

3. Macbeth 1605-6

Act IV. sc. iii. Ross joins Malcolm and Macduff with dreadful news and a suggestion of a long period of desolation for Scotland from the coronation of Macbeth to the flight of Macduff to England.

MACDUFF	But not a niggard of your speech: how goes't?	180
ROSS	When I came hither to transport the tidings, Which I have heavily borne, there ran a rumour Of many worthy fellows that were out; Which was to my belief witness'd the rather, For that I saw the tyrant's power a-foot: Now is the time of help; your eye in Scotland Would create soldiers, make our women fight, To doff their dire distresses.	
MALCOLM	Be't their comfort We are coming thither: gracious England hath Lent us good Siward and ten thousand men;	190
ROSS	An older and a better soldier none That Christendom gives out. Would I could answer This comfort with the like! But I have words That would be howl'd out in the desert air, Where hearing should not latch them.	
MACDUFF	What concern they? The general cause? or is it a fee-grief Due to some single breast?	
ROSS	No mind that's honest But in it shares some woe; though the main part Pertains to you alone.	
MACDUFF	If it be mine,	200
ROSS	Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it. Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever, Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound That ever yet they heard.	
MACDUFF	Hum! I guess at it.	
ROSS	Your castle is surprised; your wife and babes Savagely slaughter'd: to relate the manner, Were, on the quarry of these murder'd deer, To add the death of you.	
MALCOLM	Merciful heaven! What, man! ne'er pull your hat upon your brows; Give sorrow words: the grief that does not speak Whispers the o'er-fraught heart and bids it break.	210

MACDUFF My children too?
ROSS Wife, children, servants, all
That could be found.
MACDUFF And I must be from thence!
My wife kill'd too?
ROSS I have said.
MALCOLM Be comforted:
Let's make us medicines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief.
MACDUFF He has no children. All my pretty ones?
Did you say all? O hell-kite! All?
What, all my pretty chickens and their dam
At one fell swoop?
MALCOLM Dispute it like a man.
MACDUFF I shall do so; 220
But I must also feel it as a man:
I cannot but remember such things were,
That were most precious to me. Did heaven look on,
And would not take their part? Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee! naught that I am,
Not for their own demerits, but for mine,
Fell slaughter on their souls. Heaven rest them now!
MALCOLM Be this the whetstone of your sword: let grief
Convert to anger; blunt not the heart, enrage it.
MACDUFF O, I could play the woman with mine eyes 230
And braggart with my tongue! But, gentle heavens,
Cut short all intermission; front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself;
Within my sword's length set him; if he 'scape,
Heaven forgive him too!
MALCOLM This tune goes manly.
Come, go we to the king; our power is ready;
Our lack is nothing but our leave; Macbeth
Is ripe for shaking, and the powers above
Put on their instruments. Receive what cheer you may:
The night is long that never finds the day. 240

[Exeunt]