

THE PRINCESS KNIGHT

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

By Martin Follöse

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

- SCENE 1: The throne room of the King and Queen of Glyndufn.
- SCENE 2: The throne room of the King and Queen of Glyndufn, a few days later.
- SCENE 3: The throne room of the King and Queen of Glyndufn, 100 days later.

COSTUMING

The Knights wear belts for their swords and the Ladies-in-Waiting wear floor-length dresses with slippers. Guards in gray, loose-fitting pants or leotards with metal chest plates (made out of cardboard and aluminum foil). The Bishop should wear a monk's robe with hood and a white rope belt.

PROPS

Broom
Note for Jester Swords
Gifts for King and Queen
Cloth bag for Durum to collect trash Cot or small bed
Cup of coffee Bible

BEFORE THE CURTAIN

For a great effect try to have some PEASANTS and other characters roaming the audience with some of the Queen's Apples and King's Pickles for sale (easy fundraiser). Combine this with several wandering minstrels and you've created the mood of the play before the opening curtain. For another great effect try rolling your programs in the form of scrolls.

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SCENE 1

AT RISE:

The scene opens with the throne room full of people with the KING and QUEEN of Glyndufn standing on their podium near their royal chairs. Various items hang on the walls, such as: Coat of Arms, knight's shield, swords, flags, etc. The table upstage center holds other knick-knacks, such as: candles, old books, goblets, etc. The lights are dim and EVERYONE is frozen. From offstage right, JESTER enters and directs himself to the audience.

JESTER: Once upon a time, a very long time ago, there was a beautiful princess named Aurora. Well, she wasn't that beautiful. In fact, she wasn't beautiful at all. The only truth to this story is that it happened long ago.

At the conclusion of JESTER'S proclamation, the entire court is suddenly unfrozen. They all start jabbering.

QUEEN: *(Clapping her hands to get everyone's attention.)* Quiet everyone! I have an announcement. *(Everyone gets quiet.)* We are going to throw a Coming Out Ball for Princess Aurora on Saturday. *(Everyone ad-libs excitement, clapping, etc.)* Everyone who is anyone which is everybody is invited. *(More excitement.)* There is much to do to prepare for the Ball. I want the entire castle cleaned from top to bottom. Lady Angie, I want you to tell the cooks to prepare a big feast.

LADY ANGIE: Yes, Your Highness.

QUEEN: Lady Marie, start the royal tailors to fashion the most beautiful dress in the kingdom.

LADY MARIE: For the Princess?

QUEEN: *(Upset.)* No my dear not for the Princess, for me!

LADY MARIE: Oh, yes Your Highness.

QUEEN: *(To any two LADIES-IN-WAITING.)* I want all of the royal silverware polished until it shines brighter than the sun.

LADY-IN-WAITING: Yes, Your Highness. *(Meanwhile, the KING pulls the TOWN CRIER to the side, downstage.)*

KING: Town Crier.

TOWN CRIER: Yes, Your Majesty.

KING: I want to announce to all of the lands that we are looking for a prince for the beautiful Princess the night of the Ball.

TOWN CRIER: The *beautiful* Princess, King? You want me to lie?

KING: No, of course not, I want you to exaggerate.

TOWN CRIER: That will take a lot of work, Your Majesty, but consider it done!

KING: *(Calls to the JESTER.)* Jester! Jester! *(JESTER walks over to the KING.)* I want you to schedule the finest entertainment in the land.

JESTER: How about the Rolling Stones?

KING: No! Nothing that old. Something more up-to-date.

JESTER: I will do my best, Sire.

KING: That's what has me worried.

QUEEN: *(To the entire court.)* This will be the biggest ball in all of history. You all have your duties. Now be gone with you! *(Everyone leaves.)* Planning for a ball is always so exhausting.

KING: No matter how grand this ball will be, it will not find us a prince for our daughter.

QUEEN: You must be more positive my royal husband.

KING: Okay, I'm positive.

QUEEN: That's better.

KING: I'm positive that we will not find a prince for Princess Aurora.

QUEEN: You mustn't say such things. There is a perfect prince for every princess.

KING: I know of no blind prince.

QUEEN: Now stop that! We just have to keep looking until we find that special prince for our unique daughter. After all, it didn't take you long to find me. Did it now? *(The KING is not paying attention.)* And you have been happy ever since. Right my love. *(There is no answer.)* Stefan! *(Getting his attention.)* Are you listening to me?

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KING: Yes, my dear. I always listen to you.

QUEEN: Then answer my question.

KING: (*Searching for an answer.*) Is "no" the right answer?

QUEEN: (*Upset.*) Oh! I don't know why I put up with you!

KING: I mean "yes!"

QUEEN: You never listen to me. This is why Aurora turned out the way she did. More like a hoodlum than a delicate princess.

KING: So it's my fault?

QUEEN: Of course it's your fault. After all, you are the ruler of the kingdom.

KING: (*Softly.*) Since when.

QUEEN: If you wouldn't have made her the best swordsman in the kingdom, if you wouldn't have allowed her to participate in jousting matches, if you wouldn't have taught her to wrestle like a soldier, if you . . .

KING: All right, all right I get your point. But you are just as much to blame. You never had time to show her how to dress like a lady, how to walk like a lady, how to conduct herself in public like a lady, how to . . .

QUEEN: All right, all right! So we are both to blame. Now I must check to be sure that our servants are doing as I asked.

KING: Yes, dear.

QUEEN: And I want you to keep an eye on that Jester. He's not to be trusted.

KING: Yes, dear.

QUEEN: And don't forget to order the trashman to empty the trash. You know how I hate trash scattered around the castle.

KING: Yes, dear.

QUEEN: Are you listening to me?

KING: Yes, dear.

QUEEN: You never listen to me! (*She exits stage left. KING STEFAN sits in his royal chair thinking. Moments later, SIR WILLIAM enters from stage right. He wears a skirt typical of the medieval period.*)

KING: Sir William.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, Your Royal Highness.

KING: You're a married man, are you not?

SIR WILLIAM: For over five years.

KING: And you wear the pants in your family, right?

SIR WILLIAM: *(Looks down at what he is wearing, which aren't pants.)* Well, Your Highness, I guess you might say I do.

KING: How is it you maintain control?

SIR WILLIAM: Control?

KING: Yes, how do you control your wife? I feel that I have no control over any of the women in my life. The Queen has more power than I do. The M'lords and M'ladies jump at the snap of her fingers. I ask for something to be done and they tell me that it will have to wait until they are finished with the Queen's requests. And then there's my daughter, Princess Aurora. Every man in the entire kingdom is afraid of her. I even run myself when I hear her coming. This isn't the way it is supposed to be. How can I rule over this kingdom if I can't even rule over my own castle? How do you do it?

SIR WILLIAM: Well, Your Highness, you have to do what I do. You must put your foot down. Tell your wife that you are the man of the house.

KING: Yes?

SIR WILLIAM: And that you are in control of the castle.

KING: Yes.

SIR WILLIAM: And that you will make all of the decisions and they will never be questioned.

KING: Yes.

SIR WILLIAM: And that all of your requests will have priority over all others.

KING: Yes!

SIR WILLIAM: And please don't tell the Queen that I gave you this advice.

WIFE OF SIR WILLIAM: *(From offstage right. She is carrying a broom.)* William?

KING: Who's that?

SIR WILLIAM: Oh no!

WIFE OF SIR WILLIAM: *(Enters from stage right.)* William! There you are. How many times have I told you not to leave the house

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until you have fed that sickly horse of yours. Hundreds of times. I want you to come home and finish your chores at once.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, dear.

WIFE OF SIR WILLIAM: And you left your dishes in the sink again. I want you to remember to wash them off.

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, dear.

WIFE OF SIR WILLIAM: Well, just don't stand there gabbing with the King. Get moving! *(She swipes at his feet.)*

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, dear.

WIFE OF SIR WILLIAM: *(Chases him off right, swats at him again.)*
Move it!

SIR WILLIAM: Yes, dear.

They both exit right. The KING shakes his head and exits right. Moments later. DURUM enters from left. He begins to collect the trash from the trash cans as a CHAMBER MAID enters to clean. She notices DURUM.

MAID: Are you the new trashman?

DURUM: Yes, I am Durum.

MAID: Well be sure that you empty the trash every hour on the hour or the Queen will have your head.

DURUM: It sounds like good advice.

MAID: You want to stay on the good side of the Queen. She's the one with the power in this kingdom. The King? Well, he's just the figure head. It's the Queen that runs everything. Be sure to remember that.

DURUM: I will. Tell me, what are the knights like in this kingdom?

MAID: The knights?

DURUM: Yes. Are they good swordsmen? Brave, fearless, ready for battle?

MAID: Ready for battle? Ha, the only thing they are ready for is the dinner bell. They're a lazy lot, all of them.

DURUM: What's the King like?

MAID: He's a kind king, but he's a man.

DURUM: Most kings are.

MAID: Why do you ask such questions?

DURUM: Why? *(Trying to come up with an answer.)* While traveling to this kingdom I ran into a prince who was in search of an army. I thought that if he came here he might be able to build one. He is looking for the best knights in all the land.

MAID: Then he doesn't want the knights of Glyndufn, he wants the Princess.

DURUM: The Princess?!

MAID: You mean you haven't met the Princess yet?

DURUM: No.

MAID: Well, the Princess of Glyndufn is very unique. She just happens to be the best knight in the kingdom.

DURUM: The Princess is a knight?

MAID: And a mean and ugly one at that. Why everyone runs at the sound of her voice. *(A noise is heard off left. She looks off left.)* It's her! Run for your life!

The MAID runs off right. DURUM watches her run off but doesn't move. PRINCESS AURORA enters with a sword pretending to fight with an invisible enemy. She suddenly notices DURUM and rushes to him and puts the sword to his chest.

AURORA: Who are you and why have you entered the throne room of my father King Stefan?

DURUM: Take it easy. I have no sword to defend myself. I am defenseless.

AURORA: No one is defenseless if they still have the use of their hands.

DURUM: *(Pushes the sword away from his chest.)* But able hands are no match for a Toledo sword.

AURORA: This is true. I haven't seen you before.

DURUM: I am Durum, the new trashman of the castle. And you said King Stefan is your father?

AURORA: Yes, I am Princess Aurora. But you can call me Andy, all my friends do.

DURUM: Princess Andy. I have heard of you.

AURORA: *(Sarcastically.)* Great. And you said that you are a trashman?

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DURUM: Yes. The finest in all the world.

AURORA: Funny, you don't look like a trashman.

DURUM: I don't?

AURORA: No.

DURUM: What do I look like?

AURORA: More like a fine swordsman. Your upper body is strong, able to manage the heaviest of Toledo swords.

DURUM: It is true. I can hold my own with a sword.

AURORA: *(Holds up her sword.)* Then prepare to fight for your life!

DURUM: Hold it M'lady. I have no sword.

AURORA: Oh. *(She lowers her sword.)*

DURUM: But in another place I would have taken your challenge.

AURORA: You would fight a princess?

DURUM: But you are no ordinary princess.

AURORA: I'm not? No I'm not. I am the finest swordsman in all the kingdom. Maybe the world.

DURUM: Let's not go too far.

AURORA: You said that you are new here, what land do you hail from?

DURUM: From a land far away. A land of rolling hills and meadows filled with flowers. A land with tall mountains covered with snow that feed the rivers throughout the hottest summers. A land that is more beautiful than any I have ever seen.

AURORA: It sounds like a wonderful place.

DURUM: It is. But it is no longer. It has been taken over by a ruthless uncle of the king and its kind king has been imprisoned in the dungeon.

AURORA: The king should have brave knights to take back the kingdom.

DURUM: Unfortunately, he does not. The king's son is in a far land trying to build an army to fight his evil uncle and take back his father's kingdom.

AURORA: Someday I will travel to such a land and fight many battles and conquer evil kingdoms, to prove to everyone that I am the finest swordsman in all the land.

DURUM: I believe that someday you will. But meanwhile I must collect the trash and you must prepare for your Coming Out Ball and select your prince.

AURORA: I don't want to marry some wimpy prince. I don't want to be a princess. I want to be a knight and fight off the enemies of the kingdom and dragons that come near the castle.

DURUM: Life deals us our fate. You must be a princess, as I must be a trashman.

AURORA: Why can't we do what we want to do, become what we want to be.

DURUM: You ask questions that only Wizards and Wisemen can answer.

AURORA: Someday women will be allowed to be knights and fight battles like men.

DURUM: I doubt that. Men are much stronger and braver than women. *(AURORA puts her sword to his chest. DURUM looks at the sword.)* Then again, I could be wrong. *(She lowers the sword.)*

AURORA: I challenge any man to a battle, any time, any place. And I will have victory!

DURUM: I hope I am not that man, for you would be a worthy opponent. *(The QUEEN enters from stage left.)*

QUEEN: Aurora! How many times have I told you not to dress in that garb and not to run around the castle waving that sword.

AURORA: But mother!

QUEEN: Don't "but mother" me. You are old enough to know your duty in life. It is high time that you started acting like the princess you are.

AURORA: I don't want to.

QUEEN: It has nothing to do with what you want. You were born a princess, and you will always be a princess. There is nothing that can change that. You must start dressing and acting like a princess so that you can find a prince, get married and rule over your own kingdom.

AURORA: I don't want to be a princess. And I don't want to rule over a kingdom. I want to conquer one.

QUEEN: Oh, for heavens sake!

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AURORA: Why can't I be a knight and take long journeys and fight many battles.

QUEEN: Because it just isn't done. Journeys and battles are for men, not for women. We are suppose to be sweet and feminine. The man is the one who takes care of the woman. Not that your father does. He simply wouldn't be able to run the castle without me. But someone must keep things running around here and if it's up to me, so be it. It's part of my responsibility that I accepted when I married your father. And when you get married you will have to accept the same responsibility. It's a burden that all women must face.

AURORA: I would rather feel the pain from a sword in my heart. Why is it that men have all the fun and women have to stay home and take care of the castle and the children.

QUEEN: Because it's tradition.

AURORA: (*Exiting.*) Then I will break tradition, because I don't want to be a princess.

QUEEN: Too bad my dear! You already are. (*Exits.*)

Only DURAM who has been in the background, is left on stage. He continues to collect the trash when FREDRICK enters and notices him. FREDRICK rushes over to him and kneels at DURUM'S feet.

FREDRICK: Prince Durum! At last I have found you!

DURUM: (*Surprised to see him.*) Fredrick! What are you doing here?

FREDRICK: I have been looking for you. I bring bad news.

DURUM: What is it?

FREDRICK: Your father, King Albert, has been imprisoned by your uncle. Your loyal soldiers were unable to defeat your uncle's treacherous soldiers. The countrymen cry for your return to take back what is rightfully yours.

DURUM: I know of the evil deeds of my uncle. And of my father's imprisonment.

FREDRICK: And you do nothing? Are you scared?

DURUM: Scared? No! The time is not yet right. My father knew of the plot to overthrow him and that is why he sent me away. I was to hide until I could form a mighty army to recapture the throne.

FREDRICK: But we have been waiting for a long time.

DURUM: My father told me not to return too soon as my uncle would expect, but to wait, and catch his army off guard.

FREDRICK: But your father is in the dungeon.

DURUM: Yes I know. I feel the pain in my heart for my father. But he is right. I cannot defeat my uncle with only an army, I will need to use my wits and be more cunning. I also need time to get the best swordsmen in all the land.

FREDRICK: But you are the best swordsman in all the land.

DURUM: I am but one and they are many. I couldn't possibly defeat them alone.

FREDRICK: The people . . . the people of the kingdom cry for you to deliver them from the evil of your uncle.

DURUM: I know Fredrick. But I have not yet found enough good men to make an army. The knights here are loyal to King Stefan and will not return with me to fight for a king they don't know. And I do not know King Stefan well enough to reveal who I am.

FREDRICK: They do not know that you are a prince?

DURUM: No. And you must keep my secret. To them I am Durum the trashman. You must never kneel to me or call me Prince or tell anyone my true identity.

FREDRICK: A trashman?

DURUM: It was the only job that didn't require previous experience.

FREDRICK: Your secret is safe with me, Prince Durum. I mean Your Highness. I mean Sir Trashman.

DURUM: Just call me Durum.

FREDRICK: Right! How long do you think it will be until you have an army, Prince Durum, I mean Durum.

DURUM: (*Sadly.*) I just don't know.

JESTER enters.

DURUM: Jester! I want you to meet a friend from the land I hail. Jester, this is Fredrick. Fredrick this is the Court Jester.

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JESTER: Nice to meet you Fredrick and welcome to King Stefan's kingdom.

DURUM: Jester is the funniest man I have ever met. Go ahead, Jester, tell us a joke.

JESTER: (*Thinking for a few moments.*) Ah! I have one. How do you make a dragon float.

FREDRICK: I don't know. How?

JESTER: Two scoops of ice cream, some root beer, and one dragon. (*FREDRICK doesn't laugh, the JESTER and DURUM laugh hysterically.*)

DURUM: See what I mean Fredrick. Isn't he the funniest man you have ever met?

FREDRICK: If you say so Prince . . . I mean Durum.

JESTER: (*To FREDRICK.*) Have you come to attend the Ball?

FREDRICK: Ball? What ball?

JESTER: The Coming Out Ball for Princess Aurora. The King and Queen hope to find a desperate prince to marry her.

FREDRICK: A desperate prince?

JESTER: Yes! Princess Aurora is . . . well let's see, how do I put this, she's ugly.

DURUM: Jester! How could you say that? She's not ugly, the Princess has a beauty all her own.

JESTER: Too bad you're not a prince. The King would have you two married by sunset.

FREDRICK: Yes, it's too bad that Durum isn't a prince.

SIR WILLIAM enters from stage right.

SIR WILLIAM: Jester, there you are. I have been looking all over for you.

JESTER: Sir William, I would like you to meet Fredrick a friend of Durum's. Fredrick, this is Sir William, head knight of the castle. He is the bravest knight in all the kingdom.

SIR WILLIAM: Well of course I am that's why I am head knight. This message has just come for you. (*HE hands the JESTER a note.*)

JESTER: Oh no!

SIR WILLIAM: What is it?

JESTER: Hypnotist can't make it to entertain the Queen and her guests at the Ball. He has a prior engagement.

SIR WILLIAM: Too bad. Now who will you get?

JESTER: I don't know. Do you do a soft shoe?

SIR WILLIAM: No.

JESTER: Maybe I will order you to tell jokes again.

FREDRICK: I don't think I can make it.

SIR WILLIAM: Careful, remember what the Queen said. If you value your head you wouldn't tell any more jokes.

DURUM: All of the Jester's jokes are funny.

SIR WILLIAM: Not to the Queen.

DURUM: Well, I have to pick up the trash in the other rooms.

FREDRICK: I'll come with you.

DURUM and FREDRICK exit left.

JESTER: What am I going to do. The Queen will banish me from the kingdom if I don't get the best entertainment for the Ball.

SIR WILLIAM: What do you have lined up so far?

JESTER: A pair of Oriental Dancers and that's it. I turned down the chicken act, I thought it was too fowl and you know how the Queen sneezes around feathers.

The WIZARD and LITTLE WIZ enter from right. LITTLE WIZ stays to the side of the WIZARD and mimics the WIZARD'S every move.

WIZARD: *(To SIR WILLIAM.)* Are you Sir William?

SIR WILLIAM: Yes.

WIZARD: The guard at the draw bridge told me to register with you.

SIR WILLIAM: Are you here for the Ball?

WIZARD: The Ball?

JESTER: King Stefan is having a Coming Out Ball for his daughter, Princess Aurora.

WIZARD: No. We are just passing through looking for a friend.

SIR WILLIAM: Well, if your friend is anywhere near the kingdom he'll be at the Ball.

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JESTER: Say, you wouldn't know a few good tricks, would you?

WIZARD: I am not only a great Wizard but also the greatest magician.

JESTER: Would you like to perform your tricks at the Ball?

WIZARD: Perhaps. If we stay that long. Oh, this is my apprentice, Little One. He's learning my every move.

SIR WILLIAM: He doesn't talk much, does he?

WIZARD: Of course not. At home I am most famous for my potion that we give to all our children. It prevents them from talking until they are 21 years old. It makes life much more peaceful.

SIR WILLIAM: Do you have one that would work on my wife until she's 80 or 90-ish?

A GUARD or several GUARDS enter from right.

GUARD(S): Sir William, the King wants to see you and the Jester in the library immediately. *(He exits.)*

SIR WILLIAM: Now what does he want. Wizard, if you will wait here, we'll be back after we see what the King wants.

WIZARD: Very well. *(SIR WILLIAM and the JESTER exit right.)*
Another two-bit kingdom, Little Wiz. I'm getting tired of searching every tiny kingdom looking for the Prince. We must find him soon, to prevent him from building an army and taking back his kingdom. If that happens I would have nothing. But his uncle doesn't want him killed, just delayed until his empire is strong and unconquerable. *(The sound of sword fighting is heard offstage.)*

DURUM: *(From off left.)* Ah . . . you are a tricky one.

WIZARD: *(Recognizes his voice.)* Could it be? Is our search over? Quick Little Wiz, hide. *(They rush off right.)*

AURORA: *(From off left.)* You know a few tricks yourself. *(DURUM rolls on stage with AURORA following. Both have swords. They sword fight ad-libbing as they fight. Finally exhausted, they stop fighting.)*

DURUM: I think you are right! You just might be the best swordsman in all the world.

AURORA: You're a good swordsman yourself.

DURUM: It's been a long time since I have had a good work out like this. I must be in good shape when I return to my land.

AURORA: Why do you want to return? Is your job here not good enough? (*Before DURUM can answer.*) I know a trashman is not the best job, but if you want a better job, I will ask my father to give you one.

DURUM: No, the job is fine. There are many things that I have not finished at home, many people are waiting for me.

AURORA: You mean a girl?

DURUM: No, nothing like that. I have no lady-in-waiting for me, only my family and friends. They expect me to return soon.

AURORA: Have them come here. They would be welcomed here in my father's kingdom.

DURUM: That would be impossible.

AURORA: Then I shall go with you.

DURUM: That, too, is impossible. It is a long journey to my land and many battles will need to be fought.

AURORA: I am not afraid to battle and I can travel as far as any man.

DURUM: I know you can, but you are the princess of this land and you must find a prince who will rule this land when your father can not.

AURORA: (*Getting upset.*) I am tired of people telling me what I must do. I did not ask to be born a princess. Why must anyone be forced to do anything only because they are born to it. All people should be allowed to be whatever they want to, do what they want.

DURUM: Life is never that easy. Many of us have our duties of life. We are not free to do as we please. A farmer's son is trained so that one day he will farm his father's land. A prince must help protect his father and his father's kingdom even if it means death. And a princess, as you, must fulfill the duties that you were born to. No one has the choices that you speak of.

AURORA: You make it seem so honorable.

DURUM: It is. In your position the people admire you and seek your advice. They depend on the royal family to keep them safe from evil.

AURORA: I guess you are right. I speak of only dreams I have.

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DURUM: It's okay to dream. I have many dreams myself and we can only hope that from dreams reality awakes.

AURORA: But Durum, if this is so, why do I feel so restricted?

DURUM: Because you have not yet learned that along with freedom goes responsibility. For instance, your rank has given you the power and freedom to learn swordsmanship, yet your rank also calls for the conduct of a model princess, on occasion.

AURORA: You are a wise man, Durum.

DURUM: And you are a beautiful princess.

AURORA: (*Embarrassed.*) No one has ever called me beautiful.

DURUM: Then everyone is blind.

AURORA: But I am not beautiful. Not like the other ladies-in-waiting and other princesses. Even the chambermaids are more beautiful than I.

DURUM: Who defines beauty? There are many types of beauty. I not only see beauty in a delicate meadow flower, but I see beauty in a fierce storm, and in a wild beast. I also see beauty in you. I see it in your eyes and in your honesty. And in the way you handle a sword.

AURORA: You are making fun of me.

DURUM: (*Moves closer to her.*) No I am not. (*They are face to face and look as though they might kiss when AURORA runs off stage left.*) Wait Aurora, wait! (*He rushes after her. Moments later, the WIZARD sneaks on stage.*)

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