

ENTER THE PRINCESS

By **Daniel Curzon and Lady Mallet**

CHARACTERS:

At least ten **(10)** with doubling, up to as many as twenty-five **(25)**

THE PRINCESS: Based on Margaret Rose of England, with liberties, a rather short, thin woman, brunette, pretty, and feisty. The part can be played by a woman of perhaps 30 who can manage the range from 21 to 71 as a tour de force. Or possibly one woman could play her in Acts I and II up to age 48 and an older woman can play her in Act III.

THE ROMANTIC INTERESTS:

CAPTAIN PETER TOWNSEND,
tall, suave, older than the Princess, an equerry

ANTONY, small, animated photographer;
later husband of the Princess as Lord Snowdon

RODDY, considerably younger boyish boyfriend
of the Princess, sweet, playful

PRIVATE

SECRETARY: A man who incorporates several real-life jack-of-all-trades for the Princess

THE QUEEN: Similar build to the Princess, four years older, more solemn and stolid. (If necessary, the Queen and Prince Philip can be portrayed by large puppets, two puppeteers, and a separate actor for each voice.)

(These six main characters should each be played realistically, always by the same actor. They can double in other roles if absolutely necessary and if well disguised.)

OTHERS: Ladies-in-Waiting, Servants, Officials, a Famous Person, Gossips, Hangers-on, the Press, Crowds, Assistants, Private Detective, members of the Royal Family, and all other minor characters (assign each role as appropriate).

SETTING: (1952-2002)

Two main sets, as elaborate as the budget will allow, or minimalist, merely suggesting the location.

One set is PRIVATE, including indoor rooms in various residences.

The other set is PUBLIC, including anything such as platforms from which the Princess views events, on the street, etc. Some indication of the year of the action might be good but is not essential.

ACT I, Scene 1

1952 A STATE ROOM IN A PALACE

(The Queen-to-be, Prince Philip, Ladies-in-Waiting, Friends, Hangers-On, Press are gathered waiting for the belated entrance of the Princess. A staircase for her entrance would be nice, if affordable.)

PRIV.
SEC. (to audience) I'm afraid the Princess was sometimes late.

PRIN (offstage) I am not bloody late! They're all bloody early!

(The Crowd reacts to the swearing of the Princess, some shocked, some amused. The Princess is drunk.)

PRIN (still offstage) Oh, hell! Put the bloody thing on me! Here! Not there!
Let me do it. I am not too short. I just need a taller tiara!

(The Princess hurries into the room, sees the others, is mildly disconcerted. She is twenty-one, petite, fetching, and impeccably dressed for a formal occasion. Her tiara is slightly askew and she slurs her words.)

PRIN Oh, there you all are! I've been looking everywhere for you. I thought the ceremony was in the saloon, for God's sake!

PRIV.
SEC. No, Ma'am. It's where it was last time. Here.

(The Private Secretary is handsome, tall, enforcer of protocol but usually amused by the Princess.)

PRIN No need to pull such a long face. I'm here, aren't I?

(She adjusts her tiara, which remains askew. A Lady-in-Waiting comes over to assist her.)

LADY #1 No, Ma'am, if I may . . . (Reaches out.)

PRIN You may not. The tiara is fine! Let it be.

LADY #1 Yes, Ma'am. (Moves back.)

PRIN Oh, don't start getting all hurt now. If you really want to adjust the tiara, then do so. (Poses for assistance.)

LADY #1 Yes, Ma'am. Shall we go into . . . (Gestures offstage.)

PRIN Of course not! It's not as if I'm naked or something. They can look at my hair being 'touched' without scandal, I hope. God! (She stumbles a bit.)

PRESS #1 May we take a photograph now, Your Highness?

PRIN Your Royal Highness! In a moment. (to Lady-in-Waiting #1) Well?

LADY #1 I can't seem to get it perfect, Ma'am.

PRIN Then no photographs. We can't have royalty looking askew, can we? It might upset the People no end. Is there nobody here who can fix a Princess's tiara? Even it she's in her cups?

(Everyone is unwilling to be so bold.)

QUEEN Perhaps my sister would like to retire to the next room in order to obtain the help she needs?

PRIN I tell you no. I think we should wear our tiaras crooked. We could say it's a tribute to the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Aren't we meeting the Italian ambassador?

**PRIV.
SEC.** The German ambassador, Ma'am.

PRIN Oh, poo! When you've met one ambassador you've met them all.

(Embarrassed silence in general, though not from the Princess.)

**PRIV.
SEC.** Shall we begin the reception line for the ambassador? Since the king is not here tonight, we probably should —

PRIN I'm German too! I don't dislike Germans. I don't really feel like a Windsor anyway. I feel every inch of my Saxe-Coburg-Gotha heritage. See how it rolls off my tongue?

QUEEN My sister is such a pretty young thing, don't we all feel?

(The Queen applauds the Princess. Others join in because prompted to. The Queen is four years older than the Princess and more dignified and stodgy.)

PRIN (basking in the applause) You're too kind, too kind.

LADY #2 She's on everyone's lips.

PRIN Am I? I'm a mere slip of a girl doing her duty to God and country along with her loving royal sister.

(Commotion offstage.)

**PRIV.
SEC.** The German ambassador has arrived, Ma'am.

PRIN Thank God! (to PRIVATE SECRETARY) Pinch me if I fall asleep.

(The assembly forms into a reception line as protocol dictates. The Queen is not yet the Queen, only a royal princess. She is next to her husband, Philip. Others take their official positions, all very stiff.)

(The Princess is the last to get into position.)

PRIN I do wish it were the Japanese ambassador. I adore the Japanese. They're small. I feel so at home!

VOICE (offstage) May I present the Ambassador from the West German Republic, Baron Heinrich Haffer-Mussen!

PRIN Heil Hitler! (There are gasps from the assembled.) It's a joke, for God's sake!

BLACKOUT

PRIN (in the blackout) What do you mean 'inappropriate'? Acting like we have rods up our arses is more 'appropriate'?!

ACT I, Scene 2

THE SAME ROOM, SAME TIME

(The Princess and the other royals are being escorted from the room by the Private Secretary.)

(Two Ladies-in-Waiting separate from the assembly. They are as young as the Princess, loyal, attentive as well as sometimes scathing, sometimes giddy.)

LADY #3 Well, thank heaven that's over! He was so long-winded.

LADY #2 A bit, but I adored his beard. (about the Princess) Wasn't she superb?

LADY #3 Who?

LADY #2 The Princess.

LADY #3 Which one?

LADY #2 Margaret Rose.

LADY #3 (looking around carefully so that no one else can hear) If you ask me, she was disgraceful. Coming in late again, her tiara a mess, whispering and drunk. What could she be thinking?

LADY #2 But she was so sprightly about it. I thought she was a darling, the very best thing about this whole ceremony.

LADY #3 You must be joking. If she doesn't watch herself, she'll be out of the palace door before she knows it. Much too indulged by her father and entirely too cavalier about everything, if you ask me.

LADY #2 O, Lord, not again! Back in your day . . .

LADY #3 Princesses were proper. Indeed they were. Not this modern contempt for tradition, let me tell you. That is how you knew you were in the presence of royalty. People acted royal!

LADY #2 Oh, don't give me that. Henry VIII came to court with ale and food bits in his beard.

LADY #3 Don't believe everything you hear about *them*. When you are in the public eye, there is always calumny – and down-right lies. But this Princess . . . I don't believe she is going to prosper, if she keeps this up. (Shakes head.)

LADY #2 On the contrary! She is single-handedly going to save the British royal house from their reputation as Corgi-loving 'thicks'.

LADY #3 Shame on you! If they could hear you!

LADY #2 Oh, they can't hear me. They're too full of their own loud wind.

(The Private Secretary re-enters.)

PRIV.
SEC. Ladies, come, please! Have you heard?

LADY #3 What?

PRIV.
SEC. His Majesty the King.

LADY #2 What?

PRIV.
SEC. Has died. Quite unexpectedly, at Sandringham, after a day's shooting.

LADY #3 No!

(There are sounds of distress among those present. Re-enter the Princess.)

PRIN (to Private Secretary) Tell me you're wrong! He can't be dead.

PRIV.
SEC. I'm afraid it's true, Ma'am.

PRIN It can't be! He was only fifty-six.

(The Ladies-in-Waiting go to her, attend to her grief.)

PRIN Please, not Father! Please, God! How could you do this to him?!
I hate you, hate you now, God, and I used to like you so much!

(Others try to calm her down.)

LADY #1 Ma'am, Ma'am, control yourself. Others will need your strength.

PRIN He didn't even say goodbye. *I* didn't get to say goodbye.

PRIV.
SEC. Each person has to go at his appointed time.

PRIN Oh, shut up! I don't want to hear your platitudes.

PRIV.
SEC. (stiffening) Ma'am.

PRIN It's true. You're so namby-pamby it makes my teeth ache.

PRIV.
SEC. (a stiff rod) Ma'am!

PRIN Am I not allowed to show my emotions when my own father dies?
That's not right. That's not natural!

PRIV.
SEC. There's nothing natural about being royal, Ma'am.

PRIN (crying) Papa! . . . Papa! I loved you so! You're the only one around here
I love at all. Don't die. Don't die. (Sobs sincerely, passionately.)

(Re-enter the Queen, quite cool.)

QUEEN We can hear you from the other room, Margaret. It's not seemly.
Can you pull yourself together, or shall I send everyone away?

PRIN How long am I allowed to cry? What's the official time limit – thirteen
seconds, three?

QUEEN Others are looking to us for strength. Do you have any strength, Margaret? . . .
Rise, please! (The Princess slowly gets up, straightens her back. Her tiara is
crooked again.) Your tiara . . . Let me help you. (Begins to help, but the
Princess pulls away.)

PRIN Stop! Damn you! Damn the tiara! (quickly) You're the Queen now.
Oh, my God!

QUEEN I'm still your sister.

PRIN No, I don't think you are. And you never will be again. (loudly) It's not right!
It is not right!

(**Slow fade** as all except the Princess freeze in place.)

ACT I, Scene 3

1954 A PLATFORM FOR VIEWING

(The Princess is up high attending a public function, in a hat and coat, looking out at the audience. There are Others present, notably the Private Secretary near the Princess and several overly proud Officials a few steps away.)

PRIV.

SEC. (to audience) At times I accompanied the Princess on her rounds of royal duties.

OFFICIAL #1 (pointing out to the Princess) Notice how efficient and yet attentive our bakers are.

PRIN They're utterly charming.

PRIV.

SEC. (aside to Princess) You're doing very well, Ma'am.

PRIN I am not. I want a drink, and I have to pee.

PRIV.

SEC. Didn't you wear your . . . ?

PRIN I had no idea it would last this long.

PRIV.

SEC. If you could manage for just a while longer.

PRIN Oh, I'll manage. My upper lip is so stiff I can balance a biscuit on it!

PRIV.

SEC. What does that mean exactly, Ma'am?

PRIN It made sense until it came out. How many biscuit factories do I have to visit today, for God's sake? I'm tired.

PRIV.

SEC. Just this one, Ma'am.

OFFICIAL #1 (pointing out another detail with a gesture) See that, Your Royal Highness.

PRIN Oh, yes, most interesting.

PRIV.

SEC. (to Official #1) I believe you've been making biscuits here since 1854.

OFFICIAL #1 Actually, 1853. (Smiles.) And Biscuit Makers to the Crown since 1875!

PRIN (under her breath) And I haven't liked one of their bloody biscuits yet.

PRIV.

SEC. Then you must make a point of eating one at lunch.

PRIN I bloody well won't. (Smiles and waves to the bakers.)

PRIV.

SEC. You can make an effort. A bite or two. They'll be looking to see your reaction.

PRIN I have as much privacy as a goldfish in a bowl. But at least the goldfish gets to pee in the water. (Smiles.)

PRIV.

SEC. Royalty does not "pee," Ma'am. They dispense favors. Decorum, decorum.

PRIN Oh, nobody heard me! Nobody ever hears *me*.

PRIV.

SEC. They hang on every word, every gesture.

PRIN Actually they hear what they think I should say. Last week, at the . . . other biscuit factory —

PRIV.

SEC. You mean the iron works?

PRIN Whatever it was. I did a test. One of the representatives of the place came up and bowed and said, "How lovely of you to come to see us." And I said, right to his face, "I'm not really Princess Margaret Rose," and he said, "Oh, thank you, Ma'am!"

(Official #1 points out another aspect of the biscuit factory's operation below them.)

PRIN Oh, yes, I see. (aside to Private Secretary) So it doesn't matter what I say.

PRIV.

SEC. I wouldn't test that too far, Ma'am. It might get out and be quoted in the press.

PRIN The press are toadies just like the rest of them.

PRIV.

SEC. Still, Ma'am.

PRIN Let me prove it to you, right now.

PRIV.

SEC. Please, you needn't. I believe you.

PRIN I want to show you! (She beckons to Official #1.)

OFFICIAL #1 Do you have a question, Your Highness?

PRIN I do. I'm sure your lovely biscuits never come out wrong, but has anyone ever choked on one?

OFFICIAL #1 Let me think, Ma'am. (Thinks too long.)

PRIN Yes?

OFFICIAL #1 I can't think of a single incident.

PRIN Well, I certainly hope I won't be the first!

OFFICIAL #1 Heaven forbid, Ma'am!

PRIN Very bad for business. "Royal Princess Chokes to Death on Royal Biscuit."

OFFICIAL #1 It would ruin us.

PRIN Indeed it could.

OFFICIAL #1 We were planning to offer you several kinds at lunch, but perhaps –

PRIN Oh, I promise to be extremely careful. I know I'll be tempted to gobble your biscuits. You'll just have to keep them away from me.

OFFICIAL #1 I'll do that, Ma'am. I will.

PRIN I'll hold one up. I just won't eat it.

OFFICIAL #1 Much better that way, Ma'am, much better. I must say, I never before thought about what might happen if a royal person had a misfortune with a biscuit.

PRIN Perhaps we should move on to the wrapping department?

OFFICIAL #1 Of course.

(Official #1 hurries ahead, leading the way.)

PRIN (to Private Secretary) See. He didn't realise that I was twitting him in the slightest.

PRIV.

SEC. Perhaps not. But you are playing with fire.

PRIN What's the use of being royal if you can't risk courage now and then?

PRIV.
SEC. Some might consider you haughty, Ma'am.

PRIN Me – haughty? Haughty? I've never heard anything more ridiculous in my life!

PRIV.
SEC. (deferring to let her go ahead) Shall I prepare a guillotine for you, Your Highness?

(She laughs. They leave the platform as the lights dim.)

PRIN You try it out first. And be sure to let me know how it is.

ACT I, Scene 4

1955 CLARENCE HOUSE

(Silhouetted in semi-darkness the Princess is sitting on a settee, where she takes out a long, black cigarette holder, places a cigarette in it. She is alone, except for a Lady-in Waiting #2 far off to the side.)

PRIN (lighting up, groans with delight) Oh, it feels so good to be by myself for a moment!

(Hold this pose for a few moments. Lights up.)

LADY #2 I'm here, Ma'am.

PRIN I haven't had a fag in hours. I think that word means something else in America. What — I'm not quite sure. (Blows smoke.)

LADY #2 I don't know, Ma'am.

PRIN And it's good for me too. Kills the appetite. So it's easy to be picky about my food, like last night at the dinner for what's his name. I ate practically nothing myself, while Philip, Her majesty's so-called stud, consumed a zoo.

LADY #2 Oh, Ma'am, be careful.

PRIN Is there nothing that man won't put in his mouth? If he doesn't watch himself, from Philip alone, the cow may become extinct!

(Lady-in-Waiting #1 enters.)

PRIN (irritated) Oh, dear.

LADY #1 Is something the matter?

- PRIN** (ironically) Not now that *you're* here, Janey.
- LADY #2** Would you like us to leave you alone?
- PRIN** No. With you two here, it's like being alone anyway. (The Ladies-in-Waiting wince or make a small noise.) Just teasing! I didn't mean it. (She holds out her hands to them. They come over and take her hands.) Watch the cigarette! You two are such silly geese – geese. You mustn't take me seriously. I'm bored, and when I'm bored I can say things I regret. Do say you forgive me?
- LADY #1** It's not for us to forgive you, Ma'am.
- LADY #2** Ever.
- PRIN** Those are my good girls. Now tell me what are people saying about me?
- LADY #1** (hesitantly) Nothing but compliments, Ma'am.
- PRIN** Oh, come now. I know better than that. Word is out!
- LADY #2** They say you're the jewel in the royal crown, Ma'am.
- PRIN** Do they? And the brightest rose on the family bush?
- LADY #1** That you're elegant and beautiful and everyone is eager to meet you and see you.
- PRIN** Oh, bother.
- LADY #2** (too gushy) And that you're glamour personified!
- PRIN** Although not yet married, isn't that correct? I'm all those things, but going on twenty-five and not 'dating appropriately.' Tongues are beginning to wag. I can feel the breeze in here.
- LADY #1** You have plenty of time to get married, Ma'am.
- PRIN** Her Majesty my sister would like to see me married off, I'll bet. Put a little more of the spotlight on her nibs, wouldn't it just?
- LADY #2** I'm sure the Queen wants only the best for you.
- PRIN** She's a dear. (Pause.) I do hope Philip doesn't shoot her by mistake at Balmoral. (Laughs.)
- LADY #2** (shocked) Ma'am!
- PRIN** You're correct. Enough of levity! It's time I found a husband. I think I would like a drink.

- LADY #1** Yes, Ma'am. . . . This early?
- PRIN** I'll decide what's early and what's not.
- LADY #1** Yes, Ma'am. (Goes for the whiskey.) Famous Grouse, as usual?
- PRIN** With Highland spring water and one ice cube. Yes, I really must put my attention on finding a husband. Any suggestions?
- LADY #1** May I presume, Ma'am?
- PRIN** Presume away! (Lady #2 gives her a glass of whiskey.) You call this a drink? Never mind. (Takes a swig.) Was it husbands we were discussing, or was it something important?
- LADY #1** Binky Williams!
- PRIN** Insufferable man! He showed me his penis in Paris, or was it Prague? Insufferable penis.
- LADY #1** He did what?!
- PRIN** Well, not actually! Just a tight bathing costume that left little to the imagination. Why are men so proud of their genitals? It seems to me there are many other things one could be prouder of – like their art work or their gold fillings. So, no, Binky Williams won't do. He'd expect me to applaud his penis all the time.
- LADY #2** What about Colin Tennant?
- PRIN** What about him?
- LADY #2** He's to be Lord Glenconner one day.
- PRIN** As a potential husband?!
- LADY #2** Why not?
- PRIN** The pervert? The proverbial pervert?
- LADY #2** You don't really think so?
- PRIN** How shall I put this in my best Bo Peep manner? Colin and I had "relations" in Canada last year.
- LADY #1** You didn't!
- PRIN** It got so cold in the Yukon, even Colin looked good to me. In bed he got all gushy and sentimental and said I was the girl for him. He started planning this big wedding at the Abbey, and I had to stop it right there.

Colin, I said, I am not going to marry you. I like you more than that to inflict such a punishment on you!

LADY #2 What did he say to that?

PRIN I think he had already realized he'd said too much and was terribly grateful I'd let him off the hook. . . . You know how men are *after* they come.

LADY #1 You're not very romantic, Ma'am.

PRIN I stopped being romantic the first time I saw a cock entering my vagina.

(The Ladies-in-Waiting giggle, embarrassed.)

LADY #2 What about Billy Wallace?

PRIN The chinless wonder? Well, maybe he's chinless, but he's certainly no wonder.

LADY #1 I've got him! . . . Robin Douglas-Home!

PRIN He makes wonderful love, plays the piano exquisitely, but I fear he will wind up a suicide.

LADY #2 You're very hard on your men, Your Highness.

PRIN Oh, I know what they're saying about me. That I'm a nymphomaniac. But it's never been proven! (Laughs.) They even say I had sex with Stalin. I never had sex with Stalin. . . . All right, I dated Stalin, but I only let him, as the Americans say, get to first base.

LADY #1 There are some in court who think that you . . . possibly . . . are seen in the company of socialites . . . a bit much.

PRIN A bit much? I'll tell you what's a bit much. Who are they to tell me, the third in line to the throne of England – or am I the fourth now? – that I'm seen with socialites too much!

LADY #1 They say it conveys a bad image of the royal family.

PRIN Oh, tosh! Is that what they're actually saying? The nerve! It doesn't mean I'm sleeping with all of them just because I have a few drinks and a few cigarettes and a few laughs! Amazing! People are so misled by appearances.

LADY #1 You more than most, Ma'am, should know the power of symbolism.

PRIN I do know it, you impudent bitch!

LADY #1 I'm sorry, Ma'am. I didn't mean –

PRIN How dare you both! I should never pick your brains if I'm not prepared for rubbish. Well, you tell them I'm not a nymphomaniac, or if I am, I'm a very bad one! Do you hear me?!

LADY #1 Yes, Ma'am.

PRIN I am! Men are so simple. Suck their cocks, and they'll follow you anywhere. Oh, stop talking about it!

(The Ladies-in-Waiting are shocked, nervous, and amused all at once.)

PRIN You two can marry who you want. Well, *I* can't. I suppose I'll wind up with somebody dreadful just to save my reputation. How dreary but royal!

LADY #2 Perhaps *you* have someone in mind, Ma'am.

PRIN You sly fox. How did you guess? I do have my eye on someone, someone very special.

LADY #2 And may we ask who that might be?

PRIN Group Captain . . . Anonymous.

LADY #2 But he's not royal!

LADY #1 And isn't he divorced?!

PRIN I can marry anyone I want! (The other two are afraid to contradict her.) I can! I'm Margaret Rose of York, heir apparent to the heir presumptive. (after a beat) Which means I'm a member of the royal family of Great Britain, Northern Ireland, and the British dominions beyond the seas, and bloody defenders of the bloody faith!

LADY #2 But you'd become Mrs. Group Captain . . . Anonymous!

LADY #1 You'd have to leave Clarence House.

PRIN I can manage anywhere.

LADY #2 In a military wife's bungalow?

PRIN It wouldn't bother me in the slightest. Some people take their charisma wherever they go.

LADY #2 But not their ladies-in-waiting, Ma'am – not to be disrespectful.

LADY #1 I would not push my luck in that area, Ma'am.

PRIN No! Fame is like a delicate fruit . . .

LADY #1 In what way, Your Highness?

PRIN I don't know. It just is! Don't be impertinent!

LADY #1 I'm sorry, Ma'am.

PRIN You should be. Get out of here, before I sack the both of you!

(The Ladies-in-Waiting curtsy and back out of the room.)

PRIN (to them, although they are gone) Damn your hides! You can't tell me I can't have my Group Captain, you can't! If I want him, and he wants me, and he does, in the worst way, then I'll have him, by God, or know the reason why! . . . Oh, bother, bother, bother! I can't think of anything witty to say. So I'll just sit here and look stunning.

(She sits on the settee again, poses with her cigarette holder. Fade to semi-darkness.)

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 5

1955 ANOTHER ROOM IN A PRIVATE HOME, LATER

(We hear party voices, sounds. The voices belong to Bright Young Things of café society: vain, gossipy, alcoholic, and rich.)

GUEST #1 Oh, yes you will, Boofey!

GUEST #2 You can't make me, and that's all there is too it!

GUEST #1 Tallulah, tell her she must. I will have that camisole.

GUEST #4 (in a different conversation) Have they run out of champagne? What kind of gin joint is this? (Laughs.) Oh, here's some!

GUEST #5 Tommy! Tommy! Come over here! You must hear the cleverest thing that Binky just said about Boofey!

(Enter the Princess, to escape the offstage voices, but still listening.)

GUEST #6 You bring Binky over here! I'm not budging from this caviar! It's stupendous!

GUEST #5 Don't eat all that caviar! It'll make you as big as a walrus or something.

GUEST #3 Binky's already as big as a walrus. He shouldn't have any caviar at all. And no cake!

GUEST # 2 That's what you think! I'm going to eat myself sick.

GUEST # 5 Well, don't blame me if you can't get out of bed one morning.

GUEST # 2 Who gets out of bed in the morning?! Really, Billy, sometimes you can be so common!

(Laughter.)

PRIN (sighs) (to herself) Oh, dear. . . . I really must get married, I think. Settle down.

GUEST #1 Stop it, Boofey!

GUEST #2 I won't!

GUEST #1 You will too, you wretch! You're spoiling the birthday party!

PRIN (to herself) Yes, it's time. Well past. . . . Well past.

(Slow fade on voices, laughter, which begin to repeat the lines of this scene.)

GUEST #1 Oh, yes you will, Boofey!

GUEST #2 You can't make me, and that's all there is to it!

(The Princess escapes.)

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 6

1955 ROYAL BOX IN A THEATRE

(The Princess is at the ballet, wearing a fancy dress. With her is Group Captain Anonymous, a tall, manly, reserved equerry with a horsy British face. Around them are Hangers-On, Ladies-in-Waiting talking among themselves, but also quietly observing and commenting on the two lovers.)

(It is just before the ballet is about to start.)

PRIN I'm so pleased you agreed to join me tonight, even though it's not your usual thing.

CAPTAIN For you, even a ballet.

PRIN All the more reason I'm flattered. But really you should get to know ballet better. It's one of my favourite things in the whole world.

CAPTAIN You'll have to teach me what you like about it.

PRIN The way they pose and jump, never sweating, or at least pretending they aren't.

CAPTAIN Sort of like royalty?

PRIN That's good! That's true, isn't it? How lovely to know someone who can teach one things.

CAPTAIN I'm happy that you think I can teach you anything.

PRIN Oh, pish! You taught me how to ride.

CAPTAIN I believe you were already quite accomplished before I appeared on the scene.

PRIN But you refined my riding skills.

CAPTAIN I hardly think —

PRIN No, you did! Before you showed me how to sit properly, I was almost in pain on a saddle, especially afterward.

CAPTAIN Well, even if it's not true, thank you. And what's on the program tonight?

PRIN *Le Corsaire*. I picked it specially for you. It has all sorts of action, blustery and yet elegant. Sort of like your military itself, come to think of it.

CAPTAIN Is it? I can't wait. Although I don't think the military go leaping about all over the place.

PRIN But they do! The ballet and the military are exactly alike, except for the music.

CAPTAIN We have music. Brass bands.

PRIN Believe me, I know. I've had to listen to enough of them.

CAPTAIN You've had your fill of them, then?

PRIN Is that a leading question?

CAPTAIN Did it sound like that? I'm sorry.

PRIN No need to be sorry. I can be led, sometimes, depending on the leader.

CAPTAIN And where precisely would you like to be led, Ma'am?

PRIN Do you know a good bridle path?

CAPTAIN . . . How do you spell that?

PRIN B . . . r . . . i . . . I forget how to spell the rest. I'm hopeless at spelling.

CAPTAIN Are you? There's so much I don't know about you, isn't there?

PRIN You thought you knew who I was, didn't you? But don't be like the rest of the world. There's a public me and there's a private me. And they are very different.

CAPTAIN If I didn't know you from out earlier associations, I too might believe the rumors.

PRIN When you're in the spotlight, there are rumors. Exaggerations. Patent lies.

CAPTAIN What do you suppose they're saying about us right now?

PRIN You can imagine. (Turns and waves to the Ladies-in-Waiting.)

CAPTAIN It's not as though we're really on a "date."

PRIN You're just part of the party.

CAPTAIN Indeed.

PRIN And I didn't pick this seat for you to sit in.

CAPTAIN Which just happens to be next to yours.

PRIN Clearly not. It was all quite random.

CAPTAIN I suppose I should thank Heaven for my good fortune, shouldn't I?

PRIN Are you religious?

CAPTAIN Occasionally.

PRIN Me too! We have so much in common.

CAPTAIN We do seem to, don't we? Of course I'm so much older than you.

PRIN I'm very mature for my age. Very mature.

CAPTAIN I'm divorced, remember.

PRIN Dreadful woman.

CAPTAIN Dreadful woman?

PRIN Your wife. Ex-wife. She had to have been dreadful to have divorced you.

CAPTAIN She wasn't that bad. Nor was I. It's just that the two of us were no longer good together.

PRIN I like men who can put words together nicely. Nicely put.

CAPTAIN I like girls who like men like me.

PRIN I'd squeeze your hand, but everyone would notice.

(All of her party look sharply at the Princess and the Captain.)

CAPTAIN (noticing them staring) I imagine that happens now and then when you're in the royal box.

PRIN Would you mind being in the royal box, besides tonight, I mean?

CAPTAIN Something tells me that if this were to go any further, we both wouldn't be in the royal box for long.

PRIN Do you really think so? I think the Queen can be persuaded. Though it's maddening to even have to ask that stick-in-the-mud for permission!

CAPTAIN To accept a divorced man into the royal family? (Shakes his head.) Never!

PRIN We could try!

CAPTAIN We're doomed from the start, like your uncle and Mrs. Simpson.

PRIN No! No! Times have changed. And I do so like you – almost as much I used to like God when I was a little girl, I mean.

CAPTAIN And now you're a big girl, all grown up and sophisticated, with tiaras and a louche crowd she travels in.

PRIN Louche? I don't like the sound of that. What does "louche" mean exactly? It isn't nice.

CAPTAIN I thought it meant . . . worldly.

PRIN I guess I'm louche then. (Laughs.)

CAPTAIN Just how wicked would you say you are, Ma'am?

PRIN You can see that I'm not nearly as wicked as "they" are beginning to say, can't you? Such Puritans! It's just drinking and smoking! Even the press is not respectful anymore. Now they can't wait to print the most horrible insinuations and libels. I wish I were half as wicked as they say I am. I'd be having more fun!

CAPTAIN If you say so, Ma'am.

PRIN Oh, do call me Margaret once and for all. Let me just say this: (reciting)
There was a little girl,
Who had a little curl,
Right in the middle of her forehead.
When she was good,
She was very, very good – (Looks at him.)

CAPTAIN And when she was bad she was . . . torrid?

PRIN Oh, that’s naughty! I love it. Torrid, not horrid.

CAPTAIN Of course you’re not horrid. I’ve known you long enough to know how utterly charming you are.

PRIN “Can be charming” would be more accurate. Now I want you to get the “group” that you’re the so-called captain of and get all those vicious paparazzi, as they’ve called now. Mow down every single one of them. Promise?

CAPTAIN You have but to ask.

PRIN Now I shall never have to worry about those leeches sucking my blood ever again, shall I? And we will be the perfect couple forever and ever.

CAPTAIN On the other hand, I suppose I could *start* being louche, for the right woman.

PRIN Indeed, you need the right woman. Not like that dreadful harridan you married.

CAPTAIN Ma’am, Margaret, she really wasn’t like that. May I ask you not to speak of her that way? (He waits to see if the Princess will explode.)

PRIN Oh, I’m sorry I’m sure. “Dreadfully” sorry. I shan’t speak again.

CAPTAIN I beg your forgiveness. I have no right to be cross with you. It’s not my place.

PRIN Precisely! I haven’t had a nanny for years!

CAPTAIN Perhaps we should examine the program.

PRIN Of course I also like it when you’re not afraid of me. You aren’t, are you?

CAPTAIN How could I be afraid of anyone so fundamentally good?

PRIN Well, I’m not Bo Peep! Nor an angel either.

CAPTAIN To tell the truth, it’s not easy knowing what I can and what I can’t say to you.

PRIN You’re hardly the only one. Don’t worry. I’ll tell you what to say and what not.

CAPTAIN Perhaps that’s too uncomfortable, for both of us.

PRIN Perhaps so! Look! The lights are dimming. *Le Corsaire* is about to envelope us.

CAPTAIN I can't wait

PRIN If you fall asleep, at least don't snore!

(The Captain takes the Princess's hand, lifts it, kisses it. She squeezes back.)

CAPTAIN The same to you! (as the lights dim) Darling Margaret.

VOICES Did you see that? Did he kiss her hand? He did more than that! He kissed her breast! I saw him grab her nipple. I predict by the interval one or the other will be in someone's lap!

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 7

1955 A BEDROOM IN CLARENCE HOUSE

(The room is totally dark. The Princess and the Captain are in bed together.)

PRIN (after a moment) Did you like that?

CAPTAIN Marvelous.

PRIN Would you like some more?

CAPTAIN One can have too much of a good thing.

PRIN Oh, don't come yet! I hate it when men get all breathy and squiggly and serious and I'm not part of it.

CAPTAIN I'll do my dutiful best.

PRIN I must say your best is quite nice. (She is feeling him up, although we can't see anything.) Do you find me attractive, without all the trappings, I mean?

CAPTAIN Of course, my little Margaret Rose.

PRIN Just Margaret. I hate the Rose. . . . It was a silly question. How can I ever be seen without my trappings?

CAPTAIN In the dark perhaps?

(A night light is turned on.)

PRIN Wouldn't it be awful if someone found us here?

CAPTAIN It's time they got used to us, the idea of us as a couple.

PRIN They won't find us, of course. I've sent everybody away for the weekend. How shocked they'd be to find you in my bed!

CAPTAIN I believe you're enjoying this.

PRIN Well, why not? If I have to be a princess, I might as well enjoy it.

CAPTAIN When we're married, you can stop worrying about the world.

PRIN We can?

CAPTAIN If we marry, you'll have to leave all this and live in my home. Surely you've thought this through.

PRIN But I haven't even seen your home!

CAPTAIN It's, shall we say, more modest than yours.

PRIN This one isn't actually mine anyway. I just live here. I won't miss it.

CAPTAIN You think you won't, but it can be quite a shock living in the real world.

PRIN My world is entirely real! And it can't be that awful out there. You've survived it. Besides, they should accommodate me. They managed for fucking Henry VIII. We can make you a viscount or something.

CAPTAIN I'm not the viscount type.

PRIN Don't be silly. You'd make a perfect viscount. It isn't as though people haven't been made into lords and earls and god knows what else in the past – and for doing what? Some monarch's dirty business. They can cough up a viscount.

CAPTAIN You tell them that, Princess.

PRIN I'm not afraid of them and their boring old tradition. Tradition is so tiresome.

CAPTAIN It must be, yes.

PRIN Do you think I'd pretty even if I weren't a princess?

CAPTAIN Lovely. Especially here in the dark.

PRIN Oh, you! (Punches him.)

CAPTAIN Hey!

PRIN Some say I'm quite pretty. Sometimes, I'm afraid, it might just be the royal setting.

CAPTAIN Are you always this witty?

PRIN Was I being witty? I thought I was merely stating what I felt.

CAPTAIN Wit can be quite tiring at times. Such effort, on both sides.

PRIN A clever turn of phrase can turn lead into gold. But I don't feel any need for effort. Everything just comes out.

CAPTAIN Like poop?

PRIN Oh, that's disgusting!

CAPTAIN It's quite natural.

PRIN Oh, do stop! . . . Actually you've hit on something. I've always thought it was odd that we should claim to be made in God's image. Does God shovel food in at the top and it comes out in a most unbecoming mess at the bottom? I'm sorry. I'm talking rot. It must be putting you off most awfully.

CAPTAIN Nothing you do can put me off. (Turns off the light.) . . . Feel here.

PRIN (feeling his penis in the dark) So I see! You complete cad!

CAPTAIN You're completely captivating, really. If only people could see you as I do.

PRIN You mean naked and stroking your penis? I hardly think that would endear me to them.

CAPTAIN I mean being the wildly wonderful, passionate woman that you are.

PRIN They say I have a voracious appetite for sex. And they're quite right. One after noon recently I had sex with all of Wales.

CAPTAIN Come, let me shut that mouth and let me show you where my heart is.

PRIN I'm passionate, but I'm capable of great love too. Are you my great love?

CAPTAIN We can only try to live our lives, and not let others live them for us.

PRIN You're right. Let's live ours!

(Silence.)

CAPTAIN You sure you want to do this?

PRIN Well, we've come this far.

(Both laugh.)

PRIN Is that your heart I feel against me?

CAPTAIN Shhh . . . I do love you, Margaret.

PRIN Oh, my God, now I have . . . everything!

(Perhaps we hear the sound of the bed starting to move.)

PRIN Oh! . . . Oh!

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 8

1955 A ROOM IN BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(The Queen is waiting, dressed in an expensive but plain dress. Her husband, Philip, is standing nearby. The Prince is tall, grumpy, and sarcastic, immaculately dressed in a suit and tie, very irritated.)

MALE

SERVANT May I get you something, Your Majesty?

QUEEN (waves her hand dismissively, saying nothing)

MALE

SERVANT Yes, Ma'am.

PHILIP: (about the Princess) She's a spiteful, spiteful . . . wretch!

QUEEN Don't let her upset you. She knows how to get her way by discombobulating other people.

PHILIP Somebody ought to give her a good hiding!

(Enter the Princess immediately.)

PRIN Hiding? Who would that be? Did you start without me?

MALE

SERVANT Ma'am . . . ? (The Servant starts to ask the Princess if she wants anything.)

QUEEN Hardly. (She waves the Servant from the room.) (He leaves.) Let's get right to point.

PRIN I do wish you'd let me have a drink. I have the feeling that this is going to be difficult.

QUEEN You drink quite enough as it is.

PRIN Ooo, so majestic! I do wish you'd drink more, Lilibet. I so love your horsy laugh.

PHILIP What impertinence! You listen here, girl. We've had enough of your flouting of conventions, your endless –

QUEEN I will handle it, Philip.

PRIN Why does *he* have to be here?

PHILIP Of course I have to be here. You need someone to talk sense into your silly head. What can you be thinking?!

QUEEN Philip.

PHILIP All right, all right. (Sulks away to the side.)

QUEEN (to the Princess) You know why I have asked to speak to you, I trust.

PRIN Do I? To compliment me on my engagement? To give me a pony?

QUEEN There will be no pony – and no engagement either.

PRIN Oh, but there will be!

QUEEN You cannot marry a divorced man. You will bring disgrace, even tragedy, to your family if –

PRIN Tragedy-smagedy! What nonsense!

QUEEN Sit down, Margaret Rose.

PRIN You know I hate that name and dropped the Rose ages ago.

QUEEN I will sit, then. (Sits.)

PRIN You don't look comfortable.

QUEEN Much too much is made of comfort. Indeed, it is your main problem. You want only what your own selfish desires tell you to want and never what is good for the House of Windsor.

PRIN The Saxe-Coburg-Gothas, you mean? The lumpen-Royal Family.

QUEEN You may insult me, all of us, but we are not going to let you ruin us and our reputation.

- PRIN** I'll go away. Peter and I will live elsewhere. There – it's settled!
- QUEEN** You haven't an inkling about what you'd be getting yourself into. Have you even been in a military wives' compound?
- PRIN** I've seen them. You forget I see many things when I'm performing my so-called royal duties.
- QUEEN** Seeing them is hardly living in them. You have never cooked so much as a piece of toast in your life. You barely know how to turn on a television set by yourself.
- PRIN** You exaggerate, no doubt for effect.
- QUEEN** I speak the plain truth. You are a vain, frivolous, little . . .
- PRIN** Go ahead, say it.
- QUEEN** I don't have to step into the gutter to make my point. We do not divorce. Nor do we marry the divorced; you will break it off, and that will be the end of it.
- PRIN** We don't divorce. We stay locked into loveless, dried-up old "holy unions" that are the real disgrace. The hypocrisy smells to high Heaven.
- PHILIP** Monstrous! (Grumbles more.)
- QUEEN** (to Princess) In time you will learn that hypocrisy is a good thing. What if everyone did exactly what they wanted and didn't give two farthings about what anyone else may think!?
- PRIN** We'd all be better off.
- QUEEN** We'd all live in anarchy! Why couldn't you have picked someone more suitable? Are you deliberately trying to spite me because I became Queen and you didn't?
- PRIN** You did not figure into it.
- QUEEN** I suspect maybe I did. You thought because we were raised together, schooled together that we were equal. We weren't!
- PRIN** I'm your equal any day, my Queen!
- QUEEN** I am speaking of the succession. Of course you are my equal as a person. You are most clearly not my equal when it comes to the throne.
- PRIN** Perhaps if I plotted your overthrow, I would be?
- PHILIP** Such impudence! I say throw her to the wolves, and let her starve with the Group Captain!
- PRIN** It's not all wolves outside this palace. Peter has a fine job. I will adjust.

PHILIP You'll be begging to come back here in two months.

PRIN Never!

QUEEN We are not going to see whether she will or not. She is not going through with this marriage, and a statement will be prepared. (to Princess) And you will sign it!

PRIN You sign it! You sign it *good!*

PHILIP You will sign if we have to drag your silly arm to the paper.

QUEEN I'll marry who I want! I'll be like Uncle David.

PHILIP Yes, stuck with a twig – an American at that – who has the looks of a char-woman with too much rouge on her cheeks. What could David have been thinking?!

PRIN They're very happy now.

PHILIP Have you seen them lately?

PRIN No.

PHILIP Well, I have. They trudge around the world, really with no place to go or stay. He's her puppy; it's unseemly. He must have some fetish she caters to!

QUEEN Philip.

PHILIP She must! She's not beautiful or young or royal. In fact, she's as common as dirt. And she's a bloody American!

QUEEN Philip.

PHILIP And just between you and me, as the "Duchess" proves all too well, maybe you can't be too rich, but you definitely *can* be too thin!

QUEEN In any case, they are hardly a role model, for you, Margaret Rose. I would hate to see you unhappy after the shimmering part wears off.

PRIN It won't wear off. At least in my case!

QUEEN It always wears off. The question is what will be there underneath once it goes. In your case, I fear it will be even less than in poor Uncle David's situation. Unless you have a fetish too.

PRIN How dare you two! I've already had more love, more genuine emotion in my time with Peter than you two have had in what is it – eight years? *Eighty* years?

QUEEN I know that you are angry, dear, so I won't hold these things against you. But I will say this: You are presumptuous and callow, to say nothing of superficial, thoughtless, and stupid, to think that you know what my husband and I share. Just because we do not scare the horses with our love, it doesn't mean we have less than you do. Our love has been tested, and lasted, and you are not going to make a foolish mistake that will haunt you for the rest of your life. Nevertheless, I don't tell you this for your sake alone. I do feel some sisterly affection for you still, but not nearly as much as I once did. I am mainly telling you what you will do because it is essential for the monarchy and the system of government, as my advisers have made clear. I could not care less, after today, if you hanged yourself, my dear. But, believe me, you won't hang the rest of us.

(Silence.)

PHILIP What? No saucy rejoinder?

QUEEN It is all over the papers now, with endless speculations. The People are quite anxious about the outcome. It has to come to an end. I'm afraid it will not be with the huge wedding in Westminster Abbey, as you no doubt fantasized.

PRIN You could give Peter a title. It's been done before. You could send us into exile. You could have some backbone and accept us. Divorce isn't that horrible a thing! Sometimes *not* getting a divorce is the horrible thing!

QUEEN I could. But I won't. Already this is the second terrible scandal with a divorce in less than twenty years. You are rocking the very foundation on which our legitimacy and credibility stand. We are not shop girls – although you smoke like one – aping the latest fashions from cheap magazines and – God forbid! — film stars, including the fashion of fashionable divorce. We are the rock bed of society, and you . . . you little shit, you are not going to destroy it.

PHILIP (snaps his fingers at the Princess) *Hah!*

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 9

1955 A PLATFORM OUTDOORS

(The Princess is standing on a public platform. She is wearing another smart hat and coat. Loud martial music is playing, almost drowning out the voices.)

OFFICIAL #2 (gesturing at the parade going by – again out in the audience. He is very energetic and proud.) See, Ma'am!

(The Princess is trying to smile and listen and nod appreciatively, but she is sad.)
(Enter Official #2's Associate, beckons to Official #2, who goes over to attend to some matter. The Associate and Official #2 confer.)

(The Princess, by herself, continues to wave from time to time. But eventually her hand drops. So does her head. She turns away for a few moments, then turns back, places a smile on her face, and resumes her duties.)

(As the parade music fades, the Princess's pre-recorded message comes over a loudspeaker, as it was broadcast in October, 1955.)

VOICE "I would like it to be known that I have decided not to marry Group Captain Peter Townsend. I have been aware that, subject to renouncing my rights of succession, it might have been possible for me to contract a civil marriage. But, mindful of the Church's teaching that Christian marriage is indissoluble, and conscious of my duty to the Commonwealth, I have resolved to put these considerations before others." (The Queen and Philip appear below the platform.) "I have reached this decision entirely alone, and in doing so have been strengthened by the unfailing support and devotion of Group Captain Townsend." . . . (He is obviously not there.) "I am deeply grateful for the concern of all those who have constantly prayed for my happiness."

(She waves once more, bravely.)

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 10

1955 ANOTHER ROOM IN CLARENCE HOUSE

(The Group Captain is pacing the room. His face is tired and worried.)

(Enter the Princess, dressed perfectly in subdued colors.)

CAPTAIN There you are! I'm sorry I couldn't come sooner.

PRIN I had an appearance to make myself.

CAPTAIN Another biscuit factory?

PRIN A school parade in Wilshire. A new school named after me. I had to go.

CAPTAIN I understand. It's just that I wanted to see you before I leave. They've posted me to Brussels. Out of sight, out of mind, they figure.

PRIN I could still go with you.

CAPTAIN Why don't you?

PRIN All right. I will.

(They look at each other, surprised.)

CAPTAIN Just like that?

PRIN If only it were that easy.

CAPTAIN Yes.

PRIN I suppose I could fly over to Brussels from time to time.

CAPTAIN True.

PRIN You don't sound convinced.

CAPTAIN Is that what you want?

PRIN I don't know what I want. Oh, I do know! They just won't let me do it.

CAPTAIN I thought you were going to stand up to them. Tell them off.

PRIN I did!

CAPTAIN Just not enough, apparently.

PRIN You don't know the pressure on me – the cruel letters I've been getting. Hundreds of them.

CAPTAIN Well, I can't claim hundreds of letters, but do you think I haven't taken ribbing from the men in my unit? Especially the officers. And I can't go anywhere without photo-journalists dogging me..

PRIN They're beasts, I agree.

CAPTAIN Scum of the earth.

PRIN That's what it would be like if you married into my family. We could never go anywhere and be left alone, not after all this publicity.

CAPTAIN We should have just done it! Gone off and gotten married. To hell with all of them – your sister, her "advisors," the People!

PRIN There's a great deal of sympathy for us. I hear it. I even see it – in the faces of the staff.

CAPTAIN What about your friends? What do they say?

PRIN I have no friends. I have hangers-on.

CAPTAIN Well, what do they say?

PRIN I can't trust what they say, even the ones I think I can trust. They usually say what they think I want them to say.

CAPTAIN Uneasy lies the head that wears . . . a tiara.

PRIN Don't be flippant.

CAPTAIN I'll be a anything I damn well please. (desperately) I'm going to lose you! There isn't going to be some last-minute salvation where we wind up a happy couple with church bells and confetti.

PRIN And the Archbishop of Canterbury giving his blessing.

CAPTAIN I'll probably never see you again after today. I'll be in Belgium! (He does not know this sounds humorous.)

PRIN Silly boy, it's not that far away! We can find places; we can find ways.

CAPTAIN I don't want a life like that, skulking about, afraid of being caught. It's not a courageous life.

PRIN Doing what we want, not what others want us to do! To me, that's courageous.

CAPTAIN You'd grow tired of it.

PRIN No, I wouldn't.

CAPTAIN Then I'd grow tired of it. I'm tried of it already. I don't want that life.

(Silence.)

PRIN We probably wouldn't last anyway.

CAPTAIN (surprised) What?!

PRIN We. Us. Maybe a year.

CAPTAIN That's a terrible thing to say.

PRIN I know. But it's the truth. If you can't even survive this part.

CAPTAIN So you don't really love me after all?

PRIN What's love?

CAPTAIN Nice. Yes, that is a very nice way to protect yourself from regret.

PRIN Oh, I do love you. (Hugs him.) I do!

CAPTAIN Just not enough. (He removes her arms from around him.) Correct?

PRIN (her heart breaking) Just not enough . . .

(Silence.)

CAPTAIN Well, that about says it all, does it not?

PRIN I'm sorry, Peter.

CAPTAIN Are you? I wonder. You are such a *princess!*

PRIN What is that supposed to mean?

CAPTAIN Maybe it's true what they're saying about you – that you're shallow and frivolous.

PRIN You forgot vain and ill-natured.

CAPTAIN . . . and wonderful. So wonderful!

(They grab each other again – with squeezes and kisses.)

(Finally they separate but hold hands.)

CAPTAIN Goodbye, my princess.

PRIN Goodbye, my prince, my darling prince.

CAPTAIN Even if I were a prince, I still couldn't have you, and merely because I met my ex-wife before I met you. (Lets go of her hand.)

PRIN Will you write?

CAPTAIN No.

PRIN I will.

CAPTAIN No, you won't.

PRIN Will you write about us?

CAPTAIN Probably . . . but I'll wait a long, long time.

PRIN Splendid. Nobody will care then.

CAPTAIN Right. Nobody will care . . . then.

PRIN Even us.

(They touch hands for the final time. The Captain turns and walks away.
The Princess turns and walks steadily in the opposite direction.)

CODA (in semi-darkness)

PRIN (plaintively, an echo from the side of the stage) I love you!

CAPTAIN Let's never marry anyone else. Promise?

PRIN I'll promise if you'll promise.

CAPTAIN I promise!

BLACKOUT

ACT I, Scene 11

1955 BARE STAGE

(A minuet or other old-fashioned music is playing. All who play multiple parts enter in slow motion, undulating and weaving, sharply choreographed, holding up mirrors to each other. There is smoke swirling around – smoke and mirrors.)

(A Figure in a golden robe with a golden face mask appears, ideally from a trapdoor, but somehow, and is surrounded by the others, completely blocked from view.)

(After a few moments, the dancers move to reveal the golden Figure. It is the Princess, draped provocatively, as naked as the law and taste allow. She holds a whiskey glass in one hand and a vibrator in the other, both of which she holds aloft in ironic triumph.)

PRIN Peter who? See, I've forgotten!

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

(INTERVAL)

ACT II, Scene 1

1959 A PUBLIC STREET

VOICE #1 (pointing offstage) Do you see that limousine?

VOICE #2 Who is it?

VOICE #1 (pointing) It's the Queen!

VOICE #2 Where? Where?

(A crowd begins to gather.)

VOICE #1 I believe that's her. There she is!

VOICE #2 That's not the Queen! That's Princess Margaret.

VOICE #3 I've seen her here before. She's going to a garden party around here.

VOICE #4 The slut!

VOICE #5 Did you see the strapless dress she was dancing in at some night club last week?

VOICE #2 It showed the top of her breasts!

VOICE #1 Really? I'd like to see that. She's got jolly good breasts, I hear.

VOICE #4 She must have – as much as she shows them off!

VOICE #1 If I had breasts like hers, I'd show 'em too, I'll tell ya!

VOICE #2 Here she comes!

(Enter the Princess with a small party.)

PRIN Oh, there's a crowd over there. Perhaps we should go around to the other door.

(She and her party start to retreat.)

VOICE #4 Where you going, Your Royal Highness? Too good for the likes of us?!

VOICE #1 Shhh! You can't talk like that to her!

VOICE #4 She's no better than the rest of us, just because she was born with a silver spoon up her nose! (yelling at Princess) Afraid we'll soil your fancy clothes with our breath, Highness?

PRIV.

SEC. Hear, hear, move along there! (to audience) Being famous has its pitfalls.

VOICE #4 You move along. We were here first!

PRIN (to Private Secretary) Never mind. Let's just go the other way.

PRIV.
SEC. (to crowd) How dare you treat your betters with disrespect?! (Threatens to beat them with his fists.)

VOICE #4 Your princess is nothing but a drug addict!

(There is consternation from the Princess's party and many of the crowd.)

PRIV.
SEC. You don't know what you're talking about. Ignorant rabble! Typical! Typical!

PRIN I'm afraid it's becoming more and more typical. Someone threw a potato at me last week in Kensington Park.

PRIV.
SEC. What!? You didn't inform me of this?

PRIN I thought it was an isolated incident.

VOICE #4 What's your boyfriend going to do about it, huh, Princess? Have me flogged, cut off my ears? Hah!

PRIN What would I do with ears?

VOICE #4 Got enough cut-off ears already, have you, ducky?

VOICE #3 Think you're better than we are, don't you?!

PRIV.
SEC. Don't answer him.

VOICE #3 Well, don't you?

PRIV.
SEC. Her Royal Highness has nothing but the highest regard for the people of the United Kingdom.

VOICE #4 Bollocks! I know what she thinks.

PRIN Don't believe everything you hear!

VOICE #3 You shouldn't look down on the little people so much, Ma'am!

PRIN Well, at my height, I can't very well look down on the big people!

(Some laughs, smiles.)

PRIV.
SEC. Don't answer them!

VOICE #1 You tell him, Ma'am!

PRIN Thank you.

PRIV.

SEC. Don't dignify this any more. (to the crowd) Off with you! All of you!

VOICE #4 We're not moving. Off with you!

VOICE #3 Off with your heads!

PRIN Let me say a few words to them.

PRIV.

SEC. No! Come away!

(He leads the Princess and party away.)

VOICE #4 See how she is! Too good to speak to us! Got to get to another party!

VOICE #3 Why don't *we* get invited to those parties?!

VOICE #1 God bless you, Ma'am!

VOICE #4 We don't like you anymore, Margaret Rose!

(The Princess stops, turns back to speak.)

PRIV.

SEC. Ma'am, anything you say will be used to sully the whole Royal Family!

(Reluctantly, the Princess holds her tongue.)

PRIV.

SEC. Come, please.

PRIN (stopping) It must be terribly difficult being poor, do you suppose?

(The Private Secretary leads her offstage.)

VOICE #4 Did you hear what she said?! It's difficult all right, you bloody cow!

VOICE #2 I thought what she said was very sympathetic.

VOICE #4 Sympathetic? Don't bloody well count on her coming to your fucking garden party any day soon!

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 2

1959 A PRIVATE GARDEN PARTY

(Enter the Princess and small party, a few moments later.)

SERVANT (announcing) Princess Margaret and party!

HOSTESS Welcome!

PRIV SEC Lady Vyvian, tea is prepared, I assume.

**MEMBER
of PARTY** That was truly frightening!

HOSTESS What happened? (to Servant) Certainly we have tea. Anything else?

(The Servant runs offstage for the tea.)

(The Princess is ushered in, helped with her coat, given a chair to sit in.
Everyone in the room is bustling with nerves – those from outside as well
as those already at the party.)

PRIN They made us late.

HOSTESS Not at all, not at all! What happened?

PRIN What happened to whom? (pulling rank) *Whom* are you talking to?

HOSTESS I'm sorry. What happened, Your Highness?

PRIN That bunch outside was really quite frightening.

**PRIV.
SEC.** Hooligans! Probably Irish.

**MEMBER
of PARTY** Anti-monarchists, the lot of them!

**ANOTHER
MEMBER
of PARTY** They said the most extraordinary things to Her Royal Highness.

PRIN More and more I'm finding I actually like hypocrites!

(Enter Servant with teapot and cups.)

SERVANT Tea, Ma'am.

(The Hostess helps serve the tea to the Princess.)

PRIN (drinking one small sip without even looking at it or the Servant) Thank you.

HOSTESS Shall I call the police?

PRIV.

SEC. No, no, that won't be necessary.

PRIN Napier here worries overmuch about what gets into the newspapers.

PRIV.

SEC. They could have harmed you, Ma'am.

PRIN Oh, they were just venting their discontent. I do the same thing. Although I must say this: the multitudes tend to cloy upon repeated viewings!

(Some chuckles.)

HOSTESS I'm glad to see Her Royal Highness back in her good spirits.
(fawning) But I fear the tea is not to your liking.

PRIN Of course it is. Now if only had a shot of Famous Grouse as a chaser.

HOSTESS I'm sure we can find some. (Gestures to Servant, who gets the bottle.)

PRIN Ah, you knew I was coming. My fame precedes me!

(The Hostess presents a glass of whiskey to the Princess.)

PRIN (taking it) I will blame *you* when I go to utter ruin. (Takes a sip.)

HOSTESS Please all of you help yourselves! You must be famished after that row in the street.

(People help themselves to hor d'oeuvres. The Servant offers drinks, food.)

HOSTESS I'm afraid I'm down to one servant. Bridget is . . . indisposed.
(Rolls her eyes.) A charming girl but utterly irresponsible.

PRIN I'm going to fire all of mine.

HOSTESS Really, Ma'am?

PRIN I have noticed that they are not afraid of me any more. I used to be able to grump about something, and it was taken care of like that. (Snaps fingers.) Now they take their bloody time. Frequently they are downright saucy. And people think we aristocrats are always in control. Only princesses should be saucy!

GUESTS (about servants) Off with their heads! The lazy, impudent lot of them!

(The doorbell rings.)

HOSTESS Oh, that'll be Rudolph.

PRIN Nureyev? Or the red-nosed reindeer?

HOSTESS The former. I trust you won't mind being presented to him. He begged me to let him come to meet you today.

(The Hostess signals the Servant to wait before answering the door.)

PRIN Didn't I see him in something? *Le Corsaire*? I quite liked him, didn't I?

PRIV.

SEC. I believe so, Ma'am. His reputation is growing enormously.

(The doorbell rings again.)

HOSTESS I can send him away, if it's too much after your incident in the street.

PRIN No, no, perhaps he'll be interesting. Even not leaping about.

(The Servant sees that it is all right to answer the door.)

(Everyone looks toward where the ballet star will enter.)

(Enter Rudolph Nureyev.)

HOSTESS Rudolph! How lovely of you to come!

(Cheek kisses, his coat taken, a general fuss made.)

NUREYEV (in broken English) Lady Vyvian, would not have missed it for world.

HOSTESS Your Royal Highness, may I present the principal male dancer of the Kirov Ballet, Rudolph Nureyev.

(He inadvertently, nervously curtsies.)

NUREYEV Oh, sorry. I guess I'm supposed to bow. (Bows.)

PRIN How very nice to meet you.

(They touch hands, awkwardly on his part.)

NUREYEV Excuse me, I am most nervous.

PRIN I take that as a great compliment.

NUREYEV I have heard so much of you. You are disgusting everywhere.

PRIN Am I? Surely I'm not disgusting in Russia?

NUREYEV Everywhere!

HOSTESS I'm sure he means "discussed."

NUREYEV What did I say wrong?

PRIN It's charming.

NUREYEV Princess, you only second member of a royal family I ever meet.

PRIN And who was the other?

NUREYEV In Holland. The queen there.

PRIN (archly) They have a royal family — in *Holland*?

(Others snicker.)

NUREYEV That is what they told me. Not true?

PRIN I made a joke. I was there when Wilhelmina abdicated in favor of her daughter, Juliana.

NUREYEV Must have been nice to be there!

PRIN Personally I never think it's nice when royalty abdicate. It gives the People, as in your country, very disturbing ideas.

NUREYEV We overthrew the czars, indeed. . . . I liked the czars better.

PRIN You don't plan to return home with the Kirov, Mr. Nureyev?

NUREYEV Never! I hate Russia now. Call me, please, Rudy. (He finally sits.)

PRIN I'm afraid I have seen you dance only once.

NUREYEV Is all right. They are just ballets.

PRIN Really? You don't admire your own work?

NUREYEV I keep strive to be better. (Shrugs.) I try. Some like me, some don't. But I am *me*!

PRIN I know just what you mean. We can't please everybody, can we?

NUREYEV I leap, they like. Everything else, they don't notice. (Shrugs again.)

PRIN So true! How are you coping with your fame?

NUREYEV I like it . . . I suppose.

PRIN You'll get used to it. I was born famous.

NUREYEV Must make it easier, yes?

PRIN It can be a burden. People have all these expectations.

NUREYEV So true! They look at me on sidewalk like I am freak.

PRIN Ignore them – unless they have a gun!

NUREYEV Am glad to speak with you now. Before, was afraid.

PRIN You're not afraid of me, I hope. The royal dwarf.

NUREYEV You, a dwarf? Petite! You are petite! And, no, now I am not afraid.

PRIN You don't find my voice unpleasant, too hoity-toity?

NUREYEV No, Ma'am. I like your voice.

PRIN I think my voice is very pleasant – indeed bird like. If you're a love-sick coot or a horny tit willow!

NUREYEV I think you make joke. No?

PRIN I've met many movie stars and world figures and endless celebrities in my day, Rudy, and I am always surprised how they almost tremble when they meet me. I think this will happen to you very soon.

NUREYEV Come! Let them tremble!

PRIN But be careful. Before you know it, people will take liberties.

NUREYEV So true! I am barely famous, and yet last week some girl asked me to autograph — how you say? — (Points to his behind.) her 'arse'! Imagine!

PRIN Really? Did you autograph it? Her behind?

NUREYEV I did not. My publicist wanted me to.

PRIN You were quite right not to. There is publicity and there is fame. One is manufactured; the other comes unbidden to a few special persons. I like you, Rudy.

NUREYEV You do?

PRIN You don't autograph butt just because you are asked to.

NUREYEV So true! And I don't kiss "arse" either!

PRIN Of course you don't. You're natural royalty!

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 3

1960 BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(The Princess is waiting, drunk. Some time passes. Finally the Queen enters.)

PRIN At last!

QUEEN I was delayed.

PRIN Piss off!

QUEEN I am your Queen. As I apparently have to keep reminding you.

PRIN Lucky stars! *I* could have been Queen, darling Lilibet.

QUEEN How so?

PRIN By being born five years earlier. Of course it goes without saying that I wouldn't be nearly as good at it as you!

QUEEN I don't want to get into another row with you.

PRIN (continuing on) Perhaps I should seek to overthrow you. How would you like that?

QUEEN Margaret Rose, I have something I wish to speak to you about. That is why I asked you to come here.

PRIN (continuing on) Yes, yes, yes, intrigues in the corridors of the palace! Strategic chokings!

QUEEN You have become quite silly, I must say.

PRIN And you are about as much fun as the Nazis.

QUEEN Your sharp wit will do you in one day. Trust me.

PRIN Perhaps I'll be poisoned?

- QUEEN** You have already poisoned yourself, with whiskey and cigarettes. You don't need me.
- PRIN** Touché. Quite good.
- QUEEN** I don't want to bandy with you. I have a favor to ask.
- PRIN** (not interested, continuing on with her 'plot') It would not be that difficult to take the throne. I'll start with Anne. A horse accident shouldn't be hard to arrange. Should it? The real question is can I find a horse large enough to fall and crush her. Or would the horse be more in danger?
- QUEEN** (patiently) Margaret Rose.
- PRIN** Then of course next there is Charles. Lovely boy. Though a touch kinky underneath, don't you think? Those ears. Surely someone could be persuaded to pick him up by those and hold him for a time in a butt of Malmsey.
- QUEEN** Why not a butt of Famous Grouse? But, no, people would know it was *you* immediately, wouldn't they?
- PRIN** That would leave just *you* between me and the throne. A well-placed Corgi on a staircase? An unfortunate stumble? A broken neck?
- QUEEN** When you are finished with your treason, I have something to say.
- PRIN** No doubt I should finish off Philip at the same time, just in case he tries to murder me and take the crown for himself – for himself and one of his mistresses. Do you know about the mistresses? That's how you maintain your admirably long marriage. Well, longevity in marriage is not necessarily the same as happiness, is it? As a matter of fact, quite the contrary!
- QUEEN** I believe you have used that line before.
- PRIN** That doesn't make it any less true. But we're off the point. How can I get rid of you and Philip at the same time? Help me here.
- QUEEN** I presume no one will have noticed the royal family disappearing one by one.
- PRIN** Oh, someone will notice. But I shall be ingenious in covering my tracks. I should have been an actress.
- QUEEN** I think you are an actress.
- PRIN** I have it! I'll drug the two of you with something that leaves no trace in your bloodstreams – there are any number of drugs now that Richard the III or Agatha Christie could only dream about. Something to numb you. Then I'll scatter food scraps on the two of you.

QUEEN And?

PRIN The Corgis will do the rest.

QUEEN Have you had enough fun with your regicidal fantasies?

PRIN One can never have enough fun. But what is it you want to say to me?

QUEEN The Girl Guides have asked me to make a presentation of an award tomorrow, but I feel very unwell and, if I can't go, I wonder if you would go in my place.

PRIN Sorry to hear you're unwell. As usual, I'm second choice?

QUEEN Third, actually. They said they would enjoy having the Queen Mother come in my stead, but given your history as a Girl Guide, I think it more appropriate if you go.

PRIN Shall I wear my old uniform? I can plot my murders dressed as a Girl Guide!

QUEEN Good. I'll tell Napier. He'll let you know, or do you want me to call you?

PRIN Napier's fine. I'll keep the day open.

QUEEN You do go on, but I suspect you have a good heart.

PRIN No, Lilibet, I have no heart at all. I want to smoke. (Looks for cigarettes.)

QUEEN Don't. There is another thing I would like to ask you.

PRIN Don't. That's the real reason you asked me to come, isn't it?!

QUEEN Are you seeing someone, romantically?

PRIN Aside from the whole world, you mean? (She abandons the cigarettes.)

QUEEN You have no one to blame but yourself. You do flaunt yourself. You can only expect people, especially the press, to notice your antics. What about Rudolph what's his name? Are you dating him?

PRIN Heavens, no!

QUEEN Are you sure?

PRIN I'm sure.

QUEEN What about that Antony Armstrong somebody?

PRIN Tony? He's just a bit of fun.

QUEEN You have no intention of marrying him?

PRIN It's never crossed my mind.

QUEEN Well, it's time someone crossed your mind. Someone serious.

PRIN How about the Pope? *He's* pretty serious. What are you talking about?

QUEEN My advisors and I think it's time you married. You're nearly thirty.

PRIN You are quite amazing, darling sister. Quite ruthless. I hope you never plan to murder *me!* I'd be dead in a minute.

QUEEN I am deadly earnest about this.

PRIN No doubt. You haven't smiled since 1947.

QUEEN You should marry and have children. I enjoy mine thoroughly. In fact, I'm going to have another one.

PRIN You are making it extremely difficult to get to the throne, Lilibet. Children? I don't like children. Surely children are only a source of pleasure at their conception.

QUEEN If you can find a suitable husband, someone not too common like a film star, or a photographer, I am sure arrangements can be made. Attitudes toward marriage have altered somewhat in recent years. I think we could put you up in Kensington Palace instead of Clarence House. It can be made quite pleasant there.

PRIN What does one say to such generosity?

QUEEN I realize it's unfortunate that you didn't get your Group Captain, but I'm afraid that it is just too bad.

PRIN Too bad? Too bad? I gave up the one man I truly loved, and now it's "just too bad." You take my breath away. Five years ago you made me sign that dreadful renunciation of Peter, and now you're telling me I have to marry somebody. Well, do you mind if I marry *him* now!?

QUEEN You never loved Town that much. Admit it. It was a flirtation.

PRIN It's *Townsend!* It was a love affair!

QUEEN Then why didn't you run off with him?

PRIN This is outrageous.

QUEEN You shouldn't have listened to all of us. The fact that you did tells me you didn't love the man.

PRIN You incredible bitch! Excuse me, I meant *Your Majesty!*

QUEEN Well, have you been in touch with Townsend since he went to the Netherlands?

PRIN Belgium! I honored my word. I said I would renounce the relationship, and I did. We haven't spoken a word since.

QUEEN Oh, stop it! All your poses. How can you expect anyone to know what you would do or not do, when you're in the press more than Elvis Priestley, if that's his name. How am I to know what you're capable of?

PRIN I thought our past together would have taught you what I was inside. (Points to her heart.) Even you can't see past the exterior of things? And you know me! Or at least I thought you knew me.

QUEEN I do know you, Margaret Rose. I am sure you're very good indeed, almost as good as you think you are.

PRIN And you're almost not as stupid, or heartless, as I think you are. Are you?

QUEEN I am what I have to be. That's why *you* never could have been queen. Never.

PRIN We'll never know until that Corgi is on the staircase, will we?

(Silence.)

QUEEN So then! You will look through your roster of eligible – and suitable – young men — youngish men.

PRIN You can count on me, my Queen. Maybe I'll even drop the Group Captain a note, just to see if he wants to go on my list. Shall I?

QUEEN You had better write soon, then. Haven't you heard? He's engaged, to a pretty little Belgian woman, I'm told.

PRIN He said he never would! Oh, that traitor!

QUEEN Well, work around him, for God's sake. Honestly, Margaret, I sometimes wonder if you're cut out for this job in any way, shape, or form!

PRIN You can keep your job! You only keep it by being behind everybody else by at least a century and a half – and calling it being morally superior. You ruined my life with Peter Townsend out of some stupid, stupid, stupid, stupid notion about "suitability" in marriage. He was divorced! Oh, my God, how dreadful! How horrible! How unthinkable! And now, sorry, we don't care that much anymore. Philip cheats on you day after day, as well he should, but you are still married. So you are good and I am was so very wicked! Well, fuck you, Your Majesty. Fuck you up the ass with your bleeding, bloody scepter!

(Exits.)

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 4

1960 A ROOM IN CLARENCE HOUSE

(Antony Armstrong-Jones is arranging a photographic shoot, his equipment around him. He is a smallish, reasonable-looking man with a large face.)

(Eventually the Princess arrives, dressed to the nines as usual. She strikes a pose.)

ANT Oh, I wanted you in everyday clothes.

PRIN These *are* my everyday clothes.

ANT I'm aware that you always look stunning, but something intimate, bare shoulders even.

PRIN My darling sister believes I need to be less daring, more regal.

ANT I'll try to capture your inner self. There is regal, and there is *royal*.

PRIN Piffle. . . . I like it, though.

ANT Shall we begin? (Starts arranging his camera equipment.)

PRIN You realize that Cecil Beaton should be taking these photographs, don't you?

ANT Oh, Cecil's so . . . so . . . pushy.

PRIN I hear he occasionally has sex with *women*.

ANT How remarkable. I thought he was a sod through and through.

PRIN You'd better not let him hear you say that. Or you'll be Cecil Beaton to death.

ANT I live in fear. . . . You've been waiting to use that line on me, haven't you?

PRIN Are you ready? I am. How about over here? (Gets into a pose.) I must warn you. I have colored my hair.

ANT Have you?

PRIN Just for you. I dare say it quite takes twenty years off, no?

ANT (after a beat) Nineteen, Ma'am. (about her pose) Not there, I think. Maybe there later. For now, I should like you on the settee.

PRIN That's a bit much! Don't push your luck, Tony.

ANT I don't know what you're talking about.

PRIN Having me on the settee. (playfully) There's hardly enough room for one.

ANT I defer to your greater familiarity with the settee. (Mock bow.) Let's try this. (Arranges her in a different pose.) Just your face. To the side.

(She shows him a three-quarters profile.)

PRIN How's this?

ANT A little more here. May I? (Holds out his hand.)

PRIN I suppose, if you have to.

ANT I have to. (Touches her jaw, moves it.) Hold that.

PRIN I hate standing still. But your hand is firm. Is your hand always so firm, Tony?

ANT Let's just say I haven't had any complaints.

PRIN Really? But then have you done royalty before.

ANT I have found that, after some initial intimidation, royal personages aren't that much different from anyone else.

PRIN I find that hard to believe.

ANT Aside from their unbelievable self-confidence — that what they do is always quite wonderful. I imagine it comes from being constantly told how wonderful they are.

PRIN Couldn't it come because they are constantly being wonderful?

ANT (smiling) Whether it's a commoner or a queen, they all want the same thing in their photographs – to be flattered. (Slaps his camera.)

PRIN Well, you can show me warts and all.

ANT That's because you're still young and lovely. Speak to me in twenty years and we'll see if you still feel the same.

PRIN So boyish and yet so wise.

ANT I have experienced quite a bit so far in my life, if I may say so.

PRIN The polio at sixteen?

ANT That was one thing.

PRIN Have you many wounds, then? Shall I tend to them? Tell me, what do wounds look like?

ANT (aside) You'll know one day.

PRIN What did you mutter?

ANT Nothing, Ma'am. Just about the camera.

PRIN I mutter all the time. It's good that no one records it!

ANT Shall we have a go with the camera? (He positions a camera.)

PRIN I'm poised for greatness!

ANT If I may be permitted, you do have lovely skin.

PRIN You're permitted. Would you like to take some home?

ANT That's rather grotesque, if I may say so.

PRIN You may not say so! (angry) You little twerp!

ANT Ma'am, I don't need these photographs that badly. Really I don't. Perhaps I should take my equipment and leave.

(Starts to gather his stuff.)

PRIN Whatever suits you. . . . Oh, stop! Don't go. You're not a little twerp at all. I just said that. You're quite . . . nice.

(Pregnant Pause.)

PRIN Now you say, "You're quite nice yourself."

ANT "Mercurial" is the word I'd use. All fire and ice.

PRIN Is that from Shakespeare?

ANT Yes, Cleopatra, Ma'am.

PRIN How flattering. . . . You're not just being flattering, I hope!

ANT It's hard to deal with certain customers, Your Highness, when they fluctuate in their emotions so wildly.

PRIN You'll make a lot of money from these photographs, so shut up, Tony. Now how do I look like this? (Assumes another flamboyant pose.)

ANT Like Cecil Beaton himself.

PRIN How embarrassing. (Drops the pose.) This one? (Strikes another pose.)

ANT You're a fund of invention, Ma'am. Do you want to become my assistant?

PRIN Do you want to become mine?

ANT (hesitantly) In what way would that be, Ma'am?

PRIN (stops posing) Oh, there is something to be said for arranged marriages!
Far less tiring!

ANT I don't want to presume on our . . . friendship.

PRIN Oh, I know, I know. You think it's easy making a play for a man? . . .
Is it easy making a play for a man, Tony?

ANT What are you asking me, Ma'am?

PRIN What do you think I'm asking you?

ANT If it's what I think it is, I'd have to say . . . that . . .

PRIN Say nothing. I have no right to ask.

ANT You have every right to ask.

PRIN You see, I do want children. I mean, I'm expected to have children.

ANT I am reasonable sure that I can produce children, Ma'am.

PRIN Good. . . . Shall we get started?

ANT Ma'am!

PRIN I mean on these photographs! We've just been dilly-dallying. We need to
get down to business. Let's make them all dour and grumpy. Her Majesty
will love them that way.

ANT No, I think we should show your shoulders.

PRIN My shoulders?

ANT Perhaps you could lower your dress to just here.

(Touches the top of her arm.)

PRIN I'll have to undo a button in the back.

(He bows.)

PRIN Or two.

(Starts to undo a button.)

ANT I can't wait. (with a double meaning) I know the camera loves you.

PRIN Does it? God, I hope so. (teasing) Can you help me? (Turns her back and indicates the buttons.) (He starts to unbutton the buttons.) Now you'll have to button me up, remember, when we're finished. Promise?

ANT (he turns her around) Which side? (He kisses her on the mouth.)

(The Princess freezes for a moment, then melts into his arms. The kiss continues.)

SLOW FADE

ACT II, Scene 5

1960 A ROOM IN CLARENCE HOUSE

(The Princess is alone, on the telephone. She is wearing a bathrobe and smoking a cigarette. She has a take-away menu from a pizza restaurant in one hand.)

PRIN Do you deliver? (Listens.) To Clarence House. (Listens.) Yes, that Clarence House. I would have had the staff do this, but it's past midnight. (Starts hacking from the cigarette.) Christ! (Listens.) Yes, I'm all right. It's these cigarettes. I must give them up. (Listens.) Who's it *for*? . . . Mrs. Jones. (Listens.) Just Mrs. Jones – to be. "To be or not to be." (Hacks more, a truly awful hacking noise.) (Listens.) No, I'm still here. Can you deliver it or not? (Listens.) Cash only? What does that mean? (Listens.) I don't carry cash. I don't think there's any cash around here. What does it look like? (Listens.) Listen, we want some, and we want it tonight. I'll have someone pay you tomorrow. (Listens, hacks.) You have my word, that's how! (Listens.) Oh, bollocks! (Calls to Tony offstage) Have you got any cash?

ANT (calling) A little.

PRIN Listen, we're celebrating our engagement. I've never had pizza before. (Hacks some more.) I realize that. (Tosses the cigarette away.) Do you know who this is? (Listens.) No, not the Queen of England. Her sister. (Listens.) Margaret Rose. Do you recognize my voice? (Listens.) Good. (Hacks and spits.) Jesus! Cheese, ham, pimento, anchovies. Forget the anchovies. They don't agree with me. (calling to Antony) Tony, do you like anchovies?

ANT . . . Not really.

PRIN Forget the anchovies. (Listens.) Small, medium, or large? Hell, make it a large. It's our engagement! (Listens.) I'll give you the address and I'll have someone meet you at the front entrance, with cash. (calling) Tony, you've got to meet them out in front!

ANT Oh, bloody hell. I knew this would be a pain in the ass.

PRIN (on telephone) It's in Pall Mall, next to St. James Palace . . . (The lights are fading.) (Listens.) Yes, thank you. I'm sure we'll be very, very happy together. Goodbye. (Hangs up.) (She hacks violently.)

ANT (about the hacking) Oh, for Christ's sake, Margaret! Stop smoking!

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 7

1960 WESTMINSTER ABBEY or a suggestion of it

(A crowd is dressed for a wedding. The Archbishop is waiting.) (Church music.)

(Antony, formally dressed, is waiting upstage for his bride.)

(Again late, the Princess appears in her wedding dress, with two attendants who fuss over her veil, the train.)

PRIN I didn't forget!

(The Wedding March begins. People take their places.)

(The Princess moves across the stage – but not in a straight line. She should be choreographed to go directly downstage, then sharply upstage, where Antony joins her. They stand with their backs to the audience, facing the Archbishop.)

ARCHBISHOP In the presence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we have come together to witness the marriage of Margaret Rose and Antony, to pray for God's blessing on them, to share their joy and to celebrate their love
. . .

(Group Captain Peter Townsend appears.)

CAPTAIN (loudly) Stop! . . . Stop!

(The ceremony stops. Everyone except the Princess and the Captain freeze in place.)

PRIN Peter?

CAPTAIN It's me, yes. Don't you recognise me?

PRIN What are you doing here?

CAPTAIN I came to ask you to marry me.

PRIN I thought *I* was the one who is always late.

CAPTAIN It's not too late. This can be annulled. I won't marry the Belgium woman.

PRIN I heard that she looks exactly like me.

CAPTAIN No one looks exactly like you. You're unique. Come away with me now. You don't love him, not the way you love me.

PRIN (weakly) Yes, I do.

CAPTAIN You don't. And you know it. Come away with me and we will be supremely happy. No one has ever known such happiness as we'll know. We have years and years left. It's not too late. I have always loved you. I always will.

(Silence.)

PRIN What pretty lies. I thank you for them. But we'll be fighting, like everybody else, within a week. Certainly within a year.

CAPTAIN Not so!

PRIN Then the boredom years, nothing left to say except grunts.

CAPTAIN But loving grunts.

PRIN Begone, Satan! Don't tempt me any longer.

CAPTAIN Please, Margaret —

PRIN This is your delusion, not mine! Get out of here.

(He begins to disappear, through a trapdoor would be great, or in a flash of light.)

CAPTAIN (throwing her a kiss) Goodbye, Margaret. I love you! (Exits.)

(The Princess watches where he was for just a moment; then everyone unfreezes.)

(The Princess turns and takes Antony's hand and they proceed to leave the Abbey, possibly down an aisle through the audience.)

(The crowd ad libs congratulations, throws rice.)

CROWD

MEMBER #1 (crying) It's so beautiful!

CROWD

MEMBER #2 I give it six months!

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 8

1960 BARE STAGE

PRIV.

SEC. (to audience) The Princess and her new husband became the toast of several towns and had considerably more than their fifteen minutes of fame.

(Enter Tony dancing.)

PRIN Wait for me! (Enter the Princess from offstage.) What's that dance you're doing?

ANT It's mine! Can't decide what to call it — what d'you think? (Does several steps.)

PRIN It's not a fox trot, I know that. No, it should go like this! (Does her own steps.)

ANT The Princess Twist!

PRIN The Lord Snowdon Hop!

(They both do a Twist, more or less together.)

PRIV.

SEC. People often wished they were them.

MEMBER of

the PUBLIC (passing through, stopping) I wish I were them.

QUEEN (passing through) I don't! (Exits.)

PRIN Shall I sing a song?

ANT Of course!

PRIN I'm running out of breath!

ANT Let's sing together.

PRIN "The Stately Homes of England, how beautiful they stand, to prove the upper classes have still the upper hand."

ANT (continuing) "Though the fact that they have to be rebuilt and frequently mortgaged to the hilt is inclined to take the gilt off the gingerbread . . ."

PRIN "And certainly damps the fun" . . . (breathless) I can't go on!

ANT Sing, darling, sing!

(But they both are dancing and laughing so hard they can't sing.)

BLACKOUT

ACT II, Scene 9

1965 A ROOM IN KENSINGTON PALACE

(They are in the rather modest Apartment 1A. Antony is now Lord Snowdon.)

(Enter the Princess, now thirty-five, in a rather ordinary coat and day clothes.)

PRIN (calling) Are you working?

ANT (offstage) Working!

PRIN How's it going?

ANT Working!

PRIN And you don't want to be disturbed. (Takes off her coat.)

ANT You're quite right!

PRIN (quietly) I had hoped that *knowing* this would happen to us would keep it from happening.

ANT Can't hear you!

PRIN Guess who I ran into at today's 'biscuit factory'?

ANT Working! . . . *Who?*

PRIN You esteemed mother.

ANT How is the countess?

PRIN She asked about you.

ANT I must ring up the old bat.

PRIN She didn't mention that you haven't called her.

ANT I don't believe you.

PRIN She invited us over to Birr Castle. I like your mother. Let's go sometime.

(Antony enters, with a rag he has been cleaning his photographic equipment with.)

ANT She puts on such airs now, since she re-married "up." So, *no!* Furthermore, if we visit Ireland, I'm afraid we'll be mistaken for two leprechauns.

PRIN You perhaps. Not me.

ANT Someday I'm going to make a film about dwarves. They have feelings too.

PRIN Small ones?

(Antony gives her a perfunctory kiss on the cheek.)

ANT Would you like something from the kitchen?

PRIN Like what? I had to eat at the 'biscuit factory.' They used silver plates again, even though I specifically requested that they not. They're too hot; they burn you. Then they get cold immediately and your food turns into a soggy mess.

ANT The agonies of royalty. I should be nicer to Mother. She was a pip, actually, when I had polio. Very supportive! (Laughs. Demonstrates how she "supported" him when he was crippled.)

PRIN So much for gratitude. She didn't look all that well.

ANT I'll ring her up – if you'll call your famed sister.

PRIN I think she's had the number changed. Besides, I've see her often enough. Indeed, she has delighted me enough to last a lifetime!

ANT Tongues will wag.

PRIN Oh, the gutter press will make a scandal out of anything. If I don't see my sister, it's royal sisters estranged! If I do see my sister, it's Princess Margaret insists on basking in her much-beloved elder sister's presence on far too many occasions!

ANT I think we should build an aviary here, like the one I did for the London Zoo. Only smaller. I'm restless.

PRIN Well, "Lord Snowdon" could come on more official visits with me.

ANT Boring!

PRIN And they say I don't earn my keep. Come with me, and we'll make remarks behind our hands.

ANT The new microphones would probably catch us out. And then there would be hell to pay.

PRIN Where are the children?

ANT In the garden.

PRIN By themselves?

ANT No! Emmy is with them.

PRIN We should have that wall made higher. The IRA wouldn't hesitate to jump that wall in a minute and snatch the children.

ANT I'll tell the guards to patrol that area more.

PRIN Will you?

ANT You can speak to them too. Why do you leave everything to me?

PRIN Because I'm busy stomping through endless factories, that's why! You don't seem to realize how draining it is – every gesture scrutinized. Did Her Royal Highness slight the candle makers union by sneezing upon her arrival? Did Her Royal Highness insult the milk producers of Guernsey by stepping in a cow paddy during the ceremonial milking – implying somehow, by god, that cows shit!

ANT We should have spelled out my royal duties more, before we got married.

PRIN They're *my* royal duties. You just tag along when you feel like it.

(Silence.)

ANT That's why I don't go.

PRIN What?

ANT Everyone treats me as though I'm some guttersnipe, some "photographer." I grew up in a manor house owned by my father, a Queen's counselor, and my godfather was Sir Michael Duff, Lord Lieutenant of Caernarvonshire!

PRIN With polio. I know.

ANT Whoever marries you has more than his share of snobbery to put up with.

PRIN You have snobbery enough for both of us.

ANT I am not snobbish. That's rubbish.

PRIN You thought you made the match of the century when you got me, and it's not rubbish.

ANT Oh? What did I get that's so marvelous? Remind me. I keep forgetting. This rundown apartment, which only a royal aunt would live in! Or is it the soothing voice of my loving wife?

PRIN I didn't twist your arm to marry me. You should have done more research on the royal life. Didn't they teach you anything at Cambridge? Oh, I forgot. You left without a degree, didn't you?

ANT Don't give me that! Not only don't you have a degree, you haven't finished a whole book in your life.

PRIN Quite wrong. I finished one in 1953!

ANT People probably think that's witty. But it's not – it's just true!

PRIN I knew we would come to this! I knew it, and yet I went ahead with it.

ANT You made your bed.

PRIN You can bet it's the only time I've made my bed!

(They fume silently.)

ANT Forgive me. I don't want to quarrel. We've been quarreling quite a bit lately.

PRIN I don't want to either. Can't we just stop? Just stop?

ANT I hope so. This isn't good for us, not good

PRIN It's sort of exciting, though. Like boxing.

ANT You! (Takes her hands gently.)

PRIN Hold me.

ANT Hold me too?

(They hold one another.)

(The Princess reaches up and gently boxes Antony's ear, once.)

LIGHTS FADE

ACT II, Scene 10

1967 A ROOM IN KENSINGTON PALACE

(The Princess is sitting stiffly on the sofa in a different smart dress, having a whiskey and a cigarette. The assistant nanny, Emmy, is standing near the door.)

PRIN You may bring in the children now, Emmy. I'd like to see them before I go.

(Emmy nods, exits.)

(The Princess finishes her whiskey.)

PRIN (to herself) I'm going to cut back. And the smoking as well. (Puts out the cigarette.) It kills the appetite, yes, but I hear that's not all it kills!

(Emmy enters, carrying two fairly large framed photographs of the Princess's children.)

EMMY Your children, Ma'am. (Presents a picture of a six-year-old boy.) Viscount Linley. (The Princess examines the picture, approves.) (Emmy presents a second one, this of a four-year-old girl.) Lady Sarah. (The Princess approves.)

PRIN They are looking very well, aren't they?

EMMY Tip top, Ma'am.

PRIN They were taken today?

EMMY I believe so. Shall I inform the nanny that you're pleased, Ma'am?

PRIN You may. Tell her I'll be in to see the children in person tonight.

EMMY Very good, Ma'am. Shall I tell them you love them?

PRIN (annoyed) I'll tell them myself!

EMMY Very well, Ma'am.

PRIN Some people seem to think royalty do not care for our own children. Those people don't have to look splendid after a six-year-old and a four-year-old are through with them! (Points to her tidy clothes.)

EMMY I didn't mean to judge, Ma'am.

(The Princess gets up, puts on a smart hat, doesn't like it, tries another.)

(Enter Antony from outside, wearing a topcoat.)

ANT Off to the 'biscuit factory'?

PRIN There you are! Is this hat too old for me?

ANT (dryly) It's perfect.

PRIN Want to come? It's an airplane parts manufacturer.

ANT Sounds smashing.

PRIN The car's waiting in the courtyard. (Points upstage.)

ANT No.

PRIN Didn't think so, so didn't include your name. I'll make excuses for you, as usual.

ANT You're so good to me.

PRIN That's all, Emmy. You may leave.

EMMY Ma'am . . . sir . . . (She leaves.)

PRIN I'll be leaving soon. What are we doing for dinner?

ANT I thought I might go out.

PRIN Well then, it's me out during the day and you out during the night.

ANT So it seems.

PRIN (sighs) Just as well. (Finishes her hat.)

ANT I'm not . . .

PRIN (holding up her hand) I don't want to know what it's not.

(Silence.)

ANT I've heard you're seeing someone.

PRIN I am.

ANT Anyone I know? Anyone *you* know?

PRIN (Almost laughs.) Shall I ask you the same thing?

ANT It's no one you know.

PRIN Good. . . . Prick.

ANT Slag.

PRIN Fairy.

ANT Cunt.

PRIN . . . Cunt.

(Silence.)

PRIN Goodbye. (Gets her purse.)

ANT Goodbye. (He takes off his topcoat.)

(The Princess leaves. Antony sits where she was sitting, pours himself a drink.)

BLACKOUT / END OF ACT II / INTERVAL

ACT III, Scene 1

1978 BARE STAGE

(The Princess enters as she was in the previous scene. Before the audience's eyes we see her age from the thirty-seven of the previous scene. Others in the cast transform her by adding padding, age make-up, a dowdier hairstyle or wig, more matronly clothing. At the conclusion the Princess is a definitely older-looking forty-eight.)

(The transformation can happen these ways: during the interval itself, but in full view of the audience or at the start of Act III, lasting for no more than a minute or two as the audience watches.)

(If the production goes with a second actress now playing the Princess, the younger Princess and the older meet in full view of the audience. The younger one hands the new one her tiara, then exits.)

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 2

1978, BEDROOM AT MUSTIQUE, HER CARIBBEAN ISLAND

(Roddy is wearing a caftan, lounging on the bed, reading a magazine. He is a boyish thirty-one, fun-loving, playful, sweet-natured.)

RODDY (calling) I want sex!

(No answer.)

RODDY It's something you've never experienced before!

(No answer.)

RODDY All right. Too late! You won't get it now!

(Enter the Princess, also in a caftan, her hair loose. She is carrying a bikini.)

PRIN Shall I wear this? (Holds it up to her caftan.)

RODDY You know what happened last time.

PRIN Yes, but we're old news now.

RODDY: I have a new limerick for you.

PRIN (resigned) Oh, no. . . . Okay, what is it?

RODDY (accompanying himself on the piano, if possible, but not necessary)

There once was a Princess named Rose,
Who looked incredibly good in her clothes.
But she looked even better,
To those who had “et” her,
Spread out on a bed in a pose.

Like it?

PRIN How vulgar. I love it. (fingering the bikini) They wouldn't be shocked by this now. Just howl with laughter. (Tosses the bikini aside.)

RODDY Do you really like the limerick, or are you just placating me? Excuse me for a moment. (He exits.)

PRIN Wait. I have a limerick for you. I am making it up right now. (Takes a piece of paper with the limerick on it from a pocket of her caftan.)

RODDY (offstage) Go ahead!

PRIN What are you doing in there? The loo?

RODDY I'm looking for a game for us to play.

PRIN Don't you want to hear my limerick?

RODDY Absolutely. How about Monopoly?

PRIN I want to make up a limerick for you, so you can see how clever I am.

RODDY How about Scrabble?

PRIN (throwing the paper down) Oh, for God's sake!

RODDY I want to hear it! I'm giving you more time to make it up.

PRIN I'll make it up one line at a time. Are you listening?

RODDY Do you want me to come in there to listen?

PRIN (quickly) No! (retrieving the paper) Here goes!

(reciting)

An attractive old princess from Britain
One season was suddenly smitten.
Who the lucky chap was
Set the kingdom a-buzz —

RODDY (appearing, carrying a stack of games and completing the limerick)
Since he looked less like a prince than a kitten!

PRIN Oh, that's better than what I have.

RODDY (seeing the piece of paper) Making it up
one line at a time, my foot! What did you write?

PRIN It's rubbish. I can't write limericks.

RODDY Let me see it.

PRIN (adamantly) No! (Tears up the paper.) There! Gone, before the press gets it!
(Kicks the bikini on the floor.) (to it) Get away!

RODDY (solicitously) You don't have to play a game if you don't want to.

PRIN (petulantly) Do you think I don't know that?!

RODDY God! Are you in one of your moods?!

PRIN Yes. Enjoy it!

RODDY I'd rather have a scarification ritual on a nearby island. It's less painful.

PRIN We need to throw a party. Lots of people. Maybe *some* of them won't be boring!

RODDY Splendid! Let's do it. Here or back in London?

PRIN Nobody invites *me* to parties anymore.

RODDY Stop! No self-pity, please!

PRIN Well, they don't! I'm not attractive any longer.

RODDY I think you're very attractive.

PRIN You have no taste.

RODDY I have wonderful taste. Just the other day someone said I was like a
young Noel Coward.

PRIN As my children would say, Who's Noel Coward?

RODDY (presenting some games to her) You pick the game.

PRIN I always lose.

RODDY I'll let you win this time.

PRIN What good is that? You don't know the first thing about how to humour royalty. You let them win, but you don't tell them you're doing it!

RODDY I don't stay with you because you're 'royalty'.

PRIN (irritated) What does that mean? I've ceased being dignified, because you've seen me in a caftan?

RODDY All I meant is that I don't stay with you because of some abstract concept or fetish about 'royalty'. It's because of *you*. (Smiles, takes her hand.)

PRIN (after a beat) Now you've got the hang of it! Spoken like a true courtier.

RODDY Spoken like a man who cares for you.

PRIN You and I have been an 'item' for longer than I was with my husband. Do you realise that?

RODDY I'm flattered beyond measure.

PRIN But what is it about you I like?

RODDY Because I have the patience of Job?

PRIN No, I don't think so.

RODDY Shall I count the ways?

PRIN You can be amusing.

RODDY Number one – I'm amusing.

PRIN "Can be amusing." Once every seven weeks or so.

RODDY Number two – I'm effervescent.

PRIN There are other words for what you are.

RODDY (hurt) I am effervescent. I try to be.

PRIN All right, you are effervescent, like Welsh wine.

RODDY Do we Welsh make wine? No matter. I'm sure if we did, it would be effervescent.

PRIN Any more charms of yours I should know about?

RODDY I am polite and considerate.

PRIN Like a Girl Guide? How about "honest, reliable, and can be trusted"?

RODDY Now you're just being cruel. Besides, if I'm a Girl Guide, that makes you not only a lesbian but a pedophile. Ha, Ha, Ha!

PRIN You're not that much younger than me!

RODDY Of course I am!

PRIN I just can't stand old skin. (Shudders.) Including my own. (Feels her own arm.)

RODDY (to distract her) Let's play Scrabble!

PRIN I'm so bad at it, Roddy.

RODDY Actually you're very good at words.

PRIN Just not letters. (She looks in a nightstand drawer.)

RODDY No. No cocaine. (Comes over and shuts the drawer.) (sweetly) No, no, no, no, no.

PRIN You're no fun, ruddy Roddy!

RODDY (waving the Scrabble game overhead) Yes, I am!

PRIN Cocaine.

RODDY Scrabble. How about this? (Takes a party favor whistle – the kind that rolls out – and blows into it.)

PRIN Where did you get that? I've been saving it, for a night just like this. Want to try?

(The Princess shakes her head slowly and elaborately.)

RODDY I'm afraid I'm failing you.

PRIN You don't have to humour me all the time.

RODDY Oh, but I *do*!

(She laughs.)

PRIN I'll tell you a game I'd like to play, something we have never played before.

RODDY I'm afraid to ask.

PRIN Who is the worst person you've ever had sex with?

RODDY Excluding you, you mean?

PRIN (laughing) Including me, if you insist.

RODDY You have to play too.

PRIN I will. You first.

RODDY I don't trust you.

PRIN What do you mean?

RODDY I'll tell you too much, and then you won't tell me anything.

PRIN On my word as a royal princess.

RODDY Hmm. You first.

PRIN You devil. You first!

RODDY The worst sex or the worst person?

PRIN Both.

RODDY It's hard.

PRIN So many to choose from?

RODDY I'm not as judgmental as you.

PRIN True. Who?

RODDY It was a woman.

PRIN (expressing fake shock) No!

RODDY When I was fourteen . . .

PRIN And . . . ?

RODDY It was somebody who came to the door of our house.

PRIN A religious fanatic?

RODDY No. A neighbour who had seen me and, I guess, found me alluring and had to have my young charms.

PRIN A woman child molester? You're serious?

RODDY I was very mature for my age. I'll spare you the details. Let's just say it was memorable. Now you. Was it Philip?

PRIN (laughing) Never! Oh, my God, Philip! Never, never, never! But what was awful about your neighbour. It sounds like you enjoyed yourself.

RODDY I've never had a bad sexual experience in my life.

PRIN . . . Really. I have. Oh, the sex was all right, but he was a gangster, a deeply evil man. Never mind his name.

RODDY You're sure it's not Prince Philip?

PRIN He was an actor and a killer.

RODDY A killer?!

PRIN He threw somebody in a river. Drugs or just pure meanness – I forget.

RODDY Why did you have sex with somebody like that?

PRIN Why not?

RODDY Did you see him kill anybody?

PRIN Well, he didn't kill them in bed with us!

RODDY Are you sure he actually killed somebody?

PRIN He described it to me.

RODDY I don't think I want to hear this.

PRIN Yes, you do, Roddy. And it passes the time.

RODDY He doesn't sound like your type.

PRIN He wasn't. The actor part fooled me. He was very 'manly,' as they say. I did it with him very *deliberately*, to see what it would be like.

RODDY Margaret, why are you telling me this?

PRIN It was awful . . . and memorable. I knew as he lay on top of me, entering me I knew what it would be like to be smothered. What it must be like to drown – gasping for air, gasping, gasping, and then that flood of water into your nose, your mouth, holding you paralyzed, holding you there as you die. . . . I'm sure that man would have especially enjoyed killing a princess.

(Silence.)

RODDY I don't like this game.

PRIN I don't either.

RODDY I think I will go to bed. (Heads toward his bedroom offstage.) Do you mind if I sleep in my own bed tonight?

PRIN Did my story upset my little boy? I'm sorry.

RODDY Scrabble would have been better.

PRIN Cocaine would have been even better than that.

RODDY (wagging a finger) No cocaine. . . . Promise?

PRIN I promise.

RODDY Good.

(He comes over and kisses her on the cheek.)

PRIN You're good for me, Roddy. Thank you.

RODDY You're welcome.

(He looks at her with concern, then exits.)

(The Princess stays for a moment, then dims the lights. She sits on a settee. She takes out a long, black cigarette holder and places a cigarette in it. She lights it and takes a drag. She assumes the very same posture that she did earlier in the play. Only this time she blows on the party whistle that Roddy gave her, then takes another drag on the cigarette.)

(We are not sure about this detail: possibly the audience hears a fart, if it can be done with the right effect, loud enough to signify a growing carelessness about herself but not a comically gross one. Or *perhaps the audience hears nothing, followed by the next line.*)

PRIN (after a long pause, to herself, even if we don't hear anything) Is there anything better on this earth than a fart by yourself?

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 3

1979 BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(The Princess, now forty-nine, is sitting at a table. She looks to see if anyone is coming, very impatient.)

(Enter the Queen, her sister, now fifty-three.)

QUEEN Forgive me for being late.

PRIN I've been known do to it myself. Don't let it become a habit.

(They embrace.)

QUEEN How was Mustique?

PRIN Dreary. It rained.

QUEEN Really? (A Servant appears.) Yes, the tea. And that other thing.

SERVANT I'll bring them, Ma'am. (Exits.)

QUEEN I can't linger today. I have a meeting with the Prime Minister in a few minutes.

PRIN So nice of you to squeeze me in.

QUEEN I wanted to see you. Sisters should see each other. . . Even if . . .

PRIN They should! That way they can check the rumors for themselves.

QUEEN We've grown apart over the years. We used to be so close.

PRIN Well. . . what can I say?

QUEEN You're looking well.

PRIN I wish. Time is not being good to me.

QUEEN You look fine.

PRIN I look forty-nine, on a good day.

(The Servant returns with a tea tray: a teapot, cups and saucers, cakes, scones, cream and jam, etc. There is a newspaper article on the tray as well.)

SERVANT Ma'am.

PRIN It looks very nice.

QUEEN The scones are particularly good. The cook puts something special in them.
(Looks to the Servant.)

SERVANT Yoghurt, Ma'am.

QUEEN They're not so dry. Very nice.

(The Servant prepares a plate for each, pours tea in each cup.)

PRIN Half a scone is enough for me.

SERVANT Jam?

PRIN No.

QUEEN Me either.

PRIN (to Queen) Why do I have the feeling that I have been summoned here for more than tea? Why the newspaper?

QUEEN (to Servant) That will be all, Robin.

(The Servant bows and leaves.)

PRIN So . . . how's dear Philip?

QUEEN Grumpy.

PRIN Some people believe that others mellow with age. It is my observation that they just become fatter, shattered versions of what they have always been. And what about the health of those others?

QUEEN You mean those ahead of you in the succession? Healthy as horses.

PRIN Pity.

QUEEN How's Roddy Llewellyn?

PRIN Who?

QUEEN The man who isn't your husband but whom you are seen with all the time.

PRIN Oh, it's one of *those* meetings! I swear, Lilibet, you pay more attention to my husbands, or non-husbands, than I do!

QUEEN (taking the newspaper article from the tea tray) This appeared in the news again.

PRIN (not looking at it) Oh, that!

QUEEN You've seen it?

PRIN Actually it's a rather good picture of me. They've started using older pictures of me now.

QUEEN In a bikini, with a man not your husband?

PRIN Wasn't that the title of Victorian melodrama – *A Man Not Her Husband!*

QUEEN You may scoff, but –

PRIN You know how rude and stupid the press has become.

QUEEN You don't have to help them!

PRIN It's an old picture. What can I say? The tea is superb, by the way. Is it made specially for you?

QUEEN Fortnum and Mason. Tell me. What does Antony think about all this? (Indicates the newspaper article.)

PRIN I'm sure I don't know.

QUEEN Are you planning a divorce?

PRIN Not particularly. He does his 'thing,' as they say. I do mine.

QUEEN I see.

PRIN Why? Do you want me to get a divorce? As I recall, dimly, there was a time not so long ago when a divorce made everything else out of the question. Or am I mis-remembering?

QUEEN I don't want to keep on lecturing you.

PRIN Marvelous. I don't want to keep on being lectured.

QUEEN I want to appeal to your better nature.

PRIN And that would be what? Give up Roddy? Have reconciliation with Tony? Abandon my plan to usurp the kingdom?

QUEEN Be serious for a moment. Your behaviour has coarsened with time. You are getting a terrible reputation – no, you already have it!

PRIN Playgirl Princess. Toxic Princess. Royal Slut. I've heard them all.

QUEEN Self-indulgent. Rude.

PRIN I'm never rude! . . . except when it's deserved.

QUEEN You can be extremely cruel. I've heard reports.

PRIN The Meanie in the Bikini. You really shouldn't read *The Sun*, Lilibet! It sucks the queenliness right out of you.

QUEEN I'm happy this amuses you, but I want to say something, face to face.

PRIN Queen to Princess?

QUEEN Sister to sister.

PRIN Let me guess what it is.

- QUEEN** You don't have to guess. You're the main reason for the growing hatred of the Royal Family. If you keep it up, you are going to destroy us all.
- PRIN** What!?
- QUEEN** Citizens now speak of us with contempt. They don't see us as the best of what England can be, noble and dignified and great! More and more they don't even consider us worthy of the ordinary respect they would extend to a tradesman.
- PRIN** Did we ever really have all that much respect?
- QUEEN** We had it! We did! There was a time when "aristocratic" meant something admirable, something others wanted to emulate, to aspire to. Now you fuel anti-royalist sentiment, almost on a weekly basis, it seems. "Princess seen gallivanting . . ." — you name it!
- PRIN** Gallivanting? What an archaic word. I have not "gallivanted" in ages.
- QUEEN** (steely) You have not restrained yourself since you gave up what's his name. You think you performed your one Great Sacrifice, and that entitles you to whatever you feel like saying or doing, no matter how it impacts others.
- PRIN** We can't all be martinets like you. It's quite exhausting.
- QUEEN** I may be a "martinet," but I don't embarrass myself and the entire ruling family — no, make that the entire empire — because I am so shallow, silly, vain, and ridiculous and "martyred" that I cannot think of anything else except myself for more than five seconds at a time.
- (Silence.)
- QUEEN** (continuing) You are not amusing and charming and full of fun, as you apparently think you are. You've been indulged since birth. You are a pitiable, aging nitwit who constantly shames herself, evidently blindly, but, more importantly, shames the whole concept of what "royalty" is meant to mean.
- (Silence.)
- QUEEN** I must go to that meeting now. (Gets up, starts to leave the "tea.") (Looks back.) Have I made my feelings clear, Margaret? . . . Have I? Or shall I say more?
- PRIN** Perfectly. (Lifts her teacup) Always splendid having tea with you, Your Majesty!

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 4

1978 A ROOM IN A HOSPITAL IN LONDON

(The Princess is lying in a hospital bed, asleep.)

(Two Guards are in the room in sentry positions.)

(Enter Roddy, in casual clothes. He doesn't look any older.)

GUARD #1 (blocking him) Yes?

RODDY She knows me.

(Guards look to the Princess for confirmation.)

(She does not answer.)

GUARD #1 No one is allowed in.

RODDY How is she?

(The three look at the still body of the Princess.)

PRIN (without moving) Dead!

RODDY Margaret!

(The Guards are uncertain.)

PRIN Oh, let him in. I suppose I know him.

(The Guards let Roddy pass.)

RODDY (coming to the hospital bed) How are you?

PRIN Sick as a Caribbean dog, but at least my divorce is going through.

RODDY Are you going to make an honest man of me now?

(The Princess does not reply.)

RODDY Well, we can talk about it later.

PRIN Let's just say I don't want to go through a divorce ever again.

RODDY They say you took an overdose.

PRIN It's hepatitis.

RODDY You overdosed.

PRIN Don't flatter yourself. It was because of Tony and the divorce.

RODDY Thanks.

PRIN And his cruelties. Oh, please. Don't sulk. Don't make me have to mother *you* from my hospital bed!

RODDY Well! Good! I can see that you're almost back to normal. Guess what! I've been offered 200,000 pounds to write about us.

PRIN Is that a threat?

RODDY I thought it was a sign of how much I care for you. I told them no.

PRIN Maybe *I* should write it! (She laughs but with difficulty.) Ow, it hurts to laugh. I feel miserable.

RODDY Poor little princess. (Pats her hand.) We're quite the pair, aren't we?

PRIN Where were you for so long? I've been here for days.

RODDY I thought it best if we weren't seen together.

PRIN Too late for that.

RODDY I'm sorry that I just disappeared.

(The Princess shrugs.)

(The Guards are eavesdropping but pretending they aren't.)

PRIN There was a time when I thought being a princess meant I could count on people. But even princesses have to learn that's never possible.

(Silence.)

RODDY So, where do we two go from here?

PRIN I don't know about you, but I'm going to Tuvalu.

RODDY Where's that?

PRIN Beyond Fiji. We're giving it back.

RODDY Why?

PRIN The British Empire is breaking up. So naturally they thought of me!

RODDY Surely no one will expect you to go now, since you're ill.

PRIN Girls in sulus and lava-lavas with frangi pani in their hair. Sounds better than a biscuit factory!

RODDY I don't think you should go. You should stay here in London and let me nurse you back to health.

PRIN Have you become a doctor now?
RODDY A doctor of love!

PRIN What shite! "Doctor of love"? Now I can die. I've heard everything.

RODDY I do love you.

(The Guards stir slightly.)

PRIN That very well may be, and to prove how much I love *you* I won't let you go to Tuvalu with me.

RODDY What if I insist?

PRIN I'll get my sister after you. She'll sic her Corgis on you. . . . I'm getting up.
(Makes an effort.)

RODDY (solicitous.) Are you sure?

(The Guards are disturbed too.)

PRIN I've got to free the Tuvaluvians! (Sings.) "Rule, Britannia! Britannia rule the waves!"

(She collapses.)

RODDY Now, now, back into bed with you.

GUARD #2 Are you all right, Ma'am?

PRIN Stay there. (Holds up her hand.)

(Roddy helps her back under the covers, soothes her forehead.)

PRIN Thank you, Roddy. You do love me a little, don't you?

RODDY More than a little. (Kisses her forehead.) Are you going to be okay?

PRIN And make your life miserable again?

RODDY (sweetly, lovingly) Sure.

PRIN I do thank you for coming.

RODDY I'll come again . . . I'd better go and let you rest.
(Moves away from the bed.)

PRIN Yes. Thank you for coming? . . . Did I say that already?

RODDY You did.

PRIN Oh, Roddy, I think my mind's going! I used to be so sharp, and now I'm getting forgetful. Don't let me get forgetful! Please!
(She reaches out to him.)

RODDY (coming back to the bed) Margaret.

(The Princess clutches at him, rather desperately.)

PRIN Roddy, Roddy, Roddy! Help me. Help me!

(They embrace. The Guards look embarrassed.)

PRIN Now go. Go. One of the guards can help you past the crowds outside.
(to Guard #2) Help him, would you?

(The Guards and Roddy don't know what to say.)

PRIN What's wrong?

RODDY . . . There aren't any crowds outside.

PRIN What do you mean? There are always crowds outside when one of the Royal Family is ill.

RODDY Not just now.

PRIN (to Guards) Nobody at all?

GUARD #1 No, Ma'am.

RODDY They must have heard you were better.

PRIN Yes, it must be something like that.

GUARD #1 It's . . . ah . . .

PRIN It could not possibly be because not a single person in the country any longer gives a tinker's damn about Princess Margaret Rose. Could it?

RODDY There's at least one . . .

(The Princess laughs, too hard.)

PRIN Thank you. At least *one!*

(Roddy waves. She waves back. He slips out of the room.)

(The Guards relax.)

(The Princess lies in the bed, laughed out, sad, shaking her head.)

PRIN I'm sorry, Roddy. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. . . . I wish I loved *you* too.

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 5

1978 TUVALU in the GILBERT AND ELLICE ISLANDS

(The Colonial Administrator and the Private Secretary are sitting on a dais.)

PRIV.

SEC. (to audience) And then there was what happened on the island of Tuvalu, a true turning point, I do believe.

COL. ADM. I do hope Her Royal Highness can make it.

PRIV.

SEC. I understand that you have worked very hard on her visit.

COL. ADM. We began preparations over a year ago.

PRIV.

SEC. She has been very ill, you know.

(The Princess appears, still in her hospital gown. But Others start to help her change into her traveling clothes.)

(The Colonial Administrator and the Private Secretary continue to talk without seeing the Princess and the Others. But *she* can hear *them* and responds to them.)

COL. ADM. Everything will be very much in the Polynesian tradition. Native dancing at its finest. Later we will bring in large palm leaves covered in chicken, pork, vegetables, and bananas. Food is eaten with the fingers and one drinks from the coconut shell that is provided. And we have open necked shirts because of the heat. But perhaps the Princess can manage a tiara for Saturday night?

PRIN (to him, to the side) It's boiling, for God's sake!

(He cannot hear her.)

(The Others are trying to dress up the Princess, but she is overcome by the heat and keeps resisting the clothes.)

PRIV.

SEC. I do hope an aircraft and the state car will still be provided for Her Royal Highness.

COL. ADM. I apologize that we do not have a suitable vehicle nor the funds to buy one, but locals rely on subsistence fishing and the few coconuts here for their livelihoods.

PRIV.

SEC. We understand completely.

PRIN (wiping her face) Do you want me to die there?!

COL. ADM. (to Private Secretary) I am sorry that the ceremony has to start at eight A.M. on the dot. We have no runway lights at Funafuti Airport and we wouldn't want to risk a late flight.

PRIV.

SEC. You've thought of everything, it seems.

COL. ADM. I hope I have not offended Her Royal Highness by requesting a place on the departing royal flight. It would be awkward to be left here after the Union Jack has been lowered and the Tuvalan flag raised in its place. I am not trying to be cheeky and force myself on her plane, believe me.

PRIV.

SEC. I'm sure she understands, or will in time.

PRIN I'm not going to that godforsaken island if you kill me!

COL. ADM. Do you know that Her Majesty the Queen has now formally approved the naming of the island's hospital — "The Princess Margaret."

PRIV.

SEC. How lovely.

PRIN A hospital! How appropriate!

(They still don't hear her.)

PRIV.

SEC. (taking out a slip of paper) We thought perhaps the Princess could include this sentence in her remarks, if she is well enough to make her remarks.

COL. ADM. Yes?

PRIV.

SEC. (reading) "I have been impressed by how healthy everybody looks, and it is also nice to know that there are no nasty tropical diseases prevalent in Tuvalu." The Princess, you see, has only just recently been through a bout of hepatitis of her own.

PRIN And that's not the half of it, arsehole!

COL. ADM. How thoughtful of her. . . . One can only hope that Her Royal Highness is not still contagious herself.

PRIV.

SEC. (turning his head) I beg your pardon?!

COL. ADM. (changing the subject) I was thinking the church service should be from St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, chapter 5, verse 3. "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another."

PRIN What about this flesh over here?

PRIV.

SEC. (to Colonial Administrator) I think the reference to flesh might be misinterpreted, given the Princess's . . .

COL. ADM. . . . perceived reputation? Of course. We'll play it by ear then – once the Princess actually arrives.

PRIV.

SEC. I'm certain she'll be here if she is at all able.

(The Princess is now dressed but sweating and struggling to get to the dais, very out of breath.)

PRIN Fuck both of you!

COL. ADM. I do hope she will make it. It would greatly disappoint the 523 persons it took to prepare this occasion for her if she does not.

(A telephone rings. The Private Secretary steps off the dais to get the call.)

(The Princess freezes in place. She is not on the telephone.)

PRIV.

SEC. (on telephone) Hello? (Listens.) Yes, Ma'am. (Listens.) Yes, Ma'am. (Listens.) No, Ma'am. I'm sorry to hear that, Ma'am. (Listens.) Yes, I'll inform them, Ma'am.

(He hands the telephone to one of the Others. He turns and looks at the Colonial Administrator and shrugs apologetically.)

COL. ADM. The Princess is not coming?

(The Private Secretary shakes his head.)

COL. ADM. She's not coming at all? (The Colonial Administrator sags.)

PRIN (unfreezing) And now I can die really, really happy. I've seen fucking *Tuvalu*!

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 6

1981 BUCKINGHAM PALACE

(The Queen is waiting in a stiff-backed chair.)

(The Princess, now fifty-one, enters slowly. Her health has deteriorated a bit.)

QUEEN Margaret Rose, how nice of you to come!

PRIN What is it this time?

QUEEN I haven't seen you for ages. I have missed you.

PRIN I've been busy – hepatitis, viral pneumonia.

QUEEN I thought those were some time ago.

PRIN There have been lingering effects. Breathing mostly.

QUEEN I'm sorry to hear that. You really must take better care of yourself.

PRIN You got the healthy genes, I guess, like Mother.

QUEEN How's that man you were seeing? Robby something.

PRIN I have no idea. I'm not seeing him anymore, if that's what this is about.

QUEEN It wasn't. I'm just interested in your life.

PRIN The age difference between *Roddy* and me was beginning to scare even the horses.

QUEEN I heard he was a nice man.

PRIN Yes. That's why I let him marry somebody else.

QUEEN Did you?

PRIN And we wouldn't want another scandal, would we? Princess Margaret marries teenager!

QUEEN There *is* something I wanted to discuss with you.

PRIN I knew it! No, I'm not returning to Tuvalu!

QUEEN No one is asking you to. (Pause.) Believe me.

PRIN I was ill!

QUEEN They were counting on you. Obligation means that you go anyway.

PRIN I . . . I didn't want to give the Tuvaluvians my pneumonia! They have enough problems of their own.

QUEEN . . . Well, let's concentrate on the present, not the past, shall we? I am wondering if you will be attending Charles and Diana's wedding.

PRIN When is it? I'll check my engagement book.

QUEEN Late July.

PRIN You couldn't stop it, I gather.

QUEEN She'll do. She's timid, but she'll do.

PRIN I suppose they want Westminster Abbey. (jocularly) I believe I was married there myself once. What was the name of that man I married again?

QUEEN It will be in St. Paul's.

PRIN Antony something. Or was it Group Captain what's his name?

QUEEN Don't be bitter. It's not becoming. To be honest, I don't want you attending this wedding if you're going to be scowling through the whole thing.

PRIN Do you imagine that I'm that bad? I know how to put on a false front. I've been instructed by the finest experts of the court!

QUEEN We can claim that you are ill again. Now that I see you, it will be . . .

PRIN I'm not going to be ill this time. Surely you can find me some properly matronly outfit to wear. One of your old ones maybe? Something dowdy and tasteful.

QUEEN Of course you should be there; we all should, whatever you wear.

PRIN I'm sure Diana will be very pretty.

QUEEN The people love weddings.

PRIN So do I! I wish I'd had more of them. What if I wear a salmon bikini?! Can't you see me waving in St. Paul's in that!

QUEEN With your track record, I can only hope you're joking.

PRIN You can wear a bikini too. Matching outfits, like when we were little girls.

QUEEN I would not want to steal the day from Charles – and Diana.

PRIN Oh, you'll steal it anyway. Don't worry. I'm not going to wear a bikini. I am not that desperate for attention.

QUEEN I am sure the couple will be pleased. You are also a bit . . . (signals with her hand) for a bikini anywhere, don't you think?

PRIN I'll act my age, Lilibet. The day will belong to the young.

QUEEN I am pleased that you are being so agreeable. It will make planning so much easier.

PRIN I wouldn't put it past you to plan around me otherwise. And I'm always agreeable — even when I'm disagreeable!

QUEEN Which I understand is more and more often.

PRIN That's not fair! I often don't feel well these days. I certainly don't look well.

QUEEN Still smoking and drinking night and day?

PRIN I'm trying to cut down.

QUEEN I am very glad of that.

PRIN God, you're annoying. It's not that easy to stop!

QUEEN Not many things are, after a lifetime of them.

PRIN I wish you would drink more. I do so love your girlish laugh when you're drunk.

QUEEN You and Mother drink enough for all of us.

PRIN Yes. You would think it would have made her and I closer, wouldn't you? ... Oh, Lilibet, what's happened to me? I used to be vivacious and young and pretty. I don't want what's happening to continue, especially the bitterness. I don't want – I don't want to be a bitter old crone muttering under her breath at people who are happier than she is!

QUEEN (startled at the candor) I don't know what to say. . . . It's not too late.

PRIN It probably is.

QUEEN We must accept what comes to us in life.

PRIN Well, easy for you to say, when what came to you was the throne of fucking England!

QUEEN You've grown so coarse.

PRIN I just keep up with the world.

QUEEN Some are born great. Some achieve greatness. . . .

PRIN And?

QUEEN Some destroy the greatness they were given. Which are you, Margaret Rose?

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 7

1981 ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL

(It is the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana. Use the wedding march that was used on July 29, 1981.)

PRIV.
SEC. (to audience) They were all there that day at St. Paul's.

(Enter the Queen, Philip, the Princess, other family members, hangers-on, etc.)

(Other players can form both the royal party and the on-lookers.)

(Princess Diana enters in a white wedding gown with a very long train, helped by two girls. She traces the same pattern that Princess Margaret followed in her wedding to Antony.)

(Charles meets up with her at the altar. The wedding music gets softer and softer.)

(All is solemn as the Archbishop says the same words that were used at the marriage of Margaret and Antony.)

ARCHBISHOP In the presence of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we have come together to witness the marriage of . . .

(His voice fades, lights go out on the royals, one by one, as they step out of the limelight.)

(The Private Secretary leads the Princess to a platform, where she watches with great dignity as she is replaced by the new princess. The wedding itself goes into slow motion, with little or no sound.)

PRIN (to Private Secretary) I see we have a new princess.

PRIV.
SEC. Of the moment, Ma'am.

PRIN There's always a new one, isn't there? Of the moment.

PRIV.
SEC. Some moments are better than others.

PRIN I used to be Princess Diana, do you remember, Napier?

PRIV.
SEC. I remember, Ma'am. At least you had Westminster Abbey.

PRIN I did, didn't I? . . . So long ago.

PRIV.
SEC. People won't forget, Ma'am.

PRIN Yes, they will. That's one of the things you can absolutely count on in life.

(Charles and Diana touch hands.)

PRIN It was lovely. . . . I just hope when her time is up, for her sake she goes faster than I seem to be going.

LIGHTS FADE

ACT III, Scene 8

1985 HOSPITAL ROOM, LONDON

(The Princess is in a hospital bed again, under the covers. A Nurse is looking at her. A Doctor enters.)

DOCTOR How is she?

NURSE She's resting. Fitfully.

DOCTOR When was the last episode?

NURSE A couple of hours ago.

DOCTOR She's lucky to have that lung at all. (Shakes head.) Smokers! Let me know if there's any change.

NURSE I will.

(The Doctor leaves. The Nurse adjusts the bed. The Princess groans.)

NURSE Sorry! (She checks out her patient, then takes a magazine, sits in a chair, and begins to read.)

(The Princess tosses, makes distressed sounds.)

(Enter Group Captain Townsend – a dream in the mind of the Princess.)

CAPTAIN (gently) Margaret. (No answer.) Margaret, it's me.

(The Nurse does not see or hear him.)

PRIN (groggy) Peter? What are you doing here?

CAPTAIN You're dying, so I came to see you.

PRIN I'm not dying.

CAPTAIN Yes, you have only a few minutes to live.

PRIN I'll stop smoking, I promise.

CAPTAIN It's too late.

PRIN I would have stopped if I could have married you.

CAPTAIN A pretty thought.

PRIN It's true!

CAPTAIN It's not true, and you know it.

PRIN Don't talk to me like I'm a schoolgirl.

CAPTAIN You are a schoolgirl – a very, very naughty one.

PRIN Are you a ghost?

CAPTAIN A dream.

PRIN Can't you save me?

CAPTAIN You made your bed. Now you must lie in it.

PRIN I liked you better in the past.

CAPTAIN We were casualties of our time.

PRIN We were, weren't we?

CAPTAIN Of course we wouldn't have lasted as a couple anyway.

PRIN You came to tell me that?

CAPTAIN So that you won't have regrets.

PRIN But if I don't have regrets, what do I have?

(The Captain smiles.)

(Enter Antony with framed photographs of their two grown children.)

ANT I have something to show you, darling.

PRIN Tony?

ANT Our children. The best thing we ever did.

PRIN Let me see them.

(He shows her the two photographs.)

PRIN They're fine human beings. We did a wonderful job in creating them.

ANT We did. (Takes her hand.)

PRIN Though it is rather awful to think the best thing about me is not *me* but *them*. I do hope they will remember me with at least a touch of fondness. Tell them goodbye for me, will you?

ANT . . . You're not going to die.

PRIN What? Peter said I am.

ANT He's military, not medical.

CAPTAIN We're all going to die.

ANT (to the Princess) You'll never quite get your full breath back, and you'll have to stop and rest every time you walk, but you'll pull through this time.

PRIN I'm not sure I want to live, actually.

ANT Oh, rot! You're only fifty-five. You have plenty to live for.

PRIN All those biscuit factories yet to be seen!

ANT And the royal scandals yet to come. You've got to hold on for those. They are going to make yours and Townsend's pale by comparison. (Waves at the Captain, who refuses to wave back.)

PRIN Oh, splendid. I won't even be a "tragic love affair" anymore, just a grain of sand in history?

ANT We're all just a grain of sand in history. You're lucky if you get a sentence on the great scroll: "Photographer consort of princess."

CAPTAIN "Equestrian trainer of princess."

(Enter Roddy.)

RODDY Or "vague, rumored lover of late-twentieth-century British princess."

PRIN Roddy!

RODDY Well, at least you remember my name!

PRIN You were always kind to me. (Points at Antony.) Unlike him!

ANT He didn't have to put up with as much shite as I did. You were too tired to be a bitch all the time by the time you met him.

CAPTAIN She was never a bitch!

PRIN I was never a bitch. (to Antony) But you were!

ANT At least I got a title out of it.

PRIN Wicked Bitch of the West.

ANT It takes one to know one, darling.

PRIN You know something, Tony, since you're here. I loved you. I just never liked you.

ANT Of course not. I was too much like *you*!

CAPTAIN Be kind to her. She has emphysema.

ANT Is that why we're nice to people – their diseases? (pointing to imaginary people) Forgive that old fart over there for a lifetime of stupidities. For now he has shingles. Forget about So and So's endless small cruelties. She's got terminal hemorrhoids!

CAPTAIN You're awful. They should take your title away from you.

ANT I damn well earned my title as much as anyone in the past ever did – with every thrust of my sword! (Thrusts his crotch at them all.)

(The Captain turns away.)

RODDY (turning away in disgust) Don't listen to him, Margaret. You definitely married beneath you.

ANT How could she not have – unless she married God Himself!

PRIN Unfortunately, God never asked me.

CAPTAIN You probably would have turned him down!

PRIN (annoyed) What!?

CAPTAIN Oh, sorry.

PRIN Keep out of this!

RODDY You should have married me, Margaret.

PRIN I should have.

CAPTAIN No!

RODDY I made her happy.

PRIN Much of the time. We *were* married, in effect. I doubt that a ceremony at the Abbey and a certificate on the wall would have made any difference. Nothing lasts forever, except in fairy tales. (to the Captain) Apparently not even in my dreams!

RODDY I brought you a present.

PRIN A farewell gift?

RODDY A get-well gift. I want use to be friends for the rest of our lives.

PRIN What do you really think, Roddy? Am I going to live or die today? We have a split vote.

RODDY I don't think it's up to me.

PRIN You mean it's up to me? Can one actually decide to live or to die, or is it just veins and vessels and . . .

ANT And vanity!

PRIN That went some time ago. The body first and then the memory of your body as it used to be, and then the memory of the memory.

RODDY No, don't be sad! I don't like it when you're sad.

PRIN I'm afraid I am very sad, Roddy. Hovering here between life and death can do that even to a royal princess! Perhaps I should just close my eyes now and . . . drift . . . drift to nowhere.

(Roddy hurriedly takes his gift out of a shopping bag.)

RODDY Wait!

PRIN Let me go, Roddy. I'm not afraid. I'm not. (Drifts off.)

RODDY No! (Pulls a tiara out of the shopping bag.) I got this for you.

(She sits up slightly.)

PRIN A tiara?

RODDY It's not real, but it is from Harrod's.

PRIN Oh, Roddy, what more could one ask for. But you're the real jewel.

**ANT /
CAPTAIN** (together) Aw!!

(Roddy helps the Princess set the tiara on her head.)

RODDY There! I think that does it.

PRIN How do I look, gentlemen?

CAPTAIN Stunning.

ANT Cheap.

RODDY Perfect. Like you.

PRIN Does it at least distract from the face?

RODDY You're beautiful.

PRIN It's not just a sick old woman's dream then? It truly is a real tiara?
(Touches it.)

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 9

1985-1999 A PLATFORM OUTDOORS

(The Private Secretary appears, speaks to the audience.)

PRIV.

SEC. Her Royal Highness Princess Margaret of York continued to make numerous public appearances for the next fourteen years. Princess Diana's appearances, shall we say, attracted more attention. (Bows.)

(Three Officials appear on the platform, leading on the Princess, who is now quite fragile and elderly.)

PRIN I so enjoyed my visit here today at your

...

OFFICIAL #1 Biscuit factory.

PRIN At your ... ?

OFFICIAL #2 Playing field.

PRIN Excuse me, at your ... ?

OFFICIAL #3 Scottish dance recital.

PRIN I enjoyed them all more than I can say. It is good just to get out these days.

OFFICIALS

(together) And we enjoyed having you here, Your Highness.

PRIN I'm sorry Diana couldn't make it.

OFFICIAL #3 Not at all, not at all. You've always been my favourite member of the royal family.

PRIN Mine too!

PRIV.

SEC. (to audience) Her Royal Highness fulfilled her obligations, tiresome and tiring though they often were. Although not officially reported, she was over-heard to say many things in these years. Here is a but a sampling:

PRIN (to the Private Secretary) Some say I am still quite pretty. Sometimes I think it might just be the royal setting. And nowadays even the royal setting may not be enough!

(She and the Private Secretary move to another spot of the platform.)

PRIN I can, if pressed, trace my lineage back to William the Conqueror, who was just another illegal immigrant, if you think about it.

(In another position.)

PRIN I wouldn't stand around for hours waiting to see *me*!

PRIV.
SEC. And truth be told, some of her people, who shall be nameless, said a few sharp things to Her Highness.

PRIN They didn't dare!

PRIV.
SEC. I'm afraid they did. "If you weren't a princess, Ma'am, I'd say you looked like a tart."

PRIN Why did I indulge such insolence?!

PRIV.
SEC. I have no idea, Ma'am. Perhaps you are related to a saint?

PRIN Distantly related, no doubt. Come to think of it, I think I should have made an excellent saint, if I had just put my mind to it!

(The two assume another position on the platform.)

PRIV.
SEC. How are you holding up, Ma'am?

PRIN Other than bored, bored, bored, I'm fine!

PRIV.
SEC. Ma'am, you can't expect every single minute of your life to be a delight.

PRIN With you around, that is hardly a danger!

PRIV.
SEC. But she always spoke well of her family.

PRIN My mother, my mother, what can I say? She's an old drunk — but a nice old drunk. She'll probably outlive me. Charles, Lilibet, Philip, the rest — I have finally given up my plans to kill them all and take the throne. They're doing quite enough on their own to bring ruin upon themselves.

PRIV.
SEC. The people still love *you*, Ma'am.

PRIN Bollocks! Do you think I'm senile?! But I do feel for the people, more than I used to.

PRIV.
SEC.

I've heard that's true, Ma'am.

PRIN

I'm sure I'd enjoy being desperately poor for a week or two myself. It must be exciting living on the edge.

PRIV.
SEC.

You have brought hope to the people, Your Highness – hope and glamour!

(A crowd cheers for the Princess.)

PRIN

Have I? Yes, some of them still cheer for me. I must say, however, that the multitudes can be more fickle than a princess.

(The crowd boos her, moves away.)

PRIV.
SEC.

Ma'am, please.

PRIN

Don't shush me! Who made you royal?

PRIV.
SEC.

The same thing that made me a commoner made you royal, Ma'am – mere accident of birth.

PRIN

Oh, stop! Life makes all of us what we are sooner or later.

PRIV.
SEC.

And that is . . . ?

PRIN

Quite dead!

PRIV.
SEC.

Shall we go in to the luncheon now, Ma'am?

PRIN

You know something, What's Your Name. I don't like you anymore.

PRIV.
SEC.

I'm sorry to hear that, Ma'am. Perhaps I should resign.

PRIN

And do you know why I don't like you anymore? Because you're too good for me.

PRIV.
SEC.

I could only hope to be as good as you, Ma'am. (Bows.)

PRIN

Bollocks! (He leads her from the platform slowly.) I hope the food is better at this luncheon than the last. I've had better food out of a dog dish!

PRIV.
SEC. Perhaps you shouldn't eat out of dog dish, Ma'am.

PRIN I didn't hear that. I don't think I'd like it.

PRIV.
SEC. This way, Ma'am.

(They step down from the platform.)

LIGHTS FADE

ACT III, Scene 10

1999 THE ISLAND OF MUSTIQUE

(In this scene the Princess is sixty-nine years old.)

(The staff members are a Personal Detective (male) and an Assistant (female).)

(The Assistant is tidying up the place.)

DETEC. (peeking through door) How is she tonight?

ASSISTANT Irritable.

DETEC. I'll trade you my shift for twenty quid.

ASSISTANT Will you leave me your gun so that I can shoot her?

DETEC. No!

ASSISTANT Then not bloody likely. Take it like a man.

DETEC. (stepping into the room) The pay's good.

ASSISTANT And she has been through a lot.

DETEC./
ASSISTANT (as one) We're very lucky!

(They laugh.)

DETEC. Sometimes I want to smack her, though.

ASSISTANT You'd better not let her hear you say that.

DETEC. There has to be a better job than this.

ASSISTANT Looks very impressive on a resume.

DETEC. Where is she anyway?

ASSISTANT She's hiding in the cupboard.

DETEC. (nervously) What!?! (Looks at the cupboard.)

ASSISTANT She's washing her hair. (Points off to unseen bathroom.)

DETEC. You had me goin' there.

(Suddenly there is screaming from offstage.)

DETEC. My God!

PRIN (offstage screams and groans)

ASSISTANT I'll go! She may not be dressed. (Rushes offstage. Sound of bathroom door being opened, if possible.)

(More screams.)

ASSISTANT (offstage) Ma'am! Ma'am!

DETEC. (calling) What is it? Should I come?

(Sound of bathtub tap being turned off, or some commotion.)

ASSISTANT (offstage) Ma'am, please!

(Sounds of the Princess sobbing.)

(The Assistant hurries back on stage.)

ASSISTANT You'd better call an ambulance! She's scalded herself!

DETEC. What?! How did that happen?

ASSISTANT She was adjusting the taps in the shower, and the scalding water splashed all over her feet!

DETEC. Oh, my God!

ASSISTANT It's very serious. Call an ambulance.

(The Detective grabs a telephone – possibly a cell phone? He dials the emergency number for the island.)

(Sobs from the Princess, still offstage.)

ASSISTANT (calling) We're getting you an ambulance, Ma'am!

DETEC. Hello? We need an ambulance or a doctor immediately. (Listens.) It's for the Princess. (Listens.) Yes, *that* princess. She's been scalded. Do you know the address? (Listens.) Yes. Good. (Listens.) Please hurry!

(The Assistant runs back offstage to help the Princess. Sobs can be heard.)

DETEC. (moving closer) Can I help? (After a hesitation, he runs offstage too.)

(After a few moments, the two carry the Princess on stage, swathed in a robe, her feet bandaged with towels. She is crying more softly now. They place her on a sofa, fussing over her.)

DETEC I think she's going into shock.

ASSISTANT Is that good or bad?

DETEC. She won't feel the burns as much. But they're pretty bad.

ASSISTANT She was still standing in the scalding water when I ran in!

DETEC. Really? She must have been so startled she couldn't move.

ASSISTANT I know, but you'd think at least she'd jump back once the hot water began hitting her.

DETEC. Those knobs on the shower can be very confusing, if you're unfamiliar with them. But she's been coming to this place for forty years. You'd think she'd know how to operate them. Christ!

ASSISTANT She must have been traumatized. She literally did not move!

(The Princess is all of a sudden alert.)

PRIN I wasn't that traumatized, you ninnies! Do you expect a Royal Princess to turn off her own fucking bath water?!

(She collapses back on the sofa. The other two attend to her.)

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 11

2000 A ROOM IN WINDSOR CASTLE

(The Queen is looking out a window at the gardens. She looks at her wristwatch.)

(As usual, the Princess enters late – this time for a different reason. She is hobbling badly. She is an unsteady, slow-moving, elderly sixty-nine-year-old woman now.)

PRIN (for the first time) I'm sorry I'm late, Lilibet. I just can't . . . (Gestures at herself.)

QUEEN It's understandable. . . . You should have had those skin grafts.

PRIN That's for sissies. (Holds onto a chair to support herself.)

QUEEN You should at least be using a cane.

PRIN How would that look? I manage.

QUEEN Do you take something? It must be painful.

PRIN Don't worry. It's legal.

QUEEN I was worried about you, not the family's reputation.

PRIN If you say so.

QUEEN Will you recover?

PRIN Do you mean will I ever walk normally again? Probably not.

QUEEN Surely there is a specialist somewhere. Charles has an Indian doctor he likes. He's very high on him.

PRIN I'm fine. I can beg off any number of 'biscuit factories' this way.

QUEEN I have my doubts about that doctor, I must say.

PRIN Not a quack, is he? Charles always has been a bit balmy – even before he and Diana divorced. Now he's worse.

QUEEN He is balmy, isn't he?

(They share a little laugh at Charles.)

PRIN I think *I'm* divorced too and a bit balmy. Since my strokes, I don't always remember clearly.

QUEEN I'm trying to think who in the family *isn't* divorced?

PRIN I could be bitter, I suppose, if I let myself – someone’s *divorce* playing such a large part in my younger years. But that’s not me!

QUEEN I have found that life is best handled by not dwelling on regrets.

PRIN Do you? And what regrets do you have, my Queen? Other than having had me as your sister?

QUEEN I don’t have any regrets about you. At times about Philip, my children’s spouses, and a Prime Minister or two. But not you, Margaret. You always did the right thing, not always right away, but ultimately you did more right than wrong. In fact, you have always been my very favourite.

PRIN . . . You are such a liar. But I love you for it.

QUEEN And I, you.

(They think about embracing but decide it’s too gushy.)

QUEEN So! Do you think you will come to Balmoral this summer?

PRIN I wouldn’t miss it for the world. I’d like to turn seventy there.

QUEEN We’ll play charades. You’ll again play the piano for us. We’ll do imitations. You were always so good at imitations, Margaret. It will be like the old days. We must start seeing each other more often, like when we were girls and you used to run like mad around these corridors.

PRIN And everyone would shush me. “Margaret Rose, Margaret Rose!” Crawfie would complain. Remember? “Be a good girl now. Be a good girl, you little demon, you.”

QUEEN (about the imitation of their governess) That’s her! That’s her to a T!

PRIN “Elizabeth, smile more, darling. People like people who smile.”

QUEEN Perfect!

PRIN “Margaret Rose, your tea is getting cold, and I won’t tell you again!”

(They both laugh.)

(The Princess slumps and touches her left eye.)

QUEEN Margaret?

PRIN I have shortness of breath. (Tries to remain standing but can’t.) My left side! Lilibet!

(The Princess slumps to the floor.)

QUEEN Margaret!

BLACKOUT

ACT III, Scene 12

2002 A GARDEN

(The Princess is brought out in a wheelchair by the Private Secretary. She is now seventy-one years old, wearing an eye patch on her blinded left eye. She is paralyzed on her left side, including the arm and the leg.)

PRIV.

SEC. It's lovely here in the garden, Ma'am.

PRIN If you insist.

PRIV.

SEC. Do you want to go back inside?

PRIN. No. Let's stop here.

(He stops the wheelchair.)

PRIV.

SEC. Would you like to face the azaleas, Ma'am? They're very pretty.
I can arrange a ramp so that you can see them from above. (Starts to leave.)

PRIN Wait. Let me face *them*. (Points at the audience as the audience for the very first time.) I've heard they're watching!

PRIV.

SEC. Really, Ma'am? They could be hostile.

PRIN There are some things I'd like to say to them.

PRIV.

SEC. Are you certain? I'll see about a ramp.

PRIN Fine. (He is hesitant to leave.) We'll be fine.

(The Private Secretary goes off to get the moveable ramp.)

PRIV.

SEC. (calling) Are you all right, Ma'am?

PRIN

Shoo! (Waves him offstage altogether. She manages with difficulty to maneuver the wheelchair to the front of the stage.)

PRIN (to audience) Bear with me. . . . Hello. Or should I say goodbye? I can see your eyes, or at least feel them. Don't feel superior to me, you bunch of Peeping Toms! And don't pity me either. I've had a perfectly terrific life, with more laughs and excitement, more variety than most people can even dream about. I had looks, fame, respect, marvelous friends. I met everybody important or famous in my time. Even when I was vilified, I felt alive. . . . How shall I say this nicely? Most lives are far, far sadder than mine was, if looked at up close, and far, far worse paid than mine ever was! Would you want *your* life up here for all to gawk at? Will it end badly? Don't ask yourself. Please don't. The un-examined life is the one truly worth living! . . . So, no, don't feel pity for me, even the way I am now. If you had the chance, you know you would trade your life for mine in a minute. And I would never trade mine for anyone's. Anyone's! . . . Now go home and live your lives even better, fuller than I lived mine. Whatever that life is, be royal about it! Go! Go! . . . My head hurts. And it's time for me to die. (calling) What's Your Name – are you there? Come along!

(Gets her wheel-chair ready, does not see him as he approaches from the rear. It is Group Captain Peter Townsend who returns with a ramp to the platform used earlier for viewings. Reality and fantasy are mingling in the mind of Princess Margaret.)

PRIN (not seeing him, just that someone is behind her) Ah, good. I'm ready to view the flowers now, What's Your Name. But not the azaleas – the roses. There's one I especially fancy – an English rose. The full name is the English Margaret Rose.

CAPTAIN I've managed to find a ramp and plat-form from which to view the flowers, Ma'am. (Stands behind her wheelchair.)

PRIN Wait one moment. There's something. (Takes a large purse that is hanging from the side of the wheelchair.) Here it is. (Takes out a tiara.) I almost forgot it. One more time. (Places it on her head. Townsend stoically helps her get it right.) There! Is it all right, What's Your Name? Or does it look incredibly silly?

CAPTAIN It couldn't be better, Your Highness.

PRIN Don't lie to me now, What's Your Name.

CAPTAIN I wouldn't, Ma'am.

PRIN Up the ramp and to the flowers then!

CAPTAIN Yes, Ma'am.

(He wheels the wheelchair up the ramp to the viewing platform. But this time the Princess and he stand looking away from the audience, toward the roses in the background.)

CAPTAIN (stopping the wheelchair) Will this do, Your Highness?

PRIN It's perfect. Perfect! (Points with her right arm.) Look at those. And those! Aren't they glorious?! Glorious! . . . (turning, slowly recognising him) Peter?

CAPTAIN (placing his fingers on his lips, then on hers.) (quietly) Shhh ...

(The Princess slumps in the wheelchair. The tiara becomes askew.)

CAPTAIN (noticing) Ma'am? . . . Margaret?

(She is dead.) (Townsend begins to weep. He gently removes the tiara from her hair.) Darling? (Touches her face. He kisses her on the top of her head out of love, gently weeping.) I'm sorry so many stopped loving you, Margaret. . . . But I never did.

SLOW FADE
END OF PLAY

Copyright 2007