*‘Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be* */ What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;* */ It is too full o' the milk of human kindness* */ To catch the nearest way: thou wouldst be great;* */ Art not without ambition, but without The illness should attend it*.’

* The letter makes it clear that **Lady Macbeth shares her husband’s ambition**.
* **She understands the necessity to be ruthless** if the prophesy is to come true.
* Her reaction to the letter also offers **a new perspective on her husband’s character** – she perceives weakness in the mighty warrior.

**Macbeth’s love for his wife** is evident from the fact that, in Act I, sc(v), he writes to her as soon as he hears the prophesy:

*‘This have I thought good to deliver**thee, my dearest partner of* ***greatness****, that thou* */ mightst not lose the dues of rejoicing, by being / ignorant of what* ***greatness*** *is promised thee*.’

She is **determined to help her husband achieve his goal**, and her words are suggestive of **a link to the malevolent Witches**:

*' Hie thee hither,* */ That I may pour my spirits in thine ear;* */ And chastise with the valour of my tongue / All that impedes thee from the golden round*.’

* She is an **enthusiastic participant** and the key **enabler of the regicide**
* She is **unable to cope with the moral consequences** of her actions and is eventually **consumed by guilt**.

**Lady Macbeth**

***‘She should have died hereafter.’***

**Macbeth, Act V, sc(v)**

It is important to note that **Lady Macbeth is different from the Witches**. She is not part of the supernatural. **She understands morality, and feels that she is strong enough to ignore her conscience:**

*‘Come, you spirits / That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,* */ And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full* */ Of direst cruelty! make thick my blood;* */ Stop up the access and passage to remorse,* */ That no compunctious visitings of nature / Shake my fell purpose*.’

**The Transformation**

Like her husband, Lady Macbeth goes through a radical change across the five acts of the play.

In her case, the transformation is **from powerful and abhorrent to weak and sympathetic**

**Lady Macbeth understands her own power**. She is the **strategist who plans the murder**, and telling her husband that she will facilitate his crime:

1. *‘To beguile the time,* */ Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,* */ Your hand, your tongue: look like the innocent flower, / But be the serpent under't*.’
2. *‘You shall put* */ This night's great business into my dispatch’*

**Key Revision Scenes:**

1. Act I, sc(v)
2. Act I, sc(vii)
3. Act II, sc(ii)
4. Act III, sc(ii)
5. Act V, sc(i)
6. *‘Art thou afeard / To be the same in thine own act and valour / As thou art in desire? Wouldst thou have that / Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life, / And live a coward in thine own esteem?’*
7. *‘Screw your courage to the sticking-place, / And we'll not fail.’*
8. *‘What cannot you and I perform upon / The unguarded Duncan?’*
9. *‘What not put upon / His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt / Of our great quell?’*

* Lady Macbeth’s **intelligence and insights into her husband’s psychology** are evident from her response to his decision to abandon the plan.
* She knew he would need her support because his nature is ‘*too full o’ the milk of human kindness.’*
* When that moment comes, in **Act I, sc(vii)**, she **plays on his egoism and reassures him in order to convince him to proceed**.
* Her plan to put the blame on the bodyguards offers him the reassurance he needs.

1. ‘The doors are open and the surfeited guards do mock their charge with snores – I have drugged their possets;
2. ‘Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done’t.’
3. *‘Infirm of purpose! / Give me the daggers: the sleeping and the dead / Are but as pictures.’*

**It is wrong to say that Lady Macbeth makes her husband kill Duncan**. She encourages and facilitates him, but **he has free will** and makes his own mind up, while fully aware of the consequences.

* **Lady Macbeth is driven mad by guilt**. By Act V, sc(i), she is depicted obsessively scrubbing her hands saying *‘Out, damned spot, out I say...yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him’* and *‘The Thane of Fife had a wife, where is she now?’*
* **She believed that she could act with impunity, and she was wrong**. The audience remember her corruption but **witnessing such a strong character brought to such a state elicits some degree of sympathy**.
* Malcolm’s final speech suggests **she died by suicide**. He says she *‘by self and violent hands took off her life.’*
* **She dies unlamented by her husband**, who dismisses her death with the words *‘she should have died hereafter.’*
* **Lady Macbeth’s role diminishes greatly after Macbeth’s coronation.**
* She tries to arrest his slide into paranoia and cruelty but is unsuccessfully.
* Macbeth excludes her from his plans, making her a peripheral figure throughout Acts III-V.

1. *Naught’s had, all’s spent, where our desire is got without content.’*
2. *‘These deeds must not be thought after these ways...so, it will make us mad.’*
3. *‘Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck.’*

**On the night of the regicide**, she:

1. Drugs the guards
2. Rings the bell
3. Admits she could not kill Duncan herself
4. Fails to convince Macbeth to return the bloody daggers to Duncan’s chambers, illustrating the limitations of her influence over him.