

**THE LAND OF FORGETFULNESS.
A CHILDREN'S PLAY IN THREE
ACTS ESPECIALLY ADAPTED TO
OUT-OF-DOOR PERFORMANCES**

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The Land of Forgetfulness. A Children's Play in Three Acts Especially Adapted to Out-Of-Door Performances by Katharine Kester

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KATHARINE KESTER

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THE LAND OF FORGETFULNESS

ACT I.

[The PIED PIPER and children are seen in the distance. The PIPER plays and the children come trooping after him singing and laughing. They come onto the stage. A German folk-dance may be used here, if desired. The PIPER remains in the background watching the children, a smile on his lips. When the dance is ended, he comes forward, breaking into their midst.]

PIPER. Enough, enough! Break off and rest awhile!
The way was long for all your little feet.
But not one of you thought of weariness—
'Twas happiness and joy that filled your heads.
Now thanks, my pipe, for what thou'st done today.
Thou canst at my command bring mirth to some,
To others, sorrow.

BERTHA. MASTER PIPER man!

PIPER. Ay, what wouldst thou?

BERTHA. As through this wood we came,
I looked around me, for the pretty flowers
And trees just seemed to smile and nod at me.
And so I looked about, and there I saw—
Guess what!

PIPER. Oh, tell me, I could never guess.

FRITZ. Yes, tell us quick for I saw something, too.

GRETCHEN. And so did I!

HEDWIG. And I!

WALTHER. And I did, too!

BERTHA. A tiny little man, all dressed in brown!

FRITZ. A fat and jolly, rosy, little man!

[Children all nod and agree.]

BERTHA. I saw him peeking from beneath a flower
 And looking at me, twinkling with his eyes.
 And when I stopped just once to look at him,
 Why, he was gone!

FRITZ. And so was mine!

GRETCHEN. And mine!

HEDWIG. Oh, tell us, PIPER, what the brown things were.

PIPER. [*Laughs.*] Why, yes, dear children, those were
 little elves.

WALTHER. Real elves, that only live in story books?

PIPER. Real elves, that only live in Fairyland.

LOTTCHEN. Are we in Fairyland?

ALL CHILDREN. [*Wondering and awe-struck.*] In Fairy-
 land?

PIPER. In Fairyland, my dears, is where you are,

The fairest, loveliest country 'neath the sun.

Here all is happiness the whole day long,

No books, no lessons, nothing here but fun.

FRANZ. I'd like to stay here always!

TRUDEL. So would I!

[*Children all nod and agree.*]

PIPER. And so you shall, my dears, and so you shall!

[*Children laugh and clap their hands.*]

HERMANN. And shall we see the fairies and the elves?

PIPER. Ay, certainly, and that without delay.

I'll call them now.

[*Blows a few notes on his pipe.*]

Come hither, little elves.

They'll be here presently.

[*Elves come in from all sides, running, jumping, creeping,
 turning somersaults.*]

Ah, here they are!

Come, come, give greeting to our visitors.

What, visitors! Nay, nay, they've come to stay!

Do bid them welcome, elves. Go shake their hands,

For that's the way the mortals greet each other.

[*Elves go around shaking hands with children.*]

PIPER. [*Introducing.*] This, children, is the little Elf-land king.

ELF-KING. In Elfland's name, I'm glad to welcome you.

I'm glad that you have come to see us here.

For 'tis a finer, fairer land than yours.

Come see us in our homes beneath the ground,

For that is where we elfinen live and work.

We place deep in the ground the precious gems,

Like this one which this little maiden wears.

Come dine with us on roasted grasshoppers' legs.

'Tis kingly fare, I'm sure you'll like it much,

As long as you are good, we'll treat you well,

We'll play with you and show you many things.

But if you should be naughty, then beware!

The elves will come and pinch you black and blue!

[*Children shudder.*]

PIPER. I know they will be good, your majesty.

So now let all the elves and children join

In merry sport, say, in a game of ball.

I'd have a word with you.

CHILDREN. Yes, let's play ball!

[*Children and elves go to back of stage and play ball.*]

PIPER. I want to tell you why I brought them here.

ELF-KING. Ay, ay, and I am anxious to be told.

PIPER. Thou knowest the charms my wondrous pipe
can work.

ELF-KING. Thy pipe has served thee many a good turn.

PIPER. It is a noble instrument, indeed.

Well, yestereven, as I journeyed through

Old Brunswick, by the river Weser's side,

I talked with peasants, as I always do

And all their conversation was the same,

For instance, when I met a farmer man,

"Good-day!" said I. "Say not good day," quoth he,

"And why?" I asked, "Is not the weather fine?"

"Ay, fine for vermia," was my friend's reply.

"Your crops are growing well," I ventured then,

"They'll feed the rats, I doubt it not," said he.

"Come, come, my friend," I cried, "You're pessimistic!"

"How can a man be otherwise?" said he,
 "Why know you not how Hauline town's besieged?
 They're simply overrun with awful rats!"

ELF-KING. With rats! Why, stop a moment, that reminds me.

This morning there appeared in dear old Elfland
 A host of sleek and well-kept, giant rats.
 We use them for our horses, as you know.
 But where they ever came from, I don't know.

PIPER. Why, that's within my story; you shall hear,
 Well, I went straight to Hauline town in Brunswick,
 And found affairs in a most awful state.
 I went to Hauline's Mayor and Corporation,
 And said that I would rid their town of rats.
 If they would give me then a thousand guilders.
 "One! "Fifty-thousand!" was their joyous cry.
 So out into the street I went and piped,
 And after me of course the rats came trooping,
 I dumped them in the river Weser's tide,
 Whence they came down to you.

ELF-KING. Ah, now I see!
 And thanks for such a splendid lot of steeds!

PIPER. [*Laughs.*] No thanks to me, but my beloved pipe.

Well, to go on, I went to get my pay,
 For they had promised me a thousand guilders;
 But to my great surprise, they would not pay!
 I said, "I'll make you pay!" So out I went,
 And piped again, this time a different tune,
 And now, instead of rats, the children came
 And followed in my wake, with song and dance,
 I brought them here, and here they are to stay.
 The innocent must suffer for the guilty.

ELF-KING. [*Offended.*] You call it suffering, then, to live in Elfland?

PIPER. Oh, no, indeed! I beg a thousand pardons!

I meant not what I said, for truly now
 The children are the happier of the two,
 And 'tis the lonely parents that must suffer.
 Observe the babies in their little sport.
 Ah, childhood is the finest time of life.

Well, children, have you had a merry game?

CHILDREN. Yes, yes! [*They run forward.*]

WALTHER. The little elves know how to play
 As well as any of us boys and girls.

AN ELF. Ay, truly, we do; and we know besides
 Just heaps of things that boys and girls do not.

HEDWIG. And will you teach us all those lovely things?

AN ELF. Oh, may be, if you're good.

CHILDREN. Oh, we'll be good!

PIPER. Well, children, now that you have seen the elves,
 Perhaps you'd like to see some other things.

What say you as to fairies, for a taste?

[*Children clap their hands joyously.*]

Then sit you down and be as still as mice,
 And soon the lovely fairies will appear.

[*Children sit down at back and sides of stage. PIPER
 blows a few notes on his pipe. Elves squat down at
 different places. Soon the fairies come flitting in.*]

FAIRY-QUEEN. Hail, PIPER! Welcome back to Fairy-
 land!

Thy charmed notes wakened me from flowery sleep,
 With joy I called my band, and we are here
 To give thee greeting and obey thy wish,
 Thy slightest bidding. Say, what shall it be?

PIPER. Thou seest these little mortals round about?

[*Fairies utter terrified exclamations and shrink together
 at one side of stage.*]

BLUEBELL. Mortals! They will harm us, I'm afraid!

PIPER. [*Laughs.*] Nay, nay, they'll harm you not, and
 anyhow,

They're only children, harmless little things,
 They love the fairies and they wish to see

How beautifully you dance. Come, dance for them.

[*Fairy dance.*]

PIPER. Thanks, lovely creatures, thanks. Well, boys and girls,

What think you of this pretty fairy band?

LOTTCHEN. I like the fairies better than the elves.

[*All little girls nod and agree. Fairies laugh and bow prettily, while elves break into chorus of weeping.*]

LITTLE BOY. [*Hermann.*] I like the elves the best.

FRITZ.

And so do I!

[*Elves shout and throw their arms about little boys in a violent embrace. Hesitatingly, little girls try to embrace fairies, who draw away.*]

ROSE. Be careful, or you'll break my pretty wings!

PIPER. Now, little elves, and fairies, you may go.

I know you have your duties to perform.

We'll meet again. Be ready when I call.

[*Exit elves and fairies.*]

ELIZABETH. [*Looking after them.*] I'd like to be a fairy!

GRETCHEN. So would I!

FRANZ. Oh, pshaw! I'd rather be an elf, by far.

They're *solider* than fairies.

ELIZABETH.

Oh, but then

The elves are brown and ugly, and the fairies

Are bright and pretty, with such lovely wings!

FRANZ. Now, isn't that just like a little girl!

You always think about your clothes and things!

ELIZABETH. Well, anyhow, your stocking's torn, so there!!

[*Begins to cry.*]

PIPER. How now! A quarrel brewing in the air?

Methinks the little ones are tired out,

For crossness and fatigue go hand in hand.

Come, children, you must have a little nap.

Lie down in quiet, and ere long, I know,

Refreshing sleep will close your little eyes.