

PERUSAL SCRIPT

THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG

A PIRITICAL GOOD TIME FOR YOUTH ACTORS

by Wendy Gourley



Newport, Maine

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THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG

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Order # 3286

ORIGINAL CAST

MAGNIFICO / CRIMSON CUTLASS -- David Nuffer
BRIG/ CALICO -- Katy Cox
HARLEY / BLACK RAVEN #3 -- Bryn Davies
ZANY / CRIMSON CUTLASS -- Abby Brown
PRINCESS COLUMBINE -- Kaeleigh Tucker
GROMOLOT / BUZZARD -- Aaliyah Lodendahn
KING -- Sam Kleyh
ADVISOR -- Olivia Gourley
PEASANT (BLACK RAVEN #1) -- Jasmine Johnson
GUARD -- Hannah Sumsion
OLD WOMAN -- Christina Stockton
DUCHESS DUNGAREES -- Kendal Stein
CAPTAIN BLOODGUT -- Jaron Kirk
ISABELLA -- Zarah Green
FLAVIO -- Marcus Parker
JELLYBONES -- Bella Gunter
BLACK RAVEN #2 -- Darci Ramirez

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION TEAM

Director -- Dr. J. D. Newman
Assistant Directors -- Briana Lindsay, Amber N Cummings, Brian Kocherhans
Production Stage Manager -- Tayler Nikole Allen
Assistant Stage Manager -- Amber N Cummings
Scenic Design -- Dan Whiting
Costume Designer -- Mallory Goodman
Lighting Designer -- Tayler Nikole Allen
Assistant Lighting Designer -- Jill Loveridge
Sound Designer -- Jason Sullivan
Makeup Designer -- Estee Parker
Production Stage Manager -- Tayler Nikole Allen
Production Manager -- Isaac Walters
Outreach Coordinator -- Eileen Nagle
Scene Shop Supervisor -- Don Parker
Scenic Carpenters/ Painters -- Katelyn Dahl, Jill Loveridge, Timothy Paey, Topher Rassmussen,
Jason Sullivan
Properties Designer -- Jessie Pusey
Electricians -- Aubrey Jeffries, summer camp lighting classes
Dance Choreographer -- Nancy Cannon
Fight Choreographer -- Jakob Tice
Light Board Operator -- Aubrey Jeffries
Sound Board Operator -- Tayler Nikole Allen
Fight Captain -- Darci Ramirez

CAST OF CHARACTERS 17: 4m, 5f, 8 either

Frame Story Characters:

- PRINCESS COLUMBINE/THE BLACK RAVEN: A clever pirate masquerading as a princess. Based on the stock character of Columbina.
- CAPTAIN MAGNIFICO: A commanding pirate captain with a mother complex. Based on the stock character of Magnifico.
- BRIG: Leader of Captain Magnifico's side-kicks. A confident rogue. Based on the stock character Brighella.
- HARLEY: Magnifico's side-kick. Playful and acrobatic. Based on the stock character of Harlequin.
- ZANY: Magnifico's side-kick. Constantly surprised and curious. Child-like, but surprisingly cunning. Based on the stock character of Zanni.
- GROMOLOT: The princess' lady-in-waiting, a sometimes mute. When she speaks she speaks in gibberish. Based on the stock character of Pierrot.

Characters in “The Wooden Sword”

- THE BLACK RAVEN/PEASANT: An optimistic and resourceful peasant. Based on the stock character of Columbina.
- KING: Miserly, but bored and unhappy. Based on the stock character of Pantalone.
- ADVISOR: Serious and skeptical, thinks he knows more than anyone. Based on the stock character of the Doctor.
- GUARD: Dutiful and threatening. Based on the stock character of Brighella.
- OLD WOMAN: Feisty and tricky. Based on the stock character of the Witch.

Characters in “The Switch”

- THE BLACK RAVEN: Still optimistic and resourceful - becoming a bold defender. Based on the stock character of Columbina.
- ISABELLA: Young, innocent girl in love. Based on the stock character of the Innamorati.
- FLAVIO: Young, naive boy in love. Based on the stock character of the Innamorati.
- DUKE DUNGAREES: Isabella's greedy father who only thinks of money. Based on the stock character of Pantalone.
- CAPTAIN BLOODGUT: A cowardly pirate masquerading as a wealthy gentleman. Based on the stock character of the Captain.
- JELLYBONES: a tricky pirate out for revenge. Based on the stock character of Harlequin.

Characters in “Trapped!”

- THE BLACK RAVEN: Based on the stock character of Colombina.
- CRIMSON CUTLASS: Proud, speaks with a thunderous voice and pronounced British accent. Wears a fancy, frilly red pirate coat and hat. Based on the stock character of Magnifico.

- **BUZZARD:** Crimson Cutlass' self-serving first mate. Based on the stock character of Brig.
- **CALICO:** Crimson Cutlass' self-serving second mate, a very literal thinker. Wears a woolen cap. Based on the stock character of Harlequin.

Setting:

The deck of Captain Magnifico's ship. There is a mast, a plank, a hull, and a hatch. The imbedded stories are acted out in the same space, although the locations are elsewhere.

Playwright's Notes on Stock Characters:

This play is based on the characters and lazzi of Commedia del Arte. Each character is based on one of the stock characters and should employ the classic movements, masks and costume elements of those characters. Although the characters varied over time and in different regions, for the purpose of this play, the characters are gender neutral, except for Princess Columbine/The Black Raven, who is female. The rest are described as follows:

Brighella (Brig): Master of the servants, proud, hard worker, smart, tricky, and self-serving. Leads with closed hips.

Captain (Captain Bloodgut): A foreigner. All swagger on the outside, cowardly on the inside. Leads with his knees.

Columbina (Princess Columbine, The Black Raven, Peasant): The one sane and rational character. Care-free, quick of mind and body. Always a step ahead of everyone else. No mask or stylized make-up, except that as the Black Raven, she wears a black mask and cape. Balanced, confident movement.

Doctor (Advisor): He knows everything, but understands nothing. Loves to argue. He is serious and ponderous. He leads with his fat belly.

Harlequin (Harley): Stupid, happy-go-lucky servant, lives in the body, vain, cheeky, playful like a monkey. Employs the slapstick to play tricks. Leads with open and loose hips. Costume has colorful diamond patches.

Innamorati (Isabella, Flavio): The Innamorati are the young lovers. Lovely, fashionable, but dim-witted and naive. Not masked, but wear heavy white-faced make-up. They lead with their hearts/chest.

Magnifico (Captain Magnifico): Ruling class, leader, grand, powerful, leads with his head.

Pantalone (King, Duke Dungarees): A greedy miser, old and dried up. A Magnifico that's lost his teeth. Leads with his chin and knees.

Pierrot (Lady Gromolot): A simple-minded, but honest servant. Often with white face and loose white clothing. In this play, Pierrot speaks gibberish. Loose-limbed and energetic.

Witch (Old Woman): Powerful in her dismissal of society norms and rules. An old hag, can be earthy and rude. Moves in large sweeping figure eight movements.

Zanni (Zany): Enthusiastic, curious, child-like. Bird-like movements. Leads with nose and feet, with arms out and feet coming up like a pigeon.

Acknowledgement:

The playwright would like to thank the Noorda Regional Theatre Center for Children and Youth for commissioning this piece for their 2014 Youth Summer Camp.

THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG by Wendy Gourley. About 60 minutes. 4m, 5f, 8 either. *The Hornswoggle Jig* is a pirate-themed commedia dell'arte romp complete with stock characters, lazzi, and sword play. The play is designed to create multiple significant roles for a large cast with many female or gender flexible roles. It contains three embedded stories within a frame story that could be rehearsed separately. Princess Columbine has been captured by pirates and has to lead them to her treasure or walk the plank. She chooses the latter, but as a final request tells the pirates tales of the dreaded Black Raven, a la Scheherazade, to stall for time for her rescue. **Order #3286.**

Wendy Gourley is a freelance playwright and dramaturg who is currently working on a Masters of Communication and Storytelling at East Tennessee State University. She was the Playwright-in-Residence for the Noorda Regional Theatre Center for Children and Youth and graduated from Utah Valley University (UVU) in Theatre Arts with an emphasis in playwriting. She has written plays for the Noorda Theatre, Resonance Story Theatre, and is currently working on *Extraordinary Magic* for the revamped Young Ambassadors at Brigham Young University. Her plays, *The Story Stone* and *Making Mochi on the Moon*, were National Bonderman Symposium/Write Now semi-finalists and have been finalists/semi-finalists in the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival - Region 8 playwriting contest, PLAYground festival at Northwestern University, and New Plays for Young Audiences at NYU. Wendy was Suzan Zeder's new play/production dramaturg for *The Milk Dragon* at UVU. Her dramaturgy work on UVU's *Eurydice* garnered national awards: LMDA/KCACTF Student Dramaturgy Fellowship, national finalist; Fellowship to the National New Play Dramaturgy Intensive, Kennedy Center; and the LMDA/ATHE Emerging Dramaturg Award.

THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG

Optional Pre-show:

All performers are mingling around as the audience enters. Some are juggling, clowning, doing acrobatics, playing music or singing. They interact with the audience, chat and show-off. As house lights dim, the actors gather back to the stage, in a casual manner. The ZANI CHORUS pull out their kazoos and play a fanfare.

COLUMBINE: Today, you must throw out everything you think you know about “the theatre.”

BRIG: *(to the audience)* “Sit in your seats and be very, very still!”

HARLEY: “Shhh! You must be quiet!”

ZANY: “No wiggling please!”

COLUMBINE: NOT! Forget about all that! Today’s show is based on Commedia dell’Arte.

(A gong.)

DOCTOR: *(very academic, consulting a book)* A sixteenth century form of improvisational clowning and acting, founded in Italy.

COLUMBINE: It was fun and wild; the actors never knew exactly what was coming next. It was definitely *not* your mother’s theatre.

PLAYER ONE: The actors can talk to the audience

(PLAYER ONE walks up to an audience member) So, how was traffic?

PLAYER TWO: *(standing up from audience)* It was terrible!

(looking sheepishly at the audience for his unexpected outburst)

What? The audience can talk back to the actors!

MAGNIFICO: You can boo for the villain. *(plays the villain and encourages audience response.)*

FLAVIO: Or cheer for the hero. *(encourage audience response.)*

PLAYER THREE: But most of all, you can laugh.

(GROMOLOT runs forward and holds up a laugh sign.)

Bigger... bigger...

(PLAYER THREE cuts off the audience as GROMOLOT puts down the sign. They go back and forth a few times.)

COLUMBINE: Commedia dell’Arte is full of pratfalls...

(PLAYER FOUR steps forward eating a banana and throws the peel behind him. PLAYER FIVE comes along with a tall stack of packages and almost slips and falls on the peel, but sees it just in time and with elaborate teetering and tottering avoids it, breathes a sigh of relief and then promptly trips - presents and limbs sprawling.)

Physical comedy...

(PLAYER SIX walks like a wobbly old man with a cane, tries to avoid one of the fallen presents, starts to falter, falls forwards, but instead tucks into an acrobatic trick with a “ta da!” at the end.)

And Lazzi...

(A gong.)

DOCTOR: *(very scholarly)* The actors’ signature stunts, gags and pranks. From the Tuscan word *lacci*.

COLUMBINE: They’re like tricks. Like... The “Ladder Lazzi”...

(PLAYER SEVEN walks a ladder across the stage like a pair of stilts. Or the “Statue Lazzi”... PLAYER EIGHT pretends to be a statue, while others mingle around. When their backs are turned, PLAYER EIGHT may steal their wallet or something from their basket or even kick them, but if they turn around, PLAYER EIGHT returns back to being a statue.)

Commedia dell’Arte is also based on stock characters.

(A gong.)

DOCTOR: *(very highbrow)* Characters rooted in the ancient tradition of the Greek and Roman comedies.

COLUMBINE: Yeah, whatever. Each character had a certain personality, costume, and movement.

MAGNIFICO: First up, the Il Vecchi or Masters. These characters were in charge -

ZANY: Or thought they were!

MAGNIFICO: *(demonstrating his movement as he speaks)* Magnifico is the leader. He’s grand and always has the most power! His movements lead with his head.

PANTALONE: *(demonstrates his movement as he speaks)* Pantalone or Mr. Big Pants. He’s a vinegary old miser – who only cares for money. He leads with his chin and knees.

DOCTOR: *(demonstrates his movement as he speaks)* Il Doctorre, the Doctor. He’s a man of learning who knows everything, but understands nothing. He’s heavy and ponderous and leads with his belly.

CAPTAIN: *(demonstrates his movement as he speaks and approaches the back of MAGNIFICO with his drawn sword)* Il Capitano, the Captain. He swaggers! He brags! He boasts!

(MAGNIFICO boldly turns around to face the CAPTAIN. The CAPTAIN squeaks and retreats.)

And will do anything to avoid an actual fight. He leads with his knees.

COLUMBINE: Next up, we have the Innamorati or... the lovers!

(The lovers begin a slow stage cross towards each other with outstretched arms.)

FLAVIO: Isabella!

ISABELLA: Flavio!

FLAVIO: Lovely, beautiful!

ISABELLA: *(giggly)* Handsome, noble!

FLAVIO: Dainty of feet!

ISABELLA: Leads with chest -

HARLEY: Cause they're full of hot air!

(The miss each other or trip.)

ZANY: And entirely dim-witted!

(They scramble to find each other as the fathers approach.)

FLAVIO: Isabella!

ISABELLA: Flavio!

PANTALONE AND DOCTOR: And entirely off limits!

(PANTALONE leads ISABELLA off by the arm, while the DOCTOR leads FLAVIO off by his ear.)

PANTALONE: Come along, daughter!

DOCTOR: Wait till your mother hears about this!

COLUMBINE: And last we have the Servants... Brighella

(BRIG steps forward with movement.)

BRIG: I'm the master of the other servants - proud and cunning. I lead with closed hips.

COLUMBINE: Harlequin...

(HARLEY steps forward with movement.)

HARLEY: I'm handsome (gorgeous) happy-go-lucky and playful.

(HARLEY snaps his slap-stick behind someone to make them jump.)

I lead with open and loose hips.

COLUMBINE: And Zany...

(ZANY steps forward with movement.)

ZANY: I'm curious.

(COLUMBINE holds out a flower to ZANY.)

Whoa! And constantly surprised by everything! I lead with my nose and feet.

COLUMBINE: And then there's me, Columbine. I'm the bridge between them all. I usually play the servant to Isabella, but I stick my nose into everyone's business. I can be as cunning as Brighella, as playful as Harlequin, as thrifty as Pantalone and as smart as the Doctor, as I stay a step ahead of everyone else. Let's face it, I'm the only sane and rational person in the whole play!

(GROMOLOT steps forward and tugs on COLUMBINE's skirts. She stage-whispers gibberish into COLUMBINE's ear.)

What about you?

(GROMOLOT shakes her head vigorously.)

Oh, very well. This is Gromolot.

(GROMOLOT shyly waves to the audience.)

GROMOLOT: *(in gibberish)* Hello Everybody!

COLUMBINE: In Commedia, Gromolot means gibberish language.

GROMOLOT: *(in gibberish)* Yes, that's exactly right!

COLUMBINE: *(to audience, shaking her head)* I take no responsibility for where this might lead...
(to GROMOLOT)

Are you happy now?

GROMOLOT: *(in gibberish)* Absolutely! Thank you!

COLUMBINE: Well, on with the show!

Scene One:

Onboard a pirate ship.

AT RISE—*Lights come up on a pirate ship in the midst of a storm. The cast comically sways back and forth, interspersed with storm-related lazzi.*

BRIG: *(over storm)* Have we outrun them, Captain?

MAGNIFICO: Bring me my spy glass!

(ZANY tries to bring his spyglass, but it takes several attempts as the swaying ship keeps sending him back.)

HARLEY: Incoming!

(Everyone ducks and makes the sound of an approaching cannon ball. Splash!)

BRIG: Missed us by a mile!

MAGNIFICO: The spyglass!

(ZANY finally reaches the CAPTAIN, then promptly doubles over the side of the ship to throw up. The CAPTAIN looks through the spyglass.)

MAGNIFICO: We've outrun them!

HARLEY: Helped by the storm no doubt.

(The storm sound begins to recede.)

BRIG: It's letting up.

(The lights brighten and storm sounds die out.)

ZANY: *(throwing out her arms and raising her face)* The sun!

(Bird sounds.)

BRIG: We did it! We outran the King's own ship!

MAGNIFICO: Brig! Bring the booty!

(BRIG and HARLEY enter, carrying a small, but heavy, chest of gold and jewels, followed by ZANY.)

BRIG: Here it is Captain!

(to HARLEY.)

A little further, Harley!

(to MAGNIFICO.)

And may I say, you were a true terror in the last battle.

(BRIG and HARLEY set down the chest and cross to MAGNIFICO's side.)

MAGNIFICO: You really think so?

(MAGNIFICO pulls out his dagger and shows off his skill.)

MAGNIFICO: I do think I parry and thrust with panache... although Mummy always said I had the footwork of a cuttlefish.

(MAGNIFICO tries some fancy footwork.)

HARLEY: But fish don't have feet, sir.

(MAGNIFICO stumbles.)

MAGNIFICO: Exactly!

(He dejectedly puts his dagger away. ZANY has opened the chest and is fingering through the treasure.)

ZANY: Oooh! Look at all the sparklies!

MAGNIFICO: *(threateningly)* Zany!

(ZANY shuts the lid immediately and sits on it, but once no one is looking, she begins to admire an enormous jeweled ring that is now on her finger.)

MAGNIFICO: Alas! Are you sure there was no other treasure on the Princess' vessel?

BRIG: Aye, Captain. One chest was all there was.

HARLEY: We still get to dance the Hornswoggle Jig, don't we?

MAGNIFICO: I'm not sure one chest is cause for celebration.

HARLEY: But Captain, we always dance the Hornswoggle Jig when we bring home treasure – it's tradition!

ZANY: Oh, Captain... don't forget we captured more than just one chest of jewels...

MAGNIFICO: That's right! We have the Princess!

BRIG: Perhaps she can lead us to the rest of her treasure...

MAGNIFICO: A brilliant plan! She'll tell us where the treasure is, or she'll walk the plank! Bring her on deck!

BRIG: *(calling to some PIRATES)* You scurvy rats, there! Bring up the Princess!

(THEY exit)

MAGNIFICO: Here treasure is said to be legendary and there's no one who can stop me from making it mine!

ZANY: There's always The Black Raven.

(The whole cast gasps.)

MAGNIFICO: What did you say?

ZANY: I said, "there's always..."

(ZANY looks up and notices the intensity of the crowd.)

ZANY: Uh...nothing.

MAGNIFICO: *(an aside to BRIG)* She's right! The Black Raven always seems to swoop in and ruin my best laid plans – just like my brother Glorioso did when we were boys. Mummy always did like Glorioso best...

(The PIRATES have entered with PRINCESS COLUMBINE and her lady-in-waiting, GROMOLOT.)

BRIG: Uh, Captain?

(MAGNIFICO pulls himself together to address the Princess)

MAGNIFICO: Well, well, Princess Columbine. Welcome to the Tarantella! You are just in time to join our celebration.

COLUMBINE: *(defiantly)* And what are you celebrating?

MAGNIFICO: Why the sinking of your ship, of course. And the capture of the magnificent treasure!

(He makes a grand sweeping gesture toward the small chest. Everyone turns to look at it. Silence. ZANY folds down her lapel to hide a huge broach.)

COLUMBINE: That's just a fraction of my treasure and you know it!

MAGNIFICO: True. But we also have you! And you will lead us to the rest!

COLUMBINE: Over my dead body!

MAGNIFICO: That can be arranged!

(HARLEY steps in between this growing battle.)

HARLEY: But first, Captain, it's time to dance the Hornswoggle Jig! *(to COLUMBINE)* It's a tradition, you know.

MAGNIFICO: Yes, I wouldn't want to keep my men waiting. We've got a lot to celebrate. Music!

(Music cue: The Calabrian Tarantella. Those who are musicians begin. Much of the song is played to COLUMBINE.)

BRIG: WHO'S THE FIERCEST PIRATES AROUND? ARRGH!

THE MEANEST ONES TO BE FOUND?

ALL PIRATES: WE'LL SNEAK IN ON YOUR BIRTHDAY AND SWIPE THE CAKE,
AS WE DANCE THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG.

MAGNIFICO: AND WHEN YOU SEE THAT ALL OF YOUR PRESENTS
HAVE ALL BEEN STOLEN AWAY,
OH THE TEARS! AND THE SIGHS!

ZANY: *(mournful cry)* WHAT A SAD BIRTHDAY GIRL AM I!"

MAGNIFICIO: AND THEN WE'LL SAY..

ALL PIRATES: WE'RE THE FIERCEST PIRATES AROUD! ARRGH!

THE MEANEST ONES TO BE FOUND!

WE SMASHED ALL YOUR PRESENTS AND ATE YOUR CAKE,
AS WE DANCED THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG!

LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA.

LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA.

HARLEY: AND NOW YOU'VE FOUND YOUR SHIP IS ALL A SUNKEN
IT'S SWIMMING DOWN AMONG THE WATERY DEEP.
ALAS, YOU'RE ALL ALONE AND MOST FORSAKEN.

THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO DO NOW, BUT WEEP.

PLAYER ONE: YOU'RE THE FIERCEST PIRATES AROUND! ARRGH!

THE MEANEST ONES TO BE FOUND!

ALL PIRATES: WE'LL MARCH YOU DOWN TO THE END OF THE PLANK,
AS WE DANCE THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG.

MAGNIFICO: UNLESS YOU'RE WILLING TO LEAD US
TO YOUR HIDDEN TREASURE ABROAD.

OH, THE HOPE! OH THE JOY!

ZANY: *(laughs)* "WHAT A WONDERFUL, FREE GIRL AM I!"

MAGNIFICO: BUT IF NOT...

ALL PIRATES: WE'RE THE FIERCEST PIRATES AROUND! ARRGH!

THE MEANEST ONES TO BE FOUND!

WE'LL HAPPILY SEND YOU TO SWIM WITH SHARKS,
AS WE DANCE THE HORNSWOGGLE JIG!

LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA.

LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA, LA.

MAGNIFICO: Now, Princess, aren't you worried now?

COLUMBINE: Oh, I don't know. In the end, things always turn out for the best.

MAGNIFICO: Well in our case, that is entirely up to you. Either lead us to your treasure, or walk the plank.

(GROMOLOT bravely steps in to protect COLOMBINE)

GROMOLOT: *(in gibberish)* [You wouldn't dare!]

MAGNIFICO: And who is this?

COLUMBINE: Lady Gromolot, my lady-in-waiting.

BRIG: Does *she* know where the treasure is?

COLUMBINE: Of course! Why don't you ask her?

BRIG: Tell us where the treasure is or you'll join your mistress on the plank.

HARLEY: Yeah! You'll be swimming with the fishes in Davy Jones' Locker!

GROMOLOT: *(happy to comply – in gibberish)* [Well, it's quite simple really. All one has to do is sail to the coordinates of 50 degrees longitude and 73 degrees latitude and there you'll find the most dreamy little island you've ever set eyes on -]

HARLEY: Hey, what gives?

COLUMBINE: When Gromolot and I were children, there was a tragic croquet accident –

(Sound effect: wooden tone as COLUMBINE knocks her head with hand.)

COLUMBINE: - took one right to the head. No one's been able to understand a word ever since. She's a most valued companion. I tell her all my secrets!

MAGNIFICO: Blast! Enough nonsense! To the plank, both of you!

(There is a lazzi with lots of stumbling around trying to get them both on the plank. The WOMEN are on the plank, but MAGNIFICO is flustered.)

MAGNIFICO: It's late! Take one look down into the icy seas and decide: either tell us where the treasure is, or -

COLUMBINE: I'm the Princess, surely you'll grant us safe passage.

MAGNIFICO: I'm a pirate, not a dandy! Ye'll get no quarter from me!

COLUMBINE: Clearly, there's no honor among thieves. But be warned – if you do this thing, I will be revenged!

MAGNIFICO: By who?

COLUMBINE: The Black Raven!

(All gasp.)

MAGNIFICO: *(an aside to BRIG)* Why do people keep saying that name!

(to COLUMBINE)

I'll not fear that name! Dead men tell no tales... er, in this case, dead women, so how is he ever to know?! But to prove that I am not entirely without honor, I will grant you a last wish.

(COLUMBINE thinks this over.)

COLUMBINE: Very well, I wish to tell you all a story.

BRIG: You're going to waste your last wish on a story?

COLUMBINE: I'm going to tell you a story of The Black Raven that will seep in and haunt your dreams until when he comes to avenge me you'll be grateful your misery will be at an end.

(The crew is stunned into silence, except for ZANY.)

ZANY: Oh, goody, I love a good story!

(ZANY hides a gaudy necklace under her tunic.)

MAGNIFICO: *(aside to BRIG)* Drat! Just like the bedtime stories Mummy used to tell!

(composed, to COLUMBINE)

Well, do your best. We promise to listen.

Scene Two:

The Wooden Sword

AT RISE—All settle in to listen as COLUMBINE stands on the plank to tell her story. PLAYER ONE enters as THE BLACK RAVEN with black mask and cape.

COLUMBINE: Many of you know of The Black Raven as a formidable privateer – the scourge of every pirate – as she protects the King's waters – in his black mask and cape. But do you know how she came to be The Black Raven? It began back when my father was a miserable, stingy miser...

(THE BLACK RAVEN exits as the KING is counting coins, while his ADVISOR is writing in his counting book.)

KING: One million, one hundred thirty-three thousand and two. One million, one hundred thirty-

three thousand and three. One million, one hun- I'm bored!

ADVISOR: Wait – what?

KING: I'm bored, I tell you. We've been counting all day.

ADVISOR: You know we must perform our monthly accounting of your treasury, Your Highness. If we lose our place, we'll have to start all over again.

KING: Well, I'm the King – and by George, I say I'm bored! What good is it to count it? If I'm not counting the money, I'm worrying about it. What if my enemies defeat me in battle and take all my money? What if a treacherous advisor –

(The KING looks suspiciously at his advisor.)

steals away with my money? What if the people rise up in rebellion and storm the treasury?

(The KING looks out a window.)

Look at them down there – peacefully tending their fields. Do you think they're happy?

ADVISOR: Who?

KING: The peasants! Do you think they're happy?

ADVISOR: Happy, Sire?

KING: Yes, happy! You know.

(The KING puts on a big cheesy grin and a happy stance. The ADVISOR shudders.)

ADVISOR: Well, I've never been a peasant, but I think it's generally believe that peasants lead unsavory lives – lice, toil, the occasional famine. I don't see how they could possibly be *happy*.

KING: I must know for myself. I will dress as a beggar and see if I can find any happy peasants.

ADVISOR: That is highly ill-advised. Terrible things might happen. You might stub your toe... or get hungry. You might be exposed to... smells!

KING: I swear you to secrecy! I will be back before nightfall. Try not to have a nervous breakdown in the meantime.

COLUMBINE: And so the King disguised himself and set out. He saw peasants that looked tired, a few that looked angry, a lot that looked content, but no one who looked truly happy, but then he heard it...

(PEASANT begins to whistle.)

A very happy-sounding tune. He followed it to the small hut of a peasant.

(Sound effect: knocking)

PEASANT: Come in!

KING: Hello! I was passing by and heard your happy song. I was wondering if you had a bite to eat.

PEASANT: Well, it's just some bread and a bit of cheese, but I'm happy to share it.

KING: Is that all you have?

PEASANT: You seem rather choosy for a beggar.

KING: It's not that, it's just... I heard your happy song... and yu seem rather chipper for someone who has so little.

PEASANT: It's true I only earn enough to feed myself each day as I fix shoes, but I also have the

trees and the birds and all of heaven to look at.

KING: But don't you worry that someday you won't make enough to eat? I bet you won't be as happy when your stomach is growling.

PEASANT: Each day, I believe that things will always turn out for the best.

COLUMBINE: The king returned to the castle determined to put this man to the test.

KING: *(speaking to his advisor)* I would not believe it! He was so cheerful and he had nothing!

ADVISOR: Her simple faith makes her happy.

KING: She is a fool! Now how can I expose his happiness for the sham that it is? I know: send out a decree stating that it is illegal to repair shoes! We'll see how hungry she gets when her livelihood is taken away.

ADVISOR: But sire! The shoe union! The leather makers – will be in an uproar!

KING: They'll thank me! People will need more shoes than ever!

(A GUARD enters the town square. There are various people milling about including an OLD WOMAN carrying a bucket.)

GUARD: By order of the King: shoe repairing is now outlawed. When shoes wear out, new ones must be purchased!

OLD WOMAN: What foolishness is this? I'll shoe repair you!

(The OLD WOMAN stomps on the GUARD's foot then scampers off. The PEASANT enters.)

GUARD: What's that you have?

PEASANT: My shoe repair tools.

GUARD: Shoe repair is now illegal. I'll have to confiscate them.

(The GUARD exits with the cobbler's tools.)

PEASANT: What do I do now? I believe that somehow things will work out for the best.

(The OLD WOMAN is back, carrying her bucket full of water – confetti!)

OLD WOMAN: Who does that King thing he is? He makes me so mad, I'd like to knock him in the head with my bucket!

(She swings a bucket, but hits a passer-by, who cries out.)

Sorry! Argh! I've spilled half my water.

PEASANT: Here, I'll help you. I have nothing else to do.

OLD WOMAN: Well, I would appreciate the help. My back is killing me.

(She hands her the bucket and they exit together.)

COLUMBINE: That evening, the King returned to the peasant's hut ready to gloat, but instead, he heard the same happy song...

(PEASANT is whistling. Sound effect: knocking.)

PEASANT: Come in!

KING: I heard about the new decree and came to see how you fared today.

PEASANT: Better than ever!

KING: But how?

PEASANT: I started carry water for people in the town square. I even made more than usual. Look, I even bought a tart! Somehow, things always turn out for the best.

COLUMBINE: But the King was not deterred.

(The GUARD posts another decree.)

GUARD: Hear ye, hear ye! Another decree from the King: Everyone must carry their own water from the town well. Violators will be prosecuted!

(The OLD WOMAN and PEASANT go over to read it.)

OLD WOMAN: Why is that King always pushing us around? I'd like to spit in his eye.

(She spits and hits a passerby, who yells and holds up his eye.)

Sorry! Not only do I have to carry my own water, but then I've got to go into the woods to gather some firewood, oh my aching back!

PEASANT: Well, I can't carry your water, but I could gather some wood for you.

OLD WOMAN: Oh, bless you! You know where I live. Just bring it there!

COLUMBINE: That night at the peasant's hut...

(PEASANT is whistling.)

KING: Not that song again!

(Sound effect: knocking.)

PEASANT: Come in, my friend!

KING: It looks like you're still singing. How did you fare today?

PEASANT: Well, you will not believe it, but carrying water is illegal!

KING: Nooo.,,

PEASANT: So now, I'm a woodcutter! And being a woodcutter is even better than carrying water. Things always turn out for the best.

COLUMBINE: By the time the King got home, he was hopping mad.

KING: This peasant is too clever. No matter what I do, she'll always find a new way to make money. I've got to really back her into a corner.

ADVISOR: Maybe we should just go back to counting money -

KING: No, I've got to expose this woman for what she is - a simpleton!

ADVISOR: Can you say obsession?

KING: I know what I'll do! Just wait until tomorrow - there's no way she's getting out of this one.

COLUMBINE: So the next day in the town square -

(The PEASANT, carrying wood, is there with others. The GUARD enters.)

GUARD: By order of the King, all woodcutters are to report immediately for service in the King's Guard.

(The GUARD looks at the PEASANT.)

Immediately!

(The PEASANT sets down her wood and crosses to the GUARD.)

Here's your new uniform and sword.

PEASANT: How much does this job pay?

GUARD: Thirty shekels a month.

PEASANT: Wow! I've never made that much money.

GUARD: Payable at the end of each month.

PEASANT: Wait – how do I eat till then?

GUARD: That's none of my affair. Now guard the town square until further notice.

(The GUARD exits. The PEASANT marches up and down. The OLD WOMAN enters.)

OLD WOMAN: Wow, that's a pretty fancy outfit for a woodcutter.

PEASANT: I'm now in the King's Guard.

OLD WOMAN: How did that happen?

PEASANT: A new decree from the King.

OLD WOMAN: That old busy body, I'd like to give him a swift kick in shorts.

(She gives a furious kick, accidentally kicking a passer-by, who cries out.)

Sorry! Well, you look really sharp. Maybe this won't be such a bad gig.

PEASANT: I don't mind, only I don't get paid till the end of the month. I'll starve to death by then.

OLD WOMAN: Here, let me see your sword.

(The PEASANT pulls it out. The OLD WOMAN whistles.)

That's a mighty fine sword. Listen, I'll got a plan. Meet me here after dark and I think I can help you.

COLUMBINE: That night, sure of success, the King practically skipped to the peasant's hut, when–

(The sound of whistling.)

KING: No, not again!

(Sound effect: knocking)

PEASANT: Come in!

(The KING enters and sees bags of food on the table.)

KING: Where did all this food come from?

PEASANT: Well, there's a story in that. You see, today I was inducted into the King's Guard. I got a fancy new uniform and a fancy new sword.

KING: Did they give you all this food too?

PEASANT: No, that was a problem. They're not going to pay me till the end of the month. And I don't mind telling you, I was a little worried – I didn't know what I was going to eat. But then, my friend from town came up with a plan. She took my sword to her neighbor, the blacksmith. He bought my sword blade and fitted my hilt with a wooden sword.

(The PEASANT takes out her sword to show her visitor.)

I took the money and bought a month's worth of food. When I get paid back, I'll just take a portion of the money and buy back my blade...

KING: But what if you have to use your sword before then?

PEASANT: I just have to believe that things will work out for the best.

COLUMBINE: Now the King knew he had her. The next day he and his advisor came to the

square to watch what would happen.

(The PEASANT is guarding the square while others are milling about. The GUARD enters with the OLD WOMAN in chains.)

GUARD: This woman was caught stealing the King's weapons. You are to execute her.

OLD WOMAN: *(innocently to the crowd)* I'm just a harmless old woman! Mercy!

(To the GUARD)

I'd like to wrap these chains around your neck.

PEASANT: Execute her? But I've never as much as swatted a fly.

GUARD: You will do as you are told or will be killed with her. *(to the crowd)* Gather around and see what happens to those who steal from their King!

(The CROWD grows quiet.)

Draw your sword this instant or be killed!

OLD WOMAN: I am innocent!

(The scene freezes as COLUMBINE yawns and then yawns again.)

MAGNIFICO: Go on...

COLUMBINE: Oh, I'm so tired. It's been quite a day.

BRIG: What happens next?

HARLEY: Does the peasant's wooden sword get exposed?

COLUMBINE: Honestly, I can't keep my eyes open for another moment.

MAGNIFICO: *(throwing a fit)* But you must! You must! You must!

(aside to BRIG)

Mummy always said I had the emotional intelligence of a squid.

(composed, to COLUMBINE)

I order you to finish the story!

COLUMBINE: Or you'll what? Make me walk the plank?

ZANY: Ha! She's got you there, Captain!

(ZANY tucks a gaudy necklace inside her tunic. MAGNIFICO takes a deep breath.)

MAGNIFICO: Very well. We will meet here again tomorrow night for the rest of the story and then you'll walk the plank!

(COLUMBINE and GROMOLOT shake hands as the lights dim to the musical interlude of "The Hornswoggle Jig." Lights come up on the next evening. The pirates are milling about. COLUMBINE and GROMOLOT are on the plank looking out through a spyglass.)

COLUMBINE: Do you see them?

GROMOLOT: *(in gibberish)* [No sign of them.]

COLUMBINE: I've got to keep stalling until they can get here.

(MAGNIFICO turns to speak to them. COLUMBINE motions to put the spyglass away.)

MAGNIFICO: Ah, nothing like a good execution before bedtime. Bilge rats! Gather 'round! It's time to hear the rest of the princess' final story.

COLUMBINE: Let's see. Where was I?

(The scene reforms as it is described.)

BRIG: The King and his Advisor were watching from over here.

HARLEY: The peasant with the wooden sword was trapped in the middle by the guard.

ZANY: And they were standing over the old lady who was saying "Help me, help me!"

OLD WOMAN: I am innocent!

(The PEASANT hesitates. The GUARD puts his hand to his hilt. The PEASANT gets an idea and then speaks boldly and slowly to the crowd.)

PEASANT: The old woman professes she is innocent. I say, if she is, may God turn my sword to wood!

(The PEASANT dramatically pulls out his sword and the crowd gasps.)

GUARD: It's a miracle!

(The crowd drops to its knees, while the ADVISOR chuckles.)

ADVISOR: You'll never get the best of that one.

(The PEASANT helps the OLD WOMAN to her knees and unties her.)

OLD WOMAN: Thank you friend. If anyone should be executed, it's the King. Why if he were here, I'd give him a –

(She turns and sees the KING who has dropped his disguise.)

OLD WOMAN: - kiss! Oh, benevolent and merciful one!

(She kisses his hand.)

KING: Be gone, before my benevolence wears out.

(She exits, but not before giving the GUARD a kick in the behind as a parting shot. The KING approaches the PEASANT.)

KING: Do you know who I am?

(The PEASANT squints and then his eyes go wide.)

PEASANT: You're the beggar who's been sharing my meals.... er, beg your pardon, you Highness.

KING: I am the one who should be begging your pardon. I've been trying to see if your simple happiness would hold out against hard times. But I can see now that your happiness is not so simple after all. It is clever and determined choice. I have learned much wisdom from you. I wished my own advisors would be so wise.

(The KING eyes his ADVISOR.)

Would you join me in court? I would like to see what else you could teach me.

(The PEASANT bows.)

COLUMBINE: And that is how my father began to learn there was more to life than money.

MAGNIFICO: Touching, Really. Let me wipe this little tear from my eye – Now walk the plank!

HARLEY: And the peasant became The Black Raven?

COLUMBINE: Eventually.

ZANY: No wonder she's so clever!

MAGNIFICO: Enough! Your time has come, Princess.

COLUMBINE: I am ready.

(She walks a few steps.)

Too bad you won't get to hear about how The Black Raven bested Captain Bloodgut and received his first commission.

MAGNIFICO: I've always wondered what happened to Captain Bloodgut – haven't seen him for years – No! Not another word! Off you go!

ZANY: I hear his treasure was never recovered...

(ZANY pulls up her sleeve to reveal a glittering bracelet.)

MAGNIFICO: Bloodgut's treasure... Perhaps we have time for one more story – one short story.

15 MORE PAGES TO THE END