

*Lincoln-Way Central High School
49th Annual Madrigal Dinner Script (2018)*

*(Actors have helped guests to their seats. Singers are in place to enter.
The Jester takes center stage on the platform.)*

TOWN CRIER: (walking across the front of the stage) Welcome, good lords and ladies. We are honored and grateful to have you joining us this evening. We ask that you please silence thine modern devices, and refrain from taking any...(consults a piece of paper in his palm)...uh, puh-hotographs or vid-eye-os during the evening. Our thanks to you, and off we go!

BRASS: Fanfare #1

JESTER:

Hear ye, hear ye! The trumpets sound!
Make way, the minstrels come!
Stand back, kind lords and ladies pray,
We beg of you, make room!
We greet you, merry gentlemen,
We greet you, ladies all.
We bid you come and join our feast
Within the banquet hall!

The KING and QUEEN enter from the back.

KING:

Wes hale to all that gather here:
Our many friends from far and near.
Who share, once more, our company,
Our music, and our revelry.

QUEEN:

Time hath treated us full well,
Time, that ringeth still the bell
For birth, for death, and all between,
Which oft rings rich, but also rings lean.

KING:

Time hath stilled its bell this eve,
To give us time to take our leave.
To flee the clamor and the rage
Welled up within this modern age.

QUEEN:

The ancient bells we must now ring:
The timeless bells which in us sing
Of joy, of peace, of brotherhood,
Of warmth, of love, of all things good.

QUEEN:

So ring out, bells, to all this night!
Ring ye out, calling us in flight
Through time—five hundred years long gone
To this castle filled with song.

KING:

So come along now, if everyone's in,
As we have begun, let the journey begin!
Trumpets, blow thy clarion call!
Singers, hie thee to the call!

A GREAT AND MIGHTY WONDER (MS)

ALLELUIA (BV)

GAUDETE (BC)

KING: Lords, Ladies, and noble guests! My Queen and I welcome you to this hall which, by our command, has been fitted for an evening of feasting, drinking, and singing for the general merriment of you all. May our evening of festivity recall the blessed event of Christmas, which joins us all as men and women of goodwill. Jester, please take your place and proceed with the entertainment. And, my good man, do be sure that your humor is appropriate and refined, unless you wish to spend the remainder of the season sleeping with the oxen.

JESTER: Welcome, friends, to our evening of feasting, drinking, dancing, and celebration of the divine art of music! We have much food to eat, drink to drink, and games to play! We have songs of love, called upon by sweet and divine inspiration. And, naturally, we have songs of a cold December night so many years ago. Now, I beg pardon to introduce myself. I am the good Jester. I shall be your leader of good cheer, your source of merry laughter, and your inspiration of joyous Christmas spirit! (*Hold for applause or lack thereof.*) Your enthusiastic ovation stirs me. Joining us to lead the feast is our sweet Serving Wench! (*She enters.*) Be kind to her, and she to you, and your dinner will surely find its way to your belly. Be smug and short of temper with her, and your dinner will find its way to your lap. You find yourself by grace tonight in the royal castle of our King and Queen!

KING:

Thank you, Jester.
Lords and Ladies, let us give thanks.
Our heads we bow, our hands we fold,
Our hearts we offer, as of old.
In thanks for food and fellowship
And shelter from the cold.

QUEEN:

If my beloved had his way,
Our feast would be twelve days long.
And more gifts would I bring each day
As in this grand, gift-giving song.

THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS (MS)

JESTER: Lords and Ladies, herald the Wassail!

HERE WE COME...(MS)

WE'VE BEEN AWHILE (BV)

APPLE TREE WASSAIL (BC)

JESTER:

Lords and Ladies, our gracious host
Bids you raise your glass for our Wassail toast.

KING:

Lords of the Kingdom, from the host
Of this castle, hear my toast.

Drink it well.
Here then I bid you all Wassail,
And down with him who will not say
“Drinkhail!”

(Clink glasses and improvise “cheers,” etc.)

WASSAIL, WASSAIL (MS)
(Singers return to places behind table.)

JESTER: Now, my good friends, a most serious moment in the evening’s festivities. For now we honor he who fell so that we might have a good meal. We honor the noble beast that now stands as the very symbol of the December feast! The mighty, fierce—

WENCH: *(Cuts him off.)* Lords and Ladies, herald the Boar’s Head!

THE BOAR’S HEAD CAROL (ALL)

JESTER: Now, gentle friends, harken thine ears to our King and Queen, as they make clear the Rules of Etiquette!

QUEEN: Rule #1: Guests must have nails clean, or they will disgust their table companions.

KING: Rule #2: Guests must avoid quarreling or making grimaces with other guests.

QUEEN: Rule #3: Guests must not stuff their mouths. The glutton who eats with haste, if he is addressed, scarcely answers thee.

KING: Rule #4: Guests must not pick their teeth at the table with a knife, straw, or stick.

QUEEN: Rule #5: Guests must not tell unseemly tales at the table, nor soil the cloth with their knife, nor rest their legs upon the table.

KING: Rule #6: Guests must never leave bones on the table. Always hide them under the chairs.

QUEEN: Rule #7: Guests must not wipe their greasy fingers on their beards.

KING: Rule #8: Guests must not lean on the table with their elbows, nor dip their thumbs in their drink.

QUEEN: Rule #9: Guests must retain their knives, or else they will be forced to grub with their fingers.

KING: And finally, rule #10: Guests must NOT flirt with the Wench!

JESTER: And now, Lords and Ladies, the time has come for your much awaited feast. And, should you find your glass empty or your meat cold, our servers will be most happy to oblige your requests, for it is your gracious company we are thankful for, and your friendship we desire to maintain. Ladies and gentlemen, dinner is served!

Dinner is Served

On cue after dinner:

BRASS: Fanfare #3

*(The Jester and Wench are in place at center,
carrying a scroll.)*

JESTER: When gentle Shakespeare strolled the Stratford lanes, and country folk danced on the village green, Madrigals were sung! Sir William Byrd, author of “Psalms, Sonnets, Songs,” gave these reasons why everyone should learn to sing. *(Unrolls the scroll and reads.)*

It is a knowledge easily taught and quickly learned, where there is a good and apt scholar.

WENCH: The exercise of singing is delightful to nature, and good to preserve the health.

JESTER: It doth strengthen the voice, and doth open the pipes!

WENCH: It is the best means to procure a perfect pronunciation, and to make a good orator.

JESTER: It is the only way to know where Mother Nature hath bestowed the benefit of a good voice.

WENCH: There is not any music of instruments whatsoever comparable to that which is made with the voice, when the voices are good and well-ordered.

JESTER: The better the voice is, the meeter it is to honor and serve God therewith, and the voice of man is chiefly to be employed to that end. Our voices now in song will lift, in the spirit of the season, with music as our gift!

NON NOBIS, DOMINE (MS/BV/BC)

**SING WE AND CHANT IT (MS)
OVER HILL, OVER DALE (MS)**

(JESTER enters, carrying a newspaper-parchment and muttering to himself about what he's reading.)

TOWN CRIER enters.

TOWN CRIER: How now, Jester? Jester..? JESTER!

JESTER: Ah, wes hale, Town Crier. Have you heard the news about Lord Lion? He didn't earn his title in battle after all. And, as it turns out, his first name IS "Dandy!" I knew it! It seems he's a blooming idiot.

TC: Not now, Jester! Shouldn't you be entertaining the guests? They're getting restless. Take a look at Lady Snippersnap! She's taking her battle axe out of her purse!

JESTER: Not the battle axe!

TC: You're so engrossed in reading this...this...What is this?

JESTER: It's *The Harold News*. It reports the goings-on in the kingdom.

TC: But that's my job!

JESTER: No. You stand on a board and announce the news of the kingdom. That's boardcast news. This is written on parchment, so it's...newsparchment.

TC: But the King made ME the Town Crier! I must stop this unlicensed interloper!

JESTER: You intend to stop the King's nephew? You remember Harold, don't you?

TC: Harold? That sneaky, gossipy little brat?

JESTER: That sneaky, gossipy *royal* brat. Who has been known to put critics in the rack. It seems he really likes stretching things. This newsparchment is where he stretches the truth!

TC: Oh, no! There goes my job! *(Starts sobbing.)* I've always been a Crier, just like my father, and his father before him, and his father-in-law before him. He married into the business. The point is, crying is all I'm good at!

JESTER: Don't say that, Town Crier. You are also very good at sobbing. Are you paid by the tear, or are you paid...weepley?

TC: Very funny.

JESTER: Hello...Jester here! Oh, stop your whining and just beat Harold at his own game.

TC: What are you talking about?

JESTER: I've heard you announce the news. You are careful with the facts, you give both sides, and you rely on reason and objective analysis for your interpretation of those facts.

TC: Why, thank you, Jester.

JESTER: And you are completely, almost perfectly...boring.

TC: What?

JESTER: Take a look at these stories. "Lord and Lady Puffintoot attend King's feast."

TC: He's already stealing my material! And...wait. I didn't know that Lord and Lady Puffintoot were here.

JESTER: Oh, yes. I saw them right over there. (*Points to audience members.*)

TC: Wow. This *is* hot off the quills.

JESTER: Now, what news do you have on Lord and Lady Puffintoot?

TC: I have it through a reliable source, which I cross-checked by interviewing Lord and Lady Puffintoot themselves, that they are building an animal shelter. They've always been animal lovers.

JESTER: But here's what *The Harold News* says: "Lord and Lady Puffintoot have built a new prison. The inhabitants stare forlornly through the bars of their cells hoping for freedom. When these pitiful denizens of despair are finally released, it is only to be slaves to their new masters. They have nooses tied around their necks as their masters drag them through the streets in public scorn."

TC: Wow.

JESTER: Grabs your attention, doesn't it?

TC: But...it's full of lies!

JESTER: Name one lie.

TC: A new prison? Bars of their cells?

JESTER: The animals are in cages, yes?

TC: Well, yes, but nooses around their necks?

JESTER: Leashes?

TC: I see your point, but new masters?

JESTER: The people who adopt the pets.

TC: Hmmph. Obviously written by someone who's never owned a cat.

JESTER: Don't you see? It's like your news, only interesting!

TC: But it's misleading.

JESTER: And selling like hotcakes! Everyone wants to read the dirt on other people. Lord and Lady Puffintoot over there are charitable, civic-minded, and pillars of the community. They're so squeaky-clean, I can't stand it. That's why I want the dirt on them. It makes me feel better about myself!

TC: You're wrong, Jester, and I'll prove it to you. I'll do the news my way, and Harold can do it his way. We'll see who wins! (*Storms out.*)

JESTER: It's a good thing you're a professional crier. You'll be doing a lot of it. (*Exits.*)

QUEEN: May we hear some more musical selections from the Lords and Ladies of the Court?

**EL GRILLO (BC)
MUSIC'S ECHO (BC)**

**MEIN FEINSLIEB (BV)
YOU STOLE MY LOVE (BV)**

(JESTER and TOWN CRIER re-enter, JESTER still reading parchment.)

JESTER: Town Crier, have you heard the news?

TC: What news?

JESTER: The Wench is expecting a suitor tonight!

TC: Of course I knew that! I have it on good authority, and I cross-checked with the Duke of Ellington himself, that he will be arriving shortly.

JESTER: Do you think he's a good match for the Wench?

TC: Yes. According to the Who's Who of Heroes, Good Guys, and Boy Scouts, he's an honorable man. He puts the noble in nobility!

JESTER: Really?

TC: Well, I thought if I spiced up my news with humor—

JESTER: Yes, you should try that sometime. It seems the Duke of Ellington—

TC: Dukey Howser.

JESTER: Huh?

TC: Yes, that was his boyhood nickname. I did some research for the human interest angle.

JESTER: Keep trying. According to *The Harold News*, Dukey Howser is a terrible match for the Wench.

TC: What are you talking about? (*Grabs parchment and reads*)

JESTER: I think the Earl of Sandwich is a better match.

TC: The Earl of Sandwich? You mean Earl Gray?

JESTER: Yes! Earl Gray suits the Wench to a tea!

TC: You must be joking!

JESTER: Yep, but...you missed it.

TC: Whatever. But, according to Who's Who of Villains, Bad Guys, and Tax Auditors, Earl Gray is a cad. He puts the blood in blue-blood.

JESTER: You should really stop that, you know.

(HAROLD enters)

HAROLD: How now, Jester, and...Jester's little friend.

JESTER: Harold! You remember the Town Crier. *(TC holds out hand for a handshake.)*

HAROLD: *(Nods vigorously.)* No.

JESTER: Right. Harold, we were just talking about the news. Is it true that Dukey Howser stabbed seventeen people?

TC: That can't be true! He stabbed people?

HAROLD: 23 at last count. 24 after tonight.

JESTER: How do you know this?

HAROLD: He schedules his stabbings.

JESTER: That homicidal maniac!

TC: Hold it. Dukey Howser has a surgery scheduled for tonight—

JESTER: Wait, surgery?

TC: He's a doctor. So young, but he's a genius!

JESTER: Well, who's he planning to stab this time?

TC: No no, he uses leeches. He applies leeches to women and children who have the ague.

JESTER: Eeewww.

TC: It's common medical practice.

HAROLD: What's your point, Town Crier?

TC: You've completely distorted the truth!

HAROLD: I've made the truth more *interesting*. *(Picks out an audience member near the front.)* Look, let's ask Lord Hottintot which news he finds more interesting. You go first, Town Crier.

TC: I will! Hear ye, hear ye! The Honorable Dr. Dukey Howser has scheduled an operation to remove gallstones from his most noble Lord Ludd's tummy. Leeches will be applied as part of his post-operative recovery program.

HAROLD: Right. My turn. *(Reads from parchment.)* Lord Ludd will be the victim of a pre-meditated stabbing tonight. Dukey Howser will lure him into his office, render him senseless, stab him, reach into the gaping wound, and remove vital internal organs. Then, he will apply vampiric slugs to the unconscious man's body. Finally, he will rob the poor, helpless man of several gold sovereigns.

JESTER: Wow! (*Looks to audience member.*) Well, Lord Hottintot, which did you find more interesting? (*Improvise with answer.*)

HAROLD: See? People with taste prefer my version. (*If audience member chooses TC, reply that only people that lack taste would prefer TC's version.*)

TC: We'll see about that! This is a long race, Harold. In the end, I will get ahead! (*He storms off.*)

JESTER: He seems...angry.

HAROLD: That will be a great story for Tuesday's edition! "Town Crier says she'll get a head! Threatens Harold with decapitation!" So, Jester, what's the news around the castle? Got any good gossip about the King? (*They exit.*)

MARGOT LABOUREZ LES VIGNES (MS)
RONDO ALLA TURCA (MS)

(*JESTER and WENCH enter*)

QUEEN: (*to Abigail*) What time will the Duke arrive tonight?

JESTER: (*excited*) According to *The Harold News*, he should be here by dessert! (*QUEEN glares at him.*) You...weren't talking to me, were you. I'll just go over here. (*Crosses to side of stage.*)

QUEEN: So he will make an appearance this evening after all?

KING: I thought he had a stabbing scheduled for tonight!

QUEEN: WHAT?

KING: According to *The Harold News*—

WENCH: Really, *The Harold News* again? Last week, I saw Harold picking through my trash.

KING: Really? I didn't know Harold had it in him. You have to get your hands dirty for good, investigative journalism.

WENCH: Dumpster diving?

KING: That way he can get the dump!

QUEEN: I believe it's called the scoop, dear.

KING: Dump, scoop, whatever you use to dig dirt.

QUEEN: It seems he got the dirt on the Wench. (*Produces a copy of The Harold News.*) "The Castle Serving Wench Had a Drinking Problem."

KING: Really?

WENCH: I threw my old sippy cup in the trash!

QUEEN: I much prefer the news according to the Town Crier.

KING: Yes, but she's so...so...

WENCH: Reliable?

QUEEN: Trustworthy?

KING: No, she's...what am I trying to say, Jester?

JESTER: Boring.

KING: Just the word!

QUEEN: Oh, really? And because I prefer the Town Crier's news, what would that make me? Dull?

KING: Of course not, my dear. No, you're...you're...what am I trying to say, Jester?

JESTER: Help?

KING: Just the word!

WENCH: Call the Town Crier. I want to know what happened at the tournament today from a RELIABLE source.

KING: And bring Harold as well. I hear he's writing a report of the tournament in his newsparchment.

JESTER: Yes, sire. (*He exits*)

WENCH: My King, how much longer will Harold be disgracing us with his presence?

KING: Now now, don't talk that way about my nephew.

JESTER: (*enters with TC and Harold*) Sire, I bring the bearers of news.

KING: (*to Harold*) My nephew, please relay the events of today's tournament. What happened to Dukey Howser, the Duke of Ellington?

HAROLD: I just wrote about it. (*Reads from parchment.*) "Today, the so-called Duke of Ellington not only despicably shoved the noble Earl Gray off his horse when he wasn't looking, but also thrust a needle into the prone and helpless Earl, thus adding insult to injury."

KING: Ha! I always thought that do-gooder Howser had a dark side.

TC: But that's not true at all. I was there!

QUEEN: (*to Harold, takes parchment*) May I? (*She reads.*) The "so-called Duke of Ellington?"

TC: But he is the Duke of Ellington.

HAROLD: Right. That's why he's "so-called."

QUEEN: "Shoved the noble Earl Gray off his horse?"

HAROLD: Shoved him with a lance, he did.

QUEEN: "While he wasn't looking?"

HAROLD: It's hard to look with your eyes closed.

QUEEN: "Adding insult to injury?"

TC: The Earl is a diabetic—he was going into shock. Dukey Howser added *insulin* to injury.

HAROLD: A simple mistake, the letters are right next to each other!

KING: How would you report it, Town Crier?

TC: Hear ye, hear ye! The box scores for the King's Jousting Tournament are as follows: Dukey Howser 1, Earl Gray 0!

KING: Go on.

TC: Um...thus making Dukey Howser the winner!

KING: Go on.

TC: Um...the end?

KING: That's it?

TC: Well...I'm still working on the color commentary...

KING: I much prefer your news, Harold.

HAROLD: Thanks, uncle!

TC: *(correcting him)* Your majesty.

HAROLD: No need to be so formal, just Harold will do.

TC: Why, you little—

KING: In light of your reporting, Harold, it's obvious that Earl Gray is the right choice for the Wench's husband!

WENCH: But sire, I love Dukey Howser!

KING: My dear Wench, you can't base a marriage on...on...Jester, what word am I looking for?

JESTER: Love?

QUEEN: *(Glares)* And what's wrong with marrying for love, dear husband?

KING: Uh...isn't it time for dessert?

JESTER: It is! Pray thee, Lords and Ladies see, a sweet dessert prepared for thee! The flaming Figgy Pudding doth ride its carriage through our hall, proclaiming that the holiday season is upon us! Good folk, strike up a song of Christmas!

WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS (BC/BV/MS)

Dessert is served, give five minutes or so for service before continuing.)

(TOWN CRIER and WENCH enter)

TC: Did you hear the King? I think he means to get rid of me! I'm doomed! *(Starts sobbing.)*

JESTER: *(Enters with parchment)* Ah, the latest edition of *The Harold News*. What's this, Town Crier?

TC: You heard the King! I feel horrible!

JESTER: It looks like you're having a bawl! There, there. I'm sure he won't fire you, Town Crier. Someone in your family has held your position for generations! You just need help making your news more...colorful.

TC: But I don't know how to do that. I just report the facts!

JESTER: I'll help you. Let me find a good example. Oh, here's one about Duchess Wigglesworth.

WENCH: By a weird coincidence, she's here tonight! (*Points in to audience.*)

JESTER: I'm surprised she's showing her face in public with this news. (*Reads headline.*) Duchess Wigglesworth Robbing the Cradle: Younger Man Found in Her Arms!"

TC: She was babysitting! *It was a baby!!*

JESTER: Well, how about this? "Lord Frumpywig—"

WENCH: By an even weirder coincidence, he's also a guest tonight! (*Points in audience.*)

JESTER: What are the odds? And, again, I'm surprised that he's showing his face in public with this news. "Lord Frumpywig Found Raving in a Homicidal Rage."

TC: Well, he was watching the Bears. So, that one's right.

JESTER: How about this one: "The Jester—"

WENCH: And by the weirdest coincidence yet, the Jester is ALSO here tonight!

JESTER: Where? Oh, right. "Jester's Joke So Lame it Had to Be Put Down!" Wait just a minute! That gossipy little brat!

TC: (*Takes parchment*) Jester's Breath So Bad it Sets Castle Tapestry On Fire!"

JESTER: I was *breathing* fire! It was a trick! It wasn't even a new tapestry, it was one of those old things.

WENCH: (*takes parchment*) "Jester gives rings to three different women!"

JESTER: I was juggling! Ever hear of audience participation?

TC: Well, Jester, you're right. The way that Harold tells it does make it much more interesting!

JESTER: But he's making it all up! This is all a bunch of lies!

TC: What happened to "colorful details?"

JESTER: Oh no...what if the King believes these colorful details??

TC: Don't worry, Jester. The King would never fire you. Someone in your family has held your position for generations!

JESTER: No, I replaced the last Jester...who met an early demise!

TC: Sorry, just trying to make you feel better.

JESTER: Something must be done about Harold.

TC: I agree! If things keep going this way, he'll ruin my career!

WENCH: We need to beat Harold at his own game.

TC: And how should we do that?

JESTER: Beat him. With objects. Lots of blunt objects.

WENCH: I think I have an idea. Even after he goes through the trash, Harold seems to find out things that only an insider would know. I suspect we have an informant among us. If we can find out who his source is, then we can shut him down! Listen! (*She huddles them up; they scheme.*)

TC: (*breaking huddle*) This is brilliant, Wench. We'll show Harold that the joke's on him, and get back to honest journalism. (*The THREE of them go into the audience.*)

WENCH: (*Goes to audience member who was pointed out as Duchess Wigglesworth*) Why, Duchess Wigglesworth, how very good of you to join us this evening! I have the most exciting news to share, but you must absolutely promise to keep it between you and me. It concerns the archery tournament today. You won't believe this, but Earl Gray ran out of arrows, and Dukey Howser gave him one of his. But don't tell ANYONE that I told you!

TC: (*Goes to audience member who was pointed out as Lord Hottintot*) Lord Hottintot, I do hope that you enjoyed your dessert. So good of you to join us. So, I'm working on my delivery of the news. I've got a new story about the tournament today. Dukey Howser had to pull some of his arrows out of the target to finish his turn, since he gave some to Earl Gray. Isn't that something? Please, though, don't tell anyone until I've had time to share it on the boardcast news!

JESTER: (*Goes to audience member who was pointed out as Lord Frumpywig*) Lord Frumpywig. Sorry to hear that the Bears lost. In fact, I completely understand your homicidal rage. I felt the same way after the tournament today. Can you believe that Earl Gray shot an arrow into the middle of the target, but he still lost? Dukey Howser took his bow and split the arrow in half! Can you believe it? And, I hear that you bet on Earl Gray. Whoops, I've said too much. Don't tell anyone what I told you!

(*HAROLD enters and goes to Duchess Wigglesworth*)

HAROLD: Hello, Wiggles! You got something for me? Whisper it to me! (*Listens.*) Excellent. So, your usual Payday, then? (*He hands her a Payday candy bar.*) Pleasure doing business with you. (*Goes to Lord Hottintot.*) Hey, Hots, you got something for me? Whisper it to me! (*Listens.*) Very nice. So, your usual reimbursement? (*Gives him a bag of pork rinds.*) Remember, you're NOT covered by the Harold News Health Insurance plan. (*Goes to Lord Frumpywig.*) Yo Frumpy, what's the tea? Just whisper it. (*Listens.*) Outstanding. So, you want the usual? (*Offers a container of Tums.*) This is your seventh Tums this week. I really do think that you need to relax about the Bears. There's a reason they call it a game. But, that was good stuff, I'd better get my quill, it's time for the next edition of *The Harold News!* (*Exits.*)

KING: Ah, a very good dessert. Dessert always puts me in a good mood. My Queen, have you heard the results from today's archery tournament?

QUEEN: Why yes, I believe that Dukey Howser defeated Earl Gray!

KING: Well, from what I hear, the results were a bit more complicated. According to *The Harold News*—

QUEEN: There's another edition of *The Harold News* already?

KING: Yes, it's right here in my...(*he holds out his hand, HAROLD rushes onstage, puts parchment in KING'S hand, and runs out*)...hand. (*Reads.*) According to *The Harold News*, Dukey Howser lost in a very unchivalric manner.

QUEEN: That cannot possibly be true. Dukey Howser is the very soul of chivalry.

KING: Let's hear it from our news sources, and you can decide for yourself. Jester, summon the Town Crier and Harold. I wish to confirm the news from the tournament today.

JESTER: Yes, sire. (*Exits.*)

KING: (*To WENCH*) Earl Gray comes from quite a reputable family...and he's rich!

QUEEN: Being rich does not make one smart, or respectable, or of good character. Being rich only means that one is rich.

(JESTER re-enters with TOWN CRIER and HAROLD.)

JESTER: My King, once again, the bearers of the news.

KING: Ah, yes. Harold, we have conflicting information about the archery tournament today. Tell us what you know.

HAROLD: I'm afraid that news about the tournament is rather scarce. But, through hard work and tough investigative reporting, I was able to glean some facts.

KING: Such as?

HAROLD: I have it on good authority that Dukey Howser gave Earl Gray the shaft.

KING: No!

WENCH: Dukey Howser gave Earl Gray a spare arrow when Earl Gray ran out!

HAROLD: My source says he gave him the shaft.

WENCH: Your source has a very loose relationship with the truth! *(Glares at Duchess Wigglesworth.)*

KING: And, what other news?

HAROLD: I heard from another source that Dukey Howser is so cheap that he gets his arrows from Target!

KING: How gauche!

TOWN CRIER: No, he pulled them from THE target!

HAROLD: Of course he pulled them from THE Target. We have only one in town. My source was an eyewitness!

TC: Your source is not only untrustworthy, but should search his conscience for the truth! *(Glares at Lord Hottintot.)*

KING: This is good stuff, Harold. What else did Dukey Howser do?

HAROLD: According to yet another reliable source, when Earl Gray took a perfect shot, Dukey Howser took a bow, and split!

JESTER: Dukey Howser took his BOW, and split the arrow in half!

HAROLD: No, I'm quite sure my source said "bow." (rhymes with "cow.")

JESTER: Your source is not only disreputable, but also of the cockney persuasion. *(In horrible Cockney accent.)* "Bow" and "bow" are not pronounced the same way, guv'nah!" (Rhyme with "cow" both times.)

HAROLD: Eh, potato, potahto.

KING: Anything else, Harold?

HAROLD: Oh, yes! Apparently, some of the nobles in this very room had bet on Earl Gray. Lord Frumpywig was particularly apoplectic!

KING: Lord Frumpywig?

HAROLD: *(Points)* The one taking the Tums. He is sure that Dukey Howser cheated. In fact, he bets on it.

QUEEN: That can't possibly be true. I don't believe it!

HAROLD: But my sources—

QUEEN: --seem to be making up facts. And if I ever find out who your sources are, I will have them thrown in the dungeon. *(JESTER, WENCH, and TOWN CRIER look at "sources" disapprovingly.)*

KING: My queen, do not go around threatening your subjects for revealing unflattering facts about Dukey Howser. It's right here in black and white. In light of these facts, it's clear to me that Earl Gray is the right man for you, Wench, and that I really don't need the news announced anymore. *(TOWN CRIER starts blubbing.)* And, apparently, I'm in the market for a new Jester now, as well! *(Reads from parchment.)* "Jester announces that the King is Dense!"

JESTER: I was talking about your muscle to body fat ratio.

KING: Not likely. You might want to start scanning the want ads in *The Harold News*, Jester. I mean now. You too, Town Crier.

JESTER/TC: Yes, your majesty. *(They cross and meet WENCH.)*

TC: Well, that didn't go like we hoped.

JESTER: Well, at least now we know who Harold's sources are. *(They glare at the audience members.)*

TC: I have an idea. It's risky, but things are getting desperate. What if...*(she brings them into a huddle. Breaks huddle.)* What do you think?

JESTER: I like it and I think that it could work!

TC: Then back to our sources!

They each return to their sources, whisper to them, and say "But don't tell anyone!" They then exit.

HAROLD enters and goes to each of the three sources in turn.

HAROLD: Hello again, Wiggles. Lay it on me. *(Whispers.)* Ooh, that's good. How about it, Hots? *(Whispers.)* Really! Wow. What say you, Frumpy? *(Whispers.)* Absolutely horrifying. How wonderful! *(Exits.)*

QUEEN: All I'm saying is that you don't seem to be objective when it comes to Harold...or Earl Gray. I trust the Town Crier, but Harold seems to miss the point of reporting just the facts.

KING: But Harold's version is so much more interesting. What harm does it do, really?

JESTER: *(enters with parchment)* Well this is a shocking turn of events!

KING: Jester, is that the latest copy of *The Harold News*?

JESTER: *(Hides parchment behind his back.)* Why, yes it is, Sire. But you reeeally wouldn't be interested in this edition. No sir, not at all!

KING: Jester, what's the matter with you? I wish to hear the latest news. Read me the headlines.

JESTER: That's not a good idea.

KING: I command you!

JESTER: Wellll...as you wish. "King crowns another man King, then jumps him!"

KING: What! I was playing checkers!

QUEEN: But, my King, Harold tells it in such an interesting way.

JESTER: Oh my, I had no idea! "King loses Queen, takes another Queen!"

KING: It's not at all like it sounds! I was playing chess!

QUEEN: How boring. This version is ever so much more exciting.

JESTER: And then...there's this. "King buys expensive new fishing boat!"

QUEEN: Excuse me? I thought we talked about that!

KING: It's not what you think! I was...I was...what was I doing, Jester?

JESTER: Buying an expensive, new fishing boat?

KING: No! I was...expanding the Royal Navy! For the defense of the realm! Against dangerous pirates!

QUEEN: We are a land-locked kingdom.

KING: Dangerous lake pirates! Jester, bring in the Town Crier. I need someone to report the facts.

JESTER: As you wish, sire. (*Exits.*)

KING: Well, go ahead and say it.

QUEEN: Say what?

KING: "I told you so!"

QUEEN: Well, I did tell you so! Your nephew has clouded your judgment!

JESTER: (*enters with Town Crier*) Your Majesty, the bearer of news.

KING: Town Crier, this...trash parchment has been telling lies about your liege lord. I want the facts.

TC: But of course, Your Majesty. According to my sources, you played checkers with Lord Frumpywig, and he lost. You crowned one of his checkers, but then were able to do a quintuple jump and win the game! And we all know what a sore loser he is.

KING: (*to Queen*) See? Go on.

TC: Later, the King played chess against Duchess Wigglesworth. She was able to take his queen with her rook, but that made the way for the king's pawn to take her queen. Duchess Wigglesworth is an even sorer loser than Lord Frumpywig.

KING: You're right. I do like the way he reports the news.

QUEEN: And what about the new fishing boat?

TC: Yep, he bought it from Lord Hottintot, who had to cover some gambling debts.

KING: I've changed my mind. I don't like the way he reports the news.

QUEEN: May I remind you that you asked the Town Crier to report the news? Because he has integrity, and he does not lie.

KING: Indeed. By the way, Lord Hottintot, your boat leaks!

HAROLD: (*Enters*) Sire! I have the most salacious bit of news about the King of—uh, is something wrong?

KING: Yes is it. I've just read the latest edition of *The Harold News*. It is full of lies!

HAROLD: Lies? Why, no, Sire. I just took the facts and made them more...colorful. You seemed to like that. And, of course, my readership has doubled! The outlying villages are going through the parchments faster than I can write them! I've even got the headline for the next issue. "The King Takes More Queens Than Henry VIII!"

KING: That's a lie!

HAROLD: Really? I thought you were a better chess player than Henry VIII. How about this, then: "The King Loses Another Confrontation With Henry VIII!"

KING: No! You're twisting everything!

HAROLD: But it's technically the truth!

TC: It's libel.

HAROLD: It's not libel.

KING: How about it's "liable" to get you executed?

HAROLD: That's not what the Town Crier meant!

JESTER: But the way he said it is much more...interesting!

HAROLD: But I'm your nephew! You can't execute me, Uncle Warty?

QUEEN: Uncle Warty?

KING: His father calls me Warty. That's why I'm thinking of invading France. Anyway, I'm not gfoing to execute you, Harold. However, I am relieving you of your duties in this kingdom.

TC: You're finished, Harold! Fired! Canned! Sacked! Outsourced! (*Looks at King.*) That was your line, wasn't it? I'm quiet now.

KING: But I'm not firing Harold.

EVERYONE but KING: WHAT?

KING: I want him to continue publishing his newsparchment...in France!

HAROLD: You're sending me home?

KING: Yes! I'm sending you back to Squeaky. (*To QUEEN*) Short for Pipsqueak, his father. Now get going, Harold! (*HAROLD exits.*)

QUEEN: So that's it? You're just sending him home?

KING: Oh, no. I could invade France, but I think *The Harold News* will be much more devastating!

TC: Good plan, sire, but...there's still some unfinished business.

WENCH: Yes. What are you going to do about Harold's "sources?"

QUEEN: My King, if you would allow me?

KING: Of course, my Queen.

TC: Excuse me, Sire, but a reminder that Dukey Howser of Ellington will be arriving within the hour!

KING: Wonderful. And, if all goes well, he will be staying with us for a very long time! (*WENCH smiles and acts excited.*) Now, about these "sources."

QUEEN: Lord Frumpywig, you have been found guilty of spreading slanderous lies. I hereby sentence you to a low-fat, low-sodium diet!

KING: Ouch! Don't we have some sort of rule against cruel and unusual punishment?

QUEEN: Lord Frumpywig, if you ever spread slanderous lies again, I shall add gluten-free to your sentence. Now, Duchess Wigglesworth. You have been found guilty of spreading malicious gossip. I hereby fine you...one Payday.

WENCH: Not her chocolate!

QUEEN: Duchess Wigglesworth, if you persist with this malicious gossip, it will cost you 100 Grand next time. Lord Hottintot, I find you guilty of selling a leaky fishing boat to my husband. (*To Town Crier*) How long has Lord Hottintot been a fan of the Bears?

TC: His whole life, Your Majesty.

QUEEN: His whole life, you say? Well, it seems that you have been punished enough. We'll consider it time served. And now, Town Crier, please finish with the boardcast news.

TC: As you wish, My Queen.
And so, the Wench will marry the Duke,
And Harold the gossip received his rebuke.
The Jester will jest till he wished to retire,
And I will always remain the Town Crier.

JESTER: I like how you report the news! (*ALL BOW to applause.*)

QUEEN:

Good Lords and Ladies, hear, attend!
The minstrels are at hand.
Our feasting is concluded, friends,
And now your host commands
That his courtiers should entertain
With joyful melody,
And soften now each sweet refrain
With praise and poetry.

KING: Thank you, my lady. Now, my friends, so that we might not interrupt a tender moment, I will now instruct you to show your appreciation for our music by applauding, but ONLY when you see myself and my Lady doing so. Applause at any other time is strictly forbidden! Jester...please review the applause etiquette with the guests.

(*Jester does applause bit with the audience.*)

KING: Thank you, Jester. My friends...the time is now yours.

CAROL OF THE BELLS (ALL)

**ANGELS WE HAVE HEARD (BC)
RIU RIU CHIU (BC)**

WHAT CHILD (BV)

**THERE IS NO ROSE (MS)
S'VIVON (MS)**

WENCH:

I thank you all for joining me,
On this, our night of revelry.
The music has been splendid, friends,
I sigh as it comes to an end.

JESTER:

Be warm, good folk, as you go out
There is a sting of cold about.
And as you huddle on your way,
Remember the friends you've made this day.

GOD REST YE MERRY, GENTLEMEN (MS)

KING:

The singers of the Madrigals
And all who made this feast
Wish you a merry Christmas
From the eldest to the least.

QUEEN:

And we add our sincere wishes
That your New Year may be bright
And bid you add your voices
As we sing "Silent Night."

SILENT NIGHT (ALL)

*(All process from behind tables and end as a single arc,
with the yule log exposed in the middle)*

JESTER:

The singers' voices fade,
The candlelight grows dim.
Our farewell wish we give to you
In the words of Tiny Tim,
"God bless us, everyone!"

(He blows out the candles on the yule log, leaving us in darkness.)

End of 49th Madrigal Dinners