

# THE PRINCESS AND THE PEA

*By Richard Davis, Jr.*

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

The overbearing Queen has already determined whom her precious sonny boy, Prince Handsome, will marry. So when a muddy and very dirty Princess Jasmine catches the Prince's eye unexpectedly, the Queen insists she pass the "pea under the mattress" test to prove she really is a princess. Only it's not one thin mattress we're talking about here, it's thirteen mattresses, four feather comforters, and eight queen-size pillows! And not only that, but Jasmine wears ear muffs, a night mask, and is very, very tired! Yet Jasmine passes the extremely unfair princess test, even without the comic jester's help. The vague king who likes to play with his Gameboy and the pompous announcer add to the merriment and help create a happy ending. About 45 minutes.

## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4 m, 2 w)*

**JESTER:** The court jester, whose humor sometimes gets him into trouble, especially when it's directed at the Queen. He's also friend and advisor to Prince Handsome.

**ANNOUNCER:** Introduces the show. A bit pompous, he becomes the first target of the Jester's humor.

**QUEEN BESSIE:** The Jester calls her Queen Bossie. He's right. She's determined her son, the Prince, will marry a Princess.

**KING HANDSOME:** Husband of Queen Bessie, father of Prince Handsome. He is dominated by his wife and finds relief only in his Gameboy. He's never quite sure about what's happening in his kingdom.

**PRINCE HANDSOME:** Son of the King and Queen and best friend to the Jester. He's squeaky clean ... that is, he's very squeamish about getting dirty. He falls in love with Princess Jasmine.

**PRINCESS JASMINE:** She's a princess with two problems: she doesn't look like a princess (*SHE'S dirty from an accident.*), which puts off the squeamish Prince at first, and she must pass the extremely unfair pea test.

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**SETTING**

The throne room of a typical fairy tale castle. It features two thrones in front of revolving (*or moveable.*) flats USC. On the other side of the flats is Princess' bed.

**PROPS**

2 fishing poles for Jester and Prince, can of worms, pouch holding a banana peel, and salt shaker for Jester, Gameboy for King. vial containing a single pea for Queen, ear muffs, night mask for Jasmine

**COSTUMES**

Jasmine needs a change of clothes. Her clothes need not look very "royal." The clean clothes Queen Bessie supplies can be outrageous and comical.

**SCENE 1**

*(BEFORE CURTAIN: ANNOUNCER welcomes the audience. Just as he finishes, JESTER enters from the back of the theatre, humming and unaware of the announcer at first.)*

JESTER: *(HE carries a fishing pole and a can of worms. He "chants" and dances as he crosses.)*

THERE IS NOTHING IN THE WORLD LIKE A FISHING POLE,  
AND CASTING FOR A FISH AT THE FISHING HOLE,  
JUST A-CASTING FOR A FISH AT THE FISHING HOLE.  
GONNA CATCH THAT FISH, GONNA REEL HIM IN,  
GONNA COOK THAT FISH FOR MY DIN DIN DIN -

ANNOUNCER: Excuse me.

JESTER: *(HE jumps, turns to ANNOUNCER.)* Ahhhh! Who are you?

ANNOUNCER: I'm ...

JESTER: Did you burp or something?

ANNOUNCER: What? No, I didn't burp. Why?

JESTER: You said "Excuse me" -

ANNOUNCER: I just meant that ... never mind. What are you doing here?

JESTER: I'm on my way back to the fishing hole. I've been fishing with the Prince, but I had to get some more worms. See? *(HE thrusts them at ANNOUNCER, who is not amused.)* The Prince loves to fish, but he hates to touch worms. Makes me bait his hook. You wanna come fishing with us?

ANNOUNCER: Fishing with ...? Look, I'm talking to the children here and ... well, you're not supposed to be here right now.

JESTER: Children? What children?

ANNOUNCER: Those children. *(HE gestures; JESTER looks, jumps.)*

JESTER: Ahhhh! What are they doing here?

ANNOUNCER: We're getting ready to put on a play here.

JESTER: I know that. Are you going to sing a song for the children?

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ANNOUNCER: Actually, I uh ... the truth is, I don't sing very well.

CAST: (*Offstage.*) You don't sing at all!

JESTER: Are you going to act in the show?

ANNOUNCER: No. Not exactly ...

JESTER: I'm going to act in the show, you know.

ANNOUNCER: Really? Who are you?

JESTER: I play Lester the Jester. A jester's sort of like a clown ...

ANNOUNCER: I know what a jester is.

JESTER: What I mean is, jesters aren't usually too smart ...

ANNOUNCER: Apparently not.

JESTER: What I mean is, even though jesters aren't too smart and all, it seems to me that if I am in the show and you're not in the show, maybe you're the one who's not supposed to be here. Nothing personal.

ANNOUNCER: What?! You don't understand. I'm the announcer. Announcers are very important. Very, very important.

JESTER: Oh? What do you do?

ANNOUNCER: I'm the one who tells the children a little bit about the show and about how to behave in the theater -

JESTER: Haven't you already done that?

ANNOUNCER: Well, yes, but -

JESTER: But what?

ANNOUNCER: I haven't done the most important part yet -

JESTER: What's that?

ANNOUNCER: (*Self important.*) You just happen to be talking to the person who says when the lights go out, so the show can start.

JESTER: Couldn't I do that?

ANNOUNCER: (*Condescending laugh.*) No, I'm afraid not.

JESTER: Why not?

ANNOUNCER: Because it's very technical, that's why. First of all, you have to clap your hands in a special way. Then you have to ...

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ANNOUNCER: (*Cont'd.*) look, let me put it this way, if you were to ask for the lights to go out, probably nothing would happen. And if they did go out, you'd probably ... I hate to tell you this ... but you'd probably disappear.

JESTER: I'd disappear?

ANNOUNCER: Yes.

JESTER: Why?

ANNOUNCER: Too technical. You'd never understand.

JESTER: Do you mind if I try to make them go out?

ANNOUNCER: It won't work for you. Take my word for it; it works only for announcers. That's why we're so special.

JESTER: Please? Just let me try.

ANNOUNCER: You did hear me say that you could disappear? (*JESTER nods.*) OK. Go ahead. But don't say I didn't warn you. (*Aside to audience.*) It's not going to work. Plus, he's going to disappear into thin air. Poof. (*HE turns to JESTER.*) Remember, I warned you ... (*JESTER makes elaborate preparations.*) Oh, for Pete's sake, will you just get on with it?!?

JESTER: Oh, all right. Lights ... out! (*HE claps his hands and the LIGHTS go out. CURTAINS open in the dark.*)

ANNOUNCER: (*Exiting.*) Oh great. Now look what you've done. You're probably going to disapp - ahh!

(*LIGHTS come up. JESTER looks around.*)

JESTER: Wow. That was great. Hey, where did that announcer guy go? Oh, well. He's not in the show anyway. (*Mocking.*) "I'm the announcer." What a nut. Now where was I? Oh, yeah ... fishing. (*HE tries a cast or two.*) I'm going fishing with the Prince. You may have heard of him. Prince Handsome the Second. (*Beat.*) Oh, come on. His father is Prince Handsome the First. (*Beat.*) His mother is Queen Bessie. (*HE looks around, then sotto voce.*) But I call her Queen Bossy because she's always ordering people around. (*HE imitates HER.*) "Les-terr! Get in here! I have some work for you to do!"

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