

Macbeth – Plot Overview

Act 1 – Prophecy and Ambition Awakened

- Macbeth and Banquo meet the three witches who greet Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, and King hereafter.
- Macbeth is intrigued; Banquo is sceptical.
- Macbeth is named Thane of Cawdor, making the prophecy seem credible.
- Lady Macbeth reads his letter and immediately plots Duncan's murder, invoking the supernatural to "unsex" her.
- Duncan arrives at Macbeth's castle – the plan to kill him is set in motion.

Act 2 – Regicide and Guilt

- Macbeth murders Duncan, driven by ambition and Lady Macbeth's persuasion.
- He is immediately haunted by guilt: "Sleep no more, Macbeth does murder sleep."
- Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, flee, making them appear guilty.
- Macbeth is crowned king – the natural and political order begins to unravel.

Act 3 – Paranoia and Tyranny

- Fearing Banquo's prophecy ("Thou shalt get kings"), Macbeth hires murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance.
- Banquo is killed, but Fleance escapes.
- At a banquet, Macbeth is haunted by Banquo's ghost, shocking the nobles and exposing his instability.
- Macbeth turns to the witches again, seeking reassurance.

Act 4 – False Security and Ruthlessness

- The witches give Macbeth three new prophecies:
 - Beware Macduff.
 - No one born of a woman shall harm Macbeth.
 - He won't be defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane.
- Macbeth, feeling invincible, orders the slaughter of Macduff's family.
- Macduff joins Malcolm in England, vowing revenge.

Act 5 – Madness and Retribution

- Lady Macbeth is consumed by guilt and descends into madness: "Out, damned spot!"
- Malcolm's army disguises themselves with branches from Birnam Wood – the prophecy begins to come true.
- Macbeth learns Macduff was born by Caesarean ("from his mother's womb / Untimely ripped").
- Macbeth is killed by Macduff; Malcolm is restored as king, restoring order and hope.