



Sleeping Beauty

A Panto By Robert Egginton

"Watch her sleep with the entire cast!"

Cast List

Characters

Princess Belladonna : *Headstrong, arm-strong and unattached*

Prince Smarming : *A bit of a cad*

Sir Prize : *Calm, brave, bit of a hero on the quiet*

The Wicked Witch of the East-end : *vain, evil, bad dress sense*

Bodge the Builder : *Work shy Witch's minion*

Narrator : *A Narrator*

The King of Pantoland : *a bit of a twit*

The Queen of Pantoland : *the power behind the throne*

The Bishop of Stoke : *Bombastic (telephontastic)*

The High Druid : *Welsh, possibly camp (?)*

Edith : *The-Old-woman-that-live-in-a-shoe, Panto Dame ☺*

Hand-maiden China : *Princess Belladonna's nympho French maid*

Jeremy : *Afro'd leader of F.A.T*

Announcement Voice 1 : *Supermarket checkout desk voice*

Announcement Voice 2 : *Lloyd Grossman / TOTP*

MC In Da Hedge : *See above*

Derek : *The King's rather pathetic Man*

The Captain of the guards : *drill sergent-esque*

Cook : *French food-maker*

Dobbin : *Panto horse!*

Cleaner : *Not exactly in the panto, more in the way*

Inspector Johnson (Vicky) : *of the panto police*

Death : *Death*

SM : *Fake stage manager*

Groups / Chorus

Can-can dancers : *ref. see Offenbach from Groves Enc.*

Palace Guards : *Not very bright or efficient, but have shiny uniforms*

Panto Police : *Make sure that panto is performed correctly according to tradition*

The Bishop's Priests : *The god-squad*

The Druids : *early hippies, with slightly more violence*

Clifton Yokels : *drunks*

Witch's Minions : *zombiesque*

Funk Against Tyranny Resistance Corps (FAT R.C) : *says it all*

Suitors : *men (!)*

Hedge Strippers : *women (!)*

STA team : *the backstage crew*

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Act 1

Scene 1 – Fertility Clinic

Tabs closed. House lights up. Behind tabs – The Old-woman-who-lived-in-a-shoe fertility clinic: 4 chairs for waiting room area, a psychiatrist's couch, a desk with a lamp on it, and the desk chair.

Bing-bong supermarket sound. House lights fade during next speech.

A. Voice 1: Ladles and Jelly-men. Welcome to the Winstonion Museum. May I remind you that throughout tonight's ordeal, smoking in the auditorium may result in the following happening.

Many alarms and bells

A. Voice 1: Please do not touch the exhibits or feed the performers, as they are on a strict diet of red meat and smarties. *<afterthought>* And they bite. In the case of an emergency, try to keep calm don't think of pink elephants. Thank you.

Bing-bong supermarket sound. Blackout, spotlights and drumroll

A. Voice 2: Tonight, for your pleasuring, Pantosoc are proud and willing to present an over-budget production for the people's republic of Bristol Union. It is big, it is clever, and yes, we like it like that. More fun than you can shake a cat at, it's time ladles and jellymen – hold on to your pants – 'cause HERE WE GO!!!

Curtains open and "There's no business like show business" starts. This then cuts out as all that is seen on stage is the cleaner.

Cleaner: Oh Shit!

Cleaner Runs off SR. The following is all amplified stage whisper from offstage:

Cleaner: Hugh! Hugh!

Narrator: Yeah? What?

Cleaner: The audience is here! They're all out there waiting!

Narrator: Where are the dancers for the opening number?

Cleaner: I don't know.

Narrator: Oh dear. Brown trousers time. What do we do?

Cleaner: Panic?

Narrator: Hmm. Doable, but less use than a chocolate teapot.

Cleaner: Well, skip ahead and do your introduction.

Narrator: OK, what's first (*sound of pages being flipped*) "Narrator comes on stage." OK, skip that. Ah here we are. Right, wish me luck.

Cleaner: Wait! Wait! You forgot your trousers!

Narrator: Ah yes. Silly me.

Sound of fly being done up. Narrator enters SR.

Narrator: Hello boys and girls! (*waits*) You can do better than that, come on. Now when I say "are you sitting comfortably," you say "what's it to you, ugly." OK, lets try that. Are you sitting comfortably?

That'll have to do for now. But really, without your help, this is just musical comedy with knob gags. Now for those of you who don't know panto, the rules are very easy. Even you arts students should be able to manage this. You cheer the good, boo the bad and if someone is being sneaked up on, you say "they're behind you."

Can-can music and dancers enter in a conga line that snakes round the stage and off again by the end of the music. This should have ended by the next line.

Narrator: (*if anyone says it too early*) OK. Very eager. Well done.

Let's practice that one together shall we. Ready...

Conga line enters again.

Narrator: ...one, two, three. They're behind you! (*if anyone says it too early, break off with...*)
Oh dear. You lot have all the timing of a thirty year old virgin's first shag... not that I'd know of course.

And hecklers, if you must make sudden ejaculations during the performance, don't be surprised if we come right back in your face with a witty retort, though it'll more likely be blatant insults, you bastards. And so to our scene...

Conga line enters again.

Narrator: Now that's enough of that. You're just... what, really behind me?

Narrator looks behind and conga line & music freezes for a moment before continuing quickly till finish. Looks back.

Narrator: Excuse me a moment.

Narrator runs off. Sounds of a fast and furious fight. Narrator returns rubbing hands together.

Narrator: Right! As I was saying (*lights dim to black except spot on Narrator*), This is Pantoland. Otherwise known as Bristol. A peaceful and happy place, full of beered up locals that need but work little, and so pass their time with inane cow tipping contests, marrying their cousins and imitating trees.

The King and Queen are a quite normal couple. For royalty at any rate. And have hardly anyone put to death on a whim. Unless they're musicians. And they are loved and respected by everyone...

Musical Director: Oi!!

Narrator: OK, nearly everyone. But their one sadness is that they have no children. And so, after years of trying, the King decides to pay a visit to one of the Kingdom's more worldly citizens.

Spot fades out, lights come up on stage. After a moment, Derek enters.

Derek: His most majestic royalness, the King.

Derek stands aside. Half the guards enter in formation and stand against the back wall. Derek plays a fanfare on the recorder as the king enters. Then the second half of the guards enter to cover the back wall.

King: (*massaging temples*) Derek. Don't tell me...

Derek: Lost the trumpet sire.

King: Yes. Well. It was at least an improvement on the previous one in front of the ambassador of never-never land.

Derek: Not a fan of kazoos then sire?

King: Not really. I doubt Wendy will take me seriously again.

Edith's voice is now vaguely heard off-stage.

Derek: Sorry sire. I'll wait in the carriage, then.

Derek exits. Edith enters with her back to the king.

Edith: But it's not hidden, I keep my sausage in the fridge. I'll only be 5-minutes, big-boy. No, put it away... (*turns and notices King. Goes down slowly to one knee*) Oh. Your Kingliness.

King: You can rise old-woman-that-lives-in-a-shoe.

Edith: Er, no. It appears I can't. Give us a hand, will you, your Majesty. And you can call me Edith if you like.

King: (*helping her up*) Your name's Edith?

Edith: No. But people find a shorter name is easier to say. (*settling herself on a chair*) So, what brings you here your majesty?

King: A carriage. But I left it outside. So, Edith, I have been told that you are wise in the ways of having children.

Edith: Well, there's only one way I know, and having 20 of the little buggers wasn't so much wise as exhausting, but I do know a thing or two about the birds and the bees, if you see what I mean.

King: You're a naturist?

Edith: How did you know that? But that's not the point. I'm talking about procreation.

King: Oh. I see. Jogging, tennis and such like. Very good for one, what!

Edith: Are you completely jelly-brained?

The guards look at one another, worried

King: Madam, I am the king!

Edith: That may explain it, but it don't excuse it.

Three guards advance on the old woman with spears

Edith: It don't excuse it, *sire*. (*the guards retreat*) Let's start from the beginning. Oh, you know the story. 30 years ago, I was a foot-ware dwelling nymphomaniac and I could get pregnant just by thinking of phallic shaped vegetables. Well, soon I had so many children I didn't know what to do.

I suppose so much is public record. I was spread all over the tabloids. Well, a pretty girl has to make a living somehow. From the money I made posing for cameras in nothing but whipped cream and a cherry or two, I sent my children off to boarding school, and put myself through college. After that, I set up this; the old-woman-that-lives-in-a-shoe fertility clinic.

King: I see.

Edith: Really?

King: No. I just thought you might get a move on if I said that.

Edith: (*sighs*) Never mind. Why don't you get comfortable and tell me your problem. Then perhaps I can help you.

King sits on couch and Old Woman perches on a chair nearby.

King: Well, the Queen and I wish to have a child. Queenie always wanted a sprogglet and I can't say no to her. Ever. But more urgently, if there is no living heir, when the Queen and I are gone, the entire kingdom goes to my auntie. And she's a bit of pain; Always poking her nose in where it's not wanted, turning people into newts and generally being a nuisance, don't you know.

The trouble is, that it's been 3 years now and nothing. Not even a small child. To be quite honest, I'm knackered with the whole business. Well, there you have it.

Edith: And would you say that sexual relations between you are normal? (*the guards try not to laugh*). Are the bully-boys really necessary?

King: No. Not really. In fact, I can look after myself rather well. But if I don't let the boys out of the castle occasionally, they get stroppy and start worrying the serving girls.

Edith: They're a nuisance. Can't they just wait outside?

King: They like to feel useful. Defending people is all they know, you see, and they tend to sulk if they can't defend someone.

Edith: Then they can defend my children who are playing *outside*. Mind you, there's nobody to defend your guards from my children, but I'm not having them continuing to clutter up my clinic!

King: Oh very well. (*To the captain of the guards*) Captain. Take your men outside and make sure that no harm comes to... Edith's children. I'll be perfectly safe in here.

Captain of the guard: Right, you horrible, stupid, ugly, mangy, flea-ridden no-good excuse for a worthless stinking wreck of a putrid...

King: Today, captain please.

Captain of the guard: Alright. Come on then, lads.

The guards leave.

Edith: So, would you say that sexual relations between you are normal?

King: Well, I don't like to blow my own trumpet.

Edith: It's OK if you do. Perfectly natural to blow one's own trumpet occasionally.

King: No, no. That's what Derek is for.

Edith: That aside. You and the Queen. You do regularly have intercourse?

King: Yes. I can go on for hours. I'm quite a conversationalist you know.

Edith: OK. Short words it is then. Do you have sex. With your wife?

King: Of course. You can't make a baby without having sex. I've had some of the best tutors in the land. We do all that kissing and cuddling stuff.

Edith: And... the rest of it?

King: There's more? To be honest, my old tutor used to get a bit flustered talking about sex, he just used to say it's "the most loving hug that a man and a woman can give each other," and then go and have a bit of a lie down.

Well, it all does no good. I squeeze her as hard as I can, and clamp my mouth over hers.

But it never seems to come to anything. She just tends to pass out more often than not.

Edith: (*standing*) I think, I may have found your problem.

The king also stands.

Edith: Let me explain. You see... (*looks thoughtfully at king*) I think perhaps pictures might be more your thing.

Edith hands the king a book. He looks shocked. She turns it up the right way. He looks more shocked.

King: (*pointing at book*) What's going on here?

Edith leans down and whispers in the king's ear.

King: What a bizarrely invasive procedure.

Edith: It's quite enjoyable, honestly.

King: It sounds monstrous. And this doesn't hurt her at all?

Edith: Well, maybe a bit to start with...

King: So it's disgusting *and* painful is it? You really aren't persuading me here, I'm afraid.

Edith: Maybe I can put it another way...

"birds and bees" song – possibly "Let's do it"

Tabs close.

Scene 2 - We meet the witch

In front of tabs - the witch's pad

Narrator: What goes on between the royal couple is not for us to see. But needless to say, they got the hang of things quickly, and soon you only needed to be in the castle late at night to know what was going on. And in the morning. Occasionally the afternoon too.

King & Queen (*voices backstage*) horsy, horsy, horsy, whoopee! My lord! who's your daddy?! oh you naughty thing! Ha ha! etc...

Narrator: Which of course is most awkward for the servants. Those that had not already lost their hearing through senility, soon went selectively deaf to save going mad with the embarrassment of it all.

So, 9 months pass, and with the exception of 2 floods, a riot, a minor war and a plague of racoons, very little happens. The king directs the workman preparing the new nursery. Of course, choice of the final colours has to wait until the sex of the child is known, as nothing is more likely to turn a child into a screaming homosexual than the wrong colour bedroom...

Wicked Witch of the east-end enters SL

Witch: Boring! Boring, boring boring! No-one cares what the idiot does with the nursery. And anyway, my fool nephew wouldn't know a tasteful roll of wallpaper if it was covered in paste and rammed up his.. nose. Double boring I say. Your tone, it's is so insipid, your delivery so bland; have you considered a job in daytime TV? Now push off and let me finish the story.

Narrator: Well I never...

Witch: No, I doubt you ever did, did you. And that's half the problem. You always were a little goody two shoes. Now be a good boy and run along before I do something unpleasant.

Narrator: Like what? You don't scare me.

Witch: I had beans for lunch.

Narrator: You didn't!

Witch: I did!

Narrator: That's chemical warfare, that is!

Witch: *(after a pause)* Oh god, that's bad. Blimey. What a stinker. *cough*

Narrator: You haven't heard the last of this.

Witch: Can't... breath.

Narrator exits

Witch: *(big f***-off monologue)* Some people are so gullible. He must realise I've built up an immunity to my own stink by now. *evil cackle* Oh dear. What a pathetic lot you are. I suppose I'll have to go through all that booing and hissing rubbish with you. Well, I don't care. Because, this time, this panto, I'm going to win. Evil triumphing over good, all the boring heroes dead. How marvellous. If you haven't guessed, and I expect you haven't, I am the king's aunt. Better known as the wicked witch of the east end. Actually, the wicked bit isn't really necessary. I just like the sound of it. There aren't any good witches left, I got rid of the lot of them, so that when I make my move, there will be no-one to stop me. Oh, there's the clergy and those old hippie druids, but they're too busy fighting amongst themselves to stop me. Soon, my plans will begin to unfold and then nothing will get in my way. Mwah ha ha ha ha!!!

But I get ahead of myself. Let me finish the story that was so sonorously started for you. So, the baby was born, a girl, all hairless and looking like a wrinkled William Hague. But then, all babies look like that, even the girls. And, barring the fawning and the limp-wristed handshakes and self-congratulatory smiles all round, that's about it. Sickening. And now, the little bitch is being christened in three days and I'm not invited. Which, in fact, is perfect, as it gives me a good excuse to crash their little party and cause a bit of a stink, though perhaps not as literally as last time.

Now, I just need to get ready for the christening. Bodge, Bodge, where are you, you ghastly little villain? Bodge!

Bodge enters

Bodge: Alright, alright! I was just having a cup of tea. Blimey, you'd think I'd get a bit more thanks. After all, I'm the only one who ever gets things done. Cor, you should see the stuff I've got to do. List a mile long, I'll tell yer.

Witch: What are you blathering about? You never do anything! Half your time is spent complaining about how much work you have to do, ogling anything that moves and combing that nasty mop of yours, and the other half is spent having cups of tea, on the phone to your mates and having a quick kip. I don't think I've ever seen you actually get on and do anything.

Bodge: Yeah, alright. I may take the odd break. But that is just to deal with the stress caused by such a hectic lifestyle. It's not easy being such a geezer like myself. It requires work and dedication. And more often than not, a cup of tea and a bit of a kip.

Witch: Oh, do shut up. Before I have to do something unpleasant.

Bodge: Like what? You don't scare me.

Witch: I had (*strain*) beans for (*grimace*) lunch. Oh it's no good. But I'll think of something really bad. Probably involving a car battery and your testicles. That's beside the point. I need you to do something for me.

Bodge: Look, I work for you. That's fine. But there are some professional lines that I won't cross. I do have some pride.

Witch: You slept with woman from the butchers so you could get free sausages.

Bodge: Well, that's different. I really like sausages.

Witch: But that's not what I meant. I have a job for you. I want nothing to go wrong at this christening. Or rather, the only hitch I want is the one that I've planned. I don't want any adlibbing from those thrice-drafted druids. So this is what I want you to do. Go and find the druids. And stop them.

Bodge: Is that it? The whole plan? Stop them?

Witch: What's wrong with that. That's what I want done.

Bodge: It's just rather lacking in detail is all.

Witch: Use your initiative, moron. Tonight is their solstice celebration. They'll be dancing around the standing stones, worshipping the almighty DAVE and talking a load of mystic bollocks until midnight. Then they'll binge on wine and wild-berries until half one, at which point...

Bodge: Wow! How did you find out all that?

Witch: (*handing bodge a leaflet*) It was all in their fresher's fair leaflet.

Bodge: I know who I'm joining next year, then.

Witch: Shut up. After you got fired from that building job for being too stupid, you're lucky to be in work at all. So, you will infiltrate their ranks, drug their wine and with any luck, they won't wake up until the day after the christening.

Bodge: So at great personal risk I'll go and drug a bunch of fanatics that practice sacrifice every week so that they get it right on the solstice. And what, may I humbly enquire, mistress, will you be doing.

Witch: Why, making myself beautiful for the christening of course.

Bodge: But there's only 3 days left. Surely that's not nearly enough...

Witch: Silence. Get out of my sight. Before I decide to turn your habit of talking out of your arse into a ghastly reality. Now shoo!!

Bodge scarpers

Witch: Horrid little man. Right. I'm off to soak in a hot mud bath. I may not be invited, but none of the really interesting guests at a party ever are. And then maybe I'll give the new princess a small gift. One she'll never forget. Mwa-ha-ha-ha-ha!! Um, that's sort of it. Can we have the lights down now, please?

The lights don't go down. So after a moment, the witch sidles off. Lighting change - tabs open.

Scene 3 – the christening

Behind tabs - the royal chapel. Chairs for dignitaries. On stage - the Queen sitting in her throne, the King pacing, with bumper book of names.

King: How about Mavis?

Queen: She's not a loaf of bread.

King: I know. Princess Debby.

Queen: Look, I'm trying to think. If you haven't got any sensible suggestions, I suggest you keep quiet. Dear.

King: Mmm. (*after a pause*) Dorothy.

Queen: That sounds like a common farm girl. Names of flowers are always good. How about princess buttercup?

King: Sounds even more like a farm girl. Flowers, flowers. Hmm. Daisy?

Queen: Definitely not. Too cow-like. Clematis?

King: That's a disease isn't it?

Queen: No dear. That's Chlamydia.

King: Still. Doesn't sound right. Oh, I've got it!

Queen: What, chlamydia?

King: No. No. The name. Belladonna. What do you think? It's a flower. And it means "beautiful" "kebab".

Queen: You mean "beautiful lady".

King: Exactly. Isn't it perfect?

Queen: It does have a certain something. But isn't belladonna a poisonous...

King: Great. That settles it then. And just in time. Here comes the god-squad.

Derek enters SR followed by the bishop and 3 lessor priests

Derek: His largeness, the Bishop of Stoke. And his train.

The bishop and his train continue onto the stage. The bishop takes Derek aside.

Bishop: What's your name lad?

Derek: Derek, your bigness.

Bishop: Are you a complete idiot, Derek?

Derek: No sir. Some bits are missing.

Bishop: Well, Derek, you may have not have grasped this. So I'm making it clear now. It's not clever making jokes about big men. Not when they're carrying big heavy sticks. They may just decide to smite you round the head with them. If you're lucky

Derek: And if I'm not lucky?

Bishop: I shall sit on you until you stop breathing. Pray you die quickly.

Derek: Point taken. Terribly sorry sir.

Bishop: Don't mention it. (*Derek leaves. Quickly*) Sire! So good to see you ,and the queen looks radiant. And is that the little princess? Marvellous, marvellous. I take it you have a name chosen?

Simultaneously { **King:** Yes.
Queen: Well, actually...

Bishop: Jolly good. You wouldn't believe how often the parents don't decide until the last minute. And then there's confusion and arguments and all sorts of problems and eventually the poor thing's named "spud" or some god-awful thing. (*looks up*) Sorry... and sentenced to a life of misery from the taunts and the potato jokes.

King: (*after a pause*) Right. We'd decided on Belladonna, hadn't we dear?

Queen: Oh, very well. But when the time come, *you're* explaining what it means.

Bishop: Belladonna, eh? Very.. original your majesties. Yes, that will be a grand name, I'm sure.

Derek re-enters SR.

Derek: Sire, all the important sounding people that you invited to make the place look full are waiting outside. They would like to know if they can come in yet.

King: I...er...What do you think dear?

Queen: Yes, do go ahead and let them in, Derek.

As the following list is read out, the king and queen nod to each as they enter SR, except the last one.

Derek: Ahem. The Princess of Regent Street. The Regent of Prince's Street. The Earl of Mayfair. The Mayor of Earl's Court...

King: Is this list necessary, Derek?

Derek: No sire. Entirely pointless.

King: Skip to the end would you.

Derek: Of course. (*flipping over a dozen or sheets*) Sir Plus de Requirements, Rumplstiltskin...

Voice off: Don't say my name you bastard!

Derek: ... and The Old-woman-that-lives-in-a-shoe.

The king hides his face.

Edith: (*entering and coming over to the child*) Your Majesty. See you finally came over your difficulties! Ooo! Is this the babe? Isn't she adorable. She's got your eyes ma'am. And your... your teeth sire. Are you sure she should be playing with those?

King: It's OK. I have a spare set. So, how are the children, Edith?

Edith: Oh, they came with me. They seem to have made friends with your guards.

There is a crash off stage, a howl of pain and children's laughter.

Edith: Yes, getting along famously. Oh, I'm sorry to bring this up now, but can we have a talk later about my fee, sire?

Queen: What fee?

Edith: What fee??

King: Er... Yes. For, um...

Edith: Diplomatic consultation.

King: Quite so. Perhaps a title would be in order, as well. I think you would suit a "dame" rather well, don't you think? We'll talk more later.

Queen: Did any of that mean what I think it meant?

King: No. Probably not.

Queen: Thank goodness for that.

There is a pause while everyone finds their seats

Bishop: Sire, I believe everyone is here. May I begin?

King: Actually, Bish... Can I call you Bish?

Bishop: No, I'd rather...

King: I think You'll find I can. So actually Bish, there are a few guests that haven't arrived that we need to wait for.

Bishop: May I enquire whom it is?

King: Yes.

Bishop: Whom is it?

King: (*quietly*) The Druids.

Bishop: What was that?

King: The Druids. I'm sorry Bish, but I couldn't invite you and your clergy without inviting them. It would show unfair prejudice. And anyway, they're needed for the gift of blessings.

Bishop: I could do that! Blessings. That's what Bishops are for!

King: But theirs work.

Bishop: (*grasping*) But they're heathens.

Queen: (*a little exasperated*) What of it?

Bishop: They, they dance around to strange music, drink too much and wear silly robes.

Queen: The same could be said of your lot.

Bishop: Well, I've heard they drink the blood of goats.

Queen: You drink the blood of your god!

Bishop: Oh. Alright. We'll wait for them. Don't come running to me when you're burning in hell.

The Bishop sits. There is a pause of no more than 15 seconds.

Bishop: (*getting up*) Looks like they're not turning up. I suppose...

Derek enters SR, out of breath. The druids follow him.

Derek: (*out of breath*) Your royalness, the High Druid and five not-quite-so-high druids.

High Druid: Sorry we're late your majesty. Had a little trouble with one of the lackeys of the wicked-witch-of-the-east-end.

King: Auntie! I forgot Auntie! Did you invite her?

Queen: No. I thought you did.

King: Oh dear, she's going to be pissed.

High Druid: Well, the more the merrier.

Bishop: See! What did I tell you. Drunkard!

High Druid: Fascist!

Queen: Please, gentlemen. If you could just try to get along until after the christening?

The High Druid and the Bishop continue to stare at each other.

King: I suppose we're better off without Auntie anyway. She's always trying to poison people and then sulks when no-one talks to her. Bit of a kill joy actually. Very well, everyone is here now. Bishop, if you would?

Bishop: Would what?

King: Don't play silly buggers with me or I'll chop your nuts off. The ceremony.

Bishop: *(breaks gaze with High Druid)* Ah yes. Sorry. *(gathers notes)* Ashes to ashes, dust to dust. Here, do we commit the...

One of the Bishop's aides puts a different set of notes in his hands

Bishop: Right. Of course. Silly me. We are gathered here in the sight of god and in the smell of incense, to welcome this child to our flock. Who are to be the godparents?

King: Well, we'd hoped that you would be a godfather, Bishop.

Bishop: I would be delighted.

King: And that so would you, High Druid.

High Druid: Me?

Bishop: Him?

Queen: Are you sure dear? I mean, we've got one god-father. Isn't there supposed to be a , you know, fairy godmother. The High Druid is neither a woman or a fairy.

Bishop: Actually, he is a bit of a fairy, from what I've heard.

High Druid: I will pretend I didn't hear that.

King: No. These two are the closest we have to powers for good this kingdom. They'll have to do, Will you accept to be the godparents?

Bishop & High Druid: We will.

King: Sold!

Bishop: Very well. Then with myself and the high druid as witnesses, I christen this child Belladonna. May the lord bless her and welcome her into his flock, blah blah blah etc etc.

King: Very nice.

The Bishop takes a step backwards.

High Druid: The boys and I have listed a few of the gifts we would like to bestow on the child to insure a long and happy life. *(reads from the list)* She should be a short, easy lay, covered with honey, thick as two short planks, with four breasts.

A short pause.

King: I think not.

High Druid: We guessed you might say that. We thought it was worth a go. We'll just do the traditional ones then. You would start them off , Gwydion, last night has caught up with me a bit, I think.

The High Druid leaves SL. Druid 1 (Gwydion) approaches the crib.

Druid 1 (Gwydion): From the druidic circles of Llewelyn, I bless you with beautiful good looks. Probably a bit of a heart-breaker, the sort that could make a statue's head turn.

Druid 2: From the brothers of the Brummie druidic order, I offer you the gift of intellect.

Beauty can pall very quickly when the stupid open their mouths. I know. I've been to Ibiza.

Druid 3: Me and my mates of the Glaswegian Druids, reckon she should be a bit of a fighter.

After all, what's the good of good looks and brains if someone smashes your face in with a shovel?

There is a dramatic lighting change as the witch enters SR. Dramatically.

Witch: Oh, this is all very touching. But, I see that the druids couldn't make it. What a shame...

King: They did actually, even if a little late.

Witch: Really? Oh, that's odd. Never mind. I take it you've all given your silly little gifts to the child?

The druids nod.

Witch: Yes. You're telling the truth, I can tell. Typical druids. Very honest. Not so bright.

So, even though you didn't invite me, I'm going to give the child a gift as well anyway.

Queen: No, that's really not...

Witch: But I want to! And frankly, I don't think you can stop me! Ha, ha, ha. My gift is this, little one. You will live, and well, up until your 18th year. But on your 18th Birthday exactly, you will suddenly feel a little prick and die.

The Witch pulls out a carrot and pricks the babies finger, leaving the carrot in the cradle.

Witch: Yes, yes, I know the phallic imagery of it all. But it's traditional OK?

Queen: You monster!

Witch: Ha!

Bishop: Damn your soul to hell woman.

Witch: Oh, it's too late for that. I sold it long ago. But as I plan to live forever, it's really not something I lose sleep over.

King: Auntie, how could you?

Witch: Oh, you wet little lettuce of a king, very easily. Nothing to it. Call it a knack. Let's just say I'm bad.

"Bad" by Michael Jackson. After this, Bodge runs in, rather pissed.

Bodge: Sorry, Mistress. They beat me with cunning and guile and stuff.

Witch: They drank you under the stone table didn't they?

Bodge: Yes, Mistress.

Witch: Well, it's of no consequence after all. Come along, Bodge, lets go somewhere private and have a nice long talk about pain. Yours in particular.

They exit SR. Lights return to normal. A few seconds later, the high druid comes back in, doing up flies.

High Druid: Did I miss anything?

Edith: Not much dear. The Witch just cursed the baby to death on her 18th Birthday.

High Druid: Oh, that's a bit of bother.

King: But you haven't given your blessing yet. Can't you undo her curse?

High Druid: (*walking over the crib*) It's possible, yes. I just need to... Oh no!! The carrot. Did the witch put the carrot in there?

Queen: Yes. I think she did.

High Druid: Then, I'm afraid that I cannot reverse the spell. No druid can undo carrot-magic. It's rooted in the earth, and that we cannot destroy. (*a pause*) But I may be able to alter it a little.

Queen: Anything please. Somebody save my baby!

High Druid: (*picking up the carrot*) OK. It's just you and me.

The High Druid fights to put the carrot in his mouth.

High Druid: (*still struggling*) No, I can't do it!

Gwydion: Yes you can. The power of the carrot is all in your mind.

High Druid: Carrot soup.

Gwydion: Yes.

High Druid: Vegetable curry!

Gwydion: That's it!

High Druid: Carrot cake!!

Gwydion: One more!!

High Druid: Coleslaw!!!

The High Druid succeeds in taking a bite out of the carrot.

High Druid: *(a little out of breath)* That's the best I can do. I've shortened it a bit. My gift is this: that the princess Belladonna will not die on her 18th birthday, but merely fall into a deep, deep sleep, to only awaken at true love's kiss.

King: What's true love's kiss got to do with it? Is that entirely necessary?

High Druid: It's difficult to explain. It's um.. well you see...

Edith: It's a panto thing your majesty. The kiss is very important. Everyone would be awfully disappointed if she was woken up by a workman banging away at four in the morning. It might be easier to arrange, but it lacks that certain epic quality you see.

King: Oh I see. Well, thank you High Druid. I think we all need a bit of time to think. Derek!!

The king claps his hands. Derek runs in SR.

Derek: Ladies and gentlemen, refreshments will now be served in the dining room.

There is a rush off the stage, with cries of "at last" and "free food" and "that's what I came here for". The Queen and a servant take the baby away. All that are left are the King, the Bishop and the High Druid.

King: So, what was your gift originally going to be?

High Druid: Um... Chastity.

King: *(Walking off)* Oh dear oh dear.

The lighting fades on stage and the tabs close.

Scene 4 - Druids vs. Catholics

In front of tabs - still in the castle. The Bishop and the High Druid had placed themselves on roughly opposite sides but in front of the tabs by the end of the last scene.

High Druid: Bishop

Bishop: High Druid.

High Druid: So how are things.

Bishop: Oh, you know. So-so. And you?

High Druid: Can't complain. Mustn't grumble. Done the place up lovely haven't they?

Bishop: Oh yes. Nice, um, pictures.

High Druid: I especially like the one with the line of dogs peeing against the wall. It's very funny that, isn't it?

Bishop: No, not really.

High Druid: Oh.

Bishop: Have you repented of your false beliefs and heathen practices yet?

High Druid: Have you shed the pseudo-intellectual trappings of ruthless crusaders and embraced nature?

Bishop: No.

High Druid: Well then. I suppose you have the place surrounded by now.

Bishop: Yep. You?

High Druid: Of course.

Bishop: So. A stalemate.

High Druid: Seems that way.

Bishop: Well then. I must say that once again, it has been an honour to meet such a gentleman of an enemy.

High Druid: Likewise.

They shake hands.

High Druid: Goodbye then.

Bishop: Bye,

They begin to walk away.

High Druid: (*sotto voce*) You old tosser.

Bishop: What was that?

High Druid: Sorry?

Bishop: You heard me, you nancy tree hugger!

High Druid: Tree hugger! Listen you Listen, you bloated over-dressed blancmange...

Bishop: Take that back!

High Druid: I will. 'cause you're more like a wedding cake anyway.

Bishop: I'll bloody have you!

The Bishop and High Druid have a rather girlie (no offence) fight, with much flapping and slapping. After a short time, the captain of the guard enters.

Captain: Stop that! Stop it! It's silly. Very silly indeed. Now, bugger off both of you.

All exit.

Scene 5 - 18 years later

Behind tabs – the Princess' bedroom

Narrator Enters

Narrator: One good thing comes from the christening. The King and Queen send out search parties to find the witch and make her remove the curse. But after a few months, it seems obvious that she's disappeared from the kingdom. And for this at least, everyone is grateful. And so eighteen years pass.

Two people come running on with a string between them on which are pinned 18 ears.

Narrator: Oi! Oi, you two! (*no response from the ear-carriers*). Some of the castle staff have still yet to get over their temporary deafness, but as is standard for a large jump in narrative, very little has changed. Almost everyone is eighteen years older. Some of the older citizens of the kingdom have died and new ones have been born to take their place; that place being gurgling to themselves and dribbling a lot. And so the kingdom continues to function. After a fashion.

In the castle, Belladonna grew up. As a princess blessed by the druids, she was clever, beautiful and strong. As a young girl to whom nothing was denied, most of the time she was a petty, short-tempered, tyrannical right-royal pain in the arse. And everybody loved her. Well, that's what the history book says. Actually, there were a number of people who didn't like her, and the majority, having never met her withheld their judgement, but as none of them could afford decent authors, they don't count.

And with her eighteenth birthday approaching with the speed and deadliness of a short-sighted skinhead in a Ford Escort, the King and Queen have frantically been scouring the land for suitors, in the hope that one of them will be Bella's true love.

Lighting change. Curtains open to bedroom scene. The maid is sitting on the bed, sewing. Bella runs in from SL and hides behind a changing screen.

Bella: Psst.

China looks round, but doesn't see her.

Bella: Psst!

China looks round again, but again does not see her.

China: I must be pissed.

Bella: Oi! China! Behind the screen.

China: (*getting up*) Oh, sorry miss. Didn't see you there. What are you doing hiding there, miss?

Bella: My parents have had me meeting horrid young men all morning. Well, that's not quite fair, actually. Some were quite old. They all smile and fawn and bow and it's flattering for about 10 minutes and then I find myself longing to run away and become a nun so that I never meet another one of those crawling, greasy... men!

China: Oh la, my lady!

Bella: What ever does "la my lady" mean? Sounds like something you put on toast.

China: All ze staff are saying it at ze moment. You know, like last month it was *wazzuuup!*

Bella: Put like that, I think I quite like "la my lady."

Footsteps are heard approaching

Bella: China! Do me a favour. This will be my parents wondering why I've run off leaving half a dozen suitors waiting in the ballroom. Don't tell them I'm here, please.

China: Of course not, your highness.

Bella: (*returning to behind the screen*) Cheers.

The King and Queen enter, followed by Derek, and Bodge as the chamberlain. The King is wearing silent bells on one leg.

Queen: Bella? Are you here, dear? Ah, China. Have you seen your mistress recently?

China: I think she's in ze ballroom, ma'am.

Queen: Ah. No, she's absconded. Again. Are you sure she isn't around?

China: Quite sure.

Queen: Ah well. (to the audience) I wonder if you've seen her. Has anyone seen my daughter? Where has she gotten to?

Queen waits to get a few suggestions and doesn't pay attention to answers of behind the screen. Then she picks on one and she, the King and the servants exit. After a moment, Bella re-emerges from behind the screen. However, she doesn't see the others sneak back in behind her.

Bella: Thanks, China. I thought for a moment those two interfering old pains in the...

Queen: Hello Bella.

Bella: Mummy! I didn't... or rather. Um... Don't blame China. My fault really.

Queen: Oh., I don't blame her. I'm sure she was put up to this. Bella, why can't you at least be civil to your suitors. They honour you by travelling so far to see you, you know. You really hurt Baron Goutguzzler's feeling when you called him an over-stuffed gilded pillow-case.

Bella: Call me a liar and I'll eat my wimple. He was wearing half a carpet, mum.

Queen: That's not the point.

Bella: It is to me! He's so full of hot air. If I ever pricked him I'd end up with an eight year old boy with a beard.

King: What about the others? Chamberlain?

Bodge: Yes. Yes. (*flicks through notes*) Duke Botheringale of Worplesdon...

King: Yes. He was very nice I thought. And he had that enormous pecker.

Queen: That was a falcon dear.

Bella: No. I don't think so.

King: Why not?

Bella: He was the one with the missing finger, glass eye and bandaged arm, right?

King: That's the fellow.

Bella: Seems like he's unpopular with all the birds.

King: I... Oh, I see. Who else?

Bodge: Um... Next was Lord Fopworth of Basingstoke.

Bella: Another silly wet nobleman. He was wearing lace.

Queen: Many men wear lace. It's quite fashionable at the moment.

Bella: It was pink. No. The nobles are all twits or shirt-lifters.

King: Nothing wrong with shirt-lifting. An ancient and honourable profession. Some of my best friends are shirt-lifters.

Queen: You're thinking about something else entirely dear.

King: Oh yes. Quite right. My mistake.

Queen: Well they weren't all noblemen. What about that musician bloke...

Bodge: Jean-Thomas the pianist from Dorking.

Bella: Dorking? Where is that?

Bodge: Eh? Oh, wherever you left it I expect.

Queen: Yes. You were impressed with him weren't you?

Bella: He certainly had nice long nimble fingers. But he also had wandering hands. He was lucky to get off with just a sprained wrist. Oh, it's no use. None of them really measure up. They're too snooty, or lecherous, or just plain silly.

Queen: Will you at least see the rest of today's lot? There's quite a mixture left. You never know, maybe just one of them will be the one.

Bella: The one what?

Queen: The one what is right for you, girl. Please will you see them?

Bella: Oh must I? More of them? Just because I'm eighteen tomorrow, I won't suddenly become a stiff, old maid. Maybe I'll find someone next week. Or next month. Whatever. What does it matter?

King: Maybe more than you think.

Bella: What does that mean exactly?

Queen: Oh don't pay any attention to your father. You know what he's like. He just wants you to be happy. We'll just go and round up the nice young men left in the ball room and you can see them in here. I know it's a little overbearing in the formal rooms, since Mervyn Peake and Mr Escher did that extension for us. But we did get all those hidden passages and the infinitely long long-gallery at virtually cost.

King: Ha! I'd like a word with them! I get lost in the bathroom at times. It's most disconcerting to walk in and meet yourself coming the other way.

Queen: (*leading the king out*) It's only a mirror.

King: But they're damned creepy is what they are.

The King and queen have exited by this point. Bodge and Derek notice a moment later and run after them.

Bella: Oh China, save me from parents with good intentions. I don't see the point of meeting any more men. They sound like a broken record, each one scratching out the same old theme... (*overly melodramatic male voice*) My lady, dearest Princess, most radiantly beautiful gem, I am Baron Goutguzzler of Upmyself and my ever-so humble life is yours, as is my ever-so impressive weapon, for, from the moment I saw you I knew that I was in love with you and had to have you to keep in a box, if you're good you might get weekends off. Will you marry me?

(*normal voice*) Maybe some of them are putting it on to impress me, but I can't tell. I don't care if they have 10 acres or 100 acres. It doesn't impress me if they can ride a horse upside down or go cow-tipping at weekends. None of it matters. It don't impress me much.

"It don't impress me much" song during which the men described enter and then stay at the back as chorus. At the end, Bella and China go into a quick huddle. Then China goes over to the suitors and flashes a bit of leg, possibly saying "hey boys" or something else corny. While they're ogling, Bella runs off. Chorus number here? Ends when the King, Queen, Derek and Bodge come back in.

Queen: Bella, dear... Oh not again.

King: China, where is the Princess? And this time it's important. We have to find her before midnight. And it's now... (*looks at watch*) blasted thing's broken again.

Queen: It's a sundial. It doesn't work at night. China, where is my daughter?

China: I really don't know, Ma'am. She just ran off.

King: It's nearly her 18th birthday. I want her safe in her room before tomorrow.

Queen: Derek, go and fetch the captain and tell him to assemble his guard here, now.

Derek: Yes, ma'am.

Derek turns to go.

King: And find a doctor, just in case.

Derek: Yes, sire.

Derek turns to go again.

Queen: And summon the high druid as well.

Derek: Yes ma'am.

Derek turns to go yet again.

King: And tell the kitchen to make up some roast potatoes and cheese. Just in case.

Queen: Just in case of what?

King: In case I get hungry.

Queen: (*after a pause*) Well, what are you waiting for? Get on with it man!

Derek, poor put upon Derek, runs off.

Queen: You can't get the staff these days.

King: Yes I can. Why, only last night...

Queen: Not in front of the servants, please. China!

China: Yes, your majesty?

Queen: Is that your knitting?

China: (*hiding it*) No, your majesty.

Queen: Show me. Now.

China reluctantly brings it out and the queen takes it.

Queen: That's very dangerous, China. You know we even have the guard out searching the castle for sharp objects. You can't be too careful. Especially with tomorrow being... tomorrow.

King: What have you knitted anyway. It's too small for a sock.

China: It's a sheath, Sire.

King: Really? I couldn't fit my sword in there, I'd tear a hole in the end.

China: I think zat might ruin it, sire.

Queen: Hmm. I'm not convinced that a knitted one would work. Or be very comfortable either.

The Queen and China smile.

King: Will you two stop talking over my head. It's most disconcerting, as you're both shorter than me.

The Captain of the guard enters.

Queen: Ah, Captain. At last. (*hands him the knitting needles*) Look after these.

Captain: You asked for me ma'am?

Queen: That's right. The princess has run off and we must find her before her birthday tomorrow. Where are your men?

Captain: The SPORT teams are still being rounded up.

King: The what?

Captain: The SPORT teams. Sharp Pointy Object Retrieval and Termination teams, Sire. They should be reporting in any moment now. I should warn you though. They've been a bit funny since that SAS training course they went on.

All the guards rush down through the audience shouting "hut hut hut hut" for some reason, and assemble on-stage around the prosarches.

Captain: Report, Lieutenant.

Lieutenant: The last rooms have been searched, sir. All sharp pointy objects have been retrieved and terminated, sir. The Cook wasn't happy though. Apparently it's hard to carve meat with a wooden spoons. I'm afraid we had to put Corporal Nethers in a cell, sir, after he reported having pins and needles.

Captain: Very good, Lieutenant. OK men. We have exactly (checks watch) oh, appears to be broken. Anyway, we have about 5 minutes to find the princess and take her out!

Queen: Captain!

Captain: Sorry. We have to find her and bring her back to her room, dead or alive. Sorry, sorry. Alive. Definitely alive.

Reveals, pulls down or somehow acquires a diagram of the castle

Captain: Alpha team will search the public chambers. Beta team will search the bed chambers, Seti team will monitor the radio telescope and as gamma team arrived last from the hike today, they will be searching the latrines and septic tanks.

Half the Guards grumble, slouch off SL

Captain: The officers and myself will search the kitchen and the wine cellars, thoroughly. She could be hiding in any one of those barrels of vintage port.

Now, this is it. Our big moment. A task so simple that even we can't mess it up. This will be a day to tell your grandchildren about. The day we, the palace guard, finally, did something right. OK men, it's all up to you now. Get out there and find her!

On this last comment, the captain gestures off stage with the hand holding the knitting needle. The nearest men back off slightly.

Captain: *(handing needles to next guard)* Oh, deal with these, lieutenant.

Lieutenant: *(handing needles to next guard)* Deal with these, sergeant.

Sergeant: *(handing needles to next guard)* Corporal.

Corporal: *(handing needles to next guard)* Lance-corporal.

Lance-corporal: *(handing needles to next guard)* Private.

Private: *(handing needles to princess as she enters)* Princess.

All: Princess?!

Bella: *(nonchalantly tapping needles against palm)* Yes? Oh, everyone looks very tense. What's the matter?

Queen: Uh, Bella dear. Please be careful of those knitting needles.

Bella: These? Why? I'm not a little girl. I think I'm safe from a pair of blunt old knitting needles.

King: Blunt? No, no, no. Sharp as razors those. You could really hurt yourself.

Bella: These old things? No, they're blunt a anything. See? *(tests point with finger)*. Ow.

There is a short pause. Then Bella collapses onto the bed.

King: Damn. I feel that could have gone better.

Queen: It's our fault. We should have told her about the curse. Then she would never have done that.

King: Maybe not. But somehow it was never the right moment.

Queen: No. But what is the right moment to tell one's daughter that she's cursed by the wicked witch of the east end? We just don't know when she'll wake up. The right man may not turn up until next week or next year or... We might have gotten old. We might even be...

Witch: *(entering)* ...dead? Yes. Such a pity. Such a waste. I feel for you, I really do.

King: You? What are you doing here?

Queen: Gloating I expect.

King: And pity, auntie? Pull the other one, it's got bells on.

Witch: Oh yes. So it has. *(aside)* All the fashion sense of a magpie. *(to royal couple)* It's true. I know I cursed the child. But I... had a headache that day. I hadn't been feeling myself.

Captain: Who were you feeling?

Witch: That's my own business, but what I did was wrong. I realise that now. Let me make it up to you.

Queen: You've had eighteen years to do that. Why leave it so late?

Witch: I've been out of the kingdom for many years and in my travels I've had time to do a lot of thinking. I'm here to offer you a gift.

King: I remember the last time you offered us a gift.

Witch: I said I'm sorry. What do you want? Blood?

Captain: As a start. Just a couple of pints.

Witch: Oh what an amusing man you are. You must be the court fool.

Captain: Madam, I am the captain of the guard and head of military intelligence.

Witch: You could have just said yes.

Captain: How dare you. I think I must say, that I do not trust you, witch.

Bodge: Captain! Do you dare speak for your king?

King: What? Eh? No-one speaks for me. Except for me. Sometimes my wife. Oh, and the chamberlain. Actually, quite a few people do. But that's beside the point. Calm down, captain. I would hear what auntie has to offer.

Edith and the high druid arrive.

Witch: I cannot remove the curse. (*points at the high druid*) His meddling put it beyond my power. But if you are willing, I could put this entire castle to sleep along with the princess. You would wake up when she does. All you have to do is go to sleep willingly and not resist the spell.

High Druid: Sire. Please don't do it. This woman tried to kill your daughter. Do you really believe she could change that much? It's a bit of a coincidence that she turns up now. What if you don't wake up for five years? Or twenty years!? What'll happen to the kingdom?

King: Someone could stay behind to keep running things.

Witch: Don't you have a chamberlain?

King: Yes. He's as loyal a man as I've known. Where is he?

Bodge: I'm still here, your majesty. As ever, your devoted servant.

High Druid: Don't I know you from somewhere?

Bodge: Me? No. I don't recall having met you before. And I would remember having met such a distinguished soul such as yourself, high druid.

Edith: What a charming man. Tell me. Do you find it hard to keep your clothes on being so smooth and greasy?

Bodge: I'm sorry. You are?

Edith: Dame Edith of the Shoe. But you can call me darling

Bodge: Ah. The old woman who lived in a shoe but now has a nice little semi-detached in Bath-Spa. I've heard so much about you.

Edith: Yes. But you can't prove any of it.

King: It's always lovely to see you, Edith. But Derek was supposed to find a doctor.

Edith: He did. I don't generally tell people I'm a doctor. Or that my last name is Ruth.

Queen: Dr Ruth?

Edith: The one and only. But please don't tell anyone else. I prefer a little privacy. You don't know how embarrassing it can be to have couples stop you in the street to thank you for your help and how Roger is living up to his name and they're at it noon and night. I don't embarrass easily. But it's one thing to discuss venereal diseases in a clinic. It's a little off-putting when you're doing your big shop at Asda.

Queen: I see. I don't suppose there's anything you can do here, is there?

Witch: Of course there isn't. I'm sure Edith's a wonderful doctor and a woman that can coax the best from any man. But I feel that living death's beyond her ability with smelling salts.

Edith: Can't argue there.

King: Chamberlain. Do you feel up to the task of keeping the kingdom running? Just you have to stop the leprechauns picking the mushroom men, keep the fairies off the booze, and always have one eye on the pixies. Stop watching them for a minute and they'll nick the marmite sandwiches right off your plate, the buggers. But, apart from that, the kingdom pretty much runs itself. What do you say?

Bodge: It would be an honour, your majesty.

King: What do you think dear?

Queen: Going to sleep for a couple of years would be a nice rest from running this place. Besides, I don't think I have a choice. I love my daughter too much to leave her alone like this.

Bodge: If I may say so ma'am, I think that's very wise of you. Sire, I think this is the best decision for everyone involved. So the witch has been a bit... hideously evil in the past. Who hasn't eh? Go on. Give her a chance.

High Druid: There's something very funny going on here. Can't you tell? How can you trust her?

King: How can we not?

High Druid: Well, go ahead and be foolish if you wish. I'll have no part of it. *(to the witch)* You haven't seen the last of me, witch.

The High Druid leaves

King: OK, auntie. We'll trust you. But any funny business and I want you to fetch the high druid immediately, chamberlain. Is that clear?

Bodge: As a mountain spring, your majesty.

King: Very well. We're ready.

Witch: *(Like Mr Burns)* Excellent. *(pulls out large carrot and clicks fingers)* It has begun.

King: Is that it? No magic words? No chanting?

Witch: No. That's for the punters, mainly. Just relax and listen.

Some "truly terrible music" fades up and everyone but the witch and bodge fall asleep.

Witch: That's it. I've won. They're all asleep and I'll make sure that no-one will ever be able to get in and wake little miss sleeping beauty. So, it looks like the kingdom is mine. Bodge...take your fingers out of your ears man...

Bodge does so and immediately stretches and yawns

Witch: ..and don't do that! So, my little puppet on a string, let us go and plan a new future, where I am queen and all of pantoland bows before me as their supreme ruler. And tell me more about this rail privatisation. That sounds horribly evil.

The witch begins to laugh, evilly. She walks daintily off stage with a royal wave. The Cook comes on with a ridiculously over-sized piece of cheese.

Cook: Sire. I couldn't find any cheddere, zo I brought you some...zut, alors! *(Collapses on to cheese)*

"Truly terrible music" fades up, the lights fade out and the curtains close, ringing to the witch's laughter.

Act 2

Scene 6 - Clifton, 100 years hence

In front of tabs. Behind tabs, the derelict shell of Clifton, with naught but banks where shops should be, and Jeremy in stocks.

Once house lights are down, there is a drum roll and a spot on the centre of the curtain. Then some silly music begins and Dobbin appears for his solo dance number. Afterwards, the narrator comes on stage.

Narrator: Welcome to the second half of tonight's ordeal. That was Dobbin there, and fans will be pleased to note that we have pictures of Dobbin being mounted backstage at this very moment. We must apologise to those of you expecting to see Clarabel the panto cow dancing tonight, but she couldn't be here due to painful calves. If there are any friends of Dave or Mike in the audience, then I'm very surprised. But if there are, don't worry. The porters have found some bolt cutters and Vaseline, and should have them free by the end of the performance.

In this second half, we have more of the same for you. Actually, exactly the same. Because of the current gag crisis, all our remaining healthy jokes have been culled and we have had to reuse the jokes from the first half. If at the end of the performance anyone wants to make any comment on this or on any other aspect of the show, please fill in the slip in the back of your programme and deposit it in the bin on the way out. And so with puns, melodrama and a general disregard for the institutions of taste, gender and plot structure, we return you to the show...

We take now another great leap into the future, like a blindfolded man on the diving-board of faith taking a running jump into the three-quarters empty swimming pool of uncertainty. One hundred years have passed and the world is a different place. There have been wars, famines, floods, and even attacks by beings from another planet. However, due to our effects budget over-running, we can only afford a single man standing in a bucket of water... No, no I've just been told that we can't actually afford that either. So, a hundred years of war and extraterrestrial violence is being represented by the wanton destruction of this stuffed toy.

A teddy bear on a stick is pushed through the curtains. The narrator pulls a gun from his jacket and shoots it in the head. The bear falls off the stick and the narrator kicks it off the stage.

Narrator: After staging a bloodless coup over her own lackey, the wicked witch of the east-end now holds absolute power over the lives of Bristol's population, and her strangely zombie-like minions roam the streets enforcing her will. People are afraid to leave their homes, in case they're stolen while they're out, and it is to this dark and forbidding background that two questing knights from the far away land of Somerset now enter our scene.

The Prince and Sir Prize enter from the auditorium SL.

Prince: Dobbin? Dobbin, where are you? I have sugar lumps. Dobbin, I'm getting my boots all muddy and you are a very naughty horse. You'd better stop hiding soon or I'll geld you with a rusty spoon.

Sir Prize: You know we'll not find him tonight. I expect he's found some poor sap to entertain and has earned himself a nice warm stable somewhere. You should be proud of him. He's a very clever horse.

Prince: Clever enough to leave me walking for the last hour. Pick any horse in the kingdom my father said. And I chose Dobbin, the world's greatest and only dancing horse. It was quite amusing for a while, but twenty miles at a rising foxtrot is a real pain in the arse.

Sir Prize: Never mind. Look, there's a sign ahead. Perhaps it's a village.

Prince: Ah, somewhere to rest and perhaps help with our quest for a...

Sir Prize: Shhh! Don't say it out-loud, my prince. Our quest is too important to be spoken of so lightly. Somebody might hear.

Prince: Whom? There's nobody for miles.

Sir Prize: (*pointing at audience*) What about that lot.

Prince: Oh yes. Well at least we can hope for a dry bed and a clean woman for the night.

Sir Prize: Are you sure it's healthy to do that every night?

Prince: Best form of exercise. And don't forget, there's the rigorous mental challenge of getting them into bed in the first place.

Sir Prize: "Clifton Village."

Prince: What?

Sir Prize: Clifton Village. That's what the sign says.

Prince: Excellent. I've heard of this place. Plenty of nubile and unworldly 1st year students, ripe for the... plucking. And you can't apparently move for trendy wine bars. And where there are wine bars, there are...

The tabs open to reveal a derelict street with and a guy in the stocks.

Prince: Oh dear god. All the trendy wine bars have been turned into banks! This is nothing like I had been led to believe Clifton was like...

Jeremy: Excuse me.

Prince: ...I mean there's nobody here. Where are the delis, the antique dealers and furniture shops?

Jeremy: Excuse me!

Prince: Where, damn it, are the interminable pizza establishments?

Jeremy: All gone. Shut down by the Witch and her minions.

Prince: Who said that?

Sir Prize points at Jeremy

Jeremy: The name's Jeremy. Say, you're a funny looking pair. Are you local?

Prince: Certainly not. I am Prince Smarming de Bournville, bachelor, scoundrel and heir to the throne of Somerset. And this is my good friend Prize; Sir Prize Dan Shocked, knight of the stocking, afternoon of the holy sock, and generally a jolly good chap. So. Now that we're introduced, tell me about this witch that has so spoiled this Cliftonian utopia.

Jeremy: She lives in luxury in her mansion known only as "The Wurks", whilst the rest of us starve. If you don't work for the witch, it's hard to stay alive, now the only shops left are shoe shops and banks.

Sir Prize: Shoe shops and banks? Surely that can't work. What do people eat? The shoes?

Jeremy: Don't be silly. You can't eat shoes. Just the slippers and wellingtons.

Prince: Sheer madness. How do you clothe yourselves? How do you survive without the basics of good pizza, olive bread and 17th century walnut tallboys? How can you possibly live like this?

Jeremy: We survive. Most resort to getting pissed to try and forget about it all.

Sir Prize: And how do they pay for the alcohol?

Jeremy: With loans from the bank.

Sir Prize: But no-one can pay them back.

Jeremy: That's right. And the witch owns the bank. So once you're too far into debt, she takes your soul and you become one of her mindless minions.

Prince: Ah. An age old question. The price of a human soul...

Jeremy: About fifty quid.

Sir Prize: Fifty quid? That's barely enough for three rounds of drinks, or one round at the Lizard Lounge.

Jeremy: Hey. Life's not fair. Look at me for instance. Why do you think I'm in this state?

Prince: Oh my god! This man is in stocks!

Jeremy: Give that man a coconut.

Prince: Well, why didn't you say anything?

Jeremy: Why didn't I mention that rain is wet? Or that Dale Winton is unlikely to become prime-minister? It's bloody obvious, that's why! Now, are you just going to stand around like bystanders at a traffic accident, or are you going to help me out of this?

Sir Prize moves to help him. The Prince stops him.

Prince: Wait! We don't know why he's in there. He could be a dangerous criminal.

Sir Prize: You heard what he said. Law's broken down here. A witch rules the land, her minions terrifying the city. Look at him. We can't leave him like this.

Prince: Ah. But we only have *his* word on all this.

Jeremy: Why, of all the...

Prince: Uh, uh. It's for your own protection.

Jeremy: Bollocks it is.

Prince: OK. It's for our own protection. Which is, in my opinion, more important.. So, tell me, how can we believe you?

Sir Prize: What can you tell us to prove to us that you should be let out.

Jeremy: I am in here for wearing platform shoes. They've been outlawed for being too funky you see. It's lucky they don't know half of what I've really been up to.

Sir Prize: How do you mean?

Jeremy: I am the president of the fat RC.

Sir Prize: What does that stand for?

Jeremy: Funk Against Tyranny Resistance Corps.

Prince: That's a strange sounding group. I refuse to believe you, I've never heard of it.

Jeremy: Of course you haven't. That's because it's a secret. Listen, a hundred years ago when the witch assumed control of the city, she infiltrated most organisations and societies through the use of her mind-control trance music. But the Jazz, Funk, Soul Society refused to listen to it because it was too mainstream. Eventually, the society was a rallying point for the underground resistance and so became the Funk Against Tyranny Resistance Corps. We are pledged to resist the witch and when we are strong enough, to defeat her. And we keep the groove and stay funky, so that we will be ever vigilant against the mind-numbing effects of the witch's music.

Sir Prize: It sounds like a noble cause, does it not, my prince.

Prince: It does. If you're telling the truth.

Jeremy: If you want proof, you'll just have to wait. A patrol of minions will be along soon enough to give me my evening whipping. Then you'll see.

Prince: Very well, we'll wait.

Sir Prize: I wish we could help you against the witch, you know, but we're already on a mission.

Prince: Are you sure you should be telling him?

Jeremy: What sort of mission?

Sir Prize: He's in stocks! What's he going to do?

Prince: OK. Well, actually, it's less of a mission, more of a shopping trip. Mummy and Daddy are redecorating the palace and we're looking for some of the more tricky items for them. You know, like marble armchairs, brass monkeys, salt and vinegar flavoured toilet seats and so on. Oh, and I'm supposed to be looking for a princess; someone to marry and settle down with.

Sir Prize: But he doesn't seem to be in too great a hurry.

Prince: It's true. Being charming, laid back and ruinously dashing have let me know a great number of women. Specifically, by charming them, laying them back, ruining them and then dashing off. Yes, It's the bachelor life for me, for as long as I can get away with it. Did you know, I've won cad of the year 3 years running now. That takes ruthless dedication.

Sir Prize: The queen, his mother, gave us a list of qualities the prospective bride must have.

Prince: It's rather exacting. That's why I've had to get to know quite so many of them. It's rather like shopping for a new mule.

Sir Prize: No it's not.

Prince: Ok. It's like buying an expensive car. You want to travel from showroom to showroom, checking out different models, eyeing up the bodywork, running your hands over the controls, having a rummage in the glove compartment, perhaps looking under the hood. You may even take out a few for a test drive. but eventually you find one you like and... and I have no idea what happens then. I expect that it's like a light gets turned on inside you.

Jeremy: I expect something gets turned on alright. But love is more than lust. It's just not always easy to tell the difference.

Sir Prize: Perhaps love's something you find after you've spent more than one evening with someone?

Prince: Well, that's me buggered then. No, I'll hold out for love at first sight, thanks.

Jeremy: What's this exacting list say, then? Exactly.

The prince roots through his pockets and pulls out a list.

Prince: Ahem. She must be "at least six foot tall. Quite bright, but mustn't show up the wall paper too badly. No tassels." Oh no. That's the standard lamp mummy wanted for the salon. Hold on.

The prince brings out another list.

Prince: "Someone who's kind and generous, who's face will look good pressed onto a coin, who's bright enough to stand her own against a pit of vipers or the royal court, whichever is more venomous, who will make me happy, isn't likely to kill everyone with poison and no tassels." Oh, that was in there after all. Well, between them, those specifications rule out all women I've met. Most of them trip up on the tassels. Dangerous things. I can see why they're on the list.

Jeremy: Wasn't the note mix-up gag used in the first half?

Sir Prize: Yes, twice in fact. There's a joke shortage I'm afraid. But at least the protesters are still letting through puns.

Prince: Mmm. Puns. Plop in a sausage, some onions and ketchup and you've a meal fit for my dad.

Sir Prize: Any idea what a pun is, Smarming?

Prince: Nope.

Sir Prize: So we've had no luck finding bonk-o-boy here a wife. But we have an even more important mission. Our true quest, is to find a place where... where a man can get a drink. In a building. Surrounded by his mates.

From here until the song, drunks start stumbling in to lie or slump about the back of the stage.

Jeremy: You're looking for a pub?

Prince: Yes. But not just any pub. Your genuine true-to-god, down-to-earth, real-ale pulling, local darts team hosting, haven for regulars and strangers alike. No themes. No gimmicks.

Sir Prize: A place where every man enters equal, and is judged only by the strength of his bladder and ability to stay upright.

Prince: A pub that is the centre of a community, the chapel of the drunk, the heart and soul of a town.

Jeremy: Oooooo. Such a place would likely be one in a million.

Prince: Perhaps. But it is our pledged quest to find it. And find it we will.

Song: "There's a pub for us". In second verse, drunks form into male chorus, before returning to their original positions.

Jeremy: That's a very... interesting mission.

Prince: Quest.

Jeremy: Whatever. But I'm afraid that the witch has closed down all the pubs hereabouts.

Sorry to disappoint you. But I have to ask, *why* are you looking for a pub?

Prince: It was...

Sir Prize: That guy with the...um...

Prince: No. I remember. Last Easter at... no that's not it either...er...damn.

Sir Prize: But it was very important.

Prince: Oh yes. Of the utmost import. Like Carlsberg. Mmmm.

The price and Sir Prize stare off into space for a moment, lost in thought of beer. The sound of the minions approaching is heard.

Jeremy: Oi! Hey, snap out of it - they're coming! Do you believe me yet?

Prince: That could be anybody.

Sir Prize: What if it's not? How would you like to be shackled to a post and whipped?

Prince: Very much. But I respect you too much as a friend, Prize.

Sir Prize: That was a rhetorical question.

Prince: Of...of course it was. I knew that. It was a rhetorical answer.

Several zombie-like minions arrive on the stage SL and slowly move towards the trio.

Jeremy: Oops. Out of time fellers. It was nice knowing you.

Prince: Never fear, friend.

Jeremy: Friend?

Prince: Yes. Obviously you were telling the truth all along. And as a man of honour, I shall defend you. I would have preferred a beautiful maiden, but beggars can't be choosers.

The Prince reaches for his sword and draws... nothing.

Prince: Have at you! Ah. My sword?

Sir Prize: On Dobbin, sir.

Prince: Ah well. Nothing for it. We shall have to run away. Sorry Jeremy.

Sir Prize: Ahem. What about (*puts on mask*).

Prince: Shall we? (*Puts on own mask*)

Original Batman fight music. The Prince and Sir Prize attack the minions in a Batman type way with Pow! and Biff! signs being held up by the drunkards. They then pie the minions until one collapses and the rest run away.

Jeremy: Thank you sirs. That was very brave of you. A little unorthodox perhaps, but brave none-the-less.

Sir Prize: That's OK. Lucky those pies were there really.

Prince: Yes. What a coincidence, eh?

Jeremy: Quite. (*after a pause*) So, are you going to leave me here until I rot, then?

Sir Prize: No. Sorry.

Sir Prize and the prince try to let Jeremy out of the stocks. Eventually, Prize goes over to the fallen minion and retrieves a huge key. This fits in the huge lock on the stocks. With much clanking, the lock opens and Jeremy stands up.

Jeremy: (*stretching and scratching his balls*) Great balls of fire, I feel good! I knew that I would. I been in those stocks for four days now and for the last two I've had the most incredibly itchy...er. That is to say, thank you, sirs. Thank you both very much. I wish that there were somehow I could repay you.

Sir Prize: Well, we've just arrived here. Could you tell us if there are any princesses, priestesses, or other assorted noble women around here?

Jeremy: Oh. Not that I can think of.

Prince: I'm not picky. Any woman will do.

Sir Prize: Smarming. We have to find you a wife.

Prince: (*childishly*) Don't wanna wife.

Sir Prize: Don't be childish.

Jeremy: There is a legend though. Of old Wills castle. No-one goes there. No-one can. To start with, it's on the other side of the wide and desolate downs. But it's also surrounded by a thick and dangerous porn hedge. Nobody has ever got past it. A few have returned after

venturing a few yards in, with glazed eyes and garish tales of enchanting succubuses and things done with cling film that would make your hair curl. But inside the castle is said to rest Princess Belladonna - a beautiful and yet highly discerning woman who is said to have a sharp tongue but a heart of gold.

Prince: Sounds fun. Right we're off.

Sir Prize: Did you hear what he said? It's incredibly dangerous and no-one has ever returned. We'll never get through alive.

Prince: Nonsense. You're only saying that because nobody ever has. But have you ever met anyone quite as debauched and perverse as myself?

Sir Prize: No. Can't say that I have.

Prince: Well then. I should be well protected. Don't worry. I'll blindfold you.

Sir Prize: That's supposed to comfort me?

Prince: Er. Yes. That's why I suggested it. To... comfort you.

Sir Prize: You're a strange, sick little man, sometimes. And you have my pity.

Prince: Why thank you Prize. Jeremy, can you tell us the way to this Wills castle?

Jeremy: Well, if you want to throw your lives away, there are worse ways to go I suppose. You follow this road here, until you reach the Victoria Rooms Municipal rubbish tip. And then you fork off...

Prince: Excuse me?

Jeremy: You fork off to the left. Then you keep going until you hit the downs. Wills Castle is on the far side. You should be able to follow the sound of the solo saxophone to the porn hedge. Now you'd better go. The witch is going to be really pissed off at how you defeated her minions.

Prince: That's right! To the Dobbin-Mobile!

Blackout and tabs. More Batman music.

Scene 7 - The witch and the hedge of porn

In front of the tabs with large fluorescent sign "Wurks"

Explosion of at least sound, as lights come up on the witch holding her large carrot and berating her minions. Bodge stands nearby.

Witch: What!?! They defeated you with... with quiche?!

A Minion: Tart.

Witch: What was that? Be careful. I'm very cross, and that means that you are all in imminent danger of having your pants filled with scorpions. Now, you say there were two of them. So even though you outnumbered them and you were armed, they beat you with baked goods.

The minions hesitate and shuffle their feet.

Witch: Oh I can't be bothered. I can't even be bothered to torment and torture any of you... Except you.

The witch points her large carrot at a member of the audience for just longer than is comfortable, and then breaks off and continues at the minions:

Witch: Put together you've less brain left than Anne Robinson. When I removed your free-will, I really should have left you enough intelligence to tie your own shoe-laces. This is just embarrassing. Call yourselves evil minions? Go on, get out of my sight.

The minions scamper off.

Witch: Idiots. Without vastly superior numbers, they're about as effective as a sponge in a swimming pool. And just as wet. No, I think I need someone with a brain for this. But failing that... Bodge!

Bodge: Yes, your evilness?

Witch: I have a task for you. I want you to...

Bodge's mobile phone goes off. After both of them pat their pockets furiously, Bodge finds his phone and answers it.

Bodge: Alright, darlin'. Nah, I'M IN THE PANTO! (*pause - sucks in air through teeth*) Cost you. (*pause*) Cash in hand? (*pause*) Alright, I'll be round in 5 minutes. Just let me slip into something more comfortable. Oo, you cheeky cow. Right. See you in 5. Don't let on to the missus OK? (*hangs up*) Sorry, got to rush.

Bodge starts to leave. The witch stretches out her carrot and points at him. He freezes in his tracks and slowly spins round as if not under his own volition.

Witch: Not so fast! I've had enough of this insubordination from you, builder boy. I think it's time I did something to concentrate your mind a little on the task in hand. penili-corporis spongiosum mogrificus floribundum

Bodge: (*clutching at privates*) Argghhhh!! And also Euggghhhhhhhhhhh!! (*or similar*) Oh, that's not good. Oooooooooo. What have you done to me, you horrible old witch?

Witch: Flattery will get you no-where. I have robbed you of a serious distraction to your work.

Bodge unzips his flies to reveal a bunch of flowers.

Bodge: Bloody Flora! That's a bit below the belt isn't it?

Witch: Ha! Maybe now you'll be a good boy for a bit. Behave yourself and I'll restore your fornication apparatus to it's former - ahem - glory. Now, here's what I want you to do... oh do put that away. You're scarring the audience and it's sure putting the willies up me, I can tell you.

Bodge puts away flowers and does up flies.

Bodge: You're a cold, frigid, heartless bitch.

Witch: What was that?

Bodge: I've an old bondage-harness itch.

Witch: Well, I'm not interested in your sordid little hobbies. Keep them to yourself. I'm more interested in these two wandering crusaders, whoever they are, and if they might cause trouble. Because I'm the only one around here allowed to cause trouble. I just want you to find them and follow them, without getting covered in custard. Even you should be able to manage that!

Lights go down on the witch and Bodge who then leave.

Announcer 2: It' Thursday night, and you're watching Channel 5. Which can only mean one thing...

Light come up on MC as he comes through the curtain.

MC: It's soft porn time!!

Dodgy background music including saxophone begins. The Prince and a blindfolded Sir Prize enter.

Prince: This seems to be the place. It's where the dodgy music's been coming from.

Sir Prize: It's actually quite catchy.

Prince: That's dangerous talk, that is. Are you sure you're ready for what's coming up?

Sir Prize: Well, it may be hard. But I can take it.

MC: And have we...

Announcer 2: And have we got a line up for you tonight.

MC: First tonight, we've...

Announcer 2: We've got tropical erotical line dancing, followed by...

MC: Followed by "flights of fancy", our topless darts show.

A pause.

MC: To round the evening...

Announcer 2: To round the evening off, we have an American special feature: "Beer belly dancer of the year award."

The MC has stomped off to the wings. A pause.

Announcer 2: Oh, look, I'm sorry. I'll be good.

MC: Honestly? OK then. I can see our tropical erotical line dancers just changing over there in the wings. *(slight pause)* So let's meet tonight's special guests Prince Smarming and Sir Prize. Why don't you come on up here?

Prince: No. That's fine. Don't mind us. We're just passing through.

MC: I said "why don't you come on up here."

Two floozies enter and escort the Prince and Sir Prize up on to the stage.

MC: It's great to have you here. Now I understand...

Prince: Can I just ask you a question?

MC: Sure, pal.

Prince: This is supposed to be a porn *hedge*. It's a bit sparse.

MC: Well, these stories get exaggerated. It's more a porn bush. And if you look carefully, you can just see it, over there in the wings.

Prince: Oh. I say.

MC: Now, I understand that you're both here forever, entranced by our addictive pornographic web.

Sir Prize: *(to empty space)* Ha. That's where you're wrong.

MD: I'm over here.

Sir Prize: Terribly sorry. You see, I am blindfolded and therefore cannot see any of your tempting imagery. And my friend here has such a filthy, disgusting, sordid, dirty...

Prince: ...perverse...

Sir Prize: ... and thoroughly corrupted mind, that he is immune to anything you could throw at him. Come on Smarming, let's go.

Prince: *(starring into wings)* OK. In a minute. I'll just want to stay here a bit longer to...study...stuff. Gosh. I wonder how she does that.

Sir Prize: Does what? Who? Smarming, I really don't think this is the time to...

The MC removes Sir Prize's blindfold

Sir Prize: Oh. I say.

MC: Now you two just relax and enjoy yourselves. *(to the floozies)* You can go now. I think I can handle them from here. *(to audience again)* And so...

Announcer 2: And so on with tonight's show. It's what we've all been waiting for, let's see the Alaskan marathon strippers!

5 girls walk into the theatre in front of the audience. They are obviously dressed in very many layers. They start to undo ties, remove water wings or remove wellies, whatever their top layer is.

Then a siren sounds, there are flashing (rotating police things?) lights and the panto police enter, including the inspector with a flashing light or a siren on his head.

Inspector: Shtop, shtop, what's all this then?

That's enough of that, I reckon! Boys,
clear that filth off the floor.

You *(points at MC)*, come here, and shut that door.

Some of the police escort the Alaskans out of the theatre, one closes the door.

MC: Who are you?

Inspector: Does this on my head not give you a clue?

MC: Oh., You're one of those semi-intelligent traffic cones the local council is always going on about.

Inspector: What do you mean, semi-intelligent?
 Watch your mouth, or it might have an accident.
 My name's Inspector Johnson,
 but everybody calls me Vicky.
 We happen to be the panto police.
 We're all bastards, so don't get tricky.

MC: The panto what?

Inspector: The panto *police*.

MC: The what police?

Inspector: The *panto* police.

MC: The what-what?

Inspector: Careful, you, this is a panto audit.
 And you are up to your neck in it. (*points at the Prince and Sir Prize*)
 And that goes for you two as well.
 This panto suspect is suspect as hell.
 I'm tempted to put it under arrest.

Prince: (*woodenly*) What are the charges?

Inspector: (*points at girls leaving SR*) Well, they're over dressed.

MC: Look. We're all very tired. And making things rhyme does not make them more impressive. It's very annoying. Can't you just tell us what the charges are?

Inspector: Alright. (*reading from note book*) Tap-dancing without due attention to prat-falling. Lack of cutesome small children on stage singing songs. Not one person has lost their trousers yet, and there have been several cases of gratuitous wittiness...

MC: What's wrong with that? I thought this was supposed to be funny.

Inspector: Funny?! No! Just stick to bad puns and innuendo. Tradition, boy. None of this situational or observational rubbish.

MC: I thought some of it was quite good, actually. And you know, there is a joke shortage at the moment...

Inspector: Who asked you? Listen, when I was young, all we had to make our humour with was two bits of string, a box of wigs and occasional syphilis. Do you know what the secret to good comedy is?

MC: Timing?

Inspector: No! Knob gags. Keep them coming hard and fast. That's what the audience wants. That's what they expect. And that's what they're damned well going to get!

One of the panto police enters SL

Police Personage: All the girls are now safely covered with a ground-sheet sir. They won't cause any more trouble.

Inspector: Very good. We're going now. But I expect this panto to jolly well pull it's socks up. I expect another chorus number, at least 3 plot twists and, if at all possible, a pair of false breasts before the end. Do I make myself clear?

Everyone Else: (*downtrodden*) Yes, Sir.

Inspector: Good. Well, carry on about your business then.

The police and the inspector leave, with siren going and lights flashing.

MC: Odd lot, don't you think. (*waves hand in front of Prince's face*) The wheel's still turning but the hamster's dead. (*To announcer*) You were very quiet. Where were you when I was being berated by the filth?

Announcer: Well, that's the advantage of being a disembodied voice, I guess. I was just watching and having a quiet giggle to myself.

MC: If I could see you, I'd give you such a thump. *(to the audience)* Well, it looks like these two are good as gone. Shall we carry on with the next floor show? I'm sure I heard a yes in there. Without further ado, then...

Dobbin walks in with an electrical cable between his teeth.

MC: No. Hey, horsy...

Sir Prize: *(groggily)* Is that Dobbin?

Prince: Sounds like it.

Sir Prize: Oh.

MC: Put that down. Power cables are very dangerous if you don't know... No! don't pull it. Stop that. You'll...

Most of the lights go out. The MC runs off.

Announcer 2: *(slowing down)* Dave? What are you doing Dave? I'm afraid. I'm so terribly...

Prince: Dobbin! There you are lad. I was just about to leave.

Sir Prize: Oh yes. Me too. Could have stopped looking at any time.

Prince: Incredible. This place hasn't affected either of us in the least. I don't know what the fuss was all about. Come on! Onward to the breast.

Sir Prize: What?

Prince: Onward to the castle. What did I say?

Sir Prize: Never mind. It probably isn't in flagrante...er, important.

Prince: Rii-iight. Come on Dobbin.

Dobbin walks up to the stage. The Prince takes a run up but stops as Dobbin moves. He tries again but the same thing happens.

Prince: Right. Dobbin, you take the lead.

Dobbin exits SR, followed by the Prince and Sir Prize. Then a few moments later, Bodge sneaks in. He dials a number on his mobile.

Bodge: Hello, Bodge here. The witch please. No, I don't want to hold. Give her the phone in the bath, for goodness sake. *(pause)* Yeah. You'll never guess where they've... no they haven't gone to the zoo, or the Epi, where? No. They've gone to Wills Castle.

Bodge has to hold the phone away from his ear while the witch screeches at him.

Bodge: Well I don't know. You're the evil genius. *(pause)* OK. Fine. Oh that's good. That's very good.

Bodge exits SR as the lights fade out.

Scene 8: The Castle again

Behind tabs – the Princess' bedroom. Tableau from the end of Act 1

Tabs open. Lights gradually come up with the truly terrible music. Dobbin, the Prince and Sir Prize walk in SR.

Prince: Dobbin, which part of "We're leaving" do you not understand? This place is obviously deserted, except for the *(yawn)* terrible piped music.

Sir Prize: Perhaps it's a clever attempt at thematic continuity.

Prince & Sir Prize: *(after a pause)* Nah!

They notice all the sleeping people.

Prince: Oh my god! They're all dead!

Prize goes over to one and listens to chest.

Prince: Prize, leave her alone! That's sick, twisted and just morally wrong.

Sir Prize: I'm checking for a pulse - they don't seem to be breathing. But look at all the dust, they've been here for years.

Prince: Yes. Maybe they're wax work dummies, you know, really good ones.

Sir Prize: ...that have been left in sleeping positions in a lady's bedroom in an abandoned castle, surrounded by porn. Does that strike you as odd?

Prince: Yes, I was wondering about that. And nobody charged us for entrance or tried to sell us a programme.

Sir Prize: Ha. They'll never make their money back.

Dobbin does a little tap dance.

Prince: What's that Dobbin? I think he's trying to tell us something.

More tapping from Dobbin

Sir Prize: What? Don't you understand him?

Prince: No, I never did understand Modern dance. Come on boy, tell Unckie Smarming and you might get a sugar lump.

More Dobbin tapping

Prince: What's he saying?

Sir Prize: Um..... "don't be patronising or I'll kick your teeth in"

Prince: Ah.

Very short tapping from Dobbin

Sir Prize: Dobbin says "it's more likely that they were put under a spell by the witch by means of the piped music and thus have remained this way for several generations".

Prince: Yes, he's right. That does seem more plausible.

Sir Prize: (*spotting the princess*) Wait a minute. My! She's stunning.

Prince: Oh yes. She can butter my crumpet any day.

Sir Prize: If she wasn't dead.

Prince: Yes, yes. A minor technicality.

Sir Prize: Perhaps... Perhaps the kiss of life would wake her.

Prince: A kiss? What good is a kiss going to do after all these years, old chap? You're thinking, perhaps, of a large voltage across the temples, or smelling salts. My grandmother used to swear...

Sir Prize: No - no, I believe that in these situations a kiss is more appropriate. Now, my old tutor told me a mnemonic or something for this....ah yes. ABC - "Arteria Benidictus Caldisimo".

Prince: What does that mean?

Sir Prize: I've no idea, I don't speak Latin. Neither did my tutor. Pretty lousy tutor really. But apparently he taught the Old King of Bristol.

Prince: Yes? Whatever happened to the Old King?

Sir Prize: He's over there by the washbasin.

Prince: Oh right.

Sir Prize: Ah well, here goes something.

Prize goes ver to the Princess, and with his back to the audience gives her a kiss. Possible slurping noises.

Sir Prize: Damn. Didn't seem to do anything.

The terrible music cuts out.

Prince: Well, that's something at least.

Tapping from Dobbin, who moves towards bed.

Sir Prize: No, Dobbin. I don't think so.

More tapping

Sir Prize: Well, it just wouldn't work. The culture gap would be too great.

Mournful tapping

Sir Prize: No, it's not you. I think you're great. And someday you'll mount the right girl I'm sure.

Prince: Move over, let the expert try.

The Prince leans over the Princess and nearly kisses her. However she wakes up in the nick of time.

Bella: Eugh! Get off! Talk about terminal bad breath - I could have suffocated. You should get that looked at. But probably from a safe distance.

Prince: Are you by any chance Princess Belladonna?

Bella: I'm afraid you have the advantage of me sir.

Prince: Oh, I hope so. I am Prince Smarming de Bournville, at your service Princess.

Bella: Oh my goodness! Look at everyone. How long was I asleep?

Sir Prize: Same length as you are awake surely.

Bella: Great. I wake up surrounded by my comatose family and friends and I'm greeted by a slimy toad with halitosis and a struggling comedian. Oh. Where are my manners?

Thankyou for waking me, kind sirs.

Prince: It was nothing.

Bella: Oh really? Well forget it then. Hello? What a beautiful horse. Is this your beast then?

Prince: That's right, gorgeous.

Bella: I wasn't asking you.

Dobbin walks up and nuzzles Bella

Bella: He's very affectionate isn't he?

Sir Prize: Dobbin, behave!

Bella: Yes, it's to meet you too, Dobbin.

Noises as others start to wake up. The following 3 lines are not necessarily said separately, and others may make up their own phrases.

King: No. I don't wanna ride a pony.

Edith: Well at that price I'll have 3 then.

Derek: Left a bit. Up a bit. Ooo, that's the spot.

Sir Prize: I think they're waking up.

Bella: No kidding, Holmes.

King: Derek?

Derek: Yes sire?

King: Tell the cook that I want kippers for breakfast.

Cook: OK. Can do.

King: Cook, why are you in my bedroom?

Cook: I waz going to ask you ze same thing, sire.

The Queen gets up and looks at the other sleepers.

Captain: Corporal, get out of bed and put the kettle on, dear.

Corporal: Don't appear to be in bed sir.

Queen: *Ahem*

Captain: (*jumping up*) Company, atten-tion!

The guards jump to attention. Some are facing the wrong way.

King: (*getting up*) My goodness, what time is it? (*looks at watch*) Oh, appears to be broken.

Queen: Captain, take your men and secure the castle please.

Captain: (*saluting*) Don't worry ma'am, if any of it's missing, you'll be the first to know. After me, that is. And whoever found the bit was missing. Or rather didn't find it because it wasn't there...

Queen: Today captain, please.

Captain: Yes ma'am. Come on lads

The guards leave.

Queen: OK, everybody up. It appears the witch's spell is over.

Edith: And just when I was getting comfortable.

Bella: Um...what spell?

King: I wonder who broke it?

Bella: Broke what?

Prince: Your majesties, allow myself to introduce... myself. I am Prince Smarming de Bournville, and this is my friend Sir Prize. And if any spell was broken, I believe that it was I who broke it. Don't worry, I'll pay for it. I hope it wasn't expensive.

Edith: Possibly. It depends on how you look at it. Or her, even.

Bella: What's that supposed to mean?

King: So, you woke up our Belladonna did you? Well, then let me be the first to congratulate you...

Bella: (*stepping between the King and the Prince*) Hello!? No more congratulations. No more talking as if I wasn't here. No more anything, until someone explains what's been going on.

A breath's pause and then everyone starts explaining together.

Bella: Argh! Shut up the lot of you! Does anybody know what's been going on *and* can explain it simply without just guessing? (*silence*) Anyone? Right.

Bella goes into the wings. Whilst everyone is still looking at each other, confused, she returns dragging a dishevelled narrator.

Narrator: Look. I can explain. I was just trying to reassure her. She was alone and cold - well she would be in that outfit...

Bella: Don't worry. Your indiscretions offstage are already forgotten.

Narrator: They are?

Bella: Are what?

Narrator: Forgotten.

Bella: What's forgotten?

Narrator: My indiscretions offstage.

Bella: Ah. I'd forgotten about them. Well, in that case you'd better explain what's been going on around here. Quickly. And Maybe I won't inform the panto police of your appallingly unprofessional conduct.

Narrator: You're very kind. Well... (*deep breath and then the following very fast*)

When you were christened, the wicked witch, she
cursed you to die at eighteen, but then the
druid took a bite from the carrot and
saved your life. With me still? So,

Eighteen years go by and then you
feel a prick and fall asleep with
all your family by your side as the
witch takes over the kingdom. And
So she's stayed in sole control for a
hundred years and
everything's gone from bad to worse, then
these two come along and save the
day (in a minor way),

though for a hero, my money's still on Dobbin. He may not be the best kisser, but just imagine if Fred Astaire had four feet.

A short, slightly confused pause.

Bella: Right. I see.

King: Actually, I got lost somewhere around the christening.

Queen: I remember. We had to send out search parties. All the guests found it hilarious.

King: Could you just repeat it again for me?

Bella: No, no, thank you. Thank you so much, you've been an invaluable help. We wouldn't want to keep you any longer.

Narrator: It's no trouble...

Bella: Push off.

Narrator: Right-o.

Narrator exits.

Edith: My! Just imagine. A hundred years. I expect I'm a rich woman.

Derek: How so?

Edith: Well, last time I checked, I had about two hundred pounds in my Bearings Bank savings account. By now...

The Prince coughs, loudly.

Edith: That's a nasty cough you've got there. You should probably take something for it.

Bella: I've heard Hemlock's very good.

Queen: Don't be poisonous, Belladonna.

The Captain and the Lieutenant bring in Bodge, disguised as the chamberlain. Dobbin gets agitated.

Bella: What's wrong, Dobbin? It's just the Chamberlain. He's harmless.

Lieutenant: Sire, we just found him wandering in one of the outer hallways.

King: Chamberlain? But you were supposed to be running my kingdom these past hundred years. Explain yourself, man.

Bodge: Sire. I... I don't know what happened. One minute I was escorting the witch out of the castle and then *bam!* I wake up on the floor. And the whole castle seems deserted - the guards and the present company excepted. She must have somehow put me to sleep as well. I'm sorry sire.

King: Ah. I see now. Don't worry, chamberlain, I understand how deceiving my aunt can be.

Queen: I thought that one had to be willing for the spell to work?

Bodge: Ah yes. But who told you that, eh?

Queen: A fair point.

Bodge: Damn that witch. I'm tempted to go and see her right now and give her a piece of my mind.

Captain: (*quietly*) Humph, that wouldn't leave much left.

China, who has until now rested behind the bed, wakes and rises slightly

China: Ugh. Where am I?

King: Ah. Someone give the girl a hand.

China: What am I? Why am I?

Edith: Poor dear's gone a bit metaphysical. There, there love. You've... just had a wee sleep.

Prince: *ahem*, Princess Belladonna, though I have known but a few women before...

Sir Prize: Ha!

Prince: May I say that none of them were as beautiful as you. Well, maybe a couple were close, but you! You are perfect. I know this is sudden and all, but... but you...you...who is that?!

The prince walks past Bella to China.

Prince: Hello there! Dear lady, would you grace me with the divine pleasure of your name?

China: China. Hand-maiden to ze princess.

Prince: What a delicate name. Well, hand-maiden China, though I have known but a few women before...

Bella: This is familiar.

Prince: ...none of them were as beautiful as you. Well, the princess is close, but you, my dear, are even more perfect perfection. I know this is sudden, but... let us go somewhere private and talk, shall we?

China: La sir! Zat sounded almost like a proposal.

Prince: More like a proposition.

China: Well, it'll do for now.

She takes his arm and they exit SL.

Bella: Is he always like that?

Sir Prize: What can I say? Smarming by name... But he's very dedicated to our quest for the perfect pub.

Bella: The perfect pub?

Sir Prize: Yes, if it exists. Oh, and he's brave in his way, too. He only sometimes runs away. And then there's always a good reason.

Bella: (*amused*) Do you always defend him like this?

Sir Prize: That's my job. I am sworn to it. A knight always keeps his sword and always keeps his word.

Bella: I see. I expect that China will sort him out, though.

Sir Prize: I don't know. Smarming is a bit of a lady-killer.

Bella: And China is a bit of a man-eater, so they're just perfect for each other.

Sir Prize: I doubt his mother would agree.

Bella: Mothers never agree. That's what they're for, I think.

Edith: Tell me, Sir Prize, it's been a hundred years, things must have changed. Change is inevitable, after all - except from vending machines. Do, for instance, people live on the moon?

Sir Prize: Well, not...

Queen: Have war, disease and famine been eradicated by a gradual but steady rise in the standard of living?

Sir Prize: Oddly enough...

Edith: Is Cliff Richard still singing?

Bodge: I expect so.

Edith: Pity.

Sir Prize: How did you know that, Chamberlain? I thought you'd been asleep?

Bodge: Well, it's obvious isn't it? Anyone who appears that pure and good and nice all the time must be the personification of evil. I expect he's just waiting for the end of the world so that he can rise up and lead the legions of hell across the face of the earth.

Edith: I always thought he looked a bit too smug.

Cook: What about microwaves?

Sir Prize: What about them?

Cook: Have zey been invented yet? Zey would be so useful for all zese microwave dinners I have stashed in the castle freezer...

Sir Prize: No! Weren't you listening to what the narrator said? Nothing's really changed for the better round here while you were asleep, because this witch has been running things.

Cook: A shame, ze plastic always melts in ze oven. I'd better go - I left a pot-roast of mutton in ze oven before we left. It might possibly be done by now.

Cook exits.

King: Yes, what is to be done about Auntie? She's obviously a bit of a liability now. Taking over my kingdom. The unmitigated cheek of it!

Captain: I say storm her stronghold, kill everyone and hang her up by the unmentionables.

Derek: Do women have unmentionables?

Captain: Possibly, but not that I'd care to mention.

Bodge: That sounds like a fine plan. Brilliant. Wouldn't you say so sire?

King: Hold on a minute. We can't just go barging in on auntie uninvited. It would be rude.

Besides, it wouldn't work, as we don't know where to find her.

Bodge: At her stronghold at the Wurks.

Sir Prize: How did you know her stronghold is at the Wurks?

Bodge: You... mentioned it earlier.

Sir Prize: Oh no I didn't.

Bodge: Oh yes you did.

oh no I didn't etc...

Bodge: Well, maybe the witch mentioned it. At the christening perhaps.

King: But you weren't at the christening, Chamberlain.

Edith: Yes he was. I remember where I've seen you before, now. The High Druid was right.

The chamberlain is in fact (*she removes his fake beard*) the witch's light-weight servant,

Bodge-the-builder.

Bella: Jeepers!

Bodge: And I would have gotten away with it all if it weren't for you pesky kids.

Bodge runs off stage

Queen: Captain, stop him!

Captain: Lieutenant, stop him!

Lieutenant: Yes sir! I'll go and find beta team.

King: He's getting away!

Captain: No. They don't know this part of the castle well enough. Go and find Sedrick. He knows this part of the castle better than anyone.

Lieutenant: But he's been dead a hundred years, sir.

Captain: Oh yes...

King: Just go and get him yourselves!

Queen: Never mind. It's too late. And as the chamberlain, Bodge knows this castle as well as anyone here. I expect he's long gone.

Captain: Ah, but we know where he's going. He'll be off to the Wurks, no doubt. My original plan is still valid, I believe. We take the Wurks on-masse and take care of the witch and that treacherous Bodge in one swell fwoop.

Bella: Don't you see, that's what he wants us to do. It must be why he risked coming here in the first place. It'll be a trap.

King: I think you're right, Bella dear. It's a pity, though. I think auntie's gone too far this time. Her taking over my kingdom is just not cricket, don't you know.

Sir Prize: If I might make a suggestion, sire? Perhaps we should stick our head in the noose.

King: That's a crap plan.

Sir Prize: Ah, but once we've sprung her trap, we spring one of our own.

King: Excellent idea. In that case, I'll get my sword and we can be on our way.

Sir Prize: If I may be honest, sire, this is a game for the young.

King: And?

Sir Prize: Well, you're not. Young that is.

King: Ha! I can still fight. To be a king requires nerves of steel, a will of iron...

Edith: ...and a knob of butter.

King: Edith, please!

Queen: He's right you know. You seem to take forever climbing the stairs to your bedroom.

King: That damned Esher again.

Queen: What do you suggest, young man?

Sir Prize: If perhaps just the Prince and myself went to spring the trap, the witch might get overconfident.

Captain: Yes. With good reason. I still think a full frontal attack is best.

Queen: Oh do shut up captain. Your lot couldn't storm a wendy-house. Do you think this is likely to work Sir Prize?

Sir Prize: With a little local help, yes.

King: Very well, Sir Prize. You and the Prince...

Bella: And me! You'll not leave me behind. I'm young too.

Sir Prize: But you're a... a girl.

Bella: I'd take you any day sunshine. Besides, with me it's personal. She tried to kill me, remember?

Queen: Oh, if you must, dear.

King: Good. Well then, if you think the Prince and China are finished whatever they're doing?

Sir Prize: Goodness yes, it's been more than two minutes now. For Smarming, that leaves one and a half minutes to spare.

Tab's close

Scene 9: The Wurks

The Wurks sign is in front of tabs. Secret weapon is being prepared behind tabs. The Narrator enters

Narrator: And thus it came to pass that it took rather longer than expected to separate the Prince and China. But patience prevailed and with a little help from a bucket of cold water and a crow-bar, our intrepid band of young non-gender-descript persons set off to meet the witch.

Through the now defunct and slightly shabby porn-bush, across the wide and desolate downs they travel, until they come at last to the Wurks, just off-stage. Sadly, and in an oddly cost-effective way, this means that you can't actually see them battle the Witch's elite "Knights of the living dead," swim the moat of wasp infested jam, (*gestures at shoulder height*) this high, and finally make their way into the heart of the witch's fortress, which is where we now meet them again.

Narrator exits and the Prince, China, Sir Prize and Bella enter SR in the auditorium.

Prince: Gosh. That was amazing China. How did you do that... that thing to the bouncer?

China: Well, I used to be a gymnast you know.

Prince: Ah I see. That also explains how you did that other thing earlier.

China: No. Zat just takes practice.

Bella: And Sir Prize, when you ran around the wall and then spun in the air to kick the three blokes at once. Wow. Worth the ticket price tonight, for that alone.

Sir Prize: Yes I thought so too. And yet, it still seemed too easy.

Prince: Just because it all took place off-stage? Well, the audience still believed it all happened that way, don't you?

Sir Prize: No, the way the door was left open with a sign saying "Welcome to the Witch's stronghold, please now wipe your feet."

Prince: Ah.

The Witch enters from behind the tabs SL

Witch: Ah indeed, my little prince. I see you've brought a little band to play soldiers with. How delightfully brave. How very noble of you.

Bella: We've come to give you an ultimatum. You tried to kill me, I'll overlook that, for now, but you cannot continue to destroy the kingdom this way.

Sir Prize: Either yield control and agree to leave the kingdom, or we will have to take you by force...

Prince: And not in a nice way.

Witch: Do you really think you can take me by force do you? (*cackle*) Don't make me laugh... more. I will never relinquish power. Bristol is mine for eternity. (*seriously evil laugh*)

Bella: But why? Why have you reduced this wonderful city to such a state?

Witch: Why?! What's the point of worrying about "why" when the "how" is so much more fun?

Bella: You've all the morals of a cat. No, actually, I quite like cats, and that's doing them down. You've all the morals of a cheese sandwich, you are utterly without any redeeming qualities, and we're going to take you down.

Witch: Bring it on.

The heroes move towards the witch up onto the forestage. When she holds up her carrot, they freeze.

Prince: Um, I don't appear to be able to move.

Sir Prize: That should keep you out of trouble for a bit.

Prince: (*reaching for China*) Dumpling!

China: (*reaching for the Prince*) Love-bucket!

Bella: Give it a rest, you two. So. I suppose you think you've won then?

Witch: Yes.

Sir Prize: I think you'll find you're mistaken.

Sir Prize whistles or otherwise signals. FAT RC enter SR in the auditorium and strut SL in front of the forestage to a funky number. However, they stop short of the witch.

Prince: Well, what are you waiting for? This is where you, you know, save the day and all that.

Jeremy: Actually, I really like our leitmotiv. Would you play it again?

Musical Director: Oh. Um, if you like. OK, from the top.

FAT RC rush SR and strut SL again to their music, this time getting all the way to the witch.

Jeremy: You've made a mistake this time, my nemesis. This time you've let your guard slip and no-one's going to help you put it back on.

Sir Prize: Release us and we'll be lenient.

Bella: We will?

Sir Prize: Yes. It is our duty to be merciful. But this is your last chance. We have sprung your trap and now we're going to eat our cheese.

Witch: What?

Sir Prize: You know, like the cheese in a mouse trap.

Witch: (*with disdain*) Oh, metaphor. But you have made a mistake. You thought you were cleverer than me, eh? You thought you could call my bluff, did you? Well, now I'm calling yours. Bodge!

Bodge and several minions have entered SL in the auditorium and have been sneaking up on FAT. They now take hold of the FAT members.

Witch: Well, it seems your little attempted coup has failed. But since I...

There is a knocking at the door

Witch: Now what?

Bodge: The postman?

Witch: No. He always knocks twice.

The door SR opens and death enters., dramatically.

Death: Cower briefly mortals, for I am deaf...

Bella: Er, excuse me, do you mean "death"?

Death: Eh? What?

Bella: I said...

Death: Hold on, I'll turn the old hearing aid on. Right, what was that?

Bella: Never mind. But surely it's "brief" mortals, anyway.

Death: Oh dear. What did I say?

Bella: “Briefly” mortals.

Death: Gosh. Silly me. I’ll just... go back out and do it again.

Bella: Go ahead.

Death: Ta.

Death exits and comes back in again.

Death: Cower, brief mortals, for I am death. Know you, who’s name is Gregory, that the limit of your span upon this mortal coil is upon you. Come with me (*turning away*) to the land of the dead, shade of Gregory...

China: Er, pardon me, death sir.

Death: Oh. What was wrong with it that time?

China: Nothing. It was a good speech. Lovely symbolism I thought. But, there’s no Gregory here.

Death: Fifteen Lower Church Lane?

Witch: Two doors down.

Death: Really? Shit. Don’t mention this to anyone, will you? I’ve got a reputation to live up to you see. Well, maybe “live up to” is the wrong phrase, but you understand. Good show. Bye.

Death leaves.

Witch: As I was saying, since I already have the kingdom in my power, I shall also be magnanimous, and not kill you, merely throw you in the dungeon. Don’t even think about trying to escape. Well, of course you won’t after you’ve sat listening to my music for a few days. You won’t think anything at all. You’ll be mine. Mine forever. Mwah ha ha ha!!

To exultant church music, the Bishop and his clergy enter from the back of the auditorium and move down through the audience SR.

Bishop: One minute there, witch. I think I might have something to say about that. I’m going to give you such a bible bashing...

Witch: What!? How come you’re here, jelly-man? You should be long dead.

Bishop: So should you. But as your fiendish magics have kept you alive, so has my faith sustained me. How could I join my lord in his kingdom above, when this earthly one is in such a mess? So, I think a bit of saving the day is in order, yes?

The High-Druid and several not-so-high druids enter SR in the auditorium to Pagan sounded music (?)

High Druid: Never fear! The druids are here to liberate you, princess.

Bishop: You!! How very rude of you to barge in like this. This is my rescue, druid.

High Druid: I don’t see your name on it.

Bishop: Well, I bagsied it first, so bog off.

High Druid: Oh yeah? Make me!

Prince: This is ridiculous. We’re all on the same side, right?

High Druid: Right. Let’s do this together, then.

Bishop: Huh. OK. Last one to kill a bad-guy buys the beer.

High Druid: You’re welsh rarebit, Witch!

Witch: I think not.

High Druid: Why not?

Witch: Because, you squabbling simpletons, all of you together couldn’t beat me at one hand of poker even if I were blindfolded. What I mean is... do you think I hadn’t predicted this? This is all part of my plan. Now I can get rid of all of my remaining little enemies at the same time. Allow me to reveal to you the ace up my sleeve, a little hobby of mine, my secret weapon.

The curtains open to reveal a huge ‘now-not-so-secret’ weapon.

Witch: (*Dr Evil-esque*) I like to call it a “La-zer.”

Sir Prize: (*after a short pause*) Well, I didn’t see that one coming.

Witch: Now you have all offended me very deeply - with your camaraderie and selflessness and so on. So I think I’ll just kill you all now. Prepare the weapon!

A minion pops on stage and plugs it in. It starts humming or something.

Sir Prize: Hold on! You’ve forgotten something. Aren’t you going to taunt us some more? Brag about your total power and control?

Witch: I am not a sports car. But what’s the point? It would just give you an opportunity to escape. I suppose I could give you a tour of my base and explain my one weakness before leaving you to be killed by some complicated and easily broken contraption. But instead, I’m going to vaporise you while I have the chance.

Bodge: But you said you were just going to capture them. You never mentioned killing them. Not all of them. Where’s the sense in that?

Witch: Oh, and since when do I have to run all my plans by you, Bodge? I’ve just changed my mind, that’s all. Now that I have my secret weapon, I have the upper hand and I shall do as I please.

The cleaner enters, unplugs the secret weapon and plugs in a Hoover.

Witch: What are you doing?! That’s my secret weapon!

Cleaner: Oh, are you still here? Do you know how late it is? Well, you’ve run a bit over, and I get off in ten minutes. So if you don’t mind, I’m just going to Hoover the dressing room. Oh, and get a move on - I need to do the stage when I get back.

The cleaner leaves SL.

Witch: Why of all the cheek! Well, I’ll just plug it in on the other side.

The "stage manager" (probably not really) comes on stage with some techies

SM: Sorry, you can’t do that.

Witch: Why not?

SM: It might hurt someone. Have you had it checked out by the health and safety officer?

Witch: No of course not - it’s supposed to hurt people.

SM: Then we’re going to have to remove it from the stage, I’m afraid. Sorry about this.

They start to wheel the weapon off stage.

Witch: We’ll soon see about that! You won’t find it so easy to interfere with my plans once I’ve turned you all into wombats.

SM: Don’t be daft. We’re just the back-stage crew. You can’t hurt us.

The weapon is now off-stage

Witch: My beautiful machine!! Damn that STA, bunch of useless officious bastards.

The lights go out. Dobbin enters.

Witch: Very funny! Oh look, STA are lovely, do a wonderful job and are much under-appreciated. Is that better?

The lights come back on.

Witch: Thank you. Now, I may not have my machine, but I have my magic, so I’m still going to kill you all. I do love a happy ending.

Bodge: No! I won’t let you!

Witch: After all these years, Bodge? Trying to do the right thing? It’s a bit late for that isn’t it? Get a grip, man. Besides, what are you going to do?

Bodge: I know your weakness. The source of the witch’s power is her humorously over-sized carrot thing.

Bella: Well, that's very good of you. However, our feet are stuck to the floor.

Bodge: But if someone were to eat the carrot... like right *now!*

Witch: What are you blathering about?

Dobbin grabs the carrot from the witch and starts munching on it. The witch walks backwards from the minions in front of her.

Witch: Oh dear. This might be a problem.

The minions start looking around them.

Minion 1: What the hell? I'm free.

Minion 2: Me too. How did that happen? Where's the witch?

Minion 3: There she is!

Witch: Now, don't be hasty. What I did for you was for your own good.

Minion 1: Oh please. I only had a sixty quid overdraft. I didn't deserve to end up as your mindless slave for eleven years.

Minion 2: And now it's pay back time.

The witch turns to run and bumps into the King, Queen, Derek, Edith, Captain and Lieutenant.

Witch: Nephew! My dear nephew. Those men have gone mad and are trying to kill me.

King: Really? Whatever for, auntie.

Witch: They were cursing your name and calling you a foolish and stupid king, so I told them that you were a fine and praise-worthy leader that I would never hear a word against and... then they attacked me. Really, I'm quite innocent.

King: And I'm the tooth fairy. You've tried this innocent act before, remember? Captain, arrest this witch.

Witch: You can't do that. I still have my magic.

Prince: She's bluffing. Dobbin ate her magic carrot and now she's about as dangerous now as an enraged bunny rabbit.

Witch: What?!

Sir Prize: But not as pretty.

Prince: Given.

Witch: You've not heard the last of me!

Queen: Oh, how predictable. Take her away, before she subjects us to any more clichés.

Witch: You'll be sorry! I'll be back, you'll see! You'll regret having messed with meeee!

This last word becomes a wail as she is frog-marched off stage.

Edith: What an annoying woman. I do hope we *have* seen the last of her.

Prince: Oh, I'm sure we have. Unless some fool of a director writes a sequel, that is.

Bella: What's to be done now, dad?

King: We get on and re-build the kingdom I guess.

Gwydion: *(to Clergy, Druids, FAT)* So that's that. *(short pause)*.... Erm... Pub then?

Druids, Clergy & FAT RC exeunt thru stage door (SR), with cries of 'At last!', 'Mine's a lager!' and so on.

Sir Prize: And the witch?

King: Hmm. I wonder what we should do with her?

Prince: I know...

King: It's a pity we can't kill her.

Prince: Oh, never mind, then.

Minion 1: No, she's ours!

Minion 2: We want justice!

Minion 3: Cobblers. We want revenge! She's our witch!

Minion 1: May we burn her?

Minion 2 & 3: Yes, burn her!

Queen: Stop it. I'm sure you're angry, but the answer to evil is not further evil. Two wrongs don't make a right. However, I agree she should be punished.

Minion 3: Bollocks it doesn't! BURN HER!

Minions exit screaming 'Burn Her!' SL

King: Yes. And perhaps she can do something useful too. After the terrible music she inflicted upon us and her minions, I think we should have a captive audience for all the local junior-school recorder groups to come and play to. They'll appreciate that, though auntie may possibly go mad. Or madder, that is.

Now, tell me, who are were all these those people? I recognise the Druids and the Clergy Bishop, but who are these... beatniks? is this... beatnik?

Jeremy: My name is Jeremy, and we are the Funk Against Tyranny Resistance Corps. And who might you be?

King: Me? I am the king.

Jeremy: Really? I didn't elect you, so don't expect any immediate grovelling from me. Anyway, technically you're dead, and with the princess unmarried, the kingdom belonged to the witch. Now she's gone, there would appear to be no official ruler.

Edith: Tell me, before you joined this FAT thing, were you a...

Jeremy: ...law student. Yes.

Bella: And if I were married? My father could still be king?

Jeremy: Well, of course that would be different.

King: Then it's easy. The prince woke up the princess ergo, he must be her true love. It couldn't be more perfect if it were a fairy-tale.

Bella: But I don't want to marry him.

Queen: Why not?

Bella: He's a self-centred, slimy, ego-centric, good-for-nothing male-bimbo bastard.

Prince: She's certainly got my ticket.

King: But he kissed you.

Tapping from Dobbin.

Sir Prize: Ah. That's right. The prince didn't actually kiss Bella.

Edith: Well who did? Someone must have, as she woke up. Come on, the suspense is killing me!

More tapping from Dobbin.

Bella: You?!

Sir Prize: Guilty as charged, princess. (*a little flustered*) But let me assure you that my only intention was to wake you. It wasn't because I found you attractive or...

Bella: You don't find me attractive?

Sir Prize: No. Or rather yes. I do find you attractive. Very. You see. Um... would you. Erm... would you marry me, princess?

Bella: Oh. Well... god yes. In a second.

Sir Prize: Oh don't worry, there's no rush.

Bella: Well, there is the whole kingship thing.

Sir Prize: Oh, that's right. OK. "In a second" it is then.

Bishop: Can I help?

Queen: Yes, Bishop, get up here.

Bishop: (*getting up there*) Do you take this man, to be your blah blah, take this woman, etc lawful wedded stuff and say "I do"?

Sir Prize & Bella: We do.

Bishop: Then I pronounce you man and wife. You now have permission from god himself to get off in public.

Sir Prize & Bella get off in public.

Bishop: Oh yes. I'm definitely in the zone, today. Zip, a marriage, zap, another wedding, boing, a bouncing baby boy. All in a day's work. Any more for any more?

China drags the Prince in front of the Bishop.

China: Yes. I want to marry this man please.

Sir Prize: Really? Why?

China: He iz very cute. And really quite as experienced as he boasts.

Bella: Gosh. Can I swap? ...Only joking.

Prince: Now hold on a moment. I like you very much, but this is really rushing into things rather quickly.

China: Why wait? You do love me right? Zat's what you said earlier when we were...

Prince: Yes, of course I do. But marriage...

China: ...means zat you'll have me all to yourself, yes? Wouldn't zat be nice?

Prince: Well, yes it would.

China: Oh wonderful!! Zen you will marry me. Darling.

Prince: What the hell, let's do it. Quit while you're ahead, that's what I say.

Bishop: So, you two, do you do?

Prince & China: We do.

Bishop: Then I pronounce you man and wife as well. Jolly good.

The prince and china get a stage kiss too, lucky them.

Bodge: Dame Edith? I know that when we last met I was disguised as the chamberlain, and betrayed everyone and everything, but now that I've had a typical end-of-show character reversal, is it possible that... oh sod it. Will you marry me?

Edith: Certainly not. I hardly know you.

Bodge: Oh.

Edith: But I wouldn't mind taking you home with me for a little game of smuggle the salami.

Bodge: That's even better! But there is one little problem I've got though. *(he whispers into her ear)*

Edith: Oh! Are you going to let a little thing like that get in the way of a happy ending? Don't worry, I've got some cream for that. I've had to deal with much worse in my clinic, believe me. There was this one guy who...

King: Yes, thank you Edith. I'm sure we don't need to know all the details. The captain has just informed me that there are several kegs of beer back here, probably from when this place was a club...

Most of the cast rush up onto the stage (carefully!)

Bella: Well, is that it? We've defeated the witch and the kingdom can slowly rebuild. But what exactly do the four of us do?

Sir Prize: Well, I'm afraid that we still have a quest to complete.

Bella: Ah, the perfect pub. You'll never find it, you know.

Prince: We were coming to that conclusion as well, what with the end of the show looming and all.

China: I have a suggestion. They do say "if you build it they will come."

Prince: No, I'm sure it goes, "if you go down on..."

Sir Prize: I think she's got a point. The "Wurks" is but an empty shell now, but we could make a fantastic pub out of it.

Prince: Us?

Jeremy: Uh. Me and my boys have got nowhere to go now. I don't suppose you need any bar-staff?

Bella: Yes, why not? No pub is complete without a full complement of bizarre locals. It'll be In fact, let's build the funkiest pub ever. In fact, let's do the show right here!

Sir Prize: Oh darling! You're so sexy when your smart!

Bella: Oh Prize!

Sir Prize: Oh Bella!

They snog.

China: Oh Lovebucket!

Prince: Oh Dumpling!

They snog.

Queen: Oh Kingy!

King: Oh Queenie!

They snog too... see where we're going with this?

High Druid: Oh Bishop!

Bishop: Oh Druid!

They snog.

Edith: Oh Bodge!

Bodge: Oh Edith!

They snog.

Jeremy: (*who has by now come up on stage and fought past all the writhing bodies!*) Is it just me or has it just got Hot in here?

*Last musical number "Feelin' Hot Hot Hot" (please, please, please let this be the end - I'm tired and I want to go to bed. Do you know how long it took me to write thi ****ing thing?)*

Now that you have got to the end, stop!

Song Lyrics

There's a pub for us

To the tune of "There's a place for us":

PRINCE:

There's a pub for us,
Somewhere a pub for us,
bar-towels and horse-brass and trips to the gents,
we'll stay till our money's all spent,

SIR PRIZE:

There's a perfect pub,
In my dreams, the perfect pub,
Watered down beer and stale sweat,
Drinking anti-freeze for a bet.
Someday.

BOTH:

Somewhere, with Kareoke-style singing,
Where are the locals are minging.
Somewhere.

There's a pub for us,
Spit and sawdust in grub for us,
We'll drink whiskey in pints then stare,
At ugly barmaids with facial hair

Somehow, Someday, Somewhere

That don't impress me much

You're a man of means, who seduces with cash,
But I'm not impressed by the size of your stash.
You think you can have me just because you're rich,
Don't want your dirty money,
I won't be your bitch.

Oh-oo-oh, you think you're special
Oh-oo-oh, you think you're something else

(Okay, so you're a rich bastard)

CHORUS:

That don't impress me much
So you got the dough, but have you got the touch
Don't get me wrong, yeah I think you're alright
But that won't keep me warm in the middle of the night
That don't impress me much.

You're one of those guys who think they're good in bed,
But you just want me to give you head.
You think you're a sex-machine, keep trying all night,
But I won't be coming, you don't treat me right.

Oh-oo-oh, you think you're special
Oh-oo-oh, you think you're something else

(Okay, so you're impotent)

CHORUS:

That don't impress me much
So you got the looks but have you got the touch
Don't get me wrong, yeah I think you're alright
But that won't keep me warm in the middle of the night
That don't impress me much

(instrumental)

I never knew a guy with such an pungent aroma,
Who likes to roll around with a pig or ten.
You probably wouldn't notice if I didn't come over,
You'd be busy with Bettsie in the back of her pen.

Oh-oo-oh, you think you're special
Oh-oo-oh, you think you're something else

(Okay, so you've a pig-farmer)

CHORUS:

That don't impress me much
So you got the meat but have you got the touch
Don't get me wrong, yeah I think you're alright

But that won't keep me warm in the middle of the night
That don't impress me much
You think you're cool but have you got the touch
Don't get me wrong, yeah I think you're alright
But that won't keep me warm on the long, cold, lonely night

That don't impress me much