

SCENE ELEVEN: *At the Banquet that Night*

MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, ROSS, LENNOX and OTHER GUESTS are seated around a table.

ROSS: *(To MACBETH)* Was Macduff not invited?

MACBETH: He was, but is unable to attend. I feel that his loyalty to me is waning.

ROSS: Oh, surely not.

Suddenly, one of the MURDERERS appears at MACBETH's side. He has blood all over his face.

MURDERER: *(Quietly)* I need to speak with you.

MACBETH: *(Horried)* What are you doing here! Are you mad?!

MURDERER: I need to speak with you urgently.

MACBETH: Outside! Away from here!

MACBETH stands and leads the MURDERER outside. They stand alone together.

The GUESTS continue to mime being at the banquet.

MACBETH: *(Irritated)* Now, what is it you need to tell me?

MURDERER: We tried to follow your instructions.

MACBETH: Tried?

MURDERER: The older man...

MACBETH: ...Banquo...

MURDERER: ...whoever. Anyway, he is dead. We surprised him and the attack was undefended.

MACBETH: But his son, Fleance?

MURDERER: Escaped. It became too dark to see properly, the torch fell and, in the blackness, he fled.

MACBETH: This is not good news! This is the worst outcome!

MURDERER: We will continue trying to find him for you.

MACBETH: Leave it! Just go.

The MURDERER hesitates, not quite sure what to do.

MACBETH: *(Shouting)* Go!

The MURDERER exits. MACBETH returns to the banquet.

As he goes towards his chair he sees the ghost of BANQUO sitting there.

BANQUO'S ghost is invisible to everyone else around the table.

MACBETH stands rigidly staring at the ghost.

LENNOX: Please be seated, your Highness.

MACBETH: Who has done this?

ROSS: Done what, Sire?

MACBETH: Is this some sort of joke? Who has done this to me?!

ROSS: *(To LENNOX)* What is affecting him? *(To MACBETH)* We don't understand what you mean.

MACBETH: *(Talking to the ghost of BANQUO)* Do not look at me in that way! I cannot fear you, you have no voice to speak against me! *(Shouting)* Banquo, stop looking at me I tell you! Vanish! Be gone!

The OTHER GUESTS are concerned by this behaviour.

ROSS: *(Rising)* We should leave, his Highness is obviously unwell.

LADY MACBETH: No, stay, gentlemen and enjoy yourselves. It is an illness which occasionally strikes your king and has done since his youth. Do not be concerned, I will help him. *(To MACBETH, gently leading him away)* Come with me.

MACBETH and LADY MACBETH stand aside together. The other guests mime their reactions to each other.

MACBETH: He is there!

LADY MACBETH: Who?

MACBETH: Banquo! He sits there like the devil's messenger.

LADY MACBETH: Banquo is not with us, he has not yet returned from his ride.

MACBETH: Nor will he! He is dead, killed at my command. That, in there, is his ghost come to haunt me!

LADY MACBETH: Stop this! It is just your imagination playing tricks. Calm yourself or your behaviour will be the downfall of both of us. Our guests cannot understand your actions and I cannot possibly explain this to them. Leave the room and I will ask them to go. The evening cannot continue.

MACBETH exits.

LADY MACBETH returns to the party and mimes asking everyone to leave. They do so as the lights fade to blackout.