

ACT I

INT. THE KING'S TOWER - DAY

SONG - THE KING CAN SING

KING WILLIAM is seen singing in the solitude of his private tower. He is walking about joyfully reading from sheet music in hand. He wears the ROYAL NECKLACE, a long gilded chain from which hangs a fist sized SAPPHIRE. As he sings he occasionally picks up the large stone and looks at it, through it towards the sun coming in from the window. Other sheet music is strewn about the table and a music stand, some has fallen on the floor. A knock at the door startles the king who begins gathering the music to store it in the hiding place he's devised behind some book shelves.

KING WILLIAM
(agitated, but feigning
normalcy)
Yes, Yes! Who is it?!

MERCANTEL, the head of the king's military, is seen outside the door listening in. He heard a male singing and the king can't sing.

MERCANTEL
Your Highness, it is Mercantel.
I require to see you.

Hurrying about the King knocks over a few CHESSMEN on his solitary CHESSBOARD. He stops for an instant and remembers exactly where to put the pieces back, then continues his hiding of the music.

KING WILLIAM
What is it! I'm busy.

The king is frantically hiding the sheet music as if it is an illegal quantity. The music stand is jammed and unable to collapse.

MERCANTEL
I should not wish to bother you
and... your visitor, but I___

KING WILLIAM
(interrupting)
I am quite alone! What do you mean -
what do you want!

The king throws the music stand under the bed and doing so snags the covers messing them, pulling them off one side of the bed and partly on to the floor. The stand does not clear the frame so the king puts it under a small table draped with a table cloth. The stand causes a large bulge in the clothe that the king stands in front of to hide.

MERCANTEL

I require to see you.

KING WILLIAM

Enter!

MERCANTEL enters the room noticing the unmade bed and the king appearing to hide someone under the table.

MERCANTEL

Sire forgive me but_____

KING WILLIAM

(interrupting)

You are not forgiven. The trumpet has been placed at the base of the tower for my summoning and you instead disregarded my order and chose to ascend this tower and violate my privacy. You will not again or I will see to a violation of your -

(suggestively)

privacy. Out with it then!

MERCANTEL

King the town commoners, those singers, have arrived an were let into the castle without proper screening. I was told you gave the order. I am encharged with your protection and you must allow me__

KING WILLIAM

To protect me from singers?

MERCANTEL begins to nose around the chamber, looking at the bed and moving towards the King who repositions himself to hide the bulging cloth.

MERCANTEL

From barbarians who seek to destroy us. One may have taken place amongst the song troupe. I should be allowed to screen.

(MORE)

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

I am just checking if the order
came from you Sire.

KING WILLIAM

You, as head of the army, are
indeed expected to serve me well -
but I ask of you: Who the more
likely to provide cover for the
barbarian, the song troupe, or the
militia. Have you ever known a
Barbarian to croon my dear man?

MERCANTEL

Most assuredly not Sire.

KING WILLIAM

Exactly: would stick out like a
sore...barbarian.

MERCANTEL

Sire. I know of not one barbarian
who 'croons' and nor has this
kingdom ever known one king who
could sing.

KING WILLIAM

Exactly. Too bad it seems you've
discovered what a King and
Barbarian have in common.

MERCANTEL

But it is not a bad thing Sire:
They must be willing to wage war,
to be hard, to decimate an entire
people who threatens them, to make
the cold hard choices in the field.

KING WILLIAM

Yes- and singers are too
sentimental.

MERCANTEL

Exactly.

KING WILLIAM

Too soft.

MERCANTEL

Yes.

KING WILLIAM

Too full of___

MERCANTEL
(interrupting)
It!

KING WILLIAM
Yes!

MERCANTEL
Yes! So I thought I heard singing
up here Sire.

KING WILLIAM
You heard no singing here.

MERCANTEL
I did.

KING WILLIAM
No.

MERCANTEL
I heard a male's voice.

KING WILLIAM
Yes.

MERCANTEL
Yes?

KING WILLIAM
You heard the song troupe below -
uh, uh, 'reverberating' - yes
'reverberation' - their voices
collecting and bouncing in this
hollow tower...and amplifying!

MERCANTEL
Reverberation Sire?

KING WILLIAM
I'm sure.

MERCANTEL
But I haven't given the order for
them to commence song practice for
the Solstice Festival in a two
days. It could not be.

KING WILLIAM
Singers, what a raucous bunch,
can't follow orders - already
breaking ranks with the great
MERCANTEL.

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(putting his arm around
him, steering him to the
stairs)

You better get down their and keep
them in line!

(smiling)

The sentimental have trouble with
protocol, no?

MERCANTEL

Yes. Sire, should I have the maids
sent up to fix that table cloth?

KING WILLIAM

Oh fix that? That's the new style
my man, too much time in the field
for you. And....don't bother me
here again. Blow the horn below
next time - or my wrath will sound
its own clarion call upon thee!

MERCANTEL exits and the king bolts the door. He works to
dismantle the music stand and puts in the hiding place behind
the books, takes out the crown, dusts it, and places it back
in place then seals the secret alcove.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

The singing troupe is seen gathering while the young leader,
HENRY, is passing out music and giving directions. He appears
a teen yet commands their attention and respect. He is
reviewing some parts and waving his hands as a conductor,
pointing, explaining.

MERCANTEL is seen ushering in some armed guards moving
towards the troupe.

KING WILLIAM enters the scene from the doorway at the base of
the tower. Everyone in the courtyard bows and curtsies at his
presence.

MERCANTEL

All Hail the KING!

KING WILLIAM

All rest at ease! Mercantel, is
this the recalcitrant bunch of whom
you spoke?

MERCANTEL

Yes.

(to the troupe)

Who among you is the leader?

HENRY

It is I sir, Henry.

MERCANTEL

You? You're just a kid. You are here to entertain the royal Solstice festival with what - children's tunes?

HENRY

No sir, with the finest we have to offer.

KING WILLIAM

And MERCANTEL here is a man's man - the head of the King's Army. We hear that a barbarian might be among you.

HENRY

Your highness, we are all accounted for and well know. The singers are not plentiful in these parts and we are like family - well most of us our family. My father was the leader. He passed last year. I assure you the quality will suit his highness.

MERCANTEL

Young man, Henry was it? I heard singing earlier before it was commanded. We're all accounted for?

KING WILLIAM

Yes that's important. Well we will see if a Barbarian is in our midst. Show us son what is within their throats and assure us therefore of what is in their hearts.

HENRY

A supreme honor Your Majesty.

The troupe launches into:

SONG - THE SOLSITCE SONG

with HENRY leading and singing in a powerful voice that defies his years. MERCANTEL is suspicious of the males.

But the caliber of musicianship is extremely refined and as the song progresses MERCANTEL finds it tiresome and without threat so he commands his men at ease and motions them to take up their usual guard positions. The KING is seen attempting stoicism but taking great interest in the troupe, in particular, a woman, JULIA, of about his age in the back row - heard above the others - smiling radiantly and with charisma. The KING attempts to hide his attraction.

KING WILLIAM

(enthusiastically at songs
end)

Extraordinary!

(then containing himself)

That, that such a large voice come from such a, such a, dignified young man. Good for you son - your father surely beams from above. The Solstice Festival has its singers then, without a sign of anything barbaric!

HENRY

Thank you Your Majesty.

KING WILLIAM

(pretending)

But you should require a great deal of work. You are not ready to grace my guests! There was something run amuck in that back row - out of step - most unacceptable to even these untrained, unmusical ears.

(to JULIA)

You there! Step out. Was it you?

JULIA rushes out to in front of the KING and gives a deep curtsy staying in the bent position while speaking.

JULIA

Your Highness, I have offended and am shamed.

KING WILLIAM

Someone did. Show yourself that it be know if you have the discord or grace.

JULIA begins

SONG - JULIA'S DUET,

alone, a capella, and the KING is enthralled yet outwardly careful, aware of MERCANTEL'S proximity.

The song has gaps of open spaces, rhythmic, but appearing somehow incomplete. The beautiful song is interrupted by royal messenger from the castle main building.

CRIER

Sire! The D'ORLEO family hath arrived and are spotted making their way up the road.

KING WILLIAM

Mercantel. Take your men and greet them - and screen them! This prospective bride of mine must not be barbaric in the least.

(to the CRIER)

You, give my orders to ready the pleasantries.

MERCANTELL exits with his men.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(to HENRY)

What was that?

HENRY

A song I've made in honor of the fest. I thought it well suited for the Solstice.

KING WILLIAM

It seems....broken...Somehow disjoint. Let me see it! Pointing to the stack of music.

HENRY finds the page and hands it to the KING. The KING reads it with great interest.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Its...absolutely incredible - commoners? It is *uncommonly* beautiful.

JULIA comes out of her bow. HENRY is shocked at the KING'S ability to enjoy the music from a page only.

HENRY

Sire? How could you know? Can His Highness discern the notes somehow?

KING WILLIAM

Oh, uh ,no. Of course not. I meant the penmanship. Absolutely beautiful pen strokes I mean.

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

I should order you to make copy for yourself. I will place this one as art upon an unimportant wall somewhere. The castle has everything you know - but nothing of this sort. Lovely. Work on it! Its broken - now!

The troupe begins again and the KING turns his back to them and reads along smiling as if in ecstasy. He turns to watch JULIA as she sings and turns his back again on them with a large smile.

INT. CASTLE THRONE ROOM - DAY

MERCANTEL is just outside the door primping the young lady, COUNTESS D'ORLEO. She is plain, skinny, expressionless, stiff, and holds her chin very high. Her father and mother are aristocratic and appear nervous. In the Throne Room, HENRY and JULIA join the entourage. MERCANTEL begins the

SONG - MAYBE THIS ONE WILL DO

and upon its end, again primps the young girl readying her.

MERCANTEL

Okay then you look, ah....ah Good. You look good then! The KING should find you acceptable for marriage at the festival. Countess are you ready to be a queen?

COUNTESS D'ORLEO

I should say so. Been born for such. You bother me with your primping. Do not assault the future queen so!

MERCANTEL

Of course madame, ah highness, ah countess - its just that the king is very particular, if that's what we want to call it. He ages and is without. We need to produce heirs in a kingdom and he appears to not like...a...ah, he's got peculiar, I mean, Particular, particular tastes. Okay then - lets go.

They enter the THRONE room and all bow. The COUNTESS does a very shallow unaffected curtsy.

CRIER

All hail the King! Your Highness I present the Duke and Duchess of O'Orleo County and their daughter, the COUNTESS D'ORLEO.

KING WILLIAM

(unimpressed)

Oh, I see. Countess what is your age?

COUNTESS D'ORLEO

I am thirteen.

MERCANTEL

Madame! You address the King properly! With his Highness/

KING WILLIAM

Al...of...
ways protective, that is my
MERCANTEL god love him. Thirteen
then. What is it you are the most
fond of?

COUNTESS D'ORLEO

Well, I, your highness, I am fond
of...of...I like to sleep.

KING WILLIAM

Yes it would appear so. A
countenance that invites others to
share what it is most fond of...
(getting up and moving
towards her parents)
Duke, how are things in D'ORLEO
then?

DUKE D'ORLEO

Your Royal Highness, they are well.
Thank you for your invitation.

KING WILLIAM

You may thank MERCANTEL who will
show you to a meal and recompense
for your lengthy travels. My
regards to the county and family
D'ORLEO then.

The KING moves away from them and they bow and curtsy. He stops before HENRY and JULIA and pats HENRY on the rear.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(to HENRY)

You have a question regarding the important festival? I should like to see you in the tower child.

MERCANTEL rolls his eyes and ushers the family from the room then rushes back in to pull the KING aside.

MERCANTEL

Sire I should like to keep things in perspective.

KING WILLIAM

Well keep them that way. Your perspective is no concern of mine.

MERCANTEL

As your particulars are neither mine Highness, it is just that the good of the people, tomorrow, depends upon continuity, stability Sire. No one lives forever. Your great father is gone now and you are here. Tomorrow who calls you... father?

KING WILLIAM

And who will call her... mother? The girl was a child, a babe, made of paper. The wind would blow right through her. And the wind speaks with eloquence compared to any words pried from her mouth!

MERCANTEL

Sire it is of small consequence. This is not for anything but perpetuation of the kingdom - continuity. The barbarians are stronger now. They wait for us to flinch and the loss of our King without error is more than such a flinch.

KING WILLIAM

There is no chance with that sheet of velum - no curves in form or fancy.

MERCANTEL

Sire you have passed on any suitable prospect I have sought to procure. You may settle on any and continue whatever is your particular fancy.

KING WILLIAM

So you bring me a waif of paper?

MERCANTEL

But there are only so many suitable women of the proper pedigree and status. It is not as though we could choose a commoner. Continuity Sire. We are bound by the dictates of our birth. There are no real choices - our destiny is cast by the stars. You have past up many 'appropriate' girls over the years and now they are well into family life, Countess D'Orleo is a bit young, and slight, yet _____

KING WILLIAM

Yet, exceedingly D'Ugly. D'Ugly-o.

MERCANTEL

Sire, please/ Your great father was in his 44th year like you when he took ill. You were already into your twenties. You have not yet even wed. Please Sire. The Solstice Festival is the traditional time of marriage and it is days away. There is something, against the stars, about letting it pass in the year of age that your father was taken. There are not many choices left Sire.

KING WILLIAM

Time hath moved quickly.

MERCANTEL

Yes Highness. Look at MADAME De CORTERRE over there.

MERCANTEL motions discretely towards a group of people among which is a stately and beautiful middle aged woman and her husband standing with their young daughter.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

Do you recall some 15 years ago when I presented that gorgeous creature to you.

KING WILLIAM

I do.

MERCANTEL

"I do". That is what you were supposed to say Sire, but refrained. She was impeccable then and even more so now. Sire, you should trust your Mercantel.

KING WILLIAM

I have my reasons.

MERCANTEL

I understand.

KING WILLIAM

Do You?

MERCANTEL

I believe so Sire. You may take the boy to the tower and come down to the queen. It is not for any of us to say, only for me to look out for the safety of the king and his predecessor, and train my predecessor.

KING WILLIAM

You hardly understand.

MERCANTEL

Don't I? Look at her daughter Sire. The COUNTESS De CORTERRE. You should trust your Mercantel. She is already gorgeous. She is just of child bearing years. Many men would desire her as perhaps the most beautiful creature in the kingdom____

KING WILLIAM

No. She is a child. She is without form again. No curve of body or mind.

MERCANTEL

Sire be reasonable.

KING WILLIAM

That is what I've always been.

MERCANTEL

The Lady De CORTERRE. She is more your fancy. I should see to a small....accident.. to befall the husband and you should take her.

KING WILLIAM

I should trust my Mercantel - yes?

MERCANTEL

Yes.

KING WILLIAM

Do not alter that man's life or I shall personally take yours with my own hands do you understand.

MERCANTEL

Sire.

KING WILLIAM

(to HENRY)

Henry I should like you to see something in the tower.

MERCANTEL rolls his eyes again and walks away.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

(to JULIA)

Maiden you as well. Bring yourselves in 15 minutes, I have a matter to attend.

They bow and Curtsy.

INT. THE KING'S TOWER - DAY

The KING is seen pacing back and forth if deciding something. JULIA and HENRY knock at the door.

KING WILLIAM

Enter!

The two musicians enter and bow and curtsy, staying in their respective bent positions. The KING approaches and stands directly before them bent over as well staring at the ground. JULIA and HENRY rise up to see the KING now bent over.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 (looking at the ground)
 What is it? What is so special down
 here?

JULIA
 It is a curtsy and bow My Lord.

KING WILLIAM
 I am a man not a God - not your
 lord. I expect you upright the next
 time when we are not faced with -
 the other's protocol.

HENRY
 Yes Sire.

JULIA
 Yes My Lord, uh, Sire, Sir...King

KING WILLIAM takes JULIA's arm and leads her to the window.

KING WILLIAM
 Look at the fields and stone walls.
 As far as thou could see it's mine!

The KING lets go of her and walks to his CHESS TABLE and
 makes a move for BLACK.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 But look again. Everything is NOT
 mine. Look at me. The KING of the
 land, and then look once more. The
 KING of nothing...No wait.

The KING moves to the other side of the board and shakes his
 head and makes a move for WHITE.

I'm the King of traditions to be
 upheld. The King of the protocol
 and preconceived. The King of the
 Caste. The King of everything which
 is: nothing. The king must be hard
 and the king must not feel. The
 king must not love and the king
 mustn't do another, must not do one
 thing: the king cannot, sing - but
 you can - so you will. Show me that
 song again.

JULIA begins the 'hollow' or 'broken' melody from before and
 the King listens completely while looking out the window.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Why is it empty?

HENRY
The baritone part is one played by
a man no longer part of the troupe.
A man whose gone. My father.

KING WILLIAM
You sing it child.

HENRY
I cannot. My face is without hair
and my voice without change. When
it deepen I shall assume the part.
Until then it is beyond my reach.

KING WILLIAM
Is there no baritone amongst the
townspeople?

HENRY
The singers are not many. The war
is the holder of the resources. The
protection of the walls is the
priority. The skilling of those in
music is the residual - of which
there is none. Our troupe is the
best available.

KING WILLIAM
(looking at JULIA)
I should agree. Yet the King of
nothing must not choose a commoner,
a townswoman, a singer, a joyous
one of the ale halls! This is a
King! I am a King woman! I am a
KING! Who can not - must not - will
not - ever -SING! But you can...so
you will.

JULIA begins to cry.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Entertain me. Please...my lady.

JULIA through her tears regains her infectious smile and
starts to sing

SONG - JULIA'S DUET

the incomplete ARIA, but this time, after two stanzas the
KING waves his hand to stop her.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Woman, you break my heart. I should like to show you something, show you both...something.

(to HENRY)

What was once below

(motioning to the room)

Is now above... and what was once in front

(motioning to the bookcase)

Is now behind.

HENRY ponders the words as if a riddle and then looks at the bookcase and then to the KING who motions for him to proceed towards the bookcase. The KING walks towards the books and points to a RED BOOK in the middle of the case motioning for HENRY to take it. HENRY grabs he book but nothing happens.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

The one red book, that would be too obvious. Grab the one to its right.

HENRY does and the case slide to the side revealing the secret compartment. The ROYAL CROWN is there and a JEWELLED CHEST. The KING grabs the CROWN and PUTS IT ON HENRY'S head so he can take the box out and then opens it showing HENRY and JULIA its contents. A Library of sheet music. The King grabs the top copy.

HENRY

Sire. Is it sacrilege to put this crown on my head?

KING WILLIAM

The only sacrilege is that my forefathers had much smaller heads it appears - the darn thing keeps falling off me - don't wear it for that reason - its safe here - fits you pretty good.

HENRY

Its heavy.

KING WILLIAM

That too. The weight of responsibility is awesome, and also shining, and requires a straight back.

HENRY straightens his back.

The KING holds up the sheet music he's taken from the secret storage.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 Look familiar? Its done in your
 hand Henry - but now it's in mine.
 (to JULIA)
 Sing again...Please.

SONG - JULIA'S DUET

Music in hand, the KING fills in the baritone parts to her and Henry's amazement, skilled and with fine execution. JULIA and the KING in duet complete, replete - in apparent ecstasy.

The song complete the KING and JULIA are near an embrace but stop caught up in the fantasy world of the music quickly dissipating with it's dying end notes - they separate from each other in a past state of composure.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 That is a lovely song - only
 outdone by the loveliness of its
 executor.

JULIA
 Your Highness is that person.

HENRY
 Well then. A boy is teased by many
 things - now also a baritone. A
 King. A King who is many things. A
 King, whose fine voice tears bring.
 A King who...can sing. Would the
 King like to join our troupe?

KING WILLIAM
 I should in another life my son.
 (Looking at JULIA, taking
 her hand)
 I should do many things...in
 another life.

The KING sings the

SONG - HAIL THE KING (Through FIRST Chorus only)

Upon completion HENRY and JULIA applaud him, and he, lovingly bows, this time to them.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
 Promise me something.

JULIA

Your secret is safe Sire.

KING WILLIAM

No. That when we are alone - you will see me as - just a man - another man - a person...your friend - just a fellow - a fellow singer...William.

The KING hugs them both.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - NIGHT

The KING is milling about giving orders for the decorations to be laid for the festival. The SONG TROUPE is practising in the corner and the KING is attentive to the sounds but careful of betrayal of his love of them. JULIA and the KING keep looking at each other discreetly.

MERCANTEL enters with a prisoner, a BARBARIAN, bound by the hands, with the ROYAL GUARDS spears pointed at the man.

MERCANTEL

Highness. Beyond the gate laying in wait was this man found. A high ranking Barbarian planning to disrupt us. To kill our men and violate our women. What shall you have done with him?

KING WILLIAM

We shall make a spectacle of an enemy.

MERCANTEL

We shall be honored to.

KING WILLIAM

Untie his hands.

MERCANTEL

Sire?

KING WILLIAM

You should trust your King. Untie him.

(to the Barbarian)

Approach me foe.

MERCANTEL

Sire this is a dangerous man. Let him not approach His Highness.

KING WILLIAM

Is he then? Approach me foe.

The BARBARIAN stands eye to eye with the KING.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

What say you man? What is it you want with us? Because us - is me.

BARBARIAN PRISONER

Your destruction.

KING WILLIAM

Why?

The BARBARIAN is at a loss for words.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Why? What is it we have to do with you and you with us anyhow?

BARBARIAN PRISONER

It is our way. We our mortal enemies!

KING WILLIAM

Why?

The BARBARIAN is without reason.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Put thy hand upon my throat then.

The BARBARIAN looks around as if about to be tricked and then does so. The KING raises his hand gently to the BARBARIAN'S throat as well.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Is it death you seek?

BARBARIAN PRISONER

Yes.

KING WILLIAM

Seek it man! SQUEEZE!

The BARBARIAN begins to squeeze the KING'S neck and MERCANTEL and the GUARDS drawn near but the KING motions them off with his free hand.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Are you seeking? It is not found!

The BARBARIAN begins with all his might but the KING composed matches equal force appearing unaltered by the grip.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)
Well? Well! You are a leader of the men? USE BOTH HANDS THEN!!

The BARBARIAN loosing places both hands upon the KING'S neck in futile effort to overcome the force of the KING'S one hand alone, the KING'S Other is behind his back. The KING brings the man to his knees. The BARBARIAN is loosing consciousness.

MERCANTEL
(almost giddy with excitement)
Finish him master! With thy own hand! Rob the cretins life with thy own hand!

The KING lets the BARBARIAN go. The man crumbles to the floor and then recovers and recoils slithering away on his rear.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)
Brilliant! A public execution is of more worth! We will make example of him - in public - not private Sire.

BARBARIAN PRISONER
I am ready to die a martyr.

KING WILLIAM
You are?

BARBARIAN PRISONER
I will lay my life gladly for my cause!

KING WILLIAM
Twas a pity you could not enunciate what that cause was no? You are ready to be a martyr then - and so you shall be - for my cause then!
(to MERCANTEL)
Take this man to the gates and release him unharmed.

MERCANTEL
But Sire!

KING WILLIAM

Do it! He wants to be a martyr. Let him sacrifice to my cause.

(to the PRISONER)

Man go to your family. Let them see the face that should no longer be on earth. Let your sons know the father, anew. Let your people know that this King, that this King, ME, that his strength of arm is great, and that strength, is only outdone by his strength of heart. You leave us be, and we, will do the same to you. Off with you.

MERCANTEL

But Sire!

KING WILLIAM

(to MERCANTEL)

Off with you too!

JULIA is seen watching intently at the KING'S mercy. She looks at him in adoration and with great love. Her and Henry both bow to the KING, the man, unsolicited, as MERCANTEL storms off with the prisoner and men with just as great disdain.

INT. THE KING'S LIBRARY - DAY

The KING is standing over his chessboard. Just outside in the street JULIA is walking alone. Both are not aware the other is close by. The KING sings the KING CAN SING SONG in ballad tempo

SONG - THE KING'S LAMENT (The King Can Sing. slowly)

KING WILLIAM

(sung)

*I found a woman. A real grace
filled woman. An enticing,
inviting, delighting real woman.
Good God above all things she's so
much alive. What a smile! Let them
post their label upon common life -
She's got style. So they say shes
not for me, So they say its not to
be, Some man she will marry... What
if he was me....*

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE THE KING'S LIBRARY - DAY

As the KING finishes his part of the Lament, JULIA, sings her LAMENT out in the street in close proximity yet unaware.

SONG - JULIA'S LAMENT (The King Can Sing. slowly)

JULIA

(sung)

*I've met a man. A real perfect man.
An empowering, questioning,
towering man. In hand he has choice
of men's life or their death. He
chooses life. From the gentry
suitable he will select, He'll
choose his wife. I should never
hope to be, He is not the man for
me, Someone he will marry... What
if she was me....*

ACT II

INT. CASTLE THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

MERCANTEL is visibly distraught and anxious - pacing and awaiting. An ARMED GUARD approaches him and whispers in his ear.

MERCANTEL

Your Highness! I have great news!
She hath arrived.

KING WILLIAM

Who hath arrived?

MERCANTEL

MISS COUBALEI A NORMAHNS has
arrived to please the King.

KING WILLIAM

Really? Who is this then?

MERCANTEL

Sire the festival is tomorrow and I
have located the lady. She is of
fine pedigree and your approximate
age. Said to be cultured from a
fine university and rumored
curvaceous.

(MORE)

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

She is the only such woman left in our Kingdom and the King should find proper delight with her.

KING WILLIAM

I shall?

MERCANTEL

Sire. You shall. The peoples, the army, the bankers, the children, the merchants, and Mercantel are all relying on your wisdom now. You must trust me. It is your 44th year in the stars Sire - your father - the magicians have taken note and are stirring.

KING WILLIAM

I see. So many await. The magicians 'stir'. Have you been giving away your will again to their decks of cards?

MERCANTEL

Sire please be careful. Their magic is strong and to be feared. They see deeply into the future. They assure me to wait no longer.

KING WILLIAM

Let her wait no longer.

CRIER

May the King be presented with the Countess of West Chester Upon Sussex, the fine COUBALEI A NORMAHNS.

The Countess walks in. She is well dressed, unaffected, with a bored expression, and very curvy, the kind of curves not of great shapeliness, but those of being vastly overweight.

MERCANTEL

(whispering to the KING)

Look at that Sire. Curves upon curves! No girl here! Woman through and through! Soft woman...schooled woman...

KING WILLIAM

I say 'woman'. What brings you here?

MERCANTEL
 (quietly, while still
 smiling, to the KING)
 Sire - please do not joke.

KING WILLIAM
 What is it you require?

COUBALEI A NORMAHNS
 Your Highness, I require nothing, I
 was summoned.

KING WILLIAM
 You require nothing? Everyone
 requires something. What is it
 then?

COUBALEI A NORMAHNS
 Nothing I assure you Sire.

KING WILLIAM
 Did you require nothing at the
 morning meal then?

MERCANTEL
 (turning his back on
 COUBALEI, mouthing to
 the KING)
 Sire. Please.

COUBALEI A NORMAHNS
 I required the same as the others.

KING WILLIAM
 Really then. It is obvious, but I
 should like to hear it from you:
 How then does the fine lady like to
 pass her time?

MERCANTEL
 (mouthing to the KING,
 hands together in prayer)
 Oh Sire please!

COUBALEI A NORMAHNS
 I should like to ride.

KING WILLIAM
 I wonder if your horse shares your
 enthusiasm.

MERCANTEL

(quickly turning from the
KING to the GUESTS)

Guards, please take the lovely
COUNTESS A NORMAHNS to the study
and the King will be along shortly.

(to the KING after her
departure, angrily)

Sire I have done all I could for
you: youth, beauty, and curves.
What is it you require?

KING WILLIAM

I should require a larger pantry
for starters. What was her name?

MERCANTEL

Coubalei A Normahns.

KING WILLIAM

Oh got it. 'Cruel Belly Enormous'!

MERCANTEL

Sire please!

KING WILLIAM

You marry her! And god help you
with your grocery bill.

MERCANTEL

I am a warrior Sire. I choose women
when needed and heirs are not,
shall we say, 'required', of me.
She is for the King to approve.

KING WILLIAM

Well I offer no approval.

MERCANTEL storms out.

INT. THE MAGICIAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

The MAGICIAN is dressed in a long black robe with gold stars
and long pointed hat with the same pattern. He is casting
smoke into the air and looking into it to discern the future.
MERCANTEL and a FOUR GUARDS are also in the room. A couple
important, wealthy men, the BANKER and the MINISTER OF
COMMERCE, who stand by the table. MERCANTEL is on the edge of
his seat.

MERCANTEL

Well what is it! What do you see
wise oracle.

MAGICIAN

Be still. Your voice will contort
the smoke.

MERCANTEL sits back fearfully. After a few moments the
MAGICIAN cuts his deck several times and deals out TWO CARDS
onto the table.

MAGICIAN (CONT'D)

I have seen the future. The King
will not be with us after the
festival.

MERCANTEL

What! So soon? Is there no other
path the river's future might wind?

MAGICIAN

There are two courses always upon
the stars, as there is a night and
day, a sun and moon, a man, and a
woman.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

(smuggly)

Yes. That appears the problem
doesn't it. Our King doesn't
believe in two. He fancies one of
the equation.

BANKER

If we do not have an orderly
transfer of power Mercantel, the
financial market may disrupt
without confidence. There's
rumbling already at his dismissals
of women in the 44th year. I have
too much at stake, too much to
lose over this fool!

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

As do I. What this King seems to
not grasp is that we were here long
before he. Our businesses and banks
built this country! What is
civilization without us? The
trouble with him is he thinks he is
really....king.

MERCANTEL

Oracle, you say two paths exist with which the waters of time might flow. Can we effect the direction?

MAGICIAN

Yes Mercantel, you may effect both.

MERCANTEL

What if we could get the King to marry? What if he consummated before the end of his 44th year? Might not this force the future to flow on one side of the hill?

MAGICIAN

Yes.

BANKER

We must have the festival pass with a marriage Mercantel. The barbarians are known to have their infiltrations and spies. They will get word of the King's refusal to produce and they will prepare to strike and hit us under the disruption of his death.

MERCANTEL

(to the MAGICIAN)

Oracle. The King's in his 44th year. He is William the 4th. Interpret.

MAGICIAN

Number 'four' people are rebels, reversers taking the opposite path.

BANKER

(smuggly)

That explains a lot.

MAGICIAN

The number 4 with 4, together as one, 44 - has the same meaning as number 26 - the gravest warnings for the future. It foreshadows disaster brought about by the association with others... ruin.

MERCANTEL

Good god.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

There's no provision in our ancient manifests for a King outside the bloodline? Like, like Mercantel?

MERCANTEL

The manifest states that the King must have two things: 1) be of age as signified by facial hair.

BANKER

You have that covered. A pretty...
(laughing)
pretty ugly...white beard.

MERCANTEL

2) The King will wear the Royal Necklace and possess the Royal Crown given by his predecessor.

BANKER

Well we'll get the necklace easy enough. But the crown is a problem.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

Yes. No one has seen it in years. There is rumblings that he melted it down and took the jewels to give to each of his child lovers.

BANKER

I have heard it said also! If the people knew he melted down the crown of his fathers to compensate those of his 'hobby', they would likely support a new leader.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

Mercantel, deliver us either a child, or the necklace upon your neck. We don't care which one! Don't stand in the way: you're with us or against us. No man is above removal!

MERCANTEL

I assure you we are of like minds.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE, AND BANKER

Here! Here! Hail the KING!

As the men revel in union, outside the room in the street JULIA and HENRY are passing. They hear the noise and look through the window expecting to see the KING.

MERCANTEL

So it is decided. The King must wed or we will take his life. He should have an 'accident' tomorrow. We will let it be known that the crown was decimated in unclean ways. The people will turn. They will revile his ways when we present them as such to be reviled.

(to the MAGICIAN)

Oracle. You must tell me which of the two paths our river is likely to head tomorrow.

MAGICIAN

This is why there are two cards upon the table.

The room's inhabitants gather close around the table.

MERCANTEL

Magician, turn one over.

MAGICIAN

I am a seer. You are the water.

MERCANTEL picks a card and looks at the two business leaders.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

Turn it over!

BANKER

Do it!

MERCANTEL pushes a card to the magician, who flips it over.

MAGICIAN

Death. The Death card.

JULIA runs off crying. Henry stays to hear the plan.

MERCANTEL

Oracle, interpret.

MAGICIAN

It is the end card. There are 78 cards, one only is labeled death.

MERCANTEL

But the paths may change until the instant, yes?

MAGICIAN

Yes.

MERCANTEL

Gentlemen, I...I am unsure.

BANKER

You picked it. You are the killer, we, the financiers & facilitators. Tell us what you need to fulfill your specialty and we shall fulfill ours.

MERCANTEL

I should like to give him every chance and then my hands are clean.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

Yes, a chance, and should he choose to die it is his choice - not ours.

BANKER

Yes.

MERCANTEL

Yes! I will offer him the opportunity to wed the beautiful COUNTESS DE CORTERRE. Men all look at her. Though still a girl, she is delicious. If he passes her his fate is cast.

BANKER

But then you are the unwed King and we should have to kill you.

MERCANTEL uneasily looks around as if it was a joke but realizes it is not.

MERCANTEL

I...I see. I will marry the beautiful girl should he choose her not. Then it is no fault of mine.

MINISTER OF COMMERCE

And with such a lovely treat you should have no trouble making haste with an heir - yes?

BANKER AND MERCANTEL

Yes! Yes!

The men leave the room and HENRY runs off to alert the King. The MAGICIAN is seen pulling towards him the remaining card on the table. He places both hands on top of it and stares into the smoke of the candle.

MAGICIAN

The path of a river has but right
and left. The right hand hath
chosen death. The left hand is...

The MAGICIAN flips the card.

MAGICIAN (CONT'D)

Fire...Death, and fire. The fates
hath brought a blackness upon this
kingdom.

INT. THE KING'S TOWER - NIGHT

The King is walking about the room listening to HENRY.

KING WILLIAM

But where is JULIA?

HENRY

I do not know. You must listen
King. They will cause you an
accident if you do not wed COUNTESS
DE CORTERRE. You must do it.

KING WILLIAM

I must...find JULIA.

HENRY

King, we must plan. You must marry
the girl...she is...
(stopping himself from
adoration)
She will suit you, eventually. It
will stop them. We must stop them!
I will fight them by your side and
kill MERCANTEL myself!

KING WILLIAM

Young man...you are a natural
leader. I see it how you command
the choir with authority. You could
command a congregation, and a
country.

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You are not afraid of the heartless MERCANTEL. Heartless men are the most dangerous.

HENRY

That is why the King must sing. You must be the King. The oracle said you, you in this year especially, are poised to create a reversal - a great change. You must remain in power and reverse the likes of the men who conspire.

KING WILLIAM

From your description I know who they are. It was the Minister of Commerce and the head Financier. How many guards were with them.

HENRY

Their were four Sire. Each had a gold band upon his arm.

KING WILLIAM

The eight with the gold bands are my personal guards in public and abroad - encharged with dying for the king. I've lost half of my security and have no way of knowing which ones. I could wed the girl and never really fix anything son.

HENRY

It is a start. You have allies Sire. You may count on me and JULIA and many more. You are loved.

KING WILLIAM

Yes, until the evil ones spread muck into the minds of the sure knocking them onto the shadowed side.

HENRY

Truth does prevail Sire.

KING WILLIAM

I must find Julia.

EXT. BASE OF THE KING'S TOWER - NIGHT

MERCANTEL stops in front of some revelers at the towers base.

MERCANTEL

You there. I'm looking for the King. Have you been here a while?

REVELER

We have. He is up there.

ANOTHER REVELER

A young boy went up just a while ago. They are in there 'together'.

REVELER

It is the way of some.

MERCANTEL

Yes. It is.

MERCANTEL blows the horn to summons the King.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

The festival is tomorrow and I see some of the kingdom hath begun tonight with the celebrations and liberal drink.

They being to sing a drinking song:

SONG - REVELERS WE

The KING appears at the tower's door by them with HENRY. The revelers look at each other and giggle.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

You revelers get out of here. Now!

They leave.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

Sire, I desire to speak alone.

KING WILLIAM

What you say can be spoken in front of the child.

MERCANTEL

Certainly. Who keeps secrets amongst us? I have consulted the oracle Sire. There is growing concern that the numbers in the stars conspire against us.

KING WILLIAM

The stars is it?

MERCANTEL

Yes Sire. It is suggested that the flow of time hath approached a fork like a river. As your trusted protector, I must implore you to choose the path that results in stability. The festival tomorrow is nearly upon us and I will summons the COUNTESS DE CORTERRE and tell her she is to marry you then. I beg you to take this course Sire.

KING WILLIAM

Summon her then.

HENRY embraces the King.

MERCANTEL

You...agree? After all of this?

KING WILLIAM

I am not against the stars. They have been here before me and will remain thereafter.

MERCANTEL

(to HENRY, misinterpreting the boy's embrace)

Don't be distraught child. It really changes nothing. You have chosen wisely Sire. I shall make the arrangements. Thank-you Sire. Thank-You!

MERCANTEL runs off.

KING WILLIAM

It really changes...nothing.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - MORNING

HENRY is leading the musicians in final practice for the festival. The courtyard is decorated in golden suns with long filaments. A crowd of people has gathered and the altar for wedding with a long white carpet aisle is setup middle stage. MERCANTEL is see giving orders and the King is seen looking around. The chorus and musicians are playing

SONG - THE SOLSITCE SONG

After it is over the King is seen shaking hands, apparently congratulatory as people have heard the word of his impending marriage but the King is seen straining to look towards the choir area which is still absent of JULIA. The King makes it to HENRY.

KING WILLIAM

Where is she? You have not seen her since last night.

HENRY

No King. She will get over it. She is loyal to you King and will come around. We must give her time.

KING WILLIAM

Yes....time.

MERCANTEL approaches.

MERCANTEL

Well the festival preparation is nearly complete. The last minute wedding has excitement buzzing the air. Everyone seems so happy. Me too!

KING WILLIAM

Yes everyone. Everyone is.

EXT. CASTLE GARDENS - DAY

JULIA is walking among the flowers. The KING has found her but he chooses to remain hidden behind the bordering trees. He moves towards the trees but stops and considers. JULIA begins the

SONG - I THEE WED (TO a verse before its first change)

The King listens to her lament and nearing the songs end comes through the trees to enter the song in painful duet. The song stops before the first its two beautiful texture changes.

KING WILLIAM

So we are made without wings and must watch the other creatures soar high above.

JULIA

There are birds and there are men.
Their are the Royal and there are
the common. Our maker deems it so
My Lord.

KING WILLIAM

William.

JULIA

William.

KING WILLIAM

Does he really? Is this gods will?
Separation by class, by caste. It
rings hollow without the resonance
of truth, rings dull, like a
cracked bell's banter.

JULIA

There is god in your fine song.

KING WILLIAM

And in your's dear woman.

JULIA

You must marry the child William. I
will smile upon your vows and sing
the with perfect pitch the notes of
your wedding song.

KING WILLIAM

As I listen unable to show myself?
As I sing not? Is this gods will or
a cracked bells banter - for even
the cracked bell gets to sing a
little - who deems this - whose
laws are we following?

JULIA

Those of the men we have empowered
I suppose. We are bound it appears.

KING WILLIAM

I should take the matter into my
own hand then.

JULIA

If there was only a way William.

KING WILLIAM

The matter into my own hand.
 (he takes her hand in his
 and kneels)

I should marry you here. If you
 would have this man. I should marry
 you here in the eyes of our maker.
 We bow to him, He gives us love and
 song. He gives life. He is the
 number upon the stars, the numbers,
 the stars themselves. He is the
 song in a heart, and you are my
 song. Marry me JULIA, in the true
 world - not the world of merchants
 and oracles - the world of ... of
 the flowers - let us call them our
 subjects queen. Let you and I be
 the lord and mistress of our own
 garden. Dear God have mercy upon
 us.

JULIA pulls away and put distance between them. KING WILLIAM
 rises and looks off over the flowers.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Julia...I...I love you.

JULIA

Oh William. And I love you. Who are
 we to jump across the bonds of
 caste? Who are we to question and
 overturn the ways of men.

KING WILLIAM

Who? I am King! Our maker made me
 this for a reason, made you who you
 are for a reason. And he hath
 brought us together for a reason.
 The Solstice festival Julia, it is
 the day with the most light of the
 entire year, the 21st day of June.
 Let it be the most bright then! Let
 the shadowed minds of men find
 ample illumination.

JULIA

But you are to marry the girl for -
 the kingdom's sake.

SONG - I THEE WED (FROM a verse before its first change)

This time they complete the song as JULIA resists the possibility of jumping across caste lines, readying to leave but unable to during the FIRST CHANGE IN THE MUSIC. During the MUSIC'S SECOND CHANGE, the King pulls a flower from the garden, goes to his knee, twists its stem into a ring and places it upon her singing 'with this ring - I thee wed'. JULIA repeats those lines through her tears during the music.

JULIA (CONT'D)

Can a river run two paths my love?

KING WILLIAM

Yes. It just did...wife.

ACT III

INT. THE KING'S LIBRARY - DAY

JULIA and HENRY are sitting on the couch dressed and cleaned for the performance and wedding. The KING stands with his back to them considering a CHESSBOARD, similar to the one in the tower, where he is playing another game against himself. He is dressed in a new royal wedding outfit.

KING WILLIAM

So these wedding clothes - do they suit me.

HENRY

No.

JULIA

Yes.

KING WILLIAM

I thought so.

They all laugh. The KING turns to them smiling.

JULIA

You look wonderful William.

The KING approaches her smiling and paces his hands on her shoulders gently feeling her skin.

KING WILLIAM

And you JULIA, you are the finest woman in the kingdom, and with your hair done ready for the performance, the woman who was already the most beautiful on earth, hath transcended, to take now her place amongst the angels.

JULIA

I saw the young Countess. She is ...truly a beautiful woman.

KING WILLIAM

Girl.

HENRY

Truly...beautiful. It is not what you should like to hear Sire, but I think thou art exceedingly lucky. Can she... can she sing, King?

KING WILLIAM

I'm afraid the arts are not in congruence with the royal, as if somehow barbaric, is not the converse true however? Yet, I think the children if allowed and nurtured learn and ... by god she is a child. Perhaps with the right teacher - the ones who should learn are the leaders no?

JULIA

Yes William and you will teach her well.

The KING stares down at the CHESS TABLE.

KING WILLIAM

I Think that move is not allowed. The KING'S moves are limited by the makers of the game.

(beat)

You see friends, I have not married because our maker hath given me a gift of song for some reason. The King can't sing. A wife would see. I haven't known the move to make on my silly board - against myself.

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

It has been easier to let them think I needed private time for lovers - and I did - I loved that music too much to have kept it locked away. Anyhow, the moves have reached a limit. We are dressed and ready.

The KING stares at both of them.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

Look you both. You are the chosen ones. Who knows in this entire kingdom the secret of this king? You do. And who knows the secret of Mercantel and his unholy band? You do. You are chosen. HENRY, you are without status and necklace are yet worthy, a prince. JULIA, you are without a title, and yet the QUEEN - and I - I am with title, and yet a common baritone. These things are and will be. It is written in the numbers upon the heavens.

(beat)

It is nearly time to end it.

(looking at the chess board)

I hath made a move, whilst thou cleaned, anticipating MERCANTELS two open moves. It would appear the game hath reached its limit.

(in despair)

What was once behind you - is now in front...and what was once above... is now....below.

HENRY

Yes Sire.

(jokingly, posing, flipping his hair, to break the KINGS despair)

You complimented JULIA, but doesn't His Highness think that HENRY hath cleaned up well also.

KING WILLIAM

(laughing)

Bless your timing son. Well since you brought it up, I wasn't going to say you know, it appears that HENRY hath been playing in the royal sandbox. Wipe your lip boy. You are about to lead the band.

HENRY self consciously wipes the dirt from his lip. The KING shakes his head signalling the boy has not got it. JULIA takes a handkerchief and approaches HENRY to assist.

The King walks to the window.

JULIA

It won't come off. It requires not a cloth, but a razor.

HENRY feels the upper lip.

HENRY

Well, well, well! It hath begun! My voice will change soon.

The KING turns quickly from the window as if taken with sudden thought. He looks over the chessboard and moves two pieces.

KING WILLIAM

(with great resolution)

The oracle hath read a card and he should be fulfilled. He hath given me the way and the funny thing is...I believe not in him. I do believe that we all have secrets: mine is that I will not wed the girl today.

HENRY

King! You must! You must not perish for the good of the kingdom.

KING WILLIAM

(joyously)

No son. I must perish - for precisely that reason - the good of the kingdom.

JULIA

No! I wont let you!

JULIA runs to hug the KING.

KING WILLIAM

You won't let me? Who are we to undo the great plans of our maker. We are all chosen and have parts like actors in a play. Let us read the lines. Let us assume the roles.

JULIA

No. You are mistaken. Your role is leading while alive, not through martyrdom as the barbarian - you set him free Lord.

KING WILLIAM

I did. And I shall too be set free.

HENRY

No. This is not correct.

KING WILLIAM

Really then? My son, do you play chess?

HENRY

No King. It is the game of the royals - ours is the game of checkers.

KING WILLIAM

Too bad. Then you won't understand my analogy. You see, I am checkmated by MERCANTEL, or so he believes, but there was one move left! Checkers... it's not possible to illustrate in those terms - there is no similar move in that game...

(considering, the KING
breaks a wide smile when
the idea comes to him)

wait I know... when you get your man to the other side of the checker board you say "I WIN!".

HENRY

That is not so Sire. You say "KING ME".

KING WILLIAM

Okay then.

KING WILLIAM takes the ROYAL NECKLACE from his neck and places it upon HENRY'S.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You are now the King...Sire.
Welcome to the boards end! I win!
You see - you do say that!

KING WILLIAM bows.

HENRY

No! That's not how it works!

KING WILLIAM

You're right... there are the accompanying lines my father told me, and his father told him, and so on, and now I tell you....remember them Sire, the time will come when you say them to another:

(on his knee, bowing to the new KING HENRY)

'...The necklace is sapphire and the destiny blue is upon you - choose wisely your words and actions for they affect the many - choose wisely your course, set it straight and true, the kingdom, its fate, depends on you. Fare thee well my son...'

HENRY

No!...ah...as King, as a King I command you!

KING WILLIAM

(laughing)

You're getting the hang of it - that's it!

HENRY

No!

KING WILLIAM

Yes! There are evil men who must be taken down. This is the way and you will follow the course set by those who rule -us. This is not my course son - succumb to your destiny.

(smiling, happily)

What was once behind you is now in front...and what was once above is now....below.

(to JULIA)

Look for me in the clouds. You will see me soon. Do not fight the course of a mighty river, it is our makers life blood flowing cleanly - who are we to jump across caste lines anyhow? I was once...a king.

The KING touches both their cheeks.

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

My time - our time - hath come -
goodbye - I will see you up high.

The KING leaves. JULIA and the new KING HENRY stand in shock uncertain what to do.

JULIA

(to HENRY)

What am I to call you?

HENRY

(looking at the sapphire)

How about...Henry? Good god help me. This sapphire is upon me. What just happened?

JULIA

The river took a turn Sire.

HENRY

What is he planning to do?

JULIA

He must know what he is doing.

HENRY

What was once behind is now in front, and what was once above, is now below...what does it mean.

HENRY walks about the room and then acts out the lines as they were portrayed to him first in the tower. He walks forward towards the books and grabs the book to the right of the one odd colored on the shelf. The case opens to reveal the CROWN and ROYAL CHEST of music.

JULIA

That was what he spoke of - the 'move' he made earlier. He 'moved' them from the tower to here.

HENRY

Oh no!...I know what comes next.
JULIA throw me that coat!

HENRY DONS THE COAT to cover the necklace and grabs the CROWN before shutting the secret hiding place to protect the music.

EXT. BASE OF THE KING'S TOWER - DAY

MERCANTEL and the four conspirator GUARDS are standing at the door to the tower.

MERCANTEL

I cannot believe it! I gave him every chance. The fool. He has not the courage to face me but has a note passed to me?!

(reading aloud)

Changed my mind. Blow the trumpet and we'll talk about it.

(to the GUARDS)

Do you hear him in there? Singing! This idiot is trying to destroy our kingdom - singing away the future - how dare he disregard us. He hath chosen his card. Throw fire into the throat of his tower and burn his voice from him then!

The GUARDS light torches and throw them into the small windows at the base of the tower. They accelerate the blaze with hay from a nearby cart filled tall with bales.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

Burn the damn man's throat out!
Listen to him sing up there! The king CAN NOT sing! Doesn't he know!
The wooden stairs go up a long way.
Catch fire to all the wood and burn the *pansy singer* to ashes!

Smoke begins pouring from the upper windows of the King's chamber. Silence from the inside of the tower is all that remains. A crowd begins to gather as the castles inhabitants see the billowing black smoke. The MINISTER OF COMMERCE and THE BANKER appear smiling and join MERCANTEL.

THE CROWD

Fire! Smoke billows from the King's Tower!

MERCANTEL

People! People! Remain calm and listen to me! Gather and find our way. Find Your way to my voice and find the truth of us!

The people gather at the base of the tower and focus upon MERCANTEL.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)
Kingdom! There has been a great
tragedy upon the day of the
solstice. Hear me. Hear me!!

The people begin to quiet down seeking news of the fire.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)
The King has confided in me. I was
the King's best friend. I knew him
the best and held his secrets. Our
king was afflicted. Our king knew a
demon had wrapped around his spirit
like a choking vine. He struggled
with it and confided in me. He
could not win. He was unclean and
he knew it. He never married
because of his affliction and on
the day of his marriage - today -
he found his past catching up with
him. He told me this morning that
he could no longer lead his great
people with confidence - See the
smoke of your King! But fear not!
He hath provided for you. He hath
taken his life to cleansing fires
and born a new leader in private -
it is I - I shall take you to a
better place. He hath entrusted me
with the Royal Secret Oath of the
King - Behold your King - Behold
MERCANTEL - Your King by the order
of them who hath come before!

People begin bowing to MERCANTEL confused and fearful.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)
You should trust your Mercantel my
people. It is a dark day. Trust in
your Mercantel. Those black clouds
above soon dissipate - I will
return you the light and clarity!

HENRY and JULIA arrive. He is covered by coat and the
necklace not visible. JULIA drops to her knees in tears at
the sight of the billowing smoke. HENRY helps her up lovingly
and then walks to the front of the crowd opposite MERCANTEL.

HENRY

Mr. Mercantel! People of the Kingdom! There is no Royal Necklace upon this man!

The people begin to stir realizing the young man is correct.

MERCANTEL

My friend the King confided in me alone that his unclean ways had been his end - that the Royal Necklace had witnessed his indiscretions of the flesh with children. The King realized a new necklace need be upon me - one of clean energy, and his own so desecrated need be purged with his own flesh, by fire!

HENRY

But what of the crown! It has not been worn and would not be so desecrated!

MERCANTEL

My friends a dark day has come. The torch has been passed to a clean and true generation. The crown was desecrated - melted down, as he recounted to me in his tears - its stones taken by the king, given to the children whom he could not control his desires with. Out of guilt to each for what he had done - a gem from the crown of his forefathers. A sad day.

HENRY

You sir! People! The King was in judgement by these men for not having an heir yet you say he chose to empower an older unwed man?! You?!

The people stir again.

MERCANTEL

People! Friends You should trust your Mercantel! The King, my dear afflicted friend did not want marriage and to change his 'habits'.

(MORE)

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

He instructed me to take the young girl COUNTESS De CORTERRE as my wife in his place - that she should give me child - Give child to us! Give us stability, cleanliness.

COUNTESS DE CORTERRE is horrified and buries her head into her mother's dress at the thought of the ugly old man. Her father envelops both of them in his arms in a futile shielding effort.

MERCANTEL (CONT'D)

The ministry of Commerce and the chief Banker stand side by side here now. They knew the truth also and we stand ready to bring in the new day - TO SERVE YOU! People! The traditions are good and to be revered, not reversed! We must continue the long line of what came before us. We must continue and obey our manifest! Follow me!

(waving his arms)

Join me! Say it with me! We are reborn! Repeat with me - come on!

(arms skyward, screaming)

"We must continue what was - we must obey the laws of the land - trust in Mercantel for he has been chosen!"

THE CROWD

"We must continue what was - we must obey the laws of the land - trust in Mercantel for he has been chosen!"

HENRY grabs the summoning trumpet from the base of the burning tower and jumps atop the cart of hay. He begins blowing it to disrupt. Some musicians grab their horns and join in a massive regal chord until the momentum of a crowds frenzy reverses and attention is diverted upon the young man HENRY, now standing higher than MERCANTEL.

HENRY

People! Hear me! This man seeks your trust. This man tells you of his friend and things said that only he heard. These three men and these four guards assure of you of their cleanliness and of your Kings vile nature! They ask trust?! They are here to 'SERVE YOU'?!

HENRY rips open his coat to reveal the Royal Necklace.

HENRY (CONT'D)

These men assured you the King
burned this. Yet he hath passed the
torch to a new generation - not an
old order.

KING HENRY THE FIRST takes the long trumpet and hurls it as a
javelin towards MERCANTEL'S feet from atop the cart.

HENRY (CONT'D)

That was the trumpet to summon the
King from above. He hath been
summoned!

JULIA takes the CROWN from a bag and throws it up to HENRY
atop the Cart as the people begin to rumble and encircle
MERCANTEL and the other conspirators.

HENRY (CONT'D)

And here, more proof of their
'cleanliness', the crown was not
desecrated any more than the
necklace was. You have been lied
to! The King hath not committed any
crime, nor taken his life! Behold
the criminals! The false! Behold
the men - who killed our King!!

The crowd swells in anger and envelopes the conspirators.

THE CROWD

(screaming angrily)
"Burn *Them* - Burn Them!"

HENRY

No! People! My People! Listen! We
must begin anew! The King was a
friend of a man here - my friend!
He was a merciful man who could
sing! Let his legacy live on!

HENRY pauses and realizes he has the crowd's attention. He
places his hands on his hips regally and stands tall.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Take them unharmed to the gates and
cast them forth from our world -
they are the barbarians! Cast them
out and show them mercy. We do not
need them and we need not their
blood to stain our clean hands!

(MORE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

Do this in honor of the man who
loved you. Honor him in me! Honor
him - in YOU! Cast them out!

The people appear confused.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Let it go forth that the King's
strength resides not only in his
arm but in his mind and choices,
and this strengths are only outdone
by the power of his heart! Your
hearts - Our hearts people! You
should trust *yourselves*. We are the
power - THEY...

(pointing at the
conspirators)

WERE SUPPOSED TO SERVE THE PEOPLE -
NOT THE OTHER WAY AROUND! THEY
SERVED THEMSELVES and become the
barbaric. We are rid of them
finally. Let us uphold the good
traditions and cast out those that
ring false - because they were made
by men like these - Your King could
sing. The King *must* sing.

A CHEER comes forth from the people who like what they hear
and feel inspired by the powerful young leader.

HENRY (CONT'D)

We will start fresh - not rid of an
unclean King - but in loss of a
great man- there *will be* a festival
today- and a marriage.

HENRY extends his hand to the COUNTESS DE CORTERRE who is
hoisted atop the cart and they embrace.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Great people! Behold your QUEEN!

They cheer and erupt as some drag the conspirators away.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Celebrate her! Celebrate
yourselves! That King could sing!
The King must sing. This King can
sing!

SONG - HAIL THE KING (From the 2nd VERSE)

HENRY (CONT'D)

People! To the alter. We have a
festival to celebrate...and a bride
to crown!

SONG - THE SOLSTICE SONG

A CLEAN SHAVEN MAN appears from stage right. He is hardly noticeable dressed in a commoner's musician clothes. It is the former KING. He takes a position next to JULIA and begins singing. She shows recognition and bewilderment in the voice. She looks at him and realizes it is he, jumping into his arms. The excited crowd parts in reverence to the new queen who is regally lifted from the cart and walks towards the alter. HENRY notices JULIA in an embrace and jumps from the cart to the musicians stand and joins them.

KING WILLIAM

You'll make a fine couple
(looking at JULIA)
- and so will we.

HENRY

King, I do not understand?

KING WILLIAM

Do not call me that again Sire.
You, are the King, and I, I'm just
a commoner who sings in praise of
the Lord, and the Lord of this
castle.

HENRY

But the singing from the tower,
MERCANTEL knew you were within when
he set the fires.

KING WILLIAM

Reverberation My Lord.
Reverberation! Through a hose I
sang and its end within the locked
base reverberated within. They knew
I was somewhere I was not. It was
the only way. We needed to rid the
kingdom of them or nothing would
change.

(smiling)

You said you knew nothing of chess
King. You will learn it, for its
moves are welcome fodder for the
leader.

(MORE)

KING WILLIAM (CONT'D)

The one just played against
MERCANTEL, oddly enough, that move
is a 'CASTLE', a substitution of
places with the king - a move
beyond his usual constraints - a
move between a king and a tower -
it is what gave me the idea.

HENRY

You must stay near me - teach me.

KING WILLIAM

I will. We lost one Chessboard to
the fire but a fine one waits in
the library for you to master.

HENRY

You are an incredible man.

KING WILLIAM

And you ... are a King. Your queen
awaits. Your kingdom awaits. Choose
wisely. Your father is looking down
smiling proudly on his son - KING
HENRY THE FIRST. Hail the KING!