



*“**B**y the pricking of my thumbs,  
something wicked this way comes!”* Nick  
Finney paused and then grinned at his  
audience. “Anyone recognize that line?”

The hands of half a dozen high school  
students shot up. Nick glanced at the adults  
scattered about the room.

Nick was the new drama director at  
Cold Forks High School. He expected his  
students to recognize the line from a play  
they were studying. He wasn’t so sure about  
the adults, though. They were members of  
a local little theater group. Right now they  
looked baffled.

One student waved his arm excitedly,

begging Nick to call on him. Nick was disappointed in the adults. They sat in their chairs as still as statues.

“Don’t *any* of you recognize that line?” Nick asked the adults. “It’s from Shakespeare’s play *Macbeth*.”

In the front row, Joe Collier—the local newspaper publisher—shifted uneasily in his chair. “Some of us recognized the line, Nick. We know what play it’s from. We just don’t like it.”

Nick studied Joe in surprise. “It’s one of Shakespeare’s greatest tragedies. How can anyone *not* like *Macbeth*?” When no one answered, Nick went on. “I hope you can learn to like it, Joe. My students are studying *Macbeth* this semester. So that’s the play I want to direct for your little theater group!”

In the back row, Gloria Valdez stood up. She was a local businessperson who owned several stores in town. “Nick, we don’t want to make life hard for you,” she said with a nervous smile. “We just think it would be better if we put on a comedy or a musical.

Or maybe—”

Other people began throwing out ideas. Nick shook his head. “It will be better for all of us if we do *Macbeth*,” he insisted. “Then I can bring my students into the production. I’ve staged this play in other places, and everyone really liked it. It’s a great story, filled with greed, betrayal, murder, ghosts—”

Harry Hardwick, the local bank president, stood up. “*Macbeth* is a bad luck play,” he said flatly.



Nick was amazed. “Harry, are you kidding me? Are you folks really *that* superstitious?” he exclaimed.

Harry turned red and looked away.

Nick noticed that his students seemed puzzled. “Maybe I’d better explain,” Nick told them. “There’s a legend that Shakespeare wanted to make a big impression on the King of England, James I. So he included a real witch’s curse in *Macbeth*. As a result, the play supposedly brings bad luck to the actors.

Even to this day, a lot of actors won't say the name of the play out loud. They refer to it as 'that Scottish play' or 'the cursed play.'"

Nick saw several students glance nervously at each other. He grinned. "Give me a break! You don't believe that old rubbish, do you?"

"What *kind* of bad luck?" asked Steve, a red-haired high school senior.

Nick laughed. "Sometimes actors have had accidents. But—" He paused, looking at each student in turn. Several of the faces looked worried. "Come on, you guys! Accidents happen all the time. There have been accidents in other shows. No one calls *them* bad luck plays."

Steve looked relieved. "So it's not *really* bad luck?"

"Only if you believe it is," Nick said. He stood up and stretched. "Okay, people, it's late. Let's wrap it up now so my students can go home and get to bed. I don't want to see any of them falling asleep in drama class tomorrow!"