



Macbeth, Acts I and II, the rise before the fall



Macbeth, Acts I-II, the plot beats that matter *

The witches' prophecy

three witches greet Macbeth as Thane of Glamis, Cawdor, and king hereafter, planting the ambition the rest of the play grows from

The first prophecy confirmed

Macbeth is named Thane of Cawdor soon after, which is what makes him start believing the third title too

Lady Macbeth's persuasion

she reads his letter, judges him too gentle for the crime, and pushes him toward murdering Duncan that same night

Duncan's murder

Macbeth kills the king while he is a guest under his own roof, then struggles to face what he has done

Act I, what it sets up

- the witches speak in riddles and contradictions (fair is foul, and foul is fair), a pattern the whole play keeps repeating
- Macbeth's own aside after the prophecy already shows the ambition stirring, before Lady Macbeth says a word
- Duncan naming his son Malcolm as heir removes one of Macbeth's paths to the throne, sharpening his motive
- Lady Macbeth's soliloquy asking to be unsexed and filled with cruelty is the clearest statement of intent in the whole act



four stops in order along a dashed path, the prophecy, the Cawdor title, the persuasion, then the murder

