

A Crust of Bread



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Adapted from the play *Make-Believe* by A. A. Milne

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

A Crust of Bread!

2

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A Crust of Bread!

3

MAKE-BELIEVE: A CHILDREN'S PLAY IN A PROLOGUE AND THREE ACTS was first produced at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, England, on December 24, 1918, with the following cast: Marjory Holman, Jean Cadell, Rosa Lynd, Betty Chester, Roy Lennol, John Barclay, Kinsey Peile, Stanley Drewitt, Ivan Berlyn, and Herbert Marshall.

A Crust of Bread!

4

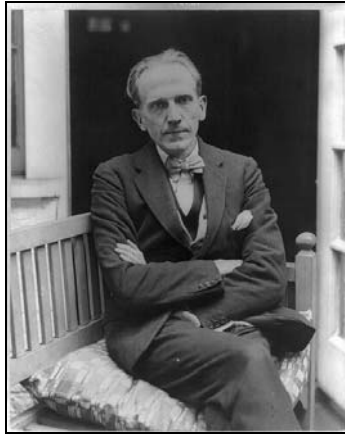
A Crust of Bread!

COMEDY. Adapted from the play *Make Believe* by A. A. Milne. The King and Queen are eager to decide who will marry their daughter since her suitors, who have rather hearty appetites, are eating them out of castle and kingdom. The suitors include the snobby Yellow Prince, who doesn't like to get his hands dirty; the Blue Prince, who likes to stare into space; and the Red Prince, who is phony and condescending. To find the suitor with the kindest heart, the King and Queen decide to test them by having the Queen disguise herself as a beggar and ask each suitor for a crust of bread. However, unbeknownst to her parents, the Princess has proposed marriage to the "oh so very slow and uncomprehending but entirely adorable" Woodcutter. The Princess and Woodcutter overhear the King and Queen's plans and concoct a scheme in which the Woodcutter will prove to have the kindest heart with the help of three pieces of dreadfully dry, moldy bread. Delightfully wacky characters take center stage in this hilarious play.

Performance time: Approximately 30 minutes.

A Crust of Bread!

5



A. A. Milne, 1922

About the Story

English author Alan Alexander Milne was born in Hampstead, London, and is best known for his Winnie-the-Pooh books. Milne joined the British Army during WWI and served as an officer. He married in 1913, and his only son, Christopher Robin Milne, was born in 1920. During his writing career, Milne wrote more than 30 plays as well as several novels, story collections, poems, and works of nonfiction.

A Crust of Bread!

6

Characters

(5 M, 2 F)

PRINCESS: Princess who is in love with a woodcutter; wears a crown and dress; female.

KING: Has to decide which of three princes his daughter will marry; male.

QUEEN: Disguises herself as a beggar in order to find the suitor with the kindest heart; wears a crown and a dress and beggar disguise; female.

WOODCUTTER: Hardworking, handsome woodcutter who can be a bit slow when it comes to romance; wears a flannel shirt, jeans, and a hat; male.

RED PRINCE: One of the Princess's suitors who allows the Woodcutter to "help" him; wears a crown and red clothing; male.

BLUE PRINCE: Dense, monosyllabic prince who likes to stare into space; wears a crown and blue clothing; male.

YELLOW PRINCE: Condescending, snobby prince who doesn't like to get his hands dirty; wears a crown and yellow clothing; male.

A Crust of Bread!

7

Setting

A forest glade.

Set

Forest glade, exterior of Woodcutter's cottage. There is a backdrop of trees to indicate a forest. Trees/bushes large enough to hide behind are onstage. There is a cutout of the Woodcutter's cottage with a bench in front of it.

A Crust of Bread!

8

Props

Axe

Hat, for Woodcutter

3 Moldy bread crusts (For mold effect, bread can be colored with food coloring.)

Orange ribbon

Scarf or handkerchief

Ragged cloak, for Queen's beggar disguise

Log large enough for King and Queen to sit on

Glass of water

Sound Effect

Music for silly song/dance

**“No, no!
Not bread!
I will not have
any more bread!”**

—Queen

A Crust of Bread!

10

A Crust of Bread!

(AT RISE: A forest glade, outside the Woodcutter's cottage. The Woodcutter is singing while he cuts wood. As he finishes his song, the Princess enters and approaches.)

PRINCESS: Good morning, Woodcutter.

WOODCUTTER: (Continues cutting wood, without looking up.)
Good morning.

(Pause.)

PRINCESS: (Annoyed.) Good morning, Woodcutter.

WOODCUTTER: (Continues working, without looking up.)
Good morning.

PRINCESS: (Annoyed.) Don't you ever say anything except good morning?

WOODCUTTER: (Looks up.) Sometimes I say goodbye.

PRINCESS: You are a cross woodcutter today.

WOODCUTTER: I have work to do.

PRINCESS: You are still cutting wood? Don't you ever do anything else?

WOODCUTTER: Well, you are still a Princess. Don't you ever do anything else?

PRINCESS: (Annoyed.) Now, that's not fair, Woodcutter. You can't say I was a princess yesterday when I came and helped you stack your wood. Or the day before, when I tied up your hand where you had cut it. Or the day before that when we had our meal together on the grass. Was I a princess then?

WOODCUTTER: Somehow I think you were. Somehow I think you were saying to yourself, "Isn't it sweet for a princess to treat a mere woodcutter like this?"

PRINCESS: I think you're perfectly horrid. I've a good mind never to speak to you again. And...and I would, if only I

A Crust of Bread!

11

could be sure that you would notice I wasn't speaking to you.

WOODCUTTER: After all, I'm just as bad as you. Only yesterday I was thinking to myself how unselfish I was to interrupt my work in order to talk to a mere princess.

PRINCESS: Yes, but the trouble is that you *don't* interrupt your work.

(Woodcutter stops working and approaches Princess.)

WOODCUTTER: *(Smiles.)* Madam, I am at your service.

PRINCESS: I wish you were.

WOODCUTTER: Surely, you have enough people at your service already. Princes and chancellors and chamberlains and waiting maids...

PRINCESS: Yes, that's just it. That's why I want your help, particularly in the matter of the princes.

WOODCUTTER: Why? Has a suitor come for the hand of Her Royal Highness?

PRINCESS: Three suitors. And I hate them all.

WOODCUTTER: And who are you going to marry?

PRINCESS: I don't know. Father hasn't made up his mind yet.

WOODCUTTER: And this is a matter which your father — which His Majesty — decides for himself?

PRINCESS: Why, of course! You should read the history books. The suitors for the hand of a princess are always set some trial of strength or test of quality by the King, and the winner marries his daughter.

WOODCUTTER: Well, I don't live in a palace, and I think my own thoughts about these things. I'd better get back to my work.

(Woodcutter goes back to chopping wood. Pause.)

PRINCESS: Woodcutter!

A Crust of Bread!

12

WOODCUTTER: (*Looking up.*) Oh, are you still here? I thought you would have been married by now.

PRINCESS: (*Whining.*) I don't want to be married. (*Hinting.*) I mean, not to any of those three...

WOODCUTTER: You can't help yourself.

PRINCESS: I know. That's why I wanted *you* to help me.

(*Woodcutter approaches Princess.*)

WOODCUTTER: How can a simple woodcutter help a princess?

PRINCESS: Well, perhaps a simple one couldn't, but a *clever* one might.

WOODCUTTER: What would his reward be?

PRINCESS: His reward would be that the Princess—not being married to any of her three suitors—would still be able to help him chop wood in the mornings. (*Slight pause.*) I am helping you, aren't I?

WOODCUTTER: (*Smiling.*) Oh, decidedly.

PRINCESS: (*Nods.*) I thought I was.

WOODCUTTER: It is great how a lady like yourself helps so humble a fellow as I.

PRINCESS: (*Meekly.*) I'm not *very* great.

WOODCUTTER: There's enough of you to make a hundred men unhappy.

PRINCESS: (*Hinting.*) And one man happy?

WOODCUTTER: (*Reluctantly.*) And one man very, very...happy?

PRINCESS: (*Hinting, batting her eyelashes.*) I wonder who he'll be...? (*No response from Woodcutter.*) Woodcutter, if *you* were a prince, would *you* be my suitor?

WOODCUTTER: One of three?

PRINCESS: (*Excitedly.*) Oooooo! Would you kill the others?! (*Points.*) With that axe?!

A Crust of Bread!

13

WOODCUTTER: I would not kill them in order to help His Majesty make up his mind about his son-in-law, but if the Princess had made up her mind...and wanted me –

PRINCESS: (*Excitedly.*) Yes...?

WOODCUTTER: Then I would marry her no matter how many suitors she had.

PRINCESS: (*Batting her eyelashes, hinting.*) Well, she's only got three at present...

WOODCUTTER: (*No clue.*) What is that to me?

PRINCESS: (*Batting her eyelashes, hinting.*) Oh, I just thought you might want to be doing something to your axe...

WOODCUTTER: (*No clue.*) My axe?

PRINCESS: (*Frustrated.*) Yes. You see, she *has* made up her mind... (*Smiles at him and bats her eyelashes.*)

WOODCUTTER: (*Finally understands.*) You mean – ?!
(*Flabbergasted.*) But...but I'm only a woodcutter!

PRINCESS: That's where you'll have the advantage over them...when it comes to axes!

WOODCUTTER: (*Melodramatic.*) Princess! (*Takes her in his arms.*) My princess!

PRINCESS: (*Melodramatic.*) Woodcutter! My woodcutter! My oh-so-very-slow-and-uncomprehending-but-entirely-adorable woodcutter!

[END OF FREEVIEW]