

CRISKIN AND THE KING

KING

Puce will color everything. The color chosen by your King.

(THROCKMORTON and GRISELDA both faint)

.KING

Oh, dear. You don't think that perhaps I got a little carried away...

CRISKIN

Never, Sire.

KING

But how can we have Christmas and Hannukah and Kwanza with only puce?

CRISKIN

I know sire, but we must make sacrifices for peace. Do you want the fighting to go on? Wouldn't it be better to have a peaceful puce holiday season than a holiday season when everybody's fighting. Isn't peace and harmony what the holidays are all about?

KING

You are so wise, Criskin. You're right.

CRISKIN

I should mention one thing sire. Puce is the color of fleas.

KING

Really? I thought they were black.

CRISKIN

Not when you look really closely.

KING

That's terrible. I will pick another color.

CRISKIN

That would be a mistake, your Excellency. The King is never wrong. Once you have made a decision, you must never change it. .

KING

I guess so, but what if some of my subjects don't like puce?

CRISKIN

How is that possible, when you yourself have chosen it?

KING

That's true. I chose it.

CRISKIN

I'm sure everyone will be agreeable. Just leave that to me.

KING

Thank you, Criska.

SCENE EIGHT

(LABORATORY - MERTZ is there looking through a pair of puce colored glasses. When MERTZ is in his invention mode he talks with a German accent. He loses it when he becomes the businessman.)

CRISKIN

Mertz. Are the new glasses ready?

MERTZ

Not yet. Zay are not rready.

CRISKIN

Why are you talking like that?

MERTZ

I am in my scientist mode.

CRISKIN

Not ready!!! They were supposed to be ready today. People aren't wearing their glasses. And some of them are getting away with it. You have to invent something so they can't take them off without our knowing about it. .

MERTZ

I'm verkink as fast as I can.

CRISKIN

All right, all right - how soon.

MERTZ

Vell, Vee shtill haf a couple of bugs, but I should know better by next week.

CRISKIN

Show me what you've got so far.

MERTZ

Alrright. Put zese on.

(CRISKIN puts them on.)

CRISKIN

Right. Very good, but what's to keep me from taking them off?

MERTZ

Zat's ver ze bugs come in. I haf a couple of ideas. Ve could either screw them on to people's heads...but the screws could get loose. So you would haf a lot of people valking around mit a screw loose. OR – zis issf ver ve're leaning...take off ze glasses.

(CRISKIN takes off the glasses and there is a very loud siren noise, like a car burglar alarm.)

CRISKIN

Ow! Turn it off!

MERTZ

Zis vay way nobody could take zer glasses off visout us knowink about it.

CRISKIN

What's wrong with that?

MERTZ

I haven't vorked out yet how I can keep somebody from deactivating ze button that sets off ze alarm, but ve're close. But choost a minute.

(HE takes off his hat and puts on another one. He discards his accent and is now speaking as a marketing man.)

CRISKIN

What is it?

MERTZ

Now, don't take what I'm going to say the wrong way.

CRISKIN

Mertz, what is it?

MERTZ

You're throwing a lot of people in the dungeon.

CRISKIN

(With irritation)

Yes. Until they understand that there is only one color and one color alone, that's the way it has to be. Do you have a problem with that?

MERTZ

No, no. I understand. I know you're a man of high principles. You got your integrity to worry about. It's just that...

CRISKIN

It's just what?

MERTZ

The bottom line. You gotta look at the numbers. You're puttin' all those people in jail. Who's gonna buy the glasses? You gotta make the sales, man.

LUCY AND HELENA

(THIS IS A SPLIT SET. THE THRONE ROOM AND A ROOM IN LUCY'S HOUSE. LIGHTS UP ON LUCY'S HOUSE. (SHE is with her mother, HELENA. HELENA is preparing to leave for work at the palace.)

LUCY

Why can't I go to the palace today?

HELENA

You have a cold and it's nasty outside.

LUCY

I hope the King doesn't think I didn't keep my promise. That was really weird of Bullick. He never acts that way. If you see the king, will you tell him I was there and explain what happened?

HELENA

I will try. I'll come home as soon as I can.
(SHE exits)

(HELENA comes back.)

HELENA

Lucy, what did you say to the king? What - uh - what have you...?

LUCY

Aren't they beautiful?

HELENA

(Runs around the room, tearing the pictures off the wall. They are pictures of Xmas trees and Minorahs and Kwanza).

Quickly, we must get rid of these before anyone sees them.

LUCY

No, mother. You can't. Don't tear them down.

HELENA

Lucy, are you out of your mind? We are in enough trouble as it is. What did you say to the king?

LUCY

I just told him I hate puce. I never want to see puce again!!

HELENA

Fine. That's really fine. They've fired me. And they told me that if I ever bring you around again, we would both end up in the dungeon.

LUCY

That's not fair. I thought the King was my friend.

HELENA

Do you really think you could tell the King what to do?

LUCY

Why not, why can't I tell the King when he's wrong? Did the King fire you?

HELENA

No. It was Bullick.

LUCY

I bet the King doesn't even know about this. I've got to tell him to hire you back.

(Goes to the door.)

HELENA

Lucy, No. You mustn't go there. It will be all right. I will get other work.

BULLICK AND CRISKIN

CRISKIN

Bullick, come here.

(BULLICK looks a little confused.)

BULLICK

Wha-what were you doing...?

CRISKIN

Never mind. Bullick, I want you to see to it that the seamstress Helena is fired and never allow her or her daughter Lucy to come to the palace again. She must be kept away from the King.

BULLICK

Why? Lucy's mother is such a nice lady.

CRISKIN

We must protect the King. That brat's trying to undermine our puce program.

BULLICK

Our puce program? Sure, but... but she doesn't mean any harm.

CRISKIN

Do I get the feeling that you are not behind me 200%, Bullick?

BULLICK

No, no, but...

CRISKIN

Because if you're not, you might prefer to work in the dungeons. That would be easy to arrange.

BULLICK

No, no, I'm with you 240%. Does the King know about this?.

CRISKIN

We don't have to bother the king about this. He might miss her for a day or so and then he'll find some riddles and games to amuse himself with. It's up to us to take charge, Bullick, because there is no one else. We mustn't upset him with problems. And now can I count on you to take care of that matter with the seamstress?.

BULLICK

Uh, yes – sure thing.

LUCY AND BULLICK

LUCY

Bullick, are you really going to put me in a nasty, smelly dungeon? And tomorrow the holidays start. You would really do that?

BULLICK

Sure thing, Lucy. You heard what his Lordshi- his Excellency said.

LUCY

Must you always do what he says?

BULLICK

If I know what's good for me.

LUCY

Do you know where the King is?

BULLICK

Of course I know where the King is.

LUCY

Then why don't we go and rescue him. Tomorrow is Christmas. If we get him out today wouldn't that be a wonderful gift for everyone?

BULLICK

What!!! You've got to be kidding!!!

LUCY

No, I'm not kidding, Bullick. Do you really think that Criskin is right to do all these bad things? That terrible puce and putting the King in a dungeon and all those other people and...

BULLICK

No, but...

LUCY

Come on, Bullick. I know you don't like what's going on any more than I do. You're really a nice person and...

BULLICK

You really think so?

LUCY

I know so, Bullick. You were always a nice person – helping old ladies across the street and watching people's dogs...

BULLICK

I didn't think anybody noticed. You're right, Lucy. Criskin shouldn't be allowed to do all this arresting and putting people in jail...but if I don't do what he says...he'll really get mad...

LUCY

Wouldn't you like things to be the way they were, when things were bright and happy...

BULLICK

Yeah, I would, but..

GRISELDA AND THROCKMORTON

(someone read the parts of Criskin and the King)

SCENE FOUR

(THROCKMORTON AND GRISELDA are in the throne room, debris all around them, GRISELDA are dueling with yardsticks and shouting at one another.)

THROCKMORTON

Numbbrain. Fuchsia.

GRISELDA

No way, lamebrain. Chartreuse, chartreuse, chartreuse..

THROCKMORTON

Never. You'll turn the throne room into a pigsty.

GRISELDA

That should make you feel right at home. Oink, oink, oink.

THROCKMORTON

I'm going to get you for this.

GRISELDA

Ooh! You're going to get me. I'm really scared.

(The KING and CRISKIN enter.)

KING

What is going on here? Stop this foolishness. Do you know why you are fighting?

GRISELDA

Because he's an idiot?

THROCKMORTON

Because she's a dork?

KING

You are fighting because there are too many choices and your brains will shrink and your tongues will shrivel up. If there were no colors you would not be fighting. Therefore we will ban all the colors but one.

Looks at Criskin

Because we need one color for definition.

*(The PAGE clashes the cymbals very loudly.
They all reel with the noise.)*

THROCKMORTON

You're going to ban all the colors, but one? That's terrible.

KING

Well – uh...

CRISKIN

How dare you say that the king's idea is terrible!

KING

Yes, how dare you say that. All the colors will be banned – except one.

GRISELDA

And what color will that be?

THROCKMORTON

Fuchsia!

GRISELDA

Chartreuse!

THROCKMORTON

Fuchsia!

KING

(To Criskin, plaintively)

They're still fighting.

CRISKIN

The choice, Sire, must be yours. You must choose. You are the KING!

*(The PAGE is about to clang the cymbals when
he realizes it is CRISKIN talking.)*

KING

Yes, yes. I am the KING. Fuchsia, Chartreuse, puce. PUCE! That has a nice ring to it. Pee-uce. I like that. That's it. The color will be puce. And that's the color you will paint the throne room.

GRISELDA

Puce! That's a yucky color.

CRISKIN

(Quietly to the KING)

She said Puce is Yucky. How dare she say that Puce is yucky when it is your choice.

KING

You're right. How dare she say that Puce is Yucky. How dare you say that puce is yucky, the color chosen by your King. Just for that I now decree that puce will color everything.

THROCKMORTON

EVERYTHING???

KING

The color chosen by your King. PUCE!

GRISELDA

The castle walls?

KING

And even all the castle halls. PUCE!

THROCKMORTON

And everything we wear?

KING

From your toes up to your hair. PUCE!!!

GRISELDA

And even trees?

KING

Yes - and all the leaves. PUCE!!!

KING

Puce will color everything. The color chosen by your King.

(THROCKMORTON and GRISELDA both faint)

