

SCENE 5

Inverness.¹ Macbeth's castle.

ENTER LADY MACBETH, READING A LETTER

Lady Macbeth "They² met me in³ the day of success.⁴ And I have learned, by the perfectest⁵ report, they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which
5 they vanished. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives⁶ from the king, who all hailed me 'Thane of Cawdor,' by which title, before, these weird sisters saluted⁷ me, and referred me⁸ to the coming on of time, with 'Hail, king that shalt be!' This have I thought good to deliver⁹ thee,
10 my dearest partner of greatness, that thou mightst not lose the dues¹⁰ of rejoicing, by being ignorant of what greatness is promised thee. Lay¹¹ it to thy heart, and farewell."

metaphor

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be

What thou art promised. Yet do I fear thy nature:

15 It is too full o' the milk of human kindness¹²

1 central Scotland, roughly 100 mi. N of Glasgow

2 the witches

3 on

4 military/battle success

5 (1) fullest, most complete, (2) faultless, most certain

6 messengers

7 addressed, greeted

8 referred me = directed/pointed me

9 transmit/report/communicate to

10 (1) right, (2) that which is owed

11 deposit, place, set

12 It has been suggested that this should be, in effect, one word: "humankindness." The 1623 Folio's spelling, used in this edition, does not at first seem to settle the issue, since "kindness" then meant "kinship." But the OED's earliest

Macbeth's nature is being compared to
"milk of human kindness"

She thinks he is too kind to seize the
opportunity to become king

You are the Thane of Glamis and now the thane
of Cawdor, you will be what the witches predicted.
Yet, I fear of who you are in nature. You are too kind
that you don't do what you have to do. You wish
to be a great person, and you have ambition but
you lack the evilness associated with that ambition.
You have great desire, but you want to get it as a
good man; you will not act falsely to gain it. But you
want what you are not supposed to have.

You want something (the crown) that calls out
"You must do this (something wicked) if you want
to have it"; on the other hand, rather than
do what you fear to do in order to gain it,
You would have someone else do the wickedness for

you (Even other person did the wickedness. you
would not wish it undone.) Hurry home

so I can persuade you with my words and
correct you (change your mind) with the boldness
of my words so that you can overcome your
character which prevents you from gaining the crown
which the witches have already made you king

"milk" is something that female have,
represents helpful, humane, considerate.
We can infer that she thinks Macbeth is not
being manly, he is not cruel enough to
do what he should do (wicked, murderous)

can be killing Duncan
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To catch¹³ the nearest¹⁴ way. Thou wouldst¹⁵ be great,
Art not without ambition, but without

The illness¹⁶ should attend¹⁷ it. What thou wouldst highly,¹⁸
That wouldst thou ^{morally}holy, wouldst not play false

And yet wouldst wrongly¹⁹ win. Thou dost²⁰ have, great

kingship

Glamis, ^{gaining / receiving something} That which cries²¹ "Thus thou must do" if thou have²² it,

And²³ that which rather²⁴ thou dost fear to do

Than wishest should be undone. Hie²⁵ thee ^{come home quickly}hither, come

Personification

That I may pour my spirits²⁶ in thine ear,

And chastise²⁷ with the valor of my tongue her words

All that impedes²⁸ thee from the golden round, ^{stops} king's

Which fate and metaphysical²⁹ aid doth seem ^{witches} crown

Lady Macbeth's

To have thee crowned withal.

nature

you with

citation for "humankind" is approximately 1645. This too is not conclusive. Yet a metaphor based on mother's milk seems to fit a good deal better with the more traditional reading, and "kindness" as "the state of being kind" is cited in the OED from about 1350 on. The OED editors cite "the milk of human kindness" as one among the citations for "the quality or habit of being kind"

13 seize, lay hold/take possession of

14 most direct/shortest

15 want to

16 wickedness, depravity

17 should attend = that ought to accompany*

18 very much, greatly

19 unjustly, unfittingly

20 you would/wish/want to

21 calls out/begs

22 are/want to have

23 and on the other hand/at the same time

24 more

25 hasten, hurry* hie

hither = to or towards a place

26 vital powers/character/disposition

27 discipline, reform, correct

28 the golden round = the kingly crown

29 supernatural

use of consonance
|th| and |w| sound

use of assonance
|il| sound (short)

use of sibilance
lots of "s" sound

There are lots of "thou"

"wouldst" "without" "thee"

Long "I" "my" Lady Macbeth's wishes and concerns

"thee" refers to Macbeth

done means finish doing something

29

Macbeth is full of kindness in him so Lady Macbeth will fill him with her character, by "pouring it into him". So Macbeth can change his mind.

- She fears her husband is too kind to seize the crown
- She notes that he has ambition, but he will not do anything wicked to attain it
- He would not refuse the crown if someone done the wickedness
- She says to herself, come home and I will persuade you with my words to change your mind so that you act wickedly to become what you have been promised to become

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ENTER A MESSENGER

What is your tidings?

Messenger The king comes here tonight. Duncan will be coming to the castle tonight

Lady Macbeth Thou'rt mad³⁰ to

say it.

30 Is not thy master with him? – who, were't so,

Would have informed for³¹ preparation.³²

Messenger So please you, it is true. Our thane is coming.

One of my fellows³³ had the speed of³⁴ him,

Who, almost dead for breath,³⁵ had scarcely more³⁶

35 Than would make up³⁷ his message.

Lady Macbeth

Give him tending,³⁸

He brings great news.

She asks those spirits to come and

sign that terrible thing EXIT MESSENGER "unsex" her (to make her more like a man who would be more likely to murder than a woman are going to happen metaphor would)

The raven himself³⁹ is hoarse, use of consonance

(Duncan will be murdered)

← That⁴⁰ croaks the fatal⁴¹ entrance of Duncan

Under my⁴² battlements. Come, you spirits → beings with no body use of sibilance

That tend on⁴³ mortal thoughts, unsex me here,

Duncan coming into her castle where he should be protected but it is where he will be murdered (fatal)

↓ living beings subject to

30 frenzied, delusional, insane death / actions ending

31 informed me for the purpose of making in or causing

32 PREPaRaTiON

33 colleagues, comrades

34 the speed of = a faster rate of progression (by running) than

35 shortness of breath

36 more breath left

37 would make up = constituted, formed

38 care, attention

39 indeed, in fact

40 he who (the raven being a singularly appropriate announcer of Duncan's ill-fated visit)

41 fated, destined to bring doom*

42 (not "these battlements," or "Macbeth's," or even "Macbeth's and my," but "my")

43 tend on = watch over, take charge of, wait upon ("attend to")

The raven (the messenger) has a sore throat from cawing so much about Duncan entering the castle (fatally) where he should feel protected. Come to me you spirits who attend to those who have thoughts of murder, remove my femininity

She asks the spirits to

fill her from top to bottom with the most horrible cruelty

↓ looks back to "full with the milk of human kindness"

Lady Macbeth wants Macbeth to come home so she can fill him her character but now

30 ask spirits to fill her the cruelty so that she is bold enough to act wickedly for Macbeth as she fears his nature

She wants that done so no compunction
visits her and stops her from doing what she
plans to do

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And fill me, from the crown⁴⁴ to the toe, top full⁴⁵ make the blood⁴⁶ flow differently
Of direst⁴⁶ cruelty! Make thick⁴⁷ my blood, (be braver, crueler, different)
Stop up the access and passage⁴⁸ to remorse,⁴⁹ regrets for doing something wrong
That no compunctious visitings⁵⁰ of nature
Shake my fell purpose,⁵¹ nor keep peace between
The effect⁵² and it. Come to my woman's breasts remove her human kindness⁴⁵
And take⁵³ my milk for⁵⁴ gall,⁵⁵ spirit you murdering ministers,⁵⁶
Wherever⁵⁷ in your sightless⁵⁸ substances⁵⁹ cannot be seen
You wait on⁶⁰ nature's mischief!⁶¹ Come, thick night,⁶² very dark
And pall⁶³ thee in the dunest⁶⁴ smoke of hell, super dark and smoky
That my keen⁶⁵ knife see not the wound it makes, 50
personification

exchange milk for
acidic bile that would
poison the nurturing food
of breast milk (milk of
human kindness)
alliteration

wait, in hiding, to do
evil acts (inspire human
to do terrible things like
murder)

- 44 top of the head*
- 45 top full = brim full, filled to the very top
- 46 most horrible/terrible/evil
- 47 dense (so sentiments not cruel - e.g., pity - cannot flow to her heart)
- 48 access and passage = entrance and (1) transit, (2) right/opportunity of movement
- 49 to remorse = do not allow "access and passage" to (1) regret, repentance, conscience, (2) pity/compassion/tenderness
- 50 compunctious visitings = remorseful influences
- 51 fell purpose = fierce/savage/cruel intention/resolution*
- 52 result
- 53 accept, receive
- 54 in exchange for
- 55 liver bile, traditionally associated with bitterness, rancor, etc.
- 56 agents*
- 57 (i.e., "come" from "wherever" you "wait on")
- 58 invisible, unseen, dark
- 59 essences, essential natures
- 60 wait on = wait for, await
- 61 evil, misfortune, misery
- 62 (Wills, *Witches and Jesuits*, 56, cites the "begetter" of *Macbeth*, King James, who wrote in his *Daemonologie* that the devil can "thicken and obscure the air ... that the beams of any other man's eye cannot pierce through the same to see them")
- 63 cover, drape
- 64 darkest, murkiest, gloomiest
- 65 exceedingly sharp
- and fill me with terrible cruelty
from the top of my head to my
toes.
Thicken my blood and stop the entrance
and flow to regret and guilt
so that I will not be visited by any
guilt or moral understanding that
will prevent me from acting by making
me realize the wrongness of it.
Come to my breasts you spirits that
attend to thoughts of
murder and replace my
milk with acidic bile.
Come to me from wherever you wait for the
opportunity to cause trouble (to inspire murder). Come
dark night and cover yourself in the thickest smoke
from hell so that my eager knife will not see
who it murders

First soliloquy, she says he will not refuse it if someone else acts wickedly. In this soliloquy, it seems she is planning to do it.

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metaphor

Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark, and so that heaven above will not open the darkness of night, as if it is a blanket, peep through to see what is happening. and when heaven realizes what it sees cry "stop. stop!"
To cry "Hold, hold."⁶⁶

ENTER MACBETH

Great Glamis, worthy Cawdor,

cry "stop. stop!"