

SCENE NINE: THE PALACE BALLROOM**13A - Before "The Contest"**

(A line of COURTIERS enters, dressed and pomaded for the ball, followed by an alarming array of opportunistic PRINCESSES. Prince Eric enters, dressed in royal finery, followed by Grimsby, who calls the gathering to order.)

14 - The Contest**Grimsby, Princesses****GRIMSBY**

WELCOME, DEAR FRIENDS, TO OUR CONTEST –
THE FIRST THAT THIS KINGDOM HAS EVER SEEN!
WE GATHER TODAY FOR A VOCAL DISPLAY
SO OUR PRINCE MAY AT LAST CHOOSE A QUEEN!

These six princesses possess the most accomplished voices in all the land!

(to the princesses)

Tonight, one of you will go home with the crown! May the best woman win!

(One by one, the princesses step forward to sing.)

PRINCESS 5

(high energy, overwhelming)

LISTEN TO ME
DON'T I SOUND RICH?
LOUD, AM I NOT?
PLUS I'VE GOT PERFECT PITCH
WOULDN'T YOU THINK I'M THE GIRL
THE GIRL WHO HAS EV'RYTHING?

PRINCE ERIC

That's not her voice. I'll know it the moment I hear it—

(Grimsby pounds his staff on the floor, signaling a rejection.)

PRINCESS 2

LISTEN TO THIS
CLEAR AS CAN BE!
YOU'LL KNOW I'M IT
WHEN I HIT MY HIGH C!
AH!

(Prince Eric gives Grimsby a look; this isn't the girl. Grimsby pounds his staff, and Princess 2 exits in a huff.)

PRINCESS 4

WOULDN'T YOU THINK I'M THE GIRL
THE GIRL WHO HAS EV'RYTHING?

(belt)

EV'RYTHING!

(head voice)

EV'RYTHING ...

(Another look from Prince Eric; another pounding from Grimsby.)

PRINCESS 6

I'M A WORLD-FAMOUS COLORATURA!

(She sings an operatic riff. Another veto; another pounding.)

PRINCESS 1

MY VIBRATO IS SECOND TO NONE!

(Another veto; another pounding.)

PRINCESS 3

(dances exuberantly)

I'M A WALKING DISPLAY OF BRAVURA!

(Prince Eric just makes a face. She won't do, either. Another pounding.)

PRINCESSES

IT'S SO CLEAR ...
CAN'T YOU HEAR?

PRINCESS 6

I'M THE ONE!

PRINCESS 1

I'M THE ONE!

PRINCESS 5

I'M THE ONE!

PRINCESSES 2, 3

I'M THE ONE!

PRINCESSES

I'M THE ONE!

(Prince Eric is unconvinced and disheartened. Grimsby pounds in a frenzy to halt the singing.)

GRIMSBY

Surely one of these lovely voices matches the music in your heart—

PRINCE ERIC

I wish I could say “yes”! But she’s not here.

GRIMSBY

(re: Princess 2)

But her father rules all Prussia.

(re: Princess 4)

She’s richer than Midas!

(re: Princess 1)

She’s one of triplets, but they’re willing to break up the set!

PRINCE ERIC

No, Grim!

GRIMSBY

You’ll be the death of me, boy! What am I to do? The sun has nearly set. Soon, your birthday will be over. You must choose someone! Perhaps if we steel ourselves ... take another listen:

(Ariel, aware that this is her last chance, enters and battles her way into the center of the throng.)

25 – Ariel Steps Forward

Ursula

PRINCE ERIC

Ariel?

GRIMSBY

For heaven’s sake, child—you mustn’t.

PRINCE ERIC

Shh! Wait, Grimsby. Be quiet, and listen! Go ahead, Ariel.

(The whole room quiets in anticipation. Ariel is blinking back tears, already praying for a miracle. She takes a slow deep breath. It looks as if she’s about to attempt a note. But instead, she gets an idea. She catches Prince Eric’s gaze, and then—in her own, inimitable way—executes a few of the very dance steps he taught her two nights before. When she’s done, the princesses all titter derisively. Ariel looks to Prince Eric, helpless.)

GRIMSBY

(crestfallen)

Oh, child! Poor, lost child.

(then to Prince Eric)

I had so hoped, dear Eric, that you might find love somewhere in this room.

PRINCE ERIC

(smiling, his gaze fixed to Ariel)

Perhaps I have. I've just been too blind to see it.

GRIMSBY

But that's impossible, she didn't utter a sound.

PRINCE ERIC

No? Well, that's funny. Because I heard every single note, as clear as a bell.

(a beat, and then)

That must mean something, old boy.

GRIMSBY

(beaming)

Perhaps it does.

(Suddenly, wafting on the breeze, the siren call:)

VOICE

AH-AH-AH-AH, AH-AH-AH-AH ...

(Ursula has unleashed Ariel's true voice yet again.)

GRIMSBY

Can it be? Another contestant?

VOICE

... AH-AH-AH-AH-AH-AH, AH-AH-AH-AH ...

PRINCE ERIC

That's it! That's the voice!

(Prince Eric can't help himself; the voice cuts right through him. Ariel looks at him, panicked; her whole face is a plea.)

GRIMSBY

Oh, dear. This is most unexpected!

URSULA

(offstage)

AH-AH-AH-AH, AH-AH-AH-AH ...

(But, looking at Ariel, Prince Eric has new found resolve.)

PRINCE ERIC

(to Grimsby)

Tell her that the competition is over. Tell her she's too late!

(Ariel beams at Prince Eric with gratitude. He leans in to kiss her.)

URSULA

(offstage)

AH-AH-AH-AH, AH-AH-AH-AH!

(Just then, the sun turns a bright red. Ursula arrives in a huge way.)

Why, look! Such a gorgeous sunset! And on the third day, too! Time's up. You lose!

(With her mighty magic Ursula wipes the ball guests away and grabs for Ariel and Prince Eric with the help of Flotsam and Jetsam. Grimsby tries to help.)

GRIMSBY

Eric!

PRINCE ERIC

Ariel!

(Prince Eric rushes to save Ariel but the Ursula's magic throw him aside and drag Ariel away.)

URSULA

Say goodbye to loverboy, I'm dragging you down, down, down into the depths where you belong!

(And she does just that, yanking Ariel back down into the watery home from which she came .)

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