

Act 1, Scene 1

[Thunder and lightning. Out of the foggy air come three ugly old women, dressed in black. They are witches]

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

2nd Witch: When the fighting is all done,
When the battle's lost and won.

3rd Witch: Before night covers everyone.

1st Witch: Where's the place?

2nd Witch: Upon the heath¹⁹.

3rd Witch: There to meet with Macbeth!

All Witches: Fair is foul²⁰ and foul is fair,
Flying through the dark and foggy air!

[They laugh and disappear into the fog]

Act 1, Scene 2

[King Duncan and some thanes at a camp, some distance from the battle. Enter Malcolm, the King's eldest son, with a wounded soldier]

Duncan: Who is that poor man? His wounds are bleeding.
Surely he can tell us how the battle's going.

Malcolm: This is the captain, who by his bravery,
Saved me from certain death.

Duncan: Welcome, brave friend! Tell me all you know.
How was the battle going when you had to leave?

Captain: For a long time, it was still in doubt.
The rebel²¹ force was strong – their men fought well.
Then brave Macbeth – for brave he surely is,
Fought till he reached the rebels' wicked²² leader.
Then, bloody sword in hand, he faced the traitor²³
And with one blow²⁴, cut him almost in two.
And put the traitor's head upon our castle wall,

Where all can see it and be glad.

Duncan: Oh, brave Macbeth, what a great man he is!

Captain: The battle was not over, King of Scotland.

Some rebels turned and ran, but others came.

Fresh soldiers then began to fight against us.

Duncan: And were not Macbeth – and Banquo too,
Alarmed²⁵ by this?

Captain: Are lions alarmed by hares²⁶?

Our two great thanes began to fight fiercely.

With their strong swords they cut and cut again.

... But help me sir, my wounds are deep, I bleed ...

Duncan: Rest now, brave man, you have said enough.

Look after him. He must not lose more blood.

[The captain is taken away. Enter the Thane of Ross]

Here is more news. What do you know, good thane?

Ross: I come from Fife, my gracious²⁷ King,

Where the great King of Norway fought against us,

Assisted²⁸ by the rebel Thane of Cawdor.

But do not fear, my lord, our leader, great Macbeth

Took on the fight and won. The victory was ours.

And the defeated King of Norway begged for peace.

Duncan: Great happiness!

But how the Thane of Cawdor has deceived us!

That rebel thane shall have a traitor's death.

The Thane of Cawdor is now brave Macbeth.

Act 1, Scene 3

[On a foggy heath. The sound of thunder. Enter the three witches]

1st Witch: Where have you been, sister?

2nd Witch: Killing pigs.

3rd Witch: And what about you, sister?

1st Witch: A greedy sailor's wife was eating nuts.
She chewed and chewed and chewed.

'Give some to me,' I said.

'Leave me alone, you dirty witch!' she cried.

Her husband is at sea – his ship is called the *Tiger*.

I'll call for a strong wind and follow him.

2nd Witch: I'll give you a wind.

1st Witch: You are kind.

3rd Witch: And I another.

1st Witch: And I myself have all the other.

I'll blow him east and blow him west,

But never will that man be blest²⁹.

He will not sleep by night or day.

Never will he find his way,

To friendly port or place of rest.

Look what I have!

2nd Witch: Show me, show me.

1st Witch: Look, another sailor's thumb.

He drowned³⁰ as homeward³¹ he did come.

[The sound of a drum]

3rd Witch: A drum I hear.

Macbeth is near!

[The three witches hold hands and dance in a circle]

All Witches: We three sisters, hand in hand.

Travel over sea and land.

Left we go and right we turn,

Three times your way, three times mine,

Three times more to make it nine.

Quiet now. Our spell is made.

[The witches disappear into the fog. Enter Macbeth and Banquo]

Macbeth: The weather goes from foul to fair.

This dirty fog darkens the clear air.

Banquo: How far are we from Forres?

[The fog clears and he sees the three witches]

Who are these old creatures, dressed in dirty clothes?

They must be women, though I can't believe it.

You seem to understand me, but you're silent.

Macbeth: Speak, if you can. Who are you?

1st Witch: All hail³², Macbeth. Hail to you, Thane of Glamis!

2nd Witch: All hail, Macbeth. Hail to you, Thane of Cawdor!

3rd Witch: All hail, Macbeth. You will be King of Scotland!

Banquo: *[To Macbeth]* Why do you seem to fear a future full of promise?

[Turning to the witches]

Tell me the truth, you creatures.

Are you old women, as you seem to be,

Or are you not real at all?

You've told Macbeth his present and his future fate,

And that has left him silent.

If you have knowledge of the seeds of time –

Which seeds will grow and which will not, then tell me now.



Banquo: *I'th' name of truth,
Are ye fantastical, or that indeed
Which outwardly ye show? My noble partner
You greet with present grace and great prediction
Of noble having and of royal hope,
That he seems wrapt withall: to me you speak not.
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 beg nor fear
Your favours nor your hate.*



*Who are these old creatures, dressed in dirty clothes?
They must be women, though I can't believe it.*

Act 1, Scene 3

ye = you

fantastical = of the imagination

outwardly = on the outside

present grace = honour given at this time

prediction = a statement about what the future will be

wrapt withal = very deep in thought

grain = a seed

1st Witch: Hail!

2nd Witch: Hail!

3rd Witch: Hail!

1st Witch: You are lesser than Macbeth, but greater.

2nd Witch: Not so happy, but much happier.

3rd Witch: [*to Banquo*] You'll not be King, but you will father kings.

So all hail, Macbeth and Banquo!

1st Witch: Banquo and Macbeth, all hail!

[*The fog gets thicker*]

Macbeth: Wait! You have not said enough. I must know more.

My father's death has made me Thane of Glamis.

But Thane of Cawdor? No, that's wrong.

The Thane of Cawdor is alive and well.

And as for being King, that is impossible.

Tell me where you got your knowledge from

And how you know my future.

Stay, tell me more – I order you!

[*The witches laugh and disappear into the fog*]

Banquo: The fog has hidden them.

Where have they gone?

Macbeth: Into the air. I wish they had stayed.

Banquo: Were they really here or are we mad?

Macbeth: They said your children will be kings.

Banquo: You shall be King. They said that too.

Macbeth: And Thane of Cawdor. Isn't that right?

Banquo: That's exactly what they said.

[Enter two thanes, Ross and Angus]

Who's this?

Ross: The King knows of your courage, brave Macbeth.
He has had news of it from every side.

Angus: We have both come to bring our royal master's thanks
And take you to him, for he wants to see you.

And, from the King, we bring a further honour.

You have been named 'Macbeth, the Thane of Cawdor'.

Banquo: That's what the witches said. How did they know?
Can they foretell the future?

Macbeth: The Thane of Cawdor is alive. Why give me his title?

Ross: The Thane's alive, that's true, but he's a traitor.
And very soon, he'll die a traitor's death.

Macbeth: [Speaking to himself] Glamis and Cawdor ...
That's what the witches said. The best is still to come.

[To Angus]

Thank you, kind sir.

[To Banquo]

Now you must hope your children will be kings.

They've told the truth to me. Why not to you?

Banquo: If you believe that, you must believe
That one day, you'll be King. I am not happy.
These things of darkness may have come to trick us,
Tell us some truths, but lead us into evil.

[To Ross and Angus]

Good friends, I must speak to you a minute.

Macbeth: [To himself]

The witches said two things about me – both were true.

That surely means that one day I'll be King.

They all foretold my future – is that good or bad?

If bad, why did the witches give me hope?

They called me Thane of Cawdor – now I am.

So other truths may follow. If good,

Why am I thinking of a plan – a terrible idea,

That frightens me so much, that my hair stands on end?
And my heart, too, is beating far too fast.
But yet the dreadful fears that I have now,
Are nothing to the deadly horrors in my mind.
My body and my mind are so confused,
That action itself, gives way to wildest thoughts.
Imagination has replaced reality.



Macbeth: *If ill, why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am Thane of Cawdor:
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair,
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of Nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings:
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man,
That function is smother'd in surmise,
And nothing is, but what is not.*

hath = has

earnest = very serious information

commencing = starting

yield = give in or surrender

doth = does

unfix = stand on end

seated = fixed

function = power to act

smother'd = covered thickly, with too much of something

surmise = strange ideas

Banquo: Our friend is deep in thought. Something is troubling him.

Macbeth: *[Continuing to himself]* If fate will make me King,
Then fate will crown³³ me. I do not need to act.

Banquo: Macbeth's new honours are too much for him.

Macbeth: *[Still to himself]* Whatever happens, come what may,
Time will go on, to end the strangest day.

Banquo: Worthy³⁴ Macbeth, are you ready now?

Macbeth: *[To Banquo]* I'm coming, sir.

I'm sorry, friends, my thoughts have been confused.
Gentlemen, I thank you. Let's go to the King.

[To Banquo]

I want to speak to you about the witches,
And what they told us.

We must be honest with each other.

Banquo: Indeed we must.

Macbeth: Then we'll talk later.

[To Ross and Angus]

Come, friends, take us to the King.