

# Desperate Housewives of Shakespeare

*A One-Act Comedy*

By Jane and Jim Jeffries

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### **Dedication**

*Special thanks to Susan Dahl  
and the Hudson Drama Department for showcasing this play  
at the Wisconsin One-Act Play Competition in October 2012.*

### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Okay, these housewives may not be real, but they are desperate! Shakespeare has been manipulating and twisting their lives for six plays now, and they desperately want to escape his evil machinations. But are they desperate enough to commit murder? Shakespeare has been found dead: stabbed, poisoned, starved, choked, bitten by an asp, and even turned into a baardvark (excuse the pun). Lady Macbeth, Juliet, Kate, Rosalind, Cleopatra, and Titania all had the means and the motive to kill Shakespeare, but who really did it? This comic tragedy (or is that tragic comedy?) has all of the action of a Shakespearean play but with none of those angsty monologues about the meaning of life. Great for a strong female cast with some serious comedy chops.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(2-3 Men and 6 Women)*

**Lady Macbeth** – She thinks Machiavelli is such a babe in the woods.

**Cleopatra** – Very attracted to powerful men. The emperor of Rome was just a part of her Caesar salad days.

**Titania** – Queen of the fairies. It's more formidable than it sounds.

**Katherine** – Bit of a shrew, which is what men call powerful women.

**Juliet** – We aged her up to 17, because a married 13-year-old is a little "ishy."

**Rosalind** – Disguised as a man, she is looking for her true love. Yeah, we don't get the logic either.

**Inspector Tremblance (M)** – William Shakespeare in disguise, wears a really bad wig. The Donald Trump of playwrights.

**Lord Macbeth (M)** – Husband to Lady Macbeth. Okay, he's pretty hen-pecked. Casting a big, hulky guy for this role will add to the humor.

**Duncan (M)** – Okay, he's dead, but he can have a lot of fun with physical humor and, hey, no lines to learn. If you are really short on guys, you can use a dummy.

## **SETTING**

All the action takes place in a dining room that has a long table with chairs. A large, man-sized broom closet is located USR with a curtain on the back for the person playing Duncan to come in and out. A smaller cupboard for dishes is next to it. There is a door to the outside at USL.

**PROPERTIES**

Bucket and scrub brush for Lady Macbeth  
Coffeepot  
Coffee cups and small plates  
Small bell for Lady Macbeth  
Frisly apron for Lord Macbeth  
Plate of cupcakes with no icing  
Plate of cupcakes with icing  
Broom and dustpan  
Vial on a chain for Juliet  
Shoulder bag/purse for Juliet  
Bathrobe for Lord Macbeth  
Timepiece for Juliet  
Newspaper for Lord Macbeth  
Poems from Orlando  
Steak knife  
Badge, notebook and quill for Detective Tremblance

## **Desperate Housewives of Shakespeare**

*(AT RISE: LADY MACBETH is scrubbing the floor.)*

**LADY MACBETH:** What does a woman have to do around here to get things clean? *(Scrubs harder.)* Out, out darn spot!

*(SFX: KNOCK at door. She crosses to door and opens it. CLEOPATRA is standing there.)*

**LADY MACBETH:** Cleo.

**CLEOPATRA:** Mac, you won't believe the news—

**LADY MACBETH:** *(Ushering in CLEOPATRA.)* Don't call me that.

**CLEOPATRA:** Call you what?

**LADY MACBETH:** Mac. I hate that.

**CLEOPATRA:** But—

**LADY MACBETH:** My name is Lady Macbeth—

**CLEOPATRA:** But—

**LADY MACBETH:** Thane-ette of Cawdor—

**CLEOPATRA:** But—

**LADY MACBETH:** Queen of all Scotland!

**CLEOPATRA:** Right. I will call you...all of that if you call me *(With flair.)* Cleopatra VII Thea Philopator, Queen of the Nile.

**LADY MACBETH:** *(Pause.)* Cleo.

**CLEOPATRA:** Mac. Look, you won't believe the news—

**LADY MACBETH:** Give me just a sec, Cleo. I was just cleaning up. *(Resumes scrubbing.)*

**CLEOPATRA:** You're always "just cleaning up." What goes on around here, anyway? Wild parties?

**LADY MACBETH:** Just because you have wild parties— *(Stands again.)*

**CLEOPATRA:** Yes, but mine are on a barge. To clean up, we just burn the barge.

**LADY MACBETH:** *(Thinking aloud.)* Burn, yes. And all the evidence is destroyed.

**CLEOPATRA:** Evidence?

**LADY MACBETH:** Uhm, you know, evidence about your real estate fraud.

**CLEOPATRA:** Hey, I was just trying to sell off some old Egyptian buildings.

**LADY MACBETH:** It's called a pyramid scheme.

**CLEOPATRA:** Hey, that one pyramid is pretty rare. Tut's uncommon tomb—

*(SHE is interrupted by the entrance of TITANIA, who appears on stage without using the door.)*

**TITANIA:** Poof! *(SHE waves her arms dramatically and startles LADY MACBETH and CLEOPATRA.)*

**LADY MACBETH:** Titania, I wish you would stop doing that.

**TITANIA:** What? *(Still waving arms.)* Appearing suddenly and mysteriously?

**LADY MACBETH:** No. Saying “poof” every time you make an entrance. It's annoying.

**TITANIA:** But I'm Titania—

**LADY MACBETH/CLEOPATRA:** Queen of the Fairies.

**LADY MACBETH:** We know.

**TITANIA:** Well, I am.

**CLEOPATRA:** You may want a name change, dear.

**LADY MACBETH:** Disney has completely ruined your street cred.

**CLEOPATRA:** Fairies are either plump, cute, and harmless—

**LADY MACBETH:** Fairy godmothers.

**CLEOPATRA:** Or they are tiny, cute, and harmless—

**LADY MACBETH:** Tinkerbells. Why not “Titania, Queen of the Superheroes”? Superheroes are all the rage right now.

**CLEOPATRA:** And Thor is so dreamy.

**TITANIA:** Do they even have female superheroes?

**LADY MACBETH:** Uhm. *(Thinks.)* Yeah, Black Widow. You could be Black Widow.

**TITANIA:** I can't. Someone has already laid claim to that title. *(The TWO stare at CLEOPATRA.)*

**CLEOPATRA:** Hey! *(Beat.)* Gosh, one or two Roman emperors die on you, and you get a reputation.

**TITANIA:** I'm sorry, Cleo. I'm just a little crabby. I haven't had my coffee. Is it ready?

**LADY MACBETH:** Yes.

*(TITANIA goes over to broom closet and starts to open door. LADY MACBETH sees her and rushes over.)*

**TITANIA:** I'll just grab a cup—

*(LADY MACBETH directs Titania's attention to the smaller cabinet so that neither TITANIA nor CLEOPATRA notices the arm that slumps out of the broom closet.)*

**LADY MACBETH:** The coffee cups are in the cabinet. *(Tucks arm back into the broom closet and closes door.)* This is the broom closet. No cups here. So just get some cups from the cup cabinet, and I will be right back with the coffee. *(Exits.)*

**TITANIA:** *(Goes to cabinet to get cups for everyone.)* She's a little touchy about her broom closet, isn't she?

**CLEOPATRA:** She's touchy about all of her cleaning supplies. I seriously think she's OCD.

**TITANIA:** Really?

**CLEOPATRA:** Have you ever noticed how often she washes her hands?

**LADY MACBETH:** *(Enters and stops.)* I'll be right back. I forgot to wash my hands. *(Exits.)*

**CLEOPATRA:** See what I mean?

**TITANIA:** And come to think of it, she has been rather ... erratic of late.

**CLEOPATRA:** And have you noticed— *(Interrupted by the entrance of LADY MACBETH with the coffeepot.)*

**LADY MACBETH:** Noticed what? *(Not looking at CLEOPATRA as she sets coffee on table.)*

**CLEOPATRA:** *(Picks up coffee cup.)* That there aren't any spots. What's your secret?

**LADY MACBETH:** Uhm, vinegar and vigorous scrubbing.

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