

"SHAKESPEARE IN THE WRONG HANDS"

Written by

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*(Lights up on the the Inn Of The Three Witches. Juliet is pacing impatiently while Desdemona sits at a table doing needlepoint. On a table sits the head of Anne Boleyn.)*

*(The NARRATOR enters and addresses the audience)*

NARRATOR

*(to audience)*

William Shakespeare, actor, poet, playwright, husband, father and most importantly for the producers of this show, dead for four hundred years. No copyright, no litigation, no lawyers, no complaining. We begin, here, at The Inn Of The Three Witches where we are about to meet five of the Bard's most enduring female characters, including the faithful and tragic Desdemona.

*(Gestures toward Desdemona)*

JULIET

*(petulantly)*

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?

NARRATOR

The young and tragic Juliet.

ANNE

*(calling out)*

Hey... Somebody... How about a straw?

NARRATOR

And the tragic Anne Boleyn. Or at, least the head of the tragic Anne Boleyn. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to an Evening Of Shakespeare.. In The Wrong Hands.

*(He exits)*

JULIET

Romeo... Romeo.

ANNE

Is she gonna do that all day?

DES  
Leave her alone. She's in love.

ANNE  
Give me a break.  
(to Juliet)  
Hey, kid... How long have you and this..?

JULIET  
Romeo.

ANNE  
Whatever. How long have you two been getting it on?

JULIET  
"Getting it on?" We are definitely not "getting it on."

ANNE  
Really? Then what's the point?

DES  
They only just met. A real relationship takes time to grow.

ANNE  
You read too much. You know that?

JULIET  
The real problem is...

ANNE  
Okay. Now we're getting somewhere. What's her name?

JULIET  
Who?

ANNE  
The real problem.

JULIET  
There is nobody else.

ANNE  
There's always somebody else.

JULIET  
The problem is he's a Montague.

ANNE  
So, he's a Montague.

JULIET  
I'm a Capulet. Our families hate each other.

DES

Tell me about it.

JULIET

Your families don't get along either?

DES

His side is fine. It's mine. The whole racial thing.

JULIET

We're always having to sneak around.

ANNE

Isn't that hot?

DES

Please. Look what sneaking around got you.

*(The front door slams open.  
Katherine storms in)*

KATHERINE

I...! Hate...! Men...!

ANNE

Look who's here. If it isn't The Duchess of Shrews...bury.

KATHERINE

Men!... Are!...Pigs!

DES

Oh, you don't mean that, Katherine

KATHERINE

All men... are... pigs.

ANNE

Okay. Let's hear it. What did Petruchio do this time?

KATHERINE

He's a man. Isn't that enough?

DES

Oh, you say that about every man you go out with.

KATHERINE

That's because every man I go out with is a pig.

DES

What about Lorenzo? You two were pretty hot and heavy there for a while.

KATHERINE

Until he turned into a whiny, sniveling, momma's boy pig.

ANNE

How about Antonio? He was definitely not a momma's boy.

KATHERINE

Antonio was a preening, self absorbed, narcissistic... pig.

DES

Marcello seemed very nice.

KATHERINE

He was.

DES

So? What was the problem?

KATHERINE

He was also married. The pig.

ANNE

Face it Katie. The only reason you fight with all these guys is for the make up sex afterwards. Not that I'm criticizing.

*(Hecate, an ancient crone, in rags, shuffles in.)*

HECATE

Can I get anybody anything?

KATHERINE

A double espresso.

HECATE

Miss Desdemona? Miss Juliet?

*(Juliet waves her off)*

DESDEMONA

I'm fine.

ANNE

A straw would be nice.

HECATE

I'll be right back.

*(Hecate exits)*

JULIET

*(agrily)*

If he doesn't show up soon...

KATHERINE

What's her problem?

DES

Her young man didn't show up.

KATHERINE

(to Juliet)

Count your blessings.

JULIET

What am I going to do?

KATHERINE

For one thing, you're gonna stop mooning around like a sick cow over this... what'shisname?

JULIET

Romeo.

KATHERINE

Really? That's a name? I thought it was a condition.

JULIET

What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

KATHERINE

Who sold you that bill of goods?

JULIET

He told me that.

KATHERINE

Before or after he put his hand down your dress?

DES

Behave yourself, Katie.

KATHERINE

You want this Romeo of yours to take you seriously?

JULIET

With all my heart.

KATHERINE

Then tell him to get lost. Take a long walk off a short pier.

JULIET

Why would I want to do that?

KATHERINE

Men are only interested in one thing. And as soon as they get that one thing, they want that one thing from someone else.

ANNE

Someone else. That was my middle name for a while.

KATHERINE

Take for example that pig Petruchio.

DES

How can you talk like that about the man you're going to marry?

KATHERINE

Marry? Who said I was going to marry Petruchio?

DES

Your father for one.

KATHERINE

My father just wants me out of the house.

DES

Who could blame him?

KATHERINE

I could be marrying a goat for all he cares.

JULIET

I'm confused.

KATHERINE

Don't be. That's the man's job. Your job is to keep him that way.

ANNE

Where were you when I was tall?

KATHERINE

It's not the destination that counts, it's the journey. Men love journeys. All you have to do is keep moving the goalposts.

DES

Nonsense. Othello and I are perfectly happy.

KATHERINE

Really? Happy?

ANNE

What have you heard?

DES

She hasn't heard anything because there is nothing to hear.

KATHERINE

Well, Petruchio told me that Iago told him that there's trouble in paradise.

DES

Iago is just a big troublemaker. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

KATHERINE

If you say so.

ANNE

Come on Des. It's only us girls. You've got to talk to someone.

DES

Well, Othello has been acting a little strange lately.

ANNE

Like how strange? What strange?

DES

He keeps asking me questions.

ANNE

About what?

KATHERINE

Yeah. What kind of questions?

DES

Little things. Dumb things.

ANNE

Does he think you're, you know, like fooling around?

DES

Of course, not.

ANNE

Are you, like, fooling around?

DES

How could you even think such a thing?

ANNE

If he thinks you are, you might as well be.



DES  
(to Juliet)  
Don't listen to her. She's just bitter.

ANNE  
Only you could have the worst of two worlds. A husband that thinks you're fooling around without the fun of actually fooling around.

DES  
Could we please change the subject?

KATHERINE  
This is exactly what I was talking about.

DES  
Don't you tell this impressionable child she should be having promiscuous relationships.

KATHERINE  
I'm telling her just the opposite. If Othello was still pursuing you, he wouldn't be accusing you of sleeping with other men. He'd be competing with them.

JULIET  
(impatiently)  
Oh, where is he?

KATHERINE  
Forget him.

JULIET  
I can't.

KATHERINE  
He's not the only fish in the sea. Look at you. You're young, you're hot and if I didn't like you so much, I'd hate you. You've got to let him know that as far as you're concerned, it's raining men.

JULIET  
He'll just lose interest.

KATHERINE  
Au contraire, my dear. Au contraire. That's when he'll really get interested.

DES  
Starting a relationship on false pretenses can only end in disaster.

KATHERINE

False... True... They're all pretenses and they all end up in disaster. When the ship goes down you just have to make sure you're the one in the life boat.

DES

I could never live that way.

KATHERINE

Petruchio would never accuse me of having an affair.

DES

Why not?

KATHERINE

Because he's too busy trying to start one with me.

ANNE

You mean you and Petruchio aren't...

KATHERINE

That's right.

ANNE

Then what do you..?

KATHERINE

I said Petruchio and I aren't. I didn't say I wasn't.

DES

I'm shocked.

ANNE

You go girl.

DES

Juliet, don't listen to these two.

JULIET

Maybe they're right. Maybe I should see other boys.

DES

Do you want to end up like her?

*(She points at Anne)*

ANNE

Hey... Don't forget. I was once queen of England.

DES

And look at you now.

ANNE

But when I lived, I really lived. Not like you. All prim and proper and tasting life in delicate little forkfuls.

(to Juliet)

You listen to Katherine. No man will ever rule her.

KATHERINE

High five.

(starts to high five  
Anne, then realizes)

Sorry.

ANNE

No problem.

KATHERINE

Everyone calls me a shrew and worse. Well, if I'm such a damn shrew why is Petruchio still hanging around? Come on Desdemona, you're the expert on love and marriage. Why didn't Petruchio take off long ago?

DES

Maybe he sees beyond your exterior. Maybe he sees the real you.

KATHERINE

First of all I've got a great exterior. And second of all, he hasn't gotten beyond first of all.

DES

You can't really believe that.

KATHERINE

As soon as he gets his hands on this exterior he's gonna be looking around to get his hands on every other exterior... and posterior he can.

DES

If you have such a low opinion of Petruchio why do you care if he stays or doesn't stay?

KATHERINE

That's my business.

JULIET

Oh... You love him.

KATHERINE

Don't be ridiculous.

DES

The girl is right. You do love him.

KATHERINE

That is completely irrelevant.

DES

How can you say love is irrelevant?

KATHERINE

Because it's a weakness. Especially in a woman. It makes you vulnerable. And I will never be vulnerable again.

DES

But, you'll also never know true happiness.

KATHERINE

If it means that I'll never have to walk in any man's shadow, it's a trade off I'll gladly make.

JULIET

I don't think I could do that.

KATHERINE

Wait till you come home some day and find lipstick on Romeo's tunic and it's not yours.

JULIET

Romeo wouldn't do that.

KATHERINE

He's a man, isn't he?

ANNE

That's why I never waited around for any man to cheat on me. If lipstick was going to show up on any tunics, I made sure it was mine.

DES

And it usually was.

*(Hecate enters. She hands a note to Juliet, gives Katherine her espresso and drops a straw in Anne's flagon)*

ANNE

About time.

*(Hecate exits)*

JULIET

It's from him.

DES

What does it say.

JULIET

It says my bounty is as boundless as the sea, my love as deep. The more I give to thee, the more I have, for both are infinite.

ANNE

Would someone mind sticking a finger down my throat.

JULIET

He wants to see me.

KATHERINE

Then let him make the trip.

ANNE

And make sure it's over broken glass.

DES

You go see him, child.

KATHERINE

You're making a big mistake.

JULIET

Parting is such sweet sorrow, that I shall goodbye til it be morrow.

*(Katherine puts her finger  
down Anne's throat)*

ANNE

Thank you.

*(Juliet runs off)*

DES

You two should be ashamed of yourselves.

ANNE

It's a tough world out there. The child's gotta be prepared.

DES

Don't either of you remember the first time you fell in love? How startlingly it was. How utterly wonderful.

KATHERINE

How old are you?

DES

Well, I still feel that way about Othello. Just like the first day I laid eyes on him. And you feel that way about Petruchio... I can tell.

KATHERINE

You're a very sick woman.

DES

And what about the first time you met Henry? What did you see?

ANNE

A large stomach and all the wealth of England.

*(Hecate returns)*

HECATE

Can I get you ladies anything else?

DES

Hecate...

HECATE

Yes, Miss Desdemona.

DES

Have you ever been in love?

HECATE

There was a warlock I had my good eye on once. Everyone said it was a match made in hell. Sexiest man I ever met. Big ears, horns, fangs... Skin like rotting flesh... Man, he was hot.

KATHERINE

Didn't work out?

HECATE

Caught him with some witch.

KATHERINE

What did you do?

HECATE

Turned him into a toad.

KATHERINE

A toad. You gotta teach me how to do that.

DES

I hate to break this up but I have to get going.

KATHERINE

Yeah... Me too.

ANNE

Sure, you don't want to stay around for another flagon?

DES

No, I gotta go. I told Othello that I'd make his favorite dish for him.

KATHERINE

What a coincidence. I promised Petruchio I'd throw his favorite dish at him.

*(Katherine and Desdemona  
exit.)*

HECATE

(shaking her head)

Tsk... Tsk ... Tsk.

ANNE

What's wrong, Hecate?

HECATE

Nothing. Nothing.

ANNE

You've seen something, haven't you?

HECATE

So sad.

ANNE

What is so sad?

HECATE

Poor Miss Desdemona.

ANNE

What about poor Miss Desdemona?

HECATE

In a fit of jealousy...

ANNE

Yes? What about a fit of jealousy?

HECATE

Othello..

ANNE

Yes? Yes?

HECATE

He will strangle poor, lovely Miss Desdemona.

ANNE

Oh my God. And what bout Juliet? Did you see something about Juliet?

HECATE

So young. So tragic. Because of a terrible misunderstanding, she will take her own life.

ANNE

Oh no... No.

HECATE

And Miss Katherine.

ANNE

What about Miss Katherine?

HECATE

It's too horrible to consider. Even for me.

ANNE

You must tell me.

HECATE

She will suffer the worst fate of all.

ANNE

What could be worse than dying?

HECATE

She will marry Petruchio.

ANNE

(alarmed)

Oh, no!

HECATE

It gets worse.

ANNE

What could be worse.

HECATE

She will cook for him.

ANNE

Horrors.

HECATE

She will clean his house.



ANNE  
I can't listen to this.

HECATE  
She will wash his clothes.

ANNE  
The infamy... The infamy.

HECATE  
And then...

ANNE  
And then what?

HECATE  
She will iron them.

ANNE  
This is just too awful to bear.

HECATE  
There's more.

ANNE  
More?

HECATE  
She will get fat with him.

ANNE  
(catty)  
Well, she always was a little on the heavy side.

HECATE  
She will fight with him constantly.

ANNE  
That's our Kate.

HECATE  
And then they will have incredible make up sex.

ANNE  
Every cloud has its silver lining.

HECATE  
Which will result in a dozen screaming brats.

ANNE  
Oh the barbarity. The barbarity. Poor, poor Katherine.

HECATE

Well, you asked.

*(She exits)*

ANNE

*(to audience)*

Ladies... Ladies... Ladies... I hope you've been paying close attention. There's a cautionary lesson to be learned from the fates suffered by dear Desdemona, lovely Juliet, and outspoken Katherine. Men can be wonderful diversions, God knows. And sometimes they're even necessary. But take it from someone who's been there. Never... ever... ever... lose your head over one.

*(The table with Anne's head, is removed and replaced with a chair draped in a beautifician's smock and a table on which sit combs, brushes, scissors, etc. We are now in Ruby's House Of Beauty somewhere in Elsinore Castle.*

*OPHELIA enters and starts fussing with her hair in a hand mirror.*

*The Narrator returns)*

NARRATOR

We move now to thirteenth century Denmark and Ruby's House of Beauty, located somewhere in Elsinore Castle.

*(The Narrator exits as Ruby enters)*

RUBY

Stop playin' with your hair girl. That's my job.

OPHELIA

Oh Ruby, you have to make me especially beautiful.

RUBY

Honey, this is a comb, not a magic wand.

OPHELIA

I mean it. I have to look really, really hot tonight.

RUBY

What's the big occasion?

OPHELIA

I'm going to be a princess.

RUBY

Trust me girl, you've been a princess for a very long time.

OPHELIA

No, I mean of real princess. With the tiara and the whole nine yards.

RUBY

Who died?

OPHELIA

Nobody died.

RUBY

I thought with you people, every time someones dies, you all move up one.

OPHELIA

I'm going to marry a prince. I'm going to be Princess Ophelia.

RUBY

He told you he was a prince, did he?

OPHELIA

He is a prince.

RUBY

I'd be careful if I were you, child. A lot of frogs out there claimin' to be princes.

OPHELIA

This one's no frog.

RUBY

I'd have someone run a background check, if I were you. Every guy nowadays with a pair of tights and a sword says he's a prince.

OPHELIA

I'm going to marry Prince Hamlet.

RUBY

Hold on here... You are going to marry the prince of darkness?

OPHELIA

You really shouldn't say those things about him.

RUBY

Honey, that man could depress a hyena.

OPHELIA

He just has a lot on his mind.

RUBY

He's a friggin' prince. He doesn't do jack. What on God's green earth could he have on his mind?

OPHELIA

It's his father.

RUBY

Unless they went to a lot of expense to bury the wrong guy, your boyfriend's father is dead.

OPHELIA

That's the problem.

RUBY

What? Are you tellin' me the old guy's not dead?

OPHELIA

Oh, no. He'd dead alright.

RUBY

One more time. What's the problem?

OPHELIA

Hamlet thinks...

*(she fidgets)*

RUBY

Oh boy, here it comes.

OPHELIA

I really shouldn't say anything.

RUBY

Fine with me child. Whatever it is, I wouldn't pay much attention. If you ask me, all these royals are a couple of raisins short of a Danish. It's what happens when cousins marry.

OPHELIA

Okay, if you must know, Hamlet doesn't think his father died of natural causes.

RUBY

Hell, girl, this is Elsinore. Nobody dies of natural causes.

OPHELIA

You have to promise not to tell a soul.

RUBY

My lips are sealed.

OPHELIA

Well, Hamlet thinks that his step father...

RUBY

Claudius... The new king.

OPHELIA

Yes. Claudius, the new king. Well, Hamlet thinks the new king had something to do with his father's death.

RUBY

He thinks Claudius croaked his old man?

OPHELIA

Something like that.

RUBY

He may be on to something.

OPHELIA

You think the king could do something so... gross?

RUBY

This is Denmark. There's always something rotten going on somewhere. So, uh... did the prince of indecision come to this conclusion all by his lonesome?

OPHELIA

Not... exactly.

RUBY

Just how, exactly.

OPHELIA

His father told him.

RUBY

His father is dead.

OPHELIA

I know it's a little hard to believe.

RUBY

Oh no... No. Hard to believe? Hamlet's dead father talks to him.

There's more.

OPHELIA

I can't wait.

RUBY

His father...

OPHELIA

Yes?

RUBY

Wants him to kill Claudius.

OPHELIA

So, let me get this straight. Hamlet told you that his old man... his dead and buried old man... came back from the grave and told his son that Claudius was somehow responsible for his death and now he wants Hamlet to bump off the king.

RUBY

Pretty much.

OPHELIA

And you want to marry this guy?

RUBY

When he asks me.

OPHELIA

Hold on just a cotton pickin' minute here. He hasn't asked you to marry him?

RUBY

Not in so many words.

OPHELIA

We're talking about Hamlet here. If he does ask it'll be in so many words you won't know what the hell he's talking about.

RUBY

The ring will do all the talking necessary.

OPHELIA

How well do you know Prince Hamlet? When I say "how well?" I mean "how well?"

RUBY

Well enough.

OPHELIA

RUBY

Take it from someone who's been there, done that and got the T shirt, "well enough" ain't well enough.

OPHELIA

I know he loves me.

RUBY

He told you that?

OPHELIA

Not in so many words.

RUBY

How many words does it take? Then again, we are talking about Prince Hamlet.

OPHELIA

He doesn't have to say anything. I know he does.

RUBY

You're a child. When it comes to men, you don't know squat.

OPHELIA

I can't tell by the way he looks at me.

RUBY

Don't confuse myopia with interest.

OPHELIA

(adamantly)

He loves me and I am going to marry him.

RUBY

The prince never seemed like the marryin' kind to me. Y'know, always hanging out with his bros.

OPHELIA

Are you talking about Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? They all went to college together. That's all there is to it.

RUBY

Hamlet always seemed more of a mama's boy. That's all I'm sayin'.

OPHELIA

It's true that Hamlet's not too pleased with his mother these days. He thinks she married his uncle too soon after his father's funeral.

RUBY

Oh really? He thinks the next day was too soon?

OPHELIA

This is serious. Don't make jokes.

RUBY

Who's making jokes? They used the leftovers from the funeral to cater the wedding.

OPHELIA

Hamlet thinks there may have been something going on between Claudius and Gertrude even before.

RUBY

He thinks? He thinks? Hell, everybody in Elsinore knew Gertrude and Claudius were busy steamin' up the old Wamsuttas.

OPHELIA

Well, I didn't know it.

RUBY

Are you blind, child? Even at the funeral, Claudius had his hand firmly planted on her royal keester. Maybe the prince should seek a little professional help. I mean, "I see dead people." Give me a break here.

OPHELIA

Ruby, what do you think I should I do?

RUBY

What does your father say?

OPHELIA

"Neither a borrower nor a lender be."

RUBY

Why? Does your old man think you want to go into business with Hamlet?

OPHELIA

No, that's just the way he talks. "To thine own self be true and it follows as the night the day" ... yadada, yadada, yadada.

*(Ruby holds up a mirror in front of Ophelia)*

OPHELIA

Oh Ruby, you're a dream.

RUBY

We are all such stuff as dreams are made on. And you can quote me on that.



OPHELIA

Ruby, if Hamlet doesn't ask me to marry him, I swear I'll drown myself.

RUBY

Now, now child... You must not talk that way. You listen to Ruby. Men are like ferry boats. If you miss one, there'll be another one along in an hour. Now run along.

*(Ophelia gives Ruby a hug and runs off.)*

OPHELIA

Wish me luck.

RUBY

Luck.

*(to herself)*

You're gonna need it.

*(calls out)*

Next.

*(GERTRUDE, Hamlet's mother enters)*

RUBY

Your majesty.

GERTRUDE

Rosie, how are you?

RUBY

Ruby.

GERTRUDE

What?

RUBY

Ruby. My name is Ruby.

GERTRUDE

Are you contradicting your queen?

RUBY

No, ma'am. I was merely pointing out.

GERTRUDE

One does not "point out" to their queen.

RUBY

Yes, your royal haughtiness.

*(Gertrude sits. Ruby drapes a smock over her.)*

RUBY

Well, what will it be today?

GERTRUDE

Just a touch up.

RUBY

Want me to do something with those roots?

GERTRUDE

I am the queen. The queen does not have roots. She has transitions.

RUBY

*(begins working on Gertrude)*

How have you been, majesty? I haven't see you here since the wedding. I suppose congrats are in order.

GERTRUDE

Thank you, Rita.

RUBY

As well as condolences.

GERTRUDE

Condolences?

RUBY

On the death of your husband.

GERTRUDE

Claudius is not dead. In fact he alive. Very much alive.

RUBY

I meant your previous husband. King Hamlet.

GERTRUDE

Yes, of course. King Hamlet. He is dead... and buried.

RUBY

Although, still active from I hear.

GERTRUDE

I beg your pardon.

RUBY

Everything satisfactory with the new king?

GERTRUDE

Everything is satisfactory... Very satisfactory, Rhonda. Things couldn't be more satisfactory. As a matter of fact I can't remember when I have been so satisfied and on such a regular basis.

RUBY

Well, you go highness.

GERTRUDE

Are you married, Rhoda?

RUBY

I was once.

GERTRUDE

Was he a loving man?

RUBY

That's what every woman I ever caught him with said.

GERTRUDE

My first husband was not a loving man.

RUBY

I'm sorry to hear that, highness.

GERTRUDE

In fact he was a cold man. A very cold man.

RUBY

Couldn't be much colder than he is right now.

GERTRUDE

Perhaps there are women who prefer a man who pays them no attention... Leaves them completely alone... A man who never... how should put it...? A man who never...

RUBY

Shows them the respect and tenderness they deserve?

GERTRUDE

Tenderness, schmenderness

(her voice drops  
three octaves)

I'm talking about a man who never slips them the high, hard one. Sweeps out the chimney... Threads the ole needle. Lays a little pipe. Who, now and then, treats them to some of the old "poppa ooooo mow mow."

RUBY

Of course, majesty. What could I be thinking?

GERTRUDE

And then along came Claudius. Slow walkin' Claudius. Slow talkin' Claudius. The man is so different from his brother.

RUBY

For one thing, he's alive.

GERTRUDE

Yes, he does have that going for him. But, Claudius is warm.

RUBY

Warm is a good thing in a man.

GERTRUDE

He's considerate.

RUBY

A rare trait these days.

GERTRUDE

And loving. Very , very, very, very loving and sometimes for hours on end.

RUBY

There's certainly a new glow in the royal cheeks.

GERTRUDE

All I want to do is...

RUBY

Enjoy his company? Rest in his arms? Bask in his adulation?

GERTRUDE

(her voicing dropping  
three octaves again)

Do the horizontal mambo... Excavate the tunnel of love.  
Clean the carpet... Parallel park... Ride the pony... Slurp the...

RUBY

I get the picture your royal humpingness.

GERTRUDE

My son doesn't understand that.

RUBY

He's young. Give him time.

GERTRUDE

Maybe if he had someone in his life, he'd understand my need to... How should I say it?

RUBY

I think that lawn's already been mowed, your horniness. It looks like that's it.

*(Holds up mirror for Gertrude)*

GERTRUDE

Are you coming to the play tonight?

RUBY

What play is that your majesty?

GERTRUDE

Hamlet has commissioned a play to be performed in the castle tonight. You must come.

RUBY

Thank you. But plays really aren't my thing. I like something with a little action. Something I can get down with. Something "funky."

GERTRUDE

One does not turn down an invitation from her queen because the subject doesn't rise, or sink, to the required level of "funkiness" I'll leave you two tickets with "will call."

RUBY

Will call?

GERTRUDE

William Call. He's my secretary.

*(Gertrude exits)*

RUBY

Okay, send in the next victim.

*(CLAUDIUS, The King, enters)*

CLAUDIUS

Ruby, Ruby, Ruby.

RUBY

King, King, King.

CLAUDIUS

Ruby, Ruby, Ruby.

RUBY

King, King, King.

CLAUDIUS

You're a sight for sore eyes, Ruby.

RUBY

You're looking very regal, yourself.

CLAUDIUS

I'm feeling very regal.

RUBY

I haven't seen you since your coronation.

CLAUDIUS

Has it been that long?

RUBY

At least. Is it true what they say, highness?

CLAUDIUS

What's that Ruby?

RUBY

That it's good to be the king.

CLAUDIUS

It doesn't suck. I can tell you that. The power... The wealth... The respect. But, mostly the power. God, I love the power... People stand when you walk into a room. They don't sit until you sit. They do what you tell them to do. They laugh at all your jokes. Ruby, right now, back in the castle, there are actually people lining up just to kiss my...

RUBY

Yes?

CLAUDIUS

Ring.

RUBY

Ring. Of course. Your ring.

CLAUDIUS

And the women. Ruby, I can't turn around without some beautiful woman offering me, well, what beautiful women have to offer. But, of course, I am faithful to the Queen.

RUBY

Of course.

CLAUDIUS

Completely faithful.

RUBY

Completely.

Totally faithful. CLAUDIUS

Totally. RUBY

Completely and to... CLAUDIUS

What's her name? RUBY

Annabella. She's a lady in waiting. CLAUDIUS

Obviously she ain't waitin' no more. RUBY

Ruby, Ruby, Ruby. CLAUDIUS

King, King, King. RUBY

I may be the King, Ruby... CLAUDIUS

Here it comes. RUBY

But, I am still a man. CLAUDIUS

If you weren't you wouldn't be the king. RUBY

Exactly. CLAUDIUS

You'd be the Queen. RUBY

Ruby, Ruby, Ruby. CLAUDIUS

King, King, King. RUBY

You won't say anything about the... uh... CLAUDIUS  
(Ruby mimes zipping  
her lips.)

I knew I could count on you.

RUBY

Your usual trim, majesty?

CLAUDIUS

Please.

(He sits. Ruby drapes  
a smock over him)

My stepson is putting on some cockamamie play tonight and his mother insists that I go.

RUBY

Then I'll see you there.

CLAUDIUS

You're going?

RUBY

Let's say the Queen extended an invitation I couldn't refuse.

CLAUDIUS

Then there's no getting out of it for either of us. Do you have any children Ruby?

RUBY

None that I know of.

CLAUDIUS

What?

RUBY

It was a joke.

CLAUDIUS

Of course. A joke. No one tells me jokes anymore.

RUBY

That's too bad.

CLAUDIUS

They're afraid to be funnier than the king.

RUBY

Heavy lies the head that wears the crown.

CLAUDIUS

Very perceptive. Who said that?

RUBY

I just did.

CLAUDIUS

Mind if I use that sometime?



RUBY

Knock yourself out.

CLAUDIUS

My stepson hates me Ruby.

RUBY

He's just a little confused.

CLAUDIUS

He hates me for marrying his mother.

RUBY

It's not easy for a child when one parent dies and the other remarries... the next day.

CLAUDIUS

Perhaps we were a bit hasty. But, it's a cruel world out there for a woman without a man to protect me.

RUBY

I suppose. Only thing I know is the last man who said he'd protect me, protected me out of everything I had.

CLAUDIUS

I couldn't leave my brother's widow alone.

RUBY

So I hear.

CLAUDIUS

And now her son wants to see me dead.

RUBY

Really? Hamlet? Dead?

CLAUDIUS

Those are the rumors. Have you heard anything, Ruby? People tell you things.

RUBY

Me? No. Haven't heard a thing. Not a thing.

CLAUDIUS

If you do hear, send me a note, will you? You'd have the undying gratitude of a grateful king.

RUBY

If I hear any thing.

CLAUDIUS

Thank you Ruby.

(Gets up to leave)

Oh, and bring toothpicks

RUBY

Toothpicks.

CLAUDIUS

For Hamlet's play. To prop your eyes open. It's gonna be a real snooze.

*(Claudius exits. HAMLET enters)*

RUBY

Well, look what the cat dragged in.

*(Hamlet drops into the chair and slumps down)*

RUBY

Sit up straight.

HAMLET

Sit up straight? Why straight? Why not crooked? Why not slumped forward? Or with one leg thrown over the arm. Or, perhaps...

RUBY

(throws a smock over him)

Knock it off. You can't go to your play looking like a bum. You need something that says now. Something young... Hip. With it. If I were you I'd go with bangs.

HAMLET

Bangs?

RUBY

They're all the rage in England. I hear Prince Valiant is beating them off with a stick.

HAMLET

To have bangs or not to have bangs, that is...

RUBY

Keep that up and I'll shave you bald. Now, tell me about this play of yours.

HAMLET

Actually it's a ploy.

A ploy?  
RUBY

To catch the conscience of the king.  
HAMLET

The ploy?  
RUBY

No, the play.  
HAMLET

But the ploy's the thing to catch the conscience of the king.  
RUBY

No, that's the play.  
HAMLET

What's the play?  
RUBY

The Mousetrap.  
HAMLET

The Mousetrap?  
RUBY

Yes.  
HAMLET

What's a mouse trap have to do with this?  
RUBY

It's the play.  
HAMLET

The Mousetrap is the play.  
RUBY

Yes.  
HAMLET

Then what's the ploy?  
RUBY

The play.  
HAMLET

The ploy is the play.  
RUBY

HAMLET

And the play is The Mousetrap.

RUBY

So what you're saying is... the play is a ploy and the ploy is a play and the play is the Mousetrap.

HAMLET

And the play within the play.

RUBY

Excuse me.

HAMLET

The Mousetrap.

RUBY

What about the mousetrap?

HAMLET

It's the play within the play.

RUBY

The Mousetrap is the play within the play.

HAMLET

That's what makes it a ploy.

RUBY

Let me see if I have this. The play is a ploy and the ploy is a play and the play is the play within the play which makes it the ploy.

HAMLET

But you mustn't repeat that to anyone.

RUBY

I don't think I could if I wanted to. Does your girlfriend know about this ploy?

HAMLET

Girlfriend? I don't have a girlfriend.

RUBY

What about Ophelia?

HAMLET

Did she tell you she's my girlfriend?

RUBY

She thinks you're gonna pop the question.

HAMLET

What question?

RUBY

Well, it ain't to be or not to be?

HAMLET

She thinks I want to get married? I've got enough on my plate. My father's dead. My uncle is the king. And my mother is...

RUBY

Let's not go there. A bit of advice. Let the child down easily. She's young and impressionable and highly strung.

HAMLET

Tell me about it. I've played lutes that weren't strung as tight.

RUBY

Just be careful

HAMLET

It's not easy being me, Ruby.

RUBY

Right. Prince of the realm. A killer job. Who'd ever want it?

HAMLET

Speaking of killer jobs, I may have to kill my uncle.

RUBY

"May" have to kill your uncle?

HAMLET

Nothing settled yet. I haven't decided.

RUBY

Of course you haven't, you're Hamlet.

HAMLET

I'm still weighing all my choices. I have to be sure he really murdered my father.

RUBY

You don't want to go off half-cocked.

HAMLET

Although I have it from a very reliable source.

RUBY

And who would that be?

HAMLET

My father's ghost.

RUBY

Your father's ghost. You sure it wasn't just some of your college buddies punkin' you?

HAMLET

I definitely talked to him. Actually, I didn't talk to him. He did all the talking.

RUBY

Sounds like the old king.

HAMLET

You won't mention this to anyone, will you?

RUBY

You can very sure of that.

HAMLET

I can depend on you?

RUBY

If I'm lyin', I'm dyin.

HAMLET

(exiting)

Ah, Ruby, I often wonder whether 'tis nobler to suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, or rise up against a sea of bubbles...

*(Hamlet exits. The GHOST enters)*

GHOST

Looks like I'm next.

RUBY

King Hamlet.

GHOST

You don't seem surprised to see me, Ruby.

RUBY

Around here, nothing surprises me.

GHOST

The sight of a dead man walking would put most people off.

RUBY

Well, I ain't most people.

GHOST

No, you're not Ruby. You're the last honest person in Denmark.

RUBY

Which ain't sayin' much.

GHOST

(drops in Ruby's  
chair)

What am I going to do, Ruby?

RUBY

We could trim up the front a little. Layer the back. Cover the bald spot.

GHOST

I'm talking about my family. My brother murdered me. My wife took him into her bed, before my body was even cold. My son won't avenge me.

RUBY

Just another day in the life of the Danish royal family.

GHOST

You think Gertrude and Claudius had something going before he poured the poison in my ear?

RUBY

I wouldn't know your majesty.

GHOST

And you wouldn't tell me if you did.

RUBY

What happens at Ruby's...

GHOST

Stays at Ruby's. I could have used ministers like you, Ruby. People who knew how to keep their mouth shut. Unlike my son.

RUBY

Hamlet is young, majesty.

GHOST

He's thirty two years old. When I was his age I'd conquered half of Scandinavia, imprisoned two thousand enemy soldiers, killed God knows how many more and impregnated five hundred of their women.

RUBY

You were a doer, majesty.

GHOST

If my father's brother had killed my father, I would have roasted the bastard over hot charcoals. I'd've fed his innards to the pigs. I'd've had his head on a...

(quick change of subject)

Can you really cover the bald spot?

RUBY

No problem.

GHOST

So how are things with you, Ruby?

RUBY

Can't complain and thank you for asking.

GHOST

Still seeing that rope maker?

RUBY

You remembered. No, we broke up. He wouldn't tie the knot.

GHOST

That's the trouble with young people today. No sense of commitment. Take my son for example. "To be or not to be?" I don't get it. Just stab the sonafabitch. Did I ever tell you about the time I killed three men with just one thrust of my sword.

RUBY

Three? With one sword? Really?

GHOST

I think it was three... Or was it four? Death is hell on the memory, Ruby. Anyway, there they were... all lined up in a nice, neat row.

*(Having heard the story a dozen times before, Ruby mouths the words as the Ghost continues talking.)*

*Ruby finishes up and removes the smock. The two of them exit with the Ghost still talking and Ruby nodding and nodding and nodding)*

*Romeo enters and begins pacing anxiously, glancing up over the audience to Juliet's balcony.*



*The Narrator enters)*

NARRATOR

Verona, Italy.

(points up over the  
head of the audience)

Just above you is Juliet's balcony. And, this love struck young man is none other than her Romeo, who is about to encounter..

*(A man dressed in black races in, crashes into Romeo and sends them both flying)*

...someone he, nor, I might add, you, could have anticipated.

*(Narrator exits)*

CASANOVA

My apologies, my young lord.

*(Helps Romeo to his feet)*

ROMEO

And who might you be?

CASANOVA

No one of consequence.

ROMEO

Then what is it you seek in the place?

CASANOVA

Exit, my good man. Exit. If thou would's't be so kind as to point me to the nearest gate.

ROMEO

My direction will do thee no good.

CASANOVA

If it is good direction it will do me a great deal of good.

ROMEO

Only if thou art a phantom.

CASANOVA

How so, my young friend?

ROMEO

All gates are locked at the stroke of twelve.

CASANOVA

Mmmmmm. That is troublesome. Perhaps thou would'st be so kind as to provide me with a leg up and I will disappear into the night as though I were a phantom.

ROMEO

Leave this very place, I cannot.

CASANOVA

Art thou a prisoner?

ROMEO

Only of my lady's smile.

CASANOVA

Ah, a damsel.

ROMEO

The fairest eyes have ever gazed upon.

CASANOVA

So here you stand in darkness, lit only by a pale moon, waiting for a sign, a signal perhaps, that the husband of the lady in question is otherwise occupied.

ROMEO

Oh no. Tis not so.

CASANOVA

I am truly sorry to hear such.

ROMEO

I would never dally with another man's wife.

CASANOVA

Another man's wife is the only wife with which one should dally.

ROMEO

And dishonor the holy bands of matrimony?

CASANOVA

Never. No man honors the bonds of matrimony more than I.

ROMEO

I am please to hear such.

CASANOVA

Without marriage there would be no married women. And a world without married women would be a sad and empty place.

ROMEO

Indeed.

CASANOVA

A marriage is like a beautiful garden, would thou agree?

ROMEO

I would, I would.

CASANOVA

And a garden must be constantly tended, would thou also agree?

ROMEO

I would.

CASANOVA

But left to neglect, a garden will wither and die.

ROMEO

True.

CASANOVA

And in this age, most husbands, tis sad to behold, pay little attention to the tending of their marriage garden.

ROMEO

Tis sad, indeed.

CASANOVA

If the garden is to blossom into full ripeness, tis the wife, then, who must see to its tender care.

ROMEO

Spoken well.

CASANOVA

So it is only in the service of restoring the bloom to that rose that is the married woman that I enter her garden to plow her neglected furrow.

ROMEO

I know thee, don't I? I have seen thee before.

CASANOVA

I am not of this city.

ROMEO

Mercutio did point thee out when once we visited Venice. Thou art Casanova.

CASANOVA

At your service.

ROMEO

Mercutio said there is not a woman in all of Christendom that trusts thee.

CASANOVA

Indeed.

ROMEO

And this thou freely admits?

CASANOVA

Why else would so many extend me invitation to attend them in their boudoir?

ROMEO

Is that what you are doing here this night? Attending another man's wife in her boudoir?

CASANOVA

No longer, I am sad to report.

ROMEO

Scorned by a woman much offended?

CASANOVA

Chased by a husband much surprised.

ROMEO

Thou dishonor a woman and expect me to aid thy retreat?

CASANOVA

Dishonor? By showing my appreciation of what her husband so foolishly ignores? Why, I pay her the highest honor.

ROMEO

Thou art quick of tongue.

CASANOVA

Exactly what the lady was saying before were so rudely interrupted.

ROMEO

Thou are base and carnal.

CASANOVA

Before passing judgment my young lord, hear me out.

ROMEO

Do I have a choice?

CASANOVA

Thou could aid my escape and render me speechless.

ROMEO

And miss a glance of my love's fair visage.

CASANOVA

I will speak quickly. While a woman young and virginal sets marriage as the price for the gift of her virtue, a married woman has no virtue to make gift of and no need of marriage. Thereby, making pleasure it's own reward. A woman with husband has so much to offer and asks so little in return.

*(A light shines down from  
Juliet's window.)*

ROMEO

But soft what light through yonder window breaks.

CASANOVA

Excuse me?

ROMEO

Tis the east and Juliet is the sun.

*(Casanova looks up)*

CASANOVA

Thou speak the truth. Your maiden is fair, indeed. If she was but married, I would gladly be your rival.

ROMEO

I must speak to her.

CASANOVA

Thou must not speak.

ROMEO

How will she know my feelings?

CASANOVA

To find success with maidens fair, you must never reveal thy true feelings.

ROMEO

But she must know I love her.

CASANOVA

She must only know that she loves thee. When engaging the fairer sex, young lord, take thy satisfaction in harvesting the fruit. Tis not necessary to own the orchard.

ROMEO

She speaks yet she says nothing.

CASANOVA

It is what women do. It falls under the heading "If you truly loved me, you could read my mind."

ROMEO

Look!!!

CASANOVA

(frightened)

What??? Where???

ROMEO

Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven, having some business, do entreat her eyes to twinkle in their spheres till they return.

CASANOVA

Be careful how thou call out my young lord. I very nearly soiled my tights.

ROMEO

What if her eyes were there, they in her head? The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars, as daylight doth a lamp. Her eyes in heaven would through the airy region stream so bright that birds would sing and think it were not night.

CASANOVA

Fortunately for us, it is night. What's say we hie before the sun does rise?

ROMEO

Oh, see, how she leans her cheek upon her hand.

CASANOVA

Great cheek leaning. Never seen better. Let's hie.

ROMEO

(to the unseen  
Juliet)

Thou hast a smile so bright, thou couldst't have been a candle. I would hold thee so tight, thou couldst't have been a handle.

*(During the above speech,  
Romeo's gestures underscore  
the words in much the same  
manner as a Motown group's  
choreography)*

ROMEO

Be strong, young lord. You must resist the..."the temptations."

ROMEO

She speaks.

CASANOVA

It's nothing to be concerned about. They do that from time to time.

JULIET (O.S.)

O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo?

CASANOVA

Who is this Romeo of whom she speaks?

ROMEO

I am Romeo.

CASANOVA

Nice to meet you, young Romeo.

JULIET (O.S.)

Deny thy father and refuse thy name. Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

CASANOVA

What did she just say?

ROMEO

Deny thy father...

CASANOVA

No, the last part.

ROMEO

And I will no longer be a Capulet.

CASANOVA

She is a Capulet?

ROMEO

She is Juliet, daughter of Lord and Lady Capulet.

CASANOVA

Oh boy.

ROMEO

Thou knowest the Capulets?

CASANOVA

Let's say, I am familiar.

ROMEO

With my true love's father.

CASANOVA

Your true love's father is not exactly the Capulet with whom I have become familiar.

ROMEO

You and...?

(Casanova nods)

I do not believe it. Thou and Lady Capulet?

CASANOVA

Thou thinkest a woman the likes of Lady Capulet banks the fires of her passion upon the saying of her wedding vows.

ROMEO

She is the mother of...

CASANOVA

She is a woman, young Romeo.

ROMEO

(disillusioned)

Thou and Lady Capulet.

CASANOVA

Now, do you understand the urgency of my exit before these walls make prisoners of us both?

JULIET (O.S.)

'Tis but thy name that is my enemy. Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man.

CASANOVA

Of what does she speak?

ROMEO

Our families hate each other.

JULIET (O.S.)

O, be some other name!

CASANOVA

From what I know of the Capulets, that is very good advice.

JULIET (O.S.)

What's in a name? That which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet.

CASANOVA

Be careful, my friend. Roses get pruned and on a regular basis.



JULIET (O.S.)

How camest thou hither, tell me, and wherefore?

*(Casanova clamps his hand over  
Romeo's mouth)*

CASANOVA

Just stumbled in by mistake. I will be gone in a nonce. A  
nonce and a half.

JULIET (O.S.)

The orchard walls are high and hard to climb, And the place  
death, considering who thou art. If any of my kinsmen do see  
thee, they will murder thee.

CASANOVA

Are you listening? Did you hear that? Murder thee and, more  
than likely... me.

ROMEO

*(to Juliet)*

Alack, there lies more peril in thine eye than twenty of  
their swords.

CASANOVA

*(frustrated)*

It only takes one.

ROMEO

I have night's cloak to hide from their sight.

CASANOVA

*(more frustrated)*

They have torches.

ROMEO

I am no pilot, yet, wert thou as far as that vast shore  
wash'd with the farthest sea, I would adventure for such  
merchandise.

CASANOVA

I'll give you that. The merchandise is first rate. If I were  
twenty years younger... Make that ten years younger... But,  
alas, I am not getting any younger and it is my firm desire  
to get a great deal older.

JULIET (O.S.)

O, Romeo, dos't thou love me?

CASANOVA

Tis a sucker's question. Be careful.

JULIET (O.S.)

I know thou wilt say 'Ay,' And I will take thy word.

CASANOVA

Perfect. She thinks you love her but you haven't actually said it. It keeps the door open and, if push comes to shove, it provides thee with complete deniability.

JULIET (O.S.)

O gentle Romeo, If thou dost love, pronounce it faithfully.

CASANOVA

Pronounce and you will be entering territory from which no man hath yet returned.

JULIET (O.S.)

Good night, good night! as sweet repose and rest come to thy heart as that within my breast!

CASANOVA

And on the breast reference we are out of here.

JULIET (O.S.)

Three words, dear Romeo, and good night indeed.

CASANOVA

Three words? The day I encounter a female who limits herself to three words is the day I take the vows.

JULIET (O.C.)

If that thy bent of love be honourable, thy purpose marriage, send me word tomorrow.

CASANOVA

Marriage? What have I been telling you all along? No hey nonny nonny until the ring is on the finger

JULIET (O.C.)

Tis almost morning.

CASANOVA

The little lady is right. We must hurry from this place while we still have arms and legs to hurry with.

JULIET (O.S.)

Good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow.

ROMEO

Did you hear that? She sorrows over out parting.

CASANOVA

That's good. Always leaving them wanting more.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

This way!

CASANOVA

The Capulets. Let us make haste.

ROMEO

Hast thou every been in love, Casanova? Hast thou?

CASANOVA

(under pressure)

Once. Happy? Now can we hurry?

ROMEO

If thou couldst't love once, though could love again.

CASANOVA

Maybe. Who knows? Could happen. Now, let's get the hell out of here.

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Over there!

ROMEO

Fear not the Capulets, my friend. We will soar high above their puny flighted darts on the wings of love.

*(Romeo runs off)*

CASANOVA

Puny darts. Wings of love. Where does he come up with this stuff? I'm getting too old for this. Perhaps a less life threatening change would be the wisest course of action.

MALE VOICE

This way!

CASANOVA

But, in the meantime....

*(He follows Romeo out)*

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, Casanova.

*(Casanova carefully returns)*

WOMAN'S VOICE

Oh, Casanova.

*(Casanova looks back over his shoulder, then at the audience and shrugs.)*

CASANOVA

What the hell?

*(He hurries in the direction of the Woman's Voice passing the Narrator as he enters)*

CASANOVA

(to Narrator)

You only live once. Right?

*(Casanova exits. The Narrator watches him go then turns to the audience)*

NARRATOR

Murder. Who doesn't love a good murder? It was certainly one of Shakespeare's favorite subjects. And, who better to solve the murder of a king, than a tough talking private eye?

*(Sound of a bluesy film noir saxophone. JUSTIN THYME enters dressed in a trench coat and fedora)*

THYME

(to audience)

It was raining that Monday I got back to the office. I was feeling a little low. But, then again, rainy days and Mondays always get me down.

*(He takes off his fedora and hangs it on a beat up coat rack. Then removes his trench coat and hangs it up. During these actions....)*

NARRATOR

Meet Justin Thyme, hard boiled with a side of irony. Mr. Thyme is an operative of the F.B.I. That's the Fictional Bureau Of Investigation. Thyme handles the toughest, dirtiest cases in English literature. That's right, he's a fictional detective.

*(The Narrator exits and the saxophone fades.)*

THYME

(to audience)

I'd hardly got my coat off when Effie, my overdeveloped secretary with the underdeveloped typing skills, pulsated into my office.

*(EFFIE, Thyme's sexy secretary, pulsates in to the sound of drumbeats)*

THYME  
(to audience)  
She told me I had a visitor.

EFFIE  
You got a visitor.

THYME  
What does he want?  
(to audience)  
I asked.

EFFIE  
I don't know.

THYME  
(to audience)  
She replied.

EFFIE  
I didn't ask him.

THYME  
(to audience)  
She explained.  
(to Effie)  
Okay, sweet knees, show him in.

*(Effie faces the door and shouts)*

EFFIE  
Come on in!!!

*(A Scotsman in a kilt enters. This is MALCOM)*

THYME  
Thanks, Sugar hips.

EFFIE  
Sure. Anytime. If you want me, just whistle. You know how to whistle, don't ya, boss? You just put your lips together and...

THYME  
And what?

EFFIE

Do I have to think of everything?

*(She pulsates out to the sound  
of drumbeats)*

THYME

*(to audience)*

My visitor told me his name was Malcom.

MALCOM

Me name is Malcom.

THYME

*(to audience)*

I told him to have a seat.

*(to Malcom)*

Have a seat.

*(to audience)*

He sat down, modestly crossed his legs at the ankles,  
straightened his hem and told me he needed my help.

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 catch a murderer.

THYME

Murder, huh? Who got whacked?

MALCOM

Me father.

THYME

What makes you think your 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  
in Scotland his father was a big deal.

MALCOM

Back home in Scotland, my father was a big deal.

THYME

How big?

MALCOM

The biggest. He was king.

THYME

That's big. Any suspects as to who did the zotzing?

MALCOM

I don't suspect. I know. The man who killed my father is named...

(with great import)

...MacBeth.

THYME

Did you say MacBeth?

MALCOM

Aye. That's what I said... Macbeth

THYME

That's what I thought you said.

MALCOM

Then why did ya make me repeat it?

THYME

Dramatic emphasis.

(to audience)

Malcom had told me 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 some body else. Either way it was my job to get the bottom of it. 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.

*(Malcom exits)*

THYME

(to audience)

I knew I'd get to Scotland before him.

*(Sound of rain, wind and thunder. Thyme turns his collar up)*

THYME

(to audience)

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

*(We are back in the Inn Of The Three Witches)*

THYME

(to audience)

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, hello there cold, wet and miserable. What'll it be?

THYME

Whaddya got?

HECATE

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 house 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 'imself, MacBeth 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 exits the Inn)*

THYME

(to audience)

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

*(Sounds of thunder and howling wind)*

THYME

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

CASTLE GUARD (O.S.)

Who goes there?

THYME

Justin Thyme, Fictional Detective. I'm here to see the king.

CASTLE GUARD (O.S.)

You may enter.

*(Thyme exits. Over the following dialogue we here the sound of footsteps, doors opening, doors closing, more footstep, more doors and even more footsteps)*

THYME (O.S.)

I entered a small ante room, just off a hallway, next to a dining room, behind a closet, through an armory, around a tower, up a staircase, down a corridor that opened on to a sitting room that overlooked a garden that led into the throne room.

*(Thyme enters, winded from his walk. He stops to catch his breath)*

THYME

(to himself)

I gotta join a gym.

*(Lady MacBeth enters)*

LADY MACBETH

Hello, Thyme.

THYME

(to audience)

She was there... Waiting for me.

LADY MACBETH

I was wondering when you'd show up.

THYME

(surprised)

Nola? Nola MacDougal? Could it really be?

LADY MACBETH

It's been a while since someone called me that.

THYME

(to audience)

Back when I knew her, everyone called her Nola. She was a showgirl. With orange feathers in her hair and a dress cut down there. She would salsa 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.

(to Nora)

You haven't changed a bit, apple hips.

LADY MACBETH

You always did know how to say the right thing, didn't ya Thyme?

THYME

What can I say? I'm good. But, you already knew that.

LADY MACBETH

Still mad at me?

THYME

Why? Because you left town 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 Yankees bullpen?

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 did you have to offer Thyme? A fictional detective's pay? A high deductible health plan with no dental. 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. Satisfy...

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.)*

*(BLACKOUT)*

*(When the lights come back up, Lady MacBeth is wearing Thyme's fedora and smoking a cigarette)*

LADY MACBETH

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

THYME

(proud of himself)

What can I say? I'm good. But you knew that.

LADY MACBETH

So tell me Thyme, what are you doing in Scotland? 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 know 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 with 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, technicality wise, I was off the hook. Somehow, I couldn't imagine Nola mixed up in murder. Extortion, blackmail, bookmaking, mail fraud, loan sharking.. sure. But murder? Like I said, it was getting complicated.

LADY MACBETH

(impatiently)

Are you done?

THYME

For now.

LADY MACBETH

Your wasting your time, Thyme. We found the men who killed King Duncan. Their hands were drenched in blood.

THYME

I'd like to talk them. These killers of yours.

LADY MACBETH

I'm afraid that's not possible.

THYME

Why not?

LADY MACBETH

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

THYME

What about 'em?

LADY MACBETH

Those aren't gargoyles.

THYME

Why the rush to judgement, 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

Only seven?

LADY MACBETH

It was a slow night.

THYME

Do me a favor. When you see your husband, don't say anything about what went down here.

LADY MACBETH

No problem. I've forgotten it already.

*(She returns Thyme's fedora  
and exits)*

THYME

*(to audience)*

Before I could figure out whodunit, I had to figure out whocouldadone it. Normally, I like to start out by looking around. See what I can see and what I can't see. Sometimes what you can't see is more important than what you can see. The only problem is, you can't see it.

*(MacDuff enters and walks past  
Thyme)*

THYME

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 nosing around.

THYME

What else did she say?

MACDUFF

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

THYME

For the record, what's your name?

MACDUFF

MacDuff.

THYME

You work for MacBeth, MacDuff?

MACDUFF

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

THYME

Why would I say that?

MACDUFF

Because I'm his right hand man.

THYME

You wouldn't happen to know where MacBeth was when the old king got dead.

MACDUFF

Are you saying MacBeth had something to do with the king's death?

THYME

I'll ask the questions.

MACDUFF

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

THYME

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

It's the castle on the Frammis.

THYME

MacBeth is Thane of Glamis on the Frammis?

MACDUFF

No. MacBeth is Thane of Cawdor.

THYME

If MacBeth is Thane of Cawdor, who is Thane of Glamis on the Frammis?

MACDUFF

Tammis.

THYME

Tammis?



MACDUFF

Tammis of Glammis on the Frammis.

THYME

How about the first lady. Do you know where she 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. One last question? You'd do anything for Lady MacBeth, wouldn't you?

MACDUFF

You bet your bodkin I would.

THYME

Like kill for her?

MACDUFF

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

THYME

Nothing. Just one more question.

MACDUFF

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

THYME

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

MACDUFF

In my room... And I got seven witnesses to prove it. We done here?

THYME

Yea, sure.

(MacDuff starts to  
exit)

One more thing.

MACDUFF

Again?

THYME

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 fun lovin', peasant taxing, wife stealing guy he used to be.

THYME

What's different?

MACDUFF

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

MACBETH (O.S.)

(reciting in  
Shakespearean tones)

I'm always chasing rainbows.

MACDUFF

See for yourself. That's him now.

MACBETH

(entering)

Watching clouds drifting by.

MACDUFF

If there's nothing else, I'm out of here.

*(Starts to leave, stops, looks back. Thyme shakes his head. MacDuff hurries off)*

MACBETH

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

THYME

Your majesty.

MACBETH

(holds up a spoon  
he's carrying)

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

THYME

Afraid not. It's a spoon.

MACBETH  
I could've sworn it was a dagger.

THYME  
No, it's a spoon.

MACBETH  
You sure?

THYME  
Positive. It's a spoon. I wonder if I could ask you a question or two?

MACBETH  
And who might you be?

THYME  
The name's Thyme. Justin Thyme.

MACBETH  
The fictional detective. My wife mentioned you.

THYME  
What did she have to say?

MACBETH  
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, where were you when the old king bought the farm?

MACBETH  
The farm? You must have him confused with Old MacDonald.

THYME  
No, no. Where were you when the old king was iced? Shivved? Whacked?

MACBETH  
Shivved? Whacked?

THYME  
Where were you when King Duncan was killed?

MACBETH  
Killed... Why didn't you say so? I was in my room and I've got seven witnesses to prove it.

THYME

(to audience)

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

MACBETH

(wandering off)

Some fellows look and find the sunshine. I always look and find the rain.

*(MacBeth exits.)*

THYME

(to audience)

Maybe the old king's son had bumped him off, after all. And I was being set up. But something MacDuff said kept rattling around in my brain like loose screw. I decided to check out my hunch.

*(Sounds of rain and thunder.  
Thyme turns up his collar and  
steps back into the Inn Of The  
Three Witches)*

THYME

Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled back into the Inn Of Three Witches.

*(Hecate enters)*

HECATE

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

THYME

What can I say liver lips, you're sore eyes are a sight.

HECATE

'Ow you do go on.

THYME

The last time I was hear you told me MacBeth had been sitting right where I was sitting. That you gave him a real show. That you knew he was coming.

HECATE

That's right.

THYME

How did you know?

HECATE

She told us.

THYME

She? Who?

HECATE

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

THYME

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 the real high pointy heels.

THYME

Stilletos.

HECATE

'Ad one of them too.

THYME

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 happy to do it, but there was this one teensy, weensy little problem.

THYME

What was that?

HECATE

None of us can read.

THYME

What'd 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.

THYME

(to audience)

That had to be Nola. She always did her best work on a table top. So she paid off Hecate and the Vandellas to put on a show for MacBeth. Now the only question was why?

(to Hecate)

Can you show me what she had you do?

HECATE

Happy to oblige.

(MORE)

HECATE (cont'd)  
 (calling out)  
 Latasha... Latoya... Lashana.

*(Three Hags in slit skirts  
 shuffle in)*

THREE WITCHES  
 (sing)  
 All hail MacBeth, new thane of Glammiss.  
 Thou shalt be king, and that's a promise.  
 Be strong, be proud and take no sass.  
 Ain't no one here can kick your ass.  
 Macbeth shall never vanquish'd be  
 Until Birnam Wood come to Dunsinane, see.  
 That's your future, short and tall.  
 And now we're outta here, y'all.

THYME  
 Very nice.

HECATE  
 We're available for weddings, parties and bar mitzvahs.

THYME  
 I'll keep that in mind.

HECATE  
 Let's go girls.

*(Hecate and The Three Witches  
 exit)*

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

*(Sound of rain, wind and  
 thunder)*

*(Thyme turns up his collar)*

THYME  
 (to audience)  
 Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled back into the castle. The  
 place was quiet... Dead quiet.

*(Sound of a very loud clock  
 bonging)*

THYME

(to audience)

Except for that. That's when I saw it. A knife jammed into the mattress where my back should have been. It raised a lot of questions. Like who wanted to kill me? Why did MacBeth go around talking to himself? And why did Malcom wear a skirt? I left a wake up call for dawn and decided to catch forty winks.

*(He pulls the knife out of the mattress and lays down. The sound of a rooster crowing wakes him up)*

THYME

(to audience)

My alarm went off right on time.

(rises)

I had to be careful. Someone wanted me dead and until I found out who it was I'd be walking around with a bullseye on my back.

(crosses the stage  
warily)

I was cautiously making my way down a narrow corridor when a door opened and a man stepped in.

(MacDuff enters)

He was with a woman.

*(Lady MacBeth enters)*

LADY MACBETH

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

*(She kisses MacDuff)*

THYME

I couldn't hear MacDuff's reply. It's hard to understand a guy when he's got a tongue in his mouth that isn't his own.

*(Lady MacBeth breaks off the kiss and exits)*

THYME

MacDuff.

MACDUFF

(surprised)

Thyme.

THYME

Surprised?

MACDUFF

No. Why should I be surprised?

THYME

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

MACDUFF

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

THYME

I find that surprising, considering I just caught you playing tonsil hockey with the lady of the house.

MACDUFF

You're not gonna tell the king, are you?

THYME

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

MACDUFF

Thanks Thyme, I owe you one.

THYME

Glad to hear it. Time to pay up.

MACDUFF

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

THYME

Where you were last night around midnight.

MACDUFF

I admit it. I've got nothing to hide. I was Lady MacBeth. And we've got seven witness to prove it.

THYME

(to audience)

MacDuff's alibi got me to wondering. What were they doing that required seven witnesses?

MACBETH (O.S.)

Day and night. Night and day. Why is it...

(enters)

... that this longing for you follows wherever I go?

MACDUFF

If the King asks, we never talked, I wasn't here and I got seven witnesses to prove it.

*(MacDuff hurries off)*



THYME  
Your majesty.

MACBETH  
(a little tipsy)  
Thyme... Is that you?

THYME  
It's me.

MACBETH  
(holds up a bottle)  
Wanna a little drinkie?

THYME  
Maybe another time.

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

THYME  
You know anything about this?

(holds up the dagger that was  
stuck in his bed)

MACBETH  
A soup spoon?

THYME  
A dagger. Recognize it?

MACBETH  
It's mine.

THYME  
Remember, when you saw it last?

MACBETH  
I most certainly do. It was in your back.

THYME  
So you admit that you tried to kill me.

MACBETH  
Of course, I killed you.

THYME  
Why?

MACBETH  
Why do I admit it?

THYME

Why did you kill me?

MACBETH

She told me to.

THYME

Who told you to kill me?

MACBETH

You know the answer to that as well as I do.

THYME

I wanna hear you say it.

MACBETH

My wife. The adorable Lady MacBeth.

THYME

Why? Why did she want me dead?

MACBETH

Why does any woman want any man dead?

THYME

Good point. But what was her reason specifically?

MACBETH

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

THYME

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

MACBETH

You don't know my wife like I do Thyme.

(suspiciously)

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

THYME

No. Of course not.

(to audience)

The guy had tried to kill me once already. I didn't see any reason to make him mad.

MACBETH

She wanted to be queen. And in order for a woman to become a queen she has to be married to a king. That's the rule. I didn't make the rule. But, that's the rule. And I wasn't a king. I was just 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. Thyme?

THYME

Some times.

MACBETH

The Scotch invented golf. Did you know that Mr. Thyme?

THYME

No, I didn't

MACBETH

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

THYME

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

MACBETH

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

THYME

(to audience)

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

MACBETH

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

THYME

Nobody's invincible.

MACBETH

I am. The prophecy says so. I will reign as king until Birnham Wood comes to Dunsinane.

(a clock gongs three times)

Hear that Thyme.

(declaims as he exits)

It's three o'clock in the morning. I've danced the whole night through.

THYME

(to audience)

It was time I brought Malcom up to date.

*(Sounds of rain, wind and thunder. Thyme turns his collar up.)*

THYME

Cold, wet and miserable I stumbled into Malcom's camp.

GUARD (O.S.)

Who goes there?

THYME

Justin Thyme, fictional detective. I'm here to see Malcom, son of Duncan, brother of Donald, cousin of Shamus, uncle of Hamish and close personal friend of Phil.

SCOTCH GUARD (O.S.)

Follow me.

*(Thyme exits)*

THYME (O.S.)

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

SCOTCH GUARD (O.S.)

(announcing)

Justin Thyme, fictional detective.

*(Thyme and Malcom enter from opposite sides)*

MALCOM

What news Justin Thyme?

THYME

I've got good news and I've got bad news.

MALCOM

Me and my men could use some good news.

THYME

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

MALCOM

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

THYME

I don't blame them.

MALCOM

We'll attack Dunsinane Castle in the mornin' and I'll claim me rightful crown.

THYME

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

MALCOM

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

THYME

Wait a minute. Did you say Birnham Wood?

MALCOM

Aye.

THYME

That's what I thought you said.

MALCOM

Then why did you make me repeat it?

THYME

Dramatic emphasis. Malcom, I think I know a way to make this work.

MALCOM

Then let's hear it laddie.

THYME

Here's my plan. MacBeth thinks I'm a ghost.

*(They exit. A few moments later they return from the other side of the stage)*

THYME

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

MALCOM

You know Thyme, this plan of yours is just crazy enough to work.

*(exiting)*

Gather round laddies. We have work to do.

*(Sounds of wind, rain and thunder. Thyme turns up his collar)*

THYME

*(to audience)*

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

(MORE)

THYME (cont'd)  
 (Clock loudly  
 bonging)

Except for that. Once again, she was waiting for me.

*(Lady MacBeth enters wearing a  
 slinky red dress, black seamed  
 stocking and stiletto heels.)*

LADY MACBETH

Hello, Thyme. I was waiting for you. MacBeth told me everything. How'd he spilled the beans to your ghost. Copped to everything. He was never cut out to be king. He can't handle the pressure. Not like you, Thyme. We used to be a great team, remember?

THYME  
 (to audience,  
 suspiciously)

You've got something up your sleeve. I can tell.  
 (to audience)

Or she would have, if she'd had a sleeve.

LADY MACBETH

Why don't you come over here and I'll show you.

THYME  
 (to the audience)

The code of the fictional detective clearly states you never fool around with an accessory to murder. However, addendum 5, paragraph 7, sub paragraph 8 states that it is not only permissible to fool around with an accessory to murder, if said fooling around is in pursuit of additional evidence. In that case said fooling around is not only permitted it's encouraged. Especially if the accessory is built like Nola.

LADY MACBETH

How would like to be King of Scotland, Thyme?

THYME

I don't know. I never thought about. What would I have to do?

LADY MACBETH

Not much. Just marry that King's widow.

THYME

One problem with that. The King is still alive.

LADY MACBETH

A temporary condition.

THYME

Can I give you my answer in the morning?

*(Lady MacBeth grabs his tie  
and pulls him toward her.)*

LADY MACBETH

I wouldn't have it any other way.

*(Suddenly there are sounds of  
people running and shouting)*

THYME

*(to audience)*

Suddenly, there were knights, bishops, rooks and pawns  
everywhere.

*(MacDuff runs by.*

*Thyme grabs him.)*

What's going on MacDuff?

MACDUFF

The castle is under attack.

THYME

Where's the king?

MACDUFF

On the battlements.

LADY MACBETH

Defending the castle?

MACDUFF

Speaking in rhyming couplets.

LADY MACBETH

We'd better get up there before he starts speaking in iambic  
pentameter.

MACDUFF

No, please don't go, m'lady. It's too dangerous. Stay with  
me. I'll protect you.

LADY MACBETH

You gotta be kidding.

MACDUFF

This is our chance, m'lady While the battle is going on  
out front, we can slip out the back. Just you and me.

LADY MACBETH

Really? Just you and me. And we're are we going, just you  
and me?

MACDUFF

I drove a family off some lovely acreage on the bonnie, bonnie banks of Loch Lomond. We could build a cottage. Raise sheep.

LADY MACBETH  
(flirtatiously to  
MacDuff)

Raise sheep? Just what I've always wanted. But first, you must do something for me, MacDuff.

MACDUFF

Anything for you, majesty.

LADY MACBETH  
Glad to hear it. Now, listen to me very closely.  
(she moves in very  
close)

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

MACDUFF  
(breathing heavily)

Yes, majesty.

LADY MACBETH  
And do what you do best.

MACDUFF  
Yes, majesty. Of, course majesty. What I do best. Just one question?

LADY MACBETH  
Yes?

MACDUFF  
What is it I do best?

LADY MACBETH  
Why, make yourself a target, of course.

MACDUFF  
Of course. Fear not, milady.

*(He runs off happily)*

LADY MACBETH  
(to audience)  
Oh what fools these mortals be. Especially, the male mortals.

(to Thyme)  
This is the chance we've been waiting for, Thyme. Let's go.



THYME

Where?

LADY MACBETH

To the battlements.

*(They hurry off. MacBeth enters along with MacDuff)*

MACBETH

Like the beat, beat of the tom tom, when jungle shadows fall.

*(Thyme and Lady MacBeth enter from the other side. Thyme is huffing and puffing and trying to catch his breath)*

THYME

Ever think of investing in an elevator?

LADY MACBETH

Let's do it Thyme. Right here. Right now.

THYME

As much as I'd love to persimmon ears, I don't think we've got two minutes to spare.

LADY MACBETH

Don't flatter yourself, flatfoot. I mean this our chance to make MacBeth... macdead.

THYME

Hold on... I've got a better idea.

*(crosses to MacBeth and starts talking like a ghostly figure)*

MacBeth... MacBeth... It is I, the ghost of Justin Thyme.

MACBETH

Begone, ghost of Justin Thyme. Begone.

THYME

Fat chance, MacBeth. The jig is up.

MACBETH

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

THYME

Look... Out beyond the battlements. What do you see?

MACBETH

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

THYME

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

MACBETH

Yes. I see it now. A forest. A big, green, advancing forest.

THYME

Good. Now ask yourself this. Was that forest there yesterday?

MACBETH

No... No it was not.

THYME

Do you recognize that forest, MacBeth?

MACBETH

Yes, Yes I do... It's... It's... Ohhhhh sh.....

THYME

That's right, MacBeth. Birnham Wood has come to Dunsinane. Now ask yourself this MacBeth. Do I feel lucky? Well do ya' MacBeth?

MACBETH

I'm doomed. I'm doomed. 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 your crown and clean out your desk.

MACBETH

What is happening?

LADY MACBETH

Call it a hostile take over.

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 crap so you'd have the cojones to knock off Duncan.

MACBETH

There was no prophecy?

LADY MACBETH

Just like Thyme here isn't a ghost.

MACBETH

Of course he's a ghost. I killed him.

THYME

The only thing you killed was my mattress.

LADY 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?

THYME

And that's not a forest out there.

MACBETH

It's not Birnham Wood?

THYME

That's Malcom's army. They just moved all of Birnham Wood to Dunsinane.

MACBETH

Every branch? Every leaf?

THYME

Every twig. Like I always say, you can't make an omelet without causing an ecological disaster now and then.

*(Malcom enters)*

MALCOM

It worked, laddie. Your plan worked. We've captured the castle.

THYME

They're all yours Malcom.

LADY MACBETH

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

THYME

You forgot one thing.

LADY MACBETH

What's that?

THYME

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

LADY MACBETH

You can say that again.

THYME

I'll do or say anything I have to, to nail the bad guys.  
It's part of the code of the fictional detective.

LADY MACBETH

God, I hate codes.

MALCOM

I'll take that crown now.

(takes the crown  
from MacBeth)

Life, as you once knew it, is over.

MACBETH

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

Oh, spare me.

THYME

(to Malcom)

She's all yours.

LADY MACBETH

You can't do this Thyme. Don't I mean anything to you. What  
about the times I fed your insatiable passion. Banked the  
fires of your raging lust.

MACBETH

You banked his fires?

LADY MACBETH

Like you wouldn't believe.

MACBETH

You never banked my fires.

LADY MACBETH

Maybe if you a fire to bank.

(MORE)

LADY MACBETH (cont'd)  
 (turning all her  
 charms on Malcom)

Not like Malcom here. Now this is a real man. A man who stands up for what he believes, no matter what. A man willing to fight and die for his country and for the woman he loves and doing it all in a flattering, knee length tartan plaid skirt by Stella McCartney. Isn't that right Malcom?

MALCOM  
 (flattered)

I suppose.

LADY MACBETH  
 Of course, it is.

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

MACDUFF  
 Milady. What about about me? What about us?

LADY MACBETH  
 Us? Us? There is no us. There never was an "us." There will

MACDUFF  
 And after everything I did for you.

THYME  
 What do you mean everything, MacDuff?

MACDUFF  
 Everything.

THYME  
 Like what?

MACDUFF  
 Like doin' away with those two poor unfortunates.

THYME  
 Which two poor unfortunates?

LADY MACBETH  
 Don't listen to him Thyme. He's just jealous.

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

LADY MACBETH

That was you?

(MacDuff nods)

Look at this way MacGruff...

MACDUFF

MacDuff.

THYME

Whatever. Better men than you have gotten caught in Nola's web. Much better men than you.

MACDUFF

What will become of me?

*(A Guard leads MacDuff off)*

THYME

(to audience)

The poor guy never had a chance. He made the mistake of fallin' 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 it, every coach seat is hell.

MACBETH

Out, out brief candle.

THYME

(to audience)

As for MacBeth. Well in the end he was just an ordinary guy who wanted what ordinary guys want... To hunt a little. To fish a little. Get in a round of golf, now and then. Sleep with the help. Of all the tragic 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.

*(The Guard returns to lead MacBeth off)*

MACBETH

(exiting)

And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death.

THYME

(to audience)

Not to mention the most depressing.

LADY MACBETH  
 (girlishly  
 flirtatious, she  
 takes Malcom's arm)

Oh Malcom, please.

THYME  
 (to audience)

As for Nola...

LADY MACBETH  
 I'm not that kind of girl. But, with you I could learn to  
 be.

*(Lady MacBeth and Nola exit  
 giggling like teenagers)*

THYME  
 (to audience)  
 I think it was Big Bill Shakespeare who put it best.  
 Whatever Nola wants, Nola gets.

*(Sound of wind, rain and  
 thunder. Thyme turns his  
 collar up and exits. Bluesy  
 saxophone up and under. Thyme  
 exits as three chairs are put  
 in place. A woman in her early  
 thirties enters. This is grown  
 up Cinderella. She sits in one  
 of the chairs and picks up a  
 magazine.)*

*Saxophone out.*

*The Narrator enters)*

NARRATOR  
 Thought you'd seen the last of Juliet? Then I have a real  
 surprise for you.

*(Juliet enters. The Narrator  
 exits. Juliet sits and glances  
 over at Cinderella. She looks  
 away then glances back)*

JULIET  
 Excuse me.

CINDERELLA  
 Yes?

JULIET  
Have me met before?

*(Cinderella wants desperately  
not to engage in conversation)*

CINDERELLA  
I don't think so.

JULIET  
You seem so familiar.

CINDERELLA  
Sorry.

JULIET  
Your sure we haven't...

CINDERELLA  
Yes, I'm sure.

JULIET  
I feel I know you from somewhere.

CINDERELLA  
It happens.

*(Rebuffed, Juliet sits quietly  
for a moment then speaks  
again)*

JULIET  
(excitedly)  
Ohmygod... It's you. It's you, isn't it? I knew it. Could I  
get a selfie?

*(She takes out a phone shoots  
a selfie of the two of them)*

JULIET  
No one's going to believe this. I'm sorry. My name is  
Juliet. Juliet Montague.

CINDERELLA  
How nice for you.

JULIET  
And you're Cinderella. Cinderella Charming.  
(Cinderella nods)  
I can't believe I'm actually talking to Cinderella Charming.  
This is so awesome.



*(Cinderella nods. She goes back to reading, then looks up over her magazine.)*

CINDERELLA

Wait a minute? Did you say your name was Juliet Montague?

JULIET

That's me. Juliet Montague.

CINDERELLA

Is Montague your maiden name.

JULIET

No... It's my married name. My maiden name was Capulet. I'm thinking of going back to it.

CINDERELLA

I've sometimes thought about going back to mine. But, it seems like such a hassle. Besides, Charming sounds a lot better than Schekendorff.

JULIET

I suppose.

CINDERELLA

So, you're that Juliet?

JULIET

Yeah... Afraid so.

CINDERELLA

I thought you were...

JULIET

Dead?

CINDERELLA

Well, yeah.

JULIET

I thought you lived happily ever after.

*(The ice has been broken. The two women start talking)*

CINDERELLA

That was the plan.

JULIET

The best laid plans...

CINDERELLA

So the whole suicide thing...?

JULIET

Oh that. We faked it.

CINDERELLA

Faked your own death? That's pretty drastic. Why would you do that?

JULIET

It was the only way we could think of to get away from all the craziness. His parents. My parents. The whole Capulet - Montague thing.

CINDERELLA

So what happened with you and Romeo? You guys seemed really hot for each other.

JULIET

In the beginning. You know how it is.

CINDERELLA

Tell me about it.

JULIET

We were so young. I was fourteen. In that rebellious period. My father said left, I went right. My mother said marry Paris, I picked Romeo. Who knows. Maybe if she'd said marry Romeo, I'd be divorced from Paris, now.

CINDERELLA

I'm sorry.

JULIET

Don't be. It was doomed from the start. I'm beginning to wonder if they're all doomed from the start.

CINDERELLA

I'm not the one to ask.

JULIET

In the book you seemed so happy.

CINDERELLA

A fairy tale.

JULIET

None of it was true?

CINDERELLA

I was poor. That part was true.

JULIET

The fairy godmother? The pumpkin?

CINDERELLA

Oh, please... A fairy godmother, really?

JULIET

Not even the carriage and the six white horses.

CINDERELLA

Rented.

JULIET

That was my favorite part? How disappointing.

CINDERELLA

No more so than finding out you didn't die. Of course, I'm only speaking in literary terms. The whole dramatic arc of the story is predicated on you...

JULIET

Dying.

CINDERELLA

Well, yes.

JULIET

The truth just isn't that romantic, is it?

CINDERELLA

Never is. We're just the end result of a long tradition of romantic love being the answer to every woman's prayer.

JULIET

So, Prince Charming...?

CINDERELLA

Wasn't that charming.

JULIET

(disappointed)

Ohhhhh.

CINDERELLA

He was an invention. Mostly my invention. I had fantasized him to such a degree, it wasn't until we'd been married for a few years that I realized what a total waste of space he was.

JULIET

It took me five.

CINDERELLA

So Romeo wasn't...

JULIET

He was Romeo alright. Ask half the women in Verona.

CINDERELLA

He... uh..?

JULIET

Every chance he got. For years I thought it was me. I wasn't attractive enough. I wasn't experienced enough.

CINDERELLA

Terrible, isn't it?

JULIET

Was the prince faithful? As long as we're baring our souls.

CINDERELLA

You know about Snow White.

JULIET

Well, yeah... I did read something.

CINDERELLA

Did you know about him and Snow White's wicked stepmother.

JULIET

(shocked)

Nooooooo.

CINDERELLA

Yes. Turns out he had a thing for wicked stepmothers.

JULIET

Did that include your stepmother?

CINDERELLA

My stepmother is great.

JULIET

You're better off without him.

CINDERELLA

I have to accept a lot of the blame.

JULIET

You shouldn't say that.

CINDERELLA

It's true. I concocted the whole phoney baloney scenario.

JULIET

You just wanted something better from life. We both did.

CINDERELLA

Happily ever after. What a load of crap.

JULIET

I just can't believe that.

CINDERELLA

Can't or won't?

JULIET

I have to believe that there is someone out there.

CINDERELLA

Someday my prince will come?

JULIET

So, you've given up on ever finding someone?

CINDERELLA

(mockingly)

Romeo, Romeo, where for art thou, Romeo?

JULIET

Please. That was all Shakespeare. Who talks like that?

CINDERELLA

Really?

JULIET

Sorry to bust your bubble.

CINDERELLA

It's my own fault.

JULIET

For wanting to believe?

CINDERELLA

God, it's so ingrained in us. Will we ever get past it?

JULIET

I don't know if I want to.

CINDERELLA

We have to grow up some time.

JULIET

Not if growing up means becoming cold and cynical.

CINDERELLA

Don't listen to me. If I wasn't looking for some answers would I be sitting outside a shrink's office?

JULIET

I guess not.

CINDERELLA

So, are you seeing anyone? I'm sorry, I don't mean to pry.

JULIET

My life's an open book.

CINDERELLA

Tell me about it.

JULIET

No. I'm not. But I'm hopeful. How about you?

CINDERELLA

I'm in no rush. I did okay in the settlement. I'm not a princess anymore, but, then again, who is?

*(The reception enters)*

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Montague.

*(Juliet stands)*

CINDERELLA

It was nice meeting you.

JULIET

*(dramatically)*

Parting is such sweet sorrow.

*(catching herself)*

Sorry. Force of habit.

*(Juliet exits. A moment later a YOUNG WOMAN enters, sits and thumbs through a magazine. The whole time she keeps glancing over at Cinderella)*

YOUNG WOMAN

Ohmygod... It is you. Oh, like this is so cool. Could I have your autograph?

CINDERELLA

Sure, why not?

*(Cinderella signs)*

YOUNG WOMAN

I can't believe I'm talking to Cinderella. You are my hero. I've read everything about you. It's so inspiring.

CINDERELLA

Don't believe everything you read.

YOUNG WOMAN

I just know that someday my prince will come. And we'll ride away on his white horse and live happily ever after.

CINDERELLA

Are you here to see the therapist?

YOUNG WOMAN

Oh, no. I just came to pick up a friend.

CINDERELLA

His name is Dr. Peterson. He's very good. He specializes in disappointment.

RECEPTIONIST

Ms. Charming.

*(Cinderella rises)*

YOUNG WOMAN

I don't think I'll need him.

CINDERELLA

*(stands)*

You will. Trust me.

*(Cinderella follows the Receptionist out. After a moment or two, The Young Woman rises and exits passing the Narrator on his way in. He stands center stage, looks out over the audience for a few moments, then...)*

NARRATOR

Before you go, I'd like to leave you with this final quote. Tha...tha...that's all folks.

*(He turns and exits)*

THE END