

SCENE ONE

*Trumpet fanfare.*

FICKLEFRED Good morning, kingdom! Good morning, castle! *(looks in hand-mirror)* Good morning, King Ficklefred! You're looking hip and fashionable as usual. *(to audience)* And good morning to all of you! How nice of you to visit my almost-perfect kingdom.

*PRINCESS BUNNYHOP crosses stage.*

FICKLEFRED Good morning, Princess Bunnyhop!

BUNNYHOP What's so good about it?

FICKLEFRED What's so good about it? Princess Bunnyhop, have you forgotten that I am a king? What could be groovier than being a king? I get to wear a crown, live in a castle, and look at this magnificent kingdom I have!

BUNNYHOP This kingdom's a drag if you ask me.

FICKLEFRED No kingdom is perfect. But my kingdom is almost perfect. Observe all the loyal subjects I have. They adore me! *(pointing offstage)* Here come some of my loyal subjects now. *(calling offstage)* Good morning, loyal subjects!

*(from offstage, rotten tomatoes are thrown at FICKLEFRED)*

FICKLEFRED My loyal subjects appear to be throwing rotten tomatoes at me.

BUNNYHOP How clever of you to notice.

FICKLEFRED No matter. It must be some sort of new, trendy greeting. I'm sure they meant it in the nicest possible way.

BUNNYHOP Are you sure about that?

FICKLEFRED Of course I'm sure. *(to offstage subjects)* Thank you, loyal subjects, for all these ripe and succulent tomatoes! I shall cherish them always! After all, I am your king!

*Loud booing from subjects.*

FICKLEFRED Would you listen to that? My loyal subjects have made up a lovely chant to show their admiration for me! *(to subjects)* Yes! Boo to all of you too! I love you all! *(blows subjects a kiss)*

BUNNYHOP You know something, King Ficklefred? You're weird. *(exits)*

FICKLEFRED *(picking up a tomato)* Mmmmm. Tomatoes. And so many of them. Maybe I could bring these to my royal chef so he can bake me an almost-perfect, rotten tomato pie. *(taking a strong whiff of tomato and making an exaggerated grimace)* Ah! nothing like the aroma of rotten tomatoes...*(bursts into tears)* Who am I kidding? My loyal subjects hate me! They all hate me! How can I be the most loved worshipped king when everyone keeps hating me? How? How? How?

*FOO FOO the jester enters. He has a perpetual, blank look on his face and he always speaks in a monotone.*

FOO FOO Do I sense unhappiness in this room?

FICKLEFRED Have you come to throw rotten tomatoes at me too?

FOO FOO *(still blank and expressionless)* No. I have come to fill your day with glee. It is I... Foo Foo the hilarious, court jester. *(maintaining blankness and monotony, he does a silly dance)* I can sniff out a sad person from miles away. I sniffed and sniffed and my nostrils led me here.

FICKLEFRED It could have been these rotten tomatoes you smelled.

FOO FOO Humour me. I'm working here.

FICKLEFRED So sorry.

FOO FOO That's okay. Now then. I am sensing that you need some cheering up.

FICKLEFRED I sure do! You see, my loyal subjects threw rotten tomatoes at me and...

FOO FOO That's not my problem. My job is to put a smile on your face and a giggle in your heart. That's why they call me Foo Foo...the hilarious, court jester.

FICKLEFRED I don't think anything could cheer me up right now.

FOO FOO Trust me. I'm a professional. *(without expression, he throws confetti on the audience)*

FICKLEFRED I suppose you could give it a try.

FOO FOO I am about to tell a joke.

FICKLEFRED Go ahead.

FOO FOO I'm warning you, this joke is extremely funny.

FICKLEFRED The funnier the better.

FOO FOO Are you sure you can handle the hilariousness of the joke I am about to tell?

FICKLEFRED Foo Foo! Please! Just tell the joke!

FOO FOO *(taking out quill and paper)* Sign this.

FICKLEFRED What's this?

FOO FOO A waiver.

FICKLEFRED Why do I have to sign a waiver?

FOO FOO The joke I am about to tell is arguably the funniest joke in the world. You will laugh very hard and might explode. If this happens, I do not want to be held liable.

FICKLEFRED            Just tell the joke, Foo Foo!

FOO FOO                Okay. Ask me if I am a tree.

FICKLEFRED            Are you a tree?

FOO FOO                No.

FICKLEFRED            That was the joke?

FOO FOO                Why aren't you laughing?

FICKLEFRED            It wasn't funny.

FOO FOO                What do you mean it wasn't funny? I amused myself so much I gave myself a cramp.

FICKLEFRED            Foo Foo, you haven't told one funny joke since I hired you ten years ago. You are a drag. A flop. A disgrace to jesters everywhere.

FOO FOO                *(still expressionless)* Please, please, oh pretty please, King Ficklefred. Allow me to prove myself hilarious. I will tell you a knock-knock joke. I will create a poodle from an orange balloon. I will roll myself in peanut butter and sing showtunes. Or perhaps you would like to see me do my Stevie Wonder impersonation.

FICKLEFRED            Foo Foo! Read my lips! You are not funny.

BUNNYHOP              *(entering)* I think he's hilarious.

FICKLEFRED            What!

FOO FOO                Told ya.

BUNNYHOP              He's funny, he's brilliant and he's absolutely adorable!

FOO FOO                *(still without expression, hands BUNNYHOP a bouquet of flowers)* These are for you, Princess Bunnyhop.

BUNNYHOP              *(after flowers squirt her in the face)* Oh, Foo Foo! These are the kind of flowers that squirt you in the face! They are my favourite! *(gives FOO FOO a kiss on the cheek)*

FOO FOO                *(no emotion)* Oh gosh. Oh shucks. I think I am going to blush.

FICKLEFRED            Wait a minute. Am I missing something here?

BUNNYHOP              Isn't it obvious? I am in love with Foo Foo the hilarious, court jester.

FICKLEFRED            You can't be in love with Foo Foo!

BUNNYHOP              Why not?

FICKLEFRED            Because Foo Foo is a jester and you are a princess!

BUNNYHOP              So what's your point?

FICKLEFRED            Princesses are supposed to fall in love with princes. Not jesters. I mean, Foo Foo isn't even funny!

BUNNYHOP He is so funny! Foo Foo is a barrel of monkeys!

FOO FOO She did not mean that in the literal sense.

FICKLEFRED What about that nice prince I picked out for you?

BUNNYHOP Prince Boring from Mundane Mountain?

FICKLEFRED He's a charming fellow. Why not fall in love with him?

BUNNYHOP Pah-lease! Prince Boring is...well...he's boring.

FICKLEFRED Princess Bunnyhop! I beg you! Stop being in love with Foo Foo! It's not normal for a princess not to marry a prince! It's different! It's embarrassing! My loyal subjects will make fun of me!

BUNNYHOP Oh, King Ficklefred. You shouldn't worry about your loyal subjects making fun of you.

FICKLEFRED I shouldn't?

BUNNYHOP Of course not. Your loyal subjects have been making fun of you for years. They think you are a complete goon. It won't make a difference one way or the other that I am in love with a jester.

*FICKLEFRED bursts into tears.*

FOO FOO He's crying again. How depressing.

FICKLEFRED It's just not fair! Why do my loyal subjects keep making fun of me!

FOO FOO Because you're weird. Here. Have a hankie.

*FOO FOO hands FICKLEFRED a gag hankie that becomes a long chain of multiple hankies tied together. FICKLEFRED pulls them out of FOO FOO's pocket as he laments.*

FICKLEFRED I am not weird! I am a very nice king! Sure, my kingdom is not entirely perfect, but that isn't my fault. Is it? Is it?

BUNNYHOP I can't take any more of King Ficklefred's crying. Come on, Foo Foo. Let's go admire your rubber chicken collection.

*FOO FOO and BUNNYHOP exit.*

FICKLEFRED I must pull myself together. I am a king and kings are not supposed to cry. I have to be a grown-up about all this. I mean, it's not the end of the world, right? My kingdom isn't perfect, but it's almost perfect. Perhaps I should call my almost-perfect minstrels. They can sing me a song. Oh! How happy that would make me! Music makes everyone happy! Minstrels! Come here at once!

*MINSTRELS hurry in.*

MINSTRELS Tah-dah!

FICKLEFRED Minstrels, a song.

GEORGE A song?

IRA A song!

GEORGE That would be splendid!

IRA Yes, splendid!

GEORGE Tell us, King Ficklefred. What song will you be singing for us today?

FICKLEFRED I'm not singing anything, you fop. That's your job.

GEORGE My job?

IRA Mine too?

FICKLEFRED Yes, yours too. You are minstrels and minstrels sing.

IRA He wants us to sing, George. What do you think of that?

GEORGE I don't know, Ira. I thought we were the gardeners.

FICKLEFRED Just sing already! Play a tune on your mandolin and sing a song for me!

GEORGE My mandolin!

IRA Yes, yes. The mandolin! Excellent idea! Go ahead, George. Play your mandolin.

*GEORGE strums on a badminton racquet. For obvious reasons, no noise is heard.*

GEORGE Something seems to be wrong with my mandolin.

IRA Whatever could be wrong with your mandolin, George?

GEORGE I haven't the foggiest idea, Ira. When I strum, it makes no music.

IRA Perhaps your mandolin is defective, George. Did you hold on to the receipt?

FICKLEFRED Wait a minute, wait a minute. George, that is not a mandolin. That is a badminton racquet.

GEORGE Badminton? Oh, that does sound like fun, doesn't it, Ira?

IRA It sure does, George.

GEORGE Do you have a racquet too, Ira? Perhaps we can play a few games.

IRA What a co-incidence! I just happen to have a badminton racquet with me right now.

GEORGE           Marvelous!

IRA                What are we waiting for, then?

*MINSTRELS play badminton.*

FICKLEFRED      *(dodging birdie)* Hold it... What the... You guys... Wait... This isn't... Now cut that out!

GEORGE           Oh my. It seems we've upset the king, Ira.

IRA                I believe you're right, George.

GEORGE           How terribly selfish of us.

IRA                Yes, yes. Dreadfully selfish.

FICKLEFRED      That's more like it.

IRA                *(handing FICKLEFRED a racquet)* Would you like a turn, King Ficklefred?

FICKLEFRED      No, I would not like a turn! What I want is a song!

GEORGE           A song?

IRA                A song?

BOTH             A song!

IRA                But what song should we sing?

GEORGE           How about that song we sang in that place there that one time? You know the one?

IRA                Oh, George! That is my favourite song! Let's sing it!

GEORGE           Yes, let's.

IRA                *(to audience)* But we'll need all of you to help us.

GEORGE           *(to audience)* Yes. We'll need you to clap your hands like this. *(demonstrates)* Can you do that?  
*(encourages audience to clap)* Excellent clapping!

IRA                We need some good clappers. You see, George and I have no sense of rhythm. Isn't that right, George?

GEORGE           Tragic but true, Ira. It's a good thing we have all these people here today who can help us keep rhythm with their clapping.

IRA                We'll need back-up singers too, George.

GEORGE           Good idea, Ira. *(to audience)* You can be our back-up singers. When I point to you, everyone go, "Shoo boop dee doo." Go ahead. Try it. *(points and leads them in chant)* One more time. *(points again)* Very good.

FICKLEFRED      Would you two just sing the song before I become an old man?

IRA Yes, yes. Now would most definitely be a good time to begin the song. Wouldn't you agree, George?

GEORGE Absolutely, Ira. Everyone, you may begin clapping...now.

*While the audience and FICKLEFRED clap, GEORGE and IRA sing ...off key, in no tune in particular.*

IRA Why, oh why don't penguins fly?  
Why don't worms have any feet?  
I wonder if they want to cry,  
Because they can't walk down the street.

GEORGE *(points to audience)* Shoo boop dee doo.

IRA Alack! Alack! A cow won't quack!  
Unless a duck can teach him how.  
But if you moo, he'll moo right back.  
For that's the language of a cow.

GEORGE *(points to audience)* Shoo boop dee doo.

IRA Well, well, well, what is that smell?  
A skunk! A skunk has come for tea!  
I wonder if he thinks he stinks,  
Or if he thinks that stink is me!

GEORGE *(points to audience)* Shoo boop dee doo.

IRA Please, oh please, try not to sneeze,  
But if you must, then plug your nose.  
A sneeze might scare my puppy's fleas,  
And then they'll jump into your clothes.

GEORGE *(points to audience)* Shoo boop dee doo.

IRA Hey, you! Yes, you! I've lost my shoe.  
A chicken took it from my foot.  
But I don't know what chickens do,  
With shoes they take from...

FICKLEFRED Stop! Stop! Everybody stop your clapping! Stop your shoo boop dee dooing! And George and Ira, stop singing that ridiculous song!

IRA Ridiculous?

GEORGE I thought the shoo boop dee dooing was a nice touch.

FICKLEFRED Yes, yes. The shoo boop dee dooing was magnificent and so was the clapping. But the song made no sense and your singing was completely off key and unmusical.

IRA I thought the singing was superlative. Especially considering that George and I are completely tone deaf.

FICKLEFRED Tone deaf? How can you manage to have no sense of rhythm AND be completely tone deaf?

GEORGE            We are quite talented in that regard.

FICKLEFRED        Of all the kings in all the kingdoms in all the world, why did I have to be the one with two tone deaf minstrels?

IRA                You're just lucky, I suppose.

FICKLEFRED        Out! Both of you are an embarrassment! Out! Out! Out!

GEORGE            Shall we let ourselves out, Ira?

IRA                Splendid idea, George. Then what shall we do?

GEORGE            How about a game of badminton?

IRA                Oh, that would be fun, wouldn't it?

*Exit GEORGE and IRA.*

FICKLEFRED        How embarrassing! To think, I have two tone deaf minstrels with no sense of rhythm. Oh well. There must be something perfect in my almost-perfect kingdom. Maybe I should go for a walk in my almost-perfect garden and admire my almost-perfect geraniums. Or maybe I could teach my almost-perfect pet parrot to speak in almost-perfect sentences. Or I could go fishing in my almost-perfect pond and catch an almost-perfect trout. No, wait! I know what I can do to cheer myself up! I'll hoist the giant flag I have with the picture of my face on it! Yes! That's it! I'll hoist it on top of this almost-perfect hill so that all of my kingdom can see it and remember what a wonderful king I am!

*FICKLEFRED hoists the flag. When he does, he notices that it is not a flag at all. It is a pair of his polka-dotted underpants.*

FICKLEFRED        Oh no! That isn't a flag! That is a pair of my polka-dotted underpants waving high in the air for all the kingdom to see! How embarrassing! I'll bet my loyal subjects are behind this! (*facing the wings*) Alright! Which one of you loyal subjects is responsible for replacing my flag with my polka-dotted underpants? (*tomatoes are thrown at FICKLEFRED from offstage*) Rotten tomatoes? Is it totally necessary for you to throw rotten tomatoes at me all the time? (*avocados are thrown at FICKLEFRED from offstage*) Rotten avocados? Thank you. That's much better.

*BUNNYHOP runs onto the stage, screaming.*

FICKLEFRED        What is it, Princess Bunnyhop? Why are you screaming?

BUNNYHOP         Oh! King Ficklefred! It's the dragon! He's chasing me!

FICKLEFRED        The dragon, you say? Might that be the dragon with the disgusting, garlic breath that makes everyone keel over and gag?

BUNNYHOP         Yes!

FICKLEFRED        You mean the big, purple dragon with the hairy tongue, the glow-in-the-dark eyeballs and the green, rotten teeth?

BUNNYHOP           The very one!

FICKLEFRED        You mean to say you saw the dragon who pulls temper tantrums when he's hungry, likes to chase innocent princesses for no apparent reason and who answers to the name of Floyd?

BUNNYHOP           That's the one!

FICKLEFRED        You mean the dragon who burps and doesn't say 'excuse me?'

BUNNYHOP           Yes, yes, yes!

FICKLEFRED        The dragon with the terrifying roar who apparently has no sense of humour?

BUNNYHOP           King Ficklefred, this kingdom only has one dragon.

FICKLEFRED        Just double checking.

BUNNYHOP           Oh, King Ficklefred! Whatever shall we do!

FICKLEFRED        Never fear, Princess Bunnyhop. There is one way to scare away Floyd the dragon. And this is the only way to do it.

BUNNYHOP           Tell me! Please!

FICKLEFRED        We can't do it by ourselves. *(pointing to audience)* We'll need our friends here to help us.

BUNNYHOP           *(to audience)* Listen carefully to King Ficklefred. We need your help to scare away the dragon.

FICKLEFRED        *(to audience)* Everybody put your thumbs in your ears and say, "Inketty, binketty, stinketty BOO!" Can you do that?

BUNNYHOP           *(to audience)* The dragon's coming closer! Say it again everybody, and don't forget to stick your thumbs in your ears! Come on! Inketty, binketty, stinketty BOO!

*Loud roar from offstage.*

FICKLEFRED        Ugh-oh. Here comes Floyd the dragon.

BUNNYHOP           Maybe we're not saying it loud enough. The dragon might not be able to hear us over his loud roar.

FICKLEFRED        Good point. *(to audience)* Okay, everyone. We need you to be as loud as you can. That dragon is practically deaf from all that roaring he does. He needs to hear us. Ready, go! Inketty, binketty, stinketty, BOO!

BUNNYHOP           *(to audience)* I think we need to be even louder than that! And remember, it doesn't work unless you stick your thumbs in your ears. Let's try it again. Inketty, binketty, stinketty, BOO!

*Loud roar from offstage.*

FICKLEFRED        *(to audience)* One more time ought to do it. Let's try it again, everyone! As loud as you can! Inketty, binketty, stinketty, BOO!

*Loud roar from offstage.*

BUNNYHOP           It worked! Look, King Ficklefred! it really worked! The dragon is running away!

FICKLEFRED        *(to audience)* Thank you, everyone. You saved Princess Bunnyhop from the dragon.

BUNNYHOP           What a relief!

FICKLEFRED        Don't get too excited, Princess Bunnyhop. The dragon is bound to return sooner or later.

BUNNYHOP           Oh no! Are you sure?

FICKLEFRED        He always does. But don't worry. My courageous knights will protect you from the dragon.

BUNNYHOP           What courageous knights?

*Enter KNIGHTS. They are stuffing their faces with food.*

FICKLEFRED        These courageous knights.

BUNNYHOP           King Ficklefred, these are not courageous knights. These are the Knights of the Picnic Table.

FICKLEFRED        Yes. The Knights of the Picnic Table are the bravest knights in all the kingdom.

BUNNYHOP           The Knights of the Picnic Table are the ONLY knights in all the kingdom.

FICKLEFRED        *(to audience)* Everyone, I would like to introduce you to my courageous knights. The Plaid Knight, the Polka-Dotted Knight and the Saturday Knight.

PLAID               The Saturday Knight isn't here.

FICKLEFRED        What do you mean the Saturday Knight isn't here?

POLKADOT          He only works weekends.

PLAID               Today's Wednesday.

FICKLEFRED        Fine. The Plaid Knight and the Polka-Dotted Knight. The Knights of the Picnic Table.

POLKADOT          That's us.

FICKLEFRED        Can you guys do me a favour?

PLAID               Can it wait 'til after lunch?

FICKLEFRED        I'm afraid not. You see, I need you to do something brave. Do you think you can do that?

PLAID               We're knights. It's our job to be brave.

POLKADOT          Right. I learned everything I know about bravery from my dear old dad, Richard the Chicken-Hearted.

FICKLEFRED        Terrific.

PLAID So what do you want us to do?

FICKLEFRED Well, there's this dragon and...

*KNIGHTS scream and hide.*

POLKADOT Where? What dragon?

PLAID I want my mommy!

POLKADOT Hide us, King Ficklefred!

FICKLEFRED Wait a minute. I thought you guys were supposed to be brave.

PLAID We're supposed to be, but we're not.

*Loud roar is heard offstage. KNIGHTS scream.*

PLAID Mommy!

POLKADOT That dragon ssssure ssssounds sssscary!

FICKLEFRED Oh, for Pete's sake. You guys should be ashamed of yourselves. And you call yourselves knights.

*Loud roar from offstage. KNIGHTS scream.*

FICKLEFRED Would you two just put down those turkey drumsticks and slay the dragon already?

*KNIGHTS tiptoe across the stage and timidly talk to the offstage dragon.*

POLKADOT Yoo hoo. Mr. Dragon.

PLAID It's us. The Knights of the Picnic Table.

POLKADOT Wwwwwe've come to sssslay you.

*Roar from offstage. KNIGHTS scream and run offstage. POLKADOT rushes back onstage, grabs the turkey drumstick, takes a bite out of one, and runs back offstage with them.*

FICKLEFRED How embarrassing.

BUNNYHOP I guess I'll have to slay the dragon myself.

FICKLEFRED            You can't slay the dragon. You're a princess. Princesses don't do things like that.

BUNNYHOP             Well, someone's got to do it. Those pathetic knights can't do anything but mow down on lunch...I have to do everything myself.

*Exit BUNNYHOP.*

FICKLEFRED            I am so embarrassed. What kind of a kingdom is this, anyway? My loyal subjects keep throwing things at me, the princess is in love with a jester who is not funny, I have two tone deaf minstrels with no sense of rhythm, my polka-dotted underpants are flying from the top of a flagpole where everyone can see them and my brave knights just ran away screaming like a couple of freaked out chickens. Can life get any more embarrassing?

*Enter SHAKESPEARE.*

SHAKESPEARE         Excuse me. Are you King Ficklefred?

FICKLEFRED            Unfortunately, yes. Now go away before someone else embarrasses me.

SHAKESPEARE         I don't think you understand. You see, I am William Shakespeare.

FICKLEFRED            Never heard of you.

SHAKESPEARE         I like to write plays.

FICKLEFRED            Good for you. You wouldn't by any chance like to slay dragons too, would you?

SHAKESPEARE         No.

FICKLEFRED            Can you tell jokes? Sing?

SHAKESPEARE         Sometimes. But I prefer to write plays. Especially plays about kings.

FICKLEFRED            What are you getting at, Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE         Well, I'd like to write a play about you. I was wondering if I could observe your kingdom and take some notes.

FICKLEFRED            That depends. Are you famous?

SHAKESPEARE         Extremely.

FICKLEFRED            If you write a play about my kingdom, will that make me famous too?

SHAKESPEARE         I guarantee it.

FICKLEFRED            In that case...Yes! Yes! Yes! Oh! Shakespeare! I would love for you to write a play about me!

SHAKESPEARE         I thought you might say that. I'll go get my notebook. Just remember, I'll be watching your every move for the next couple of days, so just be yourself.

FICKLEFRED            Be myself. I can do that. See you later, Shakespeare.

*Exit SHAKESPEARE.*

FICKLEFRED This is wonderful! At last people will love me because I'll have a famous play written about me! How exciting!... Wait a minute. My polka-dotted underpants are still flying from the flagpole. And my jester still isn't funny. My minstrels still don't know anything about music. Princess Bunnyhop still loves Foo Foo and not the prince. My knights are still afraid of dragons! Oh! What have I gotten myself into! I'm about to have a famous play written about me and soon the whole world will know how embarrassing my life is! I have to do something fast. I have about ten minutes before Shakespeare comes back with his notebook to observe me! That means I have ten minutes to make my kingdom perfect!

*Enter PRINCESS BUNNYHOP.*

FICKLEFRED Princess Bunnyhop! You have got to do me a HUGE favour! And I am talking humunga cowabunga huge! We've got major favourage happening here. And when I say huge, I mean this is the big enchilada of favours!

BUNNYHOP You know I'd do anything for you, King Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED Go to Mundane Mountain and pretend to be in love with Prince Boring.

BUNNYHOP Anything but that.

FICKLEFRED Please, Princess Bunnyhop! It's only for one afternoon!

BUNNYHOP The longest afternoon of my entire life!

FICKLEFRED If you do this teensy weensy favour for me, I'll let you stay up past your bedtime.

BUNNYHOP How long past my bedtime?

FICKLEFRED You don't have to go to bed at all until next Tuesday.

BUNNYHOP Make it Wednesday and you have a deal... But it's only for ONE afternoon.

FICKLEFRED Whatever.

*Exit BUNNYHOP. Enter FOO FOO.*

FICKLEFRED Foo Foo! Just the man I wanted to see. *(hands him a sack)* Here. Put these down your pants.

FOO FOO What is in this sack?

FICKLEFRED Lizards.

FOO FOO What reason would I have to put lizards down my pants?

FICKLEFRED It will help you to be funny.

FOO FOO *(still expressionless)* There is nothing comical about lizards. Leave the funny stuff to me, Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED           Just do it! Go, go, go.

*FOO FOO leaves with the sack of lizards. Enter MINSTRELS.*

FICKLEFRED           George! Ira! Come here for a minute.

GEORGE               Another song, your majesty?

FICKLEFRED           Not yet. *(hands them some sheet music)* First I want you to take this sheet music and practice this song over and over until you get it perfect.

IRA                    Practice?

GEORGE               Practice the song?

IRA                    Over and over?

GEORGE               Until we get it perfect?

IRA                    What a novel idea.

GEORGE               We've never tried that before.

IRA                    But that would require effort.

GEORGE               You are demanding a lot of us.

FICKLEFRED           I don't care how horrible you are after today. All I'm asking is that you sing well for one afternoon. Do you think you can do that? After today you can sing as badly as you want.

IRA                    We'll try, but we're not making any promises.

*Exit MINSTRELS.*

FICKLEFRED           What else do I have to fix?

*SUBJECTS throw tomatoes at FICKLEFRED from offstage.*

FICKLEFRED           Right. The loyal subjects. *(facing offstage)* Okay. I'm sensing that none of you like me very much. Here's the deal. If you all pretend to like me for just one afternoon, I will give each and every one of you a bag of jellybeans.

VOICE                *(from offstage)* Did you say jellybeans?

FICKLEFRED           Yes! Jellybeans! As many jellybeans as you want!

VOICE                And you promise that we only have to pretend to like you for one afternoon?

FICKLEFRED           Yes! After today you can go back to not liking me!

VOICE Well, okay. But this doesn't mean we like you!

FICKLEFRED *(to audience)* And I'll need your help too. I need Shakespeare to think I'm the best king in the world. Here's what I want you to do. When I say, "Who's the best king in the world," I'll point to you and you can all wave your hands in the air and cheer, "King Ficklefred! Hooray!" Let's try it. Who's the best king in the world? *(points to audience and encourages everyone to do the chant)* Magnificent! Let's try it again. Who's the best king in the world? *(points and waits for a response)* Wow! I almost believed you that time! I hope Shakespeare falls for it too.

*Loud roar from offstage. KNIGHTS scream and run onto the stage.*

PLAID Save us, King Ficklefred!

POLKADOT The dragon is after us again!

FICKLEFRED You're being silly. Stop it.

PLAID But King Ficklefred! The dragon is so scary!

POLKADOT I think I need some spaghetti and meatballs.

PLAID Yes. Spaghetti always cheers me up when I'm running away from dragons.

POLKADOT It's the carbohydrates. You see, when you're running away, spaghetti helps you to...

FICKLEFRED There will be no spaghetti for either of you!

POLKADOT What do you mean by that?

FICKLEFRED You are not allowed to have any snacks until you start acting brave.

PLAID King Ficklefred, don't joke about things like that.

FICKLEFRED I'm not joking.

POLKADOT But we're not brave.

FICKLEFRED I'm not telling you to be brave. I'm telling you to ACT brave.

PLAID I'm confused.

FICKLEFRED Look, just pretend that you are not afraid of anything. Imagine that the dragon is not big and scary and that you guys are the biggest, strongest knights who ever lived.

POLKADOT That sounds hard.

FICKLEFRED It's simple. Just go and practice grunting, flexing your muscles and making ugly faces. It will make you look much braver. If you do a good job, I'll give each of you a cheeseburger.

PLAID With pickles?

FICKLEFRED        With lots and lots of pickles.

POLKADOT         We must do it, Plaid Knight. We must be strong for the cheeseburgers.

PLAID              Oh fair and lovely cheeseburger! To thee I toss my gauntlet!

POLKADOT         We must go and defend the honour of cheeseburgers everywhere!

PLAID              I love you, cheeseburger!

*Exit KNIGHTS.*

FICKLEFRED        Isn't chivalry swell?

*Enter SHAKESPEARE.*

SHAKESPEARE     Okay, King Ficklefred. I'm back and I've brought my notebook.

FICKLEFRED        That is splendid, Shakespeare. I'm sure you'll find my kingdom to be as perfect as can be.

SHAKESPEARE     Sure. Whatever. I'm going to hide over here in this bush so I can observe you. Remember. Just be yourself.

FICKLEFRED        Of course I'll be myself. Who else would I be? Now then, who is the best king in the world? *(points to audience and encourages them to shout the chant)* I can't hear you! *(points again and waits for a response)* That's right. My kingdom is perfect in every way and everyone loves me! If you don't believe me, just ask my loyal subjects. *(to one side of the stage)* Good afternoon, loyal subjects! It's me! King Ficklefred.

*SUBJECTS throw flowers at FICKLEFRED from offstage.*

VOICE 1            We love you, King Ficklefred!

VOICE 2            We are so lucky to have a king like you!

VOICE 1            We're not worthy!

VOICE 2            Can I have your autograph, King Ficklefred?

VOICE 1            Your majesty, come here and give me a hug!

VOICE 2            You are perfect in every way!

VOICE 1            Let's hear it for King Ficklefred!

VOICE 2            What a groovy king we have!

*SUBJECTS make kissing noises from offstage.*

FICKLEFRED Please, please, loyal subjects. You are embarrassing me!...Oh look! Here comes my lovely daughter, Princess Bunnyhop!

BUNNYHOP Greetings, Father!

FICKLEFRED And where are you off to on this fine day?

BUNNYHOP I am on my way to Mundane Mountain to see the charming Prince Boring! He is the handsomest prince in the entire world and I love him a whole bunch!

FICKLEFRED Oh! To be young and in love!

BUNNYHOP Prince Boring and I are going to spend the entire afternoon twiddling our thumbs and staring blankly at nothing in particular! What fun!

*Exit BUNNYHOP.*

FICKLEFRED You enjoy yourself, Princess Bunnyhop...Now then. Where are my minstrels?

*Enter MINSTRELS.*

FICKLEFRED Well what do you know. It's George and Ira, my perfect minstrels. How about a song?

*MINSTREL play a flawless tune on their mandolins and sing along in perfect harmony. When they are finished, they exit.*

FICKLEFRED Ah! Have you ever heard such beautiful music in all your life? They sound like a couple of canaries. But then, only the best for King Ficklefred's kingdom...Hmmm. I wonder where my hilarious, court jester could have gotten to? Yoo hoo! Foo Foo!

*FOO FOO comes in, with high energy, flailing and giggling like a lunatic. He is wiggling and dancing like a goof.*

FOO FOO There's lizards in my pants! There's lizards in my pants! Ta-hee-hee! Oops! Whoop-dee-doo!

FICKLEFRED Would you look at that? Have you ever seen anything so hilarious in all your life?

FOO FOO *(wiggling around frantically)* Lizards! Lizards! Lizards! Woo hoo!

FICKLEFRED Foo Foo, you are so funny!

*FOO FOO, still giggling like a lunatic, turns some cartwheels and then clumsily shakes his legs as though trying to get the lizards out of his pants.*

FOO FOO OOOO! Ah! OOOO! AH! OOOO! AH! This is weird! This is really weird!

FICKLEFRED Okay, Foo Foo. That's enough. You've made me laugh so much, my ribs are starting to hurt. Come back tomorrow so we can have some more fun.

*Exit FOO FOO.*

FICKLEFRED Wasn't that hysterical?

*Loud roar from offstage.*

FICKLEFRED Oh no! It's a dragon! If only the Knights of the Picnic Table were here! They are so brave!

*Enter KNIGHTS. They are roaring, making ferocious faces and flexing their muscles.*

POLKADOT We're not afraid of dragons!

PLAID No! Because we are brave!

POLKADOT Notice how we're flexing our muscles like this?

PLAID That's what brave people do!

*Loud roar from offstage. KNIGHTS roar back at the dragon.*

POLKADOT That silly dragon thinks he can scare us!

PLAID Nothing scares us! Especially not dragons!

POLKADOT I could slay that dragon even if I was blindfolded!

PLAID Me too! And being blindfolded would not bother me because I am not afraid of the dark!

*Loud roar from offstage.*

POLKADOT Beware, dragon! Beware!

*KNIGHTS run, roaring off the stage.*

FICKLEFRED I feel so safe. I always know that the brave Knights of the Picnic Table will protect me...Let's see. What else can I brag about in my perfect kingdom?

*SHAKESPEARE comes out of his hiding place.*

SHAKESPEARE      Hold it! Hold everything!

FICKLEFRED        What's wrong, Shakespeare?

SHAKESPEARE      I can't write a play about you, King Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED        What do you mean? My kingdom is perfect.

SHAKESPEARE      That's the problem. It's too perfect.

FICKLEFRED        Too perfect? How can a kingdom be too perfect?

SHAKESPEARE      Look, how can I write an interesting play when nothing unusual ever happens to you? I only write about kings who are not perfect. For instance, I once wrote a play about King Richard the Second who spent so much money on fancy clothes for himself, that he had to take money from his cousin. Then there was King Macbeth who took bad advice from some weird sisters. And we musn't forget King Henry the Sixth who didn't know how to be a good king because he became king when he was a baby. And what about King Richard the Third who had the big hump on his back?

FICKLEFRED        They sound like complete losers to me.

SHAKESPEARE      Being different doesn't make you a loser...King Ficklefred, have you been honest with me? Is your kingdom really as perfect as you say it is?

FICKLEFRED        Not exactly...But if you give me two minutes, I can change everything back to the way it was before.

SHAKESPEARE      I don't have much time. In a few hours I'm supposed to go watch this really awesome play in the park. I hear it's very well written.

FICKLEFRED        Please, Shakespeare! Oh please!

SHAKESPEARE      Well...Okay. But you only have five minutes. I'll be back.

*Exit SHAKESPEARE.*

FICKLEFRED        Oh my. Oh my. I don't have much time.

*Enter MINSTRELS.*

GEORGE            So, how were we?

IRA                Who'd have thought a couple of tone-deaf minstrels could sing?

FICKLEFRED        You sounded terrific. Now sing badly again.

IRA                Why would we want to do that?

FICKLEFRED        I liked you better when you sang off-key.

GEORGE But after we practiced really hard, we actually started to sound good.

IRA We feel better about our music now. From now on, we are going to practice ALL our songs so we can ALWAYS do a good job.

*Exit MINSTRELS.*

FICKLEFRED Oh no!

*Enter BUNNYHOP.*

FICKLEFRED Princess Bunnyhop!

BUNNYHOP Oh, King Ficklefred! I had the most wonderful time with Prince Boring on Mundane Mountain!

FICKLEFRED You can stop pretending to like Prince Boring now.

BUNNYHOP I'm not pretending. I really like him. You'll never guess what we did all day on Mundane Mountain. We sat around all afternoon watching paint dry. I had no idea how fascinating paint could be when it's drying! It takes such a long time! And tomorrow I'm going back to Mundane Mountain so that Prince Boring and I can do algebra and read really long instruction manuals. And if there's time, we'll make popcorn and watch a six hour documentary on the behaviour of slugs.

FICKLEFRED You want to see Prince Boring again?

BUNNYHOP Oh, yes! I have fallen in love with Prince Boring!

FICKLEFRED No! What about Foo Foo?

BUNNYHOP Foo Foo has been acting very silly lately. And between you and me, I think he might have lizards down his pants.

FICKLEFRED But...

BUNNYHOP I don't know what I was thinking, falling in love with the court jester. Princesses are supposed to fall in love with princes. Now if you'll excuse me, I am going to phone Prince Boring so we can have a long, dry conversation about top soil.

*Exit BUNNYHOP.*

FICKLEFRED What have I done!

*Enter FOO FOO, still acting silly.*

FICKLEFRED Foo Foo! Quick! Take the lizards out of your pants!

FOO FOO Are you kidding? These lizards are the best thing that has ever happened to me!

FICKLEFRED Stop pretending to be funny, Foo Foo!

FOO FOO I don't have to pretend to be funny. Thanks to these lizards, I AM funny! For the first time in my life, people are laughing at me and I think it's swell. Besides, having lizards in my pants is sort of fun. *(to audience)* But remember, it's not fun for everyone. Only court jesters.

FICKLEFRED Foo Foo! You can't do this to me!

FOO FOO *(leaving)* Thanks for making me put lizards in my pants, King Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED I can't believe this is happening! At least my loyal subjects still don't like me. *(to the side of the stage)* Hey, subjects! Throw some rotten tomatoes at me, will you?

VOICE *(from offstage)* Why would we do that?

FICKLEFRED Because you don't like me.

VOICE Yes we do.

FICKLEFRED No! Don't you remember? I had to give you all jellybeans so you would pretend to like me.

VOICE But it was very nice of you to give us jellybeans. We like you now. Long live King Ficklefred!

FICKLEFRED This isn't happening.

*Enter KNIGHTS. PLAID KNIGHT is carrying a little dragon in his arms.*

PLAID Hey, King Ficklefred! We found the dragon. Isn't he cute?

FICKLEFRED What do you mean cute?

PLAID We didn't realize how little the dragon was until we found the courage to go and look for him.

POLKADOT And we owe it all to you, King Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED Me?

POLKADOT We took your advice. We imagined ourselves being big and strong and pretended that we weren't afraid of the dragon. Before we knew it, we actually convinced ourselves that we really were brave. Now we don't have to pretend anymore.

PLAID Thank you, King Ficklefred. *(to dragon)* Come on, Floyd. Let's have lunch.

*Exit KNIGHTS.*

FICKLEFRED No! No! No! No!

*Enter SHAKESPEARE.*

SHAKESPEARE Here I am, King Ficklefred. Now, show me how unusual your kingdom is.

FICKLEFRED Oh, Shakespeare! My kingdom isn't unusual anymore! My subjects love me, my knights are brave, my jester is funny, my minstrels can sing, the princess fell in love with the prince and with my lousy luck, they'll probably live happily ever after!

SHAKESPEARE Really?

FICKLEFRED Let's face it. My kingdom is...*(grimacing)*...perfect.

SHAKESPEARE Hmm. I guess this means I won't be able to write a famous play about you. Sorry about that, King Ficklefred.

FICKLEFRED Don't you think you could make a special exception for me? Is there any possible way you could write a play about a perfect kingdom?

SHAKESPEARE Nope.

FICKLEFRED The least you can do is try.

SHAKESPEARE What's the point? Nobody would ever buy tickets to see a play about a perfect kingdom.

FICKLEFRED I would.

SHAKESPEARE One ticket is not going to pay off my mortgage. Now stop begging and let go of my pant leg.

FICKLEFRED I've messed up everything. If only I had done what you said and just have been myself. There's nothing wrong with being different. It's not embarrassing at all! Being unusual makes people interesting and unique.

SHAKESPEARE Looks like there's nothing interesting or unique about you, King Ficklefred. Sorry about your luck.

*Exit SHAKESPEARE.*

FICKLEFRED From now on, I'm not going to be embarrassed about being myself. It's silly to pretend to be someone you're not.

EVERYONE *(from offstage)* We love you, King Ficklefred!

FICKLEFRED Oh, sure. Why don't you just rub my nose in it.

