

THE WEDDING OF KING GEORGE

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FADE IN:

SUPERIMPOSE:

"Accidents will occur in the best regulated families."
(Charles Dickens)

INT. WINTER PALACE BALLROOM, RUSSIA, 1743

A huge ballroom with many guests. Seated in THRONES at the front of the room are ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA and her husband ANTHONY ULRICH. The infant CZAR IVAN is in a nearby BASSINET. A GERMAN GENERAL approaches the throne, bows.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

General Biron -- so good to see you. Have you seen the infant czar yet? -- but no, of course you haven't. Come forward, please.

Anna Leopoldovna motions for a lady-in-waiting to lift the infant from the bassinet.

GERMAN GENERAL

What a handsome fellow he is -- and he'll make a fine czar under your regency, Anna Leopoldovna.

He makes the sign of the cross.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

I'm told you have word from my father, the Duke of Mecklenburg?

GERMAN GENERAL

He sends his love and promises to get here to see his grandchild, as soon as he can.

Across the room, ELIZABETH, cousin of Anna and heiress to the throne, watches. She lifts a finger and a GENERAL OF THE PREOBRAZHENSKY REGIMENT leans toward her. She whispers in his ear.

INT. PREOBRAZHENSKY GUARD BARRICKS - NIGHT

A long-shot of FIGHTING MEN adjusting ARMOR, SWORDS, SPEARS. At the head of the room two of the guard are fitting a BREASTPLATE on Elizabeth. The GENERAL OF THE PREOBRAZHENSKY REGIMENT is at her side.

GENERAL OF PREOBRAZHENSKY REGIMENT

It is all set, Your Highness. The
Regent and her husband are to bed,
their guard light and unready.

ELIZABETH

I wish no unnecessary bloodshed. I
insist on this.

GENERAL OF PREOBRAZHENSKY REGIMENT

We will do our best to avoid any,
Your Highness.

INT. HALL OF THE WINTER PALACE -- NIGHT

Elizabeth -- now with SWORD and SHIELD -- leads the
PREOBRAZHENSKY GUARD down the hall to Regent Anna
Leopoldovna's bedroom. Three of the OPPOSING GUARD run into
the hall WEAPONS drawn.

GENERAL OF PREOBRAZHENSKY REGIMENT

Drop your weapons or die!

The opposing guards look at each other, then to the general,
then to Elizabeth.

ELIZABETH

My cousin will not be harmed --
this I promise you.

Realizing dying will accomplish nothing, the opposing guards
drop their weapons.

GENERAL

Take their weapons!

INT. ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA'S BEDROOM -- NIGHT

Anna and her husband sleep. He SNORES. The infant Czar
sleeps between them. Suddenly, the door is thrown open and
Elizabeth barrels in. Anna Leopoldovna sits up and SCREAMS.
Anthony, her husband, sleeps.

ELIZABETH

Do not scream again, Anna
Leopoldovna.

Anna is so terrified she cannot scream. Anthony's SNORING
grows louder.

ELIZABETH

You and the infant czar are under arrest. All will be explained to you in time. For now you must dress and pack. I've a coach waiting for you.

Anthony Ulrich starts drunkenly SLEEP-SINGING:

ANTHONY ULRICH

Away from ... home ... away from home...

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

Where are you sending us?

ELIZABETH

To the Fortress of Riga near Livonia.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

No! Send us to Mecklenburg, Germany to live with my father. I have no desire to be regent nor my son Czar. You know this, Elizabeth. I told you so.

ANTHONY ULRICH

Cold and tired and all alone ...

ELIZABETH

Please don't make this more difficult than it is. You must stay with the baby czar and he certainly cannot be allowed to go to Germany. Once in Riga, I will send word by emissary. You will not be forgotten nor harmed. I promise this.

ANTHONY ULRICH

I am 500 hundred miles away from home ...

Anthony's singing melds into rhythmic snores.

EXT. FORTRESS OF RIGA -- TWO MONTHS LATER - DAY

A COACH rolls up to the FORTRESS, stops. A FORTRESS GUARD exchanges words with the driver then signals the TOWER GUARD.

FORTRESS GUARD
Emissary from Empress Elizabeth!

TOWER GUARD
Emissary from Empress Elizabeth!

The CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD rushes to the coach. ABRAM GANNIBAL, a tall, very black man in a RUSSIAN GENERAL'S UNIFORM steps out of the coach.

INT. LARGE ROOM OF FORTRESS -- DAY

The room is large and bare. Anna Leopoldovna sits at a BATTERED WOODEN TABLE eating a mean-looking porridge out of a meaner looking bowl. Gone is the royal apparel from two months earlier; gone are the gaiety and royal bearing. A KNOCK comes at the door; it swings open and the captain of the guard enters.

CAPTAIN OF THE GUARD
Madam -- the emissary from Empress Elizabeth is here.

Anna Leopoldovna jumps up excited, frightened.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
Yes ...Yes. I-I will receive him.

The captain bows and leaves. A moment later Gannibal enters the room. He bows, but only slightly.

GANNIBAL
Anna Leopoldovna.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
General Gannibal -- we meet for the first time. I'm honored.

GANNIBAL
The honor is mine, Madam, I assure you.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
And if I may introduce my husband
--

FRAU SCHELLENBERG (the maid) walks into the room with a TRAY and is at once so startled at Gannibal's blackness, she drops the tray.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
Frau Schellenberg!

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
A thousand pardons, Your Grace.

Gannibal appraises the maid's plumpness with some interest then turns back to Anna Leopoldovna.

GANNIBAL
Quite all right. My black skin often causes that reaction.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
Sir, please have a seat. Excuse the coarseness here. The Empress has not yet given us an allowance. Frau! Vodka for our guest.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
Vodka ...?

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
Yes ... Well ... tea anyway.

GANNIBAL
Tea will be fine.

INT. AT THE SUPPER TABLE - DAY

Gannibal is sitting with Anna Leopoldovna and her husband, a cup of tea balanced on his knee.

ANTHONY ULRICH
I knew General What's-His-Name couldn't be trusted. Anyone who treats horses like people and people like horses is a horse's ass himself -- Bah hah hah ...!

Gannibal smiles politely. Anna looks at her husband as if he's a fool ... which he is.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA
All of my life I've heard about you, General Gannibal -- my mother uncles, aunts, and all the other members of Czar Peter's family knew you, yet somehow we never met. Strange, isn't it?

GANNIBAL

Actually, we did meet, Anna, but you wouldn't remember. You were a baby.

At this very instant the maid returns with the baby czar. Anna Leopoldovna is startled.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

Shelly -- not now!

FRAULEIN SCHELLENBERG

It's his feeding time and I thought--

GANNIBAL

Wait a minute -- that's the infant Czar, isn't he?

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

(weakly)

Yes.

GANNIBAL

Bring him here. I want to see him.

The maid looks at her mistress who nods, then walks to Gannibal.

GANNIBAL

(awe-struck as he takes the baby)

The Czar Ivan.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

(frightened)

We no longer call him that.

GANNIBAL

(looking at her sharply)

But he is the true Czar, appointed so by Empress Anne before her death.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

Yes, sir.

Gannibal motions for the maid to take the infant.

GANNIBAL

I will report to Empress Elizabeth he is in the pink of health.

ANNA LEOPOLDVNA
 Yes, General. And if you would tell
 her --

She looks at her husband.

ANNA LEOPOLDVNA
 (continuing)
 Anthony, if you would allow me and
 the general a moment of privacy.

ANTHONY ULRICH
 (indignant, hysterical)
 What? How dare you! I'm your
 husband -- why shouldn't I listen?
 I have rights, you know! I'm stuck
 in this miserable fortress just
 like you -- and it's all your fault
 -- yours, not mine! And, you,
 General -- you tell the Empress
 I've had it up to here with her
 medieval Russian games! You hear
 me? I can't and won't take any more
 of this abuse! I don't have to! I'm
 from Germany too -- a Habsburg! And
 we Habsburgs are not to be pushed
 around -- and won't be! Tell her
 that -- you hear me?!

Still fuming, Anthony storms out the room. Anna waits a
 moment then walks to the door and locks it.

ANNA LEOPOLDVNA
 Brainless ape ... It makes my skin
 crawl just looking at him. I was
 forced to marry him, you know. We
 now sleep in separate beds. He
 doesn't want it that way, but there
 can be no other way now.

Gannibal is looking at her intently. She walks to the
 corner, reaches into a BASKET and pulls out a BOTTLE OF
 VODKA.

ANNA LEOPOLDVNA
 Ta-ta! But please don't tell the
 guards, Gannibal.

GANNIBAL
 I won't breathe a word.

She hurriedly finds TWO GLASSES.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

You truly are the most
extraordinary man I've ever met.
And your heroics in battle are
legendary.

GANNIBAL

Greatly exaggerated, I'm afraid.
All the real heroes are dead.

Anna looks around the room to make sure all is secure.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

I never wanted my son to be czar.
It was forced on him, and his
regency on me. All I ever wanted,
Gannibal, was to return to my
father's Palace in Mecklenburg,
Germany.

GANNIBAL

I've been told as much.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

Then you will help us get there?

She looks around the room again, then slips her MILK-WHITE
HAND over Gannibal's COAL BLACK HAND.

ANNA LEOPOLDOVNA

(continuing)

I will do anything to get me and
the baby to Mecklenburg ...
anything.

Gannibal looks down at her hand then into her beautiful
milk-white face.

EXT. MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ, 17 YEARS LATER -- DAY

SUPER: "MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ, GERMANY -- 17 YEARS LATER"

A COACH barrels down the road toward the PALACE OF
MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ. The DRIVER snaps his WHIP over the
TEAM OF FOUR.

DRIVER

Mock Snell!

The horses bolt forward.

INT. INSIDE COACH - DAY

JOHN SHACKLETON, Royal Painter to KING GEORGE II, frantically reaches for his EASELS as he tumbles to the floor.

SHACKLETON

Maniac!

EXT. FRONT OF THE CASTLE OF MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ -DAY

The twenty-something DUKE FREDERICK OF MECKLENBURG-STRELITZ stands on the porch in a green smoking jacket. He smiles as the coach pulls in front. The door to the coach opens and Shackleton tumbles out.

DUKE FREDERICK

Welcome, Herr Royal Painter!

INT. PALACE FOYER -- DAY

The Duke leads Shackleton into the foyer where CHARLOTTE and MARIE (a maid) stand waiting. Charlotte is oddly ethnic-looking; her hair is covered in a SCARF. Marie is a gorgeous blonde. Thinking Marie is the Princess, Shackleton smiles at her and begins to bow -- but stops as the Duke waves his hand toward Charlotte.

DUKE FREDERICK

And this, Herr Shackleton, is my sister, Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg.

Shackleton gags, but quickly recovers; Charlotte curtsies.

CHARLOTTE

Welcome to Mecklenburg, Herr Royal Painter.

SHACKLETON

Thank you ever so much, Princess Charlotte -- and I must say, you are the loveliest of the three princesses I've visited so far.

The Duke and Shackleton walk into the dining hall and begin eating and drinking like old chums. While they eat the Duke makes sure Marie keeps Shackleton's TANKARD full of beer. The two men exchange jolly toasts as they drink.

SHACKLETON

Choice stuff, this Mecklenburg
brew.

DUKE FREDERICK

But a fine beer cannot be judged
with only one sip, Herr Royal
Painter. One must get drunk to be
thoroughly sure.

SHACKLETON

Well, sir, one more and I'll be
thoroughly sure for sure
Hahahahahah!

DUKE FREDERICK

Onward then!

The Duke motions to Marie to fill Shackleton's tankard yet
again.

INT. PALACE SUNROOM -- DAY

Shackleton is at his EASEL painting away. Charlotte is
seated, SCARF still on her head. The Duke is perched on a
stool nearby. Shackleton's face is BEET-RED from all the
beer the Duke has been pouring into him. The PORTRAIT is
finished all but for Charlotte's hair. Shackleton makes one
more stroke, smiles, points with his brush to Charlotte's
head.

SHACKLETON

And now, my dear, if you would
remove your scarf, please.

The Duke is coming at Shackleton with the PITCHER of beer
again.

DUKE FREDERICK

One more toast, Mr. Shackleton,
shall we?

SHACKLETON

No, no ... seriously ... I
shouldn't ... I can't ... I--I ...
well ... just this ... this last
one -- the absolute last one, mind
you.

DUKE FREDERICK

Tail of the dog, then!

SHACKLETON

(weakly)

Yes, eh ... tail of the dog

Shackleton lifts the tankard and downs the whole thing.

DUKE FREDERICK

That, sir, is drinking.

Shackleton burps, picks up the paint brush, looks to Charlotte.

SHACKLETON

And now, my dear, If you would ...
ah! -- you already have.

Indeed she has ... Charlotte has removed her scarf to reveal an *AFRO!* Not a seriously funky 'fro, for although frizzy, it is a brown frizzy of a texture mulattoes possess.

SHACKLETON

Thank you, my dear.

Shackleton looks back to the painting, lifts his brush, stops. He squints at Charlotte's hair. He leans his head one way then the other. He scratches his head. He looks back to the painting then back to Charlotte. Finally, he reaches into his pocket for his *SPECTACLES*, puts them on, looks at Charlotte and -- *GASPS!*

SHACKLETON

Heavenly Father!

INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDIO BACK IN LONDON -- DAY (WEEKS LATER)

Shackleton is arranging the *PORTRAITS* of four different German princesses. Frowning, he places *CHARLOTTE'S PORTRAIT* last in the line-up. We hear *FOOTSTEPS* from the hall then the 12-year-old *PAGE* steps into the room:

PAGE

Hear Yee! Hear Yee! Princess
Augusta and Lord Bute enter!

SHACKLETON

Not so loud -- and I told you about
that before ... didn't I? Didn't I?

PAGE

I'm supposed to be loud.

SHACKLETON

And I'm supposed to flog you when
you talk back, aren't I? Aren't I?

PAGE

Whatever.

The DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA enters with her not-so-secret
lover LORD BUTE. The Dowager is a tall Germanic beauty of
40; Bute is a refined and athletic 50.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Royal Painter -- you're back!

SHACKLETON

(taking a deep bow)

So very good to be back, Your
Highness.

BUTE

So, Shackleton -- did you enjoy
Germany?

SHACKLETON

A privilege to have served, sir.

Bute snickers. The Dowager steps forward.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And you're confident you've
captured the likeness of each
princess?

SHACKLETON

Each blade of hair, Majesty.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

(giving Shackleton a stern
look)

I should hate to think otherwise.

Bute snickers.

BUTE

Don't let her frighten you,
Shackleton. Her bite is worse than
her bark.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And, you, sir, stop being so
clever. Everyone is so clever
nowadays and I wish to goodness we
had a few fools left.

BUTE

But we do, Your Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And what do they talk about?

BUTE

Clever people.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Fools!

Bute is staring at the FIRST PORTRAIT in the line-up. He turns to the Dowager.

BUTE

Here's a comely lass if ever there was.

The Dowager steps to the portrait, stares at it, turns to Shackleton.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And she is --?

SHACKLETON

(smiling)

The most splendid Princess Sophia of Brunswick Wolfenbüttel, Your Highness.

The Dowager and Bute exchange FROWNS. And it is at this very instant the Page's ANNOUNCEMENT is heard.

PAGE

HEAR YEE! HEAR YEE! The King and Prince enter!

KING GEORGE II and his grandson PRINCE GEORGE enter the studio. Bute and Shackleton bow; the Dowager curtsies.

KING GEORGE II

What's going on here, Royal Painter? Why wasn't I immediately informed of your return?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

We wanted it to be a surprise, Father-in-law.

KING GEORGE II

I don't like surprises -- you know that! I commissioned Shackleton for this job -- not you, madam, so I should have been informed of his return immediately!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I beg your indulgence, Sire, for any untoward thing I might have done. And now -- my son, if you would --

She takes her son, Prince George, by the elbow and guides him to the SECOND PORTRAIT.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

(continuing)

Behold this lovely princess the royal painter has rendered for your inspection.

The King throws his hands up for silence.

KING GEORGE II

Which one is Sophia of Brunswick-Wolfenbittel?

SHACKLETON

That would be the first one, sire.

KING GEORGE II

I'm the King of England, and if I tell my grandson to marry Sophia of Brunswick-Wolfenbittel, he shall ... and I do ... and that settles it ...

The King turns to Shackleton.

KING GEORGE II

(continuing)

Providing she has no defects uncovered by the Royal Painter ...?

All eyes shift to Shackleton who is visibly happy now. He has THREE CARDS in his hand. He makes a pretense of reading the top one. He looks up satisfied and confident.

SHACKLETON

No defects at all, Your Majesty. Sophia of Brunswick-Wolfenbittel is a most splendid choice. Besides her

(MORE)

SHACKLETON (cont'd)
obvious beauty, she is sixteen
years of age and--

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Sixteen is too young.

KING GEORGE II
But you were sixteen when my son
married you!

KING GEORGE II
And you tried to stop it --
remember?

The King turns back to Shackleton.

KING GEORGE II
Continue, Royal Painter.

SHACKLETON
Yes, sire. She does excellent
needlework, plays the harpsichord
with a delicacy far beyond her
years --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
(sharply)
Did she play for you?

SHACKLETON
(smugly)
Yes, Your Highness. I followed the
King's instructions to the letter,
and as I say, her playing is
exceptional, inspired, burnished
and unhurried, the strongest and
most nuanced performances I've
heard to date. Dolce... Animato...
Spiccato... Vivace...
Tranquillamente... Energico...

KING GEORGE II
Ahem ...Yes, well ...Languages?
What languages does she speak?

SHACKLETON
(tensing up)
Well ... on that, sire, there may
be a slight deficit -- she speaks
only German.

The Dowager grabs the sides of her face as if someone has
yelled plague!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Only German?!!

KING GEORGE II
Don't be ridiculous. She's only 16.
Why, she'll be speaking better
English than all of us in a
fortnight.

But the Dowager has moved on to the SECOND PORTRAIT.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Mr. Shackleton, pray which princess
is this?

SHACKLETON
That would be Princess Marie of
Saxe-Gotha -- another splendid
choice.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Ah! -- my niece.

KING GEORGE II
No!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
But Your Majesty, dear, at least
let Mr. Shackleton list her
refinements --

KING GEORGE II
No! There'll be no cousin-marrying
on my watch. That's the reason half
the sovereigns in Europe can't
produce healthy heirs. No, madam --
no inbreeding!

The Dowager looks at Bute who looks back powerlessly. She
frowns. The King looks from the second portrait to the
THIRD.

KING GEORGE II
Now then, Mr. Shackleton, tell me
about this next princess.

SHACKLETON
That would be Magdalena of
Saxe-Weissenfels, Sire, and she is
--

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

NO!

The King is stunned by the violence in the Dowager's voice.

KING GEORGE II

At least let him finish,
Daughter-in-law.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I will not! I'd rather my son marry
an African's daughter than a
Saxe-Weissenfels princess.

The King sighs.

KING GEORGE II

We'll come back to her later. Now
this last one, Mr. Shackleton --
who is she?

Shackleton's face instantly registers alarm.

SHACKLETON

This last one, sire?

KING GEORGE II

(impatiently)
Yes, man -- speak up! Who is she?

SHACKLETON

Oh, yes, sire, yes, yes. She is
Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg,
sir.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Who?

SHACKLETON

Princess Charlotte of Mecklenburg.

KING GEORGE II

Where on earth is Mecklenburg?

SHACKLETON

Near the Pomeranian border opposite
Ratz --

KING AND DOWAGER

Rats?!!

SHACKLETON

Eh ... Ratz ...*burg*, Your Highness.
A tiny principality bordering
Mecklenburg ... and eh ...yes,
quite right ... entirely infested
with rats. Bad business there,
sire. Nothing good has ever come
from that part of Germany -- border
ruffians, scallywags, cuthroats,
the lot of them.

The King is staring at Charlotte's portrait as he strokes
his beard.

KING GEORGE II

And yet she does look fertile
... hmmm....

He turns to the prince.

KING GEORGE II

(continuing)

And that's the paramount thing,
grandson -- a queen must be as
fertile as a rodent and this is a
fertile one -- why, can't you see
it in her teeth, by George?!

PRINCE GEORGE

Yes, grandfather.

Steeling himself, Shackleton steps forward.

SHACKLETON

Oh, eh -- one thing I forgot to
mention about the first princess,
Your Highness. The first princess
expressed a deep interest in
learning English and --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What are her refinements?

SHACKLETON

As I said, Sophia of Brunswick is
--

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Not that princess -- this Charlotte
Mecklenburg-Ratzburg girl!

Shackleton can't believe the unthinkable is happening.

SHACKLETON

This one? But Majesty, you can't possibly --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Yes! This one! Her refinements, sir -- be quick, we haven't all day.

Shackleton shuffles his cards. He's fighting to control the terror building in him, but there's no controlling the sweat beads popping on his forehead.

SHACKLETON

Yes, indeed -- her refinements. Eh, yes, I remember some small accomplishments -- hardly worth mentioning, really ... ah! -- here it is, what of it there is: expert needlework, superb botanist ... hmm ... dances skillfully, rides a horse well ... and what's this? Writes poetry, they say, although I'd hardly place much store in that --

And it is at this point Prince George steps forward, his curiosity roused.

PRINCE GEORGE

She writes poetry, Mr. Shackleton?

SHACKLETON

Yes ... but quite inferior poetry, I'm sure, as you can well imagine ... Now then ... where were we? Oh, yes -- to return to the first princess we looked at --

PRINCE GEORGE

Does she have musical talents, Mr. Shackleton, sir?

Shackleton looks at the young prince as if he is a second from throttling him.

SHACKLETON

Does who have musical talents?

PRINCE GEORGE

Why, Charlotte, of course.

SHACKLETON

You're referring to Princess
Charlotte?

PRINCE GEORGE

I am.

SHACKLETON

Musical talents? ... Musical
talents ...? Why, yes, of course
-- whoever heard of a German
princess without musical talents?
Perfectly implausible ... Unheard
of ... Now then, to return to the
first princess --

PRINCE GEORGE

What are they?

SHACKLETON

What are what?

PRINCE GEORGE

Princess Charlotte's musical
talents.

SHACKLETON

Her musical talents?

PRINCE GEORGE

Yes.

SHACKLETON

You want to know what her musical
talents are?

PRINCE GEORGE

I do.

SHACKLETON

Yes, of course you would --
perfectly plausible you would --
isn't it? ...Princess Charlotte
...Right, Charlotte, Charlotte
...Right ... Let me see now --
where did I put her card? ...
Right.

Shackleton shuffles the cards; then, not finding the one he seeks, he begins searching his pockets finally pulling out a beer-stained one. He sniffs it and frowns. He reads it and frowns deeper still. In a second his face is dripping with contempt.

SHACKLETON

Pshaw ... if we are to believe these scribblings -- and I question them myself even though they are in my own hand ... she plays violin, harpsichord, fife -- both wood and metal -- cello, mandolin, French horn, harp, organ, tenor slide trombone --

KING GEORGE II

All those instruments -- amazing! Did she play each instrument for you, per my instructions?

SHACKLETON

She did, Majesty, but not being a musician, I can hardly vouch for what I heard. Thus, I put it to you, sire, perhaps her ability to play so many instruments is an indication she's not especially good at any one of them.

Prince George steps forward again; for some reason he is more than a little interested in Charlotte.

PRINCE GEORGE

Forgive me again, Mr Shackleton, but how many languages does she have?

SHACKLETON

Who?

PRINCE GEORGE

Why, Princess Charlotte, of course.

SHACKLETON

Her...? You'd like to know how many languages she has?

PRINCE GEORGE

Yes, Mr. Shackleton, I would.

SHACKLETON

As in spoken languages?

PRINCE GEORGE

Well, yes ... of course.

SHACKLETON

And that's a reasonable question, mind you ... But ... doesn't it yet again bring up the first princess we looked at earlier, Your Highness? The one who -- as the King so wisely pointed out -- would surely learn English in a fortnight? Well, the King was entirely correct -- as our King always is about such matters -- because the first princess, in my most humble opinion --

Shackleton waves his hand toward the FIRST PORTRAIT while taking a step in that direction.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What do you think you're doing --?

SHACKLETON

Majesty...?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

My son asked you about Princess Charlotte, not that other princess.

KING GEORGE II

Royal Painter, answer my grandson's question directly and be quick about it. How many languages does Charlotte speak!

SHACKLETON

Charlotte ...?

KING GEORGE II

That's what I said!

SHACKLETON

Oh, Princess Charlotte? Yes, Your Highness, but of course, sire.

(taps his head)

I have that answer right in my head, Sire.

KING GEORGE II

And I'll have your head right on a pike if you stall a second longer.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

How many bloody languages does she speak, man?!

SHACKLETON
 (doomed)
 Five languages, Majesty.

EVERYONE
 (Astonished)
 Five languages?!!

SHACKLETON
 (hysterically)
 Six, if you count Portuguese.

INT. KING GEORGE II'S BEDCHAMBER, 10 MONTHS LATER -- DAY

King George II is dying. The Dowager, Prince and other court people are at his bed. BARON VON STRASSER, (the Royal Physician) folds the King's hands on his chest.

STRASSER
 The King has passed.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 God bless him. He was a great king.

An OFFICIAL steps forward, removes the CROWN from the King's head and places it on Prince George's head.

OFFICIAL
 King George II is dead. Long live
 King George III!

EVERYONE
 Long live King George III!

TRUMPETS BLOW, other voices echo, etc. The Dowager turns to her son.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Be strong, my son, for now you are
 the King.

PRINCE GEORGE
 Yes, mother.

BUTE
 And now we must fetch Princess
 Charlotte of Mecklenburg to be your
 bride.

PRINCE GEORGE
 Yes -- send Admiral Anson for her
 at once.

OFFICIAL
As you command, Your Majesty.

EXT. FRONT OF MECKLENBURG PALACE -- DAY (SEPTEMBER 1761)

Several coaches escorted by a platoon of ROYAL DRAGOONS pull up in front of the palace.

INT. MECKLENBURG PALACE -- DAY

DETER, the butler, stares out the window at the entourage. He is highly upset about it all. The Duke appears at the top of the stair and calls down to him.

DUKE FREDERICK
What?! What are you doing in here,
you blockhead? Can't you see
they've arrived? Outside -- Quick!

DETER
I-I ... Yes, Your Grace

From the top of the stairway Princess Charlotte calls down. She is dressed in a GLORIOUS WEDDING GOWN.

CHARLOTTE
Frederick, I'm ready.

DUKE FREDERICK
Yes, Charlotte, I see you are!

He goes up a few steps and starts beaming. He is very much pleased with what he sees until his eyes reach her MULATTO AFRO.

DUKE FREDERICK
You look marvelous. Simply
marvelous -- enchanting! Why, when
you get to London the English will
fall to their knees to see such a
lovely German princess. And... eh,
eh... wait a minute.

He goes to the landing at the middle of the stairway and begins adjusting his PRUSSIAN CAVALRY PARADE JACKET, GOLD BRAIDING, RED CAMPAIGN SASH at his stomach. He fusses with the SABER at his waist until it is tilted a precise 90 degrees.

DUKE FREDERICK

There ... now ... How do I look, my sister?

CHARLOTTE

Like Frederick the Great after routing the French at Rossback!

DUKE FREDERICK

Really? Do you really think so?

EXT. IN FRONT OF PALACE -- DAY

The MEMBERS of the King's Escort are out of the coaches. Deter calls to them:

DETER

Lord Anson, please?

ANSON

That would be me, sir. And you are?

DETER

Deter, butler to the Duke of Mecklenburg.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Look, here, Deter -- are they ready inside?

DETER

Yes, sir, The princess is ready. Are you to be the proxy, sir?

The EARL OF HARCOURT steps forward.

EARL OF HARCOURT

That would be me, sir -- Earl of Harcourt.

(calls out)

Royal crown, please!

CAPTAIN YOUNG of the Royal Dragoons comes forward with the ROYAL CROWN. LADY TEASLEY, a dazzlingly pretty 20-something, is eying the captain deliciously. She steps forward.

LADY TEASLEY

A minute, boy! I left my parasol in the coach. Fetch it for me, would you?

CAPTAIN YOUNG

Ma'am?

The young captain's face has turned beet red. ADMIRAL ANSON, a fiftyish man in Royal Navy uniform, takes Lady Teasley by the elbow.

ADMIRAL ANSON

You promised to behave this trip,
Lady Teasley.

Lady Teasley giggles.

LADY TEASLEY

But sir, if I'm out of order,
oughtn't the handsome admonish me
himself?

ADMIRAL ANSON

The man is a captain and should be
addressed properly.

LADY TEASLEY

But I did, Admiral Anson.

ADMIRAL ANSON

I distinctly heard you call him boy
... and just now handsome.

LADY TEASLEY

But he is a handsome boy, isn't he
Lady Ancaster?

LADY ANCASTER

A diamond of the first water, to be
sure.

BARONESS HAMILTON is inspecting the "palace" through her
MONOCLE.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Am I to believe this is the ...
ahem ... palace of the next queen
of England?

LADY ANCASTER

Perhaps it's their summer palace.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Summer, winter, or fall, madam,
this edifice is most emphatically
not a palace. Its coloring is too
rusticate; its outline excessively
exfluncticated.

LADY TEASLEY
Exfluncticated ...?

BARONESS HAMILTON
Excessively.

LADY TEASLEY
Lady Hamilton, I don't think I know
what exfluncticated means.

LADY ANCASTER
No one does, My dear.

LADY TEASLEY
Honestly, Lady Hamilton, you say
the cleverest things.

LADY ANCASTER
'Tis true. Why, she's so clever she
sometimes doesn't catch what she's
saying herself.

LADY TEASLEY
How do you do it, Lady Hamilton?
What's your secret?

LADY ANCASTER
Her secret is a new husband every
four years -- each richer than the
one before.

BARONESS HAMILTON
Lady Ancaster, I would ask in the
future, you get my permission
before airing my clean laundry in
public Now, then, what was
your question, Lady Teasley?

LADY TEASLEY
If a woman doesn't love her
husband, Lady Hamilton, how can she
ever be happy?

BARONESS HAMILTON
My dear, girl. If woman doesn't
love her husband, -- and he's rich!
-- no happier arrangement is
possible.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Ladies, please! Your positions,
please!

The group lines up. Anson and Harcourt to the front; the ladies behind them. Harcourt holds a PURPLE PILLOW with the ROYAL CROWN on it. Anson signals to Deter.

ADMIRAL ANSON
We are ready, sir!

DETER
Yes, your Grace!

Deter runs to the door and calls to the Duke who waits at the landing midway up the stair.

DETER
They are ready, Your Grace!

DUKE FREDERICK
And are we! Enter then!

Deter turns and calls out to Anson.

DETER
If your excellency, please -- Enter then!

ADMIRAL ANSON
Enter we shall -- here we go, lads!

Anson and Harcourt lead the group inside.

INT. STAIR LANDING MIDDLE -- DAY

The Duke calls up to Charlotte.

DUKE FREDERICK
Now, Charlotte! Come down, now!

Charlotte is walking down the stair as the group files in.

Charlotte passes the Duke at the middle stair landing and continues down.

The group assembles in front of the stairway just as Charlotte reaches the bottom.

She smiles at them; they look in horror at her MULATTO AFRO.

Harcourt looks at the crown on the pillow in his hand then to Charlotte's hair.

EARL OF HARCOURT

See here, girl -- where is your mistress?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Eh, Harcourt --

Before Charlotte can answer her brother utters an indignant "WHAT?" and begins running down the stairs. But he is going too fast, trips, and soon is tumbling down as everyone jerks out of his way. More embarrassed than hurt he tries to scramble up, but in his fall his sword has become bent around his leg.

BARONESS HAMILTON

And there you have it.

DUKE FREDERICK

And there you have, what?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Are you all right, man?

DUKE FREDERICK

Why wouldn't I be all right? And what did she mean by 'And there you have it'?

ADMIRAL ANSON

You came down rather hard, sir.

DUKE FREDERICK

We've established that. Now I want to know what she meant by -- look, look ... nevermind. Just proceed with the proxy wedding -- can we?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Yes, of course, sir, but first we'll get a surgeon in here.

DUKE FREDERICK

Surgeon? What? is someone sick? Who? Where? When? How? No -- you see? someone is not sick -- now will you proceed with the proxy marriage per the contract signed by your king? Will you?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Harcourt, help me, here. We'll carry him to the dining room where our surgeon can have a look at his leg.

DUKE FREDERICK

Sir -- whoever you are! -- the marriage contract explicitly states the proxy marriage takes place the second you walk through the door. Do you need your surgeon to read that for you? Is that your problem, sir?

ADMIRAL ANSON

And so it shall, but not before you're attended to. Here we go, Harcourt -- one, two, three!

Anson and Harcourt lift the Duke using the fireman's carry.

DUKE FREDERICK

Put me down!

Anson and Harcourt let the Duke drop.

DUKE FREDERICK

Ow! My leg! My leg!

HARCOURT

Don't worry, sir, the surgeon is on his way.

Anson and Harcourt lift the protesting Duke again and carry him away. Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster step toward Charlotte.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Not to worry, my dear -- a momentary delay.

CHARLOTTE

Yes, ma'am.

BARONESS HAMILTON

(looking at Charlotte's hair)
I'm Baroness Hamilton, and this is Lady Ancaster. And I must say, you have such beautiful hair. Did you get it from your mother or father?

CHARLOTTE

Get it, madam?

BARONESS HAMILTON

(pointing to Charlotte's hair)
Your hair.

CHARLOTTE

I don't think I know. My mother and father passed when I was but a child.

BARONESS HAMILTON

My condolences, dear -- but surely you have portraits of them?

CHARLOTTE

Yes, I keep them over my bed.

LADY ANCASTER

May we see them? We Brits so love portraits of ancestors, really.

BARONESS HAMILTON

It's quite the national pastime.

LADY ANCASTER

All the rage in Philidelphia, too.

INT. CHARLOTTE'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster each have a portrait in hand. Lady Hamilton is inspecting hers with her monocle.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Perplexing.

CHARLOTTE

Perplexing?

BARONESS HAMILTON

Eh -- perplexingly good, I mean to say. Such classic Teutonic features... eh, were you adopted, perchance?

CHARLOTTE

Adopted?

LADY ANCASTER

What Lady Hamilton means, is in England all the good families adopt these days.

CHARLOTTE

I didn't know that.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 'Tis so. If we don't set a good
 example for the lower classes, who
 shall?

Lady Hamilton reaches for the portrait in Lady Ancaster's
 hand.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Ah! -- your father?

CHARLOTTE
 Yes, poppa.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Such a remarkable Bavarian nose --
 why, you could cut cheese with it.

CHARLOTTE
 Cut cheese?

LADY LADY ANCASTER
 His nose is as sharp as a knife,
 she means.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Yes ... But I was wondering, my
 dear -- do you have portraits of
 your grandparents?

CHARLOTTE
 I do.

LADY LADY ANCASTER
 And your great-grandparents?

CHARLOTTE
 I do.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Both sets?

CHARLOTTE
 Both sets?

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Of great-grandparents from each
 line. Let me see, that would be --

LADY ANCASTER
 Sixteen portraits, I should think.

CHARLOTTE

Sixteen?

BARONESS HAMILTON

We English show off ours every
chance we get.

Lady Hamilton hangs portrait of mother back up -- UPSIDE
DOWN!

LADY ANCASTER

Quite the national pastime, it is.

Charlotte shrugs, then turns portrait of mother right-side
up.

CHARLOTTE

I can do much better than sixteen.
Our portrait room has seventy-two
portraits of ancestors.

BARONESS HAMILTON AND LADY ANCASTER

Seventy-two?!

CHARLOTTE

If you would follow me, please.

INT. LEAD COACH DAY

Anson and Harcourt are in the lead coach.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Did you see her hair?

HARCOURT

Do you think I'm blind?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Not you -- the Royal Painter! She
doesn't look anything like his
portrait of her.

HARCOURT

They never do. Those damn royal
painters -- they don't do portraits
... they do flattery art. The
Dowager will have his head on a
platter -- the king too, once he
sees her.

And it is at this instant a KNOCK comes to the coach door.
Anson pulls up the shade to reveal Lady Hamilton peering in.
Quickly, he opens the door.

BARONESS HAMILTON
Sirs! We've been looking all over
creation for you! Move over,
Harcourt.

Lady Hamilton steps in. Anson closes the door.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Where have you been?

BARONESS HAMILTON
In her bedchamber, then to her
portrait room where she showed us
ancestor portraits proving 72
quarterings and nine-hundred years
of descent -- possibly more.

EARL OF HARCOURT
Seventy-two quarterings? Gad!
That's more than the King himself.

ADMIRAL ANSON
But what explains the hair?

HARCOURT
Flog the both of them until we find
out, I say.

Another KNOCK comes to the coach window -- it's the Duke!
Anson opens the door a crack.

DUKE FREDERICK
Gentlemen, my sister is waiting. If
you would follow me, please.

Anson gives the Duke a forced smile.

ADMIRAL ANSON
One moment, if you would, sir.

The duke pulls the door open wider as he waves the MARRIAGE
CONTRACT in Anson's face.

DUKE FREDERICK
Absolutely not! The marriage
contract requires the proxy
marriage take place the instant you
enter the palace. My sister will
not tolerate --

Anson angrily grabs the door.

ADMIRAL ANSON

I don't give a cackling-fart what
your frog-faced sister won't
tolerate, and that's because she's
a fraud, sir -- a bleeding fraud!
Now give us a moment, damn you!

This said, Anson SLAMS the door in the Duke's astonished
face. Harcourt and Lady Hamilton are aghast. Suddenly
realizing the outrageous insult he's made, Anson is aghast
too.

ADMIRAL ANSON

What did I do? My apologies. Those
words were not mine -- must be the
heat. Frightfully sorry, lads,
truly.

He's looking at Harcourt and Hamilton for support but they
are speechless.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Look ... I-I ... I don't know what
got into to me. I wasn't speaking
from the heart. Please strike those
words from your memory. I'll ...
eh, apologize to the fellow too.
Yes, that's the thing to do. Can't
risk an international incident over
it, can we?

BARONESS HAMILTON

No ... that would never do.

HARCOURT

Never.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Absolutely not.

EXT. IN FRONT OF LEAD COACH -- DAY

Anson steps out of the coach with the forced grin of
seasoned diplomat. The Duke is quaking with rage. His hand
is on the HILT OF HIS SWORD.

ADMIRAL ANSON

My good man, look at you, sir -- as
fit as a fiddle. Your recuperative
powers are amazing --

DUKE FREDERICK

Sir! You have besmirched the House of Mecklenburg. I demand satisfaction. We must duel --there is no other way. You have --

BARONESS HAMILTON

Delayed the wedding long enough.

HARCOURT

And as the contract says, the proxy wedding must take place immediately. Duty first, sir.

Lady Hamilton hooks her arm around the Duke's sword arm and gets him walking.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Indeed. It would cause an international incident of antediluvian proportions if it did not. Breach of contract, and all that rot. Wars have been fought for less, sir. Why, your subjects would rise in revolt and be perfectly proper doing so.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Duke Frederick, I assure you --

BARONESS HAMILTON

Come along now, Admiral. Earl Harcourt is precisely correct -- duty first.

INT. PALACE, GREAT HALL -- DAY

The group is assembled in the GREAT HALL. Charlotte and the Duke face the English.

Harcourt steps forward with the ROYAL RING on a PURPLE PILLOW. Anson motions to Charlotte and two of the dragoons lift her and place her PRONE on a nearby SOFA. Harcourt steps forward and places his FOOT ON THE SOFA. Admiral Anson begins reading the PROCLAMATION.

ADMIRAL ANSON

I, Lord Anson, Vice-Admiral of Great Britain, by the powers vested in me by George William Frederick, King of Great Britain and Ireland, Duke and Elector of Hanover, Duke

(MORE)

ADMIRAL ANSON (cont'd)
of Cornwall and Rothesay, Duke of
Edinburgh, Marquess of Ely, Earl of
Eltham, Viscount of Launceston,
Baron of Snowdon, Prince of Wales
and Earl of Chester, do hereby
present his proxy in marriage to,
you, the most serene Princess
Charlotte of Mecklenburg -- the
Earl of Harcourt ...

Harcourt takes the RING off the PURPLE PILLOW and hands the
pillow to one of the dragoons.

ADMIRAL ANSON
You may place the ring on the
Princess's finger.

Harcourt does this. Anson turns to Charlotte:

ADMIRAL ANSON
I know pronounce you, Queen Consort
to King George III of England.

VOICES
Hear! Hear! God save the Queen!

Harcourt helps Charlotte up. Lady Hamilton kisses Charlotte
on each cheek.

BARONESS HAMILTON
And now, Princess Charlotte, you
are Queen Charlotte -- our Queen!

LADY ANCASTER
And not just any queen -- Queen of
all Britannia!

VOICES
Hear! Hear! Long live the Queen!

INT. LONDON -- SHACKLETON'S STUDIO -- EVENING

Shackleton is at an easel painting when the page comes in.

PAGE
Baron Von Strasser here to see you,
sir.

SHACKLETON
Von Strasser? The Royal Physician
to see me? But why?

PAGE

Who do I look like, Nostradamus?

SHACKLETON

Wait!

Shackleton dashes to CHARLOTTE'S PORTRAIT and throws a TARP over it. He straightens his clothing.

SHACKLETON

All right, send him in. And when he leaves, come back. I've a bone to pick with you.

PAGE

Oh, yeah?

SHACKLETON

Out! Out! Or I'll flog you within an inch of your life right now! Out! I say!

The page leaves. In a moment we hear the harsh CLICKING of PRUSSIAN RIDING BOOTS upon the cement floor. Strasser is a tall militaristic man and wears a SWORD at his side. He towers over Shackleton. Shackleton extends his hand, Strasser pretends not to see it.

SHACKLETON

So good to see you, Royal Physician.

VON STRASSER

Where is it?

A look of alarm flashes over Shackleton's face. His voice comes weakly.

SHACKLETON

It, sir?

VON STRASSER

Princess Charlotte's portrait.

SHACKLETON

Yes, of course, Herr Doktor, of course.

VON STRASSER

Don't patronize me.

SHACKLETON

Yes, sir. Forgive me. Right here, sir.

Shackleton walks to the rear of the studio and uncovers the portrait of Charlotte. Strasser takes one look and whips around, teeth baring.

VON STRASSER

You pendulous ape! This is not a true likeness of the mulatto.

The word "mulatto" almost causes Shackleton to faint. He looks at the German in stark terror. His words come in a terrified whisper.

SHACKLETON

Mulatto?

VON STRASSER

Do you realize what you've done, you imbecile? The mulatto is due in London soon. She's already married by proxy to your king. This means if he goes through with the formal marriage ceremony - which I can't imagine he would after one look at her true mulatto face - the blood of Africa will in a few generations flow through every royal house in Europe - which I suppose, was your plan all along, wasn't it?

SHACKLETON

Sir... Sir, I swear I had no--

VON STRASSER

Dummkopf! Didn't you see it in her face?

SHACKLETON

But, sir, the object of art is beauty. It was my job to hide her deficits. No royal painter would dare show her ... her ... as you put it, sir, true mulatto face.

With one frightening motion, Strasser jerks his SWORD from its SCABBARD and bashes the painting sending it flying across the room.

VON STRASSER

Everyone in Germany knew about her which is why no German prince would touch her with a ten-foot pole -- and now this ... this abomination before God!

SHACKLETON

But, sir, what was I to do? Had I shown her true features, her brother, the Duke, would not have allowed me to leave with the portrait --

Strasser slides his sword into the scabbard as he talks:

VON STRASSER

Who are the treasonous dogs you conspired with? We have ways of making you talk, you know.

SHACKLETON

Treason!!!? No! No, sir! I swear on my mother's grave it was not treason, sir. You must believe me. Never -- never would I even dream treason.

Strasser is already walking away; he calls to Shackleton over his shoulder.

VON STRASSER

You will be bought to the Tower to confess your crimes soon enough. Until then you are not to leave London for any reason whatsoever -- do I make myself clear, Mr. Shackleton?

SHACKLETON

Leave London? Why would I do that, sir? I'm innocent! And I would no more leave London than book passage to America! And as to the Tower, sir, I hardly fear that. Freedom is something every man holds dear, but some men hold honor more precious, and as you will soon learn, sir, I, John Shackleton, am one of those men!

EXT. THE WATERFRONT -- DAY

Shackleton is hurrying down the waterfront. Behind him a boy rolls a wheelbarrow filled with his property. Shackleton stops at a ship's boarding plank and calls up to the seaman standing on the deck:

SHACKLETON
Seaman! Is this ship going to
America?

SEAMAN
Australia, mate.

Shackleton frowns and continues to the next ship where a FIRST MATE stands at the plank.

SHACKLETON
Sir, is this ship bound for
America?

FIRST MATE
That I am, gov'nor. Casting off
tomorrow, in fact.

Shackleton tears a fat wallet from his pocket.

SHACKLETON
I need to book passage.

FIRST MATE
Would you now? Well, mate, the
company office is on Fleet Street.
All you need do is go there,
present your credentials, and--

SHACKLETON
I need to board now! Right now!

The First Mate rears back indignant.

FIRST MATE
Impossible! Not in a thousand years
would I book passage straight off
the docks. Absolutely not! It will
never happen on any ship I'm First
Mate on. We have our standards,
I'll have you know --

SHACKLETON
I'll pay triple in gold!

FIRST MATE
Will that be first class or
steerage, sir?

INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDIO -- DAY

ALLAN RAMSAY, is at an easel painting when Lord Bute walks
in.

BUTE
And you are?

RAMSAY
Allan Ramsay, assistant to the
Royal Painter.

Bute holds up a LETTER.

BUTE
Really? then you need to know about
this. We received it from your
master, John Shackleton, a few
hours ago. It is his resignation
and recommendation that you become
royal painter.

RAMSAY
He didn't tell me a word!

BUTE
Highly irregular I agree -- in
fact, highly suspicious too.

The Page enters the studio.

PAGE
Hear Yee! Hear Yee! The Dowager
Princess Augusta enters.

The Dowager enters her petticoats whipping about her; with
her are two guards.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Where is he? Where is the little
piker!

She whips in Ramsay's direction.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Who is this man?

Bute is faster than Ramsay.

BUTE

He's Allan Ramsay, Your Majesty,
the one Shackleton recommended as
his replacement.

Bute holds up Shackleton's letter. The Dowager snatches it
from him, crumbles it, tosses it in his face.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I'll decide that, not he. Now where
is the treasonous dog?

Bute smiles and shrugs.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Oh, you think this is a game, Bute?

Bute bends to kiss her cheek.

BUTE

Let us have a little sugar, love.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Not now! And I've told you about
that before.

Bute gives a mock bow.

BUTE

You're beautiful when you're mad,
you know that?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You really are pushing it, sir.
Just remember, you've been warned.

Now comes the CLICKING of PRUSSIAN RIDING BOOTS. Von
Strasser walks in. Bute frowns at him; Strasser returns the
frown.

VON STRASSER

Majesty, there you are.

Bute reaches in his vest pocket, pulls out a TIN OF SNUFF,
and pinches a thumbfull into his nostril.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Put that snuff away. I no longer
allow it in my presence.

Bute is no longer amused.

BUTE
Surely you jest?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Oh? And why would I?

She takes a step backward so that she is almost touching Strasser. Bute's face immediately flames jealousy.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Doctor Strasser says it destroys
the olfactory glands and rots the
brain. Isn't that true, Dr.
Strasser?

Strasser gives a dry laugh.

VON STRASSER
Actually, that's not true, Your
Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
It isn't? Why not?

VON STRASSER
Because anyone who uses snuff
doesn't have a brain to begin with.

The Dowager's peel of laughter echoes across the room. Bute's expression changes from jealousy to violent anger. His hand goes to the HILT OF HIS SWORD.

BUTE
Was that insult directed at me,
sir?

VON STRASSER
As you English say -- if the shoe
fits --

Suddenly realizing the violence brewing, the Dowager steps between them.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Not another word! -- both of you.

She turns to Ramsay.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
(continuing)
As for Shackleton, we'll find him
if we have to flush every sewer in
London.

VON STRASSER

Won't be necessary, Your Majesty. I know exactly where he's at.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You do?

VON STRASSER

Indeed. I purposefully frightened him to smoke him out, then had my little friend --

Strasser points to the Page who smiles and takes an elaborate bow.

VON STRASSER

(continuing)

... follow him. He booked passage to America. We'll be boarding the ship and dragging him back later today.

The Dowager brightens up.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You darling! Why are we Germans always the ones to get things done around here? You may kiss my hand.

She extends her hand. Strasser gives Bute a spiteful grin then bends to his knee to kiss her hand.

VON STRASSER

With pleasure, Your Grace.

Bute is livid. Seeing this, the Dowager withdraws her hand.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Well, then, that's that. Haul him back and throw him in the Tower. And I want answers. I want the names of his co-conspirators if you have to break every bone in his body to get them.

VON STRASSER

And that you shall have, Your Excellency.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Keep me informed of your progress. Guards!

Whipping her skirts about her as she turns, she storms out of the room. Strasser is grinning at Bute.

VON STRASSER

She's beautiful when she's mad,
isn't she?

Rather than answer, Bute's hand goes for the hilt of his sword. Strasser matches this action, waits, then slowly backs out of the room his PRUSSIAN RIDING BOOTS CLICKING as he goes. Bute takes his hand off the hilt of his sword.

BUTE

That would be Baron von Strasser.
He hates the English and we English
hate him. But you needn't worry
about that, Ramsay. I'll be killing
the Hun soon enough.

Ramsay's eyes widen.

EXT. PORT OF LONDON -- DAY

A tall ship glides from its berth topsails a-whipping. Shackleton is sitting in a deck chair with a TANKARD of beer in one hand, a fine Spanish CIGAR in the other. Sitting next to him is a FELLOW. Shackleton stands up and waves his tankard toward London.

SHACKLETON

A plague on you, London! May you
rot in Hell!

FELLOW

Care friend. There are spies
everywhere these days.

SHACKLETON

A German king! A German Dowager
Mother, and now a mulatto queen.
How has it come to this, I ask you?
Are we not Englishmen?

FELLOW

Aye, that we are.

SHACKLETON

Then why are our Kings and Queens
all Germans?

FELLOW

Aye.

SHACKLETON

Are we not are the descendants of
King Arthur?

FELLOW

Aye.

SHACKLETON

Then how does this German dog have
the power to throw me in the Tower
of London -- and what for? I ask
you? What for?

FELLOW

Well, what for, man?

SHACKLETON

For doing my job, that's for what.
For prettifying a frog-faced girl
so she looks like a German
princess. That is my crime, sir!
That is why the Hun swine wants to
draw and quarter me! That's why I
stand before you now.

FELLOW

Oh, that's it, is it.

SHACKLETON

And that is why I'm going to
Philadelphia, never to return to
this precious stone set in the
silver sea -- this bitch goddess
Britannia again.

FELLOW

Never say never, mate.

The ship passes FISHERMEN IN THEIR BOATS. Shackleton lifts
his tankard in salute.

SHACKLETON

Good-bye noble fishermen! Salt of
the earth, you are, boys. God's
people -- Englishmen!

A SMALL SLEEK YACHT is racing toward the ship. Shackleton
doesn't see it, but the fellow does. Shackleton takes
another guzzle of beer then waves to the fishermen again.

SHACKLETON

True Anglo-Saxons, you are --
Anglorum Saxonum! -- and never
forget that, lads!

FELLOW

My, she's coming along fast. A ship
of the Royal Guard. Wonder who
they're after?

Suddenly, the smaller craft is beside them. Shackleton takes
another mouthful of beer and salutes it with the tankard.

SHACKLETON

(calling to the unseen
captain)

Good show that! Fastest yacht I've
ever seen. English sailors like
you, are why we rule the seas, sir!

Von Strasser steps to the deck so Shackleton can see him.

VON STRASSER

Going somewhere, Mr. Shackleton?

Shackleton's jaw and tankard drop at the same time.

SHACKLETON

You ...!

VON STRASSER

Yes, me ... And I need not tell
what happens next, do I, Mr.
Shackleton?

SHACKLETON

(weakly)

No, sir.

EXT. ALBERCORN'S CASTLE -- COURTYARD -- DAY

Harcourt, Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster are taking tea in
the courtyard when Anson walks over looking like he's just
seen a ghost.

HARCOURT

Gad! What's wrong, Anson?

ADMIRAL ANSON

They put Shackleton in the Tower.

EVERYONE

WHAT! Why?

ADMIRAL ANSON

We all know why. And in case there's one among us who doesn't, I'll say it -- because our German princess is really our German mulatto, agreed?

BARONESS HAMILTON

Yes! Agreed, agreed, and agreed. Now can we end this dreadful farce and get on with our lives?

LADY ANCASTER

You mean, tell the queen she's no longer the queen? And, pray, who'll do that? Not me!

HARCOURT

Fine, I'll do it then -- where is she?

BARONESS HAMILTON

Well, Anson ...?

ADMIRAL ANSON

It's the contract that bothers me. We're all bound by it -- even the king.

HARCOURT

Bound to the "authentic" Princess of Mecklenburg -- not someone's mulatto bastard.

BARONESS HAMILTON

That wasn't very nice.

HARCOURT

Being sent to the Tower isn't very nice.

LADY ANCASTER

But we can't break the contract. We don't have that authority. Isn't that what you mean, Lord Anson?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Our duty was to perform the proxy marriage and bring the princess to London. The simple fact is, no other authority is vested in me.

HARCOURT

Try telling that to the Dowager.

BARONESS HAMILTON

And end up like Shackleton? No thanks!

LADY ANCASTER

Lady Hamilton, correct me if I'm wrong, but wasn't there a rumor about this sort of thing years ago?

BARONESS HAMILTON

Rumor?

LADY ANCASTER

About a black African who defiles a German princess.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Oh, that rumor. That's been around since Othello -- longer, I'm sure. What are you getting at --

ADMIRAL ANSON

Wait minute -- wait a minute! Did you know there's a Russian general blacker than the ace of spades? That's a fact. I actually knew the fellow - a brilliant military engineer. Met him in Paris before the war. He was giving lectures on military fortifications at the University. Amazing stuff. I actually used some of his techniques in the field, and get this - he was raised in Peter the Great's court as the czar's godson.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Oh, that Moor! I heard about him - everyone's known about that rascal for ages! Czar Peter raised him right along with his own children. In fact - right along with Elizabeth, the current Empress of Russia. My god! If he's still alive he'd be like a brother to the Empress of all Russia!

ADMIRAL ANSON

Right you are, Lady Hamilton. And his name was ... I want to say,

(MORE)

ADMIRAL ANSON (cont'd)
 Hannibal - that's right Hannibal.
 I'm sure of it ... how could I
 forget a name like that, right?"

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Hannibal ... it is catchy. But are
 you saying you think --

ADMIRAL ANSON
 We'll have to get him here, there's
 simply no other way. We'll have to
 get him here to explain the whole
 thing to the King. And that, lads,
 is how we pull our bottoms out the
 fire.

EARL OF HARCOURT
 Gad, man! You don't really think --

LADY ANCASTER
 But Admiral Anson -- how do we get
 him here in time?

ADMIRAL ANSON
 I know several Russian admirals. We
 could get a message to Empress
 Elizabeth. I'm sure she'll send him
 to London ... or here. Here in
 Harwich would be better.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 This is all utterly mad -- but
 there's a method to this madness, I
 must say.

LADY ANCASTER
 And I know just the thing to do
 while we wait for him -- we visit
 Samuel Johnson, the wisest man in
 England to get his advice.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Darling man. Brilliant mind.

HARCOURT
 Why just Johnson? Why not trek to
 Tibet to get the Dalai Lama's
 opinion? Then pop over to Rome to
 receive the Pope's blessing? Oh,
 oh, oh, I know ... to top things
 off, we sail to France to get
 Voltaire's two pennies worth, hey?

LADY ANCASTER

No need. Voltaire is visiting London, I read it in the Chronicle this morning. We can stop at his hotel on the way back.

HARCOURT

You can't be serious.

LADY ANCASTER

Sir, I'm as serious as ovarian apoplexy.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Would you like me to describe how serious ovarian apoplexy is, Mister Harcourt?

HARCOURT

No, let Voltaire do it -- I'm sure he's nothing better to do.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Then it's settled -- Johnson then Voltaire.

LADY ANCASTER

The adventure continues!

BARONESS HAMILTON

Crusaders we are!

LADY ANCASTER

One for all, and all for --

EARL OF HARCOURT

The Tower!

BARONESS HAMILTON

My dear Mister Harcourt, I must tell you, wit is not your forte and you should leave it to people who haven't been at a university.

EXT. LONDON SAMUEL JOHNSON'S HOUSE - EVENING

The group sits at a long table with SAMUEL JOHNSON. Johnson's black servant, FRANK BARBER, serves everyone a hot toddy and leaves.

SAMUEL JOHNSON
African descent?

BARONESS HAMILTON
Quite right, Dr. Johnson. That's
what we believe.

The great man shakes his head as if there's a bee in his
ear.

SAMUEL JOHNSON
You mean, as in Negro, black,
colored, dark-complexioned, dusky,
ebony, Cushite, Ethiop?

BARONESS HAMILTON
All of the above, sir.

Slowly, Dr. Johnson examines each of the faces in the room.

SAMUEL JOHNSON
Frank Barber, my assistant, served
your hot toddies a moment ago. Are
you saying the princess looks like
him?

BARONESS HAMILTON
Oh, no, sir. Her skin is quite
white and at a distance she would
surely pass for white. But close up
is another matter. Indeed, sir, her
hair is quite the African type.

SAMUEL JOHNSON
Woolly?

BARONESS HAMILTON
Wooly, sir?

SAMUEL JOHNSON
As in kinky, nappy, knotted,
frizzy, matted, un-straight,
peppercorn, camel-like?

Harcourt gives a polite cough.

HARCOURT
Dr. Johnson, sir, I think a more
apt description would be mulatto
hair, sir.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Mulatto?

LADY ANCASTER

Yes, Dr. Johnson, mulatto.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Not quadroon, octoroon, quinton or hexadecaroon?

HARCOURT

Sir...?

SAMUEL JOHNSON

Nevermind.

Johnson stands, places his hands in back of him as he paces. After a few paces he starts a long boring speech:

SAMUEL JOHNSON

A Highland gentleman, a younger branch of a family, once consulted me if he could not validly purchase the Chieftainship of his family from the Chief who was willing to sell it. I told him it was impossible for him to acquire, by purchase, a right to be a different person from what he really was; for that the right of Chieftainship attached to the blood of primogeniture, and, therefore, was incapable of being transferred. I added, that though Esau sold his birth-right, or the advantages belonging to it, he still remained the first-born of his parents; and that whatever agreement a Chief might make with any of the clan, the Herald's Office could not admit of the metamorphosis, or with any decency attest that the younger was the elder; but I did not convince the worthy gentleman.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Your point, if I have it correctly, sir, is we were not handed the goods the King contracted for.

SAMUEL JOHNSON

That is your position precisely, sir. If the girl is not the right

(MORE)

SAMUEL JOHNSON (cont'd)
and proper princess of Mecklenburg
- and by your description she most
assuredly is not - you've been
cuckold, sir.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Cuckold, sir?

SAMUEL JOHNSON
Cuckold, sir.

INT. COACH TO LONDON -- DAY

HARCOURT
Dr. Johnson told us all I need to
know. Really don't see the need to
bother Voltaire with this horrid
mess.

BARONESS HAMILTON
My Dear Earl Harcourt, Voltaire has
agreed to see us. Are you
suggesting we cause an
international incident of
antediluvian proportions by
standing him up?

HARCOURT
No, especially since I haven't the
foggiest idea what antediluvian
means.

LADY ANCASTER
Nor, I.

BARONESS HAMILTON
And there you have it.

INT. HOTEL PATIO -- DAY

Walking onto the hotel patio, they see Voltaire having
breakfast. Anson does the introductions.

VOLTAIRE
Admiral Anson? Are you the same
Admiral Anson, Lord of the Royal
Navy who defeated the French at
Cape Finisterre?

ADMIRAL ANSON
Yes, I'm that villain.

VOLTAIRE
Well, this is an honor! Please, be seated -- I insist.

Everyone is seated.

VOLTAIRE
Although French, I am no friend of France. Nor have I ever sought the applause of Parisians -- I'm not a dancing bear, you see. Indeed, if I were a young man I'd still be writing my attacks of my government from the Bastille.

LADY ANCASTER
Why no more, Monsieur Voltaire?

VOLTAIRE
Because over the years Bastille champagne has become shockingly inferior.

HARCOURT
Funny you should mention the Bastille, sir. We wanted your advice on a matter that could well send us to the Tower of London.

VOLTAIRE
And you come to me, Monsieur? a man whose second home is the Bastille?

Laughter.

ADMIRAL ANSON
We just transported King George's new Queen consort from her duchy in Germany and the problem is, sir, we believe her father is a black Russian general named Hannibal.

VOLTAIRE
Gannibal? You think my friend Gannibal is her father? Incroyable!

ADMIRAL ANSON
Gannibal! That's his name!

VOLTAIRE

I knew Gannibal very well, Monsieur. When he lived in Paris I made of point of meeting him. You see, before meeting him I had a theory the black race was incapable of rising above a very low intellectual level. Gannibal changed that opinion.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Yes, he's brilliant. I actually attended several of his lectures when he was teaching in Paris.

VOLTAIRE

A brilliant intellectual too, Monsieur. But of course the question is of his extra-curricular activities, not his intellect, no? And you say Dr. Johnson's point was primogeniture? Hmm ... Fascinant!

BARONESS HAMILTON

Dr. Johnson was of the opinion since the Princess is obviously not the true and authentic issue of the Mecklenburg-Strelitz line, the marriage contract is null and void.

VOLTAIRE

Of course primogeniture has no scientific basis -- nothing at all to do with whether a person is fit to be King ... or Queen Consort.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Sir, our duty was to insure the princess is the right and proper princess, not determine whether primogeniture is right and proper.

HARCOURT

For our purposes, sir, the point is not a philosophical one.

VOLTAIRE

But, Monsieur, I'm Voltaire, the world famous philosopher, remember? Still, as to the practical thing to do, that's plain enough. Let King

(MORE)

VOLTAIRE (cont'd)

George decide if he wants to marry her himself.

HARCOURT

But her hair -- it's mulatto hair and that means it's impossible she is the authentic princess of Mecklenburg.

VOLTAIRE

Man can believe the impossible, Monsieur -- it's the improbable he can't believe.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Actually, they're already married -- by proxy.

VOLTAIRE

Well, then at least let him see her before he lops off her heard. Who knows? he might like her head. As we say across the Channel -- the blacker the berry, the sweeter the juice.

HARCOURT

But then a bastard would be Queen of England!

VOLTAIRE

We're all descended from bastards, Monsieur. Including those among us who punish their horses for breaking Sabbath.

HARCOURT

It's still cheating, sir!

VOLTAIRE

Every man cheats in his own way, Monsieur Harcourt. And at the top of every man's family tree -- no matter his titles and crowns -- sit two filthy monkeys playing with their feces.

INT.COACH -- DAY

HARCOURT

'The blacker the berry, the sweeter
the juice' -- I can only imagine
where he got that.

LADY ANCASTER

All that shockingly inferior
Bastille champagne, I'll wager.

HARCOURT

I say, we go back to Mecklenburg,
find someone old enough to remember
who cuckold whom, and flog them
within an inch of their life until
we get the truth.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Just itching to flog somebody,
aren't you, Mr. Harcourt?

HARCOURT

Actually, I am.

LADY ANCASTER

Someone from the household -- a
scullery maid or butler -- they
know everything.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Someone as old as that Frau
Schellenberg. Hey! why not Frau
Schellenberg? She's old enough to
have been around when Charlotte was
conceived.

HARCOURT

By Jove, you're right, Lady
Hamilton -- she'd know everything!

ANSON

Now you're thinking, lads! Now
you're thinking!

A HORSEMAN rides up to the coach, stops, knocks on door.

HORSEMAN

Admiral Anson, sir! Message from
the fleet.

Anson takes the message and waves the horseman away. He
opens and reads it.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Well, dear hearts, he's on his way. Empress Elizabeth received our message and packed General Gannibal off yesterday. God Willing, he'll be in Harwich sometime tomorrow.

BARONESS HAMILTON

And so, we finally get to meet the black man who started this mother of all scandals.

LADY LADY ANCASTER

Mother of all scandals? Do you really think it all that, Lady Hamilton?

BARONESS HAMILTON

With a little luck, Lady Ancaster -- yes!

EXT. HARWICH HARBOR -- DAY

A Russian brigantine sits at Harwich Harbor. A royal coach with a team of four waits. A coachman dressed in silks stands nearby and at each side of the coach a mounted dragoon. Gannibal is bidding an old sea captain goodbye when one of the dragoons, a CAPTAIN, calls from the plank. Gannibal acknowledges him, walks down the plank then follows him to the coach. Harcourt is inside. He cracks the door.

HARCOURT

General Gannibal, forgive me for remaining in the coach, but this business is of some state secrecy, sir.

The two men shake hands. Gannibal enters the coach.

HARCOURT

How was your trip?

GANNIBAL

Excellent. The Baltic is wonderful this time of year and everything we ate came straight from her waters.

HARCOURT

But you must try our seafood before your return home. I'll see to it and would very much like your opinion of how North Sea seafood compares to Baltic.

The coach takes off, travels through the town to a two-story brick cottage and stops. Not from the cottage is Albercorn Castle; this is the castle where Anson and the rest are staying.

As Harcourt and Gannibal get out of the coach, another coach pulls up not far away.

Harcourt points to the coach and he and Gannibal watch as Admiral Anson, Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster get out. And it is as they are watching the coach, FRAU SCHELLENBURG, Charlotte's maid, gets out.

She seems confused. Anson and the others watch her closely. They look to Gannibal and Harcourt and wave. She looks to them, sees Gannibal, let's out a yelp, and faints into the arms of Lady Hamilton. The two women help her back into the coach. Anson begins walking toward Gannibal and Harcourt.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Gannibal, my good man, how have you been, sir?

GANNIBAL

I believe I've met you before, sir.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Indeed you have. One minute, please. Harcourt, please fetch the Duke, now.

HARCOURT

Right.

Harcourt bows to Gannibal then walks off toward the castle. Anson turns back to Gannibal.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Paris, École d'Artillerie, 1721,
and -

GANNIBAL

God, Yes! I remember you. You took my Geometry and Fortifications course. But did you say your name is Anson? You don't mean Admiral Anson who defeated the French at the First Battle of Cape Finisterre?

ADMIRAL ANSON

I'm afraid so.

GANNIBAL
My God! That's wonderful!

The two men hug.

GANNIBAL
You wouldn't believe how I wondered if the Anson I read about could possibly be my ex-student. I wrote a blizzard of letters to the Royal Navy, all apparently ignored. I suppose they thought I was a Russian spy.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Well, my teacher, you should know this: I used one of your techniques in Peru in '41 to demolish a fort and it worked out perfectly - just like you taught us it would!

GANNIBAL
And then you captured a Spanish galleon laden with gold which made you a wealthy man for life. I read all about it in St. Petersburg, my friend.

The two men continue talking as they enter the cottage. Once inside a knock comes to the door. Anson calls out "Enter!" and Harcourt walks in with the Duke.

ADMIRAL ANSON
General Gannibal, may I present to you, the Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, brother of Princess Charlotte.

GANNIBAL
A pleasure, sir

DUKE FREDERICK
Eh ... yes.

GANNIBAL
Your uniform - it's that of a Prussian cavalry colonel. Are you in the Prussian cavalry, sir?

The Duke's face reddens.

DUKE FREDERICK

No, sir! Mecklenburg
is independent. We have never
sided with Prussia - and now you
will excuse me, sir!

And with that the Duke storms out of the house his boots
a-flapping as he goes.

GANNIBAL

Did I say something wrong?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Don't give it another thought. By
the way, Gannibal, the woman who
fainted out front a moment ago.
It's almost as if she recognized
you.

GANNIBAL

Wouldn't be the first time. In
Russia there are still people who
when they first see the color of my
skin run for the hills. More than
likely she's never seen a black man
before.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Perhaps. So, Russia is that where
your estate is?

GANNIBAL

Reval, Estonia, actually, not that
far from St. Petersburg - say, did
you say that fellow was the Duke of
Mecklenburg?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Yes.

GANNIBAL

Interesting ... I wonder ... About
18 years ago I met a woman named
Anna Leopoldovna whose father was a
duke of Mecklenburg. I remember
this because the message she wanted
me to deliver to the Empress was
that she wanted to return to her
father's duchy in Mecklenburg.
Unfortunately, it never happened.
Anna Leopoldovna died in childbirth
nine months after I met her.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Died in childbirth, you say? Did
the baby live?

GANNIBAL
I have no idea.

INT. ALBERTON CASTLE, ANSON'S BEDROOM -- DAY

Frau Schellenburg sits in a chair in the middle of the room. Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster busy themselves with the tea service. Anson sits in front of Schellenburg. Harcourt holds a short RIDING CROP in his hand and is standing behind her. The mood is tense.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
I am sorry for fainting, Your
Highness. It's because I never saw
a black man before.

ADMIRAL ANSON
Frau Schellenberg, are you aware of
the penalty for treason?

Frau Schellenberg shrieks:

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
TREASON!?

ADMIRAL ANSON
Treason, madam.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
But Your Eminence, I'm just the
Queen's maid. I know nothing. I-

ADMIRAL ANSON
This was not your first time seeing
the African, was it?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
But, Your Eminence! I swear I have
never seen him before! You must
believe me. I only fainted because
--

ADMIRAL ANSON
We need to know about the Fortress
at Riga, Frau Schellenberg. We need
to know what happened there 18
years ago. Tell us, and we may be
able to help you. Of course, you'll
(MORE)

ADMIRAL ANSON (cont'd)
 tell us anyway -- Harcourt will see
 to that good enough, won't you
 Harcourt?

Harcourt loudly SLAPS the riding crop into his palm causing
 Frau to practically jump out of her seat.

HARCOURT
 Right.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 Mein Gott!

Baroness Hamilton hands her a cup of tea.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Tea, Frau Schellenburg?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Yes, please!

BARONESS HAMILTON
 One lump or two?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 No lumps!

ADMIRAL ANSON
 Yes, well, have your tea, madam. We
 can't, however, let you leave the
 room until you answer our
 questions.

BARONESS HAMILTON
 Why, your hands are shaking
 frightfully, dear. Here ... Let me
 hold your tea until you calm down.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 You don't understand.

ADMIRAL ANSON
 Try me.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 But, sir -- will you promise to
 protect me?

ADMIRAL ANSON
 We'll do what we can.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

'do what you can'? Is that all the assurance you can give me, Your Worship? I am grateful for that, mind you, but isn't there something more concrete you can say to help me remember horrible memories buried so deep in my heart and mind they may never surface again?

ADMIRAL ANSON

I can't give you any more assurances than that, madam, but perhaps Harcourt can.

(Anson stands up)

We'll leave you with him and come back in an hour.

Harcourt SLAPS the crop against his palm loudly.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Wait a minute! -- it has suddenly all come back to me

Anson sits back down.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Has it?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

In bits and pieces ... Yes ... I'm remembering now ... When the African came to Riga, I was chambermaid to Anna Leopoldovna the deposed Empress of Russia. Oh, such a fearful time! The African was an emissary of Empress Elizabeth. He stayed at the Fortress for a week and during this time he had sexual relations with Anna Leopoldovna.

(with trembling hands, she uses a napkin to wipe her brow)

From this accursed union Charlotte was born.

BARONESS HAMILTON

You're certain of this?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

As certain as death and taxes, Your Grace.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Continue.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Anna swore me to secrecy and sent me and the baby -- that would be baby Charlotte -- to Mecklenburg-Schwerin. But when I got there, the other Duke -- Anna's father -- would not allow me and baby Charlotte to stay. He turned us away.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Wait a minute -- you said the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. I thought the name of the duchy was Mecklenburg-Strelitz.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

There are two Mecklenburgs, Your Excellency.

HARCOURT

Two Mecklenburgs, you say?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes, Your Grace -- Mecklenburg-Strelitz, where Charlotte is from, and Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where her birth-mother Anna Leopoldovna is from. The two Mecklenburgs border each other and are related by blood.

ADMIRAL ANSON

That makes things clearer. Continue, please.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes, Your Lordship. Where was I? Oh, yes, as I say ... after Charlotte was born, Anna Leopoldovna sent me to her father's duchy -- Mecklenburg-Schwerin -- with the baby. But her father turned us away, as I say.

LADY ANCASTER

But why didn't you tell him Charlotte was Anna Leopoldovna's baby and thus his granddaughter?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

I did.

LADY ANCASTER

And he turned you away anyway?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

He did.

BARONESS HAMILTON

So you went to the other
Mecklenburg -- Mecklenburg-Strelitz
-- and were accepted by the Duke
and Duchess there?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Yes, Majesty. They took me and the
baby Charlotte in after her
grandfather, the Duke of
Mecklenburg-Schwerin, turned us
away.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Whose plan was it?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Plan, Your Eminence?

ADMIRAL ANSON

To pass off Charlotte as the Duke
of Mecklenburg-Stelitz' daughter?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

But it was never a plan, sir. The
Duchess fell in love with Charlotte
and raised her as her own. As for
me, I only knew Charlotte was being
treated like a princess and as the
ex-servant of her birth-mother,
Anna Leopoldovna, I was grateful.

BARONESS HAMILTON

And then the Duchess died, without
telling her son -- the current Duke
-- Charlotte was not his real
sister -- is that it?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Yes, Your Marchioness. Duke
Frederick was but a child himself
when I came to Mecklenburg with
baby Charlotte -- and, yes, he
thinks she's his true sister.

BARONESS HAMILTON
And Charlotte knows nothing about
it either?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
Nothing -- I swear.

Anson stands up.

ADMIRAL ANSON
And you will keep it exactly that
way. You will not breathe a word of
it -- or this meeting -- to anyone.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
Yes, My Lord -- you have my word
and I never go back on my word.

ADMIRAL ANSON
We'll see about that.

BARONESS HAMILTON
More tea, Frau Schellenburg?

She grabs the cup like it's a life-preserver:

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
Yes, yes, Your Grace -- please
more. I love your English tea, I do
... I do!

Frau Schellenberg guzzles down the steaming tea like a woman
dying of thirst.

EXT. ST. JAMES PLACE -- DAY

A line of carriages arrive in front of St. James Place.
Inside the first carriage are Charlotte, Frau Schellenberg,
and Lady Hamilton.

CHARLOTTE
Tell me, Lady Hamilton, what
happens when we reach the Royal
residence?

BARONESS HAMILTON
But we've already reached the Royal
residence, my dear. Look -- the
attendants are coming to fetch you
to meet your husband the King.

Two red-suited Royal attendants head for the carriage.

BARONESS HAMILTON

(continuing)

Now don't be nervous, Your Majesty.
It's really all quite ordinary.

CHARLOTTE

But you've been married three
times, Lady Hamilton. It is not
ordinary for me to see -- for the
first time! -- the man who is my
husband.

BARONESS HAMILTON

You'll do fine, and he'll think you
lovely. You'll see.

This said, Lady Hamilton opens the door to the coach and
steps out. She calls to the attendants to get the bags
first. Frau Schellenburg turns to Charlotte.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

'Married three times'... I want you
to get rid of this English whore
tomorrow -- you understand me,
Charlotte? Answer me when I talk to
you!

CHARLOTTE

Yes, Shelly.

The coachman places a footstool at the coach door then opens
it. One of the attendants helps Charlotte out. Charlotte is
dazzled by it all.

BARONESS HAMILTON

Don't worry. The King is in the
east tower, so he can't see you
from here.

This news causes Charlotte's face to redden.

INT. ST. JAMES PLACE -- DAY

Bute walks into the Dowager's apartment.

BUTE

Are you here, love? The princess
has just arrived and --

He sees the Dowager and Strasser sitting side by side and is
stunned.

BUTE

What is he doing here?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

That's none of your business, sir.
Now get the girl and bring her
directly to me. The King is not to
see her under any circumstances.
You have your orders -- now obey
them!

Bute fights back his rage and leaves the room. Strasser
grins.

VON STRASSER

The old fool didn't like seeing me
with you, did he?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

That, sir, is the least of my
concerns.

The Dowager takes his hand.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Come, let's go to the window and
see if we can spot the mulatto.

They go to the window. Strasser let's his arm slip around
her waist. Bute walks back in.

BUTE

I thought so, you German swine!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What are you doing back here? I
told you to--

STRASSER

Who are you calling swine, you
English dog?

The men go for their SWORDS.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Stop it! The both of you!

BUTE

English dog am I?

STRASSER

Yes -- but I'll put you out of your
misery!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Stop it, I say! I command you!

In an instant the two are dancing around the room in deadly play.

Strasser delivers an expertly executed thrust nicking Bute's forearm and drawing first BLOOD.

The Dowager runs from the room screeching for the guards.

In a second she's back with a complement of Beefeaters who quickly separate the duelists.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
How dare you! Drawing swords like
common street thugs! I'll cool your
heels - to the Tower with him!

She's pointing to Bute. She whips around to Strasser.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And don't think you're getting off,
mister. You'll join him as soon as
we're finished with the mulatto. In
the meantime, guards, take this one
to his apartment and lock him in!

The guards take both men out.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Savages!

She notices a PIECE OF CLOTH cut from Bute's jacket sleeve on the floor. She picks it up. There's a bit of BLOOD on it. She touches it with her index finger then brings the tip of her finger to her tongue and tastes it. She grins the grin of a woman with the seeds of madness in her. Then, as if suddenly remembering something terribly important, she yelps and dashes out of the room.

INT. ST JAMES PLACE -- DAY

Admiral Anson is walking down the corridor with a splendidly dressed King George III. The King pauses, takes a TIN OF SNUFF from his vest pocket, opens it and applies a pinch to each nostril. He turns to Anson.

GEORGE III
So you say things went well, Lord
Anson?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Splendidly, Your Majesty. We hit turbulent waters over the Channel, but had a good captain, and between he and I, we figured out the correction needed and hit our stride.

GEORGE III

Well done. Very well done.

They continue walking. Anson stops.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Here, Sire, let's take the shortcut through the cloakroom.

GEORGE III

Huh? A shortcut? Why, certainly. Good idea.

They turn into the CLOAKROOM where Charlotte and Lady Hamilton are sitting. Recognizing Lady Hamilton, the King smiles:

GEORGE III

Excuse us, Lady Hamilton, we were taking a shortcut and --

The King's head whips toward Charlotte and he is so stunned at the realization of who she is, he drops his TIN OF SNUFF.

Charlotte bends and picks up the tin of snuff. Lady Hamilton is curtsying, but the King only has eyes for Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE

You are the King.

She hands the tin to him; he takes it.

GEORGE III

And you are Princess Charlotte.

Charlotte nods. George turns to Anson as if to ask what to do next. He is still holding her hand seemingly not aware he's doing so. He turns back to her.

GEORGE III

I beg your forgiveness, Lady Charlotte. I had no idea you were here. We weren't supposed to meet until--

CHARLOTTE

I'm pleased we have. Can you stay a moment, Your Majesty?

GEORGE III

Yes ... I suppose ... If you think it all right.

Anson is motioning for Lady Hamilton to follow him outside the room. In a moment they're backing out of the room. They back into the corridor and close the door. But just as they do this they hear the slamming of a door at the far end of the corridor, look, and to their horror see the Dowager charging into a room.

ADMIRAL ANSON

My, God! It's her. Inside! Hurry!

They dash into the room opposite the cloakroom and gently slide the DOUBLE DOORS shut, but not enough so they can't peer out. Down the CORRIDOR the Dowager charges out of one room into another. She continues this until she is finally at the room the King and Charlotte are in. She tears open the door and is aghast to see George and Charlotte holding hands.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

(disbelievingly)

George ... George

George doesn't hear her.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

George ...

George turns -- he's beaming like a boy on Christmas morning.

GEORGE III

Mother! What splendid timing. She's here as you can see -- and look at her ... isn't she lovely?

The Dowager is looking at Charlotte's hair and is aghast. She starts backing out of the room, then into the hall, then she is running down the hall.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Bute! Bute! Where are you, Bute!

In the opposite room Anson and Lady Hamilton are all smiles. They can see the King and Charlotte are still holding hands.

INT. BANQUET HALL -- DAY

Charlotte is playing the HARPSICHORD. King George is sitting next to her as proud as a peacock. The Dowager walks in then over to MILDRED (the Royal Seamstress)who's been standing there happily listening.

MILDRED
She has such rhythm, Your Majesty.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
All Africans do ...

MILDRED
What ...?

Seeing his mother, George stands up beaming.

GEORGE III

Mother! - Lady Charlotte just played a wonderful medley of German folk songs. Lady Charlotte, could you play the medley for mother, please?

CHARLOTTE
Yes, of course, Your Majesty.

The Dowager grabs Mildred by the elbow.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
But, George, as much as I'd love to, Mildred and I must attend to her coronation gown.

MILDRED
But it's fin--

The Dowager yanks Mildred shutting her up.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
But I promise to return as soon as I can.

She and Mildred leave. Charlotte continues playing.

INT. SEAMSTRESS WORK ROOM --

Mildred and the Dowager are working on the CORONATION GOWN.

MILDRED
The measurements sent last month are a perfect match. Smaller than you on your wedding day, she is.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Really?

MILDRED
You were seventeen too when you
married?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Sixteen ... Mildred, let me ask you
something, and I want you to be
completely honest with me.

MILDRED
I'm always completely honest with
you, ma'am.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
This girl --

MILDRED
You mean the new queen, ma'am?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
She's not the queen, yet!

MILDRED
She isn't?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Of course she isn't. She hasn't
been crowned yet, has she?

MILDRED
No, but --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
The official marriage is tonight --
but the coronation is next week and
she isn't officially queen until
the coronation.

MILDRED
Technically, no ... I guess.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And that coronation will never
happen if I have anything to do
with it --NEVER!

MILDRED
But ma'am!

The Dowager storms out of the room her petticoats whipping
about her.

MILDRED

Heaven help us! I must tell the
King! The Dowager Mum has gone mad.

INT. ROYAL BEDCHAMBER -- NIGHT

King George III is sitting in his BEDCLOTHES at the edge of the ROYAL BED. His GROOMS have already taken their seats on the long BENCH alongside the bed. The BRIDESMAIDS have taken their seats on the bench opposite.

Frau Schellenberg is sitting on a small stool in front of the King with a WOODEN PAIL between her knees. She beckons Charlotte to sit next to the King then begins washing the King's feet. After washing the King's feet she washes Charlotte's feet.

This done, she dips a GOLDEN CHALICE into the water and hands it to Charlotte. Charlotte knows what to do: she dips her fingers into the chalice then walks to each corner of the bed and sprinkles water on the corner. This done, she hands the chalice back to Frau Schellenberg who takes it, smiles conspiratorially at Charlotte, then leaves the room.

A bell CHIMES and the ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY walks into the room with his TWO CHAPLAINS.

He stands in the center of the room then beckons Charlotte and King George to him. He blesses the couple then waves the chaplains forward. One is holding a CERAMIC PITCHER, the other, TWO CHALICES.

The first chaplain pours the sweetened spice wine from the pitcher he's holding into the chalices the second chaplain holds. The filled chalices are handed to the couple. Till now Charlotte dare not look into the King's eyes but when the chaplain positions them in front of each other, she cannot avoid his eyes any longer.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

You may drink of the benediction
possest.

The King and Charlotte each take a deep drink from their chalices. This done, the chaplains take the chalices and leave the room.

The Archbishop takes a seat in the SMALL THRONE at the direct end of the royal bed. Once seated he smooths his robes and vestments, straightens his LARGE CROSS so it is at the exact center of his chest, strokes his beard for a moment, then lifts a thin finger signaling the lead groom and lead bridesmaid to step forward.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
You may disrobe the royal couple.

The lead groom and bridesmaid disrobe the King and Charlotte and the two are nude. Charlotte begins to tremble. The King lifts her onto the bed. Now they are lying beside each other. They are trembling. The Archbishop levels a long thin finger at the King:

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
You may proceed.

In an instant King George is on top of Charlotte as the Archbishop, grooms and bridesmaids lean forward to witness the Royal Consummation.

INT. ROYAL BEDROOM -- MORNING

Charlotte and King George are still in bed. She stirs, reaches out feels him, smiles. She gets up. She is NAKED. She walks to the closet then stops when she hears his LAUGHTER. She whips around immediately covering her breasts.

CHARLOTTE
You mock me, sir!

GEORGE III
How do I mock thee?

She thinks for a moment then says:

CHARLOTTE
Perhaps you have stood naked before a woman before, sir, but I have never stood naked before a man.

GEORGE III
Of course you haven't -- that's why you're a maiden ... or at least were a maiden.

She thinks about this for a moment then says:

CHARLOTTE
Am I not still a maiden?

GEORGE III
Do you not know the answer to that yourself?

CHARLOTTE

Of course I do. Do you think me a complete bumpkin, sir?

GEORGE III

That would be treason.

CHARLOTTE

I will get one of your Kingly robes to cover myself.

GEORGE III

Yes, do.

She walks to the closet. The King eyes her buttocks and sits up in the bed. She returns in his CORONATION ROBE.

CHARLOTTE

Now you have nothing to laugh at.

GEORGE III

Mere words can not express the depth of my grief.

CHARLOTTE

Serves you right ... and besides --

GEORGE III

Yes?

CHARLOTTE

He that eats the fruit must climb the tree.

The King is out of the bed and rushing toward her. She yelps and runs into the closet, but the King is quick behind her. He grabs her and wrestles her to the floor. The loud RIP of the coronation cape is heard.

GEORGE III

Heavenly Father! You've ripped the coronation robe!

CHARLOTTE

Is that not good, Majesty?

GEORGE III

'Tis treason and now I must punish thee.

They kiss.

EXT. OUTSIDE WESTMINSTER ABBEY -- DAY

The Cathedral is filled with groups rehearsing their Coronation scenes. These are the church wardens, the Barons who'll carry the canopy over the King and Queen during the procession, the ushers, Vice Chamberlain, Peeresses, Maids of Honor, Ladies of the Bedchamber, unmarried Daughters of Peers, so forth and so on.

Charlotte is with her Maids of Honor rehearsing their scenes.

During a break in rehearsals while she and Frau Schellenberg are sitting alone nibbling on LIVERWURST SANDWICHES, Frau Schellenberg points a fat finger at one of the Maids of Honor:

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

And that one -- she's a little too superior for me. Before we leave today, tell her her services are no longer needed.

Charlotte looks at Frau Schellenberg stunned. Finally finding her voice she speaks:

CHARLOTTE

Her name is Sarah Lennox. She's a very important peer--

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Don't you put on airs with me, Missy. I don't care if she's the Queen of Prussia -- she's not to come back tomorrow - mind me now.

Charlotte stares at Frau Schellenburg as if seeing something in her she's never seen before.

Later, while she and the Maids of Honor are going through their paces, Charlotte sees the King entering the Cathedral. They smile and just like that - without thinking - she blows him a kiss, which he pretends to catch, breathe in, and blow back.

Charlotte is standing there smiling like this when Frau Schellenburg comes along side of her.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Have you got rid of her yet? No you haven't. Well, tell her right now. Hurry up, we don't have all day--

Charlotte's smile turns into a frown. She speaks with an authority not used before:

CHARLOTTE

No one has a right to speak to the Queen of England in that tone -- not even you, Shelly.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

What?

CHARLOTTE

Pack your things tonight for tomorrow I'm sending you back to Mecklenburg! That is all. You are dismissed!

This said, Charlotte spins away and joins the Maids. Frau Schellenburg stands there her mouth wide open.

INT. THE DOWAGERS'S APARTMENT -- MID-DAY

The Dowager is sitting at her TOILETTE smudging VENETIAN CERUSE on her forehead while taking inventory of her still beautiful 42-year-old face. MARY, her Lady-in-Waiting walks into the room.

MARY

Your Highness, Baron von Strasser is here to see you.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Send him in.

The girl goes out. A second later come the CLICKING of Strasser's PRUSSIAN RIDING BOOTS, then he is resplendent before her -- at least, resplendent in the mirror the Dowager is eying him in. Today he is dressed in his Holsten officer's uniform, booted and spurred and with the same sword he used to tame Lord Bute.

STRASSER

Your Highness, I'm here as ordered.

She's powdering her nose. She stops and speaks to him while looking at him in the mirror.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And are your heels sufficiently cooled, Herr Doktor?

STRASSER

A thousand apologies, Your Highness. Words can't express how shamed I am for my behavior.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Don't grovel, it doesn't become
 you. Bute has been banished from
 the Court and will be sent abroad
 directly. And I was very near
 assigning the same fate to you,
 sir, until certain events made your
 counsel indispensable.

STRASSER
 Your Highness, I'm eternally
 gratefully for your restraint and
 stand ready to once again assist
 you in ridding the court of the
 horrible mulatto concubine.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Your brawl with Bute was a costly
 one; the time lost incalculable.

She stands up and faces him.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 But there are more ways of killing
 a cat than choking it with butter.
 I have another plan.

STRASSER
 And it will succeed, My beauteous
 Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 "Beauteous" Highness? Is that a new
 title I'm unaware of?

STRASSER
 A thousand apologies, madam. Once
 again, my emotion overtakes my
 brain.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 You knew Bute would draw steel,
 didn't you?

STRASSER
 Your Highness?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 You wanted that -- didn't you, you
 arrogant brute?

STRASSER

But your Majesty, he drew first.

She seems to remember something.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

We must act fast. The plot against the King must be crushed -- that's the paramount thing.

STRASSER

My thought exactly.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Then why haven't you extracted a confession from Shackleton yet?

STRASSER

Who'd have thought the old fool had so much blood him? He refuses to name his co-conspirators no matter what inducements we apply.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Then let us interview someone else from his merry crew. I know just the one. She's not a peer so we can take her directly to the Tower without trial. She calls herself Lady Teasley. Fetch her now.

Strasser kneels to a knee, reaches for her hand.

STRASSER

As you command Your Majesty.

He is kissing her hand longer than he should. Her FAN comes out and THWACKS him hard on the cheek.

STRASSER

Ow!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You don't learn, do you?

STRASSER

A thousand apologies, Your Majesty.

Strasser leaves. Mary comes into the room again.

MARY

Your Majesty, there is a woman to see you.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Who?

MARY

The German maid of Queen Charlotte.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What? What could she possibly want?
Send her away -- Wait! Did you say
Charlotte's maid?

MARY

Yes, Your Grace.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

My, God! She would know everything.
Yes! send her in, by all means! Get
her now! What are you waiting for,
you fool? Get her now, I said!

Mary returns with Frau Schellenburg. The Dowager looks over the short fat woman barely able to hide her contempt.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Guten Abend, Frau Schellenberg

Frau falls to her knee reaching, then kissing the Dowager's hand.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Guten Abend, Ihre Höhe

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

So tell me Frau, how can I assist
you?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

Queen Charlotte ordered me back to
Mecklenburg.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

But whatever for, madam?

Schellenburg looks around the room as if making sure they're alone.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG

I'm ashamed to tell you, My
Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You may be open with me, Frau.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 But If I tell you, Your Majesty,
 I'll need your protection.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 And you shall have it.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 But I just don't know, Your
 Holiness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 I told you, it's all right.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Maybe it's better that I just leave
 now. Sorry to bother -- I'll just
 go now. My bad.

She turns to leave.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Get back here, you imbecile! Tell
 me what you came here to tell me
 before I flog it out of you -- now!
 Right now!

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 I will! Yes, I will. Okay, okay,
 okay, I'll tell you ... I was maid
 to Anna Leopoldovna when Empress
 Elizabeth of Russia exiled her to
 the Fortress of Riga.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Anna Leopoldovna? I knew Anna -- a
 beautiful German girl -- Russian
 mother, German father.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 Her father was the Duke of
 Mecklenburg-Schwerin --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 That's where Charlotte is from!

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 Not exactly, Your Highness. There
 are two Mecklenburgs --
 Mecklenburg-Schwerin, where Anna
 Leopoldovna was from, and
 Mecklenburg-Strelitz, where Queen
 Charlotte is from.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Two Mecklenburgs?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
Yes, your Highness. When Anna
Leopoldovna was exiled to the
Fortress at Riga, I was with her.
In fact, I was with her when... Oh,
I can't! I can't.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Stop it! Stop your whining and
continue!

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
Forgive me. I-I was with her when
the African came to Riga, Your
Majesty. The African whose daughter
she bore nine months later --
Princess Charlotte.

The Dowager jumps up.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
I knew it! I knew it! I knew it! I
knew I'd be vindicated!

She runs to Schellenburg and hugs her.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
You darling woman! No one will harm
you now. You have saved the Crown!
You have given me the weapon I need
to get rid of the mulatto fraud
once and for all!

Schellenburg seems confused.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
You mean this will stop Charlotte
from remaining queen?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
She is not queen yet. The
coronation is what makes her queen
and that will never take place now,
thanks to you.

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
But I didn't mean to do that. All I
wanted was to stay here in England.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 What you want has no bearing on
 anything, you fool. And you will
 not speak a word of this to anyone
 -- you understand?

FRAU SCHELLENBURG
 (weakly) Yes.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 I hope so, for your sake.

INT. KING'S CHAMBERS -- DAY

George III is standing with Admiral Anson. He's taking a pinch of snuff. He offers the tin to Anson who takes a pinch in each nostril himself.

ADMIRAL ANSON
 Your Majesty, I need your
 protection.

GEORGE III
 My protection Lord Anson? From
 whom?

At this very instant the Dowager comes barreling into the room.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 YOU!

ADMIRAL ANSON
 Princess Augusta -- this is indeed
 a pleasure --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 You were given specific
 instructions to bring Charlotte to
 my chambers when she arrived, but
 you disobeyed me, didn't you?

ADMIRAL ANSON
 But, Your Majesty, I can explain
 that-

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Can you? And I suppose you can
 explain the African too?

ADMIRAL ANSON
I beg your pardon?

GEORGE III
African? What's that supposed to mean, mother?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
You'll find out soon enough. But for now, I want this man arrested.

GEORGE III
Don't be ridiculous. This is Lord Anson, not the Royal Painter. And speaking of the Royal Painter, I still haven't been told why he was sent to the Tower.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Your Majesty, all will be made known to you soon enough. There's a conspiracy afoot, is all I'm at liberty to say now.

GEORGE III
A conspiracy?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And he is the ringleader.

GEORGE III
Nonsense.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Guards!

Two Beefeaters rush in.

GEORGE III
Evidence, mother? I'd like to see it.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And you shall.

GEORGE III
Anson, do you know what she's talking about?

ADMIRAL ANSON
I haven't a clue, Your Highness.

GEORGE III

That's good enough for me. And it will have to be good enough for you, mother, at least until you present evidence.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Sir, he's lying through his teeth. And, again, I would ask that you allow me to discipline this subject without interference. As your regent-

GEORGE III

But you are no longer my regent.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You know what I meant!

GEORGE III

This matter is dismissed. Until you present evidence, I will hear no more of it.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I am within my rights, Your Majesty!

GEORGE III

I said the matter is dismissed -- and for that matter, mother, so are you. Now leave the room. We'll take this up later.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What? You dare talk to me in that manner in front of a peer? Your grandfather, if he were alive would --

GEORGE III

You are dismissed and I've commanded you to leave the room.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Why ... Why ... I never. I-I ...

Stunned, the Dowager backs out of the room. The King looks at Anson.

GEORGE III

I learned yesterday she sent Shackleton to the Tower without

(MORE)

GEORGE III (cont'd)
 cause. Then this mulatto business
 I'm hearing reports of. Then
 earlier today she sent one of your
 group, Anson -- Lady Teasly to the
 Tower. Sir, I think my mother has
 gone mad.

ANSON
 Lady Teasly? She sent Lady Teasly
 to the Tower, Your Majesty?

INT. COTTAGE -- DAY

Frau Schellenberg ladles cabbage soup into a bowl until the bowl is full. A newspaper boy slips a BROADSHEET through the door. She puts the bowl down, gets the broadsheet and is stunned at once because on the front page is a DRAWING OF GANNIBAL below the headline,

INSERT -- FRONT PAGE NEWSPAPER

"RUSSIAN GENERAL ARRIVES IN HARWICH."

BACK TO SCENE

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Mein Gott! Will you never go away!

She rushes to the bedroom, flops on the bed, and starts smacking Gannibal's image with the back of her hand.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 See, you black devil! See all the
 trouble you've caused? See?! See?!
 See?!

She continues this for a while then falls asleep clutching the broadsheet to her chest.

INT. COTTAGE BEDROOM LATER DAY

The door of the cottage swings open and the Dowager walks in.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Frau! Frau, are you here?

She walks into the bedroom, sees Frau Schellenberg sleeping, shrugs, walks out of the bedroom, walks to the front door of the cottage and stops. Her face seems to say, "Something

wasn't quite right in the bedroom -- but what?" In a moment she's back in the bedroom. Her eyes immediately focus on the broadsheet the sleeping Frau Schellenberg is clutching to her chest.

A FEW MINUTES LATER

Frau Schellenberg awakes to find the Dowager standing at the side of the bed looking at the broadsheet. The Dowager turns to her.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I let myself in, came here and saw this drawing of the African clutched to you chest. At first I thought nothing of it and was ready to walk out. Then a voice in my head asked, "Why would she have his drawing clutched to her chest like that? The answer hit me like a flash.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Your Majesty -- I-I --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You're Charlotte's mother, aren't you!? You're the one who had the African's mulatto bastard!

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

No! No! No! No, Your Majesty -- a thousand times no!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I knew Anna Leopoldovna and what I know about her is she would not have slept with the African -- flirt with him, yes. Sleep with him -- or any many save her husband! -- no! So that leaves you, doesn't it, you lying slut?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Your Holiness, you must believe --

The Dowager's slap comes like a perfectly executed right cross sending the older woman flying out the bed.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Come here you miserable lying git!

The Dowager pulls her up by the scuff of her neck and smacks her again and again.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

No! No more! I will tell the truth
this time -- I will ... I will!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I'm listening.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

It is as you say. Please do not hit
me anymore. The African slept with
me! He did! He did! And I knew when
they brought him back this would
happen -- I knew!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You mean he's here -- in England?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Where?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

A cottage in Harwich.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And that was Admiral Anson's work
too, wasn't it?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes! He's the ringleader. But
please, Your Majesty, you must
protect me from him now that I have
told you everything.

EXT. HARWICH COTTAGE NIGHT

The ROYAL COACH and a compliment of Dragoons pulls in front
of the cottage. The dragoons break down the door and pour
in. They hear something above and run upstairs. The Dowager
and Frau Schellenberg follow them in. In a moment the
dragoons are downstairs with Gannibal and a young woman.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And she is?

CAPTAIN

A whore he picked up at a tavern.

The Dowager smacks the girl then points to the door.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 You have three seconds to disappear
 and two of them are up!

The girl runs out the door. The Dowager steps to Gannibal.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Stand fast, black man. Everyone
 else outside -- including, you,
 Captain.

The dragoons leave. Now it is only the Dowager, Gannibal,
 and Frau Schellenberg in the room.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 You know who I am, sir?

GANNIBAL
 I was told the King's mother.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 And her -- do you know who she is?

Gannibal steps closer to look at her.

GANNIBAL
 I do not, Your Majesty.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 And yet she is the mother of your
bastard daughter.

GANNIBAL
 Impossible!

He steps to Schellenberg again, takes her face in his hand,
 peers at it, turns to the Dowager.

GANNIBAL
 I have never seen this woman in my
 life -- I'll swear by it.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 And yet she says you have a saber
 scar on your back -- take off your
 shirt!

GANNIBAL
 What? --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Take it off -- now!... I command
 you.

Gannibal is too slow. The Dowager steps forward and rips his shirt off. She runs her finger along the scar on his shoulders.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Right where she said it would be.

GANNIBAL
What sorcery is this?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
The Fortress of Riga 18 years ago.
The maid you slept with. This is
she and the Queen Consort of
England your bastard mulatto
daughter, black man!

Gannibal reaches for the wall to hold on. He holds his heart.

GANNIBAL
Madam... I-I ... This is madness
... How ... ? How am I to believe
such a thing? How can any man
believe such a thing?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
I have a confession for you to
sign.

She unfurls a scroll.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And you will sign it, sir --
believe that if you don't believe
anything else that has happened
this black night.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON, DUNGEON -- DAY

The thick iron door swings open and two disheveled prisoners are pushed in. The HUNCHBACK jailer directs each to a chair then bellows, "Shut up!" He lets his eyes linger on the woman because she is the most beautiful woman he's ever seen. He drinks in her beauty, grunts like an ox then leaves. Shackleton and Lady Teasley ponder their fate.

The door swings open again and this time the hunchback carries in a small DESK; he puts it down. He looks at Lady Teasley again. Lady Teasley looks at him.

The sound of PRUSSIAN BOOTS CLICKING. Strasser enters the cell, behind him is the Dowager carrying SCROLLS, A BOTTLE

OF INK AND A QUILL PEN. She sits at the desk and nods at Strasser who unrolls the SCROLL in his hand and reads from it:

STRASSER

Prisoners! ... Tomorrow the Council of the King's Ministers will charge you each with high treason and sometime thereafter you will be executed for your crimes. Your executions will take place in the courtyard below.

He looks to the Dowager who nods.

STRASSER

You, Mr. Shackleton, because of your continued resistance are scheduled for special punishment. You will be hung until an inch from death, cut down while still alive, your entrails cut from you and burned before your dying eyes, then drawn and quartered while you gasp your last bloody breath.

Shackleton is too far gone to register any of this. He looks off into the distance like a man who's lost his mind. The Dowager frowns and turns to Lady Teasley:

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

As to you, Madam Teasley, it is now known your claim of peerage is a pack of lies. You're the daughter of a Yorkshire chimney sweep not the baroness you've long claimed to be. Therefore, it is deemed you shall be burned at the stake until dead.

Lady Teasley GASPS.

The Dowager picks up a PARCHMENT.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

I am not a monster, madam. I am a mother seeking only to protect her progeny -- WHICH IS MY RIGHT AND DUTY BEFORE GOD!

(beat)

This is the confession you must sign. It states Admiral Anson

(MORE)

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA (cont'd)
 recruited you as one of his
 co-conspirators. It states the plan
 was to pass off the mulatto girl as
 the Princess of Mecklenburg when
 you well knew she wasn't. Sign this
 confession and I'll do my best to
 spare you the stake.

LADY TEASLEY
 I know nothing of a mulatto girl.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Don't be ridiculous. How could you
 look at her and not tell she was
 mulatto? Now, here -- sign it.
 Things will go a lot easier for you
 if you do.

LADY TEASLEY
 I'll not sign a lie that would
 implicate my friends in another
 lie.

The Dowager slams her fist on the table.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Guard your tongue, madam, or you'll
 soon be without it.

LADY TEASLEY
 Do to me what you will, but I will
 not sign a pack of lies that will
 hurt Admiral Anson.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Oh, you shall! I promise you shall.
 You'll soon beg for the chance to
 sign this pack of lies.

(pause)
 Strasser, I'm done here. I was a
 fool to try reason with her. You
 may do what needs to be done and
 may God have mercy on her soul.

The Dowager grabs her things and storms out the room.

STRASSER
 That wasn't very smart, my pretty.
 She's a witch when she gets mad.
 And she's right, you know. You have
 obviously never experienced
 excruciating pain scientifically
 (MORE)

STRASSER (cont'd)
 applied. In a moment, you'll be
 begging to sign Admiral Anson's
 death warrant were we to ask it of
 you. No? Well, let's make a
 believer out of you then, shall we?
 ... Igor!

Together the two men lift her into the RACK and begin
 strapping her in. Strasser steps back.

STRASSER
 Strap her in good, I'll be right
 back.

Strasser leaves. The Hunchback looks at Lady Teasley who
 looks at him. He touches her face then jerks his hand away
 as if he's touched fire.

LADY TEASLEY
 Kiss me!

HUNCHBACK
 (his groan is like that of a
 wounded beast.)
 Nooooo!

LADY TEASLEY
 I want you to -- Kiss me!

Fighting something in himself and losing, the Hunchback
 kisses her.

LADY TEASLEY
 You must not let him hurt me -- do
 you understand?

The Hunchback's head snaps back.

HUNCHBACK
 Nooo! ... Leave me alone!

LADY TEASLEY
 You must stop him and then you can
 have me -- all of me! Kiss me
 again!

Slowly the hunchback kisses her again.

Then comes the CLICKING of Strasser's PRUSSIAN BOOTS. The
 Hunchback jumps back. Strasser enters the cell and looks
 around.

STRASSER

What's going on here?

The Hunchback Shrugs.

STRASSER

Never mind. Well, then, so here we are, Lady Teasley. We two. Igor doesn't count. He's as dumb as an ox -- dumber, actually.

Igor grunts in anger; he's not that dumb.

STRASSER

As to your friend the royal painter, he lost his mind weeks ago. In fact, I'm the fellow who made it happen. You see, he was buckled in just the way you're buckled in, and what I did to him was this --

He pulls the BAR and Lady Teasley let's out a BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM.

STRASSER

That's all right, my pretty -- screaming is allowed. In fact we encourage it, so let's get some more of it, shall we -- stiffen the sinews! But wait ... tell you what ... give us a little kiss and I'll cut you some slack, agreed?

Strasser leans over and begins kissing her. His hand goes to her BREAST. The Hunchback roars and leaps on him wrestling Strasser to the ground and knocking him out cold.

LADY TEASLEY

Hurry! Unbuckle me.

The Hunchback unbuckles her and reaches for her hand.

HUNCHBACK

I know secret passage.

LADY TEASLEY

Not yet. Lift him onto the rack.

HUNCHBACK

No.

LADY TEASLEY
I'll do it myself then.

She starts to lift Strasser; the Hunchback relents and helps her. In a moment they have him buckled in. Strasser is coming to.

STRASSER
What?

LADY TEASLEY
Stiffen the sinews!

She pulls the POLE down causing Strasser to scream like a banshee. In the corner Shackleton's face suddenly comes alive. He walks over to Lady Teasley.

SHACKLETON
Let me do that.

She lets him have the pole. The Hunchback takes her hand but she stops him.

LADY TEASLEY
Wait. I want to see this.

STRASSER
No, Shackleton, no!

SHACKLETON
If you prick me do I not bleed?

Shackleton gives the pole a vicious pull down.

STRASSER
No -- Oooooooooo!

SHACKLETON
If you poison me will I not die?

Shackleton pulls the pole down again.

STRASSER
No -- Oooooooooo!

SHACKLETON
If you wrong me will I not revenge?

Shackleton brings the pole down much too hard and fast. Strasser's screaming echoes throughout the Tower.

STRASSER

Ooooooooo!

INT. MEETING ROOM ST. JAMES PLACE DAY

Anson, Harcourt, Lady Hamilton and Lady Ancaster are sitting in the meeting room. The Dowager sweeps in.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

And so we're all here -- all except Lady Teasley. Which I suppose explains your promptness in getting here, doesn't it?

ADMIRAL ANSON

Your Majesty, I take full responsibility --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Silence! Too late for gallantry now. Your roguery - hadn't I checked it in time - would have resulted in the royal line being polluted with the stain of African blood, a stain that in time would have blackened every royal house in Europe. Which is to say, the mulatto - in time - would have become the grandmother of all Europe!

Anson raises his hand. The Dowager nods.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Princess Augusta, we have discussed our situation and arrived at a unanimous decision ... with conditions.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Conditions? The nerve of you! Your betrayal, sir, blocked any corrective measures I might have taken. The King is a young, naive man. The mulatto, because of her African features, exotic. My son didn't stand a chance. In other words, he never should have laid eyes on her and never would have, save for your villainy!

Anson picks up the SCROLL in front of him.

ADMIRAL ANSON

Providing Lady Teasley is released immediately and we are all afforded a trial by our peers in open court, we --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

You odious pimp! No trial! The only reason you're not with Lady Teasley is because you are peers. Well, I've fixed that. These confessions sign away your right to trials -- it says so right in them and --

The door opens, a guard rushes in, goes to the Dowager and whispers something in her ear. She yelps and stands.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Shackleton and Teasley overpowered Strasser!

(she turns to Anson)

You Monster! Does your roguery know no bounds, man?

(pause)

I must go to him. No one leaves this room until these confessions are signed! Do you hear me! No one leaves this bloody room until their frickin' confession is signed!

The Dowager rushes from the room. Harcourt picks up the quill and dips it in the jar of ink. He motions to Anson.

HARCOURT

Let me have that. I'll sign it if you won't.

LADY HAMILTON

And sign away your right to a trial? Did you see her eyes, Harcourt? She's mad as a March hare and you trust her to keep her word?

Harcourt stops reaching. Anson stands up.

ANSON

C'mon, everyone.

LADY ANCASTER

Where are we going?

BARONESS HAMILTON

We're going to the King, aren't we,
Anson?

ANSON

That we are, Baroness. That we are.

INT. TOWER OF LONDON -- EVENING.

The sound of a HORRIBLE MOANING. A GUARD leads the Dowager
to the rack room.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

How did it happen?

GUARD

The Hunchback -- he overpowered
Strasser and escaped with the girl.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

Find them! And when you find them,
make sure they stay alive -- you
hear me? I want them alive! ... And
what is that awful howling?

GUARD

It is Von Strasser, ma'am.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

What!?

They enter rack room to find Strasser on a STRETCHER
attended by TWO SURGEONS.

STRASSER

Majesty! Look what they've done to
me!

The Dowager is aghast.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA

My God! His arms! His legs. Why do
you let them hang like that?

DOCTOR

There is nothing we can do, Your
Majesty. There are no muscles or
ligaments holding them together.

STRASSER

Ooow! Ooow!

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Get him out of this hell-hole! Now!

They pick up the litter and carry him out. On the way out they pass a cell packed with MEN who begin LAUGHING at the howling Strasser. The Dowager rushes to cell, grabbing the bars as she bellows like a madwoman.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Shut up, you scum! Shut up I tell
you! Do you hear me --

Suddenly, she sees Shackleton standing in the back.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
You! So you didn't escape with the
others? How unfortunate for you,
Mr. Shackleton. How very, very,
very unfortunate for you --

SHACKLETON
And how very, very, very
unfortunate for you, you sick Hun
bitch!

Shackleton splashes her beautiful face with a PAIL FILLED
WITH FECES AND URINE.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
My eyes! My eyes!

The prisoners howl with laughter.

INT. MEETING ROOM -- DAY

The Dowager is led into the meeting room by a page her EYES
THICKLY BANDAGED.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
The confessions! Are they on the
table.

PAGE
Yes, Your Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Yes, of course they are. Yes.

Frantically, she goes around the table collecting the
'CONFESSIONS'. When she has them all she feels her way to
the head of the table and takes a seat.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
You may lead the Council in now.

The page and guard go out. The Dowager shuffles the "confessions." In a moment the page is back with: PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL, CLERK OF THE COUNCIL, PRIME MINISTER OF PARLIAMENT, AND THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Gentlemen, please be seated ...
please. Page, come by my side.

It's obvious the men would rather be someplace else, but they take their seats nonetheless.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Please excuse the bandages around my eyes. The surgeons assure me my eyes will be healed in a few days. Page, pass these around. Gentlemen, The Page is passing around the confessions of the members of the conspiracy for your perusal.

The page passes them around, each person reads, then passes the document he's read to the man next to him. In a moment all the documents are stacked in front of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Archbishop of Canterbury, are you here?

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
I am, Your Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Yes, I knew you would not fail me. And, you, Lord President of the Council?"

LORD PRESIDENT
As you commanded, Your Highness.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
And you, Prime Minister Pitt?

MINISTER PITT
Yes, I am.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Well, then, let's get to cases.
Gentlemen, this is without question
the most important matter you will
ever decide. So important, in fact,
I've resorted to the extraordinary
exigency of reviving my regency
and-

MINISTER PITT
Reviving your regency?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Yes, sir. Lord Bute researched the
law and I am within my rights. You
see, when during the course of
events --

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Where is Lord Bute?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Who asked that?

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
I -- the Clerk of the Council.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Oh, you ... Well, under certain
emergencies, when it becomes clear
the King is of a state of mind --

And it was at this very moment King George quietly enters
the room with TWO NUNS. He motions everyone to remain seated
and silent.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Who entered the room? Did someone
just come in?

CLERK OF THE COUNCIL
Continue, please. You were talking
about the King's state of mind...

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
Huh? Yes. Well, the law is on my
side, Gentlemen. But I'm ahead of
myself. The point is, my son, the
King, was taken advantage of -- so
much so he is no longer capable of
dispensing his duties with the
judgment required. In short, he is
about to make a horrible mistake

(MORE)

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA (cont'd)
 that will pollute the royal line
 forever.

LORD PRESIDENT
 Pollute the royal line--?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Indeed. The King asked for evidence
 and now I have it -- four signed
 confessions revealing the entire
 plot.

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
 But these documents are not signed,
 Madam. There's not a signature on
 them.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 What? What? But I ordered them to
 sign them!

LORD PRESIDENT
 Ordered 'who' to sign them?

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 The treasonous dogs who conspired
 against the Crown, of course.

LORD PRESIDENT
 I see.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 What do you mean, 'I see'?

LORD PRESIDENT
 Well, Your Majesty, to be candid, I
 don't see. These confessions make
 no sense. First, they're unsigned
 --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 That's because my orders weren't
 followed -- but they will be, I
 promise you that.

LORD PRESIDENT
 Second, I have no idea what Lord
 Bute told you about 'reviving the
 regency,' but the devil, madam, can
 cite Scripture for his purpose --

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Don't you give me none of that
 poetic claptrap. You want it plain
 and simple? Here it is -- my son,
 the King, is incompetent!

LORD PRESIDENT
 But Madam --

The Lord President stands-up indignantly.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 What?

LORD PRESIDENT
 That is treason.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 No, it's not! It's stopping that
 mulatto pretender from being
 crowned queen consort -- something
 he's incompetent of doing because
 he's already in love with her!
 That's what it is.

Quietly, George III taps each man on the shoulder and
 directs them out of the room. The Dowager keeps raving.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 The fact is, he was always a slow
 child to begin with -- a bed-wetter
 and thumb-sucker until 18 years of
 age. Why, weren't it for myself and
 Lord Bute, he surely wouldn't have
 made it to twenty-one on his own
 steam. I mean, he didn't even know
 what sexual intercourse was until
 Lord Bute explained it to him a few
 weeks ago -- he's a child in a
 man's body, I tell you. No more a
 man than this snot-nose page is!

The page touches the tip of his nose with his finger and
 looks at it. The King's face is crimson with embarrassment
 ... and anger.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 And now, this ... this... colored
 girl he wants to make the Queen of
 England? This savage from darkest
 Africa. Gentlemen! Will you allow
 this to happen? Will you allow 800
 years of breeding to fester and dry
 (MORE)

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA (cont'd)
 up like ...like a raisin in the
 sun? --

FIRST NUN
 It is time to go, mum.

The first nun has her by the elbow; the second takes the
 Dowager by the other elbow.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 What?! Who dares? Who dares touch
 me?! What? What is going on here!
 Take you hands off me. Only my son
 the King has a right to touch me
 ... The King!??

SECOND NUN
 It will be alright if you just come
 with us now, mum.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 The King? No! He couldn't...No!
 He's the only one ... But... My,
 God! George -- you're here, aren't
 you? Speak to me! I'm your mother,
 you must answer me!

GEORGE III
 Yes, I am, mother.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 George ... Listen...I-I didn't mean
 those things I said... It was all
 politics, that's all. I-I was only
 going for effect... only trying to
 protect you -- you must believe--

GEORGE III
 And now I must protect you,
 mother, from the charge of treason.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Treason?!

GEORGE III
 You must go with them now. The
 Council will be told you've gone
 mad -- it's the only way to keep
 them from charging you with treason
 as is their solemn duty.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 But, George ... son... I have the
 evidence you asked for! I have
 proof! Confessions.

GEORGE III
 Unsigned.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 But we can force them to sign them
 if you just give me a chance.

GEORGE III
 This is the only way, mother.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 No it isn't! Who are these women?
 Where are they taking me?

GEORGE III
 To Bedlam, mother -- at least until
 I have time to make the Council
 forget all this.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 Bedlam?! You wouldn't. You daren't!
 You can't! Not there! Wait! Wait!
 Wait! ...send me to France, if you
 must send me somewhere. Send me
 there -- no one will know --
 anywhere but Bedlam!

The two nuns drag her out.

DOWAGER PRINCESS AUGUSTA
 No! It was my duty before God to
 protect my progeny! My duty! Bute!
 Bute! Heavenly Father, where is
 Bute?!

INT. COTTAGE -- DAY

Frau Schellenberg is standing at the window eating cabbage
 soup when she sees the two nuns lead the Dowager into a
 waiting wagon. The Dowager swings to slap the bigger of the
 two nuns, who blocks her and slaps back knocking the Dowager
 to the ground.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Mein Gott! Ding Dong die Hexe ist
 tot!

(subtitle)

(MORE)

FRAU SCHELLENBERG (cont'd)
*"My God! Ding Dong the witch is
 dead!"*

INT. SHACKLETON'S STUDIO -- DAY

Charlotte sits for a portrait dressed in a glorious coronation gown. Ramsay is doing the painting. King George III, Anson, Lady Hamilton, Lady Ancaster, Harcourt, Lady Teasley, the Hunchback, and Shackleton stand nearby happily looking on. Lady Teasley and the Hunchback are holding hands.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBY -- AFTERNOON

King George III and Charlotte lead the PROCESSION into Westminster Abbey then down the aisle. Dignitaries and peers line both sides of the aisle one of whom is Gannibal.

The procession approaches Gannibal and just as it passes him Charlotte turns and stares directly into his face. The two hold each others' gaze then Charlotte turns and looks straight ahead.

INT. FRAU SCHELLENBERG'S COTTAGE

Frau Schellenberg is at the cottage window eating potato soup when outside in the distance a couple approaches. She squints at them.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 The King and Queen! Mein Gott!

She flings the BOWL into the sink breaking it then begins tearing around the cottage picking up things.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Mein Gott!

A KNOCK comes to the door.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 (weakly)
 Yes?

KING GEORGE III
 It's the King and Queen, Frau Schellenberg.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes! Yes! Of course. Of course! I'm coming! I'm coming, Your Holiness!

Trembling now, she opens the door.

KING GEORGE III

May we come in?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

No! I mean, yes! Of course! Please -- I insist! Yes, please. Excuse the condition. Charlotte -- I mean, Queen Charlotte. Please...Please.

KING GEORGE III

I hope we're not intruding?

The King steps in.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes -- I mean no, no, you're not intruding, Your Majesty ... no - I assure you, you're not. I beg of you come in, please ... Yes - oh, but you're already in, aren't you? Tee-hee ... silly me.

Charlotte looks dramatically different. She sports a WIG as tall as a wedding cake and is wearing lots of MAKE-UP. She's in a TREMENDOUS HOOP GOWN and is at the DOOR staring at its narrow width wondering how she'll get the skirt through it. She turns sideways but still the gown is too wide.

KING GEORGE III

I'll pull while you press down on the hoops.

CHALOTTE

Yes ... that would work.

They struggle until Charlotte finally shimmies in. Once in Charlotte stares deeply into Frau Schellenberg's face as if searching for something in it.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

A thousand apologies for the door. Who knows what fools made it so narrow, Your Majesties.

Charlotte puts her hand on the King's hand then whispers something in his ear. The King nods then steps forward.

KING GEORGE III
Quite right, eh, but there's
something we must ask you, Frau
Schellenberg.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
Me? Your Excellency?

KING GEORGE III
Yes ... well, the thing is this,
madam -- are you Charlotte's
mother?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
Wha? Ahhh!

Frau Schellenberg grabs her breast and jerks backward. She begins quaking. She groans a groan of a woman roasting in the fires of hell, spins then collapses to the floor where she continues quaking and moaning.

Charlotte and the King rush to help her but in her effort to do this Charlotte's tremendous hoop gown tips her directly on top of Frau Schellenberg an action that puts the two women face to face and snaps Frau Schellenberg out of her histrionics. They stare at each other like this nose to nose for a second.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
Cherry ... I smell cherry on your
breath.

CHARLOTTE
Cherry snuff.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
When did you start using snuff?

CHARLOTTE
Last week.

The King pulls Charlotte off the older woman. They help Frau Schellenberg up.

CHARLOTTE
It's all right, Shelly. You have
nothing to fear.

KING GEORGE III
You must trust us, Frau
Schellenberg.

Frau Schellenberg starts sobbing then buries her head in Charlotte's chest. Charlotte holds her the way a mother holds a frightened child.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Mein Gott! I can't! I can't! I
can't hold it in anymore,
Charlotte, dear. I can't breathe.
It's killing me. I can't breathe. I
want to die. I want to be buried
alive for my sins. Can anyone on
earth know my pain? When will it
end, Charlotte? When?

CHARLOTTE

Shelly ... please. I must know. The
King must know.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes! Yes! Yes! I carried you in my
womb! I birth you! I cannot believe
this myself but it is the truth.
Nothing can be truer -- Mein Gott!
Ooooooh.

CHARLOTTE

My mother! You are my mother,
Shelly -- but why did you never
tell me this? Why?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Mein Gott! I have kept the secret
for eighteen years. Even
when Admiral Anson asked me about
it, I lied to protect you,
Charlotte. I'm a simple girl from
the country. These things should
never happen to me -- to anyone! I
only wanted you to live - can I be
faulted for that? When you were
born they told me to take you to
the river and throw you in. I
escaped to Mecklenburg with you.
God wanted you to live -- he wanted
you to live, my daughter!

CHARLOTTE

And who is my father?

Frau Schellenberg suddenly stops her sobbing.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

What?

CHARLOTTE

We need to know who my father is.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

Yes... Of course, you would. It is only natural you'd want to know that ... Yes... Yes. But on that score you have nothing to be ashamed of, my daughter. He was no common man. He was a proud and powerful Russian general with many medals and titles and honors -- a man trusted and respected by the Empress of Russia herself! Empress Elizabeth's emissary he was -- and that is a fact no one can deny. But ... eh... sadly ... he, eh, died many years ago. I received a letter informing me of this when you were but a child.

KING GEORGE III

You called him a Russian general, Frau Schellenberg, but we have reason to believe he is something more than that.

Terror flashes over Frau Schellenberg's face.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

More than that, Your Eminency?

CHARLOTTE

We have reason to believe he is the African Abram Gannibal.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG

(hands grabbing head in horror)

AF-FREE-CUN?! Wha?! -
 WHAT!?!...Waaa?... Who? ... What?!
 ...Your father?! No! Nien! Nien!
 Nien! A thousand times nien! I would know that wouldn't I? ... A schwarz ...? Who said such a thing? Whoever they are may God strike her dead where she stands! Such an monstrous lie! I-I... My ears! My ears are burning! ...Oh, he was dark complicated -- Russians are

(MORE)

FRAU SCHELLENBERG (cont'd)
 dark complicated -- but
 AF-FREE-CUN! - Mein Gott!...
 AF-FREE-CUN?!" Who would speak such
 blasphemy -- Who?! If I were a man,
 I'd run him through with my sword,
 I would! Mein Gott! Ooooh!

She does a spin and collapses to the floor again. Forgetting the hoop dress, Charlotte rushes to help her up tumbling on top of her again. The weight snaps the older woman out of her paroxysms and the two are nose to nose again.

CHARLOTTE
 Help us up, George.

KING GEORGE III
 Yes, yes.

He helps both women up. Charlotte smooths the gown then looks to Frau Schellenburg.

CHARLOTTE
 Are you all right, Shelly?

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Yes.

CHARLOTTE
 Well ...

George and Charlotte are standing side by side.

CHARLOTTE
 Well...

KING GEORGE III
 Yes....eh, well, ahem.

CHARLOTTE
 A second, please, Shelly.

Charlotte and George go to the corner and begin whispering turning every few seconds or so to look at Frau Schellenburg. After a while they both shake their heads in agreement then Charlotte reaches into his vest pocket, takes out a TIN OF SNUFF, pinches a sniff in each nostril then gives the King a pinch in each nostril. They walk back to Frau Schellenberg.

CHARLOTTE
 The King has decided this, Shelly.
 You will be given this cottage to
 (MORE)

CHARLOTTE (cont'd)
 live in as long as you like and
 with it an allowance of 100 pounds
 per year. Is that acceptable to
 you?

Frau Schellenberg rushes Charlotte to kiss her hand, but the force of the rush on the hoop skirt causes Charlotte to tumble to the floor yet again with Frau Schellenberg on top of her. The King helps them up.

KING GEORGE III
 I never understood the point of
 these hoop skirts.

CHARLOTTE
 They take getting used to, I
 suppose.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Mein Gott!

EXT. OUTSIDE THE COTTAGE DAY

The King and Charlotte are walking away from the cottage hand and hand. The King is talking to Charlotte pointing things out to her as they walk. They stop and take another pinch of snuff.

INT. COTTAGE DAY

Frau Schellenberg watches them from the window tears streaming down her fat cheeks.

FRAU SCHELLENBERG
 Mein Gott!

EXT. 1762 - KONIGSBERG, EAST PRUSSIA -- DAY

A snowbound Russian military encampment. Lower officers salute Gannibal as he makes his way to his tent. A St. Petersburg solicitor in a bilberry-hue frock-coat waits for him in front of the tent, his carriage and team of steaming horses nearby. Gannibal nods to the lawyer then waves him into the tent.

GANNIBAL
 Did you bring it?

SOLICITOR
Yes, General Gannibal.

The solicitor takes a TUBE from under his arm and from it pulls out Charlotte's CORONATION PORTRAIT. He hands the portrait to Gannibal.

GANNIBAL
So this is she?

SOLICITOR
It is, sir.

GANNIBAL
Queen Consort of England?

SOLICITOR
Her children and grandchildren will marry into every House in Europe, sir.

GANNIBAL
If history is any measure, yes.

SOLICITOR
The rumor is, she's a mulatto, sir.

Gannibal glares savagely at the man. The solicitor stares back, not understanding.

GANNIBAL
What was that supposed to mean?

SOLICITOR
Nothing, sir. Just a ridiculous rumor I picked up in a London grog shop.

Calming himself, Gannibal takes a small BAG OF COIN from his pocket and tosses it to the man.

GANNIBAL
Guard your tongue, lawyer. Rumors like that get men killed.

SOLICITOR
Indeed they do, sir.

The solicitor bows and leaves. Gannibal waits a moment then unrolls the portrait again. He stares at it -- as if wanting to sear it into memory -- rolls it up, shoves it into the tube then tosses the tube into the fireplace where the roaring flames engulf it instantly.

He takes out his PIPE and smokes.

The SMOKE from the pipe mixes with the smoke of the fire, swirling up into the flue then out over the frozen tundra.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE TENT -- DAY

A wind blows snow into the air above the tent. The SMOKE and SNOW swirl together and from it the Coronation portrait slowly materializes zooming forward until it fills the screen. This is the actual Allan Ramsay 1762 PORTRAIT of Queen Charlotte now held in the Mint Museum in Charlotte, North Carolina.

FADE OUT:

BLACK SCREEN:

SUPER:

"Prudence imposes silence,
and that little dear word silence
has so often been my friend in necessity,
that I make it my constant companion."

(Queen Charlotte, 1744- 1818)

THE END