

The MacBeth Curse

By JAG

JemCon 2014 Stingers Fan Fiction Contest Entry

The Grand Old Theatre of Toronto is celebrating its 150th anniversary. During a press conference, director Mr. Earl Freeman explained that for the occasion, a special gala was organized featuring many different performances in music, dance and theater, to commemorate one and a half centuries of entertainment in this venerable institution. On the musical part, representing modern music, he presented two groups who are currently at the top of the charts: Jem and the Holograms and the Stingers. The gala was to be held next week and he invited all the people to witness a great performance for that special event.

Later that day, Jem and the Holograms were setting up their instruments for a rehearsal of their number. Backstage, Rio was setting the sound equipment and the console for the lighting and special effects. Suddenly, a pair of hands set in front of his eyes: "Guess who?"

"Jem? Is that you?" guessed Rio.

But when he turned, he saw Minx. "Oh! It's just you, Minx."

"What do you mean Rio, it's just me?" asked Minx, "Are you not glad to see me?"

"Well, I'm glad that the Stingers and Jem and the Holograms are playing for this great gala, but I have lots of tasks to do to make this happen, so..."

Minx interrupted him: "You thought I was Jem, Rio. What do you see in her? You already have Jerrica as your girlfriend."

"Jem," replied Rio with a little hesitation in his voice, "is a very good friend of mine and I don't like her being bothered by people who are bad influences."

"Oh! Do you think I am a bad influence to you?" said Minx, and she continued: "I can make you see things differently. I can show you a really good time. Your Jerrica is a hopeless workaholic. Why, she is even nowhere to be seen when Jem concerts start."

"She is there when it counts, and that's what I like in her. So, if you'll excuse me, I have this console to set", said Rio, getting back to work.

Meanwhile, Riot invited himself on the stage and interrupted the rehearsal. He asked Jem if she wanted to go for a date with him after the rehearsal.

"We could end the day alone together for an unforgettable evening."

Jem answered him: "That's very nice of you, Riot, but I am very busy after the rehearsal with the Holograms, I must decline."

"You work too much, Jem, let them do the dirty work", argued Riot. "You're the boss after all and you're too good for them to do anything else but join me for the perfect date." Riot insisted a couple of times to the point that, a little bit irritated, Jem ended the conversation.

"Sorry, Riot, I have a word to say in this and this word is NO! Now we have a rehearsal to finish."

Riot was upset: "Eventually you'll be mine, you just don't know it yet". Going back to Minx and Rapture who witnessed it all, he decided to leave the place for the moment.

"So, you struck out again with Jem, what a pity!" Minx said.

"I didn't see you having much success with Rio either," replied Riot.

"You shouldn't let them treat you like that," Rapture added. "This calls for a little revenge. Let me do something about it."

"Do as you want. Show Jem what it is to mess with the Stingers, but don't hurt her," Riot replied.

"Yes, go ahead, we will cover for you," added Minx. "Show that American girl how to treat our Riot."

Rapture went backstage to check the place and to find something useful for her plot. She met Jonas Armstrong, a very old employee who worked almost 40 years in this place. When she deliberately passed under a ladder on the stage in front of him, he told her to be careful.

"Don't you know it is bad luck to walk under a ladder?"

Rapture, pretending not to be interested, replied: "Bah! It is only a stupid superstition!"

"You, young folks, don't know the traditions of the theater," complained Jonas. "Many spirits of past artists who performed in this theater are dwelling in these premises and you should not dismiss them as stupid superstitions."

Rapture quickly found out after this little conversation with Jonas that he was quite superstitious, especially about theater legends. But he was also a respected person among the staff of the theater as well. Her plot became clearer from this moment.

She decided to invoke the famous MacBeth curse. When this Shakespeare play was first presented, a series of mysterious accidents took place among the actors and the staff when someone in the theater announces the name of the play. Those accidents ranged from strange illnesses, falling parts of the set to even the death of an actor in a sword fight where the sword prop didn't fold as planned when hitting its victim. This curse seemed to repeat itself each time the play was featured afterwards, so it became a tradition among actors to never say the name of this play again.

To set her trap, Rapture disguised herself as a member of the staff and she reached Kimber at the end of the Holograms' rehearsal. She asked her if she was a little bit nervous to perform in a big gala like this. Kimber said no, but she was a little bit impressed by the majesty of this big theater and its history, because so many great names performed on this very stage over all those years.

"You know, this theater featured the most famous Shakespeare plays," Rapture said. "A good way to bring good luck to this gala would be to shout out 'MacBeth' three times from the stage in front of everybody."

"You really think I should do this?" asked Kimber.

"Absolutely, and you must do this in front of everybody to spread the good luck to all," said the mischievous Rapture.

Taking the bait, the Kimber went on the stage the next day and in front of all the performers and the theater's staff she shouted like a cheerleader: "Good luck to you all! MacBeth! MacBeth! MacBeth!"

Everybody in the place stopped and a strange silence lasted for a couple of seconds.

"What? I just said good luck," said Kimber. "Is there a problem?"

"Eh, little girl, you've just cursed the gala!" Jonas replied. "That is not anything!"

Jem came to her and talked to her about the curse.

"Oh, Kimber, in the theater world, there is an old superstition that saying MacBeth brings a curse over the actors of the play. And usually we say 'break a leg' instead of good luck. Someone played a mean trick on you."

"Oh, Jem, I am so sorry," replied Kimber. "What should I do?"

"Well," answered Jem, "let's hope that nobody will make such a big deal out of it."

But, getting on the stage, Jonas pointed right at Kimber.

"This whole gala is now cursed because of you! Now, bad luck will strike everywhere until someone pays the price of this outrage!"

All the people in the theater started to mumble among themselves. Aside from the stage, the Stingers laughed at the situation, but tried to stay cool in order not to tip anybody off.

With all the commotion, the director, Mr. Freeman arrived and asked what was going on. Jonas talked to him about the curse.

"That old curse? Give me a break! I think someone made just a silly prank to annoy us. Go back to your chores."

"Silly prank! Silly prank!" said Jonas. "You will see when things go wild all over the place!"

Of course, Rapture wouldn't stop with this. She enrolled Minx and also called Tchrat and asked them to help her organize some "accidents," especially around the Holograms, to let people feel that the curse was real, without anyone suspecting a thing, of course. And from that moment, some props got suddenly missing, a part of the set almost fell over the Holograms unexpectedly, and some weird noises

were heard throughout the theater, courtesy of Techrat's electronic sound box. Jonas commented that these events were leading the people working in the theater to become more and more nervous. To push things further, Rapture also spread the rumor, more or less supported by Jonas, that, in order to remove the curse, the performer who invoked the "name that was not to be said" should leave the play. By this, she meant that Kimber as well as Jem and the Holograms were to leave the gala. However, after a few tries, neither her actions nor Jonas' comments could convince the director to do something about it.

"Stop this nonsense, curses are real only if you pay too much attention to them instead of your work," Mr. Freeman said. "This goes for you, Jonas, and to everybody else." Determined to make her plot succeed, Rapture decided then to step up the pressure.

Over the stage, where Jem and the Holograms set their instruments, there were sandbags used to support the backdrop curtains. She decided to make one of those sandbags fall on the instruments right in front of Jem, if possible. With the commotion that this would bring and the broken instruments, Jem and her band mates would surely have to forfeit the gala. She asked Techrat to put a little remote controlled device that will cut the rope holding the sandbag without being detected afterwards if someone was to look up after the fall. When the Holograms entered the theater, she triggered the device so they could see the fall on their instruments, but it didn't work. Nothing happened.

"Arrgh!" Rapture said, furious. "I will have to trigger it up there myself."

She hardly climbed on a very small platform at the very top of the scene to reach for the cable of the sandbag. In the meantime, Jerrica arrived on the scene with the Holograms and, thinking they were alone, under Rapture's eyes, she transformed herself into Jem.

"What's that? It's impossible! How did she do that?" said a mystified Rapture.

Startled by this vision, Rapture made a false move on the narrow platform and tripped to fall down in the back of the stage with a big scream and a loud noise. Jem and the Holograms quickly reached her, followed by the Stingers who heard her scream. Rapture was knocked unconscious. Riot got close to her to try to help.

"Someone get an ambulance!" Riot shouted.

Minx was devastated. Aja then took Jem aside.

"I think Rapture tried to drop something on us, but I also think that she could have seen you transform into Jem. What will we do?"

"I'll think of something," Jem answered. "But I'm more worried about Rapture, now."

Jonas came following the noise and he was convinced more than ever that this was the curse of MacBeth.

"You see! You see! The curse is going worse than ever!" When Mr. Freeman arrived, Jonas asked him: "Now do you believe me? What will it take to convince you? The only way to end it is to dismiss this Kimber girl and her band mates from the gala!"

"Let's take care of the wounded first," Mr. Freeman said. "Is anybody else injured?"

After he examined the stage, nothing seemed to be wrong, so Mr. Freeman asked the staff to clean it up. But Jonas saw something on the floor near where Rapture had fallen. It was a knife. Looking up, he also noticed some device attached to the rope holding a sandbag. He climbed up to be sure and he finally understood that this was a setup and all of this was a hoax.

"I think I owe you an apology," Jonas said, approaching Mr. Freeman. After showing him the knife and the device and pointing to the sandbag, Jonas added, "Someone tried to force things on you by using this silly curse, and he made me help him."

"I now understand what has really happened," Mr. Freeman replied. "No hard feelings, my friend."

At the hospital, Jem and the Stingers were waiting for news about Rapture. Minx was there, silent, staring at the floor. Riot was very sad.

"It's all my fault. I shouldn't have let her do that."

"You must be very close," Jem told him. "I am really sorry for you."

"Rapture has always been like this," Riot said, opened up. "She even tried to fool Minx and me when we first met her. It was in Germany, at the Waldorf Club. There was supposed to be a talent search competition with a ten thousand-dollar reward. Rapture approached Minx and I when we entered the club and she told us that there was a \$200 fee to enter the contest. Times were hard then and we had about only this amount left, but we decided to go anyway, because we were sure to win and that prize money would be very useful to us. However, in the club, there was only this other group, the Wild Boars, with their leader called Macho. Rapture reassured us that other groups were to come soon for the contest."

"In the meantime, the groups were rehearsing. We saw Rapture singing with the Wild Boars and we found she had a great voice and she was as good at the guitar, compared to her band mates who were just acceptable at the most. But we wondered how come she could sing for a group and also collect fees for the same talent contest. We became suspicious about the situation."

"In fact, Macho had an issue with the owner of the Waldorf Club and he decided to take revenge and find someone else to take the blame. He asked Rapture to 'recruit' another group for a phony talent contest. She thought that Macho was doing it only for the money, but later she saw him talking to us and offering us some of his fireworks."

"It will help your act," Macho said, "and don't worry, I have extra for me."

After that, Rapture said to Macho: "But you gave them all of our fireworks. What for?"

"My little pussycat," warned Macho, "those fireworks are rigged to explode and spread fire around. The club will burn, and I will get my revenge on the club owner. And who will be blamed? Those turkeys! So shut up and get ready to leave with us."

Rapture felt very bad about it. But what upset her more is that there were many people entering the club for the contest and all of them could be victims of Macho's scheme. So, she managed to warn us and give us back the money she stole from us. Macho's scheme was exposed and he was finally arrested. But before the police escorted him out of the club, he fired Rapture.

"Out of my sight, witch! I know the people in this business! You will never sing for anybody else ever!"

"Rapture left the club with her belongings and took the street. She saw us on the way and she decided to catch up to us. She asked if she could join us, if we would care to accept her, even after all she did to us."

"And we did," Riot concluded. "And we never regretted it."

At this moment, the doctor entered the room.

"Mrs. Phoebe Ashe has regained consciousness," he explained. "She is all right now, but she's very lucky, just a few bruises. You can see her now."

Riot and Minx entered the room where she was resting, followed by Jem. Riot took her in his arms and hugged her gently. Minx was trying to remain stoic, but a little tear came down her cheek.

"You gave us quite a scare," said Riot.

"Yeah, but my plot failed, hasn't it?" answered Rapture.

"We will get over it. We always do, like old times," reassured Riot. "Don't you think, Minx?" "Yes, of course", approved Minx, "Are we not the best?"

When Rapture saw Jem at the entrance of the room, she spoke urgently.

"Riot! When I was over the stage I saw Jerrica changing into Jem, I saw her..."

"You had a close call," interrupted Riot. "You must have seen it in your dreams while you were unconscious."

Jem, discreetly turned her head and called Synergy. And right after, a hologram of Jerrica entered the room, saying: "I heard about the news about Rapture accident, is she alright?"

When Rapture saw Jerrica, she said: "Oh, Jerrica is here as well... Maybe you are right, Riot, I must have seen it in my dreams."

"Let's go to our hotel," Riot ended.

The next day, Mr. Freeman thought about firing the Stingers after finding out about their prank, but Jem put in a good word for them. He finally decided that both groups could perform together as planned for the gala, which happened to be a memorable event for the community.

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