

THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

A Comedy Fantasy

by

MARK BILLEN

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

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CAST LIST

STAGE MANAGER

ASSISTANT 1

ASSISTANT 2

KING OF CLUBS

DOCTOR 1

DOCTOR 2

DOCTOR 3

DOCTOR 4

PANTALOON *(Court Chamberlain)*

TRUFFALDINO *(A jovial fellow)*

LEANDER *(An evil prime minister)*

FATA MORGANA *(a witch)*

TCHelio *(a wizard)*

PRINCESS CLARISSA

SMERALDINA

PRINCE OF CLUBS

COOK

FARFARELLO *(a wind devil)*

CREONTA *(a giantess)*

PRINCESS LINETTA

PRINCESS NICOLETTA

PRINCESS NINETTA

GUARDS

CAVE MEN

CLOWNS

*The action takes place in the palace of the King of Clubs,
in a hot desert and in the kitchen of Creonta.*

The original performances of this play took place at Hawford Lodge School, Worcester on 18th, 19th, 21st and 22nd March 1994 with the following cast:-

STAGE MANAGER	Alex Kelly
ASSISTANT 1	Kijika Rolle Rowan
ASSISTANT 2	Daniel Jukes
KING OF CLUBS	Robert Impey
DOCTOR 1	Jonathan Race
DOCTOR 2	Martin Churchill
DOCTOR 3	Andrew Busby
DOCTOR 4	Alastair Sturt
PANTALOON	Richard Maile
TRUFFALDINO	Tom Oakley
LEANDER	Henry Windridge
FATA MORGANA	Alison Larnder
TCHelio	Michael Finlay
PRINCESS CLARISSA	Katy Hickson
SMERALDINA	Faye Windridge
PRINCE OF CLUBS	Steven Ott
COOK	Charlie Fernihough
FARFARELLO	Jack Bellfield
CREONTA	Betsy Ready
PRINCESS LINETTA	Rebecca Davies
PRINCESS NICOLETTA	Emily Oakley
PRINCESS NINETTA	Laura Willis
GUARDS	George Ballard, James Herbert, Matthew Smart, Jonathan Hickman
CAVE MEN	Lee Chmielewski, Matthew Tyas
CLOWNS	David Plank, Sam Roche, Amanda Hull, Howard Maile

PRODUCTION NOTES

This version of "The Love for Three Oranges" is not intended to be Prokofiev's opera reduced to a play. It is bound to have a great deal in common with the opera as it is based on the same traditional Italian story and the main characters are common to both works. I have included the Stage Manager and his two Assistants as characters who help things along and try to become involved in the story. Although the scenes run in the sequence of the opera I have written my own dialogue and developed situations to suit a cast of young people. The wonderful thing about the story is that it appeals to all ages and there are so many hilarious situations that the play moves along at a good pace.

The play can be produced with simple sets and quite basic lighting. The Stage Manager and his Assistants can perform most of the scene changes in front of the audience which provides part of the fun and keeps the action moving along. I have not divided the acts into separate scenes but the scene changes are clearly explained in the script. An effective palace setting at the rear of the stage and two sets of drapes to provide a background for the other scenes are all that is really needed.

The props are simple and can be made by the cast without too much assistance. When three princesses are required to emerge from giant oranges large painted umbrellas provide a simple and effective solution. The costumes need to be good as they are an important part of the characterization.

The scene at the end of Act 1 when the Prince is entertained is a chance for the talents of any particular cast to be exploited. It's surprising what skills young people have that might be suitable. Usually there will a juggler in the group or someone who can spin plates. This provides a good starting point from which to build up a comic routine.

Mark Billen.

THE LOVE FOR THREE ORANGES

by MARK BILLEN

A comedy fantasy in two acts based on the traditional Italian story used by Prokofiev in his opera.

ACT ONE

A stage with the scenery in place but not all of the props. The lighting is on. [The curtain, if there is one, is open.] The auditorium lights stay on at first but fade during the first few lines of conversation.

The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter, are unaware of the audience, and bring two thrones to the centre of the stage.

Manager: Come along then. put the big one there and the little one next to it.

Assistant 1: There's the big one.

Assistant 2: And there's the little one. *(The thrones are facing upstage but this is not noticed at first.)*

Assistant 1: What's on tonight, then?

Assistant 2: Is it some thing tragic to make everyone cry? Ooooooh, it would be so sad.

Assistant 1: Or a fast and furious flippant farce full of frolics?

(The others stare at him).

Manager: What did he say?

Assistant 1: Is it a fast and furious flippant farce full of frolics?

Assistant 2: Or some thing romantic?

Manager: It's none of these. It's something different. Funny and sad, romantic and also

Assistant 2: tragic booo hoooo! Oh, it's so sad!

Assistant 1: He doesn't know what it's about and he's already upset!

Manager: It's not really tragic, any way.

Assistants: Then what is it?

Manager: The Love for Three Oranges!

Assistants: The Love For Three Oranges?

Manager: That's it. A scintillating story full of strange sensations and splendid situations!

Assistants: Ooooooh!

Manager: (*Firmly*) And before it begins you'd better put those two thrones the right way round - facing the audience.

(The ASSISTANTS lift up the thrones and turn them - both suddenly see the audience.)

Assistants: Oh dear! Oh dear!

Manager: What's the matter?

Assistants: LOOK! (*They turn the MANAGER to face the audience.*)

Manager: Oh d-e-a-r!

Assistant 1: What do we do now?

Assistant 2: Let's go and hide! (*He hides behind one of the thrones.*)

Manager: We can't, they've seen us

Assistant 1: Well, we'd better do something or they'll start throwing things at us.

Assistant 2: Shall I tell them a nice tragic story to cheer them up?

Assistant 1: Cheer them up ! It'll send them to sleep!

Manager: One of them's nearly asleep already. (*At the stage front.*) WAKE UP SIR!

Assistant 1: I know, I'll tell them one of my jokes!

Manager: Oh no you don't. There's only one thing to do.

Assistant 2: Run away!

(He tries to but the others hold him back.)

Manager: No, we'll say who we are.

Assistant 1: That's a good idea.

Assistant 2: I'd sooner run away.

Manager: (*Addressing the audience*) Good evening. You are not meant to have seen us

Assistant 1: (*Stepping forward*) But you have!

Assistant 2: Shut up!

Manager: But as you have we'll have to explain who we are. I (*He pulls himself up.*) am the stage manager and these are my clever and helpful assistants.

(They both look utterly stupid.)

Manager: This is [name] and this is [name].

(They smile and wave.)

Assistant 1: Our job is to help move the scenery.

Assistant 2: And to make sure that everything goes smoothly.

Manager: We should have been hidden away before you came in. As you've seen us please don't tell any one.

Assistants: *(On knees, begging)* Please don't tell any one.

Manager: Or we'll get told off by the producer.

Assistant 1: He'll start ranting and raving and tearing his hair out.

Assistant 2: No he won't.

Assistant 1: Why not?

Assistant 2: He hasn't got much left! *[The script can be modified to suit!]*

Manager: *(Ignoring them and addressing the audience)* We're not meant to be seen or heard.

Assistant 1: But we've decided that's crazy.

(The others nod in agreement.)

Assistant 2: So now and then we may just creep on to check that everything's all right.

Manager: If we don't like the story we have been known to pop in and change things a bit.

Assistant 1: If the baddies become too powerful then we have a few surprises for them!

Manager: That's enough, it's time for us to begin!

Assistant 2: Ooooooh goody, I always enjoy a nice tragedy.

Assistant 1: A comedy!

Assistant 2: Tragedy! Tragedy! Tragedy! } *(Shouting at the same time*

Assistant 1: Comedy! Comedy! Comedy! } *as each other and fighting).*

Manager: *(Separating them)* SILENCE! *(To the audience)* Attention everybody!

Assistants: *(As they leave)* It's starting! It's starting! It's starting!

(There is a march, the stage becomes very gloomy. the KING, DOCTORS and PANTALOON enter. MANAGER and ASSISTANTS exit upstage.)

King: Tell me the worst. What is wrong with my son? What is wrong with the prince? Is he about to die?

(The DOCTORS inspect x-ray plates etc.)

Doctor 1: He has a head ache.

Doctor 2: His skin goes hot.

Doctor 3: His skin goes cold.

Doctor 4: And he looks very pale.

King: What makes him so ill?

Doctor 1: He's asleep half the day.

Doctor 2: He's awake half the night.

Doctor 3: He's affected by the weather.

Doctor 4: Rains add to his pains.

Doctor 1: And even hurt his brains.

Doctor 2: And when the wind blows

Doctor 3: From the wrong direction

Doctor 4: (*To the audience*) It's best to keep out of his way altogether.

King: This is terrible.

Doctor 1: He says that he has a pain in his thumb.

Doctor 2: And a boil on his bum.

Doctor 3: That won't go away.

Doctor 4: (*To the audience*) So he'll never be able to sit on the throne in comfort.

King: But what is wrong with him?

Doctor 1: He doesn't want to be well.

Doctor 2: He enjoys being ill.

Doctor 3: He likes all his medicines and potions and pills and tonics.

Doctor 4: He asks for more of them every day.

Doctor 1: He wants medicine for nose ache.

Doctor 2: And tonic for hair ache.

Doctor 3: And pills for aching finger nails.

Doctor 4: (*To the audience*) And some thing to help him sit down more comfortably.

Doctors: We agree he has

Doctor 1: Severe

Doctor 2: Complete

Doctor 3: Absolute

Doctor 4: Incurable

Doctors: Melancholia! Complicated with Hypochondria!

King: Oh, my poor son.

Pantaloon: Oh, how dreadful!

King: }

Pantaloon: } They all agree

King: Severe

Pantaloon: Complete

King: Absolute

Pantaloon: Incurable

King: }

Pantaloon: } Melancholia; complicated with Hypochondria.

(The DOCTORS huddle round the KING.)

Pantaloon: *(Stepping forward)* What a lot of quack, quacks! Do they know anything about medicine? If he's too hot then give him some ice! If he's too cold give him a cup of hot chocolate! If he can't sleep at night then let him sleep all day.

King: *(To PANTALOOON)* What shall I do? I'm getting old. If the prince dies then who will sit on my throne after me? That vile madam, my niece, Princess Clarissa, that's who. She's so evil and dreadfully stuck up. What shall I do?

Pantaloon: Poor man.

King: Who will help me?

Pantaloon: What a problem.

King: What a tragedy.

Doctor 1: What a to-do!

Doctor 2: Is this the king?

Doctor 3: Not very regal!

Doctor 4: Quite a disappointment!

Pantaloon: *(To the KING)* Stop worrying! He's not dead yet!

(All freeze for a moment - staring at the KING who is deep in thought.)

King: A long time ago it was said he could be cured.

Doctors: How?

King: With just one laugh - just one laugh would be his cure.

Doctor 1: Impossible!

Doctor 2: Ridiculous!

Doctor 3: Absurd!

Doctor 4: Bosh. *(A moment's silence.)*

Pantaloon: So why don't we make him laugh?

Doctors: *(Loudly)* It wouldn't work!

King: I've just been told it wouldn't work.

Pantaloon: Don't give up! Don't give in! What do they know? *(He sneers at the DOCTORS.)* Have THEY tried to make him laugh? The sight of THEM is

enough to make anyone feel ill? We all need cheering up. This whole court is much too dull, dim and depressing. How can the prince be cheery and chatty in such a glum and gloomy atmosphere? (*He lets this sink in then speaks softly.*) I know just the thing to cheer him up.

Doctor 1: It can't be done.

Doctor 2: He'll never laugh.

Doctor 3: Nothing will make him laugh.

Doctor 4: (*To the audience*) He doesn't have a funny bone.

Pantaloon: (*Ignoring the KING*) We'll have a party! An extravaganza with lots of fun and jollity to perk up the Prince. (*Calling*) Truffaldino! Truffaldino!

Doctors: It won't work!

King: A party? Fun and jollity? It won't work.

Pantaloon: It won't work if we don't try! Let's have a go. Truffaldino!

Truffaldino: (*Springing and whirling in.*) Did someone call for me? How can I help?

King: It's very hard.

(*TRUFFALDINO looks from one to the other as each speaks.*)

Pantaloon: It's really easy!

King: Utterly beyond you

Pantaloon: Just your sort of thing.

King: It'll take you ages.

Pantaloon: You'll love it!

Truffaldino: But what do you want?

King: (*At his most doleful*) Some jolly amusements and fun - in short a light hearted frolic to cheer up the Prince and make him laugh.

Truffaldino: (*Exuberant*) We'll have balloons , streamers, funny hats and much, much more! Don't let the Royal brain worry! Leave it all to me!

(*He exits rapidly.*)

King: Is he all there? Is he round the twist? He'll never do it!

Doctors 1 + 2: (*To PANTALOON*) It won't work.

(*They exit.*)

Pantaloon: Yes it will!

Doctor 3 + 4: (*To PANTALOON*) It's quite impossible.

(*They exit.*)

Pantaloon: (*Insistent*) NO IT'S NOT! He's just the chap and won't let you down.

King: The prime minister must be informed. Where is Leander?

Leander: (*Appearing suddenly from behind the King's throne. He is sinister and very smooth and smarmy.*) Right beside you, your majesty.

Pantaloon: (*To the audience*) Here's trouble in capital letters. How vile he is! He would like to see the prince dead.

King: Leander, we're to have some jolly festivities.

Leander: (*Aghast*) Jolly festivities!

King: And grand parades.

Leander: Grand parades!

King: And red faced clowns. If the prince is to recover he must be made to laugh.

Leander: Laugh? Is this wise? Surely such excitement would exhaust the prince and make him worse.

Pantaloon: (*Aside*) Now you can see who the real enemy is.

Leander: It would do more harm than good.

Pantaloon: (*Furious*) Ooooh!

King: If we don't try we won't succeed.

Pantaloon: That's a change of tune.

King: (*Glumly*) Fun and frolics, clowns and capers, smiles and laughter.

Leander: Haven't you heard, people sometimes die from laughter?

King: (*Ignoring Leander*) There shall be a party.

(He leaves and LEANDER and PANTALOON are left alone. there is a brief silence then they circle the stage insulting each other. LEANDER struggles to find suitable words, PANTALOON is quick witted.)

Pantaloon: Vile traitor!

Leander: King's pet!

Pantaloon: Serpent!

Leander: Lap dog!

Pantaloon: Snake in the grass!

Leander: Cuddly toy!

Pantaloon: Turncoat!

Leander: Teddy bear!

Pantaloon: Renegade!

(He leaves.)

Leander: (*Puzzled*) Turncoat? Renegade? Dictionary!

(He leaves. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter.)

Manager: Right, you take the big one and you take the little one.

Assistant 2: It seems to there's going to be a tragedy. Splendid. Splendid.

Assistant 1: Where's the jokes? Where's the laughs?

Manager: I told you this was different - not just a comedy.

Assistant 1: I must admit the story's different.

Assistant 2: With some nice sad parts.

Assistant 1: I don't like the look of things. That prince doesn't sound at all well to me.

Manager: If you don't start doing some work you'll be in the same state as him.

Fata Morgana: *(Popping in - very cutting in tone)* If it's not too much trouble could you possibly move? Then we might be able to get on with the story.

(She pops back.)

Assistant 1: *(Frightened)* Who was that?

Assistant 2: I don't like the look of her.

Manager: That's Fata Morgana. A witch!

Assistants: Ooooooh!

Manager: Very efficient, very effective, very dangerous!

(TCHELIO comes wandering in backwards.)

Assistant 1: Who's this?

Manager: Tchelio, a wizard.

Assistant 2: Efficient? Effective? Dangerous?

Manager: er no Daft, dotty and useless.

Tchelio: *(Looking about)* Now where did I put it?

Manager: See what I mean?

(The others nod.)

Tchelio: It must be somewhere...

Manager: Let's creep off - silently! We're not meant to be here!

(They creep off in exaggerated style.)

Tchelio: I'm sure I left it here. My spell book, where did I leave my spell book?

Fata Morgana: *(Popping up)* What's the matter Tchelio? Got a problem?

Tchelio: (*Shrinking back*) No - no problem.

Fata Morgana: Lost our spell book?

Tchelio: (*Huffy*) Don't need it.

Fata Morgana: Yes you do!

Tchelio: I remember all my spells by magic!

Fata Morgana: (*Aside*) If he can remember the spell for remembering! (*Aloud*) I hope you can. You'll certainly need to!

Tchelio: What do you mean?

Fata Morgana: (*Gloating*) There's a sickly prince here Soon to die!

Tchelio: Y...e....s.

Fata Morgana: Then it's my job to make sure that he does.

Tchelio: How cruel!

Fata Morgana: I know. Lovely, isn't it? (*She cackles.*)

Tchelio: (*Courageously*) Then I shall save him.

Fata Morgana: Will you? We'll see. How about a game of cards? (*She casually flicks a pack of ready strung cards through her hands.*)

Tchelio: (*Producing his own pack*) I think we'll use my cards.

Fata Morgana: If you win the prince is yours. If I win then I shall do everything I can to make his remaining life vile.

Tchelio: And how will you do that?

Fata Morgana: By helping Leander.

Tchelio: (*Aside*) Surely I can win a game of cards.

Fata Morgana: Card table!

(*The ASSISTANTS come dashing in with a card table.*)

Fata Morgana: Put it there!

(*She points and hisses at the ASSISTANTS who then cower at the side of the stage and watch.*)

Fata Morgana: Ready? (*TCHELIO is fumbling for a wand.*) Need a wand Tchelio? Try mine!

(*She passes a wand that collapses in TCHELIO'S hand. TCHELIO is furious, FATA MORGANA laughs evilly. TCHELIO slams the wand down on the table.*)

Tchelio: Ready.

(*Whatever TCHELIO does FATA MORGANA defeats him.*)

Tchelio: Seven.

Fata Morgana: Easy eight!

Tchelio: (*Aside*) What's the spell? What's the spell?

Fata Morgana: Ten.

Tchelio: Abra abra

Fata Morgana: Come on!

Tchelio: (*Pulling out his card*) Two.

Fata Morgana: Try again! (*She cackles.*)

Tchelio: King!

Fata Morgana: Azakazar! Here's an ace! The prince is mine and you have lost!

Tchelio: That's what you think!

Fata Morgana: Yes I do. You lost the game!

Tchelio: But not the battle! Just you see, I can't save the prince, but I can help Truffaldino.

Fata Morgana: Silly old fool. You can't even turn an egg into an omelette! I have won. The prince is mine!

(She sweeps out spinning TCHELIO in a whirl which sends him tottering off. The MANAGER enters and the ASSISTANTS come forward.)

All Three: Phew!

Manager: Nasty!

Assistants: Very!

All Three: Very, very, nasty!

Assistant 2: Efficient!

Assistant 1: Effective!

All Three: Dangerous!

Assistant 2: I don't like the look of her!

Assistant 1: I wouldn't like to meet her in the dark!

Assistant 2: I wouldn't like to meet her in the light!

Manager: (*Thoughtful*) It's best to meet her in the dark.

Assistants: Why?

Manager: Because then you can't see her ugly face! (*The others laugh.*)

Assistant 1: And what's going to happen now she's on the side of Leander?

Assistant 2: I know, there's going to be a tragedy!

Manager: Out of the way, here comes Leander himself.

(They leave and LEANDER comes in thinking aloud.)

Leander: Now we're in trouble - whatever I plan and plot obstacles are put in my

path. Big awkward obstacles.

(CLARISSA comes striding in. She is very commanding.)

Clarissa: There you are Leander. A word in your ear. Who am I?

Leander: *(Aside)* I thought she knew. *(Aloud)* Princess Clarissa.

Clarissa: What am I?

Leander: *(Aside)* If only I dared to say. *(Aloud)* The second heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Clubs.

Clarissa: Precisely. And if the prince dies what shall I be once my uncle, the king, has snuffed it?

Leander: Queen, oh great princess. *(He gives a grovelling bow.)*

Clarissa: Precisely. *(Sarcastically)* Now Leander, dear, help me to become queen and you shall be my husband. Do you understand?

Leander: Precisely, princess. *(He gives an even lower bow.)*

Clarissa: Then get on and do something. Help the prince on his way. Hypochondria and melancholia. The time couldn't be better. Help him to kick the bucket.

Leander: *(Aside)* Isn't she regal! *(Aloud)* Patience my dear - wait and see - I plot and scheme every moment that I breathe. I shall not fail.

Clarissa: *(Sarcastically.)* Brilliant!

Leander: Every day I read him death bed scenes and funeral odes.

Clarissa: Yuck!

Leander: Three times daily with his meals I read this sad stuff. And for a night cap I select epitaphs for his bed time stories. They give him dreams that range from dark grey to deep black.

Clarissa: I don't think your plans will work in time. Have you a taste for hemlock?

Leander: *(Aside)* It gives me cold feet to hear her talk that way.

Clarissa: Things can't go on like this. Perhaps a bullet is the

(TRUFFALDINO whizzes in with CLOWNS who practise their routines and exit.)

Clarissa: Who was that? What is going on?

Leander: Truffaldino, a jovial fellow. He makes people laugh.

Clarissa: *(Meaningfully)* HE MAKES PEOPLE LAUGH! What is going on?

Leander: *(Very nervous)* He's here at the king's command to arrange

(CLARISSA glowers as LEANDER stutters out the news.)

Leander:.... to arrange f..festivities and j..jollific..cation. Th..there's to be a

p..p..party to t..try to m..make the p..p..p..p..prince laugh.

Clarissa: (*Scornful*) And you, the prime minister; the man in charge; have let all this be planned. If you are in control get some control over this. Don't you realise - one laugh - just one laugh would ruin all my plans?

Leander: What shall I do?

Clarissa: Even a prime minister must make up his mind from time to time and see things in black and white, not dull grey. Poison or a sudden shot - that's the answer.

(A table moves across the room.)

Clarissa: What's that?

Leander: A moving table.

(The table pins them against the side of the stage.)

Clarissa: But tables don't move on their own. After it!

(They chase the table. It bumps into LEANDER.)

Leander: Ooooh! (*Commandingly.*) Halt!

(The table stops.)

Leander: There, you see, it's a house trained table.

Clarissa: Then why did it move?

(SMERALDINA emerges from beneath the table.)

Clarissa: } Who are you?

Leander: } (*They cling together in fear.*)

Smeraldina: Smeraldina, at your service. (*She gives a leering bow.*)

Leander: Trying to listen in on affairs of state. It's the gallows for you!

Smeraldina: Not so fast prime minister. Just a second. I think you have need of me and I won't be much use when I'm swinging on a rope. I can help I have news for you. The prince is protected by Truffaldino!

Clarissa: } (*Smugly*)

Leander: } We know that!

Smeraldina: And (*She pauses dramatically.*) Truffaldino is protected by Tchelio!

Clarissa: So what!

(TCHELIO crosses the stage - distinctly muddled and oblivious of everyone.)

Tchelio: Where did I put it? It must be somewhere.

(He muddles his way off.)

Clarissa: A muddled old wizard - what can he do?

Smeraldina: More than you think. He may be a muddled magician, but he's a wise wizard. He could make a fine mess of your plans.

Leander: I don't like the sound of this.

Clarissa: Then here's our plan. Before Truffaldino has a chance the prince must die. Poison or the bullet, I don't care which. And as for little nosy-parker here - a quick execution will soon cut her down to size.

Smeraldina: Have mercy great princess! *(She grovels.)*

Clarissa: Why?

Smeraldina: There is perhaps a wiser course of action. Don't forget my mother.

Clarissa: Your mother?

Smeraldina: Fata Morgana! Ask her to join in the fun. She'll put a spell on the prince that will make all Truffaldino's plans come to nothing.

Leander: Will she?

Smeraldina: She will and whilst she's about nothing the clowns can do will make the prince laugh!

Clarissa: }

Leander: } Fata Morgana?

Clarissa: She sent you to us?

Smeraldina: She did. Now call on her!

Clarissa: *(Kneeling)* Fata Morgana! *(She tugs down LEANDER.)*

Leander: Fata Morgana!

Clarissa: Come to the party, Fata Morgana!

Leander: Fata Morgana, come to the party!

All Three: Come to the party Fata Morgana and make it a party we'll never forget!

(FATA MORGANA is silhouetted laughing. The stage then goes black and the three exit. The lights slowly come up again. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter cautiously beckoning each other on.)

Manager: *(Softly)* There's going to be magic.

Assistant 2: *(Ominously)* Black magic.

Assistant 1: Goodee, I love a chocolate. The orange creams are my favourites.

Manager: Not that sort. Magic! Evil magic.

Assistant 2: I don't like the sound of this.

Assistant 1: But you wanted a tragedy.

Assistant 2: Yes, but I didn't want there to be anything nasty. I didn't want anyone to die.

Manager: You can't have a tragedy then. There has to be at least one body in a tragedy.

Assistant 2: Does there?

Assistant 1: Now what's going to happen?

Manager: It's time to meet the prince.

Assistant 1: What's he like?

Manager: Nearly dead!

Assistant 2: But I don't want a tragedy!

Manager: There'll be another tragedy if you don't shut up! Now wheel him in.

(Curtains are drawn to hide the palace; then with much pushing and grunting the PRINCE is wheeled in on his bed. He is hardly visible as he is smothered in blankets.)

Assistant 1: Are you sure that this is the prince? It just looks like a pile of bed clothes.

Manager: Let's see if we can find him.

(They pull back the covers, counting and commenting as they do so.)

Assistant 1: One.

Assistant 2: Two.

Manager: Any sign of him?

Assistant 2: *(Searching)* Not yet, three. Ah, there's something here.

Manager: What is it?

Assistant 1: A teddy bear.

Assistant 2: Four.

Manager: Still no sign?

Assistant 1: Nothing. Five.

Assistant 2: Now, what's this? *(He pulls out a hot water bottle.)*

Manager: Hot water bottle.

(The PRINCE shoots out a hand and grabs it back.)

Assistant 1: There is someone under there!

Manager: But where?

Assistant 2: Six. What's this? *(He pulls out another hot water bottle.)*

All Three: Another hot water bottle!

Assistant 1: There's something here!

Manager: At last. Now we can introduce him.

Assistant 2: *(Very formally)* Ladies and gentlemen

Assistant 1: His Royal Highness

All Three: The Prince of Clubs!

(They point to him but the PRINCE does not stir.)

Manager: Just a moment, we've forgotten something.

Assistant 2: What's that?

Manager: Today's medicines.

(ASSISTANT 1 goes off and returns with a trolley full of medicines. The PRINCE seizes a bottle, takes a large gulp and then collapses with a groan.)

Prince: I'm so ill. My hair is aching dreadfully. My toes won't stop twitching. My left little finger aches in the third joint. I'm ill. I'm so ill

Assistant 1: *(To the audience)* I don't think he feels very well.

Manager: Right every thing's ready. Out of the way.

(They exit. The PRINCE checks his potions etc. The COOK enters.)

Cook: What would your highness like for his dinner today? I thought that to begin with a little beef tea might suit.

Prince: Beef tea! What sort of thing is that for a sick man? I shall have some venison pate and toast!

Cook: Next I thought a little lightly poached white fish.

Prince: White fish! How disgusting! I need building up! Bring me roast duckling with cherry sauce, served with golden roast potatoes and a selection of at least four vegetables.

Cook: To finish I thought that it might be best for you to have a little plain blancmange.

Prince: Blancmange! I detest the stuff. That won't do me any good. That won't give me strength! I shall have an entire chocolate gateau served with lashings of fresh cream!

Cook: Very well, your highness.

Prince: And don't forget that I need a whole bottle of the best red wine.

Cook: Will you be having a selection of cheese and biscuits?

Prince: Don't be ridiculous! How can a man in my state of health digest them?

(The COOK leaves and LEANDER enters and goes to the bedside.)

Prince: What words of comfort will you read today, Leander?

Leander: *(Producing some books)* I have a volume of epitaphs chosen from the grave stones of the most celebrated people in History.

Prince: Is there anything else to cheer up a sick prince whose end is coming closer by the minute?

Leander: In addition there is a delightful dirge that is quite fascinating and some accounts of the funerals of the most famous princes in all the world.

Prince: I think a detailed account of the funeral of a famous prince would raise my spirits.

(LEANDER is about to start when TRUFFALDINO comes bounding in.)

Truffaldino: Good day, Prince. I've news for you.

Leander: *(Aside)* What ill luck! Just when he was in the mood to be depressed!

Prince: *(Morbidly)* I don't want any news.

Truffaldino: There's going to be a party.

Prince: I hate parties. I'm too ill. The nail on my big toe won't stop aching.

Truffaldino: There'll be balloons and funny hats and streamers.

Prince: How tedious.

(LEANDER, delighted by the response of the Prince, creeps off.)

Leander: *(Aside, as he goes)* I must tell Clarissa this good news, perhaps the party will never take place! If the Prince will not come Truffaldino's party will be of no use!

Truffaldino: *(Full of enthusiasm)* There'll be clowns.

Prince: I don't like clowns. I've a pain in my left ear lobe. I'm too ill.

Truffaldino: Put your tongue out please your highness and say aah.

Prince: Aaah. Aaah. Aaaaaah!

Truffaldino: *(Inspecting)* Perfect health I do declare!

Prince: Ooooh! *(He coughs.)*

Truffaldino: Come on, sir, cough it up!

(He holds a bowl into which the PRINCE coughs.)

Truffaldino: (*Inspecting*) Funeral odes and epitaphs. Now they're out you'll be able to enjoy yourself. Come along and join the fun.

(*PANTALOON enters.*)

Pantaloon: Your highness, are you ready?

Prince: Ready for what? Ready to die? Yes, ready to die!

Pantaloon: Ready for the party?

Prince: I'm not coming. I'm too ill. I have dreadful shivers that keep running up and down my left thumb.

Pantaloon: But your father, the King, asks you to come.

Prince: Send him my apologies. I must decline the invitation as I am about to die.

Pantaloon: This is not an invitation. This is a command.

(*The sound of a march is heard.*)

Pantaloon: Come on, they are starting, you'll miss the fun!

Prince: I must take my medicine. Seventeen spoons of this. (*He leaps from his bed to grab the medicine.*)

Truffaldino: Forget the spoons. Forget the medicine. (*He throws them off.*)

Prince: Five spoons of that. (*He tries to grab another bottle.*)

Truffaldino: Away with them. (*He throws the bottle away.*)

Prince: Four of these tablets.

Truffaldino: Off they go! Away with them all. (*He throws away all the medicines much to the anguish of the PRINCE.*)

Prince: You rotter! You unfeeling fellow! You bounder!

Pantaloon: Come along, sir, we must get you dressed.

Prince: Dressed! I'm not getting dressed!

Truffaldino: Oh yes you are. Who ever saw a prince in his night shirt?

Pantaloon: Now this way please (*He tries to direct the PRINCE.*)

Prince: I'm not coming. I'm too ill I tell you. My left little toe is starting to drop off!

Truffaldino: (*Firmly*) Come along.

Pantaloon: You'll love it!

Prince: I'll hate it! I hate you! Both of you!

(*They man handle him off, protesting loudly. The PRINCE continues to protest loudly in the wings as the MANAGER and ASSISTANTS clear the stage - putting their hands over their ears whenever things get really noisy The sound of the march is heard again as the curtains open. Streamers and*

balloons decorate the palace. There are pretty lights. The whole court enters preceded by PALACE GUARDS. All the courtiers and the DOCTORS are wearing funny hats. The KING takes his place on the throne and looks at the smaller, empty throne next to him. Silence.)

Prince: *(Loudly, off stage)* I'm too ill to come! I'm about to die.

(TRUFFALDINO and PANTALOOON drag the PRINCE on.)

Prince: Why are you doing this to me? *(He rants.)* I'm dying I tell you. I'm weak ... *(He violently shakes himself free throwing LEANDER and PANTALOOON to the floor.)* I'm weak as a flea!

Pantaloon: *(Aside from the floor)* What will he be like when he thinks he's well?

Prince: *(Ranting again)* Why won't anyone listen to me? I'm just a walking corpse!

Leander: *(Aside to Clarissa)* Then I wish he would die quietly!

Prince: *(Subsiding)* Where's my medicine? I want my medicine. *(He wraps himself up in a blanket.)* This is no way to treat a sick man. *(Softer)* I may die at any moment. *(He sits on the throne.)* I'm very ill. *(He continues muttering to himself.)*

Truffaldino: Now for the first entertainment.

(Two hairy CAVE MEN lumber on and fight in pantomime style with clubs. Every movement is slow and exaggerated, every reaction is extreme. The crowd roars with laughter. They hit each other and nurse their wounds for a little then fight again.)

Crowd: Bravo! Splendid! Magnificent! Superb!

(The KING, PANTALOOON, CLARISSA and LEANDER watch the PRINCE. FATA MORGANA enters surreptitiously near CLARISSA and LEANDER.)

Leander: *(Privately)* Who are you?

Fata Morgana: *(Privately)* Fata Morgana, party pooper, at your service. Whilst I am here the prince cannot laugh at any of Truffaldino's frolicsome festivities!

Leander: *(Privately)* Ah! Our life support!

Clarissa: *(Privately, hissing)* Choose your words more carefully!

Fata Morgana: *(Privately)* Fear not, if the prince is at death's door then together we'll pull him through! *(She keeps hidden.)*

Crowd: *(As the CAVE MEN fight again at full force)* Bravo! What a sight!
Splendid!

Clarissa: *(Nudging LEANDER)* Bravo!

Leander: *(Following)* Bravo!

(The CAVE MEN finish fighting - loud applause. CLARISSA and LEANDER belatedly join in over enthusiastically and pointedly finish last.)

Truffaldino: No sign of a laugh?

King: No! *(He is bitterly disappointed.)*

Pantaloon: Not even a smirk.

Prince: What a noise! What a row!

Truffaldino: *(To the CAVE MEN)* On your bikes!

First Caveman: What's a bike?

Second Caveman: We ain't got no bikes!

First Caveman: C'mon. We gotta go!

Second Caveman: But I ain't got no bike!

(The CAVE MEN leave shaking their heads in incomprehension.)

King: It doesn't look too good!

Doctor 1: Just as we said.

Doctor 2: It won't work.

Doctor 3: Nothing will cure him.

Doctor 4: Nothing at all!

(CLARISSA and LEANDER gloat together. FATA MORGANA smiles.)

Truffaldino: Entertainment number two. Bring on the clowns!

(The CLOWNS enter and perform. Much mirth and the CROWD responds but the PRINCE remains silent. CLARISSA and LEANDER congratulate FATA MORGANA.)

Crowd: Aren't they super? They're the best! *(Much laughter.)* Hilarious! *(Loud applause.)*

(The CLOWNS exit and the CROWD continues to buzz with excitement.)

Truffaldino: Did the prince laugh?

King: Not a twinkle.

Pantaloon: Not a smile. *(They both shake their heads in despair.)*

Leander: *(Privately)* Not even the smallest smirk.

Clarissa: *(Privately)* Or the tiniest titter.

Fata Morgana: *(Privately)* And all thanks to me!

(They all three shake hands and even dance a little, very discreetly.)

Prince: Let me go back to my cosy, comfortable bed.

King: This is serious.

Pantaloon: This is frightful.

Leander: *(Aside)* Couldn't be better.

Clarissa: *(Aside)* Quite delightful.

Doctor 1: Not a hope!

Doctor 2: Not a chance!

Doctor 3: There's no cure!

Doctor 4: As we've said before!

Truffaldino: Nothing's working! Nothing seems to make him laugh! What other things can be done? All he wants to do is to go back to bed!

(FATA MORGANA, gaining confidence, has failed to remain hidden!)

Truffaldino: Who are you? What are you doing here?

Fata Morgana: Minding my own business. You mind yours!

Truffaldino: Where's your ticket? You shouldn't be here!

Fata Morgana: Why not?

Truffaldino: *(Angry)* Get out of here! Away with you! Out of here you filthy old hag!

Fata Morgana: What manners! That's no way to treat a lady!

Truffaldino: What's an old bag like you doing in the royal court?

Fata Morgana: Watch your words!

Truffaldino: *(Loudly)* Will you go and boil your head?

(TRUFFALDINO gives FATA MORGANA a great big push, knocking her head over heels and all her petticoats and bloomers are revealed.)

Crowd: *(Shocked and astonished)* Ah! Ah!

(There is silence. All eyes are on FATA MORGANA.)

Prince: *(Slowly)* Hee-hee-hee-hee! *(All eyes turn to him.)*

Ha-ha-ha-hahaha! (*All mouths open.*)
Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho!
It's the old woman!
She's so funny!
Ha-ha-ha-hee-hee-hee-ho-ho-ho-ho!

King: That was a laugh!

Truffaldino: }

Pantaloon: } That was a laugh!

Doctors: That was a laugh!

Clarissa: } (*Dolefully.*)

Leander: } That was a laugh

Crowd: That was a laugh!

(*The STAGE HANDS rush in.*)

Manager: } (*To the audience*)

Assistants: } That was a laugh!

All: It was laughter! It was laughter!

Truffaldino: (*Making a pronouncement*) The prince has laughed!

Prince: Yes! I laughed! I laughed!

King: My son!

Prince: And I'm well again! Look at me! (*He throws his covers off.*) Look at me!

(*He springs about the stage turning cartwheels etc. The CROWD applauds.*)

Prince: I'm well ! Look at me!

(*He does some press ups and other physical exercises.*)

Doctor 1: Wonderful!

Doctor 2: Marvellous!

Doctor 3: Sensational!

Doctor 4: I always said that a good dose of laughter was

Doctors: Just what he needed! (*They congratulate each other.*)

Leander: } (*Secretly.*)

Clarissa: } Oh no! What shall we do!

Fata Morgana: (*Standing up, furious*)

Laugh at me! You shall regret it.

For I never shall forget it!

You laugh at me, so you are cursed,
Of all my curses it's the worst!
The vilest curse that comes from me,
You'll fall in love with oranges, three!

All: (*Puzzled*) Oranges three?

Fata Morgana: (*Addressing the audience*)
I had to say it that way round,
As a rhyme for oranges can not be found!

Prince: Three oranges?

Fata Morgana: Yes, you now shall have a love for three oranges. You must search for them, night and day, for ever, until you find them!

(*Everyone, except LEANDER and CLARISSA, is aghast.*)

Leander: } (*Privately*)

Clarissa: } We're saved! (*They hug each other in glee.*)

Clarissa: (*Softly*) He'll die in the attempt!

(*CLARISSA and LEANDER are not noticed as all eyes are on the PRINCE.*)

Prince: (*The spell starting to affect him*) I'm so well, I must eat! Fetch me some fruit! A strawberry, no ... an apple, no ... a pear, no ... an orange ... in fact I'd like two please ... no three ... I must have three oranges!

Pantaloon: Three oranges for his highness! Send for them from the kitchens.

(*The COOK enters holding three oranges but is brushed aside by FATA MORGANA.*)

Fata Morgana: Not so easy ... not so fast! These are not just ordinary oranges.

Prince: Three ripe juicy oranges.

Fata Morgana: They're miles away! Over the mountains, over the desert. They're in the kitchen of a cook named Creonta!

Prince: Then I shall seek them!

Fata Morgana: And Creonta is a giant! Ha ha ha ha!

(*CLARISSA and LEANDER laugh furtively.*)

Prince: Then off I go! Come on Truffaldino, you shall come too!

(*TRUFFALDINO is alarmed and tries to wrap himself in the PRINCE'S now*)

discarded blanket!)

Truffaldino: *(Aghast)* Who, me?

Prince: Yes, you!

Truffaldino: But I'm not very well!

Prince: Don't start saying that. You don't fool me! Go and fetch my sword!

Truffaldino: I don't think this sounds too good!

(He leaves.)

Prince: It all sounds good to me

King: I see danger, death and destruction.

Clarissa: } Danger, death and destruction!

Leander: } *(They rub their hands in glee.)*

Prince: Oranges ... three oranges ... I must seek my three glorious oranges!

King: Stay! Think of the kingdom!

Prince: No!

King: Stay! I insist that you obey my ...

Prince: Save your breath! Hurry! Hurry! I'm in love. In love with three glorious oranges! Where's Truffaldino?

(TRUFFALDINO enters with a sword.)

Truffaldino: Here I am!

(The PRINCE grasps the sword.)

Prince: Then let's go!

Truffaldino: This is dreadful - dreadful!

Prince: Off we go to find my three glorious oranges!

Truffaldino: I'm not scared ... I'm terrified!

Fata Morgana: Farfarello! Farfarello

(FARFARELLO, a wind devil, enters.)

Fata Morgana: Blow your bellows. Send them on their way!

(FARFARELLO puffs his bellows. There is the sound of a rushing wind. The PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO are blown out. The CROWD cling to each

other for safety.)

Fata Morgana: }

Clarissa: } Ha ha ha ha ha ha !

Leander: }

(The KING faints. PANTALOON tries to fan him and the DOCTORS gather round and begin to make an examination).

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

(The palace is hidden by curtains. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter wheeling on a palm tree.)

Manager: *(Once the tree has been positioned.)* Here we are.

Assistant 2: Just a moment - where are we now?

Manager: In the desert.

Assistant 1: What dessert? I can't see any trifle or any thing.

Manager: }

Assistant 2: } Desert, you fool!

Assistant 2: Sand and sun!

Assistant 1: Then we have a problem.

Manager: What's that?

Assistant 1: *(Pointing)* There's a lady over there in an overcoat. Take it off please, madam - you'll be far too hot - we're in the desert now!

Assistant 2: I don't like the sound of that Creonta.

Manager: But you wanted a tragedy! She's the one who'll make sure it happens.

Assistant 2: But every time I hear her name

Manager: Yes

Assistant 2: I'm frightened!

Assistant 1: Are you frightened? *(He is trying to scare ASSISTANT 2, who nods.)*
Really, really frightened? *(Another nod.)* Because there's something you ought to know about Creonta.

Assistant 2: *(Nerved up)* W..w..what?

Assistant 1: She eats people! She boils them in a stew or roasts them in her oven.

Assistant 2: Ooooooh!

Assistant 1: And if she's in a hurry

Assistant 2: Yes

Assistant 1: She doesn't even bother with pepper and salt!

Assistant 2: Ah! Aaaaah! *(He shivers in fear.)*

Manager: Stop it, both of you! We've got to do something to help the prince.

Assistant 1: How?

Assistant 2: Someone must be able to help.

Manager: There's only one person who can.

Assistants: Who?

Manager: Tchelio.

Assistant 1: *(Laughing)* Tchelio? He's hopeless!

Assistant 2: Everything he does goes wrong.

Manager: But there's no one else, so let's call him.

All Three: Tchelio! Tchelio!

(TCHELIO comes wandering on in a mesmerised state.)

Tchelio: Hello!

Manager: You've got to help the prince.

Assistant 1: And Truffaldino!

Tchelio: I suppose I'd better. What can I do?

Assistant 2: You could ask Farfarello which way he sent them.

Tchelio: Good idea! Stand clear!

(MANAGER and ASSISTANTS stand aside. TCHELIO draws circles.)

Tchelio: Farfarello! Farfarello! Come down to earth! Farfarello! Come down and appear!

(FARFARELLO appears where ever TCHELIO isn't looking.)

Farfarello: Hi! Why are you looking there, you old fool?

Tchelio: *(Astonished)* There you are. *(Aside to the STAGE HANDS)* Goodness gracious, it worked!

Farfarello: *(Cheekily)* Tell me, are you a real magician or just a cunning conjuror - children's parties a speciality - *(Putting on a sweet voice)* "Now come and stand by Uncle Tchelio" and all that sloppy dribble?

Tchelio: Some and some. When the need arises my power is incredible. I am fierce and frightening, so watch your tongue! Now answer my questions and mind what you're saying!

Farfarello: *(Aside)* He's quite tetchy today, quite hoity-toity, probably he's got something to hide. *(To TCHELIO)* Zap it to me old pal, ask away.

Tchelio: Where are the prince and Truffaldino?

Farfarello: They're having a snooze!

Tchelio: Having a snooze! That doesn't show much determination. Why should they be snoozing?

Farfarello: I blew and puffed and sent them on their way. Then I had to nip back to have my bellows serviced.

Tchelio: *(Exasperated)* And where are they?

Farfarello: *(Giggling)* Hm hm hm. Just outside Creonta's kitchen.

Assistant 2: *(Aside)* Oh no!

Tchelio: But that could be the end of them! She'll have them for elevenses.

Farfarello: Why do you think I blew them there, so that they could have a picnic?

(He starts to go.)

Tchelio: Stop! Come back! I command you to stay!

(He tries to cast a spell and seems to 'pull' FARFARELLO back by magic. FARFARELLO saunters on insolently.)

Farfarello: Ha! Ha! Listen ducky, you can't even make me move my little finger if I don't want to! You're powerless. There's nothing you can do. And by the way try to learn to play a better game of cards. Bye!!!

(FARFARELLO departs, delighted by his own wit. The PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO enter looking round.)

Prince: The wind has dropped, we must be near the oranges by now.

Truffaldino: Wind, you call that a wind, it felt more like a hurricane to me!

Prince: Never mind. I must find my three oranges, my three glorious oranges.

Truffaldino: *(Aside)* He's off again.

Tchelio: Stop! What do you seek?

Prince: Three glorious oranges!

Truffaldino: *(Aside)* Not again!

Tchelio: Three oranges, you must be mad, Creonta has them.

Prince: Where are they?

Tchelio: In her kitchen. She guards them.

Prince: Pooh! I'm not afraid of a cook.

Tchelio: She's a giantess.

Prince: So what. Come on Truffaldino.

Tchelio: She'll knock your head off with one of her spoons and pop you in her oven.

Prince: I can't live without my three beautiful oranges! *(He daydreams.)*

Tchelio: She'll serve you up with mashed potatoes.

Prince: *(To himself)* I must have my three oranges!

Truffaldino: Oh disaster, oh calamity!

Prince: *(To himself)* Three beautiful oranges!

Truffaldino: Oh catastrophe!

Tchelio: Don't say I didn't tell you!

Truffaldino: Oh ruination!

Tchelio: Listen Truffaldino, you must listen if you want to save your skin. *(He*

produces a ribbon.) May be this pretty ribbon will distract Creonta. If it does then grab the oranges

Prince: *(Suddenly alert)* Three glorious oranges.

Tchelio: and run!

Truffaldino: Oh, thank you, thank you! *(He puts the ribbon safely in his pocket.)*

Prince: Hurry Truffaldino! *(He tries to drag him along.)*

Tchelio: And one more thing, before you're torn away, if you open the oranges

Prince: *(Urgently)* Three glorious oranges.

Tchelio: Make sure that pure water is at hand or you will regret it!

Truffaldino: Thank you Tchelio. Thank you!

Prince: Au revoir!

(PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO exit.)

Tchelio: I've done my best, now, can a pretty ribbon save their lives?

(The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS clap him and TCHELIO wanders off muttering to himself.)

Manager: Now, Creonta's Kitchen.

Assistant 1: *(Relishing the situation)* Right - Creonta's kitchen.

Assistant 2: Then let's get out of here!

(He dashes off. The MANAGER and ASSISTANT 1 push the palm tree off and the curtains open to reveal a kitchen range with giant pots and pans including a large frying pan. Prominently positioned are three ordinary sized oranges. CREONTA, in filthy cook's overalls is reading from a large and shabby cookery book.)

Creonta: *(Speaking slowly and thoughtfully at all times.)* Traveller's Stew take three large onions, four huge carrots, an enormous turnip, five long parsnips and one traveller where shall I find a nice juicy traveller? Not many come this way these days. I wonder why. What I need is a nice, fresh juicy traveller I suppose I'd better try another dish Hmm now this looks interesting, Prince's Pudding!

(CREONTA continues to read from her cookery book as the PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO creep in and remain hidden.)

Truffaldino: Can you see them?

Prince: No, I can't.

Truffaldino: (*Catching sight of the oranges*) Look, over there!

Prince: Ah my three oranges!

Creonta: (*Reading from her cookery book*) Take ten large peaches

Prince: Let's just wait a moment and see what happens. She certainly doesn't look very friendly.

Creonta: and skin them before simmering slowly with a fresh juicy prince. Dash it! There's no princes in these parts either. Let's look again let me see (*She checks the cookery book.*)

Prince: That doesn't sound very nice to me.

Truffaldino: Certainly not. All this waiting makes me nervous. What are we going to do?

Prince: We'll just have to distract her.

Truffaldino: Fine how?

Prince: You go and talk to her.

Truffaldino: She'll eat me!

Prince: Don't worry, I won't let her.

Creonta: Perhaps I can manage this dish Orange Delight (*She reads.*) Take three large fresh oranges

Prince: Quick, or it will be too late! (*He pushes TRUFFALDINO forward.*)

Truffaldino: (*Very nervously*) Excuse m...m...m...me!

Creonta: What are you doing? (*To the audience*) Such luck, a traveller! (*To TRUFFALDINO*) Yes, my dear? What can I do for you my handsome boy?

Truffaldino: I'm r...r...r...rather l...l...l...lost and v...v...v...very h...h...h...hungry.

Creonta: You've come at the perfect time, I'm just preparing dinner and I'd love to have you for a meal! (*To the audience*) He's a bit bony but he'll do!

Truffaldino: You're very kind. (*To the audience*) What a hideous face!

Creonta: Not at all. Now would you like a large dish or a small one? (*To the audience*) He'd fit a small one, no trouble at all.

Truffaldino: A small one if you please.

Creonta: (*To the audience*) What lovely manners! (*To TRUFFALDINO*) Tell me do you fry?

Truffaldino: I don't know how to cook .

Creonta: I'm sure you cook beautifully my dear! Now tell me, do you fry?

Truffaldino: I thought you were doing the cooking.

Creonta: So I am. Now answer my question, do you fry or would you prefer to boil?

Truffaldino: I really don't know.

Creonta: Then let's find out. In to the pan!

Truffaldino: What did you say?

Creonta: IN TO THE PAN!

Truffaldino: Ooooh! Ooooooh! (*Full of nerves he searches in his pocket.*)
Ooooh! I've brought you a present.

Creonta: Never mind that. IN TO THE PAN

(*TRUFFALDINO produces the ribbon and dangles it before her.*)

Creonta: Oooooooh! You little darling. A ribbon!

(*CREONTA is totally fascinated by the sight of the ribbon. The PRINCE creeps forward and takes the three oranges.*)

Truffaldino: Do you like it? Is it pretty?

Creonta: Beautiful. And it's my birthday today!

Truffaldino: (*Sweetly*) Then it's a birthday present, just for you.

Creonta: Oh you darling little precious. Put it on me would you please?

(*TRUFFALDINO mounts a chair and ties the ribbon on to CREONTA.*)

Truffaldino: Just a moment. There, it's tied!

Creonta: Thank you dear, now don't I look lovely?

Truffaldino: (*Blowing CREONTA an enormous kiss which pleases her immensely.*) Gorgeous! (*To the audience*) She's revolting!

Creonta: Just bring me a mirror so that I can see myself.

Truffaldino: Where is it?

Creonta: Just over there. I feel so..o..o pretty. Oh, so..o..o pretty!

Truffaldino: (*Finding the mirror*) There you are.

Creonta: (*Staring at her reflection*) Oh, how perfect, my favourite colour too!
Now tell me darling, don't I look gorgeous

(*TRUFFALDINO creeps back to the PRINCE.*)

Creonta: Doesn't it suit me? (*She continues to admire herself.*) Beautiful!
Beautiful!

Truffaldino: (*To the PRINCE*) Have you got them?

Creonta: (*Admiring herself*) Just my colour!

Prince: (*To TRUFFALDINO*) Yes, here they are. Aren't they gorgeous?

Truffaldino: (*To the audience*) He's almost as bad as her!

Prince: Now, let's go.

(*They start to creep off.*)

Truffaldino: Let's go while we're still alive!

Creonta: *(Still admiring herself)* Gorgeous! Just so gorgeous. Tell me, little darling, don't I look wonderful? *(She searches.)* Peep-bo! Where are you? Ohhhhhh! He's gone. The little scamp!

(The curtains close and hide CREONTA, who continues to admire herself. MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter, pushing the palm tree on and also some pyramids in the background.)

Manager: This side this time and keep the pyramids at the back.

Assistant 1: *(Pointing to someone in the audience)* Keep that coat off please madam, we're back in the desert!

Assistant 2: They've got them then, three beauootiful oranges!

Assistant 1: Now that he's got them what's he going to do with them?

Manager: Take them home of course!

Assistant 1: What, all the way?

Manager: Of course.

Assistant 1: Well, that doesn't seem very fruitful to me. *(The other two hit him.)*

Manager: Out of the way, here they come.

(All three go to the sides, but remain in view. PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO enter carrying three oranges which are distinctly larger than before.)

Prince: We've no wind to help us now. We're not getting very far.

Truffaldino: I'm sure these oranges are bigger.

Prince: We must go on!

Truffaldino: I'm so thirsty. It's so hot. I need a drink.

(They exit.)

Assistant 1: The oranges are growing.

Assistant 2: They're bigger than when Creonta had them.

Manager: Hurry, move the palm tree, move the pyramids.

(The ASSISTANTS reposition them quickly on the opposite sides.)

Manager: Look out, here they come. Hush!

(The PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO enter with some larger oranges, about the size of footballs, which they bounce as they walk.)

Truffaldino: (*Exhausted.*) Let's stop a moment. My arms are killing me. (*They put the oranges down.*) How much further?

Prince: Let's have a look. (*They step forward and survey across the audience.*)

(*The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS creep on and during the following conversation swap the oranges for larger ones, making Shh! signs to the audience as they do so.*)

Prince: Miles and miles of ...

Truffaldino: Desert. Just sand and sand and sand.

Prince: And then there's more sand.

Truffaldino: And I'm so thirsty, just so thirsty. I'd do any thing for a nice cool drink of fresh water.

Prince: Be quiet it only makes it worse.

Truffaldino: And the oranges just keep growing

Prince: } Bigger and bigger and bigger!

Truffaldino: } (*They turn and look at the still larger oranges.*)

Truffaldino: Oh no! We'll never carry them now!

Prince: Then we'll just have to roll them. On we go! (*They roll the oranges off.*)

Manager: (*To ASSISTANTS*) Remember, they must not see us.

Assistant 1: We're silent.

Assistant 2: And invisible.

Assistant 1: (*Backing in to some scenery*) Ouch!

Manager: Shhhhh! (*Cross*) You call that silent and invisible!

Assistant 1: I couldn't help it!

Manager: Then learn to be silent and invisible!

(*They creep to the sides. PRINCE and TRUFFALDINO enter with three enormous oranges. They struggle with them and are both clearly hot and tired.*)

Prince: I really must have a rest, I'm so sleepy. (*He yawns and stretches.*)

Truffaldino: And I'm so thirsty! I really must find something to drink.

Prince: (*Totally ignoring TRUFFALDINO'S comments*) I must lie down, I really must.

Truffaldino: While you are resting I shall die of thirst.

Prince: Never mind, don't worry, have a snooze. Some sleep will give us strength, I must have forty winks. (*He calmly takes off his jacket and makes it into a pillow and settles down to sleep, sucking his thumb as he does so.*)

Truffaldino: (*Indignant*) It's just not fair! How am I meant to have a nice little snooze when I am about to die? (*To the PRINCE*) I must have a drink, sir.

(He shakes the PRINCE; no effect.) I need some water sir. *(Shakes again.)* Prince! Wake up! *(There is no movement.)* I don't think he'd wake if there was an earthquake. But I must have something to drink *(He pauses, thoughtful and depressed then gradually looks about. Suddenly his eyes light upon the oranges.)* How about the oranges? Oranges are fruit and fruit would quench my thirst Should I? If I don't I shall die I'll just cut one of the three that'll leave two for the prince They look so big and juicy He'd never manage three on his own Enough of thinking It's time for action!

(TRUFFALDINO seizes the sword and cuts into the first orange PRINCESS LINETTA steps out. She is dressed entirely in white.)

Linetta: I am the Princess Linetta!

Truffaldino: *(Astounded)* Oh no! A princess. All I wanted was some fresh orange juice!

Linetta: I must drink, give me a drink.

Truffaldino: Oh no! This is worse than ever!

Linetta: I am thirsty terribly thirsty. Give me a drink or I shall die of thirst. Any thing will do. Even some cool water.

Truffaldino: Princess, oh princess, where can I find water? We're in a desert and there's no water here.

Linetta: Don't worry, bring me some champagne or a glass of Pimms or a dry martini with ice or

Truffaldino: *(To the STAGE HANDS)* Could you direct me to the nearest cocktail bar? *(They wave him aside.)* Wake up Prince! *(He sleeps on.)*

Linetta: I shall die unless you can give me something to drink.

Truffaldino: There's only one thing for it

(TRUFFALDINO cuts into the second orange. NICOLETTA, appears.)

Truffaldino: Good grief! Another one!

Linetta: *(Very weakly)* I am dying I must have water

Nicoletta: I am the Princess Nicoletta and

Truffaldino: you are thirsty.

Nicoletta: In fact I think I am dying. Could you fetch me some pure fresh water?

Linetta: I am dy ing *(She collapses.)*

Nicoletta: My sight is failing.

Linetta: I am dying.

Truffaldino: Just hold on, be patient, give a chap a chance.

Prince: *(Snores loudly.)*

Linetta: Water, water.

Nicoletta: Take pity on a dying princess.

Linetta: I really am dying. *(She dies.)*

Truffaldino: Is she really dead?

Nicoletta: Water, water, wat *(She dies.)*

Truffaldino: And her too! *(He panics.)* Oh no! I can't take any more. Water must wait! This is no place for me!

(TRUFFALDINO runs off in terror. The PRINCE suddenly stirs, stretches and wakes up.)

Prince: That was a splendid slumber. Ah! *(He has another stretch then looks about.)* What's all this? No Truffaldino? Two princesses. *(He inspects them.)* And both dead? What can this mean? *(He sits and ponders the situation.)*

(The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS creep on and check the bodies.)

Manager: Oh dear, what a state of things.

Assistant 2: Two princesses are dead. It's so sad.

Manager: We must clear up. We can't have bodies every where.

Assistant 1: What shall we do?

Manager: There's only one thing for it, push them out of view over here.

(LINETTA and NICOLETTA are eased out of the way behind some scenery.)

Manager: That's better!

Assistant 1: Now let's see what happens to orange number three!

(They 'hide' again, ASSISTANTS on one side and the MANAGER on the other. The PRINCE has remained in a trance throughout.)

Prince: *(Becoming alert again)* Alone at last dear orange! I know that you are the orange of my dreams. What do you hide beneath your shiny skin? *(He kneels by the orange and strokes its skin.)* Dearest orange, I am devoted to you! I beg of you give all that I seek!

(The PRINCE cuts into the third orange and PRINCESS NINETTA steps out!)

Ninetta: I am the Princess Ninetta!

Prince: A princess! A princess! My princess! I have searched for you all my life.
I have dreamed of you all my days!

Ninetta: I always knew that my prince would come!

Stage Hands: Aaaaah!

Prince: You are mine!

Ninetta: Not yet! I must have a drink or I shall die of thirst!

Assistant 2: Not another!

Prince: You are mine!

Ninetta: I must have a drink!

Prince: Just a second. *(He looks about him.)*

Ninetta: A drink, a drink I beg of you. My sight is fading I shall die. *(Still begging for water NINETTA collapses.)*

(The PRINCE looks about desperately.)

Manager: *(To the ASSISTANTS)* Hey! Can one of you chaps find some water?

Assistant 1: What if we can?

Manager: Give the girl a drink, otherwise we'll have a tragedy!

(ASSISTANT 1 goes off; ASSISTANT 2 stands wringing his hands in despair.)

Assistant 2: Oh dear! Oh dear!

Ninetta: Water, water, give me some water!

(ASSISTANT 1 returns with a fire bucket, pretends to pull out various creepy crawlies and finally pulls out a giant spider which is dropped on the head of ASSISTANT 2 who immediately screams. ASSISTANT 1 then puts the bucket down near the PRINCE. The STAGE HANDS all point to the bucket and click their fingers trying to catch the attention of the PRINCE who remains totally unaware of their actions. Eventually they all give up and sit down again, powerless to do any more.)

Prince: *(Noticing the bucket)* What's this I see? *(He dips a finger in the bucket and tastes.)* Water! Drink this Ninetta. *(She does so as the PRINCE lifts the bucket to her lips.)* You'll soon recover!

Ninetta: You rescued me from that dark orange and now you have saved my life!

Prince: *(Heroically)* Nothing could prevent me from finding you! Horrid hurricanes did not hold me back, I battled through! The most monstrous mountains could not stand in my way, I clambered over them! I was not

defeated by cruel Creonta and the horrifying heat of her kitchen. I stood up to her and tore you from her! All of this I did for you!

Ninetta: What a hero!

Prince: Now the time has come for me to take you home to meet my father. The King of Clubs.

Ninetta: (*Shocked*) What! How can I meet your father in this crumpled old dress?

Prince: He won't mind.

Ninetta: But I shall! You must bring me a brand new dress, you know, the sort of thing that a princess would wear.

Prince: Very well.

Ninetta: Now bring me a beautiful dress. I shall wait for you.

Prince: I shall return as fast as I can and the King will be with me.

(The PRINCE leaves and NINETTA gives a sigh of contentment.)

Ninetta: What a lucky girl I am! I do hope that he won't be long.

(There is the sound of a sinister wind. Suddenly the stage is gloomy. The shadowy forms of FATA MORGANA and SMERALDINA are seen moving about but NINETTA does not see them. SMERALDINA carries a large pin.)

Manager: Fata Morgana!

Assistant 1: Smeraldina!

Assistant 2: With a giant pin!

All Three: Look out!

(Too late. FATA MORGANA drives the pin in to NINETTA.)

Ninetta: Aaaaaaaaaaaaah!

(NINETTA disappears behind the palm and when she re-appears she has a rat's head. She dashes about then scuttles off.)

Assistant 1: Turned into a rat! What will happen now?

Fata Morgana: Now my dear, you take Ninetta's place and insist that you are the real princess. Do you understand?

Smeraldina: (*Grinning evilly*) Yes Mum.

(FATA MORGANA exits stealthily.)

Assistant 2: What ever can we do?

(The sound of the march is heard and the stage becomes rather brighter. The KING, PRINCE, CLARISSA, LEANDER, PANTALOON and GUARDS enter. One of the GUARDS carries a new dress. SMERALDINA keeps her back to them.)

Prince: *(Not checking)* Here she is father, my very own princess, my bride to be!

(SMERALDINA turns and gives the most horrific and evil grin.)

King: What her? A princess?

Prince: But that's not her! Where's Ninetta?

Smeraldina: It is me. Of course it's me. I'm Ninetta!

Prince: No you are not. That's a filthy lie!

Smeraldina: But Prince, you promised to marry me!

Clarissa: And he is bound by his promise!

Leander: He is bound by his promise! *(They nod in satisfaction.)*

Pantaloone: *(Sadly)* That is the law.

Clarissa: } *(In mock pity)*

Leander: } Oh dear! That is the law!

Prince: Marry her! Never!

King: You have no choice!

Prince: But she's revolting! I won't marry a girl with a blue face! I refuse to marry this this creature.

King: A prince may never break his word.

All: *(Reacting according to their feelings)* Aaah!

King: Congratulations.

Prince: This is terrible.

King: Give her your arm. Let us return to the palace.

(The march is heard and all leave except LEANDER and CLARISSA who remain with satisfied smiles upon their faces.)

Leander: *(Speaking each word separately)* It seems that the sweet fruit had a bitter centre.

Clarissa: Quite gone off. Ha ha ha ha ha ha!

(CLARISSA and LEANDER laugh helplessly.)

Leander: Given our prince the pip! Ha ha ha ha ha !

Clarissa: (*Giving LEANDER a satisfied look*) How appealing. Ha ha ha ha ha !

(They are in fits of laughter and cling to each other for support.)

Leander: }

Clarissa: } Aren't we witty! Ha ha ha ha!

(They nearly collapse with laughter then exit, still laughing. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter to change the set.)

Manager: This is terrible!

Assistant 2: What are we going to do?

Manager: Let's have a think.

Assistant 2: Think!

Manager: Yes, think! (*He does so.*)

Assistant 2: I'm not very good at thinking.

Manager: Who tried to stop the prince from laughing?

Assistants: Fata Morgana!

Manager: And when he laughed who put that curse on him?

Assistants: Fata Morgana.

Manager: And who turned that nice princess into a nasty rat?

Assistants: Fata Morgana.

Assistant 2: She just spoils the story.

Manager: That's it ... if we nobble Fata Morgana we take away the cause of all the trouble.

Assistant 1: If we can stop her she won't be able to do any more of her spells and curses!

Assistant 2: And perhaps we can have a happy ending after all!

Assistant 1: Who would have thought that he used to like tragedy!

Manager: Right, what shall we do then?

(They put their heads together and plot; part way through they turn their heads and look at the audience)

Manager: We're not telling you

Assistants: It's a surprise!

.... then they plot again and break up laughing.)

Manager: Come on we've got to change the scenery.

Assistant 1: Where are we going now then?

Manager: Back to the palace, we'll see what we can do about Fata Morgana as soon as we can catch her on her own.

(They push the scenery off; the curtain opens to reveal the palace again.)

Assistant 1: Look out here she comes with Tchelio!

Assistant 2: Quick, hide.

(FATA MORGANA comes storming in with TCHELIO belting behind her. They are in the middle of a furious argument.)

Tchelio: You curs-ed crone, vile and vicious! You think you're so clever don't you? But I tell you that I'm nowhere near finished yet just you wait and see!

Fata Morgana: You stupid old fraud. You're not even up to the simplest trick from a Christmas cracker.

Tchelio: Fiend, is there nothing that shames you? How low can you yet? Creeping up on people and stabbing them with giant pins!

Fata Morgana: Shut up you old fool. Go and get yourself an obedient white rabbit. You're finished.

Tchelio: Then tell me, oh all powerful Fata Morgana *(She preens herself on hearing this flattery.)* Tell me, oh queen of the dark forces

Fata Morgana: You flatter me

Tchelio: Why, with all your inestimable powers stacked against him why is the prince

Fata Morgana: Yes, dear Tchelio?

Tchelio: why is the prince still alive?

Fata Morgana: *(Spitting with fury)* Because you cheated! You gave Truffaldino a piece of ribbon! Cheat! You are no magician, my friend, you are nothing more than a nasty, cheap cheat! The prince is mine, don't you forget it, cheat again and you'll regret it!

Tchelio: Bitch! I'm not finished yet! I'll never let you win! Now, I must go and check a few spells.

(TCHELIO leaves, finds he has gone the wrong way)

Tchelio: Sorry, slight mistake, let me see now, this way I think.

(He finally exits. FATA MORGANA can hardly control her laughter as from

beneath her robes she produces TCHELIO'S spell book.)

Fata Morgana: He'll practise some spells if he can find his spell book! If he wants to play dirty then I can play dirtier! Ha ha ha ha! *(She is triumphant.)* See that! *(She waves her wand causing darkness, lightning and loud thunder.)* See my power! Hear my power!

(The thunder dies away and FATA MORGANA stands in total silence with her arms held high.)

Manager: *(Off stage)* Fata Morgana!

Assistants: *(Off stage)* Fata Morgana!

Fata Morgana: *(Suddenly nervous)* Who who who's there?

(STAGE HANDS appear, the MANAGER keeps back and has a rope hidden.)

Assistant 1: It's only us. We've got some thing for you!

Assistant 2: Come closer, Fata Morgana the magnificent, and let us whisper a little something in your ear.

Assistant 1: It's a lovely surprise.

Assistant 2: Because we admire you so

Fata Morgana: I'm not too sure about this fellows. What do you mean?

Assistant 2: Come closer and we'll tell you.

Fata Morgana: *(Tempted but cautious)* Very well.

Assistant 1: We won't hurt you *(Aside)* Not much!

Assistant 2: There's nothing to fear *(Aside)* If your names don't begin with F and M!

(The ASSISTANTS stand beside FATA MORGANA and the MANAGER stands behind with a large noose ready to go over her.)

Fata Morgana: What have you got for me then?

Assistant 1: It's a surprise!

Assistant 2: A big surprise!

Fata Morgana: *(Becoming more interested)* I like surprises.

Assistant 1: Close your eyes then.

Assistant 2: Ready?

Fata Morgana: *(Impatiently and with her eyes closed)* Yes, what is it?

All Three: This!

(They slip the rope over her and pull it tight. FATA MORGANA protests and struggles but there is no escape.)

Fata Morgana: *(Whilst they bind her)* Ow! Ow! Cheats! Ow!

Manager: Now you're trapped. We'll have no more dirty business from you!

Fata Morgana: Cheats! I'll soon escape. Do you really think a piece of rope can bind someone as powerful as me? *(She struggles determinedly but it is no use.)* I'll soon be out of here, just you see.

Assistant 2: That's quite enough! *(He pushes her and she rocks helplessly.)*

Assistant 1: What can you do now all powerful one? *(He gives her a push.)*

Manager: Now you're under our control! *(He pushes FATA MORGANA and she fumes in fury.)*

Assistant 1: You're in our power! *(He pushes.)*

Assistant 2: So there! *(He pushes.)*

Manager: Let's get her out of the way.

Fata Morgana: *(As she is pushed and prodded to the side of the stage and out of sight)* You feeble little weevils. Do you really think that you can change the story. You're powerless I tell you, utterly powerless! I'm the one with the power.

All Three: Oh no you're not!

Fata Morgana: Oh yes I am! And you'll soon find out just how powerful I am just you wait and see! *(She is pushed and poked.)* Stop prodding me like that. I'm not that bad really.

All Three: Oh yes you are!

(FATA MORGANA is still protesting in the wings when the sound of the march is again heard. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS come dashing back on holding wedding decorations.)

Manager: Quick, get these up. Get ready.

Assistant 1: Hurry up, they'll be here soon.

Assistant 2: Poor prince, fancy having to marry Smeraldina.

Assistant 1: I don't. I wouldn't marry Smeraldina if she was the last

Manager: Quick, the thrones.

(MANAGER and ASSISTANTS dash off; LEANDER and PANTALOOON enter.)

Leander: *(Very pompously)* Is everything ready?

Pantaloone: Everything.

Leander: *(Sneering)* Where are the thrones?

Pantaloon: *(Commandingly)* Thrones.

(ASSISTANTS dash on and put the thrones in place.)

Pantaloon: There they are!

(The procession enters and once in place covers the view of the thrones; SMERALDINA is veiled. The PRINCE is very distressed and clearly detests his bride. NINETTA slips into place on one of the thrones behind the crowd. She is still wearing the rat head.)

All: Long live the king! Long live the prince. Long live the princess.

Clarissa: }

Leander: } Ra! Ra! Ra!

(They continue over enthusiastically and make a lot of noise after everyone else has finished. The KING gives them a hard stare.)

King: My son, it is time to present your bride to the court.

Prince: *(Stepping away from SMERALDINA and trying to show his distaste)*
Father, do I have to marry this this blue faced troll?

Smeraldina: *(Clawing at the PRINCE)* Oh princey, don't break your promise to your darling Ninetta.

King: A prince's promise cannot be broken. Come and sit upon the thrones.

(The crowd part and the RAT is revealed sitting on one of the thrones in a very indignant state.)

All: A rat! Help! A rat in the royal court.

(TCHELIO suddenly appears in a blaze of light.)

Tchelio: Abracadabra! Be gone rat! Ninetta return!

King: Guards!

Tchelio: Rat! Be gone! Princess return! Return princess!

King: Guards! Muskets at the ready.

(The GUARDS step forward.)

Tchelio: Drat you rat! Do as I command!

(The RAT is making frantic signals.)

King: Take aim!

(The GUARDS raise their guns.)

Tchelio: I command you rat

(The RAT'S signals become more urgent.)

King: On the count of three

Prince: *(Suddenly alarmed he leaps in front of the RAT to prevent it being shot.)*

Don't shoot the rat! It's trying to tell us some thing.

Tchelio: Now then rat, this is your last chance! I command you to unrat yourself!

(TCHELIO hurls a monstrous spell at the RAT. There is a flash of the lights, the RAT disappears and NINETTA appears blinking in the lights.)

Prince: Princess, my princess!

Princess: Where am I? What has happened to me?

All: A miracle!

Prince: My orange! It is her, my own princess!

Princess: There you are, my prince.

All: Good gracious.

King: Well I never fancy that!

Prince: Yes father, I do!

King: Then who is this? *(He points at SMERALDINA.)*

Prince: *(Tearing off the veil.)* Ugh!

Truffaldino: Why, I know her, she's been skulking round the palace rather a lot lately. It's Smeraldina!

Doctor 1: She certainly has a most unusual complexion!

Doctor 2: And she doesn't look at all well.

Doctor 3: There must be some thing wrong with her diet.

Doctor 4: Once we have examined her we'll soon find a cure.

Clarissa: } *(Aghast at the turn of events.)*

Leander: } Smeraldina, hush!

King: *(Noticing)* Smeraldina, plotting with Leander and Clarissa. I see it all now.

Leander: Oh sir

Clarissa: *(With mock affection)* Dear uncle

Leander: } (*Very obsequious.*)

Clarissa: } How could you think such a thing of us?

King: I understand it all now. Why was my son so ill? Because of you. Why didn't he get well? Because of you! The two of you have plotted and schemed but now your plot will take another turn.

Leander: Oh sir.

Clarissa: Oh uncle.

King: You have betrayed us. You have been prepared to commit high treason

Leander: No sir.

Clarissa: No uncle

King: For which the punishment is

Truffaldino: Oh sir, forgive them.

Pantaloon: Be quiet! I'm enjoying this!

King: (*With deliberation and menace*) For which the punishment is torture Whips and scorpions Ropes a..n..d chains Snakes a...n...d ladders!

Leander: } (*Groveling*)

Clarissa: } Mercy. Mercy!

King: And then, to finish, death, by hanging.

All: Death by hanging!

Leander: (*Pleading*) No sir!

Clarissa: (*Pleading*) No uncle!

King: Send for the hang man.

Leander: Mercy sir.

Clarissa: Mercy uncle.

King: Arrest them all. (*The GUARDS move forward .*)

Clarissa: }

Leander: } Help! Save us! Help! Help!

Smeraldina: }

(*Shouting in terror they run away.*)

King: After them!

(*The KING leads the way and is followed by the GUARDS and everyone else. ALL exit. Throughout the following chase all movements are exaggerated, almost as in a slowed down film. The pursuers remain in a line as they chase. The stage is clear for a moment then CLARISSA, LEANDER and SMERALDINA dash in from the opposite direction. They search frantically for somewhere to hide.*)

Leander: *(Terrified)* What shall we do?

Clarissa: Run away!

(They run off. Immediately the KING and everyone else enters and they search furiously every where, moving the thrones and going down among the audience. There is much noise and pandemonium. Finding they exit by the same route as they entered. CLARISSA, LEANDER and SMERALDINA appear from another entry. They are more frantic than ever.)

Leander: Where can we hide?

Clarissa: Over there!

(LEANDER dashes to a suitable position. CLARISSA storms after him and throws him to the floor.)

Clarissa: *(Screaming)* That's my place!

(CLARISSA hides; LEANDER picks himself up awkwardly and finds a hiding place as does SMERALDINA. The line of pursuers enters still lead by the KING but no one has noticed that FATA MORGANA has joined in at the end of the chase. The KING has lead everyone at such a frantic pace that when he suddenly stops all bump into each other and spread over the stage. As soon as she enters FATA MORGANA leaps on the thrones and stands commandingly.)

Fata Morgana: *(Speaking loudly above the hubbub which quickly dies down.)*
Daughter, Leander, Clarissa, run for you lives!

(They run through the audience and if there are spare seats sit among them.)

Fata Morgana: One last spell I shall work!
So you'll not follow us with ease
By my command you now shall freeze!

(Suddenly the stage is bathed in blue light. All freeze in position. Cackling to herself FATA MORGANA comes down from the thrones and admires her work. Laughing she takes off her battered hat, steals the crown from the KING and places it on her own head. She tickles the PRINCE under the chin then makes faces at NINETTA. Moving on she pulls the beard of TCHELIO then picks up her hat and pulls it down over PANTALON'S head. Seeing

TRUFFALDINO she bends him over, limbers up then gives him a smart kick. TRUFFALDINO shoots up with an astonished look then bends over again. As everyone is 'frozen' this is FATA MORGANA'S moment of delight. She is immensely proud of herself and cannot stop laughing in glee. She pulls herself together and speaks to the audience.)

Fata Morgana: Really that was very clever,
Now they're stuck like that, for ever!

(FATA MORGANA goes off cackling. The MANAGER and ASSISTANTS enter.)

Assistant 1: Now look what she's done!

Manager: How did she escape?

Assistant 2: She was so cross that she blew herself into a red hot temper and exploded the ropes.

Assistant 1: That's really spoilt things!

Assistant 2: Just as the story was so nice too.

Manager: There's nothing we can do now.

Assistant 2: We can't break her spell.

Manager: Brr, it's jolly cold here. *(He points to someone in the audience.)* I hope you've put your coat back on, madam.

Assistant 2: Is there nothing we can do?

Manager: Nothing. *(They are very glum and thoughtful.)*

Assistant 1: Yes there is. *(He dashes off.)*

Manager: What's he up to?

Assistant 2: I don't know.

(ASSISTANT 1 comes dashing back holding three aerosol sprays.)

Manager: What's that?

Assistant 1: Anti-freeze of course. Spray them with this and they'll be as good as new!

Manager: Splendid! You go over there, I'll go to the back and you do this part here.

(They spray everyone and gradually all start to stretch and thaw out and the lighting slowly returns to normal.)

Assistant 1: Make sure you don't miss any one.

Manager: And make sure you do them properly. We don't want any one left with

a frozen arm or anything.

Assistant 2: Hair spray sir?

Assistant 1: How about a little freshen up under the arms.

Manager: Nearly done.

Assistant 2: Just one leg to finish.

Manager: Come on, we'll sit at the side so that we can see the end of the story.

(They sit out of the way but remain in view.)

Pantaloon: *(Stretching and looking round.)* Aaah! What happened, where are they?

King: *(Feeling for his crown)* Traitors, where are they?

Truffaldino: Gone!

Pantaloon: Gone for good!

King: Then after them, guards.

(The GUARDS begin to dash off.)

Truffaldino: They're not worth it.

King: You are right, there is something far more important to be done.

Prince: Now father

King: Yes my son.

Prince: Can we go back in time?

King: What do you mean?

Prince: I want another procession.

All: Another procession?

Prince: Yes, my wedding procession was with Smeraldina, now I want to have a procession with Ninetta!

King: Very well, it shall be done.

Pantaloon: Come along everyone, back we go.

Truffaldino: In to order please everyone.

Pantaloon: No squabbling please!

(With much activity and chat TRUFFALDINO and PANTALOON usher everyone backwards off the stage and the procession is reformed.)

Manager: *(To the audience)* So all ended happily

Ninetta: *(Shouting)* Will you get your foot off my dress?

Prince: *(Indignant)* It's not on your dress!

Ninetta: I tell you it is on my dress!

(NINETTA and the PRINCE continue to argue loudly and the MANAGER and ASSISTANTS put their hands over their ears as the argument develops.)

Prince: It's no where near your dress!

Truffaldino: Can we have the march again please?

Assistants: Yes, all ended happily

Everyone: *(Loudly)* Ever after!

CURTAIN

(The march is heard, very loudly, one more time for the curtain call.)

