

Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

(Adapted book. Intermediate level)

Macbeth. Part 1

'My hands are as red as yours. Hut my heart is not as white with fear as your heart.'

At the time of this story, Duncan was the King of Scotland. Macbeth was a great lord and the leader of the Scottish army. Banquo was also a lord and an army leader.

Macbeth had won a great battle against an army from Norway. He and Banquo were coming back from the battle, riding over some wild, open land in a storm. In the wildest part they saw three witches sitting around a fire. The witches stopped the two men.

'Who are you?' asked Banquo. 'You look like women, but you have beards.'

'Speak!' said Macbeth. 'What are you?'

'Greetings, Macbeth, Lord of Glamis,' the first witch said.

'Greetings, Macbeth, Lord of Cawdor,' the second witch said.

'Greetings, Macbeth. You will be king,' the third witch said.

Then they turned to Banquo.

'You will not be king,' the third witch said. 'But your children and your grandchildren will become kings.'

Macbeth and Banquo rode away from the witches.

'I am already Lord of Glamis,' said Macbeth, 'but how can I become Lord of Cawdor? The Lord of Cawdor is still alive. And I do not believe that I will be king. They said your children will become kings, Banquo.'

At that moment, messengers from King Duncan came to Macbeth.

'The Lord of Cawdor helped the Norwegians,' one of them said. 'He fought against the king. Now the king wants you to be the new Lord of Cawdor.'

'Lord of Glamis and Lord of Cawdor,' Macbeth said to Banquo with surprise.

'If you believe the witches, you will become king,' said Banquo. 'Perhaps these witches are telling the truth - and perhaps they want to cause trouble and death.'

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In Macbeth's castle. Lady Macbeth read a letter from her husband.

'The witches say that my husband will be king,' she thought. 'But Macbeth is too kind, too gentle. There are things that he must do, but he is afraid to do them. I must speak to him, and make him brave.'

Then Macbeth arrived at the castle. 'My dearest love, the king is coming here tonight,' he said. 'He wants to honour me.'

'When will he leave?'

'He says that he will leave tomorrow.'

'Oh, no! He must never leave! Macbeth, your face shows your thoughts and feelings. You must hide them. Leave everything to me.'

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King Duncan arrived at Macbeth's castle with his two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain. After dinner, Macbeth came out of the dining hall.

'If I want to be king, I must kill King Duncan,' he said to himself. 'I must kill him quickly. But what will happen if I kill him? An act of this kind could harm me. The king is a guest in my house, so I should guard him against murderers, not kill him. Duncan is a good king and his death will cause great sorrow. No! I will not do it.'

Just then, Lady Macbeth came out of the dining hall. 'Why did you leave the room?' she asked.

'I do not want to kill the king,' said Macbeth. 'He is good to me. People like and admire me. I will not throw away their good opinion.'

Lady Macbeth was very angry with her husband. 'What are you saying?' she asked. 'Why are you so afraid? You want to be king. Are you afraid to kill him?'

'I am a brave man,' Macbeth replied. 'I will do everything that a man should do - everything that is right.'

'You must be strong,' Lady Macbeth said.

'But what will happen if we fail?'

'Then we fail!' said Lady Macbeth. 'But if you are brave, we will succeed. Wait until Duncan is asleep. We will make everyone believe that the king's servants killed him. I will put something in their drink to make them sleep, and we will cover them with the king's blood.'

'Yes, we will do it,' said Macbeth. 'But we must look kind and happy, so no one knows our plans.'

The king and his two sons came out of the dining hall. The king was tired so he went to bed early.

Later that night, Banquo and his son Fleance met Macbeth in the garden of the castle.

'Here is a beautiful jewel from the king to your wife,' said Banquo. 'He has gone to bed.'

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Midnight came. Lady Macbeth made the king's servants drunk, so they knew nothing. She took her dagger and went to the king's bedroom. Duncan was sleeping deeply after his long journey. His face reminded Lady Macbeth of her father and she could not kill him, so she left.

Macbeth looked at the dagger in his hand. 'The witches told the truth. I must go into Duncan's room and kill him,' he thought.

When he came out of the king's room, he saw his wife. 'I have done it,' he said. 'Did you hear anything? Did you speak? I thought I heard a voice. "Macbeth has murdered sleep," it said. "He will never sleep again."'

'I heard nothing,' Lady Macbeth said. 'You imagined it. Now, get some water and wash the blood from your hands. Why did you bring the dagger here? You must leave it in the king's bedroom, take it back and cover the sleeping servants with blood.'

‘I cannot go into that room and see the king’s body again,’ Macbeth said. ‘I am afraid.’

‘You are weak,’ said Lady Macbeth. ‘Give me the dagger. I will spread blood on the servants.’

When she came back, she showed her hands to Macbeth. ‘Now look! My hands are as red as yours. But my heart is not as white with fear as your heart. Put on your night clothes. We want people to think that we are asleep.’

Suddenly there was a loud knock on the great gate of the castle.

‘What is that?’ cried Macbeth. ‘Every noise frightens me.’ He looked at his bloody hands. ‘My hands! All the water in the oceans will not clean the blood from these hands!’

People were still beating on the gate. Macduff and Lennox, two Scottish lords, had arrived. Macbeth came out to greet them.

‘Is the king awake?’ asked Macduff.

‘Not yet, but I will take you to his room.’

Macduff went into the king’s room. A moment later, he ran out with a loud cry.

‘What is the matter?’ Lennox asked.

‘It is too horrible!’ Macduff cried. ‘Quickly, wake Malcolm and Donalbain. Ring the castle bell.’ Banquo came in. ‘Oh, Banquo, Banquo!’ cried Macduff. ‘Our king is dead.’

Malcolm and Donalbain came out of their rooms.

‘What is the matter?’ Donalbain asked.

‘Your father, the king, is dead!’ Lennox said. ‘We think his servants murdered him. They are covered with blood.’

‘We must ask questions and try to find the answers,’ Banquo said. ‘This is a bloody piece of work. What does it mean?’

The king’s two sons were afraid. Who could they trust?

‘I will go to England,’ said Malcolm. ‘Someone in this castle murdered our father. They are only pretending to be sad.’

‘And I will go to Ireland,’ said Donalbain. ‘We will be safer in different countries.’

* * *

After that night, strange and frightening things happened in Scotland. There was black fear in everyone’s heart.

Banquo did not trust Macbeth. ‘Now Macbeth has everything, he said to himself. ‘The death of Duncan makes him king. King, Cawdor, Glamis - he is everything that the witches promised. But they promised something for me too. I will be the father of kings. Will that be true?’

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth invited people to a feast.

‘Fleance and I must ride out this afternoon,’ Banquo said. ‘But we will be back for the feast.’

‘Good,’ Macbeth replied. ‘I hear that Duncan’s sons, in England and Ireland, are telling lies about their father’s murderer.’

When the room was empty, Macbeth called a servant. 'Bring in the two men who are waiting outside the palace gate,' he said.

'The witches said that Banquo's sons would be kings of Scotland,' he said to himself. I have done this terrible thing for Banquo and his children, not for myself. He must die, and Fleance, his son, must die too.'

The two men came in. They were murderers.

'Banquo is your enemy,' Macbeth said. 'He is my enemy, too. You must kill him. I will tell you where you can wait to catch him and his son.'

* * *

Before the feast began, Lady Macbeth talked to her husband.

'You spend too much time alone,' she said. 'Your only friends are your sad thoughts. It is too late to worry. Duncan is dead.'

'We are still in danger,' Macbeth replied. 'We both have terrible dreams every night. I am full of fear while the dead rest in peace.'

'Don't let anyone see that you are worried,' said his wife. 'Look happy when our guests come here tonight.'

'Yes, I will,' Macbeth said. 'And before night falls, something will happen. When you know what it is, you will say to me, "Well done!"'

Macbeth. Part 2

'Macbeth! Be brave! You cannot be hurt by any man who was born from a woman.'

But the two murderers had only carried out half of Macbeth's plan. They had killed Banquo, but Fleance escaped. One of the murderers returned at dinner time, when the lords and ladies were enjoying the feast.

'There is blood on your face,' Macbeth said to him.

It is Banquo's blood,' the murderer replied. 'But I have bad news. Fleance is still alive.'

'Now I am still afraid,' Macbeth said to himself. He moved away from his guests and stood thinking.

'Sit down,' Lady Macbeth said. 'These people in the hall will notice your strange behaviour. Be happy among your friends!'

There was one empty seat at the table. Quietly the bloody ghost of the murdered Banquo sat down in it.

Ross, one of the lords, said to Macbeth, 'Won't you sit down with us? Here is an empty place.'

But Macbeth saw the ghost of Banquo in the chair. 'The table is full, he said. 'Who did this?' His face was white with fear. No one else could see the ghost, so no one understood his words. 'You cannot say that I did it!' Macbeth cried to the ghost. 'Don't shake your bloody hair at me!'

'My lord is often like this,' Lady Macbeth said to the guests. 'It is nothing. He will soon be well.'

In a low voice, Macbeth spoke to his wife. 'I have seen Banquo!' he said.

She was angry with him. 'You are looking at an empty chair!'

But the ghost appeared again to Macbeth.

'Look! He is there!' Macbeth cried.

Lady Macbeth could do nothing, so she asked everyone to leave. 'My husband is getting worse,' she told her guests.

The ghost demands blood,' said Macbeth. 'Blood demands blood. Tomorrow I will go and see the three witches. I must know what will happen.'

'You need sleep,' said Lady Macbeth. 'Come, we will sleep.'

* * *

In the same wild place, the three witches were singing strange songs and putting mysterious things into a pot over a fire. They were making black magic.

Then they suddenly stopped. 'He's coming,' one of them said.

Macbeth stood there, looking at them. 'Give me answers to my questions,' he said.

'Speak!' said the first witch.

'Ask!' said the second witch.

'We will answer,' said the third witch. 'Do you want to hear the words from our mouths or from the mouths of our masters?'

'Call your masters!' Macbeth cried. 'Let me see them.'

Macbeth began to see strange and unreal things. Ghosts appeared in front of him.

The first ghost was the head of a soldier. It said, 'Macbeth! Macbeth! Watch Macduff. Watch him and protect yourself from him.'

'I do not know who you are,' Macbeth said. 'But thank you for your good advice.'

The second ghost was a child covered in blood. It said, 'Macbeth! Be brave! You cannot be hurt by any man who was born from a woman.'

The third ghost was a child wearing a crown. It carried a small tree in its hand. 'Be brave,' it said. 'Be proud, and do not worry. Your enemies will never beat you until Birnam Wood moves to Dunsinane Hill.'

Macbeth felt happier now. 'I was afraid of Macduff before,' he thought. 'Now I will make sure that he does not harm me. And how can the last two things ever happen? I am safe!'

He turned to the witches. 'Can you tell me if Banquo's children will be kings of this country?' he asked.

'Do not ask us any more questions,' the witches said.

'Answer me or I will curse you!' Macbeth cried.

Eight kings appeared, and then a figure like Banquo.

'Banquo is covered in blood,' cried Macbeth. 'He is pointing at them, showing me that they are his sons. I do not want to see any more!'

The witches danced around and then they disappeared.

Later, Macbeth heard that Macduff had run away to England.

'I know what to do,' Macbeth thought. 'I will burn down his castle and kill his wife and all his children.'

* * *

In England, Macduff was talking to King Duncan's son, Malcolm. 'When will these terrible things in Scotland end?' asked Malcolm.

Then Ross, another Scottish lord, came to see them.

'What is happening in Scotland?' asked Macduff.

'I have bad news,' answered Ross. 'Each day brings more sadness and trouble.'

'Go home,' said Malcolm. 'Tell my people that we will come very soon. The English have given me 10,000 men. We are coming to fight Macbeth.'

'That is good news,' said Ross. 'But I must give you bad news, Macduff. Something terrible has happened. Macbeth has taken your castle. He has killed your wife and all your children.'

'What! All my pretty children? Did you say all? And their mother?' Macduff cried.

'Your wife, children, servants - everyone that he could find in the castle,' Ross said.

'And I was not there,' said Macduff. 'Kind heavens, bring me face to face with this murderer. Now he will never escape me!'

* * *

Lady Macbeth was ill. Her servant spoke to the doctor.

'She cannot sleep. The king has gone away to fight against Macduff and Malcolm. Every night my lady gets up from her bed. She puts on her coat, takes some paper, writes on it and then goes back to bed. She does all these things in her sleep. She does not know what she is doing.'

'What does she say?' asked the doctor.

'I do not want to repeat her words,' the servant said.

As she spoke, Lady Macbeth walked slowly into the room, carrying a lamp.

'She hates to be in the dark,' said the lady. 'She always has a lamp by her side.'

'Her eyes are open,' said the doctor. 'What is she doing with her hands?'

'She does that very often, sometimes for a quarter of an hour. She is trying to wash her hands.'

'Listen!' said the doctor. 'She is speaking. I will write down her words.'

'There is still blood here on my hands,' Lady Macbeth said. 'Here is more blood. I did not know that an old man had so much blood in him. Will these hands never be clean? Wash your hands, put on your night clothes. Banquo is dead. He cannot come out of his tomb. Someone is knocking at the gate! Go to bed!'

'I have heard enough,' the doctor said. 'I cannot help her. Only the gods can help her now.'

* * *

Soon everyone knew that a great English army was on its way. The Scottish lords rode with the army and talked about their king, Macbeth.

'Some say that he is mad,' said one.

'His men do not love or trust him. They act only because he orders them to act. His title of king means nothing. It is like a big man's coat worn by a little thief,' said another.

‘Well, let us march on towards Birnam!’

Macbeth’s mind was sick, but he still felt safe. ‘They cannot hurt me,’ he said to himself. ‘How can Birnam Wood move to Dunsinane? How can I die at the hands of a man who was not born from a woman? Malcolm was born from a woman.’

Soon Malcolm, Macduff and their soldiers were riding near Birnam Wood.

‘Tell each soldier to take a branch from a tree and hide behind it,’ Malcolm said. ‘Then Macbeth will not see us.’

Back in the castle, Macbeth heard the sound of women crying. He called a servant.

‘Why are people crying?’ he asked.

‘The queen is dead, my lord.’

‘This is not a good time for her to die,’ Macbeth said. ‘I cannot think about it now.’

A messenger came running in.

‘You have come to tell me something. Tell me quickly!’ cried Macbeth.

‘My good lord,’ the messenger said. ‘I have just seen something very strange. I was standing on guard and I looked towards Birnam - and the forest began to move!’

‘If you are lying to me,’ said Macbeth, ‘I will hang you from the nearest tree until you are dead.’

But it was true. The soldiers were carrying branches in front of them as they walked. Nobody knew how many men were moving towards Dunsinane.

Macbeth still felt that he was safe. Every man was born from a woman!

He heard wild shouts and the noise of sword striking sword. He heard the cries of dying men and the shouts of his enemies.

Suddenly Macduff stood in front of him. ‘Macbeth, you killed all the people that I love,’ he cried. ‘Show me your face!’

‘Move back!’ said Macbeth. ‘I have already killed too many of your family.’ But Macduff was not listening. He was there to kill Macbeth. ‘You are wasting your time!’ cried Macbeth. ‘No man can kill me except one who was not born from a woman!’

‘Let me tell you, then,’ cried Macduff. ‘I was cut from my mother’s body early. I was not born in the normal way.’

Macbeth knew then that he would die. But he was a brave man in this final battle. ‘Come! We will fight to the end,’ he shouted. ‘And there will be a curse on the first man who cries, “Stop! Enough!”’

Macduff’s anger made him strong and he killed Macbeth. Then he cut off Macbeth’s head and showed it to the English army, the Scottish lords and their soldiers.

Malcolm, their new king, said, ‘I thank you all from my heart for helping me.’

The tired men went home. Soon, they all came together again at Scone, to see the crown of Scotland put on the head of their new young king.

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