

Scene Three
The Royal Parlor

(Immediately following. The QUEEN sits, sewing a button on the king's trousers. The KING, clad in his undergarments, is trying to squeeze into a suit jacket that is too small for him. After a sharp orchestra chord, the QUEEN speaks:)

QUEEN. A fine father you are! You never worry about him.

(A sharp orchestra chord.)

KING. What's wrong with him?

(A sharp orchestra chord.)

QUEEN. He isn't happy.

(She bites off the thread and thrusts the pants at the KING on two orchestra chords. Music out.)

KING. Of course he is.

(He struggles to get the pants on.)

QUEEN. If he's happy, why doesn't he get married?

KING. If he's happy, why *should* he get married?

(Trying in vain to button the pants.)

Oh, it's no use trying to get these buttoned. They'll just have to do as-is.

QUEEN. Don't be ridiculous. You look like five pounds of flour in a two-pound sack.

(The KING takes the pants off.)

The royal tailor will just have to make you a new suit.

KING. But this suit is in perfect shape!

QUEEN. No one is questioning the shape the suit is in, darling.

(CHRISTOPHER comes storming into the room, brandishing the flier.)

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CHRISTOPHER. Mother, what is the meaning of this?

KING. (*Putting on a dressing gown.*) Doesn't anybody in this house knock?

QUEEN. Darling, we were just talking about you.

KING. Your mother was talking, I was listening.

QUEEN. And where have you been, in that costume?

CHRISTOPHER. Why wasn't I consulted about this ball that I'm supposedly giving?

QUEEN. Oh, darn - you found out. It was supposed to be a surprise birthday party. Well, surprise!

CHRISTOPHER. It's three months until my birthday. And since when does a birthday party require the attendance of "every eligible young maiden in the kingdom"?

QUEEN. (*Feigning shock and disbelief.*) What...? Let me...

(She snatches the flier and gives it a glance.)

Well, you know those royal printers - they never get anything right.

CHRISTOPHER. Mom, I want this ball called off immediately.

QUEEN. But, darling, it's impossible to cancel once you've got the ball rolling.

(She realizes she has made a joke and howls, but she's the only one.)

CHRISTOPHER. Well, you can just count me out!

(He turns on his heels and starts off.)

KING. Your Highness!

(This in a father's tone of voice that pulls CHRISTOPHER up short.)

Look, Chris - we don't want to pressure you, but you do have certain obligations.

QUEEN. What your father is trying to say is that it's time to choose a bride and produce an heir. After all, someday soon this kingdom will be yours.

KING. Not *that* soon.