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PREVIEW: THE KEEPER OF PIGEONS - A FARCE IN ONE ACT

By

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Cast of Characters

FRIGG: Lord of Brahm
THOM: Lady of Brahm
PORTIA: Daughter of Frigg/Thom
HORACE: Court Page
LOVETT: Court Page
MUMFORD: Court Stewart
TEAK: Minister of Finance
GILBERT: Prince of Island
PAMELA: Thom's Maid
GUARD

Synopsis

Lovett, a lowly court Page discovers his friend and another lowly Page in the arms of Castle Brahm's Lord Frigg's daughter, Lady Portia he is offered the newly created position of Keeper of Pigoens for his silence. Unexpectedly, the King's rude son, Prince Gilbert, arrives demanding Lady Portia's hand in marriage. The Keeper of Pigeons acts swiftly sending messages to the King by his Pigeons informing him of the Prince's demands. The angry King then commands the Prince to leave Castle Brahm. Lovett is promoted to Squire and Horace's request for Lady Portia's hand is granted by a grateful Lord Frigg." Props: Costumes of the period for the Lord, Ladies, Pages, Ministers, the Prince, handmaiden, and Guard. Candalabras, long table with chairs, tapestry on walls. Bed, curtain on large windows, or implied window.

Set

The interior of a medieval castle.

When

Medieval time

Note

Sound: Medieval music. Bell, trumpets. Footsteps

Costumes of the period for the Lord, Ladies, Pages, Ministers, the Prince, Handmaiden, and Guard.

Props (5)

Candelabras
long table with chairs
tapestry on walls
bed
curtain on large windows, or implied window

ACT I

TIME

Once Upon a Time, long ago ...

SETTING

Castle Brahm of an Island Kingdom.

Scene One

TIME: Late Evening.

SCENE: A dreary Castle room.

AT RISE: LADY PORTIA 20's, paces nervously. HORACE 20's, quickly ENTERS stepping to Her, bows then they embrace.

PORTIA

I worried Father had learned of us, Horace, or perhaps you feared to meet this evening?

HORACE

My duties at your parents supper prevented my departure. It is I who feared you would not wait. Yet here I am, in your arms

PORTIA

I Pray one day our love will not be confined to rendezvous within the Castle walls.

(They kiss as LOVETT, 20's, enters holding a piece of paper.)

LOVETT

Ah, Horace, I have searched every ... where --

(He stops when seeing them embracing and bows.)

LOVETT

A thousand pardons, Lady Portia. I, I ...

HORACE

Lovett!

PORTIA

Page Lovett... my life would be ruined if Father should learn I held affection toward Horace. Can I trust you to remain silent of what you have witnessed?

HORACE

And my life ended!

LOVETT

Aye, Lady Portia, I can do no other than protect your honor ... and the life of my friend Horace as well.

PORTIA

How shall I reward you for your loyalty... and silence , Page Lovett?

(Lovett paces considering then bows.)

LOVETT

My Lady, I wish to be named Keeper of the Court's Pigeons.

PORTIA

I know not of such a position?

LOVETT

Yet My Lady is able to create such a title?

HORACE

We Pages already care of the Pigeons.

LOVETT

Aye, in their maintenance and send and retrieve missives as needed, but the Keeper of Pigeons would always be in the Lofts at the ready, caring for the birds well-being and assuring a quick and speedy posting and retrieval of missives. This would also allow Pages time for other duties.

(Portia considers.)

PORTIA

Very well, Page Lovett, I will repeat your words to Father but it is he who must title you.

LOVETT

(Bows.) Aye, of course., Lady Portia. My gratitude.

PORTIA

Now, I must return to my chambers. Until we meet again, my sweet.

(Portia kisses Horace then steps to the exit.)

HORACE

I await with great anticipation, My Lady.

PORTIA

And Page Lovett, if you reveal our arrangement to any ear, you will lose all between yours. Understood?

(Lovett bows. Portia leaves.)

LOVETT

(Angrily at Horace.)

Have you gone mad!

HORACE

What do you speak of madness?

LOVETT

What else is there when I find Lady Portia in the arms of a friend who has certainly lost his mind!

HORACE

Lady Portia and I have discovered a mutual sparkle in our eyes.

LOVETT

You are going to discover the executioner's blade on your neck!

HORACE

Only if our affection is learned of. Now, tell me of the missive you hold.

LOVETT

By the Saints, I forgot! From Castle Morgana! My Lord should receive it immediately! I sought you out to deliver it since it is late and My Lord will have my head for disturbing him. You are his Page and expected to disturb him

HORACE

The Keeper of Pigeons is responsible for ensuring the missives from all domains, were those not your words?

LOVETT

If I am titled as such!

HORACE

Presenting it yourself to the King would surely place you as Keeper of Pigeons in his mind when Lady Portia presents your proposal to him.

LOVETT

(Considers.)

Aye. ... of course, provide a sample of my efficiency and loyalty.

(Lovett pats Horace's shoulder then leaves.)

HORACE

Godspeed ... Keeper of Pigeons!

These pages have been removed
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FRIGG

Then it shall be my error. We will wait for the King's response.

(Frigg nods at Horace.)

LIGHTS: Down.

END SCENE FIVE

SCENE SIX

TIME: Morning.

SCENE: The Great Room of the Castle.

AT RISE: Lady Thom, Mumford, Teak, and Lady Portia are seated at the table . Pamela stands nearby.

(Lord Frigg ENTERS taking his seat.)

TEAK

Good morn, My Lord. May I inquire of the King's return missive?

THOM

Do you await a message from the King?

FRIGG

Aye, My Lady. I sought his counsel on the subject.

THOM

Have you sought Portia's counsel of her desires?

PORTIA

Father! I pray you will not allow such a union!

THOM

My Lord, I do not believe even a King would know what is in a young woman's heart.

MUMFORD

My Lord, I am informed that one wagon contains numerous parcels containing silver coins, gold trinkets, and a chest of gems. Truly a dowry of riches.

THOM

Material, shiny objects do not hold the value emotional happiness can offer, My Lords!

PORTIA

My heart does not belong to Prince Gilbert and never will! never! I... I --

THOM

Another has captured it?

FRIGG

Silence! From all!

THOM

Our daughter has naught slept, My Lord, having worried all eve of your reply to His Highness.

FRIGG

Aye, my apologies Portia. My temperament is clouded from not receiving a missive from the King. I have sent for the Keeper of Pigeons for answers.

TEAK

The many Hawks of the wood, no doubt.

(The Guard ENTERS standing by the end of the table by Pamela. Prince Gilbert ENTERS to the center of the room.)

GILBERT

I bid you good morn, Lord Frigg, Lady Thom, and the most enchanting Lady Portia.

THOM

Good morn, Your Highness. I trust you rested well?

GILBERT

Soundly in great anticipation of Lord Frigg's pleasant announcement this morn.

FRIGG

Aye, well, Your Highness, you see. ...

GILBERT

Come now! Let us not dally about! What is your reply?

FRIGG

Your Highness, with the utmost respect to you ... I must decline.

(Lady Portia sighs deeply. Mumford and Teak look at one another worried. Prince Gilbert angrily slaps His hat against a leg.)

GILBERT

A grave error, Lord Frigg.

FRIGG

I must consider Lady Portia's happiness. It is written in her eyes such a union does not agree with her heart.

GILBERT

Matters of the heart require time to be shaped, Lord Frigg. Your very sister, Lady Thom has told of how your heart ran cold towards your very union!

THOM

(Angrily stands.) Your Highness! You are bold assuming to know what runs through my heart before or after our union!

(Frigg places a hand on Lady Thom's arm calmly lowering Her back into Her seat.)

FRIGG

Apologies, Your Highness, yet my decision remains. It is Portia's heart which I consider, not your desires or title.

GILBERT

Then I must explain the wagons. One contains an abundant dowry. Riches to do with as you see fit! But, you decide by emotion naught to receive the full wagon so, as your Prince, I command you to fill the empty one from your treasury, as Castle Brahm's apology for refusing my marriage proposal.

FRIGG

Your Highness! This is outrageous!

(Horace and Lovett ENTER stepping to Frigg.)

FRIGG

Well?

LOVETT

(Holds a paper.) My Lord, to ensure a reply I sent six of my fastest Pigeons to Castle Morgana, each carried the exact message as you dictated for His Royal Highness.

GILBERT

You have sent a missive to the King?

LOVETT

Aye, Your Highness. Six pigeons to out-number attacks by scavengers. Two have returned carrying the same reply.

(Frigg takes the missive and stands.)

GILBERT

I am delighted your Keeper has completed his labors to your satisfaction. Now perhaps he will assist loading my wagon along with your other Page?

FRIGG

Nay, Your Highness. I shall read the message from the King aloud, then you decide an action.

(Prince Gilbert looks amused, bored.)

GILBERT

If you wish. It will alter nothing.

FRIGG

(Reads missive.) Lord Frigg. I am overwhelmed with pigeons but delighted to see their importance. The missives they carry worries me greatly for I do not approve of my son's seeking Lady Portia's or any hand without my consent!

The Queen and I are highly distressed at his disrespect! Therefore, you are commanded to relate my displeasure with instructions to return immediately to Castle Morgana. Furthermore, Lord Frigg, you are commanded to keep the dowry brought to Castle Brahm as forfeiture in lieu of this childish behavior.

GILBERT

No! No!

FRIGG

(Continues reading.) And ... remind the Prince of his place! I am still King, my Will be obeyed. The oaf is to depart Castle Brahm immediately, peacefully and without quarrel or prejudice!

(Frigg lowers the message. Prince Gilbert paces angrily then glares at Frigg and storms out. The Guard shrugs at Pamela and follows. Pamela smiles.)

PORTIA

(Hugs Frigg.) My heart thanks you, Father!

FRIGG

Your young, heart is fortunate I do not care for such an arrogant snob as Gilbert.

(Frigg stands with a goblet.)

FRIGG

And we owe gratitude to our Keeper of Pigeons for a well-conceived plan ensuring the speedy and safe reply from the King.

(All raise their goblets.)

MUMFORD/TEAK: Hear! Hear!

TEAK

My Lord, may we return our thoughts to matters of importance, such as the recent deposit of the dowry into my, rather, the Castles treasury.

FRIGG

Aye. Our wagon of riches! I have decided half this prize shall be a gifted to Lady Thom to continue her work with our needy and hungry within our Domain.

(Mumford and Teak appear shocked.)

THOM

My Lord! How generous. I am lost for words.

FRIGG

Ah! A small treasure is all it took?

PORTIA

This is wonderful, Mother!

THOM

My only concern was of your happiness and security, daughter. I wish you to always farewell.

FRIGG

Now! Keeper of Pigeons. Come forward!

(Lovett nervously steps forward.)

FRIGG

You have proven Keeper of Pigeons to be an important role within my court. I cannot allow such a position to be held by a mere Page, therefore, you are hereby named Squire to the court of Castle Brahm.

LOVETT

My Lord, I ... Thank you, sire. Thank you!

FRIGG

And the Loft under your care shall receive half of the remaining dowry for updates and needed aides to assist you in your duties.

TEAK

My Lord, I must protest!

FRIGG

Aye, I sensed you might. Horace! Step forward.

(Horace nervously steps forward.)

FRIGG

(Motions toward Portia.)

Is it true?

(Portia gasps.Thom looks from Portia to Horace then smiles knowingly.)

THOM

(Interrupts.) Portia, you hesitated earlier to state your true affections. Pray tell now, who is it your heart yearns?

(Portia is scared looking from Thom to Horace to Frigg.)

PORTIA

I ... I fear to name who has my heart!

THOM

Horace? Do you wish to speak?

(Horace and Portia look defeated.)

HORACE

My Lady, My Lord. Because of my position I am obliged to hide my affection and desire for lady Portia. I wished I could have shouted of my love for her from the Cathedral bell tower! Yet, I know it is not to be.

FRIGG

(Stands squinting at Horace.) You slither in the shadows slyly knowing I would remove your head for this!

HORACE

Aye, sire. My love for Lady Portia is greater than my fear of death, My only regret is my position forbids me to request her hand in the proper fashion.

(Frigg studies Portia for a moment then Thom then back at Horace.)

FRIGG

I cannot allow a Page to wed my daughter. It is unthinkable of such a union! Therefore, I have no recourse but to order you ...

(Horace stands rigid. Portia sobs. Lovett lowers his head sadly. Mumford and Teak smile at each other.)

FRIGG

... titled Squire to the Court of Castle Brahm.

(Mumford and Teak are stunned. Horace and Lovett hug.)

THOM

My Lord? What of Squire Horace's request for Portia's hand?

(Thom and Portia look at Frigg pleadingly.)

FRIGG

Aye, aye ... granted, Squire Horace.

(Horace and Portia hug. Everyone cheers.)

TEAK

My Lord, we offer our happiness to Lady Portia but we must return to our duties.

FRIGG

A sound idea while you still have duties to attend.

(Teak and Mumford EXIT dejectedly.)

FRIGG

To our Keeper of Pigeons!

(They all raise goblets.)

LIGHTS: Down

FINAL CURTAIN.



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