 You shall offend him and extend his passion.
 Feed, and regard him not. [*To Macbeth*] Are you a
 man?

55 *upon a thought*: as fast as you can
 think of.

56 *note*: take notice of.

Macbeth

Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
60 Which might appal the devil.

Lady Macbeth

O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear;
This is the air-drawn dagger which you said
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,
Impostors to true fear, would well become
65 A woman's story at a winter's fire
Authoriz'd by her grandam. Shame itself!
Why do you make such faces? When all's done
You look but on a stool.

Macbeth

Prithee, see there! Behold, look, lo! How say you?
70 [To Ghost] Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak
too.

If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites. [Exit Ghost of Banquo]

Lady Macbeth

What, quite unmann'd in folly?

Macbeth

If I stand here, I saw him.

Lady Macbeth

Fie, for shame.

Macbeth

75 Blood hath been shed ere now, i'th'olden time,
Ere humane statute purg'd the gentle weal;
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear. The time has been
That when the brains were out, the man would die,
80 And there an end. But now they rise again
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns
And push us from our stools. This is more strange
Than such a murder is.

Lady Macbeth

My worthy lord,
Your noble friends do lack you.

60 *proper stuff*: absolute rubbish.

61 *painting*: image, imagination.

62 *air-drawn*: drawn in the air.

63 *flaws*: bursts of passion.
starts: startled movements.

64 *Impostors to*: false imitations of.

65-6 *A woman's . . . grandam*: an old
wife's tale for a winter evening round
the fireside.

66 *grandam*: grandmother.

68 *stool*: The usual seating for
Elizabethans; chairs were expensive
and rare.

71-3 *If . . . back*: if vaults and graves
can send back the oodies we have
interred in them, our only burying-
places will be the stomachs ('maws')
of carrion-eating birds.

71 *charnel-house*: vaults for the storage
of the bones of the dead.

73 *unmann'd*: Lady Macbeth challenges
her husband's manhood; compare
1, 7, 39-54.

75-6 *Blood . . . gentle weal*: there was
bloodshed before now, in the olden
days, before law and order ('humane
statute') had regulated the nation.

78 *for the ear*: to speak about.

81 *twenty . . . crowns*: twenty fatal
wounds in their heads; compare
'twenty trenched gashes on his head'
(line 27).

Macbeth

I do forget—

85 Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends.
I have a strange infirmity which is nothing
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all,
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full!

87 *love . . . all*: Macbeth proposes a toast to ease the tension.

Enter Ghost of Banquo

I drink to th'general joy o'th'whole table,
90 And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss.
Would he were here! To all, and him we thirst,
And all to all.

Lords

Our duties and the pledge.

92 *pledge*: oath of allegiance.

Macbeth

Avaunt and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;

95 *speculation*: power of seeing.

95 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with.

Lady Macbeth

Think of this, good peers,

97 *a thing of custom*: a regular occurrence.

But as a thing of custom. 'Tis no other,
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

Macbeth

What man dare, I dare;

101 *arm'd*: i.e. with a thick skin and a tusk.
Hyrcan tiger: The tigers of Hyrcania (an area on the south-east coast of the Caspian Sea) were proverbially (and poetically) fierce.

100 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm'd rhinoceros, or th'Hyrcan tiger,
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble. Or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword;

102 *but that*: i.e. except that of Banquo's ghost.

105 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence horrible shadow,
Unreal mock'ry hence.

104 *dare . . . desert*: challenge me to fight you in the wilderness.

105 *If trembling . . . then*: if I so much as tremble then.
protest: proclaim.

Unreal mock'ry hence. [Exit Ghost of Banquo
Why so, being gone,
I am a man again.—Pray you, sit still.

106 *baby*: doll, plaything.

Lady Macbeth

You have displac'd the mirth, broke the good meeting

110 *admir'd*: amazing, astonishing.

110 With most admir'd disorder.

- 111 *overcome*: pass over.
 112-13 *make . . . owe*: make me feel as though I'm not really myself.
 113 *owe*: own.
 115 *ruby*: redness.
 116 *blanch'd*: turned white.

- 119 *Stand . . . going*: don't worry about the precedence of rank in your departure. Compare this disarray with the order of 'You know your own degrees' (line 1).

- 124-6 *Augures . . . blood*: speaking birds (such as magpies, jackdaws, and rooks) have given omens ('Augures') and signs have revealed the most hidden ('secret'st') murderer by means of talking birds.
 124 *understood relations*: known relationships (e.g. between natural phenomena and events in the human world).
 125 *maggot-pies*: magpies (which can imitate the human voice).
choughs: crows (birds of ill omen).
 127 *at odds*: disputing with.
 128 *denies his person*: refuses to come; Macduff's refusal is an insult, and an act of defiance.
 131 *them*: the Scottish nobles.
 132 *feed*: bribed—i.e. as a spy.
 133 *betimes*: early, speedily.
 134 *bent*: determined.

Macbeth

Can such things be,
 And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
 Without our special wonder? You make me strange
 Even to the disposition that I owe,
 When now I think you can behold such sights
 115 And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
 When mine is blanch'd with fear.

Ross

What sights, my lord?

Lady Macbeth

I pray you speak not; he grows worse and worse.
 Question enrages him. At once, good night.
 Stand not upon the order of your going,
 120 But go at once.

Lennox

Good night, and better health
 Attend his majesty.

Lady Macbeth

A kind good night to all.
 [Exeunt Lords and Attendants]

Macbeth

It will have blood they say: blood will have blood.
 Stones have been known to move and trees to speak.
 Augures, and understood relations, have
 125 By maggot-pies, and choughs, and rooks brought forth
 The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

Lady Macbeth

Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

Macbeth

How sayst thou that Macduff denies his person
 At our great bidding?

Lady Macbeth

Did you send to him, sir?

Macbeth

130 I hear it by the way, but I will send.
 There's not a one of them but in his house
 I keep a servant feed. I will tomorrow—
 And betimes I will—to the weird sisters.
 More shall they speak. For now I am bent to know
 135 By the worst means, the worst; for mine own good,

- 138 *tedious*: troublesome.
go o'er: crossing to the other side.
 139 *will to hand*: need to be done.
 140 *scann'd*: looked at closely.

- 141 *season*: preservative.
 142 *My . . . self-abuse*: my uncharacteristic behaviour.
 143 *the initiate fear*: a novice's fear.
wants: lacks.
 144 *young*: inexperienced.
deed: action.

All causes shall give way. I am in blood
 Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more,
 Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
 Strange things I have in head that will to hand,
 140 Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

Lady Macbeth

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

Macbeth

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse
 Is the initiate fear that wants hard use;
 We are yet but young in deed.

[*Exeunt*]

Act 3 Scene 5

The witches and their queen Hecate prepare for another meeting with Macbeth. This scene is not Shakespeare's work; see 'Source, Date, and Text', p.xxvii, and 'Macbeth: the source', p.101.

- 2 *beldams*: old hags.
 3 *Saucy*: impudent.
 4 *traffic*: deal.

7 *close contriver*: secret organizer.

9 *art*: witchcraft.

- 13 *Loves . . . you*: only cares about magic and prophecy for what they can do for him, and not for themselves.
 15 *Acheron*: This was one of the rivers of Hades, the underworld of classical mythology.

SCENE 5

A deserted place. Thunder. Enter the three Witches, meeting Hecate

First Witch

Why how now, Hecate, you look angerly?

Hecate

Have I not reason, beldams, as you are,
 Saucy and over-bold? How did you dare
 To trade and traffic with Macbeth

5 In riddles and affairs of death?
 And I the mistress of your charms,
 The close contriver of all harms,
 Was never call'd to bear my part
 Or show the glory of our art?

10 And which is worse, all you have done
 Hath been but for a wayward son,
 Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
 Loves for his own ends, not for you.
 But make amends now. Get you gone,

15 And at the pit of Acheron
 Meet me i'th'morning. Thither he
 Will come to know his destiny.
 Your vessels and your spells provide,
 Your charms and every thing beside.

20 I am for th'air. This night I'll spend

- 24 *vap'rous drop*: It was believed that witches could invoke the moon to shed a malign influence on herbs and other objects.
profound: deep, with hidden qualities.
- 26 *sleights*: tricks, artifice.
- 27 *artificial sprites*: wicked spirits made by art (i.e. not the real demonic powers).
- 29 *confusion*: ruin, damnation.
- 32-3 *security . . . enemy*: Proverbial: 'the way to be safe is never to be secure'.
- 32 *security*: over-confidence, complacency.
- 33s.d. *Music . . . song*: The song may have been that in the play *The Witch* by Thomas Middleton (see '*Macbeth*: the source', p.101).

Unto a dismal and a fatal end.
 Great business must be wrought ere noon.
 Upon the corner of the moon
 There hangs a vap'rous drop profound;
 25 I'll catch it ere it come to ground;
 And that distill'd by magic sleights,
 Shall raise such artificial sprites
 As by the strength of their illusion
 Shall draw him on to his confusion.
 30 He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear
 His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear.
 And you all know, security
 Is mortals' chiefest enemy.

Music, and a song, 'Come away, come away', within

Hark, I am call'd: my little spirit, see,
 35 Sits in a foggy cloud, and stays for me. [Exit
 First Witch
 Come, let's make haste; she'll soon be back again.
 [Exeunt

Act 3 Scene 6

Lennox and an unnamed Lord discuss the state of affairs: Malcolm is in England; Macduff has gone to join him; and the English king is raising an army to fight against Macbeth.

- 1 *hit*: touched.
- 3 *borne*: managed, carried out.
- 4 *pitied of*: lamented by. Lennox is choosing his words very carefully.
Marry: by [the Virgin] Mary; a mild oath, meaning no more than 'yes, indeed'.
- 8 *cannot . . . thought*: can fail to think.
- 10 *Damned*: damnéd.
fact: deed.
- 11 *straight*: immediately.

SCENE 6

Somewhere in Scotland: enter Lennox and another Lord

Lennox

My former speeches have but hit your thoughts
 Which can interpret further; only I say
 Things have been strangely borne. The gracious
 Duncan
 Was pitied of Macbeth; marry, he was dead.
 5 And the right-valiant Banquo walk'd too late,
 Whom you may say, if't please you, Fleance kill'd,
 For Fleance fled. Men must not walk too late.
 Who cannot want the thought how monstrous
 It was for Malcolm and for Donaldbain
 10 To kill their gracious father? Damned fact,
 How it did grieve Macbeth! Did he not straight

- 12 *pious*: dutiful, loyal.
 13 *thralls*: captives.

- 16 *deny't*: deny that they had murdered Duncan.
 17 *He*: i.e. Macbeth.
 18 *under his key*: locked up in his power.
 19 *an't please*: if it please.

- 21 *broad words*: unguarded gossip.
 21–2 *he . . . feast*: failed to attend Macbeth's banquet; see 3, 4, 128.
 24 *bestows himself*: has hidden himself.
son of Duncan: Malcolm.

- 25 *holds*: withholds.
the due of birth: his birthright—i.e. the crown.
 27 *Of*: by.
Edward: Edward the Confessor, King of England 1042–66.
 28–9 *That . . . respect*: Malcolm's present misfortunes have not affected him in Edward's high esteem.
 30 *upon his aid*: in support of Malcolm.
 31 *Northumberland . . . Siward*: Siward, Earl of Northumberland, and Young Siward, his son.
 32 *him above*: God.
 33 *ratify*: make valid, sanction.
 36 *faithful*: sincere.
free honours: honest rewards.
 38 *exasperate*: exasperated, infuriated.

- 40 *he*: i.e. Macbeth.

- 41 *'Sir, not I'*: This was Macduff's reply to Macbeth.
 42 *cloudy*: frowning.
turns me his back: goes and turns his back; 'me' is used in this phrase merely for emphasis.
 43 *hums*: murmurs.
 44 *clogs*: burdens; the Messenger probably knows Macbeth's treatment of those who bring bad news.

- In pious rage the two delinquents tear,
 That were the slaves of drink and thralls of sleep?
 Was not that nobly done? Ay, and wisely too,
 15 For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive
 To hear the men deny't. So that I say,
 He has borne all things well, and I do think
 That had he Duncan's sons under his key—
 As, an't please heaven, he shall not—they should find
 20 What 'twere to kill a father. So should Fleance.
 But peace, for from broad words, and 'cause he fail'd
 His presence at the tyrant's feast, I hear
 Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell
 Where he bestows himself?

Lord

The son of Duncan,

- 25 From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth,
 Lives in the English court and is receiv'd
 Of the most pious Edward with such grace,
 That the malevolence of fortune nothing
 Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff
 30 Is gone to pray the holy king upon his aid
 To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward,
 That by the help of these, with him above
 To ratify the work, we may again
 Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
 35 Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,
 Do faithful homage and receive free honours,
 All which we pine for now. And this report
 Hath so exasperate their king that he
 Prepares for some attempt of war.

Lennox

- 40 Sent he to Macduff?

Lord

He did. And with an absolute, 'Sir, not I',
 The cloudy messenger turns me his back
 And hums, as who should say, 'You'll rue the time
 That clogs me with this answer.'

Lennox

And that well might

45-6 *Advise . . . provide:* warn him to
stay as far away (from Macbeth) as he
knows how.

45 Advise him to a caution t'hold what distance
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel
Fly to the court of England and unfold
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing
May soon return to this our suffering country

50 Under a hand accurs'd.

Lord

I'll send my prayers with him.

[*Exeunt*]

ACT 4

Act 4 Scene 1

The witches assemble to meet Macbeth, and promise to answer his questions. Their magic Apparitions comfort him at first—and then give cause for alarm.

- 1 *brindled cat*: cat with black/brown streaked fur.
- 2 *hedge-pig*: hedgehog.
- 3 *Harpier*: This is presumably the name of the witch's 'familiar', or attendant spirit.
- 8 *Swelter'd . . . got*: sweated out poison incubated in sleep; the ingredients of the witches' cooking-pot are all items thought by the Elizabethans to be poisonous or unnatural.
- 9 *charmed*: charmèd.
- 12 *Fillet . . . snake*: lengthwise slice of a snake from the fens.
- 15 *Wool of bat*: short hair from the skin of a bat.
- 16 *fork*: forked tongue.
blind-worm: slow-worm (a kind of legless lizard).
- 17 *howlet*: young owl.
- 19 *hell-broth*: thick soup, strong enough for the devil.
- 23 *mummy*: mummia, a preparation used in embalming bodies, or taken from embalmed bodies.
maw and gulf: stomach and throat.

SCENE 1

An isolated place. Thunder. Enter the three Witches with a cauldron

First Witch

Thrice the brindled cat hath mew'd.

Second Witch

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whin'd.

Third Witch

Harpier cries, 'Tis time, 'tis time.'

First Witch

Round about the cauldron go;

5 In the poison'd entrails throw.

Toad, that under cold stone

Days and nights has thirty-one

Swelter'd venom sleeping got,

Boil thou first i'th'charmed pot.

All

10 Double, double toil and trouble;

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Fillet of a fenny snake,

In the cauldron boil and bake:

Eye of newt, and toe of frog,

15 Wool of bat, and tongue of dog,

Adder's fork, and blind-worm's sting,

Lizard's leg, and howlet's wing,

For a charm of powerful trouble,

Like a hell-broth, boil and bubble.

All

20 Double, double toil and trouble,

Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Third Witch

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,

Witches' mummy, maw and gulf

- 24 *ravin'd*: ravenous.
 25 *hemlock*: i.e. the 'insane root' (compare 1, 3, 82).
digg'd . . . dark: Night-time was best for gathering poisonous herbs and roots.
 27 *slips*: cuttings.
 26-9 *blaspheming . . . lips*: The bodily parts are all those of infidels.
 27 *goat*: Traditionally a lecherous beast.
 31 *Ditch-deliver'd*: born in a ditch.
drab: prostitute.
 32 *slab*: semi-solid.
 33 *chawdron*: entrails.
 34 *ingredience*: mixture of ingredients.

37 *baboon*: Another traditionally evil and lustful creature.

- 38s.d.-43s.d. *Enter Hecate . . . Witches*: These lines (like the whole of Act 3, Scene 5) are almost certainly not Shakespeare's work; see 'Source, Date, and Text', p.xxvii, and '*Macbeth*: the source', p.101.
 39 *I . . . pains*: I appreciate the trouble you have taken.

Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark,
 25 Root of hemlock, digg'd i'th'dark;
 Liver of blaspheming Jew,
 Gall of goat, and slips of yew,
 Sliver'd in the moon's eclipse;
 Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips,
 30 Finger of birth-strangl'd babe,
 Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
 Make the gruel thick and slab.
 Add thereto a tiger's chawdron
 For th'ingredience of our cauldron.

All

35 Double, double toil and trouble,
 Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Second Witch

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
 Then the charm is firm and good.

Enter Hecate, and the other three Witches

Hecate

O well done! I commend your pains,
 40 And every one shall share i'th'gains;
 And now about the cauldron sing
 Like elves and fairies in a ring,
 Enchanting all that you put in.

Music, and a song, 'Black spirits, etc.'

[*Exeunt Hecate and the other three Witches*]

Second Witch

By the pricking of my thumbs,
 45 Something wicked this way comes;
 Open locks, whoever knocks.

Enter Macbeth

Macbeth

How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags!
 What is't you do?

All the Witches

A deed without a name.

- 49 *conjure* . . . *profess*: call upon you solemnly in the name of that magic you practise ('profess').
- 51-9 *Though* . . . *sicken*: Macbeth is prepared to risk all the common hazards of witchcraft.
- 52 *yeasty*: frothy, foaming (like a liquid when yeast has been added).
- 53 *navigation*: shipping.
- 54 *bladed corn*: unripe corn (where the 'blade' still surrounds the 'ear').
lodg'd: flattened, broken down (by wind and rain).
- 56 *pyramids*: obelisks, pillars.
- 58 *nature's germen*: seeds, basic matter, of all creation; compare 'seeds of time' (1, 3, 56).
- 59 *till destruction sicken*: until destruction itself is sick (because so much has been destroyed).

- 62 *our masters'*: the mouths of our masters—i.e. the evil spirits that the witches serve.
- 64 *nine farrow*: litter of nine piglets.
sweaten: exuded.

- 65 *gibbet*: gallows.

- 67 *office*: function.
67s.d. *armed*: armoured, helmeted.



Macbeth

- I conjure you by that which you profess,
50 Howe'er you come to know it, answer me.
Though you untie the winds and let them fight
Against the churches, though the yeasty waves
Confound and swallow navigation up,
Though bladed corn be lodg'd and trees blown down,
55 Though castles topple on their warders' heads,
Though palaces and pyramids do slope
Their heads to their foundations, though the treasure
Of nature's germen tumble altogether
Even till destruction sicken: answer me
60 To what I ask you.

First Witch

Speak.

Second Witch

Demand.

Third Witch

We'll answer.

First Witch

Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,
Or from our masters'?

Macbeth

Call 'em, let me see 'em.

First Witch

Pour in sow's blood, that hath eaten
Her nine farrow; grease that's sweaten

- 65 From the murderer's gibbet throw
Into the flame.

All the Witches

Come high or low:

Thyself and office deftly show.

Thunder. Enter First Apparition, an armed Head

Macbeth

Tell me, thou unknown power—

First Witch

He knows thy thought:

Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

71 *Thane of Fife*: Macduff; see 'Macbeth: the source', p.101.

71s.d. *Descends*: This stage direction from the Folio text suggests that the Apparitions would disappear through a trap-door in the stage.

72 *caution*: warning.

73 *harp'd*: guessed, hit upon.

First Apparition

70 Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth: beware Macduff,
Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

[*Descends*]

Macbeth

Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks;
Thou hast harp'd my fear aright. But one word more—

First Witch

He will not be commanded. Here's another,
75 More potent than the first.

Thunder. Enter Second Apparition, a bloody Child

Second Apparition

Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth.

Macbeth

Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

Second Apparition

Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born

80 Shall harm Macbeth.

[*Descends*]

Macbeth

Then live, Macduff, what need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live,
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,

85 And sleep in spite of thunder.

Thunder. Enter Third Apparition, a Child crowned with a tree in his hand

What is this,

That rises like the issue of a king
And wears upon his baby-brow the round
And top of sovereignty?

All the Witches

Listen, but speak not to't.

Third Apparition

Be lion-mettl'd, proud, and take no care

90 Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until

83 *bond*: contract, legal surety; by killing Macduff, Macbeth will guarantee that Fate will keep the promise of the second Apparition.

84 *That . . . lies*: so that I can tell these cowardly fears they are false.

86 *issue*: descendant.



87-8 *round . . . sovereignty*: the crown.

88 *speak not to't*: Spectators were usually warned to keep silent in the presence of supernatural phenomena.

89 *lion-mettl'd*: lion-hearted.

90 *chafes*: is angry.

frets: complains.

92 *Birnam . . . Hill*: Birnam Wood was about twelve miles from Dunsinane.

94 *impress*: press-gang.

95 *bodements*: predictions.

98 *the lease of nature*: a natural lifespan.

98–9 *pay . . . custom*: give up his life (as though he were paying a debt) to a normal old age.

104s.d. *Hautboys*: reed instruments, ancestors of the modern oboe.

110s.d. *show*: dumb-show.

eight kings: i.e. the Stuart monarchs who claimed descent from Banquo; James VI and I, then King of England, would be the latest of these—but his mother, Mary Queen of Scots, is excluded; she was executed by Queen Elizabeth's command in 1587.

glass: i.e. a magic crystal permitting visions of the future.



111–23 *Thou . . . his*: Macbeth comments on the kings as they pass before him.

Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.

[*Descends*

Macbeth

That will never be:

Who can impress the forest, bid the tree

95 Unfix his earthbound root? Sweet bodements, good.

Rebellious dead, rise never till the wood

Of Birnam rise, and our high-plac'd Macbeth

Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath

To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart

100 Throbs to know one thing. Tell me, if your art

Can tell so much, shall Banquo's issue ever

Reign in this kingdom?

All the Witches

Seek to know no more.

Macbeth

I will be satisfied. Deny me this,

And an eternal curse fall on you. Let me know.

Cauldron descends. Hautboys

105 Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this?

First Witch

Show!

Second Witch

Show!

Third Witch

Show!

All the Witches

Show his eyes and grieve his heart,

110 Come like shadows, so depart.

*Enter a show of eight kings, and the last with a glass
in his hand; Banquo's Ghost following*

Macbeth

Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!

Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,

Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first;

A third, is like the former.—Filthy hags,

115 *Start, eyes:* let my eyes jump out of my head.

116 *crack of doom:* break of Judgement Day (Doomsday).

120 *two-fold . . . sceptres:* i.e. the twin orbs of the English and Scottish crowns, and the sceptres of England, Scotland, and Wales.

122 *blood-bolter'd:* covered in clotted blood.

125 *amazedly:* bewildered.

129 *antic round:* grotesque dance (perhaps in a circle round Macbeth).

131 *Our . . . pay:* our homage has given him the welcome he deserves.

133 *aye:* for ever.

accursed: accursèd.

134 *without there:* whoever is outside (offstage).

115 Why do you show me this?—A fourth? Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?

Another yet? A seventh? I'll see no more.

And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass
Which shows me many more. And some I see,

120 That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry.

Horrible sight! Now I see 'tis true,

For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,

And points at them for his.

[*Exeunt show of kings and Banquo's Ghost*

What, is this so?

First Witch

Ay, sir, all this is so. But why

125 Stands Macbeth thus amazedly?

Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites,

And show the best of our delights.

I'll charm the air to give a sound,

While you perform your antic round

130 That this great king may kindly say,

Our duties did his welcome pay.

Music. The Witches dance, and vanish

Macbeth

Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour,

Stand aye accursed in the calendar.

Come in, without there!

Enter Lennox

Lennox

What's your grace's will?

Macbeth

135 Saw you the weird sisters?

Lennox

No, my lord.

Macbeth

Came they not by you?

Lennox

No indeed, my lord.

Macbeth

Infected be the air whereon they ride,
And damn'd all those that trust them. I did hear
The galloping of horse. Who was't came by?

Lennox

140 'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word
Macduff is fled to England.

Macbeth

Fled to England?

Lennox

Ay, my good lord.

Macbeth

[*Aside*] Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits;
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook

145 Unless the deed go with it. From this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and
done.

The castle of Macduff I will surprise;

150 Seize upon Fife; give to th'edge o'th'sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool,
But no more sights.—Where are these gentlemen?

155 Come, bring me where they are. [*Exeunt*]

143 *dread*: terrible.

144-5 *The . . . with it*: it's impossible to
act as quick as thought unless
intention and action go together.

146-7 *The firstlings . . . hand*: as soon as
I get an idea, I'll carry it out.
firstlings: firstborn things.

152 *trace . . . line*: descend from him, are
of his lineage.

Act 4 Scene 2

Lady Macduff questions Ross about her
husband's flight, and then tries to explain
the situation to her son. A Messenger warns
her to make a quick getaway, but Macbeth's
murderers burst into the room before she
can take his advice.

3-4 *When . . . traitors*: even when we
have done nothing, we are still traitors
for running away in fear.

SCENE 2

*Fife: Macduff's castle. Enter Lady Macduff, her son,
and Ross*

Lady Macduff

What had he done, to make him fly the land?

Ross

You must have patience, madam.

Lady Macduff

He had none;

His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.

Ross

You know not

5 Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.

Lady Macduff

Wisdom? To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion, and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not.
He wants the natural touch, for the poor wren,
10 The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear, and nothing is the love;
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason.

Ross

My dearest coz,

15 I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o'th'season. I dare not speak much further,
But cruel are the times when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves, when we hold rumour
20 From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea,
Each way and none. I take my leave of you;
Shall not be long but I'll be here again.
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
25 To what they were before. My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you.

Lady Macduff

Father'd he is, and yet he's fatherless.

Ross

I am so much a fool, should I stay longer
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.

30 I take my leave at once.

[Exit

Lady Macduff

Sirrah, your father's dead,

And what will you do now? How will you live?

Son

As birds do, mother.

Lady Macduff

What, with worms and flies?

7 *titles*: entitlements, the things belonging to his title of nobility.

9 *wants . . . touch*: lacks natural feelings.

12–14 *All . . . reason*: when it is so unreasonable to run away, it shows neither concern for his family ('love') nor wisdom, but only selfish fear.

14 *coz*: cousin (a general term of endearment).

15 *school*: control.
for: as for.

17 *fits o'th'season*: mood of the times.

18–19 *when . . . ourselves*: we behave in uncharacteristic ways and don't know what we are doing.

19–20 *hold . . . fear*: believe rumours because we are fearful.

22 *Each . . . none*: this way and that, and get nowhere in the end.

23 *Shall . . . again*: it won't be long before I come back.

24 *climb upward*: get better, improve.

29 *It would . . . discomfort*: Ross is afraid that he will be moved to tears, embarrassing himself and Lady Macduff.

30 *Sirrah*: A term of endearment (as used here), abuse, or condescension.

34-5 *net . . . gin*: Lady Macduff lists different methods of catching birds.

34 *lime*: sticky lime on tree branches.

35 *pitfall*: covered hole.

gin: snare.

36 *Poor . . . for*: traps aren't set for fowls of inferior species.

41 *Then . . . again*: if you can get them so easily, you will not want to keep them.

42 *wit*: intelligence.

43 *for thee*: for your age.

47 *swears*: takes an oath.

Son

With what I get I mean, and so do they.

Lady Macduff

35 Poor bird, thou'dst never fear the net, nor lime, the pitfall, nor the gin.

Son

Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for. My father is not dead for all your saying.

Lady Macduff

Yes, he is dead. How wilt thou do for a father?

Son

Nay, how will you do for a husband?

Lady Macduff

40 Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

Son

Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

Lady Macduff

Thou speak'st with all thy wit, and yet i'faith with wit enough for thee.

Son

Was my father a traitor, mother?

Lady Macduff

45 Ay, that he was.

Son

What is a traitor?

Lady Macduff

Why, one that swears and lies.

Son

And be all traitors, that do so?

Lady Macduff

Every one that does so is a traitor and must be hanged.

Son

50 And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

Lady Macduff

Every one.

Son

Who must hang them?

Lady Macduff

Why, the honest men.

Son

Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars
55 and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang
them up.

Lady Macduff

Now God help thee, poor monkey, but how wilt thou do
for a father?

Son

If he were dead, you'd weep for him; if you would not, it
60 were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

Lady Macduff

Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

Enter a Messenger

Messenger

Bless you, fair dame. I am not to you known,
Though in your state of honour I am perfect;
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly.

63 *in your state . . . perfect:* I know your
rank and reputation very well.
64 *doubt:* fear, suspect.
65 *homely:* humble.
If you will take a homely man's advice,
65 Be not found here. Hence with your little ones.
To fright you thus, methinks I am too savage;

To do worse to you were fell cruelty,
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you,

70 I dare abide no longer. [Exit

Lady Macduff

Whither should I fly?

I have done no harm. But I remember now
I am in this earthly world where to do harm
Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly. Why then, alas,

75 Do I put up that womanly defence,
To say I have done no harm?

Enter Murderers

What are these faces?

A Murderer

Where is your husband?

78 *unsanctified*: accursed.

Lady Macduff
I hope in no place so unsanctified,
Where such as thou mayst find him.

A Murderer

He's a traitor.

Son

80 Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain.

A Murderer

80 *egg*: youngster.

What, you egg!

81 *fry*: spawn, offspring.

Young fry of treachery!

Kills him

Son

He has kill'd me, mother.

Run away, I pray you!

[Exit Lady Macduff crying 'Murder', pursued by
Murderers with her Son]

Act 4 Scene 3

At the English court Malcolm and Macduff test each other's loyalties. There are plans to attack Macbeth—and Macduff hears the news of the murder of his wife and children.

3 *mortal*: deadly, death-dealing.3–4 *like . . . birthdom*: protect the country of our birth from ruin as good soldiers stand astride a fallen comrade.8 *Like*: the same.*wail*: lament, grieve for.9 *What . . . believe*: only believe what I know to be true.*redress*: put right.10 *As . . . friend*: when the time is right.11 *What . . . perchance*: perhaps what you say is true.12 *sole name*: name alone.**SCENE 3***The English Court: enter Malcolm and Macduff*

Malcolm

Let us seek out some desolate shade and there
Weep our sad bosoms empty.

Macduff

Let us rather

Hold fast the mortal sword and like good men
Bestride our downfall birthdom; each new morn,
5 New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows
Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out
Like syllable of dolour.

Malcolm

What I believe, I'll wail;

What know, believe; and what I can redress,

10 As I shall find the time to friend, I will.

What you have spoke, it may be so perchance.

This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,

Was once thought honest; you have lov'd him well—

- 14 *touch'd*: harmed.
- 14–15 *something . . . me*: you may gain something from him through betraying me.
- wisdom*: it is wisdom.
- 16 *innocent lamb*: The image of the sacrificial lamb is central to the Christian religion.
- 19–20 *A good . . . charge*: Malcolm suggests that Macduff's honourable nature may have degenerated under Macbeth's government.
- 21 *That . . . transpose*: my suspicious thoughts can't change your nature.
- 22 *Angels . . . fell*: there are still some bright-shining angels, although the brightest of them fell from God's grace.
- the brightest*: Lucifer ('the light-bearer') who rebelled against God and was thrown down from heaven (Isaiah 14: 4, 12).
- 23–4 *Though . . . so*: if everything that's evil tried to look virtuous, virtue would still look the same.
- 23 *brows*: forehead, appearance.
- 25 *Perchance*: perhaps.
- even there*: i.e. in Macduff's flight to England: Macduff had been hoping that he could overthrow Macbeth—but his sudden flight to England has aroused Malcolm's suspicions.
- 26 *rawness*: exposed situation.
- 27 *motives*: reasons for staying in Scotland.
- knots*: ties.
- 29–30 *Let . . . safeties*: my suspicions are not meant to dishonour you but to protect myself.
- 32–3 *tyranny . . . check thee*: tyranny can make itself secure, since virtue—Malcolm—dare not oppose it.
- 33–4 *wear . . . affeer'd*: Macbeth can wear his stolen crown because his title to it is legally confirmed ('affeer'd' is a legal term) by Malcolm's ineffectiveness.
- 37 *to boot*: in addition.
- 38 *in absolute fear*: entirely in fear.
- 39 *the yoke*: i.e. Macbeth's government; the 'yoke' fastens oxen to the plough.
- 41 *withal*: as well.

He hath not touch'd you yet. I am young, but something

- 15 You may discern of him through me, and wisdom
To offer up a weak, poor innocent lamb
T'appease an angry god.

Macduff

I am not treacherous.

Malcolm

But Macbeth is.

- A good and virtuous nature may recoil
20 In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon:
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose;
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so.

Macduff

I have lost my hopes.

Malcolm

- 25 Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonours,
30 But mine own safeties; you may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.

Macduff

Bleed, bleed, poor country.

Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee; wear thou thy wrongs,

- The title is affeer'd. Fare thee well, lord,
35 I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot.

Malcolm

Be not offended.

- I speak not as in absolute fear of you:
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke;
40 It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds. I think withal
There would be hands uplifted in my right,

43 *England*: the King of England, Edward the Confessor.

48–9 *More . . . succeed*: suffer more, and in many more different ways, under his successor; see '*Macbeth*: the source', p.101.

51 *grafted*: made part of me (as gardeners graft plants together).
52 *open'd*: i.e. like buds; Malcolm continues the gardening image.

55 *confineless harms*: boundless injuries.
legions: multitudes, battalions.

58 *Luxurious*: lascivious, lecherous.
59 *Sudden*: rash, impulsive.
smacking: tasting.

63 *cistern*: tank, container of fluids.
63–5 *my desire . . . will*: my lust would overflow all barriers of restraint that opposed me.

66–7 *Boundless . . . tyranny*: lack of self-control is a tyranny in a man's character.

67–8 *it hath . . . throne*: it has caused many thrones to become vacant prematurely.

71 *Convey . . . plenty*: have plenty of scope to carry on as you please.

72 *hoodwink*: deceive (by blindfolding).

74 *vulture*: The bird is the epitome of greediness.

And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands. But for all this,
45 When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

Macduff

What should he be?

Malcolm

50 It is myself I mean—in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
Than when they shall be open'd, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Esteem him as a lamb, being compar'd

55 With my confineless harms.

Macduff

Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd
In evils to top Macbeth.

Malcolm

I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
60 That has a name. But there's no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness: your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o'erbear
65 That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth,
Than such an one to reign.

Macduff

Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyranny; it hath been
Th'untimely emptying of the happy throne
And fall of many kings. But fear not yet
70 To take upon you what is yours: you may
Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty
And yet seem cold. The time you may so hoodwink.
We have willing dames enough; there cannot be
That vulture in you to devour so many

75-6 *dedicate . . . inclin'd*: offer themselves in (sexual) service to the king as soon as they know he likes that sort of thing.

77 *ill-compos'd affection*: unbalanced disposition.

78 *stanchless*: unstoppable, insatiable.

79 *cut off*: put to death.

80 *his . . . house*: this man's jewels, and that man's house.

81-2 *my . . . more*: the more I had, the more I would want.

85 *Sticks deeper*: is more deeply rooted.

86 *summer-seeming lust*: lust which is hot but transitory, lasting only for the summer of a man's life.

87 *sword . . . kings*: the death of some Scottish kings.

88-9 *Scotland . . . own*: you have rich harvests ('foisons') of your own in Scotland that should satisfy you.

89 *portable*: bearable.

90 *weigh'd*: balanced.

91 *king-becoming graces*: virtues appropriate for a king.

93 *perseverance*: The stress is on the second syllable.

95 *relish*: trace.

96 *division*: variation.

several: particular, individual.

97-8 *I should . . . hell*: I would say 'To hell with all harmony'.

99 *Uproar*: cause uproar among.

104 *untitl'd*: illegitimate, having no right to the title.

bloody-sceptr'd: holding the sceptre through bloodshed.

75 As will to greatness dedicate themselves,
Finding it so inclin'd.

Malcolm

With this, there grows

In my most ill-compos'd affection such

A stanchless avarice that, were I king,

I should cut off the nobles for their lands,

80 Desire his jewels, and this other's house,

And my more-having would be as a sauce

To make me hunger more, that I should forge

Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,

Destroying them for wealth.

Macduff

This avarice

85 Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root

Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been

The sword of our slain kings; yet do not fear,

Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will

Of your mere own. All these are portable,

90 With other graces weigh'd.

Malcolm

But I have none. The king-becoming graces—

As justice, verity, temp'rance, stableness,

Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,

Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude—

95 I have no relish of them, but abound

In the division of each several crime,

Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should

Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,

Uproar the universal peace, confound

100 All unity on earth.

Macduff

O Scotland, Scotland!

Malcolm

If such a one be fit to govern, speak.

I am as I have spoken.

Macduff

Fit to govern?

No, not to live. O nation miserable!

With an untitl'd tyrant, bloody-sceptr'd,

- 107-8 *By . . . breed*: by his own act convicts himself of treachery, and defames his own birth and heritage.
- 107 *interdiction*: legal restraint placed on those incapable of managing their own affairs.
- 111 *Died . . . lived*: lived each day as though it were her last; compare St Paul's claim, 'I die daily' (1 Corinthians 15:31).
- 112-13 *These . . . Scotland*: it's just those crimes you accuse yourself of [committed by Macbeth] that have forced me to leave Scotland.
- 115 *Child of integrity*: Macduff's grief for Scotland could only spring from his honesty.
- 116 *scruples*: doubts.
- 118 *trains*: stratagems.
- 119-20 *modest . . . haste*: cautious wisdom prevents me from trusting people too quickly.
- 123-4 *abjure . . . myself*: renounce all the accusations I made against myself.
- 126 *Unknown to woman*: a virgin.
was forsworn: committed perjury.
- 133 *here-approach*: coming here.
- 134 *Old Siward*: The Earl of Northumberland.
- 135 *at a point*: in readiness.
- 136 *we'll together*: we'll go together.
- 136-7 *chance . . . quarrel*: may our chances of success be as good as our cause is lawful.
- 139 *'Tis . . . reconcile*: Macduff is not completely convinced by Malcolm.
more anon: we'll talk more about it later.
- 105 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again,
Since that the truest issue of thy throne
By his own interdiction stands accurs'd
And does blaspheme his breed? Thy royal father
Was a most sainted king; the queen that bore thee,
110 Oft'ner upon her knees than on her feet,
Died every day she lived. Fare thee well,
These evils thou repeat'st upon thyself
Hath banish'd me from Scotland. O my breast,
Thy hope ends here.
- Malcolm**
- Macduff, this noble passion,
- 115 Child of integrity, hath from my soul
Wip'd the black scruples, reconcil'd my thoughts
To thy good truth and honour. Devilish Macbeth
By many of these trains hath sought to win me
Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me
120 From over-credulous haste; but God above
Deal between thee and me, for even now
I put myself to thy direction and
Unspeak mine own detraction, here abjure
The taints and blames I laid upon myself,
125 For strangers to my nature. I am yet
Unknown to woman, never was forsworn,
Scarcely have coveted what was mine own,
At no time broke my faith, would not betray
The devil to his fellow, and delight
130 No less in truth than life. My first false speaking
Was this upon myself. What I am truly
Is thine, and my poor country's, to command:
Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,
Old Siward with ten thousand warlike men
135 Already at a point was setting forth.
Now we'll together, and the chance of goodness
Be like our warranted quarrel. Why are you silent?
- Macduff**
- Such welcome and unwelcome things at once,
'Tis hard to reconcile.

Enter a Doctor

Malcolm

Well, more anon.—

140 Comes the king forth, I pray you?

Doctor

Ay, sir: there are a crew of wretched souls
That stay his cure; their malady convinces
The great assay of art, but at his touch,
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand,

145 They presently amend.

[Exit

Malcolm

I thank you, doctor.

Macduff

What's the disease he means?

Malcolm

'Tis called the Evil.

A most miraculous work in this good king,

150 Which often since my here-remain in England

I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven

Himself best knows, but strangely visited people

All swoll'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,

The mere despair of surgery, he cures,

155 Hanging a golden stamp about their necks

Put on with holy prayers, and 'tis spoken

To the succeeding royalty he leaves

The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,

He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,

160 And sundry blessings hang about his throne

That speak him full of grace.

Enter Ross

Macduff

See who comes here.

Malcolm

My countryman, but yet I know him not.

Macduff

My ever gentle cousin, welcome hither.

142 *stay his cure*: wait for his healing touch; Edward the Confessor was thought to possess a heavenly power, which he bequeathed to succeeding monarchs, to cure scrofula—an inflammation of the lymph nodes which was popularly known as the 'King's Evil'.

convinces: overcomes, baffles.

143 *great . . . art*: greatest efforts of medical skill.

145 *presently amend*: recover at once.

151 *solicits*: entreats.

152 *visited*: afflicted.

154 *mere*: complete.

155 *stamp*: coin, medal; Queen Elizabeth and King James both gave coins to those they 'touched'.



158 *healing benediction*: blessed gift of healing.

162 *My . . . not*: Ross is probably identifiable as a Scot by his tartan clothing.

163 *ever gentle*: always noble.

164 *betimes*: as soon as possible.

165 *means*: circumstances.

166 *Stands . . . did*: is Scotland still the same as it was.

168-9 *nothing . . . smile*: the only people to smile are those who don't know what's going on.

169 *once*: ever.

172 *modern ecstasy*: everyday emotion.

172-3 *The deadman's . . . who*: hardly anyone bothers to ask who is dead when they hear a funeral bell.

175 *or ere*: before.

176 *nice*: accurate.

177-8 *That . . . one*: people mock the speaker who tells a tale that's an hour old because every minute brings ('teems' = breeds) a new one.

178 *does*: is.

182 *niggard*: miser.

Malcolm

I know him now. Good God betimes remove

165 The means that makes us strangers.

Ross

Sir, amen.

Macduff

Stands Scotland where it did?

Ross

Alas, poor country,

Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot

Be call'd our mother, but our grave, where nothing,

But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;

170 Where sighs, and groans, and shrieks that rend the air

Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems

A modern ecstasy. The deadman's knell

Is there scarce ask'd for who, and good men's lives

Expire before the flowers in their caps,

175 Dying or ere they sicken.

Macduff

O relation

Too nice, and yet too true.

Malcolm

What's the newest grief?

Ross

That of an hour's age doth hiss the speaker;

Each minute teems a new one.

Macduff

How does my wife?

Ross

Why, well.

Macduff

And all my children?

Ross

Well, too.

Macduff

180 The tyrant has not batter'd at their peace?

Ross

No, they were well at peace when I did leave 'em.

Macduff

Be not a niggard of your speech: how goes't?

183–90 *When . . . distresses*: Ross dodges Macduff's question about his family.

185 *out*: preparing for war.

186–7 *Which . . . afoot*: I had evidence to confirm my belief when I saw Macbeth's army on the move.

188 *eye*: presence in person.

190 *doff*: cast off (like clothes).

193–4 *An . . . out*: no soldier in the whole Christian kingdom is said to be a more experienced ('older') and better soldier.

196 *would be*: ought to be.

197 *latch*: catch.

198–9 *a fee-grief . . . breast*: very personal grief belonging to one person alone; Macduff uses legal terminology.

Ross

When I came hither to transport the tidings
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour
Of many worthy fellows that were out,
Which was to my belief witness'd the rather
For that I saw the tyrant's power afoot.
Now is the time of help. [*To Malcolm*] Your eye in
Scotland
Would create soldiers, make our women fight
To doff their dire distresses.

Malcolm

Be't their comfort
We are coming thither. Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men—
An older and a better soldier none
That Christendom gives out.

Ross

Would I could answer
This comfort with the like. But I have words
That would be howl'd out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not latch them.

Macduff

What concern they?

The general cause, or is it a fee-grief
Due to some single breast?

Ross

No mind that's honest
But in it shares some woe, though the main part
Pertains to you alone.

Macduff

If it be mine,
Keep it not from me; quickly let me have it.

Ross

Let not your ears despise my tongue forever
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard.

Macduff

H'm—I guess at it.

Ross

Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes
Savagely slaughter'd. To relate the manner

208 *quarry . . . deer*: piled up bodies of deer killed in a day's hunting; Ross makes a bitter pun on 'deer' and 'dear'.

210 *pull . . . brows*: Macduff is trying to hide his grief.

211–12 *the grief . . . break*: when grief doesn't speak out, it breaks the overburdened heart.

214 *from thence*: away from home.

218 *He has no children*: Macduff may refer either to Malcolm (who cannot know a father's feelings), or to Macbeth (who cannot be made to suffer appropriate revenge).

219 *hell-kite*: devilish bird of prey.

221 *one fell swoop*: a single savage attack; the now-proverbial phrase originated here.

222 *Dispute*: bear.

like a man: i.e. bravely.

224 *as a man*: i.e. with grief.

228 *for thee*: because of you.

228–9 *Naught . . . demerits*: although I am nothing, they were killed because of my failings.

Were on the quarry of these murder'd deer
To add the death of you.

Malcolm

Merciful heaven—

210 What, man, ne'er pull your hat upon your brows:
Give sorrow words; the grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

Macduff

My children too?

Ross

Wife, children, servants, all

That could be found.

Macduff

And I must be from thence?

215 My wife kill'd too?

Ross

I have said.

Malcolm

Be comforted.

Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge
To cure this deadly grief.

Macduff

He has no children. All my pretty ones?

Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?

220 What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?

Malcolm

Dispute it like a man.

Macduff

I shall do so;

But I must also feel it as a man;

225 I cannot but remember such things were
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee. Naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits but for mine,

230 Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now.

Malcolm

Be this the whetstone of your sword, let grief
Convert to anger. Blunt not the heart, enrage it.

233 *I . . . eyes:* I could act like a woman
and weep.

234 *braggart:* boaster (threatening more
than he can do).

235 *intermission:* interval (between now
and the time he meets Macbeth).
Front to front: face (forehead) to face.

237-8 *if . . . too:* may God forgive him also
if I allow him to escape.

240 *leave:* permission to depart.

242 *put . . . instruments:* are arming
themselves; Malcolm claims that the
forces of good are on his side (just as
Lady Macbeth invoked the powers of
evil for the murder of Duncan).

Macduff

O, I could play the woman with mine eyes
And braggart with my tongue. But gentle heavens,
235 Cut short all intermission. Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
Within my sword's length set him. If he scape,
Heaven forgive him too.

Malcolm

This tune goes manly.
Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;
240 Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:
The night is long that never finds the day. [Exeunt

ACT 5

Act 5 Scene 1

Lady Macbeth walks in her sleep, dreaming about the murder of Duncan.

Os.d. *Doctor of Physic*: physician.

1 *watched*: stayed awake.

3 *field*: battlefield.

4 *night-gown*: dressing-gown (see 2, 2, 73).

5 *closet*: cabinet.

fold: Elizabethans told their writing-paper first to make margins then, after writing, to form envelopes.

6 *seal*: Letters were usually stamped over the folds with the writer's personal seal.

8 *perturbation*: disturbance.

9 *do . . . watching*: act as though she were awake.

10 *slumbery agitation*: sleeping activity; the Doctor's language is professionally formal.

11 *actual*: active, physical.

13 *report after her*: repeat behind her back.

16s.d. *taper*: candle.

17 *guise*: appearance.

18 *close*: hidden.

SCENE 1

Lady Macbeth's apartments: enter a Doctor of Physic, and a Waiting-Gentlewoman

Doctor

I have two nights watched with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walked?

Gentlewoman

Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed, yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

Doctor

A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep and do the effects of watching. In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what at any time have you heard her say?

Gentlewoman

That, sir, which I will not report after her.

Doctor

You may to me, and 'tis most meet you should.

Gentlewoman

15 Neither to you, nor anyone, having no witness to confirm my speech.

Enter Lady Macbeth, with a taper

Lo you, here she comes. This is her very guise and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her, stand close.

Doctor

How came she by that light?

Gentlewoman

20 Why, it stood by her. She has light by her continually, 'tis her command.

Doctor

You see her eyes are open.

Gentlewoman

Ay, but their sense are shut.

Doctor

What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman

25 It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands; I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady Macbeth

Yet here's a spot.

Doctor

29 *set*: write.

Hark, she speaks; I will set down what comes from her to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

Lady Macbeth

31 *One, two*: Lady Macbeth, reliving her past experiences in her sleep, hears the striking of a bell—perhaps that which called Macbeth to murder Duncan (2, 1, 62).

35 Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One, two. Why then 'tis time to do't. Hell is murky. Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account? Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Doctor

Do you mark that?

Lady Macbeth

38 *Thane of Fife*: Macduff.

40 The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o'that, my lord, no more o'that. You mar all with this starting.

Doctor

Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

Gentlewoman

She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that. Heaven knows what she has known.

Lady Macbeth

44–5 *perfumes of Arabia*: Many spices (from which perfumes were made) were imported from [Saudi] Arabia.

45 Here's the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. O, O, O.

Doctor

46 *sorely charged*: heavily burdened.

What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

48 *dignity*: status (i.e. Lady Macbeth's status as queen).

Gentlewoman

I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body.

Doctor

Well, well, well—

Gentlewoman

50 Pray God it be, sir.

Doctor

This disease is beyond my practice; yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep who have died holily in their beds.

Lady Macbeth

55 Wash your hands, put on your night-gown, look not so pale. I tell you yet again, Banquo's buried; he cannot come out on's grave.

51 *practice*: professional skill.

Doctor

Even so?

Lady Macbeth

To bed, to bed; there's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, give me your hand; what's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed. [Exit

56 *on's*: of his.

Doctor

Will she go now to bed?

Gentlewoman

Directly.

Doctor

Foul whisp' rings are abroad; unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles; infected minds
65 To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets.
More needs she the divine than the physician.
God, God forgive us all. Look after her;
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her. So, good night,
70 My mind she has mated, and amaz'd my sight.
I think, but dare not speak.

63 *abroad*: about, at large.

66 *divine*: priest.

68 *means . . . annoyance*: anything she might use to harm herself.

69 *still*: always.

70 *mated*: stunned.

amaz'd: bewildered.

Gentlewoman

Good night, good doctor.

[Exeunt

**Act 5 Scene 2**

A section of the army marches towards Dunsinane, and their leaders discuss the enemy, Macbeth, who is showing signs of panic.

Os.d. *Drum and colours*: military sounds and regimental banners.

1 *power*: force.

3 *Reverges*: desires for revenge.

3-5 *their . . . man*: those great causes would be enough to rouse a dead man to answer a call to arms in bloody warfare.

4 *bleeding*: bloodshed.

5 *mortified*: dead, insensible.

SCENE 2

Countryside near Dunsinane. Drum and colours.

Enter Menteith, Caithness, Angus, Lennox, Soldiers

Menteith

The English power is near, led on by Malcolm,
His uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.
Reverges burn in them, for their dear causes
Would to the bleeding and the grim alarm

5 Excite the mortified man.

Angus

Near Birnam Wood
Shall we well meet them; that way are they coming.

Caithness

Who knows if Donaldbain be with his brother?

Lennox

For certain, sir, he is not. I have a file
Of all the gentry; there is Siward's son

10 *unrough*: beardless.

10 And many unrough youths that even now
Protest their first of manhood.

11 *Protest . . . manhood*: show that now
they have reached manhood.

Menteith

What does the tyrant?

Caithness

Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies.
Some say he's mad; others that lesser hate him
Do call it valiant fury, but for certain

15-16 *buckle . . . rule*: contain his
disordered government through control
by force.

15 He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause
Within the belt of rule.

Angus

Now does he feel

His secret murders sticking on his hands.

18 *minutely . . . breach*: every minute
new revolts reproach him for his own
treason.

Now minutely revolts upbraid his faith-breach;
Those he commands, move only in command,

19-20 *move . . . love*: act in obedience
only and not in loyalty.

20 Nothing in love. Now does he feel his title
Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
Upon a dwarfish thief.

20-2 *Now . . . thief*: Once again titles
and ambitions are described in terms
of clothing.

Menteith

Who then shall blame

His pester'd senses to recoil and start

23 *pester'd*: vexed.

When all that is within him does condemn

24-5 *all . . . there*: Macbeth's own nature
is in rebellion against himself.

25 Itself for being there?

Caithness

Well, march we on

To give obedience where 'tis truly ow'd;

27 *med'cine*: physician—i.e. Malcolm.
weal: land.

Meet we the med'cine of the sickly weal,

28-9 *pour . . . us*: pour out every drop of
our blood to cleanse our country;
blood-letting—drawing blood from a
patient—was regularly used in the
treatment of diseases.

And with him pour we in our country's purge,
Each drop of us.

Lennox

Or so much as it needs

30 *dew*: water.

30 To dew the sovereign flower and drown the weeds.
Make we our march towards Birnam.

{*Exeunt, marching*}

Act 5 Scene 3

Macbeth learns of the approaching armies; he discusses his wife's condition with the Doctor, then goes off to battle.

1 *them*: the thanes.

3 *taint*: go rotten, lose courage.

5 *mortal consequences*: human fates.

8 *The English epicures*: the soft-living English.

9 *sway*: rule myself.

11 *cream-fac'd*: white-faced.

loon: lound—a Scottish term of abuse (= villain, rogue).

14 *over-red*: redden over, paint red over.

15 *lily-liver'd*: with a bloodless liver (traditionally thought to be the seat of courage).

patch: idiot.

17 *whey-face*: milk-face; 'whey' is the thin white liquid left when the milk curdles.

20 *push*: onslaught; thrust (of weapons).

21 *cheer*: comfort; Macbeth can still make a pun with 'chair'.

disseat: unseat, de-throne.

22 *my way of life*: the course of my life.

SCENE 3

Dunsinane, Macbeth's castle: enter Macbeth, Doctor, and Attendants

Macbeth

Bring me no more reports, let them fly all;
Till Birnam Wood remove to Dunsinane,
I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know
5 All mortal consequences have pronounc'd me thus:
'Fear not, Macbeth, no man that's born of woman
Shall e'er have power upon thee.' Then fly false thanes
And mingle with the English epicures;
The mind I sway by and the heart I bear
10 Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.

Enter Servant

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon.
Where got'st thou that goose-look?

Servant

There is ten thousand—

Macbeth

Geese, villain?

Servant

Soldiers, sir.

Macbeth

Go prick thy face and over-red thy fear,
15 Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?
Death of thy soul, those linen cheeks of thine
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

Servant

The English force, so please you.

Macbeth

Take thy face hence!

[*Exit Servant*

Seyton!—I am sick at heart,

20 When I behold—Seyton, I say!—this push
Will cheer me ever or disseat me now.

23 *the sere . . . leaf*: Compare the opening lines of Shakespeare's Sonnet 73, 'That time of year thou mayst in me behold / When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang / Upon those boughs that shake against the cold . . .'

27 *mouth-honour*: flattery, lip-service.

28 *fain*: willingly.

I have liv'd long enough. My way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,
And that which should accompany old age,
25 As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep; mouth-honour, breath
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.
Seyton!

Enter Seyton

Seyton

30 What's your gracious pleasure?

Macbeth

What news more?

Seyton

All is confirm'd, my lord, which was reported.

Macbeth

I'll fight till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.
Give me my armour.

Seyton

'Tis not needed yet.

Macbeth

36 *skirr*: scour.

35 I'll put it on;

Send out more horses; skirr the country round.

Hang those that talk of fear. Give me mine armour.

How does your patient, doctor?

Doctor

Not so sick, my lord,

As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies

40 That keep her from her rest.

Macbeth

Cure her of that.

41 *minister to*: treat.

42 *rooted*: deeply embedded.

43 *Raze*: eradicate, root out.
written: imprinted.

44 *oblivious*: causing forgetfulness.

45 *stuff'd bosom*: burdened heart.

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,

Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,

Raze out the written troubles of the brain,

And with some sweet oblivious antidote

45 Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff

Which weighs upon the heart?

Doctor

Therein the patient

51 *dispatch*: hurry up.

51-2 *cast The water*: test the urine.

53 *pristine*: undefiled.

55 *Pull't off*: Macbeth speaks to the attendant, probably referring to his armour.

56 *rhubarb, cynne*: medicinal plants prescribed as emetics and purgatives.

57 *scour*: drive out.

58 *preparation*: i.e. for war.

59 *Bring it after me*: Either the piece of armour of line 55, or some further news.

60 *bane*: destruction.

63 *Profit . . . here*: The avarice of physicians was always a target for satire.

Act 5 Scene 4

Malcolm's army camouflage themselves with branches from the trees of Birnam Wood.

2 *chambers . . . safe*: we shall be able to sleep in peace.

Must minister to himself.

Macbeth

Throw physic to the dogs, I'll none of it.

Come, put mine armour on; give me my staff.—

50 Seyton, send out.—Doctor, the thanes fly from me.—
[To Attendant] Come sir, dispatch.—If thou couldst,
doctor, cast

The water of my land, find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo

55 That should applaud again.—Pull't off, I say!—

What rhubarb, cynne, or what purgative drug
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of
them?

Doctor

Ay, my good lord; your royal preparation
Makes us hear something.

Macbeth

Bring it after me.—

60 I will not be afraid of death and bane,
Till Birnam Forest come to Dunsinane.

[Exeunt all but Doctor

Doctor

Were I from Dunsinane away and clear,
Profit again should hardly draw me here.

[Exit

SCENE 4

*Birnam Wood. Drum and colours. Enter Malcolm,
Siward, Macduff, Siward's son, Menteith, Caithness,
Angus, and Soldiers, marching*

Malcolm

Cousins, I hope the days are near at hand
That chambers will be safe.

Menteith

We doubt it nothing.

Siward

What wood is this before us?

Menteith

The Wood of Birnam.

Malcolm

Let every soldier hew him down a bough,

5 And bear't before him; thereby shall we shadow
The numbers of our host and make discovery
Err in report of us.

A Soldier

It shall be done.

Siward

We learn no other, but the confident tyrant
Keeps still in Dunsinane and will endure

10 Our setting down before't.

Malcolm

'Tis his main hope,

For where there is advantage to be given,

Both more and less have given him the revolt,

And none serve with him but constrained things

Whose hearts are absent too.

Macduff

Let our just censures

15 Attend the true event and put we on
Industrious soldiership.

Siward

The time approaches

That will with due decision make us know

What we shall say we have and what we owe;

Thoughts speculative their unsure hopes relate,

20 But certain issue strokes must arbitrate.

Towards which advance the war. [Exeunt, marching

5 *shadow*: conceal.

6-7 *make . . . us*: make Macbeth's
reconnaissance agents give a false
report of our numbers.

8 *no other*: no other news.

10 *setting down*: laying siege, setting up
camp.

11 *advantage . . . given*: opportunity to
escape.

12 *more and less*: high and low in rank.

13 *constrained things*: constrained;
miserable conscripts.

14-15 *Let . . . event*: let's leave our
criticisms until the battle's over.

18 *owe*: lack, are missing.

19 *Thoughts . . . relate*: speculation
about what will happen is based on
uncertain hopes, but actual fighting
(‘strokes’) will decide the certain
outcome (‘issue’).



Act 5 Scene 5

When the battle is at its height, Macbeth learns that his wife has died—and that Birnam Wood is coming towards Dunsinane.

SCENE 5

Dunsinane: inside Macbeth's castle; enter Macbeth, Seyton, and Soldiers, with drum and colours

Macbeth

Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still, 'They come.' Our castle's strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn; here let them lie
Till famine and the ague eat them up.

- 4 *ague*: disease (characterized by fever and shivering fits).
5 *forc'd*: reinforced.

- 5 Were they not forc'd with those that should be ours,
We might have met them daresful, beard to beard,
And beat them backward home.

7s.d. *A cry within*: Some editors/directors send Seyton to enquire about this 'cry' ('within' = offstage); others introduce a servant who speaks to Seyton.

A cry within of women

What is that noise?

Seyton

It is the cry of women, my good lord.

Macbeth

I have almost forgot the taste of fears;
10 The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
As life were in't. I have supp'd full with horrors;
Direness familiar to my slaughterous thoughts
15 Cannot once start me. Wherefore was that cry?

- 11 *fell*: head, shock.
12 *dismal treatise*: frightening story.
13 *As*: as if.
14 *Direness*: horror.
15 *start*: startle, alarm.

Seyton

The queen, my lord, is dead.

Macbeth

She should have died hereafter;
There would have been a time for such a word.
Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day
20 To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
25 And then is heard no more. It is a tale

- 16-17 *She . . . word*: At least two meanings are possible for these lines: a) 'she would have died sooner or later: such a time would inevitably have come'; b) 'she ought to have died later, when there would have been more time (for mourning)'.
19 *petty*: trivial.
20 *To . . . time*: until the last syllable of remembered time shall have been recorded.
22 *candle*: i.e. life.
23 *player*: actor.
24 *frets*: raves.

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing.

Enter a Messenger

Thou com'st to use thy tongue: thy story quickly.

Messenger

Gracious my lord,

30 *I say I saw*: The Messenger cannot believe his eyes.

30 I should report that which I say I saw,
But know not how to do't.

Macbeth

Well, say, sir.

Messenger

32 *watch*: guard.

As I did stand my watch upon the hill

33 *anon*: suddenly.

I look'd toward Birnam and anon methought
The wood began to move.

Macbeth

Liar and slave!

Messenger

35 Let me endure your wrath if't be not so;
Within this three milè may you see it coming.
I say, a moving grove.

Macbeth

If thou speak'st false,

39 *cling thee*: shrivel you up.
sooth: truth, true.

Upon the next tree shall thou hang alive
Till famine cling thee; if thy speech be sooth,

41 *pull in resolution*: check my determination.

40 I care not if thou dost for me as much.

42 *equivocation*: double-dealing.
fiend: i.e. the third Apparition.

I pull in resolution and begin

To doubt th'equivocation of the fiend

That lies like truth. 'Fear not, till Birnam Wood
Do come to Dunsinane', and now a wood

46 *avouches*: claims, affirms.

45 Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!

47 *nor . . . nor*: neither . . . nor.
tarrying: staying.

If this which he avouches does appear,
There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.
I 'gin to be awearry of the sun

49 *estate o'th'world*: the order of creation.

And wish th'estate o'th'world were now undone.

51 *harness*: armour.

50 Ring the alarum bell! Blow wind, come wrack;

At least we'll die with harness on our back. [*Exeunt*]

Act 5 Scene 6

Malcolm's army reaches Macbeth's castle:
battle is commenced.

SCENE 6

*Dunsinane, surrounding the castle. Drum and
colours. Enter Malcolm, Siward, Macduff, and their
army, with boughs*

Malcolm

Now near enough; your leafy screens throw down
And show like those you are. You, worthy uncle,
Shall with my cousin your right noble son
Lead our first battle. Worthy Macduff and we
5 Shall take upon's what else remains to do,
According to our order.

Siward

Fare you well.

Do we but find the tyrant's power tonight,
Let us be beaten if we cannot fight.

Macduff

Make all our trumpets speak; give them all breath,
10 Those clamorous harbingers of blood and death.

[*Exeunt*

Alarums continued

4 *battle*: army, division of an army.
we: Malcolm begins to speak in the
royal plural.

7 *power*: military forces.

9 *give . . . breath*: blow them as hard as
you can.

10 *harbingers*: officers sent ahead to
make reservations (see 1, 4, 45).

10s.d. *Alarums continued*: From this
point onwards the action is
continuous, and the audience must
move in imagination to different parts
of the battlefield.

Act 5 Scene 7

Macbeth encounters Young Siward and kills him.

- 1 *tyed . . . stake*: i.e. like a bear chained to a post and attacked by dogs in the so-called 'sport' of bear-baiting.



- 11 *abhorred*: abhorred.

SCENE 7

Before or inside the castle of Dunsinane: enter Macbeth

Macbeth

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But bear-like I must fight the course. What's he
That was not born of woman? Such a one
Am I to fear, or none.

Enter Young Siward

Young Siward

- 5 What is thy name?

Macbeth

Thou'lt be afraid to hear it.

Young Siward

No, though thou call'st thyself a hotter name
Than any is in hell.

Macbeth

My name's Macbeth.

Young Siward

- The devil himself could not pronounce a title
10 More hateful to mine ear.

Macbeth

No, nor more fearful.

Young Siward

Thou liest, abhorred tyrant; with my sword
I'll prove the lie thou speak'st.

Fight, and Young Siward slain

Macbeth

Thou wast born of woman.
But swords I smile at, weapons laugh to scorn,
Brandish'd by man that's of a woman born.

[Exit with Young Siward's body]

Alarums. Enter Macduff

Macduff

15 That way the noise is. Tyrant, show thy face!
 If thou be'st slain, and with no stroke of mine,
 My wife and children's ghosts will haunt me still.
 I cannot strike at wretched kerns whose arms
 Are hir'd to bear their staves; either thou, Macbeth,
 20 Or else my sword with an unbatter'd edge
 I sheath again undeeded. There thou shouldst be;
 By this great clatter, one of greatest note
 Seems bruted. Let me find him, Fortune,
 And more I beg not.

[*Exit*

Alarums. Enter Malcolm and Siward

Siward

25 This way, my lord; the castle's gently render'd.
 The tyrant's people on both sides do fight;
 The noble thanes do bravely in the war.
 The day almost itself professes yours,
 And little is to do.

Malcolm

We have met with foes

30 That strike beside us.

Siward

Enter, sir, the castle.

[*Exeunt*

Alarum

17 *still*: for ever.

18 *kerns*: lightly-armed foot-soldiers (see 1, 2, 13).

19 *staves*: lances.
either thou: either I fight with you.

21 *undeeded*: having done nothing.
There: that's where.

23 *bruted*: noised, reported.

25 *gently render'd*: surrendered without fuss.

30 *strike beside us*: who fight on our side.

Act 5 Scene 8

Macbeth encounters Macduff.

SCENE 8

*Dunsinane: enter Macbeth***Macbeth**

Why should I play the Roman fool and die
On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes
Do better upon them.

*Enter Macduff***Macduff**

Turn, hell-hound, turn.

Macbeth

Of all men else I have avoided thee,
5 But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
With blood of thine already.

Macduff

I have no words;

My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out.

*Fight. Alarum***Macbeth**

Thou lovest labour.

As easy mayst thou the intrenchant air
10 With thy keen sword impress as make me bleed.
Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life which must not yield
To one of woman born.

Macduff

Despair thy charm,

And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd
15 Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

Macbeth

Accurs'd be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man;
And be these juggling fiends no more believ'd
20 That palter with us in a double sense,

1-2 *play . . . sword*: Roman honour
demanded suicide rather than
surrender.

2 *lives*: living men.

5 *charg'd*: burdened.

8 *terms*: words, expressions.

9 *intrenchant*: incapable of being cut.

10 *impress*: make a mark on.

12 *charmed*: charmèd.

14 *angel*: guiding spirit, the 'genius'
referred to in 3, 1, 57-8.

15-16 *from . . . ripped*: delivered
prematurely by Caesarean section.

17 *Accurs'd*: accursèd.

18 *cow'd*: depressed, disheartened.
my . . . of man: the greater proportion
of my courage.

20 *palter . . . sense*: trick us with double
meanings.

21-2 *keep . . . hope*: keep their promises as we hear them but not as we hope for them.

24 *show and gaze*: spectacular exhibit.

26 *Painted . . . pole*: painted on a sign hung from a pole (as in a fair or carnival).

29 *baited*: taunted.

31 *oppos'd*: opposite me.

32 *try the last*: have a final attempt.

That keep the word of promise to our ear
And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

Macduff

Then yield thee coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o'th'time.

25 We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted upon a pole and underwrit,
'Here may you see the tyrant.'

Macbeth

I will not yield
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.

30 Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane
And thou oppos'd being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last. Before my body,
I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

[*Exeunt, fighting. Alarums*]

Enter Macbeth and Macduff, fighting, and Macbeth slain

[*Exit Macduff, with Macbeth's body*]

Act 5 Scene 9

Malcolm is proclaimed King.

Os.d. *flourish*: trumpet call to herald
Malcolm's approach.

1 *we miss*: who are missing.

2 *go off*: be killed.
by these: judging by these men I see
here.

5 *soldier's debt*: what a soldier owes—
i.e. his life.

8 *the . . . fought*: the position where he
fought without flinching.

10–12 *Your . . . end*: you must not
measure your grief by his worth,
because then it would be endless.

12 *before*: in the front of his body; see
'*Macbeth*: the source', p.101.

15 *hairs*: the hairs on my head (a
proverbial comparison); perhaps
Siward makes a pun with 'heirs'.

17 *knell*: funeral bell (see 2, 1, 63).

19 *score*: debt—see line 5.

SCENE 9

Malcolm's headquarters. Retreat, and flourish. Enter
with drum and colours, Malcolm, Siward, Ross,
Thanes, and Soldiers

Malcolm

I would the friends we miss were safe arriv'd.

Siward

Some must go off. And yet by these I see,
So great a day as this is cheaply bought.

Malcolm

Macduff is missing and your noble son.

Ross

5 Your son, my lord, has paid a soldier's debt;
He only liv'd but till he was a man,
The which no sooner had his prowess confirm'd
In the unshrinking station where he fought,
But like a man he died.

Siward

Then he is dead?

Ross

10 Ay, and brought off the field. Your cause of sorrow
Must not be measur'd by his worth, for then
It hath no end.

Siward

Had he his hurts before?

Ross

Ay, on the front.

Siward

Why then, God's soldier be he;

15 Had I as many sons as I have hairs,
I would not wish them to a fairer death.
And so his knell is knoll'd.

Malcolm

He's worth more sorrow,

And that I'll spend for him.

Siward

He's worth no more;

They say he parted well and paid his score,

20 And so God be with him. Here comes newer comfort.

Enter Macduff, with Macbeth's head

Macduff

Hail, king, for so thou art. Behold where stands
Th'usurper's cursed head. The time is free.

22 *cursed*: cursèd.

23 *compass'd with*: surrounded by.
pearl: jewels—i.e. the thanes.

I see thee compass'd with thy kingdom's pearl,
That speak my salutation in their minds;

25 Whose voices I desire aloud with mine.

Hail, King of Scotland.

All

Hail, King of Scotland.

26s.d. *Flourish*: fanfare.

Flourish

Malcolm

We shall not spend a large expense of time
Before we reckon with your several loves
And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,

28 *reckon*: settle accounts.
several: separate, individual.

30 Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland

In such an honour nam'd. What's more to do

32 *would . . . time*: ought to be started
now, just as a new age has begun;
Malcolm's gardening metaphor seems
to echo Duncan's words, *I*, 4, 28–9.

Which would be planted newly with the time,—

As calling home our exil'd friends abroad

That fled the snares of watchful tyranny,

35 Producing forth the cruel ministers

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,

37 *self . . . hands*: her own violent hands.

Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands

Took off her life,—this and what needful else

39 *calls upon us*: demands our attention.
Grace: god.

That calls upon us, by the grace of Grace

40 *in measure . . . place*: in the correct
order, at the right time, and in the
proper place: Malcolm restores
harmony to Scotland.

40 We will perform in measure, time, and place.

So, thanks to all at once and to each one,

Whom we invite to see us crown'd at Scone.

42 *Scone*: The traditional site of Scottish
coronations; compare *2*, 4, 31.

Flourish

[*Exeunt*