

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare



ACT 1, SCENE 2.

A camp near Forres. Trumpet call offstage. DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and SERVANTS enter. They meet a bleeding CAPTAIN.

DUNCAN

Who is that bloody man? Judging from his troubles, he can report to us[†] the latest news of the revolt.

MALCOLM

This is the sergeant who fought like a good and hardy soldier to save me from captivity. Greetings, brave friend! Tell the King all you know of the fighting when you left it.

CAPTAIN

The outcome was hard to guess, just as when two tired swimmers cling together and pull each other down. The merciless Macdonwald is worthy to be a rebel; and for that reason, countless villains from all over the world swarm around him like insects. He's aided by kerns and gallowglasses from the Hebrides, and Fortune smiled on his cursed cause— falsely, like a rebel's whore. But all was in vain, for brave Macbeth (he deserves that name well) scorned Fortune with his swinging sword, which steamed with the blood of the slain. Like valor's favorite, he slashed his way until he faced the villain. Without bothering to shake hands with him, or to say farewell, he ripped him open from his navel to his jaws and stuck his head on our battlements.

DUNCAN

Oh valiant cousin, worthy gentleman!

happiness and unhappiness according to her own whims, showing some favor to all men but being constant to none
[†] to us Duncan is using the royal "we."

ACT 1, SCENE 1.

Scotland. An open place. Thunder and lightning. Three WITCHES enter.

FIRST WITCH

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

SECOND WITCH

When the uproar is all over,
and the battle's been lost and won.

THIRD WITCH

That will be before sunset.

FIRST WITCH

Where will we meet?

SECOND WITCH

Upon the heath.

THIRD WITCH

There we will meet with Macbeth.

FIRST WITCH

I come, Graymalkin!

SECOND WITCH

Paddock calls for me.

THIRD WITCH

Quickly!

ALL

Pleasant is foul, and foul is pleasant;
Let's hover through the fog and filthy air.
They exit.

CAPTAIN ✓

Shipwrecking storms and grim thunderbolts often come from the east, where the sun rises; in just such a way, new disasters fell upon us from what had seemed the source of our comfort. Listen, King of Scotland, listen: 30

No sooner had justice, armed with valor, forced these nimble kerns to take to their heels, but the King of Norway saw a new opportunity. With brightly polished arms and new supplies of men, he started a fresh attack. 35

DUNCAN

Didn't this disturb our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

CAPTAIN

Yes, like sparrows disturb eagles, or the hare the lion. To tell the truth, I must report that they were like cannons overloaded with two cannonballs each; they doubled, then doubled again, their strokes against the foe. Whether they meant to bathe in bloody wounds, or cause the battlefield to be remembered like another Golgotha, I cannot say — 40
But I am faint; my wounds cry out for help.

DUNCAN

Your words suit you well, just like your wounds: they both taste like honor. Go get him doctors.

The CAPTAIN is led away.

ROSS and ANGUS enter.

Who comes here?

MALCOLM

The worthy Thane of Ross. 50

LENNOX

What haste can be seen in his eyes! That's how a man would look if he were about to say strange things.

ROSS ✓

God save the King.

DUNCAN

Where did you come from, worthythane?

ROSS

From Fife, great King, where the Norwegian banners defy the sky and chill our people with fear. 55

The King of Norway himself started a fearful battle with a huge number of soldiers—helped out by that most disloyal traitor, the Thane of Cawdor. 60
But then came Macbeth, the war-goddess's husband, dressed in mighty armor,

he faced the king with equal skill and courage—sword against sword, arm against rebellious arm, taming his undisciplined spirit. To conclude, the victory fell to us. 65

DUNCAN

Great happiness!

ROSS

And now

Sweno, Norway's king, wants to make peace.

We wouldn't allow him to bury his men until he gave ten thousand dollars for our general use at Saint Colme's Inch. 70

DUNCAN

Never again will that Thane of Cawdor deceive my trusting heart. Go command his immediate execution, and greet Macbeth with his former title.

ROSS

I'll take care of it. 75

DUNCAN

What he has lost, noble Macbeth has won.

They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

A heath near Forres. Thunder. The three WITCHES enter.

FIRST WITCH

Where have you been, sister?

SECOND WITCH

Killing swine.

THIRD WITCH

Sister, where were you?

FIRST WITCH

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,
and munched, and munched, and munched.

"Give me some," I said.

"Begone, witch!" the fat-rumped, scabby woman cried.

Her husband has gone to Aleppo—the master of the Tiger.

But I'll sail there in a sieve,

and in the shape of a tailless rat,

I'll do him in, I'll do him in, I'll do him in.

SECOND WITCH

I'll give you a wind.

FIRST WITCH

You are kind.

THIRD WITCH

And I'll give another.

FIRST WITCH

I myself have all the other winds;

they blow away from every port,

and they know all the directions

in the navigator's compass.

I will drain him as dry as hay:

sleep will hang upon his eyelids

neither night nor day;

he will live a cursed man.

For nine times nine weary weeks,

he will dwindle, hunger, and waste away.

Though his ship cannot be lost,

it will still be tossed by tempests.

Look at what I have.

SECOND WITCH

Show me, show me.

FIRST WITCH

Here I have the thumb of a pilot
wrecked when he was coming home.

Drum offstage.

THIRD WITCH

A drum, a drum!

Macbeth is coming.

ALL (*dancing in a circle*)

The Weird Sisters, hand in hand,

swift travelers over the sea and land,

this way go around and around—

three times for you, three times for me

and three times again, to make up nine.

Now be quiet! The spell is ready.

MACBETH and BANQUO enter.

MACBETH

I've never seen a day both so foul and pleasant.

BANQUO

How far do you think it is to Forres? Who are these creatures,

so withered and wild in their clothing

that they don't look like inhabitants of the earth,

even though they are on it? Are you alive? Are you anything

that a man can put questions to? You seem to understand me,

because each of you puts a chapped finger

against her skinny lips. You must surely be women,

and yet your beards will not allow me

to call you women.

MACBETH

Speak if you can. Who are you?

FIRST WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to you, Thane of Glamis!

SECOND WITCH

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to you, Thane of Cawdor!

THIRD WITCH

All hail, Macbeth, who will be King later on!

BANQUO (to MACBETH)

Good sir, why are you so startled, seeming to fear things that sound so pleasant? (to the WITCHES) In the name of truth, are you imaginary, or are you really what you outwardly appear to be? You greet my noble partner with both his present title and a prediction of further greatness—
of a nobleman's possessions and the hope of becoming a king; he seems completely entranced. But to me, you say nothing. If you can look into the seeds of time and say which grain will grow and which will not, then speak to me, for I neither beg your favors nor fear your hate.

FIRST WITCH

Hail!

SECOND WITCH

Hail!

THIRD WITCH

Hail!

FIRST WITCH

Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

SECOND WITCH

Not so happy, and yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH

You will be a father to kings, even though you won't be a king yourself.

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

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FIRST WITCH

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

MACBETH

Stay, you incomplete speakers, and tell me more.

By Sine's death, I know I am Thane of Glamis;

but how can I be Thane of Cawdor? The Thane of Cawdor lives—
a prosperous gentleman. And to be King

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is no more to be believed

than to be Thane of Cawdor. Tell me—where

did you get this strange information? And why

do you stop us on our way across this barren heath

with such a prophetic greeting? Speak, I command you.

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The WITCHES vanish.

BANQUO

The earth has bubbles, just like water has—

and these creatures are made of them. Where have they vanished?

MACBETH

Into the air—and what seemed solid has melted,
like breath into the wind. I wish they had stayed!

BANQUO

Were these things we speak about really here?

Or have we eaten from a root that causes insanity

and takes the reason prisoner?

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MACBETH

Your children will be kings.

BANQUO

You will be king.

MACBETH

And Thane of Cawdor, too. Isn't that how it went?

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BANQUO

To the very same tune and words.—Who's here?

ROSS and ANGUS enter.

ROSS

Macbeth, the King has happily received

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the news of your successes; when he considered your personal boldness while fighting against the rebels, his astonishment and his praises struggled with one another, and he didn't know whether to express his feelings or keep them to himself. He viewed your deeds for the rest of the day in silence, and found you in the strong Norwegian ranks, not at all frightened by what you made yourself— strange pictures of death. As thick as hail came messenger after messenger, and every one brought praises for your great defense of his kingdom, and poured those praises down before him.

ANGUS

We've been sent by our royal master to give you thanks— but only to announce you into his presence, and not to pay you.

ROSS

And as a pledge of a greater honor, he asked me, on his behalf, to call you Thane of Cawdor. So by that title I say—Hail, most worthy Thane! For that rank is yours.

BANQUO

What, can the devil tell the truth?

MACBETH

The Thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?

ANGUS

The man who was the Thane still lives— but under a heavy judgment, he holds onto a life that he deserves to lose. I do not know whether he was allied with the Norwegians, or supported the rebels with secret help and advantages, or tried to wreck his country by serving them both. But he has overthrown himself by capital treasons that are confessed and proven.

MACBETH (*aside*)

Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor— the greatest prophecy is to follow. (to ROSS and ANGUS) Thanks for your trouble. (to BANQUO) Don't you hope your children will be kings, since those that gave me the title of Thane of Cawdor promised no less to them?

BANQUO (to MACBETH)

If you trust to that completely, you might start yearning for the crown, besides being Thane of Cawdor. But this is strange. And oftentimes, to catch us in our own trap, the instruments of darkness tell us true things, gaining our confidence with honest trifles, only to betray us in matters of serious importance. — (to ROSS and ANGUS) Fellow noblemen, I'd like a word with you.

MACBETH (*aside*)

Two fortunate prophecies have proven true in the beginning to a splendid play on the theme of kingly power. (to ROSS and ANGUS) I thank you, gentlemen.

(*aside*) This invitation by supernatural beings cannot be bad, and yet it cannot be good. If it is bad, why has it given me a promise of success, beginning with something true? I am Thane of Cawdor. But if it is good, why am I ready to yield to that temptation— the horrid image of which makes my hair stand on end, and causes my well-fastened heart to beat against my ribs in such an unnatural way? Frightful things that are actually present affect one less than imagined horrors.

My murderous thought is still only imaginary, but it shakes my entire manhood so deeply that my power to act is smothered by expectation, and nothing seems real except what I imagine.

BANQUO (to ROSS and ANGUS)

Look at how entranced our companion is.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

MACBETH (*aside*)

If chance would make me a king, why, chance might crown me
without my doing a thing. 155

BANQUO (*to ROSS and ANGUS*)

These new honors that have come upon him
are like our new clothes; they will not fit the body's shape
until they've been worn awhile.

MACBETH (*aside*)

Whatever should happen,
time will see even the stormiest day to its end. 160

BANQUO

Worthy Macbeth, we're waiting until you're ready.

MACBETH

I beg your pardon. My dull brain is trying to recall
something I've forgotten. Kind gentlemen, I've written down
your courtesies in my mind, and I'll turn
to that page daily to read about them. Let us go to the King. 165
(*aside to BANQUO*) Think about what has happened, and when we
have more time,

and have thought it over awhile, let us speak
our hearts freely to each to other.

BANQUO

Very gladly. 170

MACBETH

That's enough until then.—Come on, friends.
They exit.

*Forres. A room in the palace. Fanfare. DUNCAN, LENNOX,
MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, and SERVANTS enter.*

DUNCAN

Has the Thane of Cawdor been executed? Haven't
the men assigned to oversee the execution returned yet?

MALCOLM

My lord,
they have not yet come back. But I have spoken
with someone who saw him die, who reported
that he confessed his treasons very openly,
begged your Highness' pardon, and spoke
with deep repentance. Nothing he did in his life
suited him better than how he left it. He died
like someone who had rehearsed his death, 10
so he could throw away the dearest thing he owned—his life—
as if it were a thing of no importance.

DUNCAN

There's no way
to read a person's mind by his face.
He was a gentleman I had learned
to trust completely. 15

MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS enter.

(*to MACBETH*) Oh worthiest cousin!

I was just now feeling guilty
for my sinful ingratitude. Your achievements come so quickly that,
no matter how quickly I try to pay you back, 20
I can't overtake you. I wish you weren't so deserving,
so you might be in debt to me, instead,
for my payment and thanks! All I can say is
that everything I have to give is not enough to repay you.

MACBETH

Just giving the service and loyalty that I owe you
is its own reward. It is Your Highness's role
to receive what we owe you; our duties 25

are like children and servants to your throne and nation;
in doing all they can to safeguard you with love and honor,
they only do what they should.

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DUNCAN

You are welcome here.
I have planted you, and will do all I can
to make sure that you grow well.—Noble Banquo,
you are no less deserving, and it must not be
thought that you have done less; so let me embrace you
and hold you to my heart.

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BANQUO

If I grow there,
the harvest will belong to you.

DUNCAN

My countless joys
are unrestrained, and try to hide themselves
in teardrops.—Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
and those among you nearest to me: Learn
that we will leave the throne to
our oldest son, Malcolm, whom we shall call the Prince of
Cumberland

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from now on. He will not be the only one honored in such a way,
for gifts of nobility will shine like stars
on all who deserve them. (to MACBETH) Let's leave here for
Inverness,
where you'll make me even more indebted to you.

MACBETH

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Anything is really labor if it isn't used in your service.
I'll be the messenger myself, and make my wife
joyful to hear that you are coming;
I humbly leave you now.

DUNCAN

My worthy Cawdor.

MACBETH (*aside*)

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The Prince of Cumberland! That is a step
I must either fall down from or else leap over,
for it lies in my way. Stars, hide your fires;
let not my black and deep desires be revealed by the light.
Let my eye not notice what my hand does—yet let my eye
see the deed it fears to see when it is done.

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He exits.

DUNCAN

That's true, worthy Banquo. He is full of valor,
and I feel fed by the praises he receives;
it's like a banquet to me. Let's follow him,
since he's gone on ahead to make ready our welcome.
He is an unrivaled relative.

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Fanfare. They exit.

ACT 1, SCENE 5

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MESSENGER

The King is coming here tonight.

Inverness. Macbeth's castle. LADY MACBETH enters, reading a letter.

LADY MACBETH

The Witches met me in the day of victory, and I have learned from reliable sources they know more than mortals do. When I burned with desire to question them more, they made themselves like the air and vanished into it. While I stood there, entranced with wonder about all this, a messenger came from the King and hailed me as Thane of Cawdor. Those Weird Sisters had saluted me by that same title; referring to the future, they also said, 'Hail, King that will be!' I thought it good to tell you all this, my dearest partner in future greatness; you mustn't miss the rejoicing you deserve by being ignorant of the greatness promised to you. Hold it close to your heart, and farewell.

You are the Thane of Glamis, and also of Cawdor; and you will be what has been promised. But I'm worried about your character; it is too full of the milk of human kindness to take the quickest way. You want to be great; you're not without ambition; but you lack the necessary wickedness. The thing you want most to do, you want to do in a holy way; you don't want to do wrong even to win something you can only get wrongly. Great Glamis,

you want something which cries out to you, "You have to do this," or else you can't have it; and you're more likely to fear doing a thing now than to wish it were undone later. Hurry here quickly, so I can pour my thoughts in your ear and scold away with my bold tongue everything that stands between you and the crown, for fate and supernatural aid seem to have given you that crown.

A MESSENGER enters.

What is your news?

LADY MACBETH

You are mad to say so. Isn't your master with him? And if this were so, wouldn't he have sent word for us to prepare?

MESSENGER

May it please you, it is true. Our thane is coming. One of my fellows outran him on his way; almost dead for lack of breath, he had barely enough breath left to deliver his message.

LADY MACBETH

Go and assist him. He brings great news.

MESSENGER exits.

The raven himself is hoarse from croaking the news of Duncan's fatal entrance under my battlements. Come, you spirits that watch over deadly thoughts; take away my womanliness and fill me to the brim, from head to toe,

with the most dreadful cruelty! Make my blood thick; make my feelings numb and incapable of pity, so that no natural pangs of remorse should come and shake my deadly purpose, nor stand in the way of the achievement of that purpose. Come to my woman's breasts and replace my milk with gall, you spirits that urge to murder, wherever your invisible forms are aiding the destructive forces of nature! Come, thick night, and enshroud yourself in the darkest smoke of hell, so that my sharp knife can't see the wound it makes, nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark to cry, "Stop, stop!"

MACBETH enters.

ACT 1, SCENE 6

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor—
and greater than both by a promise of future kingship!
Your letter has carried me beyond
the ignorance of the present, and I can now sense
the future in this very moment.

MACBETH

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here tonight.

LADY MACBETH

And when will he leave?

MACBETH

He intends to leave tomorrow.

LADY MACBETH

Oh, the sun
will never look upon that tomorrow!
Your face, my thane, is like a book where men
can read strange things. To deceive people,
you must suit your looks to the occasion. Show welcome into
your eye, 70
hand, and tongue. Look like the innocent flower,
but be the serpent under it. He who is coming
must be provided for; so you will put
me in charge of this night's great business,
which will bring royal power and mastery to us alone
for all the rest of our nights and days.

MACBETH

We will speak further.

LADY MACBETH

Just keep an innocent look about you;
to change your expression will be dangerous.
Leave all the rest to me.

They exit.

*Before Macbeth's castle. Oboes and torches. DUNCAN,
MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS,
ANGUS, and SERVANTS enter.*

DUNCAN

This castle is on a pleasant site. The air
comes forth lightly and sweetly
to soothe our senses.

BANQUO

This summer visitor,
the church-dwelling martin, proves 5
that heaven's wind breathes delightfully here
by making this his favorite home. I see no projection, decoration,
buttress, or available corner where this bird
hasn't made his hanging nest, his cradle for breeding his young.
In places where these birds breed and visit most, I have
observed 10
that the air is delicate.

LADY MACBETH enters.

DUNCAN

Look, look, our honored hostess!
Though the love we receive is sometimes troublesome,
we must still be grateful for it. In saying this, I teach you
to ask God to reward us for all your inconvenience 15
and thank us for troubling you.

LADY MACBETH

All the service we can do for you—
even if it were all done twice, then doubled again—
must be a poor, slight offering when weighed
against those deep, broad honors 20
that Your Majesty loads upon our house. Because of past honors,
and the recent ones heaped upon them,
we're obliged to pray for you.

ACT 1, SCENE 7

DUNCAN

Where is the Thane of Cawdor?
We pursued him at his heels and had intended
to arrive before him. But he rides well,
and his great love for you, as sharp as his spur, has helped him
to reach home ahead of us. Fair and noble hostess,
we are your guest tonight.

LADY MACBETH

As your servants, we always
keep our people, ourselves, and all that is ours ready to be
accounted for,
so that you can inspect them whenever you wish,
and always receive what's yours.

DUNCAN

Give me your hand. (*taking her hand*)
Lead me to my host. We love him highly,
and will continue to grant favors to him.
With your permission, hostess.

They exit.

*A room in Macbeth's castle. Oboes and torches. A chief BUTLER
and several SERVANTS enter with dishes and utensils and pass
across the stage. Then MACBETH enters.*

MACBETH

If it's over with once it's been done, then it would be best
to do it quickly. If the murder
could gather up the consequences in a net, achieving
success through his death, and if this deed
could prove sufficient all by itself—then here, 5
right here, upon time's riverbank,
I'd risk my eternal life. But in a case like this,
I still might be judged in this life; I might also teach others
to do bloody deeds—and once those lessons are taught,
they might be turned against me. This impartial justice 10
offers the poisonous ingredients of my cup to my own lips.

He has two reasons to trust me while he's here:
First, I am his relative and his subject—
and as both, I have strong reasons not to do the deed. Second, I
am his host,

who should shut the door to keep out his murderer, 15
not hold the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
has wielded power so mildly, and his reign
has been so blameless, that his virtues
will plead like trumpet-voiced angels to protest 20
the damnable crime of his murder;
and pity will be like a naked, newborn infant
straddling the wind, or like heaven's cherubim riding
the invisible horses of the air—
for pity will blow the horrid deed into every eye
so that tears will drown the wind. I have nothing 25
to spur me on toward my intended deed
except ambition, which leaps over itself
and falls on the other side—

LADY MACBETH enters.

Well, then—what is your news?

LADY MACBETH

He has almost eaten. Why did you leave the chamber?

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MACBETH

Has he asked for me?

LADY MACBETH

Don't you know that he has?

MACBETH

We will go no further in this business.

He has honored me lately, and I have gained

the golden respect of all sorts of people—

and this respect should be worn while it is shiny and new,

not cast aside so soon.

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LADY MACBETH

Was it only a drunken hope

that you wore before? Has it been sleeping since?

Is it waking up now, looking sickly and pale

at what it meant to do so freely? From now on,

I'll value your love as equally fickle. Are you afraid

to show the boldness and action needed

to become what you want to be? Would you be content to have

the crown you value so highly,

and yet live, in your own opinion, a coward's life?

Are you willing to let the words "I don't dare" come after the

words "I want to,"

like the poor cat in the proverb?

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MACBETH

I implore you, be quiet.

I dare do all that's worthy of a man.

Whoever dares to do more is not a man.

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LADY MACBETH

So what kind of beast was it

that first made you tell me about this scheme?

When you dared to do it, you were a man;

and to be more than what you were then

would make you even more of a man. Neither the time nor the

place

were then ready, and yet you were willing to make them both

ready.

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Now they have made themselves ready, and their readiness

makes you unsure of yourself. I have nursed a child, and I know

how sweet it is to love the baby that sucks milk from me.

And yet, while he was smiling in my face,

I would have plucked my nipple from his boneless gums

and dashed his brains out, if I had sworn

to do this as you have sworn.

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MACBETH

if we should fail—

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LADY MACBETH

We fail?

Just fasten your courage to the notch,

and we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—

and after his day's hard journey,

he'll soon sleep soundly—I'll overpower

his two chamber servants with wine and revelry

until memory, the guard of the brain,

is smoky, and the container that catches reason

is nothing but an alembic. When they are sleeping like pigs,

lying there drenched in alcohol as if they were dead,

what won't you and I be able to do

to the unguarded Duncan? What won't be blamed upon

his drunken officers, who will bear the guilt

of our great murder?

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MACBETH

Give birth only to but men-children,

for your bold spirit should create

nothing but males. When we have smeared

his two sleepy chamber guards with his blood

and used their own daggers, won't everyone believe

that they have done it?

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LADY MACBETH

Who'll dare believe anything else,

since we shall roar and howl with grief

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upon his death?

MACBETH

I am determined, and strain
every muscle to ready myself for this terrible feat.
Let's go, and trick the world with our pleasant looks.
Our false faces must hide what we know in our false hearts.

They exit.

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ACT 2, SCENE 1

Court of Macbeth's castle. BANQUO and FLEANCE enter; FLEANCE carries a torch.

BANQUO

What time of night is it, boy?

FLEANCE

The moon is down. I haven't heard the clock strike.

BANQUO

The moon goes down at midnight.

FLEANCE

I believe it is later, sir.

BANQUO

Wait, take my sword. There's thrift in heaven; its candles are all out. Take that, too.

An urgent need to sleep lies upon me like lead, and yet I do not wish to sleep. Merciful God, keep away from me those cursed thoughts that come to me whenever I rest!

MACBETH and a SERVANT enter, the SERVANT with a torch.

Give me my sword.

Who's there?

MACBETH

A friend.

BANQUO

What's this, sir! Aren't you asleep yet? The King's in bed.

He has been enjoying himself more than usual,

and gave enormous tips to your servants.

He sent this diamond to your wife,

greeting her by the name of most kind hostess. Now his day has ended

in perfect happiness.

He gives MACBETH a diamond.

MACBETH

Since we were unprepared for his visit, our desire to serve him was greater than our ability to do so; otherwise, we would have been more generous.

BANQUO

It's all right.

I dreamed last night of the three Witches.

To you, they have shown some truth.

MACBETH

I don't think about them.

And yet, whenever we get an hour to ourselves, we should spend it talking some about that business—if you'll allow the time.

BANQUO

Whenever you wish.

MACBETH

If you'll ally yourself with me at the proper moment, you'll gain honors by it.

BANQUO

As long as I lose no honor in seeking to add to what I already have—always keeping my heart free from evil and my loyalties spotless—I'll hear what you have to say.

MACBETH

Meanwhile, sleep well.

BANQUO

Thanks, sir. The same to you.

BANQUO and FLEANCE exit.

MACBETH (to a SERVANT)

Go tell your mistress to ring the bell when my drink is ready. Go on to bed.

SERVANT exits.

Is this a dagger that I see before me, its handle pointed toward my hand? Come here—let me grab you.

I can't hold you, and yet I still see you.

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Fearful vision, can't you be felt by my touch
as well as seen? Or are you nothing but
a dagger of my imagination, a false creation
that comes from my feverish brain?
I still see you, looking just as solid
as this dagger I now draw.

He draws his dagger.

You lead me the way I was going,
and just such a weapon I am supposed to use.
Either my eyes are more foolish than my other senses,
or they are worth all the rest together. I still see you—
and on your blade and handle, I see large drops of blood
that weren't there before. There's no such thing as this dagger. 55
My bloody business causes it to take shape
before my eyes in this way. Now over this half of the world,
nature seems dead, and wicked dreams deceive
those who are hidden in sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
the ceremonies of pale Hecate; and withered murder 60
is awakened by his guard, the wolf,
whose howl is his cry of warning; and so, at a stealthy pace,
murder moves with Tarquin's lustful footsteps toward his goal
like a ghost. You solid and firmly set earth,
don't hear my steps or which way they walk; for I fear 65
that even your stones might tell where I am,
breaking the horrible silence
that suits this moment well. While I threaten to act, he lives.
Words cool hot deeds too much with their cold breath.

A bell rings.

I go, and the murder will be done. The bell calls for me to do it. 70
Do not hear it, Duncan, for this ringing
summons you to heaven or to hell.

Exit.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Court of Macbeth's castle. LADY MACBETH enters.

LADY MACBETH

The wine that has made them drunk has made me bold;
it has put them to sleep, but has inflamed my courage. Listen!
Hush!

It was the owl that shrieked—the fatal crier,
who calls out a stern good night. My husband is doing it.
The doors are open, and the drunken guards 5
mock their duties with snores. I have drugged their nighttime
drink so that death and life argue with one another
as to whether the men are alive or dead.

MACBETH (*offstage*)

Who's there? What's this? 10

LADY MACBETH

Oh, no! I'm afraid they have awakened,
and it's not been done. We are ruined by the attempt,
not by the deed. Listen! I laid out their daggers so they'd be ready;
Macbeth couldn't miss them. If the king hadn't looked
like my father while he slept, I would have done it myself. 15

MACBETH *enters with bloody daggers.*

My husband?

MACBETH

I have done the deed. Didn't you hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH

I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.
Didn't you speak?

MACBETH

When?

LADY MACBETH

Just now. 20

MACBETH

While I was coming down?

LADY MACBETH

Yes.

MACBETH

Listen!

Who's sleeping in the second room?

25

LADY MACBETH

Donalbain.

MACBETH (*looking at his bloody hands*)

This is a miserable sight.

LADY MACBETH

How foolish—to call it a miserable sight.

MACBETH

One of them laughed in his sleep, and the other cried, "Murder!"

And so they woke each other up. I stood and listened to them.

30

But they said their prayers, and then they settled down to go back to sleep.

LADY MACBETH

Two of them are in that room together.

MACBETH

One cried, "God bless us!" And the other cried, "Amen!"

It was as if they had seen me with these executioner's hands,

35

listening in on their fear. I could not say "Amen" when they said "God bless us."

LADY MACBETH

Don't think about it too deeply.

MACBETH

But why couldn't I say the word "Amen"?

I was in great need of a blessing, but "Amen"

40

stuck in my throat.

LADY MACBETH

Such deeds must not be thought about in such a way; otherwise, they will drive us mad.

MACBETH

I thought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!

Macbeth murders sleep"—the innocent sleep,

45

sleep that straightens out the tangled skein of worry;

the death of each day's life; a soothing bath after hard labor; an ointment for hurt minds; the second course of great nature's meal; the most nutritious part of life's feast.

LADY MACBETH

What do you mean?

50

MACBETH

It kept crying, "Sleep no more!" to everyone in the house.

"The Thane of Glamis has murdered sleep—and so the Thane of Cawdor

will sleep no more. Macbeth will sleep no more."

LADY MACBETH

Who was it that cried in such a way? Why, worthy Thane,

you slacken your noble strength in thinking

so squeamishly about things. Go, get some water,

and wash this filthy evidence off your hand.

Why did you bring these daggers from the place?

They must stay there. Go—carry them back, and smear

the sleeping guards with blood.

60

MACBETH

I won't go anymore.

I'm afraid to even think about what I've done;

I don't dare look at it again.

LADY MACBETH

How indecisive you are!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

are like pictures, nothing more. Only the eye of a child

fears a painted devil. If Duncan is bleeding,

I'll paint the faces of the servants with his blood,

for they must seem guilty of the murder.

LADY MACBETH exits. Knocking offstage.

MACBETH

Where is that knocking coming from?

What's wrong with me, that every noise terrifies me?

(*looking at his hands*) Whose hands are these? Ha! They'll pluck out my eyes.

Could all of great Neptune's ocean wash my hand

70

ACT 2, SCENE 3

clean of this blood? No; instead, my hand
would drench the enormous seas a crimson color,
making their green waters wholly red.

LADY MACBETH reenters.

LADY MACBETH

My hands are red like yours, but I'd be ashamed
to wear a heart so white. (*knocking offstage*) I hear a knocking
at the south entry. Let's go to our bedroom.

A little water will wash all signs of this deed off us:
how easy it will all be, then! Your self-assurance
has deserted you. (*knocking within*) Listen, more knocking.
Put on your dressing gown, or someone may call on us
and realize that we've been awake. Don't be so weak
and lost in thought.

MACBETH

To know what I have done—it would be better to lose
consciousness altogether. (*knocking offstage*)
Wake up Duncan with your knocking! I wish you could!

They exit.

Court of Macbeth's castle. Knocking offstage. A PORTER enters.

PORTER

Here's a knocking, indeed! If a man were the porter of the gate of
hell, he'd have to turn the key a whole lot. (*knocking offstage*)
Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, in the name of Beelzebub?
Here's a farmer who hanged himself because he'd hopped for
higher prices. Welcome to you! Bring plenty of handkerchiefs
to keep yourself dry; you'll do some sweating here. (*knocking*
offstage) Knock, knock! Who's there, in some other devil's name?
Why here's an equivocator who could swear different things in
each of the scales of justice; he committed treason in the name of
God, but couldn't equivocate his way to heaven. Oh, come in,
equivocator. (*knocking offstage*) Knock, knock, knock! Who's there?
Why, here's an English tailor who's come here because he stole
fabric out of tight-fitting pants. Come in, tailor. Here you can heat
up your pressing iron. (*knocking offstage*) Knock, knock! Never any
quiet. Who are you? But this place is too cold for hell. I'll stop
playing the devil-porter. I'd planned to let in folks from all the
professions that go the wide and easy path to eternal damnation.
(*knocking offstage*) Right away! (*Opens a door.*) I ask you to
remember to tip the porter.

MACDUFF and LENNOX enter.

MACDUFF

Friend, is it because you went to bed so late
that you arise so late?

13 *French hose* Certain types of French trousers fitted so tightly that even a
dishonest tailor had trouble stealing surplus material while making them.

14 *goose* tailor's pressing iron

PORTER

Why, sir, we were partying till 3 o'clock a.m., and drink, sir, is a great cause of three things.

MACDUFF

What three things does drink cause most?

PORTER

Goodness sir, red noses, sleep, and urine. Lechery, sir, it causes and uncauses. It causes the desire, but it makes it difficult to perform. And so, heavy drinking might be called an equivocator as far as lechery is concerned. It helps him, and it hurts him; it turns him on, and it turns him off; it encourages him, and discourages him; it makes him stand, and not stand. To conclude, drink tricks him right to sleep—then lays him out and leaves him.

MACDUFF

I believe that drink laid you out last night.

PORTER

That it did, sir—it had me right by the throat. But I paid him back for his trick, and I think I was too strong for him; for even though he lifted me up by my legs, I still managed to throw him up.

MACDUFF

Is your master awake?

MACBETH enters.

Our knocking has awakened him. Here he comes.

LENNOX

Good morning, noble sir.

MACBETH

Good morning to you both.

MACDUFF

Is the King awake, worthy Thane?

MACBETH

Not yet.

MACDUFF

He commanded me to call on him early: I've almost missed the time.

MACBETH

I'll show you to him.

MACDUFF

I know this is a joyful trouble to you—and yet it's still trouble.

MACBETH

The work we enjoy is a remedy for pain. The door to Duncan's room is that way.

MACDUFF

I'll boldly call on him, for it's my appointed duty.

MACDUFF exits.

LENNOX

Is the King going away today?

MACBETH

Yes. He made commands for it.

LENNOX

The night was unruly. Where we slept, chimneys were blown down; and it's said that wailing was heard in the air—strange screams, like people dying. And there were prophecies in terrible voices, telling of dreadful uproars and troubling events, about to make these days sorrowful. The owl cried out the whole night through. Some say the earth was feverish and shook.

MACBETH

It was a rough night.

LENNOX

In my young years, I can't remember one to match it.

MACDUFF reenters.

MACDUFF

Oh, horror, horror, horror! Neither my tongue nor my heart

can imagine or name you!

MACBETH AND LENNOX
What's the matter?

MACDUFF

Destruction has now made its masterpiece.
Most godless murder has broken open
the Lord's holy temple and stolen from it
the life that was inside!

MACBETH

What are you saying? The life?

LENNOX

Do you mean his Majesty?

MACDUFF

Go to his bedroom and be blinded by the sight
of a new Gorgon. Do not ask me to speak.
Look—and then speak yourselves. Awake! Awake!

MACBETH and LENNOX exit.

Ring the alarm bell. Murder and treason!
Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! Wake up!
Shake off your pleasant sleep, death's imitation,
and look at death itself! Get up, get up, and see
the Day of Judgment's likeness! Malcolm, Banquo,
rise up, as if from your graves, and walk like spirits,
in keeping with this horror. Ring the bell!

Bell rings.

LADY MACBETH enters.

LADY MACBETH

What's going on,
that such a hideous trumpet summons together
the people who sleep in this house? Tell me, tell me!

MACDUFF

Oh, gentle lady,
it's not right for you to hear what I have to tell.
To repeat it in a woman's ear

would murder her as soon as she heard it.

BANQUO enters.

Oh, Banquo, Banquo,
Our royal master has been murdered!

LADY MACBETH

Woe, sorrow!
What, in our house?

BANQUO

Too cruel a thing to happen anywhere.
Dear Macduff, I beg you to contradict yourself
and say it isn't so.

MACBETH and LENNOX reenter, with ROSS.

MACBETH

If I had only died an hour before this happened,
I'd have lived a happy life; for after this moment,
there's nothing serious in human life.

All things are mere trifles. Fame and honor are dead.
The wine of life has been emptied, and only the dregs
are left for this world to brag about.

MALCOLM and DONALBAIN enter.

DONALBAIN

What's wrong?

MACBETH

You are, and do not know it.
The spring, the origin, the fountain of your blood
has been stopped; the very source of it has been stopped.

MACDUFF

Your royal father has been murdered.

MALCOLM

Oh, by whom?

LENNOX

It seems that the men in his chamber did it.
Their hands and faces were marked with blood.
So were their daggers, which we found unwiped

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upon their pillows. They stared and seemed bewildered.
No man's life was to be trusted with them.

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MACBETH

Oh, and yet I regret that I killed them
in my fury.

MACDUFF

Why did you do so?

145

MACBETH

Who can be wise and bewildered, calm and furious,
loyal and neutral, all at the same time? No man.
The haste of my intense love
outran my more cautious rationality. Here lay Duncan,
his silver skin streaked with his golden blood;
and his gaping wounds looked like an opening in the world
to let in wasteful destruction. There were the murderers,
drenched in the color of their trade, their daggers
improperly clothed in gore. Who could stop himself
if he had a loving heart—and if he had courage
in that heart to act on his love?

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LADY MACBETH (*fainting*)

Help me away, oh!

130

MACDUFF

Help the lady.

MALCOLM (*aside to DONALBAIN*)

Why do we keep quiet,
since we're the ones most concerned with this topic?

DONALBAIN (*aside to MALCOLM*)

What can we say here,
where our doom might rush out
from the smallest hiding place to seize us? Let's go away;
our tears are not ready yet.

135

MALCOLM (*aside to DONALBAIN*)

Nor is our deep sorrow
ready to be expressed in action.

BANQUO

Help the lady.

140

LADY MACBETH is carried out.

And after we have clothed our half-naked bodies,
which now are at risk from the cold, let us meet
and examine this bloody piece of work,
and try to understand it better. We are shaken by fears and
doubts.

I place myself in the hands of God; relying on Him,
I shall fight against this treasonous cruelty,
the purpose of which is still unknown.

MACDUFF

And so shall I.

ALL

So shall we all.

MACBETH

Let's quickly put on our armor
and meet together in the hall.

ALL

We all agree.

150

All but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN exit.

MALCOLM

What will you do? Let's not meet with them.
To show an unfelt sorrow is a duty
that comes easily to false-faced men. I'll go to England.

DONALBAIN

I'll go to Ireland. By going our separate ways
we'll both be safer. Wherever we are,
men's smiles have daggers in them. The closer the relation,
the more likely we are to be killed.

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MALCOLM

This murderous arrow that's been shot
has not yet struck, and it's safest for us
to stay out of its path. So let's mount our horses,
and let's not be fussy about farewells,
but sneak away. It's justifiable theft
to steal oneself away from such a dangerous situation.

160

They exit.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

Outside Macbeth's castle. ROSS and an OLD MAN enter.

OLD MAN

I can remember seventy years well,
and in all that time I have seen
dreadful hours and strange things; but this terrible night
makes all I've seen seem trivial by comparison.

ROSS

Ah, good father,
you see how the heavens, as if troubled by man's deeds,
threaten his world. It's day according to the clock,
and yet the dark night keeps out the sun.
Is it because the night is strong, or because the day is ashamed,
that darkness entombs the face of the earth
when living light should kiss it?

OLD MAN

It's unnatural,
just like the deed that's been done. Last Tuesday
a falcon, while soaring at her greatest height,
was attacked and killed by an owl that normally hunts
only mice.

ROSS

And here's something strange but true: Duncan's beautiful, swift
horses—
the finest of their breed—
went completely wild, broke out of their stalls and ran loose,
defying all attempts to control them; it was as if they wanted
to make war with mankind.

OLD MAN

It's said that they ate each other.

ROSS

They did, and my eyes were bewildered
to see it.

MACDUFF enters.

Here comes the good Macduff.
How's the world going now, sir?

MACDUFF

Why, can't you see?

ROSS

Is it known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF

The men that Macbeth has killed.

ROSS

Sorrowful day!
What could they expect to gain from it?

MACDUFF

They were bribed.
Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's two sons,
have sneaked away and fled; this puts suspicion of the deed
against them.

ROSS

Even more unnatural!
What wasteful ambition, to greedily devour
the source of their own lives! Then it's very likely
that royal power will go to Macbeth.

MACDUFF

He's already been chosen, and has gone to Scone
to be made King.

ROSS

Where is Duncan's body?

MACDUFF

It's been taken to Colmekill,
the sacred tomb of past kings,
and the protector of their bones.

ROSS

Will you go to Scone?

MACDUFF

No, cousin, I'll go to Fife.

ROSS

Well, I'll go there.

MACDUFF

Well, I hope you'll see things well done there—
or else we'll long for the days of Duncan's rule! Good-bye!

ROSS

Good-bye, father.

50

OLD MAN

May God's blessing go with you—and with all others
that seek to make good out of bad and friends out of foes.

They exit.

ACT 3, SCENE 1

Forres. The palace. BANQUO enters.

BANQUO

You've got it all now—King, Thane of Cawdor, Thane of Glamis, everything—

just as the Witches promised; and I'm afraid you did something extremely wicked to get it. Still, they said that the throne wouldn't stay in your family, but that I would be the ancestor and father of many kings. If what they say is true (and their promises have been glowingly fulfilled for you, Macbeth)— why, judging from all that you've gained, mightn't they be my fortune-tellers as well, and give me reason to hope? But hush, I must be quiet.

Trumpet call. MACBETH and LADY MACBETH enter as King and Queen, accompanied by LENNOX, ROSS, LORDS, and SERVANTS.

MACBETH

Here's our most important guest.

LADY MACBETH

If he had been forgotten, there would have been a gap in our great feast which would be completely improper.

MACBETH

15
Tonight we hold a formal supper, sir, and I ask you to be there.

BANQUO

Let your highness command me, for my duties are forever bound to you by an unbreakable tie.

MACBETH

Will you be riding this afternoon?

BANQUO

Yes, my good lord.

MACBETH

Otherwise, we would have asked for your good advice (which has always been both well-considered and helpful) in today's council meeting; but you'll be there tomorrow. Are you riding far? 25

BANQUO

Far enough, my lord, to fill up the time between now and supper. Unless my horse runs faster than usual, I'll have to be riding at night while it's dark for an hour or two. 30

MACBETH

Don't miss our feast.

BANQUO

My lord, I will not.

MACBETH

We hear that our murderous cousins have gone to England and Ireland. They haven't confessed their cruel murder of their father and are filling people's ears with strange lies. But more about that tomorrow, when state business also will demand both of our attention. Go, to your horse. Good-bye, until you return tonight. Is Fleance going with you? 35

BANQUO

Yes, my good lord. Time is short, and we must go. 40

MACBETH

I hope your horses are swift and sure-footed; and so I entrust you to their backs. Farewell.

BANQUO exits.

Every man may do as he likes

until seven tonight. To make your company even more welcome, we will keep to ourselves until supper time, alone. Till then, God be with you. 45

All exit except MACBETH and a SERVANT.

Sirrah, a word with you. Are those men waiting to see us?

SERVANT

They are, my lord; they're outside the palace gate.

50

MACBETH

Bring them to us.

SERVANT exits.

To be king is useless,
unless one is safely king. My fears of Banquo
run deep, and his regal character
is something that I should fear. He dares to do much—
and although he is of a bold temperament,
he also has wisdom, which guides him to act safely
even in boldness. There is no one but him
whose existence I fear, and my guardian spirit
is intimidated by him, as it is said
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He scolded the Witches
when they first called me by the name of King,
and demanded that they speak to him. Then, prophet-like,
they declared him father to a line of kings.

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They placed a profitless crown on my head
and put a barren scepter in my grip—

to be yanked away by someone not of my family,
since no son of mine will succeed me. If this is true,
I have corrupted my mind to help Banquo's offspring;
for them I have murdered the most kindly Duncan;
I have lost my peace of mind and gained trouble,
just for them; and I have given my immortal soul
to the devil,

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to make them kings—the offspring of Banquo, kings!

Rather than have that happen, let fate come to the field of
combat

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and fight me to the death.—Who's there?

SERVANT reenters; with two MURDERERS.

(to *SERVANT*) Now go to the door, and wait there till we call you.

SERVANT exits.

Wasn't it yesterday when we spoke together?

FIRST MURDERER

It was, may it please your Highness.

MACBETH

Well then,
have you thought over what I told you? Remember
that it was Banquo who kept good fortune away from you
in the past; you thought that I had done so,
but I was innocent. I explained this to you
at our last meeting, carefully proving to you
how you were deceived and hindered, the means
used to do it, and everything else that would convince
even a half-wit or a madman,
"This is what Banquo did!"

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FIRST MURDERER

You made it known to us.

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MACBETH

I did, and I went further—which is now
the point of our second meeting. Do you find
that patience is so strong a part of your character
that you can let this go? Are you so meekly Christian
that you'd pray for this good man and his offspring,
even after his heavy hand has pushed you toward the grave
and made your offspring beggars forever?

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FIRST MURDERER

We are only mortal men, my lord.

MACBETH

Yes, in a casual list you pass for men,
just as hounds, greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,
shoughs, water-rugs, and demi-wolves are all called
by the name of dogs. The list that shows value
distinguishes the swift, the slow, the sly,
the watchdog, the hunter—every one
according to the gift which generous nature
has given him; in such a list, each dog receives

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a special distinction not to be found in a list that shows all dogs as the same. And this is true of men. Now, if you have a place in the list above the lowest rank of manhood, tell me; and I will assign you a task which, once it is done, will rid you of your enemy and attach you to my heart with love; for while he lives, my health is sickly— but if he were dead, it would be perfect.

SECOND MURDERER

My lord, I am a man so angered by the vicious blows and beatings of the world, I don't care what I do to get back at the world.

FIRST MURDERER

And I am another man so weary of disasters, so knocked about by fortune, that I would risk my life in any way to mend it or be rid of it.

MACBETH

You both know that Banquo is your enemy.

BOTH MURDERERS

True, my lord.

MACBETH

He's also mine—and my hatred is so bloody, that every minute he lives is a stab at my very heart. And though I could openly use my power to sweep him from my sight and justify it as my royal will, I must not, because of certain friends we have in common whose affection I can't afford to lose; I must appear to mourn the death of the man who I myself killed. And this is why I woo you to come to my aid: I must hide the deed from the common eye for several important reasons.

SECOND MURDERER

My lord, we shall do what you command us.

FIRST MURDERER

Even if our lives—

MACBETH

Now you show your true spirit. In less than an hour, I'll tell you where to plant yourselves and give you the best information available concerning when to do it—for it must be done tonight, and at some distance from the palace; always remember that I mustn't be implicated. And in order that the job not be botched or bungled, Fleance, his son, who keeps him company (and whose absence is just as important to me as that of his father) must meet the same fate at that dark hour. Go away and make up your minds I'll come to you soon.

BOTH MURDERERS

We've made up our minds, my lord.

MACBETH

I'll call upon you immediately. Wait inside.

MURDERERS exit.

It is agreed upon. Banquo, if your soul is going to fly to heaven, it must find its way there tonight.

MACBETH exits.

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ACT 3, SCENE 2

The palace. LADY MACBETH and a SERVANT enter.

LADY MACBETH

Has Banquo gone away from court?

SERVANT

Yes, madam—but he returns again tonight.

LADY MACBETH

Tell the King that I await his convenience to have a few words with him.

SERVANT

Madam, I will.

SERVANT exits.

LADY MACBETH

Nothing's gained, and everything's lost, when we've got everything we desired but remain uneasy. It would be better to be the one we murdered than to live in uncertain joy because of our murder.

MACBETH enters.

10 Tell me, my lord—why do you stay alone, keeping company only with your most wretched musings, entertaining thoughts that really should have died along with him you think about? Things that can't be changed should be ignored. What's done is done.

MACBETH

15 We've only cut the snake, not killed it. She'll heal and be herself again, and our feeble hatred will remain endangered by her tooth, just as before. But let the universe crash down, and let both heaven and earth perish,

20 before we will eat our meals in fear, or have our sleep plagued with these terrible dreams that disturb us nightly. We'd be better off joining the dead, whom we have sent to their peace in attempting to gain our own peace,

than to have to suffer upon the rack of the mind in restless frenzy. Duncan is in his grave.

25 After life's fitful fever, he sleeps well.

Treason has done its worst to him. Neither steel, poison, rebellion, foreign troops, nor anything else can bother him anymore.

LADY MACBETH

Come on with me.

30 My noble lord, smooth over your furrowed expression. Be cheerful and friendly with your guests tonight.

MACBETH

I shall, love—and please, you do the same.

Give special attention to Banquo;

honor him well with both your eye and tongue.

35 You and I are unsafe as long as we

must wash our honors in streams of flattery, and turn our faces into masks to disguise what our hearts really are.

LADY MACBETH

You mustn't think about this.

MACBETH

40 Oh, my brain is full of scorpions, dear wife!

You know that Banquo and his son Fleance are alive.

LADY MACBETH

But nature hasn't given them an eternal lease on life.

MACBETH

There's some comfort in that; they can be attacked.

So be merry. Before the bat has flown

his blind flight, and before the lazily humming, scaly winged beetle,

45 at black Hecate's command, has rung the bell

that brings on nightly slumber, a most dreadful deed will be done.

LADY MACBETH

What are you going to do?

MACBETH

50 Keep your innocence by not knowing about it, dearest darling,

until you can applaud the deed. Come, blinding night;
cover up the tender eye of merciful day,
and with your unseen, murderous hand
cancel and tear to pieces Banquo and Fleance's lease on life,
for it frightens me. Daylight grows dim, and the crow
flies to the dark and dismal woods. 55
The wholesome things of day begin to droop and sleep,
while night's troublesome creatures are waking to hunt their prey.
You are amazed by my words, but keep quiet.
Things with evil beginnings become stronger by more evil. 60
So please—come along with me.
They exit.

ACT 3, SCENE 3

A park or lawn, with a gate leading to the palace. Three MURDERERS enter.

FIRST MURDERER

But who asked you to join us?

THIRD MURDERER

Macbeth.

SECOND MURDERER (to FIRST MURDERER)

We needn't mistrust him, since he's able to describe
our job and what we have to do
down to the smallest detail.

FIRST MURDERER (to THIRD MURDERER)

Then wait here with us.

There is still a glimmer in the west, with streaks of day.
Some belated traveler is now spurring his horse
to get to an inn before dark, and the person we await
is approaching.

THIRD MURDERER

Listen—I hear horses.

BANQUO (offstage to a SERVANT)

Give me a light, quickly!

SECOND MURDERER

Then it's Banquo. The rest
of those on the list of expected guests
are already at the court.

FIRST MURDERER

His servants are taking his horses.

THIRD MURDERER

He's almost a mile from the palace; but he usually does that,
as do all men; they walk from there
to the palace gate.

SECOND MURDERER

A light—I see a light!

BANQUO and FLEANCE enter; FLEANCE with a torch.

THIRD MURDERER

It's Banquo.

FIRST MURDERER

Get ready.

BANQUO (to FLEANCE)

There will be rain tonight.

FIRST MURDERER

Let it rain down blood.

The first MURDERER puts out the torch; the others attack

BANQUO.

BANQUO

Oh, treachery! Flee, good Fleance—flee, flee, flee!

FLEANCE exits running.

(shouting to FLEANCE) You must seek revenge! (to MURDERER) Oh, villain!

He dies.

THIRD MURDERER

Who put out the light?

FIRST MURDERER

Wasn't it the right thing to do?

THIRD MURDERER

Only one of them has been killed. The son has fled.

SECOND MURDERER

We have failed in the most important half of our work.

FIRST MURDERER

Well, let's go, and tell him how much we've done.

MURDERERS exit.

ACT 3, SCENE 4

A formal room in the palace. A banquet is prepared. MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX, LORDS, and SERVANTS enter.

MACBETH

You know your own ranks; sit down accordingly. From beginning to end, a hearty welcome to all.

LORDS

Thank you, your Majesty.

MACBETH

I will mingle among you and play the humble host.

Our hostess stays on her throne, but when it is appropriate, I will ask her to welcome you.

LADY MACBETH

Say it for me, sir, to all my friends; for my heart says that they are welcome.

First MURDERER appears at the door.

MACBETH

See, they thank you from their hearts in reply.
Both sides of the table are equally full of guests. I'll sit right here, at the head.

Enjoy yourselves thoroughly. Soon we'll drink a toast all around the table. (to FIRST MURDERER) There's blood on your face.

FIRST MURDERER

It's Banquo's, then.

MACBETH

It's better outside you than inside him.
Is he finished off?

FIRST MURDERER

My lord, his throat has been cut. I did that for him.

MACBETH

You are the best of the cutthroats! Yet whoever killed Fleance is a good man too.

If you did that, you are without equal.

FIRST MURDERER

Most royal sir, Fleance has escaped.

MACBETH *(aside)*

Then my fit of terror comes over me again. Otherwise, I'd have been completely secure—
solid as marble, steady as a rock,
as wide and free as the surrounding air.
But now I am jailed, penned, confined, locked in
with bold doubts and fears. *(to FIRST MURDERER)* But Banquo's
safely dead?

25

FIRST MURDERER

Yes, my good lord. Safe in a ditch he remains,
with twenty trench-like gashes on his head,
the smallest of them enough to kill a man.

30

MACBETH

Thanks for doing that.
(aside) The grown serpent lies there. The small serpent that has
fled
will develop venom naturally with time,
though it doesn't yet have teeth. *(to FIRST MURDERER)* Go away.
Tomorrow we'll speak together again.

35

FIRST MURDERER *exits.*

LADY MACBETH

My royal lord,
you show no hospitality. Guests feel like they're buying their meal
if they aren't assured that it's given with welcome
while the feast is going on. Mere eating is best done at home;
outside the home, food must be flavored with ceremony;
gathering for a feast is pointless without it.

40

The GHOST OF BANQUO enters and sits in Macbeth's place.

MACBETH

A sweet reminder!—
(to his GUESTS) Now, may good digestion follow your hearty
appetites,
and good health follow both!

45

LENNOX

Would it please your Highness to sit?

MACBETH

Here we'd have all our country's nobles under one roof,
if only the honored Banquo were present.
I hope to scold him for his unkindness
rather than grieve that he's suffered some accident.

ROSS

His absence, sir,
proves his promise false. Would it please your Highness
to honor us with your royal company?

50

MACBETH

The table's full.

LENNOX

A place is reserved right here, sir.

MACBETH

Where?

55

LENNOX

Here, my good lord. What is it that troubles your Highness?

MACBETH

Which of you has done this?

LORDS

What, my good lord?

MACBETH *(to GHOST)*

You cannot say I did it. Don't shake
your bloody locks of hair at me.

60

ROSS

Gentlemen, rise. His Highness is not well.

LADY MACBETH

Sit, worthy friends. My lord is often like this,
and has been since he was young. Please—stay seated;
the fit will only be momentary; he will be well again
as quick as a thought. If you stare at him,
you will offend him and make his fit last longer.
Eat, and pay no attention to him. *(drawing MACBETH aside)* Are
you a man?

65

MACBETH

Yes, and a bold one, since I dare look at something which might terrify the devil.

LADY MACBETH

Oh, what nonsense!

This is just some image of what you fear—like that imaginary dagger which you said led you to Duncan. Oh, such sudden outbursts— which only appear to be fearful—would be better suited to a woman's story by a winter's fire, sworn to by her grandmother. For shame! Why do you make such faces? When all's said and done, you're only looking at a stool.

MACBETH

Please, see it! Observe, look! (*to the GHOST*) Oh! What do you want to say?

Why, what do I care? You can nod, so speak, too. If charnel houses and our graves send back to us the dead that we bury, our real tombs will be in the stomachs of birds.

GHOST OF BANQUO vanishes.

LADY MACBETH

What's this—has foolishness stolen your manhood?

MACBETH

As sure as I stand here, I saw him.

LADY MACBETH

Ugh, for shame!

MACBETH

Blood has been shed before now, in olden times, before humane laws made the nation more civilized; yes, and even since then, murders have been committed, too terrible to hear of. There was a time when, once his brains were knocked out, a man would die,

and that would be the end of it. But now the dead rise again, with twenty deadly wounds on their heads, and push us off our stools. This is stranger than such a murder itself.

LADY MACBETH

My worthy lord,
Your noble friends miss you at the table.

MACBETH

I had forgotten them.
(*to GUESTS*) Don't be amazed at me, my most worthy friends. I have a strange illness, which means nothing to those who know me. Come, let's drink to everyone's love and health.

Then I'll sit down.— Give me some wine. Fill it full.

GHOST OF BANQUO enters.

I drink to the general joy of everyone at the table— and to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss. If only he were here! I want to drink to him and to everyone, and let all drink to all.

LORDS

We drink to our allegiance, and to your toast.

MACBETH

(*seeing GHOST OF BANQUO*)

Go away, and get out my sight! Hide yourself in the earth! Your bones have no marrow; your blood is cold; You have no vision in those eyes from which you glare.

LADY MACBETH (to GUESTS)

Good nobles, think of this as just a habit of his; that's all it is; it only spoils the pleasure of the occasion.

MACBETH (to GHOST)

What any man dares, I dare.
So approach me looking like a rugged Russian bear, an armored rhinoceros, or a tiger of Hyrcania;

take any shape but this, and my firm muscles
will never tremble. Or come to life again
and dare me to fight with swords in some lonely place.
If I continue to tremble then, call me
a baby girl. Away, you horrible shadow!
You unreal mockery, away!

GHOST OF BANQUO exits.

Why, now that it's gone,
I am a man again. (to GUESTS) Please, everyone, sit still.

LADY MACBETH (to MACBETH)

You have chased away our happiness, and spoiled this good
gathering
with a most amazing outburst.

MACBETH

Can such things happen,
and pass over us like a summer's cloud,
without our taking special notice? You make me wonder
what kind of person I am,
now that I see how you can look on such sights
and keep the natural rosiness of your cheeks,
when mine are pale with fear.

ROSS

What sights, my lord?

LADY MACBETH

I beg you, don't speak. He grows worse and worse.
Questions will enrage him. Quickly—let's say good night.
Don't worry about leaving in the order of your ranks,
just go at once.

LENNOX

Good night—and may his Majesty
soon feel better.

LADY MACBETH

A kind good night to all.

LORDS exit.

MACBETH

The murdered will have revenge, they say; bloodshed requires
more bloodshed.
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;
and well-understood messages
told by magpies, jackdaws, and crows have revealed
the best-hidden murderer.—What time of night is it?

LADY MACBETH

So near morning, it's hard to say whether it's morning or night.

MACBETH

What do you think of the fact that Macduff refused to come to
the feast
at our command?

LADY MACBETH

Did you send for him, sir?

MACBETH

I heard talk of his absence, but I will send for more information.
In each of the nobles' houses,
I keep a paid spy. I'll go tomorrow—
and very early—to visit the Witches.

They'll tell me more, for now I am determined to learn

the worst news from the worst sources. For my own good,
everything else must take second place. I have waded so deep
in blood that, even if I tried to stop,
it would be as hard to go back as to wade the rest of the way
across.

I've got strange things in mind that must be carried out—
and they must be done without taking time to think about them.

LADY MACBETH

You lack the preservative of all living creatures, sleep.

MACBETH

Come, we'll go to sleep. My strange delusion
is the fear of a beginner who needs to be toughened by
experience.

We are still only novices in evil.

They exit.

120

125

130

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140

ACT 3, SCENE 5

A heath. Thunder. The three WITCHES enter, meeting HECATE.

FIRST WITCH

Why, what is it, Hecate? You look angry.

HECATE

Haven't I got reason to be since you hags are so impudent and overly bold? How dare you deal with Macbeth in the riddles and business of death—while I, the teacher of your spells and the secret inventor of all evils, was never called to play my part, or to show the glory of our art? What's worse, all you have done has only been for a headstrong, spiteful, and wrathful follower—who, as others do, cares for his own purposes, not yours. But make amends now. Leave here at once and meet me in the morning at the pit of Acheron. He will come there to learn his destiny.

Bring along your tools, spells charms, and everything else that's needed. I'll take to the air. I'll spend tonight arranging a disastrous and deadly conclusion. Great business must be done before noon.

Upon the corner of the moon, there hangs a heavy drop of moisture. I'll catch it before it hits the ground; when it's been distilled by my magic, it will raise up such unnatural spirits of witchcraft that by the strength of their deceptions, they will lead him on to greater confusion. He will reject fate, mock death, and value

his hopes more than he does wisdom, virtue, and fear. And you all know that over-confidence is mortals' greatest enemy.

Music and a song is heard offstage.

Listen! I'm being called. See, how my little spirit sits in a foggy cloud and waits for me.

HECATE exits.

FIRST WITCH

Come, let's hurry. She'll soon be back again.

They exit.

ACT 3, SCENE 6

Forres. The palace. LENNOX and another LORD enter.

LENNOX (*ironically*)

What I've been saying, you've been thinking, too—
so draw your own conclusions. I only say
that things have been managed strangely. Macbeth pitied
the kindly Duncan; and indeed, he was murdered.

And the most valiant Banquo walked outside too late—
and you may say, if you wish, that Fleance killed him,
for Fleance fled. Men must not walk outside too late.

Who can help but think how monstrous
it was for Malcolm and Donalbain
to kill their kindly father? Damned evil deed!
How it grieved Macbeth! And right away,
in religious rage, didn't he kill the two wrongdoers
while they were slaves of drink and captives of sleep?
Wasn't that nobly done? Yes, and wisely, too,
for it would have angered any heart alive
to hear the men deny it. And that's why I say
he has managed all things well. And I think,
if Macbeth had Duncan's sons under lock and key—
may it please heaven that he never does!—they'd learn
what it means to kill a father. So would Fleance.

But let's be quiet. For because of his bold words, and because
he failed

to attend the tyrant's feast, I hear
Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell me
where he's keeping himself?

LORD

Malcolm, the son of King Duncan,
from whom this tyrant has stolen his birthright,
lives in the English court and is treated
by the most religious King Edward with such kindness,
that fortune's cruelty cannot lessen
the high respect in which he is held. Macduff has gone there
to ask the holy King, on Malcolm's behalf,

to stir up Northumberland and the warlike Siward
so that with their help—and also with the support
of God above for their cause—we may again

have food on our tables and sleep during our nights;
free our feasts and banquets from bloody knives;
receive freely granted honors in return for nothing more than our
faithful devotion;

all of which we yearn for now. News of this
has so exasperated Macbeth that he
is preparing for war.

LENNOX

Did he send for Macduff?

LORD

He did—and when Macduff flatly replied, "Sir, I'll not come,"
the sullen messenger turned his back
and hummed, as if to say, "You'll regret the moment
when you burdened me with this answer."

LENNOX

That might well
teach Macduff to be cautious, and to use his wisdom
to keep as much distance as possible from Macbeth. May some
holy angel

fly to the court of England and deliver
Macduff's message before he gets there, so that a swift
blessing

may soon return to our country, which suffers
under a cursed hand!

LORD

I'll send my prayers with him.

They exit.

ACT 4, SCENE 1

A dark cave. Thunder. WITCHES enter.

FIRST WITCH

The streaked cat has mewed three times.

SECOND WITCH

The hedgehog has whined three times, plus one.

THIRD WITCH

Harpier cries, "It's time, it's time!"

FIRST WITCH

Go all around the cauldron;
throw in the poisoned guts.

Here's a toad that has sweated out venom
while sleeping for thirty-one days and nights
under a cold stone;
boil it first in the magical pot.

ALL

Let toil and trouble grow double everywhere;
let the fire burn and the cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH

Boil and bake in the cauldron
a slice of a snake from the swamp,
the eye of a newt and the toe of a frog,
the wool of a bat and the tongue of a dog,
an adder's forked tongue and a slow-worm's sting,
a lizard's leg and a young owl's wing,
to cast a spell for powerful trouble,
boil and bubble like a hell-broth.

ALL

Let toil and trouble grow double everywhere;
let the fire burn and the cauldron bubble.

THIRD WITCH

The scale of a dragon, the tooth of a wolf,

the mummified flesh of a witch, the stomach and throat
of a salt-sea shark glutted with prey,
the root of a hemlock plant, dug up in the dark,
the liver of a blasphemous Jew,
the bile of a goat and seedlings of a yew tree
cut off during an eclipse of the moon,
the nose of a Turk and a Tartar's lips,
the finger of a baby strangled at birth
after being born in a ditch to a prostitute.
Make the gruel thick and slimy.
Add to the mix a tiger's guts
for the ingredients of our cauldron.

ALL

Let toil and trouble grow double everywhere;
let the fire burn and the cauldron bubble.

SECOND WITCH

Cool it with a baboon's blood.
Now the spell is thick and ready.

HECATE enters.

HECATE

Oh, well done! I praise your efforts,
and every one of you will share in the profits.
And now, sing around the cauldron
like elves and fairies in a ring,
bewitching all that you've put in.

Music and a song.

HECATE exits.

SECOND WITCH

I can tell by a tingling in my thumbs
that something wicked is coming this way.
(knocking)

Locks, open yourselves
to whomever knocks.

MACBETH enters.

25

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MACBETH

What have we here, you mysterious, black hags of midnight!
What is it that you do?

ALL

A deed without a name.

50

MACBETH

I command you by the black arts that you follow—
however you came to learn them—to answer me.
Even if you unleash the winds and let them storm
against the churches; even if foamy waves
destroy and sink ships;
even if ripe wheat is flattened and trees blown down;
even if castles fall on the heads of those who live in them;
even if the tops of palaces and pyramids
are leveled to their bases; even if the precious
seeds of all uncreated things tumble together
until destruction itself grows sick of its work; answer
the questions I ask you.

55

60

FIRST WITCH

Speak.

SECOND WITCH

Demand.

THIRD WITCH

We'll answer.

65

FIRST WITCH

Tell us if you would rather hear it from our mouths,
or the mouths of our masters.

MACBETH

Call them. Let me see them.

FIRST WITCH

Pour in the cauldron the blood of a sow that has eaten
her nine young; also throw into the flame
grease that has collected
on a murderer's gallows.

70

ALL

Come, you high and low spirits;
show yourselves, and skillfully do your work!

Thunder. The FIRST APPARITION, an armored HEAD, appears.

MACBETH

Tell me, you unknown power—

75

FIRST WITCH

He knows your thoughts.
Listen to his speech, but don't say anything.

FIRST APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware of Maccluff,
Beware of the Thane of Fife. Let me go. I've said enough.

The FIRST APPARITION disappears.

MACBETH

Whoever you are, thanks for your timely warning.
You have touched on my very fear. But tell me one more thing—

80

FIRST WITCH

He cannot be commanded. Here's another spirit
more powerful than the first.

Thunder. The SECOND APPARITION, a bloody CHILD, appears.

SECOND APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!—

MACBETH

I'm all ears, listening to you.

85

SECOND APPARITION

Be ruthless, bold, and decisive. Laugh scornfully
at the power of men—for no man born to a woman
can harm Macbeth.

The SECOND APPARITION disappears.

MACBETH

Then live on, Maccluff; why should I fear you?
But still, I'll make myself doubly confident,
and force fate to stand by its promise. You will not live,
so I may tell my faint-hearted fear that it lies,
and sleep even through thunder.

90

Thunder. The THIRD APPARITION, a crowned CHILD with a tree in his hand, appears.

What is this spirit,
who looks like a king's offspring as he rises,
wearing upon his baby's brow a crown—
the highest symbol of power?

95

ALL

Listen, but do not speak to it.

THIRD APPARITION.

Be strong like a lion and proud, and do not worry
about anyone who angers or troubles you, or where
conspirators might be.

100

Macbeth will never be defeated until
great Birnam Wood marches
to fight against him.

The THIRD APPARITION disappears.

MACBETH

That will never be.

Who can draft the forest into service, command a tree
to pull up its earthbound roots? These are good, sweet
prophecies!

105

Rebellious, slain Banquo, you'll never rise until the woods
of Birnam move; so highly placed Macbeth
will live out his normal life span, breathing serenely
for a long time, dying a natural death. Still, my throbbing heart
longs to know one thing. Tell me—if your skills
can tell so much—will Banquo's descendants ever
reign in this kingdom?

110

ALL

Seek to know no more.

MACBETH

I must learn everything. Refuse to tell me this,
and let an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know!

115

The cauldron sinks through a trapdoor. Oboes are heard
offstage.

Why is the cauldron sinking? And what is this music?

FIRST WITCH

Show him!

SECOND WITCH

Show him!

THIRD WITCH

Show him!

120

ALL

Show his eyes the future, and bring his heart grief.
Come and go like shadows.

A parade of eight kings enters, the last with a mirror in his hand;
the GHOST OF BANQUO follows them.

MACBETH

You look too much like the spirit of Banquo. Get away!

Your crown scorches my eyeballs. And you, the next one—

the hair on your golden-crowned head is like the first.

125

The third is like the second.—Filthy hags,

why are you showing me this?—A fourth! My eyes pop out of
their sockets!

What, will this parade of kings continue until thunder announces
Judgment Day?

Still another? A seventh! I'll not look anymore.

And even an eighth appears, holding a mirror

130

which shows me many more kings—and some I see
carrying double globes and triple scepters.

What a horrible sight! Now I see that it's true,

for Banquo, with his blood-matted hair, smiles at me
and claims them as his descendants.

APPARITIONS vanish.

What, is this true?

135

FIRST WITCH

Yes, sir, all this is true. But why
is Macbeth standing there looking so amazed?

Come on, sisters, let's cheer up his spirits
and give him the best of our entertainment.
I'll cast a spell on the air to make music,
while you perform a fantastic, circular dance —
so this great King may kindly say
that we paid proper homage to him.

Music. The WITCHES dance and then vanish.

MACBETH

Where are they? Gone? Let this destructive hour
be recorded as cursed in the calendar!
Come in, you who wait outside there.

LENNOX enters.

LENNOX

What does your Grace want?

MACBETH

Did you see the Witches?

LENNOX

No, my lord.

MACBETH

Didn't they go past you?

LENNOX

Certainly not, my lord.

MACBETH

May the air they ride on be diseased,
and may all who trust them be damned! I heard
galloping horses. Who just arrived?

LENNOX

Two or three men, my lord, who bring you word
that Macduff has fled to England.

MACBETH

Fled to England?

LENNOX

Yes, my good lord.

MACBETH (*aside*)

Time, you foresee my dreadful undertaking.

160
A hasty plan is never achieved
unless it is done immediately. From now on,
every deed that my mind imagines
will be carried out by my hand at once. And right now,
to make sure my goals are achieved, let the following deed be
both thought and done:

165
I will take Macduff's castle by surprise
and seize Fife; I'll put to the sword
his wife, his children, and all unfortunate souls
who might follow him. No more foolish boasting:
I'll do this deed before my resolve cools off.
But no more visions!—Where are these gentlemen who just
arrived?

170
Come on, take me to them.

They exit.

140

145

150

155

ACT 4, SCENE 2

Fife. A room in Macduff's castle. LADY MACDUFF, her SON, and ROSS enter.

LADY MACDUFF

What has my husband done, to make him flee the land?

ROSS

You must be patient, madam.

LADY MACDUFF

He was not.

It was madness for him to flee. Even when we've done nothing traitorous,
our fears can make us behave like traitors.

ROSS

You do not know
whether he fled because of his wisdom or his fear.

LADY MACDUFF

Wisdom? To abandon his wife, his children,
his mansion, and his possessions, leaving them here
to flee somewhere else? He does not love us.
He lacks natural feeling; for a poor wren,
the smallest of birds, will fight against an owl
to protect the young ones in her nest.
Macduff's actions show nothing but fear, no love for us.
He shows no wisdom, either, since his flight
defies all reason.

ROSS

My dearest cousin,
I beg you to control yourself. As for your husband,
he is noble, wise, and sensible, and understands best
the violent disorders of our days. I don't dare speak much further.
But these are cruel times when we are regarded as traitors
and do not know the reason for it; when we believe rumors
out of fear, and yet do not understand our fears;
we float upon a wild and violent sea,
at the mercy of its every wave and motion. I'll leave you now.
It won't be long before I come again.

Things this terrible can't get any worse, or else they'll improve
to what they were before. (*turning to MACDUFF'S SON*) My
handsome cousin,
God bless you.

LADY MACDUFF

He has a father, and yet he's fatherless.

ROSS

I am such a fool, if I stay any longer
I'll disgrace myself by weeping, and cause you discomfort.
I'll go at once.

ROSS exits.

LADY MACDUFF

Little one, your father's dead.

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

SON

As birds do, Mother.

LADY MACDUFF

What, on worms and flies?

SON

On what I can get, I mean—just as they do.

LADY MACDUFF

Poor bird, you'll never learn to fear the net, the lime,
the covered pit, or the snare.

SON

Why should I, Mother? They are not set for ordinary birds.
My father is not dead, no matter what you say.

LADY MACDUFF

Yes, he is dead. So what will you do for a father?

SON

No, what will you do for a husband?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, I can buy myself twenty at any market.

SON

Then you'll only buy them to sell them again.

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LADY MACDUFF

You're speaking with all your wit—and yet I suppose it's witty enough for a child.

SON

Was my father a traitor, Mother?

LADY MACDUFF

Yes, he was.

50

SON

What is a traitor?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, one who swears an oath and breaks it.

SON

And are all men who do so traitors?

LADY MACDUFF

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

SON

And must they all be hanged who swear oaths and break them?

55

LADY MACDUFF

Every one.

SON

Who must hang them?

LADY MACDUFF

Why, the honest men.

SON

Then the oath-breakers are fools, for there are enough oath-breakers to beat up the honest men and hang them.

60

LADY MACDUFF

Oh, God help you, poor monkey!
But what will you do for a father?

SON

If he were dead, you'd weep for him. And if you did not, it would be a good sign that I'd soon have a new father.

65

LADY MACDUFF

Poor babbler, how you talk!

MESSENGER enters.

MESSENGER

Bless you, fair lady. You do not know me, but I am well acquainted with your noble rank. I fear that some danger is coming very near you. If you will take an ordinary man's advice, don't let yourself be found here. Hurry away with your little ones. I think I'm being heartless to frighten you like this; but to do worse harm to you would be deadly cruelty, and yet such harm is very close to you. May heaven save you! I don't dare stay any longer.

75

MESSENGER exits.

LADY MACDUFF

Where should I flee?

I have done no harm. But now I remember that I am in this earthly world, where to do harm is often considered praiseworthy, and to do good is sometimes considered dangerous foolishness. So why—oh, sorrow!—do I use that womanish defense of saying I have done no harm?

80

MURDERERS enter.

Whose are these faces?

FIRST MURDERER

Where is your husband?

LADY MACDUFF

I hope he's in no place so unholy that the likes of you can find him.

85

FIRST MURDERER

He's a traitor.

SON

You lie, you shaggy-haired villain!

FIRST MURDERER

What, you brat?

The MURDERER stabs him.

You fish-spawn of a traitor!

SON

He has killed me, Mother:

Run away, I beg you!

The SON dies.

LADY MACDUFF exits, crying "Murder!" MURDERERS exit, following her.

90

ACT 4, SCENE 3

England. Before the King's palace. MALCOLM and MACDUFF enter.

MALCOLM

Let's find some lonely shade
and weep our sad hearts empty there.

MACDUFF

Instead, let us
firmly take hold of a deadly sword, and like good men,
fight for our fallen land. Every new morning,
new widows howl, new orphans cry, and new sorrows
strike heaven in the face until it echoes
as if it felt sympathy for Scotland, yelling out
a similar sound of grief. 5

MALCOLM

What I believe, I'll weep for;
what I know, I'll believe; and what I can set right,
I will set right, whenever time permits. 10

What you have said might be true—perhaps.

This tyrant, Macbeth, whose name alone blisters our tongues,
was once thought honorable; you've loved him well yourself. 15
He hasn't harmed you yet. Although I'm only young, you might
earn something from him by doing me harm; and you might think
it wise

to offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb like me
to pacify an angry god.

MACDUFF

I am not a backstabber.

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MALCOLM

But Macbeth is.

A good and virtuous character may falter

when commanded by a king. But I must ask your pardon.

My thoughts can't change whatever you really are:

angels are still bright, even though the brightest angel fell. 25

If all evil things were to disguise themselves as good,
good things would look the same as always.

MACDUFF

I have lost hope of gaining your trust.

MALCOLM

Perhaps you lost your hopes where I found my doubts.

Why, in such haste, did you leave your wife and child—
those precious reasons for staying, those strong knots of love—
without saying farewell? I beg you
not to feel insulted by my suspicions;
they're only for my own safety. You might be perfectly honorable,
no matter what I think.

MACDUFF

Bleed, bleed, poor country!

Go on and lay a sure foundation, great tyrant,
for good men do not dare to stop you. Flaunt your crimes;
your title is legally upheld.—Farewell, lord.

I wouldn't be the villain that you think I am
for all the territories under this tyrant's control—
and the wealthy Orient, as well.

MALCOLM

Don't be offended:

I don't say all this because I'm certain that I should fear you.

I think our country sinks beneath its yoke.

It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
is added to its wounds. I also think

that people would lend their hands to defend my right to the
throne;

and here, the kindly English king has offered to help me
with thousands of men. But despite all this,

when I tread upon the tyrant's head

or carry it on my sword, my poor country

will have to endure more vices than it did before;

it will suffer in many ways—and more than ever—
at the hands of Macbeth's successor.

MACDUFF

Who might he be?

MALCOLM

I'm speaking of myself, for I know

that many different vices are grafted onto me;

whenever they bloom, evil Macbeth

will seem as pure as snow, and the poor nation
will regard him as a lamb when his deeds are compared
with my endless crimes.

MACDUFF

From all the armies
of horrible hell, there couldn't come a devil damnably
evil enough to surpass Macbeth.

MALCOLM

I agree that he's murderous,
lustful, greedy, treacherous, dishonest,
violent, vicious—having a trace of every sin
that has a name. But there's no bottom—none—
to my lust. Your wives, daughters,
mothers, and virgins could not fill up
the reservoir of my lust—and my desire
would break through all the restraining barriers
that tried to check my will. You'd be better off with Macbeth
than to have someone like me reign.

MACDUFF

Unlimited lust

takes terrible control of human nature. It has

suddenly emptied happy thrones,

causing many kings to fall. But still, don't be afraid

to accept what belongs to you. You can

secretly indulge in your pleasures as much as you like,

and still seem chaste; you may blindfold everyone.

We have enough willing ladies. You cannot be

such a vulture that you can devour all the women

willing to give their bodies to a great man

if he should want them.

MALCOLM

Along with this, there grows

in my wicked character such

unquenchable greed that, if I were king,

I would take the nobles' lands away,

desiring one man's jewels and another's house;

and the more I took away,

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the greater my appetite would grow, until I provoked unjust quarrels against good and loyal subjects, destroying them to get their wealth.

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MACDUFF

This greed is a deeper problem; it grows a more harmful root than fleeting, youthful lust, and it has put our kings to the sword. But don't be afraid. Scotland has enough abundance to satisfy your desires with possessions of your own. All these faults are bearable, weighed against your virtues.

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MALCOLM

But I have none. I haven't a trace of kingly virtues such as justice, truthfulness, self-control, stability, generosity, perseverance, mercy, humility, devotion, patience, courage, and resolve; instead, I excel in all the different varieties of every crime, and the many ways to act them out. In fact, if I had power, I would pour the sweet milk of friendship into hell, throw the general peace into chaos, and confuse all order on earth.

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MACDUFF

Oh, Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM

If such a man is fit to govern, say so. I am just what I have told you.

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MACDUFF

Fit to govern? No, not to live.—Oh, what a miserable nation! With an illegal tyrant wielding a bloody scepter; when will you see healthy days again, now that the rightful heir to your throne stands accused by his own condemnation, and insults his ancestors?—Your royal father was a most saintly king. The queen who bore you was on her knees praying more often than on her feet, and prepared herself for heaven every day that she lived. Farewell!

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These evils of which you have accused yourself have banished me from Scotland.—Oh, my heart, your hope ends here!

MALCOLM

Macduff, this noble outburst—born of your integrity—has wiped all black suspicion from my soul, and has fully convinced me of your truthfulness and honor. Devilish Macbeth has tried out many plots to win me into his power, and my prudence prevents me from trusting anyone hastily. But let God above take charge of our partnership, for I now put myself under your direction and take back my own self-accusations, rejecting the stains and faults I laid upon myself as foreign to my nature. I am still a virgin, have never perjured myself, have hardly even wanted my own possessions, never broke a promise, would not betray the devil to his fellows, and rejoice in truth as much as I do in life. My first false words were those I just said about myself. What I truly am is yours and my poor country's to command; and indeed, just before you came here, Old Siward and ten thousand soldiers, already fully prepared, were setting forth to Scotland. Now we'll go together—and may our chance of success be as certain as the justice of our cause. Why are you silent?

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MACDUFF

So many welcome and unwelcome things at once—it's hard to understand.

A DOCTOR enters.

MALCOLM

Well, we'll speak more soon. (to the DOCTOR) I ask you, is the King coming this way?

155

DOCTOR

Yes, sir. There is a group of wretched souls

waiting for his cure. Their illness defies the best efforts of medicine, but at his touch—because heaven has made his hand so holy—they quickly heal.

160

MALCOLM

Thank you, doctor.

DOCTOR exits.

MACDUFF

What disease does he mean?

MALCOLM

It's called the evil.

This king is able to cure it in a most miraculous way—and often during my stay here in England, I have seen him do it. How he appeals to heaven, he best knows himself; but fearfully diseased people, who are swollen, covered with sores, pitiful to see, and beyond the help of medicine, he cures by hanging a golden coin around their necks while saying holy prayers. And it's said that he will leave this healing power to the kings who come after him. Along with this strange ability, he has a heavenly gift of prophecy; and several other blessings surround his throne, showing him to be full of holiness.

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ROSS enters.

MACDUFF

Look at who comes here.

MALCOLM

It's one of my countrymen, and yet I don't know him.

MACDUFF

My most noble cousin, you are welcome here.

MALCOLM

I know him now.—Good God, quickly take away the obstacles that keep us apart!

180

ROSS

Amen to that, sir.

MACDUFF

Has nothing changed in Scotland?

ROSS

Oh, sorrow—our poor country is almost afraid to know itself! It cannot be called our mother, but our grave; where only those who know nothing of what's going on are ever seen smiling; where sighs, groans, and shrieks rip through the air without being noticed; where violent sorrow seems an ordinary emotion. One scarcely bothers to ask what dead man the bell tolls for; and good men lose their lives before the flowers in their caps lose theirs, dying before they get sick.

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MACDUFF

Oh, your description is too precise—and yet too true!

MALCOLM

What's the newest grief?

195

ROSS

A speaker is hissed for describing a grief that happened just an hour ago.

Each minute brings a new one.

MACDUFF

How is my wife?

ROSS

Why, well.

MACDUFF

And all my children?

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ROSS

Well too.

MACDUFF

The tyrant has not disturbed their peace?

ROSS

No, they were well at peace when I left them.

MACDUFF

Don't be stingy with your speech. What's going on?

ROSS

When I came here carrying the news which I have sadly brought, I heard a rumor that many worthy fellows had taken up arms; and I believe I witnessed some confirmation of this, for I saw the tyrant's army on the march. Now is the time to bring help. Your presence in Scotland would add more soldiers, and make even our women fight to throw off their fearful troubles.

MALCOLM

Let them be comforted, for we are going there. The King of England has lent us good Siward and ten thousand men; no one in the Christian world is considered an older or better soldier.

ROSS

I wish I could respond to this comfort with more of the same. But I have words to say that should be howled out in the desert air, where they might never be heard.

MACDUFF

Whom do they concern? All of Scotland? Or is it a private sorrow that belongs to some single heart?

ROSS

There's not an honest person who doesn't share some of the woe—but most of it concerns you alone.

MACDUFF

If it has to do with me, don't keep it from me. Quickly, tell me about it.

ROSS

Don't let your ears despise my tongue forever, for it will make the saddest sound they've ever yet heard.

MACDUFF

Hum! I can guess at it.

ROSS

Your castle has been taken by surprise, your wife and children savagely slaughtered. To give you the details would mean adding your own death to this heap of murdered deer.

MALCOLM

Merciful heaven!
(to MACDUFF) What, man, don't pull your hat down over your forehead.

Give words to your sorrow. When grief does not speak aloud, it whispers to the overburdened heart and tells it to break.

MACDUFF

My children, too?

ROSS

Wife, children, servants—all that could be found.

MACDUFF

And I had to be away! My wife was killed too?

ROSS

That's what I said.

MALCOLM

Be comforted.
Our revenge can be the medicine to cure this deadly grief.

MACDUFF

Macbeth has no children. All my pretty ones? Did you say "all"? Oh, hellish bird of prey! All! What, all my pretty babes and their mother, at one deadly swoop?

MALCOLM

Avenge it like a man.

MACDUFF

I shall do so,
but I must also feel it like a man.
I cannot help but remember things

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that were most precious to me. Did heaven watch all this
and do nothing to stop it? Sinful Macduff,
they were all killed because of you! Worthless as I am—
it wasn't for their own sins but for mine
that murder took their souls. Heaven, give them rest now.

260

MALCOLM

Let this be a whetstone to sharpen your sword. Let grief
turn itself into anger. Don't calm your heart; enrage it.

MACDUFF

Oh, I could behave like a woman with my weeping eyes,
or a braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,
cut short any delay! Bring this fiend of Scotland
and myself face to face.

265

Put him within the length of my sword. If he escapes,
may heaven forgive him, too.

MALCOLM

This is spoken like a man.
Come, let's go to the King. Our army is ready;
we lack nothing except permission to leave. Macbeth
is ripe to be shaken, and even the heavenly powers
are arming themselves. Take whatever comfort you can:
No night is so long that it doesn't end in day.

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They exit.

ACT 5, SCENE 1

Dunsinane. Outer room of the castle. A DOCTOR and a servant
GENTLEWOMAN enter.

DOCTOR

For two nights I have watched with you, but I can't see any truth in what you've told me. When was the last time she walked in her sleep?

GENTLEWOMAN

Since his Majesty went to the battlefield, I have seen her rise from her bed, throw her dressing gown around her, unlock her chest, take a piece of paper out of it, fold it, write on it, read it, then seal it, and finally go back to bed—and yet remain fast asleep the whole time.

DOCTOR

This is a great disorder in her personality—to receive the benefits of sleep, but at the same time to do the deeds of someone awake! In this restless sleep of hers—aside from walking and other actual deeds—what have you heard her say at any time?

GENTLEWOMAN

Things, sir, which I must not repeat.

DOCTOR

You may repeat them to me—and it's most proper that you should.

GENTLEWOMAN

I won't repeat them to you nor anyone else, unless I have a witness to confirm what I say.

LADY MACBETH enters, holding a candle.

Look—here she comes. This is how she always does it—and by my life, she's fast asleep. Watch her, stand nearby.

DOCTOR

How did she get that candle?

GENTLEWOMAN

Why, it stood by her bed. She has a candle near her all the time; it's her command.

DOCTOR

You can see that her eyes are open.

GENTLEWOMAN

Yes, but her sense of sight is shut.

DOCTOR

What is she doing now? Look at how she rubs her hands.

GENTLEWOMAN

It's common for her to seem to be washing her hands like this. I have known her continue this way for a quarter of an hour.

LADY MACBETH

There's still a stain here.

DOCTOR

Listen. She's speaking. I will write down what she says to help me remember it better.

LADY MACBETH

Out, damned stain! Out, I tell you! One o'clock, two o'clock. Well, then, it's time to do it. Hell is dark. *(as if speaking to MACBETH)* Shame, my lord, shame—you call yourself a soldier, and yet you're afraid? Why should we who know about it be afraid, when we'll be too powerful to be brought to justice? Still, who would have thought the old man would have so much blood in him?

DOCTOR

Did you hear that?

LADY MACBETH

Macduff, the Thane of Fife, had a wife. Where is she now? What, won't these hands ever be clean? *(to MACBETH)* No more of that, my lord, no more of that. You'll spoil everything with these outbursts.

DOCTOR

For shame, for shame! You have heard a thing you shouldn't have heard.

GENTLEWOMAN

She has said something she shouldn't have said, I am sure of that. Heaven knows what she has done.

LADY MACBETH

The smell of blood is still here. All the perfumes in Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

DOCTOR

What a sigh that is! Her heart is heavily burdened.

GENTLEWOMAN

I wouldn't have such a heart in my bosom—not for the well-being of all the rest of my body. 45

DOCTOR

Well, well, well.

GENTLEWOMAN

I pray to God it turns out well, sir.

DOCTOR

This disease is too much for my skills. Still, I have known people who have walked in their sleep, and then died religiously in their beds. 50

LADY MACBETH (to MACBETH)

Wash your hands. Put on your dressing gown. Don't look so pale. I tell you yet again, Banquo is buried; he cannot come out of his grave.

DOCTOR

Am I really hearing this? 55

LADY MACBETH

To bed, to bed. There's knocking at the gate. Come, come, come, come. Give me your hand. What's been done cannot be undone To bed, to bed, to bed.

LADY MACBETH exits.

DOCTOR

Will she go to bed now?

GENTLEWOMAN

Immediately. 60

DOCTOR

Ugly rumors are spreading. Unnatural crimes bring on unnatural rebellions. Diseased minds will confess their secrets to their deaf pillows.

She is in more need of a priest than a physician. God, God, forgive us all. Watch over her. Take away anything she might use to harm herself, and always keep your eyes on her. And so, good night. She has bewildered my mind and amazed my sight. I don't dare say what I'm thinking.

GENTLEWOMAN

Good night, good doctor.

They exit.

ACT 5, SCENE 2

The country near Dunsinane. Drum and colors. MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, and SOLDIERS enter.

MENTEITH

The English army is near—led by Malcolm, his uncle Siward, and the good Macduff.

They burn with desire for revenge, for their heartfelt reasons would stir even a dead man to join the bloody, grim attack. 5

ANGUS

We'll meet them as we should near Birnam Wood. They're coming that way.

CAITHNESS

Does anyone know if Donalbain is with his brother Malcolm?

LENNOX

I am certain that he is not, sir. I have a list of all the nobles. Siward's son is there, and many beardless youths that want to prove themselves men for the first time. 10

MENTEITH

What's the tyrant Macbeth doing?

CAITHNESS

He's fortifying great Dunsinane Castle. Some say that he's mad; others, who hate him less, say that he's full of valiant fury. But it's certain that he can't buckle his diseased and bloated cause within the belt of his control. 15

ANGUS

Now he feels the blood of his secret murders sticking to his hands. Every minute, new revolts protest his treason. 20

The men he commands follow him only because he commands them,

not because they love him. Now he feels his kingship hanging loosely on him, like a giant's robe on a dwarfish thief. 25

MENTEITH

Who can blame his tormented nerves for recoiling and trembling when, with his whole mind, he condemns himself for being alive?

CAITHNESS

Well, let's march on and give obedience to whom we really owe it. We'll meet Malcolm, the healer of our sick country; and with his help, we'll pour out every last drop of our blood to purge our country of evil. 30

LENNOX

Or as much blood as is needed to nourish the royal flower of healing, and to drown the weeds. Let us march towards Birnam Wood. 35

They exit, marching.

ACT 5, SCENE 3

Dunsinane. A room in the castle. MACBETH, DOCTOR, and SERVANTS enter.

MACBETH

Don't bring me any more reports. Let all my thanes desert me!

Until Birnam Wood approaches Dunsinane,

I'll not weaken with fear. Who is this boy Malcolm?

Wasn't he born to a woman? The spirits who know the future of all human events have told me this:

"Never fear, Macbeth. No man that's born to a woman

will ever have power over you." So flee, treacherous thanes, and join with the soft, well-fed Englishmen.

The mind that rules me and the heart I bear

will never give way to doubt or shake with fear.

A SERVANT enters.

May the devil blacken you with damnation, you cream-faced idiot!

Why do you look as white as a goose?

SERVANT

There are ten thousand—

MACBETH

Geese, you villain?

SERVANT

Soldiers, sir.

MACBETH

Go stick pins in your face and hide your fear in blood, you cowardly boy. What soldiers, clown?

Death upon your soul! Those linen-white cheeks of yours will make others afraid. What soldiers, milk-face?

SERVANT

The English army, may it please you.

MACBETH

Take your face away.

SERVANT exits.

Seyton!—I am sick at heart

when I look—Seyton, I say!—This effort will encourage me forever or dethrone me now. I have lived long enough. My way of life has grown withered, its leaves have turned yellow, and things which should come with old age, such as honor, love, obedience, and many friends, I cannot hope to have; instead, I must expect curses that are not loud but deep, lip-service, and hollow declarations of loyalty which my poor heart cannot believe, but must.—
Seyton!

SEYTON enters.

SEYTON

What is your Highness's pleasure?

MACBETH

What more news is there?

SEYTON

All reports have been confirmed, my lord.

MACBETH

I'll fight until my flesh has been hacked from my bones.

Give me my armor.

SEYTON

It's not needed yet.

MACBETH

I'll put it on.

Send out more horsemen. Scour the countryside.

Hang anyone who says he's afraid. Give me my armor.—

How is your patient doing, doctor?

DOCTOR

My lord, she's not so much sick

as troubled with frequent hallucinations,

which keep her from getting any rest.

MACBETH

Cure her of that.

Can't you treat a diseased mind,

pull up a rooted sorrow from the memory,

ACT 5, SCENE 4

erase the troubles engraved on the brain,
and with some sweet, forgetfulness-inducing medicine,
clean the over-packed bosom of that dangerous stuff
which weighs against the heart?

DOCTOR

In such things,
the patient must treat himself.

MACBETH

Then throw medical science to the dogs. I'll have none of it.
(to SEYTON) Come, put my armor on me. Give me my staff.

SERVANTS begin to arm him.

Seyton, send commands.—Doctor, the thanes are fleeing me.—
Go on, Seyton, hurry.—Doctor, if you could test
the urine of my kingdom and find out what disease it has,
then purge it until it's in sound, perfect health,
I'd applaud you until my applause
came back as an echo. (to SEYTON) Pull off my armor, I say.
(to DOCTOR) What rhubarb, senna, or other purgative drug,
would clean these English out of here? Have you heard about
them?

DOCTOR

Yes, my good lord. Because of your royal preparations for battle,
we've all heard something about them.

MACBETH (to SEYTON)

Bring my armor after me.—
I will not be afraid of death and destruction
until Birnam Forest comes toward Dunsinane.

DOCTOR (aside)

If I could get far away from Dunsinane,
I wouldn't come back here again even for good pay.
They exit.

*Country near Birnam Wood. Drum and banners. MALCOLM,
SIWARD, MACDUFF, YOUNG SIWARD, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS,
ANGUS, and SOLDIERS enter, marching.]*

MALCOLM

Kinsmen, I hope the days are coming soon
when we'll be safe in our own home.

MENTEITH

We don't doubt it.

SIWARD

What woods are these in front of us?

MENTEITH

It's Birnam Wood.

MALCOLM

Let every soldier cut down a bough
and carry it in front of him. That way, we will hide
the size of our army, and Macbeth's lookouts
will give incorrect reports of us.

SOLDIERS

It will be done.

SIWARD

All we have learned is that the confidant tyrant
is keeping himself inside Dunsinane castle, and will stay there
when we arrive before it.

MALCOLM

That's his best hope;
for whenever they've had the opportunity,
men of both lesser and greater ranks have revolted against him,
and those who continue to serve him do so only by force,
for their hearts aren't with him, either.

MACDUFF

Let's not make guesses about the situation
until the battle is over; meanwhile, let's get to work
like true soldiers.

ACT 5, SCENE 5

SIWARD

The time is coming
when we'll learn the difference
between what we say we have and what we really have.
Mere guesswork tells us about nothing except our uncertain
hopes;
the final outcome must be decided by the strokes of swords;
so let our army advance toward that outcome.
They exit, marching.

*Dunsinane. Inside the castle. MACBETH, SEYTON, and SOLDIERS
enter with drums and banners.*

MACBETH

Hang our banners on the outside walls.
Word keeps coming that they're on their way. Our castle's strength
will make a mockery of their siege. Let them wait outside
until they're finished off by starvation and illness.
If they weren't reinforced by deserters from our side,
we might have met them boldly in the battlefield, face to face,
and beat them until they fled back home.

Women are heard crying offstage.

What is that noise?

SEYTON

It is women crying, my good lord.

SEYTON exits.

MACBETH

I have almost forgotten what it feels like to be afraid.
There was a time when I would have shivered
to hear a shriek at night; and if I'd heard a frightening tale,
the hair on my scalp would have risen and stirred
as if it were alive. I have eaten my fill of horrors.
Terror is so familiar to my murderous thoughts
that it can't startle me anymore.

SEYTON reenters.

What was that crying about?

SEYTON

The Queen is dead, my lord.

MACBETH

She should have died at another time.
There would have been a better moment for such news.
Tomorrow, and the day after, and the day after—
the days creep on one after another at a dismal pace

until the last word of time's record is spoken;
and all our yesterdays have lighted the way for fools
to die and turn to dust. Out, out, brief candle!
Life is just a walking shadow, a bad actor
who struts and worries for an hour on stage,
and then is heard no more. It is a tale
told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
but meaning nothing.

A MESSENGER enters.

You came to use your tongue; tell your story quickly.

MESSENGER

My gracious lord,
I should report to you what I think I saw,
but I don't know how to do it.

MACBETH

Well, tell me, sir.

MESSENGER

As I stood watch on the hill,
I looked toward Birnam, and it soon appeared to me
as if the woods began to move.

MACBETH

Liar and villain!

MESSENGER

Let me suffer from your anger if it's not true.
You can see it coming, less than three miles away.
I tell you, it's a moving forest.

MACBETH

If you are lying,
you'll hang alive on the nearest tree
until you starve. If you're telling the truth,
I don't care if you do the same to me.—
My courage falters, and I begin
to fear the trickery of the devil,
for he tells lies that seem true. "Don't be afraid till Birnam Wood
comes to Dunsinane!"—and now the woods
are coming toward Dunsinane.—To arms, to arms, let's attack!—
If what this man tells me is really true,

neither running away nor waiting here is possible.
I'm beginning to grow weary of sunlight,
and wish that the universe itself were wiped away.—
Sound the call to arms!—Let winds blow, let destruction come;
at least we'll die with armor on our backs.

They exit.

ACT 5, SCENE 6

In front of the castle at Dunsinane. Drums and banners.

MALCOLM, SIWARD, MACDUFF, and their ARMY enter, carrying branches.

MALCOLM

Now we are near enough. Throw down your leafy coverings, and look like yourselves.—My worthy Uncle Siward, you and my cousin, your most noble son, will lead our first battalion. Worthy Macduff and I shall undertake whatever else remains to be done, according to our battle plan.

SIWARD

Farewell.

If we can find the tyrant's army tonight, let us be beaten if we don't put up a fight.

MACDUFF

Make all our trumpets speak; give breath to those noisy announcers of blood and death.

They exit. The battle sounds continue.

10

ACT 5, SCENE 7

Another part of the field. MACBETH enters.

MACBETH

They have tied me to a stake. I cannot flee, but must fight out this round like a bear. Where is a man who was not born to a woman? I'm supposed to fear such a man, or no one.

YOUNG SIWARD enters.

YOUNG SIWARD

What is your name?

5

MACBETH

You will be afraid to hear it.

YOUNG SIWARD

No—not even if you call yourself by a hotter name than any in hell.

MACBETH

My name is Macbeth.

YOUNG SIWARD

The devil himself could not speak a name more hateful to my ear.

10

MACBETH

No, nor one more frightening.

YOUNG SIWARD

You lie, detested tyrant. With my sword, I'll prove that what you say is a lie.

They fight, and YOUNG SIWARD is slain.

MACBETH

You were born to a woman.

I smile at swords, and laugh scornfully at any weapons wielded by a man who was born to a woman.

Exit.

Battle sounds. MACDUFF enters.

15

ACT 5, SCENE 8

Another part of the field. MACBETH enters.

MACBETH

Why should I play the Roman fool and die
on mine own sword? While I see living men, wounds
are better on them than on me.

MACDUFF enters.

MACDUFF

Turn this way, hellhound, turn this way!

MACBETH

I have avoided you more than any other man.
But get back from me. My soul is already too burdened
with your family's blood.

MACDUFF

I have nothing to say;
my voice is in my sword, you villain—too murderous
to be described in words.

They fight. Battle sounds.

MACBETH

You're wasting your strength.
You'd find it just as easy to damage the intangible air
with your sword as to make me bleed.
Let your blade fall on vulnerable heads;
I live a charmed life that cannot be lost
to a man born to a woman.

MACDUFF

Lose hope for your charmed life,
and let the demon you've been serving
tell you that Macduff was prematurely ripped
from his mother's womb.

MACBETH

May the tongue that tells me so be cursed,

MACDUFF

The noise of battle is that way. Tyrant, show your face!
If you are killed, and not by a stroke of my sword,
my wife and children's ghosts will always haunt me.
I cannot fight against wretched mercenaries, whose arms
have been hired to carry their spears. I must fight you, Macbeth—
or else I'll sheathe my unused sword,
its edge still unbattered. You ought to be there;
all this noise seems to report the presence
of someone important. Let me find him, Fortune!
I beg for nothing more.

They exit while the trumpets sound the call to arms.

MALCOLM and **SIWARD** enter.

SIWARD

Come this way, my lord. The castle has surrendered without a
fight;
the tyrant's people are fighting for both sides;
the noble thanes are proving themselves brave in battle;
victory almost declares itself yours,
and there is little left to do.

MALCOLM

We have met with foes
who deliberately miss us.

SIWARD

Sir, enter the castle.

They exit. Battle sounds.

for it has daunted my manly spirit!
And let no one else believe those cheating devils
who trick with us with their double meanings,
standing by the letter of their promises,
but breaking our hopes with them. I won't fight with you.

25

MACDUFF

Then surrender, coward,
and live on to be the carnival attraction of the age.
Just as we do with the rarest freaks, we'll paint your picture
on a banner and hang it from a pole; and under the picture
we'll write,

30

"Here you can see the tyrant."

MACBETH

I won't surrender
to kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
and be tormented by the curses of the rabble.
Though Birnam Wood has come to Dunsinane,
and I'm faced with you, a man not born to a woman,
I'll test fate one last time. I hold up my warrior's shield
in front of my body. Fight on, Macduff,
and may the first one to cry, "Stop! Enough!" be damned.

35

They exit, fighting. Battle sounds.

*They reenter fighting. MACBETH is slain. MACDUFF exits,
carrying off MACBETH'S body. Trumpets sound the call for a
retreat. Fanfare. MALCOLM, SIWARD, ROSS, the other THANES
and SOLDIERS enter with drums and banners.*

MALCOLM

I wish the friends we're missing had arrived safely.

40

SIWARD

Some of them must have died; and yet, judging from the
number of survivors I see,
our great victory today has been won with few lives.

MALCOLM

Macduff is missing, and your noble son.

ROSS

My lord, your son has paid a soldier's debt.
He only lived until he was a man—

45

and as soon as had he proved himself a man with his bravery,
fighting at his post without shrinking,
he died like a man.

SIWARD

Then he is dead?

ROSS

Yes, and carried off the field. You must not grieve
enough to match his value; if you do,
your grief will never end.

50

SIWARD

Were his wounds in front of him?

ROSS

Yes, on his front.

SIWARD

Well, then—let him be God's soldier now!
If I had as many sons as I have hairs,
I couldn't wish finer deaths for them;
that's all the tolling he'll get for his funeral.

55

MALCOLM

He deserves more sorrow,
and I'll give it to him.

60

SIWARD

He's worth no more.
They say he departed well and paid up his bill—
and so, God be with him. Here comes further comfort.

MACDUFF reenters, carrying MACBETH'S head.

MACDUFF

Hail, King!—for that's what you are. Look—here stands
the tyrant's accursed head. The world is free from evil.
I see that you are surrounded by the noblest men of your
kingdom,
who are thinking the same greeting I now make.
I wish to hear all our voices say it aloud:
Hail, King of Scotland!

65

ALL

Hail, King of Scotland!

70

Fanfare.

MALCOLM

I shall not waste much time
before I reward each of you for your services,
so that I don't remain in your debt. My thanes and kinsmen,
from now on you will be called earls—the first men ever honored
by that title in Scotland. There's more to be done,⁷⁵
which should be carried out quickly to begin our new age;
for example, we'll call home from abroad our exiled friends
who fled to escape the shrewd tyrant;
and we'll bring to justice the cruel agents
of this dead butcher and his fiendish queen—⁸⁰
who, it is believed, took her life
by her own violent hands. Whatever else
we are called upon to do, we shall carry it out fully,
at the proper time and place, by the grace of God.
So thanks to all of you together, and to each one of you—⁸⁵
and we invite you to see us crowned at Scone.

Fanfare. All exit.