

**ANIMATION: AN EXPERIMENT IN
CHARACTER DESIGN, DEVELOPMENT, AND ANIMATION**

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DEVELOPMENT, AND ANIMATION.** Wendy Reneé Vinzant (Alan Stacell),
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To design and develop an animated character from within the pre-written musical, *The Dancing Princesses* by Michael Weiner and Alan Zachary. The end character design should be able to function in a brief animation in the musical sequence of "Be Like Me." The chosen character, Fulvio, is an Italian rat who functions as a sidekick to the main character within this children's musical. The design development process includes: live action studies, a multitude of sketches, a storyboard, and a brief animation piece output to a VHS tape for viewing.

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THE ILLUSION

Since the beginning, humans have had an impulse to create images that imitate the life forms that surround them. These types of images can be traced back 25,000 years to Cro-Magnon man, who created remarkable cave drawings of the animals he hunted (Thomas and Johnson 13). Within these cave drawings, located in Lascaux, France, early man demonstrated his ability to create representations, both accurately and beautifully

Figure 1 Cro-Magnon man tried to capture the essence of the creatures around him on the cave walls in Lascaux, France.

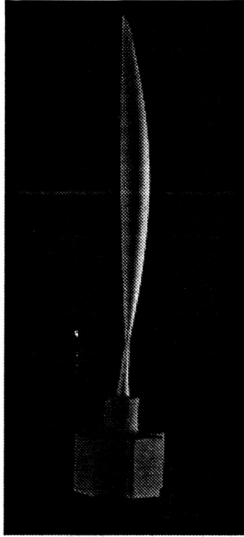


drawn. There appears to be an inner life within the simple sketches, even a suggestion of movement. With these drawings, captured in a lasting rock-wall canvas, we can begin to understand the human fascination with the creation of animation and of the illusion of life.

Many artists have achieved marvelous results in capturing the essence of life.

Sculptor, Constantin Brancusi, focused his life's artwork on capturing this spirit:

When you see a fish, you do not think of its scales, do you? You think of its speed, its floating, flashing body seen through the water.... Well, I've tried to express just that. If I made fins and eyes and scales, I would arrest its movement and hold you by a pattern or shape of reality. I want just the flash of its spirit (Varia 205).



*Figure 2 Brancusi's Bird in Space, 1925
White marble, height 71 inches;
base: stone and wood selections;
National Gallery of Art,
Washington D.C.; gift of Eugene
and Agnes Meyer*

Brancusi, through abstract shapes and simplicity, created sculptures that are bursting with energy and speak with a strong inner force. One example of this captured essence is seen in the many versions of *Bird in Space*, which all appear to express the idea of flight. Again, Brancusi explains his strive for simplicity:

Simplicity is not an end in art, but one arrives at simplicity in spite of oneself, in approaching the real sense of things. Simplicity is at bottom complexity and one must be nourished on its essence to understand its significance (Shanes 105).

Although artists can capture a specific moment in time through drawings, painting, and sculpture, they can do no more to suggest what happens just before, or what will happen after that particular moment has passed. Throughout time, artists have searched for a medium that would allow them to capture that “elusive spark of life” (Thomas and Johnson 13). A phenomena began with the development of Frenchman Emile Reynaud’s Praxinoscope in the 1882, when the first sequence of animated movements were shown to an audience at the *Théâtre Optique* in Paris (Solomon 10). The praxinoscope, an invention before photographic film, consisted of a “series of painted slides mounted on a huge perforated leather belt, held on two large drums. As the belt was wound through the

machine, a lamp projected the moving images through a lens onto a screen” (Noake 9). With this crude process, a new art form was created and emerged as further developments helped to refine the overall process. Dedicated men, such as Winsor McCay, Max Fleisher, Walt Disney, and Otto Messmer, also added fuel to the artistic medium of animation, which has continued to develop and redefine itself over the last one hundred years.

Today, an animator, can create characters that captures a particular instant and continue that instant through a series of movements by meticulously capturing its actions. The character, not bound by actions alone, could show emotions, feelings, and even innermost fears. Therefore, the animator would ultimately create a scene with a character, that not only appeared to be living, but thinking, and making decisions all by himself (Thomas and Johnson 13-15). In the end, the animator would have created a piece of art that is in movement, but more importantly, created the art of movement (Laybourne 4).

CHARACTER DESIGN

CREATING ANIMALS WITH PERSONALITIES

Expression of feelings and language symbols are well known to humankind. We use facial expressions and body movement to help convey when we are sad, happy, or ashamed. Animals are similar because they have a pattern of actions that can communicate their feelings, even without sound. For instance, a dog can communicate to its owner when its playful, sleepy, ashamed, or indignant by using its entire body and movement.

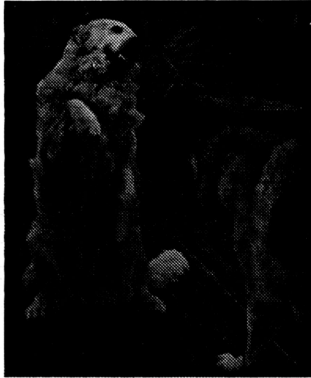


Figure 3 Animals can clearly communicate their emotions through the use of their body movements and attitudes.

In animation, the animator has learned to use this understanding to develop a cartoon that will be familiar or appealing to an audience. It was Walt Disney who was one of the first to understand the importance of a personality in animation:

At first the cartoon medium was just a novelty, but it never really began to hit until we had more than tricks... until we developed personalities. We had to get beyond getting a laugh. They may roll in the aisles, but that doesn't mean you have a great picture. You have to have pathos in the thing (Thomas and Johnson 29).

Emotions are universal, and easily understood by a spectator. The feelings of the character portrayed on screen transcend from the animation to the viewer and become the audience's emotions. It is the spectators that make the character sad because the character is real to them. Charlie Chaplin reinforced this idea when he spoke about the beginning of his film career: "Little as I knew about movies, I knew that nothing transcended personality" (21).

In 1914, Winsor McCay, a cartoonist for the *New York Herald*, created the first animated personality; *Gertie the Dinosaur* (See figure 4). In this cartoon, Gertie's distinct emotions ranged from shyness to stubbornness. She even cried tears when criticized.



Figure 4 *Gertie the Dinosaur, an epic piece created by Winsor McCay in 1914, is the first animated personality.*

With elegance and carefully timed movements, McCay created such convincing cartoon figures that he was charged with tracing them from photographs (22).

In all the early studios after the point of *Gertie the Dinosaur*, the focus was in the gag and not the personality. This was due to the lack of talent that met up to McCay's that was entering into the field of animation. The focus was on what was commercially acceptable. It wasn't until Otto Messmer's "Felix the Cat" that the idea about giving a character a personality was resurrected. Although Pat Sullivan's studio, producers of "Felix the Cat", failed to develop this idea further than its rudimentary beginnings, the possibilities were therefore left open for others to explore (23).

When Walt Disney came onto the scene, he was not immediately successful, but with some talented animators, lots of hard work, and determination to succeed, Walt Disney studios set the standard for developing characters with personalities. From the early years with Oswald to the later success of Mickey Mouse, the art of movement was growing stronger and the language of imagery was being refined (26-27).

AN EXPERIMENT: CHARACTER DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

With all the developments in the field of animation and the advanced understanding of character design and development, the task of creating a new character is a lengthy process. In the following pages, are the steps that involved developing one of the characters for the children's musical, *The Dancing Princesses*, which is based on the fairytale, *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*.

THE FAIRY TALE: *THE TWELVE DANCING PRINCESSES*

Fairy Tales exist in every conceivable form of literature, ranging from the story of Joseph in Genesis, which reads like a fairytale, to Homer's Odysseus with giants and witches. Originally, fairytales were passed down orally, so it is impossible to pinpoint their origin and how many generations of storytellers they passed through before being documented. It wasn't until the nineteenth century when collections of fairytales were compiled by Wilhelm and Jacob Grimm and published in their monumental *Kinder- und Hausmärchen* (1812-1815). Before that time, only a minute amount of writers had adapted a number of traditional fairytales, thus creating new original stories. The most important of these is the tales French author Charles Perrault (1628-1703) created. Often, his versions, such as "Cinderella" with the glass slipper and the pumpkin coach, are more recognized than the Brothers Grimm translations (Grimm and Grimm, *The Twelve Dancing Princesses and Other Fairy Tales* x).

Despite the story line, the plot of fairytales is perpetually the same success story. The hero, typically a male, starts out deprived, persecuted, or betrayed but triumphs against evil and wins his victorious fortune. The character may be rewarded by receiving a

princess, a kingdom, or may simply go back home, but the same sentiment is expressed by the accustomed phrase, “And they lived happily ever after.”

With the fairytale of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, there are primarily two main tales in existence: The Brothers Grimm version and a French translation that is descendant of Charles Perrault’s original tale. Other contemporary versions are in existence but are a mixture of the previous two. There are sundry differences between the primary two tales, such as the length and amount of detail, the outlet for discovering the secret of the tattered

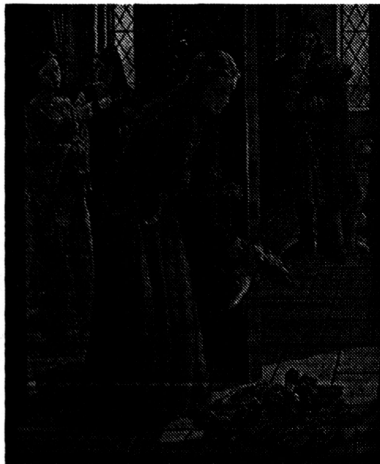


Figure 5 The twelve princesses and the mystery of their worn-out shoes. Illustration by Ruth Sanderson from The Twelve Dancing Princesses by Ruth Sanderson

slippers, and the overall outcome. Each version also sets the stage surrounding the mystery in slightly different ways. The Brothers Grimm version begins narrative by introducing the king’s daughters in the following manner:

There was a king who had twelve beautiful daughters. They slept in twelve beds all in one room; and when they went to bed, the doors were shut and locked up; but every morning their shoes were found to be quite worn through, as if they had been dancing in the night... (Grimm and Grimm, *Grimm’s Fairy Tales* 37)

Charles Perrault’s translation first introduces the young boy and then later introduces the twelve princesses in section three:

Once upon a time there lived in the village of Montignies-sur-Roc a little cow-boy, without either a father or a mother. His real name was Michael, but he was always called the Star Gazer, because when he drove his cows over the commons to seek for pasture, he went along with his head in the air, gazing at nothing... he dreamed that he had the happiness to marry a princess....

It was well known that for full twenty miles round that there lived in the castle of Beloeil twelve princesses of wonderful beauty, and as proud as they were beautiful, and who were besides so very sensitive and of such truly royal blood.... They had twelve beds all in the same room, but what was very extraordinary was the fact that though they were locked in by triple bolts, every morning their satin shoes were found worn into holes...

(Red Fairy Book 1)

Despite these differences, the gist of the story is the same. In both fairytales, there is a young boy who travels to the kingdom to become a suitor to solve the mystery plaguing the king's twelve daughters. Upon his arrival, he falls in love with the youngest princess and after uncovering the secret of the nightly tattered dancing shoes, he wins the hand of the princess of his choice.

THE CHILDREN'S MUSICAL: *THE DANCING PRINCESSES*

Similar to the two fairytales of *The Twelve Dancing Princesses*, the children's musical of *The Dancing Princesses* (See Appendix 1) is a conglomeration of the previous versions of the tale with a bit of added spice. Michael Weiner and Alan Zachary, the authors of this musical, decided to create a narrative piece that filled in the gaps that were missing from the earlier narratives. They added characters, sub-plots, and songs to move the story along with ease. Also, Weiner and Zachary developed the storyline in more detail than in the previous versions to lend an explanation to the reasoning for some of the

character's actions. In the end, with a little ingeniousness, the composers had a clever musical that could be enjoyed by both young and old.

THE CHARACTER: FULVIO

One of the characters added to the script of *The Dancing Princesses* was the specific character, Fulvio, that functions as a sidekick to Michael, the main character. Fulvio, a human-size rat, is saved from impending doom at the traveling fair by Michael, after some coaxing. From the moment that this character is introduced, Fulvio, because of his stature and humor, stands out among the primarily human-filled cast. In **figure 6**, a brief overview of Fulvio's character is given to help compile an overall personality.

Figure 6 Character sketch of Fulvio, the Italian rat

Fulvio Spiritoso Untuoso Rigatoni Capellini
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• From Rome (the Roman lover)• Loves cheese & women• Thinks he knows how to “woo” women• Thinks of himself as the master of l’amore• Sensitive about being a rat (in the world of man)• Sensitive about his height (human size)• Well fed (loves his mother’s Italian cooking)• Dislikes being dirty• Slicked back hair• Rough exterior (the “cool” guy)• Caring but doesn’t like to show it• Loyal to Michael for rescuing him from the cage at the Fair• Sarcastic• Tends to exaggerate• Confused by some English slang phrases

Within the script, the song, “Be Like Me” (*see Appendix 1*) is an perfect example at explaining Fulvio's personality. Fulvio, who believes he is a master of l’amore, sings this song to Michael about how to woo the woman of his dreams. He basically tells Michael that in order to win the heart of the princess, he has to be “smooth” and “slick”... “a lot like me! (Fulvio)” Since this song exemplifies Fulvio's character, I created a brief pencil

animation setting in motion the design of Fulvio I created. But before I could attempt to animate the character in motion, I had to first design him.

PREVIOUS ANIMATED FILMS WITH RAT CHARACTERS

In the beginning of my search for a design for Fulvio, I looked at other previous animated films with rat characters and begin to notice a trend. Typically, a rat is used in animated films to represent an evil character. This stereotype carries over from the great plagues of Europe that were spread by the rats within the cities. The myth that surrounds the rat still has bearing on how we view this creature. Common belief would say that a rat is a dirty and evil. On the contrary, rats are very clean animals and rarely bite. Despite the contradictory beliefs, rats are still portrayed in many films as dirty rotten scoundrels. There are a few exceptions, such as *Charlotte's Web*, where Templeton, the rat, is cast as a friendly but selfish rat. Although this one film shows a rat in a better light, the fact still remains that it is a rare occurrence that a rat is depicted as a good, friendly character.

In the films, *An American Tail*, *The Secret of NIMH*, and *The Great Mouse Detective*, the protagonists are mice and the antagonists are rats. The mice are depicted as sweet and gentle, while the rats are shown as bitter, hateful, and mean. Throughout the different film, the evil rodent's physical characteristics are usually the same, despite the different animation styles. They are typically drawn with a sharp pointed nose, a heavy brow, and sharp fanged teeth contrary to the fact that rats have none of these characteristic.

AN AMERICAN TAIL

In *An American Tail*, Fievel is a young Russian mouse separated from his parents on the way to America, a land they thought was without cats. When he arrives in New World all alone, he keeps up hope that one day he will be reunited with his family. Fievel's adventure begins with a friendly pigeon who tries to help out after Fievel has washed ashore in the New York Harbor. The pigeon takes him to Warren T. Rat to help

him find his family. Despite the good deed the pigeon thinks he is doing, he is handing Fievel over to a measly tramp who will do anything for money. Warren t. Rat, thus typifies the usual animated rat who is up to no good.



Figure 7 In An American Tail, Warren T. Rat is an evil character that pretends to befriend Fievel before selling him to a sweat shop

THE SECRET OF NIMH

In The Secret of NIMH, a timid, widowed field mouse named Mrs. Brisby is faced with a crisis: her youngest son Timmy is sick in bed with pneumonia, and cannot be brought outside his home, a cinder block on a farm. But she must move her family to safety before the block is crushed in the farmer's spring plow. After consulting a wise Great Owl, she journeys to see the rats of NIMH, a society of super-intelligent beats living in the farmer's rosebush. The rat leader, Nicodemus, informs Mrs. Brisby that her late husband helped the rats escape from the NIMH lab where they had received the injections which altered their minds. He also tells her about the rats' Plan to move faraway into the wilderness and live like productive human beings. In the end, there is a group of rodents who oppose



Figure 8 In *The Secret of NIMH*, its a clash between good versus evil in the fight of Jenner, Justin, and Sullivan.

Nicodemus' aim to move, and one of them, Jenner, kills him. After a furious sword fight between Jenner, the evil rat, and Justin, a good rat, Jenner is killed by the hand of his own accomplice, Sullivan.

In this animated feature, its the mouse protagonist against the rat antagonist, with the exception of a few. Because of this difference, the character design of Jenner, the evil rodent, takes on a more rat-like form, where as Justin and Sullivan, the good rats, take on a more fox-like and cat-like design. The distinct differences in designs help the contrast between good and evil, despite the fact that they are all rats.

THE GREAT MOUSE DETECTIVE

In *The Great Mouse Detective*, the antagonist is a dapper, evil rat named Ratigan and once again, the protagonist is a group of mice: Basil and Watson, the detectives, and Olivia and her father the toy maker. Ratigan and a gang of rugged rats, devise a plan to rid England of the Queen and to take over the country. To carry out this master plan, they need the assistance of a toy maker who will develop a robot of the queen and Olivia's father is just the mouse to create it. He is a master toy maker, and Ratigan kidnaps him for his

services. Basil and Watson, soon set on the path to locate the toy maker, and after some setbacks, they succeed.

The character of Ratigan in this feature is slightly different because he is a debonair but conniving character who plots evil plans. Despite his sophisticated facade, the true ugliness shines through.



Figure 9 In The Great Mouse Detective, Ratigan has other plans for the Queen.

LIVE ACTION STUDIES

The term “live action” refers to the filming of actors or animals performing scenes planned for animated characters before the animation begins (Thomas and Johnson 319). The main goal is that a live action study is to stimulate and inspire new ideas, as well as helping the animator further understand the particular model, whether it be an actor or an animal. Ideally, this process functioned as a new way to study forms in movement. It was Walt Disney who said, “I definitely feel that we cannot do the fantastic things based on the real, unless we first know the real” (Thomas and Johnson 71).

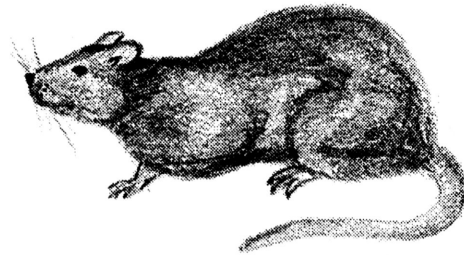
In the development of Fulvio, live action studies were conducted on both a rat and an actor, thus enhancing the overall knowledge of movement and typical characteristics.

LIVE ACTION STUDIES OF THE RAT

The typical roof rat, known formally as *Rattus rattus*, is derived from the word *rodere*, meaning “to gnaw.” They can adapt to nearly every type of climate on this planet, as well as adapting their diet to whatever food is available. The *Rattus rattus* originated on Southeast Asian islands, India, Central Asia, and China before the Ice Age. With the

shipping trade, thriving in this region in the 12th Century, a worldwide distribution of rats began with the shipping of goods, and invaded Europe during this time (Himsel 6 - 9).

Figure 10 An image of one of the most common species of rats; the Rattus rattus



Physical Characteristics of the Rattus rattus

Weight	4-12 ounces
Length	14-18 inches
Body	slender
Muzzle	elongated
Ears	more than 3/4 inches, hairless
Tail	longer then the length of the body and the head combined

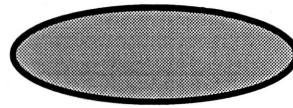
Figure 11 Physical characteristics of the Rattus rattus, also known as a roof rat

After obtaining a rat during the beginning of my research, I began to conduct live action studies, both with a 8 mm video camera and a 35 mm photographic camera, observing the rat's typical habits. During this phase of study, I noticed that it slept most of



Figure 12 Still photographs of a rat in the basic forms

the day, only interrupted by brief spurt of activity, which usually included eating. It mainly was active at night, scrounging up food and rearranging its cage. I noticed typical shapes that the rat's body formed, such as a round ball when sleeping or scared. This round shape appears to act as its comfort position. Also, the rat's body takes on an elongated



Round Ball	Elongated
When Sleeping or scared	When stretching, standing on back legs to explore, walking, or sometimes sleeping
<i>Comfort Position</i>	<i>Exploring Position</i>

Figure 13 Table of the main forms of a rat's body

shape when it stretches, stands on its back legs to explore, walks, and sometimes sleeps. This oval shape appears to be a exploring position and the rat takes this stance during the night when he is active.

The rat, like the character Fulvio, was conscious about being clean. He would stop to wipe down his entire body several times in an hour. Also, he would typically stop every few minutes to clean his face, which prompted the full body washes. This cleaning process can be see in **figures 14** and **15**.

Figure 14 Still images taken from a live-action video



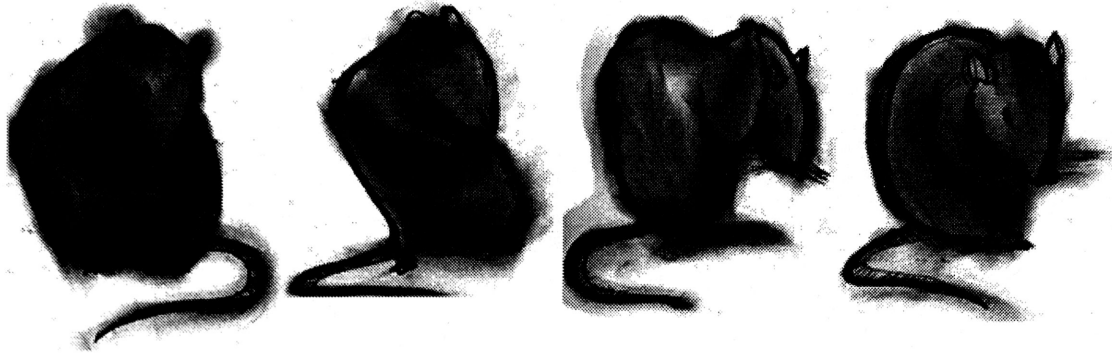


Figure 15 Charcoal sketches taken from a live-action video study

LIVE ACTION STUDIES OF AN ACTOR

The movement of the human figure displays an amazing amount of overall activity. It brings to life many of principles of animation, such as the “squash and stretch,” “exaggeration,” and follow through.” In a live action study, every detail of changing shapes and relationships in the different movements could be understood, thus bringing aiding the animator to better understand and recognize the movement needed to be captured by a specific character (Thomas and Johnson 321).

After obtaining a copy of the music and script to *The Dancing Princesses*, and I had a basic storyboard together, it was time to conduct a live action study of an actor going through the planned motions and movements of the song lyrics of “Be Like Me.” In **figures 16, 17, and 18**, the movement is captured for the planned animation that consists of the first two lines of the lyrics:

FULVIO

YOU’VE GOT TO BE SMOOTH

YOU’VE GOT TO BE SLICK



Figure 16 A live-action study of an actor for the word "smooth"



Figure 17 A live-action study of an actor for the word "slick"



Figure 18 Close-up of facial expressions for the word "slick"

SKETCHES

Sketching is a very important part to developing a character. You must first begin with basic shapes, trying to capture the proportion, the stance, and body shape, then advancing the sketches to include portions of its personality. All-the-while, keeping the design and sketches simple, in order not to spoil the essence that lies in simplicity. In the end, after thousands of drawings, the animator end up with a final design for the character. And can continue the quest for the art of movement.

SKETCHES: THE BEGINNING

The following images are basic sketches created at the beginning of my research and development of the character Fulvio. I spent a lot of time making quick sketches while observing the rat in a cage, capturing both simple forms and real life representations. In the illustrations that follow, I worked to understand the three-dimensionality of the rat, its basic shapes, and different perspectives.

Figure 19 Quick sketches to understand the shapes and forms

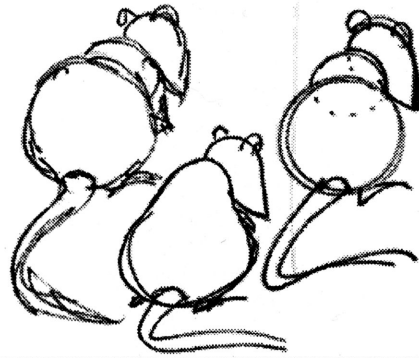
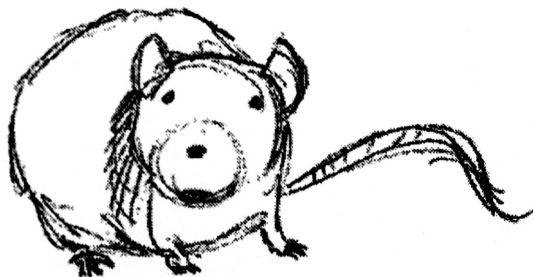


Figure 20 Quick study drawings of rat's shape and form.



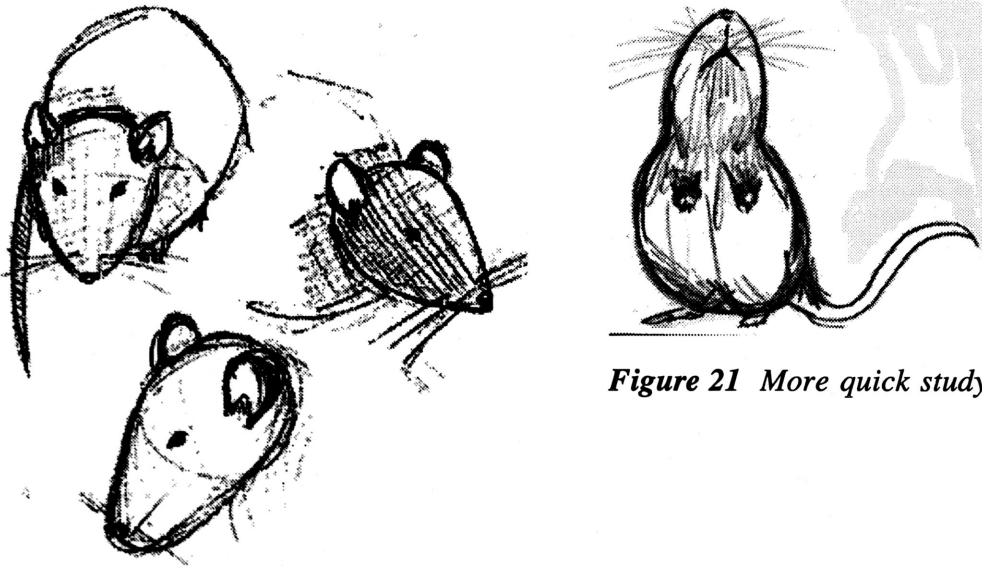


Figure 21 More quick study drawings

SKETCHES: THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

The following images are the developmental sketches that begin to capture and create an idea of Fulvio's specific personality. I tested ideas of flexible features, such as the muzzle, and the design on the slicked back hair.

Figure 22 Test character designs

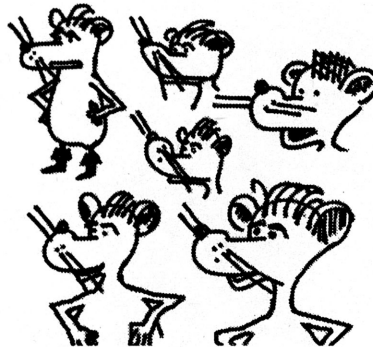




Figure 23 Developmental body and face forms



SKETCHES: THE FINAL DESIGN

In the following images, a final design of Fulvio is created and captured in a series of drawings, such as the head shape drawings in **figure 24**. In the final design, Fulvio has a simple pear-shaped body, a spherical head with a clump of hair sitting on top of it. He has a bit of a Roman nose, that is flexible, depending on his emotions. He also has heavy eyebrows to accentuate his eyes and compliment the tuft of hair on his head.



Figure 24 Facial expressions for Fulvio

THE ANIMATION PROCESS

THE STORYBOARD

The storyboard is an important element in developing animation. It allows an animator to put their thoughts into a logical order. Therefore the storyboard becomes a “conceptual planning aid” (Laybourne 76). A more formal definition is a series of single images which each represents a distinct sequence or narrative element within the animation. It can simply be thought of as a creative outline for the artist that is essential in explaining the film to others. The storyboard has been rightfully deemed “the animator’s mouthpiece” (77).

The main function is for conceptualization. People say that the real creativity begins when the idea is given a visual and concrete rough draft. It leaves room for experimentation and revision. Thus, the storyboard may be revamped often for the sole purpose of finding the perfect image for communication.

In the brief animation sequence planned for *The Dancing Princesses*, and with the finalized design of Fulvio, I began developing a storyboard. I began by illustrating the my first ideas into a rough draft, editing as ideas started to flow. In the final stages of a

developed movement for the lyrics of the song “Be Like Me,” I created the final version of the storyboard as seen below in **figure 25**.

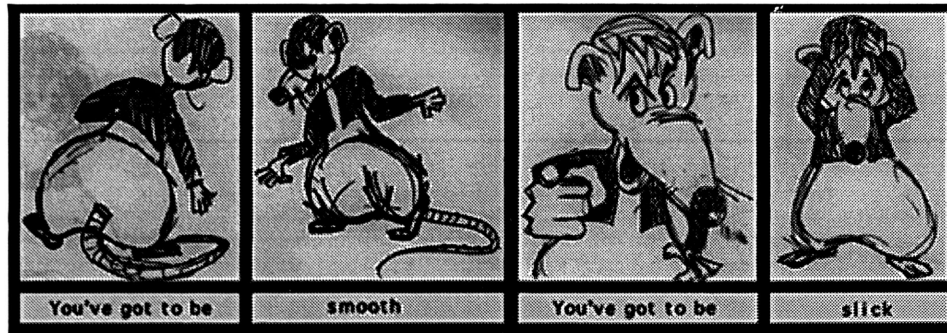


Figure 25 The storyboard for the brief animation sequence of the character design for Fulvio

THE ANIMATION

The final animation piece was created in Macromind Director on a Macintosh computer. This program allows an animator to integrate a soundtrack, images, and movement with ease. The entire animation was drawn by hand and scanned into the computer where it was imported into Director. Then, within the program, I was allowed to place each frame of movement into a compiled animation piece and output to a VHS tape.

The final animation sequence was created as a simple pencil test animation piece. This type of animation, as seen in **figure 26**, allows the focus to be on the character and its movements within the animation because there are no distracting backgrounds, or outrageous color schemes. The eye focuses on the character, its acting, and its movements.

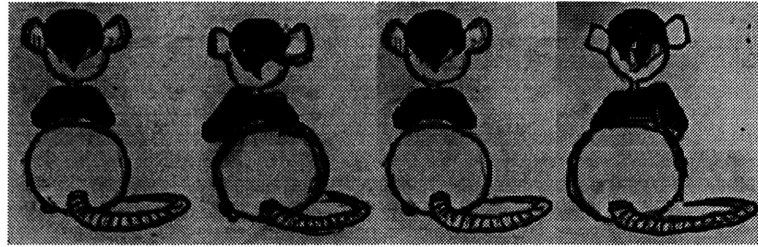


Figure 26 An example of the beginning frames from the pencil test animation sequence for the song "Be Like Me"

In conclusion, animation is more than just a few drawings done in succession. It is the combination of art, movement, acting, and character, among others. To create a good animation, the animator must fully understand the character to bring it to its full potential. Overall, animation allows you to elaborate on what your mind can imagine. Walt Disney once said, "Animation can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive" (Thomas and Johnson 13).

Animation is a constant experiment. With every new character, new story, new ideas, there is experimentation to be done. Animation now has many facets at which it can be created. There is the realm of computer animation, traditional animation, claymation, paper cut-out animation, among others. Despite the avenue of expression, with a little creativity and imagination, anything can become a reality. Once again, Walt Disney sums it up best when he said, "It's possible to do darn near anything if we figure out certain definite things.... We can do anything we think of with this [animation]" (Thomas and Johnson 243).

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APPENDIX 1

THE DANCING PRINCESSES
A Children's Musical

by

Alan Zachary

&

Michael Weiner

First Draft
January, 1995

Book, Music, & Lyrics ©1995 Alan Zachary & Michael Weiner

THE DANCING PRINCESSES

CAST OF CHARACTERS

LEADS (4 Males, 1 Females)

MICHAEL, a young man

FULVIO, an Italian rat

RALEIGH, an eccentric gardener

NOSTRADAMUS, an evil fortune teller

NORA, a princess

ENSEMBLE (5 Males, 5 Females; doubling not calculated)

GABRIELLA

ALEXANDRA

ELISA

CATHERINE

MIRANDA

KING

SUITOR

BUFF GUY #1

BUFF GUY #2

COURTIER #1

COURTIER #2

PHIL THE CRIER

CHARLIE, THE INNKEEPER

MADAME DESIREE

INN GUESTS

BARKERS

TOWNSPEOPLE

SHRUBBERY *

FLY TRAP *

FOREST *

ROYAL RODENTIA *

HUNGRY CAT *

HUNGRY DOG *

EVIL CREATURES *

* These parts can be performed using puppetry if desired.

THE DANCING PRINCESSES
MUSICAL NUMBERS

<u>“AT THE FAIR”</u>	30
<u>“TRAPPED LIKE A RAT”</u>	39
<u>“THE FUTURE TENSE”</u>	46
<u>“REMEMBER WHEN”</u>	51
<u>“DON’T LOSE YOUR HEAD”</u>	56
<u>“STORYBOOK ROMANCE”</u>	72
<u>“AMATEUR WIZARD 26”</u>	79
<u>“BE LIKE ME”</u>	90
<u>“STORYBOOK ROMANCE (REPRISE)”</u>	96
<u>“STORYBOOK ROMANCE (FINALE)”</u>	106

THE DANCING PRINCESSES

(The Castle Gardens. A picture perfect day in a fairy tale kingdom. Assorted shrubberies decorate the stage. Birds tweet in the background. A few minutes before 'curtain', a diminutive gardener appears wearing a safari hat and clothes and begins to water the plants, thoroughly enjoying his job. This is RALEIGH, slightly eccentric gardener to the King and narrator of our story. After the house lights dim, it takes another moment before RALEIGH suddenly becomes aware of the audience's presence.)

RALEIGH

(British)

Well, hallo hallo! Welcome to our little kingdom. I trust your journey here was satisfactory and your accommodations the same. I am Raleigh, head of ...
(He examines his safari hat with a curious look.)

RALEIGH

...your African safari vacation!
(The stage turns darker and jungle noises ensue.)

RALEIGH

I tell you this will be one dangerous excursion! Please keep your hands in your seats at all times and do keep an eye on small children. We always seem to lose a few in the jungle. You know those timers with their irrepressible appetites!

(chuckles)

Fortunately, I've got these garden shears to clear away any intrusive shrubbery.

VOICE (O.S.)

(whisper)

Raleigh!

RALEIGH

Oh, listen! That's probably a tiger right now! Let's have a look-see, shall we?
(He is about to walk offstage when someone pushes him back on very slowly. It is the KING, dressed in his royal garb.)

KING

Raleigh. . .

RALEIGH

What an unexpected surprise! His highness has decided to join us! Here, take these shears, sire.
(The KING hands the shears back to RALEIGH.)

KING

Raleigh, you' re my gardener. These are my gardens. Tell the story. We're all getting restless.

(The KING exits. As RALEIGH begins the story, the characters appear and pantomime the prologue.)

RALEIGH

Aye, Aye, sire! All right, let's see. . . Once upon a time. . . no no no no, how frightfully clichéd. . . A long time ago in a galaxy far, far. . . no no who'd believe that. . .

(pensive pause)

About three weeks ago, we had a very peculiar mystery plaguing our kingdom. You see, the king has six beautiful daughters, all equally lovely (though quite frankly, some of them could use an attitude adjustment). Every evening, as the princesses fell asleep, the king would lock and bolt their bedroom door to protect them from "danger". (In other words: men!)

(chuckles)

Every morning, however, the king awoke only to find in the princesses' chambers their six pairs of dancing shoes worn through to the sole. This odd series of events baffled the poor king and his entire royal court, and one day, upon being informed of the scandalous gossip spreading throughout his kingdom. . . oooh, I have some juicy gossip right here.

(He removes a "*Castle Enquirer*" from his gardening pouch and holds it up reading aloud. The ENSEMBLE stops its pantomime and stares at RALEIGH.)

RALEIGH

"Princess Gives Birth to 3-Headed Dragon", "King Reveals He's a Queen". . .

ENSEMBLE

RALEIGH!!

RALEIGH

Enough gossip. So to prevent any further unfounded rumors, the king called upon his noble crier, Phil, and issued forth a proclamation to be taken to every land beyond the boundaries of his own. It stated that any man who could solve the mystery of the worn-out dancing shoes would be rewarded with one of the princesses' hands in marriage, but should he fail, he would face a much darker consequence.

(RALEIGH gently puts his hands around his neck as if he's glad it's still there.)

RALEIGH

Brave young men came from far and near, all of them failing in their mission to fulfill the king's wish, until that one bright morning when Phil the Crier happened upon the small town of Monotony . . .

(MUSIC CUE)

"AT THE FAIR"

(Monotony—a town on the brink of being bored to death. As RALEIGH exits, A BORED GENTLEMAN enters and sings. He is followed by a WEARY GENTLEMAN.)

BORED GENTLEMAN

I WAKE UP EV'RY MORNING

WEARY GENTLEMAN
I WORK FROM NINE TO FIVE

BORED GENTLEMAN
MY DAY'S SO AWF'LLY BORING

BOTH GENTLEMEN
IT'S A WONDER I'M ALIVE
(A DULL LADY enters.)

DULL LADY
MONOTONY

WEARY GENTLEMAN
MAKES YOU WANT TO CRY

BOTH
MONOTONY

BORED GENTLEMAN
I'M TOO BORED TO TRY
(Several TOWNSPEOPLE enter and join the other three to sing:)

TOWNSPEOPLE
MONOTONY!
(excitement grows)
BUT THERE'S ONE DAY UNLIKE THE REST
WHEN WE PUT ON OUR SUNDAY BEST
AND THROWING CAUTION TO THE
WIND, SING, "HALLELUJAH!"

(A sign appears which reads: "MONOTONY TOWN FAIR—TODAY! GET EXCITED!"
Activity increases as the fair and BARKERS engulf the stage.)

TOWNSPEOPLE
SAY GOODBYE TO DRAB AND DULL
WE'LL END THIS NEVERENDING LULL
UPON THIS FATEFUL DAY
WHEN WE GRATEFULLY SAY:
(The fair is now in full swing.)

TOWNSPEOPLE & BARKERS
LIFE HAS CHANGED NOW THAT THE FAIR IS IN TOWN
FUN AND GAMES SO WEAR A SMILE NOT A FROWN
TURN MONOTONY UPSIDE DOWN
UNWIND AND YOU'LL FIND

LEAD BARKER
THAT YOU CAN TRY YOUR LUCK AND PLAY A GAME OF YOUR CHOICE OVER
THERE'S A GIANT RAT WITH A VOICE
IN THAT BOOTH YOU'LL HAVE YOUR FORTUNE TOLD

TOWNSPEOPLE & BARKERS
GOOD TIMES UNFOLD
AT THE FAIR!

(A tent opens to reveal MICHAEL, our hero, having his fortune told by MADAME DESIREE.)

MADAME DESIREE
I am calling upon the powers of the crystal ball to tell me of young . . .

MICHAEL
Michael.

MADAME DESIREE
I knew that. . . to tell me of young Michael's future. I see. . . things. . . exciting things
in your future. . . more excitement than any excitement. . . you've ever been excited
about. I see princesses, kings, and wizards, oh my!

MICHAEL
Thank you very much. I'll just be on my way. . .
(exits & sings)
PRINCESSES, KINGS, AND WIZARDS, THAT'D BE GREAT
IF ONLY THAT GYPSY HAD A HAND IN MY FATE
BUT HERE I STAND IN THIS SORRY STATE
BELIEVE ME, CAN'T YOU SEE
THAT THIS WHOLE SCENE HAS GOT ME FEELIN' BLUE?
NO EXCITEMENT, NOT A THING TO DO
MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING THAT I NEVER KNEW
WAITING FOR ME OUT THERE SOMEWHERE
SOMETHING I WON'T FIND HERE
AT THE FAIR!

(An assortment of BARKERS call out to MICHAEL.)

BALL THROW BARKER
HEY, KID, PLAY THE BALL THROW!

BALL THROW CROWD
KNOCK DOWN THE BOTTLES AND WIN A PRIZE!

FREAK SHOW BARKER
THIS WAY TO THE FREAK SHOW!

FREAK SHOW CROWD
THE BEARDED LADY OF ENORMOUS SIZE!

CAROUSEL BARKER
YOU THERE, RIDE THE CAROUSEL!

STRONG MAN BARKER
TEST YOUR STRENGTH AND RING THE BELL!

BARKERS
STEP RIGHT UP, BUY WHAT WE SELL!

MICHAEL
I DON'T BELONG HERE
SOMETHING'S VERY WRONG HERE
TOWNSPEOPLE
SO MUCH TO DO, YEAH
WANNA SING OUT LOUD, "HALLELU, HALLELU, OH, HALLELUJAH!"
IF ONLY I COULD FIND
A WAY TO LEAVE BEHIND
THE LIFE I HAVE KNOWN
THIS LIFE I'VE OUTGROWN

(MICHAEL'S attention shifts to FULVIO, an abnormally large yet suave Italian rat, who calls to him from a cage behind the freak show.)

FULVIO
Scusami, Signore. . .

MICHAEL
Who the . . . what the . . . what are you?

FULVIO
Allow me to introduce myself, ragazzo. My name is Fulvio Spiritoso Untuoso Rigatoni Capellini. . . but you can call me Fulvio.

MICHAEL
But, how can you. . . talk? I mean. . . you're a . . . a . . .

FULVIO

Don't say it! Don't say it! I know. I've heard it all my life: ratto, rat! You'd think they'd come up with a better word than 'rat'! Backwards it spells "tar"! How do you think that makes me feel, huh?!

MICHAEL

I'm sorry. Anything I can do?

FULVIO

Si! You can get me out of this stinking cage!

MICHAEL

Well, I don't know if I should. . .

FULVIO

Please! You've got to help me! The key is right over there!

MICHAEL

Well. . . I guess.

(MICHAEL grabs the key and unlocks the cage releasing FULVIO.)

FULVIO

Oh, thank you! Grazie! Thank you!

MICHAEL

Just stay out of sight.

(PHIL THE CRIER has arrived amid the hubbub and addresses a crowd of onlookers including MICHAEL, FULVIO, and two BUFF GUYS.)

PHIL THE CRIER

I HAVE A PROCLAMATION FROM THE ROYAL COURT
I BEG YOU LISTEN CLOSELY, FOR MY TIME IS SHORT
THERE'S A MYSTERY AT THE CASTLE THAT'S OF GREAT IMPORT
AND THE SUITOR WHO SOLVES THE THING
WILL WIN THE HAND OF A DAUGHTER OF THE KING!

BUFF GUY #1

You mean I could marry a princess?

PHIL THE CRIER

Yea!

BUFF GUY #2

And when should we leave for the castle?

PHIL THE CRIER

Today!

BUFF GUY #1

(to Buff Guy #2)
Well you heard the news!

BUFF GUY #2

Not a minute to lose!

BUFF GUYS & PHIL

WE'RE (YOU'RE) GONNA MAKE HISTORY
SOLVING THIS MYSTERY!
(PHIL exits.)

TOWNSPEOPLE

SOON OUR BOYS'LL GO DISCOVER THEIR FATE
A MEETING WITH DESTINY THEY CANNOT BE LATE
WE'LL ALL REMEMBER THIS EVENTFUL DATE
IN THE MIDDLE OF A RIDDLE
*(The sea of TOWNSPEOPLE parts as the BUFF GUYS march "down the aisle".
MICHAEL looks on scornfully.)*

TOWNSPEOPLE

OH, HERE COME STRONG YOUNG MEN WITH MUSCLES SO WELL-DEFINED

MICHAEL

HOW MUCH OF THIS MUST I ENDURE?

TOWNSPEOPLE

SO IMMENSE THAT THEY COULD SAVE HUMANKIND

MICHAEL

FRIGHT'NING TO BE SURE
THAT IF I DON'T LEAVE THIS TOWN I WILL GO OUT OF MY MIND!

BUFF GUYS

WE SHALL DO OUR BODIES PROUD WHILE

MICHAEL

FAR FROM THIS ANNOYING CROWD
(MICHAEL gestures to FULVIO who agrees that they should depart. And they do.)

BUFF GUYS

WE'LL FIND THAT WE HAVE NOT A CARE

TOWNSPEOPLE

YOU'RE NONE THE WORSE FOR WEAR
AT THE FAIR!
AT THE FAIR!
(*Blackout.*)

(*A Road Outside Monotony. MICHAEL and FULVIO travel along the road as day changes to night.*)

MICHAEL

Wow! It's so good to be outta there!

FULVIO

You're telling me! It was disgusting. I feel like a dirty rat.

MICHAEL

You look like one.

FULVIO

Hey, don't get personal.

MICHAEL

Wait a minute! Wait a minute! You never answered my questions. How can you talk?
A-and why are you so. . . big?

FULVIO

I don't ask you why you talk huh? I don't ask you why you are so big!

MICHAEL

Heyyy, not that big.

FULVIO

Let us just say that my mamma kept me well-fed. Italian cooking, you know? . . . Ah, smell that air! Freedom! If only there were some lake or stream where I could clean myself.
(*They arrive at a stream.*)

MICHAEL

What would you call this?

FULVIO

Five-star service

(*FULVIO washes his face and hands, slicks back his hair, and adjusts his suit. He looks like a million bucks. Meanwhile, BUFF GUY #1 and BUFF GUY #2 enter on the opposite side of the stage.*)

BUFF GUY #1

Solving this mystery will be a piece of cake. . .

BUFF GUY #2

Easy as pie. . .

(They hold their hands to their stomachs.)

BUFF GUY #1

Why I remember the time when I slayed ten crocodiles and fashioned this jacket and these boots out of their skins, all with one hand tied behind my back.

BUFF GUY #2

Ha! That's nothing! I once saved an entire village from a felonious band of goat-riding gargoyles with nothing but a spoon and a hairbrush.

BUFF GUY #1

Child's play! One time, I saved a damsel in distress from a thirty. . . nay, a fifty foot, fire breathing well what have we here?

(*They arrive at the stream and notice MICHAEL and FULVIO.*)

MICHAEL

Oh no.

BUFF GUY #2

Looks like the little peasant boy from town. Better run on home, boy. The wilderness is no place for a helpless sod like you.

MICHAEL

I am going to solve the mystery at the castle and marry a princess.
(*The BUFF GUYS laugh uncontrollably.*)

BUFF GUY #2

Did you hear that?

BUFF GUY #1

That's the funniest thing I've hear in years! Yeah, who's gonna help a wimp like you?

FULVIO

I am.

(*The BUFF GUYS laugh again.*)

BUFF GUY #1

Lookit the big rat!

BUFF GUY #2

Yeah, how do you get him to move his mouth like that? You some sorta biologists?

BUFF GUY #1

Ventriloquist. . . it's ventriloquist. Dummy.

MICHAEL & FULVIO

Exactly.

BUFF GUY #2

Good luck, losers.

(The BUFF GUYS splash MICHAEL and FULVIO and exit laughing.)

MICHAEL

Do you have any idea what it was like to be trapped in a town with guys like that?

FULVIO

Probably a lot like the feeling of being locked up in a tiny cage. . . in a wrinkled suit. . . But do not worry, with me by your side, I will make sure that you make those guys eat their words. After all, you saved me from a life of endless agony!

MICHAEL

My pleasure.

FULVIO

I owe you big time.

MICHAEL

No problem, really.

FULVIO

I am with you through the thick and the thin—

MICHAEL

Okay! Enough already!

(pause)

How did it happen, Fulvio? How did you get caught?

FULVIO

I guess you could say I lost my senses. You see, I was going out with these two lovely females, Maria and Sophia, which taught me an important lesson: Never date more than one at a time. . . eh, it's a long story. You don't really want to hear it.

MICHAEL

I do!

FULVIO

Nah, you don't.

MICHAEL

I do!

FULVIO

You convinced me. The setting is: Italia!

(MUSIC CUE)

“TRAPPED LIKE A RAT”

FULVIO (CONT'D)

Home of the great masters: Leonardo, Michelangelo, Donatello, and Raphael (before they were turtles). And then, there's Fulvio, a different kind of “master”. A master of. . . l'amore! Love! Or so I thought. . .

(We are now in FULVIO's Rome. As he sings, he reenacts his capture along with assorted ensemble players.)

FULVIO

(Sings)

IT WAS ONE DAY IN SPRING
I WAS HAVING A FLING
BACK IN ROMA
I WAS PLANNING TO DINE
WITH TWO LADIES SO FINE
I FELT WEAK IN THE KNEES
AT TEN, I SAID, “AVE MARIA!”

(MARIA leaves, swallowing the rest of FULVIO's cheese on her way out. Her exit is followed by SOPHIA's entrance.)

FULVIO

AND THEN, I SAID, “HELLO SOPHIA!”
ALLOW ME THE PLEASURE OF CUTTING THE CHEESE

(Speaks)

Now where is that cheese? I can't find the cheese!
Scusami please!

(FULVIO runs out of his villa and takes to the streets of Rome searching for cheese.)

FULVIO

I WAS RUNNING AROUND
WITH MY NOSE TO THE GROUND
BACK IN ROMA
WHEN THE FAIR CAME IN SIGHT
IT WAS MY LUCKY NIGHT
'CAUSE THE FAIR'S WHERE IT'S AT

(A giant piece of cheese appears attached to a rather large and formidable mousetrap.)

FULVIO

OH, I WAS A HUNGRY FELLA
WHO'D DIE FOR SOME GOOD MOZZARELLA
I SPOTTED THE CHEESE AND I ACTED SO FOOLISH
LOST ALL MY COOL, WISH I HADN'T DONE THAT!

(He grabs the cheese, sets off the trap, and a BARKER appears lowering a cage over him.)

FULVIO

I WAS TRAPPED LIKE A RAT
I WAS PENNED LIKE A PIG
I WAS LOCKED BEHIND BARS
IN A CAGE THIS BIG!
I SHOUTED, "HELP ME! AIUTO!
FREE ME, YOU BRUTO!
DO I LOOK LIKE SOME BUREAUCRAT?"
I WAS TRAPPED LIKE A RAT!

FULVIO (CONT'D)

(spoken to Michael)

For three years! Can you believe it? Three years of my life. . . wasted. And that's fifteen
in rat years! Think of all the missed opportunities!

(sings)

THE WOMEN I'VE LOST
A LIFETIME OF PASTA
MAMMA'S LASAGNA LOADED WITH FAT—MMM!
(MICHAEL brings in his own experiences as analogous to FULVIO.)

MICHAEL

DAYS OF ADVENTURE
NIGHTS BETTER SPENT
SURE, I'M ALIVE
BUT I WANT MUCH MORE THAN
JUST TO SURVIVE

FULVIO
I'LL SECOND THAT!

MICHAEL & FULVIO

I WAS TRAPPED LIKE A RAT
NOW I'M FREE AS A BIRD
I WILL THINK OF THE PAST
AND SAY, "HOW ABSURD!"

FULVIO

AND WHEN WE FIND OUR NEW SETTING

MICHAEL

THERE WILL BE NO MORE REGRETTING

MICHAEL & FULVIO

LIKE WHEN LIFE WAS DULL AND FLAT

FULVIO

I WAS TRAPPED

MICHAEL

I WAS TRAPPED

MICHAEL & FULVIO

YOU WERE TRAPPED
HE WAS TRAPPED

FULVIO

IN A TRAP

MICHAEL & FULVIO

THAT WENT SNAP!
I WAS TRAPPED LIKE A RAT!

(Blackout. MICHAEL and FULVIO exit. Lights up as RALEIGH enters.)

RALEIGH

As Michael and Fulvio continued on their long and foreboding journey, the mystery of the worn-out dancing shoes persisted at the castle. Many suitors had already tried their hand at solving the peculiar puzzle with rather nasty results.

(The Throne Room. As RALEIGH exits, the KING enters and sits on the throne.)

KING

I should like to have the company of my two courtiers.
(A quick TRUMPET FLOURISH. COURTIERS #1 AND #2 ENTER.)

COURTIERS

(British)
Didst thou beckon, sire?

KING

Will you please stop using that ridiculous language?

COURTIERS

As you wish, sire.

KING

What is the status of the shoes?

COURTIER #1

I'm afraid it looks—

COURTIER #2

rather grim, sire.

KING

Worn through?

COURTIER #1

To the sole—

COURTIER #2

sire.

KING

(sighs)

Bring on the suitor.

COURTIERS

Yes, sire.

(The COURTIERS exit and immediately return carrying a recently awakened SUITOR wearing pajamas. The six PRINCESSES follow.)

SUITOR

Hey, what's goin' on! Put me down!

KING

Anything to report, squire?

SUITOR

Uhh, well, I was all set to follow the princesses last night, and then I, uh, just uhh, well.

KING

Fell asleep?

SUITOR

Yeah! Exactly!

KING

(feigning sympathy)
Oh, I'm sorry. Were you very tired?

SUITOR

Yeah. Boy, was I ever tired. Exhausted. Just needed a good night's sleep.

KING

Indeed. You look well rested.

SUITOR

I feel like a million bucks. Tonight, I'll find out what's goin' on around here for sure!

KING

Sorry. You were told that you would have one change to prove yourself, and you failed.
(to Courtiers)
Dispose of him please.

COURTIERS

Yes, sire.

(The COURTIERS start to carry the SUITOR away. Princess GABRIELLA steps forward.)

GABRIELLA

(regretful)
Silence, Gabriella. It must be done. I'm sorry.

SUITOR

When he said "dispose of him", what did he mean exactly?

COURTIER #1

Chop. . .

COURTIER #2

. . .chop.

SUITOR

Oh, man, I gotta work in the kitchen?
(The COURTIERS shake their heads.)

SUITOR

Gardener?
(Nope.)

SUITOR

Well, I'm baffled!

COURTIER #1

(points to his neck)
Chop. . .

COURTIER #2

. . .chop

SUITOR

Oh, come on. Wait this is a joke, right? Right?

(tiny voice)

Help meeee!

(The COURTIERS exit with the struggling SUITOR. Princess NORA steps forward.)

NORA

Why must you keep doing this father?

KING

Why are your shoes tattered beyond repair?

NORA

I... I don't know.

KING

Where do you all disappear to every night?

NORA

I don't know! I don't remember going anywhere.

KING

Well, until you do know or can remember or one of these suitors unravels the mystery, this is how it must be.

(As the PRINCESSES exit, NOSTRADAMUS enters carrying a crystal ball.)

NOSTRADAMUS

(to Princesses)

Why so glum, ladies?

KING

Come forward, my friend. Nostradamus, wise prophet of the ages, you have been by my side since this wretched riddle began to plague my kingdom. Your keen insight into what the future holds has proved invaluable to me.

NOSTRADAMUS

I do my best, your majesty.

KING

Once again, I'm afraid I must ask of you: When I awake tomorrow morning, will the mystery be solved.?

NOSTRADAMUS

It would be my pleasure to give you an answer, sire.

KING

Oh, thank you, Nostradamus.

NOSTRADAMUS

But first, there is a little matter of, well how shall I say it. . . money? I've been in your service for nearly five years now, and I think it's time I got a raise.

KING

But, my friend, I just increased your salary yesterday.

NOSTRADAMUS

Yes, yes. But why bicker over petty details? I understand that the royal treasury has become somewhat depleted of late, but did I not predict the locusts in time for you to have the exterminators in place?

KING

Yes, but—

NOSTRADAMUS

And how about the hailstorms?

KING

Well, yes, thanks to you we had emergency shelters built.

NOSTRADAMUS

You wouldn't want me leaving the kingdom now, would you?

KING

Of course not!

NOSTRADAMUS

Then I propose a deal: You give me more money, and I just may see an end in sight for this ghastly affair.

KING

very well. Here you are.

(The KING hands a bag to NOSTRADAMUS who looks into his now glowing crystal ball with a sudden reverie.)

NOSTRADAMUS

Ah ha! It's all becoming very clear! Oh, it doesn't look good, your majesty. I see. . . I see. . .

KING

What? What do you see?

NOSTRADAMUS

(in verse)

I FORESEE TOMORROW MORNING
AND IT'S NOT GOOD NEWS
AT DAWN, YOU WILL AWAKEN
TO THE WORN-OUT DANCING SHOES.

KING

Oh, dear.

NOSTRADAMUS

But, never you fear, your majesty. Sooner or later, with your continued patronage of course, I'm bound to put a dent in this mystery.

KING

Thank you Nostradamus. I feel much better knowing that my future is in your hands.
(The KING exits.)

NOSTRADAMUS

More than you know, your majesty. For you see. . .

(MUSIC CUE)

"THE FUTURE TENSE"

NOSTRADAMUS

THE SKY RAINED HAIL FOR SEVEN DAYS
AND I FORESAW THE HAILING
THE LOCUSTS CAME AND JUST THE SAME
MY POWERS PROVED UNFAILING
BUT THE PLAGUES I DID FORESEE
(THOUGH IT MAY SEEM DASTARDLY)
WERE CAUSED BY, WELL, ME!
AS A BOY I ENJOYED MAKING TROUBLE
FOR THE TEACHERS WHO TAUGHT ME IN SCHOOL
THE MORNING I LEVELED THE SCHOOLHOUSE TO RUBBLE—Whoops!
MY PARENTS CONDEMNED ME, PROCLAIMED ME A FOOL
"YOUR FUTURE LOOKS AWFULLY GRIM," THEY SAID
"WE WANTED A SON, GOT A DIM-WIT INSTEAD."
DID I DESPAIR? -- NO NO NO!
DID I EVEN CARE? -- DON'T THINK SO!

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT.)

THINKING BACK TO MY LESSONS IN GRAMMAR, YOU SEE
IT SUDDENLY MADE PERFECT SENSE
CHANGING "I WAS" AND "I AM" TO "I WILL BE"
I LIVED LIFE IN THE FUTURE TENSE!
BUT! YES, THERE'S A 'BUT'!
TWO YEARS LATER, I FELL INTO A RUT
DELUSIONS OF CLOUT HAD LED ME TO POUT
MY AMBITIONS WERE BIG, MY RESOURCES WERE SMALL
MORE! I WANTED MORE!
I WAS GREEDY LIKE NEVER BEFORE!
WHEN OUT OF THE BLUE, SOMEONE ANSWERED MY CALL
IN THE FORM OF THIS MAGICAL CRYSTAL BALL. . .

(He picks up the crystal ball which glows as he shows it off to the audience.)

NOSTRADAMUS

NOW I'M A MAN WHO CAN PLAN TO MAKE TROUBLE
AND IT'S TROUBLE I'M PLANNING TO MAKE
CONTROLLING THE WORLD WITH MY PRECIOUS GLASS BUBBLE
HIS MAJESTY GIVES AND I TAKE—I TAKE!
I'LL TELL YOU THE FUTURE, YOUR MAJESTY:
YOU AND YOUR PRINCESSES BOWING TO ME!
WHY ARE THEIR SHOES WORN TO THE SOLE?
WELL, HERE'S THE BAD NEWS: I'VE PLAYED A ROLE!
YOUR DAUGHTERS WILL DANCE FOR ME NIGHT AFTER NIGHT
THEIR MEM'RIES ERASED BY THE DAWN'S EARLY LIGHT
YOUR TREASURY DRAINED, A NEW KING'S REIGN WILL COMMENCE

(He sits on the throne.)

NOSTRADAMUS

IN MY LOV'LY NEW SPREAD
THANKS TO THINKING AHEAD
WAY AHEAD IN THE FUTURE TENSE!

(Blackout. Lights up on RALEIGH as he enters with a rather distasteful expression.)

RALEIGH

Hmmph! And to think that he was best man at my wedding. Missus Raleigh was very upset when we found out about him! I can't believe I fell for his poppycock fortune-telling. I, of all people, should have now better. Anyway, back to the story. . . The sun set, the moon ascended into the sky, and our princesses became increasingly concerned about their soles. . . sorry, bad pun.

(The Princesses' Chambers. RALEIGH exits. Princesses NORA, GABRIELLA, CATHERINE, MIRANDA, ELISA, and ALEXANDRA, are preparing for bed. A nearly full box labeled "WORN-OUT DANCING SHOES" looms ominously in the corner.)

CATHERINE

You know, Nora, you really must be careful about talking back to father.

NORA

I wasn't talking back. I just want to put an end to all this.

ALEXANDRA

Me too! If this keeps up, there won't be one eligible bachelor left in the kingdom. Or any kingdom!

ELISA

Just peasants.

ALEXANDRA

(disgusted)
Ooooooh, peasants.

NORA

I can't believe we're related. How can I be the youngest and yet be the most mature?

MIRANDA

Oh boy, here she goes again.

NORA

I can't wait to move out of here.

GABRIELLA

You can't move out of the castle!
(The door bursts open and in struts BUFF GUY #1)

BUFF GUY #1

Of course she can. And she will.

(to Nora)

Won't you, honeybunch? I'll build you a castle, the likes of which you've never seen. . . when we're joined together in matrimonial bliss. You know, you really are the most beautiful princess.

NORA

And you are possible the most ill-mannered buffoon I have ever met.

BUFF GUY #1

Ooooooh, feisty! Eh, you'll get over it. Tomorrow, this mystery will be solved, thanks to yours truly, and we'll be on our honeymoon.

GABRIELLA

(Points him to the door)
The door?

BUFF GUY #1

Yes it is! If any of you need me, I'll be just in the next room, watching for anything mysterious. G'night, ladies.
(He gallantly exits.)

GABRIELLA

“Buffoon” . . . That was good, Nora.

ELISA

More like “baboon”.
(*They laugh. There is a knock at the door.*)

CATHERINE

Oh, no, not again.

NORA

(*to the door*)
Go away!
(*The door opens revealing the KING.*)

KING

Excuse me?

NORA

Oh, sorry father. I didn’t know it was—

KING

No matter. I just came to wish you all goodnight.
(*He kisses each of them as they say “goodnight”.*)

KING

I wish I could say that tomorrow this mystery will end, but Nostradamus has predicted otherwise.

NORA

I don’t like him, father. Why do you keep paying him to tell you the same thing day after day?

KING

Nostradamus has saved my kingdom from near catastrophe on more than one occasion. He deserves our gratitude and respect.

(*The action freezes and the lights dim on the Princesses’ chambers as the lights come up on BUFF GUY #1 in his adjoining room with his ear to the wall trying to listen. NOSTRADAMUS surreptitiously enters carrying his crystal ball.*)

NOSTRADAMUS

Listening for something? Or is your ear stuck to the wall . . .?

BUFF GUY #1

Just trying to get some clues . . . Hey, is that one of those “magic ball” things? Lemme see.
(*He grabs the crystal ball from NOSTRADAMUS and shakes it.*)

BUFF GUY #1

(to crystal ball)

Will I solve the mystery, marry a princess who will be subservient to me, and live happily ever after?

(NOSTRADAMUS takes back the crystal ball, and it begins to glow. BUFF GUY #1 freezes as if in a trance.)

NOSTRADAMUS

My sources say 'no' ...

(in verse)

I FORESEE YOU WON'T REMEMBER ME
I'M CLEARLY A MIRAGE
IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO SLEEP
SO, PLEASANT DREAMS AND BON VOYAGE!

(BUFF GUY #1 falls asleep and his room turns dark. As the lights return to normal in the Princesses' chambers, the action continues where it left off.)

KING

And besides, he's the only one who can give me hope for an end to this puzzling matter. Unless you've been able to remember something?
(They all silently look down.)

NORA

I'm sorry, father.

KING

(sighs)

I know that things haven't been easy since your mother passed away, but you girls are all I have, and I'll do anything I have to do to insure your safety. Goodnight.
(The KING exits.)

NORA

This is so frustrating!

GABRIELLA

I hate feeling completely helpless.

MIRANDA

This just doesn't make any sense! I mean, we've obviously been going somewhere at night and doing something to wear out our dancing shoes.

CATHERINE

Judging by the holes in my shoes and the calluses on my feet, I'd say we've been doing a lot of dancing.

ELISA

But why can't we remember? I'd like to think I'd remember dancing all night. . . especially if it was with a rich, good looking, really well-built suitor!

(MUSIC CUE)

“REMEMBER WHEN”

ALEXANDRA

We're losing it, don't you see? We're losing our minds!

NORA

We are not losing our minds, Alexandra.

ALEXANDRA

Then why can't we remember anything, Nora?

ELISA

Nothing!

NORA

Nothing? Really now.

(sings)

REMEMBER WHEN WE MET THAT DASHING SUITOR?
BESIDE THE WISHING WELL

ALEXANDRA

WAIT, THERE WERE TWO!

ELISA

IT WAS TOUGH DECIDING WHICH OF THEM WAS CUTER

NORA

THAT'S NOT THE POINT I WANTED TO GET THROUGH TO YOU

ALEXANDRA

ONE WAS SO VERY HANDSOME

ELISA

ONE HAD HAIR OF SILKEN GOLD

ALEXANDRA & ELISA

HE WAS MY KIND OF MAN

ELISA

SOMEONE GRAND

ALEXANDRA

SOMEWHAT BOLD

NORA

(clears her throat)

My point is:

(sings)

WE ALL REMEMBER DAYS OF LONG AGO DESPITE
THE FACT WE CAN'T REMEMBER WHERE WE WENT LAST NIGHT!

CATHERINE

REMEMBER WHEN WE USED TO PRACTICE DANCING
PREPARING FOR THE YEARLY ROYAL BALL?

GABRIELLA

THE MEM'RY OF THOSE NIGHTS IS SO ENTRANING

MIRANDA

YET A MEM'RY OF LAST NIGHT I DON'T RECALL AT ALL

CATHERINE, GABRIELLA, & MIRANDA

OUR SHOES WOULD HOLD TOGETHER
WHENEVER WE LET LOOSE
BUT NOW IT SEEMS THE LEATHER
IS WEATHERED FROM USE

PRINCESSES

WE HAVEN'T DANCED FOR AGES, SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT
IT APPEARS THAT WE'VE BEEN DANCING EACH AND EV'RY NIGHT!

NORA & GABRIELLA

WHAT WOULD MOTHER DO?
SHE ALWAYS FOUND A WAY
TO PAINT A PRETTY PICTURE
USING ONLY SHADES OF GREY

ALEXANDRA & ELISA

WHEN SOMETHING BOTHERED FATHER
SHE KNEW JUST WHAT TO SAY...

PRINCESSES

REMEMBER WHEN WE PROMISED TO EACH OTHER
IF EVER ANY PROBLEMS SHOULD ARISE
WE'D FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF OUR MOTHER
AND FIND OURSELVES A SORT OF COMPROMISE

NORA, CATHERINE, & GABRIELLA

BUT THIS IS NOT A CRISIS
A COMPROMISE CAN FIX

ALEXANDRA, ELISA, & MIRANDA

AND SO THE SACRIFICE IS:

NORA, CATHERINE, & GABRIELLA

THE PRICE IS

PRINCESSES

WE SIX. . .

(All the PRINCESSES except NORA proceed to fall asleep.)

NORA

I KNOW SOMEONE WILL MAKE THIS MYST'RY END—AND THEN
WE'LL LOOK BACK UPON THESE TIMES
AND SAY, "REMEMBER WHEN"

(The moment NORA falls asleep, the shadowy figure of NOSTRADAMUS appears holding his glowing crystal ball in a full-length mirror behind the Princesses' beds. Blackout. Lights up as RALEIGH enters.)

RALEIGH

Meanwhile, Michael and Fulvio continued along the road leading to the castle. 'Twas a lovely evening.

(MICHAEL and FULVIO happily stroll along the road admiring the weather.)

MICHAEL

Lovely evening, eh Fulvio?

FULVIO

Ah, si! Bellissima!

(RALEIGH pulls out a script and spectacles.)

RALEIGH

Oh, wait a moment. I'm sorry. "It was storming."
(Lightning lights up the stage followed by thunder. MICHAEL and FULVIO are suddenly caught in torrential rain.)

FULVIO

Aaaaaaaaah! What are we going to do?
(MICHAEL looks left then right, then back at FULVIO.)

MICHAEL

Get wet?

RALEIGH

Fortunately for them, they soon caught sight of a brightly lit inn where they sought shelter.

MICHAEL

An inn!

FULVIO

We're saved! Andiamo! Let's go!

(MICHAEL and FULVIO run off.)

(An Inn. A PIANO PLAYER tickles the ivories on a honky tonk piano. CHARLIE, the innkeeper, walks around pouring drinks for a merry band of somewhat inebriated INN GUESTS, and then returns to behind the bar.)

DRUNK INN GUEST

Pour me another, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You sure, pal? You've had a lot to drink. Maybe you oughta lay off.

DRUNK INN GUEST

Do it! On the rocks!

CHARLIE

You're the boss. One more "No-Neck Special" comin' up. Hey, all of you! Heard a new joke today: A suitor's brought before the king after h fails to figure out the princess shoe mystery, right?

DRUNKER INN GUEST

Already heard it, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You'll hear it again. So anyway, the king says, "Take 'im away," right? And the poor guy says to the king, "Hey, cut me a break will ya?" So the king says "well, which one?"
(laughs)
Get it?
(Silence.)

CHARLIE

"Which one?" . . . "Cut me a break." . . . Aww, you guys are hopeless.
(With a strong gust of wind, the door bursts open revealing MICHAEL and FULVIO soaked to the bone. Everyone stops and stares.)

FULVIO

(to Michael)
We're dead.

MICHAEL

Relax. We're fine. . . I hope.

DRUNK INN GUEST

What did you put in my drink, Charlie? I'm seein' things!

CHARLIE

Like a kid and a big rat standing in the doorway?

DRUNK INN GUEST

Get outta here! You been drinkin' too?

CHARLIE

Hey, kid! Come on over here.

(to Inn Guests)

Mind your own business, folks. There's nothing to see here.

(MICHAEL and FULVIO approach the bar.)

CHARLIE

Anything I can get for you, uhh. . .

(looks at Fulvio)

. . .fellas? Some water perhaps?

(He chuckles. MICHAEL and FULVIO look at each other and remain stone faced.)

FULVIO

We are not amused.

MICHAEL

A room for the night would be fine, thanks. And two towels, please.

CHARLIE

No problem. Here you go. I live to serve.

(He hands them the towels from below the bar. They dry themselves off.)

CHARLIE

So, uh, you two want the honeymoon suite?

(He chuckles again.)

FULVIO

You are a real joker, no?

CHARLIE

I call 'em as I see 'em. . . Name's Charlie. So what brings you two to this neck of the woods? You don't look like you're from around here.

MICHAEL

We're not. My name's Michael, and this is Fulvio. We're on our way to the castle to try to solve the mystery—

DRUNK INN GUEST

Yeah, try!

(to Inn Guests)

Hey, get a load of this kid, you guys! He says he's gonna try to solve the mystery!

INN GUESTS

Ha ha! Go ahead and try. ya sap! Try! Try! Try!

CHARLIE

All right! That's enough!

(to Michael)

You may want to rethink your plan, Mickey.

MICHAEL

Michael

CHARLIE

You see, you're not the first brash young suitor to come waltzing through here thinking he's got this thing in the bag. No no no. If you try an' solve the mystery, and you don't? Well, it's curtains for you kid. Curtains.

FULVIO

What do window draperies have to do with all this?

MICHAEL

I don't understand what you're getting at, Charlie. What have I got to lose?

OLD INN GUEST

You could lose yer noggin!

MICHAEL

My what?

DRUNK INN GUEST

You better tell 'im, Charlie.

CHARLIE

You're right. Got a little story for you, Mickey.

MICHAEL

It's Michael.

CHARLIE

You'd better listen too, Fabio.

FULVIO

Fulvio!

CHARLIE

Well, unless you wanna say a final "cheerio", listen up. Maestro?

(MUSIC CUE)

"DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD"

(The PIANO PLAYER plays an arpeggio.)

CHARLIE

HERE'S A TALE, WORSE THAN ALE. . .

(CHARLIE takes a drink from a mug of ale and then spits it out with a look of disgust.)

. . . GONE STALE

OF A TRAGIC ROYAL MESS

ONE BY ONE, THE SUITORS COME

THEIR FATE YOU NEVER WILL GUESS

AND WHERE THEY'VE GONE

"GOD IN HEAVEN KNOWS"

SO THIS IS HOW THE STORY GOES:

CHARLIE (CONT.)

THERE ARE SIX GIRLS UNWED *
EACH YOUNG MAN THEY BEHEAD
WAS JUST TRYING TO SUIT THEM IN TURN
WE ALL SIT HERE AND LAUGH
WHEN THEY GET SPLIT IN HALF
A SHARP FEELING AS YOU WILL SOON LEARN
I'VE SEEN BOYS COME AND GO
WHO DON'T KNOW THAT WE KNOW
THEY'RE ALL DOOMED, SO I GIVE 'EM FREE BEER
'CAUSE THERE'S NO TURNING BACK
ONCE YOU'VE SET DOWN THAT TRACK
IT'S A TERMINAL CRACK YOU WILL HEAR!

INN GUESTS

IT'S AS PLAIN AS CAN BE
B-E-H-E-A-D

(Six of the INN GUESTS hold up cheerleading placards as they sing to spell out "behead".)

INN GUESTS

A MORE MENACING WORD YA WON'T FIND
KID, YA WON'T SAVE THE DAY
SO BE GONE, ON YOUR WAY!
HEY, WE DON'T MEAN TO SEEM TO UNKIND
BUT WE'VE THOUGHT THIS THING THROUGH
HERE IS WHAT YOU SHOULD DO:
TURN AROUND AND MARCH STRAIGHT OUT THAT DOOR
'CAUSE WE WON'T EVER WEEP
FOR YOUR PERMANENT SLEEP
AND YOUR CRANIUM SPLAT ON THE FLOOR!

INN WOMEN

BUT, IF YOU REFUSE

INN MEN

HERE'S THE GOOD NEWS:

CHARLIE & BARBERSHOP INN GUESTS
YOUR LIFE IS ALL THAT YOU'LL LOSE!

CHARLIE & INN GUESTS

DO WHATEVER YA PLEASE
BUT WE'RE DOWN ON OUR KNEES
AND THIS GESTURE IS ALL FOR YOUR SAKE
FOR WITH ONE FINAL GULP
YOU'RE REDUCED TO A PULP
A TRULY DISASTROUS MISTAKE
IT'S MUCH BETTER WE'VE FOUND
TO BE SHOT, HUNG, OR DROWNED
THAN TO LONG FOR THE USE OF A COMB
IF YA WANNA SAVE FACE
DON'T COMPETE IN THE RACE
IT'S A DANGEROUS PLACE SO GO HOME!

(The lights dim as the four BARBERSHOP INN GUESTS bring down the house for a moment.)

BARBERSHOP INN GUESTS

EV'RY MORNING WE CAN SENSE IMPENDING DOOM
WHEN THE KING HEADS TO HIS DAUGHTERS' ROOM
'CAUSE WHEN HE FINDS THEIR SHOES ARE DILAPIDATED
THE KING HAS A SUITOR DE-CA-PI-TA-TED!
(CHARLIE and the INN GUESTS form a kick line.)

CHARLIE & INN GUESTS

LISTEN, HEED OUR ADVICE
LIVING LIFE IS REAL NICE
PLUS IT'S BETTER THAN LIFE WHEN YOU'RE DEAD!

CHARLIE

IF YA CHANCE IT AND GO

INN GUESTS

'MEMBER WE TOLD YA SO!

CHARLIE

IF YA HAD A FULL DECK

INN GUESTS

THEN YOU'D VALUE YOUR NECK!

CHARLIE

PLEASE DON'T DO THIS MY FRIEND

CHARLIE & DRUNK INN GUEST

IT'S A SAD BLOODY END

CHARLIE & INN GUESTS

HEY KID, DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD!

(Everyone in the inn passes out with the exception of MICHAEL and FULVIO, who's a bit woozy from having beer stuffed down his throat. CHARLIE sits up in a drunken haze.)

CHARLIE

And don't drink and dr—
(looks around)

Just don't drink.

(He passes out and begins to snore. MICHAEL grabs the key to his room from CHARLIE's hand and drags a semi-conscious FULVIO offstage.)

FULVIO

Michael! You're upside down!

MICHAEL

And you're drunk. Sweet dreams, Fulvio.

(FULVIO immediately begins snoring. Blackout.)

(It is dawn the next morning, and CHARLIE bids farewell to MICHAEL and FULVIO.)

CHARLIE

You sure you wanna do this, Michael?

MICHAEL

That's Mickey. I mean, I mean. . . yes, I'm sure.

CHARLIE

If you say so. Good luck.

MICHAEL

Here's for the room.

(MICHAEL hands him a few coins.)

CHARLIE

You keep it, pal. Just be careful. You watch out for 'im, Fulvio.

FULVIO

Si, I plan to watch. Ciao!

MICHAEL

Thanks for the warning, Charlie. G'bye.

(They exit leaving CHARLIE calling after them.)

CHARLIE

Good luck, kid!

(aside)

You'll need it.

(CHARLIE exits, and RALEIGH appears.)

RALEIGH

Now, here's where the story gets really exhilarating! (It's almost time for my official entrance. . .) Michael and Fulvio arrived at the castle later that morning only to find the guards rather inhospitable.

(The Castle Entrance. MICHAEL and FULVIO stand in front of the doors to the castle and knock.)

MICHAEL

Hello? Is anyone there? Hello?

FULVIO

Maybe they are on vacation?

(Two rectangular boxes, similar to that of a 20's speakeasy, open on the doors revealing the eyes of the COURTIERS.)

COURTIER #1

Shoo shoo! Be gone with thee, peasant!

COURTIER #2

Abandon all hope to enter here, impoverished one!

FULVIO

Friendly guys.

MICHAEL

I want to see the king.

COURTIER #2

(laughs)

Oh really? He wants to see the king! And what makes you think that he wants to see you?

COURTIER #1

His highness only sees suitors who are here to try to solve the—

MICHAEL

That's me. I'm a suitor.

(The "peep-boxes" shut very abruptly followed by the sound of muffled laughter.)

FULVIO

They did not go for it.

MICHAEL

I can see that. . . There has to be some way we can. . .

(spots something offstage)

Wait a minute.

FULVIO

What? What is it?

MICHAEL

A way in.

(They run offstage.)

(The Castle Gardens. RALEIGH enters whistling on the opposite side from which they ran off doing some shrubbery trimming with his shears. MICHAEL enters moments later with FULVIO in tow panting.)

FULVIO

I hope that what you see is a hospital because I will be needing one very soon.

MICHAEL

No no. Look!

FULVIO

What? Ah haaa!

(MICHAEL creeps toward RALEIGH, who is still unaware of his presence. MICHAEL clears his throat, but RALEIGH keeps tinkering. MICHAEL taps him on the shoulder.)

MICHAEL

Excuse me, sir.

(RALEIGH jumps and drops his gardening shears.)

RALEIGH

Whoa!

MICHAEL

Sorry to scare you like that.

RALEIGH

(picks up shears)

Oh, no trouble at all. I'm used to it. What can I do for you?

MICHAEL

I assume you're one of the king's gardeners?

RALEIGH

Assume not, my young friend. I am not one of the gardeners. I am the gardener.

MICHAEL

Just a moment. Are you the head gardener?

RALEIGH

Well, yes, but also the only gardener. My name is Raleigh.

MICHAEL

Really?

RALEIGH

Raleigh. And you are. . .

MICHAEL

Michael

RALEIGH

And who's your friend hiding behind the hedge?

(FULVIO steps out from behind the hedge.)

That's Fulvio

MICHAEL

Whoa! Big rat!

RALEIGH

Little human!

FULVIO

Whoa! Big talking rat! Touche, my friend.

RALEIGH

Do you mean to tell me that you tend these vast gardens. . . by yourself?

MICHAEL

Yes indeedy.

RALEIGH

Then I guess you wouldn't be needing another gardener?

MICHAEL

Actually, I have been very busy with some outside work lately, so I suppose I could use some help.

RALEIGH

Really?

MICHAEL

Raleigh. Sure. The job is yours if you want it.

RALEIGH

Sold!

MICHAEL

Alright then. . . here.

RALEIGH

(He hand MICHAEL his gardening shears.)

Every morning, I want you to take these shears and put together six bouquets of six flowers each. No more, no less, or sparks will fly. These are for the princesses. Now I want you to--

RALEIGH

(interrupting)
Wait wait wait. . . I' bringing flowers to the princesses?

MICHAEL

Yes. Do you have a problem with that?

RALEIGH

MICHAEL

um, no, it's just that. . . whoa. . .

RALEIGH

Good. Now I want you to cut an assortment of flowers, not all the same. You must be at the foot of the royal staircase every morning to greet each of the six princesses with a bouquet. You got all that?

MICHAEL

Check.

RALEIGH

Check what? Listen, you had better hurry and get started because the princesses will be down in less than half an hour.

MICHAEL

Right.
(*MICHAEL runs off with FULVIO.*)

RALEIGH

Write what? These kids today with their peculiar. . . oh, he meant. . .

(*MICHAEL sticks his head out.*)

MICHAEL

And thanks again!

RALEIGH

Go! Go!

MICHAEL

I'm off!

(*He disappears.*)

RALEIGH

Off what? Oh, I give up. Now, where was I? Ah, yes. . . Hmm, where the devil did I put those shears?

(*Blackout.*)

(*The Royal Staircase. MICHAEL stands at the foot of the steps holding the six bouquets. FULVIO stands behind him.*)

MICHAEL

I hate to say this, Fulvio, but maybe you ought to. . . hide out for a little while. Somehow I don't see princesses reacting well to a r. . . to you.

FULVIO

(*sighs*)

I understand. You have fun without me. I will just find some corner in which to cry.

MICHAEL

Oh stop it. Just stand off to the side where no one will see you. Quickly! Here they come!

(The PRINCESSES walk down the staircase one at a time. MICHAEL greets each one of them with a bouquet.)

MICHAEL

Good morning, princess. Good morning, princess. Good morning, princess, Good morning, princess. Good morning, princess.

(As MICHAEL is about to greet NORA, they share a seemingly eternal moment of eye contact and his brain seems to shut down. If love at first sight is possible, this is it.)

MICHAEL

Good. . . princess. . . morning. . . I mean, I mean, here you are, princess.

NORA

Thank you. I've never had a young man bring me flowers before.

MICHAEL

N-never?

NORA

Ever. It's always Raleigh who brings the bouquets.

MICHAEL

I . . . I'm the new head gardener. . . . assistant.

NORA

I think I could get used to you.

(And with that, she's gone. MICHAEL turns to putty.)

FULVIO

Having fun, Don Juan? Better wake up. here comes the king!

(The KING enters and is met by the COURTIERS who are carrying a dreamy-eyed BUFF GUY #1 down the royal staircase. MICHAEL stands at attention.)

MICHAEL

Good morning, your majesty.

KING

(ignores Michael)

Don't tell me. The shoes are worn-out, and he fell asleep.

COURTIERS

Precisely, sire.

BUFF GUY #1

(sings off-key)

I know you, I've walked with you once upon a dream is a wish your heart makes when you wish upon a star. . .

KING

Are you drunk?

BUFF GUY #1

(sings off-key)

Goodnight, baby, goodnight, milkman's on his way. . .

KING

Get him out of here.

(The COURTIERS carry BUFF GUY #1 away.)

KING

Nostradamus

(Nostradamus pushes MICHAEL aside as he enters.)

NOSTRADAMUS

Move, peasant.

MICHAEL

Hey!

(MICHAEL and FULVIO watch from the corner.)

KING

Ahhh, Nostradamus. Please let your words be favorable.

(Nostradamus clears his throat and extends his palm. The KING removes another small bag from his pocket and hands it to NOSTRADAMUS who peers into his glowing crystal ball.)

NOSTRADAMUS

(in verse)

I'D FORESEE THAT IT WILL END
I WOULD DO THAT IF I COULD
BUT THE SHOES LOOK WORN TO PIECES
SO THE OUTLOOK 'S NOT SO GOOD.

(Blackout.)

(Raleigh's Cottage. MICHAEL and FULVIO are both lying on their respective cots.)

MICHAEL

I'm telling you Fulvio, she is it. She is what I've been looking for my entire life!

FULVIO

Okay! Basta! I have heard enough already.

MICHAEL

And she's no more than a stone's throw away from here.

FULVIO

Si! And she's a princess. How do you plan to woo a princess when you're just a gardener? And how about the king?

MICHAEL

Woo the king?

FULVIO

Ay, dio mio. No no. I doubt that the king looks very kindly on his daughters marrying peasants. How are you planning to convince him?

MICHAEL

Simple. All we have to do is solve the mystery.

FULVIO

What is all this "we" stuff? I am not planning to lose my head over some girl. I told you what happened to me the last time I didn't think things through. You had better really want that cheese!

MICHAEL

I do! I can't believe I didn't ask for her name. I am such a fool!

FULVIO

A fool for love. "A fool and his formaggio are quickly parted." Old proverb in the Capellini family. Now I know from experience.

(RALEIGH enters holding a candle and wearing a nightcap and gown.)

RALEIGH

Time for bed, you two. You have to be up early tomorrow to collect the bouquets.

MICHAEL

Alright. Oh, Raleigh, there's this one princess--

RALEIGH

Nora.

MICHAEL

She's the last one to come down and. . . Nora?

FULVIO

Michael's in love.

RALEIGH

Nora. She has that effect.

MICHAEL

Nora. . . one more question: Do you have any idea--

RALEIGH

--where the princesses go at night?

(MICHAEL just nods in astonishment.)

RALEIGH

Sorry, my boy. I haven't the foggiest. Goodnight.

(RALEIGH exits.)

MICHAEL

Nora. . .

FULVIO

Say it again. I missed it the first four times.

MICHAEL

We need a plan, Fulvio.

FULVIO

I plan to sleep.

MICHAEL

There's only one way to find out how they escape at night. Fulvio, you have to sneak into their room and find out.

FULVIO

Me? Why me? You go!

MICHAEL

You're less conspicuous.

FULVIO

I'm a big rat!

MICHAEL

Please. . .

(pause.)

FULVIO

Fine. Fine, I'll go. But you better be there to get me out when they lock me up again.

MICHAEL

Don't worry. Just find out how they get out of their room and we'll take it from there.

(Blackout.)

(Castle Hallway. FULVIO creeps across the dimly lit stage.)

FULVIO

“Don’t worry,” he says. you just go, Fulvio. I will take a nap. You will probably get killed or worse, but try not to wake me if you make it back alive.

(FULVIO narrowly avoids an encounter with the COURTIERS.)

COURTIER #1

Didst thou hear a disturbance?

COURTIER #2

‘Twas my mind playacting again.

COURTIER #1

Ah yes. Slithy mentis.

(FULVIO heads down the hallway and suddenly encounters a rather large, sleeping, HUNGRY CAT. He tiptoes past and runs into the Princesses’ chambers just as the KING leaves. The HUNGRY CAT opens one eye after FULVIO passes and decides to investigate. FULVIO hides behind one of the Princesses’ beds and listens.)

GABRIELLA

It’s getting to the point where I’m afraid to go to sleep.

NORA

Don’t worry, Gab, everything will be fine.

ALEXANDRA

Except our shoes.

ELISA

And my feet.

CATHERINE

Go to sleep all of you. . . Sweet dreams.

MIRANDA

I hope. . .

(They fall asleep. FULVIO peers out from under the bed when suddenly, NOSTRADAMUS appears in the mirror with his glowing crystal ball.)

FULVIO

What in the world. . .

(Smoke fills the room, causing FULVIO to sporadically cough. The PRINCESSES rise from their beds under NOSTRADAMUS’ spell, and walk toward the mirror.)

NOSTRADAMUS

(in verse)

LISTEN TO MY VOICE
OBEY MY EVERY COMMAND
I FORESEE YOU'LL DANCE FOR ME
IN MY NOT SO DISTANT WONDERLAND.

(The PRINCESSES file through the mirror as NOSTRADAMUS begins to laugh. FULVIO stands and stares in disbelief.)

FULVIO

You have got to be. . .

(The HUNGRY CAT appears behind FULVIO. He taps FULVIO on the shoulder and licks his chops. FULVIO gapes.)

FULVIO

. . .kidding me. . . Nice kitty!

(Blackout. We hear a very loud "meow".)

(The Royal Staircase. MICHAEL stands at the foot of the steps once again passing out bouquets until NORA arrives. The bouquet he hands to her is easily twice the size of the other ones.)

NORA

Thank you. They're beautiful.

MICHAEL

They are now.

NORA

You have a way with. . . floral arrangements.

MICHAEL

I thank you, Princess Nora.

NORA

Now I'm at a disadvantage. You know my name, but I--

MICHAEL

Michael

(Offstage we hear the voice of the KING speaking with the COURTIERS and BUFF GUY #2.)

KING (O.S.)

Oh, god, another one! Take him away!

COURTIERS (O.S.)

Yes, sire!

(The COURTIERS walk across the stage carrying BUFF GUY #2.)

BUFF GUY #2

Okay, the ride's over, guys! I've had enough! I'm getting dizzy!

(They exit. MICHAEL and NORA turn their attention back to each other.)

NORA

I'd better go, Michael. You know. . . the pressures of princessly life and all that. . . I'm referring to my sisters of course.

(sideways glance)

You don't say much.

MICHAEL

I . . . I . . . I--

(Nora almost seductively closes the space between her and MICHAEL until they are face to face.)

NORA

Have you ever been this close to a princess before?

MICHAEL

Only in my dreams.

NORA

(dreamy)

You're very. . . sweet.

(abrupt)

But I have to run. See you soon?

(And she's gone once again. MICHAEL is spellbound as his side of the stage turns into the castle gardens where RALEIGH approaches him. NORA's side becomes the throne room as she is joined by ALEXANDRA and ELISA>)

ALEXANDRA

So how's your new gardener boyfriend, Nora?

ELISA

Yeah, has the farm boy shown you any of his livestock yet? A few sheep? Some pigs perhaps?

NORA

He's not my boyfriend. He just seems. . . different.

(The action freezes as MICHAEL and RALEIGH carry on their conversation.)

MICHAEL

There's something different about her.

RALEIGH

Oh, I wouldn't be so sure about that, my boy. Most of these princesses are rather, well, into themselves. They can't be bothered by petty things like, oh, conversation, love, et cetera. They have an entirely different agenda.

(They freeze and the action changes to the other side of the stage.)

ALEXANDRA

Different? He's a peasant garden boy. You can't love a gardener. You're a princess.

ELISA

Yeah. What are you going to do? Live on his farm? Milk some cows?

ALEXANDRA

Nora, you should talk to father's therapist. He'd set you straight. I wouldn't be caught dead with a peasant. I mean, what would people think?

NORA

Who cares what people think?! And I'm not talking about marrying him. I just want to know him.

(Back to MICHAEL and RALEIGH)

MICHAEL

I don't think she is that way, Raleigh. I just want to get to know her.

RALEIGH

You're positive? I know some lovely young ladies who you would probably like. And they are far more accessible to a peasa. . . a young man of your stature than a princess who will likely break your heart.

MICHAEL

Haven't you ever fallen in love, Raleigh?

RALEIGH

Well, of course, with Missus Raleigh. She's the castle cook. And a fine one at that! You might want to think about following my example. You may be taking an awful chance.

(Back to NORA, ALEXANDRA, and ELISA.)

ALEXANDRA

Know him? Oh, I feel ill.

ELISA

It's not proper for a princess to love anyone but a prince. . . or at least a knight. Father certainly wouldn't approve.

(The action unfreezes on both sides.)

MICHAEL & NORA

That's a chance I might be willing to take!

RALEIGH

Suit yourself. You know where to find me.

ALEXANDRA

Let's go, Elisa. I can't listen to any more of this.

ELISA

Enjoy your little fairy tale, Nora.

(MUSIC CUE)

“STORYBOOK ROMANCE”

(RALEIGH, ALEXANDRA, and ELISA exit. MICHAEL and NORA talk in their two different worlds.)

NORA

It's not like I'm planning the wedding.

MICHAEL

Who made the rule that someone like me can't be with someone like her?

(sings)

THEY WANT TO KEEP US APART
THOUGH WE'VE NEVER BEEN TOGETHER
I'D RISK A BROKEN HEART
TO BE WITH YOU

NORA

WITH YOU THERE MIGHT BE A WAY
TO LIVE UNTIL FOREVER
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SAY
I CARE, WELL, I DO

MICHAEL

I SET OUT ON THIS QUEST
AND I MUST NOT FAIL

NORA

A DAMSEL'S IN DISTRESS

MICHAEL & NORA

IT'S LIKE A FAIRY TALE

A STORYBOOK ROMANCE
FROM A STORY SOMEONE TOLD ME
A SIMPLE LOOK OR GLANCE
LED ME TO WHERE I AM
ARE WE SO DIFF'RENT? WHO CAN TELL?
MAYBE A KISS WOULD BREAK THE SPELL
OVER THE POWERS THAT BE
WHO KEEP TELLING ME
NOT TO TAKE A CHANGE
ON A STORYBOOK ROMANCE

NORA

FALLING IN LOVE IS HARD ENOUGH
WITHOUT THE WALLS THAT STAND BETWEEN US

MICHAEL

PEOPLE MAY SAY OUR ROAD IS ROUGH
BUT THEY'VE NEVER REALLY SEEN US

NORA

ANYONE CAN BE A PRINCE
BUT HE IS SO MUCH MORE

MICHAEL

SHE'S ALL I'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR -- SINCE THIS STORYBOOK ROMANCE

NORA

A STORYBOOK ROMANCE

MICHAEL

I CAN'T BE SURE ABOUT TOMORROW

NORA

TOMORROW

MICHAEL

THE TWO OF US COULD DANCE

NORA

WE COULD DANCE

MICHAEL & NORA

UNTIL THE BREAK OF DAY
I WILL BE BETTER OFF WHEN I'M
LIVING IN "ONCE UPON A TIME"
OUR LOVE MAY SEEM TOUCH AND GO
BUT HOW WILL I KNOW
'LESS I TAKE A CHANCE
ON A STORYBOOK ROMANCE?
OUR LOVE MAY SEEM TOUCH AND GO
BUT I'LL NEVER KNOW
'LESS I TAKE THE CHANCE
FOR A STORYBOOK ROMANCE

(The set of the castle interior disappears along with NORA, and the stage becomes the castle gardens. FULVIO yells to MICHAEL from offstage.)

FULVIO (O.S.)

Michael! Michael! Where are you?

MICHAEL

Fulvio?

(FULVIO runs onstage panting. His suit is in shreds and he is altogether disheveled. we hear the hissing and meowing of the HUNGRY CAT from offstage.)

FULVIO

Where are. . . a place to hide! Quick! Quick!

MICHAEL

Behind the hedge!

(FULVIO runs behind the hedge which MICHAEL begins to trim. The HUNGRY CAT appears and begins to prowl around. MICHAEL "acts natural".)

MICHAEL

Looking for someone?

(The HUNGRY CAT eyes him suspiciously and continues searching.)

MICHAEL

Big juicy rat, maybe?

(The HUNGRY CAT's ears perk up. He nods affirmatively.)

FULVIO

(whispers)

What are you doing? You're going to make me cat chow!

MICHAEL

(whispers)

Trust me.

FULVIO

(not listening)

I have a plan!

MICHAEL

(to Hungry Cat)

He went that way.

(MICHAEL points in the direction opposite the hedge. The HUNGRY CAT starts to leave when FULVIO inadvertently foils MICHAEL's plan.)

FULVIO

(a la canine)

Woof! Woof! Go away cat! Bark! Ruff! Bark! Yip! Yip!

(The HUNGRY CAT is suspicious of the dog with the Italian accent and turns back. MICHAEL snaps at him with his garden shears which sends him running.)

MICHAEL

Scat! Get lost!

(MICHAEL pauses and turns back to FULVIO who has come out from behind the hedge.)

MICHAEL

That has to be the worst dog imitation I've ever heard.

FULVIO

Hey, I am a lover not an impersonator!

MICHAEL

I thought that you were the one who was supposed to be helping me, hmmm?

FULVIO

And I am. . . or maybe you are not interested in where the princesses go at night, hmmm?

MICHAEL

You found out? You saw? Where? Tell me where!

FULVIO

Oh gee, it has slipped by my mind. Maybe if you told me how much you liked my canine vocal artistry, I could remember.

MICHAEL

You're not serious. . . You are serious. . . Fine. You do a good dog imitation.

FULVIO

Scusami? I did not hear you.

MICHAEL

You bark like a champ, okay? Now where do the princesses go at night?

FULVIO

Through the mirror!

MICHAEL

Through the mirror. Fulvio, if you're kidding around again--

FULVIO

It is true! Some evil guy appears, casts a spell, and the princesses follow him through their mirror.

MICHAEL

And what happens then?

FULVIO

And then a big cat tries to eat me!

MICHAEL

If only I could follow them. There has to be a way.

FULVIO

Si, well, while you're figuring that out, maybe you can figure out a way to get me a new suit. This one has had it.

(FULVIO removes his tattered jacket and tosses it into the shrubbery. It is mysteriously thrown back in his face.)

FULVIO

What is going on here?

(FULVIO tosses the jacket back into the shrubbery. This time the cockney-accented SHRUBBERY comes to life and holds it over FULVIO's face so he can't see. MICHAEL faces the opposite direction, deep in thought.)

MICHAEL

Quiet down, Fulvio. I'm trying to think.

(FULVIO continues to struggle and finally call to MICHAEL.)

FULVIO

Help me!

MICHAEL

(turning around)

Geez, Fulvio. Not again. . . Whoa! Stop! Let him go!

(The SHRUBBERY releases FULVIO and his jacket.)

SHRUBBERY

(cockney)

Tell your friend 'ere not to pollute. It's downright rude it is.

FULVIO

Oh, great. I am almost killed by a talking plant. I do not believe this.

MICHAEL

I'm willing to believe just about anything at this point. . .

(to Shrubbery)

Who did this? Who made you. . .

SHRUBBERY

I can't say. It's forbidden.

MICHAEL

It was Raleigh, wasn't it?

SHRUBBERY

(to Fulvio)

The kid's quick.

MICHAEL

I knew there was something strange about him. Gardener my foot! He's some sort of sorcerer, isn't he?

SHRUBBERY

(to Fulvio)

Brighter than a bolt of lightning he is.

MICHAEL

(yells)

Raleigh! Raleigh!

(to Shrubbery)

SHRUBBERY

I . . . don't know.

MICHAEL

Tell us . . . please.

SHRUBBERY

I . . . can't say for sure.

FULVIO

We'll uproot you from the ground then!

SHRUBBERY

Ha! You can't! I'm potted!

FULVIO

Michael. The shears please.

SHRUBBERY

You win! I'll take you to 'im.

(They exit.)

(Raleigh's Magic Forest Alcove. RALEIGH appears to be tinkering with some potions, an ensemble of life-like plants, and an odd collection of botanical paraphernalia. He exits. SHRUBBERY hesitantly enters but is immediately noticed by a FLY TRAP.)

FLY TRAP

Hey! Look everyone! It's Shrubbery, my main plant. How's it goin', Shrub? I heard you've been tryin' to branch out.

(They all laugh except SHRUBBERY.)

SHRUBBERY

Ha ha. Very funny. Listen, I've got a small prob--

(RALEIGH enters again and sees SHRUBBERY.)

RALEIGH

Shrubbery! How are you, old chap? Haven't seen you back here in a while? Need some more of my magic fertilizer?

SHRUBBERY

No, actually, I'm watching my weight. But I did happen upon two, um, "gentlemen" in the garden who were rather insistent upon seeing you--

(MICHAEL and FULVIO enter hurriedly.)

MICHAEL

Raleigh! What . . . what is all this?

(RALEIGH looks at SHRUBBERY sternly for a moment and then starts laughing. SHRUBBERY realizes he's in the clear and gives a relieved chuckle.)

RALEIGH

Well, you've found me out, Michael. I knew you were a clever lad. It was bound to happen sooner or later.

FULVIO

So it is true?

MICHAEL

You practice magic?

RALEIGH

Well, practice does make perfect and I--

MICHAEL

So that's how you've been able to take care of the gardens all by yourself.

SHRUBBERY

Nothing gets past 'im, Raleigh. Watch 'im close.

RALEIGH

Oh, no need to worry. Michael here is--0

(MUSIC CUE)

"AMATEUR WIZARD 26"

MICHAEL

All this time I'm thinking Raleigh the gardener. I should have known. Raleigh, the enchanter. Raleigh, the sorcerer! Raleigh, the--

RALEIGH

Whoa! Slow down, my boy! Magic is just a hobby for me really. Though one day, I hope to make it. . . something more.

(sings)

TO MOST IT WOULD APPEAR
I AM A GARDENER -- THAT'S TRUE
WITH PLANTS TO PLANT AND WEEDS TO WEED
I'VE MANY THINGS TO DO
FOR EV'RY DAY I'M HARD AT WORK
TO MAKE THE GARDENS GROW
A TASK I HAVE ATTENDED TO
SINCE MANY YEARS AGO
BUT THERE'S A SECRET OF WHICH
THE VAST MAJORITY'S UNAWARE
A SECRET I WILL TELL YOU
IF YOU PROMISE NOT TO SHARE

MICHAEL

I swear!

RALEIGH

IT'S REALLY QUITE NEAT

MICHAEL

What is it?

RALEIGH

DEVOUTLY DIVINE

MICHAEL

That's great but
IF YOU'D JUST COMPLETE
YOUR GRAND DESIGN--

RALEIGH

Fine! I'M NOT A PHYSICIAN
NO, NOT A MUSICIAN
I'M JUST A MAGICIAN WITH SOME TRICKS
I'M AMATEUR WIZARD TWENTY-SIX!

(RALEIGH rips open his shirt to reveal a T-shirt which reads "Amateur Wizard #26.)

MICHAEL

Amateur Wizard Twenty-Six? What does that mean?

(SHRUBBERY sings with some Cockney DAISIES.)

SHRUBBERY & DAISIES

SOME SEVEN YEARS AGO
SIR RALEIGH JOINED THE WIZARD CLUB
AND EV'RY FRIDAY NIGHT
THEY GATHER AT THE NEAREST PUB

RALEIGH

I HAVE A BOOK OF SPELLS
AND IT'S A VERY USEFUL TOOL
BUT AS A MEMBER OF THE GROUP
THERE'S ONE IMPORTANT RULE!

SHRUBBERY & DAISIES

HE CAN'T USE MAGIC FOR PURPOSES
OF EVIL OR OTHERWISE

RALEIGH

'CAUSE IF I DO, I WON'T TURN PRO

FLY TRAP

A TRAGEDY I SURMISE

RALEIGH

IT'S ALL RATHER SPLENDID
AND ROLLICKING FUN
YOU THINK THAT I'VE ENDED?
I'VE JUST BEGUN!
I'M FILLED WITH AMBITION
A SENSE OF TRADITION
AND I'M ON A MISSION JUST FOR KICKS

SHRUBBERY, DAISIES, & FLY TRAP

HE'S AMATEUR WIZARD TWENTY-SIX!

(a rhythmic banter begins with FULVIO.)

FULVIO

Ahhh, benissimo, but
MICHAEL NEEDS TO STAY HIDDEN AT NIGHT

RALEIGH

I DON'T MEAN TO PRY, COULD YOU TELL ME WHY?

MICHAEL

THE PRINCESSES ALWAYS AT NIGHT TAKE FLIGHT

AND HE WANTS TO FOLLOW **FULVIO**

AND SPY **MICHAEL**

HOW SLY! **RALEIGH**

I JUST HAD A WONDERF'LLY CURIOUS NOTION **MICHAEL**

I'M WANTING TO HEAR THIS **FULVIO**

YOU WILL **MICHAEL**

SO? **RALEIGH**

IF YOU COULD CREATE A MOST MAGICAL POTION **MICHAEL**

IN THIS SITUATION THAT'S MOST APROPOS **RALEIGH**

PERHAPS YOU COULD TURN THE BOY INTO A TREE **FULVIO**

TRANSMOGRIFICATION, OF COURSE, ONE, TWO, THREE! **RALEIGH**

I'LL NEVER SEE YOU TURN ME INTO A TREE! **MICHAEL**

RALEIGH
(sings)
I HAVE THE SOLUTION, IT'S INVISIBILITY!

(The entire FOREST comes alive and sings with RALEIGH.)

FOREST
OH, WHAT COULD BE MORE GRAND
THAN TO PARADE AROUND UNSEEN?
WHY THINK OF ALL THAT YOU COULD DO
TO BREAK THE DAY'S ROUTINE
THAT'S RIGHT YOU'LL DISAPPEAR
IN ON PHANTASMIC POOF OF SMOKE

RALEIGH
AND IF YOU THINK I'M KIDDING

WELL, MY BOY, THIS IS NO JOKE!

FOREST

FOR WHEN YOU TURN INVISIBLE
COMPLETELY OUT OF SIGHT

RALEIGH

I'M SURE THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE
WHO'LL RECEIVE AN AWFUL FRIGHT!

(The FOREST continues to sing with SHRUBBERY, FLY TRAP, and DAISIES singing in counterpoint.)

FOREST

IT'S SIMPLY AMAZING
BEFORE WE CAN BLINK
TO THINK YOU'LL BE GONE
WITH ONE SMALL DRINK
WE HAVE THE SUSPICION
WITH RALEIGH'S VOLITION

SHRUBBERY, FLY TRAP, DAISIES

YOU'LL HAVE A BALL
ALL THANK TO
RALEIGH!
RALEIGH!
HIP HIP HOORAY
WE'RE PROUD TO SAY

FOREST

THAT THERE IS NO MESS TO HARD TO FIX
FOR AMATEUR WIZARD TWENTY-SIX!

NOW THEN WHAT DO WE NEED
TO MAKE A POTION THAT WILL SUFFICE

(RALEIGH starts tossing assorted botanical items into a pot and stirs vigorously.)

PETUNIA

ONE PETUNIA SEED

BIRD OF PARADISE

HOW 'BOUT A BIRD OF PARADISE?

TULIP, CLOVER, ROSE

TULIP, CLOVER, A ROSE

PARSLEY, THYME, ROSEMARY, SAGE

SOME PARSLEY, THYME, ROSEMARY, AND SAGE

DAFFODIL

A DAFFODIL

RALEIGH

I SUPPOSE

OLD PANSY

A PANSY NINETY YEARS OF AGE

FOREST

YOU MIX IT ALL TOGETHER THIS MAGICAL DEBRIS
WE EAGERLY AWAIT YOUR STATE OF ANONYMITY
FOR SOON YOU'LL BE A LIVELY SIGHT NOT TO SEE!
THANK TO--

MICHAEL

Who?

RALEIGH

Me! YOURS TRULY!

(RALEIGH pours a magical glowing green liquid out of the pot and into two small vials.)

FOREST

INVISIBILITY!
A MAN WHO HAS CROSSED THE RIVER STYX!

RALEIGH

Twice! THE THIRD LITTLE PIG -- HE USED MY BRICKS!

(RALEIGH hands the two vials of the potion to MICHAEL and FULVIO.)

FOREST

HE'S AMATEUR WIZARD

RALEIGH

I'M AMATEUR WIZARD

RALEIGH & FOREST

I'M (HE'S) AMATEUR WIZARD TWENTY-SIX!

*(MICHAEL and FULVIO toast RALEIGH and drink down the potion.
Blackout.)*

(Castle Hallway. MICHAEL and FULVIO, now invisible to all except to each other and the audience, quietly walk down the hallway leading to the Princesses' chambers. Just then, FULVIO spots the HUNGRY CAT sleeping soundly. FULVIO waves his arms in front of the cat who does not respond. FULVIO pokes the cat who jumps up, alarmed. He's about to give the unsuspecting cat a swift kick in the behind when MICHAEL yanks FULVIO's tail. FULVIO lets out a "yelp" which frightens away the HUNGRY CAT. MICHAEL and FULVIO speak in hushed tones.)

MICHAEL

Cut it out!

FULVIO

(holding his tail)

I am cutting! ow. . .

MICHAEL

Shh!

FULVIO

Shh!

(The door to the Princesses' chambers opens up and out steps the KING. MICHAEL and FULVIO slips past him and enter the room. The KING pauses for a moment, looks around confusedly, and exits. Inside the room, the PRINCESSES are getting into their beds. MICHAEL stands beside NORA's bed watching here carefully.)

GABRIELLA

Goodnight, Nora.

NORA

Goodnight, Gab.

ELISA

Sleep tight, Nora. Maybe you'll dream of your little farmer boy!

ALEXANDRA

I'll bet Nora dreams of living in a little cottage with her beloved garden boy, drawing water from a small, nearby well.

(MICHAEL becomes quite agitated toward ELISA and ALEXANDRA, but FULVIO restrains him.)

NORA

Sounds like paradise.

(MICHAEL turns back to NORA's bed in love.)

ELISA

You could bring us our morning bouquets!

CATHERINE

Enough already! Go to sleep!

MIRANDA

Goodnight!

(The lighting changes as MICHAEL and FULVIO stand waiting.)

MICHAEL

I don't see anything, Fulvio. Where's this "evil guy"?

FULVIO

Soon! Soon!

(Suddenly, NOSTRADAMUS appears in the mirror with his glowing crystal ball as smoke fills the room. MICHAEL tries to clear the smoke to see who is in the mirror.)

MICHAEL

Who is . . . my god! It's Nostradamus!

FULVIO

Nostra-who?

MICHAEL

Nostradamus! The King's fortune teller!

FULVIO

Oh.

NOSTRADAMUS

(in verse)

LISTEN TO MY VOICE
OBEY MY EVERY COMMAND
I FORESEE YOU'LL DANCE FOR ME
IN MY NOT SO DISTANT WONDERLAND.

(The PRINCESSES rise from their beds and walk in a trance through the mirror. MICHAEL too is affected by the spell and follows them.)

FULVIO

Hey, hey! Wake up!

(FULVIO snaps him out of it. MICHAEL shakes his head.)

MICHAEL

Thanks, Let's go! Quick!

(They run through the open mirror just before it magically seals up and turns back to normal.)

(In a cinematic montage, NOSTRADAMUS leads the spellbound PRINCESSES through a mysterious underground cavern. MICHAEL and FULVIO follow. A mist fills the stage, and NOSTRADAMUS and the PRINCESSES re-enter crossing an underground lake in black gondolas which seem to propel themselves. MICHAEL and FULVIO enter rowing a row boat, trying to catch up. Finally, they all arrive at an oddly lit black marble castle, Nostradamus' lair.)

(The eerie underscoring present throughout this scene becomes a positively uncanny waltz. Inside Nostradamus' castle, MICHAEL and FULVIO become mesmerized by the PRINCESSES as they begin to independently dance an enchanted ballet. NOSTRADAMUS slowly weaves in and out of them as they dance. A few moments pass, and NOSTRADAMUS strolls offstage. MICHAEL cannot take his eyes off NORA.)

FULVIO

I do not believe what I am seeing.

MICHAEL

I know. Isn't she beautiful? And what a dancer. She's just. . . perfect.

FULVIO

(nostalgic)

Ah si, they all seem so perfect at first, but once you get to know the, let me tell you. . . what am I talking about?! Michael, in case you did not notice, we are in very grave danger!

MICHAEL

Shh!

(He continues staring at NORA.)

FULVIO

Shh, yourself! Here I am in an underground castle with a lovesick loon waiting to be discovered by Signor Nostradamascus who will probably be too happy to turn me into antipasto for the nearest pussycat!

(NORA floats past MICHAEL prompting him to follow her across the dance floor, just barely dodging the other PRINCESSES.)

FULVIO

(very loud whisper)

Wait! No! Stop! Where are you going?!

(MICHAEL takes NORA's hands and begins to dance a waltz with her. NORA's expression is just barely cognizant, but enough that we know she's not entirely entranced at this point. FULVIO becomes panic stricken as he watches for NOSTRADAMUS.)

FULVIO

Oh no! Don't do that! Please don't do that! This is not happening! Somebody tell me this is not happening! Somebody. . . nobody's going to tell you anything Fulvio, because you are surrounded by crazy humans. . . ay, it's him!

(NOSTRADAMUS enters and proceeds to resume his weaving in and out, but he does not notice MICHAEL and NORA dancing at the opposite end of the stage. MICHAEL and NORA move in such a way that MICHAEL's presence does not become immediately obvious. FULVIO is horrified.)

FULVIO

Dio mio! This is the end!

(He runs over to MICHAEL and NORA and starts pulling on MICHAEL's arm.)

FULVIO

Andiamo! We must leave. . . now!

(Just as MICHAEL kisses NORA, NOSTRADAMUS takes notice of her peculiar positioning and cuts directly through the other PRINCESSES to get to her. Before he reaches her, however, MICHAEL shakes off his hypnotic trance and takes off with FULVIO. NOSTRADAMUS glares at NORA who has stopped dancing but remains entranced. Blackout.)

(The Castle Gardens. It is the next morning, and FULVIO is following MICHAEL as he collects the bouquets for the princesses. MICHAEL appears to be taking great care in preparing the last bouquet for the day: Nora's.)

FULVIO

I mean, what were you thinking?

MICHAEL

I don't know! It just happened.

FULVIO

"It just happened," he says. I almost have a heart attack, and he says to me, "It just happened."

MICHAEL

Alright then, it didn't happen.

FULVIO

Oh yes it did! You can't fool me! I was there!

(MICHAEL places Nora's bouquet on a rack with five others and carries them over to Raleigh's cottage where he leaves them outside the front door. He picks up Nora's bouquet and examines it further as he enters the cottage and sits on his bed. FULVIO follows.)

MICHAEL

Look, I'm sorry. I just lost myself. It's like she was calling to me. . . asking for my help. I don't know. Whatever it was, it won't happen again.

FULVIO

Can I have that in writing?

(There is a KNOCK at the door.)

MICHAEL

who is it?

SHRUBBERY (O.S.)

Special delivery for Master Fulvio!

MICHAEL

Huh?

(SHRUBBERY enters carrying a brand new, pin-striped silk suit which he hands to FULVIO.)

SHRUBBERY

'ere you are, sir. Thought you could use a new suit. Made it myself. (A few silkworms owed me some favors.)

FULVIO

Oooh, grazie! You are okay, Shrub.

SHRUBBERY

Thanks. Arrivederby!

FULVIO

(correcting him)
Arrivederci.

SHRUBBERY

(to Michael)
What he said.

(SHRUBBERY exits. FULVIO removes his tattered jacket, and dons his new one. A perfect fit.)

FULVIO

Ahhh, perfetto!

MICHAEL

Looking good, Fulvio.

FULVIO

I know. But you. . . you do not look so good. How do you expect to woo the princess of your dreams looking like this?

(MICHAEL looks dirty and disheveled.)

MICHAEL

That's not the worst of it. I can barely even talk to her, Fulvio. It's like I become some sort of mute when I see her. There are so many things I'd like to say, but the moment she's within a few feet of me, fwish! My tongue freezes, my body seizes up. Complete mental meltdown.

FULVIO

You simply have to find the right approach, Michael. Women, whether they are princesses or paupers, want someone who will sweep them off their feet.

MICHAEL

So, what am I supposed to say? "Nora, I danced with you last night in an enchanted underground castle. I turned myself invisible with a magic potion so I could follow you. I love you. Marry me?"

FULVIO

No no no. Be forward, but be subtle.

MICHAEL

How do I do that? I don't know what to say. I don't know how to act.

(MUSIC CUE)

“BE LIKE ME”

FULVIO

How to act? Easy! You’ve got to dazzle her. You’ve got to put her on that pedestal and make her think that she is the most important thing in your life.

(sings)

YOU’VE GOT TO BE SMOOTH
YOU’VE GOT TO BE SLICK
IN ORDER TO WIN HER HEART
YOU’VE GOT TO GET IT TOGETHER AND QUICK
SO BRUSH BACK THAT HAIR
AND SHOW HER YOU CARE
AND BE LIKE ME!

(MICHAEL begins to clean up his act.)

FULVIO (CONT’D)

YOU LOOK LIKE A BUM
YOU NEED A NICE SUIT -- LIKE MINE!
IF YOU WANT TO CATCH HER EYE
YOU’LL HAVE TO SHOW HER YOU’RE AWFULLY CUTE
PUT ON A NEW SHIRT
AND CLEAN OFF THAT DIRT
AND BE LIKE ME!
FIRST, SAY, “BUON GIORNO”
AND YOU’LL BE LIKE ME!
“TI VOGLIO BENE
I LOVE YOU, SI SI!”
WHEN YOU GIVE HER FLOWERS
SHE’LL SMILE AND SAY:
“MAMMA MIA, GLAD TO SEE YA!”
SHE IS THE REASON YOU CAME TO THIS PLACE
IF YOU’RE IN LOVE, WASH OFF YOUR FACE
AND STAND STRAIGHT AND TALL
‘CAUSE AFTER ALL
WITH ONLY ONE SHOT
YOU’VE GOT TO BE HOT
A LOT LIKE ME
SO BE LIKE ME!

(Enter three lively rodents which comprise the ROYAL RODENTIA.)

ROYAL RODENTIA

REMEMBER FULVIO’S RULE:
“YOU MUST BE UNCOMMONLY COOL”

FULVIO & ROYAL RODENTIA

WITH THE LADIES YOU CAN’T PLAY THE FOOL!

FULVIO

SO, DON'T BE A PAZZO
YOU CRAZY RAGAZZO
THOUGH IT'S NOT SO EASY TO DO
BE SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT IS WHAT AND WHO'S WHO!
OH WHAT A COUP!

ROYAL RODENTIA
TO BE LIKE YOU!

(The ROYAL RODENTIA sings counterpoint to FULVIO's melody.)

FULVIO
YOU'VE GOT TO BE SUAVE
A BIT DEBONAIR
LINE
YOU'VE GOT TO SHOW STYLE, WIT, CHARM
ALL THIS AND MORE OR YOU WON'T HAVE
DIVINE
A PRAY'R
TO BE A GREAT GUY
YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO TRY
TO BE LIKE ME!

ROYAL RODENTIA
BE SOMEONE GREAT
WITH A GOOD PICK-UP

THE PERFECT DATE
YOU'LL BE SIMPLY

FULVIO
SO, SAY, "BUON GIORNO"
AND YOU'LL BE LIKE ME!
"TI VOGLIO BENE
I LOVE YOU, BABY!"
WITH ALL THE RIGHT WORDS
YOU WILL MAKE HER SAY:
"PER FAVORE, PLEASE L' AMORE!"
THERE'S JUST ONE WAY TO MAKE HER
UNDERSTAND
YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE HER BY THE HAND
THEN GIVE HER A SHOVE
SHOVE!
SAY, "I'M IN LOVE!"
IF YOU WANT ROMANCE
A REASON TO DANCE
PICK UP THOSE PANTS
COME ON TAKE A CHANCE
THIS KNOWLEDGE IS FREE
WITH A GUARANTEE
TO BE LIKE ME!
YOU'LL BE LIKE ME!

ROYAL RODENTIA
BUON GIORNO!

TI VOGLIO BENE!

L' AMORE!
OH, UNDERSTAND!

TAKE HER HAND
THEN GIVE HER A

LOVE!
ROMANCE!
DANCE!
AHH!

FREE
GUARANTEE!
TO BE LIKE. . .

*(The song ends and the ROYAL RODENTIA bid farewell to FULVIO and exit.
MICHAEL looks considerably better.)*

FULVIO

(to offstage)
Thanks for the backup, guys!
(to Michael)
So, does that answer your question?

MICHAEL

It certainly does!

FULVIO

Then go get her!

MICHAEL

I just can't do it like you, Fulvio. Maybe if you came with me. . .

FULVIO

No chance. I am exhausted. You have tired me out!

MICHAEL

Come on, just this once. Please?

FULVIO

No no!

MICHAEL

I'll look into getting you some lasagna! Raleigh's wife is the castle cook, you know. Think of all that pasta, the tomato sauce, the hot melted cheese: parmesan. . . ricotta. . . mozzarella--

FULVIO

Basta! You are killing me! Fine. I will go.

(Blackout.)

(The Royal Staircase. RALEIGH re-enters as the narrator.)

RALEIGH

You've continued the story without me! Now let's see, hmm, where are we? Ah, the royal staircase. Later that morning, as the princesses came down from their chambers, Michael stood once again at the foot of the stairs with their bouquets. But this time he was prepared to charm the living daylight out of the object of his affections: Princess Nora. . . with Fulvio's help of course. Meanwhile, another suitor had taken to slumber.

(RALEIGH exits. MICHAEL enters with the bouquets while FULVIO hides off to the side. As the PRINCESSES descend the stairs, MICHAEL hands each her bouquet. NOSTRADAMUS follows the COURTIERS as they carry BUFF GUY #2 across the stage and exit. Offstage we hear the KING and BUFF GUY #2.)

KING (O.S.)

By God, man! This isn't an inn! You're supposed to keep watch over my daughters and find out where they go, not take a blasted night long nap!

BUFF GUY #2 (O.S.)

I know, your highness, I'm sorry, I just. . .

NOSTRADAMUS (O.S.)

May I be of service, your majesty?

KING (O.S.)

Of course, Nostradamus.

(The PRINCESSES exit except for NORA. MICHAEL tries to be cool.)

MICHAEL

(bad Italian accent)

Ecco dei fiori, signora.

NORA

Excuse me?

(MICHAEL panics and looks to FULVIO.)

FULVIO

(whisper)

Sei una bella ragazza!

MICHAEL

(to Nora)

Sei una bella pazza.

(FULVIO slaps his own forehead.)

NORA

I don't understand, Michael. Is that Italian? What does it mean?

MICHAEL

Uhh. . . it means. . .

(MICHAEL looks at FULVIO.)

FULVIO

Don't look at me! You just called her a beautiful nutcase!

NORA

Michael, what are you looking at? Is something wrong?

MICHAEL

Nothing! Nothing at all!

NORA

Then what are you trying to say?

MICHAEL

Uh. . . lovely day, hmm?

NORA

Fine. I'm leaving.

(She walks away. MICHAEL stands like a statue.)

FULVIO

Go after her! This boy is hopeless!

(MICHAEL catches up with NORA just before she is about to exit. Without a thought, he blurts out his proposed speech from earlier.)

MICHAEL

Nora, I danced with you last night in an enchanted underground castle. I turned myself invisible with a magic potion so I could follow you. I love you. Marry me?

(MICHAEL cannot believe what he just said. NORA stands in shock for a moment. FULVIO covers his eyes.)

FULVIO

I cannot bear to watch this!

(FULVIO exits.)

NORA

Magic Potion? Enchanted castle? I'm lost. . . except for the 'love' part.

(She grins. MICHAEL temporarily turns sheepish.)

MICHAEL

You may want to sit down for this, princess.

NORA

Nora. I'm fine standing.

MICHAEL

Nora. Alright then, here's the story. Last night, I followed you and your sisters down into a castle somewhere underground, and I danced with you.

NORA

Oh really? Then why don't I remember, hmm?

(NOSTRADAMUS enters on the side of the stage opposite FULVIO's exit, then moves into shadows to watch the couple.)

MICHAEL

Nostradamus puts you all under a spell.

NORA

Mmm hmmm. And just how did you get into our room?

MICHAEL

Raleigh made me a magic potion from--

NORA

(stifling a laugh)
Raleigh, the gardener?

MICHAEL

Yes, the gardener! But he's not just a gardener! He's a wizard, well, amateur wizard anyway. See, we knew how you escaped at night. . . through the mirror.

NORA

And how'd you know that if I didn't even know?

MICHAEL

Fulvio told me.

NORA

Who's Fulvio?!

(FULVIO enters behind NORA.)

MICHAEL

He's a rat.

NORA

Oh really. A rat told you. What's his name again? Fulvio? Is he around? I'd really like to meet him. Oh Fulvio! Fulvio! Where are you?

(FULVIO taps her on the shoulder, and she turns around.)

FULVIO

Buon giorno!

(NORA is frozen, not sure whether to scream or run. MICHAEL signals for FULVIO to exit which he does. MICHAEL backs NORA up slowly and gently sits her down on the staircase.)

MICHAEL

Believe me now?

NORA

I . . . I think I do . . . You said we danced? How?

MICHAEL

When I was invisible down in the castle, I saw you dance and you were just so . . . so . . . I couldn't take my eyes off you. Your sisters danced well, but you. . . I just wanted to take you in my arms and keep you safe. I had to hold your hands. I had to dance with you. . . Fulvio wasn't very happy about it.

NORA

(still stunned)
I'm sure he wasn't.

(MICHAEL sits beside her.)

MICHAEL

You still don't remember?

NORA

I'm trying. I really am, Michael.

MICHAEL

Then maybe you'll remember this.

(He gives her a gentle kiss which surprises her at first, but she quickly puts her arms around him.)

NORA

I can't believe it. . . It's true. I thought it was a dream.

(pause)

I remember everything! . . . What are we going to do?

MICHAEL

I'll go to the king and ask him to give me a shot at solving the mystery.

NORA

No! You can't do that. He wouldn't believe you.

MICHAEL

Why? I've already solved it.

NORA

Because you're. . .

(MUSIC CUE)

"STORYBOOK ROMANCE (REPRISE)"

MICHAEL

A poor gardener? I'm as good as any suitor.

NORA

Well I know that but. . . he doesn't. He'll take one look at you and. . .

(sings)

HE'LL WANT TO KEEP US APART
HE WON'T LET US BE TOGETHER
MY FATHER WILL NOT SEE IN HIS HEART
WHAT I SEE IN YOU

(MICHAEL takes her by the hands and lifts NORA up so they're both standing.)

MICHAEL

IT'S TRUE THAT I'M NOT A PRINCE
BUT I'LL LOVE YOU 'TIL FOREVER
I'LL SOLVE THIS MYSTERY AND CONVINC
HIM OUR LOVE IS TRUE

(NOSTRADAMUS sings from the shadows with plans for MICHAEL's undoing.)

NOSTRADAMUS

OH, WHAT A HOPEFUL SIGHT
BUT HE'LL SURELY FAIL

MICHAEL & NORA

WE'LL FIN'LLY SET THINGS RIGHT

MICHAEL, NORA & NOSTRADAMUS

HERE IN THIS FAIRY TALE

MICHAEL & NORA

WE'LL HAVE OUR STORYBOOK ROMANCE

NOSTRADAMUS

I'LL END THIS STORYBOOK ROMANCE
MICHAEL & NORA
WE CAN BE SURE ABOUT TOMORROW

NOSTRADAMUS

TOMORROW BELONGS TO ME

MICHAEL & NORA

THE TWO OF WILL DANCE

NOSTRADAMUS

THEIR FINAL DANCE

MICHAEL & NORA

IN OUR STORYBOOK ROMANCE

NOSTRADAMUS

JUST WAIT AND SEE. . .

(NOSTRADAMUS laughs and suddenly disappears as his part of the stage goes dark.)

NORA

I never trusted Nostradamus. I'm not surprised he's up to something. . . but what is it?

MICHAEL

I. . . don't know.

(We hear the voices of the KING and COURTIERS from offstage.)

KING (O.S.)

Tell me what is left of the royal treasury, gentlemen.

COURTIER #1 (O.S.)

It's not so good, sire, what with all the fortune-telling payments.

KING (O.S.)

How much?

COURTIER #2 (O.S.)

Nay for but a few guilders, sire.

(pause)

Does this mean no bonuses this year?

(MICHAEL and NORA react to the offstage scene.)

NORA

Of course, he's been taking father's money.

MICHAEL

Bit by bit. Incredible.

NORA

All this time, he's been draining the royal treasury, while he was the one causing the mystery in the first place.

MICHAEL

With that crystal ball of his.

NORA

That's it! What if you were to get Nostradamus' crystal ball when you're invisible? Then he couldn't cast the spell over us anymore--

MICHAEL

And then the king would have to believe me!

NORA

Brilliant. . . So what should I do?

MICHAEL

Nothing. Just do what you always do. Go to sleep and leave everything to me.

NORA

My hero -- the gardener.

MICHAEL

Heyyy, this gardener's going to save you, princess. Remember that.

NORA

How could I forget?

(She pulls him to her by the hand and kisses him.)

NORA

Good luck, you.

(Blackout.)

(Raleigh's Magic Forest Alcove. It is later that night and RALEIGH is busy mixing the invisibility potion while MICHAEL and FULVIO talk.)

FULVIO

Take his what? His crystal ball? You kid me, right?

MICHAEL

Nope.

RALEIGH

Sounds a trifle risky, Michael, if I do say so myself.

FULVIO

You're telling me it sounds risky! I won't let you do this.

MICHAEL

I have to. And I have to do it alone.

RALEIGH

Well, you certainly have courage.

(RALEIGH hands pours the potion into a vial and hands it to MICHAEL.)

FULVIO

Courage? Who needs courage? Michael, stay alive. You do not want to do this.

MICHAEL

(amassing courage)
Yes. Yes I do.

FULVIO

No. No you do not.

MICHAEL

Do me a favor. . .

(MICHAEL grabs an hourglass sitting by RALEIGH and turns it upside down.)

MICHAEL

If I'm not back in one hour, come get me. Promise me, Fulvio.

FULVIO

Si, I promise. One hour.

RALEIGH

Godspeed, my boy.

MICHAEL

Thanks. Cheers.

(MICHAEL drinks the potion and turns invisible. The lighting changes to affect the passing of time until it is night.)

(Nostradamus' Castle. The mysterious waltz from earlier resumes as the PRINCESSES dance their ballet. MICHAEL follows NOSTRADAMUS as he weaves in and out of the dancing PRINCESSES. MICHAEL, now invisible, makes repeated attempts to nab the crystal ball that NOSTRADAMUS carries with him, but each time is a near miss. On one attempt, NOSTRADAMUS becomes visibly aware of MICHAEL's nearby presence. As MICHAEL tries one last time, NOSTRADAMUS grabs his arm. MICHAEL is overwhelmed with fear as the crystal ball begins to glow.)

NOSTRADAMUS

THE PRESENCE OF A STRANGER
IS UNDOUBTEDLY QUITE NEAR
SO I FORESEE MY UNSEEN FOE
WILL RATHER HASTILY... APPEAR!

(NOSTRADAMUS' incantation not only makes MICHAEL visible to everyone but also awakens the spellbound PRINCESSES. They ad-lib lines relating to their state of alarm.)

NOSTRADAMUS

You can't beat me, you little twit. I control you. I make your future. Thought you'd have your little
(sings)
storybook romance, la la la la la.
(speaks)
I've seen the future and it's all mine... What do you think of your little gardener now, Princess Nora?

NORA

Leave him alone, you no-good... lout!

(The PRINCESSES are shocked at NORA'S language.)

NOSTRADAMUS

Ohhh, that hurts, my dear. I'm aching inside. Really, that's no way to talk to your new king... which I believe would make you all my new handmaidens... how delightful!

GABRIELLA

What is he talking about?

ALEXANDRA

He's off his rocker.

ELISA

Crackers. Totally.

MICHAEL

Give it up, Nostradamus.

NOSTRADAMUS

Give it up? Oooh, I think not. Which reminds me. . . if I'm going to assume the throne right now, I should do it properly. It's not fair to illegally overthrow the king, and I am a law-abiding gentleman.

(to the glowing crystal ball; in verse)

I FORESEE HIS HIGHNESS WILL AWAKE
BUT NOT BENEATH HIS COVERS
HE'LL SOON ARRIVE, NO DOUBT ALARMED
AS ARE THESE TWO YOUNG LOVERS

(The KING appears suddenly, half-awake in his pajamas.)

KING

Wha. . . what the. . .?! Where am I? What happened to. . . Nostradamus?! What is going on here?

MICHAEL

Sire, Nostradamus here has been plotting against you. He's been casting a spell over your daughters which makes them come down here and dance until their shoes get worn out. Then he tells you that the mystery will not be solved because he's the one who's been causing it in the first place.

KING

Why, that's ridiculous! Why should I listen to a peasant?

NORA

He's right, father. We've all seen it now. He used his crystal ball to make the suitors fall asleep, to control us, and now to bring you here.

KING

(enraged)

How dare you, Nostradamus! How dare you do this to me, my daughters, my kingdom!! I trusted you! And to think that I could have killed all those suitors.

NORA

'Could have'? You mean, you didn't kill them?

KING

No of course not! I just had them thrown in the dungeon until this blasted mystery was solved.

NOSTRADAMUS

Shut up! Time to hand over that crown, old man. I'm the ruler around here!

KING

You can't just take away my throne!

NOSTRADAMUS

Ah, but I already have! They say that in the kingdom of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. Well, in the kingdom of the poor (that's you), The one with the dough runs the show!

(NOSTRADAMUS waves his hands and reveals at the back of the stage all of the KING's gold which he's amassed over the years. Everyone gasps.)

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

And in case you have any ideas about escaping, I have a few friends who might not like that.

(to the glowing crystal ball; in verse)

AWAY WITH 'GOOD' I SO LIKE 'BAD'
IT'S TIME TO MAKE MY MARK
I FORESEE THAT YOU WILL MEET
MY FELLOW CREATURES OF THE DARK!

(Out of the shadows come EVIL CREATURES who take hold of MICHAEL, the PRINCESSES, and the KING. MICHAEL struggles against one of the EVIL CREATURES and breaks free, unnoticed by NOSTRADAMUS.)

NOSTRADAMUS

I . . . think I'm having too much fun here. .

(Just as MICHAEL lunges at him, NOSTRADAMUS holds up his hand, freezing MICHAEL in his tracks.)

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

I thought I told you not to try anything! Now I'm just going to have to kill you!

NORA

(trying to break free)

No!

NOSTRADAMUS

Oh, yes. . .

(in verse)

IF YOU COULD CHOOSE A WAY TO DIE
IN REAL LIFE, NOT YOUR DREAMS
I FORESEE THAT YOU WOULD FANCY
BEING CRUSHED BY FALLING BEAMS!

(The light of the crystal ball burns bright as several beams swing from above. MICHAEL dodges each just in time with barely a moment to catch his breath.)

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

OF ALL THE FORCES IN THIS WORLD
THERE IS ONE FORCE I ADMIRE
I FORESEE THAT YOU WILL SOON
BE ALL CONSUMED BY DRAGON'S FIRE!

(Through lighting effects, the stage appears to be completely engulfed in flames. NOSTRADAMUS suddenly stops it.)

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

I MUST ADMIT, I DO ENJOY
BEING EVIL AND INHUMANE
BUT YOU ARE SUCH A WILLFUL BOY
SO DIFFICULT TO TRAIN
THAT I FORESEE I WILL DESTROY
YOU WITH SIMPLY AGONIZING PAIN. . .

(The light of the crystal ball turns blood red as MICHAEL falls to the ground, writhing in pain. NOSTRADAMUS and the EVIL CREATURES laugh as everyone else gapes at the horror of the scene. Suddenly, the doors to the castle blast open and FULVIO, RALEIGH, and SHRUBBERY burst in.)

FULVIO

Andiamo!

SHRUBBERY

Yeah, andiamo!

RALEIGH

Tally ho!

(FULVIO and SHRUBBERY attach NOSTRADAMUS which sends his crystal ball flying into RALEIGH's hands. MICHAEL runs to fight off the EVIL CREATURES restraining NORA and then the KING.)

RALEIGH

Hey, Shrubbery! Catch!

NOSTRADAMUS

No!

(RALEIGH tosses the ball to SHRUBBERY who catches it and in turn throws it to FULVIO, thus creating a game of "keep away from NOSTRADAMUS".)

SHRUBBERY

Cripes! This thing is 'eavy! 'ere ya go, Fulvio!

NOSTRADAMUS

No, please! Stop!

FULVIO

Ah, si! This is very heavy. I think I am going to drop it!

NOSTRADAMUS

Noooooo!

FULVIO

(chuckles)

Here you are, Michael. Have a ball!

(They all laugh as MICHAEL catches the crystal ball. The EVIL CREATURES cower and disappear into the shadows. NOSTRADAMUS turns plain chicken.)

NOSTRADAMUS

What . . . what are you going to do to me?

MICHAEL

(to the king)

Your majesty? Any ideas?

KING

I leave his future in your hands, son.

MICHAEL

Now let's see, how did you make this thing work again? Oh yes.

(in verse)

YOU'VE MADE A GREAT BIT MESS HERE
WHAT WITH ALL THAT GOLD YOU TOOK
SO I'D SAY I FORESEE THAT YOU'LL
RETURN EACH GUILDER, YOU WORTHLESS CROOK!

NOSTRADAMUS

But that could take years! I . . . I . . .

(The crystal ball glows extremely bright.)

NOSTRADAMUS (CONT'D)

(as if in a trance)

. . . will return it all.

(NOSTRADAMUS finds himself automatically walking to the giant pile of gold, taking a few coins in his hands, and walking out the door back to the KING'S's castle. NORA runs over to MICHAEL and hugs him.)

MICHAEL

Thanks, guys.

FULVIO

Non cé problema!

SHRUBBERY

'ey, that means 'no problem', right?

RALEIGH

Our pleasure, Michael. Or should I say, Prince Michael.

(They all look to the KING.)

KING

He's welcome in my kingdom any day.

MICHAEL

Then, I humbly ask for your daughter Nora's hand in marriage.

NORA

My, what a surprise!

KING

And I humbly grant my permission.

NORA

And I definitely accept!

FULVIO

Some guys get all the luck.

(MICHAEL and NORA kiss as everyone leaves. FULVIO takes the crystal ball from MICHAEL and examines it carefully. The HUNGRY CAT enters and rapidly corners him.)

FULVIO

(holding crystal ball)

YOU THINK YOU'VE GOT ME CORNERED
BUT THE GLORY IS ALL MINE NOW
A BIG POOCH, I FORESEE,
WILL SOON TAKE CARE OF THIS FELINE. . .

(There is a loud "bark" and a HUNGRY DOG comes bounding out onstage.)

FULVIO

(points to Hungry Cat)

CIAO!

(The HUNGRY DOG chases the HUNGRY CAT offstage. We hear the KING shout from the same direction.)

KING (O.S.)

I have an idea for the wedding banquet! A pasta buffet!

FULVIO

What a king! What a kingdom! What a world!

(FULVIO wanders off very content. MICHAEL and NORA finally break the kiss. The underscoring swells.)

MICHAEL

May I have this dance?

(NORA takes his hand, and they dance as they exit. RALEIGH re-enters as the narrator.)

(MUSIC CUE)

“STORYBOOK ROMANCE (FINALE)”

RALEIGH

OUR TALE HAS COME TO AN END
HOPE WE’VE BROUGHT YOU JOY AND SOME LAUGHTER
AS IS WITH THE STORYBOOK TREND
THEY’LL LIVE HAPPILY EVER AFTER

(MICHAEL and NORA enter together.)

MICHAEL & NORA

IN A STORYBOOK ROMANCE
YOU’LL FIND A PRINCESS AND A PEASANT

RALEIGH

LIVING A LIFE IN WHICH THEY DANCE

MICHAEL, NORA, & RALEIGH

FREE FROM THE TIES THAT BIND

(The ENSEMBLE enters behind MICHAEL, NORA, and RALEIGH.)

MICHAEL & NORA

WE MADE OUR FUTURE, SO CAN YOU
IF YOU BELIEVE THAT DRAMS COME TRUE

ENSEMBLE

DON’T LET YOUR LIFE PASS YOU BY
DON’T WISH -- GO AND TRY
DARE TO TAKE THE CHANCE
FOR A STORYBOOK ROMANCE

(Blackout.)

THE END