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Dramatic Publishing

THE PLAIN PRINCESS

Adapted by
AURAND HARRIS



From the Book by
PHYLLIS MCGINLEY

THE PLAIN PRINCESS

First productions were at Western Michigan College of Education and Seattle Junior Programs. A present-day fairy tale, adapted from Phyllis McGinley's popular book.

Fairy tale. Adapted by Aurand Harris. From the book by Phyllis McGinley. Cast: 4m., 7w., 2 either gender, or suitable for an all-female cast. The king and queen plan a birthday party for their daughter, Esmeralda, showering her with gifts and toys, ordering a feast with entertainment, and inviting a neighboring prince to play with her. But the princess is in a sulky mood and throwing one of her royal tantrums; she goads the usually well-mannered prince into declaring what no one has ever dared to admit—that she is a plain princess. Faced at last with the truth, the princess falls into a genuine decline, and her parents offer a great reward to anyone who can make her beautiful. All the wise men try, without success. Finally, the royal dustwoman, Dame Goodwit, offers to make the princess beautiful in three months—if the princess will come and live in her cottage with her three daughters. The changes that take place are only natural ones, but when the princess learns to do a truly unselfish thing, her mouth turns up, her nose turns down, and her eyes sparkle like the candles on a birthday cake. *Two sets. Royal and folk costumes. Code: PF2.*

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The Plain Princess (Harris)



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(THE PLAIN PRINCESS)

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To

ELEANOR and ZACK YORK

This play was given its premiere production by Western Michigan College of Education, at Kalamazoo, Michigan, in July, 1954, under the direction of Prof. Zack York, and was later repeated by the same group for the 1954 Annual Meeting of The Children's Theatre Conference, at East Lansing, Michigan. The pictures shown on Page 6 are provided through the courtesy of Prof. York. His technical notes are also carried on page 7.

A later production, presented by Seattle Junior Programs, under the direction of Mr. Kenneth Carr of the University of Washington, provided additional material. Mr. Carr's pictures are shown on Page 8, and his original music composed for this production may prove helpful for many producers.

THE PLAIN PRINCESS

CAST

Dame Goodwit
Annabelle
King
Queen
Prince Michael
Princess Esmeralda
Doctor
Magician
Dulcibelle
Floribelle
Echo
First Page
Second Page

THE PLACE

Act I. The Royal Playroom.
Act II. Dame Goodwit's Cottage.
Act III. The Same.

THE TIME

The Spring and Summer now or long ago.

Scenes from
THE PLAIN PRINCESS
as produced by the University of Washington
for Seattle Junior Programs



ACT I



ACT II

TECHNICAL NOTES

by ZACK YORK

Our magic tricks were limited to four: (1) The music box cover rising by itself on spoken cue; (2) the doll standing in her crib on visual cue, (when the Magician turned his flashlight on her), and saying the word "Ma ma, ma ma, I won't! I won't! I won't!"; (3) the dog on the table upstage center jumping and barking on visual cue, (when the Magician turned his flashlight on him. One of his front paws was nailed to the table, so that when he jumped into the air, it seemed as if he supported his own weight. Here again the sound of barking was live, and given by the manipulator.) In all three of these cases, the action was secured by having stage hands pull fish line which was attached to the lid of the box, the doll's shoulders, and the dog's ears, and passed through holes in the flats.

The fourth magic effect was turning the Royal Dustwoman's feather duster into a bouquet of red roses, when the Magician turned his flashlight on her. This is a stock magic trick, which can be purchased, but it is not really necessary to the action.

The only other technical difficulty was encountered in handling the mask for Esmeralda. We caused the Magician to go through some magic motions, and made the magic drapery (to which the mask was attached) appear out of the air. The drapery was fastened to a batten by long lengths of black fish-line. We covered the descent of the drapery with magic music (The Sorceror's Apprentice). Enough slack was allowed so that the Magician may give the drapery to the pages who carried the drapery to cover the Princess. The drapery was still attached to the fish-line, while the Magician was going through his magic act and lingo. Esmeralda removed the mask from the drapery, and put it on. When it was in place, the pages moved upstage, center, taking the drapery with them. It was still attached to the fish-line and the batten. When the Magician left, he simply picked up the drapery from the two pages, and walked off with it, enough slack being allowed so that he and the drapery could get out of sight line.

Actually, any set of magic tricks can be used, It is up to the ingenuity and imagination and facilities of the director to solve the problem as he can.

Music composed for *The Plain Princess*
by Kenneth Carr

ONCE THERE WAS A PRINCESS
Prologue

once there was a Princess who wore a golden crown, but wasn't like a
Princess in any other town, her eyes as-les were dull as glass, her nose
stuck up like a cup and her mouth ran down in-to a frown oh,
it was a so-spi-cious and ugly dis-po-si-tion, but so one dared com-
plain, that the Princess the princess was plain.

ONCE THERE WAS A PRINCESS
Epilogue

once there was a Princess who wore a golden crown, fair-er than
Princess in any other town. Her eyes they sparkled bright as could be, her
nose turned down like a nose should be, her mouth the white spread in a happy
smile; Ah! Ah! ev-ry one ex-claimed, and Es-mer-el-de the beau-ti-ful
was pro-claimed

LULLABY

o-ver your Bed-sters Twin-ble And ho-ver, The sky has spread you a
 Bright Ray- al cov-er And the moon with a corse for its hand- le is
 wait- ing to serve as your Bed- side can- dle; sleep Es- mer- el- da sleep.

WORKING SONG

We work + play the w-hole day long, our hands are bu- sy our feet tap- a- Song
 Hap- py Hap- py are we.
 oth- er folks wor- ry oth- er folks stew, we nev- er wor- ry though oth- er talks do.. (Repeat
 Happy, Happy
 are we. and h
 we know the se- cret an- y And it weath- er find a friend + work to- geth- er
 Ev- ry heart that was a sad one then be- come a glad one, and you can be
 Hap- py Hap- py as we.

The Plain Princess

ACT ONE

(There is music. It is a tinkling melody with royal trumpets of a land of make-believe. Dame Goodwit steps out in front of the curtain. She is friendly and cheerful as any Mother would be, and full of wisdom and affection as all Mothers should be. She wears an apron and a large dust-cap. In her hand she carries a many-colored feather duster. She sings.)

DAME: Once there was a Princess
Who wore a golden crown,
But wasn't like a Princess
In any other town.
Her eyes, alas,
Were dull as glass;
Her nose stuck up
Like a cup;
And her mouth ran down
Into a frown.
It was a suspicion
She had an ugly disposition.
But no one dared complain
That the Princess—the Princess was plain!

(She steps inside as the curtain opens. The scene is a long narrow gallery, running from R. to L. It is the royal playroom and dazzling in its beauty. Each toy is arranged on a display by itself and outshines the next one, as they are all made of gold, trimmed with jewels, and stand on velvet platforms. Annabelle, the eldest of Dame's four young daughters, stands at L. by the doorway. She is pretty and dressed simply. She, too, has a colorful feather duster, but smaller. Dame smiles at Annabelle and indicates the dazzling room)

This is the royal playroom.

ANNABELLE *(Impressed)*: Oh! Oh, how beautiful.

DAME: These are the royal toys.

ANNABELLE: Oh, Mother, all of these! She has all of these to play with?

DAME *(Nods.)*: All for Princess— *(They both look off L.)* Esmeralda. *(Then business-like waves her duster.)* And they must be dusted twice a day for the Princess— *(They both look at L.)* Esmeralda. *(Dame starts to dust in rhythm and sings. Annabelle, quickly and cheerfully, follows and imitates her, dusting with her own little duster.)*

ANNABELLE: Mother?

DAME: Yes?

ANNABELLE: What is she like?

DAME: The Princess? (*Annabelle nods. They look off L.*)

She is like you.

ANNABELLE: Like me?

DAME: She is a little girl, but (*Worried*) the Princess—the Princess is not happy.

PRINCESS: (*Off-stage L. the Princess shouts*), “I won’t! I won’t wear the blue dress, or the green dress, or the pink dress. I won’t, I won’t. I won’t!”

ANNABELLE (*Alarmed, looks off L.*): Someone is shouting— (*There is loud bang and crash off L.*) and kicking a chair.

PRINCESS (*Off stage*): “I won’t wear the gold dress. They are not good enough. None of them are good enough. None of them are good enough for a royal Princess!”

ANNABELLE: Is that—is that the Princess?

DAME (*Nods emphatically*): That is Esmeralda.

(*Two Pages appear at R. and blow their trumpets.*)

The King! The King is coming. (*Hurries Annabelle to L.*). Quick, Annabelle! We’ll finish the dusting later. (*Off L. the Princess shouts:*)

PRINCESS: “I won’t!” (*Dame turns and hurries Annabelle to R. Two Pages appear at R. and stand by the door. Dame stops.*) The screen! Behind the screen. (*They rush to back, and Annabelle hides behind a screen. The Pages raise their trumpets and blow. Annabelle peeks out, Dame pushes her back, just as the King enters R. Dame curtsies low. The King is pompous, and speaks in a loud voice. He wears his crown and robe and carries conspicuously, one in each hand, a pair of roller skates—solid gold, with diamond-studded wheels.*)

KING: For the Princess! Golden skates. These will make her happy.

(*Puts skates on table by music box.*)

DAME (*Curtsies again.*) Yes, your Majesty.

KING (*Nervous.*): Is everything ready?

DAME: Yes, your Majesty.

KING: Is the Princess—is Esmeralda ready?

DAME: She is dressing.

KING: Tell her I command—(*Anxiously.*) Tell her the Prince will be here any minute. (*Looks off R.*) Everything must be ready. Everything must be dusted.

DAME: Yes, your Majesty.

KING (*Looks around at toys.*): The Prince will be royally entertained. He will listen to the music box and watch the puppet show.

(*This is his secret pleasure. Like a boy he can’t resist pushing the button on the side of the puppet booth, and immediately Punch and Judy come to life and start hitting each other over the head. There is hurdy-gurdy music. The King laughs and nods his head and shadow boxes with each blow. The Queen enters at R. She is beautiful and graceful,*

but helpless. She wears her crown and robe and carries, conspicuously, a pearl necklace. She stops at the sight of the King boxing.)

QUEEN: Your highness! (*Caught in a childish act, the King stops stiffly, pushes the button again. The puppets become lifeless and the music stops, and the King becomes dignified. Queen holds out the necklace.*) For Esmeralda. A new golden locket with a shining pearl. This will make her happy.

KING: I brought her a pair of golden skates. (*To Dame*): Tell the Princess we are waiting.

DAME: Yes, your Majesty. (*Exits L.*)

QUEEN (*Looking to see if they are alone.*): I hope—I hope this is not one of her BAD days. What if she cries and kicks? What if Prince Michael does not like her?

KING: I will command her to be happy today.

QUEEN (*Dame enters at L.*): I don't understand. There is nothing really wrong with her. But she frowns instead of smiles, and her eyes are never happy.

KING: We give her everything.

QUEEN: She should be beautiful. Her hair is brushed one hundred strokes every night.

KING: Her cheeks are rosy from cod-liver oil.

QUEEN: Her teeth were straightened by golden braces.

KING: What is the matter with her?

DAME: Your Majesty, I know what is wrong. I can help the Princess.

KING: You?

DAME: I can change her eyes, her nose, her mouth—

QUEEN: Yes?

DAME: I have four little girls and they do not cry or kick, and their faces are happy.

(Trumpets are heard off R.)

KING: The Prince! The Prince! He has arrived! Quick! Quick! Is my crown on straight?

QUEEN: My train—smooth my train!

(Dame tries unsuccessfully to help both at once.)

KING: Call Esmeralda. Tell her the Prince has arrived. She shall come at once.

DAME: Yes, your Majesty. (*Exits L.*)

QUEEN: What—what if they don't like each other! Oh, if only—ONLY Esmeralda—(*Whispers.*)—were beautiful—instead of—plain.

KING: Sh! No one must ever say the word—plain. She must never know. We will keep it a secret that the Princess—is plain.

(The trumpets blow again, and two Pages appear at R. and announce loudly):

PAGES: "Prince Charles Michael from the neighboring castle." *Prince Michael enters at R. He is a handsome young boy, courteous and wholesome. He is dressed in his best Sunday clothes and wears his*

Sunday crown. He removes the crown and bows. A Page takes the crown and hangs it on the golden hat-rack.)

KING: Welcome, your royal Highness. (*Holds out his hand, palm down.*)

PRINCE: Thank you, my royal friend and neighbor. (*Puts his hand, palm down, over King's.*): I bring you greetings from my royal father. He hopes your royal health is good.

KING: Thank you.

PRINCE (*To Queen*): I bring greetings from the Queen my Mother. She hopes your royal health is good. (*Bows and kisses the Queen's hand.*)

QUEEN: Thank you.

PRINCE (*Proud and happy*): And I bring a gift to the royal Princess, the beautiful Esmeralda. (*Looks around.*)

KING (*Shouts*): Esmeralda! Esmeralda!

PRINCE: Where is she?

PRINCESS (*off stage*): "I won't! . . . I won't! . . . I won't!"

QUEEN (*Quickly and nervously*): Oh, it is going to be a happy day. Croquet on the lawn—

KING: Ten minutes on the new swing.

PRINCE: I can pump to the highest branch.

KING: Oh, no, YOU mustn't pump! A special footman will give you the run-unders.

QUEEN: And the jugglers will toss golden balls.

PRINCE: I like to play ball.

KING: Oh, no, YOU mustn't play. You will only watch the jugglers play. (*There is a loud crash off-stage L. and an angry cry of pain. Dame enters hurriedly.*)

DAME: Your Majesty, there has been an accident.

KING (*Alarmed*): The Princess? Is she hurt?

DAME: A chair got in the way of her foot.

KING: I command—I command all chairs to stay out of her way!

QUEEN: She was kicking. Oh, but she mustn't kick today!

KING: Tell the Princess we are waiting!

DAME: Yes, your Majesty. (*Exits quickly at L.*)

KING: Tell the Princess we will wait no longer.

QUEEN: Poor dear.

KING: Tell her to —appear!

DAME (*Re-enters breathlessly*): Her highness, the Princess Esmeralda approaches. (*King and Queen stand stately and look toward L. Prince steps forward and bows. There is an expectant pause. King coughs. Queen coughs. Prince peeks to see what is happening. Dame looks off L., curtsies and announces again.*): Her highness the Princess Esmeralda approaches. (*King and Queen and Prince again stand and bow in readiness. There is another expectant pause.*)

KING (*Shouts*): Esmeralda!

QUEEN (*Nervous*): Sh!

KING: I command—

DAME: She is here.

(Esmeralda enters at L. She is beautifully dressed like a fairy-tale Princess. But, alas, her eyes are haughty, her nose is held high, and her mouth is set in a grim pout. Her face is twisted in a very ugly sneer. She is not a pleasant sight.)

KING: Good morning, my dear.

QUEEN: Prince Charles Michael has come to play with you.

PRINCESS: I don't like boys. *(Makes a face at him.)*

KING: Say "Good morning."

PRINCESS: I won't. I won't. I won't! *(Stomps one foot, then the other, then jumps with both.)*

KING: Esmeralda—

PRINCESS *(Backs away.)*: And I won't play with him. *(Turns and stomps off L.)* I won't play. I won't. I won't! *(King, Queen and Dame follow her.)*

QUEEN: Please, dear—

KING: You must play with the Prince.

QUEEN: We have six colors of ice cream for the party.

KING: He—he brought you a present!

PRINCESS *(There is a sudden silence.)*: A present? *(Princess appears quickly at L.)* What is it? *(They all stand behind her, relieved.)*

PRINCE *(Formally.)*: I bring good wishes from my royal Father, and I bring a gift—a gift I made myself for her royal highness, the beautiful Esmeralda.

PRINCESS *(Snatches the box.)*: Let me see it.

QUEEN: You must thank him—thank him dear.

PRINCESS: It isn't very big. *(Shakes box.)*

KING: Open it.

PRINCESS *(Gives box to Dame with an ordered sneer.)*: You open it.

PRINCE: If you don't like it—if you don't want it, I'll be glad to take it back.

PRINCESS: You can't. You gave it to me. It's mine. It's mine!

PRINCE: I worked two days carving the handles.

QUEEN: You made it yourself?

PRINCE: I wanted to give you something I made. A gift really from me.

DAME *(Has opened the box, and is delighted.)*: Oh!

PRINCESS: What is it? Let me have it.

DAME *(Holding up a simple jumping rope.)*: It's a jumping rope. *(Princess grabs it.)*

KING: Hand-made by a Prince!

PRINCESS *(Superiorly.)*: I have a gold one with ivory handles.

QUEEN: Say, "Thank you."

PRINCESS: It's just an ordinary rope with two pieces of wood. It is not worth a thank-you. *(Throws it down.)*

PRINCE *(Picks it up.)*: I carved your name on one handle and mine on

the other. (*Looks at her disgustedly.*) Esmeralda is a long name and hard to spell.

PRINCESS: It is the most beautiful name for the most beautiful Princess in the land.

PRINCE: I'll find a shorter name. Someone who will like it.

KING (*In a state.*): Music! Start the music box, and we'll ride the rocking horse. We'll play with the bouncing balls.

QUEEN (*In a state*): Yes, the party—start the party. Everyone be happy!

(*Queen claps her hands. Soft music is heard. A Page enters on either side and each sets down a stand on which are ribbons and many colored balloons. They throw confetti and streamers.*)

KING (*Goes to rocking-horse and tries to show the children how to have fun.*): Who will ride the rocking-horse—rocking-horse—rocking-horse!

PRINCESS (*Running to rocking-horse.*): It's my horse, and nobody else can ride it.

KING: The golden rings! We'll toss the golden rings! (*Pages exit.*)

PRINCESS: First! I must be first.

QUEEN: The Prince is your guest.

PRINCESS: I said it before he did. First!

PRINCE (*Tries to be agreeable.*): I like to throw rings. I have a set at home.

PRINCESS: Are they made of gold?

PRINCE: I use my Mother's embroidery hoops.

PRINCESS: Mine are pure gold with diamonds, and I always win. I always win every time I play. First!

PRINCE: Of course. (*He bows. King and Queen relax.*) I will shoot after the Princess, after the beautiful—(*Stops, looks at her critically. King and Queen hold their breath and lean forward as he looks again. Princess sneers at him. He looks away and speaks flatly.*) —after her highness.

PRINCESS: Watch me. Everybody watch ME! (*Tosses a ring wildly.*)

PRINCE: You missed.

PRINCESS: That doesn't count. I wasn't ready. Now watch. Watch me. (*Tosses wildly again.*) Someone pushed. You—you pushed me. I get to throw again.

PRINCE (*Quietly*): You don't play fair.

PRINCESS: Yes, I do!

KING: Esmeralda.

PRINCESS: He cheats. You're a cheater—cheater—cheater!

QUEEN: Please—let's start over again.

PRINCESS: First.

PRINCE. All right. But only ONE shot. Then it is my turn. That is the way to play.

PRINCESS: Stand back! Everybody stand back. I always win!

(Tosses and misses.)

PRINCE: You missed. *(Princess puckers her face, clenches her fists in rage and yells. Prince is surprised but announces over the noise.)*

Now it is my turn. *(Princess is suddenly quiet and watches. Prince aims carefully. He tosses and makes a ringer. King and Queen and Prince all exclaim at once.)* A ringer! I scored!

KING: Good shot!

PRINCESS *(Screams.)*: I won't play! I won't! I won't! *(In tantrum she kicks a small gold chair. She screams again and jumps on one foot.)* My foot! Oh, my foot! My foot. *(King and Queen rush to her. Music stops.)*

QUEEN: Oh, my dear—my darling.

KING: Get the doctor! Get two doctors. Get her to bed! *(Princess keeps yelling loudly and hops toward right, on one foot. King, Queen and Dame follow her.)*

QUEEN: She is turning pink! *(Fans her with handkerchief.)*

KING: Bring the smelling salts.

QUEEN: She is turning purple!

KING: Say "Ah!" "Ah!"

The Princess, crying loudly, hops on one foot off R. All, except the Prince exit excitedly after her. Thinking the room empty, Annabelle creeps out from behind the screen, hiding the duster behind her, and starts making her way stealthily off L. The Prince sees her.)

PRINCE: Hello.

ANNABELLE *(Caught.)*: Hello.

PRINCE: Where are you going?

ANNABELLE: I am not supposed to be here. I was dusting—*(Brings out her feather duster.)* And got caught. Is she really hurt?

PRINCE: Not much. Do you like to jump rope? *(Annabelle smiles friendly, and nods.)* Even if it isn't gold?

ANNABELLE: We use the clothesline.

PRINCE: May I—may I play with you?

ANNABELLE: My sisters and I play down by the duck pond.

PRINCE *(Likes her.)*: What's your name?

ANNABELLE: Annabelle.

PRINCE *(Repeats it with pleasure.)*: Annabelle. *(Then frowns.)* That's a long name, too. *(Then smiles.)* But easier to spell.

(Princess yells off R. Prince and Annabelle exit quickly at L., as the Princess, followed by King, Queen, and Dame enter at R. Princess continues to yell and hop.)

KING: Get a crutch! Get a wheelchair!

PRINCESS: My foot—my foot! *(Sits.)*

KING *(Picks up the guilty chair.)*: We will break the chair—burn it in the furnace!

QUEEN: The awful chair will be gone.

KING (*In baby talk.*): Now does my 'ittle Princess feel better?

(*Princess nods, her crying subsides to a whimper. King and Queen smile at each other in relief, then they look around.*): The Prince?

QUEEN: Where is he?

KING: He's gone.

PRINCESS (*Looks around, then screams and kicks again.*): I want the Prince! I want the Prince. Bring him back!

KING: Guards! Guards! (*Two Pages appear at R.*) Find the Prince! Search the palace! (*One Page exits R. One Page exits L. Dame exits after him.*)

QUEEN (*Calls helplessly and waves handkerchief.*): Prince Michael—Prince Charles Michael.

KING: Come out, come out wherever you are! (*King looks under a low table.*)

PRINCESS: I want him back! I want him back! (*She stands up and stomps her feet.*)

QUEEN (*Points.*): Your foot—it's all right.

KING: You can stand on it.

(*Princess immediately sits down. One Page appears at L. and shouts.*)

FIRST PAGE: Not in the royal carriage shed.

SECOND PAGE (*Appears at R. and shouts.*): Not under the royal bed. (*They disappear.*)

KING (*Holds up skates.*): The skates. New golden skates with diamond wheels.

PRINCESS (*Grabs them greedily.*): Give them to me.

FIRST PAGE (*Appears again at R.*): He is not on the floor.

SECOND PAGE (*Appears at L.*): Nor behind the door. (*They disappear.*)

PRINCESS (*Remembers and yells again.*): Bring him back! Bring him back!

QUEEN (*Desperate.*): The locket. A golden locket with a shining pearl.

PRINCESS: Let me see. (*King gets hand mirror.*)

QUEEN: It will make you happy. It will make you beautiful.

PRINCESS: It's mine! (*Slips it over her head.*)

KING: Look in the mirror. What do you see?

PRINCESS: I see—I see the most beautiful Princess in the land. (*Takes the mirror and admires her haughty self.*)

DAME (*Enters at R.*): Your Majesty, the Prince has been found.

QUEEN: Where?

DAME: By the duck pond.

KING: I command—I command his presence immediately.

DAME: He is here. (*She curtsies as the Prince enters R.*)

KING (*Sternly.*): Now young man, where have you been?

PRINCE: By the duck pond.

KING: Yes, yes, we know. But why?

QUEEN: Why did you run away?

PRINCESS: Why didn't you play with ME?

PRINCE: I was carving a new name on the handle of the jumping rope.

QUEEN: A new name?

KING: Whose name?

PRINCE: It sounds like the way she laughs—Annabelle.

QUEEN: Another Princess?

PRINCE: No, she lives on the other side of the duck pond.

PRINCESS: Does she have golden skates with diamond wheels and a locket with a shining pearl?

PRINCE: No.

QUEEN: Then why did you run away?

KING: Why do you play with the servants?

PRINCE: Because—I like her better than the Princess.

KING (*Stunned.*): What!

QUEEN (*Echoes.*): What!

(Princess opens her mouth, but is speechless. She turns and looks at him.)

KING: She has no toys.

PRINCESS: And she is ugly.

PRINCE: Oh, no. No, she is not ugly.

PRINCESS: Is she beautiful? As beautiful as I?

PRINCE (*Smiles as he remembers.*)

HER mouth turns up.

(Princess suddenly holds the mirror out and looks at her pouty mouth.)

Her nose turns down.

(Princess peers in the mirror and puts a finger under her tilted nose.)

And her eyes twinkle like candles on a birthday cake!

(Princess bends forward and squints at her screwed-up face.)

PRINCESS: But I—I am the most beautiful Princess in the land.

KING (*Quickly.*): And you have bicycles, tricycles, and ponies.

QUEEN: And ribbons, and bows, and laces.

PRINCESS: Is she—is she more beautiful than I? (*They wait.*) Is she?

PRINCE (*After an awkward moment*): Yes.

(Princess yells and kicks. King and Queen talk at the same time, ad lib, trying to comfort her. Prince steps toward them.)

I am sorry—

(But he is not heard or noticed. He walks around them to the other side.)

I am sorry—

(He still is not heard in the confusion. He shrugs his shoulders, takes his crown from the gold hat-rack and starts R. Two Pages appear at R., raise their trumpets and blow. King, Queen, and Princess "freeze", surprised by the bugles. Prince stands at R. by doorway.)

Goodbye. I am sorry. But a Prince must tell the truth. And in truth, Esmeralda—(*Very clearly*)—you are a PLAIN Princess.

(He bows and exits quickly.)

PRINCESS (*Holds up mirror and looks again.*): Plain? Ugly?

(Closes her eyes and holds the mirror away in horror.): Take it away!

Take it away! (*Throws the mirror away.*): It's true. It's true.
He said—I am plain.

KING: No one on my side of the family was ever plain.

QUEEN: You didn't get it from me.

PRINCESS: I am. I saw—I saw my mouth, my nose—oh, what can I do?

KING: You shall have a hundred new dolls.

QUEEN: Two hundred new dresses.

PRINCESS: That isn't what I want.

KING: You shall have anything!

QUEEN: Anything you say.

PRINCESS (*Although we begin to sympathize with the Princess, she still keeps her selfish, spoiled expression.*): I want—I want a mouth that turns up, a nose that turns down, and eyes that sparkle like a birthday cake.

KING (*To the Pages.*): The Doctor! Call the Doctor. Bring the royal physician. (*Pages exit.*)

QUEEN: Yes, yes he will cure you.

KING: And tomorrow you will be happy and beautiful and the Prince will play with you.

DAME: Your Majesty, if I may speak—

QUEEN: You may wear my longest train.

KING: And play with the royal crowns.

DAME: I know how to help her. Let me change the Princess.

(*The Pages enter at R. and announce.*)

PAGE: His greatness, the notable, the eminent, the only—royal Doctor. (*Doctor enters with black bag. He is small with white hair and a white beard. He has difficulty seeing over his glasses.*)

KING: Ah, at last. You have kept us waiting. I command—

DOCTOR: Tongue! (*King sticks his tongue out.*) Pulse. (*Holds King's wrist.*)

KING (*Tries to talk with his tongue out, motions to Center.*): No—no—not me—over there.

QUEEN (*Comes to Doctor.*): I am so worried, I feel faint.

DOCTOR (*To Queen.*): Tongue. (*Queen puts tongue out.*) Pulse. (*Feels Queen's wrist.*)

KING: No! No! It is the Princess.

DOCTOR: Esmeralda? Which foot is it this time?

QUEEN: No, she hasn't kicked a chair.

DOCTOR: Strained her voice yelling?

KING: No! No!

DOCTOR (*Peering.*): Not kicked, not yelled—then she is sick!

(*Sees that she is really crying and hurries to her.*): My dear little Princess, why do you cry?

PRINCESS (*Looks at him tearfully.*): Can—can you help me?

DOCTOR (*Nods.*): I have many pills for many ills. (*Goes into his routine.*) Tongue.

PRINCESS: It isn't my tongue.

DOCTOR: Pulse.

PRINCESS: It isn't my pulse. (*Doctor looks puzzled.*) It is—something wrong with my mouth, and my nose, and my eyes!

DOCTOR (*He is more puzzled. He looks at King and Queen. They nod solemnly. Then with professional dignity he opens his bag.*): For the mouth—gargle. (*Takes out a big green bottle and shakes it.*) For the nose—spray. (*Takes out a big atomizer and sprays his own nose.*) For the eyes—glasses. (*Takes out a pair of big frame glasses.*)

PRINCESS: No. I want a mouth—that turns up. (*Doctor looks surprised, then at the bottle, shakes his head, and puts the bottle back into the bag.*) I want a nose—that turns down. (*Same business by Doctor, puts atomizer into bag.*) I want eyes—that twinkle and sparkle. (*Same business, puts glasses into bag.*) I don't want to be plain. I want to be—beautiful. (*Doctor sensing danger, shakes his head, and quickly shuts his bag.*)

KING: Well?

QUEEN: Well?

DOCTOR: A doctor cannot change the Princess. Tongue, pulse, temperature—yes. But all the pills in my bag will not make the Princess beautiful. No, no, this is not a case for a doctor. Good day. (*Starts to R.*)

KING: Stop! I command—

DOCTOR (*Stops at entrance, mysteriously.*): There is only one chance—one hope for the Princess.

KING: Yes?

QUEEN: What?

DOCTOR: Magic! (*He exits R.*)

KING: Of course.

QUEEN: We should have thought of that before.

KING (*To Page.*): Quick! A proclamation to the Kingdom! Let it read: "Wanted Immediately! Magicians, Wizards, ANYONE who can transform a—plain young lady into a beautiful young lady. Results must be guaranteed, or—off with his head.

PAGE: Yes, your Majesty. (*Exits R.*)

DAME: Anyone? Anyone may try?

KING (*To the world.*): Anyone who can change the Princess.

DAME (*Smiles excitedly.*): Yes, Yes, I understand—anyone. Oh, excuse me, excuse me. I have to hurry. There is something I must do: (*Curtsies quickly many times as she eagerly backs out of the room at L.*)

PAGE (*Trumpets are heard off R. Page enters.*): The mysterious, the unfathomable, the mighty—Momdoo, Magician of Magic!

QUEEN: Here so soon?