

# Once Upon a Mattress – Synopsis & Characters

**Synopsis:** This musical is a clever retelling of the fairytale about the *Princess and the Pea*. Our story begins many moons ago in a distant kingdom. Due to an unhappy curse, King Sextimus is unable to speak, while his terror-of-a-wife, Queen Aggravain, has taken over control of the kingdom. Most importantly, in an attempt to keep Prince Dauntless single and powerless, she has decreed that only the princess that can pass her test may marry her son. Further, no one else in the kingdom may marry until Prince Dauntless does. Luckily, Sir Harry is able to find an amazing princess, Winnifred the Woebegone. She instantly catches the attention of Prince Dauntless, and is able to pass the Queen's supposedly impassable sensitivity test. When the Queen still tries to prevent the prince from marrying, he tells her to 'shut up' which ends up breaking the curse on the king. Now able to speak, King Sextimus regains his rightful position as leader of the kingdom, and all is well.

## CHARACTERS:

**QUEEN AGGRAVAIN:** Very protective of her only son, Dauntless. She is a strong character that takes the stage with her presence. She is overbearing, lively, domineering, but should be played comically.

Adult Female (Age 40 – 60's)

Audition Age: 30+

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Alto

Dance Requirements: minimal but must move well

### **Audition Requirements:**

Singing: #7 Sensitivity

Spoken: Monologue: pg 9-10 (choose approximately 1 minute of this "mamalogue" to perform at audition)

**PRINCESS WINNIFRED the Woebegone:** She is not the "classical" princess in any sense of the word. She can swim moats, lift weights and she prefers the swamps of home to a fancy castle. She is energetic, adventurous, independent and optimistic.

Adult Female (Age 20s – flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Mezzo/Soprano

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

### **Audition Requirements:**

Singing: #6 Shy (from the beginning until bar 78)

Spoken: Dialogue: pg 35 with Dauntless from "No, let's do it again" to beginning of song.

**PRINCE DAUNTLESS:** Still a "mama's boy," but it is evident that he is ready to move on. He is child-like, naïve, with a likeable sense of innocence. He adores Winnifred and is in awe of her every step.

Male (Age 20+ – flexible)

Vocal Requirements: baritone

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

### **Audition Requirements:**

Singing: #18 Man to Man

Spoken: pg 35 with Winnifred from "No, let's do it again" to beginning of song

**LADY LARKEN:** A classic beauty. She is graceful, charming and in love with Sir Harry. She is very eager for Dauntless to marry so she can wed Harry before her little bundle arrives. She is eager to please and would never cause embarrassment to her love, Sir Harry.

Adult female (Age 20's flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Soprano (sings the romantic ballads)

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

***Audition Requirements:***

Singing: #4 In a Little While

Spoken: Dialogue (with Harry): pg 6 – 7 beginning with “My darling, you missed the test.” and ending at the song

**SIR HARRY:** He is a handsome and masculine knight, but quite pompous -- a bit of a “stuffed shirt.” He fancies that he may one day become the Prime Minister, if he can find a Princess to marry Dauntless, so he can wed Lady Larkin. He is chivalrous, brave, determined but a bit taken with himself. Think Dudley Do-Right.

Adult male (Age 20s – 30s)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, Tenor

Dance Requirements: moderate but must move well

***Audition Requirements:***

Singing: #4 In a Little While

Spoken: Dialogue (with Larken): pg 6 – 7 beginning with “My darling, you missed the test.” and ending at the song

**MINSTREL:** May be cast as male or female. Functions as the narrator and has a direct link to the audience, and is attractive and “worldly”. Has an air of confidence and enjoys telling the real story to the audience. S/he is likeable and cunning when need be. Works at foiling the Queen’s plans.

Adult male/female (Flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, tenor/soprano

Dance Requirements: good physical skills required, light choreography

***Audition Requirements:***

Singing: #2 Many Moons Ago

Spoken: Dialogue: pg 2 monologue & pg 12 monologue

**JESTER:** May be cast as male or female. Must be flexible, agile and full of energy. Has a hidden passion for show business and the “good old days” His/her loyalty lies with his/her friends, the King & the Minstrel.

Adult male/female (Flexible)

Vocal Requirements: strong singer, tenor/soprano

Dance Requirements: Dancer and special talents (juggling, gymnast, contortionist) a bonus.

***Audition Requirements:***

Singing: #19 Very Soft Shoes

Spoken: Dialogue (with the King): pg 18 – 19 do all the lines of the Jester and the Minstrel for the audition. End at the song.

**WIZARD:** The Queen’s Loyal Confidante. He is magical and mysterious and is able to do several magic tricks. He possesses a sense of showmanship. Kind of a buffoon though.

Mature adult male (flexible)

Vocal Requirements: Primarily a speaking role

Dance Requirements: minimal

***Audition Requirements:***

Spoken: Dialogue: pg 4 beginning with, “You have now reached . . .” end at “You’re time is up.”

**KING SEXTIMUS, THE SILENT:** He is mute, due to a curse, but you always know what he is thinking, He is expressive, mischievous and playful.

Mature adult male (flexible)

Vocal Requirements: Primarily a mimed role - strong facial and physical comedy

Dance Requirements: minimal

**Audition Requirements:**

Mimed: Dialogue (with the Jester & Minstrel): pg 18 – 19

**Ensemble:** The **Ladies-in-Waiting** and **Knights** who are all waiting for the Prince to get married so that THEY can get married to each other.

The following are character roles and will be cast from the ensemble. If you are interested in any of these smaller parts, we encourage you to sign up to audition for one of the major leads, so that we have a chance to hear you. We want to put together the best cast possible, and the more information we have, the better.

- Queen's Ladies-in-waiting: **Lady Rowena, Lady Merrill, Lady Lucille, Lady Helena, Lady Sarah, Lady Mabelle**
- Knights: **Sir Luce, Sir Russell, Sir Michael, Sir Humphrey.**
- Kitchen Wench: A woman chased around the castle by King Sextimus.
- Emily (chambermaid), Soldiers, Servants, Musicians.

**CALLBACK AUDITIONS:**

After the first round of auditions (September 13 & 14), some members may be asked back for a callback audition, at which different actors will be paired to read certain scenes together. Some may also be asked to sing another number. To help you prepare for that eventuality, below are listed some of the scenes which are being considered for call back auditions (scheduled for September 15).

**Possible scenes for Callback auditions:**

- Song: #18 **Man to Man** (Dauntless & King)
- Song: #21 **Yesterday I Loved You**, beginning at bar 128 to the end (Larken & Harry)
- Song: #6b **The Minstrel, The Jester and I** from the beginning to bar 87 (Jester, Minstrel & King)
- Song: #8 **The Swamps of Home** from beginning to bar 43 (Winnifred)
- Speaking: **ACT ONE: Scene 5**, pg 27 from "Come in." until the end of scene (Winnifred, Larken, Harry)
- Speaking: **ACT TWO: Scene 4**, pg 51 whole scene (Jester, Wizard and Minstrel)
- Speaking: **ACT TWO: Scene 9**, pg 61 from "She's going to get cold . . ." until the song (Dauntless, Queen, King)