

Macbeth – Act I

Scene i

A Scottish moor.

Three old witches make plans to meet again.

Scene ii

A military camp.

King Duncan asks a wounded captain for news about the battle with the Irish invaders. Macbeth is reported to have killed the traitorous Macdonald. The thane of Ross reports that the traitorous thane of Cawdor has been defeated and the army of Norway repelled. Macbeth, the hero, is given Cawdor's title.

Scene iii

On the heath near the battlefield.

The witches hail Macbeth as thane of Glamis and as thane of Cawdor. They also declare that he will be king one day. Macbeth is baffled. They call Banquo "lesser than Macbeth, and greater" and "not so happy, yet much happier". Then they say Banquo's children will sit upon the throne.

Arrival of Ross and Angus.

Ross tells Macbeth that the king has made him thane of Cawdor. Cawdor is to be executed for treason. The first of the witches' prophecy has come true.

Scene iv

At the king's palace.

Cawdor has been executed and dies nobly. Duncan announces his intention to name Malcolm the heir to his throne. Malcolm now stands between Macbeth and the crown. Plans are made to dine at Macbeth's castle.

Scene v

In Inverness, Macbeth's castle.

Lady Macbeth reads to herself a letter she has received from Macbeth. She knows he is ambitious but fears he is too full of "th' milk of human kindness". She wants to convince her husband to do whatever is required to seize the crown. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth discuss the king's visit. She tells her husband that Duncan will never leave their castle.

Scene vi

Outside Macbeth's castle.

Duncan praises the castle. Lady Macbeth welcomes him.

Scene vii

Inside the castle.

Macbeth paces by himself, pondering his idea of assassinating Duncan. He thinks of the terrible consequences. Lady Macbeth enters; Macbeth tells her that he does not want to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth, outraged, calls him a coward: "When you durst do it, then you were a man". She explains her plan to him and Macbeth agrees.