

SCENE 1. THE BARON'S CASTLE

SONG 1 "COME YE MEN AND COME YE MAIDENS" (CD track 1/9)

(Enter Baron Steinkopf and Snide, his secretary.)

Baron: So, Snide? My favourite time of year is almost here. Is everything prepared for next week? Do you have the list for this year's "Goodwill Gathering"?

Snide: Oh yes, your lordship. The peasants have all been invited to attend. They will gather to greet you on the village green next Saturday, as usual, on pain of death.

Baron: Invited? I don't like that word. What if they don't want to come?

Snide: If they don't come, your lordship's soldiers will be invited to burn their cottages down, sire.

Baron: Excellent! Oh, I do enjoy the Goodwill Gatherings! And do they all know what goods they must provide?

Snide: It is the same every year, Sire. Each peasant knows what gift to give you. And they all know how upset you would be if anyone forgot!

Baron: Splendid! It promises to be a very 'peasant' afternoon. Now, where is Blitherwit, that idiot bailiff of mine? Call him, Snide.

Snide: Call him Snide? But that's my name.

Baron: What?! I know! I meant.....Call him. You....Snide, ...call.....Oh forget it. I'll do it myself! *(shouts)* Blitherwit! Get in here! Now! Blitherwit!!

(enter Blitherwit and guards)

Blitherwit: You called, your Magnificence?

Baron: Of course I called. Where have you been? And why have you brought this lot with you?

Blitherwit: They're my body guards, Sire.

Baron: No, Blitherwit, they're my bodyguards. And my body doesn't need guarding at the moment. I am safe within my own castle. Now give me that list.

1st Guard: *(to audience)* He's not, you know. He's not safe.

2nd Guard: Nobody's safe. Nowhere.

3rd Guard: Not while the Black Shadow is still about.

4th Guard: *(to audience)* Well, you're safe, I suppose. The Black Shadow's not after you, because you are all kind, generous, sensitive people. Not like Baron Steinkopf.

1st Guard: The baron's not kind he's cruel!

2nd Guard: Evil!

3rd Guard: Mean!

4th Guard: In fact, he's not very nice at all!

Baron: Silence! Blitherwit, if you can't keep this lot quiet, then you'll all be fired! And it'll be a very big fire! Now, Snide, this list - I see that a shoe-maker has come to live in the village since last year.

Snide: Yes, Excellence. And I hear that he's very good.

Baron: Splendid! He can be my 'sole' supplier - at no cost to myself, of course!

Snide: Very good, sire. And the village now has an apiarist.

Baron: A what! An apiarist? That's monkeys, isn't it?

Snide: No, sire, it's bees. You know, honey, that sort of thing.

Baron: Really? So, more 'free-bees' for the Baron. Oh I am looking forward to Saturday!

SONG 2 "WELL I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD ALL YEAR" (CD track 2/10)

Come on Snide - let's make sure there's enough room in the cellar to store all the gifts that the villagers are going to give me this year! (*exit Baron & Snide*)

1st Guard: (*to audience*) See? I told you he's not very nice!

Blitherwit: Silence! If you get me into trouble with the baron one more time, you're all fired!

Guards (*all together*): And it'll be a very big fire!

Blitherwit: Silence! Now get out. Go and do something you're good at. Go and frighten the villagers - and remind them to turn up on Saturday, or else!

4th Guard: Or else what?

Blitherwit: Or else their cottages will be making that very big fire. That's what. Now get out, all of you!

(*exit guards, followed by Blitherwit.*)

SCENE 2. THE DARK FOREST

(Enter Baron and Snide)

Baron: *(calls behind him)* Come on, keep up. You're supposed to be guarding me, not playing hide and seek.

Snide: They're a little bit scared, sire. They don't like being out in the dark forest on their own.

Baron: Scared? They're supposed to be soldiers. *(enter guards and Blitherwit, carrying a large, heavy sack.)* Look at them! What have they got to be they scared of?

Guards *(all together, nervously)*: The Black Shadow!

Baron: What! That little weed? I could take him on single-handed! *(Guards turn to make exit)* Hold it! I said I could, not I would! And anyway, I need you here to guard the treasure.

Snide: I still don't think this is a good idea, sire. It's a bit risky bringing all this treasure through the Dark Forest.

Baron: Nonsense, Snide. I have to make room in the castle cellar for all the new treasures the villagers will give me on Saturday.

Blitherwit: It's very heavy, sire. *(Puts the sack down)*

Baron: Of course it's heavy! It's full of valuable things. Jewels, gold coins, old people's pensions, little children's pocket-money - that kind of thing. It's all going into my huge account at the Bad-Lord and Kingly Building Society, to make me even richer! Now, let's get a move on.

Black Shadow: *(off-stage, ghostly)*: Oooooooooooh!!

1st Guard: What was that?

Baron: What was what?

Black Shadow *(off-stage)*: Oooooooooooh!!

2nd Guard : That!

SONG 3 "IT'S GETTING RATHER SPOOKY IN HERE" (CD track 3/11)

1st Guard: I don't like it.

Baron: Well, it's too late to rewrite it now!

1st Guard: No! Not that!

Black Shadow: *(off-stage)* Ooooooooooh.

1st Guard: That!

Baron: That! That's nothing. It's probably a a robin.

Snide: It sounded to me like a wolf.

Blitherwit: It sounded to me like a very big wolf.

3rd Guard: It sounded to me like the Black Shadow.

4th Guard: And me

1st Guard: And me.

2nd Guard: And me. It was. It was the Black Shadow.

Baron: What? Are you sure? Well, what are you waiting for? Get after him. This is your chance to capture him. Go on! Quickly, before he gets away! *(exit all except Baron and Snide)* No, hang on a minute. Not all of you. Wait! Too late, they've all gone.

Snide: Don't worry, sire, I'm with you.

Black Shadow: *(leaps onto stage)*: And so am I!

Snide: Oh! *(jumps behind baron for protection)*

Baron: What do you want? Who are you?

Snide: Well I don't think it's Red Riding Hood! I think it's.....

Black Shadow: The Black Shadow! And this, I think, is just some of the treasure that you have taken from the poor villagers over the years?

Baron: What! No! You can't have that. That's stealing!

Black Shadow: No. It was stolen. But now it's going back to its rightful owners.
(picks up sack)

Snide: Be careful – it's very heavy!

Baron: You won't get away with this. I have guards. I only have to call and they'll be here in an instant. *(calls)* Guards!

Black Shadow: Guards? Is that what you call them? I'll bet that by now they're lost in the forest.

Guards *(offstage)*: Help! Help, we're lost in the forest! Where are we? Help!

Black Shadow: Just as I thought. But I can't stand around here chattering all day. There are people who need my help. And I'm sure you're anxious to go and help your little friends too. Good-day!

Snide: Bye-bye. *(exit Black Shadow)*. Well! He was quite nice, really, wasn't he. For a Black Shadow.

Baron: Nice! He's taken my treasure! All my lovely treasure. He won't get away with this.

Snide: I think he just did. Look. It's gone!

Baron: I'll get it back. I'll pay him back. No one makes a fool of Baron Steinkopf! You wait and see. Come on, Snide. Let's go and find those idiots who are supposed to be guarding me. *(exit both)*

SCENE 3. THE VILLAGE GREEN

SONG 4 “COME YE MEN AND COME YE MAIDENS *2nd time* (CD track 4/12)

(Enter Guards, carrying big chair for Baron, little chair and desk for Blitherwit)

1st Guard: I don't like it. It's too quiet.

2nd Guard: You're right. Always a bad sign in an audience!

(Enter Baron, Snide and Blitherwit. Baron sits, with Snide beside him. Soldiers line up on opposite side to Snide. Blitherwit sits at the end of the line.)

Baron: Oh, I do enjoy the Goodwill Gathering. It's my favourite day of the year!

Snide: Better than Christmas, sire?

Baron: Much better! At Christmas I don't get presents from the peasants!

Snide: But you do get presents from all your friends.

Baron: Exactly. And last year I got.....?

Blitherwit: *(reading from list)* One pair of socks, large, pink. From your mother.

Baron: Precisely. So lets get on with the Gathering. Who's first?

Blitherwit: The shoemaker, sire. Mr. Clark.

1st Guard *(calls)*: The shoemaker!

(enter Mr Clark, with shoe box. He bows to the baron)

Baron: Well, what have you got for me?

Mr Clark: A pair of shoes in the very latest style, sire. I have used only the finest leather, and the stitching is of the highest quality.

Baron: It had better be. Give the box to the guard. *(Clark hands over the box.)* That's all. Go on now, shoo! Shoo! *(Slaps Snide on the back)* Get it, Snide, the shoe maker, ...Shoe ...Shoo!! Oh, I love these Gatherings! Much, much better than Christmas. Don't you think so, Snide?

(Box passes via each guard to Blitherwit, who puts it beside his table. Black Shadow enters behind Blitherwit, taps his shoulder to distract him, takes box and exits)

Snide: Yes sire great fun. Who's next?

Blitherwit: The bee-keeper, sire. Miss Gale.

1st Guard *(calls)*: Miss Gale!

(enter Miss Gale with honey jar)