

Fairy Tales and Women

By

Gerald P. Murphy

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FAIRY TALES AND WOMEN

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Dr. Chicken and Mr. Hawk

(Loosely adapted from “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”
by Robert Louis Stevenson)

Characters

Dr. Henry Chicken - shy scientist
Mr. Edward Hawk - Henry's brutal alter-ego
Pamela Pullet - Henry's vain true love
Peggy Pullet - Pamela's activist sister
Dr. Olivia Owl - Henry's physician
Legal Eagle - Henry's attorney
Annie, Charlene and Betty - activist hens
Maria Pigeon - Henry's maid
Stella and Mabel - music hall hens

Scene 1

(At rise, Dr. Henry Chicken is just about to drink a potion from a flask when he is interrupted by Maria, his maid, who introduces Pamela Pullet, his secret true love. In the interest of keeping up the tempo of the show, Henry and Edward could be played by separate actors, but that is the director's choice. All characters are partially feathered and have partial beaks over their noses. Bird masks would also work fine. The point is to suggest birds without interfering with speaking. Realism is not important here.)

Maria. Pamela Pullet is here to see you, Mr. Chicken!

Henry. Thank you, Maria. Send her in. *(Smelling his flask)* I must do something about this formula. It smells rather like garlic! Ugh! *(Maria exits as Pamela enters)*

Pamela. What's that you're drinking, Henry? Are you starting a party without me?

Henry. *(Putting flask away inside his jacket)* Just some medicine for my sore throat. What brings you here, Pamela?

Pamela. I hope I'm welcome!

Henry. You are always welcome, Pamela! You know that! Is your sister still planning to lead that march today?

Pamela. You know how she is – always fighting for this or for that!

Henry. I don't know where she gets the energy!

Pamela. Peggy has always been mad about her political activities, especially the rights of hens! She's very pushy. I've warned her over and over again that men don't find pushiness attractive.

Henry. Is that why you stayed away from her protest marches?

Pamela. Why would I march for females? My goal has always been to nab an eligible bachelor, not to march with ragged socialists! I'm looking for someone who is settled, well connected, and rich - someone like you, the brilliant chemical research scientist, Dr. Henry Chicken!

Henry. Like me? Why would anyone be interested in me? I'm a nothing. No woman would want a shy research scientist all cooped up here with my experiments! I'm ugly and bashful and have no charm.

Pamela. You'd be surprised at how little these things matter as long as you have money. Why I came very close to marrying an incredibly ugly rooster just like you last year.

Henry. Why would you choose someone so repulsive?

Pamela. He was an investment banker. That chicken knew how to feather his nest!

Henry. What happened? Did you change your mind about marrying him?

Pamela. He fell head-over-heels in love with my sister, Peggy. Can you imagine? He fell for my fanatical sister! He heard one of her speeches and he immediately turned over his entire nest egg to the poor!

Henry. It's hard to believe someone could transform into an opposite so quickly!

Pamela. That's what I thought! Of course, Peggy would have nothing to do with him, so he rushed off to India to join some sort of ashram.

Henry. What's an ashram?

Pamela. Some sort of monastery where he could live in peace and serenity to forget about Peggy. Sometimes I just hate my sister, that stupid little red hen! She stole my future! And that's not the first time, either! Oh, if only someone would ask me out for a date. I haven't had one for months and months.

Henry. Is that true, dear Pamela Pullet? I would think that someone as beautiful as you would have men smashing down doors to ask you out.

Pamela. You'd be surprised how many men are too shy to approach a girl with my charms, my beauty, and my attractive plumage!

Henry. It doesn't surprise me. You take my breath away, Pamela!

Pamela. If they only knew how lonely I am, how I yearn for a rowdy rooster! Do I smell garlic?

Henry. What was that?

Pamela. There's a slight aroma of garlic in the air. Don't you smell it?

Henry. Not at all! Not at all!

Pamela. Oh, well, it might just be my imagination. I don't suppose, Henry, that you will ever see how lonely I am behind my ravishing beauty? Have you ever thought of asking me out?

Henry. I dream of the day I would be brave enough to attempt this!

Pamela. Then why don't you try me out? Everyone says I am pleasing to the eye, well formed, and gorgeous.

Henry. I'm afraid the effort would give me a heart attack! Even now, my heart is beating faster than a drum in your elegant presence.

Pamela. I can't wait forever, Henry. My beauty has a sort of shelf life, you know. Every spring chick eventually becomes an old stew hen. You must strike while the iron is hot! Meanwhile, I must be off to shop. There's a new place just opened I must check out. It's called "My Fine Feathered Friends." I can't wait to see what they have! Ta-ta, darling! (*Pamela exits*)

Henry. Oh, Pamela, Pamela, Pamela! There is nothing that I want more than to date you, my choice little chicken! And then I will find the courage to make you my wife. But first I must transform myself into my opposite, just as the investment banker did. *(He takes out flask)* I researched this concoction for years. If I'm right about my scientific calculations, and I am a genius in these matters, there will be more than enough in this flask to transform myself into a creature brave enough to shed my shy ways and boldly go where no chicken has ever gone before! *(He drinks, puts away flask, then falls to the floor moaning and writhing. He rolls offstage stage left still moaning, then returns as Edward Hawk, who is hunched over and carries a walking stick.)*

Edward. I've been so worried about attracting Pamela, I hadn't noticed that the world is filled with many female feathered friends I can bend to my will! Why put all my eggs in one basket? Ha, ha, ha! I might start off with her little sister, that loudmouthed creature who loves to march for civil rights! It's time now that she found out what my rights are! Oh, yes! Oh, yes! The chick is in the mail! Ha, ha, ha! *(Edward hobbles off stage left waving his stick as hens enter stage right carrying hen's rights placards. Annie Hen sets a box for Peggy's speech upstage center.)*

Scene 2

Annie. Where is Peggy Pullet? We can't get started without her!

Betty. She's on her way, Annie. Don't worry!

Charlene. I'm so excited. This is my first protest march! I'm so curious to see how this will turn out!

Betty. Everything will go fine as long as we have Peggy to lead us!

Charlene. Is that her? I've never seen her before!

Betty. That's her! The greatest fighter for hen rights in all of England! *(Peggy enters, climbs on box and begins her speech.)*

Peggy. Hello, marchers!

All. Hello, Peggy!

Peggy. Thank you all for volunteering for this march! As you know, we hens have been treated poorly since the world began. We've been cooped up for far too long! It's time to let the chicks out of the bag! *(All cheer)*

Peggy. We give so much to the world and receive so little in return! There is only one word to describe our condition – OPPRESSION! *(All cheer)* When we complain about our treatment, we are attacked as radicals. Well, maybe it is time

we all became radicals and rebel against this tyranny! We have nothing to lose but our chains! *(All cheer)* For too long we have been on the bottom of the pecking order! For too long have we waited on rooster's wing and claw while it seems they have only one duty – to wake us up each morning with their stupid crowing. Well, it's time we told them that they have nothing to crow about! *(All cheer)* The roosters just want us to sit on the nest and lay eggs. And as long as we obey their wishes, we will never have it better! They want us to be like their mothers – chicks off the old block! Well, we have to show them we are chicks of a different color! We're mad as wet hens and we won't take it anymore!

Hens. We won't take it anymore! We won't take it anymore!

Peggy. We are cackling loud and clear! And our march will bring great cheer! For it's time we stood for our sisterhood! Let us cluck so all can hear!

Hens. Cluck, cluck, cluck!

Peggy. We are strong and full of pride! And we will not be denied! We're the angry group of the chick coop, and we won't be pacified!

Hens. Never, never, never! *(Hens march stridently stage left as Edward enters furtively stage right)*

Peggy. March on, sisters! March on! *(Sniffs the air)* Oh, oh! Do I smell garlic?

Edward. Nice speech, little chick! Nice speech!

Peggy. Did you like it? That's wonderful! We usually don't have many males at our rallies!

Edward. I flew in special just to hear you. I have a great interest in chicks.

Peggy. Did you agree with my ideas? Do they fit with your own philosophy?

Edward. You know what my philosophy is?

Peggy. No, but I'd love to hear it!

Edward. Life batters you when you are young, and then it only gets worse!

Peggy. That's a horrible philosophy! Is there no place for happiness or joy in life?

Edward. Don't be such a mother hen. Life is pain. Anyone who says otherwise is trying to sell you something. And I will prove it to you!

Peggy. Oh, no, you won't!

Edward. Oh, yes, I will!

Peggy. Oh, no, you won't!

Edward. Oh, yes, I will! *(He grabs her from behind and drags her stage right)*

Peggy. Help me! Help me! It isn't fair! It isn't fair!

Edward. Who ever told you life was fair? Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! *(They exit stage right as Annie returns from stage left to claim the box)*

Annie. Peggy? Peggy Pullet, where are you? How do you like that? She flew the coop! She's supposed to be leading the parade and she disappears! Oh, well!
(She picks up box and exits stage left)

Scene 3

(Edward enters, drinks potion, rolls twitching and moaning offstage as before, then enters as Henry)

Henry. What have I done? What have I done? I destroyed my true love's sister. I took the life of an innocent hen! Oh, how shall I ever be forgiven? I have been wicked, wicked, wicked! Oh, woe is me! Woe is me! But why should I blame myself? Dr. Henry Chicken would never slay Peggy Pullet. I admired her! The murderer was someone else, a perfect stranger! And since it wasn't me, I'm actually innocent, am I not? It was that wicked Edward Hawk! But I must do something about my formula! *(He pulls flask from his jacket and looks at it)* I must have added too much brute and not enough gentleman. It's lucky that I am a scientific genius who can correct the dosage. I'll just add fifty centimeters of my garlicky-smelling Androzia to the brew. I'm sorry about Peggy's unfortunate demise, but the world will applaud all my efforts when I have finally perfected my personality-changing drug! After all, to make an omelet, you have to break some eggs! Ha, ha, ha! *(He frowns)* That's an eccentric laugh I've come up with! *(Pamela enters)*

Pamela. Did you hear about my sister, Peggy?

Henry. No, I haven't. I hope she's in good health!

Pamela. She's gone, Henry! She's passed into the next world! Some awful beast dispatched her just after the protest rally began!

Henry. Pamela! You must be heartbroken!

Pamela. I am! I am! I don't have a thing to wear for the funeral! I mean, who was it who invented that silly habit of wearing black for funerals? Black is such a dreary color, almost as dull as grey, don't you think?

Henry. I meant you must be heartbroken about your poor sister's extinction!

Pamela. Certainly, I'll miss her, but you must admit she was kind of asking for it!

Henry. Asking for it? What do you mean?

Pamela. She was always marching about demanding her rights. She must have known that would make her unpopular. Don't you think?

Henry. I don't know what I think.

Pamela. She was a great fighter for her hens, I'll agree. And she fought hard for what she thought was right. The only thing I ever fought hard for was softer straw

for my nest. But you are right, dearest Henry. I suppose I will miss the brash little radical. After all, she was my sister! And she always fought for chicken rights. I'm a chicken, so in a sense she was fighting for my rights! Yes, her death was a shame, I suppose. I must forgive her sins, even if she did steal that old boyfriend of mine. We are still sisters, so I forgive her and hope she ends up in chicken heaven where there is always plenty of chicken feed and five roosters for every hen! And a fancy dress shop on every corner! So now it is time for me to weep and wail for my sister, dear Peggy Pullet! I just hope the tears don't stain my blouse. *(She sobs most insincerely as Henry takes her hand. They gently and slowly exit as light fades to black)*

Scene 4

(Legal Eagle and Olivia Owl enter Henry's room. Legal goes immediately to a small table and picks up an unsealed envelope.)

Olivia. You're sure Henry won't mind us going through his papers, Legal Eagle?

Legal. I'm his attorney, Olivia.

Olivia. And I'm his private physician, but that doesn't give me the right to go through his private papers!

Legal. Henry wrote me days ago that he wanted some adjustments made. He told me to pick up some things and have them notarized. It's not as if I don't know about all his legal matters already. We have a very trusting relationship.

Olivia. But shouldn't he be here to hand you the papers himself?

Legal. *(Opening envelope and peering inside)* It's not necessary. He told me he's already signed everything off. That's strange!

Olivia. What's strange?

Legal. The papers. It looks like he's changed his will. Why would he do that? The handwriting is definitely Henry's. It says here that in the event of Henry's death, all his assets will go to his "friend and benefactor Edward Hawk."

Olivia. Who is this Edward Hawk?

Legal. From what I've heard, he's a common thug, possibly a murderer. Certainly he is not someone with whom Henry would normally associate!

Olivia. What's that stain on the papers?

Legal. *(Legal sniffs paper)* That's odd. It smells a bit like garlic. *(Sniffs again)* Yes, it most definitely appears to be!

Olivia. That doesn't sound like Henry at all. If I remember correctly, he could never abide the smell of garlic.

Legal. Yes, it almost made him ill, he said.

Olivia. He even had a difficult time passing an Italian restaurant.

Legal. He didn't mind onions, if I remember.

Olivia. Oh, right you are. He loved onions. It was just garlic he stayed away from.

Legal. Onions he adored. And leeks he loved! But garlic – never!

Olivia. He's changed, hasn't he? I hear he's been experimenting with various combinations of dangerous chemicals.

Legal. But that's his job. He's a research scientist.

Olivia. Some of his colleagues think he's been experimenting too much! There are some things best left alone, like garlic!

Legal. Oh, don't be silly, Olivia. The man's a genius.

Olivia. He's not such a genius. He completely ignores all the recent findings on the benefits of herbal medicines. He's fixated on chemistry and chemical answers to everything.

Legal. I have noticed he seems very pale and sickly lately. Perhaps, he's working too hard.

Olivia. If you ask me, I think there's a connection between his illness and this Edward Hawk fellow!

Legal. You might be right. I'll tell you what. I'll put off working on these papers until I can find out what's going on with our friend Henry.

Olivia. And I'll bring over some herbal medicines that might help him. Some of my colleagues have had miraculous cures.

Legal. And perhaps one of us might check out this Hawk fellow. I hear he's been showing up more and more frequently in some of the shadier haunts of our fair London.

Olivia. You'd better be careful, Legal Eagle. The murder rate has gone up considerably down there.

Legal. And I'll set up a meeting for the three of us. If Henry is going off the deep end, we must intervene! After all, that's what friends are for!

Olivia. I still can't get over it!

Legal. What's that, Olivia?

Olivia. *(Holding her nose)* Garlic!

Legal. Egad, yes! *(Legal and Olivia exit as the unkempt Edward enters with two rowdy music hall hens. Edward is wild with excitement and feverish joy, waving his*

stick around dangerously. Hens are good sports with Henry, but are a bit wary of him.)

Scene 5

Stella. Oh, you are a wicked, wicked man!

Edward. Come here, Mabel, and let's give me a kiss.

Mabel. You kiss him, Stella. He's too rough for me! He's a big bad brute of man, he is!

Stella. I'll kiss him if he cleans up a bit. He looks like something what has been dragged through a hedge backward!

Edward. I'm being nice, you know. I'm asking. I could force you, Lady Muck!

Stella. And who are you to order me about, Lord Muck?

Edward. Don't get cheeky with me!

Mabel. Ah, you're just a smelly old bucket of garlic juice!

Stella. Yes, he's the foulest fowl that ever flew the skies! *(Girls laugh and Edward joins them)*

Edward. Come on, you girlies! You're being very unfair to me. Actually, I'm a very sweet man deep down inside!

Mabel. How deep would you have to go?

Stella. Several feet I think!

Edward. I can prove to you I'm a sensitive type! I write poetry, I do!

Mabel. What sort of poetry would come out of a brute like you?

Stella. Yes, prove it to us. We'd like to hear some of this poetry of yours!

Edward. If you want some poetry, here is my kind of verse! Awhile ago I was a chicken and so very shy! I was afraid to ever speak my mind! But now I'm brave enough to be a brutal kind of guy! I'll beat you black and blue and then I'll rob you blind! Ha, ha, ha!

Stella. That's not a proper poem. It's not about love or such things. Give us a poem what has a proper love affair in it!

Edward. You'll see my shadow on the land wherever there are hens. I see a helpless darling all alone! I'm zooming in upon my victim with my close-up lens and soon she will be entering my killing zone! Ha, ha, ha!

Mabel. You have all that nastiness mixed up with love. Love has nothing to do with attacking chickens. Love is about tender kisses and such, not helpless hens entering your killing zone! You're a sick one, Mr. Hawk, a very sick one!

Edward. I saw a chicken yesterday, just standing on a street, just waiting as the highway traffic flowed! I loved the way she stood there looking stupid, yet so sweet! Now there's a chicken who will never cross the road! For I'll be flying above the clouds where chickens never go! And as I'm flying above the clouds, I'll sneer at you below! I'll swoop on down with my walking stick and whack your head till you're feeling sick! Oh, I'm the foulest fowl you'll ever know!

Mabel. That was a terrible poem!

Edward. Come here and give me a kiss, Mabel!

Mabel. Let's get away from this monster, Stella!

Stella. *(As they exit)* I'm right behind you, Mabel. This fellow frightens me!

Edward. What's the matter girls? Afraid of Edward Hawk? Ha, ha, ha! Afraid of Edward Hawk? Ha, ha, ha! *(Blackout)*

Scene 6

(Maria, Henry's pigeon maid, is peering out into the audience/street from Henry's window)

Maria. Oh, there's a sight for you! Looks like that man had a few too many tonight. Ha, ha! Yes, a few too many! He's weaving and weaving. Oh, he just fell! Ouch! Now he's getting up! How will he ever make it home, the poor fellow? Ha, ha, ha! Oh, there's someone coming along. He's has a walking stick and he's all hunched over. Perhaps he'll help the gentleman home. Oh, no! He's attacking the man with his walking stick. Ouch! Ouch! That must hurt! He's clubbing the poor man until he is lifeless! Oh, what a brutal scene this is! Now there are others coming along! Look, it's Mr. Legal Eagle! He notices the nasty felon has left behind his walking stick! He's picking it up. The stick must be a clue! I love clues, I do! *(Edward enters and creeps slowly up behind her)* Except, is it really a clue when it is obviously the murder weapon? I mean, shouldn't a clue be subtle and difficult to explain until the genius detective discovers its purpose? Wait a minute! I witnessed the whole thing! I can identify the brute who did this! He's the same creature I often see come here to visit Henry. It's Mr. Edward Hawk, the one who reeks of garlic. *(She sniffs the air)* I think I smell garlic right now!

Edward. Hello, Maria, you little stool pigeon! I see you have been snooping out the window again!

Maria. Yes, I have, Mr. Edward Hawk, and once I give my testimony, this will be an open and shut case!

Edward. Oh, no, it won't!

Maria. Oh, yes, it will!

Edward. Oh, no, it won't! *(Edward grabs her from behind and drags her off stage left)*

Maria. Help! Help! It isn't fair! It isn't fair!

Edward. Who ever told you life was fair? Ha, ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha!

Scene 7

(Pamela enters stage right, followed quickly by the same hens who earlier entertained Edward)

Mabel. What's a posh lady like you doing in this part of town!

Pamela. I was out to buy some necessary cosmetics and somehow I got turned around in the fog. What part of London is this?

Stella. This is the part of London what has all the gruesome slayings, Lady Muck! And you best not be walking alone.

Pamela. Oh, indeed! Indeed! May I walk with you?

Mabel. I don't suppose it would hurt our reputations none if you did!

Stella. Right, but you better be moving here fast before the monster gets you.

(Pamela joins them with great speed)

Pamela. Ever so thankful for the invitation. What sort of monster is this creature? Has anyone seen him?

Mabel. Stella thinks we met him a short time ago in the music hall!

Pamela. Oh, my goodness! I can't imagine such a thing!

Stella. We were lucky to get away with our lives!

Pamela. What did he look like?

Mabel. Ugly and hunched over!

Stella. And he carried a walking stick, he did!

Mabel. There are them what say he comes out of the sewers, but we don't hold with that theory.

Stella. And there are them what say he escaped from the Bedlam Madhouse, but we don't hold with that neither.

Pamela. Is there any way you can tell if he's in the area?

Mabel. Yes, there is one way. He has the stink of garlic about him!

Pamela. Where do you think he comes from?

Stella. From the sky, most likely, from the sky. He's mostly likely some sort of predator bird what comes from way up in the air and dives down on his helpless victims!

Mabel. You might be walking along, as innocent as can be, and he's flying up there so high you can't really see him.

Stella. He's an ugly thing!

Mabel. He loves to kill just anything!

Stella. He spreads fear all over the land, he does!

Mabel. He's like that Attila the Hun fellow.

Stella. Right! He's a monster right out of the history books! He pounces on every little chick and beat them good with his walking stick!

Mabel. That's the way he gets his fun!

Pamela. *(Sniffing the air)* I smell garlic!

Mabel. *(Also sniffing the air)* Yes, it does smell something like garlic!

Stella. Let's get out of here, ladies! Let's run like the wind! *(Pamela and hens exit stage right as Olivia and Eagle enter stage right)*

Scene 8

Olivia. You say you found Henry's walking stick at the scene of the crime?

Legal. Yes, but I was able to conceal it from the police.

Olivia. That was wise of you. No need to implicate poor Henry in these matters.

Legal. After all, we attended the same schools!

Olivia. We belong to the same social clubs!

Legal. He's one of us! Birds of a feather!

Olivia. Have you told Pamela she is to meet us here?

Legal. Yes, I have, Olivia, but she's always late it, seems. And do you have the herbal formula?

Olivia. *(Pulling out a flask.)* My colleagues tell me this can work wonders. We'll just have to see. I don't want to count my chickens before they hatch, you know!

Legal. What are the ingredients?

Olivia. Very simple, actually. Nothing you couldn't get in a normal Chinese restaurant. It's basically just liquefied sweet and sour pork, but distilled to one hundred times the normal potency.

Legal. And what's the theory here?

Olivia. As you know, I've given up on chemical-based Western medicine with all the horrible side effects. I think that Mr. Hawk might be a side effect of the medicines Dr. Chicken has been taking all these months. Hopefully, the sweet and sour pork will complement the sweetness of Dr. Chicken with the sourness of Mr. Hawk.

Legal. In short, if all goes well, Dr. Chicken will have a perfectly balanced personality!

Olivia. Correct. He'll be neither chicken, nor hawk.

Legal. Then he'll be a chickenhawk?

Olivia. I suppose that's as good a name as any.

Legal. I'll help poor Henry in from his bedroom. *(Pamela enters stage right as Legal is exiting stage left for Henry)*

Pamela. Sorry to be so tardy. There was this stupendous sale on feathered boas and I just couldn't miss it!

Olivia. We'll be bringing Henry out soon. We want you to be a witness to a little experiment.

Pamela. Has Henry developed a new perfume with his chemical research, Olivia? I just love new perfumes!

Olivia. Not quite, but I think this will interest you. *(Henry, extremely weak, is helped in by Legal)*

Henry. Hello, Pamela!

Pamela. My goodness, Henry! You look like death warmed over! *(Legal and Olivia help Henry to sit on the floor center stage. Olivia pulls out a flask and helps Henry drink it.)*

Henry. How long will this take? I'm afraid I don't have very long for this world.

Olivia. The effects should come rapidly. We should see something in a few seconds. Legal, help me hold him down. *(Legal and Olivia hold Henry down, but soon Henry is screaming and pushing them away. He rolls on the floor and screams as he did earlier and disappears offstage, only to be followed quickly by the entrance of the very healthy Edward. Edward begins to chase Pamela about the room as she screams "Oh, no, you won't!" and he screams, "Oh, yes, I will." Neither Legal nor Olivia has any effect on the brute. Suddenly, Edward falls on the ground in agony and rolls offstage. Henry enters, seeming much healthier. Pamela decides to embrace him and she chases him around the room as he screams "Oh, no, you won't!" and she screams, "Oh, yes, I will!" Finally, he also collapses totally. Legal and Olivia rush to his aid on the floor and he quickly recovers.)*

Henry. What happened? Where am I?

Olivia. Are you feeling better now?

Henry. Yes, I am. In fact, I feel better than I have for a long time!

Legal. Are you a chicken?

Henry. Partially.

Pamela. I hope you haven't become that horrid Mr. Hawk!

Henry. Not quite, but I feel something of him stirring within me! In fact, Pamela, I just had an idea. Would you like to go on a date with me?

Pamela. Oh, Henry, dearest Henry, you finally asked!

Henry. I thought we might try a little rock climbing and bungee jumping! Then we could do a little skydiving!

Pamela. Sky-diving! I hear that's dangerous!

Henry. That's why I like it!

Pamela. And after the skydiving?

Henry. The opera, of course. And then perhaps we could go to a poetry reading!

Pamela. Oh, Henry! You're my hero!

Legal. Your sweet and sour potion has worked, Olivia.

Olivia. Yes, he seems fully integrated. There's not even a whiff of that horrible garlic in the air!

Henry. And one more thing, Pamela!

Pamela. *(Batting her eyes)* Yes, darling?

Henry. Come over here! *(Pamela comes to his side)*

Pamela. And what is it that you want, darling?

Henry. I want a great big kiss, Pamela! A great big kiss!

Pamela. I thought you'd never ask! *(They kiss)*

Olivia. It's a happy ending!

End of Show

**McRumpelstiltskin:
or The Longest Leprechaun
An Irish Fairy Tale
by Gerald P. Murphy**

Characters

Queen Mab – selfish and tyrannical queen

Secretary – browbeaten servant to Mab

Soldier

Sara } peasants

Kathleen }

James }

Kevin }

Rory – a leprechaun

Nicole

Miller – Nicole’s father

Guard

Queen Primera – former queen

Soldiers, Prison Guards and other Townspeople as desired

(Queen Mab and Secretary enter. Secretary is reading from a scroll of paper so long it drags on the ground.)

Mab. They still refuse me credit?

Secretary. Yes, your highness. They claim you have borrowed too much already and may never pay them back.

Mab. That's nonsense! Utter nonsense! Did you contact the Grand Bank of Moravia?

Secretary. No, your magnificence. They refused to reply to any of my letters.

Mab. What about the Bank of Balrania? They were always a soft touch.

Secretary. The chief financial officer informed me he is still waiting for the first payment on our last loan.

Mab. What about new taxes?

Secretary. We are already taxing everything at 100 percent, your majesty.

Mab. Can't we go to 200 percent?

Secretary. I'm afraid we've bled the people dry, your wondrousness.

Mab. What about the orphanages?

Secretary. The orphanages?

Mab. Yes, you know, those little hovels where we stick the children of our dead soldiers. Surely there must be some money we can get from these buildings.

Secretary. We sold them off years ago, my queen.

Mab. We did? What did we do with the money?

Secretary. We spent it all on our next war.

Mab. Oh, yes, that's right! And a lovely little war it was. But that was then and this is now. We need more money for a new war. My soldiers grow old and rusty in peacetime.

Secretary. But we need to find a source of money, my ladyship. Without gold there can be no war!

Mab. I've just got to get hold of some gold!

Secretary. No banker is willing to lend you a shilling.

Mab. Wartime gives reason for joy. I just love to watch my enemies destroyed!

Secretary. But it gets very expensive to launch an offensive when you are broke!

Mab. But I want to bring woes to my numerous foes!

Secretary. Peace is tearing you apart, my dear Queen!

Mab. I want war! I want war! I want war!

Secretary. We've just got to get hold of some gold!

Soldier. *(Enters and kneels before the queen.)* I have wonderful news for you, my Excellency.

Mab. Spit it out, soldier.

Soldier. Some soldiers have trapped a rare creature, a leprechaun!

Mab. A leprechaun! Are these not the creatures who have secret knowledge of gold?

Secretary. This is the answer for all our problems. We can have an inexhaustible supply of money now!

Mab. And we can wage war whenever we please! Have this creature brought to me and we'll see if we can squeeze some of the good stuff out of him! *(Mab, Secretary and Soldier exit, and several impoverished peasants enter. You can tell they are poor because of the dirty make-up artfully applied to their faces and the patches which festoon their ragged, yet colorful, clothing. In short, they are obviously poor, but that doesn't mean they have totally abandoned their sense of style.)*

Sara. Where are your three sons, Katrina? I haven't seen them for weeks.

Kathleen. They have to stay at home in bed.

Sara. In bed? Why is that? Are they sick?

Kathleen. No, it's just that they only have one pair of trousers between them and that one pair is torn to shreds so they're ashamed to come outside.

Sara. Oh, that's terrible.

Kathleen. Right you are, but it really isn't any worse than everyone else is going through.

Sara. Everyone but the queen.

James. If only her sister hadn't died. She was a much kinder queen. If only she were in charge!

Kevin. If only, if only, if only! There's no use living in the past!

Kathleen. If we had the strength, we would rise up and depose her!

Kevin. If pigs had wings, they could fly!

Sara. It's too bad we're too weak from hunger to revolt!

Kevin. For dinner last night I had a handful of dirt!

James. You had dirt? Oh, how I long for a nice plate of dirt! You don't know how lucky you are. For the last three weeks my family has had only one bucket of swamp water for food!

Kathleen. Swamp water? I'd die for a nice hot cup of swamp water swarming with nutritious bacteria! At least that's something you can get your teeth into. My family is trying to live on dirty air and horse flies!

Sara. Don't you dare mention the horseflies or the queen will have the tax man upon us!

Kevin. We have no future and we have no hope!

James. We are quite stinky; we can't afford soap!

Kathleen. Our queen is a nasty devil; she treats us like dirt!

Sara. She never helps her people!

Kathleen. She only like to hurt!

Kevin. Someday our queenie will get what is due!

James. Even Napoleon met his Waterloo!

Sara. We'll be so happy, like birds on the wing!

Kevin. And we'll smell pretty, like flowers in spring!

Kathleen. If only we could get rid of this evil queen! *(A flatbed wagon carrying a bound leprechaun enters from stage right, pulled by several soldiers. The leprechaun is kneeling in the wagon. False feet jut out from his knees, making him appear much smaller. His legs from the knees down are hidden by dark cloth. This is all an illusion, of course, to give the actor a dwarfish appearance. He will have his "long leprechaun" size in later scenes, after he is stretched on the queen's rack.)*

Soldier. Make way for the leprechaun! Make way for the leprechaun!

Kathleen. Is it a real leprechaun?

Soldier. Just look at him! Doesn't he look like one?

Kathleen. I don't know! I've never seen one before.

Soldier. Well, now you have! This is the bona fide genuine article.

Kathleen. Can you speak for yourself, short fellow?

Rory. He's right. I'm a leprechaun.

Sara. I thought that leprechauns only appeared in fairy tales.

James. Here he is! As big as life!

Kevin. Or as small as life!

Kathleen. What's your name, Mr. Leprechaun? *(Mab enters with Secretary.)*

Rory. I can never tell a soul my name. But I can tell you this. If any woman can discover my name and say it to me aloud, that woman will be my wife!

Mab. And I'm sure every woman on earth would be dying to marry a short little stumpy thing like you, leprechaun!

Rory. Are you the queen?

Mab. Yes, I am the queen, so you must do what I tell you to do!

Rory. I'd be willing to do almost anything for you if you'll set me free!

Mab. Set you free? That'll be the day. No, Mr. Leprechaun, you won't be set free very soon!

Rory. I can perform many deeds of magic for you if you will only free my arms!

Mab. You need only perform one act of magic. (*Holding a sack.*) Fill this sack with gold!

Rory. Faith and begorrah! I can do that for you. What will you do with the gold?

Secretary. The queen would make war and she needs the gold to pay for this war!

Rory. To pay for a war?

Mab. Yes, little leprechaun, to pay for horses and cannon and swords and shells!

Rory. Then I'm afraid I must stay a prisoner!

Secretary. Why is that?

Rory. The gold I give is for good, not evil!

Mab. Are you saying my glorious wars are evil?

Rory. I'm afraid so, good queen.

Mab. Have you ever been tortured, leprechaun?

Rory. Faith and begorrah, queen, I have not.

Mab. That is good. Then you have never heard of the rack?

Rory. The rack? No, I am ignorant of the rack.

Mab. Not for long, leprechaun. Soon you will know the exquisite agony of being spread and stretched on the rack until the pain becomes unbearable!

Rory. Yet I still cannot give you gold for evil!

Mab. We'll see about that, leprechaun! We'll see about that! Take him to the tower, soldiers.

Secretary. Stretch him on the rack!

Mab. (*Angry*) I give the orders around here, Secretary!

Secretary. Yes, your royal majesty!

Mab. Never presume you know what I would order!

Secretary. Yes, your royal majesty!

Mab. Soldiers?

Soldier. We await your orders!

Mab. Take him to the tower, soldiers!

Soldier. Is that all, my queen?

Mab. And stretch him on the rack! And if he won't do my bidding, put him under lock and key! We'll put his shrimp on the rack and give him a good stretch! And then the stretched out fool will be locked up forever and a day in the tower where he will never see the sun again!

Rory. Never see the sun again!

Mab. Never, never, never!

Rory. Faith and begorrah! This is the worst day of me life!

(The leprechaun is wheeled offstage. Mab and her secretary also exit. Meanwhile, the miller and Nicole, his daughter, enter.)

Miller. Was that the queen?

Sara. Yes, that was the queen, the monster who rules our land...

James. ...the unnatural lover of warfare...

Kathleen. ...the royal hag of horror!

Miller. Do you have need for a miller here?

Kathleen. To have need for a miller, we would need grain.

Miller. Yes, of course.

Kathleen. Well, we have no grain here.

Miller. Without grain, you would starve!

James. And that's exactly what we are doing, compliments of the queen.

Sara. Just what are you doing here?

Miller. *(Bragging)* I am the most famous miller in the land!

James. You are? What is your name?

Miller. My name, like my profession, is Miller.

Kathleen. Sara, you've travelled around. Have you ever heard of a miller named Miller?

Sara. A miller named Miller? No, I haven't. Sounds like he's repeating himself! And who is the girl?

Miller. She's my daughter, Nicole, and she's the finest weaver in the land!

James. The finest weaver in the land? Can you prove that?

Kathleen. Yes, you seem to be a braggart. How do we know anything you say is true?

Miller. Well, it is true that I can't do the impossible. I can't be a miller without grain, just as you can't be a farmer without land! *(Mab and Secretary enter with two soldiers and listen)*

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