

Macbeth: I can't sit at the dinner table being nice to Duncan while I am planning to kill him. I am so nervous...If I could assassinate the king and that would be the end of it, I would gladly risk my life and soul to do so. But murder has consequences in this world, and doing murder teaches others to be violent against us in retaliation...Duncan loves me and trusts me. I am his cousin and his host. I should be protecting him from murder, not plotting to murder him myself... Duncan is such a kind and benevolent king that the angels will blow trumpets to proclaim the injustice of his murder. The kingdom will cry tears like rain...I can't do this. Ambition just makes people act hastily and rush to disaster.

Lady Macbeth enters stage right and crosses to Macbeth.

Lady Macbeth: There you are, husband. Our guests are still eating, and you left the banquet hall. Duncan is asking for you. Are you all right?

Macbeth: We will proceed no further with this business. The king has just honored me, and I have the good opinion of many people. I don't want to lose that before I have a chance to enjoy it.

Lady Macbeth: Are you drunk? Did you fall asleep and wake up a coward, green with fear? Are you afraid to go after what you desire? If so, that is how I will think of you from now on, always saying "I can't," like a scaredy cat!

Macbeth: Stop, please. I dare to do what is morally appropriate for a man; to do more isn't being a man at all.

Lady Macbeth: You were a man when you first told me, and you will be more of a man if you keep to the plan. The time and place are perfect, but you are losing your nerve!

Macbeth: What if we should fail?

Lady Macbeth: We won't fail? We can't fail if you get your courage up. When Duncan is asleep, I will get his servants drunk, and when they fall asleep, we can do whatever we want to Duncan, and the servants will be blamed. And we will grieve so loudly when we hear that Duncan is dead, that no one would ever suspect us.

Macbeth: Okay, you have convinced me, and I will do everything in my power to commit this terrible act. Go, be a good hostess, and remember, a false face must hide what the false heart knows.

She exits stage right. Banquo and Fleance enter.

Banquo: Come, Fleance. Help your tired father to his bed. Quite an evening, wasn't it?

Fleance: Yes, father. Let me carry your sword for you. It is very late.

Banquo: Good Macbeth, why did you miss the end of the party? The king was passing out gifts and honor, and the wine flowed. He gave your wife a huge diamond for being a fine hostess. And now everyone is to bed... You know, I can't stop thinking about what those witches said. Part of what they said to you came true.

Macbeth: When we have an hour to spare, let's talk about it... Friend Banquo, stay by my side when the time comes, and I will give you great honor.

Banquo: I'll be glad to do what you say, if I can do so in good conscience.

Macbeth: To bed and rest well. We will talk later.

Banquo: And good night to you, too.

Banquo and Fleance exit. A dagger swings around in the air near Macbeth. He jumps back frightened at first, and then tries to catch it and can't.

Macbeth: Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch you in my hand... I see you but I can't catch you. Are you a vision, or a dagger of the mind, created by my fevered brain? You look just like my dagger here (*pulls out his dagger*) that I plan to use. Are my eyes not working, or are they my only sense that is working, because now I see blood on your blade?... The dagger is not real—it is what I am about to do that makes me think I see it... All is quiet while everyone is sleeping peacefully, and silence is appropriate for what I am going to do. While I stand here, the king still lives. And the longer I wait, the less courage I have.

A bell rings.

Macbeth: The bell tells me it is time to go. It will be soon done. Duncan, for you the bell summons you to heaven or to hell.

Macbeth exits stage right. Shortly after, Lady Macbeth enters stage left.