

Les Jongleurs de Dieu

by Nell Smyth

Company of Players:

Pippin:

Poivre:

Pouce:

Pinch:

Papillon:

Jacques:

Gilbert:

Alphonse:

Bibbolot:

Bertram:

Queen of Aquitaine:

King of Aquitaine:

King's Guard:

Brigands in the forest (3):

Hildegard of Bingen:

Death:

Devils(3):

Crusaders (2):

Master Jongleur:

Mustapha the Cross-eyed Apprentice:

Averroes, the Wise Muslim scholar:

Final Masque

Feeble King:

Unhappy Queen:

Plotting Duchesses:

Wicked Elder Princes:

Youngest Prince:

Jester:

Scene 1 : Outside the city walls in Medieval Aquitaine

A group of medieval players enter slowly, tentatively looking around, clearly full of nervousness. We will gather they are approaching the walls and gate of a medieval castle in southwestern France. Slowly they become aware of the audience and as they do, they tense, indicating how nervous and unsure they are.

*One of the company- **Pippin**- urges the others as they come to the front and form a line.*

***Pippin:** Viens mes braves! We had best make ourselves ready. No going back now!*

***Pinch:**(*knees visibly shaking*) But now we are back here it's so very different than we imagined!*

***Poivre:** Yes, so very, very d-d-different!*

***Company:** (*echoing*)Very, very different!*

***Pippin:** Oh come on mes braves! We're as well prepared as we are ever going to be and we can't go back so we'd best go forward, heh?*

***Company:** (*shaking heads, mouthing and murmuring*) NO going back now!*

***Bibbolot:** 'Es right ! We are players and professionals! We remember ze code: nozzing else matters.*

***Alphonse:** ..but ze play itself!*

***Jacques:** And we play for the honour of God!*

***Gilbert:** La gloire du Dieu and la plaisir du Roi! For my part, I am ready to play my part!*

Bertram: With Courage in our hearts!

Poivre and Pinch: and Fire in our Bowels!

Company: In our bowels and our bellies! In our hearts and our minds!

Pippin: Allons nous! La Chanson for courage!

Song "Courage mes Braves"

Gilbert: We certainly have been this way before!

Jacques: But as we stand before these fine castle walls it seems much more than two years since we were here!

Poivre: So much has happened since we were banished from the court!

Pinch: When we were thrown onto the bosom of the world!

Poivre: Kicked and spat upon!

Bibbolot: Reviled, rejected and dejected, battered and bruised!

Alphonse: For we were indeed oh so very bad! So inept! So gloriously and naively devoid of skill!

Pippin (roaring): Arrêtez! Basta! Stop! Mes braves are you going to piss away all ze courage we 'ave summoned? Remember then we had no name!

Bibbolot: E's right! Then we were just les Jongleurs!

Jacques: Les jongleurs without a name!

Pippin: Without a name, without a direction and without skill! But things have changed! That was then and this is now! All together now! Jacques! Gilbert! Poivre, Pinch, Papillon, Pouce, Bibbolot Alphonse, Bertram! (*each steps up as*

name is called) You remember how far we have journeyed since that time?

All: Oh yes Pippin!

Pippin: And do you remember every lesson you 'ave learnt since then?

All: But of course!

Pinch: Vividly

Pippin: Jacques, Gil, you remember? Harsh winds and burning sun, driving rain and icy winters, high mountains, rocky pathways that pierced our feet, howling wolves and dangerous brigands and hungry stomachs and parched throats! We overcame it all and are the stronger for it!

Jacques and Gil: Oh we remember it all very, very well!

Pippin: Pappillon? Bertram? Pouce? (*heads nod but Pouce shakes hers*) Alphonse et Bibbolot?

Alphonse: As if 'twere only yesterday!

Bibbolot: Be assured Pippin I will never forget our exile for all the days of my life!

They all look at each other for a moment as looks of significance and silence are exchanged and then on cue, they suddenly break into action, moving as one, fetching costumes from the cart and setting up the cart itself as a royal throne.

Jacques: (*proclaiming*) We move back in time to the not so distant past, a space of but two years and a day!

Bibbolot: Our timing was always a little off!

Jacques: (*glaring*) Two years and a day! Ago! Long, long ago! A time ago in ze Royal Court of Aquitaine!

Alphonse: Ze finest court in all of France where we foolish players had thought

to amuse our king and queen and find our fortunes!

The Company is now all in a line ready as the simple set is created to evoke the court 2 years ago

Gil: *(holding a crown)* Who plays le roi?

Bibbolot: Quoi?

Gil : Le roi!

Bibbolot: Oh le roi!

Bibbolot: Who plays le roi?

Pippin: Quoi?

Bibbolot: Quoi?

Gil: Le roi!

Bibbolot: Le roi!

Pippin: Le roi!

Poivre: Quoi?

Pippin: Quoi?

Bibbolot : Quoi?

Gilbert: Le roi!

Bibbolot: Le roi!

Pippin: Le roi!

Poivre: Le roi!

Jacques: Quoi?

Poivre: Quoi?

Pippin: Quoi?

Bibbolot: Quoi?

Gilbert: Le roi!

Bibbolot: Le roi!

Pippin: Le roi!

Poivre: Le roi!

Jacques: Le roi

Alphonse: Quoi?

Jacques: Quoi?

Poivre: Quoi?

Pippin: Quoi?

Bibbolot: Quoi

Gilbert: Mais le roi!

Bibbolot Le roi!

Pippin: Le roi!

Poivre: Le roi!

Jacques: Le roi!

Alphonse: Oh le roi!

Pinch *(who has been shaking his head all this time)* Pas moi! Pas moi! I do not want to be the king!

Papillon: I want to be ze queen! Ze Queen!

Bertram: Eh moi! I am ze King!

Alphonse: *(whirling around towards Bertram and throwing him the crown)*
Voila our uncrowned king!

The Company kneels as Papillon and Bertram wearing crowns ascend the thrones. Pippin steps forwards as others take up their positions

Pippin: Let the magic commence! Our story begins here!

Scene 2: At the Court of Aquitaine

An absurd and highly comical burlesque unfolds full of pratfalls, slips and rough talent. The final denouement is reached as **Poivre** lands on the lap of **The Queen** while 2 whoopee cushions are let off by 2 other players in synchrony. The **King** stands up as the **Queen** struggles in horror.

King: Arretez vous! Stop! Cease this nonsense! These pale perfidious players do offend and despoil our person! Guard arrest these jongleurs! Take them to the gates of the city, hurl them from the battlements! Do not let them darken our doors again!

Players freeze and all look horrified as 2 guards step forward to take them away. Suddenly the **Queen** stands up.

Queen: Wait! Such foolish players know not what they do. Grant them their lives my lord and send them into exile!

King: Exile? Banished and forbidden to return forever! Let it be so! Take them from our court! Guards take these despoilers, these fools from hence!

Guards bustle the players from the court

Scene 3: Outside the City Walls

Players emerge as if roughed up, shoulders shaking free, waving a fist or 2 at the walls and guards and falling to the ground hurled there by guards. They get up brushing off the dust thoroughly disconsolate.

Jacques: (bullish) Huh! Big deal! We're wasted on that crowd!

Gilbert: (whining) I'd practised that trick at least once before going before the king. Threatened with the dungeons just because they lack a sense of humour! Huh!

Pouce: I wasn't there. Don't know anything about it.

Bibbolot: (scratching head) Outrageous and insulting! Where's the Royal sense of humour? What doth the king imply? That what we offer is a surfeit of rough and untutored silliness. My bruises tell me that guard is more rough than we.

Jacques: Kings and queens are far too busy with the 'serious' business of ruling I suppose!

Gilbert: That's why kings and queens need players to amuse and entertain them!

Pinch: Well at least it made *us* laugh. But now we're finished. It's over.. Banishment (shakes his head as everyone contemplates this for a moment)

Bibbolot: (hyper-dramatically) What is this Royal sentence then but Speechless Death to rob our native tongues from uttering our sweet breath?

Alphonse: Hey buck up! We're still Kings, ze Kings of Mirth and Fun! Just because it didn't work out in zis court doesn't mean we can 't try our luck elsewhere!

Pippin: Maybe zey are jealous of a talent that shines like the sun eh?

Poivre: Can't take a joke that's for sure!

Gilbert: Out of touch with their own people! Well we can always take our show and perform elsewhere. The world is wide!

Pinch: As long as we're not performing in the dungeon to fellow prisoners!

Bertram: Me, I'm leaving (*makes to set off*)

Gilbert: (*grabbing him by the neck*) Not so fast mon brave! All for one and one for all. Let's head that way to the forest whose ancient trees, and mossy roots, whose gentle glades and leafy bowers shall be our haven!

Jacques: Bon idee! The forest! For there we can be outside the law of this overbearing court and its overweening tyranny where a man does not possess even a pinch of zest to laugh at a (*pinches his fingers together*) little bawdy jest!

Company: Outlaws! We'll be outlaws!

Jacques: Rebels! Answerable to none save our own laws! Our own rules! Can you not smell the freedom!

Poivre and Pinch: Mmmn! It smells good!

Song "We're Rebels, We're Rebels"

Just as they prepare to leave the stage Pippin stops them

Pippin: Stop! We need a guard at this point! Gilbert?

Guard: Happily! Pass me a letter and a tabard too (*Jacques passes him these items from the cart and he rapidly puts on the tabard*)

Stop! Players I have a letter from Her Majesty for you! She trusts that her respect and reverence might bring redemption here.

Pippin: Did the guard really speak like that? (*ironic, dubious*)

Guard/ Gilbert: I am sure he did. The foolish clamour of thy eager tongues she seeks to stay and hopes to tutor your rough untalented ways.

Jacques: Grrr!

Guard: And brings to thee contained within this letter a message meant for thee.

Poivre: Ooh! A message!

Jacques: *Oui!* A l-e-t-t-e-r! Fool who's going to read it?

Poivre and Pinch: What does it say!

Bibbolot: Ooh la! Ooh la la! A letter, a letter! A letter from ze queen!

Alphonse: A letter! A billet doux? Perhaps for you? (*looks at Poivre who scowls back*)

Guard: For shame! Pale talent, foolish bluster and churlish company that hath no name!

Jacques: Ouch!

Guard: Still fooling even now! Her majesty is full of kindness and makes her recommendations to you!

Pippin: (*menacingly*) We'll take the letter even though we cannot read it! Fool! Know that we ply our trade with tumbling, singing and joking! (*flaunting and proud*) not those soft arts of reading, writing, and... and... embroidery. Best be gone and tell her Majesty much gratitude all the same, for it will make a fine souvenir! (*folds it carefully, hands it to Papillon and prods and pushes guard away - Guard leaves*) Come fellows! To the forest where we will find a friendlier

Company: (*whistling and cheering*) A la Foret!

Scene 4: The Dark Forest

Players enter in darkness, somewhat characteristically chaotic, walking backwards, groping in the dark.

Alphonse: I don't want to be here! (*wailing*)

Pinch and Pouce: It's dark! It wasn't this dark!

Pinch and Papillon: It's scary! It wasn't this scary!

Bibbolet: It was! Have you know memory? It was terrifying! Terrifying! Dark and gnarly branches grope at my pale visage and remind me of the graveyard terrors of my youth!

Alphonse: Blinded by darkness, inhospitable and ancient place! Terror untold!

Bibbolot: My legs and arms scratched and pierced! My heart pounding fiercely 'gainst my chest

Jacques: Nonsense! We were filled to the brim with rebellious fire! We charged into that forest!

(proclaiming trying to override others facetiousness) And here we are! We are in the vast and ancient forest, La Grand Foret des Meaulnes ze dark Foret des Meaulnes where only the desperate or the brave dare venture..

Alphonse: La Grande Foret des Moaners more like.

Pippin: (*reprimanding*) Alphonse!

Jacques: Into ze forest we hurled ourselves, filled with the fire of our own rebellion and the spirit of the simple man!

Pinch: Very very simple !

Alphonse: How innocent we were!

Pippin: Arretez vous or we will never get this show on the road. Jacques, Gil did we go up hill?

Gilbert: It was all uphill! (*changes voice to dramatic and inviting*): Dark overhanging branches brush against our faces, owls hoot, silence all around, just the sounds of ourselves and the cart moving through the forest. Feet on leaves and twigs, and all around a deepening silence.....

Alphonse: (*hysterically*) Bibbolot! Dribbolot! Hold my hand! My foot! My foot is stuck!

Bibbolot: Which one? Hands? Feet? You 'ave so many Monsieur Octopus! This darksome pall of night fall heavy 'bout our shoulders as the witching hour ascends. (*Poivre and Pinch and Jacques do owl sounds*) Bats shriek, Confused we trip and stumble!

Alphonse: It's hard to be a rebel when you're moving at snail's pace

Pinch: And your bruises are still hurting from a rough palace guard.

Jacques: (*with an attempt at bravura*) We're rebel players and we sing for our supper.

Pouce: I never said I was a rebel

Gilbert: Courage everyone! Remember we found our way down unknown paths and knew not how deeply our courage was stitched into the sinews of our souls!

Pippin: Let's sing! It's what we do well even when we don't know where we are going!

Bibbolot: Excusez moi Pippin but that's most of the time!

Reprise Song " We're Rebels, We're Rebels"

*As song is almost complete, bloodcurdling sounds are unleashed and the players are attacked. Genuine screaming and cursing ensues as **Bertram** and **Poivre**, dressed as **brigands** attack the players. As the lights come up we see a quivering mass of players hiding behind stage set bushes, clearly stripped and cowed with more real feeling apparent.*

Company: *(quavering, reedy voices sing the chorus faintly)* We're rebels, we're rebels, we're rebels we are!

Bibbolot: Alphonse?*(seeking)*

Alphonse: Bibbolot

Bibbolot: Alphonse! *(arms open)*

Alphonse: Bibbolot!*(hug)*

Jacques: Alphonse? Bibbolot? Gilbert?

Gilbert: Jacques?

Jacques: Gil!*(arms open)*

Gilbert: Jacques!

Jacques: Gil! C'est toi!*(embrace)*

Bibbolot: Les autres? Pippin? Pippin?

Pippin: Ici, ici! But stripped of almost everything! Papillon? Pouce? Poivre? Pinch?

Pouce, Poivre, Pinch, Papillon: Ici! Ici! We're over here!

Poivre and Pinch: Stripped of nearly everything but the queen's letter!

Bibbolot: Where's Bertram? Was he taken by zose evil curs?

Jacques: Zose bullying brigands and blood-lusty thugs got us well and truly and we thought we were outlaws tough enough to take on the world!

Pinch And we can't even keep the clothes on our backs!

Alphonse: That's why we are clowns!

Pippin: Bertram! Bertram! I don't hear him anymore and I certainly don't see him. He always likes to put up a good fight. Battling brigands 'e probably got his skull cracked in two! Let's find him and leave this place.

Alphonse: Pippin those bullies 'ave taken everything! What's left in the cart?

Pouce, Poivre, Papillon: *(crying)* Those bullies! Zey 'ave taken Betram, zey have taken everyzing!

Bibbolot: C'est vrai! Even the possibility of being outlaws! We've been robbed of everything! Our new role and Bertram!

Alphonse: *(howling)* Companion and fellow player!! Notre ami, Bertram! E's been kidnapped and we 'ave no money to pay for 'is r....ansom! *(howls)* Bertram! Bertram! e perdu! Notre ami! Lost! L....ost and taken!

Poivre, Pinch, Papillon: Le pauvre, le pauvre enfant lost never to be f...ound *(howl)*

Bibbolot: Snatched and stolen, accosted, confined and captured! This is a crime! A kidnap!

Pippin: Mes braves! Mes braves! Clam yourselves! We are players! Time for a song. It will draw us to Bertram and fill us with courage! Let's fight back in our own way! We are not thugs or men of violence! We are not bullies and maybe..... we are not very good at being outlaws! Remember when you bump into a tree it usually has a message for you. Jacques? Gil? Bibbolo? Give us a note.

Song: Bully Bully Bully Bully Bully Boy!

*Company leaves forest scuttling and creeping using cut out bushes as means of covering up their minimally clothed state. **Bertram** comes up from the other side of the stage singing and following as the song dies away. **Pippin** appears and marks the backdrop on the map to indicate Bingen in Germania. Company comes on stage and looks at the map while **Pippin** goes to the cart and starts to put on a nun's habit and veil.*

Gilbert (*whistling*) As I recall, we had to walk a long way without clothes. Not to mention it was winter and bitterly chilly.

Jacques: No! You remember falsely Gilbert, as usual! It was autumn and it was sunny and mild!

Gilbert: Mild? Are you mad? Don't you remember the chilblains we had and those cold mountain passes we trekked from the Gorge du Tarn to the border of Germania with wind and ice blowing in our faces the whole time?

Jacques: Oh a little rain, a little drizzle, light mist and spectacular views. Aha! Looks like Pippin's going to play the abbess!

Company: The Abbess of Bingen! We loved that place!

Pinch, Pouice, Poivre and Papillon: Hildegard of Bingen!

Jacques: Eh Pippin are you up to all the lines? I remember she had a lot to say to us!

(*Pippin smiles serenely and joins hands in prayer as the lights dim, Company leaves and Hildegard takes centre stage*)

Scene 5 : A Convent in Germania wherein resides the great Abbess Hildegard unknown to the players

Hildegard: What is that raggie taggle band that makes its way up the hill towards our convent?

Are they gypsies? I think not. That cart they bring behind them speaks of vendors or perhaps poor homeless wanderers seeking a sanctuary from marauding tribes! Sister Mechtild bid them come hither and have them tell us their tale. Reassure them that all are welcome for none shall ever be turned away from God's house.

Sister: (*curtseying*) Aye, Abbess Hildegard.

Company enters wiping sweat from their brows, suddenly aware of how dirty and dishevelled they are. They could be wearing a motley selection of costumes left over from the cart to add to their appearance of absurdity and confusion.

Hildegard: Why welcome good friends! (*company exchange glances at the unexpected greeting*) I am Mother Hildegard, Abbess of this convent of Bingen.

The entire company looks awkward, bows and then shifts from foot to foot. Eventually Gilbert steps forward and each player follows suit introducing themselves

Jacques and Gilbert (*wiping sweat from brows*): Jacques and Gil (*bowing*) We've pulled our cart up the monastery hill.

Hildegard: Bravo!

Bibbolot: Bibbolot, at your service (*genuflecting*) Mother Abbess

Alphonse: (*bowing*) Alphonse, Alphonse is my name!

Hildegard: Bibbolot, Alphonse, enchante!

Poivre: (*bowing*) I am Poivre, Mother Hildegard. And this is Papillon

Papillon: Papillon! Papillon!

Hildegard: Papillon! Oh a Butterfly! How delightful! And do you fly through life bringing us colour and joy? And these are?

Pinch: Pouce, P--pouce and B- B- B-Bertram and P- P-Pinch. (*bowing*)

Bertram: Bertram (*bowing very dramatically*) I have been attacked by brigands and bullies! I was lost in the forest but then I was found!

Hildegard: Isn't that marvellous how God's grace works in our lives?

Pouce: Pouce, Pouce, I am Pouce. Pippin isn't here yet. He's checking our cart.

Hildegard: Your cart of.....?

Poivre and Pinch: We're p-p-pl-players Mother Abbess.

Hildegard: Players! What a wonderful path! And for whom do you perform?

Company shrugs awkwardly, humbled and unsure.

Hildegard: (*laughing*) My friends you are most welcome here! Players too are welcome here. If you do not know for whom you perform then at least tell me.. what is your name?

Poivre and Pinch: Uh, eh, just... we're just.... lesJon- jon- jongleurs

Hildegard: No name? But then where do you perform?

(Awkwardness grows)

Alphonse: Everywhere (*shrugging*)

Bibbolot: And nowhere! (*shrugging*)

Hildegard: I see and where then are you going to my Jongleurs?

Bibbolot: Everywhere!

Alphonse: And nowhere!

Hildegard: (*laughing*) Why you are lost souls! Every group of players needs a name and every group of players needs to know whom they serve and why! But first my friends let us offer you our simple hospitality at Bingen! All of you are surely in need of some fresh clothing, a simple meal of bread, cheese, wine and honey, and a good bed for the night!

Company: (*sighing with relief and amazement*) Why th-thank you Mother Abbess. Most kind.

Pinch and Poivre: Most k- k-kind! m-m-most welcome!

Pouce: (*sigh*) I am most glad I'm here.

(lights dim to sounds of plain song Hildegard's own music)

Scene 6: Hildegard's Room at Daybreak*Sounds of bees buzzing off stage and distant music***Hildegard:** Dear friends now that we have risen for matins and breakfasted well, may I ask how your night was?**Company:** (*rubbing eyes and yawning, attempting to look awake*) Good! Very fine. Good, good. Most good!**Hildegard:** Good? So now we must work!**Company:** Work?**Hildegard:** Why? Yes! Who is your leader?**Company:** Leader? (*look at one another a bit confused*)**Hildegard:** You may choose to take turns but every wise band of God's Men or any serious endeavour needs a leader! (*Company continues to look confused*) We have work to do my good friends and I will need to talk with your leader about the contents of the Queen's letter which your Papillon has been safeguarding for you. (*Company looks down, unenthusiastic and a bit disgruntled about mention of the letter*) Now who can step into these shoes and become your leader at least for a while? Jacques? (*in turn each one will look away reluctant to be nominated*) Gilbert? Alphonse? Bibbolot? Papillon? Poivre? Pinch? Pouce? Bertram? (*the others look around*) Where is Bertram?*(After some confusion and concern Alphonse and Bibbolo peer out of window)***Alphonse:** Zere 'e is! In ze garden with the bees, Collecting honey! Eh Bertram comme est va? Bien eh?**Poivre:** Pippin is down zere too harvesting that almond tree.**Hildegard:** Pippin.....? (*thoughtfully*) Now mes braves let's get to work. Poivre, Pinch and Pouce, you three may work in the garden. Bertram is already busy collecting honey from our fine workers, the bees. An example to us all my friends. Jacques and Gil can you go to the well and fetch pails of water for the kitchen? Alphonse and Bibbolo would you care to embroider with Sister Mechtild? Papillon? You and I shall regard the Queen's letter and play music.*(A scene unfolds of everyone miming harmonious working at their tasks as Hildegard plays music as Papillon holds the letter out as if it is being read)***Hildegard:** Whom do you serve?**Company:** We know not! We please ourselves!**Hildegard:** Whither goest thou?**Company:** We know not! We blow where the wind takes us**Hildegard:** To what does thou dedicate thine art?**Company:** Art! We know nothing of art!**Hildegard:** My friends you cannot stay here forever. You must uncover your task in life and discover God's Purpose for you in all these wanderings. Your Queen here has granted you a pardon, a great favour and has set you these 3 questions to help you in this undertaking. May I discern here the voices that seek to guide you and offer you some help?**Company:** Most Certainly Dame Hildegard. (*bowing*)**Hildegard:** I will christen you Les Jongleurs de Dieu, a Frankish name because that is where you hail from but also so that, you never forget that above all kings and queens, all maids and men, God in his heaven gives us life and asks for us to return to him with the gifts he has bestowed upon us; like gold to airy thinness beat. From now on you serve God and not just yourselves my fine fellows. And if you can fulfill this task, then you will come to understand the answer to the other

2 questions your Queen has set you.

Pinch: Everywhere but back there!

Company: (*murmuring, looking bashful and pleased*) The Players of God! A fine name!
Poivre: (*jumping into Pouce's arms*) Dungeons! Irons! No no going back!

Hildegard: Whom do you serve?

Bibbolot: The sight of our ignominious humiliation! Bruises, banishment and exile! And an angry sovereign whose choler rages and rejects!

Company: (*bowing*) We are Les Jongleurs de Dieu!

Hildegard (*laughing*) Your merciful Queen wishes for your return along time hence. She hopes for your return when all four seasons doubled have passed, in 2 years time. At which point she requests that you will show that you know what it is to be real players. Hence she hath set you these 3 questions. Whom do you serve? Whither goest thou and To what do you dedicate your art? A fair and wise leader she must be. You have plenty of time but you must devote yourselves to your task or it will run away from you. And now my children! A good lunch, a few more days of good work and nights of deep rest and I will bless you and see you on your way westwards to Iberia!

Hildegard: Whither goest thou Jongleurs?

Company: We know not!

Poivre, Pouce and Pinch: Oh can't we stay here forever?

Hildegard: (*laughing*) For a while you may indeed but you have tasks to fulfill, places to see and things to learn. How else will you master your art and discover your purpose? But before you leave here I will suggest that Pippin become your leader at least for a while (*Company murmurs approvingly*). He is trusted by all of you and looks out for the weaker ones and has a good head and strong heart. He will serve you well. I will make one further suggestion that your next steps take you to Spain.

Lights fade to black- music- music softens as lights come up and Company with cart assembles in a line led by Pippin who takes off Hildegard costume, places it in the cart and leads the line as they look backwards waving. Lights fade as company moves off stage. Lights fade to indicate time passing. Company appears from other side sweaty, efforting and clearly tired after much travelling. Pinch, Poivre and Pouce are at the rear they come on and scrutinise the map and then mark the journey form Germania back through France.

Company: Spain!

Alphonse and Bibbolot: Ole!

Hildegard: You will see many things on the way and in that great country there lives a man, a wise Moor of Islam, Averroes is his name. I will send letters of introduction and he will teach you from the deep well of wisdom and life where all true artists must dwell. One more thing Mes Jongleurs de Dieu. Now that you have a name, a leader and for now, at least, a direction, take seriously the favour granted to you. Your queen is desirous of your eventual return.

Company: WHAT! Quoi? Non?

Scene 7: Somewhere in France

Pinch: I remember a devilish climb up those mountains as we returned through France!

Poivre:... passing from Germania and its holy places.

Gilbert: Yes we were somewhere in France when the attacks started

Alphonse: Climbing down one of those slippery hills of shale and sharp rock.

Bibbolot: Up yet another craggy mountain, frazzlement and fatigue rising up to pinch our Holy Joy!

Alphonse: So tired, so thirsty, such swollen toes and cracked heels!

Bibbolot: Sweat running down our faces in runnels, hot and sweaty, aching legs, throbbing feet, back breaking hills!

Alphonse: Cranky and complaining!

Jacques: A fertile field for the demons to sow their darnel seed! Determined to undermine us, unsteady our purpose and set doubt reverberating in our hearts!

(Poivre, Pouce and Pinch don little horns from the cart and Pinch has a fork for prodding)

Gilbert: Just about now was when the demons started sowing mayhem

Pippin: Oop la! Mes braves Not so far to go before nightfall. Remember Mother Hildegard's words! Rest assured in our destination and let the day carry us forward! We head for Spain! Light heart and clear head!

Gilbert: *(muttering as demons nip in and out whispering in ears)* Mmn I could do a better job leading us over these hills and valleys! How can we be sure we are going the right way? Vexation, irritation.....

Jacques: We could take you up zis hill in double time and down again in half!

Alphonse: *(mocking)* But when Jacques and Gil go up a hill zey always fall down and break their crowns n'est ce pas?

Bibbolot: Alphonse! Confess you covetous crow! did you borrow my shoes again? These ones pinch and pain me so-o-o!

Alphonse: Quoi moi? Borrow those bits of curled up, rancid goat hide that pass for footwear! Excuse me! I have taste!

Jacques and Gilbert, Alphonse all guffaw loudly

Papillon and Bertram: *(tapped on the shoulder and whispered to by the demons)* Ouch! Ouch! We 've been carrying the cart too long! It's someone else's turn! Not fair! We're doing all work.

Jacques: Work? We pulled it all through Germania!

Fight becomes physical as demons dance among them winding up the irritation more and more

Pippin: *(roaring)* Arretez Vous! Vous etes Les JONGLEURS de DIEU! Or have you forgotten?

Jacques! Gilbert! Alphonse! Bibbolo! Papillon! Bertram! Pouce! Pinch! Poivre *(the last 3 take their horns off shamefacedly and put them in the cart)* There are Seven Deadly Sins or do you not remember anything Mother Hildegard taught us? There are so many treacherous ways for the soul to leave its path! We have just let Satan's little servants sew bad seed in this garden! Mon Dieu! *(devils disappear as costumes go back in cart)* Just now we have seen those sins come out to play! Envy, Sloth, Pride, Vanity, Anger! Let us not forget who we are and the tasks before us. Mes braves remember. Who we are and what we are about! Do hte bess squabble when they make honey?.....

(Shamefacedly the Company hang their heads and then embrace each other)

Song

Scene 8: En route somewhere in France

Poivre: Still in France!

Pippin: Our home land and place of many fine encounters

Jacques: Wherever we are is wherever we are!

Gilbert: But for sure we are somewhere!

Jacques: But further west (*pointing at the sun in the sky*) than we were before!
Bravo Pippin we are not lost yet!

Pippin (*turning and bowing*) Merci mes Braves! Mes Jongleurs!

Company: Les Jongleurs de Dieu!

Pippin: (*scouring landscape ahead*) Ooh la bas! Ahead I see before us a company of men, glinting armour, red flags and ecoutez, the distant sounds of beating drums. They are crusaders heading east to their Holy War, the opposite way to us. Who'll take the crusaders?

Company squints into the audience following the direction of *Pippin's* arm.

Jacques and *Bertram* don crusader tabards and helmets from the cart and take up a position as the company turns to meet them and after a moment of staring, bow.

Pippin: Bonjours fine soliders and where are you going to?

Crusader 1: Off to fight a war my friend!

Crusader 2: Off to the East my friends to fight a Christian War

Alphonse: A Christian war?

Gilbert: How can you love your enemy as your brother if you are making war on him?

Crusader 1: We fight the Muslim dog who hath usurped the holy places of the East where once our Noble Redeemer both lived and died for our souls.

Crusader 2: Aye we fight for the Holy City!

Crusader 1: And we fight for the glory of God!

Company: Of God?

Crusader 2: And we fight for the Glory of our King!

Company: Your King?

Crusader 2: And we fight for the Glory of our Country!

Company: Your country?

Alphonse: God, King and Country. That is a lot to fight for!

Crusader 2: Thousands of us march my friends. The Pope hath ordained we take Jerusalem for the Christians!

Crusader 1: Come march east with us and help slaughter those dogs!

Pippin: Many thanks! (*bowing*) However our task is to march west not east (*aside to audience*) and to meet a Muslim and learn from him not fight him! But many thanks fine friends and may your journey be blessed!

Crusader 2: If you have an itch you had better scratch ne'est ce pas? Adieu!

Company waves as crusaders leave and then return, take off their costumes and put them back in the cart. When they are done Pippin gathers company together

Pippin: Mes braves regardez! The sun is setting over Spain, our destination! Let us head for the foothills of those Pyrennees mountains and make camp. Enough for one day. Allons y west!

Lights fade

Scene 9: A Forested Pathway near a Village -
Jacques indicates where players are on the backdrop map

Poivre: Were we in Spain yet?

Pinch: Had we arrived by now?

Poivre: We'd been travelling all day and the night was so short.

Gilbert:: Pippin! What could you see ahead?

Pippin: I smelt the smoke first and then I saw something sinister rising into the sky. I thought it must be a village ahead!

Pouce: *(looking unnerved)* Uh oh! I know this place!

Company: Death! *(everyone looks at Bibbolot)*

They hum Courage Song as Death suddenly appears from behind them.

Death: Mes Jongleurs! At last! Our moment of encounter and will it be our last? Come to play with Death itself? Will perchance you be mine? Are you ready! Now or later? Come let me embrace you!

Players recoil in fear

Death: Oh I see you think I have come too soon! Tis often thus with folk when they meet up with Death. You think that you're not yet done with what you came to do. A few more days, a few more years, a few more hours *(shrugs shoulders)*. Few can welcome Death with open arms! But after all, who can cheat Death! Mmmn? *(smiling horribly)*

Pippin: Why are you here? Why do you stalk our shadows and play upon our fears?

Death: Well asked indeed! I prowl and stalk about this way because I was

invited! Can you not smell the odour of Death on the air? Do you not feel that heavy pall hanging in the air? The funereal mood? The grave faces of those who remain? Few can laugh in the face of Death, who gently doth dissolve the bands of life. Let not false hope make you linger in an extremity, reflecting on the comforts of Heaven while here on earth nothing but crosses, cares and griefs! Surrender to mine arms!

Pouce: Death! I remember you!

Death: And I you, little Pouce! But you cheated me then and you will again!

Pouce: You took everyone, everyone in the village!

Death: Except you! You were spared! And it seems little orphan Pouce you have found your way to jolly company!

Pouce: Yes away from you! With the memories of the marks of Death burned into me: horrible pustules of pink blisters, delirious fevers, bloated bodies and the loss of the love of life! You with your cruel disregard for age, rank, and station cut us down and take us in your callous, cold and cruel way, disregarding families, husbands, wives, children!

Death: It was not I! For I am not the Deadly Plague, merely its messenger! I am the Great Reckoner! Ever at our backs we hear Time's winged chariot passing near! All the great poets will tell you! All the best songs make sure that I am honored somewhere there lurking in the shadows! Greatness and immortality are impossible without my presence. Will you not gaze upon my visage! Am I not fair? I bring you the chance for your soul to take stock. Have you lived as you ought? Whither goest thou? They call me the Grim Reaper but yet I am the Great Teacher? Face up to Mortality! Have a Dose of Reality! I see you wrinkle up your noses. Indeed what a plague and pestilence is here! Let me tell you how busy it has made me over the past few years. Epidemic proportions. And just like yourselves I have been all over Europe, up and down, in towns, in castles and in villages.

Poivre and Pinch transform the costume cart into a plague cart with Bertram

lying on top

Poivre and Pinch: Bring out your dead! Bring out your dead!

Company: (*puts hands over faces and wail in mourning*): La Pestilence! La Pestilence!

Pouce: (*screaming*) Pippin!

Pippin: Company!

Death: (*looking thwarted*) What leaving so soon? Wait! I have a riddle for you all before you go!

Jacques: No riddles! We have enough to do without riddles. We are busy enough answering questions for the Queen.

Death: No time for Death's Riddle? Come, come (*cajoling*) Hear me out. at least since you are all so young and so bound by the Riddle of Life! What is the differencebetween..... Life and.....(*triumphantly*) Death?

(Company pauses. No one responds)

Pouce: A heartbeat.

Death: Bravo Pouce! One who can riddle with Death is ensured of a long life!

Pouce: Pippin!

Pippin: Company! Time to leave! Bring this little orphan villager with us! Comment t'appelles?

Pouce: Pouce.

Gilbert: Only Pouce?

Jacques: Pouce alone! That's how come he joined us and left his village behind him! **Scene 10: A Spanish Courtyard in Cordoba**

Pippin: Viens mes braves. To territories new! I see the great mountains of the Pyrennees above us and I smell the air of Spain! Let us leave this fetid place where Death lurks!

Death: (*gaily*) Adieu mes braves! We'll meet again! If not today at least another! Of this you can be assured!

(*Alphonse comes on and adjusts map to indicate Spanish destination. Gilbert and he takes costumes from the cart. Gilbert goes off stage while Alphonse dresses up as Mustafa*)

Alphonse: This is my favourite role! A poetic Muslim Moor. Mustafa by name. Apprentice to the great philosopher and mathematician Averroes. Was it summer yet?

Jacques: (*peering round*) It was spring, almost summer and very very warm.

Alphonse: Warm sunny Cordoba in southern Spain! Whitewashed and glinting in the sun, orange trees dotted everywhere and yellow canary birds singing in cages. (*transforms into Mustafa*) I hear a fountain splashing in my master's courtyard garden

Mustafa the cross-eyed apprentice: (*peering from a rooftop*) By the Delight of Allah and all the Beauties of Creation! I see a strange and colourful sight coming this way! A straggling gaggle of folk. Are they selling cloth or baubles? Have they come to mend pots and pans? Perhaps they journey this way to see my master, Averroes? Goodness knows he receives visitors with some frequency these days. All are come to see the great man. The wise man! The scholar and philosopher! The Great translator of Aristotle the great Greek! Allah has deemed it so! Celebrated throughout Europe and the Muslim world!

(*receives them at the door as they appear on stage with the cart*)

Welcome welcome, most welcome! You are welcome strange ones, strangers to our door but you are most welcome! I am Mustafa the cross eyed apprentice! And this praise be to Allah, this is the home of Averroes, my master, the great and wise, and most blessed of Allah.

Pippin: Saints be praised! We have come to the right place! We have brought letters. For we were sent to your master.

Pinch: We're here and we're hot as dogs in the midday sun!

Jacques: We've been travelling for months!

Bertram: Yes months!

Pinch: All the way from Germania!

Poivre: We're here! We're there! We are here in Cordoba!

Bertram: Journey's end?

Bibbolot: Ooof I hope so! My feet ache, my blisters scream, my whole body a litany and chorus of complaints.

Mustafa: Compliments are always welcome to Allah's ears

Bibbolot: Complaints! Compliments?

Jacques: We are just dusty from the road and the heat of the sun.....

Pinch and Poivre: We are unwashed

Pinch and Papillon: and unworthy

Mustafa: Please! Please welcome strange ones! Make yourselves at home! Later we can go to the bath house! I can tell you all need to wash! Oh no offence intended! Please! Please to make yourselves comfortable! I am Mustafa, Averroes' cross-eyed apprentice here to do Allah's will and serve your needs! Strange ones, fools, madmen and the sick indeed, are all welcome in our religion. But have you journeyed all this way to ask me this? Oh no offence! I will bring you some mint tea! Wait here in the courtyard and when my master returns, in sh' Allah, why then he will be able to see you, better than I for I must confess I am Mustafa the cross eyed apprentice!

Sounds of canary birds and music as players relax in the soothing atmosphere of an Islamic garden. Gilbert enters as Averroes

Averroes: (entering with arms outstretched) My friends! Dear Friends, most welcome! Mustafa tells me you have journeyed from far to study mathematica here in Sevilla.

Company: Mathematics! look appalled and non plussed.

Bibbolot: He means n-nu-numbers?

Poivre: Big, big ones probably

Pinch: Mathematics? All this way for mathematics?

Bibbolot: We don't count.... on principle.

Mustafa: Numbers are the key to understanding the Beauty of our Universe! Numbers, ratios, proportions, bring you to the depths of things! They give form to all that is!! (*company look appalled*) Would you like a most interesting question to contemplate? No? I'll get your mint tea!

(**Pippin** hastily fumbles for the letter from Hildegard. Bowing he hands Averroes the letters. Averroes opens up the letter and looks confused)

Averroes: What strange and marvellous requests are contained here within! Very appropriate for a philosopher. Mmnn, Whom do you serve? Whither are you going and to What do you dedicate your art? These are indeed questions I contemplate many times a day.

(*Company look impressed*)

Pippin: No! No there is some mistake! That is the wrong letter sire. A letter from our queen. Here is a letter from Dame Hildegard for your good self!

Averroes: (takes the letter) Dame Hildegard of Bingen! A great friend in deed and thought! Praise be to Allah! Friends of Hildegard are most welcome to our humble home here in Sevilla. But tell me who are you and where have you come from?

Jacques: We are Les Jongleurs de Dieu!

Company lines up

Jacques: Jacques and nearby, Gilbert! Oh and here is Poivre!

Poivre: Poivre (*bowing*) and here be Pinch

Pinch: Pinch and Papillon!

Papillon: Papillon and Pouce!

Pouce: Pouce! Pouce and Bibbolo!

Bibbolo: Bibbolo, Bibbolo and here is Alphonse!

Pippin: I am Pippin and this is Bertram!

Bertram: Bertram! (*bowing*)

Mustafa: Towels, soap, bathhouse! Let us go my friends!

(Lights fade, music and then come up on the Company sitting crosslegged listening rapt to Averroes)

Averroes: Our great friend, Aristotle has much to teach us of existence, but the path of philosophy is not for all. Indeed my own family are judges who administer law and each one of us must find the purpose for which Allah hath put us here on earth. Why is the pool there? So we may reflect and contemplate like water itself. For truly you will become the thing in which you immerse yourself. Poivre show me that little frog of yours from the pool, See how green he is! The colours of his home! How much this frog is made of water, how he moves in water with ease and joy and even as he leaps away how he chooses the water for his world. Like the little frog you too must reflect on where you are going and what will give you the most life? Unlike the frog, Allah has given us tongues to speak. Language my friends is our gift and especially for players. You already know whom you serve Praise be to Allah but do you know where you are going?

(Company shakes their heads)

Might I suggest that if you wish to develop your art and skill as all of us must do, why you take yourselves to the Actor's Guild in Paris where if you are accepted you may strengthen yourselves for your eventual return to your queen

Pippin: It will be a trial!

Averroes: Believe me I know about trials! My whole family are judges! But a fair trial is a great success and a cause for celebration! Courage! Do not indulge your fear but rather how you may meet this challenge set before you by a kind queen. You already know the answers to her questions! And Paris is a beautiful city. I know it well and all the guilds are close by the great cathedral of Notre Dame! You speak the language of the Franks do you not?

Jacques: Aye it is our tongue

Averroes: Good then asking directions to the Guild of Les Jongleurs will be very easy!

Scene 11: The Actors' Guild in Paris

(Bibbolet comes on and places a mark on the map for Paris. All Company comes on)

Bibbolot: Yes the last stop before here was Paris. We stayed a long time. Was it spring time when we arrived? I remember the dreaming spires of Notre Dame cathedral and the rattle of carts over Roman cobbles and Italian leather shoes!

Jacques: The River Seine was a sight to behold. I remember the route to the Actor's Guild like the back of my hand

Gilbert : Vingt quatercinq, Rue des Pommeliers

Jacques: Vingt quatre deux

Gilbert: Cinq!

Jacques: Deux and it was summer!

Gilbert: Cinq and it was winter!

Pippin: Jacques and Gil! What is it with you two? Always have to come tumbling after each other! The cherry blossom was in bloom and the smells and sounds of our own tongue filled the air! Pretty French girls singing pretty French songs!

Poivre: None of them looking at us as I recall..

Bibbolet: I remember the latest Parisian spring fashions, fabulous velvets from Brugges, caps with tassels and sleeves slashed with fashionable, courtly, rich fabrics and great wide cuffs.....

(Jacques meanwhile has taken advantage of this interlude as he wanders to the cart to put on Master Jongleur costume)

Jacques: I'll give you cuffs you vain-headed rooster *(he makes to cuff Bibbolot around the ear)* I am in charge now! What I say goes! Master Jongleur du Paris

at your service! Now get ready

Company: Uh oh!

Le Maitre: Entrez , entrez! You 'ave come from far but let's begin. Mmnn your letters of recommendation *(examines them approvingly and folds them up briskly)* Bon! Tres bon! Mes amis, zere is no time to waste. You 'ave a task before you and you 'ave come to ze right place. I am Le Maitre du Guilde des Jongleurs and you, I understand seek to become the Players of God. The question is...

Pippin: We have 3 questions.

Le Maitre: *(ignoring)* Ze question is can you prove yourselves to be worthy of your name?

Poivre: Well we are trying.....

Le Maitre: *(in full rhetorical flow)* Yes, but ze the question is can you stay with ze path God has given you even through all the trials life sends you? *(Pinch and Poivre now counting off on fingers to one side indicates that this is his second question)* It requires Tenacite! Oui! It requires a Dedication! Mais Oui! A Devotion! Profound Concentration! La Dedication, La Devotion, La Concentration! Apres Moi! *(Company are cut off by Le Maitre's rhetorical flow)*

Company: La Ded.....

Le Maitre: Do you know? Can you imagine? What is it? To what No don't try to answer! Not yet! To what do you dedicate yourselves to! *(Poivre and Pinch triumphantly counts off on their 3rd fingers having got caught up in all of Le Maitre's smaller rhetorical questions and wave them in the air to indicate 3 questions)*

La Dedication! La Devotion and La concentration! The Mother of all skill and all art my friends! This is the answer my friends! Nothing less will do! Apres Moi! What is the mother of all skill and all art!

Company: La ded.....

Le Maitre: *(hand up to stop them)* Words! Such easy coinage! Spent in a moment. No! Don't tell me but rather.....show me! Exactement so n'est ce pas? So let us begin! *(rapid pace)* Practise begins every day at dawn with 3 hours of tumbling, juggling and tightrope, followed by breakfast, followed by song, lute, flute and footwork, followed by les chansons and la grande recitation of poesie, La Belle Poesie, poetry!. Lunch, followed by badinage and repartee followed by ze traditional dances of France, followed by combat, character work and composition. Dawn to dusk and zen some more!

Company: Dawn to dusk and then some more?

Le Maitre: Exactemente! I am a hard, hard task master! Stamina and spirit are essential! I crack ze whip but if you are ready to submit to my rule as apprentices for one year, well, zen voila! I will give you your best opportunity to become truly worthy of your name to play before Our Lord and the King and Queen. Now, what my friends can you pay me?

Company: Pay you?

Le Maitre: Why yes the apprentice pays the master to learn his skill and zen to join the guild! 'Ow else could it all work with God in his heaven, the King on his throne and the Master Player, who 'appens to be moi, 'ere with bread on his table and wine in his jug? Zis my friends is the order of the world! Perhaps in all your footloose coming and going you 'ave not understood 'ow these things must work!

Pinch: But Monsieur Le Maitre there is a wisdom gleaned in wandering too *(coughs as he realises he may have overstepped the mark)*

(a horrified frozen moment ensues as Le Maitre looks at Pinch and the other players while the players shuffle uncomfortably, aware that he may decide to throw them out after all. After a very long time Le Maitre breaks the tension by laughing a strange whinnying laugh as the company gradually join in with relief)

Le Maitre: Bien sur! No doubt! No doubt! Heh! Heh! But now of course, all of

that wisdom and fine spirit has to be mastered and transformed into Mastery of your Art! Voila! Zen you too become masters! Zis my friends is how the universe must work! And 'ow do we become masters? Why by becoming apprentices to ourselves! Voila! Beautiful isn't it? God's plan! The symmetry of nature! Just as ze birds build zere nests and ze maidens learn to weave fine linen cloth and ze good king must rule with fairness and sound judgement according to God's Plan so we players are nothing without skill! Nothing but mud, raw clay, awaiting the shaping hands that will bring ze skill, C'est vrai non? Bon!

Company: C'est vrai!

Le Maitre: Bon! So let us begin! Zere is not a moment to waste!

(Company takes up positions and mime various activities to include juggling, tumbling, singing, lute playing etc. After a while a nod from Pippin brings every one to the front in a line as they sing)

Song: Practice, Practice, Practice

(Le maitre enters with a whip and cracks it as the others return to work)

Le Maitre: Pas de exhibition, pas de showing off! Plus douce! Plus fort! Moins effort! A toute vitesse! And don't forget to smile *(Company freezes and then returns to different activities to indicate growing versatility)*

Company: Day in,day out,
Autumn, winter, spring and summer,
Seasons come and seasons go,
Time passing.
Muscles strengthening,
Toning, groaning
Skill growing,
Determination,
Resolution,
Dedication
Concentration

Apres Moi!

(Pinch and Poivre whispering and grinning' highly amused, private joke as Le Maitre comes forward and cracks his whip)

Le Maitre: And remember your queen expects a play worthy of her court. A play to redeem your foolery! A play to show you know the answers! To what do you dedicate your art?

Company: To the art of being a jongleur (*juggling start*)

Le Maitre: Half baked?

Company: Never! Fully committed forever!*(leap frogging as well)*

Maitre: With an abiding passion?

Company: With Dedication, Concentration and Devotion!

Maitre: Apres Moi! (*ushers players to the door*) Mes Jongluers you are ready to graduate! You are ready to leave! (*Embraces each player and blows kisses as they leave juggling and skipping*)

Scene 12: The court of Aquitaine. Inside the walls

Poivre: Mon Dieu! We are here!

Pippin: The Court of Aquitaine!

Jacques: Well here we really are after all this time. Will we be reviled or will we be applauded?

Gilbert: That question my friend is what a player always has to live with!
(Company forms a line across the front of the stage and faces audience silently watching out expectantly)

Pippin: Ah! We are summoned! Let us get ready!

(Company goes to the cart and starts to change into their costumes. They take up position and freeze as lights fade and then come up to signify the play is about to begin - The audience will now be the Court of Aquitaine to include the King and Queen)

The Masque

The Jester:

*For this great Court of Aquitaine,
We trust our play may entertain.
Your smiles and tears or cries of "Shame!"
Will tell if we have laboured in vain.*

*To Questions Three, the answers we have sought
'Gainst struggle and much hardship we have fought,*

*Who are We and Whom do we Serve?
Your Majesties! Les Jongleurs de Dieu
Pay Homage to the King above!*

*Whither Do we Go? Why, Abroad and Away!
'Tis the answer to this second question brings us here today!*

*To what do we Dedicate our Souls and our Art?
This third question can answered as each player takes his part!*

*We've striven our best to answer these Royal Questions three,
And so in kind, but one question we would bring back to thee!
For 'tis the task of jesters to play with themes thus prettily,*

*A Question lies within our play, that we would bring to thee
What is't that maketh for wise Authority?
And that to which we rightfully bend the knee?*

*And so 'tis time!
We trust you will enjoy our classical tragedy!*

Three Evil Duchesses (enter)

*First Duchess: My lady duchesses hast heard the word?
The king this day hath summoned all his sons
For rumour has it he plans to divide his vast kingdom between all three sons!*

*Second Duchess: Say you? But he is not yet in his dotage or of such an age that
he himself cannot command his kingdom!*

*First Duchess: Aye but his head grows tired and the crown is heavy, his beard is
gray and his queen unhappy!*

*Good Duke: (entering) Good Day fair ladies! The king and queen come hither and
all our court must now prepare for the division of the kingdom that the king will make
this day. (aside to audience) I feel within my soul a deep foreboding.*

*Second Duchess: Foreboding, I overhear you say, good Duke? Surely not! (aside to
duchesses) As power shifts from hand to head and from crown to prince there's
something in the wind for us! Sisters, I smell opportunity!*

Duchesses: (smiling wickedly) Indeed sister!

Good Duke: Here comes the King and Queen!

(enter king, queen, jester and three sons to trumpet sounds)

The King: Good Duke come hither and read my proclamation!

*Good Duke: My liege, I bend my knee to thee and humbly take thy words to share
among thy people.(reads)*

*'It is mine intent this day to share between my three royal sons, my vast and
rich territories according to their public professions of love for me'*

My Lord is this wise?

King: Silence! Duke, I'd hear my sons speak!

First Duchess: He speaks of Vast territories!

Second Duchess : Opportunities!

Third Duchess: Three princes unwed and three duchesses we!

*Jester: My Lord and King hast thou a crown upon thy head or do we see a nightcap
there instead. Me thinks we all are dreaming? Am I in my nightshirt?*

King: Silence Fool! This time thy jests are ill timed

Princes: (kneeling) Father we bend our knee.

Queen: I am unhappy.

Duke: Peace, madam perhaps all will turn out well.

*Jester: Or not! False comfort taken in the actions of a foolish monarch and I am
called the fool?*

*First Prince: Father I love thee as the Earth the Sun whose warming rays do ever
seek to shine,
Great blessing reign upon thy radiant kingship, eternal and divine.
All battles I have fought, all armies were massed for thee,*

I am thy lusty, firstborn ever ready to bend his knee (kneels sycophantically)

Jester: *Such silver tongued flattery, such easy coinage I ne'er did hear till now. Surely the old king will not believe it?*

King: *Good, good my first born son!*

First Duchess: *His cozening and fawning son inspires us in like way! How easy is to flatter in this court and so achieve one's way!*

Second Duchess: *Let's hear what his handsome second son hath to say!*

Third Duchess: *Mmmn!*

Second Prince: *Greater love yet have I to win great treasures,
That do afford us princes your courtly pleasures
I have youth's strength though I am younger
For if this be a competition twixt son and son
Hear my petition: I love thee more than anyone!*

Jester: *Clearly, he hath a great appetite! Such greed and wolfish hunger!*

Second Prince: *Since that first day that I was born,
Loyalty, strength and love for thee
Hath always served as my priority!*

(two elder princes looking daggers at each other)

King: *Good and better yet, my second born son! And now our youngest speak!*

Jester: *Old Man! Undeaf thy ears! A thousand flatterers sit within thy throne whose compass is no bigger than thy head!*

King: *Our youngest speak!*

Third Prince: *Truth hath a quiet breast. I cannot measure in flattering words the love I have for thee.*

King: *What? No words? NO love to thine father? O bitter gall! O bitter child!
I'll banish thee instead!*

Duke: *Sire no! Do not portcullis and shut up the mouth from which such easy flattery doth refuse to flow! I beg thee reconsider the wisdom of such simplicity. Such courage to resist the easy coinage of the court where words have value and are easily bought. Let not bitterness and malice grow from one small injury twixt parent and child!*

King: *Reconsider? Nay! Come hither Duke. I'll speak no more. (whispers)*

Duke: *The King decrees that in its entirety his kingdom will not be divided into three but rather two, as he this day relinquishes his crown and casts into exile his youngest son!*

Queen: *I am unhappy!*

Duke: *My Lord, are words such easy currency here that one's own child can be bought, bitten, debased and cast out like a coin tossed in the gutter?*

King: *Mine ears are deaf! I speak no more!*

Queen: *I am unhappy*

(The Court a mix of glee- duchesses and princes- and sorrow- Duke, jester, queen)

Court: *Exile! Banishment!*

Youngest prince: *From now each step I make will but remember me what a vast world I wander in far from the jewels I love. Exiled!*

Duke: *Good Sire! Look what thy soul holds dear and imagine it to lie the way thou goest! Tis but a journey! Why each trudge, each step can be made sweet! There is a deal of learning in one's feet.*

Prince: *Aye and I now a journeyman to grief.
My home lost, my parentage and family*

swept away by one old man's temper.

More than banishment and total loss! My home has been taken from me!

Jester: *Suppose the singing birds musicians.*

The grass whereon thou treadest a carpet and the flowers, fair ladies and all thy steps but a delightful measure or a dance.

(young prince exits as Court, Duke and Jester watch sorrowfully)

Jester: *Wilt thou not undeaf thy ears old king and relent? Or hast all thy wisdom now been spent?*

(King shakes his head. Princes step forward to take the crown off their father's head and squabble over it. They freeze as the Duchesses come forward and mime intense flirtation with the 2 princes vying for attention, and then the queen's crown is wrested from her head and also fought over by the duchesses. Duchesses turn on each other, stabbing each other, taking poisoned goblets to sip and dying dramatically while the 2 princes stab the king and queen and then each other. Duke has left as has Jester as stage is covered with melodramatic dying bodies)

(Young prince appears)

Prince: *What scene of horror here unfolds? Was not this my father's court? Were not these my brothers, my sweet mother, unable to persuade my father to change his mind, quite cold and dead? And these fine ladies of the court who burned too hot and now are cold? What all dead? How came it so?*

Duke: *Alas sire, We have not seen a battle marked by such willfull power and savage greed since Roman times. For when a monarch can so easily relinquish his authority, then all the howling dogs and scavenging wolves come out to gain their share.*

Youngest Prince: *Aye my poor, foolish father. Was this what thou intended in thy divine authority, to give it all way? And brothers mine steeped in malice so deep it hath made an incision into the fabric of our entire kingdom. Could not all here forget, forgive, conclude and find agreement when all were rich and fair? Was not a happy conclusion possible? Why such violence, pain and strife?*

Duke: *Your poor unhappy mother and the plotting ladies of the court all gone too. The best that we can hope for as worms turn and epitaphs are written, is that you, our young and supple prince may like the sapling that withstands the storm, be strengthened here and start anew.*

(Jester and Duke bow on bended knee before young prince)

Duke: *Sire this scene before us presents a dire and grievous tragedy. May those of us who have lived to see this dawn, learn here the lessons so hard won today. Temperance, caution, patience and humility to govern with justice and wise authority!*

(Young prince holds his hands out over jester and Duke in a royal blessing as scene freezes. Jester steps forward after a few minutes)

Jester: *Thanks to Her Majesty our noble Queen
Whose mercy tutored Wandering Players all unseen,
Thanks gentle folk to this fine and royal court
We hope our play both tears and laughter brought!
Kind company by your applause we'll truly know
If we have here succeeded or no!*

(Company lines up in front as themselves and bows. After audience's applause. Pippin holds his hand up and the Company looks up over the horizon beyond the audience to an imagined royal throne. At Pippin's signal all the company bend their knees and heads for a few seconds and then rise up slowly as if commanded, grinning. Gradually they smile more and more as if hearing wonderful words from the King and Queen.

Pippin: *Sire, with grateful heart and much gratitude we do receive thy blessing. Thy gifts to us, a place at court as players of the King, a pension and a home. This is such beneficence from thee and thy queen as any player might ever dream of. We thank thee and accept.*

(Players look at each other amazed, dazed and happy, slapping hands in comradely fashion and then remembering where they are. Then on cue, turn to

the back, pick up their shields which were used as part of the set to signify the court. Holding their shields they break into song)

Closing Song

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