



A sorry sight

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Macbeth:

[*Looking on his hands*] This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth:

A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.

Macbeth:

There's one did laugh in 's sleep, and one cried,
"Murther!"
That they did wake each other. I stood and heard
them;
But they did say their prayers, and address'd them
Again to sleep.

[Macbeth Act 2, scene 2, 18–23](#)

Macbeth's hands are a "sorry sight"—they're covered with the blood of King Duncan, whom he has just murdered. Macbeth seems to fuse several related meanings of "sorry." On one hand, the sight is "painful" or "distressing"; on the other, it provokes remorse and sorrow. We use "sorry sight" in a somewhat weaker sense than Macbeth did; we mean "pathetic spectacle." Serious pain or true regret is rarely involved.

Lady Macbeth only finds it foolish to get all emotional about such a manly deed of courage [*see [SCREW YOUR COURAGE TO THE STICKING PLACE](#)*]. Macbeth's bad conscience, however, cannot be curbed, as he hallucinates hideous denunciations of the murder.

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