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# LAUGH AND GROW WISE

A PLAY IN ONE ACT  
By FREDERICK J. POHL

*"Our own folly shall be jester."*

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## NOTICE

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FREDERICK J. POHL  
359 Halsey St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

**Price - Thirty Cents**



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*"As a spark from the flint to the faggots, so is  
mirth to the mind. Laughter gives light  
and flame to the brain. Without  
wit, there is no wisdom."*

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# LAUGH AND GROW WISE

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## CHARACTERS

THE KING

THE KING'S JESTER

THE GRAND VIZIER

THE KING'S JUDGE

THE CAPTAIN OF THE KING'S ARMY

A COURTIER

A MERCHANT

A SLAVE

THE QUEEN

MIRIGA, THE PRINCESS

TIME—When things were new under the sun

PLACE—Near the edge of the earth

SETTING—A king's court

ACTING TIME—50 *minutes*

## SYNOPSIS

The Jester, through the scheming of the Grand Vizier, is condemned by the King to be out of favor until he can make men laugh at themselves. A Merchant from a far country comes to sell a marvel, (the first mirror in the prehistoric world), which the Jester purchases, as soon as he discovers that in it men can see themselves as they appear to others. With the aid of the mirror, the Jester makes the boastful Captain fear his own image, causes the Courtier to flatter himself, the proud Queen to find fault with her own fair face, and the King and all the court to perceive their own folly. The play ends when the Jester wins the Princess and forces the Grand Vizier to laugh at himself.

## PROPERTIES

A hand mirror and a king's throne.

## SCENERY

No special scenery required. A chair covered with yellow cloth will serve as the king's throne. Red hangings on the wall behind the throne will satisfactorily suggest the king's court.

## COSTUMES

Oriental. Draped cloth will be effective for the men.

A symbolic color scheme is suggested to harmonize with the characters represented: The King and Queen, purple and white; the jealous Grand Vizier, green; the cowardly Captain, yellow; the flattering Courtier, pink; the Judge, all black; the rich Merchant, red; the Slave, brown and white; the Princess, orange and white; the Jester, principally orange and white, with green, blue, red, and gray trimmings.

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# LAUGH AND GROW WISE

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(*The King is on his throne. Grouped around him are the Jester, the Grand Vizier, the Judge, the Captain of the King's Army, and the Courtier. All, except the Vizier, are laughing.*)

JESTER—And so, O King, as he came out of the Temple, his clothes were all awry like those of a man who has no slave to dress him.

(*The King and the others laugh heartily, except the Vizier, who frowns.*)

KING—(*suddenly serious, upon observing the Vizier's frown*)—  
I do not wish to laugh at anything that is not funny.

VIZIER—He is a stupid fool, O King.

JESTER—A terrible fate befell the man who would not laugh!

KING—Tell us.

JESTER—He grew thin.

KING—Why?

JESTER—His belly had no exercise.

(*The King and others laugh. The Vizier frowns.*)

KING—(*suddenly serious, to Vizier*)—I do not wish to laugh at what is silly.

VIZIER—Thou dost well, my Lord. What is this talk of bellies where brains are needed for affairs of state?

KING—I wish I had as much brains as belly.—Ah me!—Laughter is pleasant. It giveth easement from the pains of much eating.

VIZIER—True, my Lord. But laughter cometh at the expense of brains.

JESTER—Not so, my Lord. There may be brains in laughter as well as belly.

VIZIER—This fool, my Lord, would turn philosopher.

JESTER—Knowledge without laughter is worse than folly.

VIZIER—Sensible men have nought to do with jesting.

JESTER—As a spark from the flint to the faggots, so is mirth to the mind. Laughter gives light and flame to the brain. Without wit, there is no wisdom.

VIZIER—(*sneering*) My Lord, a reasonable man must needs tire of such idle fancies.

JESTER—Thy solemn mirthlessness would make a fool weep!  
(*Imitates weeping*).

VIZIER—None but a fool laughs at thy jests!

JESTER—The King laughed at them.—Thou dost call the King a fool!

VIZIER—The gods forbid!—The King's mind did not laugh, even though his mouth appeared to do so.

KING—Let the Judge prepare to give judgment. (*The Judge stands forth*) Did I laugh, or did I not?

JUDGE—The King laughed, but against his will.

VIZIER—(*to the Jester*)—Because of thee, the King was forced, against his will, to seem like a fool!

KING—What judgment shall be passed upon the King's Jester?

JUDGE—A fool's punishment should be heavy.—Let him be out of favor until he makes men laugh at themselves.

VIZIER—A judgment, O King, a judgment!

COURTIER—A most sagacious Judge!

VIZIER—What sayest, Fool?

JESTER—I know not; but someday, you shall all—laugh at yourselves!

(*All laugh derisively*).

KING—If we do, thou wilt be such a jester as never was.—(*standing*) But, until thou canst make us do so, remain from our presence. Otherwise, if thou enterest our presence, thou diest!—Come, let us go forth to the gardens. (*Exit left the King, Vizier, and Judge*).

CAPTAIN—I shall never be so simple as to laugh at myself!

COURTIER—Nor I!

CAPTAIN—The thing is impossible.

COURTIER—There is nothing about thee, brave Captain, at which any one could laugh.

CAPTAIN—I thank thee for thy praise, honest Courtier.

(*Exit left the Captain and Courtier. The Jester drops his bauble, and kicks it far from him. Enter the Princess left*).

PRINCESS—Why art thou angry?

JESTER—I am in disgrace before the King.—The Vizier spake malicious words against me.

PRINCESS—The Vizier is over-crafty.

JESTER—He schemeth for a rich prize.



PRINCESS—What prize?

JESTER—Thy hand in marriage.

PRINCESS—No! No!—Thou must save me!

JESTER—I am powerless.

PRINCESS—Hath it not been decreed that no man may ask the hand of one who is betrothed to another?

JESTER—Yea, but thou art not betrothed?—(*eagerly*)—Unless?—(*sadly*)—Tell me, who is the man?

PRINCESS—Art thou not glad that I may be saved from the Vizier?—Yet thou askest in tones of sorrow, “Who is the man?”

JESTER—I am glad.—Nay, I am sorry.—Nay, I know not.

PRINCESS—Glad and sorry, and which thou art, thou knowest not. Sorry and glad, and which shalt thou be when thou knowest?

JESTER—What dost thou mean?

PRINCESS—I tell no man my meanings. Let him guess, whose heart can read riddles. (*Crossing to right*).

JESTER—Thou meanest?—Nay, but can it be? (*about to embrace her*)

PRINCESS—Hush!—My mother, the Queen! (*Jester to extreme right; Princess center*).

(*Enter left the Queen, attended by the Captain and the Courtier*).

QUEEN—(*at left*) Miriga, it pleases me to find thee in profitable converse with so wise a man as the King's Jester.

JESTER—I thank your Majesty.

COURTIER—(*moves behind Queen to center*) Is that all the Fool says: “I thank your Majesty”?—This is the way he should return a compliment: Peerless Queen—Model of all perfections!—Thy graciousness is excelled only by thy sagacity.—That I am wise, is due only to the influence of thy wisdom.

QUEEN—There speaks the honest Courtier.

COURTIER—But indeed, peerless Queen, (*bowing*) there is doubt of the Fool's wisdom. He fell, to-day, into disfavor with the King.

QUEEN—Thou knewest this, Miriga, yet held speech with him?—Fie on thee, foolish girl!

PRINCESS—I pitied him.

QUEEN—Whom the King dislikes, is not for thee to pity.

CAPTAIN—(*at center*) Say the word, O Queen, and I will choke the Fool with one hand, just as I choked the dragon Melkishiboo.

PRINCESS—Keep thy chokings for brutes like thyself!

QUEEN—Miriga!

PRINCESS—(*crossing left*) Your Majesty, perchance the Queen's word will move the King in the Jester's behalf.

QUEEN—Come away, simpleton!—Dost think I have breath to waste for a fool and jester?—Come, attend me.

(*Exit left the Queen, Princess, Captain, and Courtier*).

(*The Jester flings himself on the floor left of center, dejectedly*).

(*Enter right a Slave, followed by a Merchant, who is carrying under his arm, a flat object wrapped in a cloth*).

SLAVE—This way to the King's court!—Wait here, Owner of Many Camels, if thou wouldst see the King.

MERCHANT—It is well, Slave.—Go forth to the gate and speak to my men. Tell them thou hast admitted me to the King's palace. They will give thee dates and a gourd of wine.

SLAVE—O rich Trader with Many Camels! May thy gods prosper thy buying and selling! (*Exit Slave right*).

MERCHANT—If my gods do not, I will get other gods. (*To Jester*)—By thy dress, a King's fool.—Friend, I would make a trade with thee.

JESTER—I have no heart for trading.

MERCHANT—(*shaking his head*)—Thou art a fool indeed.—Come, let gold cure thy folly.

JESTER—I do not keep my wits in my purse.

MERCHANT—Do me a favor, then, and for the recovery of thy wits, I will—pray to my second-best god.

JESTER—The plague take thee, and thy whole wardrobe of gods!

MERCHANT—Woe to thee, blasphemer!

JESTER—Thy gods can do me no harm.

MERCHANT—Yea, sooth. My gods have no power so far from their own country. This land of thine is wellnigh at the edge of the earth.—I was not prudent to come so far away from the wrath of my gods.

JESTER—Why hast thou come?

MERCHANT—I have a treasure to sell, a marvel, the like of which no man hath ever seen before. Wilt thou behold this marvel?

JESTER—I care not.

MERCHANT—It is something most strange, a thing which perchance thy King may purchase. Help me sell it to him.

JESTER—(*turning from Merchant*) I am no driver of bargains.

MERCHANT—But this is not like any marvel that ever was.—The merchant who sold it me found it lying beside a water pool in the great desert. It was on the way from that land in the north where the first weapons of iron were fashioned. Men said: "There can be no metal harder than bronze", and they trusted in the strength of bronze. Then came the barbarians from the north, and men felt the sting of iron swords. Then got we iron weapons to ourselves, and cast away the bronze, and drove back the barbarians. In the memory of those now living, men first got those iron weapons.

JESTER—The Captain of the King's Army will heed thy talk of weapons.

MERCHANT—Nay, by my gods! This marvel is no weapon.—It is a thing of magic. I surmise, from the place of its finding, that it was devised by skilful magicians who dwell, men say, among the fierce tribes in the north.

JESTER—O depart from me, with thy tiresome gods and thy magic!

MERCHANT—Like every fool, thou art blind to thy opportunities. (*Crossing right*)—A King's Jester, and yet thou wilt not even look at a marvel that will make thy King laugh.

JESTER (*rising to his feet and crossing to Merchant*)—Make the King laugh?

MERCHANT—Yea, sooth.

JESTER—Where is it? Let me see it!

MERCHANT—Ah! Now art thou eager to set eyes to the business. Well, thou shalt look through the marvel.

JESTER—Look *through* it?

MERCHANT—It is not the appearance of the marvel that is strange. The magic lies in the amusing things one can see *through* the marvel. Why, through the marvel, I have seen men and camels, and the great desert, and palm trees, and city walls. However, these things were not so amusing as one funny old man I always see through the marvel. He has the face of a jolly rogue, and when he grins, (*grinning*) he shows his teeth in a most comical way. I cannot help laughing at him. (*laughing*)—Well, here is the marvel. Look through. (*He hands the marvel to the Jester*).

JESTER—(after a pause, during which he examines with surprise the marvel and the image of himself and of his bauble within it)—Why, I see a man dressed like a king's jester! There are traces of tears on his cheeks.

MERCHANT—Like thee, he must have been weeping.

JESTER—Like me—(He makes gestures before the marvel)—Why, this is strange. How can this be?

MERCHANT—What dost thou see now?

JESTER—Why, there, behind the jester, I see thee!

MERCHANT—Me!—Nay, not so.—That is the funny old man of whom I told thee. See, he is laughing at us!

JESTER—(comparing the Merchant with his likeness)—He is laughing at himself!

MERCHANT—Himself?—I do not understand.

JESTER—(eagerly) This marvel is for sale.—Wilt thou sell it to me?

MERCHANT—Canst thou pay the price?

JESTER—How much dost thou ask for it?

MERCHANT—Let me see. (Slowly crossing left)—I have brought it many day's journey across the desert.—It is a very great magic.—The times are very bad.—The price of camels is very high.

JESTER—I did not ask for the price of camels, but for the price of this!

MERCHANT—It will cost thee the weight of four hundred barley grains in gold.

JESTER—Four hundred!—I will give thee two hundred.

MERCHANT—Thou saidst thou wast no driver of bargains!

JESTER—Two hundred or nothing!

MERCHANT—Thy King may offer more.

JESTER—The King may not buy at all.—See, here is two hundred grains' weight of gold.

MERCHANT—It is a purchase!—The marvel is thine. (Jester pays the Merchant).

MERCHANT—(crossing to right) As I journey back towards the wrath of my gods, I am sad to think that I shall not have the funny old man with me to laugh at.

JESTER—He will ride on one of thy camels.

MERCHANT—Thou art joking.—How can he do that, when he is in the marvel?

JESTER—(*aside*) The King will enjoy this!

MERCHANT—Let me take one last look at the funny old man in the marvel,—a look to remember.—Thou saidst but now that he was laughing at himself.

JESTER—Well, look!—Is he not?

MERCHANT—He is laughing at me.

JESTER—Thou art laughing at thyself!

MERCHANT—I?

JESTER—The secret of this magic is this: all things that are, appear like themselves through the marvel. Thou seest thyself, and therefore thou laughest.

MERCHANT—Thou meanest that he—is I?

JESTER—Yea.

MERCHANT—And I—am he?

JESTER—Yea.

MERCHANT—Then I—am a funny old man?

JESTER—I never said so.

MERCHANT—I did. I called myself a funny old man! I apologize!  
—I must have the marvel back!

JESTER—It is mine now.

MERCHANT—But I have sold myself!—I must have it back!

JESTER—(*springing out of his reach*)—Nay, I shall call the King's guards to put thee out!

MERCHANT—Alas!—I am afraid to journey towards the wrath of my gods, leaving myself behind.

JESTER—Depart from the palace, or I call the guards!

MERCHANT—I will go, even though I must leave myself in thy power. I will hasten away from thy city. But I implore thee, good King's Jester, let no harm befall me!

JESTER—Go!—Betake thee to thy camels—Go!

MERCHANT—If my gods were not so far away, I would bid them curse thee!

(*Exit Merchant right*).

JESTER—Go!—Ha! Ha! Ha!—O matchless marvel!—Through thee, shall I see the Princess married to the King's Jester?

(*Enter left the King and the Vizier. The Vizier catches sight of the Jester and calls the King's attention to him*).

KING—How now, Fool! Did I not command thee to keep from our presence until thou couldst make us laugh at ourselves?

JESTER—O King, I have obeyed thee.

VIZIER—Darest thou assert that the King's person is so lacking in dignity as to deserve being laughed at, even though it be by the King himself?

KING—Darest thou, Fool?

JESTER—The Grand Vizier shall answer his own questions when he hath seen his own folly.—As for thee, O King, be pleased to look through this marvel, wherein thou shalt behold great mysteries.

KING—I fear the headsman awaits thee, Fool.

VIZIER—The executioner cannot make him more truly a fool without a head than he hath by nature always been.

KING—(*taking the marvel in hand*)—What is this?

JESTER—That is the wrong side, O King. Look through the other way.—So.

KING—(*frowning*) Villain! Who dares frown in the presence of the King? What, wretch! Dost thou front me thus?—Down, down with thy face!—Thou wilt not obey me!—Darest thou mutter words in thy throat when the King speaks?—Silence, I say, and down!—What! Dost thou clench thy fist at me?—Woe to thee, traitor!—Fool, thou saidst thou wouldst make me laugh, but now, by the gods of my mother, I was never so angry as at this moment!

VIZIER—Condemn the traitor in the marvel to instant execution, O King.

KING—Traitor, thou dlest! (*The King, holding the marvel in his left hand, plunges forward with dagger in his right hand, stabbing. Amazed at his failure to reach the man in the marvel, he stops, looks behind the back of the marvel, advances again, and stops*).—He eludes me! He is here before me, yet I can catch him not!—Stand, then, and hear thy sentence!—Yea, move thy lips if thou must, but listen!—I, the King, denounce thee as traitor to our royal throne, and condemn thee to execution within the hour!

JESTER—Stop, O King!—Thou knowest not whom thou dost condemn!

KING—Silence, Fool!—(*to the image in the marvel*) I condemn thee to execution within the hour, whenever it shall be discovered who thou art! By the gods of my mother and my great aunt, I, the King, have sworn it!

VIZIER—My Lord, let me see the condemned villain. Then, if he escape through the magic of the marvel, I shall know him again when I chance to meet him, and thus deliver him to justice.



(*The King hands the Vizier the marvel*).

VIZIER—Oh! What a black and evil face! —What a wicked villain!—He is indeed a traitor, O King! He looks capable of all deceit. Never trust a man with such eyes, and such a mouth, O King!—See those thin and grasping fingers!—He is avaricious, and hath an over-weening ambition. A man to be feared, O King, and one to be slain as one slays scorpions!

JESTER—(*laughing*)—A judgment! O King, a judgment!

VIZIER—How now, Fool?

JESTER—The Grand Vizier hath perfectly described—himself.

VIZIER—Described myself?

JESTER—(*Taking marvel from the Vizier*)—This marvel, O King, is not like unto an open gate in the wall of thy city, through which one may see the world beyond the wall. —But it is a magic device for the King's amusement, for it shows men to their own eyes as they appear to others. What we see within the marvel is a perfect copy of ourselves.—The Grand Vizier described himself!

KING—And by so doing, revealed what manner of man he really is? (*ascending throne*)—I shall take warning against him from his own lips.

VIZIER—(*kneeling*) Mercy, O King!—When I looked through the marvel, I was not myself.—I was beside myself with rage. I spoke words as against a traitor, from the depth of my anger, and not from careful observing of the man I saw through the marvel. (*rises*) Besides, hath the King forgotten that he hath given condemnation of execution within the hour upon himself, by the King's vow that must not be broken?—This is the Fool's doing!

KING—Woe is me!—I have given judgment upon myself!

JESTER—Nay, O King.—This marvel is but an instrument for jests.—Let call the court, one or two at a time, and observe with merriment how each will describe himself.

KING—(*laughing*) It will be sport!—Let call the Captain and one other.

(*The Jester, looking off left, claps his hands. The Slave appears right, eating the last of his dates, sucking his fingers, and drinking from a cocoanut gourd*).

JESTER—Slave! (*The Slave drops the gourd*).—The King calls for the Captain and one other!

SLAVE—(*crosses to left*)—The Captain! The Captain! The Captain to the King's court! The Captain and one other! The Captain! The Captain!—(*Exit Slave left*).

KING—(*taking the marvel from the hands of the Jester*)—How awe-inspiring I look when I am angry!—How dignified when I frown!—How like a King when I raise my fist!

VIZIER—How like a god when thou showest wrath!

KING—Do I so?—Nay!—See, I am smiling at my own conceit!  
(*King seats himself*).

(*Enter left the Captain and the Courtier. The Vizier crosses to right*).

KING—Brave Captain, our Jester hath a thing to show thee.

JESTER—(*taking the marvel*)—Thou art called the “brave” Captain?

CAPTAIN—And justly so.—Did I not choke with one hand the dragon Melkishiboo, and overthrow in single combat six barbarians?—Did I not do this at night when other men slept?—Did I not slay, in the darkness, the giant who was found dead in the desert at dawn?

JESTER—So hath the King been told.

CAPTAIN—Am I not feared for my strength and courage more than any other in the King’s court?

JESTER—So hast thou often told the King.

CAPTAIN—Am I not he that despiseth fear?—(*advancing to Jester menacingly*) Doth any man deny it?

JESTER—No man denies it.—Therefore, O brave Captain, the King would have thee give exhibition of thy bravery.

CAPTAIN—What must I do?

JESTER—He desires thee to meet face to face a warrior who hath never been defeated.

CAPTAIN—Never defeated?—Where is he?

JESTER—The King bids thee gaze defiantly upon that warrior,—to meet his courage with courage, his boldness with boldness, his anger with anger, and his blows with blows!

CAPTAIN—Is this warrior a very fierce fighter?

JESTER—He hath always been *thought* fierce—and dangerous, and therefore hath the King chosen thee to meet him face to face.

CAPTAIN—But—but—

JESTER—Here, in this marvel, is the man whom thou must face!

(*The Jester holds the marvel before the face of the Captain. The Captain cowardly backs away from the marvel, and the Jester follows him up*).



CAPTAIN—No! No! (*raising his arms in self defence*)—Strike me not! I never injured thee!

(*The Jester stops following him. The Captain sees that the King, Vizier, and Jester are laughing at him, and he falls on his knees*).

CAPTAIN—I confess, O King!—I have been a boaster. But I swear by the gods I am not a coward; only, I have a great fear of death.

KING—Never boast again, and we forgive thee.

JESTER—Hereafter, the fierce warrior in the marvel shall be held the bravest man in the King's court. (*Jester whispers to King and, laughing, points to Courtier*). The brave warrior hath heard much praise spoken of the truthfulness of the honest Courtier, and fain would make his acquaintance.

COURTIER—I am honored far above my humble deserts. Why should the great warrior deign to speak to so small, so insignificant a man as I? I am but an ill-visaged, although honest courtier, with no worth but what is bestowed upon me by the world's greatest King! (*bows*).

JESTER—The King himself hath not yet seen his new favorite, the formidable warrior. Therefore, the King desires that the honest Courtier, who always speaks sincerely, from the bottom of his heart, shall describe the warrior to the court.

COURTIER—I shall describe the warrior most exactly.

(*The Jester holds the marvel before the Courtier, who bows repeatedly in salutation to the image in the marvel. Then he speaks to the image*).

COURTIER—Ah! Thou art a handsome man! How broad are thy shoulders! What a stalwart figure thou hast! I admire thy superb muscles and gigantic limbs!—Thou art larger and more handsome than any one I ever saw, except the King, whose person is the most elegant and sublime of all the sons of men, superior to thine, just as thine is superior to mine. (*bowing to King*).

KING—An oily-mouthed flatterer!—"Honest" Courtier indeed!

JESTER—If it be the King's pleasure, let call the Queen and the Princess.

KING—Let them be called.

(*The Jester claps hands and the Slave appears left*).

JESTER—Call the Queen and the Princess.

SLAVE—The Queen! The Queen! The Queen to the King's court!  
The Queen and the Princess! The Queen! The Queen!

(*Exit Slave left*).

COURTIER—(*crosses to right*) The King calls me flatterer. If I ever flattered any man, O King, it was but to win a place among those who find the warmth of the King's smile more precious than the beams of the sun in a garden of flowers.

KING—Umph! Thou mightst have said worse.—(*rising*) The Queen and the Princess!

(*Enter the Queen and the Princess left*).

QUEEN—My Lord, the King.

KING—O my Queen, I have called thee to have thee meet here a woman whom my heart tells me is supremely beautiful.

QUEEN—Hath the King so soon forsaken me for a rival?

KING—Nay, but see her of whom I have spoken.

QUEEN—Does my Lord ask me to look upon her who has stolen from me his love?

KING—It is my command.

QUEEN—Cruel!

KING—If it grieves thee, O my Queen, thou needst not look upon her.

QUEEN—(*crossing right*) Then I will *not* look upon her!

KING—Thou mayst look or not look, according to thine own pleasure. Here, in this marvel, is the woman whom I most admire.

QUEEN—Let me see her! (*The Jester holds the marvel before the Queen*).

QUEEN—(*after a pause, during which she chokes back a sob*)—So this is she whom my Lord admires!—Cat!—Brazen-faced hussy!—Bold thing!

KING—(*laughing*) Name to me, O Queen, what thou thinkest her best graces.

QUEEN—Graces?—She hath none.

KING—Then, what are her faults?

QUEEN—Faults! Everything! (*Encouraged by the King's laughter, she proceeds*).—Her eyebrows are uneven!—One of them is drawn crooked!—Her hair is too dark!—Her eyes are too light!—Her nose is too big; and besides, it turns up at the end!—Her neck is too fat, and her chin is double!

KING—And those lips I have so often kissed?

QUEEN—Did they never leave marks of the rouge on thine?

KING—Sometimes, I must confess.

QUEEN—As I thought, my Lord. The wench's chief fault is that she doesn't know how to paint! And she powders abominably!

KING—What, at a venture, wouldst thou guess as her age?

QUEEN—Her age?—If she is a day old, she is well over forty!

KING—(*roaring with mirth*)—Let the Princess see the wench. (*The Queen steps aside; the Princess advances to the marvel, which the Jester holds before her*).

KING—Daughter, why dost thou start and stare? What thinkest thou of the forty-year old wench?

PRINCESS—I can scarce think her to be forty, and as for her looks—

QUEEN—Yea! For her looks—!

PRINCESS—But as for her looks,—I must agree with the Queen.

JESTER—O King, was there ever seen such a marvel?

(*The Jester and the King laugh and consult together. The Princess steps over to the Queen*).

PRINCESS—I am sorry for thee, my mother.

QUEEN—Why so, child?

PRINCESS—I did not think the wench very old nor very ugly.

QUEEN—What!—Thou art blind!

PRINCESS—Nay, sooth. I thought her the lovellest girl I have ever seen.

QUEEN—Impertinent child! Must I take insults from my daughter, as well as from my Lord?

PRINCESS—Nay, mother.—I say but what I think.

QUEEN—What thou thinkest, indeed!—And now thou wilt join thy father in scorning thy mother!

KING—Enough, woman!—Peace!—Now I bethink me, it is more like that ye will join each other in weeping for me, the King. I remember me that I have passed judgment of execution within the hour upon myself.

JESTER—Nay, but it was in jest!

VIZIER—Jest or no jest, the King hath passed his word.

KING—I am undone!

VIZIER—There is a way of hope for the King, if he will heed my counsel, rather than that of the Fool.

KING—Yea, tell me!

VIZIER—Let call the Judge.—He is learned in the making of vows, and perchance may release the King from his oath.

KING—Let call the Judge. (*The Vizier claps his hands. The Slave appears left*).

VIZIER—Call the Judge.

SLAVE—The Judge! The Judge! The Judge to the King's court!  
The Judge! The Judge! (*Exit Slave left*).

VIZIER—By giving heed to this Fool's marvel, the King hath unhappily learned the price of folly.

JESTER—To know the price of folly, is worth a man's happiness.  
(*Enter the Judge left*).

JUDGE—The King hath called me from profound meditations on equity, jurisprudence, and the principles of justice.

KING—Let the Judge prepare to give judgment.

VIZIER—The King unwittingly hath condemned to execution within the hour one who is as dear to the King as the King's own person. The King wishes to know if he may forbid the execution.

JUDGE—Did the King condemn with an oath?

VIZIER—The King swore by the gods of his mother and his great aunt, but—

JUDGE—Then, the King's word must not be broken!

VIZIER—But the King—

JUDGE—The King's oath is more sacred than the King; for it is his oath!—Let the execution proceed.

KING—But I don't want the execution!

JUDGE—If the King breaks his oath, the authority of the King is weakened. If the authority of the King is weakened, the law loses its terror. If the law loses its terror, the King's Judge loses his power. Therefore, the King must keep his oath! (*The King groans*).

VIZIER—The King will reward the Judge if he gives contrary judgment.

JUDGE—The King must not break his oath!

KING—(*groaning*)—Oh!—(*to the Vizier*)—Thou unprofitable counsellor! Thou didst prompt me to call upon the Judge!

JESTER—Let the King rejoice that he hath a wiser counsellor than the Grand Vizier. Here, in this marvel, O King, is a new and most learned Judge, who will declare false the judgment which the King's Judge hath given.

JUDGE—Will the King give ear to this babbler?

JESTER—It is fitting and proper that the King's Judge pass upon the ability of the Judge in the marvel.

(*The Jester holds the marvel before the King's Judge*).

JUDGE—Call ye this man a judge?—What a witless old numskull! I have grave doubts of his perspicacity. He seemeth full of misapprehension, confusion and misconceptions. I never beheld such a wrong-headed, jaundiced, purblind, illiberal, intolerant, fanatical dogmatist!—Believe him not, O King!—I, the King's Judge, hereby declare this to be a most falsely pretentious and unrighteous judge. Furthermore, I declare that whatever judgments this legal imposter hath ever judged, or shall judge, are null and void in the King's realm forever!

KING—I am saved!

JESTER—Hear ye, one and all, the mystery of the marvel into which ye have looked.—Within the marvel, each of you hath seen the semblance of himself as a living image, created by the magic of the marvel.

KING—Thou, "brave" Captain, didst fear thyself!

CAPTAIN—Then that is why I was afraid! For who is there in all this land, fierce enough to make me fear him, save, of course, myself?

KING—Thou, "honest" Courtier, didst flatter thyself!

COURTIER—But what I said of thee, O King was not flattery!

KING—We censure thee not, since thou flatterest so well.—As for thee, O Judge,—

JUDGE—(*hastily*)—I reverse my decision in the case of the King's oath!

KING—The Jester shall be King's Judge hereafter.

QUEEN—If the Jester becomes the Judge, who shall be Jester, and make us merry?

JESTER—Our own follies.

KING—And the Jester, as Judge, with the marvel, shall test the thieves and liars, and let them judge themselves, whether they be honest men or no.

QUEEN—Nay, my Lord; I can make better use of the marvel.

KING—How?

QUEEN—(taking the marvel from the Jester's hand)—With a marvel like this, a woman need never grow ugly and old.

KING—Thou didst disparage thine own fair face.—Rather than think of thee as thou didst describe thyself, I shall prefer to think thee still beautiful, and, for love of me,—a liar!—Come to my arms! (*The Queen goes gladly to the King's side*).—Tell me truly, love, how old art thou?

QUEEN—As young as I really look.

KING—As for Miriga, the Princess—

JESTER—As for Miriga, the Princess—She saw in the marvel the most beautiful woman in all the world! (*The Jester moves over to the Princess, who throws herself into his arms*).

KING—So ho!—That way the wind blows?—I wonder,—did the Jester see all that in the marvel?

PRINCESS—My Lord, the Jester saw in the marvel, the wisest man in the King's court.

KING—Then he shall marry the Princess.

VIZIER—But the King said that the Fool should be out of favor until he made us all laugh at ourselves.—I have not yet laughed at myself.

JESTER—Then thou hast much laughing to do!

KING—(*threateningly to the Vizier*)—Laugh!—Laugh!

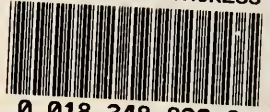
VIZIER—(*at first painfully and disgustedly, but soon heartily, laughs*).

JESTER—Laugh at thyself and grow wise!

(*Curtain*)



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