# THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER

By THOMAS HISCHAK

Loosely based on Mark Twain’s
The Prince and the Pauper

CAST OF CHARACTERS
(In Order of Appearance)

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SETTING
Various locales in England, 1837.

SET DESCRIPTION
The princess’s sitting room, with two elaborate chairs and a small table, is set STAGE RIGHT. STAGE LEFT, an open stage works best with furniture and props used to denote all other locales: the street outside the palace gates, a noisy public house, the Herndon drawing room, Herndon Haberdashery’s workroom and Kensington Gardens. The village street of the PROLOGUE and EPILOGUE can take place on a bare stage or in front of the curtain and requires only two benches.
SYNOPSIS OF SCENES
While the scenes are numbered, the action should be continuous, one scene beginning as the previous one ends. The play can be presented without an intermission, if desired.

PROLOGUE
A rural village outside of London, 1882.

ACT ONE
Scene One: The princess’s sitting room and a street outside the palace gates, 1837.
Scene Two: A noisy public house, later that evening.
Scene Three: The princess’s sitting room, that same evening.
Scene Four: The Herndon’s drawing room, later that same evening.
Scene Five: The princess’s sitting room, the next day.
Scene Six: Herndon Haberdashery’s workroom, that same day.
Scene Seven: The princess’s sitting room and a street outside the palace gates, moments later.

ACT TWO
Scene One: A street outside the palace gates, later that day.
Scene Two: The princess’s sitting room, two days before the coronation.
Scene Three: The Herndon’s drawing room, the day before the coronation.
Scene Four: The princess’s sitting room, the morning of the coronation.
Scene Five: Kensington Gardens, later that day but still before the coronation.
Scene Six: The princess’s sitting room, moments later and just before the coronation.
Scene Seven: The princess’s sitting room a few hours after the coronation.

EPILOGUE
A rural village outside of London, 1882.
THE PRINCESS AND THE PAUPER

PROLOGUE

LIGHTS UP on the street of a small rural village. There are two benches along the side of the road. A young PRIMROSE SELLER stands by the road selling flowers from a crude basket. A few VILLAGERS pass back and forth, ignoring her.

PRIMROSE SELLER: Primroses for sale! Primroses for sale! Only tuppence a bunch! Lovely primroses for sale. (To a VILLAGER.) Take a bunch home to your sweetie, sir? Only tuppence. They is ever so lovely, don’t you think?

CONSTABLE: (ENTERS and crosses to PRIMROSE SELLER.) See here, you! Don’t you be bothering folk.

PRIMROSE SELLER: I was just asking the gentleman if he’d like to buy some of me primroses.

CONSTABLE: Move along. No one wants your dirty little flowers.

PRIMROSE SELLER: Oh, but look at them, Constable. Ain’t they lovely? Buy a bunch for the missus?

CONSTABLE: You move along like I say— (SOUND EFFECTS: UPSET HORSES and CRASH. ALL turn to look OFF LEFT.)

PRIMROSE SELLER: Good gracious! Look at that carriage!

CONSTABLE: She’s lost a wheel! (Starts to run toward the noise and PRIMROSE SELLER follows, but he stops her.) No, you don’t! Get on with you! I won’t have you getting in the way! (Runs OFF LEFT. A COMMOTION is heard OFF LEFT.)

PRIMROSE SELLER: (Looks OFF LEFT.) A fancy carriage if I ever seen one. (A woman rushes by.) Primroses for sale! Buy a bunch— (She is gone.) Such a to-do! You’d think the Queen of England was in town. (Crosses RIGHT.) Primroses for sale! Lovely primroses! Only tuppence a bunch! (EXITS RIGHT. QUEEN VICTORIA ENTERS LEFT, followed closely by her serving matron, OLD MCDOWELL.)

OLD MCDOWELL: Are you injured, Your Majesty? Are you quite all right?

QUEEN: Of course, I am all right. Not a scratch. Stop fussing, McDowell.

OLD MCDOWELL: But the carriage pitched about so!

QUEEN: No worse than a good tossing at sea.

OLD MCDOWELL: What if the carriage had tumbled over?

QUEEN: Well, it didn’t. Just one of the wheels it looks like. Bingham will take care of it. It appears none of the horses was injured. I’d say we were all quite lucky.
OLD MCDOWELL: I suppose Your Majesty is right. But where are we?
QUEEN: Still a few hours from London, I should think. Such a pleasant spot this is. Why do we travel all the way to Balmoral when there are such lovely places as this only a few hours out of London?
OLD MCDOWELL: We must find a suitable place for you to wait, Your Majesty.
QUEEN: This looks very suitable. Such a fine day!
OLD MCDOWELL: But here? In the open on the street? You must not think of it, Your Majesty.
QUEEN: Too late, McDowell, I’ve already thought of it. I am tired of being in that stuffy carriage. A nice breath of fresh air sounds very inviting.
OLD MCDOWELL: But, Your Majesty, what if someone sees you? What if you are recognized? What if a crowd gathers?
QUEEN: What if, what if! What if a band of Barbary pirates comes storming out of that barn over there?
OLD MCDOWELL: (Alarmed.) Do you think...?
QUEEN: (Laughs.) Relax, McDowell. We shall be quite safe. There seems to be no one around at all. This is what they call in America a “one-horse town.”
OLD MCDOWELL: Very odd expression.
QUEEN: I think it colorful. Except for our horses, I don’t see another. When we leave, it will be a no-horse town! (Chuckles at herself.)
OLD MCDOWELL: Your Majesty is in a very merry spirit today, if you don’t mind my saying so.
QUEEN: I don’t mind it in the least. I am just going to sit here and enjoy the lovely afternoon. (Crosses to a bench.)
OLD MCDOWELL: (In a panic.) Oh, but, Your Majesty!
QUEEN: What is it now, McDowell?
OLD MCDOWELL: You cannot sit! Not on that bench.
QUEEN: Why not?
OLD MCDOWELL: Well... well... it just isn’t done!
QUEEN: McDowell, you have been telling me for over 45 years just what is and what isn’t done. Aren’t you a bit weary by now?
OLD MCDOWELL: And in those 45 years, I have never seen you sit on a... crude wooden bench like that.
QUEEN: True. Well, let us look on it as an adventure! (Sits.) There. We’ve had an adventure.
OLD BINGHAM: (ENTERS LEFT and bows.) Your Majesty.
QUEEN: What is the situation, Bingham? Are we stranded in this remote village indefinitely?

OLD BINGHAM: Not at all, Your Majesty. I've located a wheelwright, and he is replacing the damaged wheel even as we speak.

QUEEN: Thank goodness! We are saved!

OLD MCDOWELL: How lucky for us.

OLD BINGHAM: We ought to be on our way in no time, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: Very good, Bingham. I knew I could rely on you.

OLD BINGHAM: Thank you, Your Majesty. (EXITS LEFT.)

QUEEN: Are you sure Your Majesty would not prefer to wait inside some appropriate place?

OLD MCDOWELL: And give up this lovely sunshine? I don’t think so, McDowell. Why don’t you sit on that bench there? Why should I have all the adventure?

QUEEN: As you wish, Your Majesty. (Cautiously sits on the other bench.)

OLD MCDOWELL: I know you are anxious to continue reading Dr. Prescott’s sermons. Please do so. I shall just sit here and enjoy the pleasant weather.

QUEEN: If Your Majesty insists.

OLD MCDOWELL: I insist.

QUEEN: Very well. (Pulls out a little book, puts on her spectacles and reads. SOUND EFFECT: SOFT MUSIC. The QUEEN smiles, looking into the distance. VICTORIA ENTERS in the Queen’s imagination and stands near her bench. She is 17 years old and dressed in a regal but feminine dress. OLD MCDOWELL of course does not see or hear her.)

VICTORIA: You really ought to do this more often, you know.

QUEEN: You’re right. Youth always knows best.

VICTORIA: If your bones weren’t so old, we could race down that hill, around the barn, and then back here by way of that church.

QUEEN: (Amused.) You do it. I’ll watch.

VICTORIA: No. It’s no fun alone. I wonder if old McDowell is up for a race. (They both laugh.)

QUEEN: I’m afraid her bones are older than mine.

VICTORIA: Fossilized! (Sits on the bench next to QUEEN.) It seems like McDowell was always old. Even when she was young.

QUEEN: Some people are that way, my dear. (Points OFF RIGHT.) Do you see that?

VICTORIA: What? (Stands and looks OFF RIGHT.)
QUEEN: That girl. Over there in front of the public house. She's selling flowers.

VICTORIA: She is! I wonder if they are primroses.

QUEEN: I can't tell. These old eyes of mine.

VICTORIA: These young eyes can't tell either. She's too far away.

QUEEN: I wonder what they cost.

VICTORIA: Tuppence? If I recall, they cost tuppence.

QUEEN: Yes… tuppence. (Pause.) Are you remembering what I'm remembering?

VICTORIA: Certainly. I remember everything that you do.

QUEEN: Not everything, my young friend.

VICTORIA: Well, I certainly remember the primroses. And the tuppence…

QUEEN: Yes. The primroses… and the tuppence… (MUSIC FADES OUT and the LIGHTS FADE to BLACK.)

End of PROLOGUE

ACT ONE

Scene One

LIGHTS UP LEFT on a street outside the palace gates. The princess's sitting room in Kensington Palace is set STAGE RIGHT with two elaborate chairs and a small table with a hand mirror. The scene is now London in 1837. BETTE CANTY ENTERS LEFT with a basket of primroses. She is 17 years old, wears a worn and simple dress, her face smudged with grime. She speaks with a lower-class accent. She stands DOWNSTAGE outside the gates and faces the AUDIENCE, addressing unseen customers.

BETTE: Primroses for sale! Only tuppence a bunch. Beautiful primroses! Sir, buy a bunch of primroses off a poor girl? Only tuppence. No? Oh, well. Primroses for sale! Lovely primroses here! Primroses, dear madam? They is every so lovely, don't you think? Yes? Oh. Primroses for sale! Only tuppence a bunch! (LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the princess's sitting room, where VICTORIA faces the AUDIENCE, looking out an unseen window at BETTE.)

MCDOWELL: (ENTERS RIGHT. She is only in her 20s but already has a hard and matronly look and an authoritarian demeanor. She sees VICTORIA and gasps.) Princess Victoria! Come away from that window at once!

VICTORIA: I cannot make out if they are roses or carnations.

MCDOWELL: What are you talking about?

VICTORIA: There's a flower girl out by the gates. She's selling some kind of red flower, but she's too far away to be able to tell. Roses or carnations? Perhaps poppies!
MCDOWELL: Come away from that window! (Pulls her into the room away from the “window.”) What if someone should see you?!

VICTORIA: I’m sure everyone in London has much better things to do than pay attention to me.

MCDOWELL: Royal princesses do not stare out windows like some kind of...

VICTORIA: Some kind of what?

MCDOWELL: I... I... I’m sure I don’t know. All I do know is that princesses do not gawk!

VICTORIA: I wasn’t gawking. At least, I don’t think I was. I was just watching that flower girl. She doesn’t seem to be selling very many flowers. People just pass her by.

MCDOWELL: Rightfully so. Selling flowers in front of Kensington Palace! Where does she think she is? Billingsgate Fish Market?

VICTORIA: I don’t think she’s selling fish, McDowell. (Goes back to the “window.”) Definitely some kind of red flower.

MCDOWELL: Whatever she’s selling, she ought to be run off. I’ll go and notify the captain of the Guard. (Starts to leave.)

VICTORIA: No, McDowell! Let her be! She’s not doing any harm. Just selling her flowers.

MCDOWELL: There is such a thing as a public nuisance.

VICTORIA: Oh, McDowell... (Leaves the “window” and joins her.) There. I’ve moved away from the window. Are you happy now?

MCDOWELL: Happiness is entirely irrelevant.

VICTORIA: Then make me happy and don’t tell the guard.

MCDOWELL: If you command it, Princess Victoria.

VICTORIA: I do. (laughs.) My first command! It does make me feel giddy. (laughs.)

MCDOWELL: What is so humorous?

VICTORIA: Me! You! It never occurred to me that I can command something, I think I might enjoy doing it.

MCDOWELL: Your royal position is not to be taken so lightly.

VICTORIA: Just think of it, McDowell. You have been in my service for... what is it? Two months now?

MCDOWELL: Nine weeks, to be exact.

VICTORIA: Nine weeks! And this is the first time I have commanded you to do anything. Remarkable! I think I shall never get used to being a royal princess.

MCDOWELL: But, Victoria, you were born to it.
VICTORIA: Not really. Uncle William surely doesn’t think so. He thought a son of his would someday be king. Poor Uncle William. No sons and just silly little niece Victoria in line to the throne. Do you know, McDowell, I never knew about any of it?

MCDOWELL: What do you mean?

VICTORIA: Well, Mama and Papa never spoke about it. No one did. Not even Uncle William. Then on my seventeenth birthday my governess gave me a prayer book as a present and inside was a little note. She wrote that I would one day be the queen. It was the first I heard of it! And that was less than a year ago!

MCDOWELL: It was presumptuous of your governess. She had no business telling you.

VICTORIA: Well, I’m certainly glad she did. I believe I would still be left in the dark.

MCDOWELL: There was no hurry in telling you. It will be many years before you have to concern yourself about such things.

VICTORIA: Many and many years, I hope! I think being queen must be even more dreary than being a royal princess.

MCDOWELL: It is your duty.

VICTORIA: Yes, yes, McDowell. I know. I don’t mean to be disrespectful of the crown and all that, but some days, living in Kensington Palace is indeed dreary. There’s no other word for it!

MCDOWELL: Really, Victoria! It is nearly five o’clock. You remember that there is a state dinner at Buckingham House tonight? Right after tea, Mrs. Chapman will be here to do your hair.

VICTORIA: Buckingham House! I do believe that is the only place on earth that is more dreary than this place!

MCDOWELL: Nonetheless, His Majesty and the queen will be there, and you must be on your very best behavior.

VICTORIA: I know. Bow. Smile. Say nothing. And pretend I don’t know anything about… you know what.

MCDOWELL: Exactly.

VICTORIA: Exactly. (Brightens as she gets an idea.) McDowell!

MCDOWELL: (Concerned.) What is it, Victoria?

VICTORIA: Do you have any money? I mean, with you at the moment?

MCDOWELL: Money? Why in the world do you ask about such a thing?

VICTORIA: The truth, McDowell! Do you have any money at all?

MCDOWELL: I believe I have a few coins in my pocket.

VICTORIA: Wonderful! (Rushes to the “window.”) She’s still there! It’s not too late!
MCDOWELL: Whatever is the matter with you, young lady?

VICTORIA: McDowell, I am going to give you a command. And I'm sure you won't like it.

MCDOWELL: Liking has nothing to do—

VICTORIA: I want you to go down to the gate and buy a flower from that girl!

MCDOWELL: What?!

VICTORIA: No! I've got an even better command. I want you to go down and ask that flower girl to come up here, and I will pick out the flower myself!

MCDOWELL: Victoria!

VICTORIA: I told you you wouldn't like it. But it's a command.

MCDOWELL: But... but... but...

VICTORIA: A simple command. Go immediately before she is gone!

MCDOWELL: Up... up here?

VICTORIA: Certainly!

MCDOWELL: But that is... impossible!

VICTORIA: Very well, then. If you won't go, I will open this window and shout out to her! (Turns to the "window.")

MCDOWELL: No!

VICTORIA: How does this thing open? Ah, here we go!

MCDOWELL: You must not! You can't—

VICTORIA: Very well, then. You go. Quickly!

MCDOWELL: Oh...! Oh, dear! (EXITS RIGHT.)

VICTORIA: I hope she's still there. (Goes to the "window.") She is! (Laughs.) Oh, what a queen I shall be! (Laughs again, then FREEZES as the LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the gates where BETTE is still speaking to invisible passersby.)

BETTE: Lovely primroses for sale! Only tuppence a bunch! Buy a bunch of primroses off a poor girl, sir?

BINGHAM: (ENTERS DOWN LEFT.) Move along with you, girl! Quickly or I'll have you arrested!

BETTE: Arrested? For what? Selling flowers? Ha! Aren't you a bit young to be a copper?

BINGHAM: I am a member of the Palace Guard, not a... copper. And I tell you to move on this very second or you'll be sorry!

BETTE: The palace, eh? Well, ain't we proud! Why don't you buy a bunch of primroses off a poor girl? You can give them to King William!
BINGHAM: Don't you get saucy with me! (Grabs her by the arm roughly.)

Come along with me!

BETTE: Owww! You're hurting me arm! (Struggles.)

BINGHAM: You're in mighty big trouble as it is. Don't go making it worse.

BETTE: Owww! (Kicks his shin. BINGHAM lets go of her as he falls to the ground.) Serves you right! (Starts to run OFF but collides with MCDOWELL, who ENTERS UP LEFT and comes DOWNSTAGE through the gates. MCDOWELL holds on to BETTE.)

BINGHAM: Stop that girl! (Stands.)

MCDOWELL: Young lady, you are to come with me. (BETTE struggles.)

BINGHAM: Thank you, ma'am. I'll take care of this. (Tries to grab BETTE.)

MCDOWELL: She's wanted inside, Sergeant.

BETTE/ BINGHAM: What?

MCDOWELL: That's right. Come along, miss.

BETTE: But I ain't done nothin'!

BINGHAM: See what comes of being so saucy.

BETTE: He's the one who started it! Pulling me arm like I was some sort of criminal!

MCDOWELL: Silence, girl. Come with me. (Pulls BETTE back through the gates.)

BETTE: Help! Someone help!

BINGHAM: I hope they cut off your head!

BETTE: Aaaahh! (EXITS UP LEFT with MCDOWELL.)

BINGHAM: Aaaahh, yourself! (Turns and sees that he is being watched by invisible passersby [or by EXTRAS].) Move along! All of you! There will be no loitering near the palace! (LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the princess's sitting room, where VICTORIA has been watching at the "window".)

VICTORIA: (UNFREEZES.) What a ruckus! I haven't seen so much excitement since the time I dropped my tiara in the chamber pot! (MCDOWELL ENTERS RIGHT, pulling BETTE, who still struggles. BETTE stops when she sees VICTORIA.) Very good, McDowell. Well done, indeed!

BETTE: Hey, what's goin' on here?

VICTORIA: Welcome to Kensington Palace. (Goes over to BETTE and looks in her basket of flowers.) Why, these are not roses or carnations!

BETTE: Who said they was? I can't afford no roses or carnations. These is primroses.
VICTORIA: Primroses! McDowell, why didn’t we think of primroses?
Rather narrow-minded of us, don’t you agree?
MCDOWELL: Shall I purchase a bunch all the same, Princess?
BETTE: Princess!
VICTORIA: Of course. I hope we have enough money. (To BETTE.) How much does a bunch cost?
BETTE: Tuppence... Yer Highness.
VICTORIA: Have you got tuppence, McDowell?
MCDOWELL: Certainly. (Removes a few coins from her pocket.)
VICTORIA: Oh, we are in luck! I choose... (Picks out a bunch.) ...these.
Pay her, McDowell.
MCDOWELL: Very well. (Hesitantly puts a coin in BETTE’S hand.)
BETTE: Thankee. (Bites on the coin, then puts it in her pocket.)
VICTORIA: Does it taste all right?
BETTE: What? Oh! It ain’t the taste that counts. Got to be sure it’s real, you see.
MCDOWELL: How insulting!
VICTORIA: Let me see that again! McDowell, give her another tuppence!
MCDOWELL: Very well. (Hands BETTE another coin.) Here. (BETTE bites it again.) Really, Princess!
VICTORIA: How much for the whole basket?
BETTE: All of it?
VICTORIA: Would that cost half a crown?
BETTE: Well... I...
VICTORIA: McDowell, have you half a crown? I should ever so much like to see her bite that.
MCDOWELL: Very well. (Hands her a coin and BETTE bites it before pocketing it.)
BETTE: Very kind of you, ma’am. To show me gratitude, I’ll throw in the basket as well. (Hands the basket of flowers to VICTORIA.)
VICTORIA: Thank you very much!
MCDOWELL: If you will come this way, miss. (Grabs BETTE.)
VICTORIA: Oh, don’t go yet!
MCDOWELL: I insist! This has gone on long enough!
VICTORIA: Please, McDowell, just a few moments more?
MCDOWELL: I must get her out of the palace before they come to serve tea.
VICTORIA: It’s hardly tea time yet. Please?
BETTE: (To MCDOWELL.) See here! Which is the princess here and which is not?

VICTORIA: Precisely. McDowell, you may withdraw. I will ring for you when I need you.

MCDOWELL: But—

BETTE: You heard the princess, McDowell. (Smiles at MCDOWELL.)

MCDOWELL: But—! (Looks to VICTORIA, who also smiles.) Very well, Princess. (EXITS RIGHT unwillingly. When she is gone VICTORIA and BETTE burst out in laughter.)

VICTORIA: Poor McDowell! She will never forgive me!

BETTE: Who is this McDowell anyway? Some kind of jailer?

VICTORIA: In a way, yes!

BETTE: She's got some grip, I can tell you that! (Rubs her arm where MCDOWELL grabbed her.)

VICTORIA: To be honest, she’s my lady companion. When I outgrew my governess, they appointed McDowell to look after me.

BETTE: And do you need lookin’ after?

VICTORIA: Everyone seems to think so.

BETTE: Then you really are a princess?

VICTORIA: Quite true. I am Princess Victoria. I daresay you’ve never heard of me.

BETTE: Victoria? The one who’s gonna be queen when King William pops off? Oh, I’m beggin’ yer pardon.

VICTORIA: How long have you known that? About me, I mean.

BETTE: Well... years, I suppose. Everyone knew that for years.

VICTORIA: Not quite everyone. Oh, I do like your hair. Do you do it yourself?

BETTE: Me hair? Ain’t no one does nothin’ to it.

VICTORIA: I like how it hangs down. When I turned 12, they said I could no longer have my hair down.

BETTE: It looks mighty fine to me. Wish I could get mine to stay put on top of me head.

VICTORIA: All you need are combs.

BETTE: Combs?

VICTORIA: Like these! (Takes some combs out of her hair.) I'll show you. Sit over here.

BETTE: But they got jewels on them. (Sits.)

VICTORIA: Just tortoise shells, I believe. (Fixes BETTE’S hair up by putting the combs in.) This will be easy. It's the ringlets that are
difficult. Mrs. Chapman does my ringlets. (As she takes the combs out of her own hair, VICTORIA’S hair falls onto her shoulders.)

BETTE: You got a lady just for... ringlets?

VICTORIA: Of course. Uncle William likes the ladies at court to have ringlets.

BETTE: You don’t say.

VICTORIA: When I am queen, I think I’ll have ringlets abolished!

BETTE: Good idea. Then I’ll be right in style.

VICTORIA: There! (Finishes BETTE'S hair and gets a hand mirror from the table.) Take a look. (Hands her the mirror.)

BETTE: Blimey!

VICTORIA: Don’t you like it?

BETTE: Like it? I look like a bloomin’ princess!

VICTORIA: My goodness, you do. (Goes and looks at BETTE carefully.) And not just any princess. Look at us! (She stands by BETTE’S side and holds the mirror out so that they both appear in it.)

BETTE: Blimey!

VICTORIA: I assume “blimey” is a good thing.

BETTE: We is the spittin’ image of the other.

VICTORIA: I noticed a resemblance when you first walked in. But now with your hair up... Here, let me wipe away some of this grime on your face. (Uses her handkerchief to wipe BETTE’S face, then places it on the table.)

BETTE: Oh, I’m sorry about that. I ain’t washed me face since the water pipe broke in the marketplace. Been two days, it has.

VICTORIA: Now look. (Holds up the mirror.) We look even more alike. Blimey!

BETTE: Blimey is right!

VICTORIA: With the right frock you could pass as a princess.

BETTE: Aw, I don’t think so.

VICTORIA: Certainly. Here, try on this! (She slips out of her dress, revealing a very lacy undergarment with a full skirt.) We are obviously the same size.

BETTE: But... (Stares at VICTORIA’S outfit.) You got a fancy dress on under yer dress!

VICTORIA: I suppose I do! (Laughs.) Here, take off your frock and put this on.

BETTE: Oh, I oughn’t—
VICTORIA: Here, I'll help you. (They take off BETTE'S dress, revealing a ragged slip underneath.) It just buttons up the front... like so. (BETTE now wears VICTORIA'S dress.) Look in the mirror.

BETTE/ VICTORIA: Blimey! (Both laugh.)

VICTORIA: Now you look like a princess. Princess...? Oh, but I don't know your name.

BETTE: Bette. Bette Canty.

VICTORIA: Well, Princess Bette, what do you think?

BETTE: I think I'm dreamin', that's what me thinks! And you... with yer hair down like that you might almost be taken for a flower girl. But not in those fancy underthings.

VICTORIA: You're right. (Putting on BETTE'S dress,) I could never sell flowers dressed like that. Now, your frock on the other hand... So nice and simple and... Oh, so much more comfortable! (She is finished putting on BETTE'S dress.) Well? What do you think?

BETTE: If yer face weren't so clean, me own mother would be fooled!

VICTORIA: Where's my handkerchief? (Takes it from the table and rubs it on her face.)

BETTE: What are you doing?

VICTORIA: Look! Some of the grime came off! How do I look?

BETTE: Like a regular professional flower seller from Piccadilly!

VICTORIA: Marvelous!

BETTE: But we better get out of these duds before your jailer comes back.

VICTORIA: Oh, wouldn't it give McDowell quite a turn!

BETTE: It might send her to an early grave! (Starts to take off the dress.)

VICTORIA: Poor McDowell. She never has any fun. (Points to BETTE'S arm.) What's that there?


VICTORIA: From McDowell?

BETTE: Oh, no. Not her. It was that brute of a guard out there. He roughed me up pretty good a while ago.

VICTORIA: Why, it's all black and—

BETTE: It's nothin' to worry over. It'll go away. Just like all the others.

VICTORIA: Others?

BETTE: Mostly from me mum. She's got a terrible temper when she's had her gin.

VICTORIA: But for a palace guard to treat an innocent person like that!
BETTE: Don’t worry yerself, Princess. It’s my arm.

VICTORIA: It’s my guard! You wait right here, Bette. I have a few words to say to that rude fellow. (EXITS RIGHT.)

BETTE: But— Oh, blimey! (LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the gates where BINGHAM stands at attention just outside the gates as PASSERSBY come and go. In a moment, VICTORIA, still in BETTE’S clothes, ENTERS UP LEFT and passes through the gates to BINGHAM.)

VICTORIA: You there!

BINGHAM: Ah! I see they let you keep your head. Lucky thing for you!

VICTORIA: I do not believe you are assigned to Kensington Palace to browbeat innocent flower girls! I am very displeased with you! What is your name, Sergeant?

BINGHAM: What’s yours?

VICTORIA: I am Her Royal Highness the Princess Victoria!

BINGHAM: Are you, now? Well, I’m the prime minister. So get along with you, and don’t come back if you want to stay out of trouble.

VICTORIA: Of all the insolence! (A few PASSERSBY stop and watch the argument.) I insist on your name, sir.

BINGHAM: Don’t you know the prime minister’s name? Can’t be much of a princess, I say! (The PASSERSBY laugh.)

VICTORIA: I will report you to the captain of the Guard.

BINGHAM: Will you? Well, tell him Sergeant Bingham sends his compliments.

VICTORIA: I am sure he will be very displeased with your conduct here today, Sergeant Bingham. Manhandling a poor flower girl... insulting a royal princess...

BINGHAM: And which of those two might you be?

VICTORIA: Is there no end to your insolence?

BINGHAM: First you’re a flower girl, then you’re a princess. Next you’ll be the Queen of Sheba! (More laughter.) Is there no end to your imagination? (Laughter.)

VICTORIA: I have nothing more to say to you, sir. (Starts to go back through the gates.)

BINGHAM: Hold on there, missy! (Grabs her.) And just where do you think you’re going?

VICTORIA: Into the palace, oaf. Where I live. (More laughter.)

BINGHAM: I think maybe you got the wrong address, my lady. I’m thinking your place of residence is more likely Billingsgate! (Laughter.)

VICTORIA: Unhand me, sir!
BINGHAM: No more fun and games, my girl. Be on your way and be quick about it.

VICTORIA: You do not believe me?!

BINGHAM: To be honest, no.

VICTORIA: It's astonishing!

BINGHAM: To say the least. Now off you go! (BINGHAM and VICTORIA struggle as the crowd shouts and cheers.)

MRS. CANTY: (ENTERS DOWN LEFT and joins the CROWD.) Bette Canty! What are you up to now? (The shouting stops, and the CROWD parts so MRS. CANTY can go up to VICTORIA.)

BINGHAM: Can you identify this ruffian, ma'am?

MRS. CANTY: It's my daughter, Bette. What's she done?

BINGHAM: Disturbing the peace for one thing. I'd be much obliged to you if you'll take her off my hands.

MRS. CANTY: Bette, you evil girl, you! (Grabs VICTORIA and BINGHAM lets go of her.)

VICTORIA: I'm not Bette. She's inside the palace.

MRS. CANTY: Bette Canty, you'll be the death of me yet!

VICTORIA: I'm not your daughter!

MRS. CANTY: You're not, are you?

BINGHAM: No, she's a royal princess! (Laughter.) But you better take her home all the same, ma'am. We're full up at the palace! (More laughter.)

MRS. CANTY: Nasty, evil girl! (Slaps VICTORIA twice.) Gettin' into trouble with the law, are you? (Slaps her again.) Makin' up stories so's that people think you was daff! (Slaps her again.) Well?

VICTORIA: (Weeps.) Please... please don't hit me again.

MRS. CANTY: I've just started with you, me dearie! (To the CROWD.) What is all you starin' at?

BINGHAM: Move along, people. No loitering in front of the palace. Get along now. (OTHERS EXIT DOWN LEFT and RIGHT.) I don't think she's right in the head, ma'am. You better take her home.

MRS. CANTY: You mind yer own business!

BINGHAM: Then see that she doesn't come around here again! Or I'll have you both locked up! (EXITS DOWN LEFT.)

MRS. CANTY: Now, see what you've done? Tryin' to get me in trouble with the law! I'll teach you! (Starts to hit her again.)

VICTORIA: Please! Don't! (MRS. CANTY stops.)

MRS. CANTY: Just look at you. And where's yer basket? What have you done with all the flowers?
VICTORIA: I... I...
MRS. CANTY: Speak up!
VICTORIA: I... sold them all. And the basket.
MRS. CANTY: Little liar! (Shakes her) Where's the money, then?
(Shakes her and the coins fall out of BETTE’S dress pockets.)
What's this? (She gets down on the ground and collects the coins.)
Tuppence... tuppence... tuppence... and half a crown! (Stands up.)
Well, you had quite a day! And about time, too. You must have gotten some rich toff to take a likin’ to you. Eh?

VICTORIA: Yes.
MRS. CANTY: Some wealthy gentleman, eh?
VICTORIA: No, a lady.
MRS. CANTY: Well. That’s more like it. Come on. I thinks I'll have meself a little celebration. I've an awful thirst that's been with me all day long. Come along, Bette.

VICTORIA: Where are we going?
MRS. CANTY: Don’t be daff. We’re goin’ home. What’s wrong with you, girl? (Pulls VICTORIA OFF DOWN LEFT as the LIGHTS CROSSFADE to the princess’s sitting room, where BETTE is pacing nervously.
MCDOWELL ENTERS.)

BETTE: Oh, McDowell! I’m so glad you’re back! Somethin’s happened! Somethin’ awful!
MCDOWELL: Calm yourself, Victoria. You’re all red in the face. I barely recognize you. Where is that dreadful flower girl?

BETTE: She went to scold that guard. Not the flower girl. The princess! She went and left me here, and she ain’t come back and—
MCDOWELL: Good riddance to her. I don’t know what possessed you to let her come up here in the first place.

BETTE: But you don’t understand!
MCDOWELL: Of course I do, dear. Let me feel your forehead. (Puts her hand on BETTE’S forehead.) Goodness, child, you’re burning up! There will be no state dinner for you tonight. I must call the doctor at once. (Starts to leave.)

BETTE: But you’ve got it all wrong!
MCDOWELL: I know your uncle will be disappointed, but you must be put to bed immediately. Your mother and father will make their excuses to the king.

BETTE: The king!
MCDOWELL: Stay right here, Victoria. I’ll be right back.
BETTE: (Goes to MCDOWELL and holds her arms.) But, McDowell, you’ve got to listen to me!
MCDOWELL: I've never seen you in such a state! Please, Victoria, no arguments. Just this once! (EXITS RIGHT.)

BETTE: But... (Goes to the "window" and looks out, then paces some more.) What'll I do? This is crazy! I... I've got to get out of here right away! (BETTE rushes toward the EXIT but is stopped by LUCY, who ENTERS RIGHT with a tea tray. In addition to tea, there are sandwiches and sweets piled high on it.)

LUCY: Tea, Your Royal Highness. (Places the tray on the table.)

BETTE: Tea? (Her eyes widen at all the fine food.)

LUCY: Certainly, Princess. Will there be anything else?

BETTE: More than all this? I mean... no. Thankee. (Shakes LUCY'S hand.) Thankee very much!

LUCY: (Confused and embarrassed.) Yes... Your Highness. (Quickly EXITS RIGHT.)

BETTE: Thanks again. (Looks at all the food.) Blimey! (LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene One

ACT ONE

Scene Two

LIGHTS UP LEFT on a noisy pub later that evening. MRS. CANTY is at a crowded bar with OTHER PATRONS, including MILES. There are a few unoccupied tables, save for one in the corner, where VICTORIA sits, frightened and uncomfortable. She has been crying.

MRS. CANTY: Now, Charlie, don't you be so stingy with the gin! I had a bit of luck today, and I demands yer full attention! (PATRONS laugh.) Drink up, everyone! It's bloomin' Christmas in June! (More laughs and noise.)

MILES: (Emerges from the small crowd. He sees VICTORIA sitting alone and goes over to her.) Not joinin' in the celebration, miss?

VICTORIA: No.

MILES: That woman up there is payin'. Thinks she's a queen or somethin'. You know her?

VICTORIA: No. (Pause.) She says she's my mother. But she isn't.

MILES: Strange thing to say. You don't know her, yet she says she's yer mother?

VICTORIA: That's what I said.

MILES: Still strange. Here, you've been crying! What's a pretty young girl like you got to cry about?

VICTORIA: Don't be insolent.

MILES: I begs yer pardon, miss. Foolish me, I thought I was bein' polite.
VICTORIA: I... I meant...

MILES: Ain’t any of my business to know why such a young one like you is sittin’ in a public house and crying. That’s what you meant.

VICTORIA: Yes. (Starts to cry.) No...

MILES: (Sits at her table.) I’ve got two daughters meself, both just a bit younger than you, and when they cry, the missus and me, we feel it is good manners to ask why.

VICTORIA: Quite right. It’s only natural! (Weeps.) Mister...?

MILES: Herndon. Miles Herndon. Haberdasher Unlimited. Saint Martin’s Lane. (Tips his hat to her.) Pleased to be of service.

VICTORIA: Mr. Herndon, have you, by any chance, a handkerchief on you?

MILES: Just my line of work! I don’t usually carry me merchandise on me. But as luck would have it, I have a lovely sample with me. (Takes out a lacy white ladies’ handkerchief.) You are more than welcome to it. (Hands her the handkerchief.)

VICTORIA: Thank you. (Dries her eyes.) I should be polite, Mr. Herndon, and tell you why I am crying. You appear to be a kind soul and you asked so nicely.

MILES: No need, miss.

VICTORIA: But if I told you, I fear you would either laugh at me or beat me.

MILES: I promise I won’t do either. What a thing to say!

VICTORIA: That woman at the bar... she did both when I told her.

MILES: Well, I imagine it was the gin talkin’. Looks like she’s had a powerful amount already.

VICTORIA: Dreadful woman. (Cries more.)

MILES: Surely not the mothering type, that’s clear to see.

VICTORIA: She’s not my mother!

MILES: So you said.

VICTORIA: My mother lives in Kensington Palace.

MILES: Does she, now? (Smiles.)

VICTORIA: Go ahead and laugh at me. I quite expected it.

MILES: I don’t think I will, miss.

VICTORIA: No? Then you certainly will when I tell you that I am the Princess Victoria and my being here with that vicious woman is all a terrible mistake! (Pause. MILES doesn’t react.) Well?

MILES: Strange thing to say. (Very serious.) Not at all funny.

VICTORIA: Then you are going to beat me! (Rises and starts to move away.)
MILES: No! (Rises.) Please don't go.

MRS. CANTY: (Sees VICTORIA standing and shouts to her across the room.) Sit yerself right down, Bette, and waits there, just like I told you. You mind me, girl, or you'll be sorry for it! (VICTORIA sits.)

There! (To CROWD.) Me worthless daughter, don't yer know! Fill 'em again, Charlie! Ain't you never seen a thirsty customer before? (More laughter and she turns her back on VICTORIA and MILES.)

MILES: Definitely a terrible mistake!

VICTORIA: (Surprised.) You believe what I said?

MILES: Well...

VICTORIA: Of course you don't. No sane man would.

MILES: I... I think there's something in what you say. I mean, she cannot be yer mother. You are so... refined like. A regular lady. Not likely to be her daughter.

VICTORIA: I thought she was terrible earlier today. But now that she has been drinking so much, I am even more afraid of what she'll do to me!

MILES: We must get you away from her right now.

VICTORIA: But how? She is watching me all the time.

MILES: You leave it to me. This is what we'll do, Miss... er... Yer Majesty?

VICTORIA: Your Royal Highness, Princess Victoria.

MILES: Yer Royal Highness, then. I'm going to take you home to my wife, Nellie. She'll know what to do. And my girls, they'll take care of you.

VICTORIA: How shall we manage it?

MILES: You go out that door and down the street to the greengrocer at the corner. (Rises.) Wait for me there, and I'll come join you soon.

VICTORIA: But— (Rises.)

MILES: Not yet! (Pushes her back down on her stool.) I'll give you the signal. Don't worry... Princess. You'll be safe at my house.

VICTORIA: Thank you, Mr. Herndon!

MILES: (Goes to the bar and addresses MRS. CANTY, forcing her to turn her back on VICTORIA.) What might you be celebratin', my lovely? A good day at the races?

MRS. CANTY: The races! (Laughs.) Did you hear that, Charlie? Me at the races!

MILES: You appears to me to be a sportin' kinda woman. (Gestures to VICTORIA, who gets up from the table and carefully steals OUT.) Ain't I seen you at Monte Carlo once?
ACT ONE

Scene Three

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess’s sitting room, that same evening. MCDOWELL is speaking with VICTORIA’S mother, the DUCHESS OF KENT.

MCDOWELL: And her language has become something terrible! I have never heard her speech so coarse! She keeps referring to me as “sweetie” and “duckie.”

DUCHESS: I know what you mean, McDowell. I never thought I’d live to see the day when my own daughter would address me as “Mum”!

MCDOWELL: And she’s gotten so careless with the tea things! It’s as if she never handled the Staffordshire china before!

DUCHESS: Perhaps she is upset over something, and it has wreaked havoc on her personality.

MCDOWELL: Yet she was quite herself this morning. This strange behavior seems to have come over her all of a sudden.

DUCHESS: Then perhaps it will leave her equally as fast.

MCDOWELL: Let us hope so.

DUCHESS: In the meantime, no one must know anything. We must keep the princess out of sight until she has regained her senses.

MCDOWELL: Very good, Your Ladyship.

DUCHESS: Victoria was not much missed at the state dinner tonight. Cancel any further appointments on her schedule. We’ll say the princess has... a slight cold. But we must make every effort not to alarm the king.

MCDOWELL: Certainly, my lady.

LUCY: (ENTERS RIGHT.) Beggin’ your pardon, Your Ladyship...

DUCHESS: What is it, Lucy?

LUCY: It’s the Royal Princess, my lady.

DUCHESS: What about her? Isn’t Victoria in bed and asleep?

LUCY: That’s just it, my lady. She won’t go to bed and—

BETTE: (ENTERS RIGHT, wearing a very long and elaborate nightgown.) There you are, Mum!

DUCHESS: Victoria, why aren’t you in bed?

BETTE: First of all, I ain’t sleepy. And then there’s this here dress!

MCDOWELL: Is something the matter with your nightgown?
BETTE: That's just it! I can't wear a fancy gown like this to bed. It will get all wrinkled and mussed up, don't you see?

DUCHESS: What kind of nonsense talk is this, Victoria?

MCDOWELL: That is your favorite nightdress! You've said so on several occasions.

BETTE: I did? Well, it is pretty, no saying nothin' against it. But to sleep in? It seems a downright shame, that's what I'm sayin'. Now, I seen a whole closet full of clothes in there. Maybe I can pick out somethin' more to my liking.

DUCHESS: If you wish.

MCDOWELL: Lucy will help you select another nightdress.

DUCHESS: Then you must get right to bed. Do you understand me, Victoria?

BETTE: Sure thing, Mum. (To MCDOWELL.) Thank you, duckie! (To LUCY.) Come on along, Lucy gal. I better get out of this one before I pop a button! (EXITS RIGHT.)

MCDOWELL: Stay with her, Lucy, until she is sound asleep.

LUCY: Yes, ma'am.

DUCHESS: And try to ignore the princess's unusual behavior. She is suffering from... a slight cold.

LUCY: Yes, ma'am. (EXITS RIGHT.)

MCDOWELL: Oh, dear.

DUCHESS: Precisely.

MCDOWELL: That was her favorite nightgown. I'll swear to it!

DUCHESS: We must humor the princess, McDowell. Anything to keep her quiet and out of sight.

MCDOWELL: As you say, Your Ladyship.

DUCHESS: But if she doesn't come to her senses soon, I don't know what we'll do! (EXITS RIGHT. LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene Three

ACT ONE

Scene Four

LIGHTS UP LEFT on the simple drawing room of the Herndon family, with a few chairs and a table. It is later that evening. MILES introduces VICTORIA to his wife NELLIE and his two daughters, BESS and HOLLY.

MILES: And here are my daughters, Bess and Holly!

BESS: Hello!

HOLLY: What pretty hair you have!

VICTORIA: Pleased to meet you.
NELLIE: Now, we must do our best to make our guest feel welcome, girls!

MILES: She ain’t heard a kind word since forever, so both of you be nice for once! (Laughs.)

BESS: Oh, Father!

HOLLY: However do you keep yer hair so pretty?

VICTORIA: I... I...

NELLIE: Don’t you be botherin’ the girl with questions, Holly. Can’t you see she’s all done in?

MILES: She’s had quite a tryin’ day, ain’t that right, miss?

VICTORIA: Yes.

NELLIE: I won’t have you go callin’ her “miss.” It ain’t friendly like. (To VICTORIA.) What’s yer name, dear?

VICTORIA: Well...

BESS: She’s got to stop and think on it?

NELLIE: Hush you, Bess!

VICTORIA: Victoria.

HOLLY: Oh, that’s a pretty name!

NELLIE: Just like the princess!

BESS: Too fancy. I’ll call you Vicky!

MILES: Now, Bess!

VICTORIA: That’s quite all right. All my... friends... call me Vicky.

NELLIE: Vicky it is, then!

HOLLY: Vicky, may I brush your hair? I don’t mind a bit!

BESS: I’m sure Vicky would much rather brush her own hair, silly!

HOLLY: But I could do it proper! In the back where she can’t reach!

MILES: I am sure our guest is much too tired for anything but bed. Isn’t that right... Vicky?

VICTORIA: I am rather tired.

NELLIE: Of course you are, dear.

VICTORIA: Holly, you may brush my hair in the morning. If you like.

HOLLY: Jolly good! I’ll do a bang-up job of it, too!

BESS: She’ll have you lookin’ like a princess, no doubt.

NELLIE: Now off to bed, all of you. It’s late and we’ve got a full day of sewing in the shop tomorrow.

MILES: That’s right! We’ve got a big order of handkerchiefs for Saxon’s Emporium.

NELLIE: Vicky, do you sew?

VICTORIA: I... I can do embroidery.
That's fine, then! Good night, girls! (BESS and HOLLY each kiss MILES and NELLIE good night during the following.) Be sure to make our guest comfortable!

BESS: She can sleep with me in my bed.

HOLLY: Why not mine?

BESS: The way you kick so?!

NELLIE: After you take off that dress, Vicky, you have Holly bring it to me and I'll see if I can get some of that grime off.

MILES: And no chattering all night long. Our guest needs her rest!

BESS: Good night!

HOLLY: I'll show you the way! (EXITS LEFT with BESS and VICTORIA.)

NELLIE: Miles Herndon, wherever did you find that poor girl?

MILES: Long story. But if I didn't get her away, she'd be beaten black and blue by now.

NELLIE: You don't say! Poor girl.

MILES: There's something I ought tell you, Nellie.

NELLIE: Miles?

MILES: She ain't right in the head.

NELLIE: You brought a loony into my house?

MILES: Oh, she's harmless enough. It's just that she's got these... delusions.

NELLIE: What sort of delusions?

MILES: Well... she thinks she's a princess.

NELLIE: Oh, that. All young gals these days got such delusions. I blames it on that young Princess Victoria up at the palace.

MILES: But this girl thinks she is that very same Princess Victoria.

NELLIE: You don't say! And when I asked her name she hesitated like.

MILES: Probably didn't want to give her real name. So--

NELLIE: So she said Victoria! Oh, the poor girl.

MILES: I hope you don't mind me bringin' her here.

NELLIE: You couldn't just let a daft girl roam the streets, could you?

MILES: Exactly. We'll care for her for a few days. Keep her safe from them that was doin' her harm. Maybe she'll come to her senses then.

NELLIE: I do hope so.

HOLLY: (ENTERS LEFT in a simple nightgown. She carries the dress VICTORIA was wearing.) Here is Vicky's dress, mother.

NELLIE: Just look at the thing! She must be poor as a church mouse.

HOLLY: Oh, I don't think so!
MILES: What makes you say that?
HOLLY: Under that dress she’s got another one. All white and clean and fancy as can be!
NELLIE: Ridiculous!
HOLLY: It's true! It's got lace at the collar and on the hem and sleeves—
NELLIE: Lace!
HOLLY: I thought only a princess could have such a pretty thing!
(Exits.)
NELLIE: Holly's imagination will get the best of her one of these days.
MILES: I wonder...
NELLIE: What’s that, Miles?
MILES: Nothin'. I just wonder. (Lights down.)

End of Scene Four

ACT ONE
Scene Five

Lights up right on the princess’s sitting room the next day. Bette is alone, pacing back and forth.

BETTE: They'll chop me head off, for sure! As soon as they finds out the truth, it's off to the Tower with me! (Goes to the “window” and looks out.) If only I could run away! With them guards out there, this place is just like a prison. (Paces.) Oh, what good would it do me? Dressed like this, I couldn't get halfway home before I was spotted. What I wouldn't give for me old dress back!

LUCY: (Enters right with the tea tray and sets it on the table.) Tea time, Your Highness.
BETTE: Lucy! Just what the doctor ordered! (Goes and looks over the selection.) What have you got for me today? More of those puny little sandwiches? Downright delicious, I says! And tarts! Oh, yer a gal after me own heart, Lucy!
LUCY: It is good to see that Your Highness still has her healthy appetite.
BETTE: With vittles like these, who wouldn’t?! One thing I’ll say about this place, they knows how to feed a body!
LUCY: There is perhaps nothing better for a cold than a good appetite.
BETTE: Who’s got a cold?
LUCY: Well... begging your pardon, Your Highness, but you do.
BETTE: I do? Who says?
LUCY: Well... everybody. I mean... the official word is that the Princess Victoria has a cold and all her royal appointments have been canceled.
BETTE: What appointments? No one told me about no appointments.
    Am I missing out on all the fun 'cause someone says I gots me a cold?
LUCY: I... I... (MCDOWELL ENTERS RIGHT.)
BETTE: McDowell! Just the person I wants to see. Since when have I
gots a cold?
MCDOWELL: Since yesterday afternoon, Your Highness.
BETTE: News to me. Seems like a body ought to know if she had a
cold or not.
MCDOWELL: Lucy, you may leave.
LUCY: Yes, ma’am. (EXITS RIGHT.)
MCDOWELL: Official word has been issued that the Princess Victoria
has a slight cold and cannot leave the palace.
BETTE: So that’s why I’m stuck here like a rat in a sewer!
MCDOWELL: Such language, Victoria!
BETTE: I know I don’t talks like a princess. Ain’t any of you asked
yerself why that is?
MCDOWELL: The princess is not herself.
BETTE: I’m myself, all right. I just ain’t someone else. That’s the
problem!
MCDOWELL: Surely even you realize that something is the matter,
Victoria. For two days now you’ve been... so different. But do not be
alarmed. You will soon feel like yourself again. In the meantime—
BETTE: In the meantime, the princess has a cold.
MCDOWELL: Precisely.
BETTE: Oh, how did I get into this mess?
MCDOWELL: Do not upset yourself, dear.
BETTE: Ain’t a person even allowed to get herself steamed up a bit in
this place? Sometimes I can just scream!
MCDOWELL: Princesses do not scream.
BETTE: I know. But flower girls can.
MCDOWELL: Such an odd thing to say.
BETTE: Can I trust you, duckie?
MCDOWELL: Please don’t call me—
BETTE: Can I really trust you, McDowell? I mean trust you with me
life?
MCDOWELL: I am totally devoted to you, Victoria. You know that.
BETTE: Sure. But can I trust you?
MCDOWELL: You hurt my feelings to doubt for one moment my
devotion!
BETTE: All right. I get the gist. Then sit down, McDowell. I got a story that will make yer hair curl.

MCDOWELL: I cannot sit down unless Your Highness sits as well.

BETTE: I get the picture. (Pushes MCDOWELL into one chair, then sits in the other.) There. Now, I got news for you, duckie. I ain't got a cold. And I ain’t gone crazy like you and the others think. And, what’s more, I ain’t the Princess Victoria! (LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene Five

ACT ONE

Scene Six

LIGHTS UP LEFT on the workroom of Herndon’s Haberdashery, the same day. There are benches and two long tables where piles of cloth are set. BESS, HOLLY and VICTORIA, wearing aprons, sit sewing. There are at least two OTHER GIRLS sewing as well. NELLIE is looking over the girls and checking their work.

NELLIE: Smaller stitches, Lizzy. These are ladies’ handkerchiefs, not sails for the British Navy.

HOLLY: Mama, come and look at Vicky’s embroidery!

BESS: It’s beautiful!

NELLIE: Let me see, dear. (Takes a handkerchief from VICTORIA.) My goodness!

HOLLY: Isn’t it lovely?

NELLIE: It certainly is! Where did you learn to embroider like this, dear?

VICTORIA: My governess.

BESS: Your what?

HOLLY: What’s a governess?

VICTORIA: I meant that a friend… someone I knew… at school… her governess taught her.

NELLIE: Well, she certainly taught you very well. Wait ‘til I shows this to Mr. Herndon!

BESS: I thought only rich folk had a governess.

HOLLY: Was yer friend rich, Vicky? And did she have such pretty underthings like you?

NELLIE: What a question to ask!

VICTORIA: She… she used to be rich.

HOLLY: But not no more?

NELLIE: Enough questions, Holly! You drive a person to distraction!

BESS: Could you teach me to embroider like that, Vicky?
Victoria: Well...

Holly: Me too! If you teach her, you've got to teach me!

Nellie: I thinks it's a natural gift you've got there, dear. Some talents cannot be taught.

Holly: Well, she can try, can't she?

Victoria: Holly, I certainly shall try. And you too, Bess. It's just that... no one has ever asked me to do something for them before. Something that I could do, I mean. I've always felt so... useless.

Nellie: You've a gift for embroidery, my dear. You mustn't waste it.

Victoria: I suppose not.

Nellie: You can work for Mr. Herndon and me as long as you likes, dear. We've got plenty of girls who can sew. But the fine ladies likes their handkerchiefs embroidered. So will you stay with us?

Victoria: I don't know.

Holly: But you must!

Bess: Holly is right, for once. You must stay!

Victoria: I... cannot say. I'm sorry.

Nellie: You just think about it, dear. Takes yer time and think about it.

Victoria: I will promise you this.

Holly: What?

Victoria: If I can't stay with you, I promise to teach Bess and Holly what I know. I'm sure they will be just as good as I.

Nellie: That's very kind of you, my dear. Now back to work, everyone. Millie, when you're finished with them handkies, I need you to start on them gloves.

Miles: (Enters the shop with two small boxes.) Here are the rest of the men's handkerchiefs. Just need to have the monograms sewn on.

Nellie: What did they say at Jackson's?

Miles: It's no go. Seems them factories up north turn out them same kind of gloves faster and cheaper than we can.

Nellie: But they can't be quality stock! Not like ours!

Miles: Don't seem to be much interest in quality these days.

Nellie: Just you look at this, Miles. (Goes to Victoria.) Show Mr. Herndon that handkerchief, dear.

Victoria: Yes, ma'am. (Goes to Miles with the handkerchief and hands it to him.)

Miles: Getting along fine yer first day, are you?

Nellie: She certainly is. Just look at that, Miles.
MILES: Beautiful work indeed! Why, you can't get this kind of embroidery just anywhere.
NELLIE: Certainly not from some factory up north!
MILES: Where did you learn to do this kind of thing? Not from that mother of yours.
VICTORIA: I told you. She's not my mother!
MILES: Did yer real mum teach you to do this?
VICTORIA: Not exactly. (Returns to her seat.)
NELLIE: What did they say at the Exchange? Did you get to see Terwilliger?
MILES: Didn’t get a chance. Things is all astir at the Exchange. On account of the king and all.
VICTORIA: What’s that?
NELLIE: What’s doin’ with the king?
MILES: Seems he took sick again.
NELLIE: Oh, every time the king gets the sniffles them folks at the Exchange starts on to panic over nothin’.
MILES: This ain’t no sniffles. They say he’s real sick this time.
VICTORIA: Poor Uncle William!
HOLLY: What a funny thing to say!
VICTORIA: Please tell me, Mr. Herndon. What is the matter with my—
MILES: Can’t rightly say. But it sounds pretty serious this time.
VICTORIA: I must get to Buckingham House! (Takes off the apron and prepares to leave.) Right away!
NELLIE: What?!
MILES: There already be a crowd outside the gates. I seen them on my way here.
NELLIE: What need have you to go to Buckingham House, girl? I’m sure I’m as upset over the king as the next person. But that’s no reason to go running—
VICTORIA: You don’t understand!
MILES: Let the girl go, Nellie.
NELLIE: But—
MILES: You know... (Indicates to her that VICTORIA is not right in the head...) ... Let her go see for herself.
NELLIE: Of all the—
VICTORIA: I just hope I am not too late! (Runs OUT.)
HOLLY: What’s the matter with Vicky?
MILES: Can’t rightly say, Holly. But the poor girl—
NELLIE: The poor girl aint right in the head, that’s what it is!
BESS: I admit she is a little strange.
HOLLY: No, she aint!
MILES: I best keep an eye on her. (EXITS.)
NELLIE: You too?
BESS: Strange or not, she sure knows embroidery. (LIGHTS DOWN.)
End of Scene Six

ACT ONE

Scene Seven

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess’s sitting room, moments later. BETTE and MCDOWELL are sitting just as they were at the end of Scene Five. The palace gates are also in place, STAGE LEFT. BETTE is just finishing telling MCDOWELL what happened.

BETTE: And ever since I seen the princess get chased off by the guard out there, I aint seen her again! (Rises and looks out the “window.”)
MCDOWELL: (Rises.) Do you mean to say that since yesterday the Royal Princess has been... out there somewhere?
BETTE: She aint been here in the palace. How I wish she was!
MCDOWELL: This is... outrageous! Do you realize—
BETTE: I know better than you what she's up against out there. She is such a nice young lady, and she don't know a thing about London—the real London.
MCDOWELL: But what will I tell the Duchess?
BETTE: I don't think you want to tell her anything. You don't want to get her in trouble, do you?
MCDOWELL: Trouble! You have no idea!
BETTE: Oh, yes I do, duckie. (Sits MCDOWELL in a chair.) Now, you just get a grip on yourself and think about it.
MCDOWELL: I must inform her parents! I must call the Guard! I must alert the king!
BETTE: Then you're the one who will be in big trouble.
MCDOWELL: Me? I've done nothing!
BETTE: Ain't you supposed to be her companion or something? Ain't you the one paid to keep an eye on her? You're the one that lost her. And in my neighborhood that means you are goin’ to get the worst of it, duckie.
MCDOWELL: But... but...
BETTE: I trusted you, McDowell. Now, you got to trust me. The only way out of this is to get the princess back here and not tell anyone what happened.

MCDOWELL: But... how?

BETTE: You got to get me some old clothes so I can sneak out of here and go find the princess.

MCDOWELL: But where will you look? London is so big!

BETTE: For a poor flower girl, there ain’t too many places to hide. If me mum found her, my guess is she’s working Piccadilly. Though I best warn you—if me sweet mother got her hands on her, the princess will be a little worse for wear.

MCDOWELL: Working Piccadilly?

BETTE: Sellin’ flowers. My mum gets them cheap from Covent Garden and makes me sell the whole lot by midnight or she beats me.

MCDOWELL: Are you suggesting—

BETTE: I ain’t suggestin’ nothin’, but the sooner I get out of here and starts lookin’ for her, the better off for everybody. (A DISTANT SOMBER BELL starts tolling. Then ANOTHER. Soon SEVERAL DISTANT CHURCH BELLS are heard tolling the same slow toll.)

MCDOWELL: What can be happening?

BETTE: What are all those bells for?

MCDOWELL: It can’t be! (Rushes to the “window” and looks out. BETTE joins her. They watch as the LIGHTS COME UP LEFT, where a small crowd is gathered behind the gates. VICTORIA ENTERS DOWN LEFT, pushing her way to the front of the CROWD to see. MILES soon follows her ON and works his way to the front next to her. No one in the CROWD speaks, but the BELLS get louder and louder. The MEN in the group take off their hats and bow their heads. In the palace, the DUCHESS and LUCY ENTER RIGHT. BETTE and MCDOWELL turn away from the “window” and face the DUCHESS. Suddenly the BELLS STOP RINGING.)

BETTE: What’s goin’ on here? (The DUCHESS, MCDOWELL and LUCY each kneel, facing BETTE, and bow their heads.)

DUCHESS: Your Majesty...

BETTE: Blimey! (BLACKOUT.)

End of ACT ONE

ACT TWO
Scene One

LIGHTS UP LEFT on the gates outside the palace, later that day. SOUND EFFECT: DISTANT THUNDER and RAIN. All of the crowd is gone except for VICTORIA and MILES, who stare through the gates.
VICTORIA: Poor Uncle William.

MILES: He was a good king.

VICTORIA: I wouldn't know about that. I only know he was a nice man.

MILES: You actually knew him?

VICTORIA: Of course I did. He was my uncle. I've known him all my life.

MILES: You really believe it. I can see that you really believe it.

VICTORIA: What difference does it make? No one else does.

MILES: Where do you come from?

VICTORIA: Kensington Palace.

MILES: And your name is really Victoria?

VICTORIA: Yes.

MILES: “Vicky” to your friends.

VICTORIA: I don’t have any friends.

MILES: None at all?

VICTORIA: A royal princess has no friends. A companion, a governess, servants, guards... but no friends.

MILES: How does a royal princess end up in a Piccadilly pub?

VICTORIA: A foolish mistake. Even more preposterous to believe than who I am. I do not expect you to believe any of it, Mr. Herndon.

MILES: I do not think you are crazy in the head.

VICTORIA: Thank you.

MILES: And if you are not off your head, you must be... who you say you are. There is no other explanation.

VICTORIA: Logical thinking. But I wouldn’t trust it.

MILES: I have one more question. Then I will know.

VICTORIA: Ask it, then.

MILES: Do you want to be queen of England?

VICTORIA: Truthfully... no. I cannot think of anything worse.

MILES: As I thought. (Kneels and bows his head.) Your Majesty.

VICTORIA: (Lights down.)

End of Scene One

ACT TWO

Scene Two

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess’s sitting room, two days before the coronation. The DUCHESS is quizzing BETTE while MCDOWELL looks on.

BETTE: Then I bow to the prime minister and acknowledge the archbishop.
DUCHESS: No, no, Victoria! Pay attention. You acknowledge the prime minister with a slight nod of the head, but you bow to the archbishop!

BETTE: I bow to the archbishop. But how am I gonna know which one is the archbishop? All those old men look alike to me!

DUCHESS: Don’t be irreverent!

MCDOWELL: It will be easy to identify the archbishop.

DUCHESS: It certainly will. You’ve seen him dozens of times.

MCDOWELL: He will be the gentleman with the tall hat and—

DUCHESS: The archbishop is the one who will put the crown on your head. What is all the fuss about?

BETTE: It’s all so confusing!

MCDOWELL: I’m sure Victoria will do fine, Your Ladyship.

DUCHESS: The coronation is in two days. I suggest you make a stronger effort to concentrate, Victoria.

BETTE: Yes, ma’am. I bow to the archbishop, the one with the big hat and carrying the crown.

DUCHESS: What is the time, McDowell?

MCDOWELL: Nearly two o’clock, Your Ladyship.

DUCHESS: Already? Oh, there is so much to do yet. The ladies will be here any moment for your next fitting, Victoria.

BETTE: Another one?

DUCHESS: A coronation gown is not something easily done. You will remain here for the fitting, then at 2:40 you must leave for Westminster Abbey to meet with the cathedral dean about the ceremony. And don’t forget that dinner tonight is at Buckingham House with the privy council.

BETTE: Yes, ma’am.

DUCHESS: I must leave you now, Victoria. McDowell will supervise the fitting. I have to select the table setting for the coronation dinner.

MCDOWELL: Yes, Your Ladyship.

DUCHESS: Remember, Victoria. Concentrate! (EXITS RIGHT.)

BETTE: Archbishop, cathedral dean, privy council! I think I’ll go off my nut!

MCDOWELL: Hush, Victoria. Someone will hear you!

BETTE: And my name is not Victoria!

MCDOWELL: I realize that. But you can hardly expect me—

BETTE: What are we goin’ to do, McDowell? That Duchess has got me so busy every minute I’ll never sneak out of here and find the real princess!
**ACT TWO**

**Scene Three**

LIGHTS UP LEFT on the Herndon’s drawing room, the day before the coronation. VICTORIA is planning with MILES and NELLIE.

**VICTORIA:** It is not as impossible as it may appear, Mr. Herndon. I was born and grew up in Kensington Palace, and I know every corridor and entrance in the place.

**MILES:** A secret passage, perhaps?

**VICTORIA:** Nothing that convenient, I’m afraid.

**NELLIE:** I don’t see why we can’t just go and knock on the front door and tell them who you are!

**MILES:** Why should they believe her? As far as they know, the princess is inside. She would immediately be arrested as an impostor.

**VICTORIA:** Mr. Herndon is right. Especially dressed like this. It would be futile.

**NELLIE:** But the coronation is tomorrow! And it ought to be Vicky up there on that throne! Oh, I beg your pardon, Yer Highness.

**VICTORIA:** I hope both of you will always think of me as Vicky.

**MILES:** You said there might be a way into the palace?

**VICTORIA:** Yes. The gardens behind the palace have three entrances to Kensington Park. Two of them are well guarded, but there is a
groundskeeper's entrance that is a possibility. If I can get inside the garden, then I can easily get into the palace and find Bette.

MILES: Out in the garden might be all right. But once inside you will be spotted for sure.

VICTORIA: If I am dressed like a princess, I could go anywhere as I please. Once I find Bette, I can give her directions on how to get out to the garden by way of back staircases.

MILES: It just might work!

VICTORIA: But how am I to get a dress that is convincing enough?

NELLIE: You just leaves that to me, Vicky—er, Yer Highness. I knows a lady friend who does alterations for a posh family in Mayfair. When the ladies gets tired of a particular dress, they sometimes gives it to my friend so she can use the lace and other trimmings as such. I'll get you a gown fit for a future queen!

VICTORIA: Splendid, Mrs. Herndon!

MILES: There is one snag we haven't considered yet.

NELLIE: What's that, Miles?

MILES: What if this girl Bette doesn't cooperate? What if she likes livin' in a palace? What if she wants to be queen herself?

NELLIE: Oh, gracious! I hadn't thought of that!

VICTORIA: I spent only a few minutes with Bette, but I think I can say something of her character. After a week living my life in Kensington Palace, I imagine she is more than willing to escape such a life. As for being queen, I'm guessing she has some strong reservations about that as well. (LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene Three

ACT TWO

Scene Four

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess's sitting room, the morning of the coronation. MCDOWELL fusses with BETTE'S hair, putting in combs.

BETTE: I don't want to be no queen! I'll run out of that church like a thief before I let anyone put a crown on me!

MCDOWELL: Stand still. I can't fix your hair.

BETTE: My hair! (Breaks away and paces the room nervously.) The coronation is this afternoon! They wants to make the wrong girl queen! And you're fussing about my hair! Oh, I wish I had me old dress back. I'd muss up my hair and walk out of here dressed like a scullery maid!

MCDOWELL: You cannot do that! At least not until the princess returns!
BETTE: What is she waiting for? We start for the church in a few hours!

MCDOWELL: I will admit that time is running out.

BETTE: Running out! Before you know it, I'll be bowing to the chap with the crown and sayin', "No thanks, duckie."

MCDOWELL: I have every faith in Princess Victoria. Please be patient.

BETTE: Patient! (Stops at the "window.") If I could get out of this fancy dress and these silly shoes, I'll bet I could climb out this window and reach for those vines over there and—

MCDOWELL: (Panics.) Victoria!

BETTE: Call me Bette. Or out the window I go!

MCDOWELL: Please... Bette!

BETTE: More like it. (Comes back into the room.) I'd more than likely break me bloomin' neck. Then where would they put the crown?

(LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene Four

ACT TWO

Scene Five

LIGHTS UP LEFT on a section of Kensington Gardens, later that day but still before the coronation. There is a park bench DOWN LEFT and a wall that separates the palace garden from the park. A simple gate in this wall serves as the ENTRANCE to the gardens from the palace.

Some LONDONERS stroll in the gardens. MILES ENTERS DOWN LEFT with VICTORIA, who wears a long cloak over her gown. Her hair is put up in combs as it was in the palace.

VICTORIA: It's this gate over here. Sometimes it is left unlocked while the gardeners are working.

MILES: There's too many people about for the moment. Perhaps we should wait a bit.

VICTORIA: Let's sit over here... so we don't appear to be too conspicuous. (They sit on the bench.)

MILES: What if the gate is locked?

VICTORIA: I've thought of that. I will take off the cloak and call to one of the gardeners inside. I can say I was in the garden and decided to come out here in the park and got locked out.

MILES: Will they believe you, do you think?

VICTORIA: I think they will — thanks to this lovely dress your wife was able to get for me.

MILES: I must say, you certainly looks like a princess in that dress.
VICTORIA: Oh, look, there's no one close about. I think this is our chance.

MILES: Right, ho! (They rise and go toward the gate.)

MRS. CANTY: (ENTERS DOWN LEFT suddenly from behind them and shouts, stopping them.) There you be, you little devil! (Goes up to them.) Where you been hiding this past week? And don't you lie to me, you wicked thing!

MILES: Madam, I'm thinkin' you've made a mistake.

MRS. CANTY: Mistake, my foot! What you done with yer hair, Bette? It looks all la-dee-dah like. What are you playing at?

MILES: This lady's name is not Bette.

MRS. CANTY: Sure it is! I knows me own daughter, don't I? Hey, I recognize you! You're that bloke who was at the pub. That night me Bette run off.

MILES: Go away at once.

MRS. CANTY: Come here, girl! (Grabs VICTORIA by the arm.) What you mean runnin' off where I can't find you?

VICTORIA: Please!

MILES: Let go of her!

MRS. CANTY: Wait 'til I get you home, girl! I'll teach you a thing or two about shirkin' yer own mum! (There is a three-way struggle with shouting.)

BINGHAM: (Appears at the gate, opens it and ENTERS.) What's all this, then? Break it up, I say! (He separates them.) What's behind this nonsense?

MRS. CANTY: That there's me daughter, Bette! And this bloke here is tryin' to take her from me.

MILES: The woman is off her nut.

MRS. CANTY: Crazy, am I? This chap is out preying on innocent young girls—

BINGHAM: Something of a leecher, are you?

MILES: This young woman—

MRS. CANTY: Bette, tell this officer—

BINGHAM: Quiet, both of you! (Turns to VICTORIA, who is still wrapped in the cloak and stands apart from them.) Now, miss, what's the meaning of all this? (A pause.)

VICTORIA: Sergeant Bingham, is it not?

BINGHAM: Yes, but that's neither here nor there.

VICTORIA: Thank goodness you've come, Sergeant Bingham. (Removes her cloak and reveals her gown.)
MRS. CANTY: Blimey! Where'd you get that dress, Bette?

VICTORIA: I'm afraid I've done a rather foolish thing, Sergeant. I was walking in the gardens and I saw the gate was open. I so wanted to come out in the park here. I really should not have done so.

BINGHAM: Princess Victoria! (Bows.)

VICTORIA: I realized my mistake and was returning to the gate when this woman accosted me.

MRS. CANTY: This here ain't no princess! She's me daughter, Bette!

BINGHAM: Silence, woman!

VICTORIA: I believe she mistook me for someone else... It is really all my fault.

MRS. CANTY: Them clothes and that hair don't fool me! That there is my Bette!

MILES: Perhaps I can explain, Sergeant. My wife here ain't... quite right in the head, if you knows what I mean.

MRS. CANTY: Wife!

MILES: All the same, I likes to get her out for a bit o' fresh air every once in a while. I try me best to keep an eye on her, but she got away from me, you see, and goes up to this lady here, rantin' about her daughter Bette.

MRS. CANTY: But she is Bette!

BINGHAM: Do you two have a daughter Bette?

MILES: Sad to say, Sergeant, but we did. She's been dead these past two years. But sometimes the missus gets it into her head—

MRS. CANTY: She ain't dead! She's right there in front of you!

BINGHAM: (To MILES.) I understand, sir. But you'd best keep a close eye on your wife in the future.

MILES: Certainly, Sergeant. (Takes MRS. CANTY by the arm.) Come along, Milly. You've had enough excitement for one day.

MRS. CANTY: Me name's not Milly! And you takes yer hands off me!

MILES: So sorry for causin' so much trouble, Yer Highness.

VICTORIA: Not at all, Mr....?

MILES: Herndon. (Bows.) You are too kind.

VICTORIA: Good-bye... and thank you, Mr. Herndon. (They exchange smiles.)

MRS. CANTY: Hey, what's goin' on here?

BINGHAM: Move along, you two.

MILES: Quite right, Sergeant. Come along, Milly. It's time for yer medicine. (Crosses LEFT, still with a grip on MRS. CANTY.)
MRS. CANTY: Medicine! Let go of me! What you tryin’ to do here?
(They EXIT DOWN LEFT.)

BINGHAM: You’d best get back inside, Your Highness, before there is another unpleasant occurrence.

VICTORIA: Yes, Sergeant. I have a very busy day ahead of me.

BINGHAM: I should say so! (Opens the gate for her.) The coronation will not wait.

VICTORIA: No, it won’t. Thank you again, Sergeant. I will not forget your kindness. (She EXITS through the gate. BINGHAM follows, closing the gate behind him. LIGHTS DOWN.)

End of Scene Five

ACT TWO

Scene Six

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess’s sitting room, moments later and just before the coronation. BETTE now wears a regal white coronation gown, and the DUCHESS stands nearby and admires it.

DUCHESS: Absolutely lovely, Victoria! My daughter certainly looks like a queen!

BETTE: I don’t feel much like any queen.

DUCHESS: Don’t talk nonsense, Victoria. In fact, today you must not talk at all. Only the pledge, of course, and the prayers during the ceremony. Oh, and a simple thank you to the guests from foreign countries. Otherwise, I suggest you maintain a dignified silence. After all, you are still not completely over your… cold.

BETTE: My cold. Nice word for it.

MCDOWELL: (Rushes IN RIGHT.) Your Ladyship!

DUCHESS: What is it, McDowell?

MCDOWELL: You’re wanted! Right away.

DUCHESS: Who wants me? Is something the matter?

MCDOWELL: No. Not at all. Something about where the ambassador from Italy is to sit at the banquet. You must see the majordomo at once!

DUCHESS: The ambassador from Italy? Oh, I knew he was going to be trouble. Where is the majordomo?

MCDOWELL: In the blue stateroom.

DUCHESS: Such a bother. (Crosses RIGHT.) Remember, Victoria, we leave for the Abbey in 15 minutes. Try not to wrinkle your gown.

(Exits RIGHT.)

MCDOWELL: She’s here!
BETTE: The princess?

VICTORIA: (ENTERS RIGHT, wearing the dress from the previous scene and carrying the cloak.) I just heard Mother go down the hall. The Italian ambassador works every time.

BETTE: Princess! (Bows.) I mean, Yer Highness!

VICTORIA: No time for formality, Bette. We have got to do a quick switch of clothing and get you out of the palace. McDowell will show you the way.

BETTE: Am I ever glad to see you! (Starts to undo the buttons on her gown.) Fifteen minutes more and I don't know what I'd do!

MCDOWELL: Let me help get that gown off you. (Helps BETTE.)

BETTE: But what will I wear? I can't go out in the streets dressed in that frock! (Points to VICTORIA'S dress.)

VICTORIA: I've brought a little something for you. (Pulls up her skirt and reveals BETTE'S flower girl dress underneath.)

BETTE: Me own dress! Blimey!

VICTORIA: But you must wear this cloak and keep your hair up until you are safely out of the palace. Once you are in Kensington Gardens, you can get take off the cloak and let your hair down.

BETTE: I likes the sound of that! (With MCDOWELL’S help she gets the white gown off.) And you can have this here dress with me compliments. It's as stiff and as itchy as it looks.

VICTORIA: I take it palace life did not agree with you, Bette?

BETTE: I likes the food all right. As for the rest of it—

MCDOWELL: You must hurry, ladies. The duchess will be returning as soon as she finds out the majordomo is nowhere to be found.

VICTORIA: McDowell, you keep watch at the door.

MCDOWELL: Yes, Your Highness. (CROSSES RIGHT.)

BETTE: Oh! I better tell you all about the archbishop. You bow to him, see? And the prime minister... Now what was it you do to the prime minister? I forget.

VICTORIA: A slight nod of acknowledgment, I believe. Don't worry about me, Bette. You just take care of yourself. Especially with that mother of yours.

BETTE: You come up against me mum? Oh, I am sorry about that, Princess.

MCDOWELL: Ladies! Hurry!

BETTE: And you know which one is the archbishop?

VICTORIA: I ought to.
ACT TWO
Scene Seven

LIGHTS UP RIGHT on the princess’s sitting room, a few hours after the corona-
tion. VICTORIA, in the white corona-
tion gown and now wearing a crown, stands with MCDOWELL, and gathered around them are MILES,
NELLIE, BESS, HOLLY and BETTE, who is back in her own flower-girl clothes. The bells and shouts fade away.

VICTORIA: I have summoned you here, my friends, to thank you. Mr. and Mrs. Herndon, I thank you for your kindness and your care. Holly and Bess, I thank you for your friendship. The first two friends I ever had. And Bette Canty, I thank you for your service to your country. You served as Royal Princess in a time of great distress and served so well hardly anyone noticed my absence.

BETTE: Oh, I don’t know about that, Yer Majesty. I sure had a lot of folk confused! (OTHERS laugh.)

VICTORIA: All the better for them, Bette. In my years ahead, I hope to keep them guessing on occasion, or else I won’t have any fun at all. Finally, I wish to thank McDowell, who bravely kept our secret and had such faith in me that she did not alarm the court with the truth.

MCDOWELL: I shall never breathe a word of any of it as long as I live, Your Majesty.

MILES: The same can be said for all of us, Your Majesty.

VICTORIA: I think it is an adventure to be shared only amongst ourselves.

BESS: I’ll keep me mouth shut. I’ll even keep Holly’s mouth shut. And you know that ain’t easy!

HOLLY: I love secrets! I won’t say a thing!

VICTORIA: I think such behavior deserves a reward. Mr. Miles Herndon…

MILES: Yes, Yer Majesty?

VICTORIA: From this day forth the official haberdasher for Queen Victoria shall be Herndon Haberdashery, Saint Martin’s Lane, London. Also, every Tuesday for the next six weeks, I will expect Bess and Holly Herndon at Buckingham House promptly at three
o'clock in the afternoon for embroidery lessons from Vicky. After
that time, they will be the official embroiderers for the queen's
handkerchiefs.

HOLLY: Buckingham House? Ain't you goin' to live in a palace?

VICTORIA: A good point, Holly. I think we shall have to promote my
uncle's house to Buckingham Palace.

MILES: I am honored, Yer Majesty. My whole family is.

NELLIE: I should say so!

VICTORIA: As for you, Bette Canty...

BETTE: I can't sew a stitch, Yer Majesty. I can't make you no fancy
hankies.

VICTORIA: You will be too busy for sewing, Bette. I plan to secure a
flower shop for you on Regent Street, and the only primroses to
grace the royal residence will be those from Canty Florists.

BETTE: You mean it?

MCDOWELL: Of course, Her Majesty means it. Don't be insolent, girl.

BETTE: Me own shop? Blimey! Thankee, Yer Majesty! (Shakes
VICTORIA'S hand vigorously, and ALL but MCDOWELL laugh. ALL
FREEZE in position. SOUND EFFECT: SOFT MUSIC.)

End of ACT TWO

EPILOGUE

SOFT MUSIC CONTINUES and ALL REMAIN FROZEN as the action
flows seamlessly from the previous scene. The aged QUEEN VICTORIA
ENTERS with OLD MCDOWELL, dressed as they were in the PROLOGUE.

QUEEN: (Goes up to the FROZEN BETTE.) Yes, Bette. I meant it. Didn't
I, McDowell?

OLD MCDOWELL: You were as good as your word, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: For 27 years, Canty Florists provided all the primroses in my
London residence. When Bette died in the influenza epidemic of
1864, I never allowed primroses in my house again.

OLD MCDOWELL: Very true.

QUEEN: Somehow they made me so sad after that.

OLD MCDOWELL: You also kept your word to Mr. Herndon.

QUEEN: Dear Mr. and Mrs. Herndon. (Goes over to MILES.) Yes,
haberdasher to the queen for... how many years was it, McDowell?

OLD MCDOWELL: I cannot recall. Decades, it was.

QUEEN: And Holly and Bess. (Goes over to them.) They embroidered
for me until...
OLD MCDOWELL: Until their eyes grew as weak as mine. They live in Tunbridge Wells now. I believe together they have a dozen grandchildren.

QUEEN: I still have many of their handkerchiefs. Safely put away with so many other memories. So many memories. (MILES, NELLIE, HOLLY, BESS, BETTE, VICTORIA and YOUNG MCDOWELL UNFREEZE and slowly leave the stage as the QUEEN and OLD MCDOWELL remain. The sitting room furniture is removed, and the two benches in the village of the PROLOGUE are put in place. MUSIC OUT. The QUEEN sits on one bench and OLD MCDOWELL puts on her spectacles and sits on the other bench, reading her book.) Oh, my dear McDowell. What has brought all this back to me?

OLD MCDOWELL: Brought what back, Your Majesty?

QUEEN: The Herndons. And Bette Canty. The whole adventure.

OLD MCDOWELL: You call it an adventure. I only recall I was a nervous wreck the whole time, and I try not to think on it.

QUEEN: Oh, sometimes I enjoy thinking back on it. It was so long ago, and now it seems like it was a... fairy tale. Totally unreal. Yet rather exciting. I wonder why I am thinking about it today.

OLD MCDOWELL: I cannot imagine, Your Majesty. Are you feeling unwell?

QUEEN: There you go fussing again, McDowell. Always my health, my meals, my clothes, my flowers— that's it! The flower girl!

OLD MCDOWELL: What flower girl?

QUEEN: She was over there. (Rises and crosses the stage, looking OFF RIGHT.) I saw her selling flowers near that public house. I wonder if they were primroses.

OLD BINGHAM: (ENTERS LEFT) Your Majesty.

QUEEN: What is the word about the carriage, Bingham?

OLD BINGHAM: Good news, Your Majesty. The new wheel is just about secured, and we ought to be on our way in a few minutes.

OLD MCDOWELL: Thank goodness! (Rises, puts away her book and spectacles.) They will be wondering what happened to us in London.

QUEEN: Let them wonder.

OLD MCDOWELL: Perhaps we will be back at Buckingham Palace by tea time.

OLD BINGHAM: Very likely, ma’am.

QUEEN: Thank you, Bingham. We shall be at the carriage shortly.

OLD BINGHAM: Very good, Your Majesty. (Bows and EXITS LEFT.)
OLD MCDOWELL: I will feel much better once we are on our way. I
don’t much like this village.
QUEEN: I think it quite a lovely spot. I wonder what it would be like to
live here.
OLD MCDOWELL: You are in a merry mood today, if you don’t mind my
saying it, Your Majesty.
QUEEN: Say it. I am, somewhat.
PRIMROSE SELLER: (ENTERS RIGHT, without QUEEN and OLD
MCDOWELL noticing her. Approaches them, carrying her flower
basket.) Primroses for sale, dear ladies. Lovely primroses. Only
tuppence a bunch.
QUEEN: There you are!
PRIMROSE SELLER: Ma’am?
QUEEN: I told you I saw her, McDowell. And they are primroses! How
wonderful!
PRIMROSE SELLER: Buy a bunch, dear lady? Only tuppence!
OLD MCDOWELL: Be off with you, young girl!
QUEEN: No, McDowell—
OLD MCDOWELL: (To PRIMROSE SELLER.) Have you any idea whom
you are addressing?
QUEEN: Be quiet, McDowell. (Goes to PRIMROSE SELLER.) Still only
tuppence? After all these years?
PRIMROSE SELLER: Ma’am?
QUEEN: How much for the whole basket?
PRIMROSE SELLER: The whole basket?!
OLD BINGHAM: (Rushes ON LEFT breathlessly and goes to PRIMROSE
SELLER.) Stand back there! You’re not to approach Her—
QUEEN: Go gently, Bingham, or you’ll have a stroke. The young lady is
not bothering anyone.
OLD BINGHAM: But, Your—
QUEEN: Bingham, I have a long memory, and I recall you have a habit
of chasing off innocent flower girls. I think it is a habit you should
learn to break.
OLD BINGHAM: I apologize, Your—
QUEEN: (Goes to PRIMROSE SELLER.) You didn’t say how much for the
whole basket.
PRIMROSE SELLER: I... I...
QUEEN: McDowell, have you any money with you?
OLD MCDOWELL: I believe so, Your—
QUEEN: Give the young lady whatever you have. (To PRIMROSE SELLER.) May I have the basket as well? Or do you need it for tomorrow?

PRIMROSE SELLER: I can always get myself another basket, ma'am.

QUEEN: We will give you a fair price. (To OLD MCDOWELL.) What have you got there, McDowell?

OLD MCDOWELL: (Looks in her bag.) Only two shillings, I'm afraid.

QUEEN: Well, that's not a very fair price for a whole basket of primroses. Not to mention the basket itself.

OLD BINGHAM: Allow me, Your Majesty. (Gives PRIMROSE SELLER a coin.) A half a crown. (Takes the basket and gives it to QUEEN.)

QUEEN: That's more like it. Thank you, Bingham.

PRIMROSE SELLER: (Confused.) Your Majesty?

OLD MCDOWELL: We really must get to the carriage, Your Majesty.

OLD BINGHAM: All is ready, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: Then we have no choice but to bid farewell to this lovely spot and continue on to London. (To PRIMROSE SELLER.) Thank you, my dear. Your primroses are indeed lovely. Quite as lovely as... Well, no matter. (To OTHERS.) If we are going to go, we might as well go. Come along! (EXITS LEFT, followed by OLD MCDOWELL and OLD BINGHAM as PRIMROSE SELLER remains dumbfounded. She watches them go for a moment, then looks at the coin in her hand. She holds it up and examines it. Then she bites on it. Convinced it is real, she smiles and EXITS RIGHT. LIGHTS FADE to BLACK.)

END OF PLAY
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES ONSTAGE

PROLOGUE
Rural village street—two benches.

ACT ONE

Scene One:
Princess’s sitting room—two elaborate chairs, small table with a hand mirror.
Street outside palace—palace gates.

Scene Two:
Public house—bar, few tables and stools, glasses.

Scene Three:
Princess’s sitting room.

Scene Four:
Herndon’s drawing room—two simple chairs, small table.

Scene Five:
Princess’s sitting room.

Scene Six:
Herndon Haberdashery’s workroom—benches, two long tables, piles of cloth, needles, thread and other sewing supplies.

Scene Seven:
Princess’s sitting room and street outside palace.

ACT TWO

Scene One:
Street outside palace.

Scene Two:
Princess’s sitting room.

Scene Three:
Herndon’s drawing room.

Scene Four:
Princess’s sitting room.

Scene Five:
Kensington Gardens—park bench, gate into garden, wall.

Scene Six:
Princess’s sitting room.

Scene Seven:
Princess’s sitting room.

EPILOGUE
Rural village street.
PROPERTIES BROUGHT ON

PROLOGUE
Basket of primroses (PRIMROSE SELLER)
Small handbag, spectacles, book (OLD MCDOWELL)

ACT ONE
Scene One:
Basket of primroses (BETTE)
Several coins in pocket (MCDOWELL)
Hair combs, handkerchief (VICTORIA)
Tea tray with tea service, sandwiches and sweets (LUCY)
Scene Two:
Handkerchief (MILES)
Scene Four:
Bette’s dress from Victoria (HOLLY)
Scene Five:
Tea tray with tea service and food (LUCY)
Scene Six:
Embroidered handkerchief (VICTORIA)
Two small boxes (MILES)

ACT TWO
Scene Four:
Hair combs (MCDOWELL)
Scene Six:
Cloak (VICTORIA)

EPILOGUE
Small handbag, spectacles, book (OLD MCDOWELL)
Basket of primroses (PRIMROSE SELLER)
Coin (BINGHAM)

COSTUME NOTES
Above all else, costumes must indicate the difference between those characters at court and those outside the palace.
PRIMROSE SELLER wears a worn, simple dress and apron.
CONSTABLE wears a police uniform, cap.
QUEEN has gray hair and wears an elegant black dress and a bonnet.
OLD MCDOWELL has white hair, wears a matronly dark dress and a bonnet and carries a small handbag.
OLD BINGHAM wears a fancy uniform, hat.

MCDOWELL wears a conservative, but fashionable dress and carries a similar small handbag.

VICTORIA wears a light-colored regal dress and white lacy underskirt at the top of the play. Her hair is held up with fancy combs. From ACT ONE, Scene Two through ACT TWO, Scene Three, she wears Bette’s dress, adding an apron in ACT ONE, Scene Six. In ACT TWO, Scenes Five and Six, she wears a cloak over a fancy dress, which is over Bette’s old dress. In ACT TWO, Scene Seven, she wears a crown and the white coronation gown that Bette wears in the previous scene.

At the top of the play, BETTE wears a simple, soiled dress with pockets and a ragged underskirt before changing into Victoria’s regal dress. In ACT ONE, Scene Three, she wears a long and elaborate nightgown. From ACT ONE, Scene Five through ACT TWO, Scene Four, she wears Victoria’s regal dress or other fancy dresses. In ACT TWO, Scene Six, she wears a white coronation gown. For ACT TWO, Scene Seven, she is back in her original dress.

BINGHAM wears the same uniform and hat as OLD BINGHAM.

MRS. CANTY wears a worn, dirty dress and a shabby hat with feathers.

LUCY wears a maid’s uniform.

MILES is dressed in a shabby but clean suit with a vest and a hat.

DUCHESS wears the very elegant dress of a royal. She wears a more formal gown in ACT TWO, Scene Three.

NELLIE, HOLLY and BESS wear simple but presentable dresses. In ACT ONE, Scene Six, they also wear aprons. HOLLY also appears in a plain white nightgown in ACT ONE, Scene Four.

SOUND EFFECTS

Upset horses, crash, soft music, distant somber bells tolling, thunder and rain, joyous peeling of bells, shouts of “Long live the queen!”
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