

Harry/Larken

LARKEN: The latest princess was a failure.

HARRY: No!

LARKEN: Yes.

HARRY: Bad luck. But don't despair for we have plenty of time. If a true princess is not found in the next few months I will go out and find one myself . . . or I don't deserve to wear my spurs.

LARKEN: Darling . . .

HARRY: My love?

LARKEN: Do you remember the Royal Joust on Whitsunday, when you won those spurs?

HARRY: Of course.

LARKEN: When you were called Sir Harry, the Fairest and Bravest Knight in all the Land, and everyone agreed that you had a brilliant future ahead of you; that you might someday become Lord Chamberlain, or ever Prime Minister?

HARRY: Well, I don't know about Prime Minister . . .

LARKEN: Do you remember the picnic we all had later on the greensward with the lovely cold pheasant?

HARRY: Yes.

LARKEN: And you and I wandered away from the others to climb the hill and watch the sun go down?

HARRY: Yes.

LARKEN: And a lark was singing in the trees and you said you'd remember that moment forever because the lark's song reminded you of my name?

HARRY: Yes, Larken, yes!

LARKEN: And then we watched the sun go down?

HARRY: Yes!

LARKEN: Well. *(Pauses, takes a deep breath, then speaks)* I'm going to have a baby. *(HARRY is stunned)* So you see, a princess for Dauntless *must* be found . . . and soon or I shall have to go away somewhere.

HARRY *(Clears his throat)*: Uh . . . uhrm . . .

LARKEN *(Suddenly frightened)*: Oh, darling . . . I'm so worried! This could ruin you and you'd never be Prime Minister or anything! Say the word, Harry, and I'll go now. I'll go far away where they'll never find me! *(HARRY hesitates)* Just say the word!

HARRY *(Bravely)*: No! You'll stay here! Why should we both suffer all our lives just because *you* had a moment of weakness?

LARKEN *(Ecstatically)*: Oh, Harry! *(She throws herself into his arms. Music in)*

HARRY: We're none of us perfect! Everything's going to be all right.

LARKEN: Thank you, Harry!

King/Minstrel/Jester (1/2)

..... MINSTREL: He changes everything. (KING agrees. LARKEN exits happily DOWN RIGHT. Now KING, worried, paces back and forth. JESTER and MINSTREL enter UP RIGHT)

JESTER: My father expected me to follow in his footsteps but then I landed this jester job and . . . What's wrong?

KING: (Worried)

JESTER: You're worried?

KING: (Yes)

JESTER: About what?

KING: (Points OFF RIGHT)

JESTER: Who?

KING: (Lady)

JESTER: Some lady? Which lady?

KING: (Two syllables)

JESTER: Two syllables.

KING: (First syllable)

JESTER: First syllable.

KING: (Bird)

JESTER: Bird . . . some kind of bird.

KING: (Yes)

JESTER: Auk, bluebird, catbird, dove, eagle, finch, grouse, hawk, ibis, jay, kiwi, lark, marten . . .

KING: (Claps hands on "lark")

JESTER: Lark!

MINSTREL: Lady Larken.

KING: (Right . . . pantos small word . . . "and")

JESTER: "And" . . .

KING: (Pantos: Knight)

JESTER: A Knight?

MINSTREL: Which Knight?

KING: (Sir Harry)

BOTH: Sir Harry!

King/Minstrel/Jester (2/2)

KING: (Pantos: "Dust")

JESTER: Dust . . .

KING: (Sounds like)

JESTER: Sounds like dust . . . uh . . . "lust"

KING: (How could you)

MINSTREL: "Must." Must what?

KING: (Erase)

MINSTREL: You're going to start all over, right?

KING: (She's in trouble)

JESTER: She's in trouble.

MINSTREL: What kind of trouble?

KING: (Big)

JESTER: Big trouble . . .

MINSTREL: How many syllables?

KING: (Pregnant)

JESTER: She's going to have a baby.

KING: (Takes off crown, puts it under his tunic, and waddles)

JESTER: Does anyone else know?

KING: (Sir Harry)

JESTER: Sir Harry.

MINSTREL: Of course! But does anyone *else* know *besides* Sir Harry?

KING: (No . . . and you must keep the secret)

JESTER: Don't worry, we can keep a secret! The question is . . . can *you*?

KING: (Me? I can't even talk. "Locks" his mouth and swallows the "key")

MINSTREL: We know you can't talk . . . (GIRL crosses; KING starts after her but is pulled back by MINSTREL. Music in) You can't talk but you manage to communicate.

KING: (Yes)

Queen/Dauntless

(Scene: in one. A castle corridor. QUEEN and DAUNTLESS enter, he tagging behind her at some distance)

QUEEN: Come along darling, don't dawdle. *(Stops and observes him shuffling along)* Dauntless, pick up your feet for heaven's sake and don't squint! I told you not to look at the sun.

DAUNTLESS *(Adjusting)*: Yes, Mama.

QUEEN: That's better. *(Hugs him. KING runs on chasing WENCH)* SEXTIMUS! I've told you once, I've told you a hundred thousand times, I will not have you playing these foolish games and running around in the halls. It just isn't dignified. We are the rulers of the kingdom and if we don't set a proper example for the rest of the court, I'd like to know who will. I mean what is the point of being a ruler if one isn't going to behave as a ruler should. *(KING exits DOWN LEFT, in pantomime mimicking her. The KING never speaks aloud, but makes what's on his mind very clear by acting it out)*

DAUNTLESS: Mama . . .

QUEEN *(Stopping)*: Now what?

DAUNTLESS: Mama, when am I going to get my Princess?

QUEEN: Dauntless, I don't want to discuss that now. It's time for your COCOA.

DAUNTLESS: But Mama, sometimes I get the funniest feeling that you don't want me to get married.

QUEEN: Don't *want* you to get married? Don't *want* you to get married? Dauntless — don't you trust me?

DAUNTLESS: Of course, Mama, but . . .

QUEEN: Well, then how can you say such a thing? *(The Mamalogue: spoken as rapidly as is possible to do without sacrificing clarity)* I want you to get

Queen (Mamalogue)

married! How many times have I said to you, "I want you to get married?" Only this morning, I was saying to your father, I said, "Sextimus, I want that boy to get married. It just isn't normal for a boy that age to stay single! And after all, he is the Prince," I said, "Don't forget that. He's next in line to the throne. I mean we're not exactly the oldest people in the world; but on the other hand we're not going to live forever, and I just know that I'd feel much better, much easier and more relaxed in my mind if that boy were married, and settled and set!" And that is absolutely verbatim, *exactly* what I said to your father this morning. Of course, he didn't say anything. He never does. But you know him just as well as I do; I don't have to tell you how impossible he is. But that's my cross of pain; and I don't want you to worry your head one tiny bit about the fact that your father and I don't get along, and never have. If he makes me miserable, and makes me suffer, I just have to put up with it, and I will not allow it to affect my child's attitude toward him or me. He may be a mean, stupid, dreadful, selfish, rotten man, but he is your father and I want you to respect him. There is only one person who really cares about you and really worries about your health and your happiness and your future and that's what I'm talking about right now; your future, and I want to make myself absolutely clear; I *want* you to get married *but* I don't want you to marry just *anybody*. After all, marriage is a lifetime partnership and I wouldn't want to see my little boy make the same mistake I did and wind up miserable the way I did. You *are* a prince and you must marry someone suitable, someone who's good enough and smart enough, and fine enough for my good, nice, sweet, beautiful baby boy. And of course she has to be a princess. I mean a *real* princess. That's one thing I absolutely insist upon. She has to be a real, genuine, bonafide princess just as I was. That's what you really want, isn't it? Someone like me? Of course you do! Oh, God! If I were only twenty years younger — Just remember this — you *must trust me* . . . (LARKEN and HARRY enter
DOWN LEFT)

Minstrel

MINSTREL (*Spoken*): There are many versions of this story; I sing them all. This is the prettiest, but it's not quite accurate. I happen to know the true story of "The Princess and the Pea" for the very good reason that I was there. It was a small kingdom ruled over by a talkative queen and a mute king. The Princess in the *true* story was not the only girl put to the test. Actually, she was one of 13 girls — girls who came to the castle hoping to wed the Prince, but who, for one reason or another, were found to be unsuitable. (*Lights come up full on stage and the picture has changed*)

Winnifred/Dauntless

WINNIFRED: No, let's do it again! *(The QUEEN exits DOWN LEFT and the COUPLES disperse)* Maybe you could give me a clue.

DAUNTLESS: A clue?

WINNIFRED: I know it's highly secret, but . . . what *sort* of test does she usually give?

DAUNTLESS: Well, with *Mama* thinking up the test, it might be almost anything . . .

WINNIFRED: Like what?

DAUNTLESS: Ohhh . . . sometimes it's history . . .

WINNIFRED: Oh.

DAUNTLESS: Sometimes it's dancing . . . sometimes it's . . . spelling . . .

WINNIFRED: Oh.

DAUNTLESS: . . . but sometimes it's a test of strength and endurance.

WINNIFRED *(Now she perks up)*: Aha!

DAUNTLESS: For instance, one of the girls was supposed to lift this weight. *(He goes to a large "medieval" weight)* She couldn't. *(He tries to lift it, giggles)* I can't even lift it . . . But I know you'll pass; you don't have to worry.

WINNIFRED: Do you want me to pass? *(He nods)* I'll pass. *(She goes to weight, tucks her hem into her waist, spits on her palms, and, in professional weight-lifter fashion, succeeds in getting it off the floor, then to her chest, then, with great effort, over her head, and down to floor. Then, lest we forget she's a girl, daintily undoes her skirt, and strikes her most feminine pose)*

DAUNTLESS: Hey, I think you're wonderful.

WINNIFRED: By the way, I don't think I've ever told you . . . my full name is Winnifred the Woebegone. But Winnifred's too formal. You can call me by my nickname.

DAUNTLESS: Winnie?

WINNIFRED: Fred.

DAUNTLESS: Fred! What a beautiful name . . . So straight . . . So strong . . . So *you!*

Wizard/Minstrel (1/2)

(Scene: The WIZARD's chamber. He is alone in the room looking at a cauldron of steaming chemicals. The JESTER comes down the stairs followed by the MINSTREL.)

JESTER: Pardon, Sir Wizard.

WIZARD: What do you want?

JESTER: Our friend, the Minstrel, is a great admirer of yours.

WIZARD: No soft soap, if you please. *(Walks away)*

MINSTREL *(Stepping forward)*: This is not soft soap. And I wouldn't even say it except for the fact that I've been banished. And before I go — well — I hope this won't embarrass you, but . . . I had to tell you what a great artist you are . . . Cardamon.

WIZARD *(To JESTER)*: Cardamon? Don't call me by that name.

MINSTREL: I use that name with honor, sir. I don't think I'll ever forget seeing you in command performance at Glastonbury in '92. What a show, what a triumph! You took seven curtain calls.

WIZARD: Eight.

MINSTREL: Do you happen to remember a little boy in the second row who stood up and yelled "Bravo" that night?

Wizard/Minstrel (2/2)

WIZARD: Yes . . .

MINSTREL: I was that boy.

WIZARD: I can't believe it.

MINSTREL: Of course, now I'm in show business, too. And sir . . . if it's any interest to you, it was your inspiration that brought this about.

WIZARD: You must belong to the guild. (*They perform elaborate ritual handshake*) Camelot Local 714! To think that someone remembers those days.

MINSTREL: Yes. Well, I just wanted to tell you what that performance meant to me, Cardamon. I'd better be going now.

WIZARD: No. Stay awhile. Sir Minstrel — (*Flower trick*) for you.

MINSTREL: Thank you.

WIZARD: Here — have a seat.

MINSTREL: No, the Queen wouldn't like it if she knew I was still around.

WIZARD: Never mind her. Sit down. This is between us.

MINSTREL: Anyway you're probably busy with that test for tomorrow.

WIZARD: Oh, that's all right. The test is all taken care of.

MINSTREL: I don't suppose you could tell an old Guild brother what it is?

WIZARD: Well, I'm sort of under oath . . .

MINSTREL: I understand. Well, I'd better be going.

WIZARD: No. Wait a minute. May I borrow your handkerchief?

MINSTREL: What handkerchief? (*WIZARD produces handkerchief, then plucked chicken*)

WIZARD: Some people think my act is pretty fowl.

MINSTREL: Cardamon the Great!

WIZARD: I bet you can't guess what the test is about.

MINSTREL: Astronomy?

WIZARD: No. You'll never guess. (*Conspiratorially*) Sensitivity. (*They laugh*)

MINSTREL: Sensitivity! (*To JESTER*) Did you hear? (*JESTER rolls on his back and kicks his feet. They all laugh*) Cardamon the Great.

WIZARD: Cardamon the Greatest. (*He makes cane turn into two silks*) Now let me tell you the rest. (*Looks at JESTER*) No, I'd better not.

JESTER: I'll go — but may I ask one favor, Cardamon? May I . . .