

**Fletcher**, a reference to John Fletcher, the dramatist. With Jonson, Fletcher serves to establish the implied standard for playwriting. In Dryden's day, Fletcher was perceived as a master of tragedy because of his ability to portray strong emotion.

**Ancient Dekker**, a minor prophet. The allusion is to Thomas Dekker, an Elizabethan dramatist and author of domestic comedies about middle-class life. Because he wrote about middle-class manners and morals, he is placed among the host of inferior poets. Dryden gives him one of the brief prophetic roles in the poem, as one who predicted Shadwell's rise to monarch of dullness.

—Stanley Archer

## Macbeth

*Author:* William Shakespeare

*First published:* 1623

*Genre:* Play

*Locale:* Scotland

*Plot:* Tragedy

*Time:* Eleventh century

**Macbeth** (mak-BEHTH), thane of Glamis, later thane of Cawdor and king of Scotland. A brave and successful military leader, and potentially a good and great man, he wins general admiration as well as the particular gratitude of King Duncan, his kinsman. Meeting the Three Weird Sisters, he succumbs to their tempting prophecies, but he also needs the urging of his wife to become a traitor, a murderer, and a usurper. He is gifted, or cursed, with a powerful and vivid imagination and with fiery, poetic language. Gaining power, he grows more ruthless, until finally he loses even the vestiges of humanity. He dies desperately, cheated by the ambiguous prophecies, in full realization of the worthlessness of the fruits of his ambition.

**Lady Macbeth**, the strong-willed, persuasive, and charming wife of Macbeth. Ambitious for her husband's glory, she finds herself unable to kill King Duncan in his sleep because he resembles her father. As Macbeth becomes more inhuman, she becomes remorseful and breaks under the strain. In her sleepwalking, she relives the events of the night of the king's murder and tries to wash her hands clean of imaginary bloodstains.

**Banquo** (BAN-kwoh), Macbeth's fellow commander. A man of noble character, seemingly unmoved by the prophecy of the Three Weird Sisters that he will beget kings, he is not completely innocent. He does not disclose his suspicions of Macbeth, and he accepts a place in Macbeth's court. After

being murdered by Macbeth's assassins, Banquo appears at a ceremonial banquet. His blood-spattered ghost, visible only to Macbeth, unnerves the king completely. In the final vision shown to Macbeth by the Three Weird Sisters, Banquo and his line of kings appear.

**The Three Weird Sisters**, three witches, sinister hags who seem more closely allied to the Norns or Fates than to conventional witches. They make prophetic statements to Macbeth that are true but deceptive. Their prophecy of his becoming thane of Cawdor is fulfilled immediately, tempting him to take direct action to carry out the second prophecy, that he shall be king. They lull him into false security by telling him that he has nothing to fear until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane and that he cannot be killed by any man born of woman.

**Macduff** (mak-DUHF), thane of Fife. He and Lennox arrive at Macbeth's castle just after the murder of King Duncan, and Macduff discovers the body. A brave but prudent man, he flees Scotland and offers his help to Malcolm. Underestimating the villainy of Macbeth's character, he is thunderstruck at hearing of the atrocious murder of his wife and children. He becomes a steel-hearted avenger. Before killing Macbeth, he deprives him of his last symbol of security, for as a cesarean child he was not actually born of woman. He presents Macbeth's head to Malcolm and proclaims the young prince king of Scotland.

**Duncan**, the king of Scotland. Gentle and trusting, he shows great kindness to Macbeth. His murder by Macbeth is therefore almost incredibly fiendish.

**Malcolm** (MAL-kuhm), King Duncan's eldest son. Far more cautious and shrewd than his father, he leaves for England to escape possible assassination. He is reluctant to give his trust to Macduff but finally, realizing his loyalty, accepts his aid in taking the throne of Scotland.

**Donalbain** (DON-ahl-bahn), King Duncan's younger son. After consulting with Malcolm, he agrees to take a separate path, going to Ireland so that the potential heirs to the throne would not be accessible to a common assassination.

**Fleance** (FLEE-ahns), the son of Banquo. He escapes the murderers who kill his father and lives to haunt Macbeth with the Three Weird Sisters' prophecy that kings will spring from Banquo's line.

**Ross**, a nobleman of Scotland. He is Duncan's messenger to Macbeth, bringing him word of his new title, thane of Cawdor. He also bears news to his kinswoman, Lady Macduff, of her husband's departure from Scotland. His third office as messenger is to carry word to Macduff of the

destruction of his entire family. He fights in Malcolm's army against Macbeth.

**Lennox**, a nobleman of Scotland. He is Macduff's companion when the latter brings the message to King Duncan at Macbeth's castle. He also deserts Macbeth and joins forces with Malcolm.

**Lady Macduff**, a victim of Macbeth's most horrible atrocity. She is human and pathetic.

**Macduff's son**, a brave and precocious child. He faces Macbeth's hired murderers without flinching and dies calling to his mother to save herself.

**Siward** (SEE-wurd), the Earl of Northumberland, the general of the English forces supporting Malcolm. He is the type of the noble father accepting stoically the death of a heroic son.

**Young Siward**, the general's courageous son. He dies fighting Macbeth hand to hand.

**A Scottish doctor**, called in to minister to Lady Macbeth. He witnesses her sleepwalking in which she relives the night of the murder.

**A gentlewoman**, an attendant to Lady Macbeth. She is with the doctor and observes Lady Macbeth during the sleepwalking scene.

**A sergeant** (also called captain in the folio text), a wounded survivor of the battle at the beginning of the play. He reports to King Duncan the heroism of Macbeth and Banquo.

**A porter**, a comical drunkard. Roused by the knocking on the castle door, he pretends to be the gatekeeper of Hell and imagines various candidates clamoring for admission. The audience, knowing of Duncan's murder, can realize how ironically near the truth is the idea of the castle as Hell.

**Hecate** (HEHK-eh-tee), the patroness of the Witches. It is generally accepted among Shakespearean scholars that Hecate is an addition to the play by another author, perhaps Thomas Middleton.

**A messenger**, who brings word that Birnam Wood apparently is moving. His message destroys one of Macbeth's illusions of safety.

**Seyton**, an officer attending Macbeth. He brings word of Lady Macbeth's death.

**Menteith, Angus, and Caithness**, Scottish noblemen who join Malcolm against Macbeth.

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## The MacGuffin

*Author:* Stanley Elkin

*First published:* 1991

*Genre:* Novel

*Locale:* An unnamed city in the American Midwest

*Plot:* Psychological realism

*Time:* The 1990's

**Robert Druff**, also called Bob and Bobbo, the city commissioner of streets. At the age of fifty-eight, wearing his ill-fitting clothes and suffering from heart disease, a collapsed lung, and poor circulation, Druff finds himself "on the downhill side of destiny." He swallows Valium to calm himself and chews coca leaves to create a sense of "restored obsession," the antidote to what he otherwise experiences as a vaguely defined loss of force (a strange malady given that Druff never had much force to lose). Alternately overbearing and self-deprecating, ridiculing others and feeling ridiculous, he recognizes his own inconsequence. He is understandably disappointed by his "bozo itinerary" and "pointless odyssey"—his cruising for potholes and reviewing of streets he superintends yet barely knows. Frequently invoking the Marlon Brando line from *On the Waterfront*, "I could have been a contender," but realizing that it rings rather hollow, he constructs an increasingly involved and fantastic plot that is at once playful and paranoid. Druff has the starring role as detective/victim.

**Rose Helen Druff**, his wife of thirty-six years. They met while at college; the fact that her hip problem made her "a relatively presentable cripple" did little to assuage "her savage resentment," which led to a suicide attempt that in turn led Druff to propose marriage. She later saves him "from the humiliation of his body" following heart surgery. He cannot save his now deaf "Miss Kitty" (one of Druff's many allusions to television shows and films, in this case the television Western *Gunsmoke*) from her worst fear, that even though she wears her hearing aids to bed, she will burn to death in her sleep because the batteries will run down and she will be unable to hear the smoke alarm.

**Michael Druff**, sometimes called Mikey, their son. Even though he is thirty years old, he still lives with his parents. Despite his manic weight lifting, he is fearful and craven, like his father. Mikey's largely fantasized relationship with Su'ad al Najaf provides Druff with an important element in his own Hitchcock-like fantasy.

**Su'ad al Najaf**, called Suzy, a Lebanese graduate student who is fatally injured while crossing a city street. Her death, coupled with her Middle Eastern background and Mikey's having known her, lead Druff to concoct a fantastic plot

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