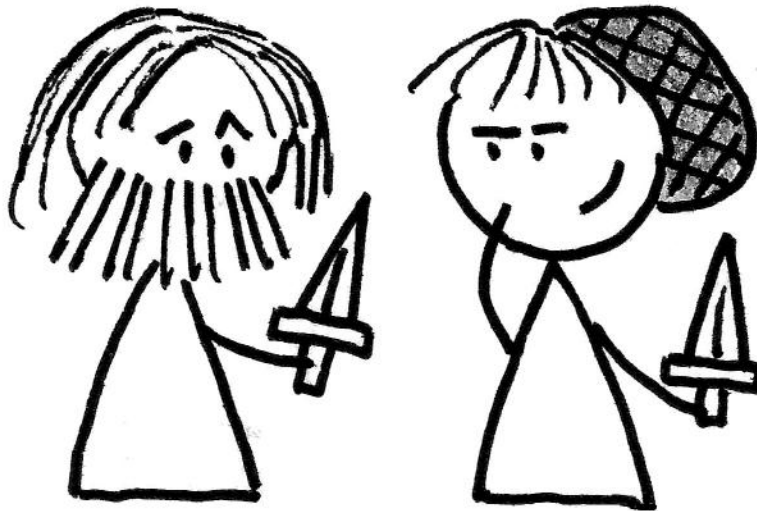


Macbeth

Macbeth Plot Summary



Scotland is at war and the Scottish King Duncan hears the news that his generals, Macbeth and Banquo, have defeated the enemy. On their way home from battle Macbeth and Banquo meet three witches who foretell that Macbeth will be made Thane of Cawdor and eventually King of Scotland. They also foretell that Macbeth's friend, Banquo, will father a line of Scottish kings, although Banquo will never be king himself. The witches disappear, and Macbeth and Banquo do not believe in their prophecies until some of King Duncan's men come to tell Macbeth that he has been named Thane of Cawdor. Macbeth now starts to think that the other prophecy — that he will be crowned king — might be true too, but he is not quite sure. He and King Duncan plan to dine together that night at Inverness, Macbeth's castle. Macbeth writes a letter to his wife, Lady Macbeth, telling her all that has happened.

Lady Macbeth wants Macbeth to become king and she wants him to murder Duncan to get there. He and Lady Macbeth plan to get Duncan's two guards drunk and blame the murder on them. While Duncan is asleep, Macbeth stabs him. When Duncan's death is discovered the next morning, Macbeth kills the guards too — because he is so angry at their crime (or so he says) — and is made king.

Macbeth

Afraid of the witches' prophecy that Banquo's children will become kings, Macbeth pays murderers to kill Banquo and his son Fleance. They kill Banquo but Fleance escapes. At dinner that night, Banquo's ghost appears. When Macbeth sees the ghost, he is absolutely terrified. But because nobody else can see the ghost, Macbeth's dinner guests don't know what is happening to him.

Frightened, Macbeth goes to visit the witches in their cave. There they show him further prophecies: he must beware of Macduff; he cannot be hurt by any man born of woman; and he will be safe until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane Castle. Macbeth is relieved now because he knows that all men are born of women and that forests cannot move. When he learns that Macduff has fled to England, Macbeth orders his wife and her children to be murdered.

When this news reaches Macduff, he vows revenge. Prince Malcolm, Duncan's son, has an army in England, and Macduff joins him. Lady Macbeth, meanwhile, has started sleepwalking and thinks she can still see bloodstains on her hands, and she kills herself. Macbeth waits for Malcolm's army, certain that the witches' prophecies make him invincible – nobody can hurt him. He is struck numb with fear, however, when he learns that the army is moving toward the castle holding boughs cut from Birnam Wood in front of them - Birnam Wood is indeed coming to Dunsinane.

In the battle, Macbeth meets Macduff, who declares that he was not "of woman born" but was instead "untimely ripped" from his mother's womb – this means that he was cut from his mother's belly by caesarean section. Though he realizes that he is doomed, Macbeth continues to fight until Macduff kills and beheads him. Malcolm now becomes King of Scotland.

