

"MACBETH THE KNIFE"

A Dick Shamus Mystery

Written by

Bruce Kane

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Contact: [bk@kaneprod.com](mailto:bk@kaneprod.com)

"MacBeth The Knife" is a script in hand, live on stage recreation of an old time radio broadcast or a brand new comedy mystery podcast. The play is written to be performed by actors at microphones in modern dress reading from scripts.

The set may be as minimal as a row of chairs for the actors and two or three microphones for them to speak into. It can also be as elaborate as a full recreation of a recording studio or anything in between.

The cast can be a full compliment of actors or a minimal number playing all the parts and changing their vocal characteristics to represent the characters they are playing.

Because the actors will be reading from scripts rehearsal times can be reduced although performances should be honed before going on stage.

Sound effects and music can be performed live on stage or recorded and played back electronically. The latter may provide you with more variety and flexibility.

However you choose to mount your production of "Murder At Dunsinane," it is a comedy, so hopefully you will have as much fun performing it as the audience will have watching you.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

DICK SHAMUS - Hard boiled detective

EFFIE - Shamus's secretary

MALCOLM - Son of murdered king

LADY MACBETH - Femme fatale

MACDUFF - Scottish soldier

MACBETH- Scottish king

HECATE - Head witch

THE THREE WITCHES - Crones who sing

VARIOUS GUARDS

ACT ONE

*(The cast, scripts in hand, file in and take seats behind stand up microphones. The actors playing the Stage Manager and Shamus approach microphones. The remaining actors will approach the microphones when it is their turn)*

STAGE MANAGER

We go in five... four... three... two...

*(The Stage Manager points. Bluesy film noir saxophone is heard. After a moment, the actor playing Shamus speaks)*

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus. Dick Shamus. I work for the F.B.I. The Fictional Bureau of Investigation. I handle the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature. That's right, I'm a fictional detective.

*(Saxophone out. After a beat, stirring music up and under)*

ANNOUNCER

It's the Adventures of Dick Shamus, Fictional Detective starring Jason Tindal as Dick Shamus, Fictional Detective. Tonight's episode "Murder At Dunsinane."

*(Music out)*

SHAMUS

It was raining that Monday I got back to the office. I'd just spent six weeks at sea on a tub called The Pequod. The captain had taken up permanent residence in Davey Jones Lokcer and I was there to find out why. Was it murder? Was it an accident? Everyone. I talked to told me the same thing, almost like it had been written out for them. The captain was killed by a whale. Not just any whale. A white whale. It had to be true. Who would ever come up with a story like that? I was writing up my report when Effluenza Wachowski, my over developed secretary with the under developed typing skills, pulsed into my office.

*(SFX: Drumbeats emphasize Effie's walk)*

SHAMUS

She told me I had a visitor.

EFFIE

You got a visitor.

SHAMUS

I told her to tell him I'm busy. Tell him I'm busy. She said he'd come a long way to see me.

EFFIE

He's come a long way to see you.

SHAMUS

I asked her how far is long? How far is long? She said Scotland.

EFFIE

Scotland.

SHAMUS

That is long. I asked her what he wanted. What does he want? She said..

EFFIE

How long are you gonna keep doing that?

SHAMUS

Sorry, apple hips, just establishing a style. Anything else I should know?

EFFIE

He has a very unusual fashion sense.

SHAMUS

Meaning?

EFFIE

Meaning, he's wearing a plaid mini skirt.

SHAMUS

Really?

EFFIE

Really.

SHAMUS

You've peaked my curiosity, tangerine cheeks. Have the gentleman come right in.

EFFIE

(bellowing)

Come on in!!!

*(Door opens)*

MALCOLM  
(Scotch accent)

Mr. Shamus?

SHAMUS

I'm Shamus.

MALCOLM

Me name is Malcolm.

SHAMUS

Please, to meet you Malcolm. Have a seat.

MALCOLM

Thank you.

SHAMUS

He sat down, modestly crossed his legs at the ankles and straightened his hem.

EFFIE

If you want me for anything else boss, just whistle. You know how to whistle, don'tcha? You just put your lips together and...

SHAMUS

And what?

EFFIE

Do I have to think of everything?

*(SFX: Door closes.)*

SHAMUS

What can I do for you, Malcolm?

MALCOLM

I need your help.

SHAMUS

That's what I'm here for.

MALCOLM

I want you to catch a murderer.

SHAMUS

Murder, huh? Interesting. Who got whacked?

MALCOLM

Me father.

SHAMUS

I'm sorry to hear that. What makes you think your old man was murdered?

MALCOLM

The seven stab wounds in his back.

SHAMUS

I immediately ruled out suicide. Malcolm said that back home his father had been big deal.

MALCOLM

Back home me father was a big deal.

SHAMUS

How big?

MALCOLM

The biggest. He was king.

SHAMUS

It don't get much bigger than that. Any idea who did it?

MALCOLM

One.

SHAMUS

Does he have a name?

MALCOLM

Everyone has a name.

SHAMUS

I know that. I was just setting up a dramatic reveal.

MALCOLM

Oh. In that case his name is...  
(dramatically)

MacBeth.

*(Dramatic music sting)*

MALCOLM

How was that?

SHAMUS

Good. The King of Scotland had gotten his ticket punched and it was up to me to find out who his travel agent was. Your case intrigues me Malcolm. I'll take it.

MALCOLM

Thank you, Mr. Shamus.

SHAMUS

I think we should split up. Travel separately.

MALCOLM

I'll take the high road.

SHAMUS

I'll take the low road.

MALCOLM

I'll get to Scotland afore yee.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind howling,  
rain falling)*

SHAMUS

Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled into "The Inn Of The Three Witches." Ramshackle, tumble down, off the beaten path in a secluded part of a remote forest it wasn't exactly a Starbucks. But, then again, there wasn't one on every corner. I was shaking off the rain when a snagged tooth crone with rotting flesh dropped into the chair next to me.

HECATE

Well, 'ello there tall, dark and miserable. What'll it be?

SHAMUS

Whaddya got?

HECATE

We got a nice fenny snake.

SHAMUS

How do you cook that?

HECATE

In the cauldron boil and bake.

SHAMUS

Anything else?

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.

SHAMUS

Of course.

HECATE

As for the more discerning palate, there's nose of Turk and Tartar's lips.



SHAMUS

For some reason my appetite took a powder. I'll just settle for directions, sweet knees.

HECATE

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

SHAMUS

I'm looking for Dunsinane Castle.

HECATE

Goin' to see the MacBeth's are ya?

SHAMUS

Just the directions, toots.

HECATE

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

SHAMUS

About those directions.

HECATE

Sure you don't wanna 'ang around till closin'? I get off at midnight, if you know what I mean.

SHAMUS

I knew exactly what she meant. That's why I was out the door faster than you can say acid reflux.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind howling)*

SHAMUS

Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled out of the darkness and into Dunsinane Castle.

GUARD

Who goes there?

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus... Dick Shamus. I'm here to see the king. Official business.

GUARD

Wait here.

*(Musical interlude to indicate passage of time)*

GUARD

Okay, Shamus. You're cleared. Follow me.

*(SFX: During the following we hear footsteps, doors opening, doors closing, more footsteps, more doors opening and closing.)*

SHAMUS

The guard led me through a small ante room, just off a waiting room, next to a dining room, behind a reception room, that opened onto a sitting room, that overlooked a garden room, that led to a stairway, around a tower, through an armory, around a kitchen, into another ante-room that led into the throne room. Excuse me.

GUARD

Yes?

SHAMUS

Isn't there a shortcut or something?

GUARD

This is the shortcut.

*(Door opens)*

SHAMUS

When we finally got where ever it was we were going...

GUARD

Mr. Shamus, ma'am.

*(MUSIC: Bluesy film noir saxophone)*

SHAMUS

She was there. Waiting for me.

LADY MACBETH

*(sultry voice)*

I've been waiting for you.

SHAMUS

Nola? Nola MacDougal?

LADY MACBETH

Funny, no one's called me that in ages.

SHAMUS

Back when I knew her, everyone called her Nola. She was a showgirl with orange feathers in her hair and a dress cut down to there. In those days Nola was beautiful, smart, ambitious, dangerous, scheming, conniving, calculating and cunning. In short, she was everything I ever wanted in a woman.

*(Saxophone out)*

SHAMUS

The years had been kind to Nola, although, I had to admit, she'd changed. You haven't changed a bit Nola. If anything, she'd added a few more erogenous zones. Mmmmmm, I liked that line. I decided to go with it. If anything, tangerine toes, you've added a few more erogenous zones.

LADY MACBETH

You always did know the right thing to say to a girl, didn't you Shamus?

SHAMUS

It worked. I'd have to remember it.

LADY MACBETH

Still mad at me, Shamus?

SHAMUS

Why? Because you dumped me without saying a word?

LADY MACBETH

Maybe.

SHAMUS

Because you slipped out of my life one night and disappeared without so much as a post-it note?

LADY MACBETH

Perhaps.

SHAMUS

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 the showed off more curves than Sandy Koufax the day he struck out eighteen.

LADY MACBETH

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

SHAMUS

Just one question.

LADY MACBETH

Sure.

SHAMUS

Why? Give me one good reason.

LADY MACBETH

He could offer me wealth. He could offer me power. He could offer me...

SHAMUS

I said just one.

LADY MACBETH

What could you offer me, Shamus? A fictional detective's pay? An underfunded retirement account? Admit it Shamus, I had no future with you. . I was just someone to feed your insatiable passion. Bank the fires of your raging lust. Satisfy your...

SHAMUS

She was killing me softly with her words. I had to shut her up and I knew just how to do it.

LADY MACBETH

Shamus... Shamus...

(swooning)

Ohhhh, Shamus.

*(Musical transition)*

LADY MACBETH

(sighing)

I can't remember the last time two minutes flew by so quickly.

SHAMUS

Yeah. Tell me about it.

LADY MACBETH

Can I ask what you're doing here? And don't tell me you came all this way just for a little highland "fling."

SHAMUS

I'm investigating a death.

LADY MACBETH

Who died?

SHAMUS

The King.

LADY MACBETH

The King? Don't be ridiculous. The king is in perfect health.

SHAMUS

How come you know so much about the King of Scotland?

LADY MACBETH

Well... for one thing, my name's not Nola MacDougal anymore. It's...

SHAMUS

Yes?

LADY MACBETH

MacBeth.

*(Dramatic music sting)*

LADY MACBETH

Lady MacBeth.

*(Dramatic music sting)*

SHAMUS

That means the king is...

LADY MACBETH

My husband.

SHAMUS

Did you say husband?

LADY MACBETH

Yeah... That's what I said. Husband.

SHAMUS

That's what I thought you said.

LADY MACBETH

Then why did you make me repeat it?

SHAMUS

Dramatic effect. Husband. That word had a way of focusing a man's attention. 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 on a trip to ecstasyville. So technicality wise, I was off the hook. Somehow, I couldn't picture Nola mixed up in murder. Extortion, blackmail, bookmaking, mail fraud... sure. But murder? Like I said, it was getting complicated.

LADY MACBETH  
Are you done?

SHAMUS  
For now. Nola told me I was wasting my time.

LADY MACBETH  
Your wasting your time.

SHAMUS  
She said they found the men who murdered King Duncan.

LADY MACBETH  
We found the men who murdered King Duncan.

SHAMUS  
She said their hands were drenched in blood.

LADY MACBETH  
Their hands were drenched in blood.

SHAMUS  
She said...

LADY MACBETH  
Could you please stop doing that.

SHAMUS  
I'd like to talk to them, these killers of yours.

LADY MACBETH  
Too late.

SHAMUS  
How so?

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

SHAMUS  
Yeah.

LADY MACBETH  
Those aren't gargoyles.

SHAMUS  
Why the rush to judgment?

LADY MACBETH  
To assure the peasants that justice had been served. That society was back in balance one again. That they could  
(MORE)

LADY MACBETH (cont'd)

return to their miserable lives and that we could return to making them miserable.

SHAMUS

Not that I don't believe every word you're telling me, cumquat ears. Yeah... Right... Nola couldn't draw a straight line with a ruler. If it's okay I'll just hang around and ask a few questions, just for appearances sake.

LADY MACBETH

You do that, Shamus.

SHAMUS

Just for the record, where were you when the king got whacked?

LADY MACBETH

In my room. And, I've got seven witnesses to prove it.

SHAMUS

Knowing Nola, I was surprised it was only seven. One more thing, persimmon hips... When you talk to your husband...

LADY MACBETH

Yes?

SHAMUS

I wouldn't say anything about what went down here. I wouldn't want him to get the right idea.

LADY MACBETH

No problem. I've forgotten it already.

*(Musical transition)*

SHAMUS

Before I could figure out whodunit, I first had to figure out whocouldadunit. My modus operandi - that's Latin for modus operandi. And you thought I was just another pretty face. Like I said, my modus operandi is to ask a lot of questions. Sometimes you get answers and sometimes you don't get answers and sometimes the answers you don't get are more important than the answers you do get. The only problem you didn't get 'em.

SHAMUS

Excuse me, sir.

MACDUFF

Yes, what is it?

SHAMUS

Mind if I ask you a lot of questions?

MACDUFF

Depends on who's doing the asking.

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus.

MACDUFF

The fictional detective

SHAMUS

Word travels fast.

MACDUFF

Lady MacBeth said you'd be nosin' around.

SHAMUS

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.

SHAMUS

Just for the record, what's your name?

MACDUFF

MacDuff.

SHAMUS

You work for MacBeth, MacGruff?

MACDUFF

MacDugg. It's MacDuff.

SHAMUS

MacDuff.

MACDUFF

I work for MacBeth. You might say I'm his right hand man.

SHAMUS

And who would you say is his left hand man?

MACDUFF

I didn't know he had a left hand.

SHAMUS

Everybody's got a left hand.



MACDUFF

If you say so.

SHAMUS

You wouldn't happen to know where MacBeth was when King Duncan got dead.

MACDUFF

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

SHAMUS

Just asking.

MACDUFF

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

SHAMUS

What makes you think that? 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. Oppressing the serfs. Sleeping with the scullery maids. Then the witches told him he'd be Thane of Glamis.

SHAMUS

Thane of Glamis?

MACDUFF

It's the castle on the Frammis.

SHAMUS

MacBeth is thane of Glamis on the Frammis?.

MACDUFF

No. Like I told you. MacBeth is Thane of Cawdor.

SHAMUS

Then who's Thane of Glamis on the Frammis?

MACDUFF

Tammis.

SHAMUS

Tammis?

MACDUFF

Yes. Tammis of Glamis on the Frammis.

SHAMUS

It all sounded like double talk to me. Tell me something MacGruff...

MACDUFF

MacDuff. It's MacDuff.

SHAMUS

MacDuff. How did MacBeth react to Duncan's kickin' the bucket?

MACDUFF

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

SHAMUS

How is he different?

MACDUFF

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

MACBETH

(reciting)

I am always chasing rainbows.

MACDUFF

Like that.

SHAMUS

Suddenly, there he was. Big Mac himself.

MACBETH

Watching clouds drifting by.

MACDUFF

If you've got nothing else, Shamus, I'm out of here.

SHAMUS

For some reason the sudden appearance of the king had spooked MacGruff.

MACDUFF

(from a distance)

MacDuff. It's MacDuff.

MACBETH

My schemes are like all my dreams. Ending in the...

SHAMUS

Your majesty.

MACBETH

Is this a dagger I see before me? The handle toward my heart.

SHAMUS

No. Actually, it's soup spoon.

MACBETH

Damn, I coulda sworn it was a dagger.

SHAMUS

It's not.

MACBETH

Are you sure?

SHAMUS

Positive.

MACBETH

Good thing I didn't try to stab anybody with it. How embarrassing would that be?

SHAMUS

Your highness, could I ask you a few questions?

MACBETH

How many is a few?

SHAMUS

More than some. Less than a bunch.

MACBETH

That sounds good. By the way, who are you?

SHAMUS

The name's Shamus.

MACBETH

The fictional detective. My wife mentioned you.

SHAMUS

Really? And what did she say, if I may ask?

MACBETH

That you were a complete stranger. That she'd never seen you before and that I shouldn't listen to ugly rumors. What is it you wanted to know?

SHAMUS

Just curious as to where you were when King Duncan bought the farm?

MACBETH

Bought the farm? You must have me confused with Old McDonald.

SHAMUS

No. Where were you when King Duncan was iced? Whacked? Shivved?

MACBETH

I don't understand.

SHAMUS

Murdered?

MACBETH

That I understand. I was in my quarters. And I've got seven witnesses to prove it.

SHAMUS

So far everybody had an alibi. It was the same alibi, but it was an alibi.

MACBETH

(voice trailing off)

Some fellows look and find the sunshine.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind, rain)*

MACBETH

I always look and find the rain.

SHAMUS

Something MacGruff said...

MACDUFF

(from a distance)

MacDuff. It's MacDuff.

SHAMUS

Something MacDuff said kept rattling around in my brain like a loose screw. I decided to check it out.

*(End of sound effects.)*

SHAMUS

Wet, cold and miserable, I stumbled back into The Inn Of The Three Witches.

HECATE

Well, look who's 'ere. Couldn't say away from ole Hecate, could ya, duckie?

SHAMUS

What can I say liver face? You're sore eyes are a sight.

HECATE

'Ow you do go on.

SHAMUS

The last time I was here, you told me MacBeth had been sitting where I was sitting.

HECATE

Same exact spot.

SHAMUS

That you gave him a real show.

HECATE

That we did.

SHAMUS

You also said you knew he was coming.

HECATE

That's right.

SHAMUS

How did you know he was coming?

HECATE

She told us.

SHAMUS

She? Who?

HECATE

Never told us her name. Just handed me a pouch full of gold coins, she did.

SHAMUS

What did she look like?

HECATE

About so high. Wore a red dress, she did. With them stockings with the seams up the back and them shoes with real high pointy heels.

SHAMUS

Stilettoes.

HECATE

'Ad one of them, too.

SHAMUS

Why did she want you to know MacBeth was coming here?

HECATE

Said it was his birthday. Wanted us to give him a special show. Even wrote it all out for us. Told her we'd be real 'appy to do it, but there was one teensy, weensy, little problem.

SHAMUS

What was that?

HECATE

None of us can read.

SHAMUS

What did she do?

HECATE

Got right up on that table and did the whole number for us, she did. Ain't never seen nothin' like it.

SHAMUS

That had to be Nola. She always did her best work on a table top. Could you show me what she had you do?

HECATE

Sure.

(calls out)

Latasha... Latoya... Lashana.

SHAMUS

Three of the most decrepit crones to ever haunt a stage shuffled out and hit it.

THE THREE WITCHES

(sing)

All hail MacBeth, new thane of Glamis  
 Thou shalt be king and that's a promise  
 Be strong, be proud and take no sass  
 Ain't no here can kick your ass.  
 MacBeth shall never vanquished be,  
 Until Birnham Wood come to Dunsinane see.  
 That's your future short and tall.  
 And now we're outta here, y'all.

*(Musical transition)*

SHAMUS

It was all starting to make sense. But proving it wasn't going to be easy. It never is.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind, rain)*

SHAMUS

Wet, cold and miserable, I stumbled back into the castle.  
The place was quiet... Dead quiet.

*(SFX. Very loud bonging of a  
clock.)*

SHAMUS

Except for that. I opened the door to the cell that was passing for my room when I saw it. A knife stuck in the mattress where my back would have been. That knife raised a lot of questions. Who was trying to kill me? Why did MacBeth walk around reciting pop tunes? And why did King Duncan's son wear a skirt? If I wanted to stay alive, I had to be careful moving around the castle. Someone had put a bullseye on my back. I pulled the knife out of the mattress and backed out of the room. I was cautiously making my way along a narrow corridor when a door opened and a man stepped out. I couldn't tell who it was but I recognized the woman posed seductively in the doorway.

LADY MACBETH

I can't remember the last time two minutes went by so... quickly.

SHAMUS

I couldn't understand his reply. It's hard to hear what a guy is saying when he's got a tongue in his mouth...that isn't his own. I waited for the dame to close the door then moved in.

SHAMUS

MacGruff.

MACDUFF

It's MacDuff. MacDuff.

SHAMUS

Surprised?

MACDUFF

Surprised? No. Why should I be surprised?

SHAMUS

I don't know. You look surprised. You sound surprised. You act surprised.

MACDUFF

I'm surprised you'd think I was surprised.

SHAMUS

Then you're not surprised?

MACDUFF

No, of course I'm not surprised.

SHAMUS

I find that surprising.

MACDUFF

I'm surprised that you're surprised that I'm not surprised.

SHAMUS

Considering I just caught you playing tonsil hockey with the lady of the house.

MACDUFF

It's not what it seems.

SHAMUS

It isn't?

MACDUFF

Okay, it is what it seems. You're not gonna tell the king are you?

SHAMUS

What you and the first lady do is your own business.

MACDUFF

Thanks, Shamus. I owe you one.

SHAMUS

It's time to pay up.

MACDUFF

So soon? Isn't there usually a gap, a grace period?

SHAMUS

Do you know where Lady MacBeth was when King Duncan turned up face down.

MACDUFF

Lady MacBeth had nothin' do with the Duncan's death. You do anything to upset the lady and you'll have me to answer to. You got that Shamus?

SHAMUS

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 here like I do Shamus.

(suspiciously)

You don't know her like I do, do ya Shamus?



SHAMUS

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

MACDUFF

You bet your bodkin I would.

SHAMUS

Like kill for her?

MACDUFF

Only if she asked me... Hey, what are you getting at?

SHAMUS

One more question. Where were you when Duncan got whacked?

MACDUFF

With Lady MacBeth. And we've gotten seven witnesses to prove it.

SHAMUS

MacGruff's alibi..

MACDUFF

That's MacDuff. MacDuff.

SHAMUS

MacDuff's alibi got me to wondering what they were doing that required seven witnesses. I was about to ask him when...

MACBETH

(reciting)

Day and night. Night and day.

MACDUFF

It's the king.

MACBETH

Why is it so that this longing for you follows where ever I go?

MACDUFF

If he asks, I was never here and I've got seven witnesses to prove it.

SHAMUS

Your majesty.

MACBETH

(a little tipsy)

Shamus... Is that you?

It's me. SHAMUS

Wanna a little drinkie? MACBETH

Some other time. SHAMUS

You don't know what you're missing... Hundred year old scotch... Imported. MACBETH

You know anything about this? SHAMUS

Is that a soup spoon I see before me? MACBETH

It's a knife. Recognize it? SHAMUS

It's mine. MACBETH

So you admit it. SHAMUS

Admit what? MACBETH

That you tried to kill me. SHAMUS

I didn't try to kill you. MACBETH

You didn't? SHAMUS

No. I killed you. MACBETH

I was standing there right in front of him and he was talking like I was a dead man. Just for conversation sake, can I ask why you killed me? SHAMUS

She told me too. MACBETH

She told you to? SHAMUS

MACBETH

The one and only Lady MacBeth. Sure you don't want a little drinkie?

SHAMUS

No thanks. Did she tell you why she wanted me dead?

MACBETH

I don't know. Why does any woman want any man dead?

SHAMUS

Good point. Did she give you a specific reason?

MACBETH

She did say you were a good detective. That sooner or later you'd figure out I'd killed Duncan.

SHAMUS

Did she tell you to do that too? Kill Duncan.

MACBETH

You don't know my wife like I do, Shamus.

(suspiciously)

You don't know my wife like I do, do you Shamus?

SHAMUS

No, no. Of course I don't. The guy tried to kill me once already, I didn't see any reason to make him mad.

MACBETH

She wanted to be Queen. I mean, what woman doesn't want to be a queen? It is a step up from princess. And in order to become a queen in Scotland, a woman has to be married to a king. That's the rule. I didn't make the rule. Somebody else made the rule. But that's the rule. And a rule is rule. And only a ruler can change the rule. That's another rule.

SHAMUS

I get it. I get it.

MACBETH

I wasn't a king, back then. I was a thane. I liked being a thane. It's a good job being a thane. You get to hunt when you want. Fish when you want. Play a little golf when you want. You play golf, Mr. Shamus?

SHAMUS

A little.

MACBETH

The Scotch invented golf. Did you know that?

SHAMUS

No, I didn't.

MACBETH

It's true. We invented golf. Golf and haggis.

SHAMUS

Great. Two things that give you indigestion. Why are you telling me all this?

MACBETH

Why not? You're a ghost. Who are you going to tell?

SHAMUS

So, that's it. MacBeth thinks I'm a ghost. Either he was drunker than I thought or mad as a hatter. But, then again, this was twelfth century Scotland. These guys believed in wood sprites.

MACBETH

Besides, what difference does it make who I tell? I'm invincible.

SHAMUS

Nobody's invincible.

MACBETH

I am. The prophecy says so. I will reign as king until Birnham Wood comes to Dunsinane. And there are only two chances of that happening. Slim and...Well, one other I can't think of right off. Sure you don't want a little drink?

SHAMUS

I had my confession. But there wasn't anything I could do with it. The king had me in check. It was time to bring Malcolm up to date.

*(SFX: Thunder, rain, wind)*

SHAMUS

Wet, cold and miserable, I stumbled into Malcolm's camp.

GUARD

Who goes there?

SHAMUS

Dick Shamus, fictional detective. I'm here to see Malcolm, son of Duncan, brother of Donalden, cousin of Sean, uncle of Hamish and close personal friend of Phil.

GUARD

Aye, we've been waitin' for ya'. I'll take you to Malcolm.

SHAMUS

The guard led me across a stream, around a meadow, down a path, through a wood, along a creek, over a hill, down a dale and up to the heather on the hill.

SHAMUS

Isn't there a shorter way?

GUARD

This is the shorter way.

MALCOLM

Greetings Dick Shamus.

SHAMUS

Greetings, Malcolm.

MALCOLM

What news do you have for us?

SHAMUS

I've got good news and bad news.

MALCOLM

Me and my men could use some good news.

SHAMUS

The good news is you're in the clear. MacBeth copped to everything. Killing your father... Stealing the crown.

MALCOLM

Aye, that is good news. We must to action. My men are going crazy sitting around all day listening to bagpipe music.

SHAMUS

I don't blame them.

MALCOLM

We'll attack Dunsinane Castle in the morrow and I will claim my rightful crown.

SHAMUS

That's the bad news. There's no way three hundred men in skirts are going to take Dunsinane Castle.

MALCOLM

If me and my laddies have to spend one more day here in Birnham Wood, we'll...

SHAMUS

Wait a minute. Did you say Birnham Wood?

MALCOLM

Aye.

SHAMUS

Did you say this is Birnham Wood?

MALCOLM

Yes, that's what I said. This is Birnham Wood.

SHAMUS

That's what I thought you said.

MALCOLM

Then why did you make me repeat it?

SHAMUS

Dramatic effect. Malcolm, I think I know a way to make this work.

MALCOLM

Let's hear it man.

*(Musical interlude to indicate passage of time)*

SHAMUS

Then you storm the castle, capture MacBeth and snatch the crown.

MALCOLM

Shamus, I do believe your plan is just crazy enough to work.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind, rain)*

SHAMUS

Cold, wet and miserable, I slipped back into the castle. It was quiet...Dead quiet.

*(SFX: Loud gong striking several times)*

SHAMUS

Except for that. I made my way quietly down the corridor and slipped into my room.

LADY MACBETH

Hello, Shamus.

*(Saxophone plays)*

SHAMUS

She was waiting for me.

LADY MACBETH

I was waiting for you.

SHAMUS

I asked what I could do for her. What can I do for you? She said...

LADY MACBETH

We're not going to go through that again, are we?

SHAMUS

No, not if you don't want to.

LADY MACBETH

There's something you should know.

SHAMUS

What's that?

LADY MACBETH

MacBeth confessed.

SHAMUS

I know. I was there.

LADY MACBETH

No. I don't mean you. I mean he confessed to me that he confessed to you.

SHAMUS

MacBeth confessed to you that he confessed to me.

LADY MACBETH

Yes, he confessed to me that he confessed to you.

SHAMUS

I'm surprised that he confessed to you that he confessed to me, I have to confess.

LADY MACBETH

I'm surprised he confessed to you.

SHAMUS

Why do you think he did it? Confess to you that he confessed to me.

LADY MACBETH

Because he was never cut out to be king. He can't handle the pressure. When push came to shove he wasn't capable of screwing his courage to the sticking place.

SHAMUS

Screw what?

LADY MACBETH

His courage to the sticking place?

SHAMUS

What does that mean?

LADY MACBETH

I have no idea. He's not like you, Shamus. We used to be a great team, remember?

SHAMUS

What are you suggesting, cinammon ears?

LADY MACBETH

Why don't you come over here and we can "discuss" it.

SHAMUS

Nola had something up her sleeve. Or she would have, if she'd had a sleeve. The code of the fictional detective clearly states you never take an accessory to murder on a trip to the moon on gossamer wings. However, addendum 5, paragraph 7, subparagraph 8, states that it is not only permissible but encouraged if it's in pursuit of evidence and the party in question is put together like a brick pagoda. I made a mental note to send a case of Chateau Lafayette-we-are-here to the guy who wrote that addendum.

LADY MACBETH

Shamus, how would like to be King of Scotland?

SHAMUS

I don't know. I never thought about it. What does it pay?

LADY MACBETH

If you're interested, I think I can swing it.

SHAMUS

Isn't there already a king?

LADY MACBETH

There's going to be an opening very shortly.

SHAMUS

Can I give you my answer in the morning?

LADY MACBETH

Sure... There's no rush.

*(Musical transition)*

LADY MACBETH

When I said there was no rush, Shamus, I meant there was no rush.



*(SFX: Shouts, running  
footsteps, muffled commands)*

LADY MACBETH  
What's going on out there?

SHAMUS  
Stay here, vanilla knees. I'll see what's happening.

*(SFX: Door opens, sounds grow  
louder)*

SHAMUS  
MacGruff...What's going on?

MACDUFF  
That's MacDuff... MacDuff

SHAMUS  
Whatever. Why are all these knights, bishops and pawns  
running around?

MACDUFF  
The castle is under attack.

LADY MACBETH  
Attack? Who's attacking the castle?

MACDUFF  
I's Malcolm, his army and three annoying bagpipers.

LADY MACBETH  
Where's the king?

MACDUFF  
On the battlements.

LADY MACBETH  
Fending off the attackers?

MACDUFF  
Reciting iambic pentameter.

LADY MACBETH  
We'd better get up there.

MACDUFF  
No, please don't go, milady. It's too dangerous. Stay here  
with me. I'll protect you.

LADY MACBETH  
You're kidding, right?

MACDUFF

This is our chance, highness. While the battle goes on out front, we can slip out the back. Just you and me.

LADY MACBETH

Really? Just you and me.

MACDUFF

I own some land on the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond. We could build a cottage. Raise sheep.

LADY MACBETH

Of course. You and me. Just what I've always wanted to do, raise sheep. But first you must do something for me.

MACDUFF

Anything for you, milady.

LADY MACBETH

I want you to go up on the battlements...

MACDUFF

Yes, milady.

LADY MACBETH

And I want you to do what you do best.

MACDUFF

Of course, milady. Do what I do best.

LADY MACBETH

That's right.

MACDUFF

One question, milady.

LADY MACBETH

Yes?

MACDUFF

What is it I do best?

LADY MACBETH

Why, making yourself a target, of course.

MACDUFF

Of course, your majesty.  
(calling out)  
Fear not, MacBeth, I am coming.

LADY MACBETH

Oh what fools these mortals be. Especially the male mortals. This is the chance we've been waiting for, Shamus. Follow me.

SHAMUS

Where are we going?

LADY MACBETH

Up that stairway to the corridor that runs through the upper tower, around the armory, down the ladder, across the bridge, down the stairs, over the ramp, up the stairs that lead to the lower tower through the door and across the battlements.

SHAMUS

Isn't there a shortcut?

LADY MACBETH

That is the shortcut.

*(SFX: Footsteps, doors opening, doors closing, more footsteps, chains rattling, gates squeaking. This give ways to the noise of battle... Trumpets, men shouting.)*

LADY MACBETH

We're here.

SHAMUS

Ever think of putting in an elevator?

MACBETH

*(sounding very  
Shakespearean)*

If it were done when tis done, then 'twere well it were done quickly.

LADY MACBETH

He's right, Shamus. Let's do it. Right here. Right now.

SHAMUS

As much as I'd love to, I don't think we've got two minutes to spare. In case you haven't noticed, the castle is under attack.

LADY MACBETH

Don't flatter yourself, flatfoot. This our chance to make MacBeth mac dead.

SHAMUS  
I've got a better idea.

LADY MACBETH  
What's that?

SHAMUS  
He thinks I'm dead, right?

LADY MACBETH  
Right.

SHAMUS  
Let's go with that.  
(sounding ghostly)  
MacBeth... MacBeth...

MACBETH  
Who calls my name?

SHAMUS  
It is I. The ghost of Dick Shamus.

MACBETH  
Begone, ghost of Dick Shamus. Begone.

SHAMUS  
Fat chance. The jig is up. You're through.

MACBETH  
The jig will be up when Birnham Wood comes to Dunsinane.

SHAMUS  
Look around you MacBeth. What do you see?

MACBETH  
Trees... As far as the eye can see... Nothing but trees.

SHAMUS  
Yes, trees. But you're missing the big picture. You're not seeing the forest for the trees.

MACBETH  
Ah yes, I see it now. A forest. A big green, advancing forest.

SHAMUS  
Do you recognize the forest?

MACBETH  
Yes. It's... It's... Ohhhhh sh...

SHAMUS

That's right MacBeth. Birnham Wood has come to Dunsinane.

MACBETH

But how is that possible.

SHAMUS

Malcolm relocated Birnham Wood to Dunsinane.

MACBETH

Every branch? Every leaf?

SHAMUS

Every twig. Like I always say, you can't make an omelete without causing an ecological disaster.

MACBETH

I must flee. A horse... A horse... My kingdom for a horse.

LADY MACBETH

Wrong play you Scottish has been. It's all over... You're through... Turn in the crown and clean out your desk.

MACBETH

I don't understand. What's happening?

LADY MACBETH

Call it a hostile takeover.

MACBETH

The prophecy has come to pass.

LADY MACBETH

There was no prophecy, you moron. I paid off the witches to tell you all that garbage so you'd have the cojones to knock off Duncan and I could become Queen.

MACBETH

There is no prophecy?

LADY MACBETH

Just like Shamus here isn't a ghost.

MACBETH

Of course he's a ghost. I killed him

SHAMUS

(normal voice)

Sorry to bust your bubble, Mac. But all you killed was my mattress.

MACBETH

Listen to me haggis for brains. There's no such thing as ghosts. There's no such thing as witches. There's no such thing as prophecies and the tooth fairy doesn't leave money under your pillow.

MACBETH

Then who does?

MALCOLM

It worked laddie.

SHAMUS

Malcolm

MALCOLM

Your plan worked. We've captured Dunsinane.

SHAMUS

They're all yours Malcolm.

LADY MACBETH

What are you talking about Shamus? We had a deal, remember? You would get rid of MacBeth, marry me and together we would rule this land. And, in the tradition of those kings and queens before us, we'd suck the peasants dry.

SHAMUS

You had a deal, Nola. But you forget one thing.

LADY MACBETH

What's that?

SHAMUS

I'm a cop, a gumshoe, a dick.

LADY MACBETH

You can say that again.

SHAMUS

Sometimes it's good business to let people think you're corrupt. They trust you more.

MACDUFF

Milady... Milady...

LADY MACBETH

What is it MacGruff?

MACDUFF

MacDuff... MacDuff.

LADY MACBETH

Whatever.

MACDUFF

What's to become of me? I did everything you asked.

SHAMUS

What do you mean everything she asked?

LADY MACBETH

Don't say a word.

SHAMUS

Come on, kid... Spill. She can't do anything to you now. What did you mean "everything?"

MACDUFF

Like for instance, doin' away with those two poor unfortunates.

SHAMUS

Which two unfortunates.

MACDUFF

Those two poor unfortunates starin' down at ya from the front gate.

SHAMUS

That was you?

MACDUFF

She made me do it, Shamus. I didn't wanna do it. She made me kill 'em. And, all the time she knew it. I guess she always knew it.

SHAMUS

Poor kid. He never had a chance. Better men than him have gotten caught in Nola's web. He made the mistake of falling for a dame who promised him a trip to the moon on gossamer wings, and instead booked him a coach seat to hell. Come to think of, every coach seat is hell.

MALCOLM

I'll take that crown now MacBeth. Life, as you knew it, is over.

MACBETH

(sound very  
Shakesperean)

Life... What is life? 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.

LADY MACBETH

Spare me, the rhyming couplets.

SHAMUS

She's all your Malcolm.

LADY MACBETH

How can you do this, Shamus? Don't I mean anything to you. What about the times I fed your insatiable passion? Banked the fires of your raging lust? Satisfied your...

MACBETH

You fed his insatiable passion? Banked the fires of his raging lust. Satisfied..?

SHAMUS

Like there was no tomorrow.

MACBETH

You never fed my passion. Banked my fires... Satisfied...

LADY MACBETH

Because you're a sniveling coward. Not like Malcolm here. Now this is a real man.

MALCOLM

You really think so?

LADY MACBETH

(seductively)

Oh yes, I do. Are you not a man who stands up for what he believes?

MALCOLM

I guess you could say that.

LADY MACBETH

Are you not a man willing to fight and die for his country?

MALCOLM

That is true. Very true.

LADY MACBETH

And are you not a man who does it all in a flattering, knee length tartan plaid skirt by Stella McCartney?

SHAMUS

It was over. King Duncan's killers had been exposed. Malcolm had been exonerated and returned to his rightful place on the throne. Now it was his turn to bleed the peasants dry.

MACBETH

Out, out brief candle.



SHAMUS

As for MacBeth... Well, in the end he was just an ordinary guy who wanted what ordinary guys want. To hunt a little. Fish a little. Get in a round of golf and now and then... Sleep with the help. Of all the characters I've come across, MacBeth has to be the most tragic.

MACBETH

Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow  
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.

SHAMUS

Not to mention the most depressing. And, finally there was Nola.

LADY MACBETH

Oh, Malcolm, a king like you needs a queen by his side  
who'll feed his insatiable passion?

MALCOLM

I suppose.

LADY MACBETH

Banks the fires of his raging lust?

MALCOLM

From time to time.

LADY MACBETH

Satisfy his...

SHAMUS

Like the man said...Whatever Nola wants, Nola gets.

*(SFX: Thunder, wind, rain.  
Saxophone music up and out.)*

THE END