

The Force of Destiny



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alternative version of "*Macbeth*"
after Shakespeare

by Christian Lanciai (2009)

Dramatis Personae:

Three Fates
Macbeth
Lady Macbeth
Banquo
Fleance, his son
Thane of Ross
Thane of Angus
Thane of Lennox
Thane of Caithness
Thane of Monteith
other thanes and nobles
King Duncan
Malcolm, and
Donalbain, his sons
Macduff
his wife
his son
two assassins
servants
a watchdog
a doctor
a maid
other soldiers

The action is around 1040-1057 in Scotland
and one scene in England (act IV scene 4).

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Act I scene 1. A moor.
Three weird sisters

1 What are we really doing here?
2 We are the sisters of destiny who exist only because of destiny.
3 We are the children of inevitability, whose existence is implacable.
1 But why have we gathered?
2 We have gathered to be the guides of destiny,
3 to lead the victims of destiny into their destiny, so that they never may
find their way back again.
1 Who are now the victims of destiny?
2 The noble Macbeth is heading in our direction.
3 And we can't turn him down,
2 since destiny placed him in our way
1 Will he then not be able to manage without destiny?
2 No one manages without destiny,
3 and if they try they try in vain,
2 which Macbeth surely shall become aware of.
1 Is he the one coming here?
2 Exactly, a man of destiny,
3 with a follower of destiny to follow him.
Macbeth Hold it, Banquo! What strange women are these, who appear like ghosts
here in the middle of the desert moor? What are they doing here?
Banquo They fill me with dark forebodings just like you.
Macbeth We must confront them. We never backed down from any battles, were
always the first in the front line, never retired, so we can't just cowardly evade some
weird and wicked crones?
Banquo No.
Macbeth What are you doing here, unattractive old ladies in the wilderness so far
from humanity you can get in the middle of the moor of desolation?
1 Hail Macbeth, thane of Glamis!
2 Hail Macbeth, thane of Cawdor!
3 Hail Macbeth, king of Scotland!
Macbeth (recoiling) You don't know what you are saying. I am thane of Glamis, that is
correct, but everything else is absolutely wrong.
Banquo Ask them to explain themselves.
Macbeth Explain yourselves, weird sisters!
1 We have nothing to explain, only to declare.
2 You don't see your destiny yourself yet, but you are already stuck in it.
3 Everything will explain itself in time.
Macbeth I find this creepy.
Banquo You greet my friend here with impossible titles, but you haven't greeted me.
1 Hail Banquo, not as fortunate but more fortunate.
2 Hail Banquo, no king himself but father of kings.
3 Hail Banquo, less than Macbeth but greater with time.
Banquo This is oracle talk, which no one can understand.
Macbeth Are they quite demented, or dare you take them seriously?
Banquo They probably don't know themselves what they are saying. They are
gaga and beyond all hope.

Macbeth Still there is something about them that you can't quite negate. They are here, and they have said what they have said. You can't oppose yourself against revelations from the spiritual world.

Banquo Do you suggest that they could not be mortal?

Macbeth Yes, if they don't understand themselves what they are saying with a spiritual tongue, which it could be perilous to depreciate.

Banquo You are superstitious.

Macbeth No, I just try to follow what life has to offer me.

Banquo This is getting on my nerves. Let's ride on.

Macbeth I see two friends coming riding towards us. Could it be the thanes of Ross and Angus?

Banquo It doesn't look any better. Then something must have happened.

Ross Hail, Banquo and Macbeth!

Macbeth What news are you bringing to us?

Ross The king is cheerful, since he heard how you successfully vanquished the rebels. From gratitude he therefore has named you thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth Thane of Cawdor! But that thane is still alive! Has anything happened to conclude his life?

Ross He lives, but as a traitor he has forfeited his title and position. The king therefore gives them over to you.

Macbeth (to Banquo) I can't believe my ears.

Banquo Reality transcends imagination.

Macbeth The prophecy has come true and at once!

Angus We hope this will suit you, Macbeth. You seem almost painfully surprised.

Ross Take it only as an honour.

Macbeth Naturally I feel only honoured. Still this was the very last thing I expected. I am somewhat shocked by this surprise.

Angus That's natural.

Macbeth (to Banquo) If the oracles of the witches so clearly immediately prove true, what unheard of consequences do we not then have to expect? They told you, that you in time would be the father of kings.

Banquo And you a king yourself

Macbeth This frightens me. What kind of a destiny is this that so ruthlessly takes us innocent people for a ride? What did we do to deserve this?

Banquo Nothing. – My cousins, let me hear closer details of what has happened, that has stricken us like lightning from a clear sky. (*talks with Ross and Angus*)

Macbeth (to himself) This is truly unpleasant. I never asked anyone for such a sudden overwhelming honour. This could not lead to anything good. It appears to be good, but it carries a seed to situations we cannot control which therefore must turn evil. I can't help it, I quake and shudder, and I don't like it. Thane of Cawdor! Must it then mean that I also have to wear the crown of Scotland? What will then become of king Duncan?

Banquo Look, how deeply he has let the honour affect him! He is overwhelmed!

Angus I would probably have been also.

Macbeth Pardon me, gentlemen, but the surprising news has put me slightly off. Is king Duncan well?

Ross He is as well as he could ever be and probably eagerly expects us to his camp.

Macbeth Let's hurry there then and serve him by our dutiful attendance and presence.

Ross You are as eager as he is for a reunion.

Macbeth We must discuss this further, Banquo, in private.
Banquo It must needs some discussion indeed.
Angus Has anything happened to you?
Macbeth Yes, a strange phenomenon. We'll talk about later. Let us now hurry to our king. (*exeunt*)

Scene 2. With the king.

Duncan Has Cawdor been executed?
Lennox He lives no more and died like a man after all. He stood up for his treason and regretted sincerely his treason and finally submitted a full confession. He accepted his sentence with equanimity, considered it correct and departed from his life un stoic calm.
Duncan I must sincerely regret his treason and desertion, since I trusted him implicitly as a friend of mine. Now this trust must be conferred to another man instead.
Lennox Look, here they come, the gallant heroes, your right arm and a new Cawdor to bestow your fullest trust on.
Duncan They are welcome indeed to the highest degree. – My best friend, let me embrace you and cordially welcome you in the stead of Cawdor – never could anyone think of him that he would fail us and perhaps not even himself, but in his place you have now proved a more trusted and closer friend than our fallen brother. That is how it is. If any world collapses in breakdown, ruins and losses, another will rise instead if not two. (*embraces Macbeth heartily*) I also greet you, my brave Banquo.
Macbeth It is a great honour for me to so suddenly receive your confidence, my good king, and I have no higher wish than to be able to live up to it.
Duncan You already do. – At the same time we hereby proclaim, that our oldest son, prince Malcolm, receive the title prince of Cumberland as the closest heir to the throne of Scotland. As you are loyal, obedient and submissive to me, so be you also to him.
All (raise their swords) Long live Malcolm, prince of Cumberland!
Duncan So let us now make our way to Inverness, for the celebration of the victory with banquets and all other possible pocolation.
Macbeth Then it shall be my sincere pleasure to tell my wife that you are now on your way with the entire court. We shall most heartily have you lodged with us.
Duncan Your hospitality is well renowned, my good thane Macbeth of Cawdor. We are looking forward to that feast. Let's break it up! And mind all our practical details! (*general decampment*)
Macbeth (alone) Prince of Cumberland! What does the mechanisms of destiny have to say about such a title? If it doesn't revoke the oracle about my royalty to the relief of all of us and thus annul the force of destiny, then nothing in life can be trusted any more.

Scene 3.

Lady Macbeth (reads a letter) "Thus the weird sisters of the moor prophesied, that I soon would be thane of Cawdor, and I had hardly turned my back on them when I was greeted by that title by king Duncan's friends, Ross and Angus. It proved, that Cawdor had fallen to insidious treason and would soon be executed, I did not know anything about that, wherewith king Duncan quite spontaneously had conferred

that title on me. But that wasn't all that the sibyls had promised me, but also the title king of Scotland."

Would I not know these initiated sibyls, who know more about the world than the world knows itself? Of course, they must be absolutely right, and if they promised you to become king of Scotland, you have no other choice than to actually be just that. And now Duncan comes here himself to spend the night. Everything fits exactly. All we have to do is to serve destiny by giving it some slight push ourselves. And chance miraculously falls into our hands and plays them. – When will he come?

Servant He is on his way and will come any moment. (*heavy knocks at the gate*)
That must be him.

Lady My husband, all you now have to do is not to show any weakness. You are human, and there is all your liability, but I will mould you with some firmness, so that you when the moment comes never can hesitate. Destiny ordained our course for us, and all we need to do is to blindly follow it in perfect safety.

Macbeth (enters) My wife! (*embraces her*)

Lady My husband! Welcome back, and your letter was even more welcome.

Macbeth As you see, I was somewhat bewildered by the appearance and prophecies of the three weird old ladies.

Lady Which already have started to come true! You can't deny it!

Macbeth That's the strangest thing of all.

Lady Just don't let you be stopped by any human scruples. The course is straight to power, and you only need to be consistent and follow it.

Macbeth You appear to be more ambitious than I.

Lady I observe what is happening and act accordingly as it comes natural. Your king is now coming here and intends to sleep here. Isn't that if anything just an obvious signal for us to start acting?

Macbeth Are you considering a royal murder?

Lady I am only thinking of the realization of the prophecy of destiny, which nothing can keep us away from, or what?

Macbeth Your attitude compels me to shudder.

Lady No, it compels you to act! If you are served with a career from above of unassailable glory, power and honour, are you then so stupid that you could turn it down?

Macbeth A murder is always a murder though.

Lady And hasn't Duncan himself then committed some murders to become king and remain so?

Macbeth They do not count. There were different. Cawdor was the last.

Lady There you are. Murder is just a necessary operation sometimes when politics so demands, which it always does, and that's how politics are, or else it would not work. Power and destiny demands it. We have no right to oppose them.

Macbeth We could actually get away with it if we could succeed in compromising others.

Lady That will be easy.

Macbeth Let's carefully consider the risks. We must not leave any blind spots. Crime can only be excused if you could get away with it in perfect safety.

Lady There, now I recognize you, and now you start acting like a man. We will of course meticulously go through all the details with the utmost care. (*They retire.*)

Act II scene 1. The banquet. Duncan at the head of the table.

Duncan Where is my host, the one responsible for this royal banquet? He certainly has not saved any resources for the sake of impressing. We are all more than satisfied, gentlemen, and cannot praise our host enough with his lovely hostess, but where the devil are they?

Macduff Perhaps they are busy in the kitchen.

Banquo Every banquet needs careful organization.

Duncan (*sees Macbeth with his lady entering*) Well, at last, there you are! You seem inclined to refuse us every possibility to poculate with you!

Lady Your night quarters need careful preparation, my liege, as you must be given the privilege of sleeping comfortably.

Duncan Your care for your guests shall stand above all praise, and in that you must all agree, mustn't you, gentlemen?

(*general acclaim*)

You really haven't spared any effort for our entertainment, while you have been least of all visible, as if your generosity had to be compensated by social thrift. Could that be so?

Macbeth (*to his lady*) He is too good. I cannot go through with this. (*out*)

Duncan Now he runs away again. What's the matter with your husband. Is he ill?

Lady Not at all, but a thousand duties keep calling on him. He has a thousand irons in the fire, and for the moment some vital servants have fallen sick, which adds to his troubles, which should be no concern of yours. I only ask you to go on celebrating regardless of him. I will see if I could tear him from his human engagements. (*out*)

Duncan I hope it will pass. Such a beautiful lady as lady Macbeth I would have dreamt of having with me at every fortuitous party, the fortune and happiness of which would be only due to her beauty and charm. (*They go on celebrating and poculating.*)

Lady (*outside, with Macbeth*) Are you crazy? You can't back down any more!

Macbeth You can't ask me to murder him when he is only full of praise of you and me. It will not do. Let it not go any further. Why would I be king, when I am as happy as I am and could be? What more do I need? We already have a good king and need no other and no better.

Lady The destiny, the opportunity, the chance! You can't fail them, when they for once offer you their grace and fortune by an opportunity, that never will come back!

Macbeth You press me to what I have no desire of.

Lady I am looking to the best for you, for us and for the country! There are plenty of thanes, they disappear unknown and forgotten without reaching a place in the book of history, but the king has eternal life, and they can never be brought down from the throne of history!

Macbeth But the crime must get out and become known, giving us the ineffaceable stamp of shame and dishonour, which will burden us forever.

Lady Not if we get away with it. The right to write down history will be yours. Could you resist it and turn me down?

Macbeth I never could, and you know it.

Lady Then strike tonight, when the king is asleep, blessed by your generous cups! He couldn't have a lovelier death than satisfied, gentle and drunk in a lovely sleep of self-satisfaction.

Macbeth Go back to join the guests. I have to think.

Lady If you back out now you are no more my husband but just a hare and a worthless coward, who missed the best chance of his life only because he was stupid and yellow. *(she goes in to the guests. She is greeted with overwhelming appreciation by Duncan and the others.)*

Duncan Only you were missing, my lady. Now only your husband is missing. How is he?

Lady He will come. He has that weakness only that he lets his worries and concerns take the better of him.

Duncan Sit down with us and poculate, since we have victories and a new excellent thane of Cawdor here to celebrate.

Lady Gentlemen, I was never the one who could decline parties. *(They celebrate.)*

Macbeth (aside) She is right. A moment and possibility like this will never come again. It is extreme hazard, but it might succeed. Destiny seems to hold me by my hand. So far it has led me infallibly to success, all signs have been unilaterally positive, and could I then let it down? Can the winner abandon the gaming table when he only keeps on winning? Never, for there never was a man to voluntarily let go of happiness when it is smiling on him. Success is worth a wager. Destiny tempts me with success, and I could then only put all my trust in her. Everybody here loves my wife, who always was popular for her social charm and talent, and she only grows more beautiful for carrying on and keeping it up. How could I then turn her down? It's an impossibility. She has received the grace of destiny and rides successfully in full control of this dangerous goddess and is not afraid of anything. All I have to do is to follow. *(goes in to join the guests)*

Duncan (rising) At last, our host, a toast to the honour of our noble hosts! I am tired now after this outstanding celebration and longs to get home to bed. Will you do me the honour, my lady, to lead me to my room?

Lady I shall be delighted, king Duncan. Go on celebrating, all you others, for we have unlimited resources, we will not run out of beer, and the food is enough for everyone to get more than satisfied. All we wish for this evening is for all of you to be happy and content with a good sleep under our roof in perfect harmony and satisfaction.

Ross Lady Macbeth, a more qualified hostess has never made a better party. Gentlemen, her toast! *(All rise and drink to her with acclamation.)*

Angus And the host! To Macbeth!

All To Macbeth! *(All drink to him with enthusiasm.)*

Macbeth I thank you all from my heart, my friends, but now beg your leave to retire, for I happen to be rather tired.

Macduff Haven't we all celebrated more than enough already? I suggest that we do our hosts the honour to retire ourselves with them and the king to our sleep and well deserved rest.

(All agree, and general breaking-up.)

Macbeth Is it the irony of fate to force me to this murder just at the moment when it is at most against all reason and the most outrageous injustice? The king may have committed some crimes himself for the sake of power, but he was never so amiable and appeaseable, more sympathetic and as a king more winning than he is now. And then in this the most inappropriate moment I am forced by destiny and the whims of an ambitious woman to take a decisive step from law and order and decency to lawlessness and evil, tyranny and established injustice. Nothing can rescue me back if I transgress this limit from what is correct, sound and right. I

abandon myself to the incalculable arbitrariness of destiny and my wife's ambitions, and I could win the game in a temporary career and honour or be cursed and lost forever in the damned and hopeless darkness of the fallen souls. Can I take such a fatal step? It's like an exciting experiment. It's like taking an initiative in war: if you do not dare you can never win. If you dare you don't necessarily have to lose. Therefore you wage and see if it might succeed. Perhaps it succeeds – if not, you are beaten, and then you might as well die, and be rid of the problem.

Lady (comes stealthily up to him) Are you ready?

Macbeth Always ready.

Lady He has gone to bed and sleeps already, snoring like a nice and happy pig. No one suspects anything. All sleep blissfully, as if they all had got back their childhood innocence. When I strike the bell, it's time. (*vanishes*)

Macbeth Still there is the possibility that she will never let the bell sound.

Banquo (enters with Fleance, without seeing Macbeth) The eyes will force me to bed to sleep immediately with their heaviness, but I am too worried and uneasy, and the moon is down. I can't get rid of the visions of the macabre manipulations of the witches. Something is going on which fills me with the extreme terror of darkness.

Fleance Come to bed, father. You have done your work for today. It's the large quantity of beer that has caused your senses to start floating around.

Banquo And still it feels as if the disturbance comes from outside. (*sees the shadow of Macbeth*) Halt! Who is there? (*pulls his sword*)

Macbeth Be calm, my friend. It's only me.

Banquo So absolutely quiet in the darkness – I took you for a phantom.

Macbeth You haven't had too much to drink again, my dear Banquo, I hope? Everybody else is already sleeping.

Banquo Oh yes, now I remember! Maybe that's why I could not find any peace. King Duncan gave his greetings for a good night with thanks by asking me to give you this ring with a nice diamond. You truly deserved it. (*gives him the ring*)

Macbeth Thank you, my friend. Go to bed now yourself.

Fleance Come, father. That was your last duty today.

Banquo I am coming. Pleasant dreams. Macbeth. (*Fleance gets him with him.*)
(*In the same moment the bell tolls.*)

Macbeth Doomsday! It's my doom more than king Duncan's, for now there is no possible return. It has to be done, it will be an extensive operation, and it really will be nice when all this is over,... perhaps. (*leaves*)

Lady The night couldn't be any blacker, like to accentuate the boldest crime ever committed in Scotland, but the powers are with us, destiny showed that from the beginning, and nothing can go wrong. All possible witnesses are dead drunk and are lying about drivelling, we were conscientious about letting the guests for once have as ample a booze as they could take, and Scotsmen never willingly spit in the glass. Only the owls are howling loud, as if they were aware of being the only ones to know what is going on.

Macbeth (enters with two bloody long daggers) Are you satisfied now?

Lady Did it work out well?

Macbeth It worked out too well. All slept too well. No one woke up, as if they had passed into eternal sleep without any help of mine.

Lady You can't walk around like that with the sword daggers. We must compromise the servants. It's they who did it, not we.

Macbeth What more do you ask of me? I have done my part. It was too simple not to leave me afterwards with shaking hands. Now I can't handle anything any more.

Lady (takes the swords) Go to bed. But go and wash yourself first. I will smear down the servants and hide the swords with them. They are too drunk to ever be able to comprehend what they did in their sleep and drunken state. Dry off your stains. No trace of blood must be found on any of us.

Macbeth You are getting smeared yourself.

Lady I will wash afterwards. Take it easy, Macbeth. You did a good job. Now I will do the rest. We are partners and share the responsibility, especially now when we are getting royal, which I hope will be the next step.

Macbeth Alas, I will never be able to sleep any more!

Lady Don't imagine such nonsense! Go to bed!

(There are knocks at the gate.)

Macbeth Is it destiny itself knocking at our gate?

Lady You are all washed up and get your nerves all shattered at the least sound of noise! It's just someone who wants to get in! Go to bed! I will come at once as soon as this job is finished. No one must find us awake at this hour.

(Macbeth retires in nervous concern, watches his bloody hands.)

Macbeth He didn't even rattle. They didn't even wake up. They just died and instantly bled to death, as if they never could have expected anything else...

Lady Go! *(Macbeth leaves.)*

To work now, quick and stupid but efficient! If we only can make it the first hour we can make it all... *(hurries out with the swords)*

(More knocking at the gate. No reaction. More knocks. An old watchdog with a lantern shows up.)

Watchdog What sort of an infernal noise is that? Who the devil wants to get into this hell at this hour of the night? It must be the devil himself who has found himself locked out. Let him knock. I will not let him in.

(more knocks)

So obstinate, you devil? Let's see who is more obstinate! An old tough idiot like me can starve out all hell by sheer obstinacy! Just go on knocking! Let's see who will give in!

(more knocks)

The way you carry on I will have time to pee before you give up. I might as well take care of the opportunity. That was the only reason why I got up, when you started disturbing me by your infernal knocking! Go to hell, you disturbing devils of the peace! *(goes to let his water)*

(more knocks)

Can't you see that I am busy? Can't you hear that I am stuck in natural circumstances? Open up yourselves if you can, or break up the gate if you feel like it, because if you want me to open, you will have to wait for a long time.

(more knocks)

By the devil! Or else the risk is that I actually might open the gate for you!

(more knocks)

As you wish! Blame yourselves! *(goes to open up at last. Macduff and Lennox show up.)*

Macduff Were you up late tonight, since it is so difficult for you to wake up?

Watchdog Alas, my lord, the entire house drank themselves to bed, and it does not seem likely any will wake up willingly, since after such a great party the aftermath will only be sour.

Macduff The king asked me to wake him up early, since he wants to get on with his journey and not arrive too late.

Macbeth (arriving, obviously newly-awakened) What's happening?

Watchdog They wanted to wake the king up, but they only woke me up, for the king is sleeping his booze off.

Macduff I had better wake him up myself. Is that all right?

Macbeth Of course. (*Macduff leaves.*)

Lennox It was a terrible night. Where we were lying the chimney blew off the cottage, while owls howled with threatening anguish and a north wind came wheezing and howling with arctic cold, so that everyone woke up shaking. It was as if suddenly the entire universe had been crowded with evil spirits.

Macbeth Yes, it was a long night of terror, but now it is over.

Macduff (returns, more than upset and shaken) O horror! What an unnatural night of terror! Of all evil that could have happened, a much greater evil than anyone could have imagined has now stricken us all to shambles!

Ross What's the matter, my good Duff? You are not the one who is easily upset or frightened.

Macduff The king lies murdered in his bed!

Macbeth In my house? Impossible! That can't be tolerated! (*hurries out*)

Macduff Follow him, Lennox, so that he doesn't do anything rash!

Lady (appears) Who is screaming in my house and why? This was supposed to have been a most well-deserved sleeping-morning!

Macduff Let no one sleep any more until we have reached the bottom of this the worst disaster that ever could have happened to us!

Lady What has happened?

Macduff I cannot speak about it, and I wish to spare your ears from the infamous scandal that now tries to spoil your excellent hospitality and name and reputation...

Lady As hostess I must hear all possible complaints. (*enter Banquo*)

Macduff Alas, Banquo, the king lies murdered in his bed!

Banquo It must not be true! You must have slept badly this night, had evil dreams and hallucinated!

Macduff Who hasn't? And it will be the worse in the awakening to a reality that we for everlasting shame in drunken snugness overslept!

(screams in another part of the castle)

Banquo That sounds bad. Are there more around here to be murdered?

(enter Lennox)

Macduff What is it, Lennox?

Lennox At the sight of his king's death in the bath of his blood that filled the entire bed, our Macbeth was seized with berserk fury, which was far from cured by our findings not only of the obvious murder weapons but the servants themselves all bloodied by the crime, on sheets, on clothes, their faces and covers, as if they had tried to wipe it off before they drunk and utterly intoxicated fell unconsciously unmanageable asleep.

Macduff But why?

Lennox That we never now shall know, because the raving Macbeth fell upon them and killed them instantly, as a perfect requital, judgement and sentence all at once.

Macduff That was not good.

Lady And this happens in my own house?

Banquo No, it has already happened.

Ross Here comes the lord of the castle.

Macduff Do you have any comment on what has happened, Macbeth?

Macbeth You would probably all have done exactly the same thing. No one can tolerate that his king is murdered in his own house and under his responsibility and

hostship. I cut the process short with the murderers, so that we settled everything at once.

(enter Malcom with Donalbain)

Malcolm What has happened? The entire house is screaming!

Macduff My Prince of Cumberland, we now owe you all our fidelity and esteem, for your father lies murdered.

Macbeth The murderers have already been punished.

Lennox Still it seems to me, thane of Cawdor, that you went too fast to action. We ought to have heard what they could have said as any testimony and to their own defence.

Macbeth They were all confused in their drunkenness, completely unsound and could not understand what they had done under the influence, they were not responsible and had lost their memory. It is probable that they had committed their crime unaware of what they did and having lost their senses. Is that any conciliatory circumstance? No, a crime is and remains a crime, and the one accountable for it can never get away from paying for it.

Donalbain (to Malcolm) I don't like this.

Malcolm It smells too bad.

Donalbain Perhaps we shall be the next victims to a foul intrigue play.

Malcolm Unless we find refuge and safety in a different land.

Donalbain Precisely.

Malcolm We must not give a hidden villain the chance to go on operating quietly under cover.

Lady I cannot bear it! Such a scandal, and in my own house! *(faints)*

Macduff Help the lady there! This was too strong for our hostess, and I knew it. I wanted to spare her.

Macbeth Bring her out, and put her to bed. She will recover eventually, when the blood is washed away. *(She is carried out.)*

Banquo What more measures do you suggest, Macbeth?

Macbeth We are all here, we who govern the realm, who also carry all responsibility. We must gather at once for a vital conference.

Ross That's absolutely necessary. We must not give up the stability of the country but instead immediately accept all new burdens after this most unwelcome demission.

Lennox I am on.

Macduff Me too.

Macbeth Let's then immediately start the conference.

(Exeunt all except Malcolm and Donalbain.)

Malcolm I will find my safety in England. What about you?

Donalbain I think we had better separate. I'll take care of Ireland. We can act together across the borders, and if one is murdered, the other will remain. So I don't think they plan anything lethal against us.

Malcolm You think then exactly like myself, brother.

Donalbain (takes his arm) Farewell, my brother, until we find each in Scotland again.

Malcolm With our father thoroughly avenged. *(They embrace and leave.)*

Act III scene 1.

Ross I was not at the royal election. How did it go?

Banquo As expected. There was no real choice. Macbeth is now king, and I just hope it will be more for good than for bad.

Ross And the princes of Cumberland and Donalbain?

Banquo It was their escape that settled it. That compromised them. All Scotland is now discussing what connection they could have had with the royal murder.

Ross Here is Duff, coming also directly from the royal meeting. Any comment, Macduff?

Macduff I would rather not.

Ross You hardly seem satisfied.

Macduff Can anyone be satisfied about a royal murder with all the witnesses done away with?

Ross Is that an insinuation?

Macduff The unanimity was total. No protest, only silence, while deep inside no one could believe that his most loyal servant could have done it and even less that his sons had anything to do with it. They are also gone, we can do nothing, and the government has to be carried on.

Banquo I hear the new king coming.

Macduff Then I will vanish.

Ross It's not quite proper for a man of rank to stay away from a coronation.

Macduff In this case it's even less proper for me to be present. I cannot pretend, Ross and Banquo. Someone here has played it false, and I will have no part in it.

Ross Where will you go?

Macduff Home to Fyfe. The only proper place for a man to be is with his family, which now in the times to come might need closer protection than usual. (*leaves*)

(*booming acclamations in the background.*)

Banquo I would almost follow Macduff's example.

Ross Are you also doubting the sincerity?

Banquo And what's worse: I have reasons for it.

Ross Keep them to yourself. I must join the chorus of crows. Macduff is not the only one who has a family to think of. (*goes to meet Macbeth and his following as they enter*)

Hail Macbeth, king of Scotland!

All his followers Hail Macbeth, king of Scotland!

Macbeth Hold it! Still I am not crowned. I see you all here except one. Where is Macduff?

Banquo He had urgent business home to his family.

Macbeth Only that? His absence might give the impression of a protest.

Ross I told him that.

Macbeth And still he got in a hurry.

Lady Don't concern yourself about it. He is only one of many. No success could be entirely perfect. No kitchen is perfect without salt and pepper.

Macbeth Let's then plan our coronation festivity tonight. You will be there, I hope, Banquo?

Banquo Of course, if only I can. I only have one errand with Fleance, my only son, to execute this afternoon.

Macbeth Are you riding with him?

Banquo Yes. But why do you want to know?

Macbeth I wouldn't like to miss you at dinner. – Gentlemen, blow your horns in fair salute, and let Scotland triumph! No royal murders will be able to shadow Scotland's honour or keep its proud traditions from growing on! You are all welcome to our royal banquet tonight for the confirmation of our throne and our unanimity, and if anyone be missing, like Macduff, we will drink to him for that and none the less! Concerning Malcolm and Donalbain, there is nothing we can do. What they have done is on their own responsibility, and if they choose to abscond, it's their own matter.

Lennox They are in England and Ireland spreading rumours that there was more behind the murder of the king than what was obvious.

Macbeth Fairy tales and speculations like conjecture. Let them spread them as they wish. A government must not be disturbed by crooked spread of rumours but must concentrate on the future and the law and order. To the coronation! Now that is all that's missing! (*All out except Banquo.*)

Banquo Your aptitude of method confirms my darkest suspicions. Only I was there with you on the moor when the weird sisters delivered us the most extraneous prophecy, which in your case now has come true the whole way. How will it then be with mine? One thing is certain: if you, as I believe, manipulated destiny yourself to further you by foul and ruthless means, will I then at least not try to make a similar attempt? (*leaves*)

Macbeth (aside, with two ruffians) You know, we have some common interests.

1 Banquo's death.

2 We spoke about it before.

Macbeth Now it's time. He rides out this afternoon with his son, and it is desired to have both settled with.

1 You are now king, and we are under your protection, and you pay handsomely, as you have promised, for a well delivered work.

2 We warrant that no one will get away.

Macbeth That's good. Then I trust you.

1 Just one question, only. You were the best of friends and always stuck together almost like foster brothers. Why this sudden total turn around?

Macbeth He knows too much, and he threatens me.

2 What does he know that nobody else knows?

Macbeth What also no one else should know anything about.

1 (*to 2*) Don't ask too many questions. We have unsettled business with the good Banquo, and now we can conclude them and get paid for it as well and even have legal protection for the transaction. What more could you ask for? We don't need to ask any questions, and when the Banquo affair is finished, we forget it and know nothing about it.

Macbeth That's right. Therefore I trust you.

2 We are very well agreed.

Macbeth I will wait for your report of the success of the undertaking. You may start upon your venture. (*The murderers leave.*)

One crime can only lead to another. If once you have started, it's just to follow on to the end, for evil can only survive and be confirmed by constant upgrade. Banquo must die and his son with him, for he suspects us for the murder of king Duncan, he was there at the revelation of the prophecy of destiny and knows too much, and I can't have gone thus far, sacrificing all virtues and deserts for the power of ambition and the exhilaration of the temptations of destiny, to have Banquo's sons succeed to my throne and I die without children. Destiny may have prophesied well from a

certain perspective, but if it presents reservations I must fight them. May destiny lead me, but may it not rule me, for now I have control and will not lose it. I am sorry, Banquo, but your destiny is in the way for my own.

Lady (enters) Are you walking here around again brooding for yourself in dismal introspection? Just don't say, that you still have second thoughts.

Macbeth You forget that I am now king and have to consider the future of the realm.

Lady Then all is good and well. I think we are safe now. Macduff is wise enough not to say anything in his detachment, and the princes have deeply compromised themselves. Is there anything left to fear?

Macbeth Banquo. As you remember, the lewd sisters prophesied that his sons would be kings after me.

Lady And you mean to say then, that since the prophecy had been completely realized for you, it also must convey Banquo's royal success?

Macbeth Don't worry. I have made arrangements.

Lady Already?

Macbeth No, but the preparations have already been made.

Lady He was supposed to be the guest of honour at our royal feast tonight.

Macbeth The risk is that he might fail to turn up.

Lady And if he turns up?

Macbeth In that case, we must of course treat him as the foremost guest of honour.

Scene 2. The banquet

Ross As usual our noble hosts provide us with overwhelming generosity and hospitality.

Angus He is the newly crowned king. He is naturally anxious to have his popularity confirmed.

Lennox While more and more ask themselves, why such a handsome king with such a beautiful wife never had any children.

Ross That will hardly make any dynasty.

Angus Any news from Macduff?

Lennox He is as silent as the wall and only has one comment on the new world order, which is no comment.

Ross To avoid any risk of unpleasantness, he has no contact with neither the princes nor the new court.

Angus Attention, here is the queen.

(enter Lady Macbeth)

Lady I beg you, gentlemen, take your seats and be most cordially welcome! A few are still missing, but we will begin without them.

Ross Among those missing is your husband.

Lady He will come any moment.

Lennox Has he cured his sleeping problems? The worst should now be over for him, and he managed brilliantly the taking over of the royal responsibility.

Lady The less said about his non-existent sleep, the better. Let now the wine go round and be relished by you all!

Ross We are missing Banquo here tonight, your husband's closest friend. Wasn't he to be the guest of honour?

Lady We cannot understand at all why he hasn't come. *(sees Macbeth outside)*

Macbeth (outside, with the murderers) So you succeeded with Banquo but failed with Fleance?

1 Banquo lies massacred in the ditch for rats and crows to feast on until the corpse is found tomorrow, but someone put out the torch, and Fleance escaped.

Macbeth Then you have only done half the job. The worst half is still alive. I am sorry, but that means only half the payment.

2 We are sorry too.

Lady (comes out) How dare you grossly neglect your guests at your coronation dinner?

Macbeth It's over now. I'll come at once. – My friends, thanks anyway for what you managed, and I hope to be able to trust you also in the future.

1 We live highly on the power of the crown and its criminal needs. *(They leave.)*

lady (has returned to the guests) He is coming now, our great king!

Macbeth (enters to the dinner) My friends, most heartily welcome, all of you! I hope you will provide yourselves well, since our house holds immeasurable resources – it shall never be said about Macbeth, that he was stingy and kept something for himself! *(raises a cup)*

Angus (rises and raises his cup) Cheers, Macbeth, and may your reign be long and fortunate!

All (follow his example) Cheers, Macbeth with queen and consort! To our king and queen!

(all toast enthusiastically)

Macbeth I only miss Banquo, my closest friend, who would have been the guest of honour for tonight. Perhaps he still might come, perhaps he is only late, we shall see, but everybody knows that Macduff had lawful excuse.

Lennox Has he been heard of?

Macbeth No, but everybody knows that he prefers his family to politics.

Lady Take your seat now, my husband, in the high settle and don't stand there hesitating. All fuss and demanding formalities are over now, and we are now obliged to dedicate ourselves to pastimes and festivities!

(enter Banquo's ghost taking Macbeth's seat)

Macbeth My queen, you are right. Let's forget the heavy duties and instead attack matters of more importance at the moment of joys and pleasures. *(is about to take his seat when he sees Banquo there and hesitates startled)*

Lady What is it? Why do you hesitate! Are you seeing something?

Macbeth What I see cannot be real, but unfortunately it is more real than all reality. We see with our eyes, but what we see without them goes much deeper. What are you doing here?

Lennox (to the others) He is confused.

Angus Has he been drinking again?

Lady Macbeth, the guests are whispering.

Macbeth I put to you an open question! What are you doing here!

Banquo (quietly) Since you ask I will answer so that only you can hear it. I received your invitation and came. Such an invitation to the coronation banquet of a new king cannot be refused even with death for an excuse.

Lennox Behold how his eyes are widening in terror. I fear that he is experiencing something that we cannot see.

Angus My queen, does he often have such uncanny attacks?

Ross To my eyes he seems rather distracted.

Lady It will pass, gentlemen, it will pass. *(to Macbeth)* Are you a man? You are shaming us at our own coronation dinner! *(Banquo leaves.)*

Macbeth (relieved) I am sorry, gentlemen, I had something of an attack and didn't quite believe my senses, but now I see that what I saw was really nothing to be seen.

Angus Welcome back to reality, my king. We almost grew concerned about you.

Lady (resumes the initiative) Everything passes, every illness, every attack, all evil thoughts and worries, but now we have our party, which is the only sensible matter to focus on.

Macbeth I am sorry, gentlemen. I get into my moods at times, but I assure you, that it's nothing to worry about.

Lennox It was perhaps missing Banquo that slightly touched your mind.

Macbeth Of course, there is no one I miss more than him. We were always allies in every enterprise and warfare, we shared almost everything in life, so his absence tonight is more than palpable. *(Banquo returns.)*

Lady Then at last take your seat at the table, and let this be a felicitous banquet for a good start of your commendable government!

Macbeth (pale and stiff with fear when he is to try to take his seat again) Is that only why you have come, to reproach me by your bloody presence for my steps of action?

Banquo The others cannot see me, but it's enough that you do and that only you can hear me. I was your best friend, and would I then refrain from your coronation feast? You would never have accepted any excuse, not even my own death.

Macbeth You see me through with such sharpness that I am forced to feel it as a lance piercing my body and soul, but by this truth you make all my existence and future unbearable.

Ross He is mad. Let's go.

Lennox This is indeed most unpleasant.

Lady I beg you, noble gentlemen, remain! Macbeth, have some more wine! That is probably what you need!

Angus On the contrary, methinks there shouldn't be any more for him.

Macbeth I ask you again: Why did you turn up if not to spoil the party of my coronation and make by your appearance a poignant and keen reproach?

Banquo Like I said before, you invited me, and here I am. *(rises and leaves)*

Lennox It almost seems as if he had something on his conscience.

Ross I don't want to remain here any longer. This is too painful.

Angus I follow your example. We recommend ourselves, my queen, and we sincerely hope for the king of this country and your husband to get better.

Lady Stay, please, I beg you! The banquet hasn't even started yet!

(More and more lords rise and leave, bowing politely for their farewell.)

This is too absurd!

Macbeth (when the last one is gone) He is gone now. We can start the party now.

Lady You have completely ruined it! This was to be our triumphant start on our long and successful government!

Macbeth He came as an unpleasant surprise.

Lady (beside herself) Whatever visions you had, you succeeded only in ruining everything and that with a vengeance!

Macbeth I am sorry. It was not intended. I was not prepared for an abusive visit by ghosts.

Lady Do you mean that the poor Banquo actually was here?

Macbeth He showed himself only to me but also spoke to me.

Lady And what did he say?

Macbeth For an excuse for his appearance at my party he gave, that I had invited him.

Lady If it begins like this, how will it continue?

Macbeth I must have a further conference with the ladies of the moor. I have the right to demand of them an explanation.

Lady Those who gave you your destiny?

Macbeth Yes.

Lady Then they are obliged to be consistent and to confirm your position of power.

Macbeth Yes. That's what I mean. Banquo is dead, but the son Fleance escaped, and they did promise Banquo's progeny the throne of Scotland.

Lady Then you may really wonder what they actually meant.

Macbeth That's what I mean.

Lady Come, my husband. Drink no more today. You have had delirium enough. The coronation party was a failure, but we are still alive.

Macbeth The question is how long, and I almost wish it was all over.

Lady Are you already tired?

Macbeth Extremely.

Lady And only get more tired by not being able to sleep, like me. We already seem to be well on our way of becoming a lovely pair of unblessed spirits.

Macbeth We are crowned now and cannot avoid the power and responsibility. Let's bear with our fates until they smother us.

Lady If only the night wasn't so dark!

(They go out together.)

Scene 3.

Ross What do you think, Lennox?

Lennox It looks bad.

Ross Do you think it is as bad as it looks?

Lennox I think it is worse than how it looks. The king's behaviour at his own coronation feast more than confirms my worst suspicions.

Ross What does Macduff say?

Lennox He has at last started to act. Malcolm is with king Edward in England and is there treated with the utmost respect as a political refugee. Macduff has gone there to persuade the king to reinstate Malcolm as rightful king of Scotland by force.

Ross I admit that Macbeth's saga carries strange traits of insidious machinery behind false curtains.

Lennox Everything points in the same direction. Duncan is murdered by his own most faithful servants completely without any motive. Macbeth executes them at once in blind fury over their crime in his own house. Who could have heard them deny the matter without raising even greater fury? But no one questions their capacity to commit such a murder of precision in their state of utter drunkenness. And then Banquo. Who had any motive to murder him? And not only him, but also his only son, who fortunately got away and could tell about the murder? The king's pangs of conscience were too obviously screaming at the party not to convince everyone present. Everything indicates the same thing: Macbeth does not know what he is doing and murders anyone just to hold on to power.

Ross It's about time to get in touch with the prince and Macduff in England, isn't it?

Lennox The king here is desperate, which only makes it more urgent that he as soon as possible be relieved of his critical course.

Ross And how does he react to Macduff's voluntary exile?

Lennox Like to everything else: with furious despair.

Ross Then there will be war.

Lennox Most certainly.

Ross Time to bring your family in safety.

Lennox And side with the right party yourself.

Ross The only right side is to always join the opposition against all tyranny.

Lennox That's what I mean. An oppressed opposition is always right and can only ultimately prevail.

Act IV scene 1. The moor.

Macbeth So once more I tread my way back to the home of desolation to research my destiny, aware that I will never probably catch up with it or understand it, and I also fear it will be just as much for evil as for good, but what have I to lose? The power is a lie of flattery and hollowness that only cover mean insidious parasites that will consume us from within, bereave you of your soul and end up scrapping and discarding you as one washed up old wasted rag of shreds, abused to uselessness, and to what purpose? None at all, for everything is but like some disease of vanity that keeps on bolting and increasing, leading you astray without an end to that long fall into a constantly more massive darkness without bottom, like a self-consuming waste that might at best end up in nothingness in the extreme annihilation of all that was yourself. – There they are, the witches, the horrifying Norns. Come on and lead me, show me straight the road to hell, you lewd and unaccountable, hair-raising hags!

1 We are only here for your sake, poor king, more corrupt and ruined after a shorter reign than any other, but we are not at large for judgement. We just follow and observe.

Macbeth You gave me the thread to my destiny, which led me to where I am today. Then you should not consider yourselves free from all responsibility.

2 Wouldn't you then have followed the same course of actions if you hadn't met with us? Would you not have met with the same possibilities and opportunities, and would your wife have had a different character?

Macbeth That is most debatable. But what is done is done, and I wish now to be informed of what more is expecting me.

3 That is why we are here. You searched for us, inviting us to join your conference, and invitations by Macbeth can never be refused by living or by dead.

Macbeth Are you alive then, or are you among the dead?

1 Straight in the middle in between. But we are ready to inform you of all that you wish to know.

Macbeth Have I anything to fear from Macduff?

2 We answer, that no man of woman born can harm you.

Macbeth And if I am threatened and they wage a war against me?

3 Then we answer, that there's nothing that can threaten king Macbeth until the woods of Birnam march across the hills to Dunsinane.

Macbeth Your answers are too positive and satisfactory to almost be too good to be convincing. Then I only have one question left. You foretold Banquo, that he

would be ancestor and father of some future kings of Scotland. Could you give a closer explanation of your prophecy?

1 You don't want any answer to that query.

2 Someone else must answer that for you.

3 Behold yourself the consequences of his death.

(enter Banquo with eight kings following.)

Banquo Are you satisfied and happy now, Macbeth? These are but eight generations. You rule alone without results, but the fact that I was removed by your fear will make the way for my progeny and theirs. Take it easy. Your time is fortunately enough limited. *(disappears with the eight descendants.)*

Macbeth This is too much. I cannot bear it. The mirror shown to me of my ignominy and absolute nonentity is overwhelmingly unbearable. Let me just disappear and have it all over and done with.

1 You have to act your part first. That is your destiny.

2 Think of your invincibility at Dunsinane where no man born of woman can harm you.

3 It will pass, but first you must as king run the course at full length and be consistent about it, for you are no coward.

Macbeth That is maybe my very destiny, not to be a coward. So be it. I accept the inevitability of destiny and abandon myself to its bottomless abyss to sometime at last reach some end to it, as my life's only possible liberation and redemption.

(The witches have vanished. When Macbeth looks up again, Ross has entered.)

Macbeth (looks up) Ross, is that you?

Ross They told me you had departed for this barren moor of desolation.

Macbeth What is your errand?

Ross News. Macduff has defected to England and is there with the support of king Edward mobilizing an army to reinstall Malcolm as king of Scotland.

Macbeth That is no news. I expected that since long. No harm is done. We are well prepared and can throw back any possible invasion. Let the English come! We are not afraid! Scotland will never bow to invasions!

Ross So you assume command?

Macbeth Without question.

Ross Good. I will notify the government. *(leaves)*

Macbeth So there will be war again, but they have no chance, for the Norns have made me invulnerable against mortals. I fear only the immortals and those who survive me and how they will judge and condemn me. *(leaves)*

Scene 2. Fyfe.

Lady Macduff But why would he escape the country? What has he done? Was it only from fear, that has run amuck with him, since he has nothing to fear? If there ever was anyone born without fear, he was the one.

Ross We must have patience, my lady.

Wife He leaves me then alone with my son, for what? If only he could leave some explanation!

Ross Macduff is not the one to act rashly, and if he had to leave the country in a hurry it couldn't have been without some pressing reason.

Wife And how long will he be gone? How shall we support ourselves?

Son You can get a new husband, mother.

Wife What nonsense! I only have one as long as he lives.
Ross Perhaps he saw it as the only possibility to save his own life.
Wife If his life was threatened, the life of his family is in the same danger. He then exposes his family to the danger to escape it himself. Is that the right thing for a man and father to do?
Ross Perhaps he found it the way to save you from the very danger that threatened him. Children and women are always perfectly innocent and out of reach of any political danger.
Wife Thank you, thane Ross, for your effort to calm us down, but we are not happy.
Ross I can understand that. I had better leave now before having spoken too much. The last thing I wish is to have you compromised. Farewell, my lady, and trust your husband and me. (*leaves*)
Wife Who else could we trust at all?
Son I am sure we will manage. He will soon be back.
Wife Yes, but when? When evil times approach, it always takes too long before they end.
Messenger (enters) My lady, excuse me.
Wife Another sad message?
Messenger I am afraid you are in danger. You had better place yourselves in safety.
Wife But what could possibly threaten us? An abandoned wife with her child? Are we not vulnerable and exposed enough? Isn't it bad enough that a husband and father has abandoned his family?
Messenger I just wanted to warn you. I had better vanish myself now. (*vanishes*)
Wife And where would we go? We have no one else but each other and nothing else than our home. We have to trust our innocence. If the hearth at home isn't safe, then nothing in the world is safe.
Murderer 1(enters) We are looking for Macduff.
Wife He is not here. What do you want with him? And who are you?
2 The king's emissaries. He has turned a traitor.
Son (attacks him) You are lying!
2 Am I? (*cuts his throat*) Prove it!
Wife (understands, puts her hand to her mouth in fear) You would have murdered him, but instead you murder us!
1 Just as well, so there will be a few dead anyway. (*catches hold of her, and the other murders her*)
2 There are many servants here. We must not leave any witnesses alive.
1 To work! (*They leave the bodies and quickly abandon the place.*)

Scen 3. Dunsinane.

Macbeth It's not my fault, Caithness. These hooligans acted on their own.
Caithness Don't tell me, your majesty, that they committed their massacre without a mandate.
Macbeth They had no motive.
Caithness So what was their business there then?
Lady (enters) What has happened?
Macbeth Macduff's home has been ravished.
Lady Isn't Macduff safe in England?

Caithness Your majesty, without doubt the murderers were looking for Macduff, who well aware of that his life was in danger already had left for England. Frustrated by not having found Macduff, his pursuers instead murdered Macduff's child, wife and servants.

Lady That was not intended.

Caithness What was not intended, madam?

Lady You question me as if I was responsible. I know nothing. Ask my husband.

Macbeth She knows nothing.

Caithness What do *you* know?

Macbeth What is your angle?

Caithness A heinous massacre has been executed on obviously absolute innocents, and I am searching for some meaning, some responsibility and for what lies behind it.

Macbeth I already answered your question. They acted completely on their own. I ask again: What is your angle?

Caithness Such an evil and meaningless slaughter must raise evil blood all over Scotland, which must lead to doubts and questions concerning the leadership competence.

Macbeth So you wish to warn us?

Caithness All Scotland demands the murderers to be punished, and as long as they are at large no one will be safe in Scotland.

Macbeth Thanks, Caithness, for the warning.

Caithness And one more thing.

Macbeth Well?

Caithness Macduff's escape to England could lead to more defections after the murder of his family.

Macbeth Thanks for the warning, Caithness. You may leave.

(Caithness bows and leaves.)

Lady What is this? Have you lost control?

Macbeth We have lost control, my dear. We already did so at the first murder of Duncan, which you enforced.

Lady You were going to be king. We only followed the course of destiny. My grandfather was king Kenneth III. Duncan belonged to a family of usurpers. We only restored order.

Macbeth But at what price? To make all the thanes of Scotland our enemies after the massacre of Macduff's family?

Lady That had nothing to do with Duncan. That had nothing to do with us.

Macbeth But we are responsible as the government!

Lady You are, my husband, not I. Your murderers' actions are no business of mine. I am sorry about Macduff's wife and child, but neither you nor I have any right to accept responsibility for what goes wrong against our wishes.

Macbeth Their blood will cry for me until I die, my dear, even if I wasn't directly responsible. And you made me king.

Lady No, Macbeth, you fell for the force of destiny, not for me. But as your queen I am in the same trap, and your destiny will be mine. We are not accountable. We will just be victims. *(leaves)*

Macbeth Destiny as a trap that no man can avoid, and which must hit the hardest against those most aware of their responsibility? Is life such a hopeless game against the superiority of fate, where all humanity always has to lose? Then life is just a constant continuous destruction until everything is all over. *(broods)*

Scene 4. Westminster.

Malcolm I don't think you need to worry about having had to leave your own behind. No evil can go as far as to cowardly attack the innocent closest kin of someone out of grace.

Macduff Still there is a gnawing worry and bad conscience in my heart, which cannot leave me any rest. If only I had been able to bring them with me!

Malcolm Perhaps they are even safer at home. A family with children will not fare well on a long voyage and enforced evacuation.

Macduff I fear that she crying loud accuses me of not making her understand.

Malcolm Macbeth has employed assassins operating freely with a licence. He has a spy in every castle in his pay. You can hardly even whisper any word of openness, sincerity and truth without being branded and reported as a traitor. You would have been murdered if you had remained.

Macduff And still I wish I had for the sake of my own! Now I am unable to defend them if anything should happen, and the worst of all is the incertitude.

Malcolm We will get the better of the problem in time.

Macduff You are still young and have barely even touched a woman yet. How could then such innocence stand up to the unheard of crowned encumberment of guilt of Scotland?

Malcolm We have Edward the Confessor on our side, who is the very contrary we need: of saintly purity and goodness, who even has the healing power to remedy incurable diseases. If he can cure leprosy and consumption, he can also cure Scotland.

Macduff Idealism and childish goodness of the heart weighs light to bloody ruthlessness without a conscience.

Malcolm Here is your cousin, probably with news about your family.

Macduff My dear Ross! You have been longed for indeed! Most heartily welcome!

Ross My dear friend, I did what I could.

Macduff You are not as glad as I. What has happened?

Ross I am afraid that the mere name of Scotland nowadays only means bad news, but I bring the very worst thinkable.

Macduff Let's hear it!

Ross I tried to warn them. I sent them message to take cover and place themselves in safety, but they found no other place where they could feel safe except at home, so they stayed by their own hearth. Briefly afterwards, Macbeth's assassins appeared, who had been sent with the commission to kill you before you left the country. When they found your home, your wife was there alone with your children. My friend, I cannot express how sad I am unto the utmost deepest sorrow.

Macduff What happened?

Ross All dead, wife, children, servants. No one could make any resistance. It was a massacre, probably from wrath that you had got away.

Macduff The madness of Macbeth's wrath is spreading to the people finding outlet against the most innocent of innocents, mothers, children and helpless servants. How is this possible? How can such a thing be tolerated by nature and the order which we still believe is ruling all the universe?

Ross I regret sincerely with my most atrocious pain. Such evil has arrived all too suddenly and is too cruel in its brutality of shock efficiency for anyone to be able to at all mobilize any resistance, preparation of defence, or even understand it.

Macduff Then all the worry, anguish and despair I felt was real, and I am more responsible than ever. And there is nothing we can do, just live in exile and observe!

Is all hope then lost and really gone? Shall that villain be allowed to ravage freely with his government of terror and the gangs of murderers in his employment until there will be no Scotsmen left to even breathe? Shall he really be allowed to ravage freely and without distinction murder women, children, maids and servants, as if they were worthless bugs and insects of annoyance, that disturbed him by existing?

Malcolm Calm down, Macduff. King Edward has now placed an army at our disposal of ten thousand men.

Macduff And you don't tell it until now?

Malcolm I wished to wait for the right moment to come, when you would look deepest down into the abyss and most would need the opposite medicine, for its effect to be the more efficient.

Macduff It sounds like an incredible miracle completely in king Edward's style.

Malcolm He stands for the expenses. All we have to do is to work.

Macduff And so we will indeed. Let's not wait one single day with restituting Scotland all at once! Let's concentrate all our powers on the vital operation of as soon as possible to overthrow this morbidly corrupt regime before it goes on murdering more innocents and breaking up more families by ruthless persecution and outrageous execution! This inhuman rule must be removed at once! We must not wait!

Malcolm We are with you, Duff.

Ross More and more are joining you every day.

Malcolm Our moral strength could not be higher, while Macbeth's could not be lower.

Ross All the universe resounds in silent acclamation of our vital, necessary and most urgent mission.

Macduff (takes all hands) Then we will start moving.

Act V scene 1. In the castle.

Doctor I have waked with you for two nights but so far found no ground for your alarm.

Maid I promise you, that it is true, that what she says while walking in her sleep is most alarming.

Doctor People who walk in their sleep are then ruled by completely unconscious forces and impulses from the subconscious and don't know themselves then what they experience and can therefore neither be tied to what they might confess. No matter how pathetically deplorable they may appear, they are perfectly unaccountable.

(Lady Macbeth makes an entrance, in ghostly silence and gliding, like in a state of trance.)

Maid Behold, she comes!

Doctor As you say, actually in nightgown and linen with her candle. Mark well that her eyes are open.

Maid Yes, but they see nothing. She walks in blindness.

Doctor Still in absolute sleepwalking confidence. This is really an interesting experiment.

Lady Will the stains then never disappear? *(rubs her hands as if to clean them)*

Doctor I will write up everything she says, so that you at last have a witness to your observations.

Lady Will the blood never vanish? Who could have thought that such a tough and dry old man could contain so much inextinguishable blood to spurt?

Doctor (shocked) This is terrible.

Maid Just wait. It will not end.

Lady Are you then a coward? Are you a soldier and well used to splattering massacres and only stops at a murder of a reptile who is in your way?

Doctor If she doesn't know what she is saying, it is nonetheless the more meaningful.

Lady What have we to fear when there is no earthly power that could hold us accountable?

Doctor She is obviously and deeply mentally disturbed, and there is no cure for such problems except perhaps a priest. This goes far beyond my ethical authority.

Lady Did not the thane of Fyfe have a wife? Where is she now?

Doctor This goes well beyond all limits.

Lady It went too far with her and her children. I never wanted to have any part in such things. I am stained to incurability by what I never wished and never did, and the more I scrub the spots, the more shrilly their red glare keep screaming in my constantly more anguished brain.

Maid Have you heard enough?

Doctor And more than enough. This calls for a doctor of most extraordinary and compact obligations of silence. Not one word of what she has spoken must come outside our castle and the confines of her private chambers. Secrets such as these must be locked up.

Maid And what about her?

Doctor I cannot help her. I fear her malaise has carried her too far, like it did to the thane's wife, but this case is far worse and infinitely more worrying, since she behaves like someone dead but is alive.

Maid Can you be in a worse condition?

Doctor Than as someone dead but still alive? I have seen nothing worse.

Maid Neither have I.

Doctor Let's withdraw in silence with what we don't know, for we have not experienced this, only she. *(they leave)*

Lady Shall I never wake up from my nightmare? The darkness of the night equals that of hell: it only goes on getting darker although it's already black, and not even death can liberate me, for after the arbitration of death there will only be an even worse unrest waiting to grab hold of you forever. Banquo proved that by not being dead no matter how meticulously he was murdered – he only became the more alive and laughed over it and the more for our unspeakable incurable horror.

(retires with her candle and leaves the stage completely dark)

(on her way out) To bed, to bed, to our own eternally accursed vigil. *(leaves)*

Scene 2.

Lennox The English are now close, led by prince Malcolm, the determined Macduff and his cousin lord Ross. This superior force is overwhelming, and there is anger burning in it as well, fuelling the energy, since they know too well that only their cause is just.

Angus Wouldn't the only sensible thing for us to do be to join them?

Monteith All the thanes of Scotland wish to do so, but we are the leading ones, and if we demonstrate ourselves to be on England's side, surely even more will join us.

Lennox They intend to come here over Birnam.

Angus So let's go ourselves there with our troops.

Lennox King Macbeth stands no chance. If he is a realist, which he should be as there is nothing wrong with his king's competence, he should lay down his arms, and I wonder why he doesn't.

Angus He has nothing to lose. He has gone too far and knows that he has nothing to expect of any war against him than a definite dethronement. He will fight unto his death.

Monteith What is he doing now?

Lennox He is fortifying Dunsinane and believes to hold a firm position there, but his men are not enthusiastic and obey their orders rather passively.

Monteith Is Donalbain on Malcolm's side?

Lennox No. The younger prince stays on in Ireland in detached expectancy and preparation.

Monteith I have heard that the usurper's wife is not quite well.

Lennox Is anything in Scotland well in such a tyrant's realm? Is he himself quite in his senses? His sworn enemies claim that he is mad, but others claim that he is driven to some desperation in his boldness of presumption and refuses therefore to give up.

Angus I also heard that he has weird ideas of being under the protection of some fortune of a higher destiny and therefore thinks he is invulnerable.

Lennox We shall see about that. He has corrupted and poisoned all Scotland, which is enough for us to halt and put an end to his career by every right.

Angus He could hardly expect any other destiny.

Lennox No.

Monteith Let's meet the English, Malcolm and Macduff then. It's about time that they learn that all of Scotland is with them on principle.

Lennox Yes. Let us be one with Scotland's soul and honour and unite with them against the brutal force and power that has violated them. *(They leave.)*

Scene 3. The castle

Macbeth How is the queen?

Doctor She is not improving, only getting worse.

Macbeth What can you do?

Doctor Nothing.

Macbeth What kind of a doctor are you? Aren't there cures against anything nowadays? Aren't there drugs? Aren't there medicines? Cure her by any means and any hellish concoction, but cure her!

Doctor It is more easily said than done, when she doesn't seem to want to get well herself.

Macbeth What the hell are you talking about, you quack?

Doctor Her chronic sleeplessness has gone too far with her and affected her nerves, so her entire mentality is unbalanced.

Macbeth Make her sleep then at least, so that she doesn't have to run around howling in the nights!

Doctor That's when she sleeps.

Macbeth So she lives her most active life in the sleep, while she awake only complains of her sleeplessness and anguish and wrings her hands and only can lie in bed completely at a loss?

Doctor She suffers, your highness.

Macbeth From what?

Doctor From everything you can suffer from that isn't physical.

Servant My lord, the thanes of Lennox, Monteith, Angus and Caithness have announced, that they join Malcolm and Macduff.

Macbeth This country is swarming with traitors! Soon there are only traitors left! Let them just defect! They can't touch me anyway, for they are all born of ordinary mortal women! No one can beat me except the one who doesn't exist or never has been born! Ha-ha!

Doctor (to the servant) He is mad, but worse off than the queen, for he is riding on his crimes and pangs of conscience while she only suffers from them.

Servant Most thanes in the country have now defected to Malcolm.

Doctor If I disappear, don't expect me back. (*leaves*)

(*A heart-rending scream of women is heard.*)

Macbeth What is happening? What have the ladies now been up to? Their accompaniment surpasses the terrors of reality. – Get down and find out what is the matter with them. (*servant leaves*)

As if I didn't have enough of war cries and war noise and other infernal rattle. Something tells me that this was my wife's last outcry.

Servant My lord, look! (*points in terror up towards a window*)

Macbeth What do you want me to see? My lady's window! Ha! Is that she that has hanged herself out? That is hardly a constructive sight. That's just what the entire army now needs for some encouragement to a tougher defence! So she has hanged herself. In her own sheet. Well, perhaps she might have some sleep now. That's what she always wanted but never could get.

Alas, my wife, I did love you but obviously in vain, since we both received another fortune to think of which in contrary to human happiness turned into the unhappiness of power. Perhaps we could have been happy in spite of all, if the message of my destiny and future hadn't reached me. Then most probably the royal murder would never have taken place, since you never would have urged me to it. Could he have died anyway, old and tough as he was, and perhaps I might have become king without the help of force. Donalbain is in Ireland, and Malcolm has become an Englishman. If you had not been in the way and pressed me across the threshold of power by the means of force, I might have become a famous and sovereign king and at least an important minister for the sovereignty of Scotland. Now things happened as they did, now you are dead, and I stand here alone defending the freedom of Scotland and myself against the whole world at large. Everything went wrong because of violence, that ravished our souls and stressed us to take the power of destiny into our own hands instead of leaving destiny to itself and allowing it to manage things as it pleased by itself. That would have been better. Now I appear as an abominable tyrant villain that just has to be brought down, and the worst thing is that I might then according to the word of destiny be invulnerable. My wife was after all consistent and took her fate into her own hands, but I cannot do the same. That would be an inconsistency by someone who after all was king and invested by destiny itself with a responsibility to at least manage his own fate.

Servant My lord! Look! I have never seen anything like that! You can hardly believe your eyes!

Macbeth What is it now then?
Servant The forest! It is moving!
Macbeth What forest?
Servant Birnam's wood! It seems to be approaching here!
Macbeth (amazed) Damn me if you aren't right. It actually looks like that. So at last my hour is struck. Destiny is getting her way, and I can relax. Then I only have to meet that man who never was born by a woman. – It's a war stratagem! They have cut branches to disguise themselves and conceal the size of their army! It's the English with our traitors who are coming! Mount your horses! To battle! Fight to the last! It's the final settlement! Prepare yourselves!
Servant Your majesty...
Macbeth Yes, what is it?
Servant What shall we do with the queen?
Macbeth Cut her down at last! She has dangled enough. Try to give her a decent funeral before the flood comes this way. I will probably never get one myself, but that much at least I owe her. Hurry on! I must get out to the battle!

Scene 4.

Malcolm This battle turned easier than expected with only insignificant losses, as if half of all the king's men spontaneously turned against the other half. The castle has surrendered from within, and we only have to march in and restore Scotland.
Ross Young Seyward though has fallen for the sword of the terrible villain.
Malcolm Has anyone seen Macduff?
Lennox During the entire battle he only looked for Macbeth with nothing but bloodthirsty revenge on his mind.
Ross That's quite natural.
Lennox It's possible that they are now meeting for a settlement, since none of them can be located.
Malcolm If only Macduff settles with Macbeth we can easily manage the rest. Back to the battle, gentlemen! It's time to clear the field!

Scene 5.

Macbeth Do the English then only consist of chickens and cowards? Few have dared to face me, some hundreds have run away for me, and twenty did I slaughter at least, but still I haven't seen Macduff. Is he as yellow as everybody else that he would prefer to avoid me?
Macduff (sees him) There he is, the one I wanted all day long! Hasn't he wished to meet me, or has destiny saved him especially for me?
Macbeth (sees him) Macduff!
Macduff There you are at last, you crowned usurper of the worst villain who ever made a royal throne a pile of shit by his inhuman crimes as overwhelming as his criminality and lewdness! I could never have given myself any forgiveness if any other hand than mine could settle things with you! No one leaves this place now until one of us is liquidated.

Macbeth I almost thought already that I would miss you and that you would get away. Know that destiny has marked me as invincible. I never wanted any harm done to your family but only to yourself.

Macduff But you employed and sent the murderers!

Macbeth Correct, but only after you. They acted on their own when they frustrated over having missed you turned instead to letting too much innocent and harmless blood. They had already earlier missed one victim and got mad from doing it again. In brief, it never was intended.

Macduff But it was performed nevertheless, and they are crying for your blood!

Macbeth And they are right to do so, and I therefore don't want your blood crying also with the others.

Macduff How can you believe yourself invulnerable?

Macbeth It has been said by destiny, that only he can touch me who was never born by any woman. Biologically, that is an impossibility.

Macduff (laughs) Let me uniform you then, you villain of a murderer and bloody tyrant, that I was cut out and liberated from my mother's womb without the pains of birth for either her nor me, so I was never born!

Macbeth (dumbfounded) So the prophecies come true, and I have done my destiny. I need no longer fear for the uncertain. You were always there, and I was not aware of it until this moment, when my world has gone to cinders anyway. I need no longer fight my destiny. It has caught up with me and made it clear by explanation.

(lets down his sword) Make it short, Macduff. There's no one who has greater right to take my life than you. I plead guilty and confess to every crime in Scotland that has been committed since king Duncan's death, and I deserve no less than death and nothing more. Finish now at last this failure of a lost and wasted life, and bring my head to Malcolm with the proclamation that his royal father now has been avenged.

Take good aim and do it handsomely with skill. I could have bent my neck to only you among all people to expose it for what it deserves. *(falls on his knees, exposes his bare neck)* Take good aim and do it handsomely with skill

Macduff (raises his sword in fury and strikes with all his power. Blackout in the same instant.)

Scene 6.

Malcolm There is victory across all lines, and what more could we ask for? Order is restored with an astounding low amount of losses, casualties and blood.

Ross We only miss Macduff.

Angus Here he is, and he is bringing something with him.

Macduff (enters with Macbeth's head) Greetings from the late Macbeth, who asked me to convey to you, prince Malcolm personally, that your father and the great king Duncan now has been avenged. *(throws the bloody head to Malcolm's feet)*

Malcolm That was actually all that was needed. We have reached the circle's end and are back where we started, when Macbeth with the inevitability of destiny entered the stage, but that is now all over. Welcome home, Macduff, and it is rewarding and a special joy to see you without any wounds. Thus has one at least got through this hell without a stain. I thank you all as well, my gentlemen and soldiers, generals and lords of England with the armies you provided for our cause, and special thanks to all the thanes of Scotland, who I hereby straight promote to earls, since you all as one man stood up and never hesitated to oppose and spite the

arbitrary lawlessness of a usurper, for the order and the freedom that was trampled and oppressed. I thank you all, and as soon as we have achieved a legal and working government you will all be free to go back home.

Macduff (raises his sword) Long live king Malcolm!

All (follow his example) Long live king Malcolm!

(Flourish and triumph, all gather to greet and congratulate Malcolm and Macduff to bring them their homage.)

The End

*(Gwaldam 31.10.2009,
translated 3.7.2020)*

Apology

Be it far from me to even try to vie with Shakespeare, whom no one can surpass concerning artistry of language and dramatic talent in characterization and in form together with superior experience of his craft, whoever he may have been; but I found my latest experience of "Macbeth" so inspiring and thought-provoking, that I felt urged to provide a complement. His drama could be found to outwardly have the appearance of a moral melodrama, leading to the fact that crime is never profitable but only a total waste of effort, but the undercurrents are without end and bottom and consistently invisible and subconscious since they are so cleverly written between the lines. – It's these undercurrents that I have desired to bring forth in broader light with their possibility of a more modulated and humanised view on the tragic destiny with some exhortation to a necessary investigation of the secret mechanisms of destiny in connection with the human factor as a more reasonable explanation to the tragedy of destiny than only naked evil. – This is perhaps Shakespeare's most concentrated drama with only half a text to that of "Hamlet".

This complimentary version follows Shakespeare exactly – it is his exact story (found in Holinshed's chronicle) with exactly the same persons, but with a few excluded and some alterations in some characters. It's above all the witches who here are given an entirely different importance and character, also Lady Macbeth's character is somewhat elucidated – it's actually possible that she was the *primus motor* of Macbeth's career, since she was the grandchild of an earlier Scottish king – like also Macbeth's own is somewhat moderated, while all the others are the same. Some scenes have been added that are missing in Shakespeare, while other scenes found there are missing here, if though their essence is conveyed. Completely different though is the language, since Shakespeare's art of poetry is and will remain supreme, there is very little here even reminding of it, while I couldn't help sometimes falling in to the iambic rhythm, – but it always passes.

So let me not be placed by Shakespeare's side, but let me only compliment him by perhaps finding something extra in him that wasn't quite obvious.

*Gwaldam, Kumaon,
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translated 29.6-3.7.2020.*