

Macbeth - Episode 2 The Evil Lady Macbeth!

Back at Macbeth's castle in Inverness, Lady Macbeth is reading a letter from her husband which tells her what has happened and of the witches' predictions that he would be made Thane of Cawdor and then become King.

She is concerned that as Macbeth is "too full of the milk of human kindness" to fulfil the prophecy. He is ambitious but without the qualities to help it on its way, she says.

A messenger arrives to announce that King Duncan will be visiting to spend the night with the Macbeths. Lady Macbeth sees this as their big chance to do away with the king: **"The raven himself is hoarse that croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan under my battlements."**

Almost like a witch herself, she summons the dark spirits to **"fill me from the crown to the toe top-full of direst cruelty"** as she hatches a way to murder the king.

She is reunited with Macbeth and tells him her plans.

King Duncan arrives with his court and says how charming the place seems... **"this castle hath a pleasant seat."** This is ironic in view of what Lady Macbeth has planned for him.

She welcomes him and he tells her how well-loved her husband is.

Macbeth mulls over the planned murder of Duncan and says it would be best to get it over with quickly. He says his "vaulting ambition" will be what spurs him on.

But when Lady Macbeth finds him, he has changed his mind about the murder, deciding that the king is good and kind and has honoured him. She is furious. She says she would rather pull a baby from her breast and dash its brains out than go back on their decision.

She tells him to **"screw your courage to the sticking place."** She says that when Duncan is asleep she will make his guards so drunk they will be in a stupor. The murder can take place and then they will take the blame.

Her plans so shock Macbeth that he says to her: "Bring forth men-children only!" He feels she is as strong as a man and will only produce sons - not daughters.

Now answer the following questions:

1. Where is Macbeth's castle?

Macbeth's castle is in Inverness.

2. What is Lady Macbeth reading?

Lady Macbeth is reading the letter from Macbeth.

3. Who sent it?

Her husband, Macbeth, sent the letter.

4. What does she believe Macbeth is too full of?

She thinks he is too "full of the milk of human kindness... to catch the nearest way."
(p13. 15-17)

5. Who is on his way to visit the Macbeth castle?

King Duncan is on his way to the castle.

6. How long is King Duncan going to stay?

He will be staying one night.

7. What does Lady Macbeth begin planning?

She starts to plan the King's murder.

8. Why is the line "This castle hath a pleasant seat" ironic?

King Duncan says this on his arrival, without knowing that Lady Macbeth is planning his murder.

9. What does Lady Macbeth want Macbeth to do?

She wants Macbeth to murder Duncan.

10. What is Macbeth's first reaction to his wife's plan?

At first, Macbeth says the murder should be done quickly but, later Macbeth's conscience makes him want to back out of the plan.