

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

M A C B E T H

BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY

Todd Louiso, Jacob Koskoff, Michael Lesslie

**Based on the play *Macbeth*
by William Shakespeare**



THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

MACBETH

Adapted By
Jacob Koskoff & Todd Louiso
And
Michael Lesslie

Based on the play *Macbeth*
By
William Shakespeare

EXT. FIELD NEAR INVERNESS - DUSK

A small boy lies motionless on a RAISED PLATFORM. His eyes stare up at us, lifeless. He has flowers in his hair and surrounding his shrouded body, his hands folded on his chest.

A MEAGRE CROWD stands in front of this PYRE. To the fore are MACBETH and LADY MACBETH. Their faces ashen with grief. Behind them we see BANQUO and his son FLEANCE.

Lady Macbeth walks forward with a sprig of RED BERRIES. Places them reverently on her young son's dead chest, fighting back tears.

After her, Macbeth carefully lays oyster shells over the boy's eyes. Then he scoops up a handful of black Scottish soil and pours it over his son's chest. Over his folded hands. Sending him to rest.

EXT. FIELD NEAR INVERNESS - LATER

The platform is ablaze, the smoke disappearing into the vast landscape. Macbeth's arm is around Lady Macbeth. Their faces stricken. She lays her head on his shoulder, seeking solace.

He watches the embers and smoke of the pyre rise into the darkening sky, transfixed by the sight. The camera follows the smoke as it rises and becomes --

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE -- SAME TIME

MIST swirling around the mountains. FOUR DARK FORMS stand watching the ceremony from afar. Women, all of different ages. One is a CHILD, as young as the dead boy.

Their faces are scarified with unnatural marks -- the decorations of a pagan belief. They hold primitive bone CHARMS in their hands. They speak quietly. Calmly.

OLDER WITCH

When shall we three meet again,
In thunder lightning or in rain?

MIDDLE WITCH

When the hurley burley's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

YOUNGER WITCH

Where the place?

MIDDLE WITCH

Upon the battlefield, there to meet with Macbeth.

OLDER WITCH
 Fair is foul and foul is fair.
 Hover through the fog and filthy air.

And at that, the mist ENGULFS them as we --

BLACKOUT:

TITLES:

Civil war rages in Scotland
 The traitor Macdonwald leads mercenaries against King Duncan
 Few remain loyal to the crown

Macbeth, Thane of Glamis, leads a weary army
 The king has sent him his last reserves
 The war will be decided at the battle of Ellon

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

That same MIST floats across a plain embedded in the Scottish mountains. Dark clouds are gathering in the sky above.

Out of the mist walks Macbeth. He looks years older now, his face roughly bearded. A leader, a powerful and ferocious warrior, his lean body cased in battered threadbare armour.

Behind him emerges his ROUGH ARMY.

They are soldiers hardened against nature by years of fighting. Their WEAPONS hang heavily in their hands, their scarce armour soaked in the showering rain. We recognise some from the funeral, although time has clearly passed.

First among their ranks is Banquo, Macbeth's sturdy second in this war. His eyes, like the eyes of all of the men, are fixed on something straight ahead across the plain. Apprehensive.

A group of about THIRTY REINFORCEMENTS. They are little more than boys, 14-16 years old. Virgins to war, they're terrified -- but also excited.

Macbeth and Banquo look at each other with concern: these recruits are not what they were expecting. The difference between the men and the boys is startling.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Macbeth's army checks and re-checks their weapons, the older men doing it for the young boys, like fathers taking their sons through a rite of passage. They smear the boys' faces with black soil to match their own -- war-paint.

Two BROTHERS from the virgin soldiers nervously laugh as they daub each other's faces.

A MONK crosses himself, his face also painted for the fight.

A YOUNG BOY SOLDIER (15) swallows down panic desperately. More than the others he looks out of place in this battle, unproven. His hands are shaking too hard to grip his own sword and he drops it again and again, hopeless, as thick tears stream down his face.

Nearby, like his men, Macbeth is readying himself. Ritualistically his hands run over his weapons, preparing each for its quickest draw:

A LONG-SWORD edged with dents; a BASELARD on his back; a KNIFE coarsened with use; TWO DAGGERS sheathed on either side of his waist. His body a machine of war.

He is wearing a tabard that marks him out as the leader of this force. Sewn into it is the Scottish symbol of the Rampant Lion and, smaller, the crest of his house, Glamis. Tied onto the tabard are DOG TAGS from soldiers who have fallen in past battles.

He looks down the line of his men, inspecting them. Their fear palpably assuages at his presence: they owe him their lives. Loyal.

Then, Macbeth notices the shaking Young Boy Soldier. He starts down the line towards him. Each Soldier bows their head as he passes out of respect. All the Soldiers and young boys are wearing DOG TAGS marked with the same insignia.

He comes to a halt in front of the Young Boy Soldier and takes him in. The boy stares up in awe, his tears stopped.

Calmly Macbeth rips a piece of fabric from his uniform and picks up the fallen sword. Carefully he binds it to the Young Boy Soldier's hand, fast. Their eyes meet: it's time.

At this, a dim noise becomes noticeable on the edge of hearing. A RUMBLE. It is getting LOUDER.

One of the Young Soldiers tries to control his breaths, each one catching in his throat.

ANOTHER of his young comrades vomits in fear.

ANOTHER chews his lip ferociously until it bleeds.

The TWO BROTHERS stand wide-eyed with terror. They face each other, cajoling each other on.

A BEARDED SOLDIER mutters a prayer over and over again, senseless now, stumbling over the words and re-starting.

ANOTHER repeatedly squeezes the hilt of his crude sword.

ANOTHER swings his weapon through the air, rehearsing the coming strokes.

ANOTHER pounds his chest with his fist.

ANOTHER checks over his armour obsessively, its inadequacy horribly clear.

The MONK breathes out evenly, a cross to his lips, his face steadied by the effort of control.

And, taking his place at their fore --

MACBETH cuts his own hand. He picks up some of the Scottish earth. Rubs it into the wound.

He then looks to Banquo and smiles. Takes his friend's head in his hands and kisses it hardily. Banquo nods to him. Ready.

And, finally, Macbeth turns with the men to face:

A THICK, VAST BANK OF WHITE MIST

Across the plain. Impenetrable, its tendrils reaching out ravenously around their legs. RED EMBERS glow faintly from its depths like demonic eyes.

The rumble is now shaking the ground.

FROM BEHIND: we see their line silhouetted against this wall of mist. Men and boys facing down Hell itself.

Then, slowly, Macbeth starts forward at a walk. We TRACK in behind him in as the soldiers hold the line.

The rumble grows DEAFENING. The red embers glowing ever more fiercely.

Macbeth raises the sword aloft and begins to jog forward now. We TRACK with him as he breaks to a RUN, a sprint, wild as --

SHADOWS start to appear from within the bank of mist. Unnatural forms, terrifying.

The swirls around Macbeth thicken. The rumble quakes hard and he suddenly looses a guttural WAR-CRY which echoes across the field. Banquo and the other men JOINING HIM, the sound fierce, like crashing waves -- all of the men one with Macbeth, an army joined by the sound as --

-- MACDONWALD'S ARMY of mercenary Norwegians thunders out of the mist towards them, a TERRIBLE POWER, at least their equal. And suddenly the two forces SLAM into one another:

Macbeth charges in, his BROADSWORD raised, ducking low to shoulder a Norwegian out of his path. Almost in the same movement he leaps forward and slices at an oncoming Norwegian who wields a weapon made of bone and an axe. But Macbeth slashes across his chest and punches him into the ground.

Recovering quickly, Macbeth turns and brings down a Norwegian Archer who is drawing back an arrow. Hits the bow out of his hands and follows up with a fatal thrust to his chest.

Macbeth takes down two more Norwegians: a flurry of fatal stabs and slashes.

ELSEWHERE:

One of the Brothers seen earlier is on the ground, his guts already cut. The other brother stands over him in bewilderment.

Banquo slices his blade across the throat of a Norwegian Soldier and turns to aid Macbeth.

A Scottish Soldier (SEYTON) has his arm hacked off by a Norwegian. ANOTHER takes a punch to the face as...

AT THE FRONT:

Macbeth kills a Norwegian and looks round -- to see the Young Boy Soldier on the ground fifteen feet away, a Norwegian raising his weapon over him for a killing strike.

Macbeth hurtles towards the fallen boy, breath pounding, and -- SMASHES down the Norwegian just in time. He hauls the Young Boy Soldier to his feet and turns away.

As he does so, however, he catches a glimpse of something across the field -- and STOPS DEAD.

FOUR FORMS are watching from the edges of the battle. Utterly motionless. As if watching him and him alone.

The chaos around Macbeth seems to SLOW, stilling for a moment. Macbeth stands entranced, something about these WITCHES hypnotising him. As around him --

A soldier is stuck in a loop, stabbing a Norwegian's dead body again and again.

The Monk dies on the ground, his cross fallen from his hand.

The YOUNG BOY SOLDIER is grabbed from behind. Silently, an ENEMY SOLDIER draws a rough blade across the boy's neck. The boy yells out mutely. And, suddenly --

A Norwegian SLAMS INTO Macbeth from the side, kicking the action back into breakneck speed.

Macbeth spins, counters with his broadsword, then pulls his half-sword from his back and kills the attacker. Glances round again to where the Witches stood...

But the Witches have VANISHED. Replaced now in the reddened haze by a SCOTTISH LORD directing the invaders against his own kind.

He wears a tabard like Macbeth's, but the crest of the lion is almost obscured with Norwegian charms and he is flanked by NORWEGIAN GUARDS.

The traitor MACDONWALD -- the enemy leader in this battle. It's as if the Witches were drawing Macbeth towards him.

Another Norwegian lunges at Macbeth with a spear. But Macbeth slashes him down and leaps over his body to kick a Norwegian off a fallen comrade.

He surges forward towards his target, picking up Banquo at his side. Back on mission now: if he can get to Macdonwald, the battle will be over and this carnage will stop. He leaps forward and...

Swings into the path of a huge NORWEGIAN BERSERKER, who strikes him back hard with a flaming torch. Reeling, Macbeth recovers, plunges his sword into the man's chest. But ANOTHER cannons into his side, knocking him to the ground.

Macbeth kicks out wildly, bringing the Norwegian attacker down. Rolls to his knees, whips two daggers from his belt. And in one fluid movement the Norwegian is dead.

Springing back to his feet, Macbeth forces his blade into another Norwegian's back. Then looks back ahead across the battlefield --

He's CLOSER to Macdonwald now. Only the traitor's personal GUARDS left between them. Macbeth races on, gaining ground. Slices through one of Macdonwald's Guards then buries his knife in the chest of the next.

Carried forward by his own momentum, he stumbles. Hits the ground, where his hand finds the axe of a Norwegian he just killed. He swings it upwards, bringing down another enemy just closing in. And as he moves, fluid, brutally balletic --

LENNOX (PRE-LAP)
Doubtful it stood...

INT. KING DUNCAN'S TENT - DAY

LENNOX, a gnarled and battle-worn old soldier, kneels before us. His face covered in blood and war-paint. Reporting the battle as though narrating straight to the audience:

LENNOX
As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art. The merciless Macdonwald from the
Western Isles
Of kerns and gallowglasses is supplied
And fortune, on his damnèd quarrel smiling,
Showed like a rebel's whore.

KING DUNCAN listens, rapt. His clothes clean, his crown immaculate, his sword decorative at his waist. But quickly we slam back into the --

INT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Macbeth takes out another knife from his leg strap and plunges it into the leg of an oncoming Norwegian Guard, now on his knees. He grabs a rock from the ground and smashes the leg of another, bringing him down as he launches up again and on. Closing in on Macdonwald for the final confrontation.

LENNOX (V.O.)
But all's too weak,
For brave Macbeth -- well he deserves that name --
Disdaining fortune, with his brandished steel,
Which smoked with bloody execution,
Like valor's minion carved out his passage
Till he faced the slave.

Macbeth charges through the final Guards -- dispatching one, then another, and another, Banquo always at his side -- until eventually he comes face to face with MACDONWALD himself.

Macdonwald is terrified. Defenceless now. He raises his sword, trembling as Macbeth advances on him.

Then, gently almost, Macbeth takes Macdonwald's sword by the blade. Lowers it. A strange intimacy to the moment.

Macdonwald's face slackens at the inevitability of what's before him.

Macbeth turns, taking in the carnage behind. His fallen brothers. The slaughtered Norwegians. Then he meets Banquo's eyes.

And, in one swift motion, he spins, swinging with his broadsword -- to DECAPITATE Macdonwald in one seamless slice.

LENNOX (V.O.)

Which ne'er shook hands, nor bade farewell to him,
Till he unseamed him from the nave to th' chops,
And fixed his head upon our battlements.

Macdonwald's body drops. A beat of silence, all of the Soldiers on the battlefield watching. Then, as one -- Macbeth's men BELLOW for their leader in victory.

SOLDIERS

(roaring)

Hail Macbeth! Hail Macbeth!

INT. KING DUNCAN'S TENT - DAY

Lennox finishes his report as Duncan beams, triumphant.

LENNOX

And to conclude, victory fell on us.

DUNCAN

O valiant Macbeth! Worthy Gentleman!
Great happiness.

Duncan kisses Lennox's head. At this, a YOUNGER MAN enters. Hooded, his face innocent but yearning for the test of battle.

This is MALCOLM, Duncan's son. Duncan leaves Lennox, kisses his son's cheek.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Whence camest thou, noble Prince?

MALCOLM
 From Fife, great king;
 Where the Norwegian banners flout the sky
 And fan our people cold.
 Assisted by that most disloyal traitor
 The thane of Cawdor,

Malcolm steps aside to reveal:

THE THANE OF CAWDOR. A traitor, cowed, guarded by two clean-cut soldiers ROSSE and ANGUS.

Duncan steps towards his captive. Cawdor lowers his eyes.

CAWDOR
 God save the King.

DUNCAN
 (to Angus)
 No more that Thane of Cawdor shall deceive our bosom
 interest: go pronounce his present death.
 And with his former title greet Macbeth.

Duncan lifts the gilded and decorative tabard from Cawdor's neck and gives it to Angus. Angus bows:

ANGUS
 I'll see it done.

Duncan turns back to Cawdor. Disdainful.

DUNCAN
 What he hath lost, noble Macbeth hath won.

EXT. FIELD NEAR KING'S CAMPSITE - MORNING

A cavernous valley. Cawdor's lone figure stands some fifty feet apart from Duncan and the rest of the royal retinue. His arms by his sides. Strong, accepting.

Across the field, Duncan and Malcolm raise long-bows. And --

THEY LET TWO ARROWS FLY. The shafts soar through the air towards the traitor, who braces himself as...

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY (DUSK)

Twilight. Eerily quiet. The battlefield smoulders with the carcasses and waste of the conflict.

The Young Boy Soldier's body lies dead in the mud. His face drained of colour, but his eyes staring up as though still alive.

Macbeth stands over him. Alone. A flicker of grief flits over his battle-worn face. The boy an eerie echo of his own son.

Banquo and other Soldiers look on around him. Then...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - LATER

Macbeth and Banquo haul the Young Boy Soldier's body onto a pile of their fallen comrades. Collecting the roughly marked DOG TAGS and swords from the bodies of the dead. They turn to collect up more corpses, readying their friends for burial.

A few other lone figures wander the landscape, also collecting possessions from the slain soldiers or tending wounds of those still alive.

Exhausted, Macbeth and Banquo heave another body down and study the dead for a moment.

MACBETH

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.

Banquo nods silent assent. They turn back -- and see a wild dog scavenging on bodies across the plain. Macbeth picks up a rock and whips it at it. The dog scatters.

Then, he stops.

In the distance behind the dog is a YOUNG GIRL. Near her, three MORE WOMEN kneel over a fallen soldier. Their dresses adorned with strings of crude bells, which peal faintly as they move.

THE WITCHES.

They hunker down over the soldier's body, which has been stripped naked. The OLDER WITCH makes an incision at the wrist with rusty knife, then begins to let the blood into a leather pouch.

Macbeth takes note of the women with a bewildered look.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

What are these?

Banquo grabs for his sword, but Macbeth halts him. They take a few steps toward the women, who take no notice.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 Live you? or are you aught
 That man may question?

At that, the CHILD WITCH approaches. Drawing close, she starts playing with his dog tags, as though unaware of his bewilderment. The others then stand and follow after her.

Macbeth pushes out a few more words:

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 Speak, if you can:
 What are you?

The Middle Witch looks steadily at him.

MIDDLE WITCH
 Macbeth. Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis.

OLDER WITCH
 Macbeth. Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor.

MIDDLE WITCH
 All hail, Macbeth. That shalt be King hereafter.

Macbeth stares. Dismayed that these women have called him by name. Banquo, unnerved, looks to him:

BANQUO
 Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear
 Things that do sound so fair?

Macbeth does not answer. Banquo turns to the women:

BANQUO (CONT'D)
 My noble partner
 You greet with present grace, and great prediction
 Of noble having, and of royal hope,
 That he seems rapt withal: 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.

The Witches look to each other, irritated. Then to Banquo once more:

MIDDLE WITCH
 Hail, lesser than Macbeth, and greater.

OLDER WITCH
 Not so happy, yet much happier.

MIDDLE WITCH

Thou shalt get kings, though thou be none.

Banquo stares at them, mesmerized. The Older Witch smiles softly. She LAYS A HAND ON MACBETH'S FOREHEAD. At her touch, Macbeth's eyes lilt closed. And...

OLDER WITCH

So all hail Macbeth and Banquo.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/NAVE - DAY

A grand ceremonial hall. A CROWN is laid on Macbeth's head before a huge crowd. A Priest blesses his forehead and --

BACK TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DUSK

The Older Witch removes her hand. Macbeth's eyes fluttering still, as if lulled to sleep.

OLDER WITCH

Banquo and Macbeth, all hail.

With this, the Older Witch turns away. The others follow and they all begin to disappear into the mist.

Macbeth blinks, waking from his reverie. He starts after them.

MACBETH

Stay, you imperfect speakers, tell me more.

But the Women ignore his plea and continue on, becoming lost in the fog. Macbeth hurries in pursuit, following the sound of their retreating bells.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

By Father's death I know I am Thane of Glamis;
But how of Cawdor? the Thane of Cawdor lives,
A prosperous gentleman; and to be King
Stands not within the prospect of belief.
No more than to be Cawdor. Say from whence
You owe this strange intelligence, or why
Upon this blasted heath you stop our way
With such prophetic greeting.

His voice is smothered by the dead air: there is no response. The bells have FADED.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 Speak, I charge you.

But they are gone. All is silent. Banquo materialises out of the mist beside him.

BANQUO
 The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
 And these are of them -- whither are they vanish'd?

MACBETH
 Into the air; and what seem'd corporal,
 Melted as breath into the wind. Would they had stay'd!

They are silent, repeating in their heads what the Weird Women have told them. Banquo looks to his friend.

BANQUO
 Were such things here as we do speak about,
 Or have we eaten on the insane root,
 That takes the reason prisoner?

A smile rises to Macbeth's lips. Considering the madness these women spoke.

MACBETH
 Your children shall be kings.

BANQUO
 You shall be King.

Pause. For a moment Macbeth appears to believe it. Then he grins again.

MACBETH
 And Thane of Cawdor too; went it not so?

BANQUO
 To th'selfsame tune, and words.

They share a chuckle. But their unease at the strange forecast is palpable.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD CAMPSITE - DAY

Small fires burn, miniscule against the looming mountains.

Seyton, whose arm was severed during the battle, is being treated. Macbeth and Banquo are holding him down. He SCREAMS as the wound is cauterised with hot coals.

From across the cluttered campground, two cleanly dressed young men approach on horseback: ROSSE and ANGUS, from the King's tent. They stand out, their armour showing no signs of combat. They cannot hide their shock at the state of the soldiers.

Banquo notices their arrival. Murmuring privately:

BANQUO

The King hath happily receiv'd, Macbeth,
The news of thy success.

Macbeth looks up and sees the two Thanes for the first time. They don't get down off their horses.

ROSSE

As thick as hail,
Came post with post; and every one did bear
Thy praises in his kingdom's great defence,
And pour'd them down before him.

ANGUS

And we are sent
To give thee from our royal master thanks.

ROSSE

And, for an earnest of a greater honour,
He bade me, from him, call thee Thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth stops at the words. He looks to Banquo for a second. Dropping his voice, so as not to alert the surrounding soldiers to their conversation:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

The Thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrow'd robes?

ANGUS

Treasons capital, confess'd and prov'd,
Have overthrown him.

Macbeth cannot respond. Rosse takes out an ORNATE BOX and opens it, presenting Macbeth with CAWDOR'S STAINED TABARD.

Macbeth looks between Rosse and Angus, who smile back at him expectantly. Finally:

MACBETH

Thanks for your pains.

Macbeth casts a final glance to Banquo. Then...

EXT. BATTLEFIELD CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The Soldiers sleep in dug-outs right beside the fresh graves -
- mounds marked by PILES OF STONES. In the dim light it's
hard to discern the living from the dead.

Macbeth and Banquo huddle in the cold night air by a fire.
Talking quietly.

MACBETH

Do you not hope your children shall be kings,
When those that gave the Thane of Cawdor to me
Promis'd no less to them?

BANQUO

That trusted home
Might yet enkindle you unto the crown,
Besides the Thane of Cawdor.

Macbeth does not reply. Banquo smiles grimly.

BANQUO (CONT'D)

But 'tis strange:
And oftentimes, to win us to our harm,
The instruments of Darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles, to betray's
In deepest consequence.

Macbeth isn't listening: his head is now consumed with the
Weird Women's prophecy.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD CAMPSITE - DUSK

Late. Everyone is asleep. But Macbeth cannot rest. He walks
past the sleeping bodies of his men towards a large pit,
which is filled with the bodies of his fallen soldiers.

On top of them all is the Young Boy Soldier. His neck is torn
open, his eyes sightless.

Macbeth kneels down by the Boy's side, fixed by the sight. He
removes the Young Boy Soldier's Dog Tags and attaches them to
his belt, where it joins the dog tags of the other fallen
men. Then gently places rocks over the boy's eyes. Just as he
did for his son.

MACBETH

This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill; cannot be good:--
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,

(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
 Against the use of nature?
 Present fears
 Are less than horrible imaginings.

Macbeth looks around: everywhere, his exhausted men are sleeping.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 If Chance will have me King, why,
 Chance may crown me, Without my stir.

Macbeth takes out a bloody dagger and places it on the boy's chest, folding his hands over it in a ceremonial pose.

Then, he climbs out of the pit. Lights a torch from a nearby fire and throws it into onto the bodies.

Flames begin to engulf the corpses in front of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - DAY (DAWN)

The sun cracks the horizon. Macbeth leads his exhausted men on foot through an endless, wind-swept pass in the mountains.

The horses are laden with equipment heavy equipment. One is WHINNYING helplessly, stuck in the clay-like mud. Soldiers try to tug it free with ropes. Macbeth turns to help.

EXT. VALLEY - DAY

Macbeth's men trek down into a cavernous valley. They are ant-like in the spectral Scottish landscape.

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

Duncan, Malcolm and the rest of their royal retinue wait, fresh from their night's sleep.

Macbeth is marching his hungry, exhausted soldiers past them. The difference between the two groups not lost on anyone present.

Macbeth breaks from his men's ranks and approaches the King with a cloth-wrapped parcel. His eyes track over Duncan's weapons, noting their pristine splendour.

Suddenly Malcolm steps forward, barely able contain his admiration of this hardy general:

MALCOLM
Hail Macbeth.

But Macbeth scarcely acknowledges him. Duncan smiles tightly, registering Malcolm's love of the war hero. The optics of the moment are striking: the dirty, injured soldier and the well-slept King in fresh clothes.

DUNCAN
O worthiest cousin.
More is thy due than more than all can pay.

MACBETH
The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself.

Macbeth holds Duncan's gaze for a moment before lowering his eyes. Duncan nods.

DUNCAN
From hence to Inverness,
And bind us further to you.

Macbeth is taken aback by the command.

MACBETH
I'll be myself the harbinger, and make joyful
The hearing of my wife with your approach;
So, humbly take my leave.

DUNCAN
My worthy Cawdor.

Duncan takes Macbeth's face in his hand. Affectionate, but proprietorial. Macbeth glances uncomfortably towards MACDUFF, a fellow general in the king's retinue. Two warriors who have not seen each other for some time. No love lost between them.

At that Duncan removes his hand. And Macbeth turns to leave -- tossing the cloth-wrapped parcel to the pristine Rosse. Rosse looks up queasily:

MACDONWALD'S HEAD, cloaked in his tabard.

Macbeth pushes away with Banquo through the throng of Lords and Soldiers, eager to reach his horse again.

CUT TO:

EXT. INVERNESS - DAY

WIDE MOUNTAINS. Deep within them, we find a RUN-DOWN VILLAGE at the foot of a valley: INVERNESS.

Populated by the families of men who have fought in the war, the village feels depleted, forsaken. Rows of sturdy dwellings cluster, a CHAPEL built largely from wood, a CENTRAL PAVILION dominating. But the heart is missing. A generation of this place lost to war.

On the village outskirts, crosses mark the graves of the deceased. WOMEN till a field by hand, pushing a heavy plough through the black earth. Their husbands lost to war, this is their work now.

Throughout the village we see RED ROWAN BERRIES attached to doors and woven into the villagers' hair. Rudimentary wind-chimes hang from every structure.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY

Light shines in through a cruciform hole in the wall of this bare, makeshift church. On the floor, before a sparse altar, sits LADY MACBETH.

The years since we last saw her have been hard. But she is strong. Self-preserving. This is clearly a sanctuary for her.

In front of her lies the presentation box containing Cawdor's tabard. She lifts it from the box, revealing a LETTER from Macbeth underneath. As she runs her fingers across the fabric she begins to read...

LADY MACBETH

'They met me in the day of success; and I have learn'd by the perfect'st report they have more in them than mortal knowledge. When I burned in desire to question them further, they made themselves air, into which they vanish'd. Whiles I stood rapt in the wonder of it, came missives from the King, who all-hail'd me, "Thane of Cawdor"; by which title, before, these Weird Sisters saluted me, and referr'd me to the coming on of time, with, 'Hail, King that shalt be!'

She looks up to a large cross above the altar. Determination burning in her eyes. She speaks quietly, entreating:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Come, you Spirits,
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty. Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on Nature's mischief. Come, thick Night,
(MORE)

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of Hell,
 That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
 Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
 To cry, 'Hold, hold!'

She looks from the cross to a tableau engraved into the walls. Fearsome devils clutching human babies, stealing them away.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

(to herself, to Macbeth)

Hie thee hither,
 That I may pour my spirits in thine ear,
 And chastise with the valour of my tongue
 All that impedes thee from the golden round.

EXT. INVERNESS/FIELDS - DAY

Macbeth leads his surviving soldiers through the fields, approaching Inverness at long last.

The women tending the fields become alert when they see him: none have yet received news of their husbands or sons. Their children SQUEAL with excitement and quickly chase after him back to the village.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Macbeth and Banquo draw to a halt, their remaining army and laden horses behind them. As they dismount, Banquo's young son FLEANCE runs towards them.

Banquo smiles. He reaches down and grabs Fleance up, clutching his son in an embrace.

Nearby, Macbeth just takes his weapons from his horse. Alone.

The Women of the village watch him in nervous anticipation.

Macbeth opens the bag with his dead soldiers' swords and dog tags. Then sees one WOMAN in particular and stops. She is 40, angular, pockmarked, and extremely fearful.

Macbeth searches in the bag until he finds the sword he's looking for: it's the Young Boy Soldier's sword, the fabric still wrapped round it.

He slides off the fabric to keep for himself, then removes the sword and brings it to the woman. She closes her eyes and sags forward in abject despair.

INT. INVERNESS/MACBETH'S DWELLING - CONTINUOUS

Lady Macbeth waits in the middle of the meagre bedchamber, watching the door. Sleepless with nerves. In her hands is a ceremonial drinks set, prepared for her returning husband.

FOOTSTEPS sound from the walkway outside and she tenses. Then...

The bedroom door pushes open. Macbeth, still in his armour.

Their eyes meet for a moment, neither sure how to close the ground between them. Months of absence to recover in a second.

Macbeth turns away, starts to pull off his rough armour. Exhausted. Bruised. She tentatively steps closer to help him:

LADY MACBETH

(nervous)

Thy letters have transported me beyond
This ignorant present, and I feel now
The future in the instant.

Macbeth turns, meets her eyes, uneasy at her insinuation. Neither of them move. The words hanging between them.

MACBETH

My dearest love,
Duncan comes here to-night.

LADY MACBETH

And when goes hence?

MACBETH

To-morrow, as he purposes.

Quietly, Lady Macbeth shakes her head:

LADY MACBETH

O never
Shall sun that morrow see.

Macbeth stares. Struck silent by the thought spoken out loud. Lady Macbeth tentatively puts a hand on his shoulder -- but he flinches away with the pain.

Undeterred, she eases off his remaining armour, trying to find intimacy. He starts to sag with exhaustion, edging towards rest for the first time in months. But instinctively he resists it.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor, and shalt be
What thou art promis'd...

Macbeth gently shakes her away, uncomfortable. He peels off a bandage. Lady Macbeth stares at the wound beneath. Deep. Then takes away his weaponry and hangs it on the wall, disarming him.

He stands alone for a second, watching her. Until she turns, takes his head in her hands and, gingerly, kisses him on the lips.

Macbeth closes his eyes. A small, unconscious smile creeps over his face. An old closeness. Home.

She takes his hand, trying to keep the tenderness, and draws him to sit on the bed. Softly she dips a cloth into a bowl of spiced water by the side and strokes at his wound.

He inhales sharply in pain. She continues to tend to him.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Yet I do fear thy nature:
It is too full o'th'milk of human kindness,
To catch the nearest way. Thou wouldst be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily; wouldst not play false,
And yet wouldst wrongly win.

She gently rolls him onto his side, revealing another wound on his back.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

To beguile the time,
Look like the time; bear welcome in your eye,
Your hand, your tongue: look like th'innocent flower,
But be the serpent under't.

He looks round at her.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

He that's coming
Must be provided for. You shall put
This night's great business into my dispatch.
Leave all the rest to me.
Which shall to all our nights and days to come
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom.

MACBETH

We will speak further.

Lady Macbeth kisses him again, warmly, more firmly now. The strange intimacy crackles. Then she breaks away and lays him down, stroking his head and easing him to sleep.

As she does, however, she notices something:

His hand is TREMBLING inadvertently. Like the Young Boy Soldier's before the battle. He doesn't seem aware of it.

Softly she takes it and presses it with her hand, caressing it until the trembling ceases.

CUT TO:

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY (DUSK)

CLOSE ON: DUNCAN'S SMILING FACE.

Duncan and his entourage of Malcolm, Angus, Rosse, MENTEITH and OTHERS stare around at the rustic hardship of Inverness. Their horses fill the whole village square.

Before them, LADY MACBETH and the rest of the villagers are BOWING, all in their finest adornments. Each of the women's hair has been ceremonially plaited.

Lady Macbeth rises and approaches the King. She removes the hood of her cloak, smiling gracefully:

LADY MACBETH

All our service,
In every point twice done, and then done double.

Duncan cups her face in his hand.

DUNCAN

Give me your hand,
Conduct me to mine host. We love him highly
And shall continue our graces towards him.
By your leave, hostess.

He kisses her hand, then processes away led by his servants.

EXT. INVERNESS/MACBETH'S DWELLING - DAY

Macbeth sits half-naked on his bed. Sleepless. Lost in his troubled thoughts. His hand is STILL TREMBLING slightly, though he does not notice it.

Outside, sounds of PREPARATION filter in. A FEAST being readied for the King.

EXT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY

Lady Macbeth prays at the altar. She finishes, then starts to soak a cloth in a dark liquid -- preparing a MIXTURE of some kind.

She grinds herbs into it with a pestle and mortar as the sound of CHILDREN SINGING bleeds in and...

INT. INVERNESS/PAVILION - NIGHT

A SMALL CHOIR OF BOYS AND GIRLS sings FÀILTE DHUNNCHÀIDH before King Duncan, a tribute to their royal guest. Lady Macbeth stands amongst them, leading the song. Maternal in her pride.

This main tent has been transformed into a feasting hall, open at the sides. Benches and tables line the space, Duncan and his retinue seated at the head. The whole room is decorated with berries and flowers, every effort made to turn the bare tent into a space fit for the King.

The whole village has crowded in. Macbeth. Banquo. Fleance. All watching in exhausted solemnity.

As the children finish their song, Duncan applauds indulgently, smiling beneficence. The others follow his lead.

INT. INVERNESS/PAVILION - LATER

Later. The party is sliding into debauchery, the King's soldiers smeared with fat from roasted meat, SINGING and YELLING. Children have fallen asleep under tables or in their parents' arms.

Through it all, Malcolm just stares at Macbeth. Entranced. He cannot take his eyes from him.

Abruptly, however, Duncan notices this and hauls himself up, CALLING OUT loudly:

DUNCAN

Up, up!

They all obey, hushing instantly. Duncan looks out at all the faces. Teary now. Drunk.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

My plenteous joys,
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves
In drops of sorrow.

He puts his hands on his son's shoulders.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
Sons, kinsmen, Thanes --

His gaze lights on MACBETH in particular:

DUNCAN (CONT'D)
And you whose places are the nearest -- know,
We will establish our estate upon
Our eldest, Malcolm; whom we name hereafter
The Prince of Cumberland.

Duncan sets a chair on a table and pushes Malcolm up towards it. Awkwardly, Malcolm climbs up -- glancing at Macbeth as he does.

Then, Duncan dips his fingers into a cup of wine and flicks it on Malcolm's face, anointing him.

From the crowd, Macbeth watches. A single shadow of anger passing over his face.

No-one notices -- except perhaps for Banquo.

MACBETH (PRE-LAP)
The prince of Cumberland. That is a step
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap.
For in my way it lies.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Macbeth stands across the square in the dark, looking in at the bright interior of the tent from outside the chapel.

Inside the feasting tent, Duncan is laying ornamental wreathes on the heads of some of the children who sung to him. They stare up with awestruck admiration. He is their god. Unassailable.

Macbeth's eyes draw to his wife, who is kneeling amongst the children. She smiles, full of happiness in their innocent company.

MACBETH
If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. If th'assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch
With his surcease success... That but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here --
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come.

He turns away, his mind torn with indecision:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

But in these cases,
We still have judgement here; that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which, being taught, return
To plague th'inventor: this even-handed Justice
Commends th'ingredience of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips.

Macbeth hits his head softly into the chapel wall. Going over the argument again and again.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

He's here in double trust:
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
Strong both against the deed; then as his host,
Who should against his
Murderer shut the door,
Not bear the knife myself.
Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Would plead like angels, trumpet-tongu'd, against
The deep damnation of his taking-off.

He draws in a breath, his mind settled at this.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th'other.

He turns away. And as he does...

INT. INVERNESS/PAVILION - NIGHT

Malcolm's eyes rove by Duncan's side in the feast. Searching.

Macbeth's chair is EMPTY.

Lady Macbeth enters with more food. She lays it down in front of DUNCAN'S TWO GUARDS, filling their glasses with more wine. As they clumsily toast her, drunk, she glances across to Macbeth's place -- and falters for a second, the absence awkward. Quickly she hurries away.

Malcolm watches her. But Duncan fails to notice.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Lady Macbeth scans the village in the darkness. It seems deserted, everyone in the pavilion. Then, she sees it: a flame burning dimly in the chapel.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NIGHT.

Shadows flicker from a lone torch. Macbeth hunches forward in a rough wooden pew.

VOICE (O.S.)
Why have you left the chamber?

He turns. Lady Macbeth is staring at him from the doorway.

MACBETH
Hath he ask'd for me?

LADY MACBETH
Know you not, he has?

She moves to the altar. Determined. From underneath it, she draws the pestle, mortar and herbs we saw earlier from their hiding place and pours the mixture into a SMALL VIAL.

Macbeth rises to his feet. He steps up behind her and takes her in his arms. Quietly:

MACBETH
We will proceed no further in this business.

She stops. Macbeth presses on:

MACBETH (CONT'D)
He hath honour'd me of late; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.

LADY MACBETH
Was the hope drunk,
Wherein you dress'd yourself? Hath it slept since?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely?

She turns to face him:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)
From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour,
As thou art in desire? Would'st thou have that
(MORE)

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thy own esteem,
Letting 'I dare not' wait upon 'I would'?

MACBETH

Pr'ythee, peace.
I dare do all that may become a man;
Who dares do more, is none.

LADY MACBETH

What beast was't then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?
When you durst do it, then you were a man;
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man. Nor time, nor place,
Did then adhere, and yet you would make both:
They have made themselves, and that their fitness now
Does unmake you.

She takes his face in her hands, beseeching.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me.
I would, while it was smiling in my face,
Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
As you have done to this.

MACBETH

If we should fail?

LADY MACBETH

We fail.
But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
And we'll not fail.

She kisses him, almost nervous. Macbeth kisses her back, more forcefully.

Reaching down, she then slowly starts to work him out of his clothes. Taken by her actions, he pushes her back against the altar and kisses her harder.

Their passion grows in intensity. They begin to make love. Intimate. Desperate, but caring.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

(breathless, almost
inaudible)

When Duncan is asleep, his two chamberlains
Will I with wine and wassail so convince
That memory, the warder of the brain,

(MORE)

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
 A limbeck only: when in swinish sleep
 Their drenchèd natures lie as in a death,
 What cannot you and I perform upon
 The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
 His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
 Of our great quell?

Macbeth gasps and hangs his head, finally spent. They stay there a moment, still. Until, softly, she eases him out of her. Kisses his lips. And he looks up into her eyes.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I am settled, and bend up
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show.
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

The NOISE from the banquet continues in the distance.

Outside the tent, Fleance is wrestling with another young boy in the mud. The fight playful but deadly serious to the two children. Fleance's nose is bleeding and the Village Boy's lip split.

Around them is a small CROWD of other local youths, all cheering. Banquo is watching from their midst.

Fleance DUCKS a blow and grapples the Village Boy into a stranglehold. The crowd JEERS as Fleance heaves him to the ground, goaded on.

Eventually the Village Boy holds up his hand in submission. Banquo grins with pride and steps in to help his son up. The crowd filters away into the night, the entertainment done.

BANQUO

Hold, take my sword.

Banquo hands his heavy iron sword to his son. Fleance takes it in amazement, feeling its weight. Banquo smiles. Then wraps his tabard over Fleance's shoulder. Something seeming to trouble him, now.

BANQUO (CONT'D)

Take thee that too.
 A heavy summons lies like lead upon me,
 And yet I would not sleep. Merciful Powers!
 Restrain in me the cursed thoughts that nature
 Gives way to in repose.

At that -- Banquo hears someone approaching from behind. He turns:

BANQUO (CONT'D)
Who's there?

VOICE (O.S.)
(from the darkness)
A friend.

They tense. Then -- Macbeth materialises, a strained smile on his face. Banquo exhales, relieved.

BANQUO
What, Sir, not yet at rest? The King
Hath been in unusual pleasure, and
Sent forth great largess to your offices.

MACBETH
Being unprepar'd,
Our will became the servant to defect,
Which else should free have wrought.

BANQUO
All's well.

Banquo takes Macbeth by the side of his neck and pats him reassuringly. Fleance just stares up at Macbeth in awe.

BANQUO (CONT'D)
I dreamt last night of the Weird Sisters:
To you they have show'd some truth.

MACBETH
I think not of them.

Macbeth shrugs curtly and takes out his sword for Fleance to spar with. Thrilled, Fleance raises Banquo's sword and begins to try blows, but even absent-mindedly Macbeth is too quick for him.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
Yet when we can entreat an hour to serve,
We would spend it in some words upon that business,
If you would grant the time.

BANQUO
At your kind'st leisure.

Macbeth smiles at him. Seizing the opportunity, Fleance lunges forward in frustration and JABS MACBETH IN THE GUT with his father's sword.

Macbeth blinks at the boy in surprise. Fleance stares back at him, shocked at what he's just done. Then...

Banquo laughs. And Macbeth softens, laughing along too. With a wave of his arm he gestures for them to return inside.

Banquo shoots a glare at Fleance, who continues only to watch Macbeth. But as Macbeth walks inside...

MACBETH

If you shall cleave to my consent, when 'tis
It shall make honour for you.

Banquo stops. Unsure how to interpret this.

BANQUO

(carefully)

So I lose none
In seeking to augment it, but still keep
My bosom franchis'd, and allegiance clear,
I shall be counsell'd.

Macbeth turns back. Chuckles uncomfortably, his eyes passing from Banquo to Fleance.

MACBETH

Good repose, the while!

BANQUO

Thanks, Sir. the like to you.

Macbeth steps aside, gesturing Banquo and Fleance to continue inside ahead of him. He watches them go, alone in the courtyard, barely visible in the dark.

INT. INVERNESS/PAVILION - NIGHT

Late. The pavilion is littered with the remains of the feast, as well as some guests who have failed to find a comfortable place to rest. Cats pick at scraps of food on the tables.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Duncan stumbles along a walkway, accompanied by his Two Guards. They take up positions either side of the curtains, themselves also drunk. Their eyes liltng to sleep.

EXT. INVERNESS/CORRAL- NIGHT

Horses jostle uneasily in the overcrowded corral. A sharp wind is gathering into a STORM.

The air is filled with the sound of the village's wind-chimes, animated by the growing gale.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Lady Macbeth prays in the chapel. Alone, lit by candles.

INT. INVERNESS/MACBETH'S DWELLING - NIGHT

Macbeth, meanwhile, is hunched down over a fire, his hands moving soundlessly over his body as though checking his weapons in his unconscious battle ritual.

He is wracked with indecision. Memories of war playing on his mind like the dark shadows dancing on the walls. Memories of his fallen friends. Of the Witches.

He drops his hands to his knees, redundant for a second. Then instantly starts his ritual again -- but...

It's no use. He gives up. Makes to rub his face, exhausted, when suddenly...

He frowns, noticing something.

His hand is TREMBLING.

Unnerved by this trick of his body, Macbeth closes his eyes, trying to banish the tension. He breathes out, then wearily opens his eyes and...

Stops dead.

The YOUNG BOY SOLDIER from the battlefield is standing in the doorway of the dwelling before him, watching him calmly. He is pale as the grave, his cut throat now scarred over, as though time has passed. But he seems corporeal. Real.

And, in his hands, is a DAGGER.

He is holding it out to Macbeth by the blade.

Macbeth stares. Disbelief edging into his voice.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger, which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?

The Young Boy Soldier says nothing.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Come, let me clutch thee -

Macbeth walks towards him. Reaches out but -- the Boy steps backwards out of the door away from him. He looks from the dagger to the Boy's face.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling, as to sight? Or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

The Young Boy Soldier still does not speak. Just turns and walks outside. Macbeth follows after him, mesmerised.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Macbeth treads out of his dwelling onto the long walkway.

The Young Boy Soldier is walking soundlessly ahead of him towards Duncan's tent. Low fires light their way.

The sound of the wind-chimes rises in intensity.

MACBETH

Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.

WIDE: we see Macbeth stepping forward intractably, ALONE. There is no Young Boy Soldier.

MACBETH'S POV: The Boy's dagger is dripping blood. As if beckoning him on.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Mine eyes are made the fools o'th'other senses,
Or else worth all the rest: I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before.

Slowly, rain starts to fall. Macbeth closes his eyes, trying to calm himself.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

There's no such thing.
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes.

He opens his eyes again. And sees the Young Boy Soldier is STILL WAITING FOR HIM by Duncan's tent door. Expectant.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Now o'er the one half-world
Nature seems dead, and wicked dreams abuse
(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)

The curtain'd sleep. Witchcraft celebrates
And wither'd Murder moves like a ghost.

Macbeth pulls himself up to his full height and steps through the entrance into Duncan's tent.

INT. DUNCAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

The Young Boy Soldier leads Macbeth towards the unconscious two Guards in the entryway. He peers down at them on the floor, studying their faces. A bell gently TOLLS.

Then, Macbeth kneels and takes the daggers from the slumbering men. He looks to the Boy one last time.

MACBETH

I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw. Whiles I threat, he lives:
Words to the heat of deeds too cold breath gives.

We follow Macbeth through the curtain into Duncan's inner bedchamber.

Slowly, he steps up close to the sleeping king. Standing over him, staring down. The man helpless in his slumber.

As if sensing him there, however, Duncan's eyes softly FLUTTER OPEN. Taking in Macbeth above him. The daggers.

A wave of recognition passes through his eyes -- the King like a boy, vulnerable and fragile.

Gently, Macbeth places his hand over Duncan's mouth. He raises the knife's point to Duncan's chest. Duncan looks to Macbeth for mercy one last time.

Macbeth pauses for a second. Then -- THRUSTS HARD, burying the knife into Duncan's heart. Duncan lurches forward in pain but Macbeth holds him down.

He raises the blade again and begins to stab Duncan with increasing force. Building into a frenzy, unable to stop himself.

Duncan's body bucks with pain. But Macbeth still stabs. And stabs. And stabs. Until finally, Duncan's body falls limp and Macbeth gasps out, sagging with the exertion.

Macbeth breathes hard. Lost. Slick with blood. Gently, he lays himself down by his dead king's side. Craving rest.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NIGHT

The large iron chapel bell swings in the wind, tolling in the dark.

EXT. INVERNESS/CORRAL - NIGHT

The horses grow wild at the gathering storm. One, more skittish than the rest, WHINNIES in fear as the others start to buck and rear. Their smooth backs shoving against each other, trying to clear space. The posts of the corral coming loose.

INT./EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - NIGHT

A TORRENT of rain drenches the square. Duncan's entourage sleeping or passed out under the cover of the pavilion.

A thin stream of water descends the walkways of the village. Chimes sounding out in the wind.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NIGHT

CLOSE ON: Lady Macbeth's face, eyes shut fast in prayer, determined. She holds a STRING OF CHARMS in her hand, her fingers worrying its beads. The rain HAMMERS outside. The chapel bells RINGING out above her in the gale.

Fresh clothes are laid out at her feet.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - SOON AFTER

Through the cold night, Malcolm treads out of his dwelling towards Duncan's tent. Unable to sleep, something troubling him in what he saw earlier.

INT. INVERNESS/DUNCAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm enters. He steps over the drugged Guards. Carefully, slowly, he opens the curtain to his father's bedchamber.

INT. INVERNESS/DUNCAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

The light of a small fire illuminates the King's tent. But when he enters, Malcolm's face turns to a look of horror.

Duncan's body, unrecognizable, torn with gashes, lies in its own blood on the bed.

The sheet is wrapped tightly around its head, red blotches at its eye sockets, its white hands cinched at its sides.

VOICE (O.S.)

The spring, the head, the fountain of your blood
Is stopp'd; the very source of it is stopp'd.

Malcolm looks round in shock, to see:

MACBETH, sitting by the side of the bed. Still streaked in blood, holding the daggers in his hands.

Malcolm doesn't know what to do.

MACBETH

Here lies Duncan,
His silver skin lac'd with his golden blood;

Macbeth motions down to the bloody daggers in his hands.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

There, the Murderers.
Steep'd in the colours of their trade,

Macbeth looks up back at Malcolm. The young man is paralysed. Terrified. Macbeth rises and walks towards him.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had liv'd a blessed time. For, from this instant,
There's nothing serious in mortality;
All is but toys. Renown, and grace, is dead;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.

Macbeth holds out the bloodied weapons, gesturing for Malcolm to take them. Malcolm now close enough to kill him with one quick thrust. But...

Malcolm does nothing. Unable to assault this hero before him. Macbeth's stare burrows into him:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Live you? or are you aught
That man may question?

Malcolm is now even more frightened. Tears streaking his face. He starts to back away as...

CLOSE ON: Macbeth closes his eyes. A RUMBLE is building on the edge of hearing, the same sound as we heard on the battlefield. It grows in intensity, blocking out all other noise.

Macbeth covers his face with his hands, still holding the daggers, smearing his eyes with Duncan's blood. Then suddenly the noise STOPS as...

VOICE (V.O.)
(whispered)
Sleep no more.

Macbeth's eyes open again. Malcolm is gone. He looks back to the King's body in confusion.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NIGHT

Lady Macbeth waits, alone in the pews. Suddenly FOOTSTEPS outside make her start:

LADY MACBETH
Hark! I laid their daggers ready;
He could not miss'em. Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't.

The FOOTSTEPS draw near to the chapel, RUNNING. She treads quietly to the door, peering through it.

Outside, a figure is saddling a horse in the corral. Malcolm.

EXT. INVERNESS/CORRAL - NIGHT

Quickly, Malcolm mounts his mare, kicks it, and rides it free of the corral. As he goes, his horse pulls the corral post free -- and suddenly all the other horses BOLT OUT into the darkness.

Lady Macbeth steps out of the chapel behind. She stares after him, panic in her eyes. When suddenly --

A BLOODIED HAND covers her mouth from behind.

Macbeth, soaked and covered in blood. He is shaking uncontrollably and clutching the two stained daggers in his free hand. She pulls herself free:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)
(gasping)
My husband!

MACBETH
I have done the deed.
Didst thou not hear a noise?

LADY MACBETH
Did you not speak?

MACBETH

When?

LADY MACBETH

Now.

MACBETH

As I descended?

LADY MACBETH

Ay.

Macbeth cannot answer. He studies the stains on his shirt, the blood dripping on the stone floor.

MACBETH

This is a sorry sight.

Quickly Lady Macbeth seizes his arm and leads him inside.

INT INVERNESS/CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

Lady Macbeth pulls Macbeth into the chapel:

LADY MACBETH

A foolish thought to say a sorry sight.

MACBETH

Methought, I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more!
Macbeth does Murder Sleep!'

Lady Macbeth stops a second at his dark words. She looks into his eyes. They are ablaze. Forsaken.

LADY MACBETH

Who was it that thus cried? Why, worthy Thane,
You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things. Go, get some water,
And wash this filthy witness from your hand.--

She pulls his other hand up and for the first time notices the bloody daggers.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

(shocked)

Why did you bring these daggers from the place?
They must lie there: go, carry them, and smear
The sleepy grooms with blood.

Lady Macbeth tries to rouse him from his stupor but he shakes her off.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers. The sleeping and the dead,
Are but as pictures; 'tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. If he do bleed,
I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seem their guilt.

She pulls the daggers from his grip.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Lady Macbeth walks at a pace along the dark walkway. We follow from behind, her body silhouetted in the faint moonlight as she comes to the sleeping Guards.

Tentatively, she smears their shirts and faces with the daggers' blood, careful not to wake them.

Before turning away, however, she glances inside -- and sees Duncan's bloodied shape through the opening of his tent curtain. She stops a moment. Horror in her eyes.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NIGHT

Macbeth stands frozen by the font, staring at his red hands. Rain is pouring down hard from cracks in the ceiling.

MACBETH

What hands are here? Ha! They pluck out mine eyes.

He pushes his fingers into his own eyes sockets. His face smearing with blood.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood
Clean from my hand?

Macbeth holds out his hands into the rain water falling from the ceiling. It drops RED beneath them, tainted by the blood.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

No, this my hand will rather
The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.

Lady Macbeth re-enters, her hands now covered with blood as well.

LADY MACBETH

My hands are of your colour; but I shame
To wear a heart so white.

She crosses to him and thrusts her hands into the fall of rain water.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

A little water clears us of this deed:
How easy is it then!

She wipes them clean, then unties Macbeth's ravaged shirt and strips it off, stuffing his bloodied clothes into the hiding space in the altar. She covers it again. But as she does, quietly:

MACBETH

To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself.

She pauses. Takes his face in her hands tenderly. Pleading with him to keep his composure. Wind blows outside, making the WOODEN CHIMES KNOCK around them. Until, finally, we...

CUT TO:

EXT. INVERNESS/LAKE - DAWN

Dawn. The sun crests the horizon.

A faint drizzle remains from the night's storm but the sky has mostly cleared, its colour softening.

CLOSE ON: Macbeth pulls himself from the water of a lake, his flesh steaming. He catches his breath. Biting down tension.

The landscape is quiet. The horses from the stable are strewn across the hill, watching him. Spectral in the early sun.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - DAWN

Macbeth leads the horses back into the village square. A few guests from the night before still lie comatose under shelter at the edges of the courtyard. Suddenly:

VOICE (O.S.)

Good morrow, noble Sir!

Macbeth turns -- to see MACDUFF. His hair and beard are saturated from the storm he has just ridden through -- but still he looks fresh compared to those who attended the banquet. Next to him is LENNOX, quick-eyed, soft-spoken.

MACBETH

Good morrow, both.

Lennox smiles a greeting. But Macduff studies Macbeth. Their dislike of one another tangible.

ACROSS THE SQUARE: Lady Macbeth begins to step out from another doorway, but seeing Macduff she stops and retreats.

MACDUFF

Is the King stirring, worthy Thane?

Macbeth, for a moment, appears lost. Macduff repeats:

MACDUFF (CONT'D)

Is the king --

MACBETH

Not yet.

MACDUFF

He did command me to call timely on him:
I have almost slipp'd the hour.

Macbeth nods. The role he now must play dawning on him.

MACBETH

I'll bring you to him.

The men follow Macbeth, their boots plodding through the mud.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - DAWN

Macbeth leads Macduff and Lennox toward Duncan's tent. They walk in silence.

MACDUFF

I'll make so bold to call.

Macduff enters Duncan's tent, disappearing from sight. Lennox turns. Making conversation:

LENNOX

Goes the King hence to-day?

MACBETH

He does:
he did appoint so.

Macbeth isn't really listening -- his attention caught by a group of children playing outside. Fleance stands at a distance too, alone, watching from the side.

The children are re-enacting the events of the night before. One of the boys has fashioned himself a crown out of twigs and wrapped a blanket around his shoulders, blessing his playmates just like Duncan did Malcolm.

Lennox continues:

LENNOX

The night has been unruly: where we lay
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i'th'air; strange screams of death,
Some say, the earth was feverous, and did shake.

Macbeth looks up at him for the first time. A glimmer of suspicion on his brow.

MACBETH

'Twas a rough night.

INT. INVERNESS/DUNCAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

Macduff pulls away the bloodied sheet, shock seizing his face. In front of him lies the butchered king, like a desecrated god.

Shaking, he folds Duncan's hands together on his chest and kisses them in reverence. His world in upheaval. Then he kneels down and prays to his fallen king.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Macbeth stares hard at Lennox, uneasy. About to speak, when --

-- Macduff walks out from Duncan's tent. His hands bloody. Lennox's face falls in horror.

MACBETH

What's the matter?

MACDUFF

Confusion now hath made his masterpiece!
Most sacrilegious murder hath broke open
The Lord's anointed temple, and stole thence
The life o' th' building!

MACBETH

What is't you say? "The life"?

LENNOX

Mean you his majesty?

MACDUFF

Do not bid me speak:
See, and then speak yourselves.

Lennox rushes inside the tent. Macbeth following close after as Macduff bellows:

MACDUFF (CONT'D)

Awake! Awake!

He runs towards Malcolm's tent.

MACDUFF (CONT'D)

Ring the alarum-bell.
Murder, and treason!
Banquo and Malcolm!
Awake! Shake off this downy sleep,
Death's counterfeit, and look on death itself.
Malcolm! Banquo!

Banquo emerges blearily from his tent nearby. He starts to hurry towards Macduff. Fleance joining him.

Lady Macbeth steps out of her own dwelling behind him, her hair and bedclothes in pointed disarray.

INT. INVERNESS/DUNCAN'S TENT - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON: Lennox's face, as he takes in the horrific sight. Duncan's body, just as Macduff left it.

Over Lennox's shoulder, Macbeth stands in the doorway, deadly still. Macduff breaks in past him, followed by Banquo, Fleance and Lady Macbeth:

LADY MACBETH

What's the business?
Speak. Speak!

MACDUFF

Our royal master's murdered.

LADY MACBETH

O, by whom?

LENNOX

Those of his chamber,
Their hands were all badged with blood...

Lennox points back towards the Guards, speechless.

Instantly, Macbeth heads out to the tent's entrance. He grabs up the first Guard, pulls out his dagger and SLICES HIS NECK with one deadly swipe.

The Guard drops. Macbeth then grabs the second sleeping Guard and SLAYS HIM TOO.

Behind Macbeth, Macduff and Banquo stare. Fleance is rooted by their side, stunned.

Macbeth looks up from his victims to see their eyes all turned towards him.

But it is Banquo whose gaze Macbeth meets.

Macduff steps forward. The distrust clear in his voice:

MACDUFF
Wherefore did you so?

Macbeth defiantly moves towards Macduff.

MACBETH
Who could refrain,
That had a heart to love, and in that heart,
Courage, to make love known?

Macduff doesn't answer. The air thick between them. Suddenly -
- Lady Macbeth retches.

LADY MACBETH
Help me hence, ho!

MACDUFF
Look to the lady.

Lennox quickly helps Lady Macbeth, as Fleance runs out towards the church.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY (DAWN)

Stricken with panic, Fleance desperately pulls on the chapel bell, ringing out that the King is dead. Daylight glares down through the belltower ceiling on his face.

EXT. INVERNESS - DAY (DAWN)

The bell's echoes resound faintly across the mountains. The morning light bleeding coldly over the village in the distance.

CUT TO:

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - NEXT DAY

Reverential hands gently clean Duncan's body. A cloth removing the traces of blood. Pristine WHITE SHEETS are then wrapped around it, as a needle and thread stitch together the jagged gashes on his face.

The corpse, swaddled in a white shroud, is now laid on the altar. A MONK stands at the head, two Guards at its feet.

EXT. INVERNESS - DAY

A CROWD has gathered outside the chapel. The population of Inverness has swelled with outsiders, gathered to pay their respects to the dead King.

Among the crowd are the LEAD THANES, including Macduff and his young, beautiful wife LADY MACDUFF. He holds one of their CHILDREN (5). The other one (8) clings to Lady Macduff's skirt. Banquo stands a little way off.

Everyone is DRESSED IN DARK COLOURS. Many are hooded. Some carry posies of local flowers. All shell-shocked. Uncertain.

The Thanes murmur amongst themselves as they wait. Lennox, Angus and Rosse close together.

LENNOX

How it did grieve Macbeth. Did he not straight, In pious
rage, the two delinquents tear,
That were the slaves of drink, and thralls of sleep?
Was that not nobly done?

ANGUS

Ay, and wisely too;
For 'twould have anger'd any heart alive
To hear the men deny't.

LENNOX

I say, he has borne all things well.

He looks over the other Lords, sizing up their response.
Angus meets his glance and nods: they share a loyalty.

ROSSE

Is't known, who did this more than bloody deed?

Macduff overhears this last question. He hands his child to his wife with the easy gesture of a parent, then moves across to talk to Rosse. She shoots him a warning look as he goes.

MACDUFF

Those that Macbeth hath slain.

ROSSE
 Alas, the day!
 What good could they pretend?

MACDUFF
 (curtly)
 They were suborn'd.
 Malcolm, the King's son,
 is stol'n away and fled; which puts upon him
 Suspicion of the deed.

Rosse shakes his head in disbelief.

ROSSE
 Then 'tis most like
 The sovereignty will fall upon Macbeth.

They all look into the chapel, as...

MACDUFF
 He is already named.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth process towards the altar, eyes forward, a strange parody of a wedding. They pay their respects over the body of the fallen king.

Hovering above the corpse, Macbeth's gaze turns to meet Banquo's just outside the tent. But Banquo looks away. His face edged with distrust.

Sensing this, Lady Macbeth glances round at the rest of the crowd. Her stare flickers over Lady Macduff. Taking in her assembled family.

Macbeth looks back to Duncan's body. He lays the CEREMONIAL ROYAL SWORD on the dead King's chest and kneels before him, Lady Macbeth at his side.

EXT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Seeing Macbeth kneel, the crowd follows suit. Almost as if it is to Macbeth himself they are kneeling.

Macduff, back at his wife's side, also lowers himself to his knees. Lady Macduff looks solemn. They know their chance has passed.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCOTTISH LANDSCAPE - DAY - TIME LAPSE

Mist moves and dances with speed across the Scottish landscape. Time passing, as --

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - TIME LAPSE

On the altar where Duncan's body once lay, we see the fresh flowers wither and decay before our eyes.

EXT. INVERNESS - DAY

The village is being abandoned. Tents are disassembled and emptied, the villagers' possessions strapped onto horses for the journey to their new home.

INT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The trail of villagers snakes through the harsh countryside. A population on the move. Macbeth rides at the head of his army with Lady Macbeth at his side.

He looks back to Banquo, who keeps his distance at the rear of the line, the berth between them marking the tension.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEACH - DAY

CLOSE ON: DUNSINANE.

Duncan's former castle seems five times the size of the whole of Inverness: its high thick walls span the width of the sky and lookouts rise from each of the four corners.

One side is surrounded by the dense BIRNAM WOODS, on the other lies the North Sea.

WIDE: Macbeth approaches on horseback along the beach, with Lady Macbeth mounted regally by his side. His entire army arrayed behind them. And, behind the army, the villagers of Inverness.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth share a private, inadvertent smile: this is their new home. Macbeth dismounts and gives his reins to a soldier -- Seyton, who lost an arm on the battlefield. Loyal.

Macbeth offers his elbow to Lady Macbeth, bowing slightly as he does so. She smiles happily and dismounts.

In the rank some way behind them, Banquo and Fleance watch the new King and Queen elect making their way towards the castle from their lone horse.

Banquo takes in the rest of the army. As if struck for the first time by the implications of Macbeth's advancement.

BANQUO

Thou hast it now. King, Cawdor, Glamis, all
As the Weird Women promis'd; and, I fear,
Thou play'dst most foully for't.
Yet it was said,
It should not stand in thy posterity;

He breathes in. Then looks back at Fleance.

BANQUO (CONT'D)

But that myself should be the root and father
Of many kings. If there come truth from them,
Why, by the verities on thee made good,
May they not be my oracles as well?
And set me up in hope?

Fleance is puzzled at his words. Banquo smiles, dismissing the thought.

BANQUO (CONT'D)

But hush, no more.

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - DAY

Running through the large, cavernous halls of Dunsinane are the CHILDREN of Inverness. They laugh, hurtling into every room, amazed at the opulence.

Around them, the women and Soldiers of the village are setting up beds in the large chambers. As over it, we hear...

VOICES (PRE-LAP)

Hail Macbeth! Hail Macbeth! Hail Macbeth!

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/NAVE - DAY

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth kneel at the head of a vast stone nave, now dressed in royal raiments. There's an awkwardness to them in their formal clothes and heavy crowns, a stiffness that was never there before.

Before them, a huge CROWD CHANTS MACBETH'S NAME. All of the Nobles are collected in their finery. To one side, Macbeth's SOLDIERS stand to attention. Further back, the Villagers from Inverness, their ranks swelled with those from Dunsinane too.

A BISHOP cups his hand over Lady Macbeth's forehead. With his other hand he pours HOLY WATER over her CROWN.

He moves to Macbeth to repeat the gesture -- his fingertips touching Macbeth's head, just as the Older Witch did on the battlefield.

CLOSE ON: Macbeth's face as the water seeps through the Bishop's fingers, running down over his brow. He closes his eyes against it and...

CUT TO:

INT. INVERNESS/DUNCAN'S TENT - FLASHBACK

Macbeth stands over Duncan, plunging the daggers again and again into the King's chest. Duncan's eyes wide with agony.

BACK TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/NAVE - EVENING

Macbeth opens his eyes, the blessing complete. He is now King. He and Lady Macbeth stand to accept the devotions of their subjects.

One by one, the Nobles begin to process forward to pay homage. Macduff and his family are the first amongst them.

Lady Macduff steps up to Lady Macbeth, curtseys and takes her hand -- but hesitates before kissing it. Lady Macbeth holds it out to her, waiting. Lady Macduff then looks her dead in the eye and kisses it at the wrist, defiant in her obedience.

To her side, Banquo bows at Macbeth's feet now. Macbeth smiles down at his old friend -- but Banquo cannot hold his look. Uneasily he turns his face down and, unable to kiss the new king's hand, instead touches it with his forehead.

As he stands again, almost imperceptibly, Macbeth's hand starts to TREMBLE. Lady Macbeth notices. Shoots him glance.

The other Thanes process forward, pledging their allegiance in turn.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEDCHAMBER - DUSK

Later. Macbeth sits on the floor, cloaked in his royal robes. The crown untouched by his side.

He is arranging his weaponry around him on the floor, cleaning all of his knives and swords as if readying for battle. Banquo's defiance playing on his mind.

MACBETH

(quietly)

To be thus is nothing,
But to be safely thus... Our fears in Banquo
Stick deep, and in his royalty of nature
Reigns that which would be feared. 'Tis much he dares,
And to that dauntless temper of his mind
He hath a wisdom that doth guide his valour.

Lady Macbeth enters. A beat, as she takes in her husband on the floor. The weapons. Then approaches and kneels down by his side.

LADY MACBETH

How now, my lord, why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on?

He does not answer. Instead, he picks up a knife and starts to pick at some dried blood on its blade, deep in thought.

MACBETH

We have scorch'd the snake, not kill'd it.
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.

LADY MACBETH

Things without all remedy
Should be without regard. What's done is done.
Come on, gentle my lord, Slink o'er your rugged looks,
Be bright and jovial among your guests tonight.

Lady Macbeth playfully picks up the crown and places it on his head. She smiles approvingly. But then --

MACBETH

Thou know'st that Banquo, and his Fleance, lives?

A glimmer of unease flits through her eyes.

LADY MACBETH

You must leave this.

MACBETH

He chid the Sisters
When first they put the name of King upon me,
And bade them speak to him. Then, prophet-like,
They hail'd him father to a line of kings:
Upon my head they plac'd a fruitless crown,

(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)

And put a barren sceptre in my grip,
Thence to be wrench'd with an unlineal hand,
No son of mine succeeding. If't be so,
For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder'd;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace,
Only for them;
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings!

LADY MACBETH

What's to be done?

Macbeth stares at her, on the cusp of speaking. Then --

MACBETH

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.

He smiles a little. A flicker of fear, almost, in his look...

MACBETH (CONT'D)

O -- full of scorpions is my mind!

He laughs. Lady Macbeth frowns at his strange words. But -- Macbeth just moves towards her, reaching his hand under her skirt, as if seeking solace. Seeking distraction. She tries to resist.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Thou marvell'st at my words, but hold thee still.
Things bad begun make themselves strong by ill.

He pushes his hand into her. She gasps.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Come, seeling Night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful Day,
And, with thy bloody and invisible hand,
Cancel, and tear to pieces, that great bond
Which keeps me pale!

Forcefully she pushes his hand away. He stares at her in surprise. Then, she takes his head in her hands and kisses him hard. Willing him to come back to her.

Macbeth closes his eyes for a second at her touch. Until finally, he opens them again and looks back at her. And a single tear rolls down his cheek.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEACH - DAY

The beach. Banquo and Fleance hurriedly prepare horses to ride away from the castle. Urgent.

Fleance looks back, and sees that he's dropped some of their belongings in the sand behind them. He quickly rushes back to collect them up. Banquo hurries over to help him.

As they're gathering their final possessions, however, Banquo looks up -- and notices Macbeth and a PAIR OF SOLDIERS riding towards them. One of the Soldiers is Seyton.

They arrive just as Banquo is reattaching the last of their belongings to the horses. Macbeth dismounts. The air tense.

MACBETH

To-night we hold a solemn supper, Sir,
And I'll request your presence.

BANQUO

Let your Highness
Command upon me, to the which my duties
Are with a most indissoluble tie
For ever knit.

Macbeth glances at the laden horses.

MACBETH

Ride you this afternoon?

BANQUO

Ay, my good Lord.

MACBETH

We should have else desir'd your good advice
In this day's council; but we'll take to-morrow.
Is't far you ride?

The answer is obvious from the stuffed bags. But Banquo tries to lie, matching Macbeth's offhandedness with his own:

BANQUO

As far, my Lord, as will fill up the time
'Twixt this and supper: go not my horse the better,
I must become a borrower of the night,
For a dark hour or twain.

Macbeth smiles. The horses, picking up on the atmosphere, begin to shift skittishly. Banquo's eyes darting to those of the two men watching. But Macbeth just stares at him.

MACBETH

Fail not our feast.

BANQUO

My Lord, I will not.

Macbeth nods. Then looks away, as if dismissive:

MACBETH

We hear our bloody cousin is bestow'd
In England; not confessing
His cruel parricide, filling his hearers
With strange invention.

Banquo has no reponse -- just forces a speechless smile.

Fleance looks from one man to the other, trying to understand the strange current of tension. Until finally...

MACBETH (CONT'D)

But of that to-morrow,
When, therewithal, we shall have cause of State
Craving us jointly. Hie you to horse: adieu,
Till you return at night.

He turns away. Then...

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Goes Fleance with you?

This final question strikes ice down Banquo's spine. But he tries to mask it.

BANQUO

Ay, my good Lord: our time does call upon's.

MACBETH

I wish your horses swift, and sure of foot;
And so I do commend you to their backs.
Farewell.

Macbeth waves him off. Banquo quickly nods to Fleance, and they mount their horses and ride off at speed.

Macbeth watches them go for a moment in silence, as if weighing something up. Then, he turns to Seyton and the other Soldier. Speaking quietly, almost conversationally:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Within this hour at most,
I will advise you where to plant yourselves,
Acquaint you with the perfect spy o'th'time,
The moment on't; for't must be done to-night,
And something from the palace; always thought,
That I require a clearness.

Macbeth stares after Banquo and Fleance. Then:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

And with him,
To leave no rubs nor botches in the work,
Fleance his son, that keeps him company,
(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Whose absence is no less material to me
Than is his father's, must embrace the fate
Of that dark hour.

Seyton glances Macbeth in surprise, the reality of what he's asking them to do hitting home. But his fellow Soldier answers loyally:

SOLDIER

We are resolv'd, my Lord.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - DUSK

Trees loom in these dense woods. Seyton and the Soldier, now MASKED, watch Banquo and Fleance from a distance. They glance at one another and ride on ahead to cut them off, their dark mission underway.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - EVENING

The fog is thick. Trees and branches are silhouetted against the blackening sky.

Muted horse hooves CLOP in through the fog. Then the outlines of two travellers emerge -- Banquo and Fleance -- riding slowly on the damp earth.

They come to a halt in a small clearing. Fleance dismounts from his horse and relieves himself against a tree. Banquo gets down with him, wary, and looks to the heavens.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

Fleance peers into the dark forest ahead. And frowns. For a SHADOWY FIGURE seems to be standing before him amongst the boughs.

CLOSE ON: a drawn arrow poised in the Figure's crossbow.

Suddenly out of the trees, the arrow WHIPS PAST FLEANCE -- and pierces Banquo's back. A second arrow immediately SLAMS INTO his shoulder.

Banquo falls. Fleance rushes towards his father in sudden panic -- but sees the MASKED SOLDIER coming towards them from the other side. Banquo cries out:

BANQUO (CONT'D)

Fly, Fleance!

Banquo lunges round with his sword to meet his attacker, wounded and disabled. The Soldier strikes the sword from his hand, but Banquo ducks his charge and pulls the Soldier down to the ground.

Wrestling hard, the Soldier brings out his dagger and plunges it into Banquo's side. Banquo grapples the Soldier tight despite the pain, yelling for Fleance to escape:

BANQUO (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Fly!

But Fleance is frozen with horror. His father's death unfolding before his eyes. The Soldier DRIVES THE BLADE into Banquo's side again and again and Banquo loses strength, finally releasing his foe. The Soldier stands, pulling Banquo up by his hair.

Banquo's eyes meet his son's for the last time. A King he will never see crowned. And, as the Attacker draws the blade across his throat...

SEYTON
Let it come down.

Seyton LOOSES AN ARROW at the boy, startling him from his paralysis. And, as his father's body falls forward into the dirt, Fleance finally turns and sprints away.

79 **EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS**

79

Fleance sprints into a thicker part of the woods. Bursting through the dark trees, ducking under sharp branches, his breath pounding.

From behind he hears the FOOTSTEPS of the Attackers coming toward him. Another arrow FLIES PAST. Fleance tumbles to the ground, but picks himself up quickly and keeps moving through the forest, trees and branches blurring as he passes. Until finally he comes to an opening in the brush and...

Stops dead.

In a small clearing covered in leaves, as if she's been waiting, is the CHILD WITCH. Staring at him calmly.

Gasping for breath, Fleance stares back at her. Then...

80 **EXT. FOREST - MOMENTS LATER**

80

Seyton bursts into the clearing and stops to listen.

But it is EMPTY. Fleance and the Child Witch have disappeared. Seyton stares around. But there's no sign of the boy at all.

VOICES (PRE-LAP)
Hail Macbeth! Hail Macbeth!

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BANQUET HALL - LATER

The chant ECHOES throughout this cavernous banquet hall. All of the NOBLES are waiting before the banquet tables along with Macbeth's own Soldiers, who seem out of the place in this rarefied ceremonial dinner.

There's an elegance and sophistication to the proceedings that is entirely foreign to those guests who have come from Inverness. But Duncan's former court, including Rosse, Angus, Lennox and Menteith, are clearly used to it.

Macbeth stands at the head table. Lady Macbeth by his side. Everyone waiting on his command.

Macduff and Lady Macduff are both watching the royal couple closely.

MACBETH
(calling out)
You know your own degrees, sit down: at first
And last, the hearty welcome.

The room makes to sit down. But then -- Macbeth stops. His attention taken instead by the doors opening, and SEYTON and THE OTHER SOLDIER entering the room to take their places.

Lady Macbeth and the Nobles all pause as he does, unsure whether to sit or stand. Oblivious, Macbeth starts away from his seat towards the new arrivals:

MACBETH (CONT'D)
Our hostess keeps her state; but, in best time,
We will require her welcome.

LADY MACBETH
Pronounce it for me, Sir, to all our friends;
For my heart speaks, they are welcome.

Menteith holds out another seat for Macbeth...

MENTEITH
Your Majesty...

... but Macbeth just moves past him.

MACBETH

Be large in mirth; anon, we'll drink a measure
The table round.

The crowd watches, poised and uncomfortable in the silence as Macbeth walks right up to Seyton. Seyton, aware that the room is watching them, leans in close, uneasy.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

There's blood upon thy face.

SEYTON

(whispering)

'Tis Banquo's then.

MACBETH

'Tis better thee without, than he within.
Is he dispatch'd?

SEYTON

(whispering)

My Lord, his throat is cut;
That I did for him.

A brief silence. Macbeth puts a hand on his shoulder. As though they are totally alone.

MACBETH

Thou art the best o'th'cut-throats;
Yet he's good that did the like for Fleance:
If thou didst it, thou art the nonpareil.

SEYTON

(apprehensively)

Most royal Sir... Fleance is scap'd.

Macbeth stares at Seyton intently. He pulls him close by the back of the neck, their foreheads touching. The room waiting in suspension for their King to return to his chair.

MACBETH

Then comes my fit again:
I had else been perfect;
Whole as the marble, founded as the rock,
As broad and general as the casing air:

His breathing is laboured. He suddenly looks close to tears, anger building:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

But now, I am cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd, bound in
To saucy doubts and fears.

Across the room, Lady Macbeth grows alarmed at the attention he's getting:

LADY MACBETH
My royal Lord,
You do not give the cheer.

Macbeth stops at the sound of her voice, looks back. Abruptly aware of everyone watching him again. He rearranges his face into a smile and nods back to Seyton, trying to mask their conversation:

MACBETH
Thanks for that.

He starts back to his place. Lady Macbeth and all of the Nobles STILL ON THEIR FEET, waiting for him to give the toast. Lady Macbeth's eyes ablaze as he begins to speak:

MACBETH (CONT'D)
Sweet remembrancer!
Now, good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!

Quickly Lennox offers Macbeth a cup of wine -- helping his new King. Macbeth meets his eyes gratefully.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
(raising the toast)
Here had we now our country's honour roof'd,
Were the grac'd person of our Banquo present;
Who may I rather challenge for unkindness
Than pity for mischance!

The Nobles force a LAUGH. Lady Macbeth doesn't join in.

LENNOX
His absence, Sir,
Lays blame upon his promise.

Macbeth smiles at him and raises the cup to his lips, as do others. But just as Macbeth starts to drink --

He STOPS AGAIN, something catching his eye nearby. Everyone pauses.

LENNOX (CONT'D)
What is't that moves your Highness?

A change has come over Macbeth's face. He starts forward.

MACBETH'S POV: Standing amongst the soldiers at the far end of the hall, is BANQUO. Dressed for battle, his face covered in war-paint. The wounds inflicted on him have disappeared.

But his eyes burn into Macbeth -- a look of love. Of betrayal.

BACK TO: Lady Macbeth immediately senses something is seriously wrong now. Lennox too.

Slowly, Macbeth walks towards the vision of Banquo.

MACBETH
(almost under his breath)
Which of you have done this?

LENNOX
(confused)
What, my good Lord?

MACBETH
Thou canst not say, I did it:

MACBETH'S POV: Macbeth stares into the dead face of Banquo.

Macduff, fully aware of Macbeth's agitation, speaks loudly, pointedly:

MACDUFF
Gentlemen, his highness is not well.

Lady Macbeth quickly moves from her place as Macbeth's hands begin to TREMBLE FURIOUSLY. She speaks curtly to Macduff and the others:

LADY MACBETH
Sit, worthy friends.
My Lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought
He will again be well. If much you note him,
You shall offend him, and extend his passion;
Feed, and regard him not.

At her command, finally, the guests sit. Lady Macbeth takes Macbeth's wrist and draws him close. The whole room still watching.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)
(whispering urgently)
Are you a man?

MACBETH
Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
Which might appal the Devil.

LADY MACBETH
O proper stuff!

MACBETH

Prithee see there -- behold, look, lo, how say you?

Macbeth gestures back to the chair with his trembling hand.
Lady Macbeth takes his face in her palms without looking.

LADY MACBETH

This is the very painting of your fear:
This is the air-drawn dagger, which, you said,
Led you to Duncan.
Why do you make such faces?

As she speaks, Macbeth looks past her and -- blinks. Banquo
has now VANISHED. Replaced by one of his Soldiers.

MACBETH

If I stand here, I saw him.

LADY MACBETH

My worthy Lord,
Your noble friends do lack you.

She starts to lead him back to the table. Macbeth takes her
arm as he follows after her -- trying to convince her:

MACBETH

Blood hath been shed ere now, i'th'olden time,
The time has been
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end; but now, they rise again,
And push us from our stools. This is more strange
Than such a Murder is.

She looks out at the guests sternly, ignoring him. He follows
her gaze and sees the eyes of the Guests upon them both. Sees
Macduff staring at him unabashedly.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I do forget.

Macbeth manages a laugh, glancing again at Macduff, and grabs
for another drink. He raises his cup -- and the whole banquet
hall stands quickly once again to meet the toast.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends,
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
To those that know me.
Come, love and health to all;
Give me some wine:

A servant pours more wine for him:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Fill full:

I drink to th'general joy o'th'whole table,
And to our dear friend Banquo, whom we miss;
Would he were here! To all, and him, we thirst,
And all to all.

LORDS

Our duties, and the pledge.

Macbeth swallows the entire thing. Then looks up from the cup to see:

MACBETH'S POV: BANQUO is standing before him in ANOTHER PLACE now. His stare bitter with reproach.

Macbeth can't tear his eyes away. His hand starts to shake.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

(pleading quietly)

Avant and quit my sight. Let the earth hide thee.
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes,
Which thou dost glare with.

BACK TO: The guests, still standing, stare at their King as he addresses the stone wall at the end of the room.

Abruptly, Macduff takes Lady Macduff's arm and begins to exit the hall: they've seen enough.

Lady Macbeth calls out sharply to them, desperation edging into her voice now:

LADY MACBETH

Think of this, good Peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other...

MACBETH

(to Macduff)

Pray you, sit still!

Lady Macduff falters in the doorway. But Macduff takes her hand again and leads her out, defying Macbeth's order.

Macbeth turns to his wife. Runs his fingertips down her cheek as if they are alone, entreating consolation. Quickly she takes his hand away and holds it tight.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

You make me strange
Even to the disposition that I owe,
When now I think you can behold such sights
(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 And keep the natural ruby of your cheeks,
 When mine is blanch'd with fear.

LENNOX
 What sights, my Lord?

Lady Macbeth rounds on him:

LADY MACBETH
 I pray you, speak not!
 He grows worse and worse;
 Question enrages him. At once, good night.

Stunned, the audience does not move. Finally she snaps again:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)
 Stand not upon the order of your going
 But go at once!

The Nobles hastily gather their possessions and leave.

ROSSE
 Good night, and better health
 Attend his Majesty!

LADY MACBETH
 A kind good night to all!

Eventually, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are left alone in the cavernous hall. Finally, for the first time, Macbeth takes a seat.

MACBETH
 It will have blood. They say blood will have blood.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BANQUET CHAMBER - LATER

Late. Everyone has left, night sunken in. Macbeth lies fully clothed on the floor of the hall.

Quietly, with a blanket over her shoulders, Lady Macbeth enters. Kneels down to him:

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 What is the night?

LADY MACBETH
 Almost at odds with morning, which is which.

His eyes flicker with fatigue, but he keeps himself going.

MACBETH

How say'st thou that Macduff denies his person
At our great bidding?

Lady Macbeth tenses, sensing what's coming. Looking him firm in the eye, she shakes her head, forbidding his pursuit of this channel:

LADY MACBETH

You lack the season of all natures, sleep.

But Macbeth just presses on insistently.

MACBETH

I will to the Weird Sisters:
More shall they speak; for now I am bent to know,
By the worst means, the worst. For mine own good,
All causes shall give way: I am in blood
Stepp'd in so far that should I wade no more,
Returning were as tedious as go o'er.
Strange things I have in head that will to hand,
Which must be acted, ere they may be scann'd.

Trying to be tender, Lady Macbeth takes his trembling hands in hers and rests her forehead against his brow. Her affection subdues him and his eyes sag, weighted down with exhaustion.

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEDCHAMBER

Gently, Lady Macbeth leads Macbeth to the bed, lays him down and strokes his head as she did before.

She curls herself next to him. Nestles her head against his back as her own eyes begin to close, willing him to rest.

But his eyes remain open.

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Silence. Lady Macbeth sleeps peacefully by Macbeth's side. Macbeth, however, is still wide awake, staring up at the ceiling.

Strange LIGHTS are dancing amongst the shadows on the walls. Curiously he gets to his feet and tracks them to their source -- a crack in the curtain.

The NORTHERN LIGHTS are streaking the black night outside, glaring brilliantly. As though calling to him. He casts a look at his wife, innocent in her sleep, and...

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAWN

Dawn is breaking. Macbeth rides through the cold countryside. The night's darkness is slowly receding as he chases the light fervently.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Daylight. Macbeth comes to the battlefield where he fought Macdonwald's men. Again, ominously, a thick wall of MIST is blocking the plain. It is freezing now, its ghostly swirls reaching out around his knees.

Tufts of grass sprout from the frost-covered mounds that mark the mass graves of his soldiers. Intractably drawn, searching, he calls out to the mist:

MACBETH

I conjure you, by that which you profess,
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me!

There is no response. Macbeth starts to walk forwards. Around him the swirls begin to thicken.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Speak, I charge you!

Nothing. His desperation builds and he breaks into a run, which turns to a sprint, panting, until finally...

He stops. Out of breath. The mist is silent. Fathomless. He is alone.

Then, from nearby, the faint peal of bells begins to chime in the mist. He turns, the sound drawing him on towards it.

From within the fog the forms of the WITCHES take shape, standing over the red glow of a fire. An infant is CRYING.

Macbeth walks toward them. The crying becomes CLEARER and LOUDER. And the mist clears, to reveal they are preparing some kind of mixture over a flame.

The Older Witch is cradling an INFANT in her arms. It plays with the bells around her neck contentedly. The others work beside her, grinding herbs with a pestle and mortar.

The Older Witch looks up at Macbeth. Her eyes solemn with intensity:

OLDER WITCH

Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care
Who chafes, who frets, or where conspirers are:

YOUNGER WITCH

Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be.

MIDDLE WITCH

Until Great Birnam wood to high Dunsinane hill
Shall come against him.

Macbeth looks down, to see that the Witches are now pouring BLOOD from the leather pouch we saw earlier into the mixture they're making. When it's spent, they hold the bowl up to him. As though challenging him to drink.

Tentatively, he takes the bowl and brings it to his mouth. The thick, dark liquid running over his lips. And...

DISSOLVE TO WHITE

EXT. BATTLEFIELD/MIST - DAY

THEN: Macbeth wanders alone in the mist; as though in a dream. As though out of time itself. The Witches are gone.

Through the mist around him, a rank of his BLOODY SOLDIERS appears. Processing across the field past him, their eyes cast down in defeat, marks from their last battle still fresh. An army lost to the ages.

Macbeth peers around at them. They each seem to murmur snippets of speech.

GHOST SOLDIER

Beware Macduff.

ANOTHER GHOST SOLDIER

Beware the Thane of Fife. Dismiss me. Enough.

A THIRD GHOST SOLDIER

Beware Macduff.

They trudge past Macbeth without looking at him. Until, from their ranks -- the YOUNG BOY SOLDIER from the battlefield appears. He comes to a stop before Macbeth.

YOUNG BOY SOLDIER

Be bloody, bold, and resolute: laugh to scorn
The power of man, for none of woman born
Shall harm Macbeth.

Macbeth reaches out to embrace the Young Boy Soldier, relieved. The Boy accepts his hold without emotion. Then breaks away and marches on. Macbeth's mind whirring.

MACBETH

Then live, Macduff: what need I fear of thee?
But yet I'll make assurance double sure,
And take a bond of Fate: thou shalt not live.

He looks back after the Young Boy Soldier -- but he is gone.
The rest of the army vanished too. Macbeth is utterly alone.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

An isolated valley. Macduff hurries his Wife and Children onto three horses, flanked by two of his guards. He lifts the youngest Child up to Lady Macduff on the horse and kisses them each goodbye urgently. He has to leave.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Daylight. The mist has cleared. Through it, vacant-eyed and somnambulant, Macbeth is wandering like a lost soldier, his body smeared with earth. His horse gently grazes nearby.

Lennox rides up alone. He has clearly been looking for his King. He quickly dismounts and hurries over as Macbeth squints into the early morning sun. He calls out:

MACBETH

Saw you the Weird Sisters?

Lennox's eyes scan the area, briefly. He has no idea what Macbeth's talking about.

LENNOX

No, my Lord.

MACBETH

Came they not by you?

LENNOX

No, indeed, my Lord.

Lennox takes out a blanket and tries to wrap it around Macbeth, helping him back onto his horse. Macbeth grabs Lennox's arm, grinning up at the sky around him.

MACBETH

Infected be the air whereon they ride;
And damn'd all those that trust them!

He lets out a WHOOP, exhilarated by the prophecy he's heard. Lennox nods, unsettled, and gently removes the King's hand from his arm. Macbeth rides off.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Lennox and Macbeth ride through the barren landscape. Macbeth seems alert now, charged with a new purpose.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - DAY

Lady Macbeth waits by a side entrance of the castle. Watching her husband coming towards her along the beach, wariness in her eyes.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - DAY

Macbeth paces, listening to the news since his departure. Lennox and Seyton are hovering nearby. Lady Macbeth stares at her husband, fear edging into her look.

MACBETH

Who was't came by?

LENNOX

'Tis two or three, my Lord, that bring you word,
Macduff is fled to England.

MACBETH

Fled to England?

LENNOX

Ay, my good Lord.

Macbeth holds Lennox's stare for a second. Then nods, confirmed in his actions. He starts pulling on his armour:

MACBETH

Time, thou anticipat'st my dread exploits.
The flighty purpose never is o'ertook
Unless the deed go with it. From this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. Be it thought and done:

Lady Macbeth shakes her head and moves to him in entreaty. Grabs his arm -- but Macbeth stops and stares at her in surprise like a stranger.

LADY MACBETH

Hell is murky. What's done cannot be undone.

Macbeth watches her for a second. Gently takes her face in his hands. For a fleeting moment, she sees his old self again.

Then, as he holds her, he calls out to Lennox and Seyton:

MACBETH

Send out more horses, skirr the country round;
Hang those that talk of fear.
The castle of Macduff I will surprise,
Seize upon Fife, give to th' edge o' th' sword
His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool.
This deed I'll do before this purpose cool.

She tries to grapple with him, begging him not to do this terrible act. But finally he **SHOVES HER AWAY** and strides out of the chamber.

Lady Macbeth stares after him in shock. Overwhelmed by the change in his condition. By the darkness unfolding before her.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCOTTISH PLAIN - DAY

Dense woods. Silence. A young **BOY** runs through the trees. He could be playing. Innocent almost. Then --

LADY MACDUFF (O.S.)

(screaming)

Murder!

We see Lady Macduff running for her life behind him, clutching her youngest child in her arms.

Behind them, Macbeth's **SOLDIERS** are bearing down on horseback.

The older **Boy** trips and falls. Lady Macduff desperately helps him up, pulling him back to his feet. He sprints on ahead -- but it's too late for her. The **Soldiers** grab her up.

LADY MACDUFF (CONT'D)

(screaming)

Murder! I have done no harm!

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - DUSK

CLOSE ON: Lady Macbeth's face, staring up outside the castle. Shocked with grief over what's about to happen.

WIDE: Lady Macduff and her Children are tied to poles on a platform before the castle walls. A pyre beneath them stacked with wood for burning. The Children CRYING quietly.

A CROWD watches. Lady Macbeth hesitates at their fore -- as though for a moment she might try to step forward and release these prisoners. But then...

Macbeth walks forwards brandishing a fiery torch.

MACBETH

Bring me no more reports; let them fly all:
Till Birnam wood remove to Dunsinane,
I cannot taint with fear.

Macbeth points towards to the surrounding Birnam Woods. The people of Inverness and Dunsinane follow his gesture, uncomprehending. His own Soldiers looking on.

Amongst them are Rosse and Angus. Hooded within the crowd.

Lady Macbeth stares at her husband, no longer recognising the man she loves. As he yells out:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

What's the boy Malcolm?
Was he not born of woman? The spirits that know
All mortal consequence have pronounc'd me thus:
'Fear not, Macbeth; no man that's born of woman
Shall e'er have power upon thee.'
Then fly, false Thanes,
And mingle with the English epicures.

Macbeth looks down towards Lady Macbeth. Her face stricken.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Why are you silent?

She cannot respond.

Macbeth approaches Lady Macduff and her children with the flaming torch. Lady Macduff cries out, defiant, strong:

LADY MACDUFF

This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest!

Macbeth hesitates at her words. The briefest of pauses. Then -
- he lowers the torch.

The wood CATCHES. Lady Macbeth stares on as the flames rise up. Her face shuttering into a mask of grief.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - NIGHT

Darkness. The castle is silhouetted in the distance. The corpses of Lady Macduff and her children ENGULFED IN FLAMES on the stakes.

Lady Macbeth just stares blankly. Her mind cracked by the atrocity she's witnessed. She looks up and follows the flames flickering high in the sky.

CUT TO:

EXT. ENGLISH BORDER - DUSK

Two dozen tents occupy a large swathe of hillside by the Scottish-English border. The stone wall dividing the nations stretches as far as the eye can see, torches lighting its length.

A huge ARMY OF SOLDIERS, healthy, well equipped and well trained, prepares beneath them. It is a modern force, with a vast supply of weapons and horses.

Rosse, Angus and the other Scottish Lords pull up on horses, their few belongings bound behind them.

A young man walks over to greet them: MALCOLM. All the Soldiers stand for him as the riders dismount: a young general in the making. He embraces Rosse, then Angus, excited to see the familiar faces.

ROSSE

Now is the time of help. Your eye in Scotland
Would create soldiers, make our women fight,
To doff their dire distresses.

Malcolm nods, enjoying the feeling of importance.

MALCOLM

Be't their comfort,
We are coming thither.

ROSSE

Would I could answer
This comfort with the like. But I have words
That would be howled out in the desert air,
Where hearing should not latch them.

EXT. ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE - NIGHT

In another part of the encampment a man is kneeling on the ground, praying. MACDUFF.

He sees Malcolm and Angus walking towards him. Rosse and other Thanes holding back. He stands as they arrive.

MACDUFF

My ever-gentle cousin,
Stands Scotland where it did?

ANGUS

Alas, poor country.
Almost afraid to know itself. It cannot
Be call'd our mother, but our grave.

MACDUFF

What's the newest grief?

Angus tries to speak -- but he cannot find the courage. Macduff senses something is wrong. Fear taking hold deep within in him. Malcolm steps forward:

MALCOLM

Let not your ears despise my tongue forever,
Which shall possess them with the heaviest sound
That ever yet they heard.

MACDUFF

How does my wife?

Malcolm sucks in a breath, mustering strength.

MALCOLM

Your castle is surpris'd; your wife and babes,
Savagely slaughter'd. To relate the manner
Were, on the quarry of these Murder'd deer,
To add the death of you.

Macduff goes pale, disbelief tricking over his face.

MACDUFF

What man?

Malcolm doesn't answer. The culprit is clear.

MACDUFF (CONT'D)

My children too?

MALCOLM

Wife, children, servants, all
That could be found.

MACDUFF

And I must be from thence?

Malcolm hesitates, unsettled by the insinuation. Quickly Macduff turns away and begins to gather up his belongings, as if there is something he could do. Then he stops, staring into nothing.

MACDUFF (CONT'D)
My wife kill'd too?

MALCOLM
I have said. Be comforted:
Let's make us med'cines of our great revenge,
To cure this deadly grief --

MACDUFF
He has no children!

Malcolm falters, unable to answer the force of Macduff's rage. Macduff chokes on his grief, grappling Malcolm to him.

MACDUFF (CONT'D)
What, all my pretty chickens, and their dam,
At one fell swoop?

MALCOLM
Dispute it like a man...

Macduff looks up at him in outrage.

MACDUFF
I shall do so.
But I must also feel it as a man. Sinful Macduff,
They were all struck for thee.

MALCOLM
Be this the whetstone of your sword,
Let grief convert to anger.
Blunt not the heart, enrage it. Gracious England hath
Lent us ten thousand men. Our power is ready;
Our lack is nothing but our leave.

Macduff looks up to the Scottish mountains beyond the wall, now utterly determined, as if he's speaking to Macbeth himself.

MACDUFF
Front to front
Bring thou this fiend of Scotland and myself.
Within my sword's length set him.
If he scape heaven, forgive him too.

CUT TO:

EXT. REMOTE LANDSCAPE - EVENING (LATER)

Lennox and Menteith sit beside a tent and a fire. Speaking as if directly to us, just as Lennox did in Duncan's quarters earlier. As they talk, images play over their narration:

LENNOX
Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies...

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE - VARIOUS TIMES

Macbeth, dead-eyed, swings a sword in his chamber.

LENNOX (V.O.)
Some say he's mad. Others, that lesser hate him,
Do call it valiant fury.

Macbeth rocks in a beam of light from a window, alone.

LENNOX (V.O.)
But, for certain,
He cannot buckle his distemper'd cause
Within the belt of rule.

Macbeth jogs around the castle's rooms, on edge.

LENNOX (V.O.)
Those he commands move only in command...

Macbeth drinks wine at dawn, its effects lost on him.

LENNOX (V.O.)
Nothing in love.

Macbeth stares into space, his crown perched on his brow.

EXT. REMOTE LANDSCAPE - EVENING

Menteith takes a breath. This is what he expected.

MENTEITH
Now does he feel
His secret Murders sticking on his hands.

Lennox nods grimly. At that -- one of their DOGS nearby begins to BARK. Then TWO, then THE WHOLE PACK. Their eyes turn:

To see three of MACBETH'S ARMY riding in their direction.

The two old men rise. One picks up an axe and the other a sword. Readying themselves for their fate.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEDCHAMBER - NIGHT

Lady Macbeth sits alone in her chamber, washing some tools in a bowl. Disquieted, she scrubs at them harder and harder.

They are the daggers with which Duncan was killed.

Unsatisfied, she looks up.

EXT. INVERNESS - DAY

Lady Macbeth travels towards her old village on horseback with her Maidservant. She is swathed in muslin, her shoulders covered by a white cloak.

Inverness is now in ruins. The tents have long gone and the cross-beams and structural supports stand like abandoned totems. Only the chapel remains, snow glistening against its sides.

It is a ghost town.

INT. INVERNESS/CHAPEL - DAY

Lady Macbeth sits on the floor of the chapel alone, enveloped only in the muslin now. Her breath clouds in the freezing air. But she does not seem to feel the cold.

Part of the roof is sagging and torn, small flakes of snow finding their way into the interior.

Her eyes stare out at someone we cannot see in the chapel before her. She speaks quietly, as though pleading with all that has past. As though confessing, almost.

LADY MACBETH

Yet here's a spot.
Out, damned spot! out, I say!
Hell is murky...

At some imagined response, her face hardens. Upbraiding whomever she sees:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Fie, my Lord, fie! A soldier, and afeard?
 What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our
 power to account?
 Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so
 much blood in him?

At this, her face cracks in sadness, almost imperceptibly.

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?
 What, will these hands ne'r be clean?
 No more o'that, my Lord, no more o'that: you mar all
 with this starting.
 Here's the smell of the blood still:
 All the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
 hand.
 Wash your hands, put on your night-gown; look not so
 pale.
 To bed, to bed: there's knocking at the gate.

She starts to beg, reaching out in plea now:

LADY MACBETH (CONT'D)

Come, come, come, come, give me your hand.
 What's done cannot be undone.
 To bed, to bed, to bed.

Finally, her eyes sag with exhaustion, the lids closing. But she forces them open again. Desperate to cling on to the vision before her. And finally we turn in the direction of her stare to see:

A SMALL CHILD on the floor of the chapel. Pale, his skin marred with red sores.

It is her SON. The boy we saw in the opening image, now alive again.

Until, softly --

WIND-CHIMES peal on the wind outside. She looks up.

EXT. INVERNESS/VILLAGE SQUARE - DAY

Lady Macbeth walks away from the chapel, barefoot now over the snow-dusted ground. Icy MIST swirls around her.

Some way in the distance, on the crest of a hill, are FOUR FIGURES. The Witches. One has a bundle in her arms: the infant we saw earlier. It seems to beckon Lady Macbeth on.

Lady Macbeth stares. Drawn inexorably.

LADY MACBETH
To bed. To bed. To bed.

She walks on, struggling with each new step. Her eyes lirting to sleep.

WIDE: Lady Macbeth is alone and lost, wandering into the landscape, fully exposed to the elements.

CUT TO:

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/NAVE - DAY

Macbeth sits on the floor of the coronation chamber. The few villagers and children still loyal to him sit around him. Candles light the space, arranged in a vigil for their Queen. The atmosphere is prayer-like, solemn.

Macbeth is wearing his royal cloak like a blanket. His face is haggard, beyond exhausted. A man who cannot rest.

A MESSENGER approaches, breaking his reverie. Macbeth smiles.

MACBETH
The devil damn thee black, thou cream-fac'd loon.
Where gott'st thou that goose look?

The Messenger is visibly scared to relay the news he has.

MESSENGER
There is ten thousand --

MACBETH
Geese, villain?

MESSENGER
Soldiers, Sir.

Macbeth chuckles.

MACBETH
Go, prick thy face and over-red thy fear,
Thou lily-liver'd boy. What soldiers, patch?
Death of thy soul! Those linen cheeks of thine
Are counsellors to fear. What soldiers, whey-face?

MESSENGER
The English force, so please you.

The news settles. Macbeth nods, expecting this inevitability.

MACBETH

Hang out our banners on the outward walls;
The cry is still, "They come." Our castle's
strength
Will laugh a siege to scorn: here let them lie,
Till famine and the ague eat them up.

The Messenger's head remains bowed. Unsure of his master's command.

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BEDCHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Macbeth enters. Lady Macbeth is lying motionless on a bed, her face white and still, her lips blue. Her Maidservant lies next to her, her eyes red and swollen from crying.

A DOCTOR stands by. Nervous. Macbeth approaches.

MACBETH

How does your patient, Doctor?

The Doctor takes a solemn breath.

DOCTOR

My Lord--

MACBETH

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

The Doctor has no idea how to respond. Macbeth motions for him to come closer, smiling confidentially:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

(whispering)

Doctor, the Thanes fly from me.
What rhubarb, cyme or what purgative drug,
Would scour these English hence? Hear'st thou of them?

The Doctor nods, terrified.

DOCTOR

Ay, my good Lord: your royal preparation
Makes us hear something.

MACBETH

If thou couldst, Doctor, cast
The water of my land, find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
(MORE)

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again.

Macbeth looks expectantly at the Doctor. Then:

DOCTOR

The Queen, my Lord, is dead.

Macbeth stares at him, confused for a second. His hand moves to a strap of his armour but finds it isn't there. The Doctor watches him speechlessly. Finally, he turns to Lady Macbeth.

He treads over. The reality of his loss sinking in.

MACBETH

She should have died hereafter:
There would have been a time for such a word.

He steps forward to her. Close. The air tremors out of him. Then, as though speaking softly straight to her:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.

His face cracks a little but he holds himself in. He exhales, steadying, and collects her up in his arms. Lifting her from the bed, clutching her as if she's still alive.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Out, out, brief candle.
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more: it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.

He sits with the body. Stroking her hair. Tries to look down at her again but closes his eyes. Lost. Behind him, the Maidservant starts to cry.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

What is that noise?

DOCTOR

It is the cry of women, my good Lord.

Macbeth hardly seems to hear. Holding his wife's lifeless body in his arms.

MACBETH

I have almost forgot the taste of fears.
The time has been, my senses would have cool'd
To hear a night-shriek; and my fell of hair
Would at a dismal treatise rouse, and stir,
As life were in't. I have supp'd full with horrors:
Direness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
Cannot once start me.

As he peers down at her, a Messenger enters. Macbeth barely looks up.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Thy story, quickly.

MESSENGER

Gracious my Lord,
I should report that which I say I saw,
But know not how to do't.

Macbeth's face settles at this. He knows what's coming.

INT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/CHAMBER - MOMENTS LATER

Macbeth strides through the castle chamber. A fatal determination in him now. Calling out:

MACBETH

Seyton! -- I am sick at heart,
When I behold -- Seyton, I say!

Silence. He sits on the throne. Speaking to himself:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

This push
Will cheer me ever, or disseat me now.

Seyton hurries in. Macbeth looks up at him. Quiet now.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I have liv'd long enough: my way of life
Is fall'n into the sere, the yellow leaf;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have; but in their stead,
Curses, not loud, but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.
Seyton?

SEYTON

All is confirm'd, my Lord, which was reported.

Macbeth is expressionless.

MACBETH

I'll fight, till from my bones my flesh be hack'd.
Give me my armour.

SEYTON

'Tis not needed yet.

Macbeth launches up to his feet in sudden fury:

MACBETH

I'll put it on!

CUT TO:

EXT. BIRNAM WOOD - DUSK

FLAMES rage around us, as ghoulish silhouettes of ENGLISH SOLDIERS set torches to the trees of Birnam wood. The blaze bathing the world in red, like a descent into hell.

From out of their ranks we find a lone figure: MACDUFF, dressed as a Scottish warrior, war-paint streaking his face.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/PLAIN - DUSK

SMOKE billows over the castle from the inferno. Cloaking it in the blackness of a false night.

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/BATTLEMENT - DUSK

From the battlements, Macbeth stares out at the burning landscape. Other MEN from his army gather in behind him, their mouths gaping in disbelief.

The DARK SMOKE is palling around them, blown from the fiery forest. BIRNAM WOOD is entirely ENGULFED IN FLAMES across the plain, the blaze snaking into the sky.

Within the dark plume of smoke, tiny EMBERS of charred wood float delicately towards the castle. Glowing bright orange, red and yellow, they mingle with the blackness of the fog.

We follow ONE OF THE EMBERS as it dances in the wind and eventually comes to find...

... MACBETH'S PALM, held out in the air. He brings it back in. And we notice: his hand entirely still now. Under control.

MACBETH
 (hushed, to himself)
 And now a wood
 Comes toward Dunsinane.

His mouth dries. His face becomes resolute.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 Ring the alarum bell. Arm, arm, and out.

EXT. BIRNAM WOOD - NIGHT

Macduff emerges from the flames onto the edge of the battlefield. Armed. Ready. He bellows for his nemesis:

MACDUFF
 Tyrant, show thy face!

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/PLAIN - NIGHT

Macbeth and his few remaining Soldiers appear from the gates of the castle into the red haze of the plain before it.

Amongst them, we can pick out some of the Recruits that survived the battle with Macdonwald. They are petrified, their leader now seeming like a stranger to them.

Macbeth briefly checks over his weaponry as he did in the opening: the sword, the daggers. The warrior again. He stoops to fill his hand with black Scottish soil, daubs it over his face.

He then sucks in a breath, savouring what's to come. And he starts to walk forward fearlessly at the front of this meagre rank, sword held aloft, right into the thick swirls of smoke.

MACBETH
 There is nor flying hence, nor tarrying here.
 I 'gin to be aweary of the sun,
 And wish th'estate o'th'world were now undone.
 Blow, wind! Come, wrack!
 At least we'll die with harness on our back.

Suddenly out of the flames charge -- THREE ENGLISH SOLDIERS. They attack Macbeth, but he brings them each down with quick successive blows of his broadsword.

MACBETH (CONT'D)
 They have tied me to a stake: I cannot fly,
 But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he,
 That was not born of woman? Such a one
 Am I to fear, or none.

Macbeth breaks into a run, taking out TWO MORE SOLDIERS as he goes. Then THREE MORE. Then another THREE. Fearless, invincible. Alone at the front of the fight.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Why should I play the Roman fool, and die
On mine own sword? Whiles I see lives, the gashes
Do better upon them...

He stabs his sword into another, brutal, when...

VOICE (O.S.)

Turn, Hell-hound, turn!

At the cry, Macbeth's head stiffens. The voice familiar. He hesitates for a second, then turns slowly, sword in one hand, dagger in the other, to see:

Macduff walking towards him from the smoke, revenge sunken into his features.

The other English Soldiers are holding back behind him. Macbeth glances round. His own men are standing off too. As if allowing this confrontation to take place. The war between nations resting on these two enemies' fates.

Macbeth looks back coolly.

MACBETH

Of all men else I have avoided thee,
But get thee back, my soul is too much charg'd
With blood of thine already.

MACDUFF

I have no words;
My voice is in my sword.

Macbeth readies himself. And at that -- Macduff CHARGES, sword raised.

Macbeth throws up his blade -- but Macduff strikes down in a storm of blows. Macbeth dodging and countering fiercely.

Again and again Macduff unleashes attacks with all his might -- but Macbeth parries them all. A man without fear. Forcing his opponent to tire himself. And, just as Macduff flags a little --

Macbeth seizes the opportunity and launches forward, an unstoppable force.

Macduff desperately tries to avoid his strikes. His breath becoming more laboured, his defences weaker.

Macbeth's strikes draws closer and closer to their target -- and suddenly he breaks through Macduff's guard and SLASHES his blade across his shoulder. Macduff SCREAMS OUT and stumbles back.

Macbeth looks over at him. Defiant. Offering him survival.

MACBETH

Thou locest labour:
As easy may'st thou the intranchant air
With thy keen sword impress, as make me bleed.

But Macduff raises himself up again, beckoning Macbeth to come on, clenching his sword in his fist.

Macbeth lunges. Macduff blocks. The two warriors duck and weave, Macbeth heaving forth a series of heavy blows with his sword. But then, too confident now, Macbeth overstretches himself in anger and --

Macduff dodges aside and comes back like lightning, SLICING ACROSS MACBETH'S STOMACH with his blade.

Macbeth staggers past him in shock. Turns, furious, when suddenly...

He FREEZES. Everything seeming to still for a moment, as in the battle at the opening.

For, in the smoke behind Macduff, Macbeth catches sight of:

FOUR FAMILIAR FIGURES ADVANCING.

The WITCHES. Present somehow before him on this battleground.

Macbeth stares at them. Then --

He DRIVES his broadsword into the ground and turns back to Macduff, drawing a lighter blade. Willing his fate to come on.

He hurls himself forward in an attack, parrying blow after blow until he SWIPES HIS SWORD ACROSS MACDUFF'S LEG.

Macduff screams out, lashes at Macbeth again. But Macbeth ducks aside -- so Macduff grapples him in a lock. SLAMMING PUNCHES into his enemy's flank, his exhaustion making their fight even more brutal now, more primitive.

With a yell, Macbeth shoves Macduff away and swings back with his sword. Macduff reels away -- but Macbeth closes in, PUNCHING him in the face and HEADBUTTING him.

Macduff drops his weapon at the pain, tries to grapple Macbeth again -- but Macbeth turns and uses the momentum to THROW HIM OVER HIS SHOULDER to the ground.

He straddles his foe. HURLS HIS FIST down into Macduff's face again and again to weaken him. Desperate now, Macduff rolls Macbeth over, pulling out a dagger and thrusting down --

-- but Macbeth catches his arm in the crook of his elbow and SNAPS IT just in time. Macduff CRIES OUT in agony. In the instant Macbeth HEAVES him over onto his back again, ripping the blade from Macduff's hand and driving it down at his neck when --

Macduff throws up his hands to block the strike at the last second. Macbeth forces the blade down towards Macduff's throat, struggling hard against his desperate resistance.

He speaks, right into Macduff's face as he wrestles the point closer for the kill:

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Let fall thy blade on vulnerable crests;
I bear a charmed life; which must not yield
To one of woman born

Macduff gasps. The Witches still looking on, as...

MACDUFF

Despair thy charm;
And let the Angel whom thou still hast serv'd
Tell thee, Macduff was from his mother's womb
Untimely ripp'd.

At this, suddenly -- Macbeth's grip loosens. His eyes deadened by the words. Shocked.

Thrown, he looks up at those around him.

And there, in the ranks of the Soldiers, he sees THE YOUNG BOY SOLDIER.

Macbeth turns his gaze back to Macduff.

MACBETH

Acursed be that tongue that tells me so,
For it hath cow'd my better part of man.

Macbeth lowers his blade a little. Broken by this news. He sinks back on his haunches, completely drained.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

I'll not fight with thee.

Seizing his chance, still caught in the fight -- Macduff lashes out with his blade, SLICING MACBETH across the gut.

Macbeth flinches at the blow. Then Macduff STRIKES AGAIN.

Distantly feeling the pain, Macbeth grips his wounded stomach. Blood tumbling out over his hands.

But, summoning strength, he stands. Turns his back on Macduff.

The nightmare he is in suddenly dawns on him. He looks around the battlefield like he is waking from a dream. Not understanding where he is or how he got here. A brief moment of clarity from the murky hell of his mind.

He looks back to his young Soldiers -- the ones he led into battle against Macdonwald. But one by one, they drop their swords and walk away from him into the smoke.

He meets Seyton's eyes last of all. As Seyton lowers his gaze and follows after them.

Macbeth has been deserted entirely, the last vestiges of loyalty his men once owed him gone. The truth of what he has become piercingly clear: a tyrant. A murderer. A forsaken warrior. Alone.

Behind him, Macduff rises up to his feet.

MACDUFF

Then yield thee, coward,
And live to be the show and gaze o'th'time:
I will have thee, as our rarer monsters are,
Painted upon a pole, and underwrit,
"Here may you see the tyrant."

Macbeth turns back round to face him -- and makes out the indistinct forms of six men on horseback watching the fight. Malcolm, Rosse, Angus and THREE ENGLISH LORDS.

At this sight, Macbeth locks eyes with Macduff. Refusing to give in to this humiliation. To surrender everything he has fought for.

MACBETH

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before young Malcolm's feet,
And to be baited with the rabble's curse.
Though Birnam wood be come to Dunsinane,
And thou oppos'd, being of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last.

With painful effort, Macbeth pulls a last dagger from a sheath on his leg. He steps towards Macduff, urging it on.

MACBETH (CONT'D)

Before my body
I throw my warlike shield: lay on, Macduff;
And damn'd be him that first cries, 'Hold, enough!'

He reaches out -- strong even in the face of his fate -- and clasps his arm around Macduff's neck. The two men stare into one another's eyes. And, finally, with all his force --

Macduff DRIVES HIS SWORD DEEP INTO MACBETH'S GUT, plunging it right through him for the fatal blow.

Macbeth's face stiffens, frozen in a flicker of brief pain.

Blood pours out from his gut.

Macduff looks into Macbeth's dying face as Macbeth clings to him. Two warriors ruined by fate. Still on their feet. Until...

Macduff yanks his sword free. And, as one, they collapse down to the ground.

Flecks of ash and fire float in the air above them.

On his knees, Macbeth sees the Witches finally turn their back on him and walk away.

And, at long last, his eyes lilt to a close.

Dead.

Macduff stares. His sole reason to live now extinguished.

In the quiet, Malcolm, Rosse, Angus and the Three English Thanes ride up to him on their horses.

Malcolm looks down at the fallen king. Vestiges of admiration still wrestling over his brow. Once his hero. Now his fallen foe.

MALCOLM

He's worth more sorrow,
And that I'll spend for him.

ANGUS

He's worth no more.
This way, my Lord; the castle's gently render'd.

At this, Macduff looks up to Malcolm from Macbeth's broken body, exhausted and drained. Bitterly:

MACDUFF

Hail. King of Scotland.

Angus takes up the call, turning to the Soldiers behind:

ANGUS

Hail, King of Scotland!

SOLDIERS (O.S)

Hail, King of Scotland!

The sound of ten thousand voices echoes through the air. And Malcolm rides on towards Dunsinane Castle. The English army following behind their new king.

Macduff watches row after row of ENGLISH SOLDIERS in shining chain-mail march past the fallen warrior before him.

Macbeth's lifeless body is still upright on its knees, as if defying even death itself. Cinders and ash swirling around them.

CUT TO:

EXT. DUNSINANE CASTLE/PLAIN - LATER

Dawn sunlight creeps in. The smoke has dissipated a little, the trees of Birnam Wood still smouldering in the cool air.

Macbeth's body is now coated in the ash that has fallen around him. The ground black with it all. His figure deserted in the middle of this desolate battlefield.

Then, the form of a young boy emerges from the smoke. He's not in armour, but wrapped in warm rags. He walks over to Macbeth's corpse and kneels at it, as we see --

It is FLEANCE. He looks wilder than before, neglected. But he studies Macbeth with fascination.

Then, with great effort, he walks over to Macbeth's sword in the ground and pulls it free.

INT. DUNSINANE/GREAT HALL - DAY

Malcolm sits alone in the grand hall. Duncan's iconic sword resting in his hands. The room prepared for his imminent coronation.

He slowly unsheaths the sword from its scabbard. And his arm begins to tremble.

Whether from the weight of the ceremonial blade or the realisation of his new responsibility, we do not know.

He stands and looks round at the empty THRONE. At his CROWN resting on its seat.

Then, he turns towards the vast doors of the chamber. From it an impenetrable shaft of light is beaming down on him.

He begins to walk towards it, sword in hand. As...

EXT. DUNSANINE CASTLE/PLAIN - DAY

Fleance feels the weight of Macbeth's sword in his hands. He casts a glance back toward the looming castle behind him. Then looks round to the woods from which he came. As if he is able to see something in them that we can't.

And there, we see that A THICK WALL OF MIST has formed, just like in the opening battle. Its depths seem hungry, impenetrable.

A RUMBLE starts to build from deep within it.

Fleance squares himself up, breath trembling. He begins to walk towards the mist, the sword's tip trailing in the ash behind him.

We track with him as he raises the weapon, heavy in his hand, and breaks to a RUN -- a sprint, wild, panting desperately -- when finally we PLUNGE WITH HIM INTO THE WHITENESS and...

SNAP TO BLACK

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION
BEST ADAPTED SCREENPLAY
Todd Louiso, Jacob Koskoff, Michael Lesslie

Based on the play *Macbeth*
by William Shakespeare



THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY
www.TWCAwards.com