CHAPTER 5

Macbeth

By William Shakespeare

Adapted by Kate Davis
Summary

In A.D. 1040 Macbeth, a Scottish thane, or regional leader, is returning from battle when he has a mysterious encounter with three supernatural beings, the “Weird Sisters.” The Sisters hail Macbeth as not only the Thane of Glamis (his current title) but also as Thane of Cawdor and King of Scotland. Macbeth is confused by this but later learns that he has, in fact, recently been given the title Thane of Cawdor. Amazed that the Sisters spoke the truth, Macbeth becomes captivated by the idea that he may someday become king. Macbeth’s wife, Lady Macbeth, encourages her husband to take bold action to make this prophesied event come to pass, and together the two plot the murder of the current king, King Duncan. Because the king’s murder can only be hidden—and the way to the throne smoothed—with additional bloodshed, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are soon plunged into a deep pit of murder and madness.

Presentation Suggestions

Position Macbeth and Lady Macbeth front and center. Seat the narrators, Maid, Doctor, Criminal, and Servant behind the Macbeths. Place the supernatural beings—the Weird Sisters, Hecate, and Phantoms—in a grouping to one side of the Macbeths. Place Malcolm, Duncan, Captain, General, Ross, Banquo, Macduff, Lennox, and Messenger in a grouping on the other side of the Macbeths.

Props

The Scottish lords can wear plaid. They can wear kilts, if available, or blankets fashioned as kilts. The Weird Sisters and Hecate can wear black or dark colors and witches’ hats. A bucket or drum of some kind can be placed in front of them to serve as their cauldron, and they may hold spoons or ladles with which to stir their brew. The phantoms can wear white sheets or scary masks. The doctor can wear a white lab smock or a stethoscope. The maid can wear an apron. Audience members can be given branches with which to play the part of the hidden army advancing on Dunsinane. They can be enlisted to make marching sounds in the background to create tension during Scene 16.

Cast of Characters

(main parts in boldface)

Narrators 1, 2, 3
Hecate, queen of the witches
Weird Sisters, 1, 2, 3
Malcolm, King Duncan’s son
Duncan, king of Scotland
Captain, in Duncan’s army
Ross, a Scottish nobleman
Macbeth, thane of Glamis; later thane of Cawdor and king of Scotland
Banquo, a general in the king’s army
Lady Macbeth
Messenger
Macduff, Thane of Fife
Lennox, a Scottish nobleman
Criminal
Phantoms 1, 2, 3
Maid, to Lady Macbeth
Doctor
General, in Scottish army
Servant
Scene 1

**Narrator 1:** The setting is Scotland, the year A.D. 1040. At the edge of a foggy bog, four craggy-faced witches appear. The three Weird Sisters and their queen, Hecate, are plotting chaos for Macbeth as a storm is brewing.

**Hecate:** *(in a scratchy voice)* Where have you three been since nine?

**Weird Sister 1:** Singing spells and killing swine.

**Weird Sister 2:** *(stirring cauldron)* Conjuring tempests on a thane to make some future trouble reign.

**Weird Sister 3:** Here is a soldier’s torn-off thumb to make the curse quickly come!

**Hecate:** When shall we all meet again—in thunder, lightening, or in rain?

**Sister 1:** When the storm and uproar’s done, when the battle’s lost and won.

**Sister 2:** We’ll gather on the barren heath.

**Sister 3:** There to meet with Thane Macbeth.

**Hecate:** When the fog is thick and thin, we will hover over him. He’ll not know we’re here or there, when fair is foul, and foul is fair!

Scene 2

**Narrator 2:** A war has broken out against Scotland. At a battle camp, King Duncan waits for the results.

**Narrator 3:** Malcolm, the king’s son, and Ross, a nobleman, help a wounded man into Duncan’s tent.

**Malcolm:** The war is over. This courageous captain saved my life.

**Duncan:** Poor, bleeding man—give me an account of the battle.

**Captain:** *(weakly)* The Irish ran at us with axes in hand. Then brave Macbeth brandished his sword till it smoked with blooded execution! Swiftly, he carved a path through the army, faced the rebel leader, and cut him from navel to chin.
Duncan: Worthy Thane Macbeth!

Captain: No sooner had the Irishman died than the Norwegians attacked.

Malcolm: The Thane of Cawdor turned and sided with Norway.

Duncan: Traitor!

Captain: Macbeth and Banquo redoubled their strokes. But whether they won or not, I cannot say, for I grew faint from wounds.

Duncan: (to servant) Give this man aid!

Ross: (to king) Thanks to Macbeth, the victory fell to us.

Duncan: Great happiness! But Cawdor has betrayed us. I sentence him to death. Strip him of his title and give it to our hero, Macbeth.

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Scene 3

Narrator 1: Returning from battle, Macbeth and Banquo slog across the heath. Odd shapes seem to appear and disappear in the fog.

Macbeth: Victory shines, yet the air hangs dismally. So foul and fair a day I have never seen.

Narrator 2: Suddenly, three withered witches appear out of the mist.

Banquo: What are these, that look like no inhabitants of earth? (to sisters) Are you mortal? I might think you to be women, yet your beards forbid me to believe that.

Macbeth: Speak, if you can.

Sister 1: All hail, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis.

Sister 2: All hail, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor.

Sister 3: All hail, Macbeth, that shall be king hereafter!

Macbeth: (dazedly) Thane of Glamis I may be, but how can I become Cawdor? The present Cawdor is still alive. And how can I be king? That is unbelievable!

Banquo: Strange sisters, if you can look into the seeds of time, tell me what will grow for me.

Sister 1: Lesser than Macbeth, but greater.

Sister 2: You shall bring forth kings, yet you shall be none.

Banquo: Riddles without meaning!

Macbeth: Why do you stop us on this blasted heath to give us strange prophecies? Tell us more!

Sisters: All hail, Banquo and Macbeth!

Narrator 3: Without saying anything more, the Weird Sisters fade into the fog.
Macbeth: They’ve vanished, as breath into the wind!
Banquo: Did you hear what I heard? Or are we hallucinating?
Macbeth: They said your children shall be kings.
Banquo: And you—Thane of Cawdor and king!

Narrator 1: Out of the fog a weary nobleman approaches.

Ross: Ah, Macbeth, I’ve found you! I come from the king. He had heard of your victory in battle. He names you the new Thane of Cawdor!

Narrator 2: Macbeth and Banquo exchange looks of amazement.

Macbeth: (as if stunned) Can this be so? (to Ross) Rest from your journey while we consider this.

Ross: I will. And then the king bids me bring you to him.

Narrator 3: As Ross sits a way off, Macbeth and Banquo speak softly.

Macbeth: If those hags know the truth and call me Cawdor, perhaps your children really will be kings!

Banquo: And you might be king. But beware: There may be great harm in believing the instruments of darkness. They may win us over with small truths, then betray us with more harmful deceptions.

Narrator 1: Banquo goes over to speak with Ross, leaving Macbeth alone.

Macbeth: (to himself) Harm us how? These supernatural events seem more good than ill, for truly I am now Thane of Cawdor. But king? I hate to think what I would have to do to replace good King Duncan. The image is so horrible, it makes my heart knock at my ribs.

Banquo: (calling) Macbeth, are you ready to go?

Macbeth: (to himself) If chance would make me king, then chance will have to crown me.
(aloud) Come, friends, let us go to the king.

Scene 4

Narrator 2: Macbeth and Banquo join Duncan at his royal palace.

Duncan: Worthy Macbeth! For your loyalty and valor, I owe you more thanks than I can pay.

Macbeth: Serving you with love and honor is payment in itself.

Duncan: Banquo, I also hold you near my heart.

Banquo: My duty is to you alone.

Duncan: I have planted both of you and will see you grow. Signs of nobleness, like stars, shall shine on all who are deserving. I hereby place the two of you at the right side of my son, Malcolm.
Narrator 3: Banquo and Macbeth bow.

Duncan: I also invest Malcolm as Prince of Cumberland. When I am gone, your loyalty shall go to the prince. Now, let us go to your castle in Inverness, Macbeth, and celebrate your new title.

Macbeth: With pleasure, my king. I will go on ahead and give this joyful news to my wife, so that we might prepare for your visit.

Duncan: Go, valiant kinsman. We will follow shortly.

Narrator 1: As he leaves the palace, Macbeth reflects on the changes.

Macbeth: (to himself) Malcolm is now Prince of Cumberland? A great step for him, yet one that lies in my way if I were to seek the throne. I would trip over it... unless I leapt over it...

Narrator 2: Macbeth feels suddenly ashamed of his thoughts.

Macbeth: Stars, hide your fires. Let not light see my black and deep desires.

Scene 5

Narrator 3: Macbeth sends a note on ahead to his wife telling her about the witches and his new fortune. At the castle, Lady Macbeth reads her husband’s letter.

Macbeth: (reading) So, dear partner in greatness, I am to be the new Thane of Cawdor . . . and maybe more: These women also said I shall be king! Think on how this could take place, but tell no one.

Lady Macbeth: (to herself) My lord dreams of becoming great, but he is too kind to ever make it happen. He has ambition, but he’s not sick enough to do what it takes to rise to the position. Yet, if he would have, he must do.

Narrator 1: A messenger enters, interrupting Lady Macbeth’s thoughts.

Messenger: My lord sends word that the king is coming.

Lady Macbeth: The king? Go make ready for his arrival!

Narrator 2: The messenger obeys.

Lady Macbeth: (to herself) This is a timely stroke of luck. Now I will chase away all that keeps Macbeth from the golden crown. I will see he has what prophecy has promised. Duncan’s visit will be . . . a fatal one. Come, spirits, take the softness of my heart away and fill me with cruelty. Let nothing shake my purpose—not remorse or any other weak emotion. Come, thick night, and wrap me in the smoke of hell, so that I cannot see the wounds I make. And let not heaven reach through the blanket of darkness to stop me!

Narrator 3: Shortly, Macbeth arrives. Lady Macbeth rushes to embrace him.

Lady Macbeth: Great Thane of Glamis and now of Cawdor! Greater even than both of these—your letter has uplifted me!
Macbeth: Greetings, my lady. King Duncan and the prince arrive tonight.

Lady Macbeth: So I have heard. Leave tonight’s business to me.

Macbeth: Have you made plans?

Lady Macbeth: Aye. Indeed I have. The king shall not see tomorrow’s sun.

Narrator 1: Macbeth looks worried.

Macbeth: I meant the feast. . . .

Lady Macbeth: Husband, your face can be read like a book. Listen! If we are to do this deed, you must show welcome in your eye, hand, and speech. You must look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it.

Macbeth: But I’m not so sure—

Narrator 2: Blaring trumpets announce the arrival of the king.

Macbeth: Go greet him while I wash. (quietly) We will speak about his later.

Narrator 3: Macbeth goes to his chamber, while Lady Macbeth greets the king.

Lady Macbeth: Welcome, Noble King! Your Majesty honors our house.

Duncan: Fair hostess, we are your guests tonight. Where is the Thane of Cawdor? We love him highly.

Lady Macbeth: First, rest from your journey. Then I’ll bring him to you.

Scene 6

Narrator 1: Alone in his room, Macbeth reflects on his wife’s words.

Macbeth: (to himself) Would my lady have me assassinate the king? Could I? If it is to be done, it is best done quickly. . . . Still, there is judgment to be dealt with. If this act were the be-all and end-all—that would be one thing. But the bloody deeds we do return to plague us.

Narrator 2: Macbeth talks himself out of killing Duncan.

Macbeth: I am Duncan’s kinsman and subject. As his host, I should block the door to those who would harm him, not bear the knife myself! What’s more, he is well loved. His death will evoke the pity of all, and their tears will drown the wind. No. I have nothing but ambition to spur me on. And that is not enough.

Narrator 3: Lady Macbeth comes looking for her husband.

Lady Macbeth: The king asks for you.

Macbeth: You and I must go no further with plans to remove him. He has just honored me with a new title. People think well of me now.

Lady Macbeth: (angrily) Has your hope of being king gone pale? Or are you afraid to be the same in action as in desire? What are you, a man or a coward?
Macbeth: (bristling) Peace, woman! You question my manhood? I dare do everything a man would do!

Lady Macbeth: What beast made you change your mind? When it was a vague idea, you dared to do it; then you were a man. Now that you have a real opportunity, you shrink from it. If I had sworn to do something, I would kill my own child before I would break my vow!

Macbeth: What if we fail?

Lady Macbeth: Fail? Set the arrow of your courage right! We will not fail. When Duncan is asleep, I will ply his men with wine till they lose all reason and memory. When they sleep like pigs and the king is unguarded, you and I can do anything. We’ll use his attendants’ daggers so they will bear the guilt.

Macbeth: You have more mettle than ten men. But I ask you, will others believe that Duncan’s own servants have done the deed?

Lady Macbeth: They will when they hear how loudly we roar with grief.

Macbeth: Then I’m settled. I summon my strength to the feat. Let’s go to the king’s feast. False face must hide what the false heart does know.

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Scene 7

Narrator 1: The banquet ends very late that night. Finally, the king retires. Macbeth paces the halls, thinking of the crime he may commit. In the dark, he comes upon Banquo.

Banquo: Who goes there?

Macbeth: A friend—I, Macbeth. Why are you wandering here?

Banquo: I cannot get to sleep. Cursed thoughts and visions keep appearing to me. Why aren’t you at rest?

Macbeth: Thoughts of the king have kept me awake—whether he was pleased with the feast, that is.

Banquo: I’m sure he was. Tonight I dreamed of the Weird Sisters. They told you some truth, didn’t they?

Macbeth: (lying) I haven’t thought about them in a while. (yawning) Milady is fixing me a tonic and will ring a bell when it is ready. Try to sleep, now.

Banquo: Thanks, sir. And you, too.

Narrator 2: When Macbeth is alone, he begins to hallucinate. A knife appears.

Macbeth: (unbelieving) Is this a dagger I see before me, the handle toward my hand? (to knife) Come, let me clutch you.

Narrator 3: He swipes at the hovering dagger but cannot grasp it.

Macbeth: I see you but cannot grasp you. Are you a dagger of the mind?
Macbeth: *(with horror)* Now your blade is smeared with blood! Lack of sleep and wicked nightmares are playing tricks on my mind.

Narrator 2: The phantom dagger floats toward the king’s chamber. As if hypnotized, Macbeth follows.

Macbeth: You lead the way I was going. So my horror follows your horror. Let me move like a ghost, so that my steps are not heard.

Narrator 3: A bell tolls. It is Lady Macbeth’s signal that all is clear.

Macbeth: I go to do what I must. Duncan, hear not this sorry bell, for it is your death knell.

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### Scene 8

Narrator 1: Lady Macbeth is sneaking through the castle halls. She see that Duncan’s door is open.

Lady Macbeth: Macbeth is about it. The drugged attendants are snoring.

Macbeth: *(from within)* What ho!

Lady Macbeth: *(fretfully)* Suppose they’ve woken and the business is not done? I laid their daggers out so he couldn’t miss them!

Narrator 2: Macbeth stumbles out into the hallway.

Macbeth: *(nervously)* I have done the deed. Did you hear a noise?

Lady Macbeth: When?

Macbeth: Just now.

Lady Macbeth: I heard you speak.

Macbeth: I didn’t speak. One of the servants laughed in his sleep; the other cried, “Murder!”

Narrator 3: Macbeth stares at his bloody hands.

Macbeth: This is a sorry sight.

Lady Macbeth: Do not regret your action.

Narrator 1: All of a sudden, Macbeth jumps, frightened.

Macbeth: Did you hear that? I swear just now I heard a voice saying, “Sleep no more. Macbeth murders sleep.”

Lady Macbeth: Think not on these deeds, or they will make us mad.

Macbeth: *(in despair)* Macbeth shall never sleep again.

Lady Macbeth: Snap out of it! A sick mind will bend your noble strength. Get some water and wash this filthy witness from your hand. And why did you bring these daggers with you? They must lie next to his attendants! Take them back and smear their hands with blood.
Macbeth: I cannot. I dare not look again on what I have done.

Lady Macbeth: Do you forget your purpose! Here, I’ll do it myself!

Narrator 2: She enters Duncan’s bedchamber, replaces the knives, and smears blood on the servants to make it look as if they killed the king. Then she hurries back to her husband, who stands brooding in the hallway.

Lady Macbeth: Don’t be so lost in thought. A little water clears us of this deed.

Macbeth: All Neptune’s ocean will not wash this blood from my hand.

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Scene 9

Narrator 3: At the crack of dawn, Lennox and McDuff, two noblemen, arrive at Inverness looking for the king. Macbeth, who has not slept, hurries to open the door when he hears the knocking.

Macduff: (to Macbeth) The king has asked us to call for him early.

Macbeth: Yes, I heard he has to leave today. Come, here is his room.

Narrator 1: As McDuff enters to wake the king, Lennox and Macbeth wait in the hall.

Lennox: (to Macbeth) Last night, during the storm, strange screams of death were heard. Some say the earth itself did shake.

Macbeth: It was a rough night.

Macduff: O horror!

Narrator 2: Macduff rushes back out of the room.

Macbeth & Lennox: What is it?

Macduff: Unholy murder! His majesty has been murdered!

Macbeth & Lennox: Murdered?

Macduff: The king is dead! Go see for yourselves. Murder! Treason!

Narrator 3: Lennox and Macbeth rush into the king’s chamber.

Macduff: (shouting) Ring the alarm! Banquo! Malcolm! Awake! Rise up and witness this horror!

Narrator 1: A bell is rung throughout the castle. Lady Macbeth, Banquo, and Malcolm run into the hall.

Lady Macbeth: What awfulness calls us?

Macduff: Our royal master (to Malcolm) and father is murdered.

Lady Macbeth: Woe, alas! In our house?

Banquo: Dear Duff, say it isn’t so!

Malcolm: Who has done this?
Narrator 2: Lennox and Macbeth stumble back out of the bedchamber.

Lennox: His servants’ hands and daggers are smeared with blood.

Macbeth: I could not hold back my fury. I killed those murderers.

Macduff: Why did you do that?

Macbeth: Who can be wise when they see their king dead and next to him, his slayers. My love outran my reason.

Lady Macbeth: (fainting) Oh, help us!

Narrator 3: As everyone tends to her, Malcolm slumps against the wall.

Malcolm: (to himself, suspiciously) Hold off, sorrow. To show sadness is easy for a false man.

Banquo: Let us investigate this bloody piece of work.

Macbeth: Get dressed and ready yourselves to fight this treason, then meet me in the hall.

Narrator 1: All leave but the prince.

Malcolm: (hiding) Not I. It is not safe here. My father’s servants would never have killed their lord! I ride for England. Who murdered a king would also remove a prince.

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Scene 10

Narrator 2: In the coming days, King Duncan is buried.

Narrator 3: When Macbeth learns that the king’s son has disappeared, he blames Duncan’s murder on Malcolm.

Narrator 1: Prince Malcolm cannot rule Scotland from England, so the crown goes to the next in line—Macbeth. He is made king and moves into the palace. Banquo and his son, Fleance, visit.

Banquo: (to himself) The witches were right: Macbeth now has it all—Glamis, Cawdor, and King. But I fear he played foully for it.

Narrator 2: The new king and queen welcome Banquo to court.

Macbeth: (to lords and ladies) Our chief guest has arrived! Tonight we shall have a solemn supper. You will attend, won’t you, Banquo?

Banquo: (guardedly) My duty is to do what Your Highness commands.

Macbeth: I hear that Malcolm is making up tales. He denies killing his father. What do you think of that?

Banquo: Counsel me on what I should think.

Narrator 3: When Macbeth is alone again, he paces nervously.

Macbeth: (to himself) Banquo bears himself royally and has clear sight and wisdom. I fear no one else the way I fear him.
Narrator 1: Macbeth calls for a servant, who enters, bowing.

Macbeth: Find me two men who need work.

Narrator 2: The servant bows and leaves, and Macbeth returns to his dark thoughts.

Macbeth: The sisters said Banquo would father a line of kings. Have I murdered Duncan only to see Banquo’s sons take my crown?

Narrator 3: A little later, the servant returns with two rough peasants. He leaves them with Macbeth.

Criminal: Why does the king call upon men of misfortune like us?

Macbeth: Your low fortune is the fault of Lord Banquo. He is an enemy of the common folk and me.

Criminal: For a fee or a favor, we will do away with him for you, Sire.

Macbeth: Strike him down for good. And see that his son, Fleance, embraces the same fate. Be my assistants in this and I will see that you have new positions in life. But keep this business quiet.

Criminals: It is done, Sire.

Scene 11

Narrator 1: That evening, the king proceeds to supper with the queen.

Lady Macbeth: You seem so preoccupied, my lord. Have we gained what we desired only to lose our joy?

Macbeth: I am afflicted by terrible nightmares. I’d be better off with the dead, whom we’ve sent to peace.

Lady Macbeth: What’s done is done.

Macbeth: While Banquo lives, my mind is full of scorpions.

Lady Macbeth: Forget him. Be bright with your guests tonight, or they will guess our secret.

Narrator 2: Macbeth and Lady Macbeth enter the banquet hall.

Macbeth: Hearty welcome! Sit and partake!

Narrator 3: But before the king sits, he is called aside by one of the criminals.

Macbeth: Is Banquo dispatched?

Criminal: His throat is well cut.

Macbeth: And his son the same?

Criminal: Fleance has escaped.

Macbeth: Fool! Go look for him!

Narrator 1: Macbeth stumbles back.
Macbeth: (to himself) The walls bind me. I feel a fit coming on. . . .

Lady Macbeth: (quietly) My lord, you must appear more cheerful!

Macbeth: (trying) A toast to all—good health in body . . . and in mind.

Narrator 2: Macbeth approaches his chair on the platform, but it is occupied—by Banquo’s ghost!

Macbeth: (angrily) Who is this?

Lennox: Why don’t you sit, Sire?

Macbeth: The table is full.

Lennox: No, here’s a seat for you.

Narrator 3: No one else but Macbeth can see that Banquo—pale, bloody, accusing—sits in the royal chair.

Macbeth: (questioning) Banquo?

Ross: He has not come. His absence breaks his promise.

Macbeth: (to chair, seemingly crazed) Do not shake your gory locks at me! You cannot say I did this deed!

Narrator 1: Lady Macbeth quickly rises and tries to cover for the king.

Lady Macbeth: Pay no attention to my husband. He often has strange fits—a condition from childhood.

Macbeth: (to Lady Macbeth) Strange indeed! (to Banquo’s ghost) Your face appalls the devil. Get back to the grave!

Ross: Gentlemen, let us leave. His Highness is not well.

Lady Macbeth: No, stay! Sit and eat. You will offend him if you notice his infirmity. Pay no attention to him, and his fit will pass more quickly.

Narrator 2: She grabs Macbeth and speaks to him in an angry whisper.

Lady Macbeth: Fie, for shame! You’re looking at an empty chair!

Macbeth: There was a time, when the brains were out, a man would die. But now dead men rise again and push us from our stools.

Lady Macbeth: Stop this! Your guests are watching!

Macbeth: (in embarrassment) Worthy friends, do not wonder at me. Fill my glass. Health to all!

Lady Macbeth: You’ve ruined the mood.

Macbeth: How can you look on such a sight and not go pale?

Ross: What sight, my lord?

Lady Macbeth: Questions will enrage him. It might be best if you all go.

Lennox: (leaving) Good night, then. Better health, Your Majesty.
Lady Macbeth:  (to Macbeth) What is all this?

Macbeth:  I have had Banquo killed. Yet he haunts me here. Say, why isn’t Macduff here?

Lady Macbeth:  You worry too much. It is unmanly. Go get some sleep.

Macbeth:  Yes. Sleep. Fear abuses me. I have stepped so far in blood that I should wade no more.

Scene 12

Narrator 3:  The next day, Macbeth seeks the witches to foretell his fate. He finds them in a cave.

Narrator 1:  Hecate and the Weird Sisters are stirring a black kettle.

Sister 1:  Round about the cauldron go; in the poisoned entrails throw. Toad with sweating venom got, boil first in the charmed pot.

All:  Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Sister 2:  Fillet of snake, boil and bake; eye of newt and toe of frog, wool of bat and tongue of dog.

Sister 3:  Lizard’s leg and owlet’s wing, make the potion’s magic sting.

All:  Double, double, toil and trouble; fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Hecate:  By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes!

Narrator 2:  Macbeth enters the cave.

Macbeth:  How now, my midnight hags! What does my future hold?

Hecate:  Our spell will show you.

Narrator 3:  Thunder resounds as an armored head rises from the pot.

Phantom 1:  Beware Macduff! Beware the Thane of Fife!

Macbeth:  (to the head) Why should I? What will happen?

Narrator 1:  The phantom does not answer and disappears. Another phantom appears.

Phantom 2:  Be bloody and bold. None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

Macbeth:  All are born of women. Thus I have no need to fear anyone—not even Macduff!

Narrator 2:  A third phantom appears—a crowned child with a tree in his hand.

Phantom 3:  Be courageous and proud, for Macbeth shall never be vanquished until Great Birnam Wood shall come to Dunsinane.

Macbeth:  Ha! A forest cannot unfix its roots and move. I shall live long! But tell me—will Banquo’s children be kings?
Narrator 3: A vision appears, showing eight kings standing in line. The last one holds a mirror reflecting an endless line of heirs. Banquo’s ghost follows, laughing in scorn.

Macbeth: (in horror) NOOOO!

All sisters: (cackling) Ha ha ha!

Macbeth: Curses on you all!

Narrator 1: Shaken, Macbeth rides back to the palace and steals inside. Around a corner, he overhears Macduff’s wife telling a nobleman that she doesn’t know where her husband has gone.

Narrator 2: Macbeth grows furious.

Macbeth: (to himself) If Macduff has turned against me and fled, then he too shall taste my wrath!

Scene 13

Narrator 3: Macduff, Thane of Fife, had gone to England to find Scotland’s true heir, Prince Malcolm.

Macduff: (to prince) Scotland is in chaos. Banquo is murdered, and Macbeth blames Fleance, his son.

Malcolm: Just as he blamed me for my father’s death when I fled. That is too much coincidence. Macduff, you thought Macbeth was honest, yet he is treacherous!

Macduff: I’ve lost all hope for him.

Malcolm: Our country sinks beneath his yoke. It weeps, it bleeds, and each day a new gash is added to its wounds. Macbeth is deceitful, malicious, smacking of every sin that has a name.

Macduff: Then raise an army and return to claim your throne!

Malcolm: I have none of the graces that make a good king—not justice, mercy, or patience. I am too quarrelsome, too greedy. With power in my hands, peace and unity would never reign.

Macduff: (in despair) O Scotland! When will your wholesome days return? Your king was a saint, but your prince feels unfit to rule. My hope is gone. I banish myself from Scotland!

Malcolm: No, good Macduff! Your passion moves me to put off these weak thoughts. I am young and inexperienced, but I pledge myself to your honor and to my country.

Narrator 1: As he speaks, a nobleman from Scotland bursts in.

Macduff: Lord Ross! What news from Scotland?
Ross: (breathlessly) I have ridden all night to find you. At home, more men have grown distrustful of Macbeth. They have left the court and are ready to fight with us against him.

Macduff: Then I will rally the thanes. How fares my wife?

Ross: (hesitantly) If only I could howl the words where none could hear . . .

Macduff: (worriedly) What words? (shaking him) Let me hear it!

Ross: Your wife . . . has been savagely slaughtered.

Malcolm: Merciful heaven!

Macduff: And my children?

Ross: Wife, babies, servants—everyone was murdered that could be found. Your castle was surprised.

Macduff: (in shock) All my pretty ones? All that was precious to me? At one fell swoop? Who did this?

Ross: The same as killed Duncan.

Narrator 2: Macduff collapses to the ground in anguish.

Macduff: God rest my family.

Malcolm: Let grief convert to anger and be your sword! The King of England has offered me an army 10,000 strong and a general to lead them. Let us march on Dunsinane and rout out the bloody tyrant!

Macduff: (seething) Heaven bring me face to face with this fiend of Scotland—and he shall not escape!

Malcolm & Ross: Vengeance!

Scene 14

Narrator 3: In Macbeth’s castle, the queen’s maid talks with a doctor.

Maid: Every night I see her rise from her bed and sleepwalk.

Doctor: Has she uttered anything?

Maid: I dare not say. Shh—she’s here.

Narrator 1: As they peer down the hall, Lady Macbeth walks as if in a trance, carrying a candle. She sets it down.

Doctor: Look how she rubs her hands together.

Maid: She does that over and over again, as if washing her hands.

Lady Macbeth: (raving) Out, damned spot! Out, I say! Fie, my lord! What need we fear who knows it? No one has power over us. Yet, who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?

Doctor: Did you hear that?
Lady Macbeth: (madly) The Thane of Fife had a wife. Where is she now? (rubbing again) Will these hands never be clean? No more killing, please, my lord! You’ll ruin everything!

Maid: What has she known?

Lady Macbeth: Here’s the smell of blood still. All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand.

Doctor: This disease is beyond me. She needs a priest, not a doctor.

Lady Macbeth: Banquo is buried, I tell you; he can’t come out of his grave!

Doctor: Foul whisperings!

Lady Macbeth: To bed, to bed. What’s done cannot be undone.

Doctor: Unnatural deeds do breed unnatural troubles. (to maid) Look after her and listen to what she might confess. Infected minds discharge secrets to their pillows.

Scene 15

Narrator 2: On heath and plains, the Scottish army marches towards Dunsinane to gather with Malcolm, Macduff, and the English forces.

Lennox: We will join the English troops near Birnam Wood. What news do we have of the tyrant?

Messenger: He is fortified in his castle. Some say he is mad.

Lennox: Now he feels his secret murders sticking on his hands.

General: Scotland is in revolt.

Lennox: Now his title hangs loose about him, like a giant’s robe upon a dwarfish thief.

Narrator 3: Meanwhile, back in the castle at Dunsinane, Macbeth prattles about overconfidently, with blind pride.

Macbeth: (to servant) Bring me no more reports of rebellion. Nothing can touch me “till Great Birnam Wood shall come to Dunsinane,” or so the Sisters said. And what is Malcolm? Born from woman like everyone—he has no power over me. My mind and heart shall never sag with doubt or shake with fear!

Servant: (in terror) Soldiers are coming—there are ten thousand of them!

Macbeth: I’ll fight till the flesh is hacked from my bones. My armor!

Narrator 1: As the servant runs to get it, the queen’s doctor enters.

Macbeth: What news of my lady?

Doctor: Her mind is very troubled.

Macbeth: Can’t you cure a diseased mind? Pluck sorrow from a memory? Cleanse the stuff that weighs a heart?
Doctor: For that, a patient must minister to herself.

Macbeth: I will have none of that. (shouting down the hall) Bring me my armor! I will not be afraid of death and bane, till Birnam Forest shall come to Dunsinane!

Scene 16

Narrator 2: Back on the battlefront, Malcolm addresses the armies.

Malcolm: Here at Birnam Wood we join to fight the tyrant! Soldiers, cut down a branch or bow, then bear it before you to hide our numbers.

General: Macbeth keeps in his castle. Those few he commands do only what they’re told; they have no heart in it.

Malcolm: Then let us advance!

Narrator 3: Nearly alone, Macbeth in armor clatters around the castle like a chain against cold stone.

Macbeth: Hang out our banners! Our castle’s strength will laugh them to scorn. (cackling insanely) Let them lie outside the walls till famine and fever eat them alive!

Narrator 1: A scream pierces the air.

Maids: Eeeeee!

Macbeth: What is that noise?

Servant: The cry of a woman.

Narrator 2: The servant runs towards the sound, but Macbeth is unfazed.

Macbeth: Have I forgotten the taste of fear? I have supped so full with horrors that terrifying sounds no longer frighten me.

Narrator 3: The servant returns, looking upset.

Servant: My lord—the queen is dead!

Narrator 1: Despite his previous calm, the king sinks onto his throne aghast.

Macbeth: (gloomily) Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow creeps in this petty place from day to day, to the last syllable of recorded time; and all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage and then is heard no more. It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Narrator 2: A messenger dashes in.

Messenger: I don’t know how to report what I just saw. As I stood on the ramparts, Birnam Wood began to move!

Macbeth: (in terror) LIAR!
Messenger: Go see for yourself.

Macbeth: The phantom said, “Fear not, till Birnam Wood shall come to Dunsinane”—and now... Birnam Wood is moving toward Dunsinane! Ring the alarm!

Narrator 3: Meanwhile, in the distance...

Macduff: Sound the trumpets!

Malcolm: Throw down your leafy screens, men. We’re near enough!

Narrator 1: Macbeth peers out a window and sees the army advancing.

Macbeth: Blow, wind, as you may. I will laugh their swords to score, for all men are “of woman born.”

Narrator 2: Macduff storms the castle.

Macduff: (calling) Tyrant, show your face! Fortune, let me find him, for I will avenge my family’s death!

Narrator 3: Sword drawn, Macduff rounds a corner and spies Macbeth.

Macduff: Turn, hellhound, turn!

Macbeth: Get back. My soul is charged to draw your blood.

Macduff: I will not waste words on a villain. My voice is in my sword!

Macbeth: Let fall your sword! I bear a charmed life, which will not yield to one “of woman born.”

Macduff: Despair that charm, for I was ripped from my mother’s womb before her time was due!

Macbeth: (in shock) Curses on your tongue! I will not fight with you.

Macduff: Yield then. We’ll strap you to a pole and display you as a monster, with a sign reading, “Here hangs the tyrant.”

Macbeth: I will not yield! Even though Birnam Wood has come to Dunsinane and you are of no woman born, still I will fight to the last. Lay on, Macduff, and damned be he who cries “enough!”

Narrator 1: Filled with passion for his country and family, Macduff brandishes his sword with skill.

Narrator 2: Sparks spit as metal strikes metal. Two passionate beasts fight to the death, like armored dragons.

Narrator 3: Through the halls, the sound of soldiers’ boots echo like thunder.

Soldiers all: Die, murderous villain! For Scotland!

Narrator 1: Malcolm enters the hall. As he does so, Macduff strikes one last triumphal blow. He grasps the bloody head of Macbeth.

Macduff: (to Malcolm) Hail, the new king! For so you are. Behold the usurper’s cursed head.
All: Hail, King of Scotland!

Malcolm: My thanes and kinsmen: Call home our exiled friends who fled the tyranny of this dead butcher and his fiendish queen, who died by her own violent hand. You shall be Scotland’s honored earls. By the grace of Grace, our thanks to all. And now each one we invite to see us crowned.