

THREE WEIRD DAUGHTERS

A one-act play by Lenny Hort

SYNOPSIS

Three daughters of a witch who tempted Macbeth must decide how to carry on their mother's legacy. What should they tell Prince Donalbain about their troubled vision of his future?

CHARACTERS

JANET. Oldest sister.

ELSPETH. Middle sister.

MEG. Youngest sister.

All three women are in their late teens or early twenties. They may be played by any race or ethnicity.

DONALBAIN. Handsome Scottish prince. About 25.

TIME

Middle Ages.

PLACE

Scotland.

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THREE WEIRD DAUGHTERS

Lenny Hort—Scene 1

(DONALBAIN'S VOICE is heard intoning lines from Act 3, Scene 4, of Macbeth:)

I will tomorrow to the Weird Sisters.
More shall they speak, for now I am bent to know
By the worst means the worst. For mine own good,
All causes shall give way.

(Lights up on MEG consulting an old parchment. MEG gesticulates eerily as JANET enters with a baking pan.)

MEG

“Double, double toil and trouble,
Fire burn, and—

JANET

Meg?

MEG

Not now.

JANET

What are you up to?

MEG

Can't you see I'm busy?

JANET

Don't tell me y'er practicing Mum's old spells again?

MEG

What if I am?

JANET

Them spells are mighty dangerous in the wrong hands.

MEG

It's not a spell. It's an incantation.

JANET

Same difference.

MEG

“Fire burn and cauldron—”

JANET
I'm not seeing this cauldron.

MEG
“Fire burn and cauldron bubble!”

JANET
For the love of St. Andrew!

MEG
Must you always be interrupting?

JANET
It's just I thought you might want a shortbread, still hot from the oven. (*Setting the pan down.*)

MEG
Oh, Janet, you do know my weakness.

JANET
Careful, pan's—hot.

MEG
Oww!

JANET
Silly girl. Let's see where it hurts. Give us your hand.
(*JANET takes MEG'S hand. Pause.*)

MEG
Thanks, Janet. It's feeling better already.

JANET
Next time, be more careful.

MEG
You have Mum's healing touch.

JANET
I wouldn't know about that. Help yourself to a shortbread, but be sure to blow on it first.

MEG
Mmm. Mum's old recipe?

JANET

Our mum most certainly knew how to bake. When she wasn't busy messing about with eyes of newt and toes of frog.

MEG

That was her brewing, not her baking.

JANET

Don't remind me.

MEG

It was some powerful brewing she did with Auntie Maidlin and Auntie Morag.

JANET

That's all done with now.

MEG

But—

JANET

It's done, little sister. Have another shortbread.

MEG

You do know how to tempt a person. Just like Mum.

JANET

Shall I warm you some milk?

MEG

In a bit, thank you. Elspeth'll be stopping by.

JANET

Been a while since that one chose to grace us with her presence. Didn't know we were expecting—

MEG

We weren't.

JANET

You summoned her?

MEG

You might say.

JANET

I don't know how you do it.

MEG

I'll teach you. You'll be a natural.

JANET

A strange feeling come over me, company's on its way. Next thing I know, I'm tidying up the cottage and baking shortbreads.

MEG

Oh, Janet, you always did have the sense.

JANET

I've got more sense than you.

MEG

You have Mum's gift.

JANET

I'd settle for her gift for baking.

MEG

That you have and more. And Elspeth has the sense as well.

JANET

Fat lot of good it's done her. Good thing I made these shortbreads, good thing we haven't scarfed down every last one.

MEG

I've had just one. Well, two.

JANET

I expect I baked enough if it's just Elspeth. Unless she's bringing her husband.

MEG

She sent Tom off to market.

JANET

Or Tom's brother. Angus has a nice healthy appetite, and the man does appreciate my baking.

MEG

Just Elspeth. Not that I wouldn't mind tasting me some of that prime Angus beef.

JANET

Go on!

MEG

Maybe I'll summon him some fine day—or some fine night.

JANET

You're wicked.

MEG

That's what folks said about Mum and Auntie Maidlin and Auntie Morag.

JANET

I wouldn't go that far.

(ELSPETH appears.)

ELSPETH

What are they saying about mum?

MEG

That the Three Weird Sisters changed history when they showed Macbeth his future.

ELSPETH

Och, Macbeth. Don't get me started on stupid bloody Macbeth.

JANET

Watch your language.

ELSPETH

We're not in church.

JANET

We shouldn't even be saying that cursed name.

ELSPETH

Say it all you want. Macbeth's dead and gone and good riddance to him and all those bloody warlord thanes he took down with him.

JANET

Shortbread, Elspeth?

ELSPETH

Thanks. Bloody good, just like mum's.

JANET

Mum's shortbread are a legacy to be proud of.

MEG

Mum's shortbread didn't change the fate of nations.

ELSPETH

Aye. Her prophecies did that.

JANET

Don't tell me you're proud of all the bloodshed that sprung from those prophecies.

ELSPETH

Stupid bloody thanes slaughtering stupid bloody thanes.

MEG

It didn't have to be that way. The Weird Sisters never told Macbeth he had to slaughter his way to the throne.

JANET

But don't tell me Mum didn't know that's exactly what he and the missus would do.

MEG

It didn't have to be that way. We could work some powerful good in this world if the three of us could master what the three of them left us.

ELSPETH

There's plenty mum showed me.

JANET

Best keep it to yourself. They say King Malcolm's cracking down on witchcraft.

MEG

That's just talk.

JANET

They say he blames a certain three witches for the untimely murder of his father.

ELSPETH

That fool Malcolm wouldn't even be king if not for those certain three witches.

JANET

Didn't they just hang a witch in Aberdeen?

MEG

For poisoning her husband.

ELSPETH

Bastard probably had it coming.

JANET

Fine talk from the happy newlywed.

ELSPETH

I'll talk how I want to.

MEG

The ones they hang for witchcraft are never the honest-to-goodness witches. Auntie Maidlin, Auntie Morag, and Mum all died peacefully in their own beds.

JANET

God rest their souls.

MEG

Amen sister.

ELSPETH

Amen.

JANET

Shortbread?

ELSPETH

Thanks.

MEG

It's just, I had a bit of a seeing this morning, just before dawn.

JANET

Just what we need.

ELSPETH

Let the lass talk, Janet.

JANET

But—

ELSPETH

Let her talk.

MEG

There we were, the three of us, wandering through dense fog, but somehow seeing our way, never stumbling, when out of the fog comes the king's brother, Prince Donalbain, desperate to learn his future, just like Macbeth went to Mum and Auntie Maidlin and Auntie Morag.

JANET

We all know how brilliantly that turned out.

MEG

I'm telling you, it didn't have to be such a tragedy.

ELSPETH

A purging.

JANET

A bloody mess.

ELSPETH

Your seeing, Meg. What future did we reveal to that silly twit Donalbain?

MEG

I don't know, Elspeth, I don't know. That kind of seeing'll take all three of us.

JANET

Don't look at me.

ELSPETH

We could show that royal blockhead quite a future, alright, if we all put our heads and our hearts into it.

MEG

Please, Janet?

JANET

How did you even know you were seeing Donalbain?

MEG

I just knew.

JANET

You've never actually seen the man, have you?

MEG

Where would I have seen a prince of the realm?

ELSPETH

Our mum did.

MEG

Well, I haven't, but there he was.

JANET

Ever seen his portrait?

MEG

Course not, but I tell you it was him.

JANET

You remember what he looked like?

MEG

Don't imagine I'll ever forget. Handsome lad, no wonder they call him Donald the Fair.

JANET

More handsome even than Angus?

ELSPETH

Scotland's full of lads more bonnie than my nitwit brother-in-law. Don't know what the both of you see in him.

JANET

You wouldn't.

MEG

Well, Donalbain had rosy cheeks. Full head of hair, carrot-red curls almost down to his shoulders, with a long, neatly-trimmed mustache.

JANET

But no beard on his chin?

MEG

The chin cleanshaven.

JANET

Dressed in green and gold?

MEG

You had the same seeing.

JANET

It's frightful, but I did.

ELSPETH

So did I, I reckon. A clearing in the birch forest, with a circle of stones?

JANET

And burnt ashes in the center. As if a cooking pot, a cauldron, had sat there.

MEG

It's a sign from Mum.

ELSPETH

The Three Weird Sisters live on in us.

JANET

Three weirdos.

MEG

Janet?

JANET

Lord help me, I'll join your little circle, but only to keep the two of you out of trouble.

MEG

Double, double toil and trouble.

JANET

Shortbread, anyone?

MEG

Let's have another round. And maybe that warm milk you promised. It'll help us to stomach a bit of Mum's home brew.

JANET

I thought we poured all that out on the dung heap.

MEG

Elsbeth saved a few bottles for sentiment's sake.

JANET

You can't mean—

ELSPETH

The concoction Mum used to call baboon's blood?

(ELSPETH takes a bottle from her apron and hands it to MEG.)

MEG

It brings powerful visions.

JANET

St. Andrew preserve us.

ELSPETH

It has to be all three of us.

JANET

I don't know.

MEG

It's what Mum would have wanted. (*MEG struggles to open the bottle.*) If I can even open the blasted thing after all these years.

JANET

Here. (*JANET takes and opens the bottle.*)

ELSPETH

Well done.

MEG

You always did have the touch.

JANET

It's nothing I asked for.

MEG

But you've got it.

JANET

Lord help me.

ELSPETH

Just a tiny wee sip. It's powerful stuff.

JANET

You've tried it?

ELSPETH

More than once. Do you suppose I'd have chosen Tom for my husband if I hadn't been seeing that he'd be the one to take me away from this place?

MEG

That was your future. But this is about the whole kingdom.

ELSPETH

Time to learn what the Fates have in store for Prince Donalbain.

JANET

Lay on. (*ALL THREE women sip. Lights change.*)

Scene 2

(JANET, MEG, and ELSPETH, hands joined, move in a circle reciting lines from Macbeth.)

JANET, MEG, and ELSPETH

The Weird Sisters, hand in hand,
Posters of the sea and land,
Thus do go about, about,
Thrice to thine and thrice to mine
And thrice again, to make up nine.

(DONALBAIN appears, dressed in green and gold as described.)

DONALBAIN

I conjure you by that which you profess
Howe'er you come to know it, answer me!

(DONALBAIN vanishes.)

JANET, MEG, and ELSPETH

Double, double toil and trouble.
Double, double toil and trouble.
Double, double toil and trouble!

(SISTERS release one another's hands and collapse. Pause.)

JANET

Handsome Donalbain's a bad lot.

ELSPETH

Another Macbeth in the making.

MEG

He spends most of his youth in hiding...

ELSPETH

Making plans.

JANET

Year after year goes by...

ELSPETH

And still our Donalbain's making plans.

MEG

King Malcolm falls in battle after a long reign...

ELSPETH

And Donalbain finally sees his moment.

JANET

He seizes his brother's throne, but scarcely holds it a year...

MEG

Before Malcolm's son defeats him in battle.

ELSPETH

Donalbain dies in prison, a bitter, blind old man...

JANET

Blinded by order of his own dear nephew.

ELSPETH

Simply glorious.

MEG

The lad needs our help.

JANET

To set him on that bloody path or keep him off it?

MEG

I don't even know, dearie. I don't even know. This morning my seeing of Prince Donalbain felt so powerful, but now I'm powerful confused.

JANET

Well, I had another bit of seeing before that baboon's blood wore off.

ELSPETH

More about Donalbain?

JANET

About my own future. A happy future. It's a beautiful summer day, the scent of honeysuckle in the air. I'm sitting on a rock by the edge of the brook, washing my own dear daughter's feet, helping her get ready for her wedding day. The lass reminds me of her dear auntie Meg.

ELSPETH

The poor thing. No, I'm sure she was lovely.

JANET

Such joy in her face, in her eyes.

MEG

Did you name the lass after me?

JANET

I honestly don't recall. I'm sure I called her by name, but blast me to China if I remember it.

MEG

Don't suppose you remember who the father of the bride was.

JANET

He wasn't present.

MEG

But you knew who he was? *(Pause)*

JANET

Best I don't start the two of you gossiping.

ELSPETH

So it was Angus.

JANET

Either of you have any pleasant seeing of your own?

MEG

You saw yourself married to Angus?

JANET

It wasn't about Angus. It was about my daughter.

MEG

Your daughter with Angus.

JANET

It's all very hazy.

MEG

Because I swear I saw something similar.

ELSPETH

Looks like our Angus has a busy future ahead of—

JANET

Leave it—Elspeth.

ELSPETH

—him, though I'm sure you could both do better for yourselves than my flea-brained brother-in-law.

MEG

It isn't funny.

JANET

It is in a way. Because now I'm thinking, maybe that baboon's blood was showing me a glimpse of your future, Meg, and not my own at all.

MEG

Oh, Janet, do you really think so?

JANET

It well may be.

ELSPETH

How sweet. But if that foolishness is settled, can we turn our attention back to Prince Donalbain?

MEG

If we must. I'm so confused just now. Better than mooning about Angus, I suppose.

ELSPETH

We'll set a charm to summon Donalbain, same as you summoned me this morning.

MEG

Summoning a sister is second nature. I don't know if I could summon a stranger.

ELSPETH

The connection's already there. Else none of us would have had that vision of chancing upon that handsome twit in the birch forest.

MEG

He reached out for our mother and her sisters.

JANET

And somehow found us.

ELSPETH

Lucky him.

JANET

We've seen the poor bugger's future. And it isn't pretty.

MEG

But we could show him how badly it turns out if he insists on plotting against his brother.

JANET

A warning to live a better life.

ELSPETH

Or to carry out his plotting more carefully.

JANET

So we don't tell him anything.

ELSPETH

Oh, we tell him alright. It's his fate we've seen and our fate to tell him.

MEG

It's our choice to tell him or not.

ELSPETH

And his choice to act on it or not. It's a test.

JANET

Which he'll fail.

ELSPETH

Most likely.

MEG

But maybe not. Mum and Auntie Maidlin and Auntie Morag tested Banquo, not just Macbeth. They promised Banquo he'd father a line of kings, but that didn't turn the man all homicidal.

ELSPETH

Macbeth finished off Banquo before he had the chance. Which was pure foolishness from a lunatic who didn't even have a son of his own to pass his kingdom along to.

MEG

Always did wonder about that.

ELSPETH

Never occurred to that stupid pillock Macbeth that if he ever did have a son of his own, the lad could marry a daughter of Banquo's and birth royal grandchildren to both of those idiot thanes.

JANET

King Malcolm's promoted his thanes to earls.

ELSPETH

Whatever you call them, they're still bloody idiots. Do you think Scotland was such a blissful place before Macbeth took charge? It was one bloody battle after another.

JANET

The world would be a better place with women in charge.

ELSPETH

Like sweet, gentle Lady Macbeth.

MEG

I thought we could use Mum's witchcraft to do some good in this world.

ELSPETH

And I'm sure we can all do plenty of good. But there won't be much chance of it if we can't influence the men with the power. And how's a peasant woman going to do that except with witchcraft?

MEG

I've no idea.

ELSPETH

Unless you'd rather become a nun and try working your way up to mother superior.

JANET

I'm not seeing that for any of us.

ELSPETH

Think where that would leave your poor darling Angus.

MEG

So what do we tell Donalbain when he comes looking for the Three Weird Sisters?

ELSPETH

We tell him the truth he wants to hear. We tell him he'll be king.

JANET

We tell him he'll be king.

MEG

And the part about having his eyes gouged out and dying in prison?

ELSPETH

That part he doesn't want to know.

JANET

Just tell him he'll be king.

ELSPETH

Sisters, leave it to me. All hail, Donalbain, that shalt be king hereafter.

JANET

All hail, Donalbain, that shalt be king hereafter.

ELSPETH

Say it again, dearie, only try to sound more like the powerful witch that you are.

JANET

All hail, Donalbain, that shalt be king hereafter!

ELSPETH

That's it, Janet. Now you, Meg.

MEG

All hail, Donalbain, that shalt be king hereafter!

ELSPETH

Together.

ALL

All hail, Donalbain, that shalt be king hereafter!

MEG

When shall we meet Donalbain?

JANET

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?

ELSPETH

That will be ere the set of sun.

But first there's plenty must be done.

Unless you'd rather be a nun.

(Exit ELSPETH, MEG, and JANET. Lights change.)

Scene 3

(Sounds of a storm. DONALBAIN appears, speaking lines from Macbeth. JANET, MEG, and ELSPETH appear opposite, dressed in black.)

DONALBAIN

So foul and fair a day I have not seen.
How now, you secret, black, and midnight hags?
Speak if you can.

JANET

All hail Prince Donalbain, son of the king that was!

ELSPETH

All hail Prince Donalbain, brother of the king that is!

MEG

All hail Prince Donalbain, uncle of the king that is to be!

ELSPETH

(Aside to MEG:)

Uncle?

DONALBAIN

Just uncle and no more?

MEG

Beloved, influential uncle, if you but play your cards right.

DONALBAIN

Then shall I not be king?

ELSPETH

We never said you wouldn't be.

JANET

You shall be king hereafter!

DONALBAIN

You lasses three do not seem all that certain of my future.

ELSPETH

Prince Donalbain take care! We three have seen your future, and well we know your fate.

MEG

Indeed we know your fate. Content yourself with being a good brother first, then uncle to a king.

ELSPETH

Nay, listen not, for why content yourself with merely prince, when one day you can rule the land as king.

DONALBAIN

That all is very interesting, and yet, perhaps you lasses could direct me to the Three Weird Sisters.

ELSPETH

Indeed, we are the Three Weird Sisters.

JANET

Indeed we are.

MEG

Indeed.

DONALBAIN

Three sisters you may be, and certainly you're weird, but you young lasses cannot be the Three Weird Sisters I came looking for. (*Exit DONALBAIN.*)

ELSPETH

Come back!

JANET

Come back.

MEG

He's gone.

ELSPETH

He's gone, alright, and this was not the way we planned it.

MEG

Not the way you planned it.

ELSPETH

Beloved, influential uncle? Why couldn't you just say the words I told you?

MEG

Why do you always have to tell us what to do?

ELSPETH

Because if I didn't, you'd never get anything done at all.

JANET

Dearies—

ELSPETH

We could have been advisors to a future king.

MEG

Who none of us thinks should be a king.

ELSPETH

He's fated to be king. You saw it clear as I did.

MEG

Who knows if that fate's set in stone?

JANET

Dearies—

MEG

I'd like to think that I can change my fate.

ELSPETH

Strange way you have of showing it!

MEG

Didn't I convince the two of you to embrace what Mum left us and join me as Weird Sisters?

ELSPETH

Who do you suppose planted the notion in your head? Why, I've been having visions of Prince Donalbain for weeks.

MEG

But—

ELSPETH

And don't you understand it's always been our fate to be Weird Sisters?

JANET

Elsbeth, that's enough. We sisters played at witchcraft for a day, but now there's work to be done. Unless you've got a spell to get the goats to milk themselves.

MEG

I'm not ready yet to give up Mum's legacy.

ELSPETH

But aren't you, though? The two of you can just go back to working hard and getting nowhere and pining away for the same handsome, worthless idiot.

JANET

What a hurtful thing to say.

ELSPETH

I could do far worse with the powers Mum passed on to me.

JANET

Well so can I!

(JANET lays her hand on ELSPETH.)

ELSPETH

Oww!

JANET

How do you like your fate now, sister?

ELSPETH

You're hurting me!

JANET

Serves you right, you nasty toad.

(ELSPETH screams.)

MEG

Janet, let her go. Your touch was meant for healing, not for hurting.

JANET

She's hurt the both of us more than enough.

ELSPETH

(Sobbing:)

Please!

JANET

I've barely gotten started.

MEG

But Janet. If you're still cross with Elspeth, you must not be seeing what I'm seeing. A vision of a happy future day.

JANET

Yours?

MEG

No, yours, but still a happy day for all three of us. Elspeth is there, and I'm helping her to make your wedding veil.

JANET

I'm marrying Angus?

MEG

Not Angus, but I never saw a more joyful bride.

JANET

Then who's the groom?

MEG

I do not recognize the man or know his name, but I promise he'll be walking into your life, and soon.

JANET

Is he handsome?

MEG

I must admit the man's a little plain. His nose sticks out a bit and he's lost most of his hair. But I can tell he's good and kind, and such a way with the animals. And best of all, he asks you what you want and doesn't tell you what to do.

JANET

A bride could do worse.

MEG

And this lad's ever so proud to be marrying a lass known far and wide for healing folks with the touch of her hands.

ELSPETH

Those hands.

JANET

I'm sorry, Elspeth.

ELSPETH

No, no, I'm sorry.

JANET

Did I hurt you bad?

ELSPETH

Something awful. But then it got better, and I started to feel the glow of Mum's healing touch, right when Meg was telling about the man with the way with the animals.

JANET

I think I caught a glimpse of him. I don't mind the nose that sticks out funny, long as he's a good husband, a good father.

MEG

I can see that he is.

JANET

It's in his eyes.

ELSPETH

And in his smile.

MEG

Feeling better now?

ELSPETH

Much.

MEG

That's good. Because Elspeth, I must say that you were looking well in this little bit of seeing I had just now. Anyone could see from your dress, from your rings, that you and Tom had come up in the world.

ELSPETH

As had you, I'm sure.

MEG

Anyone could see that you shared in the joy of your loving sisters. Maybe you weren't the feared advisor to princes, but you were respected throughout the community as a wise woman.

ELSPETH

Stupid bloody princes can take care of themselves.

JANET

Amen to that, sister.

MEG

Amen to that. It may be quite some time before I'm ready to sip baboon's blood again, but from what I've seen, we all have fine futures to look forward to together.

I reckon we do.

ELSPETH

Sorry for torturing you.

JANET

What are sisters for?

ELSPETH

All hail Meg.

JANET

All hail Elspeth.

MEG

All hail Janet.

ELSPETH

All hail the three that shall be sisters forever.

MEG

All hail the three that shall be sisters forever.
(*ALL THREE SISTERS embrace.*)

ALL THREE

THE END

10/10/2025