

Phantomime III - The Baron and the Cornstalk

Big music and lights for a big start - the music fades and we open on a small spot on the trap door. The Baron clambers out.

Baron: Hang on. Give me a minute. It's bad enough having to open the show this year without having to hide down there while all you despicable vermin shuffle in, expecting a happy jolly show when what your actually doing is simply sheltering from the weather. Well I've got news for you peasants. This year things are going to be different! This year is "The Baron's Year"! Yes, you can boo, yes you can hiss, but please don't poo and please don't.....miss the toilets if you need any further relief. You see since my last two cunning plans to rid the Maze of irksome irritants were thwarted I have been regrouping and growing in power, like Voldermort only in real life. I have spent the last year in the underworld - or rather the understage - learning dark magic so that I can finally scare away all you fearless folk once and for all. I should say that if you haven't witnessed previous York Maze Phantomimes then don't worry; it's essentially the same nonsense ever year. However to quickly update you on the premise; *(big breath, top speed delivery)* I once erected a castle in a barn to thwart the planning restrictions yet failed to rid the Maze of visitors thanks to a tenacious corncob and some local meddlers. I undertook some terrifying guises however the will of the villagefolk was too overpowering and I was forced to flee but this year I am committed and empowered to regain my land while Farmer Tom has taken his eye off the ball, full stop, end of sentence wait for applause. You're easy to please aren't you?/Oh, you're hard to please I see. Very well, much as I like the sound of my own voice perhaps we should get on with it. Behold, here comes the first obstacle in my quest for Maze domination, the simpleton Darren McClaren.

Baron exits. Darren enters

Darren: Hello everybody. Oh it's a bit dark in here *(clicks fingers and the lights come up)* That's better. Hello boys and girls *(wait for response)*. Hello Mums and Dads *(wait for response)*. My name is Darren McClaren, me and my Mum Karen live and work here at York Maze. My Mum's in charge of the weddings but it's a bit quiet at

this time of year so we're poor. (*encourage an "Ah"*) And we're cold (*"Ah"*). And we don't know what letter comes after Q. (*"Ah"*) Oh, thanks very much. So now you all know who I am but I don't know who you are, so after three I'd like you to all shout out your names. Ready, 1,2,3.....That's great, Huey Duey, Louis, I've got them all. Right, on with the nonsense, I think I hear my mother calling...

Karen: (*offstage*) Darren!

Darren: Almost right on cue, that's our mam. In fact here she comes now.

Karen enters

Karen: Howdo. I know what you're thinking. OMG. Close your mouth Sir, it's embarrassing for both of us. My name's Karen McClaren and I'm the local totty! I don't usually look this stunning but I have just come from the beauty parlour.

Darren: Was it closed.

Karen: Shut it you. Please excuse my son. I know, I really don't look old enough do I! It's what comes from being down with the kids. It's like totally sick here at York Maze innit!

Darren: What?

Karen: Now Darren it's time we had a rather awk convo.

Darren: Why are you speaking like this?

Karen: Like what?

Darren: Like you think you know how to speak youth.

Karen: It's like totes my normal lingo. It's well wicked. In fact it's wicked cool! I can't help it Darren if I'm still young! Still hip!

Darren: Since the operation the only young thing about you *is* your hip.

Karen: Now son we need to be serious now OK? You weren't getting many laughs anyway let's get on with the show. The fact is Darren my

lad....come down here when I'm talking to you.....the fact is that we're stony broke. The maze has had a barren Summer and there are no takers for my wedding planning business. At this time of year business is literally dead!

Darren: Can't Farmer Tom help?

Karen: No, he's swanned off on yet another holiday hasn't he, leaving me to hold the fort! Honestly I think the success has gone to his head ever since we won all the accolades the York Tourism awards could throw at us.

Darren: What all of them?

Karen: Yes, we totally swept the board, since you ask! But now, now we've been left to tend the land with nothing but a skeleton staff.

Brings on a couple of skeletons - attached to Karen's shoulders?

Here they are. Darren meet Sharon, Sharon meet Darren, you know me, I'm your Mam Karen and this over here is....erm,,,Tim Farron. Don't worry if you don't know who that is... nobody does.

Darren: Is that all the staff we have here.

Karen: Yes my lad. Honestly, sometimes it feels as if there's no body here at all! We're absolutely worked to the bone! Plus I don't trust them - he thinks I don't know that he's slacking but I can see right through him. Thank you I'm here all week.

Darren: If ever there were an incentive not to buy a season ticket!

Karen: No, it's no laughing matter. We're so poor (*blows nose and weeps*)

Darren: Are you crying Mam?

Karen: Just teaching you how to act Darren lad, watch and learn. We're so poor we need to eat cereal with a fork to save on milk (*blows nose and throws it into the audience*) We're so poor we have to eat the spam from our email folders. (*throws another tissue*). We're so poor I need to reuse my tissues, can I have those back please?

Darren: Whatever are we going to do mam?

Karen: There's only one thing for it Darren lad. We're going to have to sell your prize cob.

Darren: No Mam, not my horse.

Karen: No no not your horse. I mean that good-for-nothing sweetcorn go and get her.

Darren: What? Get rid of Sweetie corn? Are you sure Mam?

Karen: I'm afraid so son. Hopefully we can get a few pennies for her. Although I'm not very hopeful to be honest. You can get a whole pot of sweets for a pound just out there.

Darren brings Sweetie onstage

Darren: Are you sure there's nothing else we can do Man?

Karen: Man?

Darren: I mean Mam!

Karen: Nearly gave the game away there son! No I'm afraid that unless we can find somebody wanting to get married and engaging the services of York's finest wedding planner then this is our only option.

Darren: But people here love Sweetie, don't you girls and boys?

Karen: I'd keep her if we could Darren lad, but we've already sold those racing pigs on the cheap to Piglets and we're still penniless.

Darren: Very well mam, I'll see what I can get for her. Bye for now boys and girls! *(Exits)*

Karen: And make sure you get a good price for her. Meanwhile I'm going to arrange me some weddings. Tara for now! *(Exits)*

Baron enters

Baron: I thought they were never going to get off! But how perfect. Time to exploit their desperate predicament by using my newly acquired skills in dark magic to transform myself, in front of your very eyes into somebody totally unrecognizable. I am going to transform myself into a tall, dark, mysterious, distinguished, articulate yet somewhat garrulous gentleman who will offer to buy Sweetie in return for some "magic" sweetcorn seeds. Let the transformation take place...(music and lights - the Baron hasn't changed a bit). I know, you're mightily impressed aren't you. Behold, here comes the youth Darren.

Darren enters

Darren: I'm sorry Sweetie, but look on the positive side, you may end up going back to your roots.

Baron: I say there young fellow m'lad, what perchance are you doing wandering along with that giant sized corn on the cob.

Darren: There's a sentence that has probably never been said before. Well, slightly mysterious man with an even more mysterious odour, I have to take her to market to get the best price I can.

Baron: Oh no no no, you don't want to take her to market.

Darren: Why not?

Baron: Because we don't have enough actors to successfully create that scene. Besides I'll take that cob off your hand for something far better than money.

Darren: What, a backstage pass to a Taylor Swift concert?

Baron: Not quite, but I can offer you these magic seeds!

Darren: Oh, is that all?

Baron: Is that all? These will bring you fame and fortune beyond your wildest dreams.

Darren: Oh I'm not sure. What do you think Girls and Boys?

Baron: I tell you what, as I'm feeling generous I'll throw in a top of the range witches hat as well - as it's Halloween and there's no way the York Maze gift shop is going to shift all that stock!

Darren: Alright then, it's a deal. Bye Sweetie, I'll buy you back when I've made my fortune.

Darren exits

Baron: Excellent! My plan is coming together nicely. By my reckoning once the seeds are planted a giant cornstalk will grow, they will climb it and come across a zombie ogre and they will be scared away from York Maze forever. I can't think where I came up with this dastardly storyline! And as for you, well I already have your boyfriend held captive in a top secret location but I think you are due a different fate; you are for the microwave my friend. Those buffoons may have had a barren Summer but next year will be The Baron's Year. Oh yes it will etc. Well we'll just have to wait and see won't we!

Baron exits. Karen enters on the phone

Karen:hello is that Jordan. Hello love it's Karen McClaren here. I was just wondering if you were due another wedding yet and if so whether you'd consider a Halloween wedding this year, say at York Maze? What's that? Still happily married? Read all about it in your new book? Oh, well obviously I'm delighted for you. Bye bye. It's no good, I'm going to have to take matters into my own hands.....let's see, who looks as though they might be up for a wedding? Do we have any corpse brides here? Never mind you look like death so you'll do. And how about a dashing young Dracula? Oh yes you're dashing, dashing out of the door more like. Come along, let's give them a round of applause as I drag them onto stage. Now what's your name? (eg Helen) And yours? (eg Simon) Have you got a girlfriend Simon? What do you think of girls called Helen? What's your surname? (eg Evans). Oh yes, Helen Evans, it's got a ring to it hasn't it! Ooh did I say ring? But it's so fast! Do you believe in love at first sight Helen? Well don't worry if we get you married down

there you'll barely be able to see each other. I'm sensing that they aren't too sure about this, but they have been great sports, please give them a huge round of applause.

Darren enters

Darren: I'm back Mam

Karen: Yo Dazzler, what's happening

Darren: Mam you're at it again.

Karen: What? Can I help it if I'm down with the kids.

Darren: If you're down with the kids then I'm Jess Glynn.

Karen: Who?

Darren: My point exactly.

Karen: Now listen, how did you get on with selling Sweetie? Did you get a good price?

Darren: Better than that; I got some magic seeds!

Karen: Come again?

Darren: Magic seeds.

Karen: You what?

Darren: MAGIC SEEDS!!

Karen: Yes yes I heard you. Not sure I'll ever hear anything else again but I heard you the first time. I just can't believe you've been so daft. Here we are, penniless and destitute and you come back to York Maze with sweetcorn seeds! What good are they? Oh, if Helen and Simon were to get married we could use it as...Cornfetti!! No, there's only one this for it. Twerk Darren me lad.

Darren: Twerk?

Karen: Yes, Twerk.

Darren: Mam, I know you think you're down with the lingo but you can't ask me to twerk. It's a family show.

Karen: No no, Get to work! We need to find people who want to get hitched ASAP. You go and look in the village and I'll see if I can do a spot more matchmaking here.

Darren: Right you are Mam (*exits*)

Karen: So then I think our last victims were too young to marry so what I need are some older ladies to take part in our version of Take Me Out!

(Take Me Out theme tune. Karen goes into audience)

Now don't worry if you haven't seen this program, it's basically like Blind Date....but for the very desperate. You'll do Madam, you look old. So you stand there under your light and we'll bring a couple more beautiful ladies to add to our beauties (*actors playing Kernel and Sweetie appear at windows in wigs*) I might just beautify you a little more with this (*ventriloquists mask ref Nina Conti*) and then all we need is a handsome male to be our contestant. But in the absence of a handsome male you'll do sir. What's your name? (*put mask on him*) So then, I wonder whether he'll find his mate? And I wonder who it might be! Well it's time to find out. Ladies you know the score, No likey, No lighty!

All lights go out except the lady with the mask on.

Well look at that, we have a match. Let's thank our other lovely participants as they leave the stage. And you come and stand over here sir.

Both audience members are stood either side of the central flat, having their masks operated from offstage by actors playing Baron and Darren who are also doing the voices into microphone.

So then what do you think of our?

Woman: Oh yes, he's rather dishy isn't he!

Karen: And are you equally taken with our.....

Man: Phwoaaaaar!

Karen: I'll take that as a yes. So do you think that you need to spend time getting to know each other or are you happy to just press on and get married straight away?

Man: Oh I'm just dying to take her in my arms right now and profess my undying love!

Woman: Ooooh yes, why wait, that's what I say.

Karen: Well this is marvelous. I'll start planning the wedding straight away!

Man: In fact Karen....can I go over right now and give her a big slobbery kiss?

Karen: What now?

Man: Oh yes, I can't wait!

Karen: You don't have to straight away, don't feel the pressure with so many people watching you.

Woman: Oh no please do. I'd really like that.

Karen: Very well, do you think they will confirm their love for each other with a kiss?

Whether they play ball or not;

For being such great sports let's give them a huge round of applause. I don't know, I'm not sure it'll last.

Darren: *(entering)* What makes you say that Mam?

Karen: Well, did you see the way he was looking at me? She looked well jell! Now listen, enough of this frivolity, we need to get to bed.

Darren: Why's that Mam?

Karen: Because we need to progress the story. You can see their getting restless. They want to get out on those slides and the bouncy pillow. And as for these useless seeds, you can sling them over there for all I care. Now, the budget couldn't afford us a proper bed so we'll have to snuggle up here Darren lad. Nighty nighty.

Darren: Pyjama pyjama!

They sleep on the stage and the Baron enters

Baron: Excellent, my plan is working a treat. Now while they sleep I will use my dark magic powers to make a cornstalk grow. It will be far superior to any maze plant Farmer Tom has managed to produce; in fact it will stretch up to the sky. These oafs will then ascend the cornstalk and they will arrive at a Castle on a Cloud.

Karen: *(sitting up to sing)* There is a Castle on a Cloud *(sleeps)*.

Baron: And when they reach the Castle on a Cloud...

Karen: I like to go there in my sleep.

Baron:they will come across a terrifying Zombie Ogre....

Karen: Nobody shouts or talks too loud..

Baron: Shut up shut up. Do you mind, I'm acting here! Now when they see the zombie ogre they will be terrified and will flee York Maze once and for all. I do seem to be carrying the plot somewhat this year don't I! So now, prepare yourself for the finest special effects this side of Christmas. Behold the mighty Cornstalk.

Dramatic Music while the cornstalk inflates

Baron: There we are. Now, it may be that they are reluctant to climb such a mighty stalk and so I will extend my powers of disguise to take

the form of a force for good so that I can encourage them up there. Curses they awake, I must begin the transformation.

Transformation music as the Baron becomes a fairy. Darren and Karen awake.

Karen: Morning Darren lad. Just coming round from my beauty sleep.

Darren: I think you could do with sleeping for a bit longer Mam!

Karen: Why you cheeky....wait a minute, what's this? And who are you?

Baron: I am a Fairy!

Karen: *(to audience)* I always wondered. Hang on, I think I must still be asleep. I did have a funny dream one time that I had a visit from a Fairy Queen but she didn't look anything like you.

Baron: In actual fact I am a Queen.

Karen: *(to audience)* Anyone else care to comment?

Darren: Mam, the seeds must have been magic. Farmer Tom could do with some of those. This is amazing! I'm going to climb it Mam, I've got a good feeling about what I might find up there.

Karen: Don't be ridiculous son, it could be dangerous.

Baron: Climb the cornstalk if you dare
For you will find great wealth up there.

Darren: I will climb that stalk so green
For who can doubt a Fairy Queen.

Karen: It's true our life can get no worse
But why are we all talking verse?

Baron: To make the show seem more exciting
And compensate for such poor writing!

Darren: Up I go to meet my fate.

Karen: I'll come with you, wait Daz wait!

Baron: And so my plan is coming together beautifully. When you next see me I will have transformed once more into my finest creation yet. A Zombie Ogre!

Baron exits. Karen and Darren climb the stalk.

Darren: Finally we've reached the top.

Karen: Yes we have - we were climbing, not putting it back under the stage - time to suspend your disbelief.

Darren: You alright Mam?

Karen: Fine, Darren me lad, just got caught up in a load of cob-webs!
(holds up a web of cobs)

Darren: Mam, this is the most amazing castle I have ever seen in my life!

Karen: You weren't here last year then.

Darren: Let's take a look around. But be careful Mum. There's a sign here that says "Beware of the bats".

Karen: Beware of the bats? Bats are no more scary than crows. Anyway they'll all be asleep in the daytime. No, I am not scared of bats!

Window opens and Karen is whacked by a crow with a cricket bat.

Darren: You alright Mam?

Karen: Yes yes, just feeling a bit whacked that's all. All I said was I'm not scared of bats.

Window opens and Karen is whacked again. She falls.

Darren: You alright Mam?

Karen: Yes yes. Maiden Over! You know what Darren lad, do us a favour; stand over there and say that you're not scared of bats.

Darren: Ok Mam if you insist. Where are you going.

Karen: Far away!

Darren: OK I'm here, what is it I say?

Karen: I'm not scared of bats!

New window opens and whacks Karen on the head.

Karen: Hang on hang on that's not fair. I thought you had to stand over there and say I'm not scared of bats (*hit again*). Oh that's it I'm outa here.

Darren: No Mam wait. Look what's here.

Karen: What, what is it?

Darren: It's a golden.....

Karen: Egg? A golden egg? Really, oh we'll never be poor again!

Darren: No no, it's a golden...

Karen: Harp? Just what I wanted son, we'll be playing a different tune from now on.

Darren: No Mam you're not listening to me. It's a golden Corn! It's Kernel Kernel everyone!!

Karen: Well how's that going to help us?

Darren: SShh Mam, he's trying to tell me something. What's that Kernel? You have been held captive here by a zombie ogre and you're desperate to return to your lady love back at York Maze as soon as possible?

Karen: I didn't hear him say anything.

Darren: Oh he did Mam, I just have to decipher his accent.

Karen: And what accent is that?

Darren: I think it's Cornish. He says that initially the ogre was nice to him but that he was just trying to butter him up.

Karen: Well ask him if he has seen this Zombie Ogre recently.

Long pause while Kernel whispers into Darren's ear.

Darren: He says yes.

Karen: Well that does it, let's get out of here.

Baron enters as the Zombie Ogre on stilts

Baron: Not so fast Mazelings.

Darren: Aargh, a hideous ogre, what now Mam?

Karen: Scary indeed, though something tells me we can outrun him! You alright up there.

Baron: A touch of Vertigo but I'm bearing up. Now, prepare to be zombified!

Darren: Quick Mam, Kernel. Down the Cornstalk!

Baron: Pathetic mortals...and sweetcorn thing...You can run but you can't hide, I will follow you forever until you are gone from York Maze!

Darren Karen and Kernel reach the bottom of the cornstalk. Baron is clinging onto it for dear life!

Karen: Oh no son, what are we going to do?

Darren: Hang on, Kernel's found something. What's that? It's a blooded axe left backstage after Hallowscream?

Karen: Quick Kernel, chop down the cornstalk.

Kernel chops at the stalk

Baron: Ahhh, I'm falling. Falling sideways conveniently enough.

Baron exits offstage we hear a very long crashing sounds interspersed with Baron shouting "I'm ok" and screaming to cover the removal of the stilts.

Darren: We did it, how can we ever thank you Kernel.

Karen: Oh look here he comes.

Baron enters hobbling.

Baron: I think I've broken my funny bone.

Karen: Don't worry, it wasn't particularly effective anyway. So Baron, it was you all along.

Baron: Yes yes, my dastardly plan to regain York Maze appears to have failed once more.

Darren: Well I think it's only fair that we punish you. What will it be, water?

Karen: Did that last year.

Darren: Custard pie?

Karen: Year before that.

Darren: Well what then?

Karen: I've got it. For the ultimate punishment, and to give this show the wedding it deserves, you will have to marry me!

Baron: What? No no anything but!

Karen: Mrs. Baron Karen McClaren, I like the sound of that.

Baron: No, please, spare me.

Darren: What's that Kernel? If only you could find your lady love then you could get married, attracting lots more visitors to the Maze and solving our financial woes?

Karen: *(to Baron)* Did you hear any of that? I can't hear a word he says!

Darren: In that case all we need to do is find Sweetie Corn!

Baron: Ah, well you see there may be a problem there. You see it's a rather delicate subject. Popcorn anyone?

Darren: Oh no, Mam. Sweetie has been assaulted!

Karen: *(trying some popcorn)* More like sugared I'd say.

Darren: Baron you are a bad bad man....

Baron: Well that is my role.

Darren: ...but you will be forgiven if you use your magic powers to bring Sweetie back to life.

Baron: But that will totally drain me of magic powers. Why should I?

Karen: Because there is an audience full of children who will be really upset if their favourite mascot has gone forever.

Baron: Oh very well. Iggle piggle, trouble and strife, bring that Sweetie back to life!

Sweetie appears - cheers!

Karen: Excellent! Now York Maze can have the wedding it deserves.

Darren: What's that Kernel? You want to finish off the show by practicing your first dance routine?

Karen: Very well, that just leaves us to say thank you everybody for coming and enjoy your day here at York Maze. Take it away Kernel and Sweetie. Bye for now!

Show ends with a corn dance routine to Thriller.

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