

# THE NEW CLOTHES KING AND THE BANDIT QUEEN

By Edith Weiss

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# THE NEW CLOTHES KING AND THE BANDIT QUEEN

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**SYNOPSIS:** In this retelling of the classic story "The King's New Clothes," King Henry's kingdom is bankrupt and the people are desperate. His solution is to marry Queen Charlotta, who he assumes is rich. He assumes incorrectly. Queen Charlotta is eager for the marriage because she's as poor as a church mouse. In order to look wealthy, the King spends his last bag of money on luxurious clothes that, he is assured, have the added benefit of only being seen by smart people. No one in the Kingdom sees the clothes the tailors are busily sewing, and an uneasy silence descends upon the kingdom. Who will have the courage to speak truth to power? A wonderful cast of characters round out this original and hilarious retelling.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(4 Males, 6 Females, 3 Either)*

TILDA Hardworking maid  
 COOK Earthy, loves her pet chicken which she carries in her pocket  
 SQUAGMIRETTA SCHMIRTZ Scrappy kitchen maid, scruffy  
 BARTHEL MULEHEAD Rustic, not too bright servant, constantly falling in love  
 TWEERS\* The King's Prime Minister, serious, trying to keep his head while all about him are losing theirs  
 GWENDOLYN The King's new servant, very sweet and innocent  
 WINONA\* The King's Printer, prone to hysterics  
 CECILY\* The King's Financial Advisor, a worried and proper person  
 KING HENRY Pompous, petulant, and poor  
 WINIFRED Queen Charlotta's handmaiden. Practical and loyal. Doesn't mince words.  
 QUEEN CHARLOTTA Spoiled, ultra feminine, helpless... at first  
 GUY A common thief, the brains of the duo  
 MO A common thief, the brawn of the duo

**Note:** Cecily becomes Cecil and Winona becomes William if cast as men.

### PROP LIST

- Old shoes for shining
- Colorful clothes for hanging on clothes racks
- A rubber chicken
- Teddy bear (optional)
- Tattered large bag or bags for Winifred to carry
- Small fancy looking purse for Queen
- Writing paper
- Pen
- Brooms
- Mops
- A bucket or two
- Sign: "We Love is Ignss"
- Sign: "T King's Nw Clots"
- Sign: "T ND"
- A daisy
- A rose
- A handkerchief
- Hats, wigs, scarves, etc. for Daily Admiration Parade
- The Royal Tape Measure
- Scissors
- Some hangers
- A Bag of Gold

### SET REQUIREMENTS

No set building is necessary. Two clothes racks and the throne depict the Kingdom in Scene 1, and a stump or log that can be carried on and off by Winifred can suggest the forest. The Tailor's Chambers can be made by tying cloth between the two clothes racks, forming an entrance to the Tailor's Chambers behind which the tailors can hide or Exit. The show can be toured

### **PRODUCTION NOTES**

The Mouret can be sung to music or done as a poem. If there is no actor specified for the lines, divide up as you see fit. If you have lights, they can fade up and down to introduce the new scenes. If you have no lights, use sound to establish the different locations. For the forest, birds, and owls, for the Kingdom, something triumphal and regal sounding. If you have no lights and no sound, using the clothes racks for the castle and the stump for the first forest scene will work. Scene 4 doesn't need the stump again.

### **COSTUME NOTES**

The Cook's apron should have lots of big pockets to put the chicken in. When Mo and Charlotta exchange clothes, Mo can wear an ill fitting duplicate of the Queen's gown. The frillier it is, the more petticoats there are, the more the actor has to work with, and the funnier the ensemble will look, especially if he has on huge boots. The Queen can change from her dainty shoes to a pair of boots for her second scene, which were perhaps in the bag that Winifred carries. All the servants' clothes are raggedy, Tweers, Cecily and Winona are better dressed, the King and Queen's costumes are ornate and sumptuous looking.

### **PRODUCTION HISTORY**

Centre Stage Theater, Nova Scotia; E Street Project, Denver; Millersville University, Pennsylvania, St. Clair County Community College, Michigan, Stage Eleven, Denver, Young Actors Theater, Englewood CO.

SCENE 1

*(Lights down and up on King Henry's kingdom. COOK, prone, is snoring loudly on stage, and TILDA, shining shoes, humming. Then BARTHEL chases SQUAGMIRETTA across stage, waking up COOK, who watches.)*

SQUAGMIRETTA: Get away from me Barthel Mulehead!

BARTHEL: But I love you Squagmiretta my sweet!

SQUAGMIRETTA: You make me sick!

BARTHEL: But my love is relentless for you and only you,  
Squagmiretta Schmirtz!

SQUAGMIRETTA: *(giving a loud burp)* You're a fool, Barthel!

BARTHEL: I'm a fool for love, and I wrote a poem for you.

"Squagmiretta Smirtz, I love you till it hurts. Oh, how you flit and flirt, my heart's on red alert, for you, my Squagmiretta Smirtz."

SQUAGMIRETTA: I can't stand you.

BARTHEL: Look at you. Your skin is so purty. It's like the bellyside of a sow under a full moon.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Stop being romantic with me!

BARTHEL: Your hair's as silky as an acre of corn stubbles after harvest. You smell sweeter than a silo full of rye.

SQUAGMIRETTA: You make the hairs on the back of my neck stand up.

BARTHEL: But I love you, the loveliest woman I will ever love!

SQUAGMIRETTA: Leave me alone!

*(SQUAGMIRETTA and BARTHEL off noisily. COOK wakes up.)*

COOK: What is going on?

TILDA: Those two are at it again.

*(Enter BARTHEL and SQUAGMIRETTA.)*

BARTHEL: Marry me and be Mrs. Mulehead!

SQUAGMIRETTA: Never! I'd rather put pig bristles up my nose than marry you!

COOK: Will you two stop it? You're going to wake up the King!  
You know how he hates that.

BARTHEL: He'll have a fit.

TILDA: It seems like I am the only one around here who does any  
work at all.

COOK: What about me, Tilda?

TILDA: You were sleeping, Cook.

*(ENTER PRIME MINISTER TWEERS)*

COOK: I was not sleeping! Morning, Master Tweers.

TWEERS: Good morning everybody.

BARTHEL: Sqaugmiretta, be mine now and forever.

SQUAGMIRETTA: When pigs fly.

BARTHEL: You look so beauteous when you're being spiteful.

TWEERS: I'm looking for Gwendolyn, the new lady in waiting.

BARTHEL: I love you with all my heart.

SQUAGMIRETTA: I'll rip it out and stomp on it, Barthel.

BARTHEL: You look so splendorifous when you're mad.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Stop it, Barthel! Stop talking about me!

TWEERS: Hold your tongue a minute, Barthel.

*(HE does)*

Barthel, let go of your tongue. It's just a figure of speech.

*(HE does)*

I'm trying to find Gwendolyn.

BARTHEL: Is she pretty?

SQUAGMIRETTA: Barthel Mulehead!

BARTHEL: I was just asking!

TWEERS: Will you two be quiet? Now. *(going to TILDA)* Tilda.

TILDA: Here.

TWEERS: So you are. What about Gwendolyn?

TILDA: She's coming from the next village.

TWEERS: Yes.

TILDA: So she has to cross the bridge!

TWEERS: And... ...

TILDA: So it ain't there no more cause it fell down!

TWEERS: So she may be unable to get across the river!

TILDA: And if she does get across, then she'll have to walk down  
Thieves' Highway!

TWEERS: So she may be in the hands of vicious robbers!

TILDA: I doubt it cause the highway has a herd of wild cows running  
all over it cause all the fences are down too!

TWEERS: She'll never make it, will she?

TILDA: Nope.

TWEERS: Fences, bridges, roads – everything is falling apart!

BARTHEL: All the wheels fell of the horse carriages! And they  
rolled right out of the Kingdom cause there weren't no fences to  
stop them! And no grooms, no stable boys, no workers left 'cept  
for us!

TILDA: The whole kingdom is going to pieces ever since the King  
met Queen Charlotta! He spends all his money on clothes.

COOK: We're about out of food! I'm reduced to making cream of  
beak soup!

BARTHEL: *(looking longingly at the chicken in her pocket)* Well  
what about-

COOK: This is my pet chicken, Barthel -don't even think about it!

TWEERS: Oh, that things should come to this! What could befall  
us next?

*(Offstage SOUNDS of mooring, commotion, yelling.)*

GWENDOLYN: *(running frantically onstage)* Oh – save me! Wild  
cows! Help! *(jumps into BARTHEL's arms, who stares at her  
moon-eyed)* Excuse me. Sorry. Hello. I'm Gwendolyn. You  
can put me down now.

BARTHEL: I don't mind carrying you.

GWENDOLYN: *(getting down)* Really, I'm fine.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Get your hands away from her bustle, Barthel.

BARTHEL: I was just looking at her.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Well stop it.

COOK: We've been waiting for you all morning, Gwendolyn!

GWENDOLYN: I'm sorry. I'm not usually late, but then I don't usually have to swim rivers and outrun a herd of wild cows before I start work. How do you do?

BARTHEL: *(staring at her)* I'm doing good.

COOK: You almost woke up the King with all that racket.

GWENDOLYN: I'm sorry.

COOK: You don't want to get the King mad at you.

*(Enter WINONA and CECILY, in a panic.)*

WINONA: Someone woke the King!

CECILY: And he's really mad!

*(BARTHEL dashes offstage to get the King's throne, sets it center. TILDA and COOK bring on the clothes rack and get the King's wig, powder, perfume, robe, ready for his morning dressing.)*

KING: *(offstage, as a teddy bear flies onstage)* Heads will roll!

SQUAGMIRETTA: I hope he slept well. It helps his mood.

TWEERS: When I checked on him this morning, he was sleeping like a log.

*(Enter KING HENRY. ALL bow.)*

TWEERS: *(handing him Teddy bear)* Good morning Highness I trust you slept well.

KING: I slept like a log! I was cold, I was damp, and I think there's something growing between my toes.

GWENDOLYN: Might I suggest taking a bath?

COOK: He took a bath not two months ago!

GWENDOLYN: Oh. Sorry.

*(KING sits on throne while TILDA, BARTHEL, COOK, GWENDOLYN, SQUAGMIRETTA put on his wig, powder him, bejewel him, perfume him. THEY can form a line from the rack, passing stuff to BARTHEL who grooms the KING, who can cluster around him. BARTHEL can clip the KING'S nose hairs here, if you wish.)*

TWEERS: I'm sorry you didn't sleep well, Highness.

KING: What was that terrible noise outside my window last night?

TWEERS: I believe it was the wind.

KING: Well next time put a stop to it!

TWEERS: Stop the wind, Sire?

KING: By royal command!

TWEERS: Certainly, Sire.

KING: And what woke me up just now?

*(SQUAGMIRETTA points to GWENDOLYN.)*

KING: *(standing)* Cut out her tongue!

BARTHEL: Dang!

KING: By royal edict!

TWEERS: We can't do that, Your Righteousness. That was outlawed.

KING: By whom?

TWEERS: Your very self, Sire. Under pressure of public demand.

KING: *(sitting)* Public demand! They don't know what they want!

COOK: They want their tongues.

WINONA: Your Highness, we simply must speak to you! It's pressing; it's terribly important.

CECILY: I'm sure Winona the Printer has pressing problems, but your Majesty, I've been trying to speak to you for days. It's about the Kingdom's finances.

KING: But I'm busy, Cecily. I was just going to cut out someone's tongue.

CECILY: No, Highness! As I'm sure Prime Minister Tweers here can tell you, that's illegal.

WINONA: Highly –

CECILY: -highly illegal.

KING: Darn it! It's no fun being King anymore if you can't do what you want.

*(KING stands, BARTHEL puts robe on him.)*

WINONA: Well, Highness, now that you're not busy, I simply must speak to you.

CECILY: I, too, must speak to you. Absolutely imperative. Right now if not sooner, about the state of affairs in the Kingdom.

KING: State of affairs? The state of affairs is wonderful! I'm engaged to the beautiful and rich Queen Charlotta, I love my new clothes, and now I'm going to breakfast in my chambers and then its naptime! I've got a busy day, so off I go! (*Exit KING*)

CECILY: He just refuses to listen.

BARTHEL: (*staring lovestruck at GWENDOLYN*) He's sore in love.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Barthel-

BARTHEL: I'm just lookin' at her!

SQUAGMIRETTA: Well stop it.

TWEERS: Knock if off, you two. We have enough problems in the Kingdom as it is.

*(To the music of J.J. Mouret, theme from Masterpiece Theatre taken from his Rondeau; or the lines can be divided up and said by the actors.)*

(SONG)

In this land of ours we have a little problem  
And that problem is our King  
Who every day is even more convinced that clothes are the only  
thing  
He has shirts and cloaks  
Waistcoats and robes de chambres  
Every hour something new to wear  
While his garment makers tailors haberdashers  
Work until they are threadbare

*(Dance four measures.)*

When he's not asleep he's upstairs in his chambers  
Always trying on newly sewn clothes  
Of silks chenille brocades in many colors  
Such and puce and shades of rose

*(Dance ten measures.)*

Every closet in the castle's full to bursting there are  
Clothes in simply every nook  
As our King searches through miles and styles of colors  
Hunting for a brand new look  
He spends bags of gold and all his time as well  
To beautify himself from head to toe  
While our Kingdom quickly falls to rack and ruin  
On account of all his costly clothes.

*(END SONG)*

SQUAGMIRETTA: Yeah. And while we're standing here without a penny to our names, Queen Charlotta's probably lying in the lap of luxury right now!

*(On their exit, grumbling off, ACTORS roll off clothes rack, take off throne, and all props of the Kingdom.)*

## SCENE 2

***(AT RISE: Forest on the way to King Henry's castle. Sounds of birds, etc. Enter WINIFRED, who could be carrying a stump for the set, and a large tattered bag of the Queen's belongings.)***

WINIFRED: Queen Charlotta! Come on, Your Highness. At this rate we'll never get there.

CHARLOTTA: *(Entering)* I am so tired! Winifred, would you carry me?

WINIFRED: No, I will not carry you. As you can see, I'm already carrying every measly and meager thing we own! Which I am doing although you haven't paid me a penny in months. So I cannot, and would not if I could, carry you when you have two perfectly good feet!

- CHARLOTTA: (*looking at her feet*) You're right. They are perfect. Perfect, pretty little feet. And it is on these petite feet that I will walk all the way to King Henry's kingdom.
- WINIFRED: Try not to lag behind. We've got to stick together. We've never been this far from our castle; these woods could be dangerous.
- CHARLOTTA: I'm sorry. I was just thinking about King Henry. Oh, how I love him! Let me count the ways!
- WINIFRED: Please don't. They've been counted and recounted, ad nauseum.
- CHARLOTTA: Winifred, my loyal and devoted servant, how can you be so unsupportive of the great love I bear King Henry?
- WINIFRED: Because it's stupid! You just met him!
- CHARLOTTA: It was love at first sight, of course. That's the best kind, don't you think?
- WINIFRED: No.
- CHARLOTTA: Oh, Winifred, you just don't understand.
- WINIFRED: Queen Charlotta, it's unwise. You saw him all of once!
- CHARLOTTA: Love has nothing to do with wisdom. Wisdom is for common folk.
- WINIFRED: As in common sense, I suppose.
- CHARLOTTA: That's why they call it common, Winifred.
- WINIFRED: (*sarcastic*) Yeah, we wouldn't want that. We'd rather be walking through these unknown woods to a strange kingdom so you can marry a man you hardly know; without him even knowing we're coming; so if we get attacked and eaten by whatever wild things live out here, no one will ever know!
- CHARLOTTA: We will have died for love, Winifred. Isn't that wonderful?
- WINIFRED: No. It's not my idea of a happy day at the fair.
- CHARLOTTA: Oh, but how I love him! I love him with a love that is so fervent, fierce, abiding and elevated it almost makes me feel guilty for lying to him.
- WINIFRED: Lie to him? Why would you lie to him? What have you lied to him about?
- CHARLOTTA: He thinks I'm rich.
- WINIFRED: What!

CHARLOTTA: I cannot tell him the truth! If he finds out I have no money- he might not marry me.

WINIFRED: He'll find out soon enough!

CHARLOTTA: By then it will be too late! I will have already married him, and be living in his Kingdom. Besides, he loves me madly and therefore won't care if I'm poor. As if money is the most important thing! Money isn't the most important thing, Winifred.

WINIFRED: I know it isn't. Food is.

CHARLOTTA: Love, Winifred! Love is the most important thing!

WINIFRED: Only if you're not hungry.

CHARLOTTA: When someone is hungry for love, Winifred, nothing else matters.

WINIFRED: Then why don't you tell him the truth?

CHARLOTTA: True love is not concerned with truth. The truth just confuses things.

WINIFRED: But this is just wrong, Queen Charlotta!

CHARLOTTA: (*changing the subject*) Oh how I love him! It was love at first sight, Winifred. When I saw him ride by on his stallion, his royal hair flying - so handsome, so refined, so elegant-

WINIFRED: So rich.

CHARLOTTA: And he saw me at my window, and I saw him - and he saw me, and we saw we, and he pulled the horse's reins back to stop the steed so he could gaze longingly at my face-

WINIFRED: -And he stopped the horse so fast, that he flew head over heels into the pigpen.

CHARLOTTA: Yes, he flew off the horse. But how gracefully he soared through the air!

WINIFRED: No one ever plunged into pig slop with such panache.

CHARLOTTA: I believe you're making fun.

WINIFRED: Oh, no, Highness. There's no fun in this job, believe me.

CHARLOTTA: (*getting pen and paper from her purse, then sitting on stump*) Winifred.

WINIFRED: You're sitting down. Why are you sitting down? Shouldn't we try to walk to an inn that I can only hope even exists in this forsaken forest?

CHARLOTTA: I feel suddenly moved to write a poem. A love poem.

WINIFRED: Oh, goodie.

CHARLOTTA: Winifred, what rhymes with love?

WINIFRED: Shove.

CHARLOTTA: "Oh, King Henry my love... myself at you I shove."  
That doesn't sound right.

WINIFRED: Sounds about right to me.

CHARLOTTA: Winifred, you're just not a romantic. "My eyes seek you, and only you." What rhymes with only you?

WINIFRED: Bony stew.

CHARLOTTA: My eyes seek you, and only you... my love is like a bony stew. Winifred, that's saying my love is like a stew full of bones! That's like saying I'm a pot of bony beef! A bony stew! You're no help at all!

WINIFRED: I don't know how to write a love poem! I've never even read a love poem! I'm too busy feeding the pigs, and chopping firewood, and dressing you, and combing your hair, and cleaning, cooking and sewing for you! So I'm sorry if I'm no help with your love poem!

CHARLOTTA: (*long sigh*) I have to do everything by myself. All right. Henry, Henry, Bo Benny, Bo Nana Fana Fo Ferry... Mi My Mo Menry... My Henry! Oh, isn't that good.

WINIFRED: Bo benry? What's a bo benry?

CHARLOTTA: It's called poetic license.

(*Sound of a huge growl is heard.*)

WINIFRED: What was that?

CHARLOTTA: Save me!

WINIFRED: With what? We don't have any weapons!

(*Sound of a bigger growl.*)

CHARLOTTA: It's getting closer! Do something, Winifred!

WINIFRED: We've got to get out of here! Over there- (*pointing offstage*) see those bushes? Let's hide under them!

CHARLOTTA: (*putting poem in purse*) But – there's dirt under there! Crawly things! I'll get leaves on my clothes!

WINIFRED: Do you have a better idea?

CHARLOTTA: No.

WINIFRED: Then let's go!

(*THEY run off as the growl sounds louder.*)

### SCENE 3

#### **King Henry's Kingdom**

COOK: Company - formation!

(*SQUAGMIRETTA, BARTHEL, TILDA, GWENDOLYN, run onstage with brooms and mops and a bucket or two. The following can be done with a simple rhythmic beat: da DUM da DUM da DUM DUM. Brooms and mops can help establish the rhythm.*)

Tools! Positions! Go!

ALL: We dust, we sweep, we polish  
The dirt we will demolish  
We launder we scrub do dishes and wax  
Rump to rump we jump  
To finish every task!

COOK: All the daily meals I make the bacon I fry and the buns I bake

TILDA: I shine the shoes and clean the loos and even sweep out the chimney flues

SQUAGMIRETTA: I milk the cow and feed the sow and in the summer I pull the plow

GWENDOLYN: I beat and wash and hang up the clothes

BARTHEL: I cut the hairs in the noble King's nose

ALL: There's ever so much to do  
And each day it begins anew  
Our work is never done  
And there isn't a task we'll shun!

COOK: Once more in double time!

ALL: *(as fast as possible)*

We dust, we sweep, we polish  
The dirt we will demolish  
We launder we scrub do dishes and wax  
Rump to rump we jump  
To finish every task!

COOK: All the daily meals I make the bacon I fry and the buns I bake

TILDA: I shine the shoes and clean the loos and even sweep out the chimney flues

SQUAGMIRETTA: I milk the cow and feed the sow and in the summer I pull the plow

GWENDOLYN: I beat and wash and hang up the clothes

BARTHEL: I cut the hairs in the noble King's nose

ALL: There's ever so much to do  
And each day it begins anew  
Our work is never done  
And there isn't a task we'll shun!

COOK: Come on, Squagmiretta and Tilda, we gotta haul water from the well.

SQUAGMIRETTA: *(looking longingly at BARTHEL, who ignores her)* All right.

*(COOK, TILDA, and SQUAGMIRETTA off with two buckets.)*

BARTHEL: Gwendolyn, I made up a poem for you.

GWENDOLYN: Oh, no. Barthel, really-

BARTHEL: Here I go. "Where you been, Gwendolyn? I'll say it again, where you been? Life is a dustbin without Gwendolyn. Without Gwendolyn, I'm a shark with no fin. Gwendolyn, I am a bowling pin and you are the ball, so knock me down cause I love y'all!"

*(Enter COOK, TILDA, and SQUAGMIRETTA, who overhear end of poem.)*

SQUAGMIRETTA: Barthel Mulehead, you two-timing bag of skunk stink!

BARTHEL: Oh-oh. I gotta go. *(Runs off)*

GWENDOLYN: Squagmiretta, it's not my fault. I don't want Barthel for a boyfriend. I mean, I just met him and you two have been friends all these years.

TILDA: Squamiretta, I thought you hated Barthel.

SQUAGMIRETTA: I did. But now that he don't want me no more, I want him bad. Real bad.

COOK: You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar, if you know what I mean.

SQUAGMIRETTA: No.

COOK: I mean you gotta be nice to him.

SQUAGMIRETTA: Oh. Well, I can try that.

*(Enter WINONA and CECILY, carrying a sign, which faces away from the audience. The sign says, We Love Is Ignss". BOTH are very upset.)*

TILDA: There's Winona and Cecily. They look upset.

SQUAGMIRETTA: They sure do. Their faces are scrunched up like a warthog rooting for slugs in a rotten stump.

CECILY: Oh, this is bad. This is so bad.

WINONA: I know it. As a professional printer, I'm decidedly disgraced.

*(TWEERS enters, sees the sign immediately as WINONA and CECILY try to cover it up.)*

WINONA: Oh, no. There's Master Tweers.

TWEERS: Winona, Cecily, what-

CECILY: Nothing.

WINONA: We're busy.

TWEERS: You're just standing there.

CECILY: Standing here holding this sign is keeping us very busy.

*(TWEERS gets a peek at the sign, takes it, faces it out.)*

TWEERS: *(pointing at sign)* Look at this!

WINONA: It looks fine to me.

TWEERS: Not my hand. This! “Is ignss”

WINONA: Oh, woe. Woe is me.

TWEERS: What’s an ‘is ignss’?

CECILY: Those are the words “his highness” without any H’s and E’s.

WINONA: I used the last H and the last E in the entire kingdom!  
There are no more! We’re completely out of H’s and E’s!

CECILY: And the King won’t buy anymore! Says he needs the money for his wardrobe!

TWEERS: Winona, Cecily, get ahold of yourselves!

*(THEY hug themselves.)*

Let go of yourselves. It’s just a figure of speech. Now please, and calmly, tell me what the problem is here.

WINONA: I started out making a sign that said: “We love Your Liege”. Liege, L-I-E-G-E. But I only had one E and so the sign said, “We love Your Lig”. Well, what’s a lig? No one knows what a lig is! So I made this sign but I ran out of H’s!

CECILY: We can’t say “We love Your Lig!” We can’t say “We love Is Ignss!” He’d chop off our heads!

WINONA: He can’t. He’d have to *cop* off our – *ads!* Either way it’s a bad thing!

TWEERS: Cop off your ads? What are you talking about?

CECILY: You see, we have no more H’s, we have no more E’s- so chop becomes cop and head becomes ad.

WINONA: H’s and E’s are terribly important.

Without an H, shin becomes sin.

Without an E, there’s be no elephants or bees...

There’d be L pants and buh’s

We couldn’t sneeze, freeze, or squeeze,

We’d snz, frz, and sqz

Without an H, we couldn’t hold or hug or have a headful of hair

-

We’d old and ug and have an adful of air!

CECILY: We couldn’t get from here to there, we’d go from rr to tr

We couldn’t talk to him and her, we’d talk to mm and rr

Life would be appalling-

WINONA: - the thought of it is galling

CECILY: Without our H's and E's.

WINONA: We couldn't say hello we'd say L-lo! If you take the e out of bed sheet and sleep you'd go to bd pull up the st and try to go to slp! It is enough to make you wp!

CECILY: In the morning you'd ti up the solacs on your so's and put on your clots not clothes so you see without H's and E's nothing goes.

WINONA: There'd be no number three, it's be two tr four – and what's more, you'd have scrambled gg's for breakfast, and then brush your tt's!

TWEERS: Winona!

WINONA: Well...

BARTHEL: My name would be Bartel!

SQUAGMIRETTA: And mine would be Squagmiritta.

CECILY: We couldn't even be we'd just b, (*pronounced 'buh'*) we couldn't be we but just w, (*wuh*) no more me but just mm, she would be ss and he wouldn't exist!

BARTHEL: Dang!

WINONA: The world would collapse, our language would lapse, we'd be in terrible traps without our H's and E's!

GWENDOLYN: How awful! If only the King would listen!

BARTHEL: (*staring at GWENDOLYN*) He's sore in love.

GWENDOLYN: Why are you staring at me?

SQUAGMIRETTA: Stop it Barthel.

TWEERS: Everyone, it's almost time for the King's Daily Admiration Parade, wherein he shows off his clothes. Let's get this over with.

COOK: But look- no one's here from the village!

TWEERS: No one came yesterday either.

TILDA: I don't think they're going to come anymore. They think it's boring.

TWEERS: Of course it's boring, but the King would be furious if he found out they're not coming.

BARTHEL: But there was a whole clump of people here yesterday.

COOK: No there weren't, Barthel. I put hats and mittens on the bushes and told his Majesty that they were a delegation of very

small and hairy people come from the far Tundra just to admire him. He's so full of himself he didn't even notice.

BARTHEL: They were bushes? No wonder they wouldn't talk to me. I just figured they were shy.

COOK: We have got to come up with a better plan for the parade today.

*(Enter KING, angry. TWEERS, WINONA, CECILY hide signs behind them.)*

KING: Why aren't you helping me get ready for the parade!?

TWEERS: So sorry, Highness, here we come! *(To SERVANTS)*  
We gotta go. We'll have to think on our feet!

*(ALL exit, taking signs, brooms, buckets etc. with them. Lights down.)*

#### SCENE 4

*(Lights up on WINIFRED, by herself, looking around stage. Animal noise.)*

WINIFRED: Queen Charlotta! Queen Charlotta? Where are you? I told her to hide with me here, but would she listen to me? No. Now she's gone. Sure, she was shallow, vain, insensitive and self absorbed, but she was my Queen and I loved her. I'll miss her so much! Now I'm all alone! Alone, and lost in the woods

*(We hear a karate scream off, Queen CHARLOTTA, still making karate sounds, jumps onstage. SHE is in boots, bandana, men's clothes.)*

Queen Charlotta? Are you all right?

CHARLOTTA: Yes I am. *(Karate kicking)* Eeeeeeyaaaa! I've got it under control, Winifred.

WINIFRED: What happened?

CHARLOTTA: While you were hiding over here, I was hiding over there. I heard a noise behind me, then felt someone pulling on my purse.

WINIFRED: Someone was back there? Who?

CHARLOTTA: Thieves!

WINIFRED: Thieves?

CHARLOTTA: That's right. Thieves! Robbers! Well, I couldn't let them get King Henry's poem, so... *(making Karate sounds)* eyahh! Hai! Hai!

WINIFRED: So what?

CHARLOTTA: I don't know what came over me. I just kinda gave them a eeeeeyaaaaa! *(karate kick)* and a wwwwwaaaaahhhhhhaaaaaa *(karate hands)* and they got real scared.

WINIFRED: What happened to your gown?

CHARLOTTA: It was too hard to kick in that gown. So I took these clothes off of one of the bandits. Yeeeeaaaaa! I think that's the last we'll see of them. Ya! Yayayaya! Winifred, I've had an epiphany.

WINIFRED: What's an epiphany?

CHARLOTTA: A big bolt of truth hit me square in the head. I realized that I've been a wimp. Now, I am a woman. Hear me roar. *(Opens mouth to roar)*

WINIFRED: Please don't roar. You'll attract the beasts.

CHARLOTTA: I am now worthy of King Henry's love. Come! We have miles to go.

WINIFRED: But we're lost.

CHARLOTTA: That's a challenge, not an obstacle! Come on! We've got mountains to climb, logs to leap and rivers to swim-

WINIFRED: I can't swim!

CHARLOTTA: Neither can I. We'll learn together.

*(Animal sounds offstage.)*

WINIFRED: What was that?

CHARLOTTA: EEEEEAAAAAA!

WINIFRED: Queen Charlotta-

CHARLOTTA: Call me Chuck.

WINIFRED: Chuck? Don't you think that's going too far?

CHARLOTTA: Let's go.

WINIFRED: We haven't slept all night!

CHARLOTTA: Come on. Real women don't need sleep.

*(CHARLOTTA exits, striding purposefully.)*

WINIFRED: Yes, they do. Queen Charlotta - Chuck - Chuck! Don't leave me here alone! Queen Chuck!

*(WINIFRED runs off after QUEEN. Enter two bandits, MO in CHARLOTTA's gown.)*

MO: Guy, we just got whapped by a girl.

GUY: She did not whup us. We were just stunned, what with all that Eyaa'ing she was doing, that's all.

MO: I've never seen anything like it! I mean- she's a girl!

GUY: Yeah. It is a little embarrassing.

MO: Don't talk to me about embarrassing, Guy! At least she didn't take your clothes. I got to get out of this dress. I feel ridiculous!

GUY: Come on, Mo, it's not that bad!

MO: Not that bad? Not that bad?! I'm in a dress! With frilly things on it and petticoat under it.

GUY: All right, all right. There's a castle right over the mountain that way. Let's go and steal what we need.

MO: I can't go like this!

GUY: Mo, what are your choices here?

MO: None!

GUY: All right then. Let's go.

MO: *(As THEY exit, tugging on the dress)* How do they walk in these things?

**SCENE 5**

***(King Henry's kingdom. TILDA and COOK enter, bring in clothing racks. SQUAGMIRETTA enters, with a daisy.)***

SQUAGMIRETTA: He loves me. He loves me not. He loves me.  
He loves me not. He-

*(Enter GWENDOLYN, followed closely by BARTHEL.)*

You want to stand by me in the parade, Barthel?

BARTHEL: *(staring with longing at GWENDOLYN)* No.

GWENDOLYN: Please stop looking at me.

*(GWENDOLYN off, disgusted. BARTHEL follows.)*

SQUAGMIRETTA: *(angry)* You'll get yours, Barthel Mulehead!

*(Enter COOK, SHE watches SQUAGMIRETTA tear up and start sniffing.)*

COOK: What's the matter, Squagmiretta?

SQUAGMIRETTA: It's that horrible Barthel Mulehead. I want him to marry me but he loves Gwendolyn. What does she have that I don't have? *(Blows nose loudly)*

COOK: Manners.

SQUAGMIRETTA: I can have manners anytime I want! I'll get Barthel back - I will be Mrs. Squagmiretta Schmirtz Mulehead if it's the last thing I do!

*(Enter ALL except KING.)*

GWENDOLYN: Barthel, please stop following me.

BARTHEL: You're beauteous when you're cruel.

*(GUY and MO enter unseen by OTHERS, stay on the edges of the scene, perhaps behind the clothing racks, listening.)*

COOK: Listen up, everybody, Master Tweers has an idea for the parade.

TWEERS: We're gonna disguise ourselves as village people. Then we'll group here, at the start of the parade; then we'll distract the King, at which point everyone put on a disguise, run ahead, and pretend to be a new crowd of people. Okay?

BARTHEL: I'll do it.

TILDA: That is so dumb.

GWENDOLYN: Not as dumb as dressing a bush.

COOK: Let's go, it's just about to start! And remember – say nice things about his clothes!

*(ALL exit. GUY and MO cross downstage.)*

GUY: A Daily Admiration Parade? Have you ever heard of such a thing, Mo?

MO: *(not paying attention, HE'S batting at his dress)* Oh! Get down!

GUY: What are you doing?

MO: These petticoats keep riding up! I hate this gown!

GUY: Will you stop with the dress? I have an idea. Here is a King who is so vain he has a daily parade for his clothes. Yet the kingdom is falling apart!

MO: I know! Those broken fences caught on the lace on the hem of my dress!

GUY: So here's my plan. We'll pretend to be tailors.

MO: Tailors? We can't sew!

GUY: It doesn't matter. We'll tell him these are clothes only smart people can see. So if you don't see the clothes, it means you're stupid.

MO: But I'm not real smart, Guy. How will I see them in order to be able to sew them?

GUY: We don't have to see them, Mo, they're not there! We're gonna fool them. No one will admit there's no clothes there, because they'll be afraid that everyone will think they're too stupid to see them! And he'll pay us lots of gold for the clothes.

MO: Gold! You're a genius, Guy.

GUY: First thing we do is hide in the crowd and watch the parade.

MO: Oh, I love a parade, Guy.

GUY: Here they come. Melt into the crowd.

*(Enter BARTHEL, SQUAGMIRETTA, GWENDOLYN, TILDA, CECILY, WINONA, and COOK dressed as Village people, ad libbing. GUY and MO melt upstage. COOK carries a bag of costume pieces and wigs. TWEERS enters.)*

TWEERS: All right. So the plan is to disguise yourselves as Village People, and –

*(THEY ALL start to sing “YMCA”. MO and GUY get behind them and try to blend in.)*

TWEERS: What... stop... stop! Not those village people! I meant— oh never mind, here he comes. Perk up, will you people! Long live the King!

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