



The Maiden and the Boy Who Vanished

Readers Theater Play Script and Performance Notes

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CHARACTERS

NARRATOR#1

NARRATOR #2

DUKE BORIS

DUCHESS OLGA

NURSE

FAIRY

SERVING MAN

SERVING WOMAN

DMITRI/GHOST

WIDOW

ANNA (eldest daughter)

KATYA (middle daughter)

SOFIA (youngest daughter)

MESSENGER

VILLAGER #1 / BROWN BEAR

VILLAGER #2 / HEDGEHOG

VILLAGER #3 / DEER

**If there are performance notes, they can be found on the pages following the script*

Scene 1 – Castle of the Duke and Duchess, in the Study/Widow’s Cottage

[Stage Set: The stage is divided into two sections which are both rooms in the Castle of the Duke and Duchess. If you want to use a backdrop, it can be painted to show both rooms. On one side of the stage is the Study and the other side of the stage is the Great hall. There are two more locations in the play- The Widow’s Cottage in Scene 1 and The Magic Forest in Scene 5. These will be “pop-up” locations at the front of the stage.]

[The play opens in the Duke’s study. If you have a backdrop, this part can show a large bookcase and a window. In the study there is a desk and two chairs. One chair is behind the desk and the other is next to the desk.]

[DUKE BORIS is seated on the top of the desk in his Study facing his wife, DUCHESS OLGA. The DUCHESS lovingly holds a baby (doll). DUKE and DUCHESS do not move, as if they are frozen.]

[NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2 enter, then stop and face the audience.]

NARRATOR #2:

Hello, everyone. This play is called “The Maiden and the Boy Who Vanished.” It’s a folk tale from Russia, and it’s brought to you by *Stories to Grow by*.

[NARRATOR steps forward.]

NARRATOR #1:

One day long ago in Russia, there lived a very rich nobleman known as Duke Boris. After years of hoping for a child, he and his wife, the Duchess Olga, (*gestures to the Duke and Duchess*) at last had a wonderful baby boy, named Dmitri (pronounce: Dih-MEE-tree).

[DUKE BORIS and DUCHESS OLGA unfreeze.]

DUKE BORIS:

My dear Olga, we must celebrate the birth of our child!

DUCHESS OLGA:

Wonderful idea, Boris! I’ll make arrangements at once!

NARRATOR #1:

They called for a grand feast.

[SERVING MAN and SERVING WOMAN enter.]

DUKE BORIS:

(to Servants) We'll have pheasant under glass, strawberries from Europe, and caviar!

DUCHESS OLGA:

Nothing but the finest delicacies in all the world to celebrate the birth of our baby!

[SERVANTS bow and exit.]

NARRATOR #2:

So, (excited) EVERYONE in the land was invited, right?!

NARRATOR #1:

Um, I wouldn't say EVERYONE..

NARRATOR #2:

So, (throws arms upward, again in excitement) everyone in the Duke's castle was invited!

NARRATOR #1:

Uh, not really.

NARRATOR #2:

The Duke's immediate family was invited?

NARRATOR #1:

That's more like it.

DUKE BORIS:

It'll be you, me, and our baby son Dmitri.

DUCHESS OLGA:

No expense will be spared, my dear! (calls offstage) Nurse!

[NURSE enters, DUCHESS OLGA hands the baby to her, and NURSE exits, followed by DUKE and DUCHESS.]

[While NARRATORS speak the next two lines, WIDOW, ANNA, KATYA, and SOFIA enter to the Widow's cottage, a "pop-up" setting at the front edge of the stage. If you want a backdrop to further delineate the Widow's cottage, you can make a small paper backdrop to show the rear wall of the cottage and have STAGE HANDS bring it on when WIDOW and her daughters enter, holding it up behind them while they speak. There is a small table with a teapot and three empty teacups.]

NARRATOR #2:

All this extravagance! This must be a prosperous kingdom!

NARRATOR #1:

The Duke and Duchess are doing fine, that's for sure. But for everyone else... (*gestures to the Widow and her three daughters Anna, Katya, and Sofia*) ... not so much.

WIDOW:

Wonderful news! The Duchess Olga had her baby today, a boy named Dmitri!

ANNA:

How marvelous!

KATYA:

It's an occasion to celebrate!

SOFIA:

But how?

KATYA:

Extra cup of tea?

WIDOW:

We mustn't be wasteful of our tea.

ANNA:

An extra serving of porridge?

WIDOW:

And where do you suppose we'll find THAT?

SOFIA:

Here's a thought—how about if we just toast to the health of the new baby boy, using our tea?

WIDOW:

What a good idea, Sofia!

[WIDOW, ANNA, KATYA and SOFIA hold up their teacups and say "Hear, hear!" They exit.]

NARRATOR #1:

That was nice.

NARRATOR #2:

What are the Duke and Duchess up to?

[DUKE BORIS rushes onstage, waving his arms, distressed. He is wearing a nightshirt and stocking cap.]

DUKE BORIS:
(throws up arms in despair) Aughh!

[DUCHESS OLGA rushes onstage, from the same stage wing.]

DUCHESS OLGA:
What is it, dear?!

DUKE BORIS:
A terrible dream!

DUCHESS OLGA:
A nightmare?

DUKE BORIS:
There was a blinding light. Then a fairy appeared!

[FAIRY enters from the opposite stage wing.]

DUKE BORIS:
She said–

FAIRY:
(facing audience, waves wand) Duke Boris, you and your wife are always cooped up in your castle, oblivious (pronounce: ubb-LIV-eous) to the hardship of your subjects.

DUCHESS OLGA:
For goodness sake, what does “oblivious” mean?

DUKE BORIS:
Who knows? Then she said –

FAIRY:
Your feet are not on the ground! So that you also understand hardship, I decree this: Your son’s feet must never touch the ground until he is 12 years old! If his son’s feet touch the ground before that time, he will disappear and be lost to you!

DUCHESS OLGA:
What, NO!

DUKE BORIS:

Then she waved her wand—

[FAIRY waves her wand.]

DUKE BORIS:

And disappeared!

[FAIRY disappears. (See Performance Notes on how to create the effect of FAIRY's disappearing.)]

DUCHESS OLGA:

(alarmed) Boris, what do you make of it?

DUKE BORIS:

It was as real as real can be! We can't take a chance, Olga. Our son's feet must not touch the ground for 12 years. Otherwise—

DUKE BORIS and DUCHESS OLGA, together:

(clutch each others hands and stamp their feet in fear) Aughhh!! *(run offstage calling for Nurse)* NUUURRSE!

[DUKE BORIS and DUCHESS OLGA exit.]

NARRATOR #1:

As you can imagine, the greatest care was taken with the baby.

[NURSE enters carrying a baby, and cooing to him.]

NURSE:

Dear little thing! Don't worry – we'll make sure those sweet little feet *(wiggles the baby's foot)* don't come anywhere near a floor. *(turns to exit but before she does, turns to the audience)* Saves a buncle on shoes.

[NURSE exits.]

NARRATOR #2:

Carrying a BABY around is one thing...

NARRATOR #1:

I know. But not so easy when he grows up!

NARRATOR #2:

(puts hand on back) My back is sore just thinking about it.

NARRATOR #1:

Let's fast-forward to the day before Dimitri's 12th birthday.

NARRATOR #2:

We can do that?

NARRATOR #1:

Just do as I do.

[NARRATOR #1 waves his or her arms, and NARRATOR #2 mimics the movement. A special effect is created to convey the passage of time (See Performance Notes for suggestions on how to do this.)]

[STAGE HANDS remove table from Widow's Cottage.]

Scene 2 – The Great Hall, nearly 12 years later

[Stage Set: In a castle, a “Great Hall” was a large and usually rectangular hall, ornately decorated, where a Duke, Prince, or Lord would entertain guests. If you have a backdrop, paint a fireplace for the Great Hall . If you don’t have a backdrop, you can create a fireplace out of a cardboard box (See Performance Notes for suggestions on making the fireplace). There is a long-ish table with one chair facing the audience, and a couch which has been covered in gold fabric (See Performance Notes for the couch).]

[A large grandfather clock should be onstage, and it can also be made of cardboard. The minute hand of the clock should be maneuverable so that an actor standing behind the backdrop can advance the minute hand from 11:55 pm to midnight. (See Performance Notes on how to create this effect.)]

NARRATOR #1:

And now, by the magic of storytelling, nearly 12 years have passed.

[SERVING WOMAN and her husband SERVING MAN enter, preparing for a party. SERVING WOMAN carries wrapped presents and decorations. SERVING MAN dusts as he enters.]

SERVING MAN:

(stops dusting to say these lines) At last, his 12th birthday is tomorrow! We thought this day would never come.

SERVING WOMAN:

(to Serving Man in a snippy voice, as if yelling at a little brother who WILL NOT listen) Keep dusting! This birthday party must be PERFECT.

SERVING MAN:

(shrugs) It’s not as if any guests are coming.

SERVING WOMAN:

That’s not the point! Our Duchess has made it clear everything in this castle must be perfect. Even the furniture *(gestures to furniture)* was re-upholstered in gold silk!

SERVING MAN:

I’m not going near it. If I spill even one drop of water....

SERVING WOMAN:

...you’re done for. *(thumps herself on the side of head as she remembers something)* Ahhh, the SILVER! How could I have forgotten? It won’t polish itself!

[SERVING WOMAN rushes offstage.]

DMITRI:

(from offstage) Nurse! I wish to go outside now. Please come carry me!

NURSE:

(from offstage) Yes, dear one! Coming! Here, hop up on my back.

SERVING MAN:

Just one more day! One more day and this nonsense will be over and done with!

[From offstage, NURSE screams.]

[DUKE BORIS runs onstage from the opposite direction where the scream was heard.]

[NURSE runs onstage. She is very upset.]

DUKE BORIS:

What's the matter? Tell me! What happened?

NURSE:

(breathless) I was carrying Dimitri and all of a sudden there was this blinding light out the window! When I turned to see what it was, Dimitri must have slipped off my back ... because I think his foot touched the floor... and ... and...

DUKE BORIS:

And WHAT?!

NURSE:

Master, your son has VANISHED!

DUKE BORIS:

(gasps)

NURSE:

This is all that's left of him! *(holds up a bright red waistband in the traditional Russian style, decorated at both ends with gold pompoms and tassels)*

DUKE BORIS:

(takes the waistband) I can't believe this! Tomorrow was the day! What will I tell the Duchess?

[DUCHESS OLGA enters.]

DUCHESS OLGA:

What will you tell me what?

DUKE BORIS:

Dear wife, it's our son – he's vanished!

DUCHESS OLGA:

What?! WE MUST FIND HIM~

DUKE BORIS:

(calls offstage) SERVANTS!

[SERVING MAN and SERVING WOMAN run onstage and stand at attention.]

DUKE BORIS:

EVERYONE! SEARCH THE HOUSE AND THE GROUNDS! FIND MY SON!

[NURSE and SERVANTS criss-cross the stage, then each runs offstage.]

[DUKE and DUCHESS exit. A moment later DUKE re-enters, sits at his desk in the Study, puts his head on the desk, and covers his head with his hands. He stays this way until the beginning of the next scene.]

[NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2 enter.]

NARRATOR #2:

Poor Duke! Poor Duchess! Can we zip ahead another five years? Maybe it'll all be worked out by then.

NARRATOR #1:

All right, let's give it five years.

[Once again, NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2 wave their arms and create the special effect that indicates the passage of time, as they had done before.]

Scene 3 – Duke’s Study, 5 years later

[Stage set: Same as in Scene 1.]

NARRATOR #2:

(gestures to the Duke, who is still seated with his head on the desk and hands covering his head) The clock says it’s midnight, and the Duke seems the same as when we left him five years ago. Has nothing changed?

NARRATOR #1:

Shh, listen. Let’s find out.

[A grandfather clock strikes twelve (See Performance Notes for how to show a clock where the minute hand can move from 11:55 pm to midnight, and how to simulate a clock chime). After the first two or three chimes, reduce the sound of the chimes so the voice of DUKE BORIS can be heard.]

DUKE BORIS:

It’s midnight again. I can’t believe it’s been five years since Dimitri vanished! Today, if he were here, the Duchess and I would be celebrating his 17th birthday. *(holds up waistband and loudly sighs)*

NARRATOR #1:

Oh, dear. That answers our question.

[SERVING WOMAN and SERVING MAN rush in. They are out of breath.]

SERVING WOMAN:

(curtseys) Sire...

SERVING MAN:

We need to speak with you at once, your Excellency! If we may, your Excellency.

DUKE BORIS:

(not really looking up, shaking his head) Bursting into my study at midnight – what could be so important?

SERVING MAN:

Midnight is why we’re here!

DUKE BORIS:

(looks up) What do you mean? Goodness, the two of you look like you’ve seen a ghost!

SERVING WOMAN:

We have!

SERVING MAN:

Your Grace, listen. All week long when midnight strikes we've heard footsteps, groans, and other strange noises coming from the Great Hall. And tonight, the noises were the worst of all!

SERVING WOMAN:

None of the servants will step foot in the Great Hall anymore, even in the daytime, to dust!

SERVING MAN:

Master, the Great Hall is haunted!

DUKE BORIS:

(stands) Other than the Great Hall's getting very dusty *(chuckles)* there's nothing to fear. Aren't you just making an elephant out of a fly? It's just the curtains flapping against the windows. Go back to bed now, forget about it.

SERVING WOMAN:

(sighs) If you say so, your Grace.

DUKE BORIS:

And tell the rest of the servants the Duke said there's nothing to be afraid of.

SERVING MAN:

Yes, your Grace.

[SERVING WOMAN and SERVING MAN bow, and exit.]

DUKE BORIS:

All that bother, from just the wind. *(to audience)* Though – why would it only happen each night at midnight? *(stands and starts to pace, then suddenly stops)* Could it be these strange goings-on hold a clue as to the disappearance of my son? *(holds hand in a fist)* I must tell the Duchess and see what she thinks!

[DUKE BORIS rushes offstage.]

Scene 4 – Town square

[Stage set: This Town Square scene is a “pop-up” since the scene is brief. (See Performance Notes for suggestions.)]

NARRATOR #1:

The next morning, the Duke and Duchess sent a Messenger to the town square to make an announcement.

[MESSENGER steps forward to the very front of the stage.]

[VILLAGE WOMAN #1, VILLAGE WOMAN #2 and VILLAGE WOMAN #3 enter and gather around MESSENGER.]

MESSENGER:

Hear ye, hear ye! The Duke Boris and Duchess Olga are offering a reward of 100 GOLD COINS

...

VILLAGER #1:

(in awe) 100 gold coins!

VILLAGER #2 and VILLAGER #3, together:

(looking at each other, also in awe) 100 gold coins!

MESSENGER:

... to the person who can spend the entire night in the Great Hall of the castle and report to the Duke on what they see.

VILLAGER #1:

What a cakewalk! We just sleep over at the Duke’s castle? Works for me!

VILLAGER #2 and VILLAGER #3, together:

(looking at each other) 100 gold coins!

[VILLAGERS exit, chattering excitedly.]

[MESSENGER exits.]

Scene 5 – Duke’s Study

NARRATOR #1:

Word spread quickly, as you can imagine. Many citizens of the land were eager to try. But none, as it turned out, had the courage to stay the whole night.

NARRATOR #2:

Why not?

NARRATOR #1:

At midnight, just as the servants said, there were louds groans and the sound of footsteps coming closer and closer. You can imagine – each contestant right away forgot the brave talk and ran off. It wasn’t worth it to risk their lives for 100 gold pieces.

NARRATOR #2:

The Duke and Duchess didn’t find out anything about their son?

NARRATOR #2:

Not a speck.

[DUKE BORIS enters, stops and turns to audience, sighs and shakes his head. He walks over to his desk and sits in the chair. In a moment he has fallen asleep and is loudly snoring.]

[SERVING WOMAN and SERVING MAN enter and tiptoe toward DUKE BORIS.]

SERVING MAN:

(softly) Master? *(pauses)* Master? *(pokes him lightly)*

DUKE BORIS:

(wakes up, startled) WHAT?

SERVING MAN:

(nervous) Um, Your Grace, you have some visitors.

DUKE BORIS:

Visitors?

SERVING WOMAN:

It’s the miller’s widow and her three daughters. They’re asking about the reward.

SERVING MAN:

They’re not asking ABOUT the reward – they know all about it. They’re asking about how they can try their chances for the reward.

SERVING WOMAN:

That's what I said!

DUKE BORIS:

Wait a minute, they want to try their chances in the Great Hall, do they? (*SERVING MAN & SERVING WOMAN nod*) After the first few contestants ran away, no takers have come by. Well, what are you waiting for? Bring them in!

SERVING WOMAN:

My husband will escort them.

[*SERVING MAN* is not paying attention and doesn't move. *SERVING WOMAN* nudges *SERVING MAN*. *SERVING MAN* is brought to attention, exits, and after a moment returns with *WIDOW*, *ANNA*, *KATYA*, and *SOFIA*. The *WIDOW* and her daughters stand before *DUKE*. Their clothes are patched and they are clearly from modest circumstances.]

DUKE BORIS:

Welcome, good woman.

WIDOW:

My Duke. (*bows*) Sir, may I introduce you to my eldest daughter Anna? (*Anna curtseys*) She would like to stay in the Great Hall all night. The haunted room.

DUKE BORIS:

So I've heard. And if your daughter stays the whole night through, she will receive 100 gold coins.

WIDOW:

So we've heard!

DUKE BORIS:

(*to Anna*) Are you sure you're willing to do this?

ANNA:

I am. (*looks at her mother*) Our mother always told us, "Without effort, you can't pull a fish out of a pond."

DUKE BORIS:

My mother told me that, too! Though you need a net. Very well, Anna, stay at the Great Hall tonight. With any luck, you'll stay the whole night through. (*to Serving Woman and Serving Man*) Bring this maiden the kind of dinner you'd serve to my wife and me. You know what I mean. And enough firewood to keep the Great Hall warm tonight.

SERVING MAN:

Yes, Sir. *(bows)*

SERVING WOMAN:

Right away, Sir. *(bows)*

[While ANNA, WIDOW, and DUKE BORIS speak the lines below, the following action takes place: SERVING WOMAN and SERVING MAN exit. They return a couple of seconds later, with SERVING WOMAN carrying a white tablecloth, and a cart with wooden bowls, plates and cups, and SERVING MAN carrying several logs of wood. The two are fearful of going into the Great Hall area, so they work quickly. As quickly as they can, SERVING WOMAN lays the tablecloth on the table and sets out the dinner preparations, and SERVING MAN puts the logs down in front of the fire. Then they both exit, still fearful.]

ANNA:

(hugs her mother and two sisters) Don't worry, Mother. I'll be all right. By morning, we will have 100 gold coins!

WIDOW:

May you stay safe, my child.

ANNA:

Don't worry, I'll be fine. I'll just go settle in now.

[ANNA gives her mother and sisters a quick hug, and goes to the Great Hall. WIDOW, DUKE BORIS, KATYA, and SOFIA exit.]

Scene 6 – Great Hall

[Stage set: Same as Scene 2.]

[ANNA sets out the food.]

ANNA:

Why, look at this – Borscht, beef stroganoff, smoked salmon – what a feast!

[Anna eagerly pretends to eat. After a few moments, the clock begins to strike. The first two gongs are heard. (See Performance Notes on how to simulate a freestanding clock and its chimes.)]

ANNA:

Midnight already? (*wipes mouth with napkin*)

[As the next 10 gongs are heard, ANNA pretends to start a fire in the fireplace. Then she starts to set the table. The gongs should be quick or it can take too long.]

[When the clock is finished striking 12, ANNA sits down again.]

[Loud footsteps, moaning, and groaning noises are heard offstage.]

ANNA:

(*looks toward the sounds*) My goodness! It's midnight, and that must be the noises they talked about. (*returns to eating*)

[GHOST enters and stands behind ANNA, but she is so busy eating she does not notice him. GHOST is the same actor as the one who will play DMITRI, later. To convey a ghost-like impression, the ghost wears a white sheet as a costume and an eye or face mask. When it's time for the GHOST to turn into DMITRI toward the end of the play, the actor will remove the white ghost costume and eye/face mask (see Performance Notes for costume and quick change ideas).]

GHOST:

(*clears throat*) Ah hemmmmm!

[ANNA spins around on her seat and sees GHOST behind her. She jumps up in surprise. ANNA knocks the chair over as she jumps up.]

ANNA:

Oh my! Who are you?

GHOST:

That doesn't matter. (*gestures at the table*) Tell me, was this dinner cooked for anyone?

ANNA:

Yes, for me.

GHOST:

And is that is your place setting..?

ANNA:

Of course. it was set for me.

GHOST:

This fire... is it built for anyone?

ANNA:

For me, who else?

[GHOST sighs and disappears. (See Performance Notes for ideas on how to make GHOST "disappear").]

ANNA:

(*darts about the stage*) Come, Master! Come!

[DUKE BORIS rushes onstage, wearing a nightshirt. He carries a pretend candle on a small plate. In his pocket is a pouch with the 100 gold coins.]

DUKE BORIS:

(*impatiently*) What happened?

ANNA:

After the stroke of midnight, I heard those noises everyone talks about.

DUKE BORIS:

And you didn't run away, congratulations! What happened?

ANNA:

Suddenly, a young man appeared!

DUKE BORIS:

A young man? This is new indeed! Who was he?

ANNA:

He didn't say. He just asked two — no, it was three — kind of odd questions.

DUKE BORIS:

What?

ANNA:

If the dinner was prepared for anyone, and if place setting was set for anyone, and if the fire was built for anyone.

DUKE BORIS:

That's odd! Of course the dinner and the fire were prepared for you.

ANNA:

That's what I told him. And then just like that (*snaps her fingers*) – he vanished!

DUKE BORIS:

Like a GHOST?

ANNA:

All I know is that he just (*snaps her fingers*) vanished!

DUKE BORIS:

Well at least we learned something we didn't know before. Here's your reward. (*reaches into his pocket and hands the pouch to Anna*)

ANNA:

(*curtseys*) Thank you, your Grace! (*to audience*) Wait till I show Mama!

[ANNA rushes offstage.]

DUKE BORIS:

Wait till I tell the Duchess!

[While NARRATORS speak the following lines, SERVING MAN and SERVING WOMAN enter, remove the dinner implements and white tablecloth from the table, and clear the logs in front of the fire.]

NARRATOR #1:

The Duke was pleased to learn a bit more...

NARRATOR #2:

But in truth, it wasn't anything that led him to his son.

NARRATOR #1:

Exactly. So the challenge was still on. The next day, the Widow brought her second daughter, Katya, to the Duke's castle.

[SERVING MAN enters with WIDOW and KATYA.]

WIDOW:

Sir, my daughter Katya would like to try spending the night in the haunted room. Perhaps she can learn something else about this strange visitor.

[KATYA steps forward.]

DUKE BORIS:

Aren't you afraid, my dear?

KATYA:

No, sir. My sister prepared me and told me about the questions. I'm ready.

DUKE BORIS:

The rules are a little different this time. To earn the reward, if the young man appears again, you must find out more him Ask his name, where he's from, or better yet, if knows anything about my son.

KATYA:

I understand, Sir. If he comes back, that is.

DUKE BORIS:

Of course. *(to Serving Man)* Prepare the Great Hall for Katya's stay tonight.

SERVING MAN:

At once, my Lord.

[SERVING MAN exits. While the lines below are said, he re-enters with SERVING WOMAN. Again, SERVING WOMAN carries a white tablecloth and a tray with dinner preparations, and he carries in a few logs that he places in front of the fire. SERVING WOMAN lays the tablecloth on the table and sets out the dinner preparations, and they both hurriedly leave.]

DUKE BORIS:

Best of luck.

KATYA:

Yes, Sir.

[KATYA hugs her mother goodbye.]

[KATYA goes through the door to the Great Hall, arranges the food and silverware on the table and pretends to set a fire in the fireplace. She sits down at the table, humming to herself.]

[After a few moments, the clock strikes midnight and the first chime is heard.]

KATYA:
Midnight!

[Eleven more chimes are heard. When the clock is finished striking 12, KATYA sits and pretends to eat. Note- again, the chimes should go quickly.]

[Noise – loud footsteps, moaning, and groaning – is heard offstage.]

KATYA:
(*looks around*) Is that what I think it is?

[GHOST enters.]

[As NARRATOR speaks the following lines below, GHOST and KATYA silently pantomime the following actions: GHOST talks, GHOST “vanishes,” KATYA is shocked and rushes about, calling for DUKE.]

[DUKE BORIS rushes in.]

DUKE BORIS:
What is it? What did you find out?

KATYA:
Your Excellency, the young man came back! He asked the same questions and I knew just how to answer them. I also asked him where he was from. He said he was from a place down under, some kind of golden forest.

DUKE BORIS:
Then what?

KATYA:
That was it. He just vanished!

[DUKE BORIS gives KATYA another pouch of coins. KATYA takes the pouch and skips off stage, smiling.]

NARRATOR #1:

The Duke continued to offer the reward. However, for the next contestant to earn the reward, some information would need to lead directly to the discovery of the Duke's son. That night, the Widow came with her youngest daughter, Sofia.

[WIDOW enters with SOFIA.]

WIDOW:

Good sir, my youngest daughter Sofia has volunteered to stay in the haunted room tonight.

[SOFIA steps forward.]

DUKE BORIS:

Understand this. To earn the reward, you must find out something that leads DIRECTLY to my son's return.

SOFIA:

I understand the terms, Sir.

DUKE BORIS:

Very well, then.

[DUKE BORIS raises an arm to SERVING WOMAN and SERVING MAN, who are standing in the wings. As before, they go to the Great Hall. He carries a stack of firewood and she carries a tray of food and a white tablecloth. SERVING WOMAN lays the tablecloth and sets the dinner props upon the table. SERVING MAN leaves the logs of wood by the fire. The two of them are fearful and hurry out, looking behind them as they head back to the wings without speaking.]

[WIDOW and DUKE BORIS walk to the wings. SOFIA watches them go.]

[After a brief pause, SOFIA walks into the Great Hall. She does almost exactly what KATYA did: spreads out the dinner preparations on the table and tends to the fire.]

[The clock begins to strike. She sits at the table, but does NOT eat.]

[Once again, noise – loud footsteps, moaning, and groaning – is heard offstage. She gets up, looks about, then returns to the table. From the table, she continues to look all over the room.]

[GHOST enters and groans loudly to get SOFIA's attention. SOFIA leaps from her chair. She grips the edge of the table to show that she is confused and scared. She does not speak.]

GHOST:

(sighs) I suppose this food is for yourself alone? *(pauses, then somewhat insistently)* Well, answer me!

SOFIA:

Well, yes it's supposed to be for me. But if you like, why not have some, too?

GHOST:

(brightens) And this fire, for whom was the fire built?

SOFIA:

For me, but if you stay and have some dinner with me, it will warm you, too.

GHOST:

(claps hands) Ah yes! And so I shall! But first I must go take care of something.

SOFIA:

What, you're leaving?

GHOST:

I must go.

SOFIA:

Could I come with you?

GHOST:

I'll be back soon.

[DMITRI exits.]

SOFIA:

I'd better follow and keep an eye on him. *(to audience)* He didn't actually say I SHOULDN'T go.

[SOFIA exits, following in the same direction where GHOST had exited.]

[NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2 exit.]

Scene 7 – Golden Forest

[Stage set: This is a “pop-up” scene that takes place at the front of the stage, in front of the other sets. The actors playing the GOLD TREE and SILVER TREE will enter and stand at the front of the stage in order to establish the boundaries of the forest. If you want to further separate the forest, you can make a small paper backdrop to show a magic, shiny world and have STAGE HANDS bring it on when TREES enter, holding it up behind them during the Scene.]

[GHOST enters the Golden Forest.]

[SOFIA enters and hides behind GOLD TREE, watching GHOST.]

[In the Golden Forest, GHOST meets BROWN BEAR, HEDGEHOG, and DEER. ANIMALS do not speak, but GHOST pets each one in turn, talking quietly to them. SOFIA follows at a distance.]

[FAIRY enters.]

FAIRY:

So the time has come, at last!

GHOST:

It has come.

FAIRY:

You were invited to dine? You, an outsider, was shown hospitality?

GHOST:

That I was. As surprising as it was.

FAIRY:

Then it is time.

GHOST:

It is time.

[While SOFIA speaks, below, FAIRY and GHOST silently pantomime the rest of their discussion.]

SOFIA:

(hiding behind a tree) It's a fairy! I wish I could hear what they were saying. Who would believe I came to a magical golden forest? I must take a memento of this journey home.

GOLD TREE:

How about a small golden twig?

[GOLD TREE hands SOFIA a gold branch (See Performance Notes for ideas on GOLD TREE'S branches).]

SOFIA:

Perfect, thank you!

SILVER TREE

Ahem. And how about a SILVER twig?

SOFIA:

Oh, my! Thank you!

[SILVER TREE hands SOFIA a gold branch (See Performance Notes for ideas on SILVER TREE'S branches).]

SOFIA:

I should get out of here before they see me!

[SOFIA exits.]

[After a moment, GHOST and FAIRY exit.]

[SOFIA re-enters the Great Hall and sits by the fire. That is where GHOST/DIMITRI finds her when he returns.]

[GHOST enters, but is now the grown-up DIMITRI. He no longer wears the white ghost costume and eye mask, but rather a prince-like costume and the red waistband left behind years ago. (See Performance Notes for ideas on making this change quickly.)]

DMITRI:

Thank you for waiting.

SOFIA:

You sound the same, but you look so different!

DMITRI:

I'm the same as I have always been, though you are the first to truly see me. Let's have that dinner now. Is it still warm?

SOFIA:

Yes. And I haven't started eating yet.

[They sit and pretend to eat for a few moments.]

DMITRI:

What a delicious meal! My compliments to the chef.

SOFIA:

It was the cook here in this castle who prepared it .

DMITRI:

(yawns) I think I may need to rest a bit. *(glances at couch)*

SOFIA:

Would you like to lie down?

DMITRI:

Don't mind if I do. *(goes to couch, lies down, and immediately starts to snore)*

[SOFIA takes the twigs she hid in her sleeve and sets them by DMITRI's side. She sits in a chair by the bed and is soon asleep, too.]

Scene 8 – Great Hall, the next morning

[Stage set: as in Scene 4.]

[SOFIA and DMITRI are both asleep, he on the couch and she with her head on the table.]

[NARRATOR #1 and NARRATOR #2 enter.]

NARRATOR #1:

Look at them. Exhausted.

NARRATOR #2:

Tired out.

DUKE BARON:

(from offstage) Olga wake up, it's morning. Guess what? No interruptions last night. You know what that means?

DUCHESS OLGA:

(also offstage) Either everything went very well last night. Or — oh my gosh! — maybe something horrible happened! Boris, you must go check on the girl!

[DUKE BORIS rushes onstage to the Great Hall, worried. He is wearing his nightshirt and stocking cap.]

DUKE BORIS:

(recognizes his son on the couch) Son, it's YOU! You're all grown up!

[DMITRI wakes up. SOFIA wakes up, too.]

DMITRI:

Father! *(they hug)*

DUKE BORIS:

(calls to offstage) Look! OLGA! Everyone, come! Dmitri is HERE! AT LAST, HE IS HOME!

[DUCHESS OLGA, WIDOW, ANNA, KATYA, SERVING MAN, SERVING WOMAN and NURSE run onto the stage. They happily hug and dance about.]

[SOFIA and DMITRI move to center stage, surrounded on both side by the other actors.]

DUCHESS OLGA:

Son! Look at you!

DMITRI:

I guess I'm all grown up, Mother! (*hugs mother*)

[DMITRI notices the gold and silver twigs that were near the couch.]

DMITRI:

What's this? (*turns to Sofia*) These are from the Golden Forest. Did you follow me down there, to the world down under?

SOFIA:

I was thinking maybe I should follow you. Was that all right?

DMITRI:

It's fine. (*touches her hand*) I'm glad you saw the place where I stayed the last five years. Now look what your adventuring will do for us!

[DMITRI takes the twigs. He tosses each twig, in turn, out the window of DUKE BORIS's study. STAGE HANDS bring on a beautiful castle. The castle must have only tones of gray or black (no color yet!). (See Performance Notes for suggestion on making the two-sided castle). ALL ACTORS pretend to look out a window at the castle as it appears. They say "Oooooohhh! aaaahhh!" "A castle!"]

DUCHESS OLGA:

That castle was never there before What kind of magic is this?

DMITRI:

The magic twigs this maiden brought back from the Golden Forest created the castle you see before you!

DUKE BORIS:

How convenient – and right next door! Let's call for a feast to celebrate your homecoming and new castle!

DUCHESS OLGA:

Wonderful!

DMITRI:

(*looks at Sofia*) And we'll celebrate with, umm.. may I ask your name?

SOFIA:

Sofia. And I know you're Dimitri.

DMITRI:

Yes. Sofia, I know we just met and this may seem very quick to you, but after all this is a fairytale—

SOFIA:

It must be one! I saw you talking to a real Fairy in that forest.

DMITRI:

She is one. *(takes her hand)* Sofia, I hope it's not presumptuous to ask you, would you be mine?

SOFIA:

You know, it feels right between us, Dmitri. Since this is a fairytale after all— *(to audience)* Because don't do this in real life! *(back to Dmitri)* But for you, now, I say Yes!

DMITRI:

Splendid! We'll invite all the citizens in the land to our wedding. EVERYONE will be welcome!

DUKE BORIS:

(steps forward) Uh, everyone? Do you think that's wise?

DMITRI:

Father, without the kindness of people in our land like Sofia, *(puts arm around Sofia)* I never would have been able to return home. The Fairy proclaimed in order for the spell to be broken, I must get invited to dine while I was a stranger, in the castle where I was born.

DUCHESS OLGA:

And that's what this young lady did?

DMITRI:

She did indeed.

DUKE BORIS:

Very well then! This will be a celebration unlike any other – for your homecoming, your castle, AND for the wedding of the two of you!

[ANNA runs onstage and skids to a stop.]

ANNA:

Did someone say “wedding”?

[KATYA and WIDOW run onstage and skid to a stop.]

KATYA and WIDOW:
“Wedding”?

SOFIA:
You heard right, Mama, Anna, Katya. (*takes hand of Dmitri*) Dmitri and I are going to be married.

DUCHESS OLGA:
And everyone’s invited!

[FAIRY enters.]

SOFIA:
(*points to Fairy*) THERE she is!

FAIRY:
At last, the Duke and Duchess no longer have their heads in the clouds. It will be a new land after this! And for the final touch... (*waves wand*) ...kazaam!

[When FAIRY waves her wand, STAGE HANDS flip the castle to show the other side- this one is gold and silver and shiny. (See Performance Notes for suggestion on making the castle and giving it gold and silver effects). ALL ACTORS pretend to look out a window at the castle. As they see it, they say “The castle has turned to pure gold!” “And silver!” “Ooooh, ahhhhh!”]

NARRATOR #1:
Well, it looks like our story is now told. And they all lived–

NARRATOR #2:
Wait a minute. By “all,” do you mean just the nobles in the castle? Or other folks too?

NARRATOR #1:
EVERYONE. Yep, everyone in the land lived happily ever after.

[If you have a curtain, close it now. If you do not, fade the lights. If you have no stage lights, all actors come on stage and bow to the audience.]



Performance Notes for The Golden Goose

THREE WAYS THAT STUDENTS AND TEACHERS CAN UTILIZE THIS PLAY

- 1.** Students can read the play aloud while sitting in the classroom. Ask the readers to skip all bracketed stage directions. You may prefer to rotate your actors to give all students a chance to read the speaking parts.
- 2.** Students can perform the play in the classroom. Clear an area that can be used as the stage. Have the audience sit on the floor in front of the stage. Students in the play can make simple costumes and/or sets as described below. When the scene change, the characters "on stage" simply walk to the back of the room where they wait until their next appearance "on stage."
- 3.** Students can perform the play on stage. Refer to the production notes that follow. Ask the actors to enter from the back of the room and move through the audience as they approach the stage.



COSTUMES

- NARRATORS— Simple, nice clothes.
- NURSE— Long skirt, long-sleeved shirt, and long white aprons. She can also wear a white nurse's cap. Black or brown shoes.
- DUKE BORIS— Long dark pants, black or brown boots or shoes, a dark long-sleeved shirt, and a black blazer or buttoned vest. A gold sash would be a nice touch. It can be a strip of fabric that is worn over one shoulder



and sewn or safety-pinned together at the opposite hip.

In Scenes 1 & 6 he wears a bathrobe or nightgown over his clothes.

- **DUCHESS OLGA**— A long pale-colored dress, such as white, light blue, or light pink. Jewelry would be a nice touch. She can wear a long pearl necklace, gold pendant and/or broach.

In Scenes 1 & 6 she wears a bathrobe or nightgown over her clothes.

Costume Note for **DUKE** and **DUCHESS**: During the Scene 2, **DUKE** and **DUCHESS** can be “aged” by combing generous amounts of baby powder through his slicked-back hair (make sure actors are not asthmatic or allergic to talc products).

- **WIDOW, ANNA, KATYA, SOFIA**— Shawls, long-sleeved shirts, long skirts, and knit gloves with the fingertips cut off. Black or brown boots or shoes. They may also wear kerchiefs.

Note: Clothes should look tattered and worn. You can tear clothes in a few places, rub some dirt on them, and/or sew patches on to make them look old.

Note: **SOFIA** must have sleeves long enough to hide the twigs.

- **FAIRY**— Light colored flowy dress, possibly shiny or sparkly, and wings.
- **SERVING MAN** and **SERVING WOMAN**— Simple, plain light-colored clothing and black or brown shoes.
- **MESSENGER**— Black or brown pants, a tan or white long-sleeved shirt, and a black or brown vest. Black or brown boots or shoes.
- **VILLAGERS**— Long sleeved shirts, pants or skirts and black or brown shoes. They can have vests or shawls and hats or kerchiefs. Clothing is tattered and worn. They can also wear knit gloves with fingers cut off.
- **GHOST/DIMITRI**— Nice black pants, long sleeved shirt, and a buttoned vest (for **DIMITRI**). He also later wears a red waistband- the one that **NURSE** found in Scene 1 or one just like it. Over these clothes, he wears a white sheet or white cape and a white eye mask (for **GHOST**). Cape can be made out of a white sheet or fabric, draped over shoulders and pinned in the front near the collarbone.



Note: When GHOST exits in the middle of Scene 5, he quickly removes the sheet and the mask, and adds the red waistband, in order to become DIMITRI. He can start his quick change while the TREES exit, and TREES can exit slowly to give him more time.

SOFIA re-enters the Great Hall first, and sits by the fire to wait. This will also give the actor a little more time to change from GHOST to DIMITRI. When he re-enters the Great Hall, he is DIMITRI.

- **ANIMALS**— Fantastical costumes that suggest the essence of the animal, along with headbands with ears and/or antlers. One option is to have them dress in pants and shirt in the color of their animal, and add bits of colorful/shiny/sparkly material. Another option is to have the entire costume be a colorful/shiny version of the animal.
- **GOLD TREE**— Gold fabric draped and a gold hat. He or she holds gold branches in each hand (see props notes).
- **SILVER TREE**— Silver fabric draped and a silver hat. He or she holds silver branches in each hand (see props notes).



PROPS

Scene 1

- A doll wrapped in a blanket or cloth for DUKE and DUCHESS to hold.
- A wand for FAIRY. This can be a plastic wand or made out of cardboard.

Scene 2

- Gold fabric for STAGEHANDS to put over furniture at top of scene (to represent furniture being reupholstered).
- A few party decorations and birthday presents for SERVING WOMAN to carry in. Several brightly wrapped boxes can serve as birthday presents. Decorations can be made from construction paper.
- A dust cloth or feather duster for SERVING MAN to use.



- A traditional Russian waistband, bright red and decorated at both ends with gold pompoms and tassels, for NURSE to bring on. This can be represented with a strip of red fabric with pieces of gold or yellow yarn attached to the ends, either with hot glue, fabric glue, or by sewing them.

Scene 3

- A drumstick or gong stick and a cymbal, gong or metal garbage can lid to simulate the 12 strikes of the clock at midnight. The strikes can be made offstage, but should be loud enough that audience can hear.

Note: To reduce chimes after the first two or three, as called for in the script, you can simply hit the cymbal/gong/lid really loud the first two times, then soften the hits after.

Scene 4

- A white tablecloth for SERVING WOMAN to carry on.
- A rolling cart for SERVING WOMAN to bring on and off for the overnight guests (SERVING WOMAN brings cart on three times during this scene). Cart can be covered in a white table to make it look nicer. On the cart are several items: Wooden-looking bowls, plates, and spoons.

Note: Actors can pretend to eat, or you can use simple food items, such as bread, cheese, fruit, etc, for the visual effect. If you do use food items, they can come in on the rolling cart with the dinnerware.

- Logs/firewood for SERVING MAN to carry on and off. (SERVING MAN bring the logs on three times during this scene). These can be real logs or bundles of real twigs. You can also make logs from brown construction paper or cardboard, or you can use paper towel rolls and paint them a darker brown.

Note: In order to make it easier to bring logs on and off, you can tie them in a stack, or glue them together (if they are paper), so that SERVING MAN only has to carry one bundle instead of several individual logs.

- A drumstick or gong stick and a cymbal, gong or metal garbage can lid to simulate the 12 strikes of the clock at midnight. The strikes can be made offstage, but should be loud enough that audience can hear.

Note: To reduce chimes after the first two or three, as called for in the script, you can simply hit the cymbal/gong/lid really loud the first two times, then soften the hits after.

- A bag of coins for DUKE to give to ANNA. The bag can be empty or filled with small objects for weight and sound.



Scene 5

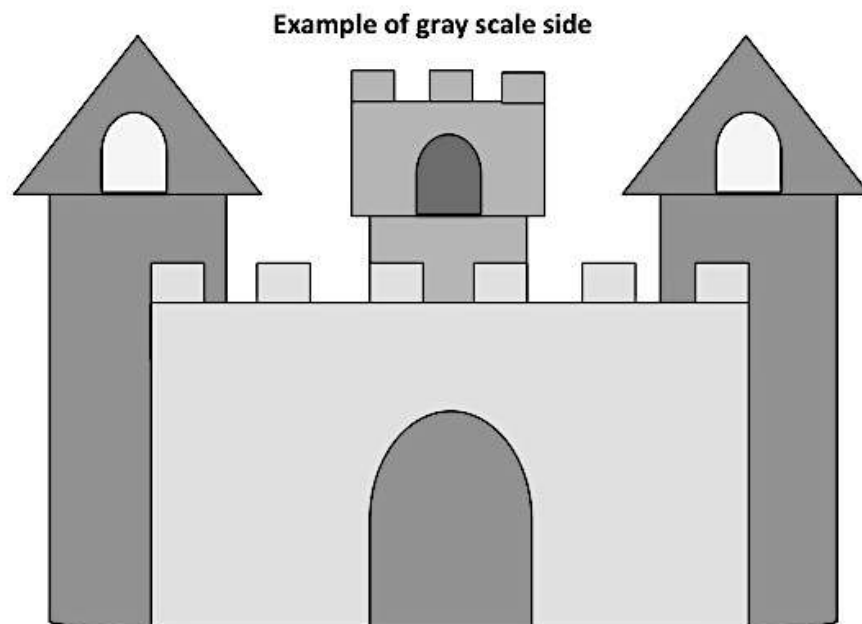
- Two small gold branches for GOLD TREE to hold. These can be real branches or cut from cardboard, and spray-painted gold. SOFIA takes one from TREE.
- Two small silver branches for SILVER TREE to hold. These can be real branches or cut from cardboard, and spray-painted silver. SOFIA takes one from TREE.

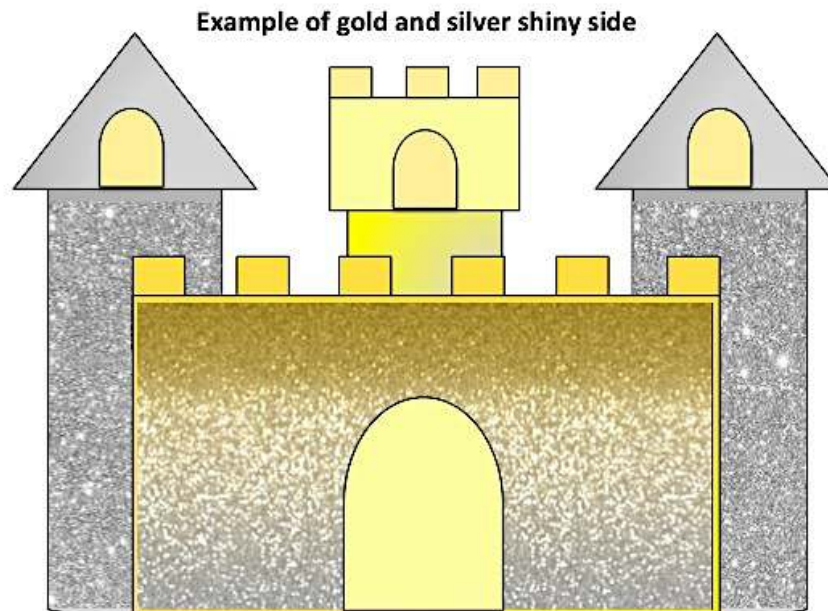
Scene 6

- Gold and silver branches (one of each- the same branches that SOFIA took from TREES).
- A castle for STAGE HANDS to bring on. This can be made from cardboard. Draw the outline of a symmetrical castle on a large flat piece of cardboard, such as a flattened refrigerator box, and cut it out.

On one side, paint the parts of the castle in gray scale, using gray, black, and white- no color. On the other side, paint the same parts of the castle in silver and gold, or yellows. Use metallic paints and/or glitter to make the castle look shiny.

See images for examples:





SETS

The stage is divided into two sections, with The Study on one side and the Great Hall on the other side. If you want to use a backdrop, you can paint it to show both rooms. If you choose to not paint a backdrop, you can just rely on the furniture to establish the different rooms.

The Widow's home in Scene 1 and the Magic Forest in Scene 5 will be pop-up scenes at the front of the stage. More information below:

- **Scene 1**— The Castle, in the Study and The Widow's Cottage.
In the study there is a small desk or table and a chair. You can put books on the desk/table. If you have a backdrop, you can paint a large bookcase and a window.
The Widow's Cottage is a "pop-up" scene, which happens half way through the scene. There is a table and three chairs sitting at the front of the stage in front of the great hall set.
Optional: To further separate the Cottage from the Great Hall,



STAGE HANDS can hold up a piece of fabric as a backdrop, behind the table and chairs.

WIDOW, ANNA, KATYA, and SOFIA can bring off the furniture at the end of Scene 1, or STAGE HANDS can bring it off.

- **Scene 2**— The Castle, in the Great Hall. There is a table with two chairs, a couch, a fireplace, and a free-standing grandfather clock with moveable hands.

For the couch, you can use a real couch, or you can create the affect of a couch using chairs, pillows, and a blanket.

To create the couch place three sturdy chairs (that do not have arms) in a row. They should be sturdy enough to hold the actor who plays GHOST/DIMITRI when he lies down. On each chair, place a pillow. Use a large sheet or blanket to cover the chairs and tuck the fabric in around the pillows. If there is a lot of excess fabric, you can gather it and tie it in the back. You can place smaller pillows on top, as well as a smaller blanket. This will give it more of a couch look and will be what GHOST/DIMITRI uses when he sleeps.

Note: At the end of Scene 1, STAGE HANDS can cover the couch in a gold fabric, to represent the furniture being upholstered.

For the fireplace, you can use a flattened box and paint it to look like a fireplace, and prop it up against a chair or stool.

Note: If you want to give the affect of a fire being made and put out (by SERVING MAN), you can cut some flames from construction paper, put some tape loops on the back, and hide it behind the fireplace. SERVING MAN can attach it to and detach it from the fireplace when he brings on the logs.

For the grandfather clock, you can use a tall cardboard box. Paint the front of the box to look like a clock, making the clock face large enough that the audience can see it. Use a box cutter to cut the top part of the face from the 11 to the 12. Paint the small hand on the clock face, on the 12.

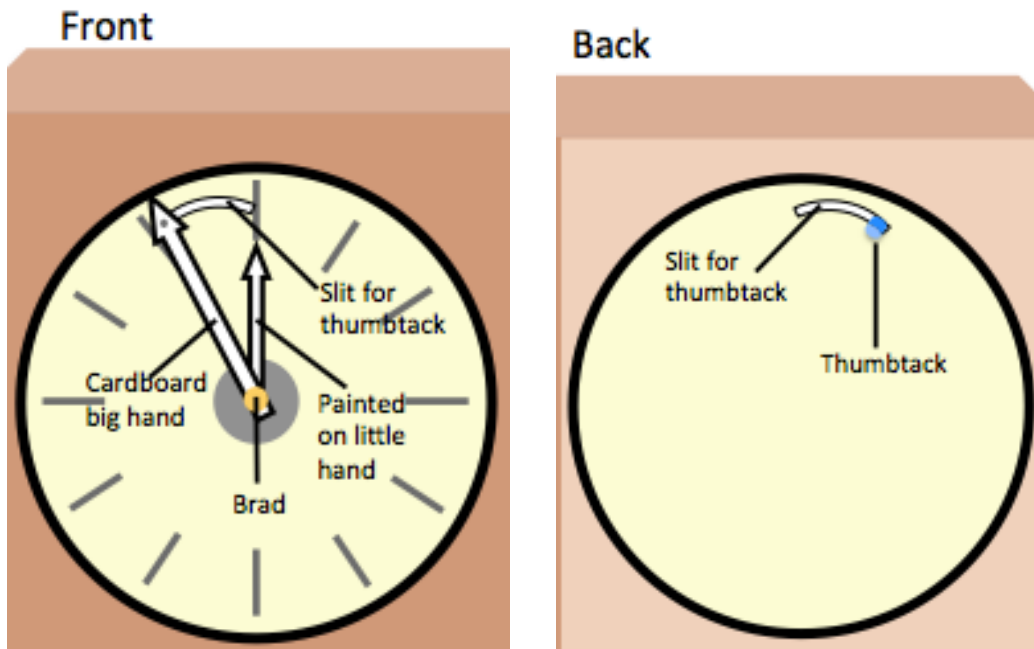
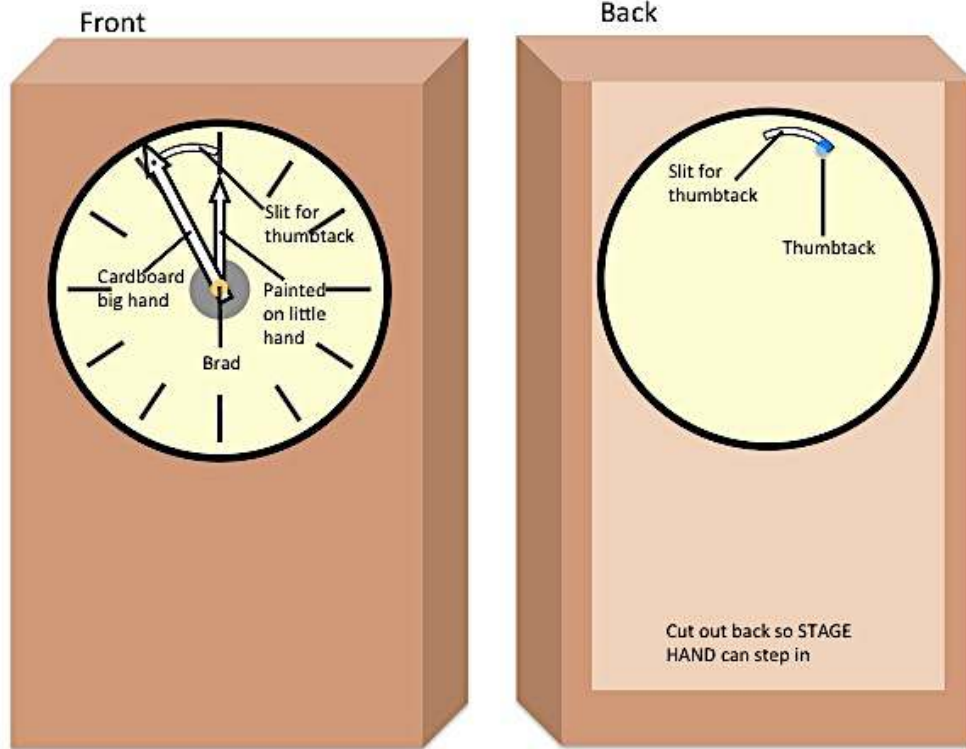
Make the big hand out of thin cardboard or cardstock. Use a brad to attach it to the center of the clock face, so that it is able to move.

On the other side (back) of the clock, put a thumbtack through the slit and the big hand, and tape it in the front. This allows the hand to be moved from the backside of the clock. Have a STAGE HAND stand inside the box, and move the hand when it's time.

Note: Make sure STAGE HAND know the cue for when to move the hands to midnight, and when to move them back.



See images on next page:





- **Scene 3**— The Castle, in the Study. The set is the same as in Scene 1, but you can have STAGE HANDS add or move items around a bit to give the effect that time has passed.
- **Scene 4**— The Castle, in the Great Hall. The set is the same as in Scene 2, but you can have STAGE HANDS add or move items around a bit to give the effect that time has passed.
- **Scene 5**— The Magic Forest. This is a “pop-up” scene that takes place in front of the other sets. The actors playing the GOLD TREE and SILVER TREE will enter and stand at the front of the stage in order to establish the boundaries of the forest.
Another option is to have STAGE HANDS bring on a long piece of shiny fabric and hold it up behind the TREES, so that the scene takes place in front of the fabric.
- **Scene 6**— The Castle, in the Great Hall. Set is the same, but stagehands will bring on the gray/golden castle at the end (see prop notes for castle construction).

OTHER STAGING NOTES

- At the end of Scene 1 and the end of Scene 2, NARRATORS show the passing of time. There are a few ways they can do this- they can wave their arms up and down and make a funny noise, or spin around in circles and make a funny noise, or do any sort of dramatic gesture with a funny noise.
- During Scene 2, the FAIRY disappears. . This effect can be achieved in several ways. Two suggestions are as follows: NARRATORS or STAGE HANDS can stand in front of FAIRY and wave their arms and make a noise as FAIRY runs off stage. OR FAIRY herself can mover her arms and make a noise while backing up offstage. In order to differentiate this from the earlier “passing of time”, assign a different gesture and noise.
Another option is make this a comical moment, where the FAIRY hears the DUKE explain that she “disappeared”, and she can look at him, as if to say, “Oh, right!”, and then awkwardly run off stage.
- During Scene 4, the GHOST disappears, twice. This effect can be achieved in several ways. Two suggestions are as follows: Each time he disappears, GHOST can pull his white cape up around himself, in front of his face, and back up as he exits.



Another option is to have GHOST hide behind the grandfather clock- he can either be the one who moves the clock hand, OR he can stand behind whoever is working the clock hand. When he enters, he pops out from behind the clock, and when he disappears, he just steps back behind it.

