

24. The Laughing King

Scene I

King Leonard is taking a walk in his garden.



Leonard : What a bright, sunny morning ! How colourful my garden looks ! Ah ! How sweet the flowers smell ! Now who is that hurrying here ? Isn't it Grieselda, the witch ?

Grieselda is seen walking in, hurriedly.

Of course it is ! Why this haste and hurry ? Oh, oh ! There she slips and falls into... ha ha ha ... the puddle. Ha ha ha ! How muddy her face is ! How wet her clothes are !



Ha ha ha ! (*Laughs louder.*)

Grieselda scrambles out of the puddle and comes limping towards the king.

Grieselda : (*angrily shouting*) Shame on you, King Leonard ! you laugh at my fall !

Leonard : Ha ha...

Grieselda : If you like laughing so much, may you laugh all the time !
Zung, mung, shung.....

Leonard : Ha, ha ...

Witch Grieselda sits under a tree, frowning at the laughing King and wiping off the mud from her body.

Scene II

The Palace

The King enters, still laughing. The Queen who has been looking for the King, comes to him with a plateful of cakes.

Queen : *(Handing him the plate)* Won't you taste these special cakes I baked for you ? By the way, why are you laughing ? What's funny, dear ? Won't you tell me ?

Leonard : Ha, ha....

Queen : *(Getting annoyed)* Stop laughing, dear You will drop the plate. You won't stop ?

The plate falls from the King's hand.

Oh, no ! You have broken one of my best plates. And dropped my special cakes !
Boo hoo hoo....

Leonard : Ha, ha, ha...

Princess Cynthia comes and sees her father laugh and her mother cry.

Cynthia : Father, we can hear your laugh all over the palace. But why are you laughing ? And that too when mother's crying over her broken plate !

Leonard : *(Unable to control himself)* Ha, ha..... ho, ho.....

Cynthia : *(Consoling her mother)* Never mind, Mamma, I'll pick up the broken pieces and try to mend the plate. *(Starts collecting the pieces.)* Ooh ! I've cut my finger !

Leonard : *(Laughing louder)* Ha, ha ho, ho, ho.....

Cynthia : *(Staring at her father angrily)* Father ! How can you laugh even when I've cut my finger ?
Boo hoo, hoo.....

Leonard : Ho, ho, ho..... I should stop laughing....
he he But I cannot... ha ha ha..... Let me go and consult my council of wise men. Ho ho..... ha ha ! They'll know what to do.



Scene III

The wise men are holding a meeting with the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom, King Ferdinand. The King enters the chamber, followed by the attendants.

Wise men : Your Majesty, King Ferdinand has come with a complaint that thieves from our kingdom have stolen fruits from his orchard.

Leonard : (*Helplessly holding his sides and roaring with laughter*) Ha, ha ! Ho ho...

Ferdinand : (*in anger*) How dare you laugh at my complaint ! I will not put up with this sort of insult. I will soon be back with my army.



Leonard : Ha, ha.... Don't go my friend. Ho, ho...
(*Turning to his wise men*) Stop him, wise men.
Ha, ha.... Stop King Ferdinand.

Wise men : But Your Majesty ! What makes you laugh at this serious hour ?



Leonard : Ha, ha... sorry, I can't help laughing, ha, ha, ha... due to Witch Grieselda's magic. Ha. ha...

Wise men : The witch's magic ? Well, let's all go to Witch Grieselda and request her to help the King.

Scene IV

The Palace Garden

The King enters with his wise men.

They see the witch still sitting there with a frown on her face.

Wise men : Oh Witch Grieselda ! Our dear King is sick of laughing. Please free him from the spell.

Grieselda : No, no, no. Why did he laugh at me when I fell into the puddle ?



Wise men : Do forgive him, please.

Leonard : (*Trying to control his laughter*) I'm sorry, Witch Grieselda ! Ha, Ha... I hurt your feelings when I laughed at you when you fell into the puddle. But because of your spell, I hurt my wife's feelings and then my daughter's and my friend's by laughing at their misfortunes. Ha, ha... I promise you, I'll never laugh at others. Ha, ha...

Grieselda : Since you are sorry about your behaviour, I'll give you one chance. But if you ever laugh at anyone's troubles, King Leonard....

Leonard : Never, never again. Ho, ho....

Grieselda : Shung, mung, zung... Back to your normal self, King Leonard !

Leonard : At last I have stopped laughing ! What a relief ! Thank you very much, Witch Grieselda ! Thank you. Now I will write a letter of apology to King Ferdinand. I'll get a set of new plates for my Queen. Bring my daughter Cynthia. I'll stick a plaster on her poor finger. But first, let me present a new dress to dear old Witch Grieselda !



All : Three cheers for the King !

Things to do :

1. Answer the following questions orally:
 - (a) Why did King Leonard laugh at Witch Grieselda?
 - (b) What effect did Grieselda's magic have on the king?
 - (c) Why did the Queen get annoyed?
 - (d) How did Princess Cynthia console her mother?
 - (e) Who was King Ferdinand? What was his complaint?
 - (f) Why was King Ferdinand angry with King Leonard?
How did he show his anger?
 - (g) Why did King Leonard want to stop laughing?
 - (h) Why did Witch Grieselda decide to help the King?
What was her condition?

2. Use the following in the sentences given below :

scrambled, frowned, looking for, put up with

- (a) 'I cannot such nonsense,' said the teacher.
- (b) He over the rocky hillside.
- (c) When Ajit's father saw Ajit's school record, he
- (d) 'Who are you ?' asked Anil. 'My mother,' said Amit.

3. Read carefully :

- (a) What a bright sunny morning (it is)!
- (b) How colourful my garden looks!

These are exclamatory sentences. They mean:

- (a) It is a very bright sunny morning.
- (b) My garden looks very colourful.

Write an exclamatory sentence, using your own words.

