

Part Live Was I 'Ere I Saw Evil Trap

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Annotated with stage directions and costume descriptions on the afternoon of May 1, 2002.

Cornelius Bree: Susan Galbraith
King George: Nancy McCracken
NRon: Pete Schult
Judge Gibbet: Bob Hughes
team

The Shill: Laurel Sharp
Prince George: Sam Smukler
Sludgeworth: Julie Schult
Buck Dodgers: Laura Waterstripe

Narrator: Maria Hosmer-Briggs
Queen: Mike Miller
Pat Pious: Dan Clark
and the Ribbonsteel Rapper dance team

*Bree enters several minutes before the play begins and works the audience, carrying a bag prominently labeled "Cornelius Bree, DVM & PhD, Patent Medicines" and wearing, a brown man's suit with red bowtie and a gold lame top hat with an elastic band that holds medicine bottles across its brim. The central brown bottle is labeled **BREE-Z Miracle Potion Good for EVERYTHING** and is flanked by smaller bottles of **Dr. Bree's Sugar Pills**. Bree dispenses sugar pills to audience members one at a time. Each time, there is a brief conversation about the pills. "You're looked peaked, young lady. Try one of my sugar pills." "You can buy them through my Web site www.quack.com."*

The play begins when the players take their places, including the advisors, who line up at the back of the playing area (among the Morris dancers) with their backs to the audience. The advisors are all wearing cowboy hats painted half white/half black, with the front half being white. When their backs are toward the audience, the black aspect of their hats faces the audience.

Bree takes center stage to address the audience as a whole.

Bree: Do you suffer indigestion?
Is your nose full of congestion?
Do you wobble when you walk?
Belly up and hear my talk.
Here's a cure for all your ills.
Dr. Bree's new Sugar Pills.
Sugar's a food supplement
That makes you happy and content.
Fat free, with no medicinal flavor.
It gives your coffee extra savor.
(Shill enters from stage right, tapping with cane) That poor lady cannot see.
Come this way, dear, come to me.
Try Bree-Z, my special potion. *(Shill gulps eagerly from bottle)*
Then shed those specs, if you've a notion.
(Shill tosses away cane and starts juggling).
Isn't that a miracle, ladies and gentlemen? Only \$5 a bottle, available from my Web site.

Narrator gallops onstage from right side, interrupting, and chases Bree & shill offstage. Narrator is dressed in cowboy gear and rides in on a child's hobby horse, with coconut shell sound effects provided by her helper.

Narrator: Once there was a king of little brain
Not evil, not bad-tempered, not insane
But childish in his views of right and wrong
I'd have to say his judgement was not strong.

The King enters from the back. He is wearing a white cowboy hat with a red, white, and blue foil garland as a hatband. Otherwise, our typical kingly attire – a tattered velvet cloak over Morris kit of white pants and white shirt.

King: In comes I, I'm George the King
I am the king of Everything
When I say "Jump!" they say, "How high?"
We are the boss, the prince and I.

The Prince is a young boy (about 12), dressed in denim shirt over Morris kit.

Prince: In comes I, Prince George the Fair
I got the brains, dad got good hair.
It's hard for people to respect him,
Mom and I try to protect him.
Come on Dad, skip work today!
The sun is shining, let's go play! *(King and Prince move stage right and start playing a shoot-em-up game together)*

The Queen enters from back. She is a bearded man wearing a bright-colored loose dress over Morris kit and a golden yarn wig and is inconspicuously carrying the Prince's white hat.

Queen: I do not have an easy life.
As George's mom and George's wife,
It's work enough to raise one child
But now my husband's running wild.

Appearances are all he knows
He judges people by their clothes.
He thinks that, if your hat is white
Then everything you say is right.
But if a black hat meets his eyes,
He thinks you'll tell him only lies.

I wish he were a wiser king.
Respect for him is vanishing.
Predators all come his way.
I have to save him every day.
(tears at her hair)

King: Queen Beatrice, as I declare,
What are you doing to your hair?
We're cowboys! *(Puts on a cowboy accent)* Let us save your hide.
There's outlaws everywhere outside!

Here's my six-shooter. *(Pulls out a gun)* Have no fear.
I'll blast those hombres out of here.

(He crouches down and starts creeping toward the knot of advisors, who are standing still with their backs to the audience and the King)

Prince: Wait, dad! (*Queen tosses Prince the white hat. He catches it and puts it on.*)
Those men are your advisors.
Not enemies, but sympathizers.
(*Prince whistles at advisors; they turn around, so the white aspect of their hats faces the king. King relaxes and smiles.*)

King: By golly, boy. I think you're right!
Now I can see. Their hats are white
Yep, just like yours, and just like mine.
We're on the same team.... that's just fine. (*he goes into a happy daze*)

Queen: (*Grabs the King's gun.*) Preserve me from both son and spouse
Who play with guns inside the house!
The vultures circle 'round my man.
Saints protect him, if you can!(*Exits*)

Narrator: (*Moves across group of advisors, turning several of their hats around. They grumpily restore them to white facing front. Narrator takes center stage.*)
The King's advisors are no fools
They know the tricks, they know the rules
The King's a pawn in their Great Game.
His life will never be the same. (*Exits*)

The advisors now enter and address the King in turn. The Prince, who was beside the King, is pushed progressively farther away from him despite periodic efforts to break through. One at a time, the advisors displace each other and take places encircling the King.

NRon: (*Walks forward to center stage. NRon is a tall man wearing a necktie and the standard "advisor" hat over Morris kit*) They call me Ron. My first initial's N.
I'm one of George's highly trusted men.
"Tis I invent the game, and he doth play it.
When he says "Jump!" 't'was I who bid him say it.

(*to King*) Remember that I put you on the throne.
The funds I brought were never grants; they're loans.
Your lifestyle has a price, and you must pay.
So listen well to what I ask today.

King: (*listening attentively*) Hey, Ron, old pal, I'm here for you.
Just tell me what you want to do.
(*Sludgeworth moves in from behind and turns NRon's hat around so black faces front. King shakes his head and frowns.*)

King: (*confused*) Now wait a minute, Ron old bro'
You look... different. I don't know....

Sludgeworth: (*Sludgeworth pushes her way between NRon and the King and, standing to the King's left, shakes the King's hand heartily. Sludgeworth is a woman wearing a shiny black shirt, black leather biker jacket, black pants, advisor hat*)
Miz Sludgeworth here for EPA
I have big plans well underway
The Arctic's full of oil, I hear
And cities need more oil each year.

Our top priority should be
To grab that oil for you and me.

Pious sneaks up behind Sludgeworth. He is a man wearing the advisor hat – modified with a black cross on its white aspect and a white cross on its black aspect –black shirt with white turtleneck, and black pants.

King: I'm always glad to get more crude. *(looks away from Sludgeworth)*
(Pious turns Sludgeworth's hat around, then moves behind King to stand by the King's left shoulder. The King turns back to look at Sludgeworth and does a double-take.)
What? Drill the Arctic? That sounds rude.

Pious: *(turns the King to face him)* Pat Pious here, I help men learn
To give the Church the wealth they've earned.
That filthy lucre! I refine it
To do God's work *(aside)* as I define it.

King: *(piously with hands folded)* My father George in Heaven dwells
I hope someday I'll go there, too.

Pious: Invest in God! Send me all the taxes
We accept PayPal, mail, or faxes. *(Gibbet moves into place and turns Pious' hat. Gibbet is a man in a black graduation robe with standard advisor hat.)*

King: *(again the King does a double-take)* Tickets to Heaven? That offer smells
It stinks about as bad as you!

Gibbet:*(striding to center stage in front of King and other advisors)*
I am Judge Gibbet, hear my retort.
That money, sire's for jails and courts!
The criminals are running wild.
They'll offer reefer to your child,
paint rude graffiti on the wall,
and grab your wallet as you fall! *(Sludgeworth, by King's left shoulder, reaches for the King's pocket and thinks better of it.)*
The facts are certain, the law's so sure,
why its res ipsa loquitor!

All: Huh?

Gibbet: Don't worry, I passed the bar. *(Sludgeworth: The snack bar?)*
Jails are much too costly, as you know.
The noose or chair is the way to go!

King: This town's not big enough to hold
All of the outlaws I can see.
I like your style! I'll get some gold,
Name an electric chair for me.

(Buck Dodgers enters behind Pious, turns Gibbet's hat and takes center stage as Gibbet moves to beside Pious' right shoulder. Dodgers is a woman in a rainbow holographic-pattern shirt over Morris kit, carrying a lurid green squirt gun and wearing an advisor hat).

Dodgers: In comes I, Buck Dodgers, Futuristic Gladiator
My colleagues here think small, I fear. My challenges are greater.
You never know when aliens may zap you from afar
I think you need a power web to shield you from the stars.
A billion here, a billion there, buys oil or prayers or rope. *(dismissive)* My
plans require a TRILLION just to bring you any hope.
A hero fights for what is Right! A hero never cowers!
For when the Death Star looms in view, the action lasts for hours!

King: I'll need time to raise a trillion,
But I'm sure it can be done.
And while we're at it, can you make
A Jedi of my son?

Prince: *(Elbowing his way through the advisors to stand by the King)*
Hold on! You'd better stop and think.
Don't tax the poor to feed the rich.
You're teetering on an awful brink
You might just end up in a ditch.

Now the advisors start talking in quick phrases, each time turning the King toward them. The King is spun right, then left, as they go into a rapid-fire patter. NRon described this action as the "agitator" cycle.

Dodgers: What's more important than Defense?

Sludgeworth: That Stars Wars thing's a sacred cow!

Pious: She's right. Don't worship golden calves!

NRon: We rich folks need a tax break NOW!

The advisors are standing in a ring around the King and now start the "spin" cycle, grabbing his shoulder and spinning him in a consistent direction, speaking in rapid succession.

Sludgeworth: Oil!

Pious: Heaven!

Dodger: War!

NRon: Money!

Gibbet: Hang 'em!

King: You make my head spin with your talk
I must lie down *(starts to exit)* I cannot walk...
(Staggers to a blanket the Narrator has neatly spread out on the ground and collapses)

Queen: *(Entering from back)* You beasts! Why do you torture him!
You know he isn't strong!
My King, I'll make them leave you now. Shoo, shoo! *(waves arms at advisors, who retreat to stage right)*
Oh no! There's something wrong.

Doctor, Doctor, please come quick.
Something's wrong. The King is sick.

Bree: In comes I, Cornelius Bree. (*Enters from stage left*)
DVM and PhD.

Queen: DVM?

Bree: Doctor of Vertebrate Medicine. Is he a vertebrate?

Queen: I don't know, he's kind of spineless
I have the cure for all that ails
In this small bottle. (*pours out sugar pills by the King's face- no good*)... If it fails,
My snake oil potion's almost magic (*another bottle, another attempt*)
If it don't work.... (*no response from King*) Your case is tragic.
(*Sadly*) I fear that this time I'm too late.
To raise the dead is not my fate.

(*Brightening*) But there's Pat Pious, my old friend!
Let's have a prayer to make him mend! (*Pious moves toward Bree cautiously*)
Remember... we worked Denver together
That time that we got (*Pious cringes, holds his hat over Bree's mouth*) tarred and
feathered.

Pious: (*Kneels by King, and intones*) Our Father.... can beat your father at do-mi-nos...
(*No response from King*)

Queen: What religion are you, anyway?

Pious: Poppa John Pizzologist.
(*Shrugs*) I'm sorry. I can't do a thing.
The King is dead, long live the King! (*points at the Prince*)

(*The advisors turn their attention to the new King. They move forward as a group from stage right*)

Gibbet: Hang it all, it's time for us to cash in! (*Grabs the Prince and drags him forward*)

NRon: Let's teach the lad conservative compassion
That he may rule the land after our fashion.

Sludgeworth: May the new King be the quickest and the aptest of our pupils!

Pious: Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from scruples!

Dodgers: Let us build a mighty laser, tho' the National Debt quadruples.

(*The advisors encircle the Prince as he struggles against them*)

Prince: Help, help! Dad, Mom!

The Queen enters from stage left)

Queen: But soft, what wind through yonder hedgerow breaks?
I smell a rat - and several snakes.
I fear my son is led astray.
Who can I call to save the day?

(The circle of advisors rotates slowly clockwise. A tin whistle plays a few notes.)

I know I'll call the Royal Dancers!
Their swords will cut away these these cancers!

(The advisors run away in panic. "Who'd have thought she'd call in the rapper team?")

Ribbonsteel Rapper enters, dances, while the King lies on his blanket stage left. When they exit at the end of their dance, the King wakes, stands, and moves to center stage to stand by the Queen.

King: You won't believe, I had the strangest dream.
It was all in Black and White, and beige, and cream,
and blue and pink and purple and chartreuse.
The world is full of colors! Spread the news!

And then I heard my boy call out in need,
And knew that I had been a fool, indeed
I listened to the voices of the greedy
And set aside my duties to the needy.

(advisors remove hats and start humming Pomp & Circumstance in background)

True heroes do not wear white hats
Their worth is in their actions.
And love and joy, not wealth and toys
Are life's true satisfactions.
The colors of the world, like gems, proclaim the rising day
So let us go and join our friends, and celebrate the May.

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