

THREE WITCHES

a play

by

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CHARACTERS / TROUPE

diversity casting encouraged in all roles

3 WEIRD SISTERS:

JUNE	The eldest (mid/late twenties)
MAY	Second born (a year to three younger than June)
NOVEMBER	(at least six years younger than May) cognitively challenged

LADY MacBETH a noble woman in the autumn of her years (late 30s / early 50s)

VANESSA Gentle Woman to Lady MacBeth (late 20s / early 30s)

HECATE self-anointed Goddess of Magick (20s / 40s)

MacBETH Lord and Thane of Glamis (late 40s / late 50s)

BANQUO* Lord, Soldier and Best friend to MacBETH (late 30s / early 40s)

LADY MacDUFF a noble woman (30s / 40s)

FLEANCE* Banquo's son (20-something)

MUSICIANS (violin, bodhran, tin whistle, flute, guitar),
JUGGLERS, CIRCUS/CARNIVAL PERFORMERS to be added as desired

**to be played by the same actor*

MESSENGER / HERALDS / SOLDIERS ...

to be played by the same above members of the troupe (including Musicians) as needed.

THE SETTING

A stage, representing MacBeth castle and surrounding countryside in Scotland.

THE TIME

Spring 1057

SYNOPSIS

Three Witches retells the saga of *the Scottish play* (aka *MacBETH* as long as you're not reading this aloud in a theatre) from the vantage of the Three Weird Sisters without the use of anything truly supernatural. The story is relayed to us by a troupe of travelling players who assume all parts large and small (encouraging diverse casting opportunities).

Hecate, a self-proclaimed dark witch, is double booked and trades off her second appointment to the sisters (rival white witches/apothecarians of their day) for a few hallucinogenic roots. The job is to deliver a message to Lord MacBeth, manipulatively arranged by Lady MacBeth herself, thus setting into motion the events laid out in William Shakespeare's tale of greed, lust and power.

The king (Duncan) is killed, MacBeth assumes power; or should we say, Queen MacBeth assumes power. King MacBeth does all he can, even killing Banquo (his best friend), in order to secure his wife's love. The rest of the country skirmishes; Lady MacDuff requests sanctuary for her family, Banquo's son, Fleance, runs away, only to injure himself and be found by the youngest of the Three Sisters, November, who takes him home, like a lost dog, in order to nurse him back to health. Meanwhile Hecate erupts on the sisters' home, demanding her share.

Word arrives that Lady MacBeth plans to cleanse the New Scotland of any unwanted, and the list is quite long. In order to survive the coming genocide, it is up to the witches to take history into their own hands.

The events of this story align with the events laid out in William Shakespeare's *MACBETH*. The characters themselves, however, may widely differ from traditional interpretation.

*"How responsible am I for the well-being of my fellows?
To ignore evil is to become an accomplice to it."*

- Martin Luther King, Jr.
Senate Hearings on Economic Justice, 1966

"Fair is foul and foul is fair."

- Witches
(*MacBeth* – ACT I, sc 1)

EXTENDED CHARACTER DESCRIPTIONS:

The THREE WEIRD SISTERS (*June, May & November*):

JUNE The eldest SISTER (mid/late twenties)
(A junkie ... always a little altered and always jonesing for the next fix, what else can I say; she has been sampling opiates a tad too long. Unable to stay in one place, she fidgets, is predictably unpredictable and almost always tends to not recognize personal space. She means well but her execution is a bit all over the map.)

MAY Second born SISTER (a year to three younger than June)
(She carries herself with a quiet driving force ... always keeping the evening moving forward with few exceptions when she allows herself to breathe. She yearns for a better life. Her sense of duty to her sisters, however, always comes first; she is the head of her household not out of choice but by necessity. Though she does get frustrated with her sisters from time to time, she is never saddled by obligation. She cares for them out of love..)

NOVEMBER Youngest SISTER (late teens, at least six years younger than May)
(At her core she is what we would today regard as on the Spectrum for Trisomy 21 [also known as Down Syndrome] however she has been given test drugs for so long it is unclear whether the medications have a cure or a cause for her now ADHD as well as other cognitive challenges. She is slow to catch on but eager to take her place as an adult. She can be laser focused at times to the point she will lose track of all else. When not hyper-focused she can be easily distracted and restless. Focuses on the trees rather than the forest.)

LADY MacBETH A noble woman in the autumn of her years (late 30s / early 50s)
(Driven to achieve in a time when women were overlooked. She has plans for a greater Scotland. Entitled, whether by birthright or she married into her position is unimportant; she has maneuvered herself and her circumstances into where she finds herself today and she knows it. Always thinks several steps in advance, she would have made a brilliant chess player.)

VANESSA Gentle Woman to Lady MacBeth (late 20s / early 30s)
(Timid at first glance, she has a tendency not to make waves. She goes where the wind blows her. She has no choice in the matter. A young widow [her husband of another race was lost in one of many needless battles of its time], she has left her young daughter with her parents to raise as she does her best to scrape by and send what monies she can home.)

HECATE Self-anointed Goddess of Magick (20s / 40s)

(A self-proclaimed witch. She has learned to get by using her wits and forcing the issue when necessary. She fights for respect while longing for community—forever at odds with herself in the struggle.)

MacBETH Lord and Thane of Glamis (late 40s / late 50s)

(A man's man. An everyday joe, pushed to prominence. He is a friend to everyone and left on his own merits might make a decent ruler. However, he is driven by his love for his wife and the need to prove his love for her. All else comes a distant third [her love and her approval taking up both first and second places in his heart].)

BANQUO Lord, Soldier and Best friend to MacBETH (late 30s / early 40s)

(A true second to MacBeth if there ever was one. A Huckleberry Finn to MacBeth's Tom Sawyer. He is at peace with his life and understands the rules of the game when the tides do turn. A widower [his wife lost to a plague too many years ago], he remains a father first.)

LADY MacDUFF A noble woman (30s / 40s)

(Born into position, she has seen how politics work in all scenarios. With a level head and an open heart, she is the hope for a decent tomorrow. She would decidedly be a better queen for Scotland than Lady MacBeth; therefore, she knows she is a threat. With her husband gone however, her children's safety are more important than her raising a challenge. She is a mother first.)

FLEANCE Banquo's son (20-something)

(Raised by a single father [his mother lost to one of many plagues of the times], he has been more pampered and sheltered than prepared to make his way in this world. He is more a lover than a fighter and yet envisions himself to avenge his father's untimely murder. He is neither pious nor entitled, simply naïve.)

MUSICIANS, JUGGLERS, CIRCUS/CARNIVAL PERFORMERS

(Musicians may also hold speaking roles [listed above], and are part of the ensemble. Instruments should all be simple hand held Celtic faire, i.e.: violin, bodhran [a Celtic drum], guitar, tin whistle, flute [no Bag— or Uilleann pipes please].

Jugglers and other Circus/Carnival performers would be ideally comprised of the Musicians and Players already noted above. Preferably a Player's carnival skill should reflect on their character [i.e: the players portraying Fleance and May might each/or either be jugglers].)

A NOTE ON THE NOTATIONS:

1. A slash “ / ” indicates the character with the next line of dialogue begins his or her speech (overlapping dialogue).
2. Dialogue in parenthesis “ () ” is expressed aloud, as an aside or unintentionally.
3. Dialogue in brackets “ [] ” is not verbalized / MAY be expressed nonverbally.
4. Dialogue in brackets/parenthesis “ [()] ” is not verbalized / is an internal aside—purposely unspoken; nor expressed nonverbally; more likely disguised under a smile, stare or a glance.

A CLARIFICATION REGARDING TYPOS:

Nope. They aren't. Did I miss one (or two)?—probably. But for the most part, if you see a typo, such as a word repeated, a grammatical error, lower case or UPPER CASE used in place of common punctuation (even a few misspellings), it was, indeed, intended.

PRONUNCIATION OF NAMES

(in alphabetical order:)

Angus	<i>ANG</i> (as in ang[le])— <i>us</i> (as in [f]uss)
Caithness	<i>KATHE</i> (as in Faith)— <i>ness</i> (as in [dr]ess)
Cawdor	<i>KAW</i> (as in raw)— <i>dor</i> (as in door)
Donalbain	<i>DONal</i> (as in Donal[d])— <i>bane</i> (as in vein)
Duncan	<i>DUN</i> (as in [F]un)— <i>con</i> (as in control)
Fleance	<i>FLEE</i> (as in she)— <i>ans</i> (as in the Star Wars character name [H]an S[olo])
Glamis	(rhymes with in [p]alms; the “i” is silent)
Gruoch	(<i>GRUU</i> [as in grou[p]— <i>chk</i> : as in pulling up phlem)
Hecate	<i>HEC-ut</i> (rhymes with [B]ECKett)— <i>ay</i> [as in [d]ay)
Lenox	<i>LEN</i> (as in Lenny)— <i>ux</i> (as in [t]ux[edo])
Malcom	<i>MAL</i> (as in Mal[lard duck])— <i>com</i> as in (.com)
Mentieth	(as in <i>MON</i> [day]— <i>teeth</i>)
Novvi	(a soft ‘o’: as in <i>Nov</i> [el]— <i>ee</i>)
Ross	really? Really? ... (a soft ‘o’ as on [b]oss)

A brief history

*The Scottish play * that play * the Bard's tale ** (it goes by many names) is supposedly cursed. It seems King James VI, the king of Scotland at the time Shakespeare penned his ode to the northern UK, was deeply superstitious and had raised a campaign against those who practiced the dark arts throughout his lands. Shakespeare, out of “respect”, added witches to this tale and through his research quoted actual curses used by the Wiccan. Neither the king nor the witches were amused. King James banned the play from being produced in his nation and the witches placed a curse on it. A curse believed even to this day, that one may not even utter the name of the play (*MacBeth*) in a theatre without risking folly or even death.

To reverse the curse one must step outside the theatre, spin around three times, spit (some insist this must be over your left shoulder) and then utter a profanity or quote Shakespeare from anything other than the play *MacBeth* itself. Hamlet's line to the ghost in ACT 1, sc 4 is also considered a shield against such atrocities:

“Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,
Thou comest in such a questionable shape
That I will speak to thee.”

Then lastly, you must knock on the theatre door and be allowed back inside.

Some people believe all this (I'll just leave it at that).

Why should I bring this up? Because amongst our troupe of actors in this play, *Three Witches*, include several members who are so superstitiously inclined. Amongst these ranks include the man playing the role of MacBeth itself and the woman playing the role of June.

The actors playing the roles of Lady MacBeth and May are not so hell bent.

Others may decide for themselves (note the Heralds speak the name and November purposely or inadvertently fudges it—make of those what you will).

In our workshopping this piece through our current pandemic, we have been strife with power outages, last moment casting changes and “ZOOM hell”.

So ... have fun with that.

MP

(At rise:

All performers are set on stage. If capable of the same, the actors of any role may play music—they may not even play well but wouldn't it be nice if they would. However, musicians who only play music is a fine choice as well. The sole purpose for their rabble rousing at this point is to assemble a crowd together [including ourselves] to hear their tale. There is very little set to speak of other than a scant amount of furniture: chairs, perhaps some shelving, possibly a window, and a few assorted props. Any additional work to establish location may be projected or created with lighting. This is a traveling troupe of players at best. A passing of the hat is not out of question. Music continues below the following / not unsimilar to an opening musical number—to arouse and keep the audience's attention; during which the troupe, short of dancing¹, non-verbally punctuating much of May's exposition:)

MAY

(Keenly attentive in her purpose to keep the crowd assembled and engaged throughout her opening address:)

A prologue.

This be the moment we ask you to suspend belief [as in lie to yourself].

That this space, where we are all gathered, may not exist. That we, all, may be transported to a room, a castle, a cave, or mere thought itself.

That we, be not men nor women, but actors. With but one purpose: to entertain; and why would we want to entertain yourselves?: to relieve you of coin. Truth.

So, we are but who we are AND what we say we are. Unless we lie. Because people lie. Nobles lie. Peasants [lie]. Good people lie, not just villains; villains are people. We are all villains to someone; we are all someone's monster; someone's witch.

We three, are sisters (the three of us) and instead of plying you with pages and pages of exposition: She, is the eldest; She, is the youngest and I, am in the middle. Her name [the eldest] is June, she was born in the month of June. I was born second: in the month of May [hence my name]. She was born in the month of November ... two out of three. Still, our father named her November because I doubt he thought she would live past the month's end. Novvi [short for November] came into this world feet first as our mother left. And eventually had to be pulled out of [what remained of her]. Our father shortly followed on foot; he ran away. Do not blame him; do not pity us: there was—there is, honestly, something amiss with Novvi: she's not—she never was right; not that she's wrong

¹ Although choreography is not infeasible

MAY (Continued:)

but she *is* difficult. Had she been born from a cat or a dog, she would have been set outside the litter; that is nature's way. But we were .. young and our father .. could not overcome his grief—he knew he was a danger to her so, rather than kill the child that killed his wife: he left. We didn't. June and I, raised her; best two young girls could—Oh, and please, do not be so romantic as to think that all was some great misunderstanding and that our father returns or our mother never truly died because we were there and I still bare witness that these things happened; and, *no*, he will *not* magically appear at the end of our play everyone's a prince or king or gleefully married, for we are women and dirt poor bitches at that; and we will stay so—and Am I boring you, sir? Would you prefer we get on with it? Wouldn't we all; but we can't; we go on *day to day to day* .. and I will *not* share this prologue because I am the only one who can explain it because she [November] can't and she [June] .. can't. Not to worry, she doesn't understand a thing it is I'm saying. Neither of them do.

You understand her [November], now as for her [June]:

June and I sought out cures for Novvi's conditions (there are many—as many conditions as there are cures). And we learned what herb will do this, what berry, that. And in the learning we gained a trade. Med'cines. Med'cines for every want and every need. And the local common watched us from afar and called us names—Weird Sisters' always Novvi's favorite—but they would come to us in the dark for our knowledge. We quickly learned [that] people will pay for this knowledge and pay even more for the fauna itself. More precisely, they'll pay more for their wants than for their needs. We learned to cater to those wants. White witches, they call that. And in the journey for the next herb or the next mixture of root and flower, June found herself lost into that euphoria of forget. Novvi takes what I give her: gentles her mind and staves off her seizures. And I remain in the middle. And we lie to ourselves that life is good.

Meanwhile, the Country around us seems at constant war; with its neighbors and itself. Truth from lies—rumors and lies, peace and lies, war and lies. They [my sisters] don't know the truth. They [the Noble dressed actors] manufacture it. They [the remaining] support it, suborn it or feed off it. She [June], runs from it. She [November], must be protected from it. So ...

(Pointing out the cast of the actors by character:)

Nobleman, Nobleman, Noble lady, his wife, What you would call the competition and ... a servant. So ... that should stave off ten or twenty minutes of our tale. Sit up, sir, things may start moving after this.

(End music.

Music may or may not support the following²:

² Music may be used at most any point to enhance the story (though NOT prolong it) and need not be limited to the moments laid out in the pages that lie ahead.

The Two Men [MacBETH & BANQUO] travel together far upstage and step just out of light as simultaneously: the Noble Lady (LADY MacDUFF) escorts the Servant [VANESSA] to a another far edge of the stage, leaving her [Vanessa] holding a carpet bag. LADY MacDUFF then exits. A sitting stool is procured and given to Vanessa to hold as well.

The remaining women [JUNE, NOVEMBER and HECATE] take their next positions mise en scène as our final player “his Wife” (LADY MacBETH), carrying a make-up tray in her hands, takes but a few steps forward while VANESSA moves dutifully to arrive in position before her [Lady MacBeth]. VANESSA immediately sets down the stool:)

LADY MacBETH

(Completing her cross:)

You’re new. What happened to Miss Agnes?

VANESSA

I wouldn’t know.

LADY MacBETH

I didn’t ask you.

(She sits and hands Vanessa the make-up tray.)

MAY

(Giving us one last look.)

[You see? Wha’d I tell you?]

(Light shift:)

(THE SHANTY:

The Sister’s home, a one room hovel; the walls are lined with shelves displaying various jars, pots, baskets and vials of questionable vegetation and serums. HECATE is searching the inventory as MAY steps back to assume her own position upstage of them all, overseeing the scene.)

JUNE

(Following her [Hecate] a little too closely:)

Do you know what you’re looking for?

HECATE

I'll know it when I see it.

JUNE

What is it ails you?

HECATE

“Ails” me? (a bunch of bitches digging up every stool they see and leavin nothing for the rest of us maybe)

NOVEMBER

What?

HECATE

(Doing her best to keep her distance from June, she moves around November, making sure not to remark on the girl's appearance [November sets somewhere on the spectrum of having Down Syndrome or some other noticeable challenge]³.)

‘Scuse me.

(To May—referring to June:)

You really shouldn't be letting her be sampling your own wares.

JUNE

(Regarding November:)

Don't mind her.

MAY

Everything alright over there?

HECATE

It's a fine array of shrubbery and herbs you have [here].
What're you asking [for this one]?

MAY

Not for sale.

NOVEMBER

You know what they're for?

HECATE

I know what they're for.
How do you expect to turn a profit?

³ The role of NOVEMBER should preferably be played by an actor with disabilities, if you please.

MAY

The rest is all fine; that's for the girl.

HECATE

Maybe that's all I came here for. Maybe somebody dug it all up; so you can ask anything you want.

MAY

Maybe somebody dug it all up cuz maybe it was a med'cine.

HECATE

It puts you in a haze, doesn't it?

MAY

It depends on who takes it; It's not for sale.

HECATE

You're saying she takes it? She's prescribed it—it's her medicine?

MAY

What if I am?

HECATE

Three roots. It's all I'm interested in.

JUNE

(They are now best friends:)

What would you be needing three roots for?

HECATE

(Getting rid of her:)

Maybe I'm a witch.

MAY

Maybe I'm the queen of Scotland.

JUNE

(Hecate's intention going completely over her head:)

Dark or light?

If you're a witch ...

HECATE

A witch is a witch.

MAY

There be dark that cast spells and whatever other bullshit they can make people believe in and then there's those who know med'cines, herbs, and actually do some good for people.

HECATE

Like keeping the unborn unborn? Don't get piety on me. Whaddo you like for it?

MAY

I think I like you gone.

HECATE

You're barely keepin a roof over your head, here.

(Referring to June:)

And what the hell's with her?

MAY

Family.

HECATE

Sos, you got two lead weights [here] and merchandize I want. I already know about you three: you spend more time on your backs than you do selling this shit. You say she's sick, [and] what's her excuse?

MAY

Who the hell do you think you are?

HECATE

Someone who maybe does their groundwork. Get to know your adversaries first. But I also came here to give you a leg up: a gift. I'm double charted: can't be two places at one time. Some witches be successful. Three roots and I'll give you the second job.

JUNE

We'll take it.

MAY

[It's] not for sale.

JUNE

We could discuss two.

HECATE

I need three.

Wealthy landowner, owns a castle. Just sending a message. From the wife. Only they can't know it's from her. You'll have to "divine it".

JUNE

["Divine"?]

HECATE

Witch it up. You get payment from him then go and tell her all's done and get paid again from her. Send in the waif. Manor born are gulls for that.

MAY

So why don't you take the job?

HECATE

[A] previous engagement; Does it matter? You want the job or / not?

JUNE

Two roots.

(Lights fade up,
revealing:

HECATE

Three's my goin' price; it's about to move to four.

MacBETH &
BANQUO now
standing side by side,
their backs to us.)

JUNE

Done. Witch to witch.

(To May:)

We'll dig up more.

(Referring to November:)

We keep her 'tween us. She'll be / fine.

MacBETH

(Still with his back to us, relieving
himself along the upstage foliage:)

(Lights fade on the
women as they exit:)

Find your own tree.

BANQUO

(ditto:)

There isn't one.

MacBETH

Then do your business on a bush.

BANQUO

You afraid I'll faint at the sight of it?

MacBETH

More afraid you'll make a splash.

BANQUO

It could only improve your smell.

(The SISTERS, carrying a carpet bag amongst them, re-emerge downstage from whence they exited, covertly spying the two men. A beat.)

MacBETH

(We have an audience.)

BANQUO

(I doubt they can see anything.)

MacBETH

(I doubt they could see it up close.)

(The men finish their task. Turn. There is an awkward pause.)

JUNE

Which [one] of you is the banker?

(MacBETH & BANQUO share a look.)

MacBETH

He [is]—This is Lord Banquo, and I am Lord M/ac(Bebbebe[th])

JUNE

So, you are ‘him’.

MAY

The chosen one.

BANQUO

Chosen for what, I’m afraid to ask.

JUNE

Whatever you like.

MacBETH

(Understanding only too well:)

We have no need. We have our wives that we are going home to.

JUNE

I’m sure you can work it up again ...

BANQUO

On your way.

MAY

We have a message for you, M'Lords.

MacBETH

From?

JUNE

... God.

MacBETH

Ladies [if I may call you that] ...

MAY

(To us:)

And then we gave him some long drawn out riddle 'bout how he [MacBeth] was going to be a king and twice a Thane (a governor of sorts).

NOVEMBER

First twice a Thane and *then* a king.

MAY

Thank you, Novvi. First: a double Thane and *then* in line to be king.

BANQUO

Sorry to disappoint you [girls], but he's only once a Thane and we serve at the foot of King Duncan.

MacBETH

Good Ladies, whatever you're selling we're not in the market for.

BANQUO

Be on your way.

MacBETH

I'm sorry, we have no coin to give you and ... I'm afraid we have not much in provision; but what we have, we shall share.

(As MacBETH offers a bit of food, folded in a cloth,

BANQUO does not follow his lead.)

We're hardly a day away, give her the bread.

(BANQUO reluctantly complies. The Sisters place the food into their traveling bag as the lights begin to fade up on LADY MacBETH and VANESSA, applying make-up.)

BANQUO

And what do I get for this: what do you have in your fortune teller's sack for me?

NOVEMBER

(Pointing to MacBeth:)

Thane of Glamis, Thane of Cawdor, King to be.

MacBETH

I have nothing more for you, child.

BANQUO

Don't humor them, Lord—they're worse than—This is what happens to street urchins when they grow up.

JUNE

You notice that did ja? [Growed up?]

BANQUO

I wouldn't want the fleas.

MAY

No, there *is* word for you ... that ... You [Banquo] may be a father.

BANQUO

Oh, my heavens, I must tell my wife at once: the boy *is* mine. Twenty odd years, I've always wondered.

(The TROUPE freeze in position as MAY turns out to comment to us:)

MAY

"*Tell my wife*"?—Yes, he's a widower: lost the woman to the plague—like I said when we started this: people lie. (I'm not going to do this everytime.)

(She assumes back into the scene—all continue:)

A father. To kings. A father to kings.

BANQUO

And who pray tell me, will be my queen?

JUNE

What queen shall ye want to bed?

MacBETH

Not mine that's for damned sure.

BANQUO

My god, yours would never have me. She hardly wants you.

JUNE

I'm sure there's plenty to go around.

MacBETH

Alright, enough of this. Keep your talk and your legs closed. Should you find yourselves by the castle Glamis, I'm sure we can find some suitable work for you there.

NOVEMBER

Oh, we're done with that. We're witches now.

MAY

(to JUNE:)

[You see what you've done?]

BANQUO

She speaks.

MAY

Please, pay them no mind.

MacBETH

Nor you him.

(Giving her a coin or three:)

Do you write?

MAY

Thank you, Sire.

MAY

(Referring to June:)

Enough to get by.

JUNE

oh, I c'n hold a pen ... or two.

MacBETH

On second thought: [on your way, enough of this.]

BANQUO

Be gone, vanish.

JUNE

The young one, is that your fancy?

MAY

(Abruptly ending the scene [again, to us]:)

Aaand we left.

(The men begin to cross off as the SISTERS continue opposite:)

MAY (Continued:)

(To June:)

I will not have her know that, damn you.

JUNE

What's good enough for me and good enough for you: not good enough for her?

MAY

piss off.

(A MESSENGER⁴ stops the men just before they exit:)

MESSENGER

M'Lords.

MacBETH

Boy.

(The MESSENGER hands MacBeth a letter and waits.
MacBETH reads.
The SISTERS stop to watch from a distance:)

JUNE

"We're witches now."

MAY

Don't be getting any grand ideas.

⁴ MESSENGER may be played by troupe actor also playing Lady MacDuff

JUNE

What grand ideas?

(Through the following scene the Sisters wait; watching the men: MacBETH finishes reading the letter then turning the page over composes another missive: Meanwhile lights continue on LADY MacBETH, still seated, as VANESSA, tends to Lady's make up for the coming day.)

LADY MacBETH

And your prior position, Miss?

VANESSA

Vanessa, M'Lady.

LADY MacBETH

(Choosing not to correct the poor girl [thereby revealing her disinterest as to her name] she instead rephrases the question:)

Your last position was for Lady MacDuff, I believe?

MAY

This was—this *is* a one-time thing, / Understand?

VANESSA

Yes, M'Lady.

MAY

/ Understand?

JUNE

Of course; what's not to understand?

LADY MacBETH

How was she to work for? A tyrant? A pushover? Tell me something awful.

VANESSA

There is nothing to tell, M'Lady.

LADY MacBETH

Oh, of course there is. You were in her direct service?

VANESSA

Nurse to her children.

LADY MacBETH

Her *Wet* nurse? Tell me, did you like it; having someone else's stripling gnawing at your bits? Well, you won't need worry about that here. No children to speak of in Glamis. Unless—unless you count Lord MacBeth, of course. But you'll stay clear, I expect.

I'll take that as a "yes".

VANESSA

Of course not, no, I would never.

LADY MacBETH

Three denials and no accusation; should I / be concerned?

VANESSA

I have never, would never/—will

LADY MacBETH

Please [I heard you the first time]; and never interrupt me when I am speaking. That may have been acceptable with the MacDuff children but a noble woman finishes her thoughts, anything else is disrespectful.

VANESSA

I apologize, / M'Lady.

LADY MacBETH

That: I accept; You are young; and as you hear: I may interrupt you; you may not interrupt me—that is simply the way it is—How am I looking?

(Through the following dialogue:

VANESSA searches thru the make-up tray for a bit of reflecting glass [a mirror], she hands it to Lady MacBeth who studies the make-up artist's handiwork.)

JUNE

We send her in. You heard what she [Hecate] said.

MAY

I'm not sending her [Novvi] in alone.

NOVEMBER

I can / do—

(MacBETH finishes his letter, hands it back to the original Messenger, along with coin, and sends him on his way as

JUNE begins affixing NOVEMBER's costume to resemble the messenger, "manning it up" to the point she tries drawing a moustache on the girl. MAY tries to intervene with logic [not June's strongest suit]:)

MAY

[Novvi]

JUNE

(To November:)

Repeat after me: "I have a message for the Lady." Then you give her this.

(Mimes handing her a letter.)

NOVEMBER

"I have a message for the Lady."

JUNE

... Then you give her this.

NOVEMBER

What's the message?

JUNE

To give her this. Pretend there's a note.

NOVEMBER

What note?

JUNE

We'll have the note.

"I have a message / for the lady"

NOVEMBER

"I have a message for the lady"

(She waits for more instructions, particularly as to what the message would be.)

JUNE

And you stay off the road. You travel tween trees and bushes so no one'll see you.

NOVEMBER

"I have a message for the lady: you to travel through the trees"

(A beat.)

JUNE

Fine. I'll go in.

MAY

I'll go in.

JUNE

You want me to watch her [November] then?

MAY

... [Fine. You go in]

(JUNE takes the costume and exits the same direction [right or left] as the first Messenger left, dressing as she goes as:)

LADY MacBETH

(Handing back the glass:)

Blush.

(VANESSA hesitates. Looking for what apply and how.)

LADY MacBETH

(Instructing her hastily:)

That. There. Use the knife. Shave the chalk. / Dip the brush. Then apply.

VANESSA

(Echoing back her instructions:)

shave the chalk—Dip the brush—then Apply; Yes, M’Lady....

LADY MacBETH

If you have nothing to say: say nothing. Don’t just repeat what I say nor address me with no purpose. I think that’s why God commands us not use His name without reason: it’s annoying.

VANESSA

[Whatever you say: I will say nothing.]

LADY MacBETH

Good. You’re learning.

(JUNE enters, dressed as a messenger, knowingly unannounced, she stops for a split second—*after all, there’re two women here*—it’s a 50/50 shot at best: she walks up directly to Lady MacBETH:)

JUNE

My Lady.

LADY MacBETH

What is this—and Who are / you—

JUNE
(Offering a letter.)

It is done.

LADY MacBETH
What is the meaning of this?

JUNE
A letter. From your husband.

LADY MacBETH
Don't push that at me—I won't touch it—[you, Miss, whoever you are].

VANESSA
Vanessa, M'Lady.

LADY MacBETH
Take the letter.

(VANESSA hesitates and then does as told.)

LADY MacBETH
Well, open it: ...
(To June:)
What does it say?

JUNE
Should we spea[k]—may we have the room privately?

LADY MacBETH
No, we may not. Messages were dispatched?

JUNE
[What? This's] from the Lord himself.

LADY MacBETH
To the Lord.

JUNE
We's told 'em just what was asked.

LADY MacBETH
And Lord MacBeth was found alone when the message was issued?

JUNE

... As alone as he could be .. there was the one with him: a Banker, I believe. The two were [inseparable .. it seems] privacy seems a rare commodity amongst the noble born.

LADY MacBETH

Maybe you should have waited.

JUNE

But there was messages for both [I thought]

(Quoting from memory:)

We did just what .. you [wished]. Messages to *both* Lords / I assure you, we got 'em right.

LADY MacBETH

(In reference to Banquo:)

(He is far from a Lord.)

(To Vanessa:)

Open it.

(VANESSA does so. Once it is apparent the letter is safe, LADY MacBETH snatches the epistle back and begins to read.)

MacBETH

M'Lady. Fortune has blessed us once again. The Thane of Cawdor has been dispatched from his position for leading a useless revolt against our king. The former Thane has sadly, been relieved of both his post and this life ... His duties however, have been bestowed upon your loving husband.

(He continues to talk inaudibly ...)

LADY MacBETH

How did you come in possession of this epistle from his Lordship; Did you wait on it?

MacBETH

(Continuing: now sharing the joke:)

I write you this because as fortune would have it, we came across a trio of Sisters who quoted us just that this would happen but minutes before ...

JUNE

From a distance. Your husband gave the letter to a boy, we met the boy .. outta their sight—nobody [saw us] ... we talked to the boy [and] showed him things and uh bartered. Didn't need no potions or dust .. womanly ways .. you understand?

(To Vanessa:)

I'm sure you do.

MacBETH

They claim that I will be king, if you can believe such prophesy.

JUNE

He was after all a boy, slightly; surprised with what we uh .. had to offer ... It wasn't hard. Well, it was [hard]; and then it wasn't; and then the letter was in our hand.

MacBETH

And Good Banquo? Banquo is to be a *father* to kings ...

(In good humor:)

So, don't let him near your bed.

JUNE

Would you like more torrid details?

MacBETH

We will be home soon. And in celebration of this, our good King Duncan dines with us this night. We are thrice blessed. Prepare the castle for his lodging. We will be home shortly.

JUNE

(As privately as she can:)

He's to be a Thane, twice. Right? And one day a king. And the other fella would daddy a king.

MacBETH

Banquo sends his love.

BANQUO

I hardly said that; and you need a bath.

JUNE

We got it right, right?

MacBETH

Your doting and devoted husband.

LADY MacBETH

Did you read this?

JUNE

No, the seal was still affixed, wa[s]n't it?

MacBETH

PS: Banquo says I need a bath. Care to join me?

JUNE

I believe it is custom'ry to privilege a mess'nger of such wanted and antic'pated news. With a gift?

LADY MacBETH

I believe it is customary not to be asked for. Is it not a token of gratitude? Alone. *We* are hardly alone. *He* was hardly alone. / You should have—

JUNE

/ As was—

LADY MacBETH

—waited. And your tone is quite ungracious.

JUNE

Was I that? I'm sorry ... boundary issues. (I understand.)

(Unsure how to respond:)

My apologies for my ... impatience.

(MacBETH and BANQUO exit as
JUNE waits a moment longer until it becomes painfully
obvious: nothing in the way of coin is coming forth... she
looks to Vanessa for affirmation.)

VANESSA

[I'm new here.]

(JUNE crosses off the way she came and retraces her steps:
back towards her sisters as LADY MacBETH assumes the
pose: VANESSA dares not breath.)

LADY MacBETH

Well?

(VANESSA moves back into duty, continuing in silence to
prepare LADY MacBETH, followed by bejeweling her as
the dialogue continues:)

(The SISTERS again together make their way home ...)

MAY

What the hell? You got nothing?

JUNE

It's not as if I didn't try.

MAY

It's exactly as if you didn't try. (christ.)

JUNE

Then you go back and talk to her. I'd like to see you [do better] ... I did my best.

MAY

I'm sure you did.

JUNE

(Stopping abruptly to keep her wits.)

What's that supposed to mean?

MAY

(Still on the move.)

It means what it means: you did your best.

JUNE

Meaning *my* best—

MAY

Is the best you can do.

JUNE

And you can do better?

MAY

What's done is done.

JUNE

(Moving again:)

Not so fast.

MAY

Catch up.

JUNE

I'm not talkin' about your speed (although you could slow down / and let me—)

(As MAY stops:)

thank you.

MAY

What?

JUNE

We could push it at both ends, you know.

MAY

What? [What are you talking about?]

JUNE

Witchin'. Dark and White. Why not? A witch is a witch.

MAY

This was a one time shot; it's a slippery slope as you [well know] .. We get spit at enough.

NOVEMBER

I wanna be a witch.

JUNE

See Novvi wants it; [why not then?]
You want to leave. We all know it: Leave. We'll get by on our own.

MAY

You wouldn't last a day.

JUNE

Try me.

MAY

How much did you make off of her again?

JUNE

piss off.

(And lights shift to THE SHANTY: they are back at home:)

MAY

You piss off.

NOVEMBER

Where's the dog?

JUNE

The dog?

NOVEMBER

She was here this morning.

JUNE

She's ... She must be outside, darlin.

MAY

Did you sell her?

JUNE

Who would sell a dog—more importantly: who would buy her mangy-ass hound?

MAY

We can look for her later.

(To June:)

[And you'll tell me where to look for her, won't you?]

JUNE

I don't know where she is. Last I saw she was chasin' a rabbit.

MAY

A rabbit?

JUNE

So, don't blame me.

MAY

That was our dinner.

JUNE

The dog?

MAY

The rabbit.

JUNE

(I was wondering how it got itself fenced in.)

MAY

And you let it go?

JUNE

How was I to catch a dog, she was chasing / a rabbit.

MAY

Not the dog, the rabbit; you let the rabbit go.

JUNE

I don't like hurtin' the bunnies.

MAY

Oh, we're black boned witches now but we don't want to hurt the bunnies. (my gawd).

JUNE

Nobody likes rabbit but you. I don't like how greazy they are and Novvi cries the whole time.

MAY

You prefer we starve?

JUNE

If I don't haveta listen to you when I'm dead, it might make it worth it.
(She reaches for her own source of opiates.)

MAY

Just ... Wait. Wait till she's asleep for gawd's sake.

JUNE

Who?

(MAY looks around and indeed November is gone—
presumably run off to find her dog.)

MAY

(Oh my gawd.)

JUNE

Better find her 'for the rabbit eats her.

MAY

I hate you.

JUNE

piss off.

(But May has already left.

Music beneath:

JUNE sits down with her box of opiates. At this juncture may I point out that June's attire includes leather strappings binding her calves to her feet and her forearms to her hands. She addresses us as she goes about the task of removing one of these bindings to expose a series of scabs and scars; made from self-inflicted cuts. As she continues: she will be taking a small dagger from the box, re-opening a cut and pouring directly into her vein her opiate of choice.

She then uses the leaves of that same plant to cover the wound and rebinds the strappings to keep both the drug in place and her laceration from bleeding out:)

JUNE

At this point in our story is not about me. So, what I do here does not matter. Sos, I'll do as I want.
Now, King Duncan ... spends the night at the castle [of] Lord and Lady MacBeff. Rule of Gentry: The next in line for any ruling class is most often a living relative to the previous or prior ruler. ('xcept for maybe democracy and that's why democracy doe[s]n't work: Any idiot with a good lie can be a ruler in a democratic community). In the absence of a relative ready and armed to take the throne, the mostest ranked Governor (or Thane if you're in Scotland and we are); the most ranked has the most rights to stake a claim.

Meanwhile VANESSA finishes Lady MacBeth's transformation and retreats offstage. Add bordham (drums): LADY MacBETH crosses to join her husband elsewhere on the stage. They share a moment.

LADY MacBETH

Be. a Man.

JUNE

'Course anyone with a stronger sword can also boast the challenge.
MacBeff is both.
The challenge is always in the bloodline.
Keeping it intact. Pure.
With the right amount of ... danger.
Let spill just a few drops.
Careful not to ... let it flow ... only to be captured ... fleeting
... no pain ... no tears ... No regrets ... no dreams ... no failure ...
just .. pure
rapture
joy.
and peace.
We are the stuff
that legends are built from.

(LADY MacBETH watches for his reaction to be assured her message has sunken in.)

(MacBETH is resigned but on board. Which is good enough for her; LADY MacBETH again exits.
MacBETH pauses as he continues to weigh his options.
He too finally exits opposite his wife.
Pause.
A single bell sounds.)

(The bell begins to repeat and continues to peal, fading and settles into the fog that has become June's sanctuary through the following;

Each HERALD⁵ is hit with a single shaft of light, music progresses into a third movement, accentuating⁶.)

1st HERALD

The King is dead. King Duncan / is dead.

2nd HERALD

The King has been killed. By his two valets. Lord MacBeth has served them quick / justice.

1st HERALD

King Duncan is dead. In Lord MacBeth's / castle.

3rd HERALD

The king is dead. King Duncan / is dead.

1st HERALD

Long live the / King.

2nd HERALD

Long live the / King.

3rd HERALD

Long live the / King.

1st HERALD

King Duncan is dead.

(MAY returns with a teary eyed NOVEMBER in tow.
MAY takes but one look at June ...)

MAY

(bollocks)

3rd HERALD

King Duncan's sons, Malcolm and Donalbain, run.
Leaving their families / behind.

2nd HERALD

Thanes Angus, Menteith and Caithness: run. Leaving
their families / behind.

([←]As each HERALD
finishes their lines, their lights
fade out].
Meanwhile: MAY sends
November to bed, [to curl up
in her own corner of the
room].

⁵ HERALDS 1, 2 & 3 may be portrayed by MUSICIANS or troupe actors also portraying HECATE, BANQUO and LADY MacDUFF respectively.

⁶ Music in this sequence should layer into three distinct accordances: the opiates world of JUNE, the war drums of Lord and Lady MacBETH, the outcry of the HERALDS

1st HERALD

Thanes Ross & Lenox, prepare to run. Ready to leave their / families behind.

3rd HERALD

Lord MacDuff, the Thane of Fife, runs. Leaving his family behind.

MAY then tends to cleaning up June as best she can, making sure the binding remains intact but not too tight, she positions June delicately so that her body is aligned for a best blood flow, and finally she puts June's box of opiates away.)

(Lights to black. The music and finally the bells fade to silence.)

(Lights rise on VANESSA, who is already begun her day cleaning, as LADY MacBETH crosses to her carrying a wadded up gown: the same outfit she [Lady M] was wearing in her previous scene.⁷ She hands the ball of material to Vanessa:)

LADY MacBETH

This is to be burned.

VANESSA

Yes, Ma'am.

(Examining the dress ...)

Is that .. blood?

LADY MacBETH

I'm not that old, my dear; I still issue [*ie: menstruate*].

VANESSA

I believe I can get this out for you / if you ...

LADY MacBETH

It is to be burned. I do not want to see it restored and you wearing it, understood?

VANESSA

Understood.

LADY MacBETH

Good girl.

VANESSA

Yes, Ma'am—M'Lady.

⁷ There is no need however for a complete costume change on Lady MacBeth's part as long as the wadded material she carries in appears the same as the dress she also wears/wore in previous scene.

LADY MacBETH

(To herself as she walks away: just to hear the sound of it—even if only from her own lips:)

M'Queen.

(VANESSA chooses not to think further on it and returns to her duties ...)

(Lights cross fade to:)

NOVEMBER

“Madam, I have a message” [no, let me try again:] “My Lady .. I have a message”
“My Queen—(my queen-my queen-my queen-my queen) ... “My Queen .. I have a message”

(dammit, now I don't remember the message ...)

(Looking into our sea of faces ...)

I don't like how you're looking at me. I'm not stupid .. and I don't like being judged. That's why I like animals .. better [than people]. Animals don't judge you. They don't think of you as less [than]. They don't blame you. They don't laugh at you or roll their eyes. They just love [you]. I'm not .. stupid. I know things. I see things and I feel things. It maybe takes me longer sometimes but I can lie there. I can let some man. I see how they look at me. Like

(Pointing out one man:)

you. You want me. That way. I know. And I know I don't have to do nothing. But sometime I might want to. I want to want to. I'm a woman .. not a child.

(Struggles a moment ... then remembers:)

They're throwing a banquet. Tonight. A party. For the new ... King and Queen. (we weren't invited. We ...)

(A beat: again she struggles ... but to no avail ... almost to the point of tears:)

I'm not stupid.

That's why I like animals. Animals don't think you're stupid. Animals don't care. Because ... they care.

So, why do they run away?

(Lights again cross fade to:

LADY MacDUFF paces the area of the stage nervously alone, clutching a hand-sized purse. After establishing this only but for a moment VANESSA enters quietly. LADY MacDUFF, in response, stops pacing ... externally.)

VANESSA

She'll be with you in a moment.

LADY MacDUFF

Thank you.

(There is an awkward silence.
Lights rise elsewhere onstage as MacBETH and BANQUO
cross the stage's breadth:)

MacBETH
Your son? Will he be joining us tonight?

BANQUO
Tonight, my liege?

MacBETH
Ah, we don't need titles tween each other. At the Banquet. I will schedule him a
seat: do not disappoint me.

BANQUO
You mean don't disappoint her. He will be honored.

LADY MacDUFF
She treating you well?

VANESSA
As to be expected.

LADY MacDUFF
[Good.] Your daughter? [Have you seen her?]
She [Lady MacBeth] doesn't know?

VANESSA
She [Lady MacBeth] never asks.

LADY MacDUFF
[May you be with her soon.] Is she [your daughter] still with your parents?

VANESSA
North of Aberdeen.

MacBETH
[dammit.]

LADY MacDUFF
Ah, [yes.] Aberdeen sounds safer now than here.

BANQUO
What is it, Sire? [Please:] get accustomed to it: you're going to be a king.

VANESSA
Any news from Lord MacDuff?

LADY MacDUFF
[None.]

BANQUO
Like the sisters said, eh: it is fate;
who can fight it?

VANESSA
[I understand.]

MacBETH
As it be your fate to sire a king...

BANQUO
(Understanding all too well ...)
... I have only one son.

VANESSA
And the children? Seth, William and little Bobby?

LADY MacDUFF
Growing. Fatherless for the time being, so ...

VANESSA
[I'm sorry.]

BANQUO
I was thinking I would go riding
this afternoon. To see the sky.
One ride. [One last ride].

LADY MacDUFF
[You needn't be.]

VANESSA
[Of course.]

MacBETH
And your boy? Will he be going
with you?

VANESSA
He'll be back. I'm sure he'll send word soon.

MacBETH
Return in time for the feast. He has a seat at the table. Always.

LADY MacDUFF
Of course.

VANESSA
Of course.

BANQUO
Would we all.

(There is a pause as BANQUO exits stage; MacBETH too,
taking another path, begins his exit; meanwhile, between
the women, a delay of some sorts is in play. LADY

MacDUFF reaches out, there is an uncomfortable—
someone could be watching—touch. MacBETH is gone.
The two women separate, leaving the Lady MacDuff's
purse in Vanessa's possession. A beat.)

VANESSA

Her Excellency will see you now.

(LADY MacDUFF takes the invitation in—a breath—she
follows VANESSA.)

LADY MacDUFF is led to an area with two seats. One
noticeably higher than the other. VANESSA stands clear of
the doorway allowing the queen her entrance and ultimate
reign of the room. LADY MacBETH enters.)

VANESSA

(Handing the purse on to Lady MacBeth and stepping
aside:)

Lady MacDuff.

LADY MacDUFF

My queen.

LADY MacBETH

(To Vanessa:)

You may stay, Miss V.

VANESSA

/[... As you wish.]

LADY MacBETH

(To Lady MacDuff:)

Oh, we just call each other by initials, here. Quite informal. Very French. She is
Miss V. I am Queen M. Not to be confused with Lady M—which I was but now
I'm not—but that would make you Lady M; would it not?

LADY MacDUFF

Your Excellency is in a good mood today.

LADY MacBETH

Why wouldn't I be? It is a sad day, of course, we are all still in mourning, but it is
our position as women to keep things light, is it not?

LADY MacDUFF
Yes, it is, your Excellency.

LADY MacBETH
Your Excellency.

LADY MacDUFF
... Your Excellency.

LADY MacBETH
Your ...

LADY MacDUFF
Excellency.

LADY MacBETH
No, that would be improper. That would be the same as me calling myself an
Excellency. Exchange the “You” for “My”

LADY MacDUFF
My Excellency.

LADY MacBETH
Perfect. Please, sit.

LADY MacDUFF
Thank you.

LADY MacBETH
(Referring to Vanessa:)
You know Miss V.

LADY MacDUFF
You know I do.

LADY MacBETH
She has made herself .. indispensable.

LADY MacDUFF
Ah. Wonderful.

LADY MacBETH

And what brings you here today? I do expect both you and your husband this evening for the banquet?

Still no word?

(She looks to Vanessa for confirmation.)

LADY MacDUFF

None, My Excellency—My Queen (May I call you my queen?)

Which is ... what finds me here. Lord MacDuff has not been heard from .. [since] the night King Duncan [befell his own fate] ... He has yet to return. Nor has there been any word.

LADY MacBETH

It is the pity ... that he would abandon you at this time.

LADY MacDUFF

(Choosing to stay her course:)

Unless, and this I fear, he has been stopped.

LADY MacBETH

Stopped?: Who would want to detain him? Or do you mean ...

LADY MacDUFF

Those that took the life of his Uncle, I would presume. He was in line—*is* in line—*Was*.

LADY MacBETH

(Holding her thoughts close:)

And why do you come to me with this news?

LADY MacDUFF

... I have but nowhere else to turn, My Queen. I am in your debt for previous accommodations, as you know, and I would request ... a sanctuary for myself; and my sons. Know we mean you no harm. Only our loyal support.

LADY MacBETH

... I don't think I like what I'm being accused of.

LADY MacDUFF

I I accuse you of nothing. I only ask for sanctuary.

LADY MacBETH

Is that so? How should I know it was not your own husband who directed the effort that brought us where we are today; that you bring me threat cloaked in loyalty?

LADY MacDUFF

For what purpose?

LADY MacBETH

Catching me unawares.

LADY MacDUFF

Would we not be in separate chairs if that were true? I am but transparent here. I come to you not as a wife, not as a widow, but as a mother. As governess to all of Scotland, My Queen.

LADY MacBETH

Am I that?

LADY MacDUFF

It is the weight of the crown you wear, is it not? I mean you no offense—only ... mother to mother ...

(A slight silence.)

LADY MacBETH

(To Vanessa:)

Do you find her to be an honest and noble woman of her word?

VANESSA

... Of course—Yes. Yes, My Queen.

(A beat: LADY MacBETH quickly weighs her options.)

LADY MacBETH

(To Lady MacDuff:)

Tell her.

LADY MacDUFF

Tell her what?

LADY MacBETH

Tell her how she came into my service.

LADY MacDUFF

... She did nothing, My Queen.

LADY MacBETH

Tell her softly or I will bluntly.

LADY MacDUFF

(To Vanessa:)

... It was not you, my dear.

LADY MacBETH

It was her son. She ... happened upon him spying over you and ...

(To Lady MacDuff:)

I want to let you put this delicately.

LADY MacDUFF

He ... was exposed and .. fantasizing, physically ...

LADY MacBETH

About you.

LADY MacDUFF

.. about you.

LADY MacBETH

Watching you. Bare chested, suckling his brother. Boys will be men in training ...
So, you see why we had to get you out of that house?

LADY MacDUFF

And as any mother would [do]: you took in the child.

(Slight pause.)

LADY MacBETH

Leave me your residence.

LADY MacDUFF

(By way of apology to Vanessa:)

Seth is only a boy ... for so long. I wanted him to remain in that light just a little
while longer.

LADY MacBETH

A mother's love. And that love is all that brings you here today.

LADY MacDUFF

It does, My Excellency.

LADY MacBETH

Leave me your residence. I will see to it that it is passed over.

LADY MacDUFF

Thank you, My Excellency.

LADY MacBETH

You may go.

LADY MacDUFF

... Thank you.

(a noble curtsey, if only to show her respect:)

May God Bless you. May God bless you both.

(LADY MacDUFF exits, VANESSA trailing behind.)

LADY MacBETH

(To Vanessa:)

You. Stay.

(VANESSA responds accordingly,
doing her best to not let her
attention follow: as LADY
MacDUFF continues across stage,
as she came, and continues off.)

(Lights up on HECATE .. having
just received the news ...)

HECATE
[Holy shit].

LADY MacBETH

Preparations for the king's coronation banquet are all complete?

HECATE

holy shit.

VANESSA

.. M-m-my / Queen?

LADY MacBETH

“M-m-m-m-my *who*?”

VANESSA

Queen. You, [I am loyal to you—you have my full attention,] my Queen.

LADY MacBETH

Very well.

See to it that space is retained but remove several—say six—chairs from the table. Maybe eight. Retain the spaces. Have the chairs in waiting.

VANESSA

The purpose?

HECATE

holy fucking shit. goddammit.

LADY MacBETH

That there be no empty seats. Let them crowd to the table and be added by a gracious and giving monarchy.

A step ahead, my dear, always be a step ahead.

(VANESSA makes her exit. HECATE charges off as well.

Lights fade while LADY MacBETH crosses stage → ...

[as music underscores: a lone figure runs through the house: a man, Banquo's build but much younger and apparently swifter than Banquo himself.]

→ ... to meet up with her husband.)

MacBETH

It had to be done.

LADY MacBETH

I know. We will have our house in order and put all this ugliness behind us. Yes?

MacBETH

Of course.

LADY MacBETH

They are about to name you King. I have never been more prouder of you than this day.

MacBETH

“More-prouder-of you”?

LADY MacBETH

Words escape me. I am flush.

(She waits for him to repeat the same pair of sentiments to her ... nothing.)

MacBETH

Was it truly fate?

LADY MacBETH

What is fate but opportunity grasped? What's done is done.

Shall we?

(Music reprises beneath as again, the RUNNER runs.
Unseen by the royal couple as they exit—lights fading out
as we hear:)

A VOICE (Offstage)⁸

All rise for the King.

(Lights explode on the SHANTY:
HECATE forcing her way in.)

HECATE

You goddam bitches!!

MAY

What the hell / are you—

HECATE

You thought I wouldn't know? Nothing happens here that I don't know about!

MAY

You wanna go out and try coming in again?

HECATE

fuck you.

MAY

fuck you too.

JUNE

Oh, I wanna get in on this: fuck the both of you. .. (What are we fucking about?)

HECATE

I gave you a gift; a peace offering.

⁸ VOICE – if recorded ... anybody's, I guess ... if live: may be spoken by troupe actor portraying Vanessa
NOTE: It is not an oversight that the words "and Queen" were not included (deal with it).

JUNE

Are you talking about ... ?

(NOVEMBER enters. All attention turns to her ... but only for a moment:)

NOVEMBER

I can't find the dog.

JUNE

Still?

MAY

He'll come back—jus[t] ... [get inside].

HECATE

Shelves look pretty emptier now, don't they?: Business pick up?

JUNE

Are you drunk?

HECATE

Are you altered?

You talked to the King and the Queen.

JUNE

They wasn't the king and queen at the time; and you / sent us.

HECATE

You were my messengers.

JUNE

You never / said—

HECATE

It was IMPLIED! Now everywhere I go they're not asking for Hecate no more, / they all want to see—

MAY

The *Greek Goddess of magic*, that's what you're calling yourself?

NOVEMBER

What's a *goddess*?

HECATE

You're lookin at one, Honey—No, they all want to know about where to find the *Weird Sisters*.

(MAY looks to June for an explanation.)

JUNE

(I may of sold a fortune 'r two since then.)

HECATE

Stay in your own racket.

(NOVEMBER gathers together something to drink and a bit of scraps.)

MAY

Sit down and eat.

NOVEMBER

I wasn't ... [gonna eat; I was heading out again; just wanted to get something to drink is all].

(NOVEMBER proceeds to drink all of her water as the dialogue continues:)

JUNE

If the King or Queen wants to seek our advice again, who are we to say, "no"?

HECATE

Have you seen them again?

JUNE

Not yet.

HECATE

Will you?

JUNE

I may expect.

HECATE

What makes you so sure?

JUNE

I "Divined" it.

HECATE

They're mine.

JUNE

You "own" the King and the Queen?

HECATE

I'll make your life a living hell.

JUNE

(Everything in her to keep from laughing in her face:)

What the hell do you think it is now?

MAY

(Catching November attempting to leave again:)

No.

NOVEMBER

I'll be right back.

MAY

Novvi—

NOVEMBER

She's hungry.

MAY

My gawd girl ... To the truffle patch and back. No farther.

(There are no words but a huge smile and NOVEMBER re-exits. That done: MAY turns her attention back to the unwanted visitor:)

HECATE

I'm in no mood!
Get your girl in order.

JUNE

Hey—hey: I'm the eldest.

HECATE

You had your spree. You sold your walls out. But that's where it stops. You're a witch now, are you? Can you do this?

(She flicks her wrist and there is a flash:

Sparks hit the floor with a puff of smoke—an amateur’s magician trick at best.)

JUNE

Anybody can play with flints.

(But MAY is more involved in stamping out the embers left behind from the parlor trick. She and HECATE share a look: she gets the point.)

JUNE (Continued:)

You got nothing on us. We got ... we got herbs and roots and med’cines. You got what? Puppets and light shows and fortunes bought and sold from the gentry? You ain’t got shit.

HECATE

Keep To Your Own Road.
If the King or Queen call on you again: you call me.

(MAY finishes putting out any risk of fire.)

HECATE

[I got plenty of flint.]

JUNE

piss off.

HECATE

you piss off.

JUNE

you piss off first.

MAY

We’ll all take a piss. Just .. go. One happy piss, everybody in one bucket.
We got your threat. Leave her be.

(HECATE is about to make another speech but decides against it and leaves. A beat. Lights cross fade to:)

(LADY MacBETH holding back her tears in favor of appearances. She is trying to brush a tangle out of the back of her head while trying her best not to wallow ...)

JUNE

Don't look at me like that; you wanna leave; we both know it's just a matter of / ..
[time].

MAY

No one's / leaving

JUNE

And how'm I supposed to keep things afloat with you gone?

MAY

/ Nobody's—

JUNE

I don't blame you. I get it. One of us has to stay with Novvi and let's face it ... I
ain't goin anywhere.

(A beat: JUNE's attention is pulled toward the box of
opiates; JUNE and MAY share a knowing moment as:)

(VANESSA enters with a night tray, she sees Lady
MacBeth's struggle.)

VANESSA

Do you want me to [help]?

LADY MacBETH

No.

(VANESSA moves passed her to set down the tray. LADY
MacBETH resigns to truth and holds out the brush in front
of herself ... for the taking.

Lights fade on the sisters.

VANESSA brings the Queen a small chalice or goblet,
setting it down in front of her as she takes the brush and
assumes her duties.)

LADY MacBETH

Are they laughing at me?

VANESSA

... No one is laughing, my queen.

LADY MacBETH

(They damned well better not.)
This was my night. You've been married.
I asked you a question.

VANESSA

Yes, My Queen.

LADY MacBETH

He's dead; right?

VANESSA

Men war.

LADY MacBETH

Why is he [Lord MacBeth] like that?

VANESSA

/ M'Queen—?

LADY MacBETH (Continuing:)

I gave him everything. This was to be *my* night. My wedding night was his. This was to be mine. My coronation. Our coronation. I wouldn't have minded if he'd tried to take the moment for himself, I would've even respected that but to .. cry and bawl like some ... And they all looked at us like—at him—at us—at Me like we were a .. joke. That we were *unfit* [to wear the crown]. and then he starts ... Where is the little man I married? I built him into a soldier ... Your husband, did he ever go mad in front of your eyes? Embarrass your entire family?

VANESSA

He .. was a good man.

LADY MacBETH

Hold that memory well.
What are they saying in the halls?

VANESSA

I wouldn't know.

LADY MacBETH

Find out. I expect you to know. I expect you to be my eyes and ears when you are out of my sight. What do they say behind my back; What do they do; What do they think?: That is your job.

VANESSA

Yes, / M'Queen.

LADY MacBETH

And if you happen to agree with them. If you join in on their talk and their laughter, their gossip and their lies, I expect you to come to me with it first; Before *they* come to me; because *they* are my eyes and my ears outside this room regarding you.

VANESSA

... Yes, My queen.

LADY MacBETH

King MacBeth is ill: it is the cook's fault. A bit of spoiled meat. He is not himself.

VANESSA

My queen ... I have / a daughter ...

LADY MacBETH (Continuing:)

Why wasn't your Mommy at the banquet?: Your former employer. She promised to be there, did she not? You were there, you heard her. Did you not hear her?

(A final stroke of the brush and the snarl is out:)

Damn you.

VANESSA

I—forgive me, my / Queen—

LADY MacBETH

Out. And you have an errand tomorrow. Wear something you can travel in.

(VANESSA is at a loss for what to say or do: she acknowledges her queen sans a curtsy or bow and leaves.)

(Music:

The RUNNER runs. Followed by the sounds of others running to catch him. There is a snap of twigs and branches as he makes his way through the thickets. Horses hooves follow. The RUNNER huddles himself into a dark corner.

The horses [three at best] can be heard [or envisioned via the musicians] traveling the breadth of the stage, circling once, and then returning back across from whence they came.

NOVEMBER enters, following their sound:)

NOVEMBER

Have you seen?

(But they are gone. NOVEMBER returns to her undertaking, waving the bit of food, hoping the smell might attract her dog back as she searches the stage.)

NOVEMBER

I'm not going to hurt you. No one's going ta hurt you. I just want you to [come home.]

(She whistles: a feeble attempt at best.)

Dog? Dog?

I should have given you a name. I'm sorry, I didn't give you name. I promise I'll give / you a ... name.

(She is stopped by a wincing.)

NOVEMBER

dog?

(She comes across the crouching Runner.)

(They lock eyes.)

(Lights slowly shift:

THE SHANTY: JUNE hands the box of over opiates to MAY and then settles herself in to sleep:)

MAY

Thank you but no: [One of us has to stay sober.]

JUNE

[You don't get the point:] Look. I'm gonna I' gonna .. stave myself off this shit and uh so you, you can start looking for a new life / fer yourself.

MAY

No one said anything about wanting a new life.

JUNE

Gawd, I did. We got a chance with this dual witchin. I got a chance to make a life, you got a chance to have one.

MAY

shut up.

JUNE

piss off.

MAY

you piss off.

JUNE

you [piss off] ...

MAY

(Watching June drift off to sleep.)

[I'll help you .. but I'm not going anywhere.]

(She puts the opiates back into inventory on the shelves as.)

NOVEMBER

(Helping the Runner up on his feet.)

Can you?

RUNNER

I can try.

(MAY lies down to sleep as well as The RUNNER, leaning on NOVEMBER for balance, barely manages to cross stage

MAY

(Getting up again, she addresses us:)

OK, Not one of my most shining moments: sure. Was Novvi home? No. Did we both go to sleep? Yes. I'd like to say I tried to stay up but I didn't. I would lying. I was tired. Don't judge me. Hey, how many of you have fallen asleep on duty? Yeah, yeah, *you* know [*you* know what it's like, thank you]. And nobody can really sleep anyways: the whole country is having trouble sleeping—so you take it where you can get it—everybody's feeling the turmoil, which really shouldn't have anything to

to November's corner of the shanty. Once there, the two move through a series of poses:

- NOVEMBER bandaging his ankle.
- NOVEMBER sitting at his feet, enthralled, as he tells tales of how he came to be found by her.
- NOVEMBER covering him with her Blanket.
- NOVEMBER watching him sleep.

MAY (Continued:)

do with us except for somehow we seemed to get the ball rolling in the first place; so, you know now we have to be looking over our shoulder the whole time. And now she [June] decides she's gonna go all dry and I—you know how long that's gonna last ...

- And finally, NOVEMBER laying herself down, a respectable distance aside him.)

(She waits for June to reply.)

Nope she's asleep. And so was I; so shove me in the stocks⁹.

Till the next morning:

(May steps back into the scene as:)

(Lights grow to morning:

MAY and JUNE stand at their distance but clearly watching over the couple. NOVEMBER is the first to wake, sensing the judgmental stances of her sisters [what that judgement is, is different for each of them].)

NOVEMBER

I ... This is not [what you—whatever your thinking it is: it's not that] ...

(Moves herself away from the Runner.)

He broke his leg. Running.

JUNE

Well, this isn't a stray dog this time, is it?

MAY

[Not a word.]

JUNE

“Can she keep him”?

MAY

Don't.

Who's he running from?

NOVEMBER

... the King.

(JUNE just laughs.)

MAY

Are you out of your [mind]? He can't be here.

⁹ Stocks: as in placed in the stocks (stockyard)— a form of town punishment and humiliation.

NOVEMBER

They killed his father.
The .. banker.

MAY

This is Banquo's Son?

NOVEMBER

(spitting it out:)

The the "son" of the the "father" of of the "daddy of kings"... ?

MAY

He has to leave.

NOVEMBER

He can't walk.

MAY

Not our / issue.

NOVEMBER

He broke his .. foot wrist—

JUNE

Ankle?

NOVEMBER

—in one of them truffle holes you [June] never filled up.

MAY

Get him out.
You. Wake up. You're out of here.

JUNE

(Did you do anything with him?)

MAY

You. Up. Out.

JUNE

(Did you see it?)

MAY

(To June:)

(I swear to gawd)

(To November:)

Did he touch you?

NOVEMBER

No.

MAY

He didn't touch you.

JUNE

Is he dead? Does he wake up?

NOVEMBER

I gave him some root for the pain.

MAY

You gave him some root?

JUNE

Why do you have to repeat everything she says?

MAY

How much?

NOVEMBER

I don't know. A bite?

JUNE

A big bite or a little bite; his bite or your bite?

NOVEMBER

A bite—I don't know—a bite.

JUNE

Now everybody's repeating themselves.

MAY

Which leg?

NOVEMBER

What?

MAY

(Squeezing them separately to check:)

Which ankle? Which—

(And the Runner, Banquo's son [FLEANCE] shoots awake
in a start.)

JUNE

I would say that one.

He does look like his daddy.

MAY

Who are you? What're you doing here?

(They wait the moment for FLEANCE to gain his
bearings.)

FLEANCE

Uh ... I'll go.

MAY

Damned right.

(FLEANCE tries to get up but he can barely stand.)

FLEANCE

I'm trying [believe me].

NOVEMBER

(To May:)

Are you mental?

MAY

Novvi?

NOVEMBER

No.

MAY

Novvi.

NOVEMBER

No.

MAY

We don't need the crown / on us—

JUNE

Have you got any money?

FLEANCE

(Still attempting to comply:)

I'm trying [to leave].

NOVEMBER

If he goes, I go.

MAY

Be serious.

NOVEMBER

[I have never been more serious in my life].

MAY

You're a child.

NOVEMBER

I am not a child.

MAY

So, he did.

FLEANCE

No. No. No.

(He tries to say the word ["no"] any number of ways—but no matter how it lands it sounds wrong to someone .. he finally stops. .. To June:)

And no, I don't have any money; And I just told her what my Daddy my father—it was nothing / ...

JUNE

Is there a price on his head / ?

NOVEMBER

June/!?

JUNE

What?

FLEANCE

(Hobbling with assistance to find a place to sit:)

Nothing took place between us, I assure you. She's a—you're a lovely girl but ...
and I'm in a bit of pain ...

(and covering bases with May:)

And my senses. I can't ...

NOVEMBER

He can't walk.

MAY

What happened to you?

NOVEMBER

I told—

(But May's look shuts November down: "she wants to hear
it *from him*.")

FLEANCE

Lord MacBe—

JUNE

The new king?

FLEANCE

The same. He sent men after my father and myself—my father is / Lord
Banquo—*was*— ...

MAY

We know who you are¹⁰.

FLEANCE

I was running. I tripped. A broke something; I heard a snap.

NOVEMBER

I told you.

MAY

Novvi?

¹⁰ Meaning we know who "he (Banquo)" is, and if you're his (Banquo's) son—that's all we need to know.

FLEANCE

Your sister found me. She brought me in. We talked. That's all. Nothing more. For hours. Just talked. She gave me some medicine for ...

MAY

(Through the preceding having located a small pouch of liquid; she hands it over to him to drink:)

Here.

FLEANCE

It wasn't this.

MAY

This isn't for that. If you're staying here to mend, we don't want you getting any ideas. And if you do ... this has been known to put a stop to them.

FLEANCE

.. Permanently?

MAY

Until you're on your way.
It's the price to be here. Or you can find the door; take your chances out there.

(He drinks the medicine. All of it.)

FLEANCE

Oh my gawd, that tastes like piss.

MAY

It half is.

FLEANCE

Do I have to take that again?

MAY

Every day.

FLEANCE

(oh my gawd)

NOVEMBER

Thank you.

MAY

Don't thank me yet.

(There is a knock at the door. The women look to each other .. Do they hide him, do they what ... ? FLEANCE tries to get up: he can't. Another knock.)

MAY

Be right there.

(They all set FLEANCE back down on the floor, next to the seating. They then throw the blanket back over him. MAY makes her way to the door as another knock—)

MAY

(Throwing the door open:)

I SAID I'M COMING FOR GAWD'S SAKE.

(VANESSA is on the other side, wearing a traveling cloak and holding a crudely drawn map, a tad unnerved.)

VANESSA

[I'm sorry, I don't mean to interrupt anything .. um ..] Are you a .. a three sisters ...?

(No reply.)

[Sorry] I may have the wrong ... [on second thought, if it's not too much to ask:] can you help me?

(Shows the drawing.)

Am I holding this right?

MAY

(Looks over the map in her hand—since both sisters are on their way over to do the same.)

Why are you here? Who sent you?

VANESSA

The queen.

MAY

... Queen Duncan or ...?

VANESSA

MacBeth.

(shite.)¹¹

MAY

JUNE
(fuck)¹²

VANESSA

The king wants to ... um ... You spoke to him before, correct?

JUNE

We did.

MAY

(To June:)

/ [Really?]

VANESSA

He wants to see you again. He would be here this morning but the queen has asked for a delay. She wishes you to ...

(Handing over a sealed paper:)

It's in the letter.

JUNE

(I told you: we're in business!)

MAY

(Not now)

(To Vanessa:)

Did you read this?

VANESSA

I don't know how to [read, I'm sorry to say].

MAY

(ahah.)

(She looks over the epistle.)

VANESSA

He'll be here on the morrow.

JUNE

Tomorrow?

VANESSA

¹¹ While May's line "shite" is in reference to the plot;

¹² June's line "fuck" is in reference to uttering the name "MacBeth"

Tomorrow.

JUNE

(Tomorrow ...) / [Can we be ready by then?. On our own I mean]

MAY

Well, we may need more time.

VANESSA

The queen gave you a day.

MAY

to prepare. Of course. To ...

VANESSA

Is someone ...[under] there?

MAY

(Showing her a small vile of powders:)

Give him this.

JUNE

(What're you doing?)

MAY

For his indigestion.

(Referring to the letter:)

You never read this, correct?

(Showing her—knowing she can't read:)

The queen asks—here the queen states he ... uh ...

VANESSA

She did mention the king had a bit of bad meat last night ...

MAY

Exactly. A thimble in his drink .. uh .. twice a day .. for—

JUNE

Five /.

MAY

(As she goes to the task of measuring out and wrapping the medicine into a small bit of cloth and sealing it:)

Two days.

MAY (Continued:)

The [diarrhea/foreign object/bad meat] .. It will pass and then he will be right as rain. We will expect him then.

VANESSA

(Looking around cautiously:)

What are all these?

JUNE

Med'cines; Herbs, Potions.

VANESSA

You're witches?

JUNE

Was there ever any doubt?

MAY

Friendly witches. Friendly. Nothing to fear.

JUNE

(Showing her around, seller to prospect:)

The trick is in the knowing: These? These'll send you off into magical kingdoms. Make a man see or hear or think whatever you want him to. Or her. / This one—

VANESSA

How did you learn all this?

JUNE

Trial and error mostly.

NOVEMBER

Are you looking for something sp'cific?

VANESSA

(Too close to the blanket:)

Is someone under there?

(She steps unwittingly on his broken ankle.)

FLEANCE

(The blanket goes flying off as he grabs at his limb.)

Oh my gawd!!!

(All freeze a moment. FLEANCE and VANESSA find themselves staring at each other. Music¹³: Love at first sight? But there is no moment of ...)

MAY

You don't know him?

VANESSA

No. Should I?

MAY

(Countering quickly: she throws the blanket back over him:)

He is being treated for night terrors. Pay no attention. He needs the darkness.

VANESSA

.. For night terrors ...

MAY

They come at night. Here you are. Say nothing to the king

(Rechecks the letter:)

Nor the queen. She wishes it to be .. uh .. discreet. Embarrassing circumstance[s]
... Just pour the ...

VANESSA

Two thimbles in his drink.

MAY

Twice a / day.

JUNE

Twice a day.

VANESSA

Twice a day, yes.

MAY

And we will see him thereafter.

VANESSA

(At the door:)

Isn't he a little old for—or young for night terrors ...

¹³ A single trill of a tin whistle or one draw of the violin's bow ... simply punctuation at best

MAY

They come at any age. But he's a little ashamed by it, so .. Say nothing.

VANESSA

To ...

MAY

(Politely and expediently leading her out:)

[To] anyone. Are there soldiers with you?

VANESSA

No ... / [I came alone] ...

MAY

Be careful heading back. Hurry, while there's still daylight.

VANESSA

It's just .. morning ...

MAY

Thank you.

(And the door is again closed. The Sisters finally breathe.)

JUNE

I guess we'll have to call on *her* then.

MAY

Call on?—No!!

(Light's change¹⁴.

¹⁴ Though written to be performed without; if an Intermission be required ... this would be the place for it.

THOUGHTS on an intermission:

AFTER LIGHTS CHANGE: switch to a single light on MAY as she addresses us:

MAY

If you're needing to use the facilities, this'd be the time to do it.

Followed by ONE MEMBER OF THE TROUPE running off to do just that as light's fade out on the rest of the company.

Throughout the actual intermission, the troupe may go about resetting the stage, taking their own break, leaving to use the facilities themselves and returning at their own leisure. Eating, drinking onstage (to the period of the piece, please [no packaged foods or drinks]), checking their make-up and/or costumes, rolling dice, tuning their instruments ... you get the idea.

Music¹⁵:

A montage of scenes: Similar to a series of tableaux:

- LADY MacDUFF and HECATE are utilized to move the majority of set pieces throughout: There is an untouched chemistry between them; following each other's lead, they work as a team, otherwise unnoticed and underplayed [even feigned] for appearances sake, though HECATE's eyes may linger when they should not, Lady MacDUFF's clearly never do.
- LADY MacBETH watches out a window, seated next to MacBETH, VANESSA holds her breath as she fills his cup. He drinks.
- FLEANCE convalesces: NOVEMBER waits on him dotingly.
- JUNE walks past the shelving where the opiates are waiting and ... flips the shelf the finger.
- MacBETH drinks. LADY MacBETH's eyes follow a bird's flight.

A break in the tableaux:)

VANESSA

(Crossing away with the tray and drink.)

I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't do it. I can't do it.

FLEANCE

What if she can't do it?

(Another last shift: THE SHANTY: The SISTERS:)

JUNE

You're sure she didn't recognize him?

MAY

Her eyes were as blank as her brain.

(NOVEMBER just stares at her sister.)

MAY

[What?]

NOVEMBER

Is that how you talk about me when I'm not around?

MAY

Novvi—

¹⁵ If no where else in the play, here through this sequence, music is required, if not live (ideally) then at least taped.

(NOVEMBER storms, races or slinks off: point is: she doesn't want to be there.)

JUNE

She's "in love".

MAY

(Gawd, I know)

(End music. Lights shift again to the SHANTY:
MAY hands FLEANCE a bowl of food scraps.)

MAY

Eat it all.

FLEANCE

Where's [the little one]?

MAY

She's spending far too much time [in your presence] and not on her duties.

FLEANCE

So, I'm *your* problem now?

(Tastes the food.)

This is good, what is it—[on second thought] no, I don't want to know. Do I?

MAY

No, best not.

FLEANCE

Thank you. You didn't need to take me in. You could have handed me over.
Thank you.

MAY

Yeah, well, it wasn't my idea.

FLEANCE

Thank you all the same.

MAY

(As she waits on him to finish his meal.)

So, your name is Fleance. What kind of name is that, Fleance?

FLEANCE

One my parents gave me, I don't know.

MAY

What's it mean—what's it stand for?

FLEANCE

.. I don't know. No one ever told me.

MAY

You never asked?

FLEANCE

Never needed to.

MAY

(Filling in the silence ...)

Sos, you're going to be a king?

FLEANCE

No. Please. Do I look like a king?

MAY

What does a king look like?

FLEANCE

Not like this.

(Finishes the food.)

The uh [medicine you gave before] are in here?

MAY

Yyyeah. Told you not to ask.

FLEANCE

(Hands her back the bowl:)

Thank you for the food [and for disguising the taste].

MAY

Don't bat your big eyes at me.

FLEANCE

I [wasn't] ... I could say the same to you.

MAY

(ha)

(They share a moment of comfortable silence: May pours Fleance a glass of water and hands it to him.)

FLEANCE

Is there something in this?

MAY

It's just water.

(FLEANCE drinks. It is indeed just water. The silence continues as MAY wipes out/washing the bowl to put it back on a shelf.)

FLEANCE

Why do you do it; Look after them?

MAY

They're my sisters. We're all we got. What else was I s'posed to do?

FLEANCE

You don't seem touched; anything you want, I imagine.

MAY

Touched?

FLEANCE

Messengers from god, angels among us, witches, I don't care what you call yourselves. You seem ...

(They share the unspoken silence a moment too long ...)

MAY

Are you trying to give me ideas? (Everyone wants me to outta here for some reason.)

FLEANCE

You never thought about it? Being on your own? Having your own life?

MAY

With you?

FLEANCE

No, not with me, with with yourself.

MAY

Family doesn't do that to family.

(Realizing his father ...)

I'm sorry.

FLEANCE

[Don't be, the way I see it .. my father:] He saved me.

MAY

Your mother?

FLEANCE

Gone. Plague.

Your parents?

(MAY just smiles; Mona Lisa at best.)

FLEANCE

You *have* parents?

MAY

No, we're witches, you know, we just ... appeared here ... like magic.

FLEANCE

Magic.

MAY

Magic.

(Another shift: things are moving quickly: THE SHANTY:
VANESSA, MAY and FLEANCE.)

VANESSA

Do you have more?

MAY

What?

VANESSA

I .. I spilled it, I dropped it .. I don't know if I can ...

MAY

You're doing nothing wrong. It's .. med'cine.

VANESSA

What if I give him too much?

(Her eyes wander on to Fleance.)

MAY

Why are you looking at him instead of over / [here]?

VANESSA

why is he still here?

MAY

He broke his [ankle]

VANESSA

Did I [break his ankle]? Oh, my lord, I'm so sorry.

MAY

He's not a Lord.

VANESSA

I didn't say "Lord", I meant "lord" not "Lord".

FLEANCE

(Reassuring her:)

You didn't [break my ankle].

VANESSA

If they find you here ...

MAY

Do you know who he is?

VANESSA

(The God's honest truth:)

No. So many are running now .. I just .. Are you on the run? Did you do something awful?

(NOVEMBER enters with a basket of pulled vegetation. Accompanied by JUNE who ... may or may not have a basket herself, but is definitely eating something and a little on edge.)

NOVEMBER

What is *she* doing here?

MAY

She needed more med'cine.

JUNE

You gave her enough to kill a cow.

VANESSA

What!?

JUNE

Just an expression.

It's ASPARAGUS; Is that OK with you!?

To what do we owe this pleasure?

VANESSA

They have plans.

MAY

Plans?

(Music intercedes as LADY MacBETH enters, holding out to Vanessa her makeup tool kit and hair brush. VANESSA obliges by joining her [in body and task only] her mind still with the others.)

LADY MacBETH

We will create a new Scotland. Our prior Thane of Cawdor (God rest his soul) has already weakened Norway; we align with France and we can overcome both.

VANESSA

To cleanse the land.

NOVEMBER

“Cleanse”?

LADY MacBETH

And then on to Ireland. And then Wales. Then from all four quadrants we allow England to surrender herself and we reunite this kingdom.

JUNE

So, what the fuck happens to France?

LADY MacBETH

We give her Norway, she'll be happy. And we return her lands England now occupies. Then:

VANESSA

Then she remove the Jews. The foreigners. The lawless. The different [like her, like Novvi]. The immigrant. Mixed blood. To unite the kingdoms. My daughter's mixed blood.

LADY MacBETH

And traitors. Traitors go without saying.

VANESSA

She would kill my daughter. And take her [November]. I don't know what she'd do with you [June].

FLEANCE

He killed my father.

JUNE

.. You used it all?

VANESSA

No ... not yet.

MAY

When will he be here?

VANESSA

Two days, you said, it'll move through his system, you said.

MAY

So you're not so stupid.

VANESSA

A woman presents herself as she needs to get by. I have no interest in any [government overthrow] .. or any Genocide. I need passage for my daughter. If I brought her here to you?

MAY

Here? Where would we put her?

VANESSA

[I have nowhere else.]

LADY MacBETH

How's that for a legacy?

(LADY MacBETH [and her music] continues off, VANESSA is required to follow. The SISTERS and FLEANCE take seat as HECATE steps in to address the four:)

HECATE

Lesson One.

MAY

We can't go: lesson one, lesson two, lesson three. He'll be here as soon as he's well.

JUNE

She could keep on [dosing him, couldn't she?].

MAY

Then a doctor will be called. We've no time: we do this quick.

FLEANCE

We could poison him, you know. No one'll know. They'll suspect others.

MAY

They'll suspect the valets. You kill him, you kill her. You're willing to kill her?

JUNE

Who the fuck is she?

NOVEMBER

Are you / feeling alright?

FLEANCE

Who who is she? We don't know her. We .. we only saw each other a few mornings ago.

MAY

How's your leg?

FLEANCE

You throwing me out now?

NOVEMBER

No.

MAY

.. No.

(A beat.)

FLEANCE

I could kill him when he comes here /.

(JUNE screams in Fleance's ear to shut him up.)

HECATE

Lesson's going well.

VANESSA

(Entering quickly without knocking:)

Sorry, it took me so long to get away.

HECATE

Who's she?

JUNE

You didn't knock.

(VANESSA knocks on anything.)

HECATE

Another "witch"?

MAY

Our ear into the castle.

HECATE

(oh my.) Siddown.

(VANESSA finds a place to sit next to Fleance.)

FLEANCE

We were talking of killing the king.

MAY

We weren't.

FLEANCE

She was going to poison him.

MAY

He'll have a battalion of soldiers with him.

VANESSA

He's not the problem; she is. He only does things to win her over.

FLEANCE

[Killing my father is winning her over?]

VANESSA

[I'm sorry but] yes.

(Half a beat.)

HECATE

Are there more?

MAY

This is it.

HECATE

(And you wonder why I work alone.)

MAY

(To us:)

And this follows with a bunch of planning and shop talk and nobody really cares and nobody wants to waste their time on all that. And then we got to the matter of the venue:

(Back into the scene:)

Not here. We have enough here.

NOVEMBER

This is our home.

JUNE

Too much to lose; Next:

FLEANCE

Then I could [kill him if it wasn't done here].

MAY

No.

HECATE

This—here—wouldn't work anyways. We need .. a cave .. a dark hole .. a ...

NOVEMBER

I know. Where you [June] grow the thistle.

JUNE

[That's ours.]

NOVEMBER

It's a a cave.

JUNE

Smells a little dank.

HECATE

Smell's not a problem. We'll need to set it up. We'll need.

(To Vanessa:)

Can you get anything from the castle?

VANESSA

[Like .. what?]

HECATE

Mirrors. Glass. String. Candles. (I have the puppets but) some armor.

FLEANCE

We're going to do it then?

MAY

No.

JUNE

No.

VANESSA

No.

NOVEMBER

.. No.

HECATE

You'll need a leash on him.

(Music:

Lights on HERALD¹⁶ as the SISTERS, HECATE,
FLEANCE and VANESSA transform the SHANTY into

¹⁶ HERALD may be played by troupe actor portraying Lady MacDuff.

the CAVERN complete with Cauldron and all the accoutrements.:)

HERALD

Runaway Thanes gather troop in England. War awaits. Scotland braces. (While the King lay a last day bedridden.)

(Lights out on Herald; [Herald exits in the darkness] as collaborators tend to last details [Music fades off to reveal:])

VANESSA

He'll be here tomorrow.

JUNE

Can you [give us one more day]?

MAY

No. No, we'll be ready. We have to be. He'll suspect something otherwise.

FLEANCE

Agreed.

HECATE

(To Vanessa ... unable to shake the thought:)

Do I know you?

VANESSA

Why would I know you? I just started at the castle Glamis ...

HECATE

Who did you ... [never mind]

VANESSA

[I worked for] Lady MacDuff. I watched her children. Do you know her?

(As the thought hits her:)

Do you think she could take in my daughter? She has immunity. Can you get word to her?

HECATE

I don't know who you're talking about.

JUNE

(Hanging a last piece of string or wire:)

Is this right?

HECATE
More to the left.

JUNE
Right?

HECATE
Left?

JUNE
Right?

MAY
Oh my gawd, stop. Left; “correct”; not “right”. Left: correct: Left.

(And the final piece is moved into place. They each step away to admire their handiwork. A beat. JUNE reaches into the cauldron and produces a bottle wrapped in cloth. She unwraps it and uncorks it before asking:)

JUNE
Drink? (It’s just mead.)

MAY
.. I assume it *is* a lesser poison.

(They pass the bottle, if a glass or two can be procured, it is:)

JUNE
To family.

VANESSA
To keeping family.

FLEANCE
Keeping family.

MAY
(A rhetorical question posed as a toast:)
How did we end up here?

HECATE
You stole him from me.

JUNE

We didn't steal him, you .. you gave him up.

MAY

And why; why was that?

NOVEMBER

She was twice engaged, you remember?

MAY

She was.

JUNE

What was you doing? What was so [important] ... Was it worth it?

(But HECATE just deflects with a smile.)

JUNE

(Passing the bottle to Hecate:)

Oh, there's something behind that smile.

HECATE

You "divined" that, did you?

(Takes a drink. Passes it along.)

JUNE

Talk.

We're family. Talk.

HECATE¹⁷

You know where I—you wanna know where I was? I went to attend a ... a baptism, they call it. Her ... her nephew was being half drowned by some old man in a cassock promising lies and whatnot but I ... at least I could be there. Near her. In the daylight. All but with her. We wouldn't—we couldn't touch—we could barely look at each other but we knew. I knew. There were moments; a glance, a smile; sometimes that's all you get. They could burn me for being a witch but they don't but if they knew [that—that we were lovers] they'd string us alive or at least they'd string me. She ... she's manor born—married, three children of her own; and she feels dead when we're not together. At least that's what she tells me; what she wants me to hear ... what I want to hear; so, I ... chose. I chose to be there. then the bitch ups and sends me out. Someone caught me looking [at her when I shouldn't have] and she had to protect her Sacrament.

¹⁷ No music beneath this speech.

HECATE (Continued:)

She didn't protest too much but just enough to have me banished and now I am without.

And you would stand there and tell me how righteous your "family" is. I've had enough of "family" for a lifetime.

(There is an uncomfortable silence. HECATE drinks to the silence. A beat.)

JUNE

Should we should we get cleaning up here or—What else is there to be done?

FLEANCE

Yes, correct, right.

(They all move into task. All but NOVEMBER who watches HECATE settle back into being an outsider.)

MAY

Novvi, don't stare.

(They continue to re-arrange. JUNE comes across a smallsword. She quietly brings this to the attention of May [and November, who is still with May].)

JUNE

(Referring to Fleance:)

[I think we have a problem.]

(Lights shift:

Music beneath:

MacBETH and LADY MacBETH:

MacBETH kisses LADY MacBETH on the cheek and departs from her. LADY MacBETH exits back as MacBETH makes his way to the entrance of the CAVERN: Standing at the entrance, as the collaborators take their places, pushing Vanessa and Fleance into hiding spots, MacBETH turns to us to take his moment ...)

MacBETH

(To us:)

This is where the king, entreats the witches—

(To one individual:)

I'm feeling much better, thank you very much.

(Amongst the preliminary, 11th hour details, for FLEANCE is securing the shortsword.

MacBETH (Continued:)

(Back to us all:)

So, what do we know about the King? What do we *really* know about .. the Scot? He was actually a good man. Very loving. Perhaps too so. Everyone says (look it up). His fatal flaw is that he loves a woman more than anything else—more than life itself. A woman—whose name is Gruoch¹⁸ by the way; how's that for discouragement?; I mean, what sort of name is that? You don't hear anybody named Gruoch anymore, do you?—Well, anyway, MacBeth loved—dammit: the *Scot* loved his wife. He would do anything for her. As you've seen. He kills the king, he kills the valets he blamed for killing the king. He [kills his best friend]: His best friend. This all weighs all too heavy on his heart.

FLEANCE

Now? Really?

MAY

All of it.

MacBETH

In the scene you didn't see—it was a wonderful scene: at the Banquet. Ghosts and daggers. I go a little mad. “Is this a dagger, I see before me.”

I know the witches have devined the truth to me before ...
So, it only makes sense that I seek their advice again.

MacBETH (Continued:)

In the scene you didn't see, I get the idea to pursue them again; so, I ask my wife and—o, and unbeknownst to me, though I do hear rumors, all the clansman who ran away or or are still running away at this point, are now gathering together down in England, to join forces to march back up and retake Scotland. But I don't know that yet—

—we're ready. Alright then.

(Taking a new position:)

My troops: wait here. A cave. Should I be ...

While for MAY the last task of importance is indeed the drugging of Fleance.

And for JUNE, we're not sure, but she does disappear from view for a moment or more.

MAY pays no attention to the sword Fleance positions out of sight and offers him his morning medicine.)

(FLEANCE drinks the rest.

MAY is satisfied and busies herself with other minor chores ...)

(FLEANCE falls to the floor, apparently drugged.)

(The SISTERS and HECATE drag the sleeping Would-Be-Assassin off to a corner. Out of sight.)

(MAY cues MacBETH.)

¹⁸ GRUOCH – pronounced “grugh” / the “u” is the same as “u” in full or wonderful. The “ch” ending (aka “gh”) has a whisp of the sound of one clearing their throat.

MAY

[Don't pad your part].

(Drawn to silence, MacBETH complies, tucking his helmet under his arm and stoops to "enter the cavern". He looks about. The four witches watch him looking. A beat.)

JUNE

You're back.

MacBETH

I'm back.

MAY

You want to know your future.

MacBETH

Your good.

(To Hecate:)

They're good.

HECATE

Hecate, sire. They're my prodigies.

MacBETH

Then you trained them well.

MAY

Something to drink?

MacBETH

(At first he politely refuses but then realizes:)

Oh, is this part of the .. then yes, yes, thank you.

(He drinks.)

MAY

More?

MacBETH

Am I? Alright then: more. Sure, why not?

(He drinks. They refill his cup. He drinks again.)

I may need a corner if I keep [drinking like this; to pee in I mean]...

JUNE

(To us:)

This goes on for a little bit—we may need to move along here then.

(New positions for all [though Vanessa and Fleance remain unmoved]: MacBETH is less cognitive but quite functional.)

HECATE

You wish to ask questions of us, or would you rather hear directly from the spirits themselves?

MacBETH

Oh, whatever you have set up here is fine with me.

HECATE

Of course. Whatever you wish. Your men, outside [will they be joining us]?

MacBETH

They can wait.

HECATE

Are there many?

MacBETH

I don't have all day.

HECATE

Of course.

(From the Cauldron, wearing a black cloak to conceal herself from the neck down: VANESSA rises. She is wearing a fake beard as well as a helmet that puts her face in shadows. Standing, she sways to effect a head floating in the air.)

MacBETH

Oh my gawd, what is this? Apparition, what do you have to say for yourself?

(VANESSA stares blankly ahead, trying not to make eye contact. She starts to open her mouth ... then stops. A beat. She lowers herself back down.)

MacBETH
What was that?

MAY
(What're you doing?)

VANESSA
(He wants me to speak.)

MAY
(So, speak.)

VANESSA
(What if he knows my voice? What if he recognizes my voice, it's too high; /
what if he knows my voice.)

MAY
(Then don't use your voice.)

VANESSA
(How do I not use my / voice?)

MAY
(.. Just move your lips.)

MacBETH
Can somebody tell me what's going on?

(And VANESSA is thrown back up into position. She
opens her mouth.)

MAY
Macbeth!!!

(MacBETH stares at her. VANESSA understands. She
opens and closes her mouth / with no idea what will be
coming out of it. The other women join in trying their best
to be in sync, following MAY's lead:)

	MAY	HECATE	JUNE	NOV.
MacBeth!!		MacBeth!!	MacBeff!!	MacBebebe!!
MacBeth!!		MacBeth!!	MacBeff!!	MaBebebe!!
MacBeth!!		MacBeth!!	MacBeff!!	MaBebebe!!
.. Beware ...				

MAY
Beware .. Mac ... Duff!!

JUNE
Who's MacDuff?

VANESSA
(Stares at May:)
[Why'd you have to bring up him?"]

MAY
(All I could come up with
no notice.)
The Thane .. the Thane of Fife!!

HECATE
The Thane of
Fife!

JUNE
Thane of
Five!

NOV.
Thane

VANESSA
(Slightly panicking:)
Dismiss me.
(Nope, this is about her:)
Dismiss me!!!
(Bringing herself back down and out:)
Enough. (enough, enough, enough)

Dismiss me!

Dismiss!

Dismiss!

(VANESSA is now out of sight and scurries herself out of
the back the Cauldron.)

MacBETH
That sonofabitch.

HECATE
(More. We can't stop / now—)

(A baby doll is shot up out of the cauldron, it is on a string
and hangs precariously swinging overhead.)

JUNE
Mac/BeFF!!.

MAY
MacBeth

HECATE
MacBeth

MacBETH
What is that? A toy?

(The doll seems to be dripping, MacBETH wipes whatever
it is away from his own face.)

MacBETH
What is that—?

JUNE

/ Blooooood.

MacBETH

—Blood?
Why?

(The doll continues to be pulled higher, through a pulley system operated by JUNE, as she speaks for it:)

JUNE

Laugh and be bold, old fool; And and resolute and scorn and none will be born of man—No man born of woman—

(But at this point the pulley crank, made from an old tree branch, breaks in JUNE's hand, causing the string to lose tension and the doll to come plummeting down back into the Cauldron before another word can be said.)

JUNE

(Well, that wasn't right.)

(She tosses the branch into the cauldron just as:

NOVEMBER prepares to make her own entrance from the oversized pot. NOVEMBER stifles her response from being hit by the branch.)

MAY

Drink.

MacBETH

More?
If you insist.

(He drinks, as:)

(NOVEMBER emerges from the vat, dressed as a young boy, wearing a crown and holding the recently thrown branch. She now allows herself to wail from the pain. MacBETH responds in kind. The other witches echo the wailing. A beat. FLEANCE groans.)

NOVEMBER

(Realizing attention is on herself now AND that she is holding a tree limb; she waves the limb in MacBeth's general direction:)

The ... earth ... abhors you. The earth ... abhors you.

MAY

(That's not the line.)

NOVEMBER

(I don't remember the line but) The earth .. abhors you.

(NOVEMBER slinks back down into the Cauldron, at loss for anything else to say: she growls like a fierce cat of the jungle.

Fog and mist and any other lighting effects would be best brought into play now.)

MacBETH

(Taking the moment to try his best to piece it all together:)

I think I understand. Like a king, he was, growling like a lion, like a little king.

"No man borne of woman": ... can unseat me. "Beware MacDuff": find him; deal with him. "The earth ... the earth ..."

JUNE

Abhors you.

MacBETH

"The earth [abhors you]": the trees will attack?... Well, that's stupid.

(Empties his drink without urging.)

One more?

MAY

(refilling his cup:)

Anything, our King.

JUNE NOVEMBER HECATE

Our King

Our King

Our king.

(FLEANCE groans. He stirs.)

VANESSA

Anything, our—[King].

(She immediately silences herself, realizing her voice might be distinct when heard alone.)

MacBETH

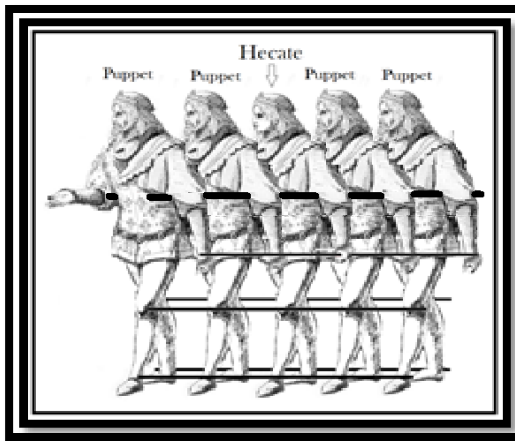
Show me the Kings of Scotland. Am I to be the greatest ...
(But the full measure of the mead mixture is taking effect.)

JUNE

(What are we [supposed to do now]... ?)

HECATE

(We're ready. I came prepared.)



(HECATE emerges from behind a wall of the cavern in a classic full-sized chorus line of puppetry which she operates from the center: Her legs and arm movements synchronize with rods to animate the attached puppets. Her costume and make-up blends in, matching the puppets as best she can. She circles the room and then MacBETH himself. FLEANCE takes opportunity to join in on the parade, dragging the shortsword behind him. Unknowingly HECATE leads FLEANCE directly to his intended. She obviously continues on, leaving the two men to stare at each other; both reeling from the effects of drugs. A beat. MacBETH is the first to respond ...)

MacBETH

(Overwhelmed:)

How like Banquo you look.

(Tears well up in his eyes.)

I'm sorry. ... I didn't [want to]. I'm so sorry.

(Seeing true remorse in MacBeth, FLEANCE too softens, bringing not the sword down on MacBeth but placing his own arms around him and holding him close. The two men all but weep a moment then pull away, at which point HECATE and the SISTERS place themselves between the two of them and pull FLEANCE back behind the Cauldron, HECATE includes herself in the mix, thereby muddling the vision into total confusion.)

MAY

Another drink, my King?

MacBETH

... I think I've had enough.

(Unsure what to make of it all ... gathering his composure.)

This was very .. enlightening.

(Thinks a moment as he collects his helmet et al.)

I think I need to ... see to a Thane.

VANESSA

(Rushes to him, using whatever costuming she can to hide her true identity:)

MacDuff? MacDuff is gone, my liege. Back to England—[not back, no back, just to, just] To England.

MacBETH

And his wife? And his children? She [Lady MacBeth] .. said something about them. They're still here, right?

(How would you know—you wouldn't know—why would you know that?)

(He takes out far too much money than this charade deserved; but what does her care—it's only money, he tosses it about to them, freely:)

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank .. you and

(Tosses the rest into the Cauldron)

And you in there. Thank you. I think.

(He regally composes himself:)

I will take my leave.

(MacBETH exits. A beat.)

JUNE

Well, that could've gone better.

(End music. A beat.

New music picks up afresh to accompany the troupe move in consort to return the stage to its previous condition, with one notable exception:

HECATE maneuvers unattended to remove her costume of puppetry; no one aids her [not even the music supports her costume change], but again, this is not unexpected. Once removed, she stands alone. Finally, LADY MacDUFF crosses to her, and without acknowledgement the Lady takes the puppets and crosses back to join the others. Once finished, the troupe empty the stage, leaving HECATE alone. Lights fade.)

(VANESSA attends to the QUEEN as a very sober KING returns. He crosses to and kisses her.)

LADY MacBETH

Everything come to pass as planned; Are we happy now?

MacBETH

As expected. love you.

LADY MacBETH

love you more.

(And he is off again.)

HECATE

Troops gather. fucking troops.

(LADY MacDUFF enters / unannounced.)

LADY MacDUFF

How dare you.

LADY MacBETH

How did you get in here? How did she—Did you ...?

VANESSA

/ [I? No.]

LADY MacDUFF

We had an agreement.

LADY MacBETH

What happened?

LADY MacDUFF

You know damned well. My / son— ...

LADY MacBETH

(Including Vanessa in her audience:)

As I was informed: the boy spoke out of turn

(then solely to Lady MacDuff:)

as you and your household were being gathered to move to safer quarters. It is unfortunate—but it happened.

(Seth?)
VANESSA

And my other children?
LADY MacDUFF

What would I know of them?
LADY MacBETH

We trusted you.
LADY MacDUFF

And I you. Were your other children harmed? I understood they were taken in / to safety.
LADY MacBETH

I spoke to you mother to mother.
LADY MacDUFF

I am no one's mother.
LADY MacBETH

Where are they?
LADY MacDUFF

Safe, I presume.
LADY MacBETH

They're children.
LADY MacDUFF

To be men. And men wage war; Don't they? You should have had daughters.
LADY MacBETH

.. I am trying .. to be ...
LADY MacDUFF

Word has it your husband has fled to England; gathering an army.
LADY MacBETH

I want my children.
LADY MacDUFF

What have you heard from him?
LADY MacBETH

LADY MacDUFF

(oh my god.)

LADY MacBETH

Your son's fate was a horrible misfortune. What of your other children?

LADY MacDUFF

You're holding them.

LADY MacBETH

What choice do I have; what choice have you given us?

LADY MacDUFF

There is no us!

LADY MacBETH

Apparently not.

(To Vanessa:)

See her out. Yes, you. We're done here.

LADY MacDUFF

I am not leaving without my children.

LADY MacBETH

Well, they're not here ... Do you hear any children?

LADY MacDUFF

We had / an agree— . . .

LADY MacBETH

Where were *you* at our coronation? Where were *you* at our banquet? We *had* an agreement, didn't we? Where were *you*?

No, I want to hear you say it.

LADY MacDUFF

you bitch.

LADY MacBETH

At last; someone with the metal to say that to my face. Thank you. That makes the rest so much easier.

(There is a silence. Lady MacDUFF all but spits in the queen's face.)

LADY MacBETH

You may go.

(On the heels of Lady MacDuff's exit; quietly at first then building to a scream:)

run. Run. RUN. RUUUNN!!!

(LADY MacDUFF runs past HECATE; no acknowledgement. HECATE watches her go as LADY MacBETH recollects her composure.)

LADY MacBETH

(To Vanessa:)

Would you follow her?

(No answer. Lights shift. HECATE quietly exits, not following Lady MacDuff—perhaps through the audience.)

(FLEANCE enters the SHANTY to find VANESSA, alone, rifling through shelves.)

FLEANCE

What're you doing?

VANESSA

Why are you still here?

FLEANCE

Broken is broken.

VANESSA

You can hobble.

FLEANCE

Why don't you like me? And what are you doing here?

VANESSA

She knows. She suspects.

FLEANCE

Do you even know what you're looking for?

VANESSA

She killed them.

FLEANCE

.. Let me help you.

VANESSA

(Culling out a seemingly looking specimen:)

What does this one do?

FLEANCE

[I don't know] .. the girl takes it.

(The two of them consider the options as MAY enters, seeing the pair a little too close, if you ask her.)

MAY

What is [happening here] ..?

(VANESSA keeps possession of the drug in question as she and FLEANCE separate.)

MAY

(In reference to their proximity to each other:)

Don't let Novvi see you.

(Lights change:)

JUNE

(To us:)

Word reaches MacDuff of the fate of his wife and children. Just to be clear: she's dead; the kids're dead. Everybody MacDuff left behind is dead. Even the house staff: all dead. Just want to make sure you got the picture. MacDuff and his soldiers ... let's just say this war is no longer about land.

(Lights change again to reveal the KING and QUEEN; VANESSA waits in attendance.)

LADY MacBETH

Why are you constantly at the window?

MacBETH

I'm not constantly.

LADY MacBETH

What is that?

MacBETH

What is what?

(He now hears them:)

Birds.

LADY MacBETH

Ah ...

When I was a child . . . I had a cat. . . . And a bird. The bird had this beautiful cage. It was grand. [Made of] spun iron [with] glass bobbles.

MacBETH

Why do you remember that?

LADY MacBETH

(Lost in her own thoughts .. stumbling through them ...)

The cat paid the bird no attention and even less to me. In the mornings the bird—she would sing to the rising sun. [But my] mother warned me never to let her out. That she would fly away. But I could tell she wanted her freedom. And the more I heard the bird sing the more I heard her cry. She [would] call to the birds outside and they to her. [Her] song really never changed but I grew to hear it different. [I heard] the voice of a creature who wanted more—more than the crafted wire and colored shafts of light; more than morning seed and afternoon fruits; she wanted her wings.

So, one morning, when she was caroling to the peasant birds [and they to her] I opened the door ... And she just sat there. Perched on her handmade branch ...

[and] did nothing for the longest time. While I watched [her]. Finally, I reached in to pet her and that's when she took flight. She didn't even make it to the window before the cat caught her.

From that moment on I decided I could be the bird or the cat.

Pity I hate milk.

(Through this piece,
JUNE finds her own
mind wandering as well.
Lost in thought ..)

(MacBETH, concerned, moves softly to his wife as
VANESSA pulls slightly away from the scene to address
us:)

VANESSA

He loves her.

Do you know how many times I've been at the back wall as they've loved on each other? And they knew I was there. And they didn't care. And that sickened me that they didn't care. And I was envious .. that they didn't care. To love like that. With full abandon. God knows, without her he might do good.

FLEANCE

He killed my father. He killed the king. He's a butcher.

VANESSA

He's a man in love.

FLEANCE

And if you take away his love?

VANESSA

We have to. She's a danger.

FLEANCE

And what is *he*?

VANESSA

Lost.

(The Light shifts to again include VANESSA with the King & Queen. MacBETH steps toward Vanessa to speak with her.)

(Lights shift again: the SHANTY: The SISTERS and FLEANCE take position as VANESSA again moves in unannounced:)

VANESSA

He's called for a / doctor.

JUNE

You need to learn to knock.

VANESSA (Continuing:)

The king—the king has called for a doctor for the Queen. She's not well. He knows. My gawd, everyone can see it. You and your potions ... You said this was going to be subtle.

MAY

It is. It has to be. / Give it [time].

VANESSA

You should *hear* her.

FLEANCE

You should have let me kill him when we had the chance.

(As the scene continues: MAY sorts through their medicinal stock and debates other pharmaceutical options; pulling a few “under considerations” to the side and into a carpet bag:)

MAY

If she goes : like that [without warning]: he could explode. [We stick with the plan:] She gets sick. He is brought to her bed. You relieve a cancer with leeches not by opening up a vein.

JUNE

fuck you too.

MAY

piss off.

JUNE

you piss off.

VANESSA

..Where's the other one?

MAY

Other one?

VANESSA

'One who called herself Hecate.

JUNE

No one has seen her since ...

NOVEMBER

The cave?

FLEANCE

Since she announced herself. Gawd, I thought I was going to throw up.

JUNE

I did, a little.

NOVEMBER

I thought it was beautiful.

JUNE

It wasn't beautiful; it was .. deprived.

NOVEMBER

She trusted us. She felt she could trust us and what did you do? Everyone turned their backs; but did she go and run? No, she finished the job.

JUNE

She got paid.

NOVEMBER

You really think that's why she did it?

MAY

(Staying on task:)

She's calling for a doctor: we send her a doctor.

(Silence: they all understand what she means. All but ...)

NOVEMBER

Wha[t]?

FLEANCE

I'll do it.

MAY

They'll recognize you. And you [June] were already there (we all know how that turned out.)

JUNE

He saw you in the cave.

MAY

He doesn't know what he saw. We end this ... correct?

JUNE

I got us into this ...

MAY

Don't even bother [completing that sentence].

VANESSA

We could send her. [I mean] Hecate.

MAY

She's not talking with us; we don't even know / where she—

VANESSA

Then we find her; we need to speak with her.

MAY

Have you seen / Novvi's [medicine]? Are we out?

NOVEMBER

They're afraid to be in the same room with her.

JUNE

She threatened to burn us alive, remember?

NOVEMBER

When was [that; what're you talking] ..?

JUNE

You weren't there.

VANESSA

(Staying on point:)

We need a "doctor."

NOVEMBER

Then I'll do it.

MAY

I love you, Novvi, but ... [no].

Did anybody see / Novvi's medicine—it was right here—When did you take it last?

VANESSA

No. I don't think—no, nobody saw me coming here, no.

JUNE

You don't think or you don't know?

FLEANCE

Let her be.

JUNE

Making eyes at her now too? Choose, lover boy.

MAY

[Really?]

JUNE

Wha[t]?

(And NOVEMBER has run off again.)

MAY

(To June:)

Go after her.

(To Vanessa:)

Were *you* sent to get the doctor?

(VANESSA’s absence of answering suggests “yes”)

You found him.

(Lights shift:

Drums ((bordham) softly build from this point forward:

FLEANCE addresses us as:)

FLEANCE

Alright then .. I guess this is the moment in the night [day/afternoon] when we talk a little bit about [me]—

(realizes from the look on our faces he might better change the subject to:)

Meanwhile the Country steals for war.

Scotland may lose Scotland when all is done.

Malcolm, MacDuff and Ross and I can’t remember all the names but everyone who isn’t MacBeth has joined forces in England and (Lenox, that’s one of the names) they’re all marching north.

Guerilla tactics are employed.

MacDuff’s troops camouflage themselves as trees and bushes in an attempt to surround the castle.

And I ... I sit here with women. The country goes to war / And I sit here with the women.

NOVEMBER

Why do you like her?

(MAY goes about conducting her “visit”

FLEANCE

What /?

as JUNE concentrates on not taking possession of the bag left behind.)

NOVEMBER

What do you see in her?

FLEANCE

I never .. I never [meant to .. lead you on] in any manner.

NOVEMBER

I know the way—I seen the way men look at me.

FLEANCE

... That doesn't make it right.

(MAY then travels to counsel with the KING.)

NOVEMBER

Like you look at my sister.

(a sincerely innocent question:)

Do you really think she 'd make a better queen for you than me?

FLEANCE

([How do even I possibly try to answer that ...?])

(To us:)

And I sit here with the women.

MacBETH

(Giving "the doctor " no other option:)

Fix. Her.

(Exit MacBETH.)

(After lingering too long JUNE steps away to address us, causing NOVEMBER to catches eye of the bag May left behind.)

JUNE

I had to get away—[I] had to get out of that house. Good news though: I found her bleedin dog—I think I found her dog—I chased her for a while; at least I think it was a dog; It was brindle.

(NOVEMBER grabs the bag up and runs off again.

Two players don Soldiers cloaks and take guard posts as:)

(Lights reveal Lady MacBeth's chambers. Two SOLDIERS¹⁹, flank the doorway. VANESSA attends to

¹⁹ Two SOLDIERS - may be portrayed by troupe members playing MacBETH and Lady MacDUFF.

LADY MacBETH as MAY "THE DOCTOR" is allowed entrance. Music continues throughout.)

VANESSA

The doctor is here to see you again.

(LADY MacBETH cranes her head in May's direction; she is obviously not at her best. She then reaches down to take hold of her dress hem and prepares to pull it up over her head [thereby exposing herself] but for Vanessa's intervention.

MAY turns back to address the Soldiers:)

MAY

May we [have the room in private]?

(The SOLDIERS step off, out of view, into the darkness.)

MAY

(Carefully to Lady MacBeth:)

We must ...

(Just as calmly, to Vanessa:)

watch the door.

LADY MacBETH

You were here before.

MAY

Yes, my dear, I saw you two days ago.

LADY MacBETH

I am your queen: I am not your dear.

MAY

[Not my queen]. Yes, of course.

(She draws the window curtains closed.)

Have you been taking your medicine?

LADY MacBETH

I don't like it dark in here.

Open a window. I need air.

VANESSA

The archers, my Lady. We don't want them / to have [aim on you].

LADY MacBETH

Queen. Dammit.

VANESSA

My queen.

(MAY goes through the motions of checking Lady MacBeth over “medically”.)

LADY MacBETH

Why don't they love me?

MAY

Love you?

LADY MacBETH

Their queen. Why don't they love their queen?

MAY

When did you last see the king?

LADY MacBETH

The king is busy waging war—*defending* war—*Not* warring: he is busy *Not* warring.

(As MAY inspects her pupils:)

You should ask before you touch your queen.

MAY

May I?

LADY MacBETH

How do I look? Do I need makeup?

MAY

You look fine; / Majestic.

LADY MacBETH

Make up. I need make up. Miss V.

VANESSA

Yes, My Queen.

LADY MacBETH

Do your job.

(MAY and VANESSA share a beat. VANESSA collects the make-up tray. LADY MacBETH runs her hands along MAY's closest arm:)

LADY MacBETH

You going to inspect all my parts “doctor”?
Nooo babies. I’ve made noooo babies. Not that I couldn’t: I didn’t want to.
Wanna look?

(MAY obliges VANESSA by taking a step back to allow her access to apply make-up to the Queen’s face.

Meanwhile NOVEMBER makes her way into the scene, also dressed as a male apprentice, carrying the medicines bag. She is detained by the Soldiers:)

NOVEMBER

The doctor forgot her bag—*He* forgot his bag.

LADY MacBETH

(To Vanessa:)

You have babies, don’t you? A crossbreed brat? Thought I didn’t know, didn’t you? “My eyes and ears”.

VANESSA

(Keeping calm:)

Hold yourself still, M’Lady.

FIRST SOLDIER

(Poking back in onstage:)

Doctor?

LADY MacBETH

So, you can .. paint me?

MAY

What’re you—?

(Staying calm:)

Yes, let her in, everything’s [good with that; let her in,] thank you.

LADY MacBETH

(Pulling Vanessa in close to her:)

You did this to me. Why? Because I didn’t ask about your . . mongrel bastard? Country is full of bastards.
After all I’ve done for you.

(NOVEMBER is let in. The Soldiers steps back out. NOVEMBER rushes to join May.)

LADY MacBETH
(Changing her tact:)
Stop it. Please. We can start again. We can
start afresh.
What have you done?

MAY
(What the hell?)

(NOVEMBER opens
the bag and shows May
a bottle of poisons.)

NOVEMBER
(I can help; I can do this. I want to.)

LADY MacBETH
(Sees the knife, used for shaving the blush, in Vanessa's hand.)
You haven't got the balls.

(A standoff ensues: VANESSA is nothing
short of a deer caught in the headlights:)

MAY
(What the hell are you [talking
about?] ... Go home Novvi
[before something happens])

LADY MacBETH
(Challenges her:)
Do it.
(Nothing. She pulls Vanessa's
wrist in; placing the knife's blade
at her own throat:)

.. You're a [child]

Do it.
LADY MacBETH
Youuuu foolish ... little .. bitch. You thought you
could come in here—
(Proving her point: she screams it
one more time to cement in what a
feeble waste of courage the servant
is:)

NOVEMBER
(I'm not a child! Stop treating me
like I'm your pet.)

DOOO ITTT!!

(Silence.

VANESSA finds herself
unable to move.

LADY MacBETH lets the
moment sink in.)

(The sisters both turn at the sound,
allowing NOVEMBER the
opportunity to pull June's opiates
dagger out of the "doctor's bag".
MAY looks back toward the door
again to see November with the
dagger and immediately responds
by grabbing the weapon out of her
hand:)

MAY
(What the hell did you [think you were
going to do with this])?

LADY MacBETH
... Know your place.

you're worthless.

You're only good for a—
—who the fuck are you?

(But NOVEMBER relinquishes the dagger gladly, and as May hastily looks toward the door, NOVEMBER swiftly maneuvers around her sister, leaving her literally holding the bag as NOVEMBER pulls Fleance's shortsword out from the carpet bag, and positions herself behind Lady MacBeth, placing the sword's edge against the Queen's throat in mid-sentence—)

(NOVEMBER pulls the knife away, slicing it across the regent's throat. Both VANESSA and MAY freeze. LADY MacBETH's eyes widen with the realization. She clutches her throat, trying to hold it closed, as the blood begins to gush²⁰. She instinctively tries to stand and move away from her own horror—only to find herself off balance and unable to escape the inevitable. She falls.

LADY MacBETH lies dead.
VANESSA, MAY and NOVEMBER stand motionless.)

MAY

[Not a word.]

(A beat. MAY returns June's dagger into the bag. Then gingerly takes the knife from Vanessa. She places it in the queen's own hand. She opens the bag for November to return the shortsword. NOVEMBER acquiesces the iron. A beat.

VANESSA moves to reopen the window curtains. A look. MAY and VANESSA help NOVEMBER, who snatches back the bag as she exits, out through the windows. MAY then follows. VANESSA watches as they disappear from view. A beat. She recloses the curtains, positions herself away from the body. She closes her eyes. Music ends: VANESSA drops the make-up tray. And screams.

Dead silence.

VANESSA's scream echoes. Lights dim as the SOLDIERS rush back in; they stop at the sight; seeing VANESSA pointing to the body. Lights fades as:)

²⁰ Blood, of course, is optional

(A death bell [as heard previously] begins to alarm.
JUNE enters back into the Shanty only to find Fleance:)

JUNE

You're still here.

FLEANCE

I'm still here.

JUNE

(Retrieves her opiates box from the shelf:)

(fuck it.)

FLEANCE

(Stepping forward—out of the scene—to address us:)

And now I guess, I guess *this* is my turn. I eventually healed to ...

(Realizes we are not as interested in his story as much as
we are as to what has just transpired before our eyes:)

So: Queen MacBeth's death was determined / to b—

JUNE

(Unaware of Fleance she takes over:)

was assumed to be a suicide. No valets were killed. No scrubwomen [mauled].
Not even the doctor. Go figure. Perhaps there were dissentions in the ranks.

FLEANCE

(Reassuming his closing speech:)

But the King himself didn't take it all that well. As predicted: After a moment of
stunned calmness: "*Out; out brief candle*"; he exploded into a rage. You take
away all a man has to live for: he has nothing left to lose. Order was restored. And
the king was beheaded. Or maybe the king was beheaded and order was restored.
Yes, first the beheading, then the restoring.

JUNE

And just who was responsible for the beheading ... some *might* say MacDuff, he
was last seen in the fight and comes back with the head but ... well, that was all
done offstage, wa[s]n't it? By someone

(not a man)

never born of a woman ... [if you catch my drift] ...?

(The bell fades out underneath.)

FLEANCE (Continuing:)

As for the Lady's suicide:

(Soft music beneath:)

JUNE

As for Hecate's: [her] body was found, floating ...
*Having made a garland of sundry sorts of flowers,
Sitting upon a willow by a brook,
The envious sprig broke. Into the brook she fell
And for a while her clothes, spread wide abroad,
Bore the young lady up and there she sat
Smiling even mermaid-like 'twixt heaven and earth,
Chanting old sundry tunes uncapable,
As it were, of her distress. But long it could not be
Till that her clothes, being heavy with their drink,
Dragged the sweet wretch to death.*²¹
And then there's him [Fleance].

FLEANCE

(Again, reclaiming his closing speech:)

My turn. And then there's Fleance: Poor Fleance, he has to choose. Between the puppy love [November], the sexy widow [Vanessa] and the duty bound sister [May]. Who will he choose? Destined to be a king, Fleance chooses Fleance.

JUNE

(Lost in thought—unaware of the box of opiates she is holding ...)

I came here to do something; what was it?

FLEANCE

And so, Fleance flees to England. And one day I will return.

(Music: a change of tone, a change of tempo as MAY steps forward one last time:)

MAY

And you know he never returned. He lived out his whole life in Wales. Oh, eventually one of his grandchildren did come crawling back and yes *he* became the king but think nothing of that. it was all a lie: A lie created by a Lady to devise a wedge between two men – yet in so doing she planted the seed thru Banquo to Fleance who passed the lie along to his children and his children's children until [eventually] .. and we all know if you tell someone enough times *this* is to be *your destiny*—eventually someone will believe it; and so Fleance's great great I don't know grandson finally did return to Scotland and in killing hundreds if not thousands of men took the crown for himself. But we was all dead by then so who really cares? As for Fleance, that's the last any of us would ever saw of him.

²¹ excerpted from HAMLET – first Folio 1603

JUNE

[Now, I know I came in here for something ...] (what the fuck was it?)

MAY

And that; dear friends, is our story.

As for us [we Sisters]: we never left this land. As you recall I never said we were going to. I never said I even wanted to. Maybe I lied.

Epilogue.

You have now heard our tale put into proper perspective of how things actually transpired. No magic. No destiny; no ghosts, no floating daggers. Only choices and a few well placed lies.

.. as regards the last prophecy of “trees attacking the castle” ... who the hell knows how Novvi dreamed up that. She’s funny that way.

And now, as back to “why”; why have we shared you this story? [As I told you from the start:] To relieve you of coin. [Why would we relieve you of coin?] That we may bury poor Hecate beside her love. Amongst the manor born.

(The troupe begin to course their paths toward the audience, with hat or purse—or anything respectable to be used as an offering plate—in hand, as May concludes:)

MAY (Continued:)

I know, I know, she is simple born like all of us. But have heart; If we can raise enough: they won’t care. Some things *can* be bought, after all.

(Again jugglers may juggle as well as other circus acts performed to ensure audience’s attention, however each act is accompanied by a troupe member with a hand out, or a purse or a hat ...

Music builds to

BLACK OUT.)

END