

## ENTR'ACTE

*Towards the end of the interval Peach returns to his table and gradually drops off to sleep*

*Meanwhile the voices over the tannoy lead up to the following*

**Voice 1** We can't start.

**Voice 2** Why not?

**Voice 1** She's forgotten her sword.

**Voice 2** She just doesn't think, that woman.

**Voice 1** Bundle of nerves.

**Voice 2** Did I tell you she came round to see me on Thursday?

**Voice 1** No!

**Voice 2** Yes.

**Voice 1** After what she'd done?

**Voice 2** After what she'd done.

**Voice 1** What happened?

**Voice 2** It was the morning. No, it was the afternoon. It was the afternoon.

I'd just got Veronica on the potty.

**Voice 1** Oh, the pet.

**Voice 2** Mmmmm. She was just being a very good girl when ding-dong at the door, who should it be?

**Voice 1** Her.

**Voice 2** No. The washing machine.

**Voice 1** The Indesit.

**Voice 2** The new Indesit. Very nice. Push button programming, non-tangle action. The nappies were better than if I'd soaked them all night in Drive.

**Voice 1** Freda, sorry to interrupt, dear, but when that switch is down, it does mean the microphone's switched off, doesn't it?

**Voice 2** Yes, of c—oh, my God!

*There is a sharp buzz as a microphone is switched off*

*Mrs Reece appears through the C of the tabs, carrying her handbag and a bucket containing raffle tickets*

**Mrs Reece** Hello, again. I wonder if I could ask if anyone came by car tonight. Anyone at all? Oh yes, at the back. Do you think I could beg a favour? You see there's some people in the front row who need a lift. Could you possibly squeeze them in? Yes? Oh, jolly good. You'll be all right, ladies, because this gentleman's going to give you a lift back to (inaccessible town). Well, now we're going to draw the raffle. In case you wondered what this—(indicating the bucket)—was for. And I think it

might be a nice idea if we asked our guest of honour to pick the winning number. Mr Pear? Hello!

**Peach** (*waking up*) Hello, there. Hello, everyone. And what a pleasure it is to be back here in Bristol, a city I have the greatest affection for.

**Mrs Reece** Would you like to pick the winning number?

**Peach** Forty-two.

**Mrs Reece** No, out of this bucket.

**Peach** Oh, yes, that's a much better idea. (*He rises and crosses to Mrs Reece*) Just hold your horses then. Good job I brought my walking shoes.

**Mrs Reece** The main prize tonight, Mr Lemon, is a peach meringue pie made by Mrs Dabney . . . .

**Peach** I think you've got that wrong, haven't you?

**Mrs Reece** Have I?

**Peach** You said *peach* meringue pie. That's my name.

**Mrs Reece** I'm such a scatterbrain. You'll have to forgive me, Mr Peach Meringue Pie. As I was saying, we're going to draw for our star prize in just a minute, but first of all we have our consolation prize, a lovely little pot of homemade jam. Also made by Mrs Dabney. Her larder's going to be awfully bare, isn't it? Anyway, let's draw for that, shall we?

**Peach** Here I go.

*He draws out a number and announces it. The audience member is invited on stage. While Mrs Reece is escorting him or her, Peach produces "magic" billiard balls and manipulates them, quickly secreting them when Mrs Reece brings the winner C stage. She asks his or her name, then brings out a pot of jam in ribboned crêpe paper*

**Mrs Reece** Well, this is for you. And I'm going to ask Mr Apricot to present it to you. So would you pass it to him?

**Peach** (*receiving the jam*) Is that for me? (*Name*), thank you. That's all the more welcome because it was unexpected. I shall put that on my little table and I shall have that for breakfast.

**Mrs Reece** I'm sorry, I should have told you: it's (*name*)'s jam.

**Peach** This is (*name*)'s jam? Well done, (*name*)! Not only does he win raffles, he makes preserves.

*During the next speech Mrs Reece goes over to Peach, takes the jam out of his hand, presents it to the winner and ushers him or her off the stage*

Do you get the fruit from your own garden? We had a wonderful crop of gooseberries this year, and I was going to make some jam myself, but my neighbour, Dame Peggy, said, "George, why don't we make some wine?" And I said, "Peggy, dear, you know what happened the last time I made gooseberry wine". And she said, "Yes, you and me and Lady Antonia got absolutely blotto".

*Mrs Reece encourages the audience to clap the departing winner. Peach thinks the applause is for his story*

**Mrs Reece** Fancy another dip?

**Peach** Well, just a quick one before dinner.

**Mrs Reece** This is for the first prize. No peeking, Mr Peach Meringue Pie.

**Peach** Forget the Meringue Pie.

**Mrs Reece** But then we won't have a prize.

*Peach takes a ticket from the bucket*

**Peach** And the winning number is twenty-two. Clickety-click.

**Mrs Reece** Twenty-two? Two two? For a lovely cake made by Mrs Dabney?

An old hand with a wooden spoon.

**Peach** Yummy yummy.

*Mrs Reece's face lights up in surprise as she looks at one of the tickets she has taken from her bag*

**Mrs Reece** (*laughing*) How embarrassing.

**Voices** (*off*) Oh, what a swizz. Do it again, Phoebe. It's not fair (*etc.*)

**Mrs Reece** (*sharply*) Yes, all right. (*To Peach*) Let's have another one, shall we?

**Peach** I *am* going to get arm-ache, aren't I? (*He takes a ticket from the bucket*) The winner this time is number eleven. Two fat ladies.

**Mrs Reece** No, no. Legs.

**Peach** Two fat legs. Anyone got two fat legs?

**Mrs Reece** Who's the lucky one? (*She checks her own tickets again*)

*Thelma appears through the tabs holding a ticket*

What, you've got it, have you? (*To Peach*) What shall we do?

**Thelma** This is quite legitimate.

**Mrs Reece** Yes, it's the luck of the draw, I suppose. (*Calling*) Felicity, dear, have you got the . . . ah!

*Felicity appears through the C of the tabs with the lemon meringue pie, which she presents to Thelma and then exits*

**Thelma** Lovely.

**Mrs Reece** Thank you, Mrs Dabney. And thank you, Mr Damson. A sterling job.

**Peach** Great fun.

**Mrs Reece** Have you had a cup of tea?

**Peach** Love another.

**Mrs Reece** Well, you come with me. (*To the audience*) And now let's see what happens next!

*Mrs Reece, Peach, Felicity, and Thelma turn their backs on the audience, expecting the tabs to open*

Open sesame!

*The tabs open*

*Mrs Reece, Peach and Thelma walk through and off stage*

## ACT II

*The House Lights go down and the Lights come up on stage revealing a table set C with a chair either side. On the table is a chequered cloth, a bowl of artificial fruit, a vase of artificial flowers, and plastic beakers*

*The 3rd Witch enters R*

**3rd Witch** Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd—

*Once again she is pulled back into the wings and there is a succession of crashes and walls. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth enter L*

**Macbeth** Here I'll sit i' the midst:

Be large in mirth; anon we'll drink a measure

The table round.

*The 1st Murderer enters R without blood on her face*

*Macbeth goes over to her*

There's blood upon thy face.

*The 1st Murderer grimaces, then puts her hand to her face*

**1st Murderer** Forgot. Sorry. 'Tis Banquo's then.

**Macbeth** 'Tis better thee without than he within.

Is he dispatch'd?

**1st Murderer** Ay, my good Lord; safe in a ditch he bides,

With twenty trenched . . . thingies . . . on his head . . .

And his throat's cut as well.

**Macbeth** Thanks for that: now get thee gone:

Tomorrow we'll hear ourselves again.

*The 1st Murderer exits*

**Lady Macbeth** My royal Lord,

You do not give the cheer.

**Macbeth** Sweet remembrancer!

Now good digestion wait on appetite,

And health on both!

**Lady Macbeth** May it please Your Highness sit?

*Banquo enters on a pedestal mounted on a trolley; this is pushed by Dawn and Felicity. A large bloodstained sheet with a hole in it goes over Banquo's head and reaches to the ground so that the trolley pushers can't be seen. The intended effect is of Banquo gliding spectrally on stage. As soon as the trolley is parked R of the table, however, there is an increasing amount of movement from under the sheet*

**Macbeth** The table's full.

**Lady Macbeth** There is a place reserv'd, sir.

**Macbeth** Where?

**Lady Macbeth** There, my good Lord.

*Macbeth turns and sees the apparition. Banquo moans*

What is't that moves Your Highness?

**Macbeth** Thou canst not say I did it: never shake

Thy gory locks at me.

**Lady Macbeth** My Lord is often thus,

*Dawn's jiggling about—due to cramp, it seems—results in the table being upended. Lady Macbeth continues his dialogue while picking up the table and replacing everything on it*

And hath been from his youth; the fit is momentary;  
Upon a thought he will again be well. Are you a man?

**Macbeth** Ay, and a bold one, that dare not look on that

Which might appal the Devil.

**Lady Macbeth** O proper stuff!

This is the very painting of your fear:

This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,

Led you to Duncan. O! these flaws and starts—

Impostors to true fear—would well become

A woman's story at a winter's fire,

Authoris'd by her grandam. Shame itself!

Why do you make such faces? When all's done,

You look but on a stool.

**Dawn** I can't breathe under here.

**Felicity** Sssh.

**Macbeth** Prithee, see there! behold! look! lo! how say you?

Why, what care I? If thou canst nod, speak too.

If charnel-houses and our graves must send

Those that we bury back, our monuments

Shall be the maws of kites.

*Banquo's ghost is supposed to disappear. It doesn't. Banquo looks down. The pedestal is juddering back and forth*

**Banquo** Get me off.

**Dawn** The wheel's stuck.

**Lady Macbeth** What! quite unmann'd in folly?

**Macbeth** If I stand here, I saw him.

**Lady Macbeth** Fie, for shame!

**Dawn** Oh, I'm going home.

**Felicity** Dawn, you can't leave me under this sheet!

**Macbeth** Give me some wine: fill full;

I drink to the general joy of the whole table,

And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;

Would he were here!

*Banquo moans*

Avaunt! and quit my sight! Let the earth hide thee!

Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;

Hence, horrible shadow! unreal mockery, hence!

*The pedestal judders violently*

**Banquo** Hence!

**Dawn** Don't you hence me, dearie. I'm not bloody Charles Atlas, you know.

**Macbeth** Why, so: being gone, I am a man again.

**Lady Macbeth** You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

*The table is upended again*

**Felicity** Dawn, you've done it again!

**Macbeth** Come, we'll to sleep. My strange and self-abuse

Is the initiate fear that wants hard use:

We are but young in deed.

*Black-out*

*Felicity and Dawn exit*

*The next scene features the Witches and Macbeth, but the Lights keep coming up before the stage has been re-set. The Lights come up the first time: a cauldron has been set R. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are trying unsuccessfully to manoeuvre the table through one of the arches L. Banquo has been left stranded on top of the pedestal*

**Banquo** Somebody help me down! You can't leave me here!

*Black-out. Chatter and thudding. The Lights come up the second time: the cauldron has been moved L. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are trying to ram the table into the wings R. Banquo has been shifted L*

We're not ready! We're not ready!

*Black-out. Noise. The Lights come up a third time: the cauldron has been turned back to front. The table waits on stage while Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and others pull out props and scenery from the wings R. Banquo is now C, next to a lamp-post*

**Macbeth** There's no room. We can't get it off this way.

*Black-out. More noise. The Lights come up the fourth time: the extraneous props have been replaced in the wings with the exception of a shark, which Banquo, now placed R, is holding. The cauldron is on top of the table C*

*Quick Black-out. More noise. The Lights come up the fifth time: the cauldron has returned R. The table is C, now re-covered with the cloth and set for the banquet scene. Banquo has returned L*

*Plummer enters L*

**Plummer (making angrily for the table)** No, no, no, no!

*Black-out. More noise*

*Plummer, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth exit*

*The Lights come up the sixth time: the table has finally been removed. Thunder and lightning effects*

*The 1st and 2nd Witches enter R, cackling and carrying black shopping bags. The 1st Witch, who has now found her spectacles, has a black cat pinned to her shoulder. Giving up hope of being taken off, Banquo climbs down from her pedestal and creeps off during the following scene*

*The Witches take bones, toy mice, rubber spiders, etc., out of their bags and throw them into the cauldron as they dance round it. The 2nd Witch finally tosses in her bag for good measure*

**2nd Witch** (into the wings) Kate!

**3rd Witch** (off) I'm coming.

*The 3rd Witch enters in a wheelchair pushed by Plummer, who guides her round the cauldron and throws things into it for her*

**3rd Witch** Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd

**1st Witch** Thrice and once the hedge-pig whin'd

**2nd Witch** Harpier cries: 'Tis time, 'tis time.

**3rd Witch** Round about the cauldron go'  
In the poison'd entrails throw.  
Toad, that under cold stone  
Days and nights hast thirty-one  
Swelter'd venom sleeping got,  
Boil thou now i' the charmed pot.

*The Witches join hands*

**All** Double, double toil and trouble;  
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

*They pose, then all look in concern towards the piano and back to each other*

*The auditorium door bursts open and Gwynneth enters, running over to the piano*

*When she is seated she counts in "That Old Black Magic". Show lighting. While singing the first verse, the Witches dance a crudely choreographed dance number. Because the 3rd Witch is limited in her movements, Plummer reluctantly substitutes for her*

*During the middle eight, each Witch leaves the stage in turn*

*Gwynneth plays a retarded intro to the second verse, during which glitter curtains are drawn across the arches*

*The Witches return in sparkling silver pointed hats to perform the grand finale to the number*

*Each Witch does a brief solo routine*

*Apparitions appear through the glitter curtains*

*The illuminated sign, "Macbeth" is switched on above the stage. The Witches take a bow and gesture towards Gwynneth. Black-out*

*A spot comes up on Gwynneth, who rises, bows and exits through the auditorium door*

*During the Black-out the glitter curtains are removed. The 1st and 2nd Witches exchange the silver hats for black*

*Plummer and the 3rd Witch exit*

*There are thunder and lightning effects then the Lights come up to full*

**2nd Witch** By the pricking of my thumbs,

Something wicked this way comes.

Open, locks, whoever knocks.

*Knocking is heard as:*

*Macbeth enters L*

**Macbeth** How now, you secret, black and midnight hags!

What is't you do?

**Witches** A deed without a name.

**Macbeth** I conjure you, by that which you profess,

Howe'er you come to know it, answer me.

**1st Witch** Say, if thou'dst rather hear it from our mouths,

Or from our masters'?

**Macbeth** Call 'em; let me see 'em.

**Witches** (with appropriate gestures) Come, high or low;

Thyself and office deftly show!

*During her low bend the 1st Witch loses her spectacles again. Thunder. A bloody severed head is lowered uncertainly from flies*

**Macbeth** Tell me, thou unknown power—

**1st Witch** He knows thy thought:

Hear his speech, but say thou nought.

**Voice** (gradually increasing speed) Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! beware Macduff;

Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

*The head falls abruptly to the floor*

**Macbeth** (addressing the head) Whate'er thou art, for thy good caution thanks.

**2nd Witch** Here's another, more potent than the first.

*Macbeth and the Witches look towards one point above the stage. A bloody naked doll is lowered elsewhere. The ladies realize and gather round it*

**Voice** Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!

**Macbeth** Had I three ears, I'd hear thee.

**Voice** Be bloody, bold, and resolute; laugh to scorn  
The power of man, for none of woman born  
Shall harm Macbeth.

*Before this speech is completed, the doll is whipped up to flies*

**Macbeth** Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?  
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
And take a bond of fate: thou shalt not live.  
What noise is this?

**1st Witch** Show!

**2nd Witch** Show!

*The Show of Kings consists of Henry, dressed regally, walking across the stage R to L, scurrying behind the backcloth and then walking across stage again. He does this eight times and on each occasion changes his character and his cardboard crown (unable to find one crown, he emerges wearing one of the ladies' hats)*

*The scene holds little interest for the Witches, who hold their own conversation throughout it*

**Macbeth** Thou art too like the spirit of Banquo: down!  
Thy crown does sear mine eyeballs: and thy hair,  
Thou other gold-bound brow, is like the first:  
A third is like the former.

*She rounds on the Witches*

Filthy hags!

**1st Witch** Pardon?

**Macbeth** Why do you show me this? A fourth! Start, eyes!  
What! will the line stretch out to the crack of doom?  
Another yet! A seventh! I'll see no more:  
And yet the eighth appears, who bears a glass  
Which . . . .

*Henry is not carrying a mirror*

Who bears a glass!

*Henry withdraws and reappears carrying a beer tankard*

Which shows me many more; and some I see  
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry:  
Horrible sight! Now, I see, 'tis true;

*Banquo, in her bloodstained sheet, is pushed on R on roller skates. Unable to glide spectrally, she clumps about, hanging on to the arches for support*

For the blood-bolter'd Banquo smiles upon me,

*A quick smile from Banquo and then she exits*

And points at them for his. What! is this so?

*The 2nd Witch is miles away*

What! is this so?

**2nd Witch** Ay, sir, all this is so.

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be until  
Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill  
Shall come against him.

*(She cackles manically, then digs the 1st Witch)* Come on, cackle.

*The Witches exit L, cackling*

**Macbeth** Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour  
Stand aye accursed in the calendar!

*Black-out, during which the cauldron and severed head are struck and a small table with teapot, cups, etc., and chair are set*

*Macbeth exits. Mrs Reece, as Lady Macduff, enters, and sits at the table. A spot comes up on Peach revealing him returning from tea*

**Peach** Haven't missed the visions, have I? Have I? Oh, sugar. What were they like? Spooky? Lot of string, was there? Lovely. Sounds like fun. *(He picks up a handbag, takes out a hankie and dabs his nose)*

*The spot goes out and the Lights come up to full revealing Lady Macduff drinking tea*

*Minnie enters R as her son with a kestrel on her arm*

**Lady Macduff** Sirrah, your father's dead:

And what will you do now? How will you live?

**Son** As birds do, Mother.

**Lady Macduff** What! with worms and flies?

**Son** With what I get, I mean; and so do they.

**Lady Macduff** Poor bird!

*During ensuing dialogue, kestrel is flown up. Lady Macduff and the son point together, following the bird's "progress". The Son crosses L, her arm outstretched, and waits for the kestrel's return. However, it is not the kestrel, but the bloody naked doll that is lowered on to her arm. The moon, the severed head and finally the kestrel are all lowered briefly then whisked away*

How wilt thou do for a father?

**Son** Nay, how will you do for a husband?

**Lady Macduff** Why, I can buy me twenty at any market.

**Son** Then you'll buy 'em to sell again.

**Lady Macduff** Thou speak'st with all thy wit; and yet, i' faith,  
With wit enough for thee.

**Son** Was my father a traitor, Mother?

**Lady Macduff** Poor prattler, how thou talk'st!

*The 1st and 2nd Murderers enter R*

What are these faces?

**1st Murderer** Where is your husband?

**Lady Macduff** I hope in no place so unsanctified  
Where such as thou mayst find him.

**1st Murderer** He's a traitor.

**Son** Thou liest, thou shag-hair'd villain.

**2nd Murderer** What! you egg. *(She draws knife and stumbles into the dangling kestrel)* Aaaaaa! What's that?

*The 1st Murderer pulls the kestrel out of her way and takes her arm*

Young fry of treachery! *(She stabs the 1st Murderer)*

**1st Murderer** Dawn, no!

**2nd Murderer** Where is she?

**1st Murderer** Over there.

**2nd Murderer** Young fry of treachery.

*When the 2nd Murderer plods past the Son, Lady Macduff clings protectively to her tea things. Sure enough, the 2nd Murderer collides with the table, and when she catches hold of Lady Macduff's arm, she begins stabbing her*

**Lady Macduff** Stop it, Dawn. Dawn, you're annoying me.

**2nd Murderer** Minnie?

*The Son taps her on the shoulder. The 2nd Murderer jumps and begins stabbing the air. The Son takes hold of her wrist and guides the knife into her own stomach. She then falls on the ground. Lady Macduff adjusts her Son's clothing to avoid an indecent display of legs*

**Lady Macduff** You've got a line, dear.

**Son** He has killed me, Mother.

**Lady Macduff** Oh . . . the rotter.

*The 1st Murderer draws a knife and advances on Lady Macduff*

**1st Murderer** *(prompting the Son)* Run away, I pray you!

**Son** No, I can't run away, Felicity. I'm supposed to be dead.

**1st Murderer** You tell Mrs Reece to run away.

**Son** Run away, Mrs Reece, I pray you!

*Lady Macduff dabs her lips with a napkin, rises and runs off a couple of steps while the 1st Murderer collects the 2nd*

**Lady Macduff** Murder . . . oh, wait a minute. *(She stops and returns for her handbag)*

*Lady Macduff runs off L*

*(As she goes)* Murder! Murder!

*The Murderers follow her off*

*Black-out, during which the table and chair etc. are struck*

*The Son exits*

*The Lights come up as:*

*Thelma, playing Ross, appears from R pushing Macduff in her wheelchair*

**Macduff** My ever-gentle Ross, welcome hither.

Stands Scotland where it did?

*Ross turns Macduff around and pushes her into the UR corner. She then comes down C. During the following Macduff wheels herself down to Ross*

**Ross** Alas! poor country;  
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot  
Be call'd our mother, but our grave; where nothing,  
But who knows nothing, is once seen to smile;  
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rent the air  
Are made, not mark'd; where violent sorrow seems  
A modern ecstasy.

**Macduff** How does my wife?

*Ross pushes Macduff into the UL corner and puts the brake on the wheelchair. She then returns down C*

**Ross** Let not your ears despise my tongue for ever.  
Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes  
Savagely slaughter'd.

**Macduff** All? What! all my pretty chickens and their dam  
At one fell swoop? *(She is unable to turn the chair)*

**Ross** Not in the legions  
Of horrid hell can come a devil more damn'd  
In evils to top Macbeth.  
Cut short all intermission; front to front  
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and thyself.

**Macduff** This tune goes manly.  
Come, go we to the king.

*Ross strides off R*

I'll catch up.

*Black-out. There are screams of surprise from the darkness. The Lights come up*

*In trying to enter L, Mrs Reece, as a Doctor, and Felicity, as a Gentlewoman, have fallen into Macduff's wheelchair. They recover themselves, pushing Macduff off L*

**Doctor** I have two nights watched with you, but can perceive no truth in your report. When was it she last walked?

**Gentlewoman** Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from her bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep. Lo you! here she comes!

*Lady Macbeth enters L. A Kentucky Fried Chicken box is lying on the train of his nightdress and is dragged across the stage. The Gentlewoman casually covers it with her skirts and shuffles off L to deposit it in the wings. She returns*

**Doctor** Her eyes are open.

**Gentlewoman** Ay, but their sense is shut.

*Lady Macbeth rubs his hands*

**Doctor** Look, how she rubs her hands.

**Gentlewoman** It is an accustomed action with her.

**Lady Macbeth** Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor** Hark! she speaks.

**Gentlewoman** Observe her; stand close.

*Lady Macbeth rubs his hands*

**Doctor** What is it she does now?

**Gentlewoman** It is an accustomed action with her.

**Lady Macbeth** Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor** Hark! she speaks.

**Gentlewoman** Observe her; stand close.

**Doctor** Her eyes are open.

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*Lady Macbeth rubs his hands*

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*Lady Macbeth rubs his hands*

**Gentlewoman** It is an accustomed action with her.

**Lady Macbeth** Yet here's a spot.

**Doctor** Hark! she speaks.

**Gentlewoman** Observe her; stand close.

**Doctor** (*prompting Lady Macbeth*) Out, damned spot!

**Lady Macbeth** Out, damned spot! out, I say! (*He rubs his hands*)

**Gentlewoman** (*prompting the Doctor*) Look, how she rubs her hands.

**Doctor** It isn't.

**Gentlewoman** It is.

**Doctor** It isn't.

**Plummer** (*off*) One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't.

**Lady Macbeth** One: two: why, then 'tis time to do't. Fie, my Lord, fie! a soldier and afeard?

**Gentlewoman** He's left a bit out.

**Doctor** (*to the Gentlewoman*) Sssh. (*To Lady Macbeth*) Yet who would have thought . . .

**Plummer** (*off*) I'll tell him.

**Lady Macbeth** Yet who would have thought I'll tell him how much blood the old man had in him.

**Doctor** (*to the Gentlewoman*) Do you mark that?

**Lady Macbeth** Do you mark that?

**Doctor** No, that's my line. Now it's you.

**Lady Macbeth** What is it?

**Doctor** Can't tell you.

**Plummer** (*off*) The Thane of Fife had a wife.

**Lady Macbeth** The Thane of Wife had a fife.

**Doctor** No.

**Lady Macbeth** What?

**Gentlewoman** Should be the other way round.

*Lady Macbeth turns his back on the audience*

**Lady Macbeth** The Thane of Wife had a fife.

**Plummer** (*off*) Where is she now?

**Lady Macbeth** Dunno.

**Plummer** (*off*) What.

**Lady Macbeth** I said I dunno.

**Plummer** (*off*) You say "What"!

**Lady Macbeth** Oh. What.

*The Doctor and Gentlewoman each rub hands*

**Lady Macbeth** (*realizing*) What! will these hands ne'er be clean?

**Doctor** (*to the Gentlewoman*) Go to, go to . . .

**Lady Macbeth** Go to, go to . . . yet here's a spot.

**Doctor** Hark! she spe—

**Gentlewoman** Oh, Mrs Reece, no!

**Doctor** Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

**Gentlewoman** She has spoke what she should not.

**Doctor** You can say that again.

**Lady Macbeth** Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh! oh! Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of York; and all the clouds that lour'd upon our house in the deep bosom of the ocean buried. To bed, to bed: there's knocking at the gate. To bed, to bed, to bed.

*Lady Macbeth exits*

**Doctor** Will she now go to bed?

**Gentlewoman** Directly.

**Doctor** Foul whisperings are abroad. Good-night.

**Gentlewoman** Good-night, good Doctor.

*They wait for a Black-out which doesn't come*

**Doctor** Fare thee well.

**Gentlewoman** Bye.

*They shake hands*

**Doctor** Lovely castle you have here.

**Gentlewoman** Thank you, Doctor.

**Doctor** Well . . . keep taking the tablets.

*Black-out*

*The Doctor and Gentlewoman exit*

*A spot comes up on Peach, who is applying lipstick*

**Peach** Oh, that's better. I couldn't see what I was doing.

*The spot goes out. There is the sound of bagpipes*

*A spot comes up on Plummer standing behind Macduff in her wheelchair*

**Macduff** What wood is this before us?

**Plummer** The wood of Birnam.

**Macduff** Let every soldier cut him down a bough

And carry it before him.

**Plummer** It shall be done.

*There is the sound of marching feet. Plummer hands Macduff a potted plant and holds a bunch of flowers in front of his face as he pushes Macduff down C. The Lights come up to full*

*The rest of the company march on behind various greenery: Felicity holds an apple tree; Dawn a palm tree; Minnie a cactus; Thelma a mushroom; Mrs Reece a Christmas tree (complete with decorations). Finally Henry enters in a tree costume*

**Macduff** Well, march we on!

**Peach** Excuse me. Sorry.

**Mrs Reece** Yes?

**Peach** You do realize you've only got ten minutes left?

**Mrs Reece** To do what?

**Peach** Finish the play. Otherwise you'll be disqualified.

**Mrs Reece** Ten minutes?

**Peach** Nine now.

**Mrs Reece** But we've got to get Birnam wood to Dunsinane.

**Peach** Well, I think your only hope is Concorde.

**Plummer** What's going on? What is all this?

**Mrs Reece** It's nothing to worry about, David, dear. We've just got to finish the play in nine minutes.

**Plummer** Nine minutes?

**Peach** No, no, no, no. Eight and a half.

**Plummer** But we've got another three scenes. We can't do them in eight and a half minutes.

**Mrs Reece** We can if we try, dear. Now, come along, folks: pacy-pacy.

*She encourages the others to run rather than march on the spot*

**Plummer** I can't stand this any more. I can't stand it. It's a joke, an absolute joke. I can't work like this. It's crazy. I hope to God my parents never find out about this. Finish it yourselves. I don't want anything more to do with it.

*Plummer exits R*

**Macduff** Let our just censures

Attend the true event, and put we on  
Industrious . . .

*Plummer enters*

**Plummer** Cut it, love. Cut the scene. It's not important. Everybody off, off, quickly. (*To Henry*) You're next.

*Everybody, with the exception of Thelma and Plummer, hurriedly leaves the stage*

(*To the audience*) They all go to Dunsinane disguised as trees. All right?  
(*Into the wings*) Lady Macbeth!

*Plummer exits L*

**Thelma** Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:

Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,  
I cannot taint with fear.

*Plummer appears L*

**Plummer** This is cut, dear, cut.

*Plummer exits*

**Thelma** What's the boy Malcolm? Was he not born of woman?

Throw physic to the dogs . . .

*Plummer appears L*

**Plummer** Thelma, love, get off the stage, will you?

**Thelma** I'll have none of it . . . I will not be treated like this! I will not have my scenes cut!

*Plummer exits*

**Plummer** (*calling into the wings as he goes*) Come on, come on, come on!

*Lady Macbeth enters L*

**Lady Macbeth** What beast was't, then—

Thelma I'm leaving the play. I'm leaving the Society. Take this bloody mushroom.

*Thelma storms off L*

**Lady Macbeth** That made you break this enterprise to me?

When you durst do it, then you were a man;



And, to be more than what you were, you would  
Be so much more the man.

*Thelma marches on from L, having removed half her costume*

**Thelma** He's supposed to be Lady Macbeth! Lady Macbeth!

*Thelma marches off R*

**Lady Macbeth** Nor time nor place  
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:  
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now  
Does unmake you.

*Thelma marches on from R in an overcoat*

**Thelma** He can't even put up a set. Look at this: junk!

*Thelma exits L*

**Lady Macbeth** I have given suck, and know  
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:  
I would, while it was smiling in my face,  
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,  
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you  
Have done to this.

*Thelma steps out from the wings L, fully-dressed in street clothes and carrying her lemon meringue pie, which she pushes into Lady Macbeth's face before she exits*

We'll never get to Welwyn Garden City now.

*Plummer, in Macbeth's costume, appears from L*

**Plummer** (*pulling Lady Macbeth off*) Yes, we will. I can play her part.

*They exit*

*Black-out*

*The auditorium door opens and Thelma appears, followed by Mrs Reece, who chases her up the aisle. During the ensuing dialogue, Peach surreptitiously leaves the rostrum and goes backstage*

**Mrs Reece** Thelma, dear, I implore you: if nothing else think of what this is going to look like in the Guild journal.

**Thelma** I don't give a tinker's cuss for the Guild journal.

**Mrs Reece** Oh, Thelma. The one time that Polly Boatwright chooses to come—and this happens.

**Thelma** What do you mean?

**Mrs Reece** Polly Boatwright, drama critic of the *Guild Monthly*. She's here.

**Thelma** I don't believe it.

*Mrs Reece points out a female member of the audience*

I don't like Mr Plummer. I never have done. He's a darn sight too full of himself for my liking.

**Mrs Reece** I know, dear.

**Thelma** I expect an apology.

**Mrs Reece** Leave it to me.

**Thelma** And I want my death scene. I've been rehearsing it for nine months.

**Mrs Reece** You'll have it, I promise you. But we do only have four and a half minutes left so I will have to chivvy you along a little.

**Thelma** I'll be ready.

*She and Mrs Reece exit through auditorium door. Full stage Lights come up on Plummer, who gabbles his lines as fast as is humanly possible*

**Plummer** Hang out our banners on the outward walls;  
The cry is still, "They come"; our castle's strength  
Will laugh a siege to scorn; here let them lie  
Till famine and the ague eat them up;  
Were they not forced with those that should be ours,  
We might have met them dareful, beard to beard,  
And beat them backward home. What is that noise?

*Seyton hurtles in L*

**Seyton** It is the cry of women, my good lord.

*Seyton exits L*

**Plummer** I have almost forgot the taste of fears.  
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd  
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair  
Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir  
As life were in't: I have supp'd full with horrors;  
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,  
Cannot once start me. Wherefore was that cry?

*Seyton rushes in L*

**Seyton** The queen, my lord, is dead.

*Seyton exits L*

**Plummer** She should have died hereafter;  
There would have been time for such a word.  
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more; it is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.

*Seyton rushes in L.*

Thou com'st to use thy tongue; thy story quickly.

**Seyton** Gracious my lord,  
I should report that which I say I saw—

**Plummer** Quickly!

**Seyton** But know not how to do it.

**Plummer** Well, say, sir.

**Seyton** As I did stand my watch upon the hill,  
I looked towards Birnam, and anon, methought,  
The wood began to move.

**Plummer** Liar and slave!

**Seyton** Let me endure your wrath if't be not so:  
Within this three mile may you see it coming;  
I say, a moving grove.

**Plummer** If thou speak'st false,  
Upon the next tree shalt thou hang alive,  
Till famine cling thee; if thy speech be sooth,  
I care not if thou dost for me as much.  
I pull in resolution, and begin  
To doubt the equivocation of the fiend  
That lies like truth; "Fear not, till Birnam wood  
Do come to Dunsinane"; and now a wood  
Comes toward Dunsinane. Arm, arm, and out!

*Seyton exits L*

If this which he avouches does appear,  
There is no flying hence, nor tarrying here.  
I 'gin to be aweary of the sun  
And wish the estate o' the world were now undone.  
Ring the alarum-bell! Blow, wind! come, wrack!  
At least we'll die with harness on our back.  
Black-out!

*Black-out*

*Plummer exits. The Lights come up revealing Thelma, in armour, duelling with Macduff in her wheelchair*

**Macduff** Despair thy charm;  
And let the angel whom thou still hast serv'd  
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb  
Untimely ripp'd.

*The tabs begin to jerk closed. Thelma attempts to make herself visible to the last moment*

**Thelma** Lay on, Macduff,  
And damn'd be him that first cries, "Hold, enough!"

*The tabs have shut. Thelma wrenches them open again. She has a sword stuck underneath her arm. She falls down, then withdraws. A commotion behind the auditorium door, then Minnie, Dawn, and later Thelma, enter and hurry to the back of the auditorium. Finally Plummer comes out and sits apart from them*

*A spot comes up on the tabs*

*Mrs Reece appears through the C of the tabs*

**Mrs Reece** To quote the Bard: "All's well that ends well". Now it's very nice—

**Minnie** Can't hear you, Mrs Reece.

**Dawn** Louder, please.

**Mrs Reece** It's very nice to come up on the stage and be applauded, but those of us who take acting more seriously want our work to be judged by the professionals. So now we come to the moment when we look forward to the constructive criticism of an expert in his field, Mr George—

*A hand comes through the C of the tabs and puts a peach into Mrs Reece's hand*

George Nectarine.

*The tabs jerk open. Mrs Reece walks through and off stage. Standing with his back to the audience is Peach. He turns, revealing that he is now in full drag with evening gown and court shoes*

**Peach** Well, thank you, Mrs Reece, for that charming introduction. I'm sorry, I do hope you'll excuse my appearance, but the Guild of Drama Adjudicators is holding a drag ball at (*local theatre*) tonight, and I'm rushing straight on there. You're going as well, are you? Lovely. Now: *Macbeth*. What do we think of when we talk about this play? Well, essentially it's a love story, isn't it? A story of a young married couple, and a wife who wants her husband to get on in his job. And how well this came across in the Farndale Avenue group's production tonight. What I especially liked was the producer's refusal to kowtow to the trendies and the progressives as far as interpretation goes. What we got was a simple, raw, almost primitive production, which conveyed the tensions and the emotions so very, very powerfully. I don't know about you, but those witches terrified the life out of me. They did. I'm sure they're all charming ladies in real life, but, goodness me, I'm going to find it difficult to get to sleep tonight, I can tell you. *The Exorcist* pales in comparison. And what about that seething conflict between Macbeth and his wife? We felt it, didn't we? Yes, we did. Especially in those little asides, which I *have* made a note of: "I hate you", "You're incompetent", "You've messed up my scene". I don't, in all honesty, remember those lines from the original play, but they do so much, don't they, to heighten the significance of the play for the Eighties? And indeed for those younger than that! But, joking apart, I found this a passionately involving production. I loved that inspired, but somehow devastatingly simple device of suggesting the remoteness of eleventh-century Scottish monarchy by playing so much of the action back to front. It worked, didn't it? It alienated us. We thought, "Who *are* these people? They're not like us. They're living in a different world". And did you notice the very clever and unsettling use of darkness? We'd be watching a particular scene, thinking that we'd come to terms with it when suddenly—click! We'd be plunged into absolute darkness, prevented from an over-familiarity with the characters by the

fact that it was impossible to see them. An obvious trick; we've seen it done before, but it was so effective. I think this is the word that sums up the production for me—effective. Look at those marvellous visions. Weren't they fun? I tell you, I've been in the theatre now for, oh dear oh Lord, more years than I care to remember, and I've really got no idea how some of those things were done. Is the producer here at all? Is he?

*The Ladies point at Plummer*

Well done, Mr Producer. Well done indeed. Come on, why don't you stand up? Let's have a look at you.

*Plummer gets up with mock reluctance*

That's it. I think you've got some supporters over here, haven't you? Look, I don't want you to give any secrets away if you don't want to. Really. But how did you get that snow effect?

**Plummer** It was toilet paper actually.

**Peach** Toilet paper? Good heavens.

**Plummer** Delsey.

**Peach** What a wheeze, eh?

**Plummer** We wanted to use polystyrene, but we got this list of fire regulations—

**Peach** (*interrupting*) Well, I think it was a jolly good bit of improvisation. A credit to you. We could probably have done without the box, but that's a small point. Now, what about the performances? *Macbeth*. Yes, here was a very rousing portrayal. Plenty of light and shade. There were times when we felt very sorry for this poor fellow, and others when we absolutely hated him, didn't we? Where are you, dear? I hate you, I hate you! Lady *Macbeth*—another well-rounded characterization. I wonder, incidentally, how many of you realized that this part was played by a man. Remarkable, isn't it? I only found out just now. Watch out, Danny La Rue. An excellent *Banquo*. Bit of trouble with the projection here, wasn't there? But, good heavens, what a wealth of feeling in those eyes. Something amateurs tend to forget so often. *Macduff* I liked enormously. A lovely touch, wasn't it, to symbolize her crippled spirit by playing the part on those stark, penetrating crutches? And I'd like to single this actress out because, although there was a certain lack of mobility in the second half, she was very, very successful in communicating *Macduff's* pain. In fact it was quite the most painful performance I've seen in years. The *Witches* I've already mentioned, but some delightful costumes here. And while we're on the subject, bravo, wardrobe department, for the entire show. Some super clothes, super. All in all, then, an ambitious choice for these ladies, but one they've proved fully justified in taking. My only quibble with the production was that, for me, it lacked a sense of . . . comedy. *Macbeth* is a serious play, I'm the first to admit it, but there is humour to be found here, and I'm thinking in particular of the Porter's scene. But what we got tonight was more anguish and despair. Now don't misunderstand me, Mr Producer, your toilet paper worked a treat, but when that poor chap lost his glasses in the blizzard, I think a lot of us

blinked back a tear, didn't we? But let's not harp on this. I've had a most enlightening evening, and I think the best thing I can say in summation is that tonight's production makes me feel like going home and re-reading the play. (*He turns to his notes*)

*The Ladies and Plummer hurry through the auditorium door, chattering delightedly*

Well, it's lovely to see you all here, and I hope you'll be able to join us again later on. I must admit that the Farndale Avenue group have set a standard that it's going to be difficult to equal, but nevertheless I see that on Tuesday the (*local*) Egg Painting Club and Crochet League are presenting their version of *Ben-Hur*. On Wednesday the (*local*) Drama Class are doing *Doctor Faustus*—aren't they brave? On Thursday we've got a real treat for you, a delightful musical performed by the Merrow Village Hall Operatic Society, and they're doing *Aida*. Oh, and the producer, Mrs Walker, tells me that she's managed to persuade her son, Jeremy, to play saxophone. Sounds like fun, doesn't it? Finally we round off the week with a new play being premièred by the (*local*) Townswomen's Guild Dramatic Society—Over Eighties Division. And they're doing *The Romans in Britain*. Bless them.

*A border falls from the flies to the floor behind Peach*

Thank you for listening to me so patiently. Have a safe journey home. (*He moves upstage, sees the fallen border and steps over it*) And good-night.

*The border is suddenly raised between Peach's legs. Black-out. Music as—*

*the CURTAIN falls*