

## ORIGINAL TEXT

*Thunder and lightning. Enter three WITCHES*

**FIRST WITCH**

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

**SECOND WITCH**

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

**THIRD WITCH**

5 That will be ere the set of sun.

**FIRST WITCH**

Where the place?

**SECOND WITCH**

Upon the heath.

**THIRD WITCH**

There to meet with Macbeth.

**FIRST WITCH**

I come, Graymalkin!

**SECOND WITCH**

10 Paddock calls.

**THIRD WITCH**

Anon.

**ALL**

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

*Exeunt*

*Alarum within. Enter KING DUNCAN, MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with attendants, meeting a bleeding  
CAPTAIN*

**DUNCAN**

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

**MALCOLM**

This is the sergeant

Who like a good and hardy soldier fought

5 'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!

Say to the king the knowledge of the broil  
As thou didst leave it.

**CAPTAIN**

Doubtful it stood,

As two spent swimmers that do cling together  
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—

10 Worthy to be a rebel, for to that

## MODERN TEXT

*Thunder and lightning. Three WITCHES enter*

**FIRST WITCH**

When should the three of us meet again? Will it be in thunder,  
lightning, or rain?

**SECOND WITCH**

We'll meet when the noise of the battle is over, when one side  
has won and the other side has lost.

**THIRD WITCH**

That will happen before sunset.

**FIRST WITCH**

Where should we meet?

**SECOND WITCH**

Let's do it in the open field.

**THIRD WITCH**

We'll meet Macbeth there.

*The WITCHES hear the calls of their spirit friends or  
"familiars," which look like animals—one is a cat and one is a  
toad.*

**FIRST WITCH**

(calling to her cat) I'm coming, Graymalkin!

**SECOND WITCH**

My toad, Paddock, calls me.

**THIRD WITCH**

(to her spirit) I'll be right here!

**ALL**

Fair is foul, and foul is fair. Let's fly away through the fog and  
filthy air.

*They exit.*

*Sounds of a trumpet and soldiers fighting offstage. KING  
DUNCAN enters with his sons MALCOLM and  
DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and a number of attendants. They  
meet a wounded and bloody CAPTAIN.*

**DUNCAN**

Who is this bloody man? Judging from his appearance, I bet he  
can tell us the latest news about the revolt.

**MALCOLM**

This is the brave sergeant who fought to keep me from being  
captured. Hail, brave friend! Tell the king what was happening  
in the battle when you left it.

**CAPTAIN**

For a while you couldn't tell who would win. The armies were  
like two exhausted swimmers clinging to each other and  
struggling in the water, unable to move. The villainous rebel  
Macdonwald was supported by foot soldiers and horsemen

The multiplying villainies of nature  
 Do swarm upon him—from the Western Isles  
 Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied,  
 And fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,  
 15 Showed like a rebel's whore. But all's too weak,  
 For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—  
 Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,  
 Which smoked with bloody execution,  
 Like valor's minion carved out his passage  
 20 Till he faced the slave;  
 Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,  
 Till he unseamed him from the navel to the chops,  
 And fixed his head upon our battlements.

**DUNCAN**  
 O valiant cousin! Worthy gentleman!

**CAPTAIN**  
 25 As whence the sun 'gins his reflection  
 Shipwracking storms and direful thunders break,  
 So from that spring whence comfort seemed to come  
 Discomfort swells. Mark, King of Scotland, mark:  
 No sooner justice had, with valor armed,  
 30 Compelled these skipping kerns to trust their heels,  
 But the Norwegian lord, surveying vantage,  
 With furbished arms and new supplies of men,  
 Began a fresh assault.

**DUNCAN**  
 Dismayed not this our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

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

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

*Exit CAPTAIN with attendants*  
*Enter ROSS and ANGUS*

45 Who comes here?  
**MALCOLM**  
 The worthy thane of Ross.

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

**ROSS**

from Ireland and the Hebrides, and Lady Luck was with him, smiling cruelly at his enemies as if she were his whore. But Luck and Macdonwald together weren't strong enough. Brave Macbeth, laughing at Luck, chopped his way through to Macdonwald, who didn't even have time to say good-bye or shake hands before Macbeth split him open from his navel to his jawbone and stuck his head on our castle walls.

**DUNCAN**  
 My brave relative! What a worthy man!

**CAPTAIN**  
 But in the same way that violent storms always come just as spring appears, our success against Macdonwald created new problems for us. Listen to this, King: as soon as we sent those Irish soldiers running for cover, the Norwegian king saw his chance to attack us with fresh troops and shiny weapons.

**DUNCAN**  
 Didn't this frighten our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

**CAPTAIN**  
 The new challenge scared them about as much as sparrows frighten eagles, or rabbits frighten a lion. To tell you the truth, they fought the new enemy with twice as much force as before; they were like cannons loaded with double ammunition. Maybe they wanted to take a bath in their enemies' blood, or make that battlefield as infamous as Golgotha, where Christ was crucified, I don't know. But I feel weak. My wounds must be tended to.

**DUNCAN**  
 Your words, like your wounds, bring you honor. Take him to the surgeons.

*The CAPTAIN exits, helped by attendants.*  
**ROSS and ANGUS enter.**

Who is this?  
**MALCOLM**  
 The worthy **THANE** of Ross.

**LENNOX**  
 His eyes seem frantic! He looks like someone with a strange tale to tell.

**ROSS**

God save the king.

**DUNCAN**

Whence cam'st thou, worthy thane?

**ROSS**

From Fife, great king,

Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky

50 And fan our people cold.

Norway himself, with terrible numbers,

Assisted by that most disloyal traitor,

The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict,

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapped in proof,

55 Confronted him with self-comparisons,

Point against point, rebellious arm 'gainst arm,

Curbing his lavish spirit; and to conclude,

The victory fell on us.

**DUNCAN**

Great happiness!

**ROSS**

That now

Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition.

60 Nor would we deign him burial of his men

Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's Inch

Ten thousand dollars to our general use.

**DUNCAN**

No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive

Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,

65 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

**ROSS**

I'll see it done.

**DUNCAN**

What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

*Exeunt*

*Thunder. Enter the three WITCHES*

**FIRST WITCH**

Where hast thou been, sister?

**SECOND WITCH**

Killing swine.

**THIRD WITCH**

Sister, where thou?

**FIRST WITCH**

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap,

5 And munched, and munched, and munched. "Give me,"  
quoit I.

"Aroint thee, witch!" the rump-fed runnion cries.

Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' th' *Tiger*;

But in a sieve I'll thither sail,

And like a rat without a tail,

10 I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.

God save the king!

**DUNCAN**

Where have you come from, worthy thane?

**ROSS**

Great king, I've come from Fife, where the Norwegian flag flies,

mocking our country and frightening our people. Leading an

enormous army and assisted by that disloyal traitor, the thane

of Cawdor, the king of Norway began a bloody battle. But

outfitted in his battle-weathered armor, Macbeth met the

Norwegian attacks shot for shot, as if he were the goddess of

war's husband. Finally he broke the enemy's spirit, and we

were victorious.

**DUNCAN**

Great happiness!

**ROSS**

So now Sweno, the Norwegian king, wants a treaty. We told

him we wouldn't even let him bury his men until he retreated

to Saint Colme's Inch and paid us ten thousand dollars.

**DUNCAN**

The thane of Cawdor will never again betray me. Go announce

that he will be executed, and tell Macbeth that Cawdor's titles

will be given to him.

**ROSS**

I'll get it done right away.

**DUNCAN**

The thane of Cawdor has lost what the noble Macbeth has won.

*They all exit.*

*Thunder. The three WITCHES enter.*

**FIRST WITCH**

Where have you been, sister?

**SECOND WITCH**

Killing pigs.

**THIRD WITCH**

And you, sister?

**FIRST WITCH**

A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap and munched away at

them. "Give me one," I said. "Get away from me, witch!" the fat

woman cried. Her husband has sailed off to Aleppo as master

of a ship called the *Tiger*. I'll sail there in a kitchen strainer,

turn myself into a tailless rat, and do things to him—

**SECOND WITCH**

I'll give thee a wind.

**FIRST WITCH**

Thou 'rt kind.

**THIRD WITCH**

And I another.

**FIRST WITCH**

I myself have all the other,

15 And the very ports they blow,

All the quarters that they know

I' th' shipman's card.

I'll drain him dry as hay.

Sleep shall neither night nor day

20 Hang upon his penthouse lid.

He shall live a man forbid.

Weary sev'nights nine times nine

Shall he dwindle, peak and pine.

Though his bark cannot be lost,

25

Yet it shall be tempest-tossed.

Look what I have.

**SECOND WITCH**

Show me, show me.

**FIRST WITCH**

Here I have a pilot's thumb,

Wrecked as homeward he did come.

*Drum within*

**THIRD WITCH**

30 A drum, a drum!

Macbeth doth come.

**ALL**

*(dancing together in a circle)* The weird sisters, hand in  
hand,

Posters of the sea and land,

Thus do go about, about,

35 Thrice to thine and thrice to mine

And thrice again, to make up nine.

Peace! The charm's wound up.

*Enter MACBETH and BANQUO*

**MACBETH**

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

**BANQUO**

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

40 So withered and so wild in their attire,

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

And yet are on 't?—Live you? Or are you aught

That man may question? You seem to understand me,

By each at once her choppy finger laying

**SECOND WITCH**

I'll give you some wind to sail there.

**FIRST WITCH**

How nice of you!

**THIRD WITCH**

And I will give you some more.

**FIRST WITCH**

I already have control of all the other winds, along with the  
ports from which they blow and every direction on the sailor's

compass in which they can go. I'll drain the life out of him. He  
won't catch a wink of sleep, either at night or during the day.

He will live as a cursed man. For eighty-one weeks he will  
waste away in agony.

Although I can't make his ship disappear, I can still make his  
journey miserable. Look what I have here.

**SECOND WITCH**

Show me, show me.

**FIRST WITCH**

Here I have the thumb of a pilot who was drowned while trying  
to return home.

*A drum sounds offstage.*

**THIRD WITCH**

A drum, a drum! Macbeth has come.

**ALL**

*(dancing together in a circle)* We weird sisters, hand in hand,  
swift travelers over the sea and land, dance around and around  
like so. Three times to yours, and three times to mine, and  
three times again, to add up to nine. Enough! The charm is  
ready.

*MACBETH and BANQUO enter.*

**MACBETH**

*(to BANQUO)* I have never seen a day that was so good and  
bad at the same time.

**BANQUO**

How far is it supposed to be to Forres? *(he sees the WITCHES)*

What are these creatures? They're so withered-looking and  
crazily dressed. They don't look like they belong on this planet,  
but I see them standing here on Earth. *(to the WITCHES)* Are  
you alive? Can you answer questions? You seem to understand  
me, because each of you has put a gruesome finger to her

45 Upon her skinny lips. You should be women,  
And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
That you are so.

**MACBETH**

Speak, if you can: what are you?

**FIRST WITCH**

All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

**SECOND WITCH**

50 All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

**THIRD WITCH**

All hail, Macbeth, that shalt be king hereafter!

**BANQUO**

Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear

Things that do sound so fair? (*to the WITCHES*) I' th' name of  
truth,

Are ye fantastical, or that indeed

55 Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner

You greet with present grace and great prediction

Of noble having and of royal hope,

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

If you can look into the seeds of time

60 And say which grain will grow and which will not,

Speak, then, to me, who neither beg nor fear

Your favors nor your hate.

**FIRST WITCH**

Hail!

**SECOND WITCH**

Hail!

**THIRD WITCH**

65 Hail!

**FIRST WITCH**

Lesser than Macbeth and greater.

**SECOND WITCH**

Not so happy, yet much happier.

**THIRD WITCH**

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

**FIRST**

**WITCH**

70 Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

**MACBETH**

Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.

By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis.

But how of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor lives,

A prosperous gentleman, and to be king

75 Stands not within the prospect of belief,

No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence

You owe this strange intelligence, or why

skinny lips. You look like women, but your beards keep me  
from believing that you really are.

**MACBETH**

Speak, if you can. What kind of creatures 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, the future king!

**BANQUO**

My dear Macbeth, why do you look so startled and afraid of

these nice things they're saying? (*to the WITCHES*) Tell me  
honestly, are you illusions, or are you really what you seem to

be? You've greeted my noble friend with honors and talk of a

future so glorious that you've made him speechless. But you

don't say anything to me. If you can see the future and say how

things will turn out, tell me. I don't want your favors and I'm

not afraid of your hatred.

**FIRST WITCH**

Hail!

**SECOND WITCH**

Hail!

**THIRD WITCH**

Hail!

**FIRST WITCH**

You are lesser than Macbeth but also greater.

**SECOND WITCH**

You are not as happy as Macbeth, yet much happier.

**THIRD WITCH**

Your descendants will be kings, even though you will not be

one. So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

**FIRST WITCH**

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

**MACBETH**

Wait! You only told me part of what I want to know. Stay and

tell me more. I already know I am the thane of Glamis because

I inherited the position when my father, Sinel, died. But how

can you call me the thane of Cawdor? The thane of Cawdor is

alive, and he's a rich and powerful man. And for me to be the

king is completely impossible, just as it's impossible for me to

be thane of Cawdor. Tell me where you learned these strange

Upon this blasted heath you stop our way  
With such prophetic greeting. Speak, I charge you.

**WITCHES** *vanish*

**BANQUO**

80 The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,  
And these are of them. Whither are they vanished?

**MACBETH**

Into the air, and what seemed corporal  
Melted, as breath into the wind. Would they had stayed.

**BANQUO**

Were such things here as we do speak about?  
85 Or have we eaten on the insane root  
That takes the reason prisoner?

**MACBETH**

Your children shall be kings.

**BANQUO**

You shall be king.

**MACBETH**

And thane of Cawdor too: went it not so?

**BANQUO**

To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

*Enter* **ROSS** and **ANGUS**

## ORIGINAL TEXT

**ROSS**

90 The king hath happily received, Macbeth,  
The news of thy success, and when he reads  
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight,  
His wonders and his praises do contend  
Which should be thine or his. Silenced with that,  
95 In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,  
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,  
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make,  
Strange images of death. As thick as tale  
Can post with post, and every one did bear  
100 Thy praises in his kingdom's great defense,  
And poured them down before him.

**ANGUS**

We are sent

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

**ROSS**

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

**BANQUO**

things, and why you stop us at this desolate place with this  
prophetic greeting? Speak, I command you.

*The* **WITCHES** *vanish.*

**BANQUO**

The earth has bubbles, just like the water, and these creatures  
must have come from a bubble in the earth. Where did they  
disappear to?

**MACBETH**

Into thin air. Their bodies melted like breath in the wind. I  
wish they had stayed!

**BANQUO**

Were these things we're talking about really here? Or are we  
both on drugs?

**MACBETH**

Your children will be kings.

**BANQUO**

You will be the king.

**MACBETH**

And thane of Cawdor too. Isn't that what they said?

**BANQUO**

That's exactly what they said. Who's this?

**ROSS** and **ANGUS** *enter.*

## MODERN TEXT

**ROSS**

The king was happy to hear of your success, Macbeth.  
Whenever he hears the story of your exploits in the fight  
against the rebels, he becomes so amazed it makes him  
speechless. He was also shocked to learn that on the same day  
you fought the rebels you also fought against the army of  
Norway, and that you weren't the least bit afraid of death, even  
as you killed everyone around you. Messenger after messenger  
delivered news of your bravery to the king with praise for how  
you defended his country.

**ANGUS**

The king sent us to give you his thanks and to bring you to him.  
Your real reward won't come from us.

**ROSS**

And to give you a taste of what's in store for you, he told me to  
call you the thane of Cawdor. So hail, thane of Cawdor! That  
title belongs to you now.

**BANQUO**



What, can the devil speak true?

**MACBETH**

The thane of Cawdor lives. Why do you dress me

110 In borrowed robes?

**ANGUS**

Who was the thane lives yet,

But under heavy judgment bears that life

Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combined

With those of Norway, or did line the rebel

With hidden help and vantage, or that with both

115 He labored in his country's wrack, I know not;

But treasons capital, confessed and proved,

Have overthrown him.

**MACBETH**

*(aside)*

Glamis, and thane of

Cawdor!

The greatest is behind. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Thanks  
for your pains.

120 *(aside to BANQUO)* Do you not hope your children  
shall be kings,

When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me

Promised no less to them?

**BANQUO**

That, trusted home,

Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,

Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange.

125 And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,

The instruments of darkness tell us truths,

Win us with honest trifles, to betray 's

In deepest consequence.

*(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Cousins, a word, I pray you.

**BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS move to one side**

**MACBETH**

130 *(aside)*

Two truths are told,

As happy prologues to the swelling act

Of the imperial theme. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* I thank you,  
gentlemen.

*(aside)* This supernatural soliciting

Cannot be ill, cannot be good. If ill,

135 Why hath it given me earnest of success,

Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor.

If good, why do I yield to that suggestion

Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair

And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,

140 Against the use of nature? Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings.

My thought, whose murder yet is

but fantastical,

*(shocked)* Can the devil tell the truth?

**MACBETH**

The thane of Cawdor is still alive. Why are you putting his  
clothes on me?

**ANGUS**

The man who was the thane of Cawdor is still alive, but he's  
been sentenced to death, and he deserves to die. I don't know  
whether he fought on Norway's side, or if he secretly aided the  
rebels, or if he fought with both of our enemies. But his  
treason, which has been proven, and to which he's confessed,  
means he's finished.

**MACBETH**

*(to himself)* It's just like they said—now I'm the thane of  
Glamis and the thane of Cawdor. And the best part of what  
they predicted is still to come. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Thank  
you for the news. *(speaking so that only BANQUO can hear)*  
Aren't you beginning to hope your children will be kings? After  
all, the witches who said I was thane of Cawdor promised them  
nothing less.

**BANQUO**

If you trust what they say, you might be on your way to  
becoming king, as well as thane of Cawdor. But this whole  
thing is strange. The agents of evil often tell us part of the truth  
in order to lead us to our destruction. They earn our trust by  
telling us the truth about little things, but then they betray us  
when it will damage us the most. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)*  
Gentlemen, I'd like to have a word with you, please.

**ROSS, ANGUS, and BANQUO move to one side.**

**MACBETH**

*(to himself)* So far the witches have told me two things that  
came true, so it seems like this will culminate in my becoming  
king. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Thank you, gentlemen. *(to  
himself)* This supernatural temptation doesn't seem like it can  
be a bad thing, but it can't be good either. If it's a bad thing,  
why was I promised a promotion that turned out to be true?  
Now I'm the thane of Cawdor, just like they said I would be.  
But if this is a good thing, why do I find myself thinking about  
murdering King Duncan, a thought so horrifying that it makes  
my hair stand on end and my heart pound inside my chest?  
The dangers that actually threaten me here and now frighten  
me less than the horrible things I'm imagining.

Even though it's just a fantasy so far, the mere thought of  
committing murder shakes me up so much that I hardly know

Shakes so my single state of man  
That function is smothered in  
surmise,  
And nothing is but what is not.

**BANQUO**

Look how our partner's rapt.

**MACBETH**

*(aside)* If chance will have me king, why, chance may  
crown me  
Without my stir.

**BANQUO**

New honors come upon him,

150 Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mold  
But with the aid of use.

**MACBETH**

*(aside)* Come what come may,  
Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

**BANQUO**

Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

**MACBETH**

155 Give me your favor. My dull brain was wrought  
With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains  
Are registered where every day I turn  
The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king.  
*(aside to BANQUO)* Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more  
time,

160 The interim having weighed it, let us speak  
Our free hearts each to other.

**BANQUO**

Very gladly.

**MACBETH**

Till then, enough. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Come, friends.

*Exeunt*

*Flourish. Enter KING DUNCAN, LENNOX, MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, and attendants*

**DUNCAN**

Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not  
Those in commission yet returned?

**MALCOLM**

My liege,

They are not yet come back. But I have spoke  
With one that saw him die, who did report

5 That very frankly he confessed his treasons,  
Implored your highness' pardon, and set forth  
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life  
Became him like the leaving it. He died  
As one that had been studied in his death

who I am anymore. My ability to act is stifled by my thoughts  
and speculations, and the only things that matter to me are  
things that don't really exist.

**BANQUO**

Look at Macbeth—he's in a daze.

**MACBETH**

*(to himself)* If fate wants me to be king, perhaps fate will just  
make it happen and I won't have to do anything.

**BANQUO**

*(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Macbeth is not used to his new titles.  
They're like new clothes: they don't fit until you break them in  
over time.

**MACBETH**

*(to himself)* One way or another, what's going to happen is  
going to happen.

**BANQUO**

Good Macbeth, we're ready when you are.

**MACBETH**

I beg your pardon; I was distracted. Kind gentlemen, I won't  
forget the trouble you've taken for me whenever I think of this  
day. Let's go to the king. *(speaking so that only BANQUO can  
hear)* Think about what happened today, and when we've both  
had time to consider things, let's talk.

**BANQUO**

Absolutely.

**MACBETH**

Until then, we've said enough. *(to ROSS and ANGUS)* Let's go,  
my friends.

*They all exit.*

*A trumpet fanfare sounds. KING DUNCAN, LENNOX,  
MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, and their attendants enter.*

**DUNCAN**

Has the former thane of Cawdor been executed yet? Haven't  
the people in charge of that come back?

**MALCOLM**

My king, they haven't come back yet. But I spoke with someone  
who saw Cawdor die, and he said that Cawdor openly  
confessed his treasons, begged your highness's forgiveness,  
and repented deeply. He never did anything in his whole life  
that looked as good as the way he died. He died like someone  
who had practiced how to toss away his most cherished  
possession as if it were a worthless piece of garbage.



10 To throw away the dearest thing he owed  
As 'twere a careless trifle.

**DUNCAN**

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

*Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS*

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

**MACBETH**

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

**DUNCAN**

Welcome hither.  
I have begun to plant thee, and will labor  
30 To make thee full of growing. *(to BANQUO)* Noble Banquo,  
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known  
No less to have done so, let me infold thee  
And hold thee to my heart.

**BANQUO**

There, if I grow,  
The harvest is your own.

**DUNCAN**

My plenteous joys,  
35 Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,  
And you whose places are the nearest, know  
We will establish our estate upon  
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter  
40 The prince of Cumberland; which honor must  
Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
On all deservers. *(to MACBETH)* From hence to Inverness,  
And bind us further to you.

**MACBETH**

45 The rest is labor which is not used for you:  
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful

**DUNCAN**

There's no way to read a man's mind by looking at his face. I  
trusted Cawdor completely.

**MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS enter.**

*(to MACBETH)* My worthiest kinsman! Just this moment I was  
feeling guilty for not having thanked you enough. You have  
done so much for me so fast that it has been impossible to  
reward you properly. If you deserved less, then perhaps my  
payment would have matched your deeds! All I can say is that I  
owe you more than I can ever repay.

**MACBETH**

The opportunity to serve you is its own reward. Your only duty,  
your highness, is to accept what we owe you. Our duty to you  
and your state is like the duty of children to their father or  
servants to their master. By doing everything we can to protect  
you, we're only doing what we should.

**DUNCAN**

You are welcome here. By making you thane of Cawdor, I have  
planted the seeds of a great career for you, and I will make sure  
they grow. *(to BANQUO)* Noble Banquo, you deserve no less  
than Macbeth, and everyone should know it. Let me bring you  
close to me and give you the benefit of my love and good will.

**BANQUO**

Then if I accomplish anything great, it will be a credit to you.

**DUNCAN**

My joy is so overwhelming it brings tears to my eyes. My sons,  
relatives, lords, and all those closest to me, I want you to  
witness that I will bestow my kingdom on my eldest son,  
Malcolm. Today I name him the prince of Cumberland. But  
Malcolm isn't going to be alone in receiving honors—titles of  
nobility will shine like stars on all of you who deserve them. *(to*  
*MACBETH)* And now, let's go to your castle at Inverness,  
where I will become even more obliged to you because of your  
hospitality.

**MACBETH**

I'm not happy unless I can be working for you. I will go ahead  
and bring my wife the good news that you are coming. With

The hearing of my wife with your approach.  
So humbly take my leave.

**DUNCAN**

My worthy Cawdor!

**MACBETH**

50     *(aside)* The prince of Cumberland! That is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires.  
The eye wink at the hand, yet let that be  
55     Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

*Exit*

**DUNCAN**

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

*Flourish. Exeunt*

*Enter LADY MACBETH, alone, with a letter*

**LADY MACBETH**

*(reading)* "They met me in the day of success, and I have learned  
by the perfectest report they have more in them than mortal  
knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further,  
they made themselves air, into which they vanished. Whiles I  
stood rapt in the wonder of it came missives from the king, who  
all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor,' by which title, before, these  
weird sisters saluted me, and referred me to the coming on of  
time with 'Hail, king that shalt be!' This have I thought good to  
deliver thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou might'st  
not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness  
is promised thee. Lay it to thy heart, and farewell."  
Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be  
What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;  
It is too full o' th' milk of human kindness  
5 To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great,  
Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,  
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,  
And yet wouldst wrongly win. Thou'ld'st have, great Glamis,  
10 That which cries, "Thus thou must do," if thou have it,  
And that which rather thou dost fear to do,  
Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,  
That I may pour my spirits in thine ear  
And chastise with the valor of my tongue  
15 All that impedes thee from the golden round,  
Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem  
To have thee crowned withal.

that, I'll be off.

**DUNCAN**

My worthy Cawdor!

**MACBETH**

*(to himself)* Malcolm is now the prince of Cumberland! To  
become king myself, I'm either going to have to step over him  
or give up, because he's in my way. Stars, hide your light so no  
one can see the terrible desires within me. I won't let my eye  
look at what my hand is doing, but in the end I'm still going to  
do that thing I'd be horrified to see.

**MACBETH exits.**

**DUNCAN**

*(to BANQUO, in the middle of a conversation we haven't  
heard)* You're right, Banquo. Macbeth is every bit as valiant as  
you say, and I am satisfied with these praises of him. Let's  
follow after him, now that he has gone ahead to prepare our  
welcome. He is a man without equal.

*Trumpet fanfare. They exit.*

**LADY MACBETH enters, reading a letter.**

**LADY MACBETH**

"The witches met me on the day of my victory in battle, and I  
have since learned that they have supernatural knowledge.  
When I tried desperately to question them further, they  
vanished into thin air. While I stood spellbound, messengers  
from the king arrived and greeted me as the thane of Cawdor,  
which is precisely how the weird sisters had saluted me before  
calling me 'the future king!' I thought I should tell you this  
news, my dearest partner in greatness, so that you could  
rejoice along with me about the greatness that is promised to  
us. Keep it secret, and farewell."

*(she looks up from the letter)* You are thane of Glamis and  
Cawdor, and you're going to be king, just like you were  
promised. But I worry about whether or not you have what it  
takes to seize the crown. You are too full of the milk of human  
kindness to strike aggressively at your first opportunity. You  
want to be powerful, and you don't lack ambition, but you don't  
have the mean streak that these things call for. The things you  
want to do, you want to do like a good man. You don't want to  
cheat, yet you want what doesn't belong to you. There's  
something you want, but you're afraid to do what you need to  
do to get it. You want it to be done for you. Hurry home so I  
can persuade you and talk you out of whatever's keeping you  
from going after the crown. After all, fate and witchcraft both  
seem to want you to be king.

*Enter SERVANT*

What is your tidings?

**SERVANT**

The king comes here tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

Thou 'rt mad to say it.

20 Is not thy master with him, who, were 't so,  
Would have informed for preparation?

**SERVANT**

So please you, it is true: our thane is coming.  
One of my fellows had the speed of him,  
Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more

25 Than would make up his message.

**LADY MACBETH**

Give him tending.  
He brings great news.

*Exit SERVANT*

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan

30 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits  
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,  
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full  
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood.  
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,

35 That no compunctious visitings of nature  
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between  
The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,  
And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances

40 You wait on nature's mischief. Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark  
To cry "Hold, hold!"

*Enter MACBETH*

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

**MACBETH**

My dearest love,

50 Duncan comes here tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

And when goes hence?

**MACBETH**

Tomorrow, as he purposes.

**LADY MACBETH**

*A SERVANT enters.*

What news do you bring?

**SERVANT**

The king is coming here tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

You must be crazy to say that! Isn't Macbeth with the king, and  
wouldn't Macbeth have told me in advance so I could prepare,  
if the king were really coming?

**SERVANT**

I'm sorry, but it's the truth. Macbeth is coming. He sent a  
messenger ahead of him who arrived here so out of breath that  
he could barely speak his message.

**LADY MACBETH**

Take good care of him. He brings great news.

*The SERVANT exits.*

So the messenger is short of breath, like a hoarse raven, as he  
announces Duncan's entrance into my fortress, where he will  
die. Come, you spirits that assist murderous thoughts, make me  
less like a woman and more like a man, and fill me from head  
to toe with deadly cruelty! Thicken my blood and clog up my  
veins so I won't feel remorse, so that no human compassion  
can stop my evil plan or prevent me from accomplishing it!  
Come to my female breast and turn my mother's milk into  
poisonous acid, you murdering demons, wherever you hide,  
invisible and waiting to do evil! Come, thick night, and cover  
the world in the darkest smoke of hell, so that my sharp knife  
can't see the wound it cuts open, and so heaven can't peep  
through the darkness and cry, "No! Stop!"

*MACBETH enters.*

Great thane of Glamis! Worthy thane of Cawdor! You'll soon be  
greater than both those titles, once you become king! Your  
letter has transported me from the present moment, when who  
knows what will happen, and has made me feel like the future  
is already here.

**MACBETH**

My dearest love, Duncan is coming here tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

And when is he leaving?

**MACBETH**

He plans to leave tomorrow.

**LADY MACBETH**

O, never  
Shall sun that morrow see!  
Your face, my thane, is as a book where men  
May read strange matters. To beguile the time,  
55 Look like the time. Bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue. Look like th' innocent flower,  
But be the serpent under 't. He that's coming  
Must be provided for; and you shall put  
This night's great business into my dispatch,  
60 Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

**MACBETH**

We will speak further.

**LADY MACBETH**

Only look up clear.

To alter favor ever is to fear.

65 Leave all the rest to me.

*Exeunt*

*hautboys and torches. Enter KING DUNCAN, MALCOLM,  
DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS,  
ANGUS, and attendants*

**DUNCAN**

This castle hath a pleasant seat. The air  
Nimble and sweetly recommends itself  
Unto our gentle senses.

**BANQUO**

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

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

**DUNCAN**

See, see, our honored hostess!

The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,  
Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you  
How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,  
And thank us for your trouble.

**LADY MACBETH**

All our service,  
15 In every point twice done and then done double,  
Were poor and single business to contend  
Against those honors deep and broad wherewith  
Your majesty loads our house. For those of old,  
And the late dignities heaped up to them,

That day will never come. Your face betrays strange feelings,  
my lord, and people will be able to read it like a book. In order  
to deceive them, you must appear the way they expect you to  
look. Greet the king with a welcoming expression in your eyes,  
your hands, and your words. You should look like an innocent  
flower, but be like the snake that hides underneath the flower.  
The king is coming, and he's got to be taken care of. Let me  
handle tonight's preparations, because tonight will change  
every night and day for the rest of our lives.

**MACBETH**

We will speak about this further.

**LADY MACBETH**

You should project a peaceful mood, because if you look  
troubled, you will arouse suspicion. Leave all the rest to me.

*They exit.*

*The stage is lit by torches. Hautboys play. DUNCAN enters,  
together with MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO,  
LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and their attendants.*

**DUNCAN**

This castle is in a pleasant place. The air is sweet and appeals  
to my refined senses.

**BANQUO**

The fact that this summer bird, the house martin, builds his  
nests here proves how inviting the breezes are. There isn't a  
single protrusion in the castle walls where these birds haven't  
built their hanging nests to sleep and breed. I've noticed that  
they always like to settle and mate where the air is the nicest.

*LADY MACBETH enters.*

**DUNCAN**

Look, here comes our honored hostess! Sometimes the love my  
subjects bring me is inconvenient, but I still accept it as love. In  
doing so, I'm teaching you to thank me for the inconvenience  
I'm causing you by being here, because it comes from my love  
to you.

**LADY MACBETH**

Everything we're doing for you, even if it were doubled and  
then doubled again, is nothing compared to the honors you  
have brought to our family. We gladly welcome you as our  
guests, with gratitude for both the honors you've given us  
before and the new honors you've just given us.

20 We rest your hermits.

**DUNCAN**

Where's the thane of Cawdor?

We coursed him at the heels and had a purpose  
To be his purveyor; but he rides well,  
And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him  
To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,

25 We are your guest tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

Your servants ever

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

**DUNCAN**

Give me your hand.

Conduct me to mine host. We love him highly

30 And shall continue our graces towards him.

By your leave, hostess.

*Exeunt*

*Hautboys. Torches. Enter a sewer and divers servants with dishes  
and service over the stage. Then enter MACBETH*

**MACBETH**

If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well  
It were done quickly. If the assassination  
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch  
With his surcease success; that but this blow

5 Might be the be-all and the end-all here,  
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,  
We'd jump the life to come. But in these cases  
We still have judgment here, that we but teach  
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return

10 To plague th' inventor: this even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice  
To our own lips. He's here in double trust:  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,

15 Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against

20 The deep damnation of his taking-off;  
And pity, like a naked newborn babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,

25 That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur

**DUNCAN**

Where is Macbeth, the thane of Cawdor? We followed closely  
after him. I hoped to arrive here before him, but he rides  
swiftly. And his great love, which is as sharp as his spur, helped  
him beat us here. Fair and noble hostess, we are your guests  
tonight.

**LADY MACBETH**

We are your servants, your highness, and as always our house  
and everything in it is at your disposal, for after all, we keep it  
in your trust and we're glad to give you back what's yours.

**DUNCAN**

Give me your hand. Bring me to my host, Macbeth. I love him  
dearly, and I shall continue to favor him. Whenever you're  
ready, hostess.

*They all exit.*

*Hautboys play. The stage is lit by torches. A butler enters, and  
various servants carry utensils and dishes of food across the  
stage. Then MACBETH enters.*

**MACBETH**

If this business would really be finished when I did the deed,  
then it would be best to get it over with quickly. If the  
assassination of the king could work like a net, sweeping up  
everything and preventing any consequences, then the murder  
would be the be-all and end-all of the whole affair, and I would  
gladly put my soul and the afterlife at risk to do it. But for  
crimes like these there are still punishments in this world. By  
committing violent crimes we only teach other people to  
commit violence, and the violence of our students will come  
back to plague us teachers. Justice, being equal to everyone,  
forces us to drink from the poisoned cup that we serve to  
others. The king trusts me in two ways. First of all, I am his  
kinsman and his subject, so I should always try to protect him.  
Second, I am his host, so I should be closing the door in his  
murderer's face, not trying to murder him myself. Besides,  
Duncan has been such a humble leader, so free of corruption,  
that his virtuous legacy will speak for him when he dies, as if  
angels were playing trumpets against the injustice of his  
murder. Pity, like an innocent newborn baby, will ride the wind  
with winged angels on invisible horses through the air to  
spread news of the horrible deed to everyone everywhere.  
People will shed a flood of tears that will drown the wind like a  
horrible downpour of rain. I can't spur myself to action. The  
only thing motivating me is ambition, which makes people  
rush ahead of themselves toward disaster.



To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other.

*Enter* LADY MACBETH

How now! What news?

LADY MACBETH

He has almost supped. Why have you left the chamber?

MACBETH

30 Hath he asked for me?

LADY MACBETH

Know you not he has?

MACBETH

We will proceed no further in this business.  
He hath honored me of late, and I have bought  
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,  
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,

35 Not cast aside so soon.

LADY MACBETH

Was the hope drunk

Wherein you dressed yourself? Hath it slept since?  
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale  
At what it did so freely? From this time  
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard

40 To be the same in thine own act and valor  
As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that  
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,  
And live a coward in thine own esteem,  
Letting "I dare not" wait upon "I would, "

45 Like the poor cat i' th' adage?

MACBETH

Prithee, peace:

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

LADY MACBETH

What beast was 't, then,

That made you break this enterprise to me?  
When you durst do it, then you were a man;

50 And to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both.  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know

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

LADY MACBETH *enters.*

What news do you have?

LADY MACBETH

He has almost finished dinner. Why did you leave the dining  
room?

MACBETH

Has he asked for me?

LADY MACBETH

Don't you know he has?

MACBETH

We can't go on with this plan. The king has just honored me,  
and I have earned the good opinion of all sorts of people. I  
want to enjoy these honors while the feeling is fresh and not  
throw them away so soon.

LADY MACBETH

Were you drunk when you seemed so hopeful before? Have you  
gone to sleep and woken up green and pale in fear of this idea?  
From now on this is what I'll think of your love. Are you afraid  
to act the way you desire? Will you take the crown you want so  
badly, or will you live as a coward, always saying "I can't" after  
you say "I want to"? You're like the poor cat in the old story.

MACBETH

Please, stop! I dare to do only what is proper for a man to do.  
He who dares to do more is not a man at all.

LADY MACBETH

If you weren't a man, then what kind of animal were you when  
you first told me you wanted to do this? When you dared to do  
it, that's when you were a man. And if you go one step further  
by doing what you dared to do before, you'll be that much more  
the man. The time and place weren't right before, but you  
would have gone ahead with the murder anyhow. Now the time  
and place are just right, but they're almost too good for you. I  
have suckled a baby, and I know how sweet it is to love the  
baby at my breast. But even as the baby was smiling up at me, I  
would have plucked my nipple out of its mouth and smashed  
its brains out against a wall if I had sworn to do that the same  
way you have sworn to do this.



MACBETH

If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH

We fail?

60 But screw your courage to the sticking-place,  
And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—  
Whereto the rather shall his day's hard journey  
Soundly invite him—his two chamberlains  
Will I with wine and wassail so convince  
65 That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
Their drenchèd natures lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
70 The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon  
His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt  
Of our great quell?

MACBETH

Bring forth men-children only,

For thy undaunted mettle should compose  
Nothing but males. Will it not be received,  
75 When we have marked with blood those sleepy two  
Of his own chamber and used their very daggers,  
That they have done 't?

LADY

MACBETH

Who dares receive it other,

As we shall make our griefs and clamor roar  
Upon his death?

MACBETH

I am settled, and bend up

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

*Exeunt*

*Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE, with a torch before him*

BANQUO

How goes the night, boy?

FLEANCE

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

BANQUO

And she goes down at twelve.

FLEANCE

I take 't 'tis later, sir.

BANQUO

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

MACBETH

But if we fail—

LADY MACBETH

We, fail? If you get your courage up, we can't fail. When  
Duncan is asleep—the day's hard journey has definitely made  
him tired—I'll get his two servants so drunk that their memory  
will go up in smoke through the chimneys of their brains.  
When they lie asleep like pigs, so drunk they'll be dead to the  
world, what won't you and I be able to do to the unguarded  
Duncan? And whatever we do, we can lay all the blame on the  
drunken servants.

MACBETH

May you only give birth to male children, because your fearless  
spirit should create nothing that isn't masculine. Once we have  
covered the two servants with blood, and used their daggers to  
kill, won't people believe that they were the culprits?

LADY MACBETH

Who could think it happened any other way? We'll be grieving  
loudly when we hear that Duncan has died.

MACBETH

Now I'm decided, and I will exert every muscle in my body to  
commit this crime. Go now, and pretend to be a friendly  
hostess. Hide with a false pleasant face what you know in your  
false, evil heart.

*They exit.*

*BANQUO enters with FLEANCE, who lights the way with a  
torch.*

BANQUO

How's the night going, boy?

FLEANCE

The moon has set. The clock hasn't struck yet.

BANQUO

The moon sets at twelve, right?

FLEANCE

I think it's later than that, sir.

BANQUO

Here, take my sword. The heavens are being stingy with their

5 Their candles are all out. Take thee that too.  
A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,  
And yet I would not sleep. Merciful powers,  
Restrain in me the cursèd thoughts that nature  
Gives way to in repose.

*Enter MACBETH and a SERVANT with a torch*  
Give me my sword. Who's there?

**MACBETH**

10 A friend.

**BANQUO**

What, sir, not yet at rest? The king's a-bed.  
He hath been in unusual pleasure, and  
Sent forth great largess to your offices.  
This diamond he greets your wife withal,

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

**MACBETH**

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

**BANQUO**

All's well.

I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters:

20 To you they have showed some truth.

**MACBETH**

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

**BANQUO**

At your kind'st leisure.

**MACBETH**

If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis,

25 It shall make honor for you.

**BANQUO**

So I lose none  
In seeking to augment it, but still keep  
My bosom franchised and allegiance clear,  
I shall be counselled.

**MACBETH**

Good repose the while!

**BANQUO**

30 Thanks, sir: the like to you!

*Exeunt BANQUO and FLEANCE*

**MACBETH**

(to the SERVANT) Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.

*Exit SERVANT*

light. Take this, too. I'm tired and feeling heavy, but I can't  
sleep. Merciful powers, keep away the nightmares that plague  
me when I rest!

*MACBETH enters with a SERVANT, who carries a torch.*  
Give me my sword. Who's there?

**MACBETH**

A friend.

**BANQUO**

You're not asleep yet, sir? The king's in bed. He's been in an  
unusually good mood and has granted many gifts to your  
household and servants. This diamond is a present from him to  
your wife for her boundless hospitality. *(he hands MACBETH a  
diamond)*

**MACBETH**

Because we were unprepared for the king's visit, we  
weren't able to entertain him as well as we would have wanted  
to.

**BANQUO**

Everything's OK. I had a dream last night about the three  
witches. At least part of what they said about you was true.

**MACBETH**

I don't think about them now. But when we have an hour to  
spare we can talk more about it, if you're willing.

**BANQUO**

Whenever you like.

**MACBETH**

If you stick with me, when the time comes, there will be  
something in it for you.

**BANQUO**

I'll do whatever you say, as long as I can do it with a clear  
conscience.

**MACBETH**

Rest easy in the meantime.

**BANQUO**

Thank you, sir. You do the same.

*BANQUO and FLEANCE exit.*

**MACBETH**

(to the SERVANT) Go and tell your mistress to strike the bell  
when my drink is ready. Get yourself to bed.

*The SERVANT exits.*

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
 35 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but  
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,  
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?  
 40 I see thee yet, in form as palpable  
 As this which now I draw.  
 Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going,  
 And such an instrument I was to use.  
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' th' other senses,  
 45 Or else worth all the rest. I see thee still,  
 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,  
 Which was not so before. There's no such thing.  
 It is the bloody business which informs  
 Thus to mine eyes. Now o'er the one half-world  
 50 Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
 The curtained sleep. Witchcraft celebrates  
 Pale Hecate's offerings, and withered murder,  
 Alarumed by his sentinel, the wolf,  
 Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,  
 55 With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design  
 Moves like a ghost. Thou sure and firm-set earth,  
 Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear  
 Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts,  
 And take the present horror from the time,  
 60 Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.  
 Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

*A bell rings*

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

*Exit*

*Enter* LADY MACBETH

LADY MACBETH  
 That which hath made them drunk hath made me bold.  
 What hath quenched them hath given me fire.  
 Hark! Peace! It was the owl that shrieked, the fatal bellman,  
 Which gives the stern'st good-night. He is about it.  
 5 The doors are open, and the surfeited grooms  
 Do mock their charge with snores. I have drugged their possets,  
 That death and nature do contend about them,  
 Whether they live or die.

MACBETH

*(within)*

Who's there? What, ho!

LADY MACBETH

Is this a dagger I see in front of me, with its handle pointing toward my hand? *(to the dagger)* Come, let me hold you. *(he grabs at the air in front of him without touching anything)* I don't have you but I can still see you. Fateful apparition, isn't it possible to touch you as well as see you? Or are you nothing more than a dagger created by the mind, a hallucination from my fevered brain? I can still see you, and you look as real as this other dagger that I'm pulling out now. *(he draws a dagger)* You're leading me toward the place I was going already, and I was planning to use a weapon just like you. My eyesight must either be the one sense that's not working, or else it's the only one that's working right. I can still see you, and I see blood splotches on your blade and handle that weren't there before. *(to himself)* There's no dagger here. It's the murder I'm about to do that's making me think I see one. Now half the world is asleep and being deceived by evil nightmares. Witches are offering sacrifices to their goddess Hecate. Old man murder, having been roused by the howls of his wolf, walks silently to his destination, moving like [Tarquin](#), as quiet as a ghost. *(speaking to the ground)* Hard ground, don't listen to the direction of my steps. I don't want you to echo back where I am and break the terrible stillness of this moment, a silence that is so appropriate for what I'm about to do. While I stay here talking, Duncan lives. The more I talk, the more my courage cools.

*A bell rings.*

I'm going now. The murder is as good as done. The bell is telling me to do it. Don't listen to the bell, Duncan, because it summons you either to heaven or to hell.

MACBETH *exits.*

LADY MACBETH *enters.*

LADY MACBETH  
 The alcohol that got the servants drunk has made me bold. The same liquor that quenched their thirst has fired me up. Listen! Quiet! That was the owl that shrieked, with a scary "good night" like the bells they ring before they execute people. Macbeth must be killing the king right now. The doors to Duncan's chamber are open, and the drunk servants make a mockery of their jobs by snoring instead of protecting the king. I put so many drugs in their drinks that you can't tell if they're alive or dead.

MACBETH

*(from offstage)* Who's there? What is it?

LADY MACBETH

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

*Enter MACBETH, with bloody daggers*  
My husband!

**MACBETH**

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

**LADY MACBETH**

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

**MACBETH**

When?

**LADY**

**MACBETH**

Now.

**MACBETH**

As I descended?

**LADY MACBETH**

Ay.

**MACBETH**

Hark! Who lies i' th' second chamber?

**LADY MACBETH**

20 Donalbain.

**MACBETH**

*(looking at his hands)* This is a sorry sight.

**LADY MACBETH**

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

**MACBETH**

There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried. "Murder!"  
That they did wake each other. I stood and heard them.

25 But they did say their prayers, and addressed them  
Again to sleep.

**LADY MACBETH**

There are two lodged together.

**MACBETH**

One cried, "God bless us!" and "Amen" the other,  
As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.  
List'ning their fear I could not say "Amen,"

30 When they did say "God bless us!"

**LADY MACBETH**

Consider it not so deeply.

**MACBETH**

But wherefore could not I pronounce "Amen"?  
I had most need of blessing, and "Amen"  
Stuck in my throat.

Oh no, I'm afraid the servants woke up, and the murder didn't happen. For us to attempt murder and not succeed would ruin us. *(She hears a noise.)* Listen to that! I put the servants' daggers where Macbeth would find them. He couldn't have missed them. If Duncan hadn't reminded me of my father when I saw him sleeping, I would have killed him myself.

**MACBETH enters carrying Obloody daggers.**

My husband!

**MACBETH**

I have done the deed. Did you hear a noise?

**LADY MACBETH**

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

**MACBETH**

When?

**LADY MACBETH**

Just now.

**MACBETH**

As I came down?

**LADY MACBETH**

Yes.

**MACBETH**

Listen! Who's sleeping in the second chamber?

**LADY MACBETH**

Donalbain.

**MACBETH**

*(looking at his bloody hands)* This is a sorry sight.

**LADY MACBETH**

That's a stupid thing to say.

**MACBETH**

One of the servants laughed in his sleep, and one cried, "Murder!" and they woke each other up. I stood and listened to them, but then they said their prayers and went back to sleep.

**LADY MACBETH**

Malcolm and Donalbain are asleep in the same room.

**MACBETH**

One servant cried, "God bless us!" and the other replied, "Amen," as if they had seen my bloody hands. Listening to their frightened voices, I couldn't reply "Amen" when they said "God bless us!"

**LADY MACBETH**

Don't think about it so much.

**MACBETH**

But why couldn't I say "Amen"? I desperately needed God's blessing, but the word "Amen" stuck in my throat.

**LADY MACBETH**

These deeds must not be thought

35 After these ways. So, it will make us mad.

**MACBETH**

Methought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep"—the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the raveled sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,  
40 Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,  
Chief nourisher in life's feast.

**LADY MACBETH**

What do you mean?

**MACBETH**

Still it cried, "Sleep no more!" to all the house.  
"Glamis hath murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more."

**LADY MACBETH**

45 Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthythane,  
You do unbend your noble strength to think  
So brainsickly of things. Go get some water,  
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.  
Why did you bring these daggers from the place?

50 They must lie there. Go carry them and smear  
The sleepy grooms with blood.

**MACBETH**

I'll go no more:

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

**LADY MACBETH**

Infirm of purpose!

Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead

55 Are but as pictures. 'Tis the eye of childhood  
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,  
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,  
For it must seem their guilt.

*Exit*

*Knock within*

**MACBETH**

Whence is that knocking?

How is't with me when every noise appals me?

60 What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.  
Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood  
Clean from my hand? No, this my hand will rather  
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,  
Making the green one red.

*Enter LADY MACBETH*

**LADY MACBETH**

65 My hands are of your color, but I shame

**LADY MACBETH**

We can't think that way about what we did. If we do, it'll drive  
us crazy.

**MACBETH**

I thought I heard a voice cry, "Sleep no more! Macbeth is  
murdering sleep." Innocent sleep. Sleep that soothes away all  
our worries. Sleep that puts each day to rest. Sleep that relieves  
the weary laborer and heals hurt minds. Sleep, the main course  
in life's feast, and the most nourishing.

**LADY MACBETH**

What are you talking about?

**MACBETH**

The voice kept crying, "Sleep no more!" to everyone in the  
house. "Macbeth has murdered sleep, and therefore Macbeth  
will sleep no more."

**LADY MACBETH**

Who said that? Why, my worthy lord, you let yourself become  
weak when you think about things in this cowardly way. Go get  
some water and wash this bloody evidence from your hands.  
Why did you carry these daggers out of the room? They have to  
stay there. Go take them back and smear the sleeping guards  
with the blood.

**MACBETH**

I can't go back. I'm afraid even to think about what I've done. I  
can't stand to look at it again.

**LADY MACBETH**

Coward! Give me the daggers. Dead and sleeping people can't  
hurt you any more than pictures can. Only children are afraid  
of scary pictures. If Duncan bleeds I'll paint the servants' faces  
with his blood. We must make it seem like they're guilty.

**LADY MACBETH** *exits.*

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

**MACBETH**

Where is that knocking coming from? What's happening to me,  
that I'm frightened of every noise? (*looking at his hands*)  
Whose hands are these? Ha! They're plucking out my eyes. Will  
all the water in the ocean wash this blood from my hands? No,  
instead my hands will stain the seas scarlet, turning the green  
waters red.

**LADY MACBETH** *enters.*

**LADY MACBETH**

My hands are as red as yours, but I would be ashamed if my

To wear a heart so white.

*Knock within*

I hear a knocking

At the south entry. Retire we to our chamber.

A little water clears us of this deed.

How easy is it, then! Your constancy

70 Hath left you unattended.

*Knock within*

Hark! More knocking.

Get on your nightgown, lest occasion call us

And show us to be watchers. Be not lost

So poorly in your thoughts.

**MACBETH**

75 To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

*Knock within*

Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou couldst.

*Exeunt*

*Enter a PORTER. Knocking within*

**PORTER**

Here's a knocking indeed! If a man were porter of hell-gate,  
he should have old turning the key.

*Knock within*

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, i' th' name of Beelzebub?

Here's a farmer that hanged himself on the expectation of plenty.

Come in time, have napkins enough about you, here you'll sweat  
for 't.

*Knock within*

Knock, knock! Who's there, in th' other devil's name? Faith,  
here's an equivocator that could swear in both the scales against  
either scale, who committed treason enough for God's sake, yet  
could not equivocate to heaven. O, come in, equivocator.

*Knock within*

5 Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Faith, here's an English tailor  
come hither for stealing out of a French hose. Come in, tailor.  
Here you may roast your goose.

*Knock within*

Knock, knock! Never at quiet. What are you? But this place is too  
cold for hell. I'll devil-porter it no further. I had thought to have let in  
some of all professions that go the primrose way to the everlasting  
bonfire.

*Knock within*

Anon, anon! I pray you, remember the porter.

heart were as pale and weak.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

I hear someone knocking at the south entry. Let's go back to  
our bedroom. A little water will wash away the evidence of our  
guilt. It's so simple! You've lost your resolve.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Listen! There's more knocking. Put on your nightgown, in case  
someone comes and sees that we're awake. Snap out of your  
daze.

**MACBETH**

Rather than have to think about my crime, I'd prefer to be  
completely unconscious.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Wake Duncan with your knocking. I wish you could!

*They exit.*

*A sound of knocking from offstage. A **PORTER**, who is  
obviously drunk, enters.*

**PORTER**

This is a lot of knocking! Come to think of it, if a man were in  
charge of opening the gates of hell to let people in, he would  
have to turn the key a lot.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Knock, knock, knock! (*pretending he's the gatekeeper in hell*)

Who's there, in the devil's name? Maybe it's a farmer who

killed himself because grain was cheap. (*talking to the  
imaginary farmer*) You're here just in time! I hope you  
brought some handkerchiefs; you're going to sweat a lot here.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name? Maybe  
it's some slick, two-faced con man who lied under oath. But he  
found out that you can't lie to God, and now he's going to hell  
for perjury. Come on in, con man.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Knock, knock, knock! Who's there? Maybe it's an English tailor  
who liked to skimp on the fabric for people's clothes. But now  
that tight pants are in fashion he can't get away with it. Come  
on in, tailor. You can heat your iron up in here.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

Knock, knock! Never a moment of peace! Who are you? Ah,  
this place is too cold to be hell. I won't pretend to be the devil's  
porter anymore. I was going to let someone from every  
profession into hell.

*A sound of knocking from offstage.*

I'm coming, I'm coming! Please, don't forget to leave me a tip.



*Opens the gate*  
*Enter MACDUFF and LENNOX*

**MACDUFF**

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

**PORTER**

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

**MACDUFF**

What three things does drink especially provoke?

**PORTER**

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

**MACDUFF**

I believe drink gave thee the lie last night.

**PORTER**

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

**MACDUFF**

15 Is thy master stirring?

*Enter MACBETH*

Our knocking has awaked him. Here he comes.

**LENNOX**

Good morrow, noble sir.

**MACBETH**

Good morrow, both.

**MACDUFF**

Is the king stirring, worthy thane?

**MACBETH**

Not yet.

**MACDUFF**

He did command me to call timely on him.

20 I have almost slipped the hour.

**MACBETH**

I'll bring you to him.

**MACDUFF**

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

**MACBETH**

*The PORTER opens the gate.*  
*MACDUFF and LENNOX enter.*

**MACDUFF**

Did you go to bed so late, my friend, that you're having a hard  
time getting up now?

**PORTER**

That's right sir, we were drinking until 3 A.M., and drink, sir,  
makes a man do three things.

**MACDUFF**

What three things does drink make a man do?

**PORTER**

Drinking turns your nose red, it puts you to sleep, and it makes  
you urinate. Lust it turns on but also turns off. What I mean is,  
drinking stimulates desire but hinders performance. Therefore,  
too much drink is like a con artist when it comes to your sex  
drive. It sets you up for a fall. It gets you up but it keeps you  
from getting off. It persuades you and discourages you. It gives  
you an erection but doesn't let you keep it, if you see what I'm  
saying. It makes you dream about erotic experiences, but then  
it leaves you asleep and needing to pee.

**MACDUFF**

I believe drink did all of this to you last night.

**PORTER**

It did, sir. It got me right in the throat. But I got even with  
drink. I was too strong for it. Although it weakened my legs  
and made me unsteady, I managed to vomit it out and laid it  
flat on the ground.

**MACDUFF**

Is your master awake?

*MACBETH enters.*

Our knocking woke him up. Here he comes.

**LENNOX**

Good morning, noble sir.

**MACBETH**

Good morning to both of you.

**MACDUFF**

Is the king awake, worthy thane?

**MACBETH**

Not yet.

**MACDUFF**

He commanded me to wake him up early. I've almost missed  
the time he requested.

**MACBETH**

I'll bring you to him.

**MACDUFF**

I know the burden of hosting him is both an honor and a  
trouble, but that doesn't mean it's not a trouble just the same.

**MACBETH**

The labor we delight in physics pain.  
This is the door.

**MACDUFF**

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

*Exit MACDUFF*

**LENNOX**

Goes the king hence today?

**MACBETH**

He does. He did appoint so.

**LENNOX**

The night has been unruly. Where we lay,  
Our chimneys were blown down and, as they say,  
30 Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of death,  
And prophesying with accents terrible  
Of dire combustion and confused events  
New hatched to the woeful time. The obscure bird  
Clamored the livelong night. Some say the Earth  
35 Was feverous and did shake.

**MACBETH**

"Twas a rough night.

**LENNOX**

My young remembrance cannot parallel  
A fellow to it.

*Enter MACDUFF*

**MACDUFF**

O horror, horror, horror!

Tongue nor heart cannot conceive nor name thee!

**MACBETH & LENNOX**

What's the matter?

**MACDUFF**

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

**MACBETH**

What is 't you say? "The life"?

**LENNOX**

Mean you his majesty?

**MACDUFF**

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

*Exeunt MACBETH and LENNOX*

Awake, awake!

Ring the alarum bell. Murder and treason!

50 Banquo and Donalbain! Malcolm! Awake!

Shake off this downy sleep, death's counterfeit,

The work we enjoy is not really work. This is the door.

**MACDUFF**

I'll wake him, because that's my job.

*MACDUFF exits.*

**LENNOX**

Is the king leaving here today?

**MACBETH**

He is. He told us to arrange it.

**LENNOX**

The night has been chaotic. The wind blew down through the  
chimneys where we were sleeping. People are saying they  
heard cries of grief in the air, strange screams of death, and  
terrible voices predicting catastrophes that will usher in a  
woeful new age. The owl made noise all night. Some people say  
that the earth shook as if it had a fever.

**MACBETH**

It was a rough night.

**LENNOX**

I'm too young to remember anything like it.

*MACDUFF enters, upset.*

**MACDUFF**

Oh, horror, horror, horror! This is beyond words and beyond  
belief!

**MACBETH & LENNOX**

What's the matter?

**MACDUFF**

The worst thing imaginable has happened. A murderer has  
broken into [God's temple](#) and stolen the life out of it.

**MACBETH**

What are you talking about? "The life"?

**LENNOX**

Do you mean the king?

**MACDUFF**

Go into the bedroom and see for yourself. What's in there will  
make you freeze with horror. Don't ask me to talk about it. Go  
look and then do the talking yourselves.

*MACBETH and LENNOX exit.*

Wake up, wake up! Ring the alarm bell. Murder and treason!  
Banquo and Donalbain, Malcolm! Wake up! Shake off sleep,  
which looks like death, and look at death itself! Get up, get up,  
and look at this image of doomsday! Malcolm! Banquo! Get up

And look on death itself! Up, up, and see  
The great doom's image! Malcolm! Banquo!  
As from your graves rise up, and walk like sprites,  
55 To countenance this horror! Ring the bell

*Bell rings. Enter LADY MACBETH*

**LADY MACBETH**  
What's the business,  
That such a hideous trumpet calls to parley  
The sleepers of the house? Speak, speak!

**MACDUFF**  
O gentle lady,  
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak:  
60 The repetition, in a woman's ear,  
Would murder as it fell.

*Enter BANQUO*

O Banquo, Banquo,  
Our royal master's murdered!

**LADY MACBETH**  
Woe, alas!  
What, in our house?

**BANQUO**  
65 Too cruel any where.  
Dear Duff, I prithee, contradict thyself,  
And say it is not so.

*Enter MACBETH, LENNOX, and ROSS*

**MACBETH**  
Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time, for from this instant  
70 There's nothing serious in mortality.  
All is but toys. Renown and grace is dead.  
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees  
Is left this vault to brag of.

*Enter MALCOLM and DONALBAIN*

**DONALBAIN**  
What is amiss?

**MACBETH**  
75 You are, and do not know 't.  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood  
Is stopped; the very source of it is stopped.

**MACDUFF**  
Your royal father's murdered.

**MALCOLM**  
Oh, by whom?

**LENNOX**  
Those of his chamber, as it seemed, had done 't.  
80 Their hands and faces were all badged with blood.  
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found  
Upon their pillows. They stared, and were distracted.

from your beds as if you were rising out of your own graves,  
and walk like ghosts to come witness this horror. Ring the bell.

*A bell rings. LADY MACBETH enters.*

**LADY MACBETH**  
What's going on? Why is that terrifying trumpet calling  
together everyone who's sleeping in the house? Speak up and  
tell me!

**MACDUFF**  
Oh gentle lady, my news isn't fit for your ears. If I repeated it to  
you, it would kill you as soon as you heard it.

*BANQUO enters.*

Oh Banquo, Banquo, the king has been murdered!

**LADY MACBETH**  
How horrible! What, in our own house?

**BANQUO**  
It would be a terrible event no matter where it happened. Dear  
Macduff, I beg you, tell us you were lying and say it isn't so.

*MACBETH and LENNOX reenter, with ROSS.*

**MACBETH**  
If I had only died an hour before this event I could say I had  
lived a blessed life. Because from this moment on, there is  
nothing worth living for. Everything is a sick joke. The graceful  
and renowned king is dead. The wine of life has been poured  
out, and only the dregs remain.

*MALCOLM and DONALBAIN enter.*

**DONALBAIN**  
What's wrong?

**MACBETH**  
You are, but you don't know it yet. The source from which your  
royal blood comes has been stopped.

**MACDUFF**  
Your royal father is murdered.

**MALCOLM**  
Who did it?

**LENNOX**  
It seems that the guards who were supposed to be protecting  
his chamber did it. Their hands and faces were all covered with  
blood. So were their daggers, which we found on their pillows,  
unwiped. They stared at us in confusion. No one's life should

No man's life was to be trusted with them.

**MACBETH**

Oh, yet I do repent me of my fury,

85 That I did kill them.

**MACDUFF**

Wherefore did you so?

**MACBETH**

Who can be wise, amazed, temp'rate, and furious,

Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man.

Th' expedition of my violent love

90 Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,

His silver skin laced with his golden blood,

And his gashed stabs looked like a breach in nature

For ruin's wasteful entrance; there, the murderers,

Steeped in the colors of their trade, their daggers

95 Unmannerly breeched with gore. Who could refrain,

That had a heart to love, and in that heart

Courage to make 's love known?

**LADY MACBETH**

Help me hence, ho!

**MACDUFF**

Look to the lady.

**MALCOLM**

(*aside to DONALBAIN*) Why do we hold our tongues,

100 That most may claim this argument for ours?

**DONALBAIN**

(*aside to MALCOLM*) What should be spoken here, where our  
fate,

Hid in an auger-hole, may rush and seize us?

Let's away. Our tears are not yet brewed.

**MALCOLM**

(*aside to DONALBAIN*) Nor our strong sorrow

105 Upon the foot of motion.

**BANQUO**

Look to the lady.

*Exit* **LADY MACBETH**, *attended*

And when we have our naked  
frailties hid,

That suffer in exposure, let us  
meet

And question this most bloody  
piece of work,

To know it further. Fears and  
scruples shake us.

In the great hand of God I stand,  
and thence

Against the undivulged pretense I

110

have been entrusted to them.

**MACBETH**

And yet I still regret the anger that drove me to kill them.

**MACDUFF**

What did you do that for?

**MACBETH**

Is it possible to be wise, bewildered, calm, furious, loyal, and  
neutral all at once? Nobody can do that. The violent rage  
inspired by my love for Duncan caused me to act before I could  
think rationally and tell myself to pause. There was Duncan,  
his white skin all splattered with his precious blood. The  
gashes where the knives had cut him looked like wounds to  
nature itself. Then right next to him I saw the murderers,  
dripping with blood, their daggers rudely covered in gore. Who  
could have restrained himself, who loved Duncan and had the  
courage to act on it?

**LADY MACBETH**

Help me out of here, quickly!

**MACDUFF**

Take care of the lady.

**MALCOLM**

(*speaking so that only DONALBAIN can hear*) Why are we  
keeping quiet? The two of us have the most to say in this  
matter.

**DONALBAIN**

(*speaking so that only MALCOLM can hear*) What are we  
going to say here, where danger may be waiting to strike at us  
from anywhere? Let's get out of here. We haven't even begun to  
weep yet—but there will be time for that later.

**MALCOLM**

(*speaking so that only DONALBAIN can hear*) And the time  
hasn't come yet for us to turn our deep grief into action.

**BANQUO**

Take care of the lady.

**LADY MACBETH** *is carried out.*

When we're properly dressed for the cold, let's meet and  
discuss this bloody crime to see if we can figure anything out.  
Right now we're shaken up by fears and doubts. I'm putting  
myself in God's hands, and with his help I plan to fight against  
the secret plot that caused this treasonous murder.

fight  
Of treasonous malice.

**MACDUFF**

And so do I.

**ALL**

So all.

**MACBETH**

Let's briefly put on manly readiness,

115 And meet i' th' hall together.

**ALL**

Well contented.

*Exeunt all but MALCOLM and DONALBAIN*

**MALCOLM**

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

To show an unfelt sorrow is an office

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

**DONALBAIN**

To Ireland, I. Our separated fortune

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

There's daggers in men's smiles. The near in blood,

The nearer bloody.

**MALCOLM**

This murderous shaft that's shot

Hath not yet lighted, and our safest way

125 Is to avoid the aim. Therefore, to horse,

And let us not be dainty of leave-taking,

But shift away. There's warrant in that theft

Which steals itself when there's no mercy left.

*Enter ROSS with an OLD MAN*

**OLD MAN**

Threescore and ten I can remember well,

Within the volume of which time I have seen

Hours dreadful and things strange, but this sore night

Hath trifled former knowings.

**ROSS**

Ha, good father,

5 Thou seest the heavens, as troubled with man's act,

Threatens his bloody stage. By th' clock 'tis day,

And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp.

Is 't night's predominance or the day's shame

That darkness does the face of Earth entomb

10 When living light should kiss it?

**OLD MAN**

'Tis unnatural,

Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,

A falcon, tow'ring in her pride of place,

Was by a mousing owl hawked at and killed.

**ROSS**

**MACDUFF**

So will I.

**ALL**

So will we all.

**MACBETH**

Let's get dressed quickly and then meet in the hall.

**ALL**

Agreed.

*Everyone exits except MALCOLM and DONALBAIN.*

**MALCOLM**

What are you going to do? Let's not stay here with them. It's

easy for a liar to pretend to feel sorrow when he actually feels

none. I'm going to England.

**DONALBAIN**

I'll go to Ireland. We'll both be safer if we go separate ways.

Wherever we go, men will smile at us while hiding daggers.

Our closest relatives are the ones most likely to murder us.

**MALCOLM**

We haven't yet encountered that danger, and the best thing to

do is avoid it entirely. With that in mind, let's get on our

horses. We'd better not worry about saying polite good-byes;

we should just get away quickly. There's good reason to escape

when there's no mercy to be found anymore.

*ROSS and an OLD MAN enter.*

**OLD MAN**

I can remember the past seventy years pretty well, and in all

that time I have seen dreadful hours and strange things. But

last night's horrors make everything that came before seem like

a joke.

**ROSS**

Ah yes, old man. You can see the skies. They look like they're

upset about what mankind has been doing, and they're

threatening the Earth with storms. The clock says it's daytime,

but dark night is strangling the sun. Is it because night is so

strong, or because day is so weak, that darkness covers the

earth when it's supposed to be light?

**OLD MAN**

It's unnatural, just like the murder that has been committed.

Last Tuesday a falcon was circling high in the sky, and it was

caught and killed by an ordinary owl that usually goes after

mice.

**ROSS**

And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and certain—  
 15 Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,  
 Turned wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,  
 Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would  
 Make war with mankind.  
**OLD MAN**  
 'Tis said they eat each other.  
**ROSS**  
 They did so, to th' amazement of mine eyes  
 20 That looked upon 't. Here comes the good Macduff.  
*Enter MACDUFF*  
 How goes the world, sir, now?  
**MACDUFF**  
 Why, see you not?  
**ROSS**  
 Is 't known who did this more than bloody deed?  
**MACDUFF**  
 Those that Macbeth hath slain.  
**ROSS**  
 Alas, the day!  
 What good could they pretend?  
**MACDUFF**  
 They were suborned.  
 25 Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,  
 Are stol'n away and fled, which puts upon them  
 Suspicion of the deed.  
**ROSS**  
 'Gainst nature still!  
 Thriftless ambition, that will raven up  
 30 Thine own lives' means! Then 'tis most like  
 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.  
**MACDUFF**  
 He is already named and gone to Scone  
 To be invested.  
**ROSS**  
 Where is Duncan's body?  
**MACDUFF**  
 35 Carried to Colmekill,  
 The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,  
 And guardian of their bones.  
**ROSS**  
 Will you to Scone?  
**MACDUFF**  
 No, cousin, I'll to Fife.  
**ROSS**  
 Well, I will thither.  
**MACDUFF**  
 40 Well, may you see things well done there. Adieu,

And something else strange happened. Duncan's horses, which  
 are beautiful and swift and the best of their breed, suddenly  
 turned wild and broke out of their stalls. Refusing to be  
 obedient as usual, they acted like they were at war with  
 mankind.  
**OLD MAN**  
 They say the horses ate each other.  
**ROSS**  
 I saw it with my own eyes. It was an amazing sight. Here comes  
 the good Macduff.  
*MACDUFF enters.*  
 How are things going now?  
**MACDUFF**  
 Can't you see for yourself?  
**ROSS**  
 Does anyone know who committed this horrible crime?  
**MACDUFF**  
 The servants Macbeth killed.  
**ROSS**  
 It's too bad he killed them. What good would it have done  
 those men to kill Duncan?  
**MACDUFF**  
 They were paid to betray their master. Malcolm and  
 Donalbain, the king's two sons, have run away and fled, which  
 makes them the prime suspects.  
**ROSS**  
 Everything about this is unnatural! What a stupid ambition,  
 causing a son to kill the father who supports him. Then it looks  
 like Macbeth will become king.  
**MACDUFF**  
 He has already been named king and has left for Scone to be  
 crowned.  
**ROSS**  
 Where is Duncan's body?  
**MACDUFF**  
 It was carried to Colmekill to be placed in the tomb of his  
 ancestors, where their bones are kept safe.  
**ROSS**  
 Are you going to Scone?  
**MACDUFF**  
 No, cousin, I'm going to Fife.  
**ROSS**  
 Well, I'll go to Scone.  
**MACDUFF**  
 I hope things go well there. Good-bye! And let's hope things



Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

**ROSS**

Farewell, father.

**OLD MAN**

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

*Exeunt*

don't get worse.

**ROSS**

Farewell, old man.

**OLD MAN**

May God's blessing go with you and with all who turn bad into  
good, and enemies into friends!

*They all exit.*