The Prince and the Pauper

Freely adapted for the stage from
the Mark Twain classic

By James DeVita

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

NOTE: ALL THOSE WITHOUT A SPECIFIED NUMBER OF LINES EACH HAVE LESS THAN 15 LINES

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For preview only
RUFLER .................................. head of the ruffians
FEMALE RUFIANS 1-2 .......... part of Ruffler’s gang
MALE RUFIAN ....................... another
BAT .......................................... another
BILLY BLINK ........................... another
Citizens
MILES Hendon ...................... mystery rescuer (female) 72
SHERIFF ................................. law enforcer
HOST ...................................... innkeeper
WOMAN ................................. accused citizen
MAN ....................................... citizen
CITY PEOPLE 1-3 ................. another
See the Flexible Casting comments in the Production Notes at the back of the playbook for numerous suggestions on performing this play with fewer or more actors.

SETTING
A wide staircase CENTER STAGE leads up to a platform with open railings, suggestive of a bridge. Open supports beneath the platform allow actors to enter, exit and hide under and around them as if these supports represented columns beneath a bridge or large building. The platform itself, the staircase and the stage areas on both sides and in front of the staircase are all viable playing areas.
STAGE RIGHT of the staircase represents Offal Court, dirty and dingy. STAGE LEFT of the staircase represents the royal court, pristine and royal.
THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

LIGHTS UP: At STAGE RIGHT (now Offal Court), small GROUPS can be seen lying among each other sleeping, OTHERS are getting dressed. BET and NAN, filthy, good-hearted and profoundly ignorant, are dressed in rags and sprawled on the floor. At STAGE LEFT (the royal court), LADIES JANE and MARY, dressed regally, are sitting on a short bench with hands folded before them, straight-backed and serious, awaiting the arrival of the prince. Two DRESSERS also await his arrival—one holds the royal stockings, another the royal shoes. There is a standing mirror. EVERYONE is absolutely still and solemn and forbidden to smile. At appropriate times, though, we can tell this is not always easy for JANE, who by nature is fun and gracious. MARY, however, finds nothing funny. She is gloomy and morose, very much the Bloody Mary of history she will turn out to be.

ROYAL MUSIC IS HEARD. Offal Court doesn’t hear it, but EVERYONE in the royal court straightens up a bit more. The LADIES stand. EDWARD APPEARS above, having recently awoken. He descends the staircase regally, but still sleepy. ALL in the royal area bow as he enters to complete his dressing. Outside of his royal undergarments, the Royal Seal is quite visible hanging about his neck. The DRESSERS help him do everything to the point of being ridiculous. The actions should be extravagant and appear funny to us, but it is deadly serious to all of the royal household. JANE and MARY watch and wait for EDWARD to finish. All of this action happens at the same time that TOM CANTY ENTERS RIGHT of the staircase into Offal Court. He too has just awoken. His face and hair are so filthy we can barely distinguish his features. He wears ratty undergarments. He is angry and searching the area for something. These two scenes play simultaneously. They do not “freeze” when the focus shifts—the action simply stills itself or plays out in such a way that it doesn’t draw focus.

DRESSER 1: (Announces as EDWARD is dressed.) Bringing forth the royal stockings.

TOM: (Drags out JED.) In the king’s name, I’ll beat thee into a mud pastry, thou villain thou!

NAN: Tom!

TOM: Them clothes is mine! ’N them books is, too!

NAN: Tom, what are you doing?!

TOM: Give ’em me!

GIRL URCHIN: (To TOM, of JED.) Keep your filthy ’ands off my brother!
NAN: (Grabs GIRL URCHIN and calls to BET.) Bet, wake up! Bet!
JED: (Draws a knife.) Keep off, you slim-brained cur, or I'll unseam thee chin to chops!
NAN: Tom!
GIRL URCHIN: (Overlapping.) Fight! Fight! (OTHERS join in yelling.) The dogs is at it! Fight!
DRESSER 2: Putting on the royal stockings.
BET: Leave it, Tom!
TOM: Give 'em back!
JED: Try 'n take 'em, crust-head!
TOM: Mark me if I don't! (OTHERS urge the fight on, too.)
DRESSER 1: Bringing forth the royal shoes.
MARY: (Bored.) Lady Jane, inform my father the king that we will be leaving shortly. (JANE rolls her eyes and EXITS up the staircase.)
DRESSER 2: Putting on the royal shoes.
BET: Nan, hurry 'n get Da! (NAN runs OFF.)
GIRL URCHIN: Hit 'im, Jed. Hit 'im! (JED lunges at TOM. TOM avoids. A short pursuit as they disappear beneath the bridge. OTHERS follow, watching and cheering the fight.)
ROYAL CHEF: (ENTERS LEFT with food.) Bringing forth the royal breakfast.
EDWARD: (Bored.) Not hungry. Take it away. (CHEF EXITS with food.)
DRESSER 1: Bringing forth the royal doublet. (Holds up a doublet.)
EDWARD: (Holds out his arms.) Can I not wear the blue today?
MARY: (Barely tolerates his question.) It is a solemn, serious occasion, my lord.
EDWARD: No, it's not, Mary. You have a solemn, serious mind. We're just greeting people again.
MARY: Subjects. Not people, subjects. And they will only obey a serious and solemn sovereign.
EDWARD: Could you say that three times quickly?
MARY: (Not knowing what he's talking about.) What?
EDWARD: Serious solemn sovereign. Serious solemn sovereign. Serious—
MARY: Stop this nonsense! And do refrain from that disgusting habit of... smiling. It does not become a prince.
EDWARD: I will wear the blue.
MARY: Good heavens, he’s hopeless.

DRESSER 1: (To DRESSER 2.) Bring forth the royal blue!

DRESSER 2: (Echoes this as he sprints up the stairs to fetch the doublet.) The royal blue! (EDWARD keeps his arms out awaiting the arrival of the doublet. The fight STAGE RIGHT bursts INTO view again, JED brandishing his knife.)

JED: I got nothing o’ yours, you muddle-headed thick-wit—except an edge o’ this!

MAN: (Tries to intervene.) Give over, lads, a’fore the law gets wind and we all—

JED: (Cuts the MAN’S arm.) Mind off, you stink-swilled gutter-snipe! (TOM lunges in and the fight starts in earnest. Cheering from those around. As this happens, DRESSER 2 RE-ENTERS and runs down the stairs with the doublet.)

DRESSER 2: Bringing forth the royal blue!

MARY: (Under her breath.) For the royal pain in my neck.

DRESSER 2: Putting on the royal doublet! (As he puts the doublet on EDWARD, JOHN CANTY ENTERS with his mother, GAMMER CANTY, followed by NAN. CANTY is large and mean, clearly his mother’s son. The CROWD backs away.)

CANTY: Now, now, what ’ave we ’ere?

DRESSER 2: Buttoning the royal buttons.

MARY: Would you get him dressed, already! (CANTY grabs the FIGHTERS by their necks and walks them DOWNSTAGE.)

DRESSER 1: The Royal Dresser, Lady Mary, cannot, by law, hurry the duty of—

MARY: I will have you hurried head first into the royal sewer if you don’t— Oh, look out! (Pushes DRESSER 2 aside. To EDWARD.) How do you intend to rule a country if you can’t do your own buttons! You know how sick Father is. It shan’t be long until you are the king, so start acting like one.

DRESSER 2: The royal gloves! (MARY takes gloves and hands them to EDWARD.)

EDWARD: Don’t say that, Mary.

CANTY: (Squeezes the BOYS’ necks.) All right, boys, now wha’ is the issue at hand disruptin’ me subjecks so? (Loosens his grip.)

GAMMER: We don’t ‘preciates bein’ woked up.

TOM: Jed here hooked me clothes, he did.

JED: I did not, you lyin’ swill! They was on the ground— (GAMMER goes for JED.)
CANTY: Whoa, now—easy, Mum, easy. (Squeezing JED’s neck again.) I’d continue me questionin’ deeper, bein’ the fair man I is, but I know these clothes.

GAMMER: Tha’ he does, you thievin’ little pig! I stole ’em meself for the boy.

CANTY: Give ’em over. (Squeezes harder. JED sheds the clothes. As he does this, HENRY VIII can be seen ENTERING above. He is sickly and stays at the top of stairs. JANE ENTERS behind. To JED.) You ’ave besmirched the honored conduct code o’ the street.

GAMMER: (To ALL that can hear.) We thieve of all and every but not our own.

CANTY: I thereby banish thee from these here haunts. Be thou found again within my domain, and that hour shalt be thy last.

GAMMER: (To OTHERS.) Turn ’im out wif a good beatin’—and strip ’im o’ the clothes he got. And le’ it be a lesson to all of you! (JED is dragged OUT. He throws the book he stole at TOM. GAMMER picks it up. LEFT, EDWARD and MARY see HENRY VIII. They kneel to him.)

HENRY VIII: I am not well. I will remain here today. (To EDWARD.) Let the people see you. Away. (He is helped away. EDWARD, MARY and OTHERS EXIT up the stairs. Meanwhile, CANTY and GAMMER have turned their attention to TOM, still in CANTY’S grip.)

CANTY: And what meanest thou by not sleepin’ in thy garments?

GAMMER: Still blowing thyself up, thinkin’ you’se better ’n the rest of us? Sheddin’ clothes that I went out of me way to steal for thee—

CANTY: So’s you can sleep comfy-neat like a gentleman-prince out of one o’ your books or somethin’?

GAMMER: Tha’ s what comes of ’is filthy readin’! (Tears the pages from the book.)

CANTY: Tha’ it does! (Cold and deadly.) I catch you lazin’ wif a book again ’n I swear on your mother’s grave, I will break your fingers. Does that brain-pan of yours compre’end wha’ I’m saying?

BET: Don’t, Da, you’re hurtin’ him!

GAMMER: Mind your own, gutter-runt!

NAN: Please, Da! (GAMMER chases both GIRLS away.)

CANTY: (Tosses TOM away.) Waste of food ‘round here with the money he brings in. All o’ youse. (To TOM.) Come home empty-pockets again, and I’ll break more than your fingers. Now get to work! It’s the first of March and march we will—to the city! (He and
OTHERS EXIT. NAN and BET go to TOM and help him. TOM tries to salvage the pages of the book. As the scene with TOM plays out DOWNSTAGE, we see EDWARD, MARY, JANE and OTHER ROYALS crossing the UPPER level. Below them and UPSTAGE of TOM, NAN and BET, a CROWD forms. The ROYALS are waving and nodding, letting themselves be seen by the people. This all happens silently, but active and in real time, as if seeing it from afar.)

NAN: You all right, Tom?

TOM: I swear, one day he’ll regret every beatin’ he ever give me.

BET: Forget ‘im, Tom.

TOM: And her. I swear. (They EXIT. As they do, the UPSTAGE scene turns vocal with the CROWD cheering EDWARD. The backs of the crowd are to the AUDIENCE. Ad-libs such as: "Long live the Prince of Wales! The prince!" etc. GAMMER and CANTY and other URCHINS ENTER and work the crowd. GAMMER pretends to fall, and a kindly CITY PERSON helps her up as CANTY picks his pocket. OTHERS work by doing such things as begging, picking pockets, stealing a basket or purse and running off, stealing fruit, etc.)

TOM/NAN/BET: (ENTER, working the crowd.) Penny for food, sir? Spare change, Ma’m? Penny for the poor, sir?

TOM: Please, sir, got a penny to spare?

CITY PERSON 1: Be off, rags!

BET: (Points to EDWARD.) There he is! Tom!

GIRL URCHIN: (To CITY PERSON 1.) Penny for the poor?

CITY PERSON 2: Here you are, child.

BET: Look there!

TOM: What? (To CITY PERSON 2.) Penny for the poor?

BET: The prince, Tom! Tha’ be the Prince of Wales—Edward Tudor, tha’ shalt be king!

JED: Spare change for a bit to eat, please?

CITY PERSON 3: That’s all I have.

NAN: (Of EDWARD.) Look at tha’, he’s like a bloomin’ paintin’.

TOM: Aye… he’s ‘appy, he knows he’s eatin’ tonight. C’mon now. Best get to work or nose up to a beatin’ later. Let’s split up. Nan, put a limp on at least. Do make an effort. I’ll cut up a coughin’ jag and—

CITY PERSON 1: Thief! Thief! Stop him! Etc. (Minor chaos as a THIEF is chased: screams, ad-libbing, "There he is! Stop him!

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Officer!” etc. STREET PEOPLE [except for TOM, NAN and BET] scatter and EXIT. GUARD 1 stays close to EDWARD. MARY and JANE EXIT. At a certain point, EDWARD is jostled and the royal seal falls from him. TOM picks it up and tries to mount the stairs to give it back to EDWARD.)

GUARD 1: (Seizes TOM.) Thou filthy beggar, thou! (Grabs the seal and tosses TOM down the stairs.) Darest thou touch the Royal Seal! (Goes to strike TOM.)

TOM: I was tryin’ to give it back, I was!

EDWARD: (To GUARD 1.) Hold off thy hand! How darest thou use a poor lad like that! (GUARD 1 drops to his knees.)

TOM: Please, your grace, I was givin’ it back, sir.

EDWARD: I know, lad. I—

TOM: Please don’t hurt me, sir! (Cowers, waits for a blow.)

EDWARD: Hurt you? Thou hast been ill treated. (Holds out his hand to shake with TOM.) Come now, please accept my apology. (TOM hesitates and then does.) You look tired and hungry. Come with me.

CROWD: (EXITING.) Long live the Prince of Wales! Long live the Prince of Wales! (Continues. TOM EXITS with EDWARD, followed by GUARD 1. As the CROWD EXITS, CANTY and GAMMER ENTER in pursuit of BET and NAN, but the GIRLS stay out of their reach.)

CANTY: Where is the little river-rat?

NAN: I don’t know, Da! We was split up when the constables give chase.

GAMMER: What’d you git?

BET: Thrupence.

CANTY: And you?

NAN: Nuthin’, Da. I didn’t get to—

GAMMER: Lazy leech! Git back on the street and stay there ‘til youse bring somethin’ home! (BET and NAN EXIT.) Kids these days. Thrupence.

GAMMER: You’re too easy on ‘em, coddlin’ ‘em like little kittens.

CANTY: I can’t help it. It’s me soft heart.

GAMMER: It’s your soft head’s what it is. (They EXIT.)

EDWARD: (ENTERS LEFT with TOM, WILLIAM and SAMUEL, who bring ON chairs and a small table. WILLIAM puts a tray of food down. EDWARD gestures ALL away but TOM.) I am not to be disturbed. (SERVANTS EXIT. Sees TOM staring at the food.)
Go ahead. It’s for you. *(Bemused and also concerned as TOM devours the food.)* Hast eaten today, lad?

**TOM:** Aye, this mornin’, sir—a bit ’o bread.

**EDWARD:** A bit of bread. *(Short pause as he lets TOM eat a little.)* What is thy name?

**TOM:** Tom Canty, an’t please thee, sir.

**EDWARD:** Where dost thou live, Tom Canty?

**TOM:** Offal Court, sir, short walk from ’ere, out o’ Puddin’ Lane.

**EDWARD:** Hast thou parents?

**TOM:** One, sir, me da ’n me sisters, Nan and Bet, and a grandam I wish I didn’t ’ave.

**EDWARD:** Does she mistreat thee?

**TOM:** Not when she’s sleepin’. But when she’s awake, she makes up for it with a good many beatings.

**EDWARD:** Beatings?! **TOM:** Indeed, sir.

**EDWARD:** Beatings! Is thy father kind to thee?

**TOM:** Not anymore than me grandam is.

**EDWARD:** And thy mother?

**TOM:** Dead these three years, sir.

**EDWARD:** My mother is gone, too, since I was a little boy, but my Aunt Elizabeth is just as dear to me. I have a sister, too, Mary. And Lady Jane, my cousin. She’s lovely, Jane is, but my sister Mary… Pray, tell me, do your sisters forbid you and your servants to have fun or smile?

**TOM:** Dost think we have servants, sir?

**EDWARD:** Well, of course. Everyone does.

**TOM:** Aye, tha’ s a lark, sir, servants.

**EDWARD:** Why then, who helpeth thee to undress at night? Or attire thyself in the morning?

**TOM:** Why, none, sir. Why would I have need for someone to do that which I could do meself?

**EDWARD:** Indeed, that is true. Thou speakest fairly well. Are you educated?

**TOM:** Don’t know if I is or ain’t, sir. I got some readin’ in me, an’ there’s a goodly priest, Father Andrew, edicates me some things outta books at times.

**EDWARD:** Knowest thou Latin?

**TOM:** Oh, but scantly, sir. I’s a torture, that one.
EDWARD: Aye, I grapple with it, too. Hours and hours of Latin and French and—but tell me of where thou livest. Hast thou... a pleasant life there?

TOM: In truth, sir, when there's no beatings at hand or I'm not dead hungry, yes. There be races up and down the alleys, johnny-on-the-pony 'n fightin' games 'n—

EDWARD: You fight with each other?

TOM: Fun fightin', sir. Wrestlin', you know.

EDWARD: Wrestling!?

TOM: Aye, 'n a little hittin' too... not hurtin' each other... well, maybe a little.

EDWARD: Marry, that would be something! Could you... Do you think you could... hit me?

TOM: Beg pardon, sir?

EDWARD: I've been trained all my life to fight, but no one has ever been allowed to hit me. Go on. I've never been hit.

TOM: Uh... I don't think tha's so very proper, sir.

EDWARD: I know it's not, that's why I want you to do it. Everything is so proper around here. (Stands awkwardly for a hit.) Go on. Hit away.

TOM: Oh, sir... that ain't right, I can't—

EDWARD: Hit me! I command you! (TOM immediately punches EDWARD. He doubles over.) Oh! Oh! Good heavens...

TOM: (Horrified.) Sir?

EDWARD: Oh...

TOM: You all right, sir?

EDWARD: (Nods as he recovers.) Yes, yes... I'm fine. Quite a blow.

TOM: Well, I've a lot o' practice, sir, where's I come from. All right, you now. (Presents his arm.) Go on.

EDWARD: I beg your pardon?

TOM: You gets to hit me now. Tha's the way it plays, wallop for wallop, you know.

EDWARD: I... I am to hit... um, wallop... you? (Hesitates.)

TOM: Aye, tha's the word, very good. Oh, go ahead, already! (EDWARD awkwardly hits TOM. TOM laughs a little.) Callest thou tha' a punch? (Prepares to hit EDWARD again.) Ooh, gaw, you'se in trouble now...

EDWARD: (Retreats.) Um, what... what are you doing?
TOM: Well, tha’s the game, sir. You go wallop for wallop hard as ya can ’til one of us cries mercy. Got it? *(Winds up again.*) All right, ’ere we goes now—

EDWARD: Well, um… thank you, thank you, but I think that will be sufficient.

TOM: You sure? You got it, sir?

EDWARD: Yes, quite sure, thank you. I’ve got it. That was… fun.

TOM: Aye, ’tis truly, sir. *(Eats some more.*)

EDWARD: *(A little more cautious, but still very interested.*) So… Tom… tell me more. Tell me about the things you do, and how you… how you and others play where you come from.

TOM: Play?

EDWARD: Aye, what is playing like?

TOM: Well, let’s see… in the summer we swims a lot. We wade ’n swims in the canals ’n rivers, ’n dunk each other, we do, pushin’, shoutin’ ’n tumblin’ like.

EDWARD: ’Twould be worth my father’s kingdom to enjoy such a thing! What else?

TOM: Well, we play in the mud. By the river, sir. It really is quite lovely mud you ’ave, sir. We do fairly wallow about in it, sloppin’ it on heads ’n rollin’ guppy-like in it. ’N mud-ballghts! Best mud-ballghts you ever seen—

EDWARD: Oh, prithee, say no more! If I could just once be allowed to dirty my hair or strip my feet and revel in the mud with no one yelling at me to put back on the royal shoes! If I could have just one glorious day of this, why, I would give up the very crown!

TOM: Aye, ’n if I could just ’ave a bit o’ food whenever I was hungry ’n dress me but once, sweet sir, as thou art dressed, why I would—

EDWARD: O ho, wouldst thou like that? Then so it shall be. Doff thy rags and put on these splendors!

TOM: Good my lord, I don’t think—

EDWARD: Oh, come, we shall have fun. You shall dress like a prince, and I shall be dirty and smile.

TOM: But—

EDWARD: I command you! *(Scares TOM. Quickly.*) Just kidding. Come along now. It is a brief happiness, and we shall change back before anyone can catch us.

TOM: *(Changes. Anxious, but excited.*) Very well, sir. *(They exchange clothes, enjoying it.*)

EDWARD: *(They help each other.*) No, no, it’s worn thus.
TOM: Marry, i’ s a good fit, it is. Like i’ s made for me.
EDWARD: As is yours.
TOM: Law, i’ s heavy, though! Like to break me back.
EDWARD: I feel like I could fly away in yours. (Laughs at TOM.)
TOM: (Of EDWARD, laughing.) What?
EDWARD: Sorry, but you must stand straight... no, straight. Yes. Well. Lift your chin... no, more.
TOM: Why, I’d ‘ave to look down me nose at everyone like this. Gaw, might as well stretch me on a rack, i’ s like I cricked me neck. (Laughs at EDWARD.)
EDWARD: (Suddenly serious.) Are you laughing at me?
TOM: (Immediately cowed.) Sorry, sir.
EDWARD: (Recover.) No, no, I... I like it. Do it again. Laugh at me... nobody ever laughs at me.
TOM: Aye, tha’ won’t be so very hard, sir. You’ se a sight, savin’ your reverence. Slouch a bit or somethin’!
EDWARD: I, slouch?
TOM: Aye, you look like a peacock fell in the mud ‘n froze. Loosen up a bit.
EDWARD: Sorry, but I do not slouch.
TOM: (Plays prince.) I command you! (A beat of uncertainty from both. TOM breaks.) Just kidding.
EDWARD: (Breaks and laughs.) Very well. I shall... slouch. (Looks quite ridiculous.) Good heavens, that’s what slouching feels like. Oh, it’s wonderful!
TOM: (Enjoys.) Gaw, you look kind a’ like a’ eel.
EDWARD: (Spies TOM and laughs.) It is usually required, if you are to be a prince, that people actually be able to distinguish the features of your face. (Tosses TOM a washcloth.) If I am to slouch, you are to clean yourself! (Imitates MARY.) "River mud will be left at the castle door along with any smiling!
TOM: Have a little mud yourself! (Dabs mud onto EDWARD’S face. BOTH laugh. TOM washes his face. EDWARD derties himself, then rolls the standing mirror over to them. They BOTH stand in front of it and face it.)
EDWARD: Come beside me and we shall judge who looks more like the— (They BOTH stop and stare, awed. A stunned beat as, for the first time, they notice the remarkable resemblance. They look at each other, then back to the mirror.)
TOM: (Amazed.) Gaw, tha’ s a puzzle...
EDWARD: What dost thou make of this?
TOM: 'Is not meet that one of my degree should utter such a thing.
EDWARD: Then I shall. Thou hast the same hair, same eyes, same face and countenance that I bear. Were we to venture forth, there is none could say which was you and which the Prince of Wales.
TOM: It's a wonder… i's like meself lookin’ at me… dream-me.
EDWARD: (Deeply.) How little separates us all. Had I been born but a short walk from here, it could have been I whom that brute soldier had tossed to the ground and… is that a bruise upon your hand?
TOM: A slight thing, sir. That soldier didn’t know tha’ I was—
EDWARD: Peace! (Angered.) It was shameful and cruel to treat thee so! It shall not go unpunished!
TOM: He was only trying to protect you, sir—
EDWARD: Stir not a step ’til I come again!
TOM: But—
EDWARD: It is a command! (Storms OFF. TOM, slightly stunned, stays staring at the mirror. He begins posing and imitating EDWARD’S carriage, sitting, etc. He draws EDWARD’S sword he is wearing and pretends to knight a subject. As this plays out, EDWARD appears above, and the GUARDS from another direction. Sees GUARD 1.) You! Come before me here! What is your—?
GUARD 1: (Fetches EDWARD a box on the ear that sends him sprawling. Other GUARDS laugh.) That's for thee, thou beggar's spawn, for what thou got'st me from my lord, the prince.
EDWARD: Thou shalt hang for laying thy hand upon me!
GUARD 1: Oh, will I? (Grabs him by the neck.) Hear that, boys? He's going to hang me.
EDWARD: I am the Prince of Wales, my person is sacred. How dare you touch me! (ALL laugh.)
GUARD 1: Oh ho, you're the Prince o' Wales. My 'pologies, your highness, I forgot. 'N I'm the King o' Egypt, nice to meet you. (Gives him a boot on his backside. As he drags EDWARD OFF, OTHERS laugh.)
GUARD 2: Make way for his gracious Highness.
GUARD 1: Make way for his royal sack o' crazy rubbish! (Kicks him down the stairs OUT of the castle.) Be off, you filthy gutter scum! GUARDS laugh and disperse. Focus shifts back to TOM in the royal chambers.)
WILLIAM: (ENTERS.) The Lady Jane.
JANE: (ENTERS with a bevy of LADIES IN WAITING. Bows.) Good day, my gracious lord.

LADIES IN WAITING: (Spill in and crowd around TOM. Bow.) Good day, sweet prince.

TOM: (Terrified.) I’se innocent! Have pity on a poor beggar! I didn’t do nuthin’! (LADIES and JANE giggle.)

JANE: Sweet prince, you would be wise to leave off your fooling today. The king, your father, will show little mercy if your studies don’t improve—he just read your Latin paper.

TOM: It wasn’t me! I can’t write no Latin! I barely knows it!

JANE: That’s just what your father says, and he’s not happy about it. (LADIES giggle. JANE good-heartedly shushes them.) And he has asked me to be your tutor. Along with my ladies. (LADIES spread out before TOM. They each hand him a book as they speak and curtsy.)

LADY 1: Latin.

LADY 2: French.

LADY 3: And Greek in the morning.

LADY 4: Courtly manners.

LADY 1: Grammar.

LADY 2: And math in the afternoon.

JANE: And your history books are nowhere to be found.

TOM: I didn’t steal nuthin’, lady, I swears! In sooth, I ain’t the prince!

JANE: Leave off this strange speech, my lord. We are to study.

TOM: (Falls to his knees.) Believe me, I’se only poor Tom Canty, a beggar!

JANE: (Horror-stricken.) On thy knees, my lord, to me!

LADIES/JANE: Good your highness, rise! (WOMEN begin to believe something is really wrong with EDWARD.)

TOM: I’ll never rise ’till I sees me the prince!

JANE: Why do you speak so oddly, my lord? What ails thee?

TOM: There ain’t nuthin’ lordly about me, lady! I tell you, I ain’t the prince! Have pity on me, please, and don’t let me be tortured in the prison! I don’t want to die! (Crawls after the LADIES on his knees. They ALL shriek again, calling for help. MARY runs INTO the room. The news of EDWARD’S madness spreads like a game of "telephone," echoing throughout and increasing in volume as it does.)

LADY 2: Help!!

JANE: Summon the royal physician!
LADY 3: Help! Help!
LADY 4: Call the guards!
LADY 1: Call the king!
MARY: (Unmoved.) What is it now?
TOM: I didn’t do nuthin’! Have mercy on me!
JANE: The prince is not well.
TOM: (To MARY.) I’m not the prince! Please let me go! (GUARDS ENTER.)
MARY: Oh, stop acting like this or father will be mad.
LADY 3: (To GUARD 1, beginning at a whisper.) The prince is not well. He says he’s not himself. His father thinks he’s mad.
GUARD 1: (Passes the news on.) The prince has lost his will. He’s having fits. His father thinks he’s mad.
GUARD 2: (Passes it on.) The prince is ill. He’s lost his wits. I think he might be mad.
LADY 1: (Passes it on.) The prince is mighty mad!
LADY 2: (Passes it on to LADY 3, who started it all.) The prince hath gone mad! (MARY and JANE have been watching TOM cowering on the floor through this.)
LADY 3: (To MARY.) The prince hath gone mad!
TOM: Someone help me!
MARY: (To LADY 3.) Say that again, and I’ll have your head!
TOM: My head?! Gaw, don’t take me head! I never done nuthin’ to hurt nobody!
MARY: Stop this foolishness!
TOM: Be merciful, gentle lady!
MARY: Gentle lady? Heavens, he is mad. (The PHYSICIAN rushes IN and begins assessing TOM. Meanwhile, HENRY VIII is helped IN LEFT. He is very sickly. TOM, quite beside himself, doesn’t notice who he is.)
TOM: (To HENRY VIII.) Be you the executioner?! Already?! Make it quick, please! I’m not so very good with pain!
HENRY VIII: How now, my prince? Knowest thou not the good king, thy father?
TOM: The good king my— (Completely faints. OTHERS rush to him and rouse him.)
TOM: (Comes to.) This is the king!
ALL:  *Bow and whisper gently that they concur.* True, true. It is. Indeed. *(Etc.)*

TOM:  The king! It’s the king!

HENRY VIII:  Aye, boy, it is I. Be comforted and tremble not. *(To LADIES IN WAITING and GUARDS.)* Leave us! *(They EXIT.)* This is all just a bad dream, yes? Say thou knowest thyself and me.

TOM:  *(Panicked.)* Gav, I am too young to die by the executioner’s hands!


TOM:  *(Elated.)* Thou hearestd it! I am not to die! Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you! My good, kind lord, my king! *(Turns to the stunned CROWD.)* The king hath pardoned me! I am not to die! *(Hesitates, not sure what to do next.)* May I go now?

HENRY VIII:  Go? Surely, if thou desirest. But whither wouldst thou go?

TOM:  Back to the kennel of my birth, to Offal Court ‘n me sisters, Nan and Bet. *(Reactions of dismay.)*

JANE:  Nan and Bet?

MARY:  Crazy as a loon.

HENRY VIII:  *(To MARY.)* Shh!

TOM:  Oh, please you, sir, let me go!

PHYSICIAN:  *(Whispers to HENRY VIII.)* Perhaps he is mad but on this one matter and hath his wits untainted to other things.

HENRY VIII:  Heaven grant it may be so.

PHYSICIAN:  Let us make a trial. *(HENRY VIII nods.)* Can you tell me where you are in Latin?

HENRY VIII:  His Latin is appalling… ask him something else.

PHYSICIAN:  *(Gingerly.)* Can you… tell me your name?

TOM:  Aye, Tom Canty, sir, tha’s me name!

PHYSICIAN:  Hm… that’s not so good.

HENRY VIII:  Try again.

MARY:  *(Pushes PHYSICIAN aside. To TOM.)* Do you think me kind and gentle, my lord?

TOM:  Oh, yes, my lady. Very gentle.

HENRY VIII:  *(Crushed.)* He’s mad.

MARY:  Told you.

HENRY VIII:  Quiet, Mary. *(Gentle, to TOM.)* Look at me, boy. Do you know your kind father is a king?
TOM: The evil sac’ o’ filth that bore me is king o’ nuthin’ but sewer-rats ’n my misery! (ALL present are aghast at this outburst.)

HENRY VIII: (Devastated.) It’s true, heaven help us, he’s lost his mind! Who found him in this state?

JANE: I, my lord. My ladies and I presented him with his books, and he started acting strange.

HENRY VIII: Overstudy hath done this! Away with his schooling and books and all his teachers! Pleasure him with sports and play until his health come again. (Starts to EXIT.) And proclaim it throughout the land that whosoever speaketh of this his illness shall to the gallows! He is next in line to the English throne, and mad or sane, he shall be king when I am gone! My sister Elizabeth is away. Call her home and have her tend to him closely. Let him to bed early and rest. (As he EXITS.) Let no one say again my son is mad! (EXITS LEFT. ALL bow as TOM is led OFF. ALL EXIT after them. Overlapping this exit, EDWARD ENTERS RIGHT, chased by a jeering RABBLE. It is pressing on toward evening, a nasty night, cold and wet. EDWARD is truly filthy now, barefoot, tired and abused.)

STREET URCHIN: Oh, speak it again, sweet prince! Let me hear thy royal voice once more!

JED: His highness been playin’ in the royal mud puddles again? (Shoves EDWARD.)

EDWARD: I warn you all, ye shall pay dearly if again ye touch my person!

GIRL URCHIN: Ooh— (Shoves EDWARD again) You mean like this?

JED: (Shoves EDWARD.) ’N like this? Is tha’ what you mean?

EDWARD: (Reaches for his sword, which he is no longer wearing.) Thou villainous knave!

STREET URCHIN: You see that? He fancied he had a sword! O ho, belike he truly is the prince! (Laughter from ALL.)

EDWARD: I am the Prince of Wales, and it ill beseemeth thee to use me so!

JED: Oh, is we “beseeming” ill to thee? (They kneel in mock reverence.)

STREET URCHIN: Cease thy "beseemings" before his majesty, the prince o’ the gutter!

EDWARD: Darest thou mock me, slave! (Strikes the PERSON nearest him. The tone of playfulness stops. In an instant, the CHILDREN are upon EDWARD, giving him a sound thrashing. EDWARD
tries to bite one of them, then runs OFF RIGHT with OTHERS in pursuit. Ad libs: "Slave?! Hale him forth! Get him! Strike me?! Hold him! Give 'im here! Beat 'im soundly!" Etc. At the same time, TOM runs IN LEFT, pursued by the DRESSERS. [Other LORDS, LADIES or GUARDS can help in the chase, if desired.] The two chases overlap each other, crisscrossing, but of course remain unseen to each other.)

DRESSER 1: *(Runs with nighties held high. Firm.)* Bringing forth the royal nighties!

TOM: *(Dodges the DRESSER.)* You keep your 'ands off me, you 'n your nighties!

DRESSER 2: Good my lord, you always wear the royal nighties to bed!

TOM: I don't even know what they is! But I don't likes the sound of 'em! *(Runs. DRESSERS chase after.)*

DRESSER 2: Heaven help us, he's mad, indeed.

DRESSER 1: Hold your tongue! You heard the proclamation. No one is to say he's mad!

TOM: Help!

DRESSER 2: But he is! Look at him!

DRESSER 1: *(Makes at TOM again.)* The royal nighties!

TOM: I'll bite, I swear, I'll bite ya!

DRESSER 1: *(Quick pursuit, then TOM is cornered.)* Have patience, sweet prince.

TOM: I'll have nuthin' o' the sort! I ain't wearing no girly-girl gown to bed! Keep your 'ands off me!

DRESSER 2: Gracious lord, you must sleep in the royal nighties!

TOM: *(Turns on them.)* THAT'S ENOUGH! What is all these "musts" I must do!? You say I'm the prince, don't you? Look at me... look at me and tell me... am I the prince?

DRESSERS: Of course, my lord. Yes.

TOM: *(Turns the tables and starts chasing them.)* Well then, kiss off 'n leave me be, or I'll have your heads, I will! AWAY! *(Chases them OUT and sits LEFT, exhausted and overwhelmed. During the chase, EDWARD ENTERS at another area, just barely having escaped the rabble that was chasing him. He sits RIGHT, overwhelmed and exhausted, wrapping around his feet soil lengths of fabric that he finds on the ground.)* Good 'eavens, this it is to be prince?

EDWARD: Good heavens, this it is to be poor?
TOM: I shan’t forget this.
EDWARD: I shan’t forget this.
TOM: Can’t make a move without being told I ain’t doin’ it the right way.
EDWARD: I am mocked and abused at every turn.
TOM: Even if I were prince, why should I be treated so?
EDWARD: Even if I were not prince, why should I be mistreated so? (DRESSER 1 ENTERS LEFT, with caution, pointing out the “prince” to LADY ELIZABETH. At the same time, STREET URCHIN ENTERS RIGHT, pointing out TOM to CANTY and GAMMER. The two scenes play simultaneously.)
DRESSER 1: (To ELIZABETH.) Aye, there he is, madam. (EXITS.)
STREET URCHIN: (To CANTY.) Aye, there he is, tha’ s him.
EDWARD: (Muses.) I will remember this day’s lesson.
ELIZABETH: (Gentle, to TOM.) Do you remember me, my lord? I’m Elizabeth, your aunt. The king, your father, would have me tend to you. (Holds a hand out to TOM. He takes it.)
STREET URCHIN: (To EDWARD, mocking.) My gracious lord, oh, my prince, the king your da would ’ave a word wi’ you! (EDWARD doesn’t answer, lost in his own thoughts.)
ELIZABETH: (Sweet and gentle to TOM.) Come now. (They EXIT.)
STREET URCHIN: (To CANTY of EDWARD.) He was talkin’ all kinds o’ craziness, tried to bite me!
CANTY: Aye… jus’ another game to get outta working if I knows ‘im. (Grabs EDWARD and yanks him to his feet.) Daydreamin’ again, is you, your laziness!
GAMMER: Out to this time o’ night ’n hast not brought a farthing home, I’ll warrant thee!
CANTY: If that be so and I do not break all the bones in thy lean body, then I am not John Canty.
EDWARD: (Twists loose. Excited.) Oh, art thou his father?! Sweet heaven, grant it be so!
CANTY: His father?
GAMMER: What are you on about?
CANTY: Don’t try to fool me. You know I’m thy father— and thou’lt be sorry for it soon!
EDWARD: Oh, jest not, delay not! I can bear no more. Take me to the king, my father, and he will make thee wealthy beyond thy wildest dreams.
CANTY: Oh, that’s rich! That’s a good one! Take you to the king?!
EDWARD: Believe me, man, I speak the truth! I am indeed the Prince of Wales!

CANTY: (A beat.) Stark ravin’ mad, he is.

GAMMER: Aye, a bit dippy in his nippy, ey?

EDWARD: I am not “dippy in my nippy,” whatever that may mean! I tell you again, I am the Prince of Wales and—

CANTY: Be you the blessed King of England, you better not have no empty pockets, or you’ll get a lesson you won’t forget! In with ya, you good for nuthin’ loon! In! (They drag EDWARD OFF, followed by the STREET CHILDREN. Elsewhere, WILLIAM, SAMUEL, GUARDS, JANE and MARY ENTER, ushered IN by ELIZABETH. They carry trays of food, a small table and a chair. They stand at attention.)

ELIZABETH: (To ALL.) In, in! Quickly, now, he’s on his way. We must help ease him back to health. With us he can try to remember himself and make mistakes without any terrible consequences. Yes? Come along! Mary. (Sees she’s not budging.) Mary, what are you doing?

MARY: I’m not waiting on him.

JANE: He’s not well, Mary.

MARY: Oh, brother.

ELIZABETH: He is your brother, and you should remember his princely dignity.

MARY: (Under her breath.) Dignity-schmignity.

ELIZABETH: And never forget that he is next in line to the royal throne.

MARY: He should go to the end of the line if he’s lost his royal marbles. I’ve always been more fit to rule than he, mad or no.

JANE: Yes, we all know what you’re wishing for—the crown.

MARY: Did you say something?

JANE: (Innocent.) I said perhaps we could take him fishing—in town.

MARY: How would you like to be the bait?

JANE: (Very polite.) Oh, perhaps you should be, dear. I hear they prefer worms.

ELIZABETH: (Breaks it up.) Ladies! Let us to the business at hand. (To ALL.) By the king’s command, no one is to show any surprise at the prince’s odd manner of speech or if his memory doth lapse. Is that understood? (SERVANTS nod in unison. To
MARY.) Be that understood? (MARY rolls her eyes and nods.) Very well. Call in the prince.

WILLIAM: Call in the prince!

SAMUEL: Call in the prince! (ALL wait as TOM ENTERS. He is dressed casual-royal. SERVANTS bow as he ENTERS. An awkward pause. ALL wait for TOM to sit. ELIZABETH nods to TOM, trying to guide him as to what to do next.)

JANE: (Hesitant.) Will it please your majesty to be seated?

TOM: (Of servants.) Why, a's not proper, not afore the likes o' them.

MARY: It is indeed proper. They're bloody servants! Just sit and stop your play-acting.

TOM: Let them sit first, then I will. (To SERVANTS and OTHERS.) Come on, everyone, make ya'self at home. (ALL bow gently but do not sit.)

ELIZABETH: (Softly.) Prithee, insist not my lord, it is not meet they sit in thy presence.

TOM: But—

HEREFORD: (ENTERS, kneels.) Your Highness. (Kisses TOM'S hand.)

TOM: (Pulls his hand away.) Gaw, what's with the finger-kissy? Who are you? Who is he?

ELIZABETH: Your uncle, my lord. The Earl of Hereford.

TOM: (To HEREFORD.) 'Allo, Uncle Earl. Wha's on your mind?

HEREFORD: (A little taken aback.) I... I come with a message from the king.

TOM: Well, spit it out then.

HEREFORD: It requireth privacy, my lord.

TOM: Can you not whisper it? You know, hush-hush like?

MARY: Oh, for—

ELIZABETH: (Wars MARY.) Mary. (Whispers in TOM’S ear.)

TOM: Oh. Very well. (Waves HEREFORD over to another area.) What be the big secret, Earl?

HEREFORD: My name is not— (Tries to remain composed.) His majesty has commanded that—

TOM: Hold on there, I'd like me Aunt Bethy with me.

MARY: (Disgustingly amazed.) Aunt Bethy?!

TOM: (Gestures for ELIZABETH to join him.) Auntie!

MARY: Did he just say Aunt Bethy? (ELIZABETH comes over.)

TOM: (To HEREFORD.) All right. Spilleth it.
HEREFORD: (Reads from a letter.)”His majesty commands that, for the safety of the kingdom, you shall, from this time forward, make every attempt to hide your illness until you are yourself again. He further commands that you shall never again deny that you are the true prince, and that you shall strive to remember all that you have forgotten.” Thus saith the king.

TOM: (A bit sobered.) The king hath commanded this of me?

HEREFORD: Aye, my lord.

TOM: (A bit frightened.) I must not disobey my king.

MARY: No, you mustn’t.

HEREFORD: Furthermore, touching your princely duties. The king commandeth that thou shalt keep to rest and be not troubled with serious matters lest you should go awearied to the great Banquet of the City.

TOM: Banquet?

ELIZABETH: My lord.

TOM: (Pretends to remember.) Oh, yes, of course... the great banquet, yes.

JANE: Yes, my lord, tomorrow’s gathering of the lords and ladies of the city.

MARY: He doesn’t remember.

TOM: I do confess it had escaped me.

ELIZABETH: Please you, sir, keep diligently in mind the king’s command. Remember everything thou canst, and if you cannot, you must pretend to remember it.

MARY: Just knock it off! Our enemies cannot be led to think the future king is mad.

HEREFORD: (Presents a book.) This book, my lord, "Courtly Customs and Banquet Behaviour." The doctor thought perhaps it might help you to recall certain civilities which would be expected of you at affairs of state.

TOM: All right, Uncle Earl. I’ll give it a look. (Retires up to table, sits and reads. ALL stand still at attention behind or around him. Focus shifts to Offal Court.)

CANTY: (Drags EDWARD IN. GAMMER ushers IN NAN and BET. To EDWARD.) All right, here they is. Go on now, say thy foolery again.

GAMMER: Aye, go on, name thy name. What art thou?

EDWARD: ’Tis but ill breeding in such as thee to command me to speak. I tell thee again, I am Edward, Prince of Wales. (CANTY laughs.)
NAN: Oh, poor Tom!
BET: Tom, it’s me, Bet. Knowest tha’ not my face?
NAN: And I, Tom, thy sister, Nan, who loves thee?
BET: You couldn’t forget us, Tom, could you? Say it’s not so.
CANTY: I told you, he’s gone goosey. That, or he’s playin’ a very clever game, ain’t you?
GAMMER: Nah, he’s got a soggy noggy. *( Strikes CANTY. )* ’N i’s your fault for lettin’ ’im get away wif readin’ them fancy books! It’s fried up his brainpan ’n sizzled his wits away!
NAN/BET: Oh, Tom, Tom. Oh, my poor brother! *(Etc.)*
EDWARD: *(To NAN and BET.)* Comfort thee, ladies. I have not lost my wits—nor hath thy brother. Take me to the palace where he is, and the king, my father, will restore him to thee.
NAN: The king, thy father! Oh, Tom!
GAMMER: *(Points to his head.)* A bit squishy up here, he is!
BET: Tom! Tom, look upon me. I am thy sister. Thy sister Bet!
EDWARD: Truly I have never looked upon thy face before.
CANTY: O ho, let the show go on!
GAMMER: Wait a minute… I’ll bet he’s home empty-handed. Tha’s why’s up to this game, so’s we won’t notice!
CANTY: Show us what thou’st gathered with thy lazy begging!
EDWARD: Offend me not with thy vulgar requests.
CANTY: Tha’s it! Tha’s it! *( Strikes EDWARD. )* 
NAN: Please, Father! He’s not well!
BET: Let him to bed and rest. Tomorrow will he be himself again. He’s always paid his way.
CANTY: Well, see he does! Tomorrow must we pay the rent to him that owns this pit we call a home.
GAMMER: Two pennies, mark ye, else out we go!
CANTY: So’s everyone does their share or come not home again!
GAMMER: To bed with all of ye, ya lazy parasites!
CANTY: Come, Gammer, the very sight of ‘em wearies me. *( They EXIT. The GIRLS grab straw and rags to make a bed for EDWARD. They tend to him with care. )* 
BET: You must not talk to father so.
EDWARD: He is not my father. I thank you both for your intercessions on my behalf.
NAN: Tom… I mean, my… prince. It might be better, if you can’t remember a thing to… maybe jus’ pretend that you do.
BET: We’ll try to help—if you forget things. But don’t let Father or Gammer see it.

NAN: Try not to let anyone see it.

BET: And do try to master your tongue lest we all be beaten.

EDWARD: I will do what I can, perforce. (Falling off to sleep.) But there are those who will rue the day they had treated me so. And those who shall be remembered for their devotion... and... (NAN and BET tuck EDWARD in as he falls asleep. ALL THREE snuggle in to sleep. Focus shifts back up to the royal court. TOM closes the book of manners.)

JANE: (Gentle.) Well... would you like to give it a try, my lord?

ELIZABETH: If you forget, we will endeavor to help thee.

TOM: I will do what I can, perforce. (Begins to eat. HEREFORD "ahems" a warning.)

MARY: Oh, this will never work.

ELIZABETH: Affairs of state, my lord, generally begin with some slight conversation before falling to.

TOM: Falling to what?

MARY: Eating, my lord. Eating?

TOM: Oh. Sorry.

JANE: (Prompts TOM.) You look well, my lord. How does your grace this day?

TOM: Well. Well. Well.

ELIZABETH: (Prompts MARY to speak.) Mary.

MARY: My lord, have you considered of the French Ambassador’s intention to increase import taxes citing the Arvigne Treaty of 1486 as precedent? (TOM is blank, looks to JANE.)

JANE: (Sees TOM is lost.) My lord, the prince, has indeed considered this.

TOM: Aye. I ‘ave... (Corrects himself and puts the "h" on "have.") I have.

JANE: And he is currently verifying the authenticity of the treaty.

TOM: Yes, verifying is an... important thing, ‘n I’m doin’ that.

MARY: Indeed. Allez-vous rencontrer l’ambassadeur français vous-même? (Are you going to speak with the French ambassador yourself?)

TOM: (Completely fakes it.) Vous?... ah... vous oui. Eh... oui o no vous oui. Vous oui. Oui-oui.

MARY: I’m going to be sick.
JANE: That was good, my lord.
MARY: Violently.
ELIZABETH: Perhaps we should move on to the eating.
MARY: Oui. (An awkward pause. TOM glances at HEREFORD who gives him a sign, but TOM doesn’t understand.)
ELIZABETH: Have the royal servants leave of the prince’s grace to serve you?
TOM: (Forgets himself.) Oh, sure they ’ave. I could eat a pig, I’m starvin’! (Reactions from MARY and HEREFORD.) Serve away, lads!
MARY: He sounds ridiculous!
JANE: Try again, my lord.
ELIZABETH: (Coaches.) Have the royal servants leave of the prince’s grace to serve you?
TOM: Indeed theys… they do. May it please them to fall to… for me.
MARY: (Rings a bell.) This is torture. (WILLIAM and SAMUEL step forth to serve TOM. TOM reaches for a pitcher to pour himself a drink, but the SERVANTS rush over and drop to their knees, one handing TOM the glass, another pouring the water for him.)
TOM: I can do that… (HEREFORD shakes his head. TOM lets them serve.) Thank you.
MARY: Just nod, for heaven’s sake, we don’t thank servants.
TOM: Why not?
MARY: (As if it were the stupidest question ever asked.) Because we’re above them.
TOM: We are above no one. If chance will have me prince whether I will or no, then I shall be the kind of prince my heart tells me to be. (To WILLIAM.) What is your name, lad?
WILLIAM: (Flustered) Uh… uh, William, so please your grace.
TOM: (To SAMUEL.) And you?
SAMUEL: (Frightened.) Samuel, my good lord.
TOM: Well, I thank you both.
MARY: This is disgusting. ( Strikes one of the SERVANTS.) How dare you raise your eyes and speak to one of the royal family!
TOM: (Rises, knocking his chair back. Tries to maintain his anger. All others kneel.) Aunt Elizabeth, if I am the prince, then I must be obeyed by everyone but the king, is that not so?
ELIZABETH: Indeed, my lord, it is.
TOM: Lady Mary, I forbid you to speak again in my presence.
MARY: I am your sister, you can’t—

TOM: Guards! (They step forward.) If she utters another sound, remove her… to… wherever it is you remove people to. (MARY, checkmated, forces herself not to speak. TOM approaches her, deeply outraged.) How darest thou strike another just because thou canst? Hadst thou ever felt such blows upon thy back thou wouldst not be so quick to dole them out. (To ALL.) If this it is to have power, then it shames me and so should it all of you! Billy! Sam! (WILLIAM and SAMUEL rush to TOM and bow.) Take the food to my private chambers. I wish to be alone and rest. (Begins to storm OFF. Stops.) Uncle Earl! Where are my private chambers?

HEREFORD: Through the Great Hall, my lord, second chamber on the left. (TOM nods and strides OFF. GUARDS and SERVANTS follow, taking along any food, props and furniture not needed.)

MARY: (Storms OFF.) My father shall know of this!

JANE: Though he be changed in many ways, methinks he is more prince now than he ever was. (EXITS.)

ELIZABETH: (To HEREFORD.) Tell me plainly, what dost thou think of this?

HEREFORD: Plainly then, the king is near his end, my nephew is mad, and all too soon, I fear, he will be our king. (BLACKOUT.)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

LIGHTS UP: The next day. In Offal Court, EDWARD, NAN and BET still sleep. As this scene plays, the banquet is set LEFT with tables and chairs and cups and napkins by the SERVANTS. As rich and beautiful a pageant as possible.

CANTY: (ENTERS, wakes EDWARD and GIRLS.) Up! Up, ye lazy rags! The prince is feasted today in the city—there’ll be scores of pockets need pickin’ and money to be begged. Up with ye!

NAN: Tom, Tom, wake up. Bet.

CANTY: Let’s go, all! Gammer! Turn ‘em out! (STREET URCHIN, GIRL URCHIN and other STREET PEOPLE ENTER.)

EDWARD: Feasted in the city? The prince?

CANTY: Aye, you ’eard me. The real prince—and if thou sayest again thou art he, I’ll cudgel some sense into thee. (A TRUMPET is HEARD as TOM ENTERS the feast. The ROYAL FAMILY, except HENRY VIII and HEREFORD, follow. LORDS, GUARDS and AMBASSADORS ENTER as desired. MARY is muted and angry.

End of Script Sample
PRODUCTION NOTES

PROPERTIES

ONSTAGE:
OFFAL COURT: Blankets, dirty clothes, straw mattress, rags
ROYAL COURT: Short bench, standing mirror

BROUGHT ON, ACT ONE:
Royal stockings, royal shoes, red or brown doublet, blue doublet, gloves, nighties (DRESSERS)
Tray with food (CHEF)
Royal seal, washcloth, sword (EDWARD)
Knife, book (JED)
Trays of food, pitcher, glass, chairs, small table (WILLIAM and SAMUEL)
Penny (CITY PERSONS 2, 3)
Books (LADIES IN WAITING)
Small table, chairs (GUARDS)
Letter, book (HEREFORD)
Bell, (MARY)

BROUGHT ON, ACT TWO
Tables, chairs, gold chains, flags, trumpets, cups, napkins, red carpet, etc. (SERVANTS, GUARDS, LADIES IN WAITING)
Knife (CANTY)
Petitions (AMBASSADORS)
Rapier, bedroll, money (MILES)
Meager meal, water basin, towel (HOST)
Crown on pillow (MARY)
Bedding (WILLIAM)
Eye patches, crutches, tin basin, tattered blankets, barrel, metal bar (RUFFIANS)
Bell, scepter, orb (LORDS)
Great Seal (EDWARD)

SOUND EFFECTS
Various types of courtly music, trumpet fanfares, artillery cue.
COSTUMES

Mark Twain set this story in the second quarter of the sixteenth century. You can choose whether to use period costuming or a more contemporary look. Obviously there will be a huge contrast between the clothing worn by the royals (lush, beautiful) and that worn by the street people (tattered, dirty). TOM starts out in ratty underwear. He will need several changes of clothing including a “casual-royal” outfit and an opulent coronation outfit. HEREFORD should have two suits, one of them black to signal mourning. MILES wears a fake mustache and plumed hat to cover her hair. RUFFIANS’ costuming will be loose, coat-like rags that can be worn over the previous costumes for those who must change quickly. RUFFERGER wears a long sleeve over his “missing” hand. OFFICERS wear police uniforms.

FLEXIBLE CASTING

This play can be performed with a “cast of thousands,” or a more trimmed-down company, as many of the roles can be double or triple cast. You will need a minimum of 19—12 male actors and 7 female—to play 49 parts. Of these, there are four major male roles and seven major female roles, with the rest being smaller parts. There are additional opportunities for an unlimited number of extras. Note that the crowd scenes will benefit from more actors, and the more servants and guards there are, the more opulent the feeling of the royal court will be.

Below is just one suggested doubling, with many other combinations possible. The cast can be reduced still further by combining more of the LORDS, LADIES IN WAITING, SERVANTS, etc. For example, the four LADIES IN WAITING could be reduced to two, with the other lines divided between them.

Tom
Jane
Mary
Edward
Canty
Royal Chef/Hereford
Nan/Lady in Waiting 2/Female Ruffian 2
Bet/Lady in Waiting 3/Woman
Jed/French Ambassador/Lord 2
Girl Urchin/Lady in Waiting 1/Elizabeth
City Person 1/Street Urchin/Lord 3
Man/City Person 3/Physician/Lord 1/Spanish Ambassador
Gammer/Female Ruffian 1
Lady in Waiting 4/Miles Hendon
William/German Ambassador/Ruffler
Samuel/Russian Ambassador/Billy Blink
Henry VIII/Italian Ambassador/Sheriff/Archbishop
Dresser 1/City Person 2/Guard 2/Host/Bat
Dresser 2/Guard 1/Male Ruffian
We hope you’ve enjoyed this script sample.

We encourage you to read the entire script before making your final decision.

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