

Scene 1: Princess's room in the palace

(Tabs open. Lights up. Quincely enters with a broom and starts sweeping around an elaborate vanity. Quincely notices the audience.)

Quincely: Oh. Hello. I'm Quincely, the maid. Settle down though, Princess Puffery is coming and she's in a mood, fit to be rude **(Nods)** She has lost her charm, you see, No clue as to what it might be. **(pause)** Charm, you know, is a sensibility, Sincerity mixed with polite ability. Princess Puffery may soon learn that requires some humility. **(Sees Princess coming and jumps)** Oh, here she comes!

(Quincely exits)

Princess: **(Shouts from offstage)** *Celeste!*

(Princess enters and crosses to vanity)

Celeste: **(From offstage)** Yes, milady?

Princess: **(Wails loudly)** It's missing! **(Searches vanity's drawers)**

Celeste: **(Enters)** What is missing, milady?

Princess: As my lady-in-waiting. You should know.

Celeste: **(Looks Princess up and down)** Um, your eye-liner 'cause your eyes –

Princess: No! Not my eye-liner. My charm! My charm, Celeste, is *missing*.

Celeste: Are you sure you had some to begin with?

Princess: Don't be insolent. Of course I am. It was here. And now it's gone. Missing?

Celeste: *Oh!* Goodness, where did you last see your charm, milady?

Princess: **(Points to mirror)** Yesterday morning I saw it clearly in my smile. But this morning.....? Look! Do you see it?

(Princess turns head this way and that)

Celeste: Um I –

Princess: Oh, no. It's true! And I am to dine with the Abstonian envoy tonight!

Celeste: Oh princess, the Abstonian envoy, how exciting for you.

Princess: **(Stares into mirror)** Yes, *but*, the king said I was to bring all my charm to dinner tonight. How can I go without my charm? **(Wails)** What am I to do Celeste?

Celeste: **(Loud and with sarcasm)** OH, dear, my princess, wherever do you think you left it?

Princess: I don't know, Celeste. Look around? Find it!

Celeste: **(Looks around mirror and around the vanity)** Why yes Milady! Most certainly. It must be here. Maybe you dropped it on the floor?

Princess: Perhaps? **(looks about the floor)** I don't see it! Oh dear, I was so full of charm yesterday, too. **(Frowns)** Celeste, don't stand around. Look for it.

Celeste: We shall find it, my princess, in time for the dinner tonight. **(Calls off-stage)** Quincely! Come at once.

Quincely: **(Enters and curtsies)** What you be wanting, miladies?

Celeste: Princess Puffery has lost her charm. Go find it.

Quincely: Yes, milady. Very good. **(pause)** Where?

Celeste: The dungeon, then work your way up.

Quincely: Yes, milady. **(Addresses audience)** Same advice my dear mother gave me. Start at the bottom and work your way up, she said. I'm not sure she was referring to a dungeon

Celeste: *Quincely!* Go!

Quincely: Yes, mum. **(Curtsies and Exits)**

Princess: Celeste, you twit, my charm is most certainly not in some dungeon.

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Celeste: Oh? Where else does milady think it is?

Princess: If I knew, we wouldn't be looking for it and certainly not in a dungeon! I told you, Celeste! I saw it there in my mirror. **(Points)**

Celeste: **(Cautiously)** Perhaps, milady, you were wearing some jewelry. We only need to discover which piece holds the key to your charm?

Princess: Like what?

Celeste: Oh, you know your highness, a charm bracelet?

Princess: A charm bracelet, of course. Bring me my jewelry box.

(Celeste crosses to pick up a large gold jewelry box set beneath vanity. She presents it to Princess who opens it. It is spilling with jewels)

Princess: Let me see.

Celeste: Maybe try a few.

(Princess tries on several large, ugly bracelets. She puts 3 on her right wrist, stands and struts around the stage)

Princess: I don't feel any different. Well? Am I charming?

(Princess strikes an awkward pose)

Celeste: I'm not sure.

Princess: **(Strikes another pose)** How about now? Maybe glamorous? I could live with being glamorous.

Celeste: Still not sure, your highness. Try putting one on the other wrist. You know, create some symmetry in your limbs as you move them.

(Princess moves a bracelet to the left wrist. Waves both arms about in circular motion to spin the bracelets)

Princess: I feel nothing. Except, a little breathless.

Quincely: **(Enters. Breathless)** Excuse me, miladies, I done searched the dungeon. Believe me, nothing charming down there, unless you fancy leg irons and the sort. Now meself I fancy...

Princess: Quincely! What's that in your hair?

Quincely: **(Pulls cobweb off her cap)** This? A cobweb. Them spiders down there, Milady, they be the size of cocker spaniels. **(Indicates size with her hands)** Why I was just tangling with one when you –

Princess: Oh never mind about that. What about my bracelets, Quincely. Am I charming?

Quincely: Naw likely. They make your arms look funny, **(Laughs)** Like some wonky ring toss at the county fair.

Princess: Good lord! Not that! *Me?* A cheap attraction at a fair. Rather die. Quincely, on with your search. Report back anything interesting.

Quincely: Yes, milady. I'll do my best. **(Quincely salutes & exits)**

Princess: Celeste, you could have told me. These don't make me charming.

(Removes bracelets and hands them back to Celeste who digs around jewelry box)

Celeste: Forgive me, milady. Perhaps a necklace to draw the eye to your beauty.

(Celeste holds up a large, chunky necklace)

Princess: I don't know. It's rather large. Isn't it more intimidating than charming?

Celeste: Oh, not if you're wearing it, your highness.

Princess: I'll give it a try.

(Princess puts on necklace. Looks in mirror)

Princess: Hmmm, it's hard to say whether I'm wearing the necklace or its wearing me?
(Stands and Strikes a pose) Well?

Celeste: I don't know.

Princess: If it was working, we would know, Celeste. Jewelry may not be the answer.
(Hands necklace back to Celeste)

Celeste: Perhaps your charm is hidden somehow and requires someone to draw it forth.
(Celeste puts necklace in Jewelry box and closes lid)

Princess: But who? I can't wait for tonight, Celeste. I need to know *before* I go into dinner.

Celeste: A test, milady. Someone we can test your charm on?

Princess: What about you?

Celeste: Oh, milady, it's my job to be charmed by you. That would be no test at all.
Perhaps, someone else we could call.

Princess: Well, who do you suggest?

Celeste: How about...Sir Larry.

Princess: Him? Impossible. He's boring. Always in the library.

Celeste: There's the challenge, milady. Give him a try.

Princess: Perhaps. Call him forth and let's see.

Celeste: **(Celeste crosses to doorway and calls)** Call Sir Larry to attend Princess Puffery.
(A series of off-stage calls for Prince Larry)

Larry: **(Enters reading a book in hand)** What do you want, Puffery? I am in the middle of something as you can see. **(Slams book closed)**

Princess: I want you to indulge me?

Larry: Dear me. Indulge you? As in "To grant as a favour" or "To treat as an unearned favour"?

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Princess: Either will do.

Larry: Seriously? You? Whatever for?

Princess: How about "I'm desperate and need your help"?

Larry: Why didn't you say so in the first place?

Princess: You know, protocol.

Larry: Ah yes. I should have known when you didn't ask me to bow and scrape at your feet.

Princess: You still can?

Larry: A missed opportunity. Get on with it.

Princess: It's Celeste. She has something to ask you. **(Nods to Celeste)**

Celeste: **(Confused)** I do? **(pause)** Oh, yes. I do.

Larry: **(Looks to Celeste)** Well?

Celeste: It's...uh, rather complicated you see.

Larry: Don't waste my time.

Celeste: Right. Are you familiar with the spider-eating assassin bug?

Larry: **(Curious)** A lethal bug? That is interesting. Go on.

Celeste: It is! You see, the assassin bug uses charm to catch its prey.

Larry: What kind of charm?

Celeste: Um, it draws you in with loud chattering nonsense. **(Nods towards Princess)**

Larry: Hmm. Sounds a little familiar. What is this assassin bug's relation to Puffery here?

Princess: None! Goodness Celeste! You are making a muddle of this. The Abstonian envoy is coming tonight for dinner. I need to charm him.

Larry: So you can kill the envoy!

Princess: No! Forget the dumb assassin bug.

Larry: I wish I could. He's more interesting.

Princess: There's no bug. It's me. I have lost my charm.

Larry: You never had much to begin with.

Princess: Harsh. Considering how boorish you are.

Larry: Depends on the company. I'm going.

Princess: Wait! I need your help. What am I to do?

Larry: Puffery, it's just a simple state dinner. Try smiling.
(Princess smiles unsuccessfully)

Larry: Perhaps not.

Princess: Oh dear. **(pause)** I am worried, Sir Larry. Very worried. The fate of the kingdom may ride on this dinner.

Larry: You were always one for the melodramatics. Abstonia, Puffery, is barely a country, more village than country I'd say, and of little importance.

Princess: It is too important. The king himself has told me so.

Larry: Oh Puffery. If Abstonia is anything, it's a small kingdom of smelly goat herders with a village as its capital.

Princess: No matter its size or smell, I shall do my duty to my king. If you know so much, how may I charm their envoy?

Larry: May I suggest you wear some cheese around your neck? That should charm your envoy.

Princess: How absurd. **(pause)** Do you think it would work?

Larry: Yes. He's Abstonian. That's all they do. Make cheese and herd goats. Try some Limburger cheese. That will get his attention.

Princess: I might!

Celeste: Milady, forgive me. That's the stinky cheese.

Princess: Is it? **(Turns on Larry)** Sir Larry! Are you making fun of me?

Larry: Yes.

Princess: You might be more helpful. Don't you have any useful advice?

Larry: You could say "Please".

Princess: Please what?

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Larry: Exactly. Please. It's a polite form of address when asking a question or making a request. Politeness. It has its own charm. When you understand that, Puffery, you may yet find your precious charm. That's my advice. I'm going back to my library. Ta ta!

(Larry exits)

Celeste: Milady, I don't think you charmed him.

Princess: See Celeste. I have lost it. What shall I do, the dinner is tonight?

Celeste: Milady, I think you need professional help.

Princess: Me? Whatever are you suggesting?

Celeste: A witch's spell may help. A charm to charm?

Princess: Perhaps. Who do you suggest?

Celeste: The witch Magdalena

Princess: Is she a good witch or a bad witch?

Celeste: She's the Woodsie witch.

Princess: Sounds quaint, the Woodsie Witch, and not too dangerous. Can she help?

Celeste: She has a number of charms and potions.

Princess: Maybe we should give her a try? Call her forth.

Celeste: Milady, um, she is the Woodsie witch. We have to go the woods.

Princess: Oh bother. Can't I have a footman bring her here?

Celeste: The Woodsie witch is fickle that way. She doesn't do house calls.

Princess: Oh dear, Celeste. Are you suggesting I go to a cave in the woods? Sounds rather questionable.

Celeste: Milady, you did say you were desperate.

Princess: I am. But the woods? Aren't there mosquitoes, and fanged beasties and poisonous little crawly things about?

Celeste: Yes. A minor inconvenience compared to your missing charm.

Princess: But, but, the woods? Aren't there any non-woodsie witches nearby?

Celeste: Well yes, a few, but they're a bit dishonest. Magdalena's reputation is quite good and reaches into the hinterlands.

Princess: Near hinterlands or the far?

Celeste: The near, milady. The woods are just beyond the palace. I'm told her cave is a few steps away. We can be there in a trice.

Princess: That's quick isn't it? Oh, let's give it a try.

Celeste: Perhaps, milady should change her shoes to something sturdier?

Princess: Goodness No. These are my favorite pair. Lead on.

(All exit. Blackout. Tabs close)

Scene 2 - cave

(Tabs open to a dark cave. To one side, Magdalena-the Woodsie Witch stirs a large bone in a cauldron set on a table. Soap bubbles rise from the cauldron as she sings)

Magdalena: Round about my Caldron go, Stir my laundry ever slow. Bubble. Bubble. Soapy Bubbles. Cauldron whirl, laundry bubbles.**(Loud cackle)** A cup of this, a cup of that. A cup of ash to wash the fat. **(Loud cackle)** Soon my laundry will be done then it's off to enjoy the sun. **(Lifts bone out of pot and sniffs it)** Needs a little more soapy lye I think.

Celeste: **(off-stage)** Hello? Magdalena, Hello?

Magdalena: Fie! Who dares to be bothering me on laundry day?

(Enter Princess and Celeste. They have twigs stuck in their hair. Dirt smudges on their cheeks)

Princess: Oh, Celeste, that was torturous. I shall never leave the palace again.

Celeste: Not to worry, Milady. We are here now.

Princess: Tell the hag over there to announce us.

Celeste: Old Woman, hello. Princess Puffery demands to see Magdalena the Woodsie witch. Please announce us.

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Magdalena: Demands? Who is she to make demands of the Woodsie Witch?

Celeste: Why Princess Puffery!

Magdalena: **(Waves them off)** Magdalena sees no one except by appointment.

Celeste: But we are here on urgent business.

Magdalena: So, what! Magdalena is too busy for you today. So off with you and be away!

Celeste: **(To Princess)** She says to come back later.

Princess: I can hear, Celeste. I'm standing right next to you. **(To Magdalena)** Tell this Magdalena it's an emergency.

Celeste: She says it's an emergency.

Magdalena: Oh, an unscheduled emergency you say? It will cost you.

Princess: We will gladly pay. Whatever the cost.

Celeste: We?

Magdalena: Your first child?

Celeste: No!

Magdalena: Two gold then. **(Rubs hands together)**

Celeste: **(To Princess)** She says it's two gold.

Princess: I heard, Celeste. Pay her.

Celeste: Me? Where's your purse?

Princess: You know I don't carry cash. It's vulgar.

Celeste: Lucky for you, milady, I do carry cash. But you must pay me back.

Princess: Hmm. Let's see if she is any good. After all this was your idea.

Magdalena: I haven't got all day, girls. Things are brewing over here. **(Bangs bone on table)**

Celeste: **(Gives an impatient look at Princess)** We agree. Announce us.

Magdalena: Payment first! **(Holds out hand)**

Celeste: **(Fumbles in drawstring purse and produces two gold coins)** Here.
(Magdalena performs a little jig. Runs around the caldron, grabs the coins from Celeste, and spreads her arms as she curtsies)

Magdalena: Tada!

Princess: **(To Celeste)** She's the witch! **(To Magdalena)** You're the witch? I must say you are not what I was expecting?

Magdalena: Enuffery Puffery. Leave then. And no refunds.

Celeste: Wait, please. We need your help. And we paid.

Magdalena: You two are rather bothersome. Why should I?

Celeste: Um, we're desperate?

Magdalena: Perhaps I have something. What's it to be? I have many a potion. Love, wealth, insomnia, *warts?* **(Flourishes wart bottle and thrusts it forward)**

Princess: Eww. None of those. My problem is most urgent. I have an important dinner tonight, with an envoy. And I have lost my charm.

Magdalena: A charm to charm. That's most unusual. I'll see what I can do.
(Magdalena fumbles under table and produces box. Reaches inside and pulls out a sack. Chuckles to herself)

Magdalena: Here, try this.

Princess: What am I to do with this? Looks like a sack.

Magdalena: A magical sack. Put it over your head.

Princess: **(Princess puts bag over her head)** It smells like potatoes.

Magdalena: An earth spell.

Princess: I can't see. How is this supposed to work?

Magdalena: Feel the power. Tell your lady she's getting sleepy.

Princess: Celeste, you are getting sleepy, very sleepy.

Celeste: **(Laughs)** No, I am not.

Princess: Are you being insubordinate?

Celeste: No, just not sleepy.

Magdalena: Tell her she must obey.

Princess: You must obey me, Celeste.

Celeste: Of course, I do. I'm your lady-in-waiting. It's my job. To do whatever silly thing comes into your head.

Princess: Wait. What?

Magdalena: A Powerful spell! The truth comes out!

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Celeste: The truth is, you look rather silly.

Princess: This won't do. **(Pulls bag off her head and throws it at Magdalena)** Something else, witch.

Magdalena: I'm not a witch. I prefer Herbalist.

Princess: A what?

Magdalena: **(Slow and instructional)** Herbalist. Witch has such a bad connotation, dearie.

Princess: Whatever. Find me a charm!

Magdalena: **(Roots around in box. Produces a flower necklace)** Here is a sweet garland of Spring flowers. Their beauty will draw your charm out. Place it around your neck.

Princess: **(Takes necklace of flowers and arranges it)** Celeste?

Celeste: They look tired.

Magdalena: Oh, not to worry, dearie. This will spruce them up.
(Magdalena produces a spray bottle and hands it to Celeste who sprays Princess Puffery in the face)

Princess: I'm wet! Did anything happen? Am I charming?

Celeste: I'm not sure. Maybe I should spray you again.
(Sprays Puffery again)

Princess: Uhh! I'm still wet and no different. These things are not working, witch.
(Takes off necklace of flowers and hands them back)

Magdalena: Funny, it worked yesterday. Perhaps Stronger magic. Let me see. **(Rummages in box and brings out Laurel wreath)** A laurel wreath has significant power. It is a symbol of achievement. Wear this high on your crown.
(Hands wreath to Princess)

Princess: **(Places crown awkwardly on her head)** How does it sit? Will it interfere with my curls?
(Magdalena tugs wreath down onto Princess's head)

Magdalena: To wear the laurel crown you need to hold your head high.
(Princess tilts head back)

Magdalena: That's better.

Princess: This is a little uncomfortable. And it itches.

Magdalena: Try walking around.
(Princess slowly walks in a circle)

Princess: I can't see my feet. And how do I talk to anyone if I'm always looking up?

Magdalena: With your head held high, people will admire you.

Princess: Between the itching and the crick in my neck, I'm not sure I can pull this off. Besides, I'm already admired. This may be a touch too much, wouldn't you say Celeste.

Celeste: Of course, milady.

Princess: Are you "Yessing" me Celeste?

Celeste: Yes, milady.

Princess: Celeste! I need you to be honest with me.

Celeste: In that case, people admire you, milady, because of your title and position.

Princess: Only my title? Not me as a person?

Celeste: You lack charm, milady.

Princess: I'm well aware of that, Celeste! That's why we're here. Does the Laurel crown help or not?

Celeste: No. Because you don't believe in it.

Princess: And why should I? How can I achieve anything without my charm?

(Takes off Laurel crown and tosses it to Magdalena)

Celeste: What else have you got, witch?

Magdalena: *Herbalist.* I am an herbalist!

Princess: Obviously. If you were a real witch, I would have a charm by now. My patience is running thin. Show me something useful, witch.

Magdalena: Mind your tongue and I'll see what I can do.

(Pulls out of the box red wax lips and hands them to Princess)

Magdalena: Put these in your mouth.

(Princess puts wax smile over her mouth)

Princess: **(Mumbles)** I can't talk.

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Magdalena: Hurray! It's working! **(Cackles)**

Celeste: You do look appealing, milady.

Princess: **(Mumbles)** But I can't talk.

Magdalena: That's right. Smile and listen, people will think you're sincere.

Princess: **(Spits out wax smile)** A false sincerity? Where's the charm in that?

(Hands lips back to Magdalena)

Magdalena: That would be up to you.

Princess: All these things you've shown me are cheap props.. They don't have any charm. Show me something truly magical witch!

Magdalena: Sometimes good advice is better than any magic.

Princess: Oh bother advice. No more props. I want magic! That's why I'm here.

Magdalena: Oh, if it's magic you want.

(Rummages in box and flourishes a white carrot in the shape of a finger)

Princess: Goodness, what's that?

Magdalena: The little finger of a rich banker.

Celeste: How did he lose it?

Magdalena: You don't want to know.

Princess: What am I supposed to do with that?

Magdalena: Eat it of course.

Princess: Why? It's disgusting.

Magdalena: Bankers charm the money out of people. This finger will give you a wee bit of his magical charm.

Princess: I'm not eating that.

Magdalena: Too bad. It's rather tasty. And you said you wanted magic.

Princess: I guess I'm not that desperate.

(Magdalena eats finger with loud crunching)

Celeste: Maybe we should go?

Princess: We can't leave empty handed, Celeste. We paid for her services.

Celeste: **(Mumbles)** I paid.

Princess: Well witch?

Magdalena: I don't have what you're looking for.

Princess: *That's Malarkey!* I had charm and I lost it. Perhaps a 'finding spell'?

Magdalena: Truly, dearie, there is no spell or potion for charm. Charm is something that comes from inside you. Either you have it or you don't.

Princess: Why you're a fake and so's your magic!

Magdalena: You wouldn't know magic if you were up to your knees in it. You're a tiresome, shallow, spoiled brat. A waste of my time. Be off.

Princess: Not for two gold, you old hag.

Magdalena: **(Holds up right hand)** Enough Princess Puffery, Of your silly effrontery. Heedless will be your pleas unless I hear apologies.

Princess: Apology? For what? Poor tricks.

Celeste: You better apologise. She's rhyming.

Princess: It's not a particularly good rhyme. She's a fraud. Nothing to worry about.

(SFX. Thunder, Lightning)

Celeste: Maybe there is. We should leave.

Magdalena: Listen! I am about to curse. It's not my first, but for you it's worse. A higgity, piggity poo, A haggity, baggity boo! May there always be a pebble in your shoe!

Princess: Ouch! **(Lifts foot)**

Magdalena: Get out!

Celeste: Please, let's go.

Princess: I'm not leaving until I get what I *want!*

Magdalena: Then stay and be eaten by my dragon.

(SFX. Roar from backstage. Red eyes glow in the dark. Celeste and Princess exit quickly)

Magdalena: Works every time. **(Cackles)** Go back to sleep, Egbert.

(Magdalena waves at red eyes. They go out. Goes back to stirring cauldron. Fade to black. Tabs close.)

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Scene 3 – The Woods

(Tabs open. Lights up on dark, shadowy woods. Lady Celeste and princess are discovered center stage, bedraggled)

Princess: We are lost, Celeste!

Celeste: We should have turned left at the owl in the tree.

Princess: He had a look about him that was worrying. Which way, Celeste?

(Princess limps around stage)

Celeste: You're limping.

Princess: Yes. I have a pebble in my shoe.

Celeste: Cursed by a witch.

Princess: No thanks to you. Celeste! My charm is lost. We are lost. This was your idea, Celeste, to drag me into the forest to be cursed.

Celeste: I warned you about the witch. But you go and call her a fake. Serves you right.

Princess: Celeste! I don't like your tone.

Celeste: I'm calling you out, princess. Your rude behavior got us here.

Princess: What are you saying?

Celeste: The savage truth, princess. But you're so clueless, you probably think your own boogers taste like cocoa puffs.

Princess: Are you saying I pick my nose!

Celeste: If the finger fits!

Princess: How dare you. Such talk!

Celeste: Too much? Drink it up, girlie. It's the truth.

Princess: Not likely, you dissembling snot-nose churl!

Celeste: And what does that make you? A whey-faced poxy peacock.

Princess: Maybe you'd rather appreciate my dungeon than my company? Hmmm.

Celeste: Can't stand a little shade, princess? Low key not my style. Rudeness has consequences. No charm and cursed! That's you. If I weren't a lady, I'd have slapped some sense into you, you vain pig-nugget.

Princess: You, a lady? A fat goat has more grace, you vain, puss-filled windbag.

(Heister the bandit enters carrying a sack and eavesdrops)

Heister: Who's a windbag?

Princess: **(Point at each other)** She is!

Celeste: **(Pont at each other)** She is!

Celeste: Who are you?

Heister: **(Makes a deep bow with a flourish)** May I introduce myself? I am Squire Heister.

Princess: A feckless fool. Be off with you!

Heister: **(Smiles)** Ah, my good woman, I need but a moment of your time.

Princess: Go away I say. Shoo! Celeste make him go away.

Celeste: **(Waves hand)** Shoo! Be gone, varlet!

Heister: Ah, but Ladies, how can I when I am struck by your beauty. It's impossible?

Princess: And yet, you repel me. How about a kick in the pants, to move you along?

Heister: A bit rude.

Celeste: She has a knack for it!

Princess: Shut up, Celeste.
(Celeste smiles)

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Heister: Let's get to the point. Hand over your valuables and I'll gladly leave.

Celeste: Oh, my, goodness! Milady, I think he's a bandit! Are you a bandit?

Heister: At your service. **(bows to Celeste)** It is my humble honor to rob you.

Princess: I am Princess Puffery! It's treason to rob me.

Celeste: Everything is treason to her.

Heister: Ah, well, no matter to me. Deliver the goods. **(Holds hand out)**

Princess: Deliver what?

Heister: Money, jewels. Your valuables of course.

Princess: Fool, we're in the woods. Why would I bring valuables? Celeste, do you have any valuables?

Celeste: Just my purse, milady.

Princess: Hand it over so we can be rid of this fusty fellow.

Celeste: But my purse?

Princess: Celeste! Your insubordination is insufferable.

Celeste: Are you ordering me to give up my purse?

Princess: You're my lady-in-waiting. Sometimes sacrifices must be made.

Celeste: **(Mumbles)** Always for you, never for others?

Princess: Now stop your churlish chirping and give him the purse!

Celeste: No.

(Princess throws up her hands)

Heister: Please, please, Ladies! It's just business. **(holds out hand)**

Celeste: **(Clutches purse)** It's robbery.

Heister: Perceptions, my dear. You give, I get. You have so much, I have very little. You are performing an act of charity on my behalf.

Princess: Not willingly! What if she doesn't hand over the goods?

Celeste: Yeah!

Heister: That would be unfortunate.

Celeste: Why? You don't appear to be the violent type.

Heister: My dear woman, wouldn't you prefer a kind gesture to my feeble act of begging? Without the mewling or groveling.

Princess: I'd rather enjoy the groveling! It would make this bearable.

Celeste: Of course, you would.

(Princess glares at Celeste)

Heister: Sorry, I'm not very good at it, groveling.

Princess: No one ever is. So?

Heister: Too much pride, milady. I could tell you tales of hunger, small children crying for food, a heartless landlord. Some of it might be true. Most of it lies, to touch your heart. So, what do you say, let's keep it simple and do it this way. The purse?

Celeste: Aww, an honest thief? How charming.

(Celeste hands over her purse to Heister who puts it in his sack)

Princess: Charming? It's robbery. When I see the sheriff, I shall have you arrested.

Heister: As you will, milady. Therefore, I must be cautious.

(Takes rope out of sack)

Princess: What do you have in mind?

Heister: **(To Celeste)** It's a simple thing, milady. Perhaps you, milady, will do this?

Celeste: Are you going tie us up?

Heister: Sorry, I must. Would you be so kind as to hold the end of this rope?

(Smiles and hands rope end to Celeste)

Princess: Celeste! I order you not to listen to this brigand.

Heister: Hold the rope tight, please, milady.

Celeste: Alright.

(Heister runs around Celeste and Princess winding the rope around them until they are tightly bound together back to back)

Heister: There. A pretty pair of doves.

Princess: You leave us in awkward position, thief.

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Celeste: It is a little tight.

Heister: Excellent! I am blessed by your geniality. So, I bid you adio with great finality.
Ta,Ta!

(Bows and exits)

Celeste: Wait! Which way is the palace?

Princess: Celeste, why did you help that detestable bandit?

Celeste: I don't know. He was rather pleasant. **(Smiles)** Possibly charming.

Princess: A thieving bandit is not charming, Celeste.

Celeste: And yet, milady, despite his profession, he was sincere and kind.

Princess: No charm in tying us up. I worry about your judge of character. More importantly, I cannot go to my dinner trussed up like this. What now?

Celeste: If we can untie ourselves...

Princess: **(Princess struggles in ropes)** I'm stuck. We should call for help.

Celeste: We're in the woods. Who's to hear us?

Princess: The Huntsman, the woodsman.

Celeste: A hungry bear, a ravenous wolf. **(Cougar growls offstage)** The cougar.

Princess: I see your point. Maybe we can unwind ourselves?

(Celeste and Princess move in different directions causing them to strain and wobble)

Celeste: This way.

Princess: I'm the princess. This way.

Celeste: No. I shall lead. This way.

Princess: And I say this way.

(They struggle)

Princess: I'm the Princess. I lead, you follow.

(Princess drags Celeste around)

Celeste: Stop! Stop! You're making me dizzy.

(Princess stops)

Princess: I'm stopped. No reason to be rude and insubordinate.

Celeste: **(Rolls eyes)** We're tied *together*, milady. I fall, you fall.

Princess: Oh. That's...

Celeste: Poetic yes? But our feet are free. Perhaps, if we *cooperate*, we can shuffle together. Ready?

Princess: I'm not sure I can. I was born to lead.

Celeste: And how is that helping us now?

Princess: Maybe it's not. What do you suggest?

Celeste: Let's walk together, milady! 1,2,3 Go!

(Celeste moves in a direction as Princess follows, her limp pulls them around in a wide circle)

Princess: We're getting nowhere, Celeste!

(Princess and Celeste stop)

Celeste: Milady, your limp is pulling us in circles

Princess: I can't help it. I have a pebble in my shoe.

Celeste: Take off your shoes.

Princess: Here? In the woods?

Celeste: But, milady, if you take off your shoes, it may make walking easier.

Princess: That's silly. These are my favorite shoes. Besides the ground is damp and covered with little stones.

Celeste: The curse, milady. No shoes, no pebble.

Princess: Oh! That kind of makes sense. **(Slips off shoes)**

Celeste: Follow me. Ready?

Princess: But I'll be walking backwards.

Celeste: Do you know where you are going?

Princess: No.

Celeste: Then let me try to lead us back.

Princess: Alright.
(Celeste sets off in a direction. Princess follows walking backwards)

Princess: Oh, my. I got this.

Celeste: See what we can do together! I think the palace is this way.
(Together they walk a few steps. Ogre enters and stands in front of Celeste. Celeste stops abruptly)

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Princess: Why have we stopped? What's that odour? Celeste is that you?

Celeste: Um, there's an ogre in the way.

Princess: A big ogre or a small one?

Celeste: **(Scared)** Does it matter?

Ogre: **(Roar)** I hungry!

Princess: No.

Celeste: Back up!
(Princess backs up pushing Celeste a step forward)

Celeste: No! Forward.

Princess: Make up your mind!
(Princess steps forward)

Celeste: Faster!

Princess: I am.
(Princess stumbles. Celeste swings them around for Princess to face Ogre. Rope falls off Celeste and she exits)

Princess: **(Sees Ogre)** Oh! Hello. Celeste? Where are you?

Ogre: Hungry!

Princess: Bow to me, you lowly creature.

Ogre: Me hungry!

Princess: Stop your shouting. This is no way to have a conversation.

Ogre: Food!

Princess: Sorry, have none. Shoo!

Ogre: Shoe food? **(Points to shoes on ground. Bends over to sniff)**

Princess: Absolutely not! Take your hunger and go!

Ogre: Stay, eat. Stomach hurt.

Princess: Oh, dear.
(Ogre advances towards Princess)

Princess: I shall scream, loudly.
(Jasper enters behind Princess)

Jasper: What ho!

Princess: A what who?

Jasper: What *ho*!

Princess: A hungry ogre. Is that a wheel of cheese?

Jasper: Yes.

Princess: Quick! Give it to me.

Jasper: No!

Princess: *Don't be a twit!*

Jasper: Don't be rude!

Princess: I need that cheese.

Ogre: Cheese?

Jasper: Get your own cheese. This is an important gift.

Princess: **(Flummoxed)** Oh dear. I've forgotten my manners. **(smiles)** Would you be willing, good fellow, to *lend* me your cheese, please?

Jasper: Asking nicely doesn't mean I should.

Ogre: Me Eat?

Princess: **(Turns to Ogre)** Give us minute, please.
(Ogre scratches head and shuffles feet impatiently)

Princess: **(Turns back to Jasper)** You see, dear, if we can distract the ogre here, it may save us from a spot of trouble, don't you think?

Jasper: I suppose. How are you going to distract him?
(Princess snatches cheese wheel from Jasper)

Princess: Like this.

(Princess shows the ogre the cheese wheel)

Princess: Cheese!

Ogre: Cheese.

Princess: Eat Cheese.

Jasper: *No!*

Ogre: Cheese!

(Princess rolls the cheese wheel past the Ogre to off-stage. The Ogre follows the cheese)

Ogre: *Eat Cheese!*

Princess: He's gone!

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Jasper: My cheese! With my cheese!

Princess: Yes, the ogre's chasing it. We're saved! *Huzzah!*

Jasper: **(Angry)** But....*Oh!* Do you know how long I aged that cheddar?

Princess: No.

Jasper: A long time. It's a prized, aged cheddar!

Princess: Sir, your noble sacrifice has saved us. **(Smiles)**

Jasper: I don't know. **(pause)** It's a gift cheese! My honor depends on delivering it. Now I have nothing to present at the palace.

Princess: The palace! **(Slyly)** I'm going to the palace, too. Perhaps we could go together? And I shall explain how you bravely lost your cheese defending me. **(Smiles)**

Jasper: I'm not sure. No cheddar, no honor.

Princess: What is your name?

Jasper: Jasper. What's yours?

Princess: Priscilla. Greetings Jasper, you have my word. **(Smiles and curtsies)**

Jasper: Huh. Nicely done. Will your word be as good as my cheese?

Princess: Perhaps better. Or you can go after the ogre. It went that way. **(Points off)**

Jasper **(Reluctant and with a sigh)** I should have fought that ogre. Too late, now. Let's go. The palace is this way.

Princess: Wait. I need my shoes. **(Picks up shoes)**

Jasper: Aren't you going to put them on?

Princess: No, they're cursed. **(Pause)** It's a long story.

Jasper: You're a complicated person.

Princess: Yes I am. Lead on.

(Jasper leads Princess into the audience and around, should it take longer than there are lines, ad-lib about the aging of cheese)

Princess: Are you sure this is the way? Shouldn't we have turned back there? **(Indicates a vague direction)**

Jasper: I have a great sense of direction. Don't you worry. Never been lost, not even in a fog.

Princess: How comforting. Still, we seem to be going the long way.

Jasper: It's really a short cut.

Princess: Is it? Have you been here before?

Jasper: No. My gut says this is the way to go.

Princess: Hmm. A man and his stomach. Are we close?

(Jasper and Princess arrive at the other side of the stage)

Jasper: Almost. Just through those brambles up ahead.

Princess: Brambles? What are brambles?

Jasper: Thorny bushes. You must be careful, though, or they'll rip your skin off.

Princess: Oh, dear, maybe we should go around?

Jasper: Nothing to worry about. I'll show you the way.

(Princess and Jasper exit. Black out. Tabs close.)

Scene 4 – Princess's Room

(Lights up. Tabs open. Stage is set as it was in scene 1. Quincely is dusting around the vanity. Celeste is pacing, worried)

Celeste: Oh, Quincely, I can't bear it. I left the princess alone in the forest, with an ogre.

Quincely: Oh, goodness! Do you think she's...dead?

Celeste: Oh, no. Don't say it. I couldn't bear it if she were...

(Princess enters)

Princess: Oh, Quincely, I have had the most harrowing time.

Celeste: Forgive me, milady!

Princess: **(Sarcastic)** Hello, Celeste. Thoughts of the dungeon did cross my mind.

Quincely: The dungeon! Oh the spiders...

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Princess: She abandoned me. To an ogre!

Celeste: What could I do? The ogre... I panicked.

Princess: **(Crosses to vanity, opens drawer and takes out a purse)** I owe you.

(Princess gives the purse to Celeste)

Celeste: What? I don't understand.

Princess: Celeste, you did the hardest thing you could. You left me alone.

Celeste: I abandoned you!

Princess: True. But, too often, I summon and demand things. That smelly ogre, he was a problem I had to solve myself.

Celeste: You're not mad?

Princess: No. Let me be the one to apologise, Celeste. You see, that ogre reminded me a little of myself. Shouting, demanding, boorish. It's no way to behave.

(SFX. A Chime)

Celeste: But, my lady, I was so...

Princess: Insubordinate? I deserved it.

Celeste: I don't think..

Princess: Celeste. When you started to be honest with me and not tell me what I want to hear, you became more friend than a lady-in-waiting. I could use an advisor like that. Would you be willing?

Celeste: I'm not sure what that means, milady.

Princess: Remember the witch? I should have listened to you. I need you to caution me on my bad choices.

Celeste: Oh. You mean to be sensible.

Princess: Yes. You don't have to give me an answer now. Think on it. In the meantime, would you be so kind as to clean yourself up and join us for dinner?

Celeste: Yes, milady. Delighted. Thank you!
(Celeste curtsies and exits)

Princess: Quincely, I will need your help to get ready for this dinner.

Quincely: You look a sight, milady. I'd be happy to.

Princess: **(Smiles)** It's good to be back.

Quincely: Milady, don't you worry. Have a seat. We'll get you cleaned up.
(Princess sits at vanity. Quincely pulls twigs out of Princess's hair)

Quincely: Um, milady, I wasn't able to find your charm. I'm sorry. I did find Grace.

Princess: Grace?

Quincely: The palace laundress. She hasn't seen your charm either.
(Quincely helps to clean up Princess as she talks)

Princess: I suppose not.

Quincely: I also found Prudence.

Princess: The scullery maid?

Quincely: Yes. She hadn't seen it either.

Princess: Quincely, I think I will be alright without it.

Quincely: How so, milady?

Princess: I learned a few things in the woods, Quincely. I stood up to an ogre and braved my way through brambles!

Quincely: Must a been horrible.

Princess: It was. Do you know ogres stink? Awful.

Quincely: How did you survive it, milady?

Princess: I discovered, Quincely, charm isn't a thing. It's a feeling, a kind of courage. One must find one's own charm, to face challenges honestly.

Quincely: If you say so, milady.

Princess: Indeed, Quincely, I do. Now if Celeste is going to be my advisor, I will be in need of a lady-in-waiting.

Quincely: I'm willing to help you find one, milady.

Princess: Perhaps, Quincely, you should consider it.

Quincely: Me? A lady-in-waiting? Go on. That ogre's rattled your wits.

Princess: Why not. You have the right temperament.

Quincely: I don't know, milady. What do I do?

Princess: You must assist me with patience.

Quincely: The scullion wench in the kitchen?

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Princess: **(Laughs)** No, Quincely. We shall train you in the skills of a lady-in-waiting. With Celeste's help.

Quincely: Gaw, that will take certain kind of patience I'd say, milady.

Princess: No worries. We will take some measures to bring forth your own charm, Quincely.

Quincely: Oh, I'd like that!

Princess: Good! We can start with you fetching my tiara from the royal vault.

Quincely: Right away, milady.

(Quincely exits. Princess stares into mirror)

Princess: Oh, no. I'm such a fright. **(leans towards mirror)** Wait! Is that...? Why there's a gleam in my eye! My charm, it is back! Just in time, thank goodness! **(smiles)**

Quincely: **(Enters with tiara)** Excuse me, Milady? There's someone outside who wishes to be announced.

Princess: I'm expecting no one. Who is it?

Quincely: An odd fellow. Never seen the likes of him before, milady. He says he's the envoy of Abstonia.

Princess: Oh dear, I'm not sure I can.

(Quincely places tiara on Princess's head)

Quincely: You look grand, milady.

Princess: Really? You think so.

(Quincely nods)

Princess: Go then, Quincely and present the envoy.

(Quincely exits and returns with Jasper)

Quincely: **(Very Formal)** May I present the Envoy of Abstonia!

Jasper: **(Surprised)** You're the princess!

Princess: You're the envoy?

(Jasper & Princess laugh)

Jasper: Princess indeed. Greetings from Abstonia.

(Jasper bows)

Jasper: I must thank you, Priscilla. Whatever tale you told the king, he now thinks of me as a hero. My selfless actions, he says, by far make up for my lack of cheese. He wants me to recount the story at dinner. I have no idea how to begin. Why you were far braver than I.

Princess: Oh Jasper, you were a hero in a way. I was at my wit's end with that ogre until you showed up. Together we shall make a good story of it. **(Takes a last look in the mirror)** I think I am ready for dinner as I'm ever going to be, thanks to you Quincely.

(Quincely curtsies)

Quincely: Milady! Where are your shoes! You can't go barefoot to dinner.

Princess: Oh, my shoes? I fear I must. They're cursed.

Quincely: Oh my! Even so. Going to dinner barefoot?

Princess: Perhaps you're right. Proper attire and all. Quincely fetch them hither please.

(Quincely exits to get shoes)

Jasper: If they are cursed, should you be wearing them?

Princess: Yes. I deserve it.

(Quincely enters with shoes and gives them to Princess. The Princess puts on the shoes and stands. Takes a hesitant step)

Princess: Wait. I don't feel it. The pebble is...gone. **(dances a little)** The curse is broken! It must have happened when I apologised!

Quincely: Hurray!

Jasper: Apologised? For what?

Princess: Oh Jasper, that is a long story I have yet to tell you. After dinner, perhaps?

(Holds out arm for Jasper to escort her out. Together Jasper & Princess exit)

Quincely:

(To audience) her Shoe is mended, our tale near-ended. Her loss of regal pride, proves the steady guide. So, look to one's own esteem to catch charm's ready gleam. And with this gentle chide, I bid you all, good-bye.

(Slow blackout. Tabs Close.)

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