

The Princess & the Pea by Simone Plant

Chamberlain: Esteemed ladies and gentlemen welcome. We are gathered here tonight to greet the ladies who have graciously agreed to take part in our little, ahem, competition.

Polite applause from everyone as 4 ladies step forward and curtsey in varying degrees of smartness as their names are called.

Chamberlain: Sire, may I introduce Lady Selena, *(pause as she curtseys)* Lady Daphne, *(pause as she curtseys)* Lady Gwendolyn *(pause as she curtseys)* and Lady Lavinia *(pause as she curtseys)*. We have had no news as to whether Eleanor of Genua will be attending. If she does not appear soon she will automatically be struck off the list.

Rosebud: *(whispered to the audience)* Don't panic dear friends, I have checked in my crystal ball and her coach is on the mountain road only a few miles away. She'll be here in the nick of time, fashionably late.

Duchess: *(speaking to Travis)* So Eleanor hasn't shown up, competition too fierce for her obviously. Excellent, one less to worry about.

Travis: It would seem so milady.

Valiant: *(talking to the contestants, rather embarrassed)* Thank you ladies for consenting to this er... challenge. *(clicks his fingers and a servant moves forward with a tray of drinks)* Please ladies help yourselves. *(ladies all take a glass)*

Selena: *(inflated self-image and perceives herself as incredibly entertaining and wonderful)* Of course it was obvious that I was going to be at the top of the list, as I come from a very long and extremely regal family. Breeding will out as Madame Portia always said to us at Finishing School, where I was head gel by the way.

Daphne: *(sung like an opera singer)* I'm so happy to be here, it's a great pleasure. *(twirls around)* The acoustics are fabulous, perfect for my singing.

Gwendolyn: *(checking her appearance in a handheld mirror)* I can't possibly see all of myself in this tiny mirror, back home I have a whole room full of mirrors so I can see myself all the time. Are you sure there aren't any more mirrors here.

Lavinia: *(very humble & quiet)* It's an honour to even be considered worthy amongst all these other noble ladies. There's a 99.9% probability that one of us will marry the Prince.

(The other ladies yawn, roll their eyes and look bored as Lavinia talks)

Chamberlain: Could I have everyone's attention please. Tomorrow's proceedings will follow thusly. The first two challenges will take place before luncheon with the remaining two after. The judges, Prince Valiant, myself; of course, and Dame

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to introduce our judges. Here he is your friend and mine, the Lord High Chamberlain (*he comes on and sits behind the table*), They said we've never get her she's way too big to fit behind judges table but we've only gone and done it, it's the delectable Dame Dolly of the Bedchamber (*she enters waving and shaking hands with the audience then sits at the table*) and finally the man of the hour our very own Crown Prince Valiant (*he walks on rather sheepishly and sits at the middle chair behind the table*).

Dolly: Oohhh this is all very exciting isn't it. Are you going to be the nasty judge Chamberlain, or shall I?

Chamberlain: Certainly not, this is going to be a fair contest, not some trivial form of entertainment for the masses.

Dolly: Sorry I spoke I'm sure. Anyway you don't have the trousers for it do you.

Chamberlain: Chester cut out the game show host nonsense and just get on with it.

Chester: Could we have the contestants for first test, graceful walking, please.

The 5 ladies enter 1 at a time through the audience and line up on the stage – “stage audience” applaud. Lavina, Daphne and Gwendolyn remembering to walk with the wrong shoes on.

Chester: Contestant number 1 is Lady Selena. (*Lady Selena walks to the front of the stage, twirls & poses as if in a Miss World Contest.*) Lady Selena loves winning and her ambition is to marry royalty.

Contestant number 2 Lady Lavinia (*she walks forward walking as if her shoes are far too small*) Lady Lavinia loves numbers and her ambition is to solve pi.

Third contestant is Lady Daphne (*she walks forward as if her shoes are far too large*) Lady Daphne loves to sing and dance and her ambition is to make everyone else love it too.

Now Lady Gwendolyn (*she walks forward and trips up*) Lady Gwendolyn loves her own reflection and her ambition is to have a giant portrait painted of herself.

And lastly Lady Eleanor (*she walks perfectly*) Lady Eleanor loves animals and children and her ambition is to make everyone happy.

Judges could you please confer before giving us your scores, and I'll just chat with our contestants. Lady Daphne how did you feel that went? (*sticks the microphone right in front of her mouth*)

Lady D: I think I may have gotten the wrong shoes as they seem to have been too big for me. I'm far better at moving and dancing than that. (*twirls around and stumbles again*)

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Lady L: Yes and mine were too small. I think perhaps they got mixed up by the chambermaids. Though I know how hardworking they are it probably wasn't their fault. In fact as there are 5 pairs of shoes divided by 3 maids that works out

Lady G: *(interrupting)* I ended up with 2 left foot shoes, mine are sooo much prettier, they match my beautiful dress.

Lady S: I can walk in any type of shoe for any length of time. I came top in department at Madame Portia's Finishing school for Young Ladies.

Murmuring from the stage audience

Chester: Oh well done. Lady Eleanor how was it for you? You seemed to cope very well.

Eleanor: I'm afraid I haven't got any shoes at all as mine were ruined last night in the storm, so I've been walking bare foot all morning. *(she shows her bare feet under her dress, "stage audience" react very impressed)*

Chester: I think the judges have their results. *(goes over to Chamberlain and in his haste hits him with the microphone) or we could do the strictly come dancing "paddles" and have Chester try to add the scores up each time.*

Chamberlain: Owwww.

Chester: Oops sorry your judgship.

Dolly clasps Chamberlain to her and rubs his head as if he was a child.

Dolly: There, there Dolly make it all better.

Chamberlain: Madame please *(as he pulls away from her and straightens his clothes)* sometimes you two do over step the mark.

Valiant: Could you lot stop messing about and can we please just get on.

Chamberlain: Of course your highness. *(coughs, clearing his throat)* Lady Selena 28 points, Lady Lavinia 16 points, Lady Daphne 18 points, Lady Gwendolyn 12 points and Lady Eleanor 28 points. *(Reaction from the ladies and audience as the scores are read out)*

Chester: So that means we have to say goodbye to Lady Gwendolyn.

Lady G: I'm sad to go but now I can get back home to all my lovely dresses and jewellery and check that I still look as pretty as I did before I left.

She leaves the stage.

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Chester: Round 2 sees our contestants having to cope with that age old problem of all royalty everywhere.

Dolly: What's that, worrying about a receding **heir** line?

Chester: **Heir** today gone tomorrow.

Valiant: Can we just get on with it **please**.

Chester: Sorry Sire. The test is shaking hands. (*Everyone does jazz hands*) not that sort of shaking. A handshake, a short ritual in which two people grasp one of each other's like hands, in most cases accompanied by a brief up and down movement of the grasped hands.

Chorus: Oooo. (*sarcastically*)

Chester: If the audience would like to take part in this challenge and please line up along here, the ladies will walk down the line and shake hands with everyone in turn while making polite conversation.

As the chorus get up and make a line across the stage the Duchess speaks to Travis in a whispered aside.

Duchess: Put this buzzer in your hand with these gloves on, so when the ladies shake your hands they get a rather unexpected shock. (*he puts on the gloves*)

Travis: Excellent plan milady.

Chester: Judges are you ready.

Chamberlain: (*after consulting with the other 2*) Yes we are ready.

Chester: Lady Lavinia to go first this time. Followed by Lady Daphne, Lady Eleanor and finally Lady Selena.

The ladies in turn walk slowly and gracefully down the line.

Lady L: (*as she's shaking hands*) How lovely to be here. So nice to meet you. (*when she shakes hands with Travis she has a complete fit as the buzzer- sfx - electrocutes her, once she has composed herself, she apologises and walks away with head down*)

Lady D: It's so quaint of you to queue up. Very well done. (*She has a slightly less bad reaction to the buzzer - sfx - turning it into a bad dance*)

Lady E: Have you been waiting long? Thank you so much for coming. (*She pauses slight but doesn't react to the buzzer - sfx*)

Lady S: Hello, hello, hello (*Travis shakes Selena's with his other hand*)