

Macbeth – Act IV

Scene i

A house in Forres. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.

Chanting “Double, double, toil and trouble,” the three witches stir the cauldron. The witches call up apparitions which give Macbeth warnings, promises, and prophecies: beware Macduff, fear “none of woman born,” fear nothing until Birnam wood come to Dunsinane, Banquo’s issue shall be kings. The witches vanish and Macbeth calls in Lennox, who tells him that Macduff has fled to England, whereupon Macbeth orders the murder of Macduff’s wife and children.

Scene ii

Fife. A room in Macduff’s castle.

Ross brings Lady Macduff the news that her husband has fled Scotland. Lady Macduff and her son joke about Macduff being a traitor. A messenger rushes in to tell Lady Macduff to run for her life, but right after him come the murderers who kill the boy and his mother.

Scene iii

England. A room in the King’s palace.

Macduff seeks Malcolm’s support for a war against Macbeth, and Malcolm tests Macduff’s intentions. A doctor tells of the English King’s miraculous ability to heal the sick. Speaking to Malcolm and Macduff, Ross tells of Scotland’s suffering under Macbeth and of the slaughter of Macduff’s wife and children. Everyone is now ready to make war against Macbeth.