



Out, damned spot

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Doctor:

What is it she does now? Look how she rubs her hands.

Gentlewoman:

It is an accustom'd action with her, to seem thus washing her hands. I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady Macbeth:

Yet here's a spot.

Doctor:

Hark, she speaks. I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

Lady Macbeth:

Out, damn'd spot! out, I say!—One; two: why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky.—Fie, my lord, fie, a soldier, and afeard? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our pow'r to accompt?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

[Macbeth Act 5, scene 1, 26–40](#)

Lady Macbeth, as has become her wont, sleepwalks through the royal castle. As her waiting-woman and her doctor listen in, she mutters fragments of an imaginary conversation that recalls the night she and her husband conspired to murder King Duncan [see [A SORRY SIGHT](#)]. The hour is two o'clock; she upbraids her husband for his bad conscience; she insists that there will be nothing to fear once they've grabbed the crown; she marvels at how much blood Duncan had to shed. As Lady Macbeth replays this scene for the eavesdroppers, she not only incriminates herself, but also reveals the pangs of conscience she had ridiculed in her husband.

"Out, damn'd spot" is a prime example of "Instant Bard," tailor-made for ironic jokes and marketing schemes. But the "spot" isn't a coffee stain, it's blood. One motif of [Macbeth](#) is how tough it is to wash, scrub, or soak out nasty bloodstains. Macbeth had said that even the ocean couldn't wash his hands clean of Duncan's blood; Lady Macbeth, who scorned him then, now finds the blood dyed into her conscience. The king and queen persist in imagining that physical actions can root out psychological demons, but the play is an exposition of how wrong they are.

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Shakespeare Quotes: Out, damned spot

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