

# Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-  
MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH  
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404  
612-872-5108  
FAX 612-874-8119

## *Prince Brat and the Whipping Boy*

Story, Script and Lyrics by  
Sid Fleischman

Music by  
John Engerman

*Prince Brat and the Whipping Boy* was first presented by Seattle Children's Theatre for the  
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**Cast of Characters**

- Black Cat
- Prince Brat
- Jemmy
- King
- Petunia (Dancing Bear)
- Betsy
- Giulietta
- Ballad Seller
- Peckwit
- Hold-Your-Nose-Billy
- Cutwater
- Captain Winifred Nips
- Polly
- Alfie
- Smudge
- Corporal
- Tosher

Ensemble: Dukes, Duchesses, Palace Guards, Cavalry Men

**ACT ONE**

*The curtain doesn't rise -- just yet. A bruised and bandaged BLACK CAT, with the aid of a crutch, hurries from right wings and pauses center stage, before the curtain, and addresses the audience.*

CAT

*(looks back)*

It's Prince Brat! Run for your lives!

*(claps paw over mouth)*

Oh, don't tell him I called him Prince Brat--  
he'll 'ave me guts for fiddle strings.

No one calls him that, not to 'is face.

*(slaps his neck as if stung and exits left)*

Ow-wo-wo-wo...

*PRINCE BRAT, with sling shot, rushes after cat from right wings. He appears to be nine or ten, with good features, but with a disposition like a crosscut saw. He wears a gold crown at an saucy tilt.*

PRINCE

Ha-ha, that got you! Even  
black cats are afraid to cross my path.  
Ha-ha!

*As he saunters a step or two toward center stage, he trips. The crown falls from his head; he catches it in mid-air, bobbling it for a moment. There should be natural laughter from the audience. He casts a contemptuous gaze over the theater.*

PRINCE

Silence! How dare you laugh at me! I'm  
a prince! Prince Horace Boris Basil Hugh  
Bartholomew etcetera, etcetera, --  
the Fifth! And I can have all of you thrown  
into the dungeon like -- like -- *(snaps  
fingers after a false try or two)* like that!  
What are you doing here? Did I grant  
you an audience? Are you seeking employment  
as my royal whipping boy?

*(smirks)*

Too late. The position was filled by Jemmy,  
the rat catcher's son. An orphan, I believe.  
But he won't last long. Ha-ha! They never do!

*(Then, lofty manner)*

You may leave your name at the castle in the  
event of a vacancy. The duties of a whipping  
boy are stupidly simple.

*Strutting the apron, he SINGS with consummate arrogance.*

WHENEVER YOU'RE NAUGHTY

PRINCE  
 WHENEVER YOU'RE NAUGHTY YOU'RE SPANKED,  
 BUT I'M OF SUPERIOR RANK  
 WHEN I'M BAD AND I'M CAUGHT,  
 THE WHIPPING BOY'S BROUGHT,  
 AND HE FEELS THE WHIP FOR MY PRANK.

TO PUNISH A PRINCE IS FORBIDDEN, YOU SEE!  
 MY BOTTOM'S OF ROYAL PEDIGREE.  
 I'M NASTY, HE'S WHACKED,  
 I'M GHASTLY, HE'S SMACKED.  
 A MOST PLEASING ARRANGEMENT -- FOR ME.

*The sound of a tambourine from behind the curtain catches the Prince's attention. He pokes his head through center curtain and looks in. After a moment, with a sly smile, he glances back at audience.*

PRINCE  
 A dancing bear to amuse Papa's  
 guests. How utterly boring.  
*(after another peek through curtain,  
 scowling)*  
 Papa's paying more attention to that show-off  
 bear than he does to me! *(Then)* I know  
 what I'll do....he-he!

*The Prince vanishes through center curtain. After a moment, the curtains open on a palace chamber, with unobtrusive bookcase in rear. The KING and four DUKES and DUCHESSSES, in long wigs, sit at dining table, stage right. They are being entertained by a dancing bear, PETUNIA, and a gypsy-dressed girl, BETSY, about 16, accompanying with the tambourine. They work center stage, on a narrow red carpet running downstage from an upstage entrance with a couple of stairs. A PALACE GUARD stands like a toy soldier at one side of the entrance.*

*Raised a couple of feet at stage left, and unlit, stands a crenellated stone tower, with window slit, and scrap of moon.*

*The prince lurks behind the dinner guests and watches scornfully as the girl puts the bear through its paces with a simple song and a lot of la-las.*

WILL YOU BE MY QUEEN OF MAY?

WILL YOU BE MY QUEEN OF MAY?  
 LA-LA-LA-LEE, LA-LA-LA-LAY  
 SHALL WE DANCE 'TILL CHRISTMAS DAY.  
 LA-LA-LA-LEE, INDEED WE MAY.

SPIN AND DANCE THIS ROUNDELAY,  
 LA-LA-LA-LEE, LA-LA-LA-LAY

CLAP OUR HANDS AND STEP THIS WAY.  
LA-LA-LA-LEE, AND WELL-WELL-A-DAY.

HERE'S A VEIL FROM SALOME'  
LA-LA-LA-LEE, LA-LA-LA-LAY.  
DANCE IT TO THE MILKY WAY  
LA-LA-LA-LEE, THERE AND AWAY.

*Petunia is doing something concentrated, such as standing on her hands, or balancing on one leg. The prince gives the downstage end of the carpet a tug. The bear collapses and bellows an angry roar. The prince hides himself again behind guests.*

*Betsy calms Petunia and they resume their act. With all eyes on them, the prince begins tying the guests wigs to the backs of their chairs. He has to hold back the giggles.*

*Petunia and Betsy finish their performance, curtsy and bow to the king as they back away and exit.*

KING

Remarkable. Imagine taming a wild bear.

*(good-natured)*

Though easier, I daresay, then taming a wild prince!

FIRST DUKE

A toast to the king!

*As all rise, with goblets in hand, their wigs fly off. A duchess with a bald head screeches; howls of humiliation and anger from others. The prince doubles over with laughter at the sight of the shorn nobles. The king spots him.*

THE KING

Fetch the whipping boy!

*The guard beside the upstage entrance shouts upward through entrance.*

PALACE GUARD

Fetch the whipping boy!

*The command is repeated by offstage voices, fainter and seeming to rise up invisible stairway.*

OFFSTAGE VOICES

Fetch the whipping boy!

Fetch the whipping boy!

*Through the windows of the unlit tower at stage left we see the sudden light of a flickering lantern. The set itself becomes faintly lit, enough to make out the tower.*

OFFSTAGE GUARD

On your feet, me boy! Wake up!

*JEMMY appears in window opening, as if bolting upright in bed. He's a street waif about the same age as the prince, but far from happy living in this borrowed luxury. His hair looks disheveled; he wears a sleeping shirt*

JEMMY

Ain't I already been whipped twice today? Gaw! What's the prince done now?

OFFSTAGE GUARD

Let's not keep the great folks waitin', lad.

JEMMY

I'd as soon be back in the sewers catchin' rats, like me Pa. Rest him in peace.

OFFSTAGE GUARD

Come along.

*Jemmy disappears from the window and the lantern light fades away.*

*The Palace Guard shakes out a short whip, in readiness. (To avoid any suggestions of SM leather, the whip is many colored and, somehow, a bit festive, like a pom pom We might even attach to the ends jesters' bells. Thus, when in use, instead of hearing a thwank! we hear a jingle of bells.) And then Jemmy appears in the entry. He bows slowly and glares at the prince, who smirks in return.*

KING

Seven whacks!

*The Palace Guard and Jemmy move just out of sight, to one side of entry. We see the whip flip back into the entry each time before it strikes. Prince Brat counts each blow. Not a sound from Jemmy.*

PRINCE

One...two...three...four...five...  
six.....six... that's only six!  
(after final blow)  
Seven.

*The king shakes a finger at Prince Brat.*

KING  
And let that be a lesson to you!

PRINCE  
(*assuming a contrite look*)  
Yes, Papa.

*The king and his guests (each slapping freed wigs back on heads) exit right, as if there were a passage or hall there, leaving the stage to Prince Brat.*

PRINCE  
(*exasperated*)  
Did you hear? Not a cry out  
of that spiteful whipping boy. I won't  
allow such impertinence.  
(*turning upstage*)  
Jemmy! Jemmy-from-the Streets!

*Jemmy reappears in the entry, tight-lipped after the whipping.*

JEMMY  
M'Lord?

PRINCE  
You're the worst whipping boy I ever  
had! How come you never bawl?

JEMMY  
Dunno.

PRINCE  
A whipping boy is supposed to yowl like a  
stuck pig! We dress you up fancy and feed  
you royal, don't we? It's no fun if you  
don't bawl!

*Jemmy merely shrugs.*

PRINCE  
Yelp and bellow next time! Hear?  
Or I'll tell Papa to give you back your  
rags and kick you back into the streets.  
I promise!

*Prince Brat stalks off stage. Jemmy gazes after him.*

JEMMY  
I ain't never springin' a tear for you to  
gloat over.

*He wanders downstage, rubbing his rear and making a long-delayed, pained expression.*

JEMMY

He'll get me thrashed by the tutor  
first thing in the mornin'.  
But he won't hear a bawl or a bellow  
out of me!

*(brightening)*

Kicked back to the streets, didn't he  
say? Didn't he promise? Back to the streets?  
I'll be ever so much obliged.

BACK TO THE STREETS

JEMMY

I'LL BE BACK TO THE SEWERS  
AND SEWER RATS,  
BACK TO THE ALLEYS  
AND ALLEY CATS.  
THAT'S HOME-SWEET-HOME TO ME.  
HOME FOR THIS TATTERED HIDE.  
REST YUR BONES IN PEACE, PAW,  
PEEK AT YUR RAT-CATCHIN ME,  
HOLED UP IN THE KING'S OWN DIGS.  
FANCIED UP LIKE A PLATE OF FIGS.  
BUT YOU WON'T HEAR A SIGH OUT OF ME.  
GAW! TOMORROW I'LL BE FREE,  
GONE IN THE HALF-BLINK OF AN EYE,  
AYE, RID OF YOUR ROYAL AWFULNESS,  
YOUR PESKY HIGH FALUTINESS.  
I'LL NEVER LOOK BACK, YOU'LL SEE.  
IT'S BACK TO THE STREETS FOR ME.

He rushes off.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE TWO**

*During the blackout, the palace belltower begins to toll. By the stroke of nine the lights have come up on same set, but a new day. The scrap of moon near the tower at stage left is now the sun in full blaze.*

*The tutor, PECKWIT, bustles onto the stage, his arms loaded with books, scrolls, maps, slates, a handbell -- and a willow switch. He's a disheveled, bespeckled man in the robes of a scholar.*

*He drops the impedimenta of learning on the table, sorts through for the switch and withdraws it. He gives it a couple of cuts through the air.*

PECKWIT

I've worn out an entire forest on one lad or another, but his royal highness still has no more learning than a stuffed flea.

*(rings handbell)*

Prince Brat!

*(suddenly flustered, appalled by his slip of the tongue)*

I mean, Horace. Prince Horace!

*(grumbling to himself)*

Must you always be tardy for your lessons?

*He paces the stage, hands behind his back where he continues to ring the handbell, and grumbles and mutters.*

*Finally Prince Brat appears, followed by Jemmy, the nightshirt shucked off and now in court attire: velvet breeches, white stockings and buckle shoes. He gravitates toward bookshelf at rear, takes out and examines a book, while the prince throws himself into a chair. Peckwit gives the prince a ritual bow.*

PRINCE

*(airily)*

Get on with it, Peckwit.

PECKWIT

Did you study your mathematics?

PRINCE

Certainly not!

PECKWIT

Then perhaps you already know the answer to five times five.

PRINCE

Eleven or seventeen or something like that.

PECKWIT

Would two plus two exceed your talents?

*(unrolls map)*

Point to your kingdom, your highness.

PRINCE

*(points)*

There.

PECKWIT  
*(exasperation rising)*

China?

PRINCE  
 Close enough, Peckwit.

PECKWIT  
*(scrawls on slate)*  
 What does that say?

PRINCE  
 Ask my whipping boy. He seems to pay attention to all that gibberish in your books.

PECKWIT  
 The king didn't engage me to instruct your whipping boy! You fiddle-faddled scholar! One day you'll be king! And you still don't know the alphabet from pig tracks!

PRINCE  
*(snaps finger)*  
 I can always get someone to read for me.

PECKWIT  
 You can't so much as write your own name!

PRINCE  
 Pish-posh. I can always get someone to write my name for me.

PECKWIT  
*(exploding)*  
 It would be easier to educated a boiled cabbage! Prepare to be punished, Your Lordship!

PECKWIT  
 Whipping boy!

PRINCE  
 Ten whacks, at least.

*Jemmy closes the book, but now that his durance vile is almost at an end, he lingers for a moment.*

PECKWIT  
 Whipping boy!

JEMMY  
*(coming forward)*

How many lashes this time, Mr. Peckwit?.

PRINCE

(*smirking*)

Ten! And good and hard, tutor, if you please.

*Jemmy folds his arms and stands center stage as Peckwit, a step behind him, administers the willow switch. With each blow, we see Jemmy girding himself and holding back every yelp.*

*The prince's smirking smile turns to exploding fury as the punishment ends.*

PRINCE

You contrary rascal!

JEMMY

You want your whipping boy to yelp and howl, so it's back to the streets for me! You gave your promise, royal as could be.

PRINCE

It's pure spite that you won't howl!  
I'm on to you, Jemmy-from-the-Streets!

JEMMY

Gaw! You're not goin' back on your word?  
Turnin' me out, ain't you?

PRINCE

Think you can cross me and get away with it? Ha! Never and nohow!

JEMMY

I'll run away again!

PRINCE

(*scornfully*)

And I'll catch you again! I'll have you tracked down till your tongue hangs out like a red flag! Now come along, Jemmy-from-the-Streets. I want you to help me catch bullfrogs.

*The stage darkens. A loud croaking of bullfrogs arises from the darkness. Black Cat appears at stage left, at the foot of the tower.*

BLACK CAT

The bullfrogs? The Prince released them in the moat around the castle.

No one got a wink of sleep for a week.

*We hear various unseen voices, starting with the king's:*

VOICES

Silence those bullfrogs!  
I can't sleep!  
Oh, my poor head!  
Who put bullfrogs in the moat!  
Fetch the whipping boy!  
Fetch the whipping boy!  
Etc.

*The voices die out, the jingle-jangle sound of the whip bells rises and fades.*

BLACK CAT

That's how it went for more than a year. At his lessons, the prince learned nothing. The whipping boy learned to read, write, and do sums.

*Directly above Black Cat, Jemmy is slipping down a rope of sheets from the tower window. He's going to run away. He lands on Black Cat's Tail. A yowl, and Black Cat exits..*

*Prince Brat, wearing a black cloak and lugging a large wicker picnic basket, enters from stage left. Jemmy turns and the two almost collide. They glare at each other, nose to nose.*

PRINCE

Splendid. I was about to fetch you.

JEMMY

What are you up to now?

PRINCE

I need a manservant.

JEMMY

Walkin' in your royal sleep, are you?

PRINCE

I am running away!

JEMMY

What? -- runnin' away! You can't hop off like you was common folks. That's for the likes of me! What's put the wind in your sails?

PRINCE

*(folds arms defiantly)*

I'm bored.

SONG; BORED

JEMMY

Bored?

PRINCE

Bored, bored. Unspeakably bored.

JEMMY

WITH DUMPING BULLFROGS IN THE MOAT?

PRINCE

BORING

JEMMY

AND PAINTING FRESH PAINT ON THE TAILS OF THE  
DOGS, AND TURNING THEM LOOSE TO WAG ON THE  
WALLS?

PRINCE

BORING, UTTERLY BORING.

JEMMY

AND GREASING THE SADDLES SO THE  
KNIGHTS FELL OFF ON PARADE.  
YOU LAUGHED AND HURRAWED AND HOORAYED.

PRINCE

BORING, SIMPLY BORING.

JEMMY

AND YOU LEFT THE LADY-IN-WAITING, WAITING, AND  
WAITING AND WAITING -- AND WAITING.

PRINCE

SO, SO BORING.

JEMMY

TRIPPING SERVANTS ON THEIR FACES  
KNOCKING OVER ROYAL VASES --

PRINCE

YAWN! HOW TIRESOME.  
HOW TAME. HOW TEDIOUS.

JEMMY

(aside)

Ain't he centipede-ious.

PRINCE

BUT -- IT FEELS SO MAJESTIC  
 AND WONDERFULLY ROYAL  
 TO DO AS I PLEASE,  
 AND BE SO DEPLORABLY NASTY,  
 SO AWFUL, SO SCORNING.  
 TO TILT MY NOSE, AND STRIKE A POSE  
 AND WATCH THEM WATCH ME STRUT  
 FROM NIGHT TO MORNING.

JEMMY  
 NOW THAT'S BORING.

PRINCE  
 WHAT?

JEMMY  
 HOW POSITIVELY, ABSOLUTELY, DOWN TO THE GROUND,  
 BANG-UP BORING.

PRINCE  
 BORING?

JEMMY  
 BORING.

They do a take to each other.

PRINCE AND JEMMY  
 BORING!

Beat

PRINCE  
 Whipping Boy, let's be off!.

JEMMY  
 But it's night, and you're afraid o'  
 the dark. Everyone knows that. You  
 won't even sleep without a lit candle.

PRINCE  
 Lies! Besides, the moon's still up, good and  
 bright. Follow me!

JEMMY  
 The king'll have a gory-eyed fit!

PRINCE  
 He won't miss me..

JEMMY  
 He'll hunt us down.

PRINCE

Let him.

JEMMY

You'll get off light as a feather, but I'll be lucky if they don't whip me to the bone. More likely I'll be hung from the gallows. Scragged for sure!

PRINCE

Your neck is your own lookout. Pick up the basket, Jemmy-from-the-Streets, and follow me.

*Jemmy lifts the basket to his shoulder, and pauses for a moment of acute distress.*

JEMMY

Gaw! I'll catch it now!

He follows Prince Brat offstage.

BLACKOUT

## SCENE 2 1/2

Bravura Piece

Ballad Seller

*Before the stage is relit, there is action in the theater itself. Down one of the aisles comes the BALLAD SELLER, lighting his way with a lantern. As he is going to need more than two hands to handle his props and bits of business, he is followed by his sweet-faced assistant, a Giulietta Masina to his Anthony Quinn. He is costumed in an untidy clash of bright colors. Shouting and singing his wares, he carries a bamboo pole with both the lantern attached to the top with dozens of long paper streamers, about three inches wide -- a scraggly pompom.*

*GIULIETTA carries a pail, something like a champagne bucket, to catch the coins. It is a magicians' prop that mechanically makes the SOUND of a coin ringing in. See Prop Notes, end of script.*

*She has a pitch pipe and just before he delivers each song, she gives him the pitch. She may also carry a child's drum*

*and sticks, giving a rattle to call attention as Ballad Sellers enters, and again as he finishes each number.*

*Alternately, he may carry a small hurdy-gurdy on his pack At suitable moments she cranks the handle for bursts of song.*

SONGS OF THE BALLAD SELLER

BALLAD SELLER

Songs! Songs! Songs for sale! Buy 'em by  
the yard! Newest songs! Beautiful songs!  
Who'll buy me songs! A yard of verses, a  
penny!

MILADY GAVE BIRTH TO A RABBIT.  
PRAY SHE DON'T MAKE IT A HABIT.

All the latest! We got Hold-Your-Nose Billy, A  
Wild Man is He! Makes Attila the Hun look like  
a choir boy, he does.

Throughout their performance, every time he mentions Hold Your  
Nose Billy, Giulietta holds her nose.

BALLAD SELLER

HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY, A WILD MAN IS HE,  
HANG HIM FROM A GALLOWS TREE. . . .  
How does the rest of it go, Duchess?

He stands the pole in the aisle and as Giulietta holds it  
upright he searches for the Billy song.

BALLAD SELLER

(no pause)

In here somewhere. Ah, this's is a good'un!

He tears off a streamer of song, and reads it like an old  
stock market ticker tape.

BALLAD SELLER

THEY BURIED POOR TOMMY TITLOW  
THEY BURIED POOR TOMMY TODAY!  
ABOUT TIME THEY BURIED  
POOR TOMMY TITLOW.  
BEEN DEAD FOR A WEEK, Y'KNOW!  
14 verses, all for a copper!

From time to time he will pretend to make a sale, catching an  
imaginary coin in a trick bucket that makes a plunking sound.

BALLAD SELLER

Thankee, gov'nor. Songs for all ages.

Reaching the stage, he dives into the pompom and finds another song.

BALLAD SELLER

Didja hear? The king has  
outlawed fox hunting.

(a hushed aside)

If only he'd outlaw misbehavin' princes, eh?

OUR GOOD KING HORACE THE FOURTH  
A FOX HUNTING HE WENT FORTH  
"HENCEFORTH," SAID THE SORROWFUL FOX,  
SIRE! NAY! NAY! NO!  
AND BIT THE KING'S GREAT TOE

So lads, you can put away your  
red riding coats and your polished  
boots.

He takes the coin pail from Giulietta and makes another gesture with the pail as if catching a thrown coin. The pail clinks.

BALLAD SELLER

Thankee! Who'll buy me songs? A penny a yard!  
Aye, there's another copper!  
Songs! Songs!  
Here's a sad one, 123 verses, guaranteed to  
make you weep buckets.

POOR PITIFUL POLLY,  
DID WHAT SHE HADN'T OUGHT'ER  
MARRIED HERSELF A SAILORMAN  
AND TOOK TO GIN-AND-WATER.

He sobs theatrical sobs. He dabs at his eyes with a colored handkerchief, and squeezes out about a pint of water (wet sponge concealed in hank).

BALLAD SELLER

That one brings tears to me eyes. Or is  
someone peeling an onion?

He takes coin pail from Giulietta and makes a gesture with the pail as if catching a thrown coin. The pail clinks.

BALLAD SELLER

Much obliged, me lady! Songs for all ages.  
(reads;sings)

FAREWELL! FAREWELL! LITTLE SCHOLAR JOHNNY.

RIDING AWAY ON A NINEPENNY DONKEY.  
 "I'LL SEE THE WORLD," SAID JOHN, SAID HE,  
 "OR A REASONABLE FACSIMILE."

Fresh from the printer! Sing 'em yourself!

Another clink in the coin pail. The ballad seller peers suspiciously into the pail. He pulls out a slug, tests it with his teeth, and tosses it.

BALLAD SELLER

A slug! "Ere, now!  
 HARK! LISTEN TO THE MERRY TALE OF WHISTLING  
 WILLIE.  
 HE MET A MAID ON PICCADILLY. WHOOPS!  
*(crumbles and pockets song strip)*  
 No, that one's not for gentlefolks. Songs!  
 Penny a yard! Newest songs! Beautiful songs!  
 Get 'em 'ere!, etc.

He shrugs and sorts through the streamers of song.

BALLAD SELLER

Someone clamorin' for Hold-Your-Nose-Billy?  
 Not all sold, are they, Duchess? Oh, don't  
 that villain give me the shivers!

He tears off another verse streamer.

BALLAD SELLER

Bless me! Here's one you can dance to with  
 your ladylove.

He and Guilietta go into typical boy-and-girl soft shoe  
 vaudeville steps.

BALLAD SELLER

BOWLEGS JACK WAS A MISER,  
 AS THIRFTY AS HIS HIDE WOULD HOLD.  
 "CHICKENS!" GROWLED HE, "YOU EAT TOO MUCH.  
 I WILL SAVE A FORTUNE BOLD."  
 SO HE FED THEM PICTURES OF CHICKEN FEED,  
 AND RESTED HIS TWO BOW LEGS.  
 WHAT THOSE HENS DID NEXT WAS A MIGHTY DEED  
 - THEY LAID HIM PICTURES OF EGGS.

He again holds out the pail, moonwalking to center stage --  
 clink, clink clink.

BALLAD SELLER

What's that, gov'nor? You wants what's due  
you for that fiver? Certainly, sir. Me  
bankroll's all moth eaten. Keep the change.

He reaches into coin pail and throws out confetti.

BALLAD SELLER  
(to *Giulietta*)  
Find us Hold-Your-Nose-Billy, Duchess  
It's lurking in the bushes (pompom) 'ere  
somewhere

She starts searching.

BALLAD SELLER  
All verses genuine or money  
back on Judgment Day

She finds the right song strip, hands it to Billy -- and holds  
her nose.

BALLAD SELLER  
What 've we 'ere?  
Hold-Your-Nose-Billy! Sixteen verses!  
Still on the loose is Hold-Your-  
Nose Billy! Why, he might be  
sittin' just beside you.

Here, the ballad seller slips his shoes into clips on the  
stage, enabling him to lean way out over the footlights and to  
either side, as he sings:

BALLAD SELLER  
HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY, A WILD MAN IS HE,  
HANG HIM FROM A GALLOWS TREE.  
HERE HE COMES, THERE HE GOES.  
DON'T FORGET TO HOLD YOUR NOSE.

He cues audience to hold their noses.

BALLAD SELLER  
BLOOD AND GUTS HIS STOCK'N TRADE  
SPREADS 'EM ON TOAST WITH MARMALADE  
HE'LL CUT YOUR THROAT AND TIP HIS HAT,  
WHEREVER HE IS, DON'T YOU BE AT.

BLACKOUT

**SCENE THREE**

*A forest scene. It is night, and very dark. An owl hoots. Stage right, the interior of a forest hut, remains unlit and unused in this scene; a scrim of trees may be needed to conceal it. Deep upstage left, dimly seen among the trees, stands a horse (largely concealed by foliage -- head only, perhaps) in royal trappings with the prince in the saddle and the wicker basket tied behind. Jemmy is on his feet beside him. All are heads-on to the audience.*

PRINCE

I told you the fog would lift.  
Where do you suppose we are?

JEMMY

Lost, good and proper. I never  
been out in the forest before.

*At sound of owl hoot.*

PRINCE

What was that!

JEMMY

A hippopotamus, for all I know.  
Forests is creepy things. Gimme  
cobble streets anytime.

PRINCE

Take the halter and lead  
this dumb-headed beast.

JEMMY

Lead it? It's so dark I'd need two  
hands and a lantern to find me own nose.

PRINCE

Boy! Do as I tell you!

*Jemmy picks up the halter and takes a step or two downstage.  
stops.*

PRINCE

What are you stopping for?

JEMMY

I'm thinkin'

PRINCE

About what?

JEMMY

Me own business.

*Jemmy drops the halter and continues downstage and thinks his thought aloud.*

JEMMY

Here's your chance, Jemmy!  
Slip away in the dark. Run  
for it! No more whippings for  
you, not if Prince Brat can't track  
you down. The great sewers, Jemmy,  
that's the place to hide!

PRINCE

Jemmy-From-the-Streets!

JEMMY

*(ignores)*

All you have to find is the river  
and you're bound to come to the  
city. Who'd think to look for you under  
the city, Jemmy?

*Jemmy turns and retreats a step or two to speak to the prince, stationing himself beside a stout tree trunk.*

JEMMY

Don't worry yourself about the dark.  
Daybust can't be far off. But  
I'm goin' my own way now, your --

*Jemmy is interrupted when Prince Brat is pulled off the horse, squawking and bellowing. A glowing lantern lights up the scene with the suddenness of a magic trick (as a lightproof covering is yanked off). Hanging onto both Prince Brat and the lantern is HOLD-YOUR-NOSE-BILLY, a big, red-bearded beast of a man in a highwayman's jackboots.*

PRINCE

Ow! Ow! Let go! Let go!

BILLY

Well, what we got here? A noisy  
brat on a fine beast of a horse.

PRINCE

Insolent rascal! Take your hands off  
me!

*From behind the tree trunk, a second lantern appears as if by magic, and a skinny arm grabs Jemmy by the collar. From behind the tree comes CUTWATER, a rattleboned, cackling man with a nose like a meat cleaver. Ragged clothes hang off him like wisps of fog.*

CUTWATER  
I got another, Billy!

*Billy shoves the prince toward Jemmy and hoists the lantern.*

BILLY  
Not much of a catch -- two sparrows.

CUTWATER  
But ain't they trimmed up fancy?

BILLY  
They are, Cutwater. Got any  
gold in your pockets, lads?

PRINCE  
No business of yours!

BILLY  
Ah, but so help me, it is my business.  
(a thunderclap of laughter)  
Don't you know who I am?

PRINCE  
A clod and a ruffian!  
(pinches nose)  
And you reek of garlic!

BILLY  
Ain't you never heard  
of Hold-Your-Nose Billy?

CUTWATER  
Famous, he is. Put to song, is  
Billy.

*In a cackling manner, Cutwater reprises the Ballad Seller's  
verse. Billy preens a bit, enjoying his notoriety.*

HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY VERSES

CUTWATER  
HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY, A WILD MAN IS HE.  
HANG HIM FROM A GALLOWS TREE.  
HERE HE COMES, THERE HE GOES,  
DON'T FORGET TO HOLD YOUR NOSE.

JEMMY  
The highwayman? Is that who you are?

BILLY  
(preening)  
None other.

HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY, A HANDSOME FELLOW  
IS ME.  
LEARNED IN MISCHIEF AND CATASTROPHE.  
I'LL SNATCH THE SHADOW OFF YOUR BACK,  
AS SLICK AS IT WERE BRIC-A-BRAC!

JEMMY  
The bloody murderer?

BILLY  
*(chuckles)*  
Only in the line of duty. So you  
won't mind if we take your horse and  
empty your pockets.

*Cutwater has untied the wicker basket from the horse's saddle  
and scurries forward with it.*

CUTWATER  
Look here, Billy!

PRINCE  
Hands off, villain! Don't you  
know who I am?

*Jemmy gives him a concealed jab of the elbow, warning him to  
keep his mouth shut. But the prince straightens his shoulders  
to regal arrogance.*

PRINCE  
Bow to your prince!

CUTWATER  
Bow to what?

PRINCE  
I am Prince Horace!

BILLY  
And I'm the Grand Turnip of China!

JEMMY  
*(quickly, to save the prince from his own arrogant folly)*  
Me friend's muddle-headed, gents.  
That's clear, ain't it? His paw's  
nothing but a - a - a rat-catcher. But  
don't he put on airs, though!

BILLY  
Got enough lip for two sets of teeth.

*Meanwhile, Cutwater has carried a lantern to look over the  
horse.*

CUTWATER

Billy! They ain't just common sparrows.  
Have a look at this saddle!

*Billy catches each of the boys by an ear, to hold them, as Cutwater holds the lantern to light up the saddle. Billy's face is fixed with sudden awe.*

BILLY

Skin me alive! That's the  
king's own crest.

JEMMY

We stole it, horse and saddle!

PRINCE

Bosh! Now you know who I am,  
bow low, you fools. And be off,  
or I'll have Papa hang the pair  
of you in chains!

BILLY

(ignoring)

Cutwater, what do you reckon  
a genuine prince on the hoof is  
worth?

CUTWATER

His weight in gold at least, Billy.  
His very weight in gold.

BLACKOUT

#### SCENE FOUR

*Dawn light fades up on the interior of a thatched hut with garlic bulbs hanging like knotted ropes from the open rafters. A crude door on leather hinges leads to forest at rear and at stage left. Handbills decorate the walls. There is a table with a bottle holding weedy flowers (prop). Two mismatched (stolen) chairs, one of them rather grand. A barrel in corner overflows with plunder -- candlesticks, boots, a broken teapot, clothing, etc. The beds are two thick piles of straw against opposite walls.*

*The door bursts open; the two boys are shoved into the room. Billy and Cutwater follow. Cutwater carries the picnic basket.*

BILLY

*(chuckling)*

There's our castle, Your Young Majesty. Accept our hospitality! I hope you won't mind sleeping on the floor.

PRINCE

I'm hungry.

BILLY

And feast you will. Cutwater, serve 'em up our finest bread and herring.

PRINCE

I'd sooner eat mud.

*Cutwater throws back the lid of the basket.*

CUTWATER

Roll your eyes at this, Billy! Meat pies, looks like, and fruit tarts -- and a brace of roast pheasant! We'll eat like kings!

PRINCE

Hands off. That's mine!

CUTWATER

Was yours.

*Billy holds his lantern over the basket, and digs deeper.*

BILLY

Strike me blind! What's this?

*He lifts out the prince's golden crown.*

PRINCE

That's mine!

BILLY

Was yours.

*(plops crown on head)*

CUTWATER

King Hold-your-nose-Billy! We're dog rich.

BILLY

This crown? A trifle, Cutwater. We can be richer'n dog rich. What do you suppose the high-and-mighty lad would fetch? His weight in gold?

*Together, in high spirits, Billy and Cutwater upturn the prince and taking him by a leg each they takes the heft of him.*

BILLY  
Sixty-five pounds, by my reckoning.

CUTWATER  
Sixty-six. And an ounce or two.

PRINCE  
Put me down, you oafs!

BILLY  
We'll deliver the king a message. We'll take sixty-six pounds of gold coin in trade for his royal tadpole.  
*(turns Prince loose)*

CUTWATER  
*(gleefully)*  
Sixty-six pounds of gold bangers!  
And an ounce or two!  
*(hurries to barrel of plunder)*  
We'll need a patch of paper.  
And didn't we steal a silver inkwell once?

*Cutwater tosses plunder flying out of the barrel. Billy rips a handbill off the wall, turns it over and lays out on table. Cutwater rises from barrel with a silver inkwell fitted with a quill pen, badly bent.*

CUTWATER  
Here we are. But how are we going to do the scribblement? We can't write.

BILLY  
I've seen it done.  
*(turns over inkwell)*  
Dry as a hangman's eye. Throw me a beet, Cutwater.

*Cutwater separates a beet from food supplies on shelf and hands to Billy. Billy squeezes beet in his fist. Red juice runs into inkwell.*

BILLY  
There's ink for you, Prince.  
Take the feather and scratch out the message.

PRINCE

*(folds arms defiantly)*  
I don't take orders from curs  
and villains!.

BILLY  
Think of your pa. He'll be ever  
so much obliged to know you're safe  
and hearty. Set to at the message, lad.

PRINCE  
I'm hungry!

BILLY  
You won't be fed so much as a dried  
bean 'till you do us the document.

PRINCE  
*(blurting out)*  
But I can't write!

BILLY  
And crows can't fly! You're a prince.  
Kings and such-like are learned to write  
and read soon as they tumble out of the  
cradle.  
*(rips a garlic bulb from hanging braids, and chomps like an  
apple)*  
Hop to it!

*The blast of Billy's breath is so strong that the prince must  
fan his face with a hand.*

PRINCE  
But --

BILLY  
The scribblement!

PRINCE  
But I can't so much as scratch my  
own name.

*Jemmy standing apart from the others, snaps his fingers as an  
idea strikes. Then:*

JEMMY  
Give me the goose quill. I'll  
write the words.

PRINCE  
*(brightening)*  
That's right. My whipping boy  
knows his letters!

BILLY  
*(crafty, suspicious)*  
 Hold on.

PRINCE  
 Fall to, Jemmy-from-the-Streets.

BILLY  
 I said hold on!

CUTWATER  
 What you thinking, Billy?

BILLY  
 I'm thinking this ignorant whipping boy knows his letters -- and the royal prince can't sign his own name. Something's amiss here.

CUTWATER  
 Aye, something's amiss -- I smelt it right off.

BILLY  
 I calculate these lads have mixed themselves up to flummox us.

CUTWATER  
 Mixed themselves up?

*Jemmy looks as if a sudden lightbulb has gone off in his head. He whispers, "Gaw". Then he lifts his chin arrogantly and adopts a somewhat princely speech.*

JEMMY  
 Nonsense! I'm a mere whipping boy.

*Billy rumbles up a deep laugh and even Cutwater has to fan his face.*

BILLY  
 You take us for bedrock numskulls? Certain as eggs is eggs -- you're the prince!

JEMMY  
 Me?

BILLY  
 The genuine, straight-up-and-down Royal Highness!

*Prince Brat flails his arms in protest.*

PRINCE  
That ratty street orphan?

*Jemmy tugs at his jacket.*

JEMMY  
(stage whispers)  
Shut yer trap. Leave it to me.

PRINCE  
(shakes Jemmy off)  
This lowborn --

JEMMY  
(commandingly)  
Silence! Can't you see they're on to me.  
Hold your tongue or I'll have  
you whipped.

PRINCE  
But I'm his Royal Highness!

*Jemmy turns in disgust.*

JEMMY  
(aside)  
Gaw! He don't have the sense of a gnat!  
Can't he see I've got a plan afoot. These  
mangy outlaws will turn him loose --  
and I'll be rid of him once and for all.

PRINCE  
Wait 'til I'm King! Just wait!

BILLY  
Bag your head! Give him a kick, Cutwater.

*The prince averts the kick, rolling to a pile of bed straw.  
He sulks and gazes icily at Jemmy.*

JEMMY  
Hand me the feather. I'll write  
my dear papa, the king.

*At the table, Jemmy dips the quill in beet juice and begins to  
write. On the table sits an old bottle with a few weedy  
flowers stuck in it. Billy begins chomping garlic as he  
watches Jemmy write.*

*At a suitable moment: Billy, with his strong breath bends over  
Jemmy and the flowers on the table do a sudden wilt*

LETTER TO PAPA

JEMMY  
*(as he writes)*  
 'TO THE KING'S MOST SACRED MAJESTY.  
 DEAR BELOVED PAPA.'

BILLY  
 AYE. THAT SOUNDS PROPER RESPECTFUL  
 NOW LET'S GET TO THE HIDE-'N-SEEKFUL.

JEMMY  
*(pen scratching away)*  
 OUR CAPTORS, DON'T CROSS THEM, THEY ARE  
 LOYAL SUBJECTS, BUT SCOUNDRELS BY TRADE.

BILLY  
 MAKE THAT A MITE STRONGER. TELL HIM WE'RE  
 SHAMEFUL MEAN.

JEMMY  
 MEAN AND UNAFRAID. AND TEETHED THEIR  
 TEETH ON A GUILLOTINE.

BILLY AND CUTWATER  
*(delighted)*  
 AYE, TEETH OUR TEETH ON A GUILLOTINE.

*Cutwater has been gnawing away at a roasted pheasant from the basket.*

CUTWATER  
 AND WE THUMBS OUR NOSE AT THE  
 GALLOWES.

JEMMY  
*(writes)*  
 AND THEY KICK DOGS AND CATS.

BILLY  
*(appalled, spoken)*  
 Nay, lad! That's going to far, that is.

JEMMY  
*(scratches out a line)*  
 I'LL WRITE THAT YOU HOLD RESERVED SPACE,  
 DOWN IN THE INFERNAL PLACE.

BILLY  
 DOWN IN THE INFERNAL PLACE.  
 AYE! THAT'S THE TICKET!  
 I'll tell you where the ransom's to be  
 dee-livered.....

(A glance at the prince)  
Whipping boys has big ears, eh?  
(he whispers in Jemmy's ear)

*Jemmy scratches out a few added words, and then is about to signs with a flourish.*

JEMMY  
SIGNED --

CUTWATER  
Hold on! We forget the reward!

BILLY  
So we did,

CUTWATER  
SIXTY-SIX POUNDS OF GOLD BANGERS --  
IN BIG LETTERS

BILLY  
(to Jemmy)  
SIXTY-SIX -- put that in. And don't  
forget the ounces!

*Jemmy throws down the pen in princely disgust.*

JEMMY  
I WILL NOT BE EXCHANGED  
FOR SUCH A TRIFLING SUM!  
A PRINCE IS WORTH A PRINCE'S RANSOM!

BILLY  
NO OFFENSE, ME LAD. HOW WOULD YOU  
CALCULATE THE PROPER POUNDS AND PENCE?

JEMMY  
A WAGONLOAD OF GOLD AT THE VERY LEAST!  
AND JEWELS MIXED IN.

BILLY  
As I'm alive! A wagonload.

CUTWATER  
We did forget about jewels, Billy.

BILLY  
A WAGONLOAD OF GOLD AND JEWELS, THEN!

CUTWATER  
AMEN!

*Jemmy scribbles away, and hesitates, trying to remember the prince's real name..*

JEMMY  
 SIGNED . . .PRINCE, . . .PRINCE --  
 OF COUR-ES. PRINCE HORACE

*Billy snatches the paper off the table and, holding it at arm's length, admires it.*

BILLY  
 Feast your eyes, Cutwater!

*Billy goes into a clumsy but exuberant dance step, with Cutwater joining in.*

HOG RICH! DOG RICH!

BILLY  
 WE'LL BE HOG RICH! DOG RICH!  
 FEAST YOUR EYES ON US!  
 WE'LL SET DIAMONDS IN OUR PEARLY TEETH  
 AND RUBIES IN OUR EARS.  
 OUR HABITS MAY BE VILLAINOUS,  
 BUT WE'LL BLAZE LIKE CHANDELIERS.  
 LOOK AT ME!

CUTWATER  
 LOOK AT ME!

BILLY  
 LOOK AT US!  
 HOG RICH! DOG RICH!  
 HIGHWAYMEN PAR EXCELLENCE.

CUTWATER  
 WHEN I BECOMES A GENTLEMEN  
 I'LL FLASH WITH RINGS AND LOCKETS.  
 BUT ME HABITS ARE SO HABITUALLY BAD --  
 I'M BOUND TO PICK ME OWN POCKETS!  
 HOG RICH! DOG RICH!  
 HIGHWAYMEN PAR EXCELLENCE.

BILLY  
 WHY BOTHER TO STEAL AND PILLAGE,  
 AND TAKE IT ON THE RUN?  
 WHEN THE MOOD'S UPON US TO PILLAGE  
 A VILLAGE,  
 WE'LL TWIDDLE OUR THUMBS. . . .

CUTWATER  
 TWIDDLE OUR THUMBS?

BILLY  
 TWIDDLE OUR THUMBS -- AND HIRE IT DONE!

CUTWATER  
LOOK AT ME!

BILLY  
LOOK AT ME!

BILLY & CUTWATER  
LOOK AT US!  
HOG RICH! DOG RICH!  
HIGHWAYMEN PAR EXCELLENCE.

*Billy finishes the song by popping a clove of garlic into his mouth.*

BILLY  
Cutwater, give the lads a ration  
of breakfast.

*Cutwater busies himself with stale chunks of bread and dried herrings, and sets the stuff on the table. The prince rises from the bedstraw and looks over the repast.*

CUTWATER  
Eat hearty, little fellers.

PRINCE  
That smelly stuff. It's not  
fit for flies!

CUTWATER  
Why, we eat it regular, worms and  
all.

PRINCE  
I'll starve first!

CUTWATER  
Suit yourself.

*Cutwater, digging into picnic basket, throws Billy a whole pheasant, and resumes eating the bird of his own.*

CUTWATER  
We never feasted off the king's own  
table before, and you hardly brought  
enough for me and Billy.

*Jemmy examines his food and whispers to the prince.*

JEMMY  
Better eat. I can't find any crawly  
things in it.

PRINCE

The bread's stale!

JEMMY

Stale enough to patch a roof,  
but I've scoffed down worse.

BILLY

Take a chaw of garlic, whipping boy.  
It'll improve the taste considerable.

*To reinforce his borrowed identity, with a plan in mind to trick the villains into sending the prince back to the castle, Jemmy assumes a regal temper. He heaves his plate of food at Cutwater, who ducks.*

JEMMY

Insolent knaves! This grub ain't fit --  
isn't fit for a prince! Curs!  
Flap-eared, beetle-headed rogues! I'll  
have you horsewhipped!

*Cutwater angrily yanks Jemmy to his feet.*

CUTWATER

Who you calling them names?  
I'll flog your hide pink as a  
salmon!

*Billy separates them.*

BILLY

Keep your wits, Cutwater. It's worse'n  
common murder to lay hands on a prince.  
No need to break any more of the king's  
laws than we have to. If it comes to a  
flogging, there's his whipping boy.

*The prince, eyes suddenly wide, looks stricken.*

PRINCE

But, sir, it wasn't me called  
you names!

CUTWATER

*(sudden cackle)*

Sir, is it now? That's more  
like it, whipping boy. Tell the prince  
to keep a civil tongue in his head, or I  
won't go easy on you next time.

*The prince shoots a poisonous look at Jemmy; whispers.*

PRINCE

Watch your tongue, pretender!

JEMMY

Don't worry. I figure to get your hide out of here quick.

PRINCE

What?

JEMMY

Sh-h-h-h!

*Billy, holds up the document, staring at it.*

BILLY

Now all we got to do is get this document to the king.

CUTWATER

Without getting nabbed in the act.

BILLY

Without getting nabbed. Aye, that'll take a bit of head-scratchin'.

JEMMY

Simple. Perfectly obvious.

CUTWATER

*(an echo)*

Perfectly obvious. Just what I was thinking, Billy.

BILLY

What were you thinking?

*Cutwater, caught without an answer, is flustered. Jemmy rescues him.*

CUTWATER

I mean to say --

JEMMY

Mr. Cutwater was thinking you should send the message to the castle in the hands of my whipping boy.

CUTWATER

The whipping boy! That's the ticket, Billy.

*Billy claps a leery eye on Jemmy, and storms back and forth.*

BILLY

Prince, do you take me for a

precious fool? Send your whipping boy? To blab out where we're hid, eh?

JEMMY

*(with princely air)*

Then tote the message yourself, villain.

BILLY

Me? Me, that they sing songs about, and pinch their noses? At the first whiff of garlic, it would be off with the head of Hold-Your-Nose Billy.

JEMMY

Only if Papa's in a merciful mood. Otherwise, he'll slow boil you in oil.

*Billy stops in his tracks, distinctly uncomfortable.*

BILLY

Cutwater, you're skin and bones. You could slip in and out of a keyhole.

CUTWATER

Faw, Billy. I don't fancy being boiled to a crisp.

*Billy gives out a loud and decisive snort.*

BILLY

We'll send the pesky whipping boy!

JEMMY

And my crown with him.

CUTWATER

Your yeller crown? Not by half, we won't. Worth a tidy sum, gold is!

JEMMY

Simpleton! Blockhead!

*Prince Brat gives Jemmy a thunder-scowl, and gives his jacket a sharp tug. In harsh whisper:*

PRINCE

Back off! Don't give them the rough side of your tongue!

JEMMY

*(ignores prince)*

Donkeys! Only my golden crown  
will convince Papa that you are the  
genuine villains.

*Billy paces again, grumbling, mumbling to himself and screwing  
up his face.*

PRINCE  
(whispers to Jemmy)  
Donkey? You'll get me whipped!

*Finally Billy comes to a decision. He tips the crown off his  
head and flings it to the prince.*

BILLY  
Whipping boy! Deliver it to the  
king! With the document! And tell  
him if he don't follow our orders  
to the letter --

*Cutwater draws a swift, knifelike finger across Jemmy's  
throat, making sound effect.*

CUTWATER  
The prince'll be done for.

BILLY  
And blab all you like, whipping boy.  
We'll pack the prince off to a another  
hiding place.

*The prince now plants his legs firmly and lifts his chin  
defiantly.*

PRINCE  
I'll deliver nothing. I won't  
go back to the castle!

JEMMY  
(astonished)  
Gaw!

BILLY  
What's that?

PRINCE  
(coldly)  
It doesn't please me to take orders  
from common rascals.

JEMMY  
(a wail, to world at large)  
He don't have all the brains the  
law allows!

BILLY  
Whipping boy, you'll do as I say!

CUTWATER  
And we'll have no more of yer lip!

PRINCE  
I'll do what I choose. And I choose  
not to run your errands.

*Arms outstretched, Cutwater lurches after the prince, who dodges him around the hut. Finally, the prince leaps from the chair to the table top.*

PRINCE  
Be warned! I'll tear up your vile  
message the moment I'm out of sight!

CUTWATER  
You'll do as you're told!

BILLY  
Now, listen here, lad,  
Never let it be said about us  
That we ain't generous gents to behold.  
Carry our message and we'll share with you  
A find cupful of jewels and gold.

PRINCE  
No.

BILLY  
A teapot full, then.

PRINCE  
Not a bucketful.

BILLY  
Don't run me out of patience!

*Cutwater unbuckles and rips off his belt.*

CUTWATER  
I'll lash a bit of sense into his empty  
head!

*But as the belt clears, Cutwater's pants drop around his ankles. He wears long winter underwear, thin and patched. He tries to hoist pants up with one hand.*

JEMMY  
Don't waste your time on him. There's  
another way into the castle. My horse.

CUTWATER

Horse -- that's the answer. I was about  
to say the same thing, Billy.

*(then, baffled)*

His horse?

JEMMY

There's your messenger, sirs!

SEND THE HORSE!

SEND THE HORSE, ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S OWN.  
CAN'T A HORSE ALWAYS FIND HIS WAY HOME?  
HE'LL MAKE FOR HIS STABLES  
A BEE LINE AND FAST  
DELIVERING YOUR RANSOM NOTE  
WITH NO QUESTIONS ASKED.

BILLY

SEND THE HORSE?

CUTWATER

AND US AFOOT IN THE TREES?

BILLY

AYE, IN OUR LINE O'WORK, LAD  
WE NEED US A STEED.

JEMMY

YOU'LL HAVE GOLD ENOUGH TO BUY NAGS LIKE  
THEY WERE MUTTON CHOPS!

PRINCE

*(scornfully)*

AND RIDE ABOUT IN A COACH AND SIX? --

JEMMY

Each.

PRINCE

FIDDLESTICKS!

CUTWATER

YOU WANT MY NOTION, BILLY?

YES-SIREE-BOB.

SEND THE HORSE --

HE'S THE BEST PERSON FOR THE JOB.

Cutwater empties the straw out of a pillow and Billy drops the  
princes crown into it. Then the ransom note. He knots the  
top

BILLY

All neat and tidy done.  
I'll tie it to the saddle.  
And we'll --  
SEND THE HORSE! WHY DIDN'T  
I THINK OF THAT? BUT OF COURSE!  
AND GIVE NOT A CLUE WHERE WE'RE AT.

JEMMY

THEY'LL SING ABOUT THE TIME  
THAT HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY  
CAUGHT THE PRINCE BUT COULDN'T  
SEND THE RANSOM NOTE 'TIL HE --

JEMMY AND CUTWATER

SENT THE HORSE!

PRINCE

Horsefeathers!

BILLY

AYE, AND OUTFOXED 'EM ALL,  
THE SECRET TO OUR SUCCESS -- YES!

JEMMY, BILLY, CUTWATER

LIVES IN A STALL!

BILLY

HE'S NOBLE, LOYAL,  
AND OH SO HANDSOME.

PRINCE

But I don't want to be ransomed.

JEMMY

GIVE HIM A PAT  
AND WATCH HIM SHINE.

CUTWATER

DELIVERIN' THAT THINGAMABOB  
IN GALLOPING TIME.

JEMMY, BILLY, CUTWATER

SEND THE HORSE!  
HE'S THE BEST PRSON FOR THE JOOB!

*He exits through door, followed by Cutwater.*

BILLY

Guard our prisoners while I'm gone.

CUTWATER

I'll tie 'em up.

*Jemmy quickly looks about the room and then up the fireplace chimney for a way to escape. The chimney? Meanwhile --*

JEMMY

You could be on your way home instead of that horse -- Prince Woodenhead!

PRINCE

How dare you insult me!

JEMMY

I'm just tryin' to get rid of you!  
I'm nippin' out of here.

PRINCE

I'll go with you.

JEMMY

Not likely, you won't.

PRINCE

I can't go back to the castle now.  
Papa will foam at the mouth when  
he reads that ransom.

(scornfully)

A cartload of gold and jewels!

JEMMY

A cartload of moonshine! But  
wasn't I princely-like?

PRINCE

Papa will put me under lock and key  
forever! Even longer.

JEMMY

It won't fool a soul, that note. Your pa  
knows you can't even sign your own name.

PRINCE

(brightening)

That's right!

*Jemmy eyes settle on the bedstraw and he begins to burrow in to hide himself.*

JEMMY

It's me that'll be in the soup when the  
tutor claps eyes on the handwriting and  
says, "Jemmy! It's Jemmy trying to line  
his pockets with a ransom!" So I'll be  
obliged if you help me nip out o'here.

PRINCE

(grandly)  
I promise you my protection.

JEMMY  
Jemmy protects himself! When that dim-witted Cutwater comes to tie us up, tell him I scampered up the fireplace. Soon as he stands with his head poked up the chimney, I'll be out the door.

*Like a mouse, Jemmy burrows completely out of sight into the straw..*

PRINCE  
You'd leave me alone with cutthroats?

*The door squeaks open as Cutwater returns.*

CUTWATER  
Lads, you won't mind if I truss you up like a pair Christmas geeses.  
(Looks around)  
Where's the prince?

PRINCE  
Him? That impostor? Over there.

CUTWATER  
Over where?

PRINCE  
Under the straw.

*Jemmy doesn't wait to be nabbed. In a burst of straw, he shoots up out of the bed and leaps out the door. A startled Cutwater takes a step backwards, trips over the picnic basket and goes sprawling.*

CUTWATER  
(to Prince)  
After him! Don't let him get away!

*Jemmy exits through the trees, stage left, pausing for a dark and spitting curtain line.*

JEMMY  
(disgust)  
Much obliged, Prince Brat!

*Cutwater recovers his legs. He grabs a lantern, shoves the prince ahead of him, and lurches out after Jemmy.*

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

## Scene 1

As at the beginning of the play, Black Cat is in front of the curtains. She announces --

I'LL GIVE THEM A HISSSSS

BLACK CAT

Act Two. In which the  
plot thickens. Blimey, does it thicken!  
(tunes up voice)  
Me-me-me-me-me-moh-moh-moh-moh!.

HOLD-YOUR-NOSE BILLY, AND CUTWATER -- THEY  
ARE EACH CLUMPING ABOUT AND ROVING THIS  
WAY.

That smelly rascal had an awful brainstorm  
after turnin' the horse loose,  
BILLY, SNORTS HE, THE LAD TRICKED YOU,  
THUS.

HITCHED TO A WAGONLOAD OF JEWELS AND GOLD  
WOULD BE BLASTED CONSPICUOUS FOR VILLAINS  
LIKE US.

IS THE WHIPPING BOY IN THE FREE AND CLEAR?  
I'LL HAVE ME A LOOK.

I'd know the answer if I'd read the book.  
LET'S GLANCE THIS WAY QUICK AND THAT WAY

FAST

CUTWATER HIMSELF MAY COME BOUNDING PAST.  
IF I CLAP ME EYES ON THAT BLOODTHIRSTY  
PAIR,  
I'LL GIVE THEM A HISSSS --

Black Cat turns her back to audience and peers through the curtain, and then faces the audience again.

BLACK CAT

--LIKE THISSSSSSSSSSS.

Exits.

**ACT TWO:Scene Two**

Lights come up on heavy forest redressed from the previous scene. The hut interior has been replaced by tree trunks and foliage, and a large hollow log.

Deep upstage, the head of a bear appears from around a tree trunk. This is PETUNIA, who may not be recognized without the bangles or costuming from opening scene.

Petunia slowly explores her way downstage, on all fours except to rise and sniff a tree trunk. She vanishes behind trees or foliage, reappears. Reaching the hollow log, she climbs through it. When her head pokes out of the other end, there come sudden noises and she pulls her head back in and out of sight.

Holding a lantern aloft, Cutwater comes loping stage left, followed by the prince. Jemmy, face smudged and his clothing disheveled, pops up center stage. Seeing Cutwater, he drops down again.

CUTWATER

I'm on yer tracks! Stop before  
I get aggravated with you, Prince!

Cutwater peers across the forest gloom. Seeing nothing, he turns his back. Jemmy pops to his feet and finds a better hiding place. When one is up, the other is down.

CUTWATER

Where you think you're going to  
hide from the likes of me? Don't I  
know every thorn and blade of grass in  
this forest?

Cutwater crosses stage. Prince follows unhurried, and watches, his arms defiantly crossed.

Jemmy slithers like a snake part way into the hollow leg, behind the bear.  
Like Jemmy, the prince is smudged and his clothing ripped from the flight through the forest.

PRINCE

I don't think you could find your  
own shadow if you stepped on it.

CUTWATER

Sh-h-h-h! I hears him. In  
that dark bramble bush there.

The prince catches sight of Jemmy's legs vanishing into the log. He backs away from Cutwater, who goes up on his toes and takes a couple of high, sneaking steps toward a bush..

CUTWATER

No one gives Cutwater the slip!

*He pounces on the bush.*

*The prince follows Jemmy into the hollow log. Out of the opposite end, an instant later, shoots Petunia, head first, like toothpaste from a tube. Cutwater doesn't yet see the bear in the foliage.*

*Cutwater turns from the empty bush.*

CUTWATER

Nothing but a mouse. Keep to me heels, whipping boy!

*Turning, Cutwater see, not the prince, but the bear. He raises the lantern for a closer, startled look. Curious, Petunia rises on hind legs, but doesn't roar. Cutwater, almost jumping out of his shoes, makes a fast exit. Petunia follows him off.*

*The prince crawls backwards out of the log, and Jemmy forward out of the front end. They confront each other.*

GO AWAY, BEAT IT!

JEMMY

GO AWAY, BEAT IT! FIND YOUR OWN TRAIL.  
STOP FOLLOWING ME LIKE A COW'S TAIL.  
UNDERSTAND? IS THAT ALL CLEAR?  
YOU'VE GOT TO FIND YOUR OWN WAY OUTTA  
HERE.

*Jemmy starts away. The prince follows close behind him in lock step. Their lines are spoken as they walk.*

JEMMY

WEREN'T YOU LISTENING? LOPE OFF!

PRINCE

I'M NOT FOLLOWING YOU.

JEMMY

YES, YOU ARE!

PRINCE

YOU JUST HAPPEN TO BE GOING IN MY  
DIRECTION.

*Jemmy stops, does an about face. They glare at each other, nose to nose.*

JEMMY  
 GO AWAY, BEAT IT! SO LONG, ADIEU.  
 HOW MANY TIMES DO I GOTTA TELL YOU?  
 YOU BLABBERMOUTH! YOU RATTED ON ME.  
 STAY OUTTA ME FOOTSTEPS PERMANENTLY.

PRINCE  
 UNFAITHFUL SERVANT.  
 YOU DESERTED YOUR PRINCE.

JEMMY  
 AYE, I DID. AYE, I WILL,  
 AND FURTHERMORE,  
 I'M NOBODY'S WHIPPING BOY ANYMORE.

PRINCE  
 YOU ARE!

JEMMY  
 I AIN'T!

PRINCE  
 YOU'LL SEE!

JEMMY  
 NOT ME!

Now Jemmy marches forward, and the prince, again in lockstep, walks backwards across the stage. They stop, still nose to nose.

JEMMY  
 WILL YOU STOP FOLLOWING ME?

PRINCE  
 ME?

JEMMY  
 STAND ASIDE!

PRINCE  
 I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM A WHIPPING BOY, SO  
 FIDDLE-DE-DEE!

JEMMY  
 PRINCE, YOU'RE LOOKING AT THE LAST OF ME.

PRINCE  
 THEN GO WAY, BEAT IT!  
 MAKE YOUR OWN TRAIL.  
 STOP HANGING ON MY ROYAL SHIRTTAIL.

JUST WATCH ME! STAND CLEAR!  
I'LL FIND MY OWN WAY OUT OF HERE!

JEMMY  
ABOUT TIME. THAT SUITS ME FINE.

PRINCE  
AGREED! YOU MAY PROCEED.

JEMMY  
WE'LL PROCEED, BACK TO BACK,  
AND DON'T DO ANYTHING AMISS.

PRINCE  
SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, LIKE THIS?

They stand back to back.

JEMMY  
Now, forward march. March!

They separate, each marching forward. The distance between them reaches several feet when there is a sudden sound. It is the ROAR of the bear from offstage. The boys run back into each other as if for common protection.

JEMMY AND PRINCE  
GAW! WE GOTTA FIND ANOTHER WAY  
OUT OF HERE!

But then, deep upstage, comes the shimmering sound of a tambourine. Betsy appears, like a wood spirit, barefoot and jangling with bracelets. She shakes a tambourine in one hand and carries a piece of comb honey in the other.

BETSY  
(*offstage*)  
Petunia! Pet-pet-Petunia!

PRINCE  
What's that?

BETSY`  
Pet-pet Petunia! Come here,  
darlin'. Come to Betsy.  
Pet-pet-Petunia!

*Jemmy and the prince draw back to the cover of a tree trunk. They step on a twig, making a snapping sound. Betsy immediately looks over, and approaches.*

BETSY  
Petunia? You there, naughty rascal!  
Aren't you ashamed of yourself, running

off. I won't scratch your back, I won't.

*Jemmy steps into full view. Betsy gives a start.*

JEMMY  
Mornin', Miss.

BETSY  
My eyes! Who are you?

JEMMY  
Lost, Miss.

The prince steps out from behind the tree.

PRINCE  
Me, too.

JEMMY  
Would you know the way to the city?

BETSY  
'Course I do. Ain't we headin' for  
the fair, me and Petunia, same as  
everyone else? Have you  
laid eyes on her?

JEMMY  
Petunia?

BETSY  
Got loose, she did! My dancing bear.  
World famous! Betsy and her dancing  
bear, that's us.

PRINCE  
Oh, I saw you once!

BETSY  
We once danced for the king himself.  
The prince -- horrible lad -- tugged the  
carpet and gave us a tumble. Spoiled  
rotten as last week's codfish, he was.

*The prince, grateful to be unrecognized, retreats an  
embarrassed step.*

BETSY  
Petunia! Pet-pet-Petunia!

JEMMY  
Heard her a minute ago. About  
scared me out of me skin.

BETSY  
Which way did she go?

JEMMY  
In those trees.

*Betsy turns and starts off.*

JEMMY  
Hold on, Miss. Which way to  
the city?

BETSY  
Just follow the river.

JEMMY  
But where's the river!

BETSY  
Where it's always been. Due south.

JEMMY  
But which way is due south?

*Betsy holds out one arm like a signpost, pointing stage left.*

BETSY  
Straight on.

JEMMY  
That way. You certain?

BETSY  
Certain I'm certain. Didn't Pa  
always say I had a head like a  
compass? G'bye.

*She makes her way upstage, tambourine shaking, and vanishes.  
Jemmy pulls himself up straight, and starts marching toward  
stage left.*

*Jemmy glances back over his shoulder and is surprised to see  
the prince hanging back. The solemn prince gives a barely  
perceptible little goodby wave.*

*Jemmy ignores it, takes another step or two and then half  
turns again. Despite himself, he returns the half-hearted  
goodbye wave.*

BLACKOUT

**ACT TWO: Scene 3**

*Lights come up on a forest scene at edge of river. SOUND of seagulls. Jemmy's head pops through foliage downstage. He gazes out over the audience, thinking aloud.*

JEMMY

There's the river, right where she said.

*Suddenly, upstage from Jemmy, a mounted cavalryman rides a horse from stage left to right. The horse SNORTS AND WHINNIES.*

*Jemmy ducks down. Just as suddenly, a body is flushed out of the foliage across the stage from Jemmy. It is Prince Brat.*

PRINCE

*(whispers)*

Did he see me?

JEMMY

*(exasperated)*

What in blazes are you doing here?

PRINCE

Did he catch sight of me?

JEMMY

Dunno. Soldiers must be out all over, searching for you.

*Each lies low until the cavalryman rides across stage and out of sight.*

PRINCE

That was close!

JEMMY

Ain't you had a snoutful o'runnin' away? Go back with that soldier.

JEMMY

*(ignores)*

Is my face as dirty as yours? And my clothes?

*The prince rolls around on stage, as if in dirt.*

JEMMY

What do you think you're doin'!

PRINCE  
Getting even dirtier.

JEMMY  
You've gone daft!

PRINCE  
This is the first time no one has had fits because I got my clothes ripped and grimy. The ladies keep me starched as a pillowcase!

JEMMY  
But you're a prince! You got no business knockin' about outside the castle walls. You better go home. Your pa must be having double fits o' worry.

PRINCE  
He won't miss me.

JEMMY  
'Course he will. He's your pa.

PRINCE  
The king? I might as well be stuffed and hung on the wall like a stag's head -- for all he notices me.

JEMMY  
You catch his eye often enough with your pranks. How long are you going to let him sweat and stew?

PRINCE  
Maybe I'll never go back. This is the best time I ever had!

*Jemmy turns with disbelief and shakes his head.*

JEMMY  
Daft. He's gone daft!

JEMMY  
I aim to give you the slip. First chance.

*Jemmy picks up a piece of driftwood -- the broken handle of an oar, and smiles at this treasure. Then he sits down to pull off his shoes.*

PRINCE  
What are you doing?

*Jemmy doesn't answer and the prince repeats.*

PRINCE  
What you doing?

JEMMY  
Takin' off me shoes.

PRINCE  
I can see that.

JEMMY  
You can't see what's right in front of  
your royal nose. Look what's adrift in  
the river. Stuff to sell! I've got to  
eat, don't I?

PRINCE  
Trash? Orange peels?

MUDLARKIN'

JEMMY  
Trash? Orange peels?  
(Laughs,)  
OFF WITH ME SHOES TO GO MUDLARKIN'.  
MUDLARKIN', THERE'S TREASURE OUT THERE.  
KICK UP ME HEELS AND GO MUDLARKIN'.  
FREE TO WORRY NO WORRIES.

PRINCE  
(speaks)  
Mud what? Mud where?

JEMMY  
MUD IN ME TOES  
AND WIND IN ME HAIR  
I'LL MUDLARK THAT LEG  
OF A FANCY CHAIR.

AND BARRELS AND BOXES  
I'LL DRAG THEM ASHORE  
FOR A MUDLARK LIKE ME  
THERE'RE RICHES GALORE.

JEMMY (con'd)  
SELL WHATEVER I CAN  
FOR CHIMNEY WOOD.  
TRADE WHAT I CAN'T  
FOR WHATEVER I COULD.

MY STOMACH'S SO EMPTY  
I'LL TRADE, BYE-N-BYE,  
FOR A BITE OR TWO

OF A MINCEMEAT PIE.

*The prince takes off his shoes.*

PRINCE (speaks)  
I think I'll try it. I'd like a bite  
of mincemeat pie.

JEMMY  
IT'S RAZZLE-DE-DE WHEN YOU'RE  
MUDLARKIN'  
MUDLARKIN', TAKE IT FROM ME.  
LIVE OFF THE AIR WHEN YOU'RE MUDLARKIN'.  
FREE TO WORRY NO WORRIES.

*The prince is lucky at once, and fishes out a bent and  
battered tall hat. He puts it on and taps it in place.*

PRINCE  
(speaks)  
Look what I found!

JEMMY  
FOLLOW THE RIVER  
WHEREVER IT GOES.  
GO HAPPY, GO LUCKY,  
FOR FEATHERS AND BOWS.

WADE IN KNEE DEEP  
AND HOLD THIS IN MIND  
YOU GET TO KEEP  
WHATEVER YOU FIND.

*Song is interrupted.*

PRINCE  
Look! There's a fish!

JEMMY  
Catch it! We'll cook it!

At the footlights they pantomime trying to catch the fish.  
Then:

PRINCE  
It got away.

JEMMY  
Slipped right through your hands!

PRINCE  
You splashed water on me!

JEMMY

Not on purpose.

The prince pantomime splashing water on Jemmy

PRINCE  
That's on purpose.

Jemmy splashes the prince.

JEMMY  
Your face is dirty.

PRINCE  
So's yours.

Simultaneously, they splash each other and begin to giggle and laugh. They boyishly horse around together for a few moments.

SONG RESUMES FOR FINAL REFRAIN

JEMMY AND PRINCE

IT'S RAZZLE-DE-DE  
WHEN YOU'RE MUDLARKIN'  
MUDLARKIN', TAKE IT FROM US.  
HOIST UP A SMILE AND GO MUDLARKIN'  
BE FREE TO WORRY NO WORRIES.

Their laughter fades as they come to their senses --  
aristocrat and rat catcher

JEMMY  
Hey, I forget -- you're the prince.  
Don't stick to me. Don't be going  
back on your word. I'm skipping off.

PRINCE  
Back on my word? Humpt! I'll take this  
way, you go that. Skip off, whipping  
boy.

Picking up their treasures, they separate. The prince wanders  
off stage, right.

*Behind him on the road, a derelict old two wheeled cart, full  
of potatoes, with a huge tin cooking pot banging from its  
rear, appears. Going stage right to stage left. The cart is  
being drawn by CAPTAIN WINIFRED NIPS, a kindly, rickety,  
slightly vague old man.*

*Approaching center stage, one wheel hits a rock, and we hear a  
crack of wood. Captain Nips drops the shafts and comes around  
to look at the damage.*

NIPS

What's this, wheel? Ran you into that pesky rock, did I? Me eyesight ain't what it was, is it?

*Carrying the couple of trash pieces, Jemmy hurries to the cart.*

JEMMY

Do I smell potatoes, sir? I'll trade you this firewood for a potato. You broke down?

NIPS

This fine wheel has sprained an ankle, it appears.

*(bemused shrug)*

I may be stuck here for the rest of me life!

JEMMY

Well, sir --

NIPS

You hungry?

JEMMY

Starving.

NIPS

Those potatoes for the fair ain't cooked.

*(reaches into pocket.)*

But this one is.

*Jemmy accepts the potato, and cracks it open.*

NIPS

Salt or pepper?

JEMMY

Both

*Separating his coat, Nips draws a pinch of salt from one vest pocket, a pinch of pepper from the other.*

NIPS

Complements of Captain Winifred Nips, the

Hot Potato Man. Of course, that one's cold as stone.

JEMMY

Don't mind, sir. Not a bit.

*He takes a hungry bite. The prince reappears, stage right, and watches Jemmy eat. Jemmy notices, and tries to ignore him. To Nips:*

JEMMY

Cap'n Nips, could you repair that spoke  
with this broken oar? It's strong,  
oak, looks like.

NIPS

So it is, and so we could. Give me a  
hand, lad.

*Nips pulls out a pocket handkerchief. While Jemmy holds the oak against the cracked spoke of the wheel, Nips ties it. Reaching into another pocket for another handkerchief, like a magician with inexhaustible pockets, he ties this second cloth around the splint.*

NIPS

There! That ought to hold until we get  
to the fair. And if I hadn't had to  
sell me horse, we'd be  
there in time for breakfast.

JEMMY

I'll help push.

NIPS

In that case, we'll be there in time for  
lunch.

*Nips picks up the shafts and they start slowly forward. Jemmy, eating the potato with his hands, puts his back to push the cart.*

*He sees the prince emerge from the foliage with a couple of pieces of driftwood he has mudlarked, together with a bent and tattered tall hat. He drops the driftwood and hat, and gazes at the cart -- and Jemmy -- leaving him behind.*

*To avoid looking at the prince. Jemmy turns, facing the cart and pushing. After a few moments, he can't resist another backward glance. The prince stands in the road like a wounded bird.*

JEMMY

Gaw! Look at him. Standing there  
like the devil with a toothache.  
(to Nips)

Sir!

NIPS

Lad?

JEMMY

Stop, Cap'n. We left me friend behind.  
He can help push, can't he?

*Nips stops. Jemmy dourly motions the prince to come along.*

JEMMY

Me friend? The prince What am I sayin'?  
Cows'll give beer first.

*A brief smile lights up Print Brat's face. He picks up the hat, puts it on his head, gives it a tap -- and rushes forward. Wearing the hat, he looks a bit like The Artful Dodger. He'll wear it through most of the subsequent action of the play.*

PRINCE

You like my hat?.

JEMMY

Crown suits you better.

PRINCE

But a crown doesn't keep the rain off.

JEMMY

Push. And keep an eye out for soldiers.

*Suddenly, Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater step out of the upstage trees into the road. They brandish pistols at Captain Nips.*

BILLY

Stand and deliver!

CUTWATER

My words exactly!

*At the rear of the cart, acting on pure instinct, Jemmy tumbles under the cart and out of sight. The prince follows him.*

BILLY

Stand and deliver, I said!

NIPS

And I heard you. Deliver what?  
Potatoes? Scurvy rascals! Help  
yourselves.

BILLY

Hang your potatoes!

CUTWATER  
My words, exactly!

BILLY  
Deliver us some information, and you  
can be off. We're after two runaway  
apprentices.

NIPS  
Apprentice highwaymen?

CUTWATER  
That's right. A girl with a  
bear seen 'em. Headin' for  
the river.

BILLY  
You spy 'em?

NIPS  
Certainly not.

BILLY  
Dead certain?

NIPS  
Dead and buried certain.

BILLY  
But I can smell 'em about!.

*As SONG starts, Cutwater, begins to high tiptoe to the side of  
the cart as if to surprise his prey. Seeing this, Nips picks  
up the cart shaft and begins rotating the cart to keep the  
boys out of sight. After a moment, Billy advances toward the  
other side of the cart, and Nips must rotate back.*

THERE'LL BE A WHIPPIN' -- FIRST VERSE

BILLY  
IT DON'T MATTER IF THEY'RE YOUNG.

CUTWATER  
NAY.

BILLY  
STILL SUCKIN' ON THEIR THUMBS.

CUTWATER  
OR TO THEIR MAMA'S SKIRTS STILL A-  
GRIPPIN'

BILLY  
IF THEY GOES AND BUSTS ME RULES

AND MISTAKENS US FOR FOOLS  
BLAST THEIR HIDES -- THERE'LL BE A  
WHIPPIN'.

*During the business with the rotating cart, the prince's top hat tumbles off his head as the boys keep trying to remain hidden.. The large tin pot falls off the rear. Jemmy hides himself under it*

*Cutwater discovers the hat -- and the prince.*

CUTWATER  
Billy! Look here what I found!  
The whipping boy hisself!

*Under the overturned pot, like a turtle under its shell, Jemmy ever so slowly tries to move away.*

*Billy comes around and goes nose to nose with the defiant prince.*

BILLY  
Where do you think you're runnin' off to?

PRINCE  
*(a touch of Jemmy)*  
Dunno.

BILLY  
*(mocks)*  
Dunno! Well, you know where your master is, don't you?

*A long pause from the prince.*

BILLY  
Well?

PRINCE  
Dunno.

BILLY  
Don't dunno me! Where is he?  
*(hands around prince's throat)*  
I'll scrag you on the spot!

PRINCE  
He took off across the river. Swam it.

BILLY  
He swam the river! I suppose he

grew scales and fins!

*Cutwater does a double take -- did that cooking pot move? He raps it.*

CUTWATER

Don't bang rightly hollow, does it?

He lifts the edge of the pot..

CUTWATER

Billy, what nature of fish do you suppose this is?

*Billy lifts the pot, revealing Jemmy.*

BILLY

Aye, here's the potato we're after!

*Billy grabs Jemmy by the collar; Cutwater grabs the prince.*

BILLY (to Nips)

Beat it!

NIPS

But those lads --

BILLY

Run for your life before I blast you full of daylight!

*Nips pulls the cart off stage.*

*Billy is in a glowering, bellowing temper. As he speaks, he picks up a fallen, leafy branch. He will use it as a whip.*

BILLY

(to Jemmy)

Tricked me, did you,  
with your fancy  
quill-scratchin'!

JEMMY

Sir?

BILLY

Raising the ante to a great wagonload!  
Reckoned to slow us down, didn't you?  
It would be easier to drag around a  
dead horse as all that treasure! If  
we ain't lightfooted, we're gallows hung.  
That was your scheme.

CUTWATER

Clear as winder glass.

BILLY

I'll lay on a whipping you won't never forget!

CUTWATER

With the whipping boy right here, handy as can be! You said it would go powerful worse for us, Billy, if we thrash the prince hisself.

*Billy nods and shakes the leafy branch. Cutwater upturns Prince Brat, standing him on his head and holding him by the ankles.*

THERE'LL BE A WHIPPING -- 2ND VERSE

CUTWATER

Go to it, Billy.

BILLY

IT AIN'T NICE TO PLAY WITH WORDS

CUTWATER

THEN GO RUNNIN' OFF LIKE BIRDS.

BILLY

PARDON US IF WE GIVES YOUR WINGS A CLIPPIN'. ME QUILLS IS UP!

CUTWATER

HIS DANDER, TOO.

BILLY

HERE WE ARE, THIS BRANCH'll DO.

CUTWATER AND BILLY

BY THUNDER!

BILLY

I PROMISED YOU A WHIPPIN'.

*Billy snaps the branch across the prince's back. Jemmy's breath catches. The prince resolutely sets his jaws and doesn't let a sound escape his lips.*

CUTWATER

Put a little more sting in it, Billy. You didn't raise a peep out of him.

*Billy lets the improvised whip fly again. Jemmy gazes at the silent prince.*

CUTWATER  
He didn't feel a thing.

*The whip again, Not a cry from the prince.*

CUTWATER  
He must have a hide like an elephant!

BILLY  
He'll feel this!

*Billy exercises his whipping arm in preparation.*

JEMMY  
Bawl out! Holler and cry out!  
I won't tell anyone!

*Prince Brat shakes his head -- no. The switch strikes him.*

*At the same instant, Betsy and her dancing bear (on a rope) appear on the road, stage right. They rush forward.*

BETSY  
Ruffians! Stop it!

CUTWATER  
Mind yer own business!

BETSY  
Leave that poor lad alone!

CUTWATER  
Don't mess with us, woman.

*Quickly, Betsy slips the rope off Petunia's head.*

BETSY  
Sic 'em, Petunia! Learn them a thing or three!

*Petunia rushes for Cutwater, who panics, drops the prince and all arms and legs, flee stage right. Rising on her hind legs, Petunia, confronts Billy with a thunderclap of a roar and chases him around the stage before he escapes a beat or two behind Cutwater, They shout:*

BILLY AND CUTWATER  
Help!  
Shoo!  
Teeth like nails!

Breathin' fire like a dragon!  
Save me!

BETSY  
Good girl, Petunia! That'll do,  
darlin'.

The bear begins to sniff Prince Brat fallen in a heap on the road.

BETSY  
The lowdown bullies! Layin' stripes  
on a lad's back.

JEMMY  
Much obliged to ya', Miss.

PRINCE  
 (afraid to move)  
 Rein in your beast...please.

BETSY  
 Oh, don't be afraid of Petunia. Gentle  
 as a kitten, she is.

She slips the rope back around the bear's neck. Jemmy stands looking down at the prince, not sure what to make of him anymore. He picks up the fallen old hat and brushes it off on his sleeve.

BETSY  
 Here, let me tend to your poor hide.

PRINCE  
 No.

BETSY  
 Give us a look.

PRINCE  
 Thank you, no!

BETSY  
 You need a bit of cheerin' up, you do.  
 Petunia, give us a little dance.

REPRISE THE DANCING BEAR MUSIC FROM THE FIRST SCENE.

*The prince finally cracks a small smile.*

BETSY  
 Lumme! Ain't you the brave one!

*The prince struggles to his feet.*

JEMMY  
 (aside -- surprised)  
 Him a brave one? Prince Brat?

BETSY  
 Got a cast-iron streak of pluck in him,  
 he has.

JEMMY  
 Gaw!

BETSY

(to prince)

Don't I know your face from somewhere?  
Somewhere or other?

Jemmy quickly interrupts, almost pulling the hat down over the prince's head before he can betray his identity.

JEMMY

(quickly interrupting)

Here's your hat, good as new,  
Hurts, does that whipping?

PRINCE

Some.

JEMMY

You should have yelled and bellowed.  
That's what they wanted to hear.

PRINCE

And humble myself? You never did.

*Their eyes meet, and hold for a moment.*

BETSY

You steady on your feet, lad?  
Able to travel?

*The prince readjusts the hat on his head.*

PRINCE

Of course I am. And the prin -- I mean, I --  
I thank you. Thank you very much.

In a big aside, Jemmy faces the audience. He is almost struck dumb.

JEMMY

(aside)

Gaw! I never heard him  
thank anyone before. I didn't reckon  
princes knew how.

(then)

Those murderers are sure to be back after us.

BETSY

Not if you travel with me. Me and Petunia.

*Waving a heavy cudgel, Captain Nips reenters, stage left.*

NIPS

I'll play a tune on their  
noggins with this! They gone?

BETSY  
See for yourself. Splashing in the river like  
windmills.

JEMMY  
(to the prince)  
Lawks! Ain't we a puckered sight,  
the both of us. Torn up and scruffy.  
No one'll take you for a prince.

PRINCE  
Betsy might recognize me from the castle.

JEMMY  
Well, not with that fine hat on, she won't.

NIPS  
Is everyone going to the fair?

BETSY  
Where else would anyone be going?

PRINCE  
I've never been to the fair.

JEMMY  
Never?

PRINCE  
Not ever! *I used to watch from my window.*

**LET'S GREAT CRACKING TO THE FAIR**

NIPS  
KICK YOUR HEELS AND FOLLOW ME!  
LET'S GET CRACKING!  
LET'S GET CRACKING TO THE FAIR.

*Jemmy gives his heels a click. The prince taps the hat firmly  
on his head and tries to kick his heels.*

BETSY  
*Petunia, too?*

NIPS  
(laughs)  
WHAT WOULD A FAIR BE WITHOUT A BEAR?

BETSY  
(laughs)  
WHAT WOULD A BEAR BE WITHOUT A FAIR?

PRINCE  
WHAT DO PEOPLE DO THERE?

BETSY  
OH WHAT WONDERS EVERYWHERE!  
TIGHTROPE WALKERS IN MID-AIR.  
GAZE AT THIS AND FEAST YOUR EYES AT THAT.

NIPS  
JUGGLERS JUGGLING, OH SO CLEVER.

BETSY  
FIDDLERS, DANCERS, DID YOU EVER!

NIPS  
LOOK BEHIND, YOU'LL MISS THE ACROBAT.

BETSY  
THINGS TO BUY AND THINGS TO SELL.

NIPS  
SURE, THERE'S BOUND TO BE A CAROUSEL.

BETSY  
GRUMPS AND GROUCHES, TAKE A HOLIDAY.

NIPS  
PIES AND TARTS AND SMELLS SO FARE,  
OUR NOSE'LL KNOW WE'RE ALMOST THERE.

JEMMY  
TROUBLES? LUMME! WE DON'T CARE!

All  
WE'VE COME CRACKING!  
WE'VE ALL COME CRACKING TO THE FAIR!

WORDS AND MUSIC BRIDGE SCENE CHANGE.

#### **ACT TWO:Scene 4**

Forest set is transformed into FAIR SET.

#### COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO SPEND

NIPS AND BETSY  
COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO SPEND  
CLINK AND SPIN, THEY'LL JINGLE US A MERRY TUNE!

BETSY  
I SMELL THE FIRE-EATER CHAP,

HE MUST BE BAKING CAKES.

NIPS  
AND THERE'S A CHARMING FELLOW WHO  
MUST BE CHARMING SNAKES!

COSMO THE SNAKE CHARMER  
Hello, Nips! I SAVED YOU A SPOT  
RIGHT OVER THERE.

NIPS  
COSMO, MY OLD FRIEND, PUT IT HERE.

*Business. Nips extends his hand. Cosmo holds a basket with his arm thrust up through the center inside a long snake glove. He extends his snake hand to shake with Nips.*

NIGHTINGALE, a fair performer, gives a wave.

NIGHTINGALE  
YOU-HOO, BETSY, GIMME A SHOUT  
YOU STILL DRAGGIN' THAT  
CONFOUNDED BEAR ABOUT?

BETSY  
I'VE COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO SPEND!

PRINCE  
COPPERS TO EARN  
AND PENNIES TO SPEND?

JEMMY  
Common folks have to make a living.  
DON'T TRY TO FIGURE IT OUT.

POLLY, the Hurdy Gurly Lady, comes sashaying in, cranking out a bit of a tune.

POLLY  
HELLO THERE, HOT POTATO MAN

NIPS  
HURDY GURDY POLLY,  
YOU OLD GOSSIPY DEAR.  
I DON'T RECKON ANY NEW SCANDAL  
HAS ESCAPED YOUR PRETTY EAR

POLLY  
Not likely, luv!

ALFIE, THE WORLD'S OLDEST STRONG MAN, from under his carnival banner, gives an aged salute. Tempo slows as he sings, mumbles slowly.

ALFIE

That you, young Cap'n Nips?

NIPS

Of course it's me.  
 AND I'LL BE DASHED  
 IF IT AIN'T ALFIE THE GREAT  
 AND EVER SO GRAND.  
 THE OLDEST OLDEST STRONGEST STRONG MAN IN THE  
 LAND!  
 WHAT'S NEW?

ALFIE

Lifted an helephant last week, I did.  
 A small one.  
 CAN I GIVE YOU A HAND OR TWO?

NIPS

Yes, indeed, I daresay that you can.  
 IF YOU'D KINDLY LIFT  
 THAT STONE OUT OF MY WAY  
 I'M READY, WILLIN' AND ABLE  
 TO MAKE MY WARES DISPLAYABLE  
 THERE'S PENNIES TO EARN  
 AND COPPERS TO SPEND.

Except for Polly, who may crank out an underscoring tune on the hurdy gurdy, all actors on stage freeze in position as Alfie, who moves only a little faster than an ancient tortoise, takes a grip on the stone. He lifts it out of the path of the cart. The cast members unfreeze, applaud.

COMPANY

WE'RE HOMING PIGEONS ROAMING IN.  
 LET'S GIVE THAT CAROUSEL A SPIN!  
 WE'VE COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO SPEND!  
 (In round) COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO  
 SPEND! COPPERS TO EARN AND PENNIES TO SPEND!

*The fair faces the river, with a backdrop of ship's masts. Our waterfront view is largely cut off by a wall or fence, with a single opening in it, running from left to right, roughly midstage. The opening is set so that we cannot see straight through it.*

*The wall will enable us to give a sense of crowd, and to present daredevil acts beyond the company's skills. We seem to see a stiltwalker strolling behind the wall; actually an actor safely walking a concealed plank. NIGHTINGALE seems to be a tightrope walker balancing herself with a parasol. Since*

the wall conceals her feet, she too safely walks a raised plank. We see the tops of tall hats and feathered hats moving about, suggesting fairgoers. Balls pop into view as if a juggler is working on the other side of the wall. Clusters of balloons.

In front of the wall stands a scattering of stalls with brightly-painted signs or banners -- a PUNCH AND JUDY and particularly of ALFIE THE WORLD'S OLDEST STRONG MAN. Iron manacles, that will figure later, dress his set. It's into this area that Nips sets up his pot of potatoes. Someone hands him a bucket of water to pour into his potato pot, set to boil over a quickly set fire, stage right. He hands boys the water bucket.

NIPS

Fetch ol' Cap'n Nips another fresh bucket of water, would you lads?

The boys exit, with Jemmy carrying the bucket.

Betsy is making final adjustment to Petunia's hat or costume.

BETSY

Come along, Petunia. Let's fetch us a crowd and earn a copper or two.

(to Nips)

Wish us luck, hot-potato man.

Shaking her tambourine, she and Petunia head upstage through the off-set opening in the wall.

NIPS

Hot-hot-hot potatoes! Ready in a minute potatoes!

He hangs a banner or sign that declares: CAP'N NIPS, THE HOT POTATO MAN.

Polly, the hurdy gurdy lady, drifts back to Nips.

POLLY

Nips, dearie, have you heard the latest? Marie, the tattooed lady, may go scampering off with Clarence the Human Pretzel.

NIP

Polly, luv, you are an old gossip!

POLLY

Old? Show me a gray hair in

me pretty head.

*She gives a crank or two on her hurdy gurdy and drifts off.*

NIPS

Cap'n Nips's world-famous hot  
hot-hot potatoes! Er-r-r. Almost hot.  
Salt and pepper free!

Jemmy and the Prince return through the wall opening. They carry a bucket of water between them. Jemmy snatches the handle from the prince.

JEMMY

Lemme.

*Tug of war.*

PRINCE

Lemme! I've never been allowed to carry anything. Not in my entire life.

JEMMY

'Course not. It's not prince's work.

*The prince regains a grip on the handle.*

PRINCE

Then who'll take me for a prince, toting water?

The two boys walk the water to Nips, who pours it into the big pot of bobbing potatoes.

NIPS

I'm obliged to you, lads.  
Hot potatoes! Ready-to-eat-in-a-minute potatoes.

*Nearly, ALFIE, THE WORLD'S OLDEST STRONG MAN, is displaying the manacles, testing their strength. He has the voice of an aged barker.*

ALFIE

Step right up! Here I am, in person --  
Alfie, the world's oldest strong man!  
Ninety-nine years if I'm a day, and in the  
prime of life. Watch me pull apart iron  
manacles with these bare hands. Step right  
up!

*A lanky boy of about 15, SMUDGE, enters to watch the strong man. He wears a checked cap and he has the look of the*

*streets about him. He's carrying an animal cage covered with a cloth..*

*Jemmy and the prince drift over to watch the strong man. Smudge sees them.*

SMUDGE

Jemmy! Rat-catchin' Jemmy!

*Smudge crosses to the boys.*

SMUDGE

By gigs, it is you, Jemmy!

JEMMY

Hello, Smudge!

SMUDGE

I heard you calls the king himself by his first name these days.

JEMMY

You still sweeping chimneys?

SMUDGE

I've come up in the world, same as you, Jemmy. Have a look at these.

*Smudge throws back part of the cloth on the animal cage for Jemmy to peek inside. We hear a sudden squeaking of rodents from inside the cage.*

JEMMY

Rats?

SMUDGE

I'll be holding dog-and-rat fights for the sporting crowd.

JEMMY

But those rats look tame enough to eat off your hand.

SMUDGE

Best I could find. Catch me some castle rats, Jemmy, and I'll make a special feature -- the king's own rats! Won't the sporting gents go for that!

JEMMY

Rats ain't me line o' work in the castle, Smudge.

SMUDGE

It's not true you're whipping boy, is it?  
That's the word on the street.

JEMMY

Did you hear I've learned to read and  
write?

SMUDGE

Naw!

JEMMY

The bottom truth. I've read many  
a book from beginning to end.

SMUDGE

What's in 'em?

JEMMY

All nature o' things. I can do  
sums, too.

SMUDGE

Ain't that a wonder! I never heard  
of a rat-catcher could read and write  
and do sums. It don't fit together.  
Don't forget your old friends  
when you grow up to be a duke or  
something.

*The prince spots and picks up a nearby piece of wood for the  
fire. Jemmy seizes the moment to speak privately to Smudge.*

JEMMY

I aim to go back to the sewers.  
Mum's the word.

SMUDGE

Mum it is, if you say so. Won't  
you miss all that fancy book learnin'?

JEMMY

Painfully will.  
*(beat; then with decision)*  
But I can forget it just as fast as I  
learned it. I'll catch you some prime  
rats, first chance.

SMUDGE

*(indicates prince)*  
Who's the cove?

JEMMY

*(begins to stall)*

What?

SMUDGE  
Your pal.

JEMMY  
Him?

SMUDGE  
The scruffy one.

JEMMY  
This is -- I mean, he's --

PRINCE  
(to the rescue)  
Friend-O'-Jemmy's the name.

*Smudge puts out his hand to shake.*

SMUDGE  
Proud to make your acquaintance,  
Friend-O'-Jemmy.

JEMMY  
(quickly)  
He never shakes hands! It ain't allowed.

PRINCE  
(ignores)  
Glad to shake your hand, Smudge.

SMUDGE  
Likewise.

JEMMY  
See you about, Smudge.

*Jemmy drags the prince off, back toward Nips and the hot potato stand.*

JEMMY  
(flash of anger)  
No one's allowed to touch a  
prince -- to shake hands! You know that!

PRINCE  
But I've never shaken hands before.

JEMMY  
He could be hung for less!

PRINCE  
It felt friendly...trusting. I

may introduce the practice at court.

JEMMY

Then you'd better hurry on back  
before Hold-Your-Nose Billy and  
Cutwater pick up our trail. If  
they haven't already.

Nips, seeing them approach, spears potatoes on a sharpened  
stick and offers them to the boys.

NIPS

Feast yourselves, lads!

PRINCE

(mutters doubtfully)

Thank you..

*Jemmy sees the prince looking with suspicion at the potato in  
his hands.*

JEMMY

Ain't you never eaten a potato before?

PRINCE

Roots? Of course not! It's what we  
serve the hogs and the servants.

*He smells it, and takes a taste.*

JEMMY

Hungry as a hog, ain't you?

PRINCE

(tastes)

H-mmm.

NIPS

Salt or pepper?

JEMMY

He'll have both.

*Nips dips his fingers into a vest pocket for a pinch of salt,  
and the vest pocket for pepper. He sprinkles them over the  
prince's potato. The boys begin to scoff down the potatoes.*

JEMMY

Reckon I'll be on me way now, Cap'n.  
Thanks for the grub.

NIPS

You've got nowhere to go.

JEMMY

I've places. Places nobody can find me.  
Nobody.

*Polly renters*

POLLY

Gather around and listen to me!

PRINCE BRAT SONG

POLLY

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT THE PRINCE?  
I HEAR HE'S BEEN ABDUCTICATED.  
SCOUNDRELS CARTED HIM AWAY.  
GIVE THE ROGUES A MEDAL, I SAY!

FIRST FAIRGOER

Me, too.

SECOND FAIRGOER

A chestful, you ask me.

POLLY

PRINCE BRAT -SPOILED ROTTEN, HEAD TO TOES.  
PRINCE BRAT - MISCHIEF EVERYWHERE HE GOES.  
NOBODY WILL SING OR DANCE ON THE DAY  
THAT HE BECOMES KING.

Angrily, the prince storms away downstage. Jemmy hurries to his side.

PRINCE

Treasonous old woman!

PRINCE

PRINCE BRAT -- HOW DARE SHE CALL ME THAT!  
PRINCE BRAT -- SPREADING LIES BEHIND MY  
BACK.  
I'LL HAVE PAPA SIGN A DECREE  
TO PUNISH SUCH AUDACITY.

JEMMY

She meant no harm.

PRINCE

I'll have her tongue ripped out.  
Prince Brat -- does everyone call me that?

JEMMY

Aye, more often'n not.

POLLY  
 THEY SAY THE DAY THE PRINCE WAS BORN  
 THE QUEEN DID TWITTER IN DISMAY.  
 'BLIMEY, MILORD, SORRY TO SAY,  
 I'M HAVIN' US A BAD HEIR DAY."

CROWD  
 PRINCE BRAT --

FIRST FAIRGOER  
 MOSQUITO BIT HIM AND IT DIED.

CROWD  
 PRINCE BRAT --

SECOND FAIRGOER  
 -- HIGH AND MIGHTY AS A ONE-EYED CAT.

CROWD  
 PITY US THE DAY HE BECOMES KING.

POLLY  
 SURELY THE KING'S A-WEEPIN' HIS ROYAL EYES  
 OUT.

FIRST FAIRGOER  
 FLOODS, NO DOUBT.

POLLY  
 THOUGH WHY HE'D SHED A TEAR FOR THE LITTLE  
 TOAD, I DON'T KNOW.

CROWD  
 I DON'T KNOW!

SECOND FAIRGOER  
 Beats me.

*Prince and Jemmy aside.*

PRINCE  
 Does everyone so thoroughly dislike me?

JEMMY  
 It's ever so likely.

PRINCE  
 You hate me, too?

JEMMY  
 Me?

PRINCE

You, Jemmy-from-the-Streets.

JEMMY

Hate you? 'Course, I did.  
But maybe I don't. Not now.  
Reckon I don't Somehow.

POLLY AND FAIRGOERS  
MEANER'N A SHOEFUL OF ANTS.  
A DISASTER.  
A VISUVIUS IN SHORT PANTS!  
PRINCE BRAT -- JUST IMAGINE WHEN HE'S  
GROWN.  
PRINCE BRAT -- WHEN HE SITS UPON THE  
THRONE.  
WOE IS ME, WOE IS YOU, WOE IS US,  
ON THE DAY THAT HE -- BECOMES KING.

*Petunia enters from the wall opening, balancing a soldier's hat on her nose. Betsy comes running after her.*

BETSY

Naughty girl, Petunia! Give  
the soldier back his hat!

*The soldier, a CORPORAL, enters, following Betsy. In alarm, Jemmy and Prince Brat turn their backs and imperceptibly try to drift away..*

BETSY

(to Corporal)

You brought us luck! Look here  
at the coppers your soldier  
hat brought us, colonel!

CORPORAL

Colonel? I'm only just a corporal, Miss.  
But I'll put in for sergeant tomorrow.

BETSY

Ain't you clever!

CORPORAL

But if I catch the prince's  
whipping boy, there's the king's  
reward, and I'll be a general!  
300 gold sovereigns for the wicked  
little rogue. Dead or alive.

BETSY

My stars! I'll keep me eye peeled.

*The Corporal sets the hat on his head, throws Betsy a salute and a smile. He starts to exit through wall. He double-*

*takes, glancing back as if recognizing the prince, shrugs and exits..*

*Jemmy stands stunned.*

JEMMY

Gaw! You've got a price put on this head o'mine!

PRINCE

I'm sorry, Jemmy. Sorry I got you into such trouble.

JEMMY

The tutor recognized me handwriting, sure and certain!

PRINCE

Let's go.

JEMMY

Go home, and go to blazes!

PRINCE

But you're my friend.

JEMMY

I was mistaken!

PRINCE

I smell garlic!

*Alarm. But it is the corporal they see, reappearing dead ahead and blocking their way.*

CORPORAL

It's you -- the prince!  
In the castle once, you stomped on me toes! And the whipping boy himself!

*The boys turn again and run -- directly into the outstretched arms of Hold-Your-Nose Billy and Cutwater.*

BILLY

Catched you!

CUTWATER

Catched you like flypaper!

*From opposite sides, the two villains and the soldier pounce on the boys. It becomes a football pile-up, with legs and arms flailing around. Suddenly Billy rises and snatches the handcuffs from Alfie's hands. He vanishes with them back inside the pile-up*

*From the pot, Cap'n Nips picks up his sharpened potato stick with a steaming potato speared on it, like a kabob. He stands over the melee and drops the potato down the soldier's neck or upturned leg or pocket -- whatever turns up.*

NIPS

Hot-hot potatoes, chaps? Steaming hot potatoes?

*The soldiers begin hopping and rolling around in burning pain.*

*Jemmy and the prince emerge -- manacles together, wrist to wrist.*

*They make a run for it and exit.*

*Billy and Cutwater disentangle themselves from each other and rise to follow the boys. But Nips now waves the sharpened potato stick as if it were a fencing sword.*

NIPS

*En garde, gents!*

Billy and Cutwater tentatively raise their hands

CORPORAL

Did you see which way they went!

*Nips falsely indicates with his free thumb -- the wall opening. The soldiers rush through it. Nip's continues to address the villains.*

NIPS

*En garde! Have we been formally introduced? I am Captain Winifred Nips, formerly the best swordsman in the regiment! Stay a while.*

BLACKOUT

**ACT TWO: Scene 5**

*The main sewer opening, on river, is suggested by a round, brick mouth. The balance of the stage is dark, serving as interior sewer passages. A smaller, tributary sewer stands to one side of the main opening.*

*Black Cat is contentedly curled up, half-in, half-out, of the sewer opening. SOUND of occasional SEAGULL.*

*Suddenly, the cat jumps to feet in alarm and beats it out of the sewer mouth. She races across to stage left, stops, looks back, arches her back.*

BLACK CAT

Prince Brat! Eeeek! What's he doing  
down here in the mud?

*Jemmy and the prince, manacled together, enter from stage right. Jemmy rushes into cavernous sewer opening. The prince balks.*

JEMMY

Come on!

PRINCE

It's dark as night in there.

JEMMY

Of course, it is! The sun don't  
shine in the sewers!

PRINCE

But --

JEMMY

Afraid of the dark? Then find your own  
hidin' place!

*Jemmy enters the sewer opening -- dragging the prince along by the wrist.*

PRINCE

Where does it go?

JEMMY

Under the city. Every which way.  
Follow me.

PRINCE

*(pulling back)*  
Isn't this far enough?

JEMMY

Don't fret yourself about the dark.

It ain't so bad if you know what's  
in it. Like the rats down here. Even  
grown men are scared of 'em! Come on.

*The black cat settles down to watch. The boys move with backs  
against the wall, step by step, right to left.*

JEMMY

Blacker'n thunder down in  
here, ain't it?

PRINCE

Are we lost?

JEMMY

'Course not! I know the  
great sewers like the back  
o' me hand.

PRINCE

Is this where you were going to  
run off to? Your secret hiding  
place.

JEMMY

Not secret anymore, looks like.

*The prince gasps.*

PRINCE

What was that!

JEMMY

Scurrying at our feet?  
Nothing but a ol' rat. Two  
of 'em. Ease off my arm! You'll  
break it.

PRINCE

I wish I were like you.

JEMMY

Like me?

PRINCE

You're not afraid of anything.

JEMMY

'Course, I am. I'm afraid  
your pa'll scrag me!

PRINCE

Not even the soldiers would think

to look for you hiding down here.

JEMMY  
Unless someone tells 'em.

PRINCE  
Do you think I'd do that?

JEMMY  
Dunno.

PRINCE  
(stung)  
Dunno?

JEMMY  
Let's keep moving.

PRINCE  
I won't go back to the castle unless  
you go with me.

JEMMY  
Gaw! Pigs'll fly first!

PRINCE  
Think of all those books you could read.  
Shelves of 'em.

*They reach tributary sewer.*

JEMMY  
Watch your step! Careful. We'll stay  
out of this infernal branch of the sewer.

PRINCE  
Why?

JEMMY  
Runs under the brewery, it does. You  
could get eaten alive by rats!

PRINCE  
(almost voiceless)  
Gaw.

JEMMY  
Big as cats 'n dogs, some of 'em. The  
brewery dumps garbage grain down the  
sewer, and rats breed by the thousands.  
Millions, for all I know. And  
mean-tempered! They'll swarm all over you  
and hang on by their teeth. Follow me.

*They cross the mouth of the brewery passage. Jemmy feels his way along, dragging the prince behind him..*

*Black Cat's back suddenly arches up, and she hisses.*

*Across the stage, Billy and Cutwater appear from right wings, following their noses like bloodhounds. Black Cat runs off stage.*

CUTWATER

Look here in the mud. It's their footprints.

BILLY

(chortles)

Plain as day.

*They rush into mouth of sewer.*

*A flickering light appears as TOSHER, an old rat-catcher, appears in the tunnel to the left of Jemmy and the prince, with a lit candle fixed to the stiff bill of his hat. He moves on his hands and knees. He's hard of hearing, and speaks in a loud voice. When they see him, Jemmy and the prince freeze.*

TOSHER

Who goes there!

JEMMY

(urgently)

Sh-h-h-h, sir...

TOSHER

(booming)

This is no place for boys.

JEMMY

Ain't you ol' Mr. Rat-Catchin' Tosher?

TOSHER

(bends closer for look)

I declare! Is that you, Jemmy?

JEMMY

It is.

(whispers)

Could you hold your voice down, sir. And I'd be obliged if you'd snuff out your candle, sir. There's bloodthirsty murderers after us.

TOSHER

Speak up! Is it true you're livin' like  
the king himself? What are you doin'  
back in the sewers?

JEMMY

Running for our lives!

TOSHER

Eh?

*Billy and Cutwater appear in main entrance. Billy cups an  
ear, hearing voices as they hurry along.*

JEMMY

Your candle'll give us away.

TOSHER

*(hard of hearing)*

What's that?

JEMMY

*(louder)*

You'd do us a kindness to pinch it out.

*Meanwhile, Billy and Cutwater, feeling their way in the dark,  
cross the brewery passage and arrive to the right of the boys  
(now in the middle) in time to hear Tosher's revelation.*

TOSHER

Speak up, lad. Come back to visit  
your old friends, have you! Imagine,  
you, a rat-catcher's son, servin' as  
Prince Brat's own whipping boy!

BILLY

*(overhearing)*

What the blazes!  
They flummoxed us, Cutwater!  
That one ain't the prince! It's  
the other!

CUTWATER

We whipped the prince himself?

BILLY

*(grumbles)*

Worse'n common murder.

CUTWATER

The king'll skin us alive! By inches!

BILLY

Not if there ain't witnesses to

swear against us.

*They rush forward. Jemmy and the prince stiffen at the sight of the outlaws*

*Trapped between Tosher and the outlaws, Jemmy wets his fingers and snuffs out (or blows out) the candle on the bill of Tosher's cap. Heavy darkness falls about them.*

JEMMY  
(to prince)  
Hang on!

*Moving right, Jemmy pulls the prince past Cutwater, who is sent spinning like a toe dancer. Billy thrusts his arms forward, stage left, and trips over Tosher on hands and knees. Chaos in the dark.*

TOSHER  
Scurvy riffraff!

CUTWATER  
Which way did they go?

BILLY  
Listen!

*Jemmy and the prince freeze silently against the wall, at the entrance to the brewery passage. They hardly take a breath. Billy and Cutwater grope toward them.*

BILLY  
Stop where you stand!

*The villains approach the opening to the brewery passage. On the other side, the prince pulls off his scruffy top hat and flings it into the passage. A clattering SOUND.*

CUTWATER  
What's that?

BILLY  
It's them, is what!

*Cutwater blunders into the prince's hat.*

CUTWATER  
Look! His hat, Billy!

BILLY  
His confounded head can't be far ahead!

*Billy barges into the brewery passage, followed by Cutwater.*

*Jemmy drags the prince back toward the main entrance. They emerge into daylight ,now not only chained together, but their hands clasped.*

JEMMY

Leggo! Gaw, you'd think we were shaking hands. Ain't I in enough trouble!

PRINCE

I want to go back to the castle.

JEMMY

About time!

*(holds up manacles)*

But you're not dragging me with you.

*Petunia, pausing for a sniff, leads Betsy and Cap'n Nips onstage from left wings; they see the boys. All meet center stage.*

BETSY

*(breathless)*

Petunia's got the scent of those cuss-fired scalawags. Where are they?

*A howling and yowling is heard from inside the brewery passage. Billy and Cutwater appear, on the run, rats of all sizes clinging to them like fur coats*

BILLY

Help! Help!

CUTWATER

I'm bit! I'm bit!

*Once outside, they panic in circles.*

BILLY

Ouch! Help!

CUTWATER

Filthy varmints!

BILLY

I'm eaten alive!

CUTWATER

Oww! Ouch!

BILLY

*(chorus rat)*

Leggo my leg! Out of me way!

CUTWATER

One's down my neck! Owwww! Owwww!

*They exit.*

*Jemmy, the prince and others group onstage, have watched the spectacle with some satisfaction.*

JEMMY  
Brewery rats! Teeth like fishhooks!

BETSY  
Serves the rascals right.

*The prince, with the battered hat gone, now straightens to a very princely posture.*

PRINCE  
You've served your prince nobly,  
and Captain Nips..

BETSY  
What are you talking about, lad?

PRINCE  
The king has offered a reward for my  
whipping boy.

BETSY  
So he has. But it's nothing to us.

PRINCE  
Here he stands!

BETSY  
Who?

PRINCE  
My whipping boy.

JEMMY  
Gaw!

BETSY  
Jemmy?

PRINCE  
Turn him in.

*Jemmy reacts with bewildered anger. He is also in sudden tears.*

JEMMY  
Shifty, double-tongued horrible Prince  
Horace! -- I should never have trusted  
you!

BETSY

Turn Jemmy in? The moon'll shine in me  
mouth first! I'll do no such awful  
thing!

PRINCE

Turn him in and the reward will be  
yours and the captain's. Seize us! I  
command it.

BETSY

Who are you to command anything?

PRINCE

I am Prince Brat.

BETSY

You! So's me old hat!

JEMMY

*(a blazing look)*

Tip to toe, he's Prince Brat!

BETSY

You're the whipping boy?

JEMMY

*(shakes handcuff)*

How can I run with him attached! I'm  
done for!

PRINCE

You are!

*In all his golden finery, the king and his golden retinue,  
including the tutor, Peckwit, come striding onstage.*

KING

Stand where you are!  
The king commands it!

JEMMY

Gaw!

KING

Bow to your monarch!

*Everyone on stage bows low and reverently*

KING

Prince Horace, Boris, Basil, Hugh,  
Bartholomew etcetera, etcetera,  
-- the Fourth.

PRINCE  
The Fifth, sir.

KING  
Safe at last!

PRINCE  
I wasn't kidnapped, sir --  
I ran away.  
(raises handcuff)  
And took along my whipping boy.

KING  
The ransom note! Clap that ungrateful  
rogue in irons!

PRINCE  
Wait, sire...Miss Betsy and Cap'n Nips  
claim the reward for turning him in.

KING  
Granted!

PRINCE  
Papa, we were captured by horrible  
villains and Jemmy had to write the ransom  
note.

KING  
Who in tarnation is Jemmy?

JEMMY  
Me, sir.

PRINCE  
And Petunia rescued us.

KING  
Who in tarnation is Petunia?

BETSY  
Me dancing bear, milord. Please don't  
boil poor Jemmy in oil.

*Black Cat hits her head, as if an idea has struck, and she  
hurries off stage.*

KING  
Your mischief must be punished.



Shake your bones, Alfie. Let's see you  
put your great strength to them  
manacles!

*Alfie positions himself between Jemmy and the prince. He  
claws one handcuff open, and then the other, and displays the  
freed cuffs aloft. Applause and wild lines: "Blimey! "Did  
you see that?" "Hoorah!" "Huzzah!"*

*The Ballad Seller enters the scene (together with Guilietta,  
if she isn't otherwise occupied in the show).*

PRINCE

Shake? Have we made a bargain, Jemmy?

JEMMY

And I can read all your books I want?

TUTOR

Of course, you can, lad.

JEMMY

Shake!

*Jemmy spits on his hand to seal the bargain. The prince does  
the same. They shake. The king and the entourage are visibly  
aghast!*

KING

What plaguey treason is this?  
The sight makes me vertiginous!

PECKWIT

Giddy, my lads. He means a touch of  
dizziness.

PRINCE

It feels gallant, father!  
Trusting. Let me show you?  
Perhaps you'll want to introduce  
the practice at court.

KING

Step forward.  
(then)  
Like this?

*The king spits on his hand. The prince spits again on his,  
and they shake.*

*Now that they are touching, the king pulls his son into an  
impulsive embrace. They hug. They hold*

*The Ballad Seller reacts to what he is seeing and announces aloud:*

BALLAD SELLER  
 Bless me bloomin' eyes!  
 Did you see that?  
 Did you see the king?  
 Shakin' hands like commmon folks!  
 And the prince un-kidnapped!  
 Ain't that a song in front of me nose?

As he begins SONG he wets tip of pencil at his mouth, rolls back a sleeve to make notes of his cuff.

PUT OUT YOUR HAND AND SHAKE!

BALLAD SELLER  
 TWENTY-SIX VERSES OF  
 THE KING, THE PRINCE AND  
 THE WHIPPING BOY

GRANDEST ADVENTURE SINCE  
 HELEN OF TROY!

Lemme see.

WHERE'S ME DARLIN' PRINCE?"  
 CRIED THE KING.

SAID THE PRINCELY LAD, "PAPA, I'M BACK!  
 "ESCAPED FROM VILLAINS THICK AS FLEAS  
 FOUGHT THEM DUELS  
 ME AND ME WIPPING BOY ,  
 BACK TO BACK AND FRANCY FREE!

SO THE KING SAID,  
 "EVERYBODY CELEBRATE  
 PUT OUT YOUR HAND AND SHAKE.

KING  
 You heard me!  
 EVERYBODY CELEBRATE!  
 PUT OUT YOUR HAND AND SHAKE!

*THE company begins a formal court dance, clumsy peasants putting on airs. After several steps.*

PRINCE  
 OH, HOW DREARY!  
 PAPA, CANT WE SKIP THE PAS DE DEUX  
 AND KICK A LEG OR TWO?

KING

Oh...why not?

*Music kicks into a lively mazurka.*

BALLAD SELLER  
 YOU HEARD GOOD KING HORACE.  
 "SHAKE A HAND, KICK A LEG!  
 AND ADD A BIT OF WHOOP-DI-DOO.  
 TOUCH YOUR HEELS, LIFT YOUR CHIN  
 GIVE A HUG TO YOUR NEXT OF KIN.

ALL  
 SHAKE A HAND, KICK A LEG!

BALLAD SELLER  
 AND GIVE YOUR TOES A TWIST OR TWO.

JEMMY AND PRINCE  
 IMAGINE US, FRIEND TO FRIEND  
 AND PULLING SMILES FROM END TO END.

*Dance break.*

TUTOR  
 HOW GRAND! HOW GRACIOUS!  
 HOW POSITIVELY GRANDACIOUS!

BALLAD SELLER  
 (jots on cuff)  
 HOW GRAND! HOW GRACIOUS!  
 HOW POSITIVELY GRANDACIOUS!  
 I'll sell copies faster than  
 fish 'n chips.

KING  
 THROW OPEN THE CASTLE GATES!  
 EVERYBODY -- TO THE PALACE GO!  
 THE KING WILL BE SERVING -- ESCARGOT.

*The music is interrupted.*

BETSY  
 Mercy! What's that?

PECKWIT  
 Snails. Garden snails.

ALL  
 (puking sounds)  
 Yuk! Yuk!

*The king laughs. Back into dance tempo.*

BALLAD SELLER  
I'll write it --  
THE KING SERVED CHEESE  
AT THE GRAND JUBILATION  
FOLKS BUZZED IN LIKE A SWARM OF BEES.

ALL  
SHAKE A HAND, KICK A LEG,  
TO THE GRAND JUBILATION!  
TOUCH YOUR HEELS, HAVE A FLING  
DANCE A DANCE TO THE BOY,  
TO THE PRINCE AND TO HIMSELF, THE KING.

*The revelers dance themselves offstage. The king, prince and  
Jemmy linger behind.*

KING  
COME ALONG, I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT  
THAT HORDE OF VILLAINS  
YOU FOUGHT YOUR WAY THROUGH.  
BUT LADS, IF YOU DECIDE TO RUN AWAY  
AGAIN -- DO TAKE ME WITH YOU!

**CURTAIN**

**The End**