

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

an adaptation of the Mark Twain classic
dramatized by Dan Neidermyer

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STORY OF THE PLAY

An exciting American classic about two very different English youths: one a prince, the other a pauper; one accustomed to royal finery, the other knows only rags; one has many servants, the other is a beggar in the streets.

Yet both are the same age, same height, same build, same hair color, even very similar temperaments. In fact, so much alike are the two, both boys laughingly decide to try on each other's clothes and for a few moments find themselves daydreaming about "being the other."

For a fun moment, the pauper makes believe he's the prince and the prince, the pauper. Suddenly, the unthinkable happens! The prince, dressed as the pauper, is rather unceremoniously thrown out of the palace by the zealous guards charged to protect him!

Now on the streets of London, the prince fights to prove he's not a pauper while back in the palace, the pauper tries to prove he's not the prince as the "pauper-prince's" impending coronation as "King of England" comes closer and closer everyday!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(10M, 7F plus as many extras as desired)

TOM CANTY - A kindly young beggar from the streets of London who dreams of being a prince

EDWARD TUTOR - The strong and most determined young Prince of Wales who dreams of spending one day as a common youth

SARAH - Shrewish hag who troubles Tom daily

BET - A sister to Tom and twin of Nan

LORD HERTFORD - Lord Protector of the future king of England

JOHN CANTY - Tom's harsh and mean father

LADY JANE GREY - Young and gracious cousin of Edward

LADY ELIZABETH - Edward's sister and true friend

MILES HENDON - The valiant rescuer of Edward

GUARD - The man-at-arms of the king's palace

TOWN CRIER - The herald and chief means of spreading news throughout medieval London

PEASANT - An honest poor soul with a grievance for the new king

LOUIS - A street ragamuffin

CHELSEA - A street urchin who hangs with Louis and Gina

GINA - Another of the countless children of the streets

HERMIT - An aged and very weird subject of the king

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY - crowns the kings of England

NOTE: All roles with the possible exception of Tom Canty, Edward Tutor, Miles Hendon, and the Archbishop of Canterbury can be played by women. Doubling is also possible.

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

TIME: Mid-1500s

PLACE: Throughout medieval London

ACT ONE

Scene 1: A street in London

Scene 2: Private gardens encircling the palace of
King Henry VIII

Scene 3: A street in London

Scene 4: A room in the palace

Scene 5: Near Pudding Lane, Offal Court, London

Scene 6: A street in London

ACT TWO

Scene 1: Private gardens encircling the palace of King
Henry VIII

Scene 2: A street in London

Scene 3: A grand cathedral

PROPS

Sarah - broom

Miles - rope

Hermit - some sort of weapon

Guard - satin pillow, Great Seal of England

Archbishop - crown

SOUND EFFECTS

Trumpet fanfare

Trumpet fanfare

ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: A street in London. From the rear of the house, a ragged TOM CANTY moves among the audience, begging.)

TOM: Please, sir...please, ma'am...a penny, just a farthing.
Please, sir...please, ma'am...a penny, just a farthing. My mother, my two sisters, my grandmum, we're not doing very well...please, sir...please, ma'am...a penny, just a far--

SARAH: *(Enters, broom in raised hand.)* Get away from here, beggar! What'd'ya think ye're doing here? Disturbing everyone I see.

TOM: I'm only asking--

SARAH: Begging, that's what you're doing! Begging!

TOM: I'm hungry.

SARAH: Begging's against the law! No matter what. You know that, you little street urchin.

TOM: Is being hungry against the law too?

SARAH: *(Brandishing her broom)* It is around here. Now away from my doorstep!

TOM: Please--

SARAH: *(Hurrying toward HIM, swinging HER broom.)* Off with you!

TOM: No! No! *(A chase ensues.)*

SARAH: I'll teach you a lesson, you little beggar! Always yelling 'nd shouting 'nd begging around my house! Ye're a disgrace! That's what ye are!

TOM: I was only trying to get something to eat!

SARAH: Work for it!

TOM: Where?

SARAH: Why should I care?

(BET enters.)

BET: Tom! Tom Canty! Get you home!

TOM: But I've got nothing!

BET: Then ye'll get a beating for sure tonight.

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TOM: Some life! I'm beat now for begging something. I'm
beat later for coming home with nothing.

SARAH: Get away from here! NOW!

BET: Get you home, Tom! NOW!

*(The chase continues for a few moments. TOM is cornered
by both SARAH and BET several times, but escapes running
offstage.)*

SARAH: Get back here! You little scoundrel!

BET: Get back here! Brother! *(As SARAH and BET rush
offstage, TOM enters from another area. To Audience:)*

TOM: Some life, isn't it? Can't win for trying! Not even one
day. I mean what am I supposed to do? My father, such
as he is, throws me out of the house early every morning,
growling, "Tom, I'm warnin' ya, ya better bring home
somethin' for yer sisters, yer mother, yer grandmum, 'nd
me to eat tonight, or ye won't be sittin' down much for the
next two weeks." I go looking for jobs, little jobs a kid my
age could do, but--'nd I won't go a-thievin' 'cause no way
am I a thief of any kind, of anything. So, no little jobs, no
thievin', there's only--*(SARAH and BET rush on-stage.)*

SARAH: Think you can run away from me, do ya?

BET: Father's in a terrible fit, Tom! He's lashing out at
everyone!

TOM: I can't go home empty-handed! 'Nd I can't stay here!
(Runs off)

SARAH: Life will not go well with you, ya little dirty-faced
imp! Now stay away from here!

BET: Father's making life terrible for everyone at home!
Hurry, Tom, find us some food! *(SARAH and BET follow
HIM, offstage.)*

End of Scene 1

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Private gardens surrounding the palace of King Henry VIII. EDWARD TUTOR, sits impatiently, being taught by his uncle, LORD HERTFORD.)

LORD HERTFORD: Please, Your Highness, you must keep your attention on the matters of state. Now concerning the

French ambassador's appointment with you this afternoon--
EDWARD: I don't care to see the French ambassador this afternoon. Or any afternoon next week. Or any day for the next 100 years. Tell him not to come.

LORD HERTFORD: You must see him, Your Highness.

EDWARD: Why?

LORD HERTFORD: Forgive me, Your Highness, but as your father, the King, grows more gravely ill, you must surely become better acquainted with those with whom you will deal as head of state when you become king.

EDWARD: King! When I become king. And when will I become king?

LORD HERTFORD: With all due respects to your father, Your Highness, it could be quite soon.

EDWARD: I don't want to become king quite soon.

LORD HERTFORD: I understand, Your Highness, your feelings for your father.

EDWARD: My feelings for myself. I'll soon become a king when I've not ever really even been a boy yet. Why can't I be a boy first? When will I ever be just a boy?

LORD HERTFORD: You are the Prince of Wales. You have certain responsibilities--

EDWARD: I never asked to be the Prince of Wales!

LORD HERTFORD: Surely what you say, Your Highness--

EDWARD: Edward, my name is "Edward." Call me "Edward." I'm a person.

LORD HERTFORD: *(With a slight bow.)* Surely what you say, Edward, is true. You never asked to be either the Prince of Wales or the future King of England. God has appointed you to lead our kingdom in matters of state.

End of Freeview

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