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Humpty Dumpty

A Pantomime

Norman Robbins

Samuel French–London
New York – Sydney – Toronto – Hollywood



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CHARACTERS

Mother Goose, fairy godmother to all
Jack Spratt, a village boy
Polly Flinders, his sweetheart
Tommy Tittlemouse, a village boy
Mary Quite Contrary, his sweetheart and ward of the King
Grimm, henchman to the Sorcerer
Dame Dobb, housekeeper to the King
Humpty Dumpty, a magical being
King Florimund XIV of Nursery-rhyme Land
Powder, **Shott** } two of the King's men
Monstro, The Sorcerer, a hunchbacked goblin of great size
Page
Little Bo-peep
Lake Monster
Chorus of **Nursery-rhyme Characters, Courtiers, Guests, Snow Spirits, Gypsies, Prisoners of Monstro, Clockwork Dolls, Pretty Maids and Gardeners,** and **Guards**
Babes chorus of **Palace Children, Nursery-rhyme Characters, Pages in the Palace, Snow Spirits, Gypsy Children, Mice, Clockwork Dolls**

ACT I

Prologue In Mother Goose's Arbor
SCENE 1 The Courtyard of the King's Palace, Nursery-rhyme Land
SCENE 2 The Edge of the Great Forest
SCENE 3 Mary's Cockle-shell Garden
SCENE 4 A Corridor in the King's Palace
SCENE 5 The Great Ballroom
SCENE 6 The Ruins of Nursery-rhyme Land
SCENE 7 A World of Ice and Snow

ACT II

SCENE 1 Dame Dobb's Farm in Story-book Land
SCENE 2 A path in the Great Forest
SCENE 3 Outside Monstro's Castle
SCENE 4 A Corridor inside the Castle
SCENE 5 Monstro's Den
SCENE 6 A Corridor in the King's Palace, Nursery-rhyme Land
SCENE 7 The Great Ballroom and Finale

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

Humpty Dumpty was first performed at the Grand Pavilion Theatre, Porthcawl, Mid Glamorgan, on December 26th, 1981, and directed by the author.

This version has been specially adapted for amateurs, but differs only slightly from the original. Staging has been simplified to suit the average church hall or small theatre, and lighting, special effects and properties kept to a minimum. Songs and dances are left to the discretion of the directors. The running time of the show is 2 hours 20 minutes, including a 12 minute interval.

For the sword fights in Act II, Scene 5, it is suggested that participants use fencing foils with button points for safety, and rehearse the fights most carefully.

The eggshell shards in Act I Scene 1 are easily made with tinted polystyrene tiles, broken into fairly large segments.

The Lake Monster is simply another version of the "Ghost" gag, but instead of a white sheet, a "tie-dye" one is used and bedecked with dark green and brown mesh, fish scales, claw hands and rubber fright mask. However, one can substitute with whatever is available, from the Incredible Hulk to the Frankenstein Monster.

Costumes and scenery should be as stylized as possible and the pace of the show brisk.

For
Liz and Dann Perkins
of Eau Claire, Wisconsin, USA
and
Margaret (Peggy) Murray
of Ames, Iowa, USA

With many thanks for all their hospitality
and friendship

ACT ONE*

PROLOGUE

Mother Goose's Arbor

There is a gauze lane-cloth which depicts a gigantic shimmering spider's web. The Lights give the effect of early morning with, if possible, light mist

When the CURTAIN *rises Mother Goose is standing down* C, *smiling. She is dressed in the traditional costume of the nursery-rhyme character and carries a wooden spoon which she uses as a wand*

Mother Goose (*cheerily*)

Hello, my dears . . . and welcome
To the land of Nursery-rhyme.
I'm Mother Goose, your friend and guide
Throughout the pantomime.

(*She gives a deep curtsy before continuing*) Well, well, well. (*She peers around the audience*) You *are* a happy-looking audience. Not a gloomy face in sight. Mind you, I'm very glad to see it, because here in Nursery-rhyme Land we take a dim view of people with gloomy faces. In fact—to tell you the truth—it's even against the law. (*She nods gravely*) Oh, yes. There's *quite* enough misery and unhappiness in the mortal world without *us* having to put up with too. That's why we've decided that anyone in the audience caught scowling *or* sneering, will be banished from the theatre and sent to see (*names rival pantomime*) as a punishment. Right. Well now we understand each other, there's something I'd better tell you. Usually, there's nothing much to worry about in Nursery-rhyme Land, because as fairy godmother to everyone living here, *I* manage to keep a pretty sharp eye on things. However, according to *my* information, today looks like being a little *un*usual, and here's the reason. Right on top of the palace wall—overlooking the courtyard—is a huge EGG, held firmly in place by a magic spell and looking as if not even an earthquake could move it. Of course, *they've* no idea where it came from or even what it's doing there. All they *do* know, is that it's been up there for *centuries*, and seems to be some sort of lucky mascot. *They* call it Humpty Dumpty, and for the want of a better name, I think *we'd* better call it that too. (*She chuckles*) However, the magic holding it in place is fast running out and before very long will vanish completely. (*She nods wisely*) Well, we all know what will happen then, don't we? *Scrambled egg*. And all the King's horses and all the King's men, will *never* put Humpty together again. (*Brightly*) But not to worry. Everything that's going to happen has all been planned, and the Fairy Queen's put *me* in charge of making sure nothing goes wrong. There's plenty of

*N.B. Paragraph 3 on page ii of this Acting Edition regarding photocopying and video-recording should be carefully read.

magic left in my little wooden spoon if it should, but I don't think there's much chance of—(*She breaks off*) Ohoooo. We'd better be getting along to the royal courtyard. I've a funny feeling that things are starting to happen. Hold on to your seats and take a deep breath. I'm moving you there right *NOW*. (*She waves her wooden spoon*)

The Lights come up behind the lane-cloth to reveal the characters in position for Scene 1

Mother Goose exits as the lane-cloth flies out and the scene comes to life

Scene 1

The Courtyard of the King's Palace

A high-walled courtyard. There is a huge, well-lit egg perched C *on the wall with a large arch* L, *through which part of the city can be seen. Sentry boxes stand either side of the arch. The palace is* R *and has a practical door*

It is a bright, sunny morning and the people of Nursery-rhyme Land, led by Polly Flinders and Jack Spratt, are singing and dancing

SONG 1

Tommy Tittlemouse enters in a jaunty manner through the arch at the end of the song. He carries a simple kind of fishing rod over his shoulder and a short stick from which dangle several medium-sized fish

All greet him cheerfully and form a semi-circle about him as he moves C

Tommy (*brightly*) Hi, everybody. What do you think to *these*? (*He displays the fish*)

Polly So *that's* where you've been hiding yourself, Tommy Tittlemouse. Fishing in other men's ditches again.

Tommy (*unconcerned*) Well . . . I can hardly fish in my own, Polly Flinders, can I? There isn't a ditch for *acres* around *my* little house. (*He smiles*) But you don't have to worry. *This* time I had full permission. These little beauties are bound for the royal kitchens and King Florimund's dinner table.

Jack You don't mean to say he's having *fish* today, do you?

Tommy Why not? There's nothing wrong with a nice fat trout.

Polly But it's his *birthday*.

Jack You don't have *fish* on your *birthday*. You have venison . . . or pheasant . . . or thick, thick slices of best lean beef.

Tommy (*laughing*) That may be what *you* like Jack Spratt, but His Majesty particularly expressed a desire for a large plate of trout, and these are the best in the entire kingdom.

Polly (*looking at them*) Well . . . I must admit they're the best looking fish *I've* ever seen. Where on earth did you catch them? It couldn't have been anywhere around here.

Tommy You're right. As a matter of fact, they came from a big lake I found in the middle of the Great Forest.

All react in astonishment

Jack Don't say you've been wandering around *there* all on your own.
Polly (*protesting*) It's a horrible place. Full of witches, goblins and wolves.
Tommy (*laughing*) Maybe it is, but *I* didn't meet any. Besides, it was well worth the risk to land a catch like this. Now I can get myself into his good books before the party begins. I'm going to need all the help I can get tonight.
Jack (*amused*) I don't think *you've* anything to worry about, Tommy. Everyone in the kingdom knows that you and Mary are head over heels in love.
Tommy Everyone but King Florimund, you mean. What *he's* going to say when I turn up at the Ball asking permission to marry her, I can't imagine. After all, *she's* his royal ward, and *I'm* only a poor fisherman without a penny to my name.
Polly What does that matter? According to tradition, the King will grant the first three requests brought before him on the occasion of his Birthday Ball, and as far as *I'm* aware, no-one's ever ever been turned down.

All agree

Tommy (*wryly*) It'd be just *my* luck to be the first.
Jack (*scornfully*) There's about as much chance of *that* happening as there is of old Humpty there (*indicating the egg*) falling off the wall.

All look amused at the idea

Tommy (*brightening*) In that case I'd better start saving for a wedding ring, because I don't think he'll be taking a tumble *just* yet. If you ask me, he'll be perched up there till the end of time. Thanks for cheering me up. And now I'd better get these to Dame Dobb and see if I can steal a few minutes with Mary. I promised her I'd call this morning so I daren't keep her waiting.
Jack (*amused*) Hello. Got you under her thumb already, has she?
Tommy Certainly not. But you know how contrary she is. If I don't at least *try* to see her, she might change her mind about marrying me, and I don't think my nerves could stand it. Our secret engagement's been on and off twelve times this week already.

Everyone smiles

Polly Poor Tommy. She's my best friend, but she's so contrary I'm sure if she ever fell into the river, we'd have to search for her *up* stream.
Tommy Well, cheerio. Keep your fingers crossed for me tonight. (*He begins to move away towards the palace*)
Jack We'll do better than that. We'll all come along to give you encouragement.

Tommy (*delighted*) You will? Then if all goes well you can be guests of honour at the wedding.

All cheer, then Tommy joins them in a reprise of the opening song

SONG 1A (reprise)

Jack, Polly and the people of Nursery-rhyme Land exit cheerily

Tommy turns once more to cross to the palace

As he does so, Mary Quite Contrary enters from the palace

Mary (*seeing him*) Tommy . . . (*She hurries to him*)

Tommy (*pleased*) Mary. I was just on my way to see you. Look at these. (*He displays his catch*)

Mary (*worried*) Oh, Tommy. I've got the most awful news. Tonight's party is going to be *cancelled.*

Tommy (*stunned*) But that's impossible. What on earth's happened?

Mary It's Uncle Florimund. He was having his daily fortune told by the court astrologer when suddenly a huge black bird flew in through the window and spoke to him.

Tommy What did it say?

Mary It was a piece of rhyme. "Birthday greetings here I bring. From Nursery-rhyme Land's future King. Before this day is out, my friend, your reign of peace will surely end."

Tommy (*scornfully*) What rubbish. Surely the King didn't take any notice?

Mary (*sadly*) I'm afraid he did. You see, when he asked the bird where it came from, it cried out: "From the castle of Monstro . . . King of all sorcerers", then flew out of the window. (*Worried*) Oh, Tommy . . . what are we going to do?

Tommy (*brightly*) Cheer up, Mary. I don't know who this Monstro is, but *I'm* certainly not afraid of him. Let him set foot in this part of the world, and he'll find he's got *me* to reckon with.

Mary But what about the Ball? Uncle Florimund is so upset that he's giving orders for it to be cancelled. If that happens, we won't be able to get married until *next* year.

Tommy You're right. We've got to get him to change his mind. (*He hands her the fish*) Look, you take these in to Dame Dobb, then see if you can talk him round. You know he'll do anything for *you.* I'll go find Mother Goose and tell *her* about all this. If anyone can help us, *she* can. Now don't worry. Everything will turn out all right. It always does in Nursery-rhyme Land, hadn't you noticed?

He squeezes her hand comfortingly, then exits through the arch

Mary stands there gazing after him, then as she turns to go back to the palace, her eyes fall on the egg

Mary (*brightening*) Of course. The egg. Now why didn't I think of that before? It's the answer to all our problems.

She exits quickly into the palace looking happy

As she does so the Lights dim

Grimm, the Sorcerer's henchman enters through the archway. He is all in black and as grim as his name. A green follow spot is directed on him throughout the play every time he appears

Grimm (*looking around with a sneer*) So—this is the famous Land of Nursery-rhymes, is it? A perfect hunting-ground for my master, the Sorcerer. (*He leers*) And now to find a suitable victim. (*He begins to prowl around the courtyard*)

The palace door opens and Dame Dobb appears, singing cheerily

Dame Girls were made to love and kiss, and who am I to interfere with this . . .?

Grimm (*turning*) Ahaaaaaaa.

Dame (*startled*) Blimey . . . It's Worzel Gummidge.

Grimm (*snarling*) Silence, you old hag.

Dame (*coyly*) Flatterer.

Grimm Do you know who I am?

Dame No. Surprise me.

Grimm (*puffing himself up*) I . . . am GRIMM.

Dame Grim? You're positively *gruesome*. Tell me . . . Is that your nose, or are you eating a banana? (*She suddenly realizes*) Just a minute. Just a minute. Did you say your name was Grimm?

Grimm (*sourly*) I did.

Dame (*to the audience*) Oh, boys and girls . . . Did you hear *that*? It's Grimm. *Grimm*. The *famous* Grimm. (*Ecstatically*) Oooooooh, I just *love* his fairy stories, don't you?

Grimm (*outraged*) *Fairy stories? Fairy stories?* I don't write fairy stories, you flannel-faced old faggot. I am henchman to the great Sorcerer, Monstro . . . King of *all* sorcerers.

Dame (*unconcerned*) Oh . . . well *I'm* Dame Dobb . . . housekeeper to King Florimund, and widow of this parish. (*She simpers at him, then realizes what he has said*) Eh? *Henchman to the Sorcerer?* Well what are you doing *here*?

Grimm (*leering*) My master sends me to find the prettiest, tenderest, *sweetest* young girl in this city, and carry her off to his enchanted castle where she will become—*his bride*.

Dame (*witheringly*) You wouldn't dare. (*Primly*) And besides . . . If you think *I'm* going to marry old Monstro, you've got another think coming.

Grimm (*amazed*) *You?* You, you bilious looking old bag of bones. I said I was looking for someone *pretty*. You're so ugly, if you went down to the docks, even the tug-boats would stop whistling.

Dame (*stung*) I resemble that remark, I do. For your inflammation, I've had lots of men at *my* feet.

Grimm (*sneering*) Really? Chiropodists, I presume?

Dame (*annoyed*) Right. That's done it. You've got ten seconds to get out of this courtyard in one piece. After that, you'll be leaving it in a box.

Grimm (*sneering*) You don't frighten me, you bottle-nosed old battle-axe. I could knock you to the ground with a single breath.

Dame I'm not surprised. It smells terrible. (*She wafts the smell away*) Do you *have* to eat garlic?

Grimm (*annoyed*) Fool. Dolt. Imbecile. Out of my way. (*He pushes past her and moves towards the palace*)

Dame (*dashing after him*) Here, not so fast, sparrow-legs. Just where do you think you're going?

Grimm (*scowling*) Into the palace, of course.

Dame (*running in front of him to stop him*) Over my dead body. You're not planting your dirty great plates of meat on my clean carpet. And besides, there's nothing in there that would interest *you.*

Grimm You think not? (*He leers*) Then what would you say if I told you I suspect that *somewhere* inside that building, the King's pretty young daughter may be hiding?

Dame I'd say you'd better go and do your suspecting somewhere else, because he hasn't *got* a pretty young daughter. In fact, he hasn't got any children *at all.* (*Smugly*) He's a bachelor, he is. Just the same as his father was.

Grimm (*snarling*) Bah! In that case I'll have to seek elsewhere for my master's bride. But remember . . . the *next* time I appear in this city, I shall expect its people to salute me in the manner I deserve. Understand? (*He turns away*)

Dame I certainly do. We'll have twenty-one guns ready to fire. And they'll all be *pointing* at you.

Grimm scowls, then exits through the arch

(*To the audience*) Oooh, boys and girls. What a nasty bit of work *he* is. I know we all sprang from monkeys, but if you ask me, *he* didn't spring far enough. What a face. I bet he has to creep up on the mirror to shave. (*Worriedly*) I'd better go warn King Florimund, just in case he comes back and tries to kidnap me. (*She thinks*) Mind you . . . *he's* worried enough to begin with. Perhaps I'd better wait till he's calmed down a bit. (*She sighs*) What a morning.

She exits into the palace

As she does so the Lights dim slightly

Mother Goose enters. She glances up at the egg

Mother Goose (*moving down* C *to speak to the audience*) Well, it's still up there, I see. It looks like the old spell has a bit of power left in it yet. But all the same:

Sooner or later, without any doubt,
The last scrap of magic is sure to run out;
And then, Humpty Dumpty, on top of that wall,
You're in, I'm afraid, for a terrible fall.
No hope of salvation—of merely a crack—

You're destined to shatter. They'll not put you back.
For though they may strive with their might and their main,
You'll never sit there on the coping again.

There is a low rumble of thunder and the Lights flicker gently. She quickly turns to look at the egg, then hurries upstage to stand below and to the left of it

The magic . . . It's going . . . It's going . . . It's gone.
There's nothing but gravity holding you on.
You're starting to rock from your base to your crown.
Look out, ev'rybody—*the egg's coming down.*

The thunder rises to a climax. The Lights flicker madly then Black-out. A great crash is heard and the thunder fades away into silence

Humpty Dumpty enters during the Black-out. The egg is removed and eggshell shards placed at the foot of the wall

There is a pause of a few seconds, then Humpty's voice is heard in the darkness

Humpty Oooooooooooh? What happened? Where am I?

The Lights go up slowly to reveal Humpty Dumpty sitting at the foot of the wall, surrounded by shards of eggshell. He is dressed in a bright yellow costume. Mother Goose remains in the shadows, observing him

Oh, blimey. I'm down in the courtyard. I must have fallen off the wall. (*He glances up at it to measure the distance he fell*) Oooooh. (*He grimaces*) Thank goodness I landed on something soft. (*He rubs his head then suddenly sees the audience*) Oh . . . Hello. (*He scrambles to his feet and moves down* C *to speak to them*) Are you the *other* chickens? (*He peers*) Oh, yes . . . I can see one old boiler down there. (*He grins*) Oooh, isn't this a smashing little hen-house? There's one chicken at the back there holding a torch. I bet she's one of those battery hens they keep talking about. (*He points into the audience*) There's one down here sounds as though she's laying an egg. (*He beams*) Well, well, well. Look at all the happy faces. All enjoying yourselves, are you? (*Reaction*) Why? What are you doing? (*He laughs*) But honestly, aren't you glad you're here tonight instead of being at home watching television? Course you are. You know. I was on top of that wall when they invented television. I was. And do you know what the critics said about it? They said it was a *bad thing* because it would replace the *art of conversation.* They must have been mad. Television hasn't replaced the art of conversation. It's replaced *cleaning*, *ironing*, *washing* and *cooking*. (*He chortles with laughter*)

Mother Goose comes forward

Mother Goose Welcome to Nursery-rhyme Land, Humpty Dumpty.
Humpty (*turning to see her*) Oooooh! It's (*well-known personality*).
Mother Goose (*smiling*) No, no, Humpty. I'm not (*repeats the name*). I'm Mother Goose, fairy godmother to all who live in this magical place—

and that includes *you*. It's my job to see that everyone needing help or advice, gets it.

Humpty In that case, thank goodness you've come, 'cos *I* need some help. You see, I've just fallen off that wall and smashed my shell, and I've no idea how I'm going to put it back together again. Can *you* do it for me?

Mother Goose (*shaking her head*) I'm afraid not, Humpty. Here you are, and here you must stay.

Humpty Well . . . it's all right *now*. I've made some smashing friends out there in the audience. But what if I decide later on that I'd rather be back in my shell? I can go back *then* can't I?

Mother Goose shakes her head, still smiling

Cor . . . some fairy godmother *you* are.

Mother Goose Don't be upset, Humpty. You won't be needing that old shell any more. From this moment on, there's a new life waiting for you. Two thousand years you've been sitting on top of that wall. Now it's time for you to start the task you were created for.

Humpty (*baffled*) Eh? What's that?

Mother Goose You'll find out, soon enough. But just for the moment, remember *this*. You, Humpty Dumpty, are a very special person. No-one else in the whole wide world has the power that *you* have. Anything you want can be yours—simply by *wishing* for it.

Humpty (*impressed*) Oooooooh.

Mother Goose Just one warning. Use your gift wisely and nothing will be impossible for you; use it selfishly, and not only will you destroy your *own* happiness, you'll destroy that of everyone living in Nursery-rhyme Land *at the same time*. Do you understand?

Humpty But—but how will I know if I'm *being* selfish? I don't even know what selfish is. I mean . . . I've only just come out of an egg and I don't know *anything*.

Mother Goose (*nodding wisely*) That's very true, Humpty, so you've a lot of catching up to do, haven't you? Now remember what I've said and watch your step. (*She begins to exit*)

Humpty (*urgently*) Wait. Missis Duck. Don't leave me on my own. Not just yet.

Mother Goose Don't worry. I'll never be *too* far away from you. As a matter of fact, I'll be keeping an eye on you for the rest of your life. In the meantime—don't forget—whatever you wish for will be yours at once. No questions asked.

She exits quickly

Humpty (*calling after her*) But—but—you haven't told me what a wish *is*. How can I make one if I don't know what they look like? (*He slumps*) Oh, blimey. She's gone. Now what am I going to do? (*He looks around him*) Well . . . I don't suppose I'm expected to stand here all day. Perhaps I'd better go and have a look round. (*To the audience*) See you later, kids.

He moves uncertainly towards the rear of the palace and exits behind it.

Powder and Shott, two of the King's men, enter through the arch. They are wearing uniforms and carry muskets (or swords), but look sloppy

Shott (*looking around with satisfaction*) Well, here it is, Powder. The courtyard of the King's palace. Now, you know what we have to do? We've to stop any suspicious looking strangers from skulking around.

Powder (*excitedly*) Cor . . . Isn't it exciting, Shott? Our very first day as King's men, and here we are guarding the royal residence.

Shott (*swaggering down* C) Pooh. It's nothing to get worked up about. After all, it's only a job like any other.

Powder (*following him*) Huh. You weren't saying that this morning when we didn't know where the next meal was coming from, were you? We hadn't eaten a thing since we got thrown out of the (*names local restaurant*) four days ago.

Shott And who's fault was that, eh? It was yours. If you hadn't drawn attention to us with your noisy eating, the manager wouldn't have found out we were broke till after we'd finished.

Powder (*indignantly*) What do you mean, noisy eating? I'm not a noisy eater.

Shott Oh, no? Then how come the minute you started guzzling your soup, six couples got up to dance?

Powder Har, har. Very funny. At least *I* didn't show myself up by washing my cutlery in the finger bowl.

Shott (*surprised*) What's wrong with that? You didn't expect me to put it in my pocket with shepherd's pie all over it, did you?

Powder (*amazed*) In your *pocket*? You don't mean to say you actually *stole* that cutlery?

Shott Well . . . yes. But I didn't mean to. I took it by mistake.

Powder Mistake? How can you pinch stainless-steel cutlery by *mistake*?

Shott Easily. I thought they were *silver*.

Powder Oooh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, you do. Don't you know what happens to people who steal from other people?

Shott Yes. They go to work for the Inland Revenue. (*He chortles, then gives a yelp of pain and holds his cheek*) Owww.

Powder What's wrong?

Shott (*gingerly*) I've got toothache.

Powder Serves you right for stealing.

Shott (*groaning*) Oh, it's not funny. I'll have to go to the dentist's as soon as I get off duty.

Powder Dentists? Dentists? You don't want to waste your money on dentists. Listen. *I* had a toothache once, and all I did was to go round to my girl-friend's house. She kissed me, stroked my cheek, hugged and squeezed me, and in less than five minutes, the pain had gone. Now why don't *you* try the same treatment?

Shott (*cheering up*) I think I will. Where does your girl-friend live?

Powder (*pushing him in annoyance*) Oooh, I don't know why I put up with you, I really don't.

Shott I can tell you *that*. It's because whenever it comes to brain-power, *I*

have to do all the work. You're so stupid that you have to stand on your head to turn something over in your mind.

Powder (*indignantly*) That's a lie. I'm very intelligent, I am. When I was at school, I was the teacher's pet.

Shott Yes. She kept you in a cage at the back of the classroom.

Powder (*stung*) All right. All right. I'll prove it to you. Ask me a question. Anything you like. I'll show you whether I've got brains or not.

Shott Right. What did Julius Caesar say when Brutus stabbed him?

Powder Er . . . (*He thinks*) I know: "Ouch."

Shott (*triumphantly*) You see? You're as thick as two short planks. He didn't say "Ouch." He said—(*with great drama*)—"*Et tu, Brute.*" (*He looks smugly at Powder*)

Powder (*unconvinced*) I bet he said "Ouch" first, though. Go on. Ask me another.

Shott All right, then. I'll give you an *easy* one. Name me five things that contain milk.

Powder (*laughing*) Five things that contain milk. Simple. (*He ticks them off on his fingers*) Butter . . . cream . . . cheese . . . (*he thinks a moment then says triumphantly*) . . . and two cows.

Shott (*disgustedly*) I give up. It's perfectly obvious you don't know anything. You're about as much use as an empty stewpot is to a cannibal.

Powder (*puzzled*) What's a cannibal?

Shott (*amazed*) What's a cannibal? (*Patiently*) Look, I'll try to explain it as simply as I can. Suppose that *you* had just finished eating your mother and father for dinner.

Powder Yes.

Shott Now what would that make you?

Powder (*light dawning*) Oh . . . an orphan.

Shott turns away with a groan

Mary enters from the palace and sees them

Mary Oh. (*She crosses to them*) Excuse me, but are you the new guards?

Shott (*turning to see her*) Eh? Oh . . . er . . . yes, miss. Powder and Shott, at your service.

The men try to tidy themselves up

Mary I'm so glad I found you. His Majesty wants to speak to you at once.

Powder (*pleased*) Oooh. Here . . . he's not going to promote us already, is he?

Mary (*laughing*) I'm afraid not. But I've managed to persuade him not to cancel his party tonight, so he wants to give you both some new orders. You'd better hurry along. He's not in the best of moods today because of his foot, so it wouldn't be wise to keep him waiting. (*She indicates the door to the palace*) It's through that door and the tenth turning on the right.

Powder and Shott exit quickly

Oh, thank goodness I remembered that little rhyme about the egg. (*She*

quotes) "While e'er the egg stays on the wall, the royal crown will never fall." (*Hugging herself*) I can't wait to tell Tommy. (*Sighing*) Oh, if only it were evening now and we were waiting for the Ball to begin. It'll be hours before he gets back, I suppose. It really *is* unkind of Father Time to move so slowly.

SONG 2

After the song, Mary quickly exits into the palace again, still not seeing the fragments of the egg

Humpty enters down R

Humpty Hiya, kids. Well—I've had a look round this part of Nursery-rhyme Land and it doesn't look *too* bad. All I've got to do now is to meet a few of the people and see what *they're* like. (*Sighing*) Oooooooh. I wish I could make a start with somebody.

There is a flash and Tommy appears

(*Startled*) Oooooooh. It's a feller that's lost his trousers.

Tommy (*bewildered*) How did I get here? (*He turns and sees Humpty*) And who are *you*?

Humpty I'm Humpty Dumpty.

Tommy Humpty Dumpty? (*He grins*) Well—you're certainly dressed in the right colour. (*He indicates the wall behind him without looking*) I suppose you came off the top of that wall, eh?

Humpty That's right. I felt tired and *dropped off.*

Tommy (*laughing*) In that case I expect your brains must be feeling a bit *scrambled*?

Humpty Oh, I'm all right now, but when it first happened, I was *shattered.*

Tommy (*highly amused*) Shattered. (*He suddenly catches sight of the broken shell and sobers up*) Oh, my goodness. (*He looks up at the empty wall*) I don't believe it. (*He stares at Humpty*) You *are* the egg. (*Calling urgently*) Quick everybody. Quick. Your Majesty. There's been a terrible accident.

Humpty stands bewildered

People, including Mary, Polly, Jack, Powder and Shott, tumble on to the stage in breathless excitement. Cries of "What is it?", "What's happening?" etc. are only silenced when a loud fanfare is heard. All fall back

A Page appears in the palace doorway

Page (*proclaiming*) His Royal Majesty, King Florimund the Fourteenth. King of all Nursery-rhyme Land.

All but Humpty bow and curtsy

The King enters from the palace. He is in full regalia and sports a heavily-bandaged foot. He looks annoyed

King (*coming down* C) What is it? What's all the commotion?

Tommy Look, Your Majesty. (*He points at the shattered shell*)
King (*seeing it*) Oooo-er.
Tommy And look what came out of it. (*He indicates Humpty*)

All stare at Humpty who looks most uncomfortable

King This is terrible. Quick. Somebody fetch the Sellotape. We've got to get him back on the wall *at once.*
Humpty (*startled*) Eh? Here—hang on a minute. I'm not going back inside that thing. I've only just come out.
King (*annoyed*) You'll do as you're told. You've caused enough trouble already. Unless you go back to where you belong, I'm going to lose my crown.
Humpty Never mind your silly old crown. If I go back inside that shell, I'm going to lose my marbles. I've been stuck in there for the last two thousand years with nothing to eat but egg yolk. Now I'm down here, I'm going to stay down.
King (*firmly*) Oh, no you're not. (*Loudly*) Call out my horses and call out my men. We're going to put Humpty together again. (*He stamps his bad foot*) Owwwwwww!
Mary (*stepping forward*) Uncle Florimund—wait. I'm sure there's nothing to get excited about. (*She crosses to Humpty*) He doesn't look dangerous to *me.* (*She smiles at Humpty*)
Polly *Or* me. (*She steps forward and waves to Humpty*) *I* think he's rather sweet.

Jack pulls her back into line with a frown

King Sweet? Sweet? You don't know what you're saying, child. Everyone knows the legend as well as I do. If the egg falls down, I lose my crown. So long as he's running around loose, we could *all* be in danger. He may even have been conjured up by the Sorcerer.

All react and move back

Jack The King's right.
Mary (*scornfully*) What nonsense. You've only got to look at him to see that he wouldn't hurt a fly. Poor Humpty . . . (*She hugs him*) Silly King Florimund doesn't know what he's talking about, does he?
King (*startled*) *What?*
Tommy (*perplexed*) Mary . . .
Mary (*tartly*) And as for *you,* Tommy Tittlemouse, how you can stand there and listen to all this without trying to defend the darling little creature, I'll never know.
King (*groaning*) Oh, no. She's gone all contrary again.
Mary (*grabbing Humpty's hand*) Come along, Humpty. I'll look after you.
Tommy Now just a minute . . . (*He steps in front of them*)
Humpty (*smiling*) I'm going with her, now.
King (*annoyed*) This is all *his* fault. (*He points at Humpty*) Guards. Arrest that object.

Powder and Shott hurry forward and grab Humpty

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