



DANCE!

written by

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Twelve princesses and twelve princes are forced to dance themselves to exhaustion nightly by Fairy magic and their only hopes to be freed are a middle-aged veteran searching for his lost wife and a young African girl hoping to free her brother.

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"DANCE!"

FADE IN:

EXT. LATE 18TH CENTURY CENTRAL EUROPEAN VILLAGE - DAYBREAK

Sunlight falls gently over village. Trees are all Autumn colored. It's quiet. No one's awake, yet.

REICHSGRAF KLAUS KRAUSE (45) greying black hair, balding, waxed mustache, goatee, blue eyes, dressed in aristocratic regalia with coat of arms prominent, *MARCHES* down the road surrounded by his-

RETINUE OF DIENSTMANN (age unknown) four helmeted armed men, faces covered, otherwise wear same regalia as their master.

They *MARCH* to building with hanging sign that says 'Beer Hall', then push in the door aggressively.

CRACK!

INT. BEER HALL - CONTINUOUS

Inside Beer Hall,

INNKEEPER (50s) balding, black sideburns, clean shaven, rotund, dressed in pants, shirt, shoes, soiled apron,

-cleans mug then looks at invaders in shock.

INNKEEPER

Ach du meine Güte!

at rear table,

LAZAR ISRAELSON (46) brown hair, brown eyes, strong nose, beard down to middle chest but no mustache, black military greatcoat, black military boots, black tricorne hat, belt with cutlass in scabbard, sits, stirs mug of tea next to bowl of oatmeal,

Deinstmann *TROMP* up to him.

DIENSTMANN 1

On yer feet, Juden!

DIENSTMANN 2

You are under arrest!

In one fluid motion, Lazar upends table toward guards, spills food all over them, stands cutlass ready, before window behind him.

Guard charges him. Lazar ducks, flips guard over his back. Guard flies through back window.

SPLAT!

Lands in mud puddle.

LAZAR

That's one warning I've given more than I usually do. The next one bleeds. Now get out of my sight!

Opposite him,

KLAUS KRAUSE

Der King vishes to zee you, und you vill zee der King.

Retinue charges. Lazar sidesteps, BRAINS Dienstmann on left with hilt of his cutlass, causes him to stumble into others. Helmets bang together.

CLANK! CLANK! CLANK!

Lazar advances on Krause who holds up his cutlass alongside paper while he quivers from head to toe. Lazar looks at paper.

LAZAR

That's the King's seal...and the Kings handwriting.

KLAUS KRAUSE

(shakily)

As I s-said, der King vishes to s-see you.

Lazar snatches away paper, reads it, crumples it in one hand, waves in Krause' face as he speaks-

LAZAR

This is a friendly summons, not an arrest warrant! Did you bother to read this? Can you read?

KLAUS KRAUSE

Uuuuuuuhh..

LAZAR
 (irritated)
 Never mind! I'll go see the King!

He strides toward door past Krause who reaches to stop him,
 but his legs give out, falls flat on his face

INNKEEPER
 Look out for the Erlking. He haunts
 these woods

LAZAR
 (wry disbelieving)
 The shadow that snatches children.
 I'll keep an eye out.

Krause looks up, sees door *SLAM*. climbs to his feet.

KLAUS KRAUSE
 (in German)
*Fools! Incompetent buffoons! You
 call yourselves soldiers?*
 (actor free to ad lib in
 German)

EXT. THE VILLAGE STABLE - DAY

Krause' *RANTS* are still heard as Lazar gets his horse-
 GRAY - large gray stallion, visibly aged, but strong,

LAZAR
 Come on, Gray, old friend. We're
 off to see the King.

Lazar saddles Gray, they ride out of town while Krause
 continues to *RANT*. FOLLOW LAZAR.

Lazar rides down road into-

EXT. THE FOREST - DAY

Sun shines through leaves as they ride along.

LAZAR
 The King. I haven't seen him since
 the war. I wonder what he could
 want. He must know about my wife's
 disappearance and my search for
 her.

Gray *NICKERS*. Lazar smiles, pats horses neck.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

OK, our search, old friend. Still...

Ground mist rolls in.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

We send letters to each other often enough. He's even sent us leads to Johanna. What could be so important he needs to see me now?

Mist rises around them. Lazar looks around suspiciously, then draws his sword.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

It was day a minute ago.

Mist surrounds them. Both look around suspiciously.

VOICE

Where do you go Lazar Israelson,
soldier of the King?

Beat

LAZAR

Why would I tell someone I can't
even see.

VOICE

Stubborn as always.

HOODED WOMAN (age mysterious) eyes not visible, black mark visible on chin, hood and cloak white, dress gray, gloves black, steps from mist.

LAZAR

Who are you?

HOODED WOMAN

I'm not allowed to say.

Gray walks forward without prodding, nuzzles woman affectionately. She strokes his neck.

HOODED WOMAN (CONT'D)

Yes, you remember me, don't you,
Gray.

LAZAR

Do we ...know you?

HOODED WOMAN

Yes, but I'm not allowed to say how.

LAZAR

I'm sorry, I just can't place you.

HOODED WOMAN

You're not meant to, Lazar Israelson. You are a child of this land. Surely you have heard tales of magic before.

LAZAR

I...didn't think they were true.

HOODED WOMAN

Magic is rare, but not untrue, and you will see much of it in the coming days. I know you go to the King-

LAZAR

(interrupts)

Then why did you ask me?

HOODED WOMAN

To see if you would say. You wisely did not. I know what the King will ask of you, though again, I'm not allowed to say. I can only say this to you- firstly, whatever you do, do not drink the wine that they will bring you in the evening. Secondly, trust the young African. You will know her when you see her. Thirdly, take this.

She hands him folded cloth.

HOODED WOMAN (CONT'D)

When you put this on you will become invisible, like this.

She pulls up second hood, then vanishes.

HOODED WOMAN (CONT'D)

It should give you everything you need to complete your task.

Mists swirl around them.

HOODED WOMAN (CONT'D)
Lastly, tell no one of our meeting
here. If you do, the magic may be
undone. Know also that your quest
may end should you succeed in your
task. Godspeed Lazar Isrealson.

Screen goes white, then clears.

Lazar & Gray are surrounded by trees very different from the
ones before. Both are wide-eyed, awestruck, frightened.

LAZAR
OK Gray, let's keep going.

Gray *WHINNIES*, launches into *GALLOP*. They run for short time
until Lazar reins him in at the edge of an incline.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Whoa! Whoa there!

They look out from the top of incline to see the King's
Castle across a river.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
The King's Castle? We're already
here? We were at least a day's ride
away.

Gray *SNORTS*. Lazar looks at the bundle he received.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
She said this cloak would make me
invisible. I wonder...

He unfolds, dons cloak, turn invisible.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Well I'll be-

Gray *WHINEYS* fearfully. Lazar removes, folds cloak.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
All right, all right, calm down,
let's just go see the King. Maybe
he'll be able to tell us more.

Gray *NICKERS*, they both ride forward.

MONTAGE: VARIOUS

A) EXT. THE ROYAL ROAD

Lazar rides Gray out of forest into farm fields, that surround castle on this side of river.

B) EXT. THE CASTLE DRAWBRIDGE

Lazar dismounts Gray to speak to two-

GUARDS, age not obvious, armored head to toe.

LAZAR

Hello, my name is Lazar Israelson.
I was told I would be expected.

GUARD

Yes mein herr. Der King's orders
are to show you in directly.

Lazar follows guard, leads Gray into castle

C) INT. THE CHAMBER OUTSIDE THE CASTLE THRONE ROOM

Lazar, guard wait to be admitted. Loud ARGUMENT heard from inside.

END OF MONTAGE

INT. CASTLE THRONE ROOM - DAY

KING FREDERICK (47) dark eyes, dark brown hair with sideburns, mustache, soul patch, short in back, dressed in royal regalia, sits on throne, looks like he'll melt down soon.

In front of throne,

MINISTER SCHULTZ- (50s) dark eyes, enormous periwig, black robe.-

Argues vehemently with-

MINISTER HAUGWITZ- (50s) dark eyes, periwig small enough his ears can be seen, maroon robe.

MINISTER SCHULTZ

-and it was clear that herr Koskull was interested less in the King's problem and more in what he could gain should he convince us that he solved it.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

And this morning it was even more clear that Herr Marwitz was more interested in the princess' bosoms than he was in their wellbeing.

King Frederick bursts up from throne, rages at assembly

KING FREDERICK

Enough! Every night my daughters go to bed and no one can enter their chambers between ten bells and six! Then they awaken, exhausted, with shoes danced to pieces, and no memory of what happened.

He steps down off dais towards lords

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

Everyone who has tried to solve this mystery has either been found dead or dead drunk!

He grabs Schultz by collar

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

and the best thing any of you can do is jockey for position hoping your man will be the one the solve the mystery and gains favor with the throne!

He releases Schultz, turns, grabs Haugwitz

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

I have had enough of your demands and plots! I'd have you all executed for your failures in this if I hadn't failed myself!

Releases Haugwihtz. Turns to greater court

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

Between all of your schemes and intrigues, I am no closer to freeing my daughters from this - mystery than I was before!

He looks over, sees one courtier steal a paper from another.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
That's it! This isn't a King's
 court, it's a den of thieves! Out!
All of you! Out! Guards, clear the
chamber!

ANNEGRET HAUGWITZ(10) blonde, blue eyes, small formal gown,
 comes forward past Lazar, takes Minister Haugwitz' hand.

ANNEGRET
 You must come home Grandpapa.
 Grandmama and Mama are worried.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
 I'll come. I'll come.

Guards shepherd courtiers out as King return to throne,
 collapses into it, facepalms.

Lazar steps forward past them.

LAZAR (O.S.)
 I see your work hasn't gotten any
 easier, my liege.

OTS THE KING

King opens his eyes, sees Lazar in front of dais with weary
 smile beside guard.

ON KING

KING FREDERICK
 Israelson, finally a face I can
 trust.

He gets up, goes to shake Lazar's hand.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
 (to guard)
 Thank you, Sergeant. You may go
 now.

Guard salutes.

GUARD
 Sire.

Then leaves.

LAZAR

Is what you said true? Are your daughters really...

KING FREDERICK

I don't know what is happening with my daughters. That's why I need people I can trust to help me find out. Please come with me.

They walk off, side by side.

EXT. THE CASTLE GARDENS - DAY

PRINCESS CHARLOTTE (19) dark brown hair, dark blue eyes, simple gown, bare feet,

PRINCESS ALEXANDRINE (16) dark brown hair, dark blue eyes, simple gown, bare feet,

PRINCESS LOUISE (13) dark brown hair, dark blue eyes, simple gown, bare feet,

-all sit on grass, look tired, soak their feet in brook that runs through garden.

Behind them, on-

EXT. THE BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE GARDEN - DAY

King & Lazar observe them.

KING FREDERICK

There they are. My beloved daughters.

LAZAR

I haven't seen them in ten years. They've grown so tall. I wish... I...

KING FREDERICK

I wish Johanna were here to see them, too, old friend, as badly as I wish their mother were here to see them. I wish you had your own children to introduce to them. I wish I'd committed all my resources to helping you find your wife. I wish...

LAZAR

Don't think about it that way, my King. I'll remind you, you lost your wife, too. If there's one thing we both learned the hard way in the war, it's that countries need good leadership more than they need good friends.

KING FREDERICK

Perhaps. And the truth is, I really didn't have any special help to offer. I could have had soldiers beating the bushes looking for her but where would we even begin. What can be done when a person vanishes so completely.

LAZAR

Let's discuss that another time. You called me here to help with this problem. Why don't you tell me more about it.

KING FREDERICK

Well, it began some months ago.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

INT. THE KING'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

King bursts up from bed, terrified.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)

I remember waking up from a nightmare but not what it was about.

He shakes out his head, lays back down, goes back to sleep.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I know now it was a warning.

INT. ROYAL BREAKFAST ROOM - MORNING

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)

It was the next morning when it happened for the first time.

King sits at breakfast table, eats traditional breakfast, next to his son-

ALBERT, (8) dark brown hair, dark blue eyes, simple clothes, eats simple breakfast.

Princess Charlotte staggers in, followed by her sisters, all in dancing gowns with destroyed dancing shoes, look like they just ran marathon.

King & Albert leap to their feet.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
The Princesses had no idea what had happened, they had just woken up that way.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - BEDTIME

Two guards stand outside door.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
I posted guards outside their chamber the next night.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - MORNING

Guards haven't moved. Princesses stagger from their room dressed for dancing with ruined shoes, fall into guards arms.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
But it happened again and the guards didn't hear a thing all night.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - BEDTIME

CHAMBERMAID (40) hat covers hair, brown eyes, big white nightgown.

-tucks princesses into bed. Charlotte presents platter with four glasses of wine. All four partake.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
I ordered their chambermaid to sleep with them the next night.

INT. CHAMBERMAID'S ROOM - LATE NIGHT

Chambermaid wakes up in her own bed, shocked

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
The chambermaid woke up in her own
room and immediately informed the
guards.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - LATER

Guards *BANG* on princesses' door with battering ram.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
We spent the rest of the night
trying to break down my daughters'
chamber door.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - MORNING

Door shatters before battering ram.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

King & guards help princesses who are dressed in dancing
gowns & ruined shoes from their beds.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
The girls were alive, thank
goodness, but they were again
exhausted and their shoes
destroyed.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - NEXT NIGHT BEDTIME.

King tucks in his daughters. Charlotte presents platter with
four glasses of wine. All four partake.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
The next night, I myself, decided
to stand guard over my daughters.

INT. THE KING'S BEDROOM - LATER

King bursts up from bed, terrified.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)
I woke up in my own bed and spent
the rest of the night helping the
guards try to break down the door
again.

BACK TO PRESENT

KING FREDERICK

There's even a secret passage known only to myself and my daughters to be used in case of siege but it was sealed as tightly as the chamber door. Several things have been tried since.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

MONTAGE:

A) HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER

two guards remove door from princesses chamber

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)

We removed the door from the chamber. It was back that very night.

B) CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

King loads princesses into carriage. It drives off.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)

I tried sending them away to safety. They woke up in their room the next morning in the very same state.

C) INSIDE PRINCESSES CHAMBER - BEDTIME

Guards all stand battle ready in room.

KING FREDERICK (V.O.)

We tried stationing the guards in the chamber and quartering the girls elsewhere. All woke up in their usual rooms.

END OF MONTAGE

BACK TO PRESENT

KING FREDERICK

Clearly, we are dealing with some form of magic. Can you imagine it?

(MORE)

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
Me, who have striven my entire life
to be an enlightened ruler,
besieged in my own home by magic!
The irony! The shame! I tried to
discreetely ask my courtiers for
ideas and now I am surrounded by
every charlatan and intriguer in
Europe hoping to take advantage.

King looks into Lazar's eyes.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
Lazar, my old friend, you're one of
the few people left I would trust
with my life and the lives of my
family. Please, help me solve this.

LAZAR
You can count on me my King...
Frederick. I can't tell you how,
but I think when this is over, both
of our families will be whole
again. Tonight, I shall keep watch
in your daughters' room.

KING FREDERICK
No.

LAZAR
What?

KING FREDERICK
I can't let you do that.

LAZAR
Why not?

KING FREDERICK
After the last charlatan. I lost my
temper and issued a royal decree.
From now on, anyone who claims they
can solve this and fails will be
executed as an intriguer against
the state. If you fail, the lords
will surely force me to put you to
death.

LAZAR
Frederick, look at me. You know me.
You fought in the war beside me. Do
you honestly think I'd walk into
anything without a plan to get out?

KING FREDERICK
You've already got a plan?

LAZAR
Yes.

KING FREDERICK
Please tell me.

LAZAR
I can't.

KING FREDERICK
What?

LAZAR
I was told that if I say, it won't work. Do you still trust me enough to move forward?

KING FREDERICK
.....I do.

Lazar offers his hand to shake.

LAZAR
Well then, here's to our success moving forward.

They shake hands.

KING FREDERICK
To success.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBERS - A BIT BEFORE BEDTIME

Lazar sits in chair by open window with his sword across his lap, his hat in hand, looks distinguished while Princess Alexandrine sits across from him, sketches him.

ALEXANDRINE
Thank you, again for sitting for me, Herr Israelson.

LAZAR
I'm only too happy to do it. Just like I was for your mother.

ALEXANDRINE
Oh yes. Mother painted you, your wife, and father all together once. Did, you ever get to see the finished painting?

LAZAR

You know, I never did.

ALEXANDRINE

Well, I'll take you to see it tomorrow.

LAZAR

Well, I'm sure I'll enjoy that.

Across room, under portrait of all three princesses, sit Princess Louise who knits, Princess Charlotte who writes in her diary. All three princesses are barefoot. Princess Louise suddenly stops.

LOUISE

Herr Israelson, do you miss your wife.

CHARLOTTE

(in warning tone)

Louise-

LAZAR

No, it's all right. I miss her more every day.

LOUISE

I miss mother that way, too.

LAZAR

Everyone who knew her misses your mother that way, your highness.

OClock outside room rings *TEN BELLS*. Princesses all sit-up straight, stare into space. Lazar notices

CHARLOTTE

We should get ready for bed.

All three princesses put down what's in their hands, get mechanically to their feet. Lazar rises out of polity. Princesses leave room, come back in. Charlotte carries tray with four glasses filled with wine.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)

(monotone)

Please join us in our bedtime wine
mein herr.

LAZAR

Of course, your highness.

He steps forward, takes glass, notices all three take glass simultaneously like coordinated dance. Lazar raises glass to his lips, notices princesses do also but drink where he doesn't. He takes glass from his lips.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Princess, Alexandrine, did you also paint that lovely portrait on the wall?

Princesses seem to recover from their spellbound state, all smile, turn toward portrait, Lazar deftly tosses wine out window.

ALEXANDRINE

Yes I did. We got the idea of sitting in front a big mirror so I could sketch us and then I painted it later.

CHARLOTTE

It made for a long afternoon.

Lazar steps forward with empty glass

LAZAR

But a beautiful result. Well, you all should finish your wine and get ready for bed while I take up my post.

LOUISE

Do you think you'll find out what's happening to us?

LAZAR

I pray so, your highness. I pray so.

Princesses all drain their glasses, regain their spellbound state.

ALL THREE

Good night mein herr.

LAZAR

Good night your highnesses.

Princesses walk out of room in lockstep. Lazar sits back down in chair, notices princesses watch him from other their bed through strategically placed mirror, YAWNS voluminously, blinks several times, pretends to fight off sleep, then lets his head roll back on his left shoulder, closes eyes, SNORES loudly, then let's his right eye open partially.

In other room, he sees girls help each other into gowns & shoes made specifically for dance. He slips his hand into his coat, brings out package from woman in hood, opens it, lets cloak of invisibility cascade over him.

When he's completely invisible, he gets up, goes to door just in time for princesses to march in lockstep toward the wall in their spellbound state.

Large, oval-shaped, magical portal opens in front of wall which shows three trees with the moon behind them. Charlotte steps through to other side of portal with her sisters right behind. Lazar hustles through after them just before portal closes.

EXT. TREASURE GROVE - NIGHT

Lazar stops to look at first tree, reaches up to snap off twig. Twig bends but doesn't break. He bends it back & forth until it breaks off in his hand. He examines it closely.

LAZAR

Gold.

He moves to the next tree, repeats the process.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Silver.

He does same at third tree. This time, twig breaks off.
CRACK!

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Jewels?

LOUISE (O.S.)

Charlotte, I heard something.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Come along, Louise. We mustn't be late.

Lazar pockets twigs, pulls cloak more tightly around himself, hurries after princesses.

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - CONTINUOUS

Princesses enter field by lake which is half grass near the trees, half sand by the lake. Black obelisk with crystal ball on top stands in middle of beach. Gathered here are twenty-four young people who all wear badges of royalty. Twelve men, twelve women, all look spellbound. None speak to each other.

In addition to Charlotte, Alexandrine, Louise, are -

NICHOLAS, GRAND PRIOR OF RUSSIA, (21) black hair, blue eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes,

PRINCE FREDERICK OF THE NETHERLANDS, (24) brown hair, hazel eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes,

FRENCH PRINCE, (23) light brown hair in Ponytail tied with blue ribbon, bright blue eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

BAVARIAN PRINCE, (19) chocolate brown hair, blue eyes, plumed cap, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

AUSTRIAN PRINCE, (20) caramel brown hair, brown eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

BELGIAN PRINCE, (21) black hair, brown eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

ARABIAN PRINCE, (19) black hair, black eyes, beige skin, white turban, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

PORTUGUESE PRINCE, (18) Black hair, Blue eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes,

MOROCCON PRINCE, (20) black hair, brown eyes, caramel skin, green period clothing, dancing shoes,

CHINESE PRINCE, (19) black hair in half-up, half-down bun tied with red ribbon, black eyes, Asian skin, well muscled, period Asian clothing, dancing shoes,

SWEDISH PRINCE, (23) reddish brown hair with sideburns, green eyes, period clothing, dancing shoes,

FRENCH PRINCESS, (19) brown hair, brown eyes, yellow gown, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

BAVARIAN PRINCESS, (16) ebony hair, brown eyes, very pale skin, period clothing, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

AUSTRIAN PRINCESS, (17) waist length beige blonde hair with tiara, violet-blue eyes, rose gown, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

BELGIAN PRINCESS, (19) honey blonde hair worn up, blue eyes, powder blue gown, blue earrings, choker, wedding ring,

ARABIAN PRINCESS, (16) knee length black hair tied back with blue ribbons and blue tiara with large sapphire, brown eyes, swarthy skin, azure gown, earrings, dancing shoes, wedding ring,

PORTUGUESE PRINCESS, (16) waist length strawberry red hair, blue eyes, pink gown, matching earrings, wedding ring,

SCOTTISH PRINCESS, (17) shaggy orangish red hair, blue eyes, pine green gown with gold trim, dancing shoes,

CHINESE PRINCESS, (17) long straight black hair hangs below shoulders, brown eyes, Asian skin color, multi colored silk gown, dancing shoes,

DANISH PRINCESS, (19) long honey- blonde hair hangs down her back in thick braid that reaches clear down to her ankles, green eyes, pink and violet gown, dancing shoes,

AMA JOOF GNILANE FAYE JOOF PRINCE OF SENEGAL, (18) wears jeweled turban on head, brown eyes, flat nose like most Africans, very dark skin, cape, robe, dancing shoes.

Lazar lurks at the tree line, waits for something to change. VOICE suddenly heard from behind him.

VOICE

AMA!... Mon frere....Where are you!...

Lazar turns around just in time for-

AIDA (13) curly black hair, shoulder length, same eyes and face as Ama Joof, very dark skin, beautifully colored dress, bare feet.

- to walk right into him.

AIDA

Quoi?

Lazar quickly engulfs her in cloak, wraps one arm around her midsection & arm, covers her mouth with his other hand, lifts her off her feet, whispers-

LAZAR

Be very very quiet, or we will both be very very caught.

Lazar turns them both around. They watch assembly.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

If I take my hand away, will you whisper?

AIDA

Mm-hm.

Lazar lowers his hand.

AIDA (CONT'D)

Merci, Monsieur. What is happening, here?

LAZAR

I don't know. We'll have to wait and watch to find out. My name is Lazar. I come from Prussia. My king has charged me to find out what is happening to his daughters. What is your name?

AIDA

J'mapelle Aida. My brother, Ama, prince of Senegal, wandered out into the night and I followed to make sure he was well. A friend pointed me to some sort of ... door in the air and I found myself here.

Aida points to Ama.

AIDA (CONT'D)

That's him over there. We should go talk to him.

They move toward him.

LAZAR

Senegal? Is that where you're from?

AIDA

Oui.

LAZAR

Is that in Africa?

AIDA

Oui.

Before they can, Nicolas of Russia steps up to obelisk, runs hand over it, causes fog to rise from lake, engulf assembly.

LAZAR

Quickly, we mustn't be left behind.

They scurry under cloak, leave two side-by-side sets of footprints behind them, to assembly just in time to be engulfed by fog which disappears all assembled, drifts across lake, deposits everyone on -

EXT. DANCING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

- which is large, flat, grassless, piece of ground pounded flat by dances. Another obelisk just like first one stands on beach. Princes & princesses face dais which is at head of ground, between it & large, arched doorway that is all that's left of what was likely a great structure, now ruined.

Two giant trees stand sentinel on either side of ruin.

Dozens of fireflies buzz about, illuminate entire scene.

On dais-

ROBED FIGURE, {age unknowable}, Gender, hair, eye, skin colors all hidden, Height 5-6 feet, robe, shoes, cloak, gloves, all gray.

- sits on a dais next to table with chalice, hourglass, & large Big Six Wheel on it. They TAP their staff on dais three times. All assembled besides Lazar & Aida form two straight lines, all men right, all women left.

Chalice rises up to robed figure's hand, they drink from it, hand it to the first man in line, who also drinks from it, then passes it over to the first woman in line, who does same, then passes it over to next man in line, etc. so that everyone drinks.

When last person in line has drunk from it, it floats back to table, robed figure TAPS staff three times again then raises it like conductors baton.

All fireflies change into little winged FAIRIES who form a circular pattern around dancing ground which is now bright as day.

Two horses formed of water, rise from lake, walk to dais, transform into-

NIX IN MAN'S FORM, (age undeterminable)

And-

NIX IN WOMAN'S FORM, (age undeterminable)

Then pick up violins.

WEISSE FRAUEN(age undeterminable) hair, skin, and dress all snow white-

-Steps from trees behind dais, seats herself by large harp, followed by-

SATYR (age undeterminable)

Who wears pan flute around his neck. All of them raise their instruments, then when hourglass turns over, the robed figure spins the wheel which lands on the word 'Waltz' which then falls off wheel. Figure barks-

ROBED FIGURE

DANCE!

As band play *WALTZ*, robed figure directs them like orchestra conductor.

All people pair off, dance to music played by fairies. Frequently, they switch partners. Even Lazar & Aida dance.

AIDA

Monsieur, I cannot stop.

LAZAR

Nor I. We'll just have to hide behind the cloak and pray they don't notice us.

ON HOURGLASS

Sand falls slowly

TIME CUT TO LATER

MONTAGE

-Seven times, last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom. Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel again so it selects new dance. Band then plays new dance to which all dancers dance while their shoes progressively come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they fly in. Band cycles through *BOLERO*, *REEL*, *SCHOTTISCHE*, *COTILLION*, *MAZURKA*, *GAVOTTE*, *POLKA*.

BACK TO SCENE

Every dancer's shoes are now danced to pieces, hang by strands from their feet. They all *BREATHE* heavily, help each other stand, even Lazar & Aida who huddle & tremble beneath invisible cloak.

Robed figure *TAPS* their staff three times on dais again. All assembled relax as if released from great weight. Ama Joof of Senegal goes to obelisk, runs hand over it, fog rises again. All find themselves back at-

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - DAWN

All trudge wearily in different directions away from there.
Lazar & Aida lower cloak, look at each other, exhausted

AIDA
My feet hurt, monsieur.

LAZAR
So do mine. I've walked a half
dozen nations in these boots. I
once marched three days straight in
them and they've never hurt my feet
more than they do now.

AIDA
We should leave this land and pray
never to see it again.

LAZAR
And what would happen to the
princes and princesses?

Aida *WHIMPERS*.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Even if I wanted to, I can't let
this be. I was told if I could...
solve this problem, I might be
reunited with my wife whom I've
searched for for ten years. I'd
dance a thousand nights to find
her. I must keep going.

Aida looks up at him, resolved.

AIDA
Then I will join you Monsieur

Lazar smiles-

LAZAR
Well, wear comfortable shoes when
you next return.

Aida *GIGGLES*-

AIDA
Oui Monsieur.

Now serious

AIDA (CONT'D)
What will we do now?

LAZAR

Everyone seems to be wandering in a specific direction. We must have to return the same way we got here.

Aida points-

AIDA

Look Monsieur. There is my brother.

LAZAR

Go to him. Ask him what he knows. The princesses of Prussia whom I followed here forget everything that happen to them when they're returned home. Odds are that's the way it is for all of them. With any luck, we'll be spared that. Whatever the case, see if you can follow your brother back tonight when they all will be brought back again.

AIDA

How will I find you monsieur?

LAZAR

I'll find you. Now hurry. We don't dare get left behind.

AIDA

Oui, oui.

Aida hurries over to her brother while Lazar spots the three princesses, raises cloak, moves in behind them.

LAZAR

Your highnesses.

They all turn in shock.

LOUISE

What?

ALEXANDRINE

Is that..?

CHARLOTTE

Herr Israelson?

LAZAR

Yes, it's me. Keep walking and looking forward. There's no telling who's watching.

CHARLOTTE
 (whispers)
 Herr Israelson, where are you?

LAZAR
 Right here beside you.

He exposes his face.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
 This invisible cloak was given to
 me to follow you. What can you tell
 me about what's going on here?

LOUISE
 Nothing that matters.

LAZAR
 What do you mean?

Charlotte points ahead at portal just like the one that
 brought them here that moves toward them.

CHARLOTTE
 In a few minutes, we will be sent
 back to our rooms and forget
 everything that happened to us
 here.

Lazar quickly pulls out knife, scratches 'write' onto back of
 his hand then jams his hand into pocket that has twigs from
 treasure trees just before portal engulfs them all.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBERS - MORNING

All three princesses appear next to their beds into which
 they collapse. Lazar appears next to his chair, collapses
 into that with invisible cloak beneath him, his hand still in
 pocket with twigs.

King Frederick, his Lords, his guards all burst into the
 chamber.

KING FREDERICK
 Lazar!

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
 Herr Isrealson!

MINISTER SCHULTZ
 Mein herr!

Lazar looks wearily up at them, *GROANS*. *King addresses guards.*

KING FREDERICK
See to the princesses.

Guards Salute, leave.

MINISTER SCHULTZ
Will you not stand for your king?

LAZAR
I...can't seem to make my legs work..

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
(sarcastic)
Oh certainly so

KING FREDERICK
(sharply)
Silence! Both of you!

Both ministers wilt.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
Lazar, are you all right?

LAZAR
(exhaustedly)
I think there's something in my pocket.

He pulls out gold twig. All *GASP*, stare in wonder, including Lazar.

KING FREDERICK
Gold!

Schultz snatches it away, examines it with magnifying glass.

MINISTER SCHULTZ
It's purest gold, better than any mined in Europe.

Across from Schultz, Haugwitz examines with his own glass

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
Shaped in a perfect image of a tree branch. Our finest artistes could not do this. If I didn't know better, I'd say it was grown.

LAZAR
There's more.

He pulls out silver twig. Haugwitz snatches this one away.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

Amazing! This silver is pure as the driven snow and just as brilliantly shaped as the other.

Schultz gives his opinion from other side

MINISTER SCHULTZ

What's more, there's not a maker's mark anywhere upon it. Whoever or whatever sculpted these is a complete mystery.

Lazar pulls out jeweled twig. Ministers race over without pause raise their glasses-

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

This is impossible!

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Completely unheard of.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

There are diamonds and rubies-

MINISTER SCHULTZ

-emerald and sapphires-

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

-opals and topazs-

MINISTER SCHULTZ

-garnets and other precious stones
I can't identify-

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

-all grown together like... like...

Frederick steps forward.

KING FREDERICK

-like something never seen before.

he seizes all three twigs with authority, backs off ministers with stern look.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

Lazar, where on earth did you get these?

Lazar's brow furrows as he thinks hard.

LAZAR

I ... honestly ... don't know...

KING FREDERICK & MINISTERS

Whaaaat!?

LAZAR

The last thing I remember before collapsing into this chair was getting up from it when I saw the princesses moving in their room last night.

KING FREDERICK

Show me what you saw and did.

Lazar struggles to rise. Frederick gestures for two guards, who have returned, to help him up. Lazar GROANS as he stands, then points toward door to princesses' bed chamber.

LAZAR

I kept watch in this chair when I saw the princesses dressed in their dancing gowns and shoes walk past the door. They didn't walk so much as march, in lockstep, like we did in the army.

He limps to door, looks left, points,

LAZAR (CONT'D)

They went toward that wall but I can't remember what I saw there. I just remember looking in that direction, then waking up in the chair.

Schultz points toward princesses, who lay in their beds uncovered, still in their dancing gowns & destroyed shoes, whispers,

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Look at the princesses' shoes.

LAZAR

If their feet hurt half as bad as mine, they've earned their rest.

He grimaces, leans against wall, turns to guards,

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Could you men help me get these boots off? I swear, I've walked a half dozen nations in these boots. I once marched three days straight in them And they've never hurt my feet more than they do now.

Beat

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Strange, I...feel as though I've said that before but I can't remember when.

KING FREDERICK

It's all right, Lazar. You've already learned more than anyone else before now, including me.

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Yes, clearly His Majesty has chosen the right man for this task.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

And if you continue to bring treasures such as you have, mein herr, you will guarantee more than the future of the royal family.

All look at him like he just ate his foot. He blushes. Meanwhile, two guards, help the now seated Lazar out of his boots, when he notices the back of his hand.

LAZAR

Your Majesty, I seem to have left myself a clue.

Frederick walks over. Lazar shows him back of his hand.

KING FREDERICK

Write? Of course, if you write down everything you see tonight, it won't matter if you forget it in the morning. We'll have a blank volume and set of pencils ready for you, tonight.

LAZAR

Pencils?

KING FREDERICK

We'll explain later. Right now, let's get you to bed.

(MORE)

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)
 You, too, have more than earned
 your rest old friend.

King helps Lazar, now bootless, to his feet, pulls Lazar's arm across his shoulder, and walks him toward the servant's room.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - A BIT BEFORE BEDTIME

Lazar writes in a book with pencil he stops frequently to examine. Alexandrine walks up.

ALEXANDRINE
 And so what do you think of the
 pencil, Herr Isrealson?

LAZAR
 Useful enough. Hard to believe the
 armies of Napoleon are responsible
 for them.

ALEXANDRINE
 True. It's hard to imagine anything
 good coming from Herr Bonaparte.

Clock outside room rings *TEN BELLS*. *Princesses all sit-up straight, stare into space. Lazar notices.*

CHARLOTTE
 We should get ready for bed.

Other princesses put down what's in their hands, get mechanically to their feet. Lazar rises out of polity. Princesses leave room, come back in. Charlotte carries tray with four glasses filled with wine.

CHARLOTTE (CONT'D)
 (monotone)
 Please join us in our bedtime wine
 mein herr.

LAZAR
 Of course,

He steps forward, takes glass. all three princesses again take glass simultaneously like coordinated dance. Lazar raises glass to his lips, notices princesses do also but drink where he doesn't. He takes glass from his lips, points toward corner

LAZAR (CONT'D)
 Your highnesses, what's that over
 there in the corner?

Princesses recover from their spellbound state, all look, see nothing. Lazar deftly tosses wine out window.

LOUISE
I see nothing mein herr.

CHARLOTTE
Nor I.

Lazar steps forward with empty glass

LAZAR
It must have been a shadow. I apologize.

ALEXANDRINE
Anyone can make a mistake.

Princesses all drain their glasses, regain their spellbound state.

ALL THREE
Good night mein herr.

LAZAR
Good night your highnesses.

Princesses walk out of room in lockstep. Lazar sits back down in chair, sees princesses watch him from other room through strategically placed mirror again.

He again YAWNS voluminously, blinks several times, pretends to fight off sleep, then lets his head roll back on his left shoulder, closes eyes, SNORES loudly, *then let's his right eye open partially.*

In other room, girls help each other into gowns & shoes again. He again lets cloak of invisibility cascade over him. When he's completely invisible, he gets up, goes to door just in time for princesses to march in lockstep toward the wall in their spellbound state.

Large, oval-shaped, magical portal opens in front of wall which shows three trees with the moon behind them. Charlotte steps through to other side of portal with her sisters right behind. Lazar hustles through after them just before portal closes.

EXT. TREASURE GROVE - NIGHT

Lazar examines trees, then writes in book.

LAZAR (V.O.)

Once I passed through the magic portal again, my memory returned. The three twigs in my pocket this morning actually came from three trees that are somehow made of gold, silver, and jewels, though how I can't guess.

He again breaks off a sample of each tree. Jeweled tree again makes CRACK sound.

LOUISE (O.S.)

Charlotte, I heard something again.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Don't dawdle Louise. Come along.

Lazar continues to write.

LAZAR (V.O.)

I must move quickly after the princesses and find my African friend.

He closes book, pulls cloak tightly about himself, hurries after others.

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - NIGHT

Everyone from before is gathered here again. Lazar finds Aida, with shoes on this time, hidden behind bush. He exposes his face to her. Whispers-

LAZAR

Mademoiselle.

AIDA

Monsieur, you found me.

LAZAR

Did you forget everything that happened last night when you went home?

AIDA

Oui monsieur, but then a friend helped me remember and we've both come to help free everyone.

LAZAR

Good. We need all the help we can get with this mumbo jumbo.

Aida quietly *GIGGLES*—

AIDA
Mumbo Jumbo.

LAZAR
Where is your friend?

UMBO THE YUMBOE, (age indeterminate), male, silver hair, brown eyes, pearly white skin, African shaped face & head, two feet tall, traditional Senegalese clothing all in shades of gray, invisible cloak just like Lazar's—

opens his cloak, becomes visible to both.

UMBO
Bonsoir Monsieur Le Brave.
J'mappelle Umbo. I am a yumboe, and
I use my mumbo jumbo to make my
magic gumbo.

Lazar lets his own cloak drop from shock. Umbo produces small pot with lid & ladle.

LAZAR
You have an invisible cloak too?

UMBO
We yumboes make them monsieur.
Whoever gave you yours must have
done a great favor for the yumboes
once.

Lazar looks at his cloak with new wonder.

LAZAR
Oy gevalt.

AIDA
You must have some of the gumbo,
monsieur. It's not only very good,
it will protect you from the magic.

LAZAR
It will? Excellent!

Lazar takes offered ladle, drains it.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Mm. That is very good. Quickly,
let's get some to everyone.

Before they can, Belgian prince runs his hand over obelisk,
fog rises from lake, engulfs assembly.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Drat! Quickly, into the fog!

Umbo vanishes behind his cloak. Lazar wraps his cloak around himself & Aida. They scurry under cloak, leave two side-by-side sets of footprints behind them, to assembly just in time to be engulfed by fog which disappears all assembled, drifts across lake, deposits everyone on -

EXT. DANCING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

Princes & princesses face dais at head of ground again.

Scene illuminated again by dozens of fireflies.

Two sets of footprints leave assembly, end at bushes beside Dancing Ground. Lazar lets cloak fall away, he & Aida hide in bushes, watch assembly. Whisper-

LAZAR

Did we lose your friend,
Mademoiselle?

Umbo lets his own cloak drop. Whispers-

UMBO

Not yet, Monsieur.

LAZAR

Good. Can you get some of your...
gumbo to everyone here?

UMBO

Sadly, no monsieur. Maybe one or
two.

On dais, robed figure again sits next to table with chalice. hourglass, & wheel, TAP their staff on dais three times so all assembled besides Lazar & co. form two straight lines again.

AIDA

Look, monsieur. They're beginning.

Chalice rises up to robed figure's hand, they drink from it, hand it to the first man in line, who also drinks from it, then passes it over to the first woman in line, who does same, etc. etc.

LAZAR

Drat. No way to choose now. We'll
just have to write down what all we
see for now.

Lazar sits down, opens his book, writes.

AIDA

What are you doing Monsieur?

LAZAR

Writing down everything I see. If I write it down and take the book back to the king, then it doesn't matter if I forget it.

UMBO

Hmm, brilliant Monsieur.

When last person in line has drunk from chalice, it floats back to table, robed figure *TAPS* staff three times again then raises it like conductors baton.

All fireflies change into glowing little winged Fairies who form a circular pattern around dancing ground which is now bright as day.

Lazar writes all this down while his companions watch, wonderstruck

Band reassembles, all raise their instruments, then when hourglass turns over, Robed figure spins the wheel which lands on the word 'Polka' which then falls off wheel, then they bark-

ROBED FIGURE

DANCE!

Band plays *POLKA* as robed figure directs them like orchestra conductor.

All royalty pair off, dance to music played by fairies which is currently a waltz. Frequently, they switch partners. While Lazar & co. watch.

AIDA

I am pleased not to be out there again.

LAZAR

As am I. My dear, can you read what I am writing?

She looks over his shoulder.

AIDA

But of course.

LAZAR

Then you can surely write it, too.
Would you please write a note to my
king telling him who you are and
how you came to be here?

AIDA

Sacrebleu. What an honor.

LAZAR

Yes, well, you may make yourself
known as well Monsieur Umbo.

Umbo smiles. Lazar pulls up his cloak, vanishes-

LAZAR (CONT'D)

I'm going out among the dancers to
see if they'll answer any questions
I ask.

Umbo closes his cloak, vanishes.

UMBO

I will join you, only I will ask
the musicians and fairies.

AIDA

And whenever you learn something,
come back and tell me and I will
write it in the book.

LAZAR

Excellent. We seem to have a plan,
friends. Let's see if it works.

Lazar vanishes again then one pair of footprints leads away
from bushes as Aida sits down to write in book.

AIDA (V.O.)

Bon-

She stops to think then crosses that out.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)

To the Great King of Prussia,
Greetings.
My name is Aida of The Royal House
of Semou Njekeh Joof, whom you
would know as the rulers of Sine in
the land of Senegal in Africa. I am
currently in the strange land to
which your daughters have been
brought.

Light footprints which represent Lazar fall upon spaces between dancers as they move about ground. He sneaks up beside Charlotte, whispers in her ear, her lips move in response.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Like your daughters, my brother,
 Ama Joof Gnilane Faye Joof who is
 our father's heir, has been
 enchanted and brought to this land.
 Like your friend,

Aida stops to think.

AIDA
 I can't remember his name.

She shakes her head, leaves space on page to write it in later, proceeds

AIDA (V.O.)
 I followed my brother through the
 magical portal that brings him here
 where your friend found me.
 Together, we are trying to learn
 all we can about what is happening
 here.

ON HOURGLASS

Sand falls slowly

MONTAGE

-Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom. Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins the wheel which lands on the word 'Bolero' which then falls off wheel Band plays *BOLERO* to which all dancers dance while their shoes progressively come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they fly in.

Lazar's footprints come up beside Aida.

LAZAR
 Mademoiselle, the Princess
 Charlotte is currently dancing with
 the Prince from Portugal.

Aida writes this down.

AIDA
Monsieur, forgive me but what is
your name again.

He *CHUCKLES*-

LAZAR
It's all right. I couldn't remember
your name either. It's Lazar
Isrealson. Do you need me to spell
it.

She smiles.

AIDA
No Monsieur. Thank you and my name
is Aida.

She goes back, writes his name where it belonged.

LAZAR
Aida. I'll remember it this time.

He heads back out among dancers as she returns to her
narrative.

AIDA (V.O.)
As I write this, M. Isrealson and
my friend, Umbo move among the
captives asking questions of them.
They both have magic cloaks which
make them invisible. We may hope it
is enough to keep us secret.
The princes and princesses are
under some kind of magic spell
which forces them to come here and
dance all night. It exhausts them
and destroys their shoes. Last
night, M. Isrealson and I were
forced to dance by the spell
alongside them. M. Isrealson's
invisible cloak thankfully kept us
from being discovered.

- Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom.
Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel which lands on
the word 'Jig' which then falls off wheel Band plays *JIG* to
which all dancers dance while their shoes progressively come
apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they fly in.

Lazar exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...M. Isrealson tells me that one
 of the princes is Nicholas, Grand
 Prior of Russia. The dancers are
 forced to dance seven different
 dances every night. One every hour...

Umbo exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...My friend Umbo tells me that the
 creatures behind this are called
 fairies and that you should already
 know what those are....

-Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom.
 Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel which lands on
 the word 'Galopade' which then falls off wheel. Band plays
GALOPADE to which all dancers dance while their shoes
 progressively come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they
 fly in.

Lazar exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...M. Isrealson says that almost
 every nation in Europe is
 represented here. Some are married
 couples.

Umbo exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...My friend Umbo says that the
 fairies have been doing this for
 generations. So much so that some
 people believe that the disease
 called consumption or tuberculosis
 is the result of fairies forcing
 the sufferer to dance all night...

-Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom.
 Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel which lands on
 the word 'Mazurka' which then falls off wheel. Band plays
MAZURKA to which all dancers dance while their shoes
 progressively come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they
 fly in.

Aida stares at her pencil which is worn down to flat tip.
 Lazar appears at her side, gestures for her to give him
 pencil. He then carves tip to free lead with his knife, then
 gives her his knife for when it happens again.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...The pencils you gave to M.
 Isrealson are most wondrous. I hope
 to tell my family about them some
 time.

Umbo exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...My friend Umbo says that the band
 is made up of a pair of Nixes, an
 all white woman called the Weisse
 Frauen, and a Satyr. They told him
 they have played in this ceremony
 every night for centuries. The one
 who leads them is called the
 Erlking...

-Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom.
 Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel which lands on
 the word 'Trot' which then falls off wheel. Band plays *TROT*
 to which all dancers dance while their shoes progressively
 come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they fly in

Lazar exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ... M. Isrealson tells me that half
 of the princes and princesses are
 married couples, including those
 from Portugal, France, Bavaria,
 Austria, Belgium, and Arabia...

Umbo exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...My friend Umbo says that we all
 have been brought to the actual
 fairy kingdom and that we must be
 careful not to eat or drink
 anything from here or we will be
 trapped by its magic. Since all of
 the dancers are made to drink
 something the Erlking gives them
 every night, they are all trapped
 until we can find a way to free
 them..

-Last of sand empties from top of hourglass into bottom.
 Hourglass inverts. Robed Figure spins wheel which lands on
 the word 'Irish Lilt' which then falls off wheel. Band plays
IRISH LILT to which all dancers dance while their shoes
 progressively come apart. Glowing fairies change pattern they
 fly in.

Lazar exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear.

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...M. Isrealson says that Prince
 Frederick of the Netherlands is
 also among the captives.

Umbo exposes his face, whispers in Aida's ear. She GIGGLES,
 writes-

AIDA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 My friend Umbo wants to write you a
 message of his own.

She hands Umbo the pencil. He writes-

UMBO (V.O.)
 (French, subtitled
 English)
*Hello king of Prussia. My name is
 Umbo. I am a yumboe from Senegal. I
 like to invite both foreigners and
 locals to my great feasts and I
 hope you and your family will honor
 me by joining me for one. The King
 of Sine, whose daughter has written
 most of this text, has certainly
 enjoyed them. I am certain you will
 as well. I look forward to hearing
 your response to this invitation.
 Yours truly,
 Umbo d'Yumboe*

BACK TO SCENE

MUSIC finally ends. Every dancer's shoes are again danced to
 pieces, hang by strands from their feet. They all BREATHE
 heavily, help each other stand. Lazar, Umbo, Aida all peer
 through bushes to see what happens next.

Erlking TAPS his staff three times on dais again. All
 assembled relax as if released from great weight. Robed
 Figure lowers their hood to reveal they are-

ERLKING (age unknown) red glowing eyes, white, mask-like face
 atop humanoid mass of shadow, darkness drips from him like
 tar, pointed ears

- Lazar & co. stare in shock from bushes.

ERLKING

At last, the time is almost here.
 All of you need only do this one
 more time before you're ready.
 Tonight, when you return, you will
 all receive your final instructions
 for your journeys.

Lazar gestures for Aida to give him book. She does. He writes
 in it.

ERLKING (CONT'D)

When you first came here, you were
 spoiled...willful...self centered...even
 self absorbed...or else
 rambunctious...rash...reckless. Now you
 are... staid...dignified...obedient...if
 your families had known how well
 this would improve you, they might
 well have asked me to do what I
 have done. As it is, they can only
 benefit as we move forward.

Erlking produces bottle, uses it to fill chalice again, then
 lets some of his darkness drip into it on top of drink.

ERLKING (CONT'D)

Come forward and receive this
 nearly final communion.

Dancers all form line, first Prince receives chalice from
 Erlking, drinks from it, returns it to Erlking, bows, walks
 away which allows princess behind him to do same, only she
 curtsies, so on down line.

Weisse Frauen steps away from her harp, approaches Erlking.
 Umbo sees this, vanishes behind his cloak, sneaks up behind
 them.

WEISSE FRAUEN

One last time, Erlking. Is this
 truly necessary?

Erlking allows another Prince to drink from chalice.

ERLKING

You were there when the armies of
 Napoleon trampled our people
 beneath them without even realizing
 it. The only way to spare ourselves
 similar fates is to control the
 European crowns from now on. I
 thought I made that clear at our
 King's court

Erlking allows another Prince to drink from chalice.

WEISSE FRAUEN

And you're certain you can maintain
control of all these people?

ERLKING

I have been luring children to
their fates for centuries. You
needn't worry. It's the reason I'm
the best person to do this. Now let
me finish or they won't all be
ready for the morning. I've no
doubt I will be doing this under
the King's orders for centuries to
come.

WEISSE FRAUEN

You haven't the King's favor, yet.

ERLKING

I will never have the king's favor,
but I will always be necessary. As
he has learned, as you will learn.

Weisse Frauen *SIGHS* as Erlking let's last princess drink.
Behind them, Umbo sneaks back to bushes, grabs pencil from
Lazar, writes what he heard in book, to which Lazar nods.

Sun peaks above horizon as French Princess runs her hand over
obelisk, fog rises again, All find themselves back at-

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - DAWN

All dancers trudge wearily in different directions away from
there. Some limp on bloodstained feet. Lazar & co. lower
their cloaks. Lazar open book, flips through pages.

LAZAR

We've had a very successful morning
my friends. Let's meet here again
tonight and finalize our plan.

He turns to Umbo.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Monsieur Umbo, we will need as much
of your gumbo as we can get. Enough
for everyone here.

UMBO

Consider it done, monsieur. There
shall be feast.

LAZAR

Which will hopefully free everyone.
Mademoiselle, will you have the
strength to do this one more time?

AIDA

But of course, Monsieur.

LAZAR

Perfect.

Lazar *RIPS* blank page from back of book, hands it, with
pencil to Aida.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Here. Follow your brother and ask
him questions. See what else you
can learn.

AIDA

Mais oui monsieur.

Lazar shakes both their hands.

LAZAR

Very well then my friends. Tomorrow
we will meet here again and free
the princes and princesses of
Europe from a fairy curse.

AIDA & UMBO

Oui. Oui.

They all go their separate ways. Lazar raises cloak, moves in
behind three Prussian princesses again

LAZAR

Your highnesses.

They all turn in shock.

CHARLOTTE

Herr Isrealson?

He exposes his face.

LAZAR

Right here. And this time we've
written down what happened so it
won't matter if we forget.

LOUISE

Let's hope it works mein herr,
because here comes the magic gate.

Lazar pulls off his cloak, clutches book to his chest, & puts his hand in the pocket with the twigs, as portal engulfs them all.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - MORNING

All three princesses appear next to their beds into which they collapse. Lazar appears next to his chair, quickly removes, stashes his invisible cloak, opens book, reads, is astounded.

King Frederick, his Lords, his guards all burst into the chamber again.

KING FREDERICK

Lazar!

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

Herr Isrealson!

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Mein herr!

Lazar looks up.

LAZAR

Again, I remember nothing my Lords.

He pulls twigs from his pocket.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

But I have clearly been to the magical land again and the book tells all.

They all gather round, look over his shoulder.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

Apparently, those three twigs actually came from three trees. One made of gold, one of silver, and one of jewels.

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Amazing!

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

Incredible. Someday I absolutely must see them!

KING FREDERICK

Yes. Yes. Very interesting, but what about my daughters?

LAZAR
Let us keep reading.

MONTAGE

- They're several pages into book.

KING FREDERICK
This Aida of The Royal House of
Semou Njekeh Joof seems like a fine
young lady. I hope I get to meet
her in person to thank her for her
aid in this.

- They're several more pages into book.

MINISTER SCHULTZ
Made to dance seven dances for
several hours. Small wonder the
princesses are exhausted.

- They're several more pages into book.

KING FREDERICK
(chuckles)
This Umbo d'Yumboe is a most
amusing fellow. Would that I could
take him up on his invitation.

END OF MONTAGE

They're at end of book.

MINISTER SCHULTZ
This Erlking seems a very dangerous
enemy, my king.

KING FREDERICK
I have heard of the Erlking. A
shadowy figure that lurks in the
forest and lures children to their
doom. I thought it just an old
wives tale.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
If only we could join Herr
Israelson when he goes tonight.

KING FREDERICK
We tried that, remember? No, the
only person that's had any luck in
this endeavor is my friend.

King turns to Lazar.

KING FREDERICK (CONT'D)

It appears I must trust you with
the rescue of my daughters, my old
friend.

LAZAR

I intend to do more than that, my
liege. There are twenty-four
princes and princesses being
spellbound in this way and that
means maybe twenty-one other
families made to worry about their
welfare. I swear to you my king, I
won't rest until every single one
is freed from this evil.

He sees King is worried,

LAZAR (CONT'D)

But I'll start with your daughters
if I must do them one at a time.

King smiles.

KING FREDERICK

Thank you my friend. Rest now.
You'll need your strength for what
comes.

LAZAR

Thank you, my liege.

Others leave as Lazar beds down for the day.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - MORNING

Ministers go in opposite direction from King & guards.
Haugwitz grabs Schultz' sleeve-

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

Mein herr, we must be there tonight
when the princesses are taken
again!

MINISTER SCHULTZ

Are you mad, mein herr? We would
simply wake up in our own beds as
we did before.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
 Herr Israelson is avoiding it
 somehow. Perhaps if we hide
 ourselves, we will be able to
 follow them to this magical place.

MINISTER SCHULTZ
 And how will we explain it to the
 king if we somehow prevent the
 rescue of his daughters? No, that
 must be our first concern. Anything
 else can wait.

He spins, leaves.

Haugwitz looks around for place to hide.

INT. THE PRINCESSES' CHAMBER - A BIT AFTER BEDTIME

Haugwitz hides behind curtain by balcony,

CLOSE UP: CHARLOTTE AND LAZAR'S HANDS

Charlotte hands Lazar glass of wine with Haugwitz in
 background

CHARLOTTE
 (monotone)
 Please join us in our bedtime wine
 mein herr.

LAZAR (O.S.)
 Thank you.

His hand takes glass. All three princesses' hands take
 glasses simultaneously again like coordinated dance.
 Charlotte lowers tray.

CLOSE ON HAUGWITZ FACE

LAZAR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Your highnesses, what's that over
 there in the corner?

ALL THREE PRINCESSES
 Where?!

Haugwitz catches facefull of wine.

LOUISE (O.S.)
 I see nothing mein herr.

CHARLOTTE (O.S.)

Nor I.

Haugwitz wipes off his face.

LAZAR (O.S.)

It must have been a shadow. I apologize.

ALEXANDRINE (O.S.)

Quite all right Mein Herr.

Haugwitz looks back in room, sees Princesses all drain their glasses, regain their spellbound state.

ALL THREE

Good night mein herr.

LAZAR

Good night your highnesses.

Princesses walk out of room in lockstep. Lazar sits down in chair, sees princesses watch him from other room through strategically placed mirror again.

He again YAWNS voluminously, blinks several times, pretends to fight off sleep, then lets his head roll back on his left shoulder, closes eyes, *SNORES* loudly, *then let's his right eye open partially.*

Haugwitz scowls at Lazar's behavior

In other room, girls help each other into gowns & shoes again. He again lets cloak of invisibility cascade over him.

Haugwitz is amazed at this.

When Lazar's completely invisible, he gets up, goes to door, leaves footprints in carpet Haugwitz can follow just in time for princesses to march in lockstep toward the wall in their spellbound state.

Haugwitz sees portal opens in other room, princesses march through it, Lazar's footprints follow through after them. He then hustles through himself just before portal closes.

EXT. TREASURE GROVE - NIGHT

Lazar lowers invisible cloak, stuffs it in his overcoat, moves past the trees.

Haugwitz staggers into grove, stares at treasure trees.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ

It's true. It's actually true!

He breaks off branch from gold tree, examines it with magnifying glass.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ (CONT'D)

The purest gold I've ever seen
grown from the earth as a tree. I
see it and still don't believe it.

He breaks off piece of silver tree, examines it.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ (CONT'D)

The silver is no less exquisite.

He does the same with jewel tree Which makes *CRACK* sound when he breaks off piece

MINISTER HAUGWITZ (CONT'D)

This is the most wondrous of all.

He examines it with his glass.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ (CONT'D)

There must be a way to take
possession of these trees.

He breaks more pieces off the trees, stuffs them in his pocket. Behind him, shadows coalesce into a snake's head with red eyes, sharp white teeth, horse's mane. It *HISSES*.

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - NIGHT

Princes & princesses are all gathered. In nearby bushes, Lazar, Aida, Umbo all watch. Umbo has pot as big as he is with lid on it

AIDA

-my brother also told me that every
prince and princess out there is
able to talk to each other as they
dance so everyone knows everyone.
No one seems to know how they were
all bound by this spell, though.

LAZAR

Your brother is very shrewd to have
already gathered so much knowledge

He smiles at Aida.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
It clearly runs in the family.

She smiles back. Umbo opens his pot.

UMBO
Mes braves, you must both have some
gumbo if you are to be free from
the magic we will face tonight.

LAZAR
Of course.

Umbo serves them both one ladle of gumbo.

AIDA
Now, we must get some to everyone.

LAZAR
Not just yet. Come to me my
friends. I have a plan.

They huddle up.

Nicholas of Russia approaches obelisk, runs his hand over it,
fog rises from lake,

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Everyone clear on the plan.

AIDA & UMBO
Oui.

LAZAR
Quickly, into the fog.

Umbo vanishes behind his cloak. Lazar wraps his cloak around
himself & Aida. They scurry under cloak, leave two side-by-
side sets of footprints behind them, to assembly just in time
to be engulfed by fog which disappears all assembled, drifts
across lake, deposits everyone on -

EXT. DANCING GROUND - CONTINUOUS

Princes & princesses face dais at head of ground again.

Scene illuminated again by dozens of fireflies.

Two sets of footprints leave assembly, end at bushes beside
Dancing Ground. Lazar let's cloak fall away, he & Aida hide
in bushes, watch assembly. Whisper-

LAZAR

All right, Monsieur Umbo, you're up.

UMBO

Oui, Monsieur.

Umbo vanishes into his cloak, sneaks forward toward dais.
FOLLOW UMBO.

On dais, Erlking in robe sits next to table with chalice, wheel, & hourglass, TAPS his staff on dais three times so all assembled besides Lazar & co. form two straight lines again.

Umbo arrives on dais behind table just in time to empty much of his gumbo into chalice.

Chalice rises up to Erlking's hand, he drinks from it, hands it to first man in line, who also drinks from it, then passes it over to the first woman in line, who does same, etc. etc.

When everyone in line has drunk from chalice, it floats back to table, Erlking TAPS staff three times again then raises it like conductors baton, looks at all assembled fairies-

ERLKING

Listen all you gathered, for I wish to dispel any doubts. Ever since man discovered iron centuries ago, we fairies have had to live in the shadows of his society. His industries have plundered our forests, mountains, and rivers while his armies have trampled our homes underfoot. We have, occasionally, over the centuries, entered into pacts with the royal houses of the continent which kept us safe for some time, but the recent events in France negated all of them, Men, and particularly kings, can no longer be relied upon to keep their thrones, much less their word. The time has come for we fairies to take control of the continent. Our first step in doing so, takes place tonight.

He looks down at assembled royalty. His eyes glow brightly.
All royals are spellbound.

ERLKING (CONT'D)

Now, your highnesses, pay special attention for these will be the most important instructions you will ever receive. You must remain discreet as the current leadership is eliminated. Take no action to prevent or advance the agenda. You all must seem completely innocent when you ascend your nations' thrones. Occupy yourselves finding and preventing revolutionaries who would topple the monarchies before we can find a way to get laws in place that will protect the fairie people.

Chalice rises, turns sideways like baseball bat

ERLKING (CONT'D)

Furthermore, it is important that-

BONG!

Chalice swings like baseball bat, hits Erlking right in back of head. He goes down like fallen tree. Assembled royalty all blink, relax their bodies, shrug off spell. Lazar lowers his cloak, reveals himself, holds chalice.

On other side of assembly, Aida stands beside obelisk

AIDA

Your highnesses! Mon frere! Over here! Come to the obelisk!

Beat as all stare

LAZAR

Your highnesses! Are you all free of the spell?

LOUISE

Herr Isrealson?

LAZAR

Yes. It's me your highness.

Erlking is suddenly on his feet beside Lazar, eyes ablaze.

ERLKING

How dare you! Who are you?! I-

BONG!

Erlking goes down again. Umbo stands over him with his soup kettle in hand. Other gathered fairies cover their ears at sound.

UMBO

Iron, monsieur. Fairies are vulnerable to iron.

LAZAR

I'll remember that, mon ami, now let's escape!

They rush to Obelisk just in time for Aida to rub it, summon fog.

EXT. GATHERING PLACE - NIGHT

Fog deposits everyone. All look around.

AIDA

Monsieur, where do we go now?

LAZAR

I'm..not sure. I had hoped the portals would reopen after we struck down the Erlking.

UMBO

No the spell doesn't work that way. The portals will only reopen at sunrise.

AIDA

Perhaps we should have waited til then.

UMBO

No. Then the spell on their highnesses would have been complete and we would never have been able to free them.

LAZAR

11Well, we'd better pick a direction to go in quickly because I'd bet that Erlking will be coming after us very soon.

Weisse Frauen from band rises out of water.

WEISSE FRAUEN

You must head east, away from the water. You will find help there.

(MORE)

WEISSE FRAUEN (CONT'D)
 Look for the one called the Leshy.
 I can tell you no more, except that
 not all of us agreed with the
 Erlking's scheme.

She points to group of glowing little winged Fairies who
 float down next to fugitives.

WEISSE FRAUEN (CONT'D)
 These little ones will help light
 your way.

LAZAR
 Thank you.

He turns to others.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
 You heard the lady. Let's head
 east.

HOWL is heard

WEISSE FRAUEN
 You must make haste! The Erlking is
 summoning his allies!

Umbo BANGS his pot with his ladle behind crowd

UMBO
 This way mes amis. I know the way
 through the woods.

All hastily follow Umbo. Lazar brings up rear. FOLLOW CROWD

MUTTERS are heard among crowd (actors free to ad lib) then
 Nicholas, Grand Prior of Russia, drops back to speaks with
 Lazar.

NICHOLAS
 Mein Herr.

LAZAR
 Your Highness.

NICHOLAS
 I know of this Leshy of which the
 lady spoke. He is said to guard the
 forest of my homeland Russia and is
 believed to be the lord of all
 beasts.

LAZAR
 What should we be looking for?

NICHOLAS

He is said to be able to change shape but his most common form is that of a tree shaped like a man with two trunks that serve as legs, roots instead of toes, leaves where a man would have hair, a beard, and clothes. His voice is said to thunder like the spring storms.

LAZAR

If you know so much, maybe you should take the lead.

He offers his sword, hilt first. Nicholas pushes it away.

NICHOLAS

Nyet, mein herr.

He looks to others, they all look back as if they expect instructions

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

We discussed it and we think you're the best man to get us out of here. You've already done more than anyone else.

LAZAR

Do you all feel this way?

No objections.

LAZAR (CONT'D)

All right then. Here's the plan. We'll march through the forest in two columns, side-by-side. Aida, Umbo, you take the lead. Try to keep us on the best path the little fairies show you. Grand Prior Nicholas, since you have the best idea of who we're looking for, You and Princess Alexandra follow them and keep an eye out for him. Raise your hands if you think you spot him. The rest of you, pair off and follow in double file. Don't lose track of the couple in front of you. I'll bring up the rear. If the Erlking and his followers catch up, they'll at least have this to deal with.

He draws his sword.

LOUISE
Would that we had a few more.

LAZAR
Would that we did.

He points to glowing little winged Fairies above them

LAZAR (CONT'D)
You little ones, don't fly above
us.

He points to his waist.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
Fly down here next to our belts so
you won't be so easily seen from
far away but can still provide us
light.

Fairies all straighten, salute, take places in column.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
All right, let's move out.

Everyone falls into their places, marches out. FOLLOW COLUMN.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE TALL TREES - NIGHT

Column marches through tall trees over mossy ground when
Nicholas raises his hands, halts them. Lazar comes to front.

LAZAR
Can you see him?

Nicholas points ahead

NICHOLAS
There.

Ahead of them may be seen strange tree with two trunks.

LAZAR
It certainly looks like him. I
suppose we have no choice but to
call out to him.

NICHOLAS
Let me. My mother said my family is
said to be known to him.
(calls out)
(MORE)

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)
 Leshy! Lord of the forest! I am
 Nicholas, Grand Prior of Russia!
 Son of Paul the first.! I am told
 my family is known to you!

Top of two trunked tree twists like head on neck

LESHY
 (deep but not too loud)
 Your family is known to me.

Leshy turns around, walks over, looms over column.

LESHY (CONT'D)
 You look like your father, but my
 debt to him was paid long ago. I
 don't trust humans. Their word is
 rarely good. If you would truck
 with me, then present an offering.
 Bread, milk, or salt will do
 Otherwise-

He raises his arm-like limbs and clenches the ends into
 fists.

UMBO
 I still have some gumbo.

LESHY
 What?

Umbo floats up to the Leshy's face with his pot, offers ladle
 full of gumbo.

UMBO
 Gumbo. Best thing I know how to
 make.

LESHY
 You are a yumbo...from Africa...

Umbo bows.

UMBO
 Umbo D'Yumbo. At your service
 Monsieur.

AIDA
 You should try the gumbo. It really
 is good.

UMBO
 You could always be mad if you
 don't like it.

Leshy shrugs, lets Umbo ladle some gumbo into his mouth.

LESHY

Mmm...MMM...That is very good.
You've earned more than help,
you've earned my friendship. Who
are you and what can I do to help?

NICHOLAS

We were all captives of the Erlking
who forced us to dance for nights
until our friend Herr Isrealson and
his friends saved us.

LESHY

The Erlking? I am no friend of his.
If you had told me you were running
from him to begin with. I would
have helped you on principle.

LAZAR

Yes, well can you point us to the
way out of this realm?

LESHY

No one here knows the entire way
out of this realm, but everyone has
at least one idea of where to look.

Leshy points to place where foots of two hills meet, Moon
shines through gap.

LESHY (CONT'D)

Go to the place where the hills
meet. There's a swamp there where
the Moss People live. They also
will help you against the Erlking
on principle and will direct you to
the next stage of the way out of
the realm. I will stay here and
hold the Erlking and his followers
off for as long as I can. It has
been too long since I battled them
anyway.

AIDA

Don't get killed Monsieur Leshy.

Leshy smiles down.

LESHY

I have lived centuries, child. I
can battle the Erlking and his lot.
Everything always grows back.

(MORE)

LESHY (CONT'D)
Now make haste. The Erlking isn't
that far behind you.

Column moves hastily on while Leshy stretches himself in
preparation for combat.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE SWAMP - NIGHT

Column trudges over the watery moss covered ground under low-
hanging cypress trees also covered in moss

AIDA
Try to stay close to the trees. The
ground's not as soft.

VOICE
Please don't.

Everyone looks around.

AIDA
Who said that?

VOICE
Over here.

Aida looks over to see-

MOSS GIRL (age undeterminable) yellow eyes, long grey hair,
clad in moss.-

-steps out of tree trunk.

AIDA
Oh, hello. Who are you.

MOSS GIRL
Um...call me Vilda.

AIDA
Well, hello Vilda. My name is Aida.

Aida offers her hand which Vilda shakes.

AIDA (CONT'D)
Why don't you want us near your
trees?

VILDA
Because they're my cousins.

Moss that column was about to step on raises up, reveals two more MOSS PEOPLE.

AIDA

Oh. Hello.

VILDA

In fact everyone here is a relative of mine.

Every piece of moss around column comes to life as MOSS PEOPLE come out.

ALEXANDRINE

These must be the moss people Herr Leshy told us about.

VILDA

You come from the Leshy?

EXT. THE TALL TREES - NIGHT

Two *FÄNGGEN* (age not applicable) - giantesses, tall as average tree. bodies hairy, bristly. head hair is filled with tree bast fibers, long gray lichens, tree moss, mouths reach from ear to ear, aprons made from wildcat pelts, jackets from tree bark-

-step from behind trees followed by

LINDWORM (age not applicable) giant serpent, dark in color with brighter underside, along spine, fish-like dorsal fins, horse-like mane-

-which slithers up between them, *HISSES*

Erlking flies in on-

NACHTKRAPP (age not applicable) giant, nocturnal raven-like bird with no eyes.

-which alights at feet of others. Erlking dismounts.

Leshy curls ends of its upper limbs into fists.

EXT. THE SWAMP - NIGHT

THUNDER rolls in distance

LAZAR

Is that a storm?

VILDA

No, that's the Leshy fighting someone.

LAZAR

Most likely the Erlking since he said he would. He said you were also not friends to the Erlking.

MOSS PERSON 1

True. We don't like the Erlking.

MOSS PERSON 2

He threatens our trees

MOSS PERSON 3

And tries to feed us Caroway bread.

ALL MOSS PERSONS

Yuk!

LAZAR

Would you show us the way out, please?

VILDA

Easily.

All moss people raise their hands, *HUM*. Road made of moss rises out of swamp before them.

VILDA (CONT'D)

This moss road will take you through the swamp to the Schrat. He will then take you to the Queen of all wood folk. If anyone can help you find your way out, it's her.

AIDA

Thank you.

THUNDER rolls closer than before

VILDA

The fight is coming closer. You must hurry.

LAZAR

Yes. Thank you again. All right everyone, let's move out.

Aida, with Umbo, leads column onto moss path. Lazar brings up rear. Moss path sinks back into swamp behind them. Moss people withdraw back into their homes.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE GROVE - NIGHT

Column enters grassy clearing surrounded by trees with leaf & moss covered stump at center, canopy of branches overhead, sky not visible above.

CHARLOTTE

Do you think this is the place the moss people meant us to come to?

VOICE

The moss people sent you, did they?

Stump transforms into-

SCHRAT (age not applicable) short humanoid with oak leaves for hair, beard, mushroom covered trunk for body, roots for feet.

SCHRAT

I am the schrat. They may have mentioned me.

EXT. THE TALL TREES - NIGHT

Leshy jawpunches one *Fänggen* to his left, other to his right, Lindworm in middle, then ducks attack by Nachtkrapp

EXT. THE GROVE - NIGHT

THUNDER rolls much closer than before, drowns out Lazar's next line

SCHRAT

Sounds like the Leshy is brawling again. Follow me. It will be better to keep distance between them and us.

Schrat leads them to the edge of clearing where trees part to let everyone pass

CUT TO:

INT. A CAVE - MOMENTS LATER

Column enters a large round cave, in center of which, what looks like big heap of white straw with leaves at bottom squats. Orange light shines from sconce.

SCHRAT

Ladies, gentlemen, and fairies, may
I present the Queen of all moss
people, the Buschgrobmutter.

Assembled humans think to bow or curtsy all at once.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER

My aren't you all so polite and
gracious. You're royalty, aren't
you.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (age ancient) small, ducked, hair long, white as snow, but messy, full of lice, hair covers her almost completely except toward the bottom where her leafy skirt hangs out. Large nose point out of her hair further up on her marking location of her face.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)

Would any of you have a comb
perchance?

Everyone looks at each other. No one has comb.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)

Oh well, I suppose we shall have to
make due.

She throws out bunch of fish skeletons that could be used as combs.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)

As guests, would you please be so
kind as to comb my hair?

All eyes widen, stare at Schrat, who nods vigorously. Lazar & Aida, take lead, pick up fishbones, comb her hair. Others all shudder then follow suit.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)

Oh thank you. You are all very
kind.

Aida combs actual lice out of her hair, grimaces. Lazar fixes her with a look that says "Keep going, for all our sakes" to which she shudders, then does so.

THUNDER claps, much louder than before, startles everyone.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Oh dear. The Leshy is brawling
practically on my doorstep. He
never did have any manners.

She turns around which startles everyone again.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
You've all been so gracious. Is
there anything I might offer you in
return?

Her hand appears from her hair, holds spindle of yarn.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
A spindle of neverending yarn?

Her other hand appears, holds leaves.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Leaves that turn to gold?

LAZAR
Uh, no thank you milady. We just
need to leave the land of the
Fairies and return to our
homelands.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER
Oh, is that all. This way then.

She walks to back wall, takes orange light from sconce, wall
folds away, reveals tunnel

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
This way.

She leads everyone into-

INT. DARK TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

All follow Buschgrobmutter's orange light, Lazar is right
behind her

THUNDER rolls, tunnel shakes

BUSCHGROBMUTTER
Oh Leshy, must you?

She reaches wall, places orange light in sconce, wall opens,
reveals fog

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Ah, here we are.

She turns to others

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Now everyone join hands. Form a chain.

Everyone does

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Now it is very important that you hold on to each other as you move through the mists. Those who get lost in them are seldom seen again. Follow the moon until you find Frau der Nebel-

THUNDER claps, ground shakes

BUSCHGROBMUTTER (CONT'D)
Avoid the thunder because that is where the Leshy is battling. You must find Frau der Nebel by morning if you wish to ever return to your homes.

LAZAR
Just a moment. I've an idea.

Lazar rips hole in his long sleeve, then sticks his hand through hole, leaves part of his sleeve hanging loose, then does same to his other sleeve. After he does this to every person in line behind him then person behind them, he ties the sleeve tails together, then moves down line, repeats this, ties all together in long chain.

He then returns to front of line, ties himself to first person.

LAZAR (CONT'D)
There, now we won't get separated even if we do lose hold of each other.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER
Clever, mein herr.

LAZAR
Thank you for your help Frau Buschgrobmutter.

BUSCHGROBMUTTER
On your way now mein Frauen and
Herren.

Lazar draws his sword with his free hand, leads human chain
into-

EXT. THE MISTS - CONTINUOUS

Moon shines down from above. Lazar leads column forward.

NICHOLAS
What...what are we walking on?

LAZAR
Try not to think about it. There's
only one way out and that's
forward.

THUNDER rolls.

LOUISE
The thunder's getting closer.

LAZAR
Keep going.

VOICE
Lazar Israelson...

LAZAR
I know that voice

VOICE
Come to me Lazar Israelson.

LAZAR
Come. Follow the voice.

ALEXANDRINE
Are you certain, Herr Israelson?

LAZAR
Completely certain my Princess.

They continue forward

Hooded Woman from before steps from mists in front of them

LAZAR (CONT'D)

It is you. The woman who gave me
the cloak is the one the
Buschgrobmutter called Frau der
Nebel.

He sheathes his sword

FRAU DE NEBEL

One and the same, Lazar Israelson.

She takes his hand.

FRAU DE NEBEL (CONT'D)

Now follow me. The passage out is
not far.

Lightning strikes unseen ground ahead of them. *THUNDER* shakes
everything.

Out of mist in front of them come *Fänggen* who grin ear to
ear. From left comes *Lindworm* who hisses viciously. From
right comes *Leshy* who has dwarfish humanoid with face hidden
by hood squatted on his head.

LESHY

Sorry friends. I was fighting just
fine until they planted an
Aufhocker on me. Now I have to obey
them.

Erlking flies in on *Nachtkrapp*, lands in front of column

ERLKING

Well now, you've led us a merry
chase and given us a stiff fight
but this is as far as you go.

Lazar draws his sword

LAZAR

I've got thirty-two inches of
Toledo steel that says otherwise.

Erlking smiles

ERLKING

Oh really, sir. One blade against
all this?

Umbo drains his pot then *BANGS* on it with his iron ladle.

BANG BANG BANG BANG

Erlking's army cover their ears, back away.

UMBO

You don't like de sound of iron on
iron, do you.

Erlking snarls

ERLKING

That won't keep us at bay for long,
yumbo. Face it! Your time has come!

FRAU DE NEBEL

Not according to my clock.

She points to horizon where Sun peeps over

ERLKING

The Sun!

FRAU DE NEBEL

We've kept you at bay the entire
night, Erlking. Accept your defeat.

ERLKING

You! You did this!

FRAU DE NEBEL

And did you think I would just
languish in my captivity?

She tears off her hood, reveals-

JOHANNA, (44), dark haired, brown eyes, button nose,
beautiful, if older, woman with black mark on her chin.

LAZAR

Johanna!

AIDA

Who is she, monsieur?

LAZAR

My wife...whom I've searched ten
years for!

JOHANNA

I missed you, too, Lazar.

They kiss. Black mark on Johanna's chin melts off.

ERLKING

Noooooo!

All humans present *CHEER*. Umbo, little fairies, too.

LAZAR
What happened to you?

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. AN AUTUMNAL FOREST - DUSK

Light fades as Johanna walks through forest with full basket of berries.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
It was the day before I expected
you home. I was out in the forest
gathering berries to make that
dessert you love so much.

LAZAR (V.O.)
Oh, I haven't had that in so long.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
Yes, well, I came across something
I never dreamed possible.

OTS JOHANNA:
From behind hanging bough, she sees Erlking as he leads-

GIRL(teens) blonde hair, simple peasant dress.

-along with beautiful jewel on golden string.

ERLKING
Come along child. Cooome along.

Girl smiles in a daze.

THOK!

Rock strikes Erlking in face, dents mask.

Girl blinks as she comes out of her trance.

Johanna races in, spins girl around, pushed her along by her forearms.

JOHANNA
Run, child! Run!

Erlking recovers

ERLKING
Come back here!

Erlking chases women through forest until they reach bridge over stream. Girl escapes across it. Johanna trips, snatched up by Erlking.

ERLKING (CONT'D)
You'll pay for that, you!

Black shadow drips from dent on his mask onto her cheek.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
And I did pay.

INT. WINDOWLESS SCULLERY LIT BY LITTLE GLOWING FAIRY - TIME UNKNOWN

Johanna dressed as scullery maid scrubs floor on hands, knees.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
For a year, I was the Erlking's
scullery maid.

INT. BUSCHGROBMUTTER'S CAVE -

Johanna combs BushgroBmutter's hair.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
Then one day he sent me to the
BushgroBmutter's cave with a
message and she asked me to comb
her hair, which I did. When she
offered me a wish for doing so, I
wished to be free of the Erlking.
She freed me.

Johanna jumps for joy. BuschgroBmutter's takes her arm.

JOHANNA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I thought I'd be able to go home
but the BushgroBmutter told me that
so long as I was within the realm
of Fairie, the Erlking's curse
would keep me trapped there.

Johanna wilts into tears.

JOHANNA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I was free of his servitude but not
his curse.

(MORE)

JOHANNA (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 The only way I would be free
 forever was if I got the better of
 the Erlking somehow.

BushgroBmutter leads her away.

EXT. THE MISTS - DAY

Johanna stands dressed as Frau der Nebel.

JOHANNA (V.O.)
 The BushgroBmutter led me to valley
 of the mists where I would be safe
 from the Erlking and I became known
 as Frau der Nebel, the Lady of the
 Mists.

BACK TO PRESENT

JOHANNA
 And now we're all free.

She points at the Erlking

JOHANNA (CONT'D)
 Free of you!

ERLKING
 Yesss you are free. Ten years of
 plotting have born you fruit and
 you are free. Why should it matter
 to you that all of Fairie is
 endangered, maybe doomed, by your
 scheme.

Lindworm *SPITS* up bundle that lands at Erlking's feet,
 revealed to be terrified Haugwitz who *BREATHES*, *COUGHS*
 heavily, clutches branches from treasure trees.

ERLKING (CONT'D)
 I suppose we shall have to satisfy
 ourselves with this wretched
 creature.

MINISTER HAUGWITZ
 Please...help me...

With incredible swiftness, Lazar kisses his wife's cheek,
 dashes to Haugwitz, sticks his blade right in Erlking's mask.

LAZAR

Like perdition you will! I may be
one blade against thousands but you
will shatter another family again
only over my dead body!

ON JOHANNA

She turns to the gathered people, ground mists part in front
of them revealing weapons, All quickly arm themselves. Men
mostly take swords, women, bows & arrows.

JOHANNA

And if we must battle our way out
of Fairie, we will!
Fängen move forward but drawn arrows' heads spark into
flame. They back off
Lindworm moves to attack Lazar but Umbo *BANGS* his pot again,
backs him off.

ERLKING

That wretch is a thief and a
clutchcoin! He endangers all of you
because of his greed! And you would
fight for him?

LAZAR

He is a father and a grandfather
and his family would be devastated
if he vanished! As I was when you
took my family!

ERLKING

You would fight us all for this,
wouldn't you.

LAZAR

I'd fight you!

ERLKING

So be it!

Erlking steps away.

ERLKING (CONT'D)

You and I shall duel for this
wretch! Lazar Isrealson, soldier of
the king!

LAZAR

Fine with me.

Erlking extends part of his shadow matter out into a blade. Lazar puts his blade between his teeth, tears off his greatcoat, tosses it to Johanna, retakes his blade, falls into stance.

Lazar gives swordsman's salute. Erlking does not, fight is on. Swords *CLASH* fiercely. Erlking flows left, then right, like liquid tar, then drives for Lazar's heart. Lazar sidesteps, goes to behead Erlking, forces him back.

Now Lazar attacks. *CLANG! CLANG!* Thrust! Dodge! Parry! Behind them, humans assembled all look concerned. Aida covers her face then peers through her fingers. Johanna chews her lip.

Lazar stabs into Erlking's midsection but Erlking makes a hole in himself which sword point passes through. Erlking counters with sweeping cut to the midsection which Lazar leaps over then stabs wildly, plants his point in mouth of Erlking's mask.

ERLKING

Enough! I yield.

Lazar withdraws his blade.

LAZAR

Are we free then?

ERLKING

Strangely, I cannot just let you go. The magic of Fairie would not allow it, but I can, indeed, I must now, accept payment of some kind for your freedom. You and your wife have already paid for yours and I have no claim to the Yumboe. I know. This whole affair began because of what happened to Fairies during the last war. Your armies, they march through our mountains, they trample our forests, and they soil our lakes and rivers. If you would all swear oaths, the most solemn oaths you can think of, to never allow your armies to endanger our people should you absolutely have to fight a war, then that would surely end this. Would you all swear such an oath?

Princes, princesses, even Aida, gather in huddle to discuss this. They *MUTTER* (actors free to ad lib) until they finish, move toward Erlking, weapons lowered.

AMA JOOF

We agree to your terms, Herr
Erlking.

NICHOLAS

But I will add one more condition
to my oath, in addition to freeing
us, you must release the Leshy.

Beat

ERLKING

As you wish.

He gestures, Aufhocker leaps from Leshy's back. Leshy
straightens, relieved.

LESHY

Aahh, I shall not forget that,
Nicholas, son of the Tsars. I shall
not forget that.

Leshy shares smile with Nicholas.

ERLKING

Come. Let us swear on Herr
Isrealson's sword. The sword which
freed you all.

JOHANNA

Be careful. Fairie spells are very
precise. If something is left out
or included, a person can be
trapped forever.

ERLKING

Then perhaps you should choose the
words Frau Isrealson.

Lazar hold his sword up straight. All humans gather around
it, touch it with at least one finger. Even Aida touches
pommel from below.

Johanna considers briefly, then reaches in to touch the
sword, too.

Unnoticed by everyone, Umbo draws circle in misted ground
around gathered humans

JOHANNA

Do you swear that if your nation
must go to war, that it will not do
so at the expense of the fairies
and their kin so long as the realm
of Fairie is at peace with your
nation.

ALL HUMANS

We so swear!

ERLKING

Shrewdly chosen words mein frau.
Now you are all free.

UMBO

But if it is all the same to you,
Monsieur Le Erlking, I will be
taking them home.

Umbo pours out his gumbo into circle he drew around gathered
humans causing steam to rise swiftly off of ground, shrouds
humans, then dissipates, reveals they've disappeared.

ERLKING

Hmph.

EXT. THE PAPS HILLS IN SENEGAL - MOONLIT NIGHT

Assembly appears atop hill with large table and steaming
covered cauldron on it. Umbo leaps to top of stump.

UMBO

Mes amis, If I may have your
attention. I apologize for not
sending you straight home but I
couldn't bear the idea of sending
you home with only your nightmares
to show for this experience. I ask
you to please, join me in a feast
to celebrate your freedom here in
the Paps Hills of Senegal where I
live.

He gestures to Senegalese royalty.

UMBO (CONT'D)

Prince Ama Joof, Princess Aida,
will you join me in hosting this
affair that we may help heal some
of the damage done by the Erlking's
madness.

Ama Joof & Aida smile at each other, turn to assembly, join hands, smile broadly, raise other hands in welcome.

AMA JOOF

It's a good idea my friends. How many times have we wished we could be together outside our captivity. We may never get another chance. Let us celebrate tonight. My family has trusted Monsieur D'Yumboe for ages. I'm sure we can rely on him to return us to where we belong once the celebration ends.

UMBO

It's true. While it is still night here, the sun will soon rise. We have only until the moon sets to enjoy ourselves. After that, the portals will open and you all will be returned to your homes. Please may we begin?

Johanna takes Lazar's hand, smiles,

JOHANNA

I would like to do this Lazar.

Lazar smiles, places his hand over hers.

LAZAR

I would, too

NICHOLAS

(smiles)

Well that decided it for me,

He turns to others, raises hand.

NICHOLAS (CONT'D)

All in favor of celebrating, say aye.

All raise their hands

ALL THREE

Aye!

NICHOLAS

Very well, then let us enjoy ourselves.

All LAUGH and/or CHEER.

START CREDIT ROLL

UMBO

Tres bien! Come mes amis, Find your
seats and let my servants see to
you.

Everyone gathers around the table, Floating pairs of gloves
pull seats out for them, pour wine, and serve gumbo from the
large cauldron.

UMBO (CONT'D)

Enjoy yourselves mes amis. The
gumbo has been cooking all night
and this is my best plum wine.

LAUGHS

ALEXANDRINE

These are your servants, Monsieur
D'Yumboe?

UMBO

Actually, they're just enchanted
pairs of gloves but I like to call
them servants to make an
impression.

All LAUGH.

UMBO (CONT'D)

Well, I must unfortunately leave
you in the capable hands of the
Senegalese royal family, as I must
go to fetch our last guest.

AIDA

Who's that, Monsieur D'Yumboe.

UMBO

Why, the King of Prussia, of
course. I invited him to attend one
of my feasts. It would be impolite
to have his daughters here and not
at least try to get him, too.

Louise stands.

LOUISE

I'll come with you. Father will
listen to me.

UMBO

Very well.

He opens portal.

UMBO (CONT'D)
We shall return shortly.

They leave through portal

Some enchanted gloves pick up traditional Senegalese instruments, play them while other gloves dance on table, entertain, diners until-

Portal reopens, Umbo, Louise, King Frederick, come through.

Music stops, all diners rise at sight of king who smiles,

KING FREDERICK
So this is your soiree Monsieur
D'Yumboe! Well, it looks fit for
royalty.

Music starts again.

MONTAGE

-King walks down the table shaking hands with everyone there except his daughter, Lazar, Johanna, whom he hugs.

-Everyone dines on gumbo and plum wine while watching gloves dance.

-King raises glass in toast, Everyone raises and drinks.

-After dinner, everyone dances under moonlight. Everyone dances with every member of opposite gender.

BACK TO SCENE

Sun peeks over horizon

UMBO
The time has come to go home mes
amis.

KING FREDERICK
It was a grand time Monsieur
D'Yumboe

Portal opens, Umbo, Aida, Ama Joof stand next to it, line forms as guest walk toward portal, thank each host on their way out. Last to leave are Lazar & Johanna. Big hugs are given by Aida as they leave. Portal closes,

AMA JOOF

Well, now we must return home.

UMBO

Go ahead, Your Highnesses. Don't
worry about all of this.

He picks up half full bowl of gumbo.

UMBO (CONT'D)

The best part is cleaning up the
leftovers.

Others *LAUGH*. Aida hugs Umbo, kisses his cheek. Ama Joof
musses his hair, then both join hands, Aida skips beside her
brother as they leave.

END CREDIT ROLL.

THE END

FADE OUT