

The Piteous Life and Tragical Death
of
Steve the Intern

An Office Comedy of Shakespearean Proportions
By Daniel A. Takács

Dramatis Personae:

Duncan's Buckets:

Duncan: 50s-90s, President, Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Board.

Anne: 50s-70s, Duncan's Assistant,

Roderick: 30s-60s, Production Manager, under Duncan.

Kent: 30s-60s, Chief Operating Officer, under Anne.

Eliza: 20s, General Manager, under Roderick.

James: 20s, intern to Roderick and Eliza.

Steve: 20s, intern to Anne and Kent.

Kyle: 30s-50s, head of human resources.

A Friar

Board Members, Interns, and Attendants.

Guildspersons:

Dick: a guildsman policeman.

Margaret: a guildswoman cook. Cockney dialect.

Cockney Tom: a guildsman janitor. Cockney dialect.

Meek: a guildsman stage manager.

Actor Laurence: a guildsman actor. English RP dialect.

Stoner Stu: a guildsman warehouse worker at Duncan's Buckets. Stoner dialect.

Additional Guildspersons.

Gloucester's Twenty-Ducat Buckets:

Gloucester: 50s-70s, president of Gloucester's Buckets, a hunchback.

The Bucketheads: Gloucester's mute soldiers.

The Place: Elizabethan New England

The Time: Modern Day

ACT I

Scene 1:

(A conference room. Enter STEVE.)

STEVE

O, for a bard to whet our blunted eyes!
For kings and minotaurs and gods,
For monstrous men and shipwreck'd ships,
Success against thrice deathly odds.
Such horrors and delights I'd preach
To hold your breaths upon my lips,
But gods and monsters are all dead,
And heroines beyond our reach.
But, if your pardon we may beg,
These humble artisans and I
Have toil'd ourselves to learn a play
Which may the meanwhile please thine eye.
No honor will you find, nor glory
Within nigh modern tales we'll sing,
Yet evil's still within our story
For evil did survive the death of kings.
It is a tale of overthrows
And poisons, crowns and thrones and pacts,
Of loves to out-woo Cicero,
Of motives true, and sinful acts.
So hark and listen, if we have your leave,
A tale of interns vile and low:
The tale of murd'rous Steve!

(Enter JAMES.)

STEVE

You! What do you here, young sir?
You are unknown to me.

JAMES

You know'st me not, for this is but my first
And, Duncan willing, not my final day
Within your company. My name is James.

STEVE

Are not you some worming agent of our rival?
Bent with venom'd plan against wise Duncan?

JAMES

I swear I am no spy by this my ring
Which beareth on it the fraternal sign
And Grecian letters which our worthy Duncan
Also sports from youthful college days.

STEVE

I trust the letters on this ring as if
'Twere writ by honest Jove himself.
But wherefore come you to this place
You are not meant to witness?

JAMES

Lost, I am!
As newest intern, basest of all trades,
I lost my labrynthinal way between [*LAB-rinth-AEE-null*]
The desks, when up I cast my dizzied eyes
And found my person like a lonesome skiff
In this sweet treasure cove of office space.

STEVE

This is our hallow'd room of conf'rence;
Here Duncan curves this lofty enterprise
Along the tides of business. But get you gone!
Our holy Duncan, chairman of the board,
Our CEO, and president, will momentarily
Divide his vastly holdings and select
His order of inheritance. What ho!
Who's there!

(Enter ELIZA.)

ELIZA

'Tis I, Eliza, Roderick's faithful underling.

STEVE

And glad am I to see your handsome face
In times of such uncertainty.

ELIZA

My love.

(STEVE and ELIZA kiss.)

ELIZA

Some news I bring, but who's this interloper?

STEVE

This boy is James, an intern like myself,
And sworn to Duncan, as we all do swear.

ELIZA

Young James! Roderick, my boss, foretold
Your coming, for to him and me you are assign'd.
He bids you watch this coming meeting that
You may observe his acts and axioms
To learn the ropes of Duncan's twisty ladder.

JAMES

My thanks, I pledge myself to you and Rod'rick.

ELIZA

A double pledge, no honesty in that.

JAMES

I mean to Duncan, CEO, and you his agents.

ELIZA

Well, then I accept your triple pledge, so long
As Duncan justly reigns it.

JAMES

Many thanks.

STEVE

You are welcome, James. But Eliza: news!

ELIZA

Young James, this you may hear: you know that favor
Hath ever shine'd on Roderick to succeed
To Duncan's old position on retirement.

STEVE

And pass o'er Anne, who otherwise would have
An easy throne, but all know this, Eliza!

ELIZA

Nay.

For now it dawns that Anne has newfound hope:
Some presentation Kent hath wrought for her,
That clever ghostwriter, meant to swipe
The seat from under Rod'rick's rear.

STEVE

Bad news for you, who would be Rod'rick's heir.

ELIZA

Yes, but good for thee, who as Kent's intern,
Might buy some kingly influence.

STEVE

No crown did ever

Trickle down to interns through succession,
Our hopes must bet on your career, not mine.
For Roderick must we fight today.

ELIZA

I hate to think on thee a-languishing
As damn'd eternal intern.

STEVE

I love you as myself,
And so I must gift to thee each thing I love,
Even my ambition.

ELIZA

Your love is clarified in action.

O Kiss me, Steve!

KENT,
ATTENDANTS.)

(STEVE and ELIZA kiss. Enter DUNCAN, RODERICK,
ANNE, KYLE, BOARD MEMBERS, and

STEVE

But who comes now? 'Tis Duncan and his herald,
Come here to spill their zipper'd mouths

With news of layoffs or of cheer.

KYLE

Here cometh President Duncan King,
Founder of Duncan's Buckets,
Chairman of the Board,
And Chief of Operating Officers,
As wise a man as ever walked this Earth,
And good as any Saint. All hail, Duncan!

ALL

All hail Duncan!

KYLE

Ye may seated be.

(ALL sit, except DUNCAN. Pause.)

DUNCAN

There once was a man from Nantucket
Who started a firm to make buckets,
But when the time came
To pass on his name,
He sold the damn thing and said, "fuck it."
My friends, my good men, my assistants,
I know I'll be met with resistance,
But Gloucester [*GLOU-stir*] has offer'd,
From deep in his coffers,
A purchase with gaudy persistence.
Now knowing you're working for Gloucester,
Whoever shall follow my ouster
Will work under him
And sail to his whim;
For this new position you joust.
Now whom in this room is still willing,
Now known the position you're filling,
To answer my riddle?
Who'll play second fiddle?
Good Kent, your demeanor is chilling.

KENT

My lord, you know I love you like a father,
And my fellow Duncians know I love them too. [*DUNK-yans*]

You ever promoted me, rais'd me up
And gave me opportunity to learn
At your own ringèd hand. But sir,
'Twas you who taught me Gloucester's evil mind,
How he, both cruel and menacing
Hath driven all who work for him to dirt.
My hate for him outweighs my love for you,
And so I'd rather then withdraw myself
From your consideration, if this be the case.

DUNCAN

Thy voice's tone is flowery, 'tis true
And spine thou hast as weak as flower's stem
Who then is strong enough to bear my burden?

(Pause.)

ANNE

My noble president and master, Duncan,
I have serv'd as your assistant for
These forty years and never rais'd my voice,
Nor made objections to your presidential whims,
Nor gave you false report when Gloucester's spies
Did lure at me with bait both wealthy and renown'd.
I kept your counsel, sacrific'd myself
Upon the alter of your opinion,
But never have I served your Grace so well
As I do now by making vigorous
Objection to this foolish course.

DUNCAN

Nay, harsh Annabelle!
Pour not these noxious spirits in my ear!

ANNE

My Liege, the buckets you make here are stern,
Hearty, and more unleak'd than any in
New England! Gloucester cares not for this craft.
Shoddy, pulp'd, and warp'd, his buckets be,
As twisted as the imp who peddles them: how else
To make his so-called "Twenty Ducat Buckets?"
I beg, I cast aside all dignity,
I grovel 'fore the eyes of those I once

Called peers and colleagues. Do not pollute your name
With such a vile, a rank and wither'd man
As he who offers honey'd poisons,
Which but infect the meat that they should feed,
And turn your legacy to leprosy.

DUNCAN

Thou're weak and old, and worse, a woman.
O, I had thought you'd had a heartier heart,
Poor Anne, you could have been my heir
But now I cast you out into the muck
For your distrusts and mutinies.
O you are damn'd and banishèd.
Come not within my sight again, or I
Know not what I may do with thee.
To Gloucester I will sell my shares,
But who shall take my duties on
Or are you all too weak to ask for power?

(Pause.)

STEVE

I ask.

DUNCAN

I?

STEVE

Aye.

DUNCAN

And who, in hell, are you?

STEVE

Steve.

DUNCAN

No, your station.

STEVE

Intern.

DUNCAN

Can you make a boat out of rock?
Can you make a tree stand and walk?
You're an intern, a slave!
Be good and behave.
When you've got me my coffee, we'll talk.

(Exit STEVE.)

DUNCAN

Not one of you would see the secrets hid
Behind my curtain of my majesty?
You murder thus my trusting heartstrings thus
To bury living your ambitions so.

RODERICK

My lord, and President. My CEO.
You know I do not speak well.
My hands do serve me well to serve my Liege,
For making solid buckets is my trade.
And yet, if none will speak, I will.
I will try to keep your legacy alive.
This is what I promise. If it pleases or unsatisfies.

DUNCAN

So you accept, then, this role?

RODERICK

I do, my lord.

DUNCAN

You speak not well, but well enough methinks.
And seems your shriv'ling colleagues, all do shrink
To bear upon them this newborn position.
Your cravenness is clarified in this transition
Come interns and Kyle from HR,
Record these my wishes thus far:
My CFO's out,
To Roderick give clout,
He's Caesar, your Ruler, your Tsar!

KYLE

Give not this man your clout, sir. A clout about the head is more pain than pride.

DUNCAN

What say you, Kyle?

KYLE

Nothing, my lord.

DUNCAN

Nothing?

KYLE

Nothing, my lord, but that to clout a friend will only headaches bring.

DUNCAN

This is foolishness.

KYLE

Aye, my lord, yet all men are fools.

DUNCAN

Not I.

KYLE

As I manage human resources, I am a lord of foolishness. And a lord of fools ought to be able to fool a king.

DUNCAN

What, fool me?

KYLE

Are you not a King?

DUNCAN

King is my name, and ruler I am too.

KYLE

Why, then you lead a pack of fools!

DUNCAN

Well, that I'll give you.

KYLE

And who but a fool, is king of fools? For surely only fools will follow a fellow fool!

DUNCAN (*laughing*)

I like this fool, he livens me!

(Anne crosses the stage, carrying a box of her belongings.)

KYLE (*indicating ANNE*)

It is not meet to terminate a friend, when you thus feel alive. Anne is but a fool, are not we all? My king, keep this woman, your servant, at her present office, and all will see you wise beside a humble fool.

DUNCAN

Kind Kyle, you move me to forgiveness.
Anne, I make you now Roderick's assistant
Guide him as you guided me these decades
And you both shall prosper extravagantly.
I hereby make this declaration:
At midnight tonight my creation
Will pass on to Rod'rick
But if he should fall sick.
To Kent shall he pass on my station.
And so on my line shall pass down
To associates, then interns my crown.
At midnight tomorrow,
To my gayest sorrow,
To Roderick falls my renown.

(Enter STEVE, interrupting, with coffee.)

DUNCAN

And thou, who had such hungry ambitions
Have only acquir'd our suspicions.
Learn this: you are base
It is your young face
Which must line to succeed in this business.

(DUNCAN pours the coffee on STEVE's head.)

DUNCAN

A comp'ny becomes he who directs it,
So let's hope that Rod'rock won't wreck shit.
Base interns, adieu.
And Rod'rick to you,
Now flourish of trumpets, and exit!

(Kazoo Music: "AOL Startup Tones.". KYLE pushes
away on an office chair rickshaw. Exeunt all

DUNCAN
but STEVE.)

STEVE

Who calls me base because I am an intern?
My age is equal to any man or woman here.
Base. Why call me base? My sweat is sweat,
My hours the self-same hours that these, my betters, bill.
And now the old man perishes in wealth.
He cares not who succeeds his own success
But senile, whips his poison'd tongue moment
By moment on new prey. Why base then, I?
Have I not charm, ambition, cunning tongue
To worm my way into the folds of favor?
I would have follow'd meek that long-walk'd path
To find a kingship of mine own and work'd
The years of wasted toil and earn-less sweat
And paid the useless dues they take and take;
But since I am so base, I will the low way go.
You gods that govern who shall rise and fail,
Vault my spine with basest strength
And purge me of all virtues but desire;
I make ambition now my only god!
Observe, then, in one short night thy sun's ascent!
Through villainy will I become the president!

(Exit STEVE.)