

ARE YOU MY MURDER?

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

GHOST	Hamlet's deceased father.
DOGBERRY	The incomparably incompetent constable in Messina.

SETTING

The courtyard of the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Assumption in the heart of Messina.

(In courtyard there is a statue of Mary, kneeling as she holds the swaddled form of baby Jesus in her arms with her gaze cast skyward. Enter Dogberry, weary from his strenuous duty of wandering aimlessly. He walks to the statue, and then in his uniquely clueless and irreverent way, seats himself on the face of the statue. He is picking his nails when the Ghost of Hamlet's father, glasses on the top his head, enters.)

GHOST

Pity me not, but lend thy serious hearing to what I shall unfold.

DOGBERRY

Though it may look that I attend my duty, a moment's respite is upon me, a truth that you may well enough read upon my competence.

GHOST

Thou meanest 'countenance'.

DOGBERRY

Asia is the meanest of them all, most certainly, for their warlike and maritime elephants.

GHOST

Not *continents*. *Countenance*.

DOGBERRY

Well, do not feel the worse about thyself for it, good and pasty codger. Many incapable warriors have whet themselves when the moment—

GHOST

Stay thy tongue, if it please thee, an' thou shalt hear. I am thy father's spirit, doom'd for a certain—

DOGBERRY

(Taking out a traveling mug...)

Though I be festooned in duty, still would I welcome a friendly nip this chilly eve.

GHOST

No, good constable. You misconstrue. I come to speak of murther most foul.

DOGBERRY

Murther? Of fowl? Then this is nothing of matter to me, venereal badger.

GHOST

It is everything to do with thee! I am thy father's spirit and—

(Dogberry has thrust forward his mug again.)

No! Thou truly art duller than the fat weed. I have come to speak of *murther*.

DOGBERRY

Murther, sayest thou?

GHOST

(Knowingly, conspiratorily...)

Murther.

DOGBERRY

Who's murther?

GHOST

My murther!

DOGBERRY

A woman of poetic girth and reprehensible purity, I have no doubt.

GHOST

Hear me! By the hand and heart of thy uncle's shame! A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark is by a forged process of my death.

DOGBERRY

You were stung on the ear by a snake.

GHOST

No. Ugh. *(Muttering to himself...)* My hour has come, and thus am I bathed in the sulph'rous and tormenting flames of my son's lacking wit.

DOGBERRY

And who is this son, this noble descendant of your virulent dignity?

GHOST

You! You! You!

DOGBERRY

Your son... is... three sheep?

GHOST

Please tell me not, but hath all of Denmark entered into such madness as this?

DOGBERRY

Denmark? Is this where thy sheep be chastised?

GHOST

Surely thou hast not fallen so far from sanity to knowest not thy own home and castle.

DOGBERRY

Well, when two men ride a donkey, one must steer from underneath. Shrewd and misshapen governor, you have come to the Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Consumption.

GHOST

Hold. Is this not then Castle Kronborg, the heart of all that is Denmark?

DOGBERRY

Nay, your flatulence. Unless I am beheld a bodacious melon, and though it be not writ down as such, still we breath the hairy aroma of Messina.

GHOST

Messina?!

DOGBERRY

Which hies and contorts in the very soul of southern Italy.

GHOST

And you... thou art... *not*... Hamlet?

DOGBERRY

Oh, you do me a kind and noble injustice, most flabby governess! Thou my ears beseech me such with great companion, I am Dogberry, constable of these grand and mortuary dwellings.

(Ghost starts patting around pockets, and finally finds a pair of glasses on his head. He puts them, and is overwhelmed with relief.)

GHOST

Oh thank god.

DOGBERRY

What?

GHOST

Never mind. Well... the glowworm shows the matins to be near, and gins to pale his uneffectual fire... and all that. Adieu, adieu, adieu! Remember me.

(He pauses to consider that.)

Actually, don't.

(Ghost looks around, then...)

Exit.

(Ghost exits. Dogberry watches him leave, then examines – with disappointment – his empty mug. He blasphemously sits back down on Mary's face and starts to hum some bawdy tune. Lights out.)