



The Frog Prince

by Stephen Duckham

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CHARACTERS DESCRIPTIONS

- MARCO Warm-hearted fellow who has an uncanny likeness to a certain famous wizard!
- PRINCESS MARINA A beautiful young girl with a good singing voice
- PRINCE FREDERICK Handsome young man with a good singing voice. He must be agile when transformed into the Frog Prince.
- NARDIA Cousin to Marina. A jealous woman who covets the power of the throne and will stop at nothing to achieve her aims. She is the villainess of the story and must be able to interact with the audience as they will 'boo' her throughout.
- GERDA Her sister. A simple soul who is forced to take part in Nardia's evil plans.
- KING CROCHET A loveable character who is constantly following behind his wife and rarely manages to finish a sentence. Good comic timing is essential.
- QUEEN QUAVER A larger than life panto Dame. Always in control of a situation and must have a good rapport with the audience.
- LORD CHAMBERLAIN Small but important role. Full of his own importance.
- KING COCKLE Cameo role. Jolly character.
- THE FROG PRINCE DOUBLE. Non-speaking. Can be a Chorus member.

SCENERY

This Pantomime can be staged as simply or as lavishly as your facilities allow. Suggestions for basic settings are as follows:

ACT ONE

Scene 1 A gauze to bleed through, or black tabs with Marco on stage right and the other characters in a light stage left.

Scene 2 A full stage set depicting the interior of the Palace

Scene 3, 5 & 6 A front cloth or tabs

Scene 4 A garden set with a low-walled well up stage, or set to one side to enable the actor playing the Frog Prince to escape.

Scene 7 A full stage depicting an underwater scene of rock, shells etc. with a throne up centre.

ACT TWO

Scene 1 As Act 1 Scene 4

Scene 2 & 4 Front cloth or tabs

Scene 3 A full stage showing a grand music room in the palace. Please note: this can be the same scene as the Great Hall in Act 1 Scene 2 with added furniture and a small, non-practical piano/harpsichord.

Scene 5 As Act 1 scene 2 with added decorations for a wedding.

UV scene in Act 1

If it is not practical to use Ultra Violet, this scene can be played on the black tabs with chorus or children dressed as various sea creatures. The Frog Prince moves among them as he makes his journey to the Underwater Kingdom.

Although a lesser-known pantomime, The Frog Prince is a strong story-driven piece. The plot line is clear and easy to follow. All the basic ingredients of pantomime are found in the script and the characters should be clearly defined.

The placing of musical numbers and who sings them is suggested in the script, but it is up to the director to decide what to use. A word of advice: Pantomime audiences – particularly the younger members – like to story to keep moving, so don't make the musical sequences too long, especially the ballads. I recommend no number should be more than two and a half minutes.

I hope you enjoy doing this version of 'The Frog Prince' and have a great success with your production.

Stephen Duckham

ACT ONE

SCENE 1 MARCO'S BOOK OF SPELLS

[It is a front gauze scene. Down stage right MARCO is reading a book entitled Ancient Book of Spells. He is in his early thirties and a little dishevelled looking. He wears horn-rimmed glasses and has a scarf around his neck. (Remind you of anyone?) HE looks up and speaks to the audience.]

MARCO Hello. How nice to see you all. You've just caught me looking through my Ancient Book of Spells. It's been in my family for centuries and now it's in my care. I'm Marco, the magician, and all the spells in this book have been created through the ages by my family. One of the spells reminded me of the story of The Frog Prince. Do you know it? *[Audience reaction.]* You don't? Well it did happen some time ago. And I know all about it because I was there! It was just after I inherited this book. Would you like to hear the story? *[Reaction.]* Well if you don't you've wasted your time coming here! *[HE laughs and the audience reacts.]* OK, well here goes. The story is centred around two Kingdoms – Splendor and Beautora. Splendor was a splendid, peaceful country ruled over by the King and Queen. They had a charming daughter, Marina, who was celebrating her birthday. And the guest of honour was Prince Frederick, heir to the throne of the Kingdom of Beautora.

[He makes a pass and a light comes up behind the gauze showing PRINCESS MARINA and PRINCE FREDERICK.]

FREDERICK Marina, there's no one in the world for me but you. With your permission I am going to ask your parents for your hand in marriage.

MARINA I give it with all my heart.

[The lights fade on them.]

MARCO The whole court was in attendance that day including Marina's cousins, Nardia and Gerda! Gerda, was a simple soul who was made to do just what her elder sister wanted. Nardia was a spoiled and jealous woman who had one ambition, to marry Frederick herself and become Queen of Beautora

[HE makes another pass and the lights come up on NARDIA and GERDA.]

NARDIA *[With mounting determination.]* Prince Frederick will be mine; the crown will be mine; the Kingdom will be mine.

GERDA Oh, Nardia. I wish you wouldn't.....

NARDIA Be quiet, you simpering fool. I will have power and no one is going to stop me! *[SHE lets out a shrieking laugh as the lights fade on them.]*

MARCO Now where do I fit into the story you ask? Well, since early school days, Fredo – my nickname for him – and myself had been good friends. I accompanied him on his official tours and visits and we confided in each other on many things. I knew how much he loved Marina, and their marriage would strengthen the ties between the two countries. And on this special occasion he asked me to create a unique birthday present for Marina. And that's where the adventure starts. So, settle back and discover the story of the Frog Prince.

[HE exits down right and the gauze opens to reveal a party in progress.]

SCENE 2 THE GREAT HALL IN THE PALACE OF SPLENDORA

[A magnificent room with pillars and entrances up centre, right and left. Chandeliers hang from the ceiling. The whole COURT is enjoying the party.]

OPENING NUMBER

[MARINA and FREDERICK front the number. At the end they are together as the rest of the COMPANY breaks into groups. NARDIA moves down left with GERDA, observing MARINA and FREDERICK.]

MARINA Thank you, everyone, for making this a wonderful birthday. *[To FREDERICK.]* This is just the most perfect day.

FREDERICK But I haven't given you your birthday gift yet. *[Calls.]* Marco, are you there?

[MARCO enters with his Ancient Book of Spells. HE holds it like a tray and on it is a decorative box.]

MARCO Here it is, your Highness.

FREDERICK *[HE takes the box and gives it to MARINA.]* Happy Birthday.

MARINA Oh thank you. I wonder what it can be. *[Everyone gathers round to see the present. MARINA opens the box and takes out a golden ball.]* Oh, how beautiful. *[Showing it to NARDIA who is less than impressed.]* Look Nardia, Gerda, isn't it lovely?

GERDA Very pretty. *[Gets a nudge from Nardia and adds -]* I suppose!

NARDIA *[Dismissively.]* Very nice – for someone who is still at school!

MARINA Nardia, don't say such ungrateful things.

MARCO But this is no ordinary ball, your Highness.

MARINA Really?

FREDERICK Go on, Marco. Tell everyone about it.

MARCO I have fashioned this ball from an ancient type of gold that has a special power. Keep it safe and it will protect you from harm and bring you happiness throughout your life.

MARINA How wonderful. Thank you so much. I will treasure it forever.

NARDIA Gold with special powers? I find that hard to believe. Don't you, Gerda.

GERDA Oh I'm sure it's true – *[SHE gets a glare from NARDIA.]* – but a little hard to believe.

MARCO My lady, do not doubt the power of the spells I have in this book. It has been in my family for generation since a time when the most powerful wizards ruled the land.

NARDIA Superstitious nonsense.

FREDERICK Not at all. Marco has been my close friend since childhood and I know his magic has always been used for good.

NARDIA Something created by the dark arts is not what I would want as a present.

MARINA Don't listen to her. It's beautiful and I love it. *[To MARCO.]* Thank you for creating it. *[Then to FREDERICK.]* And thank you for giving it to me.

FREDERICK Happy birthday. And to add to the celebration of this special day, Marco has prepared a special magic show for you all.

[Reaction from the ENSEMBLE.]

MARINA How wonderful. This day couldn't be more perfect. Now I must show mother and father my beautiful present. *[To the LORD CHAMBERLAIN.]* Lord Chamberlain, are my parents on their way?

[The LORD CHAMBERLAIN steps forward.]

LORD CH I was just about to make the announcement, your Highness. *[HE moves to his position to announce the entrance of the KING and QUEEN.]* My lords, ladies and gentlemen. Their majesties, King Crotchet – and Queen Quaver!

MUSIC – ENTRANCE OF THE KING CROTCHET AND QUEEN QUAVER

[The KING CROTCHET and QUEEN QUAVER enter and acknowledge the ensemble. The QUEEN is a bundle of energy and motors through life like a steam train. The KING is the opposite and has a job to get a full sentence out before being interrupted.]

QUEEN Hello all. What a splendid turn out for your birthday, Marina. Don't you think so, Crotchet?

KING On – er – well....

QUEEN Yes, I knew you would agree.

MARINA Thank you, mother, for such a wonderful party.

QUEEN Only the best for our little girl. *[To the KING.]* Right, my dear?

KING Um – er...

QUEEN You see, your father is as excited as I am! Just look at him shimmering with delight! And it's a double celebration. *[A buzz from the Court.]* The King has an announcement.

KING Do I?

- QUEEN You know. *[SHE mimes a ring on her finger, hand over heart and puckering lips. SHE does this a number of times.]*
- KING *[Bemused.]* You're having a heart attack?
- QUEEN *[Laughs to make light of the situation.]* My husband and I have the great pleasure in announcing the betrothal of Prince Frederick to our darling daughter, Marina.
- NARDIA *[Stunned.]* What?
- QUEEN Imagine, my little girl – Queen of our neighbouring country, Beautora. Where is that handsome hunk?
- FREDERICK *[Stepping forward and bowing.]* Your Majesty. May I add my thanks for this evening.
- QUEEN Oh, such a catch. If I was only a couple of years younger! *[Reaction from the Ensemble.]* Well come along, Crotchet. Make your speech and then we can all go and have some nosh!
- KING Ah, yes. Well.... I would just like to say how pleased –
- QUEEN *[Prompting him.]* - delighted!
- KING - delighted we are to know our – um -darling daughter is happy.....
- QUEEN *[Cutting him off and applauding.]* Splendid dear, splendid. *[The KING is left with his mouth open as the ENSEMBLE join the QUEEN in applauding.]*
- MARINA *[Showing her ball to the KING and QUEEN.]* Look at my birthday present from Frederick.
- QUEEN *[Taking it and looking at it.]* How lovely. If you had another one, they could be earrings!
- MARINA It has a magical power to protect me from harm.
- QUEEN Crotchet, make a note of that. For my birthday I want – *[Name of well-known law enforcer e.g. James Bond actor etc.]* - to keep me from harm. And do a few other things too!!
- KING Yes dear – I'll er.....
- QUEEN *[Playfully tweaking the KING'S cheek.]* Yes, I know you will. He responds like lightning whenever I ask for something! Now all of you make your way to the banqueting hall where a gourmet meal of *poisson et frites avec puree de pois* is available!
- ENSEMBLE *[Puzzled.]* Eh? What? Etc
- QUEEN It's fish and chips – with mushy peas!! No expense spared!
- [ALL exit except the KING and QUEEN. She notices the audience.]*
- Look Crotchet, there's a coach load of extra guests.

- KING Oh Yes.... Er...
- QUEEN *[To the audience.]* Hello. *[Reaction.]* Well it is customary to be a little more excited when meeting royalty! *[SHE points to the KING.]* This is King Crotchet and I'm Queen Quaver. *[Reaction.]* Now I don't know where you're from, but here in Splendor when you meet royalty and they say 'hello' to you, you say 'hello, your Majesty' back with wave of the hand like this. *[She does a 'regal' wave.]* Shall we try it? I'll say 'hello' and you say 'hello your Majesty'. *[Reaction.]* 'Hello'. *[SHE waves and audience do it back.]* Oh, come on. You look like you're hanging the washing out!! One more time. *[The action is repeated.]* That's better. Much more regal, don't you think so dear? *[The KING opens his mouth, but she continues.]* You see, the King agrees! I'll be checking you out during your visit! Now I'm sure you'll all enjoy seeing our lovely country. Splendor has a wealth of attractions. Tell them all about our country, Crotchet.
- KING Well – er – there's the royal palace....
- QUEEN They've seen that! They're in it!!
- KING And there's the shopping centre.....
- QUEEN Why would they want to see the shopping centre?
- KING Well, my dear, people have to eat....
- QUEEN But they're on a tour – they'll have all brought a packed lunch – *[To audience.]* – haven't you? *[Reaction.]* No? Well in that case you must try our five-star Michelin café. *[Pointing off.]* It's through there – the other side of the gift shop!
- [NARDIA and GERDA enter.]*
- Ah, hello girls. How are you enjoying the party?
- NARDIA It's alright, I suppose. I'm not really one for parties. I prefer the more sophisticated evening in the company of interesting people and intelligent conversation.
- QUEEN Really? You ought to apply to go on - *[Name of cheesy reality television programme.]* Did you enjoy the buffet?
- NARDIA It was alright if you like that sort of food. I'm more of an a la carte person. The other evening, I dined out with intimate friends and was served oysters smothered in caviar, roasted loin and braised haunch of roe deer with sweet baby carrots, fresh apple and red wine sauce followed by poached conference pears in puff pastry with vanilla cream and caramel sauce.
- QUEEN I didn't know they served that at The Green Man! *[Or local pub.]* All this talk of food has made me feel quite peckish. Time to join our guests. *[To audience.]* No doubt we'll bump into you again while you're here. Ta ta for now. *[SHE starts to exit. The KING steps down to address the audience.]*
- KING Very nice to see you all. I hope you have a pleasant.....

- QUEEN Come on, Crotchet. You're such a chatterbox!
- KING visit. *[And HE is dragged off by the QUEEN.]*
- NARDIA The sooner we can get away from this dreary evening the better.
- GERDA But Nardia, I was quite enjoying myself.
- NARDIA Yes, I saw you stuffing those chips in your mouth. None of this lot have got any royal baring. What Prince Frederick sees in them I don't know.
- GERDA He is very handsome, and cousin Marina is a very pretty girl. They make a lovely couple.
- NARDIA Don't talk rubbish. Cousin Marina, ha! Such a goody-goody. At school she was always the favourite with everyone. Never doing anything wrong. Ugh!
- GERDA And you were always in trouble! *[SHE giggles.]*
- NARDIA Not always!
- GERDA I remember when you let that stink bomb off in chemistry and tried to blame Marina! *[SHE giggles again.]* You would have got away with it if they hadn't found the others in your locker!
- NARDIA I was set up. Someone tipped the teacher off before I could get rid of them.
- GERDA There were plenty of other times. What about that incident with the superglue and the headmaster's hat.....
- NARDIA *[cutting her off.]* That's enough, Gerda. The fact remains that none of this lot have got what it takes to be a true royal. I, on the other hand, possess royal breeding down to my fingertips. It's so unfair that Marina is going to marry Prince Frederick and become Queen of his country. It should have been me!
- GERDA But Nardia, they love each other. You can't alter the path of true love! *[Laughing at a sudden thought.]* You'd have to be a magician to do that!
- [NARDIA stops in her tracks as a plan starts to form in her mind.]*
- NARDIA What a splendid idea! There are times, Gerda, when you *can* say sensible things!
- GERDA What? What did I say?
- NARDIA A magician could change everything.
- GERDA What are you talking about?
- NARDIA A spell. *[HER idea builds and she becomes quite a witch-like creature planning her future.]* One that will make Prince Frederick fall out of love with Marina and in love with me. We would be married and I'd become Queen. In fact, I'd become the most powerful Queen whoever ruled.

[SHE roars with laughter and – (hopefully at this point) - the audience will start to 'boo' her.]

Do you hear that, Gerda? Have those peasants been listening?

GERDA *[With a smile and a wave at the audience.]* Oh hello!

NARDIA *[Grabbing her hand and pulling her away.]* Stop that. Don't get friendly with those plebs. Come over here and listen to my plan. *[THEY move away up stage.]*

GERDA What plan? Nardia, what are you doing?

NARDIA I'm going to get hold of that magician's book of spells. There's bound to be a love potion that would turn Prince Frederick's attentions to me! The thing is how to get hold of it.

GERDA Oh Nardia. You don't know what you are doing. How can you be so cruel to cousin Marina? What has she ever done to you?

NARDIA She has got what I want. The power and the future that should be mine.

GERDA But if it is meant to be.....

NARDIA *[Sneering.]* Meant to be! HA! Wouldn't you want to be by my side if I were on the throne. To have all the luxury befitting a royal personage.

GERDA *[Starting to warm to the idea.]* Well.....

NARDIA Of course you would.

GERDA But you mustn't harm Marina.

NARDIA Of course not. *[With an evil sneer.]* Just make it impossible for her to ever become Queen. *[She gives an evil laugh. The audience reacts.]* Listening again? I'll have you all thrown into the dungeons when I become Queen. *[To GERDA.]* Now this is what I want you to do. Get Marco on his own and start to flatter him.

GERDA What?

NARDIA Play with his affections. Distracted him so that he will forget about his book of spells - and I can steal it.

GERDA Oh Nardia, I couldn't! I don't know how to distract a man!

NARDIA Unless you want to be a spinster all your life, you better start learning how! *[SHE looks off.]* The love birds are coming back. Let's go into the next room to finalise my plan. *[Looking at audience.]* Away from those snooping tourists!

[Reaction from audience – NARDIA jeers at them as she and GERDA exit. MARINA and FREDERICK enter.]

MARINA We really shouldn't leave everyone in there.

FREDERICK Just for a moment. The Queen is keeping the entire court entertained - and I want a few moments alone with you.

MARINA But Frederick, we are going to have the rest of our live together.

FREDERICK I know. But right now – at this moment I just want there to be you and me.

DUET – MARINA & FREDERICK

[At the end of the number MARCO enters with his book.]

FREDERICK Ah, Marco. Is everything ready for your magic act?

MARCO Yes, your Highness. I have my book and I will delight your guests with a cornucopia of conjuring and a plethora of prestidigitation.

FREDERICK *[To MARINA.]* I guess that means party tricks.

MARCO *[With mock affront.]* Tricks? I'll have you know, Fredo, I have performed for the Crown heads of - *[Local area.]* - and beyond.

FREDERICK *[Laughing.]* Alright Marco, I believe you.

MARINA I'm sure it will be wonderful.

MARCO Thank you, your highness.

MARINA Now we really ought to be getting back.

FREDERICK Must we?

MARINA *[Taking his hand.]* Yes!

[THEY exit. MARCO calls off.]

MARCO Could you bring that table in here for me, lads?

[A table containing some magic props is brought on by SERVANTS and placed to one side of the stage. A cabinet, big enough to hold one person, with a curtain across the front is also put in place. It has an escape at the back. MARCO goes up and checks everything. He puts his book on one end of the table. NARDIA enters unseen by MARCO as he has his back to her. SHE calls on GERDA.]

NARDIA There he is. You distract him and I'll get the book.

GERDA Ohhh, I'm not sure.

NARDIA *[Pushing her towards MARCO.]* Just do it.

[NARDIA gives GERDA another push and exits. MARCO turns and bumps into GERDA.]

MARCO Oh, I beg your pardon.

- GERDA My fault. I'm a bit clumsy!
- MARCO Not at all. I wasn't looking where I was going.
- GERDA *[An attempt at flirting.]* Ha ha ha. How amusing.
- MARCO *[With a quizzical look.]* Really? *[SHE flutters her eyes at him.]* If you'll excuse me. *[HE turns to go for his book.]*
- GERDA *[Attempting to stop him.]* So – you're a magician?
- MARCO So they tell me.
- GERDA And you can do tricks?
- MARCO I have been known to produce the odd rabbit!
- GERBA Oh, for a rabbit stew!!!
- MARCO *[Amazed at her reply.]* No..... for a round of applause.
[GERDA laughs a little too loudly and claps her hands. MARCO starts to move towards his book. NARDIA appears on the other side of the stage and indicates GERDA should continue to distract him.]
- GERDA Soooo – *[SHE slips her arm through MARCO'S and leads him away from the table.]* – I guess you have lots of powders and potions that you use.
- MARCO A few.
- GERDA Like what?
- MARCO Well I have one that can turn a cabbage into a bouquet of flowers.....
- GERDA Or a pumpkin into a coach!!
- MARCO Er – well – that has been done a lot!!
- GERDA *[Trying to be seductive.]* What about a love potion?
- MARCO A love potion? Why would I want one of those?
- GERDA Well you never know when it might come in handy – if the right girl comes along.

DUET – GERDA AND MARCO

[During the number GERDA tries everything to distract MARCO while NARDIA creeps across the back of the stage and steals the book. MARCO gets a little carried away with the sequence and ends up in an awkward position with GERDA. On the applause to the number HE manages to free himself from her.]

- MARCO I – er – I really should be getting ready for my act.
- GERDA Really?

- MARCO Yes – I -er. Goodbye. *[HE dashes out.]*
- GERDA *[Weakly.]* Bye.....
[NARDIA enters.]
- NARDIA Splendid. I managed to get the book and have hidden it. Later, when everyone has left, I'll find the right spell.
- GERDA But Nardia, I don't want Marco getting into trouble. *[A little embarrassed.]* I've grown quite fond of him.
- NARDIA No time for romantic entanglements! We have work to do.
[They are just about to leave when the KING, QUEEN, MARINA, FREDERICK and the rest of the COURT enter.]
- QUEEN *[Waving to the audience.]* Hello! *[Audience response.]* Good. You're getting the hang of it! *[Sees NARDIA and GERDA.]* Ah, Nardia and Gerda. You're here. Now we've all stuffed our faces, the entertainment is about to begin. Where's that magician fellow?
- FREDERICK He was preparing his act. I expect he is getting ready.
- QUEEN Well tell him to get a move on. Emmerdale is on soon! *[Or another TV serial.]* We're all waiting to be amazed. *[The KING is yawning and not paying attention.]* Look at Crotchet. He's champing at the bit! Aren't you dear?
- KING Er – um – what's that?
- QUEEN I said you can't wait to see what he can do.
- L/CHAMB. Your Majesties, ladies and gentlemen. For your delectation and delight – Marco, the Magnificent.
[ALL applaud as MARCO enters wearing a cape adorned with magic symbols. With a flourish, he does a simple trick.]
- MARCO Your Majesties, I would now like to show you one of the most famous illusions taken from my family's ancient magicians' book. Fredo, if you would care to act as my assistant.
- FREDERICK Delighted Marco.
- MARINA *[Surprised.]* You, an assistant?
- FREDERICK I've done this since we were children together. It's great fun! *[HE crosses to beside MARCO.]*
- MARCO If I may have a volunteer. *[A GIRL from the ENSEMBLE crosses to MARCO.]* Now, if you would just step inside this cabinet, I will endeavour to transform that lovely dress from – *[Describes the colour of her dress.]* - to a completely white one. *[The ENSEMBLE chatter excitedly as the GIRL steps into the cabinet and FREDERICK draws the curtain.]* If I could have complete silence.

[The room falls silent as MARCO starts to do the trick. HE goes to pick up his book and finds it gone. HE speaks aside to FREDERICK]

My book! It's not here.

FREDERICK But you've always got it with you. Where did you put it?

MARCO I'm sure I left it on here when that Gerda started to.....

FREDERICK Started to what?

MARCO *[Quickly.]* Never mind! I'll have to cancel the performance.

FREDERICK You can't. Everyone is waiting. Can't you remember the trick.

MARCO I'm not sure – I think so.

FREDERICK Well have a go.

[MARCO speaks the verse ending in a big flourish.]

MARCO As sun turns to moon and day turns to night,
Your garment of *[Whatever colour.]* will now turn to white.

[FREDERICK pulls back the curtain. The GIRL is standing there in just her white underwear! Gasps from the ENSEMBLE and FREDERICK quickly closes the curtain.]

MARCO *[Trying to make light of the situation.]* Ha ha! Just a slight hitch. The creation of a new gown, even by magic, takes time – as you ladies know well!

QUEEN Oh he's right! My couturier takes hours over the smallest detail!

KING You'd never know – *[The QUEEN gives him a 'look'. HE quickly continues.]* – how hard she works!

QUEEN Quite!

FREDERICK Try again.

[MARCO tries another verse.]

MARCO Er – um....
Change, reverse, return, restore.
Let this box be as it was before.

[The curtain is pulled back by FREDERICK. The GIRL has disappeared. A MAN steps out from the ENSEMBLE.]

MAN Hey! What have you done with my wife?

MARCO *[Looking in the box.]* I don't understand.....

FREDERICK *[Whispering to MARCO.]* The 'box before' was empty!!

QUEEN *[To FREDERICK.]* I think your friend is a bit of a charlatan. Don't you agree, Crotchet?

KING Well – I – think.....

QUEEN There we are then! *[To MARCO.]* You better pack up and leave the Palace.

FREDERICK Wait please. He's my friend.

QUEEN Sorry dear boy, the King has spoken!

KING Have I?

QUEEN Yes dear. You were quite magnanimous!

[SHE exits, followed by the KING. The ENSEMBLE starts to leave, jeering at MARCO. MARINA goes to FREDERICK.]

MARINA I'll go and see if I can change mother's mind.

MARCO I'm so sorry to ruin your party, your highness.

MARINA It hasn't been ruined. It's been a wonderful day. *[Holding up her golden ball.]* And I have my lovely present to keep me safe. *[To FREDERICK.]* Wait for me. *[SHE exits.]*

MARCO Oh Fredo, I can't think what happened to my book. I'm sure I had it with me when I was getting ready.

FREDERICK It must be here somewhere. Let's go and look for it.

[THEY exit as NARDIA and GERDA enter.]

GERDA Oh Nardia, that was terrible. The poor man. And all because you have his book of spells.

NARDIA Forget about him. In here is bound to be what I need to make my plan work. *[SHE opens the book and starts to look through the spells.]* Now let's see. Here's one. 'The quick aging spell'. Marina would become old and grey in a matter of weeks!

GERDA That's so cruel, Nardia. I won't let you do anything to cousin Marina. *[SHE looks in the book.]* Oh, that's an interesting one. 'How to turn everything pink!' I do like pink. It's my favourite colour.

NARDIA It would be like living in an enormous blancmange! *[She continues turning pages.]* There must be something I can use. What's this. 'How to conjure a rabbit'. 'How to conjure a rat'.

BOTH Errrr!

NARDIA They're no good at all. *[SHE turns another page.]* Ah, here we are. 'Romantic rhymes and cherished charms.' There must be something amongst this lot. *[SHE reads off various headings.]* Fall in love. Fall out of love! Find the right

man – I know who that is, I just want him to ‘find’ me! Ah here we are. “The spell to turn someone’s affections to only you”.

GERDA Oh, Nardia. Are you sure you should be doing this? You’ve never dabbled in sorcery before.

NARDIA There’s a first time for everything. Besides, what is there to lose? With this I get the Prince, the crown and the power! *[SHE laughs evilly and get an audience reaction.]* Oh, be quiet. This has got nothing to do with you – day-trippers! *[SHE continues reading.]* “When recited in the presence of two people it will work instantly.” I’ll stand here as Prince Frederick comes down that corridor and you recite the spell.

GERDA *[Horried.]* Me? Oh Nardia, I couldn’t.

NARDIA You have to. I want to be found waiting for him.

GERDA What is the spell?

NARDIA *[Reading.]* “On this day and for eternity, I charge you to fall in love with the next person you see.” There! Nothing to it.

GERDA What if something went wrong? Or someone found out?

NARDIA Nothing will go wrong. Hide yourself behind one of those pillars *[SHE points up stage.]* And when Frederick comes down that corridor, cast the spell and leave the rest to me. *[Gives GERDA the book.]*

FREDERICK *[Off stage.]* I’ll go back and have a good look around in there.

NARDIA He’s coming. Quick, go and hide yourself.

GERDA But my glasses. I can’t see to read the print without them.

NARDIA You don’t need them. It’s perfectly easy to see. The third spell down from the top of the page. Now quickly. *[SHE gives GERDA a push towards the pillar. GERDA bumps into it and drops the book.]*

GERDA Oh dear!

NARDIA You clumsy idiot. *[SHE picks the book up and thrusts it back at GERDA.]* Here. Third one from the top. Quick, he’s almost here.

[GERDA partly hides behind the pillar. NARDIA crosses down stage acting all sweetness and light!]

SPELL AND SCENE CHANGE MUSIC

GERDA *[Reading with a shaky voice.]*
“From deepest lake and slimy bog,

Turn that man into a frog!"

NARDIA *[Screaming.]* What?? *[GERDA also screams and clasps her hand over her mouth trying to push the words back.]* That's the wrong page!! *[SHE looks off stage.]* And look what you've done to the Prince!

[GERDA lets out a wail in horror of what she sees.]

Come on.

[THEY both exit left. The FROG PRINCE jumps on stage down right.]

FROG P Croak!

[The lights black out and the scene changes to....]

SCENE 3 A CORRIDOR IN THE PALACE

[Front cloth depicting a corridor in the Palace. MARCO backs on from down right - the same side the FROG PRINCE jumped on at the end of the previous scene.]

MARCO Hey Fredo, I'm just going to look down this corridor. *[HE keeps looking off.]* Now where has he got to?

[The LORD CHAMBERLAIN enters down left.]

LORD/CH Can I be of assistance? *[MARCO turns.]* Oh, it's you. I thought you were told to leave.

MARCO Ah, well. I think Princess Marina has got me a bit of a reprieve. We did manage to find that poor girl who disappeared.

LORD/CH Yes – in the shrubbery, shivering with cold. She's had to borrow one of the Queen's gowns as hers had evaporated!

MARCO Oh, the poor thing!! I will make amends and make sure she gets her dress back when I find my book. You haven't seen it have you?

LORD/CH No. But if you have lost it and it's fallen into the wrong hands.....

MARCO I'm sure that won't happen.

LORD/CH All I'm saying is – be it on your own head if it does! *[HE exits left, haughtily.]*

MARCO A proper ray of sunshine! *[There is a 'croak' from off stage.]* What on earth was that?

[The FROG PRINCE enters down right.]

What on earth.... Where did you come from?

FROG P Marco, it's me!

MARCO Good lord. It talks!

FROG P It's me, Frederick.

MARCO Fredo?

FROG P Yes.

MARCO I say. That's a great disguise. But I didn't know we were having a costume party!

FROG P We're not. This is me!!

MARCO You mean you really are a frog?

FROG P Looks like it.

MARCO But what happened to you?

FROG P I've no idea. I left you to go and look for your book and the next thing I'm like this - and desperate for a drink of water!

MARCO So the Lord Chamberlain was right!

FROG P Right about what?

MARCO Someone has got hold of the book and cast a spell!

FROG P I did hear someone muttering something just before it happened.

MARCO This is terrible.

FROG P You don't have to tell me! We must find your book so you can perform a reversal spell.

MARCO Finding the book won't solve this problem.

FROG P What do you mean?

MARCO Reversal spells are not in the book. They are special potions or actions. I shall have to find out which to use on you – and that could take time.

FROG P So what am I going to do? And what will Marina say when she sees me like this?

MARCO We must hide you. *[Thinks.]* There's an old well in the palace garden. Hide in there and if you're seen no one will think anything of it. I'll tell Marina that you have been called back to Beautora on urgent affairs of state and will be back soon.

FROG P Alright. But you better find out how to get me back to human form.

MARCO I have some other books on in my room. I'll see if there's anything in there I can use. I'll meet you at the well. You better go now before you're spotted.

FROG P Be as quick as you can. *[As HE exits down right, he lets out a 'croak'.]*

MARCO *[Calling after him.]* Shh... keep your – croak down! *[HE paces.]* Oh, what a dilemma. How could I have been so stupid to have lost my book?

[MARINA enters from down left.]

MARINA Hello Marco. Who are you talking to?

MARCO *[Startled at seeing her.]* Oh – er – no one. Myself! Often do it. Always guaranteed to have a sensible conversation!! *[HE laughs feebly.]*

MARINA I see. Do you know where Prince Frederick is?

MARCO *[Without thinking.]* He's by the well.

MARINA By the well?

MARCO *[Covering what he said.]* Er – um - By now he's *well* on his way back to Beautora

MARINA Back to Beautora - without saying goodbye?

MARCO It was very sudden. Fredo was called away on very important business. Matter of life and death! Said he wouldn't be long and not to worry.

MARINA What could have been so urgent that he had to leave straight away?

MARCO Um – an – um – an epidemic.

MARINA Epidemic?

MARCO Yes of – er -frogs! Thousands of them all over the place. The whole country has turned green! Had to meet the council representative for the environment to sort it out.

MARINA Surely someone could get rid of a few frogs!

MARCO These were a special type of frog. Endangered species. Have to rescue them and turn them back to human very quickly.

MARINA Back to human?

MARCO Back to a humane area, where they will be safe.

MARINA This is all very odd. *[Slightly panicked.]* You don't think he has left me? Decided he doesn't want to marry me after all?

MARCO Not at all, your highness. Old Fredo is madly in love with you. Talks about you all the time.

MARINA Well if you're sure.

- MARCO Positive. Nothing to worry about. Just a minor hiccup. Happens all the time! It'll all be fine when I find the book!
- MARINA What?
- MARCO Why not go and *look* for all your friends and guests. They'll be wondering where the birthday girl is!
- MARINA Yes, you're right. I hope Frederick won't be away too long.
- MARCO Oh he'll have to come up for air sometime.
- [MARINA looks quizzically at MARCO, who smiles and waves. SHE exits down left.]*
- QUEEN *[Off right.]* Come on, Crotchet.
- MARCO Oh, here's the Queen coming. I can't face her asking me questions, I'm in her bad books already.
- [HE quickly exits down left as QUEEN and KING enter down right.]*
- QUEEN *[Waving.]* Hello! *[Audience responds.]* Well isn't this a splendid evening. Aren't you enjoying yourself?
- KING Me, I – er
- QUEEN *[To the audience.]* You see, he's quite the party animal! Now then before we go any further, I want to check on the arrangements for those three late-comers. The Lord Chamberlain has sorted their rooms out. I hope they will be alright
- KING Yes dear. *[HE has wandered off the subject again.]* I don't think I know them?
- (PLEASE NOTE: For the purpose of clarity, when the names of the people referred to in the next sequence, they are in Bold type.)*
- QUEEN Oh, you do. They have those really strange names. **Mr Who, Mr What and Mr I Don't Know.** *[SHE looks at the KING]* Are you listening?
- KING *[Not really paying attention.]* Oh – er - Yes, my love.
- QUEEN Good! Pay attention. **Who** is in the blue room, **What** is in the red room and **I Don't Know** is in the green room.
- KING *[Vaguely.]* Lovely. What are their names?
- QUEEN I've just told you. **Who** is in the blue room, **What** is in the red room, **I don't Know** is in the green room.
- KING Yes, but you know their names?
- QUEEN Yes
- KING Well then, who's in the blue room?
- QUEEN Yes

KING I mean the man's name.

QUEEN **Who.**

KING In the blue room.

QUEEN **Who.**

KING *[Raising his voice slightly.]* In the blue room

QUEEN **Who** is in the blue room

KING Why are you asking, my dear?

QUEEN I'm not asking you, I'm telling you. **Who** is in the blue room.

KING That's what I'm asking you. Who's in the blue room?

QUEEN That's the man's name!

KING That's who's name?

QUEEN Yes

KING *[Trying to humour her.]* Go on then, tell me.

QUEEN **Who.**

KING The man's name in the blue room.

QUEEN *[Shouting.]* **Who!**

KING There is a man in the blue room?

QUEEN Yes

KING What's the man's name in the blue room?

QUEEN No, no, no, **What's** the man's name in the red room!

KING I didn't think we were talking about who's in the red room.

QUEEN **Who** is in the blue room!

KING That's what I'm trying to find out.

QUEEN Look! Will you stop changing the rooms around.

KING I didn't know I was!

QUEEN It's perfectly simple. **Who, What, I Don't Know.**

KING What's the man's name in the blue room.

QUEEN No, **What's** the man's name in the red room.

KING I didn't ask who's in the red room.

QUEEN **Who's** in the blue room!

KING I don't know

QUEEN He's in the green room. We're not talking about him

KING I – er – I'm sorry my dear, but how did we get to the green room?