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July 4 1967

Dear Harold:

Wanted to be over  
you for this back -

I see the show is  
coming to Washington soon

All best

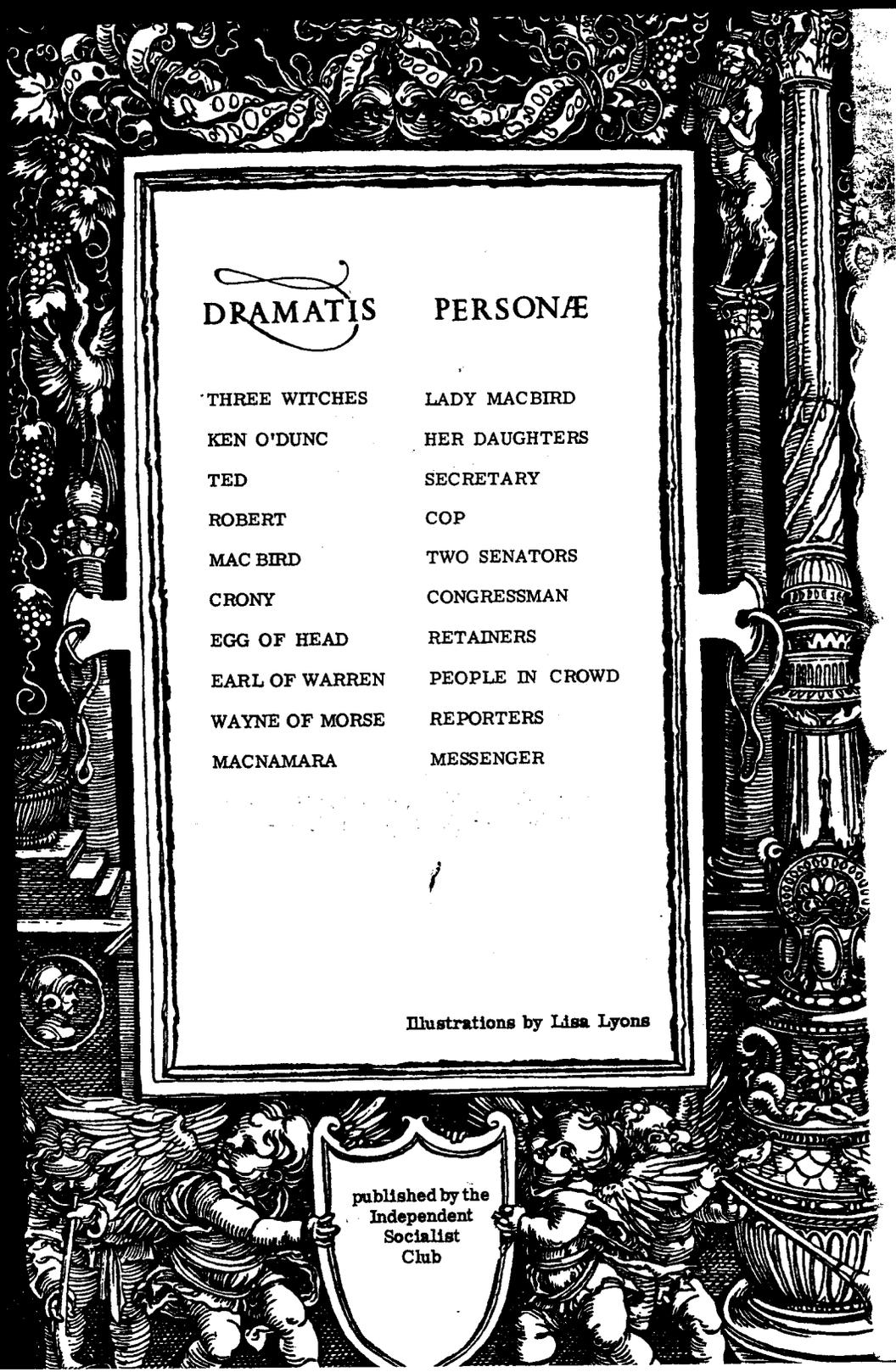
Stephen

# MAC RIRD!



The Days He Hugs  
Victory—He Gets To Conscience Of The War

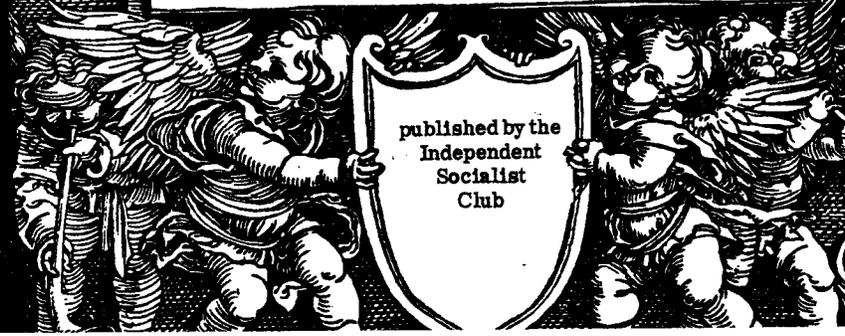
By Barry Guss



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THREE WITCHES	LADY MACBIRD
KEN O'DUNC	HER DAUGHTERS
TED	SECRETARY
ROBERT	COP
MAC BIRD	TWO SENATORS
CRONY	CONGRESSMAN
EGG OF HEAD	RETAINERS
EARL OF WARREN	PEOPLE IN CROWD
WAYNE OF MORSE	REPORTERS
MACNAMARA	MESSENGER

Illustrations by Lisa Lyons



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## ACT I

### Act I, Scene I

(Hotel Corridor at Democratic convention. Three witches slink in. The first witch is dressed as a student demonstrator, beatnik stereotype. The second witch is a Negro with the impeccable grooming and attire of a Muhammed Speaks salesman. The third witch is an old leftist, wearing a workers cap and overalls and carrying a lunch pail.)

1st witch: When shall we three meet again?  
2nd witch: In riot,  
3rd witch: Strike,  
1st witch: Or stopping train?  
2nd witch: When the hurlyburly's done.  
3rd witch: When the race is lost or won.  
1st witch: Out on the convention floor.  
2nd witch: Or in some hotel corridor.  
3rd witch: Where cheering throngs can still be heard,  
1st witch: There to meet with ----- MacBird.  
(A cry, off-stage)  
2nd witch: I come, soul brothers!  
3rd witch: Comrades call!  
1st witch: Away!

(Witches slither off while chanting:)  
Fair is foul and foul is fair.  
Hover through stale and smoke-filled air.

### Act I, Scene II

(Hotel room at the Democratic Convention. The walls are covered with charts and maps showing current tally of votes, campaign posters, etc. In an arm chair at one corner sits Teddy, playing cat's cradle.)

(Enter John and Robert. They look, move, and dress alike, except that John is older, heavier, and more self-assured.)  
John: Like? Dislike? What foolishness is that?  
Robert: Our cause demands suppressing sentiment.  
John: But, Jack, you know it isn't merely scruples.  
Robert: He has a fat, yet hungry, look. Such men are dangerous.  
John: Good God, this womanly whimpering just when I need your manly immorality!  
Robert: But John -- but Jack -- you know it isn't that. (beginning to whine.)  
John: Enough is said! At least we have to ask.  
Robert: He won't accept and, even if he does,  
John: His name will just stand second on the ticket.  
Robert: You, Bob, are still the second in succession.  
John: And Ted is next... and princes yet unborn...  
Robert: And for this land, this crowned continent,  
John: This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars,

This forceful breed of men, this mighty world,  
I see a... New Frontier beyond her seas.  
She shall o'erflow her shores and burst her banks,  
Eastward extend till East does meet with West,  
And West until the West does touch the East  
And o'er this hot and plaguéd earth descend  
The Pox Americana, a sweet haze,  
Shelt'ring all the world in its deep shade.  
And our descendants, locking link to link,  
Shall lay a lofty line of loved kings,  
To serve the faithful, laying low the foe;  
Guiding, guarding, governing this folk.

Ted: Gee, that's keen! (Counting on his fingers) So let's see. . . That means Jack in '60 and '64, then Bobby in '68 and '72, then me in. . . what would that make it. . . '76 and '80 and then in 1984 it could be. . .

Bob: Shut up, Teddy! Can't you see we're busy?  
John: There's much that must be seen and done and heard. Let's first bestow the title on MacBird. (Exit John and Robert. Teddy remains playing cat's cradle, then runs off the stage as the three witches enter.)

3rd witch: Where have you been, brother?  
2nd witch: In L. A.

3rd witch: And where were you?  
1st witch: A troop train taking men to Viet Land  
Came chugging, chugging, chugging through our town.  
"Halt ho!" quoth I, and stood upon the track,  
Then, tossing leaflets, leaped up to the troops:  
"Turn back, turn back, and stop this train.  
Why fight for them and die in vain?"  
But we were few and so did fail:  
Shoved off the train, we went to jail.  
Yet trouble stirred is always for the good.

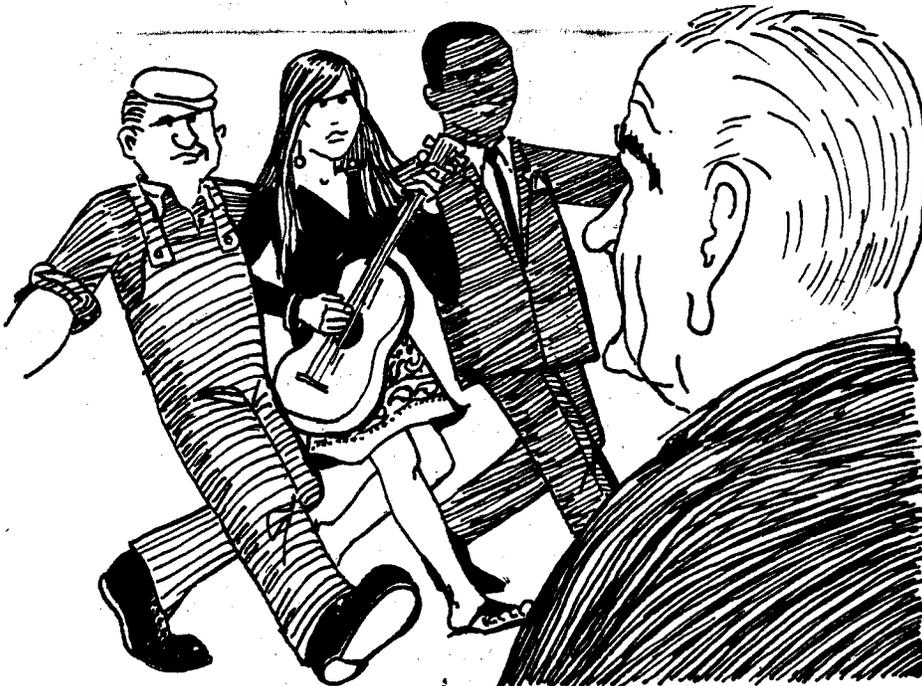
3rd witch: Tell us more about L. A. (loud footsteps, door slams off stage) Who's there? (whisper)

2nd witch: Here comes MacBird. Quick! Hide behind the chair. (The witches scurry to the chair, concealing themselves insufficiently. In the meantime MacBird enters, a large heavy-jowled figure, followed by his crony, a thin sharpy.)

MacBird: So foul, unfair a day I've never seen. (He notes figures behind the chair.)  
Some delegates, I guess, or shy supporters. (toward chair) Why howdy there! (to Crony) Let's give them folks a thrill.  
The name's MacBird! I'm mighty proud to meet ya! (Extends hand toward chair. Witches rise up slowly from behind.)

Crony: Why, it's a nigra and a filthy beatnik.  
MacBird: And there's a burn done up in worker's duds.  
Crony: God damn! Those beatnik picketers all over! Perhaps I better run and call the cops.

MacBird: Now just calm down. I know how to deal with people.  
I'll handle this. (to Witches) OK, let's hear your  
story.  
(Witches move eerily out from behind chair)  
Come on, speak up, now what in thunder are you?



1st witch: All hail MacBird. All hail the Senate's leader.  
2nd witch: All hail MacBird, vice-president thou art.  
3rd witch: All hail MacBird, that shall be president.  
All three: All hail MacBird, that shall be president.

Crony: Hey boss, how come you gulp and seem to fear?  
It has a kind of pretty sound, I think.  
(to witches) If you can look into your crystal ball  
And say who'll get ahead and who'll go down,  
Speak then to me. When he becomes the chief  
What will I be?

1st witch: You'll be his leading hack.

2nd witch: It's not so high, but so much less to fall;  
 For you shall share the fate of his career.  
 MacBird shall be the mightiest of all,  
 But Ken O'Dunc alone shall leave an heir.  
 3rd witch: An heir who'll play a king, like other kings.  
 He too shall be an extra on our set.  
 He'll strut and fret his hour on the boards  
 And be applauded wildly from the pit.  
 But if you skip and read a later page,  
 We take the final bow upon this stage.



MacBird: (who has been absorbed in his thoughts through the last two speeches)  
 The Senate leader, that I know I am.  
 But how vice-president, when Ken O'Dunc  
 Despises me like dirt? And to be chief --  
 Unthinkable while Ken O'Dunc holds sway!  
 (Witches start to slither off the stage)  
 Stay, you lying varmints! Tell me more!  
 Where'd you learn this hogwash that you tell?  
 And why the devil did you come to me?  
 Come on! Speak out!

Crony: They're gliding off the stage.  
 Witches: (continuing to move off, and chanting together)  
 The bosses shall be booted in the bin,  
 The kings unkinged. We have a world to win!  
 MacBird: Vice-president -- and president to be!  
 Crony: It's not the natural path to reach the top.

Robert: (Enter Bobby)  
 Hail MacBird, vice-president thou art --  
 That is, if you'll accept the second place.  
 My brother Jack has picked you for the job  
 And hopes that you'll agree to grace his slate.  
 MacBird: (aside) Vice-president -- and president to be!  
 Bobby: I know of course it's not what you had hoped.  
 It's really just an honorary post.  
 And so I'm sure you must want time to think.  
 Perhaps we'll get together late tonight.

MacBird: I thank your brother. Let him know for me  
 I do accept with deep humility.  
 Bobby: (faltering) Well... That's just fine... I guess that  
 means that we...

MacBird: Should go and meet together sometime... soon.  
 Bobby: (firmly) We've got a lot to do. Today. But when?  
 MacBird: (quizzical) At ten o'clock?

MacBird: OK, I'll see you then.  
 (exit MacBird and Crony. Exit Bobby)

Act I: Scene III

(Ken O'Dunc's hotel room. On stage are John and Robert surrounded by a group of their advisors. In the chair in the corner sits Teddy, playing solitaire.)

Bobby: (gossiping with circle) And just like that, he took it  
 on the spot.  
 (group gasps, showing surprise and dismay)

John: Unity required that we ask him.  
Bobby: The party must be made to speak as one.  
John: Concensus, lords, concensus is the thing!  
Bobby: The jewel upon the crown that marks the king.  
John: So gentlemen, that's now the way it stands.  
(Enter MacBird. Conversation stops short but Mac-  
Bird proceeds heartily)

MacBird: Howdy, folks. (pause with no response) I want to  
~~thank-you-all-(earnestly)~~  
I know you all conferred in choosing me. (pause)  
I wonder if you know just what this means  
To me, a boy who nearly dropped from school?  
Vice-president of these United States!  
Why, it's an inspiration to all boys  
Who daily toil, and sometimes feel despair,  
To know that in the White House -- or quite near --  
There dwells a man who had to work like them,  
Who knew the struggles, knew the ups and downs.  
It gives a boy faith in this, our land.

John: And we in turn thank you, your quick response.  
MacBird: Why thanks.

John: Thank you. (more formally) Friends,  
brothers, lords,  
All you who are nearest to us, know  
We will establish our estate upon  
The eldest, Robert, whom we now do name  
The Lord of Laws, Henceforth our closest counsel.  
In all affairs of state we are as one.  
To him entrust your thoughts as though to me.  
And now to plan the tone of our campaign.

MacBird: Say, how about conferring on my ranch?  
John: I have some business here a day or two.

MacBird: Well then, I'll go ahead. You come next week.  
The wife and I must quickly organize  
A welcome worthy of our honored guest.  
We'll have a grand procession through the streets  
For you to greet the people of my state.

John: Adieu, MacBird. We'll see you in a week.  
Bobby: Adieu. (all shaking hands and filing out)  
Others: Adieu.  
MacBird: Adieu, my lords, adieu.

(Exit all except MacBird. Ted gathers up his cards  
and runs out last.)  
MacBird: This Lord of Laws, be blasted, there's the rub,  
For in my way it lies. (slowly) Stars, hide your fires.  
Let no light see my black and deep desires.

Act I, Scene IV

(A room on the MacBird ranch. Lady MacBird is seated at her desk and reading aloud from a letter.)

Lady MB: ". . . and these weird critters had no sooner slithered out when in strides Bobby, the punky younger brother, trumpeting out their very words. 'Hail MacBird, Vice-president thou art.' I don't know what the devil they are but I reckon it's something mighty deep.

So now it's two down and one to go.  
I'll be home straight from here and we can puzzle out these strange happenings together. I just wanted you to know right away, my dearest little pardner, what we have and what's been promised.

Be seeing you real soon,

Your loving Bird"

All hail MacBird, the president to be!  
And yet I fear you're not direct enough.  
The naked act would scandalize your eye.  
You need to dress it up, to drape it out,  
In purple prose that robes it nobly.  
Your mind's too full of all your own conceits  
To catch the nearest way, the clearest way.  
You're not without ambition but you lack  
The forthrightness to face your own desire.  
You'd take the gold and never ask the source.  
You'd swindle if the act were vague enough  
And yet you'd never swipe it clean and clear,  
For lack of means to mystify the deed.  
How often in the past have I arranged  
To have the right connections come your way,  
Myself performing all the devious acts  
So you receive the bounty graciously.  
How artfully you've learned to look away  
While I prepare the props and set the stage.  
Then enter thou, declaiming loftily,  
Forgetting the deceit that makes for art.  
There's much you wish were done but would not do.  
For fear you'd see too clear your own intent.  
What you want highly you want holily. . .

(MacBird

enters)

All hail MacBird!

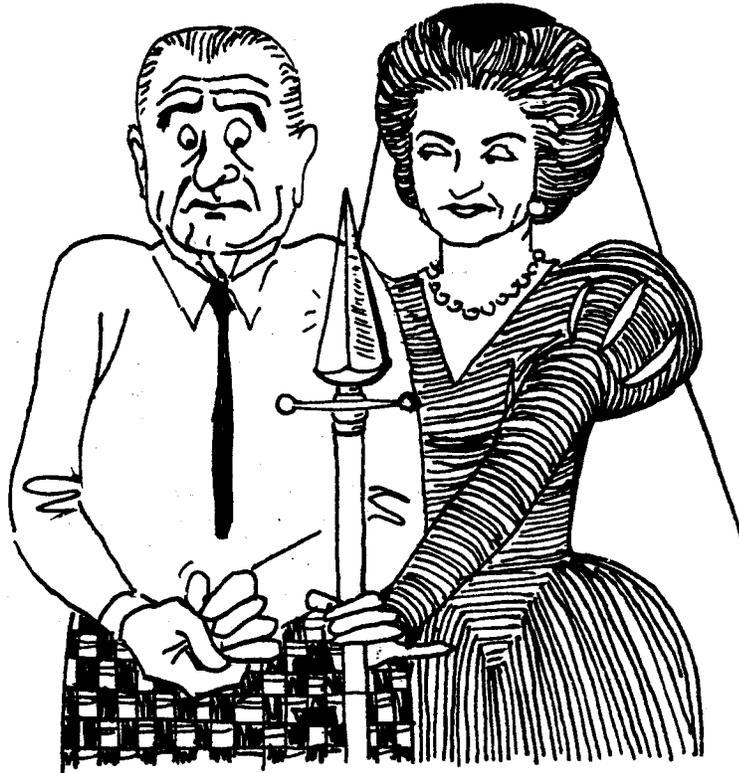
MacBird: All hail, sweet innocent!

Lady MB: All hail MacBird, the President to be!  
Your letters have transported me beyond  
This feeble present and I feel the surge  
Of future power now.

MacBird: My dearest Bird,  
Ken O'Dunc comes here this very week.

Lady MB: And when departs?

MacBird: A day or two, I think.



Lady MB: Oh, never shall the sunlight see that day!  
 Don't look so shocked. It's not the time to pose.  
 We have to choose our route and hew our way.  
 We cannot sidestep gingerly the mud;  
 Our path's direct.

MacBird: If we should fail?  
 Lady MB: We -- fail?

The only danger lies in faltering.  
 The boldest deed, the biggest lie wins out.  
 This lesson we have learned from Ken O'Dunc.  
 Remember he attacked that rebel isle,  
 Denied he did it, then announced: "Twas I!"  
 The major thing is confidence and style,  
 For still the world believes he'd never lie.

MacBird: Indeed the man's a dangerous hypocrite.  
 This nation needs old-fashioned honesty.  
 It needs a man with moral might and will;  
 It needs a man of deep sincerity.  
 (noise of a motor on high)

Lady MB: Hark, hark! His helicopter o'er the range!  
 MacBird: You greet our fork-tongued guest, whild I go change.  
 (noise of helicopter landing. Exit MacBird. Enter  
 John with Teddy, Bob, and entourage.)

Bobby: (sarcastic) My God, they've got an oil well in the  
garden!

Ted: (enthusiastic) Bobby, look! There's moo-moos on the  
lawn!

1st man: (sarcastic) Luncheons on the grass here must be  
charming!

2nd man: (sarcastic) I understand they roast the oxen whole.

John: (seeing Lady MacBird and calling aloud)  
Lady MacBird! Good day, our gentle hostess.  
Your rustic homestead charms us.

Lady MB: Thank you'all.  
Although this welcome's humble, be assured  
We're honored to receive you at the ranch.  
And simple folk throughout this ample state  
Are clamoring to see you. So for them,  
This Friday noon we've planned a grand parade,  
A fitting welcome, where the passionate throng  
Will line the streets and fill the buildings round.  
At doors and windows, yea, on chimney tops,  
Their infants in their arms, like that they'll stand,  
The live-long day with patient expectation  
To see their leader pass the streets downtown.  
And when they see your open carriage near,  
They'll raise a din and universal shout.

John: This welcome planned unduly honors us.

Lady MB: I hope you'll stay till Friday.

John: Yes, that's fine.

Lady MB: MacBird awaits within; let's go and dine.  
(All exit into the house)

Act I, Scene V

(A downtown street. Toward the left a tall building.  
Toward the right a grassy knoll. The crowd is lining  
the street. They have their backs to the audience and  
stand toward the outside of the stage. The crowd may  
be quite small, with sound effects taken from a base-  
ball game or some other grossly disproportionate  
roaring throng. They point in toward the stage, so  
the parade route is imagined to be between them and  
the backdrop.)

1st voice: So rich!

2nd voice: So young.

3rd voice: And yet so wise and sure.

1st voice: It feels so safe to know he's there.

4th voice: (male) Aw, hell!  
He's just a politician like the rest.

3rd voice: Oh hush, you fool. He's there protecting us.  
He gives his youth and strength to keep us free.

1st voice: And still has time to help out with the kids.

2nd voice: This morning's paper showed his little girl  
Dressed up in Mommy's shoes. It's on page three.

1st voice: I love those kids as if they were my own.

4th voice: You make me sick!

3rd voice: Shut up, you grouch!

1st voice: What's that?  
2nd voice: His car just came in sight. You see it there?  
All: He's coming... He's coming... He's going... He's  
going...

(a loud bang) He's gone!  
(This line is chanted as the heads of the crowd turn slowly from left to right as if following the movement of the president's car across the stage. The car should appear to be off stage by the time the shot rings out.)

Crowd: (a universal shout)

1st voice: Oh no!  
2nd voice: Can't be!  
3rd voice: They've shot the president!  
5th voice: Oh, piteous sight!  
1st voice: Oh, noble Ken O'Dunc!  
2nd voice: Oh, woeful scene!  
6th voice: Oh, traitorous villainy!  
2nd voice: They shot from there.  
1st voice: No, that way.  
3rd voice: Did you see?  
4th voice: Let's get the facts. Let's go and watch T. V.  
(crowd runs off the stage to the right, shouting.)

Crowd:

C'mon, c'mon!  
It's that way!  
Yeah!

Let's go!

(One policeman remains on the stage and takes a piece of paper out of his pocket.)

Cop: It says the shots will be from that way sent. (pointing toward tall building on left)  
(earnestly) I'll get that skunk who killed our president!  
(Cop strides off toward building with determination.)

#### Act I, Scene VI

(The public street. Crowd drifts back in. Among them Lady MacBird to one side; Ted and Bobby over to the other side, looking furtive; and the cop with a rifle in his hand.)

3rd voice: The nation weeps as one. All work is stopped.  
The men desert the plants. The schools are shut.  
The housewife leaves her pots; the food is burnt.  
The cars and public busses quit their routes.  
All private cares forgotten, strangers stop  
And ask each other questions on the street.

1st voice: What news?

2nd voice: I heard they've taken someone in.  
Lady MB: (to cop) Is't known who did this more than bloody  
deed?

Cop: He's a notorious traitor. Here, take this weapon  
(hands it to someone)  
Which I have just discovered on the spot.

1st voice: Why'd he do it?  
 3rd voice: Has the cur denied it?  
 Cop: The wretch in part confessed his villainy.  
 Lady MB: Where is the viper? Bring the villain forth!  
 (enter MacBird)

MacBird: (striding to center of stage)  
 That snake is dead who killed our president.  
 What -- dead?

1st voice: Who did it?  
 2nd voice: Wherefore did he so?  
 3rd voice: Who could refrain when Ken O'Dunc lies dead?  
 MacBird: Who could be calm that saw that scoundrel grin?  
 Who could be loyal yet neutral? I tell thee, no man.

Bobby: (whispering to Ted) What should be spoken here I dare  
 not say.

Teddy: What will you do? We are the rightful heirs.  
 Bobby: Keep still. The nearer in blood, the nearer bloody.  
 Teddy: There's something rotten in the state of Texas.  
 Voice: Lady MacBird is fainting!  
 Lady MB: Oh, some air . . .  
 (She falls to the ground. Great hubbub around the  
 fainted Lady MacBird)

1st voice: What's next?  
 3rd voice: The world's gone mad!  
 4th voice: This country's  
 doomed!

MacBird: (stepping up on stoop or stool and addressing crowd  
 in deliberate grand manner.)  
 Good countrymen, this madness must abate.  
 Be calm, my friends; I speak as head of state.

## ACT II

### Act II, Scene I

(Bobby and Ted on stage)

Teddy: What should we do?  
 Bobby: This murderous gun that's shot  
 Is not yet empty, so our safest course  
 Is to avoid its aim.

Teddy: Well then, let's flee.  
 Bobby: You make a better target when you're bounding  
 Through empty fields, a silhouetted form.  
 I think it's safer milling in the herd  
 Where any shot may hit another mark.  
 The hunter must give pause when he observes  
 A single shot may cause a wild stampede.

Teddy: Then you'll stay here?  
 Bobby: At least until I know  
 What forces may be brought against MacBird.

Teddy: I'll go. You stay. Denounce him to the world.  
 Bobby: No good, not yet. Let's fight with subtle words

Till time lends friends and friends their trusted  
swords.

(exit Teddy)

A man, full man, I need to fight with me.

(enter Egg of Head)

Lord Stevenson, the Egg of Head! How now?



Egg:

No feeble words of mine can hope to ease  
This double grief, the nation's and your own.  
Oh, what a noble mind was here brought down!  
The statesman's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue,  
sword,

The expectancy and rose of this fair state,  
The glass of fashion and the mold of form,  
Supreme in war and thus our hope for peace,  
The believed of all believers -- quite, quite dead.  
And I, of statesmen most deject and wretched,  
That sucked the honey of his many vows,  
Now see that noble and most sovereign leader  
His silver skin laced with his own bright blood,  
That unmatched form and feature of grown youth,  
Blasted with a rifle. Woe is me!  
To see what I have seen; see what I shall see!

Bobby: Again, Great Egg, your tongue gilds even death.  
Your well-draped words oft veil a bloody fact.  
(conspiratorially) "To see what I have seen; see what I shall see."

Egg: Perhaps you share my fears of what's to come.  
Perhaps you share my doubts on what was done.  
I've heard some talk, I've thought some thoughts, but I  
Prefer to wait, to give MacBird a chance.  
This new regime, though watered with warm blood,  
May grow and bloom in peace. As to your doubts,  
There's rumors round but I have seen no proof.

Bobby: There's proof enough for one who wants to see.  
To see or not to see? that is the question.

Egg: Whether 'tis wiser as a statesman to ignore  
The gross deception of outrageous liars,  
Or to speak out against a reign of evil  
And by so doing, end there for all time  
The chance and hope to work within for change.  
To work within the framework, there's the rub.  
For who would bear the whips and scorns from boors,  
The oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely,  
The insolence of office and the spurns  
My patient merit of this braggart takes --  
But for the fear of something worse than death.  
In speaking out one loses influence.  
The chance for change by pleas and prayers is gone.  
The chance to modify the devil's deeds  
As critic from within is still my hope.  
To quit the club! Be outside looking in!  
This outsidersness, this unfamiliar land  
From which few travellers ever get back in --  
It puzzles mind, it paralyzes will,  
And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
Than fly to others that we know not of.  
Security makes cowards of us all.  
I fear to break; I'll work within for change.

Bobby: MacBird permits no critics from within.  
He draws the line and all are forced to toe.  
You're with him or against him, get that straight.  
Your safety, sir, demands his overthrow.

Egg: I know you think I'm acting like a toad,  
But still I choose the middle of the road.  
(exit Egg of Head; exit Bobby)

Act II, Scene II

(MacBird's presidential office. On the wall behind his desk is a huge (40-foot) picture of Lyndon Johnson. Office furniture is impressively official but includes a rocking chair. On stage is MacBird's Crony.)

Crony: You've got it now, just like those weirdos said --  
His room, his desk, his throne-like rocking chair.  
You live as lord while he lies cold and dead.  
Yet Ken O'Dunc alone shall leave an heir.

(Enter MacBird surrounded by his entourage, which includes the same advisors who surrounded Ken O'Dunc.

MacBird: What do you mean, "they're all talking"? Who's talking?

1st man: The older one is button-holing people, telling them all kinds of things.

MacBird: What do you mean "all kind of things"? What things?

1st man: Well actually, nothing specific. He's just suggesting things.

3rd man: He really doesn't say anything, but everyone's listening to him.

MacBird: If there's one thing I can't stand, it's a yellow-bellied hypocrite. If a man's got something to say, let him step right up and say it to your face.

4th Man: Listen boss, it's only one guy whining a little. He's just a sore loser. Everybody can tell that. What harm can he do?

MacBird: In this business we all have our enemies. And I know I'm not immune to personal attacks either. But personal attacks are one thing. We're talking about attacks on the President of the United States. The President needs consensus and unity. I love my country and I love her government. I will suffer much slander myself, suffer in silence. But I will not permit attacks upon our president. Do you all understand that?

All: Yes sir. Yes sir.

MacBird: What about the younger brother?

3rd Man: He's flying to Boston. At least that's what I heard.

MacBird: (Distinctly) Have I no friends will rid me of these living fears?

(Secretary pokes her head in at the door.)

Secretary: The Earl of Warren's here.

MacBird: Well, send him in.

Earl: My lord, you sent for me.

MacBird: I know; sit down.

(Earl sits down; MacBird remains standing, pacing, etc.)

My predecessor's death has grieved the nation.

Earl: Indeed, he was beloved.

MacBird: Indeed, quite right. (gruffly)

Now some few folks whose wits are crazed with grief  
 Still seek a villain, chase a phantom foe.  
 Although the killer's killed, they cannot rest.  
 And I desire to set their minds at ease.  
 Small doubts still flit like fleas throughout the nation.

Earl: That's why I'd like a full investigation,  
 Conducted by a man of such repute  
 That we may put an end to all these doubts.  
 That man is you.

Earl: O curséd spite!

MacBird: That ever I was born to set things right.  
 I don't believe you understand the job.  
 I wouldn't say you're asked to set things right.  
 I think you get the point.

Earl: Oh, whine and pout,  
 That ever I was born to bury doubt.

MacBird: You get the picture now.  
Earl: I can't accept.  
MacBird: Cannot accept? Your nation needs you, boy.  
In times of crisis, confidence is key.  
Respect for law and leaders guides this land.  
If folks suspect their leaders, law breaks down.  
You'd help destroy the very law you love.  
Just think about those law-abiding folk  
That should be sheltered from despair and doubt.  
Those simple people need their trusting faith.  
They count on us to work their problems out.

Earl: It's too confusing. Let me think it out.  
MacBird: Earl, you and I must tolerate confusion.  
We bear this load to save them their illusion.  
Earl: I cannot go against the needs of conscience.  
MacBird: Forget your needs as I forget my own.  
Private likes and dislikes must give way.  
For their sake, share this load I bear alone.  
Your nation is awaiting what you say.  
Earl: This tragic ambiguity makes me hesitant.  
But duty wins. I'm with you, Mr. President.  
MacBird: (slapping him on back) Well, well, I knew that you'd  
come through.

Earl: Adieu, MacBird.  
MacBird: So long, you'all.  
Earl: Adieu.  
(Exit Earl of Warren.)

MacBird: A man of honor; mighty rare these days.  
(Secretary sticks her head in at the door.)  
Secretary: The press is here.  
MacBird: Jes' let 'em cool their heels.  
(Secretary closes door, leaves.)  
MacBird: (to self) I've got ta write this speech to meet the  
press.  
(settling at desk, taking up pen)  
Now, how do I convey my earnestness,  
The agony I suffer silently  
While cares of state are tearing me apart;  
My deep concern for every living soul  
Contrasted with the grandeur of my vision.  
Now, how to make one interview show that...  
(MacBird becomes absorbed in writing. At other end  
of the room, two members of his entourage conspire  
together.)

1st man: Did you not hear MacBird, the way he said,  
"Have I no friends will rid me of this living fear?"  
Wasn't it so?

2nd man: Those were his very words.  
1st man: "Have I no friends", he said, and so distinct.  
He said it with a meaning.

2nd man: That he did.  
1st man: And saying it, I thought he looked at me  
As if to say, "I wish you were that friend  
To rid me of this terror in my heart."

He meant, of course, those brothers. Come, let's go.  
I am that friend will rid him of his foe.  
(Exit two men.)

MacBird: (picking up phone) Okay, Miss Mayor, send the news-  
men in.  
(Newsmen enter chattering. They set up cameras,  
microphones, lights, teleprompter. MacBird shakes  
some hands, slaps some backs, etc., then returns to  
pose at his desk. Noise dies down; hushes are heard)

Newsmen: Pipe down, be still. MacBird's about to speak.  
(Silence. MacBird rises to his feet.)

MacBird: A tragic twist of fateful sorrow, friends,  
Made me your President that fearful day.  
And I shall be the President of all:  
Not just the rich, not just the fortunate,  
Not just the folks who vote for me, but all (ominous  
or emphatic)  
And stretching out beyond our nation's shores,  
To East and West around this seething globe,  
Where constant conflagrations blaze and rage,  
We mean to be the fireman of peace,  
Dousing flames with freedom's forceful flow.  
Our highest goal is peace, but in its quest  
We shall not fear to use our righteous might.  
In short, we seek that Pox Americana  
That all the Freedom-Loving world desires.  
The unity of all alone contents us.  
We plan to guide this planet by consensus.

(Pause. Applause. Reporters raise their hands and  
MacBird nods to one.)

Reporter: Your majesty, how do you view our future?

MacBird: I'm glad you asked that, Bob ----- I have a dream.  
We have an opportunity to move  
Not only toward the rich society,  
But upwards toward the Grand Society.  
My Grand Society has room for all;  
For each, a house, a car, a family,  
A private psychoanalyst, a dog,  
And rows of gardens, neatly trimmed and hedged.  
This land will be a garden carefully pruned.  
We'll lop off any branch that looks too tall,  
That seems to grow too lofty or too fast.  
And any weed that springs up on our soil,  
To choke the plants I've neatly set in rows,  
Gets plucked up root and all, by me, MacBird -----  
And this I do for you, my wholesome flowers.  
I see a garden blooming undisturbed  
Where all the buds are even in their rows.  
An ordered garden, sweet with unity,  
That is my dream; my Grand Society.

(Applause from reporters which finally dies down.)

MacBird: I thank you, gentlemen. Next question, please.

Reporter: Your majesty, how do you plan to deal  
With rebel groups which thrive in Viet Land?

MacBird: What rebel groups? Where is this Viet Land?  
Who gave them folks permission to rebel?  
Lord MacNamara, valiant chief of war,  
What is this place I've just been asked about?

MacNamara: It's way off to the East, 8000 miles.  
A little land we're trying to subdue.

MacBird: What crap is this "we're trying to subdue"?  
Since when do we permit an open challenge  
To all the world's security and peace?  
Rip out those Reds! Destroy them, root and branch!  
Deploy whatever forces you think we need!  
Eradicate this noxious, spreading weed!

MacNamara: Your word is my command. Your will is done.  
That land will be subdued ere set of sun.  
(Exit MacNamara; MacBird turns back to press.)

MacBird: Gentlemen, I thank you all for coming.  
You're now dismissed.

All: Thank you, your majesty.  
(Reporters begin to file out. Handshakes; cameras  
removed, etc. A small cluster gathers.)

Reporter 1: What a shit!

Reporter 2: I guess you've heard the rumors.

Reporter 1: Rumors, hell! I heard him here today.

Reporter 3: The world is gonna be his private garden.  
Defoliating weeds and lopping branches.  
(MacBird ambles over toward the group.)

Reporter 2: Watch out or you'll be weeded out yourself.

MacBird: (backslapping) How'd it go? You know I'm new at this,  
heh, heh.

Reporters: Oh, fine.

MacBird: I hope your story's good enough  
So I can ask you all back here next time.  
(They start to move off.)

MacBird: Write it well now.

Reporter 1: Yes sir-ree.

Reporter 2: Will do.

MacBird: (calling as they leave) My secretary's waiting in the  
hall  
With autographed photos for you all.  
(Reporters leave, except for one or two at the door.  
MacBird turns to Crony.)

MacBird: By ding! That press confab went off real well.  
I hit it off just fine with all the boys.  
But editors will twist the story round.  
They're all against me viciously, you know.  
(Enter Lady MacBird followed by her two daughters.  
Lady MacBird is carrying a giant bouquet of flowers.  
She is distraught. The daughters carry aerosol cans.  
Lady MacBird sniffs around the room, gasping at a  
foul odor. She stops at MacBird.)



Lady MB: Here's the smell. Out, out damned odor, out!  
(Daughters press aerosol sprays.)  
The smell of blood is still within my nostrils.

MacBird: (tense, whispering to Lady MacBird)  
My dearest sparrow, cut this nonsense out!  
She's been this way or worse for several days now.

Daughter 1:  
Daughter 2: We have to follow after her with air-wick,  
For every several steps she stops and sniffs  
And crying out, "There's blood upon this spot!",  
She makes us spray to mask the phantom smell.

Daughter 1:  
Daughter 2: And everywhere she goes, she carries flowers.  
The rooms are sickly sweet with perfumed plants.

Daughter 1: I think our mother's finally flipped her lid.  
(Lady MacBird has been wandering around the room.  
Now she speaks distractedly.)

Lady MB: Flowers by the roadside... Plant these flowers...  
Let all the land be lined with living blooms.  
Yet all the petals of a summer's roses  
Can never sweeten this accursed land.

MacBird: (to Lady MB) Be calm, sweet bird. (to others) She's  
often like this... nerves...  
To ease your frenzied wits, we will decree  
That all our highways shall be lined with flowers.  
(speechifying to press near door)  
We all applaud the lofty dedication  
With which you seek to beautify our nation.  
(pushing Lady MB out the door with daughters)  
And now, sweet woodchuck, charming chickadees,  
Go Chirping off and tend your household chores.  
(Lady MacBird exits, and her sighs and exclamations,  
along with the whish of air-wick, are heard off stage.  
MacBird sinks down at the desk with discouragement.  
MacNamara enters excitedly.)

MacNamara: MacBird!  
MacBird: Good God, what's next?  
MacNamara: The matter's  
urgent.

It's touching on our war in Viet Land.  
That pacifying program we embarked on  
Did not compel surrender, as we hoped.

A new approach is desperately required.  
 MacBird: Are we, or are we not, the strongest power?  
 MacNamara: Of course we are.  
 MacBird: Then why this blabbering?  
 MacNamara: Yes sir, but we've run into complications  
 Which must be settled soon.  
 MacBird: (sigh) Then come with me.  
 (they walk together toward exit)  
 I git to be a-weary o' this show  
 And wish my country didn't need me so.

Act II, Scene III

(A street in front of Bobby's residence. Two of Bobby's aides are heading toward his house, dressed conspiratorily in trench coats, hats low over eyes.)

1st aide: Who else will be at Bobby's house this evening?  
 2nd aide: Some senators, a congressman and us.  
 Last night he met with unionists and press,  
 This morning with the independent right,  
 Tomorrow come the leaders of the left.  
 He wisely speaks to each group separately.

1st aide: Have all agreed to join our enterprise?  
 2nd aide: The Negro leaders say their flocks are wary,  
 But then of course, they've no place else to go.  
 The southern racists think MacBird a traitor,  
 And so may not impede his overthrow.  
 Some fear the widening war, while others say  
 He's meddling with our military stands.  
 All fear his one-man rule, his arrogance;  
 His secret murders stink upon his hands.  
 And Bobby is the man who can unite  
 The tyrant's foes, though they be left or right.

(They knock on Bobby's door; he opens and steps cautiously outside.)

Bobby: Shhh, the house is bugged. Let's stay out here.  
 2nd aide: How goes it, Bobby?

1st aide: Which ones have agreed?

2nd aide: What firm commitments have we to our cause?

Bobby: It's going just as well as we could hope,  
 No worse, no better; naturally they hedge.  
 Yet certain major groups are lined up firm.

2nd aide: Tonight we've got the wishy-washy liberals.

1st aide: We've got to stress the threat he is to them.  
 These congressmen must see that he'll destroy  
 Their liberties ---- make them of no more voice  
 Than dogs that are so often beat for barking  
 Though they are kept to do so.

2nd aide: Heat them up.

Bobby: Remind them of their ancient sovereignties  
 Which now are trampled under by MacBird.  
 Heat not the furnace for our foes so hot  
 That it may singe ourselves. For if we win,  
 Then we will have to temper this fierce heat.

(Enter congressman and two senators)  
 1st aide: Who's there?  
 Senator 1: It's us.  
 Bobby: It's safe, I know the voice.  
 (They draw near. Handshakes, etc.)  
 I think you know each other, gentlemen.  
 You know the solemn purpose of our meeting.  
 Cong'man: I also know MacBird is waxing strong.  
 His warped roots are spreading in the earth.  
 Thus planted firm he sucks the soil's fertility  
 And any green and tender shoot's choked out.  
 Senator 1: It's all too true. I heard about your brother.  
 1st aide: What news is this? Has Teddy met with ill?  
 2nd aide: I thought you knew. Last week his airplane crashed.  
 A most peculiar failure in the engine.  
 Bobby: MacBird mailed out a wreath immediately.  
 2nd aide: But Teddy merely broke a bone or two.  
 Senator 1: He's strong and wicked. None of us can stop him.  
 Senator 2: I see our nation sink beneath her yoke.  
 She weeps, she bleeds, and each new day a gash  
 Is added to her wounds.  
 Bobby: Then bleed poor land!  
 Great tyranny has dug his roots too firm,  
 For no one here dares check him.  
 Cong'man: No, not true!  
 Senator 2: Or else why are we here?  
 Bobby: Your words revive my spirits, gentlemen.  
 (A gallop is heard off-stage)  
 1st aide: Who comes so fast?  
 2nd aide: I see the Wayne of Morse.  
 (Wayne of Morse strides in rapidly, wearing armor  
 and carrying lance)  
 Bobby: An unexpected though most welcome guest.  
 Wayne: Forgive this rash intrusion. I have come  
 Because I cannot stand this nation's war.  
 MacBird's gone mad, a killer turned berserk.  
 Each morn new widows' wails, new orphan cries  
 Howl up to heaven.  
 Cong'man: I grant him bloody,  
 Arrogant, avaricious, false, vindictive,  
 Smacking of every sin that has a name;  
 And yet the war itself, without his villainy,  
 May have to be more brutal than we hoped.  
 Bobby: I basically agree with both positions.  
 Regardless of the war, one thing is certain ----  
 This man's not fit to rule in war or peace.  
 We all agree to that.  
 Wayne: Fit to govern!  
 No, not fit to live! Oh, nation miserable,  
 With an untitled tyrant, bloody-sceptered,  
 When shalt thou see thy wholesome days again?  
 Bobby: We've met to help restore our land to health.  
 Let's swear to her our resolution now,  
 That we shall cut this cancer from her flesh,  
 This tyrant whose name alone blisters our tongues.

1st aide: Let's swear, let's swear!  
 2nd aide: Our hearts, our hands are yours.

Bobby: Give me your hands, each of you one by one. (They shake all around)

Senator 1: I swear!  
 Senator 2: I swear!  
 Cong'man: And here's my solemn oath.  
 Senator 2: About the Egg of Head, should we sound him?  
 Cong'man: Let us not leave him out.  
 Senator 1: No, by no means.  
 1st aide: Oh, let us have him, for his silver tongue  
 Can purchase us the purest reputation  
 And buy approval for 'most any deed.  
 Wayne: Why mention it? He'll never go along.  
 Senator 2: I would have said the same a week ago,  
 And yet I have a friend who heard him say  
 He could no longer keep his silent vow,  
 But he must speak, and for the very cause  
 The Wayne of Morse is stirred -- that is, these wars.  
 2nd aide: It's said within this coming week he means  
 To rise and break in public from MacBird.  
 1st aide: I've heard the same.  
 Wayne: I know it can't be true.  
 Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave is he!  
 Is it not monstrous how he bows and begs?  
 He lives but in a fiction, in a dream,  
 Wherein he plays the hero. But awake,  
 A dull and muddy-mettled fellow he.  
 He plays the puppet, jiggling on the stage;  
 He jumps for any hand that pulls the strings.

Senator 2: No, no, you're wrong! I've got it from my source;  
 He'll speak this week.

Wayne: Alas, it can't be true.  
 (someone has come in and handed a note to Bobby  
 which he scans)

Bobby: What's this? (scans) He might have spoken up before.  
 The Egg of Head is gone; he'll speak no more.  
 (Bobby passes the note to congressman.)

Cong'man: (scanning note) "He dropped down in the street", the  
 message says.  
 "The press was quick to call it heart attack,  
 And yet the rumor goes that near the body,  
 A poison dart was found."

1st aide: Oh, villainy!  
 Senator: The Egg of Head is gone.  
 Bobby: Be comforted.  
 Let's make a potion of our great revenge  
 To cure the deadly grief.

Senator 1: Alas, he's gone.  
 Bobby: Make this the whetstone of your swords. Let grief  
 Convert to anger. Don't blunt your heart, enrage it.  
 Senator 1: He hasn't touched us yet, but who is next?

Cong'man:  
2nd aide:

Oh, villain, traitor, cur.

Alas, poor country!

It can't be called our mother, but our grave  
Where no one but the ignorant feels safe.

Wayne:

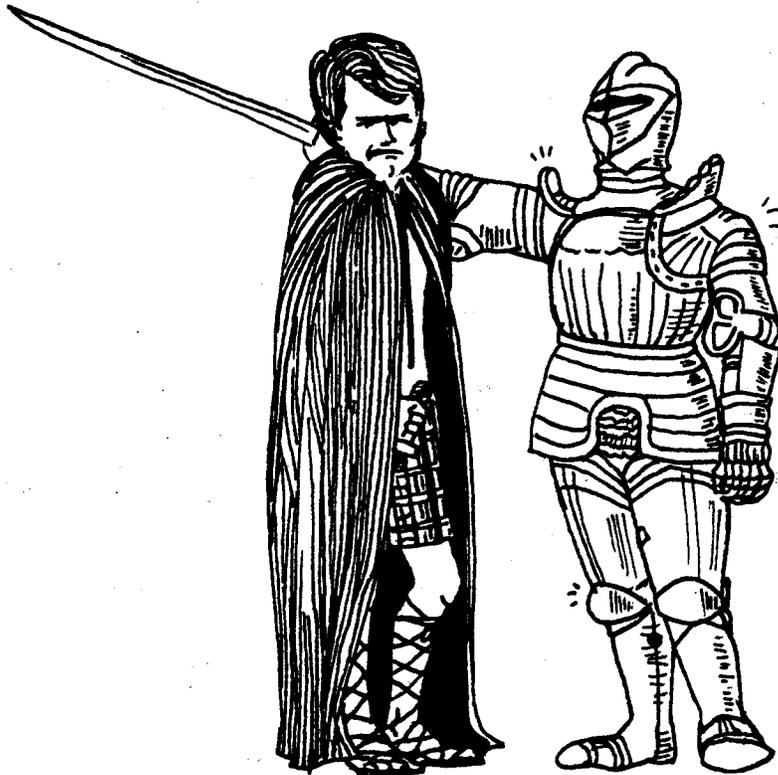
Where sighs and groans and shrieks that rend the air  
Are all unheard by men who dare not hear.  
This violent discord seems the modern tune.  
The bloody hand that plucks our flowers here  
Is ravishing the fields in Viet Land.  
Oh, carnal, bloody and unnatural act!  
The accidental bombing, casual slaughters!

Cong'man:  
Senator 2:  
2nd aide:

Tsk, tsk.

He's right.

It's got to end somewhere.



Wayne:

I must be off. I have to make a speech in  
Some college town where someone's planned a teach-  
in.

I'm off to fight the war.

Adieu.

Farewell. (exit Wayne)

All:  
Wayne:  
Cong'man:  
Bobby:

A bit of an extremist, I would say.  
I think that we can use him anyway.

Messenger: (enter Messenger)  
 Your brother's had an accident;  
 This time his yacht exploded.

Senator 1: Woe are we.

Messenger: But once again he merely broke some bones.

Senator 2: (to Bobby) You may be next, I fear.

1st aide: You know his nature,

1st aide: (cont'd) Jealous and aggressive. We've seen his sword;  
 Its edge is sharp; it's long and reaches far,  
 And where it won't extend he still can dart it.

Senator 2: Take my advice and flee beyond his reach.

Bobby: I'm now prepared for exile in the East,  
 But there I mean to organize my troops,  
 And with my force of liberals from New York,  
 I shall return to make that fat bird squawk.  
 (Trumpet blast, hurrahs and handshakes. Exit all but  
 Bobby and two aides.)

Bobby: The meeting went off fairly well.

2nd aide: Yes, quite.

Bobby: They're in our pocket, when the time is right.

### ACT III

#### Act III, Scene I

(MacBird's office. From out the window one hears  
 chants of demonstrators. Topical picket signs can be  
 seen passing by the open window. MacBird enters  
 hurriedly with followers.)

Crony: Another protest! Have the cops disperse them!

2nd man: Aw, let 'em shout. They'll only hurt their lungs.

1st man: Now, what about these letters from our allies  
 Opposing annexation of Australia.

2nd man: I thought MacBird's new doctrine would appease them,  
 The one where we extend their offshore waters  
 From three to twelve miles, unilaterally,  
 So every nation, be it large or little,  
 May with our free consent sail out from shore  
 A full twelve miles beyond her coastal limit.

1st man: A noble gesture, one the world will note.  
 MacBird is known for magnanimity.

2nd man: And yet they still protest.  
 (picket sign comes flying through the window. It reads  
 "Down with MacBird", and shows his picture upside  
 down.)

MacBird: Arrest them all!  
 Unity, unity, wherefore art thou, unity?  
 Pluck up protestors, mangle those that march!  
 Who mars consensus steals our brightest gem.  
 (Messenger comes running in)

Messenger: There's news, more news!

MacBird: Spit out your spiteful news.

Messenger: (out of breath)  
Peace paraders marching!

MacBird: Stop 'em!

Messenger: Beatniks burning draft cards,  
MacBird: Jail 'em!

Messenger: Negroes starting sit-ins.  
MacBird: Gas 'em!

Messenger: Latin rebels rising.  
MacBird: Shoot 'em!

Messenger: Asian peasants arming.  
MacBird: Bomb 'em!

Messenger: Congressmen complaining.  
MacBird: Fuck 'em!

Flush out this filthy scum; destroy dissent.  
It's treason to defy your president.  
(His followers start to move doubtfully.)

MacBird: You heard me! Go on, get your ass in gear.  
Get rid of all this protest stuff, y' hear?  
(They all scurry out of the room. MacBird is alone.)  
My God, my God, has everyone forsaken me? (enter  
Lady MacBird)

Lady MB: My lord, to bed?

MacBird: You know I dare not sleep.

Lady MB: Forgive me, I forget your malady.  
My lord, the land's beset by evil omens.  
The light is dark, the dark is darkly lit.  
Last night the Eastern Kingdom blackened over.  
The people feared a failure of the power,  
And prophets cried with not-too-hidden meaning  
That he with greatest power dwelt in darkness,  
And darkness would descend upon his nation.  
But in the black, more dreadful than the darkness,  
There gleamed demonic flames and dire combustion.  
A flickering draft card burned, and then a draft board.  
Then horror, horror, horror, howling horror!  
A human being set itself ablaze.  
It blazed and cursed thy name and blazed and cursed,  
And then it dimmed, and yet they saw it still.  
Although 'twas dark, the flames had seared their eye-  
balls.

They say they see it still. It blazed and cursed.  
It cursed thy name. Oh God, oh God, forgive us!

MacBird: I know, alas, our folk are superstitious.  
They're simple souls that see in black and white,  
And so to ease their doubts and foolish fancies,  
I plan to call a national day of prayer.  
We'll get the biggest preacher in the country.  
You know the one I mean -- the guy's got class.  
We'll make it high-toned, dignified and solemn;  
Organs, choirs, pictures of me, ponderin'.  
Now that's the sort of thing builds confidence.

Lady MB: I just don't know...

MacBird: I gotta hand it to me.  
I sure got style. MacBird, you're so damn sharp.

Lady MB: Then pray for me, my lord.  
MacBird: Of course, of course!  
But now tonight I'll see those three weird critters  
That prophesied so truly of my fate.  
Though they be fiends, no matter what the source,  
I must be certain in my future course.

Act III, Scene II

(Spooky scene with cauldron at one side of stage.  
Enter witches, who dance around cauldron to eerie  
music. Bobby Ken O'Dunc enters from other side  
of stage. He wanders across, looking for something.  
Witches huddle in the corner and music stops when  
Ken O'Dunc is seen.)

1st witch: He's seeking us.  
2nd witch: Hush up, I think he heard.  
3rd witch: We'll see him next, but first let's meet MacBird.  
(They duck down behind cauldron. Bobby crosses  
stage, searching, and exits from their side. Witches  
emerge.)  
2nd witch: You're certain that he'll find us.  
3rd witch: It's arranged.  
1st witch: Then let's prepare the brew till he appears.  
(More music; they circle around the cauldron and  
chant.)

1st witch: Round about the cauldron go,  
Watch the bubbles boil and grow.  
Stench of Strong and tongue of Kerr,  
Picket, sit-in, strike, and stir.  
Regents raging, Knowland hot,  
All boil up our protest pot.

All: Bubble and bubble, toil and trouble,  
Burn baby burn, and cauldron bubble.  
2nd witch: Round the cauldron chant and sing,  
Arson, rape and rioting.  
Bombed-out church and burning cross  
In the boiling cauldron toss.  
Club and gas and whip and gun,  
Niggers strung up just for fun.  
Black man beat and burnt and shot,  
Bake within our melting pot.

All: Bubble and bubble, toil and trouble,  
Burn baby burn! -- and cauldron bubble.  
3rd witch: Taylor's tongue and Goldberg's slime,  
MacNamara's bloody crime.  
Sizzling skin of napalmed child,  
Roasted eyeballs, sweet and mild.  
Now we add a fiery chunk  
From a burning Buddhist monk.  
Flaming field and blazing hut,

Infant fingers cooked and cut,  
Young man's heart and old man's gut.  
Groin and gall and gore of gook  
In our cauldron churn and cook.

All: Bubble and bubble, toil and trouble,  
Burn baby burn! -- and cauldron bubble.

2nd witch: (More eerie music and dancing. Then a sudden stop.)  
By the pricking of my thumbs,  
Something wicked this way comes.  
(enter MacBird)

MacBird: How now, you secret, black and midnight fiends?  
What are you at?

All: A deed without a name.  
MacBird: I order you by all authority!  
No matter how you know it, answer me!  
I must find out.

1st witch: Command!  
2nd witch: Demand!  
3rd witch: Speak out!

MacBird: What must I fear? How steady is my throne?  
Can any force effect my overthrow?  
I'm bent to know by the worst means the worst.  
Speak out, you fiends, although your tongues be  
cursed!

All witches: Darkest matters must we settle.  
Boil and bubble, answer kettle!

Voice from cauldron: Be bloody, bold and resolute, MacBird.  
All cautious counsel scorn, for be it known,  
No man with beating heart or human blood  
Shall ever harm MacBird or touch his throne.

MacBird: Then Bobby, live! What fear have I from thee?  
And yet I'll make assurance double sure,  
That I may tell pale-hearted fear it lies,  
That I may sleep at night, you shall not live.

1st witch: The cauldron boils again. There's more to hear.  
Voice from cauldron: Be iron-fisted, proud, and take no care  
Who chafes or frets or where conspirers are.  
MacBird shall never, never be undone  
Till burning wood doth come to Washington.

MacBird: What means this "burning wood"? (they start moving  
off)  
Wait, tell me more!

2nd witch: Adieu MacBird, we must at once depart -----  
3rd witch: To meet with one who also heeds our art. (They glide  
off.)

MacBird: Till burning wood doth come to Washington.  
It makes no sense. But that's of no account,  
For I have understood the clearer part,  
And now I fear no foe with human heart. (Exit MacBird)

End of Act III

## ACT IV

### Act IV, Scene I

(The convention hall. Sound of drums and fife in distance. Enter two senators.)

Senator 1: The liberal power is near, led on by Robert.  
The lords of Eastern Industry and Banks,  
With blazoned shields, are riding at the head.  
The union men are marching in the ranks  
And Negro troops are bringing up the rear.

Senator 2: And what about the tyrant? Where is he?

Senator 1: He fortifies himself with new decrees.  
Last month he made it law for congressmen  
That they could say no more than yea or nay  
And only vote on matters he'd present.  
And furthermore he's censored all the press;  
And here at this convention, as you know,  
He's having many delegates thrown out.  
I just found out he's changed the voting rules.  
Now votes are given by the size of state.

Senator 2: Some say he's mad. Others who hate him less  
Have called his meglomaniac decrees  
A zealouslyness for order. But for certain  
He cannot buckle his distended pouch  
Within the belt of rule.

Senator 1: Now can he smell  
His bloody murders reeking on his hands.  
Now hourly revolts disturb his reign.  
Those he commands move only in command  
And none in love. Now does he feel his title  
Hanging loose about him like a giant's robe  
Upon a dwarfish thief.

Senator 2: Well, let's be off  
To give our votes where they are truly owed.  
MacBird has made us swallow bitter pills.  
Strong medicines must cure the nation's ills.  
(Exit Senators.)

### Act IV, Scene II

(MacBird's room at the convention. MacBird and Crony on stage.)

Crony: The Southern lords have all deserted, too.

MacBird: And what about the press?

Crony: It's in their camp.

MacBird: Bring back no more reports. I need not care  
Till burning wood doth come to Washington.  
What's this boy, Bob that I should quake with fear?  
Has he no blood? Has he no beating heart?  
O fly, false fools! I rule and rule alone.  
The sword I brandish and the heart I bear  
Shall never sag with doubt nor shake with fear.  
But just to set my subjects' minds at ease,  
I'll make some more emergency decrees.

(MacBird sits at his desk writing. Meanwhile a figure, brandishing a sword, emerges at the right side of the stage. While he speaks from far right, MacBird in his office is seen as a still tableau in the center of the stage.)

Right-Winger: O give me Liberty or give me Death!  
My ancestors drove out a tyranny.  
They fought a foe who then was called their king.  
And shall this current communistic kind  
Be let to live, to undermine our youth?  
Speak, strike, redress! And with a blow  
Restore our dear Republic's liberties.  
I only regret that I have but one life  
Which I'll give for my country. Hold steady my knife!

(He slinks off. Enter Black Militant from left side of stage.)

Black Militant: Marching on Washington. What the hell for?  
(throws down picket sign)  
Praying and pleading to white politicians,  
White politicians who all look alike,  
Who all wanna help, "but, of course, it takes time."  
Yea, it sure does take time while they're warm and  
And they sit on their backsides while my ass gets well-fed,  
whipped.  
It sure does take time, but I'm startin' to see  
That they'll stop kickin' me when it starts hurtin' them.  
Fuck this praying and pleading! They've used up their  
time!  
I'm through with your snubs and I'm through with your  
spurn.  
I'm through with you, Whitey, so burn, baby, burn.  
(Exit Negro militant.)

#### Act IV, Scene III

(Robert's convention headquarters. Robert and his followers, including Teddy, are on stage.)

Robert: My friends, I hope the days are near at hand  
Of safety and stability.  
1st aide: They are, for sure.  
Cong'man: Which brings to mind the question of new posts  
When all MacBird's accomplices are banished.  
Senator 1: The matter has been troubling me, as well.  
Robert: My worthy lords, I'm mindful of your merit.  
Your loyalty will reap you rich rewards.  
Teddy: Can I head up the Navy? I love boats.  
Robert: We shan't discuss it all in detail yet.  
(Sirens heard in distance. Enter messenger.)  
Robert: What news? What news? Has the dictator made his  
move?  
Messenger: The news is still the same. The confident tyrant  
Remains in his hotel suite and will stay  
Till we bring all our forces to the vote.  
Teddy: (at window) A fire. Bobby! Look. I see a fire!

Robert: Teddy, please, enough!  
(to followers, beginning speech) The time approaches-  
Teddy: The very biggest fire I ever saw.  
Robert: The time approaches which will let us know  
What votes we have in hand and what we owe.  
The time's at hand, so march we toward our fate.  
There are some issues force must arbitrate.  
(Sound of drums and trumpets. Robert marches off  
leading his force, with banners, flags, etc.)

Act IV, Scene IV

(The convention floor. Enter MacBird with Crony and a few other followers. Flourish of drum and trumpet as they march in carrying furled banners, balloons, etc.)

MacBird: Unfurl our banners, loosen our balloons!  
Blow horns, crack cymbals, cheer and demonstrate!  
My name in nomination is enough.  
Those three that know all mortal destiny  
Have told me thus, "Fear not, MacBird, fear not."  
No man of heart and blood shall touch your throne.  
Then fly, false friends, fly, fly, desert in droves.  
I fear no foe; I shall not turn and run,  
Till burning wood does come to Washington.

(Enter messenger.)

MacBird: More news? What news?

Messenger: Two hundred votes are gone.

MacBird: Two hundred votes are gone? What's that to me?  
Go hide your head, you lily-livered loon!  
What states defected?

Messenger: All the Eastern Coast.

MacBird: Get out of here, you fool! Oh, jealousy!  
Because I do bestride this narrow world like a Colossus,

These petty men who crawl beneath my legs  
Turn up their envious eyes at my great prowess.  
Of course, they hate the hand that holds things firm.  
Of course, they fear the fist that gets things done.  
But, most of all, the love the people bear me  
Sears deep the jealous hearts of underlings.  
Because the cheering crowds would crown me king,  
Those icy politicians in their spite  
Now hiss and scratch and spit and claw me down.

(Enter second messenger, excited and out of breath.)

Messenger: My lord, I've come to tell you what I saw  
But don't know how to say it.

MacBird: Out with it!

Messenger: As I was watching from this hotel roof,  
I gazed with wonder down into the streets  
While savage blacks rampaging down below  
With shrieks of joy set every cherry tree  
In Washington aflame.

MacBird: Liar and slave!  
Messenger: Abuse me as you will, but still it's so.  
From out this very window, look yourself.  
I say the city burns.

MacBird: If this is false,  
I'll string you up alive. And if it's true,  
Then do the same for me. For I begin  
To fear the equivocation of those fiends  
Who lie with truth -- "Fear not till burning wood  
To Washington does come." And now the wood  
Of Washington's ablaze. Call out the troops!  
If what they say is true, it doth appear  
There is no flying hence nor tarrying here.  
And yet I'll stay and fight this bloody race.  
Bribe, blackmail, bully and attack!  
At least I'll die with harness on my back.

(Sound trumpets and drums. From other side of floor  
Bobby's forces enter, in arms, with banners.)

Bobby: Now near enough we'll launch the main attack.  
Wayne of Morse: A rushing torrent of blood which he has spilled  
Now hurls him up to dash upon the rocks.

Robert: We'll force the vote and win the race tonight;  
Let us be beaten if we dare not fight.

All shout: On, On, On to the floor fight! (etc.)  
(Robert's force advances across the convention floor  
towards MacBird's party.)

Robert: Turn, tyrant, turn.

MacBird: Of all my foes I fear this twirp the least.  
But get thee back for the love I bore your brother.  
On his account I'm loath to do thee harm.

Bobby: I'll waste no words, you pompous hypocrite.  
The floor fight will undo you on the spot.

MacBird: And all who would be spared now flee his side,  
For mercy pleas shall henceforth be denied.  
Don't blow away your breath, you two-bit punk.  
Your older brother can't protect you here.  
I have a charmed career. Now be it known  
No man with beating heart or human blood  
Can ever harm MacBird or touch his throne.

Bobby: Your charm is cursed. Prepare to hear the worst.  
At each male birth, my father in his wisdom  
Prepared his sons for their envisaged greatness.  
Our first gasped cries as moist, inverted infants  
Confirmed for him our place as lords and leaders.  
To free his sons from paralyzing scruples  
And temper us for roles of world authority  
Our pulpy human hearts were cut away.  
And in their place, precision apparatus  
Of steel and plastic tubing was inserted.  
The sticky, humid blood was drained and then  
A tepid antiseptic brine injected.  
Although poor Teddy suffered complications,  
The operation worked on all the others,

Thus steeling us to rule as more than men.  
And so, MacBird, that very man you fear,  
Your heartless, bloodless foe now lifts his spear.

(Robert slowly raises and aims his spear. MacBird gasps, clutches at his heart, and falls.)

MacBird: My heart, my heart! Thus cracks a noble heart.

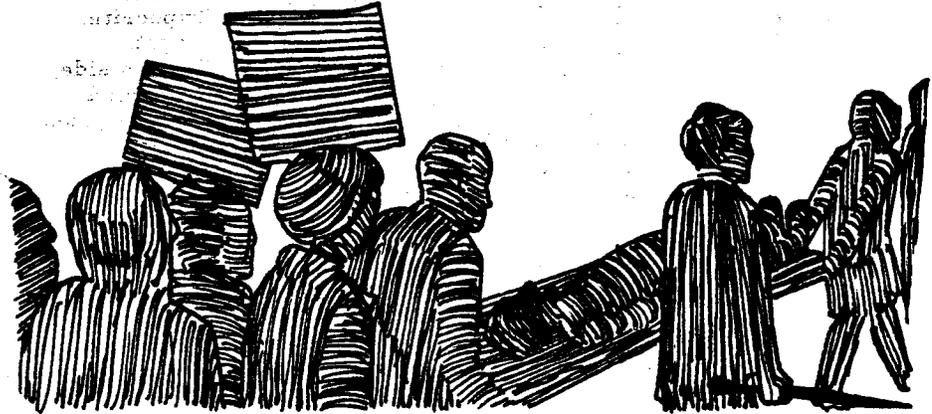
(MacBird expires. Bobby drops his weapon and doffs his armor. Showing great distress, he runs to MacBird.)

Robert: My lords, black sorrow hovers o'er the land.  
MacBird, our brilliant leader, lives no more.

(Crowd gathers round; television cameras move in.)

A tragic twist of fateful sorrow, friends,  
Makes me your President this fearful day.  
And though I never sought it, history  
Assigned to me her most demanding task,  
To follow my great predecessor's task  
In hewing out the Smooth Society.  
So, choked with grief, I pledge my solemn word  
To lift aloft the banner of MacBird.

(Bearing the body, MacBird's followers and Bobby's followers file out, holding aloft MacBird and Bobby banners, side by side.)



FINIS