

When a Bad Plan Goes Wrong!

By Jennifer Cross



This play started out as a rewrite of the classic tale of 'Sleeping Beauty' but gradually took on a life of its own thanks to the grumblings of the cast (aged 6-13 yrs) it was being written for, who didn't want to do the typical, 'Girl hounded by Stepmum, dreams of dashing Prince, is dogged by evil nemesis, but all ends well as Boy meets Girl and they get married and live happily ever after.' So, after its evolution, the story unfolded as follows into a modern comedy extravaganza...

All is well in the Kingdom when King Bob and Queen Betty announce the birth of their daughter, Princess Petronella. However, the not-so-talented witch, Nightshade, is not happy and begins plotting to do away with the Princess, whilst dealing with the eternal disappointment of her own mother, generally known as the 'Old Hag', and her inept servants. As Nightshade schemes, the Princess is watched over by many, including her outspoken Nanny, the Royal Guards, and the Royal postmen who have been enlisted into the Military and tasked with providing support to the Princess protectorate, and her friends who turn out to be part of a Royal Protection Secret Service. To cut a long story short, Nightshade tries three times to kill the Princess and is foiled each time, with the last attempt resulting in her capture, along her mother and servants. The first attempt sees her foiled by her own ineptitude, the second by the Princess's own sensibility, and the third by the rashness of the Old Hag and the quick witted smart thinking of those protecting the Princess - though unfortunately the story's token Prince is killed! The last hurrah that closes the show is a rousing celebratory musical number set in the prison where Nightshade, her servants, and Old Hag, have all been locked up. So that's it. The whole story. And there's not an icky kissy love scene in sight!

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When a Bad Plan Goes Wrong!

This is a play for a cast of 21. A larger cast can be accommodated through choral additions, extra party guests/prisoners/non-speaking members of the guard.

This play does not come with a CD or any music. (However, here are 3 suggested song numbers using well known pop songs and theme tunes, and your cast will probably suggest other favourite songs of their choice)

The play consists of 10 scenes and has a **running time of approx 40-50 mins.**

Cast and (suggested) Costume List

King Bob	-- Royal attire, including crown.
Queen Betty	-- Royal attire, including crown.
Petronella	-- Trousers/Shorts and a T-Shirt
Guards	-- Red T-Shirt, Black Trousers with a stripe down the outer legs. Sword. Armour Breastplate with Palace emblem on front.
Nanny	-- Brightly coloured clothes with an apron, big hair and a mop cap.
Old Hag	-- Baggy Brown/Grey top and skirt. Shawl.
Snivel (Female)	-- Black T-Shirt with purple bat cut-outs stuck all over and Black Leggings, and a disguise for use as a palace servant in scene 8.
Imps	-- Purple T-Shirt with black bat cut-outs stuck all over and Purple/Black Leggings. Purple hands and faces.
Nightshade (Female)	-- All in Black with a Black Cape, Maid's outfit – White apron and mop cap for use in scene 5 as a palace maid.
Col. Smoggit (Female)	-- Red T-Shirt, Black Trousers with a stripe down the outer legs. Sword. Armour Breastplate with Palace emblem on front. Commanders hat with a feather in it.
Postmen	-- Yellow T-Shirt with Royal Post Emblem, Black Trousers.
Driselda, Augustine, Margarite and Consuela	-- Dressed as a modern fashionista 'It' girls.

Scenes and Props

Scene 1 – The Palace – Trays and glasses; Baby doll in a blanket; Thunder soundtrack/sound effect; Tail; Scroll.

Scene 2 – Nightshade's Lair – Cauldron; Things to throw into the cauldron if not throwing in imaginary contents;

Football; Old Hag's Bag containing, eye of newt, rat toe, bat wing, cat tail, whiskers, and a length of string; Long stick

Scene 3 – Palace Parade Ground – Official document with Royal seal; All guards and Smoggit should have swords but there should be an extra one for Nanny to use.

Scene 4 – Nightshade's Lair – Stereo; Bowl of fruit.

Scene 5 – Palace Gardens – Picnic blanket; Magazines; Plate of Doughnuts; Pair of ugly shoes; Large Block of Cheese on a platter; Blue liquid in a drink bottle on a tray.

Scene 6 – Palace Parade Ground – 3 sacks of post; Letter; Bench; Hanky.

Scene 7 – The Ruins – Rock, or two, to sit on; Scroll; Large bag of bottles.

Scene 8 – Palace Gardens – Smoggit should already have a sword as part of costume, but an extra will be needed for the King in this scene; Jug and a tray of 6 glasses.

Scene 9 – Nightshade's Lair – Feather duster; Rat; Long length of Rope or Ribbon to tie up Nightshade and Old Hag.

Scene 10 – The Prison – Prison Bars.

Act One.

Scene One – The Palace

(Onstage Guests mingle and occasionally crowd upstage as they go to look at the babe in the arms of the queen.)

King Bob: *(steps forward and clears throat before addressing the assembled throng)* Friends, family, party crashers, the Queen and I would like to thank you all for coming and joining us in celebrating the birth of our daughter, Princess Petronella.

Queen Betty: Oo.. She smiled at me. She did. Bob...Bob... She smiled at me. *(Moves downstage cradling the baby)* Oh isn't she precious. Our little Petronellie.

King Bob: Only the most precious thing in our whole Kingdom dear. Three cheers for the Princess!

Guests: Hip hip... Hooray!

Queen Betty: *(interrupts)* Shhhhh! You'll wake the baby. *(Nanny stomps on stage left and is stopped by Guard 1.)*

Guard 1: Halt! Who goes there?

Nanny: *(frowns and looks the guard up and down)* Do you need glasses?

Guard 1: *(looks puzzled)* No, why?

Nanny: Well if you can't see it's me that goes there then I reckon you should think about getting some. Now move! *(She bustles the guard out of the way and walks over to the royal group.)* Here don't you know that baby's too young to be at parties like this. She should be off having a sleep without all this here hubbub of hip hips, and what-nots. Here, let's be having her. *(She moves as if to take the baby but King Bob steps in the way.)*

King Bob: Guards! Sieze her!

Nanny: *(struggles as she is grabbed by the guards)* Hey! What's the meaning of this? I have never been attacked like this. You wait until I report this to the union. This is the last time I take a job from Fairy Gentle's Baby Bouncing Nanny Agency.

Queen Betty: Freeze! *(The guards and Nanny freeze)* What was that you said?

Nanny: Which bit?

Queen Betty: The last bit.

Nanny: Oh that. This is the last time I take a job from Fairy Gentle's Baby Bouncing Nanny Agency. I mean they told me to expect anything working for royalty, but arrest was definitely not mentioned.

Queen Betty: Guards release her.

King Bob: But dear, are you sure?

Nanny: Of course she is. She said so didn't she? Or are you having trouble with your hearing. You should get it checked out like the guy who needs glasses. *(She looks back at the first guard, and points to her eyes and his indicating she sees him and he better watch out)*

Queen Betty: *(waves dismissively at the guard)* Oh, never mind him! If Fairy Gentle sent you, you must be Nanny Pong.

King Bob: Nanny Pong? *(He frowns distastefully and tentatively sniffs the air around her.)*

Nanny: Oi! Just because my name is pong it doesn't mean I do. I shower every day and sometimes twice when it's raining.

Queen Betty: Quite right. Leave her alone Bobby. Fairy Gentle said she was the best nanny in the business, and unless you intend changing all the nappies... *(She looks at him expectantly.)*

King Bob: No, no no... *(He vigorously shakes Nanny's hand)* Of course, of course, welcome to the palace. Come, come. This is our darling Petronella. *(Queen hands Nanny the baby.)*

Nanny: Aww.. What a pet.

King Bob: She's not a pet, she's...

Nanny: *(interrupts)* ...Your pride and joy. Your beautiful daughter...

Queen Betty: The spitting image of you when you dribble in your sleep. *(She giggles.)*

King Bob: I do not dribble in my sleep. *(Stamps his foot and turns away from them in a huff.)*

Queen Betty: Oh no dear, certainly not. *(She chuckles and nods to Nanny behind his back that he does.)*

(The hubbub of background noise resumes as Nanny and Queen Betty head back upstage with the baby. King moves off muttering about dribbling.)

(Ensemble song/dance number – ‘Isn’t She Lovely’ by Stevie Wonder.)

All:

*Isn't she lovely
Isn't she wonderful
Isn't she precious
Less than one minute old
I never thought through love we'd be
Making one as lovely as she
But isn't she lovely made from love*

*Isn't she pretty
Truly the angel's best
Boy, I'm so happy
We have been heaven blessed
I can't believe what God has done
Through us he's given life to one
But isn't she lovely made from love*

*Isn't she lovely
Life and love are the same
Life is Petronella
The meaning of her name
Betty, it could have not been done
Without you who conceived the one
That's so very lovely made from love*

(As the song ends a crash of thunder is heard as Nightshade strides on stage from stage left.)

Nightshade: *(She strikes a pose)* Yes! I am indeed Loverrrrlyyyyy! *(She cackles loud and long until she comes to a coughing stop)*

Nanny: *(Having moved downstage again)* ...And deluded. *(Dismissively indicates Nightshade)* You? Lovely? If you're lovely then give me a tail and call me a monkey.

Nightshade: Done. *(She claps her hands and imps appear and quickly surround Nanny during which time they attach a tail to her behind before laughing as they group behind Nightshade.)* Do you like it?

King Bob: *(Gasps)* Nanny!. You.. you.. you...

Nanny: I what?

King Bob: You have a tail!

Nanny: I what?!

Everybody: You have a tail.

Nanny: Don't be absurd. I'm not a common donkey or something. I can't have a ta... *(She finally feels the tail behind her and screams)* I have a tail. I have a ta... *(She faints and the King catches her)*

Nightshade: Well she did ask for it. *(As nanny is fussed over Snivel enters from stage left and hands Nightshade a scroll.)* About time you got here. *(She snatches the scroll and addresses the Royal party)* Right you lot. I haven't come here to turn you all into fainting donkeys like her. *(Thumbs at Nanny who is slumped eyes closed against the King.)*

King Bob: Then why have you come, you wretch?

Nightshade: Oh, a wretch am I? Well let's see just how wretched I can be. *(She unfurls the scroll)* Upon this night of fullest moon I give to you this blessed curse. Before the child has reached sixteen... *(She's interrupted by Snivel tugging on her sleeve)* What is it? This had better be good.

Snivel: *(gulps and mutters)*

Nightshade: Speak up nitwit. How am I supposed to hear you when you snivel like that?

Snivel: Erm... *(Clears throat and looks sheepish)* It's not a full moon tonight.

Nightshade: Of course it is. The old hag I consulted clearly said the child would be born on the night of the full moon. And here this lot are, celebrating that occasion.

Snivel: But it's not a full moon. *(Nanny comes round in time to hear the last comment and stands upright again.)*

Nanny: She's right you rancid boil. It was the full moon last night.

Nightshade: It can't have been. No. No... They're always right. *(She turns on Snivel)* I told you to check when the full moon is.

Snivel: I did. But.. erm..

Nightshade: Arghh.. Enough excuses. *(Turns back to the others and points at them)* You may think you have won, but I'll be back.

Nanny: Better check your calendar first though, wouldn't want you to miss another full moon. *(Starts to laugh)*

(As Nanny starts to laugh Nightshade storms off stage left followed by the imps after one last parting shot.)

Nightshade: And you'd better check your tail. Wouldn't want to forget you've got it.

(Nanny looks like she might faint again and leans on the King)

King Bob: Don't worry Pong. We'll call in the Head of the Good Fairies Magical Reversal Squad and see if they can help you.

Queen Betty: Good idea. Maybe she can help us too.

King Bob: Help us with what?

Queen Betty: With Petronella.

King Bob: Don't be daft. We've got nanny to help with the baby. I'm not having Nightshade looking after her.

Nanny: Really! We're you not listening, your royal deafness? You really should consider getting those ears of years cleaned out or something. Lampshade was clearly threatening your daughter's life.

King Bob: Really! I just heard something about a full balloon. Thought she was full of a lot of hot air or something... but our daughter? No, this will never do. What if she comes back and does something? Guards! *(Guards step forward and wait expectantly.)* Find Colonel Smoggit and tell her to lock down the palace. Nobody gets in or out without express permission from me or Betty. Got it?

Guards: *(nod)* Yes Sir. *(They exit.)*

Queen Betty: Do you think that's enough, dear?

King Bob: With Nightshade involved? I doubt it. We better call in backup. Come on.

(They exit and the guests start to follow)

Nanny: *(looks around)* Yep that's it. Way to clear the room Pong. You get arrested, given a tail, and then everyone scarpers leaving you to it, just another typical day. Well, if that's how you want to play it...

(She stomps off stage)

Scene Two – Nightshade's Lair

(Nightshade is stomping around throwing things into a cauldron and muttering)

(Enter Snivel from stage right)

Nightshade: And where have you been? Nope. Don't tell me. I don't want to know.

Snivel: But mistress... your mother is.. I mean the old hag is here.

Nightshade: Good. Then show her in.

Snivel: Yes Mistress.

(Snivel exits stage right and returns with the old hag)

Old Hag: So, it's true then.

Nightshade: *(tries to look innocent)* What is?

Old Hag: That you bungled the curse and got the date wrong.

Nightshade: Oh that!.. Well it was her fault. *(points at Snivel)*

Old Hag: Is that so? And how are you dealing with the wretched thing?

Nightshade: Well, I... I stopped her pocket money.

Old Hag: What? Is that all? What kind of a witch are you?

Snivel: Actually she's quite a nice one.

Old Hag: *(to Snivel)* Who asked you, rat face? *(to Nightshade)* Have I taught you nothing? Slaves are there to be slaves. You'll not get anywhere by being nice to them. You've got to be horrid. Otherwise they'll walk all over you.

Snivel: Oh no mistress: I love dealing with Nightshade's woes and quirks, her knickers and shirts. There's nothing I like more than clipping her nails with pincers of brass, and licking the eyeballs she's stored up in jars.

Old Hag: Humph... that's more like it. Excellent simpering there. *(Snivel looks pleased)* Though if you were my slave you'd be on your knees like the miserable cretin you are.

Snivel: Yes mistress. *(Bows, falls to knees and edges backwards and exits stage left.)*

Nightshade: That's enough you monstrous fiend. Snivel is just fine without your interference. Now what am I going to do about that baby?

Old Hag: What are you asking me for? It's your problem. I told you what to do and you bungled it. Time for you to stand on your own feet... *(Nightshade falls to knees and old hag feet as if pleading for help)* ...and let go of mine. *(Nightshade lets go and sits back on haunches)*

Nightshade: Nothing? You're giving me nothing? *(Starts to stand)* I want help! What kind of a mother are you?

Old Hag: A bad one. *(cackles)*

Nightshade: Pahh! Fine. I'll do it myself. Just you see. I'll get her and that'll show them who's boss. The Princess will die.

Old Hag: Yeah, yeah. I'll believe that when I see it.

Nightshade: And see it you will. Even if I have to prize your cold dead eyes open to do it.

Old Hag: What do you mean by that? I ain't planning on dying yet.

Nightshade: *(avoids eye contact and tries to look innocent)* Not what I heard.

Old Hag: *(eyes narrow)* What have you been up to?

Nightshade: That would be telling. Though I suggest you watch your back.

Old Hag: Why? *(Nightshade refuses to be drawn on the matter)*

Old Hag: Pfft! What do I care? You don't scare me. Couldn't even pass your witching exams. F for Fail. Fail. Fail. Fail. You're one great big failure.

Nightshade: Yeah... Well... I got an A for Attitude!

Old Hag: Only because that's how you spell it.

Nightshade: Yeah... Well, I'll show you, you old bag. You'll see. I'm going places.

Old Hag: Of course you are dear. There's always room at the dump for relics like you. *(Snivel re-enters from stage left with a football)*

Snivel: It's time mistress.

Old Hag: (*snorts with derision*) What's that? Don't tell me. It's your crystal ball. (*Nightshade bursts out laughing*)

Snivel: (*replies in all seriousness*) No mistress hag. It's a football. We're due to play the Goblins of Krell in a football match.

Old Hag: (*shrieks*) Football!!! You're all mad. Never have I heard anything so ridiculous. You should be spending all your time wickedly scheming like I do.

Nightshade: Yeah but that gives you wrinkles. I like to scheme and keep fit.

Old Hag: (*starts to swoon and stagger around*) Oh...oh...oh... I'm feeling faint.. I think I may have a heart attack any minute now. (*Swoons with eyes closed. Nightshade starts tapping her foot in impatience*) Oh... oh... I don't think it can take the strain... (*Peeks to see if Nightshade is buying the act*)

Nightshade: Oh do get on with it.

Old Hag: (*disappointed*) Well it wouldn't hurt you to show a little concern. I am your mother after all.

Nightshade: And as my mother you told me to be horrible. So I am. So there. (*She sticks out her tongue at Old Hag before turning to Snivel.*) Come on Snivel. Find my footy boots and let's get going. Those Goblins are going down today! (*She cackles and sweeps off stage left with Snivel following behind*)

Old Hag: Hmphh! For that I'll show her just how despicable I can be too. (*She ventures over to the cauldron and throws in a few additional things from her bag before giving the cauldron's contents a stir with a long stick.*)

*Eye of newt, and toe of rat.
Batty wing, and tail of cat.
Whiskers fine, and length of string.
Sneaky spell now do your thing.
Three times she'll try to do her ill,
Three times the Princess won't lie still.
Upon the fourth if she prevails,
A prince will ride in on a snail.
He'll seal her fate; end all that's snorey.
To him will go the palace glory.
If right beats wrong, she'll not see riches.
Instead my child will forever dig ditches!*

(*She cackles long and loud as she exits stage right.*)

Scene 3 – The Parade Ground

(*Scene is set for the parade ground with the guards forming a line across the stage. Col. Smoggit is at the end of the line with his back to the left wing and looking down the line of guards.*)

(*Ensemble number and scene change – A cappella to the tune of the Adams Family Theme Tune*)

All: *Time marches on (snap fingers twice)
Time marches on (snap fingers twice)
Time marches on, time marches on,
Time marches on. (snap fingers twice)*

*Palace life is busy,
We'll sing this little ditty
The guard is in a tizzy,
And time keeps marching on.*

*Time marches on (snap fingers twice)
Time marches on (snap fingers twice)
Time marches on, time marches on,
Time marches on. (snap fingers twice)*

Colonel: Right you 'orrible lot, stand up straight and do as I please. I am Colonel H.P. Smoggit... and yes I am a girl... so what? Girls can be Colonels too you know, and I beat every boy in my training squad to become one. Right, now, I am your commanding officer and when I say jump, 'you say how high?' Got it?

Guards: Yes Sir! *(Enter Nanny from stage right.)*

Nanny: *(Waves across to Col. Smoggit)* Yo-hoo... Colonel Smoggit... Mind if I stay and watch?

Colonel: Yes I do ma'am. The parade ground is expressly for the use of the Royal Guard. Nannies are not allowed.

Nanny: *(steps forward smartly)* Oh well in that case, I'm in!

Colonel: You're in what?

Nanny: I'm in the guard silly. Look, the King signed my application himself. *(she waves an official looking document at Smoggit who takes it and peruses it carefully)*

Colonel: *(coughs)* Ahem. Yes well, in that case.. Fall in you miserable maggot. Just 'cos you are the princess's royal handler, it don't mean you get no free passes from me. You'll train just like the rest of this lot. Now sound off, and let's make sure you're all here.

Guard 1: Private Smith, here Sir!

Guard 2: Private Jones, here Sir!

Guard 3: Private Pike, here Sir!

(Nanny doesn't sound off and contemplates her nails instead. Smoggit frowns and approaches her)

Colonel: You didn't sound off.

Nanny: I know.

Colonel: Well then do it so I know you're here.

Nanny: But you already know I'm here. I mean, you are talking to me so why should I tell you something you already know?

Colonel: Because I am your commanding officer and I gave you an order.

Nanny: Bit of a stupid one if you ask me.

Colonel: *(Moves slowly round behind Nanny)* Well I didn't ask you and tradition dictates it. Now next time I ask you to sound off... *(Leans over her shoulder)* DO IT!!!

Nanny: *(jumps in surprise)* Yes Sir!! *(Smoggit starts to return to her previous station as Nanny wiggles a finger in her ear)* No need to shout.

(Colonel stops, and glares at Nanny, who shrugs her shoulders and tries to look innocent. Colonel reaches her starting position and stands straight and tall)

Colonel: *(calls)* Sound off.

Guard 1: Private Smith here, Sir!

Guard 2: Private Jones here, Sir!

Guard 3: Private Pike here, Sir!

Nanny: Nanny here, Sir! *(A couple of postmen run onstage from stage right.)*

Postman 1: We're here too Sir.

Colonel: And who exactly might you be?

Postman 1: I'm Candy, this is Floss, and that's Stick.

Colonel: Stick? What kind of a name is that?

Postman 3: The kind I was given by my parents. Got a problem with it? *(Puffs out chest and steps towards Smoggit as if ready to fight him.)*

Colonel: *(Waves him off)* No, no. Just... never mind. Are you here for military training?

Postman 1: *(shrugs and looks at the other postmen)* I dunno. Are we?

Postman 2: Yes we are. We're the new recruits from the post office and orders are that we need training before we can venture out of the city.

Postman 3: Yup. Apparently there are all sorts of dangers awaiting us when we start our delivery rounds.

Postman 2: Exactly. Reports have been coming in that some people keep dogs as pets. *(Looks horrified)* Can you believe that? Dogs! Don't people know dogs chew the legs of postmen?

Postman 3: And that's not all. I heard there are even cats on watch waiting to wrap themselves round your ankles and cut off your blood circulation if you stand still for too long!

Postman 1: And that's why we need training! *(Postmen all nod agreement.)*

Colonel: All right then. Better get in line then.

Nanny: *(dramatic sigh)* Does that mean we've got to sound off again?

Colonel: Be quiet woman. You'll do what I tell you to do and so will everyone else.

Nanny: You sound just like Lampshade.

Colonel: She's the reason all this extra training is happening in the first place. Now can we get on?
(Nanny mimes zipping her mouth closed, locking it and throwing away the key.)

Colonel: Thank you. Now you, Madam! *(points at Nanny)* Come here. *(Nanny looks around as if to say 'Who me?')* Yes you! Come on. *(They move down stage)* The rest of you form a semi-circle around us and watch. We're going to demonstrate the art of sword fighting to you. *(Everybody gets into position and Smoggit retrieves his sword as another is handed to Nanny.)* Right, en-guardé. *(They take up positions and start to fight. Smoggit hits Nanny on the hand)*

Nanny: Owww.. that hurt.

Colonel: Well it will do if you drop you guard. Here, I'll kiss it better for you diddums. *(chuckles and makes to kiss the poorly hand)*

Nanny: *(parries and get Smoggit on the hand)* You mean drop your guard like you just did?

Colonel: Hmm.. yes.. quite. *(They take up positions again and Smoggit leaps forward and lands on Nanny's foot.)*

Nanny: *(She starts hopping and trying to hold her sore foot.)* Owwwww.. I didn't know foot stomping was a part of sword fighting.

Colonel: Yes.. well.. erm.. it's not officially.

Nanny: Oh, so you unofficially go round stomping on people's feet then do you?

Colonel: Of course not. Here, let me kiss that better, if it'll make you stop.

Nanny: *(Nanny offers up her foot and Colonel kisses it – disgust shows on her face while Nanny chuckles)* Come on then, let's be having you.

Colonel: *(coughs and regains his composure)* Yes.. final round. *(Stands en-guardé)* Prepare to be trounced. *(she advances on Nanny and they fight valiantly. Nanny twists out of the way of one blow and gets hit on the bottom.)*

Nanny: *(holds bottom)* Owwwwweeeeee. Are you trying to kill me or train me?

Colonel: Well your defence is clearly shocking. But I am terribly sorry for striking so hard.

Nanny: *(turns and points her bottom expectantly towards him)* Well?

Colonel: You can kiss that better yourself. *(Clears throat)* Ahem.. yes well.. *(Notices the others watching)* Well, now... you get the general idea. Pair up and we'll head off to the training field and see what you can do.

(They march off stage left, in pairs. Meanwhile, Snivel creeps on stage via stage right and is wringing her hands)

Snivel: Hmm... She's not going to like that. It won't be easy getting past them in a hurry, even if she does manage to find an invisibility cloak. I better return and warn my mistress. *(Exit Snivel stage left)*

Scene 4 – Nightshade's Lair

END OF SCRIPT SAMPLE!