

William Shakespeare's

MACBETH

adapted by

Clive Duncan

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Author's Note

Macbeth was written and first performed in the summer of 1606 for King James 1st of England and Scotland, and his guest, King Christian 4th of Denmark. Writing for the King, Shakespeare used themes he hoped would please; the play's story borrows from two Scottish legends – the secret murder of King Duff, and the killing of Duncan, in battle, by Macbeth. James 1st was a direct descendant of Banquo, he was interested in witches and witchcraft and had written books about it. Shakespeare knew the King didn't like long plays, so he kept it short (the original play is just over 2000 lines). A year before this play was performed the big news in England was the Gunpowder Plot – a failed attempt, by Jesuits, to blow up the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Family, followed by the trial and public executions of the plotters. Treason and rebellion would have still been fresh in the mind. Shakespeare combines all these elements to give us a dark story of power, temptation and murder – a tragedy typical of its time.

But this play is different from other Jacobean Tragedies. The audiences in Shakespeare's day enjoyed Tragedy – the higher the body count the better they liked it. They even used special effects – pig's blood squirted from an animal's bladder was a favourite! The eviler the villains, the more the audience would cheer (or boo). We still like this kind of story today; most action movies have a baddie we love to hate, many PC games involve "killing" enemies accompanied by lively sound effects. How this play differs is that Macbeth is not an evil person. At the start of the play we see a good man loyally fighting for his King and country, but temptation, greed and opportunity drag him down. Macbeth knows the difference between right and wrong – he is frightened by his own actions, suffers guilt afterwards and, in the end, loses everything. Whilst playing to his audiences' desire for blood and destruction, Shakespeare gives more – a study of evil, a psychological thriller, which still fascinates after four hundred years.

In its original form the play lasts two and a half hours, it has thirty characters, the text contains many words no longer in use and has sentence structures that, although understandable, isn't how English is spoken today. To be able to bring this play to you from Vienna in a small touring van, perform it within an hour and in a language that is not your native tongue means making alterations if we want you to enjoy it! I've viewed these changes not as problems, but as an aid to making the story as clear as possible and to give the production a style in which to tell the story. I've removed everything from the play that isn't part of the main storyline. Thirty different characters in a play can be confusing, we spend much of the time working out who is who whilst missing the story, so I've reduced it to nine to be shared between four actors. Having some of the

characters hooded, or faceless, lets us focus on the main players and adds to the theme of the Fates working against Macbeth. The idea of having the witches masked is to set them apart from the “real” people in the play. Shakespeare never uses the word “witch” in the text but refers to them as “weird sisters”. Weird, which we now use to mean odd or strange, comes from a word meaning fate or destiny – these three are from a different, supernatural, world. I’ve replaced the words that are no longer in use (i.e. gout of blood becomes drops of blood), and simplified some of the language and sentence structures (i.e. “Say to the King the knowledge of the broil as thou didst’t leave it” becomes “Report the state of battle as you left it!”). However, much of what you will read or hear in this version is untouched Shakespeare and is written in blank verse (the rhythm is iambic pentameter – five beats of ten syllables with the stress on the second syllable – try saying: de-dum de-dum de-dum de-dum de-dum! – put the stress on: dum – it’s like a heartbeat). I’ve kept this for any changes that I’ve made so that the language will flow more easily. Although this rhythm won’t be obvious when you hear the play spoken, the beat of the lines creates tension in the same way the beats in music do. It’s like rap though the rhythm isn’t as strong.

If you enjoy reading and watching this play have a look at the original version. You can download it on [Macbeth - Entire Play | Folger Shakespeare Library](#)

Clive Duncan

Characters in the play:

Duncan King of Scotland

Malcolm his son

Macbeth Thane¹ of Glamis, later Thane of Cawdor, later King of Scotland

Lady Macbeth his wife

Banquo a Thane (Lord)

Macduff Thane of Fife

Three witches

Lords and servants

Note: This version of Shakespeare's Macbeth has been adapted for four actors. To keep the story of the play as clear as possible, in both reading and watching, only the names of the main characters are used – the other characters, of lesser importance, are called Lord or Servant etc.

¹ Honorary title of a Scottish noble or lord (cf. English earl)

MACBETH

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from William Shakespeare

SCENE ONE

Music – eerie¹, haunting...

Four actors come into the acting area. They all wear hooded garments with the hoods up. They stand in a line. The actor playing Banquo drops his hood and speaks to the audience directly...

BANQUO (*narrating*) The story of Macbeth – an ancient tale –
Which every generation likes to hear;
A good and honest man seduced by power.
The meteoric² rise – the sudden fall!
We like to see a hero crash and burn.
And scholars through the years argue Macbeth
Was victim to supernatural forces,
So blame those wicked³ witches – blame the women!
Others, that power corrupts – take heed⁴, be warned.
And then there's those who say his wife's to blame;
Like Eve, she led the poor man on, the witch!
But me, I have to blame the man himself.

Banquo removes the hood of the actor playing Macbeth.

Macbeth. I viewed him as a friend, nay – a brother!
A brave and honest man who you could trust.
Someone who'd watch your back, or so I thought.
What turned him tyrant? Ruthless⁵ murderer?
He cut down anybody in his way,
Including me. Oh yes, including me,
His closest friend – we'd fought a war together –
I died, face down, throat cut, in a ditch.
Excuse my bitterness – betrayal⁶ hurts.
Why tell this story now – what's it to you?
Swap blades⁷ for bullets, kings for presidents,

¹ strange, frightening

² rapid, dramatic

³ evil

⁴ beware, take notice

⁵ merciless

⁶ being badly let down (Verrat)

⁷ swords

Change courts for boardrooms, gold and land for oil,
Then look around – the story keeps repeating –
For every powerful man who's grown rich
You'll find the innocents face down in a ditch.

The actor playing Duncan, sits on the throne. The crown is placed on his head. Macbeth and the other actors kneel.

BANQUO (*narrating*) To begin: Scotland. A land of stone and water.
The time – long, long ago. And on the throne,
Battling to keep the warring clans¹ on side,
Is Duncan. Respected by most. Nothing unites
A nation more than the enemy at the door.
Norway attacks, hungry for this land.
A call to arms sees every single Scot
Defend his king and country with his life...

Sounds of battles. Two soldiers take up swords and fight – a short, brutal fight. One is getting the better of the other when a third intervenes² and saves the soldier on the ground. He receives a wound in doing so. The second soldier flees. Duncan stands.

DUNCAN Report the state of battle as you left it!
The four enact³ what Banquo describes.

BANQUO The odds were stacked against us⁴. The enemy
Had mercenaries⁵ from the Western Isles⁶.
But brave Macbeth, a courageous man indeed,
Cut through the crowd, making a bloody path
Which led right to their captain; then, with his sword,
Slit⁷ him from the stomach to the chin,
Chopped⁸ off his head and stuck it on a pole.
The enemy were frightened and they ran.
But Norway made them turn and fight again;
He had the help of Cawdor and his men.
The thane of Cawdor is a traitor sir,
Who's turned against his country and his king.

¹ tribal families

² comes in between

³ play out

⁴ the chances of winning were minimal

⁵ hired soldiers

⁶ the Inner and Outer Hebrides

⁷ cut

⁸ hacked, cut

DUNCAN And when this happened, what did your captains do?
Macbeth and Banquo – did they fight or run?

BANQUO They fought! They fought like twenty men, and showed
No mercy to the enemy. To keep it short;
We won the battle!

DUNCAN Great news! Well done – and thanks.
Macbeth and Banquo are to be rewarded.
Cawdor’s fighting for the other side;
For this treason¹, I sentence him to death
And give his lands and castle to Macbeth.
What he has lost, honest Macbeth has won.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Honest Macbeth – he was, and Scotland’s son.
A national hero who had saved the day.
But a new battle was starting for Macbeth;
Each day we pray – lead us not into temptation²,
And Fate put three sisters in our way. Oh
Temptresses³ all. Though not what you are thinking...

Discordant music. The actors put on masks to become the three weird sisters⁴.

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

SECOND WITCH When the hurly-burly’s⁵ done,
When the battle’s lost and won.

THIRD WITCH Before the setting of sun.
Where the place?

FIRST WITCH Where the place?

SECOND WITCH Upon this heath.

THIRD WITCH Here we will meet Macbeth.
Where have you been, sister?

FIRST WITCH Where have you been, sister?

SECOND WITCH Killing swine⁶.

FIRST WITCH And you, little sister?

THIRD WITCH Shhh!
Macbeth comes.

ALL The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Travellers of the sea and land,
So we go around, around.
Three to yours and three to mine

¹ Hochverrat

² Versuchung (from the Lord’s Prayer)

³ women who tempt (often in a sexual sense)

⁴ strange women; (in Anglo-Saxon mythology) goddesses of destiny, able to predict the future

⁵ noise and confusion of battle (Wirrwarr, Wirbel)

⁶ the death of pigs was popularly attributed to witches in Shakespeare’s day

And three again, to make up nine¹.
Peace! the spell is cast².

They giggle and run away to hide, one behind the cloth, another behind the throne. Enter Macbeth and Banquo. They stop to share a drink from a flask.

MACBETH So foul³ a day, yet sweet in victory.

BANQUO How much further is it?

The Witch behind the throne jumps up – Banquo is startled⁴ and draws his sword. The First Witch appears from where she was hiding.

BANQUO What are these!

They look so old and withered⁵ and so wild.

They're not local. Escaped Norwegian prisoners?

Do you speak English? Can you understand me?

The Witches put their fingers to their lips.

BANQUO I'm not quite sure but I think they're women;

They're very hairy - makes it hard to tell.

MACBETH Speak, if you can: what are you?

FIRST WITCH Welcome, Macbeth! Thane of Glamis!

THIRD WITCH Welcome, Macbeth! Thane of Cawdor!

FIRST WITCH Welcome, Macbeth, who shall⁶ be king one day!

Macbeth backs away...

BANQUO Don't tell me you're afraid of this good news?

What are you? Fortune tellers? Hey! Please can

You read my palm⁷? You promise him great things,

What about me? No, please don't leave me out;

If you really can see the future and

Read the fate⁸ that's hanging in the stars

Give me my horoscope – I'm Capricorn.

FIRST WITCH Welcome!

THIRD WITCH Welcome!

FIRST WITCH Welcome!

THIRD WITCH Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

FIRST WITCH Not so happy, yet much happier.

THIRD WITCH Father of kings, though you'll never be king.

So welcome, Macbeth and Banquo!

FIRST WITCH Banquo and Macbeth, welcome!

¹ the numbers '3' and '9' were thought to be magic numbers in the 16thc.

² the future (destiny) has been fixed through our magic

³ 'foul' refers to both awful weather and the fierce battle that day

⁴ taken aback, suddenly shocked

⁵ verwelkt, eingeschrumpft

⁶ 'shall' (rather than 'will') suggests a future determined by some higher power

⁷ the underside of my hand (to tell my future)

⁸ destiny (Schicksal)

MACBETH Stop this nonsense. I am the thane of Glamis,
 But the thane of Cawdor lives, and to be king?
 There's little chance of that. Why tell me this?
 Why do you stop me here, in this bog¹,
 With this strange news? Tell me, I order you!

Witches vanish.

BANQUO They've vanished², disappeared. Where have they gone?
 MACBETH They've melted³ into air. I wish they'd stayed!
 BANQUO Were they real or just hallucinations,
 Caused by the battle – or whisky afterwards?
 MACBETH Your children shall be kings.
 BANQUO You shall be king.
 MACBETH And thane of Cawdor too. Or so they said.
 BANQUO They did. That's what they said to you. Who's here?
Banquo puts up his sword again – enter a Lord.
 LORD The king is grateful for your work today.
 He heard you fought courageously, Macbeth,
 And wants to see you both immediately.
 You'll get the castle, lands and title of
 Thane of Cawdor.
 BANQUO What, those old devils were right!
 MACBETH The thane of Cawdor lives.
 LORD He is a traitor⁴
 And dies tonight.
 MACBETH Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!
 Two out of three – does this mean I'll be king?
To the Lord I thank you for this interesting news.
To Banquo Do you think that your children shall be kings?
 Those women said I'd be thane of Cawdor
 And your sons would be kings.
 BANQUO If they are right
 Then you'll sit on the throne. A warning, though:
 Fate is mischievous⁵ and will give you trouble.
 Resist⁶ temptation, keep away from evil.
To the Lord My friend, a word with you.
Banquo moves away with the Lord.
 MACBETH These strange predictions

¹ marsh(land)

² suddenly gone away

³ dissolved

⁴ Verräter

⁵ plays malicious tricks

⁶ don't give way to

Cannot be bad - but are they any good?
 They promised me success, and now I'm Cawdor!
 But do I wait or should I snatch¹ the crown?
 A wicked² thought, though one I find exciting.
 It stirs my soul, my heart knocks on my ribs.
 BANQUO Look at Macbeth, my partner's deep in thought.
 MACBETH No! Fate will crown me if it wants me king,
 I need do nothing.
 BANQUO Macbeth, we wait for you.
 MACBETH Think about what's happened here, and then,
 When we have time, let's talk some more about it,
 Till then, say nothing. Let's go to the king.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Now Macbeth's sights are on the bigger prize;
 Cawdor Castle's good, but Scotland's better.
 All he has to do is trust to Fate.
 But he's ambitious³ and ambition cannot wait.

Music.

The actors make the court – one puts on the crown...

DUNCAN Is the thane of Cawdor dead?
 MALCOLM Father, he is.
 Before he hanged he confessed⁴ all his crimes
 And asked for your forgiveness.
 DUNCAN There is no way
 To see the evil hidden behind men's smiles.
 Cawdor was one of my most trusted men.

Enter Macbeth and Banquo.

Ah! Brave, honest Macbeth, you are welcome!
 My debt to you is more than I can pay.
 MACBETH To be allowed to fight for king and Scotland
 Is the only wage⁵ I ask for.
 DUNCAN Welcome.
 You have done well for me and I'll make sure
 That you'll do well by me. And Banquo here,
 As brave as all the rest, let me embrace⁶ you
 And hold you to my heart.

¹ seize, take

² evil

³ determined to be successful (ehrgeizig)

⁴ admitted

⁵ reward, prize

⁶ hug (umarmen)

BANQUO With pleasure, your highness.
DUNCAN Sons, kinsmen¹, thanes;
 Thanks to the courage of my warriors here,
 Norway is defeated, Scotland's safe.
 To be safer still I think it would be wise
 To name the king who'll follow on from me.
 I have decided that when I am dead,
 Malcolm, my eldest son, inherits² the crown.
 I make him now the Prince of Cumberland.

Malcolm kneels before his father, who dubs³ him with a sword.
 That's not the only honour I'll award;
 For nobleness, like burning stars, shall shine
 On all who've earned it.

To Macbeth I'll go to Inverness,
 To stay with you, Macbeth, my trusted friend.

MACBETH You honour me greatly, and I must ask
 To leave here right away; I'll ride straight home
 To make the preparations and give
 My wife this joyful news.

DUNCAN My worthy Cawdor!
The King, Banquo and the Malcolm go.

MACBETH The king's son, Malcolm, now stands in between
 Me and the crown. I must remove this prince
 Or my ambition fails. Stars, hide your fires,
 Do not light up my black and deep desires.

Macbeth exits.

SCENE TWO

Banquo enters carrying a letter.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Macbeth rides hard for home with his great news.

He and his wife are made for one another;
They are a match, a pair, a golden couple.

Enter Lady Macbeth – she snatches the letter from him and begins to read it.

They say behind each great man stands a woman;
Oh, she's behind him, guiding every move,
For only with his fame can she be famous,
And only with his wealth can she be rich,

¹ blood relatives

² receives (by legal succession)

³ touches his shoulders (to name him Prince)

But without her he'd be neither rich or famous;
In this house she's the master as you'll see.
Here's a letter he wrote after the battle
Telling her of the witches' prophecy¹.
And with his words, Macbeth plants a seed
Which, soon, will turn ambition into greed.

LADY MACBETH (*reading*) "They met me after we had won the battle and called me Thane of Cawdor and said I would be king. When I tried to question them, they vanished into thin air. Then came word from the king, who called me Thane of Cawdor! I think they have supernatural power and can see into the future. I have written to you straight away, my dearest wife, that you may see what greatness is promised us. Keep this secret for now."

Glamis you were, Cawdor you are, and will be
What you are promised! If you don't screw it up²!
You are too soft, too gentle in your soul
To take the easier road. Oh, you want power,
You are ambitious, but how badly do you want it?
What you desire, you'll wait for patiently,
You will not cheat – though sometimes bend the rules.
You'll make the journey when you know the route,
But fear to travel unless you can return.
O get here now, my lord, I'll make you bold³
And take away each doubt and qualm⁴ which stops you
From taking the golden prize that Fate is offering.

Enter a Servant excitedly.

SERVANT The king comes here tonight!

LADY MACBETH I don't believe it!

Is my husband with him? If this were true,
He'd have sent word so that I could prepare.

SERVANT He did! He did, it's true: our thane is coming.
One of his men rode on ahead of him.

LADY MACBETH He brings great news. The raven⁵ will lose his voice,
That croaks⁶ Duncan a fatal⁷ welcome to my house!

Discordant music.

¹ what they predicted, foretold as the future

² make a serious mistake, spoil it

³ brave, courageous

⁴ uncertainty (as to whether it's right or wrong)

⁵ Rabe: a traditional medieval symbol of ill-fortune

⁶ krächzt

⁷ foretelling death

O come, you eager spirits, unsex me¹ here
And fill me from head to toe with cruelty.
Make my blood ice, harden my heart, give me
Steely resolve² where compassion once lay.
Come to my woman's breasts and poison my milk.
Come, you murdering ministers, come thick night
And cover me in the darkest smoke from hell
So I won't see the wound my sharp knife makes,
Or heaven peep³ through the blanket of the dark
To cry "Stop! Stop!"

Enter Macbeth.

Great Glamis! Worthy Cawdor!
You shall be much greater than both of them!
Your letter has pleased me more than I can say;
My love, the future is ours for the taking⁴!
MACBETH My dearest love, Duncan comes here tonight.
LADY MACBETH And stays till when?
MACBETH He says until tomorrow.
LADY MACBETH Oh, may he never see another day!
Your face, Macbeth, will give the game away!
We both know that the king must be dealt with
If we're to fulfil this golden prophecy.
Leave every single detail to me
But you must play the host and welcome him
With friendship, kindness and with deepest love;
So no one sees the serpent⁵ underneath.

Music announces the King's approach.

MACBETH We will speak later.
LADY MACBETH Let's get one thing clear –
Those who hesitate will live in fear.
Leave everything to me.

Macbeth exits.

Enter Duncan and Banquo. Lady Macbeth curtsies⁶.

DUNCAN Dearest lady! Where's the thane of Cawdor?
We chased him all the way, but he rides well.
His love for you has helped him home and he

¹ remove from me all feminine feelings, take away everything that makes me a woman

² iron determination, strong will-power

³ look secretly

⁴ for us to seize

⁵ evil snake

⁶ greets politely, bends her knee (out of respect)

Has won the race. We are your guests tonight!
Give me your hand and take me to your man.
We love you both, most highly. Brave Macbeth!

They exit leaving Banquo.

Music - a reel¹ - lively, the actors dance, having a good time...

BANQUO (narrating) Good food and drink, music and lively dancing.
All are happy. Except the host – Macbeth.
The plans his wife has made move on too fast.
He hesitates – he needs the time to think –
He wants the crown – but murdering the king?

Enter Macbeth – he stops when he sees Banquo. Banquo bows² slightly and exits.

MACBETH If we do this - this deed³ - and that is it -
The matter closed, finished - I would do it.
If I knew that there'd be no consequence -
The king is killed and then no further trouble -
I'd take the risk. But bad deeds have a way
Of plaguing⁴ those who do them. He's here in trust;
I am his cousin, subject and his host,
I should shut the door against his murderer,
Not use the knife myself. Besides, Duncan is
So good a man, so loved, all of Scotland
Would weep⁵ and then start asking questions.

Enter Lady Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH My dearest love. How's things? How is the king?
MACBETH He's finished eating. Why have you left the table?

MACBETH Has he asked for me?

LADY MACBETH Do you not know he has?

MACBETH We will go no further with this business.
There is no need; I've just received promotion⁶
And everyone can see we're going places⁷.
We will be patient and just wait awhile.

LADY MACBETH What happened to the big ideas you had?
Was your ambition so drunk it fell asleep
And wakes up now with a bad hangover?

¹ Scottish dance music

² lowers his head (out of respect)

³ criminal act (crime)

⁴ troubling, pestering, pursuing

⁵ cry tears

⁶ being raised to a higher position (Beförderung)

⁷ starting to be successful

Our future plans spewed up¹ in sick and vomit?
 You are so weak, you do not really love me!
 You are a coward, you're not a real man!
 You are afraid of your own dreams...

MACBETH Be quiet!
 I dare do anything a man may do.
 There isn't a man alive who dare² do more.

LADY MACBETH Why did you bother³ to tell me your great plan?
 When you said you'd do it, you were a man.
 And to be greater than a thane will make
 You much more of a man. Now chance provides
 The opportunity, you hesitate.
 I know how tender it is to love a child;
 I would have plucked⁴ that baby from my breast
 And dashed⁵ its brains out, if I had sworn⁶ as you
 Have done to this.

MACBETH What if we fail?

LADY MACBETH We fail?!
 Just play the soldier with the nerves of steel
 And we'll not fail. When Duncan is asleep
 I'll give to his two guards so much good wine
 They'll lose their minds and memory. When they are in
 A deep and drunken sleep outside his door,
 We'll do what we must to the sleeping king;
 And all the blame will fall upon his guards.

MACBETH Dear wife, give birth to men-children only,
 Your strength and courage and cunning⁷ should make
 Nothing but males. If we cover those sleeping
 Guards with blood, and even use their daggers⁸
 For the murder, everyone will think that
 They have done it.

LADY MACBETH Of course – no doubt about it.
 And we will grieve and keen⁹ our murdered king!

MACBETH All right, I will do what I have to do.

¹ thrown up

² would dare (*Konjunktivform*), would try desperately to

³ make the effort, take the trouble

⁴ pulled quickly

⁵ knocked

⁶ promised

⁷ cleverness, slyness

⁸ Dolche

⁹ express loudly our great sorrow for the death of

Let's go, we must pretend that all is well
And hide our wicked hearts behind our smiles.

They exit. The music stops.

*We hear night sounds – an owl hooting, the wind beginning to blow.
Enter Banquo.*

BANQUO (*narrating*) All is quiet in the castle of Macbeth.
The fires burn low, the candles are blown out.
Though weary¹ from the travelling and the war
I could not sleep, so walked the battlements².
The night is dark and cold, the wind blows strong.
A feeling in my bones says – something's wrong.

Enter Macbeth.

Who's there?

MACBETH

A friend.

BANQUO

My friend, not yet asleep? The king's in bed.
He is so pleased with you he sent me with
This diamond³ as a present for your wife.

MACBETH

Most generous, although his visit here
Is much more precious to me than any stone.

BANQUO

I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters.
They were right about you...

MACBETH

I'd forgotten them.
But if you have a moment or two to spare
Perhaps we could discuss what they told us,
I'd be grateful⁴.

BANQUO

Whenever you wish.

MACBETH

Sleep well!

Banquo exits. Music.

Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me hold you.
I cannot touch you and yet you are still there?
How can I see you but I cannot feel you?
You're false, a fake, a dagger of the mind,
Coming from my fraught⁵ imagination.
I see you still, you are as real as this,
My own dagger, this one I'm holding here.
You point in the direction I am going,

¹ very tired

² top platform (of the castle)

³ traditionally, a diamond was thought to be a lucky charm against witches

⁴ thankful

⁵ deeply troubled

The same weapon I'm about to use,
And on your blade and handle drops of blood,
Which were not there before. You are not real!
It is this bloody business fools my eyes.

A bell rings.

I go, and it is done; the bell invites me.
Don't listen, Duncan; for it is a knell¹
That is calling you to heaven or to hell.

Exit.

Owl hoot.

Enter Lady Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH The wine that's made them drunk has made me brave,
What's put them out has given me fire.

Owl hoot.

What's that!
It was an owl that shrieked². He's doing it.
There's nothing to stop us. The drunken guards
Show disrespect with snoring³ - I drugged their drinks.

MACBETH (*Off*) Who's there? Who? What!

LADY MACBETH Don't say they've woken up and he's not done it!
The attempt on Duncan's life will see us hang.
I left the daggers ready, he couldn't miss them.
Had the king not resembled⁴ my own father
I would have killed him, myself...

Enter Macbeth.

What happened!?

MACBETH I have done the deed. Did you not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH I heard the owl scream and the crickets⁵ cry.
Did you not speak?

MACBETH When?

LADY MACBETH Now.

MACBETH As I came down?

LADY MACBETH Yes.

MACBETH (*looking on his hands*) This is a sorry⁶ sight.

LADY MACBETH A stupid thought, to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH Whose room is next to the king?

¹ death-bell (Grabgeläut)

² (schrie) an owl's shriek was believed to announce a death

³ Schnarchen

⁴ been similar to, looked like

⁵ (Grillen) crickets were also said to foretell death

⁶ sad, miserable, wretched; regrettable

LADY MACBETH It's his son.
 MACBETH He laughed in his sleep, and then cried 'Murder!'
 And then Malcolm woke up. I stood and listened.
 He said his prayers and went to sleep again
 Then cried 'God bless us!¹' and then said 'Amen';
 Hearing his fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
 Why could I not say that word 'Amen'²?

LADY MACBETH Forget it now or it will make you mad.
 MACBETH I thought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!
 Macbeth has murdered sleep'.

LADY MACBETH What do you mean?
 MACBETH It cried out 'Sleep no more!' to all the house.
 'Glamis has murdered sleep, and therefore Cawdor
 Shall³ sleep no more. Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

LADY MACBETH Who was it that cried out? My dear husband,
 It won't do any good to think like this -
 So foolishly of things. Go get some water,
 And wash away this blood from both your hands.
 Why did you bring these daggers from the place!?
 They must lie there. Take them back and smear⁴
 The sleeping guards with blood.

MACBETH I'll not go back.
 I am afraid to see what I have done.
 I dare not look at him again.

LADY MACBETH Coward⁵!
 Give the daggers to me. The sleeping and the dead
 Look just the same. If he bleeds still I'll paint
 The faces of the guards to show their guilt.

Lady Macbeth exits.
We hear knocking.

MACBETH Who is that knocking?
 Why does every noise I hear frighten me?
 What hands are here? Ha! They pluck⁶ out my eyes.
 Will all great Neptune's⁷ ocean wash this blood
 Clean from my hands?

Enter Lady Macbeth.

¹ May God bless us! (*Konjunktivform*)

² inability to pray was regarded as a sign of being possessed by devils

³ is destined to (*cf.* 'will' would only be a general prediction)

⁴ wipe over (*beschmieren*)

⁵ Feigling

⁶ pull (*ausreissen*)

⁷ Roman God of the sea

LADY MACBETH My hands are now like yours, but I'm ashamed
To have a heart so white.

Knocking.

I hear a knocking
At the south entry. We will go to bed.
A little water cleans us of this crime.
How easy is it then!

Knocking.

Listen! More knocking.
Get on your nightgown¹, do not be so lost
In your thoughts.

Knocking.

MACBETH Wake Duncan with your knocking! I wish you could!
They exit. Knocking.

Enter a Porter.

PORTER Here's a knocking indeed! Knock, knock, knock! Who's there, in
the name of Beelzebub²?

Knocking.

Knock, knock! Who's there, in the other devil's name³?

Knocking.

Knock, knock. Never quiet! Who are you? I'm coming, I'm coming. Please,
remember the porter⁴.

Enter Macduff.

MACDUFF Was it so late, friend, when you went to bed,
That you need a lie-in?

PORTER Well, sir, we were drinking till the early hours, and drink, sir, causes
three things.

MACDUFF What three things are those?

PORTER It causes, sir, a red nose, sleep, and urine. Lechery⁵, sir, it does and it
doesn't. It gives you the desire, but it takes away the performance. It sets him
on, and it takes him off. It persuades him and disheartens him. Makes him
stand to, and not stand to...⁶

MACDUFF Hush, man. Is your master awake?

Enter Macbeth.

MACBETH Good morning to you, brave Macduff.

MACDUFF And to you.

¹ dressing gown

² the Devil

³ *i.e.* Satan (another name for the Devil)

⁴ with a tip? Or the fact that he needs to sleep, too? (- especially with a hangover)

⁵ excessive sexual desire, lust

⁶ *i.e.* be ready for action, but unable to rise to the occasion (or get a sexual erection)

MACBETH Is the king up yet, my friend?
I do not know.
MACDUFF He asked me to call for him first thing.
I'm only just in time.
MACBETH I'll take you to him.
MACDUFF Does the king leave today?
MACBETH He does. He said so.
MACDUFF It's been a terrible night. Where we stayed,
The chimneys¹ were blown down; and, some, they say,
Have heard strange voices in the air. The earth,
It rumbled² and it shook.
MACBETH It was a rough night.

Exit Macduff.

MACDUFF (*from off*) O horror, horror, horror!

MACBETH What's the matter?

Enter Macduff.

MACDUFF Go to the king's bedroom. I cannot speak.

Exit Macbeth.

Ring the alarm bell. Murder and treason!
Wake up! Get out of bed! O God! Wake up!
Lock all the doors! We are not safe! Get up!
Come here immediately! Ring the bell!

Bell rings.

Enter Lady Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH What's the matter? Tell me!

MACDUFF O gentle lady,
You must not hear the dreadful news I have.

Enter Banquo.

Banquo, Banquo, the king – he has been murdered!

LADY MACBETH What, in our house?

BANQUO Too cruel anywhere!
Oh no, please tell me that it is not so.

Enter Macbeth.

MACBETH If I had died an hour before dawn broke,
My life would have been blessed³, but from this moment,
Nothing will ever be the same again.
Life is worthless. Goodness itself is dead.

LADY MACBETH Help me from here, please!

MACDUFF Somebody, help!

¹ Schornsteine

² made a deep, low sound

³ gesegnet

Lady Macbeth is taken away.

MACBETH The guards, in his bedroom, are the murderers.
 Their hands and faces were all covered with blood;
 So were their daggers, which, still bloody, I found
 Upon their pillows. They stared, and were surprised.
 I got so angry that I've killed them both.
 The king's life should not have been trusted with them.

MACDUFF You've killed them both? But why did you do that?

MACBETH Here lay Duncan dead, and there, his murderers?
 I lost control of myself, but who can blame me?
 Anyone who loved the king would do the same.

BANQUO We have to tell the prince his father's dead.
 Then let's meet to investigate¹ this crime;
 The guards, most like, were hired², so who's behind it?
 Whoever it is, they do not frighten me
 And I will fight against this evil treason³.

MACDUFF And so will I.

MACBETH Let us get ready, then.
 We'll meet in the great hall in thirty minutes.

Exit Macbeth and Banquo.

Enter Malcolm.

MALCOLM What's wrong?

MACDUFF Your father's dead. Murdered.

MALCOLM Who did it?

MACDUFF His guards. By the look of it⁴.

MALCOLM But why?

MACDUFF Who knows?

MALCOLM Where are they now?

MACDUFF Macbeth has slaughtered them⁵.

MALCOLM This evil act is only the beginning.
 My father dead and I stand next in line.
 Why kill the king if not to get the crown?
 Which means my life's not safe, or I am framed⁶
 To look responsible. Whichever way,
 I have to leave.

MACDUFF Where will you go?

MALCOLM England.

¹ find out about, examine

² paid to do the job

³ Hochverrat

⁴ As it seems; Apparently

⁵ killed them as if they were animals

⁶ set up, shown

Distance will keep me safe. For now, I don't
Know who to trust. For wherever I look
There's daggers in men's smiles.
Farewell, my lord.

MACDUFF
They both exit.

SCENE THREE

*We hear ceremonial music. Strong and rousing.
Macbeth enters with Lords and Banquo. They crown him king.*

BANQUO (*narrating*) He has it now: King, Cawdor, Glamis, all
As the weird women promised; but I know
He played a dirty game. A good king dead,
And Malcolm fled – so everybody thinks
He's guilty of the crime, and so the crown
Falls neatly¹ to Macbeth. But he wants more.
What use is a gift which is not yours to keep?
I was told my children would be kings;
If they were right with him, why not with me?
This, Macbeth knows and, cunning² as he is,
Knows what I'm thinking. I didn't see the danger:
I was no more safe with him than with a stranger.

Music as Lady Macbeth enters. She and Macbeth greet Banquo.

MACBETH Banquo – my most important ally³...
LADY MACBETH And friend!
MACBETH Tonight we hold a special dinner, sir,
And you are invited.
BANQUO I will be there.
MACBETH You ride this afternoon?
BANQUO That's right, I do.
MACBETH I needed some advice, but never mind,
We'll talk tomorrow. How far do you ride?
BANQUO All afternoon.
LADY MACBETH Don't forget our dinner.
BANQUO Don't worry, I'll be there.
MACBETH You've heard the news?
Wild rumours⁴ come from England about me!

¹ conveniently

² clever and sly

³ loyal friend (Verbündeter)

⁴ false reports

BANQUO That murdering son denies his crime¹ and then...
MACBETH But more tomorrow. Your son, he rides with you?
He does, in fact, he's waiting for me now.
Ride well. Till seven o'clock tonight, farewell.

Exit Banquo.

See to the preparations for tonight.

Exit Lady Macbeth.

Getting the job is one thing, keeping it another.
Is all this fate or is it my design²?
If destiny; the hags³ who gave me this
Promised Banquo a dynasty. I get
A trinket⁴, he's happy ever after!
For Banquo's children I have sold my soul,
For them the gentle Duncan have I murdered,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!
That will not be. A gambler⁵ may not hold
The cards he wants, but knowing his opponent's
Can help him win the game. Who's there?

Enter a Lord.

You remember what I told you yesterday?
Have you thought more about what I have said?
Banquo is your enemy, as is he mine,
And every minute he grows more dangerous.
I could, as king, make sure that he's removed,
But he has friends and they'd object to that⁶.
That's why I need your help.

LORD
MACBETH

You have it, my lord
It must be done tonight, far from this castle,
Make sure you do the job with no mistakes.
Banquo is off somewhere but comes back later.
His son is with him – this is most important –
Kill him, as well – do not let him escape.

LORD
Exit Lord.
MACBETH

No problem, sir. They won't be seen again.
It's done. And so is Banquo⁷. Friend, sleep tight.

¹ says he is innocent

² plan, intention

³ ugly old women, the witches (*highly sexist, nowadays!*)

⁴ something only trivial, unimportant

⁵ a risk-taker (in this case, a card player)

⁶ they would oppose that, be against it

⁷ *i.e.* done for, finished off

Your soul will fly to heaven – and flies tonight!

Enter Lady Macbeth

LADY MACBETH Have we risked everything for this? Gloom¹ and
Despair? You're the most powerful man in Scotland
Yet you refuse to enjoy what victory brings.
You sit alone, feeling sorry for yourself,
Brooding on² the guilty things we've done.
Such memories should be buried with the dead!
What's done is done and should now be forgotten.

MACBETH We have scorched³ the snake, not killed it;
And now it waits, ready to strike back.
A blade, a rope, poison – it is waiting;
Don't trust the food – the knock upon the door.
The fear fills my sleep with terrible dreams.
Oh! How I envy Duncan in his grave;
After life's hard work he sleeps well.
Nothing worries him now.

LADY MACBETH For heaven's sake
Calm down! And pull yourself together.
Cheer yourself up before the dinner tonight.

MACBETH I will, my love, and you must do so, too.
Remember Banquo, you must flatter⁴ him.
Smile, but don't let him see what you are thinking
We are not safe.

LADY MACBETH Stop this – and stop this now!

MACBETH O, my head is full of scorpions⁵, dear wife!
You know that Banquo and his son lives.

LADY MACBETH But they cannot live forever, can they?

MACBETH That's true. Be happy then. Before nightfall
We'll receive news which makes us safe at last.

LADY MACBETH What have you done?

MACBETH You'll find out soon enough, and when you do
You'll cheer and clap my deviousness⁶, my love.

Exit Macbeth and Lady Macbeth.

¹ misery (Elend)

² worrying about

³ only partly burnt

⁴ over-praise (schmeicheln)

⁵ my mind is filled with poisonous conflicting thoughts

⁶ underhand dealing, trickery

Discordant¹ Music.

Enter Banquo with his son.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Cunning Macbeth, and I suspected nothing.

From another place a Lord enters.

Even as my killer came towards me,
I thought he brought a message from the king.

The Lord produces a knife.

The blade flashed and in a single moment
I understood the treachery of the man.

The Lord stabs² Banquo who sinks to his knees as his son enters...

Run, boy, and save yourself! He'll kill you too!

Banquo's son runs and as the lord gives chase, Banquo holds on to him.

Though I was dead I hoped to save my son.

The lord strikes Banquo with the knife again and Banquo releases³ his grip and falls forward. The Lord exits.

The music changes to a lively reel.

As a table is set Banquo slowly gets to his feet.

BANQUO (*narrating*) And as my corpse⁴ rolled deep into a ditch⁵

With no burial, prayers or ceremony,
The party at Macbeth's began to swing.
Too soon for my spirit to find rest,
I went along – an uninvited guest.

Banquo sits at the table, hooded⁶.

Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and a Lord come to the table.

MACBETH Sit down, sit down, everyone is welcome.

LADY MACBETH I wish you welcome, too, to all our friends.

MACBETH I'll sit here, in the middle, with my friends
And soon we will start a drinking game!

To the Lord There's blood upon your face.

LORD It's Banquo's then.

MACBETH And is he dead?

LORD My lord, his throat is cut;
I saw to it, myself.

MACBETH Well done. Efficient.
And Banquo's son, you cut his throat as well?

¹ unharmonious, clashing

² strikes him with the knife, thrusts the knife into him

³ lets go

⁴ dead body

⁵ Graben

⁶ with a covering over his head

LORD We had a problem and the boy escaped.
 MACBETH And now it starts again. All was perfect,
 But now return those nagging¹ doubts and fears.
 But Banquo's safe?

LORD The bottom of a ditch.
 His body is unrecognisable.

MACBETH Thank you for that. Banquo's young son is not
 Yet dangerous. There's time.

LADY MACBETH My dear husband,
 You must be first to drink.

MACBETH Must I? Of course -
 Cheers, everyone!

They drink.

LORD Your majesty, please sit...
Banquo removes his hood and sits in Macbeth's seat.

MACBETH The seat's taken.
The Lord points to where Banquo sits.

LORD This is your seat right here.

MACBETH Where?

LORD Here, my lord.
Macbeth sees Banquo's ghost.

LORD What's wrong, your majesty?

MACBETH Who is responsible for this?

LORD For what?

MACBETH You cannot say I did this. Do not shake
 Your ghostly head at me!

LORD Stand up! The king's not well. Everyone stand!
All stand.

LADY MACBETH Please don't my friends, he often gets like this.
 An illness from his childhood – just keep still.
 It will soon pass – he'll be himself again.
 Don't stare, it only makes him worse.
 Ignore him² and please eat! *(To Macbeth)* What's going on?

MACBETH Either someone's playing a trick, or else
 There's something evil – look!

LADY MACBETH There's nothing there!
 You're paranoid³, calm down. Nothing's there.
 This is like the imaginary dagger
 You said led you to Duncan. Are you mad?

¹ that worry him all the time

² pay no attention to him

³ suffering from a mental disorder that makes him feel persecuted

MACBETH You're staring at a stool!¹
See there, see there!
O look! Look! There! What do you say?
I know that you can nod, say something too!

Banquo covers his head.

MACBETH He's gone, but I swear I saw him.

LADY MACBETH Saw who?

MACBETH I always thought that when you die – that's it!
The end. But no! The dead don't die – he's here.
I saw him in my seat.

LADY MACBETH Have you forgotten
That we have company?

Macbeth recovers himself and looks around...

MACBETH You must forgive me.
There's nothing to worry about at all,
It's grief, from Duncan's death, it still affects² me.
It's nothing. Don't be alarmed. Where's my glass?
I drink to you – my good companions,
And to our dear friend Banquo, who's not here,
I wish he was! To you, and him, good health!

They drink. Banquo reveals³ himself again.

MACBETH Get away from me! Leave me alone!
You're dead. Throat cut and lying in a ditch!
Those staring eyes are closed, they cannot see.
Ah - come alive again, fight man to man
But do not send me ghosts, so everywhere
I look I see your face accusing me!
Get out of here!

Banquo vanishes.

Why, so, he's gone,
My friends - apologies.

LADY MACBETH Good night, everyone.
Don't wait to say good bye, but go at once.

The Lords exit.

MACBETH He's after blood. They say, blood will have blood.

LADY MACBETH I've never been so embarrassed⁴ in all my life!

MACBETH I see Macduff did not turn up tonight.
What do you make of that⁵?

¹ a chair without a back

² influences

³ uncovers, shows

⁴ verlegen

⁵ How do you understand that?

LADY MACBETH Did you invite him?
 MACBETH I did; I'll find out why he did not come
 I have spies everywhere – one's watching him.
 I'll go tomorrow to the weird sisters;
 They'll tell me more, I need to know the worst.
 I will destroy anyone who's against me!
 I am up to my neck in blood; I think
 It's easier going on than turning back.

LADY MACBETH Oh go to bed. And try to sleep.
 MACBETH These dreams
 And visions are just childish fears
 Which I'll grow out of – with each crime I commit.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth exit.

Music.

Enter Banquo.

BANQUO (*narrating*) The king is ill at ease – he does not sleep.
 He trusts no one and nobody trusts him.
 Like all dictators he'll only survive
 By getting rid of any opposition
 And terrorising everybody else.
 His spies bring news of those who plot against him;
 He deals with those the way he dealt with me,
 But what he wants to know is very simple –
 Is Macbeth the winner in the end?
 So he returns to see those strange sisters,
 To ask them what the future holds in store¹.
 If he can know the ending of the story
 He'll rewrite it – to make it end in glory.

Three of the actors put on masks to become witches.

ALL Double, double, toil² and trouble;
 Fire burn, and cauldron³ bubble.
 FIRST WITCH Fillet⁴ of a fenny snake⁵,
 In the cauldron boil and bake.
 SECOND WITCH Eye of newt⁶ and toe of frog,
 Wool of bat⁷ and tongue of dog.

¹ has in reserve for him

² long hard work

³ large metal pot for boiling liquids over a fire (Kessel)

⁴ slice of boneless meat

⁵ snake living in marshland

⁶ Wassermolch

⁷ Fledermaus

THIRD WITCH Adder's fork¹ and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's² leg and owl's³ wing.

ALL For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

FIRST WITCH Peace. The spell⁴ is made.

Third Witch plays a pipe.

SECOND WITCH By the pricking⁵ of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.⁶

Enter Macbeth.

MACBETH Don't let me stop whatever you were doing.
What were you doing?

THIRD WITCH A deed without a name.

MACBETH I command you to answer all my questions.

FIRST WITCH Ask.

SECOND WITCH Demand.

THIRD WITCH We'll answer.

MACBETH Tell me, then...

Listen, but say nothing.

First Witch holds up a sword.

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware⁷ the thane of Fife. That's all. Enough.

MACBETH Whatever you are, thank you for this warning,
You've read my fears.

SECOND WITCH Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

MACBETH Had I three ears I'd hear you.

Second Witch holds up a bloody baby doll.

SECOND WITCH Be ruthless⁸, bold and strong.

No man born of a woman shall harm Macbeth.

MACBETH Then live, Macduff, I need not fear you.

No, I'll make sure I'm safe, he shall not live.

Third Witch holds up a branch.

THIRD WITCH Be lion-hearted⁹, proud; and do not care
Who plots, rebels, or where the traitors are.
Macbeth shall never be defeated till

¹ twin-tongue of a viper

² Eidechse

³ young owl (Eule)

⁴ magic charm

⁵ itching, in this case (Stechen)

⁶ supposedly a common belief among witches that itching thumbs foretold evil

⁷ watch out for

⁸ show no pity or compassion

⁹ courageous, bold, brave

MACBETH Great Birnam Wood has marched up to your castle¹.
That will never be! Who can move the forest?
Trees can't walk; without their roots they fall.
Macbeth is safe. But tell me one more thing;
Shall Banquo's children ever wear this crown?

ALL Ask no more.

MACBETH Tell me! Or curses² will fall upon you!

FIRST WITCH Show!

SECOND WITCH Show!

THIRD WITCH Show!

*The actor who plays Banquo removes his witch's masks and sits. The other two
witches remove Macbeth's crown and place it on Banquo.*

MACBETH You are too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!
*The witches take the baby doll, wrap it up and put it on Banquo's knee. They
place a small crown on its head.*

MACBETH You filthy hags! Why do you show me this?
Banquo laughs.

MACBETH Horrible sight! Now, I see, it is true.
Third Witch plays a pipe.

FIRST WITCH Yes, sir, all this is true.
The witches run off, laughing.

MACBETH Where have they gone? Come back! Come back! Who's
there?

Enter a Lord.

MACBETH Did you see the weird sisters?

LORD No, my lord.

MACBETH Did they not pass you?

LORD I saw no one, my lord.

MACBETH I heard a galloping horse. Who was that?

LORD A messenger, my lord, who brings the news;
Macduff is fled³ to England.

MACBETH Fled to England!
I will attack the castle of Macduff.
His wife and all his children will be slaughtered.
Where is this messenger? Take me to him.

They exit. Enter Banquo.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Macduff believes that he can raise an army,
Remove Macbeth, restore the rightful heir⁴.

¹ a wooded hill near Dunkeld, 12 miles north of Perth. Macbeth's fort at Dunsinane, some 10 miles away

² Fluche, Verwünschungen

³ has escaped

⁴ put Malcolm on the throne, as is only right

If Malcolm, Duncan's son, can be persuaded
To return home then Scotland will be saved.
But he's underestimated Macbeth,
He doesn't know how low that man can stoop¹;
Macduff's house receives a little visit –
His wife and children all put to the sword
And not a living soul is left alive.
Unaware of this he finds Malcolm,
He's safe across the border down in England,
Although a boy he's a smooth² politician,
And poor Macduff has come under suspicion....

SCENE FOUR

Music.

Enter Malcolm. He sits. Enter Macduff

MALCOLM My friend, Macduff. How are things in Scotland?
MACDUFF Not good. You would not recognise the place.
 Each day fathers, husbands, brothers are killed.
 Nowhere is safe. No one is safe. The road
 Going south is full of refugees³.
 It is a land of terror and of fear.
MALCOLM Don't worry, when the time is right I will
 Put right these wrongs.
MACDUFF You must act now!
MALCOLM Patience.
 I need to know whose side you are on.
MACDUFF On yours, of course!
MALCOLM Macbeth was honest once.
 You were a friend of his, he's done no harm
 To you – how do I know that you are not
 Sent by Macbeth himself?
MACDUFF I am no traitor.
MALCOLM But Macbeth is. And if I can point out –
 You've left your wife and children unprotected;
 Either you know they're safe or else my life
 Is the price for their safety. Which is it?

¹ fall, drop, lower himself (Malcolm doesn't know how evil Macbeth can be.)

² clever, skilful; polite, but at the same time deceptive

³ Flüchtlinge

MACDUFF Forgive my suspicions – I must be careful.
And so our poor country will bleed to death
Because our prince is scared¹ of the tyrant.
Your stolen crown is lost! Goodbye, then, sir.

MALCOLM I am not the traitor you think I am.
Don't get me wrong – I'm not afraid of him.
I understand what he's done to Scotland
And I could raise a force to crush² Macbeth.
But if I did you'd see no change in the
Country that you love.

MACDUFF Oh? Why should that be?

MALCOLM Macbeth's as pure as snow compared to me.

MACDUFF Believe me, no one's as evil as Macbeth!

MALCOLM You think he's bad? No woman's safe with me;
Your wives, daughters, mothers, young or old –
I'll have them all – the more the merrier³!

MACDUFF Power and sex – the old cliché. Not good,
But should not keep you from the throne. You'll be
The king – women will throw themselves at you.

MALCOLM And then I am a greedy soul. If I
Were king I'd need to live in style; I'd rob
My people of their jewels, gold and houses.

MACDUFF There'd be no need – as king you'd be well paid:
Scotland has enough gold to make you rich.
We'll overlook⁴ these minor faults of yours
And focus on your better qualities...

MALCOLM But I have none. Justice, truth and mercy,
Courage, strength and patience are nothing to me.
If you think I am fit to be your king,
Let's go to Scotland now.

MACDUFF Fit to be king!
No, not to live. Your mother was a saint,
Your father was the very best of men;
I'd pinned⁵ my hopes on you – a big mistake.
Scotland's finished. We will not meet again.

MALCOLM Macduff, enough of this charade⁶. You've passed
My test. You are here for honest reasons.

¹ frightened, afraid

² defeat, conquer

³ happier, better

⁴ forget about, ignore

⁵ put, placed

⁶ absurd game, false show

Macbeth has often tried to trap me and
So I must be cautious. What I have said
About myself is all untrue; I am
Still a virgin¹, I do not want money,
I have never lost my faith in God,
These lies, about myself, are the first I've told.
I am your king and ready for the fight.
England has given me ten thousand soldiers.
You and I will march together.

Enter a Lord.

MACDUFF

Who's this?

LORD

Excuse my interruption² – I bring news.

MALCOLM

What has Macbeth done now?

LORD

My lord, my news

Is not for you but for Macduff.

MACDUFF

What news?

LORD

There is no easy way to tell you this...

MACDUFF

Tell me quickly – you must hold nothing back.

LORD

Your castle's been attacked, your wife and children
Have all been killed. To tell you how they died
Would be the death of you.

MALCOLM

Is no one safe?

MACDUFF

My friend, I have no words...

LORD

My children too?

MACDUFF

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

I was not there to save them. My wife, too?

He has no children. All my little ones?

Did you say all? O, God! Did you say all?

Every single one and their mother?

Did heaven look down and leave them to their fate?

Sinful³ Macduff, they died because of you!

MALCOLM

Let grief⁴ turn to anger and let revenge

Sharpen your sword. There is no time for grief.

MACDUFF

Oh, I'll grieve⁵ later – I have work to do.

Just bring me face to face with him. And if

He wins the fight then God can forgive him.

MALCOLM

Our army is ready, it's time to move.

¹ someone inexperienced in life

² Unterbrechung

³ morally wrong (sündig)

⁴ (as a noun) great sadness at a death

⁵ (as a verb) express my great sadness for my loss

If it's any comfort – Macbeth will fall.

They exit.

Pipe music.

Banquo masked as a witch comes into the acting area playing a pipe. Lady Macbeth, in a nightgown follows as if being drawn along by the music. She repeatedly washes her hands as if trying to remove stains¹ from her hands. Banquo stops playing and removes his mask.

BANQUO (*narrating*) Whilst Malcolm mobilises English troops
A gloom² falls on the castle of Macbeth.
His friends slip quietly away and those
Who stay, stay out of fear, not love. Even
His wife, his partner, once, in crime, retreats³
Into herself; she's lost in guilty dreams...

Banquo blows shrilly⁴ on the pipe...

LADY MACBETH Who would have thought the old man would have so much
blood in him? It will not wash away. Will my hands never be clean? All the
perfume in the world will not hide that smell!

Sings. In darkness let me dwell⁵
The castle walls shall weep⁶
To keep me from my sleep
Close all the shutters⁷ tight
To keep it black as night
In darkness let me dwell.

Enter Macbeth.

MACBETH Doctor, how is my wife?

BANQUO (*as doctor*) Not well. Her mind
Is troubled with dark thoughts. Insomnia⁸
Has exhausted⁹ her, so when she sleeps
She can't relax, so walks and talks, whispering
All her guilty secrets.

MACBETH Cure¹⁰ her of that!

¹ dirty spots, marks (of imagined blood)

² great darkness; deep depression

³ turns, withdraws

⁴ sharply, piercingly

⁵ this echoes a line from a song, published in 1610, by the musician John Dowland

⁶ cry tears

⁷ Fensterladen

⁸ sleeplessness

⁹ tired her out

¹⁰ heal

LADY MACBETH Where is Macduff's wife? Where are his children? Don't look so worried, my lord; Banquo is dead and buried, he cannot hurt you. A little water cleans us of this crime...to bed... to bed.

Macbeth puts his hand over Lady Macbeth's mouth.

MACBETH Doctor, can you not mend¹ a broken mind,
Or take away a painful memory,
Remove a heavy sorrow² from the heart?

BANQUO (*as doctor*) You need a priest, confession, church, not me.

LADY MACBETH (*sings*) In darkness let me dwell...

MACBETH Medicine is useless; take her away.

Lady Macbeth is led away by a lord.

MACBETH Where is my armour? I will put it on!

Banquo helps with Macbeth's armour.

Let Malcolm come, I do not fear that boy;
He was born of a woman – can't do me harm.
Till Birnam wood has marched up to these walls
I am the king, I am invincible³!

He exits.

Music – martial⁴ – drumbeats.

Enter Malcolm, Macduff and a lord.

MALCOLM Where are we now?

MACDUFF Birnam Forest. Ahead
Macbeth's castle. Between this wood and it
Is open ground – dangerous to attack.
MALCOLM Get every man to cut himself a branch
And hold it up in front of him. It will
Act as camouflage⁵ and stop the enemy
From knowing how many soldiers we have.

The Lords use the coat stands as branches.

MACDUFF His plan will be to stay put⁶ in his castle;
Lock himself in and wait for us to leave.

MALCOLM He's outnumbered, what else can he do?
But we've the strength to batter⁷ down his doors –
And once we're in... Come on, it's time to move.

They exit.

¹ repair, restore

² weight of unhappiness

³ I cannot be defeated!

⁴ warlike

⁵ protective cover (Tarnung)

⁶ remain

⁷ break, beat

Enter Macbeth.

MACBETH

Hang out our flags along the castle walls!
Let them come. We can outlast¹ a siege²;
We'll watch them die of hunger and disease.
If my soldiers had not deserted me,
I would have fought and driven them all way.

We hear a woman's cry.

What's that? I have forgotten the taste of fear.
There was a time when such a scream would have
Me reaching for a sword; I've seen such blood
And horror that nothing bothers³ me now.

Enter Lord.

LORD

What was that cry?

MACBETH

The queen is dead, my lord.
She should have died much later...⁴
I'd have time then to mourn her properly.
Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow
Creeps forward, snail pace⁵, from day to day,
Leaving behind it, in its wake⁶, a trail⁷
Of yesterdays containing nothing but the dead.
The candle's out⁸. Life's a walking shadow⁹,
An actor on a stage who plays his part,
Then takes a bow and goes¹⁰. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Meaning nothing.

Enter Lord.

LORD

My lord, as I was keeping watch I looked
Towards Birnam, and, this is true, my lord,
The wood began to move.

MACBETH

You clown-faced fool¹¹!

LORD

Look for yourself and you will see it coming.

MACBETH

'Macbeth shall never be defeated till

¹ last longer than, survive

² Belagerung

³ troubles, worries

⁴ (*also means*) she should have lived a full span (of life)

⁵ very slowly

⁶ behind it

⁷ path, track

⁸ Could he be thinking of Lady Macbeth's death here?

⁹ illusion, phantom; play acting

¹⁰ receives applause and makes an exit

¹¹ idiot

Great Birnam Wood comes to your castle”
Ha! Now a wood grows legs and comes this way.
I cannot say those weird sisters lied
But I no longer trust their prophecies.
We’re trapped, there’s no escape. Open the gates!
We’ll meet them face to face. If I’m to die
I’ll die a fighting man, sword in my hand.

Macbeth exits.

We hear drum beats.

Two lords enter fighting. One of the lords escapes.

Enter Macbeth.

LORD Stop! Who are you?

MACBETH You do not want to know.

LORD Macbeth! I’m not afraid of you.

They fight and the Lord is killed.

MACBETH He was born of woman.

Enter Macduff.

MACDUFF The noise was this way. Macbeth – where are you!

MACBETH The one man I was hoping to avoid.
Keep back, Macduff, my hands are stained¹ with too
Much blood of yours already.

MACDUFF No words, Macbeth.
Just this....

Macduff attacks Macbeth and they fight.

MACBETH You cannot win, Macduff, fight someone else!
My life is charmed² - no man born of woman
Will ever beat me.

MACDUFF Your charm is worthless.
You were not born. My mother died in labour³,
My father cut me from her womb to save
My life. And so, I was not born of woman.

MACBETH Those two-faced hags with their double meanings!
They promised me all and nothing, whispering
Sweet nothings⁴ in my ear! I’ll not fight you.

MACDUFF Surrender then. We’ll put you in a cage,
Parade the streets – roll up⁵! To see the monster!

MACBETH Surrender to Malcolm? Never! I’ll not

¹ made dirty, deeply marked

² protected by magic

³ while giving birth

⁴ soft words

⁵ come along

See him wear this crown and take my title.
Although the witches promises turned out
Both true and false, let's test the final one!
Beware Macduff! Ha! Give it all you've got.
And damn the first one who cries, "Stop, enough!"

Macbeth and Macduff fight. Macbeth is killed.

Enter Malcolm and Lord.

Macduff removes the crown from Macbeth.

Music.

Macduff puts the crown on Malcolm's head.

MACDUFF Hail, king! for now you are. Scotland is free.

Hail, King of Scotland!

ALL Hail, King of Scotland!

The picture freezes.

The end.