failed
His presence at the tyrant’s feast, I hear
Macduff lives in disgrace. Sir, can you tell
Where he bestows himself?

LORD
The son of Duncan—
From whom this tyrant holds the due of birth—
Lives in the English court and is received
Of the most pious Edward with such grace
That the malevolence of fortune nothing
Takes from his high respect. Thither Macduff
Is gone to pray the holy king upon his aid
To wake Northumberland and warlike Siward,
That by the help of these—with Him above
To ratify the work—we may again
Give to our tables meat, sleep to our nights,
Free from our feasts and banquets bloody knives,
Do faithful homage and receive free honors.
All which we pine for now. And this report
Hath so exasperated the king that he
Prepares for some attempt of war.

LENNOX
Sent he to Macduff?

LORD
He did, and with an absolute “Sir, not I,”
The cloudy messenger turns me his back,
And hums, as who should say “You’ll rue the time
That clogs me with this answer.”

LENNOX
And that well might
Advise him to a caution, t’ hold what distance
His wisdom can provide. Some holy angel
Fly to the court of England and unfold
His message ere he come, that a swift blessing
May soon return to this our suffering country
Under a hand accursed!

LORD
I’ll send my prayers with him.

Exeunt

Act 4, Scene 1

A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron. Thunder.
Enter the three WITCHES.

FIRST WITCH
Thrice the brinded cat hath mewed.

SECOND WITCH
Thrice, and once the hedge-pig whined.

THIRD WITCH

FIRST WITCH
The tawny cat has meowed three times.

SECOND WITCH
Three times. And the hedgehog has whined once.

THIRD WITCH
Harpier cries, "'Tis time, 'tis time."

**FIRST WITCH**
Round about the cauldron go,
In the poisoned entrails throw.
Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one
Sweltered venom sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' th' charmed pot.

**ALL**
Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

**SECOND WITCH**
Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake.
Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and owlet's wing,
For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

**THIRD WITCH**
Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravined salt-sea shark,
Root of hemlock dug i' th' dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat and slips of yew
Slivered in the moon's eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips,
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab.
Add thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron.

**ALL**
Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

**SECOND WITCH**
Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

**HECATE**
Oh well done! I commend your pains,
And every one shall share i' th' gains.
And now about the cauldron sing,
Like elves and fairies in a ring,

**HECATE enters with three other WITCHES.**

**HECATE**
Well done! I admire your efforts, and all of you will share the rewards. Now come sing around the cauldron like a ring of elves and fairies, enchanting everything you put in.
Enchanting all that you put in.


HECATEretires

SECOND WITCH
By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.
Open, locks,
Whoever knocks.

SECOND WITCH
I can tell that something wicked is coming by the tingling in my thumbs. Doors, open up for whoever is knocking!

MACBETH enters.

MACBETH
What's going on here, you secret, evil, midnight hags? What are you doing?

ALL
Something there isn't a word for.

MACBETH
I don't know how you know the things you do, but I insist that you answer my questions. I command you in the name of whatever dark powers you serve. I don't care if you unleash violent winds that tear down churches, make the foamy waves overwhelm ships and send sailors to their deaths, flatten crops and trees, make castles fall down on their inhabitants' heads, make palaces and pyramids collapse, and mix up everything in nature. Tell me what I want to know.

FIRST WITCH
Speak.

SECOND WITCH
Demand.

THIRD WITCH
We'll answer.

FIRST WITCH
Would you rather hear these things from our mouths or from our master's?

MACBETH
Call them. Let me see them.

FIRST WITCH
Pour in the blood of a sow who has eaten her nine offspring. Take the sweat of a murderer on the gallows and throw it into the flame.

ALL
Come, high or low spirits. Show yourself and
O r i g i n a l  T e x t

# Act 4, Scene 1

70 Thyself and office deftly show!

Thunder. **FIRST APPARITION** : an armed head

**MACBETH**
Tell me, thou unknown power—

**FIRST WITCH**
He knows thy thought.
Hear his speech but say thou nought.

**FIRST APPARITION**
Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware the thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

**MACBETH**
Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution, thanks.
Thou hast harped my fear aright. But one word more—

**FIRST WITCH**
He will not be commanded. Here’s another
More potent than the first.

Thunder. **SECOND APPARITION** : a bloody child

**SECOND APPARITION**
Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!—

**MACBETH**
Had I three ears, I’d hear thee.

**SECOND APPARITION**
Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

**MACBETH**
Then live, Macduff. What need I fear of thee?
But yet I’ll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of fate. Thou shalt not live,
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,
And sleep in spite of thunder.

Thunder. **THIRD APPARITION** : a child crowned,
with a tree in his hand

**THIRD APPARITION**
Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are.

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# Modern Text

**MACBETH**
Tell me, you unknown power—

**FIRST WITCH**
He can read your thoughts. Listen, but don’t speak.

**FIRST APPARITION**
Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware the thane of Fife. Let me go. Enough.

**MACBETH**
Whatever you are, thanks for your advice. You have guessed exactly what I feared. But one word more—

**FIRST WITCH**
He will not be commanded by you. Here’s another, stronger than the first.

Thunder. **SECOND APPARITION** appears, looking like a bloody child.

**SECOND APPARITION**
Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

**MACBETH**
If I had three ears I’d listen with all three.

**SECOND APPARITION**
Be violent, bold, and firm. Laugh at the power of other men, because nobody born from a woman will ever harm Macbeth.

The **SECOND APPARITION** descends.

**MACBETH**
Then I don’t need to kill Macduff. I have no reason to fear him. But even so, I’ll make doubly sure. I’ll guarantee my own fate by having you killed, Macduff. That way I can conquer my own fear and sleep easy at night.

Thunder. **THIRD APPARITION** appears, in the form of a child with a crown on his head and a tree in his hand.

**THIRD APPARITION**
Be brave like the lion and proud. Don’t even worry about who hates you, who resents you.
Macbeth shall never vanquished be until
Great Birnam Wood to high Dunsinane Hill
Shall come against him.

MACBETH
That will never be.
Who can impress the forest, bid the tree
Unfix his earthbound root? Sweet bodements! Good!
Rebellious dead, rise never till the wood
Of Birnam rise, and our high-placed Macbeth
Shall live the lease of nature, pay his breath
To time and mortal custom. Yet my heart
Throbs to know one thing. Tell me, if your art
Can tell so much: shall Banquo's issue ever
Reign in this kingdom?

MACBETH
That will never happen. Who can command the
forest and make the trees pull their roots out of
the earth? These were sweet omens! Good! My
murders will never come back to threaten me
until the forest of Birnam gets up and moves, and
I will be king for my entire natural life. But my
heart is still throbbing to know one thing. Tell me,
if your dark powers can see this far: will
Banquo's sons ever reign in this kingdom?

ALL
Seek to know no more.

MACBETH
I will be satisfied. Deny me this,
And an eternal curse fall on you! Let me know.
Why sinks that cauldron? And what noise is this?

FIRST WITCH
Show.
SECOND WITCH
Show.
THIRD WITCH
Show.

ALL
Show his eyes and grieve his heart.
Come like shadows; so depart!

MACBETH
Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo. Down!
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs. And thy hair,
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first.

A third is like the former.—Filthy hags!
Why do you show me this? A fourth? Start, eyes!
What, will the line stretch out to th' crack of doom?
Another yet? I'll see no more.
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass

MACBETH
You look too much like the ghost of Banquo. Go
away! (to the first) Your crown hurts
my eyes. (to the second) Your blond hair, which
looks like another crown underneath the one
you're wearing, looks just like the first king's hair.
Now I see a third king who looks just like the
second. Filthy hags! Why are you showing me
this? A fourth! My eyes are bulging out of their
sockets! Will this line stretch on forever? Another
one! And a seventh! I don't want to see any
more. And yet an eighth appears, holding a
mirror in which I see many more men. And some
are carrying double balls and triple scepters,
meaning they're kings of more than one country!
Horrible sight! Now I see it is true, they are Banquo's descendants. Banquo, with his blood-clotted hair, is smiling at me and pointing to them as his.

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 7

Apparitions vanish

What, is this so?

FIRST WITCH
Ay, sir, all this is so. But why Stands Macbeth thus amazedly? Come, sisters, cheer we up his sprites, And show the best of our delights. I'll charm th' air to give a sound, While you perform your antic round. That this great king may kindly say, Our duties did his welcome pay.

Music. The WITCHES dance and then vanish

MACBETH
Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour Stand aye accursèd in the calendar! Come in, without there.

Enter LENNOX

LENNOX
What's your grace's will?

MACBETH
Saw you the weird sisters?

LENNOX
No, my lord.

MACBETH
 Came they not by you?

LENNOX
No, indeed, my lord.

MACBETH
Infected be the air whereon they ride, And damned all those that trust them! I did hear The galloping of horse. Who was 't came by?

Act 4, Scene 1, Page 8

LENNOX
'Tis two or three, my lord, that bring you word Macduff is fled to England.

MACBETH
Fled to England?

LENNOX
Ay, my good lord.

MACBETH
Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits.

LENNOX
Two or three men, my lord, who brought the message that Macduff has fled to England.

MACBETH
Fled to England?

LENNOX
Yes, my good lord.

MACBETH
Time, you thwart my dreadful plans. Unless a
The flighty purpose never is o’ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and
done:
The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to th’ edge o’ th’ sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool.
This deed I’ll do before this purpose cool.
But no more sights!—Where are these gentlemen?
Come, bring me where they are.

Exeunt

LADY MACDUFF, her SON, and ROSS enter.

LADY MACDUFF
What had he done to make him fly the land?
ROSS
You must have patience, madam.
LADY MACDUFF
He had none.
His flight was madness. When our actions do not,
Our fears do make us traitors.
ROSS
You know not
Whether it was his wisdom or his fear.
LADY MACDUFF
Wisdom! To leave his wife, to leave his babes,
His mansion and his titles in a place
From whence himself does fly? He loves us not;
He wants the natural touch. For the poor wren,
The most diminutive of birds, will fight,
Her young ones in her nest, against the owl.
All is the fear and nothing is the love,
As little is the wisdom, where the flight
So runs against all reason.
ROSS
My dearest coz.
I pray you school yourself. But for your husband,
He is noble, wise, judicious, and best knows
The fits o’ th’ season. I dare not speak much further;
But cruel are the times when we are traitors
And do not know ourselves; when we hold rumor
From what we fear, yet know not what we fear,
But float upon a wild and violent sea
Each way and none. I take my leave of you.
Shall not be long but I’ll be here again.
Things at the worst will cease, or else climb upward
To what they were before.—My pretty cousin,
Blessing upon you.
Act 4, Scene 2, Page 2

LADY MACDUFF
Fathered he is, and yet he's fatherless.
ROSS
I am so much a fool, should I stay longer
It would be my disgrace and your discomfort.

30 I take my leave at once.

LADY MACDUFF
Sirrah, your father's dead.
And what will you do now? How will you live?
SON
As birds do, Mother.
LADY MACDUFF
What, with worms and flies?

SON
With what I get, I mean, and so do they.
LADY MACDUFF
Poor bird! Thou 'dst never fear the net nor lime,
The pitfall nor the gin.
SON
Why should I, mother? Poor birds they are not set for.
My father is not dead, for all your saying.

LADY MACDUFF
Yes, he is dead. How wilt thou do for a father?
SON
Nay, how will you do for a husband?
LADY MACDUFF
Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

Act 4, Scene 2, Page 3

SON
Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.
LADY MACDUFF
Thou speak'st with all thy wit; and yet, i' faith,
With wit enough for thee.
SON
Was my father a traitor, Mother?
LADY MACDUFF
Ay, that he was.

SON
What is a traitor?
LADY MACDUFF
**Original Text**

Why, one that swears and lies.
SON
And be all traitors that do so?

LADY MACDUFF
50 Every one that does so is a traitor and must be hanged.
SON
And must they all be hanged that swear and lie?

LADY MACDUFF
Every one.
SON
Who must hang them?
LADY MACDUFF
Why, the honest men.
SON
55 Then the liars and swearers are fools, for there are liars and swearers enough to beat the honest men and hang up them.

LADY MACDUFF
Now, God help thee, poor monkey! But how wilt thou do for a father?

SON
If he were dead, you'd weep for him. If you would not, it were a good sign that I should quickly have a new father.

LADY MACDUFF
Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

**Modern Text**

Someone who makes a promise and breaks it.
SON
And is everyone who swears and lies a traitor?
LADY MACDUFF
Everyone who does so is a traitor and should be hanged.
SON
And should everyone who makes promises and breaks them be hanged?
LADY MACDUFF
Everyone.
SON
Who should hang them?
LADY MACDUFF
The honest men.
SON
Then the liars are fools, for there are enough liars in the world to beat up the honest men and hang them.

LADY MACDUFF
(laughing) Heaven help you for saying that, boy!(sad again) But what will you do without a father?

SON
If he were dead, you'd be weeping for him. If you aren't weeping, it's a good sign that I'll soon have a new father.

LADY MACDUFF
Silly babbler, how you talk!

**Act 4, Scene 2, Page 4**

**Enter a MESSENER**

MESSENER
Bless you, fair dame! I am not to you known,
60 Though in your state of honor I am perfect.
I doubt some danger does approach you nearly.
If you will take a homely man’s advice,
Be not found here. Hence with your little ones.
To fright you thus methinks I am too savage;
65 To do worse to you were fell cruelty.
Which is too nigh your person. Heaven preserve you!
I dare abide no longer.

LADY MACDUFF
Whither should I fly?
I have done no harm. But I remember now
I am in this earthly world, where to do harm
Is often laudable, to do good sometime
Accounted dangerous folly. Why then, alas,
Do I put up that womanly defense,
To say I have done no harm?

**Exit**

**A MESSENER enters.**

MESSENER
Bless you, fair lady! You don’t know me, but I know you’re an important person. I’m afraid something dangerous is coming toward you. If you’ll take a simple man’s advice, don’t be here when it arrives. Go away and take your children. I feel bad for scaring you like this, but it would be much worse for me to let you come to harm. And harm is getting close! Heaven keep you safe!

LADY MACDUFF
Where should I go? I haven’t done anything wrong. But I have to remember that I’m here on Earth, where doing evil is often praised, and doing good is sometimes a stupid and dangerous mistake. So then why should I offer this womanish defense that I’m innocent?
Act 4, Scene 2, Page 5

FIRST MURDERER
(Stabbing him)
What, you egg? Young fry of treachery!
SON
80 He has killed me, mother. Run away, I pray you!

He dies. Exit LADY MACDUFF, crying “Murder!” followed by MURDERERS

The son dies. LADY MACDUFF exits, crying “Murder!” The MURDERERS exit, following her.

Act 4, Scene 3

Enter MALCOLM and MACDUFF

MALCOLM Let us seek out some desolate shade and there Weep our sad bosoms empty.
MACDUFF Let us rather Hold fast the mortal sword and, like good men, Bestride our downfall'n birthdom. Each new morn New widows howl, new orphans cry, new sorrows Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds As if it felt with Scotland and yelled out Like syllable of dolor.

MALCOLM What I believe I'll wail; What know believe, and what I can redress,
10 As I shall find the time to friend, I will. What you have spoke, it may be so perchance. This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues, Was once thought honest. You have loved him well. He hath not touched you yet. I am young, but something You may deserve of him through me, and wisdom To offer up a weak, poor, innocent lamb T' appease an angry god.

MACDUFF I am not treacherous.

MALCOLM Let's seek out some shady place where we can sit down alone and cry our hearts out.
MACDUFF Instead of crying, let's keep hold of our swords and defend our fallen homeland like honorable men. Each day new widows howl, new orphans cry, and new sorrows slap heaven in the face, until it sounds like heaven itself feels Scotland's anguish and screams in pain.

MALCOLM I will avenge whatever I believe is wrong. And I'll believe whatever I'm sure is true. And I'll put right whatever I can when the time comes. What you just said may perhaps be true. This tyrant, whose mere name is so awful it hurts us to say it, was once considered an honest man. You were one of his favorites. He hasn't done anything to harm you yet. I'm inexperienced, but maybe you're planning to win Macbeth's favor by betraying me to him. It would be smart to offer someone poor and innocent like me as a sacrificial lamb to satisfy an angry god like Macbeth.

MACDUFF I am not treacherous.
MALCOLM
But Macbeth is.
A good and virtuous nature may recoil
In an imperial charge. But I shall crave your pardon.
That which you are, my thoughts cannot transpose.
Angels are bright still, though the brightest fell.
Though all things foul would wear the brows of grace,
Yet grace must still look so.

Act 4, Scene 3, Page 2

MACDUFF
I have lost my hopes.

MALCOLM
Perchance even there where I did find my doubts.
Why in that rawness left you wife and child,
Those precious motives, those strong knots of love,
Without leave-taking? I pray you,
Let not my jealousies be your dishonors,
But mine own safeties. You may be rightly just,
Whatever I shall think.

MACDUFF
Bleed, bleed, poor country!
Great tyranny, lay thou thy basis sure,
For goodness dare not check thee. Wear thou thy
wrongs;
The title is affeered.—Fare thee well, lord.
I would not be the villain that thou think'st
For the whole space that's in the tyrant's grasp,
And the rich East to boot.

MALCOLM
Be not offended.
I speak not as in absolute fear of you.
I think our country sinks beneath the yoke.
It weeps, it bleeds, and each new day a gash
Is added to her wounds. I think withal
There would be hands uplifted in my right;
And here from gracious England have I offer
Of goodly thousands. But, for all this,
When I shall tread upon the tyrant's head,
Or wear it on my sword, yet my poor country
Shall have more vices than it had before,
More suffer, and more sundry ways than ever,
By him that shall succeed.

MACDUFF
What should he be?

Act 4, Scene 3, Page 3

MALCOLM
It is myself I mean, in whom I know
All the particulars of vice so grafted
That, when they shall be opened, black Macbeth
Will seem as pure as snow, and the poor state
Estimate him as a lamb, being compared
With my confineless harms.

MACDUFF
Not in the legions
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damned
In evils to top Macbeth.

MALCOLM
I grant him bloody,
Luxurious, avaricious, false, deceitful,
Sudden, malicious, smacking of every sin
That has a name. But there’s no bottom, none,
In my voluptuousness. Your wives, your daughters,
Your matrons, and your maids could not fill up
The cistern of my lust, and my desire
All continent impediments would o’erbear
That did oppose my will. Better Macbeth
Than such an one to reign.

MACDUFF
Boundless intemperance
In nature is a tyranny. It hath been
The untimely emptying of the happy throne
And fall of many kings. But fear not yet
To take upon you what is yours. You may
Convey your pleasures in a spacious plenty
And yet seem cold; the time you may so hoodwink.
We have willing dames enough. There cannot be
That vulture in you to devour so many
As will to greatness dedicate themselves,
Finding it so inclined.

MALCOLM
With this there grows
In my most ill-composed affection such
A stanchless avarice that, were I king,
I should cut off the nobles for their lands,
Desire his jewels and this other’s house.
And my more-having would be as a sauce
To make me hunger more, that I should forge
Quarrels unjust against the good and loyal,
Destroying them for wealth.

MACDUFF
This avarice
Sticks deeper, grows with more pernicious root
Than summer-seeming lust, and it hath been
The sword of our slain kings. Yet do not fear;
Scotland hath foisons to fill up your will,
Of your mere own. All these are portable,
With other graces weighed.

MALCOLM
Along with being full of lust, I’m also incredibly greedy. If I became king, I would steal the nobles’ lands, taking jewels from one guy and houses from another. The more I had, the greedier I would grow, until I’d invent false quarrels with my good and loyal subjects, destroying them so I could get my hands on their wealth.

MACDUFF
The greed you’re talking about is worse than lust because you won’t outgrow it. Greed has been the downfall of many kings. But don’t be afraid. Scotland has enough treasures to satisfy you out of your own royal coffers. These bad qualities are bearable when balanced against your good sides.
Original Text

But I have none. The king-becoming graces,
As justice, verity, temperance, stableness,
Bounty, perseverance, mercy, lowliness,
Devotion, patience, courage, fortitude,
I have no relish of them but abound
In the division of each several crime,
Acting it many ways. Nay, had I power, I should
Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell,
Uproar the universal peace, confound
All unity on earth.

MACDUFF
O Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM
If such a one be fit to govern, speak.
I am as I have spoken.

Modern Text

But I don’t have any good sides. I don’t have a
trace of the qualities a king needs, such as
justice, truth, moderation, stability, generosity,
perseverance, mercy, humility, devotion,
patience, courage, and bravery. Instead, I
overflow with every variation of all the different
vices. No, if I had power I would take world
peace and throw it down to hell.

MACDUFF
Oh Scotland, Scotland!

MALCOLM
If someone like me is fit to be king, let me know. I
really am exactly as I have described myself to
you.

Act 4, Scene 3, Page 5

MACDUFF
Fit to govern?

MALCOLM
Macduff, this noble passion,
Child of integrity, hath from my soul
Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts
To thy good truth and honor. Devilish Macbeth
By many of these trains hath sought to win me
Into his power, and modest wisdom plucks me
From overcredulous haste. But God above
Deal between thee and me, for even now
I put myself to thy direction and

MACDUFF
(to MALCOLM) Fit to be king? You’re not fit to
live!—Oh miserable nation, ruled by a usurping,
murderous tyrant, when will you see peaceful
days again? The man who has a legal right to the
throne is, by his own admission, a cursed man
and a disgrace to the royal family.—Your royal
father Duncan was a virtuous king. Your mother
spent more time on her knees in prayer than she
did standing up, and she lived a life of absolute
piety. Good-bye. The evils you have described
inside yourself have driven me out of Scotland
forever. Oh my heart, your hope is dead!

MACDUFF
Have banished me from Scotland.—O my breast,
Thy hope ends here!

MALCOLM
Macduff, this passionate outburst, which proves
your integrity, has removed my doubts about you
and made me realize that you really are
trustworthy and honorable. That devil Macbeth
has tried many times to trick me and lure me into
his power, and prudence prevents me from
believing people too quickly. But with God as my
witness, I will let myself be guided by you, and I
take back my confession. I take back all the bad
things I said about myself, because none of
those flaws are really part of my character. I’m
still a virgin. I have never told a lie. I barely care
about what I already own, let alone feel jealous
of another’s possessions. I have never broken a
promise. I wouldn’t betray the devil himself. I love
truth as much as I love life. The lies I told about
my character are actually the first false words I
have ever spoken. The person who I really am is
ready to serve you and our poor country.
Act 4, Scene 3, Page 6

135 Whither indeed, before thy here-approach,
Old Siward, with ten thousand warlike men,
Already at a point, was setting forth.
Now we'll together, and the chance of goodness
Be like our warranted quarrel! Why are you silent?

MACDUFF
Such welcome and unwelcome things at once
'Tis hard to reconcile.

MALCOLM
Well, more anon.—Comes the king forth, I pray you?

DOCTOR
Ay, sir; there are a crew of wretched souls
That stay his cure. Their malady convinces
The great assay of art, but at his touch—
Such sanctity hath heaven given his hand—
They presently amend.

MALCOLM
I thank you, doctor.

MACDUFF
What's the disease he means?

MALCOLM
'Tis called the evil.
A most miraculous work in this good king,
Which often since my here-remain in England
I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven,
Himself best knows, but strangely visited people,
All swollen and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
Put on with holy prayers. And, 'tis spoken,

150 To the succeeding royalty he leaves
The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
And sundry blessings hang about his throne,
That speak him full of grace.

Enter ROSS

MACDUFF
See, who comes here?

MALCOLM
My countryman, but yet I know him not.

MACDUFF
My ever-gentle cousin, welcome hither.

Act 4, Scene 3, Page 7

Indeed, before you arrived here, old Siward, with
ten thousand soldiers already prepared for battle,
was making his way here. Now we will fight
Macbeth together, and may the chances of our
success be as great as the justice of our cause!
Why are you silent?

MACDUFF
It's hard to make sense of such different stories.

A DOCTOR enters.

MALCOLM
Well, we'll speak more soon. (to the DOCTOR)Is
King Edward coming out?

DOCTOR
Yes, sir. A crowd of sick people is waiting for him
to heal them. Their illness confounds the most
advanced techniques of modern medicine, but
when he touches them, they heal immediately
because of the power granted to him by heaven.

MALCOLM
Thank you, doctor.

MACDUFF
What disease is he talking about?

MALCOLM
It's called the evil. Edward's healing touch is a
miracle that I have seen him perform many times
during my stay in England. How he receives
these gifts from heaven, only he can say. But he
cures people with strange conditions—all
swollen, plagued by ulcers, and pitiful to look at,
patients who are beyond the help of surgery—by
placing a gold coin around their necks and
saying holy prayers over them.
MALCOLM
I know him now.—Good God, betimes remove
The means that makes us strangers!

ROSS
Sir, amen.

MACDUFF
Stands Scotland where it did?
ROSS
Alas, poor country!
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
Be called our mother, but our grave, where nothing,
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the
air
Are made, not marked; where violent sorrow seems
A modern ecstasy. The dead man’s knell
Is there scarce asked for who, and good men’s lives
Expires before the flowers in their caps,
Dying or ere they sicken.
MACDUFF
Oh, relation
Too nice and yet too true!

Act 4, Scene 3, Page 8

MALCOLM
What’s the newest grief?
ROSS
That of an hour’s age doth hiss the speaker.
Each minute teems a new one.
MACDUFF
How does my wife?
ROSS
Why, well.
MACDUFF
And all my children?
ROSS
Well too.
MACDUFF
The tyrant has not battered at their peace?
ROSS
No, they were well at peace when I did leave ’em.
MACDUFF
Be not a niggard of your speech. How goes ’t?
ROSS
When I came hither to transport the tidings,
Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumor
Of many worthy fellows that were out;
Which was to my belief witnessed the rather
For that I saw the tyrant’s power afoot.
Now is the time of help. Your eye in Scotland
Original Text
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,  
To doff their dire distresses.

MALCOLM
Be 't their comfort
We are coming thither. Gracious England hath
Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;
An older and a better soldier none
That Christendom gives out.

ROSS
Woul d I could answer
This comfort with the like. But I have words
That would be howled out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not latch them.

MACDUFF
What concern they?
The general cause, or is it a fee-grief
Due to some single breast?

ROSS
No mind that's honest
But in it shares some woe, though the main part
Pertains to you alone.

MACDUFF
If it be mine,
Keep it not from me. Quickly let me have it.

ROSS
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard.

MACDUFF
Hum! I guess at it.

ROSS
Your castle is surprised, your wife and babes
Savagely slaughtered. To relate the manner,
Were, on the quarry of these murdered deer
To add the death of you.

MALCOLM
Merciful heaven!
What, man! Ne'er pull your hat upon your brows.
Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break.

MACDUFF
My children too?

ROSS
Wife, children, servants, all that could be found.

Modern Text
would inspire people to fight. Even the women
would fight to rid themselves of Macbeth's
oppression.

MALCOLM
Let them be comforted—I'm returning to
Scotland. Gracious King Edward has sent us
noble Siward and ten thousand soldiers. There is
no soldier more experienced or successful than
Siward in the entire Christian world.

ROSS
I wish I could repay this happy news with good
news of my own. But I have some news that
should be howled in a barren desert where
nobody can hear it.

MACDUFF
What is this news about? Does it affect all of us?
Or just one of us?

ROSS
No decent man can keep from sharing in the
sorrow, but my news affects you alone.

MACDUFF
If it's for me, don't keep it from me. Let me have
it now.

ROSS
I hope you won't hate me forever after I say
these things, because I will soon fill your ears
with the most dreadful news you have ever
heard.

MACDUFF
I think I can guess what you're about to say.

ROSS
Your castle was attacked. Your wife and children
were savagely slaughtered. If I told you how they
were killed, it would cause you so much pain that
it would kill you too, and add your body to the pile
of murdered corpses.

MALCOLM
Merciful heaven! (to MACDUFF) Come on, man,
don't keep your grief hidden. Put your sorrow into
words. The grief you keep inside you will whisper
in your heart until it breaks.

MACDUFF
They killed my children too?

ROSS
They killed your wife, your children, your
servants, anyone they could find.
Act 4, Scene 3, Page 10

MACDUFF  
And I must be from thence!  
My wife killed too?

ROSS  
I have said.

MALCOLM  
Be comforted.

Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,  
To cure this deadly grief.

MACDUFF  
He has no children. All my pretty ones?  
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?  
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam

At one fell swoop?

MALCOLM  
Dispute it like a man.

MACDUFF  
I shall do so,  
But I must also feel it as a man.  
I cannot but remember such things were

That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,  
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,  
They were all struck for thee! Naught Macduff,  
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,  
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now.

MALCOLM  
Be this the whetstone of your sword. Let grief  
Convert to anger. Blunt not the heart, enrage it.

MACDUFF  
Oh, I could play the woman with mine eyes  
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,  
Cut short all intermission. Front to front

Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.  
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,  
Heaven forgive him too.

MALCOLM  
This tune goes manly.  
Come, go we to the king. Our power is ready;  
Our lack is nothing but our leave. Macbeth

Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above  
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may.  
The night is long that never finds the day.

MALCOLM  
Now you sound like a man. Come on, let's go  
see King Edward. The army is ready. All we have  
to do now is say goodbye to the king. Macbeth is  
ripe for the picking. We'll be acting as God's  
agents. Cheer up as much as you can. A new  
day will come at last.

Exeunt  

They exit.

Act 5, Scene 1