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SCENE 1.

The Village of Merrydale.

Full set. Pretty village setting. JACK and PRINCESS DEMELZA are discovered with the CHORUS, dancing and singing an up tempo NUMBER. At the end of the number JACK and the PRINCESS are C.

JACK. Hello everybody! I'm Jack Trot - just a working lad in the dairy business. A simple, insignificant nobody!

CHORUS. (**commiserating**) Aaah -

JACK. But that's enough about me, because today, (**indicating PRINCESS**) on this lovely morning, we are honoured by the presence of royalty!

CHORUS. Hooray!

PRINCESS. Jack!

JACK. Elevated, exalted, taken to a whole new level of glory by -

PRINCESS. Stop it, Jack -

JACK. Her esteemed royal loveliness, Princess Demelza!

(**JACK bows deeply. CHORUS laugh, bowing and curtsyng.**)

PRINCESS. Shut up, Jack!

JACK. Dancing with the common folk!

PRINCESS. I'm leaving -

JACK. But we love you dancing with us.

PRINCESS. No - you're just saying that.

CHORUS . We do!

JACK. We really do!

PRINCESS. Well, stop all this royal business -

JACK. We've stopped. It's finished.

PRINCESS. Promise?

JACK. Promise. Not another word.

PRINCESS. Good.

TRUMPET. (**off**) Make way for his Royal Highness -

JACK. I didn't say that!

CHORUS. It's Trumpet, the Royal Herald.

TRUMPET. (**entering, carrying royal staff**) His Royal Wonderfulness, King the Brave! (**Bows low.**) Bertram

(**KING enters.**)

JACK. (**to PRINCESS**) What does the King want with us?

PRINCESS. I don't know.

TRUMPET. Pray silence for His Majesty!

KING. Good people of Merrydale - (**To PRINCESS**) what are you doing here?

PRINCESS. Dancing.

KING. Dancing!

TRUMPET. Silence for His Majesty, King Bertram! (**Brings staff down on foot.**) **KING'S**

KING. Ow! Trumpet! You hit my foot!

TRUMPET. Did I?

KING. Yes, you did.

TRUMPET. Sorry.

KING. I've got a sore bit now. Budge over; I'll go the other side. (**Goes to other side of TRUMPET.**)

TRUMPET. And I'll put it in the other hand.

KING. Good idea.

PRINCESS. Daddy –

JACK. Daddy?!

(**JACK and CHORUS laugh.**)

KING. Don't call me Daddy –

TRUMPET. Silence for His Majesty! (**Brings staff down on to KING'S other foot.**)

KING. Ow! You did it again!

TRUMPET. Did I?

KING. Yes, you did.

TRUMPET. Sorry.

KING. **(taking staff)** Give that thing to me. You're not to be trusted. And Demelza, don't call me Daddy, like that. Not in front of the common people.

ALL. The common people!

KING. Silence!

TRUMPET. Silence!

KING. Yes, thank you, Tumpet. Now, where was I? Oh, yes. Good people of Merrydale, I am here today –

JACK. We can see that –

KING. Will you shut up! **(Brings staff down on his own foot.)** Ow! **(To TRUMPET.)** Now see what you made me do!

TRUMPET. Me!?

KING. Yes you! Bringing this silly thing out with you! See how you like it! **(Brings staff smartly down on TRUMPET'S foot.)** There!

TRUMPET. Ow!

PRINCESS. But that's not fair Daddy -

KING. Don't call me Daddy, I'm the King! **(Angrily brings staff down again on TRUMPET'S foot.)**

TRUMPET. Owoooo!

KING. Oh, sorry, Trumpet. **(Returning staff to TRUMPET.)** But don't bring that thing out with you again.

TRUMPET. **(whimpering)** No, Your Majesty.

KING. Now look everybody, I'm here today to give you some good news.

(ALL cheer.)

And some bad news.

(ALL moan.)

The good news is that we have finally paid all the Giant tax!

(ALL cheer.)

The bad news is that in an unprecedented gesture of badwill, the Giant has decided to double the tax –

ALL. Double it!?

(General consternation.)

KING. And will be sending his wicked henchman, Slimeball, to oversee payment!

(More consternation. PYRO. SLIMEBALL leaps on. All KING hides behind TRUMPET.) **scream.**

SLIME. You said it Daddy!

PRINCESS. Don't call him Daddy!

KING. No, no that's quite alright – Mister, er - Slimeball?

SLIME. That's me, but don't you worry, Granddad, the Giant's a reasonable man. He'll give you time.

KING. Really?

SLIME. You've got half an hour.

ALL. HALF AN HOUR!!!

SLIME. Thirty minutes. And if the money isn't handed over on time –

KING. Yes?

SLIME. The Giant's going to marry the Princess.

SCENE 2.

A Country Lane. Front cloth or tabs. SLIMEBALL discovered.

- SLIME. Go on then. Let's get it over with. Boo, boo, boo, boo, boo. (**AUDIENCE response.**) There. Happy? I'm not happy. Not happy at all, I can tell you. And when I'm not happy... Bad things happen... Very bad things... For starters I'm going to ruin that Jack. Just to spite Edena. And I'm going to find a way to steal away the Princess. That'll keep the Giant happy, because he's a romantic at heart - AND it'll spite Edena even more - which is right up my street...! You don't agree with me? Well, let's just see who has the last laugh! I thank you! (**Exits.**)
- KING. (**entering**) Come on, Trumpet, hurry up. Hurry up!
- TRUMPET. (**shuffling on, disguised as a tree, with his arms as boughs**) I'm coming as quickly as I can, Your Majesty.
- KING. I'm glad to hear it. You appeared to be rooted to the spot. Hah! 'Rooted to the spot'. That's a good one isn't it, Trumpet?
- TRUMPET. Very good, Your Majesty. Can I ask a question, Your Majesty?
- KING. Fire away.
- TRUMPET. Why am I dressed as a tree?
- KING. Good question, Trumpet. Good question. Take a leaf out of my book, and never be afraid to ask the right question.
- TRUMPET. No, Your Majesty.
- KING. 'Leaf out of my book'! That's another good one, isn't it, Trumpet?
- TRUMPET. Very good, Your Majesty.
- KING. You are dressed as a tree, Trumpet, so as to remain entirely inconspicuous.
- TRUMPET. Really?
- KING. I want you to blend in with your surroundings and keep a close watch on the Princess. She always takes a walk in the afternoon and I want to know exactly what's happening and exactly who she meets. Especially that uppity Jack Trot. I want to put a stop to all this chatting and dancing with commoners. I want to cut it out root and branch!
- TRUMPET. 'Root and branch!' That's a good one, Your Majesty!
- KING. (**a beat**) Don't try and come the comedian with me, Trumpet.
- TRUMPET. No, Your Majesty. Beg pardon, Your Majesty.
- KING. Your job is to find out what's happening and report back to me.
- TRUMPET. Yes, Your –

KING. (sees PRINCESS off) Quiet! She's coming. Now remember. You're almost invisible in that disguise. So, stick to her like glue. (**Starts to exit.**)

TRUMPET. (**pursuing the KING**) But Your Majesty –

KING. Like, glue, TRUMPET. Like glue. (**Exits.**)

(**TRUMPET sticks his arms out rigidly and freezes as a tree.**)

PRINCESS. (**entering**) Daddy? That's funny. I thought Daddy was here. I'm sure I heard his voice.

JACK. (**poking his head on**) Demelza!

PRINCESS. Jack! What are you doing here?

JACK. I followed you.

(**Surreptitiously, TRUMPET starts to cross the stage.**)

PRINCESS. Why?

JACK. Oh. You know. I just wanted to talk to you.

PRINCESS. I hope my father didn't see you.

JACK. Oh, no. I was very careful.

(**JACK leans against one of the boughs of the "tree".**)

PRINCESS. He's got even more protective of me than he used to be.

JACK. I know. It's very annoying.

PRINCESS. Really? Does it worry you?

JACK. Well, of course it does!

PRINCESS. Why's that then?

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SIMON. She's –

DAME.

JACK &

PRINCESS. Yes?

SIMON. An udder disaster!

(All goes silent. DAISY snorts. Kicks over the pail and stomps off upstage.

The others follow her upstage, leaving Graham marooned downstage.)

DAME. Oh, crumbs. She's not happy now.

SIMON. What did I say? I was only joking!

PRINCESS. Shall we go after her?

DAME. No, dear, don't worry. Best leave her alone for a minute to calm down. (**Looking downstage towards Graham.**) Oh, Graham, look at you all alone on your stool! I do apologise for Daisy's little tantrum. You're only a beginner and it's not your fault you made a complete hash of it. But I do think it's best if you're not here when she gets back... So, let's have a great big round of applause for Graham everybody...! There, you go back to your seat, that's it, off you go...

(Ad lib getting Graham back to his seat.)

Oh, dear. I do hope Daisy comes back in a better mood. If we've got no milk to sell we'll be completely skint.

(There is a loud knock.)

PRINCESS. What's that?

KING. **(off)** Open in the name of me!

PRINCESS. It's my father!

DAME. Quick dear, off you go. Simon and I will hold the fort.

(PRINCESS and JACK run off. DAME goes to open door and the KING enters.)

King Bertram, how lovely to see you!

KING. No, it isn't. I'm here for the rent. And where's Demelza, I heard her voice.

DAME. No, you didn't.

KING. Oh, yes I did!

DAME. **(encouraging the AUDIENCE)** Oh, no you didn't!

KING. Oh, yes I did!

DAME. **(with AUDIENCE)** Oh, no you didn't!

KING. I did, I did, I did!

DAME. **(with AUDIENCE)** You didn't, you didn't, you didn't!

KING. I give up. I've come about the rent. Where is it?

DAME. **(fishing money out of King's breast pocket)** Here it is!

KING. But that's my fifty pounds.

DAME. Is it?

KING. Yes, it is! Now you owe me one hundred pounds!

DAME. Are you saying that I owe you fifty pounds rent and the fifty pounds I mistakenly took from your top pocket?

KING. Yes, I am. That's one hundred pounds.

DAME. Well, I'd better pay you back then, hadn't I?

KING. Yes, you better had.

DAME. I'll count it out to make sure you're happy.

KING. Very well.

DAME. Now then, **(Counting out from wad.)** one, two, three, how many years have you been King?

KING. Seven.

DAME. **(counting out notes)** Eight, nine, ten, keeps you busy does it?

KING. I've had twenty one Royal engagements this week.

DAME. How many?

KING. Twenty one.

DAME. **(counting out notes)** Twenty two, twenty three, twenty four and you're not getting any younger are you.

KING. **(indignantly)** I could pass for forty.

DAME. Forty?

KING. Forty.

DAME. **(counting out notes)** Forty one, forty two, forty three.

KING. But I'm actually fifty five.

DAME. (**counting out notes**) Fifty six, fifty seven, fifty eight. My old dad kept going till he was eighty six.

KING. Mine was ninety six!

DAME. (**counting out notes**) Ninety seven, ninety eight, ninety nine, one hundred!

KING. Thank you very much.

DAME. (**discreetly passing remainder to SIMON**) The pleasure was all mine.

SIMON. That's brilliant! Can I have a go?

KING. What?

DAME. No!

SIMON. Don't worry Mrs T, I can handle these things now!

DAME. No, you can't!

SIMON. Yes, I can, I'm going to make sure you never have to worry about money ever again! Watch! (**To AUDIENCE.**) Help me! Help me!

(**AUDIENCE shout.**)

(**Super boldly**) Thank you – let's play the numbers game!

DAME. No, Simon -