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POCAHONTAS

A play in two acts for childrens theatre, based
on the historic records written about
the Indian Princess Pocahontas

by

AURAND HARRIS



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TO

WINIFRED WARD

POCAHONTAS

CAST

Captain John Smith

Henry Stuart

Pocahontas

Woussicket

Medicine Man

Chief Powhatan

Indian Braves

SCENE

A clearing in the woods in the land of Powhatan, called by the English, Virginia. 1608.

ACT I. Fall.

ACT II. Two days later.

NOTE

This play, based on the many legends about Pocahontas, is written in an heroic style to suit an heroic tale. Pocahontas may or may not have saved the life of John Smith, but she did save the Colony of Jamestown from starvation in the winter of 1608.

The Indian words (see glossary at back) are authentic words used by the Powhatan Indians.

POCAHONTAS

ACT ONE

(The beating of an Indian drum is heard as the house lights go down. The sound reaches a peak in volume, then suddenly stops as the footlights come up, and the curtains open. Scene: a clearing in the forest. The Temple of Okee, the Indian God of Evil, is R.C. It is an image of skins, stuffed and painted, and hung with copper chains in a bough of branches, surrounded by posts on which are painted hideous faces in blue, white, and red. In the stillness two figures enter cautiously D.L. They are John Smith and Henry Stuart. They are dressed like the early settlers in Virginia. Each has a gun and Stuart is carrying a box. Smith is 27, strong, brave, and adventurous. Stuart is about the same age and is a rough, simple soldier of action. He wears a beard. Smith leads and motions Stuart to follow.)

STUART: *(Stops)* Listen. The drum . . . it's stopped beating.

SMITH: We are close to the Indian village.

STUART: *(Looks around, uneasy)* We haven't seen a Redskin since we left the canoe. Just trees and bushes.

SMITH: I chose you to come with me, Stuart, because I needed a brave man.

STUART: Captain, I'm a brave man, and none dare say I'm not! But sneaking around trees, that's not my way of fighting.

SMITH: We have not come to fight. We have come in peace.

STUART: Aye, we must take back corn or the Colony will starve this winter.

(The bells on the Idol Okee jingle slightly. Stuart raises gun.)

What is that?

SMITH: Put down your gun.

(They look at Idol.)

STUART: Look!

SMITH: It is an Indian Idol. The wind is shaking the bells.

STUART: It's a scary looking devil.

SMITH: *(Points to bags at foot of Idol)* Look below . . . corn!

STUART: Aye, bags of corn!

SMITH: The Indians have put corn in front of their Idol to thank him for the good harvest.

STUART: Here's corn waiting for us to take away!

SMITH: Steal?

(Points at Idol.)

The Indians believe the Idol will cast an evil eye on any evil doers.

STUART: Him? That's just a skin stuffed and painted. Who's afraid of that?

(Drum beat is heard, off. Stuart raises his gun, frightened.)

POCAHONTAS

SMITH: Put down your gun.

STUART: Someone is coming.

SMITH: Hide. We will see who it is.

(The men hide D.L. Pocahontas enters R, carrying corn. She is a beautiful young girl, 13, kind but spirited. She wears three white feathers in her head-band and at the moment is wearing a white feather cape, the symbol of being the favorite Princess. Woussicket, meaning Running Brook, her sister follows. She is older and is plain. She carries a small Indian drum on which she beats. Pocahontas begins to dance to the drum-music in a ceremonial dance before Okee. She dances beautifully and gracefully, laying one ear of corn after another in front of Okee, each time saying, "Okee" as she bows. Smith, watching quietly at L, speaks while Pocahontas is dancing)
It is some Indian maidens. One is giving thanks for the great harvest. The Idol is Okee. She is offering him corn . . . See the three feathers in her hair. She is a daughter of the Chief! And the feather cape. She is the *favorite* daughter.

(Whispers impressed.)

She is—Pocahontas.

POCAHONTAS: *(Finishes dance and stands in front of Okee, facing audience, with hands lifted, and prays)* Great Father sent corn to the little people. Little people send prayer to Great Father.

WOUSSICKET—Woussicket dance! Woussicket dance for Okee.

(Holds out drum)

Pocahontas beat drum. Pocahontas dance with feet of hawk.

(Struts vainly)

Woussicket dance like sun on shining water.

POCAHONTAS: Nim.

(Smiles and takes drum and starts beating. Woussicket starts to dance, comically, then stops.)

WOUSSICKET: Matush!

(Pocahontas stops music.)

No corn to give Okee.

POCAHONTAS: Woussicket play in summer. Woussicket gather no corn in time of Falling Leaves.

WOUSSICKET *(D.R. a whippoorwill sings)* Bird! Whippoorwill! Kill whippoorwill. Woussicket give *bird* to Okee!

(Goes to bird nest in tree D.R.)

POCAHONTAS: Matush! Powhatan never harm helpless thing.

WOUSSICKET: Kill whippoorwill for Okee.

POCAHONTAS: Matush! Give. Give whippoorwill to me.

WOUSSICKET: Kill for Okee.

POCAHONTAS: *(With authority, claps hands)* Pocahontas wear feather cape. Pocahontas favorite daughter. Favorite daughter can stop killing.

POCAHONTAS

STUART: (*Listening D.L.*) What does she mean?

SMITH: It is the law of the Powhatan that the favorite daughter of the Chief has the power to save a life if he chooses.

(*Pocahontas holds out hand. Slowly Woussicket gives her the bird.*)

See, she has saved the bird from being killed.

POCAHONTAS: (*Puts bird back in nest gently*) Sing little whippoorwill. Sing for many moons. Sing . . . whippoorwill.

WOUSSICKET: (*Looks at her hand and exclaims*) Metinge! Cut! Bird claw like sharp arrow! Red mark of evil spirit!

(*Frightened, shakes her hand on which is blood.*)

POCAHONTAS: Quick. Put on healing clay of Okee. Magic clay will chase away evil spirit.

(*She goes quickly to Idol and gets clay from an Indian bowl.*)

WOUSSICKET: (*Stands shaking with fright*) Vwwaap! Vwwaap!

STUART: Clay?

SMITH: Yes, it is a special clay. Only the Powhatans know where to find it. A clay that will draw out infection, that will heal a wound.

POCAHONTAS: (*Gently puts clay on Woussicket's palm*) Good clay drive out evil. Hurt will go. Good spirit will return.

WOUSSICKET: (*Frightened and crying*) Evil spirit stings!
(*Look at hand.*)

Evil spirit go away! Do not like!

(*She makes a face, tongue sticking out, at hand.*)

POCAHONTAS: Sh! Spirit will see you.

WOUSSICKET: Woussicket not afraid. Woussicket brave.
(*Shakes hand.*)

Go. Evil spirit go!

(*Starts kicking air.*)

Go. Go!

(*Smiles.*)

Evil spirit gone. Sting gone from hand.

SMITH: (*Rises and steps toward girls*) Greetings to you. Kencuttemaum.

WOUSSICKET: (*Girls look in surprise and fright. Woussicket points and screams*) Evil spirit here! Eeeaaa!

SMITH: (*Raises his hand*) I bring greetings to Powhatan.

WOUSSICKET: Evil spirit speaks!
(*She hides behind Pocahontas, shaking with fright.*)

SMITH: Do not be afraid. We are not spirits.
(*Stuart steps behind him.*)

We are flesh and blood.

WOUSSICKET: Two spirits!

SMITH: We are two friends. We bring greetings to Powhatan and his fair daughters.

(*Takes a step and bows.*)

POCAHONTAS

POCAHONTAS: (*Awed*) Vaugh!

(*Girls take a step backward.*)

SMITH: Friends.

(*Girls take another step back.*)

Netab. Your humble servant.

(*With a sweeping gesture he removes his hat and bows. Woussickett screams and runs behind tree D.R.*)

Sign of friend. Shake hands.

(*Offers to shake hands.*)

POCAHONTAS: (*Ventures to speak timidly*) Friend?

SMITH: Netab . . . friend.

POCAHONTAS: Not spirit?

SMITH: No, we are not evil spirits. We are soldiers sent by—King James of England. We are Englishmen. We live in Jamestown . . . live in village . . . east . . . utchepwoissuma.

POCAHONTAS: (*Nods*) East . . . where sun opens yellow eye.

SMITH: (*Speaks simply and child-like*) I . . . name . . . Smith, Captain John Smith. He . . . name . . . Henry Stuart. And you . . . you are Princess Pocahontas.

POCAHONTAS: (*Nods*) Pocahontas.

SMITH: We have heard of you . . . Princess of the white feather . . . of the snow flakes.

POCAHONTAS: (*Nods again, braver and pleased*) Pocahontas.

SMITH: (*Looks at her approvingly*) The happy one who helps others.

Yes, we have heard of you, "Sunlight-Running-Through-Darkness" . . . Pocahontas, the name was well chosen for you.

POCAHONTAS: (*Calls eagerly*) Woussicket. Woussicket.

(*Woussickett peeks around the tree.*)

Come. Not evil spirit. Friend. Netab.

(*Points at Smith, liking him.*)

Friend.

WOUSSICKET: (*Points at Smith*) Whiteman . . . paleface!

POCAHONTAS: (*Alarmed*) Tassantasses!

SMITH: Yes, our faces are white. But we are *good* paleface.

WOUSSICKET: Away. Quick.

POCAHONTAS: Away!

SMITH: Do not go! We will not hurt you. We come in peace. Netab.

POCAHONTAS: (*Points at gun*) Shooting-stick.

SMITH: Yes, it is a gun . . . shooting-glove . . . stick-with-lightning.

POCAHONTAS: Kill!

SMITH: It is to kill turkeys, to hunt wild turkeys.

POCAHONTAS: Tur-key?

SMITH: Monanaw. To shoot monanaw—turkey. Not shoot friend. In England we shake hands with friend.

(*Shifts gun to left hand and extends his right arm to Pocahontas—full*)

POCAHONTAS

length! Woussicket hides again.)

Friend.

POCAHONTAS: *(Seeing his arm aimed at her, is shaken)* Pocahontas
. . . no tur-key.

SMITH: *(Smiles)* No, you are not a turkey and I will not shoot you.
(Kneels and bows gallantly.)

I kneel to Pocahontas, a brave and beautiful Princess.

POCAHONTAS: *(Worried at his sudden collapse)* Sick? Fall down!
Woussicket, bring pillow of soft moss.

SMITH: *(Laughs)* No, I am not sick. I am bowing at your feet. That
is the way we do in England to pay honor to a beautiful lady.

POCAHONTAS: *(Kneels facing him and looks directly at his face)*
Blue. Muskins blue!

SMITH: What?

POCAHONTAS: *(Elated at her discovery, points at him)* Blue!
(With her arms she makes a circle and looks at the sky.)

Blue like great sky!

STUART: She thinks you have dropped from heaven, that you are a god.

POCAHONTAS: *(Almost touches his eyes, joyously)* Blue. Muskins
blue!

SMITH: Blue eyes. She has never seen *blue* eyes.

WOUSSICKET: *(Peeks and waves from behind tree)* Quick. Run to
long house. Hide.

SMITH: *(Rises happily)* The box . . . the gifts. We will give the blue
beads to Pocahontas.

(Stuart opens box.)

POCAHONTAS: *(Rises and runs to Woussicket)* Eyes blue. Stranger
white . . . pale like play-doll.

(Holds up white corn-cob doll.)

SMITH: *(Holds up blue necklace)* For you, Pocahontas. Blue bubbles.

POCAHONTAS: *(Impressed)* Blue.

SMITH: It is the sky on a string . . . to wear around your neck.

POCAHONTAS: Pocahontas?

SMITH: For you.

(Pocahontas comes to him slowly. He starts to put beads on her.)

For Pocahontas . . . kind one who saved the life of a little bird.

Pocahontas . . . "Bright-stream-between-dark-hills."

WOUSSICKET: Mattath! Blue snake. Bite neck!

SMITH: It will not bite you. It is a necklace. Beads of glass.

POCAHONTAS: *(Looks trustingly at him)* Pocahontas not afraid.

(Smith puts necklace on her.)

Vaugh!

SMITH: We say, "Thank you."

POCAHONTAS: *(Holds necklace and looks down at it, repeating the
words)* Thank-you.

POCAHONTAS

SMITH: You are welcome.

WOUSSICKET: (*Again waves and "Psts"*) Come! Away!

SMITH: Wait. I have a gift for you . . .

(*Waves at her, amused.*)

You . . . Big-one-waving-from the tree.

POCAHONTAS: (*Shakes head, and points*) No. Name . . . Woussicket . . . Running-Brook.

SMITH: We have gifts for all the daughters of the Chief. Come, Running-Brook.

WOUSSICKET: Give Woussicket?

STUART: What will it be for her?

SMITH: I think . . . this little toy. A symbol of royalty from ancient Egypt.

(*Woussicket, not too close, holds out her hand impatiently.*)

WOUSSICKET: Give, Woussiket take.

SMITH: Take.

(*Smith quickly takes from box a small ornate umbrella, aims it at her, opens it, and shouts.*)

Umbrella!

(*Woussicket screams and jumps with fright, turns and runs off R. Smith stands, holding the tiny umbrella upright, innocently looking after her. Pocahontas looks at him and begins to laugh softly.*)

You laugh. Not afraid of paleface who sails across the sea in magic canoes, who chop down trees with big tomahawks, who live in houses made of logs. Who wear funny clothes and have hair on their chin. Paleface . . . some good, some bad.

STUART: She doesn't understand what you are saying.

SMITH: No, but she is not afraid.

POCAHONTAS: (*Who has been looking at him steadily, now smiles and points*) Paleface . . . white like my play-doll.

(*Holds out white corn-cob doll.*)

Pale . . . like pale doll—papoose.

SMITH: She is not afraid because I am white like her corn-cob doll! (*There is an Indian war whoop, off R. The men look about. There is another whoop off L.*)

STUART: Her sister has told the Chief.

SMITH: (*Seriously to Pocahontas*) I have come to see your Father, Mighty Chief Powhatan. I have come in peace. Netab.

(*From L an Indian Brave creeps in, holding and hiding behind a small bush. Smith points to himself.*)

John Smith . . . talk to Chief Powhatan.

POCAHONTAS: John-Smith . . . what mean?

(*Another Indian Brave creeps in from L, also hiding behind a low bush he carries.*)

SMITH: Our names do not mean beautiful things like yours.

POCAHONTAS

(More Indian Braves slip in at back, all hiding behind the low bushes they carry.)

STUART: I can tell you what the name John Smith means. It means a brave man, Captain of the Jamestown Colony.

POCAHONTAS: *(Smiles, repeats name haltingly)* John-Smith. Means blue-eyes . . . white friend.

(A drum starts beating, and the Indian Braves, one at a time, leap from their bushes and dance. The Whitemen are surrounded in a semi-circle back of them. Rattles are heard with the drum beat and the Medicine Man enters, frightening in appearance. He dances a few steps, hiding his eyes with his hand from Smith, then stops. Pocahontas runs to Medicine Man, entreating him)

Netab. Friend.

(Medicine Man still shielding his eyes from men, pushes her away.)

STUART: They hid their eyes.

SMITH: They dare not look at us until the Medicine Man has cast out the evil spirits from us.

(Medicine Man begins and does a short wild dance, casting out the evil spirits from Whitemen. He finishes the dance with a big climax and whoop. The Indian Braves now peek above their bushes, look at the Whitemen, and creep closer.)

STUART: They are looking at us now!

SMITH: You wanted to see them, face to face.

STUART: I'll fight any of them. One at a time!

(Drums start beating softly. Medicine Man kneels, facing front, takes out tomahawks from his belt and lays them in a row on the ground, motioning and chanting charms over them.)

What is he doing?

SMITH: The Medicine Man is saying magic charms, saying prayers over the sharp tomahawks.

STUART: Why?

SMITH: So the tomahawks will be ready, if the Indians need to use them—on us.

(Stuart raises his gun.)

Put your gun down. Remember, we come in peace.

(Smith steps forward and shouts.)

Kencuttemaum! Bright sun to you!

(Drum stop, off.)

I come . . . I speak to Chief! Otassapnan!

(The drums start again, loud! All look to R. Chief Powhatan enters at R, magnificent in all his feathers. He walks with dignity and stands feet apart, and frowns at Smith. Drums stop. There is silence. Chief folds his arms, nods his head, and grunts. Smith folds his arms, nods his head, and grunts. They look at each other.)

POCAHONTAS: *(Touches Father and speaks softly)* Netab. Friend Say welcome to friend.

POCAHONTAS

(Nods her head and speaks friendly to Smith.)

Kencuttemaum. Bright sun to you.

SMITH: Bright sun to Chief Powhatan. I come in peace. Netab.

(Offers hand.)

CHIEF: *(Sternly)* Stranger. No see before.

POCAHONTAS: Name . . . John-Smith.

CHIEF: John-Smith . . . what mean?

POCAHONTAS: Eyes-blue!

CHIEF: Two strangers.

(Points at Stuart.)

Who?

SMITH: He is a soldier. Name . . . Henry Stuart.

CHIEF: What mean?

POCAHONTAS: *(Points at beard)* Fuzzy-mouth.

SMITH: And your name is Powhatan.

CHIEF: *(Nods with pride)* Means . . . Greater than sun . . . greater than mountain!

SMITH: Chief of chiefs!

CHIEF: *(Repeats new words with pleasure)* Chief-of-chiefs.

SMITH: *(Slowly and elaborately)* My King sends me to you. I bring gifts of peace.

CHIEF: *(Shakes his head)* Words rattle in head.

SMITH: I bring gifts to you, Chief Powhatan, from . . . from *Chief* James of England.

(Motions toward box.)

Give to you.

CHIEF: Give?

SMITH: Gifts for you and your daughters . . . amosens.

CHIEF: Daughters?

POCAHONTAS: See.

(Holds up necklace and speaks haltingly.)

“Thank-you.”

SMITH: Daughters? How many daughters?

(Holds up fingers and counts.)

CHIEF: *(Nods proudly)* Daughters!

(Holds up hand and counts fingers.)

Kekut, ninge, nousough, yeough, poronce . . .

(Doubles his fist and shows five more fingers.)

Koshe.

(Then shows one more finger.)

Kekut.

STUART: Eleven daughters.

CHIEF: *(Swells with pride and speaks haltingly)* Chief-of-chiefs!

SMITH: His Majesty Chief of England sends you and your royal children greetings. He begs Chief Powhatan to accept his humble gifts. First a royal robe . . .

. . .

POCAHONTAS

(He takes a folded red velvet cape with train from the box. Hands it to Chief.)

Thaigivennummeraan.

CHIEF: Give Powhatan?

(Smith nods and they start to unfold it. With each unfolding, the Chief grunts with pleasure.)

Moowchick . . . moowchick . . . moowchick!

(He holds it up for all to see.)

For Powhatan!

(Then he spreads it on the ground like a rug.)

Sit soft on new rug.

(He sits in the middle of it, cross-legged and important.)

SMITH: No, it is not a rug to sit on. It is a robe, a cape . . . to wear . . . to cover you.

CHIEF: Cover? Nim. Big Cover!

(He immediately lays back and pulls the robe over him.)

SMITH: No, it is not a bedcover. It is to wear on your back . . . on your shoulders.

(Chief snores loudly. Smith speaks to Pocahontas.)

Tell him it is a cape, like your cape of feathers.

POCAHONTAS: *(Puts finger to lips and whispers)* Sh! Chief sleep.

(She and Indian Braves stand stiffly and silently. Chief snores again.)

Chief make deep-sleep music.

STUART: *(Impatiently)* Words! Talk! We want food. He doesn't understand about King James.

SMITH: Nor does King James understand the Indians.

STUART: We came for corn! You take the sacks. I will hold them off with my gun!

SMITH: There has been too much shooting. This time we come with gifts.

(He looks at the Indians who are all "frozen". To get their attention he knocks loudly on the box, then looks inside and exclaims.)

Moowchick! More! More inside!

(All heads turn to look at box.)

Ah, what is this!

(He holds up a golden crown with jewels and pointed peaks.)

A crown for Powhatan! Chief of chiefs!

CHIEF: *(Suddenly sits up, awake)* Powhatan eyes open.

SMITH: English King sends royal crown for Indian King. Crown Indian Chief. Make Indian King-chief!

CHIEF: Shines like high sun.

POCAHONTAS: Vaugh!

SMITH: Bright sun give to Powhatan.

(Holds crown toward Chief.)

CHIEF: Nim. Nim.

(Starts to take it eagerly, but Smith holds it away and continues.)

POCAHONTAS

SMITH: For Powhatan, greater than the sun.

CHIEF: Nim.

(Tries to take crown.)

SMITH: Greater than the mountains.

CHIEF: Nim.

(Same business repeated.)

SMITH: Chief of chiefs!

(Finally gives Chief the crown.)

CHIEF: *(Holds it proudly—unside down)* Come. Vimamun!

(Braves gather around and jabber excitedly. Chief silences them.)

Mattath!

(Braves move back. Chief turns to Smith.)

Name? Name of little sun?

SMITH: It is a crown. You wear it like your feather-bonnet. King wears crown on head.

(Smith touches his own.)

CHIEF: Head?

(He looks at the crown which he holds in front of him, feels the sharp spikes turned downward, moves the crown down and sees that the spikes would sink into his head, feels his own head.)

No! Sharp teeth! Bite head!

(Pushes crown toward Smith.)

SMITH: *(Takes crown and turns it right side up)* You have it upside down. You wear it this way. See . . . no teeth. No eat your head.

CHIEF: *(Relieved)* Wamattuwh.

SMITH: According to the King's orders a two gun salute will be fired after the crown is placed on your royal head.

STUART: Do you think we should fire the gun? These Indians have never heard a gunshot.

SMITH: March to the top of the hill and fire twice into the air.

STUART: I think we should stay together.

SMITH: It is the King's command.

STUART: Aye, sir. It will be done.

(He stands at attention, then marches off at L.)

SMITH: *(All is ready)* In the name of James the first, King of England, son of Mary Queen of Scotland, I place on the head of the Mighty Powhatan, a royal crown, a sign of friendship, so that two great nations will live in peace. Long live the two Kings!

(Smith places the crown on Chief's head. Immediately Chief gives a war cry and motions to Braves.)

CHIEF: Powhatan takes crown! Powhatan take prisoner!

(Points to Smith, and Braves yell and start to creep up around Smith.)

SMITH: We came for corn. White man begs for food. Paleface hungry.

POCAHONTAS: Hun-gry?

CHIEF: *(Orders Pocahontas)* Go in long house.

POCAHONTAS: Hun-gry! Give corn.

POCAHONTAS

CHIEF: Go! Keii!

(Pocahontas runs off R.)

SMITH: *(Pleads with Chief)* Friend. Netab!

CHIEF: Paleface never friend. Paleface enemy!

(Points at Smith and yells.)

Keii!

(Braves yell, "Keii!" and start surrounding Smith.)

SMITH: We do not want to kill. We want peace. Teach us how to grow corn. How to live in the wilderness. We will teach you how to sail boats, to use a compass . . .

(Takes compass from pocket.)

See . . . magic eye . . . magic needle . . . to north!

CHIEF: *(To Medicine Man)* Cacuttewass yowk?

MEDICINE MAN: *(Moves cautiously to Smith and looks at compass)* Kekewh! Alive! Wiggle worm!

(Looks again, points to Chief.)

Magic worm points at Chief!

CHIEF: Undoth!

(Claps his hands.)

Take worm! Take Paleface. Keii!

(Braves yell and leap and grab Smith, holding him fast.)

Powhatan holds prisoner!

(A loud report of gun fire is heard off L. It is deafening. Braves and Medicine Man yell in fear, hold their ears, and run off R. Chief in great fear throws the robe over him, and hiding under it, crawls to R.)

SMITH: *(Looks around at empty stage. Then speaks to the moving cover)* Friend. Stay. Netab.

CHIEF: *(At R, peeks from under robe, then rises)* Go! Take bang-bang! Never see again. Never come again! Keii!

(There is a second loud report of gun fire off L. Chief yells, throws cover over his head and runs out at R. There is silence.)

SMITH: *(Looks off R, speaks softly)* I have failed. I have not made friends.

STUART: *(Enters L)* Quick. We will get away while they are still shaking with fear.

SMITH: The Chief will sit alone until the Great Spirit tells him what to do. Whiteman's thunder has confused him.

POCAHONTAS: *(Calls off R, softly)* John-Smith . . . ?

(Smith looks R, not certain he has heard.)

John-Smith.

SMITH: *(Sees Pocahontas, as she enters timidly D.R.)* It is Pocahontas.

POCAHONTAS: *(Softly)* John-Smith hun-gry?

SMITH: Yes. All my people are hungry. They will die this winter. We have no food.

POCAHONTAS: *(She comes slowly to Smith and gives him a large folded leaf. She speaks shyly)* For John-Smith hun-gry.