

**Scene 3**

Duchess's residence

*FOT Enter Dowager Duchess Wilhelmina clutching an opened scroll "the proclamation", her daughter Lady Selena and Travis.*

Duchess: *(reading from the proclamation)* "To all eligible young ladies, please attend Grande Florentia Castle in 3 days' time where during our Welcome Ball your name will be considered in the forthcoming marriage to Crown Prince Valiant". At last a chance to get my darling girl married to a Prince. What we need is a full proof plan to ensure that she wins.

Travis: A **dastardly** plan, milady.

Duchess: Precisely.

Selena: Are you sure this is going to work Mater?

Duchess: Of course it is my darling.

Selena: Well it didn't with that idiot Prince Charming did it?

Duchess: We can do soooo much better than that wet fish.

Selena: You promised that I would be a Princess. What is the point of looking this beautiful if I can't be in the public eye all the time where everyone can see me. Really mother this just isn't good enough.

Duchess: Now, now dear, don't get so upset. Stop worrying your gorgeous head about it precious; leave it all up to me. Off you go and supervise the servants packing. Don't let those idiots put creases in your silk gowns.

*Selena flounces off*

Duchess: Travis when we arrive at the castle, I need you to get the list of all the ladies who will be attending so we can start planning our little bit of sabotage.

Travis: Do you have any plans in mind milady?

Duchess: Just ideas at present. But whatever we do it can't look as though I or Selena are involved. I expect you to be as discrete as possible. Do you think you are capable of being discrete Travis?

Travis: Of course I am milady. Just as my father and his father were before me. It runs in the family.

Duchess: Good, just as long as it doesn't run out of your mouth.

Travis: Very good milady.

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*Travis leaves.*

Duchess: Hello all you **working class** people out there. I am the Dowager Duchess Wilhelmina and if you hadn't already worked it out **I** am the baddie of this little **pantomime**.

When I was a young lady just out of finishing school I was cheated out of the crown by Valiant's mother, who married the King instead of me. Just because he thought she was kinder and more sensitive than I was. But now at last I can smell the sweet scent of success. This time my very own darling daughter will get the crown and I will be the Queen Mother. How absolutely delicious. Nothing will stand in my way.

I have trained Selena from a babe to behave as a royal in everything she does. She's an expert in every activity she puts her mind to; needlepoint, piano forte, water colour painting.

MD: Painting and decorating.

Duchess: Who said that?

Band: He/She did. (all pointing to MD)

Duchess: Do you know what happened to the last person who made remarks like that?

MD: No.

Duchess: I banished them to Stafford, so be warned. Oh do shut up you lot. Boo and hiss all you like it won't make any difference. You sound like a broken gas pipe. I'm not **that** horrible, well maybe just a little bit, ha-ha.

**Song**            **Material Girl**

*She flounces off just like her daughter.*

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Dolly: Oh I thought you were walking funny. Ha-ha, see, you said **you got it** and I pretended you had the illness too.

Chester: **I'm** the jester, **I** do the jokes, thank you very much. Have you got the keys, *(Dolly goes to do another joke but gets cut off)* for the rooms.

Dolly: They're in my handbag. *(She then places her handbag on top of the trunk and proceeds to pull ever increasingly larger and weirder objects out of her handbag – like a cross between Mary Poppins and Petula Gordinio. It takes a long time and there are some very strange things that come out of the handbag – NB the handbag has a false bottom and one of the trunks has a false top with lots of items in it)*

*Ad lib some stuff*

Chester: Could you hurry up please. Prince Valiant will have died of old age before you find those keys.

Dolly: I must say you're bearing up very well for a person in pain.

Chester: I'm not in pain.

*Dolly stamps on his foot. Chester hops around in agony.*

Dolly: How's your foot? *(continues to search in handbag)* Arh here they are. *(pulls out 3 keys & fobs coloured purple, pink & yellow)* Purple, pink and yellow.

Chester: So ....erm... which colour is delphinium?

Dolly: I don't think it really matters, the ladies all look the same, let them share.

*They hurry off and Duchess Wilhelmina & Lady Selena enter.*

Duchess: When you become Queen, Selena, I think you need to instigate a vast rebuilding programme for the castle. It's far too old fashioned and out dated for the likes of us.

Selena: Ooh yes mother, I totally agree. Those garder robes need to go for a start. We need internal plumbing and wall to wall carpets, a new fitted kitchen. Oh and have you seen ....

*Travis enters interrupting their conversation*

Travis: Here is the list milady.

Duchess: Excellent. Now let's see who we are up against *(unfolds the list)* Lady Lavinia from Aston-de-Lodgees.

Selena: I remember her from Madame Portia's Finishing School for Young Ladies. She was an absolute bore, a terrible swot and such a goody two shoes.

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Duchess: We can discount her then. The Prince would never marry a plain Jane like that. Next is Lady Daphne Dinsmore.

Selena: Dizzy Dinsmore? Always singing and prancing about. She thinks she's the next Lady Gaga, but she's got a voice like a screeching cat.

Duchess: Then there's Lady Gwendolyn of Gran-villia.

Selena: Oh no, (*in disgust*) she really fancies herself. Apparently her stately home doesn't have wallpaper just wall to wall mirrors instead.

Duchess: Last on the list is Eleanor of Genua.

Selena: I don't remember her at Madame Portia's. She can't be anyone of breeding or she would have been there.

Travis: So what is the plan, milady?

Duchess: That fool Chamberlain has told us the first challenge will be waving and walking. I think to be helpful Travis you need to offer to take the dear ladies shoes down to the chambermaids after tonight's Ball to get them cleaned and polished in readiness for tomorrow's challenges. Isn't it a shame that in your haste to help the labels get mixed up.

Travis: Indeed, milady.

*All 3 laugh as they walk off.*

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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