

Characters

Narrator
Witch 1
Witch 2
Witch 3
Macbeth
Banquo
Macduff
Lady Macbeth
Hamlet
Ophelia
Juliet
Cordelia
Beatrice
Hecate
Macduff
Malina
Donna

Scene 1: Once upon a time

Narrator

Many Shakespeare plays can be looked at from a business angle. But one that seems specially suited – being about one man’s ambition to reach the top and his readiness to step over the bodies of his superiors on the way – is what is often called... the Scottish play.

Weird lighting and sound effects (suggesting storm and lightning).

First Witch

When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

Second Witch

When the hurlyburly's done,
When the battle's lost and won.

Third Witch

That will be ere the set of sun.

First Witch

Where the place?

Second Witch

Upon the heath.

Third Witch

There to meet with Macbeth.

Cat sound

First Witch

I come, Graymalkin!

Toad sound

Second Witch

Paddock calls.

Some other sound

Third Witch

Anon.

ALL

Fair is foul, and foul is fair:
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

They run off.

Scene 2: Making an appointment

Narrator

Yes, thank you! *Light change. Sound effects off. Curtain?* That's enough classical Shakespeare for tonight! Now for something completely different: Shakespeare and Business. At first blush, it might seem that Shakespeare and modern management don't mesh. Shakespeare conjures up images of crazy princes, ugly witches, fallen kings, and sulking guys in tights holding skulls of worthy corpses. The word management conjures up images of crazy prices, ugly deals, fallen CEOs, and sulking guys in gray suits holding stacks of worthless options. But the two do mesh. For business involves people, and people -- fundamentally -- don't change. But their environment does. *Lights begin to change.* And making an appointment has become... a little more complicated.

Lights up on Witch 1 with phone and Witch 2 in another office.

Witch 2 (*the phone rings, she picks up*)

Triodia and Toadstool Consulting, hello. Bougainvillea Toadstool speaking... How can I help?

Witch1

Hi Bougainvillea! It's Miranda Catsclaw.

Witch 2

Miranda! How are you!

Witch 1

Fine, fine. Is Hecate in?

Witch 2

No. She has an outside assignment today. Won't be back for the rest of the day.

Witch 1

Should I call back later then? We really need to make an appointment, because of the Macbeth project, you know?

Witch 2

I can deal with it. I told you I want to keep her out of this.

Witch 1

But she's so much more experienced.

Witch 2

Yes, I know I'm only the junior partner but this is exactly why I want to be the one who acquires the project. When things are up and running, we can tell Hecate all about it. But for now, it's just the three of us. By the way, what about Escheveria? Shouldn't we call her?

Witch 1

I thought I'd check with you first. I'm going to make a conference call now, okay?

Witch 2

Okay.

Witch 1 *dials. It rings. Eventually, witch 3 picks up.*

Witch 3

Predictions, Prognoses and Presentiments Ltd. Escheveria Crowfoot speaking.

Witch 1 and 2

When shall we – ahem, when shall we three meet again?
In thunder lighting or in rain?

Witch2

It's about the Macbeth project.

Witch 3

Yes. Sure. When's convenient for you?

Witch 1

I'm tempted to say 'when the hurly-burly's done'... You know, at the moment I still have this Venetian project. The client is considering buying into the Belmont group. I suggested that he raise some venture capital first.

Witch 3

Did you recommend Shylock Brothers to him?

Witch1

Of course I did...

Witch 3

Throw in a Jewish bank and things become interesting, eh?

Witch 1

We will see. But I have to get this done before I can really concentrate on the Macbeth project. I think we really have to hit the ground running with that one. But I thought I'd just give you a call and see if you're free maybe in two weeks time? Maybe Thursday? Around 3 pm?

Witch 2

I'll just look in the diary. Hang on a second. (*looks*) I'm afraid 3 is not really convenient for me. I have this family business to look into on that day. The old boss is trying to manage his succession and is wondering which of his three daughters should become managing director.

Witch3

Oh, the Lear corporation? How's it going?

Witch2

I think I'm going to suggest to the old guy that he should put his daughters into some kind of assessment centre to find out who's best suited to become his successor. Yes...anyways. On Thursday I'm free from 5. Would that be okay?

Witch 1

Five is fine with me.

Witch 3

Should be fine. Unless something comes up at short notice. But then I would get in touch with you to reschedule.

Witch 1

So... where the place?

Witch 2

Upon the heath? Ah no, maybe not. It's unlikely that he goes for walks while he is working, isn't it?

Witch1

No, I think we'll have to go to the headquarters of Scotland Inc. And we have to meet him somewhere where he can't escape us.

Witch 3

How about the elevator? It's a high-rise building, that should give us enough time. Have a nice little elevator pitch? 30 seconds to make him so curious that he'll buy on the spot?

Witch 2

Sounds like fun.

Witch 1

Yeah. Sounds good. So we work out our strategy until Thursday and confront him afterwards. (*a knock is heard from without her office door, Witch 1 calls*) I'm coming Ms. Graymalkin! (*to the others*) Our secretary. Sorry, I'm afraid have to go now or she'll start scratching on the door. That woman's like a cat. Bye!

Witch 2

(a call is heard outside her door) Oh no, Paddock calls. The old toady. Wonder what he wants now... probably some files he needs my help on so he'll look good for the boss. I'll be with you in a second, Mr. Paddock! So see you Thursday, 5 pm, Scotland headquarters.

Witch 3

I just hope Miranda sends an email round later to confirm the appointment, otherwise I might forget it.

Witch 2

Oh yes. And let's just hope the weather clears up until Thursday. I hate flying in all that fog...

Witch 2

Yeah, strange weather today. We had to circle above Edinburgh airport for half an hour once because the fog was so thick. Talk to you again soon.

Witch 2 *(knocking is heard)*

Coming! *(to other witch)* Bye!

Narrator

So what's going on? Who are these charming ladies? Their portfolio is varied but mainly they specialise in HR consulting – potential analyses, career advice, succession management – doing a little financial consulting on the side. As you might have guessed, right now they are looking to sell their services to a promising potential client by the name of Macbeth.

(We see MB with his briefcase and cellphone)

At present senior national account manager at Scotland Inc, a medium-sized corporation presently run by James Duncan, whose family are also the major stockholders. Scotland is doing well even though the market is very competitive. Lately a competitor, Norway Brothers, has made a bid for Scotland's home market. Macbeth fought considerably and eventually won the market share back. A colleague of his, who was also involved in the Norway campaign, is Linda Banquo. *(Banquo joins Macbeth.)* Um. Wait a minute. *(calling towards backstage)* I think you made a mistake here. This Banquo is supposed to be a man.

Banquo: No! We had to go with the times.

Narrator: Sorry?

Banquo: Have you never heard of equal opportunities employment schemes? We have to have a certain number of women in upper management nowadays.

Narrator: Oh-kay. Right. So Macbeth is joined by his colleague Linda Banquo.

Macbeth

Now, let's catch that plane and head back. My old lady is not too pleased that I've been spending so much time abroad lately.

Banquo

Well, if you're not home she can't keep on at you about getting a promotion. And from what you've told me, that's what she wants for you. So it's only natural she wants you in her reach.

Macbeth

As if she didn't have a career of her own...

Narrator

While the two heroes are returning from the battlefield to the headquarters of Scotland Inc. to give their reports to Duncan, our three consultants have prepared a surprise for Macbeth.

Scene 3: Elevator Pitch

The witches wait for an elevator

W1

Well, where have you been lately?

W2

Confusing bankers in Frankfurt.

W3

And you?

W1

In New York.

Stock exchange.

That lady stockbroker was looking through a stack of emails with insider information

And bought, and bought, and bought.

Let me see, said I. I was standing next to her.

Get lost, you bitch! the ugly cow hissed.

But I know that her husband has invested heavily in Italian shipping options,

The tiger shipyard in Aleppo.

I think I'll use my Italian contacts -

W2

You can also use some of mine if you want.

W1

Oh, good!

W3

I have some too.

W1

To fiddle with the ships' navigation systems

So they become unsafe to use.

And he'll lose a bit of sleep over his falling options!

(One can hear the elevator arriving)

W3

A hum, a hum,

Macbeth does come!

ALL *(they play some kind of clapping game)*

We want you to take your fate in hand
Tempt you to travel sea and land
In order to take your boss's place.
Get up and join the corporate race!
Kick out Duncan, take his post
And we'll have a cause to boast
That we made you go so far
Made you become the firm's new star!

You can tell we're modern witches
Winning our clients with elevator pitches!

Shsh! Here they come!

MB and Banquo walk down the corridor.

MB

Yes, the weather is really weird today. I was saying to my wife on the phone-

Banquo

(looks at his watch)

What floor do we need to go to again? *(takes in the witches, whispering to Macbeth)*
Oh, look at those girls. They don't look like they belong in an office tower – dressed as they are. And yet they are here. Hello! *(no answer)* Don't you speak English? But you seem to understand me. Why do you put your fingers on your lips? *(The doors open and the witches enter the elevator. The witches beckon MB and Banquo to follow them into the elevator.)* You should be executives but yet your flimsy skirts forbid me to think you really are.

MB

Speak, if you can. What are you?

W1

All hail Macbeth!

MB

Hail? No, actually, it was raining when I came here. No hail yet, it's not that cold.

W1

What I meant was: Good afternoon to you, head of purchasing of Scotland Incorporated!

MB

Yeah, that's me. Hello.

W2

All hail Macbeth! Good afternoon to you, managing director!

MB

No, wait, now you're mixing things up. John Cawdor is the managing director.

W2

Are you sure?

W3

All hail Macbeth! Good afternoon to you who will be CEO soon!

MB

What? CEO? But old Duncan is not going to retire any day soon. What are you trying to tell me?

Banquo

Hello, hello, why do you look so shocked, when they prophecy you a glorious career? In the name of truth – are you just making this up or do you really have connections to the HR department? My good colleague here you greet with smiles and great predictions about his future so that he seems to be completely speechless. But what about me? If you have access to this company's career development plans and can tell which department is promising or which position better not to take, talk to me too – I'm all ears.

W1

Hail!

W2

Hail!

W3

Hail!

Banquo

Yes, enough of your weather forecasts! Tell me about my future career if you can!

W1

Lesser than Macbeth and greater

W2

Not so happy, yet much happier.

W3

You will produce CEOs even though you won't be one yourself.

So, all hail Macbeth and Banquo! *(bell)* It's your floor!

(the doors open, the witches push the men out, forcing their business card into Macbeth's hand)

Macbeth

Wait, wait, what are you doing! Hey! Why do you lay in wait for me in an elevator to tell me all this and then vanish? Hello? What's that? *(looking at the card)* Ambush marketing?

Banquo

Pop! Gone like a chewing-gum bubble. Where have they disappeared to?

Macbeth (*rubbing his head, pointing to the elevator*)

Into the air...And what seemed solid melted as breath into the wind...

Banquo

Wow, you're poetic today. But... was this just real? Or was there something in that cigarette I bummed off you 10 minutes ago?

Macbeth

Your **sons** will be CEOs.

Banquo

You will be CEO.

Macbeth

And managing director, was it not so?

Banquo

Exactly. Oh well, who comes here? If that isn't Juliet from HR. And Ophelia, too.

Enter Juliet and Ophelia.

Juliet

Hello you two. We were looking for you. The boss has received the news about your latest successes with Norway, Macbeth. He's very pleased. There's a promotion in store for you.

Ophelia

We're only here to tell you to see him as soon as possible, not to spill the beans, Julie.

Juliet

Well, he told me to tell you that you can print "managing director" on your business cards from now on!

Banquo

What, have these crazies told the truth?

Macbeth

But what about Cawdor? It's his job you're talking about.

Ophelia

Well, it is, for one more day. But it seems that he was up to some double-dealing with Norway, leaking information... It came out and so he was sent packing.

MB

I'm head of purchasing and managing director... The greatest is behind. Thanks for this news! Wow, what do you think now Banquo— will your children become company bosses?

Banquo

(*to MB*) Well, these weird sisters in the elevator certainly seem to have kindled your ambition to become boss. But be careful – we don't know who they were and maybe they will want some favours from you for giving you their information. I wouldn't trust them. (*to the others*) Juliet, Ophelia, can I have a word with you? (*they go off*)

MB

(to himself) They were right about two things – why not also about the third? But in order to achieve that... no, better not think of what I would have to do to get there. If fate wants me to be the boss of this company, maybe it will happen without me having to do anything about it.

Banquo

Macbeth, are you coming?

MB

Yeah, sure.

Narrator

So... Will the seeds fall on fertile ground? And what will Macbeth's wife say when she hears about the promotion?

Scene 4: Decision Making

Lady Macbeth and a man dressed all in black sitting in two chairs. There is a flipchart in the background, listing methods of decision making and problem solving strategies.

Hamlet: There's something rotten in this office.

Lady M

So, um, Mr...um...

Hamlet

Denmark.

Lady M

So, Mr. Denmark –

Hamlet

But you can also call me Hamlet. [Really, it's okay, Mrs Macbeth.](#) Everyone calls me Hamlet.

Lady M

Yes. Now, let's look at this again. You say you can't make up your mind. Now, there are many strategies that can help us with decision making. Here, let's try this. *(Puts a white hat on her client's head)*

Hamlet

To be or not to be
That is the question.
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind-

Lady M

Yes, I've heard all this before. Let's tackle the problem a little more systematically. Did you notice that hat on your head? It's a bit small for your head actually...but anyways...

Hamlet

I could be bounded in a nutshell

and count myself king of infinite space
were it not that I have bad dreams.

Lady M

I'm not a psychoanalyst, you know. So no dreams please. My field is systematic psychology. And now we're going to do the six hats method. Every hat symbolises a different approach to the problem. White means: just give me the facts. Just facts. Nothing else.

Hamlet

Oh, that's easy. My father dies. My mother marries my uncle, that is, my father's brother. My uncle takes over father's company. Then my father's ghost appears and tells me that my uncle murdered my father and that I have to take revenge. My uncle and my mother are spying on me. And my old friends Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are spying on me too. And they are using my girlfriend, Ophelia, to spy on me too. I think my friend Horatio is the only one who is not spying on me. Ophelia is the daughter of an old guy named Polonius who worked for my father and now works for my uncle. He was spying on me too, when I had a discussion with my mother and so I killed him. Yes, that's about it, I think. So what am I going to do? Do you think I should kill myself?

Lady M

Wait, wait, we still have the green, the yellow, the black, the red and the blue hat. Then we'll see. (*exchanges the white hat for a green one*) Now green is for creativity, yellow for the positive aspects, black for the negative aspects, red for feelings and blue for the result. Now. Be creative. Generate ideas. Whatever comes to your mind.

Hamlet

I could kill myself.

Lady M

Okay, we had that already.

H

I could kill Claudius, my uncle.

Lady M

Yes. Other ideas?

H

I could... sue Claudius for murder.

Lady M

Yes. But come on, you can do better than that.

H

I... um... could go to parent child counselling with mum and Claudius, as my mother wants. She says that I have an Oedipus complex. (*his cellphone rings*) Hello? Hi mum. Yes. No. Yes. I love you. Bye mum. (*to Lady M*) Sorry.

Lady M

No problem. Go on. Go crazy, be creative!

H

I could.... Umm... become a gravedigger.

Lady M

Yes, why not. You'll be independent of your family. That's a job that's absolutely crisis-proof.

H

I could... I could...ummm... take Ophelia and run away. Emigrate.

Lady M (*her phone buzzes, she digs in her handbag*)

Yes. Good.

H

I could join a travelling theatre company. I've always wanted to be on stage. (*Lady M is not listening to him, busy with her phone. Only nodding occasionally, while Hamlet is going crazy with his ideas*) I could... Become a pirate and rob the country. Become a hermit. Burn down the palace. Admit my love for Horatio and go to live in Wittenberg...

Lady M (*on the phone, while Hamlet keeps on talking*)

Yes, darling, can I talk to you later? I'm with a client right now.

H

Take Ophelia to Wittenberg and live in a ménage à trois. Take my mother too and live in a ménage à quatre- Take Claudius and -

Lady M

Yes, that's all very interesting. (*she takes off the hat, Hamlet shuts up immediately*). Now, let's go on to the next hats. Black and yellow. Negative and positive.

Hamlet

Ok. I think I understood how it works. What now? Yellow?

Lady M

Positive options.

Hamlet

Right. Umm...Positive. Hmmm. I will kill Claudius and all will think me a hero. Oh my... umm. I will kill myself and go to heaven- Or maybe... I will be so happy with Ophelia or Horatio or whoever that I will forget all about it. My father wasn't dead, my real father is the grave digger and Mum reveals this all to me –

Lady M (*looks at her watch*)

Good, good. (*puts the black hat on him*) Now negative.

Hamlet

Well that's easy...

Lady M

You're a pessimist?

Hamlet

A bit. Sometimes. Okay. Let's go. (*Lady M gets a text message and is not really listening, mumbling something about "promotion"... "Norway"...*) I try to kill Claudius and fail. I kill him and it turns out he is innocent. I try to kill him but accidentally kill my mum. I kill myself and go to hell. Ophelia tells me I'm a coward and kills Claudius instead. I find out that Polonius is my real father. Shit. I killed Polonius. I don't do anything and Claudius has me killed. (*shouting at her*) I don't do anything and go mad!!!

Lady M (*is forced to realise that Hamlet is still there*)

Sorry. My husband... Sorry. (*puts away her phone*) Yes, umm... (*puts the red hat unto Hamlet's head*) Now, how do you feel about all this?

Hamlet (*dreamily*)

I feel that I should go and invent a new Linux distribution.

Lady M

What? What is it with this red hat? Clients come up with this idea again and again. Is that a joke or what? Red hat: emotions. Not operating systems. Not Linux. I need to know what you feel!

Hamlet

But this is a brilliant idea.

Lady M

And how does it relate to your problem?

Hamlet

I don't know. But I feel it's the right thing to do. Thanks for your help! (*runs off*)

Lady M

Fine, fine... And we didn't even get to the blue hat. Men ... As if computers were the solution for everything...

(*her cellphone rings, she answers it*) Yes, darling. I got your message. It is wonderful! Yes, I'm on my way home. See you soon. (...) I love you too.

(*talking to herself*)

Senior national account manager thou art and managing director, and shalt be what thou art promised. CEO of Scotland Inc. Yet do I fear thy nature; it is too full of the milk of human kindness to catch the nearest way. You want to be a great guy, you're ambitious enough – but you're just not mean enough. Weakling... But behind every great man – there needs to be a great woman. Yes!

Scene 5: Home Sweet Home

(*the middle of a quarrel*)

Lady M

Was the hope drunk wherein you dressed yourself? Has it slept since and now gotten up with a bad hangover or what? What are you telling me – you won't do it?! Coward! If you really loved me you would do it without even thinking about it! You want that job, don't you? You're just too much of a coward to admit it!

MB

Hush! You'll wake up the kids!
I dare do all that may become a man
Who dares do more is none.
Have you no sense of ethics?

Lady M

And why in God's name did you tell me about it all if you don't dare do it? If you do it – then I will know you are a real man. That's a chance you only get once in a whole lifetime! You know what – if somebody had said to me – sell your kids to a child-porn producer if you want that job – I would have done it. And you know how much I love the kids.

MB

And what if we fail?

Lady M

We fail! Get off your ass and we will not fail!

MB

Okay. But what if it doesn't work?

Lady M

Oh shut up and write that email. *(goes off)*

Some hours later.

Macbeth

(deletes some writing on his computer)

Poor old Duncan. No, I cannot do it. I'll just go to bed now. *(turns off the computer and gets up, walks a few steps and then stops, startled)*

Wait a minute. Is this a touch pen which I see before me? The blunt end toward my hand? But I certainly put mine where it belongs. Next to my **palm pilot**. *(tries to grab the apparition that is only visible to him alone)* Oops – a touch pen that can't be touched? But I can still see it.

Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible

To feeling as to sight? or art thou but

A touch pen of the mind, a false creation,

Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?

Wow - I think I'm a bit overworked, I must be hallucinating. Hey, where are you leading me? *(the apparition is leading him to his palm pilot, which is buzzing/ringing. He picks it up)*

That sound reminds me of my task. Ok. I'll write it and send it, and it is done. *(he draws out the real touch pen as if drawing a sword and types something into his palm pilot.)*

Poor old Duncan; now it's farewell.

That message will send you to heaven...or to hell. *(touches "submit")*

Scene 6: Canteen talk

(Three girls are having lunch in the canteen of Scotland. Inc.)

Narrator: A few days later in the cafeteria of Scotland Inc.

Juliet

You must be cruel, only to be kind. Let him think about what he did to you. Believe me, if you give him the slip now he'll be back at your door within a week, crawling on the floor to be let in again. Then you can be the one who has the upper hand for once. And you can start over again.

Ophelia

You're right. I'm really feeling like returning all his silly presents to him with some dramatic gesture. Do you think that will impress him?

Juliet

Try it. In my opinion he's being much too dramatic anyways, so I think it's your turn to throw a little histrionic fit now.

Ophelia

Yeah. Did I tell you about his latest appearance?

Juliet

No. What did he do this time?

Ophelia

I was watching Sex and the City, and suddenly the door opens:
Pale as his shirt; his knees knocking each other;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors—he comes before me.

Cordelia

Mad for thy love?

Ophelia

Love? I don't know what your boyfriend looks like when he wants to get you into bed.

Juliet

She doesn't have one. How would she know.

Cordelia

Shut up, you!

Ophelia

Anyways, he looked like someone out of a really bad horror-movie.
He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
As it did seem to shatter all his bulk

And end his being: that done, he lets me go:
And walked out of the door backwards, staring at me all the time, never saying a word.

Juliet

Oh my, these acting classes he goes to don't seem to do him any good. Are you sure he's not gay?

Ophelia

I don't know what to make of it all. You're lucky that your guy is so much easier to handle.

Juliet

Romeo? Well, yes, he's really so sweet. But remember all his horrible relatives. And mine. They hate each other's guts, it's been like that for ages and it's not getting better. I honestly don't know where this is all going to end. Maybe we should just emigrate. Go to New Zealand and start a sheep farm or something.

Cordelia

But what if your parents need you when they get older? They're not so young anymore and you're their only child. Wouldn't you feel bad if you were at the other end of the world? How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless child – that's what my father always says.

Juliet

You can talk – you've always been close to your daddy.

Ophelia

Well, she's hoping to get the biggest share of daddy's inheritance, isn't she? So she won't have to slave away at Scotland Inc any more... So she'd better be close to her daddy...

Cordelia

Will you shut up! Just because you two don't get along with your fathers doesn't mean that everybody is the same. Besides, I have always been honest to daddy – in contrast to my sisters, who are always trying to sweet-talk him into letting them manage part of the firm already – so they can profit from his wisdom while he is still in position, they say. I'm always telling him that I'm going to make my way with or without the Lear Corporation and so far he's taken it pretty well.

Ophelia

But wouldn't it be nice to have leading position in the company? You could give free flights to all of your girlfriends... I certainly wouldn't mind.

Cordelia

The last time you were on board we had to go through some heavy turbulence, remember? And you were spectacularly sick. In my lap. So I will think twice before I let you board one of my daddy's airplanes again.

Ophelia (to Juliet)

Yeah, whatever, who cares about learjets. Let's talk about more important stuff. Who is interested in daddy's airplanes anyways? Except you maybe, miss junior project engineer...
(to Juliet) So you think I really should ditch Hamlet?

Cordelia

Oh, I'm fed up with the two of you. I'm going back to my office. *(takes her half-eaten sandwich and gets up)*

Ophelia

Yeah, having lunch 'al desko' is probably more suitable for girls like you. Not exactly the sociable type, are you.

Cordelia

I don't have to listen to this. I'm going.

Juliet

Oh... Parting is such sweet sorrow...

Beatrice *(enters)*

Girls! Have you heard the news?

Ophelia

What?

Beatrice

You've not heard it? Then I won't tell you.

Juliet

Oooh, Beatrice... come on, come on! What is it? Oh don't let us die with curiosity here. I won't tell anybody! I swear! I'll be as silent as a grave!

Ophelia

(to Beatrice) The lady doth protest too much, methinks. *(to Juliet)* You shouldn't swear any vows on secrecy. Since when have you ever been able to keep rumours to yourself?

Beatrice

Well, it's not exactly a secret anymore.

Cordelia

Is it about Duncan? Then I don't think I want to hear it again. *(goes off)*

Juliet

So what does she know that we don't?

Beatrice

Sit down and I'll tell you over a cup of coffee. You know that old Duncan has this little farmhouse in the highlands? Where he often goes over the weekends? Well now, somebody claims that he didn't go there alone.

Ophelia

And not with his wife either?

Beatrice

No, not with his wife either.

Juliet

Oh well, let the poor old guy enjoy his mistress... Who of the upper management doesn't have one?

Ophelia

How do you know so much about that?

Beatrice

It's not a mistress.

Ophelia

Another man?

Juliet

Are you afraid that that is where your Hamlet spends his weekends? With old Duncan?

Ophelia

Nonsense! So what is it?

Beatrice

Well, no, not a man. Rather smaller...

Juliet and Ophelia together

He's a paedophile? Duncan's doing it with little boys?

Beatrice

It's just a rumour. But Jessica heard it from Ross who heard it from one of the janitors who knows the brother of the woman who cleans Duncan's weekend home. Or something. Or was it Angus who got an email from the postman's cousin? Oh, I don't remember exactly. Somebody heard it from someone. But just think, if it were true!

Juliet

Well, now that would explain a few things.

Beatrice

How is that? Don't tell us you tried to impress Duncan with the shortness of your skirts.

Juliet

Me? You know that I love only Romeo.

Beatrice

Yes, but you are a girl who is open to all different kinds of ways to advance her career, aren't you?

Juliet

And who of you has not tried it?

Beatrice

Sigh no more, ladies, sigh no more,
Men were deceivers ever,

One foot in sea and one on shore,
To one thing constant never.

Ophelia

You mean that they are all sort of... open to different options... the guys around here?

Juliet

Oh no, most of them are quite firmly interested in one option only.

Beatrice

What do you think of Macbeth, for example?

Juliet

Oh that one's too ambitious to look at us girls. If Duncan were a woman, yes... But so... But no, hey wait, if Duncan likes little boys... Maybe Macbeth should reconsider...

Beatrice

Though he's not so little, our Macbeth...

Cordelia *reappears*

Now that's what you get for your gossip! Are you happy now, you vultures?

Beatrice

Why? What is it? Did anything happen?

Cordelia

Haven't you heard? What, must I be the one who brings you the news? Duncan is dead. Some journalists got wind of the rumour and started pestering and beleaguering him and he had a heart attack. Are you happy now?

Beatrice

Done to death by slanderous tongues... Who do you think will be his successor?

Scene 7: Consulting with the boss

Narrator

What has Macbeth done? Well, he has launched the deadly rumour about old Duncan. And this has promptly killed the poor old guy. Well, the man was over 75 after all and did have a weak heart. And now Macbeth has indeed become the new boss of Scotland Inc. (*Somebody puts Macbeth's new name plate up next to his door.*)

Banquo, who had looked as if he was about to point out Macbeth – who had made it look as if the rumour came from Duncan's personal assistants – as the true source of the intrigue was kicked out of the firm. (*we see B packing his stuff and going*) So it seems that the witches' – ah, sorry, the consultants' – campaign has been successful. But it turns out they have acted without order from their boss, Mrs. Hecate Triodia.

Hecate and the witches

W1

Why, what is it Hecate? You don't look very pleased.

Hecate

Have I not reason, ladies, as you are
Saucy and overbold? How did you dare
To trade and traffic with Macbeth
In riddles and affairs of death?
Am I not the boss of this company?
Why did you not consult with me?
All the connections, they are mine
And I determine from which line
You can draw the prophesies
so necessary for your work.
But you go and contact this jerk
Who'll probably not pay our fees.
He's only interested in himself
That man is such an egomaniac-

W3

And you? Are you not on the same track?
I'm only hearing me-me-me,
Where is your solidarity?

W2

Yes, don't forget we're in this all together.

Hecate

Now, don't you talk to me like that.
Macbeth is nothing but a spoiled brat.
I'm astonished you didn't see.
But you can make it up to me.
Meet me tomorrow, and don't be late
At the underground conference center
At nine o'clock Macbeth will enter
The meeting room to learn his fate.
Your laptops and your slides provide
Handouts and everything beside.

W2

Do we need to bring a projector or do they have one there?

W3

It's okay. I'll check with them.

W1

Will we need a flipchart?

Hecate (*in a hurry*)

Just make sure your clothes match.
Girls, I have a plane to catch,
Please don't make me miss my flight.
I'll be working the whole night.
See you tomorrow.
This night I'll spend
Unto a dismal and a fatal end
Great business must be wrought ere noon.
Macbeth shall know his future soon...

W2

So you know how to tackle this project?

Hecate

I've been in this business longer than you. I will have to make a few calls to some old business friends who will make Macbeth believe he is greater than fate, he will laugh about danger, and he will think he is above wisdom, grace, and fear.

As you know, security
Is man's greatest enemy!

(Hecate's phone rings)

Sorry, that's my assistant. She'll tell me I have to hurry if I want to get that plane. See ya.

(Hecate rushes off)

W2

I didn't get that last bit.

W1

She means that if you're overconfident, you're likely to make mistakes. Come on, let's get to work, she'll be back sooner than we like.

Scene 8 The Park

Narrator: The same day in a park near the headquarters of Scotland Inc. Macbeth is having his lunch break but something has spoiled his appetite.

MB walking through a park during lunch. He is on the phone with his wife.

Yes, love. Sure. No, everything is working great. Just a bit tired.

He passes a homeless person on a park bench. Does a double take.

Banquo? *(takes a second look and realises he's been mistaken. To his wife)* What? No, sorry, nothing, nothing. Yes, all is good. Everything under control. *(He notices somebody overtaking him, he starts)* Ban-? Oh sorry. No, love, I'm alright. Just a little concentration problem. For some reason I keep seeing old Banquo in every person I pass on the road. Ridiculous... Anyways... See you tonight. *(puts his phone away)*

Ok, so Banquo's been taken care of. Was there anyone close to her who could threaten me? (*goes through a list of Scottish names "MacDougal, MacIntyre, MacEwan, MacLeod..." and stops at:*) Macduff! Why didn't I think of her? Banquo's bosom friend... Why didn't I think of her before? And who else? What if they trace back that email? Aren't these computer nerds capable of anything? Maybe I need someone to reassure me of my success. (*takes his phone, dials a number*) Ah no, maybe not. What are consultants for if you can't consult with them? (*takes his phone, dials a number*) Hello? Macbeth here. Could I make an appointment with you? Yes, great. Tomorrow. (*he doesn't notice Macduff who is observing him and almost runs into her.*)

Macduff

Mr. Macbeth! Enjoying the fresh air?

MB

Oh – hello, Macduff! Well, no, I'm not here for leisure – always thinking of the company, you know. Got to prepare for an important meeting tomorrow... yes...Must be on my way! Yes... I'm hearing only positive things about you, so keep up your good work...

Macduff

You bet I will.

Scene 9: The meeting

Narrator

The next day, at the conference center.

W1

Thrice the pda has sounded.

W2

Thrice and once the smartphone buzzed.

W3

Blackberry calls: 'tis time, 'tis time!

They gather around a laptop that is connected to a beamer. The buzzwords they mention show up on powerpoint slides.

W1

Round about the cauldron go
In the evil phrases throw.
Let's take talent management
Add it and let it ferment
Action centred leadership
Let into the cauldron slip
Client-centric, cutting edge
Utilise and leverage,
Mission statement, paradigm
BPR and just in time
Make the mixture real sublime.

all

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble

W2

Enable and incentivise
Integrate, solutionise
Flesh out, step up, commoditize
Roll-out, quick win and monetise.
ERP and BSC
Value added, synergy
Win win and diversity,
Take it to the next degree,
And will success us guarantee.

all

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble

W3

Competitive advantage framework
Will also in the cauldron lurk.
TQM and culture change
Make the mixture strong and strange.
Circle back and close the loop
Almost finished is our soup.

W2

Don't forget to add Kaizen
Let it sink, then stir again.

all

Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn and cauldron bubble

W3

It has everything it should
Now the charm is firm and good.

W1

World-class!

W2

Best of breed!

W3

Bullet-proof!

W1

Yeah, you'd better save that file now.

(W3 busies herself with the laptop)

Hecate *(has appeared in the background and has been watching for sometime, unnoticed)*
What are you doing? What is that? It looks awful.

Witch 2

We call this our marketing-mix. With all this mumbo-jumbo the customer is sure to buy in.

Hecate

I think I should send you all to a workshop on presentation skills...

But well, all right. I commend your pains.

And everyone shall share in the gains

And now about the cauldron sing

Like elves and fairies in a ring

Enchanting all that you put in.

W3

Okay, let's do some corporate bonding. Girls? Are you ready to socialise with the boss?

Hecate

Give me a 'W'!

Witches

W!

And so on, until the word "Witch!" is completed.

Hecate

What's that spell?

Witches

Witch!

Hecate

Whose magic is it?

Witches

Ours!

Hecate

Who's number one?

Witches

We are. Always!

In the hallway. Beatrice is running after Macbeth

Beatrice

Mr Macbeth, the journalists keep calling us, asking for a statement from you.

MB
I'm busy.

Beatrice (*looking at her notepad*)

Like – what will change under the new boss, is any breach with tradition to be expected, how about your strategy in regard to England plc, and why did you fire one of your most talented senior managers, that is, Linda Banquo?

MB
Tell them they can go and ### themselves.

Beatrice
No, I cannot tell them that.

MB
Then think of something. What else does this company have a PR department for? Do some work for your money for once!

Beatrice
But I-

MB
Or I will consider making your whole department redundant. (*He walks on, leaving Beatrice rather stunned.*)

W1
By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes.

MACBETH
(*standing on the other side of the door, mumbling to himself*) How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags? Let's see if you're any good. (*knocks*)

W1
Open locks, whoever knocks.

(*Maybe Beatrice sneaks up to the door behind Macbeth and listens at the door for some time before going away again*)

MB (*enters*)
Hello, hello! Nice meeting you again! How do you do?

All witches
How do you do?

MB
So what's on the agenda for today?

All
A deed without a name.

Witch 1

Well, there is actually a name for it. It's called... a powerpoint presentation.

Macbeth

All right, let's get down to business right away. I don't know how you know the things you do, but I must insist that you answer all my questions. At the end of the day, I need to know where I stand.

Witch 2: *(whispering to the other witches)*

Oh well, isn't he nervous.. Forgetting all about good manners and polite introductions...

Witch 3

Well, he's a Scot, he doesn't part easily with his money and we're charging him a good sum for this.

Witch 1

You think our pricing policy is wrong?

Witch 2

No no – if we charged any less he wouldn't believe we were any good.

MB

So... ahem... I command you in the name of whatever dark powers you serve... haha... *(laughs nervously)* I mean, whatever management strategy you adhere to. I'm not choosy. I don't care if you unleash whirlwinds of predictions that overthrow the stock-markets, make the courses behave in such a crazy way that you send stockbrokers to their destruction. Whatever it is, it is absolutely mission-critical that I get some take-away from this meeting.

W1

Speak.

W2

Demand.

W3

We'll answer.

W1

Would you rather hear these things from our mouths or from our masters'?

MACBETH

You mean, your management gurus? Call them. Let me see them.

W1

Take the device that will connect,
Dial up to the effect
That we will see them in real-time,
Hear them reason, hear them rhyme.

ALL

Come, high or low;
Thyself and office deftly show!

Witch 1

Sorry, this video-conferencing software is a bit slow.

W3

We really need to upgrade.

(picture on screen pops up, showing a person's head and not much of his body.)

Macbeth

Who's that?

W1

The head of strategic marketing.

MACBETH

Tell me, you unknown power—

W1

He knows thy thought.

W2 *(whispers)*

Yeah, we briefed him about your case yesterday.

W1

Hear his speech but say thou nought.

W2

You know, these big-wigs don't like to be interrupted once they get going with their analyses...

FIRST APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth! Beware Macduff.
Beware the chief engineer. Dismiss me. Enough.

MACBETH

That was it?

Witch 1 *shrugs*

Short and sweet.

Macbeth

(mumbling) I should have become an HR consultant too. Earning thousands in minutes... with a bit of cryptic advice. *(to the person on the screen)* Anyways... Whoever you are, thanks for your advice. You have guessed exactly what I feared. But one word more—

(screen goes blank)

W1

He will not be commanded by you. Here's another, more potent than the first. (*the screen shows another person*)

(*Macbeth looks insecure*)

Witch 3

She means, from even higher up on the organisational chart...

SECOND APPARITION

Macbeth! Macbeth! Macbeth!—

MACBETH

If I had three ears I'd listen with all three.

Witch 2

Hey, wait a minute, doesn't the communications square model use four ears?

Witch 1

Ssh. Don't bother with Schulz von Thun now.

SECOND APPARITION

Be violent, bold, and firm. Laugh at the power of other men, because nobody who doesn't have an MBA will ever harm Macbeth.

The SECOND APPARITION vanishes.

MACBETH

Then I don't need to get rid of Macduff. I have no reason to fear him. He's just got a simple bachelor's degree. But then again... I think I should use a backup strategy. Better to be safe than sorry. I'll make sure of my own success by having you destroyed, Macduff, so I needn't worry about you anymore. So I can finally sleep peacefully again. That should have a positive effect on my work-life balance, I think.

(*A third person appears on the screen*)

~~**MACBETH**~~

~~And who is that?~~

~~**ALL**~~

~~Listen but don't speak to it.~~

~~**THIRD APPARITION**~~

~~Be brave like the lion and proud. Don't even worry about who hates you, who resents you, and who conspires against you. Macbeth will never be defeated until everything goes pear-shaped and your computer turns into an apple.~~

~~*Disappears*~~

~~**MACBETH**~~

~~What the hell are you talking about? That's impossible. But good for me I guess. Hah -- I will be boss for the rest of my life! But my heart is still throbbing to know one thing. Tell me, if your dark powers can see this far: will Banquo's sons ever take over once I'm gone?~~

ALL

Don't try to find out more.

MACBETH

I demand to be satisfied. If you refuse, I'll sue you for breach of contract! Let me know. What is that music?

W1

Show.

W2

Show.

W3

Show.

ALL

Show his eyes and grieve his heart.

Come like shadows; so depart!

MB

What are you playing at?

(a video shows eight persons walking in a row)

MACBETH

You look too much like Banquo. Go away!*(to the first)* Is that a work contract with Scotland Inc. that you're holding? It hurts my eyes. *(to the second)* Your business suit looks just like that of the first one. Do you go to same style counsellor? Now I see a third one who looks just like the second. *(to himself)* Filthy hags! *(to the witches)* Ladies, this doesn't quite look like what I expected. Why are you showing me this? A fourth! Will this line stretch on forever? Another one! And a seventh! I don't want to see any more. And yet an eighth appears, holding a mirror in which I see many more men. And some are carrying double and triple contracts, meaning they're CEOs of more than one company! Horrible sight! Now I see it is true, they are Banquo's descendants. Banquo with her pink slip still in her breast pocket, is smiling at me and showing me they are her boys. What? Is this true?

W1

Yes, this is true, but why do you stand there so dumbfounded?

Come sisters cheer we up his sprites

And show him the best of our delights

I'll charm the air to give a sound *(fiddles with a remote control)*

While you perform your antic round *(the witches pack up their equipment in a hurry, while there is background music and give Macbeth lots of handouts and leaflets)*

That this great man may kindly say

Our duties did his welcome pay. *(gives the last stack of brochures to MB)*

You sure got some takeaway for your money, don't forget that.

(The witches hurry out of a side-door, while Macbeth is too busy with the stack of papers he received to notice them going)

MB

Where are they? Gone? Let this pernicious hour
Stand aye accursed in the calendar! (*writes something in his calendar*)
Come in, what are you waiting for?
Did you see the consultants go out?

Beatrice (*comes in*)

No, sir.

MB

Did they not pass you on their way out?

Beatrice

No indeed not, sir.

MB

What, did they take a plane out of here or what?
Infected be the air whereon they ride
And damned be all those that trust them. I did hear
Your phone ring a second ago. Who was it?

Beatrice

That was someone from HR, telling me that Macduff has just handed in his notice. Rumours have it he'll be working as a freelancer for England plc from now on.

MB

As if he had known what I was planning. Does he have better consultants? Or are they playing a double game, these ladies? But I'll get you yet, Macduff!

Narrator

In the meantime, James Duncan's daughters are having a crisis meeting with Macduff.

Scene 10 Duncan's Daughters

Donna.

Poor father. He worked so hard to build up his empire.

MD:

I really am sorry Miss Duncan. We were all very shocked to hear of his death.

Donna:

Oh these journalists, how I hate them.

Malina:

But the media don't make up rumours by themselves. They must have gotten it from somewhere else.

Donna:

He did have a weak heart. It was widely known.

Malina:

Among the employees. I don't think that it was widely known outside the company. So I think maybe one of the employees-

Donna:

But - father a paedophile?! Who could think up such a dirty story if not a journalist?

Malina:

Someone who wanted his position?

Donna:

But he was so well-liked.

Malina

Oh, come on, Donna! Don't be so naïve. I'm sure Mr. Macduff can confirm that there were people at Scotland Inc. who will have cried tears of joy on hearing that Dad was no longer among the living.

MD

I didn't actually see anyone celebrating. But of course there were people who profited from Mr. Duncan's death.

Malina

Such as Macbeth.

Donna

But Macbeth was always loyal to father. All these years.

Malina

But he was after a promotion. Didn't you say so?

MD

Yes, Linda Banquo... I think you know that we're quite close? So, she told me that Macbeth was being put under great pressure by his wife.

Malina

And she told you something else, didn't she? When Macbeth was just coming back from the Norway campaign?

MD

They ran into some weird ladies. Who claimed to be consultants of some kind. HR counselling... And they told Macbeth that he was destined to become CEO.

Donna

Well, sure, father might have made him his successor sooner or later. He trusted him.

Malina:

But there is something that you don't know. Father was actually reconsidering. He talked to me about it.

Donna: What? You never told me about that.

Malina: I know I have never been really interested in taking over Scotland Inc. but if father had asked me to, I would have done it. I'm his eldest daughter after all. And I think he had hinted to Macbeth that he would prefer the company to stay within the family.

Donna

So Macbeth had a reason to get rid of daddy? To betray the boss he worked for all these years? But how would he have done it?

MD:

The rumour originated in an email. Only then it got around by word of mouth. And you know that it is often possible to trace messages back to their original sender even if he tries to disguise himself?

Malina

Not really – you're the engineer. But I believe you if you say so.

MD: Well, I managed to trace this message back a bit. However, I cannot prove that it really was Macbeth. For that I would have to find data traces on the device he sent it from.

Donna

What?

Malina

I think he means that if he got to search Macbeth's computer he could prove his suspicion.

MD

I already did that. Nothing.

Donna

So?

MD

I only searched his office computer. If he was smart he used some other device. One that cannot be searched so easily. Like his pda for example.

Malina

Then corner Macbeth somehow, get his pda and prove that he sent the message. You have our blessings. And if you succeed, we will take care that the media turn their attention to Mr Macbeth and his little sins... We can get our father's name cleared and you can get revenge for Banquo's sacking. Is that a deal?

MD

Okay.

Narrator

Some days later in the hallways of Scotland Inc. Macduff has collected more material but not found any definite proof. So he decides to confront Macbeth directly. But Macbeth isn't giving up so easily.

Scene 11: The Duel

MB

Why should I close up shop? As long as I see enemies of mine alive, I would rather see my sword wound them than me.

MD

Turn, hell-hound, turn! (*Macbeth does not react*) You have to change your perspective, Macbeth! (*Macbeth turns around suspiciously*)

MB

What? Oh no, not you again!

MD

I have no words:
My voice is in my sword, thou bloodier villain
Than terms can give thee out!

MB

Sorry?

MD

I don't know what to say therefore I will leverage my hardware on you! (*raises his laptop to strike Macbeth*)

MB (*very cool*)

Don't bother, my strategy is bullet-proof. Why don't you task somebody who isn't best of breed? Nobody who hasn't got an MBA can harm me. And you don't have one!

MD

How about eating a reality sandwich? Ever heard of lifelong learning? I just got my MBA in a part-time programme. Distance learning and all that... Macbeth, you really aren't up to date!

MB

You've got an MBA? Damn you! Now I need an exit strategy! I don't buy in to what my consultants say anymore. They have tricked me with their marketing strategy. Oh no, I don't have the bandwidth to handle this!

MD

Then give up and we'll use you for reverse marketing. We will turn you into a video and put you on youtube as an example for bad corporate governance!

MB

I'm not going to pull out of this and I'm not going to kiss Malina's ass and give her ear candy. Even though everything has gone belly up I will continue to fight. Come on, let's grill this beef, Macduff and damn the first man who cries, hold, enough! (*he brandishes his weapon (his laptop) and gets into fighting position*)

(*they start to fight and walk offstage*)

MD

Let's see who of us is more downwardly mobile!

(Macbeth is hit by MD and falls onto the stage)

MB
Ouch!

MD
That... was a career limiting move, my dear Macbeth!

MB
What do you want?

MD *(hits Macbeth over the head, who falls, unconscious. MD searches Macbeth's clothes and gets out Macbeth's pda)*

This. The evidence. The evidence that you were the one who started the rumour that killed Duncan. Ah. Here it is. That should be enough to destroy you once and for all. You sure won't ever find a job again. *(goes off)*

Narrator:
A few days later.

Scene 11

Macduff removes Macbeth's name-plate from the door and hands it over to Malina. Donna enters with a newspaper.

Donna
Look, it is everywhere, "Macbeth exposed as perpetrator of the rumour that killed James Duncan" or here "Macbeth destroyed – who will take over Scotland Inc.?"

(they read the newspapers)

Somewhere else, the witches are reading the newspapers, too.

Narrator: Somewhere else, at the same time.

Witch1
Well, that certainly was a fun project. Do you think we should offer Duncan's daughters our services too? They might want advisors...

Witch 2
We might...But...speaking of daughters...

Witch3
You've been neglecting the Lear project and you would like our help with it?

Witch2
If you're not too busy?

Witch 1 and 3

It would be a pleasure.

Witch1

Let's go and map out a strategy then.

Witch3

But I've got to run now. Maybe we should make an appointment... So -

All

When shall we three meet again?

(black)