MIDAS AND THE MIRACULOUS GOLDEN TOUCH

Written by Michele L. Vacca

(A play inspired by ancient Greek Mythology, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "The Golden Touch" from A WONDER BOOK.)

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KING MIDAS PRODUCTION NOTES:

CHARACTERS:

- KING MIDAS, RULER OF MYOPIA basically well intentioned and affable, though not a very good King. He's so absorbed in the accumulation and counting of his wealth, that he neglects his kingdom and duties, as well as his wife and daughter. He is lovable, but childish and selfish.
- QUEEN MIRANDA his wise and competent wife, who rules the country alone while he plays with his gold. She is outspoken (but usually with tact and always with affection.), and has a strong mind of her own. She is a better wife than Midas deserves.
- MARYGOLD their beloved young daughter and only child. She is generous, kind and perceptive and often lonely, because her father is absorbed with his gold, and her mother has to run the country.
- SIR CALVIN THE CALCULATING (the Baron De La Toadie.) the King's "trusted" accountant. He loves his work counting anything (but especially coins.) is his greatest thrill. He's basically a yes-man, who seems to be doing a bit of sly pilfering on the side.
- SYLVIA THE SYBIL prophetess and seeress the wise woman of Myopia, who sometimes speaks in rhymes, riddles and seeming non sequiturs, but is usually on target in her remarks if one knows how to listen to her. She enjoys her work and its trappings especially the fog that accompanies her entrances.
- NARRATOR/MYSTERIOUS STRANGER is not a double role, but rather a role within a role. He is a combination of audience/actor liaison and deus ex machina character apropos of devices common in ancient classic Greek drama.
- LESTER THE JESTER one of Midas' followers/employees. Like many jesters in Shakespeare this Fool is not such a fool at all. He's witty, intelligent, fun loving, a bit of a practical joker.
- LORELEI OF THE LEA Lester's fellow entertainer and cofollower/employee of Midas. She, too, is witty, charming and talented. Singing and dancing are her great joys. She and Lester are both quite fond of Princess Marygold, and do what they can to alleviate her loneliness.

SETS, COSTUMES AND PROPS:

With the exception of the opening scene the entire play takes place in the private and luxurious courtyard adjoining Midas' palace. (The opening sequence simply takes place "somewhere else" – in the depths of the forest perhaps, on a bare stage, or in front of a drop or a basic curtain.) The courtyard should appear to be spacious, and if the budget and space allow, the use of levels or platforms is very effective. There needs to be some kind of door or doorway, and, if possible, the hint of castle walls surrounding the playing spaces can create an impressive dramatic appearance. Benches are useful, and so is some type of desk for Midas to use for his accounting. The desk should have a shelf beneath the top, so that Midas can magically "stash" the "real" fruit that "turns" to gold.

COSTUMES should be rich looking (especially Midas!) and very colorful. They can be from any period or mix of periods in history or fairy tale. After all, this is the Mythical Kingdom of Myopia!

PROPS should be as exaggerated as possible. Lots of fake jewels and cans of gold spray paint go a long way toward creating the needed effect of opulence. Some items need to be duplicated for Act II; for example, there will have to be two Benjamin Bears, two tambourines, and two lutes.

SPECIAL EFFECTS:

The "effect" of Midas' daughter turning into gold has been accomplished with lighting as a classic "magic" trick where one item or person is switched for another while the light is out for a few fleeting seconds. The real actress can be positioned in an area near the wings or near a larger stage piece behind which she can hide. When the lights "black out" momentarily, a "golden" statue of Marygold can be substituted in the exact same spot where the actress was positioned. If carefully choreographed for speed and safety, the effect can be quite striking. The "effect" of turning portions of the palace into gold can be achieved with lighting. In the case of a proscenium fly house, actual "gold" draperies can be flown in to create the illusion. In Act II when Midas attempts to eat, and his food "turns" into gold, the actor achieves this illusion with simple sleight of hand. He reaches for the "normal" grapes with one hand and holds them up high. With his other hand he grasps the pre-set "golden" grapes. (Consultation with a "magician" experienced in sleight of hand would be very useful.) When he attempts to bite into the "real" grapes, he gasps, cries out, and drops them into a pre-set location. Simultaneously, he raises the "golden" grapes in his other hand to his mouth. With a little practice, it can work beautifully.

<u>SPECIAL NOTE</u>: The use of music (especially for the gold effects!), live or taped, greatly enhances the production of this play.

KING MIDAS AND THE MIRACULOUS GOLDEN TOUCH

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by Michele L. Vacca

ACT I

(OVERTURE: THE CURTAIN RISE CUED BY A CYMBAL CRASH. AT RISE LIGHTS ARE DIM. MYSTERIOUS MUSIC PLAYS. PERHAPS A BIT OF FOG ROLLS IN. THEN THE FIGURE OF SYLVIA THE SYBIL APPEARS IN LIGHT. SHE HOLDS A LARGE BOOK OR SCROLL IN HER HANDS. SHE ADDRESSES THE AUDIENCE.)

SYBIL: Oh, honored people! Hearken unto me, your wise Sybil.

> It is now the time foretold. That which has been shall be again. It is so written in the Ancient Book of History.

> (WHILE SHE HAS SPOKEN, THE OTHER PLAYERS HAVE GATHERED IN THE NEARBY SHADOWS.)

ALL: (IN UNISON.) It is so written.

SYBIL: And so – let us begin!

> (A GONG SOUNDS, OR PERHAPS ANOTHER CYMBAL CRASH. AS MUSIC PLAYS, THE

CHARACTERS MOVE IN STYLIZED FASHION INTO

THEIR POSITIONS. THE NARRATOR STEPS

FORWARD. SYBIL HANDS THE UNOPENED BOOK

OR SCROLL TO HIM.)

NARRATOR: (BOWS TO THE AUDIENCE.) Greetings, honored

people. We are gathered here today to tell a tale of a king

- a King they called Midas.

ALL: (IN UNISON, SOTTO VOCE.) Midas! NARRATOR: There once was a king they called Midas – ALL: (IN UNISON, SOTTO VOCE.) Midas!

NARRATOR: - who was an exceedingly wealthy man.

ALL: Ahh! NARRATOR: No one was richer, and no one was grander – than the

King that they called – Midas.

ALL: (IN UNISON, SOTTO VOCE.) Midas!

NARRATOR: Like most kings, King Midas had a kingdom, and his

kingdom was called - Myopia.

ALL: (IN UNISON, SOTTO VOCE.) Myopia!

NARRATOR: It was a small kingdom -

ALL: Oh?

NARRATOR: But a RICH kingdom.

ALL: Ahh!

NARRATOR: One of the richest kingdoms in the world.

ALL: Ahhh!

NARRATOR: And one of the most beautiful.

MIDAS: (BREAKING INTO THE GROUP RESPONSE.) I don't

care about that. I only care about MONEY.

NARRATOR: (STERNLY.) We KNOW, King Midas.

ALL: (TO MIDAS.) We KNOW.

NARRATOR: That's what this story is all about.

MIDAS: (AGAIN BREAKING THE MOOD.) MONEY??!!

ALL: (TO MIDAS.) Shhh!

NARRATOR: About the LOVE of money.

ALL: Ahh!

NARRATOR: And what can happen – ALL: (EAGERLY.) Yes?

NARRATOR: When someone loves money too much.

ALL: Oooo!

NARRATOR: Sybil, you may speak now. SYBIL: It is time. Let us begin!

(ONCE AGAIN THE GONG SOUNDS. THE CHARACTERS DISPERSE. THE NARRATOR REMAINS ON STAGE. AS HE SPEAKS, THE

SETTING CHANGES TO REVEAL THE DEPTHS OF

THE FOREST. MUSIC PLAYS.)

NARRATOR: In days of old – many kingdoms had a wise woman, who

was called a Sybil. The Kingdom of Myopia had a Sybil

named Sylvia, and she was very wise indeed.

SYBIL: I am Sybil, the wise woman of Myopia.

NARRATOR: Now sometimes it was easy to understand what Sybil had

to say.

SYBIL: (LOOKING UP.) Yes, it might rain today. NARRATOR: But often she would speak mysteriously –

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SYBIL: (MYSTERIOUSLY.) One, if by land, two, if by sea.

NARRATOR: Or in what seemed to be riddles – SYBIL: Why did the chicken cross the road?

NARRATOR: – or warnings.

SYBIL: Beware the Ides of March!

NARRATOR: (TO AUDIENCE.) See what I mean? SYBIL: (TO NARRATOR.) Beware of the dog!

NARRATOR: Yes, yes, I will. (TO AUDIENCE.) So it was always

important to consider her answers VERY carefully.

SYBIL: I am Sybil –

NARRATOR: (IMPATIENTLY.) We KNOW.

SYBIL: (TO HIM.) Beware the wrath of a Sybil scorned!

NARRATOR: I'll keep that in mind. Now – (GESTURES TOWARD

HIS BOOK.) – if I may continue?

SYBIL: Hmph!

NARRATOR: (OPENING HIS BOOK.) One beautiful spring day, some

many years ago, King Midas decided to visit wise Sylvia

the Sybil.

SYBIL: There once was a King they called Midas – Who came to

seek my advice . . .

NARRATOR: (TO HER.) Ahem! (TO AUDIENCE.) Even though the

journey was a short one, King Midas brought along his favorite friends and followers. Two of these favorites

were Lester the Jester and Lorelei of the Lea.

(MUSIC. LESTER THE JESTER AND LORELEI OF THE LEA ENTER. THEY ADDRESS SYBIL.)

LESTER: Oh, Wise Sylvia the Sybil! SYBIL: I am she. What do you want?

LESTER: His Mighty Majesty Midas approaches!

LORELEI: His Mightiest Mighty Majesty Midas approaches!
LESTER: (TO LORELEI.) No, you mean, His Most Mightiest

Mighty Majesty Midas approaches.

LORELEI: (TO LESTER.) No, no, no. His Mostest Most Mightiest

Mighty Majesty Midas approaches!

NARRATOR: (TO THEM.) Ahem! (THEY SUBSIDE.)

SYBIL: King Midas, you say?

LESTER: Yes, oh Sybil. Will you speak to him?

SYBIL: Maybe.

LORELEI: But you must.

SYBIL: (ANGERED.) WHAT??!!

LORELEI: (SUBSIDES.) If you're in the mood, of course.

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NARRATOR: Then Sir Calvin the Calculating arrived. King Midas had

sent Sir Calvin ahead to make certain that Sybil would not keep him waiting. (ASIDE TO CALVIN.) King Midas

hated to be kept waiting.

CALVIN: Greetings, Wise and Wonderful, Beautiful and Brilliant,

Sylvia the Sybil.

SYBIL: (TO NARRATOR.) Who is he?

CALVIN: I am Sir Calvin the Calculating, the Baron de la Toadie,

trusted chief accountant, trusted bookkeeper, and trusted confidante of our Mighty Midas, King of Myopia.

SYBIL: Trusted, eh? CALVIN: Absolutely.

SYBIL: (TO NARRATOR.) Hmm. The plot thickens.

NARRATOR: Indeed it does.

SYBIL: (TO CALVIN.) Well? Where is Midas? I go to lunch at

noon.

NARRATOR: Just then the Queen arrived, accompanied by her daughter.

MIRANDA: Greetings, Wise Sybil.

SYBIL: Greetings, Queen Miranda. I hear many good tidings of

you and of your daughter, Marygold.

MARYGOLD: What have you heard, Sybil?

SYBIL: (MYSTERIOUSLY.) That you are both generous and

kind to all.

ALL: Ooooo!

MIRANDA: We thank you, Sybil.

LESTER: Aha!

ALL: What? What is it? CALVIN: It's the King!

ALL: AT LAST! KING MIDAS!

(AND AT LAST KING MIDAS DOES ENTER, ACCOMPANIED BY A MUSICAL FLOURISH.)

ALL: HOORAY!

NARRATOR: Sybil was growing impatient.

SYBIL: (TO MIDAS.) Well? What do you want?

CALVIN: His Mighty Majesty – LESTER: His Mightiest Majesty –

LORELEI: His Mostest Mightiest Majesty –

NARRATOR: (TO THEM.) Ahem! (SHOWS SYBIL HIS BOOK,

POINTS TO THE PAGE.) Sybil, King Midas is here to

ask your advice.

SYBIL: Fine, fine. (TO NARRATOR.) Tell him to go ahead.

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NARRATOR: (TO MIDAS.) Go ahead. MIDAS: Sybil, I need some advice.

SYBIL: (WISELY.) I know.

MIDAS: You do? (MARVELING AT HER INSIGHT.) That's

amazing.

ALL: Amazing!

SYBIL: (SOMEWHAT MODESTLY.) Well, I have the Powers.

MIDAS: Ah!

ALL: Of course! She has Powers!

SYBIL: What seek you, Midas? Wisdom, perhaps? MIDAS: No, no, I have plenty of that. I am very wise.

ALL: (REACT IN CHARACTER.)

SYBIL: Do you want friends?

MIDAS: No, no. I have many friends. (GESTURES TO

AUDIENCE.) No one has more friends than I.

SYBIL: Health?

MIDAS: I am the picture of health.

SYBIL: Beauty?

MIDAS: Now, Sybil. Beauty? Who could be more handsome than

I?

SYBIL: Well –

ALL: (TO SYBIL.) Shh!

SYBIL: Well, then, Midas, what do you want?

MIDAS: Gold.

SYBIL: Gold? Did he say – he wants GOLD?

ALL: Yes, he did. He said he wants –

MIDAS: Gold!

SYBIL: But Midas, you already have a MOUNTAIN of gold!

MIDAS: I know.

SYBIL: No one in the world has more gold than you.

MIDAS: I know.

SYBIL: Why do you want MORE?

ALL: Good question.

SYBIL: (TO THEM.) I thought so. (TO MIDAS.) Well?

MIDAS: Well – what?

MIRANDA: Why do you want MORE gold, Midas?

MIDAS: Why? Oh, just – because.

ALL: Because?

MARYGOLD: Because WHY, Father?

MIDAS: Well, Marygold – just to HAVE it, don't you understand?

MARYGOLD: No, Father. I don't.

ALL: (EXCEPT CALVIN.) Neither do we. MIDAS: You see, Sybil? No one understands me.

CALVIN: I understand you, Sire.

MIDAS: You're the only one, Sir Calvin. Can you help me, oh

Sybil?

SYBIL: Perhaps. Let me think.

MIDAS: Well?

SYBIL: Be quiet, Midas. I need to consult the OMENS.

ALL: Ahhh! The OMENS! Shh!

(MYSTERIOUS MUSIC PLAYS WHILE SYBIL CONSULTS THE OMENS; SHE CHECKS THE DIRECTION OF THE WIND, LOOKS INTO AN AMULET, TAKES OUT A SMALL TELESCOPE TO LOOK AT THE SKY. LORELEI AND LESTER

WATCH HER, CALVIN AND MIDAS STAND OFF TO ONE SIDE. AND MARYGOLD AND MIRANDA

COME FORWARD TO SPEAK PRIVATELY.)

MARYGOLD: Mother? Do you think Sybil might be able to advise

Father?

MIRANDA: Perhaps, Marygold.

MARYGOLD: Will she tell him how to get what he wants?

MIRANDA: She MAY tell him, Marygold, IF he knows how to

LISTEN.

SYBIL: AHA!!! ALL: AHA!!!

NARRATOR: What do the OMENS say?

SYBIL: Hearken unto me, oh Midas! Listen and BEWARE!

ALL: BEWARE!

SYBIL: (YET AGAIN.) BEWARE!

MIDAS: You said that already. SYBIL: I LIKE saying that.

MIDAS: Oh.

SYBIL: BEWARE!! ALL: BEWARE! MIDAS: Of what?

SYBIL: The OMENS say – it is VERY dangerous for you to make

a wish because -

MIDAS: Yes, yes. Go on.

SYBIL: – because – the OMENS say – your wish may well come

true!

MIDAS: Really!? I'll get what I want? SYBIL: You may get what you ASK FOR.

MIDAS: Isn't that the same thing?

SYBIL: Not necessarily. Remember, Midas, all that glitters is not

gold.

ALL: Ahhh!

MIDAS: What should I do, Sybil?

SYBIL: Go home, King Midas, and take an accounting of all you

HAVE. When you have done this, you must celebrate ALL YOU HAVE with your family and friends and the

people of the kingdom.

MIDAS: And when I have done this counting and celebrating – then

I'll get what I want?

SYBIL: Then you may get what you ASK FOR. MIDAS: That's wonderful! Thanks a lot, Sybil. SYBIL: Don't thank me. Thank the OMENS.

MIDAS: Right. Well, let's go, everyone! We have work to do.

LESTER: And celebrating to do.
CALVIN: And lots of counting to do!

SYBIL: Be sure to account for everything, Midas. Leave nothing

out.

MIDAS: Right, right. I understand.

SYBIL: DO you?

NARRATOR: (TO AUDIENCE.) DOES he?

MIDAS: Farewell, Sybil.
SYBIL: Beware, Midas!
MIDAS: Let's go, everyone!

(MIDAS AND COMPANY DEPART WITH A FLOURISH OF MUSIC. SYBIL AND THE NARRATOR WATCH THEM GO OFF.)

SYBIL: (CALLS OUT A FINAL WARNING.) Beware, Mighty

Midas! Beware of strangers bearing gifts!

(SYBIL GOES OFF. THE NARRATOR ADDRESSES

THE AUDIENCE.)

NARRATOR: Well, Sylvia the Sybil had done her best to advise King

Midas. But had he REALLY understood all that she had said? Let's follow him back to his castle, and find out.

(AT A WAVE OF HIS HAND, MUSIC PLAYS AND THE SETTING CHANGES TO THE COURTYARD AT

THE CASTLE. KING MIDAS, MIRANDA,

MARYGOLD, CALVIN, LESTER AND LORELEI

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ENTER. AS THE MUSIC ENDS . . .)

CALVIN: (TO AUDIENCE.) People of Myopia, your Mighty King

Midas has returned!

LESTER and LORELEI: HOORAY!

MIDAS: Ah, Miranda, it's good to be home.

MIRANDA: It certainly is.

MIDAS: Come, Sir Calvin, we have much to do.

CALVIN: Yes, Sire! (HE AND MIDAS CONFER DURING THE

FOLLOWING.)

MARYGOLD: (RUNNING TO A LARGE STUFFED TOY THAT IS

ON THE WINDOW SEAT.) And here's my friend,

Benjamin Bear!

LESTER: Hello, Benjamin Bear.

LORELEI: We missed you Benjamin Bear.

MARYGOLD: I wanted to take you with us, Benjamin Bear -

MIRANDA: Now, Marygold –

MARYGOLD: But Mother said I couldn't.

MIRANDA: You can't take Benjamin Bear everywhere you go. It's

not dignified.

MARYGOLD: I know, Mother.

MIRANDA: But I know how much you love Benjamin Bear –

MARYGOLD: Oh, yes, yes, I do!

LORELEI: And so do I! LESTER: Me, too!

MARYGOLD: He's our friend.

MIRANDA: Yes, dear. (SHE GOES OFF.)

MIDAS: (WITH A LAUGH.) Still playing with that silly bear?

MARYGOLD: He's NOT silly!

MIDAS: Of course he is. (TO CALVIN.) Just look at that face.

MARYGOLD: It's a wonderful face!

MIDAS: Maybe he'd look better if he were made of gold.

CALVIN: Much better. MARYGOLD: Father, no!

MIDAS: Oh, I'm only teasing, Marygold.
MARYGOLD: I love him just the way he is.
MIDAS: Fine, fine. Now, Sir Calvin, I –

MIRANDA: (RETURNS.) Midas, there are people waiting to see us.

MIDAS: Well, let them just wait.

MIRANDA: They've BEEN waiting, Midas.

MIDAS: Well, let them wait some MORE. I'm busy.

MIRANDA: But they have problems, Midas. They need the advice of

their King.

MIDAS: No, they don't. They just want to complain.

CALVIN: How true, Sire. These people have no idea of what's truly

important to Your Mightiest Majesty.

MIDAS: Ah, Sir Calvin. YOU understand me so well.

(DURING THE FOLLOWING LINES SIR CALVIN BRINGS OUT VARIOUS ITEMS – LEDGERS, MONEY

BAGS, OBJECTS OF GOLD AND SILVER.)

MIRANDA: Midas –

MIDAS: Oh, Miranda, YOU can take care of the people waiting.

You're better at it, anyway.

MIRANDA: But they want to see BOTH of us, Midas.

MIDAS: Well that's too bad. I'm tired. Besides, Sir Calvin and I

have counting to do.

MIRANDA: Now?

CALVIN: I just love counting.

MIDAS: Why, Miranda, I'm surprised at you. Don't you

remember? Sylvia the Sybil told me I must take an

accounting.

CALVIN: I LOVE counting!

MIDAS: So do I, Sir Calvin. So do I. CALVIN: I can hardly wait to begin.

MIDAS: Neither can I.

MIRANDA: (SIGHS.) Very well, Midas. I'll take care of the

Kingdom -

MIDAS: Good!

MIRANDA: – and you take care of your accounting.

MIDAS: Great!

MIRANDA: Be sure to count EVERYTHING, Midas.

MIDAS: Why, of course, Miranda. (TO SIR CALVIN.) Isn't that

what Sybil told me to do?

CALVIN: Oh, yes, Sire. Oh, I love counting! MIRANDA: Don't forget about the celebration.

MIDAS: Celebration?

MIRANDA: After the accounting. Remember? Sybil told you to

celebrate what you have.

MIDAS: Oh, yes. Well, after we've done the counting, I'll know

how large a celebration I can afford.

MIRANDA: I see.

CALVIN: Shall we begin, Sire? Oh, I do love counting.

MARYGOLD: Father?

MIDAS: What is it, Marygold? I'm very busy.

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MARYGOLD: Can we help? (MEANING HERSELF AND LORELEI

AND LESTER.)

LESTER: (PICKING UP A MONEY BAG.) I know how to count.

LORELEI: And so do I. (TAKES THE BAG FROM LESTER.)
CALVIN: (GRABS THE MONEY BAG AWAY.) Give me that!

MIDAS: (WHO REALLY DOESN'T WANT THEIR HELP.)

Well – uh – I have it! Why don't you and Lester and Lorelei go over there – ah – somewhere – and plan the

entertainment for the celebration.

MARYGOLD: That's a good idea.

LESTER: Yes, Sire. To entertain you is my greatest joy. LORELEI: Yes, Sire. To entertain you is what I adore.

LESTER: (ASIDE TO LORELEI.) It's also what he pays us for.

LORELEI: True.

MIDAS: Now, run along. Sir Calvin and I have work to do.

LESTER: Shall I play you some music, Sire?

LORELEI: Shall I dance for you, Sire?

MIRANDA: Shall I attend to the business of the country, Sire?

MIDAS: (NOT REALLY LISTENING.) Great. Go ahead. Have

fun.

MIRANDA: Be careful, Midas.

MIDAS: Careful? Yes, yes, of course. (MIRANDA GOES OFF.)

Lester, tell the guards to be on guard.

LESTER: Ho, guards! The King says be on guard!

VOICES OF OFF STAGE GUARDS: (A FEW MUTTERS AND

GRUMBLES.)

MIDAS: We don't want any thieves to sneak in here.

CALVIN: Indeed we don't, Majesty.

LESTER: (WITH A MOCKING GASP OF SHOCK.) Why, thieves

might TAKE your gold, Majesty!

LORELEI: (SAME BIT.) And then run AWAY with it!

MIDAS: (TO THEM.) That's not funny.

LORELEI: No? MIDAS: No.

LESTER: Sorry, Sire.

MIDAS: Ready, Sir Calvin? CALVIN: MORE than ready, Sire!

MIDAS: Account book set?
CALVIN: Account book set!
MIDAS: On your mark, get set –

LESTER: GO FOR IT!!

MIDAS: Lester! LESTER: Sorry.

MIDAS: On your mark, get set, GO!

(PERHAPS A SHORT MUSICAL INTERLUDE HERE TO ACCENTUATE AND CELEBRATE THE JOYS OF COUNTING MONEY. AS THE MUSIC FADES)

MIDAS: (ADMIRING HIS RICHES.) Wonderful! Just wonderful!

LORELEI: (WHO HAS BEEN DANCING DURING THE MUSIC,

THINKS HE IS COMPLIMENTING HER.) Thank you,

Majesty.

CALVIN: Indeed it is, Sire!

LORELEI: Shall I dance again, Sire?

- END OF E-MAIL SEGMENT -

There are 56 pages in the complete ON STAGE! – KING MIDAS AND THE MIRACULOUS GOLDEN TOUCH

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