

## **Mysterious Murder in Musical MacBeth**

By

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*Amateur theatre has sunk to an all-time low*

### **STORY**

**DURATION: 60 min (1 or 2 acts)**

Dysfunctional director J an is at the end of his tether, trying to stage his latest masterpiece. However, opening night nerves pale in comparison to flamboyant egos, the hovering Mafia, and a serial killer lurking in the wings...so it goes without saying...you really shouldn't name that Scottish play!

### **CAST**

**J AN (30+):** Always on edge, quick talker to get out of any situation but never thinks too many steps ahead. He knows what he wants and refuses to listen to suggestions; especially if it risks his chance to stay alive.

**JENNY (25-30):** J an's loyal assistant. Gently spoken but quietly direct and quick witted. She appears to be submissive in conversation but will cleverly get the last word - a great asset as she investigates the murder.

**WESLEY (30):** Melodramatic drama queen. Very protective of his choreography and has something to prove.

**MRS DOYLE (40+):** Classic stage mother-esque; will do anything for her niece Marionette... anything.

**MARIONETTE (18-25):** Softly spoken pretty girl who's only on stage because her Aunty has groomed her for it; but longs for something more out of life...for as long as she lives.

**WENDY (22-30):** Thinks she's far more talented than she is. She's a control freak and has to have the last word - quite the bitch.

**RACHEL (22-30):** Always on edge - a drug addict with a doubtful memory.

**HAROLD (50+):** An ex-actor who's now the Janitor, keeping the theatre tidy, keeps an eye on everything, and longs for his 15 seconds of fame.

**ANTONIO (30+):** Mob boss - as clich  as you want to make him.

**BIFF & REGGIE (25+):** Antonio's henchmen - who are surprisingly intelligent and have a hidden desire to tread the boards.

**MAGGIE (20-30):** Lead chorus girl who is desperate for a speaking part so tries to find the killer.

**HILDA & GRETEL (20-30):** Chorus girls with german accents who's only love bigger than acting is food.

**PIPPY (18-25):** Smallest chorus girl who just loves to dress up.

**OFFICER BEACON (40+ - can be played by Wendy if needed):** Tough, suspicious and unforgiving.

**ACT ONE**

**Scene 1 - On Stage**

*JÉAN is side stage on his phone as JENNY is doing some paperwork. WESLEY watches anxiously as WENDY and RACHAEL (dressed as witches), and CHORUS (MAGGIE, HILDA, GRETEL and PIPPY - dressed as villagers) rehearse a musical number. Wesley frustrated that the steps are wrong.*

**WESLEY:** No, no, no, no, NO! For god's sake Wendy, its (*demonstrates*), turn, turn, pivot step lunge to your left! Can't you get a simple thing right?!

**WENDY:** But I can't lunge on my left!

*WESLEY fumes.*

**WESLEY:** Jéan! I can't work with this! What's the point of me spending hours choreographing, if little miss prissy here can't...

**JÉAN:** Let her do what she wants, it's not that important anyway. She's just one of the old hags that warn Mac...

*EVERYONE gasp.*

**JÉAN:** ...you know who. And I don't give a rat's you know what if she does some stupid lunge thingy!

*WESLEY eyeballs Jéan.*

**WESLEY:** (*under breath*) You'll regret this one day.

**JÉAN:** What was that?

*WESLEY storms off and sulks. WENDY smiles at Jéan. JENNY glances sympathetically towards Wesley then turns to Jéan reading notes.*

**JENNY:** Um sir, there seems to be a shortage in petty cash.

**JÉAN:** (*anxious*) Ah yes, just mark it down as Director's expenses, now where's Marionette? She's supposed to be in this scene! What the hell's going on here?! This is our final dress rehearsal for Mac...

*EVERYONE GASP.*

**JÉAN** :...you know who...and we haven't even...

*DOYLE enters; fussing around MARIONETTE who couldn't be bothered.*

**DOYLE:** Don't start with me Jéan, you know Marionette had her hair in curlers and they just came loose.

**JÉAN:** I don't care about her damn hair! I just want...

**MARIONETTE:** (*calming*) Jéan?

**JÉAN:** What?

**MARIONETTE:** I'm sorry I'm late. Don't get angry, it won't happen again.

**DOYLE:** Now listen dear you don't have to apolog...

**JÉAN:** Apology accepted. Now move into position!

*DOYLE unhappy. MARIONETTE chuffed. RACHAEL steps up.*

**RACHAEL:** *(spoken or sung)* All thee hail...er...hail to Thane of Cawdor!...or Fife...

**WENDY:** All hail to thee, to Thane of Glamis, no Cawdor is...for god's sake Rachael, I could've played both parts, at least I'd get the lines right.

**RACHAEL:** Don't start with me Wendy! I've had a rough week okay?!

**WENDY:** Jeez I wonder why? Your dealer run short?

*RACHAEL gives her the finger*

**JÉAN:** I don't care what kind of week you've all had! Tonight we go on and if I have to replace any one of you I damn well will! Now get it right!!!

**WENDY:** Bet he doesn't speak to Kristin like that.

**RACHAEL:** I can't believe she got the lead again. Such a cow.

**WENDY:** And up herself. I could play it better.

*DOYLE overhears.*

**DOYLE:** Excuse me, but Marionette obviously out classes the both of you on stage so let's not kid ourselves.

**JÉAN:** Yes Kristin! Where is she?! We're about to do her big death scene, and we haven't run it with music!

**WESLEY:** And she keeps changing the choreography! How am I supposed to keep up with it?!

**JENNY:** Sir, I'll go and check.

**DOYLE:** It's alright I'll do it; I have to get another clip for Mari's hair anyway, won't be long.

**JÉAN:** This is a disaster. We have investors in the audience and I really need...

**JENNY:** I know sir, it'll work our fine, let's take a short break.

*JÉAN agrees.*

**JENNY:** Take five everyone!

**JÉAN:** Make it three!

*EVERYONE groans. DOYLE comes back looking pale.*

**MARIONETTE:** Miss Doyle? What's the matter?

*DOYLE faints into MARIONETTE'S arms.*

**WENDY:** Oh my God! She's dead!

**JÉAN:** Great, that's all I need.

*JENNY pats her on the cheek. RACHAEL leaves for the dressing room.*

**JENNY:** No she just fainted.

**JÉAN:** Just my luck.

*DOYLE starts to come around.*

**DOYLE:** What? I, er there's...

**JÉAN:** Oh for God's sake I just want to see MACBETH!!!!

*EVERYONE gasp.*

**WENDY:** You said it! You said it!

**JÉAN:** And I'll say it again! Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth!

*ALL cover their ears and do whatever physical ritual counteracts the supposed curse.*

**WESLEY:** Stop it! We'll be cursed!

**JENNY:** Sir, its bad luck to say his name in the theatre.

**JÉAN:** And what's going to happen? Is a light or sandbag going to come crashing on my head? This isn't phantom of the...

*RACHAEL screams off stage.*

**JÉAN:** Exactly what I feel like doing.

*RACHAEL appears shaken.*

**JÉAN:** Oh great, perhaps you can tell me why the hell our leading lady's taking her merry time?

**RACHAEL:** She's dead

*DOYLE raises a hand.*

**DOYLE:** No I just fainted.

**RACHAEL:** Kristin you idiot! She's dead.

*ALL in shock. JÉAN collapses onto his knees. MARIONETTE runs off in tears. WENDY consoles Rachael. HAROLD enters sweeping.*

**HAROLD:** Terrible things happen in this theatre, just terrible.

*He takes some medication, and gives his chest a thump.*

**HAROLD:** And it always seems to involve the actors. Well I use that term loosely. Actors, hmf! (*exits sweeping*).

## Scene 2 - Green Room

*JÉAN is pacing up and down. JENNY, WESLEY and MARIONETTE listening to Doyle recap the story. WENDY and RACHAEL listen while eating scones.*

**DOYLE:**...so I went in there to get a clip for Mari's hair and there she was, face down in her powder. Oh, it was awful!

**JÉAN:** I can't believe this. My leading lady has been murdered.

**DOYLE:** Murdered? I didn't say she was murdered!

*Awkward silence.*

**WENDY:** Well isn't it obvious?

*MARIONETTE consoles the sobbing DOYLE.*

**JENNY:** But I thought Rachael said she was lying back in her chair.

**RACHAEL:** I did.

**DOYLE:** Well...I had to move her to see if she'd just fallen asleep.

*Silence, EVERYONE looks at her awkwardly.*

**DOYLE:** Don't even think I had something to do with it!

**WENDY:** Wouldn't shock me if you did.

*DOYLE offended.*

**RACHAEL:** Probably ate one of your scones.

**WENDY:** *(looking at scone)* Is that what this is?

*DOYLE snatches scone from Wendy who laughs.*

**MARIONETTE:** For God's sake, someone just died and you're making jokes!

**WESLEY:** Yes have some compassion for the deceased...even if they were a little tramp.

*MARIONETTE whacks him one.*

**JENNY:** *(to Jéan)* Sir, we have to report this to the authorities.

**JÉAN:** I have a better idea. How about we don't?

*ALL confused.*

**JÉAN:** Listen, I've got more riding on this than any of you and if we bring in the bobbies they'll surely cancel the show.

**MARIONETTE:** You can't be serious! Aunty Doyle, tell him he's just being a prat.

**DOYLE:** Actually my dear, I think he has a point. That of course means Jéan... you'll have to recast the lead.

*WENDY, RACHAEL and MARIONETTE all look at each other.*

**WESLEY:** Oh that's just great! Now there'll be some other little prima-donna princess I have to deal with! *(exits)*

**JÉAN:** I'll be in my office deciding who it will be. *(exits)*

**JENNY:** Okay everyone, take five. *(exits)*

**JÉAN (Offstage):** Make it three!

*DOYLE, WENDY and RACHAEL share piercing looks.*

**WENDY:** Don't waste your time being hopeful, you know he's choosing me.

**RACHAEL:** *(evil look)* Don't get too comfy Wen.

*RACHAEL leaves shoving past WENDY who leaves in the opposite direction.*

**MARIONETTE:** Perhaps I had better see if Jéan needs anything.

**DOYLE:** No no no. You go and rest yourself and let me handle him. *(exits)*

*MARIONETTE sighs and exits.*

### Scene 3 - Wardrobe Room

*HILDA and GRETEL are eating cream cakes. PIPPY is trying on costumes. MAGGIE pacing up and down*

**MAGGIE:** This is not happening! I can't believe Kristin is dead.

**GRETEL:** I can't believe they ran out of pink donuts.

**HILDA:** I know it's a tragedy...they are Gretel's favourites.

**GRETEL:** Ya.

*MAGGIE storms over, grabs the bun and throws it away; much to GRETELS' horror.*

**MAGGIE:** Will you two be serious?! Our best friend has died, and we have to do something about it!

**HILDA:** Maggie's right. We do owe that much to Kristen.

**GRETEL:** You are right Hilda. Kristin was the only one from the cast who spoke to us. So what should we do?

*HAROLD arrives to clean the bun and they all go quiet, he's suspicious and they pretend to look busy - making Harold suspect them even more. He exits*

**MAGGIE:** We have to find a way to spy on everyone, see who is the most likely suspect and apprehend them. And if we capture the murderer, not only will we have honoured our dear friend, but it may propel us into great fame, great fortune and the ultimate respect from the powers to be!

**HILDA/GRETEL:** You don't mean?

**MAGGIE:** That's right. A minor speaking role in the next production!

*HILDA and GRETEL clap excitedly.*

**MAGGIE:** But first we need our spy. Someone discreet, easy to hide in small places, someone quiet as a ...

*They all look towards PIPPY in the costumes, with mouse ears on.*

**PIPPY:** What?

*The OTHERS smile at her, escorting her away.*

### Scene 4(a) - Jéan's Office

STAGE NOTE - JÉAN'S OFFICE AND THE HALL OUTSIDE IS SET SIMULTANEOUSLY ON STAGE TO ALLOW QUICK MOVEMENT BETWEEN FOLLOWING SCENES (MARKED AS FOLLOWS 4a,4b,4c etc). WE JUST USED LIGHTING TO DENOTE THE SEPARATE AREAS.

*JÉAN on the phone; nervous.*

**JÉAN:** Look I promise you'll get the money! Just give me until after the show...why not now? Well because I'm not at the theatre, I'm er...at the dentist (*starts gargling and drilling noises*) sorry you'll have to call later! (*hangs up phone*)

*ANTONIO (on mobile) with BIFF and REGGIE enter. Jéan doesn't see them.*

**JÉAN:** Ha! Stupid gits fell for it again (*sees Antonio*) Ahhh! I mean...bye!

*JÉAN tries to run but lands into Biff and Reggie; then backpedals.*

**JÉAN:** Antonio! Boys. Nice of you to drop by.

**ANTONIO:** You disappoint me Jéan Pierre.

**JÉAN:** I can explain. Y'see there was this...

*ANTONIO just holds his hand up to silence Jéan.*

**ANTONIO:** I'm a patient man Jéan. If it wasn't for the fact that my beloved daughter Kristin is playing the lead in your show...

**JÉAN:** And I can assure you a fine performer she was.

**ANTONIO:** Was?!

**JÉAN:** Is! Yes, she *is* great.

**ANTONIO:** Be that as it may. I want my money Jéan, and I want it now.

**BIFF/REGGIE:** Yeah!

**JÉAN:** But I don't have it! I know bookings are good for tonight, so after the show, I'll make sure you get a decent cut from that...

*ANTONIO gives him a look and BIFF & REGGIE twist his arm harder.*

**JÉAN:** Okay, okay all of it. How does that sound?

**ANTONIO:** (*thinking/pacing*) Mmmm, better, but I need a little insurance first. Biff? You've always wanted to be on stage haven't you?

*REGGIE sniggers. BIFF thumps him.*

**BIFF:** Boss, I thought we agreed we wouldn't say anything?

**ANTONIO:** This is what I propose Jéan, how would you like another actor for your show, I'm sure you could work him into it?

*REGGIE cracks up laughing.*

**ANTONIO:** Make that two.

*Now BIFF laughs at Reggie.*

**JÉAN:** Do I have a choice?

*ANTONIO, BIFF and REGGIE pull out a ton of weaponry aimed at Jéan. JENNY enters with HAROLD looking smug.*

**JENNY:** Excuse me Jéan but I'm in a bit of a predicament.

*JÉAN still has his face in the barrel of guns.*

**JÉAN:** (*sarcastic*) Oh really? Please tell me about your difficult situation, go ahead.

**JENNY:** Well it appears that Frank has...

**JÉAN:** Don't tell me he's died too?!

*ANTONIO curious.*

**JÉAN:** *(to Antonio)* It's an expression we use for those actors that really don't cut it.

*ANTONIO seems impressed. HAROLD preening himself.*

**JENNY:** Oh no, he's simply fallen ill. So I was thinking Harold could...

**JÉAN:** Harold be Frank?!

*HAROLD smiles confidently. ANTONIO pushes the gun further into Jéan's nose.*

**JÉAN:** No no no...Biff's going to Frank.

*HAROLD gutted.*

**JENNY:** He's going to be Frank?!

**BIFF:** I can be Frank.

**REGGIE:** Why can't I be Frank?

**ANTONIO:** You can both be Frank.

*ANTONIO glares at Jéan.*

**JÉAN:** Please take the boys to wardrobe Jenny; it appears they will be sharing the role of Mac...

*BIFF & REGGIE gasp.*

**JÉAN:** *(sighs)* You know who.

*JENNY hesitant.*

**JÉAN:** We'll make it work.

**JENNY:** Certainly sir. Sorry Harold.

*HAROLD exits, grumbling and taking more medication. JENNY escorts BIFF and REGGIE into the next room.*

#### **Scene 4(b) - Hallway outside Jéan's Office**

*A jug of water sits on a trolley nearby as JENNY escorts BIFF & REGGIE.*

**JENNY:** Down the hall, second door to your left, right?

**REGGIE:** Turn right?

**BIFF:** No she said left, right?

*BIFF & REGGIE exit arguing.*

**REGGIE:** That's what I said!

**BIFF:** Look it's a simple grammatical error where you didn't accentuate your punctuation.

**JENNY:** *(to audience)* Anyway, back to business. It all seems far too suspicious for my liking. If Kristin was murdered, then the likely suspects would be someone in this theatre. Well someone has to get to the bottom of this so it might as well be me.

*MISS DOYLE enters fluffing herself up.*

**JENNY:** Excuse me Miss Doyle, May I ask you a few questions?

**DOYLE:** Not now dear I'm on a mission.

**JENNY:** To see Jéan I know.

*DOYLE surprised she knew.*

**JENNY:** He's er...expecting you; but asked for you to wait a minute.

**JÉAN (Off scene):** Make it three!

**DOYLE:** Of course. Well what is it you wanted? I suppose I now have a few minutes to kill...I mean, pass.

*They share a look.*

**JENNY:** I need to know if there was anyone you thought may have had it in for Kristin.

**DOYLE:** Well of course; that little tramp Wendy. They used to argue about who was dating Jéan. You did know they both were didn't you? Well anyway Kristin used to brag about being taken on holiday as well. Wendy hated her for it, and wanted her part. You put two and two together. I'm not waiting any longer, I have more important business to attend to.

*DOYLE fluffs herself up and enters Jéan's office.*

#### **Scene 4(c) - Jéan's office**

*JÉAN busy biting his nails in deep thought. DOYLE enters.*

**DOYLE:** (*flirty*) Hello Jéan...now about this lead role.

**JÉAN:** Now come on Miss doyle.

**DOYLE:** Call me ...Paris.

**JÉAN:** I don't care what city you want me to tour this time, you know as a highly respected director I have certain ethics and a reputation to uphold...

*DOYLE whispers in his ear until his eyes light up.*

**JÉAN:** Which I can't seem to recall just now.

*He starts to undo his pants.*

**DOYLE:** Now I need you to understand how important this is for Marionette's career.

**JÉAN:** Right...so this is like blackmail is it?

*Still excited he drops his pants to his ankles.*

**DOYLE:** Oh no Jéanny, blackmail would be me threatening to spill the beans on your little scam of always casting Kristin as the lead because she's the mob boss's daughter.

**JÉAN:** (*stunned*) You're right, that is more like blackmail.

**DOYLE:** So perhaps I should leave you with that in mind, Jéanny darling.(pinches his cheek)

*As DOYLE turns to exit JÉAN mimes strangling her but she turns and he quickly pretends to be waving cutely. DOYLE exits.*

#### Scene 4(d) - Hallway outside Jéan's Office

*As DOYLE exits the office, WENDY goes to enter.*

**DOYLE:** Too late my dear. *(fixing her hair)* I think we can get on with the show.*(exits)*

*WENDY peers into the office and we see JÉAN struggling to get his pants up. She grunts in frustration and slams the door.*

**JENNY:** Excuse me Wendy may I have a word?

**WENDY:** What is it Jen?

**JENNY:** I just wanted to ask you about Kristin.

**WENDY:** What's the point? She's dead.

**JENNY:** But if we can figure out who did it...

**WENDY:** You mean who done it! *(pleased with her own joke)*

**JENNY:** *(slightly irritated)* It means we can discreetly...

**WENDY:** Remove the killer without affecting the show. You have a point dear Jennifer. Let me see...It was Doyle.

**JENNY:** What? Are you sure?

**WENDY:** Of course. I was fixing the hem on my costume this morning when I saw her slip something into Kristin's makeup powder.

**JENNY:** But how did you know it was her? The main light in that room still hasn't been fixed.

**WENDY:** Even in the dark I could tell from the back of her it was Doyle, with that tacky shawl of hers.

**JENNY:** Why didn't you say something then?

**WENDY:** *(caught on the spot)* Well...I just thought she was... look it doesn't matter now. She hated Kristin. Always resented the fact her precious little niece Marionette didn't get the role. Ah, but if only Doyle knew that innocent little Mari was dating the director.

**JENNY:** Aren't you?

*WENDY highly offended, storms off into Jéan's office.*

**JENNY:** *(to audience)* Well not enough to go on except what people will do for a lead role.*(exits)*

#### Scene 4(e) - Jéan's office

*JÉAN is busy rocking back and forward with his teddy bear.*

**JÉAN:** It's okay Mister Tiddles, daddy will find a way out of this.

*WENDY appears in the doorway.*

**WENDY:** Ahem!

**JÉAN:** Ahhhhh! Wendy you gave me a...*(realises he's still holding Teddy)*, l...er...you see

**WENDY:** Forget it Jéan. I'm fully aware of your strange liking towards soft toys.

**JÉAN:** That was a once off I can assure you!

**WENDY:** Shut up! (*she grabs his teddy and tosses it away*) Now that Kristen is out of the picture, you can give me that lead role you've been promising me!

**JÉAN:** Well it's not that easy, you see...

*WENDY pulls out a knife and holds it to Mister Tiddles's throat.*

**JÉAN:** Don't do it Wendy!!!