

LADY MACBETH – Shakespeare's Thorn Apple

[A cry of women within]

What is that noise?

Seyton: It is the cry of women, my good lord.

[Exit]

Macbeth: I have almost forgot the taste of fears.

The time has been my senses would have cool'd

To hear a night-shriek, and my fell of hair

Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir

As life were in't. I have supp'd full with horrors;

Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,

Cannot once start me.

Re-enter Seyton.

Wherefore was that cry?

Seyton: The queen, my lord, is dead.

Malcolm: We shall not spend a large expense of time

Before we reckon with your several loves,

And make us even with you. My thanes and kinsmen,

Henceforth be earls, the first that ever Scotland

In such an honour named. What's more to do

Which would be planted newly with the time,

As calling home our exiled friends abroad

That fled the mares of watchful tyranny;

Producing forth the cruel ministers

Of this dead butcher and his fiend-like queen,

Who, as 't is thought, by self and violent hands

Took off her life;

Case:

A 32 year old woman presents with uterine bleeding and violent pains in left hip.

She is dressed in dark clothes, she has wide staring eyes and an earnest and nervous manner. She gave up work to stay at home and look after family. She stammers occasionally when she speaks. She wears a strong and heady perfume.

Uterine bleeding began after the birth of her last child. It comes and goes with no real pattern, can be heavy or light and is independent of the menstrual period which otherwise seems normal. She is very anxious about this condition but will not seek any other medical advice. She is "paranoid" about going to a doctor. She is terrified of serious underlying pathology. When the bleeding begins it sends her into a "crazy, restless mood". She becomes loquacious at this point and talks at length about this state. At its worst she hallucinates, is convinced there are ghosts in the room, claims she sees them for real. One minute she is euphoric, the next extremely sad.

She says her dreams are like this also. Sees vivid colours, strange animals, becomes very excited, hears strange voices. Sees her own body, in bits, parts missing. Cannot sleep without light. When she wakes she feels as if still in the dream, feels terrified that real life has become the dream.

When not in this state life is much calmer, except for the pain in her left hip. She has to move around to alleviate the pain, dancing really helps. She once had an abscess on the left hip and thinks the pain is related still to that.

She talks about being bored with her life, wanted to do so much, had ambitions but somehow lost them. Her relationship with husband is not good. "He is a wimp, has no ambition, has lost so many opportunities. I am ambitious for him, I push him into doing things, he really could be great if only he tried.

She becomes loquacious and red in the face again at this point, ceaselessly talking about how she wants to get rid of her husband, she did love him once, but wants to escape from him even though she hates the idea of being alone. Sometimes she feels as though she could kill him because he just won't do things, she gets into a rage with him. Could kill him with a knife. Feels terrible about this as they are a very religious family, were once very devout. These feelings play on her conscience. What can she do about all this?

“I wish I were a man, I would have done great things in my life, not wasted it, waiting for things to happen.”

She has a look of terror on her face and is difficult to calm. She continues to say how she many hours she has spent “spinning a plan of how to get rid of her husband”. “If it weren’t for him I could have got promotion, I could have been at the top. I think he has done this to me on purpose, he is conspiring against me, to keep me down, perhaps he is going to kill me instead. I need to escape” She is wringing her hands and her limbs are trembling.

After a while she is able to say more about her other symptoms.

Fears tunnels and narrow passages. Her house is old and large and there are many narrow passages and she never knows what might be lurking round the corners. The house is near to a cemetery where many family members are buried.

She is a very thirsty person, craves sour juices, loves lemon juice, but cannot go near water of any kind, has a great fear of drinking water or even being near water. Food and fluids get stuck in her throat, she cannot swallow properly, makes her extremely agitated. Large expanses of water frighten her “they are like huge mirrors, reflecting the world, they glisten, they are too bright and shining like knives.”

Has a history of terrible headaches accompanied by fever, brought on by the sun, disturbing her vision.

When she gets really nervous she becomes asthmatic.

She has been told she grinds her teeth when asleep. Her dreams are always frightful. Has woken in tears, screaming and laughing all at the same time.

Her teeth have always caused her problems, the grinding in the sleep makes her mouth sore, she feels as if they will fall out when they are really painful.

As a child she had pneumonia and scarlatina, but these were suppressed by allopathy. She also had a convulsion during the fever of scarlatina.

Her skin feels as if it has insects crawling on it but there is no eruption but skin can get fiery red sometimes. She perspires a great deal when hot and this makes her even more anxious. She has a sensation as if something is boiling inside her, this is where her terror lies.

Rx = Stramonium 10m

She never got to take this remedy. She died, either through suicide or murder, no-one really knows, but her terror was realised more than once.

Thanks for reading.

Joy Lucas RSHom