

***THE HAROLD NEWS* Cast List**

2 Male, 2 Female, 2 M/F, and Extras

HAROLD (M) Likes to twist the truth much like a contortionist likes to twist her lumbar.

JESTER (M/F) Professional fool and sometime color commentator.

TOWN CRIER (M/F) His market share is down since he likes to verify his facts & sources.

KING (M) Loves sensational news. Would love reality television, if they had televisions.

QUEEN (F) Her tastes are more highbrow. She'd be carrying a PBS tote bag today.

PRINCESS ABIGAIL (F) Her true love is the object of a smear campaign. She will fight back.

EXTRAS

COURTIERS (M/F) Members of the nobility who sit at the Royal Table

PAGES & SERVANTS (M/F) servants of the court (no lines)

Sample Pages

The Royal Court discuss which version of the news they prefer.

QUEEN: I much prefer the news according to the Town Crier.

KING: The Town Crier is so . . . so . . .

ABIGAIL: Reliable?

QUEEN: Trustworthy?

KING: No, he's . . . what am I trying to say, Jester?

JESTER: Boring.

KING: Just the word.

QUEEN: Oh, really. And since I prefer the Town Crier's news, what would that make me? Dull?

KING: Of course not, my dear. No, you're . . . what am I trying to say, Jester?

JESTER: Help?

KING: Just the word.

ABIGAIL: Call the Town Crier. I wish to know what happened at the tournament today from a reliable source.

JESTER: As you wish.

KING: And bring Harold as well. I hear he's writing up the tournament in his newsparchment.

JESTER: Yes, sire. *(Bows and exits.)*

ABIGAIL: Father, how much longer will Harold be disgracing us with his presence?

KING: Don't talk that way about your cousin.

ABIGAIL: I wish Harold were my cousin. Once removed.

JESTER: *(Re-enters with TOWN CRIER and HAROLD. They bow.)* Milord, I bring the bearers of news. *(TOWN CRIER glares at HAROLD.)*

KING: Nephew, please relay the events of today's tournament. What happened to Dukey Howser, the Duke of Ellington?

HAROLD: *(Hold up paper.)* I just wrote about it. *(Reads.)* Today, the so-called Duke of Ellington not only despicably shoved the noble Earl Gray off of his horse when he wasn't looking, but also thrust a needle into the prone and helpless Earl, thus adding insult to injury.

KING: Ha! I always thought that do-gooder Howser had a dark side.

TOWN CRIER: But that's not true at all! I was there.

QUEEN: *(To HAROLD.)* May I? *(HAROLD hands her the parchment and she reads.)* "So-called Duke of Ellington?"

TOWN CRIER: But he is the Duke of Ellington.

HAROLD: Right. That's why he's "so called."

QUEEN: "Shoved the noble Earl Gray off of his horse?"

TOWN CRIER: It was a joust, for goodness sake. He unhorsed the Earl.

HAROLD: Shoved him with a lance, he did.

QUEEN: While he wasn't looking?

TOWN CRIER: Earl Gray was so scared he had his eyes closed.

HAROLD: It's hard to look with your eyes closed.

QUEEN: "Adding insult to injury"?

TOWN CRIER: The Earl is a diabetic – he was going into shock. Dukey Howser added insulin to injury.

HAROLD: A simple mistake. The letters are right next to each other.

KING: How would you report it, Town Crier?

TOWN CRIER: Hear ye, hear ye. The box scores for the King's Jousting Tournament are as follows: Dukey Howser 1, Earl Gray 0.

KING: Go on.

TOWN CRIER: Making Dukey Howser the winner.

KING: Go on.

TOWN CRIER: The end.

KING: (*Beat.*) That's it?

TOWN CRIER: Well, I'm still working on the color commentary.

KING: I much prefer your news, Harold.

HAROLD: Thanks, Uncle.

TOWN CRIER: *(Correcting.)* Your Majesty.

HAROLD: No need to be so formal. Just Harold will do.

TOWN CRIER: Why, you little—

KING: In light of your reporting, Harold, it is obvious that Earl Gray is the right choice for my future son-in-law.

ABIGAIL: But, father, I love Dukey Howser.

KING: My dear, are you still looking for a marriage based on love?

QUEEN: *(Glares.)* And what's wrong with that, my King?

KING: Uh . . . just because it worked for us . . . well, it doesn't mean that . . .

QUEEN: Yes?

KING: It's just that in royal marriages, you need more . . . You need more . . . Jester, what am I trying to say?

JESTER: Land.

KING: Just the word. Earl Gray has a whole lotta land.

QUEEN: And did you marry me for my land?

KING: *(Laughs uneasily.)* For love! Love, my dear. I love your, uh . . .

JESTER: Land?

KING: *(To JESTER.)* That wasn't the word I was looking for.

QUEEN: Abigail loves Dukey Houser for his character, not his land.

KING: Character? This is politics, my dear; it's best to leave character out of it. You wouldn't understand.

Later, the news is starting to get out of control:

JESTER: *(Enters quickly, carrying the latest Harold News.)* Ah, the latest edition of—*(TOWN CRIER & ABIGAIL are crying.)* What's this? Two Town Criers?

ABIGAIL/TOWN CRIER: You heard the King! I'm doomed!

JESTER: *(Rubs his head.)* One at a time, please?

TOWN CRIER: I think he means to get rid of me! *(Starts sobbing.)* I feel horrible.

JESTER: It looks like you're having a bawl. *(Beat.)* Sorry, couldn't resist. *(Comforts TOWN CRIER.)* There, there. I'm sure he won't fire you, Town Crier. Someone in your family has held your position for generations! You just need some help making your news more . . . colorful.

TOWN CRIER: But I don't know how to do that. I just report the facts.

JESTER: I'll help you, Town Crier. *(Looks at parchment.)* Let me find a good example for you. Oh, here's one about Duchess Wigglesworth.

ABIGAIL: By a weird coincidence, she is here tonight. *(Points out into audience.)*

JESTER: *(Looks to where ABIGAIL pointed.)* She has a lot of nerve. I'm surprised she's showing her face in public with this news.

ABIGAIL: What news?

JESTER: *(Reads headline.)* "Duchess Wigglesworth Robbing the Cradle: Younger Man Found in Her Arms."

TOWN CRIER: She was babysitting. A baby! She was burping him.

JESTER: Oh, that explains the next line. "Their embrace was a real gas." Well how about this.
"Lord Frumpywig –

ABIGAIL: By an even weirder coincidence, Lord Frumpywig is also a guest here tonight. (*Points out into audience.*)

JESTER: (*Looks to where ABIGAIL pointed.*) What are the odds? And again, I'm surprised he's showing his face in public with this news.

TOWN CRIER: What news?

JESTER: (*Reads headline.*) "Lord Frumpywig Found Raving in a Homicidal Rage."

TOWN CRIER: He was watching _____. (*Insert name of sports team. Beat.*)
Okay, that one is right.

JESTER: Or, how about this one: "Jester –

ABIGAIL: And by the weirdest coincidence yet, the Jester is also here tonight. (*Points.*)

JESTER: (*Beat.*) Uh, may continue? (*Back to parchment.*) Let's see, where was I? Ah, yes.
"Jester's Tights are His Best Joke Material." Wait just a minute! Why, that gossipy little brat!

TOWN CRIER: (*Takes parchment from JESTER and reads.*) "Jester's Joke so Lame it had to be Put Down." (*Laughs.*) I suppose the King didn't like your joke about the weasel and the trebuchet.

JESTER: Of course he did! (*Beat.*) Didn't he? You thought it was funny, didn't you, Town Crier?

TOWN CRIER: Not me, but Lord Hottintot found it quite funny, according to "Who's Who of People Easily-Amused." (*Smiles weakly.*)

ABIGAIL: (*Takes parchment from TOWN CRIER and reads.*) "Jester's Breath so Bad it Set Castle Tapestry on Fire."

JESTER: I was breathing fire! Harold jostled me. It wasn't even a new tapestry. It was one of those really old things.

TOWN CRIER: *(Takes parchment from ABIGAIL and reads.)* “Jester Gives Rings to Three Different Women”?

JESTER: I was juggling! Haven’t you ever heard of audience participation?

TOWN CRIER: Well, Jester, you’re right. The way that Harold tells it makes the news much more interesting.

JESTER: But he’s making things up. This is all a bunch of lies!

TOWN CRIER: What happened to “colorful details”?

JESTER: *(Thinking aloud.)* Oh no! What if the King believes these . . . these . . . colorful details about me?

TOWN CRIER: Don’t worry, Jester. The King would never fire you. Someone in your family has held your position for generations.

JESTER: *(Beat.)* No, I replaced the last Jester . . . who met an early demise. He told the joke about the weasel and the catapult. Completely different joke.

TOWN CRIER: Oh. Sorry. Just trying to make you feel better.

JESTER: Something must be done about Harold.

TOWN CRIER: I agree. If things keep going this way, he’ll ruin my career!

ABIGAIL: He’ll ruin my life!

JESTER: He’ll ruin my chances for being on the cover of JQ. *(ABIGAIL and TOWN CRIER look at JESTER.)* Jesterman’s Quarterly. My tights are a fashion statement.

ABIGAIL: All right. We need to beat Harold at his own game.

TOWN CRIER: And how should we do that?

JESTER: Beat him. With blunt instruments. Lots of blunt instruments.

TOWN CRIER: I think we need to be more figurative here.