

SURELY YOU JEST!

By Springdale Mid. School | Classics...Aesop Gone Viral | Div. II
Membership #: 54321

CAST

DRAGON - Narrator character; flies, breathes fire and smoke
KING JOHN/HOST - tyrannical leader, feared and despised by all
THE JESTER - kingdom funny-person, snake oil salesperson type
WIZARD - mistaken character, aged, hard of hearing, seeing, etc.
LADY GWEN - townspeople, unhappy with the King
LORD RANDOLPH/MINSTREL - townspeople, unhappy with the King
PUPPETEER - Chester, Lester, and Esther

(Setting: England, 1200 A.D., the heart of the Middle Ages; an enormous dragon sits atop what appears to be the throne room of a medieval castle; a King sits upon his throne while two townspeople, Lady Gwen and Lord Randolph, appear to be making a request - all are frozen. The dragon's eyes open, smoke appears from its nose, and it begins to narrate the tale.)

DRAGON

Oh, hi! I didn't see you there! Welcome to England, 1200 A.D., the height of the Middle Ages. You've arrived at a good time: Oxford University was just established, troubadours serenade people on the streets *for free*, and the plague is still about 100 years away...so you don't have to be afraid of that rat crawling by your feet.

(The King animates and gestures angrily toward the two townspeople.)

DRAGON

Speaking of rats, that's King John. Now, you've probably heard of ol' Johnny John before. He's the King from Robin Hood, the one everybody loved to hate, the guy who turned a cold shoulder to the poor and welcomed corrupt sycophants with open arms.

KING

Food? FOOD?! At what point in your peasant existence did you think that it was *my* job, as your king, to provide you food?!

LADY GWEN

Your highness, we are a lord and a lady, not mere peasants!

LORD RANDOPLH

Indeed! We are a part of his highness' royal court, and yet even we do not have any food to eat!

KING

Yeah, yeah, whatever, but when you agreed to be a serf in *my* kingdom, you play by *my* rules.

LADY GWEN

(A beat.) With all due respect, your highness, we agreed to *surf* in your kingdom (LORD RANDOLPH pantomimes surfing) not to be serfs in your kingdom. We didn't know there was a homonym.

LORD RANDOLPH

(Still pantomiming surfing; California accent) For sure, brah. Like, who knew you could *be* a surf instead of just doing the surf, right? Gnarly!

KING

Enough! No more food for you! I must ration the food out so I can be certain the kingdom will have enough for winter, so just deal with it! Now, step aside. It's time for my royal court to convene!

(The townspeople step aside; JESTER and WIZARD enter from backstage.)

DRAGON

What a jerk, right? To be clear, *everyone* in the kingdom hated the king, even his own royal court! Speaking of, here come two of his most trusted advisors. That guy over there—the one walking in the complete wrong direction—yeah, so that's the royal wizard. He can't see very well or hear for that matter, but he sure can whip up a good batch of stew. Sure, he's usually trying to make a magic potion and accidentally makes a stew, but that's beside the point. And the other, technicolored, cartoonish character right there, that's the king's favorite friend: the jester. Beloved by the entire kingdom for his wild antics, the jester's popularity surpassed that of the king himself! And that's where our problem begins...just watch...

JESTER

Why did the knight put on deodorant? (A beat) He didn't want to per-squire! Get it? Per-*squire*? Thanks everyone, that's my time. Be sure to click like and subscribe on Fiefbook & YouTroubador!

KING

Oh, dearest jester! How miserable my life would be without you!

WIZARD

Who? What? Did someone say something about Chester? That's my cat!

KING

(Cruelly to wizard) No one said anything about a cat, you old fool! (Kindly to jester) Why, jester, sometimes I think this kingdom loves you even more than me...well, almost!

JESTER

Ah, thank you, my sire!

KING

But I dare not speak those words too loudly, as I wouldn't want to put that idea in the minds of the peasants, though!

DRAGON

Too late. He put the idea in the minds of the peasants.

LADY GWEN

Say, what you do think about replacing the king with the jester? He's funny, silly, and says what he means. I like that.

LORD RANDOLPH

Wow! That's a great idea! The king is a total stitch! Who cares if he may not know a thing about leading a kingdom, he's something *different*, and surely that will be better than the current king!

DRAGON

Spoiler alert: it wasn't. But word spread around the kingdom super quickly—you could even say it went viral...and it wasn't, like, "too soon" to make that joke because the plague hadn't happened yet, remember. How did word spread so quickly? Well, there were three key channels, here's the first...

HOST

Ladies and Lords, welcome back to Arthurian Idol, England's number one singing competition! Here to tell the tale of the king and his jester let's have a hand for Rock and Scroll!

(The Wizard and his pet cat, Chester, watch as a small band consisting of the Minstrel and several backup singers perform a song; the Minstrel plays his song on a team-created instrument that uses a gourd and wire to emulate a lute song includes a cappella moments in the style of Middle Ages chanting choirs; Chester is a puppet controlled by the wizard.)

MINSTREL

What's a world to do,
With a mean and angry king,
Who hates kittens and puppies,
Who is cruel to everything?

Well, you seek out something better,
Someone who's super nice,
You douse a fire with water,
Stop flames with cold, cold ice.

The people soon revolted,
Not to let the kingdom fester,
Replaced the king with funny man,
Put the crown upon the jester!

Made them laugh,
He surely did with flair,
For he had no single worry,
He had no single care!

All seemed fine and dandy,
He seemed better than the king,
But something was a little off,
The jester was hiding something.

For although the king was mean,
At least he knew the rules,
He had led for many years,
He attended the best of schools.

The jester knew no laws,
Nor nothing about taxation,
He just knew how to be a fool,
How to capture imagination.

He promised the moon,
But he failed to deliver,
Then the nights grew colder,
And the people soon shivered.

"Just keep laughing," he said,
But failed to solve their woes,
"I'm the one you wanted,
I'll keep putting on shows."

But the winter grew colder,
And the pantries grew bare,

The jester didn't know about trade,
He barely knew how to share.

The people begged for mercy,
For some help from their ruler,
But the jester just grew angry,
And his demeanor so much crueler.

The kingdom began to see him,
For the fraud he truly was,
He had no idea how to be a leader,
He was lost without a cause!

Soon he fled the kingdom,
And the people were appalled,
For it was better to have just enough food,
Than to have no food at all!

But the damage had been done,
Of that we can be sure,
When you seek to solve a problem,
Beware an even worse cure.
Beware an even worse cure.

WIZARD

Ah, did you hear that, Chester! The moral of that song was to make sure you stock your pantry well 'cause winter is cold!

CHESTER

No it wasn't you old goat! Your hearing is terrible! The moral of the story was to avoid a remedy that is worse than the disease! The king was bad but the jester was even worse! Now, if you don't mind, I need to go spend my nine lives singing this song to all my feline friends!

(Two gloves designed to be miniature cat puppets appear from backstage, Chester tells them the story in sight of the audience and judges.)

WIZARD

Yes! You could make a musical about it! Call it *Cats*!

DRAGON

(Breathes fire; the scene disappears up in smoke) So, every time you hear a cat meowing, he's really just singing the song that's been passed down from generation to generation since the Middle Ages. That was one way the story spread here's another!

WIZARD

Oh, Esther the eagle, you've become such a great friend to me since Chester ran off! Oh, what's this! A stained-glass window artisan! The window has yet to be built, but I'm too old and frail to place the glass panes. Maybe you can help, Esther? Here are the instructions from someone named...Ikea? Hmm, strange name. Must be a Viking.

(A large, Connect Four-like, platform appears from backstage; Esther the eagle puppet picks up pieces of "glass" using magnets on her talon and drops them as comical music plays; the story painted on the glass is that of the king and his jester).

WIZARD

Unbelievable, Esther! What a story! It looks like this man and his two children met a rainbow, and the rainbow didn't have any gold at its end. The moral: there's no gold at the end of the rainbow!

ESTHER

That's not what it means, you silly billy! You can barely see a thing, can you? Surely the moral is to avoid a cure that's worse than the disease! I'm going to create stained glass around the world so fellow birds can share this story and learn its lesson!

(Two gloves designed to be miniature birds appear from backstage, Esther tells them the story in sight of the audience and judges.)

WIZARD

Ooh, what a thrill! You can make a movie out of it called *The Birds!*

ESTHER

I could! Or we can put this stained glass in every medieval cathedral and hope people can figure out the story! Like this masterpiece!

(A stained glass made from edible glass appears; it depicts the moral of the story 10 different ways, but - importantly - parts of the glass are broken even though a message on the artwork says glass was used to avoid the temporal, fragile quality of paper

scrolls - of course, this in itself is another way of conveying the moral: sure, glass *seemed* to be a better cure, but it is even worse than aged paper.)

DRAGON

(Breathes fire; the scene disappears up in smoke) Every time a bird builds a nest, it's teaching other birds the story of the king and his jester, a story that has been passed on and on since the Middle Ages! But there was one final way the story spread around the world. It was a lost art of communication, one that wizards learned in school and used to transform one object into an entirely new object: the magic of *transfiguration*! Here it is!

(Setting changes to the Wizard's lab; various vials full of different color liquids bubble and glow.)

WIZARD

I keep losing all my pets, Lester. But you, my loyal little lizard, my compassionate chameleon, at least I have you! We'll just stay right here in my laboratory until...(bumps into desk) uh oh! My potions!

(A series of magical changes occur via "magic," which is really simple machines and an assembly line of changes. Five transformations take place; The first stage represents the king, the townspeople, wizard, and jester in clay; the second stage flattens the king into a throne upon which the jester now sits; the third stage involves transforming the wizard clay into food-shaped items and then dissolving them one at a time in a container of water, releasing a steam as it does; the fourth stage shows the jester moving toward a heat source, which causes the material to evaporate up in smoke; the fifth and final scene shows the townspeople turning blue due to a chemical agent to show their sadness for replacing the disease of the king with an even worse cure of the jester. Also, the color of the entire setting changes at each stage.)

WIZARD

Outstanding, Lester! Did you see that tale? Don't go swimming immediately after eating. If you do, you'll get burned by a fire, go up in smoke, and then return as a blue person!

LESTER

No, no, no! That wasn't the moral! The story reminds us to be careful what we wish for: the cure can be worse than the disease! I must go and use my changing colors to use transfiguration and teach my fellow lizards this moral!

(Two gloves designed to be miniature lizard/chameleon puppets appear from backstage, Lester tells them the story in sight of the audience and judges.)

WIZARD

Ooh! And maybe you can write a jazz song about it called "Chameleon!"

LESTER

Hmm, sure. (A beat) Before I go, I've gotta ask: why are you a goat?

WIZARD

Ah, yes. Well, transfiguration spell gone wrong.

LESTER

Got it.

DRAGON

(Breathes fire; the scene disappears up in smoke) So, there you have it! By sound, by sight, and by sensational, transformational magic, the tale of the king and his jester has been passed down from generation to generation, reminding us that, sometimes, the cure can be worse than the disease! Talk about "going viral!" So, in no uncertain terms, the moral is no longer vague, Aesop has truly gone viral, in a better way than the plague! We'll deal with that problem next...TIME!

(End scene.)