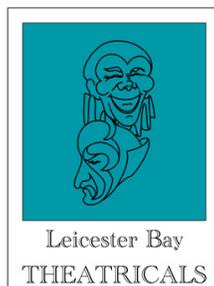
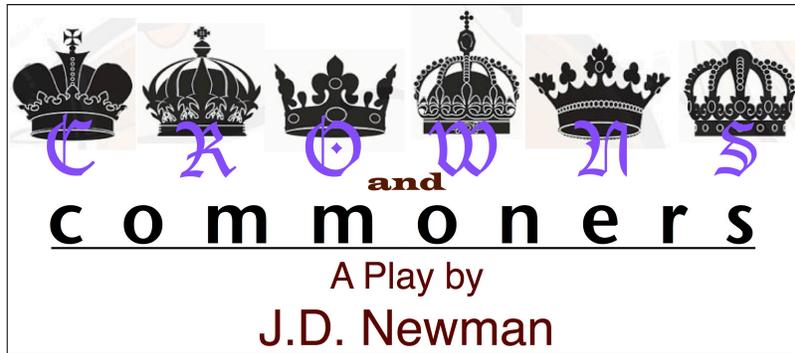


PERUSAL SCRIPT



Newport, Maine

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CROWNS AND COMMONERS

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Cast of Characters 7f 3m

Miranda -- Eldest daughter of the King

Rosalind -- Middle daughter of the King

Cordelia -- Youngest daughter of the King

Ariel -- Messenger of the King

Linda -- A student from the Academy who posed as Rosalind.

Lea -- A student at the Academy who posed as Cordelia.

Mary -- Innkeeper at the Maritime Inn

King -- The widowed father of the three Princesses

Henry -- The King's brother, usurping heir to the throne

Harold -- The King's nephew, potential heir to the crown.

Soldiers -- Rebels loyal to Henry

Setting -- The Maritime Inn, in a small kingdom by the sea

Time -- The morning of Cordelia's birthday, between the time of Shakespeare and the French Revolution

CROWNS AND COMMONERS by **J.D. Newman** -- 7f 5m About 50 minutes. The King brings his three daughters out of hiding, intending to crown them as his heirs. When he discovers that the Princesses disobeyed him during their exile, he threatens to disown them. Before the family can reconcile, the Princesses are taken hostage by the King's usurping brother and must fight for their lives and for the future of their people.
PREMIERE PLAY FILE **Order #3123.**

CROWNS AND COMMONERS

(Music plays as ARIEL, a royal messenger, delivers letters to three young women who stand apart from one another. MIRANDA is dressed as a student, ROSALIND as a sailor, and CORDELIA as a Gypsy. ARIEL steps aside as the other three read their letters simultaneously.)

MIRANDA: "Miranda..."

ROSALIND: "Rosalind..."

CORDELIA: "Cordelia..."

MIRANDA, ROSALIND, CORDELIA: "The time has come at last to bring you home."

CORDELIA: "All three of you are now of age..."

ROSALIND: "And so I summon you from where you hide."

MIRANDA: "The law allows me as the reigning King..."

MIRANDA, ROSALIND, CORDELIA: "To crown my Princesses and name you heirs."

ARIEL: Sire, I will bring your daughters home.

You may not recognize them, Sir. They've changed.

Accept them as the women they've become;

Blame me for their disobedience.

(MIRANDA, ROSALIND, and ARIEL disappear as CORDELIA steps into the scene. As the lights come up on the main set, we see MARY, a young innkeeper, setting a table for four in the great room of the Maritime Inn. A wooden door is the only entrance from the outside. Doors or exits lead to the kitchen and guest rooms. The windowless room includes several tables and is lit by oil lamps. MARY carries a lace tablecloth over one arm and a stack of plates in her hands.)

CORDELIA: Mistress Mary! Porcelain?! Is this a holiday?

MARY: I've been asked to host... a breakfast.

CORDELIA: Let me help.

MARY: You're not my servant, Cora. You're my guest.

CORDELIA: You let me lodge last night.

MARY: You paid me back. You told my fortune.

CORDELIA: Let me pull my weight. A tablecloth of lace?

MARY: My mistress gave it to me with the inn.

CORDELIA: Sailors say she ruled like a Queen.

MARY: Or like a tyrant, or like something worse.

CORDELIA: You rule like a Lady, Mary.

MARY: I'm a tavern maid.

CORDELIA: *(paraphrasing Shakespeare)* "A Lady, no worse issued..."

MARY: A wench unworthy of her Christian name.

CORDELIA: Pewter goblets?

MARY: They're the best I have. Fetch those spoons...

CORDELIA: Four silver spoons? Who's coming?

MARY: I can't say.

CORDELIA: Is it the King?

(beat)

MARY: You'll have to stay. I'm sworn to secrecy.

CORDELIA: Four spoons, four places...

MARY: Yes.

CORDELIA: They're coming!

MARY: Who?

CORDELIA: The Princesses!

MARY: The letter didn't say...

CORDELIA: They're coming back!

MARY: We've thought they would before.

CORDELIA: But now they're all of age.

MARY: Perhaps the Princesses are not alive.

CORDELIA: Of course they live!

MARY: They might have died of fever...

CORDELIA: We'd have heard...

MARY: Prince Henry might have killed them...

CORDELIA: If he had, the King would be avenged.

MARY: Our peaceful King?

CORDELIA: Do you not wish for their return?

MARY: I do, with all my heart!

CORDELIA: Then why don't you believe...

MARY: It can't be true. The royal messenger is mocking me.

CORDELIA: If you believe so, why the silver spoons?

(The door opens and the KING enters, dressed in a cloak.)

MARY: Forgive me, Sir, my inn is closed.

KING: *(He approaches the table.)* You host a private breakfast?

MARY: I can't say...

KING: *(He lifts a goblet.)* Pewter goblets and fine porcelain... You're sure they're not for me?

MARY: *(raises a broom.)* I won't defend myself, but for my guests...

(The KING puts down the goblet and removes his cloak.)

KING: My cloak worked all too well.

MARY: Your Majesty!

(She lowers the broom and her head.)

Sir, I'm not prepared!

KING: I gave you little time.

MARY: I'll finish with your meal, by your leave.

KING: Go about your business.

MARY: Thank you, Sire.

KING: I said that we must eat alone.

MARY: She guessed your secret, Sir. I couldn't let her gossip.

KING: *(nodding)* Fair enough. She'd better stay.

CORDELIA: I'll play the silent lady.

MARY: Play the proper serving maid. Don't speak unless his Highness speaks to you.

CORDELIA: He'll never know I'm here.

(MARY exits.)

Won't you take a seat?

KING: Indeed.

CORDELIA: Do you know me?

KING: You're my subject.

CORDELIA: I'm a Gypsy, Sir. Gypsies bow to all but vow to none.

KING: I've seen your face before.

CORDELIA: Indeed you have. You recognize me?

KING: Yes, from long ago... You told my fortune at the village fair.

CORDELIA: *(She takes his palm.)* I read your palm... I said you'd reunite with those you love.

(They break hands as ROSALIND, disguised as a sailor, enters carrying a trunk.)

ROSALIND: Is this the Maritime Inn?

CORDELIA: It is.

ROSALIND: *(almost dropping the trunk)* Your Majesty...

CORDELIA: Here, let me help.

ROSALIND: I'm strong enough...

(ROSALIND stares at CORDELIA and almost drops the trunk again.)

...but I could use a hand.

(They clumsily lower the trunk to the floor, hold hands, and gaze at each other. The KING stares.)

CORDELIA: We knew each other, long ago.

ROSALIND: Do you not know me, Sire?

KING: You're not one of my own. My royal guards should not allow...

ROSALIND: Those sailors by the door? They stopped me but they let me bring the trunk. It bears fine dresses for your Princesses.

KING: *(offering her a coin)* I thank you for your service, lad.

ROSALIND: *(She seizes the KING's hand rather than the coin.)* Precious cargo, but our ship bears more.

KING: *(He shakes off her hand.)* You shouldn't know...

ROSALIND: No man can keep a secret on a ship.

KING: Or in a seaport. Stay until I'm gone.

ROSALIND: As you wish, your Majesty. Have you sailed, Sire?

KING: I did when I was young... but now I can't desert my throne.

Someone else would take it if I left. Stow the trunk. Away and let us be.

(ROSALIND and CORDELIA exit with the trunk. ARIEL, the KING's messenger, enters.)

ARIEL: Your Majesty...

KING: "Approach, my faithful servant Ariel."

ARIEL: "All hail, great master, grave Sir, hail! I come to answer your good pleasure, be it to fly, to swim, to dive into the fire..." or to bring your Princesses from overseas.

KING: "But are they, Ariel, safe?"

ARIEL: "Close by, my master, not a hair perish'd."

KING: (*laughing, breaking character*) Faithful as your namesake, Ariel.

ARIEL: Faithful to the name you gave me, Sire.

KING: You are my messenger, and yet you're more. I miss my daughters less when you recite.

ARIEL: Now that I've brought them home, I'll be replaced.

KING: I'll honor you today as you deserve. Bring them in!

ARIEL: Before I do, there's something I must say...

KING: Do not delay! They've been away too long!

ARIEL: Please, let me speak...

KING: "If thou more murmurest, I'll rend an oak and peg thee in its knotty entrails!"

ARIEL: "I will be correspondent to command..."

(She calls out the door.)

Come in. Your father summons you.

(ARIEL stands aside as MIRANDA enters, followed by LINDA and LEA. The three are dressed in hooded cloaks over their school dresses and bonnets. MIRANDA approaches and embraces the KING but the other two remain aloof.)

MIRANDA: Your Majesty...

KING: Miranda! Welcome home!

(They dis-embrace.)

I've missed you.

(He seats her at the table.)

Tell me all.

MIRANDA: I've done you proud.

KING: Top marks?

MIRANDA: The very best. I took comfort in my books, although I'd rather study them with you.

KING: Your voyage...

MIRANDA: Not as rough this time. When we sailed for the Academy, I never left my bed, but Rosalind was in her element.

KING: (*to LINDA*) Rosalind...

ARIEL: No, wait...

(LINDA bows but does not embrace the KING.)

KING: I hardly recognize you. How you've changed!

MIRANDA: Father, this is Linda.

KING: Yes, my feisty Rosalind...

LINDA: My name is Linda, Sir.

KING: It was, at the Academy, but now you're Princess Rosalind again.

LEA: Anne...

KING: She is Miranda, if you please.

(to MIRANDA)

They might have called you "Anne" in school, but Miranda is your name.

MIRANDA: Sire, this is Lea...

KING: Welcome back, Cordelia...

LEA: My name is Lea, Sir.

KING: You must reclaim the proper name I gave.

ARIEL: With due respect, you gave no proper names. You christened them for Shakespeare's characters.

KING: A king can grant what names he will.

MIRANDA: (*teasing*) So you named us out of willfulness?

KING: (*in mock outrage*) "Silence, Miranda. One word more shall make me chide thee!"

MIRANDA: (*smiling*) I've missed you quoting Prospero to me. Your study was an island for the wizard and his child, and like my namesake, noble Sir, your daughter honors you.

KING: "Fairly spoke."

(*He approaches LINDA.*)

"If there be truth in sight, you are my Rosalind."

(*beat*)

Do you not recall your line?

(*prompting*)

"I'll have no father if you be not he."

(*beat*)

You knew the role of Rosalind by heart.

LINDA: I'm sorry, Sir...

KING: I'm sure your mind is filled with other things, and yet my Rosalind could not forget...

(*The KING goes to the fire, takes two fire-pokes, and tosses one to ROSALIND. ROSALIND stares at it and then at the KING. The KING thrusts his fire-poke at ROSALIND, who cowers.*)

KING: You didn't parry. Has it been so long? My Rosalind would fence with me for hours, secretly.

ARIEL: It was the worst kept secret in the land.

KING: Greater secrets I have kept secure.

(*He sets the fire-pokes down and addresses LINDA.*)

I shouldn't be surprised that you have changed.

ARIEL: Sire, listen please. Permit me to explain...

KING: (*He approaches LEA.*) Cordelia... "what can you say to me to draw a praise more opulent?"

LEA: Nothing, Sir.

KING: Nothing? Nothing comes of nothing!

LEA: I'm not unkind, but they are not my kin.

KING: Not your sisters?

ARIEL: They are not what they appear.

MIRANDA: This is Lea, not Cordelia. A dearest friend but not my sister...

KING: (*He regards LEA closely.*) What?! You're an imposter?!

LEA: I'm a decoy, Sir.

KING: (*relieved, seeming to comprehend*) Ariel, you were wise to bring my daughters secretly.

ARIEL: Thank you, Sir, but you must understand...

KING: *(To LEA)* You've kept my daughter safe. And you...

LINDA: I'm not your Princess Rosalind.

KING: I know. You risked your life to keep her hid.

(To LEA and LINDA)

I honor you. You'll reap a fair reward. But where are my true Princesses?

(ROSALIND and CORDELIA enter, dressed properly in fine gowns from the trunk.)

ROSALIND: Father...

KING: Rosalind...

(He embraces her.)

As a sailor, you were perfectly disguised.

(He touches her hands.)

Your hands are even rough and strong...

ROSALIND: They've become so over time...

KING: Cordelia... you were convincing as a Gypsy....

CORDELIA: Yes, because...

KING: But I met you at the fair last spring...

ARIEL: Sire, please, allow your messenger...

KING: You'll have your say, but listen to your King. You know I've called you back to name you heirs, to take my crown when I am gone and keep my warrior brother off the throne.

MIRANDA: We thank you, Sir. We'll stand behind you now.

KING: No, not behind me. You'll stand on your own.

CORDELIA: Father, are you ill?

KING: I'm in my prime.

ROSALIND: You want to step aside?

KING: Exactly so. The crown is heavier than it appears. I'll retire to my country home...

MIRANDA: You can't!

KING: Indeed I can. The law is on my side.

MIRANDA: I thought I'd be Crown Princess but not Queen!

KING: You knew the time would come for you to rule.

MIRANDA: Not when I'm so young and you're so well!

KING: But you are wise and learn'd enough to lead.

MIRANDA: No! I only know the wisdom held in books! I don't know governing or protocol...

KING: The courtiers will teach you all of that.

MIRANDA: Will Uncle Henry let me live?

KING: Your sisters are your heirs. My brother might endanger one but couldn't harm all three.

MIRANDA: Sir, I cannot bear the crown alone.

ARIEL: Queen Miranda, you'll not be alone. Your sisters will advise you. Heed them well. Sir, if I'd obeyed you, they'd be fellow scholars now, with no more wisdom than their sister has.

KING: You disobeyed me?

ARIEL: Yes, I've tried to tell...

KING: You took all three to the Academy...

ARIEL: No, I didn't, Sir. Your daughters were disguised for many years...

KING: As schoolgirls...

ARIEL: Miranda, yes, but not the other two.

CORDELIA: Father, when you sent us forth, I'd never felt so free. I couldn't stand to live in other walls.

KING: Is a school like a prison? Is a palace like a cell?

CORDELIA: I had to know the people we would lead.

KING: But you wrote from the academy...

CORDELIA: Lea wrote to you. She took my place.

KING: Where were you?

CORDELIA: In a Gypsy caravan. I've lived in every village in our land.

KING: You've been a Gypsy?!

CORDELIA: I pretended, Sire. They treated me like family...

KING: How have you treated me?

CORDELIA: With willfulness but not unkindness, Sir.

KING: Miranda, as the eldest, you should not have let her go!

MIRANDA: And force her to be miserable with me?

ROSALIND: Father, I was willful too. Aboard your ship I'd never known such joy! The salty wind, the endless blue, the ropes, the soaring sails...

KING: You stayed aboard the ship?!

ROSALIND: I did. I became a sailor, Sir.

KING: They would not allow a maiden, nay, a princess...

ROSALIND: I'm not first young woman they've accepted in their ranks.

KING: All this time, I thought you safe...

CORDELIA: We spared you needless grief.

KING: But the academy...

MIRANDA: Received three students... Linda, Lea, me.

KING: Linda? Lea? Who were they?

LINDA: I was no one, Sir, until your daughter raised me up.

LEA: Suffice to say I fell from grace. Your daughter claimed my soul.

KING: (*To ROSALIND and CORDELIA*) You lied to me! For years you've lived a lie!

ROSALIND: We lived a different lie than you proposed.

CORDELIA: You said we must prepare to wear our crowns, and so we did, but not as you desired.

KING: I can't believe the three of you could do this on your own.

ARIEL: They didn't, Sir. I made it possible. They yearned for different lives, but they'd have yearned in vain had I not made arrangements...

KING: It was you?!

ARIEL: If truth be told, the plan was my idea.

KING: Treason!

ARIEL: Yes, perhaps, but loyalty as well. I knew you planned to let them rule young, so I prepared them...

KING: I had my own plan.

ARIEL: Together they know all they need to know. Miranda knows the wisdom of the ages held in books.

Rosalind knows all the lands abroad. Cordelia knows villages and towns...

KING: Who were you to steer the kingdom's course?

ARIEL: No one, Sir.

KING: You're nothing but a messenger.

ARIEL: (*stung*) Forgive me for presuming that your Ariel was more. Imprison me or execute me, but you must believe I tried to serve your wishes and your daughters and my land.

MIRANDA: We could've kept the truth from you, but we trusted in your love. Even if it costs my crown, I couldn't leave my friends. Cast me off, but find a place for them.

KING: I'll give them place, Miranda. They will be your sisters now.

MIRANDA: What?!

KING: Rosalind, go sail the seas! Cordelia, roam the earth! I'll make a pair of Princesses from clay!

MIRANDA: I lied as well...

KING: And so I'll name you heir, not sovereign. I'll lead this land until the day I die.

MIRANDA: Condemn us for our real sins. We dared to change ourselves.

A bloom must thrive or wither; it can't be a bud again. Accept us, Sir, as what we have become.

KING: I would have made you more than heir; I would have made you queen. If I retired, I would be like Lear, rejected and abandoned to the wind.

ROSALIND: I'll obey you, Father. I will sail off again.

CORDELIA: And I will wander as a Gypsy....

KING: No. Despite your follies, I can't cast you off. I'll bring you to the palace, where it's safe. I'll marry you to worthy husbands: them you will obey. I might have left the crown to you and lived a life of bliss. How like the serpent's teeth it is to have three thankless daughters!

(The KING exits. After a beat, MARY enters the room with a tray of food.)

MARY: I'm almost ready, Sire. Please forgive..

CORDELIA: The King has left us, Mary.

MARY: Cora...

CORDELIA: Yes, it's me.

MARY: You're dressed up like a princess...

CORDELIA: I'm Cordelia.

MIRANDA: Mistress, I'm Miranda.

ROSALIND: And I'm Princess Rosalind.

MARY: (*bowing*) Your Majesties...

CORDELIA: Please, hostess, do not bow to us.

MIRANDA: "Tickle us, do we not laugh? Prick us, do we not bleed?"

MARY: (*To MIRANDA and ROSALIND*) Where were you hiding?

MIRANDA: I was overseas.

ROSALIND: I was upon the seas.

MARY: You were a sailor?

ROSALIND: Was ever a maid so free? In muslin, I could battle wind and storm. In silk, I'll only billow in the breeze.

(Beat)

I'll say no more. My role is coveted. I bring dishonor to my father's name, lamenting what the heavens have bestowed.

ARIEL: Come, Miranda, don your royal gown.

ROSALIND: It's time to dress as what we were before.

MIRANDA: I'll go become an ornament.

MARY: I still can serve you breakfast.

LINDA: Let me help. I was a cook at the Academy, before Miranda came.

LEA: I was a beggar, scavenging for food. Now I'm a lady without lady's gold.

LINDA: Would you employ us?

MARY: As my mistress did. She took me in.

LINDA: Were you...

MARY: I sold myself.

(Beat)

Even so, the three of us will serve the royalty.

(MARY, LINDA, and LEA exit to the kitchen.)

ARIEL: Your father showed us mercy...

MIRANDA: No. The quality of mercy is not strained.

ROSALIND: I was selfish.

CORDELIA: I was curious.

MIRANDA: You were both within your rights. O to be the sovereign of one's life!

ROSALIND: Come, mistress, you must dress and play your part.

CORDELIA: We'll dress you as befits a Princess...

MIRANDA: Yes. My life will not be so much changed as yours. I'll have my books and everything I've learned, only now I'll have to keep it to myself.

(MIRANDA, ROSALIND, and CORDELIA go into the guest room. MARY appears, finding ARIEL alone and forlorn. MARY starts to return.)

ARIEL: I've lost the only father I have known. I was like a daughter to him, or so I believed. All these years, I played the role he wanted me to play.

MARY: Now you have to be yourself.

ARIEL: I don't know who I am.

MARY: You will.

ARIEL: I'll disappear. I'll exit in the dark, and none will ever hear from me again.

MARY: Your play has ended. Find a different stage.

ARIEL: I can't.

MARY: Create a different role. That's what I've done. Here, I'm all men's angel; they protect me well. That's not the way men treated me before.

(Beat)

You want to end your life. I understand. End it, but begin a better one.

(ARIEL and MARY embrace. LINDA and LEA enter.)

LINDA: Mary, thank you for inviting me to stay, but I've decided to go on alone.

MARY: How will you support yourself?

LINDA: I'll work. I'll be a schoolmistress.

MARY: Are you sure? It's a meager living and a thorny lot.

LINDA: *(She nods.)* I'll teach spelling and arithmetic, not etiquette and French, but helping others learn may satisfy.

MARY: Lea, will you stay?

LEA: I'm leaving too. I'm going to be a nun.

MARY: It's such a lonely life...

LEA: Not so. I'll be a sister and a daughter of a King.

MARY: You're welcome to remain.

LEA: I want to render service, as Miranda did for me.

MARY: Ariel, I have a place for you.

ARIEL: Thank you, Mary. I will stay.

(Beat)

I'll help Miranda dress.

MARY: The sisters help each other.

ARIEL: Maybe so, but let me feel useful while I can.

(ARIEL exits into the guest room.)

LEA: It's cold in here.

MARY: My firewood is low.

LINDA: Wear your cloak.

LEA: My cloak? It isn't mine.

LINDA: Can we not keep the clothes upon our backs? These cloaks are fine for us but not for them.

(LEA and LINDA don their cloaks.)

Mary, would you like Miranda's cloak?

MARY: It isn't yours to give.

LINDA: It's of no use to her. See if it fits.

MARY: I guess it does no harm to try it on.

(MARY dons the cloak. HENRY, HAROLD, and SOLDIERS enter suddenly.)

HENRY: Stay where you are!

MARY: Prince Henry!

HENRY: Prince before. Today my countrymen will call me King.

LINDA: What's happening?

HAROLD: Hold your tongues and keep your lives.

HENRY: The long-lost Princesses have now returned.

LEA: You think that we are...

HENRY: Yes, we know you are.

(He indicates MARY, LINDA, and LEA.)

Miranda, Rosalind, Cordelia, your father kept you hidden all these years.

MARY: I thought the guards were soldiers of the king.

HENRY: And so did he. They're not his loyalists but rebels who have pledged themselves to me. They know my brother's an idealist, a kindly fool, more generous than strong.

MARY: He's kept the peace!

HENRY: He pacified our enemies, but could you do the same?

LEA: What do you intend to do with us?

HENRY: You stand between me and my rightful throne. I'll let you live but never in this land. My ship will take you far away from here.

LINDA: If we refuse to go...

HENRY: I'll kill you now.

LINDA: Would you slaughter us yourself, you coward?

MARY: Rosalind, restrain!

LINDA: The people will rebel if we are slain!

HENRY: Only if they know.

(He takes a lamp from a table.)

HENRY: These lamps could burn this inn of yours to ash.

LEA: You'd murder us and burn us?

MARY: Cordelia, if we obey, the Princesses survive.

LEA: Yes... Miranda... we'll obey.

HENRY: You disappoint me. Where is your resolve? You've demonstrated why I must be King.

MARY: What about our father? He is king and will remain so while he lives.

HENRY: Indeed, but when he battles me, he'll be destroyed.

ROSALIND: He fenced with me. He'll kill you if you fight.

HENRY: He fights like a player, not a man of war, but if I die, my son will take my place.

MARY: Prince Harold?

HAROLD: Yes. My father's trained me well. I'm better schooled than the three of you.

HENRY: Are you agreed? You'll come without dispute?

MARY: We'll go with you.

LEA: We will.

LINDA: We've made our choice.

HENRY: Is anybody else inside your inn?

MARY: You promised not to burn it...

HENRY: And we won't, but we can't leave any witnesses behind.

MARY: There's no one but ourselves.

HAROLD: She's lying, Sir. What about the sailor with the trunk?

MARY: He took it to the kitchen cellar.

HENRY: *(To HAROLD)* Go.

(HAROLD exits into the kitchen.)

If any of you say a word...

MARY: We know.

HAROLD: *(He returns.)* I've trapped him in the cellar. Let's be gone.

HENRY: Wait! There was a messenger who led them here. Where's she hiding? Search the inn for her.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Crowns & Commoners by *J.D. Newman*

ARIEL: *(Entering from the bedroom)* What's happening? Prince Henry!

HENRY: Messenger, you led me to the Princesses. For that, I thank you, but you can't survive or else you'd tell my story differently.

ARIEL: Kill me if you must but let them live!

HENRY: Harold, she's a traitor to our cause. Eliminate her.

HAROLD: Kill her?!

HENRY: This is war. Prove yourself a man.

MIRANDA: *(Entering from the bedroom with ROSALIND and CORDELIA.)* No, stay your hand.

HENRY: Miranda! You deceived me.

MARY: You deceived yourself.

9 more pages til the end of the script