

ALL THAT TWITTERS IS NOT GOLD

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Ray Sheers

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PUBLISHED BY

HEUER PUBLISHING LLC

P.O. BOX 248 • CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA 52406

TOLL FREE (800) 950-7529 • FAX (319) 368-8011

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8 MEN, 7 WOMEN, FLEXIBLE)

- FITZWEISEL (M).....A rather self-important member of the court. He is extremely proud of his very long thin beard. He is not at all fond of TWITTERING or his prophesies - and doesn't mind TWITTERING knowing of his dislike for him. (38 lines)
- COBWEBBERY (M/F).....The court's barber, who has had dealings with TWITTERING before and is wary of any encounter with him or his inventions. (30 lines)
- FANDANGLE (M/F).....The new court jester. She is unacquainted with life in the court. She's not dumb, just in the dark about some things. (31 lines)
- MESSENGERS 1-3 (M/F).....MESSENGERS 1 & 2 make court announcements and pronouncements. MESSENGER 3, in particular, is unimpressed and irritated by TWITTERING and makes no attempt to hide his feelings about him. (MESSENGER 1: 7 lines; MESSENGER 2: 9 lines; MESSENGER 3: 4 lines)
- BIRDS 1 & 2 (M/F).....The BIRDS' function is to comment on the actions in the kingdom and to warn, much like the chorus in Greek theater. Using multiple birds ensures that if they are using bird masks, they will be heard. Also, the BIRDS can interact nonverbally with each other, creating humorous visual effects. This role may be reduced to one or increased to many

(or eliminated altogether). See
PRODUCTION NOTES. (21 lines)

QUEEN IRENE (F).....A regal type who must seem commanding, even threatening at times, yet convincingly sensitive about her daughter's plight at others. She is a powerful figure, but laughable. (42 lines)

PRINCESS COLLEEN (F)The cursed daughter. Throughout most of the play she wears a pig mask. (No lines)

TWITTERING (M)Court Inventor, Soothsayer, and Plumber. He is presently the pet of the QUEEN, inspiring others to dislike him even more. Also, his inventions don't always work, nor do his predictions always come true, causing others to ridicule him. However, he is as convinced of his greatness as others are skeptical of it. He's a bit of an eccentric, and he can be somewhat pompous at times, especially about his skill as Soothsayer and Inventor. He would love to lose the Plumber title, it being unworthy of his abilities. He can be portrayed as a sorcerer or an eccentric brown-nosing wizard of the court. He always wears a cape, carries a staff and wears three hats atop his head. (76 lines)

ELLIOT DEWANGLER (M).....Owner of DeWangler Pest Control. He's a rather ridiculous figure, a most unlikely candidate for dragon slaying or goblin terminating. He should be a gawky type - even nerdy. There is absolutely nothing heroic about him. He thinks of himself as a business tycoon, which makes him even more laughable. He shouldn't be obnoxious,

just rather silly, unable to see himself as others see him. (58 lines)

ANGEL (F)ELLIOT's girlfriend, who hasn't had the greatest luck with men. ANGEL is attractive and rather naïve. (30 lines)

SIDEWINDER and

BLOOMSBURY (M/F).....Businessmen about to close a big deal with DEWANGLER. They are no-nonsense types with little patience for things not related to making money. (This could easily be reduced to one role, if necessary.) (SIDEWINDER: 13 lines; BLOOMSBURY: 14 lines)

GOBLIN (M/F)A nasty creature who's placed the curse on PRINCESS COLLEEN. She must be convincingly evil and other-worldly. (19 lines)

OPTIONAL EXTRAS

LADIES-IN-WAITING (F).....They accompany the QUEEN and PRINCESS. If the latter have trains on their gowns, they could hold them. One could also fan the QUEEN. Another could hold a brightly colored parasol over the PRINCESS. Though not necessary, they add a courtly "feel" to the Court scenes. (No lines)

TWITTERING'S ASSISTANT (M/F) ..This should be a rather bizarre looking character, wearing tattered clothes or animal skins. He might wear bells. He could assist Twittering with his machine in the court. This person should be visually interesting, but unobtrusive. (No lines)

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: THE KINGDOM

SCENE 2: DEWANGLER'S OFFICE

(May be played in front of curtain.)

SCENE 3: DEWANGLER'S APARTMENT

(May be played in front of curtain.)

SCENE 4: THE KINGDOM

PROPS

- Living room furniture
- Office furniture (*Desk and three chairs are enough*)
- Yellow Pages
- Barber's cloth (Sheet)
- Stool or chair
- Newspaper/book
- Beard*
- Scissors, shaving brush, razor (*minus the blade*), shaving cream, nail file, hand mirror, etc.
- Small table for barber supplies
- Horns (*Drums or kazoos also work*)
- Bird masks
- Pig mask
- Throne (*A love seat covered with regal fabric will suffice*)
- King-sized white sheet*
- Twittering Machine*
- Three hats (*For TWITTERING*)
- Jester's hat (*For FANDANGLE*)
- Staff (*For TWITTERING*)
- Contract
- Briefcase(s)
- Parasol
- Umbrella*
- Overhead projector (*Standard type used in schools*)

- Two crowns (*One will suffice if TWITTERING takes the QUEEN's during BLACKOUT*)

*See PRODUCTION NOTES

PRODUCTION NOTES

(*Approximate Running Time: 45-55 minutes*)

SET REQUIREMENTS

The action of the play takes place in two worlds, a mythical kingdom and the real, present world. Neither requires much in terms of the set, but the director may choose to make the Kingdom set more elaborate and permanent behind the curtain, while the other two scenes can easily be played in front of the curtain. The Kingdom set needn't fall into any particular time period, but it should be a rather fantastical world.

SPECIAL EFFECTS

FITZWEISEL'S BEARD:

Many long strands from a cheap wig work well. They could be braided, if desired. Since he only wears it a short time before it's "cut off," it can be held on with tape. Spirit gum may also be used and the beard actually cut off for each performance.

THE TWITTERING MACHINE:

The invention transforms humans into silhouettes and presumably has the power to transport TWITTERING from the Kingdom to the Other Side. This, like the sets, can be either simple or elaborate.

A king-sized flat white sheet is suspended by hooks from the partially closed curtain. Or, it can be affixed to a wooden frame. The tauter the sheet, the sharper the images will be. An overhead projector is used to create the silhouettes on the sheet. The closer the actors stand to the sheet, the sharper their silhouettes will appear to the audience. The sheet should be onstage during both Kingdom scenes. Colored cellophane may also be laid across the overhead to heighten the effect.

The actual Twittering Machine the audience sees can be as simple as a stand with two 6-volt batteries can be used to operate a police beacon. The spinning red light creates a nice effect, casting a bright light over a wide area. Sound effects can also be added, if desired.

Every time TWITTERING uses the Machine, he will use his staff to bang the floor three times as a signal for the blackout. During the brief blackout, the characters being transformed go behind the sheet (five seconds is usually enough time). Then TWITTERING turns on the Machine. That is the signal for the person working the overhead to turn it on. The characters are magically “transformed” into silhouettes.

THE GOBLIN’S DEATH:

To create the effect of worms crawling all over the GOBLIN, simply drop live worms onto clear or colored cellophane that’s been placed on the overhead. The worms will appear very large to the audience and will wriggle all over the goblin’s silhouette. It’s extremely dramatic and the audience won’t know how you did it. Very popular with younger audiences, especially! As the GOBLIN is dying, she should sink slowly to the floor, arms outstretched. It will actually appear as if she vanished into the floor. To heighten the effect, use a colored disc on the overhead, and as she vanishes, move the overhead further and further back. All that will be visible on the sheet then is a colored disc that gets smaller and smaller. When it’s as small as you want it, turn off the projector. *Optional:* Use a fog machine with the fog near the overhead, not the sheet. This makes a great eerie effect.

THE GOBLIN’S UMBRELLA:

A standard sized umbrella covered with torn scraps of dark fabric affixed to it gives a nice tattered look. (Once the fabric is attached, it won’t close.)

THE GOBLIN’S LIST OF DEMANDS:

Instead of the actress memorizing this, she can use a list on paper or a scroll which she’ll have with her.

THE PRINCESS’S BLUE HANDS AND GREEN FEET:

Food coloring creates this effect. If the PRINCESS wears shoes, omit the dye for her feet.

SCENE 1

The Kingdom scene. FITZWEISEL sits in a chair reading a newspaper or magazine. He is covered with a barber's cloth and getting his hair cut by COBWEBBERY. FITZWEISEL has a very long thin beard growing from his chin. To the side of the chair is a table on which there is a razor, a hand mirror, a bowl of shaving cream, and shaving brush. FANDANGLE sits on a stool, giving FITZWEISEL a manicure. Two large BIRDS are onstage near the Twittering Machine (which is covered with a cloth.). Center stage, a sheet is suspended. Two MESSENGERS enter. Each has a horn with which to announce their arrival and departure. They blow their horns. The BIRDS screech. COBWEBBERY, frightened by them, accidentally pokes FITZWEISEL with the scissors.

FITZWEISEL: Ow!

COBWEBBERY: Sorry, sir. *(Shouting to MESSENGER.)* Will you keep it down! Can't you see I'm cutting this man's throat? I mean, hair.

BIRDS: Blood! Blood!

FITZWEISEL: What! *(Checking his neck.)* Cobwebbery, am I bleeding?

COBWEBBERY: 'Tis nothing, sire. Go on with your reading. 'Tis, uh, barely a scratch. *(MESSENGERS approach and blow their horns again loudly; BIRDS screech.)* We don't play favorites here! You'll have to wait your turn if it's a cut you need.

FANDANGLE: Right! So grab a magazine and pretend that you can read. *(FITZWEISEL goes back to his paper; COBWEBBERY continues to clip.)*

MESSENGER 2: *(Horns sound; he unrolls an official decree.)* Hark! Hark! The Queen has royal need of thee! *(They ignore him; MESSENGERS look at each other, baffled. MESSENGER 2 motions to MESSENGER 1 to sound the horns again. Horns sound.)* I say, Hark! Hark! The Queen has royal need of thee!

FITZWEISEL: *(Rising and approaching them.)* And I say . . . *(Hitting Messenger with rolled paper.)* Hark! Hark, the dogs do bark and you're a royal pain in the neck! Did anybody ever tell you that? I'll bet they did.

COBWEBBERY: Can't you see we're busy? *(Leading FITZWEISEL back to the chair.)* This man's hair is a disgrace.

FANDANGLE: *(Examining his face.)* 'Tis a pity we can't improve his face.

FITZWEISEL: What?! *(COBWEBBERY quickly lathers FITZWEISEL's face with shaving cream and starts to shave him.)* Can't a man even get a shave and a haircut in peace? What's

this kingdom coming to? The next thing you know, they'll be walking in on my bath.

COBWEBBERY: And then they'll know the stuff of nightmares.

FITZWEISEL: What did you say?!

BIRDS: Nightmares! Nightmares!

MESSENGER 1: The Queen commands that you obey. . .

MESSENGER 2: . . . If you want to live to see another day.

COBWEBBERY: No, no, I don't do women's hair. It would be most unfair for me to cut a woman's hair. 'Tis against the union rule.

MESSENGER 2: Not to cut her hair, you fool.

FANDANGLE: Well, what use has the Queen of **me**? She bites her nails to the quick. Her hands are enough to make one sick!

MESSENGER 1: Not in need of a manicure is she!

FITZWEISEL: Oh, I **see**. The Queen has royal need of **me**. What is it this time? Has she lost her diamond pin?

COBWEBBERY: Her royal marbles?

FANDANGLE: Or are there warts upon the royal chin? *(They laugh; MESSENGERS are not amused.)*

MESSENGER 2: You may laugh and jest . . .

FANDANGLE: Well, I am the new Court Jester.

MESSENGER 2: . . . But deny the Queen's request and you know that within this very hour . . .

MESSENGER 1: . . . you'll feel the sting of her wrathful power!

FITZWEISEL: Oh, very well, what is this great **calamity** the Queen is having?

MESSENGER 2: A horrible curse has befallen the daughter of the queen.

COBWEBBERY/FITZWEISEL: Princess Colleen?!

MESSENGER 2: Is there any other princess?

FANDANGLE: *(To COBWEBBERY.)* Well, is there?

COBWEBBERY: No.

MESSENGER 1: A terrible goblin has arrived in the city.

FANDANGLE: Really? What's a goblin?

MESSENGER 2: And she thought the princess far too pretty.

MESSENGER 1: So she took away her loveliness . . .

FANDANGLE: How'd she do that?

MESSENGER 2: And now, I must confess . . .

MESSENGER 1: . . . the poor thing looks a . . .

FANDANGLE: Let me guess.

BIRDS: A mess! A mess!

MESSENGER 1: Right. She looks a royal mess.

MESSENGER 3 enters and all three sound their horns. COBWEBBERY drags razor across FITZWEISEL's chin sharply.

FITZWEISEL: Ow!

COBWEBBERY: Oh! (*Shocked that she's cut off FITZWEISEL's beard.*) Sorry. (*She holds up the beard to examine it and shows it to FANDANGLE, but quickly conceals it from FITZWEISEL.*)

MESSENGER 3: Her Royal Highness, the Queen! (*Courtly music. All bow as she enters with great dignity and great fanfare. She sits on her throne and music stops.*) The Princess Colleen! (*Courtly music. The PRINCESS enters in like manner, carrying a parasol. However, she has the face of a pig. She sits beside her mother.*)

TWITTERING: (*Ready to enter in the same manner.*) Ahem! Ahem!

MESSENGER 3: (*MESSENGER blows horn halfheartedly.*) Oh, yeah, and . . . Twittering, (*Unimpressed.*) the Soothsayer and Plumber!

FITZWEISEL: Oh no! Not Twittering!

FANDANGLE: What's a Twittering? What's a soothsayer?

COBWEBBERY: He thinks he can see the future.

TWITTERING: (*Entering angrily with three hats atop his head.*) Soothsayer, Plumber, **and** Inventor. How many times do I have to tell you? Twittering, Soothsayer, Plumber, and Inventor! Will you never learn?! I wear three hats! Look! Three of them! Count them! A Plumber's hat, a Soothsayer's hat, and an Inventor's hat! That's three! How hard is that to remember? **Three hats!** (*MESSENGER blows feebly.*)

MESSENGER 3: (*Dramatically.*) Twittering, a man with three **hats!** Are you happy?

QUEEN: As you have heard, a goblin has placed a curse on my only daughter, Princess Colleen. (*Cries.*)

TWITTERING: Her hands are blue, (*Holding up her blue hands; Queen cries.*) her feet are green, (*Picking up her feet; Queen cries.*) and her face . . . (*QUEEN and PRINCESS stand and give him a warning look.*) I, uh, cannot mention.

BIRDS: Mum's the word! Mum's the word.

QUEEN: (*To FITZWEISEL, FANDANGLE, and COBWEBBERY.*) It is your sworn duty to restore my daughter's great beauty.

FITZWEISEL: Me?!

QUEEN: You **three!**

COBWEBBERY: **Three?**

FANDANGLE: Even **me?**

QUEEN: Twittering, in his great wisdom, has chosen you three. And I quite agree.

FITZWEISEL: Chosen we three for what?

QUEEN: To reverse the curse and locate her misplaced beauty! Cobwebbery, Fitzweisel, and . . . (*To TWITTERING.*) who is this?

TWITTERING: Fandangle.

QUEEN: Fandangle?

FANDANGLE: (*Bowing.*) Fandangle, the new Court Jester!

QUEEN: The new Court Jester? What happened to the old one?

TWITTERING: You fired him. He wasn't much fun.

QUEEN: Oh. Anyway, into the well you three must go to travel to the Other Side.

COBWEBBERY: The well? Oh, swell!

FANDANGLE: The well? What well? Is that bad?

BIRDS: Tell! Tell! Tell about the well!

FANDANGLE: What? What about the well?

FITZWEISEL: Oh, **anything** but the well!

FANDANGLE: It **must** be bad.

QUEEN: The horrible goblin must be destroyed. Twittering, the Soothsayer, has found the one whose job it is to slay. (*Sits.*)

TWITTERING: Right you are, my Queen, for only *he* has the magic spray!

FITZWEISEL: Who is this person you require, if I may be so bold as to inquire?

TWITTERING: His name be Elliot DeWangler, Professional Exterminator!

FANDANGLE: A Goblin Terminator?

TWITTERING: Right you are!

FITZWEISEL: And how, may I ask, was Twittering the Plumber able to find this witch slayer?

TWITTERING: Not Twittering the Plumber, Twittering the **Soothsayer!** And she's not a witch, but a goblin, and a goblin's curse is ten times worse! His name I found in my magic yellow book. (*Holds up the yellow pages telephone book.*) Here, take a look.

FITZWEISEL: (*Reading.*) DeWangler Pest Control? No matter how big or how small, DeWangler gets them all. DeWangler will succeed. Your satisfaction's guaranteed. Elliot DeWangler, President.

COBWEBBERY: So he's not a local resident.

QUEEN: (*Standing, impatient with them.*) No! Which is why you have to go into the well to travel to the Other Side, or I fear my poor daughter (*Crying.*) will never be a bride. (*Comforting her.*)

BIRDS: The Other Side! The Other Side!

FANDANGLE: What's the **Other Side?**

TWITTERING: 'Tis not a pleasant place. 'Tis a land of smog and smoke, where lives the lesser human race. The land of . . .Diet Coke!

FANDANGLE: What's Diet Coke?

BIRDS: Holy smoke! Holy smoke!

FANDANGLE: But I'm a Court Jester! Not a Court De-Pester!

COBWEBBERY: Isn't there some other way?

QUEEN: (*Furious.*) You will my decree obey! Tonight into the well you must climb!

FITZWEISEL: But remember what happened last time?

FANDANGLE: What? What happened last time? What about this well? I can't swim!

TWITTERING: The well is dry. You'll be on the Other Side in the blink of an eye!

FITZWEISEL: Unless, of course, **we die**.

FANDANGLE: **Die?**

BIRDS: You die! You die!

QUEEN: I leave you now to make your preparations. I'll await your return with great anticipation!

COBWEBBERY: But . . .

QUEEN: (*Angrily.*) Enough, I say! Enough of this idle chatter!

BIRDS: Enough! Enough!

FITZWEISEL: Very well, my Queen, I can see it is our duty. But first, let us search the castle grounds. Cobwebbery, you take the upstairs, I'll take the down. Fandangle, get the bloodhounds and make your rounds!

FANDANGLE: Bloodhounds?

FITZWEISEL: Twittering, organize a tea party!

TWITTERING: You mean a search party.

FITZWEISEL: Right! Organize a search party, or if you insist a tea party, but don't just sit there like a lump in a bog!

COBWEBBERY: That's "bump on a log", I believe.

FITZWEISEL: Right. Or rump of a hog!

BIRDS: Rump of a hog! Rump of a hog!

PRINCESS begins to wail.

QUEEN: Fitzweisel! What is this hogwash you speak? (*Realizing her use of the word "hog".*) Oh!

FITZWEISEL: It's your great daughter's great beauty we'll seek.

QUEEN: Now look what you've done. You've added to her distress. Twittering, a word with you I need. (*To TWITTERING.*) I fear they'll make of this affair a horrible mess.

TWITTERING: You speak true as usual, my royal highness, my queen, my loveliness. Despair not! These underlings are clearly not up to the task. But with the aid of my new invention, I alone will do what you ask!

FITZWEISEL: (*Obviously relieved.*) If you insist.

FANDANGLE: Does this mean no well? (*COBWEBBERY nods. FANDANGLE is relieved.*) Oh, swell!

TWITTERING: After long consideration and much deliberation, exhausting and tremendous contemplation, and, of course, a great quantity of perspiration, inspiration, and . . .

BIRDS: Intoxication! Intoxication!

TWITTERING: No, no, not intoxication - imagination! I myself came upon just the right equation, and so, by my calculations, though I must say I've had some serious reservations, particularly about the duration of the duplication, and, of course, the specifics of location, but, be that as it may . . .

QUEEN: *(Rises.)* Twittering!

TWITTERING: *(Bowing profusely.)* Yes, my Queen, my royal beauty?

QUEEN: *(Shouting.)* Will you get on with it - sometime today!

TWITTERING: *(Bowing.)* Right! So without further delay, I present to you the greatest invention in the entire Milky Way - the Twittering Machine! *(He unveils it with a flourish.)*

FANDANGLE: What's a Twittering Machine?

TWITTERING: 'Tis with this machine I'll rescue Princess Colleen. Why, it's the most incredible thing you've ever seen! *(Singing quite dramatically, yet in a silly fashion, and dancing a bit.)* It sputters, it spitters, it flutters and flitters, but most of all it . . .

BIRDS: Twitters!

TWITTERING: *(Spinning.)* Right, it **twitters!**

QUEEN rises and applauds, motioning the others to applaud. They do, halfheartedly.

QUEEN: Enough delay! Get on with this urgent matter! Do as I request . . . **or die!** *(She begins to leave with the PRINCESS.)*

BIRDS: Or die! Or die!

COBWEBBERY: And we thought the Republicans were bad!

TWITTERING: She talks tough, but her bark's worse than her bite!

QUEEN: *(Returning suddenly.)* Did you say something, Twittering? *(They all bow.)*

TWITTERING: *(Bowing profusely, frightened.)* I . . . I . . . I just said I must leave this very night!

BIRDS: He lies! He lies! *(QUEEN starts to approach FITZWEISEL.)*

TWITTERING: *(To BIRDS.)* How 'd you like to end up in a soup?

QUEEN: *(Stopping in her tracks and turning.)* What?!

TWITTERING: Not you!

QUEEN: *(To FITZWEISEL.)* Fitzweisel, you look . . . **different** in some way. *(Shrugging. She and PRINCESS exit. During the following, TWITTERING adjusts his invention.)*

FITZWEISEL: Different? How different? Where's the mirror, Cobwebbery? I want to see the improvement. Hand me the mirror.

COBWEBBERY: Mirror? It's, uh, broken, my lord.

FITZWEISEL: What?

BIRDS: She lies, she lies!

COBWEBBERY: *(To BIRDS.)* Shhh! *(To FITZWEISEL.)* The mirror, it's broken, just as I have spoken.

FITZWEISEL: Nonsense! *(Holding it up.)* It's right here, and it's just fine. Cobwebbery, have you been oversipping wine? *(Looking into it; he is shocked.)* Aaaaooohh! *(Rising.)* My **beard!** What have you **done** to my beard? *(COBWEBBERY cowers.)*

COBWEBBERY: Nothing, sire. It's fine.

FITZWEISEL: Fine?! **Fine?!** *(Approaching her as COBWEBBERY moves away.)* What do you mean, it's **fine?!** *(Feeling his face.)* It's gone, you **swine!** *(They circle the chair, COBWEBBERY trying to keep out of FITZWEISEL's reach.)*

COBWEBBERY: No, no, it's fine. *(Holding it up and stroking it.)* See, not a hair is out of place. It's merely . . . **separated** from your face!

FITZWEISEL: *(Lunging for her.)* You cut it **off**, you numbskull! *(Grabbing it.)* Do you know how long it took me to grow that beard?!

COBWEBBERY: There is no doubt about it. You look much better without it.

BIRDS: You lie, you lie, you lie!

COBWEBBERY: *(To BIRDS.)* Will you shut up! *(FITZWEISEL is about to explode in anger.)* If you wish, we can reattach it, sire. That's exactly what we'll do.

FANDANGLE: That's right! With a little bit of glue, it'll be just good as new.

FITZWEISEL: **Glue!** I'll glue **you**, you fool! That's what I'll do! *(Grabbing COBWEBBERY.)* Why, when I'm through with you . . . *(Dropping her.)* For this deed, I swear, you'll pay and pay this very day, you . . . you butcher, you!

TWITTERING: The Twittering Machine is ready to transport. *(TWITTERING turns on Invention. Lights flash.)*

FITZWEISEL: Yeah, farewell, sport!

COBWEBBERY: The place won't be the same without you!

TWITTERING: Have a little faith in me. After all, I do wear three hats!

TWITTERING strikes floor three times with his staff. BLACKOUT. The machine is on and TWITTERING appears behind the sheet in silhouette.

FITZWEISEL: Yeah, and you look silly in all of them!

TWITTERING: Silly, huh? Well, we'll see who laughs last, you three! We'll see!

BIRDS: We'll see! We'll see!

BLACKOUT and CURTAIN.

BY RAY SHEERS

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