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Middle & Lower Grades

The King's Bean Soup

The search is on for the missing ingredient that will make the King happy. Hmmm, what could that ingredient be? . . .

by Sally Werner

Characters

KING

FOUR ATTENDANTS

COURT JESTER

PALACE COOK

THREE COOKS

PAGE

BEGGAR

SETTING: *Throne room of the King's palace. Throne is on a raised platform at center. Exits are left and right.*

AT RISE: *FOUR ATTENDANTS are pacing back and forth across the stage.*

1ST ATTENDANT: The King has lost his appetite. He refuses everything. He wants nothing but bean soup.

2ND ATTENDANT: If it were only as simple as that. It must be a special kind of bean soup—an old-fashioned kind of bean soup.

3RD ATTENDANT: Made from an old recipe his great-grandmother, the Queen of the North Country, once had.

4TH ATTENDANT: We have searched through all the cookbooks in the palace. We have tried all the recipes for bean soup. His Majesty insists that we have not found the right recipe.

1ST ATTENDANT: Oh, dear, something must be done. The King must have his bean soup. He has scarcely eaten anything for a week.

PAGE (*Rushing in*): The cook has found it! He has found the lost recipe for bean soup!

1ST ATTENDANT (*To 2ND ATTENDANT*): They have found the recipe.

2ND ATTENDANT (*To 3RD ATTENDANT*): They have found the recipe.

3RD ATTENDANT (*To 4TH ATTENDANT*): They have found the recipe.

ALL: They have found the recipe! The King shall have his bean soup! (*JESTER enters, dancing and singing.*)

JESTER: Bean soup! Bean soup! The King shall have his bean soup! (*Dances out again. PALACE COOK enters, carrying old cookbook.*)

PALACE COOK: Alas and alack! The recipe is old and torn. One ingredient is missing.

1ST ATTENDANT: Sh-h! Not so loud. The King must not know. Prepare the soup anyway. Perhaps he will not notice. Make haste! (*COOK hurries away.*)

4TH ATTENDANT: Meanwhile, we must try to find the missing ingredient. I will send word to all the best cooks in the land. Surely someone will know what is missing.

ALL: Yes—yes. Make haste. (*4TH ATTENDANT hurries away as KING enters and sits on throne. ATTENDANTS bow.*)

KING (*Shaking head sadly*): Oh, I feel weak—I feel faint. Oh, that I could have but one sip of my favorite bean soup.

1ST ATTENDANT: We have good news, Your Majesty.

2ND ATTENDANT: Very good news, Your Majesty.

3RD ATTENDANT: Excellent news, Your Majesty.

1ST ATTENDANT: The lost recipe has been found.

KING (*Very excited*): You mean my great-grandmother's bean soup recipe?

2ND ATTENDANT: Yes, Your Majesty. The recipe has been found.

KING: And I am to have my bean soup today?

ALL (*Bowing*): Yes, Your Majesty—today.

KING: Ah! At last! At last! My favorite bean soup. Ah! (*PALACE COOK enters, carrying bowl and spoon on tray. Places it before KING. He tastes it, smacks, rolls eyes upward, frowns, shakes head.*) No-no-no! Something is missing. It is not the same, I tell you. It lacks something. Why, oh why, can't I have my favorite bean soup? (*Puts head in hands and groans*) Take this soup out and give it to the beggars at the roadside. Take it away! (*PALACE COOK takes tray and exits with 2ND ATTENDANT.*)

1ST ATTENDANT: Your Majesty, let me explain. The recipe was found at last, but it was in a very old book and one ingredient was torn away. We thought it was some small item of little importance, so the soup was made anyway.

KING: The missing ingredient must be found, I tell you! Why don't you do something?

3RD ATTENDANT: We have, Your Majesty. We have sent word to all the best cooks in the land. They should be here very soon and someone will know what is missing from the recipe.

KING: Whoever finds the missing ingredient shall be well rewarded.

4TH ATTENDANT (*Entering and bowing before KING*): The very best cooks in the land have come, Your Majesty. First comes the cook from the Hill Country. (*1ST COOK enters with bowl of soup on tray.*)