

Excerpt from *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare

Act III, Scene i

Enter Banquo

Banquo

Thou hast it now: king, Cawdor, Glamis, all,
As the weird women promised, and, I fear,
Thou play'st most foully for't: yet it was said
It should not stand in thy posterity,
But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them—

5

As upon thee, Macbeth, their speeches shine—
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well,
And set me up in hope? But hush! no more.

*Sennet sounded. Enter Macbeth as King, Lady
Macbeth, Lennox, Ross, Lords, Ladies, and Attendants*

10

Macbeth. Here's our chief guest.

Lady Macbeth. If he had been forgotten,
It had been as a gap in our great feast,
And all thing unbecoming.

Macbeth. Tonight we hold a solemn supper sir,
And I'll request your presence.

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Banquo. Let your highness
Command upon me; to the which my duties
Are with a most indissoluble tie
For ever knit.

Macbeth. Ride you this afternoon?

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Banquo realizes that Macbeth's hands are unclean in Duncan's death. He demonstrates virtue by acknowledging that his best friend has crossed over a moral line.

Banquo. Ay, my good lord.

Macbeth. We should have else desired your good advice,
(Which still hath been both grave and prosperous)

In this day's council; but we'll take tomorrow.

Is't far you ride? 25

Banquo. As far, my lord, as will fill up the time

'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,

I must become a borrower of the night

For a dark hour or twain.

Macbeth. Fail not our feast. 30

Banquo. My lord, I will not.

Macbeth. We hear, our bloody cousins are bestowed

In England and in Ireland, not confessing

Their cruel parricide, filling their hearers

With strange invention: but of that tomorrow, 35

When therewithal we shall have cause of state

Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,

Till you return at night. Goes Fleance with you?

Banquo. Ay, my good lord: our time does call upon 's.

Macbeth. I wish your horses swift and sure of foot; 40

And so I do commend you to their backs.

Farewell. *Banquo exits.*

Let every man be master of his time

Till seven at night: to make society

The sweeter welcome, we will keep ourself 45

Till suppertime alone: while then, God be with you.

Lords and all but Macbeth and a Servant exit.

Sirrah, a word with you: attend those men

Our pleasure?

Attendant. They are, my lord, without the palace gate.

Macbeth. Bring them before us. *Servant exits.* 50

To be thus is nothing;

But to be safely thus.—Our fears in Banquo

Stick deep; and in his royalty of nature

Reigns that which would be fear'd: 'tis much he dares,

And to that dauntless temper of his mind, 55

He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour

To act in safety. There is none but he

Whose being I do fear: and, under him

My genius is rebuked; as, it is said, 60

Mark Antony's was by Caesar. He chid the sisters

When first they put the name of king upon me,

And bade them speak to him: then prophet-like

They hail'd him father to a line of kings:

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown, 65

And put a barren sceptre in my gripe,

Thence to be wrenched with an unlineal hand,

No son of mine succeeding. If 't be so,

For Banquo's issue have I filed my mind;

For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd; 70

Put rancours in the vessel of my peace

Only for them; and mine eternal jewel

Given to the common enemy of man,

To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!

Rather than so, come fate into the list. 75

And champion me to the utterance! Who's there!

Enter Attendant, with two Murderers.

[To the Servant] Now go to the door, and stay there till we

Macbeth's fear of Banquo is palpable. The reader can tell he is on the verge of irrational action.

Macbeth begins to realize the prophecy of the witches wasn't as full proof as he initially believed, because he has no sons. This sparks pity in the reader because, to a certain extent, Macbeth was manipulated into altering his own fate by the witches and Lady Macbeth.

call.

Servant exits.

Was it not yesterday we spoke together? 80

Murderers. It was, so please your highness.

Macbeth. Well then, now

Have you considered of my speeches? Know

That it was he in the times past which held you

So under fortune, which you thought had been 85

Our innocent self: this I made good to you

In our last conference, pass'd in probation with you,

How you were borne in hand, how crossed,

the instruments,

Who wrought with them, and all things else that might 90

To half a soul and to a notion crazed

Say 'Thus did Banquo.'

First Murderer. You made it known to us.

Macbeth. I did so, and went further, which is now 95

Our point of second meeting. Do you find

Your patience so predominant in your nature

That you can let this go? Are you so gospell'd

To pray for this good man and for his issue,

Whose heavy hand hath bow'd you to the grave 100

And beggared yours for ever?

First Murderer. We are men, my liege.

Macbeth. Ay, in the catalogue ye go for men;

As hounds and greyhounds, mongrels, spaniels, curs, 105

Shoughs, water-rugs and demi-wolves, are clept

All by the name of dogs: the valued file

Distinguishes the swift, the slow, the subtle,

Macbeth is showing his frailty. Power has so consumed him that he is manipulating men into believing that his best friend is their- and his-enemy.

The housekeeper, the hunter, every one
According to the gift which bounteous nature
Hath in him closed; whereby he does receive
Particular addition. from the bill
That writes them all alike: and so of men.
Now, if you have a station in the file,
Not i' the worst rank of manhood, say 't;
And I will put that business in your bosoms,
Whose execution takes your enemy off,
Grapples you to the heart and love of us,
Who wear our health but sickly in his life,
Which in his death were perfect.

Second Murderer. I am one, my liege,
Whom the vile blows and buffets of the world
Have so incensed that I am reckless what
I do to spite the world.

First Murderer. And I another
So weary with disasters, tugged with fortune,
That I would set my lie on any chance,
To mend it, or be rid on't.

Macbeth. Both of you
Know Banquo was your enemy.

130

Here again, Macbeth's thirst for power is driving him to irrational decisions.

Murderers. True, my lord.

Macbeth. So is he mine; and in such bloody distance, That every minute of his being thrusts Against my nearest of life: and though I could With barefaced power sweep him from my sight And bid my will avouch it, yet I must not, For certain friends that are both his and mine,	135	<i>Here, the reader sees Macbeth's visceral fear of Banquo. The only resolution, for Macbeth, is to rid his world of Banquo and his son, Fleance.</i>
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Whose loves I may not drop, but wail his fall
Who I myself struck down; and thence it is,
That I to your assistance do make love, 140
Masking the business from the common eye
For sundry weighty reasons.

Second Murderer. We shall, my lord,
Perform what you command us.

First Murderer. Though our lives— 145

Macbeth. Your spirits shine through you. Within this hour at
most

I will advise you where to plant yourselves;
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o' the time,
The moment on't; for't must be done tonight, 150
And something from the palace; always thought

That I require a clearness: and with him—
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work—
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
Whose absence is no less material to me 155
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour. Resolve yourselves apart:
I'll come to you anon.

Murderers. We are resolved, my lord.

Macbeth. I'll call upon you straight: abide within. 160

[Murderers exit.]

It is concluded. Banquo, thy soul's flight,
If it find heaven, must find it out tonight.

[He exits.]

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