



THE MIGHTY Mikko

A FINNISH FOLKTALE

Book & Lyrics by Aubrey Bjork

Music by Quinn Kirkham



ONLINE



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Production Inquiries

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Premiere Cast

Director, Jon-Michael Rutter; Runo/Rusthall, Natalie Damas; The Fox, Kaestli Johnson; Mikko, Chris Jacobs; King Kungen, Dave Bond; Queen Majestat, Kira Rutter; Kalske, Lynn Schillers; Alderman, Heather Telford; John Harkin, Count Kreivi; Prince Pyry/The Wyrn, Sam Gurnsey; Prince Tavast/Croft, Cameron Telford; Prince Karp/Knapadel, Hunter Telford; Princess Amalia, Emily Jacobs; Lady Ilta, Kaytlinn Pacini; Lady Elvira, Emma Damas; Servant/Attendant, Savanna Schaeffer

For my Mikko, who supported me all the way.

- A.B.

To the everyday Mikkos with the hearts
of kings and queens.

- Q. K.

SUMMARY

Similar to the English folktale “Puss in Boots” by the Brother’s Grimm or “The Master Cat” by Charles Perrault, Mikko, a humble woodsman, seeks his fortune in the world at the prompting of his furry friend, the fox.

When the dissatisfied fox suggests a new path for Mikko’s life, Mikko treats the idea as a joke—until it’s not. Thrust into the world of court and finery, Mikko wonders if the path of riches might be too much for his simple taste. Meanwhile, the clever fox paves the path ahead—much to everyone’s surprise—and welcomes Mikko home to a castle he has never seen.

(See Scenes for a detailed plot breakdown.)

Cast Size

15 m, 7 w plus ensemble (doubling possible)

Duration

About 1 hr, 45 min

Target Audience

General

Song List

Act 1

“Many Runes” - Runo the Bard

“The Mighty Mikko” - Mikko, The Fox

“A Rumor” - Lady Ilta, Lady Elvira, Kalske, Count Kreivi, Alderman, Ensemble

“That’s Grand” - King Kungen

“What Could Be” - Princess Amalia, Lady Elvira, Lady Ilta

“Welcome” - King Kungen, Queen Majestat, Mikko, Count Kreivi, Lady Ilta, Lady Elvira, Kalske, Alderman, Prince Pyry, Prince Tavast, Prince Karp, Ensemble

“When I See Your Eyes” - Mikko, Princess Amalia

Act 2

“Now I End” - Runo

“More” - Mikko

“He Must Be” - Queen Majestat, Attendant 1 & 2

“He’s Coming” - The Fox, Croft, Knapadel, Rusthall

“I Was” - The Wym

“We Are Mighty” - Croft, Knapadel, Rusthall, Ensemble

“The Mighty Mikko” (Reprise) - Princess Amalia, The Fox, King Kungen, Queen Majestat, Lady Elvira, Lady Ilta, Count Kreivi, Alderman, Kalske, Servant 1 & 2, Ensemble

Suggested Vocal Ranges

The Fox: C#3 - E4

Mikko: B2 - F#4

Princess Amalia: D#4 - G#2

The King: C3 - F4

The Queen: A3 - D5 (optional G5)

The Wym: A2 - D4

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mikko
a humble, but hopeful woodsman ready for a change
A Fox
Mikko's loyal friend and articulate instigator of his fortune

The Royals

King Kungen
a proud and pretentious local king
Queen Majestat
a ostentatious local queen with love of gems
Princess Amalia
a courageous princess who hopes to follow her heart
The Wyrm
a despotic dragon who mourns the loss of his former tyranny

The Court

Alderman
a stolid and down-to-earth guard who keeps order at court
Kalske
a proper and genteel herald at the court of King Kungen
Lady Elvira
an observant Lady-in-Waiting To Princess Amalia
Lady Iltaa
a Lady-in-Waiting to Princess Amalia
Count Krewi
a doddering, but respected courtier
Prince Pyy
an imperious visiting prince, a ringleader who fancies himself a swordsman
Prince Karp
a visiting prince inclined to telling too many stories, and not the kind that would be in his favor
Prince Tavast
a visiting prince, a little too desperate to prove himself

The Peasantry

Attendant 1, Kelvata
A busy attendant to the Queen
Attendant 2, Vaki
A busy attendant to the Queen
Rusthall
a brusque servant of the wyrm, a woodsman
Croft
a shepherd and servant of the wyrm who just wants to eat food from his own kitchen
Knapadel
a liveryman and servant of the wyrm who desperately wants to say the right thing
Servant 1, Palvel
a tyrannized servant in the wyrm's castle
Servant 2, Lija
a tyrannized servant in the wyrm's castle
Runo
a wise bard who sets the stage with traditional Finnish poetry and music
Peasants (optional): Sulhanen, Vilje, Tyonte, Paimen.....
workers in the land of the wyrm

CAST APPEARANCES

		#	PRO	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5	1.6	1.7
1	Mikko*	103		x				x	x	x
2	The Fox*	131		x	x	x		x	x	x
3	King Kungen*	38			x	x			x	x
4	Queen Majestat*	56			x	x	x		x	x
5	Princess Amalia*	53					x		x	x
6	The Wyrn*	16								
7	Alderman**	10			x	x			x	
8	Kalske**	10			x	x			x	
9	Lady Elvira**	9			x		x		x	
10	Lady Ilta**	14			x		x		x	
11	Count Kreivi**	7			x				x	
12	Prince Pyry	12					x		x	
13	Prince Karp	11					x		x	
14	Prince Tavast	11					x		x	
15	Attendant 1: Kelvata	2				x				
16	Attendant 2: Vaki	2				x				
17	Rusthall**	4								
18	Croft**	6								
19	Knapadel**	8								
20	Optional Peasants: Sulhanen, Vilje, Tyonte, and Paimen	-								
21	Servant 1: Palvel	4								
22	Servant 2: Lija	4								
23	Runo*	-	x							

*Soloist *Solo Line in Ensemble

		INT	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5	2.6
1	Mikko			x			x	x
2	The Fox			x	x	x		x
3	King Kungen			x			x	x
4	Queen Majestat		x	x			x	x
5	Princess Amalia		x	x			x	x
6	The Wyrn					x		
7	Alderman			x			x	x
8	Kalske			x			x	x
9	Lady Elvira			x			x	x
10	Lady Ilta			x			x	x
11	Count Kreivi			x			x	x
12	Prince Pyry							
13	Prince Karp							
14	Prince Tavast							
15	Attendant 1: Kelvata		x					
16	Attendant 2: Vaki		x					
17	Rusthall				x		x	x
18	Croft				x		x	x
19	Knapadel				x		x	x
20	Optional Peasants: Sulhanen, Vilje, Tyonte, and Paimen						x	
21	Servant 1: Palvel					x		x
22	Servant 2: Lija					x		x
23	Runo	x						

SCENES

ACT 1

Prologue - Runo, the bard, sings lines of epic Finnish poetry to welcome the audience to the tale of fox and master. *Song: "Many Runes."*

1.1 - At home in a sparsely-furnished cabin, Mikko and his friend, the fox, enjoy a bland meal and dream of something more. *Song: "The Mighty Mikko."* Mikko lays down to rest.

1.2 - The fox goes to the palace and slyly persuades the royals that Mikko is a man worth knowing. Gossipy courtiers speculate on who this "Mighty Mikko" could be. *Song: "A Rumor."* The fox, in the background, brings to pass his scheme with some clever trickery and suggestion.

1.3 - Now that the rumors have done their work, the clever fox returns to court. The eager king and queen press their invitation, and the fox at last agrees to review a change of clothes that Mikko could wear if he came to visit. In his dressing room, the king introduces the fox to his magnificent wardrobe and explains the duties of a sovereign. *Song: "That's Grand."*

1.4 - The three princes attempt to entrance the princess and her ladies in waiting. The queen enters and describes a handsome new king—and their newest rival—and Mikko's possible interest in marriage. The princess wonders about what her future might hold. *Song: "What Could Be."*

1.5 - The fox returns to Mikko, who is entirely unaware of the preparations his friend has made for him, and explains that the king has invited Mikko to the castle. Mikko worries, but eventually agrees at last to go.

1.6 - The courtiers and royals await Mikko's arrival. The queen sends Amalia to prepare herself. Mikko comes, and the court welcomes him. *Song: "Welcome."* The princes interrupt and attempt to throw Mikko out. Mikko fights them and wins just as Princess Amalia returns.

1.7 In a quiet chamber in the castle, Mikko expresses his concerns about marrying the princess, since he'll have nothing to offer her. The fox prompts a confession of love from Mikko, which the princess "accidentally" overhears. *Song: "When I See Your Eyes."* They are engaged to be married.

ACT 2

Interlude - Runo, the bard, welcomes the last half of his tale with additional lines of epic poetry. *Song: "Now I End."*

2.1 - The queen, accompanied by her attendants, speaks with the princess about her high expectations for Mikko's fortune and lands while packing for a journey to Mikko's kingdom. Princess Amalia defends her love for her husband. *Song: "He Must Be."*

2.2 - Mikko, now married to the princess, sings of his doubts about his role in the castle. *Song: "More."* Courtiers and other royals pass and question him about his supposed kingdom, adding to his discomfort. Mikko confronts the fox, who gives Mikko directions and counsel and sets off.

2.3 - The fox, ahead of the royal party, prepares, by some cleverly-placed words to Croft, Knapadel, and Rusthall, the way for The Mighty Mikko. *Song: "He's Coming."*

2.4 - The fox continues to the court of the infamous wyrm, who revels in and regrets the loss of his glory days. *Song: "I Was."* The fox orchestrates his demise. The wyrm perishes and the fox bids the servants make ready the castle for the arrival of the king.

2.5 As the members of the royal party make their way down the road to Mikko's castle, who do they meet? Mikko's men, of course. *Song: "We Are Mighty Mikko's Men."* Mikko stops to warn Princess Amalia of the possibility of his impending poverty.

2.6 Mikko and the royal party are welcomed by the fox to Mikko's castle. *Song: "The Mighty Mikko (Reprise)"*

SETTINGS & PROPS

ACT 1

Prologue - An empty stage with a lone spotlight on the bard. Could also invoke a fireside or other storytelling venue reminding the viewers of the original format for retelling epic tales.

1.1 - A sparsely-furnished cabin, indicative of poverty. Props suggested: a rickety table, a tattered blanket, a pot of beans, a salt shaker, a serving spoon *OR* the open forest, a picnic blanket or cot, and a pot of beans and salt shaker.

1.2 - The throne room of King Kungen. Props suggested: a bushel measure (or largish bucket) and gold coins. Also suggested in this scene: forest glades wherein the fox digs up buried treasure.

1.3 - The king's court. No additional items required. The king's dressing room. Props requested: at least three options of progressively fancier robes.

1.4 - A room in the castle with stained glass. Props suggested: swords for at least one prince (but preferably all three), a sewing/embroidery project.

1.5 - The sparsely furnished cabin. No additional items required.

1.6 - The court of King Kungen in full glory. No additional items required.

1.7 - A quiet room in King Kungen's castle. No additional items required.

ACT 2

Interlude - An empty stage with a lone spotlight. See 1.1.

2.1 - The queen's chamber. Props suggested: A large packing trunk and clothing items to put into it.

2.2 - A corridor in the castle. No additional items required.

2.3 - A shepherd's camp along the road. Props suggested: a pot or bowl for cooking over a fire.

2.4 - The castle of the Wyrn. Props suggested: food to choke on and a burnt piece of the Wyrn's tale.

2.5 - The road to Mikko's castle. No additional props required.

2.6 - King Mikko's castle. No additional props required.

PRODUCTION NOTES

Casting

Mikko, The Fox, Princess Amalia, King Kungen, Queen Majestat, Count Kreivi, Kalske, and Alderman should not be doubled.

Croft, Rusthall, and Knapadel appear only in the second act and could easily be double cast with the three princes—Pyry, Tavast, and Karp—in the first act.

Lady Ilta, Lady Elvira and Attendant 1, Attendant 2 appear in the same scene. However, any of those four parts could be doubled with Servant 1 and Servant 2.

The Wyrn appears in one scene and could possibly be doubled with another part, barring The Fox, Servant 1, and Servant 2.

Runo, the bard, appears only in the prologue and interlude, and could be included as a member of the court, or doubled with another role.

The role of The Fox may be split in half or even into thirds, especially in the case of young actors. In one case, the role of the fox was divided between three young actors to distribute the line load.

Costume Suggestions

Mikko: a humble woodsman, possibly in a gakti-style tunic. Changes into rich, kingly attire.

The Fox: possibly a cloak to suggest cunning. A fox suit, tail, or ears. A poor, but clean outfit to start, changing into a rich, courtier-like appearance

King Kungen and Queen Majestat: rich and royal, bordering on the ridiculous. Embroidered fabrics, crowns, sparkly gems or accessories

Princess Amalia: Bright, vibrants reds, yellows, and light blues. Possibly braiding or a headdress.

Alderman: Armor, a helmet or spear, and a plain tunic, possibly fringed with embroidery

Kalske and Count Kreivi: courtly, elaborate. Perhaps cravats.

Ladies in Waiting: long, flowing skirts and elaborately braided hair. Possibly an over vest or corset-type blouse.

Croft, Rusthall, and Knapadel: livery or a tabard in the wyrn's colors, preferably a shade of blue

The Wyrn: corpulent, possibly with padded stomach or limbs. Could also be represented with a large pupped or animatronic.

Helpful search terms: kansallispuku (Finnish traditional clothing)

Lights & Sound

Transition music will be provided as part of the main musical download pack, and will be labeled accordingly.

Moody green lights could increase the feel of a forest scene, especially the ones in which Mikko appears with The Fox in Act 1.

A dragon's roar and a large explosion would be helpful sounds, both to be used in Act 2 as part of the Wyrn's demise.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

MANY RUNES

Monet riimut kylmä on kertonut minulle
Monet makaa sade on tuonut minulle
Muita lauluja tuulet ovat laulaneet minulle
Anna minun laulaa vanhan ajan legenda

Lauseet luodut puut,
Käärittynä nippuiksi
Anna minun laulaa vanhan ajan legenda
Anna minun laulaa vanhan ajan legenda

Many runes the cold has told me,
Many lays the rain has brought me,
Other songs the winds have sung me;
Let me sing an old-time legend.

Sentences the trees created,
Rolled together into bundles,
Let me sing an old-time legend.
Let me sing an old-time legend.

**The lyrics in Icelandic and the lyrics may
both be sung to the backing track. Language
depends on director preference.*

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

NOW I END

Nyt lopetan mitatun lauluni
Pyydä väsynyttä kieltäni olemaan hiljaa
Tuli sammuu ja vaipuu uneen
Aamun sarastaessa

Tämä voi osoittaa tien muille,
Paremmille laulajille,
Tulevien aikojen parhaaksi,
Tuleville sukupolville.

Now I end my measured singing,
Bid my weary tongue keep silence,
Fire subsides and sinks in slumber
At the dawning of the morning;

This may point the way to others,
To the singers better gifted,
For the good of future ages,
For the coming generations.

ACT 1

PROLOGUE

ENTER THE BARD

(Scene: RUNO, a lone bard, enters the otherwise dark stage.)

Music: Many Runes

RUNO:

MONET RIMUT KYLMÄ ON KERTONUT MINULLE
MONET MAKAA SADE ON TUONUT MINULLE
MUITA LAULUJA TUULET OVAT LAULANEET MINULLE
ANNA MINUN LAULAA VANHAN AJAN LEGENDA
LAUSEET LUODUT PUUT,
KÄÄRITTYNÄ NIPPUIKSI
ANNA MINUN LAULAA VANHAN AJAN LEGENDA
ANNA MINUN LAULAA VANHAN AJAN LEGENDA

SCENE 1

HUMBLE ORIGINS

(Scene: The inside of a small, humble cabin in the woods. MIKKO stirs something in a pot near the fire. THE FOX sits down on a wooden chair. It snaps and he falls to the floor. MIKKO scoops a mess out of the pot and onto a plate. THE FOX searches for another stool. He pretends, awkwardly, to be sitting on one. Mikko serves the soup. THE FOX stares at it.)

MIKKO: What is it, then? Let's have it.

THE FOX: It's nothing. Nothing worth saying.

MIKKO: Nothing, indeed! You look as if you've bitten into a bitter leaf.

THE FOX: Really, it's nothing! Don't trouble yourself.

(MIKKO folds his arms. THE FOX shifts uneasily in his chair.)

THE FOX: Beans. There are beans in the stew.

MIKKO: Of course there are. They're good for you. And what's wrong with that?

THE FOX: They are technically edible, I suppose.

MIKKO: You're welcome to cook next time, but I don't fancy raw vole.

THE FOX: I never said I wouldn't eat the beans. I said that there WERE beans. Again.

MIKKO: Where else should beans be?

THE FOX: Preferably, In the birds. We've had them every day this week.

(MIKKO sits down at the table. The FOX sniffs the stew and tries not to gag.)

MIKKO: Well, I'm going to eat the beans whether they're in the birds or not. *(He coughs.)* They could use some salt.

(THE FOX pulls some out of his pocket, seasons his own plate, and passes it to MIKKO.)

THE FOX: Mikko, It's time for you to be moving up in the world—to make something of yourself, to claim the good you can earn.

MIKKO: The beans are that terrible?

THE FOX: Yes, but that's not the point. You're young. You're eligible. You're—

MIKKO: An excellent cook?

THE FOX: THE POINT IS, there's so much more in this world than the woods and beans, and you deserve a part of it.

MIKKO: I like the woods. They've been my home all my life.

THE FOX: But do you like eating beans?

MIKKO: They're not bad with salt.

THE FOX: Mikko, someday you might want more than sleeping on a hard, wooden floor. You might want a full pantry or to make a home. You might even want a mate.

MIKKO: With fuzzy ears and a button nose?

THE FOX: It's really not that difficult, you know. Find a girl, frolic a bit, nip at her ears. It's not that different in humans.

MIKKO: It is different in humans. A rich girl won't have me because I don't have a coat and carriage. A poor girl won't have me because she can't eat just beans.

THE FOX: Fair point. It looks like you're hopeless.

MIKKO: What girl is left, then?

(A pause.)

THE FOX: Why don't you marry a princess?

MIKKO: And why not? Please, your majesty, won't you sit here upon my wooden chair to take your bean stew? I have nothing to offer. What would a princess want with a woodcutter?

THE FOX: I don't know what a princess would want with a woodcutter, but I think I know what she would want with you.

Music: The Mighty Mikko

THE FOX:

A WOMAN WANTS A MAN, YOU KNOW
FOR MORE THAN JUST HIS PURSE
SHE NEEDS A MATE THROUGH RAIN AND SNOW
WHO KEEPS HIS FEET ON EARTH
IT JUST SO HAPPENS BETWEEN YOU AND ME
SOMEONE WE KNOW FITS PERFECTLY.

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

A MAN OF TASTE AND MEANS

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

MIKKO:

HE FEASTS ON STEW WITH BEANS

FOX:

HE'S BRAVE AND STRONG

WHAT COULD BE WRONG

WITH THE HANDSOME, MIGHTY MIKKO

HE HEARS THE SONGS OF SPARROWS

AND ANSWERS AT HIS EASE

HE TREATS ALL MEN WITH LIKEWISE GRACE

SAYS THANK YOU, YES, AND PLEASE

IF YOU ASK WHAT IS THIS PLACE

I'LL ANSWER WITH A STRAIGHT PLAIN FACE

IT'S THE HOME OF THE MIGHTY MIKKO

MIKKO:

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

A MAN OF TASTE AND MEANS

THE FOX:

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

HE OUGHT TO DINE WITH QUEENS

HE'S GOOD AND TRUE

FROM HEART RIGHT THROUGH

WHAT A MAN, THE MIGHTY MIKKO

THE FOX: Remember when you set the trap that nearly snapped my leg?

MIKKO: As if it were yesterday—I remember.

THE FOX: You could have left me for dead or skinned me for a cap. Instead, you set me free. It's time we do the same for you.

MIKKO: I'm free enough.

THE FOX: You're young and you're lonely, which is a terrible thing to be at any age. What's more, there's no reason you should be: you're handsome, capable, and good. Why, you'd make a fine husband—a King even!

MIKKO: A king, ay? Why not? Mikko his majesty, king of beans and woodcutters.

THE FOX: We will feast every night, dance courteously with all the ladies, and counsel with the counts and courtiers.

MIKKO: What a picture! I hardly recognize myself.

THE FOX: Most people don't.

IT MAY SEEM I STRETCH THE TRUTH
IN THE NAME OF FRIENDSHIP'S TIES
BUT YOU'LL FIND BENEATH THIS COAT
A CREATURE SWIFT AND WISE
TRUST IN ME, I'LL LEAD YOU THROUGH
TO CERTAIN VICTORY
I'M A FRIEND TO THE MIGHTY MIKKO

THE FOX and MIKKO:

THE MIGHTY MIKKO
A MAN OF TASTE AND MEANS
THE MIGHTY MIKKO
HE'S THE BEST THAT YOU COULD GLEAN
HE FITS THE BILL
UP ON THE HILL
THERE'S A HOME FOR THE MIGHTY MIKKO

THE FOX (*addressing an imaginary young woman as if he were Mikko*): Hello, madame. I'm a strapping young fellow.

(Responding in a lady-esque voice) Why yes, Mikko, I will marry you. (To Mikko, in a regular voice) See? You didn't even need to ask!

THE FOX and MIKKO:

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

A MAN OF TASTE AND MEANS

THE MIGHTY MIKKO

HE WON'T ALWAYS FEAST ON BEANS

HE'S BRAVE AND STRONG

IT WON'T BE LONG

TIL THERE'S A BRIDE FOR THE MIGHTY MIKKO

THE FOX: If you could, would you marry a princess?

MIKKO: If she'd have me—fur coats, feather pillows, and all.

THE FOX: Our local princess?

MIKKO: Why not? I don't know her from a birch tree, but I'd be honored enough to meet her.

THE FOX: I'll arrange it.

(THE FOX bows and exits. Mikko laughs, sighs, and makes a bed on the floor with a scanty blanket. He sleeps.)

SCENE 2

THE COURT OF KING KUNGEN

(Scene: A rich court with courtiers—COUNT KREIVI, LADY ILTA, and LADY ELVIRA—and the KING and QUEEN. A party is in full swing when THE FOX enters, accompanied by ALDERMAN, the guard. ALDERMAN whispers in KALSKE's ear.)

KALSKE: Presenting the fox, who seeks an audience with their majesties.

KING: Do you have all your moomins in the valley? What did you say?

ALDERMAN: A fox, your majesty. A furry creature of the forest.

KALSKE: One of your more (coughs meaningfully) humble subjects.

KING: Send him in. It'll provide some entertainment, at least.

(COUNT KREIVI and the other courtiers whisper as THE FOX steps forward in a grand manner. He bows. ALDERMAN takes his place near the KING's throne.)

THE FOX: Your majesties! I am come to you on an urgent errand. My mighty master, caught outside his usual realm of business, requests your bushel measure.

QUEEN: His what? What did the creature say?

KING: Alderman!

ALDERMAN: A bushel measure, your majesty. It's bigger than a peck and smaller than a tub.

KING: Ah! I see. (To THE FOX.) I'll send my largest.

(He gestures to ALDERMAN, who exits.)

THE FOX: Our deepest gratitude, your majesties. Of course you may not recognize me, but my master, the Mighty Mikko, must be known to you. You have his thanks.

(THE KING does not know who MIKKO is. The COURTIERs haven't heard of him, either, but immediately feels like he

should. ALDERMAN returns with a bushel measure, which the FOX takes.)

THE FOX (*not-very-quietly whispers to COUNT KREIVI*): Surely, your grace, his majesty has heard of Mikko, otherwise called the Mighty Mikko?

(The court whispers intensify.)

QUEEN: Of course he has! Haven't you, Darling?

KING: N-n-naturally! Of course! The Mighty Mikko. Welcome to you and to your master.

(THE FOX bows and leaves.)

QUEEN: Mikko. The Mighty Mikko. Now where have I heard that name before?

Music: A Rumor

(Throughout the first verse and chorus, THE FOX is in the background, in the forest, digging up several casks of buried gold coins. He stuffs them into the chinks of the bushel measure, making it look like he was measuring heaps of gold.)

KALSKE:

AH, SIR MIKKO! WAS THAT HIS NAME?

LAST SUMMER WE PASSED AT THE GAMES

ALDERMAN:

HE SEEMED GENTLE AND QUITE SANE.

ENSEMBLE:

OH REALLY, WHAT A BORE.

COUNT KREIVI:

I'VE HEARD HE'S ONE WITH SOME SMALL WEALTH

OF ROSY CHEEK AND DECENT HEALTH

MADE HIS FORTUNE IN A GAME OF STEALTH.

ENSEMBLE:

WE'VE HEARD ALL THIS BEFORE

(THE FOX returns lugging a smallish treasure chest. He addresses KALSKE and ALDERMAN.)

THE FOX: I beg your pardon, sirs, but would you have a spare sack?

ALDERMAN: For what? His majesty has all manner of sacks and bags. Be specific.

THE FOX: I need a sack for holding things: dirty socks, coins, secrets—

(ALDERMAN fetches a SACK, which he passes to KALSKE, and KALSKE passes to THE FOX. The COURTIERS watch with nonchalant interest. THE FOX opens the sack and dumps what sounds like a lot of coins into it. One of the gold coins falls out onto the ground. The COURTIERS are very interested.)

THE FOX: Oh, excuse me.

(He hands it to ALDERMAN and leaves without looking back. ALDERMAN stares at the coin.)

ALDERMAN: It's gold!

COUNT KREIVI:

I'VE HEARD OF HIM, OH YES, IT'S TRUE

THIS MIKKO IS A BIG TO DO

HE'S A RULER THROUGH AND THROUGH

ENSEMBLE:

BUT CAN YOU TELL US MORE?

COUNT KREIVI:

I'VE HEARD HE DINES WITH FOREIGN QUEENS

LADY ELVIRA:

A MAN OF TASTE AND AMPLE MEANS

LADY ILTA:

HE'S FAMOUS FOR THE GREATEST DEEDS

ENSEMBLE:

OH PLEASE JUST TELL US MORE.

LADY ELVIRA:

HE'S WELL-FAVORED, YES, IT'S TRUE

BUT COME I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING NEW

IT'S VERY FRESH AND JUICY, TOO (*whispers in ears*)

ALL:

OOH! SHH!

A RUMOR, A WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

LADY ILTA:

DON'T WORRY I WON'T SAY A WORD

JUST TELL ME THAT, AS WELL

A RUMOR, A WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

A RUMOR! SHHHHH.

(The FOX returns, bringing with him the bushel measure with coins "forgotten" in the cracks.)

FOX: Thank you, your majesty. My master is grateful for your kindness.

KING: Of course. It is our pleasure, of course.

(THE FOX hands the bushel measure to ALDERMAN and leaves.)

ALDERMAN: Your majesty! *(He holds up a gold coin.)*

KALSKE: They're stuck in the corners of the measure. There are loads of them!

(KING takes the coin. THE COURTIERs watch with interest.)

QUEEN: Have you invited him to dinner, Darling?

COUNT KREIVI:

I'VE HEARD HE HAILS FROM A DISTANT LAND

LADY ELVIRA

WITH JEWELS BEDECKED ON EVERY HAND

LADY ILTA:

HE WRECKED HIS SHIP, YOU UNDERSTAND

ENSEMBLE:

I WANT TO KNOW!

KALSKE:

HE BATHES IN RUBIES AND RARE GEMS

COUNT KREIVI:

SLEW A TROLL TO SAVE A FRIEND

ALDERMAN:

AND COMMANDS TEN THOUSAND MEN

ENSEMBLE:

A RUMOR, A WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

LADY ILTA:

I'LL SHARE EVERYTHING I'VE HEARD

LADY ELVIRA:

JUST SHARE YOURS, AS WELL

ENSEMBLE:

A RUMOR, a WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

A RUMOR! SHHHH!

A RUMOR, A WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

I'LL SHARE EVERYTHING I'VE HEARD

JUST SHARE YOURS, AS WELL

A RUMOR, A WHISPER

A TASTY TALE TO TELL.

A RUMOR! SHHHH!

KING: We would see more of this Mighty Mikko. Issue him an invitation.

(KALSKE bows.)

SCENE 3

AN AUDIENCE WITH THE KING

(Scene: The KING and QUEEN are seated on their thrones. ALDERMAN stands guard. KALSKE enters.)

KALSKE: Presenting the fox, herald to the Mighty Mikko.

QUEEN: Ah, the dear fox!

(The FOX enters and bows. ALDERMAN salutes much more vigorously than the first time the FOX was in court.)

KING: Sir fox, we wish to issue you and your master an invitation to our court.

THE FOX: That is very kind, your majesty. It is quite an honor.

KING: Very good, very good. When can we expect—

THE FOX: Oh, excuse me—while we are grateful for your thoughtfulness, it would be terribly rude for us to accept your generous invitation.

KING: What? What, what?

THE FOX: Please, accept our heartfelt thanks, but—

QUEEN: Surely your master is not so grand that he cannot accept a humble invitation from a fellow king.

THE FOX: As I said, we are honored, your majesty. But, to put it delicately, we wouldn't all fit.

KING: Whatever do you mean? Wouldn't fit?

THE FOX: Exactly. My master and his retinue would flood this space. You know—chamberlains, stewards, grand masters, valets, provosts.

QUEEN: Oh my. That does sound showy.

THE FOX: There's more: dukes and duchesses, lords and ladies, earls and countesses—and one dowager, I believe.

KING: There's always a dowager.

QUEEN: It is truly too much. Aren't we to see him at all?

THE FOX: My master does sometimes, to relieve the stress, travel only with me, dressed as a woodcutter.

QUEEN: A what?

KING: Alderman!

ALDERMAN: A woodcutter, sir. A commoner who uses axes or sharp objects to fell trees.

QUEEN: On purpose? How quaint.

THE FOX: Though his lands and wealth are almost too vast to mention, he's a terrifically humble man, especially just at the moment.

KING: Is there no way to persuade your master to come to us in this guise, as a woodcutter?

THE FOX: Hmmm. Perhaps it would be more comfortable for him to do away with the grandeur and ceremony for a spell.

QUEEN *(encouraging)*: Perhaps it would.

THE FOX: He could leave behind his horses and dogs, tapestries and linens, his textiles, trappings and furniture.

KING *(doubtful)*: Could he?

THE FOX: What's more, he could leave behind his instruments and books, his jewels, his gold and silver plate, silk napkins, and chefs. But alas! It cannot be. I had forgotten! In his guise as a woodcutter, he carries no spare change of raiment.

QUEEN: No spare what?

KING: Alderman?

ALDERMAN: No spare clothes, your majesty.

KING: Ah, is that all?

QUEEN: Couldn't he borrow some of yours, darling?

KING *(unwillingly)*: I, well—

THE FOX: No, no your majesty. It really is too great an inconvenience. I can carry your regards to my master, and he will surely send you his.

QUEEN: Darling! We simply must see him!

KING (*as if he's having teeth pulled*): I'm sure we could be prevailed upon to lend. Borrow temporarily, appropriate clothes for your master, a fellow king. Just this once.

THE FOX: But, oh dear—my master, as I've just recalled, has important business in foreign parts. He's bound on a tour of foreign courts. He seeks to find a bride.

QUEEN: We have one of those.

KING: One of what?

QUEEN: A bride!

KING: You're spoken for.

QUEEN: We have a daughter, darling.

KING: Exactly.

QUEEN: An unwed daughter, darling.

KING: We do. (*With realization*) we do! Would, perhaps, your master be interested in paying attentions to our daughter?

THE FOX: Ah. Well, you see—

QUEEN: She's a lovely girl.

KING: Mmmm.

QUEEN: She sews and embroiders.

KING: Mmmm

QUEEN: And dances and sings.

KING: Mmm hmmm.

QUEEN: Occasionally she even reads. And likes it.

KING: Does she? How odd.

THE FOX: Does she care for beans?

QUEEN: Not particularly. I don't suppose I've ever asked.

THE FOX: Excellent. In that case, if sufficient clothes could be provided to fit my master's station, then perhaps—

KING: As naturally as is reasonable. King to king.

QUEEN: Hurrah!

THE FOX: You are too kind, your majesties. Perhaps I may accompany to survey the options on my master's behalf?

KING (*sighs*): This way.

(*THE KING, QUEEN, and THE FOX move to another part of the stage to the KING's wardrobe. ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 enter.*)

Music: That's Grand

KING:

IT BEFITS A KING WITHIN HIS REALM
TO SHOW A STRONG HAND
HE LEADS FROM THE FRONT, BOLD AT THE HELM
AND KNOWS HIS OWN LAND
AND WHILE HE SERVES WITH BOWED HEAD
AND GUARDS THE PEOPLE AND THEIR BREAD
HE LOOKS THE PART
THAT'S GRAND
THEY LOOK TO ME TO SET THE PACE
THE METER OF THE HUMAN RACE
A MASTERPIECE FROM FOOT TO FACE
THAT'S GRAND

KING: Here, sir fox. Come and see. Perhaps this would please your master?

(*ATTENDANT 2 rushes to present another robe, slightly grander than the first two. THE FOX briefly examines it.*)

THE FOX: Are you certain, your majesty, that you don't have anything finer? I'm sure these would do for lesser men in a pinch, but for the Mighty Mikko—

QUEEN: Much finer, my dear! No skimping.

KING: Of course, of course. Look here.

A GOOD KING MUST DEMONSTRATE
THE WEIGHT OF HIS ROLE

HIS STRENGTH AND VIRTUE EMANATE
AND GREAT IS HIS SOLE
SEE HOW THE CUT HELPS MAKE A MAN
HE DRESSES WELL AS EVER HE CAN
TO LEAD THE SHOW
THAT'S GRAND
THE THREADS OF LIFE TIE EQUALLY
THE SOULS OF ALL HUMANITY
SOME DEMONSTRATE THIS VISUALLY
THAT'S GRAND

(ATTENDANT 1 and ATTENDANT 2 struggle to present the FOX with a new round of clothes, slightly higher quality.)

QUEEN: Surely these are fine enough?

THE FOX: I really fear I'm wasting your time, sir. My master couldn't possibly wear these, although I'm grateful for your attention—*(Turns away.)*

THE KING: No, no! Here!

THAT'S GRAND
TO BOAST A PIECE OF FINERY
OF GOLD OF JADE OF IVORY
A GEM OF GOOD SOCIETY
THAT'S GRAND
THAT'S GRAND
THAT'S GRAND

(ATTENDANTS 1 and 2 collapse in a heap. THE KING offers him the finest garment in the wardrobe.)

THE FOX: I suppose it will do. Temporarily.

SCENE 4

A LOOK FORWARD

(Scene: Another room in the palace with large, glass windows. PRINCE TAVAST, PRINCE PYRY, and PRINCE KARP are standing around telling stories with PRINCESS AMALIA, ELVIRA, and ILTA. At least PRINCE PYRY wears a sheathed sword. PRINCESS AMALIA works on an embroidery project.)

PRINCE TAVAST: And that was the end of the quest!

(The other two PRINCES laugh loudly. LADY ILTA yawns loudly. LADY ELVIRA ignores them.)

PRINCE PYRY: What a fascinating tale. Come, Prince Tavast, tell us—

LADY ILTA: About your adventure to the end of the world?

LADY ELVIRA: Or the time you fought an ogre?

LADY ILTA: We've heard those stories before. Many times. Too many times.

PRINCE PYRY: Well, perhaps I could recount—

LADY ELVIRA: The breadth of your father's lands?

LADY ILTA: The sum of last year's taxes?

LADY ELVIRA: We know the numbers.

LADY ILTA: By heart, in fact. Though we'd much rather not.

PRINCESS: A fresh tale would be very welcome.

PRINCE KARP: Such choosey ladies! Here before you stand three icons, three princes among men, seeking to amuse you, and you demand something fresh while you sit at your crochet.

PRINCESS AMALIA: Embroidery, actually.

PRINCE KARP: Whatever.

PRINCESS AMALIA: If our company fatigues you, your highness, there are many things about the castle that could happily entertain you.

LADY ILTA: Loads of things. So many options.

LADY ELVIRA: And none of which involve us.

PRINCE PYRY: Perhaps Princess Amalia misunderstands. We mean only to prove ourselves worthy of her enchanting attention.

PRINCESS AMALIA: Really? So is your father's kingdom really that vast?

PRINCE PYRY: Vast is a relative term.

(PRINCE TAVAST snorts.)

PRINCESS: And you, Prince Tavast, did you really fight an ogre?

PRINCE TAVAST: As it happens—

(PRINCE PYRY and PRINCE KARP stifle laughs.)

PRINCE TAVAST: It is perhaps possible that we might have embellished some of our stories, for your amusement, of course.

PRINCE PYRY: But we have done mighty deeds.

PRINCE KARP: Surely. In the eyes of some.

PRINCE TAVAST: I was once captive in an unbreakable dungeon and escaped using only my wits and an old hairpin.

PRINCE KARP: Were you really?

PRINCE PYRY: Do you mean the time you locked yourself in the cellar?

LADY ILTA: Thank heavens for the hairpin. He might have missed dinner.

LADY ELVIRA: However did you escape such a desperate situation?

PRINCE TAVAST: *(Indignantly)* I picked the lock myself! *(To the other princes)* And you, gentlemen? Of what deeds do you boast?

LADY ILTA: *(mocking)* Maybe one of them slew a dragon.

PRINCE KARP: I ate an entire blueberry pie once.

PRINCE TAVAST: *(actually impressed)* Did you? The whole thing? Crust and all?

PRINCE KARP: I did try to eat the crust, but then—

(He mimes vomiting. The LADIES-IN-WAITING are disgusted. PRINCE TAVAST pushes PRINCE KARP aside.)

PRINCE TAVAST: I've wrestled a giant.

PRINCE KARP: Fencing dummies don't count.

PRINCE TAVAST: Yes, they do.

PRINCE KARP: No, they don't!

PRINCE PYRY: Really, gentlemen, let's get to the point. *(He draws his sword.)* With this sword I've fought at least twenty men.

(The LADIES-IN-WAITING start to pay closer attention.)

PRINCESS: I've stabbed this embroidery a thousand times, your highness. And my stitches are proof of my effort. Where, might I ask, are your twenty men?

(KALSKE enters and bows.)

KALSKE: Her majesty, Queen Majestat.

(The QUEEN enters EVERYONE ELSE bows or curtsseys. The PRINCES grudgingly bow.)

QUEEN: Your highness—Darling, have you heard?

PRINCESS: Heard what, your majesty? Is there a fresh tale at court?

QUEEN: There's a king, dear, a rich king, who wishes to visit. Your father has already issued him an invitation.

(The PRINCES look crotchety.)

PRINCESS AMALIA: How is he called, your majesty? I don't recall having heard anything about him.

PRINCE PYRY: Some king of no consequence, no doubt.

PRINCE TAVAST: A pretender.

PRINCE KARP: A fraud.

LADY ELVIRA: Is that Mighty Mikko, your majesty? The master of the fox?

LADY ILTA: He's not just rich. They say he's fearfully handsome.

(The PRINCES look even more crotchety.)

PRINCE PYRY: Handsome is in the eye of the beholder.

LADY ILTA and LADY ELVIRA *(with significance)*: Agreed.

(The PRINCES glare at them.)

QUEEN: I hope all of you will work to make King Mikko comfortable while he is here, and look forward to meeting him, as do I. *(To the princess, in a lower tone, which everyone can still hear)* In any case, it is very possible, my dear, that when he comes to visit the court, he may even do some courting of his own.

(The QUEEN winks obviously at the PRINCESS. THE QUEEN, and KALSKE leaves. The LADIES-IN-WAITING immediately start whispering. The PRINCES frown and mutter to each other, and slowly walk off in a group. PRINCESS AMALIA looks at the windows.)

Music: What Could Be

PRINCESS:

COLORED GLASS
A PASSING GLEAM
A WINDOW TO HUMANITY
BACK TO THE PAST
THEY PAINT THE SCENES
A TALE FOR YOU
A TALE FOR ME
WHAT THEY DON'T SHOW
WHAT THEY DON'T SHOW
IS WHAT COULD BE

ALL:

AH AH AH AH AH AH

PRINCESS:

POOLS OF LIGHT
UPON THE FLOOR
THOSE DOORS DON'T OPEN ANYMORE
VALIANT DEEDS
THAT CAME BEFORE
GIVE NO SIGN
OF WHAT'S IN STORE
WHAT THEY DON'T SHOW
WHAT THEY DON'T SHOW
IS WHAT COULD BE

ALL:

AH AH AH AH

AH AH AH AH

PRINCESS:

ADVENTURES DEEPER THAN THE SEA
A HEART THAT'S OPEN
I HOLD THE KEY
IN ALL THAT COLOR
IN ALL I SEE
IS THERE ANY ROOM
FOR WHAT COULD BE
AH AH AH

SCENE 5

THE INVITATION

(SCENE: THE FOX and MIKKO are in Mikko's Cabin.)

THE FOX: The King has invited you to dinner.

MIKKO: The King? Invited me?

THE FOX: Exactly so.

MIKKO: The King knows me?

THE FOX: He does now. Quite well, actually. You really ought to keep a lower profile.

MIKKO: What do you mean? What happened?

THE FOX: I told his majesty King Kungen that you were in the area and may even be looking for a bride. He invited you to dinner.

MIKKO: That's it? That's exactly what happened?

THE FOX: That's it. More or less.

MIKKO: Nothing else?

THE FOX: I didn't say that.

MIKKO: What else happened then? Have you been spreading rumors?

THE FOX: What else could I possibly tell him?

MIKKO: That's what worries me. What did you tell the king?

THE FOX: Which one? Be more specific.

MIKKO: There is more than one king?

THE FOX: There are now. They tend to pop out of the woodwork.

MIKKO: Will you tell me in plain talk why the king has invited me—a lowly woodcutter—to the palace, of all places?

THE FOX: All right, a summary, then: I went to the king's palace. I asked for, and was granted, an audience with his

majesty and I mentioned that you, the Mighty Mikko, were in the neighborhood, and wanted a bride. Her majesty insisted that you come to dinner.

MIKKO: The queen?

THE FOX: The very same. She was quite insistent.

MIKKO: I don't understand.

THE FOX: You. The king and queen. Dinner. Better?

MIKKO: They know I'm a woodcutter?

THE FOX: Correct.

MIKKO: And they've invited me to dinner?

THE FOX: Exactly.

MIKKO: And the princess wants to marry me?

THE FOX: Whoa, there. Don't get ahead of yourself.

MIKKO: But you said—

THE FOX: I said you were looking for a bride, not that you had found one. You'll have to do the ear nibbling yourself.

MIKKO: I still don't understand.

THE FOX: Well, most people at least flirt before making major commitments—

MIKKO: Not that—why would they ask me to dinner in the first place?

THE FOX: You did say you wanted to marry the princess, didn't you? She might have a button nose.

MIKKO: This must be your doing. Did you tell them I spin straw into gold?

THE FOX: No.

MIKKO: Did you tell them I fought an ogre with a golden tooth?

THE FOX: Ogres can't afford gold. They're cheapskates.

MIKKO: Please be serious—my neck is on the line.

THE FOX: As I have said, I told their majesties that you, my master, a terrifically humble man and a woodcutter, was in

search of a bride, and—as I have said several times and will likely say again—they invited you to dinner.

MIKKO: That doesn't sound like the whole story to me, and whatever you've added sounds likely to land me in the dungeon.

THE FOX: I'm sure it's a nice one. The castle was decently fine.

MIKKO: If they find out I'm not a prince or a hero or whatever you've told them—

THE FOX: Neither of those, actually.

MIKKO: They'll chop off my head.

THE FOX: Or worse. I hear hanging has been popular of late.

(MIKKO puts his head in his hands. The FOX sticks out his leg and wiggles his toes.)

THE FOX: I trusted you with my life, my friend. I will not lead you anywhere that I won't go, too. Will you come?

(MIKKO sighs and shakes the FOX's hand.)

Excellent! We'll go tomorrow! Oh, and one more thing: don't be surprised if someone addresses you as, 'your majesty.'

(MIKKO groans.)

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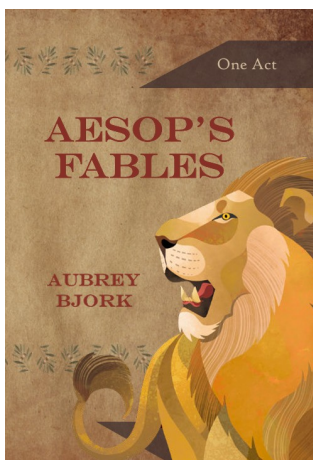


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Audience: General



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