

Characters

King Duncan (M)	-	King of Scotland
Malcolm (M)	-	Duncan's son and heir to the throne
Macduff (M)	-	A manly man, who fears no-one.
Macbeth (M)	-	Rather hapless easy to fool and manipulate.
Ross (M)	-	Very loyal to the King (whoever that may be at the time).
Lennox (M)	-	A Thane loyal to Scotland
Banquo (M)	-	Virtuous seeker of truth and justice and perhaps rather vain.
Sergeant (M)	-	A soldier who fought alongside Macbeth
Fleance (M)	-	Son of Banquo and predicted future King.
Lady Macbeth (F)	-	Long suffering wife of the hapless Macbeth, a scholar of alchemy for what good that would do a woman of the dark ages.
Witch 1 (F)	-	Enthusiastic generally optimistic of the three sisters but aesthetically challenged.
Witch 2 (F)	-	the more politically aware vegan.
Witch 3 (F)	-	possibly the leader may be the elder of the sisters.
Murderer 1 (M/F)	-	A Murderer
Murderer 2 (M/F)	-	A Murderer
Murderer 3 (M/F)	-	A Murderer
Colin (M/F)	-	Incidental character

Act 1

Scene 1 – A battlefield

(SFX. of clashing swords and battle. Duncan is talking with Macduff as he enters stage. He must be wearing the Crown. Macduff is in battle dress, dirty and bloody)

Duncan: Oh if only I didn't have this dodgy hip, Macduff - I'd be out there too you know, fighting alongside you chaps.

Macduff: **(Sceptical)** Yes, I'm sure you would be my King. Ah but here comes a Sergeant with news of the battle

(Enter Sergeant, heavily wounded, bloody and an arm missing. He hunches over, totally exhausted)

Sergeant: My Liege. I have news of the battle.

Duncan: I say, Sergeant, you seem to have lost an arm.

Sergeant: What? This? **(holding up his right arm)** No it's still there, sir.

Duncan: I meant the other one.

Sergeant: What other one, sir? I don't have another one. I lost it, sir.

Duncan: But that's what I ... oh never mind. What news of the battle?

Sergeant: Well, all was even on both sides when out of the ranks came brave Macbeth, screaming and brandishing his steel. He went left, then right, zigzagging through the fog until the merciless Macdonwald, that villainous rebel stood in front of him. But brave Macbeth, for well he deserves that name, appeared to launch himself at the enemy and un-seamed him from the nave to chaps.

(Sergeant makes a mime of the un-seaming and Duncan flinches)

Duncan: Ugh! Rather gruesome wasn't it? So does that mean we won, then?

Macduff: It means we won, your Liege.

Duncan: Yippee! Get in! **(Duncan starts gyrating the hips in celebration until he realises that Macduff is watching suspiciously. He immediately pulls up and starts limping)** Ooh! Ooh! This cursed hip, eh?

Macduff: **(Ironic tone)** Yes. It must be quite frustrating, my Liege.

Duncan: Well then, let us waste no more time. Perhaps, Sergeant, you should get that wound dressed.

Sergeant: Yes, my Liege. Thank you, my Liege. (**Sergeant tries to exit but staggers around in circles**)

Macduff: Just a moment, your Liege, I will assist. (**Eventually assisting Sergeant offstage. As an aside to Sergeant**) You have done well. Meet me later, I shall make your efforts worth your while.

Sergeant: Yes my Lord.

(Exit Sergeant)

Macduff: (**Returning to Duncan**) Now sir, may I suggest that you reward Macbeth in some way?

Duncan: But surely the glory of battle, fighting for one's King and country should be all the reward a soldier desires.

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Macduff: Well, sometimes it is good to show a little more appreciation, my Liege, besides I know just the title you can bestow on brave Macbeth. If you'd care to follow.

Duncan: (**Rather reluctant**) Oh very well then. Lead on, Macduff.

(Exit Duncan and Macduff. Enter Witch 1 and Witch 2 from opposite side, carrying a table and a bag of merchandise. They place the table centre stage and empty the bag to display the items; a couple of voodoo dolls perhaps, incense candles and three or four makeup compacts).

Witch 1: I hear something wicked this way comes.

Witch 2: Hope so! Getting bored now, setting this stuff up on the heath, waiting for customers.

Witch 1: It being so foggy, I can hardly see further than my warty nose.

(Enter Witch 3, excited)

Witch 3: He's coming. I just spotted 'im with his friend, Banquo. Just as predicted. We should hide.

Witch 2: Why do we need to hide? I thought we s'pose to speak to him, tell his future and all that.

Witch 3: We are but I thought we could use the element of surprise; you know? Imagine appearing suddenly out of the fog, kind of hovering there in the dank and filthy air. Three weird sisters. That'd spook him.

(Pause. Witch 1 and Witch 2 look at Witch 3, not impressed)

Witch 2: I'm not weird.

Witch 1: You're a vegan.

Witch 2: **(Indignant)** So?

Witch 1: Well that's weird.

Witch 2: Well you got a warty nose.

Witch 1: That doesn't make me weird. It might make me aesthetically challenged but not weird. You on the other hand...

Witch 3: That's enough, both of you. You are not getting paid to stand on this heath, arguing.

Witch 2: We're not getting paid, period. Not unless we sell this stuff. And that never happens.

(Witch 3 looks sheepish)

Witch 2: Three?

Witch 3: Well...

Witch 2: Three! Tell me you've not accepted ...

Witch 3: Fair is foul and foul is fair. Isn't that what we do?

Witch 2: But Three, we are supernatural phenomena. We only exist to expose the inherent evil that hides in humankind. In fact, it can be argued we don't actually exist at all, except as an extended metaphor.

Witch 1: Who doesn't eat meat and dairy products.

Witch 2: Oh just shut it, Warty McWart Face.

(Enter Macbeth and Banquo, both are bloody and dirty in battle dress, carrying swords and unseen by Witches)

Witch 3: Pack it in the pair of you. You know what to do, just follow my lead, okay?

Banquo: What are these - so withered and wild creatures that look not like the inhabitants of the earth and yet they live on it?

Macbeth: **(Draws his sword)** Be careful, Banquo for I fear they might be an extended metaphor.

Witch 2: **(Addressing Witch 3)** Told you.

Macbeth: Speak if you can. **(To Witch 1)** What are your names?

Witch 1: Witch One.

Macbeth: Well all of you, of course.

Witch 1: Witch One.

Macbeth: 'Which one', she asks, Banquo. Methinks they are women, although I fear they are not familiar with the local dialect.

(Macbeth makes a grand gesture of introducing himself)

Macbeth: Um. Ok. So I... That is Me... I am Macbeth. And this...

Witch 1: Oh Sainted newt's spawn! *Witch one!* I am Witch One. This is Witch Two and she - believe it or not is...

Witch 3: Karen. **(Pause)**. Kidding. Witch 3. Now let's get down to business shall we? **(Dramatically)**. All hail Macbeth! Thane of Glamis! Yay. Well done you. **(To Witch 2 and Witch 3)** Some help here?

Witch 1: Oh of course. Uh - all hail Macbeth Thane of ... of some other place too.

Witch 3: Cawdor

Witch 1: That was it. Yay! Cawdor. Lovely place. I holiday there in the summer

Witch 3: Ah but that's not all, is it girls? That is not all at all? **(Building it up)** What else is he going to be?

Witch 2: Oh God, I can't do this.

Witch 1: Shall we tell him?

Witch 3: I think we should. You...

Witch 1: shalt be...

Witch 3: **(Pretends to blow a fan fair)** King hereafter! Yay! Yay!

(Witch 1 and Witch 3 pretend to be an applauding crowd, but Macbeth looks at them, indifferently)

Witch 1: **(Together)** All hail Macbeth! All hail Macbeth! **(continue ad nauseam)**

Witch 3: **(Together)** All hail Macbeth! All hail Macbeth! **(continue ad nauseam)**

(Eventually they stop. Witch 2 has her face buried in her hands, shaking her head)

Banquo: That was weird. Come on, let's go, mate.

Macbeth: Yeah. Which way...

Witch 3: **(Forcefully)** But that is not all... Banquo, is it not?

Banquo: That is I.

Witch 3: And you have a son.

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Banquo: What of it?

Witch 3: Good. Your son will become King. And then his son. And then his son. Followed by your son's son's son's son. **(Counts up on her fingers)** Is that right? Whatever. King Duncan - who your friend is going to mur - I mean replace - possibly - will send his messenger to confirm the first of our predictions. **(Tone changes all business like)**. In the meantime, can I tempt you with one of these?

(Witch 3 opens one of the compacts)

Banquo: What is it?

Witch 3: Our own anti - aging powder made from the finest lead substance.

Witch 1: As worn by all the Royal Courtiers in England and France.

Witch 2: Normal price, a shilling; but for you-special price. Two ducats. Or- **(in a conspiratorial tone)** - buy two, get the third free.

Banquo: Well, I shall take just the one for now.

(Banquo offers the money which Witch 3 quickly snatches, placing the compact firmly in his hand. Then she gestures to Witch 1 and Witch 2 who hurriedly place the remaining merchandise in the bag. The Witches quickly exit, leaving the table but facing Macbeth and Banquo and making weird spooky sounds as they leave)

Macbeth: Okay. Let me see. We came from that way. Or was it...? No definitely that way.

(Enter Ross. His battle dress is pristine and he is well groomed. Ross creeps up on Macbeth)

Ross: Brave Macbeth!

Macbeth: **(Startled)** Uh!!

Banquo: Can we help you at all?

Ross: **(takes out a scroll, clears his throat and reads)** "The King hath happily received the news of thy success and bade me, from him, call thee "Thane of Cawdor." There. That's it. I'm done. **(Turns to exit)**

Macbeth: But sir, the Thane of Cawdor lives.

Ross: Not anymore. Your Thane of Cawdor's been a very naughty boy. In dark cahoots with the Norwegians, he was.

Banquo: A traitor, and the King's own Advisor too. These are indeed treacherous times.

Ross: Caught red handed by the Thane of Fife, apparently. Anyway, it was at Macduff's suggestion that the King invite himself to your home for a big victory party and honour you with all the Cawdor's titles, including that of Advisor to the King.

Macbeth: **(aside)** Advisor? Then could the Weird Sisters speak true? For should the King die, - oh and his son Malcolm too - then as Advisor I would become King. Better write home to warn Lady M of the news. I don't suppose she'll be best pleased at having to host fifty wild eyed bloody men returning from the battlefield. She complains enough as it is of me not being home to help with chores. And I have promised so many times to fix the plumbing, a suggestion whose horrid image doth unfix my hair. But I am Thane of Cawdor so perhaps chance will crown me as King without my having to reach for my toolbox.

Ross: **(To Banquo)** Does he do that a lot?

Banquo: Talk to an imaginary audience? Sometimes. Macbeth!

Macbeth: Uh!

Banquo: Let's go, mate.

Macbeth: But of course.

(Exit All. Lights fade)

Scene 2 – Glamis Castle.

(Lights up. The table remains centre stage. Enter Lady Macbeth with a very heavy bucket of water, rubber gloves and scrubbing brush. Then Lady Macbeth places the bucket on the table. She arches her back to stretch, mops her brow, sighs heavily)

Lady M’beth: Huh! Glamis thou art and Cawdor you are going to be. Though a fat lot of good that’ll do me, now will it? **(Exasperated)** Better to be a man than a woman in these dark times. What ambitions dare a woman dream? Dutiful wife? Mother? Ugh! I hate kids.

(Lady Macbeth puts on the rubber gloves and picks up the scrubbing brush. Lady Macbeth makes deliberate eye contact with the audience, while dipping the scrubbing brush into the bucket of water. Lady Macbeth holds it out in front of her, showing the audience. All her movements are slow and deliberate. Then manically Lady Macbeth begins scrubbing the table)

Lady M’beth: Out. Damn. Spot! **(stops and inspects her hands)** Will these nails ever be clean?

(Enter Macbeth, Still bloody and dirty)

Macbeth: My dearest love.

Lady M’beth: **(Jumps with fright)** Murdering Ministers! I wish you wouldn’t do that.

(Continues to scrub)

Macbeth: Did you get my letter? **(No answer)** ‘Brave Macbeth’ they are calling me. **(No response)** Can you imagine? **(laughs)** Everyone’s saying it.

(Macbeth moves around her, Lady Macbeth continues to scrub the table)

Macbeth: Me. Brave Macbeth. Warrior Macbeth.

Lady M’beth: **(Unimpressed)** Aye, but not ‘husband Macbeth.’ Never ‘husband handy man around the house, fixing the leaky taps Macbeth’ though, is it - eh?

Macbeth: But My love, what of my success? Duncan comes here tonight to honour me. We will have to give him our chambers of course. It is the only comfortable room in the castle. But being made Thane of Cawdor is not to be scoffed at.

Lady M’beth: **(Throwing the scrubbing brush into the bucket and exploding)** Cawdor? What is Cawdor? Miles of useless heath and filthy fog with a castle as leaky as this one. That’s what you got. And in the meantime I have walked over that filthy heath to fetch a pail of water because you still haven’t found a plumber for our taps.

Macbeth: But I will do, I promise. It is just I’d have to be on a King’s salary to afford the hourly rate of a plumber.

Lady M'beth: And to be on a King's salary you'd have to become the King.

Macbeth: Yeah, well fat chance of that happening. Even if I am the King's advisor. What can I do? Advise him to die? And then his son, Malcolm too?

(Lady Macbeth freezes. A thought is dawning. The audience can see it on her face. Lady Macbeth looks at Macbeth. Perhaps a raised eyebrow)

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Macbeth: What?

Lady M'beth: **(Gesturing for him to come closer)** Hie thee hither so that I may tell you of my darkest thoughts.

Macbeth: Oh not the one about spiders again, I hate spiders.

Lady M'beth: Oh man up! When is Duncan planning to leave?

Macbeth: Tomorrow.

Lady M'beth: Then never shalt sun that morrow see.

Macbeth: **(nodding but not really comprehending)**. Right. Right. Yeah. I get it. **(Pause)**. No, I don't get it.

Lady M'beth: Upstairs in our chambers, I have prepared a bath for you.

Macbeth: Ok. **(Pause)** Why would I need a bath?

Lady M'beth: **(sighs heavily)** To wash away that stink of battle, perhaps?

Macbeth: Oh.

Lady M'beth: Then join your party looking like an innocent flower, but! **(Lady Macbeth dramatically grabs Macbeth's arm and he jumps)**

Macbeth: What?

Lady M'beth: You be the serpent under it.

Macbeth: Be the serpent under it. Right. You mean like a snake.

Lady M'beth: Like a snake.

Macbeth: Right. So nice bath, all fresh and smelling good. Downstairs, hi everyone -looking like a flower...

Lady M'beth: An innocent flower.

Macbeth: An innocent flower - and then be a snake under the flower. Right. **(Pause)** And a - why am I doing that, exactly?

Lady M'Beth: Because after the party when everyone has retired, you will casually saunter back upstairs with a knife and... **(pauses to think)**

Macbeth: And?

Lady M'beth: And maybe an apple. As if you have the intention to peel it with the knife. And then, making sure you are not seen - I mean it will have to be as dark as dunnest hell -you sneak into our chamber where Duncan sleeps and ... **(trailing off, looking at her husband)**

(Macbeth slowly nods).

Lady M'beth: ...Yes?

Macbeth: Yes. Yes! I see now.

Lady M'beth: Are you sure?

Macbeth: Absolutely. I mean it has to be done, right?

Lady M'beth: Oh I knew you would have it in you. Right, well go and take that bath first.

Macbeth: OK. **(moves to the exit and then hesitates and turns back)** There aren't any spiders in the tub, are there?

Lady M'beth: Don't worry, I chased them all out. Be sure you empty the dirty water and remove the tub when you finish, though. We don't want Duncan tripping over it in the dark, do we?

Macbeth: Right, Gotcha!

(Exit Macbeth)

Lady M'beth: **(continues scrubbing and addressing the audience)** *The Dark Ages; where a woman's work is never finished!* And to think that before I married you, I studied alchemy and was a scholar in my own right. But now thou hast it all. **(Lady Macbeth stops, picks up the pail, places the brush and rubber gloves inside)** And all because *you* are the man.

(Exit Lady Macbeth. Lights fade)

Scene 3 – The Heath

(Lights up. Table remains centre stage. Witch 1, Witch 2 enter and place the merchandise on the table, including an empty mug)

Witch 2: Where's Three?

Witch 1: Still spying on the Macbeths.

Witch 2: Yeah? And how'd she managed that then?

Witch 1: Dunno but she should be back by now.

(Enter Witch 3)

Witch 3: Hi sisters.

Witch 2: What time you call this?

Witch 3: Time? What do I care about time? For I have had the best time ever and now time is trivial.

Witch 1: So whatcha learn then? Tell us.

Witch 3: Oh I learned plenty.

Witch 2: Well go on then, tell.

Witch 3: Ok. Well, once the King arrived with his mates and all started making merry, I naturally disguised myself as a wall flower as I usually do at these gatherings. No one ever takes a blind bit of notice of me. But then suddenly I was approached. By a man.

Witch 2: Oh you got slung out, again, then.

Witch 1: No. Actually I didn't. In fact he took quite a shine to me, he did. Told me I was the most gorgeous creature he'd ever met and would I marry 'im.

Witch 2: Oh yeah? What spell did you use on 'im then?

(Witch 1 and Witch 2 giggle)

Witch 3: I didn't have to. He'd been drinking ale. Apparently it has that effect. In fact, I observed that as the evening wore on, many other men found me attractive and declared their love for me, and then they seemed to find each other attractive and declared their love for each other too while doing a sort of wrestling ritual. Anyways, Macbeth, persuaded by his lady wife, waited until King Duncan retired.

(Witch 3 looks around, building the tension as Witch 1 and Witch 2 draw in)

Witch 3: And then as he slept...

Witch1: **(Together)** Yes!

Witch 2: **(Together)** Yes!

Witch 3: Macbeth silently entered his chambers armed with...

Witch 1: Yes!

Witch 2: Armed with... armed with what?

Witch 3: Armed with an apple.

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Witch 2: An apple?

Witch 3: An apple. **(Pause)** Oh and this knife. **(revealing a dagger)**. Now watch, sisters.

(Witch 3 waves her arms and lights flicker and fade. Light up and We are transported back to Glamis Castle. Enter Macbeth. He has bathed and blood and dirt has gone but he is deep in thought. Pacing up and down)

Witch 1: Ah!

Witch 2: Ah!

Witch 3: Ah!

(Witch 1, Witch 2 quickly put the merchandise back into the bag while Macbeth addresses the audience. The mug is left on the table)

Macbeth: If it were done when it is done then better it were done quickly.

(Enter Lady Macbeth carrying two pails of water)

Lady M'beth: Oh there you are. Have you done it yet?

Macbeth: My dear wife, I have decided that we shall speak no more of these matters.

Lady M'beth: Oh you have, have you?

Macbeth: Well I mean... Now look! **(Trying to be assertive)** I am your husband and I know I promised but I changed my mind and I can do that because I'm the master.

(Lady Macbeth casually drops the water on Macbeth's foot, so he dances and hobbles around)

Macbeth: Ow! Ow! Ow! I do have scruples, you know.

Lady M'beth: **(Over his complaints)** Well then think yourself lucky I didn't kick you right between your scruples. **(taking the mug left on the table, Lady Macbeth dips it into one of the pails of water and offers it to Macbeth)** Here! Drink some water. Now listen to me, Brave Macbeth; Warrior Macbeth or whichever empty title you want for yourself; when and only when you get the plumbing fixed will I consider you a man and a husband.

Macbeth: But what if I fail to ...?

Lady M'beth: Then you fail. But screws and some of that sticky stuff to the pipes and you won't fail. I have every faith in you. Feel better? **(Macbeth nods, rather sullen)**. Good. Deep breath. Now, you'll need a knife.

Macbeth: Yes but from where? I couldn't find...

(Witch 3 moves towards him with the dagger, twirling it around up and down across the stage towards Macbeth)

Macbeth: Wait! Is this a dagger I see before me?

(Witch 3 stops, holding the dagger up in front of Macbeth's eyes)

Macbeth: **(Accepting the dagger)** Thanks.

Witch 3: You're welcome.

(Witch3 moves back down stage)

Lady M'beth: Right. Well off you trot then.

Macbeth: Yes. I am settled. **(Hesitating)**

Lady M'beth: Then what are you waiting for?

(OS SFX . A bell)

Macbeth: Ah! That actually. I was waiting for that. **(reluctantly moving towards exit)** Because that...that is the bell that will hopefully wake Duncan and summon me to his chamber to say "oh my Liege, did the bell wake you."

(Exit Macbeth)

Witch 3: And entering the chambers, the dagger drawn...

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Oh my Liege, did the bell wake you. I'm terribly sorry, perhaps I can offer you this apple as a nightcap. I will just use this knife to slice...
(OS SFX. metal clang)

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Ah!

(OS SFX. Scream)

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Ugh!

(Silence. Lady Macbeth, Witch 1, Witch 2, Witch 3 all listening out)

Witch 1: So Macbeth had forgotten to remove the bathtub after all.

Witch 3: Yes. It was so dark, he tripped and then...

(Macbeth re-enters clutching the bloody knife. A look of horror on his face as he looks at Lady Macbeth)

Lady M'beth: The knife is bloody. Why have you brought it with you?

Macbeth: Eh?

Lady M'beth: The knife; you idiot. You must leave it there.

Macbeth: Oh. **(Turning back in a trance and then gazing at the knife, he sees it dripping in blood and throws it on the floor in horror, shrinking back and biting his fist).** Oh my God! I've killed him. I've killed him. I've killed the King.

Witch 1: **(Together)** You've murdered sleep, Macbeth has murdered sleep.

Witch 2: **(Together)** You've murdered sleep, Macbeth has murdered sleep.

Witch 3: **(Together)** You've murdered sleep, Macbeth has murdered sleep.

Macbeth: Oh what are we going to do?

Lady M'beth: **(picking up the knife, calmly)** We?

Macbeth: Well you are so much better in a crisis than I am. I just fall apart.

Witch 1: **(Together)** Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Witch 2: **(Together)** Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Witch 3: **(Together)** Macbeth shall sleep no more.

Macbeth: You see? Now I'm hearing voices.

Lady M'beth: Right! Then take the knife, smear Duncan's blood all over the guard and plant the knife on him.

Macbeth: No. No, no no no no. I can't do that

Lady M'beth: Why not?

Macbeth: It's dark. And there might be spiders

Lady M'beth: (sarcastically) Oh, yes, I hadn't thought of that. Would you like your wife to go instead, perhaps?

Macbeth: O would you mind?

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Lady M'beth: No, of course not. I'll make the beds, chase out the spiders while I'm there, shall I?

Macbeth: Oh you're so much better at these things than I. So much more...

Lady M'beth: Masterful?

Macbeth: Yes.

Lady M'beth: Then leave it to me.

Macbeth: But I murdered him.

Lady M'beth: Well not really. You didn't mean to. Besides a little water will wash us both of this sin. (**Lady Macbeth takes the mug from the table, dips it into the water**) And I do mean "a little" water. That's got to last us at least until we move to Sconce to be crowned. (**Lady Macbeth washes his hands**) There. That should do. Now, jim-jams on and off to bed with you.

(Exit Lady Macbeth and Macbeth)

Witch 1: Well, I never thought he had it in him.

Witch 3: Who? Macbeth? Perhaps he didn't.

Witch 2: What do you mean?

Witch 3: Well the reason I was late is because I stayed around to see what would happen when Duncan's body was discovered.

(Witch 3 waves her arms around again in the air. The lights fade and immediately lights up again)

Macduff: **(Heard off stage)** Horror! Horror! Horror!

(Macduff enters, still covered in blood from battle)

Macduff: The worst thing imaginable has happened. A murderer has broken into God's temple and stolen the life out of it.

(Enter Lennox, Macbeth and Ross from opposite side of stage)

Lennox: What are you talking about? "The life"? Whose life?

Macduff: Oh but it is a most ghastly sight. I entered the King's chambers where Duncan lay murdered with a dozen knife wounds in him...

Witch 1: **(to Witch 3)** A dozen but you said Macbeth...

Witch 3: Sssh! And listen!

Macduff: ...and his guard asleep and steeped in royal blood, when out of the window I saw a sight that did make me freeze with horror. **(Dramatic pause)**. My wife! Lady Macduff this way comes. Oh I am doomed.

(Silence. Lennox, Macbeth and Ross look at Macduff and then at each other)

Macduff: What?

Lennox: Uh! You mentioned finding Duncan ...murdered...?

(Enter Lady Macbeth)

Lady M'beth: What has happened? What is all this commotion?

Ross: I'm afraid it is grave, very grave news and not for the ears of the weaker sex, my good lady.

Macbeth: Macduff's wife approaches and he's doomed. **(Pause)** Apparently.

Lennox: Wait a moment.

Macduff: Oh she will be in one mighty rage; I can assure you.

Lennox: Uh! Can we just back up a bit?

Lady M'beth: But why should she be?

Lennox: I said can we just back up here for a moment?

Macbeth: (To Macduff and Ross). Ooh! Touchy.

Lennox: Macduff! You spoke of finding Duncan...murdered?

Macduff: Aye! Murdered.

Ross: Murdered?

Macduff: Aye! Murdered.

(Enter Malcolm and Banquo. Exit Lennox)

Malcolm: What's happened?

Macbeth: Oh your Highness, you are just in time. Macduff's wife approaches and is filled with rage, I guess because he didn't return home. Surely you can speak up for him. (Pause) Oh, and your dad's dead.

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Malcolm: My father is dead?

Macduff: Aye! Murdered.

Malcolm: Murdered?

(Enter Lennox)

Lennox: Aye! Murdered. And it would seem that the guard who was supposed to be protecting his chamber hath done the deed. His hands and face are all covered with blood. So is the dagger, which I found on his lap, unwiped. However, we will not get a confession out of him.

Malcolm: Why not?

Lennox: Because he is dead.

Macbeth: What? Murdered?

Lennox: No he died peacefully in his sleep. Of course murdered!

Ross: But who would kill the only witness who might tell us the truth?

Lennox: Why, whoever does not want the truth to come out, of course. **(looking around at them all)**

Macbeth: Ah then it is obvious. The guard murders Duncan and in order to prevent us from interrogating him and learning the truth, he kills himself. Very clever.

Lady M'beth: **(pulling Macbeth aside)** You fool. You kill the guard and now all suspicion falls on us? What were you thinking?

Macbeth: But I...

Lady M'beth: I told you nobody would believe a guard's story over ours but now look, you have aroused suspicion.

(Lady Macbeth and Macbeth turn to notice that Lennox, Ross and Macduff, are surrounding them with very suspicious looks. This becomes a tableau)

Banquo: **(pulling Malcolm aside)** You are not safe. And until the real murderer of your father is caught, you will remain a target. I fear someone close whose ambition it is to take the crown is the culprit and I have a fairly good idea who that is.

Malcolm: Who?

Banquo: Not telling. Far too early in the plot.

Malcolm: Please yourself.

Banquo: But you must leave secretly and ride to England. I shall stay and do a little more digging.

(This becomes a tableau. Witch 3 moves freely about the frozen characters on stage)

Witch 1: So Macbeth and his wife killed the guard to blame him for the murder? And to think, I actually liked him.

Witch 3: Don't be too quick to jump to conclusions. As Banquo says, tis too early in the plot.

Witch 2: So what now?

Witch 3: Macbeth is King as we predicted.

Witch 2: Yes but it was only a bit of fun. And what about his best friend here? You told him he would be the vessel for a whole line of Kings, including his son, Fleance.

Witch 3: Yes, which means now we must prepare for more wickedness ahead, sisters.

(Witch 3 claps her hands and all exit except Witches)

Witch 3: And for more fun too. Yes?

Witch 1: Ah.

Witch 2: Ah

Witch 3: Ah.

(Witches exit, cackling. Lights fade out)

Scene 4 – A scenic spot upon the Heath

(Lights up. Enter murderers 1, 2 and 3. Murderer 1 is carrying a bright or flowery blanket which he/she covers the table with and Murderer 2 is carrying a bottle of wine. Murderer 3, the more aloof of the three, takes out a book, a pair of reading glasses, sits in the corner and reads)

Murderer 1: Well, I guess this is it. A good idea to come a bit earlier and have a picnic. I shall spread the blanket on this mound here. Murderer 2, hand me the wine. **(Murderer 2 does so)**. Now go keep a watchful eye over that ridge for Banquo and the boy.

Murderer 2: Why me? Why not you?

Murderer 1: Because I outrank you. How many you murdered?

Murderer 2: One. But it *was* my dad.

Murderer 1: Who you crept up behind, said "boo" and he dropped dead from a weak heart. Not actually sure that counts as murder.

Murderer 2: Well how many have you murdered?

Murderer 1: Never you mind, or I'll be adding you to the list if you don't do as you're told. Go on off you go, **(gesturing to the wine and takes a large swig)**. I will save you some, don't worry.

(Murderer 2 exits and Murderer 1 sits on the table. Murderer 1 takes another swig of wine from a bottle. He notices Murderer 3 is watching offers the wine. Murderer 3 shakes his head, refusing the offer. Murderer 1 looks disgruntled at him and takes another swig)

Murderer 1: Oh I forgot, you don't drink, do you? You just read. A proper barrel of laughs you are, Murderer 3.

Murderer 3: But I supplied the wine, didn't I?

Murderer 1: I suppose you did. Well as long as you know your job, when our victim arrives.

Murderer 3: Oh you can be certain I do.

Murderer 1: And remember; that boy of Banquo's mustn't escape, either.

(Enter Murderer 2)

Murderer 2: They are approaching.

Murderer 1: Well that's a relief. Being stuck 'ere with 'im - **(gesturing towards Murderer 3)** - well he's hardly said two words. Here! **(Offering Murderer 2 the wine bottle)** This

will calm your nerves, lad. **(To Murderer 3)** Oi, Bookworm, you 'ear that. They're coming.

(Murderer 2 takes a large swig from the wine bottle)

Murderer 3: Yes, I heard, thank you. I may be able to escape between the pages of an alternative reality, but that doesn't mean I'm totally oblivious to the triviality of my surroundings and the inane dialogue between the two of you.

Murderer 2: What's he say?

Murderer 1: No idea. Right, well let's get on with it, then. Swords at the ready.

(Murderer 1 jumps down off the table. Murderer 3 joins them. All three draw swords and face stage right. They wait a while)

Murderer 1: You sure he's approaching from this side?

Murderer 2: He was right behind me. I swear. Don't worry.

(Banquo approaches from stage left. He quietly but confidently strolls up and stands behind them, arms folded)

Murderer 1: Well I hope he 'urries up, so we can get this job done. To be 'onest, I'm feeling a little queasy.

Murderer 3: Mm. Probably the wine.

Murderer 1: Nah. Takes more than half a bottle of wine.

Murderer 2: Maybe it was off, Murderer 1. I feel a bit dizzy now myself.

Banquo: And shortness of breath?

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Murderer 1: **(Together)** Yeah.

Murderer 2: **(Together)** Yeah.

(Murderer 1 and Murderer 2 double take and turn to face Banquo. Murderer 1 and Murderer 2 try to raise their swords but it takes a monumental effort and Banquo easily pushes the swords back down with just a finger)

Banquo: A sudden weakness in the limbs, perhaps?

(Murderer 3 puts his sword away and just observes the scene)

Murderer 1: As a - matter - of - fact- yeah. **(mopping his brow and loosens collar)**

Banquo: Sweating profusely?

Murderer 2: **(mopping brow and loosening collar)** How - did - you - know?

Banquo: Because I had my friend here poison the wine. So about ten seconds from now, the poison should reach the lower limbs and you will both drop to the ground, keeling over to the right...

(Murderer 1 and Murderer 2 drop to their knees and keel over to their right)

Banquo: No, *my* right, your left.

(Murderer 1 and Murderer 2 sit up and keel over to their left)

Banquo: Then you will both suffer convulsions and finally stop breathing.
(pause) Or you could tell me who hired you and I can offer you the antidote...

(Murderer 1 and Murderer 2 suffer convulsions and die)

Banquo: Oh. Perhaps not. **(Turning to Murderer 3)** That didn't quite go to plan. But good work uh...?

Colin: Colin.

Banquo: Colin. Good work, Colin.

Colin: Where's your boy?

Banquo: Fleance? I hid him of course, as instructed. Told him to stay hidden until I collect him.

Colin: Good. The Mistress was most concerned about the boy. Even though she's allergic to kids, herself.

Banquo: Really?

Colin: Common knowledge. Sooner rip it from her breast and dash its brains out, apparently.

Banquo: Ugh. Rather extreme isn't it? Anyway, so what now?

Colin: We shall go to Sconce where you may show me how to access the banquet. Once there I shall try to expose the bloody butcher.

Banquo: Okay. But it's not going to be easy. Do you know how you are going to convince him that I'm dead and Fleance has escaped?

Colin: **(Thinks)** Mm. Well. Well I suppose now these two are dead, I could cut one of them open, smear his blood over me and make it look like it's yours.

Banquo: **(Enthusiastic)** Brilliant! And...and wait a moment! For I have a brilliant plan too. Look what I have acquired.

(Banquo reveals the makeup compact. He unscrews the lid)

Colin: What is it?

Banquo: It is called Ceruse. All the posh folk in England wear it. It's made of the finest lead white. Acquired it from these three old hags who live on the Heath. Now watch this. **(Banquo dabs it all over his face)** Viola! As the French courtiers would say.

Colin: Right. And your point is... what...exactly?

Banquo: Well, after you inform your client of my demise, I will appear as my own ghost, dislodging his faculties so much that he should give himself away and confess his guilt in front of witnesses. What do you think?

Colin: Yes. I'm not sure that smearing yourself with white lead is going to fool anyone. And cold blooded butchers do not tend to have a conscience.

Banquo: **(Thinks).** You're right, Colin. Silly idea. Right, well let's get the blood of one of these two smeared on your face and then I shall accompany you to Sconce in order to get you into the castle unseen.

(Banquo stands over the dead Murderers 1 and 2 and then checks his person)

Banquo: Don't happen to have some sort of dagger on you, I suppose.

(Blackout. End of Act One)

INTERVAL

Act 2

Scene 1 – Sconce castle; much posher than Glamis

(Macbeth's banquet. The table is still covered in the pretty blanket where the Lords will enter and stand around. Enter Banquo, his face still covered in the white lead but now there is blood in his hair which he is vigorously trying to rub out with his hand. Colin is covered in splashes of blood)

Banquo: Right this is where Macbeth as newly crowned King will greet the guests.

Colin: Then you should leave before you are seen.

Banquo: Yes. I will try to get this muck off my face and this blood out of my hair. Who would have known Murderer Two would have so much blood in him? It squirted everywhere.

(Banquo shakes his head, rubbing it vigorously with his hand again just as Macbeth enters wearing the crown)

Macbeth: **(Immediately frozen looking as if he is seeing a ghost).** Don't shake thy gory locks at me.

(Banquo, trapped, looks in horror at Macbeth)

Macbeth: My God! What happened? **(To Colin)** And I see there's blood on your face. Did you do this deed? **(Gesturing toward Banquo)**

Colin: **(has to think on his feet)** Uh... and what deed is that, my Liege?

Macbeth: But this of course. Can you not see Banquo standing right here?

Colin: But sir, Banquo lies dead upon the heath.

Macbeth: What?

Colin: It is true sir for I did dispatch of him myself, with bloody knife.

Macbeth: But this is madness. Banquo speak!

Colin: It is madness indeed, sir. For what I say is the truth. Banquo lies rotting on the heath. If you see him then it must be a figment of your conscience, my Liege. They say only the guilty see ghosts.

Macbeth: But Banquo...

(Macbeth makes a step towards Banquo who raises an arm to stop him. Lords Macduff, Ross and Lennox and sundry others holding various glasses of wine or

ale are gathered at the wings, chatting sotto voce. Banquo is alarmed and points an accusing finger as he backs away to the exit, all ghostly like)

Banquo: (slightly over doing it) Woo - oo. He hath murdered Duncan; he hath murdered Banquo. Beware! Macbeth shalln't sleep no more. Woo ooooo.

(Exit Banquo)

Macbeth: No! Thou canst not say I did it.

(Macbeth follows to the edge of the stage calling after Banquo as Macduff, Lennox and Ross enter and look on, bemused. Macduff is conspicuous by the blood and dirt of battle still covering him)

Macbeth: Never shake thy gory locks at me.

(Colin hesitates and then runs offstage. Enter Lady Macbeth)

Lady M'beth: Gather round, worthy friends. Husband! Your guests have arrived. Will you not greet them?

(Macbeth urgently grabs Lady Macbeth and pulls her to the side of the stage)

Macbeth: Please, just look over there. Look! Look! See! (towards the wings) What do you have to say? Hey! He's gone.

Lady M'beth: Who's gone?

Macbeth: Banquo.

Lady M'beth: Well then, he is being disrespectful. Lord Ross!

Ross: Yes, my lady, my Queen. (Bowing in a sycophantic way). How may I be of assistance to your Eminence?

Lady M'beth: Apparently Banquo has left. Please go fetch him back.

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Ross: Oh but of course...

Macbeth: No! (now offstage and apparently shouting at Banquo's ghost) Go! And get out of my sight!

Ross: (Disappointed) Oh I'm sorry, have I offended your Liege?

Macbeth: You're staring at me with eyes that have no power to see. Get out of here, you horrible ghost, you hallucination. Get out!

Lady M'beth: Shame on you! Why make these outbursts?
(SFX . A double clap from offstage and all freeze into a tableau. Enter Witch 1, Witch 2 led by Witch 3)

Witch 3: Poor Lady Macbeth. Trying to hold the gathering together, centre stage while her husband falls apart in the wings

(Witch 3 double claps her hands and ends the tableau)

Lady M'beth: Oh but gentlemen. This is just another one of his hallucinations which I have noticed often happens after a particularly stressful battle.

Witch 2: Mm. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Witch 1: It's what?

Witch 2: Nevermind.

(Macbeth enters)

Witch 3: Ssh! Observe!

Lady M'beth: (Places a comforting arm around Macbeth) This is just a brief fit. In a moment he'll be well again. If you pay too much attention to him you'll make him angry, please, drink; talk amongst yourselves. (Speaking so that only Macbeth can hear) Are you a man?

Macbeth: (sucking his thumb) Eh?

Lady M'beth: Your guests?

Macbeth: Oh. I forgot about them. (Addressing the Lords) Don't be alarmed on my account. Fill up my cup.

(Ross quickly sees to the request and hands a glass of wine to Macbeth)

Macbeth: I drink to the happiness of everyone at the table, and to our dear friend Banquo, whom we shall miss dearly. (Macbeth drinks)

Lennox: Uh! Why should we miss him, my Liege?

Macbeth: Because he's dead.

Lords: (Together) Dead?

Macbeth: I mean ... dead ... as in dead to me...that is. Because we had an argument and he's not my friend anymore.

(Macbeth sees the dumbfounded look on the faces of Lennox, Ross, sundry Lords and Lady Macbeth but perhaps an undetected look of amusement on Macduff's face).

Macbeth: Oh come on! It's not like dead as in lying on some remote part of the Heath somewhere with his throat cut, having been murdered by some blood thirsty murdering murderers, now is it? Well cheers everybody.

(Macbeth takes another swig. There is an awkward pause. Then Ross stands)

Ross: Well, uh... Long live the King. **(The reaction is rather subdued)** Brave Macbeth!

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(All are quiet. Then Macduff demonstratively slams his ale glass on the table, gives Macbeth the evil eye and leaves)

Lady M'beth: **(To Macbeth)** You have ruined our good cheer, my Liege and disrupted the gathering by making a spectacle of yourself.

Lennox: Good night, my Queen and I hope the king recovers soon!

(Exit Lennox. Slowly followed by sundry other Lords who wish good night)

Lady M'beth: A kind good night to all!

Witch 3: And let us depart this scene too, sisters. We have more work ahead.

(Exit Witch 1, Witch 2, Witch 3)

Macbeth: Banquo is dead.

Lady M'beth: **(momentarily shocked)** And how...

Macbeth: I saw his ghost.

Lady M'beth: **(incredulous)** Ah! Of course.

Macbeth: Yes. And he pointed at me like this; **(goes into an imitation of Banquo)** "He hath murdered Duncan; he hath murdered Banquo."

Lady M'beth: He said that?

Macbeth: And he said I shalln't sleep no more which is a double negative so I'm really confused. I mean did he mean shalln't sleep no more in which case I will sleep so that's not a problem or have I witnessed a ghost with bad grammar.

Lady M'beth: (**ironic**) Yes, most confusing. So what made you think it was a ghost and not actually Banquo himself?

Macbeth: Oh it was definitely a ghost alright. His face was as white as those posh courtiers in London who wear that lead white makeup.

Lady M'beth: (**nodding slowly**) O...kay... perhaps... he was wearing the same white lead makeup?

Macbeth: That's ridiculous. Banquo isn't a posh London courtier, is he?

Lady M'beth: No but perhaps...

Macbeth: And besides, he made this haunting sound when he spoke.

Lady M'beth: What haunting sound?

Macbeth: Like; woo woo. And only ghosts make that sound.

Lady M'beth: Yes, ghosts or people pretending to be ghosts.

Macbeth: (**looks at Lady Macbeth incredulous**). Why would Banquo pretend to be a ghost?

Lady M'beth: I don't know.

Macbeth: And neither do I. But I know some people who will know. The Weird sisters on the Heath. All this equivocation, I'm sure they'll be able to clear it up. I will go see them first thing tomorrow morning.

Lady M'beth: (**sighs in resignation**) Well, if you must. Just don't get lost on the way.

(Lights fade)

Scene 2 – The Heath

(Lights up and the table still has the picnic blanket on it and Macbeth's wine glass. Blanket should be able to cover the front and sides of the table to conceal both Witch 3 and Fleance. Enter Witch 2 who stops abruptly, walks around it)

Witch 2: Oh wow! A dining table.

Witch 3: Is that you, Two?

Witch 2: Huh! **(Witch 2 quickly looks around)** Who's that?

Witch 3: It's me. I'm down here

Witch 2: Down here, where?

Witch 3: Here. Down here.

Witch 2: **(Inspects under the table. Then offering a hand helps Witch 3 out of there).**
What were you doing under that table?

Witch 3: It's not a table.

Witch 2: Three! It's a table with a cloth over it. Look!

(Witch 2 is about to take the cloth off but Witch 3 stops her)

Witch 3: No! Don't do that. You don't want to spoil the illusion.

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Witch 2: **(Looking at her suspiciously)** Illusion? What illusion? Three, what have you been up to? Why is there a dining table in the middle of the Heath?

Witch 3: Because underneath is a cauldron. A brand new cauldron. And I didn't want to arouse suspicion, you know; three females standing around a Cauldron in pointy hats and capes, on a foggy heath. **(Pause)** People might think we were witches.

Witch 2: So you place a dining table with a tablecloth to hide it.

Witch 3: Yes.

Witch 2: In the middle of the Heath. A dining table with a tablecloth.

Witch 3: Yes. Genius isn't it?

Witch 2: And that won't arouse suspicion? A dining table with a tablecloth? In the middle of the Heath? Look, there's even a glass of wine left on it.

Witch 3: Ah. But we have a guest.

Witch 2: **(Sardonic)** Oh well that explains it. Who?

(Witch 1 rushes on stage)

Witch 1: Sistas! **(Excitedly)** Something wicked this way comes.

(SFX. Clap of thunder. Witches look around, bemused. Enter Lady Macbeth wearing a false beard, carrying three placards)

Lady M'beth: And it is I. Hecate. The source of all your power. The one who has been secretly deciding what evil things shall happen.

(Again, SFX. clap of thunder and lightning. Witches look around, bemused)

Witch 1: Like, wow, sista. You must have some power to do that.

Lady M'beth: And *who* are you?

Witch 1: Witch One.

Lady M'beth: Well, *you* of course. Disobedient hag.

Witch 3: Uh! She means her name is Witch One. **(Pause)** No, it *actually is* Witch One. We are all sisters here, Hecate. But as our Creator was never sure if we were real or not we got dumped on this heath with very little consideration, you understand. Hence our names; she's Witch One, I'm Witch 3 and obviously this is ...

Witch 2: Lady Macbeth.

Witch 3: Lady Macbeth **(double take)** No, not Lady Macbeth **(Chastising)** Two! Have some respect.

Witch 2: I don't mean me. I mean 'er innit. **(She pulls down Lady Macbeth's beard)** See? She's Lady Macbeth.

Witch 1: Really? Oh your majesty. **(She bows and curtsies all very clumsily).** Your Royal Highness. Your... your...

Lady M'beth: Yes, all right. I *am* Lady Macbeth but I am also your patron. Look! Because of me you now have a brand new cauldron which very soon you will put into practise.

Witch 2: Three? You've sold us out again.

Witch 3: Well one of us had to do something. Loitering around this God forsaken place every day, watching grown men, all angry and hateful, chopping each other up for no good reason and no one paying us a blind bit of notice.

Lady M'beth: Exactly! These are the dark ages for us women.

Witch 2: Not for you it ain't. Your High and Mightiness. Well, I'm not here to do your bidding. We may not have much but at least we answer to no one. We roam this heath as free spirits.

Witch 3: Aye. Free to freeze to death in fog and filthy air.

Lady M'beth: And free spirits you can still be but with a roof over your heads if you'll just help me out. **(Pause)** Sistas?

Witch 2: You mean a real roof that keeps the rain off?

Lady M'beth: Yes. Although it might leak a bit.

Witch 2: Okay. So what you wannus to do?

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Lady M'beth: Well, first I need a volunteer.

(Witch 1's hand shoots straight up)

Witch 1: Oh me, your Highness. Me, me. Choose me.

Lady M'beth: Okay.

Witch 1: **(Celebrates)** Yes!

Lady M'beth: Right you need to climb under the table- I mean into the cauldron - and read this script to my husband when he arrives. I will give you a signal. Hold this one up first. Then this one. And finally the one with the moving trees. You see the script is numbered. Make sure my husband can see the images clearly but don't let him see you. Got that?

Witch 1: Got it! Oh I'm so excited. Can I just say, your Highness...

Lady M'beth: No. Get in. For I hear him approach.

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Hello? Secret black and midnight hags?

Lady M'beth: Oh, he's lost again. **(Calls out in scratchy witch voice)** Over here! **(To Witches)**
Sorry, bit cliché I know but can't let him know it's me, can I? Right, ladies - pretend
to stir the cauldron.

Witch 2: You mean the table.

Lady M'beth: Whatever. Follow me. **(Lady Macbeth makes up a little dance around the table
and the other two follow)**

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Are you over that little ridge?

Lady M'beth: **(Calling back in scratchy voice)** Yes, that's us. **(To Witch 2 and Witch 3)**. Right,
let's make up a little witchy chant for when he gets here.

Witch 3: Ooh, I dunno about that. Sounds very complicated.

Lady M'beth: No it's quite simple. After me. Double, double

Witch 2: **(Together)** Double double

Witch 3: **(Together)** Double double

Lady M'beth: Toil and trouble,

Witch 2: **(Together)** Toil and trouble

Witch 3: **(Together)** Toil and trouble

Lady M'beth: Fire burn...

Witch 2: **(Together)** Fire burn

Witch 3: **(Together)** Fire burn

Lady M'beth: and cauldron...? **(Lady Macbeth waits to give Witch 2 and Witch 3 a chance to
complete the rhyme)**

Witch 2: **(Together)** and cauldron...?

Witch 3: **(Together)** and cauldron...?

Macbeth: **(offstage)** Is it the ridge on the left or...

Lady M'beth: And cauldron...?

Witch 2: **(Together)** and cauldron...?

Witch 3: (Together) and cauldron...?

Lady M'beth: It's 'boil.' It's bloody 'boil.'

Witch 2: (Together) It's 'boil.' It's bloody 'boil.'

Witch 3: (Together) It's 'boil.' It's bloody 'boil.'

Macbeth: (offstage) Or should I take the right. I think it's the right isn't _

Lady M'beth: (losing her temper and forgetting her scratchy voice, shouts with impatience) It's on the left!

Witch 2: (Together) Double double toil and trouble...

Witch 3: (Together) Double double toil and trouble...

Lady M'beth: (scratchy voice) I mean... it's the left one.

Witch 2: (Together) Fire burn and cauldron boil

Witch 3: (Together) Fire burn and cauldron boil

(Enter Macbeth)

Witch 2: (Together) It's 'boil.' It's bloody 'boil.'

Witch 3: (Together) It's 'boil.' It's bloody 'boil.'

Macbeth: How now you black and midnight hags?

Witch 1 (Raises the first placard out of the cauldron). Macbeth! Beware Macduff...

Lady M'beth: (Standing behind the table kicks Witch 1, forgets scratchy voice) Not yet!

Witch 1: Ow!

Lady M'beth: (To Macbeth in a scratchy voice) Uh, what I mean is...not yet, Macbeth. You shall not yet.

Macbeth: (nodding slowly). Not yet what?

Lady M'beth: Not yet lots of things. Uh, not yet lose your hair. And... and not yet ...Place the toilet seat down when you have finished ... not yet fix the plumbing.

Macbeth: Well I know all that. You're beginning to sound like the wife.

Lady M'beth: (laughs nervously) Then what is it you seek?

Witch 3: Demand

Witch 1: **(In deep mysterious voice)** We will answer.

Macbeth: **(stepping towards the cauldron)** Who's that?

(Lady Macbeth steps in front to block him)

Lady M'beth: Oh you must not look into the cauldron. For you will offend the Great One.

(Lady Macbeth signals Witch 2, Witch 3 for support)

Witch 3: The Great One.

Lady M'beth: **(speaking into the cauldron to Witch 1)** The Great One who will tell you great truths.

Witch 3: Great truths.

Witch 2: Lots of Great truths.

Lady M'beth: Great One, could you tell us some great truths please?

Witch 1: Oh. You mean me.

Lady M'beth: Yes, oh Great one. Now please.

Witch 1: Okay. Well, uh... **(clears her throat, continues in deep voice, raising the first placard)** Be bloody, bald and laugh.

Macbeth: What?

Witch 1: Sorry. I think that should be bold. It's spelt wrong. One moment. Oh I get it. **(Clears throat again continues in deep voice)**. Be bloody bold and laugh to scorn the power of man for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

Macbeth: Ooh I like that. Just as I thought, mind you. Then live Macduff, for why should I fear thee?

Witch 1: Beware Macduff. Beware the Thane of Fife.

Macbeth: Then perhaps I should have him murdered after all.

Lady M'beth: Murdered?

Macbeth: Aye murdered.

Lady M'beth: Macduff?

Macbeth: Aye, Macduff. And that nagging wife of his – Mind you, I'd probably be doing him a favour. But why not?

Lady M'beth: Well because...

(Lady Macbeth kicks the cauldron)

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Witch 1: Macbeth shall never vanquished be until Great Birnam wood to Dunsinane Hill shall come against him.

Macbeth: **(trying to fathom that one)** No, sorry, could you repeat?

Witch 1: Sure. Ugh, it says; Macbeth shall never vanquished be...um... until...Great Birnam wood to Dunsinane Hill ...shall come against him.

Lady M'beth: You see?

Macbeth: No. What does that mean?

Lady M'beth: It means you cannot die until the trees in Great Birnam wood uproot themselves and walk up the hill to your castle. See? Now that is never going to happen, is it? So why harm anyone?

Macbeth: **(Looks at her rather bemused)** Well, because I can, of course. I can do whatever I want with absolute impunity, now.

Lady M'beth: But...but... people won't like you. You'll lose your friends.

Macbeth: **(Again bemused. Then suddenly bursts out laughing)** Ha! Friends. I never really had any. Certainly don't need them now do I? In fact, perhaps I could have them all killed too.

Lady M'beth: **(Slowly)** And your wife?

Macbeth: *(thinks about it)* Hmm. Not sure. I mean she does still have her uses, I suppose. At the moment. Perhaps when she gets older and as ugly as you lot, I'll get rid of her for a younger model. **(Notices the table)** Um. Why do you have a dining table in the middle of the Heath?

Witch 3: To hide the cauldron

Macbeth: **(Thoughtfully)** Mm. Terrible idea. **(Pause)**. Well thanks for the info you old hags.

Lady M'beth: But wait! There is one more thing.

Macbeth: No. I'm done.

(Exit Macbeth. Lady Macbeth is left watching him leave, forlorn)

Witch 1: **(standing up from out of the table)** How did I do?

(Witch 3 Witch 2 and Lady Macbeth are very sullen. Witch 3 and Witch 2 look sympathetically at Lady Macbeth)

Witch 1: I mean I know I messed up a bit at first but then you did spell 'bold' wrong, your Highness. It's got an o not an a, silly.

Witch 3: Not now, One, eh?

Witch 1: But I did all right though, didn't I?

Witch 2: Not now! Can't you see. The Lady is ...

Lady M'beth: Fine. The lady is absolutely fine. And yes, One. You were perfect. You were all perfect.

(Exit Lady Macbeth)

Witch 3: **(Looking up)** Methinks we are in for stormy weather.

Witch 2: Methinks the whole of Scotland will soon be needing shelter.

Witch 3: **(Picks up the wine glass and removes the picnic blanket from the table to reveal Fleance still in hiding)** Let us in ...haste.

(They all stare at Fleance who looks from one to another)

Fleance: Are you witches?

Witch 3: You must be Fleance.

Fleance: Yes. Are you going to eat me?

Witch 3: Why would we do that?

Witch 1: I only eat girls. Boys are too bitter.

Witch 2: And I'm vegan.

Witch 3: They are joking. Did your father tell you to wait here?

Fleance: Yes. He said a bad man wanted to kill me because I'm going to be King one day. So he hid me but didn't return. Does that mean he is dead?

Witch 3: No. Just busy. But I suppose you can come with us for now.

(Witch 3 offers her hand to Fleance which he accepts. Exit Witch 1, Witch 2, Witch 3 and Fleance. Lights fade)

Scene 3 – Malcolm's camp in Birnam Woods

(Lights up on Malcolm and Macduff. The table is bare; the cloth has gone. Macduff is dressed as a tree)

Malcolm: Come my good friend, Scotland is dying at the hands of the traitor, Macbeth. Let us find a deserted place and cry together.

Macduff: Cry? I don't cry. I'm a man.

Malcolm: But of course. However, even the most manly of men should cry. Sometimes.

Macduff: Why? Tis womanly.

Malcolm: Oh, Macduff. You are so still living in the dark ages.

Macduff: That's because it is the dark ages.

Malcolm: Yes. True. But I believe that men... us men that is. Even manly men who dress like trees should try to keep in touch with our more ... how can I put it? More feminine qualities of our ... whole beings.

(Pause. Macduff looks at him strangely)

Malcolm Just a theory. Um... Remind me again; why are you dressed as a tree?

Macduff: To fool Macbeth.

Malcolm: Of course.

Macduff: I have ordered all our men to disguise themselves as trees.

Malcolm: Ah! Can't wait to face that butcher eh? And to un-seam him from navel to chops like a manly man should do.

(Enter Lennox. Immediately Macduff sees him and draws his sword)

Macduff: Traitor!

Lennox: **(Solemn)** Actually no but perhaps when I tell you of my news you will think I am. A traitor that is.

Macduff: So you admit it then. **(Moves menacingly towards Lennox)**

Lennox: No. I do speak metaphorically. Meaning - the news I bring is so bad it will seem treacherous. Although it is tempered by a tiny smidgen of good news. But that will hardly compensate for the really, really, bad news I bring.

Malcolm: Oh do speak plainly, man.

Lennox: Okay. Your wife is dead.

Malcolm: **(Distraught)** My wife is dead? Oh my _! Hang on, I'm not married.

Lennox: Not yours. His.

Macduff: **(Brightly)** Mine?

Lennox: 'Fraid so.

Macduff: Yes! **(Fist pumping)** And the bad news.

Lennox: Uh, that... was ... the bad news.

Macduff: **(Jolly)** Really? **(Then seeing the concerned looks, he tempers his jubilation).** I mean, really? Oh that is so sad. So what of the good news?

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Lennox: UM... **(thinks)** Ah that was it; all your servants are dead too.

Macduff: But that isn't good news.

Lennox: It is if you happen not to like any of them. Or if they weren't very good at their jobs and you've been looking for a reason to fire them without the risk of legal action.

Macduff: But this is the Dark Ages, there's no risk of legal action.

Lennox: Oh. **(Pause)** In that case, it's all bad news.

Malcolm: Oh there! There! **(Puts a comforting arm around Macduff)** Now you shouldn't be ashamed to grieve. Better out than in, man, I always say.

Macduff: Grieve? I don't want to grieve. I want revenge.

(Lights fade)

Scene 4 – Sconce castle

(Lights up on Macbeth in his battle dress and crown, ready to fight. Enter Ross with a suitcase)

Ross: Ah, my Liege, I thought I might find you here. I have a couple of things to report. First, you asked me to look out for the trees in Birnham woods moving towards Dunsinane Hill.

Macbeth: Indeed I did. And have you seen such an image?

Ross: My Liege, trees are fixed to the ground. They do not move.

Macbeth: Exactly!

Ross: However, I did see Macduff and his soldiers moving up the hill from the wood, camouflaged with leaves and branches, so for a moment it did look from a distance as though the trees were moving.

Macbeth: What? Have I been fooled?

Ross: It did look quite impressive, though. From afar. But anyway, they are here now. To kill you.

Macbeth: Ha! Let them come. I have it on good authority that no man of woman born harm Macbeth.

Ross: Yes, well I shall leave you to it then.

Macbeth: Leave me to it? But where are you going?

Ross: To join Malcolm. I don't want to be on the losing side.

Macbeth: But you said you had a *couple* of items to report. What was the other?

Ross: The other? **(Thinks)** The other... the other. Oh yes, the other item. That was it. Your wife is going to kill herself. She has gone completely mad with guilt and threatens to throw herself off the battlements and end it all.

Macbeth: **(Dismissive)** Ah, acting out that's all. She's been threatening this since my visit to the weird sisters. Apparently, I haven't been paying her enough attention. Women! Such emotional creatures. Take no notice, she'll come round.

(OS. SFX. a long drawn out scream, followed by a heavy thud and an exclaimed; "ugh!" Pause)

Macbeth: Oh. **(Longer pause)**. Well... life's but a walking shadow, is it not? A tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury but in the end signifying ...nothing.

(Contemplative pause)

Macbeth: Anyway, moving on. Well, off you go then you snivelling coward. But I should warn you, I have it on good authority that_

Ross: Yes, I know - no man of woman born and all that.

(Enter Macduff, still, dressed as a tree. He has his sword raised)

Ross: Ah, my Lord, **(grovelling)** Brave and most noble Macduff.

Macduff: And not forgetting - not of woman born.

Macbeth: You? Not of woman born?

Macduff: Aye! Me?

Macbeth: But that's impossible. You are a tree.

Macduff: But I was untimely ripped from my mother's womb when she was already dead.

Macbeth: But you're still a tree.

Macduff: I am not a... Oh for the love of... hold this. **(He offers his sword which Macbeth takes. Then to Ross)** Could you help?

Ross: But of course. And may I say what an honour it will be...

Macduff: No you may not. Free me and sod off!

Ross: **(Helping to free Macduff from the tree)** But of course my Noble lord. And may I add what an honour it will also be to sod off.

(Exit Ross after freeing Macduff from the tree)

Macbeth: It is Macduff!

Macduff: Aye, it is. And I'm here to kill you. **(Macduff looks around for his sword)** Now where did I... **(Macbeth offers the sword back to Macduff and he takes it).** Ah yes. Thank you.

Macbeth: Well, I'm still not entirely convinced. After all, technically speaking, you were still born from a woman. Even if she died before giving birth.

Macduff: **(Thinks about it, carefully)** Hmm. True. Still...

(Then Macduff kills Macbeth with the sword, takes the crown and tries it on his head. Enter Lady Macbeth, carrying a wine glass and bottle)

Macduff: Ah, my lady love. **(Pointing to the crown)**. Well, how do I look? I have finally dispatched your useless husband.

Lady M'beth: Well, then let us celebrate.

(Lady Macbeth pours Macduff a glass of wine, which he takes and Lady Macbeth places the bottle on the table)

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Lady M'beth: So now what?

Macduff: Now? Well our new King Malcolm will be ready to heap much praise upon me for saving his kingdom, and as his closest ally will make me Advisor, meaning that should he fall foul to some fatal accident, I would be crowned King as the highest rank in the Royal office. I simply need to bide my time and get rid of him as I did his father. **(To Lady Macbeth)** Then you, my Sweet, shall join me as my Queen.

(Enter Banquo, wearing the pale makeup)

Banquo: **(In a ghostly voice)** Not so fast, Macduff. **(Pointing an accusatory finger at Macduff)**

Macduff: Banquo! You are....

Banquo: A ghost? Come back from the dead to haunt the real assassin?

Macduff: No. I was going to say, you are looking very pale. What is all that?

Banquo: **(Rather defensive)** It's an anti-aging potion, actually. But never mind all that -for now... **(Addressing audience)** 'Tis point in the plot to reveal all.

Macduff: That it was I who murdered Duncan? Sorry, already done that bit.

Banquo: **(Disappointed)**. Oh. Well, in that case at least allow me to explain how and why?

Macduff: But I already know how and why. I want to rule Scotland and I did it by framing the hapless Macbeth with the aid of three old hags and Lady Macbeth here.

Banquo: Ah! **(Gesturing towards audience)** But do they know that Macbeth never killed MacDonwald in battle? That it was you who paid a Sergeant from the ranks to report that Macbeth had done the brave deed.

Macduff: Of course. I needed the King to award Macbeth with Thane of Cawdor.

Banquo: Who I suspect you also framed. But why not take the title yourself? **(To audience)** I shall tell. Macduff wanted to lure Duncan to Glamis in order to murder him and put the blame on Macbeth.

Macduff: **(Boastfully Addressing the audience)** Actually, I had hoped with the Weird sisters' prompting that Macbeth would be tempted to commit the deed himself. I even put the good Lady's talents in alchemy to use.

Banquo: Yes, she told me how you coerced her into administering an hallucinogenic drug in his water, so that her husband would at least convince himself that he was guilty of the deed.

Macduff: **(To Lady Macbeth)** Why would you tell him that? **(To Banquo)** And aren't you supposed to be lying dead on the heath somewhere?

Banquo: Ah well you see, luckily the good Lady also offered her talents to me, plus the services of her very own loyal servant, **(Pause)** Colin. Together we were able to dispatch those assassins you sent after me, using her special deadly cocktail of poison in their wine.

Macduff: **(Looks surprised but soon recovers with a mocking laugh)** You tell me this while you are both standing there unharmed. Now why would you do that?

Banquo: **(gesturing to audience)** We have witnesses.

Macduff: **(Drains the wine from the glass and hands it back to Lady Macbeth)** Are you mad? No matter. I shall just have to dispose of you myself, Banquo. And as for you, my lady, well I am disappointed, naturally. I might even grieve your loss once I have had you thrown from the battlements. This time it will be for real.

(Macduff moves towards Banquo and then suddenly stops and bends over in pain)

Banquo: Something wrong, Macduff?

Macduff: I dunno. Just a bit dizzy.

Lady M'beth: Mm. Perhaps the wine?

Macduff: Nah. Takes more than a glass of wine to have that effect on me. Unless it was off.

Lady M'beth: **(Thoughtfully)** Yes. You haven't been following the plot very carefully, have you?

Macduff: You mean poisoned?

Lady M'beth: Ah now the penny drops. **(Lady Macbeth toasts Macduff with his empty glass)**
Cheers!

(Macduff points an accusatory finger at Lady Macbeth but cannot speak)

Banquo: A shortness of breath, perhaps?

(Macduff turns to face Banquo and tries to raise his sword but it takes a monumental effort and Banquo easily pushes the sword back down with just a finger)

Banquo: A sudden weakness in the limbs, too, I believe.

(Macduff mops his brow and loosens the collar)

Banquo: Sweating profusely?

(Macduff nods agreement)

Banquo: Excellent! So about five seconds from now, probably just as I finish this sentence, the poison should reach the lower limbs and you will drop to the ground, keeling over to the right.

(Macduff drops to his knees and keels over to his right)

Banquo: My right, your left.

(Macduff sits up and keels over to his left)

Banquo: That's the one. Then you will suffer convulsions and finally stop breathing.
(Waiting) Oh, perhaps no...

(Macduff suffers convulsions and dies)

Banquo: Ah, there you are. **(Turning to Lady Macbeth)** So at last you are free.

Lady M'beth: Free?

Banquo: To marry Malcolm as we planned and to have lots of children to carry on the dynasty.

Lady M'beth: I don't remember having children being part of the agreement. I mean seriously, I'm allergic.

(Banquo takes the crown from Macduff. Enter Malcolm accompanied by Ross and sees the three dead bodies)

Malcolm: So we have won. Brilliant. You sir are brilliant. **(Malcolm kneels and Banquo crowns him)** And I shall now name you The King's Advisor. **(To Lady Macbeth)** And you, my little sweet thing shall be my Queen. This is a cause for celebration.

(Malcolm quickly seizes the glass of wine from the table and takes a slug before either Banquo or Lady Macbeth can stop him)

Malcolm: Now let me guess. Macduff dispatched Macbeth as planned but how did you two manage to... ooh I suddenly feel very dizzy.

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Banquo: Oh no!

Lady M'beth: Oops!

Malcolm: In fact I can hardly lift my...

Banquo: My bad.

(Malcolm quickly goes through the phases - sweating -)

Banquo: Oh not good!

(dropping to his knees. Both Banquo and Lady Macbeth wince. Malcolm kneels over to the right and Banquo, unable to look, gestures to correct him)

Banquo. My right.

(Malcolm corrects himself. Then convulsions and dies. A long pause. Finally, Banquo peeks through splayed fingers)

Banquo: Well that wasn't part of the plan.

Ross: **(rushing to the dead Malcolm)** Oh my Liege. Now we have no King. What am I going to do?

(Pause)

Banquo: But wait! Malcolm made me Advisor, therefore I am now King.

Ross: As I shall bear witness.

(Banquo kneels and Ross crowns him)

Ross: My Liege! Worthy King Banquo. **(Aside to Banquo)** And uh - perhaps in exchange for my loyalty, I might become your Advisor?

(Pause)

Banquo: Oh very well then. And what of you, Lady Macbeth? I think perhaps since your betrothed is now dead, I should honour that contract of marriage and make you my Queen. There! Now what do you say to that?

Ross: Oh, surely the Lady cannot refuse such a generous offer my most Worthy King.

(Pause. They wait for an answer)

Banquo: Well?

(Pause)

Lady M'beth: I think you will need to wash your face.

Banquo: My... Oh this. No, there is no need; 'tis an anti-ageing potion. A blend of the finest lead based chemicals which seeps into the pores of the skin, keeping my complexion soft and young looking.

Ross: Well then, three cheers to our new King and may he live forever young. Hip hip!

Banquo: Hurrah!

Ross: Hip hip!

Banquo: Hurrah!

Ross: Hip hip!

(Banquo collapses to the floor _ dead)

Ross: Oh dear!

Lady M'beth: Thou shalt beget Kings though thou shalt be none.'

(Lady Macbeth removes the crown from Banquo. Enter Fleance, with Witch 3)

Fleance. Dad! Where have you been?

Lady M'beth: Agh! A child! **(She cowers behind Ross)**

Fleance: I waited just where you told me to for days. Luckily these three really nice ladies found me. **(Gesturing to Witch 3)** This is Karen. She greeted me as King hereafter. Dad, am I going to be King? And why do I see dead people? Dad?

Witch 3: (Studying Banquo) Looks like your father is one of them.

Fleance: (Rushes towards Banquo and kneels) What? My father dead?

Witch 3: (Nudges Banquo with her foot) It's increasingly looking that way.

Ross: The King is dead.

Fleance: But my loving devoted father? (Pause) Hang on! Did you call him King?

Ross: Would had he lived.

Fleance: So who will take the crown now?

Lady M'beth: (From behind Ross) You are his son. The crown is rightfully yours. Is that not so, Lord Ross?

Ross: Well, I suppose...

(Fleance kneels and Witch 3 crowns him)

Fleance: Wow! I am now King. How brilliant is that?

Ross: Oh your most worthy Grace. Your Eminence. Your ...

Witch 3: And your son will also become King. And then his son. And then his son. Followed by your son's son's son's son. I think that's right.

Fleance: Then I'm going to need a wife. Perhaps Lady Mac –

Lady M'beth: (Forcefully). No! Don't even go there. (pause) Let us depart, Karen. Our work here is done! We shall return to Glamis where I promised shelter for you, your sisters and all the neglected women and Widows of this man's mad world. Tell me, is Lady Macduff now settled in?

Witch 3: She is my Lady.

(Lady Macbeth skirts around Fleance and Witch 3 move towards exit)

Lady M'beth: Then let us leave the boys to their little war games.

Fleance: But Lady Macbeth is there nothing I can grant you before you leave? (Boastful) I am, after all, the King of Scotland, no less.

Lady M'beth: (Turns and pauses to think. Finally...) Well, perhaps there *is* one thing you can do.

Fleance: Just name it.

Lady M'beth: Find us a plumber, your Highness. A decent honest plumber who won't cost the earth. And have him sent to Glamis, please. There's a good boy.

(Then Lady Macbeth turns and addresses the audience, directly)

Lady M'beth: Oh and if you happen to be bristling with contempt at the lead female character not seizing the crown on her own merit; let's keep it real. After all, we are still very much living in the dark ages.

(Lady Macbeth presses finger and thumb together and raises her arm and pulls downward, indicating Blackout)

THE END