

Arts Centre Theatre
presents

SWORDS AND SORCERY

by
Liz Vickery and Robin Seavill

Little Theatre, Bristol
16th–18th January 1986



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CAST LIST

LESTER, a jester	Paul Hutchins
PRINCE SAGRAMORE, a despicable swine	Tony Smith
NELL, a serving wench	Ann Remmers
FLORA, a nother swerving wench	Liz Vickery
BUZZARD, a wizard	Walter Browning
LUCY, a lady-in-waiting	Ann Antonelli
MARK, a king	Jim Gregson
WILHELMINA, a queen	Jane Parsons
RUPERT, a hero	Robin Seavill
TREVOR, a dragon	John Hesketh
COLOMBINE, a peasant	Rebecca Bowen
ELLEN/ELEANOR, a heroine	Katherine Speakman

Music by Mike Piddock

Directed by Tony Smith

Directions SR and SL mean Stage Right and Stage Left respectively, but these are for guidance only. The important thing is to keep the movement and staging swift and fluid, with a certain cartoon-like speed and intensity.



ACT ONE

(Vaughan Williams' Fantasia on Greensleeves plays as the houselights go down. By reprise of the second chorus, there is blackness. As it ends, LESTER THE JESTER bounds up the front steps with his guitar to stand in front of the tabs. MUSICAL DIRECTOR plays a dreadful fanfare)

LESTER: Thanks, Mike *(insert name of MUSICAL DIRECTOR)*. Just stick to the piano will you? *(To AUDIENCE)* My lords, ladies and gentlemen, damsels, knights, claimants, welcome to our pantomime. Our theme is swords and sorcery, the time the middle ages, and the place – the fairest, goodliest court in all Albion. My lords and ladies, I give you – Chantecler Castle!

(Curtain rises to reveal the courtyard. USC is a well. The CHARACTERS of the court are frozen in tableau – LADY LUCY, PRINCE SAGRAMORE, KING MARK, QUEEN WILHELMINA, NELL and FLORA, BUZZ the wizard. They come alive and sing together)

ALL: Chantecler! Chantecler!! Chantecler!!! Chantecler!!!!

In Chantecler we're terribly informal.

We suffer from a glut of laissez-faire,

And bursting into song like this is normal

In Chantecler.

We're standing in the courtyard of the palace.

Up here's the well, the toilet's over there.

And life is duller than the plot of *Dallas*

In Chantecler.

Chantecler! Chantecler!

A hotbed of indifference,

For in Chantecler! Chantecler!

We like to sit on every fence.

Politically we're into feudalism,

Though bigotry's a thing we cannot bear.

We'd crush it with ferocious liberalism

In Chantecler.



Chantecler! Chantecler!
We seldom let it all hang out,
Though in Chantecler! Chantecler!
There's little else to laugh about.

In Chantecler we talk about the weather,
The least contentious subject we can air.
In all the world there's not
A more congenial spot
For going mad through boredom
Than right here. Where?
Chantecler!

LESTER: *(Yawning)* Yes, I think that says it all really. But first, before we begin this tale of dungeons and dragons, garters and gargoyles, a brief résumé of the preceding goings-on without which the following interplay of passion and politics will mean absolutely zilch. So let's start with our 'andsome 'ero – this is the one you're all supposed to cheer. Imagine this is him, nineteen years ago.

(RUPERT enters SL, practising his fencing moves. LESTER plays a few bars of the James Bond theme on his guitar)

RUPERT: *(Austerely)* I don't think that's necessary, thank you.

LESTER: *(Hurt)* Sorry I'm sure.

(RUPERT strikes a manly pose)

LESTER: *(Sings)*

[Whenever LESTER sings it's always to the tune of Greensleeves]

In days of old when knights were bold,
And they used to wassail and dance a lot,
There lived a hero of matchless skill,
And his name was Rupert Greensleeves.
(Spoken) Well what did you expect? Rhyme?
(Sings) Greensleeves, born to wealth and fame,



Greensleeves was his father's son.

Greensleeves was their family name,

Cos their coat of arms had green sleeves on.

(Spoken) The legends say that young Rupert was curious about his name and once asked his father,
“Dad, why do they call you Greensleeves?” And his father replied *(Wiping nose on sleeve)* “Dunno, son.”

RUPERT: Look, do you mind? That story *is* apocryphal you know.

LESTER: I know that, I was just trying to give you a bit of an entrance.

RUPERT: Do you even know what apocryphal means?

LESTER: You hum it, son, I'll play it. Hur hur hur.

RUPERT: You don't, do you?

LESTER: Oh yes I do. *(To AUDIENCE)* Don't we?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

RUPERT: Oh no you don't.

LESTER & AUDIENCE: Oh yes we do.

RUPERT: Oh no you don't.

LESTER & AUDIENCE: Oh yes we do.

RUPERT: All right, prove it.

LESTER: *(To AUDIENCE)* Anyone, apocryphal? *(Silence)* Great, thanks a lot. You're not supposed to
just join in blindly you know.

RUPERT: Just get on with the story.

LESTER: *(Sings)* Now Greensleeves *père* *(Spoken)* that's French for Rupert's old man

(Sings) was a swordsman rare,

The king's brave champion was his role, [The word *champion* is pronounced *cham-pye-on* throughout]

And when he died, his son got the job,

And changed his name by deed poll –

(KING MARK and WILHELMINA perform the dubbing ceremony with the Supersword, a Star Wars-like light sabre)

MARK: Rupert Greensleeves, we hereby dub you –

LESTER: *(singing on the same last note)* – at the knighthood ceremony –

MARK: Rupert Greensleeves, we hereby –

LESTER: – presided over by good King Mark –

MARK: Rupert Green Slee –



LESTER: – and his fair lady wife, Queen Wilhelmina.

MARK: Have you quite finished?

LESTER: Yes, go for it, sire.

MARK: Rupert Greensleeves, we hereby dub you knight of the realm of Chantecler. You shall henceforth be known as Rupert the Reliant.

WILHELMINA: Valiant.

MARK: What?

WILHELMINA: Rupert the Valiant, dear. Not Reliant.

MARK: Ah. Well, that makes more sense doesn't it? Only a fool or a horse would want to be called after a little three-wheeled car. Here, you'd better have the doings. (*Gives RUPERT the Supersword*)

RUPERT: Thank you, sire.

MARK: Was that all right?

WILHELMINA: Very good, dear. We go off now.

MARK: Ah, right. I can never get the hang of flashbacks...

(*MARK and WILHELMINA exit SL*)

LESTER: (*Sings*) The Supersword was no simple ordinary piece of weaponry.

The local wizard, Buzz by name,
Arrived to explain its mystery.

BUZZ: Sir Rupert, it is my duty as court magician –

LESTER: Just a minute, why do they call you Buzz?

BUZZ: It's short for Buzzard, as you well know.

LESTER: (*Enjoying himself*) Buzzard, wizard?

BUZZ: Our parents named us all after birds of prey. My older brother Merlin loves his, but my sister Bald Eagle isn't quite so chuffed.

(*Pause*)

LESTER: Oh. I thought there was going to be some sort of joke there.

RUPERT: (*Drily*) Apparently not.

BUZZ: Let's crack on. Sir Rupert, it is my duty as court magician to tell you two things. Firstly, although the Supersword will never work against the king's champion, it is in all other respects morally neutral. It can be used for good or evil. You must therefore give your solemn oath that while you are the king's champion, the Supersword will never, under any circumstances, leave your side.



RUPERT: I swear.

BUZZ: What you do in your private life is no concern of mine. Do you give your oath?

RUPERT: I give it freely and without let or hindrance.

BUZZ: I just told you I'm not interested. What do you say?

RUPERT: *(bewildered)* I do?

BUZZ: In that case I now pronounce you man and – Look you've got me all confused now. Where was I?

RUPERT: The second rule concerning the Supersword?

BUZZ: Ah yes. Secondly, the Supersword must never be allowed to get wet, or it'll ruin the batteries. Do you understand?

RUPERT: I do.

BUZZ: Then you may kiss the bride and God bless all who sail in her. I think I'd better go and have a lie down.

(Exit RUPERT and BUZZ SL)

LESTER: *(Sings)* But while Rupe drank –

(Spoken) You're going to get pretty sick of this tune by the time we're through, but they're the only chords I know.

(Sings) But while Rupe drank to his new-found rank,
There came a blackguard to the fore
A man ablaze with am-bi-shy-on,
His name it was Prince Sagramore.

(Three dramatic chords on the piano – DA-DA-DAAAHHH)

SAGRAMORE: Now is the winter of our discontent made glorious summer by this son of Greensleeves,
and all the –

LESTER: Just a minute, just a minute. What the hump do you think you're doing?

SAGRAMORE: A soliloquy.

LESTER: A soliloquy? We'll be here all night if you carry on like that.

SAGRAMORE: This is Shakespeare, you noisome knave, none of *your* paltry versifyings.

LESTER: And this is the middle ages, mate, Shakespeare hasn't been invented yet. Stop trying to build up your part.

SAGRAMORE: I'll deal with you later, jealous japester.

LESTER: *(To AUDIENCE)* Everyone's a critic.



SAGRAMORE: Oh the shame of it! To think that I, Prince Sagramore of the macho swagger and roguish grin, should have been born but a twelvemonth after that lily-shanked blithering old pumpkin, my brother Mark. Ah, the fates are cruel!

LESTER: *(To AUDIENCE)* This is your bit. Boo! Hiss!

(AUDIENCE hisses. SAGRAMORE tries to speak again but LESTER keeps the AUDIENCE going. Eventually SAGRAMORE cuffs him)

LESTER: Oh, that was *very* poetical, that was.

SAGRAMORE: But patience must be my ally. So far, the king has no heir, and as long as that is the case, I am next in line to the throne. But when that day comes, what a bloody reckoning there will be, har har har!

(LESTER whips up the AUDIENCE again. SAGRAMORE points his sword at him)

And you'll be the first to go.

LESTER: *(Frightened, to AUDIENCE)* Ah, right. You want to hold it down a little now? Artist at work.

(Sings, as if to appease SAGRAMORE) Although a cad, he was not all bad,

This prince whose sword was so keen to strike.

He loved a damsel with all his heart,

And her name was Lady Lucy – er – like.

(LUCY comes forward)

SAGRAMORE: Ah, Lady Lucy, shall I compare thee to a summer's day, thou art more –

LUCY: Prince Sagramore, I scorn you as I would a boil on a rat's behind. Let me pass.

SAGRAMORE: Ah no, no more, my lady. I will have an answer to my proposal. I have been wooing you now all of –

LUCY: Watch it.

SAGRAMORE: – twelve long summers.

LUCY: That's better.

SAGRAMORE: – and over twenty-five cold bleak winters.

LUCY: *(To AUDIENCE)* We met in the juniors. I would like to make that quite clear.



SAGRAMORE: I demand that you accept my hand today – along with all the other more interesting parts of my anatomy – and be my wife. Otherwise I shall probably run barking mad with frustration and kill something very irritating with skinny legs and a totally anachronistic musical instrument.

LESTER: *(To LUCY)* Not a lot to ask is it really? Go on, be a sport.

LUCY: Very well. Prince Sagamore, I will become your wife – on the day you become king of Chantecler. Is it agreed?

SAGRAMORE: My lady, for the sake of my love, I shall wait.

LUCY: Good. Because the queen has just told me she is with child, which means you're no longer the heir.

SAGRAMORE: What? The queen has a secret heir in the oven?

LUCY: Yes. And by the time it grows up, you won't even be able to lift the crown, let alone wear it. So put away that silly sword and get a proper job, you libidinous lecher, you. *(EXITS SL)*

(DA-DA-DAAAHHH. Or maybe that descending three-note trumpet wah-wah thing, like a mocking horse)

SAGRAMORE: Tricked! I have been tricked by the wiles of a lady in waiting. Right. No more Mr Nice Guy. From now on I shall be as black-hearted as – as – as the ace of hearts would be if it wasn't red. Nay, but there shall be some dark doings ere my lust is appeased, and I sit in triumph on my rightful throne. Is this a dagger which I see before me, the handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee. I have thee not, and yet I see thee still...

(Or as much as he can get through before LESTER shoulders him offstage SL)

LESTER: *(Sings)* The child is born, but a year's soon gorn,
We rejoin the story a twelvemonth hence.
Prince Sagamore has an evil plan
To dispose of the heir in a forest dense.

(SAGRAMORE enters SL carrying a doll wrapped up in a purple towel)

SAGRAMORE: Ah, a forest deep and dangerous. A fitting place for you to end your brief life, my little princess. Yes, well may you gaze up at your wicked uncle with those beseeching blue legs – *(He notices the doll is upside down, and hastily turns it round)* – with those beseeching blue eyes, but nothing can save you now. With you gone, I shall apparently be the heir – I mean, I shall be the heir apparent once more. Har har har!



(He lays the doll down and raises his sword to strike)

LESTER: But then just as things are looking their blackest for the little princess, what is this we see wiffing through the tulgy wood? Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No! It's –

(TREVOR THE DRAGON appears in some dramatic manner, maybe swinging in on a rope)

TREVOR: Rarr!

(SAGRAMORE, startled, drops his sword and spins round)

SAGRAMORE: Who are you?

TREVOR: I am the terrible dragon of this wood, scourge of the countryside by royal appointment and official damsel distresser for the area. I am known by the name of – Trevor.

SAGRAMORE: Aw, shame.

TREVOR: I know, but what can you do? Parents. I was hoping for a nice Grendel, or a really butch Zorgo the Gizzard-Cruncher, but – *(He pulls himself together)* Anyway, what are you doing here? *(He idly picks up the sword and waves it in a vaguely menacing manner)*

SAGRAMORE: Oh, nothing. I just dropped in for a quick snack, you know.

TREVOR: *(Looking at the doll)* Cannibal, are you?

SAGRAMORE: How dare you? My name is Prince Sagramore, I am of royal blood.

TREVOR: Oh yes? Well, I drink royal blood, mush, and you have just five seconds to clear off or *I'll* make a quick snack of *you*.

SAGRAMORE: Very well, dragon. But I shall not forget this. *(Starts to exit)*

TREVOR: Just a minute.

SAGRAMORE: What?

TREVOR: Litter. Someone could cut themselves on that you know. *(He hands him the sword)*

SAGRAMORE: Ah. Right. Thank you.

(SAGRAMORE exits SL)

TREVOR: Call me a softie, I just hate eating out of tins. *(He approaches the doll)* Now then, what's all this? Aw, no wonder you're crying, you've got a – I said, *no wonder you're crying* –



(Voice in wings starts doing baby crying noises)

Thank you – you’ve got a thorn in your paw.

(He takes it out. Crying stops abruptly)

There, that’s better. All gone. Ickle pawsy-wawsy better now?

(He cradles the doll, somewhat casually, it has to be said)

Well, this is all very well but it’s not going to do my image any good is it? Cradling babies in the forest. You don’t half niff too. Well, I’m not going to change you there *is* a limit. What’s to do, what’s to do?

(He idly tosses the baby from hand to hand like a football as he thinks)

I know, you come with me. I know the very thing. *(Exits with doll SL)*

LESTER: *(Sings)* So Trevor the wild did secrete the child

In a place of which you will soon hear more.

While teams of men were dispatched to find her,

Rupert accompanied Sagramore.

(Enter RUPERT and SAGRAMORE SL)

SAGRAMORE: Can’t we rest a while? We’ve been combing this wood for hours.

RUPERT: You rest if you wish. I shall continue the quest. In the service of my king, I will search to the last ounce of my strength, for that is my –

SAGRAMORE: Bo-ring.

RUPERT: What?

SAGRAMORE: Nothing. I say, wouldn’t you find it easier if you took that heavy sword off? I’m sure it must be slowing you up.

RUPERT: The Supersword never leaves my side.

SAGRAMORE: *(Aside)* Curses! There must be a way to get it. I know... Sir Rupert, wouldn’t it be more efficient if we searched separately for the brat, I mean, the princess?



RUPERT: You're right. If my keen mind hadn't been so weighed down by the heavy responsibilities of my office I might have thought of that sooner.

SAGRAMORE: Of course you would. Well, you search under that bracken over there, while I have a look along the banks of this river just out of sight in the wings. *(Aside)* Now's my chance. Har har har.

(Exit SAGRAMORE SR to three dramatic chords)

RUPERT: Maybe I've been wrong about Prince Sagramore? Maybe he isn't all bad after all? No, of course he is. What am I talking about? Nobody wear's flared tights anymore.

LESTER: Then suddenly, through the chill silence of the wood, a silence brought on by the thickness of the trees, the lateness of the hour and the total lack of sound, there came an enormous splash.

SAGRAMAORE: *(Offstage)* Help! Help! Sir Rupert, I have fallen into this raging torrent and am being swept to certain death while clamped between the jaws of an enormous crocodile which looks like it might have rabies!

RUPERT: Prince Sagramore! I Must save him, he *is* the king's brother after all.

(He takes off the Supersword)

I know I'm breaking my oath to the wizard, but it's in a good cause. Don't panic, my lord. I'm on my way.

(He dashes off SR)

LESTER: Only in a British pantomime could you get a hero who at one and the same time possesses the courage of a lion, the heart of an eagle and the brains of a tortoise.

(Enter SAGRAMORE SR to three dramatic chords)

SAGRAMORE: Har har har, he fell right into my trap.

LESTER: See what I mean?

SAGRAMORE: *(Into wings)* Enjoying your swim, Sir Rupert? Mind that rusty pram won't you, I'd hate you to catch tetanus on my account.

(Enter RUPERT SR with a wriggling fish sticking out of his doublet)



RUPERT: Why, you despicable untrustworthy swine. King's brother or not, you will suffer for this. Take that. *(He slaps SAGRAMORE'S face with the fish)*

SAGRAMORE: How dare you sir? I challenge you to a duel.

(He draws his sword. RUPERT goes to draw his and grabs only empty air)

Is this what you're looking for, Sir Rupert? *(He waves the Supersword)*

RUPERT: You threaten in vain, prince. The Supersword never works against the king's champion.

SAGRAMORE: Maybe not. But for now my trusty old conventional steel will suffice. Come, let's to't.

RUPERT: Let's what?

SAGRAMORE: To't. *To it*, let's to it. Shakespearean elision, you knuckleheaded dunce.

RUPERT: Books are for scholars. Your fine words will be no defence against my superior musculature, tactical skill and this fish. Put 'em up.

(They dance about, sparring at arm's length, SAGRAMORE with the swords, RUPERT holding up his fists like a bare-knuckle boxer. Eventually they disappear into the wings SL, their voices occasionally filtering through – 'Take that', 'Have at you', 'En garde', 'Ouch', etc)

LESTER: *(Sings)* Their mortal fight lasted through the night,

A desperate, bloody and grim affray

And though brave Rupert fought on in vain,

He truly won his spurs that day.

(A terrible cry from RUPERT in the wings. SAGRAMORE enters SL, tired but triumphant)

SAGRAMORE: The day is mine, Sir Rupert. Do you yield?

(RUPERT enters SL with no right arm)

RUPERT: I yield to no man, prince. The day is yours, but the war is just begun. Henceforth you are the mortal enemy of my blood.

SAGRAMORE: Your enemy yes, but your superior also. With you now, as it were, disarmed, I am the greatest swordsman in Chantecler. The king will have no choice but to make me his champion, and one day soon I shall have the crown as well. Stand aside, wretch. I am awaited at court.



(RUPERT stands abjectly to one side as SAGRAMORE passes and exits SL)

RUPERT: I have proved myself unworthy of my great office. I have lost the Supersword, broken my oath, and brought dishonour on my family's name. Only some glorious feat in the service of my country can redeem me now. *(Exits SL)*

LESTER: What more can I say? It happened just as Sagramore predicted that terrible day eighteen years ago. And so, a brief recap in case any of you came in late.

(NELL and FLORA have brought forward a chart with the court characters' names on. LESTER talks rapidly like in an RAF briefing, pointing with a billiard cue)

One – Prince Sagramore becomes the king's champion and the most powerful and hated man in Chantecler. Two – Sir Rupert tries to redeem his name but has so far been forced to bide his time doing menial tasks about the palace. Three – since the day Princess Eleanor went missing, Queen Wilhelmina, previously addicted to seafood, has not eaten a single shrimp – the significance of this will become clear later. It's called prefiguring. And four – today the mood in Chantecler is even gloomier than usual because King Mark has decreed that if Princess Eleanor is not found by noon tomorrow, the stroke of her eighteenth birthday, he will abdicate in favour of Prince Sagramore. Got that? Good. And they say *Dallas* is complicated! Thank you, ladies.

(NELL and FLORA exit SL with the chart)

So our prologue is ended, the panto begins, but good or evil? Let us see who wins.

(Sings) Greensleeves, born to wealth and fame,

Greensleeves was his father's son.

Greensleeves was their family name,

But henceforth his coat of arms had but one. *(Exits SL)*

(The stage is suddenly engulfed by a snowstorm of whirling points of light – actually it's a glitter ball hired at no doubt ruinous expense for this very effect. When it clears, SAGRAMORE is revealed holding a snow globe and watching the particles come to rest. BUZZ is with him, wringing his hands)

SAGRAMORE: I compliment you, wizard. It works splendidly.



BUZZ: Prince Sagramore, you *will* promise to keep this secret won't you? If the Magic Circle ever found out I had been giving oracles away to just anyone –

SAGRAMORE: But I'm not just anyone, wizard. From noon tomorrow I'm going to be your sovereign. I see nothing wrong in your giving me a little coronation present. Now, you're sure it knows everything and can predict the future?

BUZZ: Only so long as you ask it the right questions, my lord. It always tells the truth, but it only tells the *whole* truth if your intentions are good.

SAGRAMORE: Oh we needn't bother about that. (*Dismissing him*) Thank you, wizard.

BUZZ: There is one other thing, my lord. You must pose all your questions in rhyme. It's a sort of tradition with these things.

SAGRAMORE: Who is this oracle? TS Eliot?

BUZZ: TS who, my lord?

SAGRAMORE: I am surrounded by illiterates. Get back to your cauldron, you old buffer, and leave me in peace.

(BUZZ *exits SL, bowing*)

So now I hold the future in the palm of my hand, my power shall be infinite. Still, I'd better make sure there aren't going to be any last-minute hitches. Let me see...

(*He thinks for a moment, then shakes the bubble. swirling lights as before*)

Oracle in the snowstorm glass,
Tell me what will come to pass.
Is there any living thing
Which can stop me being king?

ORACLE: (*Voiceover*) Since you ask, I tell you true

All that is your rightful due.
The only thing that you need fear
Comes with a Sony Walkman here.

(*Lights stop*)

SAGRAMORE: A Sony Walkman? What on earth's a Sony Walkman? It's typical of that wizard to give me an oracle whose prophecies I can't even understand.



(Enter COLOMBINE SL, wearing a Sony Walkman and carrying a bundle)

COLOMBINE: Excuse me, sir, is this the castle of Chantecler?

SAGRAMORE: *(pre-occupied)* It is. What is your business here, peasant?

COLOMBINE: I'm looking for my sister. We came here seeking work, only I've lost her somewhere in the grounds.

SAGRAMORE: I have weightier matters on my mind than looking for some scruffy farm-girl. Now be off.

COLOMBINE: Oh dear. She's got all our money too, little though that is, and if I don't find her soon I really don't know what I shall do.

(She flutters her eyelashes. SAGRAMORE looks at her more closely)

SAGRAMORE: Tell me, child, how old are you?

COLOMBINE: Eighteen, sir.

SAGRAMORE: Eighteen? Really?

COLOMBINE: Yes, sir. And I lost my childhood years ago, so you can call me Colombine.

SAGRAMORE: Colombine, there's a very discreet little Italian restaurant round the corner. Perhaps we could go and look for your sister in there?

COLOMBINE: Oh sir, how can I ever repay you?

SAGRAMORE: If we find her, maybe you can both repay me at the same time. By the way, that was a most interesting hat you were wearing a moment ago. Is it the latest thing in wimples?

COLOMBINE: Oh no sir, it's a Sony Walkman, the latest thing in personal stereos.

(SAGRAMORE stops, stares at her, stares at the snow globe, stares at AUDIENCE, shrugs)

SAGRAMORE: Business before pleasure. *(He draws the Supersword)*

COLOMBINE: Is anything the matter, sir? Why are you waving your thing around?

SAGRAMORE: Oh, I just like to let the air get at it from time to time. After you.

(COLOMBINE walks ahead of him. He is just raising the sword to strike when LUCY enters with ELLEN SL)

LUCY: Prince Sagramore! What are you doing?



COLOMBINE: Ellen, where have you been? We were just going to look for you at a discreet little Italian restaurant round the –

SAGRAMORE: (*Covering up*) Lady Lucy, the cobwebs in this place are disgusting. (*He pokes the sword at the air, irritably*) Look at that. Abominable. You're in charge of castle upkeep. See to it immediately.

LUCY: (*Frostily*) Yes, my lord.

SAGRAMORE: (*To COLOMBINE*) And as for you, keep those eyelashes under control or I'll have you arrested for being in possession of a pair of dangerous weapons. (*Exits SL*)

COLOMBINE: At least he noticed, I suppose.

ELLEN: What a strange and troubled man.

LUCY: Yes. We're getting married tomorrow straight after his coronation.

ELLEN: He's going to be your husband? How sad.

COLOMBINE: He's going to be king? How interesting.

LUCY: Quite. Well, what can I do for you two girls?

ELLEN: We'd like to work in the palace. It's swanky.

COLOMBINE: Yes, we've come to seek our fortunes among all you glittering sophisticates.

ELLEN: We'd do anything.

COLOMBINE: Within reason of course.

LUCY: Are you any good in a kitchen?

ELLEN: Oh yes, I used to cook all the meals at home.

LUCY: (*To COLOMBINE*) And what's your speciality?

COLOMBINE: Oh, I've given satisfaction in all sorts of positions.

LUCY: (*Drily*) Really? As it happens, you're both in luck. With the coronation tomorrow, we could use a few extra hands. If you do your work satisfactorily, I'll see what can be done about getting you more permanent posts.

ELLEN: Thank you, Lady Lucy. We won't let you down.

LUCY: I'll send someone in to assign you your tasks. (*Exits SL*)

COLOMBINE: Looks like we've landed on our feet here, Ell.

ELLEN: Yes, but you just behave yourself. No ogling the men until after we've served our apprenticeship, right?

COLOMBINE: Oh all right, Ell. Just for you, I promise I won't look at a single man – or a married one – until after we've got permanent jobs.

(*RUPERT enters SL carrying a basket of logs*)



Cor, look at the thighs on that!

ELLEN: Colombine!

COLOMBINE: I can't help it, Ell, he's gorgeous. *(She ostentatiously drops a handkerchief and coughs)*

RUPERT: Excuse me, my lady, you appear to have dropped your handkerchief.

(COLOMBINE looks behind her for the 'lady', then susses)

COLOMBINE: Oh, you mean me! *(To ELLEN)* Not only thighs but class as well. It's every girl for herself with this one, Ell. *(To RUPERT)* Oh sir, how clumsy of me. My name's Colombine, what's yours?

RUPERT: *(Grandly)* Sir Rupert the – *(More humbly)* Rupert Greensleeves.

COLOMBINE: Charmed I'm sure. This is my sister Ellen.

RUPERT: *(Bowing)* My lady.

ELLEN: Sir.

COLOMBINE: Here, those logs look heavy. Can I give you a hand?

RUPERT: No no, I'm quite used to managing with the one I've got, thank you. Ladies. *(Bows. Exits SR)*

ELLEN: *(Angry)* Colombine, sometimes I could –

COLOMBINE: I didn't know did I? Maybe I should go after him, try and make it up somehow.

ELLEN: You stay where you are. I think we're just about to get our first assignments.

(Enter SL NELL and FLORA, two serving wenches. They are a bit like Ugly Sisters in looks and demeanour. NELL is finishing a joke)

NELL ... and the first eunuch says, "No, backwards."

(She and FLORA crack up)

FLORA: Ooh Nell, you are a one. *(They spot ELLEN and COLOMBINE)* Here, are you the two peasants we're meant to set to work?

COLOMBINE: You can set us to music if you like, ducky, we can handle it. *(Nudges ELLEN and giggles)*

NELL: Oh dear oh dear, Flo.

FLORA: Look's like we've got a right one here, Nell.

NELL: You can say that again, Flo.

FLORA: Looks like we've got a right one here, Nell.

(They collapse with laughter)



NELL: *(To COLOMBINE)* What's your name, smartarse?

COLOMBINE: Colombine.

FLORA: Here Nell, maybe we should put her out in the fields. We could do with a new columbine harvester.

(NELL and FLORA shriek with mirth)

NELL: How about you, dearie?

ELLEN: I'm Ellen.

NELL: You know anything about handling balls?

ELLEN: I beg your pardon?

NELL: Dancing and that. What did you think I meant?

ELLEN: Oh Nell, you are a one.

NELL: I'm an eight on a good night.

(They shriek riotously)

COLOMBINE: Lady Lucy said you had some work for us.

FLORA: Give us a chance, love. We haven't exhausted our endless supply of wit and repartee yet.

ELLEN: If all it consists of is making fun of strangers then I'm afraid we don't have time to indulge you.

We have our livings to earn. Come on Colombine, I hear Camelot are taking on staff –

NELL: Here hang about, hang about, not so fast. Sensitive little flower ain't you?

ELLEN: What do you mean?

FLORA: What she means is you're at court now, dear.

NELL: You want to pass muster round here, you've got to learn to loosen up a little.

FLORA: Don't take things so seriously.

NELL: Least of all work

ELLEN: Well, where we come from, things like hard work and good manners stand for something.

FLORA: Sounds like hell to me.

NELL: Tell us about it, dear. We could do with a laugh.

ELLEN: Not if you're only going to make mock.

NELL & FLORA: Cross our hearts.

ELLEN: Very well.

(NELL and FLORA retire upstage, giggling. Music intro)

FLORA: And stand up straight, dear. If you've got it, flaunt it.



(COLOMBINE *sticks her chest out*)

ELLEN: Ignore them, Colombine.

(COLOMBINE *sags again*)

ELLEN: (*Sings*) We were brought up as good little girls, polite, demure and clean.

COLOMBINE: (*Sings*) We were brought up to tidy our rooms and not to appear obscene.

ELLEN: I was a Brownie.

COLOMBINE: I was a Girl Guide.

ELLEN & COLOMBINE: We never/seldom came home late. (ELLEN *looks savagely at COLOMBINE*)

Though we were poor we tried to smile –

NELL & FLORA: (*Singing*) Gaw blimey, what a state!

Life is for the making and living, and not for perfecting your frown.

Life is for the taking and giving it *that (rude gesture)* when it's getting you down.

NELL: Don't sit with a face like a fiddle, you'll just be in everyone's way.

FLORA: Think, 'Well, since I'm stuck in the middle I might as well get up and play.'

NELL & FLORA: Make hay while the rain pours around you, if you don't get drowned that's a plus.

Let rip, take a dip in the stream, life's a dream, it's a scream, look at us!

(*Remembering their promise*) Sorry.

ELLEN: (*Spoken*) As we were saying...

(*Sings*) When I was younger, I was so modest, I never thought of men.

COLOMBINE: I didn't either, life was quite boring till I was almost ten. (*Off ELLEN's look*) Well, I don't tell you *everything*...

ELLEN: I want a husband.

COLOMBINE: I want a hero.

ELLEN & COLOMBINE: Gentle/Loaded as he can be.

We only want what we deserve –

NELL & FLORA: Pathetic! Glory Be!

Life is for the lusting and breaking of hearts, and not setting up house.

Life isn't for dusting and baking and feeding a fat drunken louse.

NELL: Why stick with one out of many? Your choice is invariably wrong.

FLORA: Take the many for every last penny then text till the next comes along.

NELL & FLORA: Take heed of your elders who've been there and seen where the whole thing's absurd.



Just shove all true love, it's a drag. Life's a trip, it's a pip, take our word!

ELLEN: May we finish?

NELL: There's more?

FLORA: We can't wait.

ELLEN: (*Sings*) As for our schooling, I started reading, writing and how to count.

COLOMBINE: I had a horsey and the groom taught me how I ought to mount.

ELLEN: I did my homework.

COLOMBINE: She did my homework.

ELLEN: We were in bed by ten. We strove to make our parents proud –

NELL & FLORA: Lord help us, not again!

Life is for the tasting and trying and getting the best deal you can.

Life isn't for wasting in lying around on a book-strewn divan.

NELL: Who needs a head full of knowledge? It leaves you dead from the neck down.

FLORA: What good are the years at art college when you could be painting the town?

NELL & FLORA: Get rid of that gloomy old look, chuck the book on the fire and cheer.

Forget it's a nettle, just squeeze –

NELL: Life's a dream.

FLORA: It's a scream.

NELL: Just a gag.

FLORA: What a rag.

NELL: Such a breeze.

FLORA: Full of sleaze.

NELL: It's for you.

FLORA: It's for me.

NELL & FLORA: And the best thing in life is it's free!

(*End of song*)

ELLEN: Yes, well, I think we'll just have to agree to disagree on that one.

COLOMBINE: Come on, Ell, give it a chance. Suck it and see, I always say.

ELLEN: I'd keep that to yourself round here. (*To NELL and FLORA*) All right, we'll stay. But you'd better give us *something* to do or Lady Lucy won't hire us.

NELL: What do you think, Flo?

FLORA: Cleaning the stables.

NELL: The very thing. Those stalls haven't seen a mop or a bucket in moons.



ELLEN: Where are these stalls?

FLORA: Just follow your nose, dearie. *(She points at the auditorium. ELLEN and COLOMBINE's faces fall)*

COLOMBINE: They look disgusting.

ELLEN: I've never seen so many steaming turds in all my life.

NELL: I know, but it's good for the rhubarb.

FLORA: Here you go. *(She gives them a duster each)* Lots of spit and polish, that's the way.

(ELLEN and COLOMBINE go down into the auditorium and dust the front row on their way out)

Crikey, Nell! They're sending us kids these days.

NELL: They won't last a minute, Flo. I was just saying to Lady Lucy the other day – what's the matter?

(FLORA is looking nervously offstage SL)

FLORA: Nell. It's a dragon. I've just seen a dragon.

NELL: Give over. Where?

FLORA: There.

NELL: Rubbish. They were all killed off years ago –

(Enter TREVOR SL)

TREVOR: Rarr!

NELL & COLOMBINE: It's a dragon! *(They clutch each other)*

TREVOR: Oh, did I startle you? Sorry, force of habit. My name's Zorgo the Terrible and I'm looking for the wizard.

NELL & COLOMBINE: Z-Z-Zorgo the T-T-Terrible?

TREVOR: All right, Trevor the Dragon. It was worth a try. Wizard anywhere about is he?

FLORA: He should be along any minute.

NELL: In fact here he is now.

(Enter BUZZ SL)

NELL & FLORA: Buzz, there's a dragon to see you.



(They scamper off SL)

TREVOR: Pretty good on your cues round here aren't you? Good morning, wiz. My name is Trevor the Dragon. I wonder if you can help me?

BUZZ: A dragon? Aren't dragons supposed to breathe fire or something?

TREVOR: That's just it, I had a bit of an accident last night. I fell in the river and now I can't get my flame going again. I was told you would be the man to see.

BUZZ: Fire? Oh no, I never touch fire. Dangerous, nasty thing, fire.

TREVOR: If it's a question of money, I could always crack your skull open like an egg and suck out your eyeballs?

BUZZ: No, it's not that, it's just that I'm only allowed to do three spells a day you see. It's a union thing. Magic Circle? More like a Fascist conspiracy for the suppression of free enterprise and personal creativity.

TREVOR: *(Aside)* Mate, we've been over this in rehearsals. Save the politics for the matinées when there's no one in.

BUZZ: You're right. I'm sorry. Yes, I've already used up two making Prince Sagamore's oracle, and doing the king a favour, and it's not lunchtime yet.

TREVOR: So you've got one left then.

BUZZ: Yes, but I'm saving that for emergencies. What if there was a fire or something? They'd need me to come and put it out.

TREVOR: Tell you what, give me my fire back *and* six quarts of ale, then if there's a fire *I'll* be able to put it out.

BUZZ: No, it's quite out of the question. Now if you'll excuse me –

TREVOR: You're past it, that's what it is.

BUZZ: How dare you? Of course I'm not past it.

TREVOR: Go on then, prove it. *(To AUDIENCE)* You all want to see him do some magic don't you?

AUDIENCE: Yes.

BUZZ: I won't be pressured

TREVOR: You can't do it can you?

BUZZ: Oh yes I can.

TREVOR & AUDIENCE: Oh no you can't.

BUZZ: Oh yes I can.

TREVOR & AUDIENCE: Oh no you can't.

BUZZ: All right, I'll prove it to you. You want fire, I'll make fire. You'd better stand back, this could be fairly magnificent. *(Consults big book of spells)* Right, I think this is the one.



By the pricking of my thumbs
Something magic this way comes.
Make us gasp and make us dizzy,
Izzy-wizzy, let's do something spectacular and unexplainable by the laws of the natural universe!

(Magnesium flash. SAGRAMORE enters SL)

SAGRAMORE: Ah, Buzz. Just the man I wanted to see.

TREVOR: You're right, I'm impressed.

BUZZ: No, you fool, that was a spelling mistake. He's not a fire, he's a sire.

SAGRAMORE: Have you got that spell I ordered for this afternoon? *(He spots TREVOR)* Ah...

BUZZ: Oh, this is a dragon, my lord, he was just leaving. Dragon, Prince Sagramore.

TREVOR: We've met.

BUZZ: You have? Where?

SAGRAMORE: Oh, nowhere special, wizard. Well, dragon, I'm sorry you can't stay –

TREVOR: I'm in no rush, Sag. I was just thinking the other day how nice it would be to see my old litter-dropping friend from the woods again. To find out how he was getting on – and how he might stop getting on if a certain incident with a sword and a swaddled baby were ever to be made public.

SAGRAMORE: *(Aside)* Are you trying to blackmail me, dragon?

TREVOR: Oh, call me Trevor, Sag. It won't cost you that much to be friendly. Just a roof over my head till I get my fire back.

SAGRAMORE: All right, I haven't time to argue, so for now I'll agree. But I warn you, things will be different once I'm king.

TREVOR: Don't rush on my account.

BUZZ: You were saying, my lord? About another spell?

SAGRAMORE: Yes, wizard. Those peasants on my land who are a day late with their rent, I told you I wanted a thunderstorm with lightning bolts to ruin their harvest and burn their miserable little hovel to the ground.

BUZZ: Oh my lord, I'm afraid it's slipped my mind, what with creating the oracle and everything.

SAGRAMORE: You mean you haven't got it prepared?

BUZZ: I'm afraid not, my lord.

SAGRAMORE: Treason! You have failed me, wizard. You will pay for this with your life.

TREVOR: Oh I say, isn't that a bit OTT?

SAGRAMORE: You keep out of this. Wizard, prepare to die.



(He draws the Supersword. RUPERT enters with a basket of logs SR)

RUPERT: Hold! Prince, you shall not touch him.

SAGRAMORE: And who is going to stop me, log-carrier?

RUPERT: I am here to try. *(He selects a hefty log from the basket)*

SAGRAMORE: But I have the Supersword. Are you willing to take the risk?

RUPERT: Yes. Are you?

(SAGRAMORE weighs the odds. He sheathes the Supersword)

SAGRAMORE: Tomorrow is my coronation day. I shall be merciful. For now. *(To BUZZ)* Be gone, old man. You can brew up my thunderstorm another time. *After* I am king.

BUZZ: Thank you, my lord. Sir Rupert. *(Exits SL)*

SAGRAMORE: And as for you, dragon, if you're staying you will have to earn your keep. Help this lackey with his logs.

RUPERT: I need no help.

TREVOR: No, I'll do it. *(Aside to AUDIENCE)* It's always best to keep in with the hero in these things, they usually come out top in the end. Oops. Spoilers. *(He picks up the log basket)* Follow me, Rupe, I'm right behind you.

(They go out SL)

SAGRAMORE: Curses. This Rupert Greensleeves grows too bold. I must seek a way to blacken his name at court – *(Looks off SR)* And maybe this is my chance.

(LUCY enters SR furtively, carrying a custard pie)

My Lady Lucy, good day.

(LUCY starts and guiltily tries to hide the pie behind her back)

And where have you been, may I ask?

LUCY: Nowhere, sir.

SAGRAMORE: Come come, what is that behind your back?

LUCY: Nothing.



(SAGRAMORE grabs her arm and exposes the pie)

SAGRAMORE: A custard pie! With the royal crest on it! This was intended for the coronation banquet.

LUCY: No it wasn't. I found it. I mean, it's mine –

SAGRAMORE: Lady Lucy, the queen has been much angered of late by the mysterious disappearance of food from her larder. Could it possibly be that you, her most trusted companion, are the culprit?

LUCY: All right, I admit it, but I can't help it. My doctor says I only crave sweet things to counteract the fact that I'm about to be married to a man whose very haircut turns my stomach like pond scum.

SAGRAMORE: But you are to be married to me.

LUCY: Yes. So you'd better give me my pie back before I vomit all over your tights.

SAGRAMORE: Lady Lucy, Queen Wilhelmina has decreed that if the thief is ever discovered, he or she will be banished from court.

LUCY: Oh sir, I beg you do not expose me. It would hurt the queen dreadfully, and I would do anything to prevent that.

SAGRAMORE: Anything?

LUCY: I would even try to be a good wife to you. I can do no more painful penance.

SAGRAMORE: Then I shall hold you to that. Become my agent. Plant this pie in Rupert Greensleeves's room to implicate him as the criminal. Then, once he is banished from court, we can reign together in smug complicity.

LUCY: You would plot against the bravest knight this country has ever known? How could you be so evil?

SAGRAMORE: Practice, my dear. Will you do it?

LUCY: You give me no choice.

SAGRAMORE: *(Giving her back the pie)* Then go. And don't keep me waiting at the altar.

(LUCY exits SL)

Har har har! My depravity almost frightens *me*. You know, sometimes I'm so evil, I'm ashamed of myself. But this isn't one of those times. Har har har!

(Exits to three dramatic chords. LESTER enters SL)

LESTER: Come on, let's all give him a really good hiss this time. Hiss. Okay, let's move on a few hours now to another part of the palace, where King Mark and Queen Wilhelmina are taking a last look round before turning Chantecler over to Prince Sagramore. Their hearts ache and a drowsy numbness



pains their sense as though they had plagiarised an early 19th-century Romantic poet while they consider their impending involuntary early retirement – that’s one for all you civil servants sitting up in the plush seats guzzling champagne.

(LESTER *exits SL as MARK and WILHELMINA enter SR*)

MARK: You know dear, this may be the coldest, draughtiest, most miserable jerry-built pile in the western hemisphere, but I shall miss it.

WILHELMINA: Me too. We’ve had some happy times here.

MARK: We have indeed. We used to dine.

WILHELMINA: Though you were late.

MARK: We ate at nine.

WILHELMINA: No, half past eight.

MARK: Ah yes, I remember it well.

WILHELMINA: No, hang on dear, we can’t do that one, it’s copyright.

MARK: Oh. Whoops. Still, I feel like a song to cheer me up. Call the jester.

WILHELMINA: The way he sings, we’d need another song to cheer us up after he’d finished. No, don’t be gloomy, dear. Look on the bright side. We’ll have the rest of our lives together to do all those wonderful exciting things we’ve always promised ourselves.

MARK: Ah yes, that’s true. *(Pause)* Like what?

WILHELMINA: Well. Um. Give me a minute.

MARK: We could be here all night.

WILHELMINA: There must be something. I’ve got it.

(Sings) Think of all the pleasures that await us.

A cruise around the world would be such fun.

MARK: They’re costly, I believe.

And sailing makes me heave.

And even if it didn’t, all that sun!

WILHELMINA: Then what about a cottage in the country?

A thatchy roof and roses round the door.

MARK: I don’t wish to be unkind,

But who in their right mind

Would want to spend their life stuck on a moor?

WILHELMINA: Than you could take up gardening.

MARK: And sneeze with allergies half the day?



WILHELMINA: Mark, dear, your attitudes are hardening.

MARK: Just to show my arteries the way.

WILHELMINA: Then how about some gentle little hobby?

Like marquetry or painting, there's a thought.

MARK: My hands have seven thumbs,

And painters get numb bums.

No, I couldn't even as a last resort.

WILHELMINA: If only the years could be shorter.

We pace out our days as they go by.

MARK: We both know all we need is our lost daughter,

With grandchildren to spoil until we die.

WILHELMINA: Think about our baby in her cradle.

Her smile could light each corner of our day.

MARK: I know what we can do

To see the future through.

WILHELMINA: To keep our gloom at bay,

As we grow old and grey,

MARK & WILHELMINA: We shall dream of our sweet Eleanor all day.

MARK: (*Spoken*) Ah, if only Eleanor were here now. Even though it's been eighteen long years, I'm sure I would recognise her the moment I saw her.

(*Enter ELLEN and COLOMBINE SL*)

Who on earth are you? I'm certain I've never seen either of you before in my life and I would be greatly astonished if one of you was to turn out to be in any way related to me.

MARK: I agree, dear. Guards! A couple of smelly young women have just invaded our private chambers.

ELLEN: Sorry to disturb you, sire, but Nell and Flora sent us to clean in here.

MARK: Oh, fair enough. Come along Winnie, let's you and me have a last go on the throne for old times' sake.

WILHELMINA: Just a second, dear. (*To ELLEN*) What is your name, child?

ELLEN: Ellen, ma'am. And this is my stepsister Colombine.

WILHELMINA: Ellen? How strange. We used to have a daughter called Eleanor. We were just this moment singing about her.

ELLEN: My parents named me after the royal baby when they found me on their doorstep. They were always your most fervent and loyal subjects.



WILHELMINA: How kind. You are most welcome to our court, Ellen.

ELLEN: Thank you, ma'am. Oh, may I ask what you would like for dinner tonight? I'm on kitchen duty.

WILHELMINA: Well, my favourite dish used to be shrimps, but I haven't eaten them since our daughter was abducted.

ELLEN: But seafood is my speciality! How would you like some tonight, as it's your final day as queen?

WILHELMINA: Do you know, I think I will. And to think I swore I could never eat another shrimp until I saw Eleanor again.

MARK: I say, Winnie, you don't think – *(He points significantly at ELLEN)*

WILHELMINA: What, that this evil-smelling peasant could be our long-lost daughter Eleanor? Don't be silly Mark, you've been watching too many pantomimes.

MARK: I expect you're right, my love. What a pity real life is never that simple. Well, don't work too hard. Remember the Chantecler motto – *(Sings)* Life is for the making and living –

(WILHELMINA drags him off by the arm SL)

ELLEN: What a lovely couple. It's so sad they're abdicating tomorrow.

COLOMBINE: Whatevs. Anyway, we'd best crack on. I'll toss you for who cleans the well. *(She takes out a coin)*

ELLEN: Is that that cheat coin you got in Ye Oldie Giftie Shoppie in town?

COLOMBINE: 'Course. You didn't think I was going to risk ruining my nails cleaning out a grotty old well did you? There's probably spiders down there.

(ELLEN sighs, climbs over the wall and disappears down the well. COLOMBINE puts on her Sony Walkman and settles down with a magazine. SAGRAMORE enters SL, unseen by her, to three dramatic chords)

SAGRAMORE: Ah, the Colombine girl. And she's all alone. Now's my chance.

(He draws his sword and approaches, cat-like. COLOMBINE suddenly addresses the AUDIENCE, causing SAGRAMORE to hide)

COLOMBINE: Oh, you will tell me if anyone comes won't you? I don't want to get caught bunking off my first day. Cheers.



(She dons the Walkman again and reads. SAGRAMORE works his way towards her. AUDIENCE shouts. She can't hear because of the Walkman. Once or twice she hears and looks about, but SAGRAMORE manages to hide. Eventually he gets within striking distance and raises the sword. COLOMBINE drops her magazine, bends for it, and SAGRAMORE's swipe misses her head by inches. She spots him and shrieks)

COLOMBINE: Prince Sagramore, what are you doing?

SAGRAMORE: *(Improvising brilliantly as before)* Look at the cobwebs in this well. Filthy. I pay you lot to clean up, not sit around idling. I think, young lady, this is grounds for instant banishment.

COLOMBINE: But sir, my sister Ellen is cleaning the well. I'm sweeping up out here. *(She makes a few vague sweeping motions)*

SAGRAMORE: Ah. But you're still slacking on the job aren't you? Listening to that thing on your head. I'm afraid my mind is made up. You will be banished from our lands –

COLOMBINE: But it's not my Walkman, sir.

SAGRAMORE: What?

COLOMBINE: No sir, it's Ellen's. She was just letting me borrow it for a while. *(She takes it off and hands it down the well)* Here Ell, you can have it back now. *(Aside)* And watch yourself, this guy doesn't seem to think much of Duran Duran.

SAGRAMORE: *(Aside)* So, the wizard was right. The oracle told me the truth but not the whole truth. The other girl is the one I should be wary of. But maybe there is still a way. *(To COLOMBINE)* Mistress Colombine, I have been over-hasty. I hope you will forgive me?

COLOMBINE: I might. Have to think about it won't I?

SAGRAMORE: A pretty young thing like you shouldn't have to ruin her beautiful complexion working for a living. Perhaps if I took you out to dinner tonight in this discreet little Italian place I mentioned earlier, we might discuss ways of improving your position at court?

COLOMBINE: Well, I'm always interested in trying out any new positions, sir.

SAGRAMORE: Good. In that case, you might be able to help me with a tiny little personal problem I have.

COLOMBINE: Oh, one of those? Trust me sir, I've had lots of experience with men's tiny little personal problems.

SAGRAMORE: *À bientôt* then, *chérie*. *(He kisses her hand)*

COLOMBINE: Yeah. See you later an' all. *(Exits SL)*

SAGRAMORE: Har har har! I'll beguile her with promises of bright lights and flesh pots then, once she is completely in thrall to my devastating combination of brute force and Brut aftershave, I'll use her to get her sister out of the way. In the meantime I'd better see if the oracle has any other warnings for me.



(He shakes the glass bubble. Swirling lights as before)

Oracle in the snowstorm glass,
Tell me what will come to pass.
Is there any other thing
Which can stop me being king?

ORACLE: *(Voiceover)* Since you ask, I tell you true

All that is your rightful due.
The only obstacle will be
The queen desiring shrimps for tea.

(Lights stop)

SAGRAMORE: Shrimps for tea? But Queen Wilhelmina hasn't eaten shrimps for years. My crown is safe.

(Enter LUCY SL)

Ah Lady Lucy, what news?

LUCY: Wonderful news, my lord. Queen Wilhelmina has ordered shrimps for tea. I must hurry to ye
shoppies before they close. *(Exits SL)*

SAGRAMORE: I'm going for a little lie down. Evidently I'm going to have to outdo even myself in
villainy if I am to take the throne unopposed. Oh what a rogue and despicable conniving swine am I.
(Exits SL)

(ELLEN emerges from the well)

ELLEN: Good, there's no one about. This well is dirtier than I thought. I'll just take a break for a while, let
all the gunge and slime settle.

(She sits with her back against the well. Enter RUPERT SL with logs)

RUPERT: Oh, my lady Ellen. Do I disturb you?

ELLEN: No, not at all, my lord Rupert, I was just having five minutes.

RUPERT: I'm glad. You mustn't let Nell and Flora bully you.



ELLEN: I can take it. But what about you? Surely you must get tired carrying those logs around all day?

RUPERT: I did acquire a helper this morning, but he was useless. Kept trying to rub my logs together to make fire.

ELLEN: Is he a boy scout?

RUPERT: No, a dragon.

(ELLEN laughs. RUPERT laughs. They look at each other)

My lady Ellen, you've got some frogspawn hanging off your hair. *(He removes it)*

ELLEN: Thank you. My lord Rupert, you have a wood-boring beetle trying to tunnel into your ear. *(She removes it. They gaze at each other)*

RUPERT: My lady Ellen...

ELLEN: My lord Rupert...

RUPERT: Ellen...

ELLEN: Rupert...

RUPERT: Ell...

ELLEN: Rupe...

RUPERT: E...

ELLEN: R...

(They plunge into each other's arms, panting and throbbing. Immediately NELL and FLORA come on unnoticed by them SL)

FLORA: ... and the second eunuch says, "Yes, forwards."

(They laugh, spot the lovers, and instantly stiffen)

NELL: Here Flo, is that who I think it is?

FLORA: I think it is, Nell. Oh how could he? With the first painted baggage that wanders in.

NELL: As if there aren't enough painted baggages around here already.

FLORA: It's disgusting.

NELL: And an engaged man too.

FLORA: Engaged? To whom?

NELL: Me, you fool.

FLORA: He isn't.



NELL: As good as.

FLORA: But I saw him first.

NELL: You didn't.

FLORA: I did.

NELL: Didn't.

FLORA: Did.

NELL: Didn't didn't didn't.

FLORA: Did did did.

(RUPERT and ELLEN hear them and break, guiltily)

RUPERT: Ah. Good afternoon, ladies.

NELL: We're no ladies, you two-timing philanderer.

FLORA: And we all thought you were so 'armless.

ELLEN: How dare you speak to my lord Rupert in that way?

NELL: And we'll have less of your lip, young lady.

FLORA: Though I should think you've got less of your lip too, the way he was chewing it.

NELL: Anyway, the queen wants you to make her tea now so get off to the kitchens and be quick about it.

FLORA: Yeah, and don't forget to wash your hands. I shudder to think where they've just been.

NELL: Fondling his logs probably.

ELLEN: *(To RUPERT)* Shall I see you again?

RUPERT: I shall count the seconds.

(ELLEN goes off SL, blowing him a kiss)

One, two three, four...

NELL: Oh come on Rupe, she's far too young for you.

FLORA: Yeah, what about us? We saw you first.

RUPERT: That's true. I suppose I do owe you something for all the years you've pursued me, cornering me in the woodshed and bursting in accidentally while I was taking a bath.

(NELL and FLORA nudge each other expectantly. RUPERT takes two logs, kisses them and hands the WENCHES one each)

Adieu, ladies. I go to follow my heart elsewhere. *(Exits SL)*



(NELL and FLORA look at the logs, the at each other)

NELL: Flo? This means war.

FLORA: Nell? You're right.

(They shoulder the logs like rifles and troop off grimly after RUPERT SL)

(Enter LESTER SR)

LESTER: And now, for the gripping finale to our first act – it says here – the scene moves to the middle of the night. Prince Sagamore has been plotting and scheming all evening, and has summoned the king to a midnight rendezvous to lay before him the evil results of all his plans.

(Exits SL. SAGRAMORE enters SL with NELL, FLORA, COLOMBINE and LUCY)

SAGRAMORE: Did it all go smoothly?

NELL: Piece of cake, my lord.

FLORA: Easy-peasy.

SAGRAMORE: Good. Then I shall be rid of my enemies by morning, har har har!

(MARK enters SR)

Ah, sire.

MARK: Sagamore, what's this all about? It's the middle of the night.

SAGRAMORE: Evil doings are afoot, sire. We thought it best you should be told immediately.

MARK: Well, what is it?

SAGRAMORE: First, my lady Lucy has news of the custard pie thief.

LUCY: It is Sir Rupert, sire. I discovered a pie hidden in a pair of tights he sent to the laundry this evening.

MARK: No, surely not. Sir Rupert would only have to ask if he was hungry.

SAGRAMORE: Who said he was hungry?

MARK: Ah, I see what you mean. Eugh.

SAGRAMORE: He must be banished forthwith, sire.

MARK: Poor Rupert. Obviously the strain of his disgrace must have finally unbalanced his mind.

SAGRAMORE: Be that as it may, sire, there is yet graver news.



MARK: Worse than having to banish Rupert?

SAGRAMORE: Much worse, sire. An attempt has been made on the life of the queen!

MARK: What?

SAGRAMORE: It's true, sire. Nell and Flora have the details.

NELL: In the course of our duties, my colleague and I were proceeding along the north wing at about ten minutes to eleven when we heard a suspicious noise issuing from the queen's bedroom.

FLORA: Upon investigating this disturbance, we discovered trainee wench Ellen attempting to administer poisoned shrimps to the queen in a manner likely to cause the royal personage to croak, or at the very least to give her a nasty attack of the hiccups.

MARK: Ellen? That delicate little maid? Oh surely not.

SAGRAMORE: It's true, sire.

MARK: We can't believe it. *(To COLOMBINE)* You, you're the girl's sister. Is she capable of such a thing?

COLOMBINE: Yes, sire. She has always been jealous of the way you nobs –

SAGRAMORE: – royals –

COLOMBINE: – royals have a monopoly on the fleshpits and bright spots –

SAGRAMORE: – fleshpots and bright lights –

COLOMBINE: – whatevs, in society, and she came to court seeking an opportunity to strike a blow for the common people. Although her sister, I of course had nothing to do with it, I was with Saggy here all evening at a discreet little Italian restaurant round the –

SAGRAMORE: Yes, thank you, Colombine. I think the case is proved, sire.

MARK: Where is the girl now?

SAGRAMORE: I had her imprisoned, sire. The dragon is guarding her.

MARK: Fetch her hither. We wish to hear what she has to say.

SAGRAMORE: Yes, sire.

(He motions NELL and FLORA off SL)

MARK: And we wish to see the queen.

SAGRAMORE: I'm afraid Queen Wilhelmina is too shocked to join us, sire. I ordered the wizard to administer a sleeping draught. She will be prostrate for hours.

MARK: It'll do her good. She hasn't been prostrate for years. Thank you, Sagramore.

SAGRAMORE: You realise, sire, that such treason is punishable by death?

MARK: We will not hear of such a thing yet, Sagramore. The girl may be innocent. She must be given a fair trial.



SAGRAMORE: In that case, sire, I shall personally conduct the hearing. And afterwards we can put her to death legally.

(Enter ELLEN SL, guarded by TREVOR, followed by NELL and FLORA)

TREVOR: Rarr!

(ALL jump)

Sorry, sorry, force of habit.

MARK: Ellen, you are charged with a gravely serious crime. Do you have anything to say in your defence?

ELLEN: Only that I am innocent, sire, but I forgive all those who so unjustly accuse me.

(ALL groan at her sickly saccharine niceness, mutter 'I think I'm going to vomit', 'Leave it out, darling', things of that nature)

MARK: Child, you could not be more noble if you had sprung from our very own purple-swathed loins.

(ALL groan at his disgusting imagery, mutter 'I think I'm going to vomit', 'Leave it out, squire', things of that nature)

We believe you, but the law must take its course. You shall be tried under Prince Sagramore tomorrow at dawn.

ELLEN: Very well, sire. If it is the only way.

MARK: It is. We are sorry.

SAGRAMORE: Return the prisoner to her dungeon –

(RUPERT bursts in SL)

RUPERT: Hold! Sire, I beg leave to speak.

MARK: Sir Rupert, we are glad to see you. Say on.

RUPERT: Sire, there is another way to prove Ellen's innocence. Trial by combat. If she be innocent, her champion will prevail. If she be guilty, he must share her fate, no matter how dire, sire.

MARK: We agree that is the alternative. But who will champion her?



RUPERT: I will.

(ALL gasp)

ELLEN: Rupert, no!

SAGRAMORE: Silence there!

MARK: Sir Rupert, we beg you to reconsider. For one thing you're probably a bit tired after stuffing all those custard pies down your tights.

(Pause)

RUPERT: Come again, sire?

MARK: And for another, you will be obliged to fight our champion.

RUPERT: Nothing would give me keener pleasure, sire.

SAGRAMORE: Nor I, sire. Let's to't.

MARK: Toot? You mean it's going to be a musical combat? Trumpets, that kind of thing?

SAGRAMORE: No, sire –

ELLEN: Rupert, I can't let you do this. You won't stand a chance.

RUPERT: My lady, I must. There is no one else.

ELLEN: Then may justice guide your hand.

RUPERT: Sire, I beg a moment alone with my lady Ellen.

MARK: We grant it willingly. Let the court withdraw.

(With great pomp and formal ceremony, possibly a burst of fanfare, the COURT exit SL)

RUPERT: Ellen –

ELLEN: Rupert –

(The COURT pile back on SL)

SAGRAMORE: Time's up. Have you any preference for style of combat, log-carrier?

RUPERT: As the king's defendant, you may choose, prince. It is all one to me.

SAGRAMORE: In that case, and in view of your condition, I shall give you a sporting chance. I choose – stone, paper, scissors!



(ALL *gasp*)

LUCY: You despicable cheating swine!

MARK: Peace. The legal niceties have been observed. Let the combat commence. Best out of five. Shake hands and come out fighting.

(*They shake. SAGRAMORE crushes RUPERT's hand cruelly*)

RUPERT: Ow! You lowly knave, you squeezed before I was ready!

SAGRAMORE: Enough! Count, sire.

(*MARK counts 'one two three', and they play. Twice RUPERT's mangled hand can only make paper and SAGRAMORE defeats him with scissors. On the third go, RUPERT makes a heroic effort to form scissors. SAGRAMORE, anticipating, wins with stone. A big 'Aww' goes up from ELLEN and LUCY*)

SAGRAMORE: The day is mine, lackey.

RUPERT: Lady Ellen, I have failed you.

ELLEN: No, you can never fail me, Rupert. Sire, I humbly crave a moment alone with my lord Rupert.

MARK: We're not going through all that again.

ELLEN: Oh Rupert. I shall always remember you for this.

SAGRAMORE: Always will not be long, peasant. You die with Rupert at dawn.

MARK: No, Sagramore. We shall not have our final day on the throne tainted with blood. We hereby decree that Sir Rupert be banished from our lands, and the girl Ellen imprisoned for life. Any man raises his hand against them on pain of death. That is our final act as king of Chanticler.

SAGRAMORE: Very well, Mark. But from noon tomorrow I shall be king, and I shall make new decrees.

(*To ELLEN and RUPERT*) Your respite will be but brief, I promise you.

MARK: Let all go to their beds. This has been a sad night for Chanticler.

(*ALL depart, MARK, LUCY and COLOMBINE SR, ELLEN, TREVOR, NELL and FLORA SL*

SAGRAMORE and RUPERT are the last to go. They stand square to each other for a moment)

SAGRAMORE: (*Softly*) Har har har!

(*RUPERT drops his eyes and exits SL. SAGRAMORE exits SR. LESTER enters SL*)



LESTER: (*Sings*) The curtain's screen falls upon the scene,

Prince Sagamore has won the day.

Yet good may still triumph over evil

Before the climax of our play.

(*Spoken*) Don't go away, folks, the best is yet to come.

(*Singing as he goes*) Greensleeves, born to wealth and fame,

Greensleeves was his father's son.

Greensleeves was their family name,

A pity he's only been left with one.

(*Exits SL*)

(*Blackout*)

END OF ACT ONE



ACT TWO

(Houselights go down. Magnificent fanfare as the curtain rises on the throne room, complete with throne)

(Enter LESTER SL)

LESTER: My lords, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the great throne room where in a few hours' time Prince Sagamore is to be crowned king of Chantecler. Meanwhile, here is a list of the early arrivals at the coronation ceremony. *(Reads from a scroll)*

Sir Spender, knight of the garter, and his wife, Pretty Polly.

The Duke of Wellington and his old boot, Mrs Wellington.

Sir Patrick Moore and his dog, Star.

The Earl of Sandwich with the buffet.

Lard Raglan and his Sleeve.

Lord Cardigan and his Jumper.

Lord Flare and his Slacks.

The Royal Physician and his Retinue.

The Royal Optician and his Retina.

Lord Beeching and his Train.

Lord Lucan. Lord Lucan? Absent...

Sir Ranulph into the night.

(Enter COLOMBINE SL, hungover)

COLOMBINE: Could you hold it down a little? My head feels like a bucket of frogs this morning.

LESTER: My lady Colombine, what were you up to last night?

COLOMBINE: Three o'clock in the morning, that's what. With a bottle of cheap Chianti and Prince Sagamore banging on about his personal problems. Turns out all he's got is sweaty feet.

LESTER: I say, the cad didn't force you to do anything against your will did he?

COLOMBINE: No, but he tried to snog me against the wall on the way home.

LESTER: The despicable libidinous swine.

COLOMBINE: And he bribed me to tell lies about Ellen poisoning the queen's shrimps, and now she's in jail and I feel absolutely rotten. Is it worth losing the love of your sister just for the promise of fleshlights and bright spots, I ask myself?



LESTER: Of course it isn't. Not when there are impressionable kids in the audience.

COLOMBINE: You might be right. Oh, what is a poor innocent girl to do?

LESTER: I don't know, but I know what *you* can do. Mistress Colombine, forgive me for introducing a subplot so late in the proceedings, but ever since I saw you yesterday in the stable, bending over and showing your class, I have been hopelessly enamoured. Do you think you could ever bring yourself to reciprocate the love of a humble court jester?

COLOMBINE: No, doubt it. Nothing personal Les, but I've always been of the opinion that it isn't what a person's like inside that matters, it's more good looks and money in the bank. I'm afraid ugly paupers just don't do it for me.

LESTER: (*To AUDIENCE*) Ah well, I suppose we can't all live happily ever after.

(*Enter SAGRAMORE SL*)

SAGRAMORE: Ah Colombine, we have a job for you. The gold braid on our magnificent wedding night codpiece is getting a little frayed. Would you see to its repair?

COLOMBINE: *Our* wedding night? Oh Saggy, this is so sudden.

SAGRAMORE: No, not *our* wedding night, you fool. I was using the royal we.

LESTER: Couldn't you have done that in the interval?

SAGRAMORE: Shut up, jester. We were referring to our wedding with Lady Lucy.

LESTER: You despicable dirty swine, what kind of twisted ménage are you envisioning?

SAGRAMORE: We're only going to explain this one more time...

COLOMBINE: You mean you have been trifling with my affections and leading me astray only to cast me off like a used sock?

SAGRAMORE: Of course not, our dear. We don't intend to cast you off until you start turning ugly. In the meantime we shall be requiring you to adopt many interesting positions around the court, and as your king we shall expect your unquestioning obedience.

LESTER: Prince Sagramore, you insult my mistress Colombine. I challenge you to a –

SAGRAMORE: *Your* mistress, jester? How dare you call our mistress your mistress?

(*He knocks LESTER down. COLOMBINE runs to him, protectively*)

COLOMBINE: Les, are you all right?

LESTER: Oh sure. Couple of weeks in an iron lung, I'll be right as rain.

COLOMBINE: (*To SAGRAMORE*) You big bully, it's just as well you hit him on the head or you could have caused him a serious injury.



SAGRAMORE: Be off about your duties, wench. We shall summon you if we have further need of your services.

COLOMBINE: (*Helping LESTER up*) Come on, Les. You may not be rich but I like your spunk.

LESTER: I'm sorry, I didn't think you'd seen it.

(They go off SL. Three dramatic chords)

SAGRAMORE: Har har har! Let her have her moment with the fool. For a girl like that, bright lights and fleshpots will always prevail over the charms of a totally anachronistic musical instrument.

(Enter MARK and WILHELMINA SR, hiding things behind their backs)

MARK: Ah Sagramore, we didn't expect to find you here.

SAGRAMORE: We were must making sure the throne room had been decorated in a manner suitably sumptuous to the occasion. Don't you think the queen ought to be getting changed?

MARK: We are in no rush to see you on our throne, Sagramore. And while we are still king, we resent you 'we-ing' all over the palace. You may leave us.

SAGRAMORE: Yes sire, no sire, three bags full sire. Enjoy your final moments of power won't you?

(Exits SL)

MARK: What a horrible man he is. If I wasn't such a coward I'd tell mummy on him, just to teach him a lesson.

WILHELMINA: Too late now, dear. Just eat your pie and forget about it.

(They take their custard pies from behind their backs and settle down to eat)

MARK: I hope no one comes in. This *is* a banishing offence you know.

WILHELMINA: No it isn't. You're still king, you can steal from your own kitchens if you want to.

MARK: But if we carry on like this, you and I are going to end up looking like a couple of barrage balloons.

WILHELMINA: What are barrage balloons?

MARK: I don't know dear, they haven't been invented yet.

WILHELMINA: That's what I like about you, Mark. Always looking to the future.

MARK: It's the only thing we've got left isn't it?



(Sings) Think of all the pleasures that await us.

Cholesterol and jogging in the rain.

WILHELMINA: With punks and spiky hair, and smog-polluted air.

MARK & WILHELMINA: And getting mugged on holiday in Spain.

And think if all the –

(LUCY enters SL, interrupting them)

LUCY: Sire, my lady, forgive me but – *custard pies*!?

MARK: Er, yes? What about them?

LUCY: With the royal crest! You've been stealing from the kitchens too!

WILHELMINA: Too? You mean you were the thief all along and not Sir Rupert?

LUCY: Yes, I admit it. Prince Sagamore blackmailed me into saying it was Sir Rupert to incriminate him.

Can you ever forgive me for deceiving you?

WILHELMINA: Well, I don't know, Lucy, after all you're not a child anymore. People your age should be above giving in to just any temptation that comes along.

LUCY: Cheek! I wasn't even born when you had your coming-out party!

WILHELMINA: I beg your pardon? I always thought you were my godmother!

MARK: Oh don't be so pompous, Winnie. We're no better than a couple of petty criminals ourselves. Here Lucy, have some pie and forget about it.

WILHELMINA: Steady on Mark, we are *slightly* better. After all, we're wearing crowns.

LUCY: Oh sire, it's such a relief to know I'm no more morally corrupt than the royal family.

MARK: Enough of these author's messages. We must find Sir Rupert and tell him he is vindicated. At least Sagamore isn't going to have *everything* his own way.

WILHELMINA: By the way, Lucy, you are coming with us to our retirement castle aren't you?

LUCY: I wouldn't miss it for the world, ma'am.

MARK: Splendid. Me and two women. I'm so happy. If only our little Eleanor could be here too, then there'd be three of you to look after me.

WILHELMINA: Mark dear, have you ever heard of Germaine Greer?

MARK: No dear, who's he?

WILHELMINA: Oh, just another little pleasure you have to look forward to.

(They all exit SR. Enter SL. LESTER with COLOMBINE following, trying to tie a bandage round his head)



LESTER: Meanwhile, in another part of the palace...

(They exit SR. Enter ELLEN and TREVOR SL)

ELLEN: Thank you for taking me out for a walk, Trevor.

TREVOR: Pleasure. Still, we'd better get you locked up again or we'll both cop it.

ELLEN: Before you go, there's something I've been meaning to ask you. That thing round your neck, is it one of your milk teeth?

TREVOR: No, it's a thorn I removed from the paw of a little baby I rescued from Prince Sagamore in the forest about eighteen years ago.

ELLEN: Is it? How fascinating.

TREVOR: Yes. By the way, didn't you say you're going to be eighteen today?

ELLEN: That's right. At noon. Just like the missing Princess Eleanor.

TREVOR: Well well well. What a coincidence.

ELLEN: Yes, isn't it?

TREVOR: While we're on the subject, what's that little scar on your hand?

ELLEN: Apparently I had that when I was dumped on my parents' doorstep in the forest. My father said I must have picked up a thorn somewhere, though someone had removed it.

TREVOR: Blue door? Little brass knocker?

ELLEN: Yes.

TREVOR: This is incredible. That's *exactly* the sort of doorstep I dumped this baby on.

ELLEN: It wasn't!

TREVOR: It was!

ELLEN: Well well well. Small world isn't it?

TREVOR: It is that and no mistake. *(Pause)* Well, we'd better be getting you back to the cells.

ELLEN: Yes, I suppose so. Incidentally, what colour were the sheets your baby was wrapped up in?

TREVOR: Purple.

ELLEN: Royal purple? That's just the colour of the sheets *I* was wearing.

TREVOR: You're kidding!

ELLEN: Scout's honour!

(They exit SR. Pause. They re-enter SR)

Look this is ridiculous. *I* must be the missing royal princess.



TREVOR: (*Gasps*) What possible evidence could you adumbrate to support such a preposterous hypothesis?

ELLEN: I've just found this programme on the floor. (*Reads*) 'Ellen stroke Eleanor – Mary Smith (*Actress's name*) Mary Smith, that's me.

TREVOR: (*Crashing to one knee*) Your royal highness!

ELLEN: Oh don't go all soppy on me, Trevor, you look ridiculous.

TREVOR: But my lady, this is wonderful news! We must inform the king immediately.

(*He sets off. She pulls him back, perhaps a trifle over-violently*)

ELLEN: No, wait. I don't think that would be a very good idea. The shock of seeing me after all these years might be too much for him, and I don't want to be convicted of regicide on top of everything else.

TREVOR: But in a few hours' time Prince Sagamore will have claimed your rightful inheritance. Think of all the money you'll be throwing away if you don't declare yourself.

ELLEN: That doesn't matter to me, Trevor. I was brought up a peasant. I've never known luxury so I won't miss it. Besides, I know I could never be happy among all the dark intrigues and corruption of the court. That's what being a goody-goody means. But I'll need your help to get away. Trevor, you must – what's the matter?

TREVOR: (*Crestfallen*) I'm just thinking of all that money you're throwing away.

ELLEN: Come on, Trevor, snap out of it. You must find Lord Rupert and bring him to me, as quickly as you can.

TREVOR: Yes, my lady.

(*They set off in opposite directions, ELLEN SR, TREVOR SL. TREVOR returns immediately with RUPERT*)

Found him.

ELLEN: What kept you?

RUPERT: Ellen, you're free!

ELLEN: Rupert, I have the most wonderful news. I've just discovered I'm the long-lost princess Eleanor and –

RUPERT: (*Crashing to one knee*) Your royal highness!

ELLEN: Oh not you as well! Trevor, keep watch outside, make sure we're not disturbed.



(TREVOR *salutes and exits SL*. ELLEN *hands RUPERT back to his feet*)

Now Rupert, we have just enough time to flee Chantecler before Prince Sagamore becomes king and sentences us to death.

RUPERT: But my lady, the throne is rightfully yours –

ELLEN: I don't care about the throne, Rupert. All I want is to follow you into exile and live the peaceful, idyllic existence of a working class wife and mother.

RUPERT: I don't think you do...

ELLEN: All right, we'll steal a few precious stones on our way out. But we must hurry –

RUPERT: Ellen, once Prince Sagamore is king, he will hold the country to ransom. I cannot allow that to happen.

ELLEN: And how are you going to stop him? Rupert, he's already too powerful, and he's got both his hands to be nasty with.

RUPERT: I know that. Nevertheless, I must stay. This is my one chance to redeem my family honour.

ELLEN: But Rupert –

RUPERT: Ellen, listen to me, sweetheart. (*Bogart*) I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of two little people don't amount to hill of beans in this crazy world. Someday you'll understand that. We'll always have the well. Here's looking at you, kid. (*Turns away*)

ELLEN: What the hump are you banging on about, you posturing great pudden?

RUPERT: It's no good trying to sweet-talk me, Ellen. A knight's gotta do what a knight's gotta do.

ELLEN: What?

RUPERT: It's the Greensleeves family motto.

(*Sings*) When a man is a knight, his escutcheon is bright,

And his honour is his only friend.

Any stain on that shield, any vileness revealed,

Must be purged before he meets his end.

Now my love for you, it could not be more true,

But redemption is what I crave more,

So a knight's gotta do what a knight's got to do

To be worthy of his amour.

(*spoken*) Farewell, Ellen. (*Turns to go*)

ELLEN: Just don't expect me to be here when you get back, that's all.

RUPERT: What do you mean?

ELLEN: (*Sings*) Please don't give me all that guff about how being brave is tough
And all that fine and noble guff about your shame.



When a woman breaks her cover, rather than admit you love her,
You would rather court recov'ry of your name.
Shall I tell you how that sounds to me, you charmer,
Before you polish up your Don Quixotic armour?
It's all hooey, it's all bunk, the sort of rubbish some big lunk
Would say who's got his muscles where his brain should be.
It may come as a surprise to those hurt and startled eyes
That between these pretty shell-likes there's a thought or three
So as you go about your quest with your heart swelling in your breast,
Bear in mind what I'm about to say to you –
Though a knight's gotta do what a knight's gotta do,
His lady hasn't gotta do it too.

RUPERT: My lady Ellen, you're angry. I can tell.

ELLEN: You bet I am, you – you *hero*.

RUPERT: But I just explained...

(Sings) If a knight takes a maid, then that knight's trusty blade
Must be twice as keen to guard them both.
He must stand straight and strong to defend right from wrong
As he promised in his solemn oath.
Now, if I were to flee this affray facing me
Then your hatred would be my sole prize.
No, a knight's gotta be what a knight's gotta be
For the love of his lady's eyes.
(spoken) Farewell again, Ellen. *(Turns to go)*

ELLEN: *(Sings)* Oh you rotter, oh you swine, your love can't be as great as mine
If my slightest little whine can turn you off.

RUPERT: *(Spoken)* My lady –

ELLEN: *(Eluding him)* You don't have to be a hero, with your self-esteem at zero
I would love you still my dear – *(He tries to touch her)* oh just get off!
Do you really want to know how mad that makes me?
When for death and glory my brave knight forsakes me?
Take a bath and get a grip, stiffen down that upper lip,
All this standing to attention makes me scream.
Can't you forget the manly pose? Glaring down your noble nose
Only makes you look as though you've walked into a beam.



I don't mean to spend my years with my lap awash with tears,
Sticking back your stupid limbs with globs of glue.
If a knight's gotta be what a knight's gotta be,
His lady hasn't gotta be it too.

(Spoken) Go on then, go and get the rest of you chopped off, it's no skin off my nose. Well, what are you waiting for?

RUPERT: *(Sings)* I have given my word. If you find that absurd,
I have no time left to explain.
All I know is I must do what I think is just,
Though it cause us both infinite pain.
So I go out of care for our fair Chanticler,
And the pride kindles warm in my chest.
For a knight's gotta dare what a knight's gotta dare.
If I die, lay this rose on my breast.

(He gives her a rose. She beats him about the head and shoulders with it)

ELLEN: *(Sings)* You're not listening to me! If I could only make you see
How all this macho chivalry will turn me grey.
All this hot air wasted on a silly thing like family honour,
And you're bound to be a goner if you stay.
I just can't believe that you could be so selfish!
Do you really have a skin hard as a shellfish?

(She plonks his hand on her cheek then her chest)

Feel this face and feel this heart. Could you really bear to part
From all these fleshy female doobries coming through?
I can sew and I can knit, I can even babysit,
And I've been waiting half my life to babysit for you.
We could share a glorious life if you'd let me be your wife,
But you want to waste yours on this derring-do.
Well, if a knight's gotta dare what a knight's gotta dare,
His lady hasn't gotta dare it too.

(She throws the rose in his face. RUPERT exits sadly SL. ELLEN picks up the rose and holds it to her face)



Yet if a knight's gotta die when a night's gotta die,
Then this lady will surely die too.

(She turns upstage, weeping. Enter LESTER and COLOMBINE SR. She is still trying to bandage his head)

LESTER: Look, how much longer is this going to take?

COLOMBINE: It's your own fault, you keep twitching.

LESTER: Didn't you do knots in the Girl Guides?

COLOMBINE: I was away the night they did brain surgery. Now hold *still*.

LESTER: Oh look, isn't that your sister over there? What's she got to be so happy about?

COLOMBINE: She's not laughing, she's crying. *(She abandons LESTER for ELLEN)* Ellen, what's the matter?

ELLEN: Oh Col, I'm so miserable. I've fallen in love with an idiot.

COLOMBINE: *(Ironic)* Tell me about it.

LESTER: I told Rupert I'm the long-lost princess Eleanor –

LESTER: *(Crashing to one knee)* Your royal highness!

ELLEN: *(Ignoring him)* – but rather than marry me he wants to stay and fight it out with Prince Sagramore. What am I going to do?

LESTER: Well, my lady, speaking for myself –

COLOMBINE: Shut up, Les, this is girl talk. Ellen, the first thing you're going to do is have a nice strong reviving cup of gin.

ELLEN: Oh Col, does this mean we're friends again?

COLOMBINE: Yes. I'm sorry I ever let Saggy lead me astray into that discreet little Italian restaurant, he was a despicable boorish swine. But what can you do? If a man isn't a swine he's an idiot.

(They exit SR)

LESTER: Preach, sister! No, wait a minute... I can't keep up with all this political correctness. *(Fast to AUDIENCE)* Meanwhile, in another part of the palace...*(Exits after them SR)*

(Enter BUZZ and RUPERT SL)

RUPERT: But Buzz, you must help me for the sake of Chanticler.



BUZZ: I can't, Sir Rupert. What you ask is too dangerous. The magic required to restore your arm would have to be so strong, it might kill rather than cure. Are you willing to take that risk?

RUPERT: I must. And you must weave the spell.

BUZZ: But I told you, I can't do it alone. Only the oracle knows the formula, and I can't get to it, Prince Sagamore guards it too closely.

RUPERT: Then we must steal it from him. Where is Prince Sagamore now?

BUZZ: Rupert, wait. That isn't the only reason I can't help you. *(He sits wearily)*

RUPERT: What is it? Buzz, are you all right?

BUZZ: I am old, Sir Rupert. There was a time I would have dared anything to help you, but now... Even if I were to steal the oracle and work the magic to restore your strength, it would exhaust the full balance of credit I have with the Magic Circle, the conniving bunch of thuggish freeloaders. I would never be able to work again, and wizzing is my life. It's all I can do. Who would ever give me another job at my age?

RUPERT: You are right, old friend. No one would. You've been tossed on the scrap heap and no mistake. So why not help me now and go out in a blaze of glory?

BUZZ: Thank you, Rupert. You make a very attractive case, but a lousy friend. I refer you to my previous refusal.

RUPERT: I'm sorry, Buzz. I realise not everyone can be as brave as I am. Besides, I cannot ask you to throw away your livelihood for the sake of a battle I am destined to fight alone. I shall leave Chanticler for the exile that awaits me, and seek another way of toppling Prince Sagamore.

BUZZ: God speed, Sir Rupert.

RUPERT: Fare thee well, Buzz. May you prosper and die a happy man.

(Exits SL, bumping into LADY LUCY as she enters)

My lady Lucy. *(Exits SL)*

LUCY: Buzz, what's wrong with Sir Rupert? He seemed to have tears in his eyes.

BUZZ: *(Agitated)* Of course he's got tears in his eyes. Everyone's got tears in their eyes, there's not a dry seat in the house. And it's all my fault.

LUCY: Why? What's the matter?

BUZZ: Oh Lady Lucy, I'm a disgrace to my profession. I'm supposed to heal and help, yet I turned away the bravest knight of this or any other generation.

LUCY: I know how you feel. I'm about to become the wife of the most despicable royal swine of this or any other seasonal entertainment and there's no way I can get out of it.



BUZZ: Life can be a heavy thing at our age, Lady Lucy.

LUCY: Thank you, Buzz. You're cheering me up no end.

(They sit in gloom)

BUZZ: Well, this isn't doing either of us any good is it? My lady Lucy, do you dance?

LUCY: Heavens, Buzz, I haven't danced since I was a teenager, all of *ten years* ago.

BUZZ: Come on, let's see how much we can remember.

(They stand and link arms)

BUZZ: *(Sings)* Once upon a time we were both in our prime,

We could gambol and touch our toes.

LUCY: But now our youth is spent, and our backs are sorely bent

By a gallimaufry of cares and woes.

BUZZ & LUCY: Yet still we can pivot and prance

Like a couple of maiden aunts

In a creaking geriatric kind of dance.

(They dance)

Trip it lightly, sweetly sing with the gaiety of spring.

Step it brightly, turn and sway –

(They collide)

LUCY: Oh my corn!

BUZZ: Oh my foot!

BUZZ & LUCY: That's the way.

LUCY: *(Spoken)* Well, that was fun.

BUZZ: Feeling better now?

LUCY: Not much.

BUZZ: Let's try it again then.

LUCY: *(Sings)* When I was a maid, dripping diamonds and jade,

I put the joy into Joyeuse Garde.



BUZZ: Our stones have been replaced by the cheapest kind of paste,
And there's moths feeding off our dance card.

BUZZ & LUCY: Yet still we can clatter and clomp
With a certain majestic pomp
In a wheeling arth-e-ritic sort of stomp.

(They dance)

Tread it lusty, one two three,
I've just twisted my right/left knee.

LUCY: I'm so rusty.

BUZZ: Where's my puff?

LUCY: Oh my legs!

BUZZ: Oh my back!

BUZZ & LUCY: That's enough!

(They collapse)

BUZZ: I needed that. I feel like a new man again.

LUCY: I don't think I ever want to look at another man as long as I live.

BUZZ: I have decided to help Sir Rupert and claim supplementary benefit. I may not be able to dance
anymore but I can still be of service to my country. Lady Lucy, will you join our cause?

LUCY: What do we have to do?

BUZZ: First we need to get the oracle back from Prince Sagramore.

LUCY: But he never lets it out of his sight.

BUZZ: That's right. So the person who steals it must be keen, strong, and preferably so thick he doesn't
have a clue what he's doing. Now, who do we know who fits that description?

(Enter TREVOR SL)

TREVOR: Rarr!

(BUZZ and LUCY jump)

Morning , Buzz. Got a light? Hur hur hur.



(BUZZ and LUCY look at each other)

BUZZ: Trevor, come with us will you? We have a little proposition to put to you...

(BUZZ and LUCY lead TREVOR off SL, one arm each)

(The stage is engulfed by the whirling lights of the oracle. SAGRAMORE enters SR, shaking the snow globe)

SAGRAMORE: Oracle in the snowstorm glass,

Tell me what will come to pass

Is there yet a living thing

Which can stop me being king?

ORACLE: *(Voiceover)* Since you ask, I tell you true

All that is your rightful due.

The only thing that you need dread

Is one who comes in cloak of red.

(Lights stop)

SAGRAMORE: A cloak of red? *(Calls off SL)* Wenches! *(Aside)* I shall do better than that.

(Enter NELL and FLORA SL)

NELL & FLORA: Yes, our lord?

SAGRAMORE: Instruct the guards that during the coronation ceremony, no man may be admitted if he be wearing the smallest spot of red on his outer garments. I am too close to my goal now to take the slightest –

(MARK enters SL in a magnificent flowing red robe, followed by WILHELMINA and LUCY)

MARK: Not late are we? What are you staring at?

SAGRAMORE: Seize him!



(NELL and FLORA grab MARK)

MARK: Oh I say.

WILHELMINA: Prince Sagramore, what is the reason for this treason?

SAGRAMORE: Seize her too. In fact, sling the whole lot of them into the dungeons and don't let them out until the ceremony.

LUCY: Prince Sagramore, if you imprison my queen then I retract my promise. I will not marry you.

SAGRAMORE: Too late. I've decided to marry Colombine after all. You've ruined your figure with all those custard pies. Take them away.

(But before anyone can move enter ELLEN, COLOMBINE and TREVOR SL)

ELLEN: Not so fast, Prince Sagramore. It has recently come to my notice that I am the rightful heir to the throne of Chantecler. I am here to claim my legal regal inheritance.

MARK: Ellen?

WILHELMINA: Eleanor?

ELLEN: Mummy? Daddy!

(But before they can embrace, SAGRAMORE stands between them)

SAGRAMORE: Hold! What proof do you have for this preposterous assertion?

ELLEN: This programme. It's all in there under Ellen stroke Eleanor. Read it and weep, loser. *(Hands programme to SAGRAMORE)* Daddy! Mummy!

MARK & WILHELMINA: Eleanor!

(They embrace. While SAGRAMORE stares disbelievingly at the programme, TREVOR approaches him stealthily from behind to filch the oracle from his pocket)

ELLEN: Isn't this wonderful? We're all together, and that's the only way to be!

COLOMBINE: Any chance I can get a share of the goodies?

ELLEN: Of course. Daddy, Colombine has made a full confession of her sins in falsely incriminating me. You will let her off won't you?

MARK: Gladly. She can hold your train at your coronation.

COLOMBINE: Gee, thanks.



(SAGRAMORE rounds on COLOMBINE, causing TREVOR to miss the pocket containing the oracle)

SAGRAMORE: Colombine? But I was about to ask you to become my little woman. Don't tell me you've gone all nasty and good?

COLOMBINE: Sorry, Saggy. Ruling Chanticler would have been cool, but being your queen would ruin it. I'd rather have a clean conscience than a despicable old swine for a husband.

SAGRAMORE: Treason! You shall suffer for this. Wenches, imprison these two peasants as well.

NELL & FLORA: Our pleasure.

ELLEN: You would imprison your own royal niece?

SAGRAMORE: I would imprison even Terry Wogan if it meant I could sit on the throne of Chanticler. Wenches, carry out your orders.

SAGRAMORE: You are forgetting one thing. We are many and you are few. You cannot overpower us all.

(SAGRAMORE dramatically draws the Supersword, sending TREVOR flying again, just as he'd got close to his pocket again)

SAGRAMORE: With the Supersword, I can do anything.

ALL: (*Ad lib*) That's true actually. Well, he's got a point. Yeah, hadn't thought of that. He's right, you know. Fair enough. Don't ask me why, but he speaketh sooth. (*Etc*)

SAGRAMORE: Away with them.

ELLEN: (*Aside*) Trevor, do something!

(NELL and FLORA herd everybody off SL)

TREVOR: I'm trying, I'm trying.

SAGRAMORE: What was that, dragon? (*Threatening him with the sword*)

TREVOR: Nothing, heh heh heh. I was just thinking the dungeons are going to get pretty crowded if you carry on like this.

SAGRAMORE: I'm sure there is room for a dragon as well. Do you want to see?

TREVOR: No no, I'm fine out here thanks.

SAGRAMORE: Just remember this, dragon. I keep you around only as long as it amuses me. So be very very careful.

TREVOR: Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.



(SAGRAMORE starts to go off)

SAGRAMORE: Oh, I nearly forgot. This oracle needs cleaning. See to it, would you? *(He tosses the oracle to TREVOR and exits SR)*

TREVOR: I'm a hero. Buzz, I've got it! *(Exits SL)*

(LESTER enters SR, wearing an enormous head bandage with an extravagant bow)

LESTER: *(To AUDIENCE)* Seen Colombine anywhere? What? In the dungeons? Leads the life of Riley she does. Meanwhile, in another part of the palace... *(Exits SL)*

(Enter SR RUPERT, followed by NELL and FLORA. NELL carries a bundle, FLORA the basket of logs)

NELL: Aw Rupe, you're not really leaving are you?

FLORA: Come on, Rupe, you can't abandon us in our hour of need.

RUPERT: *Your* hour of need? *You* have become Prince Sagamore's creatures. Now he will soon be in power, you'll do anything he asks. Even throw the royal family into jail.

NELL: Yer, but that's business.

FLORA: A girl's got to live, Rupe.

RUPERT: And a knight's gotta do what a knight's gotta do. No, I must go.

NELL: But no one else wants you to go, it's only Prince Sagamore.

FLORA: *(To AUDIENCE)* You don't want him to go do you? Do you?

AUDIENCE: No.

FLORA: No, course you don't.

RUPERT: That's very kind of you all, but it's too late. If I'm not out of Chanticler by noon, I shall be arrested. So, goodbye.

NELL: Before you go, Rupe, you'd better have this back. *(Gives him a comb)*

RUPERT: What is it?

NELL: Your comb. I stole it once when you weren't looking. Only because I couldn't have you.

FLORA: A comb? Huh! I once stole a pair of his socks. *(She gives them back)* Even your feet stink lovely, Rupe.

NELL: I once stole a whole sweater containing a third of a pint of his sweat.

FLORA: That's nothing, I once took a suit of his armour and had it melted down into a complete new set of springs for my mattress.



NELL: Oh yeah? Well, I once stole his horse and rode it naked round the streets of Coventry, without a saddle.

FLORA: Chickenfeed. I once had his house and its entire contents demolished brick by brick and reassembled in –

RUPERT: *(Interrupting)* Ladies, ladies.

NELL & FLORA: *(Looking round for these 'ladies')* Oh, you mean us.

RUPERT: You must try to be friends in future. If not for your own sakes, then for mine. Do you promise?

NELL & FLORA: We promise, Rupe.

RUPERT: Then I bid you farewell. *(He kisses their hands. They surrender the bundle and the basket)*
Now off you go.

(NELL & FLORA burst into tears and exit SL. RUPERT smiles after them, then takes a final look round)

Farewell, Chanticler. I don't know when I shall return. But return I shall. Until then –

(Enter BUZZ SL at a run)

BUZZ: Sir Rupert! Thank goodness I'm not too late. I've got the spell from the oracle. If you want your arm back, I'm willing to try my best.

RUPERT: Buzz! This is wonderful news.

BUZZ: No time for thanks. Here, drink this. *(Gives RUPERT a potion which he drinks)* It is a magic potion which will put you into a death-like slumber while the incantation does its work. Now, go and lie down in your room and keep your fingers crossed. I'll set things in motion out here.

RUPERT: Thank you, Buzz. And never fear, success or fail, the people of Chanticler won't forget this.
(Exits SR)

BUZZ: And pigs might fly. Anyway, enough of that. To work.

By the pricking of my thumbs

Something magic this way comes.

Make us gasp and make us dizzy,

Izzy-wizzy, let's do something amazing which has no explanation in Newtonian physics!

(Enter NELL and FLORA SL)

NELL: Here, what's going on, Buzz? My sofa's just sprouted an extra arm.



FLORA: And a new hand has just appeared on my clock.

BUZZ: Oh, that's no good. We need more psychic energy to make the spell work.

NELL: You mean you're trying to get Rupert's arm back?

FLORA: We're your girls then, Buzz. We can have one each to hang on to then. *(To AUDIENCE)* Come on everybody, you all want Rupert to get his arm back don't you? Yeah, course you do. Let's have some bods up on stage to help us then.

(VOLUNTEERS, two or three kids from each side, are coaxed up and made to stand facing front, conducting their side of the auditorium. The idea is to get the whole AUDIENCE shouting the spell along with BUZZ. Do it a couple of times, then give the VOLUNTEERS sweets and send them back)

NELL: Do you think it's worked?

BUZZ: We'll only know when Rupert wakes up. If anyone disturbs him while he's under the influence of the slumber-drug, it might ruin the magic. We can only wait and hope.

FLORA: Come on then. We've just got time for a cup of tea before the coronation.

NELL: Tea? At a time like this?

FLORA: There's gin if you prefer?

NELL: No tequila?

(BUZZ, NELL and FLORA exit SL. LESTER enters SR)

LESTER: What the hump was all that row about? Settle down, remember you're out. Right, now let's move on to the final act in our thrilling tale, the throne room of Chanticler, with just five minutes to go before Prince Sagamore is crowned king. All the prisoners have been released to attend the ceremony. And a thoroughly miserable bunch they all look.

(MARK and WILHELMINA enter SR to a rousing fanfare, followed by ELLEN, COLOMBINE, BUZZ and LUCY)

MARK: Not now, Mike *(inset name of MUSICAL DIRECTOR)*. No one's in the mood.

WILHELMINA: You know, of all the things I shall miss when I'm no longer queen, I think I shall miss Mike's *(inset name of MUSICAL DIRECTOR)* fanfares the least.

MARK: My main regret is I never had time to tell Rupert he was vindicated in that matter of the custard pies. How long will we have to wait for this spell of yours to work, Buzz?

BUZZ: I don't know, sire. I left him sleeping over an hour ago.



MARK: Well, let's hope he gets a move on. This crown is due to turn back into a cheap papier mâché prop in five minutes.

ELLEN: Don't worry, Daddy. Rupert promised he'd do his very best to get here on time.

COLOMBINE: Here, Les. Make yourself useful. Go and see if he's awake yet.

LESTER: Right away, dear. *(To AUDIENCE)* This is my technique, to let her think she can order me about. Once we're married of course I'll –

COLOMBINE: Chop chop.

LESTER: Yes, dear. *(He runs out SL)*

WILHELMINA: If you pull this off, Buzz, I wouldn't be surprised if they give you a new wig and a series of programmes on BBC2.

BUZZ: Alas ma'am, it cost me all my magic powers to weave the spell. But my redundancy and subsequent sordid gutter-dwelling poverty will be a small price to pay for the happy future of Chanticler.

MARK: Don't you worry about that, Buzz. We shall always have room at our court for such a good and faithful servant.

WILHELMINA: Even if our court ends up no further away than the gutter over the road.

BUZZ: Thank you, sire and ma'am, I think.

(Enter NELL and FLORA SR)

WILHELMINA: Unfortunately, not *all* our servants have proved themselves so loyal.

(ALL look accusingly at NELL and FLORA)

NELL: What have we done now?

ELLEN: You imprisoned your entire royal family, that's what.

FLORA: Oh yeah, but that was before we found out Rupe had a chance of getting his arm back.

BUZZ: That's right, your royal highness. Their assistance was invaluable, I could never have attempted the magic without them. Or indeed, without all these good people here. *(AUDIENCE)*

MARK: Really? *(To NELL and FLORA)* Then we pardon you right gladly. All who seek to make amends for past errors are given a warm welcome back at court.

NELL & FLORA: Thank you, sire.

MARK: *(To AUDIENCE)* And you're all invited to our next garden party. By the way, what about our big green friend, what's his name?



(TREVOR makes an even more spectacular entrance than his first one)

TREVOR: Rarr!

(ALL jump)

MARK: That's it. Rarr. I do wish he wouldn't keep doing that.

LUCY: Trevor stole the oracle from Prince Sagamore, sire. He too is now completely rehabilitated, albeit minus his fire.

TREVOR: Don't worry about that, Luce. Since my fire went out I've felt a new dragon. All that smoke and ash, murder on the lungs. And if I ever miss it too much I can always nip out for a quick fag.

MARK: *(Hastily covering up)* Yes, and I see the jester is returning with news of Sir Rupert.

(Enter LESTER SL)

Well, Les?

LESTER: Well, sire, you know Sir Rupert always had this stiff upper lip?

MARK: Yes?

LESTER: Well, I'm afraid the rest of him seems to have gone the same way.

MARK: You don't mean – ?

LESTER: Yes, sire.

MARK: You mean – ?

LESTER: As a doornail.

(ELLEN cries. ALL go silent and miserable)

WILHELMINA: Poor sir Rupert.

LUCY: Our final chance gone.

NELL: No more logs.

FLORA: No more tying his pillowcases round our heads and fondling his artefacts.

MARK: I think we should all take a minute to bow our heads in silence and remember our dear departed friend and champion.

(ALL pray. LESTER launches into a loud and plangent melody)



LESTER: *(Sings)* Greensleeves, born to wealth and –

ALL: *(Variously)* Ssh! Put a sock in it. Time and place, man. Killing the vibe, mate. Stop building up your part. *(Etc)*

LESTER: Sorry.

(SAGRAMORE enters SR)

SAGRAMORE: Ah, you're all here. Good.

(ALL boo him loudly)

How dare you? Is this the way to greet your future king?

ELLEN: You may take the throne of Chanticler, uncle, but you will never win the hearts of her people.

Because of you Sir Rupert is no more.

SAGRAMORE: Indeed? Too bad. I was looking forward to hunting him down like a dog.

MARK: Sagramore, I shall never rest until you have been sent packing from the throne of Chanticler, as is your due.

SAGRAMORE: While I have the Supersword, Mark, you will be powerless to stop me. Enough of this. Let the ceremony commence.

(MARK and SAGRAMORE stand at opposite sides of the throne. BUZZ conducts the ceremony)

BUZZ: We are gathered here in the sight of this disappointingly-small-for-a-Friday-night audience to join this prince and this throne in holy deadlock. Do you, Mark, hereby bequeath and relinquish all your kingly duties to your successor Sagramore?

MARK: I do, though it choke me.

(BUZZ divests him of his crown)

BUZZ: And do you, Sagramore, solemnly swear to carry out all the ceremonies, factory visits, royal walkabouts and looking down your nose at the hoi polloi your new title requires of you?

SAGRAMORE: I do, with the utmost relish.

BUZZ: *(Holding the crown over SAGAMORE's head)* If there be any here who can bring just cause or impediment as to why this despicable regal swine should not be granted royal office, let them speak now or forever hold their peace.



(ALL take a single concerted step forward. SAGRAMORE half draws the Supersword and glares round. ALL take a single step back into line with silence and guilty shufflings, whistling, looking innocently up at the ceiling, etc)

Then, Prince Sagamore, with the greatest reluctance and overcoming my deepest misgivings, I, Buzzard the wizard, hereby crown you king of –

RUPERT: *(Off)* Hold!

(ALL gasp as a FIGURE shrouded in a black cloak and hood suddenly enters – from the auditorium if possible. It is of course RUPERT, though try to conceal this for as long as possible)

SAGRAMORE: Who dares challenge us in our hour of glory?

RUPERT: I do, prince. You are a blackguard and a scoundrel –

COLOMBINE: And a despicable appropriate-adjective swine.

RUPERT: – yes, that too, and thereby totally unworthy of the glittering throne of Chanticler.

SAGRAMORE: And who are you, stranger? I charge you expose yourself.

(All the WOMEN shriek with horror and cover their mouths while all the MEN groan with disgust and cover their eyes. RUPERT throws off the hood and cloak, which is lined with dazzling red. His arm is returned)

RUPERT: I am Sir Rupert the Valiant, son of Greensleeves!

(ALL gasp then cheer and clap)

SAGRAMORE: You!

TREVOR: Well, who'd have thought it?

COLOMBINE: Everybody, you fool. It's a pantomime.

ELLEN: *(Rushing to him)* Oh Rupert! You came back. I knew you would.

(RUPERT uses his restored arm to bend her over backwards and give her a hearty kiss. ALL go 'Awww', 'Get in there, my son', 'Fill your boots' etc. Eventually he lets her up)

RUPERT: Now stand aside, my lady, I have business with Prince Sagamore.



SAGRAMORE: That red cloak! You rotten cheat, you turned your cloak inside out to get past the guards!

RUPERT: A small deception but a necessary one, prince. Now, shall we to't? *(Draws sword)*

SAGRAMORE: With pleasure, log-carrier, though your puny weapon cannot hope to prevail against the might of the Supersword. *(He brandishes it)*

RUPERT: If I may beg a final boon of the king, as is my right by the laws of combat, it won't have to.

MARK: And I am still king for another ten seconds. What is your request, Sir Rupert?

RUPERT: Make me your champion again, sire, and I vow I shall return you your throne intact.

MARK: Gladly, Sir Rupert, I hereby name you –

SAGRAMORE: No! *(He leaps towards RUPERT, sword raised)*

MARK: – champion of the throne of Chanticler!

(The Supersword's light dies in SAGRAMORE's hands He stares at it in horror)

RUPERT: Now we are equal, prince. The Supersword doesn't work against the king's champion. Will you yield, or shall I be forced to skewer your innards to the wall?

(SAGRAMORE hesitates. RUPERT offers his chest)

Come on, punk. Make my day.

(SAGRAMORE pokes RUPERT feebly with the Supersword to no effect. He sighs)

SAGRAMORE: I yield.

(ALL cheer, chant 'Ea-say, ea-say' etc. RUPERT takes the Supersword. It glows brightly once more. He is mobbed by ELLEN, NELL and FLORA. ELLEN indignantly fights off the other two)

ELLEN: Do you mind?

MARK: Sir Rupert, you have restored peace and happiness to Chanticler by the heroic deployment of two sneaky tricks. What prize to do you claim?

NELL & FLORA: Me, me!

RUPERT: I can claim no greater joy, sire, than the hand of your fair daughter in marriage.

MARK: We grant it willingly.

(ALL cheer. NELL and FLORA boo)



RUPERT: With Nell and Flora as our serving wenches.

MARK: Granted.

(NELL and FLORA cheer)

FLORA: I bags his sweaters!

NELL: I'll have his socks!

RUPERT: And an income of a thousand gold pieces a year.

MARK: Don't push your luck.

RUPERT: Just a little heroic humour there, sire.

WILHELMINA: Oh what a lovely ending. Everyone gets what they want.

SAGRAMORE: I don't.

ALL: Tough!

ELLEN: Wait. Uncle Sagamore, as your future queen I give you a choice – reform your wicked ways, or be banished from Chanticler forever. Which do you choose?

SAGRAMORE: Well, seeing this is a panto and I'm outnumbered eleven to one, I promise I'll try and be good. (*He cheers*)

ALL: Bo-ring.

SAGRAMORE: Oh, charming.

MARK: I don't know, Sagamore turning good, peace in our time, no more magic. This can only mean one thing.

ALL: What's that?

MARK: The end of swords and sorcery.

ALL: That sounds like the cue for a song.

MARK: Does it? Oh, sorry.

ALL: (*Singing*) In Chanticler our revels now have ended.

Goodwill and sweet catharsis fill the air.

In fact it all came out as we intended

In Chanticler.

MARK & WILHELMINA: We've kept our throne and found our long-lost daughter.

ELLEN: Not only that, you've gained a son and heir.

RUPERT: I'll still enjoy the odd heroic slaughter.

ALL: In Chanticler.

Chanticler! Chanticler!



NELL & FLORA: Our spirits never more shall droop.

ALL: For in Chanticler! Chanticler!

NELL & FLORA: We'll both be serving under Rupe.

LUCY: I feel so happy, I could dance a rumba.

BUZZ: I'll gladly sit and watch from my bathchair.

LESTER & COLOMBINE: (*Aside*) She'll/He'll never know a moment's peaceful slumber.

ALL: In Chanticler.

Chanticler! Chanticler!

TREVOR: I'll never need another smoke.

ALL: While in Chanticler! Chanticler!

SAGRAMORE: I'll have my vengeance! (*ALL glare at him*) Just a joke!

ALL: The lights are fading on our tinsel pageant.

We've no more songs to sing or laughs to share.

This is the last you'll see

Of swords and sorcery,

So happy new year to you and farewell from Chanticler!

THE END

