

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

A full-length historical comedy-drama by
Andrew Beattie

Based on the novel by Mark Twain

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

THE LONDON POOR, group of eight or more, any gender.*

THE TUDOR COURT, group of eight or more, any gender.*

ACROBATS AND MUSICIANS, any gender.*

JOHN CANTY, Tom's father.

LORD CHANCELLOR

TWO LADIES-IN-WAITING

MRS. CANTY, Tom's mother.

NAN, Tom's sister.

TOM CANTY, a London pauper.

BOY

GIRL, on streets of London.

BETH, Tom's sister.

SERVANT, any gender.

LADY FLEMING, Edward's nurse.

EDWARD TUDOR, the Prince of Wales.

DR. WILLIAM PHIPPS, Edward's tutor.

FATHER ANDREW, a cleric, Tom's tutor.

TWO GUARDS, outside the palace.

KING HENRY VIII, Edward's father.

CATHERINE PARR, wife of King Henry VIII.

ROYAL PHYSICIAN

EARL OF HERTFORD, Edward's uncle.

LADY JANE GREY, Edward's cousin.

PRINCESS ELIZABETH, Edward's half-sister.

HUMPHREY MARLOW, Edward's whipping boy.

STALLHOLDER, any gender.

CHILD, any gender.

BOATMAN

BOATMAN'S WIFE

TWO GUARDS, outside the Guildhall.

CONSTABLE

MESSENGER

MILES HENDON, a country squire.

PRINCESS MARY, Edward's half-sister.

LADY NORFOLK, a noblewoman.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

STEPHEN, Miles Hendon's servant.

HUGO, the leader of a gang of thieves.

THIEVES, group of seven, any gender.*

STRANGER, any gender.

HERMIT, any gender.

WOMAN

TWO VILLAGE CONSTABLES, male.

LADY EDITH, Hugh Hendon's wife.

ANN, Lady Edith's maid.

HUGH HENDON, Miles Hendon's brother.

TWO GUARDS, male, at Hendon Hall.

PRISONERS, group of eight or more, any gender.

JAILER, male.

GIRL, at coronation.

*The script allows for flexibility in casting these parts – in terms of gender, age, and in numbers of performers needed to play them; in productions requiring a small cast, some of the "named" roles can be played by members of these groups.

Large Cast Productions

With an expansion of the roles of Courtiers and Paupers to around 15 in each group, and separate groups of performers playing the Thieves and Prisoners in Act II, a cast of over 80 is theoretically possible! This can be reduced considerably by actors doubling roles, or by the groups of courtiers and paupers being reduced in size. There are plenty of roles for all genders and all ages; in fact, many roles in the play are not gender or age-specific.

Small Cast Productions

The play can be performed with a cast of 14, consisting of adults and children in the following roles:

First performer (boy): Edward Tudor

Second performer (boy): Tom Canty

Third performer (boy): Boy; Humphrey Marlow; Child (Act I, Scene 12)

Fourth performer (girl): Nan; Princess Elizabeth

Fifth performer (girl): Beth; Girl; Lady Jane Grey

Sixth performer (man): Father Andrew; Royal Physician; Miles Hendon

Seventh performer (man): John Canty; King Henry VIII; First Guard (Hendon Hall)

Eighth performer (man): William Phipps; Constable; Second Guard (Hendon Hall); Archbishop of Canterbury

Ninth performer (man): Servant (if played as male); First Guard (palace and Guildhall); Hugo; Hugh

Tenth performer (man): Second Guard (palace and Guildhall); Earl of Hertford; Stephen; First Village Constable; Clergyman

Eleventh performer (man): Lord Chancellor; Boatman; Hermit (if played as male); First Village Constable; Jailer

Twelfth performer (woman): Mrs. Canty; Hermit (if played as female); Ann

Thirteenth performer (woman): Lady-in-Waiting; Lady Fleming; Lady Norfolk; Woman; Mary

Fourteenth performer (woman): Lady-in-Waiting; Stallholder; Boatman's wife; Catherine Parr; Stranger; Edith; Servant (if played as female)

All performers (with the exception of the boys playing Tom and Edward) also play the Paupers, Courtiers, Thieves, Acrobats, Musicians and Prisoners, with lines distributed as appropriate. (For small cast productions, the size of these groups should be reduced from eight to six, with lines spoken by the seventh and eighth group members redistributed to members 1-6; all groups will consist of both adults and children.)

In a small cast production, the boy at the coronation will be assumed to be Humphrey Marlow and the girl at the coronation will be assumed to be Beth, and in each case will be played by the performers playing these roles.

SETTING

London and the surrounding countryside. 1538 (opening scene) and then 1547.

With a play whose action switches between a number of locations, it is assumed that the set will be minimal – although various backdrops (depicting the skyline of medieval London, a grand palace, etc.) may be used to suggest changes in scene.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Prince and the Pauper premiered at Hillside Avenue School, Cranford, NJ, in 2014.

ACT I

SCENE 1: THE BIRTH OF THE PRINCE AND THE
PAUPER

(As the play begins, the opening narrative is recounted by two groups of people – THE LONDON POOR ["The Paupers"], and members of THE TUDOR COURT ["The Courtiers"]. As each performer comes on, two distinct groups gradually form on the stage – the paupers on one side, and the Courtiers on the other. Members of each group are of course distinguishable by their costumes: rich, bright and opulent for the Courtiers; bedraggled, grey and worn for the paupers. It is important that the narration here "flows" seamlessly as if it is one piece of text.)

FIRST PAUPER: This tale we set before you,

FIRST COURTIER: Was told to us by one who learned it from his father,

SECOND PAUPER: Who in turn had heard it from *his* father,

SECOND COURTIER: And so on, back and still further back, the fathers retelling it to the sons,

THIRD PAUPER: Preserving it for generations to come.

THIRD COURTIER: It may be history,

FOURTH PAUPER: It may be only a legend,

FIFTH PAUPER: A tradition.

FOURTH COURTIER: It may have happened.

FIFTH COURTIER: It may not have happened.

FIFTH PAUPER: But it could have happened.

(We now have two distinct groups on the stage: five Paupers and five Courtiers. Lights rise on the group of Paupers as the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth members of the group enter. Lights remain low on the group of Courtiers.)

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SIXTH PAUPER: In the ancient city of London, on a certain autumn day in the second quarter of the sixteenth century, a boy was born to a poor family by the name of Canty, who did not want him.

(The group of paupers move to stand in a tight circle, as if cramming round to look at a newborn baby, who is held by MRS. CANTY, a middle-aged woman. There is the sound of a baby crying.)

SEVENTH PAUPER: Another hungry mouth to feed!

EIGHTH PAUPER: Another thin little body to keep warm!

(The sound of a sharp slap; the baby stops crying. JOHN CANTY, Tom's father, speaks now from the midst of the group; he is huddled amongst them so we can't see clearly which one he is.)

JOHN CANTY: Don't want none of your bloody noise disturbing this household.

(Lights down on the group of paupers, and up now on the Courtiers, as the LORD CHANCELLOR enters. He stands apart from the group as the Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Courtiers join it.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: On the same day another English boy was born to a rich family by the name of Tudor, who *did* want him.

(The members of the court stand round in a group, as if they too are standing around a newborn child. A baby cries openly, and does so throughout this next exchange. The Lord Chancellor calls two LADIES-IN-WAITING away from the tightly formed group of Courtiers. The Ladies are already on stage as members of the Court group.)

Lady Shaw! Lady Woodstock!

(The two Ladies-in-Waiting hurry over to him; they are beside themselves with excitement.)

LADY SHAW: Lord Chancellor —

LADY WOODSTOCK: Sir —

LORD CHANCELLOR: It's a boy?

LADY SHAW: It is, Sir.

LORD CHANCELLOR: The King will be informed at once.
And the child is healthy?

LADY WOODSTOCK: Hear him crying for yourself, Sir.

LORD CHANCELLOR: And your mistress, the Queen?

LADY SHAW: Alas, Sir...

LORD CHANCELLOR: She will recover. Praise God that she recovers, to bear the King a second son.

(Both groups move out of the circles that they have formed — back to their original positions. Louder:)

Let all England give thanks. Our Kingdom is blessed today!

(Both groups give a loud cheer; hats are thrown in the air. A peal of church bells.)

FIRST PAUPER: The King granted everyone a holiday, and high and low,

FIRST COURTIER: Rich and poor,

SECOND PAUPER: Feasted and danced and sang,

SECOND COURTIER: And celebrated for days and nights together.

(Now the lights change and the scene switches to a London street; the group of paupers and Courtiers suddenly mingle, forming one unified street throng. ACROBATS and MUSICIANS appear; there are banners and streamers and music and noise. Some of those playing paupers and courtiers now assume individual roles within their groups: sellers of food and drink ply their trade, a

pauper boy sits on the shoulders of a courtier, thus raising him high above the crowd, while at the other end of the stage, a boy of similar age from the Court – a page boy, perhaps – has been raised onto the shoulders of one of London's paupers.)

COURTIER: *(On shoulders of pauper:)* Let's give a cheer for England's future King!

PAUPER: *(On shoulders of Courtier:)* Rich or poor—it doesn't matter today. Let's celebrate the birth of the Prince of Wales! Hip hip...

CROWD: Hurrah!

PAUPER: Hip hip...

CROWD: Hurrah!

PAUPER: Hip hip...

CROWD: Hurrah!

(They freeze. There is a sudden change of mood.)

FIRST PAUPER: But the celebrations didn't last long.

(The sound of a bugle call.)

SECOND PAUPER: Shhh! A messenger from the palace!

(The crowd makes space for a ROYAL MESSENGER.)

FIRST COURTIER: *(As Messenger, announcing:)* The Queen! The Queen is dead!

(From offstage, the sound of a single, slow drumbeat.)

FIRST PAUPER: The King's beloved, Jane Seymour, had died providing him with the son he longed for.

(The crowd, as one, lower their hats and stand in somber silence as a funeral procession passes in front of them: a coffin, draped in a coat of arms and carried on a bier. As the procession leaves:)

THIRD COURTIER: Even as the people mourned, all talk in England was of the baby that Jane left behind, who was christened Edward Tudor by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

FOURTH COURTIER: The noisy creature lay wrapped in silks and satins, unconscious of all this fuss, not knowing that great lords and ladies were watching over him,

THIRD PAUPER: But there was no talk at all about the other baby, Tom Canty, wrapped in his rags, except among the family of paupers whom he had just come to trouble with his presence.

(Lights change again; the group of Courtiers and Paupers separate; the Musicians and Sellers of food disappear; the stage is divided as before – the court on one side, the poor on the other – with an open space between them.)

SCENE 2: TOM'S EARLY LIFE

SIXTH PAUPER: Let us skip a number of years.

(Enter MRS. CANTY and NAN, who join the group of paupers, from where they speak.)

MRS. CANTY: My boy Tom! How he's grown in all that time!

(At the mention of his name, TOM emerges from the group of paupers – amongst whom he has been, all the time, having entered at an appropriate moment – and moves in front of them. Another pauper – a BOY – also emerges from the group. They fight – with wooden "play" swords – but it is play-fighting; the lines continue uninterrupted.)

SEVENTH PAUPER: Hah! "All that time"?! The merest blink of an eye!

EIGHTH PAUPER: Hundreds of years our city's been here. London won't hardly notice the likes of us...

SEVENTH PAUPER: Scraping a living in this foggy cesspit on the banks of the Thames.

NAN: A living? Some living!

MRS. CANTY: (*As if shouting at Tom from a distance:*) Oi! Tom! Where are you? There's work to be done!

(At this Tom strikes away the sword of his opponent, which clatters to the ground. The Boy falls to his knees. Another child – a GIRL – is watching from the crowd of paupers and moves forward.)

TOM: You have lost your sword – but I will be merciful!

GIRL: "Merciful!" Who d'you think you are, Tom Canty?

TOM: Arise, my good knight – you are the faithful servant to a prince!

(Tom "knight" his opponent, touching the boy's shoulder with the tip of his sword; the Girl laughs, nastily.)

GIRL: A prince? Don't make us laugh!

MRS. CANTY: (*Calling again:*) Tom! (*Turns to Nan:*) I expect he's down by the river again. You'll have to go and fetch him, Nan.

(Nan heads off while Tom glances at the Boy and Girl; they are both looking at him scornfully.)

GIRL: Listen, Tom Canty – I can hear your mother calling you.

BOY: Your mother, the Queen. She's calling from the palace window!

(Ignoring them, Tom throws his sword down and moves to sit cross-legged in the centre of the stage, facing the group of Paupers, his back to the group of Courtiers. He opens a book, covers himself with a blanket and places a lighted candle on the floor next to him [all passed to him by one of the Paupers] – and begins to read, straining his eyes in the dim light, and drawing the blanket around himself in the cold. The Boy and Girl dissolve back into the crowd [or go offstage] as Nan reappears, this time accompanied by

BETH. They both contemptuously watch their brother. As all this happens:)

FIRST PAUPER: His games didn't last long, though.

SECOND PAUPER: Grew up fast, Tom Canty did.

THIRD PAUPER: Fancied himself as a prince – but none of the other children would play along.

NAN: So he turned to story books instead...

BETH: ...while his sisters clean and scrub and beg...

MRS. CANTY: ...and his parents do nothing but argue and fight.

(John Canty emerges from the group of paupers, while Tom's sisters dissolve back into it. John Canty sits on a wooden stool provided for him by his wife. He drinks from an ale bottle and is rather the worse for wear – though not amusingly so. His wife continues to scrub the washing.)

We've no food in the house. Nothing at all.

JOHN CANTY: What's that useless boy doing?

MRS. CANTY: He was out begging all morning. Got nothing, he said. Not even a crust.

JOHN CANTY: He's lying. He's with his books!

MRS. CANTY: Search me, I don't know where he is.

JOHN CANTY: That dreamer will be rubbing his wounds 'till Christmas, if I catch him.

MRS. CANTY: Our Tom...all his reading and knowledge – he'll make something of himself one day. He'll be a teacher or a lawyer. He'll keep us in food until we die!

JOHN CANTY: He'll keep dreaming, and we'll all die hungry!

(He retreats back into the group of paupers. Tom remains seated throughout this, reading quietly, with the blanket drawn tightly around him.)

MRS. CANTY: Tom, you'd better come down from there. *(Looks around nervously:)* He's on the prowl, your father!

(Tom glances up from his book, then goes on reading. His mother retreats back into the group of Paupers.)

FIRST PAUPER: Tom's attic was right at the top of the house where he lived, in Offal Court, off Pudding Lane,

SECOND PAUPER: One of the smallest and foulest dwellings in all London.

(Lights up on the Court group.)

FIRST COURTIER: Ha! The poor of this city deserve nothing more.

SECOND COURTIER: *(Turning to the Paupers:)* You should be thankful for what little the good Lord has provided you with.

THIRD PAUPER: *(Turning to face the Courtiers:)* How little you know, with your grand houses, your gardens... Your music!

(Lights down on the group of paupers.)

SCENE 3: THE PRINCE'S EARLY LIFE

(The Lord Chancellor, LADY FLEMING and WILLIAM PHIPPS emerge from the group of Courtiers, and talk quietly, standing apart from the rest of the group. Lady Fleming is Edward's nurse. Soft lute music. A SERVANT – one of the Courtiers – supplies the three of them with coloured pastries from a silver tray. As this is done, EDWARD TUDOR rushes on carrying a sword. He is not looking where he is going and collides with the Servant.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Your Highness!

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EDWARD: Oh!

SERVANT: No matter, my Lord – my fault entirely!

(Edward looks at the Servant without expression – and helps himself to a pastry.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: You have finished your lesson with Sir Richard?

EDWARD: *(Waving his sword around, as if fighting an imaginary opponent:)* Yes. I won, as usual!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Congratulations!

LADY FLEMING: You have torn your coat.

EDWARD: Not a bad result, considering he's been on four crusades.

LADY FLEMING: *(Looking at a tear on his jacket:)* Look at that!

LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lord, have you been careless?

PHIPPS: After being warned yesterday!

LORD CHANCELLOR: *(To Servant:)* See that Edward's whipping boy is punished for this.

(The Servant nods briefly to him and goes.)

PHIPPS: That'll teach you.

EDWARD: It was only a small tear.

LORD CHANCELLOR: *(To Edward:)* You will see the boy later on and apologise to him for your behaviour.

EDWARD: I shall certainly see him! I will tell him that a whipping is too harsh a punishment for tearing a coat.

LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lord – if I might be allowed to say, your attitude is disappointing.

PHIPPS: And not becoming of a prince!

LADY FLEMING: Perhaps His Majesty is overtired.

EDWARD: Yes – perhaps I am! I won't have any more lessons today. I shall take a book of Greek poetry and read it in the garden.

PHIPPS: A splendid idea!

EDWARD: And if I feel tired, I will go to sleep under a tree.

LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lord, your father the King wishes to see you later this afternoon.

EDWARD: Fetch me when it is time, then. You know where I will be.

(Edward moves off. He sits center, facing the group of Courtiers, takes a book out – and begins to read it. He sits so that he and Tom are back-to-back – though of course neither boy is aware of the other's presence. As this happens:)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Thank you, Lady Fleming.

(She curtsies briefly and goes, allowing the two men to talk privately.)

PHIPPS: Sir Richard lets the boy win every time!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Wouldn't you?

PHIPPS: And that's supposed to teach the boy something about swordsmanship?

LORD CHANCELLOR: Worried it keeps him away from his Greek and Latin?

PHIPPS: His father is one of the most learned men in Europe. He expects the same of his son.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Dr. Phipps, I take it you know just how ill the King is?

PHIPPS: I do.

LORD CHANCELLOR: I think that soon we will be preparing the boy for much more than sword fights and Latin translation.

(They go. Lights down slowly on the group of Paupers and Courtiers, dissolving to a single pool of light, center – where Tom and Edward still sit cross-legged, back-to-back.)

SCENE 4: THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

(The Paupers and Courtiers watch the two boys, as the lights change:)

SIXTH PAUPER: And so they sat with their books:

FIRST COURTIER: Edward Tudor, heir to the throne of England,

SEVENTH PAUPER: And Tom Canty, heir to a stale lump of bread for his supper that night – if he's lucky –

EIGHTH COURTIER: And a good hiding from his father if he's not.

(The Courtiers and Paupers go, leaving the two boys alone on stage. We hear their thoughts, one following the other, spoken out loud, though each is unaware of the other's presence.)

EDWARD & TOM: One day...

TOM: I might get to meet a real prince, like the one in this book!

EDWARD: I will escape from this rotten palace.

TOM: But...what will he think of me?

(Edward shuts the book and throws it across the floor in front of him.)

EDWARD: Armies and battles – I don't want to know about them!

TOM: My poor manners...my muddy feet, dirtying the floors of his palace!

EDWARD: I want to play in the mud by the side of the river. I want to be like normal boys!

(Simultaneously, from opposite sides of the stage, the boys' tutors enter: William Phipps for Edward and FATHER ANDREW, a cleric, for Tom.)

PHIPPS: My Lord Edward! I've been looking for you everywhere!

FATHER ANDREW: *(Simultaneously with the above line:)* Tom Canty! I've been looking for you everywhere!

(From now on the stage is divided in half, as two independent conversations take place – Edward and Phipps on one side [previously the "Courtiers" side], Tom and Father Andrew on the other [previously the "Paupers" side].)

TOM: I was hiding from my father.

PHIPPS: You are sitting in the furthest corner of the gardens.

TOM: He's going to beat me again!

PHIPPS: One might almost suspect you of hiding!

(Phipps picks up the book Edward has thrown away. He seems mildly surprised that it is lying on the ground, where it has landed. Father Andrew continues his conversation with Tom as Phipps flicks through the book:)

TOM: A whole morning outside the Guildhall, and all I got was a farthing.

(Tom tries to give the coin to Father Andrew – but he refuses it.)

FATHER ANDREW: Tom, this is for your poor mother.

TOM: But...it's for teaching me!

FATHER ANDREW: Teaching you is God's work. Besides, I get paid by the parish. Give it to your mother. Then your father won't hit you.

TOM: He will. He'll find another reason.

FATHER ANDREW: That belt of his! He'll wear it out raising the dust from the seat of your breeches with it.

(Tom draws up two chairs, for himself and Father Andrew, as Phipps finishes flicking through the book and talks to Edward.)

EDWARD: Does my father want to see me now?

PHIPPS: I'm afraid he's busy.

EDWARD: He's always busy.

PHIPPS: When he does, he wishes to talk to you on matters of state – entirely in French.

EDWARD: I think he wants me to speak better French than the King of France!

FATHER ANDREW: *(Taking the book from Tom:)* Tell me what you're reading.

PHIPPS: *(To Edward:)* Did you not like the book?

TOM & EDWARD: Stories again!

TOM: They're fantastic!

EDWARD: They don't interest me. Take it away. *(Pause.)* Dr. Phipps...could I go to school?

PHIPPS: To school!? Why, Edward, there would be other boys there!

EDWARD: I know. That's why I want to go.

PHIPPS: You must learn to like being by yourself, Edward. You will find it a lonely business, you know, being King.

(He shuts the book.)

It is a fine afternoon, to be sitting in the gardens! Your nurse will come and find you just as soon as the King is ready. I think

she is worried that you might be coming down with another fever.

EDWARD: Of course she is! It's her reason for hanging around me all the time, like everyone else does.

(Edward sits on the floor facing the audience as Phipps bows and goes, taking the book with him. As this happens, Tom talks with Father Andrew, who has been flicking through his book.)

FATHER ANDREW: You read fast, Tom. Already I must find you another book.

TOM: Don't tell my father.

FATHER ANDREW: One day – when you're too big for him to hit you – I will make sure he knows what a good student you are. That you've even learned some Latin, like the boys who go to school!

TOM: Do princes go to school?

FATHER ANDREW: What a curious question. Schools are for the sons of merchants and lawyers. A prince would be taught by his tutor. A learned man.

TOM: Like you.

FATHER ANDREW: Me! I'm nothing but a lowly priest! Now, the Prince of Wales – I hear that he has one of Oxford's cleverest doctors of philosophy to teach him.

TOM: Someday I want to meet a prince. Or even be one. And live in an enormous palace!

FATHER ANDREW: You've been reading too many stories, Tom. The inside of your head is turning to custard. Next time I will find you a book about science or mathematics. Something that won't go giving you grand ideas.

TOM: I can still dream, though – can't I?

(Beth rushes in.)

BETH: Tom! Our father's on the lookout for you!

JOHN CANTY: *(Off:)* Tom Canty! Are you up in that attic again, you miserable wretch?

FATHER ANDREW: Maybe we won't have a lesson today, Tom.

(He bustles Tom out of the room, who leaves just as John Canty enters from another direction – carrying his belt, ready to give Tom a beating.)

JOHN CANTY: Where is he?

FATHER ANDREW: Put your belt away, John Canty.

JOHN CANTY: Beth! Where's he gone?

BETH: Father, I—

(John Canty has found the book that Tom has left; he waves it in Father Andrew's face.)

JOHN CANTY: You're going to stop filling the boy's head with stuff he never needs! D'you hear me?

FATHER ANDREW: The whole of Offal Court can hear you, John Canty. And when you hit the boy—they have even less trouble hearing you!

JOHN CANTY: Beth, go to your mother. I'm going out, to look for your lousy brother.

(Father Andrew moves the chairs back as John Canty leaves with Beth.)

FATHER ANDREW: Yes, Tom Canty—you can still dream...

(Father Andrew leaves; for a moment, Edward is alone on stage.)

SCENE 5: TOM'S MEETING WITH THE PRINCE

(A lighting change indicates a shift of time and location. Two GUARDS appear, standing center; they act as narrators for the first part of the scene. The first faces Tom, as if barring his way, the second faces Edward, as if protecting him. Between them we must imagine an enormous gate – the entrance to a palace – perpendicular to the front edge of the stage, and right in its center. Tom reappears in his "half": the division of the stage between "rich" and "poor" still remains clear.)

GUARDS: That afternoon,

FIRST GUARD: Tom walked for miles through London,

SECOND GUARD: Prince Edward sat for hours in the palace gardens,

GUARDS: Alone and unhappy.

TOM: *(Looking around:)* I don't recognize this place.

FIRST GUARD: This is the Palace of Westminster. The home of King Henry the Eighth.

TOM: King Henry the Eighth? And Prince Edward Tudor?

(Edward turns his head as he hears his name mentioned. He rises and looks past the soldiers, through the "gate" they are guarding. The Second Guard sees that Edward is looking through the gate at Tom.)

EDWARD: I heard someone say my name.

SECOND GUARD: *(To Edward:)* Some urchin out in the street, my Lord. No need to bother yourself.

(The boys catch sight of one another.)

EDWARD & TOM: There's a boy the other side of the gates. Standing there on his own. A boy of my own age!

TOM: *(To himself:)* Surely that can't be him. A real prince!

(Tom runs forward and the First Guard knocks him flying.)

FIRST GUARD: Not so fast, beggar boy!

(The First Guard goes over to Tom as he is sitting up, dazed. He looks as if he is about to kick Tom back to the ground.)

EDWARD: *(Shouting at the First Guard:)* No!

(The First Guard turns; he bows to Edward, nervously.)

FIRST GUARD: Sir.

EDWARD: How dare you treat a boy like that!

FIRST GUARD: Sir, it is for your protection.

EDWARD: *(To Tom:)* I'm sorry, boy. This man claims to be acting in my name.

(Tom rises more confidently and brushes himself off. Edward pushes past the guards to talk to Tom through the gate.)

Are you hurt?

TOM: I...I'm fine.

EDWARD: What do they call you?

TOM: *(Stunned:)* Tom Canty, my Lord.

EDWARD: Well, Tom Canty, your coat has been torn and I fear it's my fault.

TOM: Oh no, my Lord!

EDWARD: *(To the Guards:)* Open the gates and let him in!

(The Guards open the gates. Speechless and open-mouthed, Tom comes through.)

You look hungry. *(To the Guards:)* Fetch this boy something to eat. Some chicken legs will do, I think. And some fresh water. *(Pause.)* Well, get on with it then!

(Now the Guards are speechless. But Edward gestures for them to go.)

GUARDS: My Lord...right away!

(They close the gates and move off, bowing obsequiously.)

TOM: Are you really the Prince of Wales?

EDWARD: My guards treated you badly. I will have them put in chains for the night.

TOM: Weren't they just doing their job?

EDWARD: You forgive them easily. Give me your coat. Sit with me here.

(Tom sits with Edward, taking off his coat and passing it to the Prince. Edward sees that Tom appears amazed by his surroundings. There is the sound of birdsong.)

My father gave me this garden as a birthday present.

TOM: It's so quiet.

EDWARD: *(Sadly:)* I'm the only one who ever comes here.

TOM: You could sit here all day and read. No one would disturb you.

EDWARD: *(Examining the coat:)* It's funny. Both of us have torn our coats today. I will have a servant take this coat to the palace and get it mended.

TOM: Is the palace yours too?

EDWARD: *(Rising, as if to call for a servant:)* It will be one day.

TOM: My Lord, you mustn't trouble yourself with my coat. My sisters will mend it for me.

EDWARD: *(Sitting back down again:)* You have sisters?

TOM: Two: Nan and Beth.

EDWARD: I also have two sisters: Elizabeth and Mary. But I hardly ever see them.

TOM: Don't they sleep in the same room as you do?

EDWARD: In the same room? Of course not! I have a whole wing of the palace all to myself! Don't tell me...

TOM: My whole family – we have only one room.

EDWARD: Don't you fight with your sisters?

TOM: Sometimes. But if my father's hit me, they let me sleep between them.

EDWARD: Your father hits you?

TOM: He drinks, you see.

EDWARD: I'm glad you have sisters to look after you. My older sister – Mary – well, she's not much fun. She thinks anyone who laughs forms a pact with the Devil! She dismisses her servants if they so much as smile! Are your sisters like that with their servants?

TOM: Servants? In Offal Court? We don't have servants.

EDWARD: But who helps you get dressed in the morning? And chooses which clothes you are to wear?

TOM: No one. We wear the same clothes every day.

EDWARD: The thought of it! I will see to it that all residents of – where did you say – Offal Court – are decently clothed. After I've done something about your father. Perhaps I should put him in the Tower like my father did with Anne Boleyn. You've heard of her, I take it.

TOM: My Lord, I'm afraid I haven't.

EDWARD: My sister Elizabeth's mother. My father had her executed with a silver sword. You must have heard of my father.

TOM: Oh yes. We all know King Henry.

EDWARD: You speak well. For a pauper, I mean. Can you read and write?

TOM: Our parish priest, Father Andrew, has taught me. But I don't have enough time for reading. I must beg for food, you see. For our family.

EDWARD: Beg! But that's awful. I always imagined...

TOM: What?

EDWARD: Well, how wonderful it would be to live in a place like Offal Court.

TOM: (*Incredulous:*) Wonderful?

EDWARD: What about the Punch and Judy shows?

TOM: The performing monkeys are funnier!

EDWARD: The games by the river bank?

TOM: There are some boys I often play with there. We dunk each other in the water – and cover each other with mud –

EDWARD: I saw you once!

TOM: From the Royal Barge –

EDWARD: Yes –

TOM: We all waved!

EDWARD: I waved back. My father went mad!

TOM: There must have been a dozen ships.

EDWARD: It was a royal pageant. There were a hundred!

TOM: Covered with gold, and fluttering banners, and brilliant lights!

EDWARD: It's actually quite boring, you know. The boat journey takes hours, and then at the end of it, there's some

banquet or other, with lots of Lords and Earls all talking about politics.

EDWARD & TOM: If only I could live like you –

EDWARD: Just for a day –

TOM: A morning –

EDWARD: It would be such fun.

(He sniffs the air.)

I smell chicken legs. My guards are coming back!

(Edward quickly removes his coat.)

TOM: What are you doing?

EDWARD: Here – my hat. Try it on.

(Tom cautiously takes off his cap and puts on Edward's hat, while Edward puts on Tom's coat – which he is still holding – and passes his own to Tom.)

It fits! Put my coat on; you will be a Prince for a day, and I will watch the Punch and Judy shows in Offal Court.

TOM: But –

EDWARD: I command it. Prince Edward of Wales has spoken!

TOM: How long will you be?

EDWARD: Only a couple of hours. Shoes as well!

(Tom puts on Edward's coat, but the unfamiliarity of the garment, and his slight hesitancy over the idea of swapping clothes, means he is slower at dressing than Edward. When it's on, they exchange shoes, and soon are facing each other.)

It's as if I was looking in a mirror.

TOM: A mirror?

EDWARD: Haven't you realized how alike we look? You have the same hair as me, and the same eyes. Listen to our voices. Don't we sound the same?

(The Guards enter with plates laden with chicken legs.)

FIRST GUARD: My Lord Edward!

(Edward turns round. But the Guards ignore him, and approach Tom.)

SECOND GUARD: Your chicken legs!

TOM: *(Glancing hesitantly at Edward:)* Ah—of course—

FIRST GUARD: *(To Tom:)* Should we serve your guest out here, in the garden?

EDWARD: *(To Tom:)* Actually—I've changed my mind. *(Awkward; to the Guards:)* I'm not as hungry as I first thought. But they do look nice. Maybe they will tempt the Prince of Wales!

(He bows to Tom. The Guards immediately turn and offer the plate to Tom, who takes a chicken leg greedily—and another; the Guards watch him, mystified.)

The Prince has said you should unlock the gates for me.

(The Guards glance at Tom, who is still busy gorging on chicken legs.)

TOM: Oh! Yes!

EDWARD: He commands it!

TOM: Oh—yes—I mean—I command it!

FIRST GUARD: Very well, Sir.

TOM: But treat the boy kindly as he goes. As if he were a prince!

(The Guards open the gates and Edward passes through. The Guards bow deeply—too deeply—as Edward heads out through

the gates. The two boys briefly look at each other through the gates; the Guards take up their positions again. Lady Fleming approaches Tom from the other direction with the Lord Chancellor.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Ah – there you are! At last I've found you –

EDWARD: *(To Tom:)* Which way is it to Offal Court?

(Tom points and turns as the Lady Fleming curtsies briefly in front of him. With a backward glance, Edward heads off.)

LADY FLEMING: My Lord, are you quite all right?

LORD CHANCELLOR: There is some trivial disturbance outside the gates. I should ignore it.

LADY FLEMING: *(Putting her hand to his forehead:)* You look quite pale.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Do you feel unwell?

TOM: I'm not sure...

LADY FLEMING: Thankfully it is time for you to go inside.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Your father is ready to see you.

TOM: My father?

LORD CHANCELLOR: You must come with us, if it pleases you, Sir.

(Tom stuffs some chicken legs into his coat pocket and hands the empty plate to the Guard – and then in a daze follows the Lord Chancellor and Lady Fleming offstage. The Guards look at each other quizzically – and head off in the other direction.)

SCENE 6: TOM'S TROUBLES BEGIN

(A group of Courtiers are fussing over an ornate throne, fluffing up the cushions and polishing the gold and wood.)

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FIRST COURTIER: The manners of the young master!

SECOND COURTIER: Snatched those chicken legs off the plate like he was a boy off the street!

THIRD COURTIER: And stuffed them in his pockets for later. That's what *I* heard.

FIRST COURTIER: His manners have always been impeccable!

SECOND COURTIER: His father's insisted on it.

FIRST COURTIER: Something's come over him.

THIRD COURTIER: What can be the matter?

(More Courtiers assemble, each entering at the beginning of their line – as before. They are setting up a mid-afternoon snack for the King: bowls of fruit and trolleys of cakes. The two Guards come back on, too – though without the chicken legs.)

FOURTH COURTIER: What *can* be the matter?

FIFTH COURTIER: Have you heard the latest?

SIXTH COURTIER: The latest?

FIFTH COURTIER: Prince Edward is ill.

SECOND COURTIER: Ill?

FIFTH COURTIER: He's gone mad, someone said. The boy doesn't know who he is anymore.

COURTIERS: How strange.

GUARDS: How strange.

(The Lord Chancellor enters, surrounded by more Courtiers. He goes over to the guards.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: You don't know anything about this, do you?

GUARDS: Us, Sir?

LORD CHANCELLOR: You two were the last to see the boy in his *normal* condition.

FIRST GUARD: Perhaps it was the chicken legs he had.

LORD CHANCELLOR: The chicken legs?

FIRST GUARD: I thought they smelt a bit strange.

SECOND GUARD: They might have gone off!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Nonsense. They were so fresh the chicken was practically still clucking!

FIRST GUARD: Clucking, Sir?

SECOND GUARD: Very well, Sir.

FIRST GUARD: As you say, Sir.

GUARDS: Nonsense!

(A cry goes out.)

SIXTH COURTIER: The King! Make way for the King!

(A flourish of trumpets offstage. On comes KING HENRY VIII, bloated and ill; he is supported by his wife, CATHERINE PARR. Also in attendance are Dr. Phipps and the ROYAL PHYSICIAN. The Guards and Courtiers stand at attention. The king is placed centerstage on the throne.)

KING: Now then, Physician. Tell me what make of it all.

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: Well, if Your Majesty will forgive me, I need to be reminded about the exact nature of the boy's condition.

KING: This afternoon I called for my son to be brought to me. He seemed — how would you say, Dr. Phipps?

PHIPPS: In a daze, Your Majesty. His nurse diagnosed a mild fever.

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: That woman does fuss him.

KING: He failed to recognize me! Me, his own father! I took him to Catherine,

CATHERINE PARR: And the boy claimed he wasn't the Prince of Wales,

KING: But that he was a pauper, of lowly birth. A common piece of vermin from the street!

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: It sounds a most extraordinary delusion, Your Majesty.

KING: I asked him a question in Latin. He knows Latin well, and answered the question well. Then I spoke to him in French – and the boy looked at me blankly, saying he had never heard the language!

CATHERINE PARR: I have often talked with him in French. He speaks the language almost fluently!

KING: Physician, people are saying he is mad. What can be the cause of all this?

(The Royal Physician is somewhat at a loss for an answer.)

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: Are we certain it wasn't those chicken legs? Supposing they *had* gone off. We should try them on someone else, to see if the effect is the same.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Ah, yes! You perhaps!

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: I, Lord Chancellor?

KING: Or are you going to throw in the towel, as you usually do, and just say you don't know what the problem is but perhaps the boy merely needs some rest?

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: That's exactly what I was about to suggest. A rest would definitely be in order.

(The Lord Chancellor nods mutely in agreement; Dr. Phipps shakes his head in frustration.)

KING: Yes, and that's just what you said to the boy's mother, moments after she had delivered him. "Get some rest, my dear lady, get some rest." The rest she got was God's eternal rest! If I hadn't listened to you then, she might still be alive!

ROYAL PHYSICIAN: Your majesty, I assure you –

KING: Catherine knows about children. *(To Catherine:)* What do you say?

CATHERINE PARR: Give him some fresh air. Take him hunting at Windsor!

KING: A-ha! A real solution at last! Get him out of the schoolroom for a while. You overwork him, Dr. Phipps.

LORD CHANCELLOR: I've told him that myself, Sir.

KING: Music and poetry is all very well, but there's time enough for that when he's better. In the meantime, healthy exercise is bound to cure him. But – until he is better – hear this: anyone who speaks about his illness will be speaking against the peace and order of the realm. They will pay the standard penalty for treason!

(He is getting too worked up, and calls for a drink; a servant – one of the Courtiers – supplies some water.)

A drink, a drink. Water...support me!

(The Royal Physician approaches, but Henry waves him away.)

Not you! Catherine!

(Catherine Parr approaches him and supports him; he recovers himself.)

CATHERINE PARR: My Lord, you mustn't let this terrible business trouble you.

KING: He is my son, and England's heir. God will not allow his condition to be permanent.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Your instructions will be carried out immediately, Sir.

KING: Of course they will. (*Coughing:*) Even if he's dying, the King's will is law.

(The Royal Physician again leaps to support him. A cry comes from one of the Courtiers, announcing the entrance of Tom Canty with Lady Fleming and the EARL OF HERTFORD. Tom is now dressed in royal finery.)

SIXTH COURTIER: (*Announcing:*) His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales!

(The Courtiers bow or curtsy as appropriate; Catherine Parr curtsies.)

KING: Oh, stuff and nonsense to your bowing! The boy needs to be left in peace, not be fawned over by you all day. Go and do something useful. Get him something to eat, why don't you!

(He shoos them away; they scurry off, and soon only the King, Tom, Hertford, Lady Fleming and Catherine Parr are left.)

Now, tell me, Lord Hertford. Is my son getting better?

HERTFORD: He is, Sir. In fact, I was just making it clear to him, as you yourself said – that Your Majesty's will is law.

KING: And so it is...and so, Edward, one day the law will be *your* will, too.

TOM: Yes, Sir.

KING: I know that you will govern England wisely. Here, why don't you sit down?

(The King struggles off his throne and lets Tom sit in it. Tom briefly enjoys its opulence and luxury as the King continues talking.)

Hmm... You seem quite at home there! Perhaps your memory is returning. Come on, Catherine. I feel in need of a nap. This afternoon has been so busy. I will leave Lord Hertford to keep instructing Edward as to my wishes.

(The King and Catherine leave. Hertford bows deeply as they go.)

SCENE 7: TOM RECEIVES INSTRUCTION

(Hertford remains with Tom and Lady Fleming, more relaxed now that the King has gone.)

HERTFORD: *(Straightening up:)* ...which are, if I might be so bold as to repeat them one final time, that you are to keep your infirmity hidden until it is passed.

LADY FLEMING: You will stop denying that you are the true Prince of Wales.

HERTFORD: You will make no further mention of this place you talk of – Offal Court.

LADY FLEMING: Do you understand?

TOM: All right.

LADY FLEMING: "Yes I do, uncle."

TOM: Yes I do, uncle.

(He bows his head, briefly, to Hertford.)

HERTFORD: Do not bow your head to me, Your Majesty. It is I who bows to you.

TOM: Oh! Of course.

LADY FLEMING: Your father is keen that you make every effort to remember the names and faces of those you knew before you were beset by this unfortunate condition.

HERTFORD: Starting with this afternoon's visitors.

TOM: Visitors?

HERTFORD: The Lady Jane Grey and the Princess Elizabeth are waiting outside.

TOM: *(To himself:)* The Princess Elizabeth! His sister. My sister, I mean.

(Hertford heads for the door, whilst Lady Fleming confides in Tom.)

LADY FLEMING: Edward, your condition will upset them. You must remember how much they love you. Try to convince them that you are getting better!

(Dazed, Tom sits back in his chair as Hertford ushers in the Lord Chancellor, who has a courtier with him, along with the PRINCESS ELIZABETH and the LADY JANE GREY, both young girls.)

HERTFORD: *(Nodding to them:)* Lady Jane, Princess Elizabeth.

(The girls cross to Tom, as the Lord Chancellor and Hertford nod briefly to Lady Fleming, who stands away from Tom on one side of the stage, and then themselves sit to one side – as if listening, behind a door. As this is happening:)

LADY JANE GREY: Edward! I haven't seen you in weeks! You remember me?

TOM: Of course. My sister, Elizabeth.

LADY JANE GREY: No. I am your cousin, Jane, and *this* is Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH: Don't worry yourself too much.

LADY JANE GREY: It is your illness that has made you forget.

ELIZABETH & LADY JANE GREY: We understand.

TOM: You are...you're very kind. *(Pause.)* You seem uncomfortable standing up.

ELIZABETH: My Lord, surely you are not suggesting that we sit down!

LADY JANE GREY: No one sits in your presence. It is unheard of!

TOM: Well, then, I command you to sit down!

(The girls exchange glances.)

LADY JANE GREY: Well, if the Prince commands it...

(They sit down.)

ELIZABETH: My Lord, I saw you reading in the garden earlier today.

TOM: You are trying to help me get my memory back.

LADY JANE GREY: What were you reading, my Lord?

TOM: Some...Latin.

LADY JANE GREY: Ah, so your lessons with Dr. Phipps are coming on well.

ELIZABETH: He is a wonderful tutor, isn't he?

TOM: Yes. He is... *(Remembering what Father Andrew told him:)* He is one of Oxford's cleverest doctors of philosophy!

LADY JANE GREY: You are beginning to remember things! Your father will be so pleased.

ELIZABETH: But Edward, our father spoke to you in French today. You said you didn't understand him.

TOM: Yes. I find that I can remember only my Latin.

ELIZABETH: Your illness is playing funny tricks on you!

LADY JANE GREY: But you mustn't let it show.

ELIZABETH: Particularly not tonight.

TOM: Tonight?

ELIZABETH: The Lord Mayor's reception at the Guildhall!

TOM: Reception? At the Guildhall?

ELIZABETH: A glorious pageant of ships beforehand! On the river!

TOM: A river pageant! With the boats lit up, and hung with banners!

LADY JANE GREY: Yes!

TOM: People watching from the banks!

ELIZABETH: It will be a glorious occasion. Oh, it's good to see your memory is returning!

LADY JANE GREY: We'll be coming too.

ELIZABETH: We'll look after you. You'll be fine.

LADY JANE GREY: To tell the truth, these occasions are often rather boring.

TOM: Yes, lots of lords and earls talking about politics.

ELIZABETH: That's just what you said after the last one! My Lord, you're not as ill as we feared.

(Tom yawns.)

LADY JANE GREY: All you need is some rest, and you'll be fine!

(The Lord Chancellor and Earl of Hertford re-enter the room. The girls rise, immediately.)

HERTFORD: My Lord, it sounds as if you are getting better.

LADY JANE GREY: He will be better still after he has slept.

HERTFORD: He will have all the rest he requires!

(He signals to Lady Fleming to take Tom out.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: *(To Elizabeth:)* So, what do you think?

ELIZABETH: My brother is clearly not himself.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Not himself? You mean, he's somebody else?

HERTFORD: A-ha! Treason! You heard what the King said!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Calm yourself, Lord Hertford. The Princess is only fourteen. I think you know what she means.

ELIZABETH: Sir, forgive me.

LORD CHANCELLOR: What the girl means is that we must keep encouraging him.

HERTFORD: Precisely. Princess Elizabeth, Lady Jane – thank you.

(The girls go. The Lord Chancellor and the Earl of Hertford talk in hushed tones. As they talk, some Courtiers set up a table – piled with food – close by.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Well?

HERTFORD: There are some signs his madness might be leaving him, though not enough. Meanwhile, his father is nearing the end, and it will be left to us to pick up the pieces.

(The Earl of Hertford looks as if he is going; the Lord Chancellor calls him back.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Lord Hertford!

(He looks around to check no one's listening.)

What I mean is... Well, haven't you noticed? The boy has been changed by his madness. Not just in his manner and speech.

HERTFORD: Treason! Again! You heard what the King said!

LORD CHANCELLOR: It's plain for anyone to see!

HERTFORD: Madness can do the strangest things.

LORD CHANCELLOR: The boy actually *looks* different.

HERTFORD: Are you suggesting there is an impostor in our midst? Why, the boy is even wearing the same coat that he tore this morning!

(Lord Chancellor still looks unconvinced. Hertford draws him to one side.)

An impostor—if there was one—would claim all the time he was a Prince! Yet here we have quite the opposite. Our prince denies his royal position whenever he can! And—another thing—if the boy we have is an impostor, where is the real prince? No, it's quite clear. The boy is my sister's son gone mad, and there's no more to it. Not another word, or you'll be expressing your doubts to the King!

(The table is set up now. Hertford turns to the Courtiers.)

Is it ready?

FIRST COURTIER: It is, Sir!

HERTFORD: *(Casting his eye over the sumptuous food:)* A spread fit for a Prince!

SECOND COURTIER: Fit for a King, Sir!

(A flourish of trumpets offstage. Hertford and the Lord Chancellor go.)

SCENE 8: TOM'S FIRST ROYAL DINNER

(At the sound of the trumpets, the row of Courtiers stand to attention behind the table, which is piled high with food—but

there is a place laid only for one. Tom is brought in by another Courtier and is led to his place. Tom moves to sit down.)

FIRST COURTIER: (*Shocked:*) Sir!

(Tom stands back up again, looking round mystified as grace is said.)

SECOND COURTIER: For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us truly thankful. Amen.

THIRD COURTIER: No one sits in the presence of the Prince of Wales. But, if I might be allowed to remind His Majesty, not even the Prince of Wales sits in the presence of *God*.

(Tom nervously sits down, recognizing that he is now expected to do so. The First Courtier pulls back his chair for him, whilst the Second Courtier fastens a napkin around his neck.)

TOM: Thank you. Your fastening is very expert.

SECOND COURTIER: Sir, it is my privilege! My family have held the post of Royal Napkin Providers to the Prince of Wales for two hundred years.

(Tom looks at the napkin carefully; too carefully, in fact. Concerned:)

You are examining it closely, my Lord. Is it not to your satisfaction?

TOM: It's fine.

THIRD COURTIER: Take it away! Fetch another! The Prince is not happy with his napkin!

(Before Tom can protest, the napkin is whisked away and another provided, as the First Courtier pours some wine – which he gives to the Fourth, who tastes it and nods; then the Third Courtier pours wine from the same bottle for Tom.)

TOM: This man is served before I am?

(He means the Fourth Courtier.)

THIRD COURTIER: He is the Royal Taster, Sir. He ensures your food and drink are not poisoned.

TOM: Ah. Does someone want to kill me?

SECOND COURTIER: We must be wary of the Spanish, Sir.

THIRD COURTIER: And perhaps the French, too.

FOURTH COURTIER: As for the Scots...

SECOND COURTIER: It is normal, Sir, for everything to pass the lips of a royal taster before it is passed to your own. Have you forgotten?

THIRD COURTIER: We have been warned that your majesty is...

FOURTH COURTIER: How shall we say...?

TOM: Out of his mind?

THIRD COURTIER: A little muddled, perhaps.

FOURTH COURTIER: In need of reminding about how things are done.

THIRD COURTIER: And about who everyone is.

FIFTH COURTIER: I am the Lord Darcy, First Groom of the Chamber. That is why I helped dress Your Majesty for dinner.

TOM: Ah, yes.

SIXTH COURTIER: I am the Lord Chief Butler.

SEVENTH COURTIER: The Lord Great Steward, Sir!

EIGHTH COURTIER: The Lord Head Cook, Sir!

TOM: Your meal...this food...I've never seen so much!

(He prepares to tuck in; various Courtiers leap to his command and pass things to him as he reaches for them.)

Remind me. How many servants do I have?

THIRD COURTIER: Three hundred and eighty-four, Sir.

TOM: Three hundred and eighty-four!

THIRD COURTIER: It is not enough?

TOM: What do they all *do*?

THIRD COURTIER: They cater for your every need, Sir.

TOM: Supposing I want a huge plate piled high with cakes and pastries in the middle of the night.

THIRD COURTIER: Then one will be prepared by the Head Cook and brought to you.

TOM: Supposing I want to see a Punch and Judy show?

THIRD COURTIER: Then the Lord Chief Steward will engage London's best Punch and Judy man, and make him give a show in the palace – just for you!

TOM: It's no fun, watching Punch and Judy on your own.

THIRD COURTIER: My Lord, you would surely not want a *rabble* intruding on your enjoyment.

TOM: Supposing I have an itchy nose.

COURTIERS: (*Muttering amongst themselves:*) An itchy nose...

TOM: Who deals with that?

FOURTH COURTIER: (*Turning to Fifth Courtier:*) That is something for the First Groom of the Chamber to deal with!

SEVENTH COURTIER: The Prince's Nursemaid!

FIFTH COURTIER: (*Turning to Seventh Courtier:*) No! The Lord Great Steward, surely...

TOM: Perhaps I should scratch it myself!

THIRD COURTIER: My Lord!

FIFTH COURTIER: The thought of it!

TOM: Perhaps there should be a newly-created post. Nose-scratcher to the Prince of Wales!

THIRD COURTIER: My Lord, an excellent suggestion. I shall see to it myself. *(Pause.)* Do you have an itchy nose, Sir?

TOM: I did. But I don't anymore. You spent too long talking about it.

(The Courtiers are all relieved. Tom goes back to his meal. He picks up a turnip.)

What's this?

EIGHTH COURTIER: That, Sir, is a turnip.

TOM: Ah. I haven't seen one before.

EIGHTH COURTIER: A wonderful delicacy, imported from Holland! As yet we don't grow them in this country.

(Tom is tasting the turnip; he doesn't like it.)

It is not to your liking?

SEVENTH COURTIER: Only the very best turnips are selected for His Majesty.

TOM: That's one of the *best*?

THIRD COURTIER: Fetch His Majesty another turnip!

TOM: No, don't worry. I won't be having another one.

THIRD COURTIER: *(With a slight bow.)* Very well, Your Majesty. As you please.

EIGHTH COURTIER: Your illness has done funny things to you, Sir. Previously, you loved turnips...

THIRD COURTIER: ...but hated nuts.

(He speaks just as Tom is stuffing some nuts into his pocket.)

TOM: Ah...I thought I'd try them later, and see if I've changed my mind. These are sold on the streets of London! A whole bag, for a farthing! Well, so I've heard.

THIRD COURTIER: Indeed. Does this mean that you have finished your meal, Sir?

(The Fourth Courtier immediately passes him a bowl of water. Tom takes one look at it and drinks the water. He sees people looking at him, flabbergasted.)

TOM: That's nice. But it has a funny taste.

THIRD COURTIER: Sir, it is rose water. Made from scented rose petals.

SECOND COURTIER: You use it for cleaning your fingers.

TOM: But they're not dirty! And even if they were, what's wrong with water from a well?

THIRD COURTIER: From a *well*?!

FIFTH COURTIER: What an amusing notion!

TOM: Isn't that where it comes from?

THIRD COURTIER: Sir, the water is provided by the Groom of the Royal Water.

TOM: *(Weary:)* Of course.

SECOND COURTIER: It is the finest there is!

TOM: He still brings it from a well, though, doesn't he!

(Tom hands the bowl back, looking unimpressed, as King Henry enters. He is walking with great difficulty, bent double over a stick; he is very irritable and breathless, and his arrival surprises everyone in the room. He is again supported by Catherine Parr.)

THIRD COURTIER: Sir!

(The Courtiers bow; Tom stands immediately, stunned, as the King moves center; then he bows, too. For a few moments, the King stands and surveys the scene.)

KING: Yes! An unannounced visit! I have come to see my son about an important matter of state...in private.

(With a flourish he sends the Courtiers away.)

SCENE 9: THE QUESTION OF THE GREAT SEAL

(The Courtiers leave, taking the remains of the food with them. The King speaks with Tom, who slowly straightens up from the deepest bow possible.)

KING: So, I see you haven't forgotten how to eat.

TOM: No, Sir. I have had no difficulty with that.

KING: *(To Catherine:)* Help me sit.

(But Tom helps him sit down; the King is obviously surprised, and flattered. To Catherine:)

Ah...Catherine! See how well the court has brought him up. He thinks to bring his old father a chair. *(Catching his breath; to Tom:)* And what about everything else? Are you beginning to remember things again?

TOM: I'm feeling a little less muddled.

KING: Good. I hope you're not listening to Hertford and the Lord Chancellor too hard.

TOM: They told me I must do everything they say!

KING: They are fools. You will still be a boy, when you become King. They will try to take advantage of that! Promise me you will watch them like hawks!

TOM: I promise, Sir.

KING: At least there's one man you won't have to worry about. The Duke of Norfolk loses his head tomorrow.

TOM: He is going to be executed?

CATHERINE PARR: For treason! Against your father!

TOM: What treason did he commit, Sir, if you don't mind me asking?

KING: I'll let you into a secret, my boy. He has committed no specific treason. But he is a powerful man and I want to get rid of him, and at last an opportunity presents itself. However, the warrant for his execution needs to have on it the mark of the Great Seal.

TOM: The Great Seal?

KING: That is why I have come to see you. You had it last.

CATHERINE PARR: The Lord Chancellor was teaching you to use it last week.

TOM: It must be my illness, Sir. I have completely forgotten.

KING: Damn this illness of yours! Edward, look me in the eye. Do you know where the seal is?

TOM: Truly I don't, Sir! Is it in a pond, somewhere?

KING: In a pond?

TOM: Well, a pond is where I would look for a giant fish.

KING: A giant fish... *(Then he gets it:)* Ha! The Great Seal! A giant fish! Catherine, he's playing a game!

TOM: I'm not, Sir! I swear!

KING: You've been giving us the runaround! You haven't lost your memory at all!

CATHERINE PARR: Now, now, dear husband, see how irritable you are getting. I can see the boy is telling the truth!

TOM: My mother's right, Sir. It's not a game, and I haven't seen the seal.

KING: Your *mother*?

TOM: The...the Queen!

CATHERINE PARR: My sweet boy, I am your father's wife, but I am not your mother!

KING: Your mother was Jane Seymour and she died just after you were born.

TOM: My mother's dead?

KING: Her funeral was one of the greatest processions London has seen! She was greatly loved, as a Queen and as a wife. She would have been well loved as a mother, too.

TOM: I have often heard people talking of a great funeral procession through the streets. It was a couple of weeks after I was born.

KING: She died from the pain of giving birth to you. Her sacrifice was England's glory. She gave the country a future King!

CATHERINE PARR: (*Attending to him:*) Sir...

KING: Ah... My wife doesn't want me getting overtired. Is it time for my afternoon nap?

CATHERINE PARR: Sir, you have already had it.

KING: Well, I shall have another one.

(Catherine helps him to stand.)

See, Edward, that one day you take a wife like Catherine. Loyal and generous, kind to a man in his forgetful old age.

TOM: I'll try my best, Sir.

KING: You are getting better. I can see the colour in your cheeks returning.

(The King is becoming increasingly frail. Walking, with a stick, he begins to head off.)

CATHERINE PARR: Edward, you must come and read to me. In French. This afternoon, while your father is sleeping. I will send for you.

(Tom watches the two of them go, and then pulls the nuts from his pockets – ready to tuck into them. But he is disturbed by the entrance of a boy, HUMPHREY MARLOW. With him is a servant.)

SERVANT: Sir!

(Tom hurriedly puts the nuts away.)

TOM: Now what?

SERVANT: Humphrey Marlow craves your attention! Will you receive him?

TOM: *(Weary:)* Go on, then.

(The Servant goes; Humphrey Marlow approaches Tom and bows.)

Who are you? *(Pause; awkward:)* You may stop bowing now.

HUMPHREY: Sir – surely you remember me.

TOM: I don't. I've been ill, you see. You'll have to remind me. You are one of my servants?

HUMPHREY: Sir, I am Humphrey Marlow! Your whipping boy!

TOM: My what?

HUMPHREY: My Lord, you will surely remember that this morning you tore your coat, during your lesson in swordsmanship, with my own father.

TOM: Did I?

HUMPHREY: You did, Sir, and your uncle decided that I should be soundly whipped as punishment for your carelessness.

TOM: You? Be whipped for something that *I* did? I don't understand.

HUMPHREY: My Lord, your memory really has gone. Let me explain. No one is ever allowed to hit you, as you are the Prince of Wales, and your person is sacred, so on the occasions that your behaviour merits a whipping, it is I that receives it.

TOM: What on earth for?

HUMPHREY: To make you feel guilty, I suppose.

TOM: It doesn't seem fair!

HUMPHREY: My Lord, it is entirely right and proper that another boy is always punished in your place.

TOM: Well, why should it be you?

HUMPHREY: I am your whipping boy! It is my profession and my livelihood!

TOM: What an extraordinary way to make a living! And you have been whipped for my carelessness?

HUMPHREY: Not yet, Your Good Majesty. The punishment is due to take place this afternoon. But I wondered if I might be so bold as to remind your grace that you promised to intercede on my behalf, saying that a whipping was too harsh a punishment.

TOM: I will speak to my uncle right away!

HUMPHREY: Ah! You *have* remembered.

TOM: No one will be allowed to beat you.

HUMPHREY: Your Grace, I thank you.

TOM: Remind me. What else have I done that you been whipped for?

HUMPHREY: Sir, just last week, you made two mistakes in your Greek translation, for which I received six strokes.

TOM: Six!

HUMPHREY: Your tutor expects much of you, Sir.

TOM: It must have hurt.

HUMPHREY: (*Rubbing his behind:*) Sir, you can't imagine.

TOM: No. I think I can.

HUMPHREY: I couldn't sit down for three days afterwards! But I am a professional. I don't let it worry me. And it is an honour to serve you.

TOM: Still, I will be more careful next time. (*Pause.*) I'm sorry.

HUMPHREY: (*Surprised:*) My Lord...

TOM: What?

HUMPHREY: Well, whenever you've said that before it's never sounded as if you actually meant it.

TOM: Well, I *do* mean it. And to make amends, I will invite you to dine with me tonight, at supper as my guest! That way I won't have to eat all on my own.

HUMPHREY: Sir, you are generous beyond words.

(He bows, and looks as if he is about to go.)

TOM: No – wait – don't go. (*Pause.*) You seem surprised.

HUMPHREY: Well, Sir, forgive me – up until now you have rarely agreed to act on my behalf.

TOM: From now on you will find me a generous master.

HUMPHREY: (*Hesitating:*) Why – thank you –

TOM: Aren't you pleased?

HUMPHREY: Well, Sir, if you are generous all of the time then I am ruined. I will have no livelihood left in the palace. I will have to seek service elsewhere.

TOM: Well then, I have an idea. You said your father teaches him – *(Corrects himself:)* Teaches *me* swordsmanship.

HUMPHREY: Why yes, Sir. He has taught me, too. Before he entered royal service, he was a crusader. One of the most fearless, it is said.

TOM: I'm feeling out of practice. You will no longer be my whipping boy. I will employ you as my fighting teacher!

HUMPHREY: Sir, it will be an honour!

TOM: We shall go into the garden this afternoon. You can show me all the techniques your father has taught you. I will be Richard the Lionheart. You will be defending the gates of Jerusalem!

HUMPHREY: Your illness has changed you for the better, Sir!

TOM: I want you to be my friend.

HUMPHREY: Sir, I can't. I am a servant.

TOM: I command it.

HUMPHREY: *(With a nervous bow:)* Sir, if you command it...

TOM: You can tell me all about life in the palace. About who everyone is. Help me get my memory back. *(Pause.)* It's quite lonely being a prince, you see.

HUMPHREY: Yes. You have said so before. But my Lord, until now you have never said that you needed a friend.

(Tom empties the nuts from his pockets.)

TOM: Are my servants fed well? Be honest.

HUMPHREY: I think so. I've never worked anywhere but the palace.

TOM: Would you like some nuts? Help yourself.

HUMPHREY: Sir – I have only ever seen such things on the Prince's dinner table!

TOM: Well, that's where they came from. Try one.

HUMPHREY: We need something to crack them open with.

TOM: I have just the thing! I found it in my room, earlier today.

(He retrieves an object from behind the table: it is a large, heavy, bell-like device with a flat base. It is, of course, the Great Seal.)

This will do!

HUMPHREY: What is it?

TOM: I don't know. But – but the Prince of Wales commands it to be a nutcracker!

HUMPHREY: Well, then it must be!

(The two boys happily use the seal to crack nuts on the table, scoffing them busily.)

SCENE 10: THE RIVER PAGEANT

(A change of lighting to indicate a change of scene and time. We hear the song, "Pastime With Good Company," whose composition is attributed to King Henry VIII. When it is finished the lights come up on a wholly different scene: a group of Courtiers and Paupers have assembled, standing in a line – as if on the banks of the river; they are watching the Royal Pageant go past. It is evening, and the lighting is low; some of the crowd carry lanterns. There is the sound of oars cutting the water. Immediately as the music ends:)

FIRST COURTIER: See how the river is ablaze with light!

FIRST PAUPER: The bridges decked out with coloured lanterns!

SECOND PAUPER: I can see them! I can see them! The boats are coming!

THIRD PAUPER: A file of barges draws up to the steps of the great palace.

SECOND COURTIER: Forty of them!

THIRD COURTIER: More! Fifty!

FOURTH COURTIER: There are banners and streamers, fashioned from arras and cloth of gold, and emblazoned with coats-of-arms.

FIFTH COURTIER: This one, the emblem of England; this one now, the King's own standard; and there—the coat of arms of the Prince of Wales.

CROWD: The Prince! The Prince! The Prince!

SIXTH COURTIER: There are dancers and musicians. A song is heard, composed by the King's own hand.

FOURTH COURTIER: A carpet is unrolled.

SEVENTH COURTIER: Attendants line either side, resplendent in gold and crimson, as the Prince leaves his palace and is welcomed onto his own Royal Barge.

(A flourish of trumpets.)

SIXTH PAUPER: The river pageant has begun!

FIFTH PAUPER: From the Palace of Westminster to the Guildhall, all London lines the banks, straining for a view.

SEVENTH PAUPER: In one boat is the Sergeant of the City Guard; in the next, the knights of the bath, each with white lace on his sleeve; then the judges, in their scarlet robes.

EIGHTH COURTIER: Then the parties of the Spanish Ambassador, and the French Ambassador, and the Representatives of His Imperial Majesty, the Tsar of Russia.

FIRST COURTIER: The Dukes of Somerset, Northumberland, Kent and Buckingham.

SECOND COURTIER: (*Announcing:*) The high and mighty, the Lord Edward, Prince of Wales!

(The crowd applauds.)

EIGHTH PAUPER: And Tom Canty, the cause and hero of it all, steps into view on the prow of the ship, and bows his princely head.

FIRST COURTIER: He wears a doublet of white satin, powdered with diamonds and edged with ermine...

SECOND COURTIER: ...and over it a mantle of white cloth-of-gold, lined with blue satin, set with pearls and precious stones.

THIRD COURTIER: Wherever light falls upon him, jewels respond with a blinding flash.

FIRST PAUPER: O Tom Canty, born in a hovel, bred in the gutters of London, familiar with rags and dirt and misery, what a spectacle is this!

SCENE 11: THE PRINCE'S TROUBLES BEGIN

(On this, most of the crowd leaves – or becomes part of the next scene: a London street. The lights change to indicate another change of time and location. We are now amidst the streets and bustle of the city of London. A STALLHOLDER – one of the Paupers – stands over a cart laden with vegetables; people queue up to buy produce from her – including Nan, Tom's sister. They talk as the stallholder serves them in turn. Each one leaves the scene after they pay for their purchase.)

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FIRST PAUPER: Such a wonderful occasion!

SECOND PAUPER: More satin and lace than you'd ever set eyes on!

THIRD PAUPER: How fine the young prince looked.

FOURTH PAUPER: Hey, Nan – what Tom would have given to be on one of those boats with their Lords, high and mighty!

NAN: We don't know where Tom is.

FOURTH PAUPER: He'll have his head in a book somewhere. Tales of kings and princes!

NAN: Lost in dreamland, our father says.

FIFTH PAUPER: Perhaps he's run away to become a servant in the royal household.

FOURTH PAUPER: Hah! If he's lucky he'll get to clean the palace latrines...

THIRD PAUPER: ...or be the Prince's whipping boy!

FIFTH PAUPER: If he's *lucky* he'll rid himself of John Canty, once and for all, that's for sure.

(They are so busy talking they haven't seen Edward – dressed in Tom's clothes, of course, and looking like him – saunter boldly up to the cart and pick an apple off it.)

STALLHOLDER: Hey! What d'you think you're doing!

FIRST PAUPER: There's a queue here!

NAN: Tom!

(Edward has taken a bite from the apple.)

STALLHOLDER: Are you going to pay for that apple?

EDWARD: Pay?

(Nan harangues Edward from one side, while the Stallholder nags him from the other.)

NAN: Our father's looking for you!

STALLHOLDER: A farthing, that'll be.

EDWARD: Our father? My father is at this moment in the palace, talking with the French Ambassador!

(The Stallholders laugh, mocking him. He takes another bite from the apple. The Stallholder grabs his arm.)

STALLHOLDER: Where's my money?

EDWARD: Get off me! *(Shaking her off:)* The Prince of Wales doesn't pay. You will all show proper respect for the future King of England!

FIFTH PAUPER: "Proper respect"!

FOURTH PAUPER: It's one of his games again!

THIRD PAUPER: You make us laugh, Tom Canty. You and your make-believe!

(There is more mocking laughter – as John Canty, who has been watching the scene for some time, comes up behind Edward and collars him. Beth is with him. He is in a filthy mood.)

JOHN CANTY: Found you at last, you useless piece of vermin! I'll warrant you've brought nothing home for your poor mother and me.

(Edward wriggles free from him; John Canty takes the apple from the boy.)

An apple! Is that all?

EDWARD: You should bow before speaking to me!

JOHN CANTY: Don't play games with me, boy. I'll break every bone in your body!

EDWARD: You will do no such thing. You will take me to the palace right away – and to my real father!

JOHN CANTY: The palace? Your real father?

FOURTH PAUPER: Tom Canty's gone properly mad, John. He thinks he's the Prince of Wales!

JOHN CANTY: He does, does he?

(John Canty grabs the struggling boy again, holding him so he cannot speak. Father Andrew is nearby; he approaches.)

FATHER ANDREW: John Canty, leave the boy alone!

SECOND PAUPER: Father Andrew! Be careful!

JOHN CANTY: You! You're the cause of this madness! Putting ideas into his head from all that learning!

(John Canty lashes out; Father Andrew falls to the ground. There is a gasp of fear from the Paupers, a couple of whom run to his aid.)

Nan, Beth...you'd better be coming home with me.

(Edward is still struggling; John Canty thumps him on the head and then picks him up, putting him over his shoulder. The girls stand there, stunned and motionless.)

Nan! Beth! Home! You heard! Or you'll get the same as your brother!

(John Canty leaves with Beth and Nan in tow. Meanwhile some Paupers drag the body of Father Andrew onto the vegetable seller's cart – and leave, hastily, with it.)

SCENE 12: THE PRINCE IN THE TOILS

(The Canty house in Offal Court. Mrs. Canty stands by a basin, scrubbing and cleaning; she is startled by shouts and cries offstage. It is the sound of Edward being beaten. Then, the four of them come on – John Canty, holding a belt and dragging Edward,

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with Nan and Beth following meekly behind. John Canty pushes Edward, upset and frightened and rubbing his behind after the thrashing he has received, towards Nan and Beth, who comfort him.)

JOHN CANTY: Don't worry about him. He's been knocked about a bit, that's all. Look! He's stolen an apple for us!

(He shows them the apple.)

Come on, lad. Tell us again who you are!

EDWARD: I've told you—I am Edward, Prince of Wales! What's more, my person is sacred, and no one is ever allowed to hit me. I will see that you hang for this!

JOHN CANTY: Will you. Well, I'll take you to the scaffold with me, for company!

(Edward looks at him, dazed.)

Begging and theft! Capital offences they are, both of them!

(John Canty nastily puts his face in front of Edward's and eats the apple while Mrs. Canty looks on.)

MRS. CANTY: O John, the poor lad. All his books and reading, they've finally sent him mad!

EDWARD: Good lady, your son isn't mad. He is in the palace, as I have said. Take me there, to my father the King, and you will get him back.

(Mrs. Canty approaches Edward, despairingly.)

MRS. CANTY: Tom, please shake off this horrid dream. Look me in the eye. I'm your mother!

EDWARD: You aren't. My mother is dead. I have never seen you before in my life.

(Mrs. Canty withdraws, distressed.)

JOHN CANTY: Nan! Beth! Where are your manners! How dare you stand in the prince's presence! On your knees, pauper scum, and show him the respect he deserves!

(The girls go down on their knees. John Canty laughs, mockingly.)

NAN: Father, please!

BETH: It's true what you say. He's mad, but he's been like this before; let's all go to bed, so that he can sleep it off.

NAN: He'll be himself again tomorrow!

JOHN CANTY: *(Grabbing Edward by his collar:)* So he will, and tomorrow he'll go begging, and bring back two pennies—no less, mind—so that I can pay the half year's rent. Or we'll all be out of this place on our ears!

EDWARD: Leave me alone. I tell you for the last time: I am the King's son!

JOHN CANTY: Really? We'll see about that!

(John Canty approaches Edward with the belt. He is about to give him another thrashing, but Mrs. Canty intervenes.)

MRS. CANTY: No, John, you've hit him enough and it's done no good. There's another way. Let him sleep, like Beth said.

(Lights go down; they have been extinguished in the streets outside. John Canty considers his wife's proposal.)

JOHN CANTY: You're lucky, boy. It's too dark to hit you properly. The lights in the street are out. *(To them all:)* If he's still like this tomorrow you'll all know about it. Now to bed, the lot of you!

(A flurry of activity as the family prepare for the night: each has some blankets and chooses a corner in which to bed down. Mrs. Canty blows out a lamp that sits nearby. Edward stands there, motionless.)

MRS. CANTY: Tom, please... See what he'll do to us all, if you go on like this.

(She hands him some bedclothes.)

EDWARD: Make the bed up for me!

(Mrs. Canty does so, and helps Edward into it.)

I will lie down. But I will not sleep.

(But he is asleep, almost at once. Mrs. Canty retreats.)

MRS. CANTY: *(Nudging Beth:)* Beth...Beth...Are you awake?

BETH: Yes.

(As they watch Edward:)

MRS. CANTY: Will he get better?

BETH: Better? He can't get better.

MRS. CANTY: What do you mean?

BETH: Can't you see? He's not Tom.

MRS. CANTY: What are you talking about? Of course he's Tom!

BETH: He's different. See the way he's sleeping...on his side, with his mouth closed. Our Tom has slept on his back since the day he was born, but never on his side!

MRS. CANTY: His madness has done strange things to him.

BETH: It's as if he's another boy entirely!

MRS. CANTY: How can he be?

BETH: All his talk of being the Prince of Wales—

MRS. CANTY: Beth, he's always been a dreamer. No, he's my own son, gone mad. Otherwise, who else would he be? The Prince of Wales himself? Here, in Offal Court?

(Their conversation is interrupted by a knocking at the door. John Canty wakes and stumbles to the door.)

JOHN CANTY: Who's that?

CHILD: *(Outside door:)* Sir—open the door. I have an urgent message for you!

(John Canty opens the door. The CHILD stands there, breathless.)

Sir—I was sent to tell you, Sir—the man you struck, earlier today. Father Andrew...

JOHN CANTY: What of him?

CHILD: He's dead, Sir. Given up the ghost, Sir—and the justices are after you, Sir—

MRS. CANTY: God have mercy!

CHILD: They have charged you with murder, Sir!

JOHN CANTY: *(Turns to the room:)* We must leave at once. Up with you all! We're leaving!

(He rapidly removes the covering from the beds of Nan and Edward.)

Out of bed! Now!

(John Canty throws all the bed coverings to one side. The family moves around, dazed. Mrs. Canty attends to Edward.)

Mind your tongues, all of you. Our name isn't Canty anymore. It's *Hobbs*. That'll throw them off the scent! Stick close to me. If we are separated, we will meet by the south gate of London Bridge!

(There is a rush as they prepare to escape with their belongings. As they do so, a number of Paupers appear—their narration providing the link to the next scene, which again takes place on the streets of London.)

SCENE 13: THE KING IS DEAD – LONG LIVE THE KING!

(Paupers emerge carrying torches to create a street scene. We are outside the Guildhall.)

FIRST PAUPER: The Canty family burst suddenly into the midst of a multitude of singing, dancing, and shouting people...

SECOND PAUPER: A line of bonfires stretched as far as one could see, up and down the Thames.

THIRD PAUPER: London Bridge was illuminated.

FOURTH PAUPER: Southwark Bridge too...

FIFTH PAUPER: While a thick rain of dazzling sparks from fireworks filled the sky with coloured lights.

SIXTH PAUPER: On the river, the glorious pageant was reaching its end. The Royal Barge had delivered its precious princely passenger to the Guildhall for the Lord Mayor's Banquet.

(There is music and noise; the stage is filled with people; some are carrying lanterns, as it is dark. In the distance there are flashes from fireworks. John Canty is leading his family through the throng; he holds Edward tightly by the hand, while Mrs. Canty helps Nan and Beth. They are stopped in their tracks by a burly BOATMAN and his WIFE. Soon a small crowd of Paupers gathers round, sensing the start of a scuffle or fight.)

BOATMAN: Hey, hey! Not so fast. What's your business when everyone else is celebrating?

JOHN CANTY: Out of my way.

BOATMAN'S WIFE: You must drink to the Prince of Wales!

(John Canty is startled but keeps a tight grip on Edward. A large two-handed bowl has been thrust in front of him.)

PAUPERS: A drink! Make him drink!

BOATMAN: We will not let you past until you have shown proper respect to His Royal Highness.

BOATMAN'S WIFE: Drink, man, or we will drop you in the river and feed you to the fishes!

(Reluctantly, John Canty takes the bowl with both hands – and drinks. This, of course, means he must let go of Edward, who slips away into the crowd.)

JOHN CANTY: The boy's gone! Catch him, someone!

FIRST PAUPER: The prince wasted no time.

SECOND PAUPER: He dived among the forest of legs about him, and disappeared.

(Edward re-emerges in another part of the crowd and speaks to a Pauper.)

EDWARD: Which way is it to the Guildhall?

PAUPER: You'll never get a glimpse of the Prince of Wales there. The crowd's ten deep!

EDWARD: Tell me!

PAUPER: Follow this road straight. But you're better off watching from Southwark Bridge!

(But Edward has gone, diving back into the throng. He re-emerges in another part of the stage – where some GUARDS have appeared.)

EDWARD: Is this the Guildhall?

FIRST GUARD: It is, Sir.

EDWARD: Let me in! I am the Prince of Wales!

SECOND GUARD: Sir, the Prince of Wales is inside!

EDWARD: He is an impostor! I am the true Prince of Wales!

(A small crowd has gathered to watch this strange scene. Among them is MILES HENDON, a country squire.)

FIRST GUARD: An impostor!

SECOND GUARD: Hark at him! His big words!

(The crowd begins to laugh at Edward, pushing and joshing him. Miles comes forward.)

FOURTH PAUPER: Throw him from London Bridge!

MILES HENDON: Leave him alone!

(Miles Hendon hides Edward behind him. The First Guard calls for help.)

FIRST GUARD: Constable!

(A CONSTABLE approaches.)

CONSTABLE: Is there trouble here?

FIRST GUARD: This boy wants to gain access to the Guildhall, Sir.

MILES HENDON: It's all right, Constable. Boyish high spirits, that's all. The celebrations have gone to his head!

(John Canty emerges from the crowd.)

JOHN CANTY: There you are!

(But Miles Hendon has drawn his sword. John Canty is powerless to react.)

CONSTABLE: And who are you, Sir?

JOHN CANTY: Why, I am the boy's father!

EDWARD: He's not. He's lying!

CONSTABLE: *(Referring to Miles Hendon:)* Isn't this man here his father?

(John Canty moves to take Edward.)

MILES HENDON: Not so fast!

(John Canty backs off as the scene is interrupted by a flourish of trumpets; there is a hush. The Messenger addresses the crowd.)

MESSENGER: Listen all! I come with a solemn message from the Palace of Westminster. The King is dead. By the grace of God... Long live the King!

(A murmur goes through the crowd; someone shouts:)

FIRST PAUPER: At last, the reign of blood is over!

SECOND PAUPER: Long live Edward, King of England!

CROWD: Long live Edward, King of England!

EDWARD: But that's *me!*

(More shouts from another part of the crowd:)

THIRD PAUPER: There he is! John Canty, the murderer of Father Andrew!

FOURTH PAUPER: Constable, arrest that man for murder.

JOHN CANTY: *(To Constable:)* Sir, I am not John Canty. My name is Hobbs and this is my son, Jack.

FOURTH PAUPER: He's lying! He's John Canty, sure as night follows day!

JOHN CANTY: *(To Edward:)* Jack! Come with me!

(But the crowd is pushing John Canty onward; led by the Constable, the mob is soon on his heels. Miles Hendon is left with Edward.)

MILES HENDON: Are you all right?

EDWARD: *(Dazed:)* I am King...

(There are still some Paupers around who sneer at him nastily. One of them mimes picking up a stone from the ground; he

"throws" it at Edward's feet. Edward jumps out of the way just in time.)

FOURTH PAUPER: Ha! Long to reign over us!

MILES HENDON: Leave him be. You've had your fun. *(To Edward:)* You'd better come with me. It's not safe for you here!

EDWARD: But —

MILES HENDON: *(Holding out his hand:)* I haven't introduced myself. Miles Hendon. And you're Jack, I believe.

EDWARD: *(Shaking his hand:)* No, I'm not Jack. I'm Tom...no...I'm...I don't know *who* I am!

MILES HENDON: Well, whoever you are, I seem to have rescued you. Come on, before any more stones come flying in your direction!

(Another stone wings its way towards Edward. Miles Hendon leads him away as the curtain falls on Act I.)

ACT II**SCENE 1: THE PRINCE AND HIS DELIVERER**

(The Tabard Inn, Southwark. The stage is still divided, as it was at the opening of Act I. This scene takes places in the "poor" half of the stage. Edward sleeps soundly on the floor, wrapped in blankets. Miles Hendon sits close by on a stool. Miles Hendon's servant, STEPHEN, noisily enters the room with a plate of food – and Miles shushes him firmly.)

MILES HENDON: Shhh – the boy is sleeping. Put it next to him for when he wakes.

STEPHEN: *(Doing so:)* Does he still think he is the King of England?

MILES HENDON: Look at the peaceful expression on his face. I hope his troubles have left him.

STEPHEN: You don't think it is a game then, Sir.

MILES HENDON: I think it is an illness caused by one too many blows to the head from that vile father of his. Hobbs, did he say his name was?

STEPHEN: It's not Hobbs, Sir. It's John Canty. Everyone knows him. He changed his name because he's on the run. Killed a man, people are saying.

MILES HENDON: He seems a nasty bit of work, whatever his name is.

STEPHEN: Will you still be travelling today, Sir?

MILES HENDON: I can't stay a day longer in London. But I can't leave the boy to mercy of that mob. So it looks like he'll have to come with me.

STEPHEN: *(Leaving:)* I will ensure that your horses are prepared, Sir.

MILES HENDON: Stephen—if he is not cured, then we will have to play along with him. Humour him. That might help him to get better.

STEPHEN: You mean we should address him as "Your Royal Highness, Prince Edward," Sir?

MILES HENDON: Not at the moment. "Jack" will do. It's what his father was calling him. Although he seemed to be saying his name was "Tom," too... I think there might be more to this curious boy than meets the eye, although I wish I could say exactly what.

(Stephen leaves just as Edward wakes and stretches and looks around.)

Good morning! There's wine and smoked ham for breakfast. *(Pause.)* Is anything wrong?

EDWARD: Where am I?

MILES HENDON: The Tabard Inn—in Southwark. Have a look out of the window! You can see London Bridge.

EDWARD: An inn? London Bridge?

MILES HENDON: I brought you here last night.

EDWARD: You rescued me from all those people!

MILES HENDON: You were lucky. You were causing a lot of trouble, telling everyone you were the King of England.

EDWARD: Thank God someone realized I was, though.

MILES HENDON: I thought you seemed in need of a friend. You stood up for yourself well. I've always admired someone with courage. That's the soldier in me, I suppose.

EDWARD: You think I'm making it all up, don't you?

MILES HENDON: Some food and a rest will put you right!

EDWARD: (*Rubbing his eyes:*) There's mud on my face.

MILES HENDON: You'll find a well in the yard outside, if you want to get clean.

EDWARD: A *well*? Water is usually brought to me by the Groom of the Royal Water!

MILES HENDON: I see. At the moment, he's not here.

EDWARD: What about that jug of water over there? Fetch it for me, and a towel.

(Miles fetches him the water and towel and places it in front of him. Throughout this scene, he is both amused and annoyed by the Prince's manner.)

MILES HENDON: Anything else?

EDWARD: I can't use the water *in* the jug, can I?

(After a moment's hesitation, Miles pours the water into the bowl and passes Edward the towel. Edward kneels and washes his face – before realizing something:)

You are sitting in the presence of the King!

MILES HENDON: So I am!

EDWARD: I could send you to the Tower!

MILES HENDON: (*Standing:*) Happy now?

EDWARD: What's your name?

MILES HENDON: I introduced myself to you last night. But you have forgotten.

(They shake hands.)

Miles Hendon. Son of Sir Walter Hendon, the fourth Baron of Hendon Hall.

EDWARD: I've never heard of you.

MILES HENDON: I admit we are not a powerful family. But in our little corner of Kent...well, everyone knows us there.

EDWARD: I went to Kent once. With my father. To a place called Dover. He was looking at all his warships there. It was a bit boring, really.

MILES HENDON: My house is nowhere near Dover. It's right out in the countryside, surrounded by woods and orchards. It's where I grew up, and it's where I'm going today!

EDWARD: It sounds nice. But it can't be nicer than the Palace of Westminster.

MILES HENDON: No. I suspect it isn't. But it's been seven long years since I was last there. I've been abroad, fighting in Europe mainly. I can't wait to see the old place again!

EDWARD: Who were you fighting?

MILES HENDON: Whoever I was paid to. I was a mercenary. A paid soldier. Here—a scar from when I fought for the French against the Spanish; and here—another scar, this one from when I fought for the Spanish against the French. I served in the armies of two dukes, three princes and four kings.

EDWARD: Were you ever captured?

MILES HENDON: I was nearly executed, twice!

EDWARD: It sounds as if Hendon Hall would have been much safer.

MILES HENDON: So it would have been. But I couldn't stay there. I was banished, you see, by my father.

EDWARD: Banished?

MILES HENDON: I fell in love with a girl—my cousin, Edith. She is rich, and very beautiful. But my father had agreed that

she should marry my brother, Hugh; he told me to leave England so that I would not prevent Hugh marrying her.

EDWARD: Did your brother – Hugh – love this lady, Edith?

MILES HENDON: Not as much as I did.

EDWARD: And now?

MILES HENDON: My father is dead. I am returning home to claim Edith as my bride.

EDWARD: What will Hugh say?

MILES HENDON: (*Drawing a sword.*) That remains to be seen.

(The sword hovers under Edward's nose.)

EDWARD: I was going to be married, once.

MILES HENDON: Really?

EDWARD: To Mary, Queen of Scots.

MILES HENDON: Indeed.

EDWARD: My father told me I would marry her when I was sixteen. But she married the King of France instead.

MILES HENDON: Well, young Sir, it sounds as if both of us have been unlucky in love.

EDWARD: You have been unluckier. Your heart has been broken and you have been away from England too long. Give me your sword and kneel in front of me.

(Bemused, Miles does so; Edward "knight" him with his own sword.)

I dub you Sir Miles Hendon of Hendon Hall. You are the most faithful of my knights. Tell me, what special privilege do you claim?

MILES HENDON: The right...the right to sit in the presence of the King of England!

EDWARD: Your wish is granted!

(Miles sits back down on the stool.)

MILES HENDON: And now, My Lord, you may finish your breakfast. We will leave in an hour.

EDWARD: For the palace?

MILES HENDON: For Hendon Hall!

EDWARD: Well, I won't be coming with you.

MILES HENDON: There are woods and fields there. You could ride, or go hunting. All the things I used to do when I was a boy! The fresh air would clear your head!

EDWARD: I have to prepare for my coronation!

MILES HENDON: You have to get better, my friend. And I can't simply throw you back out on the streets.

EDWARD: My people will cheer me on the way to the Abbey.

MILES HENDON: I think the last thing "your people" will do is cheer you!

EDWARD: I'm supposed to be meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury right this minute!

MILES HENDON: Well, he'll just have to be kept waiting. And besides, you can't meet the Archbishop of Canterbury in those clothes, can you?

EDWARD: You're right. I can't. You should buy me some new ones!

MILES HENDON: That's what I was about to suggest! I don't want you getting mud all over Hendon Hall. I know an excellent tailor with a shop on London Bridge.

(He looks Edward up and down.)

What have you been doing to get so muddy?

EDWARD: Playing on the river bank!

MILES HENDON: An odd thing for the King of England to be doing.

EDWARD: Baron Hendon, yesterday I was lucky enough to see how the people of England really live. But now my father is dead, I really must return to the palace. You will be rewarded handsomely for rescuing me.

MILES HENDON: Yes. Well, when I have returned from my tailor's, then if you still want to return to the palace, you can perhaps explain to me how you come to look as you do now.

EDWARD: I will. It's a long story!

MILES HENDON: In the meantime, your ham is getting cold. I won't be long. My servant, Stephen, is around if you need anything.

(Miles goes, leaving Edward alone on stage, busy finishing his breakfast. After a few moments, a man comes in. He is HUGO, the leader of a gang of thieves and vagabonds. John Canty is with him but hangs back, watching this scene from a distance.)

EDWARD: Are you Stephen?

HUGO: *(Cautious:)* Yes...

(He is quite clearly not Stephen, however.)

EDWARD: Sir Miles has gone to London Bridge to buy me some new clothes.

HUGO: He sent me to fetch you. You must meet him by the south gate.

EDWARD: Why?

HUGO: He needs to know the size of jacket that you require.

EDWARD: Sir Miles really has poor manners, you know. It would have been better if he had come for me himself. Still, no matter. You may take me to him!

(They go out one way. Edward catches sight of John Canty and realizes he has been tricked, just as Miles and Stephen come in another way. Miles now carries a small package – the new clothes he has bought for Edward.)

MILES HENDON: If we leave now, we will be able to make it to Greenwich for lunch. *(Looks around:)* The boy! Where's he gone?!

STEPHEN: He was here just a moment ago!

MILES HENDON: This is that vile Canty's doing. Where will they have gone, Stephen? You must help me find him. Come on – there's not a moment to lose!

(They head off frantically.)

SCENE 2: THE REIGN OF BLOOD IS ENDED

(Crossfade to the "rich" part of the stage – the Royal Palace – where Tom Canty sits on a throne nibbling on some chicken legs. He shares the plate with Humphrey Marlow, who sits on a stool beside him. The Lord Chancellor approaches with a noblewoman, LADY NORFOLK, and with Edward Tudor's half-sister, the PRINCESS MARY. The Servant stands to one side.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: My Lord...

TOM: Back to discussing my coronation, I suppose.

LORD CHANCELLOR: The Archbishop of Canterbury would like to speak with you.

TOM: This woman is the Archbishop of Canterbury?

LORD CHANCELLOR: No, Sir. This woman is Lady Norfolk. She won't keep you long.

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TOM: What does she want?

(She curtsies to him.)

MARY: Her husband, the Duke of Norfolk, was rightfully sentenced to be executed by our father, King Henry, before he died.

HUMPHREY: You remember, my Lord. You said he spoke to you about it.

MARY: She is here to beg for clemency.

LORD CHANCELLOR: A formality. The sentence will be carried out this afternoon.

LADY NORFOLK: Sir, if you please...my husband committed no treason. There wasn't even a trial!

LORD CHANCELLOR: The Archbishop is waiting, Sir.

TOM: Let him! I will hear what this woman has to say.

LADY NORFOLK: Sir, if you have it in your heart to show mercy...

(Tom and Humphrey talk quietly for a moment, after which Tom pronounces judgment.)

TOM: Good lady, your husband will not die today.

LADY NORFOLK: Sir—by God's blessing, you are merciful indeed!

TOM: He will be released from the Tower and a proper trial will be arranged.

MARY: This is most irregular, Sir.

TOM: This woman is right to protest. My father told me there's no evidence her husband was guilty.

LORD CHANCELLOR: Sir—

TOM: I command it! The King's word is law!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Very well. *(To the servant:)* Have word sent to the Tower.

TOM: *(To Lady Norfolk:)* You seem surprised by my judgment.

LADY NORFOLK: It is more than I could ever wish for, Sir.

TOM: Humphrey! You were on the streets of London yesterday, when it was announced my father was dead. What was it the crowd was shouting?

HUMPHREY: "The Reign of Blood is over!" I heard them chant it over and over again!

TOM: And so, Lady Norfolk, no more blood will be shed in my father's name.

LADY NORFOLK: God bless you again, Sir!

(Lady Norfolk departs with the servant, following a nod from the Lord Chancellor.)

MARY: Sir, I must be allowed to say how damaging these actions are—

TOM: To show mercy is a sign of strength, not weakness!

MARY: You are disregarding England's ancient and traditional laws!

TOM: They may be ancient and traditional. But they are also cruel.

MARY: I heard that this morning you let a man go completely free after he had been sentenced to hang for the charge of theft.

TOM: The only evidence against him came from a witch!

MARY: Whom you also freed!

HUMPHREY: She was only nine years old!

MARY: She had sold her soul to the devil!

HUMPHREY: She was mad. She didn't know what she was doing. And her mother was mad too. It was plain for all to see. My master did the right thing.

MARY: They were both sentenced to be drowned.

TOM: But now, by the King's will, they are still alive. I sent them to live in a holy convent.

MARY: Do you know how many thieves were executed under the godly reign of our father?

TOM: I dread to think.

MARY: Seventy-two thousand!

TOM: And how many of them had stolen because they had nothing to eat?

MARY: That doesn't matter. They sinned against God, and against the laws of England too.

TOM: Is it true that you think laughing is a sin? That you forbid your servants to smile, in case they form a pact with the devil?

MARY: Who told you that?

TOM: Madam, you must not question the King.

MARY: God is insulted by laughter.

TOM: Well then, go and ask Him to provide you with a human heart. *(To the Lord Chancellor:)* See my sister out, please.

(The Lord Chancellor takes Mary out. Meanwhile Tom and Humphrey pick up their swords – and begin, tenuously, "fighting" with them – with Humphrey clearly the teacher, Tom the pupil.)

MARY: The King is clearly mad. His illness hasn't left him!

LORD CHANCELLOR: Princess Mary, his father's law still stands. I could consider that treason. And anyway, he is much better now.

(The Lord Chancellor returns to Tom, busy now in a slow "practice" sword fight with Humphrey. Tom is trying out some new moves under his teacher's guidance.)

TOM: This must be a better life for you, Humphrey.

HUMPHREY: Sir, it is! It's only now that I've stopped being your whipping boy that I've realized what a rotten profession it is!

TOM: I am glad to have you as my trusted adviser.

HUMPHREY: Sir, I hope that you will soon be able to call me your friend, too, as you wished.

(The boys look as if they are about to begin a proper fight, but the Lord Chancellor is approaching Tom, somewhat exasperated.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Sir, if I might interrupt your game, there is much to be done. Your father is to be buried in four days' time, and there is the matter of your coronation to deal with.

(Tom puts down his sword and turns to him.)

TOM: In four days! Won't he...go off?

(Lord Hertford has brought on a coronation robe for Tom to try on. He does so, as he talks with the Lord Chancellor.)

LORD CHANCELLOR: Go off? Sir, your father's body is being attended to by skilled embalmers. He is not like some common pauper, buried the afternoon he dies!

TOM: No. Of course. *(To Hertford:)* That one's too tight. Fetch another. *(Pause; to the Lord Chancellor:)* Where is he now?

LORD CHANCELLOR: He is lying in state, Sir, in the Chapel Royal.

(The Servant shows in THOMAS CRANMER, the Archbishop of Canterbury.)

Archbishop Cranmer. Welcome.

ARCHBISHOP: I apologize for my lateness, Lord Chancellor. *(To Tom:)* Your mention of the Chapel Royal leads me to invite His Majesty to pray there with me.

LORD CHANCELLOR: After we've gone through the arrangements for the coronation.

TOM: Very well. Perhaps we can do that in the garden.

ARCHBISHOP: A very fine idea, Your Majesty. I know how much you like it there.

TOM: Humphrey can come too! We can go on with our sword-fighting lesson afterwards. Isn't that a fine idea as well, Humphrey?

HUMPHREY: It is, Sir. In fact lately, Your Majesty, all your ideas have been fine ones.

(They go; we do not see Tom again until the coronation.)

SCENE 3: FOO-FOO THE FIRST, KING OF THE MOONCALVES

(A change of lighting to indicate a shift in scene and time. We hear the ancient English tune, "Greensleeves." As it ends, we are in a wood outside London; there is birdsong and the sound of the wind in the trees. A company of THIEVES and vagabonds has gathered. The Thieves are probably played by the same performers as the London Poor and comprise men, women and children. The Fourth Thief has a musical instrument of some kind that he is strumming gently as the scene opens; others are sitting or lounging around. It is a hazy, lazy afternoon.)

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FIRST THIEF: (*Drunk:*) A song! Play us another.

SECOND THIEF: If he plays another, I'll wrap the thing around his neck!

FIRST THIEF: It'll sound better then!

THIRD THIEF: Oh, lay off him and let him play.

FOURTH THIEF: (*Strumming gently and singing:*) There was a woman in our town, in our town did dwell...she loved her husband dearly, but another man – he loved she...

(The Second Thief makes a drunken and unsuccessful lunge at the musician, who kicks him back – but stops playing, as John Canty has turned up dragging Edward, whom he throws to the ground.)

THIRD THIEF: Well, if it isn't John Canty!

FOURTH THIEF: Welcome, stranger. Want a beer?

FIFTH THIEF: That your boy, John Canty? Last time you were here, he wasn't much taller than a tree stump.

JOHN CANTY: (*Taking a beer from the Fourth Thief:*) It's not Canty anymore.

(Hugo enters as the Fifth Thief speaks.)

FIFTH THIEF: You on the run?

HUGO: He killed a man. In London.

FIFTH THIEF: Accident, I'll bet.

JOHN CANTY: I'm John Hobbs now. Hobbs.

HUGO: The boy's Jack.

FOURTH THIEF: I thought he was called Tom.

JOHN CANTY: He's *Jack* now!

THIRD THIEF: (*Looking closely at Edward:*) Is he any use to us?

JOHN CANTY: He'll prove himself, given time.

SIXTH THIEF: There's men round these parts, John, who can still remember *your* thieving, from when you were a boy.

THIRD THIEF: (*Nudging Edward:*) Is Jack Hobbs going to do his old man proud?

JOHN CANTY: He ran away from me. Got himself some fine gentleman as a friend. I was loyal when I was a boy.

(John Canty kicks Tom; Hugo intervenes and makes John withdraw.)

HUGO: John, he's had a long journey. All day trussed up in a sack in the back of a cart.

FIFTH THIEF: Poor mite. Find him some water.

THIRD THIEF: Bet he made a fuss!

SECOND THIEF: He needs beer! Not water!

(Scoffing laughter. The Fifth Thief finds a beaker of water and gives it to Edward while they keep talking.)

THIRD THIEF: (*Still with Edward:*) Doesn't say much, does he?

SIXTH THIEF: Where's his gentleman friend?

HUGO: We gave him the slip. I fooled the boy by pretending to be the man's servant.

FOURTH THIEF: He fell for that?

THIRD THIEF: The boy's too dim to be a thief.

HUGO: Needs training up. That's all.

SIXTH THIEF: Hey! Jack! What can you nick?

(Edward looks at him blankly. The Third and Fourth Thieves gather round him threateningly.)

FOURTH THIEF: Could you take a pig from a farm under your coat and cut its throat to stop it squealing?

(The Third Thief turns around and lifts his shirt; there are welts across his back.)

THIRD THIEF: See that? Whipped through three towns for stealing, I was, till the blood ran cold.

FOURTH THIEF: Look—no ear. It was cut cleanly off as punishment for begging.

THIRD THIEF: It's a crime in England, you know, to be hungry.

FOURTH THIEF: Let's drink...to English law!

(In drunken, hazy agreement, the rest of the company lift their bottles and glasses: "To English Law.")

EDWARD: *(To the Seventh Thief:)* There is a mark on your cheek.

SIXTH THIEF: Ha! It talks!

(The Second Thief forces a beer bottle to Edward's lips.)

SECOND THIEF: Get some of that down you. Talk some more!

EDWARD: It's the letter "S."

SIXTH THIEF: And it can *read*, too!

SEVENTH THIEF: "S" for "Slave," boy. I was caught begging three times. I had this brand put on me. A hot iron against my cheek, so that my sins were clear for everyone to see.

THIRD THIEF: He's on the run now, like your old father.

SEVENTH THIEF: Know what'll happen when they find me?

SIXTH THIEF: Hanging's the punishment for runaway slaves.

EDWARD: No! He won't be hanged! *(To the Seventh Thief:)* I'm going to see to it that the law is changed!

FIRST THIEF: Changed? Who are you, thinking you can change the laws of our land?

EDWARD: I am Edward, King of England.

(They fall about, laughing.)

FIRST THIEF: Listen to him!

THIRD THIEF: How much beer has the manikin had?

JOHN CANTY: My son is a dreamer. Ignore him.

EDWARD: *(To John:)* I *am* the King, as you'll find out to your cost. You murdered a man and will hang for it!

JOHN CANTY: How dare you!

(He makes a lunge for Edward but is pushed back by the First Thief.)

FIRST THIEF: Not so fast, John Hobbs. Leave him be. *(To Edward:)* And as for you...you will not make threats against anyone here. Pretend to be the King, if that's what makes you happy. We are bad people—all of us—but none is so bad as to be a traitor to their King, as *you* are.

SECOND THIEF: Hear, hear! Long live Edward, King of England!

THIEVES: Long live Edward, King of England!

EDWARD: I thank you, my good people.

(He is completely blind to their mockery. They laugh again.)

THIRD THIEF: He really is mad!

SEVENTH THIEF: Boy, I should drop it. Choose another title.

FIFTH THIEF: How about...Foo-foo the First, King of the Mooncalves!

FOURTH THIEF: Yes! Long live Foo-foo the First, King of the Mooncalves!

(They laugh again, repeating this over and over.)

SECOND THIEF: Crown him!

THIRD THIEF: Robe him!

FOURTH THIEF: Sceptre him!

FIFTH THIEF: Throne him!

(As they say this, Edward is dragged onto a barrel, where he is "crowned" with a tin basin, "robed" in a tattered blanket, and "sceptred" with an old iron bar. Then the Thieves kneel around the barrel, mocking him:)

SIXTH THIEF: Be gracious to us, sweet King.

SEVENTH THIEF: Spit on us, so that our children can tell the story to their children and be proud forever!

FIRST THIEF: Warm us with your gracious rays, O flaming sun of sovereignty!

HUGO: That's enough!

SECOND THIEF: Show us the ground you have stood on, so we can eat the dirt your noble feet have touched.

HUGO: The boy doesn't need this! Let's see if the poor, mad creature is any use to us.

(Hugo has started to remove the basin and blanket from Edward.)

Leave now — all of you. See what we can all bring back. I'll stay here with the boy and see what he's good for.

JOHN CANTY: Don't let him out of your sight. He's as mad as he is stubborn. I've lost him twice already!

(One by one the Thieves gradually go, until Edward is left alone with Hugo.)

EDWARD: I won't beg.

HUGO: You've been begging all your life on the streets of London.

EDWARD: Is that what John Canty told you?

HUGO: I've known your father since we were boys. We grew up together.

EDWARD: He's not my father. He's a liar.

HUGO: You've told him that, have you?

EDWARD: Several times.

HUGO: Well, you're braver than I thought. I'll make a good thief out of you yet!

EDWARD: Take me back to London.

HUGO: Is His Majesty getting cold?

EDWARD: His Majesty will watch you swing for this!

HUGO: You won't beg, you won't steal... Perhaps some attention from your father will help you change your mind. Meanwhile, you can be the decoy, while *I* beg!

EDWARD: On second thought, hanging may be too good for you!

HUGO: Watch! Here comes someone. I will pretend to have a fit. When the person comes running, you fall to your knees and wail and say that I am your poor afflicted brother. You will keep on wailing until a penny is handed over. Got that?

EDWARD: You can wail all you like. I won't do anything.

(A STRANGER approaches. Hugo immediately pretends to have a fit of some kind.)

STRANGER: Oh your poor soul. Here, let me help you.

HUGO: Oh, you are too kind. My brother here will tell you the agony of these fits I keep having. Please, a penny to buy some food; then you can leave me to my sorrows.

STRANGER: A penny...of course!

(Hugo takes the coins while the stranger turns to Edward.)

Come on, lad. Help me carry your brother to that house.

EDWARD: He's not my brother.

STRANGER: Who is he then?

EDWARD: A beggar and a thief! He's got your money and he's picked your pocket too. Hit him with your stick, if you want to cure him! Then he'll squeal!

(Hugo and the Stranger look at each other with contempt and suspicion. Edward is enjoying his triumph.)

HUGO: Why, you...

EDWARD: Ha!

HUGO: Your father warned me about you! He'll give you such a thrashing.

EDWARD: *(To the Stranger:)* Catch him! He is a dangerous criminal!

(Edward and the Stranger make a lunge for Hugo, who dodges them and runs away.)

HUGO: You watch out, boy! I'll be dealing with you later!

(He goes. Edward seems suddenly deflated.)

EDWARD: Thank goodness he's gone! But now what do I do?

STRANGER: Who are you, exactly?

EDWARD: If I told you, you wouldn't believe me.

STRANGER: Try me.

EDWARD: Edward Tudor, the King of England.

STRANGER: You're right. I don't.

EDWARD: Where am I?

STRANGER: In a forest!

EDWARD: I need a bed for the night. Some food, too. You couldn't help me, could you?

STRANGER: Help some boy I meet in the forest, who claims to be the King of England and whose friend robs me and pretends to be mad...are you mad?

(The Stranger edges further away. There is the sound of thunder.)

EDWARD: Please... It's starting to rain.

STRANGER: There's a hut over there, through the trees. A hermit lives there.

EDWARD: A hermit?

STRANGER: Almost as mad as you, he is! Spent twenty years living off nothing but mushrooms and pond water, they say! You'll get on well with him.

(The Stranger finally moves off.)

SCENE 4: THE PRINCE AND THE HERMIT

(Elsewhere on stage, a HERMIT appears. This creature could be played as any gender [just change the pronouns]; he is dressed in filthy clothes with a long sheepskin cloak and looks old and haggard. He kneels in some sort of silent meditation; next to him is a skull, an open book and a lighted candle. Edward moves toward him and stands on tiptoe, as if looking through the window of the hermit's hut.)

EDWARD: That's him! I'm in luck!

(He mimes knocking on the door; the Hermit looks up, surprised by the sudden visitor. Then he screams. Shocked by the scream:)

Er...I don't mean you any harm.

HERMIT: A visitor!

EDWARD: *(Nervous:)* Yes!

HERMIT: I never have visitors!

EDWARD: Can I come in?

HERMIT: If you do, you must leave your sins behind, for the ground on which you stand is holy!

(Edward enters and the Hermit looks at him quizzically.)

Who are you?

EDWARD: I am the King.

HERMIT: How wonderful!

EDWARD: Who are you?

HERMIT: Why, I am an archangel!

EDWARD: Oh! That's very interesting.

(The Hermit welcomes Edward, sitting him down on some shabby blankets.)

HERMIT: You seek sanctuary here.

EDWARD: Yes, until it stops raining, anyway.

HERMIT: You say you are the King. But clearly you have thrown aside your crown and clothed yourself in rags.

EDWARD: Yes. It's a long story.

HERMIT: You have devoted yourself to holiness! Clearly! Consider yourself more than welcome! You will be at peace here. No one will ever find you or make you return to the empty and foolish life which God has moved you to abandon. Here you will meditate on the delusions of the world and eat nothing but roots and crusts.

EDWARD: Roots and crusts...hmm...do you have anything to drink?

HERMIT: Here.

(He holds out a beaker to Edward.)

EDWARD: What is it?

HERMIT: The finest beverage: pond water mixed with pus from my own warts and blisters.

(Edward is not impressed.)

EDWARD: I think I'll have some later. Perhaps it will taste better with some of those roots and crusts you were talking about. *(Pause.)* How long have you been an archangel?

HERMIT: There is awe in your face! I can sense it! I was made an archangel on this very spot five years ago by angels sent from heaven. Their presence filled this place with an intolerable brightness. They walked with me in the courts of heaven. Touch my hand. Go on. You are touching a hand which has been clasped by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *(Pause.)* Who did you say you were?

EDWARD: The King.

HERMIT: But Henry is king.

EDWARD: He's dead. He was my father.

HERMIT: It was he who made me homeless, you know. Turned me out into the world after my monastery was closed.

(The Hermit has grabbed a knife. Nastily.)

I was going to be Pope! I was told it in a dream!

EDWARD: You can't be an archangel and the Pope.

HERMIT: Why not?

EDWARD: It's a full-time job, I expect, being Pope.

HERMIT: Say your prayers, son of Henry the Eighth! Pray the prayer for the dying! You will pay dearly for what your father did.

(The Hermit throws a hood over Edward so he cannot speak – just as a furious knocking at the door sounds. Then comes the voice of Miles Hendon.)

MILES HENDON: Open up! Open up!

HERMIT: It was a good life, you know, in that monastery. The companionship...the beer!

MILES HENDON: Open up!

(The Hermit ties a rope around Edward so that he cannot move, and heads over to the door.)

HERMIT: Who's that?

MILES HENDON: My name is Miles Hendon. Where is the boy?

(Edward swings around as he hears Miles's voice. The Hermit speaks to Miles at the open door to the hut.)

HERMIT: Boy? What boy?

MILES HENDON: *(Drawing his sword:)* I've been told you have him.

(The Hermit does not allow Miles into the hut. In fact, he stands in the "doorway" so that Miles can't see past him. Miles is clearly suspicious and tries to see past the Hermit, but the mad creature moves whenever Miles does, thereby not allowing him to see the sacked and trussed Edward – who busily tries to attract the attention of Miles from beneath his sack.)

HERMIT: He went on an errand.

MILES HENDON: An errand?

HERMIT: Picking mushrooms.

(As they speak, some figures appear in the darkness on another part of the stage: they are Hugo, John Canty and two of the Thieves.)

MILES HENDON: You're lying. He wouldn't go on an errand for anyone, let alone for you!

HERMIT: Ah, but I am not anyone. I am an archangel!

MILES HENDON: An arch—

(One of the Thieves falls over, making a horrendous noise. The others shush him.)

What was that?

HERMIT: What was what?

MILES HENDON: I heard a noise—over by that tree. Is that where you're keeping him?

(Miles Hendon turns around and starts thrusting his sword at the undergrowth. He sees nothing.)

He's got lost in these woods. Which way did he go?

HERMIT: *(Pointing in the opposite direction to where John Canty is:)* That way!

MILES HENDON: You're coming with me—to look for him.

HERMIT: Am I?

MILES HENDON: I'm not letting you out of my sight!

(They head off, Miles dragging the Hermit into the darkness—in the opposite direction from John Canty and Hugo, who now approach Edward.)

JOHN CANTY: Have they gone?

HUGO: I think so.

JOHN CANTY: Is that him?

(Hugo rips the hood off Edward; at first the boy doesn't see who it is, as Hugo is behind him.)

EDWARD: Miles...

HUGO: Wrong!

JOHN CANTY: John Hobbs, and Hugo!

EDWARD: Where's Miles Hendon? I heard his voice!

HUGO: Forget him. You're coming with us. There's work to be done.

JOHN CANTY: Thieving and begging!

HUGO: And this time we won't let you out of our sight!

EDWARD: No. I won't go with you! Where's Miles Hendon? Sir Miles, I mean! He's one of my knights –

(But Hugo has put the hood back over Edward's head, and he can't speak. They drag him off, kicking and screaming.)

SCENE 5: A VICTIM OF TREACHERY

(Some of the Thieves come back on. They have a bundle of some kind, which they throw to one another during the opening of this scene, as if trying to get rid of it. Each thief delivers their line as they catch the bundle, before throwing it to the person delivering the next line.)

FIRST THIEF: The boy's mad!

SECOND THIEF: Why won't he ever do what we say?

THIRD THIEF: He got the thrashing of his life from John Canty!

FOURTH THIEF: A lot of good that did.

THIRD THIEF: He's no use to us. Let's get rid of him.

FOURTH THIEF: No. He'll report us to the sheriff.

FIRST THIEF: Let's hang him upside down from a tree all day!

FOURTH THIEF: But he can't beg and steal if he's hanging from a tree!

FIRST THIEF: What shall we do with him?

THIRD THIEF: What shall we do with him?

(Edward is dragged on by the Sixth Thief and thrown down in front of them.)

SIXTH THIEF: What *shall* we do with him?

(The Third Thief throws the bundle down in front of Edward. In the same instant, a WOMAN appears with two VILLAGE CONSTABLES.)

WOMAN: That's him! That's the boy who stole my pig!

EDWARD: I haven't stolen anything!

(The First Constable examines the bundle lying in front of Edward.)

FIRST CONSTABLE: This is your pig, madam?

WOMAN: It is.

FIRST CONSTABLE: Well, it would appear that this boy has been caught red-handed!

(The Thieves nod in agreement. The First Constable advances on him. But, from the shadows, emerges Miles Hendon.)

MILES HENDON: Just a moment.

EDWARD: Sir Miles!

SECOND CONSTABLE: Do you know this boy, Sir?

MILES HENDON: Has he been accused of stealing? This is a matter that should be dealt with by the courts.

FIRST CONSTABLE: That's just where I was about to take him!

MILES HENDON: You were about to hang him from a tree with no proper investigation!

FIRST THIEF: He is a thief and a beggar!

EDWARD: Speak for yourself!

MILES HENDON: He is no better or worse than any of you.
(*Pause.*) Good woman, how much was your pig worth?

WOMAN: Why, Sir, around three shillings, I would say.

MILES HENDON: Would you swear to that price, on oath?

WOMAN: Sir, I would.

MILES HENDON: Are you aware of the penalty for theft of something over the value of eight pence?

WOMAN: Sir, I fear —

MILES HENDON: It is death by hanging. Would you condemn this poor unfortunate boy to that fate?

WOMAN: Lord, what have I done?

MILES HENDON: I would guess that he has eaten nothing today. But that you have eaten plenty.

WOMAN: Sir, that's true. Perhaps...well, it is quite a thin pig, now I think about it.

MILES HENDON: You would care to reconsider the price it is worth?

WOMAN: Eight pence, perhaps.

MILES HENDON: Then this boy need not die.

FIRST CONSTABLE: He will be publicly flogged!

(The Second Constable drags Edward off and prepares him for a flogging. The Thieves jeer.)

MILES HENDON: I will buy the pig off you, Madam. Here's eightpence.

WOMAN: Eightpence! It's worth three shillings!

MILES HENDON: But you swore on oath it was worth only eight pence.

WOMAN: To save the boy's life!

MILES HENDON: So you lied on oath. Constable! This woman has broken an ancient English law!

FIRST CONSTABLE: Has she?

MILES HENDON: Sir, I'm sure, even as a village constable you'd have some training in legal matters... Enough to know the law of *Cur mihi non pares, stultior es quam asinus*.

FIRST CONSTABLE: Oh, of course. Yes...

MILES HENDON: So you, like me, know that the punishment for breaking that particular law is death!

(The First Constable takes hold of the Woman.)

WOMAN: Oh...I...

MILES HENDON: Although the same law states all charges are dropped if the guilty party drops the original accusation.

(He takes back his hand holding the money and gives her back the bundle.)

WOMAN: On second thought, maybe I was a little too far away, perhaps, to say for certain that this boy was the thief.

MILES HENDON: Here is your pig. Go and sell it at the market, and get a good price for it.

(She leaves, glancing around nervously at the crowd. Miles crosses over to Edward.)

All charges have been dropped. The boy is free to go. There's no show for you to see!

(The Thieves murmur their displeasure; they had been waiting for a show. Edward slowly stands as the crowd, and the Constables, begin to melt away. To the Constables:)

If you want to hang some *real* thieves, just look around you!

(The Thieves look worried and start running; the Constables run after them and the stage is cleared of all except Edward and Miles.)

EDWARD: You saved my life again.

MILES HENDON: You might even say "thank you" this time!

EDWARD: A King never thanks his subjects.

MILES HENDON: Ah! You haven't given all that up.

EDWARD: That law you mentioned...

MILES HENDON: *Cur mihi non pares, stultior es quam asinus.*

EDWARD: You made it up, didn't you.

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