

Macbeth act 2 summary

[Literature](#), [British Literature](#)



Summary Macbeth meets Banquo in the courtyard of his castle. Banquo is restless because he cannot decide how he feels about the witches and their prophecies. Macbeth pretends indifference but casually agrees to talk about it if Banquo would like. They agree, and Banquo leaves. Macbeth again takes time to examine the pros and cons of going through with the plot and begins to see illusions, starting with a dagger floating in the air in front of him. He seems to go back and forth but eventually decides to kill Duncan. Enter To come on stage. Court A courtyard, possibly the forecourt. bearing a torch before him

Fleance is carrying a torch because this scene is set at night. Since the play was originally performed in the open air, in the afternoon, the torch helps us accept that it's night. she The moon. I take, 'tis later I assume that it's later than midnight. Most people had no accurate way to tell time. Clocks were few and watches had not been invented. There's husbandry in heaven; Their candles are all out. husbandry — conservation All the candles of heaven (the stars) are dark, unseen. The night is cloudy. Take thee that too. Banquo asks his son, Fleance, to take something else he's been carrying, in addition to his sword. A heavy summons lies like lead upon me . . . Gives way to in repose! Banquo is tired and wants to sleep, but he can't. This is a problem since he knows he'll worry over unwelcome thoughts if he stays awake. He prays, briefly, that he won't be bothered by thoughts we naturally would think when we have the time to reflect on things. Give me my sword. Banquo immediately asks for his sword back again, since someone is approaching. It's dark, so he can't yet tell it's Macbeth. Who's there? Banquo asks " Who's

there? ” — challenging the stranger to identify himself. not yet at rest? Why haven't you gone to bed?

The king's a-bed The king has already gone to his sleep in unusual pleasure and Sent forth great largess to your offices. The king has been in an unusually good mood and has given gifts in great measure to your household. This diamond he greets your wife withal, By the name of most kind hostess Here's a gem the king asked me to give to you, to give to your wife, as thanks for all her kindness as hostess. shut up. In measureless content. The king has now gone to bed in his private chamber, where he is locked in — “ shut up” — for the night, completely happy with the way things are — “ in measureless content. Being unprepared, Our will became the servant to defect; Which else should free have wrought. I wasn't expecting all this (I was unprepared), so I left the dinner early (I “ defected”). Otherwise, I would have remained the whole time, and done what anyone would normally have done. Macbeth may be making excuses. Possibly he had so much on his mind that he couldn't be a good host and left earlier than expected. Possibly he just wanted time, alone, to think. All's well. I dreamt last night of the three weird sisters: To you, they have shown some truth. Banquo first says that there's no harm done.

He then invites Macbeth to talk about their meeting with the witches, by stating that he dreamed of the weird sisters — the sisters of Fate — the three witches. He also reminds Macbeth that they have spoken truth so far. I think not of them Macbeth is lying, trying to appear unconcerned. He definitely has been thinking about what the witches have said. Yet, when we can entreat an hour to serve. We would spend it in some words upon that

business. If you would grant the time. But, if we have nothing better to do, we can talk about that, if you want. I don't mind. Macbeth wants to conceal how eager he is to talk about this. At your kind' st leisure. When it's convenient for you. If you shall cleave to my consent. It shall make honor for you. If you agree to act with me, join me, when it's time to do so, you'll benefit from it. So I lose none. In seeking to augment it, but still, keep. My bosom is franchised and allegiance clear. I shall be counsell'd. As long as this doesn't involve doing anything dishonorable, and as long as I can stay loyal and true, I'll follow along. My bosom franchised and allegiance clear — my heart belongs to the king.

I shall be counsell'd. — I'll agree with your plans. The difference between the two men is becoming clear — Macbeth is willing to do anything, including murder Duncan, to get to the throne; Banquo won't even pursue honor for himself if he has to give up any virtue to get there. Good repose the while! Sleep well until we get together to talk about this. Macbeth is probably just covering up, acting naturally. As we're about to see, he has already decided to act, and probably feels no more need to discuss things with Banquo. Is this a dagger which I see before me. The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. I have thee not, and yet I see thee still. dagger — sturdy, medium-sized knife, with a blade up to a foot long. let me clutch thee. I have thee not — Macbeth is trying to grasp the dagger's handle, but there's nothing there. Macbeth has begun to see things, guilty visions, even before he has started down the road of murder. He is afraid of the immediate future, afraid of what he is planning to do. Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible.

To feeling as to sight? or art thou but. A dagger of the mind, a false creation.
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

Aren't you able to be touched, just as you can be seen? Or are you just a vision, an imagined thing, an artifact of a fevered brain? I see thee yet, in form as palpable. As this which now I draw. I can still see you, just as solid-looking as this real dagger I now draw from its sheath. Thou marshall' st me the way that I was going. And such an instrument I was to use. Your appearance encourages me to pursue what I was going to do (murder Duncan), and I was going to use a dagger to do it, so this must be a true indicator of what lies ahead. Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses. Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still. And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood. Which was not so before? My eyes are either worthless (deceived by a false vision), or else they're the most capable of my senses (able to perceive what my other senses cannot). I still see the dagger, and now I see flowing blood on the blade and handle — that wasn't there earlier. There's no such thing: It is the bloody business which informs. Thus to my eyes. This is unreal. It's the horrifying act I'm contemplating that makes these visions appear.

Now o'er the one half-world. Nature seems dead, and wickeddreamsabuse.
The curtain'd sleep. One half the world is in the night, asleep, and nightmares take advantage of dreamers witchcraft celebrates. Pale Hecate's offerings, and wither'd murder. Alarum'd by his sentinel, the wolf. Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace. witches dance with Hecate (chief goddess of spells and witchcraft), and murder approaches (alarmed by its sentinel, the wolf). With Tarquin's ravishing strides, towards his design.

Moves like a ghost. Tarquin was the son of a Roman king, infamous for his rape of Lucretia. This story has been the subject of many artworks, including Shakespeare's own poem, "The Rape of Lucrece." For more information about this story, see the Wikipedia article regarding Sextus Tarquinius. Thou sure and firm-set earth. Hear not my steps, which way they walk, for fear. Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts Macbeth is asking, dramatically, even the earth to not hear him walking, or know which way he goes, for fear the stones themselves would speak the truth they know — that he's now going to murder Duncan. This is likely also a reference to Jesus entering Jerusalem — when told he should quiet his disciples, Jesus responded "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Or, in other words, the truth cannot be silenced. Macbeth is hoping to evade this proverb. prate — speak, talk And take the present horror from the time, Which now suits it. Make the present less horrifying than it is. Whiles I threat, he lives: Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives. While I stand here talking about it, Duncan is still alive. Words are cold and weak, compared to the heat and strength (importance) of deeds.

I go, and it is done The bell has rung. It's time to act. It's settled. the bell invites me The bell summons me. Macbeth is still hoping he can evade at least part of the responsibility for what he's about to do. Now he's making the bell partly responsible. Hear it not, Duncan; for it is a knell. That summons thee to heaven or to hell. Even now, Macbeth half hopes that the murder might not happen after all. He thinks that if Duncan doesn't hear the ringing of the bell (the knell), maybe he (Duncan) won't have to die. But Macbeth proceeds, in spite of his doubts and misgivings. In an aside, the character

speaks privately to himself for a moment, or directly to the audience, or privately to some (but not all) of the other characters present. As a matter of convention, an aside is always a true statement of what the character thinks. A character speaking in an aside may be mistaken, but may not be dishonest. An aside (again as a matter of convention) cannot be heard by those not spoken to. Exit He leaves the stage. Exeunt Banquo and Fleance. Exeunt — Latin, literally “ they leave. ” Banquo and Fleance leave the stage, leaving Macbeth alone with a servant.