

act 1 scene 4

» DUNCAN'S PALACE AT FORRES

Flourish.

Enter King DUNCAN, LENNOX, MALCOLM, DONALBAIN, and Attendants

DUNCAN

Is execution done on Cawdor? Or not
Those in commission yet returned?

MALCOLM

My liege,
They are not yet come back. But I have spoke
With one that saw him die, who did report
That very frankly he confessed his treasons,
Implored your highness' pardon, and set forth
A deep repentance. Nothing in his life
Became him like the leaving it. He died
As one that had been studied in his death
To throw away the dearest thing he owed,
As 'twere a careless trifle.

DUNCAN

There's no art
To find the mind's construction in the face;
He was a gentleman on whom I built
An absolute trust.

[Enter MACBETH, BANQUO, ROSS, and ANGUS]

O worthiest cousin,
The sin of my ingratitude even now
Was heavy on me. Thou art so far before
That swiftest wing of recompense is slow
To overtake thee. Would thou hadst less deserved,
That the proportion both of thanks, and payment,
Might have been mine; only I have left to say,
More is thy due, than more than all can pay.

MACBETH

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself.
Your highness' part, is to receive our duties;
And our duties are to your throne and state,
Children and servants, which do but what they should
By doing everything safe toward your love
And honour.

Flourish: fanfare of trumpets

2 *Those in commission: those in charge of executing Cawdor*

5

6-7 *set forth ... repentance: was truly sorry for what he had done*

7-8 *Nothing ... the leaving it: nothing he did in life could compare to how well he died*

10

9 *studied in his death: well prepared for death*

10 *owed: owned*

11 *careless trifle: worth nothing*

11-2 *There's no art ... face: it's hard to tell someone's thoughts by their face*

15

16-20 *Thou art ... have been mine: no matter how much I reward you, you will deserve more. If only you were less deserving, I would be able to honour you properly*

20

23 *pays itself: is reward enough*

24 *receive our duties: allow us to serve you*

25

27-8 *safe toward ... honour: to secure your safety and earn your love and honour*

DUNCAN

Welcome hither:

I have begun to plant thee, and will labour
To make thee full of growing. —Noble Banquo,
That hast no less deserved, nor must be known
No less to have done so—let me enfold thee,
And hold thee to my heart.

BANQUO

There if I grow,

The harvest is your own.

DUNCAN

My plenteous joys,

Wanton in fullness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow. —Sons, kinsmen, thanes,
And you whose places are the nearest, know
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm, whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland; which honour must
Not unaccompanied invest him only,
But signs of nobleness like stars shall shine
On all deservers. From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.

MACBETH

The rest is labour, which is not used for you;
I'll be myself the harbinger and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach.
So humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN

My worthy Cawdor.

MACBETH *[aside]*

The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'er-leap,
For in my way it lies. Stars hide your fires,
Let not light see my black and deep desires,
The eye wink at the hand—yet let that be
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.

Exit

DUNCAN

True, worthy Banquo; he is full so valiant,
And in his commendations I am fed,
It is a banquet to me. Let's after him,
Whose care is gone before to bid us welcome;
It is a peerless kinsman.

Flourish. Exeunt

- 29-30 *I have begun ... growing:* Macbeth is likened to a seed that Duncan promises will grow and flourish
- 30 31-2 *nor must be known ... done so:* it must not be thought that you are less deserving of my gratitude than Macbeth
- 33 *grow:* flourish, prosper
- 34 *The harvest is your own:* my accomplishments will be yours
- 34-6 *My plenteous joys ... drops of sorrow:* my numerous joys are so overwhelming that I weep
- 35 38-9 *We will establish ... Malcolm:* Malcolm will succeed me as the next King of Scotland
- 40 *Prince of Cumberland:* title of the Scottish heir to the throne
- 40 42-3 *signs of nobleness ... an all deservers:* new titles of nobility will also be granted to the worthy
- 43 *hence:* here;
Inverness: Macbeth's castle
- 44 *bind us further to you:* make us further obliged to you
- 45 *The rest is labour ... for you:* the work I must now do will not be wasted because it will be in your service
- 46-7 *I'll be myself ... your approach:* I myself will go ahead to Inverness to prepare for your visit, and give my wife the joyful news
- 50 49-50 *that is a step ... else o'er-leap:* Malcolm being named the heir to the throne is a step that Macbeth will either trip on or leap over
- 51-4 *Stars hide ... to see:* Macbeth doesn't want to acknowledge his shameful desire to kill Duncan, and wishes to be blind to what his hand does—but at the same time wants to open his eyes and see it has been done
- 55 56 *his commendations:* praises of him
- 59 *a peerless kinsman:* a relative without equal

LOOK BACK AT act 2 scene 3

First Encounter

1. The Porter imagines admitting three men to the 'everlasting bonfire'. What did each of them do?
2. **Lines 40-49:** Macbeth's responses to Lennox and Macduff are brief and terse. Why do you think this is? What do you think is the conflict between his exterior and interior?
3. Identify three or four phrases that convey Macduff's absolute horror at discovering Duncan's body.
4. Describe the different reactions of Banquo, Macduff, and Malcolm to news of Duncan's murder. Do any of their reactions suggest suspicion in their attitudes towards Macbeth's version of events?
5. What reason does Macbeth give for killing the guards? Why did he really kill the guards? Is the explanation he gives for killing them plausible, in your opinion?
6. What does Banquo swear to do? What do you expect will be the next action he takes?
7. Why do Malcolm and Donalbain choose to remain silent? Why do they decide to separate?

A Closer Look

1. What is comic relief? Why do you think Shakespeare chose to introduce humour at the beginning of what is a very tense and unsettled scene?
2. 'Too cruel, anywhere.' Does Banquo's reprimanding of Lady Macbeth's self-centredness indicate that he suspects the Macbeths? Compare his resolution to seek justice for Duncan's murder to his conversation with Macbeth in Act 2 Scene 1. What effect do you think Duncan's murder has had on his attitude to the prophecy?
3. Why do you think Lady Macbeth faints? Rank the following possibilities in order of likelihood, giving reasons for your decisions:
 - Which Lady Macbeth pretends to faint to prevent further questioning of Macbeth.
 - Lady Macbeth faints from the horror and stress of the situation.
 - Lady Macbeth faints in shock from Macbeth's rash actions in killing the bodyguards.

Think About Themes

1. Macbeth says 'no man' could have restrained himself from killing Duncan's supposed murderers. Write a short paragraph describing how Macbeth and Lady Macbeth each exhibit traditionally masculine or feminine behaviour in this scene. Is there a difference between their behaviour in this scene and that in Act 1 Scene 7? Explain the possible reasons for this difference.
2. Duncan's body is described as 'the Lord's anointed temple' and his wounds as a 'breach in nature'. What does this language indicate about kingship's function in the world, and about the nature of the Macbeths' crime?
3. Consider the following phrases and suggest how each demonstrates irony.
 - 'Twas a rough night.'
 - 'O gentle lady.'
 - 'All is but toys.'



scene analysis act 3 scene 2

SCENE SUMMARY

Lady Macbeth is in an anxious state of mind. She has achieved her goal of becoming queen but it is so paranoid that she cannot enjoy it. However, she hides her feelings from Macbeth, telling him 'what's done, is done.' Macbeth is also fearful and suffering from terrible nightmares. He reminds Lady Macbeth to single out Banquo for praise at the feast that night. He hints that a 'dreadful' deed will be carried out later, but doesn't tell his wife of his plan to kill Banquo, signalling a new distance in their relationship.

LINE BY LINE

► LADY MACBETH REFLECTS

A number of hours have passed since the previous scene. It is now the afternoon of the day of the banquet and Banquo has gone out riding with his son. Banquo has been staying with the Macbeths and is to be the guest of honour at their feast this evening.

Lady Macbeth is speaking with a servant. She asks if Banquo has left the castle: 'Is Banquo gone from court?' (1) The servant tells her that he has and will

be returning later in the evening. (2) Lady Macbeth then asks the servant to tell the King that she would like to speak with him. (3-4)

Left alone, Lady Macbeth reflects upon what has become of their lives since they became King and Queen. They have achieved their ambition but they no longer have peace of mind and security. As such, she feels they have gained nothing and lost everything: 'Nought's had, all's spent,/ Where our desire is got without content'. (5-6) They cannot

relax and enjoy what they have because at any moment they could be attacked by forces opposed to their rule.

Lady Macbeth feels that it would be preferable to be dead, just like the murdered Duncan. At least then they would be safe from harm and would not have to live in doubt and fear: "Tis safer to be that which we destroy,/ Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy'. (7-8)

► MACBETH'S TROUBLED MIND

When Macbeth arrives, the Queen asks him how he is. It seems that Macbeth has

been spending a lot of time alone, dwelling on his worries: 'why do you keep alone,/ Of sorriest fancies your companions making'. (9-10) Lady Macbeth encourages him to forget about the dreadful things they have done, telling him that thoughts of their murderous deed ought to have died when Duncan died: 'those thoughts which should indeed have died/ With them they think on'. (11-2)

There is no use thinking about things that are done and cannot be changed: 'Things without all remedy/ Should be without regard'. (12-3) But Lady Macbeth's words do nothing to soothe Macbeth. It is not the murder of Duncan that is troubling him, but thoughts of his enemies. (14)

Murdering Duncan might have gained Macbeth the crown, but it was not enough to secure his safety. Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, for example, still live and have fled to England and Ireland. There is every chance that they will look to return to Scotland to avenge their father's murder. Macbeth must also be suspicious of the loyalty of his thanes. Macduff, for example, did not attend his coronation, and his absence would certainly have been noted. It is quite possible that some of his thanes are secretly conspiring against him, biding their time until the moment is right to overthrow him.

As it stands, however, those who pose a threat to Macbeth are scattered, remote and relatively powerless. But it is only a matter of time before they regroup or band together and become more powerful. Macbeth

compares the threat to a snake that he has wounded but not killed: 'We have scorched the snake, not killed it'. (14) He imagines the snake hiding itself away, taking its time to recover and regain its strength. In a matter of time it will fully recover and become dangerous once again: 'She'll close, and be herself'. (15) Macbeth's kingship, secured by criminal means, remains in constant danger of vengeful attack: 'our poor malice/ Remains in danger of her former tooth'. (15-6)

Living in constant fear of such vengeance is intolerable. Mirroring his wife's sentiments at the beginning of the scene, Macbeth says they would be better off dead than to continue existing like this.

Those that they have killed in order to secure the crown now enjoy a greater degree of peace than they: 'Better be with the dead,/ Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace'. (21-2)

Duncan sleeps peacefully in his grave, untroubled by fears of foreign or domestic attack. In contrast the Macbeths cannot enjoy their meals or sleep without experiencing 'terrible

dreams'. (19-20)

Macbeth is unwilling to tolerate this life of fear and uncertainty any longer. He pledges to bring chaos and destruction to the heavens and the earth, if that's what it takes to secure peace of mind: 'let the frame of things disjoint -/ Both the worlds suffer'. (17-8)

Lady Macbeth is troubled by her husband's behaviour and manner of speaking. She is conscious of the fact that they are holding a banquet this evening for the Scottish lords and she hopes that her husband will be able to behave in a convivial manner when the guests arrive: 'Gentle my lord, sleek o'er your rugged looks,/ Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight'. (30-1)

► MACBETH SPEAKS OF BANQUO

When Macbeth assures his wife that he will be fine. (32) He asks that she pay particular attention to Banquo at the banquet: 'Present him eminence, both with eye and tongue'. (34) As we saw in the previous

Macbeth's fears relate back to the concerns he expressed in Act 1 Scene 7, when he was considering whether or not to go through with the murder. Back then he thought about the possibility that the repercussions of the murder could be somehow contained or 'trammelled up', that his crime would not set in motion a terrible series of events. But, as he acknowledged then and sees clearly now, this is never the case. Violence breeds violence and it is very possible that Duncan's family and supporters will seek to kill him in retribution. (1.7.1-10)



scene, it is Banquo that Macbeth now perceives to pose the greatest threat to his position as king: 'Our fears in Banquo/ Stick deep'. (3.1.48-9) It is important, Macbeth tells his wife, that they flatter him and disguise their true feelings until the threat has been eliminated. (35-7)

Lady Macbeth tells her husband that he must stop being paranoid: 'You must leave this'. (38) But Macbeth's mind is riddled with thoughts of his enemies and he cannot stop thinking of the threats that they pose: 'O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife'. (39) He tells her that Banquo and Fleance are still alive, as if to suggest that, as long as this is the case, he can never find peace. (40)

Lady Macbeth tries to soothe her husband by telling him that Banquo and Fleance will not live forever, that their lease on life is not eternal: 'But in them nature's copy's not eterne'. (41) Macbeth interprets this to mean that they can be killed: 'There's comfort yet, they are assailable'. (42) Of course, Macbeth has already given orders to have Banquo and his son killed. (3.1.125-35) He knows that they will be murdered as they make their way back to the castle this evening to attend the banquet. Lady Macbeth, however, is unaware of these plans.

Assuming that his wife meant that Banquo and Fleance can be killed to ensure their security, Macbeth tells her to be cheerful. (43) He hints at the fact that he has already made plans to have them murdered this very evening, telling her that before nightfall some dreadful deed will be done: 'there shall be done/ A deed of dreadful note'. (46-7)

Lady Macbeth, however, does not – or else pretends not to – understand what her husband is saying, asking 'What's to be done?' (47) Her response seems to make it clear to Macbeth that she no longer has the will or the strength to be part of such murderous plans. He, therefore, tells her to remain 'innocent' of his plans until they have been executed: 'Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,/ Till thou applaud the deed'. (48-9)

► MACBETH CALLS ON THE DARK FORCES

Just as he did before murdering Duncan, Macbeth now psyches himself up ahead of the night's business. Although his wife is still present, he begins to speak in a strange and sinister manner, calling on the night to wrap itself around the day and blind it to the evil deed that is to occur. (49-50) He associates the night with murder and violence and imagines that it will somehow act as his agent or assist him in his bloody endeavours: 'with thy bloody and invisible hand/ Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond/ Which keeps me pale'. (51-3)

To Macbeth, daytime represents goodness and virtue. He associates it with pity and tenderness: 'the tender eye of pitiful day'. (50) However, when night falls, it is as if the forces of good go to sleep, enabling the dark forces to emerge and act: 'Good things of day begin to droop and drowse,/ While night's black agents to their preys do rouse'. (55-6)

Lady Macbeth has been all the while listening to her husband, and she seems to be startled by his manner of speech: 'Thou marvell'st at my words'. (57) He tells her to be patient and to wait and see: 'hold thee still'. (57) He assures her that it is necessary that they commit further crimes in order to strengthen and safeguard their position. They committed murder to gain the throne and the only way they are going to hold onto it now is by committing further criminal acts: 'Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill'. (58-9)

character development

act 3 scene 2

LADY MACBETH

► THE DOMINANT FORCE IN THE MARRIAGE

In this scene we get a sense of how weary and unhappy Lady Macbeth has become. She is tired of living in constant fear and now thinks that she and her husband would be better off dead. She is also concerned about Macbeth, who seems to be spending much of his time alone. (5-10)

Lady Macbeth knows that the threats to their reign are real. She knows that there are legitimate reasons to fear people such as Banquo. She might think that Macbeth is spending far too much time fretting about these matters, but that does not mean that she thinks they ought to be ignored.

However, Lady Macbeth no longer has the will or the strength to be involved in doing what is necessary to eliminate or neutralize these threats. When Macbeth strongly hints at his plans to have Macbeth and Fleance killed, she asks 'What's to be done', as if she is unwilling or unable to be party to such crimes again. (47)

Whereas once Lady Macbeth had the ambition and the will to push her husband to commit murder, she now seems happy to remain ignorant of his crimes. Macbeth, in turn, is content to act alone, telling her to be 'innocent of the knowledge' until his dreadful deeds are done. (48) His words remind us of the manner in which Lady Macbeth spoke to him in advance of Duncan's murder. Back then she told him to leave matters in her hands, that she would take charge of the murderous act deemed necessary to secure the throne: 'you shall put/ This night's great business into my dispatch'. (1.5.64-5) Now the roles have reversed and it is Macbeth who has taken charge of their bloody affairs.

MACBETH

► PARANOIA AND INSECURITY

Macbeth now lives in a constant state of fear. As his wife remarks, he spends much of his time alone, dwelling on his worries. (9-10) His mind is filled with thoughts of those he imagines pose a threat to him: 'full of scorpions is my mind'. (39) He also fears that it is only a matter of time before forces opposed to his reign gain enough power to come to avenge the old King's murder. (15-6)

Living like this, in constant fear, has become unbearable to Macbeth. He cannot enjoy his meals and experiences nightmares every time he sleeps. He pledges, therefore, to do whatever is necessary to restore peace of mind. (17-21)

► DESCENT INTO TYRANNY

The idea of behaving like a good king and being perceived as such no longer seems important to Macbeth. Having committed a heinous crime to secure the throne, Macbeth now believes that the only way to hold on to it is to commit further evil: 'Things bad begun make strong themselves by ill'. (58) He is willing to destroy the world, to create a state of chaos and suffering, if it means he can be safe and secure: 'let the frame of things disjoint -/ Both the worlds suffer'. (17-8)

► TORTURED BY HIS CRIMES

Despite the fact that he is now committed to doing greater evil to secure his position, we get a slight indication that committing such crimes does not come naturally to Macbeth. It seems that the King is still troubled by his conscience. Towards the end of the scene he speaks of a 'bond' that keeps him 'pale'. (52-3) We might imagine that this bond is his connection to the rest of humanity, that tender tie that enables us to feel pity and sympathy for others. In a manner reminiscent of Lady Macbeth's plea to the evil 'spirits' in Act 1 Scene 5, Macbeth calls on the forces of darkness to 'Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond/ Which keeps me pale'. (49-53) Macbeth wishes to destroy this bond, so that he can begin to act without hesitation and without being troubled by remorse and guilt. ■

Lady macbeth

Lady Macbeth is a Scottish noblewoman married to Macbeth, Thane of Glamis. A driven and intelligent woman, she has a mutually loving and respectful relationship with Macbeth. Their marriage has not been without tragedy, however. In Act 1, it is revealed that they once had an infant child, who presumably died. Lady Macbeth recalls breastfeeding the baby and the love she had for her child: 'I have given suck, and know/ How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me'. (1.7.54-5)

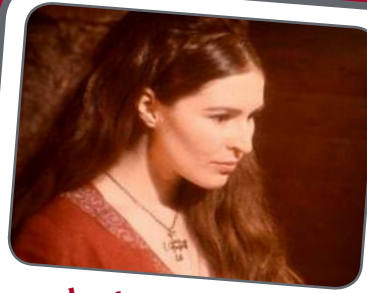
Lady Macbeth is ambitious, both for herself and for her husband. As a woman in medieval Scotland, however, she has few outlets for her own ambition; her role is to look after her husband, run the household, and be the perfect hostess for guests such as Duncan. She believes, however, that Macbeth would be a great king, and that 'sovereign sway and masterdom' is within their grasp. (1.5.67) She sees it as her job to help Macbeth to overcome his innate 'human kindness' and to do what is necessary to take the throne. (1.5.14)

I: THE DOMINANT FORCE IN THE COUPLE'S MARRIAGE

► FOCUSED AND DETERMINED

Lady Macbeth is an extremely focused, determined and decisive woman. We see these traits from her very first appearance in Act 1 Scene 5. As soon as she hears about the Witches' prophecies, she decides that Macbeth 'shalt be/ What thou art promised'. (1.5.12-3) She doesn't waste any time wondering about whether the Witches can be trusted or even if they really have the gift of prophecy. Instead, she accepts Macbeth's story at face value and immediately begins plotting how they might win the throne, suggesting that she has been dreaming of attaining power for some time. No longer content to be a thane's wife, she sets her sights on the 'golden round'. (1.5.25)

Lady Macbeth sees it as her role to help Macbeth to do what is necessary to become king, even if that involves murdering Duncan. She immediately begins to guide her husband towards taking the crown. Tellingly, her very first words to him are about the kingship: 'Greater than both, by the all-hail



Lady macbeth

RELATIONSHIPS:

Macbeth (husband), Duncan (king)

STRENGTHS:

resourceful, clever, ruthless

WEAKNESSES:

over-ambitious, overestimates her ability to commit evil deeds

hereafter'. (1.5.52) Knowing that her husband is not a natural killer, she takes it on herself to plan the murder: 'you shall put/ This night's great business into my dispatch'. (1.5.64-5)

She stresses the importance of remaining calm and pretending that everything is normal, even though they're planning a terrible crime: 'look like th'innocent flower,/ But be the serpent under't'. (1.5.62-3) When Duncan arrives at the castle, Lady Macbeth welcomes him with perfect hospitality and ceremony, displaying her steely resolve and focus. So convincing is her performance that Duncan is blissfully unaware that his 'Fair and noble hostess' is plotting his murder. (1.6.25)

Lady Macbeth is at her most strong-willed, practical and focused on the night of the murder:

- First, she spikes the drinks of Duncan's guards, rendering them practically comatose: 'I have drugged their possets,/ That death and nature do contend about them/ Whether they live or die.' (2.2.6-8) This allows Macbeth easy access to Duncan's room as he sleeps.
- When Macbeth accidentally brings the bloody knives from the crime scene, and refuses to return them, Lady Macbeth doesn't panic. She decides to return the daggers herself, saying that she has no qualms about seeing Duncan's murdered corpse: 'the dead/ Are but as pictures'.

kingship

► THE STRUCTURE OF SCOTTISH KINGSHIP

Scottish kings were chosen by a mixture of inheritance and election. When a Scottish king died, his successor was elected by the thanes or lords of the realm. However, this was not a complete democracy because the king could only come from a set number of families with royal blood. This process of selection sets the Scottish kingship apart from that of other countries, where the king's eldest son automatically succeeded him.

Macbeth, being Duncan's cousin, is of royal blood. It's possible that he could be chosen as Duncan's successor when the time comes. Macbeth has clearly harboured ambitions in this regard: 'Thou wouldst be great,/ Art not without ambition ... wouldst not play false,/ And yet wouldst wrongly win'. (1.5.15-9) But outwardly at least he claims it's exceptionally unlikely that he will ever be king: 'To be King/ Stands not within the prospect of belief.' (1.3.72-3)

In Act 1 Scene 4, Duncan nominates his eldest son Malcolm as his preferred heir. This makes it highly probable that when Duncan passes away, the thanes will honour his wishes and choose Malcolm as his successor: 'Sons, kinsmen, thanes ... We will establish our estate upon/ Our eldest, Malcolm'. (1.4.36-9) Macbeth is quick to realise the obstacle this nomination presents to his ambitions. Prior to this announcement, Macbeth had considered simply waiting until Duncan died of natural causes, in the hope that he might succeed him: 'If chance will have me king, why chance may crown me,/ Without my stir'. (1.3.143-4) In the wake of Malcolm's nomination however, this is no longer an option. If Macbeth is to gain the kingship he must act aggressively, removing not only Duncan but also Malcolm from the equation: 'The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step/ On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,/ For in my way it lies'. (1.4.49-51)

► THE ROLE OF THE KING

1. Bestows honours and receives loyal service in return

The king's lords or thanes were bound to serve him loyally and faithfully. As Macbeth puts it, 'Your

highness' part, is to receive our duties;/ And our duties are to your throne and state,/ Children and servants'. (1.4.24-26) The king's duty in return is to honour those who serve him, granting them titles, lands, and riches.

We see this when Macbeth is rewarded for his role in defeating the rebels by being made Thane of Cawdor: 'Go pronounce his present death,/ And with his former title greet Macbeth'. (1.2.65-6) Similarly, Malcolm is quick to reward the thanes for their help in defeating Macbeth by making them earls: 'Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland/ In such an honour named'. (5.9.29-30)

This system of homage involved displays of loyalty and affection, combined with long and flowery speeches. The thanes would publicly pledge their faithful service to the king, who would reciprocate by effusively praising the thanes' fine and noble qualities.

- Duncan is quick to praise the captain who was wounded in his service: 'So well thy words become thee as thy wounds,/ They smack of honour both'. (1.2.43-44)
- Duncan makes an elaborate speech wherein he chides himself for having been slow to acknowledge Macbeth's service, declaring that, 'More is thy due, than more than all can pay'. (1.4.21)
- Duncan offers a similar public display of gratitude and affection to Banquo: 'let me enfold thee,/ And hold thee to my heart'. (1.4.32-3)
- Yet another effusive display of gratitude is addressed to Lady Macbeth when Duncan thanks her for her service in hosting him: 'the love/ That follows us sometime is our trouble,/ Which still we thank as love'. (1.6.11-3)

A king was also expected to give and receive hospitality. King Duncan, for instance, honours Macbeth by visiting his castle of Inverness: 'From hence to Inverness,/ And bind us further to you'. (1.4.43-4) During his stay in Macbeth's castle he is the



perfect guest. He thanks Lady Macbeth for her trouble, rewards her with the gift of a diamond and sends gifts to the servants' quarters. (2.1.14-7) King Edward, too, is associated with hospitality and is praised for the welcome he gives the exiled Malcolm. (3.6.24-9)

2. Maintains order among the nobility

Another of the king's duties was to maintain order and balance among the nobility. This is brilliantly symbolised by the banquet scene, Act 3 Scene 4. In medieval times rank, order and ceremony were vitally important. Banquets such as this one were highly ceremonial affairs at which the nobles were seated in order of rank. Each thane had to wait until his superiors were seated before sitting down himself. Similarly, each thane had to wait for those ranked above him to leave the dinner table before standing up himself.

At the beginning of the banquet Macbeth honours these conventions, asking the lords to be seated according to their rank: 'You know your own degrees, sit down'. (3.4.1) By the end of the banquet, however, these considerations of rank and

ceremony have been abandoned. Lady Macbeth urges the thanes to leave the dinner table all at once instead of departing in order of importance: 'Stand not upon the order of your going,/ But go at once'. (3.4.121-2) Macbeth's banquet becomes a chaotic affair where the normal rules of society are ignored.

This chaotic end to the gathering represents a breach in the social order. The balance among the thanes is broken, not only that evening but for the remainder of Macbeth's reign. Gradually, we see them turn against their new ruler, a development that makes governing the country all but impossible for the newly installed king. Under Macbeth's rule, the structure of society begins to fall apart and Scotland is plunged into chaos.

3. Maintains order in society at large

Perhaps a king's most important duty was to protect his people and maintain order in society. We see this in Act 1 Scene 2, when Duncan marshals his forces against the rebels and the various invaders that threaten the peace of the realm.