

Prince and the Pauper

Adapted by Gary Drevitch
from the Classic Novel By Mark Twain

Characters

Tom Canty, 15-year old pauper

Mr. Canty, Tom's father

Mrs. Canty, Tom's mother

Nan, Tom's sister

Neighbor

Prince Edward, 15-year-old prince

King Henry VIII, his father

Lord Hertford, a royal advisor

Lady Elizabeth, the prince's sister

Humphrey, a servant

Miles Hendon, a soldier

Hugh Hendon, his brother

Lady Edith

Blake Edwards

Officer

Guard

Narrator 1

Narrator 2

SCENE 1

NARRATOR 1: Tom Canty was born in London in the 1530s to a poor family that did not want him.

NARRATOR 2: On the same day, another child was born to a rich family who wanted him very much. That boy was Edward, Prince of Wales, first son of Henry VIII, and future King of England.

NARRATOR 1: Fifteen years later, Tom Canty still lived in the narrow, dirty streets of Offal Court. His father and grandmother were drunks who fought with everyone. Then they'd come home to beat Tom.

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NARRATOR 2: They made Tom beg for them, but he refused to steal. He had learned right from wrong from his neighbor, Father Andrew, an old priest whom cruel Henry VIII had kicked out of the castle years before.

NARRATOR 1: Andrew taught Tom reading and writing. Tom's education set him apart from his friends, who jokingly treated him as their own prince.

NARRATOR 2: Tom's neighbors began to seek his judgment in their disputes. The wisdom of Tom's decisions always amazed the adults. He was a prince and a hero – to everyone but his own family.

NARRATOR 1: Tom didn't mind his life. It was all he knew. He did have one dream, though – to meet, just once, a real prince.

SCENE 2

NARRATOR 2: And then one day, Tom's wanderings took him to Buckingham Palace. Ignoring the armed guards, Tom ran to the gate and saw the prince.

GUARD: (*throwing Tom away from the gate*): Mind your manners, beggar!

PRINCE: Guard! How dare you treat a poor boy like that! Open the gates, and let him in!

GUARD: At once, your highness.

PRINCE: You look hungry. Come with me.

NARRATOR 2: The Prince took Tom into his room, the grandest room Tom had ever seen.

PRINCE: What's your name, boy?

TOM: Tom Canty, sir.

PRINCE: And where do you live?

TOM: In the city, sir. In Offal Court.

PRINCE: An odd name! Have you parents?

TOM: Yes, sir, and twin sisters, and a grandmother who is not kind to me.

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PRINCE: She mistreats you?

TOM: Yes, sir.

PRINCE: Beatings?

TOM: Yes, sir.

PRINCE: Is your father kind to you?

TOM: No more than my grandmother.

PRINCE: Perhaps fathers are alike. Mine does not beat me, but he is cruel with his words.

TOM: They cause me no harm, sir.

PRINCE: I have two sisters myself – Lady Elizabeth and Lady Mary. Tell me, how do your sisters treat their servants?

TOM: We have no servants.

PRINCE: Then who dresses you when you wake in the morning?

TOM: Sir, we each have just one set of clothes.

PRINCE: How odd! But tell me – do you enjoy living in Offal Court?

TOM: Yes, sir – when I'm not hungry. The other boys and I swim in the river or wrestle.

PRINCE: It sounds like glorious fun! It'd be worth this entire kingdom to experience it for just a day!

TOM: Sir, it would be worth all that I have to spend just one day dressed in fine clothes like yours.

PRINCE: Say no more! So be it!

NARRATOR 1: The prince removed the Royal Seal from around from around his neck and put it in its hiding place. Then the boys switched clothes. Seeing each other in the prince's mirror, they realized they could be identical twins.

PRINCE: You have the same hair, eyes, and build as I do! No one could tell which of us was the Prince of Wales! I think that while it's fresh in my mind, I'll go punish that guard who treated you so cruelly. Don't move till I return!

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NARRATOR 2: The prince ran downstairs in Tom's rags to find the guard.

GUARD: Oh, you're back, you rotten beggar! Here, this is for the trouble you've caused me with his highness!

NARRATOR 1: The guard clubbed the prince and threw him out the gate.

PRINCE: I am the Prince of Wales! You'll hang for laying your hand on me!

GUARD: Off with you, you crazy rubbish!

NARRATOR 2: The prince realized his mistake and ran from the castle to escape the guard. He was lost in the city until, hours later, a huge hand grabbed him by the shoulder.

CANTY: Out this late, and you haven't brought a penny home! If I don't break every bone in your body for this, then I'm not John Canty!

PRINCE: Oh, are you *his* father? Excellent! My good man, if you'll take me to the castle and fetch your boy, my father the king will make you rich beyond your wildest dreams.

CANTY: You're stark raving mad, boy! But I'll beat some sense into you.

SCENCE 3

NARRATOR 2: Back at the castle, everyone thought the prince had lost his mind, or at least his memory. He didn't know his servants, his lessons, or his duties. Eventually, Henry VIII called the prince before him and his advisors.

HENRY: My child, do you recognize me?

TOM: (*dropping to his knees*): Sire, you are my King! I am a helpless pauper, and I pray you will believe me when I tell you I am here only by accident. I am too young to die, sire. Please spare my life.

HENRY: You'll not die, my prince!

TOM: Bless you, sire!

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HENRY: Hertford, the prince is ill. He's been studying too much. Let him rest and rebuild his health. But let all who live in this castle know: Be he mad or sane, Prince Edward shall rule England after my death! Hertford, help the prince remember his life here.

HERTFORD: As you wish, sire.

HENRY: Oh, and Hertford, the Duke of Norfolk still waits in the Tower of London for his death. Tomorrow, we'll hang him. See that the papers are prepared.

HERTFORD: If I may ask, sire, of what crime is Norfolk guilty?

HENRY: Treason. I don't like the color of his hat.

SCENE 4

NARRATOR 2: Later that day, the prince's sister, Lady Elizabeth, and his cousin, Lady Jane, came to visit Tom.

HERTFORD: Remember your father's order – that during your illness, you never deny that you are the Prince of Wales.

TOM: I'll remember. Please, sir – sit down.

HERTFORD: No, my prince. You may have forgotten: No one may sit in your presence.

NARRATOR 1: Tom got through his visit with Elizabeth and Jane well enough, but when their talk ended, he was surprised that no one moved to leave.

ELIZABETH: Have we permission of the prince my brother to go?

TOM: Oh! Yes, of course, anything you ask.

NARRATOR 2: Later that day, Henry called Hertford to him.

HENRY: Let's get on with Norfolk's hanging. Bring me my Royal Seal so I can stamp these orders for the executioner.

HERTFORD: But my lord, you loaned the Royal Seal to Prince Edward yesterday.

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HENRY: Then retrieve it from the prince.

HERTFORD: I tried. But the prince claims not to know what the Royal Seal is.

HENRY: Will the boy never get well? Postpone Norfolk's hanging until I have the Seal.

SCENE 5

NARRATOR 1: Meanwhile, John Canty dragged the prince to his house.

PRINCE: I've told you: I am Edward, Prince of Wales! I do not know any of you!

MRS. CANTY: Not even your own mother?

PRINCE: I've never seen you like this before.

CANTY: (*sarcastically*): What a show this is! Nan, Bet, have you no manners, sitting in the presence of the Prince of Wales?

NAN: Father, Tom is worn out. He is not himself. I'm sure he'll be well tomorrow and will beg with great energy.

PRINCE: I will *not* beg. I'm not a pauper!

NARRATOR 2: Canty hit the prince and threw him to the floor.

CANTY: I'm tired of this! Boy, you'll beg tomorrow, and you'll not come home empty-handed, if you want to walk again!

NARRATOR 1: Later that night, one of Canty's neighbors knocked on his door.

NEIGHBOR: Do you know who that man was that you knocked out last night?

CANTY: No, and I don't care.

NEIGHBOR: It was old Father Andrew, and he's died of his wounds! The royal police are on their way here!

CANTY: Everyone, wake up! We've got to run away! If we get separated, we'll meet at London Bridge.

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NARRATOR 2: As everyone ran out, the prince fled into the city. Soon, he met a pack of thieves on a dark street. The thieves attacked him, but he fought back.

PRINCE: I am Edward, Prince of Wales! And even though I'm alone and friendless, I will stand my ground!

NARRATOR 1: Suddenly, a tall, muscular man appeared. He was dressed in fine, but faded, clothing and carried a sword.

MILES: I don't know if you're a prince, but you're a brave boy and you're not friendless as long as Miles Hendon is around.

NARRATOR 2: Miles Hendon fought off the thieves and led the Prince to safety.

NARRATOR 1: Meanwhile, back at the castle, Hertford had important news for Tom.

HERTFORD: The king is dead! (*bowing before Tom*) Long live the king!

TOM: Hertford, if I am to be king and I make a command, would it be obeyed?

HERTFORD: Your word is law.

TOM: Then go to the Tower of London and say that Duke of Norfolk shall not die!

HERTFORD: (*rushing to the tower*): Long live Edward, King of England.

SCENE 6

NARRATOR 2: As the prince walked with Miles past London Bridge, someone grabbed him.

CANTY: Boy, you won't escape me again, not after the beating I'll give you!

MILES: What is this boy to you, brute?

CANTY: He's my son. He's coming with me!

MILES: Boy, whether this scurvy fellow is your father or not, I'll see that he doesn't touch you if you'd rather stay with me.

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PRINCE: I don't know this man, and I would die before I'd go with him.

MILES: Then it's settled. This boy is under my protection now, so be on your way.

NARRATOR 1: Cauty grumbled and walked away. Hendon decided to play along with the boy's story about being the prince – and, now, the king. He took him back to his rented room for dinner.

PRINCE: How dare you sit in my presence!

MILES: (*standing*): My apologies, sire.

PRINCE: Your king forgives you, noble fellow. Please – tell me your story.

MILES: My mother died when I was a boy. My father is a rich and generous man. I have two brothers – my older brother Arthur, who is kind; and my younger brother Hugh, who is vicious and greedy. I haven't seen them for 10 years – since I left home to become a soldier. Seven years ago, I was captured in battle. Until days ago, I had spent all those years in locked in a French prison.

PRINCE: So now you've returned. Does a lady wait for you at Hendon Hall?

MILES: No, your majesty. The love of my life, Lady Edith, was engaged to Arthur when she was a little girl. Arthur loved someone else, but my father wouldn't let him out of the engagement. Hugh also claimed to love Lady Edith, but I think he loved only her family's wealth.

PRINCE: You have suffered much. I will return with you to Hendon Hall to reunite you with your family. In the meantime, you have served me well and deserve a reward. Name your desire.

MILES: It may sound odd, sire, but I request that I and my descendants forever be allowed to sit in the king's presence.

PRINCE: Your request is granted. Along with this: You are now Sir Miles Hendon, royal knight. Now, please sit down.

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SCENE 7

NARRATOR 2: Tom who'd soon be crowned king, was finally getting comfortable in the castle. But the hundreds of servants still confused him – especially one.

TOM: You say you are my *whipping boy*?

HUMPHREY: Yes, sire. Humphrey Marlow, at your service.

TOM: As you know, Humphrey, I have a problem with my memory. Please tell me how you serve me.

HUMPHREY: Well, when you fail your Greek lessons, your teacher whips me – and you did fail your last test, two days ago.

TOM: *You are whipped for my failings?*

HUMPHREY: Always, sire. Will the whippings take place today?

TOM: No. No one shall whip you today.

HUMPHREY: Thank you, sire! But there is one other thing –

TOM: Yes?

HUMPHREY: Now that you'll be king, perhaps you'll give up your studies. Then you'd never fail any more tests, and I'd be out of a job, for my back is my livelihood.

TOM: Don't worry, Humphrey. I declare you the Hereditary Grand Whipping Boy to the royal house of England! You and your children will always have a job here.

HUMPHREY: Sire, you've made me so happy!

TOM: You're welcome, Humphrey. Now maybe you can help me as well. You know the prince's – I mean, my – life here in the castle as well as anyone. Let me test you on some memories that I've lost in my illness.

NARRATOR 1: Tom spent many hours with Humphrey. Later that day, he impressed Hertford with his returned "memory."

HERTFORD: I am so glad to see you so well again, my lord. Now do you remember where you put the Royal Seal?

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TOM: What does this seal look like?

HERTFORD: Alas! You lost your wits again! But you still have four days before you're crowned king. By then, you will be well.

SCENE 8

NARRATOR 1: Meanwhile, Miles Hendon and the real prince arrived at Hendon Hall.

MILES: Welcome to Hendon Hall, my king! I am finally home!

NARRATOR 2: As they reached the gate, Miles saw his brother, Hugh.

MILES: Hugh! I have returned! Call our father to the gate, for I will not feel at home until I see his face again!

HUGH: Stranger, you seem to be out of your wits. Who do you imagine yourself to be?

MILES: Don't you recognize your brother?

HUGH: Miles?! You must be joking. I got a letter seven years ago telling me that my brother died in battle.

MILES: That's a lie! Call my father! Call Arthur! Surely they'll recognize me!

HUGH: I cannot call the dead to life.

MILES: They're both dead? I can't believe it! Lady Edith still lives, I pray.

HUGH: She lives.

MILES: Well, then, please bring her to me. She will certainly recognize me.

NARRATOR 1: Hugh went to find Lady Edith.

MILES: How can he say I am an imposter? I'm his own brother!

PRINCE: I do not doubt you, Sir Miles. But you still doubt that I am your king, do you not?

NARRATOR 2: At that moment, Hugh returned with Lady Edith – and a dozen armed guards.

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MILES: Edith, my darling!

HUGH: Lady Edith, do you know this man?

NARRATOR 1: Lady Edith looked at Miles with sadness in her eyes.

EDITH: I do not know him!

HUGH: Stranger, it seems you've been lying. My wife does not know you.

MILES: Your wife! Now I understand! After Father and Arthur died, you wrote the letter claiming I was dead, to steal Edith – and Hendon Hall – from me!

NARRATOR 2: Miles attacked Hugh, but the guards overpowered him.

HUGH: Throw him and his worthless boy into the dungeon.

SCENE 9

NARRATOR 1: To torture Miles, Hugh sent to his cell everyone in town who once knew him. Each said that Miles was an imposter. One night, Edith visited him – with a warning.

EDITH: Stranger, I know you believe you are Miles Hendon. But my husband is master of this town. If he says you are a mad imposter, then you are.

MILES: So you believe me, Edith?

EDITH: I don't know you. But even if you were Miles Hendon, you would be a threat to all that Hugh has – and you would be in the same peril you are in now.

NARRATOR 2: One afternoon, the prison officers brought in Blake Andrews, an old man who was once Miles' servant.

OFFICER: Do you recognize anyone in this cell, old man?

BLAKE: No, all I see are street scum. Which one says he's Miles Hendon?

OFFICER: This big animal here.

BLAKE: This is not Miles Hendon!

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OFFICER: Of course not! Why don't you give him a piece of your mind? All the others do.

NARRATOR 1: Blake approached Hendon and, between insults, whispered to him what he was really thinking.

BLAKE: You're the scum of the earth! – Sir Miles, say the word and I'll shout in the streets that you have returned –

MILES: Don't put yourself in danger.

BLAKE: You should be hanged! – I wish you were out of this cell. Hugh tortures Lady Edith and all the servants –

PRINCE: Old man, it has been long since we've heard news from London. Has the new king been crowned yet?

BLAKE: You worthless beggar boy! You don't even deserve death! – King Edward will be crowned day after tomorrow. But there is a rumor going around that Edward is mad –

PRINCE: Mad!?

BLAKE: Yes, but we hear he gets better every day, and that he is wise and humane. His first acts were to spare the Duke of Norfolk and to destroy his father's cruelest laws and punishments.

PRINCE: How has that beggar boy fooled all the men of the castle? And learned to rule so wisely?

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly, the prison officers grabbed Miles and the prince.

OFFICER: Looks like you two are going to see daylight! Sir Hugh wants to put this imposter in the stocks so everyone can take a look at a liar.

NARRATOR 1: Miles was led to the town square and his arms and legs locked into the wooden frame of the stocks. The handcuffed prince looked on helplessly.

PRINCE: Sir Miles is a servant of the king of England! I demand you set him free!

HUGH: Officer, give the little fool a whipping to teach him to watch his tongue.

MILES: No! Let the boy go! I'll take his whipping.

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HUGH: Very Well.

NARRATOR 2: As the officers whipped Miles, the crowd grew quiet, respecting a man who would take a whipping to spare an insane boy. Hugh, realizing the people were starting to turn against him, ordered the whipping stopped.

HUGH: Stranger, you are free to leave this town. I shall return your sword and horse, but if I ever see you near Hendon Hall again, I'll have you hung!

PRINCE: Sir Miles, you have saved your king from public shame. Edward of England promotes you to earl.

NARRATOR 2: Miles was touched and began to believe that the boy actually was the king.

MILES: Your majesty, I await your command. Where shall we ride?

PRINCE: To London! To win back my crown!

SCENE 10

NARRATOR 1: As Miles and the prince raced to London, Tom rode in a royal parade. Thousands of people filled the streets to look at the new king.

TOM: All these people have come to see *me*?!

HERTFORD: You *are* their king, and you are performing marvelously well today. You have returned to full health just in time.

NARRATOR 2: Suddenly, a ragged woman ran up to the royal carriage.

MRS. CANTY: Tom! I know it's you! That wasn't you at our house that night. My son!

TOM: I – I do not know you, woman.

HERTFORD: Officers, have this woman taken away! She offends the King.

NARRATOR 1: Mrs. Canty was pushed back into the crowd, and Tom stopped smiling. He was suddenly very homesick.

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HERTFORD: My lord, don't let that crazy pauper woman disturb your great day.

TOM: She was my mother!

NARRATOR 2: After a day-long celebration, Tom returned to the castle. There the Archbishop of Canterbury, chief religious official of England, waited to place the crown on the head of King Edward VI.

NARRATOR 1: As the archbishop raised the crown above Tom's head, another boy, dressed in rags, ran in. An older man followed him.

PRINCE: I forbid you to set the crown of England upon that head! I am the true king!

TOM: He is! He is the king!

MILES: I must be dreaming! My little beggar boy is truly the king of England?!

HERTFORD: Nonsense! Your majesty let the guards take these beggars away.

TOM: No! I order you not to touch them!

NARRATOR 2: Hertford suddenly noticed that the two boys were identical. He realized that he had to find a way to prove which one was the true king.

HERTFORD: There is one question that I know only the true Edward VI can answer: Where is the Royal Seal of England?

NARRATOR 1: The prince turned to one of the nobleman.

PRINCE: Lord St. John, I hid the Royal Seal in the helmet of the royal armor that hangs on the wall of my room.

HERTFORD: The beggar knows St. John's name?

TOM: You heard the king's command. Go!

NARRATOR 2: Lord St. John ran off and soon returned with the Royal Seal.

HERTFORD: (*bowing to the prince*): Long live the true king!

TOM: (*also bowing*): Now, my king, please take these clothes back, and give poor Tom, your servant, his shredded rags again.

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HERTFORD: And then, guards, have this boy put to death for impersonating the king!

PRINCE: No! This boy is innocent of wrongdoing, and I won't punish him. I have learned much about our country's laws since I left the castle. All kings should walk as paupers for a few days to see how their laws affect the people – and so learn mercy.

NARRATOR 1: In all the confusion, Miles Hendon sat down next to Edward's throne.

HERTFORD: Stand up, you mannerless clown! You sit in the presence of your king!

PRINCE: Do not disturb him! It is Sir Miles's right to sit. Hertford, send the guards to capture Sir Hugh Hendon and place him in the Tower to await my punishment for theft, fraud, and cruelty. And have his wife, Lady Edith, brought here.

NARRATOR 2: But Sir Miles asked that Hugh Hendon not be punished. Hugh soon left England and died in Europe. After that, Miles finally married Edith.

NARRATOR 1: King Edward knighted Tom Canty and put him in charge of King's Hospital. With his mother and sisters, Tom watched over all the poor and sick street children of London. John Canty was never seen again.

NARRATOR 2: Edward VI died young after a short merciful reign. His advisers often protested his lenient sentences of poor beggars and thieves. They said the guilty did not suffer enough, but the king always answered the same way.

PRINCE: What do you know of suffering? And my people know, but you do not.

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AN AMERICAN CLASSIC

Mark Twain (1835-1910) was born in Missouri with the name Samuel Clemens. By age 12, he'd already quit school and hit the road. After years of newspaper writing, Twain published "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Like that story, his best books were full of outrageous characters that made readers think about how they themselves behaved. His most famous books are *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and its sequel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Both reflect his childhood experiences in Hannibal, Missouri. Twain's last years were sad. Two of his daughters died young, and he lost his sense of humor. His last books expressed his opinion that people were usually selfish.

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