

# **The Mad Queen**

**By**

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## CHARACTERS

QUEEN 45+

AMELIA, THE QUEEN'S HANDMAIDEN 17+  
FIGURE

*The place is a home for retired actors although there is nothing to reveal it as such. The stage is empty apart from a throne on a dais and a small makeup table, jewelry box and chair. There is a window/exit /door centre upstage and an entrance downstage left. It is dawn. As the light increases, the Queen in night attire takes her dressing gown from the back of the chair and sits.*

QUEEN

(She picks up a mirror from the table and peers at her reflection)

Damn the wrinkles.

(There's a knock at the door.)

Come in.

(Enter AMELIA dressed in a white medical smock. She is pretty and kind looking.)

AMELIA

I'm sorry I'm late my lady.

QUEEN

No matter.

AMELIA

It was so quiet.

(The Queen listens)

QUEEN

You're right. It is quiet.

AMELIA

It would seem the castle is empty.

QUEEN

Have you seen the King?

AMELIA

He is awake my lady. His boy, Francis, is with him.

QUEEN

Busy with affairs of state no doubt.

AMELIA

Shall I tend to your hair my lady?

QUEEN

Yes... yes... in times like these one must keep up appearances.

AMELIA

Which dress do you desire today, my lady ?

QUEEN

The red one. I feel it's that sort of day.

AMELIA

Very well my lady.

(Exits)

QUEEN

Why do I feel so sad? It's like a cloud  
 Hanging over me. As soon as I awoke I felt  
 It, an omen, a warning. Go hide, it said.  
 Run. Run away. All is lost, the tide's turned.  
 You can achieve no more, no more. And yet,  
 To have come this far, to have endured so much.  
 Foolish thoughts... you're a grown woman aren't you?  
 You're a Queen. You know what hardship is.  
 Oh, if only my children had lived, just one of them.  
 That would have been enough. One child from three.  
 That would have been fair, all that pain  
 And for one, for just one to survive, just one.

(Re-enter AMELIA with red dress.)

AMELIA

The moths have been at it. ...around the hem,  
 But it's hardly noticeable. It's a long time since  
 You wore it.

THE QUEEN

You're right. My brother's wedding  
 If I remember correctly. Five years ago.

AMELIA

You must have looked beautiful.  
And the King was.....

QUEEN

The King was his usual self.  
If he's not the centre of attention, he pouts.  
Where did he sleep last night?

AMELIA

I don't know my lady.

QUEEN

Mmmm. He has been much distracted of late.

AMELIA

Yes my lady, there is the war and the threat of invasion ...

QUEEN

Was she with him?

AMELIA

Who madam?

QUEEN

The Countess.

AMELIA

The Countess left two days ago.

QUEEN

Did she? Well, so much for loyalty.

(She seems pleased.)

Bring me breakfast.

AMELIA

Yes my lady.

(She hangs the dress over the back of the  
throne. Exits)

## QUEEN

The Countess left. Well well. How things have changed.  
 There was a time when the world came to a stop  
 If the Countess sighed or glanced awry.  
 He'll be upset. He likes control.  
 People to do his bidding, run his errands,  
 Obey his commands and I, The Queen, must wait.  
 Thirty long years of waiting, waiting for a child  
 To be born, a parent to die, a marriage to be  
 Consummated, a roof to be fixed, a wall  
 To be repaired, a dress to be sewn and  
 Always waiting. When I was young I  
 Dreamed that being a Queen would be glamorous -  
 The adoring crowds, the trumpets, banners unfurling,  
 The glorious panoply of power. "Marry him" they cried,  
 He's a Prince and will be King and you will be  
 The Queen. Now look at me. A moth eaten dress  
 In a draughty castle waiting for the enemy.  
 Such are the dreams of youth. Such is reality.

(Re-enter AMELIA with tray)

## AMELIA

Breakfast was ready for you. Someone must have prepared it.

## QUEEN

Good. You may fix my hair now (She sits chair by makeup table). Eggs? We still  
 have eggs.  
 Did you see anybody?

## AMELIA

Ehmm ... Soldiers, just arrived.

## QUEEN

Ours?

## AMELIA

I could not tell my lady. They seemed to know their way  
 Around. They must be ours.

## QUEEN

Mmmm... Take care. Don't pull on my hair.

## AMELIA

Sorry my lady.

QUEEN

These weeks have not been easy. You have been with me for four years and yet I do not know if you have anyone... close?

AMELIA

No my lady. I have a friend but he is...

QUEEN  
A friend?

AMELIA

Well, more than a friend.

QUEEN

I do not wish to know details.

AMELIA

No, nothing like that.

QUEEN

Have you prepared our belongings?

AMELIA

Yes my lady... just as you told me.

QUEEN

Some day you'll choose between a lover or  
A groom, between a cottage or a kingdom  
By the sea. Your life is partly yours to decide  
And partly for another to command.  
Briefly our beauty and our form endow  
Us with angel's wings so we may soar  
And touch the heavens. Children give us  
The keys to time but we must wait, wait  
On consequences and affections turning blind.  
Then you will understand what it is we  
Know we have to do. We are all caught  
In the web and stream of life and must wriggle  
Just a bit to find our freedom.

AMELIA

Wriggle my lady ? I do not understand.

QUEEN

No matter. I was talking to myself. That will be enough.  
Go to the King. Tell him I will come in half an hour.  
Tell him... just... tell him ...I will come.

AMELIA

Yes my lady.

(Exit)

QUEEN

A sweet girl. Make up. Beauty's plastering art.  
Whatever the day brings, whatever winds blow  
To turn our heads from shining sun to grave  
We will be Queen, and the assassin's blade  
Can never pierce our will or majesty ...

(There is a scream off stage. The  
AMELIA rushes on stage)

AMELIA

I think he's dead.

QUEEN

Who?

AMELIA

The King.

In his own blood...The blood... A sword...

QUEEN

Who was there?

AMELIA

No one. My lady we must go. They will kill us too.

QUEEN

Lock the door.

AMELIA

They'll break it down, rape and kill us. We must leave.

QUEEN

Lock the door. Stay calm. Help me with my dress.

(AMELIA goes to door off stage locks it.  
Comes back on and helps The Queen into  
her dress. )

AMELIA

(Crying)

I don't want to die.

QUEEN

You're not going to die. Jewelry. (AMELIA hands her jewelry.) You're quite sure  
he was dead?

AMELIA

Yes my lady. He had an awful expression on his face and the blood, so red.  
(There's loud knocking on the door and  
the voice of The Figure. )

FIGURE

(Off stage)

Open the door. Open the door.

AMELIA

They're going to kill us.

QUEEN

How do I look?

AMELIA

Beautiful my lady.

QUEEN

Go to the door. Open it when I tell you.  
(She positions herself centre stage.)

AMELIA

But...

QUEEN

Do as I bid you.

AMELIA

Yes your majesty.



QUEEN

Now.

(AMELIA goes off stage. Opens door.  
Enter Figure. He kneels. AMELIA  
stands behind)

FIGURE

Your majesty. I bring you greetings from the new King.

QUEEN

You have been long in coming but we expected you.

FIGURE

His majesty guarantees you safe keeping,  
Invites you to meet him at the crossroads  
Of the Western Isles in three days time and  
Hopes you will remember him.

QUEEN

Tell his majesty we thank him for his care  
And we remember well those summers of  
Our youth when his first kiss was like the dew  
That's sent from heaven. We'll not blame him for  
His choice of bride though we were much vexed.

FIGURE

Sadly her majesty has passed away.

THE QUEEN

Then we are the sadder for his loss as  
We are for ours.

FIGURE

The horses await you.

QUEEN

Come. Let us go.

(Exits)

AMELIA

She is so much better this morning. I think the therapy is working.

FIGURE

Yes, the depression seems to be lifting. The car's waiting to take her to physical therapy.

Curtain

