

I'M A PRINCESS – GET ME OUT OF HERE!

By Linda Cooke

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A One Act Comedy

By Linda Cooke

SYNOPSIS: When sixteen-year-old Diana lands a stint as princess with an online reality show, she expects it's all gorgeous gowns and royal romance from here on out. But her Disneyland dreams become a Game of Thrones nightmare when she learns that unless she conceives an heir with a cranky old stranger she will face the dungeon ... or worse. The reality of this show is that she and fellow millennials Bernard and Gwen are trapped in the 16th century, unable to return to the lives they thought they didn't want. Can Diana still achieve pampered princess status, or will she risk her fairy tale ending to allow her new friends to live ...*(wait for it)* ... happily ever after?

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4 females, 2 males, 1 either, 10-20 extras; gender flexible)

DIANA (f).....16 year old obsessed with obtaining the perks of a Disney Princess. Turns a deaf ear to practical advice and history lessons. When put to the test, she's tougher and smarter than she appears. *(120 lines)*

BRITANY (f).....Diana's edgy and cynical friend. She tries unsuccessfully to get Diana's feet back on the ground. *(22 lines)*

MOM (f).....Diana's flighty and indulgent mom *("Anything to keep my baby from suffering over my divorce.") (11 lines)*

RYAN/RAE ANN (m/f)	Suspect reality show director, not above a little treachery to get his production off the ground. (<i>“Anything for an Internet ratings hit.”</i>). (12 lines)
BERNIE (m)	17 years old, he plays the part of Diana’s translator and advisor on the reality show. A 21 st century history nerd trapped in a 16th century reality show. (70 lines)
KING WILHELM (m)	Hard-hearted king, betrothed to Diana. The burdens of ruling have made him cold. (21 lines)
GWEN (f)	Princess Gwyneth Wilhelm. 14 years old. Bitter and broken-hearted, she initially blames her mother’s imprisonment on Diana, but later the two join forces. (22 lines)
CAMERA OPERATOR (f)	(Nonspeaking)
LADIES IN WAITING (f)	Four or more. One more matronly than the others; “fairy godmother.”(Nonspeaking)
KING’S ENTOURAGE (m/f)	Nobles. (Nonspeaking)
ARMED PALACE GUARDS (m/f)	Three guards. (Nonspeaking)
SERVANT (m/f)	Serves Goblets. (Nonspeaking)
LADY MIRANDA (f)	Gwen’s Mom. (Nonspeaking)
BERNIE’S FAMILY (m/f)	Parents and Siblings. (Nonspeaking)
BOOM MIC OPERATOR (m/f)	Optional, (Nonspeaking)
PRODUCTION TEAM (m/f)	Optional, Realty Show Cast and Crew. (Nonspeaking)

DURATION: 35 minutes.

SETTING: Diana's bedroom and a castle.

DIRECTOR NOTES

Take special care in casting the part of Diana. The entire story hinges on Diana's transition from spoiled and silly teen to shrewd yet magnanimous ruler. The actress who plays her must display both sides believably. The humor in the piece derives from the contrast between 16th century propriety and 21st century sass. Again the actors playing Diana, Bernie and Gwen must be convincing in both worlds. Britany provides the 21st century edge, while Wilhelm portrays the 16th century decorum. The tone should be a mildly dark comedy, as consequences for the characters are truly dire, but handled comically.

COSTUMES

DIANA – for opening scene, a plastic tiara and fluffy dress in nauseous bright color. She then changes into an upscale renaissance gown and headpiece.

If at all possible, her dress should have a stiff bodice front piece. Important to include an ornate necklace and other jewelry.

BRITANY – total contrast to Diana- torn jeans, fatigue jacket, combat boots.

MOM – middle-aged “mom wear,” may be frilly or dowdy.

RYAN – billed cap, “safari” vest with pockets, running shoes, jeans.

BERNIE – Tudor era noble's outfit.

KING WILHELM – upscale Tudor era garb, including crown.

GWEN – upscale Tudor era garb, including crown.

SET SUGGESTIONS

DIANA'S BEDROOM – 21st century teen bedroom interior door, window, bed, dresser, laptop computer, privacy screen.

CASTLE FOYER – portcullis, stone walls, tapestries, torches on wall.

COURTYARD – stone bench(es), topiaries, external castle wall.

THRONE ROOM – a throne (*obviously*), tapestries, candelabras.

DIANA'S ROYAL CHAMBERS – ornate bed, tapestries, fireplace.

PROPS

- ☐ Oversized Ornate Book of Fairy Tales
- ☐ Tall Bar Stool
- ☐ Suitcase
- ☐ Small Clothing Items to Pack
- ☐ Clipboard
- ☐ Paper Contract
- ☐ Pen or Plume
- ☐ Professional Looking Video Camera
- ☐ Mock-Up of Boom Microphone (*Optional*)
- ☐ Silver Tray and Set of 4 Goblets
- ☐ Needlework
- ☐ Small Books

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Feel free to change references such as fist bumps, to something more current.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The original staged reading took place Dec. 17, 2015 in Grand Island, Nebraska. By the students of Grand Island Central Catholic Middle/High School, with the cast as follows:

DIANA -----	Madison Imig
BRITANY -----	Hope Stanton
MOM -----	Abbey King
RAE ANN -----	Grace Tynan
BERNIE -----	Samaan Adenti
WILHELM -----	Tommy McFarland
PRINCESS GWYNETH -----	Kaylee Petsch
DIRECTOR -----	Brian Mohr

SCENE 1

AT RISE: *Diana's bedroom. Spotlight up on BRITANY, seated on a barstool with book of fairy tales open on her lap. DIANA is onstage, in darkness, motionless, her back to the audience.*

BRITANY: Once upon a time in the far away kingdom - of Manhattan - a baby girl was born. Her father, George Kingsley, and her mother, Elizabeth from Queens, named her after "the people's princess," Diana Frances. From the day she was born, Diana was dressed and addressed as a princess. Her room was decorated like a miniature castle. Princesses were the theme of every birthday party, Halloween costume, doll, movie and book. *(Turns a page in the Book.)* All was well in the kingdom until, as a maid of fifteen, the fair princess fell under an evil spell - of ridicule. She was cursed with classmates who declared that her princess accoutrements were for children. By the time her sixteenth birthday had passed, even her best friend, Britany, *(Points proudly to herself.)* admonished Diana.

Lights up on DIANA, who turns to face the audience as she packs a suitcase. BRITANY closes the book, places it on the stool, and turns to address DIANA.

Diana, we all liked that princess stuff when we were second graders, but we're in high school now. Why can't you just be a non-conformist like everyone else?

DIANA: I like being different. I like to appear like someone out of a different century.

BRITANY: And just what century would that be, Diana? The latter Walt Disney era? No one ever dressed like this. *(BRITANY picks up a dress from DIANA'S suitcase and in disgust, flicking her hand against the fluffy fabric.)* I wonder - where do you even find this stuff, 'cause I'm pretty sure it didn't come from Hot Topic.

Pouting, DIANA ignores the question.

You got it at a costume shop, didn't you? (*Still no answer.*) Diana?

DIANA: (*Muttering.*) On-line. Your Royal Highness dot com.

BRITANY: Diana, it's time to give this up and do grown-up stuff. Get a tattoo and a body piercing. That's what mature people do. In a few years you'll be out of high school and you can't make a living as a professional princess.

DIANA: That is where you are wrong and that's why I asked you to come over. Look on the computer.

BRITANY: (*Reading from the monitor screen*) "Internet reality show 'Contest of Crowns' seeks young woman for part of princess." Well, I'll be damned.

DIANA: And that is why I am packing. The producers are on their way over right now. I have finally seized upon a way to break the curse. At last I've found a place where I belong, where I will not be taunted for my royal ways.

BRITANY: How does your mom feel about this?

MOM: (*Sweeping into the room with more frou-frou clothes for Diana to pack.*) The queen mother gives her full consent.

DIANA turns away to primp at the mirror.

BRITANY: Mrs. Kingsley, I don't mean any disrespect, but with just one semester of Psych 101, I can see what's been going on here. At about the time Diana should have started to outgrow this princess obsession, your husband left. To make it up to her, you've been amping up the royal treatment when you should have been preparing Diana for the real world.

DIANA and MOM'S faces drop instantly.

(*To DIANA.*) I don't suppose your dad even knows about this reality show plan.

DIANA: Alas, my father remains under the curse of the evil Jody. Mayhap she has transformed him into some inanimate object, incapable of picking up a phone to call his only child.

MOM: Eighteen years of marriage, and all it takes is a 23-year-old flight attendant moving in next door...

BRITANY: *(To audience.)* The two of them had vanished in a puff of jet fuel three years prior, and have yet to be heard from.

MOM: *(Motions for silence.)* Do I hear beat of horse hooves?

SFX: The sound of hoof beats is heard. MOM scurries to the window and peers out.

They've sent a coach and six for you, sweetheart!

BRITANY: You gotta be kiddin'. *(Strides to the window and looks out.)*

Son of a ... and there's a camera crew pulling up behind it in a Hummer.

SFX: Sound of doorbell ringing.

MOM: Oh, I'll get it. *(Scurries offstage.)*

BRITANY: Diana, I've got a bad feeling about this, and apparently not much time to talk you out of it.

DIANA: And why would you do that? I'm about to meet my one true love. A handsome prince will soon carry me off to his palace to live happily ever after.

BRITANY: And why would he do that?

DIANA: Because I'm the most beautiful girl he's ever seen, with my flowing dress and shimmering tresses.

BRITANY: Yeah, because that kind of thing happens all the time. The kind of man who chooses a wife based on her outfit is not going to keep you living happily ever after. He's going to dump you for a younger model eventually.

DIANA: That's not how it happens in the story books.

BRITANY: But it is how it happens in the history books. And, I hate to bring this up, but it's how it happens in real life. Diana, it happened to your own mom -

DIANA: Shut up!

MOM enters with RYAN.

MOM: Darling, this is Ryan, the show's producer.

DIANA offers her hand low for him to bow down and kiss. He is taken aback, then smiles sinisterly and does so. If played by a female, RAE ANN would extend her hand, DIANA would decline to take it, and RAE ANN would curtsy.

RYAN: Mrs. Kingsley, I assume you and your daughter have looked over the fine points of the contract we sent you.

MOM and DIANA glance at each other sheepishly.

MOM: Uh, sure.

RYAN: Great. In that case, I'll ask you both to sign on the dotted line.

MOM and DIANA each sign in turn, and RYAN is visibly relieved.

Great! So from here on out, we want you looking, talking, and acting as if you were living in the 16th century. Clear?

DIANA: No arguments here!

RYAN: Okay, I'll leave your copy of the contract right here while you get changed.

DIANA: But I'm already in costume.

RYAN: Uh... yeah, that's funny.

DIANA shoots a hurt and angry look. Realizing DIANA is serious, RYAN tries to recover.

And it's a lovely costume, but wardrobe has something else for you.

RYAN claps his hands, and a matronly LADY enters, dressed in Tudor garb. Draped across her arms is a magnificent gown. LADY mistakenly curtsies to BRITANY. Horrified, BRITANY points LADY, in no uncertain terms to DIANA. LADY again curtsies, this time to DIANA, eyes downcast, face somber.

DIANA: You must be my fairy godmother!

LADY appears bewildered, but before she can respond, a group of younger LADIES enter, followed by a female camera operator there to capture the transformation.

RYAN: These are your ladies-in-waiting.

DIANA: *(Breaks into hopping and squealing and clapping her hands.)*

Ladies-in-waiting! That's almost as good as a fairy godmother!

LADIES usher DIANA behind a privacy screen.

MOM: Oh, Diana, honey. It's just like a dream come true, isn't it?

DIANA: More like a wish granted from a magic fairy.

BRITANY: Or a witch bearing a poisoned apple.

RYAN: I'll go get our copy of the contract notarized immediately. I've got a notary waiting in the Hummer.

MOM: If you don't mind, I'd love to get a better look at the coach and horses.

RYAN: Sure thing. Come with me.

MOM and RYAN exit.

BRITANY: *(Picks up the contract RYAN has left behind and looks it over.)* Uh, Diana, are you sure about this? This isn't a game show, or a day at the renaissance fair. This is meant to be a realistic historical re-enactment of the 1500s.

DIANA: Whatever. As long as I'm the princess. Ouch! Does the corset have to be so tight?

BRITANY: Diana, you and I both know people who like to dress up for Renaissance Fairs or re-enact Civil War battles on the weekends. But when it's over, they step back into the 21st century, tweeting their friends about it and posting the pictures on Facebook. Even *they* know that the old ways sucked and that's why people quit them. And now you're going to be living this out for heaven knows how long.

DIANA: You're looking at this all wrong. Imagine a brave cavalier as the champion of his lady fair! A chivalrous knight defending the honor of his true love! (*Sigh*) Olden times were so romantic!

BRITANY: Romantic? Romantic! Let's take a real-life example of kings and queens. Henry VIII rejected his first wife and took a younger woman as his mistress. He dumped both those women to marry the mistress's own sister. Be-headed that second wife when she didn't give him a son. Divorced and beheaded two more wives before he finally kicked the bucket himself.

There is a brief pause. BRITANY hopes this means DIANA is thinking it over. DIANA pops her head over the screen.

DIANA: (*Looks at her blankly.*) But the dresses, Britany! With the graceful, flowing sleeves-

BRITANY: Let's try another tack: How about Marie Antoinette? Got addicted to the lavish lifestyle you think is so great. Wound up beheaded by her own subjects before she was forty, and all because she'd been forced to marry a crazy prince in a strange country when she was just fifteen.

Again, there is a pause. Again, DIANA pops her head over the screen.

DIANA: Britany! I'm already sixteen! I could do what she did and marry a prince in a far-off kingdom! No more school, no worrying about a career -

BRITANY: Are you listening to me at all?

DIANA emerges from behind the screen, looking resplendent. Even the cynical BRITANY is impressed.

BRITANY: Diana, I ... I gotta admit... you look amazing.

DIANA: I'm corseted up so tight I can hardly breathe, and they've got my boobs shoved up under my chin. (*Knocks her knuckles on the rigid bodice front piece.*) Is this a dress or a fortress? (*She takes a couple of heavy steps.*) Ugh! I think I'm wearing half my body weight in clothing. How does that make sense in this heat?

RYAN, MOM, three armored guards, and a servant bearing four goblets on a silver tray enter.

MOM: Diana, darling! You're so beautiful!

RYAN: Okay, Mom and Friend, just enough time for a toast before you bid adieu to Her Highness.

MOM: Adieu? But I thought I'd be tagging along to keep an eye on my little princess.

RYAN: First lesson in the life of a Tudor era princess: Noble parents of the 16th century shipped their teenaged daughters off to marry other royals in foreign countries.

BRITANY: Yeah! That's the prince in a faraway kingdom you've been going on about.

DIANA: Oh ... Now it ... It doesn't seem so ... Mom?

MOM: Now, see here, Mr. Blaine ... (*Steps protectively in front of DIANA.*)

RYAN: Guard, seize her!

ONE GUARD grasps MOM by the arms, a SECOND GUARD grabs BRITTANY.

Gee, that sounds so much more dramatic than "I'm calling security."

THIRD GUARD pulls DIANA by the elbow, rushing her out.

DIANA: (*Calling out as she's pushed offstage.*) Mom, I'll be okay. Don't worry! Britany, look after my mom!

LIGHTS DOWN.

SCENE 2

AT RISE: *Lights up on castle foyer. Dressed in Tudor era garb BERNIE paces the stone floor. SFX: There is the sound of a carriage and horses arriving. Two castle guards open a pair of enormous double doors. Beyond the doors an idyllic countryside can be seen. Enter DIANA, followed by her LADIES. She stops abruptly and gasps upon seeing the young man. She places one hand over her heart and extends the other out low for him to kiss. He goes down on one knee and kisses her hand.*

Throughout the remainder of the play, the LADIES periodically peer at DIANA, and whisper to each other. At the director's discretion, from time to time, one will sneak away to deliver messages about DIANA to other nobles at court. LADIES should also engage in stage business such as needlework, glancing through books, gathering flowers, etc.

DIANA: Oh yes! The answer is yes! Of course I'll marry you, my handsome prince!

LADIES appear shocked and begin to whisper to each other. BERNIE appears very flustered, and begins to stammer.

(To the LADIES.) Leave us. I wish to be alone with my betrothed.

LADIES appear further confused, and stay put.

BERNIE: My lady, I am Bernard, your tutor.

DIANA: *(Over-enunciating.)* My Tudor? Like Henry, of the House of Tudor?

BERNIE: No, no! Your tututor, t-u-t-o-r. I'm here to guide you, as you find yourself in a strange place ... *(Muttering to himself.)* and time.

DIANA: *(Her voice is soft and dreamy.)* I know exactly where I am and when: Long, long ago in a kingdom far, far away... with my true love ... *(Sounding hopeful.)* disguised as a humble scholar?

BERNIE: This is no disguise, Your Highness.

Takes her by the elbow and guides her away from the LADIES.

And please allow me to say, your remarks in front of the ladies may bring dire consequences for us both.

DIANA: What are they going to do, edit us out of the broadcast?

BERNIE: *(A light bulb moment.)* So ... you understand this to be a ... a display for diversion?

DIANA: *(Fluffing her skirt or sleeves.)* Yeah, for the Internet. Cool, huh?

BERNIE: *(Casts a nervous glance at LADIES, then back to DIANA.)*
You know about the Internet?

DIANA: Who doesn't in the 21st century?

BERNIE: You're from the 21st century! You're real, aren't you? You're from the real world!

DIANA: I'm from Manhattan – that real enough for you?

BERNIE: *(Glancing again at the whispering LADIES, he drops into an East coast accent.)* I'm from Jersey. I been here three days and you're the first person I've spoken to since I got here who believes this is a reality show.

DIANA: What are you talking about? Of course it's a reality show. And when my summer break is over, I go back to my boring old non-princess life.

BERNIE: Look around you. Where is the special lighting? Do you see a boom mic anywhere? When was the last time you saw a camera operator?

DIANA: *(Looks around, and in a soft, bewildered voice of realization, she answers.)* When we got into the coach at my house. *(Looking back at her LADIES.)* So these women aren't just staying in character? I thought they were just dedicated to the project. *(Turns to LADIES.)* Hey there, what's the deal-io?

BERNIE: *(Pulls DIANA out of LADIES' earshot.)* Don't use any 21st century jargon with them and for God's sake don't ask them about our century!

DIANA: Why not?

BERNIE: When I did that I heard whispers about witchcraft and sorcery.

DIANA: You're serious, aren't you?

BERNIE: As a heart attack. Now, do you have any idea where we are, in terms of real world geography?

DIANA: (*Shakes her head no.*) You?

BERNIE: None whatsoever. I don't know how or when, but at some point this shiatsu got real. Diana, what's your real name?

DIANA: It's Diana. What's yours, Bernard?

BERNIE: (*Embarrassed.*) It's Bernard.

DIANA: Oh. I'm sorry. Can I call you ... can I call you ... anything besides that?

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