Twelve
Dancing Princesses

By Charles De Wald

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STORY OF THE PLAY

The play begins with a joyous festival, the King sitting quietly on his throne and the Prime Minister looking on. Suddenly the comic Captain and his Guards rush in to announce that the Princesses have again slept through the day, and their shoes have been mysteriously worn out during the night. The Captain swears that he and his guards have attempted to stay awake but some kind of spell again put them to sleep. The King becomes distraught and orders that everyone in his kingdom will share in his grief. If anyone can solve the riddle, he will help rule the kingdom.

The Princesses are unaware of what is really happening to them, except their strange storytelling Matron tells them not to worry. After the Matron reads them a story from her book, she magically transports the Princesses to an enchanted forest where they dance the night away.

When a young beggar comes to the kingdom, he can't help wondering why all the subjects are so unhappy. The Matron approaches the young beggar, really a prince from a kingdom that no longer exists, and offers him a robe of invisibility which will help him discover the Princesses' secret.

That evening, with the Matron's help, he goes with the Princesses to the enchanted forest and plucks a branch from a silver tree as evidence of the mystery.

The subjects are unhappy and decide to revolt against the King to demand their happiness back. But the young beggar appears and divulges all of the goings on. The Matron explains she used her secret powers to help the King allow his daughters to someday marry. One of the princesses will surely marry the prince and together rule the kingdom.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

KING: Ruler of a kingdom, long ago.

PRIME MINISTER: Assistant to the King.

CAPTAIN: Clumsy leader of the guards.

GUARDS: Comic roles, any number.

LADIES OF THE COURT: Five royal ladies who gossip, including Welles, Virginia, Jessica, Foster, and Letitia.

LADY ANNE: Most sensible of all the ladies.

MATRON: The attendant to Princesses, has magical abilities.

PRINCESSES: Twelve daughters of the king including Harmony, Joy, Charity, Faith, Mercy, Grace, Purity, Virtue, Modesty, Beauty, Charm, and Bliss.

BEGGAR: Young prince who discovers the secret.

SUBJECTS: Various lords, jugglers, acrobats, and general populace.

SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: Throne room in a magical kingdom, long ago.
Scene 2: Princesses' bedchamber at dusk, that evening.
Scene 3: An enchanted forest, also that evening.
Scene 4: The King's throne room, the next day.
Scene 5: The Princesses' bedchamber, that evening.
Scene 6: The enchanted forest, later that evening.
Scene 7: The King's throne room, the next day.

ACT I
Scene 1
THE KING'S THRONE ROOM

(AT RISE: There is a carnival atmosphere. Large banners are seen UPS. The KING sits on a throne SL and the PRIME MINSTER stands UPS of him. They are both enjoying the festivities happening before them CS. Cheerful music can be heard as jugglers, tumblers, acrobats, and dancers frolic about the stage in joyous laughter. LORDS and LADIES, and members of the populace, SUBJECTS in peasant attire, are gathered UPS. Suddenly, the CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD and the GUARDS rush in from SR. The revelry ends as the CAPTAIN speaks.)

CAPTAIN: Your Majesty! Your Majesty! Halt, men! Halt! *(The CROWD laughs as the CAPTAIN and the GUARDS trip over one another and fall to the floor CS.)*
GUARD #1: Watch where you're going.
GUARD #2: Watch where you're going!
CAPTAIN: Be still, you idiots!

(The GUARDS and the CAPTAIN pull themselves up in a row CS as the REVELERS have joined in with the crowd USC.)

KING: Yes, what is it, Captain?
MINISTER: This had better be important, you clumsy oaf!
CAPTAIN: *(Coming forward in front of the GUARDS.)* Oh, it is, it is!
MINISTER: It had better be. You have interrupted the festival. You have caused an unwelcome commotion with your stumbling, fumbling ...
KING: Let him speak! Let him speak, Prime Minister!
CAPTAIN: Your Majesty, a thousand pardons for the clumsiness of my guards but I have just come from the Princesses' bedchamber ...
KING: Don't tell me it has happened again!

CAPTAIN: I'm afraid so, Your Majesty. The Princesses' shoes have been worn out during the night! *(The LORDS, LADIES, and SUBJECTS gasp.)*

MINISTER: You idiot! You were supposed to lock them in and guard the door!

CAPTAIN: I did, Your Majesty, I swear. But last night we were all taken under a spell that made us fall asleep.

KING: *(Rising from HIS throne.)* A spell! What wickedness has befallen us?

CROWD: *(In unison.)* A spell!

KING: And what do my daughters say of this?

CAPTAIN: They know nothing, my lord, and when I spoke to them this morning, they acted as if they were in a dense haze, even deeper than before!

KING: *(Crossing in front of the CAPTAIN and moving SL.)* Oh, woe! Oh, woe!

MINISTER: *(Crossing in front of the throne.)* My lord, calm yourself. I'm sure there is a logical explanation for all this.

KING: *(SL of CAPTAIN and GUARDS.)* My twelve beautiful daughters ... under a spell!

MINISTER: *(To CAPTAIN.)* And what do you know of this?

CAPTAIN: Nothing, your lordship! I assure you I know nothing at all.

MINISTER: If I didn't know you were an ignorant boob, I would almost swear you were behind all this!

KING: Please, Prime Minister, settle your petty quarrels later. We have at hand a matter far too grave for silly fighting amongst ourselves. Captain of the Guard! Summon the Matron here at once!

CAPTAIN: *(To the GUARDS who respond as HE commands.)* About face! Forward! March! *(The CAPTAIN and GUARDS exit off SR.)*

KING: Prime Minister, come with me! I have need of your counsel.

(The KING and MINISTER exit off SL. The LADIES OF THE COURT come forward from the crowd to CS. The POPULACE murmurs to themselves UPS.)

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