

Scene iii

QUEEN, TUTOR, and MEN OF THE COURT
stand on stage, chattering amongst themselves (in
iambic pentameter).

TUTOR

Good men, listen to my words hereafter!
After coaching the Princess Beatrice,
Though it has taken me some time and work,
She shall surely make a good bride for thee.
(Even if she perhaps has the rabies
From that pet pest of hers /)

QUEEN

Now, that's enough!

She turns to face the MEN OF THE COURT.

Princess Beatrice is a *fine* young girl.
And I can assure thee, she does not have
“The rabies.” She is perfectly healthy.

Someone coughs awkwardly. BEA walks on—
wearing the Elizabethan dress. Gone is the usual
pep she walks with. Her back is unnaturally straight,
as the tutor taught her. She is trying hard to follow
the tutor's words. The corset keeps her from
moving her torso, and she's wearing almost
comically large ruffs around her neck and wrists.
She carries the skull gravely, which the QUEEN
takes and hides.

Well, well! Look at who has arrived at last.

BEA, with an uncomfortable smile on her face

Good morrow, o men of this good kingdom.
I must present myself officially
As the heir to the throne of this fine land.

O, thank goodness that princess is no more!
When she changes her garish dress in pink,
Underneath's a perfect bride to adore.
Unless she changed her mind, which would sure stink.

It's true, there is no better bride than thee.
Princess Beatrice, will thou marry me?

He holds out the paper that he read the sonnet from.
BEA is silent, in shock. She takes the paper, looks
at it.

BEA

I-Is that supposed to impress me?

MAN 1

Of course it is! /

MAN 2

What romantic writing!

BEA

This is just a ton of thinly veiled insults...! They're not even thinly veiled! They're just insults!

BEA drags QUEEN downstage, while MAN 1
flexes in the back. BEA tries not to literally vomit.
She clears her throat, trying to cover the disgusted
expression on her face.

BEA, trying to keep her voice down

Mother!

QUEEN

Oh, what on earth is it now, dear Princess?

BEA waves her over, shooing away the MEN and
TUTOR.

BEA, hushed

I can't marry him!

QUEEN, warning

Princess. Converse. In. Thine. Iambs. At. Once.

BEA

No, no, you don't understand! I've been trying *so* hard to do what you want, but I— I can't do this! I can't marry him!

QUEEN

Why on earth can't thee, Princess Beatrice?
If thou art getting cold feet, dear Princess,
Now is not really the time to tell me.

BEA

Mom, I don't belong here. And no matter how much I try, no matter how much you try to change me, I won't *ever* belong here.

QUEEN, gesturing to BEA's dress

Thou are finally starting to belong!

BEA

No! The only place I have ever belonged? You took me away from it!

QUEEN

I don't like the sound of thine attitude.
Thou art clinging to fantasy, princess.

BEA

It's a fantasy to *you*. Because you're too preoccupied with how *crazy* this place is to even consider that the world could be different! It doesn't have to be like this!

QUEEN

There are expectations that thou must heed.
They were ones that I had to follow, too,
And my mother, and her mother, before.

BEA

Mom, please. Think about this. Why do things need to stay the way they always have been?

QUEEN

I do not know what thou do speak about.

BEA

Why can't I just be myself?

QUEEN

When I was young, I used to think like thee.
I ran in the wildflowers and reeds,
In frills and ruffles and dresses of pink.
I felt the wind and breeze in my loose hair.
As a girl, I lived freely and fairly,
The world was not my mistrusted foe then,
Was not a place to be conquered and ruled
But a friend who cared for me, as I cared
for them. One day, mother, thy grandmother,
Sat me down upon the throne and told me:
“Princess Candace, soon, thou shalt be the queen.
And, then, when thou meet thy constituents,
They shall not be so polite, then, to thee.
They will not see a powerful woman,
Instead, they will see a weak little girl.
And if they believe that thou are weak, then
They'll take every chance to prove themselves right,
Searching for flaws in everything thou do.
And so, thou cannot dare give them the chance.”
I discarded the fields of wildflowers.
From that day on, I shed my pink dresses,
Bundled my hair up tight above my head.
And that little girl? I left her behind.
Now, nobody shall ever call me “weak.”
And now, I am grown. And now, I am strong.
I only want what's best for thee, my dear.
I don't want the world to hurt thee, Princess.
I just want thee to be unbreakable.

BEA is quiet for a while, considering her mother's words.

BEA

I know your life has been hard, mom. If I've learned anything in the past week, it's that being the capitol's idea of a princess is *not* fun. So, then maybe we don't have to be what *they* want us to be. Maybe we can just be who *we* want to be. And, if, for you, that ends up being... all this? That's wonderful, as long as that's *your* choice. But that's not what I'd choose. I'd keep wearing pink, and spending time with my ladies, and learning with my governess, and living with my knight.

She reaches out to the QUEEN.

I'm sorry you went through that. But that doesn't mean that I have to, too.

QUEEN

This is not up for debate, my daughter.

BEA, chuckling

No, you don't understand. I can't marry a man.

QUEEN gives her a look, as if to say, "it's not up to you."

QUEEN

Beatrice. Princess Beatrice, I don't-

BEA

I don't like men. I-I don't. And not, like, ahh, grr I hate them, I just- I don't *like* them like that. I like...

BEA gets emotional.

I like girls! I can't do this! I need to go home, mom. Back to my friends. Back to Cream. Back to my knight, Rowan.

QUEEN

Is that what this is all about?

Harboring a crush on thy lady-knight,

Like this is some sort of fairytale world?

There are no happy-ever-afters here.

For goodness sake, be realistic, dear!

O, the world is cruel to people like thee.
There's nothing to be done about it, dear.
I just want to keep thee safe, my Princess;
And if I need to make thee miserable,
In order to do that, then that, I shall.
Thou shalt marry the suitor tomorrow.
I shall discuss the issue no further.

QUEEN rushes offstage, and BEA is all alone. She looks down at her dress, teary-eyed. She lets out a sob, picks up the skull, and hugs it tightly.

Scene iv

MAN 2 paces back and forth, guarding the palace.
ROWAN, in her helmet, hauls herself (and her suit of armor) up onto the windowsill, clanking loudly.
MAN 2 whips around, and gasps.

MAN 2

Ah! A knight!

ROWAN, tearing off her helmet

Even worse!

MAN 2

Ah! A woman!

He sprints offstage. ROWAN shrugs, immediately looking back and forth down the hallway. BEA enters, from where MAN 2 ran off, looking confused. She holds the skull. She sees ROWAN, and freezes in confusion. ROWAN shrieks in excitement.

ROWAN

PRINCESS BEA!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

ROWAN crushes her in a hug. BEA gasps.

BEA

Lady Rowan? What art thou doing here?

ROWAN

WOAH!

She pulls away, confused.

Why are you talking like that?

BEA

This is how people talk in the palace...

ROWAN

O...kay? Well... it's not how you talk, is it?

BEA looks away.

Is it??

BEA

Listen, it has been /

ROWAN

Please talk normally!

BEA

IT'S BEEN SO WEIRD!!!!!!

She crushes ROWAN in a hug, who laughs, relieved.

ROWAN

There's the princess we know and love.

BEA

Oh, you don't know how happy I am to see you. I'm so glad you're here!

ROWAN

A-Are you okay, Princess Bea?

BEA considers, before eventually shrugging tentatively.

BEA

Eh, I guess.

She wipes tears from her face.

ROWAN

That doesn't sound okay to me. What happened?

ROWAN holds her elbows gingerly. BEA laughs awkwardly.

BEA

Well, you know, just kind of got kidnapped and now they're going to marry me off to this guy—

ROWAN

WHAT?!?!?!?! (Beat.)

Wait. I'm so sorry.

She notices her Elizabethan attire, and frowns.

What are you wearing? It's so un-fun and un-pink and un.... You. Um, and what's...

She points at the skull. BEA coughs awkwardly and rolls it offstage.

BEA

...It's a long story. With a lot of very not fun people. And a lot of iambic pentameter. And my mom. And a lot of weird guys, and wow, I was really getting worried there! –

ROWAN

Well, soon, it'll all be over, we'll get you out of here.

BEA

We?

ROWAN

I think your ladies would have rioted if I didn't let them come with me.

BEA

Wait, how did you all get here?

ROWAN

On horseback, of course!

A hobby-horse pokes its head out from the wings.

Hi Bessie!

BEA

Oh! That makes sense. Hello, my horse friend!

The horse whinnies and returns to the wings.

ROWAN

Now, let's get out of here, before /

MEN OF THE COURT enter, very dramatic and cliquy.

MAN 1

WAIT MY BRIDE– WOMAN KNIGHT!!

MAN 2

AND THE PRINCESS?????

They square up. ROWAN huffs, tired of having to deal with men. She has interacted with them for

three (3) minutes and has had enough. MAN 1 moves towards BEA, who pushes him away.

BEA

Stay away from me!

ROWAN

Stand back– I’ll handle this.

BEA

You don’t have to fight them, for me, Lady Rowan! If you don’t want to.

ROWAN

Oh, believe me, I do.

BEA, blushing

I mean, in that case, I won’t stop you. (Beat.) But it’s two on one?!?!?

ROWAN

I like the sound of those odds. (She pauses.) Oh, yeah, your LADIES wanted me to bring you this.

ROWAN takes her bag off her shoulder, and tosses it to the princess. She also throws a sword over, the same one that she used during their training. BEA grins.

ROWAN

They’re almost here, but they’re wreaking havoc on the way.

BEA

You’re the best. Good luck.

BEA opens the satchel, pulling out a pink dress and a tiara. She giggles and leaves. ROWAN fights off the MEN, using her pretend-sword against their real ones. It’s two on one and she’s actually awesome. During the fight, QUEEN and TUTOR enter, watching the fight. TUTOR draws his sword, but QUEEN stops him. They watch for a few moments,

before she ushers them off. Once the battle is over, they scurry off, crying in iambic pentameter.

BEA enters, wearing a beautiful pink dress! It's still her style; pink and frilly and big, but perhaps a bit more grown up than her original one. She wears a tiara, too! In her hand is her sword. She grins.

BEA

Thank goodness I'm out of that corset! And that ruff... eugh. I could barely breathe in the thing. But now...

She spins! Wow, so pretty!

I feel like myself again.

ROWAN

Wow. You look...

BEA smiles and raises an eyebrow. ROWAN is lost for words.

BEA

Yes, my knight?

ROWAN, uncharacteristically nervous

Um. You. It's. Uh. Very...Good. Yes. You look... Beau- /

LADY 1 runs on, with CREAM in her arms, who is holding the skull from earlier. She's ecstatic to see the Princess.

LADY 1

PRINCESS BEA!!

BEA gasps with excitement.

ROWAN

-tiful.

BEA

MY LADY! CREAM! Oh, I thought I'd never see you again!

BEA lifts CREAM into her arms, who squeals with excitement. She coos affectionately.

LADY 1

Princess Bea, we were so worried!

BEA

It's okay! I'm okay, I'm just glad you're here! Where is the other...?

LADY 2 runs on.

LADY 2

YOU'RE ALIVE!!! YAY!

BEA

LADIES!!!

The LADIES-IN-WAITING and BEA hug.

ROWAN initially stands off to the side, but BEA pulls her in.

CREAM

WRAWWH

BEA

Yes, I know, Cream, I'm very happy to see you, too!

LADY 1

Princess, we were worried sick!

LADY 2

And so was your knight!

ROWAN, interrupting so they don't say something embarrassing

How on earth did you get past the guards?

LADY 1

High heels make a great weapon!

LADY 2

Very hard to walk in,

LADIES-IN-WAITING

But *very* easy to hit with!

ROWAN

Alright, ladies, I hate to interrupt the reunion, but let's get out of here!

The five turn to leave. Before they can, the TUTOR enters, with QUEEN CANDACE by his side, blocking their exit. They're posing like Team Rocket.

TUTOR

Not so fast, my merry crew of ladies!
Methinks it's time for your journey to end.
Thou hast put up a fine fight, but it's o'er.

The group is silent for a moment, before laughing.

ROWAN, getting secondhand embarrassment

Why does he talk like that?

BEA, mumbling in firsthand embarrassment

It's "iambic pentameter."

LADY 1

What even is that?

LADY 2

Sounds boring! /

They high five, probably. The QUEEN stomps her foot.

QUEEN

Silence! We shall not be disrespected!
Princess Beatrice, thou cannot escape.
All of this here, that you see before thee?
This is thine future, just like it was mine.
It's thine destiny, which thou cannot change.
The time has arrived to grow up at last.

She sighs and looks away into the distance. The Fairytale Friends whisper amongst themselves.

If thou really art so ready to leave,
To abandon thy mother and run off,
So be it. A duel shall decide thy fate.

Strike me down? Thou win, and then can go home.
But if I achieve victory? Well, then;
Thou *shall* wed that fine suitor, Beatrice,
And leave behind these pesky friends of thee.

She draws a sword, a real one, as does the TUTOR.
BEA gasps, and takes a step back, holding her arms
up defensively.

BEA

Mom, I'm your daughter, you can't *fight me!*

QUEEN

I am doing this to protect thee, my dear.

BEA

...That doesn't make sense...?!?!

ROWAN marches between them, holding her
pretend sword at the ready. She gets into a defensive
stance, ready to fight off the two for the princess.

ROWAN

I won't let you do this! If you want to fight the princess, you'll have to go through me, first.

LADY 1

And me!

LADY 2

And me.

CREAM

RWAHH

All of them stand in front of BEA, blocking her
from QUEEN CANDACE and the TUTOR. It's
sweet. But BEA steps forward.

BEA

Thank you, girls. But I think I need to do this myself.

LADY 1

What??

LADY 2

Bea, you don't want our help???

BEA

It's not that! It's just... There are some times when you have to be brave, when you have to deal with things for yourself.

ROWAN

Princess, are you... sure?

BEA

Thank you, Lady Rowan. You taught me well.

She smiles and holds her hands.

I think I'll be okay. Besides... (She winks.) I've got a trick up my sleeve.

TUTOR

A-hem, the queen is waiting to fight thee.

ROWAN, over her shoulder

Oh, hush.

She steps back, to give BEA one final once-over.

Then, she smiles.

You really are the best princess a knight could ask for.

BEA gives her a watery smile.

BEA

You truly are the best knight a princess could ask for.

They hug. Tightly. LADIES-IN-WAITING and CREAM are getting emotional. QUEEN and TUTOR seem bored. After a few moments, they pull away. BEA draws her pretend-sword, gets ready.

QUEEN

...Are thou really going to fight me with that?

BEA

It still swings the same, doesn't it?

The TUTOR stands in the center, to judge the fight.
ROWAN, the LADIES-IN-WAITING, and CREAM
wait anxiously by the edge of the stage.

ROWAN

Good luck, princess!

TUTOR

And now, the time has come to fight: en garde!

BEA and QUEEN CANDACE begin to fight.
BEA's pretend sword clangs against the QUEEN's,
who looks surprised.

BEA

Not so immature, now, is it?

QUEEN moves like a trained fencer, while BEA has
lots of energy and speed. At one point, one of the
LADIES-IN-WAITING throws CREAM at the
TUTOR, in slow-mo, who goes running off. The
two have their swords locked.

BEA

Mom, you don't have to do this! You can just let me go, and we can leave all this behind us!

Clash!

QUEEN

No! Thou do not understand, Beatrice,
Because yes, of course I need to do this!
I am trying to save thee, my daughter,
From the relentless cruelty of the world.
I am thy mother! Don't thou understand?
And I know better than anyone else
How life attacks thee like an enemy.

BEA

Mom, *you're* attacking me like an enemy.

QUEEN

Don't talk back to me, Princess Beatrice.

BEA

Okay, I get it, okay! I know your life has sucked, and I'm sorry about that. I'm sorry that you felt like you had to pretend to be someone you're not. This isn't how you've always been, mom! You used to run and play and sing like I do! And I know that people can be mean, and maybe if I am who I truly am, most of the world won't accept that. Okay. But as long as I find the right people, I can be myself.

She looks back at her friends.

And mom, I *really* have found the right people.

QUEEN hesitates. Seems less certain. But they keep fighting! QUEEN seems to be getting the upper hand. She strikes the sword from BEA's hand.

ROWAN seems ready to intervene, but then, BEA draws the mirror from her pocket. As QUEEN goes to make another swing, BEA holds it out as a last-ditch attempt to defend herself.

The QUEEN stops as soon as she sees it, halting mid-swing. She sees herself, the person she has become, and the person she used to be. The sword falls from her hand. She reaches out, taking the mirror from BEA's hands. BEA wraps her arms around her mom in a tight hug.

BEA, triumphantly

Never let yourself get distracted.

QUEEN CANDACE hugs her daughter tightly.

QUEEN, now referred to as **CANDACE**

I'm sorry, Bea.

BEA, brightening up

It worked! Mom, you– you called me Bea! And you're not speaking in iambic pentameter! Oh, thank goodness, I was getting tired of that verse.

CANDACE

I really do want what's best for you, dear. And I thought that by getting you to toughen up, maybe you wouldn't be so susceptible to the harsh world outside your castle. But it's clear to me that the only person who knows what's best for you, is, well, you.

She looks around at her friends, smiling faintly.

You seem to know how to pick the good ones. (Sigh.) You don't have to marry that man. Frankly, he was even annoying me. And you have... (She gives a pointed look to ROWAN.) Well, better options in store.

BEA

I'm glad you can see that now. Thank you, mom.

The two hug again.

LADY 1

So... Uh...

LADY 2

Are you... cool now?

BEA

I think this is a step in the right direction. We've still got a way to go, but, yeah, I think she's cool now.

LADIES-IN-WAITING

YAY!

They all tackle CANDACE in a hug, who is shocked at the sudden affection, but ends up giving in. CANDACE somehow ends up holding CREAM, like someone who's never held a baby before. CREAM tries to nip at her finger. She freaks out a bit.

CANDACE

Okay, okay, thank you...

ROWAN approaches, very nervously. Everyone else is talking amongst themselves.

ROWAN

Um, yes, it's nice to meet you, officially, Ms. Bea's Mom the Queen...

CANDACE

Oh, dear. You can just call me Candace. So, you're her knight.

ROWAN, nervously

I am.

CANDACE

...Good. Good. (Beat.) I'm sorry for the way I treated you. You, are, uh, a very skilled fighter.

ROWAN

Oh, thank you, that's very... /

CANDACE

I wasn't sure that someone like you could keep my daughter safe. But, after seeing you fight off those men, coming to her defense... I don't believe I have anything to worry about. You know, her father was a knight, too. We met back when I was still a princess. He gave me that mirror to propose to me, when I was feeling the same pressures of growing up. Of fitting in. I nearly forgot it existed.

She considers for a moment, turns to ROWAN. She holds out the mirror to her.

You should have it.

ROWAN

What? Are... Are you sure?

CANDACE

I would like it to go to someone worthy. (Considers.) And now, I know, you *are*. Worthy of your position. And of...

She looks over at BEA. ROWAN blushes, and takes the mirror from CANDACE, who smiles knowingly.

GOVERNESS, from offstage

Bea? Bea!?!

The GOVERNESS runs on frantically, gasping in relief when she sees the princess, and shock when she sees the QUEEN.

Um! Um! Your majesty!

Then, she notices the mirror.

Oh, princess, I was worried sick! I thought... I thought....!!

She runs up to Bea, checking over her for any injuries.

CANDACE

It's alright. Everything is going to be okay.

BEA

Yes, it will be.

GOVERNESS

... I see. I'm so glad you're okay, Bea!

BEA hugs the GOVERNESS tightly.

BEA

I didn't realize the outside world was so...

GOVERNESS

I know, Bea, it's hard...

BEA

You never told me that.

GOVERNESS

I'm sorry. I didn't want to frighten you.

BEA

I just... I would've liked to know. To prepare myself.

GOVERNESS

I thought by hiding you from it, I could... Keep you safe, for a bit longer. But it seems that all that adult-ness has found you anyway.

BEA

...Something like that. Look, it's alright. (She smiles, takes the GOVERNESS' hands.) I'm not mad. I know now. You were trying your best.

GOVERNESS

I'm sorry that my best wasn't best for *you*.

They hug. CANDACE awkwardly walks up behind the two, clears her throat.

CANDACE

Listen, Bea... I do think I interrupted your birthday party earlier, when I came crashing into the castle. So... do you think perhaps now might be a good time for a redo?

BEA

That sounds perfect!

Giggling, the group exits, all chatting amongst themselves.