MACBETH'S DOWNFALL

MACBETH IS BRAVE IN BATTLE; HEROIC

(ACT I. 2)

- The bleeding captain calls him 'brave Macbeth' (Act I. 2. 16) and 'valour's minion' (Act I.2.19).
- Macbeth marched through the enemy, laughing at chance, and killed the rebel Macdonald with a single stroke of his sword.
- The Norwegian army fled; so the Irish army attacked, but Macbeth and Banquo were completely unafraid and fought with twice as much force as before.

MACBETH MEETS THE WITCHES

(ACT I.3)

 Macbeth is unsettled by the witches and wants to know more / Banquo is much less bothered by them.

BANQUO:

My noble partner,

You greet with present grace and great prediction

Of noble having and of royal hope,

That he seems rapt withal.

MACBETH REACTS TO BECOMING THANE OF CAWDOR

(ACT I.3-4)

• Macbeth believes he's going to be king, and is happy about it.

MACBETH (aside):

Two truths are told,

As happy prologues to the swelling act

Of the imperial theme. (Act I. 3. 117)

• Macbeth isn't sure if the prophecy is good or bad. If it's bad, why did they tell him the truth about his promotion? If it's good, why is he imagining killing Duncan, a thought so horrible it makes his hair stand on end and his heart pound.

MACBETH:

Present fears

Are less than horrible imaginings. (ACT I. 3. 140)

Later, after Duncan makes Malcolm his heir by naming prince of Cumberland, Macbeth realises he must overcome that obstacle or give up.

MACBETH:

Stars, hide your fires;

Let light not 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. 4. 55)

This is immediately followed by Duncan calling Macbeth 'valiant' (ACT I.4.56) and 'a peerless kinsman' (ACT I.4.60).

LADY MACBETH PLANS TO EXPLOIT HIS AMBITION

(ACT 1.5)

Macbeth sends his wife a letter reporting the witches' prophecies. She immediately resolves to make him king.

She believes his nature is 'too full o' th' milk of human kindness' to strike (ACT I.5.16).

LADY MACBETH: 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 would wrongly win. (ACT I. 5. 21)

When she hears Macbeth is returning, she says:

LADY MACBETH:

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. (ACT I. 5.44)

When Macbeth arrives, he says little, just the king's plans – he does not mention the witches, or his advancement, directly – he leaves that to her.

MACBETH BRIEFLY REJECTS LADY MACBETH'S PLAN

(ACT 1.7)

After hosting Duncan in his castle, Macbeth is stricken by doubt and cannot commit the act.

In a soliloguy, he says that the murder will not be over and done with.

- Violence breeds violence: 'bloody instructions, which, being taught, return / To plague th' inventor' (ACT I.7.10)
- He is the king's host and kinsman
- The king is a great and kind man whose death will be mourned across the land.

MACBETH I have no spur,

To prick the sides of my intent, but only

Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself

And falls on th' other. (ACT 1.7.29)

He tells Lady Macbeth he won't do it.

MACBETH Prithee, peace:

I dare do all that may become a man;

Who dares do more is none.

LADY MACBETH AND MACBETH PLAN DUNCAN'S MURDER

(ACT 1.7)

Lady Macbeth tells Macbeth that he was a man when he was planning to kill Duncan.

She asks him if he's a coward.

She asks if he'll always say 'I dare not' after 'I would' ('I would like to, but I won't). (ACT I.7.44)

She says that, had she said she sworn to kill her child, she would have done it.

MACBETH If we should fail? (ACT 1.7.59)

Lady Macbeth convinces him they won't if he has courage; and they can blame Duncan's servants.

MACBETH: Bring forth men-children only,

For thy undaunted mettle should compose

Nothing but males. (ACT 1.7.74)

The pair plan to grieve loudly when it's discovered.

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 I.7.82)

DUNCAN'S MURDER (ACT II.1-2)

Macbeth has a vision of a dagger leading him to Duncan's chamber.

MACBETH: Thou sure and firm=set earth,

Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear

Thy very stones prate of my whereabout,

And take the present horror from the time,

Which now suits with it. Whiles I threat, he lives.

Words to the head of deeds too cold breath gives. (ACT II.1.61)

Macbeth tried to say 'Amen' when one of the sleeping servants said 'God bless us!', but the word stuck in his throat.

As he committed the murder, Macbeth imagined he heard a voice saying:

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.' (ACT II.2.41)

MACBETH: I am afraid to think what I have done;

Look on 't again I dare not. (ACT II.2.50)

Macbeth can't go back to the crime scene to tamper with it; Lady Macbeth does.

MACBETH: To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

Wake Duncan with thy knocking. I would thou coudst. (ACT II.2.72)

MACBETH IS CROWNED; MALCOLM AND DONALBAIN FLEE

(ACT II.3-4)

After Macbeth 'officially' finds Duncan's body, he says to the lords -

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. (ACT II.3.91)

The king's sons flee for fear of being killed next. This makes them prime suspects.

Macbeth is crowned king.

BANQUO IS MURDERED

(ACT III.1-4)

Banquo suspects Macbeth has cheated to win the kingship.

Macbeth talks about how the murdering princes have fled to England and Ireland.

When Banquo leaves on a journey, Macbeth has a soliloquy about him.

MACBETH: Our fears in Banquo

Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature

Reigns that which would be feared. (ACT III.1.51)

MACBETH: If't be so,

For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;

For them the gracious Ducnan have I murdered;

Put rancors in the vessel of my peace

Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man,

To make them kings... (ACT III.1.70)

Macbeth talks the murderers into killing Banquo in similar ways to Lady Macbeth talking him into killing Duncan – by challenging their manhood.

Lady Macbeth (privately) and Macbeth (to his wife) express remorse and great guilt about Duncan's murder.

LADY MACBETH: Naught's had, all's spent

Where our desire is got without content.

'Tis safer to be that which we destroy

Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy. (ACT III.2.9)

MACBETH: 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. (ACT III.2.24)

Macbeth tells Lady Macbeth not to worry about Banquo and Fleance. He addresses the night -

MACBETH: Come, seeling night,

Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day

And with thy bloody and invisible hand

Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond

Which keeps me pale. (ACT III.2.51)

Lady Macbeth is unsettled by Macbeth's words.

MACBETH: Thou marvel'st at my words: but hold thee still.

Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill. (ACT III.2.56)

BANQUO'S GHOST (ACT III. 4)

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth hold a banquet for the Scottish lords. Macbeth is cheered by the news of Banquo's death, but worried when he learns Fleance escaped.

MACBETH: I had else been perfect,

Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,

As broad and general as the casing air. (ACT III.4.23)

Macbeth attends to his guests, toasting them and talking with them. Banquo's ghost appears and sits in one of the chairs.

MACBETH: (to GHOST) Thou canst not I say I did it. Never shake

Thy gory locks at me. (ACT III.4.51)

Lady Macbeth has to make excuses for him in front of the other lords; she calls it a fit.

LADY MACBETH: Are you a man?

MACBETH: Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that

Which might appal the devil. (ACT III.4.60)

The Macbeths pull it off – but then Banquo's ghost reappears.

MACBETH: What man dare, I dare.

Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,

The armed rhinoceros, or th' Hyrcan tiger;

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves,

Shall never tremble. Or be alive again,

And dare me to the desert with thy sword.

If trembling I inhabit then, protest me

The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!

Unreal mockery, hence! (ACT III.4.107)

Lady Macbeth asks the lords to hurry from the room.

MACBETH: It will have blood, they say. Blood will have blood. (ACT II.4.122)

Macbeth worries about Macduff, who did not come to the banquet.

MACBETH: I will tomorrow –

And betimes I will – to the weird sisters.

More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know,

By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,

All causes shall give way. I am in blood,

Stepped in so far that, should I wade no more,

Returning were as tedious as go o'er.

Strange things I have in head, that will to hand,

Which must be acted ere they may be scanned. (ACT III.4.140)

SECOND MEETING WITH THE WITCHES

(ACT IV.I)

The witches plan to undo Macbeth by making him overconfident.

HECATE: He shall spurn fate, scorn death, and bear

His hopes 'bove wisdom, grace, and fear. (ACT III.5.31)

As Macbeth approaches -

SECOND WITCH: Something wicked this way comes. (ACT IV.1.45)

Macbeth demands they tell him everything he wants to know, even if it utterly upsets nature and causes destruction across the Earth.

APPARITION ONE tells Macbeth to beware Macduff.

APPARITION TWO tells Macbeth to **'laugh to scorn / The power of man'** because no-one born of a woman can harm him.

APPARITION THREE: Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care

Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.

Macbeth shall never vanquished be until

Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill

Shall come against him. (ACT IV.1.94)

Macbeth is very happy with their prophecies, and asks if Banquo's sons shall reign in his kingdom.

They show him Banquo's descendants ruling far into the future.

MACBETH: Let this pernicious hour

Stand aye accursed in the calendar! (ACT IV.1.134)

LADY MACDUFF AND HER FAMILY ARE MURDERED

(ACT IV.1-2)

A messenger tells Macbeth that Macduff has fled to England.

MACBETH: 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. (ACT IV.1.149)

So he decides to raid Macduff's castle and kill his family.

As a consequence of this, Macduff resolves to act to kill Macbeth – Macbeth has given Macduff the motivation and drive to fight and kill him.

LADY MACBETH'S SUICIDE; MACBETH'S FINAL SOLILOQUY

(ACT V.1-5)

Lady Macbeth sleepwalks, rubbing her hands of Duncan, his chamberlains, Banquo, and the Macduff family's blood.

As Malcolm's army marches up to Scotland many lords abandon Macbeth.

MACBETH: Let them fly all.

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane

I cannot taint with fear. What's the boy Malcolm?

Was he not born of a woman?

MACBETH: I have lived long enough. My way of life

Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf,

And that which should accompany old age,

As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,

I must not look to have, but, in their stead,

Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath

Which the ppor heart would fain deny and dare not. (ACT V.3.30)

Macbeth tells the doctor that he would praise him above all others if he could find out what's wrong with his country and provide Macbeth with the solution.

Women cry in the castle.

MACBETH: I have almost forgot the taste of fears.

The time has been my sense would have cooled

To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair

Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir

As life were in't. I have supped full with horrors.

Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts

Cannot once start me. (ACT V.5.15)

Macbeth hears news of his wife's suicide.

MACBETH: She should have died hereafter.

There would have been a time for such a word.

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,

Creeps in this petty pace from day to day

To the last syllable of recorded time,

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools

The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player

That struts and frets his upon the stage

And then is heard no more. It is a tale

Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,

Signifying nothing. (ACT V.5.28)

BIRNAM WOOD MOVES

(ACT V.5)

A messenger tells Macbeth that Birnam wood is moving on Dunsinane hill. Macbeth begins to doubt the witches' prophecies as lies which sounded like truth.

MACBETH: There is nor flying hence nor tarrying here.

I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,

And wish th' estate o' th' world were now undone. -

Ring the alarum-bell! – Blow, wind! Come, wrack!

At least we'll die with harness on our back. (ACT V.5.51)

BRIEF REDEMPTION FOR MACBETH BEFORE MACDUFF KILLS HIM

(ACT V.8)

Macduff confronts Macbeth. Macbeth still believes no man of woman born can harm him, but Macduff tells him that he was 'from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped.' (ACT V.8.16)

MACBETH: Accursed be that tongue that tells me so,

For it hath cowed my better part of man!

And be these juggling fiends no more believed,

That palter with us in a double sense,

That keep the word of promise to our ear,

And break it to our hope. I'll not fight with thee.

MACDUFF: Then yield thee, coward,

And live to be the show and gaze o' th' time.

We'll have thee, as our rarer monsters are,

Painted on a pole, and underwrit,

'Here may you see the tyrant'.

MACBETH: I will not yield,

To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,

And to be baited with the rabble's curse.

Though Birnam Wood be come to Dunsinane,

And thou opposed, being of no woman born,

Yet I will try the last. Before my body

I throw my warlike shield. Lay on, Macduff,

And damned be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!' (ACT V.8.34)