I was sipping a fresh cup of tea with my cat Whiskers when I received a call. Well, there goes my well-deserved afternoon break. After trying to find a missing person stuck in the basement, I got another case to solve.

“Hello, Detective Simon here. Who is this?”

I had been called by the Museum of Scotland to find out how three people died, so I immediately rushed there. This was Castle Inverness, so I came in expecting greatness. What I saw however truly blew me away. It was mounted atop a hill, with its peach brick colour scheme standing out from the hill’s green. There were trees on the sides, some larger than others. Some trees looked like they were providing shade before I was born. The castle’s exterior was magnificent, with its brick walls, rounded towers, and arched windows. The Scottish flag hung high on one of its towers, standing proud in the sky.

I got lost trying to find the entrance to this castle. Then I resigned and asked the Head of the Museum, a respectable Thomas Winston, to help. After a few minutes, he found me, ushered me inside and led me down a crystal-white hall into a bedroom. I was presented with a dead body, lying on the bed. The unfortunate victim of the crime was dressed in medieval-looking robes. Based on the robes and the bedroom’s style, I could tell this man was of royal blood. There were multiple stabs in the heart and throat, and the bed was soaked in fresh blood. This person was, unfortunately, brutally stabbed in his sleep. The body gave off an uneasy warm feeling. It was so strange knowing that a person was really and truly dead, yet feeling as if he was alive.

Strange feelings aside, I determined that the crime had occurred around 3 hours before I arrived.

“When was the crime reported?” I asked Thomas.

“Just yesterday. An old couple strolled along the street when a bright yellow light flashed in one of Castle Inverness’s windows. They called the police, the police called us who know more about the castle than they do, and we called you because you’re the best detective we know.”

Well, that was very weird; the victim’s body temperature did not correspond to the story that Thomas gave me. I think I’ll add him to the list of suspects I have in my notebook. Plus, that attempt at buttering me up isn’t going to work.

The next day, I got in my car and embarked on another trip to the next crime scene.

I arrived at a park. It was the perfect balance between overgrown and tendered; plants grew as much as they liked, but there were clear, well-trodden paths where no plant dared to cross. There were many types of plants; ash trees, birch trees, fir trees, and other types of trees that I could not name. There were flowers in more colours than I could imagine. Not to mention the flora in the park; ferns, fungi, and the odd bird or two.

Thomas led me to a ditch by the side of the road. This ditch was dry as a bone; it held no water—all the better, or worse, for the dead body inside. The body was covered in the same robes as the first victim. He was likely a nobleman, judging by the robes he was wearing. The cut on his throat shows that he was likely not killed in the ditch; instead, he was probably killed elsewhere and thrown in the ditch, as seen by the impact on his body. Based on this, his throat had likely been stabbed and his body had likely been thrown in the ditch right after.

“When was the crime reported?” I asked Thomas.

“About the same time, an hour after the last one. A kind old lady was walking her dog in the park when a bright yellow light flashed in the ditch.”

Strange. Very strange. I’m starting to buy his stories less and less. I walked back to my car, anticipating the long trip home.

I got in my car and drove to the last crime scene.

When I got off, I saw what looked like the ruins of another castle. It paled in size, compared to the first one I saw some days ago. Its bricks were loose; I removed one and put it back immediately after, to not defile this historic site. There was a tree right next to the ruins, and for a moment, I thought I saw it lean on the tree.

In the corner—or what was left of a corner—there lay a body, clad in robes in the same style as those of the previous victims. The robes and the grass were bloodstained, and the body had numerous stab wounds. It took some time to recognise that this body belonged to a woman. The blood and stab wounds covering the body made it unrecognisable. There was also a bloody trail leading to a window frame just above ground level, which made me think that the body was brought into the castle via the window.

“When was the crime reported?” I asked Thomas.

“This might sound ridiculous, but yesterday, a satellite took an image of the ruins. When we received the photo, it had a bright yellow splotch on it. We immediately went there to investigate and saw the body.”

Strange. Very strange. This story’s ridiculous nature made me suspect Thomas very highly, no matter how respectable he was.

Hopefully, all this car driving was counted in my travel expenses. Plus, this case was something that I could sleep on, and get a good answer tomorrow.

I woke up in a cold sweat. Strange things happened to me in my dreams. Where do I even start?

First, the strange people. There were three of them, dancing around a cauldron, chanting in some unknown tongue that I didn’t know of. They looked like women, but the beards made me doubt that. One of them was shorter than the other two, which looked about my height; I say *looked* because I was watching from a distance. I did not want to get too close to them; they looked poised and ready to kill me as if I were their prey. The dream seemed real, so real that I felt that I could taste the air, which was murky and swampy.

Then, I saw a king, who had a grand feast in a castle’s hall. The walls were white, but the hall’s floor was red carpet. For some reason, the castle gave me an unexplainable feeling of déjà vu. The feast was marvellous, comprising many different dishes that looked delicious. The host was also a very entertaining figure, saying things that sparked joy in the audience. Everyone was dressed in medieval clothing, and their speech was blurry to me. Sadly, I could only watch from a distance, so I could not get a taste of whatever marvellous food they had.

Then, I watched the king go to bed. The bedroom was coloured in red, with some gold-coloured patterns on the walls. The canopy of the bed, which was crimson red, matched the colour of the bed itself. The king went to sleep on the feather-white sheets, and the candles were out.

Then, the host of the feast came into the king’s quarters, clutching a dagger with his hand. His blood-red eyes caught my attention; it looked like he was devoid of any morality. I watched him brutally stab the king multiple times in his heart and throat. Blood splattered everywhere. The host, now also a murderer, looked regretfully at the blood on his hands, knowing that the blood would never come off.

I tried to get closer to examine the dead body, but it was at this moment that I woke up. How upsetting.

This dream was strange, to say the least, but even more unsettling was the resemblance towards the crime scenes I saw earlier; the castle was strangely similar. I pulled out a photo of the inside of the majestic Castle Inverness, and the bedroom was about the same, with the same golden patterns on the walls, complete with the dead king on the bed. Also, the victims’ robes were the same, although the ones I found the other day at the crime scenes looked a lot older.

This can’t be just a coincidence, right? I’ll drive to the crime scene to double-check. The mystery deepens.

I left for Castle Inverness in the early morning to inspect the body. The castle was the same as in my dream; however, it had lost much of its colour and saturation, the walls being a bit whiter than before. Even its beauty and size could not hide the fact that it was old and abandoned.

Once again, I went to the bed in the castle, and sure enough, the dead king from my dream was there, only lacking his crown. The stabs on the neck also corresponded with the places where the king got brutally stabbed.

All this detective work is very tiring. I’ll go to sleep now.

I had another one of the strange dreams today.

The women with beards were back. This time, they were not dancing around a cauldron, but speaking to a man. Their voices were not as blurry, and I could hear some words. From their dialogue, I learned that these three women were fortune tellers of some sort, as they told the man that he would become a king.

Suddenly, I was transported to a park. The park was well-tended, where plants grew where they were supposed to. There were a wide variety of plants there, all with names which I did not know. There were also a lot more animals there.

Three people were lingering there, with knives in their grubby hands. Anyone could guess that their intentions were anything but good. They all wore earth-coloured clothing, not because they wanted to hide from people, but because they were too poor to afford anything else. Their grubby, unwashed hands and faces told the same story.

Two more people on horses came in noble robes. One of them wore a darker shade of cyan; the other wore olive green. They had no patterns on their robes, which allowed them to blend in with the landscape. However, they were not poor; bags of money hung on their waists. They set a torch ablaze. Little did they know that would be the trigger for their untimely demise.

I saw the three people run and try to kill the other two. One of them got away on his horse; the other was not as lucky and suffered a cut to the throat. The murderers threw the victim into the ditch, leaving a trail of blood. The horse, now without its rider, ran away.

Then, I woke up.

These dreams are strange, but they do give me a bit of clues. If this dream is true, and if my predictions are correct, I will have a third dream, telling me what happened to the poor woman who was killed at the castle ruins. When that happens, I’ll have to find out when these crimes took place; I highly suspect that some dark biological magic that I don’t know about is at play here.

I endured a long drive to the park this morning. The trees were here and safely off the well-trodden path, which made navigation easier. The park strangely seemed to be devoid of life, which was a little unsettling. It also seemed a little less colourful than usual.

Suddenly, I felt a wisp of freezing air on my back. The trees seemed to turn blood-red for a moment. I couldn’t tell if the colour changes only played out in my head, or if the weather was playing tricks on my eyes.

I found my way to the ditch. Sure enough, there was the unfortunate noble in the ditch, afflicted with the condition of mortality. He was dead, and there was nothing I could do to save him from his untimely fate. The trail of blood I saw in my dream was there. It looked fresh for a second, then reverted to being dry again.

However, I saw some fresh horse tracks that were not there yesterday.

Normally I would suspect that someone has accidentally tampered with the crime scene by riding a horse through it, but the direction of the horse was the same direction where the son fled in the dream. Plus, the horse tracks didn’t look like any horse would make; they petered out when leaving the ditch, each step lighter than the previous, until there were none. Something was wrong, and I didn’t know what.

I closely inspected the body and noticed that the cut at the throat was still there. I touched the body again, and it still felt warm to the touch, which was very strange. I took some pictures and went home to think.

Thinking is too boring. I’ll go to sleep now.

Another one of the dreams.

This place looked like the castle I had seen earlier in my dreams, but instead of being plain white, it looked a lot redder than the previous one. Golden tapestries lined the crimson walls. A chandelier was hanging from the painted ceiling. It was white and ornate; it looked like it had been crafted by someone skilled in his craft.

I saw a woman with her son in the castle, probably of royal descent. Her speech was less blurry, so I could tell that she was berating her son over an issue of honesty. A messenger approached her, clad in lightweight robes, and said something about fleeing her castle because danger was coming.

Then, the three murderers who killed the man in the ditch rushed in the door. One of them grabbed the woman and said something in a rushed tone. I caught the phrase “Where is your husband?” Seems like the woman was not the main target of these bloodthirsty fellows.

Then they proved me wrong by brutally killing the son and the woman. They proceeded to drag the son out of the window. The blood of the son splattered everywhere, but some of it miraculously left a trail to the window. That was weird.

Then I woke up.

That could very well be the last dream of the bunch.

Back to detective work.

From the conversations I heard in my dream, I could tell that the woman was named Lady MacDuff. This gave me a clue as to when the murder took place; it happened when kings and lords ruled the kingdom, when agriculture was the main form of income for all, and when society—as we know it—had not been established.

But how did the bodies get preserved?

Thomas must be hiding something.

For the entire day, I searched Thomas’s house. His mood drooped when I had to search his house, and he denied my request to search his house for any suspicious evidence. After some persuading, he invited me in to show me a picture taken by the satellite.

I followed him and sure enough, part of the picture was covered in a bright yellow circle. How did this happen?

Thomas came in and gave me his well-thought-out, detailed explanation of what was happening.

“I have no idea what was going on, and honestly, I thought I was seeing things when I saw the yellow light. Then I made an entire program to read the image, and it showed that there was indeed a bright yellow circle there.”

There goes any chance I had with Thomas’s house. I still think that he is suspicious, and I had to do some snooping around. So, I spent the afternoon searching Thomas's house discreetly and found absolutely nothing of value to the investigation. I’m still not going to cross him off my list; he still seems a little suspicious.

Detective work is very tiring. I think I’ll go to sleep.

It turns out that that was not the last dream that I would encounter.

Yesterday, I met the three fortune tellers in the dream. The swamp which they called home was not changed; it still stank of rotting bodies and death. However, the cauldron was gone. They moved slowly towards me; their feet did not touch the ground, and their arms did not move either like a normal person would.

I wanted to run away from these women, but I found out I couldn’t. My feet were frozen in place, not out of fear, but because I literally could not move them; I bent over and tried to move one of my feet with my hands, but it just wouldn’t budge. What kind of black magic is this?

As they approached me, fear started rising in my body, and soon I found myself unable to move, this time truly frozen in fear. They stopped just at arm’s reach, which made it even scarier.

Then my feet were out of my control, following the women as if it had a mind of its own. The rest of my body followed. The women walked towards the centre of the swamp, where the cauldron once was. Then a fire lit up beneath me, and I instinctively moved away. Then I realised that I could move, tried to escape, and was met with an invisible solid barrier that hurt my head.

They spoke in rhymes, which made my head hurt. They told me that they were the Three Witches—through rhyme, of course—and that I could not escape.

They then said, in perfect unison:

“Before you wake up from your slumber,  
Speak, and we shall answer.”

Well, these women seemed strange from the start, and they seemed to know their stuff. So, I bombarded them with questions, and they answered every question I had with ease, all while maintaining a constant meter and rhyme. It must have something to do with all that fortune-telling that keeps the brains working.

After asking them a few questions, I found out that I was in Scotland in the year 1003 AD. They also told me that they specialize in fortune-telling and potion brewing and gave me a potion that would cure me of any aches and pains I had. Although it sounded like a promising offer, I turned it down out of suspicion and asked them what happened to the three victims who died at the hands of daggers.

The witches stopped speaking and started to make a cauldron appear. Then, they gathered a collection of ingredients to throw inside the cauldron. I caught “eye of bird” and “flesh of dog”, along with some other ingredients that I could not hear. Then, something emerged from the bubbling orange liquid. From it appeared a bed, which was the same one as I had seen from my first dream. The king was lying on the bed in a deep sleep.

“King Duncan, fair in his reign,  
Met his demise, with treachery’s stain.”

The host—or rather, a miniature figure of him—emerged from the cauldron.

“Disloyal Macbeth, bloodthirsty as can be,  
Tortured with ambition and prophecy.  
Dagger in hand, with his darkest thoughts,  
He killed the monarch, and off he shot.”

They said this as the miniature figure of Macbeth killed the king. Blood splattered everywhere, as I had seen. From this gruesome affair, I knew that the murderer of the king was a nobleman named Macbeth.

I was about to ask what happened to the other victims, but the witches stopped me.

“We know thy thought.   
Hear our speech but say thou nought.”

They knew how to read minds, which was out of this world. I wondered if I could get it too.

“How do I learn how to read minds?” I asked.

“Dedication and practice, and fortune’s spark  
Are musts to learn the darkest art.”

Seems like I’m not going to be doing it then. They then proceeded to throw even more ingredients into the cauldron, most of them I could not name. The cauldron turned blue, and a slice of the park appeared, with the ditch in the middle of the slice. A squirrel emerged from one side of the slice, stumbled upon the path, looked at me for a second, and scurried away, fading into the air. The two noblemen appeared, still on their trustworthy horses.

“‘Tis Banquo and his loyal son  
Fleance; now both are on the run.  
To hide from Macbeth’s evil plot  
To find them both and kill the lot.  
The murderers shall now appear.  
And the noblemen shall then feel fear.”

At this moment, the three murderers appeared to be coming out of thin air. They entered the slice of the park still floating above the cauldron. A while later, two noblemen entered, which I inferred were Banquo and Fleance. Then, the three murderers ambushed them, killing the man in the blue robes. The nobleman in green fled on his fast horse.

“Banquo’s dead, and Fleance’s gone.  
But the plot must carry on.  
Another mystery you wish to unfold,  
The lady’s death, a tale not told.”

Upon this, the witches throw more ingredients into the cauldron. I could recognise rat entrails and a human gut, which gave me the creeps. The cauldron bubbled even more, turning it into a vivid magenta. It shook and rattled, and suddenly stopped. Then, the castle room where Lady Macduff was killed emerged from the cauldron. Lady Macbeth was berating her son. The messengers came and left the castle, having delivered the tragic news to her. Soon after, Lady Macbeth met her demise at the hands of the same three murderers, probably at Macbeth’s bidding.

The witches, for once, stayed silent on this occasion. Maybe they had nothing left to say. Or they might have run out of rhymes to say.

The latter was later proved false, as the witches composed another speech of theirs.

“For you to bring the truth to light,  
We took the bodies on the darkest night,  
As we placed them, we cast a spell,  
For the bodies had a story to tell.  
Verses were sung, and then a light,  
Shielding from time’s unstoppable might.”

To confirm my suspicions, I asked, “Were the lights yellow?”

The answer came as a simple “Yes”.

This was the first time that the witches didn’t rhyme. Nevertheless, I issued one final issue. “How will you let me prove the solution’s truth to the world?”

Without hesitation, they immediately answered, in a cool, calm, slow voice.

“Tomorrow morn, when the moon fades away,  
The evidence shall be on full display,  
Upon a table beside your bed.  
Then you shall reveal the stories unsaid.”

Just when I wanted to leave, I suddenly remembered something important.

“Where is Macbeth now?”

The witches looked at me, then disappeared. Seems like they didn’t know either. I then woke up.

I immediately checked my bedside table, hoping for some evidence. There was a folder on the table, and it seemed very old. However, it contained a lot of pictures. They were all images of how the multiple murders happened, all showing the deaths of Duncan, Banquo, and Lady Macduff, the three victims I was tasked to find the cause of death of. All in unbelievably high detail, even the most advanced cameras could not capture this image. There were also pictures relating to where Macbeth’s body was located. They show that Macbeth was buried in Dunsinane, so there I went.

According to the images, Macbeth was buried atop this hill in Dunsinane. I took out my trusty shovel and started digging. After reaching a few centimetres deep, my shovel met a body. I then started rapidly excavating the kill.

Just then, Thomas came and saw me digging, so he inquired about what I was doing. I told him that I’d solved the mystery. He approached me and noticed that I was digging up a body. There was a strange look in his eyes.

“This is the body of Macbeth, who was the person behind all these murders,” I explained.

“Who’s this Macbeth guy?”

“He was a noble during his time. His lust for the throne took over him, and he committed treason against the king by murdering him in his sleep. Then, on his bloodthirsty quest, he decided to kill two more innocent people.”

“This sounds completely ridiculous. When did the killing take place?”

I answered confidently. “1003 AD,” I said, hoping that the witches had told me the truth. Anticipating another question, I told him that the witches cast spells on the three dead bodies to preserve them.

“Now this is completely ridiculous!” came the reply. I took out the folder, knowing that this was going to happen eventually. Surprisingly, the folder felt a lot lighter than it did before; it was like it had nothing in it. I opened the folder and was about to reveal the truth behind the murders to Thomas when I realised the folder was completely empty. The blood drained from my face.

“But…but…there was something in here just this morning…”

“First you are snooping around my house, then you dug up some random body. Do you know that gravedigging is a terrible crime?” Thomas said, with a tone in his voice that made the normal docile and peaceful him sound fiercer than he is.

“But…”

“No ifs, ands, or buts for now! You’ve got a lot of explaining to do at the psych ward!”

How could it end like this? All my life’s work, all my achievements going down the drain, just because I dug a body up? That was also the body that solved the mystery as well, the truth behind these murders! How dare he invalidate all my work just because of one tiny mistake? My eyes were now filled with rage, and I felt that I couldn’t control myself anymore.

Suddenly, my hand hit Thomas. I couldn’t control that, and thanks to me being fuelled with this anger, I felt a strange desire to carry on and continue to harm him. In fact, there indeed were strange voices in my head telling me to go on. I could easily overpower him; Thomas was not a weak man, but I was a strong one.

It felt that massive amounts of energy were drained from my body every hit. I could not withstand this any longer, and I collapsed. Thomas tried to ask me if I was okay; the look in his eyes told me that he still was very afraid.

The last thing I saw before me was the three witches standing on the hill, behind Thomas. Would they scare Thomas to death once he turned around?

Guess I’ll never know now.

===FIN===