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SF PERUSALS

Old King Cole

A pantomime

Paul Reakes

Samuel French — London
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CHARACTERS

Dotty Dumplin, the royal cook
Prince Peski, the King's brother
Princess Pariah, his wife
The Herald
Florian, the King's aide
Old King Cole
1st Fiddler
2nd Fiddler
3rd Fiddler
Debbie, Dotty's daughter
Little King Cole
Lady Dragonia

Chorus of: **Courtiers**, **Pages**, **Townsfolk**, **Tradespeople** and **Creatures** of the Forbidden Forest

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I
SCENE 1 The Royal Palace of Old King Cole
SCENE 2 Outside the Palace Gates
SCENE 3 The Town Square
SCENE 4 Outside the Palace Gates
SCENE 5 The Forbidden Forest

ACT II
SCENE 1 The Town Square
SCENE 2 Outside the Gates
SCENE 3 The Royal Palace
SCENE 4 Outside the Palace Gates
SCENE 5 The Forbidden Forest
SCENE 6 Outside the Palace Gates
SCENE 7 The Grand Finale

Time — Pantotime

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MUSICAL NUMBERS

ACT I

No 1	Song and Dance	The Courtiers
No 2	Dance and Song	Pages and Fiddlers
No 3	Song and Dance	Old King Cole, Florian and Courtiers
No 4	Comedy Song	Fiddlers
No 5	Song and Dance	Townsfolk
No 6	Romantic Duet	Florian and Debbie
No 6a	Reprise of Song 6 (optional)	Florian and Debbie
No 7	Song and Dance	Dotty and Townsfolk
No 8	Song and Dance	Creatures of the Forest
No 8a	Reprise of Song 8	Creatures of the Forest

ACT II

No 9	Song and Dance	Fiddlers and Townsfolk
No 10	Comedy Evil Song and Dance	Pariah, Peski and Townsfolk
No 11	Comedy Song and Dance	Dotty and Fiddlers
No 12	Song and Dance	Pages and Courtiers
No 12a	Reprise of Song 8	Creatures of the Forest
No 13	Romantic Duet	Florian and Debbie
No 14	Song and Dance	All
No 15	House Song	Dotty, Fiddlers and the Audience
No 16	Finale Song or Reprise	All

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

Dotty Dumplin (Dame) is the royal cook. She is a larger-than-life "lady" of changing moods. One minute she is fun-loving and gushing, the next, she is blunt and sarcastic. But whatever her mood, you can't help liking the old girl. She is always on friendly and confidential terms with the audience and never misses an opportunity of involving them. Singing and dancing ability is an advantage with this role, but good characterization and camaraderie with the audience is essential. Needless to say, all her costumes, hair-dos and make-up are ludicrous and funny. Apart from her cook's costumes, she gets to wear an outrageous outfit with a very short skirt and platform shoes. Regal robes and a crown for the Finale.

Prince Peski (Baddie) is Old King Cole's younger brother. He is dominated by his scheming wife, and lives in fear of his awesome mother-in-law. Under these circumstances, you might be tempted to feel sorry for him. Well, don't waste your sympathy! He is a thoroughly unpleasant individual. A snivelling, cowardly weasel of a man who deserves every boo and hiss he gets! Singing and dancing ability is not essential for this role, but strong characterization is. His costume is elegant although its cut and colour should give him a sinister appearance. A regal robe for when he has made himself the King.

Princess Pariah (Baddie) is Peski's wife. She is the mastermind behind the evil plot to dispose of Old King Cole and make her husband the King. She will resort to any lengths to achieve this, even to the extent of devising exploding birthday cakes and calling on the powers of darkness! Both she and Peski never miss an opportunity of stirring the audience into a frenzy of boos and hisses. Singing and dancing ability is not essential for this role, but a strong, dominant personality certainly is. Her costume is elegant, but should give her a sinister and menacing appearance. As does her head-dress, hair-style and make-up. A regal robe and crown for when she makes herself the Queen.

The Herald (Small character part) is very much a law unto himself and he doesn't care who knows it! His duty, apart from making the occasional announcement, is to blow fanfares from his trusty trumpet. (These he mimes to sound effects played over the sound system.) No

singing or dancing required. The part can be played equally well as a truculent teenager or a petulant pensioner. He wears (without too much elegance!) a tabard bearing the royal insignia, baggy tights and hat with a wilting plume.

Florian (Principal boy) is the King's aide. He is a handsome, dashing young man with great charm and gracious manners. He takes his job at the palace very seriously, and is totally loyal to Old King Cole. However, his allegiance is certainly put to the test when the King decides to marry the girl he has just fallen in love with. But duty is duty, and it seems that the lovers must part. Some strong acting is required to portray this conflict between love and duty. A good singing voice and dancing ability is needed for this role. His costumes are resplendent and show off his gorgeous pair of legs. Special Finale costume.

Old King Cole (Comedy character part) is indeed a merry old soul and much loved by all his subjects. He is also a rather naïve and foolish old soul. He is totally unaware that his evil brother and sister-in-law are plotting to get rid of him and take over the throne. He also decides that he wants to be married, and chooses the same girl who has just fallen in love with his young aide. If this wasn't bad enough, he lets the scheming Pariah persuade him to take a dip in the magic pool to regain his long lost youth. This ends in disaster when she transforms him into a ten-year-old boy! However, by the end he realizes the folly of his ways and puts things right. He even ends up marrying Dotty! This is a character part that should be made likable and endearing. For all his years he is still spry and active, if at times a little befuddled. Singing and dancing is not essential. Regal regalia and crown. White hair and beard. For his dip in the magic pool he wears long red combinations. Splendid regal robes and crown for the Finale.

The Three Fiddlers are the palace entertainers. They are very short on conversation, and when they do speak it is at the same time and mostly in words of one syllable. Their main purpose is to provide song and dance, but they are also involved in comic business with Dotty and audience participation. They can be an all male/all female trio, or a mixture of both. They use prop fiddles for their initial entrance and these can be discarded later, if so desired. They wear matching troubadour type outfits with tabards, tights and feathered caps. "Page boy" style wigs of the same colour would be a nice touch.

Debbie (Principal girl) is Dotty's daughter. This comes as a surprise because she is a pretty and petite young woman with a quiet, unassuming

manner. Not a bit like her boisterous mum. She is soon beguiled by Florian, and falls hopelessly in love with him. When chosen to be Old King Cole's wife she is naturally devastated. And Florian's obsession with his royal duty doesn't help matters. Some strong emotional acting is required when this conflict comes into being. A good singing voice and dancing ability is needed for this role. Her costumes are all homespun, but they are neat and attractive. Special Finale costume.

Little King Cole (Child's part) is Old King Cole transformed into a ten-year-old boy! This is the result of his entering the magic pool and Pariah's evil trickery. Although greatly reduced in size and years, he is still very much the King. The trouble is, no one will believe him. Eventually, he convinces Dotty and together they set out to thwart the baddies by returning him to his true age. The role should be played by a competent youngster (preferably male) who has the ability to make the plight of this character believable. No singing or dancing is required. He only has one costume: a duplicate of the long red combinations as worn by Old King Cole.

Lady Dragonia (Comedy character part) is Pariah's mother and Peski's much feared mother-in-law. He has good reason to be scared because she is a very formidable old lady. But as she delights in deriding him at every opportunity we can't help liking her. Being both a battleaxe and a dabbler in the Black Arts, she is a cross between Lady Bracknell and one of the three witches! A strong, dominant personality, with mystical tendencies, is needed for this role. No singing or dancing is required. Her costume borders on the bizarre, with many baubles, bangles and beads. Her hair is a strange hue and is surmounted by a hat of peculiar design. (She only appears in Act II)

The **Chorus**, **Dancers** and **Children** appear as Courtiers, Pages, Townsfolk and Creatures of the Forbidden Forest. All participate in the action and musical numbers. There are several small speaking parts. The costumes for the Courtiers should look rich and elegant. The Pages wear tights, short tunics and small round hats. The Townsfolk should be in picturesque homespun. The Creatures of the Forbidden Forest are grotesque beings of varying shapes and sizes. Some are huge and hairy, others are small and reptilian. In other words, something to suit all age groups.

PRODUCTION NOTES

The Pantomime offers opportunities for elaborate staging, but can be produced quite simply if funds and facilities are limited.

There are three full sets:

The Royal Palace of Old King Cole
The Town Square
The Forbidden Forest

These are interlinked by one front cloth:

Outside the Palace Gates

There can be a special Finale setting, or the Royal Palace set can be used.

STAGING

The settings are fairly standard, and should not present any problems. The royal palace interior should look rich and sumptuous. There is a raised area at the back with steps leading down. On a daïs stands the royal throne. The town square is surrounded by picturesque houses and shops. Prominent is a dress shop. The rest of the town is seen in the background with a distant view of the palace. The Forbidden Forest is the classic "spooky" forest of fairy tales. Grotesquely twisted trees, crawling creepers and tangled undergrowth. To one side is the entrance to a cave in which lies a magic pool. Outside the palace gates is a front cloth used to interlink the above settings. It is painted to represent a wall with elaborate wrought-iron gates, through which can be seen the palace. If this is not practical, tabs can be used.

SPECIAL PROPS

These consist of two cakes. The first is Old King Cole's birthday cake (prop cake). It should be very large, elaborately iced and covered with lots of candles (unlit). It also has a "Happy Birthday" ribbon around it. There needs to be a duplicate ribbon for Dotty Dumplin to wear around her neck after the explosion. The cake is mounted on a trolley that can be easily pushed on and off stage. The second cake has to be big enough for the boy playing Little King Cole to be concealed inside. It can be made from light wood or strong cardboard which is then painted and decorated to resemble an enormous iced cake. It should have a removable top. This cake is also mounted on a trolley which needs to be able to sustain the weight and is safe.

LIGHTING

Bright general lighting for the palace, town square and front cloth scenes. A romantic lighting change is required for the love duets. In the Forbidden Forest scenes there is a chance for some really spooky and weird lighting effects. The shimmering reflection of water is seen at the cave entrance to show that the magic pool lies within. An eerie follow spot for Pariah as she casts her magic spell. Every time she mentions the Forbidden Forest there is a flash of lightning. Further use of follow spots for entrances, musical numbers and comic business, etc., is left to the discretion of the individual director.

EFFECTS

There is a blinding flash, a loud bang and a puff of smoke as Old King Cole's birthday cake explodes (off stage). Three more flashes are also required from inside the cave. For the Forbidden Forest scenes some carefully controlled ground mist and strange background noises will enhance the spooky atmosphere. A great clap of thunder accompanies the flash of lightning every time Pariah mentions the Forbidden Forest. An echo effect is required for those speaking from inside the cave. Also, several loud splashes are heard as characters fall or are pushed into the magic pool. Pre-recorded fanfares are needed to play over the sound system. Also a rock number and some loud dramatic music to cover Dotty's miming of the final magic spell. It would be a nice touch to hear Baby Peski and Baby Pariah bawling and crying as they are brought from the cave.

Have fun!

Paul Reakes

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Little Tommy Tucker
Old Mother Hubbard
Robinson Crusoe and the Pirates
Santa in Space
Sinbad the Sailor
Tom Thumb

Plays

Bang, You're Dead!
Mantrap

ACT I

SCENE 1

The Royal Palace of Old King Cole

Full set. The backcloth and side wings represent a sumptuous regal interior. There is a raised area at the back with steps leading down. Up R, *there is a daïs on which stands the royal throne. Entrances* R *and* L *and at the back*

When the CURTAIN *rises, the Chorus, as Courtiers, are discovered. They go straight into the opening song and dance*

Song 1

After the number, Dotty Dumplin enters from R

Dotty (*greeting the Courtiers*) Hello, you lot! (*Spotting the audience*) Ooo! Look! We've got visitors! (*Calling to them*) Hello!

A few replies

(*To Courtiers*) Crikey! What have you done to 'em? They've dozed off already! (*To the audience, coming forward*) I said ... (*Yelling*) *HELLO!!*

The audience yells back

That's better. That's more like it. Well, it's lovely to see you all and I'm Dotty. (*To someone*) No, that's my *name,* dear, not my condition. Dotty Dumplin, that's me. Cook to his Majesty, Old King Cole. I'm a sort of Nigella Lawson with royal icing. Cake making is my speciality. I make cakes for all the special occasions here at the palace. And today's *really* special because it's Old King Cole's birthday. I've made him a lovely big cake. The only trouble is, there's so many candles you can hardly see the cake. He's ever so old, y'see. How old do you think he is? (*Ad-lib with the audience*) No, you're all wrong. And I'm not gonna tell you because it's classified inflammation. Oh, but he's a

lovely chap, is dear Old King Cole. Not a bit like that nasty brother of his.

Unseen by her, sinister Prince Peski enters from L

Prince Peski, that's his name. Peski by name and pesky by nature. You'd never think they were brothers. Oh, he's really *horrible!*

The equally sinister Princess Pariah enters from L*, and joins Peski*

And so's that wife of his! Princess Pariah! She's a right horror too. The pair of 'em would give Dracula nightmares.

On seeing the sinister couple, the Courtiers make hasty exits in various directions

The pair move down on either side of the unsuspecting Dotty. The audience will probably be shouting out warnings, but she takes no notice

Most people are scared stiff of 'em, y'know. But not me. Oh, no! If they were here now, I'd give 'em a right ear-bashin'. I'd tell that pair just what I thought of 'em. D'you know what I'd say?

Peski No. What would you say?

Dotty becomes aware of them and reacts

Dotty (*to the audience*) It's *them!* You could have warned me! (*To them, with a sickly grin*) Mornin'... Mornin'.

Pariah Well? What are you going to say?

Dotty (*gulping*) I ... I was gonna say ... what a lovely year it is for the time of weather.

Peski Wasn't it something about giving us an ear-bashing?

Dotty What? Oh, no! I said *smashing!* I think you're both *smashing!*

Pariah It didn't sound like that.

Dotty Well, it's these new teeth. I have trouble pronouncing my worms. See, there I go again.

Peski Come on! *Out with it!*

Dotty What 'ere? In front of all these people?!

Pariah Would you like to pay a little visit to the torture chamber?

Dotty No thanks. I went before I came.

Peski How do you fancy being boiled in oil?

Dotty Would that be nut-free oil? Only I'm allergic to nuts. Present company accepted, of course.

Pariah How would you like to be stretched on the rack?
Dotty I don't mind. A few more inches and I'd be just like [current model]
Peski Enough of this! What were you going to say to us!
Pariah And if you don't tell us, you will be made to suffer all manner of excruciating tortures!
Dotty (*with false bravado*) You can't scare me! I'm imperious to pain. I've been to [local place]!
Peski
Pariah } (*together, snarling at her*) *Tell us!!*
Dotty All right! Don't get yer knickers in a knot. I'll tell you what I was going to say. I think you two are ——
Peski
Pariah } (*together, threateningly*) Yes?!
Dotty I think you are just like a pair of angels that fell from the sky.
Peski
Pariah } (*very flattered*) Oh, how nice.
Dotty Yes, isn't it. What a pity you both landed on yer face!

Dotty runs out at the nearest exit

Peski (*enraged*) *What!* (*He makes to pursue Dotty*) Come back here!
Pariah (*stopping him*) Wait, Peski! Don't demean yourself. She's not worth it.
Peski You're right, my little wasp. (*With evil relish*) I can wait.
Pariah Yes. As soon as you become king you can make her suffer. You can make them *all* suffer!
Peski (*indicating the audience*) And that applies to *this* rabble, as well. Who are these parasites, by the way?
Pariah I don't know. (*Peering at them*) They don't look very nice, do they?
Peski Absolutely abominable! (*He sniffs*) They don't *smell* very nice either.
Pariah Positively putrid!
Peski When I'm king this lot will be the first to go. (*To audience*) Oh, yes, you will!
Audience Oh, no, we won't!
Peski
Pariah } (*together*) Oh, yes, you will!
Audience Oh, no, we won't!

This continues ad-lib

Peski (*petulantly*) We keep talking about when I become King, but how much longer am I to wait?

Pariah As soon as your ridiculous old brother is out of the way the throne will be yours, my dear.

Peski But we've tried all ways to get rid of him! None of them have worked.

Pariah Today's plan will work, I assure you.

Peski Hah! You've said that before! What is it this time? More poison? The last time we tried that, *I* drank it by mistake and couldn't leave the bathroom for a week! Or is it to be another so-called fatal accident? Like the time he was supposed to fall into the moat and drown. What happened? I tripped over him and fell in myself! I'm still finding tadpoles in places where tadpoles shouldn't be! (*He wiggles his leg*)

Pariah Have faith, Peski. My plan is perfect. It will not fail.

Peski What is it?

Pariah A birthday cake! The last birthday cake Old King Cole will ever see.

Peski (*sneering*) Are you hoping he'll die from indigestion?

Pariah It is a specially prepared cake. I have just substituted it for the one Dotty Dumplin has made for him. She will never know the difference. It looks exactly like hers except for one very special ingredient.

Peski And what's that?

Pariah (*with evil relish*) An explosive device! As soon as King Cole cuts the first slice — *BANG!!* No more Old King Cole!

Peski
Pariah } (*together, indulging in fiendish laughter*) Hee! Hee! Hee!

Pariah And the beauty of it is, no suspicion can fall on us. That stupid cook will get the blame. There must have been something terribly wrong with her cake mixture.

Peski Ingenious! Truly ingenious! My brother's last birthday will certainly go with a bang! Oh! You're very clever, my little puff adder. (*He kisses her on the cheek*)

Pariah (*snapping at him*) What do you think you are doing, Peski?! You know you must give a week's notice before you can kiss me!

Peski I'm sorry, my dear. I got excited. You're so clever! (*To the audience*) Isn't she clever?

Audience No!

Pariah Oh, yes, I am!

Audience Oh, no, you're not!

This continues ad-lib

Peski Well, we don't care what *you* think!

Pariah No, you're just a pile of insignificant rubbish!

Sneering and snarling at the audience, they exit L

The Herald enters at the back. He blows a fanfare on his trumpet

Fanfare sounds

The Courtiers rush on and fill the sides. Handsome young Florian, the King's aide, enters on the raised area at the back

Florian Attention! Your attention, please! His royal majesty King Cole will be here at any moment. As you know, today is his birthday, so prepare to greet him with a rousing chorus of "Happy Birthday to You". (*Looking off*) Here he comes now! Get ready!

The Herald blows another fanfare. Fanfare sounds

Old King Cole enters on the raised area

Florian and the others sing "Happy Birthday Dear Kingy". King Cole comes down the steps, followed by Florian

King Cole Thank you, my friends. Thank you, one and all. (*Catching sight of the audience and turning to Florian*) I say, Florian. Who are these good folk?

They move down to take a closer look

I don't recognize them. Do you?
Florian No, Your Majesty. I shall attempt to converse with them.
King Cole Hadn't you better try talking to them first? (*He chuckles at his "joke"*)
Florian (*to the audience*) Hello! How do you do.
Audience Hello!
Florian They seem nice enough, Your Majesty.
King Cole Yes, they do. (*To the audience*) Greetings!
Audience Greetings!
King Cole Are you from a part of my kingdom?
Audience No.
King Cole Where are you from then?

The audience calls out various place names

(*To Florian*) Where did they say? I didn't catch a word of that.

Florian I think you'll have to ask them individually, Your Majesty.
King Cole Jolly good idea. (*To someone*) Hello. Would *you* like to tell me where you come from, please.

Name of a local place is given

Oh, dear. Well, it can't be helped. Someone has to live there. (*To someone else*) Hello. And where do you come from?

Name of another place is given

Oh, I went there once. But it was closed! (*To all*) Well, wherever you come from, you're all very welcome. Especially today, because it's my birthday. Isn't that right, Florian?
Florian Indeed it is, Your Majesty. (*To the audience*) You're all very welcome.
King Cole (*to the audience, indicating Florian*) Nice lad, isn't he? Lovely manners. And the best pair of legs this side of [local place]!

King Cole and the Courtiers roar with laughter

The laughter soon dies as Peski and Pariah enter from L

King Cole Oh, dear! Here come the wet blankets!
Peski (*with a smarmy bow*) Greetings, brother.
King Cole Hello, Peski.
Pariah (*with a smarmy curtsey*) Greetings, Your Majesty.
King Cole Hello, sister-in-law.
Peski May we both be permitted to wish you a very happy birthday.
King Cole Thank you.
Peski We haven't brought you our present yet.
Pariah No, it will be arriving shortly.

They cackle together

King Cole (*to the audience*) I know he's my brother, but he gives my goose pimples goose pimples.
Peski (*looking about*) Surely there is something missing.
King Cole Missing? What?
Pariah Why, yes. Your birthday cake!
King Cole By Jove, you're right! A birthday wouldn't be a birthday without a cake. Florian, have my cake brought in.
Florian (*with a bow*) At once, Your Majesty.

King Cole No, wait! Not yet. We're forgetting the daily ceremony. We must attend to that first. (*He sits on his throne*)

Peski and Pariah show their annoyance

(*To the audience*) Allow me to explain. A few years ago someone made up a rhyme about me. Oh, not *that* sort of rhyme. (*He chuckles*) No, this is a clean one. It's become a tradition that every day at this time I repeat the rhyme, and then we have a little ceremony. It's a very jolly rhyme, and goes like this. (*He clears his throat and recites the rhyme*)

Old King Cole is a merry old soul,
A merry old soul is he.
He calls for his pipe,
He calls for his bowl,
And he calls for his Fiddlers three!

Song 2

To suitable music, two Pages enter. One is carrying a long clay pipe on a cushion. The other, a large punch bowl. They perform a dance sequence

When it ends, the Pages clear to one side

The music changes, and the three Fiddlers make their entrance. They carry prop fiddles. They bow to the King

Fiddlers Happy birthday, Your Majesty!
King Cole Thank you, Fiddlers. One, two, three.
Fiddlers We have prepared for this special day,
A treat that will take your breath away.
So now, without any further ado,
Here is our birthday gift to you!

The Fiddlers perform their number. At the end, the King and the others applaud

King Cole (*to the audience*) Now, that's what I call the X Factor (*or current fad*).
Peski (*impatiently*) Yes, yes, very nice. Now it's time for your birthday cake, brother.
King Cole Ah, yes! My cake! I'm really looking forward to that.

Peski
Pariah } (*together, to the audience*) So are we!
King Cole (*to Florian*) Be so good as to summon the royal cook.
Florian (*calling to off stage*) Summon the royal cook!
Courtiers (*doing the same*) Summon the royal cook!
Voice (*off stage, calling*) Summon the royal cook!
Voice (*further off stage, calling*) Summon the royal cook!

Dotty pops her head out from R

Dotty Did somebody somewhere summon a summon? (*Business with teeth*) Cor! I nearly lost me top set!
King Cole Hello, Dotty!
Dotty (*going to him*) Oh! Hello, Yer Majfulness! Many happy returns of the day. May I say, you don't look a day older! If I had sore eyes you'd be a sight for 'em! And may I also say ——
Peski You may *not!*
Pariah Be silent, crone!
Dotty 'Ere! It's *Mrs* Crone to you!
Peski Don't be insolent, woman!
Dotty Who are you callin' a woman! I'll 'ave you know, I've rubbed shoulders with [local dignitary]!
Peski Enough of this! His Majesty is waiting for his birthday cake.
Dotty (*gushing*) Oh, yes! The cake! It's all ready! An' it's a real cracker this year too, Yer Maj. I've excelled myself! I've put my heart and soul into it!
King Cole That doesn't sound very appetizing!
Dotty Eh? (*Then realizing he is joking*) Oh! You are a one!
Pariah Don't keep His Majesty waiting! Bring in the cake!
Dotty Stop orderin' me about! Who do you think *you* are — [current or local reference]?
King Cole Please will you bring in my cake, Dotty?
Dotty (*sweetly*) Of course I will, Your Royal Flush. (*Pointedly*) If *you* say so.

She pokes her tongue out at Peski and Pariah, and then exits R

Pariah That woman! She needs taking down a peg!
Peski She needs taking down to the rubbish tip, if you ask me!

Dotty enters from R. *She is pushing a trolley. On it is a large birthday cake decorated with icing, lots of candles and a "Happy Birthday" ribbon*

Unseen by the others, Peski and Pariah rub their hands in devilish glee. As she pushes the cake to centre, Dotty sings "Happy birthday, dear Kingy". King Cole leaves his throne to admire the cake

Dotty There it is! All made by my own fair 'and! Well, what d'you think of it?
King Cole Splendid, Dotty. Absolutely splendid.
Dotty Ta! It's my piece of resistance. I thought it'd go down a bomb.

Peski and Pariah are hard put to suppress their evil chuckles

King Cole (*to them*) What's wrong?
Peski (*recovering*) Er ... nothing, brother. It's a magnificent-looking cake.
Pariah I hope it tastes as good as it looks.
Dotty (*indignantly*) Course it does!
Peski Hurry up and cut the first slice, brother. Then we can all try some.
Dotty (*handing him a knife from the trolley*) Here yah go, Yer Maj.

Peski and Pariah quickly move away to down L. *They crouch together and put their fingers in their ears. King Cole is about to cut into the cake, when Dotty gives a yell*

Whoa! Wait, Your Maj!
King Cole What's the matter?
Dotty I've forgotten to light the candles. You won't be able to make a wish. What *am* I like! I'd forget me head if it wasn't screwed on! I'll take it back it to the kitchen and light 'em right away! Won't take a minute! Mind yer backs!

Dotty pushes the trolley out R

Peski and Pariah are still crouched with their fingers in their ears. The others become aware of this and look at them with curiosity. A pause. Eventually, Pariah takes her fingers from her ears

Pariah (*to Peski, in a stage whisper*) Has it gone off? Peski? (*He still has his fingers in his ears*) Peski! (*She bellows at him*) *PESKI!!*
Peski (*jumping with fright*) *Yahh!* What?
Pariah (*in a stage whisper*) Has it gone off?

King Cole moves down to beside Peski

Peski (*in a stage whisper*) I don't know.
Pariah (*in a stage whisper*) I didn't hear anything.
Peski (*in a stage whisper*) Neither did I. (*To King*) Did *you* hear anything? (*He reacts at seeing the King*) *Ahh!* You're still here!
King Cole Of course I am.
Pariah (*looking about*) Where's the cake?
King Cole Dotty forgot to light the candles. She's doing it now.

There is a blinding flash and a loud explosion off stage R. *If possible, smoke billows out. All react*

Dotty staggers on from R. *Her hair is standing on end and her face and upper half is covered with the exploded cake and candles. The cake ribbon hangs around her neck. She is shocked and disorientated to say the least!*

The King and Florian rush to her assistance

Dotty Ooooh! ... *Where* am I? ... *Who* am I? ... Oooh!
King Cole Dotty!
Florian What happened?
Dotty I ... I dunno! I lit the candles, and had to stand well back because of the heat. It's a good job I did, because the next thing ... *BOOM!* The whole thing blew up! There was cake and candles everywhere. It's made a right mess of my kitchen too. Y'know that great big window I've always wanted? Well, I've got it now! Oh! I've heard of endin' up with egg on yer face, but this is ridiculous! (*She wipes off some cake and licks her finger*) Mmm! It tastes smashin' too. (*She holds her finger out to King*) Have a lick.
Peski
Pariah } (*to the audience, fuming with rage*) Curses! Foiled again!

Peski and Pariah exit L

Dotty (*getting tearful*) Oh, Yer Maj! Your lovely birthday cake! All blown to smithereens! I just don't know how it happened! I used one of Delia's recipes too! I'm sorry! (*Starting to wail*) Waaah!
King Cole (*comforting her*) Now, now. Don't upset yourself.
Dotty There isn't time to bake you another one. I'll just have to go down to [local bakery] and buy one. This sort of thing would never 'appen to Gordon Ramsay! But if it did, you can bet he'd have a word for it!

Dotty makes a tearful exit R

Florian Why should a cake explode like that? It's very curious, Your Majesty.

King Cole Yes, indeed ... but never mind about that now. I have a very important announcement to make. (*Addressing the whole ensemble*) As you all know, I have been a bachelor for many, many years. Well, after much thought and serious contemplation I have come to a decision. I am going to get married!

Consternation from the others

Florian Your Majesty! This *is* a surprise. Congratulations!

Others Congratulations, Your Majesty!

King Cole Thank you. Thank you.

Florian May we be permitted to know her name?

King Cole Whose name?

Florian The lucky lady.

King Cole (*casually*) Oh, I don't know her name. I haven't met her yet.

Florian (*greatly puzzled*) You haven't met ...? I don't understand ...

King Cole It's quite simple. As I've decided to get married the obvious thing to do is find a suitable bride, is it not?

Florian Yes, Your Majesty, but ——

King Cole That will be your next job, Florian. I want you to send out a royal decree at once. All prospective brides are to present themselves at the palace this afternoon for my inspection. From them I will choose a wife. Better make it three o'clock. I don't want to miss [midday TV programme].

Florian But, Your Majesty ——

King Cole What's the matter, my boy? Don't you think it's a good idea?

Florian Well, it's not for me to question Your Majesty's decision, but ——

King Cole Exactly. And who knows, I may find true love. You wouldn't begrudge an old man that, would you?

Florian Of course not, Your Majesty.

King Cole And you know what they say ... It's never too late to fall in love!

Song 3

A lively song and dance for King Cole, Florian and the others. At the end of the number the Lights fade to black-out

Music to cover the scene change, and then the Lights come up on —

Scene 2

Outside the Palace Gates

Tabs, or front cloth showing a wall with wrought-iron gates, through which can be seen the palace. Entrances DR *and* DL

Peski enters from DL. *He is met with a barrage of abuse from the audience*

Peski (*snarling at them*) Grrr! And the same to you! Why don't you all go for a *long* walk — off a *short* pier! Ha! Ha! Ha!

Pariah, in an agitated state, rushes on from DL

Pariah Peski!
Peski Ah! My little scorpion's tail. I was just getting the better of these pathetic peasants.
Pariah Never mind that. Have you heard the awful news?
Peski It's not the [local reference] in trouble again, is it?
Pariah Worse than that. The King is intending to get married!
Peski *What!*
Pariah He's going to choose a wife at three o'clock this afternoon. He could be married before the day is out! You know what that means, don't you?
Peski A trip to Poundland for a wedding present?
Pariah No! If he marries, what will his wife become?
Peski Er ... bored?
Pariah (*exasperated*) Oh, use your brains, Peski! She will become his *queen!* Even if we manage to dispose of him, *she* will carry on ruling in his place!
Peski Oh, no!
Pariah And worse still! There might be (*with great revulsion*) *children!* Horrid little princes or princesses! All ready to take over the throne.
Peski But we can't let that happen! (*Having a childish tantrum and wailing*) *I wanna be the King!!*
Pariah (*comforting him*) There, there. I know you do, my love. And you will be. Just leave it to your little Pariah.
Peski (*after sniffing and wiping his nose on her sleeve*) What are we going to do?

Pariah His disposal is now even more urgent. We must get rid of King Cole before he has a chance to find a wife and make her his queen.
Peski But how? We've only got until three o' clock!
Pariah I don't know yet. But, never fear. *I* will think of something! (*To the audience*) Oh, yes, I will!
Audience Oh, no, you won't!
Peski
Pariah } (*together*) Oh, yes, I/she will!

After a routine with audience, Peski and Pariah exit DL

Dotty enters from DR. *She has cleaned herself up and is carrying a cake box*

Dotty (*greeting the audience*) Hello, folks! Well, I've been down to [local bakers] to buy King Cole a birthday cake, and guess what? They've sold out! Typical! All they had left are these. Four cream cakes.

The Fiddlers enter from DR

Fiddlers Hello, Dotty!
Dotty Oh! It's the three tiddlers!
Fiddlers (*correcting her*) *Fiddlers!*
Dotty Think yourselves lucky I didn't say what I first thought of!
Fiddlers What's in the box?
Dotty Four cream cakes.
Fiddlers (*moving in, licking their lips*) Mmm! Cream cakes!
Dotty (*holding the box away from them*) Ger off! These are for Old King Cole to replace his busted birthday cake.
Fiddlers (*showing disapproval*) Huh!
Dotty What d'you mean — Huh? Don't you think they're good enough?
Fiddlers (*shaking their heads*) No!
Dotty I suppose you're right. It's not the same as a birthday cake, is it? What shall I do with them?

The Fiddlers look hopeful

Dotty Oh, well! Waste not, want not, that's my grotto. I'll just have to eat 'em meself!
Fiddlers *All* of them?!
Dotty That's the idea.

Fiddlers Greedy!
Dotty I suppose you think I should share them with you?
Fiddlers Yes.
Dotty (*to the audience*) Shall I?
Audience / **Fiddlers** (*together*) Yes!
Dotty Are you sure?
Audience / **Fiddlers** (*together*) Yes!
Dotty Are you really, *really* sure?
Audience / **Fiddlers** (*together*) Yes!
Dotty Well, I'm not goin' to! *I* paid for 'em, so *I'm* gonna eat 'em! So there! (*She opens the box and gloats over the cakes*)

The Fiddlers get into a huddle

(*Licking her lips*) Mmmm! Don't they look yummy! Now, which one shall I eat first?

As she is making her selection, the Fiddlers gather around her and peer into the box

Fiddlers *Ugh!!*
Dotty What's wrong?
Fiddlers There's a fly!
Dotty A fly? (*Looking in the box*) Where? I can't see it.
Fiddlers Look closer!
Dotty (*doing so*) I can't see any fly!
Fiddlers Look closer!
Dotty (*doing so, her nose nearly in the box*) No! I still can't see it!

The Fiddlers grin to the audience

Fiddlers (*to the audience*) Shall we?
Audience Yes!
Fiddlers (*putting their thumbs up*) Right! One! Two! *Three!*

They push the box up into Dotty's face. She emerges with a cake- (crazy foam-) covered face. The Fiddlers roar with laughter

Dotty Oh, no! I'm plastered again! I suppose I had that comin' for being so greedy.

Fiddlers Yes!
Dotty (*to the audience*) You could say I got my just — *desserts!*

Dotty stumbles out DL

Song 4

A song for the Fiddlers

At the end, they troop off DR, *waving to the audience*

The Lights fade to black-out. Music to cover the scene change, and then the Lights come up on —

SCENE 3

The Town Square

Full set. The side wings represent picturesque houses and shops. Predominant is a dress shop. The backcloth shows the rest of the town with the royal palace in the distance. Entrances R *and* L, *and at the back*

Music. The Chorus and Dancers, as Townsfolk, are discovered going about their business. This develops into a song and dance routine

Song 5

After the number, the Herald enters at the back with his trumpet

The Townsfolk clear to the sides. The Herald blows his trumpet. Fanfare sounds

Florian enters at the back and moves to C

Florian (*announcing to the ensemble*) All loyal subjects of the crown pay heed to this royal decree. His most gracious Majesty, King Cole, wishes it to be known throughout the land that he has decided to enter the state of connubial bliss.
Townsfolk (*not understanding*) Where?
Florian He wants to get married.
Townsfolk Oh! (*Reacting*) *What!*

Consternation from the crowd

Florian Silence! In consequence of this, all prospective brides are invited to present themselves at the royal palace this afternoon at three o'clock. His Majesty will conduct an interview with each candidate. From these he will choose his bride-to-be and future queen. That is the end of this special announcement. (*He turns away to confer with the Herald*)

1st Male Cor! Old King Cole getting wed!

2nd Male He must be mad!

1st Female I wish I was single so that I could have a go!

2nd Male (*obviously her husband*) So do I!

2nd Female (*preening herself*) D'you think he'll pick me?

3rd Female Not if I get there first!

Full of excitement, the Townsfolk rush out in various directions. At the same time, pretty young Debbie Dumplin enters from R

Debbie Good heavens! What's happening?

2nd Female (*pointing to Florian*) Ask *him!* I've got to get down to [local beauty/hair salon]!

2nd Female exits

Debbie (*approaching Florian, a little nervously*) Er ... excuse me.

Florian Yes? (*He turns and obviously likes what he sees*) Oh, hello!

Debbie Hello. Please can you tell me something?

Florian With pleasure. My name is Florian. I'm aide to His Majesty the King. I live at the palace. Blue (*or whatever the colour of her costume*) is my favourite colour and Wednesday is my day off.

Debbie (*smiling*) Thank you. That's very informative. But I meant what's all the excitement about?

Florian Oh, that. Well, I've just announced that King Cole wants to get married. He's hoping to pick himself a wife this afternoon.

Debbie (*incredulously*) *Pick* a wife? You mean someone he doesn't even know?

Florian That's the idea.

Debbie That doesn't seem right. I thought you had to fall in love with someone before you asked them to marry you. But perhaps I'm being old-fashioned.

Florian Oh, I don't think you're old-fashioned at all. I think you're very ... very new-fashioned. Every bit of you.

Debbie Well ... Thank you for telling me. Goodbye. (*She moves to exit* R)

Florian Wait! Just a minute. I ... er ... (*To the Herald*) You can go.
Herald Wot?
Florian I said you can go. (*Propelling him towards exit* L) Make your way to [local] Street. I'll catch up with you when I've ... er ... (*He looks towards Debbie*)
Herald (*nudging Florian*) Oh, I get yah! (*He gives a knowing wink*) Best o' luck!

Herald exits L

Florian (*moving back to Debbie*) Sorry about that. Now, what did you say your name was?
Debbie (*smiling*) I didn't. It's Debbie. Short for Deborah.
Florian Charming.
Debbie Debbie Dumplin.
Florian (*reacting*) I say!
Debbie I know. It's not very flattering, is it?
Florian No ... I mean I know another Dumplin. She's ——
Debbie My mother. Dotty Dumplin. She's the cook at the palace.
Florian Good heavens! So you're Dotty's daughter. Well, all I can say is your father must have been very beautiful.
Debbie (*smiling*) Are you saying my mother isn't?
Florian (*hastily*) Perhaps we should change the subject. I quite agree with what you said just now.
Debbie What was that?
Florian About falling in love. (*After a slight pause*) Are *you* in love with anybody, Debbie?
Debbie Yes.
Florian (*disappointed*) Oh! Who's the lucky chap?
Debbie My mother.
Florian (*brightening*) Ah! That's a different sort of love. The kind of love I'm talking about is ... is ...
Debbie Yes?
Florian Let me try to explain.

Song 6

Romantic duet and dance with romantic lighting change. After the number the lighting returns to normal

Florian Now do you understand what I mean by love?
Debbie (*gazing at him, breathlessly*) Oh, yes.
Florian And do you feel that way about me?

Debbie (*as before*) Oh, yes.
Florian That's good. Because I certainly feel that way about you.
Debbie Florian!
Florian Debbie!

They embrace

I must go now. I have my royal duties to attend to. But I promise I'll return as soon as I can. Until then ... (*He embraces her*) *Au revoir*!

He goes to exit L, *turns to blow her a kiss and then goes*

On cloud nine, Debbie waltzes around, humming the refrain of the duet

Dotty (*off* R, *calling*) Debbie! Deb! Where are yah! Debbie!

Dotty rushes on from R, *in a very excited state*

Oh, there you are! You'll never guess! *You'll never guess!*
Debbie (*having come down to earth*) Guess what, Mum?
Dotty Old King Cole is gonna get married!
Debbie Yes, I know.
Dotty He's gonna choose a wife this afternoon! Excitin' init?
Debbie I suppose so.
Dotty Well, don't sound so enthuselastic, girl. I think it's great news! (*Indicating the audience*) *They* think it's great news! (*To the audience*) Don't yah, folks?
Audience Yes!
Dotty (*to Debbie*) See! Oh, perhaps you've not been introduced. (*To the audience*) This is my daughter, Debbie. Say hello to the nice people, Debbie. They won't bite. I think most of 'em have left their teeth at home.
Debbie (*waving to the audience*) Hello!
Audience Hello!
Dotty (*to the audience*) Oh, I know what you're all thinking. You don't think I look old enough to be her mother, do yah?

By-play with the audience

All right, all right! There's no need to take a vote on it!
Debbie (*eager to tell her news*) Mum, I've got something to tell you.
Dotty (*not listening and prattling on, excitedly*) Now, it's at three o'clock, so I'll have to get me skates on. I'll need to get down to

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