

The King Seeks a Friend
A one-act play for children
By Douglas Evans



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Characters

Kings Jack- a young lonely king

Quick- king's page either male or female

Baker- female holding rolling pin

Shoemaker- male holding large needle and piece of leather

Barber- male holding shears

Traveler- a youth either male or female

Villagers 1-12 adjust as available

Time: olden days in the time of kings and castles

Setting: Scene One-simple set inside castle throne room. This could be staged before larger Scene 2- a village street with a cobbler shop, a bakery, and a barber shop.

PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS: 4 male 2 female 1-12 villager of either gender

PLAYING TIME: 20 minutes

PROPS: throne, window frame
Large needle, thread, piece of leather
Rolling pin
Barber shears
Candle sticks
Tarot cards
Cider mug
Bouquet of flowers
Knapsack and walking stick

COSTUMES:

Kings Jack- Robe, breeches, golden crown
Quick- breeches, waistcoat, three-cornered hat with a large feather
Shoemaker- breeches and leather apron
Baker- peasant dress with white apron and baker's cap.
Barber- long pants, long striped apron
Traveler- hiking outfit, wide-brimmed hat, walking stick, knapsack
Villagers- female and male peasant outfits

SETTING:

Scene One- simple set inside castle throne room with a throne. This could be staged before Scene 2.
Scene Two-a village street with a cobbler shop, a bakery, and a barber shop in that order. This could be a large painting.

LIGHTING: Lights fade on opening scene before coming up on village scene behind it.

SOUND: No special sounds

MUSIC: Music from Merry Old England

SCENE 1

At Rise: KING JACK stands in the throne room of his castle on a hill. He stares out a window at the bustling village below.

KING JACK
(calling out)

Quick, I wish to see you.

(QUICK, a page, enters the room. He stops before KING JACK, bows and snaps his heels together.)

QUICK

Your Grace.

KING JACK

It is market day in the village below, and the streets are crowded with villagers. I wish to walk among them. I wish to find a friend.

QUICK

A friend, sire?

KING JACK

I have lived alone in this castle for too long. I wish to find someone with whom I can share stories and ideas about the world; someone to dine with and perhaps play a game of chess.

QUICK
(looking doubtful)

That person will be hard to find, sire. Every person in the village would like to be a friend of the king. How will you find someone you can truly trust? How will you know that person seeks more than just friendship?

KING JACK

I'll know that person when I see him or her.

QUICK

Very good, sire. I would be happy to accompany you on your walk today. I can help you find the friend you seek.

KING JACK

Excellent, Quick. We shall leave at once.

Lights fade

SCENE 2

At Rise: A lively village scene. Music plays as villagers stroll before a row of shops. Stage right: a cobbler shop. Mid-stage: a bakery. Stage left: a barber shop. KING JACK and QUICK enter from stage right. Villagers pause and bow.

VILLAGER 1

Greetings, King Jack.

VILLAGER 2

Long live King Jack.

VILLAGER 3

Good day to you, Your Highness.

(KING JACK and QUICK stop before cobbler shop. SHOEMAKER sits on workbench sewing a piece of leather. Other villagers freeze.)

KING JACK

(to SHOEMAKER)

Greetings, good fellow. A fine day for a walk, is it not?

SHOEMAKER

(eyeing the king's feet)

Indeed, Your Majesty. Many people are out walking today. In fact, I was just thinking of taking a stroll myself. If you wish for a walking companion, I would be honored to join you.

KING JACK

(to Shoemaker)

Kind of you to offer. But I don't want to take you from your craft. I see your excellent shoes and boots on the feet of many villagers. You do fine work.

SHOEMAKER

(LOOKING at king's feet)

Thank you kindly, Your Highness.

QUICK

(to SHOEMAKER)

Good day to you, sir.

(Villagers resume moving. Music plays as KING JACK and QUICK stroll down the street.)

QUICK

(to KING JACK)

I don't understand, sire. The shoemaker was skilled and good-natured. Why couldn't he be the friend you seek?

KING JACK

Did you notice his eyes, Quick? He never stopped looking at my shoes. It would be hard to be friends with a man who was concerned with one thing...my feet and what footwear he could sell me!

QUICK

(nodding)

Now I understand, sire. Shall we continue with our search.

VILLAGER 4

Here comes the king!

VILLAGER 5

(doffing hat)

Would you honor my inn with a visit, King Jack?

VILLAGER 6

(holds out candles)

Fine candles, Your Grace. Would you like to buy some?

(KING JACK and QUICK stop before the bakery. In the doorway stands BAKER, holding rolling pin. The other villagers freeze.)

KING JACK

(to BAKER)

Greetings, madam. Such a warm and sunny day. The wheat fields beyond the village look green and bountiful. The harvest should be a good one this year

BAKER

(staring at king's stomach)

Indeed, Your Grace. The flour produced from the grain will be extra fine. Would you care to come into my bakery for a freshly-baked muffin?

KING JACK

(to BAKER)

Thank you for the offer, madam, but I just ate a filling meal. I commend you on how healthy and well-fed the villagers appear to be. Your bakery must be a blessing to them.

BAKER

(Still eyeing king's waistline)

Thank you kindly, Your Highness. I hope you will enjoy your visit to our village.

QUICK

(to BAKER)

Good day to you, madam.

(Villagers unfreeze. Music plays
as KING JACK and QUICK continue
walking.)

QUICK

That woman was kind and generous, sire. She was full of good
spirits. And, if I may say, quite pleasant to look at. Why
wouldn't she make a good companion?

KING JACK

Once again her eyes told the story. The baker's gaze never
left my belt buckle. How unsettling it would be to have a
friend who cared about one thing...my belly and what baked
goods she could sell me to fill it!

QUICK

(nodding)

Again I see your point, sire. Onward, then.

VILLAGER 7

The king! The king!

VILLAGER 8

(holding up tarot cards)

Would Your Majesty like your fortune read?

VILLAGER 9

(holding out clay pot)

My finest pottery, sire. Would you like to buy a pot or a few
for your castle?

(KING JACK and QUICK stop by
BARBER sitting on a stool outside
his shop. Other villagers
freeze.)

KING JACK

(to BARBER)

Greetings, good fellow.

BARBER

(stands and bows)

Your Excellency.

KING JACK

A fine, clear sky today, wouldn't you say?

BARBER

(studying the king's head)

Indeed it is, Your Excellency. I was just thinking the same thing.

KING JACK

I expect the afternoon will be warm.

BARBER

(still eyeing king's hair)

Quite so, Your Excellency. Would you care to sit on my bench where it's shady and cool?

KING JACK

Kind of you to offer, sir. But I prefer to keep walking. I've noticed how well-groomed the villagers are. You serve them well.

BARBER

Thank you, Your Excellency.

QUICK

(to BARBER)

Good day, sir.

(Villagers move. Music plays as
KING JACK and QUICK continue
walking down street.)

QUICK

I'm more baffled than ever, sire. The barber was an agreeable and helpful man. Why wouldn't he make a good friend for you?

KING JACK

Once more, the barber's eyes told his true interest. He never stopped staring at the top of my head. Who wants a friend who has a single thought...my hair and when he could give me my next haircut?

QUICK

(nodding)

Ah, yes. Again you've made a wise decision.

VILLAGER 10

King! King! Over here! Over here!

VILLAGER 11

(holding flowers)

Fresh blooms, Your Majesty. They'll brighten up the castle halls.

VILLAGER 12

(Holding out mug)

Fresh cider, sire? Just squeezed from my own apples.

(TRAVELER enter stage left, whistling. He wears a knapsack and carries a walking stick. He tips his hat to KING JACK and QUICK. Other villagers freeze.)

KING JACK

(to TRAVELER)

Greetings, young traveler. Don't the mountains look majestic this fine day?

TRAVELER

(looking into the distance)

They do, My King. I just hiked through those mountains. It was a splendid journey. The air was refreshing and the vistas were grand. I passed fields full of wildflowers and mountain streams teeming with trout.

KING JACK

Excellent! Tell me, traveler, what brings you to our village today?

TRAVELER

(looking directly into the king's eyes)

Only curiosity, My King. And what brings you?

KING JACK

(nods, smiling)

I seek a dinner companion. Would you join me this evening in the castle for some good food and conversation? Perhaps we could play a game of chess.

TRAVELER

It would be an honor, sire. I'd enjoy sharing my tales of travel with you and hearing your thoughts about the world.

KING JACK

Excellent. Come to the castle gate at sundown, and the guards will let you in.

TRAVELER

(bowing)

See you then, My King.

QUICK

(to TRAVELER)

Until this evening, sir.

(Villagers resume strolling. Music plays as KING JACK and QUICK walk to stage left.)

QUICK

Please tell me, sire. How do you know the traveler will make a good companion? How was he different from any other villager we met today?

KING JACK

Again with the eyes. Did you notice how the traveler looked straight into mine. His gaze never strayed side to side, up or down, or over my shoulder. I could tell the traveler was interested in more than my shoes or stomach or hair. He was interested in what I was saying.

QUICK

(nodding)

I understand, sire. Yes, I understand very well.

KING JACK

Indeed, I am looking forward to my dinner conversation tonight with that young man. I am looking forward to making a new friend.

(Music plays as KING JACK and
QUICK exit stage left.)

Lights fade

End of Play