

THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLINS

by Patrick Dorn

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ISBN: 978-1-64479-047-2

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THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLINS

*A One Act Comedy Adaptation of
George MacDonald's classic Victorian fairy tale*

by Patrick Dorn

SYNOPSIS: Goblins from Down Below plot to seize the kingdom Up Above, so it's up to an intrepid princess and a resourceful miner to save the day. Princess Irene is looking forward to celebrating her birthday, but the party is about to be crashed by the Goblin King and Queen, and their goofy goblin horde. Curdie, a young and clever miner, knows the goblins' secret weaknesses—an aversion to puns, and terrifically tender toes. Freely adapted from George MacDonald's 1870 children's tale *The Princess and the Goblin* is an action-packed, laugh-filled show that overflows with whimsy and silliness.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females, 4 males, 8 either, 0-10 extras)

KINGDOM OF THE UP ABOVE:

IRENE (f).....	A feisty princess. (48 lines)
LOOTIE (f).....	Scatterbrained nurse. (37 lines)
KING-PAPA (m).....	Irene's protective dad. (38 lines)
MATTIE/MATT (m/f).....	Guard. (23 lines)
NATTIE/NAT (m/f).....	Guard. (22 lines)
CURDIE (m).....	A quick-witted and courageous miner. (50 lines)
WILL/LILL (m/f).....	Miner. (26 lines)
PHIL/JILL (m/f).....	Miner with no sense of humor. (27 lines)

GOBLIN KINGDOM OF THE DOWN BELOW:

GOBLIN KING (m).....	Scheming. (32 lines)
GOBLIN QUEEN (f).....	Conniving. (33 lines)
CLUMP (m).....	Prince, as goblins go, pretty nice. (39 lines)
BLOB (m/f).....	Goblin. (31 lines)
SLOB (m/f).....	Goblin. (28 lines)
BINKY (m/f).....	Goblin. (24 lines)

DINKY (m/f)..... Smallest goblin. (34 lines)

EXTRAS:

(m/f)..... Ensemble of guards, miners, and goblins. (*Non-Speaking*)

DURATION: 40 minutes.

TIME: Once upon a time.

SETTING: In, around, and below a fairy tale mountaintop castle.

SET

The four locales can be onstage the entire time: Goblin Cavern (down right), Mine (right center), Garden (left center), and Castle Interior (down left). The various locales are suggested by portable props and furniture, with optional flats or backdrops.

PROPS

- Thrones or Stone Bench (Goblin Cavern)
- Pile Of “Rocks” (Mine)
- Large Chair (Castle)
- Table With Tablecloth (Garden)
- Blue Birthday Cake with Blue Berries (Garden)
- Spears (Mattie, Nattie)
- Pickaxes (Will, Phil)
- Small Book (Phil)
- Handkerchief (Lootie)

SPECIAL EFFECTS

MUSIC: Edward Grieg’s “In the Hall of the Mountain King,” Irish step-dancing music, party music.

SOUND EFFECTS: Thunder, rain.

LIGHT EFFECTS: Lightning. Ideally, each of the four playing areas may be lit and dimmed independently. Otherwise, dim all the lights briefly between scenes.

COSTUMES

GOBLINS – Mossy, earth-tone shawls and ponchos, tights, fuzzy slippers, twig-like (pipe cleaner) antennae headbands. Or just peasant garb and silly hats and slippers. Goblin King, Queen, and Clump wear crowns.

KING-PAPA, IRENE, LOOTIE – Fairy tale-style costumes. King-Papa has a crown, Irene could have a tiara.

LOOTIE – A silly maid or lady-in-waiting costume.

MINERS – Work clothes. Optional hard hat helmets with push-lights stuck to the front, orange safety vests.

GUARDS – Silver lamé hoods and shirts, tights, soft boot toppers, and rectangular scapulars with royal insignia. Optional helmets.

NOTE TO THE DIRECTOR

GENERAL: It's totally acceptable to mix and match modern and fairy tale elements, so long as each group is consistent. The main thing is to encourage the actors to be really silly, energetic and animated.

PUNS: *The Princess and The Goblins* is a fast and funny play with a lot of corny pun riddles (also called "Dad Jokes") and slapstick humor. When a character says a pun, add a pause between the setup and the punchline. It should be long enough to allow the audience to wonder what the answer could be, but not long enough for them to shout out a possible response.

STAGE COMBAT: When staging combat scenes, break the cast into opposing pairs. Have each pair work out three or four basic moves: attack/defend, respond/defend, etc. Then have them repeat the same sequence over and over. The combination of moves across the stage will make the battle look like mayhem, but it will always be completely under control. The sillier the better.

SCENE 1
THE GARDEN

AT START: *Lights up. SFX: Edward Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King", lightning, thunder, and rain. MATTIE and NATTIE are holding spears, as they stand at attention in the garden, shivering. BLOB, SLOB, BINKY, and DINKY enter stealthily through the audience, slinking, whispering, and giggling.*

BLOB: Tee hee.

SLOB: Shh!

DINKY: Let's get closer.

BINKY: Not too close!

SLOB: *(Loud.)* Would you guys shut up? You're going to alert the guards!

BLOB: Now you've done it.

MATTIE: *(Alert.)* Who goes there?

NATTIE: Friend or foe?

BINKY: Uh... friend?

MATTIE: What's the password?

DINKY: *(Sneaks up to MATTIE.)* Is it... *(Tickles MATTIE.)* booga, booga, boogie?

MATTIE: Aaagh!

NATTIE: Goblins!

GOBLINS swarm around GUARDS, taunting, teasing, and tickling them. BLOB and SLOB take away their spears, march around, pretending to be guards.

BLOB: Hup, two, three, four.

SLOB: Your left, your left, your left, right, left...

MATTIE: Give that back. That's government property.

NATTIE: That's my spear. I got it as a birthday present from my mom.

BINKY: *(Tickles MATTIE.)* Booga, booga, boogie!

MATTIE: Stop that!

DINKY: *(Tickles NATTIE.)* Booga, booga, boogie!

NATTIE: Cut it out!

KING-PAPA: *(Enters.)* All of you stop! That's an order!

Startled, GOBLINS stop. BLOB and SLOB drop the spears.

KING-PAPA: How dare you enter my garden? I banished you to the
Down Below.

BLOB: Yeah, but not forever.

SLOB: Someday, we'll make a comeback.

BINKY: Then you'll be sorry for being so mean.

DINKY: Yeah. Who do you think you are, anyway?

KING-PAPA: I am the King of the Up Above. Now, be gone!

GOBLINS exit, grumbling through audience.

MATTIE: *(Bows.)* Sorry, Your Majesty. They snuck up on us.

NATTIE: *(Bows.)* It won't happen again, Your Majesty.

KING-PAPA: You were outnumbered. Pick up your spears and keep
watch. We must protect my daughter, no matter what. And keep
what just happened secret.

MATTIE: We won't say a word, Your Majesty.

NATTIE: Our lips are sealed.

KING-PAPA: Princess Irene is celebrating her birthday tomorrow. I
don't want anything to ruin it. Now... keep calm, and carry on. And
report any further goblin activity to me.

MATTIE and NATTIE: Yes, Your Majesty.

KING-PAPA exits. SFX: Music fades out. Lights dim.

SCENE 2

CASTLE INTERIOR

AT START: *Lights up. SFX: lightning, thunder, and rain. IRENE enters, pacing. She is followed closely by LOOTIE. Every time IRENE turns, LOOTIE scoots out of the way and moves around behind her. MATTIE and NATTIE stand guard out in the garden.*

IRENE: I am bored out of my gourd!

LOOTIE: It's the rain, Princess Irene. Everybody's got cabin fever.

IRENE: Lootie, if I don't get out of this castle soon, I'm going to go stark raving bonkers.

LOOTIE: That wouldn't be a good thing. No one likes it when royalty turn psychotic.

KING-PAPA enters.

IRENE: *(Runs up to him, gives him a hug.)* Papa! *(Backs up.)* Ew. You're all wet.

KING-PAPA: Hello, Irene. Are you excited about your birthday party?

IRENE: I want to have it out in the garden. That way, everyone in the kingdom can come.

KING-PAPA: In the rain?

LOOTIE: Maybe it will stop by tomorrow.

KING-PAPA: You're safer inside the castle.

IRENE: Safer from what?

LOOTIE: There's gob... *(Clamps her hand over her mouth.)*

KING-PAPA: Oh, you know... stuff.

IRENE looks at him, confused. LOOTIE nods.

KING-PAPA: Scary... stuff.

LOOTIE: Scary... stuff.

IRENE: No, I don't know. How could I? You never let me go out past the guards in the garden.

KING-PAPA: It's for you own good.

IRENE: I'm too old to throw a tantrum, but if you want to see a first class hissy fit, then keep locking me up. I feel like Rapunzel.

KING-PAPA: It's not like that.

LOOTIE: I have an idea. Why don't we treat you like Cinderella? You can help bake your own birthday cake.

IRENE: That actually sounds kind of fun. Lootie, you're a good nurse.

LOOTIE: What kind of cake would you like?

IRENE: Blue.

KING-PAPA: You want a blue birthday cake?

IRENE: Pale blue. Like robin's eggs. With blueberries on top.

LOOTIE: Yum! I may have to go off my gluten-free diet... just for one day.

IRENE and LOOTIE exit. KING-PAPA waves to MATTIE and NATTIE. MATTIE and NATTIE salute. Lights dim.

SCENE 3

THE GOBLIN CAVERN

AT START: *Lights up. GOBLIN KING and GOBLIN QUEEN are seated on thrones. CLUMP enters.*

CLUMP: Hey, Mom. Hey, Dad.

GOBLIN KING: Hey there, Clump.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Hello, Son. Are you excited about getting married tomorrow?

CLUMP: I guess so. But does it have to be Princess Irene?

GOBLIN KING: You are a prince. A prince has to marry a princess.
(*Shrugs.*) It's a thing.

CLUMP: But aren't there any goblin princesses?

GOBLIN QUEEN: Sure. Tons. But we want you to marry Princess Irene.

GOBLIN KING: Then we will rule both the Down Below realm, and the Up Above... (*Points upward.*)

CLUMP: Yeah, but she's human.

GOBLIN QUEEN: No one's perfect, dear.

GOBLIN KING: If you'd like, we could kill and eat her after the wedding. Then you can marry any goblin princess you like.

GOBLIN QUEEN: It would serve the king right, for banishing us to the Down Below.

GOBLIN KING: That'll show him.

CLUMP: Kill and eat her? That sounds kind of drastic. I prefer blueberries.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Who knows? You might grow to like her.

CLUMP: But I haven't even met her.

GOBLIN KING: You will. Tomorrow. Princess Irene is having a birthday party.

CLUMP: Am I invited?

GOBLIN QUEEN: No. None of the goblins are invited. (*Smiles. Conspiratorial.*) But we're going anyway.

CLUMP: We're crashing a birthday party?

GOBLIN KING: Yes. We will seize the princess, and bring her to the Down Below.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Her birthday party will turn into a wedding reception!

GOBLIN QUEEN and KING look at each other, high five. BLOB, SLOB, BINKY and DINKY ENTER, fast. BLOB stops, and all the goblins behind bump into each other. They fall down, help each other up, then bow.

GOBLIN KING: (*Stands.*) Report. What's happening on the surface?

BLOB: It's still raining.

SLOB: But I think it will clear up tonight.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Good. If the birthday party is outside, it will be easier for us to kidnap Princess Irene.

CLUMP: I was kind of looking forward to storming the castle.

CLUMP looks around. OTHER GOBLINS have clamped their hands to their ears.

CLUMP: (*Explains.*) Storming... like the rain. And castle... like the castle?

GOBLIN KING: If there's anything we can't abide, son, it's...

ALL GOBLINS: Puns! Blecch!

GOBLIN QUEEN: Don't ever do that again.

CLUMP: Okay. Sorry.

BINKY: There are still the guards. And the king.

DINKY: They're totally paranoid.

GOBLIN KING: That could work to our advantage.

BLOB: I just don't think a frontal attack is going to work, Your Majesties.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Don't worry about that. We have a backup plan. (*To DINKY.*) Right, Dinky?

DINKY: Right, Your Majesty! (*Winks.*)

GOBLIN KING: Now, you three, get back to the surface. Keep an eye out for any developments, and report back here.

BLOB: Yes, Your Majesty.

SLOB: Your wish is my command.

BINKY: We're on it, Your Majesty.

BLOB, SLOB, and BINKY bow, then exit.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Dinky, you get to work on the backup plan.

DINKY: But it's finished.

GOBLIN QUEEN: Really? Good job! Then go join the others.

DINKY: Right! (*Bows, then exits.*)

GOBLIN KING: (*To CLUMP.*) By this time tomorrow, you could be married!

CLUMP: Okay... I guess.

GOBLIN KING and GOBLIN QUEEN high five. Lights dim.

SCENE 4 THE MINE

AT START: *Lights up. WILL and PHIL have pickaxes. CURDIE enters.*

CURDIE: Hey, Will. Hey, Phil.

WILL: Hey, Curdie. Some rain, right?

CURDIE: Yeah. Half the streams are overflowing their banks.

PHIL: I hope the mine doesn't get flooded.

CURDIE: I checked the drainage ditches. We're okay.

WILL: That's you, Curdie. Always thinking.

PHIL: When he's not dreaming.

CURDIE: What do you mean?

PHIL: All that talk about "phantom miners."

CURDIE: I didn't make that up. I hear stuff down in the mine.

WILL: Actually, I've been hearing some weird things, too. In Tunnel Four.

PHIL: Weird? What kind of weird?

CURDIE: Like a pickaxe hitting rock, but there's no one there?

WILL: Yeah. And a high, squeaky voice, singing disco tunes.

PHIL: You guys are pulling my leg.

CURDIE: (To WILL.) Tunnel Four?

WILL: Yeah.

CURDIE: Maybe I'll come back tonight. Check it out.

PHIL: Be my guest. I'm going to stay home where it's warm and dry.

Lights dim.

SCENE 5
CASTLE INTERIOR

AT START: *Lights up. LOOTIE plops into a large chair. IRENE brushes off her hands.*

LOOTIE: Whew. I forgot how much work goes into baking a cake.

IRENE: It was fun. Now I've got blueberry juice on my fingers.

LOOTIE: You know what I love to do on a rainy day?

IRENE: Besides bake?

LOOTIE: Take a nap. (*Stretches.*) Ahh. I'm just going to rest my eyes here for a minute.

IRENE: Okay. I'll explore the castle for awhile.

LOOTIE: Promise me, Princess, that you will not, any under any circumstances, leave the castle.

IRENE: I will.

LOOTIE: Stay inside. (*Begins to fall asleep.*)

IRENE: Okay.

LOOTIE: Because... gob... gob... (*Snores.*) Zzzzz.

IRENE: (*Looks around.*) Not that I haven't explored every inch of this place. Wait a minute. That door. I don't remember seeing that one before. I wonder if it leads to the tower. (*Exits.*)

Lights dim.

SCENE 6*CASTLE INTERIOR*

AT START: *Lights up. LOOTIE paces in front of the chair. IRENE enters.*

LOOTIE: There you are! Where have you been?

IRENE: I went exploring up in the tower. If I'm going to be treated like Rapunzel, I might as well act like her.

LOOTIE: You climbed up into that dusty old tower? But there's nothing up there.

IRENE: Oh, I don't know about that. But you wouldn't believe me if I told you.

LOOTIE: Well, at least you kept your promise and didn't leave the castle.

IRENE: Why are you so anxious?

LOOTIE: I wanted to tell you, the rain has stopped!

IRENE: At last! Let's go out into the garden.

LOOTIE: Just to the garden. Not toward the mines.

IRENE: Why not? It's all part of my kingdom, right?

LOOTIE: Your father's kingdom, you mean. Let's stick to visiting the garden.

IRENE: We'll see.

Lights dim. IRENE and LOOTIE exit.

SCENE 7*THE GARDEN*

AT START: *Lights up. MATTIE and NATTIE march back and forth, holding their spears. IRENE and LOOTIE enter.*

IRENE: *(To NATTIE.)* Hey, Mattie. *(To MATTIE.)* Hi, Nattie.

MATTIE: I'm Mattie.

NATTIE: I'm Nattie, Your Majesty.

MATTIE and NATTIE bow.

IRENE: Sorry. One of these days, I'll get it right.

MATTIE: No worries. (*Looks up.*) Thank goodness the rain has finally stopped.

NATTIE: I was starting to feel like a drowned rat.

LOOTIE: Then we'd have to call you "Rattie." (*Laughs.*) Har!

MATTIE: I think it will be a nice day for your party tomorrow, Princess Irene.

NATTIE: We are so looking forward to it.

IRENE: Me, too.

BLOB, SLOB, BINKY, and DINKY enter quietly. BLOB sneaks up behind MATTIE, prepares to grab her. SLOB does the same with NATTIE. BINKY prepares to grab LOOTIE, and DINKY does the same with IRENE.

BLOB: (*Grabs MATTIE.*) Gotcha!

MATTIE: Aaagh!

SLOB: (*Grabs NATTIE.*) Gotcha!

NATTIE: Aaagh!

BINKY: (*Grabs LOOTIE.*) Surprise!

LOOTIE: Aaagh!

DINKY: (*Tries to grab IRENE, but misses.*) Gotcha! Oops!

IRENE: Who... what are you?

MATTIE, NATTIE, and LOOTIE: Goblins!

IRENE: What are you doing here?

DINKY: Would it be all right if I captured you and brought you to our cavern in the Down Below?

IRENE: No, I don't think so.

DINKY: Why not?

IRENE: Because I want to have my birthday party tomorrow.

DINKY: Oh. Okay.

BLOB: (*To DINKY.*) Dinky.

DINKY: Yes?

SLOB: It's not okay. Okay?

DINKY: Right. (*To IRENE.*) Sorry. It's not okay.

KING-PAPA: (*Enters, sees GOBLINS.*) Goblins! Guards, seize them!

MATTIE: Sorry, Your Majesty.

NATTIE: They've already seized us.

KING-PAPA: Irene! Run for your life.

IRENE: (*Picks up spear.*) I want to stay and fight. It's just one little goblin.

KING-PAPA: (*Picks up spear.*) You're right. Let's skewer her together.

DINKY: Wait. What? Skewer me? (*To OTHER GOBLINS.*) Guys? A little help here.

BLOB: We're coming, Dinky.

BLOB bonks MATTIE on the head. SLOB bonks NATTIE on the head. BINKY bops LOOTIE on the head.

BLOB, SLOB, and BINKY: Boink!

MATTIE, NATTIE, and LOOTIE: (*Backs together, they slowly slump to the ground.*) Ooooooh.

BLOB, SLOB, BINKY and DINKY advance on KING-PAPA and IRENE.

SLOB: Here we come.

BINKY: We've got someone we want you to meet.

DINKY: In the Down Below.

CURDIE: (*Enters, sees what's happening.*) Goblins! (*Dashes between GOBLINS and IRENE.*)

KING-PAPA: Who are you?

CURDIE: My name is Curdie, Your Majesty. A faithful subject and a proud miner.

KING-PAPA: Irene. Give Curdie your spear.

IRENE: No way. I've got this.

CURDIE: I don't need a spear, Your Majesty. There's another way to deal with goblins.

KING-PAPA: There is?

GOBLINS grab the spears from IRENE and KING-PAPA and toss them to the side.

IRENE: Uh oh.

MATTIE, NATTIE and LOOTIE "wake up," stand.

CURDIE: No time to explain. I'll demonstrate. First, you have to get them to put their hands over their ears, so they can't grab you. (*To GOBLINS.*) Hey, guys. Have you heard this one?

BLOB: Oh, no!

SLOB: He knows our weakness!

CURDIE: Let's have some pun!

BINKY: Ugh!

CURDIE: Here's one. I asked the lion in my wardrobe what he was doing in there, and he said "Narnia business."

DINKY: Puns! Goblins hate puns!

CURDIE: Once I tried to catch some fog, but I mist.

BLOB: (*Presses hands against ears.*) No, no, no!

SLOB: (*Covers ears.*) Make it stop!

CURDIE: My dog can do magic tricks. He's a labracadabrador!

BINKY: (*Covers ears.*) I can't take it.

DINKY: (*Covers ears.*) It's cruel and unusual punishment, I tell you!

CURDIE: Now they can't fight back. See their feet? They wear fuzzy slippers because their feet are so tender. So just start stomping.

SFX: Irish step-dancing music. CURDIE begins clogging. KING-PAPA, MATTIE and NATTIE improvise tap dancing. IRENE attempts flamenco-style dancing.

BLOB: Protect your toesies! (*Exits, running.*)

SLOB: Run for your lives! (*Exits, running.*)

BINKY: Every goblin for himself! (*Exits, running.*)

DINKY: (*Points at IRENE.*) You haven't seen the last of us! (*Exits, running.*)

SFX: Music stops.

CURDIE: (*Shouts after them.*) What do you call an alligator in a vest?
An investigator!

BLOB, SLOB, BINKY, and DINKY: (*Offstage.*) Aaagh!

KING-PAPA: Is everyone all right?

MATTIE and NATTIE: Yes, Your Majesty.

LOOTIE: I'm not all right. I'm half scared out of my ever-lovin' mind.

IRENE: What were those things? Goblins?

CURDIE: Nasty creatures that live in the Down Below.

KING-PAPA: I banished them years ago. But they seem to be pushing back. *(To CURDIE.)* Young man?

CURDIE: *(Bows.)* Yes, Your Majesty.

KING-PAPA: We are in your debt. I should like to give you a reward.

CURDIE: No reward is necessary, Your Majesty. I'm just glad I happened along in time to save the princess.

IRENE: And I am grateful. Hey, would you like to come to my birthday party tomorrow?

CURDIE: Sure.

IRENE: Great.

CURDIE: If you'll excuse me, Your Majesties, I need to get home now. There's something I need to check out in Tunnel Four.

KING-PAPA: Of course. I am in your debt, young man.

CURDIE bows, exits.

LOOTIE: We'd better get inside. The goblins might come back, and I'm terrible at remembering jokes. Come along, Princess Irene.

LOOTIE and IRENE exit.

KING-PAPA: *(To MATTIE and NATTIE.)* Keep an extra close watch tonight, or there will be no birthday cake for you, tomorrow.

MATTIE and NATTIE: Yes, Your Majesty.

MATTIE and NATTIE salute and stand at attention. KING-PAPA exits. Lights dim.

SCENE 8 THE MINE

AT START: *Lights up. WILL and PHIL have their pickaxes. CURDIE enters.*

CURDIE: Hey, guys.

WILL and PHIL: Hey, Curdie.

CURDIE: You know all those stories about goblins?

WILL: Yeah.

PHIL: Those are just fairy tales.

CURDIE: No. Goblins are real. A bunch of them just attacked Princess Irene.

WILL: That's horrible!

PHIL: Is she okay?

CURDIE: She's fine for now. I remembered what my dad told me once. Goblins hate puns, and they have terrifically tender feet. I was able to chase them away with puns and riddles.

WILL: Good thing you're the kind of guy who remembers every joke he's ever heard.

PHIL: I don't like puns. Doesn't make me a goblin.

CURDIE: Well, you'd better start liking them. The goblins are going to come back. And soon.

WILL: What do you want us to do?

CURDIE: First, go to my house. I keep a joke book in the bathroom. Memorize every joke, pun, or riddle you can.

PHIL: Go to the bathroom. Will do.

CURDIE: And second, put on your heaviest, strongest boots.

WILL: What are you going to do?

CURDIE: I'm going to check out Tunnel Four. I have a sneaking suspicion the goblins are up to something down there.

WILL: The sounds we heard. You think it was goblins?

CURDIE: Could be.

PHIL: I'll have to see them to believe them.

CURDIE: Just do what I asked. And meet me back here in the morning, before Princess Irene's birthday party.

WILL: Okay, Curdie. We'd do anything for the princess.

PHIL: *(Sulks.)* Even learn some puns.

CURDIE: Let's go!

MINERS perform a complicated handshake combination that involves miner-type motions and exit. Lights dim.

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