

SETTING: *The palace of King Demetrius and his queen, Miranda, its various rooms and the forest surrounding it. Upstage center is a huge black walnut tree with branches low enough to climb. Downstage right is a bench. Another bench is located upstage left. The shift in scenes should be simple and quick, indicated with changes in lighting and sound.*

AT RISE: *The stage is dark. In the black we hear an infant crying. Lights up reveal KING DEMETRIUS standing center, holding a bundled infant in his arms. The baby is crying. He tries to calm the child but to no avail. Finally...*

DEMETRIUS

(Calling off)
Miranda...? *Miranda!*

(MIRANDA enters. DEMETRIUS holds out the baby.)

Miranda, why is she crying?

MIRANDA

Babies cry, Demetrius. It is to be expected.

DEMETRIUS

But our daughter is a princess. She has no need for tears. Anything she wants is hers for the asking.

(MIRANDA takes the baby.)

MIRANDA

Aurora does not know she's a princess, darling. All she knows is that she is either hungry...

DEMETRIUS

I just fed her!

MIRANDA

Or sleepy...

DEMETRIUS
I just woke her!

MIRANDA
Or needs to be changed...

DEMETRIUS
I just...

(Calling off.)

Nurse!

(MIRANDA laughs at him.)

MIRANDA
Have no fear, husband...

(She pats the baby's bottom.)

All is well.

DEMETRIUS
Oh. Good.

(Baby Aurora cries even louder.)

And yet she cries.

MIRANDA
My mother used to say, "When all you try appears to fail, hold her close and tell a tale."

DEMETRIUS
A tale?

MIRANDA
A story, Demetrius.

DEMETRIUS
What story?

MIRANDA
There, there, little one... little Aurora... do you want to hear a story? Is that it?

DEMETRIUS
But I don't know any stories!

MIRANDA
(Shushing him)
Shhh!

DEMETRIUS
(Whispering)
I don't know any stories!

MIRANDA
Then *I* shall tell her a story. You go now and prepare for our honored guest.

DEMETRIUS
Very well...

(He starts to leave then turns back.)

But you still haven't told me the name of our honored guest.

MIRANDA
It's a surprise! Suffice it to say that without her, we would not be celebrating Aurora's christening today.

DEMETRIUS
But why won't you tell me?

MIRANDA
I have my reasons. Now go.

(He starts to leave again then turns back.)

DEMETRIUS
This "guest" – it's not your mother, is it?

MIRANDA
No.

DEMETRIUS
Good.

(She shoots him a look.)

DEMETRIUS (cont.)

I mean, good... bye. Good-bye.

(He lifts a hand sheepishly and waves it.)

Farewell.

(DEMETRIUS exits. MIRANDA waits to make sure he is gone, then looks down at the baby.)

MIRANDA

Now that it is just the two of us, Aurora, it is time I told you the story. The story I've never told anyone before, not even your father. The story of how you came to be. Once upon a time, there was a tall, handsome king who lived in a magnificent castle with his queen. They had everything in the world they could wish for, except for the one thing they truly wanted – a child to call their own.

(MIRANDA places the now pacified baby on the downstage bench, crouches down and caresses it gently.)

Year after year, the king and his queen wished and prayed, but to no avail. They remained childless. Finally the queen, determined not to give up hope, consulted the Three Sages. Lady Tegan...

(TEGAN enters and crosses to center.)

Lady Sofia...

(SOFIA enters and crosses to center.)

And Lady Quinn...

(QUINN enters and crosses to center. MIRANDA stands and approaches them.)

MIRANDA

Your Excellencies. I am here to seek...

TEGAN

(Interrupting)

We know why you are here, Your Majesty. You want a child.

MIRANDA

Yes. Can you help me?

TEGAN

The Gift of Life is not ours to give.

THREE SAGES

Alas, we cannot help you.

(The Three Sages starts to exit.)

MIRANDA

No! Wait! Please! Please, I'll do anything. Only allow me this dream, I beg of you...

(TEGAN stops and turns back.)

Please.

TEGAN

There is another way...

SOFIA

Tegan, no!

QUINN

You mustn't!

SOFIA

It's too dangerous!

(TEGAN turns to SOFIA and QUINN.)

TEGAN

If she is willing to take the risk...

MIRANDA

I'll do anything!

(TEGAN turns back to MIRANDA.)

TEGAN

There is another, whose power far exceeds our own. Most fear her, yet she alone can help you.

MIRANDA

You don't mean...?

THREE SAGES

Carabosse!

MIRANDA

But Carabosse is a monster! A three-headed deformity...

TEGAN

Ah, but it is this “deformity” that gives Carabosse the ability to perform wondrous magic.

MIRANDA

My husband speaks of her only in a whisper. She gathers silk from the webs found in the Spider’s Glade and uses it to spin hideous nightmares! And when she is enraged she transforms herself into a fire-breathing dragon by uttering a spell, three strange words. Nee...

QUINN

Neelac.

MIRANDA

Fee...

QUINN

Feeno.

MIRANDA

Noolee...

QUINN

Nooleevahs.

MIRANDA

That’s it!

TEGAN

The King knows the Three Words? This spell is known only to the Sages!

MIRANDA

When my husband was a young man he witnessed this transformation for himself. He was forced to battle the dragon and barely escaped with his life.

TEGAN

What did the King do to make Carabosse so angry?

MIRANDA

He won't tell me. I only know he despises Carabosse.

TEGAN

And yet, if you want a child, you must seek her out.

MIRANDA

My husband would never forgive me.

TEGAN

Then don't tell him. Do you want a child or not?

MIRANDA

I do. With all my heart.

TEGAN

Well, then...?

(MIRANDA considers then nods.)

MIRANDA

I shall go to Carabosse.

TEGAN

Your Majesty, Carabosse never spins her wheel without demanding a favor in return.

MIRANDA

What sort of favor?

TEGAN

That is for Carabosse to decide. Our blessings go with you.

(TEGAN raises her right hand. SOFIA and QUINN follow suit. They bless MIRANDA and exit. MIRANDA exits opposite. The scene shifts to The Spider's Glade. CARABOSSE enters. NOTE: To avoid confusion over lines and who says what, the three heads of Carabosse will be referred to as CARA, ABO and BOSSE.)

ABO

Look at all these beautiful, beautiful webs ...

CARA

Of finest silk...

BOSSE

A gossamer dream...

CARABOSSE

Oh what a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive...

*(MIRANDA enters and gasps in horror when she sees
CARABOSSE.)*

MIRANDA

Carabosse!

CARA

What's that I hear?

ABO

An intruder?

BOSSE

Who goes there?

(MIRANDA steps forward.)

CARABOSSE

Who are you?

MIRANDA

I am Miranda, wife of the King.

CARABOSSE

Which king?

MIRANDA

Demetrius...

(CARABOSSE shrieks angrily.)

ABO

How dare you come here!

CARA

You! The wife of Demetrius!

ABO

Child...

BOSSE

Child...

MIRANDA

My dream is to have a child. The Three Sages said you are able spin dreams into reality.

ABO

You think I would help you? You, the wife of my enemy? After what Demetrius did to me I find it only fitting that he should be childless.

MIRANDA

Why? What did he do to you?

CARA

Has he never told you?

(MIRANDA shakes her head.)

BOSSE

Then you must ask it of him.

(CARABOSSE starts to exit.)

MIRANDA

No! Wait! A child!

CARO

Child...

ABO

Child...

BOSSE

Child...

MIRANDA

Do you know what it's like to want a child...? To want to hold a baby in your arms and sing to it and protect it and love it with all your heart? Have you ever loved anyone?

(CARABOSSE turns to face her.)