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?  
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;  
An older and a better soldier none  
That Christendom gives out.

ROSS  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,  
Keep it not from me, quickly let me have it.

ROSS  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.
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;
       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
       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.

[Exeunt]