

ANAROCLES AND THE LION



MURRAY J. RIVETTIE
A wacky adaptation of the classic tale

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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ANDROCLES AND THE LION

CHILDREN'S COMEDY. One day, Irving, a loveable lion, gets a thorn stuck in his paw. Due to his overbite and lack of thumbs, Irving can't pull out the painful thorn. But have no fear, because a really nice guy, Androcles, comes along and manages to pull the thorn out of Irving's paw. But soon Androcles' and Irving's luck runs out. Irving is captured by hunters, and Androcles is arrested and put in jail by a very mean Empress. The Empress is so mean, that she won't even grant Androcles one last meal—a chicken-and-beef burrito—before he is thrown to the lions. Will watching professional wrestling on TV and taking tango lessons save Androcles from the lion's jaws? This hilariously zany retelling of the classic tale will delight audiences of all ages. Perfect for touring groups.

Performance Time: Approximately 45 minutes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 2 f, 1 flexible, extras)

NARRATOR: Wears floppy hat.

LION: Loveable, but a bit of a baby.

ANDROCLES: Nice guy.

PALACE SOLDIER: Sells hot dogs at the arena.

MOTHER: Feisty; not a good taxpayer.

EMPRESS: Super mean!

EXTRAS: As arena spectators.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

Scene 1: The forest.

Scene 2: The forest, one hour later.

Scene 3: Androcles' house.

Scene 4: The palace prison, the next day.

Scene 5: The arena, later the same day.

PROPS

Floppy hat, for Narrator
Backpack
Pliers
3-foot wooden "splinter"
Boxing trunks, for Lion

SOUND EFFECTS

Doorbell
Crowd cheering (if no extras)

SCENE 1

(AT RISE: *The forest. Narrator enters, wearing floppy storyteller's hat.*)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Hello, hello, hello! Greetings one and all! My name is Books, and I am here to tell you the wonderful story of Androcles and...

(Lion enters, running all around stage, screaming and holding his paw.)

LION: Ow, ow, ow! Oh my, oh me, oh my! Oooh, that hurts so bad! I can't take it! I can't take it! *(etc.)*

(Lion keeps yelling while Narrator speaks.)

NARRATOR: ...and the Lion. This screaming creature...is the lion. *(To Lion.)* My goodness, what is the matter? You are making enough of a racket to wake up the dead!

LION: I don't care! I don't care! It hurts! It hurts! Ow, ow, ow!

NARRATOR: For heaven's sake, what hurts? What is your problem?

LION: My problem? My problem? You want to know what my problem is?

NARRATOR: Yes, that's why I asked.

(Lion calms down.)

LION: Oh, okay. My problem is...this!

(Lion shows his paw to Narrator.)

NARRATOR: What? A filthy paw? That's your problem? Just go wash it!

LION: No, no, no! (*Pause. Pulls back paw.*) Wash? Ha!

NARRATOR: Then what is it, for heaven's sake?

LION: Here. Look closer.

(*Lion practically pushes his paw into the Narrator's face. Narrator looks closely.*)

NARRATOR: I don't see a thing.

LION: A thorn! I stepped on a thorn! See it? Look...there it is! Right there! A huge thorn! Ow, ow, ow!

NARRATOR: That little thing? For that little splinter, you're jumping up and down and screaming and carrying on like you're really hurt?

LION: Yes...yes, I am! I *am* hurt! This thing is killing me! De pain, boss, de pain!

NARRATOR: Oh, come on now. You're a big boy...you're a *lion*!

LION: I'm *not* lyin'! Honest! I'm telling you the truth! Why would I lie about a thing like that?

NARRATOR: Not "lyin'"...a "*lion*." Oh, for goodness sake, just pull the darn thing out.

LION: I can't.

NARRATOR: You can't? You can't pull out the thorn?

LION: No. I can't get a good grip on it. It's that opposable-thumbs thing. I don't have them!

NARRATOR: Oh, I see. Well, why not pull it out with your teeth?

LION: My teeth? You've got to be kidding! I have such a terrible overbite, I can't get my teeth together so that I can close them down on the darn thing. (*Shows overbite.*) See?

NARRATOR: Aha. Yes, that's a very bad overbite.

LION: And besides, I have very, very soft teeth. I might just chip them trying to bite down on a thorn.

NARRATOR: My goodness, they must be *very* soft teeth.

LION: Oh, they are...believe me. Why, I chipped a molar just last week while I was eating a corned-beef sandwich. A corned-beef sandwich!

NARRATOR: Wait a minute. You chipped your tooth...on a sandwich?

LION: That's right. It was on rye bread...and when I bit down, one of those awful caraway seeds got me. It was terrible! Now, would you please help me out here? (*Extends paw.*)

NARRATOR: Gee, I really am sorry, but I can't help you. I'm not allowed.

LION: Not allowed? Why not?

NARRATOR: Because it would change the entire outcome of the story.

LION: What story?

NARRATOR: This one. The one I'm trying to tell here.

LION: What story is it?

NARRATOR: Androcles and the...and you.

LION: Androcles? And...me? (*Looks around.*) There's a story about me?

NARRATOR: Yes. It's called..."Androcles and the Lion."

LION: You mean...I'm someone...famous? (*Strikes a pose.*)

NARRATOR: Well, no, not exactly. It's just that there's this story—

LION: Huh! "Androcles and the Lion." (*Strutting.*) Ha! That's me. I'm the Lion! I'm in a story! How do you like that? I'm a celebrity! I'm a star!

NARRATOR: That's right, you're a star, but you'll still have to wait.

LION: Wait? For what?

NARRATOR: For Androcles to make his appearance. He's the one who has to pull the thorn out of your paw.

LION: Oh, all right. When's he going to be here...this Androcles?

NARRATOR: Oh, let's see... (*Looks at the sun.*) I'd say...probably any minute now...

LION: Aha.

NARRATOR: Or maybe not.

LION: What?

NARRATOR: Well, I'm sorry, but I didn't wear my wristwatch today. It's at the jewelers for cleaning. But according to the sun...any minute...or hour...depending.

LION: Depending? Depending on what?

NARRATOR: Depending...on when he actually arrives! Or...a total eclipse, whichever comes first.

LION: Oh, I see. *(Pause.)* So you really don't know when he'll be here?

(Pause.)

NARRATOR: No.

LION: Okay. Well, when he *does* get here, you won't mention anything about...about me kind of carrying on and all...will you?

NARRATOR: Oh, no, of course not.

LION: Yeah, please don't tell anyone. We lions have our *pride*, you know. *(Lion nudges Narrator, chuckles at his own joke.)*

NARRATOR: Why would I tell anyone anyway?

LION: No, no, no. As I said...we *lions* have our...*pride*.

NARRATOR: Okay, okay. You have your pride. It's okay to be proud. There's nothing wrong with that.

LION: No, no, no. You don't get it, do you?

NARRATOR: Don't get what?

LION: You know...a *herd* of elephants, a *gaggle* of geese, a *pride* of lions...?

NARRATOR: Oh! That's kind of an obtuse reference.

LION: Obtuse my foot! I am *not* fat!

NARRATOR: Not "obese"..."*obtuse*." It means...oh, never mind.

LION: Okay, but this thing is really killing me.

(Narrator looks at Lion's paw.)

NARRATOR: What? That little thing?

LION: Hey, that "little thing" is like a railroad tie jammed up into my paw.

NARRATOR: Oh, please. A railroad tie?

LION: No, come to think of it, it's more like a...a redwood tree! That's it! It's humongous!

NARRATOR: No, it isn't.

LION: Yes, it is.

NARRATOR: No, it... (*Exasperated.*) All right, I'm not going to argue with you. It's humongous. It's gigantic. It's stupendous!

LION: See? I'm glad you agree with me.

NARRATOR: Look, why don't you lie down here, try taking a little nap, and it'll help you to forget about the...the horrible discomfort you're having.

LION: I just hope I can hold out with all this pain I'm in. I don't know if I can make it.

NARRATOR: I'm sure you'll be fine.

LION: I might faint...

NARRATOR: Oh, I don't think you will.

LION: 'Cause I hate the sight of blood...

NARRATOR: There *is* no blood!

LION: Especially my *own* blood!

NARRATOR: Look! There is no blood! You're going to be fine, just fine and dandy!

LION: You think so? You really think so?

NARRATOR: Sure. You just need to calm it down a bit. Lie down for a little while. Relax.

LION: Okay, I'll try that. (*Starts to lie down.*)

NARRATOR: That's a good lion.

LION: I mean, after all, I *am* a lion. I'm tough...grrrr...I can live with it. I'll suffer in silence.

NARRATOR: Good.

LION: Yep, that's what I'll do. (*Martyr-like.*) You won't hear a peep out of me again.

NARRATOR: Fine.

LION: No, sir. My lips are sealed.

NARRATOR: Good.

LION: I'm throwing away the key. *(Throws imaginary key.)*
There.

NARRATOR: That's terrific.

LION: So you just go on about your business and don't worry
about me. I'll be fine.

NARRATOR: Okay.

LION: I'll be just fine.

NARRATOR: Right.

LION: I mean, who cares if I bleed to death?

NARRATOR: You're not going to bleed to death.

LION: My lifeblood is just oozing out onto the forest floor...

NARRATOR: Believe me, nothing is oozing.

LION: ...trickling, trickling...slowly into the dirt...

NARRATOR: You're going to live. Now just lie back there.

LION: I'll just lie back here.

NARRATOR: That's right, you just lie back.

LION: Yep, I'm gonna lie back here and close my eyes... *(Puts
head down.)*

NARRATOR: Oh, yes, close those sleepy little brown eyes.

LION: They're hazel.

(Pause.)

NARRATOR: What?

LION: My eyes...they're hazel. *(Sits up.)* See?

NARRATOR: Oh my, yes. So they are. Now, let's just lie
back there...

LION: They got these neat little sparkles in them.

NARRATOR: Is that so?

LION: Oh, yeah! Makes me look even more adorable than I
am.

NARRATOR: Well, maybe you should just close them for a
while and try to get some rest.

LION: Yeah, you're right. (*Lies back down.*) I should try to rest.

NARRATOR: That's a good little boy...uh, lion.

LION: I'm not really that tired, though.

NARRATOR: Try to rest anyway.

(*Lion sits up.*)

LION: Hey, wait a minute! You're not going to try anything funny, are you?

NARRATOR: Funny? Like what?

LION: Like maybe tie me up and then send for the hunters to come and kill me while I'm helpless and can't possibly defend myself?

NARRATOR: Absolutely, that's exactly what I'm going to do.

LION: What?!

NARRATOR: I'm kidding. I wouldn't do anything like that.

LION: Phew. Are you sure?

NARRATOR: Oh, heaven's no! In fact, I'm going to take a little nap myself.

LION: Can I trust you *not* to call the hunters?

NARRATOR: Absolutely. I need you for the rest of the story.

LION: 'Cause I don't want to end up in any zoo...or especially not on somebody's wall—

NARRATOR: Please! I won't do a thing! I'm sure you'll be okay.

LION: No hunters? No zoo?

NARRATOR: No hunters, no zoo. I promise.

LION: Oh. Okay then. (*Lies down.*)

NARRATOR: That's it. Just lie down there...

LION: Like I said, I'll just suffer in silence.

NARRATOR: Okay.

LION: My lips are, like, totally sealed...

NARRATOR: Good.

LION: Not one single, solitary peep out of me...

NARRATOR: Oh, yeah, right!

LION: I will be as quiet as a church mouse...

NARRATOR: That...I'd like to see already.

LION: Silence is golden, you know... (*Whispers.*) ...it's golden.

NARRATOR: (*Aside.*) I'm beginning to have my doubts.

LION: What?

NARRATOR: Nothing.

LION: I'll be so quiet, you're gonna think you're all alone out here.

NARRATOR: Sure.

LION: You'll be able to hear a pin drop...

NARRATOR: Maybe a bowling pin.

LION: Absolute silence...

NARRATOR: (*Aside.*) I don't think so. (*To Lion.*) All right, already!

LION: (*Full voice again.*) What?

NARRATOR: I said, "I don't think it will snow...tonight, Freddy."

(*Lion sits up.*)

LION: Well, of course it won't snow tonight. And who's Freddy?

NARRATOR: No one. No one. And you're right. No snow tonight.

LION: My name is Irving.

NARRATOR: Nice to meet you, Irving. My name is Books.

LION: Books?

NARRATOR: Yes... (*Pronounces name very carefully.*) Humphrey Books!

LION: Nice to meet you...Hum-phrey. So...when is this...this...what's his name...Anti-freeze?

NARRATOR: Androcles.

LION: Whatever. When's he supposed to get here?

NARRATOR: As soon as you wake up from your nap!

LION: And when I wake, I shall be beautiful...don't you think?

NARRATOR: Absolutely.

LION: Really?

(Pause.)

NARRATOR: No.

LION: Oh. Okay.

NARRATOR: Please...just go to sleep!

LION: All right, all right. *(Starts to lie down.)* But truthfully, I am *really* not the least bit tired... *(His head hits the floor and he starts to snore, loudly.)*

NARRATOR: For someone who suffers in silence, he makes a lot of noise! *(Pause.)* Maybe I'll take a little nap myself. A lousy little thorn, and he's carrying on like he's dying. I need a better job. What a day! *(Narrator lies down and goes to sleep as lights fade to black.)*

SCENE 2

(AT RISE: The forest, one hour later.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Okay, I'm back, and now this is where the story really gets interesting. A new friend, a young man named Androcles—not anti-freeze—is about to make his appearance. Hence, the name of this story, “Androcles and the Lion.” So, let's get ready to meet him.

(Lion sits up.)

LION: Can't we just get on with the story without waiting for this guy? My paw is really beginning to hurt...a lot!

NARRATOR: Sorry, can't be helped. We need to have the young man because... *(Pause.)* Oh, hold the phone, I think I hear him coming now. *(Androcles enters.)* Ah, yes, here he is.

LION: Finally! I'm dying here! *(Rises.)*

NARRATOR: You are *not* dying! Now hush up! *(To Androcles.)* Oh, young man, young man, over here, please. Right over here.

ANDROCLES: What? *(Sees Narrator.)* Oh, hello... *(Sees lion, screams, and jumps into Narrator's arms.)* Aaaaaaaaah! A lion! A lion!

LION: Oh, boy! And I thought *I* was the scaredy-cat!

ANDROCLES: It's a lion! A lion!

NARRATOR: Take it easy! It's *okay*. He's friendly...very friendly.

(Narrator drops Androcles. Androcles hides behind Narrator.)

ANDROCLES: *(To Narrator.)* Excuse me, but I don't think that there's any such thing as a *friendly* lion!

LION: Didn't you ever see "The Wizard of Oz"?

ANDROCLES: But *he* was a cowardly lion.

LION: So am I! Give me a break, will ya?!

ANDROCLES: You're not a killer lion?

LION: Me? A killer? I hate violence. I'm a peaceful lion. I'm against all violence, and I'll kill the first person who says I'm not.

NARRATOR: And on that note, I'm outta here! Bye! I'll see you guys later. *(Exits.)*

ANDROCLES: Bye.

LION: I'm the cowardly lion's first cousin...on my mother's side. *(Grabs paw.)* Owwww!

ANDROCLES: Ohmigosh! What's the matter?

LION: I got this thorn in my paw...and it's killing me!

ANDROCLES: So, why don't you just pull it out?

LION: I can't get a good grip on it. The opposable thumb thing? (*Wiggles paws.*) Which I don't have?

ANDROCLES: Ah, yes. Okay, let's see what I have in my backpack. (*Rummages around in his backpack and finds a big pair of pliers.*) Ah! These should do the trick. (*As he prepares to remove the thorn, he strikes up a pleasant conversation.*) So, tell me...Mr. Lion...er...say, excuse me, but do you have a name?

LION: Irving.

ANDROCLES: Your name is Irving?

LION: Yeah, you got a problem with that?

ANDROCLES: No, no. Irving's good. Hmm. Irving, the lion?

LION: I was hoping my folks would have given me a real good name, like Killer or Claw –

ANDROCLES: Claw? Wow! That's scary!

LION: It's actually short for Claudius. Claudius was my uncle, who passed away about a year ago. But I thought "Claw" was cool.

ANDROCLES: Oh, sorry about your uncle.

LION: Nah, don't be sorry. He went down fighting.

ANDROCLES: No kidding? Who was he fighting?

LION: Not *who*...what. He was protesting the lack of watering holes in the jungle, and he got washed down the mountainside by a flash flood.

ANDROCLES: A flood? That's ironic!

LION: No, it was just water.

ANDROCLES: (*Sighs.*) Right.

LION: And Mom wanted me to have a more typical name...like Leo...or Snaggletooth...or Simba.

ANDROCLES: Leo's good.

LION: Leo the Lion? That name was already taken. M.G.M. got there first.

ANDROCLES: Oh. Hey, how about Elsa?

LION: Excuuuuse me! But do I look like an Elsa to you? That's a girl's name!

ANDROCLES: Oh, right.

LION: And Dad wanted to give me some sissy name like Fauntleroy...or Abernathy...or Murgatroyd. No, thank you. I'm very happy with Irving.

(Androcles grips thorn.)

ANDROCLES: Hey, I think I got it! Yes, I've got a grip on it now!

LION: Oh, please be careful. Please, please, please!

ANDROCLES: Oh, come on now. It's just a little splinter.

(Starts to pull thorn.)

LION: *(Screams.)* Oh, no! Oh, no!

(Sight gag: The "thorn" is about 3 feet long, concealed in the lion's sleeve. Androcles has to put his foot against lion's chest. While pulling to get it out of the Lion's paw, Lion screams, "Oh, no!" throughout the ordeal.)

ANDROCLES: Stop your yelling!

LION: I can't help it! It hurts! I can't look, I can't stand the sight of blood, especially mine.

ANDROCLES: Nonsense. There's no blood involved. And it's just a splinter...a tiny, little splinter...

(More and more of the thorn is being pulled out during the dialogue.)

LION: Ooooh, boy! I can't take it! I'm dying! I'm dying!

ANDROCLES: You're not dying. I think it's almost out.

LION: Oh, please be out! Please be out!

(Androcles has pulled the thorn out completely.)

ANDROCLES: There! All done!

(Lion looks at 3-foot thorn.)

LION: That? *That* is a splinter? A tiny, little splinter?
ANDROCLES: Yep.
LION: I don't think I want to know your definition of "big"!
ANDROCLES: Ah, come on, there was nothing to it!
LION: Oh, sure...easy for you to say. You're not the one who
had the darn thing stuck in your paw...er, your hand.
ANDROCLES: Well, it's all over now.
LION: Got any antibiotics?
ANDROCLES: For what?
LION: For my wound, of course.
ANDROCLES: Nope.
LION: Iodine? Penicillin?
ANDROCLES: I'm sorry, but I don't carry any of that stuff
around with me. You'll just have to tough it out. So keep it
nice and clean and you'll be *okay*. Trust me. You're just fine.
You won't die.
LION: You're sure?
ANDROCLES: Absolutely.
LION: Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.
Say, what was your name again?
ANDROCLES: Androcles Katzananapopulos.
LION: What kind of family name is *that*?
ANDROCLES: Greek. I come from a long line of
Katzananapopuloses.
LION: It would have to be a long line with a name like that.
What was it before they changed it? (*Chuckles.*)
ANDROCLES: Hey, cut it out! Don't make fun of my
name...Irving!
LION: I'm sorry.
ANDROCLES: Apology accepted. Well, my work here is
done. It's about time for me to get home.
LION: Me, too. So, Andie, where do you live? I'll walk with
you, if we're going the same way.
ANDROCLES: I live just over the river and through the trees...
LION: (*Sings.*) "...to grandmother's house we'll go."

ANDROCLES: How did you know that?

LION: How did I know what?

ANDROCLES: That my grandmother lives with my mother and me.

LION: Just a wild guess. I'm not going that way, but, hey, listen, Androcles, I owe you one.

ANDROCLES: Forget about it. It was very nice meeting you, Irving. And I'm so glad I could help you out.

LION: Likewise, but I'd really like to do something for you.

ANDROCLES: Nah, no need to do anything. What goes around, comes around.

LION: What?

ANDROCLES: It's just an old saying like "Beware of Greeks bearing gifts."

LION: Beware of Greeks bearing gifts? Why?

ANDROCLES: It's an old story... (*Lion looks puzzled.*) ...from "The Iliad"? A book by Homer...?

LION: Homer? Homer Simpson wrote a book?

ANDROCLES: Uh, no...not Homer Simpson. Just Homer. He was also Greek...I think.

LION: Probably had some long Greek name...just like yours.

ANDROCLES: I wouldn't know. It was a long time ago.

LION: Listen...you won't mention anything about my...my carrying on over the *little* splinter, will you?

ANDROCLES: No, I won't say a word. I promise. Cross my heart.

LION: Good. 'Cause if it ever got back to my family...you know...it could be embarrassing.

ANDROCLES: I understand.

LION: My parents might get some flak from some of the others if the word ever got out. We lions have our *pride*, you know. (*Chuckles at his own joke.*)

ANDROCLES: Oh...sure.

LION: No, no, no...I said, we lions have our *pride*.

ANDROCLES: I heard you. You have your pride. It's okay to be proud. Nothing wrong with that. So what?

LION: You don't get it, do you?
ANDROCLES: Don't get what?
LION: You know...a *herd* of elephants, a *gaggle* of geese, a *pride* of lions...?
ANDROCLES: Oh! Well, whatever it is you're talking about, it's kind of an obtuse reference.
LION: Again with the fat jokes!
ANDROCLES: Not "obese"..."*obtuse*." It means...never mind. You're talking nonsense.
LION: (*Exasperated.*) Never mind.
ANDROCLES: What?
LION: Look, when you have a group of lions, it's called a "pride."
ANDROCLES: So? (*Dawns on him.*) Oh! A *pride* of lions! I got it! I got it!
LION: Finally.
ANDROCLES: Sorry. I'm not that good with strange new words.
LION: That's okay. But, I mean, our *pride* really has its *pride*. (*Chuckles at joke. Then quietly.*) You see, I was taught to hunt by my mom, and my dad never really lived it down.
ANDROCLES: I see. Sorry.
LION: That's okay. Dad was seldom around. He was always sick. He had this *huge* mane—twice as big as any other lion—and the weight of it just hurt him so badly all the time. He was always in terrible pain.
ANDROCLES: Ooooh...that's too bad. Really hurt him, huh?
LION: Dad had lots of pain, from his mane. He had other problems too, but it was mainly the pain in the mane. He just kept scratching it 'cause it hurt so much. The vet wanted to put a plastic collar around his neck, but Dad wouldn't hear of it. Nope, not Dad. It was because he was so vain.
ANDROCLES: I can understand that. Your dad was vain, so he just endured the pain in his mane?

LION: Well, Dad knew how silly he would look with a collar.
And to walk around with something like that hanging on
your neck? He thought it would be insane!
ANDROCLES: I think it's more insane to endure the pain in
his mane just because he was so vain!
LION: It bothered him the most when it would rain.
ANDROCLES: Oh?
LION: Yeah. It's plain the pain from his mane was mainly
from the rain.

(Narrator enters.)

NARRATOR: Hey, hey, hey, fellas! I'm not even in this scene,
and I can't take anymore of that stuff! Now knock it off!
LION/ANDROCLES: Sorry.
NARRATOR: You should be. Okay, you two get going your
separate ways, and I'll introduce the next scene.
ANDROCLES: Right. See ya, Irving.
LION: Not if I see you first, Andie!
ANDROCLES: Or if I see you second, Irving.
NARRATOR: Hey! Just go! *(Lion and Androcles exit.)* Thank
goodness they're gone. Let's head on over to Androcles'
house. *(Starts to exit and comes back.)* Isn't this exciting?
(Starts to exit again, mumbling.) It's plain the pain of his mane
was mainly from the rain. Geez! That is so inane...and
insane! *(Pause.)* Now I'm doing it! I am outta here! *(Exits.
Blackout.)*

SCENE 3

(AT RISE: *Androcles' house. Narrator enters.*)

NARRATOR: I took a shortcut. This is Androcles' house. His mother is at home, just puttering around the house doing the usual cooking, dusting, and cleaning—sometimes you may catch her watching soap operas or playing solitaire on the computer—when she hears a loud knock at the door... (*Doorbell rings.*) I said, she hears a loud *knock* at the door! (*Knock.*) Thank you. (*Exits, mumbling.*) Boy, where do they get help these days?

(*Mother opens the door. Soldier is standing there.*)

MOTHER: Yes? May I help you?

SOLDIER: Probably. I'm looking for the Katza...nan...nana...nap...no...pop house.

MOTHER: Katzananapopulos.

SOLDIER: Kantza...banana...

MOTHER: Katzananapopulos. Here, like this... (*Shows him how to blow out his cheeks to make the "pop."*) Now say, "Katz-a-na-na..."

SOLDIER: Katza...na-na...

MOTHER: Now blow out your cheeks... (*He does. She pops his cheeks.*) ...'pop'...u...los.

SOLDIER: Katza...yeah, that name.

MOTHER: Katzananapopulos

SOLDIER: (*Exasperated.*) Whatever. Then this is the right house?

MOTHER: Yes, it is. This is my house.

SOLDIER: Terrific! Well, ma'am, I've got some very bad news for you. You're under arrest for nonpayment of back taxes.

MOTHER: *Excuuuse* me?

SOLDIER: I said, you're under arrest—

MOTHER: I heard you the first time, Gumby. Now, what is this about back taxes?

SOLDIER: Well, every year you have to pay taxes on your property. And you haven't paid anything for the last 12 years.

MOTHER: I didn't know I was supposed to. My husband used to take care of all that trivial stuff before he died.

SOLDIER: Well, the man of the house is supposed to take care of those things. It's not really woman's work. A woman's place is in the home.

MOTHER: Hey, dum-dum! I *am* in the home, and I now *am* the man of the house!

SOLDIER: You can't be the man of the house!

MOTHER: And why not, pray tell?

SOLDIER: Because you're *not* a man!

MOTHER: I can do anything any man can do...and sometimes I can do it better!

SOLDIER: Oh, yeah?

MOTHER: Yeah! I'll even arm wrestle you to prove I'm just as good as you are!

SOLDIER: Arm-wrestle? I don't think so.

MOTHER: Chicken?

SOLDIER: No...I am not chicken. I just don't want to arm wrestle a woman.

MOTHER: You're chicken. Maybe you should just go away before this *woman* hurts you.

SOLDIER: All right! I hate arm wrestling! See? I broke my wrist arm-wrestling just a few months ago, and I don't want to do it again!

MOTHER: Ha! Who broke it? One of your soldier buddies?

SOLDIER: No...actually...it was my wife.

MOTHER: Ha!

SOLDIER: Hey, she's a very big woman! Look, I'm here to collect your taxes, or you go to jail, or maybe even worse.

MOTHER: Worse?

SOLDIER: Yeah. Sometimes the Empress is in a bad mood and she throws people to the lions.

MOTHER: Wow! That's pretty harsh punishment. And just for nonpayment of taxes?

SOLDIER: Yeah, I know. But that's life, lady!

MOTHER: And I thought the IRS was bad.

SOLDIER: Hey, don't forget...you're 12 *years* behind on payments. That's a long time.

MOTHER: And I always thought that life would be so much simpler once I hit my 50s...

SOLDIER: Whoa! Hold the phone! How old are you, if you don't mind me asking?

MOTHER: Not at all. I'm proud of my age. I just turned 56.

SOLDIER: Well, you look terrific for someone in her 50s.

MOTHER: Why, thank you. You really think so?

SOLDIER: Yeah, I do, and that changes everything.

MOTHER: Oh? It does?

SOLDIER: Yeah, there's a law on the books that says you can't harm a senior citizen—55 and older—in any way, shape, or form, and that includes *not* putting them in jail and especially *not* killing them. Senior citizens are loved and revered here...unlike in Florida!

MOTHER: Well, that's a relief!

SOLDIER: Yeah, but there's a catch to it. If you have someone younger living in the house—especially someone of the male persuasion, like a son—then that person has to take your place in whatever punishment the Empress decides is fitting for you. (*Thinks.*) For 12 years of back taxes? Hmm. Probably the death penalty.

MOTHER: The death penalty, hmm? Well, I *do* have Androcles.

(*Soldier jumps back.*)

SOLDIER: Aaaaagh! You have Androcles? Oh, no! Is it contagious?

MOTHER: Relax, pal. It's not a disease. Androcles is my son.
SOLDIER: Your son? All right! We got ourselves a fall guy!
Is he home?
MOTHER: Nope. He's still at school, but he should be home soon.
SOLDIER: Okay, I got some other errands to run so, as Arnold would say, *(Imitates Arnold Schwarzenegger.)* "I'll be bock!"
(Exits.)
MOTHER: Oh, dear, this is very upsetting. What can I possibly say to Androcles when he gets home? How can I break such bad news to him? Well, I guess someone has to do it. *(Re-enters house.)* Oh, dear. Oh, dear. Oh, dear!

(Pause. Androcles enters.)

ANDROCLES: *(Yells.)* Yo, Ma! I'm home! What's for supper?
MOTHER: What's all the yelling about? Androcles, can't you come into this house like a normal human being? And, please, don't forget to wipe your feet!
ANDROCLES: Okay, Ma. I won't.
MOTHER: I made chicken soup. Are you hungry?
ANDROCLES: I could eat something.
MOTHER: Good. First, take out the garbage. Do something around the house to earn your keep, for crying out loud. You're getting very lazy these days. Get with it, son, get with it!
ANDROCLES: Okay, Ma, okay.
MOTHER: You know, I'm getting a little bit tired of you coming home from school and not lifting a finger around here. I need some help. I can't do it all myself. I love you, Androcles, but I'm not getting any younger, you know. I'm a mother and I really worry about you.
ANDROCLES: You shouldn't worry so much about me. I'm fine. Honest, I'm just fine.
MOTHER: Oh, sure, not to worry. You never write, you never call...

ANDROCLES: Ma, I *live* here...with you!

MOTHER: That's your excuse?

ANDROCLES: Of course, it's my excuse. I'm here every single day.

MOTHER: Oh, sure you are! You spend so much time watching TV and playing with your [*insert name of game system*] computer games, I don't even know you're here half the time!

ANDROCLES: Ma, all the kids are doing it.

MOTHER: So if all the kids jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge, would you jump, too?

ANDROCLES: I don't know...maybe. What's the Brooklyn Bridge?

MOTHER: Sure you would. I knew it. You're more interested in playing computer games and watching [*insert name of popular TV show*] on television than you are in helping out around the house for your poor old mother. Oh, woe is me.

ANDROCLES: I'm sorry, Ma.

MOTHER: Androcles, do you love me, son?

ANDROCLES: Ma, I love you so much, I'd give my life for you.

MOTHER: Good. Hold that thought.

ANDROCLES: What?

MOTHER: Nothing. Nothing.

ANDROCLES: Look, I'm really sorry, Ma. I'll try to help out a little more. I really will. I promise.

MOTHER: Good. So...tell me...where did you go?

ANDROCLES: Out.

MOTHER: And...what did you do?

ANDROCLES: Nothing.

MOTHER: Then where were you for so long?

ANDROCLES: Nowhere.

MOTHER: Aha! Something's up! What did you do? I know something is up. Come on, tell me. What did you do?

ANDROCLES: All right, if you must know, Ma...I took a thorn out of a lion's paw. There, I told you.

(Pause.)

MOTHER: Androcles, Androcles, Androcles! You know how I hate it when you tell lies! And that one's a real whopper!

ANDROCLES: I'm not lying, Ma.

MOTHER: Right. And I just won the Indianapolis 500! Tell me the truth, Androcles. The truth!

ANDROCLES: I *am* telling you the truth, Ma. Honest.

MOTHER: *(Crying.)* You're killing me with your lies! I'm gonna die in my youth from your lying!

ANDROCLES: Ma, I swear...

MOTHER: Don't swear at me! You should never swear at your mother!

ANDROCLES: But I wasn't—

MOTHER: Enough!

ANDROCLES: Okay, sorry, mom. I won't swear anymore.

MOTHER: Especially at a time like this.

ANDROCLES: A time like what?

MOTHER: You'll find out soon enough.

ANDROCLES: Find out what?

(Soldier enters.)

SOLDIER: Yo! I'm back.

ANDROCLES: Excuse me. Who are you?

SOLDIER: I'm your worst nightmare.

ANDROCLES: What are you talking about?

SOLDIER: *(To Mother.)* You haven't told him yet?

ANDROCLES: Told me what?

MOTHER: Androcles...dear, sweet, wonderful son of mine...

ANDROCLES: Uh, oh.

MOTHER: You...are gonna die...bye! *(Exits.)*

ANDROCLES: What?!

SOLDIER: She said, "You are gonna die!"

ANDROCLES: Hey, I'm not deaf! I heard her. But why?
SOLDIER: Oh, just a little thing like nonpayment of back taxes...for 12 years!
ANDROCLES: Taxes? You're kidding, right? And I have to die just because some taxes weren't paid?
SOLDIER: That's right.
ANDROCLES: Isn't there anything I can do?
SOLDIER: It's too late now. Unless you can come up with all the money that's owed, you'll have to pay the penalty. Sorry.
ANDROCLES: But I don't have any money!
SOLDIER: Then you're gonna die!
ANDROCLES: Oh, that's just great! And I just got the lead in my school play!
SOLDIER: Sorry, kid. Let's go. Forward, march! Hut one, hut two...you had a good home but you left...
ANDROCLES: You're right!

(They start to exit.)

SOLDIER: Hut two, three, four...let's move it out!

(Both exit. Narrator enters.)

NARRATOR: *(To audience.)* Tsk, tsk, poor Androcles. He's on his way to prison now...and maybe even worse. And it wasn't even his fault. Let's follow them and check it out. Walk this way. *(Limps off, exits. Blackout.)*

[End of Freeview]