

THE QUEST OF THE FAIR LADY
 Updated (and first performance) on 12 Dec 2010
 Performed by the Heritage Players

LIGHTS COME UP

Oliver seated with a cup and roll looking startled. Harold walks in.

Harold: Well, Oliver, I am looking very forward to seeing you carry off the Ivy Crown at the Clarendon Tournament next week. I've been polishing our gear, and everything's ready for the journey. If we meet with no difficulties, we should be warming our feet in front of the hearth fires of Huntley Hall in a few days. Then the tournament. And then home in time for Christmas.

Oliver: Actually...well...I'm... not going to the tournament.

Harold: What??

Oliver: I had a very strange dream. Someone seemed to be calling me from far away, but I couldn't quite make out who it was or what they were saying. Then, still in the dream, the wind began to blow. It blew old brown oak leaves across my path. Among the swirling leaves I saw a bit of paper. I picked it up. It said "A fair lady, high in a tower, awaits your help. The time is now. Go to her." Then I woke up. And then things got really strange.

Harold: What? More strange?

Oliver: Yes. The note from the dream was in my shoe. (pulls it out of shoe or pocket). And there was also a second note—one that was not in the dream. It said (pulls out second note) "Not to the tournament should your feet tread. Journey toward the valley of the Blue Dogs instead."

Harold: Blue Dogs? I never heard of a blue dog. What does this mean?

Oliver: I don't know. But I feel sure I should go.

Harold: Hmm ... Blue dogs. Fascinating....this is the oddest quest I've ever heard of, but it's still a quest. I'm coming with you.

Oliver: Thank you, Harold. If you're sure? (Harold nods) Then let's go. (They begin to exit)

Harold I wonder if the fair lady has a sister? Hmm ... Oh wait....What if the fair lady IS a dog. and her sister too!?

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

Harold: Hey, if we don't know what or where blue dogs are, how do we know where to go?

Oliver: Look. There's only one road in our village, Harold. That way (points) leads to Huntley Hall and the Clarendon Tournament, and the note said not to go there. So there's only one route to choose—the other way (points).

Harold: Yes, but this road will lead to other roads. How will we know which road to take then?

Oliver: I don't have all the answers. But I know I was called, and I know which direction to head in...at least for now.

(Oliver starts with H trailing)

Harold: You know, one time I was walking and came to a place where two roads diverged in a yellow wood, and I didn't know which one to choose. I was sorry I could not travel both. Both roads that morning equally lay in leaves no foot had trodden, and I..."

Oliver: Harold, Robert Frost hasn't been born yet.

Harold: Oh. Right.

LIGHTS DOWN
LIGHTS UP

(O and H walking.)

Harold: Well, it's been three days now, and we've arrived nowhere and seen nobody.

Oliver: Well, not many folk are out in the bleak midwinter. You know, though, I'm enjoying the quiet out here, and the woods are quite lovely.

Harold: Yes, the holly and the ivy when they are both full grown. You know, of all the trees in all the wood, I think the holly wears crown...(Elaine enters from other side. Harold sees Elaine) Hey, either I'm seeing things, or that's your sister heading our way!

Oliver: Elaine! Well met! I never expected to see you here, although I'm happy to see you! What are you doing here?

Elaine: Oliver! Harold! Well met indeed! (hugs, holds hands)

Oliver: But what are you doing here? Why are you not serving at Nesscliffe Hall? Why are you not with Lady Agnes? Is something wrong?

Elaine: No, no. Sir James and Lady Agnes are well, as are the children. No, nothing wrong. I think Lady Agnes is pleased with my service as her lady in waiting. They knew I was homesick, however, and told me to take a little trip home for Christmas and then rejoin them by the New Year....So...that's why I'm here...on my way home. Why on earth are you here?

Harold: He's on a quest!

Oliver: Yes. It's a bit of a strange story.

Elaine: Well, Oliver, you are the family I was coming home to visit. If you are headed on a quest, I'll come along and have my family visit as we travel.

Oliver: Come along, then, and I'll tell you about it as we go....

LIGHTS DOWN
LIGHTS UP

(O, H, E walking slowly)

Elaine: So, the note told you to head away from the tournament?

Oliver: Yes

Elaine: But it didn't give you further directions? You don't know where you're going?

Oliver: Well, it gave us a clue, but it's a clue we don't understand it, so it's not much help. Here

Elaine: *Head toward the land of the Blue Dog instead...*The Blue Dog...I think I may know what it means.

Harold: You do?

Elaine: Yes! You know, you can learn a lot from being a lady in waiting. Lady Agnes's children are tutored by Master Cornelius, a very exceptional teacher. Lady Agnes usually attends her children's lessons (she likes to be very involved in her children's upbringing). And wherever Lady Agnes goes, I go. Master Cornelius seems to know everything. I remember one day he was explaining the various things each shire is good at producing—you know, like South Cape's excellent fish, and Windbourne's fine wheat. Well, he mentioned a place I hadn't heard of—the Blue Stem Valley. He said there's a type of clover that grows there—and only there—Blue Stem Clover! The Blue Stem Clover makes for the best pastureland anywhere—the cattle who eat it give the richest milk, and the sheep who eat it produce the finest wool anywhere. Master Cornelius says that very few people on our side of the Swan Mountains have even heard of the Blue Stem Valley, but on the other side of the mountains, people come from far and near to buy hay and wool from the Blue Stem Valley. They also raise excellent sheep dogs in that valley, and they're usually called Blue Dogs (after the clover). So...we should head to the Blue Stem Valley, the land of the Blue Dog!

Harold: Then we'll have to cross the Swan Mountains?

Oliver: Yep. Faint heart never won fair lady, you know...or the fair lady's sister.

Harold: Taking the high road suits me fine. Gives me more time to come up with riddles. Say, Elaine, what gets bigger the more you take out of it?

Elaine: A hole.

Harold: Very good! Try this one...I met a man going to St. Ives, and ...

LIGHTS OFF

LIGHTS ON

O, H, E walking across

Harold: OK. Let's see if Master Cornelius taught you this one? A man is carrying a chicken, a bag of corn, and a fox to market...

Elaine: Why would he be taking a fox? Who sells or buys foxes at market?

Harold: I don't know. But they get to a river, and there's a boat there, but it's only big enough to carry two....

Oliver: Harold, crossing the mountains was hard enough! I'm too tired for a brain teaser.

Harold: Hold on. This is a really good one. OK. The boat only holds two...

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(o,h, e walking across)

Elaine: Good gracious! This is taking longer than I thought it would.

Harold: OK. How about this one? A box without hinges, key, or lid, Yet golden...

Oliver and Elaine groan.

LIGHTS OFF

LIGHTS ON

(O,H,E coming across from one side. James, Giles, and Geoffrey come toward them from on middle aisle)

Oliver: I think surely we must be drawing near our goal. Look! Travellers! Good day to you!

James, Geoffrey, Giles: Good day!

Oliver: We are strangers here. Perhaps you can point us in the right direction. We're looking for the Blue Stem Valley, the, um, Land of the Blue Dogs?

James: You've come to the right place. The valley lies just over that ridge.

Harold: Hurrah! Hot fires and real food, here I come!

Elaine: Are you headed to the valley yourselves?

James: Yes. Our village is the first one you'll come to. We've been away from home. We've been helping our Uncle with his sheep on account of his head shepherd being sick.

Giles: But he's better now.

James: Have you come to the Blue Stem Valley to buy hay? Our grandfather has some excellent hay for sale.

Oliver: Thank you. But we're not here for the hay. We're actually on a quest.

James: A quest?

Giles: Whoa!

Geoffrey: Wow!

Giles: Can we come with you? This is the best thing that's happened in a long time!

James: It does get boring around here. Nothing ever happens to a shepherd!

Harold: I think the shepherds from Bethlehem might disagree.

James: Good point. Still, it's a pleasure to meet someone on a quest—someone on a mission.

Giles: Can we come? We could help you!

Elaine: How?

Giles: Well, I'm a really fast runner, and I'm loud...

Geoffrey: Me too!

James: Uh, guys...I'm not sure loudness is a positive attribute. You're embarrassing me.

Oliver: Well, what we really need to know is, do you have a high tolerance for non-stop riddles?

Harold: I heard that!

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(the questers arrive at the village, villagers are getting ready for Christmas, all outdoors on various errands or to buy or sell; MiddleAges-ish Christmas music playing quietly in background if we can—instrumental—e.g. What Child is This or Good King Wenceslas or 12 Days of Christmas)

James: Here we are. Welcome to Grangeford. Sir Oliver, Harold, Lady Elaine—Here is our priest, Father Mark. Father Mark, these three have come on a long journey.

(Decoy Delilah and Guard Atilla) are hanging around the edges of the group, near Father Mark and Oliver, incognito)

Decoy Delilah: (to herself as she eyes the newly arrived young men) Well, hellooooo there!

Father Mark: Indeed? You must be footsore and hungry. There is a monastery here, and I know you will be welcome in their guest house.

Oliver: That is news I'm thankful to hear.

Father Marcus: How far have you travelled?

Oliver: From many leagues west of the Swan Mountains.

Father Marcus: You have come farther than I imagined!

(business amongst the males whilst the Bored Girl, the Greenery Girl, the Shopping Girl, and the French Braid girl go over to Elaine and draw her aside)

All 3: Hello! Welcome!

Bored Girl: Oh, boy! A real live lady!

Elaine: I'm not really that exciting. I'm only a lady in waiting right now.

Bored Girl: That's good enough for me! I'm so glad you've come! (clapping hands and jumping) It gets so boring around here!

Elaine: That's just what Geoffrey and Giles were saying. They said nothing ever happens to a shepherd.

Bored Girl: Nothing ever happens to *anybody* here!

Braid Girl: You have a beautiful gown.

Greenery Girl: Yes!

Elaine: Thank you. And you have very lovely hair. Is that a French braid?

Braid Girl: Yes it is.

Elaine: It's lovely.

Braid Girl: My sister braided it.

(Greenery Girl nods and smiles a bashful acknowledgement)

Elaine: You know, the Lady I work for tells me that somewhere on this side of the mountains there is a girl whose hair is as beautiful as silk and as long—even when braided--as a tree is tall.

Braid Girl: Oh, sure. That's my cousin.

Elaine: Really? Is her hair really like that?

Braid Girl: Yeah. But she's kinda weird. (hands on hips and then rolling eyes and gesturing) She's always using her braid to whack people. And her granny—my great aunt—she's even weirder. And grumpy.

Bored Girl: I think she's a witch!

Elaine: Goodness!

(business amongst these girls now during the following)

Mare Lady (to Clothing Critic and Gwen): I love her dress!

Clothing Critic: I wouldn't be caught dead in it!

Mare Lady: Really?

Clothing Critic: Actually I love it too. But look at her shoes!! (sneaks over and pulls up Elaine's hem—which Elaine unaccountably doesn't notice—to reveal hiking boots or otherwise weird or ugly shoes) If you haven't got the right shoes, the whole outfit doesn't work.

Father Mark: And what has brought you on such a long journey?

Oliver: We are on a quest.

Father Mark: A quest. They are rare these days. And winter is not a popular time for undergoing quests. But it is a good time for doing so. At Christmas we are celebrating the time when our Lord Himself began His own quest in this world. I will pray that your mission—coming as it does at the feast of the Christ Child—will be especially blessed. Now, I'll be off to the monastery and make arrangements for you.

Oliver and Harold: Thank you, father!

Guard Atilla (incognito): (to Decoy Woman) A quest? Our master will want to know about this.

Decoy Delilah (incognito): We'd better go tell him. (They sneak off)

Oliver: I'd like to make a few inquiries here before going to our dinner at guest hall. Who in the village knows a lot? Who would be good to talk to?

Giles: Seymour is good to talk to. (leads and introduces to Seymour, an old man sitting in rocker) Seymour, this is Sir Oliver. He's on a quest!

Seymour: Well, how d'ya' do? You're on a nest? Well, that's strange.
(they shake hands)

Oliver: I'm glad to meet you, sir. I hope you can help me. I'm looking for a fair lady in need of help.

Seymour: Oh. Well...I don't know if she needs any help, but she's over there in the green dress.

Oliver: Thank you!

(Oliver and company go over)

Pear Lady: Good day, sir! Would you prefer the red pears or the green? Both make fine Christmas gifts!

Oliver: (confused) Pears?

Pear Lady: That's right. I'm the Pear Lady.

Harold: Oh, I beg your pardon. We made a mistake.

Group goes back to Seymour, who's fallen asleep.

Oliver: Excuse me, Seymour. I wasn't looking for a Pear Lady. I was actually trying to find a Fair Lady in need of help.

Seymour: Oh, in that case, you'll want to see the lady in the brown dress.

Oliver: Thank you. (Group heads over)

Chair Lady: Good day and Merry Christmas to you, sir! May I help you?

Oliver: Well, actually, I was wondering if we might be able to help you?

Chair Lady: Well, a good sale is good for the buyer and the seller. Now would you like a straight back chair or a rocking chair? I have several like the one Seymour is resting in. –Seymour, get out of my chair! How many times have I told you not to sit in the display models!? – I've also got some that come with an embroidered pillow and also some little fireside stools perfect for children. When you come to the shop of the Chair Lady, you can always find the right gift. (looks at the group expectantly)

Oliver: Oh, um. Thank you, Madam. Excuse me just a moment. (goes back to Seymour) Seymour, what I'm looking for is a Fair Lady who needs help.

Seymour: (slapping his leg) Oh, of course! Why didn't you say so? There she is—right over there in the yellow dress.

Oliver: Thank you.

Mare Lady: Good day, sir. We have the finest horses this side of the Swan Mountains. How can I help you? (neigh heard off stage) Are you looking for a brood mare? Or perhaps a gentle lady's riding horse?

Oliver: Well...er... I wasn't looking for a horse.

Mare Lady: If you didn't want a horse, they why are you here? I'm the Mare Lady, you know.

Harold: (in frustration,) The Mare Lady!? We're not looking for a Mare Lady! Or a Chair Lady! Or a Pear Lady! We're looking (yelling and stomping) for a FAIR lady!

(The music stops. There is a surprised pause.)

Outraged Brother: Hey, are you saying my sister ISN'T fair?!!

James: That's not what he means....

Giles: Yeah. He's nice. And he's here on a--

Outraged Cousin: Are you saying my cousin isn't pretty?

Oliver, Harold, Elaine, James: Uh oh.

Chair Lady: Are you saying we're ugly?!

Braid Girl: Hey!

Ben, Thomas, and Eli: Hey!!

Outraged Cousin: Our women are lots prettier than that girl you've got with you!

Elaine: Hey! (shakes fist and starts toward crowd, but pulled back by Harold and Oliver as they begin to run)

Bored Girl: Wait! I like her!

Villagers: all yell various things: and then "Get 'em!"

Father Mark (just then arriving on stage, back from the monastery): What are you doing to our guests?! (to audience, gesturing) I can't leave these people alone for 5 minutes! (Begins to chase after the villagers) Wait!

Villagers chase the Quest group off stage, down the hall, then back in via kitchen door and up middle aisle, then across the stage and out the piano door. Father Mark is following them. Seymour, hobbling and shaking his cane, trails several seconds behind. Quest group comes panting in table room door and panting running up mid aisle. Then James and his brothers run in.)

James: You guys, head that way. There's a tower over there, and tales say there's a lady imprisoned in it. (pant pant) Maybe she's a fair lady.

Oliver: Why didn't you tell us sooner?!

Giles: Sorry. All you said was that you wanted to find someone in our village who is good to talk to. And Seymour—even though he's kind of deaf--is usually good to talk to. He the best story teller in town.

(Oliver groans)

James: Anyhow, you head that way. We'll divert the crowd.

Oliver: (calling out as the boys start to head off) You don't know whether there's a lady there or not? Doesn't anyone from your village ever go there, to the tower?

James: (over shoulder) No! Too scary!

Geoffrey and Giles: (Yell out piano door into hall). Hey, guys, this way!

(Questers hide, and mob comes boiling in, and the boys lead them down the middle aisle and out the back door running and yelling. Father Mark comes a little way behind the group, saying his line; somewhere after him hobbles Seymour—or we may have him be asleep in his chair the whole time)

Father Mark: (yelling to mob) Wait! Stop!

Elaine: (coming out of hiding) Too scary? I wonder what that means...

Oliver: Are you guys still with me? You don't have to come, you know.

Harold: Are you kidding? Faint heart never won fair lady...or fair lady's sister!

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(E, H, O walking in. pause mid-stage)

Elaine: Well...here we are...the tower. (they look up) .

Oliver: (pointing) Look, a window. And a balcony.

Harold: (posing) What light from yon window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun.

Elaine: How do you know her name?

Oliver: Harold, Shakespeare hasn't been born yet either.

Harold: Oh. Rats.

Gwen (running in): Hello! I'M Gwen. I've come to help you. James told me that you're on a quest. He thought perhaps I could help you while he and Giles can keep the rest of the village on a wild goose chase. I thought my skills might be helpful.

Harold: Your skills?

Gwen: Yes! Sure! I've got great little sister skills.

Harold: Little sister skills?

Gwen: Yes. You know—getting into places where the big sisters and big brothers don't want me to be...being sneaky—that sort of thing!

Oliver: I'm sure we can use all the help we can get.

Elaine: Well... What now?

(Malgrim enters)

Malgrim: Now? Now we begin a battle of wits.

Oliver: Ho there! Who are you? We have heard that there is a fair lady in this tower, being held against her will. Is it true?

Malgrim: It's true. She is held there by my power. I am a great magician. You know, if I were a kind person I might tell you not to try to free her. It can only end in your death. And there's really nothing you can do for her.

Oliver: Are you so sure?

Malgrim: Quite sure.

Harold: I don't believe it. I think you're worried we'll succeed. I think I see fear in your eyes.

Malgrim: Listen, stupid. I am quite sure. In fact, I am so certain of the impossibility of the lady's release that I wrote into my spell that if she should ever be released, I would turn into a goat and pack my bags for Nepal....Free the lady? Ha! There are several tests you must pass even to make it to the Lady. If you find her, you still won't be able to find a way to release her. But, you know, you needn't worry about it because I don't think you can even pass the first test. Unless you correctly answer a question of my choosing, you won't even be able to get through the outer door.

Harold: Ask away, then!

Malgrim: Very well. (pauses for effect)
*What goes on four legs in the morning,
 on two legs at noon,
 and on three legs in the evening?*

Harold: The answer is...
A man, who crawls on all fours as a baby, walks on two legs as an adult, and walks with a cane in old age.

Malgrim: Impossible! That WAS the correct answer! No one has ever done that before! Let me ask you another. (Malgrim delivers these lines while Harold looks happy and happier, knowing he knows the answer)

This thing all things devours,
 Birds, beasts, trees, flowers,
 Gnaws iron, bites steel,
 Grinds hard stones to meal.
 Slays king, ruins town,
 Beats high mountain down.

Answer that...if you can!

Harold: The answer is...TIME!

Malgrim: I can't believe it! As much as I hate you, I must admit it is a pleasure to spar with you.

Harold: Well, have you heard this one? There's a man in a prison cell. There's a door and a guard on one side of the cell and a second door and guard on the other side. Now, one guard always tells the truth. The other guard always lies (waves O and E and G toward the tower door). Outside one door is the path toward freedom, but out the other door is an executioner waiting to chop the prisoner's head off....

Malgrim: (rubbing chin, getting excited)..Yes, yes?

Harold: The prisoner can ask only one guard only one question and then must walk out a door....

LIGHTS DOWN
 LIGHTS UP

Elaine: How long do you think Harold can keep him distracted?

Oliver: I don't know. We'll just have to pray it's long enough. If God sent us here, and if he gave Harold his zeal for brain teasers for just such a moment as this, then we probably shouldn't worry.

(come up to a wall)

Elaine: Oh, no! A dead end? But the stairs from the outer door lead only here. What can we do?

Gwen: I'll go back and retrace our steps in case we missed a doorway in the dark. I'll be back soon.

Oliver: Elaine! Wait! There's a note here. (unfolds and peers at it) But it's written in some language I don't know.

Elaine: Wait! I know this! It's German. Guess what!? I forgot to tell you. I've learned to speak a little German!

Oliver: What!? How!

Elaine: Master Cornelius is teaching it to Lady Agnes and the children. You really can learn a lot as a Lady's Maid.

Oliver: Wow. OK. Well, what does the note say?

Elaine: It says *Schau mal oben!* That means *Look up!*

Oliver: I think I see a trap door up there! Good job, Elaine! I can't reach it, though. Maybe I could climb this wall. Are there any hand holds?

Elaine: Hmm...there's some sort of trunk over here. Maybe there will be something useful in it.

(Elaine turns her back to the audience, bends over, gropes around. Oliver is facing dead end wall, feeling around. Guard comes in, sees that Oliver doesn't see him, grins, raises sword to strike him. Elaine turns around in time to see him and karate chops him. He roars in anger, and he and his sword fall to the floor and bump into Oliver, who turns.

Oliver: Whoa!

(Atilla starts to rise, but Oliver hits him, and he groans and drops unconscious)

Oliver: Well done, sister! Where did you learn to do that?

Elaine: I watch Buffy on weekends. Just kidding! One of the guards at Nescliffe gives self-defense lessons. You really can learn a lot as a Lady In Waiting.

(looking over short wall). Hey, I found a stool!

LIGHTS OFF

LIGHTS ON

James, Giles and Geoffrey and Mob run through, still shouting.

Father Mark: (pausing to gesture or stamp foot while yelling) You dumb villagers! You drive me crazy!

LIGHTS OFF

LIGHTS ON

(Harold and Malgrim still where they were before)

Malgrim: So the prisoner can only ask one question. Can the question be a compound sentence, a two-part question, as it were?

Harold: No.

Malgrim: Blast!

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(E and O are walking across; about the time they reach mid-stage, a woman hurries in behind them).

The Decoy Woman (flirtatious the whole time): Oh, thank you, thank you for rescuing me!

Oliver: What?

The Decoy Woman: Isn't that what you came for—to rescue me from that evil magician?

Oliver: Well, yes...But wait...We were told to rescue a Lady in a tower. You're here in the lower parts of the building. And you've run up from behind us. That doesn't make sense.

The Decoy Woman (coming up close to Oliver): Oh (laughs), not many things do make sense in this crazy world! (giggles again). Come on, sugar! Let's go!

Oliver: Um, I'm glad to be of service to you, madam, but before I leave, I feel I must search the tower to its top. I really was under the impression that the lady I was to rescue was at the *top* of the tower.

The Decoy Woman: I'm sure you're mistaken. Instructions aren't always completely accurate. I'm sure it just said "a lady in a tower," not "at the top of a tower."

Oliver: I've still got my message. (pulls it out). It does say "top" of a tower. Madam, it may be that I am mistaken and you are the lady I was sent for. Or it may be that I'm here to help several ladies for all I know. But I must make sure there is no lady at the top of the tower needing my help. I wouldn't rest easy unless I at least checked first.

The Decoy Woman: Oh, why bother? You've done enough. You've helped a lady in distress—me! Come on handsome! If you've got me, what else do you need?

Elaine: Lay off my brother, you hussy! (Elaine karate chops her)

Oliver: Thank you! I would not have wanted to strike a lady. Well, she's really not a lady—but I still wouldn't want to hit her.

Elaine: You're welcome!

(They exit and while doing so, Elaine looks back and gestures at the Decoy Woman)

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(E and O walk in and about the time they're mid-stage, Gwen runs in and joins them. Now she has a rolling pin in her hand and a fruitcake.)

Gwen: Good job, you two! You found the way! All I found was the kitchen. I did get this (brandishes rolling pin), though, in case I have to fight. And I got this (shows fruitcake) in case I get hungry, which I am—I love Christmas food! Wow! Looks like you two have already seen some action. Hey, there's a door ahead! (runs toward it, with the others following)

Oliver: There's an inscription on it. It says
*I'm a door through which you need to go.
 You'll never, never find my key, though.
 I cast the key
 Right into the sea.*

Oh no... (says, holds hand to his head)...now what?

Elaine: We've come so far...To lose now...but...but we can't possibly find the key ever.

Gwen: That's OK! You don't need it!

Elaine and Oliver: Huh?

Gwen: We'll bypass the whole lock thing. Like I always say, if you can't pick the lock, pick the door! We'll just unscrew the hinges! It works on my sister's door every time.

Oliver: You think outside the box, Gwen! Well done. I'm learning from you!

Elaine: Way to go, Little Sister Skills girl!

(they reach for the hinges as the lights go down)

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

(E and O and G walk in. They see a sword stuck in a stone)

Elaine: What's this? (they examine it)

Oliver: There's an inscription. It says

Elaine: --"the final door"? That means were almost there!

Oliver resumes:

To open the final door,

There's one thing more.

This sword is not Arthur's sword, not Excaliber.

Do you know the sword of Roland, of its name are you sure?

Say its name, and pull the sword from the stone.

If you succeed, the Lady will to you be shown.

Gwen: Who is Roland?

Oliver: He was Charlemagne's most famous knight. I don't know whether I can pull the sword out of the stone. But I definitely know the name of Roland's sword—it was Durendal.

(Oliver pulls on the sword and says "Durendal." It doesn't work. He does it again. He does it 7 more times.)

Elaine: Oh, Oliver. I think he's got us. It's not working. It's hopeless.

Oliver. Well... You might be right.... But I'm not going to give up yet.

LIGHTS OFF

LIGHTS ON

(Elaine and Gwen are looking discouraged and are counting while Oliver pulls—saying "Durendal." Elaine is counting his attempts. 98, 99, 100.)

Elaine: Oliver, perhaps it's time to stop

Oliver: Not yet. (Pulls again saying Durendal while Elaine counts 101, but this time the sword comes out. Elaine and Gwen cheer. Oliver pants)

Elaine: Look! The door ahead is opening.

Gwen: And look here! There's something written on the sword blade!

Elaine: It says "*If you made it through this test, then you had the secret stuff inside you—something called "Persistence." This door was set to open only on the 101st try. Most people wouldn't have kept trying long enough to ever make it to 101. Congratulations! Wow, Oliver. Bravo! I always thought you were just pig-headed. Well done, brother! Oh wait. There's more on the other side. It says. If you made it this far, I am impressed. But you'll never be able to get the lady out anyway, you holier-than-thou Christian knight!*"

(Groans coming from across stage.)

Elaine: Uh oh. I think Atilla the Hun and Delilah are coming around. (grabs the sword) We'll go back and take care of them. You go get the lady!"

Oliver: No! I can't send you two to fight Atilla again. You go in to the lady, and I'll take care of Atilla and Delilah.

Elaine: Oliver...God called YOU to this quest. I think He means for you to be the one who meets the lady and brings her out. We'll go back for them. You go on to the lady. You're meant to! (Another growl/groan. Elaine with sword and Gwen with rolling pin. E and G run off stage and yells "ha!" yelps/groans are heard.) (.Oliver goes in.)

LIGHTS DOWN
LIGHTS UP

(A lady with veil on head is seated at a table. Oliver runs /stumbles in. Kneels. Not looking up yet)

Oliver: My lady. I am here to help you

Lady: (rises) Good sir. If only you could.

Oliver: (he rises now) But I can. Come with me now!

Lady: (sits back down and beckons) No, it is not so easy. Sit down good sir, and let me explain.
(as Oliver sits, she removes the veil and we see she has some gray streaks in her hair)

Oliver: Oh! You're a little older than I thought you'd be (she raises eyebrows). Yet truly still very fair.

Lady: It grieves me, sir, to think that you have likely made a long journey and braved much in order to find me here and secure my freedom, for it cannot be.

Oliver: But!...

Lady: Let me explain. I was brought here many years ago by Malgrim (before I had any gray in my hair). By his sorcery he erased my memories. I know nothing of my former life except that Malgrim tells me that I had a reputation for being a very fair-minded person. For some reason Malgrim finds that amusing.... (pauses)...

When he brought me to this room, he pointed out the window there (points) at the village below some little distance from here. He said that he had a puzzle for me to solve and that he had set an enchantment in place such that if I tried to leave

the tower without finding the answer to his puzzle, then all in the village would instantly die. As would any rescuer trying to lead me out. If I stay here...they stay alive.

Oliver: Do the people of the village know the peril they are in and the debt they owe you?

Lady: They know nothing of the spell and its terms and conditions. Most don't even think I exist.

Oliver: Madam...you are a great lady. You let the years of your life slip by for their sake. You have given your youth to keep them alive. (He walks to the window and looks out. Then he turns back toward her.) They don't even have the courage to come to the tower and find out whether the rumors of your existence are true. And they never guess at the debt they owe you.

(He rouses self and comes to table and sits)

I have no great gift for puzzles, my Lady. I wish my friend Harold were here. But tell me what this puzzle is that keeps you here.

Lady: Well, here is what Malgrim has said: People think and do many wrong things—some of them very wrong. And these sins warp and wound people—even the people who commit them. So—Malgrim asks--what can be done about these sins--and be done in a way that meets 3 tests? The solution must (Number 1) Be fair (to do nothing in response to wrongs done is not right) ... (Number 2) Be kind, remembering that we are all flawed and weak... and (Number 3) Heal the wounds and ugliness brought about by our sins? If I cannot answer that question correctly then I will never be able to leave this tower without the instant death of everyone in the village. And I don't know the answer. It would take a God to see what the solution is. Is there a God?

Oliver: Yes, my Lady. There is a God, and He is a good God. And He has done more than find the solution. He became the solution. In fact, that's what the villagers are preparing to celebrate. Let me tell you about it. Many years ago, a young maiden was visited by an angel from God who had come to speak to her about a baby who, the angel said, would be the Light of the World...."

LIGHTS DOWN

LIGHTS UP

Lady: I see! The Christ Child! (gets up and shouts out the window) Hey, Malgrim, I have the answer! It's the Christ Child! The problem of sin is a cosmic one. Humans cannot solve it. Even sacrificing every human on earth could not make up for sin OR heal what it warps and wounds. But there is one person who could solve it. ...His name is Jesus Christ, son of God! When The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, His quest had begun!

Malgrim: (offstage) Nooooo! I haven't solved the riddle yet! I don't want to go to Nepal! Noooooo! Mama Maaaaaa Maaaaaaa!

Harold (yelling offstage): Oliver! He really DID turn into a goat! Whoohooo!

Lady: What?

Elaine : (running in, along with Gwen) Attila the Hun and Delilah just turned into goldfish.

Gwen: We weren't sure what to do. So we threw them out the window into the moat. I hope that's OK.

Lady: What?

Harold: (runs in) Hey, have you got a sister? And...um...she's not a dog, is she?

Lady: What?

(MOB RUNS THROUGH)

Elaine: Don't worry, my Lady. It'll all come out in the wash.

(The four take hands and bow as the lights go down.)

LIGHTS back ON as the rest of the company walks on and takes a bow whilst Christmas music is played