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How to Survive Being in a Shakespeare Play

A comedy in one-act

By Don Zolidis

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Cast of Characters

NARRATOR 1
NARRATOR 2
SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR
SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

1. Listen to the Magic Ladies
CAESAR
SOOTHSAYER
WITCH 1
WITCH 2
WITCH 3
MACBETH
SERVANT
BRUTUS
CASCA
CINNA
CASSIUS

2. Listen to the Regular Ladies Too
OPHELIA
HAMLET
BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 1
BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2
GHOST
GERTRUDE

3. Don't Listen to Dudes
HENRY V
SOLDIER 1-3

4. Change your name
ROMEO
JULIET
PARIS
TYBALT

5. Get A Proper Amount of Sleep in a Place Where No One will Murder You
LADY MACBETH
NURSE
NURSE 2
LAWYER
GHOST
ANNOUNCER
FAKE LADY MACBETH

6. Avoid Snakes
CLEOPATRA
IRAS
CHARMIAN
ASP

7. Also Avoid Bears
ANTIGONUS
SHEPHERD
CLOWN
BEAR

8. Make Other Animal Friends
LEAR
EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LLAMA
RICHARD 3
CATESBY
HORSE

9. Relationship Counseling
OTHELLO
DESDEMONA
IAGO
EMILIA
GAIL

10. Avoid Yourself
BOTTOM
ROMEO
JULIET
LADY MACBETH
OPHELIA
OTHERS

Length of the play: This show is approximately one hour long. To cut it into a shorter one-act, simply remove one or more of the sections.

Gender of the performers: Any role may be cast with any gender performer. Realism is not necessarily the goal here.

Race/ethnicity of the performers: Any person of any race or ethnicity may play any part in the show. **EXCEPTION**: The role of Othello must be played by an African-American. (Iago and Desdemona should probably not be African-American, but that's not a requirement) If you are not able to cast that role, please skip the Othello scene.

Accents: Everyone in this play, (except the narrators), should have a British accent. The actors directly quoting Shakespeare should have an over-the-top Shakespearean British accent (rolled r's, snooty manner). The Shakespeare should be *bad*.

Lights up.
A Shakespearean stage.

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR enters, perhaps in tights, overacting terribly.

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

NARRATOR 1

If you're an actor, this has probably happened to you.

SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR ENTERS, sword drawn.

SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

I will bring thee to heel, cur!

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR draws his own sword.

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

Thou art the cur, snog muffin!

SECOND SHAKESPEREAN ACTOR

Feel my blade!

SHAKESPEAREN ACTOR

I've already tried, and I don't like it!

NARRATOR 2

Let's stop this here.

SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

Piffle! I was about to teach this pupil a lesson!

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

The only lesson thou wilt teach is what thou lookest like when thy guts are piling `pon the stage, friend to bunnies!

SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

I am no friend to bunnies! Takest that back!

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

Never! Thou lovest all the bunnies!

SECOND SHAKESPEAREN ACTOR

I wilt drink thy blood!

NARRATOR 1

Guys? Seriously.

NARRATOR 2

At some point, it's going to happen to you. It's inevitable. There's no escaping it.

NARRATOR 1

You're going to end up in a Shakespeare play.

NARRATOR 2

You don't know when it's going to happen, you don't know why it's going to happen, but you'll find yourself wearing tights, or a corset –

NARRATOR 1

Or tights *and* a corset if you've got a really good role.

NARRATOR 2

And you will say things like –

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

You, minion, are too saucy!

SECOND SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

Away, you three inch fool!

SHAKESPEAREAN ACTOR

A pox on your throat!

NARRATOR 1 puts a calming hand on their shoulders.

NARRATOR 1

And if you end up in a Shakespeare play, there's a good chance…

NARRATOR 2

You're gonna die.

SHAKESPEARAN ACTOR

What?

NARRATOR 1

You are most likely toast.

NARRATOR 2

If your name is on the title of that play…

NARRATOR 1

And it says tragedy under it?

NARRATOR 2

You're DOOMED.

NARRATOR 1

You'll be stabbed –

NARRATOR 2

Or poisoned –

NARRATOR 1

Chopped up into a pie –

NARRATOR 2

Eaten by sharks -

NARRATOR 1 looks at NARRATOR 2

It's in Troilus and Cressida, check it out. Original Sharknado.

NARRATOR 1

The point is that you are NOT making it to the end of the play.

NARRATOR 2

Unless you listen to us!

NARRATOR 1

That's right! We are here to provide you a service – you wake up, you're wearing tights, you speak in iambic pentameter, don't panic.

NARRATOR 2

So buckle up for

NARRAOR 1 and 2

How to Survive Being in a Shakespeare Play.

NARRATOR 1

Method 1:

NARRATOR 2 produces a sign saying "1"

Listen to magical Ladies!

Reveals a sign saying that.

1. Listen to the Magic Ladies

NARRATOR 2

The most likely way to die in Shakespeare is being stabbed with a sharp pointy object, like a sword, dagger, knife, or shark.

NARRATOR 1

No sharks.

NARRATOR 2

How little you know, friend. And the best way to avoid stabbing is to listen to the magic ladies who are telling you how not to get stabbed. Pro-tip: If a freaky, bizarre woman in the woods screams something about your death to you in a mysterious way, listen.

NARRATOR 1

Example one: Julius Caesar.

CAESAR enters, grandly, to fanfare.

CAESAR

Quick question. My name is on the title of this play, yes?

NARRATOR 1

Right.

CAESAR

And does it say, "tragedy of" anywhere?

NARRATOR 1

All over this puppy.

CAESAR

Thank you.

A crowd gathers (CASCA, CASSIUS, BRUTUS) with SOOTHSAYER, a creepy, bizarre woman.

Who is it in the press that calls on me?
I hear a tongue, shriller than all the music,
Cry "Caesar!"—Speak. Caesar is turned to hear.

SOOTHSAYER

BEWARE…

She pauses

CAESAR

Beware what?

SOOTHSAYER

THE IDES….

Pauses again

CAESAR *(trying to figure out what Ides are)*

…ides?

SOOTHSAYER

OF MARCH!

She coughs and sputters.

I have spoken.

She's about to leave.

CAESAR

Whoah whoah whoah hold up. What are the Ides of March?

SOOTHSAYER

Your doom! Ha ha ha ha ha!

CAESAR

I got that part, but I don't know what Ides are. It's not a word.

SOOTHSAYER

March fifteenth, about nine thirty a.m.

CAESAR

Thank you! Was that so hard?

SOOTHSAYER

Watch out for the stabby knives!

She exits.

NARRATOR 2

Remember – when the crazy lady tells you to beware of something, BEWARE of something.

CAESAR

Got it.

CEASAR exits, with crowd.

NARRATOR 1

Also works for witches.

MACBETH enters stealthily, perhaps in fog.

An owl HOOTS.

MACBETH

I'M A LITTLE FREAKED OUT RIGHT NOW IN CASE ANYONE WAS LISTENING.

WITCH 1 leaps in.

WITCH 1

Macbeth!

WITCH 2 leaps in.

WITCH 2 *(overlapping)*

Macbeth!

WITCH 3 pops out of a garbage can.

WITCH 3 *(a throaty growl, overlapping)*

MACBETH.

MACBETH

Ah! I mean, what's up, ladies?

WITCH 2

None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

WITCH 1 and 3

OOOOOOOOOH.

MACBETH

That sounds promising.

WITCH 1

None of woman born shall harm Macbeth.

WITCH 3 *(overlapping, throaty growl)*

NONE OF WOMAN BORN SHALL HARM MACBETH.

WITCH 2

OOOOOOOH.

MACBETH

Right, right, right. Okay – so what about people grown in nutrient vats?

WITCH 2

Yeah they can harm you.

MACBETH

What about large animals with sharp teeth?

WITCH 3

Also can kill you.

MACBETH

Sharks?

WITCH 1

Yup.

MACBETH

Porcupines?

WITCH 2

You think a porcupine is going to kill you.

MACBETH

I'm trying to cover my bases here.

WITCH 3

Porcupines could, theoretically, harm Macbeth.

MACBETH

Good to know.

A SERVANT runs in.

Can you kill all the porcupines in England please?

SERVANT

There are no porcupines in England.

MACBETH

Really?

SERVANT

Strictly a North American creature, sire.

SERVANT exits.

MACBETH

That was educational. Lastly, just for clarification: Let's say someone is born from a Caesarean section – does that count as "from woman born?"

WITCH 1

Nope.

MACBETH

What?!

WITCH 2

Not from woman born. That's untimely ripped from the womb.

MACBETH

The heck it is. Where was the womb then?! Was it in a space pod?

WITCH 3

Doesn't count.

Skipping Forward

CINNA

Somebody's got their knickers in a twist.

CASSISUS

Silence, Cinna. We are all committed, then? To do the thing?

CINNA

You know I'm game, bro. Gonna get my stabbin' in.

CINNA eagerly practices some stabs.

CASCA

Caesar suspects nothing.

CAESAR enters, wearing an entire suit made out of balloons. He can barely move. The conspirators wave at him.

BRUTUS

Hail Caesar!

CAESAR

It is a very nice Ides of March today, isn't it?

He enjoys his balloons. Plays with them a bit.

I will now hear suits from the common rabble.

The conspirators huddle suspiciously.

CASSIUS

I'm nervous, dudes.

BRUTUS

Be cool, Cassius. We got this.

CAESAR

Anyone have any requests that I can turn down? Any babies to kiss? Anyone?

CASCA

Yeah I got something. Speak, hands for me!

CASCA tries to stab CAESAR, but his dagger bounces off his balloons. The other conspirators rush up.

CASSIUS

Death to Caesar!

Stabs, bounces off balloon.

CINNA

Welcome to the jungle, baby!

Stabs, bounces off balloon.

BRUTUS

I'm conflicted about this!

Stabs, bounces off balloon.

CAESAR

Et tu, Brute?

BRUTUS

Um…

Pause. They all try again. Fail.

CAESAR *(taking out phone)*

Yes, I'd like to reporter a murder. Cause Caesar just KILLED IT. All right can we have the conspirators dragged off and beheaded please? Thanks. And thank you crazy lady!

He gives a thumb's up.

2. Listen to regular ladies too

NARRATOR 1

But it's not just magic ladies you need to listen to.

NARRATOR 2

It's regular ladies too.

NARRATOR 1

Let's say you're a prince.

HAMLET enters, holding a skull, and talking to it.

HAMLET

Alas, Poor Yorick! I knew him, Horatio. A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy.

Looks around.

Horatio? Anyone? I guess I'll just keep talking to myself then. Totally normal thing to do. With the skull of a guy that died twenty years ago. This certainly isn't weird or disturbing at all.

OPHELIA enters.

OPHELIA

Hamlet?

HAMLET

Hey, sweetie.

OPHELIA

What are you doing out here in the graveyard, talking to a skull?

HAMLET

Nothing.

He drops the skull behind his back. Then tries to secretly kick it off-stage.

OPHELIA

I thought we could go on a date, things have been so crazy lately – with all of your… acting crazy.

HAMLET *(laughs a bit, tosses the skull to himself)*

Yeah it's been so difficult around the palace lately, with my Dad being killed and my Mom marrying my uncle.

OPHELIA

Maybe we could forget about the royal family and spend some quality time together.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER pops up from behind something and snaps a picture of them.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER

Secret rendez-vous in the graveyard! Does Prince Hamlet even like Ophelia or is he just using her like the garbage she is?!

OPHELIA

Oh darn it they found us.

HAMLET

Ignore them, honey.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2 pops in from somewhere else, snapping photos.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2

Exclusive! Ophelia wears red for sneaky graveyard date! The symbol of death! Is she the cause of Prince Hamlet's madness?!

OPHELIA

Um so you want to watch a movie or anything? Maybe we could just snuggle?

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER

In despair over losing his father, Prince Hamlet goes dumpster-diving – and finds Ophelia!

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2

Why doesn't she just throw herself into a pond already?!

HAMLET

Maybe we should go sneak into a nunnery.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER

Prince Hamlet tells Ophelia to get thee to a nunnery! But would she pollute the nunnery with her terrible sense of style?!

OPHELIA *(to Hamlet)*

Oh man I hate the paparazzi.

HAMLET

Don't worry about it. Comes with the territory of being prince.

He addresses the reporters.

Good day chaps! If you give us a minute, I'll let you pick through my rubbish. I think you'll find my lint fascinating.

REPORTERS

Oooooh.

OPHELIA pulls HAMLET to the side.

OPHELIA

They go. Or I go.

HAMLET

But baby this is how it works.

OPEHLIA

Not with me. And they hate me. Hamlet. Listen to me.

HAMLET

Very well. I shall give them letters. On the letters I'll write, `murder me' and then I'll have them deliver the letters to people with very pointy swords. That way, they'll all be dead.

OPHELIA

Don't be dense. More reporters will show up investigating the last reporters. We have to do something else. Here's my plan:

She whispers in his ear as the Reporters speak into cameras.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER

EXCLUSIVE! What has happened to Prince Hamlet?! He used to be a manly man, fighting with swords and other sharp objects, and now, now he wears tights and listen to a woman's feelings. Preposterous.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2

Shameful behavior from the royal family! I blame Ophelia. She's odious. Like a bloated slug that has heaved itself onto the shore of our great nation, oozing pus and reeking of feminism. I, for one, will not stand for –

HAMLET interrupts them.

HAMLET

Excuse me, I have an announcement.

REPORTERS

Ooooh.

HAMLET

After careful consideration, I will stepping back from my role in the monarchy. Of Denmark. Ophelia and I have decided that we will move to Canada where everything is not so rotten. We are working on becoming financially independent and will be seeking a relationship counselor. Thank you.

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER

Prince Hamlet is out!

BRITISH TABLOID REPORTER 2

Controlled by the jealous Ophelia –

HAMLET

Oh sorry. In my last act as prince, I would like you to deliver these letters for me.

Hands letters to reporters.

REPOTERS

Oooh.

They run off.
Are murdered off-stage.
The GHOST enters, upset.

GHOST

What. The. Heck. Booo. Booooo. I am thy father's spirit
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night

HAMLET

I know, Dad. I don't want to hear it.

GHOST

Revenge my foul and most unnatural murder!

HAMLET

NOPE. Not doing it. Me and Ophelia are moving to Canada for free health care. We're gonna need a lot of therapy.

GHOST

The serpent that did sting thy father's life
NOW WEARS HIS CROWN!

HAMLET

Yeah, I know, you already haunted me once and explained everything. He poured poison in your ear.

GHOST

IN MY EAR! It was gross.

HAMLET

And then married my Mom. I get it. Not cool. But you know what, this happens in every royal family and I'm done with this.

OPHELIA

Hi Hamlet Senior.

GHOST

Do not speak to me, foul strumpet.

OPHELIA

See, that kind of sexist language is why we're leaving.

GHOST

This is a tragedy!

HAMLET

Not anymore!

OPHELIA

Please, just be happy for us.

GHOST

No! I'm dead!

GERTRUDE enters.

GERTRUDE

That's because you didn't listen to me, Hamlet.

GHOST

Girl, your boyfriend slash my brother killed me!

GERTRUDE

Um… he only killed you because you weren't a good listener.

GHOST

What?!

GERTRUDE

Do you remember when I told you that if you didn't let me have the remote control I was going to have your brother poison you?

GHOST

No.

GERTRUDE

CAUSE YOU WEREN'T LISTENING!

HAMLET

Not to interrupt, but both of you are terrible role-models and I'm happy to be rid of you.

OPHELIA

That's why I'm glad my father is nice.

HAMLET

Oh – about that – I may have killed your father accidentally. Just putting that out there.

Pause.

OPHELIA

We're gonna need a lot of therapy.

HAMLET

Yup. Would you like to deliver a letter of apology?

OPHELIA looks at the letter.

OPHELIA

No.

Lights change.

3. Stop Listening to Dudes

NARRATOR 1

So, make sure you listen to both magical and non-magical ladies. Got it.

NARRATOR 2

And the reverse is also true.

NARRATOR 1

That's right. Method 3

NARRATOR 2 produces a sign.

NARRATOR 2

Don't listen to dudes.

NARRATOR 1

Or bros. And there is one bro in particular you shouldn't listen to. King Bro: Henry the Fifth.

HENRY V enters, in armor, with sword. He speaks in a very royal British/Shakespearean accent.
His soldiers, exhausted, bloody, and beat-up, limp on and gather around him.

SOLDIER

Oh man. This war is going so badly.

SOLDIER 2

I don't care. I'll fight for Henry. He's my king!
Growls, waves his sword around.

SOLDIER 3

Aye! For King and Country!

SOLDIER

Right. Sure. Definitely. Just um… his name is on the title of the play, right?

SOLDIER 2

This is the glorious History of Henry the Fifth. Grrr.

SOLDIER

And it doesn't say "tragedy" anywhere on there, so that means Henry lives and everyone else dies.

SOLDIER 2

I am happy to die for king and country! *HAPPY ABOUT IT! YES!* In fact, if I don't die today, I will be sorely disappointed. Oh to die in the company of this glorious king. Woo! England!

SOLDIER 3

YAAAAAASSS King!

SOLDIER

Huh. Question:
Raises his hand.
Can we get some additional soldiers please?

HENRY V

What's he that wishes so?

SOLDIER *(raises hand)*

Um… me? My name's Dave I signed up for this army by mistake. I was hoping to have an administrative role. The most violent thing I've ever done is soccer, or, in England, football.

HENRY *(interrupting)*

If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,

The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.

SOLDIER

I'm not sure this is sound military strategy -

HENRY V

O, do not wish one more!

SOLDIER

How `bout like a thousand more? Or armored giant cats or something? We could ride them into battle.

HENRY V

Rather proclaim it,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart;

SOLDIER

Ooh.

He tries to leave, but the other soldiers stop him. HENRY is really getting into his inspirational speech now.

HENRY V

We would not die in that man's company
That fears his fellowship to die with us.

OTHER SOLDIERS (except SOLDIER)

I heard that. Woop. Aye. (Etc…)

HENRY V

This day is called the feast of Crispian:
He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
And rouse him at the name of Crispian.

OTHER SOLDIERS

Yaasss! That's right. He speaks truth! (etc…)

HENRY V

He that shall live this day, and see old age,
Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.

HENRY shows his scars.

Skipping Forward

SOLDIER 3 *(off-stage)*
JUST ONE MORE DUDE! THAT WOULD DO IT! ONE SINGLE ADDITIONAL PERSON TO HELP WITH THIS SPECIFIC FIGHT RIGHT HERE!

SOLDIER looks around. There is no one else on stage.

NARRATOR 2
Luckily, at this point, football/soccer skills come in handy.

SOLDIER looks around.

Clutches his hamstring. Falls over.

SOLDIER
Aaaaaaaah.

NARRATOR 1
And that's why we speak French in England today.

SOLDIER 1 sneaks off-stage.

4. Change your Name.

NARRATOR 1
Knowing the right person to listen to is critical to survival. If that person is wearing a crown –

NARRATOR 2
Ignore.

NARRATOR 1
If that person is wearing a cat?

NARRATOR 2
Listen.

NARRATOR 1
And if that fails?

NARRATOR 2 *(raising a sign)*
Method Four.

JULIET enters, talks to herself on a balcony.

JULIET
Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name.
Or, if thou wilt not, but be sworn by my name,
And I'll never more be a Capulet.

ROMEO enters, listening.

ROMEO

But soft! What light through yonder window breaks!
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!

JULIET notices him.

JULIET

Heyyyy.

ROMEO

What's up, girl? You're looking fiiine.

JULIET

Right back at you.

ROMEO

How `bout I climb up that balcony and we can make some poetry together? Rhyming couplets.

JULIET

Ooh. Just one thing, though.

ROMEO

What is it, Juliet?

She takes out a playbill.

JULIET

Look at this.

She shows it to him.

ROMEO *(reading)*

Romeo and Juliet.

JULIET

And what's underneath that?

ROMEO *(reading)*

A tragedy.

JULIET

Both our names are on this play. That means we're both gonna die at the end.

ROMEO

I will kill the playwright!

JULIET

Slow your roll, Romeo. You can't stab your way out of this. There's only one way out of this: let's change our names.

ROMEO

Brilliant. I will be Juliet and you will be Romeo. I've always wanted to be Juliet.

JULIET

You're not getting it. We need to have completely non-tragic names. Henceforth, I shall be known as… Anastasia.

ROMEO

Still sounds tragic.

JULIET

Melisande.

ROMEO

Also tragic.

JULIET

Darn it.

ROMEO

I've got it! Schmop.

JULIET

Schmop?

ROMEO

Kind of like the sound of a glob of mud hitting the backside of a pig. Schmop.

JULIET

I like it. And you shall be named… Goober.

ROMEO

Goober and Schmop.

JULIET

Doesn't sound like a tragedy to me!

ROMEO

The Romance of Goober and Schmop! That is *comedy.*

JULIET

Exactly!

PARIS enters, with sword.

PARIS

Juliet, it is I, Paris. Your betrothed.

JULIET

Actually my name is Schmop.

PARIS

Schmop?

JULIET

Right.

ROMEO

Sounds like a wad of dung dropping from a great height.

PARIS

The lady… Schmop?

JULIET

Indeed. You were saying how we were engaged to be married?

PARIS

Um… actually, no worries.

JULIET

Are you sure?

PARIS

I just want to be friends. I'll text you. Um. Later.

PARIS leaves quickly.

JULIET

Schmop has quite the effect on the gentlemen.

TYBALT enters, sword drawn.

TYBALT

Where is Romeo? I, Tybalt, have come to slay him!

ROMEO

Actually, that's me. Although my name is not Romeo, it is Goober.

TYBALT

Goober?

ROMEO

Yes I am the mighty Goober and I shall let everyone know, if I defeat you in battle, that you were slain… by Goober.

TYBALT

Um… you know what, it's cool. I'm just gonna text you later.

TYBALT exits.

JULIET

That was amazing.

ROMEO

I love you, Schmop.

JULIET

I love you, Goober.

They exit hand in hand.

NARRATOR 1

And they lived happily ever after with their two children: Begonia and Scrotus.

5. Get a Proper Amount of Sleep in a Place Where No One will Murder You

NARRATOR 2

Which brings us to our fifth survival method.

NARRATOR 1 *(with a sign)*

Get a proper amount of sleep in a place where no one will murder you.

NARRATOR 2

Not sleeping in Shakespeare is not good. You will die. Or, if you sleep where someone else is planning to stab you in your sleep.

NARRATOR 1

Let's see how we can help Lady Macbeth get some sleep. She's troubled because she murdered somebody.

LADY MACBETH enters, haunted.

NARRATOR 2

It happens.

LADY MACBETH *(looking at her nightgown)*

Yet here's a spot. Out, damned spot! Out, I say! One: Two: why, then, `tis time to do't. –Hell is murky! Fie my lord, fie! A soldier, and afeared?

Two NURSES enters, watching.

Yet who would have thought the old man
To have had so much blood in him.

NURSE

Oh she's talking to herself about killing people again.

NURSE 2

Every night with this. Oh I killed somebody now I can't sleep.

NURSE

Real problem.

LADY MACBETH

The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?
What, will these hands ne'er be clean? No more o'
That, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with
This starting.

NURSE

Lady, is it you?

LADY MACBETH *(sniffing her hand)*

Here's the smell of blood still: all the
Perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little
Hand. Oh, oh oh!

NURSE claps loudly next to her.

NURSE *(shrieking)*

Wake up!

LADY MACBETH

Ah!

She looks around.

Sleepwalking again. Did I mutter anything incriminating in my sleep?

NURSE

Just something about a spot and blood and murdering the king.

NURSE 2

Nothing more than you do every night, ma'am.

LADY MACBETH

Right. Oh I am guilty! Guilty guilty guilty!

She weeps.

NURSE 2

WHOAH. Never admit guilt. That's the first step.

NURSE

My lady you must ask for mercy!

NURSE 2

DUMB. Don't do it! They can't prove anything. I mean, yes, the king died here, and yes his blood is all over the floor and yes you're muttering about it in your sleep, but is that really "evidence?" Does that "prove" "anything"?

LADY MACBETH

I don't know.

NURSE

Seems like that's pretty cut and dry.

NURSE 2

There are two sides to every story. They say you murdered Duncan. You say you didn't murder Duncan. Who could possibly know what the "truth" is?

LADY MACBETH

Huh.

NURSE

This is madness! Lady, confess your guilt and seek mercy for your crimes!

NURSE 2

THAT'S STUPID. All we need is a lawyer with no morals.

LAWYER swoops in.

LAWYER

Did someone call for a lawyer with no morals?

NURSE 2

See, they're easy to find!

NURSE

How did you know we were looking?

LAWYER

Your home Alexa system is set up to record your every word, which is then filtered into an algorithm on Facebook to share your private information with corporate clients. Thanks, home assistants!

LADY MACBETH

Is that why I've been seeing all those ads for daggers?

LAWYER

Definitely. Is this a dagger I see before me? Nope! But here are some great deals on daggers from a local weapons store! Now the first thing is to admit to nothing! No one can prove

anything! Plus, you're rich! And if I learned anything in law school, it's that rich people are never convicted for anything! Ha ha ha ha.

LADY MACBETH

You're my kind of lawyer.

NURSE

This is outrageous! You can't just –

LAWYER

Can we remove this nurse please? Not a good idea to have people who like to tell the "truth" around.

NURSE 2

Absolutely. You can clean the dungeon.

NURSE

But I –

NURSE 2 drags NURSE off.

LAWYER

Loyal servants who don't divulge your crimes are so hard to find. Now, are you being haunted by any ghosts?

GHOST enters.

GHOST

Booooo…. Murderrrrrrrr….

LADY MACBETH

I think so.

LAWYER

We'll get a restraining order against them.

POLICE OFFICER grabs GHOST and pulls it off-stage.

GHOST

Ah! Hey! I have rights!

LAWYER

Then we hire a PR Firm to go all in with television ads. We'll need some footage of you helping the poor or some nonsense like that.

LADY MACBETH

But I haven't helped the poor.

LAWYER

We can use an actress who looks like you, no worries. Do you have any children that can appear with you in the ad? Cute ones, preferably.

LADY MACBETH

I have no children.

LAWYER

We'll hire some, not a problem.

LADY MACBETH

Wow.

LAWYER

All right. Take an Ambien, have a nice glass of warm milk, and you'll sleep like a baby that was untimely ripped from its mother's womb.

LADY MACBETH

I'm feeling better already.

Yawns.

LAWYER

Check this out.

Perhaps inspirational music plays under this.

*FAKE LADY MACBETH enters, with a small child (*if you don't have a small child, you can have her pantomime interacting with one) .*

ANNOUNCER

Raised by middle-class parents, Lady Macbeth learned the value of hard work early on. Now, as a rich person, she works tirelessly to help the poor reach a better life. Plus, she's super nice. Lady Macbeth: Definitely not a murderer. Paid for by the committee to keep Lady Macbeth out of prison.

FAKE LADY MACBETH smiles and waves, perhaps in slow motion.

NURSE 2 returns.

NURSE

I'd vote for you.

LADY MACBETH

I love it.

She stretches.

Well, I'm off to bed.

She leaves.

NURSE 2

I love a happy ending.

Skipping Forward

Whoah check out that asp.

IRAS

That is one big asp.

CHARMIAN

I like big asps. And I cannot lie.

CLEOPATRA

With thy sharp teeth this knot intrinsicate
Of life at once untie: poor venomous fool
Be angry, and dispatch. O, couldst thou speak,
That I might hear thee call great Caesar ass
Unpolicied!

ASP

You want me to talk?

CLEOPATRA

As long as you call great Caesar names.

ASP

Look, I'm concerned about the stereotypes you guys have for asps.

CHARMIAN

Oh yeah.

ASP

Would you stop? That's offensive.

CHARMIAN

I'm a big fan of asps.

ASP

How do you think I feel being used as a murder weapon?

IRAS

That asp is killer.

ASP

Does anyone ask about my hobbies? My thoughts about the political climate? What if there was a way to save yourself without asking an asp to do the dirty work?

IRAS chuckles.

Hey! Hey don't laugh at that! We asps have been made to feel dirty for too long!

IRAS chuckles louder.

You know what?! I'm not being a part of this anymore. You people are too immature for asps. You can't handle this asp!

CHARMIAN

Hee hee.

ASP

Here, use this garden snake instead!

He tosses a rubber snake at CLEOPATRA.

I'm out of here!

The ASP leaves, outraged.

CHARMIAN

Man, I miss that asp.

NARRATOR 1

Keep going please!

CLEOPATRA *(takes up the rubber snake)*

As sweet as balm, as soft as air, as gentle, --
O Antony! – Nay, I will take thee too.

She applies the rubber snake to her arm. Nothing happens.

She applies it again.

It does not appear to be working.

IRAS

We are saved my Queen!

CLEOPATRA

I guess we are.

IRAS

Now we can just wait for Caesar to come and murder us.

NARRATOR 2

So the answer is: Insult snakes so they leave you alone!

NARRATOR 1

Exactly.

NARRATOR 2

Wow. You think we could make more butt jokes in this play?

NARRATOR 1

Yes William Shakespeare would never make butt jokes. He would certainly not name a character Bottom and have that guy turned into an ass in a play. That would be ridiculous.

NARRATOR 2

But wait, wasn't Caesar killed in the other play?

NARRATOR 1

This is Augustus Caesar – Antony and Cleopatra is the bloodier sequel to Julius Caesar. Basically Shakespeare took his first play, added a bunch more characters and a much higher body count.

NARRATOR 2

Oh.

NARRATOR 1

Yea he did a lot of sequels. Antony and Cleopatra. Henry the Fourth part 2. Romeo and Juliet 2 – the Revenge. A Midsummer Night's Dream Three: Wrath of The Big Bottom.

7. Also Avoid Bears

NARRATOR 2

He truly was a visionary.

NARRATOR 1

But you know what's worse than snakes?

NARRATOR 2

Bigger snakes.

NARRATOR 1

And worse than that?

NARRATOR 2

More than one bigger snake.

NARRATOR 1

I'm talking about bears.

NARRATOR 2

I love bears.

NARRATOR 1

Bears don't love you. Bears want to kill you. And eat you. And then make little forts out of your bones.

NARRATOR 2

I don't like them anymore.

NARRATOR 1

In Shakespeare, bears are fatal. Let's take a look at this scene from *A Winter's Tale.*

NARRATOR 2

Never heard of it.

NARRATOR 1

A Winter's Tale is one of Shakespeare's "problem" plays, by which we mean, plays that are not very good. It's got a princess, it's a got a mother who gets turned to stone and it has Shakespeare's worst creation: a clown for no apparent reason. In this scene, Antigonus has kidnapped a baby and sailed to the coast of Bohemia, which is a land-locked country. And he's about to be eaten.

ANTIGONUS enters, holding a baby.

ANTIGONUS *(to the baby)*

Come, poor babe:
I have heard, but not believed
The spirits o' the dead
May walk again.
Farewell!

About to set the baby down.

The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw the heavens so dim by the day.

A BEAR roars off-stage.

A savage clamour!
Well may I get aboard! This is the chase:
I am gone forever.

The BEAR enters, growls and raises its terrifying paws.
ANTIGONUS throws the baby at it and runs.
The BEAR chases him off.

SHEPHERD enters.

SHEPHERD

What have we here! Mercy on 's, a barne, a very pretty barne!

CLOWN enters, obnoxiously.

CLOWN

Hello! I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land!
But I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky; betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin's point.

CLOWN bows for applause. Waits for a laugh track. NARRATOR 1 and 2 laugh uproariously.

SHEPHERD

What.

CLOWN

I would you did but see how it chafes, how it rages, how it takes up the shore! But that's not the point.

CLOWN bows for more applause. Waits for laughs.

SHEPHERD

Yeah the baby was just lying here.

BEAR returns, perhaps snacking on a severed limb of ANTIGONUS.

BEAR

Can I ask a question here?

SHEPHERD

Ah it's a bear!

BEAR

Yeah I get that a lot. Hold on. So… this dude throws a baby at me – why don't I eat the baby?

NARRATOR 2

Bears don't talk.

BEAR

I just don't understand my motivation.

ANTIGONUS returns, perhaps missing a limb.

ANTIGONUS

I thought this was about how to survive a Shakespeare play?

NARRATOR 1

All right stop.

BEAR

Babies are tasty. And they don't fight as much.

NARRATOR 1

Let's take this back and show exactly how to avoid random bear attack for the sake of narrative convenience.

SHEPHERD and CLOWN exit, followed by a BEAR. One of them tosses the baby back to ANTIGONUS.

ANTIGONUS enters.

ANTIGONUS

The day frowns more and more: thou'rt like to have
A lullaby too rough: I never saw the heavens so dim by the day.

BEAR enters.

BEAR

Rarrr.

ANTIGONUS

A savage clamour!

BEAR

Clamour. Rarr.

ANTIGONUS

Eat this baby instead!

Throws the baby at the BEAR, but he knocks it aside.

BEAR

Nope.

SHEPHERD enters, finds baby.

SHEPHERD

What have we here! Mercy on ‘s, a barne, a very pretty barne!

ANTIGONUS

Eat the Shepherd instead!

BEAR

Rarrrr.

SHEPHERD throws the baby, and it’s caught by the CLOWN entering.

CLOWN

Hello! I have seen two such sights, by sea and by land!
But I am not to say it is a sea!

SHEPHERD

Eat the clown instead!

BEAR

I don’t like clowns.

SHEPHERD

No one does! That’s why you should eat him!

CLOWN

Hey!

BEAR advances on the CLOWN.

SHEPHERD

Seriously! You're a clown living in a forest in the middle of nowhere! There is literally no good reason for you to exist except to be bear food!

BEAR

I want a better motivation! I hate that bears are stereotyped as killing machines We're cuddly.

ANTIGONUS

How about we all become a family and raise this baby together?

SHEPHERD

I love that.

BEAR

Me too.

ANTIGONUS

But also eat the Clown first.

BEAR chases CLOWN off-stage.

NARRATOR 2

Method Seven: Befriend wild animals and raise children with them.

8. Be friends with animals

NARRATOR 1

And it's not just violent and scary animals that you should be friends with. Lots of other animals can be helpful in surviving Shakespeare.

NARRATOR 2

Method 8!

Holds up a sign

Be friends with animals.

NARRATOR 1

Let's say you're about to do something stupid.

NARRATOR 2

That happens to me all the time.

NARRATOR 1

And imagine you're king of England. An animal can be very helpful.

LEAR enters.

LEAR

Tell me, my daughters,--
Since now we will divest us both of rule,
Interest of territory, cares of state,--
Which of you shall we say doth love us most?
FRANCESCA THE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LLAMA enters, stands next to LEAR.
Wait, don't answer that. Let me pet my emotional support llama first.
He strokes his emotional support llama.
Oh this is soothing. This is very soothing. I feel better about approaching middle-age.
Sorry daughters, that was a terrible idea.

NARRATOR 1

See? Crisis averted!

NARRATOR 2

And even if you do destroy your legacy by splitting your kingdom between three daughters who try to kill each other, an emotional support animal would be very helpful.
LEAR enters, in a storm, driven to madness.

LEAR

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! Rage! Blow!
You cataracts and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples!
He stumbles about.
I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
FRANCESCA THE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT LLAMA enters.
Wait hold on. My emotional support llama has arrived.
He strokes her.
Oh I'm feeling better. Things are looking up.

NARRATOR 1

And it's not just fictional kings that could use animal friends.

NARRATOR 2

Real ones too.

NARRATOR 1

Take Dick 3 for instance.

NARRATOR 2

Richard. His name is Richard.

NARRATOR 1

Right.
RICHARD 3 enters, with CATESBY. He's badly wounded.

RICHARD 3

A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

Withdraw, my lord; I'll help you to a horse.

RICHARD 3

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast –

CATESBY

WHOAH. Rude.

RICHARD 3

And I will stand the hazard of the die:
I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
Five have I slain today instead of him.
A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!

CATESBY

I was totally going to get you a horse but then you called me a slave so I'm pretty offended by you right now. Find your own dang horse.

CATESBY exits.

RICHARD 3

My kingdom for a horse!

HORSE enters.

HORSE

Did someone offer an unreasonable exchange for a horse?

RICHARD 3

Me! Me! I'm dying out here!

HORSE

Hop on, Richard. Ride me.

RICHARD 3

Um…

HORSE

I'm a horse!

RICHARD

A what?

HORSE

A HORSE.

RICHARD

Oh, okay.

RICHARD hops on.

HORSE

And now I'm also king of England.

RICHARD

Wait, what?

HORSE

A deal is a deal. From this day forth I proclaim a new kingdom – ruled by horses – bring me the royal oats, and apples, and those little sugar cubes!

NARRATOR 1

And English history would've been very different if a talking horse was in charge.

CATESBY stumbles in, with blinders on.

CATESBY

My Lord, the people are growing weary of being hitched to wagons all the time. They cannot carry the load.

HORSE

Oh I'm so sad. That seems so unfair. Richard!

RICHARD enters, with a saddle on him.

I feel like going for a refreshing ride in the countryside.

RICHARD

Please, sire, I cannot carry you any longer. My bones are weak. My back is broken. May I have some more rest?

HORSE

I say thee neigh.

RICHARD

But sire –

HORSE

I say thee neigh! Let us go to the human races. I'm hoping to win a trifecta this time.

HORSE puts on a funny hat.

See this funny hat? It's a tradition.

CATESBY

But none of the humans can carry their horse jockeys. They keep collapsing and dying.

HORSE

Oh gee I'm so sad. GIDDYUP.

RICHARD

Oh if only I could back in time and never ask for a horse! They're terrible.

NARRATOR 1

You're in luck! We shall give you a second chance!

RICHARD

Yes!

RICHARD casts off his saddle and assumes the position with CATESBY he was at earlier.

RICHARD

Slave, I have set my life upon a cast –

CATESBY

WHOAH. You're still being a jerk about this?!

RICHARD

And I will stand the hazard of the die:
I think there be six Richmonds in the field;
Five have I slain today instead of him.
A jet pack! A jet pack! My kingdom for a jet pack!

Someone throws a jet pack at RICHARD.

Ha ha suckers!

He flies off.

NARRATOR 2

Yeah that works better.

9. Relationship Counseling

NARRATOR 1

But what happens if you're not about to be killed by an animal and your name isn't even on the title of the play?

NARRATOR 2

Then your problem might be… other people.

NARRATOR 1

Other people are a problem.

NARRATOR 2

Not a fan of other people.

NARRATOR 1

Method 9!

NARRATOR 2

Relationship counseling!

DESDEMONA and EMILIA enter, with OTHELLO.

OTHELLO

Get you to bed on the instant; I will be returned
Forthwith: dismiss your attendant there: look it be done.

DESDEMONA

Sure I guess.

OTHELLO exits.

EMILIA

How goes it now? He looks gentler than he did.

DESDEMONA

OMG, can I just tell you Emilia that Othello is being a total nightmare right now!

EMILIA

Oh man.

DESDEMONA

He just ordered me to go to bed.

Calling out

I'M NOT GOING TO BED CAUSE I'M NOT YOUR DAUGHTER, CREEP.

EMILIA

Is it wise to provoke your husband so?

DESDEMONA

I don't care. Whatever. What's he gonna do?

Calling out

I'M JUST GONNA HANG OUT WITH MY FRIEND EMILIA AND WE'RE GONNA HAVE FUN TOGETHER. You want some popcorn?

End of Excerpt.
To purchase this play or read it in its entirety, visit www.yourstagepartners.com