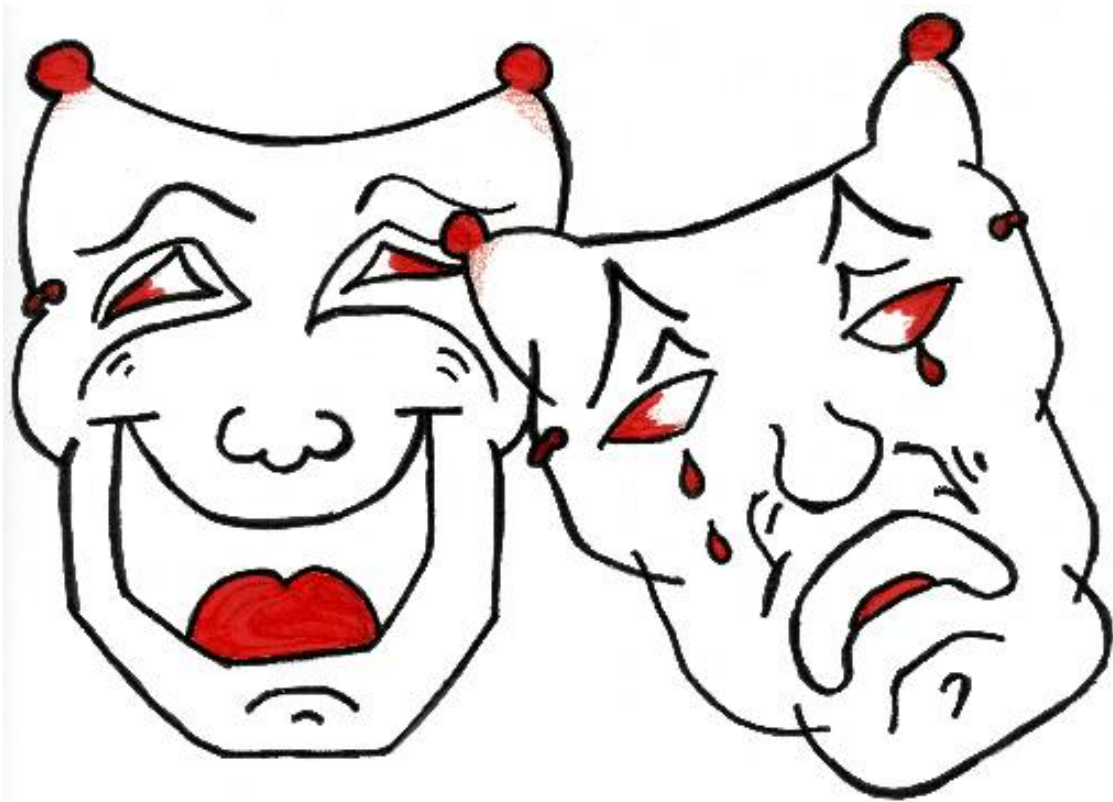


MURDER INCLUDED



a whodunit in three acts

by

Peter De Geesewell

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The Cast (in order of appearance)

4 (or 5) female / 5 (or 6) male

- HAMLET** Hamlet Lindsay is Sir Abel's son and will inherit the title „Earl of Kilmany“ on Sir Abel's death. This is probably all that he will ever inherit as the family fortune is declining rapidly.
Hamlet is a charming young man, but, like his father, quite irresponsible. He does not work, of course. His one aim in life is to become an actor. He is studying drama in Edinburgh and at the moment is busy learning the part of Jaques in Shakespeare's „As You Like It“, for his final exam.
- OPHELIA** Ophelia is Hamlet's sister. She studies drama, too. Her prime ambition in life is to play the part of Juliet in „Romeo and Juliet“.
- ABIGAIL** Lady Abigail Lindsay, Baroness Kilmany, is Sir Abel's wife. She comes from a very wealthy family and has inherited a vast fortune. She is a brewer's daughter and cannot stand being reminded of her humble social background. She runs the family affairs since neither her husband nor her children are capable of dealing with any matters even remotely related to everyday life.
Her two hobbies are the opera and William Shakespeare. That is why she named her two children after characters from Shakespeare's plays.
- ABEL** Sir Abel Lindsay, 12th Earl of Kilmany. He is always well groomed, unmistakably an august member of the Scottish nobility.
At the age of 25 he inherited vast estates in Scotland but has succeeded in losing almost everything in a life of industrious gambling, hunting and pursuing other gentlemanly activities. He has not, however, lost his sense of humour.
- BROWN** Charles Brown is the manager of Merry Murder Mysteries.
- GEORGE** George Morris is a policeman who works for the traffic department of London's Metropolitan Police. He is not satisfied with his job, and aspires to join Scotland Yard as a detective. Unfortunately he has just failed another entrance exam. What he lacks in brain power he tries to make up for in diligence. He is a veteran guest at mystery weekends all over the country. Regretfully his wife never accompanies him.
- MILLIE** Millie Morris, George's wife, is just a voice behind the curtain. She is not seen because she spends most of her time in front of her telly in the kitchen, watching her favourite programme, Coronation Street.
- RANDOLPH** Randolph Smith is a bank clerk. He is bored and dissatisfied with his job, but he has a lively imagination in which he sees himself as a super stud whom no woman can resist. Pending any real progress in this field he secretly turns to porn magazines and videos.

- PRUDENCE** Prudence Smith has been Randolph's faithful wife for 25 years. She is a bit of a grey mouse and does not like surprises. She is quite naïve, but has high moral standards. She does not like the short form of her nickname, probably because it fits her perfectly.
- VANESSA** Vanessa Redhill is an actress employed by Merry Murder Mysteries. She plays a pert, sexy, almost nymphomaniac young lady.
- TIFFANY** Tiffany Chandler is the third character in the murder mystery. She plays a gender conscious, feministic, lesbian librarian from Reading.
- JAMES** James is a patient at Dr McLeod's mental hospital. He is a hunchback, very clumsy and has a terrible stutter. He was hired by Lady Abigail Lindsay for the mystery weekend as a butler, because he had worked as a butler before he became a patient - and because he comes cheap.

Note for the director:

- JAMES** is played by the same actor as **HAMLET**.
- MILLIE** is just a voice behind the curtain. Any one of the female actresses can also speak her part.
- TIFFANY** is played by the same actress as **OPHELIA**.

ACT ONE

Scene 1

The curtain opens onto a dark stage. After a short moment a spotlight picks out a dead man's skull between a young man's feet. The spotlight gradually grows bigger and we see a young man in the middle of the stage dressed all in black, sitting on a stool. He has a copy of „**The Complete Works of William Shakespeare**“ in his hands and, after a moment's pause, starts reciting from it.

Gradually the rest of the lights are turned on and we see a big, comfortable living-room, furnished with two expensive looking old armchairs, a sofa and a small table. There are several weapons, a row of ancestral portraits and a magnificent family tree on the wall. A medieval suit of armour stands in one corner. On the left is a window with a view into a grand English garden. Behind one of the armchairs there is a bell-cord hanging from the ceiling. This is obviously the Stately Home of one of the leading old noble families of Scotland. But everything is past its prime and looks a bit run down, even shabby.

Hamlet *„All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school. And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier,
Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard,
Jealous in honour, sudden and quick in quarrel,
Seeking the bubble reputation
Even in the cannon's mouth.“*

Gosh, how shall I ever memorise this stuff by Friday? I can hardly understand a single line!

Okay, don't panic. The baby, the pupil and the lover are all right. But who wants to be a soldier these days with the American president sending us Brits into his wars? Let's try again:

*„All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages.“*

No problem so far. Let's go on:

*„At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
Then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail*

*Unwillingly to school.
And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow."*

Who's interested in eyebrows, for God's sake? It's tits and arse today, Mr Shakespeare!

He closes the book and tries to recite the text by heart.

*All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. At first the infant,
Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms;
And then the lover,
Sighing with lust while sucking on his mistress' tits.
But that's pornography - not Shakespeare!
He opens the book again and checks the text.
Yes, I got carried away!
And then the lover, ...*

Ophelia (runs in) „*Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo?*“

Hamlet Since when have you been interested in football?

Ophelia Football? I'm not talking about Becks' little boy - I'm acting, I'm Juliet.

Hamlet I see. And why can't you do it in your room?

Ophelia Why, it's too small! My Juliet needs space, you see.
Now pay attention and tell me how you like it.

She walks back a few steps, spreads her arms dramatically and recites her text again.

*„Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;*

Hamlet But not his money!

Ophelia Stop it please, I can't concentrate! I'm trying to get my lines right.

Hamlet So am I.

Ophelia Look, I won't give you a moment's peace until you've made a comment.

Hamlet Ah, well. (He closes his book.) The lines are really good - but your diction and body language aren't dramatic enough. You're supposed to be a woman madly in love.

Ophelia Thanks, I really appreciate that. Okay, I'll do it again.

She steps back as before, flings out her arms and, reciting her text, walks over to Hamlet, kneels down in front of him, looks up at him beseechingly and finally embraces his shins.

*„Oh Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou, Romeo?
Deny thy father and refuse thy name;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
And I'll no longer be a Capulet.“*

As she lowers her head she hits the skull.

Ouch!

She takes the skull with one hand and quickly gets up, rubbing her forehead with her other hand.

Why do you have to bring this awful skull into the living-room?

Hamlet What's the skull to you?

Ophelia She stretches out her arm, looks deeply into the empty eye sockets of the skull and solemnly declaims
To me or not to me - that's the bloody question!

Then she quickly throws the skull to Hamlet and casually sits down on the sofa. Hamlet catches the skull and gingerly puts it down between his feet again.

Hamlet It's my good luck charm.

Ophelia It gives me the shivers. Isn't it bad enough Mummy christened you „Hamlet“?

Hamlet Not nearly as bad as your acting, Ophelia.

Ophelia (she takes a pillow and walks to him threateningly) Apologise at once or I'll smash both your skulls in.

(she hits his head with her pillow and goes back to the sofa)

Have I told you about my audition on Monday? I might play Juliet in next year's open air in Princes Street Gardens.

Hamlet What's new?

Ophelia You've got to give me more coaching.

Hamlet Even if I wanted to, I really couldn't. Rehearsals for „As You Like It“ start on Friday - and I must know my lines by then. So please, get lost!

He turns away from her, closes his eyes again and concentrates.

*„And then the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eyebrow.....“*

Ophelia (She has obviously heard something) Hey, what was that rumbling?

Hamlet I'm not mumbling. I'm trying to learn my lines.

Ophelia I didn't say „mumbling“, I said „rumbling“.

*„It was the nightingale, and not the lark,
That pierc'd the fearful hollow of mine ear.”*

Hamlet It's „**thine**“ ear. And it was neither the lark nor the nightingale. It was my stomach. I haven't had a decent meal since Mama fired the cook a month ago.

Ophelia „Fired“? She left us because Mummy hadn't paid her wages for at least three months.

Hamlet But why would she do a silly thing like that? Emma was such a good cook. And, what's worse, Mama still hasn't replaced her. How can we live without a cook? I don't like being reduced to eating **your** homemade sandwiches. As a Lindsay, I think I'm entitled to expect something more substantial and sophisticated.

Abigail Starts singing from behind the stage.
*„Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.”*

Ophelia Thanks for the compliment.

Hamlet I'm not criticising **you**. It's Mama who irritates me. Mama with her eccentric ideas and her singing. There, she's at it again. No wonder we're losing all our servants. I can't work with that noise either.

He stands up just as his mother Abigail enters.

Abigail Good morning, darlings! Up and about already?

Ophelia Hi, Mummy! (she kisses her) We're both busy with our acting.

Hamlet Hello (he kisses her on one cheek) and good-bye!
(he kisses her other cheek, takes his book, the stool and the skull and is about to leave)

Abigail Don't leave! I've got some exciting news for you.

Hamlet What news?

Abigail Well, actually some good **and** some bad news.

Ophelia Let's hear the good news then.

Abigail Okay, I've just found a most delightful new song. Listen.
*„Come away, come away, death,
And in sad cypress let me be laid;
Fly away, fly away, breath;
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.”* etcetera etcetera. How do you like it?

Hamlet Groan! If this is the good news, I'm not sure if I can handle the bad.

Ophelia It's lovely, Mummy. Just a bit on the sad side, though.

Abigail Guess who wrote the lyrics.
Hamlet and Ophelia look at each other with a martyred look, then shrug their shoulders.

BOTH Shakespeare! Who else?

Abigail Yes, dears. Fancy both of you knowing the correct answer. Amazing!

Ophelia Not too amazing, Mummy. Have you ever sung a song whose lyrics were **not** by The Bard of Avon?

Abigail I think you have a point there, dearest.

Hamlet Look, I've really got to go now.
(he gets up, takes his book, stool and skull and starts to walk out)
And, Mama, that song's awful. Why do you sing about death and dying?

Abigail Why not? It fits my mood perfectly.

Ophelia But, Mummy, you're still young - practically my age.

Abigail Thank you, darling. I'm not referring to **my** death, of course.

Ophelia Whose then? Don't say there's something wrong with Daddy!

Abigail No, no, he's in perfectly good shape.

Hamlet Don't keep us in suspense.

Abigail It's about the death of our way of life.

Hamlet That's not exactly news, is it? We British aristocrats have been a species doomed to extinction not just since Tony Blair became PM.

Abigail Let's keep it simple then: We're broke!

Ophelia Not again, Mummy.

Hamlet Mama, that's utterly ludicrous. The Earls of Kilmany cannot be broke.

Abigail A fine example of your aristocratic logic.

Ophelia Do you mean „almost broke“ or „completely broke“, Mummy?
At this moment Sir Abel Lindsay, 12th Earl of Kilmany, enters. He is immaculately dressed and obviously in high spirits.

Abel Good morning, everybody! My dearest wife (he kisses her), my lovely daughter (he kisses her), and my charming son and heir (he slaps his back).

So what's the latest news from the gossip columns? Who's broke this time?

Abigail **We** are, Abel.

Abel Ah, you don't really mean it, Abi, do you? Certainly not us!
„Broke“, what an ugly word!

Abigail Yes, „broke“. Like „bankrupt“, „ruined“, „bust“, „kaputt“. Translated into plain English: There's not a fiver left.

Abel Good God, the woman's serious! Hamlet, ring Debbie! I think I need a whisky. How else can one digest such terrible news before breakfast?

Hamlet pulls the bell-cord and the bell rings.

Couldn't this have waited until after breakfast? I could have suffered from a heart attack, couldn't I? (he turns to the door impatiently)
Where's that girl with my whisky?

He gets up himself, walks over to the bell-cord and gives it such an angry pull that he tears it off. The cord and the bell fall down on him.

Oh, shit!

Abigail Abel, not in front of the children ...

Abel and the servants, I know. I apologise. But really, it's most irritating.
Where's that bloody girl with my bloody whisky?

Abigail Mind your language, Abel!

Abel All right, all right.

Ophelia I'll get your whisky, Daddy.

Ophelia walks out.

Abel What's keeping her, I wonder? Is she ill? What kind of staff do you employ, Abigail? I really think I'll have to fire her.

Abigail That won't be necessary.

Abel Why not?

Abigail I've already given her notice. She left us a couple of hours ago.

Abel (absolutely flabbergasted) But why? Weren't you satisfied with her anymore?

Hamlet She was such a good sport - and quite nice-looking!

Abigail You're both right. She was the perfect maid - and I gave her a glowing letter of recommendation, of course.

Abel So why send her away? Good staff's hard to come by nowadays. Is she pregnant? Has she stolen something?

Abigail You must be joking! There's nothing left to steal in this house!

Abel You haven't answered my question, Abigail.

Abigail I've just told you, haven't I? We're broke. We can't pay our staff.
Ophelia returns carrying a silver tray with a glass of whisky and a copy of The Times on it. She is wearing a white apron and a white bonnet on her head. She bows a little curtsy and offers her father the glass.

Ophelia Your drink, Your Lordship.

Abel Thanks, Debbie, er, I mean, Ophelia.

Hamlet Do you think that's funny? Borrowing Debbie's things and playing the maid? Did you know that Mama's fired her, too? There's no butler, no chauffeur, no gardener, no cook and now not even a maid! What kind of a life is this? What kind of people are we?

Ophelia *O, wonder!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in't!*

Hamlet Shut up, Ophelia. That's not funny. And - by the way - you've skipped a line.

Abel (He takes a sip of whisky) Ah, very good quality. Must be a Laphroaigh, right?

Ophelia Yes, Your Lordship. The last bottle.

Abel (shocked) What, the last bottle of Laphroaigh?

Ophelia No, Your Lordship, the last bottle of whisky.

Abel Lord, have mercy! Running out of whisky! Then our situation's really desperate. - Abi, dear, what are you going to do about it?

Abigail Well, that's a bit rich, coming from you!

Abel What do you mean?

Abigail What do I mean? Don't give me that - and wipe that stupid, innocent smile off your face. You know the answer perfectly well. Who's responsible for our being in such dire straits? You! You've got us into this mess. You, with your hunting, gambling, drinking and whoring!

Abel The last point was really uncalled for.

Abigail I see! And what about Lady Rosemary?

Abel But I gave her up as soon as you found out, didn't I?

Abigail **She** dropped **you** once she'd seen through you. The great Earl of Kilmany, Sir Abel Lindsay! You ought to be called Sir **Unable** Lindsay!

Abel I'm not impotent, as you well know, Abi.

Abigail Perhaps not in bed - but in practically everything else. You even managed to lose the last Tory seat in Scotland.

Abel I'll get it back. Scotland can't be ruled without the Lindsays!

Abigail Hear, hear! Have you ever succeeded in anything at all in your life?

Abel Of course I have! - I was destined for a distinguished career in the army. Just look at my father. He was a brilliant soldier, a colonel of the Black Watch in World War II. Highly decorated, a VC, even.

Abigail I'm not speaking about your father!

Abel It's not **my** fault that Father died early and left me to manage the Lindsay estates.

Abigail Left you to do what? You call that „manage“? Now answer my question. What have you ever succeeded in?

Abel I succeeded in, er, I managed to, er..... Oh, I succeeded in marrying the most beautiful, the most wonderful and the most sharp-tongued woman in the British Isles.

Ophelia (claps) Bravo, Daddy, well said!

Abel And by marrying this fantastic rich lady in spite of her humble background as a brewer's daughter, I managed to keep the Lindsay estates financially afloat.

Abigail At least you're honest. When I married you, I thought you were **somebody**. Good-looking, charming. A dashing dare-devil. And one of Scotland's most important noblemen. But my father warned me: "He's no businessman. He'll ruin you." Oh, he was so right!

Abel You knew I couldn't handle money. But you still married me. Or did you just marry me for my title and family name?

Abigail Just as **you** married me for my money and inheritance. You've just admitted it. And you've gambled it all away - casinos, outrageous speculations, bets and so on. If I hadn't stashed some of it away, we'd have been reduced to begging five years ago. I ought to hate you!

Abel But I haven't done anything.

Abigail That's just the problem! If only I'd heeded my father's advice! But I wanted to please you, so I handed my money over to your mismanagement. If you were my accountant and not my husband, I'd have taken you to court years ago.

Ophelia But you've always found a way out. You know how we all depend on you. So just come up with another of your brilliant ideas and you'll have us out of our quandary in a jiffy.

Hamlet Yes, don't give up so easily. We know you can do it. You've always been so good at facing your problems.

Abigail Not „my“ problems, Hamlet, „our“ problems. Believe me, I've tried everything. I've been to the banks and I've talked to all our creditors, but nobody's going to lend us as much as a single penny.

Abel What about our stocks?

Abigail Not worth the paper they're printed on, thanks to your inspired investing.

Abel The deposit account?

Abigail Cleaned out months ago.

Abel Your inheritance from the brewery?

Abigail Spent on your hobbies and friends years ago.

Abel Then there's only one solution, I'm afraid. I don't like it, but I think it's time to sell a little parcel of our land.

Abigail What „little parcel of our land“ do you want to sell? All that's left is the garden – and you can't sell that, unless you sell the house with it.

Abel (in panic) Not the house, please!

Abigail We've sold all our land.

Ophelia And my horses!

Hamlet And my Rolls-Royces!

Abel I've even opened up our Manor House to American tourists! And I, the Earl of Kilmany, have sold tickets to commoners and shown them around. What else can I do to help? – Okay, I'll do it again this year. When does the tourist season start?

Ophelia It's the middle of December, Daddy. The Americans won't be back until May.

Abel Oh, shit!

Abigail Mind your language, Abel. - Not in front of the children and servants, please!

Ophelia What about the French?

Abel The Frogs have no money - and what's worse, they don't speak English.

Ophelia The Italians?

Abel I'm not dealing with the Mafia.

Hamlet Well then, the Germans.

Abel I don't want any Krauts in my house. They're all Nazis. My father, (he points to one of the portraits) the Colonel, fought them in World War II, when they gassed six million Jews. And my grandfather, (he points to another portrait) the Brigadier, was gassed by them in the Kaiser's War.

Ophelia And the Swiss? They're rich, they travel a lot - and some of them speak English quite understandably.

Abel They're all bankers - and bankers are a curse!

Ophelia They're not all bankers. Most are harmless cowherds men and watchmakers. They yodel and blow the alphorn or they make chocolate and cheese.

Abel Okay, the yodelling watch-, cheese and chocolate-making alphorn blowers are welcome - but not the gnomes of Zurich!

Hamlet They won't come before April, Papa. They're all skiing now.

Abel Oh, sh.... sugar! (he turns to his wife, grinning) Is that better, darling? What's left, then?

Ophelia Last summer we turned our house into a hotel!

Abigail Another failure. The reception desk and the guest-book cost us a fortune - and nobody wanted to spend their holidays in the middle of Nowheria.

Hamlet Even presenting a family ghost wasn't appreciated!

Abigail Don't remind me - it was the perfect nightmare!

Abel Well, let's be honest. Mama in her pyjamas wasn't very scary.

Ophelia But she was definitely the first ghost singing Shakespearean songs.

Abigail One gentleman from Boston even had the cheek to propose to me. Preposterous!

Ophelia Let's try the paper. There's always something about making money in there.

Abel Ah, to be a Bill Gates - or at least to have him as a son-in-law.

Ophelia Forget it, Daddy, he's too old for me.

Abel A man with five billion dollars to his name is **never** too old to become my son-in-law. I'd even accept Andrew Lloyd Webber - now that he's been knighted.

Abigail Well, I wouldn't. His music's too commercial.

Hamlet (He opens the paper and starts leafing through it) Sex and Crime might give us an idea.

Ophelia Well, honestly! Sex and Crime in The Times, indeed!
They all look at the paper.

Abigail Try the want ads. There's got to be a job **one** of us is qualified for.

Abel A Lindsay needs no qualifications! We're Peers of the Realm, remember.
Noblesse oblige!

Abigail Then "oblige" (she speaks in a French accent). me by turning your noblesse into something substantial!

Hamlet What about a bank robbery? Everybody seems to be robbing banks these days. And it's no menial job, Papa. You won't get your hands dirty because you're supposed to wear gloves.

Abigail Forget it, we couldn't even afford to buy toy guns. - And you can't rob a bank using those rusty old swords. (She points to the swords on the wall.)

Abel I beg your pardon, Abigail. What you're referring to in that insolent tone of yours as „those rusty old swords“ are in fact the most precious heirlooms of Scottish history.

Hamlet Why don't we just disarm some of the local kids on their way to school? That should give us enough firepower to raid any bank.

Abigail We aren't in America yet, thank God!

Ophelia So, what's left?

Abel Next page! (Hamlet turns the page) Ah, here we are: obituaries. Check the list for people who might have left us something.

Abigail Don't be naïve! You've already survived most of your kin. And the ones who are left are very much alive and kicking.

Hamlet (He walks over to the family tree) Let's check the family tree. Aren't there any rich relatives left we could do away with?

Abigail Well, there's always Uncle Henry, of course - but I think he's got even more debts than us.

Abel What about Great Aunt Maisie?

Ophelia I wouldn't touch her even if I were protected by a full space suit. She stinks like a dead horse!

Hamlet Non olet! Anybody else left?

Abel (He quickly moves down it with his finger.) Dead - dead - impoverished - killed in an accident - more debts than us - stinks like a dead horse. I'm afraid, that's about it.

Abigail Not quite. There's one relative left who could still make us a fortune.

Abel Do I know him?

Abigail We all know him.

Abel Spit it out! Who's our miraculous saviour?

Abigail You are, Abel! Haven't we been paying a fortune for your ludicrously expensive life insurance all these years? Your early demise, of course sadly lamented, would earn us £ 2 million.

Abel We are not amused!

Ophelia Mummy, aren't you ashamed of yourself?

Abigail No, I'm just being businesslike. Weighing all the options objectively.

Ophelia Hamlet! Say something at once.

Hamlet Er, well - I do think a good father should provide for his family.

Abel Then I prefer to be a bad father - and stay alive! Abigail, that was absolutely tactless. Do you intend to kill me? Or do we have a family vote on whether or not I should commit suicide?

He gets up and starts pacing up and down. The rest of the family watch him intently and with a growing sense of restlessness. Finally he seems to have come to a decision.

All right, I'll do it. Your mother's convinced me that I must make this sacrifice for the sake of the family. And, being a Lindsay, I always put the family first and personal considerations second.

He takes one of the swords off the wall, takes it out of its scabbard, walks over to the portrait of a medieval knight, absentmindedly tests the blade with his thumb and speaks on.

The Lindsays have always been famous for their chivalry. Sir Robert, the first Earl of Kilmany, will be proud of me. (He walks over to the Colonel's portrait) I hope you'll understand, Father. Give me your blessing.

Ophelia runs over to him, crying, and wrenches the sword from his hand.

Ophelia Don't do it, Daddy. Don't kill yourself.

Abel Kill myself? What are you talking about, child?

Hamlet Weren't you going to commit suicide?

Abel Don't be daft! This sword is a classified historic monument! Robert Bruce wielded it in the Battle of Bannockburn and gave it to Sir Robert Lindsay for safekeeping after the battle. I'd never defile it - not even with a Lindsay's blood.

Ophelia What sacrifice were you talking about then?

Abel I've decided to part with Bruce's sword.

Abigail I don't think any pawnbroker will be interested.

Abel Are you deliberately insulting me? I'd never barter it away to a pawnbroker! But the National Trust for Scotland are very interested in acquiring it for their Bannockburn exhibition. They approached me years ago - but I turned them down of course.

Hamlet What do you think they'll pay for it?

Abel £30,000 ? £ 50,000? I'll name it, they'll pay it.

Ophelia Daddy, you're a really great man!

Abel Thanks!

Abigail Your father's just a really great dreamer. The only thing they'll offer will be a plaque in the exhibition saying „This exhibit has kindly been donated by the Lindsay family.“

Abel How would **you** know?

Abigail Mr Morrison, the chairman of the National Trust for Scotland, told me when I asked him.

Abel You asked him?

Abigail In the end I made him cough up £ 2,000.- though. Not quite what I had in mind, but better than just a plaque, wouldn't you agree? And we can keep it here – for the time being.

Abel I don't believe it!

Abigail Look at the back of the scabbard. There's got to be a note somewhere saying „Owned by the National Trust for Scotland“.

Abel (turns the scabbard and turns white) You Judas! I'll never forgive you for this sacrilege. It's the ultimate betrayal.

Hamlet *Come weep with me - past hope, past cure, past help!* - So where does that leave us?

Ophelia *Hang, beg, starve, die in the streets, ...* Let's go to Edinburgh. Mummy could sing in front of Harvey Nicks and the rest of us could collect money with our hats and little placards reading „Impoverished nobility. For the upkeep of castle, morale and hope.“

Abigail Be serious. Let's have another look in the paper. (She points to an advert)
What's the advert at the bottom there?

Hamlet „Merry Murder Mysteries“. An intriguing alliteration!
„We're looking for comfortable hotels in the countryside where we can stage our weekend mysteries. **You** make your hotel available to our drama group – **we** provide the guests and the entertainment. We're ready to pay good money. Don't hesitate - call us now.“ – There's a phone and a fax number in London.

Abel Good money! - What are we waiting for?

Abigail Our house isn't exactly a hotel, Abel.

Hamlet Yeah, it's a lot better. It's the Earl of Kilmany's Manor House.

Abel And didn't we turn it into a hotel last year? The guest book and the reception desk must still be around somewhere.

Abigail But Abel, this is one of Scotland's finest historic houses! You can't open it up to such a rabble. Think of your responsibilities towards all those Lindsays over the centuries right down to Sir Robert.

Abel Beggars can't be choosers.

Abigail There aren't any staff left to serve the guests.

Abel No problem! What are we sending our children to drama school for? If Ophelia can play Juliet, she can also play a waitress, can't she?
And Hamlet will make a first-class butler, I'm sure.

Hamlet A butler? Count me out!

Abel No, no, Hamlet. It's time we got some return on investment. And Abi and I will be the hotel managers. All we need is a good chef - and we're in business.

(he snatches the paper out of Hamlet's hands)

What's their number? (to Ophelia) Quick, hand me the phone, dear, before your mother can find something wrong with this plan, too.

Abigail You won't need the phone, Abel.

Abel See! What did I tell you? There's always something. What's the hitch this time?

Abigail No hitch, dear. Your plan's perfectly sound.

Abel Say it again! I don't believe my ears.

Abigail Your plan's perfectly sound.

Abel But?

Abigail No buts.

Abel So? Why don't I phone them?

Abigail Haven't I just heard a taxi? That must be our visitor. Hamlet, would you mind letting Mr Brown in?

Hamlet Oh yes, I would. I'm not the butler.

Abel yet.

Hamlet And never will be!

Abel Who's this Mr Brown? Do I know him?

Abigail I don't think you do.

Abel Where's he from? And what does he want here?

Abigail He's from London. - He's the manager of Merry Murder Mysteries.

Hamlet Wow! I'm speechless.

Abel But how can he be here? We've only just seen his advert in the paper.

Abigail I asked him to come here when I saw his ad in the Times last week.
The door-bell rings in the background.

Abigail That's him. Is it all right with you if I ask him in?

Abel Why do you ask?
She leaves

Ophelia What a coincidence!

Hamlet (he apes her) What a coincidence. Bullshit! She's tricked us, Ophelia!

(and so on)