

The Real Temple

by

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The Real Temple

DESCRIPTION

All of life is a journey, and Lorenzo finds this out literally when, in a waking dream, he falls through his mirror into a slightly wacky King Arthur-world that takes him on a search for beauty, strength, and wisdom. The play is done in vaudeville style, complete with Three Knights in a Daze, the nasty Grapunzel-Dunzel, the Saggin' Dragon, King Sale-O-Man, and the Voice of Density. (This could also be done by high school students.)

CHARACTERS

- Lorenzo, very, very ordinary teenager; he becomes KING D'ARTHUR
- Maria, Mother of LORENZIO -- feisty; good-humored
- Three Knights In A Daze, LORENZIO's helpers -- they should be dressed as outlandishly as possible; everything they do should be reminiscent of the Three Stooges
- The Voice of Density, a narrator and commentator; is not seen
- Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi, *an imprisoned beauty -- speaks in a "Blanche DuBois" accent from A Streetcar Named Desire*
- The Saggin' Dragon, a rich old dragon who wishes for better days
- King Sale-O-Man!, an entrepreneur from ancient times who is selling wisdom
- Other characters for various scenes

SETTING

- A nice place somewhere in America
- A vaguely medieval land

TIME

- Fluid

MISCELLANEOUS

- Choice of music is open
- A microphone for DENSITY
- A microphone for SALE-O-MAN!

Note 1: This play is meant to be done broadly, going for all the laughs and jokes and mugging and funny business that one could go for. Do not be shy.

Note 2: Equally so, sound/music and lighting effects should be big and broad.

Note 3: If there is no fly space, stagehands will need to move the scenery off. This should be done with choreography, so that it blends with the action on the stage.

Note 4: *Casting:* All parts, except for LORENZIO and MARIA can be cast from either gender.

The Real Temple

Scene 1

Pre-show music out. The bedroom of LORENZIO. LORENZIO is standing in front of a full-length mirror doing "muscle poses." He is a very ordinary-looking eighth-grader. There are muscle magazines around. The "mirror" is actually an empty frame so that the audience can see him clearly. There is a window frame with curtains, a picture, perhaps an overhead light: all of these are flown in and will fly out at the end of the scene; they will return at the end of the play. There is also a dresser. Music is playing in the background; LORENZIO may be singing along, perhaps even dancing a little.

As LORENZIO looks at himself in the mirror, he can do various funny things: slap his gut, suck in his gut, pick at his hair and nose, etc. MARIA enters with a basketful of clothes, which she puts down and begins to fold and put away in the dresser.

LORENZIO

Mom!

MARIA

Sorry. Didn't knock, spit, say "right on!" three times, and do the secret touchdown dance.

MARIA proceeds to do all of it.

LORENZIO

Mom!

MARIA

Now am I allowed?

LORENZIO

You get weirder by the yard every day.

MARIA

But I'm not boring.

LORENZIO

No, just weird.

MARIA

You prefer boring?

LORENZIO

I am boring.

MARIA

You're not boring.

LORENZIO

Mom, you're bugging me! A little privacy, please?

LORENZIO slumps to the floor and begins riffling through one of the magazines.

MARIA
You like how they look?

LORENZIO
Yeah.

MARIA
Really?

LORENZIO
You don't?

MARIA
I don't know. Kinda lumpy. Tell me what you like.

LORENZIO
Are you done?

MARIA
Almost.

She leaves the basket and goes to sit down by him.

MARIA
I'm sorry. I just saw your door open, had to bring the clothes in. I know you need your privacy. Forgive me?

LORENZIO shrugs his shoulders.

MARIA
I'll take that as a yes. Okay, I'm done. You can go back. In privacy.

MARIA gets up, gets the basket, and starts to leave.

LORENZIO
Mom?

MARIA
Yeah?

LORENZIO
Think I can ever look like this?

MARIA
Like that?

LORENZIO
Yeah?

MARIA
I suppose anyone could.

LORENZIO
But me?

MARIA
Why not?

LORENZIO
(brings the magazine down)
But me?

MARIA
Honey, what's the matter?

LORENZIO
Nuthin'.

MARIA
(gentle mocking)
Somethin'.

LORENZIO
Nuthin'!

MARIA
Somethin'!

LORENZIO
I'm boring.

MARIA joins him at the "mirror."

MARIA
And just what do you think that means?

LORENZIO
Mom, I don't want adult-speak, okay? Am I boring?

MARIA
Not to me. I think you're really funny.

LORENZIO
(indicating the magazines)
But, you know, I got none of this --

MARIA
They can't scratch their butts.

LORENZIO
Mom!

MARIA

They have to hire butt-scratchers they're so tight. Now how do you think that would look?

LORENZIO

That's what I'd be -- a butt-scratcher.

MARIA

Not any son of mine! You are destined to have your butt scratched, young man!

LORENZIO

I got Dad's genes.

MARIA

Biology isn't everything. I know this will sound stupid, but you can be anything you want.

LORENZIO

Next NBA slum-dunk champ?

MARIA

Oop, well, that's a stretch!

(punches his arm to accent the pun)

Stretch, get it -- ha, ha, ha? 'Fraid that's where your Dad's genes and mine work against you.

LORENZIO

So I can't be anything I want.

MARIA

Toughest thing in life -- knowing how to know what you want. Once you know that, you can get going on your journey.

LORENZIO

What's my journey?

MARIA

That, love of my life, is the hardest thing to know. But, I can tell you this -- it won't be boring. Those kinds of journeys never are.

LORENZIO

(dejected)

Yeah.

MARIA gets up and starts doing muscle poses in the "mirror."

MARIA

You know, some of those babes in there --

(indicates the magazines)

-- I know you look at the babes! -- make me feel boring. How cut they are. Bodies -- such strange things, huh? How am I doing?

LORENZIO gets up and poses with her.

LORENZIO

Like this.

For a few moments they pose together until they break up laughing.

MARIA

You, boring? Hah! Give me your shirt -- I've got another load going in.

LORENZIO takes off his shirt -- he's wearing a white tee-shirt. He hook-shots it to MARIA, who grabs it and slam-dunks it in the basket.

MARIA

Score!

Dances around, high-fives LORENZIO, etc.

MARIA

Hey, if they lowered the basket, we'd all be champs! Catch the later wave, dude!

MARIA dances out of the room. LORENZIO goes back to doing poses in the "mirror." Underscoring music begins.

* * * * *

Scene 2: The Coronation

LORENZIO peers more deeply into the "mirror," posing this way and that. As he does so, the music strengthens and the lights begin to signal that something is going to happen. LORENZIO peers so deeply into the "mirror" that he "falls" through it. When he does, all the scenery flies away, and LORENZIO finds himself suddenly in a very strange place. Music and lights become **really** strange, then everything goes dark except a single spotlight on LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

What? What? Hey, wait a minute. Where am I?
Where am I? Where the h --

But before he can get the curse word out, a trio of voices tells him to "Sssh!"

KNIGHTS

Ssshh!

Three separate lights come up on the three KNIGHTS IN A DAZE.

KNIGHT 1 (MOE)

Be careful!

KNIGHT 2 (LARRY)

Can't use that word!

KNIGHT 3 (SHERRY)

Don't go there!

LORENZIO

All right -- then where the heck am I?

MOE

You're in a very strange place.

LARRY

You are having magical things happen to you.

SHERRY

Pay attention.

LORENZIO

Who are you?

KNIGHTS

We are Three Knights In A Daze.

LORENZIO

What?

MOE

Three Knights --

LARRY

In --

SHERRY

A Daze.

LORENZIO

Sounds a bad punk band.

Suddenly, with volume and force, comes the VOICE OF DENSITY. During the next lines the lights come up completely to reveal the KNIGHTS and LORENZIO.

VOICE

So --

LORENZIO
Who are you? What are you?

VOICE
I am the Voice of Density.

LORENZIO
Density? Don't you mean "destiny"?

VOICE
Density!

LORENZIO
All right! Density!

VOICE
Because I am one heavy dude!

LORENZIO
Gotcha, dude. Now cut down on the decibels,
Density.

VOICE
So --

LORENZIO
So --

VOICE
So -- aren't you the least bit interested in
what's happening here?

LORENZIO
Where is "here"?

VOICE
This is your life.

LORENZIO
I was just looking in the mirror --

VOICE
And you fell into your life.

LORENZIO
I fell through the mirror?

VOICE
Dawn comes late to Marblehead.

LORENZIO
And what, exactly, is my life at the moment?

MOE
You have a second chance.

LORENZIO

A second chance.

LARRY

To get your wishes.

SHERRY

So don't blow it.

Enter onto the stage a crowd of people. Pennants and flags, if possible. Cheerleaders could be doing cheers. Music changes into something heraldic, stirring. In short, the director is free to make as massive and gaudy a spectacle as possible. As the VOICE speaks, the audience sees LORENZIO, who begins to swell with pride and purpose.

VOICE

Think big, man, think massive and cosmic! Think Density! Think All-You-Can-Eat! Think 4th of July on caffeine! Think like a king!

LORENZIO

A king! A king!

At his voice, the crowd kneels and becomes silent.

VOICE

How about that?

LORENZIO

I like it!

(looking at himself)

But I think I need some kingly clothes.

KNIGHTS

The Emperor should never be naked!

VOICE

It's coronation time.

Part of the crowd parades past LORENZIO with costumes and weapons of many kinds. He pulls clothes, hats, shoes, a weapon, etc. from the passing throng, dressing himself in a regally outlandish costume. Others can go through the audience passing out small crowns, like Burger King, or small flags. LORENZIO ad libs as he sees the clothes: "Oooh, I like that," "Nope," etc.

VOICE

Now, everyone -- attention!

Everyone takes a knee. The KNIGHTS exchange places to get close to LORENZIO but crash into each other as they do so.

LORENZIO
These are my knights?

VOICE
Knights chivalric, true and blue.

LORENZIO
I'm stuck with them?

VOICE
They're stuck to you.

LORENZIO
What are your names again?

KNIGHTS
Three Knights In A Daze.

The VOICE takes up a rap beat with "record scratch"; the KNIGHTS move to it. The crowd can participate in it as well, pounding onstage to keep a rhythm.

KNIGHTS
We're the guys who watch your back / We keep your
back from a sneak attack

MOE
My name is Moe.

LARRY
My name is Larry.

SHERRY
You think it might be Curley / But I'm known as
Sherry.

KNIGHTS
We're stuck to you / True through and through /
Protect you and connect you / Let's "Boo-ga-loo"
/ Boo-ga-loo / Boo-ga-loo / Boo-ga-loo / Yeah!

All three draw their swords ineptly and try to cross them in the air, making a mess of the heroic gesture. They look at themselves, then at LORENZIO, look abashed, and fumble into a kneeling posture before LORENZIO, stepping on each other's lines of praise.

MOE
Oh great dread sovereign --

LARRY
Oh thrice potent master --

SHERRY
Oh sovereign grand commander --

LORENZIO

Enough! I get the point. All right. Get up.

They rise.

LORENZIO

Now, slowly and with great reverence, walk backward and stand over there.

They start to move, bowing and scraping, knocking into each other, etc.

LORENZIO

Go on, go on.

When they reach the point, LORENZIO commands them.

LORENZIO

Stop and do not move!

They are frozen in some ridiculous postures, and the crowd laughs uproariously.

VOICE

(booming)

Silence!

(everyone falls silent)

That's better. Now, would everyone please take up their places for the Coronation Oration, otherwise known as "When The Crown Comes Down." Ready? Hit it.

Everyone immediately forms into ranks and patterns -- these are up to the director, but they should have several levels, with people in figures on the floor, standing, and elevated: symmetrical but goofy. As they chant the following words, a crown and a Prince Valiant wig are flown in, which LORENZIO will unhook and put on. If they cannot be flown in, then someone comes onstage with them hanging from a long pole. The VOICE should be in on the chant. This could be done en masse or in choral parts, and there should be stylized movements to reinforce the words -- again, these should be funny and silly.

ALL

Oh dread and potent lord / Please don't sit down
on your sword

LORENZIO looks at them questioningly. They all shrug their shoulders and smile.

ALL

That's right -- that's what we said. Do you get the point?

Massive groan at the pun.

LORENZIO

(to the VOICE)

These are the sacred words?

VOICE

When in Rome --

ALL: Oh dread and potent lord / Please don't sit
down on your sword / If you should hurt your bum
/ We'd all feel sad and glum / Instead, stand
strong and tall / And be a king for all / And if
you do your work / Then we won't call you a jerk.

LORENZIO

(loud whisper)

I thought I was supposed to get a little respect.

VOICE

This is respect -- you should hear them when they
don't like someone.

ALL

If we don't like what you do / Then we'll chop
off your head, too / Ain't it fun to rule a mob?
/ Hope you like your job.

By this time LORENZIO has his wig and crown on.

ALL

Hail, King D'Arthur! May your rama-lama-ding-
dong always last real long! May your doo-wacka-
doo be always kind to you!

LORENZIO

(addressing the crowd)

Thank you for this honor --

VOICE

That's enough.

LORENZIO

Wait a second. I want to speak to my people.

VOICE

Can't. You have work to do.

Lights change.

LORENZIO

What's going on?

VOICE

Being king is not all beer and skittles.

ALL
Nuh-uh!

VOICE
You have to earn your keep!

ALL
Sis-boom-bah!

VOICE
If you want to keep your crown, you have to go on
a quest.

ALL
(like the commercial)
Be all that you can be!

VOICE
You have three tasks to perform.

ALL
Three -- count 'em, three!

LORENZIO
A quest?

VOICE
You have to find true beauty, strength, and
wisdom.

LORENZIO
That doesn't sound so hard.

VOICE
You will begin immediately on your quest for true
beauty.

The KNIGHTS clank forward.

MOE
It's our duty --

LARRY
To follow you --

SHERRY
So Rooty-toot-tooty!

KNIGHTS
(inept dance moves)
Let's "Boo-ga-loo."

LORENZIO
Let's go.

The crowd exits as LORENZIO waves at them. The KNIGHTS jockey to get close to him, try to lift him on their shoulders, knock each other about, etc. Lights change.

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Scene 3: The Quest for Beauty

In the scene change, a ladder is brought out; this is GRAPUNZEL-DUNZEL's "tower." GRAPUNZEL-DUNZEL stands on it; she carries a coil of braided rope that will become her "hair." It should be about 20' in length and braided from a rough, heavy rope. It should also be attached to a cap of sorts that can be taken off. She also wears a white half-mask that has on it an exaggerated cosmetic face: big eye-lashes, red cheeks, etc. -- an exaggeratedly feminine face, like a doll. If it can be dared, balloons for bosoms.

LORENZIO and the KNIGHTS enter from the back of the house to music, and as they do, the VOICE narrates their journey. They are riding hobby horses.

VOICE

And, lo, they traveled through many a strange country in search of true beauty -- but it seemed in really short supply.

LORENZIO

Let's stop here -- I'm bushed.

MOE

(pulling on his hobby horse)

Hi-ho, Silver --

LARRY

Whoa, Paint.

SHERRY

Easy, Trigger.

Of course, they bump into each other and into LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

I told you guys, at least a ten-foot buffer zone!
That last pig pile we had about snapped my back.

MOE

Sorry about that, boss. My fault -- I "gee'd"
when I should have "haw'd."

LARRY

Gee, what a shame!

SHERRY

Haw did you do that?

They laugh.

LORENZIO

Stop it! No more stupid puns! No more "Knock, knock" jokes. No more "a priest, a rabbi, and an iguana" jokes. No more --

(in a pouty, whiny voice)

"I should be first this time! No, it's my turn! No, Larry always gets to ride point and say, 'Watch out for the dead griffin on the right.' " No more "He's touching me! He's touching me! Ooh, cooties!" You guys are the most ridiculous knights a king could ever have!

They look crestfallen.

VOICE

Don't you think you're a little hard on them?
Isn't he, folks?

KNIGHTS should encourage the audience to go "Awww" in sympathy.
LORENZIO cuts it short.

LORENZIO

(to VOICE)

Butt out, oh ponderous poo-bah.

(to the audience)

Don't encourage them.

(to KNIGHTS)

If we weren't in the middle of some god-forsaken disenchanted forest, I'd go right over to Knights-For-A-Day and trade you in.

VOICE

Awww.

More encouragement of the audience by KNIGHTS.

LORENZIO

I'm warning you!

KNIGHTS continue to look crestfallen and woe-begone.

VOICE

Give 'em a break. What'd'ya say, good people?
Thumbs up if you agree.

LORENZIO

All right -- all right!

(to audience)

You can put your thumbs away. Just be careful where you put them.

(to KNIGHTS)

You're not that bad. You're all smarter than, than -- a fire hydrant, and that counts for something in this world, right?

(to the audience)

Satisfied?

KNIGHTS signal the audience that it is not enough, but LORENZIO catches them. They retreat back to their "crestfallen" look.

LORENZIO

We'll camp here. Now, where are we going to find true beauty?

GRAPUNZEL

(she waves)

Yoo-hoo!

LORENZIO

Great -- now we have a screech owl! Bring it on, bring it on -- make it worse!

GRAPUNZEL

(even stronger)

Yoo-hoo!

LORENZIO

(muttering)

Having the saddle rash wasn't enough --

KNIGHTS catch sight of GRAPUNZEL and are enraptured, signaled by a musical trill of some sort.

MOE

Boss, I don't think it's a screech owl.

LARRY

Not at all.

SHERRY

Not by a mile. Not by a mile and three-quarters.

GRAPUNZEL

Hello, there.

LORENZIO

Don't interrupt me -- can't you see I'm whining?

KNIGHTS drop their horses and move in a rapture toward GRAPUNZEL.

LORENZIO

Where are you going?

LORENZIO sees where they are headed, and he, too, is enraptured:
musical trill.

MOE

Oh, lady sweeter than Nutrasweet.

LARRY

Oh, breeze softer than Downy.

SHERRY

Oh, beauty hotter than jalapeños.

GRAPUNZEL

I do declare, you boys are going to spoil me.

(spying LORENZIO)

But who are you, mon chevalier?

LORENZIO

Ding K'Arthur -- I mean King D'Arthur. Ring of
the Tound Kable -- uh, Ting of the Kound Rable --

LARRY

Good goin', boss.

LORENZIO

(spitting it out)

King of the Round Table.

GRAPUNZEL

And may I sit at your table?

ALL

Yes, please do.

They all sit, staring up at her.

VOICE

And thus she began her tale.

GRAPUNZEL

I am just a poor young thing from the South who
has had to depend upon the kindnesses of strong,
handsome, virile, turbo-charged men like
yourselves.

They all bay at the moon like dogs.

ALL

Yowwww!

MOE

What is your name, oh felicitous filly?

GRAPUNZEL

My name -- It is does not rank high among the stars -- My poor humble name is Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel.

SHERRY

And how did you get trapped in this nasty, nasty tower?!

GRAPUNZEL

Therein lies a tale of woe.

ALL

Oh, no!

GRAPUNZEL

The nasty Baron de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi stole me from my father and locked me in this tower to protect my ravishing and unparalleled beauty from ever being enjoyed by any other man or beast.

ALL

(a lá Stanley Kowalski)

Grapunzellllllll!

GRAPUNZEL

Music to my ears.

LORENZIO

How may we help you, dangling damsel?

GRAPUNZEL

Well, this wicked old curse the Baron put on me could be broken if one of you can scale this tower and rescue me.

Beat as they survey the task.

MOE

Uh, how can we do that? It's as smooth as glass.

LARRY

I'm sort of afraid of heights.

SHERRY

And I'm afraid of people who are afraid of heights.

LORENZIO

Is there any way you can help us?

GRAPUNZEL throws down the coil of rope, her "hair" -- it should make a big thud when it falls. They look at it, pick it up, examine it.

GRAPUNZEL

Just climb up my hair -- and you will have pleasure unlike anything you have ever, ever known.

MOE

Wow -- look at how beautiful this -- this -- hair is!

LARRY

(feeling it, unwilling to admit what it is)
It's so, so, so -- I can't think of a word for it.

They start fighting over the "hair"; GRAPUNZEL's head bobs as if it is being pulled by their tussle.

GRAPUNZEL

Señor Knights -- please!

MOE

Me first.

LARRY

Nah-uh, knucklehead -- me first.

SHERRY

That's where you're both wrong -- move over.

GRAPUNZEL

Boys!

LORENZIO

Hey! Who's the king here?

They desist but continue to jab and poke each other.

LORENZIO

This king job has to have some perks other than the three of you. I will rescue the fair Lady Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du Bois avec C'est Moi.

LORENZIO does a series of ten funny stretches, etc. to get ready to go up the rope. KNIGHTS counts out one to ten.

VOICE

She'll pass her expiration date before you get up there!

LORENZIO

Here we go!

The KNIGHTS pick him up slowly so it looks like he is actually ascending.

GRAPUNZEL

Oh, yes, I know you can do it. I know that "you the man"!

But when LORENZIO gets to a certain height, the cap slips off and the "hair" tumbles down. They all fall down.

GRAPUNZEL

Oh -- oh -- oh -- damn!

LARRY

What happened?

MOE

She lost her head --

LARRY

Well, some of it.

SHERRY

You mean none of it was real?

LORENZIO

Explain this, dear Gretchen Grapunzel-Dunzel de Blanche du --

Now using some outrageous foreign accent -- French or German would be good.

GRAPUNZEL

I know my name!

LORENZIO

Well?

GRAPUNZEL

All right, so it isn't real!

MOE

I'm -- I'm -- shocked.

SHERRY

I feel violated.

LARRY

You mean all that glitters is not gold?

Triumphal music.

LORENZIO

Then, who are you?

GRAPUNZEL takes off the mask. Her hair is slicked back, and she pulls out of a pocket a handlebar moustache, which she puts on: she now becomes the classic villain in a melodrama, a lá Snidely Whiplash.

GRAPUNZEL

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

MOE

It's the evil Baron!

If GRAPUNZEL has a balloon bosom, she should also take out a pin and pop the balloons through the cloth of the dress.

GRAPUNZEL

Ah, music to my ears!

LORENZIO

I demand --

GRAPUNZEL

You demand nothing!

MOE

Why, oh why, oh why, oh why --

GRAPUNZEL

Because I am tired of all you so-called knights -
-

(pronounces it as "kah-nites")

-- cruising --

(pronounced "cah-roosing")

-- around my cah -- cah -- cah -- castle grounds,
crushing the carrots, casting caca everywhere,
all mystical visions and bad body odor!

LORENZIO

So you get us to climb up there --

GRAPUNZEL

And then I simply cut the rope!

LARRY

You're not beautiful at all!

GRAPUNZEL

And I suppose you're MCAS material. Now get out of here and go home where you belong! And leave the hair there -- do you have any idea how much that stuff costs today?

They retreat.

GRAPUNZEL
(maniacally)

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!

They retreat to their horses and exit while GRAPUNZEL laughs and sad music plays.

GRAPUNZEL
Nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah-nyah.

GRAPUNZEL's maniacal laughs follows them out. Lights out, stage cleared.

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Scene 4: The Quest for Strength

The lair of the SAGGIN' DRAGON set. The lair consists of a large table covered with piles of papers, books, etc. DRAGON sits at the desk with a calculator and a ledger book, totaling up his investments. Many people will bustle in with messages, charts, etc. to show DRAGON, and he will respond appropriately. Anything else to indicate a very busy office, and don't be shy with sound effects, if possible. Also, there should be stacks of money around -- bundles, buckets, etc. It would be wonderful to get something like a Dow Jones running ticker going across the back of the stage. If not, a wheel of fortune or large dartboard. The lighting should be reminiscent of flame -- after all, we are in a dragon's lair.

DRAGON should resemble a dragon but should also wear spectacles and look tired. As the stage is being set, VOICE speaks in the darkness.

VOICE
Humiliated, defeated, tired, in need of a Power Bar and a fruit smoothie, they stumbled on.

MOE
(whiny)
Where are we?

LARRY
(whiny)
We're nowhere!

SHERRY
(whiny)
We're nowhere fast!

LORENZIO
I wanted to stop and ask directions -- but nooooo!

DRAGON
(loudly)
Will you all shut up?!

They face DRAGON.

DRAGON
Can't you see we're busy here?

LORENZIO
Where's "here"?

DRAGON
You are in a very sacred place: the Stock
Derange, located on Gall Street.

LORENZIO
And what do you do in this "sacred" place?

DRAGON
(as if it were perfectly obvious)
What do we do here?

LORENZIO
Yes.

DRAGON
What do we do here?

LORENZIO
Yes!

DRAGON
Wait!

The CROWD comes to a screeching halt. DRAGON gestures for them to move forward, which they do, with trepidation.

DRAGON
(to everyone)
We have some -- what are they? -- pee-ple here
who do not seem to understand what we do. Can
you imagine that?

CROWD
We can't imagine that at all!

DRAGON
What we do here is only the most important
activity in the world --

CROWD
Definitely the most important.

DRAGON
For all we know, the most important in the
universe.

CROWD
In the universe.

MOE
(timidly)
And that would be, your flameship?

DRAGON indicates LARRY.

LARRY
Yes, your scaliness?

DRAGON indicates SHERRY.

SHERRY
Count me in, your lizard lord.

DRAGON
(to LORENZIO)
And you?

LORENZIO
Oh, all right --

DRAGON turns to WORKERS and conducts them, as if they were a chorus.

CROWD
Every person eventually asks / What does life
really mean / We have found the answer to that /
And it makes us feel serene

In this place called the Stock Derange / What we
do is sweet as honey / All day long we come and
go --

DRAGON turns to LORENZIO and KNIGHTS, in a loud stage whisper.

DRAGON
And make oodles and boodles and bundles and
buckets and carloads and truckloads of money.

CROWD
And make oodles and boodles and bundles and
buckets and carloads and truckloads of money.

(whispering echo in the background)

Money, money, money, money, money --

LORENZIO
That's the secret to life?

CROWD
Yes it is.

DRAGON
Without money, you have no strength --

CROWD
(whispering echo in the background)
Oodles of money --

DRAGON
And without the strength of money, you have
nothing. You are nothing.

CROWD
Nothing.

DRAGON
No one.

CROWD
No one.

DRAGON
That is all there is to know, and all ye need to
know.

(to CROWD)

All right, back to work!

Looking back to LORENZIO and KNIGHTS, expecting them to be impressed.

DRAGON
Well?

MOE
This is what you do all day?

LARRY
Sit there?

SHERRY
Compute?

LARRY
Buy?

SHERRY
Sell?

MOE
In hot pursuit --

ALL
Of money?

DRAGON
Of oodles of money --

SHERRY
Seems kind of boring -- kind of.

MOE
I'd have to agree with Sherry on that one, yes.

LARRY
It ain't got no zip.

DRAGON
But money, dear children, is what drives the world and makes us strong.

LARRY
(to LORENZIO)
Is this the strength you want to find?

LORENZIO
I don't know.

MOE
This is what we walked through muck and mire --

SHERRY
Brambles and briars --

LARRY
Ice storms and fires --

MOE
To find?

LARRY
Well, I don't think it's worth it.

CROWD have been overhearing this and gradually they have edged in closer to listen.

DRAGON
(dangerously sweet)
Really?

MOE
What's the most important thing in the world?
These guys. Ready?

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY. As they do, they say the following.

MOE & LARRY
Heads we win -- tails we win.

CROWD break out into applause but are quickly silenced by a baleful look from DRAGON.

DRAGON
So you don't need any money?

LARRY

We don't need to spend our lives on getting it --
to us, that ain't strength.

DRAGON

How dare you tell me that what I have done all my
life is worthless!

SHERRY

Well, you look like just a big ol' Saggin'
Dragon.

DRAGON

(to CROWD)

Get over here!

CROWD gets on their hands and knees in front of his desk. Lights on
now definitely on fire, and sound is bass-laden. DRAGON gets off the
desk and literally stands on the CROWD's backs.

DRAGON

All my life I earned my cash / Invested,
digested, built up my stash / Got a portfolio I'd
rate top-flight / I wouldn't waste my time being
a knight.

When I was young, my Dad said, "Son, / "You ain't
any good if you ain't number one. / "It doesn't
matter who you fry on the way / "As long as your
rating is Triple-A."

Gets off the backs of CROWD.

DRAGON

I worked hard, I never had any fun! / But I went
straight to number one! / Sure, I'm lonely -- but
that's no big deal / So no one loves me -- but
who needs to feel?

DRAGON stops; lights and sound out. DRAGON looks around him, suddenly
aware of his own emptiness.

DRAGON

(half whisper)

So no one loves me -- but who needs to feel? I
feel very tired all of a sudden. Saggin' Dragon.
Come here.

(to CROWD but without any fire)

Look into that buying that silver, selling that
gold --

(makes a weary gesture and sits down)

Whatever.

LORENZIO

Are you all right?

DRAGON

Suddenly very tired. I never believed any of it, you know. When I was a young dragon, I just wanted to belch out my flame, be free to pursue who I really was. I was an artist! Woodburning! That was my thing. I was really hot! And now, look at me -- all this wealth, but you have people who care about you --

(to KNIGHTS)

Could you --

LARRY

What?

DRAGON

Could you do that -- flip thing again?

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY.

MOE & LARRY

Heads I win -- tails I win.

DRAGON

Ah, yes. Heads I win -- yes, yes. Oh, when I was young -- I think you should go now.

As DRAGON speaks in self-pity, the CROWD, as a group, rub their index fingers against their thumbs, silently weep, exaggerated pain, etc. and otherwise make fun of DRAGON. KNIGHTS and LORENZIO can barely keep from laughing.

DRAGON

My father never liked me -- he always gave me a hot foot and sent me away to play in the fireplace. I never had any friends -- they called me "chunky butt" or jalapeño breath, but I showed them, I showed them!

LORENZIO

Perhaps we should be going. We came here to find strength and, well, I think we have to say it didn't quite turn out that way.

(to KNIGHTS)

Shall we?

MOE

All --

LARRY

For one and --

SHERRY

One for all.

DRAGON

Yes, yes, I quite understand. I'm sorry it didn't work out.

LORENZIO

Oh, it worked out for us all right. I hope you earn many, many merry deutsche marks.

MOE

Delightful dollars.

SHERRY

Fabulous franks.

LARRY

Stellar pound sterling.

LORENZIO

Goodbye.

LORENZIO and KNIGHTS exit offstage. DRAGON watches them leaves, then speaks belatedly.

DRAGON

You wouldn't, by any chance, have room for one more -- No, no, I suppose you wouldn't. I don't blame you -- I can't quite control the flame like I used to. And I have gas. Ah, the price of getting older. A little acid reflux and we could all be barbecued.

(DRAGON looks at the CROWD)

Well, what to do with you? Just -- do -- something.

DRAGON exits. CROWD laughs silently as the lights come down. They clear the stage.

VOICE

And so the quest continued. They had learned a valuable lesson -- money is nice, but it don't suffice. But so virtuous were they that they forgot to snag a few loose bills --

From the back of the house comes LORENZIO and KNIGHTS. They go down the aisle toward the stage.

VOICE

And folks, these guys are so poor that they can't even afford the sound of hoof beats. And they're off, on the third leg of this interminable quest, this time for wisdom, and we ain't talking about teeth.

Suddenly, from the stage barks out a loud, obnoxious, carney-barker voice on a hand-held microphone.

SALE-O-MAN

Yowser, yowser, yowser, ladies and germs, brothers and cisterns, may-dahms and mon-sewers, señores y señoritas. Lend me your ears because I have the offer of a lifetime that will last a lifetime. Folks, have I got a deal for you!

* * * * *

Scene 5: The Quest for Wisdom

It is KING SALE-O-MAN and his world-famous infomercial, "How To Be A Wise Guy In Seven Easy Steps." There should be some kind of up-tempo music.

LORENZIO

What now?

SALE-O-MAN

I am King Sale-O-Man, Sale-O-Man the Great, the wise guy of wisdom, and welcome to my world-famous infomercial, "How To Be A Wise Guy In Seven Easy Steps," the show that's been going and going for, oh, a couple of millennia now.

Greets people in the audience, asks a few how they are doing today, asks a few "Are you feeling wise today?" and so on.

LORENZIO

Wait a second. Who is this joker? I'm not going to --

SALE-O-MAN

And I am going to let you all in on a little secret today about how to make the grey matter up there spit fire like an old Zippo lighter --

LORENZIO

Stop this!

SALE-O-MAN

All you have to do is buy my book, The Seven Successful Habits of Really, Really, Really Wise Guys, and the accompanying video tapes for the mere sum of --

LORENZIO
Stop this! You can't do this!

SALE-O-MAN
Ah, a disbeliever --

LORENZIO
You can't sell wisdom!

SALE-O-MAN
You can sell anybody anything! Beanie Babies, eh? Toilet seats with red and green lights to tell you if it's up or down? The Princess Di funeral Barbie? Pet Rocks -- I rest my case.

LORENZIO
Wisdom is something you acquire over time -- it's a vintage wine, it's not grape juice.

SALE-O-MAN
You are so old-fashioned, so retro. Nobody wants to acquire wisdom these days -- who's got the time?

(turns to the audience)

Life today is about speed -- you gotta be somewhere before you leave, you have to be a million different people from sun-up to sun-down -- All I'm doing is offering a service that makes the rat race a little easier to take.

(all innocence)

That's all.

LORENZIO walks right up to SALE-O-MAN and takes the microphone.

LORENZIO
(to the audience)
You're being cheated here! Don't listen --

SALE-O-MAN
Hey, this is my gig --

LORENZIO
You can't get wise this ways -- you have to work for it --

SALE-O-MAN
No one wants to work, King Ding-A-Ling -- it's all gotta be on-time delivery, 24-7-365. Go back to your smelly old life -- I've got to earn a living.

LORENZIO

Nooo!

At LORENZIO's yell, all the lights go crazy and blackout. Sound effects as well. LORENZIO exits. KNIGHTS move to the edge of the stage.

VOICE

Uh-oh -- the whole quest thing seems to be going to hell in a handbasket. What is to be done? Oh, what can be done?

Three individual lights will come up on KNIGHTS, one after the other. They are sitting on the edge of the stage. In the darkness, the set for the opening scene in the bedroom is set and LORENZIO takes his place in front of the mirror.

MOE

You there?

Light up on LARRY.

LARRY

Yeah. How about you?

Light up on SHERRY.

SHERRY

I'm here -- wherever "here" is.

LARRY

What happened?

MOE

It all went to hell in a handbasket -- whatever that means.

LARRY

I never knew what that phrase meant. I mean, it would have to be a pretty big handbasket --

SHERRY

True.

LARRY

-- to fit "all" into it -- I mean, "all" means all, doesn't it, which means every Ding Dong --

SHERRY

Cubic Zirconium --

MOE

Those little stickers on fruit at the supermarket that you always end up eating by mistake --

LARRY & SHERRY

What?

MOE

You know -- those little stickies that say this apple is from New Zealand and after you take a bite you realize that only half the sticky is there and there can only be one place where it went --

LARRY

All right! We get the picture! Anyway, it'd have to be a big basket was my point if it was carrying "all" to hell.

SHERRY

And who would carry it?

LARRY

Who, indeed? Who would be big enough? Strong enough? Dumb enough?

MOE

And why a handbasket?

LARRY

Right!

SHERRY

Why not a cigar box?

LARRY

(exasperated)

It has to have the alliterative "h" sound, you klotzkopf!

SHERRY

Oh.

MOE

Helicopter.

LARRY

A helicopter could do it.

SHERRY

HUM-VEE.

LARRY

Hackney. Uh, Honda.

MOE

Hindenburg.

They both look at him.

MOE

"Everything's going to hell in a Hindenburg." I kinda like that.

SHERRY

He's got a point.

LARRY

On the top of his head. All right, all right! But the point is, nothing would be big enough to hold "everything" -- so what does it mean?

MOE

Maybe it doesn't mean anything.

LARRY

What?

SHERRY

Then why would people say it?

MOE

Because people are always thinking that things are worse than they are.

LARRY

That's true -- you change the color or shape of some little thing and someone starts yelling, "It was better in the old days -- the good old days, mind you, when men were men -- "

SHERRY

And 50-year old women could be called girls --

MOE

And children knew how to wear a baseball cap properly, dag-nab-it!

SHERRY

Things may be bad --

LARRY

But they're never as bad as you think they are.

MOE

It's the thinking that gums up the works --

LARRY

And thinking's the only thing that can un-gum it, too.

SHERRY

By gum!

Lights come up on the bedroom. They see the scene.

LARRY

And I wonder what he is going to think.

Lights out on KNIGHTS. They get up on the stage and stand off to the side and watch. LORENZIO is looking in the mirror, just as he was in the first scene.

MARIA

Almost time for dinner. Lorenzo -- are you all right?

LORENZIO

I don't know.

MARIA

You look -- you look like you're a thousand miles away.

LORENZIO

A million.

(turning to MARIA)

When did you leave?

MARIA

I don't know -- a few minutes ago. What is it, honey?

LORENZIO

I think something kinda weird and, I don't know, kinda -- well, cool -- but I can't tell. A few minutes, you said?

MARIA

Not even.

KNIGHTS creep up to the mirror and look at LORENZIO. He can sense they are there, but he cannot see them.

MARIA

What are you looking at?

LORENZIO

The truth.

MARIA

Lorenzo, you're beginning to scare me.

LORENZIO

Sit down.

They sit on the floor.

LORENZIO

Mom, you say you were gone for just a few minutes -- but did you ever have one of those awake dreams where you were staring at something, and all of a sudden you're not there. You're there, but you're not because something's, like, gone away from you.

MARIA

You were out of body?

LORENZIO

Like you went to Neptune and back without a sweat.

MARIA

You went somewhere.

LORENZIO

I feel like I did.

MARIA

It's not that little gas thing you get, is it?

(a look from LORENZIO)

All right -- Just covering all the bases.

LORENZIO

What was I talking to you about before you left?

MARIA

About how boring you were -- which I don't agree with --

LORENZIO

And I was looking in here, and I kinda -- fell through.

MARIA

So you went -- through there?

LORENZIO

I think so --

MARIA

And what did you find?

LORENZIO stares at the mirror sees MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY.

KNIGHTS

Heads I win, tails I win.

LARRY

Ta-ta.

MOE

Toodle-loo.

SHERRY

Good night, sweet prince.

They exit.

LORENZIO

Heads I win, tails I win.

MARIA

What?

LORENZIO

(turns to her)

Heads I win, tails I win. Mom, real strength --
not out there. Or --

(making muscle poses)

-- like this. The real stuff is right here --

MARIA

Must have been quite a trip. It's good to have
you back.

LORENZIO

Yeah.

MARIA

Hungry?

LORENZIO

As a dragon.

MARIA

Dinner, then, your flameship, in the shake of a
lamb's tail.

MARIA exits. LORENZIO comes downstage. The CROWD and KNIGHTS come
out. The KNIGHTS have a crown and hand it to LORENZIO.

LORENZIO

You can travel to Neptune in a heartbeat.

HALF THE CROWD

You can have adventures and quests --

HALF THE CROWD

-- that seem wonderful and precious.

LORENZIO

But in the end --

MOE

In the end --

LORENZIO

The strangest journey of all --

LARRY

The journey that means the most because it is the
hardest --

LORENZIO

Is to remain strong in yourself.

CROWD pulls out kazoos and blows a fanfare for the king.

KNIGHTS

Hail King Lorenzo.

LORENZIO

(to the audience)

And may all your own journeys, no matter your
age, bank balance, or pizza preference, lead you
along the highest roads and toward the brightest
suns.

KNIGHTS rush up to LORENZIO and jostle him jokingly.

MOE

And don't forget --

MOE and LARRY flip SHERRY, and as they do, everyone in the CROWD does
the same.

LARRY

With a hey nonny nonny --

EVERYBODY

(a lá Groucho Marx)

And a ha -- cha -- cha!

Lights bump out. Music. Curtain call.