

A DARK AND STORMY KNIGHT

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Christopher Burruto

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SYNOPSIS: Young Princess Elenora is bored to tears by castle life. When it comes to acting like a princess, she'd much prefer to fight with the noble knights of the kingdom. One problem, knights are always men. The other problem is that she is the only heir to the throne. When the royal rebel throws yet another tantrum and is sent to her room, knights-in-training Ogilvy and Dennis are put in charge of guarding her chamber door. When Lord Spencer, the king's evil brother, tries to kidnap the princess so that he can become king, the stage is set for a thrilling adventure.

Add to this, the mysterious Dark Knight, a wizard named Sam, and his assistant Iggy, who couldn't be more enjoyable, and you have a fun-filled, wacky and anachronistic play!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(FLEXIBLE CAST OF APPROXIMATELY TWELVE MEN AND EIGHT WOMEN, PLUS EXTRAS AS LORDS, RUFFIANS, LADIES-IN-WAITING, AND COURTIERS - ADD AS MANY TO THE CAST AS DESIRED)

- LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE -

LORDS (m and f)..... The lords get robbed early in the play. They can also be included among the courtiers. They should wear period costumes. *(7 lines)*

RUFFIANS (m and f) Thieves and cutthroats. There may be as few or as many as you have costumes or stage space for. The ruffians can be dressed in dark, pirate-like outfits. Masks, swords, etc. *(6 lines)*

DAGMAR (m or f) Leader of the ruffians. Dressed like the ruffians, but may have a cape or hat to distinguish him from the other ruffians. *(10 lines)*

DARK KNIGHT (f) The Dark Knight is really Elenora in disguise. Costume should be dark pants, dark shirt, black tunic, and black shield with bold designs. *(3 lines)*

KLAUS (m or f) Spencer's sidekick. Dressed royally; a sword or dagger at his side. There might even be an anachronistic joke with Klaus - Mickey Mouse ears, or a Simpson's t-shirt or something of that nature. *(77 lines)*

SPENCER (m or f) The deceased King's brother. Spencer is a schemer and wishes to achieve the throne and is willing to do just about anything to achieve that goal. Spencer should wear dark clothing and a sword. *(104 lines)*

HUBERT (m or f) Sir Hubert teaches Elenora swordplay. He is somewhat reluctant to do so as he promised the late King and Queen that he wouldn't encourage her to take up the sword. He is somewhat older and wizened. Hubert should wear a knight's outfit that distinguishes his experience and leadership. *(8 lines)*

ELENORA (f) Feisty and combative, Elenora wants to be a knight more than anything. She bristles at the expectations placed upon her just because she is a girl. Elenora should dress in appropriate period costume, but perhaps with an added sword. Doubles as Dark Knight. *(102 lines)*

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LADIES-IN-WAITING (f) ..The Ladies-in-Waiting are afraid of Princess Elenora as she thinks the Ladies-in-Waiting are superficial and obsolete. They attempt to do their job, and stay out of her way. They should be dressed similarly in period costumes. *(5 lines)*

REGENT (m or f)The Regent is responsible for Elenora's well being and the future of the kingdom. The Regent is her in loco parentis and not afraid of her. The Regent should wear a distinctive period costume with a prominent badge of office. *(38 lines)*

OGILVY (m)Knight second class. A bumbling page, he wishes to be a knight. He might have a crush on the princess, but supports her very modern view that girls should grow up to fulfill their own destiny, and not someone else's version. Costume includes tunic, shield and sword. Ogilvy and Dennis should dress alike. *(125 lines)*

DENNIS (m)Knight second class, similar to Ogilvy. Has a more carefree outlook than Ogilvy. Should dress like Ogilvy. *(137 lines)*

LEMMY (m or f)Bumbling guard played for comic fun. Should wear a sword and tunic. *(7 lines)*

NORBERT (m or f).....Bumbling guard played for comic fun. *(5 lines)*

- SAM (m or f) Wizard. He was banished from the kingdom because of a notorious hair tonic scandal that left the Queen bald. Wizard hat, cape and/or Wizard's cloak. Silver beard and glasses. (51 lines)
- IGGY (m or f) Sam's sarcastic sidekick. Iggy can be a troll-like person, or just about anything else you decide. He wears anything that distinguishes him from other characters. The more playful the better. For example, he could wear a smoking jacket and carry a pipe; or he could dress like a troll. (37 lines)
- KNIGHTS (m and f) Dressed with tunics, swords and some shields. (Non-speaking)
- VERN (m or f) Another guard in similar vein as Lemmy and Norbert. Vern and Stig should be dressed alike, yet slightly different from Ogilvy and Dennis and the other knights. (30 lines)
- STIG (m or f) Another guard. (32 lines)
- COURTIERS (m and f) Dressed in appropriate period costumes. (Non-speaking)
- PLANT (m or f) A plant in the audience for Act One, Scene 6. (Non-speaking)

AUTHOR NOTES

A Dark and Stormy Knight has been performed at both the middle school level and the high school level with great success. The high school productions have been some of my favorites as the older students, who love Monty Python and understand parody a little better, can really sink their teeth into the production. Students love to dress up in period costumes, and make fun of themselves and the time period.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Throne Room can be as simple or elaborate as desired. A wooden chair swathed in red or blue material is enough to give the impression of a throne.

Knights with swords and shields gives further detail and believability.

Sam's hut is a mess. Scattered here and there are odd bits and pieces of telephones and televisions. Whether these are drawings and plans or the real thing doesn't matter. The messier and "modern" the set piece, the better.

The woods can be suggested through a single tree. The idea is that the characters and audience both know that they are in a play, so moving sets around is just a part of breaking the fourth wall.

PROPERTY LIST

- Swords, shields
- Bag of money for Dark Knight to steal
- Sewing or quilt work
- Book
- Apple
- Script for Sam and Iggy to find out what part of the play they're in
- Program for the same purpose
- Quill and paper
- Letter from Elenora stating that she is running away

- Scroll for long list of grievances
- Piece of string to lure Princess Elenora
- Dresses for Ogilvy and Dennis to wear
- Rug to roll Elenora in to assist in her escaping
- Small mirror ball
- Various sized cauldrons for Sam's Hut
- Scroll of Royal Constitution

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1	Woods at night
ACT ONE, SCENE 2	Woods
ACT ONE, SCENE 3	Woods
ACT ONE, SCENE 4	Throne Room
ACT ONE, SCENE 5	Elenora's Chamber
ACT ONE, SCENE 6	Sam the Wizard's Hut
ACT ONE, SCENE 7	Elenora's Chamber Door
ACT ONE, SCENE 8	Elenora's Chamber Door
ACT ONE, SCENE 9	Throne Room
ACT ONE, SCENE 10	Throne Room
ACT TWO, SCENE 11	Dungeon
ACT TWO, SCENE 12	Throne Room
ACT TWO, SCENE 13	Sam the Wizard's Hut
ACT TWO, SCENE 14	Throne Room
ACT TWO, SCENE 15	Throne Room
ACT TWO, SCENE 16	Partial stage

ACT ONE, SCENE 1
WOODS AT NIGHT

Woods at night. A group of royals walk stage left to right. It is dark. Forest sounds.

LORD 1: It's too bad our carriage broke down, now we have to hoof it to town. *(Noise. Startled.)* Did you hear that?

LORD 2: Hear? Hear what?

LORD 3: I heard something too!

LORD 2: You're always hearing things. I think it's all in your head. *(Ruffians appear stage right.)*

LORD 1: See, I did hear something!

DAGMAR: *(Head ruffian.)* This, my friends, is a robbery! Gold, jewelry, you know the drill!

RUFFIAN 1: Or your throats *(Beat.)* will be cut . . .

Lords hand over a sack of gold.

LORD 1: You ruffians! This gold is stimulus money, set to be distributed among the defaulted cart manufacturers in the Midwest.

DAGMAR: Now it's being used to stimulate our own wallets!

RUFFIAN 2: Go on now, back the way you came . . . *(The royals run off stage frightened. Ruffians gather together in stage center, huddled around sack of gold.)*

RUFFIAN 1: Lord Spencer will be pleased!

DAGMAR: Shh . . . don't say his name out loud . . .

RUFFIAN 2: Don't we get to keep some for ourselves?

DAGMAR: This gold goes to Lord - I mean - our secret Lord and Master. To defray the cost of his private army. That's us, boys. When he becomes King, we'll be right there, his right-hand men, receiving the perks, if you know what I mean! *(The thieves laugh in understanding.)*

The Dark Knight steps from stage right. She is dressed all in black with a black sword and black shield.

DAGMAR: *(Sees Dark Knight.)* Who!?

DARK KNIGHT: It is I, the Dark Knight!

RUFFIAN 1: You got that right - it is dark -

RUFFIAN 2: - and it is night! *(They laugh at the jest.)*

DARK KNIGHT: The people shall be pleased to get back what is rightfully theirs. Give it to me!

DAGMAR: *(Looks around.)* Go on with you! There's 'nought but one of you and FIVE of us. *(Dagmar hefts sack of gold.)*

DARK KNIGHT: As you wish! *(Dark Knight raises sword. Lights go out, a second later, the lights are back up and the thieves lie sprawled upon the stage floor, unconscious. Picks up gold and drops a black glove.)* So that you will remember me . . . good night. You'll awaken by morning.

Lights down.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 2
WOODS, THE SAME**

Spencer and Klaus stand over the prostrate men. Swords out.

KLAUS: Awaken! Get up you good for nothing thieves! *(Men are groggy.)*

RUFFIAN 1: *(Sucking thumb.)* No Mommy, I don't want to take a bath today!

RUFFIAN 2: Who are you?

SPENCER: It is I, Lord Spencer!

KLAUS: And Klaus, Assistant Regional Lord and Master.

SPENCER: Klaus, that's Assistant **TO** the Regional Lord Master.

DAGMAR: *(On one knee.)* Lord Spencer. I humbly beg your forgiveness. We have no gold to give you.

SPENCER: *(Looks around. Sighs in frustration.)* It's really quite simple, Dagmar. *(Using exaggerated motions.)* Your task is to **take** money from **other** people, then give it to **me**. There were five *(Or the actual number.)* of you! Lord Pellinore is old and weak - an easy target. And he was carrying all the stimulus money!

DAGMAR: We were ourselves robbed. A knight dressed all in sable.

RUFFIAN 2: Sir, I'd call it more of a **navy** blue.

RUFFIAN 1: I'd have to agree . . . it was more of a navy blue. It's a very subtle difference . . . it was a charming outfit all the same. He really made it work!

DAGMAR: (*Irritated.*) The knight was dressed in black - or navy blue - and carried a black sword. His shield was black with a white unicorn.

KLAUS: I love unicorns!

DAGMAR: He called himself the Dark Knight!

SPENCER: (*Frustrated.*) There was **one** of him, Dagmar. And **FIVE** of you! Klaus? Is it me, or - ?

KLAUS: It's quite simple. It's not brain surgery. See, brain surgery involves blood and sharp knives . . . and actually digging into the soft matter that makes up our brains. Ganglia; neurons. Robbery is much simpler. It's basic stuff here!

DAGMAR: It will not happen again, Lord Spencer.

SPENCER: You're right. It will not happen again, for if you fail me, it's curtains . . . dismissed. (*Dagmar exits with ruffians. Spencer mutters to himself.*) I don't understand! It's simple . . . **you** take **their** money. Then, **give it to me**. Easy peasey lemon squeezy!

KLAUS: This is the fifth aborted robbery in a fortnight. Do you think it the same Dark Knight?

SPENCER: I do not know Klaus, it may very well be. One thing I do know, I do not like this Dark Knight. Whoever he is, it is high time he was eliminated.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3 ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS

Sound of swordplay before curtain goes up. After a couple of slashes, one surrenders a sword at his chest.

HUBERT: I yield! I yield! (*A pause here before we realize that this is not a robbery or a true battle. Hubert laughs.*) Good work! You are on top of your game!

ELENORA: (*Takes off helmet, Princess Elenora.*) Thanks to you Sir Hubert! You are a wonderful teacher!

HUBERT: And you, Elenora, are a great pupil - the best I have ever had - and that includes your father. *(Beat.)* You wield his sword well. He would be very proud of you!

ELENORA: Thank you, Sir Hubert

HUBERT: Your mother, on the other hand, God rest her soul - wouldn't be pleased to know I was teaching you swordplay!

ELENORA: What harm is there in learning to protect myself?

HUBERT: Elenora, before your father's death, he made me promise to make you the finest swordsman in the kingdom. And you are! Would that he were alive to see you now! *(Looks around.)* We run great risk practicing in these woods. Even at so early an hour . . . If the Lord Protector knew, he'd be none too happy. I promised I would not allow you to come to harm.

ELENORA: What my Protector doesn't know -

HUBERT: - in three days, you come of age, and you become queen. I have to make sure you remain un-dented, and unscarred! *(A bell sounds.)*

ELENORA: Uh, oh. The bell! I must go. Today, I have to learn how to be a lady! *(She curtsies in sarcasm, and awkwardly.)* Ugh. Why does a princess need to know -

HUBERT: - Because that's how queens are. Dainty and well cultured and . . .

ELENORA: It's so . . . so . . . medieval . . .

HUBERT: These are the times we live in.

ELENORA: Times need to change . . . we must change with them. Same time tomorrow, Sir Hubert?

HUBERT: Until tomorrow, Princess Elenora. *(He bows, she exits.)* Good luck in becoming a lady! *(To himself.)* And good luck to anyone who tries to make you one!

ACT ONE, SCENE 4
THRONE ROOM

Lights up to reveal Ladies-in-Waiting in a row next to the throne. Guards present. After a second or two, Elenora, late, rushes in. She seats herself on the throne.

LADY 1: Princess? Time for Lady Lessons! First is posture. We improve our posture by putting an apple on our -

ELENORA: - may I? (*Ladies-in-Waiting give Elenora an apple. She takes a bite out of it.*) Ah, Yorick, I knew him well! (*Tosses it to the ground.*)

LADY 1: (*Tentatively, fearfully.*) Princess, a lady should always carry a book. Even if she can't read, it gives the appearance of intelligence.

ELENORA: (*Takes book.*) "These are the times that try men's souls." What a PAINÉ you all are . . . (*Throws book.*)

LADY 1: . . . how about your sewing, would you like your sewing?

ELENORA: Okay, that's enough! Line up! (*She prods them into a line.*) Heads Up! Backs straight! Arms out! You're fired, fired, fired, obsolete, and fired. (*Regent enters.*) Hello wart face!

REGENT: Princess Elenora. You were late! As usual! We've been looking all over the grounds for you. Where have you been?

ELENORA: (*Beat, as she thinks something up.*) Um. The graves of my parents . . .

REGENT: (*Beat.*) Hmm. I see grass stains.

ELENORA: I was saying prayers, on my knees.

REGENT: Your hair is disheveled.

ELENORA: There was a breeze!

REGENT: Elenora! We've got three days! Three days until your coronation, and we are going to make a lady out of you, a lady worthy of the crown! Why are your Ladies-in-Waiting all in a row? What is the meaning of this?

ELENORA: Meaning? That's difficult to say. Some philosophers warn of a general ambivalence toward life, a seeping, sucking moral malaise that threatens to betray our conception of permanence in this nihilistic world.

REGENT: They are trying to help you become a lady! Why must you torture them so?

ELENORA: Torture? I'm simply keeping them close to me (*Rising anger.*) so their irritating, twittering voices won't have to travel so far before grating on my nerves!

LADY-IN-WAITING: (*Weepy.*) She said I was fired.

LADY-IN-WAITING: (*Weepy. All ad-lib.*) Me, too.

LADY-IN-WAITING: (*Weepy.*) Me, too!

LADY-IN-WAITING: (*Weepy.*) She said I was . . . obsolete . . .
(*Wails and cries.*) Whatever that means.

ELENORA: That means that you have the combined intelligence of a piece of lint. But without the personality. (*The Ladies-in-Waiting cry anew.*)

REGENT: This is about your wishing to be a knight, again, isn't it? We've had this discussion a thousand -

ELENORA: - I wish to serve this kingdom in the best possible manner -as a Knight -

REGENT: You are made of different stuff than the knights.

ELENORA: (*Angrily.*) What do you mean "different stuff"?

REGENT: (*Backs away behind throne.*) "Sugar and spice and everything nice . . ."

LADY-IN-WAITING: (*Sarcastic.*) Right!

ELENORA: I can tear the stuffing out of most of the knights in this kingdom!

Enter Klaus, Spencer and Sir Hubert.

REGENT: As you've proven many times!

SPENCER: I see I'm late for another entertaining edition of Dysfunctional Family Feud!

ELENORA: (*With disdain.*) This doesn't concern you uncle, Lord Spencer.

REGENT: (*Frustrated.*) Elenora, your destiny is to command knights, not be one!

ELENORA: Stop commanding me and insisting that I be someone I am not! (*Begins to exit.*)

REGENT: Until you come of age, I **DO** command you!

The throne room is silent. Elenora is furious. She spins on her heel and begins to exit.

REGENT: Elenora . . . don't you walk away from me! I'm talking to you. That's it! You're grounded . . .

ELENORA: Grounded? You can't ground me!

REGENT: Oh, I certainly can! Guards! Knights! *(They approach her, clumsily. She growls at them, they all cower in fear, and run off stage.)*

SPENCER: *(Moves to her. Grabs her arm.)* Now, princess! Be reasonable and listen to the Lord Regent! *(She takes his sword from him and holds him at sword point.)*

ELENORA: Get your hands off me you evil, scheming, cowardly, conniving, sniveling con artist!

KLAUS: *(aside)* She's got you pegged!

REGENT: Elenora! Let him go! *(Five count. She throws sword down and storms off. To Ogilvy and Dennis, who are the last two remaining guards.)* Get her and bring her back to me!

OGILVY: *(Frightened)* You mean us?

REGENT: *(Points to himself.)* Yes, you two! Get the princess and escort her to the Tower of Extreme Punishment. *(Points to opposite way of where Elenora stormed off.)*

OGILVY: *(Stuttering)* J..J..Just the two of us?

DENNIS: We haven't had Advanced Combat yet, we're only pages Second Class!

REGENT: Well, now you're guards! Get her!

DENNIS: *(Stutters from fear.)* But, she's an animal! Did you see her arms? Huge! *(Like a German body builder)* "She could crack walnuts wit dos biceps!"

REGENT: NOW!

Dennis and Ogilvy exit. In a couple of seconds, they return. Elenora has them by the scruff of their necks, they are choking and weak. She tosses them down.

REGENT: Elenora! You are hereby confined to the tower until such time as you have learned to act like a - and I use the term loosely - a lady . . .

ELENORA: *(As they try to lay a hand on her, she growls, the two flinch back. To Dennis.)* I know the way to the tower. And if you lay one hand on me, so help me, I'll knock you right back to the Pleistocene. Go . . . *(She pokes the two with swords as they exit.)*

Lights down.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 5
ELENORA'S CHAMBER**

The curtain is closed just enough so that a single prison door is seen. This can simply be a large piece of cardboard of foam core with an oval hole. You can add bars to simulate a dungeon-type door. Two guards, Lemmy and Norbert, stand on either side. They can, for humor, stand at attention for a little while, scratching their stomachs, noses, or doing anything humorous.

Norbert yawns and stretches.

LEMMY: *(Alarmed.)* Who goes there!

NORBERT: Lemmy! It's me, Norbert! I was just stretching!

LEMMY: Sorry Norbert. You scared me for a second. I'm a little tired - I had overnight duty last night.

NORBERT: I heard! What's the buzz in the barracks?

LEMMY: We were looking for a Dark Knight, the one who's been terrorizing the kingdom!

NORBERT: I heard tell that he's so ferocious in battle that none dare withstand him . . .

LEMMY: I heard he's seven feet tall . . . and has massive arms . . . enormous feet, looks like a big ugly troll - no, wait, sorry - that's my mother in law - *(Spencer, Klaus, Regent, Ogilvy and Dennis enter with Elenora.)*

REGENT: You two guards. Your names?

LEMMY: Lemmy and Norbert.

REGENT: What are you doing here?

NORBERT: Gardening!

SPENCER/KLAUS: What do you mean "Gardening"?

SPENCER: Gardening? You mean "guarding."

LEMMY: That's it. Guarding!

SPENCER: We need you to relocate the prisoner in there now and move him to cell block four. *(Norbert slides door open and enters.)* Who is it? What is the name of this prisoner?

LEMMY: Don't know. But he's a bad one! Just tried to escape by eating his way through his chains and walls! *(Leans in dramatically.)* He's in here for crimes against humanity! *(Norbert then brings out a favorite teacher in chains and prison garb, great opportunity for teacher to ham it up.)* He's been convicted of torturing young minds with too much -

LEMMY/NORBERT: Homework!

SPENCER: *(Disgusted.)* Ugh! The stench! Take it away! *(Norbert, Lemmy, and prisoner exit in the opposite direction of how Spencer, Klaus, Regent, Ogilvy and Dennis entered.)* Princess? The cell is yours!

ELENORA grunts as she walks into the cell, they close the door.

REGENT: *(To Ogilvy and Dennis.)* You two are to guard the princess carefully. Make sure she **stays** in her chamber. She cannot escape. **Again.**

OGILVY: Got it!

DENNIS: Right-O!

KLAUS: Be careful, she's a slippery one -

DENNIS: Slip and Slide!

KLAUS: - keep your eyes peeled.

DENNIS: Peeled! Like po - ta - toes.

OGILVY: Banana peel.

DENNIS: Emma Peel.

SPENCER: Would you two knock it OFF!

During the whole dialogue, Ogilvy and Dennis make fun of the others behind their backs. Spencer, Klaus and Regent are downstage of the guards.

REGENT: In three days, the Princess will come of age and become queen. She, however, doesn't appear anywhere ready to take on the mantle of queen-hood.

SPENCER: Agreed. – And, we have another problem -

REGENT: (*Impatient.*) What is it?

SPENCER: No doubt you've heard about this Dark Knight. A knight who has been single-handedly terrorizing the kingdom. (*Dennis and Ogilvy make scary faces at one another.*)

REGENT: Is he one of ours? A rogue?

SPENCER: Hard to tell.

KLAUS: It appears he just wants money! Not justice. Stealing money. Gold. Jewelry. Some have lost their entire retirement portfolios!

REGENT: What a selfish brute. In every era, there's a Bernie Madoff.

KLAUS: (*Laughs.*) He just "made off" with all their money! (*Pause.*) Get it? He "made off" with . . . all their -

OGILVY: I hear the Dark Knight gives the stolen money to the poor!

ALL: Socialist!

SPENCER: Last night was the worst attack to date! Sir James was robbed at sword point!

REGENT: Sir James is the most proficient swordsman in all the realm.

SPENCER: Not anymore!

KLAUS: He was no match for this Dark Knight. We did get a better description of him - he wears all black. His shield is adorned with a white unicorn on a field of sable. And he carries a black sword that seems to radiate with strength.

REGENT: Who is he? From whence does he come?

SPENCER: No one knows. He has been seen by many, but, he has the power to slip in and out of shadows at will, almost (*Pause.*) like he's made of shadows himself.

REGENT: How is it possible that one man can defeat so many?

KLAUS: The Dark Knight fights with superior skill.

REGENT: It is well that the Princess is safely guarded - for her own protection! And ours! (*To Ogilvy and Dennis.*) Guard her well! Do not fail me!

ACT ONE, SCENE 6
SAM THE WIZARD'S HUT

Lights up on the right apron. Sam's hut. It is a mess. Scattered here and there are odd bits and pieces of telephones and televisions. Whether these are drawings and plans or the real thing doesn't matter. Sam can be somewhat overweight and sloppy looking. He [or she] is looking through some papers when the lights rise. He's tossing them around and making even more of a mess. Iggy is by his side, shaking his head.

Both are looking at the script.

SAM: Iggy, I know we're supposed to enter . . . at some point . . .

IGGY: I can't make heads or tails of this script, Sam. It's confusing!

SAM: What does the program say?

IGGY: I don't have one.

SAM: Iggy, just take it from - (*Thinks.*) - from that lady (*A plant.*) sitting in the third row. She's already asleep, she'll never miss it!

Iggy retrieves a program from an audience member and reads.

IGGY: It says here Sam, that this is Scene 6. Sam's Hut! Oh, my gosh, we're on!

SAM: What do you mean "we're on"?

Iggy points to the program.

SAM: You're right. Okay, let's get into character . . . (*They stretch a little, clear their throats, and make a big production of getting into character.*) Ready?

IGGY: Ready!

SAM: Iggy, where are the - the thing-ah-ma-jims, the what-do-you-call . . . the papers? No, not papers, the you-know, the um . . .

IGGY: I get it! This is a game! Where I have to guess what's on your mind. Trick question! There's nothing on your mind because of that do-it-yourself lobotomy!

SAM: Iggy . . . the book which contains . . .

IGGY: Invisibility potions? Nectar of stupidity? Have you been tasting too much of your Loss of Memory Malted Milkshakes again?

SAM: *(Gives Iggy a sarcastic look.)* The last batch was very tasty! No, you know the papers I'm talking about . . . the ones which are supposed to tell me who is going to be visiting today . . .

IGGY: You mean the script, sir? I happen to have one right here.

SAM: No! No! Not the script. My day timer!

IGGY: I'm sorry. Perhaps you could tell me where you had it last . . . then I could direct you over there and . . .

SAM: If I could tell you where I lost it! Ugh, you little troll . . .

IGGY: Now we're listing our family trees, are we? I am from the genus trollbita, species troll sapiens going back over twenty thousand years. Little is debatable on that subject.

SAM: I don't expect a lecture on evolution . . . since I invented it . . . Ah-hah!!!

IGGY: *(Dryly.)* Ah! The instructions on how to program your 8 track?

SAM: My good Iggy, we are going to have visitors today! Two brave knights. And bless my hairy head, the Princess Elenora is with them. Why I haven't seen her since I was, 310, or since -

IGGY: - the hair tonic scandal . . .

SAM: Well, yes . . . yes that's right.

IGGY: *(Sarcastically.)* Very good, sir. How interesting! Knights . . . gallivanting through forests, eager for plunder, perhaps they'll be slaying an innocent creature or two, just so they can date some forlorn, pageant queen with too much make up and a penchant for getting kidnapped. How exciting, sir. Just what I need to make my day!

SAM: *(To audience.)* Out of all the trolls in the world, I had to find one who's mastered the art of sarcasm.

IGGY: (*Heard, and is pleased.*) Thank you, sir. Yes, can hardly wait. Waiting eagerly, with a smile on my furry face, and a song in my ten-chambered heart . . . when should we expect them?

SAM: They should be here in the second act.

IGGY: I am all aquiver with anticipation. (*They look at their watches and wait.*)

**ACT ONE, SCENE 7
CHAMBER DOOR**

We will see Elenora's face from time to time reacting to what they're saying.

OGILVY: (*Excited and proud.*) So here we are, our first knightly duty. Keeping watch over Princess Elenora. Keeping her safe AND keeping her from causing trouble!

DENNIS: (*Sarcastically.*) Just the kind of work always imagined I'd be doing: babysitting a Princess! Hey, Ogilvy, I heard that she tried out for the Ladies Intramural Jousting Team, but they didn't take her . . .

OGILVY: How come?

DENNIS: Because it's for **girls** only . . . ha-ha . . . (*Elenora angry. She has fist out ready to grab Dennis but is stopped by Ogilvy's comments.*)

OGILVY: Dennis, that's low! That's the Princess you're talking about! You're . . . you're defiling her honor . . . (*Elenora happy and touched.*)

DENNIS: Are you going to **defend** her honor, Ogilvy!

OGILVY: (*Sadly.*) No . . . not me. I don't think she needs my help. Truth is, Dennis, I just failed the exam for my sword fighting and dismemberment merit badge. For the eighth time.

DENNIS: Ogilvy, why don't we get some practice in now!

OGILVY: Dennis, we're supposed to be guarding the princess, not engaging in extra combat practice!

DENNIS: Yeah, I guess! You know, there IS an extra spot on the Ladies Varsity Jousting team -

OGILVY: Oh, that's nice -

DENNIS: For you!

OGILVY: That's low. That's weak . . .

DENNIS: Not as weak as you!

ELENORA: You're not going to take that from him are you?

OGILVY: No! Not this time! En garde!

DENNIS: Whoo-hoo! Let's get it on! *(They spar briefly.)*

ELENORA: Ogilvy. You've got to hold your sword higher!

OGILVY: It's really heavy!

DENNIS: Put more "oomph" into it.

OGILVY: My arms are tired. Sword fighting is my worst skill. I mean, considering all the other skills: bloodletting, cross bowing, beheading . . .

ELENORA: Watch your feet there! He leads to his right!

OGILVY: Wow. You know a lot about sword fighting!

DENNIS: C'mon. Your death shall be agonizing but glorious. Your admirers will sing your praises!

OGILVY: Admirers? You mean my mom? Did you say agonizing?

DENNIS: Ogilvy, my pal, I shall slice you like a bagel and dice you like a vegematic.

OGILVY: A vege what? *(Dennis growls and barks; Ogilvy stammers.)*
I . . . I . . . I thought we agreed no growling.

ELENORA: He's just trying to take psychological advantage of you!

DENNIS: Right! Did it work?

OGILVY: Yes! *(Throws sword down in disgust.)* It's no use, I'll never be a knight. *(Sits on bench.)* I'm not sure *(Beat.)* I want to be one . . .

DENNIS: Ogilvy, buddy, what are you talking about?

ELENORA: Everybody wants to be a knight. *(Encouraging.)*

DENNIS: Come on! Fighting dragons? Trolls? Damsels in distress . . . waiting to be saved!

ELENORA: Oh, brother! Is that what you think? That the only thing women are good for is to hang around in damp and drafty castle towers waiting to be saved?

DENNIS: I guess it does sound kind of medieval, doesn't it...

OGILVY: Dennis, we're just two lowly pages. We clean out the stalls, feed the horses, get the knights coffee at ye Olde Starbucks.

DENNIS: Well, it's better than that guy who tastes the king's food for poison!

OGILVY: Dennis, you **are** the guy who tastes the king's food for poison . . .

DENNIS: Yeah, you're right. I forgot!

OGILVY: It all seems so barbaric!

DENNIS: It's the fifth century! We **ARE** barbarians. It's what we do!

ELENORA: You got that right! There's a reason they call this the Dark Ages!

OGILVY: Don't you think that maybe we should try to be more than just barbarians? *(Elenora looks thoughtful.)*

DENNIS: More than just barbarians? You're speaking heresy!

OGILVY: You know, try to improve the human condition a little?

ELENORA: Mmm. *(Thoughtful.)*

DENNIS: The human? Condition? What kind of crazy talk is that?

OGILVY: You know, I think the Princess is right . . . anyone should be a knight if they want to be.

ELENORA: Thank you, Ogilvy! Finally! Someone gets it!

DENNIS: *(To Ogilvy.)* Look, Ogilvy, sorry princess, but the princess can't be a knight. She's a **girl**. Plain and simple.

ELENORA: Ugh. You're so medieval!

DENNIS: Exactly! *(Aside.)* You're taking her side because she's cute. Even with all the muscles and attitude. *(Elenora smiles.)*

ELENORA: Either of you have a quill? *(Ogilvy gives one to her.)*

DENNIS: Don't get too close! She's dangerous.

OGILVY: Everything all right in there princess? Anything we can get for you? Tea? Book? Cappuccino?

DENNIS: How about the new TV guide?

ELENORA: No thanks! Doing just fine!

OGILVY: Just call us if you need anything!

ELENORA: Okay.

DENNIS: Finally, a little peace and quiet. *(Another five count.)*

DENNIS: She's awfully quiet all of a sudden.

OGILVY: Maybe she's asleep.

DENNIS: Maybe . . . *(Pokes head through the bars.)* Hmm.

OGILVY: What's the 'hmm' for?

DENNIS: There seems to be something, or someone, missing.

OGILVY: *(Panicked.)* What are you saying?

DENNIS: *(Peeks into chamber.)* She's gone!

OGILVY: Gone?

DENNIS: Maybe it's a trick! She's waiting for us, then when we go to check on her, she does the old switcheroo, and imprisons us! We've got to go in there. Ready?

OGILVY: I guess.

DENNIS: Game face on?

OGILVY: I don't have a game face!

DENNIS: Let's do it! *(They find the keys and hastily open the door. Then, they charge in yelling. They come back out.)*

DENNIS: Look! *(He holds up a scroll. Begins to whine and cry.)*

OGILVY: She's run away!

DENNIS: How do you know?

OGILVY: Read for yourself.

DENNIS: *(Three count pause. Reads with Dennis.)* "I have run away. *(Pause.)* Here is a short list of my grievances: *(Ogilvy takes the scroll and flings it toward the audience, it is about fifteen feet long. When it settles, they say together.)*

DENNIS/OGILVY: WOW! She's got issues.

DENNIS: How do you know it's her writing?

OGILVY: Because it's got skulls and crossbones all over it. The same kind of thing you'd see at a Metallica concert.

DENNIS: *(Looks at paper.)* Says here she's off to the Forbidden Forest to see the Wizard.

DENNIS/OGILVY: Off to see the wizard.

OGILVY: I thought he was dead.

DENNIS: He just smells that way.

OGILVY: Well, that's preposterous! She can't go to the Forbidden Forest!

DENNIS: Why?

OGILVY: It's Forbidden! The Forbidden Forest. Not the, "It's okay, you can come in now forest."

DENNIS: I got some news for you, Ogilvy. Sometimes good people do bad things.

OGILVY: Like how you sometimes cheat on your taxes?

DENNIS: Exactly. Sometimes, certain people, like Elenora, don't always do what they're told. *(Beat)* Ogilvy?

OGILVY: What?

DENNIS: If we lose the princess, *(He gulps.)* we'll be beheaded.

OGILVY: Beheaded?

DENNIS: Then, dismembered. Then . . . really punished!

OGILVY: Dismembered? *(He swoons. Dennis props him up.)*

Thanks . . . where were we?

DENNIS: Dismemberment . . .

OGILVY: *(Pause.)* I hate that! *(Swoons again. Dennis catches him.)* Thanks. Where were we?

DENNIS: *(Pause.)* Nothing . . .

DENNIS: What do we do? I got it. You dress up like Elenora, and I'll guard you -

OGILVY: Why do I always have to dress up as a girl? *(To audience.)*

Not that it happens that often . . .

DENNIS: You pretend you're Elenora until she comes back. Or you grow old. Whichever's first.

OGILVY: Not so good. Any other ideas?

DENNIS: *(With conviction.)* We run away! Splitville! Vamoose. I'll call a cab right now!

OGILVY: *(Grabs him. Seriously.)* Get a hold of yourself! We've got to find her. If we've lost her, we'll never see the light of day again . . . they'll hunt us down like -animals!

DENNIS: Like ...*(gulps)* animals?

OGILVY: - she couldn't have gotten very far. I bet she's still in the castle!

DENNIS: You're probably right! Let's go wrastle us up a princess!
(They exit.)

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 8
ELENORA'S CHAMBER

Spencer and Klaus enter.

SPENCER: Where are those two bumbling pages?

KLAUS: Nowhere to be seen!

SPENCER: Lucky for them, or we'd have to kill them, too! All right, swords out!

KLAUS: Swords out!

SPENCER: Game face on!

KLAUS: Check!

SPENCER: Let us do harm! *(They quickly enter the room, and just as quickly exit, disappointment on their faces.)*

SPENCER: Another disappointment. I am truly sorry Klaus.

KLAUS: And I was so looking forward to a little bloodletting . . .

SPENCER: *(Picks up scroll from ground.)* Wait a minute! Looky here! *(Reads scroll.)* So the princess has run away!

KLAUS: *(Spencer hands scroll to Klaus who reads it to himself.)*

Listen to this part: "and my Uncle, Lord SPENCER is a bloodless, rat-kissing fiend who is no more evolved than fungus, hogwort, or one-celled bacteria." Oh, that's flattering! Not!

SPENCER: *(Grabs.)* Let me see that . . . here's something about you: "And Klaus is nothing but a weasel-faced, rat-like creature who hangs like a limpet to any slimy thing that crawls out of the ooze . . ."

KLAUS: *(Wiping his eyes, two count.)* Oh how I **miss** that girl!

SPENCER: *(Inspired.)* Wait a second - *(He goes back in the chamber.)* Klaus. Looky what I found . . . *(Her shield and dark knight shirt.)* Does this ring a bell?

KLAUS: No, I can't say that it does. It doesn't ring a bell for me.

SPENCER: *(Slowly.)* This is the shield of the infamous Dark Knight.

KLAUS: The one who's been terrorizing all the realm?

SPENCER: Yes.

KLAUS: The one seen here in the first scene?

SPENCER: Precisely . . . so . . . that means . . .

KLAUS: They both shop at the same Ye Olde Navy?

SPENCER: No Klaus, that's not where I was going. Think for a second: this is a princess who last year, in anger, managed to BREAK the drawbridge -

KLAUS: Right! You were on it at the time, as I recall . . .

SPENCER: And, she not only unseated Sir Pellinore during the Knightly Olympics, but also sent his **horse** to the infirmary!

KLAUS: I remember.

SPENCER: A princess who bullies everyone. Who is so despised that her castle nickname is -

TOGETHER: The Royal Pain!

SPENCER: I submit to you, that this Dark Knight, as phenomenal as he is, wouldn't have a chance against the Princess Elenora.

KLAUS: Okay. I concede that point!

SPENCER: Who would be **capable** of kidnapping her? And for what purpose? Ransom?

KLAUS: Who would **pay** to get her back? (*Sing song.*) No one!

SPENCER: After spending just five minutes with her, he'd be begging **US** to take **HER** back!

KLAUS: It is an interesting coincidence that they have the same shield . . .

SPENCER: Klaus! It's not a coincidence! The Dark Knight is her!

KLAUS: "She." After the verb, "to be," the nominative form is preferred.

SPENCER: To be or not to be, is not the question! The Princess Elenora and the Dark Knight are **one** and the **same**! We've discovered her secret identity!

KLAUS: You mean in a Clark Kent-Superman kind of way?

SPENCER: (*Drawn out.*) Yes!

KLAUS: Like Batman and Bruce Wayne?

SPENCER: Yes. Yes. Your point is made.

KLAUS: (*Excited. On a roll*) Like Mr. Rogers and Captain Kangaroo!

Spencer shakes his head as if Klaus has gone too far.

KLAUS: What should we do to the Dark Knight - her - she? Elenora? Kill her? Until she's dead? Or at least until she's quiet . . . because she's awfully loud and her voice . . .

SPENCER: *(Loudly to make him stop.)* Klaus. Klaus. *(Stops, inspired.)* This day gets better and better! I have a fiendishly clever plan . . .

KLAUS: Don't you always. By the way, I like how you said "fiendishly clever" . . . you should be an actor . . .

SPENCER: KLAUS! Tell yourself to shut up. I'm too tired . . .

KLAUS: Shut up, Klaus!

SPENCER: We are the only two who know about the existence of this note . . . *(Klaus a-hems and points to the audience.)* Yes. Except for them, of course. Let's edit this note a little . . . *(Takes out quill and writes.)*

KLAUS: *(Reading over his shoulder.)* "I fully admit that I, Princess Elenora, am the Dark Knight, and seek nothing less than the total destruction and annihilation - those are pretty strong words - of the kingdom. Don't try to stop me, I will never be taken aleeve -

What's "aleeve"?

SPENCER: That's "ALIVE!" "I'll never be taken **alive!**"

KLAUS: There's only one "v" in alive. Not three, oh Fez of Foulness.

SPENCER: Right you are. Any quill out? *(Klaus reaches into pocket and gets some; makes the correction.)*

KLAUS: *(Continues to read over shoulder.)* "I will never be taken alive!" Brilliant. Evil!

SPENCER: *(Sighs with satisfaction.)* Scheming really does bring out the best in people, doesn't it!

KLAUS: It does! I feel radiant!

SPENCER: Come. Let us see the chaos we've caused! *(They exit.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 9 THRONE ROOM

The stage is dark. In blue lights, the Dark Knight creeps from stage left to stage right. As soon as the Dark Knight hears Ogilvy and Dennis, she hides behind the throne.

OGILVY: Jeepers, it's awfully dark down here.

DENNIS: It's dark. And dreary. And I am so weary. My eyes are so bleary. I can't read no Beverly Cleary. Word.

OGILVY: This is bad.

DENNIS: Here princess . . . here princess . . . princess . . .

OGILVY: What are you doing?

DENNIS: Trying to lure her to us!

OGILVY: She's not a cat, Dennis! And put away the piece of string! Why did the princess have to run away on our watch?

DENNIS: Why does the evil Dark Knight have to be in our castle?

OGILVY: *(They stop.)* Listen . . .

DENNIS: It's so quiet . . .

ELENORA: *(As the Dark Knight steps out from behind the throne, menacingly.)* Who dares follow me?

OGILVY: *(Frightened)* It's not really a dare . . .

DENNIS: You wouldn't happen to have seen a . . .

OGILVY: Princess . . .

DENNIS: About yah tall . . .

OGILVY: 'Cause we're kind of looking for one . . .

ELENORA: Leave quickly, or face death! . . . or . . . worse!

DENNIS: Worse than death? *(To Ogilvy.)* I hate that!

ELENORA: Drop your swords! Or die as you stand! *(They throw their swords down.)*

DENNIS: How about kneeling. Would you kill *(Both kneel.)* someone who's kneeling down? Would you like us to grovel, I mean because there's more where that came from. *(They begin to grovel.)*

OGILVY: What exactly do you mean by kill? Do you mean kill or just hurt real bad?

DENNIS: Or kill as in forever pushing up daisies. Singing in the heavenly choir.

OGILVY: I knew it! Dead before I ever kissed a girl!

DENNIS: What! What about that girl you said you kissed in the horse stalls last week?

OGILVY: I lied . . . I'm kind of afraid of girls. Especially the pretty ones. And it would be terrible if I didn't experience kissing at least one girl in my life.

DENNIS: I guess I'll never realize my dream of becoming *(Beat.)* a tax accountant.

ELENORA: Tax accountant? Never kissed a girl? Ogilvy, Dennis! You guys are *(Laughs.)* pathetic!

DENNIS: Hey, no offense, Dark Knight. But, your voice is really high and kind of "girly" - if you don't mind me saying so -

ELENORA: That's because - I am one . . . *(Takes off disguise.)*

DENNIS: *(Beat. Jumps to feet.)* Hey! I know a girl who looks exactly like you! She was locked in the tower, but ran away! You could be twins!

OGILVY: *(Stands.)* Princess? Why are you running away?

DENNIS: Wait a minute! Bang! I just figured it out! You're the Dark Knight! And the princess, and that other girl!

OGILVY: Dennis, quiet down before you hurt yourself. *(To Elenora.)* Why, Elenora?

ELENORA: I'm running away! Period. It's none of your business why.

DENNIS: Au contraire, princess. You were going to kill us, just a jumbo-sized swath of destruction and despair. *(Sweeps with his arms.)*

BOTH: Well?

ELENORA: *(A little uneasy and embarrassed.)* I don't want to be a princess, or a queen . . .

DENNIS: Hello! *(Knocks on her head.)* You can't run away from that! You're to be crowned Miss California in a couple of days, no, wait . . . wrong story.

OGILVY: Tomorrow you come of age. You've got maids and people waiting on you hand and foot all day, not a care in the world . . .

ELENORA: Maids! Servants! Ugh. They hover around me like . . . like -

DENNIS: - like a . . . a . . . plague of tse tse birds? *(Ogilvy and Elenora look at Dennis in wonderment.)*

OGILVY: Where were you going?

ELENORA: Sam the Wizard's. Before my parents died, Sam the Wizard was their closest advisor, a valuable and honored member of the Royal Cabinet. That is, before he got banished . . .

DENNIS/OGILVY: For that hair tonic scandal!

ELENORA: *(Alarmed.)* Shh, I hear voices! *(Spencer and Klaus from off stage.)* It's Spencer!

The sound of people talking.

OGILVY: Uh-oh, you're supposed to be locked up!

DENNIS: We were supposed to have locked you up!

OGILVY: If anyone finds us here!

ELENORA: We're all dead!

OGILVY: We'd better think of something fast. *(They look at one another. We hear noise like the sound of many feet coming. It is Spencer, Klaus, and a few swordsmen.)*

ELENORA: I've got an idea. Listen! *(Lights down.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 10
THE THRONE ROOM

ELENORA: *(As the Dark Knight, Spencer and men approach. Ogilvy and Dennis have the Dark Knight at sword point.)*

SPENCER: The Dark Knight!

DENNIS: We caught it. Him. That. Dark Knight. Thing. For you.

OGILVY: Free of Charge. No charge here. Done our job. Yawn. Time maybe for a little shut eye. Long day. Tired! Okay, see ya now!

SPENCER: Stay.

REGENT: So, Dark Knight. At last we have found you!

KLAUS: Your robbing days are over . . . you've infiltrated the castle. Threatened all with bodily harm . . .

SPENCER: *(Knowingly.)* But . . . I am curious . . .

REGENT: Curious, about . . .

SPENCER: About who is behind that mask . . .

ELENORA: *(Elenora raises her sword.)* If I am to die, I'll take you with me!

SPENCER: Then these pages also shall die! *(Spencer has them at sword point.)*

DENNIS: Sure, pick on the pages. The new guys! At the bottom of the totem pole.

ELENORA: *(After pause.)* Who are they to me? Go ahead!

DENNIS/OGILVY: What? *(They cry and burble together.)*

ELENORA: Stop it. Stop it! You're making me nauseous!

KLAUS: Me, too!

She pulls off disguise.

REGENT: Princess Elenora!

ELENORA: Let Dennis and Ogilvy go. I escaped on my own.

KLAUS: We know.

SPENCER: We've known for a long, long time.

KLAUS: Ever since the previous scene. *(Looks from Spencer.)* But, it seems like a long time ago . . .

REGENT: You have to answer for a lot more than just escaping from the tower my dear. The Dark Knight has committed many robberies! Has wreaked havoc upon the entire kingdom.

KLAUS: Not to mention, engaged in acts of treason.

ELENORA: Treason? That's not true!

SPENCER: Is this your handwriting?

Elenora is silent.

SPENCER: Well, it says here that you will stop at nothing to destroy the kingdom . . .

ELENORA: That's a lie!

SPENCER: Silence, traitor! Lord Regent, remind me again . . .
(Pause.) What is the penalty for treason?

REGENT: Death. Elenora, how could you . . . ? Guards *(Other than Dennis and Ogilvy.)* Take her to the dungeon! There she will await her doom!

ELENORA: I am not a traitor! *(To Regent.)* You must believe me!
(She struggles.)

SPENCER: *(Aside to Elenora.)* Oh, the **irony!** It's the same place your **parents died** . . . *(Elenora lunges for him and they hold her back up.)*

ELENORA: Dennis! Ogilvy!

SPENCER: Away with her . . . *(Guards and Regent take her.)* As for you two . . . clean up this mess *(Meaning swords and shields, etc.)* and then go back to where you belong, the stables . . . *(Dejected, they begin to exit, but they stop just before they exit.)*

(Crosses down left.) Could this day get any better? I don't know how I do it, but every once in a while, I even impress *(Pauses, searching for the correct pronoun.)* . . .

KLAUS: *(Helping him out.)* "Myself."

SPENCER: Not a bad day's work, huh?

KLAUS: It is a thing of beautiful wickedness. You have outdone yourself. *(Applauds.)*

SPENCER: *(Looks around humbly.)* Please, Klaus, you're embarrassing me . . .

KLAUS: *(Begins to weep.)* But I am so moved . . . may I, can we . . .

SPENCER: Well, *(Looks around.)* my therapist did suggest I get in touch with my inner child. Just this once . . . *(They hug briefly and pull apart almost instantly. then begin to exit.)*

KLAUS: I've got chills just thinking of the chaos we'll cause!

SPENCER: Yes! The good old days are back baby! *(They fist bump and Spencer and Klaus exit.)*

OGILVY: Princess Elenora IS the Dark Knight. I should have guessed. We've got to figure out a way to rescue her.

DENNIS: Rescue the Princess? Are you out of your mind? I say good riddance! She's not called the Royal Pain for nothing, you know.

OGILVY: What are you saying! We're sworn to protect her!

DENNIS: She was going to slice us to pieces . . . then let us die! You want that - that person - to live to be our queen and rule us . . . are you kidding? *(Beat.)* I think I love her! *(Beat.)* Yeah, we've got to rescue her! I miss her dangerous arms and attitude already!

OGILVY: Okay, let's think this through, what have we got so far?

DENNIS: *(Pulls out a pad, reads from it.)* We got a Dark Knight who robs people but, it's really the Princess Elenora dressed all in sable...

OGILVY: I'd call it more Navy Blue. But, no matter, continue..

BY CHRISTOPHER BURRUTO

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