

THE WISE PEASANT GIRL

by Donna Spector

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Cast Of Characters

NARRATOR

KING ALEXANDER

SOPHIA, a peasant girl

GUARD

SERVANT(S)

HORSEMAN

ANIMALS

VILLAGER(S)

GARDENER

Time And Place

Another time in a magic kingdom.

Notes

The NARRATOR, GUARD, SERVANT, ANIMALS and VILLAGER may be played by female actors.

Music could be played at appropriate points throughout the play, which was originally written as a musical fairy tale in collaboration with a composer. Please contact YouthPLAYS for more information.

Another time in a magic kingdom.
INTRO MUSIC.

NARRATOR

Once upon a time... as long ago as yesterday and as far away as tomorrow, there lived a young king named Alexander in a castle more silver than the moon and more golden than the sun.

The castle floors were polished marble, and the ceilings were brilliant paintings of the people who live in the night sky. Round about the castle, as far as the king could see, were beautiful gardens and trees with fruit that gleamed like jewels.

The king had horsemen, and footmen, cooks to prepare magnificent banquets which the king ate and drank all by himself at a huge table with candles that glimmered in his crystal glasses.

He had servants to clean, scrub, polish and pick up anything before it could even think of falling.

SERVANT

(Carries a basket of debris.)

Whew! There's a lot of cleaning to do in this castle.

NARRATOR

And the king himself was handsome as the dawn and contented as the noonday sun.

KING

I have such a wonderful life!

NARRATOR

Everyone knew about the king, but no one had ever seen him, because his splendid castle with its flowers and orchards was surrounded by a stone wall so high no one could get even the smallest glimpse of what lay inside. The great bronze gates were always locked, because the king never ventured out into the world beyond his own domain.

For a long time the king was happy living alone: he read books, listened to music, walked in his garden and, in the evenings, he climbed into his huge bed and played chess or checkers with himself until he fell asleep. But gradually the king grew restless; he was tired of his books and music, tired of always winning at chess or checkers.

KING

I need something new. But what could it be? I have everything.

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NARRATOR

One April morning the king was awakened by two doves cooing their love songs on a branch by his window. He opened his shutters, rested his sleepy head on the sill and watched the doves fluttering back and forth through the leaves.

KING

Why are they so joyful? They're only silly birds. What do they know of the world?

NARRATOR

He climbed down from his giant bed and looked at his face in the mirror. It was a handsome face, yes, but there were shadows in his eyes he had never noticed before.

KING

I look unhappy. But that's impossible! I'm the king. What more could I possibly want?

NARRATOR

He walked through his vast rooms and saw reflections of a sad king in many mirrors, always himself, walking only with himself.

KING

I'm restless. I need something. Or someone. Yes, that's it! I need someone walking beside me, someone to sit at my table and share my fine food! I need someone to talk to, because I'm...bored with myself. Blast it! I hate to admit this, but I'm...rather lonely.

NARRATOR

So the king called to his guards.

KING

Unlock the gates! Let the people in. Let them bring me messages and tell me stories. I wish to hear someone other than myself!

NARRATOR

And so the great gates on their great rusty hinges swung open with a noise so loud the people for miles around leaped out of their beds and pressed their hands over their ears.

GUARD

(Enters, beating a drum.)

The king wishes the people to enter his castle! Come and tell the king stories.

NARRATOR

But no one came, for they were all afraid to walk through the great gates that had been locked longer than they could remember.

GUARD

The king COMMANDS people to enter his gates and tell him stories!

NARRATOR

But still no one came, and the shadows in the king's eyes grew darker.

(Pause)

One day in June, a day so hot even the sunflowers hid their heads from the sun, the king's servants saw a tiny figure trudging up the road to the gates of the castle.

SERVANT

Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Someone is coming! Someone is finally coming!"

NARRATOR

The king leaped down from his bed where he had been moping for days.

KING

Who is it?

SERVANT

We can't tell yet, but it is definitely someone.

NARRATOR

The king brushed his hair and threw on a fine embroidered robe faster than his servants could help him, raced into his reception room and seated himself on his golden throne.

KING

Lights! Let there be LIGHT!

NARRATOR

And suddenly the room was ablaze with lights shimmering from hundreds of crystal chandeliers. His servants unrolled the red carpet leading to his throne and opened the great silver doors. The king waited impatiently for his unknown visitor to appear in the doorway.

And when the visitor did appear, the king saw a young peasant girl, barefoot, in a simple sundress. Her hair, dark as the earth after rain, hung down to her waist.

SOPHIA enters.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

The king was disappointed. He had expected someone more important, a wise old man perhaps, with a long gray beard, not a girl who must know less of the world than he did. What stories could she tell? The king rested his weary head against his golden throne and sulked.

NARRATOR (CONT'D)

But as the girl approached, the king saw something astonishing. She was not a girl. She was a flower: a field lily, yellow, orange and red. He looked closer. No, she was not that at all. She was an iris, a hyacinth, a crimson musk flower.

KING

Who are you, that you change shape before my eyes? Are you a shadow-witch?

NARRATOR

She knelt at his feet and bowed her head.

SOPHIA

I am a girl, your Majesty. I live in a village not far from your castle, and I have come to tell you stories.

KING

Very well. But they had better be good ones.

NARRATOR

The girl raised her head. Her eyes were greener than the ocean, which the king had only seen in picture books.

SOPHIA

My stories will interest you. May I sit here on this cushion by your feet?

KING

All right. You may.

SOPHIA

Once upon a time, there was a great kingdom ruled by a handsome king who lived alone in a magnificent castle surrounded by a high wall.

KING

This story sounds familiar.

SOPHIA

"But wait, Your Majesty," the girl said. "The king knew nothing of his kingdom, for he never ventured outside his walled domain. And his kingdom was beset with many problems."

KING

Is this an unpleasant story?

SOPHIA

Like all good stories, it has its dark moments, in order to reveal the light.

KING

Go ahead then. But get to the light.

SOPHIA

All in good time. Now in this kingdom there were many fine roads. But they all ran in circles, so no one could ever get anywhere.

KING

That's bad.

SOPHIA

Yes, and there's more. The houses in this kingdom were quite sturdy. But they had no doors. The people had to climb in and out of the windows.

KING

But that's ridiculous!

SOPHIA

But, you see, the people believed doors were bad luck, and if anyone made a door in his house, he would be cursed by evil spirits.

KING

How unscientific.

SOPHIA

Yes, but there it is. And the animals in that kingdom were most confused. The dogs meowed, the cats barked, the horses chirped like birds, and the birds brayed like donkeys.

KING

Good heavens!

SOPHIA

And every other summer all the wells ran dry, the crops faded and withered before the harvest was ripe, and the people were very hungry and thirsty.

KING

Oh, the poor people!

SOPHIA

But worst of all, the people were filled with fear, greed and envy. Everyone wanted what he could not have: his neighbor's house and land. And each person knew at night his neighbor was lying awake, planning to steal what he had.

KING

But that's terrible! Where was this place?

SOPHIA

It is here, your Majesty. It is now. I have told you the story of your own kingdom.

KING

Impossible! Everything works in my kingdom. My people are good and happy.

SOPHIA

How would you know, your Majesty? You have never seen your kingdom.

KING

Leave my castle at once! I will listen to no more lies!

SOPHIA

This is the truth.

NARRATOR

And she walked proudly out of the room. For many nights the king was so angry he could not sleep.

KING

That horrible girl! How could she presume to tell me about MY kingdom? She's just a peasant, she knows nothing. I am the KING! I know everything! Well, I know MOST things. CERTAIN things. For instance, I... Oh, drat! She couldn't be right. But...how would I know? I suppose I'll have to find out.

NARRATOR

The king waited till everyone was sleeping. Then he climbed out of bed, snuck down to the laundry room and found some old dirty clothes. He dressed himself like a peasant, tiptoed out of his castle and climbed over his wall. The moon was bright as the king walked along the road to the first village.

KING

I'll just go down and check things out. Let's see. I'll take this right turn. Hmmm. Perhaps I should take this left turn. I don't seem to be getting anywhere. Good heavens, I'm back where I was. This road runs in circles!

NARRATOR

In order to reach the village, the king had to leave the road and cross a field where the weeds were as high as his elbows.

KING

Well, that girl was right about the roads. But I'm sure that's all.

NARRATOR

Finally, he arrived at a small, dimly-lit cottage.

KING

I'll knock at the door and meet some of my people. Now, let's see. The door should be...here? No, here?

NARRATOR

But there was no door. He went from one cottage to the next, and indeed, there were no doors at all.

KING

Very peculiar. That blasted girl was right again!

NARRATOR

In the center of the village many dogs were sleeping. When they heard the king approach, they began to meow ferociously.

ANIMALS

Meow, meow!

KING

Stop that!

NARRATOR

A calico cat climbed out of a window and barked at him.

ANIMAL

Bark, bark, bark!

KING

No!

NARRATOR

The king yelled so loudly he woke up the birds in the trees, and they brayed like a herd of donkeys.

ANIMALS

Bray, bray, bray!

KING

This can't be happening. I need a drink.

NARRATOR

A villager stuck his head out of a window.

VILLAGER

What are you doing here?!

KING

I'm thirsty. Could you please give me some water?

VILLAGER

You fool! There is no water!

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