

IN THE VILLAGE OF THE BROTHERS GRIMM

By Claudia Haas

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

Cast size of 7-43 or any combination in-between.

For 43: 15f, 9m, 20 m or f

For 7: 3m, 4f

NARRATORS, scatter throughout the cast

JORINDA AND JORINGEL

JORINDA (f), fair, playful maiden

JORINGEL (m), almost-a-hero young man

JORINDA'S MOTHER (f), a protective parent

ELVINA (f), witch, crafty, hungry, wicked

YOHNA (m or f), beggar

ONILDE (m or f), shepherd, but not comfortable with sheep

LIZILIA (f), good enchantress

CHILDER (m or f)

THE SHREDS

MALINDA (f), a thrifty, virtuous servant

OLGA (f), a proud, lazy maiden

ABEL (m), a simple man

CLEVER ALICE

ALICE (f), too clever for her own good

HANS (m), proud father of Alice

ELSA (f), scattered, loving mother of Alice

BRUNHILDA (f), nose-to-grindstone servant to Alice's family

JOHAN (m), Alice's no-nonsense suitor

THE FOX AND THE GEESE

FOX (m or f), cunning - maybe

SILLY GOOSE (m or f)

SIMPLE GOOSE (m or f)

SERIOSO GOOSE (m or f)

SONOROUS GOOSE (m or f)

SOCIAL GOOSE (m or f)

SOULFUL GOOSE (m or f)

BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR

WOODY (m), an honest woodsman

GERTRUDE (f), his often shrill wife

TIMBERLY (m or f), a tree sprite with just a touch of mafioso

STAR DOLLARS

LIESL (f), young girl with goodness in her heart

ALDER (m or f), upstanding citizen

JESSUP (m or f), famished and elderly and frail

KARL (m), in tatters

MALEEN (m/f) shoeless

THE GOLDEN GOOSE

QUEEN GOOD (f), good queen

CRYING PRINCESS ESMERELDA (f), very depressed princess

GRETCHEN (f), mother of three children

NEELY (m or f), good-looking, conceited eldest sibling

ELFIN (m or f), adventuresome middle sibling

SIMPLETON (m), simple

ODD PERSON (m or f), odd person

ANNIKA (f), silly farmer's daughter

ANNALIESE (f), another silly farmer's daughter

PARSON BRAUN (m or f), upstanding head of the local church

SEXTON WHITE (m or f), works for Parson Braun

The Golden Key

FRITZ (m), a young boy

CAST OF 7

ACTOR 1 (female), Jorinda's Mother, Olga, Sonorous Goose, Jessup, Elfin, Annaliese

ACTOR 2 (female), Jorinda, Alice, Silly Goose, Gertrude, Maleen, Queen Good

ACTOR 3 (male), Joringel, Abel, Simple Goose, Woody, Neely, Parson Braun

ACTOR 4 (female), Elvina, Brunhilde, Serioso Goose, Liesl, Gretchen, Annika

ACTOR 5 (male), Onilde, Hans, Social Goose, Karl, Odd Person, Sexton White

ACTOR 6 (female), Yohna, Lizilia, Malinda, Elsa, Soulful Goose, Ina, Crying Princess Esmerelda

ACTOR 7 (male), Childer, Fox, Johan, Timberly, Alder, Simpleton, Fritz

CAST of 20 (9F, 7M, 4 M OR F)

Scatter NARRATORS according to your cast.

1. (f) JORINDA, BRUNHILDA
2. (m) JORINGEL, NEELY
3. (f) ELVINA, GERTRUDE
4. (f) MALINDA, SIMPLE GOOSE
5. (m) HANS, KARL
6. (f) OLGA, ANNIKA

7. (f) CLEVER ALICE, ANNALIESE
8. (m) JOHAN, ABEL
9. (m) WOODY, PARSON BRAUN
10. (f) LIZIELA, LIESL
11. (m) SOCIAL GOOSE, SIMPLETON
12. (m or f) ONILDE, ODD PERSON
13. (m) CHILDER, FOX, FRITZ
14. (m or f) JESSUP, QUEEN/KING GOOD
15. (f) SOULFUL GOOSE, CRYING PRINCESS ESMERELDA
16. (f) YOHNA, GRETCHEN
17. (m or f) SONOROUOS GOOSE, ALDER
18. (m or f) SILLY GOOSE, ELFIN
19. (m) SEXTON WHITE, TIMBERLY
20. (f) JORINDA'S MOTHER, ELSA, SERIOSO GOOSE

Design

In theatre, if you hang up a round yellow cardboard, it is the sun. If the actors believe it is the sun, so will the audience. Use costume pieces (capas, vests, crowns) but keep entire full costumes to a minimum. If using a small cast, allow the actor to become the different characters by adding a bonnet or a vest or a cape. Let the very act of tying a sash or adding a crown help transform the actor into the new character. If using a large cast, they may change add or subtract costume pieces behind the scenes so it is not too busy but there are places in the script where they should become the character in full view of the audience.

You may make it as simple or as complicated as is your wish. The props can be lined up on shelves in the villager's home (Clever Alice's and Olga's and Simpleton's). Or the Narrators from different stories can hand them out. All the stories are told from the villager's point of view - much as they may have recounted them two hundred years ago.

If using a theatre, three levels can serve as the different homes and the palace. Four chairs and a small table are all you need. They will suffice for all the indoor stories. If desired, a barrel can be placed for Clever Alice and stay as a set piece for the

Simpleton's home. The stage floor can be Elvina's woods, Timberly's tree, the setting for The Fox and the Geese, Liesl's woods, the journey for Simpleton, and for the Golden Key.

At Rise there are three NARRATORS to introduce the play. One will stay as JORINDA'S MOTHER and the other two will become characters in the first story. Your production should assign Narrator lines in alternating fashion as appropriate.

NARRATOR

There once was a time-

NARRATOR

When wishing was having-

NARRATOR

When witches conjured spells-

NARRATOR

And dragons filled the skies.

NARRATOR

There once was a time-

NARRATOR

Of enchantment and charms-

NARRATORS

Of heroes, fair maidens, and sillies who dwelled-

NARRATOR

In a land faraway-

NARRATOR

In the seasons we call-

NARRATOR

Once upon a time.

NARRATOR/JORINDA'S MOTHER

Once in a small cottage in the Village of the Brothers Grimm there lived-

JORINGEL enters.

JORINGEL

...and still lives...

JORINDA'S MOTHER

A young peasant boy...

JORINGEL

A *brave and handsome* peasant boy called Joringel and his best friend...Jorinda.

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JORINDA enters. Narrator puts on an apron and a cap.

JORINDA
Who was beautiful...

JORINGEL
Naturally.

JORINDA
And pure of heart...

JORINGEL
But of course.

JORINDA
And brave.

JORINGEL
Wait! I am the brave one-

JORINDA
We both are.

JORINGEL
If you say so.

JORINDA
I do.

JORINGEL
Shall we walk through the woods before the sun goes down?
And see what we shall see?

JORINDA
I would love to. Mama! Joringel has come for a visit.

JORINDA'S MOTHER
I see.

JORINDA
We would like to take a stroll in the woods before it gets dark.

JORINDA'S MOTHER
Are the cows milked?

JORINDA
Yes.

JORINDA'S MOTHER
Is the soup simmering? Is the floor swept?

JORINDA

All is done.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

You may go. But take care-

JORINDA

I know - the witch!

JORINDA'S MOTHER

Yes, the witch!

All freeze as the lights dim. A
hooting owl may be heard. We spy
ELVINA - a witch for the ages.
Yellow-eyed, craggy and evil.

ELVINA

To wit...to woo...I search for you...
Entrap young maidens and cook them in brew.
To wit, to woo...I can't love, 'tis true...
If I cannot marry then neither can you!
And Elvina is gone - as suddenly as she came.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

Stay clear of her castle...

JORINDA

I know that, Mama! You *always* warn me.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

She traps young maidens and turns them into birds and then
cooks them!

JORINDA

I'm not a ninny!

JORINDA'S MOTHER

That is good!

JORINDA

Come on, Joringel! Try and catch me!

She runs off.

JORINGEL

No fair! You caught me off guard!

Joringel runs off.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

Keep her safe, Joringel!

But they are gone.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

Keep her safe.

Jorinda's Mother could exit as the lights change. It is darker, more menacing - we are now in the woods. Elvina enters with a basket.

ELVINA

To wit, to woo, I turn dreams askew
I conjure, enchant, I moo, I mew
To wit, to woo - these woods are taboo
Do not tarry, do not linger or you'll sing in my stew.

Elvina exits as Jorinda appears followed by Joringel. She is now walking. Joringel touches her and runs. They might be on stage, but they could also be in the audience.

JORINGEL

Tag! Now try and catch me!

JORINDA

Joringel! Joringel! Wait!

JORINGEL

It's a trick. You just want to catch me.

JORINDA

If you stop and look you will see we are lost.

JORINGEL

Don't be a goose! There's the clearing with the three yew trees just up ahead.

JORINDA

Where?

JORINGEL

There... No - there - no - uh oh.

JORINDA

We passed the clearing-

JORINGEL

Where?

JORINDA
There - no - there - NO! ...uh oh.

JORINGEL
We just need to walk...backwards. And then we will be home.

JORINDA
Backwards left or backwards right?

JORINGEL
Backwards - straight.

JORINDA
I can't. There's a tree. If I move backwards straight, I run into the tree.

JORINGEL
Then move *around the tree!*

JORINDA
Around the tree - right? Or around the tree - left?

JORINGEL
It doesn't matter!

JORINDA
Of course it matters. If we are to walk backwards home we must know if we came right of the tree or left!

JORINGEL
We came from behind it!

JORINDA
Don't be angry!

JORINGEL
I'm not angry!

JORINDA
Yes, you are. You're being horrid and I'm not going to stay with you anymore!

Jorinda runs away.

JORINGEL
I'm not going to chase you this time. Jorinda! JORINDA!
I'M NOT TALKING TO YOU!

JORINDA'S MOTHER
(Appearing or we just hear a voice)
Keep her safe, Joringel!

Jorinda runs into Elvina. The witch holds out her arms as bat wings and turns her around and in a flash - they are gone. Or Jorinda may yell from offstage.

JORINDA

Joringel!

JORINGEL

Jorinda? JORINDA!

Jorinda is gone. As Joringel searches, Elvina appears and lifts up a wand and turns him to stone. She may also have a basket with a bird in it.

ELVINA

To wit, to woo, no hero are you,
Your love is a bird who quietly coos.
To wit to woo, I am perfect, et tu?
You will stay still as stone till the morn's foggy dew.

Elvina exits. Jorinda's Mother enters.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

The night slowly passed. Joringel could not move a muscle. His mind was filled with dreams of rescue. Of heroics. But he couldn't move. Not even a twitch. Just before daybreak, he dreamed of Jorinda. And heard her voice.

JORINDA'S VOICE

In years that will follow, whither you shall roam,
Dream of me, think on me, remember me, Joringel, hear my plea.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

As the sun rose, the spell was broken.

JORINGEL

Jorinda! I must rescue her! But how? I am young. I know nothing of enchantment. Nothing of heroics. Without such knowledge, I could make matters worse. I must go home and study and learn. And then return to rescue Jorinda. Yes. Go home.

JORINDA'S MOTHER

Keep her safe, Joringel. Keep her safe.

JORINGEL

No! Don't go home. But go where? And do what? I am not ready to make my way in the world. I don't know what I could be!

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

Just then - a beggar entered.

A beggar, YOHNA, enters.

YOHNA

Good day, kind sir!

JORINGEL

Can it be? Were you sent here to help me?

YOHNA

Do you have a coin to spare? Some food?

JORINGEL

I am sorry. I have no coins. No food.

YOHNA

Oh dear. You have nothing. Like me. I will tell you what you must do.

JORINGEL

All help is gratefully received.

YOHNA

As a person who has no coins - like you, no food - like you and only the clothes on my back - like you, there is only one solution. You must beg - like me.

JORINGEL

I never dreamed of growing up to become a beggar.

YOHNA

No one does, sir. But it happens. Good day.

Yohna exits.

JORINGEL

Yes - good day. Oh dear. Maybe I am not fit to do anything but beg.

SOUNDS of SHEEP are heard.

JORINGEL

There must be a pasture nearby. I shall follow the sounds and make my way out of the woods. And as he does so as the sounds of sheep increase.

Suddenly a young shepherd,
ONILDE, comes rushing towards
him.

ONILDE
Are they there? Do you see them? Is anyone following me?

JORINGEL
I don't see anyone.

ONILDE
Thank goodness! You don't know what it's been like for me -
day after - day after - they're there! THEY'RE THERE!

JORINGEL
Who? What? Where?

ONILDE
THE SHEEP! *They found me!*

JORINGEL
But - they're just - sheep!

SOUNDS of SHEEP are heard.

ONILDE
I hate that sound! It's all I hear all day and now - when I
go to sleep - they're in my dreams and I count them - one by
one as they bleat and baa! It's a horrible existence. Do me
a favor and I'll give you everything I have!

JORINGEL
What do you have?

ONILDE
Nothing.

JORINGEL
Oh.

SOUNDS of SHEEP are heard.

ONILDE
But I'm desperate - you must get those sheep away from me.
Shoo them away! Get them out of my sight! I am begging you!

JORINGEL
Calm down. Of course I'll help you. I'll bring them to
their owner. Who tends them?

ONILDE
I tend them! I'm their shepherd!

JORINGEL

And you don't want them?

ONILDE

No! I want to seek my fortune in the city and get away from these sheep!

JORINGEL

Aren't you a little young to be seeking your future?

ONILDE

It's now or never. I don't care for a life - of sheep.

JORINGEL

I will tend your flock!

ONILDE

Here! Take this - before you change your mind. Thank you!

Onilde hands Joringel a shepherd's staff or hook and exits.

JORINGEL

Wait! WAIT!

ONILDE

I knew you'd change your mind!

JORINGEL

No - just tell me where the sheep reside.

ONILDE

Down past the curvature of trees you will find a hill. At the bottom of the hill is a farmhouse. You can't miss it. It's the only one!

Onilde exits, and Joringel hears the sheep "baa."

JORINGEL

Coming!

Joringel exits.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

And so Joringel became a shepherd. Day in and day out, he herded the sheep to pasture. Day in and day out, he thought of how to rescue Jorinda. Days turned into weeks and the weeks-

Joringel enters.

JORINGEL

Turned into months. I'm a coward! Afraid of what? A silly witch! A ridiculous, childish, foolish inane-

Elvina is heard or seen elsewhere.

ELVINA

To wit, to woo, you'll turn to stone
You'll suffer such ills that man's never known.
To wit, too woo, when with you I am through,
I shall simmer Jorinda in a savory brew!

JORINGEL

-Really scary witch.

JORINDA'S VOICE

Dream of me, think on me, remember me, Joringel, hear my plea.

JORINGEL

I must rescue her!

ELVINA

You'll turn to stone-

JORINDA'S VOICE

Dream of me-

ELVINA

You'll suffer such ills-

JORINDA'S VOICE

Think on me -

ELVINA

That man has never known!

JORINDA'S VOICE

Remember me, Joringel, hear my plea!

All is silent as Elvina leaves.

JORINGEL

I don't know what to do!

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

And so faced with an impossible problem with no quick answer, he did what all men of good sense are wont to do: he took a nap.

Joringel does so.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

And dreamed of the good Enchantress Lizilia.

There is a light change and the stage is bathed in goodness. A faraway choir could be heard. LIZILIA enters with CHILDER - a young innocent. Childer has the Olivia Rose.

LIZILIA

Follow the scent of an Olivia Rose. Go to the center where a young child sits. Holding a flower that was snatched from the sky. The flower's for you; it will keep you from harm. Hold it high as you rescue Jorinda. Hold it high, it's charmed.

Lizilia exits as the stage returns to normal.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

A few hours later, Joringel awoke.

JORINGEL

I had the most comforting dream. Magical, really. I wonder if it could be true. There was an enchantress. And a child with a charmed rose. Do you smell that scent? It is the Olivia Rose. I must be near. And so I am. For there sits the child. With the star-flower in his hand. The flower is meant for me. That's what I dreamt. That's what the Enchantress said.

Joringel moves in to take it and stops.

JORINGEL

I am too bold. I shouldn't snatch a flower from a child's hand. But it's mine.

Joringel reaches for the flower. Then stops.

JORINGEL

But - it's rude. Taking flowers from a child. Maybe I should speak to him - ask him -

Childer slowly turns to Joringel and lifts the flower to him.

CHILDER

For you, kind sir.

Joringel takes the flower.

JORINGEL
Thank you. Now what?

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR
To the witch!

CHILDER
To the witch!

JORINGEL
To the witch! I must - go!

Joringel exits, as does Childer.
The lights change, and Elvina
enters with a basket containing a
bird. BIRD SOUNDS are heard.

ELVINA
To wit, too woo, I stir a bird brew, I feast on young maidens
and mix them with roux.

Bird sounds are heard as Joringel
enters and Elvina hides.

JORINGEL
Birds! But which is Jorinda? Can I save them all? Jorinda?
JORINDA!

ELVINA
To wit, to woo, you fool-dim-brained ewe, I'll tie you to
Jorinda; you'll be my ragu.

Elvina lifts her arms to cast a
spell. Joringel cringes and
holds up the flower.

JORINGEL
I hope this works!

ELVINA
To wit, to woo, to wit, TO WOOOOOO!

THUNDER CRASHES, there is a
blackout and all is silent.

There could be a soft
underscoring of music in the
blackout. The lights slowly rise
and we find Joringel and Jorinda
on stage.

JORINGEL
Jorinda!

JORINDA

I knew you'd come.

Jorinda runs to embrace Joringel
and suddenly stops.

JORINDA

Although, it took longer than I thought. What have you been
doing?

SHEEP SOUNDS are heard.

JORINGEL

I need to tell you about the sheep.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

All Elvina's birds became young maidens again and Elvina
turned to dust.

MALINDA enters.

JORINDA'S MOTHER/NARRATOR

As for Jorinda and Joringel, they lived happily for many
years and if I am not mistaken are happy still.

Jorinda's Mother exits after
greeting Malinda.

MALINDA

Indeed they are for I know them well. I, too dwell merrily
in the same Village of the Brothers Grimm. Where I was a
servant to a very proud but lazy woman.

OLGA, the "Proud Woman," enters
with a dress and pieces of
fabric.

OLGA

I am Olga, the - proud - woman. I spend my days sewing
beautiful weaves of cloth to show off my uncommon beauty.

She sews.

OLGA

Oh bother there's a knot.

She throws it on the floor.
Malinda fetches it.

OLGA

Malinda, is the cottage clean?

MALINDA

Yes, it sparkles.

OLGA

Oh no! This fabric has a tear.

She throws it over the shoulder
and Malinda fetches it.

OLGA

Are my garments washed?

MALINDA

They are drying in the sun.

OLGA

A wrinkle! Will nothing go right today?

She again throws it on the floor
and naturally Malinda picks it
up.

OLGA

Is dinner prepared?

MALINDA

The bread is rising.

OLGA

Oh, these chores have exhausted me. I can sew no more. I
must rest. This fabric is not cooperating. I cannot use
this cloth!

And she throws the piece of cloth
on the floor.

MALINDA

Begging your pardon, Miss Olga - but may I keep these - for
my own use?

OLGA

Whatever will you do with them? They are ruined!

MALINDA

Why, I have fashioned-

She shows off a cape or a vest or
a dress which is patchworked.

MALINDA

This!

OLGA

Oh! It is interesting to be sure. Now take your leave, for
the day's work has tired me.

Malinda becomes the Narrator as
Olga naps in her chair.

MALINDA

Olga had a suitor. A handsome, young man named Abel. They were betrothed and would be married in two days time. I fancied him - but it was not to be.

ABEL enters.

ABEL

Abel is a good name. It shows steadfastness, reliability and prudence. And I had the good sense to fall in love with Olga - a tireless worker.

Olga - sleeps.

MALINDA

Miss Olga! Someone to see you - it's you-know-who!

OLGA

Wait one minute to show him in.

Olga poses as if hard at work.

MALINDA

Right this way, Mr. Abel.

OLGA

Dear Abel, I did not expect you till this evening.

ABEL

I was out in the fields early, tended my crops and thought I would surprise you. I hope - it is a happy surprise.

OLGA

Of course. You just caught me - hard at work I'm afraid. Sewing the wedding dress.

ABEL

I shall not interrupt you then. I appreciate your work ethic. In just two more days, we shall be married and you will keep a home for me.

OLGA

I look forward to it.

Malinda meanwhile comes through with a broom - sweeping and dancing - all happiness and light.

OLGA

Silly girl. Look how she dances about. Pathetically dressed in my shreds.

ABEL

Whatever do you mean - dear Olga?

OLGA

Her clothing - look at it - devised from my shreds of threads that I tossed.

ABEL

Did she truly devise that garment from leftover pieces of fabric?

OLGA

Truer words were never spoken.

ABEL

Why then, I have been mistaken. For she is obviously the more industrious maid and will make a better wife. Young maiden, please come here!

MALINDA

Yes, kind sir.

ABEL

Will you marry me?

MALINDA

Well, I...but...you see... Yes!

ABEL

I am so very pleased. And young maiden, please tell me one more thing.

MALINDA

If I can, sir.

ABEL

What, pray tell, is your name?

MALINDA (AS NARRATOR)

And they exchanged names and shortly after that vows. And lived most happily in the Village of Grimm.

They exit as CLEVER ALICE enters.

NARRATOR (CLEVER ALICE)

The Village of Grimm could be a merry place. Even with hardship, strife, sickness, death, poverty, sadness, adversity, calamity and evil enchantments around each corner, we villagers forged on.

(MORE)

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NARRATOR (CLEVER ALICE) (CONT'D)
 I know this because I know so many things. In fact, I know so very many things that I was known in the Village as Clever Alice.

HANS, who is Clever Alice's father enters followed by ELSA, Clever Alice's Mother, and BRUNHILDE, their servant.

HANS
 We have an uncommonly clever daughter my dear, don't we?

ELSA
 Oh yes. That's why we named her Clever Alice, isn't it? Clever as the night is strong.

HANS
 Long.

ELSA
 That too, my dear. That too.

A KNOCK is heard.

HANS
 Why, who can that be?

CLEVER ALICE
 It must be Johan. He is looking for a suitable wife. I was recommended to him by the innkeeper.

HANS
 Brunhilde! Answer the door, please! We must arrange ourselves in a pleasing manner.

Brunhilde does so as Hans and Elsa and Alice make themselves "suitable" as they pull up chairs and pose perfectly. Brunhilde enters with JOHAN.

BRUNHILDE
 A Mr. Johan has come-a-calling!

HANS
 Well met, my good fellow! Well met indeed. Please, come and make yourself comfortable.

Alice may get up to provide a chair for Johan.

JOHAN

I must come to the point. I am a suitable gentleman looking for a suitable wife. She must have a good head on her shoulders and not be silly.

ELSA

Our Clever Alice can hear flies breathe and watch the wind turn.

HANS

Her head is filled with - brains. Our daughter will be an excellent wife, won't you Alice?

CLEVER ALICE

I have an uncommonly prudent manner and always think before I act.

JOHAN

Very well, then. If it is true, I will have you for my wife.

HANS

What a fine day it is. Let us make merry and fetch some tall glasses for cider.

JOHAN

I am not one for merriment.

HANS

We shall use short glasses then.

CLEVER ALICE

I shall go into the back room and fetch the cider.

BRUNHILDE

And I shall be quick as a bunny with the glasses.

ELSA

You can see, sir, what a well-run home Clever Alice comes from.

Alice goes to another part of the stage. A barrel may be set up. Brunhilde exits for a tray with four glasses. Hans, Johan and Elsa wait, eyeing each other awkwardly from time to time.

CLEVER ALICE

Before I tap the jugs for cider, I must quickly check my surroundings. A prudent, clever person such as I always does so. I should have a stool by the barrel so I do not stoop and injure my back. I must remember that for next time. And - oh no! What is that?

She looks out into the audience and "sees" a hatchet hanging precariously from the ceiling.

CLEVER ALICE

Someone has left a hatchet precariously hanging from the ceiling! This is not good! Why, if I marry Johan, have a child and visit my parents' home and send the child downstairs for cider, the hatchet may loosen and fall down and kill my dear wee one! This is a woefully sad situation! I fear for my child! I am distraught! Beyond comfort! Beyond care!

Clever Alice kneels down and quietly weeps. Meanwhile, in the "next" room, Brunhilde enters with a tray and four short glasses.

BRUNHILDE

Ready for the cider!

JOHAN

As are we all. What could be keeping my bride?

HANS

Do check on Clever Alice , Brunhilde. Make sure she has not come to harm.

BRUNHILDE

Right away, sir.

Brunhilde shoves the tray at Johan or Hans and goes to the "next" room where Clever Alice remains weeping.

BRUNHILDE (CONT'D)

Clever Alice ! Whatever can be the matter?

CLEVER ALICE

(Now weeping through her speech.)

Someone has left a hatchet precariously hanging from the ceiling! This is not good! Why, if I marry Johan, have a child and visit my parents' home and send the child downstairs for cider, the hatchet may loosen and fall down and kill my dear wee one! This is a woefully sad situation! I fear for my child! I am distraught! Beyond comfort! Beyond care!

BRUNHILDE

You are indeed a Clever Alice ! I am so very sad for you and your child!

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CLEVER ALICE

Thank you!

And they may fall into each other's arms - sobbing. Meanwhile, Hans, Elsa and Johan continue to awkwardly look at each other.

JOHAN

I wonder sir - do you have a monster in the next room that eats people?

HANS

I don't believe so, sir, why?

JOHAN

Because whoever goes into that room does not return.

ELSA

The barrel is just running slow. We may need to tap a new one. I shall check on it.

JOHAN

I appreciate your prudence.

HANS

We are a very sensible family.

Elsa checks on Brunhilde and Clever Alice. Hans and Johan continue to give each other polite smiles.

ELSA

Why, my poor dears, whatever is the matter?

CLEVER ALICE

(Now sobbing through her speech.)

Someone has left a hatchet precariously hanging from the ceiling! This is not good! Why, if I marry Johan, have a child and visit my parents' home and send the child downstairs for cider, the hatchet may loosen and fall down and kill my dear wee one! This is a woefully sad situation! I fear for my child! I am distraught! Beyond comfort! Beyond care!

ELSA

What a Clever Alice you are! But my grandchild! My poor, beloved, dead grandchild!

And Elsa joins them in the sobbing. Meanwhile, in the next room...

JOHAN

Do you hear that, sir? It sounds as if someone weeps.

Huge sob from the three women.

HANS

I believe you to be right. Someone is indeed weeping.

One more huge sob from the women.

JOHAN

Should we check it out?

HANS

That would be sensible and prudent.

Johan and Hans come upon the three weepers.

HANS

My Dears! Why ever do you weep?

Alice is now crying uncontrollably.

CLEVER ALICE

Someone has left a hatchet precariously hanging from the ceiling! This is not good! Why, if I marry Johan, have a child and visit my parents' home and send the child downstairs for cider, the hatchet may loosen and fall down and kill my dear wee one! This is a woefully sad situation! I fear for my child! I am distraught! Beyond comfort! Beyond care!

HANS

Do you see what a clever, woman of sense you are marrying? Who else would think so thoroughly?

JOHAN

Her prudence is beyond reproach. We must marry immediately.

Crying instantly stops and turns to smiles. Johan takes Clever Alice's hand; a bouquet is found. Set to MUSIC, a wedding procession begins. Clever Alice is all smiles, Elsa weeps, Hans is proud and Johan - is stone-faced.

Clever Alice will throw her bouquet, the wedding procession ends and Johan and Clever Alice retire to their home. One Actor enters or stays on to narrate. Johan and Clever Alice remain.

NARRATOR

After they had been married just a little while, Johan returned to work.

JOHAN

Wife, it is time for me to go back to work and earn some money. When you are done with the housekeeping, please go into the field to gather corn to make bread. I am fond of cornbread.

CLEVER ALICE

I will do so, Dear Johan.

Johan exits.

CLEVER ALICE

Everything is tidy here. So I shall go pick some corn.

She gets a small basket - which could be brought on by an ACTOR or given to her by the Narrator and goes to "a field."

CLEVER ALICE

This is a perfect day to pick corn. But the walk has tired me. If I am tired, I may not pick the best corn. Therefore, I shall nap. When I wake up, I will be in good shape to pick the proper corn.

NARRATOR

And so Clever Alice slept...all day. Meanwhile, Johan returned home.

Johan enters.

JOHAN

Alice? My own dear, Clever Alice?

Johan looks around.

JOHAN

What a prudent wife I have. She does not even come home to eat. I shall check on her. Even a clever wife must make time for food and rest.

Johan goes to the field and finds Clever Alice sleeping.

NARRATOR

And so Johan went off to the fields of corn.

JOHAN

Oh dear. This is not good.

NARRATOR

Johan rushed home-

He does so.

NARRATOR

And found a net with small bells attached. Because every home has a net with small bells attached.

JOHAN

Of course. It is prudent to have such a net.

NARRATOR

And he went back into the field and draped it over his sleeping, clever wife.

JOHAN

Sweet dreams, Clever Alice. You are not as clever as I hoped.

NARRATOR

Johan returned home, locked the door and read a book. In time, Clever Alice awoke. She was confused by the sound of the bells.

CLEVER ALICE

Oh dear. I have never jingled before. I must be someone else. Am I Clever Alice? Or am I not? I shall find out.

NARRATOR

She returned to the home of Clever Alice and knocked on the door.

JOHAN

Who is it?

CLEVER ALICE

I do not know. Would you tell me if Clever Alice is inside the home?

JOHAN

Indeed she is. Fast asleep.

CLEVER ALICE

Oh sweet heaven, then I am not Clever Alice! I am not she!

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