

# Don't Say "Macbeth"!

*By  
Burton Bumgarner*

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## **STORY OF THE PLAY**

A poor student is struggling to read Shakespeare's great tragedy, "Macbeth," while in a coffee shop next door to a theater. The student gets a study boost from waitress, who was an English major, and four customers, who are actors, as they act out the Scottish tragedy in fast-paced farce.

Soon, a pompous actor who has just finished a Shakespeare matinee next door, enters and tells of the "Scottish curse," and all of the unfortunate events that surround the play's past productions. Actors portray characters throughout history including Shakespeare, King James, Abraham Lincoln, Orson Welles, and Charlton Heston.

"Don't Say 'Macbeth'!" is a wild, wacky and hysterical way to enjoy both the story and the curse of the "Scottish tragedy." The script can be performed by as few as 9 actors, or as many as 40, or any number in between..

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## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

Some 40 roles can be covered by as few as 9 actors. If only a minimum number of actors are used, the Customers may stay on stage and become the other parts as necessary, or they may exit and return to play the parts.

WAITRESS  
REGAN  
CUSTOMER 1  
CUSTOMER 2  
CUSTOMER 3  
CUSTOMER 4  
GRIMES  
SHAKESPEARE  
WITCH 1  
WITCH 2  
WITCH 3  
GOOD OLD BOY 1  
GOOD OLD BOY 2  
ANNOUNCER  
USHER  
KING JAMES  
DUNCAN  
STAGEHANDS  
MACBETH  
MACDUFF  
FRANKIE  
RALPH  
SARAH SIDDONS  
LINCOLN  
WITNESS  
LILLIAN BOYLIS  
MALCOLM KEEN  
ORSON WELLS  
CRITIC  
WITCH DOCTOR  
LAURENCE OLIVIER LADY MCDUFF  
DIRECTOR  
MANAGER  
DIANA WYNARD  
CHARLTON HESTON  
ST. PAUL ACTOR  
INJURED MACDUFF  
KELSEY GRAMMAR

## **SETTING**

Three café tables and chairs are up stage center and right. Down stage left is a café table with two chairs. Extra chairs will be brought on as needed.

## **PROPS**

Books  
Coffee cups  
Book - "Macbeth"  
Coffeepot  
Stack of papers  
Bag of popcorn  
Letter  
Bagel on plate  
Notepad and pen  
Pin and small doll  
Script  
Sandbag  
Large, bloodied bandage

## **COSTUMES**

Some costume pieces will help identify characters, such as pointy hats for witches, stovepipe hat and beard for Lincoln, Elizabethan ruff collar for Shakespeare, etc.

## **PROGRAM NOTES**

In the script are two film references which may not be familiar to younger actors. On page 31 the character of Orson Welles says, "Rosebud." In Welles' 1941 film "Citizen Kane," the main character whispers the word on his deathbed. The story is told in flashback and reporters try to uncover the meaning of the word. The audience is given the meaning in the final scene of one of the greatest films ever made.

On page 32, the "Holy Moses" phrase refers to Charlton Heston playing Moses in the 1956 film "The Ten Commandments."

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## **Don't Say "Macbeth"!**

*(AT RISE: FOUR CUSTOMERS are seated USC and USR at the tables reading books, conversing unheard, and drinking coffee. REGAN is seated at the DSL table drinking coffee and struggling to read a book, "Macbeth." She [He] tries to concentrate but finally gives in to fatigue, lowers her [his] head and goes to sleep. WAITRESS enters with a pot of coffee and serves the customers. She crosses to Regan.)*

WAITRESS: Hey! Are you asleep? What's wrong with you? This isn't the Holiday Inn! *(REGAN doesn't stir.)* Hey, you! Wake up! *(Puts down the coffeepot and shakes Regan, who continues to sleep.)* You can't sleep here! *(Tries several times to rouse Regan.)* I know what will work. *(Moves right. Stage whisper.)* Free donuts! *(The CUSTOMERS look at her and grin. REGAN sits up.)* Just kidding. *(Disappointed, the customers return to their reading.)*

REGAN: What?

*(WAITRESS returns to the table.)*

WAITRESS: You were asleep.

REGAN: I was? Sorry. I was trying to read this book for school. And it's so boring.

WAITRESS: Why don't you try the public library?

REGAN: I did. They kicked me out when I went to sleep. The snoring was bothering people. I thought if I came in here and had some coffee, I could wake up and read. I have to finish this book by Friday.

WAITRESS: What's the book? *(REGAN hands HER the book.)* "Macbeth"? You think "Macbeth" is boring?

REGAN: Well ... yeah.

WAITRESS: How can anyone think "Macbeth" is boring? It has everything -- corruption, unchecked ambition, tyranny, murder. By the way, it's not for children.

REGAN: But it's hard to read.

WAITRESS: No, it's not.

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REGAN: Okay. The first page. We got these witches ....

WAITRESS: *(Correcting.)* We HAVE SOME witches.

REGAN: Whatever. What are they doing?

WAITRESS: Planning to meet Macbeth.

REGAN: Why?

WAITRESS: To mess with him.

REGAN: Why do they want to mess with him?

WAITRESS: They're witches. That's what they do.

REGAN: What about these words?

WAITRESS: What words?

REGAN: *(Points to text.)* These words. What's a "hurly-burly"?

WAITRESS: *(Looking over REGAN'S shoulder at the text.)* A commotion.

REGAN: What's a "Graymaling"?

WAITRESS: The name of the first witch's "familiar," who happens to be a cat. Witches need an attending spirit when they cast spells.

REGAN: What's a "Paddock"?

WAITRESS: A toad.

REGAN: How do you know all this stuff?

WAITRESS: Because I was an English major.

REGAN: Then why are you a waitress?

WAITRESS: Because I was an English major.

REGAN: Do English majors learn all this stuff in college?

WAITRESS: No. I'm reading the footnotes in your book. You could read them too. They'll tell you what those pesky old words mean.

REGAN: *(Looking at the book.)* Oh. I always wondered about footnotes.

WAITRESS: I can tell.

REGAN: So, what's it about?

WAITRESS: Why don't you read it and find out?

REGAN: Can't you give me the "Reader's Digest" version?

You're not exactly overrun with customers at the moment.

WAITRESS: *(Puts down coffeepot. To the CUSTOMERS.)* Hey! This person wants to know about "Macbeth"!

*(The CUSTOMERS eagerly cross to REGAN and WAITRESS and stand around the table.)*

## **End of Freeview**

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