

VERDI

MACBETH

English Version by Donald Pippin
(with considerable assistance from Shakespeare)

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE

The blood soaked day of ferocious hand to hand battle is over. Rebellion has been quelled, law and order restored, and King Duncan of Scotland can claim a decisive victory, thanks largely to the valor and tenacity of his trusted kinsman Macbeth, leader of the army. As Macbeth and Banquo, his partner in glory, trudge back to the camp across a barren heath enshrouded in fog and assailed by lightning and thunder, they little suspect that a longer, larger, even bloodier battle lies just ahead -- one whose seed is implanted, or perhaps merely fertilized, by three gleefully malevolent old hags whom they encounter along the way, whose demoniacally inspired prophecies have a startling tendency to come true.

Scene: a barren heath. Three witches appear amid thunder and lightning.

Witch 3: Roving sisters, what report?

Witch 2: Forty swine infected.

Witch 3: And you?

Witch 1: Flouted by a sailor's whore,
I have evened up the score,
Made the tempest rage and roar,
Seen her lover's boat capsize,
Heard his terror-stricken cries.
Forty leagues below he lies.
Cold as corral are his eyes.

Witch 3: Drive the Northern wind to blow.

Witch 2: Thunder roll and lightning flare.

Witch 3: Shroud the sea in ice and snow.

TUTTE: Fair is foul and foul is fair;
Fill with fog the filthy air
Throughout this bleak and barren land,
Throughout this land that reeks of death.

Hear the drum! Who's at hand?
Come from battle, all hail Macbeth!

They join hands and whirl into a dance.

**Hand in hand we sisters wander
Through the air and over water,
Planting chaos and disorder.
Form a circle: one, two, three!
Bent on chaos and disorder,
We encompass land and sea.
Weave a circle, sisters three,
Stretching over land and sea,
That stretches over land and sea.**

Enter Banquo and Macbeth.

MACBETH: So fair and foul a day
In equal measure!

BANQUO: A proud day of triumph!

MACBETH: Who are these grizzled crones?

BANQUO: What age or gender?
From what dark regions
Ungoverned by nature?

(addressing the witches) I presume you are women,
Though still uncertain,
For your beards make me wonder.

MACBETH: Who and what are you?

WITCH 1: Hail brave Macbeth, renowned Thane of Glamis!

WITCH 2: Hail brave Macbeth, henceforth Thane of Cawdor!

WITCH 3: Hail brave Macbeth, the next King of Scotland!

BANQUO: *(sotto voce to Macbeth)*
You shake and tremble at the joyful tidings.

(to witches) You that know who will fall and who will flourish,
Speak, reveal what you know of my own future.

WITCHES: Banquo! Banquo! Banquo!

WITCH 3: Listen well: lesser than Macbeth but greater.

WITCH 2: Less fortunate than he, but far more favored.

WITCH 1: No king yourself, of future kings the father.

TUTTE: Long live Macbeth! Long live Banquo! *(they disappear)*

MACBETH: They've gone! *(deep in thought)*

Your children will be kings hereafter.

BANQUO: After your reign is over.

BOTH: Words hard to fathom!

A messenger from the king enters.

MESSENGER: Brave Macbeth, the king proud and grateful,
Has proclaimed you Thane of Cawdor!

MACBETH: Thane of Cawdor but he's still living.

MESSENGER: Tried for treason,
Clearly guilty, he's already paid in blood.

BANQUO: (Ah, they foretold it!
Can the devil's tongue speak truth?)

MACBETH: (The first prediction fulfilled already . . .
The throne of Scotland foreseen to follow.
Why does my hair now rise up in horror?
Why does my tongue taste of blood and carnage?
The crown I long for, so freely offered,
I shall not seize,
But wait for time to run its course.)

BANQUO: (The seed is planted, the fire enkindled.
His eyes are blazing with promised splendor.)

MACBETH: (Sounded already, the prologue to grandeur . . .)

BANQUO: (With false assurance and sly maneuvers,
The powers of darkness entice their victim,

To be abandoned, beyond redemption,
Perched on the edge of the gaping abyss,
The deep and dark abyss.
When on the edge of the abyss.)

MACBETH: (Sounded already, the prologue to grandeur . . .
To royal power, a crown and sceptre,
The promise of grandeur and glory . . .
Why does my hair start to rise in horror?
Why on my tongue do I taste blood and carnage?
The crown that I so long for
I shall not force,
But wait for time to run its course.)

MESSENGER: (His odd reaction I fail to follow;
I read no pleasure upon his face.
I see no sign of joy or delight,
No sign of pleasure on his face.)

(They slowly leave. The witches reappear.)

**THE WITCHES: Subdued, they slink away,
Weighed down in wonder.
But we shall meet again
In storm and thunder.**

**For now, they go their way,
But we'll be lurking
Willing to wait
While the poison is working.**

**Stalwart Macbeth is already on fire,
Waging a war between doubt and desire.
Away, away! In haste, away!
But there we shall be lurking,
Alert, while the poison is working.
Away, away! In haste, away!
Come along, away!
The brave Macbeth is all afire,
And soon will bend to his desire.
Out of sight, we sisters watch and wait
As we pursue the prey.
Away, away! In haste, away!**

SCENE 11

Eagerly awaiting her husband's return from battle, Lady Macbeth receives a letter written *en route* to which her response is immediate, passionate, and blood-chilling.

Scene, the castle of Macbeth. LADY MACBETH enters, reading a letter:

“They met me on that day of victory . . .
While I stood rapt in wonder at their revelations
Came a messenger from the king,
Hailing me, Thane of Cawdor,
Confirming the pronouncement of the weird sisters,
Who went on to salute me,
Hail, King that shall be!
Lock the secret inside your heart, and farewell.”

Too well I know his nature!
Too mild, too milky,
Hungry for royal power,
Too soft of heart to grab it.

Rugged and steep is the climb that leads us to power.
Cry woe to him that hazards
The ascent to the summit, only to waver.

**Soar like an eagle!
Let my resolve
Ignite the fire that smolders.
Rise to the challenge of royalty!
Summoned to rule the nation,
My valor will inspire you,
Inspire you on to glory.**

**A golden crown, decreed by destiny --
Claim the gift before it's snatched away.
Delay not, go after the treasure.
The throne is yours if you dare,
If you but dare, if you but dare!
It's yours for the taking
If you but dare claim your own!**

**Delay not, deny not your claim to far greater glory.
A soldier will do what must be done.
Deny not your greater glory.**

**A soldier does what must be done.
Delay not the crowning moment of glory
On a royal throne.
Delay not, ah! You know what must be done.**

A messenger enters.

MESSENGER: By this evening expect the king's arrival.

LADY MACBETH: The king! My husband also?

MESSENGER: He joins the royal party.
I'm sent ahead to inform you.

LADY MACBETH: Rest assured, I shall provide
A royal reception. *(The messenger leaves)*

Here Duncan spends the night.
So! I'll be ready.

**Arise now, you spirits,
You agents of the inferno,
And stifle paltry scruples,
You ministers of murder, unsex me!
My milk turn to gall of direst cruelty.**

**O night, draw your curtain;
Conceal the deed in darkness.
May voices from heaven
Impede not the fatal dagger,
The dagger that plunges,
Not heeding the rivers of blood,
The gushing rivers of blood.**

MACBETH enters.

MACBETH: Ah, my beloved!

LADY MACBETH: Thane of Cawdor!

MACBETH: The king will soon be arriving.

LADY MACBETH: And when will he leave?

MACBETH: Tomorrow.

LADY MACBETH: Ah, never shall the sun behold that morrow!

MACBETH: But murder? . . .

LADY MACBETH: You understand me.

MACBETH: Too clearly . . . too clearly . . .

LADY MACBETH: You agree then?

MACBETH: What if the attempt miscarries?

LADY MACBETH: We shall not fail unless you waver.

The king! With warm words of welcome and smiling faces
We go to greet our guest.

Rustic music announces the king's arrival, with retinue. They are escorted into the castle by Lord and Lady Macbeth. Macbeth re-enters.)

MACBETH: *(to servant)*
Now that the king's retired,
Go tell your mistress
That when my night cup is ready,
At the sound of the bell stroke
I'll come to join her.

(Servant leaves)

**Is this a dagger I see before me,
The handle pointed toward me?
If you are there in fact,
Come, let me clutch you.
You elude me . . . yet still I see you.**

**Are you to lead me along the dark, murky path
That in my mind I've followed over and over?
Hallucination!
There, on the blade a smear of blood slowly spreading!
No sword, and yet I see it . . .
My bloody purpose gives it form and dimension,
An airy nothing,
For my eyes are outweighed by the other senses . . .
Now over one half the world nature is dead
And dreams take over.**

**Quietly, the assassin creeps like a ghost
Through the halls of the castle.
Comes the hour when witches commune with Satan.
Firm, solid earth, hear not my steps
That tell my presence.**

(A bell tolls)

**Fate has spoken;
The grisly bell has sounded.
Hear it not, drowsy Duncan, childlike in slumber.
'Tis the knell
That summons you to heaven or to hell.**

(He enters the king's apartment; Lady Macbeth returns.)

LADY MACBETH: Sleep has spread wide its curtain.
Ah! Was it the raven or baleful owl
That warns of death approaching?

MACBETH: *(from within)* Who's there?

LADY MACBETH: I fear the king was rudely awakened
Before receiving the blow.

(Macbeth returns, staggering, distraught, dagger in hand.)

MACBETH: All's now accomplished.
Duncan will waken again no more.
Did you not hear a noise within?

LADY MACBETH: I heard the owl and cricket cry.
And from the stairs, did you not call?

MACBETH: I?

LADY MACBETH: A muffled groan of agony . . .

MACBETH: As I descended?

LADY MACBETH: Yes.

MACBETH: In the adjoining chamber, who is sleeping?

LADY MACBETH: One of the princes.

MACBETH: (*suddenly seeing his own bloody hands*)
Oh, what a sorry, sorry sight!

LADY MACBETH: Then keep your eyes averted.

MACBETH: A sight too horrible!
A sight too horrible!
Disturbed in sleep, two courtiers prayed,
Chanting together:
O father in heaven, preserve us!
Then slept again.
I wanted to cry, *Amen!*
Ah, but the word I tried to say
Was stuck inside my throat.

LADY MACBETH: Dismiss it!

MACBETH: The word *Amen* I could not say
When I was most in need.
Oh why, oh why, oh why could I not
Say *Amen*, say *Amen*?

LADY MACBETH: Insane! Absurd!
Mere fantasy that fades away,
Supplanted by the light of day.
A fantasy that fades away,
Supplanted by the sober light of day.
Dismiss it! Dismiss it!

MACBETH: I then heard a whisper:
“Macbeth, sleep no more;
Your head will be pillowed
On briars and nettles.
Lie down, and remember
Sleep itself you have murdered.
Your eyes will stay open
Through long nights ahead.

LADY MACBETH: You should have heard also
A message more pointed:
For high aspirations
Be bolder, be braver!
The task barely started,
Too tender, soft-hearted,
You falter, you waver,
Recoil from the dead.

MACBETH: The angels of vengeance
Will soon raise a clamor,
And praises for Duncan
Will ring out the more.

LADY MACBETH: *(to herself)* So feeble of spirit,
So haggard, so craven,
I blush when remembering
The soldier of yore.

But the knife! You should have left it.
Back to the guards! Bloody their faces,
Make it seem that they are guilty.

MACBETH: Back inside? No, no, I can't.

LADY MACBETH: Give *me* the dagger.

*(Snatching the dagger from Macbeth, she enters the king's chamber.
A loud knocking is heard at the castle gate.)*

MACBETH: Each sudden noise makes me shudder!
What hands are these?
So befouled, will all great Neptune's ocean
Wash them clean again?
(Lady Macbeth returns, her hands red with blood.)

LADY MACBETH: See! My hands are of your color,
But I shame to wear a heart so white.
A little water clears us . . .

(More knocking)

MACBETH: Once again . . . Now louder yet . . .

LADY MACBETH: Come! Come away, lest they connect us
To our timely undertaking.
Cast aside the look of terror
For the coming greater good.
What's done is done.
Follow, follow.
Come, come, come, come . . .

MACBETH: How to cleanse these hands of horror
And remove the stain of blood!

Waken Duncan with your knocking!
Oh, if you only could!
If only, if you but could!

(Lady Macbeth leads him off.)

Enter MACDUFF and BANQUO.

MACDUFF: The king requested to be awakened early.
Now six o'clock already.
Wait here while I go to rouse him.

(He enters the king's chamber.)

BANQUO: So wild a night I can't recall.
Piercing the darkness, cries of lamentation,
Strange screams of death down the hallways,
The hooting owl, a bird of baleful omen;
The very earth, as wracked with fever, was shaking.

MACDUFF: *(returning)* Oh, horror! Oh, horror! Oh, horror!

BANQUO: You found the king?

MACDUFF: There . . . inside there . . .
Stare at cold horror greater than tongue can utter.

(Banquo rushes inside)

Go, sound the alarm!
Hurry! Shake off your slumber!
Foul murder! Havoc, chaos, wrack and ruin!

MACBETH and LADY MACBETH hurriedly enter, along with others.

BOTH: Who's this that cries of treason?

BANQUO: *(returning)* O God preserve us!

OTHERS: Speak up! What happened?
Why the cry of anguish?

BANQUO: The king, the king is dead, assassinated!

TUTTI: From the inferno, you avengers of evil,
Tear asunder, dismantle the whole of creation.

On the assassin, most hated of mortals,
Hurl your cannon bolts of fire,
Wield the hammer of might!

God of peace, ever close, ever present,
Heed and help us through a blood-curdling hour
(Heed and help us contend with a torturous hour)
As we hunger for order from chaos
(As we hunger for order and calm)
In the coil of eternal night.
(In the coil of a dark, endless night.)

God of thunder, fire and anger,
Let destruction fall on the monster.
Hear the solemn ghostly summons
From the noble king he has slain.
For the crime, blood for blood is demanded:
May his forehead forever be branded Descendant of Cain.

ACT TWO

Although Lord and Lady Macbeth, now King and Queen of Scotland, have achieved their ultimate goal, their triumph has brought little satisfaction. If only the prophecy of the weird sisters had stopped there! But an uneasy cloud still hangs over them: the throne, so brutally come by, will go to Banquo's offspring, unless drastic steps are taken. More experienced in crime by now, less inclined to emotional turmoil, they are ready for the challenge.

Scene: a room in the castle. Macbeth enters deep in thought, followed by Lady Macbeth.

LADY MACBETH: You try to avoid me;
You stare, like one still dwelling
Upon a secret sorrow.
What's done is done, beyond recall.
The witches foretold your good fortune:
You won the verdict,
With Duncan's son declared the guilty party . . .
His sudden flight to England . . .
Patricide, plain and simple.
Why so uneasy?
The crown is yours.

MACBETH: The sisters then went further,
Naming Banquo the father of kings to come.

Not mine but Banquo's heirs will reign.
On their behalf I face fire eternal.

LADY MACBETH: Both son and father still much alive . . .

MACBETH: But no one here on earth lives forever . . .

LADY MACBETH: Indeed! Unheard of.

MACBETH: Wading in blood, I'm compelled
To wade still deeper.

LADY MACBETH: Where? When?

MACBETH: By tonight will all be settled.

LADY MACBETH: *(slowly and sotto voce)*
This time you will be strong, resolved and steady?

MACBETH: Banquo! For you the doors of heaven open.

(He hurries out)

LADY MACBETH: **Light loses lustre.
O night, be pitiless!
Come, draw a curtain;
Hide us from heaven.
Good things of day let night tear apart,
And blind be the dagger that stabs at the heart.**

(suddenly resolute) **Relentlessly onward!
Onward and onward!
Live for tomorrow!
Never look backward.
What we have started
Must be completed.
No turning backward.
What we have started
Must be completed.**

**Dead men no longer scramble for power,
Their song of requiem *rest in peace* . . .**

**Gazing from the highest summit,
I see the slope that we've ascended.
Glorious the crown we call our own!**

**Mighty the royal throne!
Of mortal goals
We've now attained the pinnacle,
The crown and sceptre long desired
We have and must secure.
Of what little worth
Is power merely borrowed?
Throughout the ages shall ours endure.
He dies! O Banquo!
'Twas not for you that Duncan's blood was shed.
No, not for you that Duncan's blood was shed.
Tonight, prepare! Prepare to join the dead.
'Twas not for you that Duncan's blood was shed.**

SCENE TWO

On a lonely forest path as shadows lengthen and daylight dwindles, two assassins hired by Macbeth, are joined by a third, to lie in wait for Banquo and his young son as they head for home.

Scene, a forest, Macbeth's castle in the distance. Assassins enter, and speak alternately.

Say who sent you here to us.

---King Macbeth.

He told you what?

---Banquo and son, alone at night . . .

Go on, go on . . .

---We wait, and then

Kill as soon as they're in sight.

---Welcome, partner. One of us.

CHORUS OF ASSASSINS

**Shadows thicken as the light grows dim;
Here the rugged way is dark and grim.
Evil creatures of the night here roam;
Wise the wanderer that heads for home.**

**Through the forest on a lonesome path
Son and father come to meet their death.
Tremble, father, when the (deadly) knife is drawn;
Look to heaven, for your long day is done.**

Tremble, father! Tremble, son!

**For your final day is done,
In the fading of the light,
In the silence of the night.**

(They leave)

BANQUO enters, with his son FLEANCE.

BANQUO: Son, I warn you, stay closer!
The place so dark, so deserted . . .
I feel though know not why
Death and danger lurking,
Formless visions of horror
Born of suspicion.

**Omens of lethal treachery
Dwell in the murky shadows.
Well I recall the night,
The night that saw King Duncan slain.
Fear, like a nest of scorpions,
Has spewed out deadly poison.
Terror that feeds on fantasy
Has called forth spectres I fend off in vain.
Fear reinforced by despair has called forth spectres
I brush aside in vain.
I wrestle in a cloud of fear and despair,
Of naked fear and despair,
A mix of terror and despair.**

(They disappear into the forest. His voice is heard in the distance.)

My son! Run for your life!
They come to kill you!

(Fleance runs across the scene, pursued by one of the assassins.)

SCENE THREE

In the magnificent banquet room of the castle, guests assemble for a festive celebration, but the conviviality is twice shattered by Macbeth's wildly inexplicable behavior -- an uncharacteristic and unmanly display of naked fear that reawakens privately held dark suspicions. Why on earth should he be terrified of an empty chair? One would think he had seen a ghost.

Scene: the castle banqueting hall.

GUESTS: King Macbeth!

MACBETH: You lords and ladies,
Come and gather round the table.

GUESTS: Hail, dear lady!

LADY MACBETH: Friends, unworthy as I am,
Your words do me honor.

MACBETH: Welcome to all! A joy to see
So many smiling faces.
Bowing to old formalities,
Sit down, you know your places.
Beloved wife, sit here by me,
Together host and hostess.
But first, to health and happiness,
Dear wife, you lead the toast.

LADY MACBETH: A merry tune to enliven the party.
And you, too, I hope will sing along.

GUESTS: As best we can, we'll answer you,
Join in the festive song!

LADY MACBETH: **In wine and revelry
Salute this hour
When full in flower
Love brings delight.
Allow the luxury
Of peaceful pleasures
And soft, tender measures
That heal and unite.**

**Aha! O sweet tranquility!
Long night of revels!
We ward off devils
With mirth and scorn.
In carefree harmony
With friends we cherish,
May sorrows perish
In love now reborn.**

**While the wine is flowing,
Down with division!
Love and laugh again, aha, aha, aha!**

**Quarrels mended,
All contented,
Here let only pleasure reign.**

(One of the assassins enters and furtively addresses Macbeth, who responds sotto voce.)

MACBETH: On your face some blood is splattered.

ASSASSIN: Blood of Banquo.

MACBETH: Your job accomplished!

ASSASSIN: Sir . . .

MACBETH: His son also . . .

ASSASSIN: He got away.

MACBETH: Damn you! But Banquo?

ASSASSIN: Banquo is dead. *(Macbeth motions him to leave.)*

LADY MACBETH: *(noticing her husband's preoccupation)*
What affairs of state have drawn you
From the pleasures of the table?

MACBETH: Some concern at Banquo's absence
After promising to join us.
What a shame! A friend so valued
Would have done our party honor.

LADY MACBETH: Odd that he should fail the feast.

MACBETH: I'm compelled to fill his chair.

(Approaching the supposedly empty chair, he sees that it is occupied by the ghost of Banquo.)

(in terror) Not I! Never, never!
Do not point your finger!

GUESTS: Your Highness!

MACBETH: Not guilty, I swear it!
Oh, why are you shaking
Those gory locks at me?

GUESTS: The king seems unwell. We'll leave you.

LADY MACBETH: Ignore it! A temporary lapse.
(quietly, to her husband) Are you a man, or not?

MACBETH: A hero, a soldier unflinching in battle,
I dare look on horrors that would scare off the devil.
There! There! There! There!
Can you not see him there?
(to the spectre) You scowl and you glower;
Perhaps you can speak. So tell me:
Can the grave render up its cadavers?
Are shades of the dead free to wander?
Are not they locked inside the tomb
That guards well its secrets?

(The ghost disappears)

LADY MACBETH: Stark, raving madness!

MACBETH: He stood there, I saw him!

LADY MACBETH: My dear, please be seated.
You're spoiling the party, a festive occasion.

MACBETH: My friends, do forgive me.
The toast can continue;
Again lift your glasses.
Dear Banquo is somewhere far, far away.

LADY MACBETH: **In wine and revelry
Salute this hour
When full in flower
Love brings delight.**

**Allow the luxury
Of peaceful pleasures
And soft, tender measures
That heal and unite.**

**Aha! O sweet tranquility!
Long night of revels!
We ward off devils
With mirth and cheer.**

**So hail whole-heartedly
Banquo, a leader,
Fighter and father.
Would he were here!**

(The apparition reappears)

MACBETH: Go! Back to the inferno!
You chasms, fly open, devour in fire
His blood-spattered carcass.
Then crumble to nothing
The handful of ashes.
His eyes, grimly staring,
Have punctured my heart.

GUESTS: We see nothing there!

MACBETH: I dare all that men dare!
Unswerving, undaunted,
I brave the lion or tiger.
Assault me, and never
Have I knuckled under.
In battle, I lead the attack,
A stranger to fear.
But phantoms and shadows . . .
Horror! Horror!
Release me! Release me! *(The ghost again departs)*

LADY MACBETH: *(quietly to Macbeth)* I'm too ashamed to watch.

GUESTS: I wonder . . . I wonder . . .

ENSEMBLE

MACBETH: Banquo's line will steal my glory;
Need for truth becomes yet stronger.
Double meanings will satisfy no longer;
Though the sisters speak in riddles,
From their dark cauldron there is more to learn.

Banquo rushes to steal my glory;
Need for knowledge grows ever stronger,
And double meanings suffice no longer.
I need to know; I need more than ever to know.

The sisters speak in riddles,

Yet from their cauldron,
From their dark & steamy cauldron,
Surely there is more I can learn.
Good or ill, there's more I can learn.

LADY MACBETH: Shame upon you! Made to tremble
By a phantom of your own creation!
Your alarm has no foundation,
For the dead can do no harm,
Thus remain of no concern.

The dead remain of no concern;
They go, not to return.
After all, after all,
The dead can never, can never return.

As neither friend nor foe,
They rest in peace below.
They come, they go
In your own imagination.
So the dead remain of no concern,
For they go, not to return.

MACDUFF: Stench of murder! I must hasten,
Flee the clutches of an assassin.
To a nation now in tatters
When if ever can I return?

My own country, this land I stand on,
All I cherish I must abandon.
This land I leave in tears of woe,
O land of the proud not long ago.
My own home I must abandon,
No more to return.

Oh, when if ever shall I see my homeland
Now fallen so low?
This land now fallen so low?
When, oh when can I return?
When can I see my home again?

GUESTS: Dire disclosures! This usurper,
Long suspected guilty of murder!
Grimly haunted, void of virtue,

No repentance do I discern.
None at all, none at all.
A former hero sunk so low!
Mourn as we may, mourn as we may,
(Let us mourn as we may)
Let us mourn, mourn for a hero sunk so low,
Nevermore to return.
Mourn a hero sunk so low, now sunk so low.
Mourn for a man fallen so low.

ACT THREE

Increasingly perturbed, desperate to learn more, Macbeth returns to the three sisters, whose spirit masters send a tantalizingly mixed message, ambiguous reassurances, and a vision of the future that he least wanted to see.

Scene: the cavern of the witches. In the center, a cauldron is boiling, into which the witches toss their macabre ingredients.

WITCH 3: Three times the caterwauling cat has yowled in heat.

WITCH 2: The muted hooting of the owl three times I've heard.

WITCH 1: The whining porcupine three times cried warning.

TOGETHER: Now is the moment:
Be swift, malevolent!
Around the steaming pot
Come, brew a lethal plot
To spur desire and discontent.

While chanting double, double,
Toil and trouble,
Come, form a witching circle
To watch the cauldron bubble.

WITCH 3: You gullet and tongue of toad,
With snippets of poisonweed,
You wolfbane that flourishes
Where spiders and reptiles breed,
We stir into the cauldron
To make the witches' brew.

WITCH 2: You tangle of knotted rope
That hung from the gallows tree,
You stolen apparel
From travelers drowned at sea,
We pile into the cauldron
To fortify the brew.

WITCH 1: You thumbnail of baby boy
Buried alive at birth,
You rotted remains of rat
By ravenous dogs unearthed,
We pour into the cauldron
To demonize the brew.

TOGETHER: Boil! Boil!

**As the cauldron busily bubbles,
Diabolical glee redoubles.
Never mind the toils and troubles
As the cauldron boils and bubbles.
As the cauldron busily bubbles,
Diabolical glee redoubles.**

**From the highland in the distance,
Fellow spirits, lend assistance.
Out of lowland bogs and ditches,
Rally round and join the witches.
Never mind the toils and troubles
As the cauldron boils and bubbles.**

**With a tip of tongue and eye of newt,
A whisker of dead Venetian,
And a pox from house of ill repute,
The recipe's near completion.**

**See, the spell already is working;
Nearby, Macbeth is lurking.
Once again the spell is working,
Slowly working;
Close at hand Macbeth is lurking,
Grimly lurking.
Already working! There he is lurking!**

MACBETH: *(to offstage soldiers)* Till I signal,
Wait quietly at attention.

(to the witches) What do you call
This cryptic ceremony?

WITCHES: A deed without a name.

MACBETH: By that same nameless deed I then command you:
I come to learn my fate, and shall,
Though nature, the universe itself, revert to chaos.

WITCHES: Would you hear it from the masters,
The powers unknown whom we serve and obey,
Or from ourselves?

MACBETH: Summon them to appear,
And bid them open
The vast and secret chambers of the future.

WITCHES: From above, from below, from beyond us,
Spirits, rise from those regions unbounded!

(A flash of lightning, and a helmeted head rises from the cauldron.)

MACBETH: Speak and tell me ...

WITCHES: Be silent and listen.
He can read in the book of your heart.

APPARITION: *O Macbeth! Macbeth! Take warning!
Beware Macduff, Thane of Fife, source of danger.*

MACBETH: You confirm what I secretly suspected.
So continue . . . *(The spectre vanishes)*

WITCHES: He'll not be commanded.
Here's another, whose knowledge reaches further.
(Mid thunder, a bloodied child appears.)
Hush, and hear more of these revelations.

SECOND APPARITION: *O Macbeth! Macbeth!
Come, be bold, resolute!
Laugh to scorn the power of man;
You'll come to harm by none born of woman.*

MACBETH: Ah, Macduff! If relieved of the menace,
Your life I can spare.
No! No! No! Die you must!

I'm beyond taking chances.
I demand reassurance absolute!
Your death allows me to live.

But the thunder, the lightning send omens . . .
A child approaches . . . he's wearing a crown!

WITCHES: Be still, and listen!

APPARITION: *Go carefree and fearless;
Rebellious armies will strike you in vain.
Bold Macbeth never shall meet defeat
Till Birnum Wood come to high Dunsinane.*

MACBETH: So sweet a message that frees me of terror!
For when has a forest of trees come uprooted?
Rebellious trees on the march! Most improbable!
When have trees joined the army?
Too, too absurd! Too, too absurd!
Clearly, too, too absurd! To the issue:
Will sons of Banquo in the end inherit my throne?

WITCHES: Ask no further.

MACBETH: The answer! The answer!
Sisters, answer, or die by my sword!

(The cauldron sinks into the ground. Subterranean sound of bagpipes.)

But the cauldron has vanished . . . Why so?
Regal music . . . What does it portend?

WITCHES: Apparitions!
Shadows marching in procession!
Then dissolving like mist passing over.

(Kings pass slowly in single file. Banquo, the last, carries a mirror.)

**MACBETH: Leave, abhorrent fantasy
Whose face so resembles Banquo!
With flashes of blinding rays of light
Your crown has seared my eyeballs.
No! Not a second mockery,
The brow also flaunting a coronet!
And still the line goes on and on,
A third . . . a fourth . . . still others.**

I quake in fear!

**Another comes . . .
There in his hand a mirror
Showing an endless row of kings
Slowly proceeding past me.
And Banquo! A sight too horrible!
While grinning, he points them out to me.
Die this accursed hour!
Ah! I but flail at shadows,
At nothing! At nothing!
Ah! Born of my own delusion,
I flail at shadows,
I flail at misty shadows.
At nothing! At nothing!
Too dread a sight!
Petrified, petrified, I quake in fear,
In helpless fear! Will they live on?**

WITCHES: Through the ages.

MACBETH: All done for nothing . . . *(he faints)*

WITCHES: He's fainted. You airy spirits,
Come, ensnare the unconscious king
With gleeful malice.

**Lay down a snare, spirits of water, light and air;
Goad him along, drawing a knot ever tighter.
Lull him in song, humor his wayward fantasy;
Play on the mind of the deluded fighter.**

**Entice him with melody
Softer and sweeter;
Restore him to misery
Lasting and bitter.**

**Goad him on,
Spirits borne on air,
And come the dawn,
Let him wake in despair.**

**Yes, let him wake by break of day
To disillusion and dismay.
Humor his fantasy,
Luring him onward . . .**

The witches vanish; Macbeth returns to consciousness.

MACBETH : How long? . . . Where am I?
They've vanished! Oh, may this hour of lies and betrayal
Be evermore accursed!

HERALD: The queen. *(Lady Macbeth enters.)*

MACBETH: Here!

LADY MACBETH: I've found you at last! What happened?

MACBETH: I questioned the witches once again.

LADY MACBETH: Their answer?

MACBETH: *Beware Macduff! Take warning!*

LADY MACBETH: Go on . . .

MACBETH: *You'll come to harm by no man born of woman.*

LADY MACBETH: Go on . . .

MACBETH: *Rebellious armies will strike in vain,
Till Birnum Wood come to high Dunsinane.*

LADY MACBETH: Go on . . .

MACBETH: Then I saw countless future sons of Banquo;
Each wore a crown.

LADY MACBETH: Imposters! Usurpers and traitors!
Death to this pernicious nest of vipers!

MACBETH: The castle of Macduff we shall demolish,
Slaughter his wife and children.

LADY MACBETH: The son of Banquo we must first attend to.

MACBETH: Let the blood flow in torrents,
Wipe out the menace!

LADY MACBETH: There spoke what I call a man,
The valiant soldier I married.

MACBETH: Onward to kill or to die in the struggle!
Deaf to the drumbeat of conscience and reason.
Onward to battle! To battle!

LADY MACBETH: Thunder resound like the storm-driven ocean!
Stun into silence the cry of the heart.
Onward to battle! To battle!

BOTH: Hour of death, O come, be swift and ruthless!
Cancel the destiny foretold by the witches,
Shrewdly conniving!

MACBETH: We must continue!
In blood our long journey started, and so
In blood, in blood now must it end.
To battle! To battle and victory!
To kill or die we go to battle. So onward!

LADY MACBETH: We must continue!
In blood our journey began;
In blood, in blood now must it end.
To battle! To battle and victory! So onward!

ACT FOUR

SCENE ONE

Refugees who have fled from the court of King Macbeth gather on the edge of Birnam Wood to lament the tragic fate of their homeland, now rapidly turning into a graveyard. Led by Macduff, whose wife and children have been slain by Macbeth, they rally to answer the call to arms.

Scene: a deserted place on the border of Scotland and England. In the distance Birnam Wood is visible. Refugees are gathered; Macduff stands sadly apart.

**REFUGEES: O my country! Bowed in sorrow!
The name of motherland no longer can you claim.
Now you bear a harsher name:
Not our mother, but our grave.**

**Sound of weeping, sound of wailing;
Former meadows strewn with crosses.**

**Widows, orphans, mourn their losses,
Life itself that none could save.**

**To their cry the heavens answer,
Stirred to fury and compassion
For a wounded, fractured nation
Bowed in sorrow and sheer despair.**

**Bells are tolling for fallen heroes.
Yet can no one of rank or station
Breathe a murmur of indignation;
Only mumble a muffled prayer.**

**None can vent their indignation,
Only mouthe a muffled prayer.
O my country! Bowed in sorrow!
O my country! My country!**

MACDUFF: My children! My wife and children!
My tender babies! All slain by that butcher,
Like heads of cattle. My children and their mother!
Compelled to flee, I left them helpless
In the claws of a tiger.

**My dearest wife and children,
Left there alone, unshielded
From fiends devoid of mercy!
When needed most, I failed them all.**

**Pleading in vain for mercy,
They had no father to hear their cries of terror,
And then the dreadful silence
When life and breath were gone beyond recall.**

**Oh, Lord! Let me face these murderers!
If they escape my vengeance
In hell let me burn forever,
And open your arms to them.
Oh, Lord! In hell let me burn forever,
And pardon all of them.**

Malcolm enters, with soldiers and chorus.

MALCOLM: What locale? . . . This wooded valley . . .

OTHERS: Locals call it Birnam Wood.

MALCOLM: Each shall hew a bough, and bear it
Like a shield of marching trees.
(to Macduff) Let revenge become your comfort.

MACDUFF: Easily said . . . you have no children.

MALCOLM: All that love their native country,
Take up arms and follow me!

**TUTTI: Our country, now bleeding,
That rages and suffers
Has rallied its brothers
To answer the call.**

**The hammer of heaven
Already has driven
This devil, this demon
To stagger and fall.**

**The murderer, the monster
Will stagger and fall
When heaven delivers
Its mighty blow.**

**United, we rally
To answer the call
To force the tyrant to fall.
We answer the call,
The call to arms!**

SCENE TWO

It is long past midnight. In the darkened room two people anxiously wait for Lady Macbeth to appear -- asleep, yet walking, holding a lighted taper, speaking disconnected though all too revealing fragments of guilt and anguish, her eyes wide open, staring, yet seeing nothing . . .

Scene: a hall in the castle of Macbeth. It is night.

DOCTOR: In vain, two nights we've waited.

LADY: Tonight she will appear.

DOCTOR: Asleep, yet walking? What does she talk of?

LADY: I dare not repeat it to a living soul. Look at her!

*Lady Macbeth enters. Though fast asleep, her eyes are wide open.
She carries a lighted taper.*

DOCTOR: A lighted taper in hand . . .

LADY: So fearful of the dark, it is always in reach at her bedside.

DOCTOR: Her eyes wide open, and staring,

LADY: Yet seeing nothing.

DOCTOR: She keeps rubbing her hand . . .

LADY: As if to wash it . . .

**LADY MACBETH: Still so spotted! So stained and spotted!
Out, I tell you! Out, damned spot!
One . . . two . . . now time to do it!
Go ahead! Are you afraid?
And you call yourself a soldier!
I call you coward!
The king is sleeping.
Ah, but who would have thought
The old man had so much, so much blood?
Who would have thought?
Who would have thought?**

DOCTOR: Strange indeed . . .

**LADY MACBETH: The Thane of Fife had a wife . . .
Where is she now?
Oh, these hands!**

DOCTOR & LADY: Drenched in blood . . .

**LADY MACBETH: And am I never
To see them clean again?
Will I not see them clean again?**

DOCTOR & LADY: Nevermore . . .

**LADY MACBETH: The stench of blood, ever present . . .
And all the perfumes,
All the many, many perfumes of Arabia**

**Will not sweeten this hand,
This little hand.
No balm can sweeten this hand. Ay, me!**

DOCTOR: Anguish!

**LADY MACBETH: Be off, be off! Put on your night clothes.
Look not so pallid.
Banquo's safely dead and buried;
From the grave he'll not return, he'll not return.**

DOCTOR: This as well?

**LADY MACBETH: To bed, to bed now . . .
What is done cannot be undone.
Someone's knocking! Banquo is buried.
Give me your hand and look not so pale.
A little water soon will clear us.
Come on to bed, away . . .**

DOCTOR & LADY: Oh, what we have seen!
What we have heard!
What we have seen and heard!

SCENE THREE

Scene: a room in the castle.

MACBETH: Traitors all!
With England they have joined to fight me.
Yet the all-knowing masters reassured me:

*Be of cheer; scorn the power of man.
You'll be conquered by none born of woman.*

No! I've no need to fear!
Not you and not the boy you call your leader.
Yet the coming battle
Will secure me forever,
Or destroy me entirely.

**But I have lived long enough.
I now grow weary;
The leaf has withered.**

**Regard, esteem and devotion,
Rewards of a life well tended,
Warm friendship and simple pleasures
I'm never again to know.
Welcoming smiles, banter and mirth --
These pleasures have ended,
Replaced long ago.**

**In death to lie unlamented!
A grave no tears shall water,
Ah! Curses, abhorrence and loathing
Become my legacy.
Only the fruits of fear --
Hatred and fury,
Curses, abhorrence and loathing,
But none to mourn for me.**

**No tear will fall in sorrow for me.
My only reward, scorn and mockery,
And a curse on the day that I was born.
No mournful tear,
Only disdain and fury,
And sorrow that I was ever born.**

LADIES: (*within*) Ah, milady!

MACBETH: A cry of woe!

LADY: (*entering*) The Queen is dead, your Highness.

MACBETH: I've no time for mourning.
Life is a tale told by an idiot,
Full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

SOLDIERS: (*entering*) Your Highness! Your Highness!

MACBETH: What news? What's the matter?

SOLDIERS: We could have sworn Birnam Wood started marching!

MACBETH: So those sisters from hell have outplayed me!
Here's my answer: get ready!
Sword and saber! Summon soldiers!

SOLDIERS: Here to serve you!

MACBETH: No surrender!

SOLDIERS: No surrender!

MACBETH: To battle! To battle!
Onward, to win or die!

SOLDIERS: To battle! And to win or die!

Scene: Near Birnam Wood.

MACDUFF: Discard the foliage, and grab your weapons.
Find the tyrant!

SOLDIERS: To capture and kill him!

They all leave to martial music. Macbeth enters, with Macduff in hot pursuit.

MACDUFF: So you're the fiend who slew my wife and babies!

MACBETH: Not a man born of woman
On me can lay a hand.

MACDUFF: I was not born, but ripped untimely from the womb.

MACBETH: Damn you!

(Brandishing swords, they disappear from view. Women enter, in great agitation.)

LADIES: Long day of anguish! O Lord, preserve our children!
Pray now for peace.

CHORUS: *(within)* Hosanna! Hosanna!

Enter Malcolm, Macduff, soldiers.

MALCOLM: Have you the tyrant who stole the crown?

MACDUFF: Now dead. My sword succeeded.
(kneeling before Malcolm) Long live the king!

OTHERS: Hail, hail the king!

CHORUS 1: Hurrah! The tyrant slain,

No more to stalk the land,
The god of just revenge
Has dealt a blow
That brutal tyranny could not withstand.

The hero we salute
Who's rid the land of fear.
We honor and revere
The stalwart heart and hand
That freed a captive nation.

CHORUS 2: The hero we salute
Who's rid a torn and fractured land of fear.
We welcome with a cheer
The restoration of a just domain.

CHORUS 1: Hurrah! The tyrant slain,
No more to stalk the land.
The god of just revenge
Has dealt a blow
That brutal tyranny could not withstand.

WOMEN: All praises go to thee,
O god of peace on earth,
For freedom now restored
To this proud land of our birth.

MACDUFF: With joy we hail the king
Whose reign has just begun.
With peace and hope restored,
We live to see a new and brighter dawn.

MALCOLM: Another kind of king,
I lay aside the sword.
With peace and hope restored,
We live to see a new and brighter dawn.

MACDUFF: Our prayer is granted,
Long strife is ended.
Soon healed and mended,
We live in freedom again.
Tomorrow, in joy and hope,
We greet a brighter dawn.

MALCOLM: Great god of justice,
Be Thou my beacon,

Lighting the journey
To heal a stricken domain.
Tomorrow, in joy and hope
We greet a brighter dawn.

WOMEN: Cry hallelujah! God has provided.
We go now guided
By a leader just and humane.
With grateful hearts
In joy and hope we greet a brighter dawn.

MEN: A hearty cheer! Now liberated,
Come, enjoy the peace and freedom long awaited.
The hero we salute
Who's rid the land of fear,
And hail a worthy king
Whose reign has just begun,
Has just begun,
That all may live to greet a new and brighter dawn.

THE END