

Fumble and the Fairies

Adapted from The Bee Who Would Not Work by Charlotte Herr
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By Claudia Haas
Email: claudiahaas12@gmail.com

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Running Time: 60 minutes

CAST: 10; (3 female, 2 male, 5 male or female; extras welcome!)

Bees

Fumble (m) *not* a worker-bee; a dancing bee

Queenie (f) yes, the Queen

Rumply (m/f) a bit rumpled but works

Grumbly (m/f) very grumpy but does work

Flutterby (f) a butterfly who loves to dance

Murrel (m/f) a squirrel

Fairies

Pennyroyal (f) the Queen (in charge)

Basil (m) the King (a bit vain)

Dill (m/f) dreamer

Chervil (m/f) a little churlish

A chorus of bees and/or fairies can be added. You could have some fun sequences where the chorus of bees work to something like “The Volga Boatman” or to percussion or anything. The same goes with the fairy dances – you can waltz, you can also do hip-hop, tap, the jitterbug, etc. Anything goes. Want to jump rope and hopscotch? Go for it.

SYNOPSIS: Fumble becomes the dancing partner of a charming butterfly and is loving the break from his work-a-bee life. Unfortunately, if he doesn’t make honey when the sun shines, he won’t last the winter. What’s a bee to do?

PLACE: Anyplace where bees, butterflies and fairies gather (woodlands, garden, meadows, etc.). And the twilight – where the fairies go at night and in the winter.

TIME: Today, May through November

COSTUMES:

BEES: just wings and a vest (you may change the color and description of the vest in the script to suit your needs).

SQUIRREL: The tail will do. If you want a furry baseball cap, that’s fine.

BUTTERFLY: Wings

FAIRIES: Anything goes

Fumble and the Fairies

SCENE 1: A May Morning

AT RISE we are where bees gather. QUEENIE is supervising while the bees work. FUMBLE sort of works. RUMPLY is enjoying the sugary nectar. GRUMBLY is of course grumbling.

QUEENIE

Excellent my worker-bees! Gather the nectar. Work those plants! Work yourself to the bone.

GRUMBLY

We don't have bones.

QUEENIE

Work yourself to the exoskeleton then!

RUMPLY

Sooooo good. Soooo sweet. It makes me want to twirl and do nose dives into the flowers.

(RUMPLY does a nose-dive. Into the ground.)

QUEENIE

Maybe you have had enough nectar. Yes, no more sugar for you. Find the pollen. Get some protein into your bodies.

RUMPLY

But/

QUEENIE

Pollinate! That's an order.

RUMPLY

Pollinating is so tricky. I always slide into the flower.

QUEENIE

Don't lean forward so much and grip with your legs! That's why they're there.

(RUMPLY flies to some flowers.)

QUEENIE

Fumble? Are you getting any work done?

GRUMBLY

What a question! Fumble does anything to get out of work.

FUMBLY

I work. Kind of. Sort of. Maybe.

(FUMBLE hides.)

GRUMBLY

He's the laziest bee on the planet!

QUEENIE

Grumbly! Pollinate! Rumbly, stay away from the nectar.

RUMPLY

I'm going. It's hard to switch jobs in mid-air.

QUEENIE

And Rumply, your vest is inside out. Do try to look respectable. We don't want wasps looking down on us.

(RUMPLY and GRUMPLY fly away.)

QUEENIE

Back to the hive. A Queen's work is never done.

(As QUEENIE exits, FUMBLE peeks out. Noting that everyone is gone, he enters with a beach towel, or a beach chair, sunglasses and some sunscreen. After applying some sunscreen – maybe to the wings, FUMBLE lies or sits down to catch some rays. MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Busy... busy. Must eat. This is the season where I eat and eat and eat to make it through the winter – well, look at you! Lying around while everyone works.

FUMBLE

I worked ... a little. And I'll work some more. Later. This is the perfect spring day. One should get a little bit of enjoyment out of life, don't you think?

MURREL

Don't come to me when you're cold and begging for acorns. For me, this is the feasting season. It's spring and all is right with the world.

(MURREL exits as FLUTTERBY flutters by.)

FUMBLE
(Yelling after MURREL.)

I don't eat acorns! I'm a bee!

FLUTTERBY
Woe is me. I want to dance with the fairies but none of the other butterflies will accompany me. Am I so pathetic? So low in everyone's esteem that I cannot find a dancing partner? Oh! A bee! Can bees dance?

(She approaches FUMBLE.)

FLUTTERBY (cont'd)
Hello Bee. I'm Flutterby. A butterfly. Will you dance with me?

FUMBLE
Hello, Flutterby-the-butterfly. I'm Fumble. A bee. I'd love to dance with you but...

FLUTTERBY
You find me clumsy, downtrodden, pathetic and don't want to.

FUMBLE
No, that's not it.

FLUTTERBY
You find me not worthy, not accomplished, not worth your time.

FUMBLE
No!

FLUTTERBY
Why is it no one will dance with me? Am I such a lowly insect, - an insect that does not pollinate as efficiently as bees - but that is because of our make-up. We have no say in the matter. Your bodies pick up more pollen than ours/

FUMBLE
/Flutterby! I don't know how to dance./

FLUTTERBY
/Did you not see me try to gather pollen in the - what?

FUMBLE
I don't know how to dance.

FLUTTERBY

Oh! ... would you ... like to learn? You see, I have been invited to dance with the fairies this summer but I don't have a partner/

FUMBLE

/Fairies? You dance with fairies?

FLUTTERBY

Not yet.

FUMBLE

I think I would love to dance with the fairies. If I could dance.

FLUTTERBY

Would you like me to teach you? Not that I'm terribly good at it. But I do like dancing.

FUMBLE

I would love it.

FLUTTERBY

Oh my! Oh my! Oh my! He wants to dance with me! Someone will dance with me!

(She dances a waltz – or something by herself in her excitement and then stops short.)

Oh! Pardon me! Shall I give you a dancing lesson?

(And FLUTTERBY teaches FUMBLE. Any dance of your choosing. It could be the cha-cha, a waltz, a tango, etc. FUMBLE'S certainly a bit clumsy but very game.)

FUMBLE

I'm dancing! Dancing!

FLUTTERBY

Sort of.

(And they dance off as the FAIRIES dance on.)

PENNYROYAL

A perfect spot for our midsummer dances.

BASIL

The flowers will be in awe of my majestic movements.

CHERVIL

I don't know. It looks like a weasel tunneled here. We could sprain an ankle. Of course, maybe we could teach the weasel to dance.

BASIL

The King of the Fairies – which would be me – will never dance with a weasel. Maybe the Queen will.

PENNYROYAL

In your dreams! Now we should map out exactly where our dance floor is to be. This way, nobody will get lost in the woods.

BASIL

What an excellent idea. Shall we take measurements?

PENNYROYAL

(Taking out a large tape measure.)

I come prepared.

DILL

We must be aware of the weather patterns. For beautiful dancing cannot happen in the mud.

BASIL

True. We must check the clouds every hour, At present, I only see cirrus clouds which are very high up at about 18,000 feet and not likely to rain on us. We must keep a lookout for the large, puffy cumulonimbus clouds. They are most likely to produce rain and certainly dampen our spirits.

DILL

How do you know that stuff?

BASIL

Wikipedia.

PENNYROYAL

Shall we have a short practice session?

BASIL

Can you keep up with me?

PENNYROYAL

Let's show them how it's done.

(BASIL and PENNYROYAL begin a short dance.
CHERVIL and DILL join in.)

Lights change.

SCENE 2: Later that Evening

MURREL enters very busy.

MURREL

I found a chestnut tree! My very own chestnut tree! I buried fifteen chestnuts and ate twelve. Oh the berries! Oh the bird seed! Oh the plants! I love spring. I can hardly wait for acorn season.

(QUEENIE enters.)

QUEENIE

Murrel, have you seen Fumble?

MURREL

Fumble was here this morning, lying in the sun as usual. Maybe he actually went to do some work.

QUEENIE

May-be.

MURREL

I'm off. I found a chestnut tree! It fills me with joy. You should really have your bees pollinate it so I can have it forever and ever.

QUEENIE

We don't pollinate chestnut trees....

MURREL

Your loss.

(MURREL exits. RUMPLY enters.)

RUMPLY

I pollinated tulips, heather and lavender and the crabapple trees!

QUEENIE

I hope you didn't go near the azaleas.

RUMPLY

Oh no! They make me sick. I did make some honey. Not a lot but it makes the hive so cozy and sweet. But then, I fell into the honey. I'm a bit of a mess. Sorry.

QUEENIE

Your hair is a bit messy.

RUMPLY.

I know. I'm a Frizz-bee.

(GRUMBLY enters.)

QUEENIE

I'm proud of you my busy-bees. Now if we could just find Fumble.

GRUMBLY

Fat chance. I saw him dancing in the meadow.

(FUMBLE dances in.)

FUMBLE

Look! I'm dancing.

(And FUMBLE twirls and twirls and twirls and passes out.)

QUEENIE

Fumble?

FUMBLE

Yes.

QUEENIE

What's the matter?

FUMBLE

I don't know.

GRUMBLY

Too much dancing. Not enough work.

FUMBLE

But dancing makes my heart happy.

QUEENIE

Dancing makes the hive empty.

FUMBLE

I like to dance. We all need a little bee-pop in our life.

RUMPLY

But you get all sweaty and then your vest isn't straight and your hairs are all messy.

FUMBLE

Kind of like what you look like now.

RUMPLY

Awww ... don't hurt my feelings.

QUEENIE

Take advantage of the longer evening and pollinate, you three! Pollinate!

(RUMPLY and GRUMBLY fly away.)

QUEENIE

That goes for you too, my dancing bee-bopping bee.

FUMBLE

Aye, Aye, Your Highness!

(FUMBLE begins to fly and then decides to dance off.)

QUEENIE

Something tells me I'm never going to get a day's work out of that bee.

LIGHTS CHANGE

SCENE 3: June

AT RISE we are at the Fairy Dance. All are dancing including FUMBLE and FLUTTERBY who are now dancing quite well. QUEENIE enters with MURREL.

MURREL

Over there.

QUEENIE

Thanks, Murrel. Here you go. As promised.

(QUEENIE hands MURREL some honey sticks.)

QUEENIE (cont'd)

Now, don't bury them. The ants will eat them. There're no preservatives. Eat them now.

MURREL

I just love honey sticks. Thanks, Your Royal Queenie.

(MURREL EXITS.)

QUEENIE

FUMBLE!

(Music stops. ALL freeze.)

FUMBLE

Uh-oh. (Beat.) Care to dance?

QUEENIE

Fumble, I need you to leave right now and do some pollinating. If you don't, there will be no honey waiting for you when you return.

FLUTTERBY

Fumble can't leave. Who will I dance with?

FUMBLE

I can't leave Flutterby without a dancing partner. I'm obligated.

QUEENIE

To me. You're obligated to me.

PENNYROYAL

If you stay Fumble, I can promise you dewdrops for drinking and peaseblossoms for eating.

DILL

I love peaseblossoms!

FUMBLE

That does sound tempting.

QUEENIE

Your choice. But remember – no honey for you. I'm off. Somebody has to get the work done.

(QUEENIE exits.)

FLUTTERBY

Thank-you for sticking by me.

FUMBLE

Shucks, it was nothing.

CHERVIL

I declare that I am worn out from dancing and need to eat. Hey, Fumble – got any honey-combs on you?

FUMBLE

I would if I wasn't dancing.

BASIL

But dancing is life. We all need something to give us energy. Perhaps some honeysuckle juice to ensure I get enough sleep to remain as handsome as I am. And of course, some milk for my wonderful cheekbones....

DILL

I churned some butter from the milk this morning. It's perfect for honey bread!

FUMBLE

Honey bread?

DILLY

It's nothing. Just a little yeast, water, ½ cup of honey and 5 cups of flour.

PENNYROYAL

Can we not discuss recipes and just feast? Dance to the rose garden, dance!

FUMBLE

Am ... I invited?

PENNYROYAL

But of course. You and Flutterby are our newest friends.

CHERVIL

Stick with us Fumble, and you'll never have to work again.

FUMBLE

I like the sound of that.

PENNYROYAL

Dance!

(And they all dance off.)

SCENE 3: July

AT RISE MURREL is eating a chestnut.

MURREL

Ahh the chestnut tree! The gift that keeps on giving.

(GRUMBLY and RUMPLY fly in.)

GRUMBLY

Hi, Murrel! It's so good to see you. The Queen has sent us on a mission to find Fumble. Have you seen him?

MURRELL

Can't say that I have.

RUMPLY

I hope Fumble's all right! It's been weeks since he returned to the hive.

MURREL

Probably dancing. Fumble is the laziest bee I've ever known.

RUMPLY

Dancing is work.

GRUMBLY

Dancing does not produce anything.

RUMPLY

It produces fun. Sometimes Queenie forgets about fun.

MURREL

All well and good but you cannot eat "fun." Now chestnuts – that's the way to go. Care for one?

RUMPLY

Bees don't eat chestnuts.

MURREL

So I've heard.

RUMPLY

Back to our mission. Have a sunny-honey day!

GRUMBLY

Rumply! Your vest is inside out.

RUMPLY

Because it's July and it's getting too hot for vests. I'd best be off.

(RUMPLY exits as QUEENIE enters.)

QUEENIE

Murrel! Have/

MURREL

No, I haven't seen Fumble and I'm tired of answering that question.

QUEENIE

What's the matter with you?

(And QUEENIE flies off. Offstage we hear PENNYROYAL.)

PENNYROYAL'S VOICE

Dance! Fairies dance!

MURREL

Can't a squirrel eat a chestnut in peace?

(MURREL exits as the FAIRIES, FUMBLE and FLUTTERBY dance on.)

FUMBLE

Dancing is exhausting!

FLUTTERBY

Oh no! You're tired of me. You don't want me for a partner anymore!

FUMBLE

No! It's not that. I'm just tired. Dancing is harder than pollinating.

PENNYROYAL

But a lot more fun.

BASIL

Why, you are in better shape than you've ever been. You're fit as a fiddle!

FUMBLE

I am a well-toned bee.

DILL

The other bees will be so jealous of you. Dancing is great exercise. It's in our fairy DNA to dance.

CHERVIL

Isn't it in your bee DNA to pollinate?

FUMBLE

Yes. It is. And I do miss my friends. Most of them. Some of them. One of them.

DILL

We would understand if you want to go back to them.

FLUTTERBY

I don't know what I want!

BASIL

A bee needs to do what a bee needs to do.

PENNYROYAL

What *would* you like to do?

FUMBLE

I'd like – to dance! I know I should also work. I'll go back to them in August.

PENNYROYAL

Sounds like a plan. And for now – we dance!

(The FAIRIES, FLUTTERBY and FUMBLE dance off.)

SCENE 4: August

“Song of the Volga Boatmen” or another song invoking drudgery and work could be heard. QUEENIE flies in followed by a very weary RUMPLY. It is so hot, even QUEENIE is not her chirpy self.

QUEENNIE

Pollinate ... my busy ... bee.

GRUMBLY

The sweat's dripping into my eyes. It's hard to see.

QUEENIE

Welcome to August.

RUMPLY

I think it's naptime.

QUEENIE

We just got up. Rumply, where's your vest?.

RUMPLY

It's too hot to wear a vest.

QUEENIE

The sunflowers are out. The Black-Eyed Susans have appeared. The world is in bloom. We must make honey while the sun shines.

GRUMBLY

I do like Black-eyed Susan nectar.

RUMPLY

Yay! Grumbly actually likes something.

(As RUMPLY and GRUMBLY exit, FUMBLE enters
- tired and hot.)

QUEENIE

Fumble!

FUMBLE

Hi, Queenie!

QUEENIE

Excuse me?

FUMBLE

I mean Your Royal Queeniness.

QUEENIE

That's a little better. The summer is ending fast. Have you decided to return to work?

FUMBLE
That was my intention but/

QUEENIE
/no buts.

FUMBLE
It's hot.

QUEENIE
So, I've been told.

FUMBLE
I'll go to work when the sun starts to set. It will be much cooler.

QUEENIE
We are not above one hundred degrees. You are able to work.

FUMBLE
Even when it's ninety out?

QUEENIE
Even when it's ninety.

FUMBLE
After I get some water. I'm parched.

QUEENIE
Very well. Find some water, refresh yourself and *get to work!*

(QUEENIE exits as FLUTTERBY enters.)

FLUTTERBY
Fumble! I've been looking all over for you! The fairies were dancing in the meadow and I had no dancing partner. Have you forgotten me?

FUMBLE
I'm torn – I should be working with my bees. They're my tribe-hive. Summer is half over and I haven't done my part.

FLUTTERBY
But what about me? Your truest, bluest friend? Am I to be cast away? Thrown to the wind?

FUMBLE

Of course not! What to do? On the one wing, I have a duty to my bees. We are all for one and one for all. On the other wing, Flutterby has been a good friend, taught me to dance and introduced me to the fairies. I have had a magical summer. *I'm conflicted!*

(The FAIRIES enter. A little woebegone and very hot.)

PENNYROYAL

Shall ... we ... dance?

BASIL and DILL and CHERVIL

No!

PENNYROYAL

Thank goodness. Oh. Hello Flutterby. Good Morning, Fumble. Back to work?

FUMBLE

I'm conflicted!

CHERVIL

I'm hot. I'd rather be conflicted.

FLUTTERBY

Fumble doesn't want to be my dancing partner anymore.

FUMBLE

I didn't say that. I said, "I'm conflicted."

BASIL

It's too hot for conflict. On days like today, it's best to conserve your energy.

PENNYROYAL

On days like to today, I recommend eight thimbles of berry juice. It's important to stay hydrated.

DILL

But the berries are drying up.

PENNYROYAL

A spinach smoothie then. It is a good source of Vitamin A, Vitamin K, potassium and iron.

BASIL

Oh not that dreary spinach again. It turns my skin green.

DILL

I agree. One thimbleful will be enough.

PENNYROYAL

A storm is brewing. The dew point will go down ten points and the temperatures will break.

BASIL

How do you know these things?

PENNYROYAL

Weather underground.

FLUTTERBY

Coming, Fumble?

FUMBLE

I'm going to do some pollinating. At least, that's the plan.

FLUTTERBY

But who will I dance with?

PENNYROYAL

Don't be a bug-brain. Nobody's dancing in this heat.

(The FAIRIES exit.)

FUMBLE

Sooooo, here I goooooo.

(FUMBLE starts to work.)

Sooooo, here I stay.

(FUMBLE stops.)

Pennyroyal said this heat is going to break soon. I'll conserve my energy and work harder. Later. After the heat breaks.

(FUMBLE gets ready for a nap. Thunder is heard.)

Uh oh.

BLACKOUT

The sound of a downpour.

FUMBLE (in the blackout)

No work today.

SCENE 5: September

AT RISE MURREL dances on with acorns.

MURREL

It's September! Acorn season! I must eat and bury some. I must remember where I buried them and eat some more. *I love September!* Forever, September. Remember September, Murrel the Squirrel savors September.

(QUEENIE enters.)

QUEENIE

You're a happy squirrel!

MURREL

Whenever it's September. Acorn season sings!

QUEENIE

It's a busy time. Must make more honey for the hives. Did you know that some hives eat thirty pounds of honey in the winter?

MURREL

Be careful. You might get chubby.

QUEENIE

There's nothing wrong with that. A little extra weight helps bees live through the winter.

MURREL

Care for an acorn?

QUEENIE

No, thank-you. Bees don't eat acorns.

MURREL

More for me. It's time to bury some. And eat some. And hide some. And feast on them! Later.

(MURREL exits. As RUMPLY and QUEENIE enter.)

RUMPLY

Astilbe! Larkspur! Shrub roses! I love September!

GRUMBLY

It's not hot out! I love September!

(FUMBLE runs on.)

FUMBLE

Am I late?

GRUMBLY

About four months late.

FUMBLE

Never fear, Fumble is here. I will make up for the last four months by pollinating like a champ.

QUEENIE

The days are shorter.

FUMBLE

So, I'll have to work fast.

QUEENIE

If you say so.

FUMBLE

I do!

QUEENIE

The dahlias are in full bloom.

FUMBLE

Got it.

QUEENIE

And stay away from the hydrangeas. It's a waste of time. Their flowers are sterile and there is no nectar.

FUMBLE

Will do!

(FUMBLE exits.)

QUEENIE

Miracle of miracles. It looks like Fumble is finally going to work. Time to pollinate!
We lost an hour of sunlight in August.

(The BEES exit as the FAIRIES and FLUTTERBY enter.)

FLUTTERBY

Where can Fumble be?

PENNYROYAL

Don't fret. Maybe Fumble decided to go back to being a bee.

FLUTTERBY

Woe is me. I lost my dancing partner. I'll never dance again.

DILL

Maybe we can look for him and see if he would do one last dance with you?

FLUTTERBY

Would you? Could you?

PENNYROYAL

An excellent idea. We shall search high and low and find Fumble.

BASIL

Over hill, over dale...

CHERVIL

We shall hit the mossy trail.

BASIL

As the fairies go searching along.

PENNYROYAL

In the storm –

DILL

In the night –

BASI

Flying left, flying right –

ALL

Watch us fairies go searching along.

(FAIRIES exit as FUMBLE enters.)

FUMBLE

I cannot find a dahlia anywhere. I don't even know what a dahlia looks like. Sounds like I was sent on a wild goose chase for something that doesn't exist.

(MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Hello, Fumble. Look at my stash! Have you ever seen such delectable acorns?

FUMBLE

They're – okay. Not really into acorns.

MURREL

Works for me.

FUMBLE

Murrel, do you know what a dahlia looks like?

MURREL

Of course! I am a botany expert. Didn't you know that?

FUMBLE

No, I'm sorry. I thought you were just a squirrel.

MURREL

Just like a bee! Doesn't try to get to know you. Doesn't offer to share honey. Doesn't understand that squirrels have a deep intellect. Just in it for them/

FUMBLE

Murrel! Please show me a dahlia.

MURREL

It's staring at you.

FUMBLE

What? Is there a predator about?

MURREL

The dahlia. Turn around. It's watching you. Be kind. It's a beautiful flower.

(MURREL exits.)

FUMBLE

Thank-you. (Stares at dahlia.) It's quite big, isn't it? It will take a long time to pollinate that.

PENNYROYAL (Offstage voice.)

Fum-ble! Do you want to go danc-ing?

BASIL (Offstage voice)

Fum-ble? Where arrrrre you?

FUMBLE

Do you hear that? They want to dance with me. And it's a perfect day. Not too hot. Not too cold. On the one wing, I promised Queenie that I would pollinate the dahlias. On the other wing, I shouldn't abandon Flutterby. What's a bee to do?

DILL (Offstage voice.)

Ohhh, Fum-ble! We neeeeed you.

CHERVIL (Offstage voice.)

Fummmmmmm – ble!

FUMBLE

I'm going to be a worker bee. I am going to pollinate. Watch. I will be the champion of pollinators. You'll see. Maybe. I think. Yes, I must think.

(FUMBLE sits by or in the dahlia to ponder.
FUMBLE falls asleep. There's a snore.)

Lights fade to black.

Optional intermission.

SCENE 6: September later that day.

AT RISE FUMBLE is sound asleep inside or next to the dahlia. A snore is heard.

RUMPLY enters.

RUMPLY

I must find Fumble. There's talk of Fumble being kicked out of the hive. I would not like that. He's a good sort. Cheery, silly, an asset to the hive. Just a bit lazy.

(A snore is heard.)

Fumble!

RUMPLY

(Amid snorts and snores, FUMBLE wakes up.)

FUMBLE

Don't judge.

RUMPLY

Fumble, you have to start pollinating. There isn't enough extra honey for you to survive the winter.

FUMBLE

I pollinated! At least, I think I pollinated. Maybe I dreamt it.

RUMPLY

Come back with us now and do your share. Please. Pretty please. With a cherry on top?

FUMBLE

I like cherries.

RUMPLY

So, you'll come back? Before it's too late?

FUMBLE

I get exhausted from pollinating.

RUMPLY

That's because you're out of shape. You haven't pollinated in two seasons.

FUMBLE

But I dance! I'm fit as a fiddle.

RUMPLY

It uses different muscles.

(FLUTTERBY and GRUMBLY enter.)

FLUTTERBY

Fumble! Have you abandoned me?

FUMBLE

I did no such thing. I was nap/ ... err pollinating. I'm a bee, you know.

GRUMBLY
Glad you remembered! Come with me!

FLUTTERBY
No! With me.

RUMPLY
With us! To the hive!

FLUTTERBY
Me!

RUMPLY
(Singing.) Mi, Mi, Mi, Mi, Mi!

FLUTTERBY
Fumble's coming with me!

FUMBLE
I can't take it anymore! I can't please everyone!

(FUMBLE runs off.)

FLUTTERBY
Would ... *you* like to dance with me?

RUMPLY
Sorry, Flutterby. I'd rather produce honey and live through the winter.

(RUMPLY exits.)

RUMPLY
How about you?

GRUMBLY
I don't dance. Don't ask me.

(GRUMBLY exits.)

FLUTTERBY
My dancing days are over.

(FLUTTERBY exits as MURREL enters.)

MURREL

An acorn!

(MURREL picks up an acorn from the ground.)

Oh, acorn, how do I love thee? I have eaten so many of you today, I'm turning into a nut!

(Singing or chanting)

"I'm an acorn small and round,
Lying on the cold, cold ground.
Everyone walks over me,
That is why I'm cracked, you see.

I'm a nut! I'm a nut! I'm a nut!"

MURREL (cont'd)

Dance break!

(MURREL dances with the acorn. After a few steps – or as long as you wish – FUMBLE peeks out.)

FUMBLE

Psst! Murrel!

MURREL

Don't interrupt. I'm dancing!

FUMBLE

Are they gone?

MURREL

No one here but me and my acorn.

FUMBLE

I'm under so much pressure.

MURREL

Don't make me laugh! All you've done is dance all spring. And summer. And soon-to-be fall.

FUMBLE

Can I ask you something?

MURREL

Ask away. I'm a philosopher, you know.

FUMBLE

I didn't.

MURREL

Of course not. You're a bee. Bees never try to get to know squirrels.

FUMBLE

What's it all about, Murrel?

MURREL

Never figured you for a deep thinker.

FUMBLE

Is it work? Is it play? Playing is more fun. Look at you! You do nothing but eat all summer.

MURREL

I bury nuts! Lots and lots of nuts!

FUMBLE

Why do you do that? You never remember where you buried them.

MURREL

That's why I have to bury a lot of them.

FUMBLE

Life, huh?

MURREL

Yeah ... life...

FUMBLE

It's short. And I want to experience everything. Maybe there's not enough time.

MURREL

Eating takes up most of my time. If I don't feast in the summer, I'll wither away in the winter. My friend Myrtle wants me to come and live in the city. She says if you live by a school there's food everywhere all the time – even in the winter. I guess that's true because she's always well-fed – even in the winter. But I like it here. The woods, the meadows, the ponds, the lakes, the trees, the flowers, the/

FUMBLE

Got it, Murrel. You love the country.

MURREL

I think what you need is balance. Work all day and then do a little dancing at night for fun.

FUMBLE

Bees just seem to work. I never knew a "fun-bee."

MURREL

You could change that.

FUMBLE

I could, couldn't I?

MURREL

It's never too late.

FUMBLE

You're all right, Murrel. For a rodent.

MURREL

You're not so bad yourself, Fumble. For a bee. With a stinger.

(The FAIRIES enter. They are carrying FLUTTERBY on a makeshift fairy stretcher.)

FUMBLE

Oh no! Flutterby!

(FUMBLE peers in at FLUTTERBY.)

Are you alive?

FLUTTERBY

I think so.

FUMBLE

What happened?

PENNYROYAL

She was dancing in the meadow too close to the Farmer's land. Suddenly, the squirtsers/

MURREL

/sprinklers/

PENNYROYAL

/whatever – sprouted up and sprayed water over her wings.

DILL

They're soaked. And you know what happens to butterflies when their wings are soaked.

BASIL

They're grounded. They can't fly.

CHERVIL

It's a tragedy.

FUMBLE

What were you thinking?

FLUTTERBY

I wasn't. I was just dancing by myself because I didn't have a partner...

FUMBLE

Awww... Flutterby....

BASIL

I do declare, the sun is starting to set and we must retire to our twilight home. Mustn't lose beauty sleep.

PENNYROYAL

You'll stay with her, won't you, Fumble? Flutterby can't fly until her wings are dry.

FUMBLE

Of course.

BASIL

To the twilight!

(And the FAIRIES exit.)

MURREL

You're in a muddle. Can't pollinate. Can't go back to the hive.

FUMBLE

But I made the right choice, didn't I.

MURREL

Yeah, pal. You done good. I'm off. Got to find acorns while the going is good.

(MURREL exits.)

FLUTTERBY

Thanks, Fumble.

FUMBLE

You're welcome. Now I must try and sleep. (To audience.) What's a bee to do?

(The lights fade to black as FUMBLE attends to FLUTTERBY.)

SCENE 7: The next day. October 1.

AT RISE, it is the next morning. FUMBLE and FLUTTERBY are waking up.

FLUTTERBY

Rise and shine! It's a beautiful morning!

FUMBLE

Five more minutes.

FLUTTERBY

Fumble! Wake up! I have something to tell you.

FUMBLE

Are you all right? How are your wings?

FLUTTERBY

They're dry!

FUMBLE

You can fly!

FLUTTERBY

Yes! But ...

FUMBLE

But?

FLUTTERBY

I have to fly. Away. Today.

FUMBLE

I don't understand. I thought we would be dancing partners forever.

FLUTTERBY

Oh how I wish that was true. I have loved dancing with you. But ...

FUMBLE

But?

FLUTTERBY

The days are shorter and the nights are colder. I have to migrate south today.

FUMBLE

Can't it wait until tomorrow?

FLUTTERBY

If I wait too long and the frost comes, I will die.

FUMBLE

I wouldn't like that.

FLUTTERBY

I wouldn't like that either.

FUMBLE

So, this is good-bye?

FLUTTERBY

For now. Could I have one last dance before I go?

FUMBLE

I thought you'd never ask.

(FLUTTERBY and FUMBLE do one last dance.)

FLUTTERBY

Fumble ... it's been/

FUMBLE

/shh. No words. Safe travels.

FLUTTERBY

See you in the spring!

(FLUTTERBY flies away.)

FUMBLE

No more dancing. That's good. It means more time for work. But how can I work? I'll miss my dancing partner. I think I'll sit in the meadow and be sad.

(FUMBLE exits as the BEES enter.)

QUEENIE

Now Rumply and Grumbly, we have work to do. We need five more pounds of honey in the hive before winter. The daylight is dwindling. Find the last of sunflowers. Dive into the mums and the marigolds. Make honey while the sun shines!

RUMPLY

Queenie? What will happen to Fumble if he doesn't produce enough honey this season?

QUEENIE

He will have to winter outside the hive.

GRUMBLY

That's dangerous.

QUEENIE

I have no choice. I need to look after all of the workers. Not the shirker. Off with you.

(RUMPLY and GRUMBLY fly away. MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Hey, Queenie. Are you really going to let Fumble starve all winter?

QUEENIE

Were you eavesdropping?

MURREL

By accident.

QUEENIE

Do you want to feed him?

MURREL

He doesn't eat acorns.

QUEENIE

It's a problem, isn't it?

MURREL

Yep. He's not a bad fellow. Quite jolly sometimes.

QUEENIE

It's a problem.

(MURREL and QUEENIE exit as FUMBLE enters from elsewhere.)

FUMBLE

I decided that moping around wasn't doing me any good so I tried to pollinate. The problem is the nectar is drying up. There's just not a lot left. Winter is coming. What's a dancing bee to do?

(FUMBLE exits as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 8: End of October

AT RISE, it is the end of October. The FAIRIES enter. They could be dressed for Halloween or simply masked. They are celebrating the Harvest Festival. They could be wearing autumn leaves. There are no more flowers on the set. The set change could be done as a dance by the FAIRIES.

DILL

Is it time to trick-or-treat?

PENNYROYAL

Not until the sun goes down and then we shall leave to spend the entire winter in the twilight.

BASIL

I shall miss these earthly visits. But the winter is terrible for my skin. It's so drying. And your lips get chapped. It's important to take care of oneself. As King of the Fairies, I am expected to look my best.

CHERVIL

It is good to stay in the twilight. The lack of Vitamin D from the sun in the winter is most disconcerting. We shall have to make sure to drink plenty of milk.

PENNYROYAL

Which means none of you are to play tricks tonight. I know how you are. If you don't get a treat, you curdle the milk. We shall need to swipe all the sweet milk that we can.

DILL

Lollipops, marshmallows, chocolate, licorice...

PENNYROYAL

Try to think healthier, Dill.

DILL

Trick or treat, trick or treat, give me something good to eat.

CHERVIL

Apples, pears and tangerines...

BASIL

Give us a Happy Halloween.

(FUMBLE enters.)

BASIL

Greetings, Fumble.

FUMBLE

Oh! Don't you all look wonderful!

PENNYROYAL

Thank-you. We're getting ready for Halloween. Would you like to come trick-or-treating with us?

FUMBLE

Would I? Would I! But I haven't collected enough honey for the winter. And winter is coming.

BASIL

In precisely fifty-one days.

DILL

See! You have time.

FUMBLE

The flowers are fading. The nectar is emptying. And bees cannot fly when it gets cold.

CHERVIL

Do your wings get frosty?

FUMBLE

No. I just know it happens. During the winter we all huddle together and exercise our wings to keep warm. But that's inside the hive. I don't know what to do if I am outside.

BASIL

Cheer up, dear chap. The days are still warm. There's a Harvest Moon tonight so all is right with the world.

FUMBLE

Your world. Maybe I should have been a fairy. But I'm a bee. I had better start acting like one.

PENNYROYAL

Enjoy your Halloween. Trick-or-Treat!

ALL FAIRIES

Trick-or-Treat, Fumble!

(The FAIRIES exit.)

FUMBLE

I wish bees would trick-or-treat. Now to find some flowers. Here Flower-flower, where are you my sweet flowers?

(RUMPLY, GRUMBLY and QUEENIE enter - masked for Halloween.)

RUMPLY

Fumble! Look! We convinced Queenie to let us trick-or-treat tonight!

GRUMBLY

We can look at all the funny humans dressed as bees

FUMBLE

That's nice.

RUMPLY

Do you want to come?

QUEENIE

I'm afraid that's not possible. Not until he gives us five pounds of honey.

FUMBLE

I'm trying!

RUMPLY
It's hard this time of year.

QUEENIE
I'm sorry. I wish things were different.

FUMBLE
So do I.

GRUMBLY
Trick-or-Treat!

(RUMPLY and QUEENIE exit. MURREL enters -
masked.)

MURREL
Look, Fumble! The raccoons gave me a mask! I'm going to go trick-or-treating in the forest tonight.

FUMBLE
Not you, too.

MURREL
Care to join me?

FUMBLE
I have to work.

MURREL
Next time!

(MURREL exits. FUMBLE sits. The lights change to dusk. There is a full moon. A montage of trick-or-treaters cross the stage. Everyone is having a wonderful time. You can do this to music if you like.)

PENNYROYAL
Did you see the fairy dressed as Dracula? Quite scary!

BASIL
But not as handsome as me.

CHERVIL
Someone gave me a toothbrush! The nerve!

I want chocolate!

DILL

I received a honeystick! And I didn't have to work for it.

GRUMBLY

I have a honeycomb!

QUEENIE

And a honeysuckle rose.

RUMPLY

Back to the hive bees. It's too cold to trick-or-treat anymore.

QUEENIE

(ALL are gone.)

Looks like everyone had a good time. Except me.

FUMBLE

(MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Chocolate covered nuts! Peanut brittle! Salted cashews! I am in squirrel heaven. Want some?

FUMBLE

Bees don't eat nuts.

MURREL

That must have been a mistake of nature.

(MURREL exits.)

FUMBLE

Getting chilly. How can I protect myself from the cold air?

(MURREL enters with a leaf blanket or something from nature and wraps it around FUMBLE.)

FUMBLE (cont'd)

Thanks, Murrel.

MURREL

Happy Halloween!

(MURREL exits as FUMBLE shivers under his blanket. The lights fade to blackout.)

SCENE 9: November

AT RISE. All is quiet. The wind blows. FUMBLE huddles under his blanket.

FUMBLE

Things aren't going well. If I don't find shelter, I'm going to be covered by snow. And then – I hate to say this – it will be curtains for me. I wish someone would take me in. On the one wing, why should they take me in? I was a dancing fool for over five months. On the other wing, I don't want to die! And on the other wing – oh! No more wings. I'm going to check on Murrel.

(FUMBLE goes to a hole in the ground or the hollow of a tree or wherever works for you and knocks.)

FUMBLE (cont'd)

Murrel? **Murrel?** Are you in there?

MURREL (Maybe just sticking head out.)

Hi, Fumble. It's a wee bit chilly out. I don't want to come out and play.

FUMBLE

I was just wondering if you could take me in. Just for the winter. I'll repay you with honey. Next spring. Really. Truly. *Please*.

MURREL

I'm sorry. I can't. It's so crowded in here we have to move in unison.

FUMBLE

Oh! I didn't know you had a family.

MURREL

No family. But Bunny was cold, so I let her in. And soon there was another bunny and another bunny and you get the picture. Then the chipmunks tunneled in and I really don't have an inch to spare. You're a good sort, Fumble. I wish I could help but I cannot.

FUMBLE

I understand. Thanks, anyway.

(MURREL disappears.)

FUMBLE (cont'd)

Off to the hive. What are the odds they'll take me in?

(FUMBLE knocks on a hive. RUMPLY answers.)

RUMPLY

Fumble! You don't look so good. Your Highness, Fumble is here.

QUEENIE

Greetings, Fumble. I hope you are well.

FUMBLE

I'm cold. And hungry. And I'm begging you, please, can you let me in?

QUEENIE

I am so sorry but I can't. You knew our honey reserves were low. We are rationing them all winter. I need to save them for those that worked.

FUMBLE

But I –

GRUMBLY

Didn't work.

FUMBLE

No.

QUEENIE

I have an obligation to the hive. I wish you well. I truly do.

(QUEENIE exits.)

FUMBLE

What's a bee to do? Flutter my wings and hope I survive the winter?

(FUMBLE flutters and shivers and is well –
pathetic.

From the twilight, the FAIRIES spy him.)

DILL

Pennyroyal! Basil! Chervil! Look! It's Fumble. He's not doing very well.

CHERVIL

He does look pathetic.

And sickly.
BASIL

Abandoned by everyone.
DILL

PENNYROYAL
We did encourage him to stay with us and dance the summer away.

BASIL
We do bear some responsibility.

PENNYROYAL
Can bees live in the twilight?

BASIL
We're about to find out.

PENNYROYAL
Thank-you, Basil. I knew there was a heart under your rather vain exterior. Shall we?

(With lights and possibly music, some of the fairies go back down to earth and bring FUMBLE to the twilight. Maybe there's a fire. Candles? Blankets and pillows. They cover FUMBLE up and let him sleep as the lights fade to black.)

SCENE 10: Winter in the Twilight

AT RISE the FAIRIES are busy mending and polishing, knitting? Crocheting? In any case, they are all on task. This is the season when they work.)

PENNYROYAL
How are you this morning, Fumble?

FUMBLE
Much better. Thank-you, thank-you, thank-you. I see you are all busy.

DILL
Winter is when we polish our wings, mend our clothes and get everything in tip-top shape.

What can I do? FUMBLE

What can you do? PENNYROYAL

Pollinate? FUMBLE

I'm afraid we don't need pollinators in the twilight. PENNYROYAL

I can flap my wings to help you stay warm. That's what we do in the hive. FUMBLE

We're not a hive. BASIL

We're a gaggle. CHERVIL

I thought that was for geese. BASIL

It's also for fairies. DILL

I must read Wikipedia. So, what can Fumble do to earn his keep? BASIL

(Deep thinking going on.)

I know! I rather fancy his vest. It would be very warming in January. Do you think you can make a vest for all of us? DILL

If you have fabric and needle and thread, why yes. FUMBLE

What a splendid idea. PENNYROYAL

I'm ready to work. Point me to a sewing table. FUMBLE

Quite a change from last summer.

BASIL

I'm going to prove my worth.

FUMBLE

(And the FAIRIES work. Meanwhile back at the hive... the bees are huddled and fluttering their wings.)

I'm finally warm. I hate winter.

GRUMBLY

I wonder how Fumble is doing. There's a lot of snow out there.

RUMPLY

Poor Fumble. I am so sorry. I had no choice.

QUEENIE

(And back at the TWILIGHT.)

Dance break!

PENNYROYAL

(The FAIRIES do a dance.)

You even dance in the winter!

FUMBLE

It helps to keep us warm.

DILL

It's important to mix up work with play.

PENNYROYAL

I must remember that.

FUMBLE

Back to work.

PENNYROYAL

(And the FAIRIES go back to work as the lights dim to black.)

SCENE 11: March 20

(Birds can be heard. We are in The twilight. The FAIRIES all wear “bee vests.” They don’t have to be exactly what the bees wore.)

PENNYROYAL

Do you hear that, my fairies and one busy bee? Birds!

DILL

It’s spring!

BASIL

More precisely the March Equinox where we have equal amounts of light and darkness. Almost time for suntan lotion.

CHERVIL

And allergy medication.

PENNYROYAL

And dancing in the light! Are you looking forward to dancing with us this spring, Fumble?

FUMBLE

I would love to. But – I think I need to go back to my hive and see if they’ll take me back. I miss fluttering my wings with them. I miss honey. I have loved my fairy-time, but I miss being a bee.

DILL

Maybe – you can do both. Pollinate and dance.

FUMBLE

Bees don’t dance.

CHERVIL

You did.

FUMBLE

I did, didn’t I? We’ll see if they take me back.

BASIL

I have an idea. Quick! Fairy huddle!

(They huddle. And back at the hive, the bees are finally outside.)

QUEENIE
Birds, sunlight, and warmth. Venture outside. Be all that you can be.

RUMPLY
Spring!

GRUMBLY
Look! A dandelion!

(FUMBLE approaches.)

RUMPLY (cont'd)
Fumble!

FUMBLE
Rumply!

QUEENIE
Happy Spring, Fumble.

FUMBLE
Thank-you, Your Highest. I've come to see if you will take me back.

QUEENIE
I am not sure I can trust you to work.

FUMBLE
I understand. I did work this winter. I've coming with an offering.

RUMPLY
New vests! I could use a new one.

QUEENIE
Yes you could, but/

RUMPLY
/Please! Let him at least try.

QUEENIE
No dancing?

FUMBLE
Well, here's the thing/

GRUMBLY
I knew it! He isn't ready to work!

FUMBLE

I am! I learned a few things this winter. One can work really hard and then – take a dance break! You can work hard all day but if you want a little sparkle in your life and want to dance before you retire for the night – you can!

(QUEENIE paces and thinks.)

QUEENIE

We can do this on a trial basis. If you get your work done and still have the energy to dance, I'll allow it.

RUMPLY

I've always wanted to try dancing. Everyone looks happy when they dance.

QUEENIE

What is it you love about dancing so much?

FUMBLE

It's freeing. It's forgetting about work for a short moment of time. It's loving something outside yourself. And it's fun.

QUEENIE

I don't understand this "fun."

FUMBLE

Let me show you.

(And FUMBLE takes QUEENIE'S hand and leads her into a dance. It's awkward at first but QUEENIE quickly gets the hang of it and is dancing. Soon RUMPLY and GRUMBLY join in.)

FUMBLE (cont'd)

You're the "Dancing Queen!"

(MURREL enters.)

MURREL

Bees dancing!

(FLUTTERBY enters.)

FLUTTERBY

Would you look at that? (To MURREL) Shall we?

(And MURREL and FLUTTERBY dance. And of course the FAIRIES enter.)

PENNYROYAL

What a beautiful sight! We can't let them have all the fun!

(And the FAIRIES dance as the lights fade to black.)

END OF PLAY