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THE PRINCESS & THE GOBLIN

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THE PRINCESS AND THE GOBLIN

a play by
Abigail Fleming

based on the book by
George MacDonald

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Synopsis

A play by Abigail Fleming, based on the book by George MacDonald. With the help of her mysterious magical grandmother, the princess Irene and her friend Curdie the miner boy overcome a hoard of goblins with nefarious intentions.

Cast of Characters

PRINCESS IRENE	Precocious, affectionate and curious, she has a good heart but is sometimes unintentionally thoughtless.
LOOTIE	Irene’s long-suffering, unimaginative kindly governess
WALTER	The very formal butler
GRANDMOTHER	Wise, magical, and always calm.
MRS. PETERSON	The sensible, wise wife of a miner.
MR. PETERSON	A sensible, wise miner.
ELLA PETERSON	The energetic daughter of the Petersons.
CURDIE	A self-confident, intelligent miner boy.
GOBLIN MOTHER	The mother of goblin family moving from one cave to another in the mountain.
GOBLIN FATHER	The father of goblin family moving from one cave to another in the mountain.
GOBLIN HELFER	The son of goblin family moving from one cave to another in the mountain.
GOBLIN HELGA	The daughter of goblin family moving from one cave to another in the mountain.
GOBLIN KING	
GOBLIN QUEEN	
GUARD KENDRICK	A guard at the castle
CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS	
MINER #1	
MINER #2	
CROBBEL	The crown prince of the goblins
GOBLIN COUNCILOR	
GOBLIN	
GUARD HAMILTON	A guard at the castle

ACT I

Scene 1

Setting: Irene's Playroom

At Rise: Lights up on PRINCESS IRENE's playroom. IRENE wanders listlessly around the room, picking up various things and playing with them for a few minutes before wandering to the next object. She finally ends up sitting on the sofa in the center of the room, then wiggling and stretching around until she is lying upside down, with her head on the floor and her feet hooked over the back of the sofa.

PRINCESS IRENE

Lootie? Loootie! Oh, Lootie, where are you?

LOOTIE

(Entering; she looks at the PRINCESS, sighs and shakes her head in exasperation.)

Princess Irene, you shouldn't be hanging upside down like that. You'll make yourself dizzy.

(She begins tidying the room and continues to do so throughout the following conversation.)

PRINCESS IRENE

I don't care. I like being dizzy. It's interesting.

LOOTIE

Interesting! Ha!

PRINCESS IRENE

Lootie, is it almost done raining?

LOOTIE

You can hear for yourself that it isn't, Princess. Listen to that din!

PRINCESS IRENE

(groaning irritably)

Oh, it's been raining for weeks and weeks!

LOOTIE

That's a bit of an exaggeration, Princess. Remember, you were out in the garden just last Saturday.

PRINCESS IRENE

I wish I could go out in the garden now. Can't we go out in the rain?

LOOTIE

In the rain! No, thank you. We'd be soaked in a minute. You'd be wet to the bone!

PRINCESS IRENE

Oh, please? I'd love to be wet to the bone. Please?

LOOTIE

You'd catch cold.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'd love to catch cold.

LOOTIE

And have to stay in bed

PRINCESS IRENE

I'd love to stay in bed.

LOOTIE

And eat nothing but warm gruel!

PRINCESS IRENE *(dramatically)*

Gruel is my favorite. I adore gruel!

LOOTIE

What nonsense. We're staying inside where it's dry and warm. You have plenty of things to do indoors.

PRINCESS IRENE

I've done all the indoor things a thousand times.

LOOTIE

You've read every book and done every puzzle and played every game?

PRINCESS IRENE

Yes!

LOOTIE

And painted every picture there is to be painted.

PRINCESS IRENE

Yes!

LOOTIE

Stubborn girl. If your royal highness hadn't been born a princess, you would have made a very good mule.

PRINCESS IRENE

(sitting up, somewhat shocked)

What!?

LOOTIE

(sitting next to her)

I beg your royal highness's pardon. But you know, there are children in cottages on the mountain who would be thrilled to pieces to have just one of the toys you have.

PRINCESS IRENE

They would?

LOOTIE

Certainly. They have nothing to play with but sticks and stones up there. Not that they complain about it, unlike some other people I might mention.

PRINCESS IRENE

Can they go out in the rain?

LOOTIE

(getting up again)

I have no idea. Not if their parents have any sense.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'd happily play with sticks and stones for years and years if only I could go out. Couldn't we go up the mountain and bring them some of my things?

LOOTIE

Princess Irene!

PRINCESS IRENE

We could bring umbrellas.

LOOTIE

In all that mud?

PRINCESS IRENE

And rainboots.

LOOTIE

Your royal highness is not to be seen on the mountain wearing muddy rain boots and carrying an umbrella.

PRINCESS IRENE

Well, Walter could carry the umbrella.

LOOTIE

Princess, you are giving me a headache.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'm sorry, Lootie.

(beat)

Lootie, will you tell me a story? A new one, one I haven't heard before.

LOOTIE

Ohhh . . . I haven't got the imagination for that sort of thing.

PRINCESS IRENE

Tell me something true, then. Tell me something about the miners on the mountain.

LOOTIE

The miners. Hmmm. I don't know that they would interest you much, princess. There they are all day, digging away underground.

PRINCESS IRENE

Why are they digging?

LOOTIE

Well, to get the ore out of the ground. They dig and dig with their pickaxes and bring the ore out in buckets. They work in the dark all day long.

PRINCESS IRENE

Don’t they ever see the light?

LOOTIE

Well, they bring their lamps, of course. But they hardly ever see the sun. It’s very dreary.

PRINCESS IRENE

I think it sounds exciting, exploring mysterious tunnels underground. And maybe seeing some goblins! I’d love to see the mountain goblins! Wouldn’t that be exciting?

LOOTIE

(suddenly uneasy)

Oh, no. It’s dreadfully tedious, I imagine. Dark and damp.

PRINCESS IRENE

Couldn’t we go and see it some day?

LOOTIE *(businesslike)*

No sense going out and poking about in dirty mines. Much better to stay safe and sound above ground, in the light, far away from any goblins. Now, it’s time for your tea.

(She rings a bell and WALTER enters with the tea tray. IRENE moves to the tea table and WALTER sets down the tray.)

PRINCESS IRENE

Good afternoon, Walter.

WALTER

(arranging tea things on the table)

Good afternoon, Princess. And how is your royal highness this afternoon?

LOOTIE

She's restless and irritable, Walter.

PRINCESS IRENE

I am not.

LOOTIE

And contrary.

WALTER

Completely understandable. I've been restless and irritable myself of late.

PRINCESS IRENE

And contrary?

WALTER

Very contrary. It's the weather.

PRINCESS IRENE

You understand, don't you, Walter? It's so awful to be stuck inside day after day, in the same rooms, doing the same things over and over.

WALTER

Indeed, it is most distressing.

(to LOOTIE)

Miss Lootie, I've been asked to inform you that the second west corridor will be blocked tomorrow for repairs. We are requested to use the third west corridor.

LOOTIE

Bother. That's a much longer way around.

WALTER

Of course, the first west corridor is still blocked off from that other business.

PRINCESS IRENE

What a lot of corridors we have around here.

LOOTIE

And it's a good thing, what with how they're always blocked off for repairs.

PRINCESS IRENE

(with her mouth full)

Well, Lootie, you could always use one of the east corridors if the west ones are blocked off.

LOOTIE

(sighing and laughing)

My dear silly princess. The east corridors don't go where I want to go.

PRINCESS IRENE

Or you could just go through the north towers.

WALTER

Your highness has an excellent imagination. I doubt if anyone has been in the north towers in the last ten years.

LOOTIE

A regular labyrinth it is up there.

PRINCESS IRENE

But who lives up there?

WALTER

Mice.

PRINCESS IRENE

Really? Nobody but mice?

WALTER

Nobody at all. You know that there used to be quite a lot of people living here before-

LOOTIE

(giving WALTER a meaningful glance)

Shh!

PRINCESS IRENE

Before my mother, the queen, died?

WALTER

Yes. She used the north towers quite a bit. Used to keep her telescope in one of the rooms up there, as I recall. She was fond of stargazing.

PRINCESS IRENE

I never knew that. Lootie, why didn't you ever tell me my mother was fond of stargazing?

LOOTIE

I wasn't aware of it until just this moment. Now, have you finished your tea? Let's not keep Walter waiting with the tray.

PRINCESS IRENE

Yes, Lootie.

(WALTER clears the tea things.)

WALTER

Good afternoon, princess.

PRINCESS IRENE

Good afternoon, Walter.

(WALTER exits.)

PRINCESS IRENE

Stargazing! That's interesting!

LOOTIE

I never could tell one star from another, myself. Now, let's not sit and mope anymore. Shall we start on that puzzle your father, the king, sent last week? He finds such interesting things to send you when he's away traveling.

PRINCESS IRENE

(trying to sound interested)

All right.

LOOTIE

I'll go down and fetch it.

(She exits. IRENE looks thoughtfully at the stair leading to the north towers, then makes a decision and exits that way. LOOTIE re-enters with the puzzle.)

LOOTIE

Here it is, princess-

(She looks around for IRENE. She briefly opens the door for the north towers, but does not see IRENE, and closes the door again.)

Princess Irene? Princess Irene? Walter!

WALTER *(entering)*

Miss Lootie.

LOOTIE

Did the Princess Irene go past you, just now? She's disappeared.

WALTER

No, but surely she couldn't have gone far. How long were you out of the room?

LOOTIE

No more than a minute!

WALTER

Could she be hiding? Playing a game?

LOOTIE

Sometimes she hides on the north tower landing, but she's not there. I just checked.

WALTER

Well, she certainly did not appear in the kitchen. The kitchen maids make such a fuss over her whenever they see her, I could not have missed it.

LOOTIE

She couldn't have gone-you don't think-she wouldn't have gone up the mountain, would she?

WALTER

In this weather?

LOOTIE

You don't understand! Just a few minutes ago she was going on about how much she wanted to be out in the rain. And... and Walter, she was saying she wanted to see the goblins! She's such a silly, silly girl-

WALTER

Miss Lootie, remember of whom you speak.

LOOTIE

Oh, Walter, you know it's only because I'm so fond of her.

WALTER

She would be seen at the gate if she attempted to go up the mountain path. Nevertheless, I think we should err on the

WALTER (CONT)

side of caution. I will send a search party up to look for her. Meanwhile, we should conduct a thorough search of the house.

LOOTIE *(wailing)*

Oh!

WALTER

Pull yourself together, Miss Lootie. We'll soon find her.

(Lights out.)

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ACT II

Scene 1

Setting: Princess Irene's Bedroom

At Rise: LOOTIE is tucking PRINCESS IRENE in for the night.

PRINCESS IRENE

Do you think we'll ever meet him again?

LOOTIE

Meet who, Princess Irene?

PRINCESS IRENE

Curdie. You know, that miner boy we met on the mountain.

LOOTIE

Oh, him! I certainly hope not.

PRINCESS IRENE

What! Why wouldn't you want to see him again? He was so kind to us, and brought us all the way home, and he wasn't at all afraid of the-

LOOTIE

Don't talk about the goblins! I don't ever want to think about that evening again!

PRINCESS IRENE

Is that why you don't want to meet Curdie again? Just because he reminds you of the goblins? I don't think that's really fair. After all, it's not his fault we were up on the mountain.

LOOTIE

No, it certainly is not.

PRINCESS IRENE

It's not why you don't want to meet him again? Or it's not his fault? Because if it's not why you don't want to meet him again, I think-

LOOTIE

My dear Princess, you are making my head ache AGAIN. It's time to sleep.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'm sorry, Lootie. I never mean to make your head ache.

LOOTIE

I know you don't, princess.

PRINCESS IRENE

I just seem to do it accidentally, all the time.

LOOTIE

Not all the time. Just occasionally. Now put your head on the pillow and I'll turn out the light.

PRINCESS IRENE

Good night, Lootie.

LOOTIE

(turns off the light)

Good night, Princess Irene.

(The only light left in the room is moonlight. PRINCESS IRENE lies still. Presently a GOBLIN's face is seen poking over the window sill. The GOBLIN gives a little snorting cackle.)

PRINCESS IRENE

(Sitting up suddenly)

What was that? Lootie?

(The GOBLIN freezes. IRENE puts one foot out of bed, then thinks the better of it. After a long pause and looking around her, she snuggles down under the blankets again. The GOBLIN begins to attempt to climb through the window, but is having problems hauling himself up.)

GOBLIN

(shouting down to someone below him)

Hold steady, you fool!

(Suddenly he disappears and there is a loud crash. IRENE sits bolt upright again.)

PRINCESS IRENE

Lootie!

(no answer)

PRINCESS IRENE

Grandmother! Great great grandmother Irene!

(She holds up her hand in front of her face.)

Oh! The ring!

(She takes off the ring and puts it under her pillow. Her face lights up with relief when she feels the invisible thread leading from her pillow.)

There it is! The thread! I can feel it, now! I remember!

(She jumps out of bed and begins to follow the thread.)

"Follow the thread wherever it leads you," that's what she said. Even if it's a roundabout way...oh, but grandmother... this is a VERY roundabout way...

(IRENE has left her bedroom and follows the thread into the audience and around the theater.)

PRINCESS IRENE

This doesn't seem right. Grandmother, where are you? She couldn't be up on the mountain. But she did say to trust the thread...

(IRENE hesitates, then steels herself and resolves to continue.)

All right. Here I go.

(She exits the theater.)

Scene 2

Setting: Goblin King's Cave

At Rise: The ROYAL GOBLIN FAMILY is asleep. Center stage is the pile of rocks, behind which CURDIE is barricaded. IRENE, following her thread, enters from the back of the theater and makes her way down to the stage.

PRINCESS IRENE

(voice shaking)

I'm following the thread. I'm following the thread. I'm following the thread...but grandmother, I'm really scared. Please don't make me follow this thread much longer. Oh! It runs right into this pile of rocks! Now what am I supposed to do?

(She sits down, still holding the thread, perplexed, and lets out an exasperated groan.)

CURDIE

(from under the rocks)

Once there was a goblin, living in a hole

Busy he was cobblin' a shoe without a sole...

PRINCESS IRENE

What was that?

CURDIE

I'm not dead yet! Better watch out, whoever you are! I'll step on your toes!

PRINCESS IRENE

It's Curdie!

CURDIE

Who's that?

PRINCESS IRENE

It's me, Curdie! It's Irene! You helped Lootie and me when we were lost on the mountain! Do you remember me?

CURDIE

Do I remember you? How could I forget? Irene, what are you doing here? You're not safe! The goblins-

PRINCESS IRENE

Yes, I see them. They're all asleep, don't worry. But Curdie, what are you doing under all those rocks?

CURDIE

I'm pinned under here, Irene. They pushed me in a hole and blocked up the entrance.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'll get you out. Don't worry.

(She starts removing the rocks.)

Did they get into the mine?

CURDIE

No, I followed them into the goblin tunnels!

PRINCESS IRENE

That was extremely foolish of you, Curdie, as Lootie would say. She's always saying that to me, you know.

(imitating Lootie)

"That was extremely foolish of you, Princess Irene." It's very tiresome. There! I've moved all the smaller rocks. Do you think you can push this big one from behind, now?

CURDIE

Let's see. Yes, I think I can. Watch out.

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Scene 6

Setting: On the Mountain

At Rise: Everyone from the castle is gathered on a high knoll, looking down into the valley. There is a loud roaring noise.

PRINCESS IRENE

I can feel the ground shaking! The flood must be rushing right under our feet!

CURDIE

I only hope we're high enough.

PRINCESS IRENE

What about the miners?

GUARD KENDRICK

They're all right. They blocked the mine up as well as they could and got out.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

The castle's a different story, though. It's so far down in the valley, the water'll be that much stronger when it reaches the end of the tunnel.

(The roaring increases.)

PRINCESS IRENE

Oh! Look! The whole castle is shaking!

LOOTIE

Oh, my goodness. I've never seen anything like it. The whole thing will be swept away.

PRINCESS IRENE

What about my grandmother?

CURDIE

I wouldn't worry about her. I have a feeling she can take care of herself.

PRINCESS IRENE

I thought you didn't believe in her.

CURDIE

Let's just say I've had a change of heart.

ELLA PETERSON

(enter, running onstage)

Curdie! Where have you been? We thought you were lost in the goblin caverns!

CURDIE

Well, it's a long story. Ella, may I present to you her royal highness the Princess Irene.

ELLA PETERSON

Wait, this is Princess Irene? She looks just like a normal person.

PRINCESS IRENE

Thank you.

ELLA PETERSON

You're welcome.

(MR. and MRS. PETERSON enter, running onstage.)

MRS. PETERSON

Oh, thank goodness! Curdie, we've been so worried!

(curtseying)

Your royal highness.

WALTER

Look at the castle! Look at the castle!

(There is a loud roar and everyone gasps. Then the noise dies down.)

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

It's gone. All except that one tower.

(to HAMILTON)

You're sure we got everyone out?

GUARD HAMILTON

Everyone, sir. Even the horses.

PRINCESS IRENE

(voice shaking)

Where will we go?

MR. PETERSON

No need to worry about that, Princess Irene. The miner's cottages are all safe. Our village is high enough that the flood missed it.

MRS. PETERSON

There's certainly room enough for all if we parcel you out among the different cottages.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARDS

Thank you. We appreciate your offer. I'll ride down to the border with a few men tomorrow, to see if the king has returned from his journey. It will be quite a homecoming for him.

PRINCESS IRENE

My poor father, coming home to this.

LOOTIE

Never you mind. The important thing is that everyone is safe.

GUARD KENDRICK

We can rebuild.

MR. PETERSON

Come on, now. Let's figure out where all these people will sleep tonight.

(Everyone exits except CURDIE and IRENE.)

PRINCESS IRENE

I'm so glad you're all right, Curdie. They wouldn't let me come and see you, you know.

CURDIE

I wasn't fit to be seen, really. Although your grandmother got in somehow.

PRINCESS IRENE

What?!

CURDIE

A tall, old woman with very long white hair-I suppose that was your grandmother, wasn't it?

PRINCESS IRENE

Yes! So you did see her, after all!

CURDIE

She gave me something very nasty to drink. But it fixed me up, so I didn't mind.

PRINCESS IRENE

That sounds just like her. Fixing people up. But she's only ever given me delicious things to drink.

CURDIE

Well, there's not much you can do to make medicine taste better, I guess. Even magical medicine.

PRINCESS IRENE

Listen, Curdie, I'm really sorry about how I acted. I didn't mean to lose my temper at you.

CURDIE

I wasn't behaving very well, myself.

PRINCESS IRENE

You couldn't help it, could you? You thought I was laughing at you.

CURDIE

I should have trusted you. I mean, I couldn't actually believe you. But I should have known that you wouldn't be that mean. You're not like that.

PRINCESS IRENE

Thank you.

CURDIE

Irene, look.

(He points out toward the ruins of the castle.)

PRINCESS IRENE

What is it? Oh!

CURDIE

It's the only thing still standing.

PRINCESS IRENE

She's there! It's her light, up in the tower!

CURDIE

I told you she could take care of herself. That's the same light my mother saw years ago, I'm sure of it.

PRINCESS IRENE

Your mother?

CURDIE

Your grandmother helped her, once, before I was even born. I think she's been watching over all of us, all these years.

PRINCESS IRENE

Of course she has.

CURDIE

Well, don't get all smug about it. Miss-your-royal-highness.

PRINCESS IRENE

Mister-miner-boy.

(They laugh.)

CURDIE

Come on, Irene. Ella's been wanting to show you our cottage, and I'll bet my mother is already making us pancakes for dinner.

PRINCESS IRENE

I'll be right there.

(He exits. IRENE stands for a moment with her hands on her hips, looking out at the light. Finally she give a satisfied sigh and nods.)

PRINCESS IRENE

Good night, grandmother.

(Lights out.)



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