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Playscripts, Inc.
325 W. 38th Street, Suite 305
New York, NY 10018

Phone/fax: 1-866-NEW-PLAY (639-7529)
Email: info@playscripts.com
Web: www.playscripts.com

Cast of Characters

RUMPELSTILTSKIN, evil dwarf with a “Joisey” accent.

ANYA, sweet girl involved in a large lie. A romantic who stands up for herself reluctantly, she dresses better.

FRAU MUELLER, Anya’s mother; kind but a bit goofy. She’s trying to learn magic.

KING ROLFE, harassed king who must solve his country’s crisis. Finds it hard to trust anyone and is a workaholic. Disguises himself as Tanner.

INGRID, Anya’s older sister, clever and rather prim. Believes in facts; has a poor opinion of men in general. Begins looking stern, but softens.

MINISTER NORTH, officious and fussy but loyal to king and country. *(This part can be played by a female with minor changes.)*

MINISTER SOUTH, harassed husband and father of five daughters he’d like to marry off.

AUNT MARTA, Rolfe’s aunt, a wise and kindly lady.

CAPTAIN TANNER, tall, handsome officer; falls for Ingrid. Has no use for women. Arrogant at first, he also softens. Hair/eye color must be different from Rolfe.

SWEEPS, Anya’s guardian broom, fussy and pompous.

JUGHEAD, Frau Mueller’s guardian water pitcher, slow-moving, patient, and unenthusiastic.

PANSY, Ingrid’s guardian dustpan, only speaks certain phrases. *(Male or female.)*

SARAH SOUTH, sporty, athletic type, loud.

SENTA SOUTH, posh, high fashion-superior attitude type.

SIGRID SOUTH, scary, Gothic-dramatic.

(Cast of Characters, continued:)

SONJA SOUTH, sexy, vamp.

SALLY SOUTH, baby, never grew up.

GUIDE, slave to Rumpelstiltskin, a “valley girl” type.

FRAU GUDHOFF, snooty neighbor who is proud of her fine home.

FRAU KINDER, syrupy neighbor who is proud of her many grandchildren.

FRAU BLIXEN, none-too-clever neighbor who is proud of the family business.

CORPORAL DERN, disgusting soldier: dirty, unkempt; presides over the King’s legal hearings.

VOICE 1, Lord South’s whiny wife. *(Character may appear in doorways if desired.)*

VOICE 2, Lord North’s complaining mother. *(Same as above.)*

SOLDIER 1, in love with Sigrid South.

SOLDIER 2, in love with Sonja South.

SOLDIER 3, in love with Senta South.

SOLDIER 4, in love with Sarah South.

SOLDIER 5, in love with Sally South.

SERVANT 1, castle steward *(could be female-castle chatelaine.)*

SERVANT 2, maid

SERVANT 3, maid

SERVANT 4, dressmaker

EXTRAS, Townspeople, slugs and castle staff—as many as desired

Production Notes

A basic “castle wall” will serve for almost all scenes. The addition of items changes the setting: a well, a throne and some drapes, a bed and the spinning wheel, etc. The only major change is the forest/cave, which can be mostly a dark stage with trees to the side.

ACT I

Prologue: Dark stage with spinning wheel/stool, gold bars on one side, straw on the other. Small doorway for Guide to peep through.

Scene 1: Village well-stone circle/buckets, bundle of straw, various villagers’ wares. FX-water shoots from well.

Scene 2: Same; village well/basket of apples for Ingrid.

Scene 3: Palace gate; same wall with opening/musket for Tanner, ball for Sally, sundial, roll of duct tape, glass of water.

Scene 4: Palace throne room; grand chair on a dais/small table with many documents, tray with pitcher and glasses, tray of tarts, slippers, blanket.

Scene 5: Palace gate/cleaning supplies for Sweeps & Pansy/tennis racquet for Sarah, book for Tanner.

Scene 6: Palace anteroom; doorway on either side, a bench along the back.

Scene 7: Palace gate/package-Sigrid, bucket-Sonja, basket-Senta, trunk-Sarah & Sally.

Scene 8: Anya’s room; pallet at back, small door at back (*invisible*), spinning wheel, piles of gold/straw, ring, bucket for South.

Scene 9: palace anteroom/cleaning supplies for Sweeps & Pansy, crack on Jughead, spell book for Frau Mueller.

Scene 10: Anya’s room/table, curtains, dresses, water pitcher, towels, bedding for servants.

Scene 11: palace anteroom/yarn for Marta, missing “piece” on Jughead, necklace for Ingrid.

ACT II

Scene 1: Anya's room, nicer than at first, embroidery for Anya, book for Rolfe.

Scene 2: Palace gate/ball for Sally, hanky for Senta.

Scene 3: Palace anteroom/additions to pookahs due to spell, spell book, laundry basket with clothes for Sweeps and Pansy

Scene 4: Palace gate/swords for soldiers, mask and large drape for "ogre."

Scene 5: Anya's room/vase of flowers.

Scene 6: Palace throne room/barrister's wig and robe for Ingrid, pile petitions.

Scene 7: Anya's room/knitting for Anya, belt for Frau Mueller.

Scene 8: Mine; entrance at one side, then utter blackness.

Scene 9: The forest-a clearing with trees on either side/fire.

Scene 10: Anya's room/Rumpelstiltskin-spinning wheel.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN

by Peg Herring

ACT I

Prologue

(A darkened stage. A whirr is heard, then SPOTLIGHT up slowly on the face of the GUIDE peering through a low doorway at the back of the stage. It is shrouded in black, and all we see is a very white face with large, sad eyes. As GUIDE speaks, LIGHTS come up on another figure, RUMPELSTILTSKIN, sitting at a spinning wheel.)

GUIDE. *(Very tentatively:)* Master, the morning is dawning. You ordered me to warn you.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Looking up:)* Well, you aren't good for much, but you did what I told you to for once.

GUIDE. In that case, do you think I could have a day off? I mean, I haven't had one in ninety-six years, and I thought...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. How many times have I told you not to think! I do the thinking, you do the doing! I'm working here! You don't get it, do you? I need certain things to come into my hands. If they do, I'll be so happy I may set you free!

GUIDE. Really, Master? Free?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Glibly:)* Sure, free as a bird...IF I get what I need.

GUIDE. Oh, thank you, Master. I will wait in the tunnel so you can finish in peace. Free! I will go free if he gets his four things! *(GUIDE disappears into wall.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Chuckles:)* ...and IF I feel like it! *(Chanting as he finishes spinning.)* Mischief is my life's intent. Gold to straw before it's spent. I will reap a kind of fame, but they will never learn my name!

(LIGHTS fade to black during last line.)

Scene 1

(LIGHTS UP on the village well. It is morning, and FRAU MUELLER and FRAU BLIXEN have come for water and gossip. Beside them sits JUGHEAD, a water pitcher. At first sight HE seems lifeless.)

FRAU BLIXEN. Good morning, Frau Mueller. How are you this fine day?

FRAU MUELLER. Well, very well, my friend, and you?

FRAU BLIXEN. As well as can be in these terrible times with money so scarce! It is a shame. My husband, as you know, makes such fine things to sell.

FRAU MUELLER. *(She's heard it before.)* I know!

FRAU BLIXEN. But no one has any money; all the fine things just sit in the shop! Still, they are quite beautiful. Why only yesterday he made a chair—such a chair, fit for a king! But *our* king has ordered *no* new furniture since before Christmas!

FRAU MUELLER. Really! I wonder what could be wrong?

FRAU BLIXEN. I don't know, I'm sure. It's said King Rolfe has become a miser. It certainly has nothing to do with the quality; my Helmut makes the very best furniture. Have I told you about the wood he uses? He cuts it himself, every stick of it.

FRAU MUELLER. Yes, dear, you've always said so.

FRAU BLIXEN. Of course, Frau Mueller, your poor husband the wizard has passed on, which makes it very hard for you. I don't know what I would do without my Helmut.

FRAU MUELLER. Yes, I miss my husband very much, but he left me Jughead, who is very helpful. *(At this, JUGHEAD opens his eyes and sighs, revealing to the audience that he is alive. He is slow and lazy but positive in outlook.)*

JUGHEAD. *(With no enthusiasm:)* Always ready to help, ma'am. *(For the rest of this scene, JUGHEAD meets with various VILLAGERS who come by and they pantomime greetings, high fives, etc., and perhaps*

even do little bits of well-known dances: the hokey-pokey, the macarena, etc.)

FRAU BLIXEN. Jughead is a wonder. Your husband was a very clever wizard, everyone said so. But now that he's gone, things are not so good for you.

FRAU MUELLER. *(Defensively:)* I manage! I am learning spells so that I may continue his work. I have a magic book, and Jughead here, and of course, my two girls.

FRAU BLIXEN. Yes, lovely girls they are, but Frau Mueller, you really have spoiled them. They spend all their time reading books! The village boys complain that they hardly understand a word those girls say! How will they ever get husbands when their heads are stuffed with big ideas? I'm sure *my* boys would never stand for wives who know everything!

FRAU MUELLER. *(Gently:)* Well, I can assure you that as far as my girls are concerned, they won't have to. *(FRAU BLIXEN nods emphatically, then stops, wondering if she's been insulted. FRAU GUDHOF arrives, water jug in hand.)*

FRAU GOODHOF. Good day, my friends, *(Nods)* Frau Mueller, Frau Blixen.

FRAUS BLIXEN & MUELLER. Good morning, Frau Gudhoff.

FRAU GOODHOF. I hope you all will stop by this afternoon. I am baking strudel, and the garden is looking particularly lovely this week.

FRAU MUELLER. Of course, Frau Gudhoff. It is kind of you to ask.

FRAU BLIXEN. Your garden would be even lovelier with a little arbor bench set right in the center, don't you think? My husband makes sturdy benches...

FRAU GOODHOF. I'm sure, my dear, but I...haven't got room for one just now. I have clematis and roses in full bloom and there are petunias and pansies everywhere. Of course, money is hard to come by these days, too. *(Turning to FRAU MUELLER:)* It's just too bad you had to move into that tiny house when your Hans died: no

room for a proper garden—hardly any room for you and your two daughters! I imagine it's very crowded.

FRAU MUELLER. (*Tries to smile.*) Oh, we get on very well there. One doesn't need much soil to grow a few vegetables, and Jughead doesn't require much room.

JUGHEAD. Anyplace to please, ma'am.

FRAU GOODHOF. Oh, but it's so grand to have a LOT of flowers and a HOST of vegetables.

FRAU KINDER. (*Entering.*) Greetings, friends. I am a little late, I know. I had to watch little Hedvig for my daughter while she did some errands. I don't mind. She's such a good baby! I must say, all my grandchildren are very well-behaved. It's pure pleasure for me to see them.

FRAU GOODHOF. So you've said. I worry that little ones will trample my begonias or dirty the furniture with their sticky fingers.

FRAU KINDER. One doesn't mind when the little darlings are so sweet!

FRAU BLIXEN. Perhaps you need a new cradle for the baby? I'm sure she's growing very big. My husband has some fine cherry wood that looks to me like it should be a cradle. And he's so clever with the carving around the edges...

FRAU KINDER. Oh, I couldn't afford it right now, Frau Blixen, with cash so scarce. Still, money doesn't matter when you've got your family, I always say. Frau Mueller, I do hope that at least one of your daughters gets married soon! You'd be much better off with a fine son-in-law and grandchildren to fetch for you and brighten up your life!

FRAU GOODHOF. I was just saying that. A son-in-law who would build her a bigger house!

FRAU BLIXEN. Who might buy her one of my Helmut's fine rocking chairs to sit in beside the fire.

FRAU KINDER. It's too bad your girls are unlikely to marry. Why, Ingrid is so outspoken she frightens men away, and poor Anya is so

backward she never says “Boo” to anyone! You’ll never get a son-in-law to take care of you! (*OTHER FRAUS nod in agreement.*)

FRAU MUELLER. I’m fine, really...I’m learning magic. Look, I will draw water for all of us with a spell! (*She waves her arms in weird gestures:*) Alacazoo! (*SPELL sound: Water sprays from the well into her face. FRAUS shake their heads with dismay, she wipes herself off.*)

FRAU KINDER. As I was saying, Ingrid should be looking for a husband, but she hardly speaks to the village boys—thinks she’s better than they are!

FRAU MUELLER. Not better, just different!

FRAU BLIXEN. And Anya just hides in the house all day, dreaming dreams and spinning. When boys flirt with her, she blushes and says nothing!

FRAU GOODHOF. She’s as silent as Ingrid is noisy!

FRAU KINDER. What’s wrong with your daughters?

FRAU MUELLER. There’s nothing wrong with them. They’re just...particular!

FRAU KINDER. Particular? Since when can a girl with no dowry be particular?

FRAU GOODHOF. Other girls aren’t so particular!

FRAU BLIXEN. Anya is dreaming she’ll marry the King, maybe?

(All 3 laugh.)

FRAU GOODHOF. Aside from her... (*Reluctant to admit it*) beauty, what has she to offer as a good wife?

FRAU MUELLER. Well, there is her skill at spinning; she’s very quick and...

FRAU BLIXEN. And any well-trained girl can spin!

FRAU MUELLER. But—

FRAU GOODHOF. Her spinning is good, true, but it isn’t enough!

FRAU MUELLER. (*Having had enough:*) But Anya’s spinning...

FRAUS BLIXEN, GOODHOF, & KINDER. Yes?

FRAU MUELLER. *(Flustered:)* She's learning a special way to spin...

(Man comes by with a wheelbarrow filled with straw.)

FRAU GOODHOF. What's that?

FRAU MUELLER. Well—

FRAU BLIXEN. I don't believe it. She's not so special!

FRAU MUELLER. No, really—

FRAU KINDER. For all her good looks, the girl is...odd!

FRAU MUELLER. *(Blurts it out:)* She's learning to spin straw into gold! *(Three FRAUS gasp. FRAU M goes on, determined now that she's started:)* She read about it in a book, and she's teaching herself to do it. It's quite a trick, but she told me this very morning that she will have it any minute. I'd better go and see if she's got the knack of it yet. Come, Jughead! *(She exits.)*

JUGHEAD. *(Following:)* Whatever you say, ma'am. Not so fast, please! My legs are killing me!

(Three remaining FRAUS look at each other. MINISTER NORTH passes by as they discuss what they've heard. He is a busily officious man with many nervous gestures. He listens in on the conversation.)

FRAU KINDER. Do you believe she can really spin straw into gold?

FRAU BLIXEN. I've never known Frau Mueller to lie! Certainly they have all the books Hans left behind, and we know the frau is practicing magic...

FRAU GOODHOF. Practicing is the word for it! But maybe Anya has had better results.

FRAU KINDER. I must admit, Anya is very clever...like her father.

FRAU GOODHOF. And she is always reading strange books—

FRAU BLIXEN. And truthfully, her spinning is above average!

NORTH. What's this, what's this?

(The FRAUS see him and bow.)

FRAU BLIXEN. Pardon, Your Grace, we were just leaving.

NORTH. Wait! I heard you say that someone can spin straw into gold.

FRAU GOODHOF. *(Pause.)* Yes, Your Grace. That is what we heard just now.

NORTH. And who would this wonder be?

FRAU GOODHOF. *(Pause.)* Anya, the Muellers' daughter: you know, the wizard?

NORTH. The wizard, eh? So she is following in her father's footsteps! This is most exciting, most exciting. I must meet this girl immediately!

FRAU BLIXEN. She lives in the cottage by the old elm-there. *(Points.)*

NORTH. Thank you, good fraus. Good day to you!

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 2

(Later the same day. ANYA comes to the well, where she meets her sister INGRID, carrying a basket of apples. With Anya is SWEEPS, a broom who is quite excitable. The family has learned to pretty much ignore his interjections. With Ingrid is PANSY, her companion, who is a rather robotic and stiff dustpan. PANSY and SWEEPS have no use for each other, and throughout the scene try to block each other from view.)

INGRID. Anya, look, I found these on a tree beside the road. They will make delicious tarts.

ANYA. *(Tasting one:)* Good, Ingrid. Have you seen Mother?

PANSY. *(Robotic voice:)* Very doubtful.

INGRID. Not in the last hour, why?

ANYA. I had a strange visitor this morning.

INGRID. (*Teasing but a bit gruff:*) Are you sure it wasn't someone from one of your storybooks?

ANYA. I'm sure. This visitor was very real.

INGRID. Not some romantic knight or gypsy who will sweep you off your feet and shower you with poetry and starlight?

ANYA. You shouldn't make fun of me, Ingrid. If I like to read tales of love, it is because love makes the world a better place.

INGRID. Reality is best, I say. Facts are much more interesting, and they develop the mind. I would say that love is a figment of some writer's imagination.

ANYA. (*Rolling her eyes:*) I know, I know. I should read treatises on ancient history, like you. But I like stories. I wish you read more of them so we could talk about them together.

INGRID. And I wish you read more facts so we could become scholars together. (*Laughing:*) At least we both like to read about faraway places.

SWEEPS. There she is! There she is! Oh, Frau MUEL—ler!

(*FRAU MUELLER enters.*)

ANYA. Mother! The strangest thing just happened!

FRAU MUELLER. What was that, Anya dear?

ANYA. A man came by the house, very important-looking. I was sitting by the window spinning.

INGRID. That's good. Better light there. I read in a book it protects the eyesight.

SWEEPS. Yes, we must preserve dear Anya's eyesight—such beautiful eyes she has!

FRAU MUELLER. Yes, dears...the man?

ANYA. Oh, yes. He saw me spinning, and he ordered all of us to appear at the King's palace this afternoon. Now why would the King want to see us?

SWEEPS. We've just been wondering and wondering; what could it be?

FRAU MUELLER. Why, you are the loveliest girls in the land. The King has heard it and wants to meet you.

INGRID. Perhaps the King is tired of the fluffy-headed women one meets at balls and such.

SWEEPS. That's it, that's it! Anya's been discovered! Oh, this is just too exciting!

ANYA. I don't think that's it, Mother. This man seemed most interested in my spinning. He kept craning his neck, trying to see in the window.

FRAU MUELLER. *(Realizing:)* Oh...

ANYA. Mother...

FRAU MUELLER. Well...I might have said something about your spinning to the neighbors this morning...

FRAU MUELLER. Like what?

SWEEPS. What could it be, what could it be?

FRAU MUELLER. Like...you were learning to spin something new.

INGRID. Something new?

ANYA. But I'm not—I'm spinning the same old wool I've used since you taught me how to spin.

SWEEPS. Just the same old wool, nothing new, nothing fancy!

FRAU MUELLER. I know. It's just that Frau Blixen was bragging about her clever husband, who isn't half as clever as your dear father was, and then Fran Gudhoff started in about her fine home with its lovely gardens, which made me miss our old home. And then Frau Kinder went on and on about her wonderful grandchildren and... *(Stops, unwilling to finish the thought.)*

INGRID. And you have no grandchildren because Anya and I refuse to marry any of the local dolts who might take a wife with no dowry.

SWEEPS. Stupid fellows—don't know true gold when they see it!
(*Pats ANYA's arm.*)

FRAU MUELLER. Oh, Anya, Ingrid, I don't want you to marry unless you want to. I'd like each of you to find a man to truly love, as I loved your father. But it does seem unlikely with no dowry—.

ANYA. True, since father died, we are poor.

SWEEPS. Poor father...sometimes we miss him awfully!

PANSY. It is decidedly so.

FRAU MUELLER. Still, no one spins as well as you do, Anya!

ANYA. But everyone spins. It's not an unusual skill. Which brings us back to the question: what does the King's man think I can do that's so special?

FRAU MUELLER. (*Ashamed:*) Spin straw into...gold.

ANYA. Mother! How could you say such a thing?

SWEEPS. Straw into gold—now there's a feat of magic! Why, it takes centuries to learn to do that!

INGRID. (*Laughs.*) Well, at least that one is so absurd that no one will believe it!

FRAU MUELLER. The King's minister evidently did!

INGRID. Then he's mad. Typical male, jumping to conclusions without scientific evidence. We'll just go to the palace and straighten the whole thing out.

ANYA. But what if he's angry with Mother for...making up stories?

FRAU MUELLER. (*Worried:*) I suppose I could be in trouble!

INGRID. Nonsense! I'll tell them you stood in the sun too long and it addled your brain.

SWEEPS. We'll just set them straight—it won't take long. Of course, Pansy shouldn't go with us because he's just too embarrassing to have around... I mean with royalty, and all... (*He stops as INGRID gets in his face.*)

INGRID. *You'll stay home unless you promise to keep quiet, you overgrown crumb-pusher! (She takes up the basket and goes off, PANSY following.)*

FRAU MUELLER. I'm sorry, Anya dear. I shouldn't have lied, but they were all so smug, feeling sorry for me. I don't need their pity!

ANYA. But Mother, the worst thing in the whole world is a lie!

FRAU MUELLER. I know, dear—I don't know what came over me.

ANYA. You see now that it always starts trouble when you aren't truthful. All the heroines in my books insist on truth and justice.

FRAU MUELLER. I'm certain you're right, dear. I've got two of the sweetest and smartest girls in the world.

SWEEPS. *(To himself as all start off L:)* You *have* been out in the sun too long if you can say that Ingrid is sweet! That girl's tongue is so sharp she can't lick her lips without drawing blood! *(Following L:)* Why, that Ingrid just rustles my bristles, I tell you... *(Etc.)*

(EXEUNT/BLACKOUT.)

Scene 3

(LIGHTS UP on the palace gate: Captain TANNER is on duty as the SOUTH SISTERS try to get his attention, one by one.)

SENTA. Oh, Captain Tanner. I'm so glad I found you! There is an intruder in my boudoir!

TANNER. Then you are safe, Lady Senta, for he is there and you are here.

SENTA. But don't you think you should investigate?

TANNER. If you like, I will send Corporal Dern. He is quite fierce with intruders.

(DERN appears.)

SENTA. I'd rather have the intruder! *(She exits.)*

SIGRID. (*Coming from L.:*) Oh, Captain! Will you please help me with all these buttons? (*She turns her back so he can button her dress.:*) They're such a bother!

TANNER. I've got a better idea, Lady Sigrid. (*He takes a roll of duct tape and runs a big strip of it across her back. She leaves in disgust, trying to reach the tape as she goes.*)

SALLY. (*Enters with large rubber ball.:*) Capt'n Tanner, will you pway ball wif me? (*She throws the ball. TANNER uses his musket as a bat and sends it far offstage. SALLY stands looking after it sadly; we hear a SPLASH.*)

TANNER. Good game, Lady Sally. (*He returns to attention—she exits.*)

SONJA. Captain Tanner, I have something in my eye. Could you take a look?

TANNER. (*He appears interested; SONJA approaches. He throws a cup of water into her face.*) My mother always told me the best remedy for that is an eyewash, Lady Sonja. (*She splutters off.*)

SARAH. Captain Tanner, I was just going to run some sprints. Would you time me?

TANNER. Certainly, Lady Sarah, if you will bring that sundial over here. I cannot desert my post, of course.

(SARAH struggles for a few moments but can't lift the sundial. TANNER watches with no expression. She finally gives up and exits. When she is gone, he shakes his head and rolls his eyes.)

TANNER. Women!

(ANYA, INGRID, and FRAU MUELLER approach the gate with SWEEPS, JUGHEAD, and PANSY following.)

FRAU MUELLER. Now stop and take a moment to compose yourselves, everyone. We don't want to be at a disadvantage before the King because we're tired and out of breath.

SWEEPS. I don't know why we ALL had to come. *Somebody* should stay home to watch the fire.

JUGHEAD. Maybe you.

SWEEPS. Oh, don't be silly. I'm the only one with any *savoir faire*, so I must be present for an audience with the King. He will appreciate meeting someone like me.

PANSY. My sources say no.

SWEEPS. I still think Pansy should have stayed behind. He's the least useful in this situation.

INGRID. Sweeps, leave Pansy alone. He's my guardian spirit, so he goes where I go, like it or not.

SWEEPS. *(In a cough:)* Not!

FRAU MUELLER. Girls, let me look at you. Not too windblown, I think. You look charming. Pansy, smooth Ingrid's hair just there in the back. *(He does.)* Very nice. Anya my dear, why did you wear that dress? It's rather faded!

ANYA. *(Calmly:)* Because it's the only one I have, Mother, and it's fine. We're here to straighten out this...story of spinning straw into gold. The King won't care what we look like.

FRAU MUELLER. He will when he sees my two lovely daughters. Why, I wouldn't be surprised if one of you didn't catch his eye. He has no queen, you know.

INGRID. As if one of us would marry him! He's very old, at least thirty, and cares only about gold. Hasn't the country suffered for months because he won't pay his bills? He's a miser!

ANYA. Like King Midas!

INGRID. And you know what happened to him!

ANYA. And his poor daughter!

FRAU MUELLER. No, dears. I don't spend my time reading, as you do. But I say it's best to wait until we meet a person before we decide what he's like. Now this storybook King—the one who only cared about gold—must have had a wife, didn't he? Well, King Rolfe needs a wife, and it could be one of you. I'll cast a spell to put a little extra oomph in your smiles...

INGRID. NO!

ANYA. (*Hastily:*) She means, no thank you, Mother. We'll be fine just as we are. We wouldn't want to take advantage of the King, now would we?

FRAU MUELLER. No, I guess not. At least I can spruce up the helpers with a little polishing spell!

(The three SPIRITS react with alarm; FRAU M winds up and casts the spell. SPELL SOUND: PANSY dives flat on the ground, so it misses him; SWEEPS whips out a mirror, which deflects it toward JUGHEAD. HE takes the spell full force, falling forward like a gunshot movie villain. When SWEEPS and PANSY help him up, He has a jagged shiny spot which SWEEPS has pasted on him while he is down. It looks rather like a bullet hole, but it represents the "shine" he was supposed to get.)

FRAU MUELLER. Oh, Jughead, I'm so sorry!

JUGHEAD. (*Groggily:*) Not to worry. Right as rain in a minute.

INGRID. Mother, perhaps you'd better read the book again more carefully before you cast any more spells. (*FRAU MUELLER nods. They approach the gate and TANNER.*) We're here to see the King, if you please: Frau Mueller and Misses Ingrid and Anya Mueller.

TANNER. And who are they? (*Indicating the SPIRITS.*)

FRAU MUELLER. They are helpful spirits. This is Jughead, who assists me with daily tasks...

JUGHEAD. Pleased t' meet ya. If there's anything I can ever do, just ask.

FRAU MUELLER. And Anya's spirit, Sweeps...

SWEEPS. (*Bowing low:*) Your servant, sir. I would be most happy to serve as intermediary in any dealings His Majesty may have with my dear Anya...

FRAU MUELLER. And Pansy, who serves my elder daughter, Ingrid. (*PANSY merely bows.*)

TANNER. Doesn't he talk?

PANSY. It is decidedly so.

INGRID. He is limited in phraseology but manages to communicate, don't you, Pansy?

PANSY. Signs point to yes.

TANNER. They're supposed to be magical?

INGRID. Of course they are!

TANNER. I don't believe in magic myself.

INGRID. Typical male: ignoring the evidence right in front of his face!

TANNER. Be that as it may, my instructions are to only allow the three ladies inside, so these...others will have to wait here.

SWEEPS. Wait here! My good man, we cannot be left sitting idly out here while our ladies go unescorted inside the castle. I am responsible for the safety of Miss Anya. I was created for that purpose! She must be protected at all times.

TANNER. Tell you what. I'll be their escort, and *I* will protect them. As far as sitting idly, there are tasks around here that suit you nicely. (*To SWEEPS and PANSY:*) You two will sweep out the gatehouse, and (*To JUGHEAD*) you can fetch water for the horses.

INGRID. You intend to make them work for you?

TANNER. I don't see why they shouldn't help out a bit while you're inside. As the broom says, they shouldn't sit idle. It sounded like either a complaint or a request for work to me. Now, does anyone else have anything to say?

SWEEPS. I respectfully request that I not be referred to as "the broom." I am a highly complicated wizardical creation that...

TANNER. Is that a complaint, broom?

SWEEPS. Oh, no, sir, just a minor point of correction! Please, continue as if I had not said a word.

TANNER. Good. Anything else?

INGRID. Just a comment so you'll know what I am thinking. You are a rude and arrogant man!

TANNER. And you, Miss, are a woman, which makes it immaterial to me what you think or say. Shall we proceed to the audience room?

(He stalks off smartly. The three WOMEN show irritation but follow as the SPIRITS move reluctantly to complete their assigned tasks as LIGHTS fade out.)

Scene 4

(FANFARE as LIGHTS come UP on the empty throne room. First MARTA enters formally with two SERVANTS who seat her at a chair beside the throne. Then LORD SOUTH enters with great dignity, followed by the five SOLDIERS and DERN, who stand at attention. After all this, ROLFE comes in without any ceremony at all, tosses his cape and crown over the throne, and sits down at a small table to the left of the throne in a businesslike manner. DERN begins handing him documents from a large basket, and a SERVANT on his other side takes them when he has scanned and signed them. Marta dismisses the attendants. ROLFE ignores it all until he reads one paper and reacts.)

ROLFE. Another stack gone, Lord South?

SOUTH. Yes, Your Majesty. As before, we opened the treasure room this morning to find piles of straw in place of a ton of our gold.

VOICE 1. *(Offstage R:)* Siegfried, can you come here quickly, my love? *(SOUTH looks to ROLFE for permission, gets it, and leaves.)*

ROLFE. *(Frustrated:)* How is it done? We lock up the gold with every precaution, yet for six months, large portions of it are turned into straw at night. My country faces ruin. I can't pay my staff and soldiers, can't buy goods from merchants. They're starting to suspect something is wrong. If they discover what's happening, there will be national panic.

SOUTH. *(Returning:)* Sire, I don't know what else we can do.

ROLFE. Did you put guards in the treasure room this time, as I ordered?

SOUTH. Yes, Sire, but they seem to be placed under some kind of spell. We found them dazed and barely conscious in the morning.

VOICE 1. (*Offstage:*) Siegfried, I need my slippers now!

SOUTH. Coming, my love. (*He looks apologetically at ROLFE, who gestures him off and rolls his eyes at the audience. SOUTH hurries to wait on his wife.*)

MARTA. Rolfe, you look so tired. You've been working much too hard.

ROLFE. I must go over the accounts and see where we can cover the lost money.

MARTA. You'll become ill with all this worry! Then where will the country be?

ROLFE. People depend on me, Aunt Marta. I can't let them down.

MARTA. Why don't you tell them the truth? Maybe someone knows how to help.

ROLFE. If evil magic is at work, telling the people would only frighten them. We must find the person responsible and stop him.

NORTH. (*Entering:*) Or her, Sire!

ROLFE. Lord North! What have you discovered?

NORTH. I was passing through the village and overheard some wives talking. Their neighbor boasted this morning that her daughter spins straw into gold.

SOUTH. (*Returning with slippers:*) A useful skill! My wife merely turns gold into thin air.

VOICE 2. (*Offstage L.:*) Is that you I heard, Gerhart? (*If female, Gertrude.*) Come give Mummy a kiss. (*NORTH bows to ROLFE apologetically and goes off.*)

ROLFE. She spins straw into gold? But our gold—

SOUTH. Is being spun into straw!

NORTH. (*Returning:*) Exactly. It must be she who is doing it.

MARTA. If you only overheard this in the market, how can you believe it is true?

NORTH. (*Ignoring her:*) The girl's father was Mueller, the wizard.

SOUTH. A good man! He helped your father many times. And now his daughter is—

NORTH. —changing our gold into straw! It must be she.

MARTA. Mueller's daughter? I don't believe it for a minute!

ROLFE. (*Ignoring her:*) She must have grown into a powerful sorceress. I wonder how she does it.

NORTH. I don't know, Sire. I understand it takes great skill.

ROLFE. Did you arrest her?

NORTH. Not yet. We must be cautious. Consider, Sire. If this woman has such power, and if she were our ally, we would never have to worry about finances again. Now, I have met the girl, and she is young and quite lovely. I suggest that you woo and marry her.

ROLFE. (*Looking up for the first time:*) Me?

NORTH. Why, yes. It would mean permanent financial stability.

SOUTH. Lord South, you do it.

SOUTH. I, Sire? I already have a wife (*Shakes head*) and five daughters!

MARTA. Gentlemen, you are getting ahead of yourselves.

VOICE 1. Siegfried, did you find them, *liebshen*?

SOUTH. I have in my household six women. I could not add another no matter who asked me to do it! (*SOUTH goes off again regretfully.*)

ROLFE. Then you do it, North. You aren't married. (*If NORTH is a female: Then order Captain Tanner to do it. He isn't married.*)

NORTH. No, but I have my poor mother to care for. I have no time for a wife. Nor am I the King, Your Highness. (*For female: Nor is he*)

the King, Your Highness.) It is *your* duty to provide for your country's well-being.

ROLFE. (*Thinking:*) Could I just date her until the treasury is replenished?

NORTH. No. I believe we must offer marriage to assure her cooperation.

VOICE 2. Gerhart, will you bring me a blanket? This castle is so cold! (*NORTH goes off R.*)

MARTA. Rolfe, this is just too silly!

ROLFE. (*Decisively.*) You are right. I will not marry a thief simply to assure a supply of gold. I work hard to make my country prosper and take my duty as king very seriously.

SOUTH. (*Returning:*) Sometimes too much so, Sire. You hardly rest.

ROLFE. I want to do what is right.

NORTH. (*Coming through with blanket:*) With respect, Sire, we could be of more assistance, but you insist on doing everything. If you'd only let us help—

VOICE 2. Gerhart!

NORTH. Coming, Mother! (*Goes off L.*)

ROLFE. It seems to me you two are busy enough. Right now, these changes in the Constitution are taking up all my time, and now this woman comes along—

SOUTH. Let us handle the situation, Sire! You have other things to do.

VOICE 1. Siegfried, are there any of those little tarts left? (*SOUTH sighs and leaves.*)

ROLFE. (*Considering:*) What will you do with her?

NORTH. (*Returning:*) We will lock the girl up until she returns what she has taken.

MARTA. But you can't do that!

SOUTH. *(Returning with tarts:)* Lady Marta is right. What if she refuses? *(MARTA sighs--they aren't listening.)*

ROLFE. Why should she?

SOUTH. She is ... *(With a glance at MARTA, who rolls her eyes. He whispers)* female, Sire. From experience I have learned that they can be rather...perverse. *(Goes off R.)*

ROLFE. Hmm. You would know, I suppose.

VOICE 2. I'd like a tart also, Gerhart, dear. *(NORTH meets SOUTH as he returns, takes the tray and goes off L.)*

SOUTH. *(Thinking:)* You say she has a family?

NORTH. *(Returning with empty tray:)* Yes, a mother and a sister.

SOUTH. We shall lock them up with her. Tell her she must spin our treasure back to gain freedom for herself and her family.

MARTA. What if she cannot?

ROLFE. What do you mean?

MARTA. Rolfe, spinning straw into gold is not an everyday skill. If she cannot really do it, you will frighten the girl and her family for no reason.

ROLFE. Aunt Marta, what are the odds that someone can turn gold into straw yet be unable to turn straw into gold? She's a wizard's daughter; who else could be draining our treasury?

VOICE 1. Those tarts are quite dry, Siegfried. Is there any water about? *(SOUTH, with some frustration, takes up a tray on which are two glasses and a pitcher. NORTH stops him, takes a glass and pours it full of water, then motions him off. SOUTH leaves, NORTH stands waiting with the glass until--)*

VOICE 2. Gerhart... *(NORTH leaves with glass, giving an "I knew it" look to the others.)*

SOUTH. *(Returning:)* The culprit must be this Anya Mueller, I agree.

NORTH. *(Returning:)* She's taken up her father's profession and for some reason is using it to harm the nation.

SOUTH. She must be stopped.

ROLFE. Exactly. I've never really trusted wizards. Legend tells of a wizard who did our people great wrong many years ago.

NORTH. I'm told the mother practices magic, also. Perhaps she is a confederate.

SOUTH. And the sister, too. Perhaps they're in cahoots. *(Pausing.)* Cahoots, what a word, that. Cahoots. *(To the point:)* We are justified in locking them up.

MARTA. Gentlemen, you jump to conclusions. We have no proof that these people did any—

VOICE 1. Siegfried, will you help me move my chair closer to the window? It's quite warm in here! *(SOUTH leaves.)*

ROLFE. Yet the mother tells in the marketplace of her daughter's skill. The criminal cannot resist boasting, and that is how many of them are caught.

VOICE 2. Gerhart, I would like the shutters closed. The sunlight is too bright! *(NORTH goes off.)*

MARTA. You are making a mistake. It is never a good idea to form an opinion based on what one has heard about someone. Rolfe, why don't you speak to the girl to discover if she is the type of person who would do such a thing?

ROLFE. There is no need for me to speak to her. I am busy modernizing the Constitution, which will benefit all the people. The good of the many must come before consideration of one girl. Lords North and South shall find out tonight whether her claim is true, simply and efficiently. My method is quite direct.

MARTA. A little too direct if you don't consider the feelings of those involved.

ROLFE. A king must act as he deems best for his whole country, not just a few.

MARTA. I repeat: there's nothing like meeting a person to get a true impression.

ROLFE. (*Humoring her:*) I will consider it, Aunt Marta, because I have learned to trust your judgment. But I doubt that meeting her will change my mind.

DERN. (*Entering:*) Sire, there are women in the anteroom who say they were ordered to the castle.

MARTA. (*Sighing:*) Although I wish it otherwise, it is your decision, Rolfe.

ROLFE. And I have made it. Lord (*Lady*) North, Lord South, I leave it to you to convince this woman that we are serious. She has this choice: give back my gold or remain a prisoner indefinitely.

(*ROLFE exits as BLACKOUT.*)

Scene 5

(*LIGHT UP on palace gate. CAPTAIN TANNER is on duty as the SOUTH GIRLS pass by. SWEEPS, JUGHEAD, and PANSY go by throughout the scene doing various tasks, always rather resentfully. As SWEEPS bustles by with a dust rag, PANSY sticks out a foot and trips him. INGRID stands off to the far side, unseen by the others.*)

SWEEPS. Pansy! Did you do that on purpose?

PANSY. Reply hazy-ask again later. (*Exit.*)

SWEEPS. (*Mumbling:*) Of all the households in all the world, he had to appear in mine! (*Exit.*)

SARAH. (*Enters carrying a tennis racket:*) Oh, Captain, want to play a few sets after duty?

TANNER. Sorry, Lady Sarah. I have to wash my uniform. (*She exits.*)

SENTA. (*Enters dressed in the latest fashion:*) Would you like to escort me to the market tomorrow, Captain Tanner?

TANNER. Forgive me, Lady Senta, but I must meet with the head archer. (*She exits.*)

SONJA. *(Comes on and gets very close to his face:)* Captain Tanner, would you please act as my bodyguard while I walk through the forest?

TANNER. I would love to, Lady Sonja, but I must clean my musket. I will ask Corporal Dern to accompany you. *(DERN appears and she exits hurriedly.)*

SIGRID. *(Enters and approaches mysteriously:)* Captain, I wish you to meet me in the meadow tonight to welcome the summer solstice.

TANNER. I'm afraid my allergies require that I avoid meadows, Lady Sigrid. Perhaps at the winter solstice. *(She stalks off.)*

SALLY. *(Entering coyly:)* Cap'n, take me to the faiw next week, pwetty pweese?

TANNER. I regret, Lady Sally, that I must refuse. It is against my religious beliefs to attend any occasion where there is merriment. *(She goes off crying; TANNER returns to a book he's been reading. INGRID now approaches his post.)*

INGRID. Captain, I demand that you allow our companions into the castle. I did not want to embarrass my mother, but you have no right to keep them here. I know what it says in the Constitution about forced labor and detainment of innocent citizens.

TANNER. I'd be willing to bet the Constitution doesn't consider a talking broom to be a citizen.

INGRID. I'll just take it up with His Majesty when I see him, then. I wonder how he'll respond to one of his officers stealing the property of three helpless females!

TANNER. *(Angrily:)* I did not steal your property; I was merely keeping the castle clear of extra...beings! Why, they might have been dangerous criminals here to harm King Rolfe.

INGRID. And now that you've observed them closely?

TANNER. *(Admitting:)* I'm sure they are not. You must understand, though, that I had to be certain.

INGRID. *(Sweetly:)* Quite. You've done your job in a commendable manner. I assume I may take them with me into the castle now?

TANNER. (*Calling:*) All right, all of you, come here now! (*Instantly the SOUTH SISTERS arrive, tumbling over each other in eagerness.*) Not you, Ladies, I was speaking to these creatures. (*SOUTHS leave despondently as COMPANIONS spruce each other up.*)

INGRID. You really are rather hard on them. They seem like nice girls.

TANNER. That's just it. They are girls. Females. Women.

INGRID. And?

TANNER. If you'll excuse my being blunt, I find women silly and annoying.

INGRID. And men?

TANNER. Practical and amusing.

INGRID. Odd, I've always found MEN silly and annoying and WOMEN practical and amusing.

TANNER. (*Exasperated:*) Nonsense! Women are easily corrupted: take Eve, for example.

INGRID. Men are easily led: take Adam as a case in point.

TANNER. Women can't mind their own business: take Pandora, for instance.

INGRID. Men can't tell the truth: for illustration, any man who's ever been fishing.

TANNER. Women talk too much: with yourself as a specimen.

INGRID. Men are pompous and overbearing, for which you serve exemplification!

TANNER. (*Pausing.*) Exemplification? Is that a word?

INGRID. Of course it is. I read it in Plutarch.

TANNER. (*Amazed.*) You've read Plutarch?

INGRID. I have.

TANNER. And your favorite Roman?

INGRID. Pompey, I think. Strong but humane.

TANNER. I agree. The last of the true Romans. The Caesars were all scoundrels.

INGRID. (*Amazed:*) I agree! But so many do not!

TANNER. It takes a broad range of reading to get the entire picture, don't you think?

INGRID. I do. One can't just dabble in the classics.

TANNER. I suppose you read...fiction from time to time?

INGRID. Never. I find it insipid and boring next to reality.

TANNER. Exactly so! (*Unsure of himself for once:*) Would you be interested in taking a walk this evening...to discuss further the classic authors?

INGRID. (*Trying to be businesslike, but quite flattered:*) I...suppose so. Since I have to be here anyway, I mean. It would help to pass the time.

Scene 6

(*The anteroom. NORTH and SOUTH are with ANYA and FRAU MUELLER.*)

NORTH. Now, young woman, we are aware of your special skill. You will begin this night spinning straw into gold for the King's treasury.

ANYA. I cannot. You see...

SOUTH. But we are not asking you; we are demanding it.

ANYA. I must decline. The truth is...

SOUTH. I warned you, North, perverse.

ANYA. I'm not trying to be perverse, it's just that...

VOICE 1. Siegfried! Where have you put the bon-bons? I'm starving! (*SOUTH goes off disgustedly, returning in a few moments. Dialogue continues.*)

INGRID. (*Entering with SWEEPS, PANSY and JUGHEAD.*) Look, your lordships, my sister has never spun straw into gold! Why can't someone around this place get that into his head? Oh, silly me! You're all men-utterly unable to think anything through logically. (*If North is female: The king is a man...*)

NORTH. (*To ANYA.*) This is your sister?

ANYA. Yes, my Lord. Ingrid.

VOICE 2. Gerhart, dear, Mother is ready for her nap now.

(*NORTH exits.*)

SOUTH. Well, Miss Ingrid, your sister may not have spun straw into gold. But she *has* spun gold into straw. Now we simply want her to reverse the spell.

INGRID. What spell? Mother, have you been trying...

FRAU MUELLER. No, no, dear. I've done nothing but a few household spells. For example, I could get this gentleman a nice glass of water. (*She waves her arms and water shoots from a pitcher onto NORTH, who is just returning.*) Well, sometimes it works! (*Brushing him off.*)

SOUTH. Madame, enough dissembling! We require you, Frau Mueller, and your daughters to stay here in the palace dungeon until such time as all of the King's gold is replaced.

ANYA. Replaced? I don't understand.

NORTH. You, Miss Anya, will be locked in the treasure room, where you will be provided with straw to turn into gold. If you do so, your family will be released from the dungeon.

SOUTH. (*Taking NORTH aside.*) We don't have a dungeon, remember? Rolfe turned it into a recreation room for the palace guard.

NORTH. Well, lock them in the larder, then. Corporal!

INGRID. I will see that you pay for this, all of you. I've read the Constitution!

ANYA. If you'll only listen to me, Sir, I cannot do as you ask!

NORTH. Then the King has ordered that you remain imprisoned until you comply with his request. Corporal, remove them. (*DERN leads the three ladies away, INGRID and ANYA still protesting.*) We have done as we planned, but after meeting them, I fear that Her Grace Marta may be correct.

SOUTH. I agree. We have acted hastily and arrested harmless women. I'm afraid we must tell His Majesty that, however much he may not want to hear it.

VOICE 1. Oh Siegfried!

VOICE 2. Gerhart, darling!

(BOTH exit resignedly.)

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 7

(LIGHTS on palace gate. TANNER is again on duty as SIGRID walks by with a large package. This time, SOUTH stands on the opposite side and sends the soldiers out, one by one, to try to snare his daughters' attention. TANNER ignores SIGRID as SOLDIER 1 rushes to her side, obviously smitten. He takes the package but she barely notices as she watches TANNER. When they are gone, SOLDIER 2 comes out of the gate as SONJA comes by with a bucket of water. Again TANNER ignores her and the SOLDIER rushes to help. She watches TANNER as they go off. Next comes SENTA with a basket. SOLDIER 3 comes up and takes it from her. She barely notices as she gazes at TANNER. Last SARAH and SALLY come by, sharing the weight of a trunk. SOLDIERS 4 & 5 emerge from the gate and hurry to help. The girls flirt with TANNER, who ignores them. SALLY is last to leave, staring at TANNER with calf eyes. SOUTH shrugs and exits after her.)

TANNER. Women!

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 8

(LIGHTS up in the treasure room. ANYA sits dejectedly beside a spinning wheel amid piles of straw. Outside the door we see ROLFE, trying to decide whether he should go in.)

ROLFE. I'm sure Marta is wrong and I am right. This girl is responsible for my country's loss, no matter how innocent she might seem!

ANYA. I should have stood up to them and made them listen! Now what will I do?

ROLFE. If I meet her I might find out *why* she is doing this thing...

ANYA. Why can't I be bold like Ingrid? She got their attention, all right! Of course, they didn't listen to her once she started ranting about the stupidity of men.

ROLFE. I will ask her straight out why she would want to take my gold!

ANYA. Still, I should have found a way to make them hear what I had to say. I never seem to speak up when I should!

ROLFE. But will she tell the King why she hates the King? I think not. *(He stands uncertain for a moment, then has an idea and goes off.)*

ANYA. At the next chance I will speak my mind, even if they kill me. I will demand justice!

(The door opens and ROLFE steps in dressed as the captain of the guard.)

ROLFE. Forgive the interruption, Miss, but the King asks if you need anything.

ANYA. Who are you?

ROLFE. I am...Captain Tanner, of the King's guard. I was ordered to see to your comfort.

ANYA. *(Sarcastic, indicating surroundings:)* What more could I possibly need?

ROLFE. The King will provide anything you might wish. It is not his intention to make you suffer.

ANYA. (*Angrily:*) It is not, indeed? He locked up my sister and my mother, demands that I do something that I can't do, and fails even to have the decency to face me, letting his...his *creatures*, like you and Lords North and South, do his dirty work for him. I tell you, sir, *I would not work for such a man!*

ROLFE. I must protest, Miss. The King is most dutiful. He has always devoted himself to the needs of his people.

ANYA. (*Sarcastically:*) Yes, truly, I was hoping to be locked up today!

ROLFE. But a king's task is to act in his nation's best interest.

ANYA. I have never seen the King. How does he know what is best for me?

ROLFE. One means the good of the people in general, of course, not one individual.

ANYA. The King never comes to our village, never sees what we do each day. He doesn't know or care that the people suffer from his miserly ways.

ROLFE. *Miserly!*

ANYA. Why, yes! The villagers have had no money for months and months—no one has been paid. Have you received a salary lately?

ROLFE. Well, no.

ANYA. You see? People believe he's turned into some sort of miser.

ROLFE. That is not true.

ANYA. Then why? (*Pause.*) I begin to see. Something has happened to the money. Is that why he is so anxious that I do this impossible task?

ROLFE. It...may be so.

ANYA. So he is desperate! Still, he has no right to take away my freedom! I have done nothing. He is an evil man to imprison us all this way.

ROLFE. Perhaps the King is doing what he thinks is best.

ANYA. Then the King is wrong! And I despise him!

ROLFE. I am sorry you feel that way. Is there no way I can ease your unhappiness?

ANYA. (*Relenting somewhat:*) No, but thank you. I am sorry to have berated you for someone else's faults. I'm sure you are only doing what you must.

ROLFE. Thank you, Miss.

ANYA. Have you worked for the King long?

ROLFE. All my life, Miss.

ANYA. Ah, then you do not know any other way of life. Is he good to you?

ROLFE. Yes, Miss. He treats me very well.

ANYA. So you are loyal to him. That is as it should be. Is he difficult to please?

ROLFE. I have never thought so, Miss.

ANYA. People say he will not marry because he considers himself too good for any woman.

ROLFE. (*Defensively:*) Not too good, just not well-suited to the women he's met thus far.

ANYA. So he is looking for love? Interesting; I assumed kings married to benefit the nation.

ROLFE. Some kings, perhaps. But I...I mean...His Majesty believes there is one perfect woman for every man, and vice versa.

ANYA. Well, in that he and I agree. I, too, hope to meet a man who shares my ideals and dreams.

ROLFE. And what ideals and dreams are those?

ANYA. Oh, I would like to travel, see the world. I have read about it, but that is not the same as going there. Do you understand?

ROLFE. Oh, yes, Miss. Rome, for example, is far more beautiful than any description of it.

ANYA. You have been to Rome?

ROLFE. Uh, yes...on campaign, of course.

ANYA. I did not know our soldiers ever fought in Rome.

ROLFE. *(Covering:)* It was just a little skirmish, not a real battle.

ANYA. But the city was—?

ROLFE. Wonderful. Even the ruins are magnificent.

ANYA. I imagine so. And you cannot believe that you are actually there.

ROLFE. True. You feel so small when you realize how big and how old this world really is. Egypt, for example, seems so very old!

ANYA. Oh, I'd love to see it. *(There is a dawning on both their parts that they have entered a different level of acquaintance.)*

ROLFE. Perhaps someday you will. I would like to show you.

ANYA. I'd like that, too. *(Remembering:)* But I am a prisoner with no hope of ever being free. Please leave me alone, and tell your king I want nothing from him, ever!

(ROLFE is reluctant but leaves her alone, closing the door softly behind him. He stands outside for a few moments, then moves off R. LIGHTS dim a little.)

ANYA. What am I going to do? I can't spin straw into gold, and no one believes me. Why couldn't the King be more like his Captain of the Guard? What a kind and gentle man! *(A noise behind her.)* What's that? Who are you?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Appearing from the darkness of downstage:)* Who are *you*, first!

ANYA. I am Anya Mueller.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Ah, yes: the wizard's daughter.

ANYA. My father is dead.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. So I heard. Did he leave anything to his family?

ANYA. (*Touches her ring:*) A few trinkets. Now, your name, sir?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I don't think so.

ANYA. But why won't you tell me who you are and what you are doing here?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Let's just say I'm someone who can spin straw into gold.

ANYA. So you're my fairy godmother, come here to help me?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Not a chance. I work on a barter basis, and who you callin' a fairy?

ANYA. Sorry.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I am a dwarf. We're hard workers, but we don't give nothin' away, see?

ANYA. But you can spin straw into gold?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Sure can!

ANYA. I have no money...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I'll take that ring you're wearing.

ANYA. Oh. It was a gift from my father. It's not really worth anything.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. And I suppose you're some kind of gemologist, right?

ANYA. Well, no.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Dwarves do some mining, so we're pretty familiar with metallurgy. The ring is gold; that's a ruby set in it, and that's what I'll take to do the job.

ANYA. (*Unwilling to give it up:*) I don't know...it's from my father...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Okay, it's your funeral...and your sister's, and your mother's!

ANYA. Okay, okay, here! (*Takes off ring and hands it over.*)

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Boy, are you dumb! I could take this ring and disappear. You don't even know if I can really do what I say I can do.

ANYA. *(Close to tears:)* Oh, but you can, can't you?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Yeah, yeah, but there's one more thing. If you ever tell anyone about me, I will destroy you and everyone you love. Do you understand that?

ANYA. Y—yes, but I hate lying. Could I tell them *some* of the truth, that someone came along and helped me, like the story I read of the elves and the shoemaker?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Not a word! Humans! Always reading! Don't you people have a life? *(He sits down at the spinning wheel and begins.)* Now we're on the clock here, sweetie, this spell only works under a full moon, so just sit quietly and let me work. *(LIGHTS fade.)* Your king will have his gold in the morning...and you'll be free! *(Aside:)* Maybe!

(BLACKOUT.)

(LIGHTS up: Morning: ANYA is asleep as the door opens. NORTH and SOUTH peep in. She wakes and looks around; the dwarf is gone, but stacks of gold surround her.)

NORTH. She did it! She made gold from straw! Well done, young lady, well done!

SOUTH. It isn't a quarter of what we lost, but it is certainly an impressive beginning.

ANYA. I'm glad you are pleased. May I go now?

NORTH. Go? Go where?

ANYA. Home.

SOUTH. Young woman, the castle is now your home. You must spin more straw into gold until what was taken is returned.

ANYA. Oh, no!

NORTH. What do you mean, no?

ANYA. (*Thinking fast:*) This spell only works on the full moon. I couldn't do it again for a month.

SOUTH. Hmm. Well, we'll just have to be patient, I suppose.

ANYA. I'll come back in a month, then. (*The LORDS shake their heads.*)

NORTH. The King will not hear of your leaving, my dear. Why, it's possible that he will make you queen. (*SOUTH starts to protest, but NORTH pokes him into silence.*)

ANYA. I'm not interested. I've met someone.

SOUTH. Since yesterday?

ANYA. Yes, so you see, I couldn't possibly marry your miser—I mean, king.

NORTH. That is your choice, of course, but you will stay until the treasury is replenished.

ANYA. Please, be honest. Tell me what happened to the King's gold.

SOUTH. Our nation's treasury was once heaped high. Then one night a large portion simply disappeared, and in its place lay piles of straw.

VOICE 1. Siegfried, where are you? Come and pour some hot water on my feet! (*SOUTH leaves.*)

NORTH. We set guards outside the treasure room, but a month later, it happened again! I believe it *was* during the night of a full moon.

SOUTH. (*Coming by doorway with a bucket:*) The last time, we put guards *inside* the treasure room, but they were overcome by magic and more gold disappeared. (*Leaves opposite.*)

NORTH. We consulted wise men, sorceresses, the local witch. None can explain it.

SOUTH. (*Returning:*) Then Lord North heard that you could spin straw into gold. We thought you might be the one who took the gold in the first place.

ANYA. I?

SOUTH. (*Patting her arm.*) It was before we knew you. Of course, His Highness is not convinced that you are innocent. Still, we asked you to spin straw into gold, and you did it, so our troubles will soon be over!

ANYA. (*Weakly.*) So it seems. But what if I can't do it again?

NORTH. Of course you can; you've done it once, haven't you? It will be easier the second time! Wait until I tell His Majesty! We will allow your family the freedom of the castle, and they will be treated as guests, not prisoners. You will be given whatever you ask for, but we will ask that you remain in this room.

ANYA. I want my freedom. I want to go home.

VOICE 2. Gerhart, I can't reach my book. It's on the top shelf!
(*NORTH exits.*)

SOUTH. We can't arrange that. The King is adamant. What would make you more content?

ANYA. Well, if I must stay, I wish to have Sweeps with me. He's somewhere in the palace.

NORTH. (*Returning.*) Done. I will send for this Sweeps immediately.

SOUTH. (*In a fatherly way.*) I'm sorry that you are unhappy here, but do try to accept your lot.

ANYA. I can't be happy as a prisoner, but if I must remain in the palace, I will gladly stay in this room rather than risk meeting King Rolfe. I want nothing to do with a man like him!

VOICES 1 & 2. YOO-hoo! Gerhart/Siegfried!

(*THEY leave as BLACKOUT.*)

Scene 9

(*LIGHTS up in anteroom. FRAU MUELLER has been practicing spells. JUGHEAD sits in a corner with an icebag on his head, a large crack running down one side. SWEEPS is sweeping, but when he*

tries to gather the dirt into the dustpan, PANSY moves at the last second and he misses.)

SWEEPS. Do keep still, Pansy! How can I finish if you insist on moving about!

PANSY. Outlook uncertain.

SWEEPS. You really are impossible. He really is impossible, you know, Madame.

FRAU MUELLER. *(Absent-mindedly:)* I know. *(Reading book:)* I can't imagine why it didn't work. I did everything exactly as it says here... *(Turns page:)* ...although it is odd that one would add wormwood to a simple decorating spell. I'm so sorry, Jughead, I thought that a little brightening of your color was in order now that we've moved into the palace and all.

JUGHEAD. Whatever you say, ma'am. *(Groans and moves icebag to other side.)*

FRAU MUELLER. It really shouldn't have sent you spinning like that.

JUGHEAD. Would've been all right, ma'am, except for the sudden stop.

FRAU MUELLER. *(Turning page back again:)* Oh, look here! I see what happened! I turned two pages at once. That last bit was a stirring spell!

JUGHEAD. Certainly was, ma'am.

FRAU MUELLER. Well, at least that explains it. Now I can begin again and do it correctly!

JUGHEAD. *(Almost in tears:)* Anything you say, ma'am.

(ALL exit as BLACKOUT.)

Scene 10

(LIGHTS in ANYA's room. As she reads, SWEEPS arranges the room the way he wants it in his fussy way, muttering to himself.)

SWEEPS. What kind of a country is it where an innocent young girl can be locked up and forced to labor like a slave, anyway! I just don't know what the world is coming to!

ANYA. There's no sense fussing, Sweeps. At least you're here with me now; that's something.

SWEEPS. Yes, but I can't help you spin straw into gold! Only Master Mueller was a wizard brilliant enough to teach you that! And who knows what that evil king of yours will do when he discovers that you cannot fulfill his demand! Ooh, I wish I had him here right now! I'd give him such a beating with my handle!

ANYA. Well, he's not here, and he hasn't come near. He's ashamed to be so unfair, I guess.

(KNOCK on door and several SERVANTS come in, each carrying something.)

SERVANT 1. Miss Anya, the King has sent us to assure your comfort.

SWEEPS. I see to Miss Anya's comfort, I would like you to know!

SERVANT 2. *(Interrupting as if he never spoke:)* I have brought a softer mattress and warmer blankets for your bed. This castle can be quite drafty. *(Makes bed up as others continue.)*

SWEEPS. Well, you don't have to worry about me! I sleep standing up in a corner—

SERVANT 3. *(Interrupting:)* Here, warm water, towels, and some other things to make your stay more pleasant. And I will clean this room for you, it's quite in need of it. *(Begins dusting.)*

SWEEPS. I was just about to begin cleaning myself when you all came barging in!

SERVANT 4. *(Interrupting:)* I have brought some dresses, and I will fit them for you if you will choose the ones that please you. *(Shows several dresses.)*

SWEEPS. I wouldn't pick the yellow one, Miss Anya; you know how yellow makes your complexion look sallow.

SERVANT 1. *(Interrupting:)* Outside the door are furnishings that will brighten this room, if you will allow me to bring them in. *(As scene continues, brings in table, chair, some curtains, etc.)*

SWEEPS. All this clutter just makes it harder to keep the place clean!

ANYA. Why all this sudden concern for my comfort?

SWEEPS. *(Muttering to himself:)* Cheap attempt at bribery!

SERVANT 1. The King orders that we make you happy, Miss. In spite of the fact that you are a...required guest, he wishes you to have the best we can offer.

SWEEPS. *(Changing his attitude somewhat:)* My Anya does deserve the best...

ANYA. I want nothing from King Rolfe. All of you can just—

SWEEPS. *(Interrupting:)* Now, Miss Anya, don't let pride interfere with common sense. It *is* cold in here, and you may as well take what is given. You deserve fair treatment from this king, and these good people are only doing what they were ordered to do.

ANYA. I suppose you are right. *(To the servants:)* Thank you for your kindness. *(To SERVANT 2:)* The bed looks much better. I will sleep very well tonight. *(To SERVANT 4:)* I would love to try on this one, and...that one, I think. *(To SERVANT 3:)* I'm so grateful for the chance to wash the dust from my hands and face. *(To SERVANT 1:)* Oh, how lovely to have a little table and a chair, and the curtains make the place much cheerier!

(The SERVANTS finish their tasks and leave, bowing and smiling. SERVANT 4 stays with dresses ANYA has chosen.)

SWEEPS. Well, it isn't home, but then, home wasn't so great, either!

ANYA. *(Sadly:)* But I could come and go as I pleased, no matter how small and humble it was.

SWEEPS. Come, Miss Anya, try on the clothing. Nothing makes a lady happier than a new dress.

ANYA. All right, Sweeps. But if King Rolfe is trying to make me think better of him, it won't work. As long as I'm a prisoner here, he is a tyrant, and I will tell him so to his face if he ever has the nerve to show it! (SERVANT 4 looks shocked, but ANYA goes off L; SERVANT and SWEEPS follow as LIGHTS fade.)

Scene 11

(Anteroom: LIGHTS up. MARTA & INGRID enter and sit on a bench. INGRID holds her hands up; MARTA winds yarn around them.)

MARTA. I'm so sorry my nephew feels it is necessary to lock your sister up. She seems a very fine young woman.

INGRID. She is, although she spends too much time reading love stories and tales of heroic men who rush in and rescue fine young women in distress.

MARTA. I take it you don't read such things?

INGRID. I have no respect for storybooks. Give me an interesting mathematics text any time! As far as heroic men, I don't believe they exist!

MARTA. Oh, I have found that men, like women, come in all sorts, and one usually can find a type that is tolerable, if she gives them a chance.

INGRID. Are you telling me to tolerate men even when they're being stupid and arrogant?

MARTA. No, not then. But they are not always so.

INGRID. (Snorts:) I haven't seen them otherwise.

MARTA. Is there no man who you find intelligent?

INGRID. Well...

MARTA. You may tell me. I won't betray your secret.

INGRID. (Reluctant to admit it:) I have observed your Captain Tanner. He is a fine example of what I would demand in a husband...if I were ever to consider such silliness as marriage.

MARTA. I'm afraid Captain Tanner is quite unapproachable. Every girl in the kingdom has tried to catch his eye.

INGRID. I certainly have no intention of throwing myself at him as those silly South sisters do.

MARTA. My dear, you will be sorry if you do not take a chance when it arises.

INGRID. I couldn't!

MARTA. Then you will be forever alone.

INGRID. Forgive me, but did you...?

MARTA. I did. There was once a young man that I found charming, but I was young and a little in love with the idea of being a princess. I spurned him and he married someone else. He was very happy, and I...never met another like him. Now I am old and alone, and although my nephew is very good to me, it is not the same as if I'd had my own family. Perhaps that is why I took to you. *(With a look at INGRID:)* You are very like him.

INGRID. You mean that the man was...

MARTA. Your father, Hans. He was often here to see my brother the King, but I was too proud to let him know of my interest, and he met your mother and fell in love. *(Pause, then back to reality.)* Now I must check with cook and see that tonight's dinner is coming along. *(Exit.)*

INGRID. Perhaps I have been unwise, too proud. I must speak to Captain Tanner...

ANYA. *(Entering:)* Oh, there you are, Ingrid.

INGRID. Anya! I thought you were locked in that room.

ANYA. *(Impishly:)* I have a friend in the palace! He lets me wander about when the King is absent.

INGRID. Really?

ANYA. Yes. He's very sweet and has been most kind to me. We sit in my little room and talk of all sorts of things. He's been everywhere, and he has many stories to tell.

INGRID. And who is this wonderful man?

ANYA. Captain Tanner, the head of the palace guard. Do you know him?

INGRID. (*Stunned:*) I...have seen him.

ANYA. I believe that if it were not for the circumstances, he would be more than a friend, if you understand what I mean?

INGRID. Yes, I do. And...I'm very happy for you, Anya.

ANYA. There's no time for rejoicing yet. I am supposed to spin straw into gold again soon, and I have no way to do it. We may never be free.

INGRID. How did you manage it before?

ANYA. It must be kept secret. A tiny man came to the room by magical means and offered to do the work if I could pay him. I gave him the ring Father left to me, and he was satisfied.

INGRID. This is real? It was not a dream?

ANYA. Ingrid, the straw was spun into gold! Could I dream that?

INGRID. True. Do you think he will come again when you need him?

ANYA. I have no way to tell.

INGRID. For your sake, I hope he *will* come again. But I would like to know more about this magical creature. I will ask to see the palace records.

ANYA. Oh, Ingrid, do you think he might be evil?

INGRID. It's hard to say. If he helped you once, perhaps he will do it again.

ANYA. But I have nothing with which to pay him this time.

(There is a SPELL sound followed by a loud CRASH and a FLASH of light offstage, the sound of Frau Mueller's latest attempt. JUGHEAD comes sliding across the stage on his back, arms and legs flailing. He stops beside the SISTERS and they help him up, brush-

ing him off and supporting him as he wobbles. He is missing a piece near his eye.)

FRAU MUELLER. *(Brightly from offstage:)* Almost have it, Jughead, dear. You'll be good as new in no time.

JUGHEAD. Yes, ma'am. Good as new. *(Staggers off.)*

INGRID. *(Removing her necklace:)* Here, offer the little man this.

ANYA. The locket Father gave you, Ingrid! Are you sure?

INGRID. If it buys our freedom, it will be worth it. Maybe your Captain Tanner will dance one dance with me at your wedding. *(ANYA hugs her as BLACKOUT.)*

End of Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

(A week later. LIGHTS up. ANYA sews in her room as ROLFE comes in, again dressed as Captain Tanner. ANYA is dressed nicely and the room is comfortably furnished. Around her are piles of straw.)

ROLFE. Forgive my intrusion, Miss Anya.

ANYA. Oh, no, Captain. It's good to see you. *(Sets sewing down.)*

ROLFE. Is there anything more you need to be prepared for tonight?

ANYA. Thank you, no. *(Bravely:)* I have plenty of straw; that is all that seems to be required.

ROLFE. I brought a book that you may not have read. *(Hands it to her and sits.)*

ANYA. How kind of you. I will return it as soon as possible.

ROLFE. There is no hurry. I have plenty more.

ANYA. You do?

ROLFE. I mean—the King lets me borrow from his library whenever I wish.

ANYA. He is a puzzling man, the King.

ROLFE. How so?

ANYA. He is kind to you and cruel to me. How can a person be both?

ROLFE. The King...finds it difficult to believe that you did not turn his gold into straw.

ANYA. Then the King is a fool. Why would I do that?

ROLFE. Why would anyone do it? Yet you can, so it follows that you did.

ANYA. Captain, you and I have met many times now and talked about all kinds of things. Do you believe that I might be so evil?

ROLFE. Shall I tell you a story to answer that question?

ANYA. *(Puzzled:)* If it helps.

ROLFE. Long ago, the present king's great, great grandfather, who was also called Rolfe, was just a woodsman in the Black Forest.

ANYA. A mysterious place, they say.

(As ROLFE tells the story, if desired, it can be acted out in pantomime behind them. SPOTLIGHT follows as OLD ROLFE enters a black stage to find a small grate from which many HANDS stretch in desperate pleas for help. A small, cloaked figure stands over them with a whip. OLD ROLFE chases away the figure, strikes the lock with his axe, and cries of joy are heard as the scene goes black.)

ROLFE. Yes. One year an evil dwarf terrorized the town. At first he pretended to be kind and helpful, and then, using magic, he stole the villagers' children from them.

ANYA. Oh, my goodness! This dwarf stole the villagers' children?

ROLFE. Yes, to work in his mine.

ANYA. I thought dwarves were useful and friendly creatures.

ROLFE. Most are, but this one was not.

ANYA. What did the first Rolfe do?

ROLFE. He rescued the children and trapped the dwarf underground with a spell that would last as long as one person remembered the dwarf's name.

ANYA. His name?

ROLFE. Yes, a person's name is a very powerful thing. The people were grateful to Rolfe and made him king, and that is how my...the King's family came to rule this land. It's said the first Rolfe built this palace over the mine so that he could keep watch over the dwarf.

ANYA. And what has that to do with me?

ROLFE. Because of that ancient treachery, our king fears that those with the power of magic may become evil. They may do great harm while pretending to be good.

ANYA. *(To herself:)* Well, my mother might be an example of that! *(To ROLFE:)* Why doesn't the King face me and see that I am not evil?

ROLFE. Perhaps he fears he will be fooled by a beautiful face and a soft voice.

ANYA. Well, I believe that Rolfe is afraid to face me because he knows he has treated me badly.

ROLFE. Perhaps that is true. When the gold is returned, you will meet the King. Each of you must then decide for yourself how you feel about the other.

ANYA. I do not look forward to it, Captain.

ROLFE. *(He stands and starts to leave.)* I must go and leave you to your work.

ANYA. Does anyone remember it?

ROLFE. What's that?

ANYA. The dwarf's name. Does anyone remember it?

ROLFE. I've never thought to ask. It was so long ago, you see.

ANYA. Yes. I see. *(He leaves as LIGHTS fade. ANYA sits quietly. SOUNDS come again from behind her, and RUMPELSTILSKIN appears.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Well, well! Come up in the world, have you?

ANYA. I hardly dared think you'd appear again!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Now, ain't I a good guy? Didn't I save your bacon before? Why wouldn't I do it again?

ANYA. I will pay you. I have this. *(She removes the necklace.)*

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Looking it over:)* Hmm, not bad. Emeralds with diamond chips. You've got a deal. You didn't tell the King about me, did ya?

ANYA. No. But I don't understand why I can't. It's wrong to let them think *I* spin the straw into gold. If the King knew about you, he would reward you well for your work.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. NO! Get it? NO, NO, NO!

ANYA. *(Startled:)* I'm sorry.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Just keep your mouth shut. I don't want anything from old Rolfie. Now sit over there and keep quiet while I work. *(LIGHTS fade. He spins and ANYA falls asleep.)*

(BLACKOUT-- RUMPELSTILTSKIN exits; gold replaces straw.)

(LIGHTS up: morning, NORTH & SOUTH enter, find ANYA asleep, piles of gold.)

NORTH. She's done it again! Oh, Miss Anya, we are so pleased!

SOUTH. There's more here than before. I estimate we have regained two-thirds of what was lost!

ANYA. I'm glad it satisfies you.

NORTH. Do you realize what this means? Things will be back to normal next time.

ANYA. *Next time?*

NORTH. Yes, Miss Anya, you must spin once more, at the next full moon. That will put the nation back on its feet, and then our king's wise leadership will keep it that way.

ANYA. *(Dully:)* Once more.

SOUTH. Yes, but rest now. It must be exhausting to make gold. You look quite pale. It's a pity that you must stay up all night spinning. Is there no other way?

ANYA. No, Lord South. *(Ironically:)* No way that I know of.

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 2

(LIGHTS: palace gate. SALLY is bouncing a large rubber ball.)

SALLY. Oh, Captain! Captain Ta-a-a-ner!

TANNER. Yes, Lady Sally.

SALLY. Can you pweese get my little kitty out of that tree?

TANNER. Yes, Lady Sally. *(Takes ball from her, throws it offstage. CAT YOWL is heard.)* The cat is coming down now, Milady. *(SALLY runs offstage.)*

SENTA. *(Entering opposite:)* Good morning, Captain! *(She drops a large handkerchief and stands waiting, giving him flirtatious glances.)*

TANNER. Good morning, Milady Senta. *(He uses his musket barrel to pick up the cloth and return it to her.)* You dropped this. *(She exits.)*

SIGRID. *(Offstage:)* Captain Tanner! *(Entering:)* I have had a dream that you and I stood together in a church with a priest before us. What do you think it means?

TANNER. That we were in the wrong church, Milady Sigrid. I am Lutheran. *(She exits.)*

SONJA. *(Coming close:)* Captain, I am captivated by the manly scent you are wearing!

TANNER. It's horse liniment, Milady Sonja. I have a sore back. *(She pouts away.)*

SARAH. *(Running by, she turns backward and runs in place as she greets him:)* Sergeant, you're looking very fit this morning. Do you lift weights?

TANNER. No, Milady Sarah. I lift sundials. *(SARAH stalks off, miffed. TANNER allows himself a smile.)*

(INGRID passes by the gate, trying to avoid the CAPTAIN's notice. He sees her and steps into her path, all the while appearing not to notice her.)

TANNER. *(Nonchalant:)* Good day, Miss Ingrid.

INGRID. *(Barely polite:)* Captain.

TANNER. I have just borrowed a copy of Herodotus from His Majesty the King. I was wondering if we might read it together.

INGRID. (*Remembering Anya:*) No, I'm sorry. I have...things to do.

TANNER. I see. Perhaps tomorrow, then?

INGRID. (*Determined to put him off:*) I'm afraid I'll be quite busy for the next week or so, doing errands for my sister. While discussing books and...things has been...edifying in its way, I find that I have no more time to spend on such things until my sister is free.

TANNER. (*Seeing his chance:*) I've been trying to find a way to free her. Maybe if we went to the King together we could object to her incarceration on grounds of *habeas corpus*. (*Rather shyly:*) You see, since you came, I have read the Constitution too.

INGRID. I see. You want to meet with me to discuss my sister's release.

TANNER. Well, yes. I believe I can help.

INGRID. (*Sighing:*) Very well. I will meet you here at seven this evening.

TANNER. (*Happily:*) Till seven, then?

INGRID. (*Resigned:*) Till seven.

(EXIT. After she leaves, the five SOLDIERS approach.)

SOLDIER 1. Sir, may we speak freely with you?

TANNER. Of course, men. What is it?

SOLDIER 2. Well, sir, a man of your reputation...

SOLDIER 3. ...it's just that it's pretty hard to...

SOLDIER 4. ...compete with a man who...

SOLDIER 5. ...has been everywhere and done everything...

SOLDIER 1. ...killed an ogre...

TANNER. Two actually, but the second was just a small one.

SOLDIER 2. Then there were the dragons...

SOLDIER 3. Three at once, I heard?

TANNER. Well, yes, but that was mostly luck. I ducked and two of them fried each other! Then I had just the one to deal with.

SOLDIER 4. And then that six-headed thing...

TANNER. Oh, that. Easy to kill once I figured out it only had one heart!

SOLDIER 5. The point is, sir, we'd like to impress the South sisters, but they only have eyes for you.

TANNER. Hmmm. I see. Let me think. *(Pause as ALL put hands on chins and frown.)* How about this? *(They huddle and he whispers a plan which they obviously approve of. The SOLDIERS go off in separate directions with great enthusiasm. TANNER stands smiling after them.)* That should give them their chance at the South sisters, and I can have my rendezvous with the only woman I've ever met who's read Plutarch!

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 3

(LIGHTS UP. It's the day of the 3rd full moon. ANYA is reading as FRAU MUELLER practices spells. SWEEPS, PANSY, and JUGHEAD look miserable. JUGHEAD is multi-colored with dots and stripes running crazily all over him. SWEEPS has a broom of brightly colored feathers on his head, and PANSY faces backwards so he can't see. He bumps into everything.)

JUGHEAD. Couldn't be more pleased, ma'am.

FRAU MUELLER. I'm trying to reverse it, really I am, but perhaps you'll all get used to your new look. I mean, you all do look... *(Weakly)* festive!

SWEEPS. I'm sure I will get used to it, ma'am *(Sobbing)* —in a year or two!

FRAU MUELLER. Pansy, could you learn to like it?

PANSY. Ask again later.

SWEEPS. (*Taking ANYA aside:*) Anya, you know I love your mother, and I would do anything for you, but *look* at me! I'm a wreck!

ANYA. Mother, perhaps you must accept that Father was the wizard in the family.

FRAU MUELLER. (*Paging through book:*) Well, if I can just return them to normal, I suppose I could take a little vacation from wizardry. (*Stops and reads:*) Anya!

ANYA. Yes, Mother?

FRAU MUELLER. You know that ring your father gave you?

ANYA. Uh...yes.

FRAU MUELLER. It's magic!

ANYA. Really?

FRAU MUELLER. It says here that if the wearer twists the ring, she is able to see truth, no matter what falsehoods she might be told.

ANYA. That would have been very useful to know.

FRAU MUELLER. Would have been?

ANYA. The ring is gone.

FRAU MUELLER. Oh, Anya—haven't I warned you not to be careless with your things? We shall look for it as we go about, won't we, boys? (*The SPIRITS nod and begin searching. FRAU MUELLER returns to the book.*) And here's something else! Ingrid's necklace is also magical, shields one from all sorts of monsters. Dear Hans, always protecting us!

ANYA. I...believe Ingrid has also misplaced the necklace, Mother.

FRAU MUELLER. Oh, my! (*Throwing up her hands:*) Well, there's no use worrying about it, I suppose. I had thought my girls were more mindful than this.

ANYA. I'm sorry to disappoint you, Mother.

FRAU MUELLER. Oh, don't be silly, Anya. I am so proud of you and what you are doing for your country (*Whispering*), although I don't know HOW you do it!

ANYA. Just work on reversing that spell, please, so that these sad spirits will cheer up. I'll worry about spinning straw into gold.

JUGHEAD. (*Starting for the side:*) Not that I mind, but...do you think I'll ever be myself again?

PANSY. Can't predict now.

(MARTA enters as FRAU MUELLER exits, muttering and consulting her book of spells. SWEEPS, PANSY, and JUGHEAD move to the background where SWEEPS and PANSY get into a silent disagreement over the laundry. JUGHEAD patiently folds a basket of clothes, but the other two make a mess of each piece as they compete against each other for it. NOTE: In this segment the eye color should be adjusted to fit the actors playing the parts of Rolfe and Captain Tanner.)

MARTA. Hello, my dear. Are you well? It is almost time for your third night of spinning, and Rolfe is anxious for your comfort.

ANYA. I wish he would let me go. I have done as he asked, twice.

MARTA. I understand that you turned down Lord North's offer of marriage to King Rolfe. Don't you want to be queen?

ANYA. No, ma'am. Pardon me, but I could never marry that cruel, arrogant man.

MARTA. You misunderstand him. Rolfe has always tried to be a good king, and since you came here, he tries even harder to listen to his people.

ANYA. That is as it should be. But he is still a tyrant, taking our freedom away!

MARTA. (*Agreeing but not admitting it:*) I'm sure he felt it was necessary.

ANYA. And if *I* were king and felt it necessary to imprison *him*, would he approve?

MARTA. I must agree with you; he would not. Rolfe says the good of many must come before the good of one-or even three. Still, he has tried to be fair. You restored your nation's wealth, or you will with one last night's work, and so he has offered to make you queen in return.

ANYA. Even if I wanted to be queen, I have come to love another.

MARTA. Really? May I ask who it is?

ANYA. If you promise not to tell. (*Pause, MARTA nods.*) Captain Tanner.

MARTA. Captain Tanner! But Ingrid...

ANYA. What?

MARTA. Nothing.

ANYA. You said *Ingrid*. What did you mean?

MARTA. It's just that your sister...she, I mean, Ingrid...

ANYA. Are you trying to say that Ingrid is in love with Captain Tanner?

MARTA. Actually I was trying *not* to say it, but it seems to be said.

ANYA. This is awful! I would never stand in the way of my sister's happiness. I told her of Captain Tanner's visits, and she said nothing of her feelings.

MARTA. I believe she would never stand in the way of *your* happiness, either.

ANYA. What can I do?

MARTA. I don't know, my dear. I suppose it is up to Fate.

ANYA. I wish I'd never heard of this place! Why did my mother have to make up that story!

MARTA. What story?

ANYA. (*Crying now:*) Oh, Your Grace, I can't spin straw into gold. I can't tell you how it is done, but it is not I who does it. The King insisted that I *could* do it, so I was trapped...

MARTA. I remember. You tried to explain but they were all so caught up in their own ideas that they wouldn't listen.

ANYA. And then I met Captain Tanner. He is so good, and so kind, and he makes it bearable to be a prisoner. We talk about everything, travel, government, books...and I looked into those brown eyes and fell in love.

MARTA. Brown eyes?

ANYA. Yes.

MARTA. *(Long pause.)* Does your captain love you, do you think?

ANYA. I believe he might, though he has not spoken of it. Why?

MARTA. Oh, nothing. I must find the King and speak to him, right away.

ANYA. Of course. I...thank you for listening, and for being so kind.

MARTA. I've become very fond of you, my dear. You rest for a while; I *must* find the King. Trust me, things will work out in the end.

ANYA. I hope so, but I don't see how!

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 4

(LIGHTS up. The CAPTAIN is walking with SENTA.)

TANNER. So when one breaks down a musket for cleaning, he must first be sure that there is no powder in the pan...

SENTA. *(Yawning:)* I see.

(At that moment, a large ogre jumps from behind the wall. It turns so the audience can see its back. It is SOLDIER 1 on SOLDIER 2's shoulders. It roars and threatens noisily. SENTA screams once, but TANNER cowers behind her, screaming and shaking.)

TANNER. Help! Oh, help! Somebody please help me!

SOLDIER 3. (*Appears behind them, steps in front of SENTA and draws his sword.*) Begone, you ugly monster or I shall cut off your disgusting head!

(“OGRE” runs off; SENTA flees into SOLDIER 3’s arms, and the CAPTAIN calms down. SENTA sees SOLDIER 3 in a new light and smiles adoringly into his eyes. They walk off together just as SIGRID appears.)

SIGRID. What’s all the racket?

TANNER. Oh, nothing, Lady Sigrid. I was hoping we could take a walk. I find you quite fascinating.

SIGRID. (*Surprised but pleased:*) Of course, Captain! (*They walk L, and the OGRE appears, this time SOLDIERS 4 & 5. SIGRID screams as it threatens.*)

TANNER. Help! Oh, help! Somebody please help me!

SOLDIER 1. I’ll save you, Captain! (*He brandishes his sword and the ogre runs away. SIGRID looks at him with new eyes as he takes her in his arms.*) Are you all right, Lady Sigrid?

SIGRID. I am now! (*They walk away together. CAPTAIN stands waiting, whistling a little tune. Soon, SARAH comes by.*)

TANNER. Milady Sarah! Will you allow me to walk with you? I find you quite fascinating.

SARAH. Of course, Captain! (*Same business, this time SOLDIERS 2 & 3 as the OGRE.*)

TANNER. Help! Oh, help! Somebody please help me!

SOLDIER 4. How dare you attack this fair maiden! (*He scares OGRE away.*) Lady Sarah, may I escort you into the palace?

SARAH. Please! (*They go off.*) I was so frightened! (*CAPTAIN gives the audience a knowing grin. SALLY enters with a basket of flowers.*)

TANNER. May I carry your basket for you, Lady Sally? I must confess I find you most fascinating.

SALLY. (*Baby talk:*) Me? Why, thank oo, Captain Tannew. Oo are fascinating too! (*Once again, OGRE appears, this time SOLDIERS 1 & 2.*)

TANNER. (*Tiring somewhat:*) Help! Oh, help! Somebody help me!

SOLDIER 5. Here I come to save the day! (*As OGRE flees:*) Lady Sally, how terrible for you to have to face such a terrible beast. (*THEY leave together.*)

SALLY. It was howwible, just howwible!

SONJA. (*Coming on opposite:*) Captain Tanner! You sent me a note?

TANNER. Yes, Milady Sonja. I wanted to speak with you alone. You are a fascinating woman...

SONJA. How kind you are! (*OGRE, this time SOLDIERS 3 & 4, appears.*)

TANNER. (*Having lost all enthusiasm:*) Help. Oh, help. Somebody please help me.

SOLDIER 2. I'm not afraid of anything if Lady Sonja is in danger! (*As OGRE leaves:*) Lady, may I carry you inside? (*He picks her up.*)

SONJA. How strong you are! (*THEY exit. TANNER leans against the wall, exhausted.*)

TANNER. Now to find Ingrid and speak with a *really* fascinating woman!

(Exit-BLACKOUT.)

Scene 5

(LIGHTS in treasure room. Again ANYA is surrounded by straw. INGRID is with her. [In this scene the description of the physical attributes of the two men should be adjusted to fit the actors playing the parts.] In the background, PANSY and SWEEPS have a silent struggle over where a certain vase of flowers will be placed, with JUGHEAD stuck between them. All three are back to their original condition.)

ANYA. I don't know what to do now, Ingrid. It's time for the third night of spinning, and I have nothing to offer the dwarf.

INGRID. I'm sorry, Anya. I can't think of anything, either. Perhaps if I went to the King's aunt? She has been very kind.

ANYA. But the dwarf said I couldn't tell anyone about him. I've already broken that promise by telling you. I don't dare tell anyone else!

INGRID. Maybe if you asked the King for a reward...

ANYA. Never! I won't ask him for anything!

INGRID. Then perhaps your Captain could help.

ANYA. I doubt he has anything of value, being just a soldier. I've been meaning to speak to you about him, though. Ingrid, I sense that you might have feelings for the Captain.

INGRID. Certainly not! You know how I feel about men! Stupid, arrogant creatures, all of them. The Captain is no different.

ANYA. He is intelligent...

INGRID. Yes...but what is that? I have intelligence of my own; I need no one else's!

ANYA. He is handsome...

INGRID. Yes, very...but I care nothing for good looks!

ANYA. He is charming...

INGRID. Oh, yes, he is...but charm can't deceive me. What sort of man is charming to one girl in the afternoon and goes walking with another in the evening?

MARTA. (*Entering:*) Perhaps no one man.

INGRID & ANYA. What?

MARTA. Forgive my eavesdropping, but I think it is time we discussed Captain Tanner.

INGRID. Captain Tanner means nothing to me. He is in love with my sister.

ANYA. Oh, no, Ingrid, it was only friendship he was showing me, to make me forget my loneliness locked up in this room. He is truly in love with you!

MARTA. You both may win the man you love...

INGRID & ANYA. What?

MARTA. ...Because you speak of two different men.

INGRID. There are two Captain Tanners?

MARTA. In a way, I suppose. When you, Anya, spoke to me of Captain Tanner, you mentioned his brown eyes.

ANYA. Why, yes.

INGRID. But Captain Tanner's eyes are blue, very blue!

MARTA. Ingrid, describe Captain Tanner's physique.

INGRID. Well, he's very tall, and he has broad shoulders, and long legs.

ANYA. But no! He's just over medium height, with a medium frame.

MARTA. Do you see? You speak of two different men. One is Captain Tanner. The other is—not.

INGRID. So the man I have been walking with is...

MARTA. Captain Tanner.

ANYA. ...and the man I have been talking with is...

MARTA. ...a mystery, I'm afraid, that I will not solve for you. I only hope that the man chooses to tell you himself why he has de-

ceived you. Perhaps he will do so once you have finished your obligation to the King. *(She exits.)*

INGRID. Can you believe it?

ANYA. No, it's very puzzling. But at least you have the Captain to yourself. I'm glad we're not in love with the same man.

INGRID. I have been avoiding him, but I think I'll wander down to the gatehouse right now and see what he is doing.

ANYA. Yes, do. *(INGRID leaves.)* She has the Captain, and what—or who?—do I have? A greedy dwarf and a man afraid to tell me who he is. *(Sighs:)* Tonight it will all be over. If I can't pay the dwarf, there will be no more spinning, and the terrible lie will be revealed. If only truth were as plentiful as straw in this place!

(BLACKOUT.)

Scene 6

(LIGHTS up in throne room. ROLFE, NORTH and SOUTH are hearing petitions. DERN reads the next one. As he does, INGRID and TANNER come in, clearly in love. Only when DERN speaks several times do they wake up and take their places.)

DERN. *(In traditional wig and court attire.)* Hm-HM. Hm-HM! Petition for the release of Miss Anya Mueller from prison on the basis of deprivation of rights, e.g. Miss Anya was never confronted with witnesses to prove she is the perpetrator of the theft of the King's gold.

NORTH. Another one? What is this, twelve petitions for Anya's release?

SOUTH. *(Tiredly:)* Thirteen.

NORTH. *(Aside to SOUTH:)* And each time the King becomes more stubborn.

SOUTH. Why does he insist on keeping her here? It's obvious that she did not steal the gold.

INGRID. Milords, it is my argument that Miss Anya Mueller has been deprived of her rights in a most inhumane manner. If it please the court...

ROLFE. Miss Ingrid, may we dispense with the legalese and get to the point?

INGRID. Of course, Sire. *(Moses-like:)* Let my sister go!

ROLFE. I will not.

INGRID. Then you are a tyrant!

ROLFE. I am a realist. She is the only one who can save us all from financial ruin!

TANNER. Perhaps, Your Majesty, the Lady could be allowed to go home. She could return when it is time to spin again.

ROLFE. It is my wish that the Lady remain in the castle where I can...keep her under surveillance.

INGRID. You are spying on her too?

ROLFE. Not spying, merely observing.

INGRID. *(With a jolt of realization:)* YOU are the other Captain Tanner!

ROLFE. *(Defensive:)* Maybe.

INGRID. But she believes herself in love with you!

ROLFE. *(Brightening:)* Really?

INGRID. No! I mean, I should not have said that! *(INGRID rushes out:)* I must see my sister!

ROLFE. I must speak to her also! *(He abruptly leaves as ALL stare after him.)*

NORTH. So *that's* why he wanted her nearby!

SOUTH. It seems she is the One! *(NORTH & SOUTH high-five and do a dance of joy as BLACKOUT.)*

Scene 7

(LIGHTS UP in ANYA's room as she knits. INGRID runs in.)

ANYA. Ingrid! Why such a hurry?

INGRID. Anya, I know the identity of the man who befriended you.

ANYA. Good. I would like to ask him why he hid his identity from me, why he pretended to be Captain Tanner. Did he fear I would snub a lowly soldier?

INGRID. Actually, quite the opposite. *(ROLFE, in his crown, appears at the door. EXIT INGRID.)*

ANYA. It's you!

ROLFE. Anya, I must speak with you.

ANYA. But you are...I don't understand.

ROLFE. I was afraid to tell you who I am. You were so angry with the King for keeping you here. And it was wrong, I admit. But once I'd met you, I couldn't let you go, even though I told myself you might be deceiving us all. I hoped you would come to be happy here...

ANYA. Locked in a cell?

ROLFE. But I gave you everything you could desire...

ANYA. Not everything.

ROLFE. What?

ANYA. You gave me no freedom, no honesty, and worst of all, no trust. You believed, despite everything, that I stole your precious gold.

ROLFE. But I don't believe it any more! Anya...I...offer you marriage! You will be my queen.

ANYA. I will *not* be your queen! *(Pulling herself together:)* If I can, for my country's good, I will see that the gold is replaced. Then I ask that you hold to your promise to set us free. I will leave here

forever, and may I never meet with another lie! I am sick to death of them!

ROLFE. Anya—

ANYA. Please go, Your Highness. I have work to do.

(ROLFE seems inclined to speak more, but in the end he leaves sadly as LIGHTS dim to BLACK.)

(Later: LIGHTS come up dimly on ANYA asleep in her chair. SWEEPS snores softly in a corner. RUMPELSTILTSKIN appears.)

SWEEPS. *(In a dream:)* Pansy, don't you dare throw that! Argh!

ANYA. *(Waking:)* You have come again. I thought you might.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Of course. I'm your friendly neighborhood granter of wishes. Do you wish for more straw to be turned into gold?

ANYA. I do, but...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Well, then let's get to it. *(He sits down and begins to spin; ANYA seems about to tell him something, but then she says nothing for a few moments.)*

ANYA. I heard an interesting story recently.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Not really caring:)* Yeah?

ANYA. An old legend of a dwarf who was banished from this kingdom many, many years ago.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Spinning wheel slows momentarily:)* Really.

ANYA. This dwarf was defeated by the King's ancestor.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Rolfe.

ANYA. Yes, Rolfe. Is that why I was not to tell anyone of your presence?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Maybe. But it isn't a big deal. I'm a peaceful guy these days. There's nothing to worry about, girlie, so just relax. You're getting verrrry sleeeeeeepy. *(SPELL sound: He makes a gesture that causes ANYA to fall asleep. LIGHTS fade and come back UP to show passage of time, now gold surrounds them. ANYA awakens as RUMPEL-*

STILTSKIN *finishes.*) There you go, girly. I think I've surpassed my own personal record. What good work I do, if I do say so myself! *(Pause.)* You don't look very happy about it!

ANYA. I have nothing with which to pay you this time.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Turning angry:)* Well, now, that does create a problem, doesn't it? I've already spun the gold, and NOW you tell me you can't pay. I can't trust anybody these days!

ANYA. I'm sorry. I would pay you if I could. Is there something else you might accept? I could read to you, or spin you a fine jacket for winter... I bake a pretty good pie...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I have in the past taken first-born sons. I don't suppose you have children anywhere?

ANYA. No, nor would I give them up if I had.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Oh, well. *(He looks around the room:)* What's that?

ANYA. Oh, he's a friend, a sort of guardian my father left me.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Your father the wizard, yes. *(Goes over to SWEEPS and pokes him. SWEEPS wakes up.)*

SWEEPS. Oh, hello, sir. I'm sorry to have dozed off. It's just that it got so late, and I did quite a bit of cleaning today, the attic, you know. Very dusty up there.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. He talks pretty well for a broom.

SWEEPS. I am a very advanced spell, sir. My master worked very hard to give me all the little extras. Now Pansy and Jughead were his first attempts and they...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I'll take him.

SWEEPS. Ex CUSE me?

ANYA. Oh, I couldn't part with Sweeps, really!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I don't see that you have a choice, girly! I did your work for you; now you have to pay!

ANYA. But it isn't fair! I never said I could spin straw into gold in the first place! Now I'm locked up here and forced to give away my most precious possessions... *(Begins to cry.)*

SWEEPS. *(Gently:)* Miss Anya.

ANYA. Yes, Sweeps?

SWEEPS. I'll go with the dwarf.

ANYA. No, Sweeps, you can't! I can't lose you!

SWEEPS. I was created to care for you, remember? Well, if this is the way that I can assure your freedom and your happiness, then it is what I must do.

ANYA. But it isn't fair! You've done nothing, and now you'll be a slave to this evil, greedy little man! I'll never see you again!

SWEEPS. It doesn't matter. It is what we must do. You will have your freedom, and you will forget me with time. *(Turns to RUMPELSTILTSKIN:)* I will go with you.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. 'Bout time, too. C'mon then. *(He leads SWEEPS to the hidden tunnel passage at the back of the room. SWEEPS looks back once at ANYA.)*

ANYA. Wait! Maybe we can make a deal.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I'm listening.

ANYA. Leave Sweeps with me for a month...until I can find a way to pay you.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. No.

ANYA. Two weeks?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. I don't think so.

ANYA. One week? *(Thinking:)* Or I tell the King that you were here.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. *(Considering:)* I'll tell you what. I'll give you till tomorrow.

ANYA. Tomorrow!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Here's my offer. In a day's time, you must guess my name.

ANYA. How many chances?

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Hmm. Say three. I'll bring the broom back here tomorrow night. At that time, you will try to guess my name. If you guess it, you may have your talking broom back.

SWEEPS. I must protest, sir, I am not a talking broom, as you say. I am a pookah, which is really quite something else. You see—

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Quiet, you freak of nature! I'll teach you manners when I get you home! *(Regaining his dignity:)* As I say, if you guess my name, I leave you and your...companion alone. If you do not, however, you, too, must come with me and become my wife.

ANYA & SWEEPS. *(With disgust:)* Wife!

ANYA. But...

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. If you refuse, I take the broom and disappear forever.

ANYA. That doesn't leave me much choice!

SWEEPS. Oh, Miss Anya, I can't let you do this. You are risking your freedom! I'm not worth it.

ANYA. You are to me, Sweeps! *(To DWARF:)* I accept!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. You're learning, girlie! Now, I'll even give you three practice guesses!

ANYA. Oh, let me think. What would a mother dwarf name her little boy? ...Danny!

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Nien.

ANYA. Yoda.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Nyet.

ANYA. Willow.

RUMPELSTILTSKIN. Way too obvious! See ya tomorrow, girlie! *(He disappears into the tunnel, dragging SWEEPS behind him.)*

(LIGHTS fade to BLACK as ANYA sinks to her knees in despair beside the tunnel entrance. ANYA exits in the dark. LIGHTS UP as NORTH and SOUTH peep into the room. It is filled with gold, but no ANYA.)

NORTH. Miss Anya?

SOUTH. She's not here! Where could she have gone?

NORTH. His Majesty must be informed! *(ROLFE appears at the door with a SERVANT.)* Sire, she is gone! The girl spun the straw into gold, but she has disappeared!

ROLFE. See if Miss Ingrid is in her room; ask her to come here. *(Exit SERVANT.)*

NORTH. She did it! She has saved the treasury!

ROLFE. She has done much more. She made me aware of my duty as king, not just to rule the land, but to understand and consider each individual. *(INGRID appears in the doorway, CAPTAIN behind her.)* Miss Ingrid, Anya is missing. Do you know where she could be?

INGRID. Are you sure she wants to be found, Sire? She was very upset at your...deception.

ROLFE. I must speak with her once more. If she refuses me, I will trouble her no further. I'm sorry I ever forced her to spin straw into gold.

INGRID. Sire, Anya never did. It was a dwarf who spun the gold. Each time, he appeared, performed the magic, and demanded payment. The first two times she gave him some jewelry that our father left us. I don't know what bargain she made for this third time.

ROLFE. A dwarf?

SOUTH. Could it be, Sire?

NORTH. The evil dwarf of legend?

ROLFE. I fear it. It is he who turned our gold into straw in revenge.

TANNER. Sire, I have read old documents about this dwarf. Once his name was forgotten in the land, he was freed from the spell that

kept him in the mine. To regain his powers he needed four things that once belonged to a wizard. They must be given freely, not stolen.

INGRID. But he has two items now: Anya's ring, my necklace...

JUGHEAD. (*Enters with PANSY:*) Can't find Sweeps anywhere. Need help with dusting.

TANNER. ...And Sweeps. Could he have taken Sweeps for the third payment?

PANSY. My reply is yes.

INGRID. If he took Sweeps, then he has three items that once belonged to a wizard.

TANNER. The fourth thing—could it be the wizard's daughter?

ROLFE. Anya!

NORTH. I'm afraid so, Sire.

TANNER. Remember, the things must be given to him freely. Why would Anya agree to go into the mines and live with an evil creature such as that?

ROLFE. I don't know.

TANNER. We must figure out a way to free her and banish the dwarf from our land.

ROLFE. There is only one way to gain power over him.

NORTH & SOUTH. Speak his name.

ROLFE. Who knows it?

NORTH. Not I.

SOUTH. Nor I.

ROLFE. I don't believe I ever heard it. Is anyone in the kingdom old enough to remember?

NORTH. I doubt it, Sire. It was, after all, your great-grandfather who defeated him.

ROLFE. I do remember my father showing me the entrance to the evil dwarf's mine. I will go there and see if I can find any sign of him.

SOUTH. Sire, don't go alone!

(ROLFE is off, with NORTH and SOUTH trailing after him with objections. INGRID and CAPTAIN stand confused as FRAU M. enters.)

FRAU MUELLER. Is it true? Anya is missing?

INGRID. It may be that an evil dwarf took her prisoner. The King goes to the forest to look for her.

TANNER. I can't just stand here talking. I must go with the King.

FRAU MUELLER. Captain! I can help you.

INGRID. Mother, please, no spells right now!

FRAU MUELLER. No, dear, I've given up spell-casting. *(Behind her back, PANSY and JUGHEAD do a high five.)* However, once I realized your father had left each of you magic charms, I remembered the belt he gave me. *(Takes off a metal belt:)* The book says that if touched twice with the palm of the right hand, it renders the wearer invisible. Take it, Captain.

TANNER. Thank you, Madame. It may be helpful.

(Exit. BLACKOUT.)

Scene 8

(LIGHTS DIM on forest/mine entrance. [This could be a side set.] ROLFE and CAPTAIN TANNER locate the half-hidden entrance.)

ROLFE. Here it is, just as I remembered: the entrance to the mine where the evil dwarf dwells, at least he did until his name was forgotten.

TANNER. How can we be sure he's in there?

ROLFE. We can't. Let's split up. You search the forest. I will search the mine.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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