

Macbeth Act Five Overview

At Dunsinane a gentlewoman has sent for a doctor to assess Lady Macbeth's sleepwalking. They both watch her sleepwalk into the room with a candle, and act as though she is washing her hands, saying "Yet here's a spot. . . Out, damned spot; out I say." She looks guilty to the two onlookers, including the doctor who concludes Lady Macbeth needs a priest's help, not a doctor's. He leaves advising that neither he or the gentlewoman should speak of what they had seen or heard.

The thanes march towards Birnam Wood where they intend to meet with Malcolm and the army. Macbeth receives the doctor's diagnosis of his wife's visions and is displeased with this report, equally as much as he is displeased with earlier reports of military matters.

Malcolm marches through Birnam Wood with the thanes and the soldiers, instructing them all to cut off branches and use them for camouflage, to deceive Macbeth and conceal their true numbers. They comment on the fact that Macbeth confidently holds Dunsinane, which is quickly revoked by the fact that all of his men have abandoned him.

Macbeth orders his men to hang banners from the walls of the castle, claiming, with confidence, that had it not been for the deserters he would meet the English army head on, and the castle shall stand until the English army dies of famine. Lady Macbeth dies, leaving Macbeth unbothered, commenting that she should have died at a later, more convenient date.

The battle commences with Macbeth's first victim being Young Siward. The castle is stormed, and Macbeth is found and challenged to a battle by Macduff. Macduff reveals that he was born through the medieval version of a c-section, therefore not technically born of a woman, to which Macbeth responds with his refusal to fight him.

Upon their entry, the thanes and Malcolm establish that the battle has been won and the castle stormed, noting that Young Siward and Macduff are still missing. They are informed by Rosse that Young Siward is dead, and having confirmed that he died fighting bravely, Siward announces he could not have wished for a braver death for his son.

Macduff enters with the severed head of Macbeth, exclaiming "Hail, King of Scotland!" Malcolm announces he will pardon and earl all of the previously exiled thanes, and he himself will later be crowned King.