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Banquo learns that his descendants shall be kings. Banquo is suspicious of the Three Witches, remembering that they often trick men. Macbeth initially agrees but when Ross and Angus tell him he has been made the new Thane of Cawdor, Macbeth in a very important aside (soliloquy), remarks, "Glamis, and Thane of Cawdor: / The greatest is behind."

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King Duncan announces that his son, Malcolm will be the new Prince of Cumberland. Macbeth sees Malcolm as a threat to what he now takes seriously as his destiny to be king, a major turning point in Macbeth's changing morality. Macbeth makes this clear by famously asking in an aside (private speech) for the stars to hide their fires least they reveal his dark and deadly purpose or intention to kill King Duncan.

Lady Macbeth learns by letter from Macbeth of the Three Witches' prophecies for her husband, eagerly embracing them as fact. Fearing Macbeth is too compassionate and weak-willed to do what needs to be done (killing King Duncan), she famously asks the gods to remove from her all signs of compassion and femininity, replacing these with cold remorseless ruthlessness.

Learning from a messenger that King Duncan will stay at their castle, Lady Macbeth enthusiastically greets this news, suggesting that she already has plans to kill King Duncan. Macbeth and Lady Macbeth decide to speak again on the issue of the prophecies, Macbeth still uncertain of the need to kill King Duncan.

At Macbeth's castle King Duncan arrives whilst Lady Macbeth plays the most perfect of hostesses. King Duncan asks for the Thane of Cawdor (Macbeth) who is not yet present.



A guilt-ridden Macbeth wrestles with his conscience, certain that he should not kill King Duncan yet guiltily having to remind himself of all the reasons why it would be wrong. Macbeth decides against murdering his King but Lady Macbeth belittles him for not being able to murder, threatening to take away her love for him if he does not. This threat wins Macbeth over and Lady Macbeth outlines her plan to kill King Duncan in his sleep while he is a guest at their castle.

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Act II.

Banquo and son Fleance arrive at Macbeth's castle. Banquo is troubled by the Three Witches' prophecy and tells Macbeth this. Macbeth pretends not to take the Three Witches seriously.

Learning from Banquo that King Duncan is asleep, Macbeth, alone, follows an imaginary dagger to King Duncan's bedchamber where he will kill him in his sleep... Lady Macbeth has drugged King Duncan's guards, allowing Macbeth to kill King Duncan unchallenged.



Lady Macbeth was to have killed the King but his resemblance to her late father means Macbeth does the deed instead. A bell frightens Lady Macbeth and Macbeth too is nervous, but he announces that he did indeed kill King Duncan.

Macbeth recounts that the two guards cried out "'Murder!'" and later "'God bless us!'", Lady Macbeth telling her husband not to fret over such things and the fact that is conscience prevented him from saying "'Amen,'" as one of the guards had done...

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These actions largely free Macbeth and Lady Macbeth from suspicion. King Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain are introduced, both men

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We learn that King Duncan's two sons have fled, leaving Macbeth to be crowned the new King of Scotland. Macduff, who later becomes instrumental in Macbeth's downfall, has significantly snubbed Macbeth's coronation at Scone to go to Fife instead. A tone of increasing despair for Scotland begins in this scene...



Act III.

Banquo is fearful that the Three Witches' prophecies are becoming true, questioning whether Macbeth played most foully for it, or killed King Duncan to make prophecy, fact.

Meeting with Macbeth, Macbeth continuously asks Banquo of his travel plans and those of his son. Alone, Macbeth fears that Banquo's sons will mean his dynasty will be short-lived; only he will become King of Scotland and not his sons who will be replaced by those of Banquo's lineage.

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Macbeth famously sees Banquo's Ghost at his party, causing Lady Macbeth to finish their party early to prevent further suspicions about Macbeth's sanity and about their role in recent events (King Duncan's death whilst a guest at their castle). Macbeth makes his famous speech about being too covered in blood to stop killing...

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Hecate instructs the Three Witches to make preparations for her plan to use illusion and the Three Witches' prophecies against Macbeth. The Three Witches, eager to placate (please) their master, eagerly make preparations, doing as they are told...

We see Lennox and a Lord discuss affairs in their kingdom. We learn from their conversation that an army is being formed in England to fight Macbeth.

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A major turning point in the play. Just as the Three Witches prophesied Macbeth's ascendancy to become King in Act I, Scene III, here they

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Macbeth decides to kill Macduff to protect himself from him and takes the Apparition's words to mean he is safe from all men since they are all born naturally and that only the moving of a nearby forest to his castle, an unlikely event will spell his doom.

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Ross leaves and after Lady Macduff tells her son that his father is dead and was a traitor, a Messenger warns Lady Macduff to flee but Macbeth's Murderers succeed in killing Lady Macduff's son. The scene ends with Lady Macduff fleeing for her life...

Malcolm and Macduff discuss how Scotland under Macbeth's rule has been plunged into despair. Malcolm tests Macduff's integrity by describing himself as unfit to rule.

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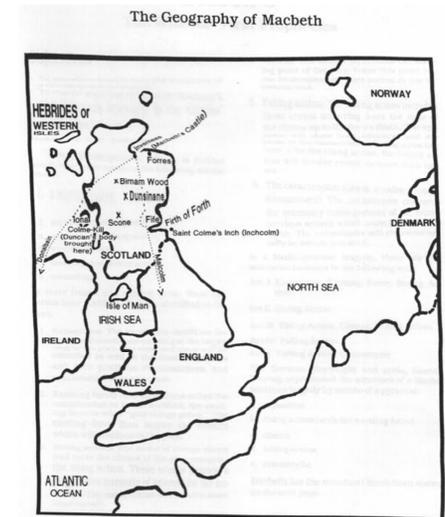
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