

THE WELL KEEPERS

An adaptation of the English Fairytale, “The Three Heads Of The Well”

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SYNOPSIS: The king of Colchester, after the death of his wife, has married the hideous widow, Edwina, for her riches. The new queen, mother to the ugly Luella and jealous of her step-daughter, Amaryllis's beauty, does her best to set the king against his own child. Heartbroken, Amaryllis leaves the palace to seek her fortune; when during the journey she shares her scanty food with an old man and is kind to the dwarfs living in the well, she is rewarded by marrying a rich and powerful king.

Luella, too, wants to imitate her step-sister, but proves to be selfish and stingy; punished by the dwarfs, she ends up marrying a poor cobbler.

After learning about her daughter's husband, Edwina leaves the palace; in the meantime the king had found out about her lies and greets Amaryllis with all the honours due to a queen.

CHARACTERS

The King

Princess Amaryllis – The King's daughter

Edwina - The Queen, Amaryllis's step-mother

Princess Luella – Edwina's daughter

Leanna - Maidservant

Old Man

Dwarf 1

Dwarf 2

Dwarf 3

King Oswald

Joe – A cobbler

Setting: England, Colchester

Time: Timeless

Duration: 16 minutes.

Props: Cloth, needle, a bell (Edwina), a piece of bread, a piece of cheese, a comb (Amaryllis), a basket (Luella), a little box, a little bottle (Joe), a purse (King).

Production notes:

Edwina and Luella are quite ugly. The dwarfs have golden hair.

SCENE 1 - The Palace Hall

(Edwina is embroidering. Luella enters.)

Luella: Leanna said you wanted to see me, Mother.

Edwina: Yes, Luella. I'm sure you, too, have noticed how your step-sister outshines you and you don't want this, do you?

Luella: Absolutely.

Edwina: Neither do you want her to become queen one day, I presume.

Luella: Of course not.

Edwina: So the best thing to do is to have the king chase Amaryllis from the palace.

Luella: He'd never do that.

Edwina: *(Smiles wickedly.)* Never can tell, my dear.

(King enters.)

Edwina: *(Hurriedly, to Luella.)* Now you make up something nasty about her and I'll do the rest.

King: My dear, Edwina, I was looking for you.

Edwina: I was just comforting my Luella once again.

Luella: Amaryllis keeps teasing me, Your Majesty.

King: Indeed.

Luella: She said that I am uglier than a toad.

King: How rude of her.

Edwina: Poor child, it's not your fault if you aren't as beautiful as she is. Go back to your room and I'll see that she apologises at once.

Luella: Yes, Mother. *(Exits.)*

Edwina: Trust me, Sire, your daughter's behaviour is truly reproachful.

King: Now, now, Edwina, aren't you being a bit too hard on her?

Edwina: Let me tell you that she never obeys me; I even caught her making faces at me.

King: When I remarried, I hoped that Amaryllis could be happy with her new family.

Edwina: Luella and I have done our best to be friendly and loving with her, but I believe she hates us. (*Pretends grief.*) That conceited girl has made us cry more than once, Sire, more than once.

King: How strange, Amaryllis has always been so goodhearted, just like her dear mother was.

Edwina: You must send her away otherwise I shall be obliged to leave the palace with Luella and with all my riches, of course.

King: Oh no, no, I'll see what I can do... (*Takes her hand.*) You know how much I care for you.

Edwina: And you know how to prove it. (*Exits.*)

King: (*Shakes his head.*) However can I chase my own daughter from her home?

(*Amaryllis enters.*)

Amaryllis: Father...

King: Good thing you're here, young lady, I have to talk to you.

Amaryllis: So do I.

King: I've been told that you have been misbehaving lately, picking on your step-sister and disobeying the queen.

Amaryllis: No, please...

King: All this grieves me as I have always regarded you as a generous and most caring girl.

Amaryllis: Whatever I may say will not be believed and therefore I ask your permission to leave the court and seek my fortune elsewhere.

King: (*Relieved.*) So *you* want to go away.

Amaryllis: Yes, father.

King: Very well then, I'll tell the queen to give you all you need and you may set forth at once. (*Exits.*)

Amaryllis: If only he knew the truth.

(Luella rushes in.)

Luella: Amaryllis... *(Sticks her tongue out, runs away.)*

Amaryllis: You... you silly girl!

(Edwina enters.)

Edwina: Well, well, my Sire has just told me you're leaving.

Amaryllis: *(Sadly)* The only thing I can do.

Edwina: Let's say, the best, *(Rings the bell.)* there is no room here for naughty girls like you.

(Leanna enters.)

Leanna: Your Majesty?

Edwina: Prepare a bag with some bread, cheese and a bottle of cider; *(sneers)* our Amaryllis has decided to leave us.

Leanna: I'll see to it at once. *(Exits.)*

Edwina: Go, *(coarse laughter)* and may you never come back.

(Amaryllis exits.)

Edwina: And now all the king's attentions will be for my Luella.

(Luella enters.)

Luella: Mother, mother, I want to go and seek my fortune too. Amaryllis is so beautiful that all the princes and kings' eyes will be for her and I shall grow old in this horrid palace and never marry.

Edwina: No reason you shouldn't try your luck as well, my love, *(Rings the bell.)* your chances are as good as hers.

(Leanna enters.)

Leanna: Your Majesty?

Edwina: Prepare a basket full of cakes and honey, almonds and sweetmeats and a big bottle of milk for Princess Luella.

Leanna: Yes, Milady. (*Exits.*)

Edwina: (*Raises her finger.*) Don't disappoint me, Luella, and see to come back with the most powerful and wealthy king.

Luella: I shall, mother, I shall. (*Exits.*)

(*Lights fade.*)

SCENE 2 – The Woods

(A stone, a well)

(*Old Man is sitting on the stone. Amaryllis enters. She has her bag.*)

Old Man: Good morrow, fair maiden, where are you heading so hurriedly?

Amaryllis: I am going to seek my fortune.

Old Man: What have you got in your bag?

Amaryllis: Bread and cheese and a bottle of cider. Would you like to have some?

Old Man: With great pleasure.

Amaryllis: (*Hands him a piece of bread and cheese.*) Here you are, Sir.

Old Man: Thank you, my dear. Since you have been so kind to me, I want to pay you back. Go to that well over there and your generosity shall be rewarded. (*Exits.*)

Amaryllis: (*Moves to the well.*) How strange... a well in the middle of the woods.

(*Dwarfs' heads come out.*)

Dwarf 1: Wash me and comb me,
And lay me down softly,
And lay me on a bank to dry,
That I may look pretty,
When somebody passes by.

Amaryllis: Of course, my dear friend, (*Takes out the comb.*) if this will make you happy. (*Combs his hair.*)

Dwarf 2: Will you do the same for me, sweet maiden?

Dwarf 3: And for me too?

Amaryllis: I'll be glad to do it. (*Combs Dwarf 2 and Dwarf's 3 hair.*)

Dwarf 2: What shall we give to this damsel that has been so nice to us?

Dwarf 1: My gift is beauty; she shall be so beautiful that she will charm the most powerful king in the world.

Dwarf 2: I'll make her voice sweeter than the nightingale's one.

Dwarf 3: Well, well, my gift shall be none of the least, as she is a king's daughter, she will be as fortunate as to become queen.

Dwarf 1: No sooner we descend into the well than your king will arrive, my dear.

(Dwarfs descend into the well.)

Amaryllis: What weird creatures. Oh my, I'm so tired and I miss my father. If only he hadn't married that evil woman.

(Oswald enters.)