

CURS'D BE MACBETH

By Donna Latham

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Cast 3F-identifying, 1M-identifying. Diverse casting, please and thank you.

- ❖ Ravenzara: First Witch, who carries a magical staff; F
- ❖ Calyia: Second Witch; F
- ❖ Eyrie: Third Witch; F
- ❖ Will Shakespeare: Upstart crow, desperate because his new play stinks; M

Synopsis

With Shakespeare's bloody new tragedy *Macbeth* reeking of flop sweat in rehearsals, the playwright happens upon on a coven of Witches. Will steals the Witches' incantations to zhuzh up the play. The Wayward Sisters unleash chaos and curse his wretched play for eternity: Curs'd be *Macbeth*.

Setting/Time: A magical, menacing forest, 1605.

[SFX: Electrical sizzle.]

(WITCHES fly on from different directions. Chant haunting curse of poisonous plants.)

ALL WITCHES

Mandragora, henbane, hemlock, slay! Shakespeare puked out a terrible play.

(Lights on WILL. He's unaware of WITCHES.)

WILL

Gah! The King's Men are a shambles. Great Burbage, my Macbeth, heaves over his puke bucket. Fierce retches that shake the Globe's very timbers.

ALL WITCHES

Mandragora, henbane, hemlock, stop! Shakespeare's *Macbeth* is a big fat flop.

RAVENZARA

Flop.

CALYIA

Flop.

EYRIE

Flop.

(With voices, create wall of sound, echoing "flop." "Flop" hangs in the air for a beat.)

WILL

And dewy Hal? Pretty beardless boy. Our Lady Macbeth. Poor, dear Hal sleeps no more. Horror-stuck to appear a fool. In my disastrous play.

(WITCHES fly together, clasp hands.)

ALL WITCHES

Fair is foul, and foul is fair.

RAVENZARA

I, Ravenzara.

CALYIA

I, Calyia.

EYRIE

I, Eyrie.

ALL WITCHES

Hover through the fog and filthy air.

(WITCHES exit.)

WILL

Macbeth's a flop, they say. All of London gossips. There's trouble with my play.*(WITCHES create wall of sound offstage.)*

RAVENZARA

Play.

CALYIA

Play.

EYRIE

Play.

WILL

The Muse eludes me. A heavy heart bears not a nimble thumb. *(Reads page.)* "Enter bleeding." Again? *(Reads pages with disgust.)* What, you egg! I am sick when I do look on thee. *Macbeth's* a hot mess. Sucks to be me.*(Wall of sound offstage.)*

RAVENZARA

Sucks.

CALYIA

Sucks.

EYRIE

Sucks.

WILL

Critics! *(Ruffles through pages. Scratches out lines with quill, scribbles.)* Where's the oompf? Zhuzh? Pizzazz? *(Crumple page in disgust.)* Such a fine line between talent and tripe.... *(Tosses crumpled paper.)* It's—blecchh. Gore, slaughter, butchery. Knave to chops. Daggers. Assassins. What binds this bloody mess together? I need a motif. A wicked, wicked motif.*[SFX: Thunder.]*

WILL

'Zounds! 'Twas passing strange, the way the air sparked.

(Gathers things, runs to escape storm.)

WILL

Pox! 'Tis weird, methinks. What lurks in the shadows? *(Hides behind boulder.)*

(Enter the three WITCHES.)

RAVENZARA

Thrice the brinded cat hath mew'd.

CALYIA

Thrice and once the hedge-pig whined.

EYRIE

Harpier cries "'Tis time, 'tis time."

(WILL cautiously spies on WITCHES.)

WILL

How now you secret, black, and midnight hags.

RAVENZARA

Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison'd entrails throw.

WILL

Cauldron?

CAYLIA

Toad, that under cold stone
Days and nights has thirty-one.

WILL

Frightful hags, what is 't you do—

EYRIE

Swelter'd vemon sleeping got,
Boil thou first i' the charmed pot.

WILL

With your charmed pot?

ALL WITCHES

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

WILL

With faces like thunder. (*Creeps a bit closer to Witches.*)

CALYIA

Fillet of a fenny snake,
In the cauldron boil and bake.

RAVENZARA

Eye of newt and toe of frog,
Wool of bat and tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and blind-worm's sting
Lizard's leg and howlet's wing.

WILL

Ew. Gruesome ingredients plunk into their brew.

EYRIE

For a charm of powerful trouble,
Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

ALL WITCHES

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

WILL

What—what are these? So wither'd and so wild in their attire?

CALYIA

Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravin'd salt-sea shark
Root of hemlock, diggid i' the dark.

WILL

That look not like the inhabitants of the earth— And yet? Are on it.

RAVENZARA

Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat, and slips of yew
Silver'd in the moon eclipse,
Nose of Turk and Tartar's lips

WILL

Chappy lips and skinny fingers.

Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-deliver'd by a drab,
Make the gruel thick and slab.

EYRIE

You dost infect mine eyes.

WILL

And thereto a tiger's chaudron,
For the ingredients of our cauldron

CALYIA

Hence, I'm mesmerized. Enthralled. Can't glance away.

WILL

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

ALL WITCHES

You should be women....

WILL

Cool it with a baboon's blood,
Then the charm is firm and good.

RAVENZARA

Yet, your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so.

WILL

Well done, Sisters! Commend our pains.
Everyone shall share i' the gains.

EYRIE

Thou art boils. Plague sores.

WILL

And now about the cauldron sing.
Like elves and fairies in a ring.

ALL WITCHES

And absolutely feckin' riveting.

WILL

(WITCHES dance and cackle around cauldron.)

ALL WITCHES
Double, double, toil and trouble.

WILL
Banger! Now, THAT'S theatre.

ALL WITCHES
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

WILL
Mad props!

ALL WITCHES
Double, double, toil and trouble.

WILL
These incantations are delicious. I must gobble them with a silver spoon.

ALL WITCHES, WILL
Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

WILL
I'll stash the spells in my memory. Wait. Was it, double, double? No, it's double bubble.
Or—bubble, bubble?

RAVENZARA
By the pricking of my thumbs,
Something wicked this way comes.

WILL
Spittin' sublime rhyme! Will I remember it, though?

(WITCHES cackle in wicked glee.)

WILL
Such hideous cackling from these Weird Sisters. My very flesh creeps and crawls.

EYRIE
(Stops abruptly. Smells something worse than herself.)
Hell breathes contagion through the storm.
Odors, bizarre and vile, swarm.

WILL
I've found my wicked motif—Witches!

RAVENZARA

(Smells gross stench, too.)

What stench wafts 'round this cavern's walls?
So rank and sour and sneaky crawls?

EYRIE

(Smells gross stench, too. Cocks her ear to listen.)

I smell greed, and I smell deceit.
And now I hear a man's heartbeat.

ALL WITCHES

Deceit, deceit, deceit.
Heartbeat, heartbeat, heartbeat.

RAVENZARA

He smells to me an upstart crow.
Now hear black feathers rustle so.

EYRIE

Fee, fi, fo fum!
I smell the blood of a Stratford man.

ALL WITCHES

Stratford man, Stratford man, Stratford man.

WILL

Christ's nails!

CALYIA

Spies on our cauldron, steals our spell.
His thieving intentions black as Hell.

(WITCHES sweep through cavern, sniffing like hounds. WILL eludes them, bolts away. In haste, leaves quill behind.)

WILL

Holy, holy, holy shit!

EYRIE

He dropped his quill, sisters!

RAVENZARA

(Holds up quill.) Black feather of an upstart crow.
(Tosses it into cauldron.) Now, round about the cauldron go.

Stop, thief!

EYRIE

Double, double? It's mine now.

WILL

That's what you think.

CALYIA

Nay. That's what I know. Wait'll I tell the players!

WILL

*(WITCHES chase WILL. RAVENZARA
"freezes" him with magical staff.)*

[SFX: Electrical sizzle as WILL is frozen.]

Zip, zap, zing with magic staff.

RAVENZARA

The what?

WILL

Freeze in place, Stratford riffraff.

RAVENZARA

I cannot move.

WILL

Sucks to be you.

EYRIE

Tis now the very witching time of night.

RAVENZARA

Frozen stiff. By this grotesque character.

WILL

Character?

RAVENZARA

Who came to me like a ghastly nightmare.

WILL

I'm alive, though.

RAVENZARA

Gripping. Ferocious.

WILL

Breathing. (*Unfreezes WILL with staff.*)

RAVENZARA

[SFX: Electrical sizzle as WILL is released.]

And—boom! A character now mine.

WILL

You stole our secrets.

EYRIE

Our words.

CALYIA

To puke out on your stage.

RAVENZARA

Robbed our secret incantation. Stolen for your own exaltation.

CALYIA

These words belong to us.

RAVENZARA

And us alone.

EYRIE

Yeah, no. Not anymore.

WILL

Wait, what?

EYRIE

Once language is released into the ether? Poof!

WILL

Poof?

RAVENZARA

Poof! It's out there. It's everyone's.

WILL

The brazen audacity!

CALYIA

Is it, though? That's how language works.

WILL

Dude, that's creepy.

EYRIE

Pot. Kettle. Black.

WILL

(Raises staff.) A curse upon your play *Macbeth*.

RAVENZARA

A curse far worse than the Black Death.

ALL WITCHES

By my Will, I'll use it.

WILL

So vile you'll dare not speak the name.

RAVENZARA

And weep as it goes up in flame.

ALL WITCHES

Audiences will love it. Curs'd be the curse!

WILL

(WITCHES create wall of sound.)

Curse.

RAVENZARA

Curse.

CALYIA

Curse.

EYRIE

Upstart crow on forbidden path. You'll be first to suffer its wrath.

RAVENZARA

WILL

(Spins three times. Spits as protection against the curse.) Toi, toi, toi, there's nothing to fear. *Macbeth* found its zhuzh, and—

[SFX: Electrical sizzle as RAVENZARA zaps WILL.]

WILL

'Zounds!

(With a clatter, WILL falls off stage, moans.)

ALL WITCHES

Curs'd be *Macbeth*!

(WITCHES cackle.)

WILL

(Lying prone.) Oooff.

(WITCHES cackle, fly off. WILL crawls back onstage, hauls himself up.)

WILL

A dramatic exit? By my Will, I'll use it! *(Flamboyantly bows to audience.)*

END OF PLAY