

# Macbeth

by William Shakespeare

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**T**he witches also told Banquo that he would be the father of kings. Macbeth, who was already Thane of Glamis, asked the witches why they called him Thane of Cawdor and king; but they vanished without answering. Just then, two of the king's men appeared.



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**M**acbeth and his friend Banquo were returning victorious from a battle against Vikings and Scottish rebels. As the two Scottish noblemen crossed a lonely heath, they came upon three witches.



**M**acbeth wrote to his wife of the witches' prophecies. Lady Macbeth read the letter with great excitement. When a messenger told her that Macbeth was on his way home, and that King Duncan was with him, the witches' final prophecy seemed close to fulfillment.



**M**acbeth's conscience troubled him. Duncan was his kinsman and his king, as well as his guest. Lady Macbeth reminded her husband of the "ornament of life" he so desired. Macbeth and his wife plotted to murder Duncan in his sleep.



**T**he next morning, the noble Macduff went to wake the king and found him murdered. He cried out in horror. Macbeth rushed into the king's chambers and killed the grooms, who appeared guilty of the murder. Banquo and Lady Macbeth hurried to the king's bedchamber.



**T**hat night, Macbeth stole into the king's bedchamber and stabbed Duncan in the heart. He returned to his wife, bloody daggers in hand, horrified at what he had done. Lady Macbeth hurried back to smear the king's sleeping grooms with the bloody daggers before dropping them on their pillows. Then she returned to her chamber.



**W**hen Duncan's two sons learned of their father's death, they feared for their own lives. Malcolm fled to England, Donalbain to Ireland. That left Macbeth as Duncan's closest kinsman and heir to the throne. Macbeth and his wife quickly set off to Scone where Macbeth was crowned King.



**M**acbeth did not settle easily at the king's palace, for there was one whom he greatly feared and envied: Banquo.



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**S**hortly after the feast began, the murderers reported that they had slit Banquo's throat, but his son had managed to escape. Macbeth sent them off and returned to the feast. To his horror, Banquo's ghost was sitting on his stool!



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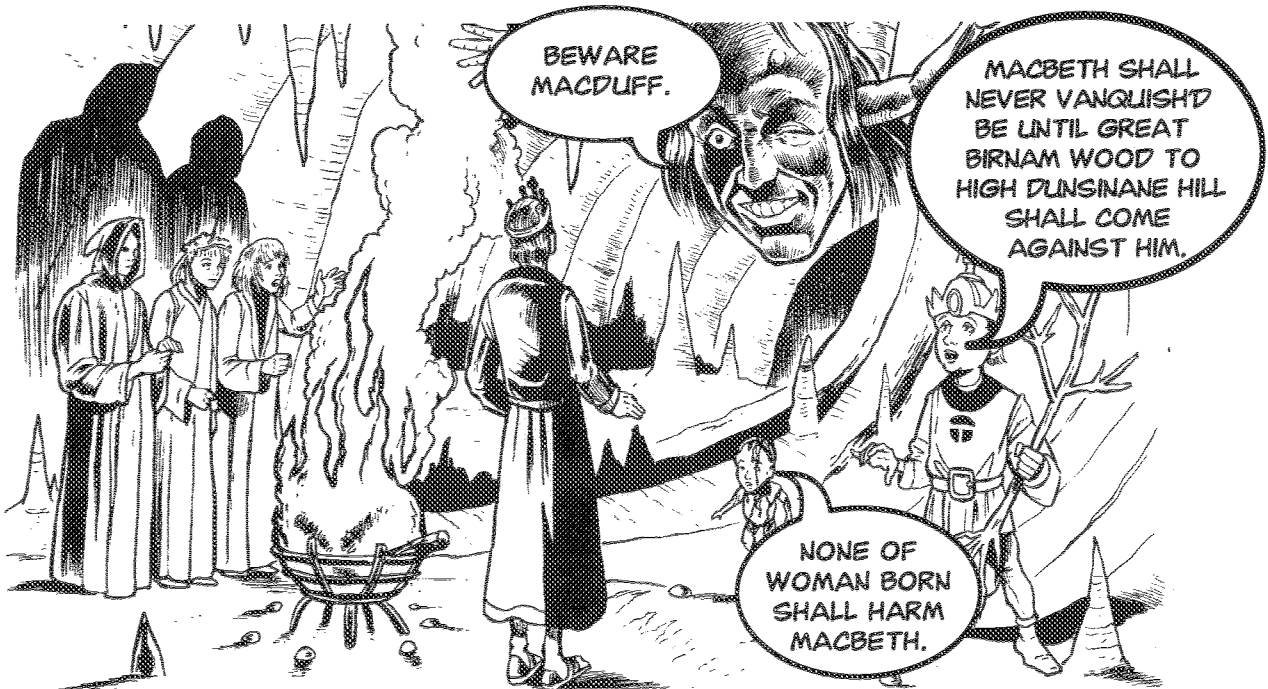
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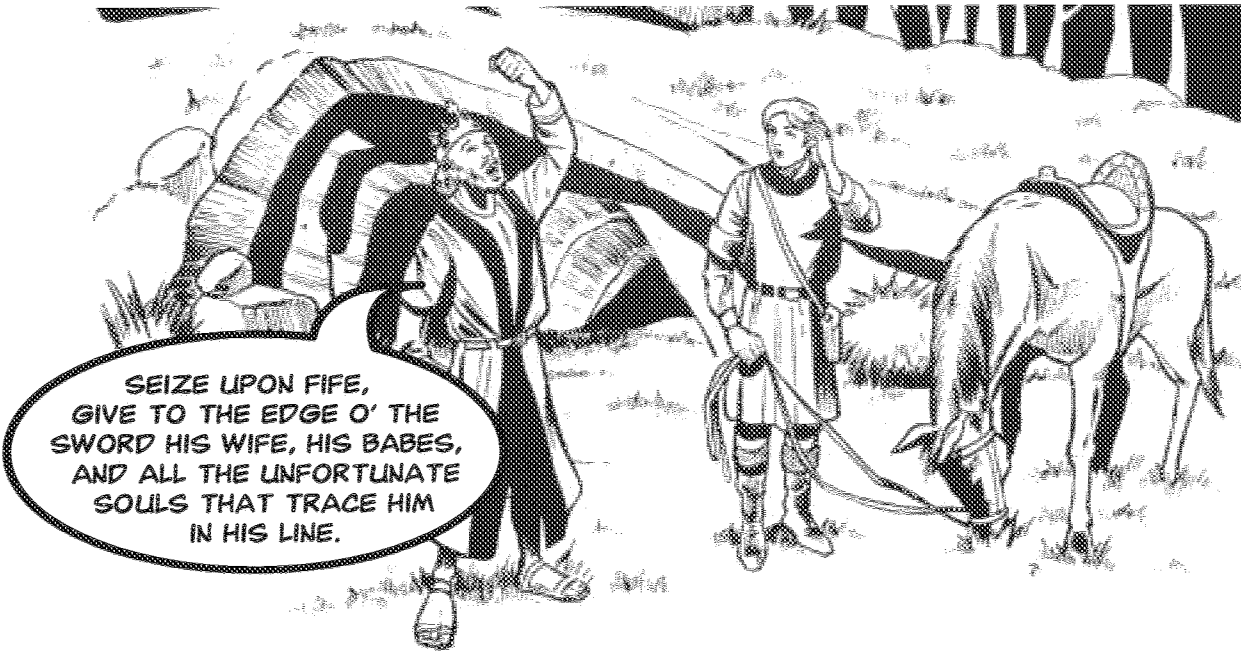
**B**anquo's talk worried Macbeth, but the witches' prophecy that Banquo's heirs would be kings worried him even more. He invited Banquo and his son to a feast, then arranged to have them murdered on their way to the celebration.



**F**rightened by Banquo's ghost, and haunted by the thought of Banquo's son succeeding him, Macbeth worried about his future as king. He searched for the witches to hear what the future would bring.



**W**hen Macbeth left the witches' cavern, he learned that Macduff had fled to England to help Malcolm raise an army to avenge his father's death and take the crown from Macbeth. Macbeth ordered an army to the home of Macduff, Thane of Fife.



**T**he murder of Lady Macduff and her entire family proved too much for Lady Macbeth to bear. She began to walk and talk in her sleep. A doctor was brought in to see if he could help her.



**M**acduff and Malcolm were preparing an army to return to Scotland when Macduff learned that Macbeth had brutally murdered his entire family.



**W**hen a messenger brought news to Macbeth that an army of ten thousand English troops was advancing on the castle at Dunsinane, the king called for his armor. Remembering the witches' recent prophecies gave him courage.





**M**alcolm's army was passing through Birnam Wood when the leader had an idea. He ordered every soldier to cut down a bough and carry it before him, to hide the army's numbers.



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**O**n the battlefield, Macbeth remembered the witches' prophecy that no man of woman born could harm him. He fought fearlessly. Then he met Macduff, the man the witches warned him about. Still, he did not fear.



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**I**nside Dunsinane, Macbeth was grieving at the news that his wife was killed by her own sorrow. Then a messenger arrived with more bad news: While on lookout, he saw Birnam Wood began to move!



**S**o the witches' prophecy was fulfilled once again. With a flourish of his sword, Macduff cut off Macbeth's head. Then he carried the traitor's head to Malcolm and laid it at his feet.

