



The Tragedy of Macdeth

by Francis X. Bacon



Francis X. Bacon is a writer living in Vatican City.

ACT I

Scene I—*A heath in Arkansas.*

[*Enter MACDETH and LYONS, jogging*]

MACDETH

How now, my gentle Lyons, what's o'clock?

LYONS

My liege, the moon our sister Artemis,
like a T-cell new ruptured
by plaguy ill-bred pathogen hath done
dismissed herself from the field of play.
[*Pushes button on wristwatch*] Six-thirty.

MACDETH

Then let us canny falconers uncage
our Reeboks to th'unruly winds and speed
on wings of Taiwan-sculpted rubber hence,
lest time should turn our stomachs cuckold
and torpor the McBreakfast Special cheat.

[*Enter three WITCHES*]

Yet stand I traitor to mine eyes or they
to me, who credit not their troth?
For these appear not women, nay, nor men,
but antecedents of the pronoun s/he—
three Deans of Gender Studies, it would seem,
the very substance of delirium.

1st WITCH

Hail, Macdeth, all hail to the chief!

2nd WITCH

Hail, good-lookin! Ro-mance on your mind?

3rd WITCH

Hail, Macdeth, both witness and defendant!
Art happy to see me, or is that a Title IX
enforcement order in thy pocket?

MACDETH

Stay, weird sisters! Download this riddle
into the syntax of propinquity.
For even as the wench of Little Rock
doth hide her charms in cotton-poly blend,
then bends with the remover to remove,
so too methinks your feignèd modesty
encrypts itself the better to reveal.

1st WITCH

Lesser than Robert Reich, and stouter!

2nd WITCH

Wetter than Maxine's waters, and whiter!

3rd WITCH

Like Teddy for a spouse, but better wive'd!

WITCHES

All hail! [*Exeunt*]

MACDETH

Hie thee hence to Lady Hillary,
knock twice—lest haste a Foster husband find—
and quaint her of this morrow's tidings.

LYONS

Good my Lord. [*Exit*]

MACDETH

What joy, what horror must this be, that makes
my very scalp unseat itself, as when
the tempest scatters sickle'd wheat afield
or Cristophe runs his fingers through my hair?
What FDA-untested potion sacks
my intellect, and exiles high-enthronèd
Consciousness of Lack of Consciousness
of Class? Ambition, like a draught
of cannabis long held (but not inhaled),
doth prick resentment to a fury, who
gallops onward riderless, and comes
uncaptained frothing to her post. But let
our morning's revels look to botany;
if she's at Rose, then I'll with Flowers be. [*Exit*]



Scene II—*The Governor's Mansion.*

[*Enter Lady HILLARY with MESSENGERS*]

HILLARY

To Salomon go, and short my 20-years,
but do thou fetch me Deutschmarks in their stead,
that I might 'scape inflation's bloody tooth,
and like an alchemist turn dross to joy.

1st MESS.

I hear, your ladyship, and fly. [*Exit*]

HILLARY

And thou,
ill-gendered knave, get thee to Madison
and teach our gentle cousin we would have
his ear.

2nd MESS.

I go. [*Exit* MESS. *Enter* LYONS]

LYONS

My lady, by your leave . . .

HILLARY

Fair Lyons, I wonder at thy charge, and see
thy face doth fax a message bearing not
the subtext of serenity.

LYONS

So foul
and fair a ball I have not seen. 'Tis foul,
in curving wide of deep left field; 'tis fair,
but in its agents of accomplishment.
For whilst I and thy noble husband did
this morning mark our wonted course afoot,
three pollsteresses squat and whiskered stood
bestride the path and croaked, All hail! All hail,
Mister President! I deem they be
so lipped the flaccid tennis balls of fate
through triumph's garden hose to inspire. [*Exit*]

HILLARY

Mister President! First Lady, I?
Say rather Empress, partnered with a drone.
By what defect of wit, what folly, what
dire presentiment, did I then yoke me
unto obscurity and shame? O come,
ye Wellesley-spawned Eumenides of spite,
unsex me here! Replace my blood with quarts
of chilliest testosterone, and butch
my hair, that no suspicious visitings
of NOW—nor journalists—might weaken my
resolve, or set me gagging Socks-like on
compunction's hairball.

[Enter FOOL]

Fool! Varlet!
cross-gartered, mincing, single-witted knave,
remove thee from mine eyes, for but to gaze
on thy ill-favored visage acheth sore.

FOOL

Madam, 'tis I.

HILLARY

Methought thou wast another,
nearer in bond canonical, though more
remote in kind.

FOOL

Nay, nay, your ladyship,
for ne'er was cuckold made but in his horns
discernible, that shame be published by
his brow, or on his saxophone.

HILLARY

Thou art
an arrant whelp! Take caution lest I pull
the stripes from thine Adidas—but to lay
them on thy back.

FOOL

'Twould make thee whinny.

HILLARY

How?

FOOL

Marry, not as mare but as Mandela,
whose Winnie spurneth not the lash, nor yet
was vexed by a friend whom time did not
incinerate.

[sings] *An ANC leader I knew
Asked her pals to a strange barbecue
And explaining with sighs,
'Well, smoke gets in your eyes,'
Ignited a dozen or two.*

But let me set a riddle, for my head:
How dost thou in thy managements compare
to auguries of Carthage or of Rome?

HILLARY

Thy wit defeats me, naughty Sphinx. Make plain
thy lesson.

FOOL

'Struth, that riches haply came
thy way unearn'd, in chicken futures.

HILLARY

Fie!

FOOL

[sings] *A damsel of Lernerite fashion
Insisted on social compassion:
'The market's degrading.
It's insider trading
That pulls the post-modernist cash in.'*

HILLARY

You're fired.

[Enter MACDETH]

MACDETH

How 'bout them *Hawgs!*

HILLARY

You're hired again.

And what blind beggary of fortune leads
thee here? No lickerous enticement to
thy fancy struts within these walls. No drab
awaits, no bawd, no trollop, slattern, slut
or concubine, no bacon double-cheese
with extra fries. Or haply hast thou lost
thy MasterCard, and cruel need restored thee
to our halls?

FOOL

[sings] *When she finds on her bed an intruder
Like to Mandy Rice-Davies, but nuder,
Slick Willie explains
And forthrightly maintains
First I gave her a job, then I
hey nonny hey nonny
hey nonny nonny
hey now Elizabeth Tudor!*

MACDETH

Nay, tire me not in the habiliments
of wrath, nor taunt me with remorse's sting.
For now is the winter of our discontent
made Acapulco through the *New York Times*,
and any misdemeanors of the past
full deeply in the Metro section buried.
Indeed this very day intelligence
is mine, if I can but New Hampshire or
Nebraska buy, that Little Rock shall lose
both pimp and pimperl, and Washington
a fan of Fleetwood find.

HILLARY

Let no device
remain untried, no artifice untested,
that ruth should beggar opportunity,
or honor's scruples pauperize success.

The siding from thy mother's mobile home
I'll sell, her dentures pawn, her Elvis lamp,
her Betty Crocker coupons liquidate!
Come Phaedra, come mistress mine Medea,
teach your willing daughter true resolve!
My husband I'll dismember for his pelf,
nor e'en his long-retirèd Jockey shorts
can rest unmortgaged, but shall serve
our purposes: as britches of contract,
brief harbingers of longings sated.

FOOL [*aside*]

That creditor be credulous indeed
who takes in trust such fell collateral.

MACDETH

If we should fail?

HILLARY

You fail! But do thou act
upon thy courage as it is thy wont
to operate upon thy hostesses,
and thou'lt not fail. Did not the bearded crones
give certain prescience of triumph?
Then play the man—or better, play the field,
and I shall summon manliness for both. [*Exeunt*]

FOOL

'Tis passing strange, that Caesar, in his home
should tempt the "why" of fate,
and stint the Y of chromosome. [*Exit*]

ACT II

Scene I—*A cavern. In the middle, a boiling cauldron.*

1st WITCH

Where hast thou been, sister?

2nd WITCH

Killing swine.

3rd WITCH

Porkers, boars, or gender-chauvinists?

2nd WITCH

Marry, all three, and at a single stroke.

1st WITCH

How now?

2nd WITCH

Vin Foster lieth silenced on the crimson'd turf,
and husband, lawyer, Razorback alike
are dumb, reposing in the selfsame corse.

1st WITCH

'Tis well and bravely done!
Then turn we to our order's liturgy,
lest Dee Dee's woe be changed to Limbaugh's glee.

WITCHES

Double, treble toil and trouble,
fan the flammers, prick the bubble,
in the cauldron boil and bake
Packwood's acne, Bobbitt's ache.
Lorena's shiv and Tonya's shank,
constituents of Barney Frank,
eye of World Trade Center bomber,
midnight snack of Jeffrey Dahmer . . .

[*Enter AUDITOR*]



AUDITOR

Oyez! Oyez!
[*Reads*] "Here be it noted in conformity
with H.R. 741 6(e)3:
Provideth funding for this curse, in parts,
The National Endowment for the Arts." [*Exit*]

WITCHES

. . . distill our brew with earwig venom,
compound with Amy Fisher's denim,
Teddy's poppers, Willie's toke,
Jonestown punch, Anita's Coke,
Janet Reno's rescue tactics,
Magic Johnson's prophylactics,
G-man's sting and he-man's stench,
powder'd harlot, Liquid Wench,

jaws of Jersey City mobster,
 claws of Chappaquiddick lobster
 (clutching in its briny clickers
 Mary Jo Kopechne's knickers),
 possum's blister, maggot's wen,
 Susan Estrich estrogen—
 Macbeth shall thus the networks charm
 to spin the news and spare him harm! *[Exeunt]*

Scene II—The White House.

[Enter MACDETH, HILLARY, MESSENGERS and FOOL]

MACDETH

Ah! for those departed too-brief hours of peace,
 unwoo'd, infugitive, when sorrows died
 more swiftly than they rose, and cank'rous cares
 of state were bounded by the couch. O Arkansas!
 Thy very hookworms prick my memory
 as messengers of fragile joy, and lisp
 in words more bitter for their sweetness
 of pleasures I shall never taste again.
 My desk, my Georgetown tie, my chiefs of staff—
 all the massy dignities of state,
 would I the most precipitously trade,
 to purchase but an acre of my own
 demesne, that uninhabitable past!

HILLARY

Art mindful of the time? We part anon
 for Michigan to press down Polack gorge
 the schemes of our firstladydom, lest he
 or she wed his or her disquietude
 to wit, and vomit our pretended physick.

MACDETH

The clock's a slave severer than his lord
 and whoreson miserly, that spareth not
 an hour for dalliance. *[Aside]* A slice of bread,
 a six of Meister Brau, and thou, my coy
 Miss Little Rock, electioneering in
 the back of my Chevelle—'twas paradise!

FOOL

And how. Lend me a Whopper, nuncle, and I'll teach
 thee why thy office girls are known as possums.

MACDETH

So let me learn.

FOOL

Primo, for their wit and provenance.
Secundo, for that they counterfeit the dead.
Terzo, because they hold on to their jobs with their tail.

[Enter MYERS]

Yet trippeth nigh calamity, I'll warrant.

MYERS

Mistress, master! Sir Vincent Foster comes
 no more at your behest.

MACDETH
 Subpoena'd?

MYERS

Slain.

For jury, judge and executioner
 unto himself he played, and furthe—



MACDETH & HILLARY

I guess
 we'll never, never, never, never know
 what happen'd . . .

MACDETH

. . . nor what melancholick flux
 or humor darkened his estate . . .

HILLARY

. . . nor how
 his private woes were hid from public gaze
 or friendship's many-eyed solicitude.
 Do thou apprise our constables and scribes
 that silence be their most becoming dirge,
 nor naughty Democrat did e'er Pulitzer breed.

[Exit MYERS]

FOOL [*aside*]

Full eager sextonry that love enroll'd
which fills love's grave afore his corse be cold.

HILLARY [*to MESSENGERS*]

Fly! Fly! To those new-orphaned chambers go,
and savage there the relics of his charge!
What cannot be dismembered, kindle; rip
what won't be fed into the flame!
Be no leaf left familiar to his brother,
no scribèd pair of words conjoin'd.
Spare not the infant children of his pen,
lest all too soon they learn the art of speech
and prattle mortal secrets to the world.
His hard disk trash, his floppies formattize:
cut out the tongue of memory, and thus
turn Testimony mute; for so methinks
shall Justice keep her dreadful sword
well-scabbarded, when to her sightless gaze
is deafness full compounded!

[*Exeunt MESSENGERS*]

FOOL

Lady, knowest wherefore eagle gaol'd the bush-hog
for a clumsy spy?

HILLARY

Nay, fool. Do tell.

FOOL

That bush-hog torched his house in seeming secret,
then chid him not to look upon the smoke.

[*sings*] *Was ever brain so weightless yet
Lead bullets made it lighter?
Was ever Whitewater so clean
That whitewash turn'd it whiter?*

MACDETH

This dicing with doom's hit-man likes me not.

HILLARY

Wouldst rather he yet lived? Nay, starch thy spine,
nor license fear to sully thy repute,
thy manhood, or thy BVDs (which, bear
in mind, shall not be fully amortized
'til '96). Do chasten thy trepidity.
for sawdust doth a queasy press-corps feed,
and those who yet will not be stonewalled we
shall Stephanopoulize. [*Exeunt*]

ACT III

Scene I—*A hall in the White House. A banquet prepared.*

[*Enter MACDETH, HILLARY, and guests*]

MACDETH

Welcome, all. The majesty of state
doth well to feast her aristocracy
as roundly as she famisheth all else;
and you, dear guests, in breeding eminent—
I speak of triumphs in *salons de goût*,
not of the nursery—rejoice yourselves
in such delected trophies of success
as interest and merit shall incline.
For all . . .

[*Enter GHOST of KOPECHNE, garlanded with seaweed*]

KOPECHNE

[*Sings*] *Larded with sweet flowers
Which bewept to the grave did go
With true-love showers . . .*

[*Enter GHOST of FOSTER*]

FOSTER

[*Sings*] *Some enchanted evening
You will meet a stranger . . .*

[*to KOPECHNE*]

Hang it all, sweetheart, this is a private banquet.

KOPECHNE

Come I this eve when fêted be the SJC,
my inquest to appeal, to wail mine injury.

FOSTER

Senate Judiciary Committee? Aye, *next* Friday. This
here is the American Bar Association.

KOPECHNE

Ah! Your pardon, sir. I guess I'll be avaulting.
I pray you kindly disregard this haunting. [*Exit*]

HILLARY

Come, come, thou starest as a maddened bull,
or saddened steer, belike—continue, worm!

MACDETH

Canst disregard that gore, that loathsome gaze?
Alack the day, the hour, that seeth slain
my tongue, my appetite!

HILLARY

Right cheerfully
discount we thy vice president, what though
he aideth our digestion not. Go to.

MACDETH

Welcome, all. The majesty of state
doth well to feast her true nobility,
our nation's flower; thus it is we come
together to felicitate with one
accord our

[GHOST *sits in HILLARY's lap*]

necrophiles . . . and doughnuts.

HILLARY

Still dumb?

MACDETH

Welcome, all. Full many peetsers have I laded
upon this board, nor scanted onions, peppers,
exter sauce—

HILLARY

We hear.

MACDETH

—termaters, cheese,
eye-talian sausages with them little seeds
inside 'em, weenies, olives (green and black),
pimentoes, cheese again, zucchini, mushrooms,
Velveeta, Spam, salami,

HILLARY

Dearest sir,
remember where we are.

MACDETH

Yea, dolphin-safe
salami! Onions, eyes of newts and toes
of frogs and wools of bats and Fightin' Hawgs,
Dancer and Prancer and Donner and Blitzen,
half a league, half a league, octave of Whitsun,
into the Valley of Dolls they rode,
valiant six hundred!

HILLARY

Friends, we beg your gracious leave. Our lord
craveth . . . Health Care. [*Exeunt*]

FOSTER

If madam's will alone could purchase health,
we'd see Kevorkian augment his wealth. [*Exit*]

**Scene II—The White House, outside Lady
HILLARY's chamber.**

[*Enter MYERS and ELDERS*]

MYERS

Twice seven nights have I kept vigil here,
to watch my Lady break her rest in twain,
and rise, tho' not awaked, and wander down
this very corridor, supplied with five
or six erasers, then commence to rub
upon the patterned paper of the walls
with grievous haste and industry—as though
to bleach the White House with her blanks away.
She'll gain her couch again within the hour,
withal by sense or memory unpiloted.

ELDERS

Soft now, she walks.

[*Enter HILLARY, nightgowned, with a handbag,
looking about her and pointing*]

HILLARY

But here's a decimal.

MYERS

And speaks.

HILLARY

Yet another. And again.

[*Takes a bottle of white-out from the bag and begins
to paint her nails*]

More dots, more dots. We've lots and lots of dots.
Thank heaven for Ko-Rek-Type, for we'd else
be dotty. Downright potty. [*Opens window*]
We see stars. Stars and Bars. Stars *through* bars,
but for our privilege. Or are they dots?
Or both? Star, dot, star. Delete: star-dot-star:
We would thou couldst! And by a finger's touch
wipe clean the cipher'd night-skies of our past.

[*Sings*] *O does eat dots
And mares eat dots
And microdots eat ivy
Acquittal HIV-2, wouldn't you?*

ELDERS

Now dat is one messed-up

HILLARY

Ho! A light . . .
Nay, 'tis but a dot. Out, damn'd dot! [*Exit*]

MYERS

Canst thou with thy leech's art uproot
this fever'd fancy from her mind? Is there
no surgery, no knife, this ill to amputate?

ELDERS

She needs *Lloyd* Cutlery, not scalpels, child:
I diagnose a sore 1040, jointly filed.
And, honey, that be Joycelyn's *ipsa dixit*,
'Cause if it ain't broke latex, I don't fix it. [*Exeunt*]

ACT IV

[*The exercise yard of Ft. Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary. Enter MACDETH and LYONS, jogging*]

MACDETH

How now, my gentle Lyons, what's o'clock?

LYONS

My liege, bright Phoebus knocks on Aries' door,
and begs admittance, pleading but an hour's
tarry in his house. [*Looking at the wall-clock
by the gate*] Quarter to two.

MACDETH

Wondrous slow be time's unfroward tread,
and whoreson recusant himself,
who lags and limps behind anticipation,
and goads her on while tugging at the reins!
I wonder what's for supper. Wednesday night
perchance we've chili dogs; full gladly could
I half a score internalize, but for
that Fuzzy in the ketchup bowl doth oft
his cut-leaf plug expectorate.

[*Enter WITCHES garbed as wardens*]

WITCHES

Parcel for 6327.

MACDETH

We thank you for your pains. Belike compassion's
tardy token, a sop to injur'd honor, balm in Kansas'
Gilead—or Tootsie Rolls.

WITCHES

A gauge of love these presents be,
from Mrs. Edward Kennedy,
who (being to thy needs alert)
conveys this gift for your dessert.

*Curdle milk and cholera quicken,
Cripple limbs and deafness thicken,
Darken sight and temper sicken!*

[*Exeunt WITCHES*]

MACDETH

Then take we merit's pulse . . . *McChicken!*

[*Re-enter WITCHES leading prisoner FOOL, in the*

guise of Ronald McDonald]

Lo!

Doth fancy bend our vision to its will?
or is this fortune's jack indeed?

FOOL

The same.

My duty done, and doing five to eight.

MACDETH

How now?

FOOL

My mistress turn'd State's Evidence
against thyself—a pardoners' tale!—and so
indulgence purchased with the coin of thy
confinement.

MACDETH

What, 'twas so?

FOOL

And thereupon
she lofted Teddy to her highest Court,
who scarce was robed and wigged but wed again,
that Little Rock ne'er lack attorney's fees,
nor scandal's harpies vex Hyannis Port;
for by his zipper is he often tripped,
whose waitresses are tumbled more than tipped!

[*sings*] *Lest he come under feminist fire
For indulging seigneurial desire
Disarmed he all blame
by changing his name
to Ted Kennedy-Rodham, Esq.*

MACDETH

Down, down I come, unwiv'd, un-amnestied,
to pay Whitewater's interest, and its deed;
'tis nobler that I quit this life in season
than breathe the air befouled by such treason!
Depart I now for heaven's caring shores . . .

[*Takes drumstick out of box*]

Mmf . . . those exter tater tots are yours.

[*Stabs drumstick down his throat*]

FOOL

Now croaks a noble heart. Goodnight, sweet prince,
that uttered blessing with thy last *McBreath*;
McFlights of angels do thy tonsils rinse
with Diet Pepsi, as befits *McDeath!* [*Exeunt omnes*]

~ *Finis* ~

Christopher Byron

Who'll Start the Rain?

Why would a Republican public relations powerhouse hire a prodigal child of Camelot as its Washington rainmaker?

As everyone knows, you can't get through a revolving door if you're carrying too much luggage—a lesson that is currently being learned anew by the folks at the Burson-Marsteller & Co. public relations firm. Last year the Republican-rooted firm picked up a Democratic "living legend" who was expected to lure clients to the company, especially its struggling Washington, D.C. office. The would-be rainmaker? Mr.

Pierre Salinger, global super-journalist extraordinaire (so to speak).

Back in the 1980s, Burson-Marsteller was the quintessence of the plugged-in Republican P.R. powerhouse. The chief operating officer, Tom Bell, was wired in to every Republican in town who mattered. He had been chief of staff to Senate Republican Bill Brock of Tennessee, and was once married to Dan Quayle's first cousin. Bolstered by the deep pockets of the Young & Rubicam advertising agency, which acquired Burson-Marsteller in 1984, Bell went on an acquisition drive that gobbled up some of the most influential Republican lobbying boutiques in town, including Black, Manafort, Stone & Kelly and Gold & Liebengood.

But not even the revelations of Gennifer Flowers could

Christopher Byron is a contributing editor of Esquire.



keep the gravy train on track forever, and scarcely had Bill Clinton won the 1992 election than the phone calls of Burson-Marsteller's army of flacks stopped getting returned. The problem was acute, because, as the firm's confidential records reveal, Burson-Marsteller's worldwide financial prospects were already darkening, a casualty of the weak economy and the cost-cutting pressures bearing down on the entire flack industry.

Burson officials say their firm is healthy and growing—and it certainly looks good when compared with some other big, multi-line PR operations. But a report from the company's bean counters last August, which came out just about when Salinger was beginning work as the company's new "vice chairman," says Burson's glory days are over. It reads, "We continue to perform below expectations, even as measured against the July forecast. We know everyone is highly conscious of the situation and is doing their [sic] best to build income and control costs." After nearly doubling its fee income in the last two years of the Bush presidency, the Washington office saw its fee income actually drop in 1993, to \$30.5 million—an abrupt reversal of fortunes.

Other big PR operations had faced squeezes, too, with bloated staffs, high-living top brass, and (ever since the 1987 stock market crash) penurious corporate clients. The