

JACK. Promise. Not another word.

PRINCESS. Good.

TRUMPET. **(off)** Make way for his Royal Highness –

JACK. I didn't say that!

CHORUS. It's Trumpet, the Royal Herald.

TRUMPET. **(entering, carrying royal staff)** His Royal Wonderfulness, King Bertram the Brave! **(Bows low.)**

(KING enters.)

JACK. **(to PRINCESS)** What does the King want with us?

PRINCESS. I don't know.

TRUMPET. Pray silence for His Majesty!

KING. Good people of Merrydale - **(To PRINCESS)** what are you doing here?

PRINCESS. Dancing.

KING. Dancing!

TRUMPET. Silence for His Majesty, King Bertram! **(Brings staff down on KING'S foot.)**

KING. Ow! Trumpet! You hit my foot!

TRUMPET. Did I?

KING. Yes, you did.

TRUMPET. Sorry.

KING. I've got a sore bit now. Budge over; I'll go the other side. **(Goes to other side of TRUMPET.)**

TRUMPET. And I'll put it in the other hand.

KING. Good idea.

PRINCESS. Daddy –

JACK. Daddy?!

(JACK and CHORUS laugh.)

KING. Don't call me Daddy –

TRUMPET. Silence for His Majesty! (**Brings staff down on to KING'S other foot.**)

KING. Ow! You did it again!

TRUMPET. Did I?

KING. Yes, you did.

TRUMPET. Sorry.

KING. (**taking staff**) Give that thing to me. You're not to be trusted. And Demelza, don't call me Daddy, like that. Not in front of the common people.

ALL. The common people!

KING. Silence!

TRUMPET. Silence!

KING. Yes, thank you, Tumpet. Now, where was I? Oh, yes. Good people of Merrydale, I am here today –

JACK. We can see that –

KING. Will you shut up! (**Brings staff down on his own foot.**) Ow! (**To TRUMPET.**) Now see what you made me do!

TRUMPET. Me!?

KING. Yes you! Bringing this silly thing out with you! See how you like it! (**Brings staff smartly down on TRUMPET'S foot.**) There!

TRUMPET. Ow!

PRINCESS. But that's not fair Daddy -

KING. Don't call me Daddy, I'm the King! (**Angrily brings staff down again on TRUMPET'S foot.**)

TRUMPET. Owoooo!

KING. Oh, sorry, Trumpet. (**Returning staff to TRUMPET.**) But don't bring that thing out with you again.

TRUMPET. (**whimpering**) No, Your Majesty.

KING. Now look everybody, I'm here today to give you some good news.

(**ALL cheer.**)

And some bad news.

(**ALL moan.**)

The good news is that we have finally paid all the Giant tax!

(**ALL cheer.**)

The bad news is that in an unprecedented gesture of goodwill, the Giant has decided to double the tax –

ALL. Double it!?

(**General consternation.**)

KING. And will be sending his wicked henchman, Slimeball, to oversee payment!

(**More consternation. PYRO. SLIMEBALL leaps on. All scream. KING hides behind TRUMPET.**)

SLIME. You said it Daddy!

PRINCESS. Don't call him Daddy!

KING. No, no that's quite alright – Mister, er - Slimeball?

SLIME. That's me, but don't you worry, Granddad, the Giant's a reasonable man. He'll give you time.

KING. Really?

SLIME. You've got half an hour.

ALL. HALF AN HOUR!!!

SLIME. Thirty minutes. And if the money isn't handed over on time –

KING. Yes?

SLIME. The Giant's going to marry the Princess.

SCENE 2.

A Country Lane. Front cloth or tabs. SLIMEBALL discovered.

SLIME. Go on then. Let's get it over with. Boo, boo, boo, boo, boo.
(**AUDIENCE response.**) There. Happy? I'm not happy. Not happy at all, I can tell you. And when I'm not happy... Bad things happen... Very bad things... For starters I'm going to ruin that Jack. Just to spite Edena. And I'm going to find a way to steal away the Princess. That'll keep the Giant happy, because he's a romantic at heart - AND it'll spite Edena even more - which is right up my street...! You don't agree with me? Well, let's just see who has the last laugh! I thank you! (**Exits.**)

KING. (**entering**) Come on, Trumpet, hurry up. Hurry up!

TRUMPET. (**shuffling on, disguised as a tree, with his arms as boughs**)
I'm coming as quickly as I can, Your Majesty.

KING. I'm glad to hear it. You appeared to be rooted to the spot. Hah!
'Rooted to the spot'. That's a good one isn't it, Trumpet?

TRUMPET. Very good, Your Majesty. Can I ask a question, Your Majesty?

KING. Fire away.

TRUMPET. Why am I dressed as a tree?

KING. Good question, Trumpet. Good question. Take a leaf out of my book, and never be afraid to ask the right question.

TRUMPET. No, Your Majesty.

KING. 'Leaf out of my book'! That's another good one, isn't it, Trumpet?

TRUMPET. Very good, Your Majesty.

KING. You are dressed as a tree, Trumpet, so as to remain entirely inconspicuous.

TRUMPET. Really?

KING. I want you to blend in with your surroundings and keep a close watch on the Princess. She always takes a walk in the afternoon and I want to know exactly what's happening and exactly who she meets. Especially that uppity Jack Trot. I want to put a stop to all this chatting and dancing with commoners. I want to cut it out root and branch!

TRUMPET. 'Root and branch!' That's a good one, Your Majesty!

KING. (a beat) Don't try and come the comedian with me, Trumpet.

TRUMPET. No, Your Majesty. Beg pardon, Your Majesty.

KING. Your job is to find out what's happening and report back to me.

TRUMPET. Yes, Your –

KING. (sees PRINCESS off) Quiet! She's coming. Now remember. You're almost invisible in that disguise. So, stick to her like glue. (Starts to exit.)

TRUMPET. (pursuing the KING) But Your Majesty –

KING. Like, glue, TRUMPET. Like glue. (Exits.)

(TRUMPET sticks his arms out rigidly and freezes as a tree.)

PRINCESS. (entering) Daddy? That's funny. I thought Daddy was here. I'm sure I heard his voice.

JACK. (poking his head on) Demelza!

PRINCESS. Jack! What are you doing here?

JACK. I followed you.

(Surreptitiously, TRUMPET starts to cross the stage.)

PRINCESS. Why?

JACK. Oh. You know. I just wanted to talk to you.

PRINCESS. I hope my father didn't see you.

JACK. Oh, no. I was very careful.

(JACK leans against one of the boughs of the "tree".)

PRINCESS. He's got even more protective of me than he used to be.

JACK. I know. It's very annoying.

PRINCESS. Really? Does it worry you?

JACK. Well, of course it does!

PRINCESS. Why's that then?