

The Fast Macbeth

We meet three witches on an open heath, looking mysterious and wondering [1]. One suggests a good time [2]. Then they sing their famous song. [3]. Two Scottish generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have won a great victory for their king and country. The “weird sisters” meet them and predict that Banquo’s heirs will one day rule the kingdom and that Macbeth himself will become king. Macbeth says he will leave that to fate: [4]. But he sends his wife the witches’ predictions and the news that King Duncan is planning a sleep-over at the Macbeth’s that night. She is itching for Macbeth to get the crown, but worried [5]. She hatches a plan but when Macbeth arrives she tells him to keep it secret, [6]. Macbeth balks, and when Lady Macbeth challenges his manhood, he bristles: [7]. But she won’t be put off [8]. As he thinks it over, he begins to hallucinate [9]. Remembering the witches’ prophesy—and his wife’s dare, he drugs the kings’ guards then murders the king. Right away he starts thinking maybe it wasn’t a good idea as he looks at his hands: [10]. When the assassination is discovered, the king’s two sons flee. [11].

With them gone, Macbeth is chosen king. After his coronation, the Macbeths throw a huge banquet. Macbeth is now worried about Banquo and his son, especially since the witches are now batting 1.000. Lady Macbeth sees him deep in thought and thinking he’s feeling guilty, reminds him that it’s over and that [12]. Macbeth, though, has hired killers to stalk Banquo and his son as they go off for a horseback ride before dinner. The murderers, though, bat only .500, and Fleance, Banquo’s son, escapes. Macbeth is furious and gets even worse when Banquo’s ghost keeps interrupting

the feast. The others can’t see the ghost and think he’s gone ‘round the twist. Lady Macbeth says he’s just not feeling well and sends everyone home.

Macbeth now goes to find the weird sisters. They’re cooking up a stew in their charmed pot: [13] and they sense Macbeth approaching: [14] When he presses them, they give him three more prophecies. First, he is to watch out for Macduff, who is still loyal to Duncan. Second, he cannot be harmed by any man born of woman. Third, he cannot be vanquished until Birnam Forest climbs up steep Dunsinane Hill. Then they show him a line of kings stretching from Fleance down through King James (who, not coincidentally, is on the throne when the play is first performed). Macbeth decides it’s better to be safe than sorry, though, [15] and while Macduff is in England raising an army, Macbeth has his wife and children slaughtered. Back at the castle, Lady Macbeth has lost her mind from guilt. Now she’s the one worried about blood, walking in her sleep and trying to wash her hands [16] but to no avail [17].

Macduff returns with an army to challenge Macbeth. When he’s told his wife has died, he’s not feeling good about life [18]. But he decides to fight on because [19]. The bad news starts when Macduff’s army cuts tree branches to carry and hide their numbers. Then in single combat, Macduff delivers more bad news: he was not born of woman but delivered by Caesarian section. With his back finally against the wall, Macbeth chooses to fight to the death, [20]. Macduff kills him, restores Duncan’s son Malcolm to the throne, and all is well. (Except for all the dead folks.) Curtain!

1

When shall we three
meet again in thunder,
lightning, or in rain?

2

When the battle's
lost and won.

3

Fair is foul,
and
foul is fair.

4

If chance will have me
king, why, chance may
crown me.

8

Screw your courage
to the sticking-place.

7

I dare do all that may
become a man; Who
dares do more is none.

6

**Look like the innocent
flower, but be the
serpent under't.**

5

**Yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of
human kindness.**

16

**Out, damned spot!
out, I say!**

15

**from this moment The
very firstlings of my
heart shall be The
firstlings of my hand**

14

**By the pricking of my
thumbs, Something
wicked this way comes.**

13

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

12

What's done is done.

11

**There's daggers
in men's smiles.**

10

**Will all great Neptune's
ocean wash this blood
clean from my hand?**

9

**Is this a dagger which I
see before me, The
handle toward my hand?**

18

**Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking
shadow, a poor player.**

17

**All the perfumes of
Arabia will not sweeten
this little hand.**

19

I bear a charmed life.

20

**And damn'd be him
that first cries,
Hold, enough!.**