

YOU DO WHAT YOU CAN

(A Parody in One Act)

By

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THE CHARACTERS

MACBETH, A Scottish Lord, unburdened with great intelligence, 30

LADY MACBETH, His wife, pretty, vain and ambitious, 20s

JAMES, Their servant, a proper 'English Butler'

DUNCAN, King of Scotland, 50s, earthy, good-natured

MALCOLM, His son, priggish and pedantic, 18

MOLLY, A Witch, indeterminate age

DOLLY, Another Witch

OLLIE, Their Brother

THE PLACE

A Bare Stage, representing

Dunsinane Castle

THE TIME

Medieval Scotland

YOU DO WHAT YOU CAN

(A bare stage, representing Dunsinane castle: MACBETH and LADY MACBETH)

LADY MACBETH

(To MACBETH, who is shaking his head and is very upset) No! Of course it isn't fair! Duncan is an old fool!

MACBETH

(False modesty) Waal now, perhaps you're prejudiced, ma dear. Perhaps I didna deserve tha Earldom over MacDooff.

LADY MACBETH

Piffle! Why, you're twice the man MacDuff is. When I think you were passed over for him, it makes my blood boil! Well, Duncan will be here soon for my birthday celebration. (Slily) And I asked you to invite him for a reason. Can't you guess what it is?

MACBETH

(He thinks, draws a blank) Noope.

LADY MACBETH

Oh, MacBeth, for heaven's sake! You are strong. But aren't you ambitious?

MACBETH

Hoot now, lassie! Dinna I want everything that's coming to me!

LADY MACBETH

And as for intelligence—(She looks at him, shrugs).

MACBETH

If that was an insult, ma dear, I didna like it very much.

LADY MACBETH

Listen to me, MacBeth. I have a plan.

MACBETH

(He waits) Well, out with it.

LADY MACBETH

(She thinks) No. I think not. For the moment, the less you know the better. Sometimes I'm afraid there's too much milk of human kindness in your veins. But let me just say one thing. If all else fails... (She produces a dagger)... it might become necessary to use this!

MACBETH

Now that's more like it! (Pause) But *whom* do I use it on?

LADY MACBETH

For heaven's sake! Think, man!

MACBETH

(She watches him think for a moment, then he shakes his head) I give oop!

LADY MACBETH

Then, I'll do the thinking for us both! But remember this! If you but screw your courage to the stars, you cannot fail!

(And then their servant JAMES appears and suddenly announces)

JAMES

(A proper British accent) King Duncan has arrived, sire. Long liveth the King!

(They look, but MALCOLM, the King's son, appears instead. He looks priggish)

MALCOLM

(Prim and pedantic) I'm sorry, I precede my father, but he had an accident. He slipped. (Arching his brow, he reveals a banana peel) Someone dropped *this* on the stairway!

MACBETH

Hoot! Now how did that happen!

LADY MACBETH

(Excessive mock concern) My goodness! How awful! Why, he might have been injured.

MALCOLM

That is very true. However, he is all right.

JAMES

(Once again, bellows) And here now *is* King Duncan! Long liveth the King!

(And now DUNCAN does, indeed, appear. He is rotund, jovial and good-natured)

MACBETH

Hail to thee, Duncan! Long liveth ma King!

DUNCAN

For a minute there, I wasna sure how long!

MACBETH

We heard o' your accident on the stairway, Your Majoosty!

LADY MACBETH

Yes! How *awful!* (Again, under her breath)... that nothing *did* happen!

DUNCAN

(Jovially) Waal, all's well that ends well, and a happy birthday to you, Lady MacBooth.

MACBETH

And you're looking well, your Majoosty! (To LADY MACBETH) Isn't he, ma dear?

LADY MACBETH

(Smiling, but obviously disappointed) Yes, isn't he?

MALCOLM

Oh, I see to that personally, you know. I understand a great deal about physic. I make him eat his eel intestine *every* single day. As you may not know it helps build a strong liver, and then I give him a daily dose of—

DUNCAN

God knows I need a strong liver! (He laughs uproariously. The others politely chuckle).

MALCOLM

(Plowing right along) And I see that he drinks his goat's milk every day to build a strong heart. And, of course, that also gives him extra strength to pursue his kingly duties. And finally I give him a hearty glass of mare's urine to aid the digestion.

DUNCAN

(Grimacing) That takes some gettin' used to!

MACBETH

We're glad you've not picked up a touch o' this plague goin' round!

LADY MACBETH

Yes, so *awfully* glad. The doctors seemed baffled.

DUNCAN

Och! Are they not! They've tried bleeding, leeching, goat's dung with a pepperin' o' sheep's blood and the Good Laird knows what else, but to no avail!

MALCOLM

Well, I personally believe it is important to gather all the great medical minds into one place and conduct research on these matters. In my opinion they will find one day that all diseases spring from an unbalanced arrangement of our bodily fluids. For example I think if the blood is too heavy with black bile, your resistance to disease is greatly reduced—

LADY MACBETH

(Cutting him off and annoying him) Yes, how *terribly* fascinating—

DUNCAN

Aye, he's a woonder with experiments. We have a heap o' dead dogs and cats to prove it!

(Then, suddenly the light darkens. When it comes up again, THE WITCHES are sitting in the room. They sit around a mock fire, with a kettle boiling over it)

DUNCAN

(In a hushed tone) Och! What's this devilry!

MOLLY

(Cackles) All hail to thee, MacBeth, thane o' Glamis.

DOLLY

(Cackles) All hail to thee, MacBeth, thane o' Chowder—

MOLLY

(Nudges her, whispering) *Cawdor*, chowder-head!

OLLIE

(Grunts) All hail to thee MacBeth, King o' (He thinks)—

MOLLY

(Whispers to him) Scotland!

OLLIE

King o' Scotland!

DUNCAN

Scotland! What's this now! (There is a collective gasp).

DOLLY

Double, double toil and trouble—

OLLIE

Fire burn and cauldron booble—

DOLLY

(Whispers to MOLLY) It's gone out!

MOLLY

(Whispers to her) Ignore it, ass!

DOLLY

We have come from a Land, from which no traveler returns, to deliver a prophecy, er...
(Loses her place in the script, totally at a loss) Hail to thee, MacBeth, thane o' Glamis—

MOLLY

(Whispers to her) We've done that, blockhead!

(But then MALCOLM who has been scrutinising them, pulls a wig off OLLIE)

OLLIE

Och! I'm decalced!

MACBETH

Hoot now!

DUNCAN

MacBooth! What bit o' jiggery pooperly is this!

MACBETH

(Totally surprised) I know nowt!

MACBETH

(Pointing angrily at MOLLY, DOLLY and OLLIE) Unmask this unhooly three! And to the rack with 'em!

MOLLY

(Cowering, as are DOLLY and OLLIE) The *rack!* No, please! I beg you, My Lady—

LADY MACBETH

(Laughing nervously) Well, Malcolm, it seems you have found us out, you clever boy!

MACBETH

What's this! Is this your doin', lassie?

LADY MACBETH

Of course it is, silly! It was meant to be a play for the King's entertainment, but I'm afraid Malcolm's quick wit has spoiled everything. (She looks hurt).

DUNCAN

A play! (To MALCOLM) Fie on ye, lad, for spoiling the fun!

MALCOLM

(Grudgingly sheepish) But how was I to know?

LADY MACBETH

(Relieved with such an easy out) Oh, don't blame him. The acting was pretty awful, I'm sorry to say! (She scowls at MOLLY, DOLLY and OLLIE who cower anew)

DUNCAN

(Laughing) Waal, ye surely fooled me, ye truly did!

MALCOLM

(An offense is the best defense) But if I may say so, in rather poor taste! I mean! King of Scotland! Really!

LADY MACBETH

(Smiling daggers at him) You are so right, Malcolm, and *so* perceptive! Your Majesty, I do beg pardon for our ill-conceived little entertainment. (She then makes to hustle off MOLLY, DOLLY and OLLIE) Off with you now, ladies, I will see that you get your *proper* rewards very soon!

MOLLY

(She bows to all) Thank you, My Lady. We did our best, I'm sure.

LADY MACBETH

Yes, so am I—unfortunately.

DOLLY

(Bowing) My Lady, Your Majesty—(Continuing to bow) I am Dolly MacTavish, scullery maid, and if, by chance, you are seekin' scullery help—

OLLIE

(Kicking her in the butt) Off with ye! I feel fool enoof! (Bowing) Begging Your Majoosty's pardon, o' course! (They exit bowing and scraping).

LADY MACBETH

(Smiling a 'What can you say' smile) It is so hard to find good help these days. But perhaps after all that excitement, you would like to retire to your rooms for awhile? (Calls) JAMES! (He has been standing at the ready).

JAMES

(Directly behind her) Yes, My Lady.

LADY MACBETH

(Jumps, glares at JAMES) Malcolm and His Majesty are ready for their rooms.