Macbeth

By

William Shakespeare

Act 2, Scene 4
SCENE. Outside Macbeth's castle.

(Enter ROSS and an old Man)

Old Man
Threescore and ten I can remember well:
Within the volume of which time I have seen
Hours dreadful and things strange; but this sore night
Hath trifled former knowings.

ROSS
Ah, good father,
Thou seest, the heavens, as troubled with man's act,
Threaten his bloody stage: by the clock, 'tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the travelling lamp:
Is't night's predominance, or the day's shame,
That darkness does the face of earth entomb,
When living light should kiss it?

Old Man
'Tis unnatural,
Even like the deed that's done. On Tuesday last,
A falcon, towering in her pride of place,
Was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.

ROSS
And Duncan's horses—a thing most strange and certain—
Beauteous and swift, the minions of their race,
Turn'd wild in nature, broke their stalls, flung out,
Contending 'gainst obedience, as they would make
War with mankind.

Old Man
'Tis said they eat each other.
ROSS
They did so, to the amazement of mine eyes
That look'd upon't. Here comes the good Macduff.

(Enter MACDUFF)

How goes the world, sir, now?

MACDUFF
Why, see you not?

ROSS
Is't known who did this more than bloody deed?

MACDUFF
Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSS
Alas, the day!
What good could they pretend?

MACDUFF
They were suborn'd:
Malcolm and Donalbain, the king's two sons,
Are stol'n away and fled; which puts upon them
Suspicion of the deed.

ROSS
'Gainst nature still!
Thriftless ambition, that wilt ravin up
Thine own life's means! Then 'tis most like
The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.
MACDUFF
He is already named, and gone to Scone
To be invested.

ROSS
Where is Duncan's body?

MACDUFF
Carried to Colmekill,
The sacred storehouse of his predecessors,
And guardian of their bones.

ROSS
Will you to Scone?

MACDUFF
No, cousin, I'll to Fife.

ROSS
Well, I will thither.

MACDUFF
Well, may you see things well done there: adieu!
Lest our old robes sit easier than our new!

ROSS
Farewell, father.

Old Man
God's benison go with you; and with those
That would make good of bad, and friends of foes!

(Exeunt)