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Dramatic Publishing

The Princess and the Goblin



*Fantasy/Drama by
Sandra Fenichel Asher
Based on the novel by
George MacDonald*

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“The novel by George MacDonald that served as the basis for the play inspired the works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien and even the musings of Sylvia Plath, but it’s the children who feel the magic of this story in play form.” —*UVUREVIEW.com*

The Princess and the Goblin By Sandra Fenichel Asher.

Based on the novel by George MacDonald. Cast: 1 to 4m., 3 to 5w., 5 actors or puppets. Princess Irene is kept in near isolation in a secluded mountain house with her nursemaid, Lootie, as her main source of company. In spite of her loving father’s occasional visits and concern for her well-being, Irene longs for connection—to her distant father; to the memory of her dead mother; to her forbidden commoner friend, Curdie; and even to Lootie, who cares for her but refuses to believe anything Irene says about the sudden occurrence of dreamlike, mysterious happenings. One day, Irene discovers a strange new stairway and follows it to the top of the house where she meets The Mysterious Lady, someone who will help her make the connections she craves. At the same time, the young miner, Curdie, is exploring suspicious doings in the dark world within the mountain—home to the goblins who bear a long-held grudge against “sun-people.” As Irene dares to climb higher and Curdie dares to dig deeper, their paths meet in surprising ways until they eventually join forces to foil the goblins’ plans and inspire new and lasting connections. *Area staging. Approximate running time: 50 minutes. Code: PK3.*

Cover: Noorda Regional Theatre Center for Children & Youth at Utah Valley University and Resonance Story Theatre production featuring Morgan Fenner as Irene and Aubrey Warner (hidden puppeteer).
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The Princess and the Goblin

A Play in One Act
by
SANDRA FENICHEL ASHER

Adapted from the Book
by
GEORGE MACDONALD



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(THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN)

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with gratitude

and happy memories.

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The Princess and the Goblin was first performed as a large-cast, mainstage show by the Open Eye Theater, Margaretville, N.Y., from December 3-6, 2009, with Amie Brockway and Sharone Stacey directing and the following cast and staff:

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY.....	Laura Battelani
PRINCESS IRENE	Melissa Day
LOOTIE	Amie Brockway
CURDIE	Phillip Misner
GOBLIN QUEEN	Aganes Laub
CREATURES.....	Michael Conroy and Eric Misner
GOBLIN KING.....	John Exter
HELPER.....	Beau Morrow
CURDIE'S MOTHER.....	Patricia Brannen
SIR WALTER.....	Duel Keck

Original music by Ric Averill

Costumes by Amie Brockway

Set and Lighting by Adrienne J. Brockway

Stage Manager.....	David J. Turan
Standby Actor.....	Thomas Hafner
Set Construction	Erwin Karl
Light and Sound Operator	Jeremiah Burke

The revised script was produced as a four-actor touring show by Utah Valley University Noorda Theatre Center for Children and Youth and Resonance Story Theatre, Orem, Utah, with performances at the Noorda Theatre Center and on tour in the region from September to December, 2011. Nannette Watts directed with the following cast:

PRINCESS IRENE Morgan Fenner
CURDIE, SIR WALTER Jason Sullivan
THE MYSTERIOUS LADY, GOBLIN KING, CURDIE'S
MOTHER Aubrey Warner
LOOTIE, GOBLIN QUEEN Nannette Watts

Producer: Dr. John Newman
Tour Manager: Eileen Nagle
Costume Designer: Allen Stout
Stitchers: Allen Stout, Jennessa Law, Kristi Summers
Puppet Design: Dallin Blankenship
Puppet Construction: Randy McNair
Puppet Consultant: Levi Larsen
Sound Assistance: Brian Healy
Properties and Set: Stephen Purdy
Program Design: Isaac Walters
Event Manager: Traci Hainsworth
Poster Design: Kristin Call
Scenic Painting: Practicum Students
Box Office: Linda Moore

The Princess and the Goblin

CHARACTERS

(5f, 4m, 5 or more m or f)

For a small, tourable production, 10 characters (5f, 2m, 3 m or f) may be played by four or more live actors . The rest (2m, 2 or more m or f) may be puppets handled by those live actors. See suggestions for double-casting and puppet assignments below.

For a larger cast, all roles may be assigned to individual live actors or puppeteers.

For an even larger cast, music may be added and as many dancers as desired may play PIGEONS that accompany LADY's entrances and exits, additional DOORS, the goblins' CREATURES, and additional GUARDS, GOBLINS, and CREATURES to dance the final battle scene.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY.....Irene's wise, magical and beautiful great-great-grandmother. Live actor when young; may be a puppet when elderly.

IRENE a young princess, brave, spirited, curious.
Live actor.

LOOTIEIrene's nursemaid, kind, caring, worried.
Live actor.

CURDIE a young commoner who works in the mines.
Brave and good. Live actor.

GOBLIN QUEEN angry and unpleasant. Live actor.

GOBLIN KING unpleasant and somewhat henpecked.
Live actor.

HELPER goblin prince, goofy, clueless. Live actor
or puppet.

SIR WALTER a royal guard. Live actor or puppet.

CURDIE'S MOTHER a commoner, gentle, kind.
Live actor.

FIRST, SECOND and THIRD DOORS live actors.

CREATURES two or more, grotesque pets of the
goblins. Live actors or puppets.

PIGEONS (optional) one or more, as lighting effects,
puppets or dancers, if desired.

Actors may be double-cast as follows:

LOOTIE also plays GOBLIN QUEEN, THIRD DOOR

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY also plays GOBLIN KING,
FIRST DOOR, CURDIE'S MOTHER

CURDIE also plays SECOND DOOR

Puppets may be assigned to the actors as follows:

HELPER is handled by the actor playing IRENE.

SIR WALTER and THE MYSTERIOUS LADY PUPPET are handled by the actor playing THE MYSTERIOUS LADY.

CREATURES may be handled by any and all actors, as needed.

Some puppets may be handled by different actors at different times.

The Utah Valley University/Resonance Story Theatre production used the following configuration:

LOOTIE also played GOBLIN QUEEN and THIRD DOOR.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY also played FIRST DOOR, CURDIE'S MOTHER and GOBLIN KING (puppet).

IRENE also played HELPER (puppet).

CURDIE also played SECOND DOOR and SIR WALTER (puppet). At one point, the actor played CURDIE and SIR WALTER at the same time; during the battle scene, the SIR WALTER puppet entered by being thrown on stage and then picked up by CURDIE.

Black capes were used to cover the actors' costumes while they worked puppets.

TIME

Long, long ago.

PLACE

Within and near a many-storied house and a mountain in English mining country. One unit set, with opportunities for the actors to climb up and down to various playing levels, serves as both house and mountain. In the script, light changes are indicated to differentiate between the house and the mountain, but other methods may serve as well, among them the turning of selected flats, opening and closing of drapes, arrangement of simple set pieces, and/or atmospheric music and sound effects.

NOTE FOR TOURING PURPOSES: Since this play will be presented in story theatre style, the audience will always know exactly where scenes are taking place and will use their imaginations to create details not supplied by the set or technology. The Utah Valley University/Resonance Story Theatre production toured with only two folding ladders: one for the house, one for the mountain. The second had a drape attached that was closed to “trap” CURDIE.

PLAYING TIME: About 50 minutes, unless extended with dance.

MUSIC: Optional melodies for CURDIE’s songs are available from Ric Averill, raverill@sunflower.com.

The Princess and the Goblin

AT RISE: *MUSIC*, an ethereal “Lady’s Theme,” that perhaps incorporates the cooing of pigeons. *LIGHTS* play across the set, slowly changing from “house” to “mountain” and back again several times. At last, *LIGHTS* settle on “house,” and *THE MYSTERIOUS LADY* appears, in her youthful form. *MUSIC* fades as she speaks to the audience.

LADY. There was once a princess whose father was king over a great country full of mountains and valleys. Her name was Irene.

(IRENE enters and speaks to audience. THE MYSTERIOUS LADY is aware of all the other characters, but they are not aware of her. She keeps herself apart from them.)

IRENE. Shortly after her birth, the princess was sent to a house on the side of a mountain to be brought up among country people by her nursemaid, Lootie.

LOOTIE *(entering)*. Well, here you are, Princess. I do wish you wouldn’t wander so far.

IRENE. Not so very far, Lootie. You found me.

LOOTIE. And a good thing, too. It’ll be getting dark soon and we won’t want to be outside. *(To audience.)* Princess Irene was a sweet creature. Her mother had died, and

though the king missed his daughter something terrible, he knew it was important to keep her safely hidden away.

(She puts a finger to her lips, signaling to the audience that this has something to do with a secret that IRENE knows nothing about. SOUND of church bells. LOOTIE takes note. BELLS fade under dialogue.)

LOOTIE *(cont'd)*. Time to go in, Princess.

IRENE. Can we not watch the stars come out?

LOOTIE. You know we cannot. Come, now.

IRENE. But why? Others are out at night...

LOOTIE *(ominously)*. Aye, others indeed. Come along.

(IRENE reluctantly follows LOOTIE offstage. LIGHTS change from "house" to "mountain.")

LADY. The nearby mountains were full of huge caverns and winding ways. Miners discovered these hidden places as they dug for the rich ore inside. One was a boy named Curdie.

CURDIE *(enters with his mining gear and "climbs" the mountain, speaking to audience)*. As the miners dug, they also discovered a strange race of beings, the goblins.

(SOUNDS of yapping precede the entrance of GOBLIN QUEEN with a snarling CREATURE. CURDIE puts down his pickax and hides.)

GOBLIN QUEEN. Hark! Who goes there? *(CREATURE whines.)* Ah, hush, you pesky thing. There's no one here.

Rouse me for no cause again, and I'll have you roasted for dinner.

(She exits, yanking the CREATURE along. It gives a last plaintive yip.)

GOBLIN QUEEN *(cont'd)*. Silence!

CURDIE *(to audience, emerging from his hiding place)*.

The goblins once lived above ground, like others. But a long-ago king so burdened them with heavy taxes and strict laws, they took refuge deep inside the mountains. There, away from the sun, they lived as they pleased, and grew in cleverness and mischief. *(He puts a finger to his lips and exits, following GOBLIN QUEEN, but forgetting his pickax.)*

LADY *(to audience)*. The goblins delighted in tormenting “sun-people” — all who lived in the open air above them. They despised sun-people, especially the children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the long-ago king whose cruelty they never forgave.

(FLASH of lightning; SOUNDS of thunder and rain. LIGHT changes from “mountain” to “house” and THE MYSTERIOUS LADY climbs to the top as she speaks.)

LADY. And so the present king had good reason to keep Irene hidden away. But it was a lonely life for a child.

(IRENE enters with a book, sits, tries to read, closes the book and sighs. CURDIE slips back to retrieve his pickax, then exits.)

LADY (*cont'd*). Princess Irene and Curdie, the miner boy, lived worlds apart from one another. But the dark plans of the goblins would soon bring them together.

(THE MYSTERIOUS LADY disappears at the top of the house. LOOTIE enters, briskly performing chores. SOUNDS of storm continue under dialogue.)

IRENE. Do you think my father will visit today, Lootie?

LOOTIE. He's not expected, Princess. And the storm wouldn't make for a very pleasant journey.

IRENE. Still, I wish he'd come.

LOOTIE. I know.

IRENE. Will it ever stop raining, do you think?

LOOTIE. It'll stop raining in due time, and your father will visit when he can. Now read your book. I've work to do.

(LOOTIE exits. IRENE glances at her book, sighs, puts it away and stands up, speaking to audience.)

IRENE. The great house had many stairways and doors. Left to herself, Irene explored them all. But one day, she found a door she'd never opened. And beyond it, a staircase she'd never climbed. On this day—all rainy and lonely—she decided to find out what was at the top of those stairs.

(IRENE begins climbing. DOORS bar her way.)

FIRST DOOR. Up and up she ran...

SECOND DOOR. ...along passages with many doors...

THIRD DOOR. ...around one corner...

FIRST DOOR. ...and two...

SECOND DOOR. ...and three...

THIRD DOOR. ...seeing doors...

FIRST DOOR. ...and more doors...

SECOND DOOR. ...and only doors...

THIRD DOOR. Very soon, she was lost.

IRENE (*extricating herself from DOORS*). Then she saw a stair.

(DOORS exit. SOUNDS of storm fade.)

IRENE (*cont'd*). Frightened as she was, she could not help wanting to see where it led.

(She continues to climb. MUSIC: "Lady's Theme." THE MYSTERIOUS LADY appears in her elderly form at the top of the house, spinning. She's surrounded by silvery LIGHT.)

IRENE (*cont'd*). At last, Irene found herself in a tower, where she opened one last door... (*She opens door.*)

LADY (*as MUSIC fades*). Come in, my dear.

IRENE. What is this wonderful light?

LADY. It's my very own moon.

IRENE. I've never seen it about the house before.

LADY. Now that you've seen it once, you'll see it again.

IRENE. What are you spinning?

LADY. In good time, child, you'll know what I'm spinning.

But, first, you must know my name. It's Irene.

IRENE. That's *my* name!

LADY. I know. But I haven't got your name. You've got mine.

IRENE. How can that be?

LADY. I am your great-great-grandmother. Your father, the king, asked if I had any objection to your having my name and, of course, I hadn't.

IRENE. That was very kind of you.

LADY. Oh, a name can be given away and kept all the same. I have a good many such things.

IRENE. Why have we never met before?

LADY. I'll explain it all to you some day. But I'll tell this much now: I came here to take care of you. I came the day you arrived.

IRENE. I wonder why Lottie never told me.

LADY. Lottie doesn't know.

IRENE. But somebody knows you're in the house?

LADY. Nobody.

IRENE. How do you get your dinner, then?

LADY. I keep a flock of pigeons.

IRENE. You eat pigeons?

LADY. No. I never kill any of my pigeons.

IRENE. You eat their eggs!

LADY. Yes.

IRENE. And they can fly, and find food for themselves!

LADY. Exactly.

IRENE. How lovely!

LADY. Indeed, it is. But I think you must go back now. I dare say Lottie is looking for you everywhere.

IRENE. Except here! Please, will you take me back? I don't know the way.

LADY. I'll take you to the top of the stair. Then you must run down into your own room.

IRENE (*to audience, as she takes THE MYSTERIOUS LADY's hand*). The princess was brought to the top of the first stair. (*She lets go of LADY's hand and descends.*) Then down she ran...and down...and down again.

(*THE MYSTERIOUS LADY watches and then exits.*)

LOOTIE (*enters below*). Where have you been, Princess? I was afraid— (*She checks herself, abruptly.*)

IRENE. What were you afraid of, Lootie?

LOOTIE. Never mind. Tell me where you've been.

IRENE. I've been to see my great-great-grandmother.

LOOTIE. What nonsense are you talking?

IRENE. I'm not talking nonsense. I'll tell you all about her. She's older than you, but prettier.

LOOTIE. Oh, I dare say!

IRENE. And she lives on pigeon eggs.

LOOTIE. Most likely.

IRENE. And sits in an empty room, spinning.

LOOTIE. Not a doubt of it.

IRENE. And she's been there ever since I came to live here. Why did you never tell me that?

LOOTIE. There was no need. You could make it all up for yourself.

IRENE. You don't believe me!

LOOTIE. I know princesses often make up stories, but you're the first to expect them to be believed.

IRENE. But it's quite true!

LOOTIE. Perhaps you've dreamt it, child.

IRENE. I didn't dream it. Come with me, and see!

LOOTIE. It's your dinner time. And I won't have any more such nonsense.

(She exits. IRENE sits down, hurt and angry, exactly where she was before her adventure started. A beat, then she stands and speaks to audience.)

IRENE. Lootie was watchful, but she couldn't spend every minute in the princess' room. The very next day, Irene ran up the stairs again. But this time was not at all like the first.

(DOORS enter and confound her.)

IRENE *(cont'd)*. She ran through passage after passage, but couldn't find the stair to the tower. Had her visit with her great-great-grandmother only been a dream?

(DOORS exit. IRENE returns to her original spot and sits.)

IRENE *(cont'd)*. Irene said nothing more about it to Lootie, for she had no way to prove her words.

(A beat, then LIGHTS brighten—)

IRENE *(cont'd)*. At last, the rain ended. *(Clapping her hands and calling offstage.)* Lootie! Let's go out for a walk on the mountain.

LOOTIE (*enters with a hat for IRENE and for herself*).
Gladly, Princess. We've had enough gloom and damp
around here!

*(They walk "out" together. LIGHTS change from
"house" to "mountain." They make their way across the
stage and then upward.)*

IRENE. And so the princess and Lootie set out together.

LOOTIE. Clouds rolled away in broken pieces, like great,
woolly sheep.

IRENE. Trees were hung all over with raindrops. They
sparkled like jewels.

LOOTIE. After a while, the sun began to set. (*To IRENE.*)
Time to go back, Princess.

IRENE. No, Lootie! A little farther.

LOOTIE. It'll be dark soon. We must go home.

IRENE. But it's ever so much easier to go downhill! Let's
go on. Please?

LOOTIE. On they went...

IRENE. ...now to look at ferns...

LOOTIE. ...now to see a stream...

IRENE. ...now to pick up a shining stone...and watch a bird
in flight.

LOOTIE (*as LIGHTS dim*). Suddenly, the shadow of a great
mountain peak shot in front of them. (*To IRENE.*) We
mustn't be out a moment longer. We're much too far from
home.

*(GOBLIN KING enters, hiding and peering out at them
as they descend.)*

IRENE. Lootie! There's a curious creature behind that tree.

(GOBLIN KING laughs. LOOTIE stifles a scream.)

LOOTIE. Hurry, child!

IRENE. But who is that?

LOOTIE. Nobody! Hurry!

GOBLIN KING. Lies! Lies! Lies!

LOOTIE. We've gone too far! We're lost! What am I to do?

(GOBLIN KING laughs. LOOTIE holds IRENE close. CURDIE enters, singing. GOBLIN KING groans and exits quickly.)

CURDIE *(singing)*.

HUSH! SCUSH! SCURRY!

THERE YOU GO IN A HURRY!

GOBBLE! GOBBLE! GOBLIN!

THERE YOU GO A WOBBLIN'!

HOBBLE, HOBBLE, HOBBLIN!!

COBBLE! COBBLE! COBBLIN'!

HOB-BOB-GOBLIN!

HUUUUUUH!

LOOTIE *(whispering)*. Do be quiet. You'll bring them all upon us.

CURDIE. No, they can't bear singing.

IRENE. Who can't? What was it that laughed at us?

CURDIE. A goblin, no doubt.

IRENE. A goblin!

CURDIE. They're after somebody—

LOOTIE. Oh, dear. I didn't want to worry her.