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The Pauper Princess**

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THE PAUPER PRINCESS

A RETELLING OF MARK TWAIN'S
THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Holly Beardsley



The Pauper Princess

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Cast of Characters

Maximum Cast – 72 actors

William Shakespeare (Narrator)

Elizabeth Tudor	Bearded Men
The Herald	Señor Ferdinand
Theresa Canty	Princess Mary
Bet Canty	Lady Louise
Nan Canty	Lady Pearl
Lady “Kat” Ashley	Lady Ethel
Lady Margaret	Queen Catherine
Lady Anne	Lady Bess
Lady Viola	Lady Tess
Lady Beatrice	Sir Cawarden
Lady Juliet	Kathalina
Lady Rosaline	Katrina
Lady Gertrude	Marianna
Lady Harriet	Angelina
Drake Norrington	Debbie
Bernard Brighton	Drunk Man
Lady Charlotte	Dead Man
Widow Duchess of York	
Lady Jane	
Lord Hertford	Handsome Man
Prince Edward	Nurse
Sir Edmund Asinus	Make up Servant
Simon Bowler	Chef
Barnaby Bowler	Courtiers (5)
Roger Crab	Citizens (8)
Miles Hendon	Servants (2)
	Guards (4)

Minimum Cast – 47 actors

William Shakespeare	Lady Harriet/ Citizen
(Narrator)/Bearded Man 1	Drake Norrington/ Bearded Man 2
Elizabeth Tudor	Bernard Brighton/ Bearded Man 3
The Herald	Handsome Man/ Bearded Man 4
Theresa Canty	Lady Charlotte
Bet Canty/ Courtier	Widow Duchess of York
Nan Canty/ Courtier	Lady Jane
Lady “Kat” Ashley/Citizen	Lord Hertford/Bearded Man 4
Lady Margaret/Citizen	Prince Edward
Lady Anne/ Citizen	Sir Edmund Asinus
Lady Viola/ Citizen	Simon Bowler/Drunk Man
Lady Beatrice/ Citizen	Barnaby Bowler/Dead Man
Lady Juliet/ Citizen	Roger Crab
Lady Rosaline/ Citizen	Miles Hendon
Lady Gertrude/ Citizen	

**Señor Ferdinand
Princess Mary**

**Lady Louise
Lady Pearl
Lady Ethel**

**Queen Catherine
Lady Bess
Lady Tess**

Sir Cawarden

**Kathalina/ Nurse
Katrina/ Make up Servant
Marianna/ Courtier
Angelina/ Courtier
Debbie/ Courtier**

Guards (4)

A Note About Casting

The Pauper Princess plays with the notion that in theatre's history men performed all roles, including the roles of women. Although some characters should be played by a male actor (i.e. Miles Hendon or the Asinus acting troupe) many of the male roles could in fact be played by female actors.

Because there is always an abundance of actors needing parts (you know what I'm talking about, theater teachers) the leads can be double-casted pushing the maximum cast up to 78. The leads include Elizabeth Tudor, Theresa Canty, Miles Hendon, Prince Edward, Princess Mary, and Senior Ferdinand. They can be citizens or courtiers during the performances where they are not the lead.

That being said, even with the maximum cast size, those with very small roles (e.g. the Drunk Man or Dead Man) should have secondary parts as Citizens or Courtiers. This gives the students more stage time and gives you a richer crowd in party/street scenes. There are also additional parts in the Street Scene choreography.

Costuming

The Pauper Princess is a period piece with period costumes—but it is also a comedy, with modern anachronistic themes. With that in mind, you can make subtle anachronistic choices like a period garb mixed with Converse High Tops, or sunglasses. Every choice you make should be made with the idea, “This is a comedy!”

Set

The Pauper Princess was written for a two sided rotating set – one side is Whitehall Palace, the other side is Dandelion Theatre. However, it can also be done in multiple ways:

The Original “Bangs & Whistles” Theatrical Design

Two stage wagons, platforms with wheels and breaks, each with curtained archway flats, walls. When stage wagons are facing forward with the front of the curtains, it represents Whitehall Palace, and should be dressed like a palace. When the wagons are facing the other side, it represents the backstage of the Dandelion Theatre. The back of the curtains should look like the curtain to a stage, with backstage props, and other theatre objects dressing the wagons. This style of set allows you to have a fully dressed set with shortened time for scene changes.

The Classroom “Black Box” Design

The Pauper Princess can also be done within a simple Black Box setting, meaning no build and using only props. This setting easily translates to a classroom or gymnasium.

Now, if no set sounds like no fun, remember that this kind of theater allows for more creativity. For the curtains, you could have two Guards holding a curtain rod. This gives more stage time to the guards and costs less than a full set.

Although Black Box theatre is considered a relatively modern approach, no set was how Shakespeare rolled. If you say, good enough for Shakespeare, good enough for me, then black box is the way for you.

The “Do you have Another Option?” Design

As you might be able to tell from the name, this is the option somewhere in between Bangs & Whistles and Black Box. Take away the full dressing, platforms, and wheels, and you have a simple wall with a curtain attached. So, how do you make a freestanding wall? Theatres, both amateur and professional, have turned from wood and plaster, to foam. Large foam board used for insulation that can be bought from any home repair store serve well as lightweight walls. Brace them with a few pieces of lumber, and “Ta-da!” you’ve got yourself a lightweight moveable wall. Don’t worry—if they had foam board in Shakespeare’s time, he would have approved.

ACT ONE Scene I

OUTSIDE WHITEHALL PALACE. THERESA, BET, and NAN CANTY are sleeping on various boxes and street rubbish DSR. SL, PRINCESS ELIZABETH looks from her balcony¹ wistfully.

SHAKESPEARE: My Lady. My Patron. My Queen. Queen Elizabeth the First! In the years to come she would preside over a golden age. An age of empires, of art, and knowledge but most of all – the stage. Star-crossed lovers, romantic disguises, sword fights and epic battles – all the world was a stage! They gave the words to me, I, an actor of that stage – but in truth, dear friends, the words were never mine. They were hers.

And yet before my lady was crowned queen. Before the bloody reign of her sister and before the passing of her beloved brother, the child king Edward, before she ever picked up a pen – she was just a girl. She was just... Elizabeth. *(exit)*

ELIZABETH sighs as HERALD enters behind her, facing the Audience. Horn Fanfare.

HERALD: Daughter of Henry, Sister of Edward, Symbol of Purity, of Pallor, of Punctuality and Prudence, the Princess Elizabeth... awakes! *(bangs staff on the floor)*

ELIZABETH: I'm already awake, Herald.

HERALD: Correction! Daughter of Henry, Sister of Edward, Symbol of Purity, of Pallor, of Punctuality and Prudence; the Princess Elizabeth... is already awake!

LADIES immediately begin to dress her in a flurry of silks and satins.

HERALD: The idol of Sanguinity, of Joy, of Bliss, and Happiness – we present to you... *(banging his staff twice on the floor – CHEF and MINSTRELS enter with an elaborate feast)* Breakfast.

ELIZABETH sighs. LIGHTS go down on ELIZABETH as LIGHTS come up on THERESA downstage. GARBAGE MAN enters whistling DSL with bucket of rubbish. GARBAGE MAN throws rubbish on THERESA, BET and NAN and exits SR.

¹ Balcony can be suggested by a banner or bar held at waist level between two guards

THERESA: (*waking up*) That was unnecessary! (to BET and NAN) Well, good morning to us.

NAN: I'm hungry!

BET: Another day – another meal to find. Where are we?

THERESA: Just outside the Palace.

Two COURTIERS pass by, noses in the air.

NAN: You really think we will find something to eat here? Do you think anyone will even see us?

BET: It sure is pretty.

THERESA: You know what they say, girls... if you can make it here, you can make it anywhere.

*MUSIC*². THERESA and company glide through CROWD SCENE³.

LIGHTS come up on ELIZABETH in the Balcony. She watches the crowd glumly. THERESA stops DSL to eat an apple she earned and as she eats she notices ELIZABETH watching her. THERESA straightens her rags, fixes her hair, and waves at ELIZABETH. ELIZABETH waves back. GARBAGE MAN enters SL and throws another bucket of rubbish onto THERESA as he exits SR.

That's bloody ridiculous! You mackerel mother!! – Son of a!! – Smelly!! – Stupid!! –

CROWD has now stopped and are staring at THERESA. THERESA stops, straightens her rags again, and nervously bows at ELIZABETH. THERESA exits SR in a hurry. Cue *MUSIC*. Cue *LIGHTS*, fade down.

² *MUSIC* can be either period or modern pop music, or a mix thereof – the point is to remember that this is a teenage comedy and the *MUSIC* should be chosen in that spirit.

³ See appendix for *CROWD SCENE* choreography.

ACT ONE Scene 2

ELIZABETH's QUARTERS. Two stage wagons with curtains are set SL and SR. Two chairs and table are set CS. LADY ASHLEY enters SL. LADIES in WAITING: LADY MARGARET, LADY ANNE, LADY VIOLA, LADY BEATRICE, LADY HARRIET, LADY ROSALINE, LADY GERTRUDE, and LADY JULIET, stand in groups. Cue LIGHTS. MUSIC fade.

LADY ASHLEY: (*singing*) Your highness! Please come away from the window before the whole of London falls in love with you and storms the Palace!

LADIES all giggle as ELIZABETH enters. ELIZABETH goes to the table and sits, picking up a quill and writing.

Enough with the sonnets, your highness! Sonnets should be read to a princess, not written by her! Most importantly sonnets should be given to you by your suitors!

LADY MARGARET, ANNE, & VIOLA: Suitors!

LADIES giggle. LADY ASHLEY sees ELIZABETH still writing, she snatches the paper from the table, reading it. ELIZABETH follows the paper.

LADY ASHLEY: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

LADY BEATRICE: (*snatching the paper*) A summer's day? Too hot! What about spring?

LADY HARRIET: (*snatching the paper*) Day?! What about night?! Night is so much more lovely!

LADY ASHLEY: (*snatching the paper and ripping it up*) We have far too busy a day for nonsense, princess!

ELIZABETH: Fine! What does our day entail, my dear Kat? No wait let me guess –

LADY MARGARET, ANNE, & VIOLA: Suitors!

ELIZABETH: (*sarcastic*) Of course. Suitors. What else could we possibly do but find me a husband?

LADY ASHLEY: We'll see three this morning,

LADY ROSALINE: two after tea,

LADY JULIET: six after lunch,

LADY ASHLEY: and then two more before dinner –

ELIZABETH: But then there cannot be any left for tomorrow!

LADY BEATRICE: Oh no, there are twelve tomorrow, your highness.

LADY ASHLEY: But this morning we have Drake the Duke, Bernard the Baron and Michael the Marquis – all important political allies to your father of course.

ELIZABETH: Of course.

LADY ASHLEY: *(taking a look at ELIZABETH)* Make Up!

MAKE UP SERVANT runs on stage, slaps ELIZABETH in the face with a big powder puff and runs off again. LADY ASHLEY moves to SR flat, opens curtain to reveal DRAKE – DRAKE is hard of hearing, hunched, and walks with a cane. DRAKE is seventy years old. CUE DATING GAME STYLE THEME MUSIC.

Princess, I present to you Drake Norrington, the Duke of Parnelle. The Duke offers you his golden years as well as his estate and treasury. He would like to walk with you through the garden perchance if his sciatica isn't acting up, nor his bunions, or the pox –

ELIZABETH: It is my pleasure to meet you, dear Duke.

DRAKE: What?

ELIZABETH: *(louder)* My pleasure to meet you!

DRAKE: *(patting her hand)* Oh, no! I wouldn't eat you, dear!

LADY BEATRICE: *(aside to ELIZABETH)* Left home without his dentures.

DRAKE: Oh, yes! We'll have great adventures... after someone points me to the bathroom.

ELIZABETH gives a signal to LADY ASHLEY; LADY GERTRUDE takes DRAKE, exit SR as LADY ASHLEY moves to SL flat, pulling the curtain to reveal BERNARD. BERNARD is enormously fat, three men put together at the width. BERNARD is unaware of any fault in his beauty and therefore walks as if he were a gift to women everywhere. Once more, CUE DATING GAME STYLE THEME MUSIC.

LADY ASHLEY: Princess, I present to you Bernard Brighton, Baron of Bumberly! The proud Baron would like to offer his beauty and bounty, as well as his great, vast – acres of farm land. Bernard brings to your fortune a burgeoning business of blubber and lard as well as the populous of his pork.

BERNARD: (*kissing her hand*) I find that pork, not poetry, is the fruit of love.

ELIZABETH: (*trying to take back her hand*) I would think bacon makes a greasy token of affection, dear sir, I prefer words – a sonnet, or a song, flowers, a bouquet of some kind.

BERNARD: Princess, I'd give you a bouquet of the finest English pork every morning of your life. I'd present to you an epic poem of pork chops, tenderloin, and roasts. Sonnets of ham! Limericks of sausage links! The very wit of an oiled pig!

ELIZABETH: Brevity is the soul of wit, my dear baron.

BERNARD: But there is nothing brief about my admiration for you, princess. (*He kisses her hand in between each exclamation. ELIZABETH desperately signals LADIES as she tries to remove her hand from BERNARD's grip.*) Your skin is as pink as the first spring piglet! Your hair is like the tawny tail of my prized sow! Your eyes

LADY VIOLA runs off SL, bringing back the DUCHESS of YORK's lady-in-waiting, LADY CHARLOTTE.

LADY CHARLOTTE: The kind and beautiful, Widow Duchess of York, requests the Proud Baron of Bumberly to an afternoon of tea and sausages. Will you accept?

ELIZABETH: (*pushing BERNARD away*) You must go! An invitation from the Duchess of York is rare indeed. I will see you again, dear Baron.

BERNARD: Until then, my Princess. (*he exits SL with LADY CHARLOTTE*)

LADY JULIET: I didn't know your cousin had an appointment with the Baron of Bumberly.

LADY ASHLEY: It's not on my schedule.

LADY HARRIET: It's not polite to poach a suitor from the Princess!

ELIZABETH: Yes, yes, I just hope she forgives me.

LADY ASHLEY: She what?

ELIZABETH: On with it, dear Lady! The last suitor, let's get it over with!

LADY ASHLEY: Of course! Next we have Michael the Marquis – where are his papers? A moment, your highness –

A HANDSOME MAN enters as ASHLEY, ROSALINE and JULIET look through her papers. ELIZABETH takes notice.

ELIZABETH: Now that's more like it!

The HANDSOME MAN bows to ELIZABETH, as ELIZABETH is about to speak, ASHLEY finds her papers.

HANDSOME MAN: (*announcing, he bangs his staff twice on the floor*) The Marquis de Minitue!

CUE DATING GAME STYLE THEME MUSIC as a NURSE carrying a swaddled baby, the Marquis, enters. The HANDSOME MAN bows to the NURSE and babe.

LADY ASHLEY: Here we are. The Marquis, although of a tender age, would make an excellent bridegroom for your highness. In 18 years –

ELIZABETH: For goodness sake! Enough!

LADIES quickly remove the Marquis offstage. ELIZABETH turns to LADY ASHLEY.

ELIZABETH: A baby?! An old man, a pig and a baby, these are the suitors for a princess of England?! Drake Norrington is seventy years old, Kat! I'm just upon my fourteenth year!

LADY ASHLEY: It would be a May, December courtship!

ELIZABETH: May, December! And what December would that be?! Was he actually present at the birth of Christ?

LADY BEATRICE: Oh, but it's a smart match, your highness! Drake was lead drummer boy. Chicks dig a drummer.

LADY ASHLEY: Your Highness you have rejected nearly all of nobility. We are reaching the bitter remains of royalty – the dregs of the golden barrel! You must marry one of them!

ELIZABETH: I shall never marry!

ASHLEY and LADIES in WAITING gasp. Some cross themselves. LADY VIOLA faints into LADY MARGARET's arms.

LADY ASHLEY: Of course you will, your highness!

ELIZABETH: My mother married my father and look what happened to her! Off with her head! Lady Howard marries my dear and loving father and bam! Off with her head! I assure you, my Kat, if I wish to be a head shorter, I will marry right away.

CUE HORN FANFARE as HERALD enters to announce PRINCE EDWARD. ASHLEY and LADIES panic, run about preparing for the Prince. ASHLEY fixes ELIZABETH who remains completely calm.

LADY HARRIET: The Prince!

LADY JULIET: The Prince!

LADY ROSALINE: Your highness!

LADY ASHLEY: Make up! Make Up!

MAKE UP SERVANT enters SR, whacks ELIZABETH in the face with the puff and exit SL. ASHLEY and LADIES settle in a curtsy so deep that their heads nearly touch the floor. The HERALD steps downstage to announce EDWARD.

HERALD: It is my esteemed – nay sanctified, glorious honor to present the Son of Sons, the apple of Henry's eye, the strong, the bold, the protector of our English Lord God, and the Future King of England, Prince Edward! (*pause while EDWARD enters*) Accompanied by the kind and beautiful Lady Jane Grey! (*pause while LADY JANE GREY enters*) And escorted by the honorable Lord Hertford!

LORD HERTFORD, DSL. EDWARD looks depressed. EDWARD flops into a chair. LADY JANE goes to ELIZABETH.

LADY JANE: Elizabeth, perhaps you can help. Edward is not himself! I'd swear that he were a different boy all together if I not knew better.

ELIZABETH: Should I call the guard for an impostor's plot?

EDWARD: (*glumly*) It is I – Son of Sons, apple of Henry's eye, the strong, the bold... blah, blah, blah, blah.

HERTFORD: Young prince, I need not remind you that the titles you are given hold responsibility and weight. You must respect the office that you were divinely assigned –

ELIZABETH: Pardon me, Lord Hertford but would you accompany Dear Jane to the royal chef? Perhaps he can whip up something to tempt the Prince and rouse his spirits?

JANE exits with LORD HERTFORD. HERTFORD gives ELIZABETH a look of annoyance. ELIZABETH turns to ASHLEY and LADIES, clapping her hands, ASHLEY and LADIES exit.

What could be so wrong with your day – they're trying to marry me to an infant! (*sitting next to him*) Your uncle looks to be in a rare mood.

EDWARD: We come from Father's sickbed. The ashen face of the king always sets him to lecture. (*imitating HERTFORD*) "Remember Edward! One day very soon... you will be king!" As if I needed a reminder!

ELIZABETH: There is something more to your sour solemnity, today. Something heavy. What is the matter, my lord? What weighs you so? (*EDWARD pulls a large medal from his jacket. ELIZABETH is shocked.*) The Great Seal of England! That won't only weigh your spirits – with that you'd sink to the bottom of the sea!

EDWARD: Father demanded I keep it. His mind is so addled with sickness he is sure there is a conspiracy to steal the crown. Last night he had the vegetables from his dinner arrested for treason. The dungeon is full of shackled potatoes and parsnip! He's totally nuts!

ELIZABETH: You mean potatoes.

EDWARD: Why can't you or Sister Mary be king? You're older!

ELIZABETH: Yes but we are girls. We get husbands – not crowns. Can I ask you something, Edward?

EDWARD: Of course, anything.

ELIZABETH: What, pray tell, is a parsnip?

EDWARD: I'm not sure, but tomorrow at dawn the parsnip and the potatoes will be burned at the stake for witchcraft.

ELIZABETH: Sounds delicious!

EDWARD: Do not joke sister. It's not funny – I would give anything to loose this weight around my neck.

ELIZABETH: Oh, Edward. Give it here. I shall keep it for you until you are ready for it.

EDWARD: Are you sure?

ELIZABETH: Of course I am sure. I am your sister, you can trust me. *(he hands her the Seal)* Do not worry so brother. *(imitating HERTFORD)* Remember Edward, one day very soon you will be a king of the people and will bear even greater weights. Remember who you are! *(pushing him to his feet and on to a footstool – she hands him royal regalia, a “crown,” a “staff,” a “robe” – an upside down bowl, a bouquet of flowers, and a throw, as she says each title)* You are the Son of Sons, the Apple of Henry's eye, the Strong, the Bold, the Future King of England –

EDWARD: *(in heroic pose)* Edward the Sixth!

JANE enters with LORD HERTFORD. JANE carries a silver tray with a bowl of nuts.

JANE: How wonderful! What a heroic sight you make, your highness!

HERTFORD: *(deadpan)* The picture of majesty, your highness.

ELIZABETH: Dear lady, what did you bring to rouse Edward's appetite?

JANE: Nuts!

EDWARD: Oh no! No more nuts!

JANE: I'm afraid it's all I could find – the Royal Chef is nowhere to be found.

ELIZABETH: But where could he be?

HERTFORD: Apparently, he is needed at the execution of a turnip.

*EDWARD slumps back into his chair with a groan.
CUE MUSIC, CUE LIGHTS, fade down.*

ACT ONE Scene 3

DANDELION INN & THEATER BACKSTAGE. Stage wagons are turned around and joined CS to appear as the backstage of the Dandelion Inn & Theater. Various theater props and stage pieces are strewn about as BET and NAN help THERESA dress into a man's costume. They look towards the audience as if into a mirror. FADE MUSIC, CUE LIGHTS.

BET: I don't think this is a good idea, Theresa.

THERESA: Of course it's a good idea.

NAN: Yes, it is a wonderful idea, Bet. Our baby sister has decided to become a man.

THERESA: Sir Edmund Asinus is holding auditions – if I get a part in his show I get two shillings a performance. Two shillings, Nan! Three if we perform for the royal court. Thomas Canty will have a part in this show if it kills her.

BET: Theresa –

THERESA: Thomas.

BET: Theresa, what would Father Andrew say if he knew you were doing this? Traipsing around on some stage dressed as a man?

THERESA: Father Andrew would say that he did not teach me to read and write so that I would starve on the streets or work in the house of ill repute. That, and he would tell me my trousers are open. *(fixes her trousers)*

NAN: *(she laughs)* At least in a House of Ill Repute you wouldn't have to bind your chest.

THERESA: Nan. Be serious!

NAN: Me, be serious? The law of the land finds a girl on the stage as treason. If they find you out it will be the clink for you – or even the stake! They'll burn you for a witch all because you wore a man's hat. Do what you will, Theresa, but be careful! Do you even know how to act?

THERESA: Can't be that hard. Stand over here. Say something. Stand over there. Say something. Kiss her. Stab him. It's all in the stage directions.

A rabble of men is heard offstage as they prepare to enter for auditions.

NAN: Here they come.

BET: Wait, I got something from the tanner for you! *(she pulls out a false mustache and puts it on THERESA)*

THERESA: That's the Bet I know and love! How do I look?

NAN: Like the bearded lady.

BET: It's made from goat hair!

A group of men enter, SL, all practicing for their audition – some singing, some juggling, some sword fighting etc. Among the men are SIR EDMUND ASINUS, director, and MILES HENDON, actor.

Others include: brothers SIMON and BARNABY BOWLER. As well as ROGER CRAB with his stuffed dog Horatio. Following is played as a soliloquy by ASINUS with the boys cutting in.

ASINUS: I tell you, young lads, the stage is the thing!

SIMON: Yeah and that big hole beyond it is the orchestra pit. So watch your step.

ASINUS: Yes, the stage is the thing. Why when I was as young as yourselves I had played the fiercest of fighters –

BARNABY: Fainted at the stage blood.

ASINUS: Sang as the sweetest and most beautiful of damsels –

ROGER: With a beard no less!

ASINUS: And when I played a king – it was the most glorious and honorable of kings, kind but not too kind, humble and yet not too humble –

BARNABY: Foul yet not too smelly.

ASINUS: Yes, lads, the stage is the thing and the theater is our domain. And for our domain we have... a play!

ALL: Huzzah!

Lining up for auditions, THERESA stands at the end of the line with BET and NAN.

SIMON: What's it called, Asinus?

ASINUS: "The Most Lamentable Mirth of Old Tiberia and his Pirate Queen on their Escape from Stockholm."

ALL: Good title!

ASINUS: Roger! What a pleasure to see you my boy! I have the part for you and your dog. Crowds love a bit with a dog. Where is that pooch of yours?

ROGER: Horatio's right here, sir. (*scratches behind the ears of a very dead, stuffed dog*)

ASINUS: I don't mean to alarm you Roger, but your dog's dead.

ROGER: I know. I had him stuffed, so he'd always be with me. Don't mean he can't play the part.

ASINUS: Well he's got to do tricks!

ROGER: He's as good as ever. You watch. Horatio. Sit. (*dog does nothing*) Horatio. Stay. (*dog does nothing*) Horatio. Play dead. (*dog is dead*) Good boy!

ASINUS: When you're right, you're right, Roger. Welcome aboard. You too, Horatio. (*moving on to SIMON and BARNABY*) The Bowler brothers! Barnaby! You desire a part in our comedy of errors?

BARNABY: Oh yes sir! I was hopin' it would be something masculine like a crusader or knight – you see I have a beard now. (*he strokes pathetic beard*)

ASINUS: Yes, I can see that! Sort of. (*turning to SIMON*) And here's your brother Simon! I haven't seen you since the Comical Tragedy of Ethel the Conqueror. How's your hearing? Honestly, I thought the cannon was suppose to fire stage left not stage right.

SIMON: What? Sorry, sir, I'm completely deaf in my left ear, sir!

BARNABY: Yeah, that's why I always stand on his left side. So I can tell him that his face looks like a fish, or he walks like a girl. It's so much fun!

SIMON: You're standing on my right, you twit! What do you mean my face looks like a fish? When do you say that? All the time?! Is that why Rosaline told me she likes trout? (*grabs him by the shirt front, making as to punch him*) Why I ought to –

ASINUS: Gentlemen, gentlemen. There will be no quarrel among brothers. I have a part for both of you. Barnaby you shall be the

first mate and Simon you shall be... the fish. (*moving on to MILES*)
You sir, are a stranger here but I feel I know your face. Do I know you from somewhere?

ROGER: Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle! He's young Miles Hendon!

ASINUS: Not THE Miles Hendon, surely not.

SIMON: I saw you perform at the Promotion of Robert the Lesser. You were such a young thing!

BARNABY: Do a verse for us Miles, please!

ALL: (*except THERESA, BET and NAN*) Yes! Please! Do a verse for us!

MILES: All right. (*he begins a dramatic and beautiful reading*)
Hung be the heavens with black, yield day to night.
Comets, importing change of times and states,
Brandish your crystal tresses through the sky,
And with them scourge the bad revolting stars
That have consented unto Henry's death.

ALL: (*bursting into applause and cheer*) Wonderful! Bravo! Well done!

ASINUS: Mr. Hendon it is an honor to have you in our group of players, truly an honor. You shall play the title role of Old Tiberia, the young prince. (*moving on to THERESA*) You are also new to us, man. Your name?

THERESA: My name is Thomas Canty. (*bows awkwardly*)

ASINUS: As you are a new player, I feel it important to tell you that your lady friends should be left at the House of Ill Repute.

BET: We are not his ladies! We're his sisters!

ASINUS: Well, Thomas, I should tell you then to leave your sisters at the House of Ill Repute.

BOYS laugh.

NAN: Why I ought to –

NAN starts to fight him, but THERESA holds her back.

THERESA: Sorry, sir. They wanted to see you. They're big fans of your performance. When you played that king! Humble but not too humble.

ASINUS: It's wonderful to see your work appreciated, thank you ladies. You may stay. Now Thomas, how about a soliloquy.

THERESA: A solilia-what?

ASINUS: Or a verse or two, whatever you prefer. Like Mr. Hendon here. Come now, Mr. Canty! The stage is the thing! It's the opening act, you're the protagonist, you step out on the stage and say –

THERESA: Of course. A verse. *(she begins a terribly improvised, badly acted verse)*

The sky is green, like cheese gone bad.

Old mother's milk, so bad, so sad.

Perchance, I've found a piece of bread.

Like bread, so bad, so sad, she's dead.

Bread and milk. Black as black.

Alack. Alack. Alack. Alack.

ALL are silent at the bad performance. MILES snickers.

ASINUS: Well, that was... interesting, Thomas. Let me see if we have a part for you. *(he looks through his papers)*

NAN: *(whispers)* What was that? It was all about food going bad.

THERESA: *(whispers)* I don't know! I panicked, I'm hungry!

ASINUS: You will play the part of the Pirate Queen.

THERESA: Thank you, Sir Asinus! Thank you so much sir!

ASINUS: Not a worry, young Thomas. Even you can't mess up that part. All you do is look pretty. You should lose the mustache, though.

NAN rips off the mustache as ASINUS looks down.

THERESA: Ouch!

ASINUS: Quick shave. I like that in an actor. Welcome aboard, Thomas! Yes! Congratulations all! There is a part for you in our play if you are quick study. We perform for the royal court!

ALL: Huzzah!

ASINUS: Tonight!

ALL: What?!

ACT ONE Scene 4

THE DUNGEON. SEÑOR FERDINAND, a Spanish ambassador, waits for PRINCESS MARY impatiently. Behind him a line of BEARDED MEN are chained to one another. MUSIC fade. CUE LIGHTS.

FERDINAND: Where is that wench? I have been waiting in this dungeon for near an hour.

BEARDED MAN 1: Try a decade, Frenchie!

BEARDED MAN 2: Try two decades – and he's not french!

BEARDED MAN 1: Are you a Frenchie too, hmmm? Why don't you eat some frog legs!

FERDINAND: It smells like beets in here.

BEARDED MAN 1: Come say that to my face! Or are you scared? Mademoiselle?

FERDINAND: Quiet! Mary approaches!

MARY: Ferdinand, I am sorry to have kept you. My sister, Elizabeth is to blame. So perfect, pretty and protestant. (*mocking*) "Edward is depressed. He's worried about being king. We must help him." Worried about being king! Give me the crown, I'll give him something to worry about!

BEARDED MAN 3: That'd give us all something to worry about!

FERDINAND: This is precisely why we are meeting in this dank place, is it not, my princess?

BEARDED MAN 1: What you calling dank? An English dungeon is a thousand times better than any Frenchie prison!

MARY: (*moving SL to avoid BEARDED MEN*) Yes, my Spanish cream-puff. The chosen one, the light which shines upon us all, the rapturous, the brave, King Henry the Eighth... has finally lost it! He's totally nuts and inches from death's door!

BEARDED MAN 4: Wooohoo!

FERDINAND: I am sorry for you, my princess.

MARY: Sorry about what? Oh, yes. The death of my Father. I am very, very sad.

BEARDED MAN 3: (*disbelief raspberry*) Pbbfft.

MARY: Anyway. Once the King is dead, Edward will be crowned King, unless...

FERDINAND: Unless what?

MARY: Unless you find a reason for him not to be King. Once Edward is found unfit for the throne I will be crowned Queen of England and you can tell your Spanish king that I would be prepared to start negotiations on a marriage contract.

FERDINAND: (*forced*) Our king is a lucky man, my princess.

MARY: Don't worry Ferdie-Ferdinand, I will not forget your kindness.

BEARDED MAN 3: Yuck.

FERDINAND: Thank you, my princess.

MARY: We must hurry to the great hall – the revels will start and we won't want to be missed.

They exit.

BEARDED MAN 1: Who's gonna miss you, Frenchie?! Not me that's for sure!

BEARDED MAN 3: Shut up, before they add another decade to our time!

BEARDED MAN 1: Your fingers are on my side again!

BEARDED MAN 2: Quit it!

BEARDED MAN 4: Oy! Shut it!

*BEARDED MEN hand slap fight as CUE MUSIC,
LIGHTS fade.*

ACT ONE Scene 5

THE GREAT HALL. Chairs are lined up diagonally CS to SL, with various members of the court already seated, ASINUS among them. In the center of the chairs are two large thrones. Three gossiping old ladies (LADY PEARL, ETHEL and LOUISE) are standing DSL.

LADY LOUISE: I have never been to English court before, everyone is so lovely.

LADY PEARL: You are in for a treat, my darling Dutch cousin! Look! There's the Baron of Bumberly with the Widow Duchess of York! Apparently he showed up unannounced for tea and it was love at first sight!

LADY ETHEL: The Duchess must be nearsighted.

LADY LOUISE: No doubt.

LADY PEARL: (*waving*) There's Drake Norrington, the Duke of Parnelle.

LADY ETHEL: Oh, to be seventy again.

CUE HORN FANFARE, COURTIERS all stand. Members of Royal Family enter in order LADIES speak of them. Starting with LADY JANE and ending with PRINCE EDWARD and QUEEN CATHERINE.

LADY ETHEL: The Lady Jane Grey. Beautiful, but much too skinny!

LADY PEARL: Friend of the family, rumored to be the ruler of Edward's heart, brings him nuts.

LADY LOUISE: Oh my. (*MARY enters on FERDINAND's arm*) And who is that, cousin?

LADY PEARL: Princess Mary. First born of Henry and proud of it. Never met a flower she couldn't wilt with a glance. She has her eye on the throne, you can be sure of it.

LADY ETHEL: The gentleman is Señor Ferdinand, ambassador to the Spanish Crown. Very suspect.

LADY LOUISE: Very suspect!

LADY PEARL: Princess Elizabeth.

LADY ETHEL: Daughter of that tragic Queen Anne Boleyn!

LADY PEARL: Beheaded. Very sad.

LADY ETHEL: And that is Elizabeth's Lady Kat Ashley. The Courtiers say she is having trouble finding the princess a husband. Too picky.

LADY PEARL: That gentleman is the Lord Hertford. The dear Prince Edward's Uncle, on his sainted mother's side.

LADY ETHEL: He's Lord Protector and Regent. They say that when the King dies, he will have the power.

LADY PEARL: Oh, the apple of Henry's eye! Here he is! Prince Edward!

HERALD enters, pausing in procession.

HERALD: Ladies and gentleman – The Queen Catherine!

QUEEN CATHERINE enters. Royal Family sits with EDWARD and QUEEN CATHERINE center, ELIZABETH, ASHLEY, and JANE sit left, where MARY, FERDINAND and HERTFORD sit right. The rest of the COURTIERS stand on either side. The Master of the Revels, SIR CAWARDEN⁴ comes center.

QUEEN CATHERINE: What revels have you for us Sir Cawarden?

CAWARDEN: A scene from Sir Edmund Asinus Players entitled, "The Most Lamentable Mirth of Old Tiberia and his Pirate Queen on their Escape from Stockholm." (he bows and sits)

EDWARD: What a mouthful!

MARY: I hope it's worth the breath to announce it.

QUEEN CATHERINE: Come now children, the Pirate Queen enters.

THERESA enters as the Pirate Queen. Her costume is of a naval nature. She wears a boat on suspenders to represent her ocean voyage, a large pirate wench wig, and an eye patch. She bows to the Royal Family, nearly falling over.

EDWARD: Watch the rudder, Lady Pirate, it will topple you every time.

ELIZABETH: (to ASHLEY) Kat, who plays the Pirate Queen? She looks familiar.

⁴pronounced Car-DEN. The CAR drove into the DEN when the director forgot to put it into reverse. Silly directors.

ASHLEY: (*looking at program*) The player is Thomas Canty. He is quite pretty once you look past his sails. Perchance he will float with the tide and not need them.

JANE: Quiet, my ladies. Here enters Tiberia.

MILES enters looking quite roguish in his Scandinavian costume. He bows and begins his verse. THERESA floats in the background, upstaging MILES acting out his verse in crude pantomime.

MILES: Four score and two days have come and gone hence,
The new moon has shown her face and hid ever since,
Yet the murderous Pirate Queen evades her sweet prince.
The invader of my heart, and plunderer of my bed,
It was she who left my dear departed wife, cold and dead.

MARY: The Pirate Queen probably sat on her with that boat of a behind.

QUEEN CATHERINE: Do not listen to her, Lady Boat. A large behind is quite becoming on a woman or a man. (*to MARY*) Why, your father's is downright enormous.

ASHLEY: Do you hear that my Princess? Your stepmother likes a man with extra pork. Maybe you should rethink the Baron and his blubber business. (*she waves at Baron*)

ELIZABETH: Enough Lady Ashley. There will be no talk of suitors during the revels.

EDWARD: Hush, Tiberia's first mate approaches.

BARNABY: (*enters*) My prince, my liege, the Pirate Queen is spotted, Here on this longitude, I have it dotted.

MILES: Make ready to fire, Make ready the cannons!
My pirate, my love, she'll swim with Atlantians! (*ROGER enters*)

FERDINAND: Swim with who?

ASINUS: The Atlantians – from the lost city of Atlantis underwater.
Follow along will you!

BARNABY: Make haste my lord, she's getting away!

ROGER: Wait! Dear prince I have cause for delay!
An ancient creature I see through mine glass,
With magical powers, a great fish, a bass.
You bring her on deck she'll tell you a secret,

You give her, her life, your secret, she'll keep it.

MILES: Stay the cannons, make ready the net,
Pray that your right sailor and made a safe bet,
For if you're wrong, will feed her your pet!

HERTFORD: Not much of a snack, that dog looks long dead.

ROGER: (*breaking character*) He's not dead, he's resting!
(*MILES nudges him*) On my honor, On my hound's life,
My Prince, I promise. She'll avenge your wife.

MILES: All together men, grab hold of the rope.
Let's pull her aboard, this fish's our last hope.

*THERESA floats offstage as MILES, BARNABY and
ROGER grab hold of a rope and pull SIMON dressed
as the fish, onto the stage.*

EDWARD: I wouldn't trust a fish, Tiberia. They're awful slippery!

SIMON: I am the fish who swims the seas,
From shore to shore with greatest of ease.
I see all and know all, under my glass eye,
I'll tell you your secret then say my goodbye.
What knowledge escapes you, what stays your sword,
You've known in your heart, from Stockholm's fjord.
Your Pirate Queen and your dead wife,
Were sisters at birth and switched in the night.

ASHLEY: How shocking!

JANE: What happened next, dear fish?

SIMON: Two moons ago, your dear wife slept in black.
The true Pirate queen stole her away, and made to attack,
Your wife now pirate and the pirate now your wife,
Your true love snuck back, armed with a knife.

MARY: Now it's getting interesting!

SIMON: Quiet as she could, she crept, but you did wake
With no time to explain, she stabbed the pirate fake
With your eyes locked, your heart made to flutter
You grabbed for your sword but could not cut her!

QUEEN CATHERINE: (*wiping a tear with a handkerchief*) How romantic!

SIMON: She ran from your guards and made for the sea,
Knowing you'd follow and she would flee,

She'd heard of a sea creature who tells the truth,
Her only hope for love, her only chance for proof.

MILES: Oh my love! I knew it couldn't be!
Please tell me I haven't lost her, my wife to the sea!

SIMON: Only one secret now, prince, I must say adieu,
Your sweet bonny love, gives her ship to the crew,
She swims to you now, cross the frothy sea,
I've told you your secret, now please set me free.

THERESA enters as SIMON hops offstage.

MILES: My love, my life!
My Pirate queen and wife!
Please tell me it's you, the one I love most!
Tell me that it's you, not your sister's ghost!

THERESA goes to speak but MILES interrupt her.

Is it really you? Could it be?
My life, my love, swam across the sea?
Please tell me the truth, for I could not bear it.
You have no secrets, no pirate's parrot?

THERESA goes to speak but MILES interrupts again.

For if not you it be,
throw my heart into the sea.
To the bottom of the sea, my heart would sink.
To the darkest of dark, most watery of drink.

THERESA goes to speak but MILES interrupts yet again.

For if it is not you –

THERESA: (*annoyed, she improvises*) Of course, it's me, you daft
mackerel mother, son of a cod! Do you see a lot of girls treading
water out here!

*COURTIERS gasp at such harsh language. LADY
VIOLA faints and LADY MARGARET catches
her. QUEEN CATHERINE fans herself with her
handkerchief, LADY ASHLEY covers JANE's ears, but
ELIZABETH makes a realization.*

ELIZABETH: The girl in the square!

ASINUS: Cut to the epilogue! Cut to the epilogue! Get Simon on the stage – someone get that stupid fish out here!

SIMON: (*hopping onto the stage as fast as he can*) The epilogue!
This prince hath his wife and his Pirate Queen too,
His wife hath her prince and adventure on the blue,
And so my dear Prince, our Edward of England
Our play hath its end, lest a sequel we be in.

*SIMON bows and ALL applaud. Players all bow.
HERALD enters with HORN FANFARE.*

HERALD: The feast has begun!

*ALL exit except for ASINUS and the players. The
players bow comically as COURTIERS exit, over and
over.*

ACT ONE Scene 6

THE GREAT HALL. ELIZABETH enters and hangs back as players talk to one another and pack their set and props.

MILES: (*grabbing THERESA by the collar*) What were you thinking?! You upstaged me the entire time, then you broke character! You called me a mackerel! You wanna call someone a mackerel, go find Simon!

SIMON: Not funny, Miles!

MILES: I agree Simon, it's not funny. Little Thomas here nearly had us on the chopping block for that stunt. You're lucky Henry wasn't watching; he'd love to put a little twit like you on a spike! (*he shoves her*)

THERESA: I had to say something! (*mocking*) "For if it not be you – For if you not it be – For be it not me –" No woman would listen to such dribble after swimming across an ocean!

MILES: What do you know of women, school boy?

THERESA: I know they don't wait around for you to finish eight stanzas to get to your point!

MILES: A real man can enrapture a woman for more than eight stanzas, full sonnets, entire plays and still...

THERESA is suddenly hypnotized by his powerful charm.

Their heart will rest upon your every word. Silence is a wound to their soul that strikes with a sharp knife. Even a breath is a pain that wrenches. Yes, schoolboy, a real man can keep a woman for more than eight stanzas.

THERESA: (*she snaps out of it*) Yeah well... you know... you... (*she melts again*)... are so handsome.

ASINUS: Yeah well, you can take down the set by yourself. Come now, troupe. They're feasting in the servants quarters as well!

ASINUS, MILES and the rest of the troupe exit SR leaving THERESA to clean up. THERESA watches them as they go and sighs. ELIZABETH comes out from hiding as THERESA looks off SR.

ELIZABETH: Men can be ruthless. Can't they? They can't understand what it's like to be a girl. Of course that Miles Hendon is rather appealing, don't you think?

THERESA: (*sighing again*) Yeah... I mean... if you like stubborn, arrogant, handsome men then sure... (*she turns around, seeing ELIZABETH, she panics, starts to curtsy and then bow*) Your highness! Princess Elizabeth!

ELIZABETH: Arise, arise! I know you, do I not?

THERESA: No, no – I'm nothing but a lowly player.

ELIZABETH: You're the girl in the square, aren't you?

THERESA: No. A young *man* performer, your highness. Don't let the dress fool you, your majesty. (*ELIZABETH remains silent, THERESA starts to babble*) Don't let the eye patch fool you either... two eyes! (*Taps eye patch. ELIZABETH is still silent looking THERESA up and down.*) Two eyes to see ladies with... because I am a man... who likes ladies... (*unable to bear ELIZABETH's stony gaze, THERESA falls to her knees begging*) Yes, it's true!! I am the girl in the square! I'm so, so, so, sorry, Princess! Please forgive me! Please don't hang me all cause I wore pants! They were completely uncomfortable – not worth it! I am so sorry!! Forgive me!

ELIZABETH: Calm yourself, girl! I have no intention of hanging you! Calm yourself! Arise, arise! (*THERESA stands up*) Why did you wave to me this morning? Do we know each other?

THERESA: (*falling to her knees again to beg for forgiveness*) I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to wave! I'm always doing that! Waving to people I don't know! Father Andrew always chastised me for waving to people above my station! Mercy, forgive me! Don't hang me for waving!

ELIZABETH: Calm yourself! I am not going to hang you! Stand up for goodness sake! (*THERESA stands up*) You did wave to me, yes? (*THERESA starts to fall to her knees again but ELIZABETH stops her*) Not that again! Stand up nice and tall – don't speak. Nod or shake your head, got it? (*THERESA nods*) You were the girl in the square, yes? (*THERESA nods*) You live in London then? (*THERESA nods*) Near the palace? (*THERESA shakes*) You work in Asinus's troupe as a player? (*THERESA nods*) But they don't know that you are a girl? (*THERESA shakes her head*) But how do you do it? How do you escape without your servants noticing?

THERESA: (*laughs*) Servants? I don't have any servants.

ELIZABETH: No servants? But who brings you food? Who dresses and undresses you?

THERESA: I bring myself food. Whenever there is any food to be had. As for dressing and undressing, Father Andrew taught me well. I'm a good religious girl. Nobody's undressing me!

ELIZABETH: No, not that kind of undressing. Who helps you change your attire from day to evening or when you go to sleep – who helps you into your sleeping gown?

THERESA: I only really have the one dress. Then there's the vest and trousers I stole – (*she looks at ELIZABETH*) borrowed – from the Dandelion theater. My sisters, Bet and Nan, helped me into those.

ELIZABETH: Only one dress? But what do you wear to see suitors?

THERESA: I don't have any suitors.

ELIZABETH: No candidates for marriage?

THERESA: There is this one boy who delivers firewood – he cuts firewood all day so he has big arms like tree trunks. But also a pretty face with big blue eyes. Sometimes I let him sit with me. Sometimes he brings me an apple.

ELIZABETH: And this boy, he is an important political connection to your father?

THERESA: No, I just like him. I never knew my father.

ELIZABETH: (*growing more wistful with each question*) You like him? Because of his big arms?

THERESA: No, I'd say more because of his eyes. And the apples he brings me.

ELIZABETH: No one picked him for you?

THERESA: Nope.

ELIZABETH: And you can go where you like? I suppose you go on many adventures.

THERESA: All my adventures involve finding food. I'm sure you have much more fun here, princess! All the music, and dresses and food! It's like a dream!

ELIZABETH: (*under her breath*) A dream you can't wake up from.

THERESA: Beg your pardon, princess.

ELIZABETH: Nothing. You are quite lucky, my dear... what is your real name?

THERESA: (*curtsying*) Theresa Canty. Thomas Canty is my stage name.

ELIZABETH: Miss Canty, you are luckier than you know. (*looking closer*) Theresa, are you sure we do not know each other? You seem so familiar to me (*she takes THERESA's eye patch and hat off and steps back*) ... I don't... believe it...

THERESA: What?

ELIZABETH: Come, I want to try something!

ELIZABETH pulls THERESA behind the screen set piece. They switch costumes, throwing pieces over the edge of the screen to show they're changing. QUEEN CATHERINE's LADIES, LADY BESS and LADY TESS – enter from SL.

LADY BESS: Can you believe that play?

LADY TESS: "Sisters at birth switched in the night!" How unrealistic!

LADY BESS: What about that Tiberia? Are you honestly gonna say that he wouldn't recognize his own wife?

LADY TESS: And I suppose everyone just goes along with this whole trading places scheme. Like, they really can't tell the difference between the two of them?!

LADY JULIET enters SL.

LADY JULIET: (*looking up from her clipboard*) Uh, Lady Bess? Lady Tess?

LADY BESS & TESS: Yes?

LADY JULIET: I'm sorry, which is which?

LADY BESS: I'm Bess. She's Tess.

LADY TESS: I'm a T –

LADY BESS: I'm a B –

LADY BESS & TESS: – with an e, double s!

LADY JULIET: (*after a moment*) Uhh... right. The queen needs you!

LADY BESS: (*to LADY TESS*) Like I said, totally unrealistic.

CHEF enters from SR, GUARD enters from SL, he turns about face running SR, when two GUARDS enter SR, picking him up by his elbows and turning him around, CHEF runs in place.

CHEF: Not again!

GUARD ONE: In the name of the king, we arrest you for treason!

GUARDS, exit SR, dragging CHEF. PRINCE EDWARD enters SL.

EDWARD: Leave the poor chef alone! What is it this time? A conspiring carrot cake? (*exits after them*)

LADY TESS: Carrot cake sounds good!

LADIES exit SR. THERESA and ELIZABETH emerge from behind the screen. They look at each other moving back to CS. ELIZABETH now dressed as THERESA, and THERESA now dressed as ELIZABETH.

THERESA: It's amazing!

ELIZABETH: Like looking in a mirror!

THERESA: How can it be?

ELIZABETH: I don't know!

LADY ASHLEY: (*from offstage*) Princess Elizabeth? Princess? Where are you?

ELIZABETH: No, she can't see me like this! Pretend you're me! Stand there and smile. Don't worry! She'll talk enough for the two of you.

ELIZABETH runs behind set piece. LADY ASHLEY enters with LADY ROSALINE, LADY JULIET, and LADY BEATRICE at her side.

LADY ASHLEY: There you are! I've been looking all over for you!

LADY BEATRICE: Your dance card is full, your highness!

LADY ASHLEY opens a scroll that falls to the ground.

LADY ASHLEY: First I have you dancing with the Duke of Parnelle. Drake was looking a little sleepy, and I know that if his bunions act up he won't be able to dance at all.

ELIZABETH: (*popping up*) Aauuhhgg!

LADY JULIET: Then to show that you are still gracious to your cousin, the Widow Duchess of York, you will dance with the Baron of Bumberly.

LADY ASHLEY: And while you're dancing you should work some of your feminine wiles to assure his affection in case this York thing doesn't pan out. His blubber business would do wonders for the treasury. After the Baron of Bumberly, we have –

LADY BEATRICE: Forget Bumberly, there's Count Ferguson, Earl of Forst, Duke of Guise –

LADY JULIET: Sir Abram, Sir Philibrick, Baron VonTesla –

LADY ROSALINE: Duke of Dannenfourth, Count Victor, and Earl of Stokes –

ELIZABETH: (*aside*) Am I to dance with every man in the country?!

LADY BEATRICE: that scrumptious Sir Irving –

LADY ROSALINE: Sir Jacques –

LADY JULIET: Sir Austen –

LADY ASHLEY: then a quick waltz with the Baron of Salzburg.
Followed by the Earl of Morris –

ELIZABETH: (*aside*) There has to be something more to life than dancing!

LADY ROSALINE: Duke of Gloucester, Sir Warren –

LADY JULIET: Sir Harr, Sir Woodhouse –

BARNABY enters seeing ELIZABETH behind screen.

BARNABY: Hey Canty! What are you doing back there? Canty!

ELIZABETH: Canty? That's right. My name is... Theresa Canty.

BARNABY: What?

LADY ASHLEY: Sir Helquist, Duke of Guinnie –

ELIZABETH: I live in London. I have two sisters, Bet and Nan.

BARNABY: Canty, what are you talking about?

LADY BEATRICE: Sir Thomas, Sir Richard –

LADY JULIET: Sir Paton, Earl of Norfolk –

LADY ASHLEY: And Duke of Ginnibrit –

ELIZABETH comes out and shouts with joy!

ELIZABETH: And I am free to go where I please! (*she looks at THERESA and LADY ASHLEY*) Make up!

MILES enters SR. HERALD enters SL. MAKE UP SERVANT runs on stage slapping THERESA and LADY ASHLEY with giant make up powder puff. In the cloud of powder ELIZABETH runs off the stage, through the house, and out the door. Leaving MILES, BARNABY, THERESA, LADY ASHLEY, LADY JULIET, LADY BEATRICE, and HERALD dumbfounded.

LADY ASHLEY: Who was that?

THERESA: (*under her breath*) Oh... mackerel.

MUSIC fades up and LIGHTS fade out.

END of ACT ONE.

ACT TWO Scene I

SIGN sits center that reads "Offal Court." CITIZENS hang lazily about. Two COURTIERS enter looking lost. DRUNK MAN rises from the ground with a stretch, another drunk lies at the bottom of the sign.

COURTIER: Excuse me, sir. Can you point the way to Whitehall palace?

DRUNK MAN: (*stretches and spits*) Oy, you walk that way *hiccup* until it no longer smells like filth.

They start to go. DRUNK MAN stops them and points the other way.

On second thought, it smells worse that way, right Bob? (*he nudges the drunk on the ground with his foot and giggles*)

FEMALE COURTIER: Shame on you, sir! Such drunken behavior!

COURTIER: In front of a lady too!

DRUNK MAN: Oh, he ain't drunk, marm. He's dead.

COURTIERS gasp.

COURTIER: (*to audience*) Offal court... they weren't kidding!

COURTIERS exit in a hurry.

OFFAL COURT STREET. CUE MUSIC. STREET SCENE⁵ begins in house, ELIZABETH enters through house to the stage.

ELIZABETH: (*repeating over and over to herself*) My name is Theresa Canty. I am Theresa Canty. I am... I am... so lost. This was a bad idea. What have I done?! That poor girl! She must be terrified! Forced into my shoes, having her toes stepped on by the Duke of Gloucester. This is a terrible, terrible idea. I'll go back. I'll go back and we will change clothes and everything will be as it was... (*she starts left, and then right*)... only which way is it...

THE GIRLS of ILL REPUTE, including: ANGELINA, MARIANNA, KATHALINA, KATRINA, and DEBBIE enter SR. They begin to circle ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH: Ladies, might one of you help me? I need to find my way back to the palace.

⁵ See appendix for STREET SCENE choreography.

KATHALINA: And who might you be?

ELIZABETH: I don't know if you recognize me, but I am the Princess Elizabeth.

GIRLS: *(pause then laugh)* Oh really!

KATRINA: See, that's funny, cause I am the Queen of the Nile!

MARIANNA: What a coincidence! I'm the King of Siam!

ANGELINA: I'm the Prince of Denmark!

ELIZABETH: I have met the Prince of Denmark, and you are not... Oh, I see... you should not deceive your Princess!

KATHALINA: *(mocking)* Did you hear that, girls? We should not deceive our princess!

GIRLS: *(mocking)* Ooooh!

ELIZABETH: Royalty does not take to such behavior!

GIRLS: Ooooh!

ELIZABETH: Please, just tell me where I am.

MARIANNA: You're in Offal Court, love.

ELIZABETH: *(looking around)* Wow... Offal Court... they weren't kidding.

ANGELINA: What she say?

KATRINA: I say she's calling our court awful!

DEBBIE: But it is Offal Court.

KATRINA: Awful not Offal, you ninny.

ELIZABETH: Enough of this silliness! I demand you take me to the palace!

KATHALINA: You demand? No one demands me to do anything, you little pirate. Who do you think you are?

MILES enters SL as GIRLS of ILL REPUTE surround ELIZABETH.

MILES: Thomas! What are you doing?! I've been following you all over Offal Court! Asinus told you to pack up the set!

KATHALINA: Thomas? Asinus? (*suddenly sweet*) Oh! Sir Asinus's young player here is playing a trick on us, ladies!

GIRLS: Huh?

KATHALINA: It's a man!

GIRLS: (*crowding in around ELIZABETH*) Oh!

ELIZABETH: I am not! Do no touch me! Who are you to assault me in such a manner?!

MILES: They're girls of ill repute, Thomas. Enjoy it. You don't deserve it!

MARIANNA: Yes, we're *those* kind of girls.

ANGELINA: With very bad reputations!

KATRINA: Some worse than others!

GIRLS pull ELIZABETH from girl to girl as they introduce themselves.

ANGELINA: I'm Angelina –

KATRINA: Katrina –

MARIANNA: Marianna –

KATHALINA: Kathalina –

DEBBIE: And Debbie!

ANGELINA: (*pulling ELIZABETH*) Come with me Thomas, I'm the exotic one –

KATRINA: (*pulling ELIZABETH*) No me! I'm the pretty one –

MARIANNA: (*pulling ELIZABETH*) I'M the pretty one –

KATHALINA: (*pulling ELIZABETH*) Come with me Thomas! I'm the nice one!

GIRLS: (*all look at KATHALINA*) Ha!

ELIZABETH: (*trying to shrug off girls*) My name is not Thomas! I am not a man! I am the Princess – (*GIRLS surround ELIZABETH pawing over her until KATHALINA pulls ELIZABETH's wig off and GIRLS stand apart shocked*)

MARIANNA: He's a she!

MILES: He's a what?

ANGELINA: She's a girl!

KATHALINA: She's a liar! I say we take her straight to the Master of the Revels. They have rewards for criminals like her!

GIRLS: (*grabbing hold of ELIZABETH*) Yeah!

MILES: No! (*holding out a sword*) Release her this very instant if you desire to keep the pretty face your business relies upon!

MARIANNA: You better listen –

ANGELINA: Yeah, some of our faces aren't so pretty to begin with.

KATRINA: Speak for yourself!

MILES: (*pushing the blade closer*) I said, release her!

KATHALINA: All right, all right! But I'll remember this, pirate. We all will.

GIRLS: Yeah!

DEBBIE: Who are we remembering?

MARIANNA: The girl, who was pretending to be a boy, who was pretending to be a girl.

DEBBIE: Oh! (*pauses*) Who?

ANGELINA: The pirate!

DEBBIE: (*clapping*) Oh, goodie! I love a pirate!

KATHALINA: We're watching you. Come on, ladies!

GIRLS exit SL except for DEBBIE who stands next to ELIZABETH staring.

ANGELINA: Debbie!

DEBBIE: (*running off*) I thought we were watching her!

ELIZABETH: (*turning to MILES*) Your bravery is without equal, sir! I find you commendable in the service of the royal house of Tudor. Now if you could just –

MILES: Cut the act! Who are you?

ELIZABETH: I am the Princess –

MILES: I said, cut the act! Who are you really? What is your name? And I know it isn't Thomas!

ELIZABETH: My name is –

BET and NAN enter SR, rushing to ELIZABETH.

BET: Theresa! (*seeing MILES*) Oh, I mean, Thomas! What a lovely costume you're wearing!

NAN: So uh... realistic!

MILES: Theresa? That's your name?

ELIZABETH: No, my name is –

BET: Thomas! His name is Thomas.

NAN: We like to call him Theresa. It's our way of making fun. You know! Calling him a girl's name. You Nancy!

ELIZABETH: My name is not Thomas!

MILES: Look, Theresa –

NAN: Nancy.

ELIZABETH: My name is not Nancy! My name is not Theresa! My name is Princess Elizabeth Tudor, and I demand you take me back to the palace!

NAN: (*under her breath to BET*) I have no idea where she's going with this.

ELIZABETH: After the play, Theresa and I got to talking. We saw how similar we looked and thought it would be fun to switch places but for only a moment. Then we were interrupted and... complications arose... but I want to go back now. You have to take me back!

BET: Oh no. She's lost her mind.

MILES: I remember you two. You were at the audition. You're her sisters?

ELIZABETH: Bet and Nan?

NAN: She's back!

BET: (*slowly*) That's right. We're your sisters. You live in London. Your name is Theresa.

ELIZABETH: Theresa told me about you. (*turning to MILES*) You helped her into her pants at the Dandelion.

MILES: I didn't do anything in anybody's pants! We don't have time for this! We have to get out of here now. If those girls come back with the Master of the Revels we'll all be arrested, Asinus and the players too. We'll all end up in chains!

ELIZABETH: Don't worry when the Master of the Revels arrives I'll simply explain what happened, and he'll take me back to the palace. Of course, I will make sure that all of you are rewarded for your help as well. (*pointing*) There he is, I see him! Sir Cawarden! Over here!

KATHALINA: (*offstage*) Where's that pirate?!

MILES, BET, and NAN look at one another and then, quick as possible, pick up ELIZABETH dragging her off SL kicking and screaming. MUSIC fades up and LIGHTS fade down.

ACT TWO Scene 2

THE GREAT HALL. THERESA stands with LADY JANE at table eating, next to HERALD SR of the table. MARY, FERDINAND, QUEEN CATHERINE, HERTFORD, and COURTIERS wander about – some dance, some talk, etc. LADY ASHLEY stands SR looking offstage.

LADY ASHLEY: We hope to see you again, dear Duke! And I pray that stain comes out of your doublet, sir! (*turning on THERESA*) That is the sixth suitor you have spilled on! Your majesty, I beg you, stop eating and pay attention to your suitors!

THERESA: That was the thirteenth suitor I've danced with, and I am hungry!

LADY JANE: You must have one of these cakes, Princess. They're to die for!

THERESA: (*eyeing GUARDS*) You have no idea how true that is, Lady Jane.

LADY ASHLEY: (*calling offstage*) Sir Warren! Don't think that I have forgotten about you! Sir Warren! (*exits SL*)

PRINCE EDWARD enters SL, crossing over to ELIZABETH and LADY JANE. They curtsy.

EDWARD: How are my two favorite courtiers?

LADY JANE: Just wonderful, my lord! We're enjoying these delightful cakes!

EDWARD: Glad to hear of it. I spent the afternoon convincing father to pardon the chef and his treasonous vegetables from execution. I'm sure he'll be demanding we chop the head off his lettuce again before you know it.

THERESA: (*under her breath*) Even the vegetables aren't safe!

LADY JANE: Your poor stepmother! She must suffer with the weight of your father's ailment. I'll bring her a cake to cheer her!

EDWARD: How very kind of you, Lady Jane. (*he waits for JANE to go, turning to THERESA*) So, where did you hide it?

THERESA: Hide what, my lord?

EDWARD: Do not joke, Lizzie. The Seal, where did you put the Seal?

THERESA: The seal?

EDWARD: Yes, the Seal. The Seal of England! Is it safe?

THERESA: Of course, the seal! The seal – I have it hidden in a very safe place. A nice place with a swimming pool, and a bucket of fish, and a row of instruments to play. Did you know a seal can play “Mary Had a Little Lamb” with its nose? *(she drinks)* Mmmm... that’s yummy.

EDWARD: A seal plays what?!

THERESA: *(confused, she starts to sing “Mary Had a Little Lamb” in honks)* Honk, honk, honk, honk, honk, honk, honk – *(she giggles)*

EDWARD: Are you insane?! The Great Seal of England? The thing that my entire reign, our father’s reign, our very lives depend on!

THERESA: That’s a lot of pressure to put on a sea mammal.

EDWARD: Sister – please tell me you didn’t lose it, did you?

THERESA: No, of course not! *(breaking down, a little bit drunk)* Actually, your Thighness, I have no idea what you’re talking about! Your sister, the princess Elizabeth, thought it would be fun to switch clothes for just a moment. You see – she saw how similar we looked and then something happened – I’m not sure what. All I’m really sure of is that I would really rather not hang for it! I’m not the princess! I’m just a common girl named Theresa Canty! Please have mercy on me, your majesty! It was not of my doing!

EDWARD: *(after a long pause, he bursts out laughing)* You’re kidding me, aren’t you?! Now that is the craziest joke you’ve told yet! Seal, seal – I get it. Theresa Canty? You’re funny!

THERESA: I feel woozy. *(she looks in her cup)* What is this stuff?

EDWARD: Elizabeth, I trust you above all others. That Seal is the most important possession in the entire country, without it I can’t even be crowned king! Please tell me it’s safe.

THERESA: Don’t you worry, my Lord. It’s safe and sound.

EDWARD: You are wonderful, Elizabeth. Thank you so.

EDWARD turns and exits as THERESA shoves another cake in her mouth. FERDINAND, who had been eavesdropping the entire time signals to MARY. She crosses to SL.

FERDINAND: My lady, I think I've found the piece of information you desire.

MARY: What is it, Ferdinand?

FERDINAND: Not only is your sister not who she says she is – she and the prince have stolen the most important piece of royal regalia, second only to the crown!

MARY: I don't believe it! Those goody-goodies wouldn't steal a wink of sleep if they didn't have to, and what do you mean she's not who she says she is – she isn't a protestant?

FERDINAND: No, she says she's a completely different person all together! She says that she and Elizabeth switched clothes!

MARY: No! Not Possible!

FERDINAND: Either that or she's lost her mind.

Both turn and look at THERESA who has been stuffing her face. She smiles with a mouth full of cake. MARY and FERDINAND turn back.

MARY: You may be right. She's lost her mind. What could they have stolen of such importance?

FERDINAND: The Great Seal of England.

MARY: The Great Seal of England?! You're kidding!

FERDINAND: No, isn't it wonderful?! Now all we have to do is tell everyone, then your brother and sister are out of line for the throne, and in line for the chopping block. When will you make the accusation?

MARY: No! We say nothing. Without the Seal they could give the crown to my second cousin, Thaddeus, for all we know. Even Lady Jane has a claim to the throne. The king has taken a turn for the worse – we need that Seal. Whomever has the Seal gets the throne.

Both turn and look at THERESA. THERESA stands face to face with a centerpiece statue. She taps the nose. MARY and FERDINAND cross to CS, each taking a side of THERESA.

How are you enjoying the festivities, sister? (*before THERESA can answer*) Yes, yes, they're lovely, but you will not believe what I

have heard! Maybe we shouldn't tell, should we Señor Ferdinand? Oh, but she is my sister, and I tell my sister everything!

FERDINAND: You do? I mean – yes, you do!

MARY: Elizabeth, we have a thief in our midst!

THERESA: (*nervous*) A thief?

FERDINAND: Yes, very important items have gone missing!

MARY: My money's on Parnelle. No one suspects an old man – which makes him the perfect culprit.

The three look over at DRAKE, LADY LOUISE, PEARL, and ETHEL. Old ladies are fawning over the Duke while he sits in a chair – PEARL is at his feet, LOUISE on the left, and ETHEL on the right.

THERESA: What would happen to him – if he is a thief – what will they do to him?

MARY: Draw and quarter him, I'd say. They'd tie him up to four horses, north, south, east and west, and let them run.

FERDINAND makes a ripping noise as they look back at DRAKE. LADY LOUISE, PEARL, and ETHEL are now fighting over him. PEARL pulls at his feet, LOUISE pulls him left, and ETHEL pulls him right. THERESA grabs another glass of wine from the table.

THERESA: (*she drinks*) How terrible!

FERDINAND: Terrible is the price for high treason – but I don't think it was him. I think it was Bumberly. Something tells me that there is more than pork under that doublet.

The three look at BERNARD. A servant enters carrying a tray of meat. BERNARD follows as the servant puts it on the table.

THERESA: Would he be drawn and quartered as well?

MARY: I don't think there are four horses in the entire country strong enough to draw and quarter that man.

FERDINAND: No, I'd say beheading.

MARY: (*in agreement*) Beheading.

Once again, three look at BERNARD. BERNARD reaches for the tray but the SERVANT gives a swift hack at the food with a cleaver. BERNARD holds his fingers close to his chest. THERESA grabs for another drink.

THERESA: *(she drinks)* But it couldn't be? Could it? What if it wasn't either of them?

MARY: You're right little sister, what if it was one of our ladies? I've always found Lady Charlotte to be very suspicious.

The three look at LADY CHARLOTTE, who watches DUCHESS of YORK and BERNARD with disgust.

THERESA: But she's a lady – they wouldn't do anything so horrible as draw and quartering would they?

FERDINAND: No.

THERESA: Beheading?

FERDINAND: No. Not beheading.

MARY: Well she's not of noble blood so –

Fires light⁶ on either side of the table. Lights change to a fiery red.

FERDINAND: They'd burn her at the stake.

THERESA: *(taking a cup of wine from the table, she downs it in a gulp)* And what, may I ask, is missing?

MARY: You won't believe it, Elizabeth! The Great Seal of England!

THERESA: *(under her breath)* What is it with these people and sea animals? *(she takes another cup of wine, turning to MARY)* Really? The Great Seal of England you say? Well, I wouldn't know anything about that!

MARY: Of course not! Why would you?!

THERESA: Why would I?!

FERDINAND: Why would she?!

At a standstill, MARY and FERDINAND look away thinking of another way to break THERESA. THERESA

⁶ Writer suggests the use of silk flames or lighting. Please, don't set yourself on fire. Seriously.

downs yet another cup of wine. MARY gets an idea. She takes a jug of ale from the table.

MARY: How terrible of me! Talking of such things at festivities! I don't mean to *ail* your spirits with such talk, my dear, dear sister!

She pours THERESA yet another drink, which THERESA then drinks.

FERDINAND: (*catching on*) Yes, you know how we like to *whine* about such things!

He hands THERESA a cup of wine, which she then drinks.

THERESA drunkenly hiccups. At first embarrassed, she looks at both FERDINAND and MARY. She then suddenly bursts into a riot of giggles. She stops herself, again embarrassed.

FERDINAND and MARY grin deviously as THERESA hiccups. They all burst out laughing. FERDINAND and MARY quickly turn from giggles to villainous laughter.

THERESA stops, alarmed by their evil laughter, but then once again bursts into drunken giggles. FERDINAND crosses past THERESA to MARY.

FERDINAND: My princess, you are as clever as you are lovely!

MARY: We'll have the Seal by morning or the end of that bottle, whichever comes first!

They look at THERESA, who bats at the feather on a gentleman's hat. THERESA giggles, looking back at them. FERDINAND and MARY clink wine bottle and ale jug as they each take an arm of THERESA and exit SL.

HERALD follows concerned stopping CS. CUE MUSIC, fades up as CUE LIGHTS, fade down.

ACT TWO Scene 3

DANDELION THEATER BACKSTAGE. ELIZABETH wanders around 'backstage' while MILES lays on a prop bench.

ELIZABETH: How long will we be staying here? It's nearly morning. I've got a featherbed at home in the palace. A featherbed with soft cotton sheets. Why must we stay here?

MILES: For the last time – we are waiting for Asinus. When Asinus returns we will tell him of our little situation and we will find a way to deal with you.

ELIZABETH: Deal with me? You do not deal with a princess! You do not deal with –

MILES: *(drowning her out until she stops)* I'M HENRY THE EIGHTH, I AM! HENRY THE EIGHTH, I AM, I AM –

ELIZABETH: *(after a moment)* Dandelion Theater. What a detestable name for a theatre. Why not a Rose? I'd much prefer a Rose to a Dandelion. But I suppose a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. *(she picks up a dirty cloth from the floor and drops it in a trunk)* Or not.

MILES: *(sitting up)* Roses are expensive. They're coddled, spoiled flowers that prick your fingers and wilt at a stiff breeze. Dandelions are sturdy weeds. They thrive in the slightest crack of stone. Their petals float on the breeze and grant you wishes. That's the theater.

ELIZABETH: What do you mean?

MILES: Life isn't easy on the bottom. There is little work, little food, and just too little to go around for many people. They wake up, and the mornings are hard; the day is hard and night gives little peace. People long for just a few hours away from their drudgery. They wish for adventure *(he pulls a sword and hat out of a trunk)* And we give them pirates on the high seas! They wish to laugh *(he pulls a jester's hat)* and we give them a clown! *(he moves to ELIZABETH)* They wish for romance – *(their eyes meet but ELIZABETH looks away)* People need the theater, just as they need their wishes and dreams, and we actors play our part.

ELIZABETH: I feel like that sometimes. Like I am playing a part. So many people watch my every move. It's as if I've always had an audience. But all the world's a stage, is it not? All the men and women merely players, each with their own exits and entrances.

And one in their time plays many, many parts. Daughter. Sister. Princess. Even so – I still feel like my part in all of this is something more than *Princess Elizabeth*. More than Edward's sister, third in line for the crown and daughter of an executed queen.

MILES: You believe you're the princess, don't you?

ELIZABETH: I wish I weren't. I'd like to be a poet. (*laughing*) I wouldn't even mind a pirate... but I *am* the princess. I *am* Elizabeth.

ASINUS, BARNABY, SIMON, and ROGER enter in a drunken state – singing, laughing, etc. MILES and ELIZABETH come down CS to talk with ASINUS.

ASINUS: Miles! Thomas! We missed you at the party!

BOYS: Par-tay!

ASINUS: It was such a wonderful party!

BOYS: Par-tay!

ASINUS: They had delicious cakes and a delightful pâté!

BOYS: Pâté!

MILES: Asinus, there is something I have to tell you.

ELIZABETH: He's drunk, Miles. How can he help you?

MILES: Asinus, how much wine did you drink?

SIMON: (*snickering*) Not as much as Princess Elizabeth!

BOYS and ASINUS all laugh. BARNABY and ROGER pull skirts and hats out of trunk and put them on.

ELIZABETH: I beg your pardon!

ASINUS: (*standing next to ELIZABETH*) Yes, you know, I have always had a fondness for Princess Elizabeth. When she came to the servant's festivities I was just so delighted. I know she's seemed to be a little snobby in the past –

ROGER: Nose in the air!

BARNABY: Stick up her bum!

ELIZABETH: Up my what?!

ASINUS: Yes, yes – but tonight we all saw just how *down to earth* she can be!

SIMON: You mean when she passed out on the floor?

ROGER: Look! Look! Guess who we are! (*ROGER and BARNABY dance drunkenly in skirts and hats, laughing*)

ELIZABETH: I'm going to kill that girl!

ASINUS: Of course it was her sister and Señor Ferdinand that really got her going. Now that Mary, she likes to party!

BOYS: Par-tay!

ELIZABETH: Princess Mary? What are you talking about?

ASINUS: Anytime Elizabeth's cup was dry, Mary stepped in and filled it right up. Would have made an excellent bar wench if it weren't for that whole princess thing. I did find it a bit odd that she kept asking her about a seal.

ELIZABETH: A seal? Sir Asinus, tell me exactly what she said, think very carefully.

ASINUS: Steady on Thomas. (*trying to remember*) Mary asked... Mary asked... Mary asked Elizabeth where she had put the Great Seal of England. I told her to check the Atlantic!

BOYS and ASINUS laugh as ELIZABETH turns away, stepping SR noticeably distraught. MILES sees her alarm and crosses to her.

MILES: What is it?

ELIZABETH: The king is very sick and his mind is addled from his illness. In the grips of his sickness, he gave Edward the Great Seal of England to protect against usurpers of the throne. The Seal is used on all proclamations, laws and decrees – it is the mark of the King of England! Whomever has the Seal has the power of a king!

MILES: Wouldn't it be safe with Prince Edward?

ELIZABETH: That's just it – Edward doesn't have the Seal, I do. Or at least I did before Theresa and I switched places. I was holding it for him until he was ready. If Mary gets a hold of that Seal...

ASINUS: (*after a moment, he tilts his head*) Boys... is it just me or does Thomas look... different?

BOYS all tilt their head.

MILES: That's what I have been trying to tell you, sir. Last night in the confusion after the festivities, I found that Thomas wasn't Thomas, Thomas was Theresa... but now I am thinking that there is the smallest chance... I must be crazy to say so... but there is the chance that Thomas is really the Princess.

SIMON: *(after a moment)* Did Miles just call Thomas... a queen?

ASINUS: Well gentlemen, this is the theater.

BOYS: *(nodding)* True, true.

MILES: No, no. What I am trying to tell you is that Thomas was never Thomas –

ELIZABETH: Thomas was a girl named Theresa. She dressed as a boy so that she would get a part in your show Sir Asinus. She didn't want to lie to you. She and her sisters – *(BET and NAN enter SL at a run)* Bet and Nan needed money. They didn't mean to get you into –

NAN: Trouble!

BET: We're in trouble!

CAWARDEN: *(offstage)* This better be good! I've been called to the palace and must get there post haste! If this is another imaginary pirate, I swear to you ladies, you will never again see the light of day!

ASINUS: That Master of the Revels! Gentlemen, quick! Positions!

KATHALINA: *(offstage)* Trust me, sir, you'll want to see this! Right this way Sir Cawarden!

GUARDS: *(offstage)* Make way for the Master of the Revels!

CAWARDEN, REVEL GUARDS, and GIRLS of ILL REPUTE enter SL, ASINUS and BOYS cross to SR getting in line with other players at attention.

CAWARDEN: Well, here we are. What is it?

KATHALINA: Sir, Asinus and his players have been playing you for a fool! That woman... is a woman!

CAWARDEN: A Woman on the stage?! Indecency! Of all the obscene ways to break the law! *(crossing over to BARNABY)* And you thought you could fool us with this pathetically false beard! *(he attempts to rip off BARNABY's mustache)*

BARNABY: Ow!

MARIANNA: Not him! Her!

CAWARDEN: (*pulling ELIZABETH out of line*) A woman on the stage!
 (*looking back at GIRLS, GIRLS nod*) A woman on the stage! Public
 acts of lewdness! This theater is closed! In the name of his
 Majesty, King Henry the Eighth, this theater is closed and all of
 her players arrested! Seize them!

*GUARDS and GIRLS rush the players each grabbing an
 actor and pulling them towards SL exit.*

ELIZABETH: Wait! Wait, Sir Cawarden! Wait! (*ALL stop*) I will freely
 and willingly confess my crimes if you will let these men go; they
 had nothing to do with it!

CAWARDEN: Never! They are as guilty as you madam! In the name of
 his Grace, the King of England, I give you no mercy!

ELIZABETH: Well than... at least ease my burden by telling me you will
 reward these good and loyal citizens for our capture.

CAWARDEN: We will award each of these... *ladies*... ten shillings!

ELIZABETH: Sir, I would think loyalty would be worth more than ten
 shillings. I would not find myself remiss in awarding (*looking at
 KATHALINA*) ...five pounds?

KATHALINA: (*long pause*) Ten pounds.

ELIZABETH: Six.

KATHALINA: Nine.

ELIZABETH: Seven.

KATHALINA: Each!

ELIZABETH: Deal!

CAWARDEN: What is going on here?!

MARIANNA: Ladies, switch!

*GIRLS release players and grab hold of GUARDS and
 SIR CAWARDEN.*

KATHALINA: What should we do with them?

ELIZABETH: Tie them up and hold them at your House of Ill Repute...
 (*smiling at MILES*) Even if they don't deserve it.

GIRLS start to drag CAWARDEN and GUARDS SR exit.

ASINUS: Miles! Once and for all – what is going on here?!

MILES: It's like we were trying to tell you, sir. Thomas isn't Thomas. Thomas was Theresa and now... (*looking at ELIZABETH*) I think she may be the –

HERALD enters SL at a run. GIRLS stop at HERALDS entrance.

HERALD: Princess! Princess! I've found you at last.

SIMON: The theater hasn't been this busy since The Maddening Mirth of the Matterhorn.

ROGER: We should start charging admission!

ELIZABETH: Herald! How did you find me here?!

HERALD: When I saw you run from the court I had my suspicions yet I considered it possible that my eyes deceived me, but upon witness of the imposter's behavior I knew that my suspicions had been confirmed and set out to find you right away. Truthfully, Your Highness, I have announced you from the day you entered this world and would know you anywhere... and as always, your highness, I pledge my unswerving loyalty and devotion to you, Princess Elizabeth (*he bows deeply*)

ASINUS and the BOYS hurry into bows all except BARNABY.

ASINUS: (*irritated whisper*) Miles, why didn't you tell me?!

BARNABY: Wait... does this mean Princess Elizabeth's a guy?

ASINUS: (*forcing BARNABY into a bow*) Shut up, Barnaby!

ELIZABETH: I cannot tell you how wonderful it is to see a familiar face, dear Herald.

HERALD: There is more, your highness. I am sorry to be the one to tell you but the king is dead. He died during the night.

ELIZABETH turns away, visibly shocked and dismayed.

CAWARDEN: Poppycock! Preposterous poppycock! How are we to know that this man is telling the truth?! It wouldn't be the first time a servant had been paid for his testimony! I know the Princess just as I know *all* the royal family and I say that this little

trollop could never be Princess Elizabeth! Besides, *I* would know if the king were dead!

CHURCH BELLS start to ring as ALL shout from backstage.

ALL: The King is dead! Long live King Edward the VI! The King is Dead! Long live King Edward the VI!

CAWARDEN: (*after a long pause*) Could be a coincidence.

MILES: Get him out of here! (*GIRLS drag off CAWARDEN*) Elizabeth, are you all right... (*he touches her arm, but then remembers himself*) I mean, your highness.

ELIZABETH: King Edward? Edward! The Seal! I must go to him! I must get inside the palace!

ASINUS: We are at your service, your highness. Whatever you need!

ASINUS, BOYS, MILES and HERALD bow deeply.

MARIANNA: Right! Us too, Princess!

KATHALINA: No extra charge!

GIRLS curtsy.

ELIZABETH: Thank you. (*she crosses to BARNABY, pulling him up from his bow, and fixing his hat*) It will take all of us to succeed. (*she crosses back to trunk, pulling out a dress*) Now, who looks good in red?

ALL: (*coming out of bow/curtsy abruptly*) What?

ACT TWO Scene 4

GREAT HALL. LADY LOUISE, PEARL and ETHEL enter with garments of mourning over their costumes. About them SERVANTS run to and fro carrying food, tools, decorations – preparing for the coronation.

LADY ETHEL: How tragic!

LADY LOUISE: Your English King Henry must have been beloved. *(becoming very dramatic)* I have never seen so many wailing ladies, so many black veils! I imagine Henry's death as a cloud over the city, that shames the sun for shining on without its dearly departed king! Oh, woe to the people of England! You poor inconsolable souls!

Around LOUISE, PEARL, and ETHEL, suddenly all at once, LADIES run back and forth laughing with streamers and masks. PERFORMERS pass through, BANNERS fall from the eaves, MINSTRELS pass, playing jaunty tunes.

Maybe not.

LADY PEARL: It's like they say, cousin, "The king is dead, long live the king!" Now we must prepare for the Coronation of King Edward the VI!

LADY ETHEL: Now it's time to Par-tay! I mean... party.

PEARL and ETHEL taking off their mourning shawls, link arm and arm, exit skipping.

LADY LOUISE: The English! I will never understand them! *(she exits)*

LADIES enter with the DUCHESS of YORK at the back. Her hat has a set of extra large and fluffy feathers. YORK is followed by a drunken THERESA, sneakily reaching for the feathers. YORK senses someone following her and so turns. THERESA follows, remaining behind. She contains her giggles. YORK turns again. THERESA follows, always after the feather. THERESA reaches for the feather, stretching! MARY enters seeing drunken THERESA. MARY runs up and grabs THERESA around the waist, pulling her away. Just as THERESA snatches the feather, YORK turns at the commotion, and THERESA collapses into a fit of giggles against MARY.

MARY: (*patting THERESA on the back, making a show*) Yes! Just let it all out! Let it all out! (*to YORK*) My dear, dear, sister is distraught over the death of our father.

THERESA: Feather!

MARY: Yes! Our poor, poor father!

YORK curtsies and exits in a hurry as FERDINAND enters. MARY drops THERESA who lands on the floor in a pile of giggles.

FERDINAND: Forgive me, your highness! She's very fast for someone who's drunk so much wine.

MARY: (*rubbing her temples*) She should be unconscious by now, or at least have a headache to match my own.

FERDINAND: What are we to do, your highness? We still haven't found the Seal.

THERESA gets up unnoticed.

MARY: Yes, I know Ferdinand, please refrain from stating the obvious. Edward has already been taken to the Tower of London to prepare for the coronation. We have very little time. Leave it to my father to be late for everything but his own funeral.

THERESA totters toward the exit.

Unfashionably early, I say!

FERDINAND: What should we do next?

MARY: We'll have to take "feathers" over here to her quarters – maybe she can show us where she and Edward hid the Seal.

THERESA is gone. MARY and FERDINAND do a double take.

FERDINAND: Where did she go?!

MARY: Find her and this time, take no chances! Pick up something heavy and knock her out!

FERDINAND: Yes, your highness!

MARY starts to exit SL. FERDINAND goes to follow, but she turns around giving him a fierce eye. FERDINAND turns about face and exits SR. HERALD enters SR looking about for any courtiers.

HERALD: Princess Elizabeth and chaperone!

ELIZABETH enters on MILES arm. They are dressed in courtier fashion.

ELIZABETH: Chaperone?

MILES: Someone has to make sure you don't get into any more trouble.

ELIZABETH: *(turning around)* Where are my ladies? *(louder)* I said, where are my ladies?!

Nine strange Ladies in Waiting enter consisting of three girls of ill repute; KATHALINA, MARIANNA, and DEBBIE, two girls of offal court; BET and NAN, and three mortified boys of the theater in drag; BARNABY, SIMON, and ROGER. Lastly, ASINUS enters looking exactly like LADY ASHLEY, stepping out grandly.

ASINUS: *(in a ridiculous high voice)* Remember boys, it's all in the movement and voice. A woman is lighter on her feet than a man and speaks with a voice as soft as a dove.

ROGER: His voice is about as soft as a crocodile.

BARNABY: I said I wanted to play a knight, something heroic – now, I'm in a dress.

MARIANNA: This isn't a play, idiot. We're here to help the princess.

SIMON: Right!

ALL look at ELIZABETH.

ELIZABETH: Oh, right! A plan! You want a plan! A plan...

BARNABY: You don't have a plan? She doesn't have a plan!

SIMON: Hey! It's the Princess doesn't have a plan – not she!

ASINUS: It's all right your highness. The stage is the thing. Think. We're rounding out the second act – you are the leading lady. What is your motivation?

ELIZABETH: To retrieve the Seal –

ASINUS: So we must find the seal. If I were a seal, what would my motivation be? *(he starts to imitate a seal, barking and clapping his hands like flippers)*

MILES: You know the Seal is actually a stamp that you press into wax to leave the mark of the king, right?



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