

Treasure Seekers

A Family Play

Play by Tanis Galik



MEMBER

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ACT ONESCENE ONE

1906 Cliffville, a small seaside village in Southern England. The main street is lined with various shops. Magic is in the air as a motley caravan of misfit carnival performers—a fire and sword swallower, acrobats, magicians, clowns, a strong man, a tattooed lady, a Gypsy fortuneteller, etc.—work the crowd of villagers, craftsmen, peddlers, shop owners, and local farmers. The crowd also includes London working-class vacationers, who cannot afford to go to the fashionable hotels and seaside resorts for their holiday. Instead, they take the new railways to Cliffville, expecting to be treated like visiting royalty.

EVERYONE is frozen in a tableau of suspended activity. EDWARD, an 11-year old boy, closely watches a Thimblerrigger. AUNT EDITH, his maiden guardian, judiciously inspects food items. ELFRIDA, Edward's 12-year-old sister, uses her Brownie camera to snap pictures of all the activities.

The spotlight hits A GROUP OF MEN, including EDWARD, gathered around the THIMBLERIGGER. The THIMBLERIGGER comes to life quickly shuffling the three thimbles.

THIMBLERIGGER

A little fun, just now and then
Is relished by the best of men.
If you have nerve, pick a thimble.
Your eyes are sharp, your mind is nimble.
If right, you win, you'll gain a plenty.
Five, draws you ten, ten draws you twenty.

(A spotlight hits DICKIE, a 12-year-old, lame con artist with a crutch under his right arm. HE bumps against one of the GENTS watching the thimble game.)

DICKIE

'scuse me, sir.

(THE GENT returns to watching the thimbles move. As DICKIE limps away, he pulls a gold watch from inside his sleeve, smiles and drops it in his pocket.)

THIMBLERIGGER

Now who's ready to take a chance? Double or nothing!

(EDWARD, holding his coin tight, with a grand move places it on the table.)

EDWARD

I will, sir.

THIMBLERIGGER

Now here's a daring fellow.

(AUNT EDITH pops to life and races over.)

AUNT EDITH

Edward, do not throw your coins away on such foolishness.

(AUNT EDITH snatches the coin from the table and grabs EDWARD by the hand pulling him away from the group while shooting the Thimblerrigger an angry look.)

THIMBLERIGGER

Ahh, Mum, let the lad have his dream. Who knows what the future holds? Anything can happen!

(THE CARNIVAL PERFORMERS and TOWNSPEOPLE come alive, going about their business.)

EDWARD

Aunt Edith, please. I know I can win.

AUNT EDITH

Easy money, never comes easily.

(AUNT EDITH turns to pay for her items.
EDWARD looks longingly at the Thimblerrigger.)

EDWARD

But we need the money and with Father gone I'm the man of the house and I...

AUNT EDITH

And what would your Father say to such an enterprise?

THIMBLERIGGER

Anything can happen. Anything can be. Anything you wish is a possibility.

EDWARD, COME.

Elfrida, please keep up with us.

AUNT EDITH

(To Elfrida)

(ELFRIDA busily takes pictures.)

ELFRIDA

Aunt Edith, one day this will be history.

AUNT EDITH

Come both of you! We must get back to the lodgers.

EDWARD/ELFRIDA

(Making faces of disgust)

I hate lodgers.

(The acrobats, magicians and clowns continue to entertain the bystanders.)

AUNT EDITH

I understand perfectly, really I do. I know it's been difficult without your dear father, but we will charge through. Chin up. Stand tall. You must look at each day as a new opportunity just waiting to be seized.

(EDWARD is drawn back to the Thimblerrigger.)

THIMBLERIGGER

Anything can happen. Anything can be.
Anything you wish is a possibility.

(As AUNT EDITH gathers her packages, ELFRIDA continues taking photographs. EDWARD is mystified by the SWORD AND FIRE SWALLOWER. RED, an elegant-looking man sporting a red beard and dressed in black, and LUG, his muscular companion, scrutinize the possibilities before them. RED signals LUG and THEY watch as DICKIE continues to mingle with the crowd picking out his target. As a LADY and a young GIRL walk by, DICKIE greatly exaggerates his limp. HE approaches them and pulls off his dirty cap.)

DICKIE
'cuse me, Mum. Could you spare a trifle?

LADY
You ought to be at home with your family, young man.

DICKIE
I wish I could, Mum.
(Sniffing)
They're all gone.

LADY
Poor little man.

(The LADY opens her purse and fumbles in it searching for a coin.)

GIRL
May I give the boy my penny?

LADY
Yes, you may. And your generosity will be matched by my own.

(The little GIRL opens her purse and hands DICKIE a penny, while the LADY hands DICKIE a half crown.)

DICKIE
A 'alf crown.
(Handing it back to her.)
Oh, that's too generous, Mum.

LADY
May God bless you, Child.

(SHE folds his hand over the coin.)

DICKIE
And may God bless you for the wonderful mother you are.

(DICKIE puts on his cap, tipping it to them. The LADY and the GIRL nod and turn to be amazed by the acrobats. RED takes note of Dickie's success. DICKIE moves off to the side.)

DICKIE (Continued)
(A big smile)

Ahhh, works every bloody time.

(Kisses the half crown and drops it in his coin purse)

I luv the sound.

(RED approaches the old gypsy woman and begins a discussion with her. MR. ROSCOE, the town's attorney, cycles down the main street barely missing some of the revelers and performers as HE frantically tries to catch up with AUNT EDITH. HE screeches to a stop as AUNT EDITH turns. HE tips his hat and SHE acknowledges his attentions. As ELFRIDA snaps pictures of the various entertainers, SHE spies MR. ROSCOE conversing with AUNT EDITH and becomes agitated.)

ELFRIDA

EDDY! EDDY!

(ELFRIDA gestures towards Mr. Roscoe. EDWARD snaps to, runs over to Aunt Edith and forces himself between AUNT EDITH and MR. ROSCOE. In her hurry to keep AUNT EDITH away from MR. ROSCOE, ELFRIDA trips over DICKIE'S crutch and THEY BOTH fall down.)

ELFRIDA (Continued)

You dirty beggar, you've soiled my pinafore.

DICKIE

'ho you callin' dirty?

(MR. ROSCOE tips his hat and departs from AUNT EDITH. HE continues bicycling to his office. ELFRIDA jumps up and hurries after her aunt, trying to rub the spot off her skirt.)

DICKIE (Continued)
(Calling after her)

Your Royal 'ighness, watch your own bloomin' self.

(DICKIE struggles to get himself up with the use of his crutch. ELFRIDA reaches AUNT EDITH's side.)

AUNT EDITH

Elfrida, is that any way for an Arden to go about town?

ELFRIDA

It wasn't my fault. It was that dirty beggar boy.

AUNT EDITH

Come, we have lots of work to do.

EDWARD

(Mesmerized by the magician)

Nooo.

AUNT EDITH

There are others who depend on us.

EDWARD

I want to see the show.

AUNT EDITH

Edward, some day you will learn there are more important things in life than what you want. Now, come along!

(AUNT EDITH firmly motions to leave. EDWARD and ELFRIDA follow. RED has become embroiled in an animated argument with the old gypsy woman. THE TALKER steps forward.)

TALKER

LADIES AND GENTS, BEHOLD THE MAIN EVENT. COME INSIDE THE TENT, T'WILL AMAZE YOU. FOR ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN. ANYTHING CAN BE. ANYTHING YOU WISH IS A POSSIBILITY.

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

(As the crowd moves on down the street following the performers to their encampment, RED's confrontation with the old woman escalates. HE becomes more threatening. The OLD GYPSY WOMAN screams and races across the stage with RED chasing her. As SHE exits, HE yells after her.)

RED

Ye owe me, ye old hag. I not be done with ye!

(DICKIE makes a quick turn hoping RED has not seen him, but it is too late. LUG blocks his escape.)

LUG

Aye, Red. An' look who we 'ave 'ere.

(DICKIE turns and feigns surprise at seeing RED.)

DICKIE

Red, me old mate, what are you doin' so far from London?

RED

Ye can drop the act, Boy. I have a bit of business down this way and I think ye could be of some use to me.

LUG

'e's a bloody cripple!

(RED walks around Dickie studying him.)

RED

Aye, a bloody cripple 'tis true, but the lad's as smooth as glass. He can charm the bottle off a bum, he can.

DICKIE

I'm on me own now.

RED

Aye, ye've done well I see. Beggin' 'll take ye far.

DICKIE

I does awlright.

RED

Laddie, just one more job for ye ol' mate Red.

(RED moves towards DICKIE. DICKIE backs into LUG. LUG grabs him, but DICKIE stabs Lug's foot with his crutch. DICKIE whirls around and quickly whacks Lug in the stomach and then the knee with his crutch. LUG in pain falls into a heap. DICKIE turns on RED holding his crutch like a sword ready to defend himself. However, RED pulls a spectacular pearl-handled dagger from his boot and threatens Dickie with it.)

RED (Continued)

I not be so easy to fool, Boy. Meet me at the ol' castle ruins on the cliff two bells after the noon hour. I'll lay out yer part then. And don't be thinking ye can run away. It won't be hard to find a crippled thief.

(RED and LUG laugh.)

RED (Continued)

Be there or I will find ye. And I won't be in such a charitable mood, ye may lay to that.

(DICKIE grabs this knapsack and exits.)

RED (Continued)

(Smiling)

Aye, he's got a million schemes that one. But he has just the touch I need to skin that rich old goat. And Laddie, when I'm through with him . . .

(RED gestures slitting his throat. Then he laughs wickedly while sliding his dagger into his boot. LUG chuckles and gets up. RED exits and LUG limps off stage after him.)

ACT ONESCENE THREE

AUNT EDITH, ELFRIDA and EDWARD bustle around their seaside, two-story cottage. Due to circumstances they are forced to live in the basement and take in lodgers — working—class prima donnas, who cannot afford to go to one of the better hotels, yet demand five-star service at discount rates. From one of the upstairs rooms, MISS PRIMROSE, a petite spinster, sits at a small table and rings her silver “servant” bell.

MISS PRIMROSE

Oh Miss Arden, I would love a spot of tea. Dearie, I do realize it’s a tad bit early, but won’t you please humor me? And do hurry for I am absolutely parched. Oh, Miss Arden, . . . I would like some service please.

(As MISS PRIMROSE frantically rings her bell, AUNT EDITH, ELFRIDA and EDWARD race about the kitchen preparing a tray with tea and “goodies” on it. MR. BELVEDERE, a large man with an ever-present cigar in his mouth, begins ringing his “servant” cowbell as he sits in the bathtub.)

MR. BELVEDERE

A TOWEL! BY JOVE I NEED A TOWEL! Is it so much to ask for the pleasure of a bloody towel when I’m at bath? Miss Arden, I would like some service PLEASE!

(As HE continues ringing his bell, EDWARD runs up the stairs to fetch towels for Mr. Belvedere. The front bell rings and ELFRIDA scampers down the entryway to answer the door. AUNT EDITH completes the tray and carries it up to Miss Primrose. MRS. POTTS with a child, MASTER REGINALD POTTS, enters the main room, carting a collection of sea creatures [alive and dead] into the house. SHE drops the pail and they stomp off a ton of sand on the newly cleaned floor. ELFRIDA trudges in behind them.)

MRS. POTTS

Oh Miss Arden, we've had a delightful day at the shore, my darling Reginald and I. Now we need a spot for Reginald's amazing creatures from the sea. Oh Miss Arden, we would like some service please!

(As MRS. POTTS and REGINALD tramp up the stairs, ELFRIDA opens the closet door and pulls out a hand brush and pail. SHE kneels on the floor and begins sweeping the sand into the pail. EDWARD is shoved aside on the top landing as the LODGERS pass by. EDWARD descends carrying as far as he can from his body a huge pair of men's drawers. AUNT EDITH follows down the staircase. SHE takes the drawers from EDWARD and tosses them into the bag of laundry SHE drags behind her.)

AUNT EDITH

(Looking towards heaven)

Would it really be a sin, to want to do each and every one of them in?

ELFRIDA & EDWARD

I hate lodgers!

(ELFRIDA throws down the brush and THEY BOTH sit on the steps of the staircase.)

AUNT EDITH

Often so do I.

(Sinking down next to them)

But unfortunately taking in lodgers is the only way we have to make ends meet.

EDWARD

If only Father were still alive.

ELFRIDA

We wouldn't have to take in lodgers.

(AUNT EDITH puts her arms around EDWARD and ELFRIDA.)

AUNT EDITH

I am sorry. We just have to be patient a little longer. I know it won't be this way forever. I promise you, one day our ship will come in.

ELFRIDA

And we won't have to wait on any more lodgers.

We'll have all the money we need.

EDWARD

A thousand pounds.

ELFRIDA

A million pounds!

EDWARD

(AUNT EDITH laughs.)

AUNT EDITH

Yes, one day it will happen. It will come suddenly.

We won't be expecting it. We'll be walking along the sand or gazing at the bay and then out of nowhere – our ship will come in. Maybe it's right outside our door.

(Immediately the front-door bell rings and THEY ALL smile. But then the ringing of the "servant" bells begins anew. AUNT EDITH hands THE CHILDREN the bag of laundry. MASTER REGINALD POTTS sneaks down the stairs.)

AUNT EDITH (Continued)

Tend to the lodgers, I'll get the door.

(AUNT EDITH exits. As ELFRIDA and EDWARD drag the bag of laundry towards the kitchen, MASTER REGINALD POTTS sticks his tongue out through the banisters and grimaces.)

REGINALD

Little slaveys.

(Before he can run up the stairs, ELFRIDA jumps up, her hand shoots through the banisters and she catches him by the leg.)

ELFRIDA

Get him, Eddy.

(EDWARD races up the stairs and pounces on REGINALD. The two boys roll around as ELFRIDA shoves the laundry bag and the pail of sea creatures into the kitchen. She quickly makes her way up the stairs to join the fray.)

AUNT EDITH (OS)

Mr. Roscoe, I wasn't expecting you until after lunch.

EDWARD

(Angrily, looking at Elf)

What's he doing here?

(ELFRIDA punches REGINALD and HE runs upstairs crying to his mother. EDWARD and ELFRIDA stand guard, chaperoning AUNT EDITH. As MR. ROSCOE carrying a briefcase escorts AUNT EDITH down the entryway, SHE motions for HIM to enter the room before HER. When HE isn't looking, SHE glances in the hallway mirror quickly adjusting her hair and makeup.)

ROSCOE

I hope I'm not inconveniencing you, Miss Arden. But as I mentioned this morning, I believe I bear exciting news for your nephew.

MISS ARDEN

Would you care to sit, Mr. Roscoe?

(AUNT EDITH sits on the sofa and MR. ROSCOE sits next to her, but a little too close. EDWARD and ELFRIDA cough loudly.)

ROSCOE

Oh, please forgive me.

(HE moves to a chair — a respectable distance away — and fumbles in his case. HE pulls out an official-looking letter.)

ROSCOE (Continued)

Lord Arden, Edward and Elfrida's granduncle in Northumberland, has recently died.

AUNT EDITH

Oh dear, we are sorry. Aren't we sorry children?

ELFRIDA

(Politely)

Yes, very sorry, Aunt Edith.

EDWARD

Who's he?

AUNT EDITH

(To Edward)

He was your grandfather's brother. He lived a great distance from us so we rarely saw him.

(To Mr. Roscoe)

I am sorry to hear of his passing, but what could they possibly expect from us?

ROSCOE

Oh, nothing, Miss Arden. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Since he died with no heirs, the title comes to your branch of the family.

EDWARD

Does that mean I'm Lord Arden?

ROSCOE

Why yes it does, young man.

ELFRIDA

And I'm Lady Arden.

(To Edward)

How perfectly ripping! Now we can shut those lodging-children up!

AUNT EDITH

No, Edward's wife will be Lady Arden. You are Miss Elfrida Arden.

ELFRIDA

But I'm already that.

EDWARD

Don't worry, Elf. I'll call you Lady Arden.

AUNT EDITH

(To Mr. Roscoe)

May I inquire of you?

ROSCOE

Anything, Miss Arden.

AUNT EDITH

Will Edward inherit something besides the title?

ROSCOE

I'm afraid there is nothing. Generations ago Lord Arden mortgaged the lands to help Prince Charlie gain the throne. Since he never became king, all was lost. Only the old castle ruins on the cliff remain.

(To Edward)

Perhaps you'll find the treasure, young man.

(MR. ROSCOE and AUNT EDITH laugh.)

EDWARD & ELFRIDA

What treasure?

AUNT EDITH

There's a legend that a great treasure was hidden somewhere in Arden castle. My father used to look for it when he was a boy.

ELFRIDA

He never found it?

AUNT EDITH

No.

EDWARD

Then it's still there!

(EDWARD and ELFRIDA literally jump for joy—
YEAH!)

ELFRIDA

After lunch we'll go find the treasure.

AUNT EDITH

(To Edward and Elfrida)

Back to work you two.

(ELFRIDA and EDWARD reluctantly go up the
staircase, but do not exit.)

AUNT EDITH (Continued)

(To Mr. Roscoe)

Where are my manners? Would you care for some tea, Mr. Roscoe?

ROSCOE

Yes, I would. If it's not too much trouble, Miss Arden?

AUNT EDITH

No, trouble at all, Mr. Roscoe.

(AUNT EDITH gets up and goes into the kitchen.)

EDWARD

When we find that treasure, we'll throw those lodgers right out the door!

Along with Mr. Roscoe.

ELFRIDA

(THEY BOTH exit.)

ACT ONE

SCENE FOUR

On a cliff overlooking the English Channel a pile of stones appearing to be the decaying wall of an old castle sits center stage. The stones partially encircle an ancient courtyard. A collapsed archway resting on its side still has an old chapel bell hanging from its peak. A stone block leans against a large pile of rocks. ELFRIDA is busy moving stones, while EDWARD stands and watches. DICKIE enters and quickly ducks behind a pile of rocks so they don't see him.

EDWARD

I don't see any treasure.

(DICKIE's head pops up over the pile of rocks when he hears the word treasure. HE watches and listens, but still remains hidden from EDWARD and ELFRIDA's view. EDWARD picks up a stick.)

ELFRIDA

If it were easy to find, grandpapa would have found it. I bet you don't know the castle was destroyed in 1644 by the Roundheads?

EDWARD

Who cares?

(EDWARD plops down on a stone and pokes at the ground with the stick.)

ELFRIDA

You're just jealous because I'm good in history and you're not.

EDWARD

Aunt Edith says it's impolite to show off. Besides, all I want is to find the treasure so I can get back to school and be a gentleman like Father. Of course, I'll take care of you and Aunt Edith too.

(EDWARD tosses the stick away.
ELFRIDA returns to digging.)

ELFRIDA

EDDY, help me move these rocks.

(EDWARD comes over and half-heartedly helps ELFRIDA push the large block aside. RED enters from the opposite side of the stage as Dickie, sees the children and jumps behind a pile of rocks. As HE moves into position, he knocks over a few stones. DICKIE ducks behind his rock pile.)

EDWARD

What was that?

(ELFRIDA grabs a small rock and steps in front of EDWARD. SHE stands with HER arm up ready to launch an attack. THEY both listen for a second. There is no other sound.)

ELFRIDA

It's probably just a rat.

EDWARD

Ugh!

(SHE tosses the rock down and starts quickly pulling the smaller stones out, clearing an opening.)

ELFRIDA

It's small, but I think you can fit.

EDWARD

I'm not crawling in there. That rat could still be around.

ELFRIDA

You are such a nipper!

(ELFRIDA wiggles her way into the opening.)

EDWARD

Can you see anything, Elf?

ELFRIDA

It's too dark, but I feel something flat.

EDWARD

Is it gold?

(DICKIE and RED pop up from behind their piles of rocks. RED is in the back so even Dickie does not know he is there.)

ELFRIDA

I don't think so. Maybe I can pull it out.

(ELFRIDA backs out of the opening and drags out a small flat piece of metal. SHE places it on the ground and BOTH OF THEM puzzle over it. DICKIE and RED lean over their mounds to better see the plaque.)

EDWARD

Maybe if we wipe it off.

(EDWARD grabs ELFRIDA's pinafore skirt and starts to wipe.)

ELFRIDA

Don't dirty my pinafore. Use your handkerchief.

EDWARD

I don't have one.

(ELFRIDA pulls out a beautiful lace-edged handkerchief from her large pocket.)

ELFRIDA

That is why Aunt Edith always tells us to carry a handkerchief. One never knows when one might need one.

(SHE carefully opens the beautiful white handkerchief, spits on it and cleans the dirt off from the metal plaque.)

EDWARD

It looks like a coat-of-arms . . .

ELFRIDA

And some writing.

EDWARD & ELFRIDA

Hear, Oh badge of Arden's house,
Arden speaks it without fear.
Sage and noble Badge of Arden's house,

EDWARD & ELFRIDA (Continued)

He requests that you draw near.
Grant Lord Arden's heart these three
Nobility, Humility, Sensibility
Such qualities teach him to prize,
And show him where the treasure lies.

(There is a flash of blinding white light and a huge puff of white smoke. DICKIE and RED are thrown back behind their stone piles. The CHILDREN fall back and MOULDIWARP, a large white mole, appears with giant playing cards in his paw and wearing a visor and reading glasses on his forehead.)

MOULDIWARP

Now you've done it. My first Royal Rummy in ages.

ELFRIDA

Who are you?

(DICKIE and RED stick their heads over their pile of stones again. MOULDIWARP places the cards and his visor in a giant "fur pocket.")

MOULDIWARP

(Making a majestic bow)

I am Mouldiwarp, the Badge of the House of Arden and Ruler of All Things White. My likeness is on all official Arden items—family coat-of-arms, furniture, silverware.

EDWARD

You're our badge?

(Sighing)

I was hoping we had a lion . . .

MOULDIWARP

Overused.

EDWARD

Or a falcon.

MOULDIWARP

(Slow and exaggerated)

O-ver-ra-ted.

ELFRIDA

Why would anyone want a big white rat on their coat-of-arms?

MOULDIWARP

Mole. I am a Grandiosus Blancicius Molektus from the royal line of Diwarpious. At the time of William the Conqueror the first Lord Arden saved my great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather's life. Since no one else was using it, Lord Arden chose a Mouldiwarp as his crest and, as a reward, the King of the Mouldiwarp must respond when the true Lord Arden and his family are present at the reading of the official edict. You called me. Here I am. What do you want?

EDWARD

I want to see the treasure.

MOULDIWARP

Oh, you do, do you? And do you think I'm just going to show you the treasure?

EDWARD

Yes?

MOULDIWARP

NO. Read the official edict.

(MOULDIWARP slides the giant pair of reading glasses from his forehead onto his nose. THEY ALL walk over to the metal plaque, bend over it and following his paw, MOULDIWARP reads. DICKIE and RED lean over as far as they can to hear what is being read.)

MOULDIWARP (Continued)

Nobility, humility, sensibility, such qualities teach him to prize AND show him where the treasure lies.

(To Edward)

It seems you have a lot to do before I show you anything.

EDWARD

I found the official edict, didn't I?

MOULDIWARP

No, she did. She moved the stones, she crawled into the opening, she found the plaque. If I were showing her the treasure, there might be some sense in it. I see I have my work cut out for me.

(MOULDIWARP pulls off his glasses and tucks them into his "fur pocket.")

MOULDIWARP (Continued)

(Exasperated to audience)

Children of this day are certainly different than children of the past. Always whining about their great tragedies, always sniveling and moaning about what they are owed.

(To Edward)

If you would be the Lord of Arden's House then you will learn these three: Nobility, Humility and Sensibility. Without them you will not only fail to procure the treasure you wish but you will fail in life as well.

(tapping Edward on the forehead with his paw)

NOBILITY, HUMILITY, SENSIBILITY.

(MOULDIWARP looks triumphantly at EDWARD.)

EDWARD

I still want to see the treasure.

MOULDIWARP

Exasperating! Very well, you shall SEE the treasure. But be warned - YOU MUST BE TOGETHER TO RETURN.

(MOULDIWARP waves his big paw. With a flash of blinding white light and a huge puff of white smoke EVERYONE disappears.)

ACT ONE

SCENE FIVE

DICKIE sleeps in a huge elegant bed surrounded by a room richly decorated in gold and blue. It is in the lavish style of the very wealthy in 1605 London. LADY ARDEN, a beautiful woman in her early 30's, enters.

LADY ARDEN

Richard, why art thou not dressed?

(SHE pulls open heavy drapes to allow light in. DICKIE wakes and looks around, confused by his new surroundings. Dressed in an elaborate nightshirt, HE sits up.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

Why art thou in bed? Art thou still with fever?

(LADY ARDEN rushes to his side and feels his forehead with her hand.)

DICKIE

Don't think so.

(LADY ARDEN gently kisses his forehead.)

LADY ARDEN

Then be up. Nurse has prepared thy clothes for thee.

(An outfit lies ready on the chair near the bed.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

Thy cousins are dressed and ready for the day.

DICKIE

Cousins?

(DICKIE looks around.)

DICKIE (Continued)

Where's me crutch?

LADY ARDEN

Thy crutch?

(Lovingly)

Richard, be done with this foolishness. This is not a day for thy jesting.

(LADY ARDEN fondly strokes his hair and then sweeps out of the room on to other pressing matters. DICKIE crawls to the edge of the huge bed and puts his legs over the side. They appear to be the same shape now, healthy and strong. He takes a few steps holding on to the bed. To his amazement, his bad leg is strong. He tries a few steps without the aid of the bed. He can walk! He falls against the bed and lets out a wild whoop. Then he pops up, hopping on his new leg. He jumps on the bed and bounces. He leaps off the bed, dances around the room and performs numerous cartwheels.)

LADY ARDEN (OS)

RICHARD!

(DICKIE grabs the clothes from the chair and tries dressing as he runs off stage.)

ACT ONE

SCENE SIX

A hallway lined with family portraits in the Arden London Mansion. EDWARD and ELFRIDA creep down the hallway.

EDWARD

Where are we?

ELFRIDA

From the coat-of-arms it must be the Arden house. Oh Eddie, look at this place!

EDWARD

Where did Mouldiwarp send us?

ELFRIDA

It must be the past.

EDWARD

Is this the castle?

ELFRIDA

No, Father said the Ardens used to have a beautiful mansion near London. This must be it.

EDWARD

This is swimming. I wish we lived here.

ELFRIDA

(Examining one of the portraits)

Doesn't this one resemble Father?

(EDWARD stares at it.)

EDWARD

It does.

(Looking around)

Do any of the paintings look like Mother?

ELFRIDA

Mother wasn't an Arden.

EDWARD

Oh. (Sigh) I wish I could remember her.

ELFRIDA

You were just a baby when she died. I can hardly remember her.

(THEY examine the portraits.)

ELFRIDA (Continued)

Just think, this is our family's history hanging right in front of us.

EDWARD

A roomful of Lord Ardens. First class!

NURSE (OS)

MASTER EDWARD!

EDWARD

We'd better find that treasure fast.

ELFRIDA

You go that way and I'll go this.

EDWARD

After we find the treasure, we'll meet back here.

NURSE (OS)

MASTER EDWARD!

(EDWARD and ELFRIDA run off in opposite directions.)

ACT ONE

SCENE SEVEN

DICKIE races around a richly decorated large room jabbing and slicing the air with a fencing rapier. EDWARD enters.

DICKIE

Good day, Cousin. Art thou ready for a little action?

(DICKIE tosses his sword to EDWARD and grabs another.)

DICKIE (Continued)

How would a game of sea dogs suit thee?

(DICKIE wildly swings his rapier in pirate fashion jumping on and off furniture while chasing EDWARD around the room. EDWARD fends him off the best he can, waving the sword back and forth trying to protect himself as he backs up. At last, EDWARD trips over a table and falls down. HE lets out a cry.)

EDWARD

Now see what you've done?

DICKIE

Don't be a bloody duffer. There's no 'arm, Mate.

(DICKIE comes over and gives EDWARD a hand up.)

EDWARD

Who are you?

DICKIE

It seems I'm your cousin.

EDWARD

You're not from this time, are you?

DICKIE

No.

EDWARD

Were you at the castle ruins too?

(Eyeing him suspiciously)

Why were you there?

DICKIE

Amazin' thing. I was out for me mornin' constitutional. I walked past this pile of rocks and poof. I woke up 'ere.

EDWARD

I am sorry. It was my fault.

DICKIE

No need to apologize, Mate. Me bum leg's as good as new.

EDWARD

We were sent here because I'm trying to find the family treasure.

DICKIE

Are you now? Well, I 'appen to be quite useful at findin' things.

(DICKIE pulls a small coin out of Edward's ear and hands it to him. EDWARD laughs.)

EDWARD

That's incredible! Can you show me how to do that?

DICKIE

Sure, it's easy. But first let's have a go at sea dogs. I don't get to use this leg too much.

(DICKIE waves his sword around again.
EDWARD backs up.)

DICKIE (Continued)

Don't be afraid. It's a game, Mate. Just 'old the sword like this.

(DICKIE shows EDWARD how to hold his rapier.)

DICKIE (Continued)

That's it. Now go like this.

(DICKIE lightly taps the end of
EDWARD'S sword and EDWARD responds.)

DICKIE (Continued)

Now you've got it.

(DICKIE and EDWARD begin to escalate their swordplay as they move around the room. NURSE races into the room.)

NURSE

Master Edward, come quickly! Lord and Lady await thee.

(NURSE removes the rapier from EDWARD'S hand and gives it to DICKIE. SHE herds EDWARD out the door just as JERONIMO, the Italian Fencing Master, briskly strides into the room.)

JERONIMO

Master Richard, art thou ready for thy lesson?

(DICKIE follows Jeronimo to the wall unit containing the fencing equipment. HE puts down the swords and imitates Jeronimo's actions, dressing for the lesson. DICKIE picks up his rapier again.)

JERONIMO (Continued)

Preparare.

(JERONIMO takes his position. DICKIE imitates his pose and they begin fencing. Dickie's training on the streets of London with his crutch serves him well. He is able to keep up with JERONIMO blow for blow.)

JERONIMO (Continued)

Butta In Tempo.

(This is an attack delivered when the opponent is preoccupied and not ready to parry instantly. JERONIMO strikes before Dickie has regained his balance, however, DICKIE responds expertly.)

JERONIMO (Continued)

Stoccata lunaga.

(JERONIMO lunges quickly towards Dickie's belly, but once again DICKIE maneuvers out of the way and is the one to score a hit.)

JERONIMO (Continued)

Eccellentissimo! How hast thou improved so greatly since yesterday?

(LADY ARDEN enters with ELFRIDA.)

LADY ARDEN

Richard, hast thou no greeting for thy Cousin Elfrida?

DICKIE

Of course, welcome dear cousin. Thou art especially lovely this afternoon.

(HE makes a grand bow. LADY ARDEN and JERONIMO laugh. ELFRIDA fails to see the humor.)

LADY ARDEN

(To Jeronimo)

Master Jeronimo, what art thou teaching him?

JERONIMO

Certainly not this, my Lady.

LADY ARDEN

(To Dickie)

I say thou art becoming thy father's son.

LORD ARDEN (OS)

And pray, what is wrong with that?

(LORD ARDEN enters with EDWARD. EDWARD is dressed elaborately in a white velvet embroidered suit sporting diamond buckles, a silken cloak, shoe-roses, cobweb-lawn starched ruff and a little sword hangs at his side.)

ELFRIDA

You look smashing!

LADY ARDEN

Elfrida, where dost thou get such language?

ELFRIDA

I'm sorry-ith, Lady Arden. May-ith I go too-ith?

LADY ARDEN
(Looking at Elfrida strangely)

No, little ladies stay at home and sew their samplers.

LORD ARDEN
(To Elfrida)

'Tis Edward's time to be presented at court. Thy father will return tonight so thou shalt not be alone for long, Little One.

(ELFRIDA reacts strongly.)

ELFRIDA

Father will be here?

(Remembering where she is)

Oh, yes.

(Visibly shaken)

Father.

LADY ARDEN
(To Lord Arden)

We must take our leave. Knowest thou what humor our good King James bears towards those who dare arrive late for his performance.

LORD ARDEN

I hope it is one of those plays by that Shakespeare fellow. They are . . .

(Winking at Elfrida)

Smashing!

(ELFRIDA breaks into a big smile.)

LADY ARDEN

The King's Men do not perform tonight. 'Tis a masque at Whitehall.

LORD ARDEN

Ugh, please tell me the Queen will not participate.

LADY ARDEN

And if she does, thou shalt smile sweetly and tell her she made a wonderful performance.

LORD ARDEN

If I could do that, I dare say I could join the King's Men and be one of their best actors.

(THEY ALL laugh.)

LADY ARDEN

Master Jeronimo, thy lesson is complete?

(JERONIMO nods yes, bows to LORD and LADY ARDEN, collects all the equipment, returns it to the cabinet and exits.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

(To Dickie)

Tutor Parados will continue thy studies and . . .

(To Elfrida)

Elfrida will sit near thee and sew on her sampler.

ELFRIDA

May-ith I study-ith too-ith?

LADY ARDEN

Elfrida, what is wrong with thee? How wilt thou grow to be a lady if thou dost not mind thy needle?

(LADY ARDEN calls off stage.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

Tutor Parados.

(TUTOR PARADOS, a large man dressed completely in black with a red beard and red hair pulled under a hat enters. HE executes an elaborate bow to Lord and Lady Arden. DICKIE is startled.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

Thou art in charge of Master Richard and Miss Elfrida. Please keep them occupied in suitable educational pursuits.

PARADOS

As always, 'tis my honor and greatest pleasure to mold these little minds with the divine knowledge of the ages.

(TUTOR PARADOS puts a large hand on each of the CHILDREN's shoulders. DICKIE pulls away.)

LORD ARDEN

Dearest,

(Taking her hand and giving it a light kiss.)

Tarry thee no longer lest we receive a personal invitation from His Majesty to spend the night in the Tower.

(LADY ARDEN kisses DICKIE on the cheek and hugs him very tightly.)

LADY ARDEN

Richard, art thou well?

DICKIE

I am fine, good Lady.

LORD ARDEN

Rest assured my love, we shall have many more years to care for our precious son.

(LORD ARDEN grabs DICKIE in a huge hug. After many more hugs and kisses, LORD ARDEN escorts LADY ARDEN and EDWARD out of the room. TUTOR PARADOS stands nobly guarding the CHILDREN. As soon as LORD and LADY ARDEN exit, his hands fall to his side and HE walks over to a desk. HE plops down, puts his feet up and examines various items evaluating their monetary worth.)

DICKIE

(To Elfrida)

Well, so much for the divine knowledge of the ages from Old Parrot-nose.

(ELFRIDA giggles.)

DICKIE (Continued)

(To Elfrida)

Let us step outside, Cousin.

(DICKIE escorts ELFRIDA to the garden.)

ACT ONE

SCENE EIGHT

DICKIE and ELFRIDA walk into the garden.

ELFRIDA

I can't see the good of working on a sampler I haven't time to finish, and would be worn out years and years before I'm born.

DICKIE

Thou speakest strangely, Cousin?

ELFRIDA

Thou wouldn't believith me-ith anyhow-ith.

DICKIE
(Laughs)

You are such a duffer.

(ELFRIDA looks shocked.)

DICKIE (Continued)

You don't remember me?

ELFRIDA

Of course, we're cousins, aren't we?

DICKIE

I can't believe you've forgotten me. My feelings is really 'urt.
(Elfrida studies him.)
Three hundred years from now? In front of Old Baskin's store?

ELFRIDA

That dirty beggar boy? No, that can't be you!

DICKIE

And to think we're cousins. Must be a shock to your aristocratic pride.

ELFRIDA

I don't believe you.

(ELFRIDA pulls her Brownie camera from her pinafore pocket.)

ELFRIDA (Continued)

If you're really from the future, what is this?

DICKIE
(Laughs)

It's a bloody Brownie.

(Smiling)

Hey now, seein' as we're cousins, how 'bout a little kiss?

ELFRIDA

You are disgusting.

(SHE replaces the camera in her pocket.)

DICKIE

Listen, your royal 'ighness. I know all about the white rat and the treasure. You little lam'ies are gonna need the likes of this gutter snipe to keep you safe until that treasure's found. So you better get used to old Dickie bein' around, cause me's 'ere to stay. And seein' as 'ow you needs me, I'm cuttin' meself in.

(ELFRIDA pulls away in a huff. TUTOR PARADOS enters the garden pretending to read a book and sits on a stone bench near them. DICKIE grabs ELFRIDA by the hand and takes her further away from TUTOR PARADOS.)

ELFRIDA

What are you doing?

(ELFRIDA yanks her hand away.)

DICKIE

Don't trust 'im.

ELFRIDA

For your information, even if you are that beggar boy, which I'm not saying you are, I can get rid of you quick as I please. All I have to do is say you're involved in the Gunpowder Plot and you can forget any treasure because that will be the end of you.

DICKIE

What are you talkin' about?

ELFRIDA

Tomorrow?

(DICKIE looks confused. TUTOR PARADOS moves closer.)

ELFRIDA (Continued)

Guy Fawkes Day?

(Pause. No response from Dickie.)

ELFRIDA (Continued)

You never went to school? Honestly! The Catholics decided to kill the King so they hid gunpowder under the House of Parliament. It would have worked too, only Mr. Tresham wrote to his relation, Lord Monteagle, saying they were going to blow up the King . . .

DICKIE

What king?

ELFRIDA

KING JAMES, you duffer.

(TUTOR PARADOS grabs Elfrida by the wrist.)

PARADOS

And where did ye hear this pretty story?

DICKIE

Come, sir. Thou dost frighten my cousin. It is but a tale she tells. She is always full of many inventions.

PARADOS

It is a tale she shall tell again before those of higher power than I. Tell me the names of the conspirators.

ELFRIDA

It's all nonsense — and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, listening when people are talking nonsense to their own cousin.

PARADOS

And I bet King James would pay a pretty penny for such nonsense.

(PARADOS twists her wrists to make her tell. ELFRIDA screams and tries to kick him. DICKIE jumps on PARADOS' back trying to stop him.)

PARADOS (Continued)

HELP! MURDER! HELP! CHARLES!

(SERVANTS come rushing in from all directions.
PARADOS throws DICKIE off his back.)

PARADOS (Continued)

Get the carriage ready! Miss Elfrida and I have an appointment with King James.

(PARADOS pulls ELFRIDA into the house.
DICKIE follows.)

ACT ONESCENE NINE

Whitehall. The room is overflowing with COURT OFFICIALS and COURT LADIES greeting one another. EACH has a smile pasted on his/her face, but tension fills the hall. One wrong word could cost you your life. At one entrance TWO PAGES dressed in full official uniform and cap stand at attention. In the center of the room sits a stage covered by a curtain on which a forest landscape and hunting scene are painted. In front of the stage is an area for the masquers and court guests to dance. On one side of the hall two royal thrones are flanked by decorative chairs for the SPANISH AMBASSADOR and other special guests. On the other side of the hall, chairs are lined against the wall for the remaining guests. KING JAMES, a 39-year old arrogant monarch, sits on the throne, goblet in hand, already yawning, but wary of anyone who approaches him. Soft music plays in the background. LORD and LADY ARDEN enter with EDWARD. THEY bow before the King. HE acknowledges their presence with a nod of his head. LORD and LADY ARDEN quickly move on.

LORD ARDEN

As charming as ever.

LADY ARDEN

Pray quiet thy tongue, Love. Thou never knowth what ears be about.

(LORD ARDEN nods in agreement. THEY greet various guests. EDWARD is transfixed by the splendor of this gold and jewel-filled room. INDIGO JONES, the 32-year-old brilliant and innovative set designer known for his overbearing arrogance as well as his fashion sense - dressed in velvet doublet and embroidered cap, races towards LORD and LADY ARDEN.)

LORD ARDEN

(Seeing Indigo's approach)

Forgive me, Dearest, but I cannot bear one more conversation with that man.

(LORD ARDEN kisses her cheek and takes off in the opposite direction.)

INDIGO

I was hoping to have a word with Lord Arden. Pressing business no doubt.

LADY ARDEN

No doubt.

(SHE extends her hand. INDIGO bows and kisses it.)

INDIGO

But as always the pleasure of conversing with thee and basking in thy radiance shall be more than adequate compensation.

LADY ARDEN

Thy speech equals thine art. Master Jones, I could not but notice the absence of thy set pieces strewn about the hall. Are we not to be enraptured by one of thine ingenious designs?

INDIGO

(Whispering)

Do not despair, Fair Lady, all the pieces have I contained in one area. There be those saith it was not feasible but . . .

LADY ARDEN

What an extraordinary idea! Thou art very clever.

INDIGO

I hope thou wilt be much delighted by what thou sees.

JONSON

And hears.

(BEN JONSON, the 32-year-old, well-educated writer of verse, pops up between them and makes a polite bow to Lady Arden.)

JONSON (Continued)

Though the physical representation be the body of the masque, its soul lieth in its speech.

INDIGO

Thy soul would not be feasible without my artful contribution.

(LADY ARDEN tactfully steps away as the uproar catches the attention of the other guests.)

JONSON

Contribution? Thou stealest the eyes of the audience so their ears cannot drink in the language of the ages.

INDIGO

The feasibility of that, sir, would not be feasible.

JONSON

Stop saying feasible, dost thou not know any other word?

INDIGO

Since thou revels in words, I am surprised thou dost not regale us with one of thine incomprehensible Latin verses that drones on and on and on.

JONSON

It would be boorish of me to speak in eloquent Latin when not all are capable of comprehending. Thou petty architect.

INDIGO

Thou hack wordsmith.

JONSON

Craftsman.

(By now the room has grown silent and EVERYONE watches the ruckus as a PAGE steps forward)

PAGE

KING JAMES, SPANISH AMBASSADOR, LORDS, LADIES AND SPECIAL GUESTS.
TONIGHT QUEEN ANNE PRESENTS A MASQUE BY MASTER BEN JONSON AND
MASTER INDIGO JONES.

(Both MEN bow and retreat to opposite corners of the room.)

PAGE (Continued)

AND NOW *THE MASQUE OF DARKNESS*.

[Based on the original 1605 *The Masque of Blackness* by Ben Jonson, *The Works of Ben Jonson*, Boston: Phillips, Sampson, and Co., 1853.]

[NOTE: This section can be as decorative or as simple as the production space and budget allow.]

(The painted curtain covering the stage falls and the PAGE drags it away. A magnificent sight is revealed. An artificial rolling sea seems to move forth as if it is flowing to the land. The back scene is a vast sea painted in perspective, so that it seems to unite with the billows of the moving stage. On top of the waves rests a great concave shell like mother of pearl drawn by seahorses. It appears to rise and fall with the waves. Beside the shell swim two sea monsters with TWO TORCH-BEARERS on their backs. The TORCH-BEARERS with their hair loose and flowing, are garlanded with seaweed and branches of coral and are dressed in sea green with skirts of gold and silver.

The top of the shell has a chevron of light, indented to the proportion of the shell and beautifully lights its pearl—QUEEN ANNE. SHE wears a classical headdress of feathers interlaced with stands of pearls and other jewels. Ropes of pearls are wrapped around her wrists and neck. HER azure and silver Grecian-styled dress is delicate and flimsy. [It is later described as courtesanlike.] Unfortunately, SHE also sports a bright blue face and arms painted blue from hand to elbow leaving her upper arms and neck white. Due to the backlighting, her English undies are apparent through the transparent fabric.

The AUDIENCE'S enthusiastic applause turns to gasps of horror and muffled whispers.

TRITONS, with a different fish mounted on each one's head and pieces of taffeta flowing from each one's back making it appear as if they are being carried by the wind on top of the water, blow into their shells to announce the arrival of OCEANUS.

OCEANUS, with blue skin, gray hair, horns, a beard of various colors, wears a robe of sea green and a garland of sea-grass. HE steps forward carrying a trident in his hand.)

OCEANUS

Of this my daughter, my most beloved birth
Who, was the first form'd dame of sea and earth.

QUEEN ANNE

Instruct and aid me, great Oceanus,
What land is this that now appears to us?

OCEANUS

For were the world, with all his wealth, a ring,
Britannia, it is who makes all tongues sing.

(SHE grandly gestures to the King. HE acknowledges her by raising his goblet.)

QUEEN ANNE

This Sun is temperate, and refines
All things on which HIS radiance shines.

(Accompanied by music, QUEEN ANNE, TRITONS and TORCH-BEARERS, parade to the dance area in front of the stage. THEY perform a few basic minuet-like dance steps and bow. There is polite applause from the audience. Then EACH PERFORMER approaches one of the guests and invites them to join the MASQUERS in a dance. OTHER GUESTS choose their own partners and join the group. QUEEN ANNE motions for the SPANISH AMBASSADOR to dance with her. HE steps forward.)

SPANISH AMBASSADOR

No, no, Gracious Queen. I do not dance.

(QUEEN ANNE extends her hand and HE graciously bows and kisses it. However, when he straightens up there is blue makeup smeared on his face and beard. As HE escorts QUEEN ANNE back to her throne. VARIOUS PEOPLE point to his face. Realizing what has happened, HE pulls a long silk scarf from his pocket and inconspicuously tries to wipe the blue off.)

QUEEN ANNE

TO THE DANCE!

(The music begins as MASQUERS and GUESTS dance.)

PARADOS (OS)

YOUR MAJESTY, I HAVE GRAVE NEWS. I MUST BE ALLOWED ADMITTANCE.

(The music stops and everyone looks towards the commotion. KING JAMES motions to the BEEFEATERS to escort PARADOS in. PARADOS enters dragging ELFRIDA with him. DICKIE races in behind them.)

LORD & LADY ARDEN

ELFIRDA! RICHARD!

(THEY run to the CHILDREN. LADY ARDEN embraces DICKIE. EDWARD runs to ELFRIDA, but DICKIE stops him. DICKIE pulls EDWARD back and holds his arm to keep him from moving away from Lady Arden. KING JAMES motions for no one to speak.)

KING JAMES

(To Parados)

What say thee, sir?

(PARADOS steps forward and makes a grand bow.)

PARADOS

During the execution of my services for the House of Arden, I uncovered a gunpowder plot to blow up Your Majesty and the House of Parliament.

(EVERYONE in attendance gasps.)

PARADOS (Continued)

I felt it my royal duty to expose such an evil act and present thee with one of the conspirators.

(PARADOS pushes ELFRIDA forward.)

KING JAMES

Thou didst well, sir. However, it is God I thank for the great and miraculous delivery HE hath granted me. When Lord Monteagle's letter was shown me, I did upon the instance interpret the meaning of a terrible blow to Parliament due to the circumstances of my own father's demise. Immediately, I dispatched the Earl of Suffolk to make a thorough search of the buildings and this very evening he discovered 36 barrels of gunpowder under the House of Parliament!

(EVERYONE gasps in shock.)

KING JAMES (Continued)

He also arrested one of the plotters, Guy Fawkes.

(A BUZZ arises among the guests.)

KING JAMES (Continued)

(To Parados)

Even so, thy service shall not go unrewarded.

(PARADOS bows and exits.)

LORD ARDEN

But Your Majesty, surely thou dost not suspect this child? How could she possibly know?

KING JAMES

How indeed! Dost thou take me for a fool, Lord Arden? Guards, round up all the Arden MEN and throw them in the Tower.

(LADY ARDEN steps forward to protest but LORD ARDEN stops her. LADY ARDEN pulls DICKIE and EDWARD close to her.)

KING JAMES (Continued)

And take this girl too.

EDWARD

NO!

(DICKIE grabs Edward before he can take any action.)

DICKIE

Ain't the time, Mate.

KING JAMES

(To the BEEFEATERS)

And if he will not other ways confess, the gentle tortures are first to be used and by degrees proceeding to the worst.

(The BEEFEATERS acknowledge their orders and drag LORD ARDEN and ELFRIDA out of the hall. KING JAMES follows. EVERYONE is in an uproar. THEY exit through various doors.)

LADY ARDEN

Richard, I must find Lord Salisbury immediately. Cautiously return home and see after thy cousin.

DICKIE

I will. Thou saveth Father. And fretith thee not, Mother. It will end well.

LADY ARDEN

What would I do without you? Thou art truly an Arden.

(LADY ARDEN kisses him gently on the head and gives him a final hug.)

LADY ARDEN (Continued)

Edward. Child, do not despair. Lord Salisbury will help free thy father and sister also.

(LADY ARDEN strokes Edward's hair and takes her leave.)

EDWARD

What am I going to do?

(DICKIE puts his arm around EDWARD'S shoulder and steers him to a private corner.)

DICKIE

Don't worry, Mate. I told you Dickie would be useful.

EDWARD

How can we rescue Elf from the Tower?

DICKIE

Fortunately, I have more than a passin' acquaintanceship with the Old Tower meself. First, we need a change of clothes.

(As DICKIE escorts EDWARD out, HE eyes the TWO PAGES still standing at attention.)

DICKIE (Continued)

Something a little less visible.