

Wayward Excerpt

By

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ACT III

Scene 17

*A long table is set up with many chairs (maybe the table isn't physicalized). Perhaps only 2 moves chairs, perhaps 2 and 3. When it is set up and Macbeth is alone on stage, he speaks as if to an assembly, yet no one else is there.*

MACBETH (1)

You know your own degrees; sit down: at first  
And last the hearty welcome.  
Ourself will mingle with society,  
And play the humble host.

*Lady Macbeth enters.*

Our hostess keeps her state, but in best time  
We will require her welcome.

*She sits.*

LADY MACBETH (3)

Pronounce it for me, sir, to all our friends;  
For my heart speaks they are welcome.

*Murderer enters, lingers at the edge of the space.  
Murderer is now played by 2, but has the same  
movement, voice, and mannerisms as 3's Murderer.*

MACBETH (1)

See, they encounter thee with their hearts' thanks.  
Both sides are even: here I'll sit i' the midst:  
Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure  
The table round.

*He goes to the Murderer.*

There's blood on thy face.

MURDERER (2)

'tis Banquo's then.

MACBETH (1)

Is he dispatch'd?

MURDERER (2)

My lord, his throat is cut; that I did for him.

MACBETH (1)

Thou art the best o' the cut-throats: yet he's good  
That did the like for Fleance: if thou didst it,  
Thou art the nonpareil.

(CONTINUED)

MURDERER (2)  
 Most royal sir,  
 Fleance is 'scaped.

MACBETH (1)  
 Then comes my fit again: I had else been perfect,  
 Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,  
 As broad and general as the casing air:  
 But now I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confined, bound in  
 To saucy doubts and fears. But Banquo's safe?

MURDERER (2)  
 Ay, my good lord: safe in a ditch he bides,  
 With twenty trenched gashes on his head;  
 The least a death to nature.

MACBETH (1)  
 Thanks for that:  
 There the grown serpent lies; the worm that's fled  
 Hath nature that in time will venom breed,  
 No teeth for the present. Get thee gone: tomorrow  
 We'll hear, ourselves, again.

*Murderer exits.*

LADY MACBETH (3)  
 My royal lord,  
 You do not give the cheer: the feast is sold  
 That is not often vouch'd, while 'tis a-making,  
 'Tis given with welcome: to feed were best at home;  
 From thence the sauce to meat is ceremony;  
 Meeting were bare without it.

MACBETH (1)  
 Sweet remembrancer!  
 Now, good digestion wait on appetite,  
 And health on both!

LADY MACBETH (3)  
 May't please your highness sit.

MACBETH (1)  
 Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,  
 Were the graced person of our Banquo present;  
 Who may I rather challenge for unkindness  
 Than pity for mischance!

*Banquo enters, does not sit, and 1 does not see 2.  
 Banquo directly addresses the audience.*

BANQUO (2)  
 Fair is foul and unkindness is kindness. Macbeth, in  
 his kindness, professes me unkind for an absence he  
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BANQUO (2) (cont'd)

himself doth make. A toast, a toast, let us drink o'  
the milk so that we all may be kind like Macbeth.

This is a tonal change, isn't it. We've broken from the text before, but this is more...direct, isn't it. Not full of poetry or grace, not lyrical or spherical, pointing out the diabolical that we all already see, and yes, it is fascinating to note that the word 'kindness' is only used once and describes Macbeth, and 'unkindness' only once and derides me. And that the speakers are, respectively, Lady M and Maccers themselves. But does this dramaturgy really have a place in this script? Does my entrance really add anything to the play?

So maybe it doesn't. So maybe I just wasn't ready to leave yet.

This is a play about the struggle between two and three.

And so that I don't lose all of my enigma, I will leave it at that.

*Banquo remains on stage but not in the scene. The only one sitting is Lady M.*

LADY MACBETH (3)

Please't your highness  
To grace us with your royal company.

MACBETH (1)

The table's full.

LADY MACBETH (3)

Here is a place reserved, *sir*.

MACBETH (1)

Where?

LADY MACBETH (3)

Here, my good lord. What is't that moves your highness?

*Banquo says "What is't that moves your highness?" with Lady M. Macbeth delivers the next line to his hands.*

MACBETH (1)

Which of you have done this?

(CONTINUED)

LADY MACBETH (3)  
/What--?

*Brings hands to self.*

MACBETH (1)  
Thou canst not say I did it: never shake  
Thy gory locks at me.

LADY MACBETH (3)  
--my good lord--

MACBETH (1)  
Gentlemen, rise: his highness is not well!

LADY MACBETH (3)  
Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,  
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;  
The fit is momentary; upon a thought  
He will again be well: if much you note him,  
You shall offend him and extend his passion:  
Feed, and regard him not. Are you a man?

BANQUO (2)  
Ok, pause. Another bit of dramaturgy. Note how every  
time Macbeth isn't behaving how Lady M wants him to,  
she does this: questions his manhood.

MACBETH (1)  
Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that  
Which might appall the devil.

LADY MACBETH (3)  
O proper stuff!  
This is the very painting of your fear:  
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,  
Led you to Duncan. O, these flaws and starts,  
Impostors to true fear, would well become  
A woman's story at a winter's fire,  
Authorized by her grandam. Shame itself!  
Why do you make such faces? When all's done,  
You look but on a stool.

MACBETH (1)  
Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how say you?  
Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.  
If charnel-houses and our graves must send  
Those that we bury back, our monuments  
Shall be the maws of kites.

LADY MACBETH (3)  
What, quite unmann'd in folly?

(CONTINUED)

BANQUO (2)

Hark, again. Could this, perhaps, be a play about toxic masculinity? What, too heavy handed? I know, don't spell it out for your audience, trust their intelligence and acumen. I'm sure they've all realized at this point that we're commentating on gender. But I think a recent phrase applied to an aged text is a worthy intervention. I present you with a term; you do the connecting.

I feel I've interrupted something. The poetry, the subtlety. Although I mean, c'mon, it's not like it's all been so subtle. I mean I gave birth. Right? But we've shifted since the start, gotten deeper into the text, trusted the power of the language and our bodies. Start to forget where we come from. Start to loose ourselves in the language that constricts and releases us. Realizes us. Look, I'm getting more poetic. Language is alluring. Every word is a promise.

I will leave now.

*Doesn't. And then does.*

MACBETH (1)

If I stand here, I saw him.

Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,  
Ere human statute purged the gentle weal;  
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd  
Too terrible for the ear: the times have been,  
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,  
And there an end; but now they rise again,  
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,  
And push us from our stools: this is more strange  
Than such a murder is.

LADY MACBETH (3)

My worthy lord,  
Your noble friends do lack you.

MACBETH (1)

I do forget.  
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,  
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing  
To those that know me. Come, love and health to all;  
Then I'll sit down. Give me some wine; fill full.  
I drink to the general joy o' the whole table,  
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;  
Would he were here! to all, and him, we thirst,  
And all to all.

*When 1 says 'Banquo,' Banquo enters. This time  
Banquo is in the playing space, and 1 sees 2.*

(CONTINUED)

Avaunt! and quit my sight! let the earth hide thee!  
 Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;  
 Thou hast no speculation in those eyes  
 Which thou dost glare with!

LADY MACBETH (3)

Think of this, good peers,  
 But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other;  
 Only it spoils the pleasure of the time.

MACBETH (1)

What man dare, I dare:  
 Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,  
 The arm'd rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger;  
 Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves  
 Shall never tremble: or be alive again,  
 And dare me to the desert with thy sword;  
 If trembling I inhabit then, protest me  
 The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow!  
 Unreal mockery, hence!

*Banquo turns sharply, exits the scene, directly  
 addresses us.*

BANQUO (2)

I said that every word is a promise. I do not entirely  
 know what I meant. It sounded true to me in the way  
 that certain words sound true together.

I know that I have complicated and unoriginal thoughts  
 on 'promise.' A word that predicts the future, and is  
 always a lie. A promise is a wish. A strong wish. Or a  
 goal. Why bother having a word that guarantees the  
 unguaranteeable? Except that of course sometimes a  
 promise shapes the outcome it claims to predict.

I am bored by this line of thought and will now abandon  
 it. I promise.

I think I'm being annoying. The dead often are. It's  
 just that I've started talking and I'm not sure that if  
 I stop I won't be gone. That is I feel erased. I do not  
 wish to exist simply as a foil for Macbeths. Or as a  
 figment of his highness' guilt.

*In that voice:*

You ladies know what I'm talking about, huh?

*Back to normal tone:*

Too heavy handed again? I'm sorry. I don't really know  
 how to do this. Help.

Help me. Please help.

(CONTINUED)

*If anyone does anything, 2 can improvise accordingly. If not, she waits until her hope snaps, and then leaves.*

MACBETH (1)

Why, so: being gone,  
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.

LADY MACBETH (3)

You have displaced the mirth, broke the good meeting,  
With most admired disorder.

MACBETH (1)

Can such things be,  
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,  
Without our special wonder? You make me strange  
Even to the disposition that I owe,  
When now I think you can behold such sights,  
And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,  
When mine is blanched with fear.

LADY MACBETH (3)

At once, good night:  
Stand not upon the order of your going,  
But go at once. A kind goodnight to all!

*1 and 3 watch the guests leave. When they are alone:*

MACBETH (1)

It will have blood; they say, blood will have blood:  
Stones have been known to move and trees to speak;  
Augurs and understood relations have  
By magot-pies and choughs and rooks brought forth  
The secret'st man of blood. What is the night?

LADY MACBETH (3)

Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

MACBETH (1)

How say'st thou, that Macduff denies his person  
At our great bidding?

LADY MACBETH (3)

Did you send to him, sir?

MACBETH (1)

I will tomorrow,  
And betimes I will, to the wayard sisters:  
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,  
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,  
All causes shall give way: I am in blood  
Stepp'd in so far that, should I wade no more,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)



MACBETH (1) (cont'd)

Returning were as tedious as go o'er:  
Strange things I have in head, that will to hand;  
Which must be acted ere they may be scann'd.

LADY MACBETH (3)

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

MACBETH (1)

Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse  
Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:  
We are yet but young in deed.