

“THE CASE OF THE TALE TOLD BY AN IDIOT”

A Justin Thyme Mystery

By Bruce Kane

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

CHARACTER LIST:

JUSTIN THYME – Bogart like private eye
EFFIE – Thyme's voluptuous secretary
MALCOM – Speaks in strong Scottish brogue
HECATE – Innkeeper at the Inn Of The Three Witches – Speaks in a cockney accent
LADY MACBETH – Wife of the king... Old flame of Thyme's – Sexy and very ambitious
MACBETH – King of Scotland –Speaks like he's watched too many Richard Burton movies
MACDUFF – MacBeth's right hand man – Rough around the edges
THREE WITCHES – The headliners at the Inn Of The Three Witches
CASTLE GUARD
SCOTTISH GUARD (can be played by actor who plays Castle Guard)

SETTING: Can be as elaborate as castle walls and all the rooms suggested in the play or it can be as simple as chairs, tables, a door and some greenery to suggest the locations.

“THE CASE OF THE TALE TOLD BY AN IDIOT”

A Justin Thyme Mystery

By Bruce Kane

SOUND: BLUESY SAXOPHONE MUSIC

LIGHTS UP:

(Justin Thyme, dressed in a trenchcoat and fedora, enters and speaks directly to the audience)

THYME: It began like most of my cases – with a guy in a plaid mini-skirt. I'd just wrapped up "The Garden Of Eden Murder Case" – the brother did it – when Effie, my incredibly well put together secretary with the limited typing skills, undulated in to my office to tell me I had a visitor.

(Effie undulates in to the sound of drumbeats to emphasize her undulations)

EFFIE: Ya' gotta visitah.

THYME: I told her to show him in. *(to Effie)* Show him in.

EFFIE: *(looks off stage and calls out)* Come on in.

(A Scotsman in a kilt enters. This is Malcom.)

THYME: *(to Effie)* Thanks, sugar hips.

EFFIE: Sure... Anytime.

(Effie undulates off to the sound of drumbeats)

THYME: We both watched her undulate out of my office and back to her desk. MALCOM:

Charming lassie.

THYME: Yeah... If you like blondes with long legs and short memories. *(to audience)* Fortunately, I did. My visitor told me his name was Malcom.

MALCOM: Me name is Malcom.

THYME: Have a seat. *(Malcom sits)* He sat down, modestly crossed his legs at the ankles, straightened his hem and told me he needed my help.

(Malcom sits. Thyme remains standing)

MALCOM: I need your help.

THYME: *(to audience)* I asked what I could do for him. *(to Malcom)* What can I do for you?

MALCOM: I want you to catch a murderer.

THYME: Murder, huh? Who got whacked?

MALCOM: Me father.

THYME: What makes you think you're old man's been croaked?

MALCOM: The seven stab wounds in his back.

THYME: *(to audience)* I immediately ruled out suicide. Malcom said that back home his father had been a big deal.

MALCOM: Back home my father was a big deal.

THYME: How big?

MALCOM: The biggest. He was the king.

THYME: That's big. Who do you think zotzed your old man?

MALCOM: The man who killed my father is called... *(with great portent)*... MacBeth.

THYME: *(to audience)* It was a story I'd heard a thousand times before. A king gets whacked. The son takes the rap and the killer takes everything else. . Of course, another story I'd heard a thousand times was the son ices the old man, splits for parts unknown and hangs the frame on somebody else. Either way it was my job to get the bottom of it. Me? I'm Justin Thyme. I work for the F.B.I. The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the toughest, dirtiest case in English literature. That's right... I'm a fictional detective. The King of Scotland had his ticket punched and it was up to me to find out who his travel agent was. Malcom and I agreed to split up. *(to Malcom)* I'll take the high road.

MALCOM: I'll take the low road.

THYME: *(to audience)* I figured I'd get to get to Scotland before him. *(Thyme and Malcom shake hands. Malcom exits)*

(SOUND: THUNDER, HOWLING WIND AND POURING RAIN)

(Thyme turns up his collar)

THYME: *(to audience)* Cold, wet and miserable, I stumbled into The Inn Of The Three Witches. *(Thyme turns and walks into the Inn Of The Three Witches)* Ramshackle, tumble down, off the beaten path in a secluded part of a remote forest, miles from nowhere, the joint wasn't exactly a Starbucks. But then again, there wasn't one on every corner, either. I was shaking off the rain as best as I could when a snagged tooth crone with rotting flesh dropped into the chair next to me. *(Hecate enters and sits down next to Thyme)*

HECATE: Well, 'ello there cold, wet and miserable. What'll it be?

THYME: Whaddya got?

HECATE: We got a nice fenny snake.

THYME: How do you cook that?

HECATE: In the cauldron boil and bake.

THYME: What else ya got?

HECATE: There's eye of newt, toe of frog, wool of bat, tongue of dog, Adder's fork, blind-worm's sting, and, the 'ouse special... lizard's leg. We serve that with a mixed green salad, of course.

THYME: Of course.

HECATE: And for the more developed palate there's Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips.

THYME: *(to audience)* For some reason, my appetite had taken a powder. *(to Hecate)* I'll just settle for directions.

HECATE: Suit yourself. But you're passin' up a real mouth waterin' treat, y'are.

THYME: I'm looking for Dunsinane Castle.

HECATE: Goin' to see the MacBeths, are ya?"

THYME: Just the directions, toots.

HECATE: He was here himself, he was. Sat right where you're sittin'. Old high and almighty. Course, we knew he was comin' so we put on our best rags, we did. Gave 'im a real show. 'Ad the fire burnin' and the cauldron bubblin'. We was a sight alright. Prophsyin'... Tellin' 'im 'ow 'he was gonna be the big cheese and all. 'E loved it, 'e did. You shoulda seen him. Rode outta here all puffed up like a Christmas goose, 'e was."

THYME: About those directions

HECATE: Sure you don't want to hang around till closin' time? I get off at midnight, if you know what I mean.

THYME: *(to audience)* I knew exactly what she meant. *(Thyme walks downstage. The lights go down of the Inn Of The Three Witches)* That's why I was out the door faster than you can say "acid reflux."

(SOUND: THUNDER, HOWLING WIND AND POURING RAIN)

(Thyme turns his collar up)

THYME: Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled out of the darkness and onto Dunsinane Castle.

CASTLE GUARD: (O.S.) Who goes there??

THYME: Justin Thyme, Fictional Detective.

(The Castle Guard enters)

THYME: I'm here to see the king. Official business.

GUARD: Follow me.

THYME: *(to audience)* The guard led me to a small ante-room, just off a waiting room next to the dining room, behind a reception room that opened on to a sitting room, that overlooked a garden room that led into the throne room.

(Thyme and the Guard exit. We hear the sounds of footsteps, doors opening... doors closing... more footsteps... more doors, etc., etc, etc. until Thyme enters from the opposite side of the stage, slightly winded)

THYME: She was there... Waiting for me.

(Lady MacBeth enters looking very slinky and very sexy)

LADY MACBETH: I've been waiting for you.

THYME: *(surprised)* Nola? Nola MacDougal?

LADY MACBETH: Funny, no one's called me that in a long time.

THYME: *(to audience)* Back when I knew her, everyone called her Nola. ... She was a showgirl. With yellow feathers in her hair and a... dress cut down to there. She would merengue and do the cha-cha. That was at the Copa. The Copa de Ora. Back then it was the hottest spot north of Sonora. In those days Nola was beautiful, smart, ambitious, dangerous, scheming, conniving, irresistible, calculating, cunning, deceitful and selfish. In short she was everything I ever wanted in a woman. The years had been kind to Nola, although I had to admit... she'd changed. *(to Lady MacBeth)* You haven't changed a bit, Nola.

LADY MACBETH: You always were full of crap, Thyme. But keep it up.

THYME: *(to audience)* If anything, she'd added a few more erogenous zones. Mmmmmm....I liked that line. I decided to go with it. *(to Lady MacBeth)* If anything, sugar hips, you've added a few more erogenous zones.

LADY MACBETH: You always knew the right thing to say, didn't you, Thyme?

THYME: *(to audience)* It worked. I'd have to remember it.

LADY MACBETH: Still mad at me, Thyme?

THYME: Why? Because you dumped me without saying a word?

LADY MACBETH: Maybe.

THYME: Because you slipped out of my life one night and disappeared without so much as leavin' me a post-it note.

LADY MACBETH: Perhaps...

THYME: Because you ripped out my heart and stomped on it with those three inch sling back, open toed, stiletto heels you always wore with black seamed stockings and a red dress that showed off more curves than the New York Yankees pitching staff?

LADY MACBETH: I'm glad to see you're a man who doesn't hold a grudge.

THYME: Just one question.

LADY MACBETH: Sure.

THYME: Why? Give me one good reason.

LADY MACBETH: He could offer me wealth. He could offer me power. He could offer me...

THYME: I said just one.

LADY MACBETH: What could you offer me, Thyme? A fictional detective's pay and an under funded retirement plan? Admit it, Thyme. I had no future with you. I was just someone to feed your insatiable passion. Bank the fires of your raging lust. Ride your throbbing, thrusting...

THYME: *(to audience)* She was killing me softly with her words. I had to shut her up and I knew just how to do it.

(Thyme grabs her up in his arms and kisses her)

LADY MACBETH: Thyme... Please... No...Please... Please... *(succumbing in a big way)* Oh, please.

(BLACKOUT)

(Lights back up on Thyme and Lady MacBeth sitting or lying side by side. She's smoking a cigarette)

LADY MACBETH: *(Sighs)* I can't remember the last time two minutes flew by so quickly. So, tell me Thyme... What are you doing here? And don't tell me you came all this way just for a little highland "fling."

THYME: I'm investigating a death.

LADY MACBETH: Who died?

THYME: The King.

LADY MACBETH: The king? Don't be ridiculous. The king is in perfect health.

THYME: How come you so much about the King of Scotland?

LADY MACBETH: Well, for one thing, my name's not Nola MacDougal anymore. It's MacBeth...

Lady MacBeth.

THYME: Then that means the king is...

LADY MACBETH: My husband.

THYME: *(to audience)* Husband! That word had a way of focusing a man's attention.

LADY MACBETH: I thought you knew.

THYME: *(to audience)* I hadn't even started my investigation and the case had already gotten complicated. According to the code of the fictional detective you don't fool around with the wife of your prime suspect. Of course, I didn't know she was the wife of my prime suspect at the time I took her to ecstasyville, so I was off the hook technicality wise. Somehow, I couldn't imagine Nola mixed up in murder. Extortion, blackmail, bookmaking, mail fraud, loan sharking... Sure... But murder? Or was I just kidding myself? Like I said, it was getting complicated.

LADY MACBETH: *(impatiently)* Are you done?

THYME: Sorry. *(to audience)* Nola told me I was wasting my time.

LADY MACBETH: You're wasting your time, Thyme.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said they found the men who killed King Duncan.

LADY MACBETH: We found the men who killed King Duncan.

THYME: *(to audience)* She said their hands were drenched in blood.

LADY MACBETH: Their hands were...

THYME: I think I covered that already. I'd like to talk them. These killers of yours.

LADY MACBETH: Too late. You know those gargoyles hanging on the front gate when you came in?

THYME: Yeah.

LADY MACBETH: Those aren't gargoyles.

THYME: Why the rush to judgment, blueberry cheeks?

LADY MACBETH: To assure the peasants that justice had been served. That society was back in balance once again. That they could return to their miserable lives and that we could return to making them miserable.

THYME: Not that I don't believe every word you're telling me persimmon knees... *(to audience)* Yeah... Right... Nola MacDougal couldn't draw a straight line with a ruler. *(to Lady MacBeth)* But, I'll just hang around and ask a few questions... just for appearances sake. You understand, don't you, cumquat nose?

LADY MACBETH: Sure, Thyme... I understand.

THYME: Just for the record. Where were you when the old king got whacked?

LADY MACBETH: In my room... And I've got seven witnesses to prove it.

THYME: *(to audience)* Knowing Nola MacDougal, I was surprised it was only seven. One more thing paprika toes... When you talk to your husband... don't say anything about what went on here. I wouldn't want him to get the right idea.

LADY MACBETH: No problem...*(starts to exit and turns back)* I've forgotten it already. *(she exits)*

THYME: *(disappointed)* Oh. *(to audience)* Before I could figure out whodunit, I had to figure out whocouldadunit. So I started asking questions. A lot of questions. *(MacDuff enters)* Excuse me... Mind if I ask you a lot of questions?

MACDUFF: Depends on who's doin' the askin'?

THYME: The name's Thyme.

MACDUFF: Oh sure, the fictional detective.

THYME: Word travels fast.

MACDUFF: Lady MacBeth said you'd be nosin' around.

THYME: What else did she say?

MACDUFF: That you were a complete stranger. That she'd never seen you before and that I shouldn't listen to ugly rumors.

THYME: Just for the record, what's your name?

MACDUFF: MacDuff...

THYME: You work for MacBeth... MacDuff?

MACDUFF: Yeah... I work for MacBeth... You might say I'm his right hand.

THYME: Yeah... And who would you say is his left hand?

MACDUFF: Wouldn't know.

THYME: *(to audience)* You come across this a lot in my business. The right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing. *(to MacDuff)* You wouldn't happen to know where MacBeth was when the old king got dead.

MACDUFF: You don't think MacBeth had anything to do with the king's death.

THYME: I'll ask the questions.

MACDUFF: You're barking up the wrong tree, mister. MacBeth had no reason to kill Duncan.

THYME: What makes you think so? He got to be king, didn't he?

MACDUFF: MacBeth never wanted to be king. He was perfectly happy being Thane of Cawdor. Stealing from the peasants, suppressing the serfs... Having sex with the scullery maids.... Then the witches told him he would be thane of Glamis and everything changed.

THYME: Thane of Glamis?

MACDUFF: Yeah... It's the castle on the Frammis.

THYME: MacBeth is thane of Glamis on the Frammis?

MACDUFF: No. I told ya... MacBeth is thane of Cawdor.

THYME: If MacBeth is thane of Cawdor, then who's thane of Glamis on the Frammis?

MACDUFF: Tammis.

THYME: Tammis?

MACDUFF: Yeah... Tammis of Glamis on the Frammis.

THYME: *(to audience)* It all sounded like double talk to me. . But there was no way I was gonna let MacDuff know that. I continued to play dumb. It wasn't hard to do. *(to MacDuff)* So, how did MacBeth react to the old king's kickin' the bucket?

MACDUFF: MacBeth was really broken up by it. He loved Duncan like a father. He hasn't been the same peasant taxing, wife stealing, fun lovin' guy he used to be.

THYME: What do you mean he's not the same?

MACDUFF: Spends most every day and night wandering the halls talking to himself.

THYME: One last question. Do you know where Lady MacBeth was when the old king turned up face down?

MACDUFF: Lady MacBeth had nothin' to do with the old guy's death. Nothin'. You do anything to upset the lady and you'll have me to answer to. You got that Thyme?

THYME: You like Lady MacBeth, don't you?

MACDUFF: Yeah... Sure... What's not to like? She's kind, gentle, sweet and loving. You don't know her like I do Thyme. *(suspiciously)* You don't know her like I do, do ya Thyme?

THYME: Apparently not. You'd do anything for Lady MacBeth, wouldn't you?

MACDUFF: You bet I would.

THYME: Like kill for her?

MACDUFF: Only if she asked me... Hey, what are you getting' at Thyme?

THYME: Nothing. One more question.

MACDUFF: I thought you said the last question was your last question.

MACBETH: Why, you keepin' score? Where were you when Duncan got whacked?

MACDUFF: In my room... And I got seven witnesses that can prove it.

MACBETH: *(enters; the following lines are spoken like a Shakespearean monologue)*

Like the beat beat beat of the tom-tom

When the jungle shadows fall

Like the tick tick tock of the stately clock

As it stands against the wall

(Thyme turns to look at MacBeth. A very nervous MacDuff uses the moment to make a hasty retreat)

THYME: *(to audience)* Suddenly there he was... Big Mac himself. Although we hadn't been formally introduced I knew it was the king. When you've been a detective as long as I have, you learn to make these deductions. The fact he was wearing a crown didn't hurt, either.

(The play continues)

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