

A MEDIEVAL FEAST

By Claudia Haas

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CHARACTERS

- LADY CANDIDA (f)** - in desperate straits; trying to avoid a marriage arranged by her uncle, she escapes the night before the wedding. She embarks on a journey to find the missing Rose brought to her father by St. George in a vision on a crusade. She believes the missing Rose to be the source of the woes that have befallen her family since its disappearance. An aristocrat, who hasn't really been taught to do anything useful, Candida discovers her own strength during the course of the play.
- KUKOLA (f)** - unwittingly becomes Lady Candida's ally in her escape. A cook by trade, Kukola helps Lady Candida in return for her freedom. A bit of a ditz, she is unknowingly wise.
- LORD CHASER (m)** - Lady Candida's uncle; he is chasing Lady Candida to uphold the marriage pact. He is on a mission, which is all he needs to know.
- SERVILE (m or f)** - servant on the manor. Extremely astute at stating the obvious.
- LORD ENTREE (m)** - lives in a small Alpine village of Richland which was settled by his father a long time ago. With a decided penchant for salads and distaste for meat, his eating habits have caused all manner of woes.
- LADY WANTALOT (f)** - Lord Entree's sister has an appetite for everything - food, diamonds, power - she wants it all.
- LADY SIGHNESS (f)** - Another of Lord Entree's sisters; she is prone to melancholia and sighing. The slightest bit of exertion drains her physically and emotionally.
- LADY CRYABIT (f)** - the youngest of Lord Entree's sisters, she is very emotional.
- MISS INWAIT (f)** - with cat like patience, this Lady-in-waiting to Lady Wantalot is waiting - for her time in the sun.
- MISS HANDFUL (f)** - Lady-in-Waiting to Lady Sighness is always there to pick up her Lady when she faints. It is getting old and she is getting rather touchy about it.
- MISS TOUCHNOT (f)** - fastidious. Obsessed with cleanliness.
- SEER (m)** - The second heir to the Richmond estate and the father of Lord Entree, he is currently wandering the Alps offering penance.
- MR. LUMBARO (m)** - an apprentice in woodwork, he is lazy and weak.
- TWIG (f)** - Cures the wood and shapes it into furniture and eating utensils. A nervous wreck.
- MISTRESS BRUSHFULLER (f)** - pulls and brushes the cloth. She has made these sweeping motions for so long, her poor arms are at odds with each other. She can't do any motion unless it includes a broad, sweeping one. Speaks bluntly and frankly.

MISTRESS WEAVIL(f) - She weaves the cloth and tends to giggle.

NOODLEBREAD (m or f) - responsible for the pulling and shaping of dough for noodles and bread. His/her claim to fame is a dough hook which he/she has devised and has been using for the past year.

SOUPSON (m or f) - In charge of kitchen. Deeply insecure, cannot ever properly finish a dish because she really can't cook.

LAUREL (f) - She is unerringly happy in her pathetic life. Nobody knows why.

LIESL (f) - A remarkably articulate peasant.

LORD ENGLISH (m) - very English Lord seeking to capture Candida who is supposed to be marrying him.

MADEMOISELLE NEZ (f) - Hired by Lord English because of her wonderful French nose. She intends to "sniff" out Lady Candida and hand her over to Lord English (for a price.)

From Rhineland:

HERR/DAMEN FRUSHSTUCK (m) - Just your basic thief seeking the Rose for his own ends.

GESUNDHEIT (f) - Kidnapped by Fruhstuck, she seeks a way to be rid of him.

From Italia:

SRTA. BRAVA (f) - A power crazed, aristocrat seeking the Rose to help her achieve world domain.

SRTA.GRAZIE (f) - Brava's younger sister. Wants to be rich. That's all.

SETTING

Place: Candida's Estate in Richmond, England; mountains surrounding Lord Entree's Richland Estate in Switzerland; Richland Manor and the Manor Grounds

Time: 1312

Act 1, Scene 1: Richmond - Candida's English Estate

Act 1,Scene 2: Mountains

Act 1,Scene 3: Manor and Manor Grounds in Richland

Act 1,Scene 4: Manor and Manor Grounds in Richland

Act 2, Scene 1: Manor in Richland

Act 2, Scene 2: Manor and Manor Grounds in Richland

Act 2, Scene 3: Dungeon in Manor

Act 2, Scene 4: Manor in Richland

NOTES REGARDING SET

We did not change sets! We used doors to indicate various playing areas. The 1st scene is in the middle of the night. So with dim lighting, we “hid” Candida behind a door and used that specific playing area for the first scene. For the 2nd mountain scene, we simply had the Seer open the middle doors of the set which revealed a mountain backdrop. For the third scene, we placed the apprentices working all over the set to indicate that they were in the large open square of the manor. We closed the doors whenever we wanted to indicate we were inside the manor and opened them for the manor square. For the dungeon we used lighting effects. A simple rail could be placed in front of the prisoners. For our production, the prisoners placed themselves snugly in the center of the stage and the bars were achieved with lights.

Our set consisted of two middle doors and a door upstage right. We were fortunate to have stairways on either side and so were able to always have a specific offstage exit for the dungeon, kitchen, manor rooms. The dining hall was the audience. We placed the characters around the audience for the effect of a large, round dining table.

During the set-up for the first feast, we used small tables (the size of a piano bench) which the Ladies-In-Waiting set up for the Lord and Ladies. The rest of the cast was placed around the stage and audience in order of their hierarchy of the times.

COSTUMES

Stock costumes of the time

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

The fun of the play is in the characters. Using characters from varying social backgrounds as well as different countries, there is a wealth of different roles for the actors to enjoy. I would encourage the use of accents. Some of the dialogue is written with the German, English, French or Italian accents. The idea is not to become perfect mimic, but to get the "feel" of the character using the accent as a tool. It is easier to get the vibrancy and emotions of Grazie and Brava if they utilize Italian accents. It even starts to affect body language and helps transform the actor into someone else.

For the setting, it can easily be done on one set if you utilize the entire theatre. The journey through the Alps and the medieval feasts can be done by blocking the actors through the audience. The play premiered in a small theatre that has no wing or fly space. No sets were changed. "Acting areas" were used. We did have a castle front with stairs on either side. One side of stairs would lead to the private rooms of the "manor-born" and the other side of the stairs would be used as exits for the servants. Below the stairs in the center were large double doors. We opened them for the scenes in the Town Square and closed them for the "inside the castle scenes." The early scenes (set on Lady Candida's estate in England) were done in dim light (it is set before dawn). We had a tiny door under one stairway that functioned as the woodshed from where Lady Candida makes her first entrance. Other options would be: a side stage, in front of curtain, or have her locked in the wings! For the dungeon scenes, we had all the "prisoners" huddle together center stage and achieved the look of bars with lights!

During the set-up of the first feast, we used small tables (the size of a piano bench) which the Ladies-in-Waiting set up for the Lord and Ladies. The rest of the cast was placed around the audience according to their importance in society. We placed them similarly for the 2nd feast imagining the audience to be a large, round table.

Many of the original stage directions and "bits" are included in the script. Have fun, let the actors figure out bits for themselves; don't be afraid to play with the play. The author of the play hopes that the actors learn how to create a fully-realized character, learn a thing or two about medieval times and have a wonderful time creating magic for their audience.

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ACT 1

SCENE 1 - THE ESCAPE

AT RISE: *We are outside a medieval manor in England. It is the middle of the night. Two heavy castle doors are seen center. Doors can also be placed on the side. All are presently closed. A tired cook (KUKOO) is seen crossing the castle grounds en route to do her morning baking. A loud cat wail fills the air. KUKOO drops her baking supplies and looks around with a rolling pin ready to strike.*

KUKOO: Who goes there? **(another loud wail is heard)** Cats! Go find some succulent mice and leave me in peace. I need to bake the morning bread.

CANDIDA: **(offstage)** Help!

KUKOO: A talking cat. This could be interesting. Cat? Are you stuck, Cat?

CANDIDA: Please help!

KUKOO: Oh! A polite cat! In the wood pile?

CANDIDA: Out! Get ME OUT!

KUKOO: Never mind! You are one rude cat.

CANDIDA: Pleeeeease!

KUKOO: That's better. **(tries to open the door)** It's locked, Cat.

CANDIDA: I KNOW it's locked. Kick the door down!

KUKOO: Kick the door? **(kicks the door)** Owwww! I'm losing feeling in my toes!

CANDIDA: Try again. Use your other foot.

KUKOO: Other foot? But it's my last one.

CANDIDA: Please hurry!

KUKOO: It's a good thing I like cats. **(starts to lift her other foot and suddenly stops)** You know, it would be easier if I used my keys.

CANDIDA: You have keys?

KUKOO: Of course I have keys. I'm the cook. I'm in and out of this shed all the time to get wood for the stove.

CANDIDA: **(growing impatient)** WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME YOU HAD KEYS?

KUKOO: You didn't ask.

CANDIDA: GET ME OUT OF HERE!

KUKOO: I don't know, now. You are starting to sound like one mean cat.

CANDIDA: (*changing her tactic*) Please, Cook. I'll grant you anything you wish if you let me out of here.

KUKOO: Oh! A magical cat. This is better and better.

(KUKOO hurriedly unlocks a side door to the shed and CANDIDA enters. SHE is a mess; although dressed in finery, SHE is covered with dust and wood. CANDIDA runs around happy to be unleashed.)

CANDIDA: I'm free! Come! There's no time to waste. We must find the family Rose! It's my last hope!

KUKOO: You're not a cat.

CANDIDA: I know.

KUKOO: But - I thought you were a big, magical cat who was going to grant me a wish.

CANDIDA: I am the Lady of the Manor. I can grant you whatever you like. After I find the Rose.

KUKOO: You're not the Lady of the Manor. I've seen her. She bathes.

CANDIDA: I am Lady Candida. And I usually bathe. But there's no time. We must flee!

KUKOO: I'm not going anywhere. Unless, of course, you have the power to grant me my own plot of land. Now, that would be worth risking my life.

CANDIDA: I am the rightful Lady of the Manor. I can help you. After you help me. After I find the Rose.

KUKOO: My allegiance is to Lord Beggarman - not to a Rose. I must bake the morning bread or the Lord of the Manor will grind me down as I grind the wheat. Excuse me.

CANDIDA: Please! Lord Beggarman is not the rightful owner of the Manor. He is merely my guardian. I am my father's heir. I should be ruling the estate. My guardian locked me up. He means to marry me off tomorrow morning. Then he will take the manor for himself. Besides, he will never grant you your own plot of land, whereas I... might. If you help me find the lost Rose.

KUKOO: You're too young.

CANDIDA: No, I'm not.

KUKOO: Well, actually, he's too old.

CANDIDA: What?

KUKOO: You can't marry him.

CANDIDA: Who?

KUKOO: Your guardian.

CANDIDA: I'm not marrying my guardian! I'm to be married to a Lord in the North country. He has oily hair and a runny nose.

KUKOO: That's terrible.

CANDIDA: I know.

KUKOO: You can't marry your guardian and the runny-nosed, oily-haired Lord of the North country. The law dictates that you can only marry one of them.

CANDIDA: I don't want to marry any of them! My guardian wants to dispose of me!

KUKOO: Your Guardian intends to marry you and then dispose of you?

CANDIDA: You're very confusing to talk to, do you know that? Who are you?

KUKOO: Your cook, Kukoo.

CANDIDA: I'm not cuckoo.

KUKOO: No, I am. Actually, my name is Kukola but most people call me Kukoo.

CANDIDA: No kidding!

KUKOO: No, Kukoo!

CANDIDA: Very well, Kukoo... if you help me find the Rose... I will later help you.

LORD CHASER: **(from afar LORD CHASER appears; HE is not terribly swift but very loyal)** Halt! Who would you be?

KUKOO & CANDIDA: Lord Chaser!

LORD CHASER: Announce yourself! Who would you be?

KUKOO: I would be Queen of England. But of course, I'm not.

LORD CHASER: What?

CANDIDA: **(ducking down)** Keep him talking. I'm going to scurry to your kitchen. Cover me.

KUKOO: **(drops her cloak over CANDIDA)** I told you who I would be. Now do you want to know who I actually am?

LORD CHASER: I'm confused.

KUKOO: Is that you, Lord Chaser? Relax your guard. It's just me, the cook. Getting ready to bake bread. **(starts off with LADY CANDIDA at her side)**

LORD CHASER: What is by your side?

KUKOO: My Lady...

CANDIDA: **(in a fierce whisper)** Don't give me away!

KUKOO: **(pushing CANDIDA down and covering her with her cloak)** Cat! My Lady Cat! She's a wonderful mouser, aren't you Cat? Meow for the good knight, Cat!

CANDIDA: **(reluctantly)** Meow.

LORD CHASER: Cat? **(scared of the big cat, HE suddenly stops)** That's one big cat!

KUKOO: Yes, well she catches lots of mice. I'd better be off, Lord Chaser.

(KUKOO and CANDIDA - on her hands and knees start off. As CANDIDA scurries away, KUKOO steps on her cloak and she is revealed.)

LORD CHASER: That's not a cat.

CANDIDA: Funny. You're the second person to notice that tonight.

LORD CHASER: You must come with me by order of Lord Beggarman!

CANDIDA: Let's split apart! Run, Kukoo! Run! Meet me west of the hillside!

(They are running a circle around LORD CHASER who is spinning in the middle trying to keep an eye on them. Suddenly they split apart and LORD CHASER is confused.)

KUKOO: **(suddenly standing still)** Why?

CANDIDA: We're going on an adventure! We're going to find the Rose and get the manor returned to me. **(CANDIDA exits one way and KUKOO another.)**

LORD CHASER: Ahhh! The "old split apart to confuse the chasing knight" routine. **(loudly)** Well, I'll have you know - **(softer)** that it works. I don't know which way to go.

SERVILE: **(An overwrought SERVILE enters getting ready for the wedding.)** Make way. Make way. I must collect the bride. Oh no! The door's open!

LORD CHASER: That's very astute of you.

SERVILE: Look at all the wood. It's a haven for spiders and vermin. Can you get the bride for me?

LORD CHASER: She's not in there.

SERVILE: Oh no! Lord Beggarman will be most distraught! And he will take his anger out on me! Have you seen the Lady of the Manor?

LORD CHASER: I don't know. I think she changed into a cat.

SERVILE: Not possible.

LORD CHASER: Anything's possible. Nothing has gone right at this manor for many years. Ever since the family lost the Rose.

SERVILE: And where did Milady-the-Cat go?

LORD CHASER: The Cook went one way and Milady-the-Cat went the other. But I don't know who went where.

SERVILE: Then we must do the same. Split apart. Search them out!

LORD CHASER: **(runs right and suddenly stops; HE then runs left and again suddenly stops)** I can't do that. I'm only one person.

SERVILE: I know! I'll go right! **(to LORD CHASER)** You! Go left and do the same! **(SERVILLE and LORD CHASER get all fired up and proceed with the directions. With full speed ahead, they get ready and run - right into each other. They knock themselves**

out and lay on the floor. SERVILE looks up.) This could be a problem.

BLACKOUT

SCENE 2 - THE JOURNEY

AT RISE: We are in the mountains. The center doors open to reveal a backdrop of mountains. Morning sounds are heard. SEER enters, dressed in rags and carries a sack.

SEER: I'm the one who knows the woes of the Rose; But I propose - just suppose - what bodes... if I disclose... what I owe from long ago?

FRUHSTUCK: **(offstage)** Macht schnell! Climb up, I say, and tell me what you see!

SEER: Who goes? I don't know! Suppose I hide and view this show!

(SEER hides as GESUNDHEIT enters. GESUNDHEIT is exhausted from days of climbing the Alps. SHE carries a large sack. SHE is listening to FRUHSTUCK's orders and doesn't obey one of them. SHE is clearly disgusted with him.)

FRUHSTUCK: **(offstage)** Gesundheit! Climb up to the highest peak and tell me what you see! Looken-sie for wasser! Find food! Is there a village? Do you find Richland? On the double! Schnell! Make haste!

GESUNDHEIT: Gesundheit, find me this! Gesundheit, prepare me that! Always Gesundheit! I never wanted this job. This strange man kidnaps me and now I am his servant. I am traveling two weeks! Two weeks up and down these mountains! And you know what? I'm tired.

(With that, SHE promptly falls to the ground, pulls the sack over her and proceeds to fall quickly asleep. SEER peeks as FRUHSTUCK enters.)

FRUHSTUCK: Who goes? Gesundheit, did you prepare the fire? Gesundheit! It's kalte up here! Ahh-choo!

SEER: Gesundheit.

FRUHSTUCK: What is that? Who calls my serf? Ahh-choo!

SEER: Gesundheit.

FRUHSTUCK: Again, I hear my serf's name! But no serf! Gesundheit! Where are you? Hold fast! I'm not afraid! **(louder)** I'm not afraid!! **(louder)** I'M NOT AFRAID! **(A snore is heard. FRUHSTUCK jumps in the air and throws his arms up in surrender.)** All right! I am

afraid! (***A “me-me-me” sleep sound is heard.***) Gesundheit? Ist that you? (***HE sees the sack lying there with GESUNDHEIT’S feet sticking out.***) Ahhh! Gesundheit! Have you melted? (***GESUNDHEIT shudders under the sack.***) Ohhh! What horrible happening is this? My serf has melted and her ghost shudders! Who has done this terrible thing?

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