9.4: Shakespeare, William. MacBeth Act 1 (1623)

Act I, Scene 1

A desert place.

Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches

• First Witch. When shall we three meet again
  In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

• Second Witch. When the hurlyburly's done,
  When the battle's lost and won.5

• Third Witch. That will be ere the set of sun.

• First Witch. Where the place?

• Second Witch. Upon the heath.

• Third Witch. There to meet with Macbeth.

• First Witch. I come, Graymalkin!10

• Second Witch. Paddock calls.

• Third Witch. Anon.

• All. Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
  Hover through the fog and filthy air.
Act I, Scene 2

A camp near Forres.

[Alarum within. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, with Attendants, meeting a bleeding Sergeant]

- Duncan. What bloody man is that? He can report,
  As seemeth by his plight, of the revolt
  The newest state. 20

- Malcolm. This is the sergeant
  Who like a good and hardy soldier fought
  'Gainst my captivity. Hail, brave friend!
  Say to the king the knowledge of the broil
  As thou didst leave it. 25

- Sergeant. Doubtful it stood;
  As two spent swimmers, that do cling together
  And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald—
  Worthy to be a rebel, for to that
  The multiplying villanies of nature 30
  Do swarm upon him—from the western isles
  Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied;
  And fortune, on his damned quarrel smiling,
  Show'd like a rebel's whore: but all's too weak:
  For brave Macbeth—well he deserves that name—
  Disdaining fortune, with his brandish'd steel,
  Which smoked with bloody execution,
  Like valour's minion carved out his passage
  Till he faced the slave;
  Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him, 40
  Till he unseam'd him from the nave to the chaps,
  And fix'd his head upon our battlements.

- Duncan. O valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!

- Sergeant. As whence the sun 'gins his reflection
  Shipwrecking storms and direful thunders break, 45
  So from that spring whence comfort seem'd to come
  Discomfort swells. Mark, king of Scotland, mark:
  No sooner justice had with valour arm'd
  Compell'd these skipping kerns to trust their heels,
  But the Norweyan lord surveying vantage, 50
  With furbish'd arms and new supplies of men
  Began a fresh assault.

- Duncan. Dismay'd not this
  Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?
• Sergeant. Yes; 55
    As sparrows eagles, or the hare the lion.
    If I say sooth, I must report they were
    As cannons overcharged with double cracks, so they
    Doubly redoubled strokes upon the foe:
    Except they meant to bathe in reeking wounds, 60
    Or memorise another Golgotha,
    I cannot tell.
    But I am faint, my gashes cry for help.

• Duncan. So well thy words become thee as thy wounds;
    They smack of honour both. Go get him surgeons. 65
[Exit Sergeant, attended]
Who comes here?

[Enter ROSS]

• Malcolm. The worthy thane of Ross.

• Lennox. What a haste looks through his eyes! So should he look 70
    That seems to speak things strange.

• Ross. God save the king!

• Duncan. Whence camest thou, worthy thane?

• Ross. From Fife, great king;
    Where the Norweyan banners flout the sky 75
    And fan our people cold. Norway himself,
    With terrible numbers,
    Assisted by that most disloyal traitor
    The thane of Cawdor, began a dismal conflict;
    Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof, 80
    Confronted him with self-comparisons,
    Point against point rebellious, arm 'gainst arm.
    Curbing his lavish spirit: and, to conclude,
    The victory fell on us.

• Duncan. Great happiness!85

• Ross. That now
    Sweno, the Norways' king, craves composition:
    Nor would we deign him burial of his men
    Till he disbursed at Saint Colme's inch
    Ten thousand dollars to our general use.90

• Duncan. No more that thane of Cawdor shall deceive
    Our bosom interest: go pronounce his present death,
    And with his former title greet Macbeth.

• Ross. I'll see it done.

• Duncan. What he hath lost noble Macbeth hath won.95
Act I, Scene 3

A heath near Forres.

[Thunder. Enter the three Witches]

- **First Witch.** Where hast thou been, sister?
- **Second Witch.** Killing swine.
- **Third Witch.** Sister, where thou?100
- **First Witch.** A sailor's wife had chestnuts in her lap, And munch'd, and munch'd, and munch'd:— 'Give me,' quoth I: 'Aroint thee, witch!' the rump-fed ronyon cries. Her husband's to Aleppo gone, master o' the Tiger: 105 But in a sieve I'll thither sail, And, like a rat without a tail, I'll do, I'll do, and I'll do.
- **Second Witch.** I'll give thee a wind.
- **First Witch.** Thou'rt kind.110
- **Third Witch.** And I another.
- **First Witch.** I myself have all the other, And the very ports they blow, All the quarters that they know I' the shipman's card. 115 I will drain him dry as hay: Sleep shall neither night nor day Hang upon his pent-house lid; He shall live a man forbid: Weary se'nnights nine times nine 120 Shall he dwindle, peak and pine: Though his bark cannot be lost, Yet it shall be tempest-tost. Look what I have.
- **Second Witch.** Show me, show me.125
- **First Witch.** Here I have a pilot's thumb, Wreck'd as homeward he did come.

[Drum within]

- **Third Witch.** A drum, a drum! Macbeth doth come.130
• **All.** The weird sisters, hand in hand,  
  Posters of the sea and land,  
  Thus do go about, about:  
  Thrice to thine and thrice to mine  
  And thrice again, to make up nine.  
  Peace! the charm's wound up.  

[Enter MACBETH and BANQUO]

• **Macbeth.** So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

• **Banquo.** How far is't call'd to Forres? What are these  
  So wither'd and so wild in their attire,  
  That look not like the inhabitants o' the earth,  
  And yet are on't? Live you? or are you aught  
  That man may question? You seem to understand me,  
  By each at once her chappy finger laying  
  Upon her skinny lips: you should be women,  
  And yet your beards forbid me to interpret  
  That you are so.

• **Macbeth.** Speak, if you can: what are you?

• **First Witch.** All hail, Macbeth! hail to thee, thane of Glamis!

• **Second Witch.** All hail, Macbeth, hail to thee, thane of Cawdor!

• **Third Witch.** All hail, Macbeth, thou shalt be king hereafter!

• **Banquo.** Good sir, why do you start; and seem to fear  
  Things that do sound so fair? I' the name of truth,  
  Are ye fantastical, or that indeed  
  Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner  
  You greet with present grace and great prediction  
  Of noble having and of royal hope,  
  That he seems rapt withal: to me you speak not.  
  If you can look into the seeds of time,  
  And say which grain will grow and which will not,  
  Speak then to me, who neither beg nor fear  
  Your favours nor your hate.

• **First Witch.** Hail!

• **Second Witch.** Hail!

• **Third Witch.** Hail!165

• **First Witch.** Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

• **Second Witch.** Not so happy, yet much happier.

• **Third Witch.** Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none:  
  So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!
First Witch. Banquo and Macbeth, all hail! 170

Macbeth. Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more:
By Sinel's death I know I am thane of Glamis;
But how of Cawdor? the thane of Cawdor lives,
A prosperous gentleman; and to be king
Stands not within the prospect of belief, 175
No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence? or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting? Speak, I charge you.

[Witches vanish]

Banquo. The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them. Whither are they vanish'd?

Macbeth. Into the air; and what seem'd corporal melted
As breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd!

Banquo. Were such things here as we do speak about? 185
Or have we eaten on the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?

Macbeth. Your children shall be kings.

Banquo. You shall be king.

Macbeth. And thane of Cawdor too: went it not so? 190

Banquo. To the selfsame tune and words. Who's here?

[Enter ROSS and ANGUS]

Ross. The king hath happily received, Macbeth,
The news of thy success; and when he reads
Thy personal venture in the rebels' fight, 195
His wonders and his praises do contend
Which should be thine or his: silenced with that,
In viewing o'er the rest o' the selfsame day,
He finds thee in the stout Norweyan ranks,
Nothing afeard of what thyself didst make, 200
Strange images of death. As thick as hail
Came post with post; and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before him.

Angus. We are sent 205
To give thee from our royal master thanks;
Only to herald thee into his sight,
Not pay thee.

Ross. And, for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee thane of Cawdor: 210
In which addition, hail, most worthy thane!
For it is thine.

- **Banquo.** What, can the devil speak true?

- **Macbeth.** The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
  In borrow'd robes?\(^215\)

- **Angus.** Who was the thane lives yet;
  But under heavy judgment bears that life
  Which he deserves to lose. Whether he was combined
  With those of Norway, or did line the rebel
  With hidden help and vantage, or that with both \(^220\)
  He labour'd in his country's wreck, I know not;
  But treasons capital, confess'd and proved,
  Have overthrown him.

- **Macbeth.** [Aside] Glamis, and thane of Cawdor!
  The greatest is behind. \(^225\)
  [To ROSS and ANGUS]
  Thanks for your pains.
  [To BANQUO]
  Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
  When those that gave the thane of Cawdor to me \(^230\)
  Promised no less to them?

- **Banquo.** That trusted home
  Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
  Besides the thane of Cawdor. But 'tis strange:
  And oftentimes, to win us to our harm, \(^235\)
  The instruments of darkness tell us truths,
  Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
  In deepest consequence.
  Cousins, a word, I pray you.

- **Macbeth.** [Aside]. Two truths are told, \(^240\)
  As happy prologues to the swelling act
  Of the imperial theme.—I thank you, gentlemen.
  [Aside] This supernatural soliciting]
  Cannot be ill, cannot be good: if ill,
  Why hath it given me earnest of success, \(^245\)
  Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor:
  If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
  Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
  And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
  Against the use of nature? Present fears \(^250\)
  Are less than horrible imaginings:
  My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
  Shakes so my single state of man that function
  Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
  But what is not.\(^255\)

- **Banquo.** Look, how our partner's rapt.
Macbeth. [Aside] If chance will have me king, why, chance may crown me, Without my stir.

Banquo. New horrors come upon him, Like our strange garments, cleave not to their mould
But with the aid of use.

Macbeth. [Aside] Come what come may, Time and the hour runs through the roughest day.

Banquo. Worthy Macbeth, we stay upon your leisure.

Macbeth. Give me your favour: my dull brain was wrought With things forgotten. Kind gentlemen, your pains Are register'd where every day I turn The leaf to read them. Let us toward the king. Think upon what hath chanced, and, at more time, The interim having weigh'd it, let us speak Our free hearts each to other.

Banquo. Very gladly.

Macbeth. Till then, enough. Come, friends.

[Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 4

Forres. The palace.

[Flourish. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, LENNOX, and Attendants]

Duncan. Is execution done on Cawdor? Are not Those in commission yet return'd?

Malcolm. My liege, They are not yet come back. But I have spoke With one that saw him die: who did report That very frankly he confess'd his treasons, Implored your highness' pardon and set forth A deep repentance: nothing in his life Became him like the leaving it; he died As one that had been studied in his death To throw away the dearest thing he owed, As 'twere a careless trifle.

Duncan. There's no art To find the mind's construction in the face: He was a gentleman on whom I built An absolute trust.

[Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS] O worthiest cousin!
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me: thou art so far before 295
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
That the proportion both of thanks and payment
Might have been mine! only I have left to say,
More is thy due than more than all can pay.300

- Macbeth. The service and the loyalty I owe,
  In doing it, pays itself. Your highness' part
  Is to receive our duties; and our duties
  Are to your throne and state children and servants,
  Which do but what they should, by doing every thing 305
  Safe toward your love and honour.

- Duncan. Welcome hither:
  I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
  To make thee full of growing. Noble Banquo,
  That hast no less deserved, nor must be known 310
  No less to have done so, let me enfold thee
  And hold thee to my heart.

- Banquo. There if I grow,
  The harvest is your own.

- Duncan. My plenteous joys, 315
  Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
  In drops of sorrow. Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
  And you whose places are the nearest, know
  We will establish our estate upon
  Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter 320
  The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must
  Not unaccompanied invest him only,
  But signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine
  On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,
  And bind us further to you.325

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

- Duncan. My worthy Cawdor!330

- Macbeth. [Aside] The Prince of Cumberland! that is a step
  On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,
  For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires;
  Let not light see my black and deep desires:
  The eye wink at the hand; yet let that be, 335
  Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

[Exit]

- Duncan. True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant,
And in his commendations I am fed;
It is a banquet to me. Let's after him, 340
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome:
It is a peerless kinsman.

[Flourish. Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 5

Inverness. Macbeth’s castle.

[Enter LADY MACBETH, reading a letter]

- Lady Macbeth. 'They met me in the day of success: and I have 345
  learned by the perfectest report, they have more in
  them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire
  to question them further, they made themselves air,
  into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in
  the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who 350
  all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor;' by which title,
  before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred
  me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that
  shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver
  thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou 355
  mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being
  ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it
to thy heart, and farewell.'
  Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
  What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature; 360
  It is too full o’ the milk of human kindness
  To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;
  Art not without ambition, but without
  The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
  That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false, 365
  And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou'dlst have, great Glamis,
  That which cries 'Thus thou must do, if thou have it;
  And that which rather thou dost fear to do
  Than wishest should be undone.' Hie thee hither,
  That I may pour my spirits in thine ear; 370
  And chastise with the valour of my tongue
  All that impedes thee from the golden round,
  Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
  To have thee crown’d withal.

[Enter a Messenger] 375
What is your tidings?

- Messenger. The king comes here to-night.

- Lady Macbeth. Thou'rt mad to say it:
  Is not thy master with him? who, were't so,
  Would have inform'd for preparation.380
• **Messenger.** So please you, it is true: our thane is coming:
  One of my fellows had the speed of him,
  Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
  Than would make up his message.

• **Lady Macbeth.** Give him tending; 385
  He brings great news.
  ![Exit Messenger]
  The raven himself is hoarse
  That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
  Under my battlements. Come, you spirits 390
  That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
  And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
  Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;
  Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
  That no compunctious visitings of nature 395
  Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
  The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
  And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
  Wherever in your sightless substances
  You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night, 400
  And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
  That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
  Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
  To cry 'Hold, hold!'
  ![Enter MACBETH] 405
  Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
  Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
  Thy letters have transported me beyond
  This ignorant present, and I feel now
  The future in the instant.410

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

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

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

• **Lady Macbeth.** O, never 415
  Shall sun that morrow see!
  Your face, my thane, is as a book where men
  May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
  Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
  Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower, 420
  But be the serpent under't. He that's coming
  Must be provided for: and you shall put
  This night's great business into my dispatch;
  Which shall to all our nights and days to come
  Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.425

• **Macbeth.** We will speak further.

• **Lady Macbeth.** Only look up clear;
To alter favour ever is to fear:
Leave all the rest to me.

[Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 6

Before Macbeth's castle.

[Hautboys and torches. Enter DUNCAN, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, BANQUO, LENNOX, MACDUFF, ROSS, ANGUS, and Attendants]

- **Duncan.** This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
  Nimblly and sweetly recommends itself
  Unto our gentle senses. 435

- **Banquo.** This guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet, does approve,
By his loved mansionry, that the heaven's breath
Smells wooingly here: no jutty, frieze,
Buttress, nor coign of vantage, but this bird 440
Hath made his pendent bed and procreant cradle:
Where they most breed and haunt, I have observed,
The air is delicate.

[Enter LADY MACBETH]

- **Duncan.** See, see, our honour'd hostess! 445
  The love that follows us sometime is our trouble,
  Which still we thank as love. Herein I teach you
  How you shall bid God 'ild us for your pains,
  And thank us for your trouble.

- **Lady Macbeth.** All our service 450
  In every point twice done and then done double
  Were poor and single business to contend
  Against those honours deep and broad wherewith
  Your majesty loads our house: for those of old,
  And the late dignities heap'd up to them, 455
  We rest your hermits.

- **Duncan.** Where's the thane of Cawdor?
  We coursed him at the heels, and had a purpose
  To be his purveyor: but he rides well;
  And his great love, sharp as his spur, hath holp him 460
  To his home before us. Fair and noble hostess,
  We are your guest to-night.

- **Lady Macbeth.** Your servants ever
  Have theirs, themselves and what is theirs, in compt,
  To make their audit at your highness' pleasure, 465
Still to return your own.

- **Duncan.** Give me your hand;
  Conduct me to mine host: we love him highly,
  And shall continue our graces towards him.
  By your leave, hostess.470

[Exeunt]

Act I, Scene 7

**Macbeth's castle.**

[Hautboys and torches. Enter a Sewer, and divers] [p]Servants with dishes and service, and pass over the stage. Then enter MACBETH]

- **Macbeth.** If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
  It were done quickly: if the assassination 475
  Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
  With his surcease success; that but this blow
  Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
  But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
  We'ld jump the life to come. But in these cases 480
  We still have judgment here; that we but teach
  Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
  To plague the inventor: this even-handed justice
  Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
  To our own lips. He's here in double trust;
 485
  First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
  Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,
  Who should against his murderer shut the door,
  Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan
  Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been 490
  So clear in his great office, that his virtues
  Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
  The deep damnation of his taking-off;
  And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
  Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed 495
  Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
  Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
  That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur
  To prick the sides of my intent, but only
  Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself 500
  And falls on the other.

[Enter LADY MACBETH]

How now! what news?

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

- **Macbeth.** Hath he ask'd for me?505
• **Lady Macbeth.** Know you not he has?

• **Macbeth.** We will proceed no further in this business:
  He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
  Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
  Which would be worn now in their newest gloss, 510
  Not cast aside so soon.

• **Lady Macbeth.** Was the hope drunk
  Wherein you dress’d yourself? hath it slept since?
  And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
  At what it did so freely? From this time 515
  Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
  To be the same in thine own act and valour
  As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that
  Which thou esteem’st the ornament of life,
  And live a coward in thine own esteem, 520
  Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would,'
  Like the poor cat i' the adage?

• **Macbeth.** Prithee, peace:
  I dare do all that may become a man;
  Who dares do more is none.525

• **Lady Macbeth.** What beast was’t, then,
  That made you break this enterprise to me?
  When you durst do it, then you were a man;
  And, to be more than what you were, you would
  Be so much more the man. Nor time nor place 530
  Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
  They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
  Does unmake you. I have given suck, and know
  How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
  I would, while it was smiling in my face, 535
  Have pluck’d my nipple from his boneless gums,
  And dash’d the brains out, had I so sworn as you
  Have done to this.

• **Macbeth.** If we should fail?

• **Lady Macbeth.** We fail! 540
  But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
  And we’ll not fail. When Duncan is asleep—
  Whereeto the rather shall his day's hard journey
  Soundly invite him—his two chamberlains
  Will I with wine and wassail so convince 545
  That memory, the warder of the brain,
  Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
  A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
  Their drenched natures lie as in a death,
  What cannot you and I perform upon 550
  The unguarded Duncan? what not put upon
  His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
  Of our great quell?
- **Macbeth.** Bring forth men-children only; For thy undaunted mettle should compose 555 Nothing but males. Will it not be received, When we have mark’d with blood those sleepy two Of his own chamber and used their very daggers, That they have done’t?

- **Lady Macbeth.** Who dares receive it other, 560 As we shall make our griefs and clamour roar Upon his death?

- **Macbeth.** I am settled, and bend up Each corporal agent to this terrible feat. Away, and mock the time with fairest show: 565 False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

[Exeunt]