

The Princess and the Pea

Dramatized by Vern Adix

From the original story by Hans Christian Andersen

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PUBLISHED BY

ENCORE PERFORMANCE PUBLISHING
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Story of the Play

This beloved tale gets an original spin when set in the kingdom of Pilsenferfer! The King and Queen think it's high time their son Prince Albert found a bride and settled down. But shy Albert can't stop collecting butterflies for his conservatory long enough to find and woo a royal maiden. And really, who needs to go to all that trouble when the lovely Anne, one of the Queen's maids, shares his passion for butterflies AND sews the buttons on his coat. If only she were from royal lineage like the other candidates, including the food-loving Princess Fatima, the spindly Princess Slivera, and the overly-energetic Princess Karate. Luckily, a slip of the tongue by the cook and a few others in the court reveal there is more to Anne that first realized. She, along with the other three candidates, will be allowed to show her princess qualities through cooking, singing, dancing and the most difficult of all, sleeping upon 20 mattresses piled atop one small pea!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 m, 6 w, 1 flexible)

KING GEORGE XXVI: King of Pilsenferfer. A bit choleric but kind in spite of it.

FENIGAN: King George's servant who isn't lazy but he sleeps a lot.

THE WIZARD: Of Pilsenferfer. The world's #1 magician, by his own way of reckoning. *(May be played by a female.)*

PRINCE ALBERT: Of Pilsenferfer. A bachelor of sorts who loves butterflies.

PIKELWIK: Albert's servant, a nice guy to have around, but not really very useful.

QUEEN ELIZABETH: Of Pilsenferfer. A romantic sort of motherly person.

ANNE: The Queen's lady-in-waiting, a lovely young woman.

PRINCESS FATIMA: Of Gourmayland. A lover of good food.

PRINCESS SLIVERA: Of Slenderia. A spindly sort of spinster, rather deaf.

PRINCESS KARATE: Of Muselbig. Small but addicted to karate, judo, and wrestling.

COOK: A regal sort of batter mixer and fry cook.

STABLE BOY: Who knows his place, but he is seldom there.

MAID: Who hasn't found her place but appears everywhere.

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SETTING

Here, there, and everywhere around Pilsenferfer and the adjacent kingdoms of Gourmayland, Slenderia, and Muselbig.

TIME

Anytime in the glamorous past when men and women wore interesting and exciting costumes, and when fairy tales about Princesses and peas were believable.

PRODUCTION NOTE

This production is arranged so that alternate scenes can be played before the curtain to enable stagehands to set or change a scene behind. In general it should be staged simply with set pieces, furniture, self-standing doors, sawhorse-horses, etc.

For arena, or modified arena, productions it is possible to establish locale areas with lights, furniture, set pieces and props. The servants of the play may be used as stagehands in costume to shift the minimal furniture and set pieces. This will help maintain a continuous flow of action.

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: The royal dressing room. The KING is discovered with his nightgown and cap on. He removes nightgown to reveal long underwear. He begins to dress himself.)

KING: Boy! ... Boy! ... Fenigan! ... Fenigan I say! ...
(Shouts.) Fenigan!

FENIGAN: *(Comes in carrying scroll under his arm.)* Yes!
Your Highness. *(Bows.)* You called?

KING: Called? I shouted for you, if that's what you refer to as calling! Here! *(Hands HIM clothes.)* Help me with these dratted things ... please.

FENIGAN: Certainly, Your Highness ... here.

(Begins with piece of clothing. HE has put the scroll down as he begins this speech. He really intended to give it to the KING but forgot to do so.)

KING: What's that? Is that the latest *Daily Scroll*?

FENIGAN: Oh, yes, Your Majesty. I forgot to give it to you.

KING: I hope my letter to Miss Heartthrob is in this morning.

FENIGAN: Heartthrob! Yuk! What a repulsive name.

KING: *(Looking through the scroll.)* I don't think it's her real name. It's sort of a pseudo ... pseudo ... you know! Just a name that she uses when she writes ... *(HE looks further.)*
Yes! Yes, yes, yes, yes ... Here it is! Look! See? *(Points to signature.)* See, it's my letter ... how about that? Hm?
(Proud about it.)

FENIGAN: Shall I help you with your clothes while you read, Your Majesty?

KING: Hm? What was that?

FENIGAN: I say shall I... *(Shows him clothes.)*

KING: Oh, yes, go right on with your work.

FENIGAN: Yes, sir.

(FENIGAN helps KING with clothes through the following speeches. King never manages to quite get his pants on.)

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KING: Hm! Here it is ... just like I wrote it ... yes sir.
(*Admires it.*) "Dear Miss Heartthrob: I have a problem. I am writing to ask you for your advice and help. Here is my problem: My son is now 22 years old and still not married. He isn't interested in girls. He spends all of his time on his butterfly collection. How can I find a princess to marry the prince, and after I find her, how can I persuade the prince to marry her? Signed King George XXVI. (*Read it X-X-V-I. Proudly.*) That's a pretty good letter, eh! Fenigan?

FENIGAN: Did you write that, Your Majesty?

KING: (*Positively.*) Yes, sir!

FENIGAN: Really? (*Gives him questioning look.*)

KING: (*Avoids looking at him.*) Yes.

FENIGAN: All of it?

KING: Yes, sir. (*Looks at Fenigan, begins to hedge.*) Well, most of it ... maybe a word or two here and there were ...

FENIGAN: (*Doubtfully.*) Oh?

KING: Well ... the Queen helped me a little ... and ... well ... it is a pretty good letter, don't you think?

FENIGAN: (*Pleased about getting the truth out of the King.*) Do you want your hair parted in the middle or on the side today?

KING: Middle! Now to read the answer to my letter ... "Dear King ..." Maybe you'd better read it, Fenigan, I'm too nervous.

(*HE hands FENIGAN the scroll, Fenigan hands him the comb. As Fenigan reads, the King combs Fenigan's hair.*)

FENIGAN: (*Reading.*) "Dear King: Thank you for your nice letter. My advice to you is as follows: First locate all of the eligible princesses in the surrounding countries who are not married. After you have found the eligible princesses it might be advisable to ..." (*To King.*) What does she mean, advisable?

KING: Let me see.

(*The KING takes scroll from FENIGAN and hands him the comb. Fenigan combs the King's hair as the King reads.*)

End of Freeview

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