

# Macbeth

## Some Key Exchanges

### ACT I, Scene iii

**After receiving the witches' prophecies, a wary Macbeth speculates about what to do.**

**Macbeth.** [Aside]. Two truths are told,  
As happy prologues to the swelling act  
Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.  
[Aside] This supernatural soliciting  
Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,  
Why hath it given me earnest of success,  
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:  
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion  
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair  
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,  
Against the use of nature? Present fears  
Are less than horrible imaginings:  
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,  
Shakes so my single state of man that function  
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is  
But what is not.

### ACT I, Scene IV

**A grateful king, but one confused by how his trust could have been betrayed, greets Macbeth and unwittingly fulfills one of the witches' prophecies. Macbeth begins to let his ambition take control of his thoughts.**

**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]  
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,  
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  
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 every thing  
Safe toward your love and honour.

**Duncan.** My plenteous joys,  
Wanton in fulness, 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  
The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must  
Not unaccompanied invest him only,  
But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine  
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,  
And bind us further to you.

**Macbeth.** The rest is labour, which is not used for  
you:  
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful  
The hearing of my wife with your approach;  
So humbly take my leave.

**Duncan.** My worthy Cawdor!

**Macbeth.** [Aside] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a  
step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;  
Let not light see my black and deep desires:

The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

## ACT I, Scene via

**After receiving her husband's letter, Lady Macbeth is determined to help her husband to the throne through murder. Macbeth expresses second thoughts, but, buoyed by his wife and her questioning of his masculinity proceeds with the plan.**

**Lady Macbeth.** Give him tending;  
He brings great news.

[Exit Messenger]

The raven himself is hoarse  
That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan  
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,  
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 murdering ministers,  
Wherever in your sightless substances  
You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,  
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,  
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,  
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,  
To cry 'Hold, hold!'

[Enter MACBETH]

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

**Macbeth.** My dearest love,  
Duncan comes here to-night.

**Lady Macbeth.** And when goes hence?

**Macbeth.** To-morrow, as he purposes.

**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,  
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,  
Your hand, your tongue: look like the 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;  
Which shall to all our nights and days to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

**Macbeth.** We will speak further.

(stage directions). [Hautboys and torches. Enter a  
Sewer, and divers]

Servants with dishes and service, and pass 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  
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  
To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice  
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice  
To our own lips. He's here in double trust;  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
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  
The deep damnation of his taking-off;

And pity, like a naked new-born babe,  
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed  
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on the other.  
[Enter LADY MACBETH]  
How now! what news?

**Lady Macbeth.** He has almost supp'd: why have you  
left the chamber?

**Macbeth.** Hath he ask'd for me?

**Lady Macbeth.** Know you not he has?

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

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

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

**Macbeth.** If we should fail?

**Lady Macbeth.** We fail!  
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  
That memory, the warder of the brain,  
Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason  
A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep  
Their drenched natures lie as in a death,  
What cannot you and I perform upon  
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,  
When we have mark'd 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 clamour roar  
Upon his death?

**Macbeth.** I am settled, and bend up  
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.

## ACT II, Scene i

**Macbeth faces his moment of decision as he enters the king's bedchamber (remember Duncan is a guest in Macbeth's castle).**

**Macbeth.** Go bid thy mistress, when my drink is ready,  
She strike upon the bell. Get thee to bed.  
[Exit Servant]  
Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.  
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?  
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' the other senses,  
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 halfworld  
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse  
The curtain'd sleep; witchcraft celebrates  
Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder,  
Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf,  
Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace.  
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,  
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.

## ACT II, Scene ii

**A clearly shaken Macbeth is greeted by his wife following the murder. Though going through with it, Macbeth is not untouched.**

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

**Macbeth.** [Within] Who's there? what, ho!

**Lady Macbeth.** Alack, I am afraid they have awaked,  
And 'tis not done. The 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]  
My husband!

**Macbeth.** 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' the second chamber?

**Lady Macbeth.** Donalbain.

**Macbeth.** 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:  
But they did say their prayers, and address'd 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.  
Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'  
When they did say 'God bless us!'

**Lady Macbeth.** Consider it not so deeply.

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

**Lady Macbeth.** These deeds must not be thought  
After these ways; so, it will make us mad.

**Macbeth.** Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more!  
Macbeth does murder sleep', the innocent sleep,  
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,  
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,  
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 murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor  
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more.'

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

**Macbeth.** I'll go no more:  
I am afraid to think what I have done;  
Look on't again I dare not.

(stage directions). [Exit. Knocking within]

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

**Lady Macbeth.** My hands are of your colour; but I  
shame  
To wear a heart so white.  
[Knocking 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  
Hath left you unattended.  
[Knocking 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.** To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

[Knocking within]

Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I would thou couldst!

## ACT II, Scene iii

### Macduff discovers the dead king and Macbeth begins the coverup.

**Macduff.** O horror, horror, horror! Tongue nor heart Cannot conceive nor name thee!

**Macbeth.** [with Lennox] What's the matter.

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

**Macbeth.** What is 't you say? the life?

(stage directions). [Re-enter MACBETH and LENNOX, with ROSS]

**Macbeth.** Had I but died an hour before this chance,  
I had lived a blessed time; for, from this instant,  
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.

**Donalbain.** What is amiss?

**Macbeth.** You are, and do not know't:  
The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood  
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.

**Lennox.** Those of his chamber, as it seem'd, had done 't:

Their hands and faces were an badged with blood;  
So were their daggers, which unwiped we found  
Upon their pillows:

They stared, and were distracted; no man's life  
Was to be trusted with them.

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

**Macduff.** Wherefore did you so?

**Macbeth.** Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious,

Loyal and neutral, in a moment? No man:  
The expedition my violent love  
Outrun the pauser, reason. Here lay Duncan,  
His silver skin laced with his golden blood;  
And his gash'd stabs look'd like a breach in nature  
For ruin's wasteful entrance: there, the murderers,  
Steep'd in the colours of their trade, their daggers  
Unmannerly breech'd with gore: who could refrain,  
That had a heart to love, and in that heart  
Courage to make 's love known?

**All.** So all.

**Macbeth.** Let's briefly put on manly readiness,  
And meet i' the hall together.

## ACT III, Scene i

### Macbeth, now enthroned as king, begins to worry about those around him and their loyalty, but none more than Bangui. He makes plans to solve that problem.

**Macbeth.** Bring them before us.

[Exit Attendant]

To be thus is nothing;  
But to be safely thus.—Our fears in Banquo  
Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature

Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares;  
And, to that dauntless temper of his mind,  
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour  
To act in safety. There is none but he  
Whose being I do fear: and, under him,  
My Genius is rebuked; as, it is said,  
Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters  
When first they put the name of king upon me,  
And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like  
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:  
Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown,  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,  
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,  
No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,  
For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;  
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;  
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace  
Only for them; and mine eternal jewel  
Given to the common enemy of man,  
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!  
Rather than so, come fate into the list.  
And champion me to the utterance! Who's there!  
[Re-enter Attendant, with two Murderers]  
Now go to the door, and stay there till we call.  
[Exit Attendant]  
Was it not yesterday we spoke together?

**First Murderer.** It was, so please your highness.

**Macbeth.** Well then, now  
Have you consider'd of my speeches? Know  
That it was he in the times past which held you  
So under fortune, which you thought had been  
Our innocent self: this I made good to you  
In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you,  
How you were borne in hand, how cross'd,  
the instruments,  
Who wrought with them, and all things else that  
might  
To half a soul and to a notion crazed  
Say 'Thus did Banquo.'

**First Murderer.** You made it known to us.

**Macbeth.** I did so, and went further, which is now

Our point of second meeting. Do you find  
Your patience so predominant in your nature  
That you can let this go? Are you so gossell'd  
To pray for this good man and for his issue,  
Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave  
And beggar'd yours for ever?

**First Murderer.** We are men, my liege.

**Macbeth.** Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;  
As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs,  
Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept  
All by the name of dogs: the valued file  
Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,  
The housekeeper, the hunter, every one  
According to the gift which bounteous nature  
Hath in him closed; whereby he does receive  
Particular addition. from the bill  
That writes them all alike: and so of men.  
Now, if you have a station in the file,  
Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say 't;  
And I will put that business in your bosoms,  
Whose execution takes your enemy off,  
Grapples you to the heart and love of us,  
Who wear our health but sickly in his life,  
Which in his death were perfect.

**First Murderer.** And I another  
So weary with disasters, tugg'd with fortune,  
That I would set my lie on any chance,  
To mend it, or be rid on't.

**Macbeth.** Both of you  
Know Banquo was your enemy.

**First Murderer.** [with Second Murderer] True, my  
lord.

**Macbeth.** So is he mine; and in such bloody distance,  
That every minute of his being thrusts  
Against my near'st of life: and though I could  
With barefaced power sweep him from my sight  
And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not,  
For certain friends that are both his and mine,  
Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall  
Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,

That I to your assistance do make love,  
Masking the business from the common eye  
For sundry weighty reasons.

**First Murderer.** Though our lives—

**Macbeth.** Your spirits shine through you. Within this  
hour at most  
I will advise you where to plant yourselves;  
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,  
The moment on't; for't must be done to-night,  
And something from the palace; always thought  
That I require a clearness: and with him—  
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work—  
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,  
Whose absence is no less material to me  
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate  
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:  
I'll come to you anon.

**First Murderer.** [With Second Murderer] We are  
resolved, my lord.

**Macbeth.** I'll call upon you straight: abide within.  
[Exeunt Murderers]  
It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,  
If it find heaven, must find it out to-night.

## ACT III, Scene ii

### Macbeth is having trouble sleeping.

**Macbeth.** We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it:  
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice  
Remains in danger of her former tooth.  
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the  
worlds suffer,  
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep  
In the affliction of these terrible dreams  
That shake us nightly: better be with the dead,  
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,  
Than on the torture of the mind to lie  
In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grave;  
After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;

Treason has done his worst: nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,  
Can touch him further.

## ACT IV, Scene i

### Following additional prophecies from the witches who talk in double visions, Macbeth seems secure but doesn't want to take any chances. He makes plans to kill the family of Macduff.

**Macbeth.** Time, thou anticipatest my dread exploits:  
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook  
Unless the deed go with it; from this moment  
The very firstlings of my heart shall be  
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,  
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and  
done:  
The castle of Macduff I will surprise;  
Seize upon Fife; give to the edge o' the sword  
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls  
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool;  
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.  
But no more sights!