

# **THE PRINCESS AND THE ENCHANTED SWANS**

*An Adaptation of the Fairy Story,  
"The Six Swans."*

by  
Bill Van Horn

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Good King Edmund is tricked into marrying Lilith, the daughter of the evil wizard, Magnus. Edmund finds to his horror that Lilith wishes to dispose of him and all his children so that she and Magnus can steal the magic Edmund guards. Lilith succeeds in turning all the children, except Princess Elizabeth, into swans. Elizabeth, safe in a magic tree, must remain silent for five years and during that time weave five shirts from thorny starflowers in order to free her siblings and herself. She is tutored by the good fairy, Erica Goodness Gracious, and kept company by Owl and Bear.

Sad, lonely, but brave, Elizabeth remains silent and withstands the onslaughts of an enchanted cat, trolls, ogres, illusions and temptations. Elizabeth shares a few silent, but happy years with Prince Charming, but tragedy strikes when she is accused of witchcraft and sentenced to die. However, time and goodness come to her rescue and all ends well.

**DIRECTOR'S NOTE:** In the original Grimm Fairy tale, "The Six Swans," the king had seven children, six boys and one girl. This play has reduced that number to five and changed some of the roles from boys to girls. If you wish to increase the number of children, remember to proportionately add the number of shirts to weave and years of silence.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(10 m, 12 w, 6 flexible, extras, doubling possible.)*

KING EDMUND: Good and kindly king.  
SIR REGINALD: His faithful retainer.  
SIR CHRISTOPHER: Another faithful retainer.  
SIR JOHN: Another faithful retainer.  
MAGNUS: Evil wizard.  
LILITH/OLD WOMAN: Magnus' daughter, a witch.  
OWL: Edmund's long-lost wife, Queen Barbara.  
PRINCESS ELIZABETH: Edmund's eldest child.  
PRINCE RICHARD: Another child, turned into a swan.  
PRINCE ALAN: Another child, turned into a swan.  
PRINCESS ANNE: Another child, turned into a swan.  
PRINCE KIRK: Youngest child, turned into a swan.  
SISTER MARTHA: Nun in forest convent.  
SISTER MARY: Another nun at the convent.  
BEAR: Elizabeth's protector.  
ERICA GOODNESS GRACIOUS: Fairy godmother.  
SIBYL: A cat and Lilith's witch apprentice.  
BELINDA: (Non-speaking) A cat and another apprentice.  
HEDDA: (Non-speaking) A cat and another apprentice.  
HILDA: (Non-speaking) A cat and another apprentice.  
SNIGGLE: A troll.  
SNAGGLE: A troll.  
WIGGLE: A troll.  
WAGGLE: A troll.  
OGRE: One of Magnus' evil creations. Large, more pitiful than frightful.  
PRINCE CHARLES CHARMING: Handsome prince.  
QUEEN CHARLOTTE: His mother.  
SHERIFF  
TOWNSPEOPLE: As desired.  
OPTIONAL: Four actors dressed as swans representing Elizabeth's sister and brothers; two fat cats; and one or two very young actors (or children from the audience) as Elizabeth's children.

**TIME:** Once upon a ...

**PLACE:** Far, far away.

## **SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**

### **ACT I**

Scene 1: Forest.

Scene 2: Many weeks later. The throne room.

Scene 3: Few hours later. Forest by the abbey.

Scene 4: Hours later. The throne room.

Scene 5: Two days later. Forest near the abbey.

Scene 6: Hours later. The throne room.

Scene 7: Hours later. Forest near the abbey.

### **ACT II**

Scene 1: A short time later. Forest near Elizabeth's tree.

Scene 2: A few days later. Forest near Elizabeth's tree.

Scene 3: Some time later. The throne room.

Scene 4: A year later. Forest near Elizabeth's tree.

Scene 5: Five years later. Charles' throne room.

## **SET DESCRIPTION**

SR is the throne room for both King Edmund and King Charles. CS is the forest and all outdoor scenes. During the first act, SL can be used as the herb garden and the outside of the abbey. During Act II, SL features the large tree. (Tree can be in evidence in Act I, but cover up the large hole in which Elizabeth and Owl will appear in Act II.)

Additional production notes can be found at the end of the script.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

*(AT RISE: A forest. MUSIC. Sounds of THUNDER. Stage LIGHTS flicker. EDMUND, CHRISTOPHER, REGINALD, and JOHN roll onto stage.)*

REGINALD: I say! I haven't had so much fun since I was a young lad! Ho-ho-ho! *(Rolls a few more times.)*

CHRISTOPHER: This is no laughing matter, Reginald. *(Sits up.)*

JOHN: *(Also sitting up.)* Indeed not. Ohhh -

EDMUND: Is anyone injured? *(Sits up.)*

REGINALD: *(Bouncing up.)* Not at all!

CHRISTOPHER: *(Rising slowly.)* Slightly. *(Rubs leg.)*

JOHN: *(Still sitting.)* Ever so much! Ooooh - *(Holds head.)*  
I've a beastly headache.

REGINALD: Fell down and broke your crown, eh what, Jack?

EDMUND: *(Looking at something in HIS hands.)* I daresay I have -

JOHN: What?

EDMUND: Broken my crown.

JOHN: *(Springs up.)* Zounds! The King has been wounded! *(Calls out.)* Hullo ... hullo! Help! Help!

EDMUND: *(Rising.)* Be calm, John. There's no cause for alarm.

JOHN: But your crown - your crown!

EDMUND: Broken indeed. Broken in half. Smashed.

JOHN: Ooooh - *(Faints.)*

CHRISTOPHER: Sire??????

EDMUND: The royal crown. *(Holds it up.)* Broken during my fall. Well, 'tis of no importance. *(Throws it off stage.)*

CHRISTOPHER: But, sire, the royal jewels!

EDMUND: Merely marbles, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER: Marbles?!?

EDMUND: Marbles. Pieces of glass. It would be foolish of me to go hunting wearing the genuine gems. That's too high a price to put on one's head.

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CHRISTOPHER: We may all have a price to pay soon.

JOHN: *(Sits up.)* How so?

CHRISTOPHER: There is something strange here. A few moments ago we were chasing a deer on your hill, *(Points.)* when suddenly the hill began to tremble and to rock so violently that we were sent rolling down the hill -

REGINALD: Aye. Such a rolling hill I have never encountered. Such rocking and rolling ... rocking and rolling ... rock, rock, roll, roll - rock and roll ... *(Starts to dance.)*

CHRISTOPHER: I say, Reginald, I think you're on to something! *(Dances.)*

EDMUND: Perhaps you had better save your strength. *(Looks up.)* We are at the bottom of a steep canyon.

CHRISTOPHER: Then let us rise to the occasion! *(Moves briskly SR. Stops abruptly as if hitting a wall.)* Alack! An invisible wall!

REGINALD: We shall hack our way free! *(MEN hack at wall with swords.)* Alas, the wall is too thick! *(MEN sheathe swords and pant.)*

EDMUND: What think you of the situation, Christopher?

CHRISTOPHER: Somewhat serious.

EDMUND: And, you, Reginald? *(Stage LIGHTS darken.)*

REGINALD: Quite serious.

EDMUND: And you, John? *(Loud clap of THUNDER!)*

JOHN: Help!! *(ALL but EDMUND cower, etc.)*

EDMUND: Courage, men. We must be brave.

CHRISTOPHER: How?

EDMUND: We will - we will ... yes, we shall whistle! Whistle a happy tune.

JOHN: I can't think of one right now.

EDMUND: Whistle! *(MEN whistle weakly.)*

REGINALD: That's not much help.

EDMUND: Then we shall sing.

CHRISTOPHER: What song?

JOHN: Oh, a hymn, a hymn! *(Each MAN sings a different song. EDMUND stops them abruptly.)*

EDMUND: Reginald?

REGINALD: *(In a high pitched voice.)* Sire?

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