

# MUGGINS

## An entertainment

Cast in order of appearance

Muggins  
Mary  
Friar  
Knight  
Wild Eric  
King  
Queen  
Peasant  
Peasant Girl  
Donkey  
Headless body  
Bear

### Scene 1

(Somewhere in old England. Enter MUGGINS. Talks to audience.)

MUGGINS

I'm fed up! I am! I'm fed up! Fed. Up. *And* I'm sick and tired! I am! Sick and tired and fed up! I've had enough! I. Have. Had. Enough. I'm sick and tired and fed up and I've had enough!

(Pause.)

Do you ever get like that? Do you? All fed up? I do! You feel all limp, don't you? All flat. Like a cake that wouldn't rise. Do you know what I mean? Like a balloon the day after the party, all floppy and wrinkled. Do you know what I mean?

(Pause. Talks to himself.)

Why does everything always go wrong for me? Why do I always end up getting the worst of everything? I don't know.

(To the audience again.)

Have you heard the latest? Have you? You haven't? Well, I don't know where you've been, because everybody else has. They're all talking about it. Oh yes! Everybody. The whole village. All talking and laughing. Oh yes! Great joke! Very funny! Ha ha!

(Pause.)

You see, I'm getting married. To Mary. From our village. Have you seen her? No? You've got a treat in store.

(Pause.)

Which is more than can be said for me.

(Pause.)

I never wanted to marry her. It was just a joke. It was after we'd got the harvest in and everyone was eating and drinking and dancing and having a good time and some of the lads started making fun of her and calling her names, like Scary Mary and that. And, well, I don't like to see anyone made fun of, so I took her side, like, and made them apologise and then I sort of looked after her and, well, I think perhaps I'd had a bit too much to drink, because I don't remember much about it to be honest, but it seems I went down on my knees and proposed to her.

(Pause.)

And she accepted.

(Pause.)

What can I do? I can't break my word, can I? I shall just have to go through with it.

MARY

(Off.)

Muggins!

MUGGINS

That's her.

MARY

Muggins! Where are you?

MUGGINS

Here, sweetest!

(Enter MARY.)

MARY

Muggins, my beloved, there you are! I've been looking everywhere for you.

MUGGINS

You shouldn't have bothered.

MARY

Aren't you going to give me a kiss, then?

MUGGINS

Of course.

(Pause.)

MARY

Well?

MUGGINS

Well what?

MARY

Give me a kiss.

MUGGINS

Oh, you mean now?

MARY

Of course, beloved!

(MUGGINS kisses her.)

Oh, Muggins, I've been so happy since you asked me to marry you.

MUGGINS

Oh, yes? That's nice.

MARY

So happy! So very, very happy! No one has ever asked me to marry them before.

MUGGINS

Really?

MARY

No one has ever danced with me before.

MUGGINS

Really?

MARY

No one has ever kissed me before.

MUGGINS

Really?

MARY

Oh, Muggins! Muggins! I can't tell you how much you mean to me. Oh, Muggins! Muggins! Marry me now! This minute! I love you, Muggins! I love you! I love you!

MUGGINS

Yes, yes, alright, alright! We'll get married now.

MARY

Oh, Muggins!

MUGGINS

Quick! Go and find a priest and we'll be married at once.

MARY

Oh! Oh, I can hardly believe it. Wait here! Don't move! I'll be right back,

(Exit.)

MUGGINS Now what have I done? I'm a fool to myself sometimes.

(Enter FRIAR.)

FRIAR Alms! Alms for the poor! Put down a deposit on the life to come. Easy terms. Alms! Alms for the poor! Get your sins pardoned here. Relics! Relics! Half a groat your relics! Icons! Icons! I cons you out of your money. Only joking! Alms! Alms! Alms for the poor! Who'll buy my relics?

MUGGINS (Aside.)

A holy man.

FRIAR (Aside.)

An idiot.

(To Muggins.)

Blessings upon you, my son. You look, if I may say so, somewhat down in the mouth. I trust it is not the burden of sin which weighs so heavily upon your soul.

MUGGINS No, no! Nothing like that. It's just that - I'm going to get married.

FRIAR I see. I have known many cases where marriage has been the cause of untold misery after the event, but not, as a rule, before.

MUGGINS I made a foolish promise, you see, and now I'm lumbered.

FRIAR It happens to many.

MUGGINS What can I do?

FRIAR You have two choices. Either you can honour your word, keep your promise to the girl, marry her and say farewell to freedom, youth and happiness...

MUGGINS Or?

FRIAR You can run away.

MUGGINS It's a hard decision.

FRIAR Take your time.

MUGGINS I will.

FRIAR Well?

MUGGINS I'll run away.

FRIAR Very wise. Here, take my spare habit.

(Takes it out of his pack and holds it out. MUGGINS hesitates to take it.)

It's alright, I've been trying to give it up.

(MUGGINS takes it.)

Keep your face covered and nobody will trouble you.

MUGGINS (Putting the habit on over his clothes.)

I hope I'm doing the right thing.

FRIAR Have faith, my child, have faith.

MUGGINS I don't know how I can repay you.

FRIAR Alms! Alms for the poor!

MUGGINS Oh, of course.

(Gives him a coin.)

Here, it's all I have.

FRIAR Blessings upon you! And now, on your way - to freedom and a new life!

MUGGINS Farewell! And thank you!

(Walks away, imitating Friar.)

Alms! Alms for the poor! Half a groat your relics!

(Exit.)

FRIAR There's one born every minute.

MARY (Off.)

Muggins! Muggins, my love!

FRIAR Here comes another one.

(Enter MARY.)

MARY Muggins, I've seen the priest and... Oh! Where is he?

FRIAR Are you looking for someone, child? Can I help you?

MARY I'm looking for the man I'm going to marry.

FRIAR In that case, I can't help you. I've taken a vow of celibacy.

MARY I left him here a few minutes ago.

FRIAR Oh, I see. Then perhaps I *can* help you.

MARY Did you see him?

FRIAR I did and, had I known that he was betrothed to you, I would never have helped him to run away.

MARY Run away?

FRIAR Yes. The young knave has cheated us both, you of your love and me of my money.

MARY He took your money?

FRIAR I gave him five groats. It was all I had.

MARY (Gives him a coin.)

Here! Take this.

FRIAR What will you do now, child, now that he has gone?

MARY What else can I do but follow him? He was all I had. Which way did he go?

FRIAR (Points the wrong way.)

That way.

(Exit MARY.)

The world is full of wickedness!

(Drops the coin in his pack.)

Alms! Alms for the poor! Icons! Icons!

(Exit FRIAR one way, enter MUGGINS the other.)

MUGGINS Well, that's that. There's no going back now. Just for once I've managed to get the better of bad fortune.

(Pause.)

The only trouble is, I can't help feeling a bit guilty about the way I've treated Mary. Breaking my word, running away. They'll make fun of her even more now. And all because of me.

(Pause.)

Oh, what's the use? What's done is done. It's no good crying over spilt milk. She'll get over it.

(Pause.)

Won't she?

(Enter KNIGHT.)

KNIGHT Merciful providence! A holy man! Sent to meet me in England's hour of need! It is a miracle! A miracle!

(To Muggins.)

Father!

(MUGGINS does not respond.)

Father!

(Pause.)

Perhaps he's deaf.

(Shouts in his ear.)

Father!

MUGGINS

Alright, alright! There's no need to shout! I'm not deaf and I'm not your fa...

(Looks down at his monk's habit, then up again at the Knight, smiling.)

Yes, my child?

KNIGHT

Father, you must help me. England is in great peril!

(Takes a scroll from under his cloak and holds it up.)

I have here a message for the King, warning him of a plot against his life. This message must be delivered at all costs.

(Looks anxiously over his shoulder.)

Even now I am pursued by one of the conspirators. His name is Wild Eric. He is the Queen's cousin.

(Puts the scroll in Muggins's hand.)

Now, there's no time to waste. You must take this and give it to the King.

MUGGINS

Well, I'm a bit busy actually.

KNIGHT

What?

MUGGINS

I'm a bit busy. Things to do. You know.

(Pause.)

For the King, did you say?

KNIGHT

If the message is not delivered, England will be doomed.

MUGGINS

Oh, go on then!

(Takes the scroll.)

I'm a fool to myself.

(Enter WILD ERIC.)

WILD ERIC

Turn, Englishman!

(KNIGHT turns to face WILD ERIC. MUGGINS hides.)

KNIGHT

Wild Eric!

WILD ERIC

Aye! 'Tis I! Wild Eric! Soon to be King Eric!

KNIGHT

Never!

WILD ERIC

Eric the First!

KNIGHT

And the last!

WILD ERIC

Who says?

KNIGHT

I do!

WILD ERIC

Oh yeah?

KNIGHT

Yeah!

WILD ERIC

Oh yeah?

KNIGHT

Yeah!

WILD ERIC

You and whose army?

KNIGHT

Don't need an army!

WILD ERIC

Oh no?

KNIGHT

No!

WILD ERIC

Come on, then!

KNIGHT            You first!  
(WILD ERIC hits him with his club. KNIGHT staggers.)

WILD ERIC        Give in?  
KNIGHT            No!  
(WILD ERIC hits him with his club again. KNIGHT staggers.)

WILD ERIC        Give in now?  
KNIGHT            Never!  
(Draws his sword and strikes at Wild Eric, who catches the blade in his bare hands, pulls it out of the Knight's grasp and throws it away.)

WILD ERIC        Now do you give in?  
KNIGHT            You're going to have to do better than that.  
(WILD ERIC hits him with his club again.)  
I give in!  
(Drops down dead. WILD ERIC prepares to drag the body away.)

WILD ERIC        (To the audience.)  
Ask me why I'm looking so tired. Eh?  
(Points to KNIGHT.)  
Too many late knights!  
(Exit, laughing loudly at his own joke, dragging the Knight by his feet.)

MUGGINS          (Comes out of hiding, the scroll in his hand.)  
Now what have I let myself in for? I don't like the look of Wild Eric. And if he finds out I've got this message, it'll be me he's after. Oh, why does it always happen to me?  
(To the audience.)  
I don't suppose anyone else would like to take it?

MARY             (Off.)  
Muggins! Muggins, my love!

MUGGINS          Oh no! It's Mary! Now what am I going to do?  
(Pulls hood over his head and kneels as if praying. Enter MARY.)

MARY             Oh, Muggins! Muggins! Where are you, Muggins? Oh, why did you run away? Why? Do you have some terrible guilty secret? Something you don't dare tell me? Don't you know I'll forgive you anything?  
(Notices what she thinks is a monk, praying on his knees.)  
Oh, sorry!  
(Tiptoes away from him.)  
Oh, where can he be? Won't somebody help me find him? Everybody just laughs at me. Everybody makes fun of me. Except Muggins. He never made fun of me. He was the only one, the only one who didn't laugh and jeer. And that's why I love him. And that's why I'm going to search the length and breadth of England till I find him. Muggins! Muggins!  
(Exit. MUGGINS stands and uncovers his head.)

MUGGINS          Oh dear! What am I going to do? If it isn't her after me, it's Wild Eric. If it isn't Wild Eric, it's her. Oh, what have I let myself in for?  
(Holds up scroll.)  
Anyway, the first thing is to deliver this. But before I get roped in for any more good deeds, I'm going to get out of this disguise. It's caused more problems than it's solved. I'll be glad when it's all over.