

THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

By Amanda Murray

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CHARACTERS

KING
QUEEN
PRINCESS
MILLER
WATCHMAN 1
WATCHMAN 2
SERVANT
FERRYMAN
NARRATOR 1
NARRATOR 2

NARRATOR 3
NARRATOR 4
NARRATOR 5
THIEF WOMAN
THIEF 1
THIEF 2
YOUNG MAN
OLD WOMAN
OLD MOTHER
MONSTER

****There are opportunities for several "extras" in the play. The young man travels through three gates which can be "non-speaking" roles.*

PLEASE NOTE

Currently, this play is written for 20 actors. However, it is easily reduced for 5 actors, using the following:

ACTOR 1

KING
NARRATOR 5
WATCHMAN 2

ACTOR 2

SERVANT
FERRYMAN
THIEF 1
MONSTER
NARRATOR 4

ACTOR 3

YOUNG MAN
NARRATOR 3

ACTRESS 1

NARRATOR 1
THIEF WOMAN
MILLER
PRINCESS

ACTRESS 2

OLD WOMAN
WATCHMAN 1
QUEEN
OLD MOTHER
THIEF 2
NARRATOR 2

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

This play offers a lot of flexibility and creativity in staging. There are roles for up to 20 actors or less with doubling or tripling the roles. There are also several opportunities for non-speaking roles. For example, each of the “gates” can be attached to and manipulated by an actor or an “extra” can portray a thunderstorm, using long, silver tinsel on a stick. The “gates” refers to a transition to show the Young Man has arrived in a new location. These are the locations where he receives the questions. Extras are optional.

The manipulation of the row boat onstage can be done in several ways. Some suggestions may be: (1) have the actor wear the boat like a pair of suspenders, legs poking through the bottom (2) have the rowboat set on casters so that the actor can either push their legs through the bottom or throw their legs over the sides of the boat to maneuver.

The box that is sent “down the river” can also be a small box on casters to be rolled or pulled across the stage.

The young man in the play turns into an ant onstage. This can be done with the use of an ant mask that is hidden in the folds of the thief woman's skirt (or some other area) while the woman uses petals or confetti to “do her magic”.

THE THREE GOLDEN HAIRS

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A blank stage. Lights up on the KING sitting in a row boat. HE looks miserable. HE is, perhaps, wrapping a cloth around an oar.

KING: I hate these oars! My hands are all callused. All rough. Why did this ever happ . . .

(HE notices the audience. HE sounds bored.)

Oh, hi there. What do you want? Yeah, yeah, don't tell me. You want to know the story, right? Just like everybody else who takes a ride on the ferry. Well, what if I don't feel like telling it this time, huh? What are you going to do about it?

(NARRATOR 1 appears. SHE clears her throat deliberately. The KING looks at her.)

Yeah, yeah, yeah, sister! Whatever! Hold on to your goulashes will you? I'll get to it when I feel like it, okay?

(NARRATOR 1, accompanied by the rest of the ACTORS, clears her throat again.)

Hey! I don't feel like it! Besides. they don't even seem like they want to hear it. Look at them, their faces all hanging down like that!

(NARRATOR 1 enters the stage.)

NARRATOR 1: Of course they want to hear the story! Don't you?

(SHE waits for audience response.)

Good.

(SHE looks at KING. HE is motionless.)

Fine. I'll do it.

(SHE walks to the boat and tries to grab a small book, next to the KING. THEY fight over it for a minute, with grunts and groans. Finally, SHE

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wins. The KING rows off the stage in a huff! NARRATOR 1 composes herself, selects a part of the stage, and begins to read.)

Once upon a time, there was an old, poor woman who lived in a small village.

(OLD WOMAN comes out, holding a baby.)

She had a baby that was born with a special gift . . . It was said that he would be lucky all the days of his life.

(The OLD WOMAN accidentally drops the baby. SHE picks him up and brushes him off, smiles and pretends nothing happened.)

It was also said that when he turned nineteen, he would marry the King's daughter.

(OLD WOMAN jumps up and down joyfully. SHE begins to make sounds of joy. The NARRATOR 1 turns to her and shushes her.)

Soon after the boy was born, a new King came to the village.

(KING enters, with SERVANT dropping rose petals before him and performing various frivolous tasks that servants do for greedy Kings; like holding his mirror or fluffing the feathers on his robe.)

He spoke to people in the village and they told him of the special boy who was born and that he would marry the King's daughter when he turned nineteen years of age. Now, the King, who had a wicked, wicked heart, was angry . . .

(The KING throws the SERVANT off stage. With a crash, EVERYONE turns to look in the direction HE flew. After a moment, a hand comes up, or the SERVANT crawls back onto the stage, indicating that HE is all right.)

The King was angry when he heard this, so he went to visit the old woman.

(The KING pushes up his sleeves and begins to run over to the OLD WOMAN angrily.)

However, even though he was furious, he maintained a sweet appearance.

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(The KING stops short. HE walks over to the OLD WOMAN slowly, composing himself and smiling too big.)

KING: Good Morning, Madame.

OLD WOMAN: Hello, your Majesty.

KING: *(very exaggerated)* My, what a wonderfully, beautiful child. It is a pity you must raise him in such conditions. Why not give up your child to me, and I will take the greatest care of him.

OLD WOMAN: *(looks at the KING suspiciously)* Are you crazy?

(The KING reveals a bag of gold. The OLD WOMAN looks at it longingly.)

KING: Certainly not. I will take the greatest care of him. Remember, he is to be a lucky boy . . . and I could give him everything, can't you see?

(The OLD WOMAN takes the money, handing the KING the baby and running off with the money. The KING smiles and holds the baby up like a trophy. NARRATOR 3 comes out.)

NARRATOR 3: The King, having won the baby, took it down to the river and put the baby in a box. He then pushed the box into the river and sent it away.

(The KING does so and sends the baby rolling across the stage in its box. MILLER catches it and follows the actions described by NARRATOR 3.)

However, instead of sinking, the box sailed just like a boat, down the river about two miles where it was found by a miller. And, when he opened the box, thinking that he would find some kind of valuable treasure, he, instead, found the baby.

(The MILLER is swinging the baby with a look of disappointment. NARRATOR 2 steps forward.)

NARRATOR 2: Now, the miller eventually came around and found out how wonderful having a child could be.

(The MILLER playfully tosses the baby around.)

Time passed very quickly. The baby soon grew into a strapping, nineteen year old man.

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(YOUNG MAN walks out onto the stage and stands in front of the MILLER. The MILLER tries to decide between the baby and the YOUNG MAN. HE finally chooses the YOUNG MAN and tosses the baby off stage.)

Then, one day, the King was riding his horse and suddenly, a great thunderstorm overcame him. He stopped in the little town where the miller lived and knocked on the miller's door.

(The MILLER and the KING stand together.)

KING: My good man, I am your King. I was riding my horse through your grimy little village when I was overtaken by this storm. I expect to enjoy your hospitality while I wait for it to clear.

(The KING forces himself past the MILLER, into his "house")

MILLER: Uh . . . certainly, your majesty.

(The MILLER offers him a chair. The KING refuses and pushes the MILLER on his hands and knees. The KING "sits" on his back. The YOUNG MAN stands nearby.)

KING: My, what a strapping young man you are! Do you do much physical labor? Don't answer. Is he your son?

MILLER: I could only wish, but no. He is a foundling. It was nineteen years ago today that I found him in the river, in a box and brought him home with me. We have shared so many wonderful . . .

KING: I'm sure you have!

(The KING leers at the YOUNG MAN.)

Happy Birthday.

YOUNG MAN: Thank you, sir.

KING: Miller, I have a proposal to make.

MILLER: Oh?

KING: I would like to write a letter to my queen to let her know that the business I seek to do will take me a bit longer due to the storm. I would like your fine son to deliver it.

MILLER: But, my King, he could not possibly leave. He has so much work that . . .

(The KING rises. The YOUNG MAN helps the MILLER stand.)

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KING: For this task I will give him two gold -pieces.

MILLER: We are at your service, your majesty.

NARRATOR 4: At this, the King threw the Miller onto his hands and knees and began to write his letter on the Miller's back. The letter read:

"As soon as the boy who brings you this letter arrives, let him be killed and I shall expect to find him dead and buried when I come back! . . . Kingsy - wingsy."

(NARRATOR 4 looks worried, and does a double take over the KING's shoulder. The KING gives him a look. NARRATOR 4 straightens up, returns to story.)

And soon after that was done, the Young man was on his way to the Royal Palace.

(The YOUNG MAN kisses the MILLER on the cheek and proceeds through the forest.)

Now, the Young man took what he thought was going to be a shortcut through the woods. However, instead of getting out of the forest quicker, he got very lost. And - it was getting dark! Finally, he came upon a small cottage in the woods. He knocked on the door and an old woman answered.

(THIEF WOMAN "opens" the door. SHE motions for the YOUNG MAN to enter.)

YOUNG MAN: Hello. I have come from the Mill. I have a letter for the Queen from his majesty. I think that I got lost somehow and I was hoping I might stay here for the night. I won't be any trouble. You don't even have to feed me.

THIEF WOMAN: I'm not worried about that, son. But, this is a thieves' den you have stumbled upon and, when they come back home they may kill you!

YOUNG MAN: I'm not really afraid of that. It's just that I can't take one more step!

NARRATOR 5: The old woman took pity on the boy and fed him and let him stay for the night. He curled up on a small cot and soon after the Young Man went to sleep, the thieves came home.

(THIEF 1 and THIEF 2 come across the stage, looking thievish, with big sacks of "loot.")

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THIEF 1: Boy, we really made out today! I can't believe how some of those people just leave their valuables just laying around like they do!

THIEF 2: I know! You'd think they had more sense! Don't they know how many thieves there are around here?

THIEF WOMAN: (*pointing to the boy*) Sssshhhh! You will wake him.

(*The THIEVES look at the YOUNG MAN on the cot and pull the THIEF WOMAN aside.*)

THIEF 1: Who is that?

THIEF 2: And why did you let him sleep here?

THIEF 1: And I bet you fed him, didn't you?

THIEF 2: We can't leave you alone for even two hours without you bringing in the strays, can we?

THIEF 1: Don't you remember the time she fed those fairies?

THIEF 2: Yes, we couldn't get rid of them for two weeks!

THIEF 1: And they kept getting into the pantry and eating all our food.

THIEF 2: And they kept spreading that fairy dust everywhere!

THIEF 1: I think that's what made me sick last year!

THIEF 2: And now she's letting something else in! Probably a wizard in disguise!

THIEF 1: Or maybe a thief come to rob the thieves!

NARRATOR 5: It would seem that thieves, who are usually so quiet, aren't so quiet when they return home.

(*The THIEVES give NARRATOR 5 a look. NARRATOR 5 "keys" his mouth shut and slinks into a corner.*)

THIEF WOMAN: If you two will shut up for one second, I will tell you! He is just an innocent boy from the mill, who is traveling to the Royal Palace with a message for the Queen from His Majesty.

THIEF 1 and THIEF 2: The King!?!

THIEF WOMAN: Duh!

THIEF 1: I can't believe that you would let a servant of the King stay in our home!!

THIEF 2: Yeah! Who knows what he is really up to!

THIEF 1: He's probably a spy for the King!

THIEF 2: Just like I said! He's a wizard in disguise! A wizard spy!

THIEF WOMAN: He's not a wizard spy! And he's not up to anything! But if you both want to sit here and argue about it, you can do it without me! I'm going to bed!

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(THIEF WOMAN storms off. The two THIEVES sit and stare at the boy for a long time. NARRATOR 5 comes forward.)

NARRATOR 5: Now, after watching the boy for quite a while, the thieves noticed something.

THIEF 1: Look at that.

THIEF 2: What?

THIEF 1: I think it's the letter sticking out of his bag.

THIEF 2: Go get it.

THIEF 1: I'm not going to get it.

THIEF 2: What are you afraid of?

THIEF 1: Nothing. You want it. You get it.

THIEF 2: All right, I will.

(Thief 2 doesn't move.)

THIEF 1: Well.

THIEF 2: Well.

THIEF 1: Go get it!

THIEF 2: *(walks over to the bag, gets the letter and scurries back)* It's a letter all right.

THIEF 1: Well, open it.

THIEF 2: You open it.

THIEF 1: I'm not going to open it.

THIEF 2: I got it. You open it.

THIEF 1: I don't know if we should.

(HE turns to the audience.)

Should we open it?

(HE waits for response.)

I'll open it.

(HE does so.)

"As soon as the boy who . . . brrriinn . . ."

THIEF 2: *(looking on)* ". . . boy who brings you this letter . . ."

THIEF 1: *(looking over his shoulder)* "brings you this letter
arrrriivveees, let him be kkkiiiiii . . ."

THIEF 2: ". . . killed."

THIEF 1: Killed?

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(They BOTH look at the boy, sympathetically.)

THIEF 1: ". . . and I shall exxxxpppeeeccctttt."

THIEF 2: ". . . expect to find him dead and buried when I come back."

THIEF 1: Dead and buried? Why?

THIEF 2: Look at this. "Kingsy - Wingsy" That's funny!

(THIEF 2 gives a long, silly laugh. THIEF 1 looks at him and rolls his eyes.)

THIEF 1: Why does he want him killed?

THIEF 2: I don't know.

THIEF 1: He's just a kid.

THIEF 2: Yeah. Too bad.

THIEF 1: Look at him.

THIEF 2: Yeah. Ain't he cute when he sleeps? He drools like a baby.

THIEF 1: We gotta do something.

THIEF 2: Like what?

THIEF 1: I know. Here. *(takes out pen and paper)* You write a letter.

THIEF 2: What should I say?

THIEF 1: Let's see . . . Oh, yes. I know what would really anger the King! Write this. "As soon as the boy who brings you this letter arrives, let him . . . marry the Princess!"

THIEF 2: Let him what?

THIEF 1: Marry the Princess!

THIEF 2: Oh, that's good! That's really good! "Marry the Princess . . . Kingsy Wingsy!"

THIEF 1: That will get him where it hurts!

THIEF 2: You're right about that! I wish I could see the look on his face when he finds out his only daughter has married the miller's son!

(NARRATOR 5 comes out to center. The THIEVES put the new letter in the bag and exit. THEY re-enter a moment later with bread and stuff for the YOUNG MAN, who has awakened. THEY show him the road to take.)

NARRATOR 5: The Thieves replaced the old letter with the new one that said the young man was to wed the King's daughter. In the morning, they gave him bread and water and showed him which road would lead him to town.

(The YOUNG MAN comes to the "Palace". Soon after QUEEN and PRINCESS enter with SERVANT.)

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Upon arriving at the Palace, the young man was shown to the throne room, where the queen and her daughter, the Princess, were playing cards.

PRINCESS: Do you have any sevens?

QUEEN: No . . . Do you have any fours?

PRINCESS: No . . . Do you have any . . .

YOUNG MAN: Excuse me . . . your Majesty?

QUEEN: Yes?

NARRATOR 5: The Young man handed them the letter. The Queen read it and was terribly pleased that there was to be a wedding.

(The QUEEN jumps up and down. SHE grabs the PRINCESS, kisses her cheeks and works her way off stage with sounds of joy and what seems to be a grocery list.)

The Princess was . . . less excited.

(The PRINCESS, staring at the YOUNG MAN, faints. The YOUNG MAN goes to her, revives her and helps her to sit on the bench.)

NARRATOR 4: However, it was not long until the Princess discovered how wonderful the young man was, and she soon grew to love him.

(The TWO kiss. EVERYONE else gives a "yuck!")

There was a wedding . . . and a wedding feast! However, soon after the wedding, the King returned to the Royal Palace! When he had heard about the wedding and the letter, he was furious and wished to find out what happened to his REAL orders.

(KING storms in. The QUEEN is sitting on the throne.)

KING: What is this I hear?

QUEEN: What do you mean?

KING: How could you let that Miller's son marry the Princess?

QUEEN: I was only following orders -- Sir!

KING: What order?

QUEEN: The letter you sent with the boy, Sir!

KING: Stop talking like that! Get out of my chair! I have to think.

QUEEN: Yes, Sir!

KING: Now, let me see that letter!

QUEEN: Here, Sir!

(The QUEEN gives him the letter. HE reads it.)

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KING: I can't believe this! These were not my orders! Bring the boy to me!

QUEEN: Certainly, Sir!

(The QUEEN exits. A moment later YOUNG MAN enters.)

KING: Boy! What happened to the letter I gave you?

YOUNG MAN: It is in your hand, your majesty.

KING: This is not the letter I sent with you!

YOUNG MAN: Then, I don't know what happened to it.

KING: I see.

YOUNG MAN: Perhaps someone changed it while I slept in the forest during the night.

KING: Absurd! I have never heard of that happening!

(HE looks at the audience.)

Have you?

(HE waits for a response.)

I didn't think so! Why are you lying to me!?

YOUNG MAN: Oh, but I wouldn't, your majesty!

KING: I see. But, you are not going to slip through so easily! *(obviously making this up)* For, there is a standing order that whomsoever would marry my daughter must first go on a quest!

YOUNG MAN: What quest?

QUEEN: *(enters)* What standing order? We don't have any such thing!

KING: Hush, woman! A quest is in order!

YOUNG MAN: What kind of quest?

KING: The one who would marry my daughter . . . must first bring me three golden hairs from the head of the monster who lives in the Black Forest! Only then will he be able to become the Prince!

YOUNG MAN: Monster of the Black forest?

QUEEN: What monster?

KING: Leave us, woman! This is . . . men's business!

(QUEEN leaves with a huff. Perhaps with a "whatever!")

KING: What do you say, boy?

YOUNG MAN: I don't know.

KING: This is the only way to keep my daughter as your wife! If you do not bring the hairs to me very soon, you will be banished from the kingdom!

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YOUNG MAN: I will do it. I will fetch three golden hairs for you. I am not afraid of the monster. I shall return from the Black Forest before you know it!

PRINCESS: *(enters, moves to YOUNG MAN; THEY clasp hands.)*

Don't fail me, darling. Be safe and come back quickly.

YOUNG MAN: *(hugs PRINCESS)* You will see. I'll return before you can say "three hairs."

NARRATOR 4: The Young man then set out upon his journey to the Black forest, after saying good-bye to his Princess. He traveled for quite a long way when he came to the gate of a large city. There, he encountered a watchman.

(WATCHMAN 1 comes forward and holds guard at the "gate." The YOUNG MAN approaches her.)

WATCHMAN 1: Ho, Ho, young man. What trade do you follow and how much do you know?

YOUNG MAN: Why, I know everything.

WATCHMAN 1: Then, for passage through my gate, you can help me to solve a problem.

YOUNG MAN: Certainly.

WATCHMAN 1: You can tell me why it is that my master's fountain that once had wine flowing from it now is dried up and won't even give us water. We are desperate! Do you know?

YOUNG MAN: Hhhmmm . . . That is a puzzle.

(HE turns to the audience.)

Do you know?

(HE waits for a response.)

I don't think I do. However, if you will let me pass, I promise to give you the answer on my way back to the Palace.

WATCHMAN 1: Very well, you may pass. But, please hurry. We are desperate.

YOUNG MAN: I will return shortly.

(NARRATOR 5 steps forward.)

NARRATOR 5: And with the watchman satisfied, the Young man started on his way again. It wasn't very long before he came upon another city, with another watchman.

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