

From the playwright of *The Real Sherlock Holmes*, *Agatha Crispie*,
Cassocked Savage and *Shakespeare in Saigon*

The CORGI QUEEN

THE AMAZING LIFE OF ELIZABETH II



A PLAY BY CENARTH FOX

The Corgi Queen

The amazing life of Queen Elizabeth II

A play by Cenarth Fox

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Queen Elizabeth II is the longest-serving British monarch.

Synopsis

Many fictional members of the Royal Household remember the life of Queen Elizabeth II. The script is based on actual events although the dialogue is invented.

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The Corgi Queen – 2

Introduction

Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in June 1953. Her father, the Duke of York, became King when his brother Edward VIII, abdicated in order to marry Mrs Wallis Simpson. The abdication saw Edward's younger brother, Albert, known as Bertie, ascend to the throne as King George VI. This meant his first child, Princess Elizabeth, became heir to the throne.

Elizabeth's father became seriously ill towards the end of his life and his daughter took on some of the duties her father would normally have performed. When King George VI died, Princess Elizabeth was in Africa with her husband, Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. The couple returned to London to attend the King's funeral and afterwards, the Princess, now Queen, would be crowned Elizabeth II.

As a child, Elizabeth had difficulty in pronouncing her name saying Lilibet. Her family adopted Lilibet as a nickname. This fact was given worldwide prominence when one of the Queen's grandsons, Harry, and his wife Meghan Markle, named their daughter Lilibet.

Notes on the Script

There are ten roles which can be performed by three actors. The play covers about 100 years. You could have more than three actors although the play works well with only three, and for two of the three, playing later versions of the same character can be a challenge and fun.

There are times when audio or audio-visual events are used. If copyright does not allow such presentations, the alternative suggestion is to create the voice-overs yourself.

Publisher's Note

This is the second time Cenarth Fox has written about Queen Elizabeth II. In the second of Fox's three novels set in World War Two, *A Plum Jam*, a pantomime is staged at Windsor Castle by strolling players. The Royal Family attend and a member becomes involved in a serious incident involving the IRA.

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The Corgi Queen - 3

Actors

There are three, two females and one male

Cook – an older middle-aged woman working in the kitchen of the Royal Household where Elizabeth and her family live.

Maid/Lady-in-Waiting/Nanny/Cleaner – a younger middle-aged woman serving the Queen's parents and then the Queen herself.

Butler/Gardener/Equerry/Secretary/Foot Guard – a younger middle-aged male serving the Queen's parents and then the Queen herself

The personality of each character is created by the dialogue. Each individual is different although the cook goes through the entire play (about 100 years) Peter Pan like and never changes. She is the rock upon which the story is told. The challenge for the other actors is to change personality as they change character over the years.

Setting

A kitchen, a below stairs room in a royal or wealthy family's household. A table and chairs are often used and so too a fireplace or stove. Exits to stairs leading to upper levels and a door/s to the yard and elsewhere are seen. As costumes will change with the passage of time, simple additions to the set will further establish the time in which the play is then set. There's a small annual calendar to one side which is flipped over at appropriate times. When the play begins it reads **1926**.

Accent, Appearance and Costumes

The period in history will determine the appearance and costumes. With Princess Elizabeth born in 1926, costumes will reflect the period. They will change with the passage of time. It's assumed all characters are British. Whilst accent is important, establishing and maintaining character is what counts.

The Corgi Queen – 4

Scene 1

(Before the play begins appropriate music of the 1920s is heard. Curtain rises on the kitchen of 17 Bruton Street, Mayfair in 1926. A small date sign sits on a bench-top to one side. It reads 1926. It's 0200 hours and all are tired, clothing a bit wayward. Basic dim lighting. COOK is busy kneading dough in a bowl. BUTLER is seated at the table with a cup of tea. MAID enters in a flap and pours herself a cup of tea)

COOK Any news?
MAID The doctor said it was coming an hour ago. What would they know? There's even talk of a C-section.
BUTLER I could 'ave been a doctor. *(He is ignored – constantly)*
MAID The midwife seems to know more than the doctor.
COOK It's always tricky with the first and I should know. My Mum had six and my sister nine.
MAID Y'not thinking of starting y'self, are you Cook?
(COOK glares at MAID who sits and sips)
BUTLER Why aren't we at the Palace. Surely a Royal baby gets born at Buck House.
COOK The Duchess wanted to give birth in her parent's Mayfair home.
BUTLER I don't know me way round this place.
MAID What time is it?
BUTLER *(Checks his watch)* Two am, just after.
(No sooner has MAID settled then a bell rings)
FX *Bell rings*
(It's one of several on the wall which identifies a room)
MAID *(Leaves tea, hops up and departs in flap)* Oh blimey, that'll be the baby.
BUTLER It's a boy. I can feel it in me water.
COOK You keep y'water to y'self.
BUTLER Call it male intuition.
COOK Do men have intuition?
BUTLER *(Didn't hear)* Sorry?
COOK I knew a woman who read tea leaves, told fortunes. She could tell important things like the difference between day and night, hot or cold, boy or girl. *(Pause)* All you need's a tent and a crystal ball.
(BUTLER misses the sarcasm, he misses everything)
BUTLER It's better if the first child is male. No boy wants to grow up having an older sister. *(Finger taps his nose)* I speak through experience.
COOK *(Turns her back)* You speak through y'smelly freckle. *(He doesn't hear)*
BUTLER The man's the head of the house. He's the chief and being the oldest reinforces his leadership. Now we have a King and when he dies, his son, the Prince of Wales will take over. Kings make great leaders.
COOK *(Moving to stove to check pot)* I thought Queen Victoria did all right.
BUTLER I grant you there is the odd exception. Queen Victoria for example. She did all right.
COOK And Elizabeth the First hung around for a while.
BUTLER *(Shocked)* Did they hang her? I didn't know that.
COOK *(Shakes her head)* Have you collected the Duke's ironing?

The Corgi Queen – 5

BUTLER Yep. *(Thinks then panics)* Oh hell.
(Puts down cup and flees. He goes out a side door and not upstairs. It's the wrong way so he rushes in and out another exit. As he leaves the second time, MAID bursts in panting)

MAID It's happening. She's having a C section. I need more towels.
(COOK nods in the right direction and MAID exits)

BUTLER *(Arrives, panic over)* I forgot. I collected it this morning. *(Sits, sips)*

MAID *(Bursts in with towels, doesn't stop)* Here we go. *(She exits upstairs)*

BUTLER What's happening?

COOK Apparently the Duchess is having a Caesar.

BUTLER *(Distressed)* A seizure! My God, that's serious. Should we call a doctor?

COOK Not a seizure, a *Caesar*, and there's probably two doctors there already – the GP and the obstetrician; and the midwife and a nurse, oh and the Home Secretary.

BUTLER *(Astonished)* The Home Secretary? What's he doing there?

COOK It's a tradition, something to do with the government being sure the royal baby is not an imposter.

BUTLER You're making this up.

COOK No, back in 16 something or other, rumour got around a royal baby died and another baby, an imposter, was smuggled into the Queen's bedchamber inside a warming pan.

BUTLER You *are* making this up.

COOK So a tradition began and ever since the government sends along a representative to make sure there ain't no baby switch.

BUTLER *(Pause. Thinks about that)* You've been on the gin again.

COOK I will be once we get the good news. *(Still preparing dough for the morning's bread)* Have you checked on the Duke?

BUTLER What do you mean?

COOK Is he standing by?

BUTLER Of course he's standing by. He's about to become a first-time daddy.

COOK Aristocratic fathers are known to be shy. *(BUTLER unsure)* Well go on. See if he's ready to enter the royal bedchamber.
(BUTLER moves thinking COOK is teasing him. Just as he decides he'd better go, he reaches the exit to the stairs but steps back as the MAID bursts in excited)

MAID She's here and mother and baby are both well.

COOK *(Excited, collecting bottle of sherry)* Wonderful. *(Pouring three glasses)* Right then, let's be wetting the baby's head.

BUTLER Brilliant. What's his name?

MAID Elizabeth.

BUTLER *(Confused)* Elizabeth? A boy called Elizabeth? *(Penny drops)* Oh, it's a girl.

MAID Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor.

COOK *(Toasting)* To Princess Elizabeth.

OTHERS *(Toasting)* Princess Elizabeth. *(All drink)*

The Corgi Queen – 6

- BUTLER** (*Admiring the tippie*) This is unusual. It has the aroma of Tuscany and the after taste of Burgundy. What is it?
- COOK** Cooking sherry.
- MAID** I'm glad it's a girl.
- BUTLER** Yes, I've always said it's better to have a girl first.
(*COOK shakes her head, puts away glasses and returns to cooking*)
- MAID** Really, why's that?
- BUTLER** Well women today are catching up to men. Now, any woman over 30 can vote. Can you believe that?
- MAID** I heard they can drive cars, fly planes and even make sandwiches.
- COOK** (*Baiting BUTLER*) But what if the Duchess has a second child and it's a boy. How would he feel having a female older than him?
- BUTLER** Not a problem. Men today are better able to adapt to this changing world.
- MAID** (*At BUTLER*) Did you clean the Duke's shoes?
- BUTLER** I did 'em last night. (*Realises he didn't and panics*) Oh Lord, but I've left 'em down here. (*Exits*)
- COOK** He'd forget his head that one. (*WOMEN amused*) So both Duchess and Princess are well?
- MAID** They were when I left. The Duke had a smile from ear to ear. I've never seen him look so happy.
- COOK** Bless him.
- MAID** Any idea on the title of the little one?
- COOK** I think she'll be Her Royal Highness, the Princess Elizabeth of York.
- MAID** I worry about her future. If the Prince of Wales marries and has children, they'll all be in line before the Duke and his little girl, so this wee lass is never going to be Queen.
- COOK** Who can tell?
- MAID** I suppose there's some European Royal family right now considering the perfect match for our new princess in twenty years time?
- COOK** I don't do matchmaking. My terms of employment cover Beef Wellington to Spotted Dick.
- MAID** With vanilla custard?
- COOK** Not on the Beef Wellington.
- MAID** (*Wanders to food*) That sounds yummy. (*Goes to put a finger in food*)
- COOK** (*Friendly smack*) Get out of it.
- BUTLER** (*Returns*) I've collected the shoes and when I took them upstairs, (*Tries to taste pudding, hand slapped by Cook*) Ow! (*Back to his tea*) I got short shrift from the Duke's new man. Who does that bloke think he is?
- MAID** The Duke?
- BUTLER** Who?
- COOK** He's a proud father of a new princess.
- BUTLER** I'm talking about his new man.
- MAID** I suppose they'll need a nanny now and then a governess. I'd love to be them.
- COOK** Which one?

The Corgi Queen – 7

MAID Both. I could start as the nanny and when the Princess was old enough, I could become Governess and help with her schooling.

BUTLER Which school will she go to?

MAID She won't.

COOK Course she will.

MAID I'll make a bet she'll be taught at home. A teacher will come to her new home, wherever that is, and give her lessons in the morning.

BUTLER So where's the family going to live? They can't stay here.

MAID I heard they're moving to the house where the Duke and Duchess spent their wedding night; somewhere in Piccadilly.

COOK *(Packing up)* Well I'll be away to m'bed. You lot can please y'selves. *(Lights slowly dim as all three prepare to leave the kitchen)*

BUTLER Somewhere nice and small I hope. Why can't the royals reside in smaller houses?

COOK *(At door)* You want the Kings and Queens of England to settle in a bungalow.

BUTLER Not that small.

COOK And you, get the light. *(She and MAID exit)*
(Music begins softly. BUTLER goes to side of room where a calendar showing a year is seen. He flips the calendar once to the next date which now reads 1930. Light shines on the date with all other lights fading to black. Music swells. It's a short scene change. Females might change aprons, head scarf, cap, etc.)

Scene 2

(Music fades and lights come up. It's another kitchen but the same setting. MAID enters carrying feather duster, cleaning rag, plonks them on kitchen table and sits, exhausted)

COOK *(Enters and reprimands)* Oi, not on my table, Missie. *(MAID removes cleaning equipment placing it elsewhere. COOK prepares evening meal)*

MAID I feel like I've just carried a horse up a ladder. *(Ignored by COOK)* Twenty-five! Did you know there are 25 bedrooms in this house? I am absolutely bugg ... ered. *(Interruption comes after the first syllable)*

COOK Language.

MAID Bugging for a cup of Rosy.

COOK What did y'last slave die of?

MAID *(Pouring herself a cup of tea)* It's all right for you. You cook for the Duke, the Duchess and Princess Elizabeth.

COOK Hey, not forgetting you and the rest of the staff, upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber.

MAID But I have to dust dozens of rooms, three flights of stairs, two sitting-rooms, the sunroom, the ballroom and the lift.

COOK Well I'm about to have an extra mouth to feed.

MAID That's more rooms than ... What did you say?

COOK The royal population is on the rise.

MAID Really? The Duchess is pregnant?

The Corgi Queen – 8

COOK We don't use that word.

MAID What's wrong with Duchess? (*COOK glares at MAID*) And how do you know?

COOK The grapevine.

MAID (*Confused*) You were told by a plant?

COOK The lady-in-waiting told the governess who told the nanny who told the housekeeper who told the head nurse who told the under nurse who told the groundkeeper's daughter who's walking out with the second footman who I overheard rabbiting to the milkman when I went to collect eggs for the family's breakfast.

MAID (*Understands*) Oh. Well that'll be nice for the little Princess, having a baby brother or sister.

COOK Very nice indeed.

MAID So will we be going back to Bruton Street in Mayfair for the birth?

COOK No, the parents of the Duchess have two homes and this time she'll give birth in their other house, and we won't be required.

MAID (*Upset*) Not required?

COOK None of us.

MAID But we worked so well for Princess Elizabeth. We know what to do; fetch towels and boil water. I'm good at staying up late and I'm *very* good at running up and down stairs.

COOK Their other house is in Scotland.

MAID (*Flattened*) Oh.

BUTLER (*Enters grinning perhaps wearing different waistcoat*) Good afternoon, ladies. Please be seated and prepare for a shock, because have I got news for you? (*They ignore him*) It's not often we male members of staff are the first to get the gossip, the royal secrets, so I'm hoping you'll now show a little more respect to yours truly, your very own clever colleague. (*He pauses expecting their enthusiastic interest. They show none*) Don't you want to hear my spectacular news?

COOK About the Duchess expecting?

BUTLER (*Shattered*) Oh bugg ... er.

OTHERS Language.

BUTLER That's not fair.

MAID And we're not required.

BUTLER (*Upset*) What!?! Not required? But we worked so well for Princess Elizabeth. We know what to do; boil shoes, fetch fathers. I'm good at staying up late and I'm *very* good at running up and down stairs.

COOK The Duchess is giving birth in her parents other house.

BUTLER So? Mayfair, Belgravia; what's the difference?

MAID It's in Scotland.

BUTLER Right. (*Thinking*) Perhaps I could get a lift with the Home Secretary.

COOK I don't think any of us will want to go to Scotland.

BUTLER I would. I'd love a holiday.

MAID Me too.

The Corgi Queen – 9

- COOK** The Duke's man told the housekeeper who told the lady-in-waiting who told the footman's mother who told the grocer who told me, the next royal baby will be born in Glamis (*pronounced Glahms*) Castle. It's as old as Methuselah and wait for it, (*She pauses*) it's haunted. (*MAID and BUTLER laugh, scoff but freeze when FX explodes*)
- FX** (*Sudden spooky music, thunder clap, lightning flash, and lights are instantly dim. MAID and BUTLER frightened. A follow spot – could it be below COOK - or does she hold a small torch beneath her chin? - highlights COOK'S face as she tells the eerie tale. Music continues softly*)
- COOK** (*Telling a tall tale*) It was in this castle that Macbeth did commit bloody murder, and we know tis true because Master Shakespeare writ it. And legend declares the 6th Lord Glamis was poisoned by his wife, and to prove it true, King James the Fifth of Scotland called in the staff to make them talk. He tortured the cook, the maid and the butler. (*The OTHERS are hooked and nervous*)
And that foul poisoner of a wife was thrown in the Edinburgh dungeons before being taken outside and burnt at the stake with her young son forced to watch. (*More disquiet from the others. MUSIC starts crescendo*)
There are ghosts galore in Glamis Castle. When a maid discovered a family secret, before she could tell it, they cut out her tongue.
- MAID** (*Short scream*)
- COOK** Her ghost still haunts the castle today. And then there was the butler. The Lord and his guests stripped him naked then chased him round the castle before the dogs attacked and tore him to shreds.
- BUTLER** (*Short scream*)
- COOK** His ghost still haunts the castle today.
- FX** *Music and lighting make dramatic and sudden change. Stop music dead, return to normal lighting. COOK relaxed goes about her work. MAID and BUTLER are terrified*)
- COOK** (*Normal, back to work*) So then, who fancies a trip to bonny Scotland?
- MAID** (*Rising*) I'm too busy dusting the ballroom. (*Exits*)
- BUTLER** (*Rising*) And I've got shoes to press and shirts to polish. (*Exits*)
- FX** *Soft scene-change music is heard*
(*COOK takes glass of sherry to table collecting newspaper en route. She sits, sips and reads aloud*)
- COOK** To their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York, a second child, a daughter, Princess Margaret Rose Windsor, a sister to Princess Elizabeth. (*Turns page, reads more*) What's this? The christening of the new royal princess was delayed because, at the time, the parish register listed only twelve babies. They waited for another christening to avoid the royal baby becoming number 13. (*Lights fade, COOK smiles, heads to year calendar with lights concentrating on date*)
Fancy that, hey; the royals being superstitious.

The Corgi Queen – 10

(She flicks the card over which now reads 1935. Apart from a small spot on date, other lights fade. Scene-change music swells. Light on calendar fades. BLACKOUT)

Scene 3

Scene-change music fades and lights come up. It's 1935 and we are still at 145 Piccadilly. NANNY, played by MAID, rushes in distraught.

NANNY Cook, are you here? Cook! Where are you?
(COOK is absent so NANNY turns and exits. Just as she does, COOK enters from other entrance and calls)

COOK Hello?
(NANNY returns still puffing)

NANNY Oh, Cook, you will never believe what I've just heard.

COOK Try me.

NANNY You know how you told me to keep a lookout for anything to do with ... *(She looks around then whispers)* ... Mrs Simpson.

COOK *(Mock shock, indignation)* I did no such thing. *(Instant change of character, hungry for gossip)* What have you heard?

NANNY The Duchess was fuming.

COOK About what?

NANNY About what she heard Mrs Simpson had said.

COOK And?

NANNY She said it was the last straw.

COOK *(Frustrated)* Mrs Simpson said it was the last straw?

NANNY No, that's what the Duchess said.

COOK But what made the Duchess say that?

NANNY Because of what Mrs Simpson said.

COOK *(Likely to explode)* Which was what, exactly?

NANNY *(Realises she's left out the key information)* Oh, ah, Mrs Simpson was overheard to say, "I've stopped wearing black stockings since I gave up dancing the Can-Can."

COOK *(Explodes)* What?

NANNY *(Thinks COOK didn't understand)* She said, "I never wear black ..."

COOK I know *what* she said. What I don't know is how that woman could even be spoken about let alone invited to events attended by members of the Royal family.

NANNY I think only one member does the inviting; the Prince of Wales.

COOK Exactly and he is the heir apparent or presumptive. *(Confused)* I can never remember the difference between heir apparent and heir presumptive. Can you?

NANNY *(Has no idea)* Sorry, I can't remember what I had for breakfast.

COOK So who told about this?

NANNY I think the Duchess's maid told the nursemaid who told the chambermaid who told the housekeeper who told the yeoman's sister-in-law who told me.

COOK This is getting way out of hand. If the Prince continues his friendship with that divorcee, the monarchy may suffer irreparable harm.

NANNY Some say it has already.

BUTLER (*Enters*) Good morning ladies. I trust I find you both well.

COOK You do not.

BUTLER It's rare we have the pleasure of your company, Nanny.

NANNY The Duchess is upset.

COOK Most upset.

BUTLER I know. I witnessed her distress with my very own eyes.
(*FEMALES shocked*)

COOK You know?

NANNY You saw her reaction to the comment on the Can-Can?

BUTLER I did indeed. (*Has no idea*) To the what?

NANNY The black stockings and the Can-Can.

BUTLER (*Pleased*) Oooh, I like the sound of that. Who's performing?

COOK What are you babbling about?

BUTLER I saw the royal response to the news that Jane disgraced herself in the vestibule.

NANNY (*Disappointed*) Not Jane?

COOK Who's Jane?

BUTLER (*Shocked*) Who's Jane?

NANNY (*Tells COOK*) Princess Elizabeth's favourite corgi.
(*COOK annoyed they're missing the point*)

COOK Oh for pity's sake. (*Orders him*) Sit down, both of you, this is serious.
(*OTHERS sit*) We must save the monarchy.

BUTLER From what?

COOK What is right. *She's* a thing.

NANNY She's stopped wearing black stockings.

BUTLER (*Disappointed*) Pity, I rather fancy black stockings. (*FEMALES stare/glare at him*) Not to wear, just to admire. (*They keep staring*)
Who's stopped wearing black stockings?

COOK That Jezebel from America.

BUTLER You mean ...

FEMALES Yes, Mrs Simpson.

COOK The rumours are beyond belief. The Prince takes her everywhere.

NANNY While she's still married to Mr Simpson.

BUTLER Who just happens to be her *second* husband.

COOK That's not the worst scandal. I heard the Prince is giving her money and, wait for it, some of Queen Alexandra's jewellery which she left for our future queen.

NANNY Mrs Simpson'll never be Queen.

COOK Never, ever but if they do marry, we can kiss goodbye to the Monarchy.

BUTLER Unless the Prince abdicates.

NANNY He has to become King first.

COOK We need a plan to save the Royal Family.

BUTLER We? What can *we* do?

NANNY Nothing.

The Corgi Queen – 12

BUTLER We're domestics, common-or-garden below-stairs staff. If the King can't bring his son into line, what hope have *we* got?

NANNY I agree. We're nobodies.

FX *Bell on wall rings.*

BUTLER *(Rising)* That's me. *(Exiting)* Let me know when you've got a plan.

COOK It's not my job I'm worried about, it's the good name of the Royal Family. King George the Fifth was offered the hand of princesses from the best European families so why not the Prince? Who would ever believe an American woman, a divorcee, would marry into the House of Windsor.

NANNY It could never happen.

COOK It's unbelievable although I must admit, the gossip's confusing.

NANNY Oh?

COOK I've heard the Prince is more keen on her than she is on him.

NANNY But what's he see in her? He could have his pick of any number of beautiful young English roses, and instead he picks a middle-aged matron who's been around the block.

COOK Twice.

NANNY I'd better go. *(Rises)* But I'm interested in your plan.
Scene-change music begins. Lights start to fade.

COOK Fix that calender for me, will you please.
NANNY heads to Calender and flips it. It reads 1936. Apart from a small spot on date, other lights fade. Scene-change music swells. Light on calender fades. COOK and NANNY exit. BLACKOUT)

Scene 4

(MUSIC fades and lights come up in same kitchen at 145 Piccadilly. It's mid-January, 1936. GARDENER enters. He is BUTLER now wearing outdoor clothes and cap. He tosses cap on table and is tired. COOK enters)

COOK *(Enters and reprimands)* Oi, not on my table, Mister.
(GARDENER removes cap. COOK prepares evening meal)

GARD'ER I feel like I've just carried a horse up a ladder. *(Ignored by COOK)* It's that treehouse, the one the Welsh gave to Princess Elizabeth. At this wet and cold time of the year, I'm supposed to climb up and check it's safe and secure. But I can't. I'm too big for the steps and the ladder's damn awkward. I'm lucky I didn't break m'neck. I tell you, I am absolutely bugg-ered.
(He says the second syllable but COOK speaks over it)

COOK Language.

GARD'ER Bugging for a cuppa Rosy.

COOK What did y'last slave die of?

GARD'ER *(Pouring himself a cup of tea)* It's all right for you. You cook for the Duke, the Duchess, Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. I've got lawns, paths, flower beds, sheds, hedges, edges, water features and that flamin' treehouse.

COOK And the dogs.

The Corgi Queen – 13

- GARD'ER** (*Exasperated*) Oh yes, don't get me started - and the dogs. If Crufts have a prize for most dog poo of the year, a corgi'd win every time. Princess Elizabeth dotes on them.
- COOK** They call her the Corgi Princess.
- MAID** (*Enters tired*) Why are they on the top floor? (*Sits exhausted*)
- GARD'NER** Sorry?
- MAID** What's wrong with the ground floor or by their bedrooms?
- GARD'NER** (*Unhappy*) Oi, do you mind? It's my turn to complain today.
- MAID** I know they're royal princesses but who has a day *and* a night nursery? What's wrong with only one? It takes me longer to climb there than it does to clean there.
- COOK** Could we show a little more respect for the King, please?
(*OTHERS rebuked*) You do know His Majesty's dying?
- GARD'NER** (*Ashamed*) Sorry.
- MAID** (*Ashamed*) Sorry.
- GARD'NER** What's the latest news?
- COOK** No change.
- MAID** Is it his heart?
- COOK** Lungs. It's the House of Windsor curse – tobacco. His father smoked, he smokes as do his sons.
- MAID** I'm forever emptying ashtrays after the Duke.
- GARD'NER** Where is His Majesty?
- COOK** Sandringham, being attended by the best doctors in the land with no doubt a clergyman on hand.
- GARD'NER** Speaking of clergymen, I saw that bloke from Canterbury here the other day.
- COOK** That bloke from Canterbury? Who on Earth are you talking about?
- GARD'NER** The archbishop.
- MAID** I sometimes pass him on the stairs.
- COOK** You do know "that bloke" lives in Lambeth Palace here in London?
- GARD'NER** So why isn't he the Archbishop of Lambeth?
- MAID** And that means, ladies and gentlemen, I won the bet. (*OTHERS look at her*) I told you Princess Elizabeth would not go to school and instead be educated at home, and the Archbishop's the proof. He teaches her religion, a master from Eton teaches her constitutional law, and others teach her German, French and music. Queen Mary and the Duchess teach her royal etiquette, and then she has dance and deportment classes, all here at home. In the afternoon she goes horse-riding and after that she ... (*They've said the line many times before*)
- TUTTI** ... plays with the corgis.
- MAID** So I won the bet.
- GARD'NER** Speaking of bets, you haven't seen that butler have you? He owes me five bob.
- FX** *Several bells ring simultaneously. This is rare and serious. All three look at the board, before all take off exiting via different doors.*

The Corgi Queen – 14

(Lighting fades leaving set in dim light. Solemn music begins. Suggest Trauermusik (Mourning Music) by Paul Hindemith. This continues for 15-20 seconds then slowly fades. Lights come up and trio enters slowly. Each wears a black coat and hat. They are back from the funeral of King George V, grandfather of Princess Elizabeth. They are sombre and speak softly without rushing. COOK removes her hat and coat and adds an apron.

Scene 5

COOK I thought Queen Mary was ever so dignified.
MAID She was, she really was.
COOK And all those sons walking behind their father's coffin, all that way.
MAID It was quite windy. I nearly lost m'at.
GARD'NER It was, it really was. *(FEMALES look at him thinking he's making fun. He's not)* And I couldn't get over the crowds.
MAID Someone said there were 5000 in St Paul's with many turned away.
GARD'NER And to think the funeral came along Piccadilly. The little princesses could have watched from their nursery.
COOK Princess Elizabeth didn't, she went to her grandfather's funeral.
OTHERS *(Surprised)* What?
COOK She was there in her little black coat and rode in the carriage with her mother and the Queen.
GARD'NER Bit young isn't she? Not even ten.
MAID She's a lovely young lady and it's a pity she'll never be Queen.
COOK Who wants tea? *(Two hands are raised and COOK prepares a brew)*
MAID So when will the Prince of Wales become King?
GARD'NER I think he is already.
COOK That's right.
MAID But he hasn't been crowned.
GARD'NER That doesn't matter. Once his father died, the Prince automatically became King. The coronation is the official bit when all the dignitaries come together.
MAID You mean the Archbishop of Lambeth?
GARD'NER *(Appreciates the joke)* Ha, ha, ha. Yep, he's one of them dignatries. *(COOK passes out tea and joins them)*
COOK Now we lot need to get serious. *(OTHERS look at her)* Our little family, the Duke and Duchess and their two little girls, might be on the move. The House of Windsor could be getting a new succession plan.
MAID What? Where are they moving to?
COOK That depends on a marriage and a baby.
MAID What marriage? What baby?
GARD'NER Ah, you mean the former Prince of Wales.
MAID The new King Edward; what is he the 7th?
GARD'NER His grandfather was the 7th. This one is the 8th.
MAID So his first-born will succeed him as the new King or Queen.
COOK And precisely how many children has our new King sired?
MAID None, and he isn't married.

The Corgi Queen – 15

GARD'NER That didn't stop some of his ancestors. Henry the First had at least 20 children with nearly all being bastards.

FEMALES Language.

GARD'NER And Henry the Eighth had six wives and twelve mistresses so our new King's got a fair bit of catching up to do.

COOK Forget that nonsense. If the King has nil issue and dies, who succeeds him?

MAID His wife?

COOK No. Even if he had one, she will never become the monarch.

GARD'NER So who will?

COOK Our beloved Duke of York will succeed his big brother and become King George the Sixth, Albert the First, or, King Bertie as his family would love to call him.

GARD'NER King Bertie?

MAID *(Excited)* And if that happens, our Princess Elizabeth will be next in line.

COOK Exactly.

GARD'NER *(Twigs)* Oh I get it. So if the new King fathers even one legitimate child, the Yorks will remain where they are; here, in the shadows, and become the hangers-on royals.

(Pause. COOK knows that is true. GARDENER thinks he understands)

Ooohhh, you don't want the new King to marry. You want the Duke of York to succeed him so you can become the King's Cook.

COOK *(Annoyed she's been sprung)* Nonsense. How dare you!

MAID But what if he *does* marry this Mrs Simpson woman?

GARD'NER Then step forward, Prince Albert.

COOK *(Scoffs)* That marriage'll never happen. His mother, the Prime Minister, the parliament, and the British people won't stand for it. *(She gives them the eye)* We won't stand for it.

GARD'NER You will. You *want* him to marry Mrs Simpson because that'll end his reign and be your best way to the Buck House kitchen.

(COOK looks ready to attack him but stops as music begins)

FX *National Anthem is heard*

COOK Wait! She moves to radio.

Lights dim but concentrate on the front of the radio. COOK adjusts the dial. A light comes on inside the radio. All three face upstage. The set is dark. The anthem fades and the speech begins)

FX *Recording of King's abdication speech plays.*

Face of King appears on mini screen on front of radio or the footage of the speech could appear on a separate screen or even the cyclorama.

At long last I am able to say a few words of my own. I have never wanted to withhold anything, but until now it has not been constitutionally possible for me to speak.

A few hours ago I discharged my last duty as King and Emperor, and now that I have been succeeded by my brother, the Duke of York, my first words must be to declare my allegiance to him. This I do with all my heart.

The Corgi Queen – 16

You all know the reasons which have impelled me to renounce the throne. But I want you to understand that in making up my mind I did not forget the country or the empire, which, as Prince of Wales, and lately as King, I have for 25 years tried to serve.

This decision has been made less difficult to me by the sure knowledge that my brother, with his long training in the public affairs of this country and with his fine qualities, will be able to take my place forthwith without interruption or injury to the life and progress of the empire. And he has one matchless blessing, enjoyed by so many of you, and not bestowed on me -- a happy home with his wife and children.

FX *National anthem begins softly building to a crescendo*
All three characters exit discreetly.

I now quit altogether public affairs and I lay down my burden. It may be some time before I return to my native land, but I shall always follow the fortunes of the British race and empire with profound interest, and if at any time in the future I can be found of service to his majesty in a private station, I shall not fail.

And now, we all have a new King. I wish him and you, his people, happiness and prosperity with all my heart.

God bless you all. God save the King!

FX *Music swells to conclusion.*
BLACKOUT. Calendar is changed to 1937

Scene 6

Lights come up in the same but a different kitchen. We're now in Buckingham Palace with the cast serving the new King George VI and his family. COOK enters carrying new cooking utensils of which she is most proud. She could have a new cap and apron to demonstrate her new location, status and duties.

COOK opens cupboard to place new pans in the kitchen. She moves downstage to inspect her new workplace)

COOK This is wonderful. New pots 'n pans, new larder, and new scales and pails. And so many VIPs to cook for. *(Snaps out of it)* Now, my first luncheon for the new King. *(Calling)* I need some help in here.
(Upstage, she starts preparing the meal. A standard routine could be kneading flour as she bakes bread every day)

MAID *(Enters looking exhausted, pulls out chair and collapses)* I want to go back. I *have* to go back. I resign.

COOK It's my dream to work in a kitchen like this.

MAID I used to complain about 25 bedrooms. Not any more. This is a nightmare.

GARD'NER *(As with MAID, staggers in looking worse for wear)* I used to complain about that treehouse for Princess Elizabeth. Not any more. Take me back to dear old Piccadilly.

MAID Exactly. When can we leave?

The Corgi Queen – 17

- COOK** Leave? What is the matter with you two? We are the privileged few, working for their Royal Highnesses, King George and Queen Elizabeth.
- MAID** It's all right for you. You cook for the Monarchs and their two daughters.
- COOK** Oh, not to mention you lot and the hordes of lords and ladies.
- MAID** For which you have undercooks, kitchenhands, dishwashers and goodness knows who else.
- COOK** But you're not alone; you're part of a small army of maids.
- MAID** And boy are they needed. Do you know Buckingham Palace has 745 rooms? For six months, you could sleep in a new bed every night.
- COOK** I'm happy with just the one.
- MAID** Every week there are a thousand dusty windowsills and the birth of 482 spiderwebs.
- GARD'NER** Don't you start. The Palace gardens cover 43 acres. By the time you finish mowing the lawns, it's time to start again. There's even a three-acre lake meaning some mornings I now have to go to work by boat.
- COOK** Will you two stop whinging? Hordes of workers would give their eye teeth to work here at the Palace. And have you forgotten it's the coronation tomorrow? The whole world will be watching and we're in the heart of it. (*OTHERS groan*) We'll be the first to hear all the news.
- MAID** All the gossip.
- COOK** What their Majesties looked like, the crowns they wear, the music, the crowds and the street parades.
- GARD'NER** I heard with all the bands, marching groups, and horses, the parade will stretch to over two miles.
- COOK** Well, you'll have plenty of fertilizer for the royal roses.
- MAID** I heard the King gets a kiss from his brothers.
- OTHERS** What?
- MAID** It's part of the coronation ceremony.
- GARD'NER** My brother wouldn't dare kiss me.
- MAID** He's got good taste your brother.
- COOK** The coronation will be a wonderful experience for the little Princesses, especially Princess Elizabeth. She can see what happens and be ready when her time comes.
- MAID** That won't be for ages. This King will live forever.
- COOK** Longer if he stopped smoking.
- GARD'NER** Did you hear the story about the sailor who chased the Royal Yacht?
- COOK** You talk the most ridiculous nonsense.
- MAID** No, it's true. I heard that as the Royal Yacht sailed away from Dartmouth, a few naval cadets jumped in rowing boats and rowed out to farewell the King.
- GARD'NER** But one cadet rowed on his own
- MAID** I heard he's a Greek Prince and took a shine to Princess Elizabeth.
- FX** *Music starts quietly – marching music for the coronation parade through London to the Abbey.*
- COOK** Well the Princess is only 13 and the Queen will soon put a stop to that sort of nonsense.

The Corgi Queen – 18

GARD'NER Are we letting the Greeks in now?

MAID Why not, surely we've run out of eligible Germans.

COOK That sounds like the King and Queen are leaving the Palace.

MAID I wish we could see the parade. Can we go somewhere to see it?

GARD'NER I know a secret spot in the garden.

MAID *(Excited)* Really?

COOK It's not a treehouse is it?

MAID Can you show me? Please?

GARD'NER *(Hops up)* Sure. This way.

(Lighting shifts. Dim all lights and crossfade to light a small corner of the stage. Have a box or small steps the spectators can climb)

MAID Come on, Cook.

COOK I'm too busy.

MAID This could be the last coronation you ever get to see.

COOK Cheeky monkey. *(Removes apron)* All right, I'm coming, I'm coming. *(MUSIC starts crescendo. Trio mount their mini dias and look out above audience. They are lit with the rest of the stage in darkness. Add FX of crowd noises. GARDENER waves his cap, MAID has mini Union Jack on small stick and COOK has a handkerchief/tea-towel)*

GARD'NER *(Pointing)* There are the King's Guards.

MAID Here come the Scots.

COOK It's the Navy. *(Waving)* God bless you, boys.

GARD'NER *(Excited)* Here's the Coronation Coach. It's their Majesties.

(All three wave and cheer as music and crowd noises swell. As their waving reaches fever pitch – BLACKOUT. The music continues but starts a decrescendo. Actors resume previous positions in kitchen as lights crossfade with music – lights up, music down. As lights return, the three are back where they were discussing the events of Coronation Day. They're exhilarated having seen the Duke and Duchess, "their" Royals, now the King and Queen)

COOK *(Kneading dough)* I've never seen so many people in all my life.

GARD'NER For me, the best part was the Royal Coach with the King and Queen waving to all those people, *their* people.

MAID My favourite moment was the cheer the Royal Family got when they came out on the balcony.

GARD'NER What about you Cook, what was your special moment.

COOK *(Thinking)* Queen Mary, on the balcony, teaching Princess Elizabeth how to give the royal wave.

MAID I didn't see that.

COOK *(Moves to demonstrate. She stands behind a seated MAID who becomes Princess Elizabeth)* Queen Mary was behind the little Princess and waving to the crowd. *(As Queen Mary, waves)* She must have been used to the parade, the church service and the balcony scene by now having seen her husband and two of her sons crowned King. Then she looked down at her granddaughter and saw she wasn't waving. Queen Mary must have said something like, *(Speaks to MAID)* "Come on Lilibet, wave to the people." So the young girl looked up at her grandmother and saw then copied the wave. *(COOK demonstrates and MAID copies)*

The Corgi Queen – 19

For me, the best moment was when the two of them looked at one another waving and smiled. *(The two do just that)* Queen Mary loved what she'd done, and her granddaughter loved pleasing the old lady.
(COOK resumes her former position)

GARD'NER So you think Queen Mary was thinking of the future?

COOK I know she was. The disappointment of her first-born's abdication was swept away as she watched the new monarch, and then the monarch in waiting. Queen Mary could see the future of the monarchy and it was oh so brilliant and bright.

GARD'NER Good-o. *(Rises)* Must away. Time to spread some of those strawberries from the Mall on the royal roses. *(Exits)*

MAID *(Rises)* Me too. I'd love to practice my royal wave, Ma-am, *(She curtsies to COOK)* but bed-making and spiderweb smashing calls. *(Exits)*

COOK *(Stops food prep and sits to write a letter. She reads aloud as she pens)* Dear Elsie, What a day. I felt like a little girl on Christmas morning. I managed to get away and watch the Royal Family from the side of the Palace. They are such a wonderful family. All that horrible abdication business of last year has been forgotten. Now we have a true royal family. They love their people and we love them. Their girls are beautiful young ladies. And to think, I cook their meals every day.

FX *Scene change music begins and lights begin to fade*
I hope you are well. Love to all the family. *(She signs)* Connie.
(She folds the letter and exits as music swells and lights fade)

Scene 7

(Lights come up on empty kitchen. Music fades. EQUERRY enters with folded newspaper. He is angry and slams paper on table)

EQUERRY This is the last straw. The King is absolutely furious. Not only has the Duke abandoned his duty but now he dares to dabble in politics.
(Stops and turns to see he's alone) Hello?

COOK *(Enters whisking contents of bowl pressed against her hip)* Well this is a turn-up. What's the King's equerry doing below stairs.

EQUERRY I had to get away. His Majesty is rarely bad-tempered but now he is ropeable.

COOK Nothing to do with my cooking I hope?

EQUERRY *(Pointing)* Front page of today's paper, the Duke and Duchess of Windsor touring, yes, touring in Germany.

COOK Germany?

EQUERRY Hobnobbing with Goebbels and Göring and then, can you believe it, swanning around the Berchtesgarden with Chancellor Hitler himself.

COOK Nice work if you can get it.

EQUERRY So not content with dragging the monarchy through the mire, and having promised to avoid public appearances, here they are grandstanding in a country preparing for war; against Britain. It's outrageous.

LADY-IN-W *(Enters angry)* Her Majesty is fuming. I've never seen her like this.

The Corgi Queen – 20

COOK Oh, we're honoured indeed; *two* from upstairs downstairs.
LADY-IN-WI had to get away. Everything the Queen said about that dreadful woman has come true.
EQUERRY *(To COOK)* What's the word amongst the staff below stairs?
COOK *(Still working)* Ours is not to reason why.
EQUERRY The King is always interested in what his people are thinking.
COOK *(Still working)* Ours is but to do or die.
LADY-IN-W You may very well die. War is coming.
COOK Really? Are you sure?
EQUERRY I can feel it in my water.
COOK *(Pointing)* Down the corridor, second on the left.
LADY-IN-W *(Heads to calender. Fade lights, concentrate single light on radio and date)* We're running out of time to sign any peace treaty. *(She flips calendar which now reads 1938)* The Prime Minister has the latest news.
FX *(Speech from the PM is played in the darkness. It may have a better effect if one speaker is behind the radio and audio restricted to this one speaker)*
Audio of speech by Neville Chamberlain.
PM This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler, and here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine. Some of you, perhaps, have already heard what it contains but I would just like to read it to you,

"We, the German Fuhrer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

"We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German naval agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

My good friends, This is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time.

We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.

(Original lighting returns. Actors resume previous positions and actions)

COOK Thank goodness for that. Now I can sleep quietly in my bed.

LADY-IN-W Don't bank on it.

EQUERRY *(Heads to calender. Fade lights, concentrate single light on radio and date)* We've run out of time to sign any peace treaty.

(He flips calendar which now reads 1939) The Prime Minister has the latest news.

(Actors exit in darkness)

FX *Audio of speech by Neville Chamberlain.*

The Corgi Queen – 21

I am speaking to you from the cabinet room at 10 Downing Street. This morning the British ambassador in Berlin handed the German government a final note stating that unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.

Scene 8

- FX** *BLACKOUT. Sounds of planes and bombs exploding
Lights flash to mimic explosions.
This continues for 10 to 15 seconds then fades slowly. WW2 has begun and London is being bombed. COOK, MAID and BUTLER enter discreetly all wearing a tin helmet a la air-raid warden. They huddle under the table facing front taking shelter, muttering quietly. Soft lighting comes up – it's night and the Palace is in a blackout – although the calendar is lit. They mutter as they huddle under the table facing front taking shelter)*
- COOK** *(Moving)* Move over.
- MAID** *(Moving)* I can't.
- BUTLER** *(Moving)* This is not a proper shelter.
- MAID** Why is the King and Queen still here in the Palace? They sent their daughters to Windsor but the parents seem determined to stay.
- COOK** Apparently the government wanted the whole family moved to Canada with the Navy all was set to go. The King refused so they tried to persuade the Queen to leave with her daughters.
- MAID** I bet Her Majesty told them where to go.
- COOK** "If the King stays, we stay," she said.
- MAID** Good for her.
- BUTLER** Look, I'm sorry to raise a minor matter but are we now in the Blitz?
- COOK** You mean with all these bombs landing on London, including the Palace, you still don't know?
- BUTLER** I thought as much but if true, then someone needs to bell the cat.
- MAID** *(To COOK)* It's all right, he often speaks in riddles.
- BUTLER** The Blitz happened in 1940. *(He points and they all look at calendar)*
- COOK** That's a butler's job.
(He hesitates then scrambles to calendar and flips date to read 1940)
- FX** *(Lighting comes up with the sunrise and the planes – and their bombs – fade. The actors go back to their normal places with MAID helping COOK who struggles. The females could remove their helmets)*
- BUTLER** The East End will have copped it again last night.
- COOK** They cop it every night.

The Corgi Queen – 22

MAID The Queen will be pleased.

OTHERS Pleased?

MAID The Palace copped it last night too and now the Queen will feel better visiting her poor suffering subjects. She always asks how people whose homes have been bombed are getting on. Do you know what the Queen was heard to say this morning?

BUTLER No, but somehow I know you're going to tell us.

MAID "I am glad we have been bombed. Now we can look the East End in the eye."

COOK It must be a wonderful experience for the people to have their King and Queen walk amongst them like that. In all the rubble and ruin, suddenly the reigning Monarch and his wife appear and speak to people, thanking them for their courage and determination.

BUTLER And it's not just the parents. The Princesses are doing their bit as well.

COOK I didn't know that.

MAID At Windsor, a Nanny told a footman who told a driver who told a groundkeeper who told the housekeeper here at the Palace. The young Royals are going to give a broadcast to the nation today.

COOK *(Surprised)* Today!?

BUTLER The Princesses are in Balmoral.

COOK *(She hurries to radio and it comes alive. If you are having photos as part of the play, the one featuring the two Princesses could be used here)* Why on Earth didn't you say? *(The actors watch the radio)*

FX *We hear the Princess Elizabeth speaking.*
"Thousands of you in this country have had to leave your homes and be separated from your fathers and mothers.
My sister Margaret Rose and I feel so much for you, as we know from experience what it means to be away from those you love most of all. To you living in new surroundings, we send a message of true sympathy and at the same time we would like to thank the kind people who have welcomed you to their homes in the country.
We are trying to do all we can to help our gallant sailors, soldiers and airmen and we are trying too to bear our own share of the danger and sadness of war. We know, every one of us, that in the end all will be well, for God will care for us and give us victory and peace.
And when peace comes, remember, it will be for us, the children of today, to make the world of tomorrow a better and happier place.
My sister is by my side and we are both going to say goodnight to you. Come on, Margaret. *(Both speak)* "Goodnight children".
(Elizabeth) Goodnight, and good luck to you all.

The Corgi Queen – 23

- The actors applaud as one with enthusiasm.*
- BUTLER** That was brilliant.
- MAID** Her parents will be so proud.
- COOK** Mark my words, one day that Princess will make a marvellous Queen.
- BUTLER** I reckon half the kids in America will soon start saying, *(Imitates Princess Elizabeth)* “Come on, Margaret.”
- FX** *Bell rings on wall*
- MAID** That’s me. *(She exits)*
- BUTLER** Cook, there’s something I need to tell you.
- COOK** Congratulations, what’s her name?
- BUTLER** What? No, I’m not getting married, I’m thinking of enlisting.
- COOK** Good for you but who’s going to take care of the King?
- BUTLER** It’s just that my mates have joined up and, I thought maybe I should too.
- MAID** *(Bursts in, panting)* Stop the presses! *(Pauses to catch her breath)* You’ll never guess who’s upstairs meeting the King and Queen.
- BUTLER** Is there a prize?
- MAID** Lord Beaverbrook.
- COOK** Did you say, “Stop the presses”?
- MAID** *(Throwaway)* Sorry. But look, I saw him.
- BUTLER** And?
- MAID** The King’s equerry says Lord Beaverbrook wants to tell Britain about how the Royal Family did their bit for the war effort, and we all have to think of things Princess Elizabeth did during the war.
- BUTLER** But only Princess Elizabeth?
- MAID** He wants the future Queen to be discovered by the nation.
- BUTLER** Well the obvious question is, why ask us?
- MAID** Because we see the Royals every day. We hear the gossip. And little everyday things are what will make the story appeal to the man on the Clapham Omnibus.
- COOK** Well there’s the radio broadcast she did from Windsor.
- MAID** *(MAID sits and makes notes)* Radio ... broadcast.
- BUTLER** *(Moves to calendar and flicks it to read 1942)* And on her sixteenth birthday she became an honorary colonel in the Grenadier Guards.
- MAID** Then she helped the Dig For Victory campaign when she worked on her allotment encouraging people to grow their own vegetables. *(BUTLER moves date which reads 1943)*
- COOK** Didn’t she join the ATS?
- BUTLER** *(Flicks calendar to read 1944)* She did becoming a member of the Women’s Branch of the British Army.
- COOK** Fancy us helping Lord Beaverbrook write a story in the *Daily Express*.

The Corgi Queen – 24

- MAID** I know she won promotion in the ATS.
- BUTLER** The King didn't want her to have easy life and she began as a second subaltern before being promoted to Junior Commander.
- COOK** Don't forget she trained as a motor mechanic.
(BUTLER changes calendar to 1945)
- MAID** That's right. She was even called Princess Auto Mechanic. *(More note taking)*
- BUTLER** She was the first female member of the royal family to serve in the British Armed Forces. *(He stands to attention and salutes)* Ma'am.
- COOK** I've always had a silent chuckle when thinking that if Princess Elizabeth was ever being driven somewhere and the vehicle broke down, she'd hop out and stick her head under the bonnet and fix the problem. *(OTHERS amused)*
- FX** *(Crowd noises begin softly with crescendo)*
- BUTLER** Surely the best story about the Princess was on VE Day when she and Princess Margaret slipped out of the Palace and mingled with the masses.
- MAID** *(Shocked)* She didn't.
- COOK** You're making that up.
- BUTLER** No, it's true. She had to convince her father but the enormity of the occasion saw the King weaken and off went the girls. Elizabeth pulled her army cap down, joined arms with the crowd and celebrated.
- MAID** *(Scribbling)* That is fantastic.
- BUTLER** Princess Elizabeth was even in a conga line heading down The Mall. *(Crowd celebration sounds increase. BUTLER grabs COOK as she leads a conga around the table with MAID joining at the end)*
- BUTLER** *(Pointing)* Look, isn't that Princess Elizabeth?
(Sounds increase as lights fade and trio conga off stage. BLACKOUT)

Scene 9

- (Lights come up with COOK sitting at table reading a newspaper. LADY-IN-WAITING enters. Calendar shows 1947)*
- LADY** *(Helping herself to tea)* I could kill for a cuppa. How are you, Cook? You always look the same. What's your secret?
- COOK** Cooking sherry.
- LADY** So how's life here in the engine-room of the Palace.
- COOK** One word, ration cards.
- LADY** That's two words and we all have to put up with it.
- COOK** If Sherlock Holmes can't make bricks without clay, I sure as Hades can't make Spotted Dick without raisins.
- LADY** *(Referring to paper)* So you've seen the news?

The Corgi Queen – 25

- COOK** Yes and I'm shocked. Usually I get the gossip before it breaks but to suddenly be told Princess Elizabeth is engaged has me a little worried.
- LADY** *(Surprised)* You don't approve?
- COOK** No, I'm thrilled for her but what's happened to my gossip grapevine?
- LADY** *(Amused)* It'll survive.
- COOK** So what do we know about the lucky gentleman?
- LADY** He's the naval officer with Greek and Danish roots.
- COOK** Is it true she wrote to him all through the war?
- LADY** True love they call it, and that's what won over the Queen. Love and persistence usually wins. Did you know the King proposed three times to Her Majesty before she accepted him?
- COOK** Are you saying the Queen doesn't approve of this sailor chap?
- LADY** Well let's just say he wasn't top of her list of suitable consorts. But the Princess has a stubborn streak and, of course, as she and her father are as thick as thieves, I don't think the Queen was ever going to win.
- COOK** What's the new chap like?
- LADY** Charming, tall, blonde and handsome.
- COOK** *(Making a face)* I don't suppose he's got a brother?
- LADY** *(Joins the joke)* Sorry, four sisters. And he and the Princess share a pair of great great grandparents you may have heard about.
- COOK** Not Queen Victoria?
- LADY** And Prince Albert. *(Teases)* So tell me, Cook, what was it like preparing meals for Queen Victoria?
- COOK** *(Ignores ribbing)* That's the thing about the royals; they marry their own class. So what else do we know about the future bridegroom?
- LADY** He's renounced any claims to the Greek or Danish throne and has become a British citizen.
- COOK** So he should.
- LADY** Well he grew up and was educated here and he fought for the Royal Navy in the war; oh, and the King will bestow upon Philip the title of Duke of Edinburgh.
- COOK** So when's the wedding?
- LADY** *(Checking her watch)* Pretty soon I think.
- EQUERRY** *(Bursts in flustered)* Oh my sainted aunt, it's bedlam upstairs. The King's ready to go, the coach is waiting and the bride's in a tizz.
- LADY** *(He's a man, how would he know?)* How do you know any of that?
- EQUERRY** The bridal bouquet went missing. Someone put it in a fridge to keep it fresh and forgot. Then the tiara the Princess chose snapped and madcap repairs were necessary.

The Corgi Queen – 26

- COOK** Goodness.
- EQUERRY** And finally the chosen necklace was on display at St James Place and they had to borrow the King of Norway's car to race over and fetch it.
- COOK** Goodness.
- EQUERRY** (*Looking at watch*) Come on, it's started. Turn on the radio.
- FX** *Music heard at the royal wedding is heard – 23rd Psalm sung by C of E choir It begins softly and builds.*
OTHERS hurry to move chairs to face radio. Over the music, the three actors comment on the service and its aftermath.
- LADY** It's a pity about the weather.
- EQUERRY** What do you mean? This is nice for London in November.
- COOK** What have you heard about the dresses; the Princess and her bridesmaids.
- LADY** Did you know Princess Elizabeth saved her ration coupons to buy material for her wedding dress?
- COOK** (*Shocked*) No!
- LADY** It's another reason why she's known as the princess of the people.
- EQUERRY** Weddings are all about the bride. I bet she'll have a team of attendants.
- LADY** Eight bridesmaids.
- COOK** Eight!
- EQUERRY** And there'll be more kings, queens and emperors on the guest list than you can poke a stick at, Cookie, so make sure your stickydate pudding is up to snuff.
- FX** *Music fades and crossfades with crowd noises*
- COOK** Cheeky.
- LADY** (*Rising*) I want to see the couple on the balcony.
- EQUERRY** I know a back way to get a view. Come on.
(Lights fade as crowd noises take over. EQUERRY leads OTHERS upstage and all exit. They return via another doorway a few seconds later and move downstage. Lights up on their faces only as they look out over audience at the balcony at Buckingham Palace)
- COOK** Would you look at the crowd.
- EQUERRY** (*Pointing*) There they are, the bride and groom.
- LADY** I knew her dress would be beautiful.
- COOK** The people love their Princess. (*Waves a handkerchief, calls*) God bless the Royal Family.
- LADY** The King and Queen look so proud. As does Queen Mary.
(Crowd noises rise as all three actors wave to the Royal family. Lights return to normal, crowd noises fade and actors return upstage around the table)
- COOK** Everyone is talking about it being the best royal wedding ever.

The Corgi Queen – 27

LADY I don't think the Queen ever stopped smiling. And Queen Mary glowed with pride seeing her beautiful granddaughter so radiant.

EQUERRY I heard a funny tale about the start of their honeymoon.

COOK *(Angry)* How dare you! We want none of your smutty remarks in here thank you very much.

FX *Music begins. Suggest romantic tune with strings*

EQUERRY It's not smutty, it's funny, in a nice way.

COOK Listen Mister Equerry, we might be part of the working class downstairs but we have our standards.

EQUERRY You haven't heard the tale yet.

LADY Go on then, tell us.

EQUERRY The newlyweds arrived at the station. The Duke alighted and held out his hand for his new bride and then, wait for it, the Princess alighted holding a lead.

COOK A what?

EQUERRY A lead.

COOK *(Confused)* A lead?
(Lights begin to fade)

EQUERRY Yes, she took a corgi on her honeymoon. *(OTHERS amused)*

COOK *(Relieved it's not smutty)* She certainly loves her dogs.
BLACKOUT. MUSIC swells. Quick change for MAID and BUTLER

Scene 10

FX *Fade music and bring up dim lights. COOK enters and fusses. She's tired. It's late at night. She spots a problem, moves to calendar, flipping it to reveal 1948. COOK returns to cooking as BUTLER enters, dog tired, pours himself a cup of tea. He looks dishevelled.*

COOK Out of the way, Master Butler. Some of us have work to do.

BUTLER *(Yawning)* I've been up since last Christmas.

COOK What do you want; a medal or a chest to pin it on?

BUTLER *(Miffed)* Pardon?

COOK What's happening upstairs?

BUTLER The only news is no news.
(MAID enters equally exhausted and collapses at table)

MAID Someone says it's a birth of the years.

BUTLER The what?

COOK The birth of the years?

MAID It's when the mother's age equals the time of her labour. The Princess is 22 so she'll "enjoy" 22 hours of labour. Thank God for drugs is all I can say.

BUTLER Drugs?

The Corgi Queen – 28

MAID The poor woman's been on a mixture of morpine and scopolomime.
BUTLER Scopalomime? I think the Nazis used that as an interrogation drug.
COOK Says Mister freckle bottom.
MAID I read that Queen Victoria used to swear by chloroform.
COOK Doctors today want the mother to sleep while they and the midwives whip out the forceps and give the little blighter a good old tug.
BUTLER It's not a record.
MAID What?
BUTLER Princess Elizabeth being in labour for more than 20 hours is not a record for a Royal baby. Princess Charlotte suffered for 50 hours, lost the baby, died herself and the doctor committed suicide.
COOK Oh lovely; any more cheery stories?
FX *Bell rings*
(It's one of several on the wall which identifies a room)
MAID *(Leaves tea, hops up and departs in flap)* Oh blimey, that'll be the baby.
BUTLER It's a boy. I can feel it in me water.
COOK You keep y'water to y'self.
BUTLER Call it male intuition.
COOK Do men have intuition?
BUTLER *(Didn't hear)* Sorry?
COOK *(Shakes her head)* Have you collected the Duke's ironing?
BUTLER Yep. *(Thinks then panics)* Oh hell.
(Puts down cup and flees. He goes out a side door and not upstairs. It's the wrong way so he rushes in and out another exit. As he leaves the second time, MAID bursts in panting)
MAID It's happening. She's having a Caesar. I need more towels.
(COOK points and MAID exits)
BUTLER *(Arrives, panic over)* I forgot. I collected it this morning. *(Sits, sips)*
MAID *(Bursts in with towels, doesn't stop)* Here we go. *(She exits upstairs)*
BUTLER What's happening?
COOK Apparently the Princess is having a Ceasar.
BUTLER *(Distressed)* A seizure! My God, that's serious. Should we call a doctor?
COOK *(Annoyed, points at BUTLER)* No, and for the first time in ages, the Home Secretary has *not* been summoned.
BUTLER No more switched babies?
COOK *(Aside)* No but we're hoping for a switched butler.
BUTLER Sorry?
COOK I asked if you are switched on?
BUTLER Never been more ready.
COOK *(Still preparing dough for the morning's bread)* Have you checked on the Duke?
BUTLER What do you mean?

The Corgi Queen – 29

COOK Is he standing by?
BUTLER Of course he'll be standing by. He's about to become a first-time daddy.

COOK Aristocratic fathers are known to be shy. (*BUTLER unsure*) Well go on. See if he's ready to enter the royal bedchamber.
(*BUTLER exits quickly via one exit as MAID enters via another flustered*)

MAID It's like Piccadilly Circus in there. Doctors, midwives, nurses you name it.

COOK Home Secretary?
MAID No, I didn't see any politicians.

BUTLER (*Bursts in in a panic*) I can't find the Duke. He's not upstairs, waiting outside, nowhere; he's disappeared.

COOK Don't be ridiculous.
BUTLER The father of the heir to the heir of the throne has been kidnapped.
COOK Oh don't talk such drivel.
MAID I heard he was playing squash.
BUTLER (*Stunned*) Squash!
COOK Off to court old chap.
(*BUTLER exits in rush as BELL rings and MAID hares off upstairs*)
(*COOK abandons cooking tasks and puts glasses on table, opens cooking cherry and puts small amount in all three*)

BUTLER (*Arrives puffing*) It's true. The Duke was playing squash while the Princess was trying to have a baby.

COOK So what's the score?
BUTLER I think the Duke was leading 12-8 in the final rubber.
COOK Not the squash. The baby score.
MAID (*Bursts in puffing*) It's here and mother and baby are both well.
(*COOK hands out glasses*) It's a boy. Charles Philip Arthur George.

BUTLER I heard the new family name will be Mountbatten.
FEMALES (*As one*) Windsor!
BUTLER Windsor.
(*They raise their glasses and toast*)

TUTTI Prince Charles.
(*MAID and BUTLER lower glasses and prepare to sit*)

COOK Not yet, as you were. (*OTHERS stand curious*) Date please.
(*Pause then head nod from COOK. BUTLER twigs, hurries to calendar changing it to 1950. Hurries back to join others in raising their glass*)
The latest Royal baby; Princess Anne.

TUTTI (*Toast*) Princess Anne of Windsor.
BLACKOUT
MAID and BUTLER exit and change to LADY-IN-WAITING and EQUERRY.

FX *Sad music begins softly; suggest Jerusalem. It continues*
(*COOK preparing food. Lights up slowly with COOK working and thinking aloud. The pace is slower and the mood sombre*)

COOK "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

The Corgi Queen – 30

(She wanders to calender and changes it to 1951) “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”

EQUERRY *(Enters)* It’s a sad day, Cook. The King has cancelled his trip to Australia and New Zealand. We’re all worried about His Majesty’s health.

COOK Is it true he was in danger of losing a leg?

EQUERRY Sadly, yes. The dreaded C word is being whispered in corridors.

COOK At least young Princess Elizabeth is able to stand in for her parents.

EQUERRY And what a brilliant job she does. Every day she prepares for her new role. Her husband provides wonderful support and the monarchy grows ever more popular.

(Wanders to calendar)

Very few people know this, Cook, and please respect His Majesty’s situation.

COOK I don’t want to hear bad news. *(Pause)* Is the King dying?

EQUERRY Doctor Howard Lloyd Owen is to perform major surgery and remove the King’s left lung. You might care to pray for His Majesty.

COOK *(Stops work, distressed)* “Oh my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

(EQUERRY changes calendar to 1952)

EQUERRY Princess Elizabeth and the Duke have gone to Kenya to represent her parents. The King’s doctors advised him not to go to the airport but there he was, on the observation platform, waving to his beloved daughter.

FX *Slow crescendo of music*

COOK I heard the Princess always has black clothes in her suitcase whenever she leaves home.

EQUERRY She does. It’s sad alas but true.

(LADY enters quietly dressed in black with a veil. OTHERS turn to her)

LADY The King is dead.

TUTTI Long live the Queen.

(MUSIC swells, lights fade to BLACKOUT)

End of Act One

The Corgi Queen – 31

Act Two

Scene 1

(Before the second act begins, play appropriate music of the 1950s. Curtain rises on a kitchen on Buckingham Palace, London. A small date sign sits on a bench top to one side. It reads decades now and shows 1950s. It's 1500 hours and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth has just finished. Basic dim lighting. Set is empty. MUSIC fades and CLEANER with duster enters, unsure. She starts dusting. COOK enters and lets rip)

COOK Oi! *(CLEANER gets fright and spins around)* What do you think you're doing?

CLEANER I'm the new cleaner.

COOK That's not what I asked.

CLEANER I was told to dust.

COOK Not in here you weren't. This is the cleanest kitchen in Christendom.

CLEANER I'm ever so sorry. It's my first day.

COOK Could well be your last.

CLEANER *(Breaks down)* Oh no, I'm so sorry. Please don't send me away. *(COOK worried she's bullied the the young woman. Goes to her)*

COOK There now, stop all this nonsense. Sit y'self down. *(CLEANER sits and COOK returns upstage to her food preparation)*
So you're new.

CLEANER Yes I am. How can you tell?

COOK *(She studies the nervous young woman)* Experience.

CLEANER I'm super excited to find a job here at the Palace.

COOK Really?

CLEANER It's my dream career. Have you ever met the Queen?

COOK Which one?

CLEANER I'm sorry?

COOK Alexandra, Mary, Elizabeth the Mother or Elizabeth the daughter?

CLEANER I've ... I've never heard of some of those.

COOK How about Queen Victoria? Heard of her?

CLEANER I think so. *(Pause)* But have you ever met the current Queen?

COOK Once or twice. I've been here for 500 years.

CLEANER What? *(Stunned then realises she joking)* Oh, you had me worried there for a minute.

COOK *(Serious, looks at her)* Who says I'm joking?

CLEANER *(Shocked)* Really? I'm not sure what to believe. I mean I've already been sent to collect a left-handed feather duster and a cake of striped soap.

COOK So you chose to work at the Palace because you like long hours, tiny rooms and lousy pay.

The Corgi Queen – 32

- CLEANER** *(Back to excited)* Yes. And I've just been watching the coronation on the television.
- COOK** Really?
- CLEANER** I thought Her Majesty was absolutely regal. Did you see it?
- COOK** I watched it on the radio.
- CLEANER** I've been a huge admirer of the Royal family all my life. My family too. We put up bunting for the big occasions and now we have a new Queen, her photograph has pride of place over the mantel in the front room.
- COOK** Good for you.
(From offstage we hear the voice and marching steps of FOOT GUARD)
- GUARD** A left, a left, a left, right, left. *(Enters marching with busby under his arm)* A left, a left, a company halt!
(He comes to smart stop, places busby on table, pulls out chair and sits)
White with two sugars ... pa-lease.
- COOK** You've got two chances, Sunshine.
- GUARD** *(Hops up and pours his own tea)* I fort as much. How are you, Cookie? Looking absolutely ravishin' as always.
- COOK** This young lady is a cleaner, just started today.
- GUARD** How do, Miss. So, how come you like long hours, tiny rooms and lousy pay? *(He points to pot)* You 'elp y'self round 'ere.
- CLEANER** *(Moves to pour tea)* Thank you.
- GUARD** So did you see Her Majesty's loyal servant in all 'is finery defendin' the Monarch on 'er coronation day as she left for and returned from the Abbey?
- COOK** I'm far too busy.
- GUARD** I was on the telly, standin' there like Lord Muck, ramrod gleamin' with buttons straight.gleaming.
- COOK** I'm sorry I missed it.
- CLEANER** I'm so glad I saw everything on the television.
- GUARD** Hey, d'ya know what my missus said? "Give us a wave, Cyril." *(He scoffs)* Give us a wave. I ask you. *(He stands)* There's a Foot Guard outside Buck House an' 'e turns to the camera and *(He waves, calls)* "Hello love, can y'see me on the telly?"
- COOK** So you married above yourself.
(GUARD not sure what that means)
- CLEANER** *(Has her tea)* Did you see Her Majesty in the flesh?
- GUARD** Now when on duty, I is not allowed to move my 'ead. *(Sniffs)* But yes, for a wee moment, I did give the old minces a bit of a flick.
- CLEANER** I heard other staff talking about how our new Queen will be like a new broom, how she'll refresh the monarchy and liven up the Palace.
- COOK** Really? How so?

The Corgi Queen – 33

- CLEANER** Apparently Her Majesty wants to start a tradition of having garden parties and will invite many of her subjects to the Palace.
- COOK** *Start a tradition? Start it?* Listen Missie, the first garden party was held here in 1860.
- GUARD** And Cookie'd know; she made the sandwiches.
- CLEANER** Then I heard staff talking about the royal children going to school.
- COOK** Now that *is* a first because the Queen and her sister were educated at home.
- GUARD** I went to school. Not for long mind, and not that it done me no good.
- CLEANER** I'm wondering; can either of you long-serving servants of Her Majesty give me any tips. If so I'll be really grateful.
- COOK** Never speak to the Queen unless she speaks to you.
- CLEANER** Thank you, Cook. (*Looks at GUARD*) And you, sir? Do you have any advice?
- GUARD** It's jam an' 'am, an' never psalm an' 'arm.
- CLEANER** (*Confused*) I'm sorry?
- COOK** Her Majesty is always mam as in ham and never marm as in farm.
- CLEANER** (*Standing, returns cup upstage*) Thank you so much. I really must return to my cleaning. (*She bobs as if others are royals*) Goodbye, ma'am, sir.
(*CLEANER exits. GUARD returns cup*)
- GUARD** There's a word goin' round that we're not to be too polite to that chap who's keen on Princess Margaret.
- COOK** Well being below stairs, I'd know nothing about that.
- GUARD** Liar. Nothin' 'appers 'round 'ere without your say-so, Missus Methusla.
- COOK** (*Looks around to check they're alone*) Apparently Her Majesty has sent the officer packing.
- GUARD** (*Preparing to exit*) Good. We've 'ad enough divorcees in the 'ouse of Windsor. So what else is news?
- COOK** I heard for the first time, Her Majesty is giving her Christmas speech on the telly.
- GUARD** Aww, lovely. Me 'ole family will gaver round after Christmas puddin' and see what Her Madge 'as got to say.
- COOK** You haven't got a telly.
- GUARD** (*Thinking*) Y'might be right. I don't fink we 'ave. (*Picks up busby*) We'll pop next door. (*Heading off*) Cheery pip. (*GUARD exits*)
- COOK** (*Wanders to calendar, muttering*) I know I'm getting long in the pearly whites but at my age, time flies. (*She flicks the calendar which becomes 1960s. As she heads back to her cooking area, NANNY arrives with news*)
- NANNY** You'll have to stop teasing me about not having any work, Cook.
- COOK** (*Shocked*) No. What's happened?

The Corgi Queen – 34

- NANNY** I've got a new little nipper to look after.
- COOK** Boy or girl?
- NANNY** Andrew Albert Christian Edward Windsor. Her Majesty and the wee lad are both well.
- COOK** What do they say about a third child? Older siblings are well ahead with established relationships and the newborn must learn to adapt.
- NANNY** Psychology, Cook? Whoever said you were just a pastry face? (*Cops a glare*) Sorry, was that a bit OTT?
- COOK** More than a bit.
- NANNY** It's a ten year gap between Princess Anne and this new wee boy. It means he'll have adults as siblings when he's still in short pants.
- BUTLER** (*Enters distressed*) It's incredible. It's never happened before – ever.
- FEMALES** What?
- BUTLER** The Duke witnessed the birth.
- COOK** What birth?
- BUTLER** The Queen's just given birth to her third son.
- NANNY** *Third* son? You mean second. I've just come from upstairs.
- BUTLER** Not here, at Windsor.
- COOK** I told you time flies. What's his moniker?
- BUTLER** Edward Antony Richard Louis Windsor.
- COOK** And the Duke was present? In person?
- NANNY** In the very same room?
- BUTLER** Not playing squash, not carriage driving, but was stood there in the delivery room as the boy was born.
- NANNY** Oh dear, does that spell trouble for his siblings in the future?
- COOK** Trouble?
- NANNY** Yes, favouritism. His Royal Highness did something for his latest child he didn't do for the others.
- BUTLER** (*Scoffing*) Parents don't have favourite children. They love them all and equally. (*FEMALES look at him*) What?
- COOK** Let's move on. (*She points at calendar*)
- BUTLER** (*Heading to calendar*) Fair enough.
(*Calendar flipped to read 1970s*)
- NANNY** What's happening for the royal wedding anniversary?
- COOK** Twenty-five years, hey? I can remember the day the Queen got married. I think the bridal bouquet went missing.
- EQUERRY** Someone put it in a fridge to keep it fresh and forgot.
- NANNY** Then her tiara snapped and madcap repairs were necessary.
- BUTLER** (*It's almost a race to repeat the story*) And finally the chosen necklace was on display at St James Place ...
- TRIO** And they had to borrow the King of Norway's car to race over and fetch it.

The Corgi Queen – 35

(They enjoy re-telling the tale)

BUTLER I heard the Queen is inviting 100 couples from all over Britain to celebrate their own silver anniversary.

COOK With the Queen and Duke?

NANNY 101 couples all celebrating their anniversary. It's another way the Queen is bring the people and the monarchy together.

BUTLER But it's not just a wedding anniversary. She was crowned the same year she married. In 1977 it'll be 25 years as the reigning monarch.

COOK I'm not sure I'll still be around.

NANNY Oh don't be ridiculous, Cook. Your middle name's Immortal.

BUTLER The Queen will light a huge bonfire at Windsor and that'll trigger thousands of bonfires to be lit up and down the country.

COOK Twenty-five years as the Monarch, hey. I wonder how many more she'll see.

NANNY Lots. *(Leaving)* And I'd better check on my domestic responsibilities. *(Exits)*

BUTLER Tell me Cook, after all these years, have you any thoughts of retirement?

COOK *(Back working)* What's that?

BUTLER Or are you planning on dying in harness?

COOK What would I do if I retired? Working for the royal family has been my life. I've seen them born, marry, have children, grow old and die. And thanks to me, they all get a feed.

BUTLER *(Preparing to leave)* You should write a memoir, Cook. *My Life Below Stairs*. *(Starts to exit. At doorway)* Or how about *Puddings for a Prince*.

(COOK waves wooden spoon at BUTLER who leaves. COOK wanders to calendar and adjusts it to read 1980s. She returns to work. LADY-IN-WAITING arrives, concerned)

LADY Cook, where do you keep the brandy?

COOK What brandy? I have a sherry at Christmas and another on the Queen's birthday.

LADY *(Looking in cupboards)* I don't believe you and this is an emergency.

COOK *(Looks at her)* Next on your right.

(LADY finds brandy and pours herself a glass and one for COOK)

COOK Not for me.

LADY *(Handing glass to COOK)* You'll need it when you hear the news.

COOK What's happened?

LADY It's all a rumour at this stage.

COOK They always are.

LADY The Prince of Wales may decide to skip becoming monarch.

COOK *(Shocked)* What?

The Corgi Queen – 36

LADY There's talk of his rejection of the crown.
COOK But that would damage the monarchy. It might even mean the end of the royal family.
LADY True but he's getting married first.
COOK Married?
LADY The Queen's former equerry has a daughter who is being talked about as a future queen.
COOK Earl Spencer?
LADY That's him.
COOK He was the King's equerry too. His daughter used to visit the Palace and the Queen knew Lady Diana when she was a girl.
LADY She still is – only 19.
COOK But what's that got to do with the Prince refusing to succeed his mother?
LADY We're hoping it's false. (*Hops up*). But let's get the nuptials over first.
FX *Music from the Royal Wedding is heard. It continues and lights fade to BLACKOUT. Actors exit. Music continues then fades. Silence. The kitchen is empty in early morning in 1982 and in dim lighting. A human shape is seen upstage. We can't make out who it is. They operate a torch, searching for who or what we don't know. The person moves about and the only sound we hear is this creeping person)*
COOK (*Her voice is heard offstage*) Oi!
(*COOK surprises intruder. There's a scuffle. He complains at being "attacked". Dim lighting comes up and we see GUARD without his busby. COOK sort of drags him forward*)
What the hell are you doing?
GUARD (*Whispering*) Quiet. Stay still.
COOK (*Whispers in anger*) Why are you creeping about in my kitchen?
GUARD (*Frantic to keep her quiet*) There's an intruder in the Palace.
COOK (*Shocked, frozen*) What?
GUARD Some geezer broke into the Queen's bedroom.
COOK Her bedroom!
GUARD I'm lookin' t'see if e's got any mates.
COOK Is the Queen all right? Was she hurt?
GUARD I don't think so. Alarms went off but the police reckoned they was false an' turned 'em off.
COOK (*Going to cupboard*) I need a brandy.
GUARD I'm on duty. I couldn't possibly ... (*Pause*) Oh all right, just a small one.
(*They sit and sip in the darkness. Torch off and dull light comes up*)
COOK The Queen must have been terrified.
GUARD Nah, she's one brave lady is our monarch.

The Corgi Queen – 37

- COOK** As if she hasn't got enough on her plate as it is.
- GUARD** What's happened?
- COOK** What's the time?
(He wanders to the calendar)
- GUARD** I'll 'ave a butcher's. *(Flips calendar)* Ah, it's the **1990s**.
- COOK** Oh my lord. It's the old saying; it never rains but it pours.
- GUARD** Is that London rains or 'er majesty reigns?
- COOK** Marriages. Her Majesty's children are in all sorts. Not one, not two but three royal marriages are heading for the rocks. It must break her heart to see the family in such a mess.
- GUARD** She's a trooper, that lady. I seen 'er troopin' the colour f'decades. Rock solid, brilliant horsewoman, upholder of tradition and ceremony. Nothin', not nothin' defeats 'er courage an' determination.
(Calling and running is heard from offstage. It's CLEANER. As she makes the noise, lights come up, COOK and GUARD hop up to discover the ruckus)
- CLEANER** *(From offstage)* Help! Somebody help! *(She bursts in)* It's terrible news.
- GUARD** *(Distraught)* Has the Queen been attacked.
- CLEANER** Windsor's Castle's on fire. It's destroyed more than a hundred rooms.
- COOK** *(Distraught)* Not Windsor.
- GUARD** *(Rising)* I'll see what I can find out. *(Exits)*
- CLEANER** Oh Cook, everything is going wrong. Failed marriages, intruder in the Queen's bedroom and now the famous Windsor Castle being burnt to the ground. Did you know it's the world's oldest inhabited castle?
- COOK** I did.
- CLEANER** And today's the Queen and Duke's wedding anniversary.
- COOK** I'd forgotten that.
- CLEANER** What can we do to help Her Majesty?
- COOK** She's very good at helping herself. I think she's making a speech this week.
- CLEANER** How can she make any speech? How can perform any of her duties when everything is so horrible.
- COOK** *(Goes to radio)* That's the right word - horrible. She's had an annus horribilus.
(Lights dim and concentrate on the radio as the two women listen to part of the Queen's Guildhall speech on November 22, 1992. Once BLACKOUT apart from radio established, CLEANER exits)

The Corgi Queen – 38

FX “1992 is not a year on which I shall look back with undiluted pleasure. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an 'Annus Horribilis'. I suspect that I am not alone in thinking it so. Indeed, I suspect that there are very few people or institutions unaffected by these last months of worldwide turmoil and uncertainty. This generosity and whole-hearted kindness of the Corporation of the City to Prince Philip and me would be welcome at any time, but at this particular moment, in the aftermath of Friday's tragic fire at Windsor, it is especially so.

Forty years is quite a long time. I am glad to have had the chance to witness, and to take part in, many dramatic changes in life in this country. But I am glad to say that the magnificent standard of hospitality given on so many occasions to the Sovereign by the Lord Mayor of London has not changed at all. It is an outward symbol of one other unchanging factor which I value above all - the loyalty given to me and to my family by so many people in this country, and the Commonwealth, throughout my reign.

Act Two Scene 2

(Lights come up on COOK reading paper. MAID and BUTLER enter together)

MAID Have you seen the headlines?

BUTLER *(Getting tea)* It's on the front page of every paper in town.

MAID It's like a revolution.

BUTLER The people don't like it. I think Her Majesty has upset her subjects.

MAID This could mean serious damage to the Monarchy.

COOK Have you finished? *(Pause)* My turn? *(Pause, they nod)* Yes, repairs to Windsor Castle will cost a fortune, and yes, the tax payer will foot the bill.

BUTLER Forty million quid for a few tapestries.

COOK And yes, the Palace will soon make an announcement to make us all happy.

MAID An announcement? What announcement?

COOK I'm willing to stake my Beef Wellington reputation that the Palace has agreed the royal family will henceforth pay tax.

BUTLER Pay tax?

MAID Just like us?

COOK Now if you don't mind, I've got the crossword, comic strips and death notices to read. Cheerio.

The Corgi Queen – 39

(BUTLER gets the message and exits. MAID hangs around)

- COOK** Are you deaf?
- MAID** Sorry, Cook, but I wondered if you'd heard the latest on Princess Diana?
- COOK** Even if I did, it'd be gossip. If what's printed on these rags *(Tapping paper)* is true, that girl's had more gentlemen friends than I've cooked roast turkeys.
- MAID** It's just that I feel so sorry for her. Am I right in thinking she's been treated badly by the House of Windsor?
- COOK** *(Taking deep breath)* Normally I never comment on matters within the Palace walls.
- MAID** *(COOK pauses)* But?
- COOK** Of course I'm an expert on domestic bliss having been married ... *(Counts on fingers)* ... six, no seven, no ... never, but being married while living in goldfish bowl seems pretty tough to me. That girl has reacted because of the way she's been treated.
- MAID** Could you get shot for saying that?
- COOK** *(Looks at MAID)* Time you got back to work.
(MAID nods, stands and exits)
- FX** *Sombre death music plays softly
(Lights dim. BLACKOUT. COOK exits in darkness. Music continues until interrupted)*

Scene 3

(We see and hear a figure wandering around upstage in the dark. It's PRIVATE SECRETARY. He whispers in mild panic)

- PRIVATE** Hello, Security. Hello. *(Can't find anyone)* Hello?
- COOK** *(Wearing dressing gown and night hat)* Oi! Who are you?
- PRIVATE** *(Frightened)* Where did you come from? *(Recovers)* I'm looking for Security.
- COOK** *(Turns switch, LIGHTS up)* This is the kitchen, there's no security here, except this. *(She brandishes a rolling pin)*
- PRIVATE** I have to contact Security. There's been a terrible accident.
- COOK** *(Worried)* What's happened?
- PRIVATE** *(Looks at her)* Have you got security clearance?
- COOK** Listen, sonny, I was working here before your grandparents were born.
- PRIVATE** *(He decides she's okay)* There's been a car crash in Paris and one of the passengers is Princess Diana.
- COOK** *(Slumps in chair)* Oh no. What happened? Will she be all right?
- PRIVATE** The driver and boyfriend are dead. The Princess is hanging on.

The Corgi Queen – 40

COOK (*Distressed*) Have you told the Queen? Oh and Prince Charles and the boys?

PRIVATE I'm sure that's all been done. I just need to check with Security here at the back of the Palace. (*Looks around*) Wherever that is.

COOK Is it on the TV?

PRIVATE It's on everything all over the world.

LADY (*Enters in rush*) What are you doing down here.

PRIVATE I was sent to contact Security and now I'm lost.

COOK Any news on the Princess?

LADY (*Looks at OTHERS*) We've lost her.
(*OTHERS distraught*)

PRIVATE I'll have to go. (*He exits*)

COOK (*Collapses on chair*) How will Her Majesty handle this tragedy?

LADY (*Sits*) As she always does. But the Prince is hurting. He thinks it's his fault and he's dreading having to tell the boys.

COOK The country'll be in mourning. She's not called the People's Princess for nothing. There'll be an ocean of flowers outside Kensington Palace.

LADY And they'll be millions at the funeral and billions watching on TV.

COOK It must be tricky for the Royal Family.

LADY Want to swap roles? (*COOK shakes her head*) Everyone knows the private lives of the Queen's children. Now everyone will put the Royals under the spotlight. What do they do? What do they not do?

FX *Funeral music begins softly*

COOK (*Stands, removes cap and dressing gown*) This is one funeral I am never going to miss. (*She points to calendar*) Will you wind the royal clock please?
(*LADY heads to calendar and it becomes 2002. COOK puts on black coat and black hat. LIGHTS fade and concentrate downstage and to one place. LADY exits in darkness. COOK steps into spot and gives eulogy. Funeral music continues underneath*)

I got my first job with the royals thanks to this lady. She was nice to me on my first day and was nice ever since. She loved family, dogs and horses so no wonder her daughter turned out like she did. She was a liver and giver. I like the story of how she was born in a horse-drawn ambulance. A special story for a special lady and now she's gone, the Queen has lost the best mother and friend she ever could have.

(*Fade to BLACKOUT and bring up music. COOK exits. Music ends. Calendar becomes 21st Cen*)

The Corgi Queen – 41

Scene 4

(LIGHTS up and BUTLER bounces in a Dubliner using an Irish accent)

BUTLER And the top of the mornin' to each and everyone of you. God bless all here.

COOK *(Appears stirring usual bowl)* Get out of m'way and what's with the Paddy routine?

BUTLER *(Back to Londoner)* I'm celebratin' t'fact our gracious Sovereign is now the first British monarch to visit the Irish Republic.

COOK And live to tell the tale.

BUTLER I can't get over how many trips our Queen has made over the decades and still today. Mind you, she's no spring chicken like you, Cookie.

COOK Get out of 'ere.

BUTLER She's been married for sixty plus years, been our monarch and head of state for easily that, she's a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, and still she jets off here, there and everywhere.

COOK What, London you mean?

BUTLER Don't be like that. The Olympics were here.

COOK The only area in which she's slowed down is in the breeding of corgis.

MAID *(Enters)* What's this about the corgis?

BUTLER Why did Her Majesty stop breeding those little dogs?

MAID I heard it was because she bred about fourteen generations.

COOK And she didn't want to have new generations coming into the world when she isn't here.

BUTLER Isn't here? Perish the thought. The Queen will be here forever.

COOK I wish. Even I'm getting weary bones. *(OTHERS stop and look at COOK who stops and looks back)* What?

MAID You can't have weary bones. You're what keeps the royal family going. *(COOK scoffs)* We only ever think of you as always being alive.

BUTLER Exactly. What she said.

COOK Well you're both wrong. Taxes, yes, death, no. Now come on, cheer up, it might never happen.

MAID After all your years working for the royals, Cook, ...

COOK Centuries if you don't mind.

MAID You must have heard some cracking stories.

COOK Which shall forever remain untold. *(OTHERS protest)*

BUTLER Well mine won't.

MAID Yes, tell us a funny story about the Queen.

COOK *(Warns BUTLER)* Oi, we'll have no disrespect for our Queen in my kitchen.

The Corgi Queen – 42

BUTLER I wouldn't dream of it. Besides the Queen's got the best sense of humour in the whole of her Kingdom.

MAID Go on, tell us.

(BUTLER looks at COOK who gives her approval. They settle for the storyteller knowing this man has served Her Majesty)

BUTLER Well one day I put out the silver bowl with the dog biscuits for the corgis. I place the bowl on the table near Her Majesty so she could feed her little friends. Any way, the guests arrive and everyone takes their place at the table. Sitting next to the Queen is some bishop. Then before anyone could say or do anything, the puckish priest, His Grace, grabbed a dog biscuit and started chewing.

(OTHERS laugh)

MAID He ate it?

BUTLER I reckon he thought it was the latest from Fortnum and Mason. *(More laughter)* So I risk a sneak-peek at Her Majesty and I reckon she's about to burst. I could read her thoughts. Do I tell the bishop he's tucking into some tasty dog chow and embarrass him, or do I pretend he's enjoying some of the Palace's finest fare.

COOK *(Genuinely laughing)* They would never be my biscuits!

BUTLER I reckon the hostess survived but later, she must have laughed till she cried.

MAID I've heard her laugh. She's really good.

(They settle)

COOK We all have. No-one enjoys laughter more than our Queen.

MAID Is that because she's had her share of tears?

COOK Long life brings sadness. She wept at the death of her father, her family and friends, and at the passing of her adored dogs. And now she faces the death of her beloved husband.

(Mood saddens)

FX *National Anthem begins softly*

FX *Mobile phone sounds softly*

BUTLER *(Steps aside to answer his phone)* Hello? ... I see. Thank you.

(He turns back to the OTHERS)

Prince Philip has passed away. *(OTHERS shocked, saddened)*

(Lighting fades. Spot picks out portrait of the Queen. ACTORS take glass)

COOK It's just another time in the life of our Queen when she will stand strong, save her grief for a private place, and continue as she has always, and serve us, her people.

(Trio raise glass. Lights dim, music swells and portrait is illuminated)

TRIO Queen Elizabeth the Second.

Curtain

Other Plays by Cenarth Fox



Agatha Crispie

Hilarious spoof on the famous characters and plots of the Agatha Christie mysteries.

Our production of *Agatha Crispie* went extremely well, sold out audiences 4 nights. They loved it.

**Powassan Players
Canada**



Shakespeare in Saigon

Pygmalion today. Eng Lit teacher teaches Vietnamese non-English speaking woman to speak Elizabethan English with a little help from Groucho Marx. Prithee my Lord.

I am here to tell you that *Shakespeare in Saigon* is a fantastic show! I knew nothing about it going in, but it was cleverly written and excellently performed.

Chris Azure (Ho Chi Minh City) March 15 2018



The Merry Widows

Four widows are undone when a fifth and much younger widow arrives suggesting she is the daughter of one of their late husbands.

The final moments were deeply moving and I wasn't the only one with tears in my eyes when the lights went up! The audience loved every moment! **Encore Theatre Company Melbourne**