

## **ROUND ONE - The murder is announced**

Round Instructions:

Where possible there should be two throne style chairs at the head of the room, perhaps elevated on a platform. Queen Elswith should occupy one and the other should be empty. Queen Elswith should be holding a doll wrapped in a blanket (Prince Edward). Beside Queen Elswith's throne there should be a plain seat in which Maid Inchina can sit sewing.

Victoria Sponge can be serving guests, mingling with other waiting staff. Wayland the Smith and the two knights, Sir Render and Sir Veillance should be seated at tables within the room, seemingly some of the audience/ guests.

A court Jester should be mingling with the guests, juggling, telling jokes and generally playing the fool. The Jester should wear a very recognisable Jester's hat, preferably with bells. (The Jester can be acted by the same person playing Cantfail as they will never be in the same room together.)

All the guests should be in a position to see the acting before the scene begins.

### **ROUND ONE SCRIPT**

QUEEN ELSWITH STANDS UP TO ADDRESS THE GUESTS. SIR VEILLANCE SHOULD THUMP ON THE TABLE TO ATTRACT EVERYONE'S ATTENTION FOR HER. AFTER HE HAS SAID HIS LINES HE SHOULD GESTURE FOR THE JESTER TO COME OVER AND APPEAR TO EXCHANGE WORDS WITH HIM – UNHEARD BY ANYONE ELSE.

**Sir Veillance:** Quiet! Quiet everyone. My Lady would speak.

**Queen E:** Thank you Sir Veillance. Lords, ladies, peasants, and unpleasants, allow me to bid you welcome to this, our humble abode.

I am afraid my Lord the King is unable to join us this evening for the banquet. He has been taken ill.

**Victoria Sponge:** Nothing serious I trust my Lady?

**Queen E:** A cold, just, Mrs Sponge. I fear the last jousting tournament in the rain drained him.

**Victoria Sponge:** Chainmail can be so terribly cold my Lady – especially when wet.

**Queen E:** Yes, me thinks he caught a chill. He is in bed with a high fever and a watering nose.

**Maid Inchina:** Mail flu then. Chainmail, that is.

**Queen E:** Indeed. However – we still have our entertainment and we have mead and meat. We will make the best of the evening. And yet – I crave company beside me.

**Sir Veillance:** Just say the word my lady and one of us would gladly join you.

**Queen E:** Indeed. That is most gracious an offer Sir Veillance, however me thinks that it would be even more gracious if I were to bestow such an honour upon one of my more humble subjects.

**Sir Veillance:** As you will my lady.

**Maid Inchina:** How will you pick my lady?

**Queen E:** Oh - not I Inchina, I would never dare to select for fear of showing favour. This task I will set to one other. Jester? Come hither.

JESTER RUSHES OVER.

**Jester:** My lady?

**Queen E:** Select a loyal subject.

**Jester:** Yes my lady. And my lady?

JESTER LEANS IN TO WHISPER SOMETHING IN HER EAR (UNHEARD BY AUDIENCE)

**Queen E:** Then summon more.

**Jester:** Yes my lady.

JESTER LOOKS AROUND, PERHAPS CARTWHEELS OR JINGLES ABOUT THE GUESTS AND THEN POINTS TO WAYLAND THE SMITH.

**Jester:** You.

**Wayland:** Me? It would be an honour, your lady.

WAYLAND BOWS LOW AND THEN APPROACHES AND BOWS AGAIN IN FRONT OF THE QUEEN. JESTER DANCES OUT OF THE ROOM.

**Wayland:** My lady!

**Queen E:** Your name?

**Wayland:** Wayland my lady. Whence would you have me sit?

**Queen E:** Here loyal Wayland. Come keep me company on this long night.

**Wayland:** Yes your majesty.

THERE IS A LOUD CRASHING SOUND FROM OUT OF THE ROOM. (A COUPLE OF BAKING TINS CRASHED TOGETHER WILL SUFFICE). THE JESTER'S HAT IS THROWN BACK INTO THE ROOM.

MAID INCHINA SCREAMS LOUDLY. SIR VEILLANCE AND SIR RENDER JUMP UP. SIR VEILLANCE RUSHES OUT OF THE DOOR. SIR RENDER RUSHES TO THE HAT.

**Queen E:** What is it?

**Sir Render:** [HOLDING HAT ALOFT] The jester's hat my lady.

SIR VEILLANCE RUSHES BACK INTO THE ROOM.

**Queen E:** Sir Veillance?

**Sir Veillance:** It was the portcullis your majesty.

**Queen E:** I do not recall ordering it lowered.

**Sir Veillance:** No indeed your majesty – but it has lowered none the less. The Jester is ... not himself.

**Maid Inchina:** Not himself? You mean he's a little shaken?

**Sir Veillance:** No – Inchina, I mean he is dead.

ALL CAST BREATHE IN SHARPLY AND MAID INCHINA FAINTS IN HER CHAIR. QUEEN ELSWITH TENDS TO HER.

**Queen E:** See to it no one leaves the castle Sir Veillance. Sir Render: summon that meddling monk Cantfail. If anyone can find out what is going on it will be him. The rest of you – please continue with the banquet.