

An excerpt from....

"THE CASE OF THE PRINCE FORMERLY KNOWN AS HAMLET"
A Justin Thyme Mystery
By Bruce Kane

Copyright: Bruce Kane Productions 2007
All Rights Reserved
22448 Bessemer St.
Woodland Hills, CA 91367
PH: 818-999-5639
E-mail: bkane1@socal.rr.com

"The Case Of The Prince Formerly Known As Hamlet" A Justin Thyme Mystery is protected by copyright law and may not be performed or reproduced in any way without written permission from Bruce Kane Productions. To obtain permission go to www.kaneprod.com/contact.htm and complete the Contact Us Form.

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS All producers of "The Case Of The Prince Formerly Known As Hamlet" A Justin Thyme Mystery " must give credit to Bruce Kane as sole Author of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performance of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for any purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or production thereof, including posters, souvenir books, flyers, books and playbills. Bruce Kane must also appear immediately following the title of the Play and must appear in size of type not less than fifty percent of the size of type used for the title. The Author's name must be equal to or larger than the Director's, but never smaller than that of the Director. **The above billing must appear as follows: "The Case Of The Prince Formerly Known As Hamlet" A Justin Thyme Mystery by Bruce Kane.**

WARNING No one shall make any changes to this play for the purpose of production. Publication of these plays does not imply its availability for production.

"THE CASE OF THE PRINCE FORMERLY KNOWN AS HAMLET"
A Justin Thyme Mystery
By Bruce Kane

PROGRAM NOTES: My name's Thyme... Justin Thyme. I'm a fictional detective. I take on the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature. That's why King Hamlet had dropped a dime to tell me something was rotten in the state of Denmark. But, before the old guy could cry "murder most foul" somebody croaked him and I was up to my peepers in betrayal, a couple of more murders, revenge, another murder, a duel to the death, a couple of more murders, a king who wanted me dead, a prince who couldn't decide what he wanted and a heavy breathing skirt named Ophelia, who wanted everything, me included. And did I mention... murder?

It was the most dangerous case of my career and the greatest murder mystery ever told. If I were you pal, I'd take notes. There'll be a quiz at the end of this play.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: The play is obviously a tongue in cheek look at the film noir, hard boiled detective popularized by Bogart's portrayal of Sam Spade and Philip Marlowe. Because the play is a comedy, the natural instinct is to play everything for laughs. This would be a mistake. For the piece to work both humorously and dramatically it requires the actor portraying the lead character Justin Thyme to play him as close to the Bogart prototype without doing an impression. Thyme is tough, sardonic and world weary. He is the anchor of the piece. The straighter he plays it, the larger the characters from Hamlet can be. Thyme's laughs are best attained by him saying his lines with the utmost conviction. If he starts winking at the audience and trying to be funny, the piece loses its anchor and will drift every which way. If the portrayal of Thyme is disciplined and focused, the jokes will fly, the laughs will follow and the audience will remain involved and entertained.

CHARACTERS:

Justin Thyme – Bogart like, hard boiled detective. Tough, sardonic, world weary.
Hamlet – Prince of Denmark Self absorbed and just a little dense
Ophelia – Sexy, femme fatale
King Hamlet – Dying king
Gertrude- Hamlet's randy mother
Claudius – The evil new king
Polonius – Ophelia's aphorism spouting father
Laertes – Ophelia's vengeful brother
Rosencrantz & Guildenstern - Hamlet's tweedle dee and tweedle dum college chums Gungel - Claudius's strong arm man
Announcer – Boxing ring announcer.
Player King - Actor in Hamlet's play
Various citizens of Elsinore

SETTING: Elsinore Castle – A few walls, pillars and arches suggest the location.

LIGHTS UP:

Justin Thyme stands downstage dressed in a trench coat and fedora. A bluesy saxophone plays in the distance.

THYME: *(to audience)* It ended like most of my cases ...with everybody dead. The king was dead. The queen was dead. The prince was almost dead.

Thyme walks to center stage and kneels over the dying Prince Hamlet. The saxophone fades.

HAMLET: O, I die, good friend.
The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:
And the rest is silence.

THYME: Unfortunately the rest wasn't silence. For a guy who was checking out, Prince Hamlet had a lot to say.

HAMLET: O good friend,
If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart
Absent thee from felicity awhile,
And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain,
To tell my story.

THYME: It doesn't take much to see that the problems of one Danish prince don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world. But what the heck. Yeah. I'll tell your story. I owe you that much.

Thyme rises and walks downstage. Attendants enter and carry Hamlet off.

THYME: It all began with a summons from the King of Denmark . He wouldn't say what the problem was, but he sounded worried... Very worried. So, I packed my fedora and saxophone accompaniment and headed for Elsinore. Me? I'm Justin Thyme. I work for the F.B.I. The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. That's right, I'm a fictional detective. When I finally reached the castle, I was told I could find the king resting in the garden. The king was in the garden alright. But he wasn't resting.

Thyme crosses to find King Hamlet close to death.

KING HAMLET: *(in a choking voice)* Murder most foul.

THYME: Yeah. It usually is.

KING HAMLET: In my ear.

THYME: He was fading fast. I leaned in closer. *(speaks louder and slower)* Yeah, it usually is.

KING HAMLET: You don't have to shout. I'm dying, not deaf.

THYME: You said in your ear.

KING HAMLET: Poison in my ear.

THYME: That'd do it.

KING HAMLET: I must be avenged.

THYME: Sorry, king... I'm a shamus... A gumshoe... A dick...

KING HAMLET: Speaketh Elizabethan English, man.

THYME: I'm a cop. Vengeance isn't part of the job description

KING HAMLET: My son.

THYME: Your son murdered you?

KING HAMLET: No. No... My son didn't murder me. He must avenge me. Help him Thyme... Help Hamlet avenge me. Promise me, Thyme... Promise me.

THYME: Yeah... Sure... I'll get the guy who murdered you. Just one question.

KING HAMLET: Yes?

THYME: Who murdered you?

KING HAMLET: It was... It was... *(King Hamlet snorts loudly and dies)*

THYME: How do you spell that? He didn't answer me. He was dead and one thing you learn in the detective game is that dead men give lousy answers.

(Thyme rises and walks downstage. Attendants enter and carry off King Hamlet's body.)

THYME: I made a promise and now I was stuck with it. The code of the fictional detective demanded that I help the king's son avenge his death. If I ever find the guy who wrote that code, him and me are gonna have a long talk with a bright light and a rubber hose. So now I had to find out who whacked the old man. That's the way it works. First you find the killer, then you avenge. You could do it the other way around but then you'd have to kill everybody. My first step was to find Hamlet.

(Again we hear the sound of a bluesy, sexy saxophone as Ophelia enters.)

OPHELIA: Well, hello tall, dark and out of place.

THYME: *(to audience)* She was wearing a diaphanous gown that was dropping more hints than the host of a bad game show. She told me her name was Ophelia.

OPHELIA: My name's Ophelia.

THYME: But that her friends called her... Feelya

OPHELIA: But my friends call me ... Feelya.

THYME: She guessed that my name was Thyme. That I was the fictional detective.

OPHELIA: You must be Thyme... The fictional detective.

THYME: She said she knew from...

OPHELIA: Could you please stop doing that.

THYME: Sorry, button nose... Force of habit.

OPHELIA: My father warned me about men like you. He said you were T... R...O...U...B...L...E.

THYME: Looks and brains. Dames like this always spelled trouble. You know Prince Hamlet?

OPHELIA: Intimately

THYME: Something about the way she said "intimately" led me to believe she knew the Prince... "intimately." Know where I can find him?

OPHELIA: Through that door, down the corridor, past the turret, through the main ballroom, turn right at the armory, left at the keep, right at the chapel, right again at the throne room, down the next corridor and around the second tower. It'll be the third door on your right.

THYME: Thanks, dollface.

(Ophelia exits)

THYME: I watched her walk away on legs that started where legs usually start, around floor level and ended where you don't expect them to end... just below her ears. I followed her directions to Prince Hamlet's quarters.

(Thyme exits. We hear the sounds of footsteps, doors opening, doors closing, more footsteps, more doors opening, more doors closing, etc., etc. Just when we think we've come to the end, we hear more footsteps and more doors. Thyme finally returns from the opposite side of the stage.)

THYME: I arrived early the next morning. *(Prince Hamlet enters addressing a troupe of traveling players.)* When I found the prince he was talking to the strangest bunch of men I'd ever seen. Some were dressed as fools....

HAMLET: Speak the speech, I pray you, as I pronounced it to you, trippingly on the tongue. But if you mouth it, as many of our players do, I had as lief the town crier spoke my lines.

THYME: All of them were wearing make-up.

HAMLET: Nor do not saw the air too much with your hand...

THYME: And some were even wearing women's clothing. This could only mean one thing... They were actors.

HAMLET: It offends me to the soul to hear a robustious periwig-pated fellow tear a passion to tatters, to very rags, to split the...

THYME: Prince Hamlet.

HAMLET: Not now, man... Can't you see I'm busy... "directing?"

THYME: Your father sent me. The name's Thyme... I'm a fictional detective.

HAMLET: How is dear old popsy?

THYME: Dear old popsy is dear old deadsy?.

HAMLET: Deadsy?

THYME: As a door nail.

HAMLET: Oh poppycock...There must be some mistake.

THYME: No mistake, prince. He's dead. Murdered most foul.

HAMLET: How... final.

THYME: Any idea who would want to kill him?

HAMLET: You mean outside of a few neighboring kings, the husbands of the women he defiled, the entire royal court and the peasants whose land he stole?

THYME: Yeah... Outside of that.

HAMLET: Nobody I can think of.

THYME: He wants you to avenge him. He told me that with his dying breath.

HAMLET: You mean avenge as in kill someone?

THYME: I don't think he wanted you to take 'em dancing.

HAMLET: Mmmmm. To avenge or not to avenge, that is the question.

THYME: No. The question is to be or not to be.

HAMLET: Please don't tell me your one of those existential detectives, Mr. Thyme. This revenge thing. Can it wait?

THYME: Only until I find out who iced your old man.

HAMLET: Fine... You find out who killed popsy and we'll talk about it then. Now, if you'll excuse me... the theatre beckons. Places everyone... We'll start with the balcony scene. (*Hamlet and the Players exit*)

THYME: Finding out who killed popsy was going to be tougher than I figured. I decided to pay a visit on the Queen. Maybe she could point me in the right direction. After all, she'd been married to the King. That's why she was called the Queen.

(*Thyme crosses to Gertrude who enters gaily humming "Here Comes The Bride."*)

THYME: Your highness.

GERTRUDE: Yes?

THYME: I'm Thyme... Justin Thyme. I was with your late husband when he died.

GERTRUDE: Oh yes... The fictional dick.

THYME: I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions.

GERTRUDE: Make them short. I'm quite busy with all the planning, as you can well imagine.

THYME: I won't be long. I'm sure the planning of a state funeral under these conditions must be one pretty tough job.

GERTRUDE: State funeral?

THYME: Your husband... The late king.

GERTRUDE: Oh... That's all done. (*gaily*) I'm working on my wedding.

THYME: Wedding?

GERTRUDE: Yes. I'm getting married in the morning. Ding, dong the bells are gonna chime. We thought what with everyone all ready there for the funeral, we'd just kill two birds with one stone.

THYME: (*to audience*) Or with a little poison in the ear.

GERTRUDE: What?

THYME: I'm sorry. That was meant to be an aside. Can I ask who the lucky guy is?

GERTRUDE: Of course.

THYME: (*after an uncomfortable pause*) Okay, who's the lucky guy?

GERTRUDE: Claudius... My late husband's brother.

THYME: You're marryin' your brother-in-law?

GERTRUDE: That's correct.

THYME: Which, if I have this figured right, will make you your own sister-in-law. And makes your husband...

GERTRUDE: The new king.

THYME: I thought your son was next in line to the crown.

GERTRUDE: Have you met my son, Mr. Thyme?

THYME: Yes I have.

GERTRUDE: So, you understand. A king must be commanding, Mr. Thyme. Decisive. My son couldn't decide which way to go on a one way street.

THYME: She had a point.
(*Claudius enters*)

CLAUDIUS: Gertrude.

GERTRUDE: Claudius...

(*Claudius kisses Gertrude long and hard*)

THYME: I guessed that this was the king in waiting, himself.

GERTRUDE: (*melting*) Oh Claudius.

THYME: The way he threw a lip lock on the grieving widow, it was obvious he hadn't been waiting long.

GERTRUDE: (*swooning*) Oh Claudius.

(*Thyme clears his throat*)

GERTRUDE (*catching herself*) Oh Claudius, I'd like you to meet Mr. Thyme. He was the one who found my dear departed husband, just before the dear... departed.

CLAUDIUS: Thyme.

THYME: Your majesty.

CLAUDIUS: Not yet... But it has a nice ring, doesn't it? (*probing*) So, tell me Thyme what were you doing for my brother?

THYME: I don't know. He didn't live long enough to tell me.

CLAUDIUS: Did he say anything before he died?

THYME: (*to audience*) I coulda told him the king told me he was poisoned. I coulda told him the poison was poured in his ear. I coulda told him that he wanted his son to...

CLAUDIUS: (*impatiently*) Well, Thyme, did my brother say anything before he shuffled off this mortal coil?

THYME: I can tell ya' one thing, he didn't do no shuffling... Just coughed and died.

CLAUDIUS: (*relieved*) Well, that's good to hear. (*catching himself*) I mean the part about not doing any shuffling. Now, if you'll excuse us Thyme, her majesty and I have to discuss my ascension to the throne, if you know what I mean?

THYME: I knew exactly what he meant and so did the Queen.

GERTRUDE: (*giggling like a school girl*) Oh Claudius, you are such a bad boy.

THYME: I couldn't blame Claudius. The Queen was one good lookin' broad. Smooth and stacked and round where it counted. Especially in the heels department. I left the two love birds to their royal nooner and nosed around the castle to see what I could learn about the old king.

(*Gertrude and Claudius exit. Thyme passes a few local residents*)

MAN: Tyrant.

WOMAN: Reprobate

MAN #2: Greedy bastard.

THYME: (*to audience*) And those were the nice things. But, so far nobody was pointing a finger, except straight up. . I was getting nowhere fast. I needed to shake things up ... (*crosses to Hamlet*) Stir the pot... Throw a few bombs.

HAMLET: You want to do what?

THYME: Shake things up ...Stir the pot... Throw a few bombs.

HAMLET: What's my play got to with that?

THYME: I wrote this scene, Prince. I want you to put it in your play.

HAMLET: Scene? In my play? I suppose you'll want a writing credit.

THYME: Relax, Shakespeare... I only care about catchin' the guy who iced your old man. The way I see it, the killer has to be someone who had easy access to your father. Someone he trusted. Someone who had the three M's.

HAMLET: The three M's?

THYME: Yeah... Motive... Method... and... uh... Mopportunity.

HAMLET: I still don't understand what my play has to do with catching my father's killer.

THYME: Everybody who had the three M's will be at your play. The new scene will let the killer know we know. Make him nervous... And nervous people do nervous things.

HAMLET: Dastardly clever... So, what you're saying is...

THYME: The play's the thing...wherein we'll catch the conscience of the...

HAMLET: Yes, Thyme?

THYME: Uh... The guy who did it. So what do you say, prince? You gonna help me catch your father's killer?

HAMLET: Yes.

THYME: Good

HAMLET: And no. (*Hamlet exits*)

THYME: What was with this guy? Was he a coward, wishy-washy or just bi-polar? I couldn't figure him out. My guess was nobody ever would. (*Ophelia, Polonius and a few playgoers enter*) When I got to the theatre the crowd was already filing in.

OPHELIA: Good evening, Mr. Thyme.

THYME: (*to audience*) It was the Lady Ophelia. She drew me to her like iron filings to a magnet. I didn't know if it was the chantilly lace or the pretty face. Maybe it was the wiggle in her walk... or the giggle in her talk. All my life I'd been a sucker for a big eyed girl... Make me act so funny... Make me spend my money. Make feel real loose, like a long necked goose...

OPHELIA: Mr. Thyme,

THYME: Hold on... Oh baby that's what I like... You were sayin'?

OPHELIA: I'd like you to meet my father.

THYME: Nice to meet you. Any father of the Lady Ophelia is a father of mine.

POLONIUS: Neither a borrower nor a lender be.

THYME: Excuse me.

POLONIUS: To thine own self be true and it follows as the night the day...

OPHELIA: Later, father... Why don't you go in. The play is about to begin.

POLONIUS: Yes, yes... There's no business like show business.

THYME: Perhaps I'll see you at the after show party, Lady Ophelia.

OPHELIA: Please... Feelya.

THYME: I'd love to. (*to audience*) Right after I took my seat - I was in 2B, of course - the King and Queen made their first entrance as husband and wife.

(*Gertrude and Claudius enter to the music "Hail To The Chief"*)

THYME: A few moments later the curtain went up and the play began.

(*The Player King enters and speaks*)

PLAYER KING: Full thirty times hath Phoebus' cart gone round
Neptune's salt wash and Tellus' orb'd ground,
And thirty dozen moons with borrow'd sheen
About the world have times twelve thirties been,
Since love our hearts and Hymen did our hands
Unite commutual in most sacred bands.

THYME: As the play unfolded I couldn't help thinking how glad I was I didn't have any money in this turkey.

PLAYER KING: Faith, I must leave thee, love, and shortly too;
My operant powers their functions leave to do:
And thou shalt live in this fair world behind,
Honour'd, beloved; and haply one as kind
For husband shalt thou—

THYME: While everybody else watched the play, I kept my glimmers on the audience. The only one squirming was the Queen. And from I what I could see, it wasn't her conscience that was making her do it. It was the king. He was rubbing her leg... from her ankle to her forehead. He was still at it when the play mercifully came to an end.

(The Player King exits to mild applause. The playgoers begin milling about)

THYME: Everyone who was anyone in Elsinore had glommed an invite to the after show party. And everyone had an opinion.

WOMAN: There we no songs. I thought there was going to be songs.

FIRST MAN: Give me a good joust anytime.

SECOND MAN: Knights being skewered

FIRST MAN: Guts being spilled.

SECOND MAN: Large bosomed damsels being carried off.

FIRST MAN: Now, that's entertainment.

CLAUDIUS: Thyme.

THYME: Your majesty. *(pointedly)* How did you enjoy the play?

CLAUDIUS: It was alright up until that scene where the king has poison poured in his ear.

THYME: Tweak your conscience, did it?

CLAUDIUS: *(nervously)* Conscience? Me? Tweak? Ridiculous. Of course, it didn't tweak my conscience. *(dismissively)* Tweak my conscience. *(concerned)* Why would you ask if it tweaked my conscience?

(The play continues...)

[PURCHASE THE PLAY](#)

[RETURN TO HOME PAGE](#)