

MACBETH

William Shakespeare



 TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE

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ACT 1

| Scene 1 |

*(An open place. Thunder and lightning. **Three witches** enter.)*

WITCH 1: When shall we three meet again?
In thunder, in lightning, or in rain?

WITCH 2: When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

WITCH 3: Before the setting of the sun.

WITCH 1: Where shall we meet?

WITCH 2: On the heath.

WITCH 3: There we will meet with Macbeth.

WITCH 1: Let's go home for now.

ALL: Fair is foul, and foul is fair—
Fly through the fog and filthy air.

*(The **witches** vanish.)*

| Scene 2 |

*(A camp near Forres. Alarms are heard offstage. **King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, and Lennox** enter, with **attendants**. They meet a bleeding **soldier**.)*

DUNCAN: What bloody man is that?
From the way he looks, he can tell us
How the battle is going.

MALCOLM: This is the man
Who fought against my capture.
(*to the soldier*): Hail, brave friend!
How is the battle going?

SOLDIER: Macbeth's sword smoked as he
Carved out his passage through the battle!
Finally he faced the villain Macdonald.
He didn't shake hands or say farewell.
Instead, he cut him from belly to jaws
And placed his head high on the castle
walls.

DUNCAN: Oh, brave and worthy cousin!

SOLDIER: Then problems came from the east.
Listen, King of Scotland, listen!
When the rebels started to run, the
Norwegian lord saw an advantage.
With fresh arms and new supplies of men,
He launched a new attack.

DUNCAN: Didn't this dismay
Our captains, Macbeth and Banquo?

SOLDIER: Yes—like a sparrow dismays an eagle
Or a hare dismays a lion!
They were, my king,
Like cannons with double charges!
For each stroke by the enemy,

They gave back two.

But I am faint. My wounds cry out!

DUNCAN: Your words and your wounds
Both tell of your honor.

(to the attendants): Go, get him doctors.

(The soldier exits, with attendants.)

(to Malcolm): Who comes here?

MALCOLM: The worthy thane of Ross.

(Ross enters.)

ROSS: God save the king!

DUNCAN: Where were you, worthy thane?

ROSS: In Fife, great king,
Where Norwegian flags fill the sky
And chill our people with fear.
The King of Norway himself, leading
many men, began a battle.
He was helped by that most disloyal
traitor, the Thane of Cawdor.
At last, Macbeth, dressed in armor,
Challenged him with greater strength.
Point for point, arm against arm,
Macbeth wore him down. In the end,
The victory fell on us.

DUNCAN: Great happiness!

ROSS: Now, Sweno, Norway's king,
Wants to surrender.

We forbade him to bury his men
Until he paid us \$10,000.

DUNCAN: Never again shall the
Thane of Cawdor betray us!
Go see to his instant death,
And greet Macbeth with his former title.

ROSS: I'll see it done.

DUNCAN: What he has lost, noble Macbeth has
won.

(All exit.)

| Scene 3 |

*(A heath near Forres. Thunder. The **three witches** enter. A drum is heard offstage.)*

WITCH 1: A drum, a drum!
Macbeth does come.

ALL: The weird sisters, hand in hand,
Travelers over sea and land,
Thus do go about, about.
Three times to yours, three times to mine,
And three times again, to make up nine.
That's it! The charm's wound up.

(Macbeth and Banquo enter.)

MACBETH: So foul and fair a day I have not
seen.

BANQUO: How far is it to Forres?
(He sees the witches.) What are these
 creatures, so withered
 And so wild in their clothing?
 They do not look like inhabitants
 Of the earth, and yet they are on it.

MACBETH: Speak, if you can. What are you?

WITCH 1: Hail, Macbeth, Thane of Glamis!

WITCH 2: Hail, Macbeth, Thane of Cawdor!

WITCH 3: Hail, Macbeth, who shall be king
 hereafter!

BANQUO: Why do you draw back, Macbeth?

Why fear what sounds so fair?

(to the witches): In the name of truth,

Are you fantasies, or are you indeed

What you seem to be? You greet

My noble partner with fair predictions

About his future. You say he will have

Noble possessions and royal rank.

Why do you not speak to me?

If you can look into the seeds of time,

And say which grain will grow,

And which will not,

Speak then to me, who neither begs nor
 fears your favors nor your hate.

WITCH 1: Hail!

WITCH 2: Hail!

WITCH 3: Hail!

WITCH 1: Lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

WITCH 2: Not so happy, yet much happier.

WITCH 3: Your sons and grandsons shall
Be kings, though you will not.
So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

WITCH 1: Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

MACBETH: Tell me more. Since my father's
death,
I have been Thane of Glamis.
But how can I be Thane of Cawdor, too?
The Thane of Cawdor is still alive,
A well-to-do gentleman. And to be king
Is no more possible than to be
Thane of Cawdor. Say from where
You got this strange information.
And why have you stopped us on this
godforsaken heath
With such greetings and prophecies?
Speak, I say!

(Witches vanish.)

BANQUO: Earth has bubbles, as water does,
And these must be bubbles, too.
Look! They have vanished!

MACBETH: Into the air,
What seemed real has melted
As breath into the wind.
I wish they had stayed!

BANQUO: Were they really here?
Or has some food we've eaten
Taken our reason prisoner?

MACBETH: Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO: *You* shall be king!

MACBETH: And Thane of Cawdor, too.
Isn't that what they said?

BANQUO: Yes. They used those very words.
(hearing a sound) Who's there?

(Ross and Angus enter.)

ROSS: The king has happily received
The news of your success, Macbeth!
He was astonished
When he heard of your brave deeds
In the battle against the rebels.
All reports proclaimed your praises
In his kingdom's great defense.
The king is very pleased to hear
Of your fearlessness during battle.

ANGUS: As advance payment
Toward an even greater honor, the king
Told me to call you Thane of Cawdor.
So I say, hail, most worthy thane!
The title is yours.

BANQUO: Those witches told the truth?

MACBETH: But the Thane of Cawdor lives!
Why do you dress me in borrowed robes?

ANGUS: He who *was* the thane still lives.
But he deserves to lose his life.
He might have actually fought for
Norway.
Or he might have helped the King of
Norway in hidden ways.
Perhaps he did both of these things
To work for the ruin of his own country.
I do not know exactly how he did it.
But the charges have been proven,
And he has confessed to treason.
The death sentence has been pronounced.

MACBETH (*aside*): Thane of Glamis, and now
Thane of Cawdor, too!
And the greatest title is yet to come!
(*to Banquo*): Do you not hope your children
Shall be kings? After all, those who told me
That I would be the Thane of Cawdor
Promised no less to them.

BANQUO: If we trusted those promises fully,
You might be king as well.
But it is strange. Often, to bring harm to us,
The devil tells us small truths,
Winning us over with small things,
Only to betray us in important things.
(*to Ross and Angus*): Cousins, a word with
you, please.

MACBETH (*aside*): Two of their predictions

Have come true! They seem like happy hints
 To the greater prophecy that I will be king.
(to Ross and Angus): I thank you, gentlemen.
(aside): This supernatural prophecy
 Might be evil or good. If evil,
 Why has it given me evidence of success,
 By starting with a truth? For it is true
 That I am Thane of Cawdor.
 If good, why are horrid thoughts
 Making my heart knock at my ribs?
 Imagined horrors are worse than real fears.
 My thoughts about murdering the king
 Shake me until I feel smothered.
 Yet nothing else seems real to me.

BANQUO *(to Ross and Angus):* Look at Macbeth.
 He seems to be in a trance.

MACBETH *(aside):* If my fate is to be king,
 Then fate may crown me—
 Even if I do nothing.

BANQUO *(to Ross and Angus):* New honors come
 upon Macbeth.
 Like new clothes, they do not fit well
 Until they've been used for a while.

MACBETH *(aside):* Come what may,
 Time and the hour runs through the
 roughest day.

BANQUO: Worthy Macbeth, we're waiting.

MACBETH: Please forgive me.

My thoughts were wandering.

Let us go to meet the king.

(to Banquo): Think about what has happened.

Later, after we've considered things,

Let us speak freely about it.

BANQUO: Very gladly.

MACBETH: Until then, enough! Come, friends.

(All exit.)

| Scene 4 |

(Forres. The palace. King Duncan, Malcolm, Donalbain, Lennox, and attendants enter.)

DUNCAN: Has the Thane of Cawdor been executed?

Have the officers returned yet?

MALCOLM: Not yet, my lord. But I have
Spoken with one who saw Cawdor die.
After confessing his treasons,
He begged your highness's pardon.
Nothing in his life
Was as honorable as his leaving it.
He died as one who had rehearsed
Throwing away the dearest thing he
owned
As if it were a careless trifle.

 *TIMELESS SHAKESPEARE*

MACBETH

Macbeth is amazed when three witches prophesy that he will be the next King of Scotland. Lady Macbeth can't wait! Without considering tragic consequences, she takes matters into her own bloody hands.

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