

Act V

Scene 5 and a half. I

Inside Birnam wood. Enter MALCOM, SIWARD and YOUNG SIWARD, MACDUFF, MENTEITH, CAITHNESS, ANGUS, LENNOX, ROSS and Soldiers, marching.

MALCOM: As we cross the threshold of the woods Our vengeance hidden by the bark only to emerge again, naked in body and soul, To seal the fate of dread Macbeth. I feel between these quivering trees, as if acclaimed entering a mausoleum.

MACDUFF: I can only hear the pulse of my pounding blood Beating at my temples, And the susurrus of my softly padding feet. As I make my discrete way towards my fate, I sense the world of men no more.

LENNOX: Our armour is of moss and our faces creeping bluebells. We are as the graves on which we tread, Forgotten and abandoned behind the shield of boles.

CAITHNESS: These trees protect us, but keep low your voices – All know that woods don't talk, nor drink, so what protects us now May else betray us later.

SIWARD: Please, speak on, so I know you ; I'd feel a fool addressing a tree that was just a tree.

MENTEITH: If you no longer decipher me from bushes May the sun that explodes like tears on our swords, be our torch-lit eyes to guide us straight And do not stray.

SIWARD: I can barely breathe! But there sits Banquo, unattended, Slumped against that stump of tree, Corpse on corpse, a dagger sunk into his back.

MACDUFF: This majestic mausoleum cannot be a graveyard If it leaves unburied the ruined remains Of that tyrant's conscience.

YOUNG SIWARD: That coward will die bawling and squalling and begging like a virgin man.

LENNOX: Do my eyes deceive me? Is it the play of leaves that plays upon my vision? Look – Banquo decomposes at last! His dust, disquiet, recomposes itself upon the tree. A death mask, a

funerary portrait, A sign and signpost, succour and success. He paints himself in nature's life eternal.

MALCOM: His image be our banner. The wind lifts it yonder high To show us our way forward nigh. He has armed our branching grasp And has clarified our plight. Let us put an end to darkness And make a nesting for the light.

ALL: Emerge!

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