

Macbeth, Act I, Scene 5

By William Shakespeare

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Enter Macbeth's Wife, alone, with a letter.

LADY MACBETH [*Reads.*]

1 "They met me in the day of success: and I have
2 learned by the perfect'st report, they have more in
3 them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire
4 to question them further, they made themselves air,
5 into which they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in
6 the wonder of it, came missives from the king, who
7 all-hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor'; by which title,
8 before, these weird sisters saluted me, and referred
9 me to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that
10 shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver
11 thee, my dearest partner of greatness, that thou
12 mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being
13 ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay it
14 to thy heart, and farewell."
15 Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
16 What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature;
17 It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
18 To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
19 Art not without ambition, but without
20 The illness should attend it. What thou wouldst highly,
21 That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
22 And yet wouldst wrongly win: thou dost have, great Glamis,
23 That which cries "Thus thou must do, if thou have it";
24 And that which rather thou dost fear to do
25 Than wishest should be undone. Hie thee hither,
26 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;
27 And chastise with the valour of my tongue

28 All that impedes thee from the golden round,
29 Which fate and metaphysical aid doth seem
30 To have thee crown'd withal.

Enter Messenger.

What is your tidings?

MESSENGER

31 The king comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

Thou'rt mad to say it!

32 Is not thy master with him? who, were't so,
33 Would have inform'd for preparation.

MESSENGER

34 So please you, it is true: our thane is coming:
35 One of my fellows had the speed of him,
36 Who, almost dead for breath, had scarcely more
37 Than would make up his message.

LADY MACBETH

Give him tending;

38 He brings great news.

Exit Messenger.

The raven himself is hoarse
39 That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
40 Under my battlements. Come, you spirits
41 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
42 And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full
43 Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;

44 Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
45 That no compunctious visitings of nature
46 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
47 The effect and it! Come to my woman's breasts,
48 And take my milk for gall, you murd'ring ministers,
49 Wherever in your sightless substances
50 You wait on nature's mischief! Come, thick night,
51 And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell,
52 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
53 Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
54 To cry "Hold, hold!"

Enter MACBETH.

Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!
55 Greater than both, by the all-hail hereafter!
56 Thy letters have transported me beyond
57 This ignorant present, and I feel now
58 The future in the instant.

MACBETH

My dearest love,
59 Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

60 To-morrow, as he purposes.

LADY MACBETH

O, never
61 Shall sun that morrow see!
62 Your face, my thane, is as a book where men

63 May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
64 Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
65 Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower,
66 But be the serpent under't. He that's coming
67 Must be provided for: and you shall put
68 This night's great business into my dispatch;
69 Which shall to all our nights and days to come
70 Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

MACBETH

71 We will speak further.

LADY MACBETH

Only look up clear;
72 To alter favour ever is to fear:
73 Leave all the rest to me.

Exeunt.