

THE THREE BLIND QUEENS: PART ONE

[MR. FITZPATRICK and HEIDI exit through the wardrobe. THREE PRINCES come forward each carrying a chair. Perhaps they have

been waiting in the shadows below the stairs the whole time. As they speak, they perform a little series of illustrative gestures demonstrating their daily tasks, sometimes standing, sometimes sitting on their chairs. Text that shares the same line on the page is meant to be spoken simultaneously. The centered, capitalized text is meant to be spoken simultaneously by all three.]

FIRST PRINCE:

Once upon a
time

SECOND PRINCE:

Once upon a
time

THIRD PRINCE:

Once upon a
time

There were

—THREE—

sons of a king

But the king was
dead

But the king

Like the queen

The king was dead.

They were on their own

—AND THE NURSEMAID RAN THE HOUSE—

The three king's sons

One had fair hair

One had silver hair

One had hardly any
hair

The three king's sons

Lived their lives

Happily

They lived their
lives

Were happily living
their lives.

Getting up in the
morning

Greeting the day

Shaking hands

And combing their hair

——GOING ABOUT ALL THEIR PRINCELY TASKS——

Visiting their horses
and their charioteers

Buying up paintings
and eating food

Looking at things

And looking away

SEARCHING FOR THEIR KEYS AND TYING UP

——THEIR SHOES AND THEIR TIES——

And making interesting comments

AND CHECKING THE MAIL

FOR INTERESTING NEWS

AND FEELING BIG THINGS ABOUT

——A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS——

And seeing a bit of dust on the floor

—————AND PICKING IT UP—————

Then

All of a sudden

One day

They knew

—————IT WAS TIME TO GET MARRIED—————

THREE QUEENS:

They had three portraits of three girls they liked.

[The AMBASSADOR enters through the utility closet. He wears a ceremonial sash and top hat.]

SECOND PRINCE:

And they said to their ambassador

THIRD PRINCE:

Go all over the world and find three girls to match these portraits and bring them back for us to marry!

AMBASSADOR:

The ambassador embarked upon his task, found three fishermen's daughters who resembled the portraits, dressed them up as princesses, and showed them to the king's sons, who said—

THREE PRINCES:

Yes, we will marry them.

PRINCES AND QUEENS:
We all like one another

THREE PRINCES:
We will get married!

[The QUEENS move down to join the PRINCES.]

AMBASSADOR:
Now, oh, what joy and celebration, what celebration and joy! What joyous celebration came over everyone! Everybody was celebrating, everyone felt joy, everybody was eating cakes and staying up late and dressing up and posing for portraits and celebrating and dancing for joy, for joy. And everyone included everyone except for one.

[All the joy stops as the door of the wardrobe slowly creaks open. The NURSEMAID steps out, crosses the stage, and heads up the stairs. She is stirring something in a bucket. She gives it several stirs between each phrase of her line.]

NURSEMAID:
The nursemaid.
Was not.
Celebrating.

At all.

[The NURSEMAID continues up the stairs out of sight as the PRINCES and their new QUEENS come back to life. As the PRINCES go about their daily tasks, the QUEENS wander away and put blindfolds on.]

FIRST PRINCE:

SECOND PRINCE:

THIRD PRINCE:

Life went on as before

The three king's sons

Lived their lives

They lived their
lives

Were happily living
their lives.

Getting up in the
morning

Greeting the day

Shaking hands

And combing their hair

————GOING ABOUT ALL THEIR PRINCELY TASKS————

Visiting their horses
and their charioteers

Buying paintings
and eating food

Looking at things

And looking away

SEARCHING FOR THEIR KEYS AND TYING UP
————THEIR SHOES AND THEIR TIES————

And making interesting comments

AND CHECKING THE MAIL FOR
INTERESTING NEWS
AND FEELING BIG THINGS ABOUT
—————A LOT OF DIFFERENT THINGS—————

and seeing a bit of dust on the floor

AND PICKING IT UP.

AND THEN ONE DAY
AND THEN ONE
—————AND—————

[The THREE PRINCES seem unable to complete the phrase or to go on with their tasks. Something is bothering them. They try again. Meanwhile, the THREE QUEENS have left them and are kneeling together, blindfolded.]

AND THEN ONE DAY
AND THEN ONE
—————AND—————

[The PRINCES slow to a stop. The NURSEMAID has reached the top of the stairs. The THREE PRINCES try one more time.]

—————AND THEN ONE DAY—————

NURSEMAID:
War broke out.

[The NURSEMAID turns her bucket over the edge of the stairs, dumping sand, stones, and toy soldiers on the floor below. Then she drops

the bucket itself. The bucket bounces, rolls around noisily a bit, then stops. Silence for a few moments. When the AMBASSADOR speaks, the THREE PRINCES go away, and the THREE QUEENS are left alone, kneeling in front of the AMBASSADOR, blindfolded.]

AMBASSADOR:

It was supposed to last seven days.

THREE QUEENS [*very softly*]:

Don't kill us.

AMBASSADOR:

It lasted seventeen years.

THREE QUEENS [*very softly*]:

Oh no, don't kill us.

AMBASSADOR:

The young men went off to the war, and left those three queens alone with the dreaded nursemaid.

THREE QUEENS [*glancing around fearfully*]:

Mother?

NURSEMAID:

Ambassador, I hate those three queens.

THREE QUEENS:

Father?

NURSEMAID:

I hate them with a passion.

THREE QUEENS:

Who's there?

NURSEMAID:

Take those three queens to the mountain—

THREE QUEENS:

Let us go back to fishing in the stream.

NURSEMAID:

And kill them there, and bring me back their eyes as proof that they are dead.

THREE QUEENS:

Don't kill us.

NURSEMAID:

We'll say they had an accident, and I will run the house again.

THREE QUEENS:

Oh no, don't kill us.

[They each remove two small round objects from their little wrist bags and offer them to the AMBASSADOR. They speak softly.]

See, we have torn our own eyes out.

Leave us on this mountainside.

We can live on the mountainside without our eyes.

Ambassador, we are no longer three,

[They gesture to their abdomens.]

Soon we will be six.

Take our eyes to the nursemaid and tell her we are dead.

[The THREE QUEENS start to sing as the AMBASSADOR collects their eyes into a mason jar. He takes them to the NURSEMAID, who is waiting at the top of the stairs. She feasts on them. As the THREE QUEENS sing, they give birth to three children, or three bundles of sticks, and climb up onto the mountainside of the basement stairs.]

SONG OF THE THREE BLIND QUEENS

FIRST QUEEN:

*I hear an army charging upon the land,
And the thunder of horses plunging, sand about their knees:
Arrogant, in black armour, behind them stand,
Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.*

*They cry unto the night their battle-name:
I moan in sleep when I hear afar their whirling laughter.
They cleave the gloom of dreams, a blinding flame,
Clanging, clanging upon the heart as upon an anvil.*

*They come shaking in triumph their long, green hair:
They come out of the sea and run shouting by the shore.
My heart, have you no wisdom thus to despair?
My love, my love, my love, why have you left me alone?*

[The FIRST AND SECOND QUEENS begin to chant the phrase "Give me something to eat," and the THIRD QUEEN answers each time, "No." This starts softly, under the AMBASSADOR's line below, but quickly accelerates and grows to a shout.]

AMBASSADOR:

Those three blind queens managed to live for a while on roots and herbs. But when their three sons were born, two of them chose to live on the bodies of their sons.

FIRST AND SECOND QUEENS:

GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT!

THIRD QUEEN:

NO!

FIRST AND SECOND QUEENS:

GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT!

THIRD QUEEN:

NO!

[The FIRST AND SECOND QUEENS tear apart their bundles, then turn to the THIRD QUEEN.]

FIRST AND SECOND QUEENS:

We've eaten up our own, now it's time for yours!

[Everyone holds still.]

~~STOLEN PENNIES: INTERLUDE~~

~~*[A clock begins to strike twelve. A CHILD enters from the crawl space. She is frightened and looks around. She begins to scratch frantically at the floorboards. She runs back to the crawl space and disappears by the twelfth chime. Music. Transition: all the perform-*~~

THE THREE BLIND QUEENS: CONCLUSION

AMBASSADOR:

It was seventeen years later.

[Two of the PRINCES enter from the utility closet wearing gas masks and carrying little flags of their country.]

The princes were no longer young. And still at war.

[There is the sound of an air-raid siren. The FIRST BLIND QUEEN pours a bucket of sand from far above onto the ground. The two

PRINCES come forward. One of them draws a line in the sand with a stick. They salute and then applaud. The FIRST BLIND QUEEN pours more sand, covering the line. This action repeats continually under the following.]

The surviving son of those three blind queens was all grown up.

THIRD BLIND QUEEN:

Please, give me something to eat. There are no more roots and herbs. The fish are gone from the stream. The hunger will drive me mad. You must leave the mountainside and bring us something to eat.

AMBASSADOR:

For the first time in his life, the boy went down the mountainside. The path was rough and he was not. He was the sweetest of young men, having been brought up among only the gentlest creatures of the earth.

THIRD BLIND QUEEN:

Please hurry. The hunger will drive us all mad.

AMBASSADOR:

He knew nothing of the world. He lost his way. He wandered so far he lost sight of the mountain. At last he came to the edge of a great desert where he could see, shimmering on the horizon, a castle of black and white marble.

THIRD BLIND QUEEN:

Please hurry. The hunger will drive us mad.

AMBASSADOR:

Now this palace was built by the dreaded nursemaid, once she had stolen the riches of the princes. Everything there was under her

curse. Fearful and lonely and cursed. The young man didn't know this. He crossed the desert and entered the palace. There was an ogre there, sitting on a chair.

ALL BUT MR. FITZPATRICK:
Wounded.

[*Pause. MR. FITZPATRICK growls.*]

AMBASSADOR:
All around him, strewn across the tiled floor, was the treasure of the world: that is, apples and grapes and strawberries and such. The ogre couldn't reach them.

[*MR. FITZPATRICK growls.*]

There was water in pools and cups and fountains and buckets and urns, but the ogre couldn't reach them.

[*MR. FITZPATRICK growls.*]

In his simplicity the young man thought:

SON OF THE THIRD BLIND QUEEN:
Perhaps that sound is his stomach, growling like mine when I am hungry, as I am now, and my poor mother.

AMBASSADOR:
And without thinking at all

ALL BUT MR. FITZPATRICK:
He offered him an orange.

AMBASSADOR:
And when he did

ALL BUT MR. FITZPATRICK:
Something happened

AMBASSADOR:
And when it did

ALL BUT MR. FITZPATRICK:
The spell was broken

AMBASSADOR:
The palace dissolved. The nursemaid dissolved. And everything

FIRST PRINCE:
Everything

THIRD BLIND QUEEN:
Everything

SECOND PRINCE:
Everything

SON OF THE THIRD BLIND QUEEN:
Everything

SECOND BLIND QUEEN:
Everything

MR. FITZPATRICK:
Almost

FIRST BLIND QUEEN:
Everything

ALL BUT MR. FITZPATRICK:
Was restored.

[Music. Transition. The BLIND QUEENS and the PRINCES leave. MR. FITZPATRICK is alone. HEIDI appears in her nightgown at the top of the stairs, holding a blanket that trails behind her. She speaks tenderly to MR. FITZPATRICK.]