

John Problem proudly presents:

**Act One from the Pantomime:**

**'Prince MacGorrdon, the Magick Cabinet - and Mandelvorn'**

**Now showing at The Nation's Play House in Westminster.**

**Prologue.**

After many years of rule in the islands of Britannia the Dark Lady, Baroness Hatchet, and her hosts were defeated at the Battle of the Shires by General Antonius Blah, Northern Irish Cross, Afghan Star, Grand Order of Baghdad, etc. etc.

The General ruled for ten years with declining popularity and then, fed up, he resigned and appointed his best friend, Prince MacGorrdon, to bring wealth and equality to the lives of the inhabitants of Britannia.

Act One opens as the Prince and his Court are two years into their benevolent rule of the country.

**Act One.**

A first floor room in a magnificent building, by the Thames. It's a new National Holiday and outside in a large square, the unemployed sing 'Carry the lad that's born to be prince, over the sea from Fife,' cheer, and shout 'Where's the booze?'

The Prince: Weel. It seems they still like us, despite the recession.

Mandelvorn: Got to be careful there, Prince. Public's fickle.

The Prince: What worries me is: do we have enough money to carry on? We don't want this building to be repossessed by Sheikh Ibn Ibn, do we? Just because we can't keep up the payments. What d'ye think, Starling?

Starling: Oh, no problem, Sire. None at all.

The Prince: How much have we got, then?

Starling: Er. Well.

The Prince: How much? Do we have enough?

Starling: Well, um.

Mandelvorn: Oh, come on, Starling. You haven't got a clue. Now look. Over the street there. A shop with three balls outside it. I suggest we ask the owner to step up. He's a mate of mine - quite rich.

The Prince: Let's get on with it, then.

Enter Vladimir, a pawn-shop owner, clutching a large brown envelope

Vladi: Hello. I'm Vladi. I can be your personal banking adviser. What do you think, guys? Hi, Mandy!

Mandelvorn: This is the Prince, Vladi!

Vladi: Brilliant! Great! Pleased to meet you, Prince!

The Prince: Weel, thank ye!

Vladi: Fantastic! Is there something in the financial line I can do for you?

The Prince: Weel, there is. We need a spot of money. How much would you say, Starling?

Starling: Um, er.

Mandelvorn: £650 billion.

Vladi: Brilliant! Eh? Eh? That's a lot of dosh! But, no prob!. Let's work out a repayment schedule.

The Prince: Repayment schedule? Repayment schedule? It's supposed to be a donation, mon, not a loan!

Vladi: Fantastic! What did you say? A donation?

Mandelvorn: Of course. What else?

Vladi: Yeah. Well. What's in it for me, then?

Mandelvorn: When the Prince has renewed his mandate, you will be looked after, Vladi.

Vladi: What's a mandate?

Starling: A mandate! That's what my sister wants!

Mandelvorn: It means that the people have full faith and trust in the Prince and want him to continue being their ruler.

Vladi: I see. That could be useful. When's it going to happen, then?

The Prince: Shortly.

Think-Tank: When the Prince has the mandate is when you will receive protection from the vagaries of an unkind fate.

Vladi: What?

Mandelvorn: You'll be looked after. No difficulties if you sometimes make a mis-declaration of your income.

Vladi: Big deal! I'm domiciled abroad, comrade.

Mandelvorn: The Prince could swiftly deal with that. And heavily, Vladi.

Vladi: Ah. Alright then. £650 billion, eh? Well, you're lucky. I've got that much in this brown envelope here.

Starling: Shall I draw up a contract?

Mandelvorn: Shuddup, you idiot. So you'll give us the money, Vladi, my friend?

Vladi: I will. But there's a condition.

Mandelvorn: We don't do conditions.

The Prince: Let him speak.

Vladi: Brilliant! Thanks, Prince. It's my daughter, Harriette. I want her to be part of your Court. She's a lovely girl and deserves a good start in life. Right now, she's doing a bit of modelling.

Mandelvorn: Wonderful.

Vladi: But she has got her M.A. and her Ph.D.

The Prince: Has she noo? Then I think it seems a reasonable request.

Mandelvorn: Sire, I 'm not sure whether.....

The Prince: Where is your daughter? Is she here?

Vladi: Yes, Mighty Prince. She's just outside. I'll call her. Come in, my dear!

Enter Harriette, a large bulky person wearing a veil and heavy shoes which clomp.

Starling: Ooh, lovely!

Mandelvorn: Why is she wearing a veil?

Harriette: Mind yer own business! Nosy berk!

Mandelvorn: Have more respect for a Lord of the Realm, slut!

Harriette: I've got a red hooter, today. That's all.

The Prince: Give me the envelope then, good Vladimir.

Vladi: Here you are, Great One. You want to count it?

Starling: Oh yes. Of course.

Mandelvorn: Forget that, Starling! If you count it, we'll be here all night.

Vladi: Brilliant, guys! I'll be off then. Look after my dear little girl. She'll be no trouble to you. But if anybody bothers her - you know what I mean - then he'd better watch out. I'll send Klegg to reason with him.

He gives his daughter a peck on the veil and leaves. Harriette sits down, takes off her shoes and scratches her toes.

Harriette: I hate these new fashions.

The Prince: Who's Klegg?

Mandelvorn: Never heard of him. Probably some local yokel.

Think-tank: (Aside to Mandelvorn). What do you think about this Vladimir?

Mandelvorn: What about him?

Think-tank: That he should be so ready to give us the money. With no repayment. How well do you know him? Is he, how shall I put it? Reliable?

Mandelvorn: He's a bit slippery. But who isn't, these days? Well, he'd better not try anything clever.....

Enter Milliprat, in a hurry and wearing a worried look.

Milliprat: Prince! Bad news!

The Prince: I can't take much more of this stress.

Milliprat: The people are getting impatient. Noisy. And noisome. We must do something!

It is true. Outside in the square, the crowd is booing and shouting 'Down with Repossession' And 'Down with VAT!'

The Prince: Here. Starling. Take a handful of this money and give them to drink. Well, Milliprat. What should we do?

Milliprat: Well, Sire. When the Dwarf Sarkozym took over as leader of the Gauls, there was Gaulic discontent all over the place, as usual. Beer doesn't work with them, so he gave a giant speech. He told the Gauls what he was going to do to make their lives better. And they believed him and everything was OK.

Think-Tank: Amazing, how foolish some people can be.

Milliprat: And he'd like us to be allies.

The Prince: What for?

Milliprat: I dunno. He wants everybody to be allies. And sign up for a treaty.

Mandelvorn: We don't do treaties.

The Prince: I can't stand them. All those signing ceremonies! Ugh! A lot of tosh.

Milliprat: I'll tell him.

The Prince: How do you know all this stuff about other countries?

Milliprat: Globalisation, Sire.

The Prince: Globalisation?

Milliprat: It's the name of a carrier pigeon service. Free from Brussels. That's how I keep in touch with what's going on in all those nasty foreign parts, abroad.

The Prince: Vairy acute, Milliprat!

Mandelvorn: I think he's got something there, Prince.

The Prince: Where?

Mandelvorn: About making a speech, I mean. Great little idea. You could do it from that balcony.

The Prince: But, Mandy! Ye know I canna stand making speeches.

Mandelvorn: I think you've got to do it, Sire. Listen to the noise out there!

Outside, the crowd is turning restive again. A stone hits the window-pane. Starling staggers in, his clothing awry, his hair on end.

Starling: Prince! I resign! I want to spend more time with my family!

Mandelvorn: Don't be stupid, Starling. Everything's going to be OK. The Prince is going to wow that lot out there with a big speech. Under my tutelage

The Prince: I am?

Harriette: No choice, Princey dear. I heard 'em talking before I come up 'ere. They was saying yer'd better 'ave some good stuff for them or art yer go. Back acrost the border.

Starling: Where on earth did you go to school, to speak like that?

Harriette: Cheltenham, dearie.

The Prince: Shut up, all of you! Think! What am I going to say in this speech?

Mandelvorn: No problem, Prince. Start off with the usual stuff. Hard-working, hard-pressed British families, etc. etc. you feel their pain. The government is working day and night to make them richer.....

The Prince: But I've said that so many times....

Mandelvorn: We'll be standing behind you to help. Believe me, Prince. You can do it..

Another stone hits the window.

Harriette: You'd better get on wiv it. I'll be under the table.

Tries to get under table, but is too large and clumsy.

Harriette: Chippendale rubbish!

The Prince stands, straightens his back, puts on a look of half determination, half oily smile, and steps out on to the balcony, dodging another stone. The noise of the crowd is stilled. Encouraged, his courtiers shuffle after him.

The Prince: My friends.

Voice: Can't 'ear yer!

The Prince: (Louder). My friends! I stand before you as your Prince.

Voice: Not for long, mate! Depends wot yer've got for us!

The Prince: I bring you change. A new way of doing things. Values! And Vision!  
We will respond with courage and steadfastness to address the new  
insecurities.

Voice: Wot's 'e on abaht?

The Prince: Equality! Choice!

Groans from the crowd. Cries of 'Get 'im off!'

Mandelvorn: Psst, Prince! Tell'em about social benefits, allowances, grants,  
subsidies.....

The Prince: I bring you tax credits....

The crowd quiets a little.

The Prince: Grants and Allowances!

The crowd starts to shout its approval.

The Prince: Benefits! Subsidies!

The crowd roars its approval.. Some start to sing 'For he's a jolly good fellow'. Others  
throw their hats in the air.

The Prince: Quality education!

Mandelvorn: Hellfire!

The crowd stops roaring its approval. Boos.

The Prince: Mandy! What do I do? Quick!

Mandelvorn: Tell 'em only to twenty-fifth place in the league tables.

The Prince: But only to twenty-fifth place in the international league tables!

The crowd roars its approval. Cries of 'Good fer you, Prince!'

The Prince: What else?

Milliprat: International understanding and peace amongst nations.

Mandelvorn: You raving nutcase!

The Prince: International Peace and Understanding!

The crowd groans.

Voice: We don't want no more of them bleeding immigr.....

The Prince: Mandy. I've got to quit this. I'm feeling sick, mon.

Harriette: Tell 'em you'll reduce taxes on the booze. Even Baroness Hatchet didn't fink of that one.

The Prince: I shall reduce taxes on the booze. I mean, beer and spirits.

The crowd screams with delight. Cheering all round. Shouts of 'Prince for President!', 'Scotland for ever!', 'Right on, man!', 'High Five!' and less noticeably 'Salaam Aleikum'.

The Prince leaves the balcony, wiping sweat from his brow.

Think-Tank: I've just been out and done a couple of focus groups. Your speech was well received, Sire. The percentages have changed dramatically.

Enter Vladi, the pawn-shop owner.

Vladi: Here. What's going on?

Mandelvorn: What's going on, chum, is that the Prince has just made a rousing speech and we are all going to be re-elected!

Vladi: That's all very well. But you didn't tell me you had a fighting opposition.

The Prince: What opposition?

Vladi: I just heard that that new Hatchet party bloke has gone all green, that he's going to abolish taxes, and he's picking up supporters in every town!

Think-Tank: Who? What's his name?

Vladi: Stave!

Harriette: Stave? 'E's louverly, 'e is!

Mandelvorn: Oh him. Don't make me laugh. Old smoothy-chops doesn't have a chance against us. Not nasty enough. No venom. Don't worry, Vladi, your money's safe with us.

The Prince: Aye, et is. Dinna fret thissen, mon. Ye'll be alright with us. I'll give ye a post in my Cabinet.

Vladi: Magic! And how about a Lordship?

The Prince: In view of your loyalty to our cause, I think it can be arranged. Come round tomorrow after breakfast.

Harriette: Oh wow! Does that make me a lady?

Curtain.

**Act Two of this award-winning pantomime will follow in our New Year Issue.**