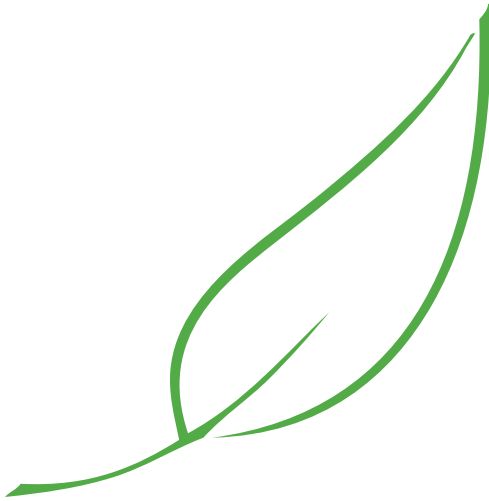


# Invisible Princess

By David Muschell



GREEN ROOM PRESS

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**THE INVISIBLE PRINCESS**  
**By David Muschell**

# THE INVISIBLE PRINCESS

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**SYNOPSIS:** When Princess Marta convinces her regent, Duchess Olga Chefsky, to come to colonial America, she has a secret plan: to escape. Her life has become a prison as the ambitious Duchess tries to keep control of the throne. Marta is aided in her escape by a magical crown passed from generation to generation in her family that grants its wearer temporary invisibility. But for her plan to succeed, she'll need the help of Ben, an indentured servant she meets in her runaway attempt. A story about the need for freedom, the obligation of duty, and the joy of friendship, *The Invisible Princess* is full of suspense, laughter and magic. Ideal for upper elementary and middle school students, it is the winner of both the Beverly Hills Theatre Guild's Marilyn Hall Award and the Alleyway Theatre Children's Play Competition.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(2 females, 3 males)*

MARTA (f) ..... a teenage girl, the Invisible Princess

BEN (m)..... a teenage boy, an indentured servant

DUCHESS OLGA CHEFSKY (f) ..... a middle-aged, bossy woman

MASTER MASTERS (m) ..... BEN works for this stingy, mean-spirited man

LECH (m) ..... a doddering old man, servant to the royal family

**PLACE:** The stable and property of MASTER MASTERS in colonial America

**TIME:** Late 1700's

**PROPS:** Barrel, broom, two lanterns, tiara, handbag

**OPTIONAL SCENES:**

BESSIE

MAN OR WOMAN ONE

MAN OR WOMAN TWO

MAN OR WOMAN THREE

MAN OR WOMAN FOUR

OTHER LOWER CLASS SEARCH PARTY MEMBERS

## ACT ONE, SCENE 1

**SCENE:** An old-fashioned barrel is at center stage. A teenage boy, **BEN**, dressed a bit raggedly, sits napping against it with a broom lying across his lap. Backing onto the stage is a very elegantly dressed teenage girl, **MARTA**. The cape **SHE** wears over her silky dress implies that this takes place during the colonial period. **SHE** carries a rather bulky handbag. At this moment, **SHE** is very worried that someone is following her and carefully scans offstage in the direction from which **SHE** entered. Her concentration is so intense that **SHE** backs into the barrel, bumping it and startling **BEN** awake. **HE** immediately pretends to be looking for something on the ground. His noise causes the girl to turn, equally startled.

**BEN:** *(on his hands and knees)* Oh! Let's see... let's see.

**MARTA:** My goodness! You startled me!

*(When BEN sees the girl, HE stops his search, which was false anyway, and gets up, brushing off his clothes.)*

**BEN:** Hello there! What's this? May I help you?

**MARTA:** Hello. *(indicating the ground where BEN had just been)* I thought--I thought you had lost something.

**BEN:** *(in total honesty)* Well, actually, Miss, I thought you were my master, catching me napping here, and I was pretending to be looking for something, you see, so he wouldn't strap me for being lazy, which I am, I admit it, though I really can't help it, you know, and an afternoon nap is so good for my constitution, you know. My name is Ben, and what can I do for you, Miss?

**MARTA:** *(taken aback by his chatter)* My!

**BEN:** Oh, don't mind me. It's usually just me and this old broom all day, and old Nellie here isn't much of a conversationalist.

**MARTA:** You name your broom?

**BEN:** I give names to everything. Might as well. Besides, it makes it easier to talk to things if they have a name.

**MARTA:** I am Marta.

BEN: Pleased to meet you, Marta. You see, everything has a name. And that's a good one for you. Couldn't have picked a better one myself.

MARTA: Thank you.

BEN: Now, what is a fine lady like yourself doing coming into my humble stable here? If you wanted a horse, I'm sure you could have sent a servant to hire it for you.

MARTA: Actually... Ben... I am trying to find a place to hide.

BEN: Hide? Whatever in the world would a person like you need to hide from? You're certainly not the criminal type, and by the looks of you, I'd say you are well raised and from a fine family, unlike myself here who comes from lowly--

MARTA: Ben! It's very important. Whether you believe it or not, I must find somewhere to hide. **(there is a noise offstage)** Oh, no.

**(BEN looks in the direction of the noise, and as HE does, MARTA takes a thin, tiara-like crown from her handbag and puts it on her head. From this moment on, SHE is invisible to all others--except us. During the following, SHE carefully climbs into the barrel, maneuvering her cape and dress with delicate slowness.)**

BEN: Now, who could that be? **(HE turns and is totally surprised, not able to see MARTA at all as SHE begins to climb into the barrel)** Where did you go? Marta?

**(Enter OLGA CHEFSKY and LECH. OLGA is an imperious middle-aged woman, arrogant and used to bossing. LECH is a doddering old man used to service and uncomplaining. His name is pronounced "Leck" but with that hard, Germanic, glottal "ch.")**

OLGA: Young man. Have you seen a young woman, perhaps your age, come in here?

BEN: **(lying with ease)** Why, no, ma'am. I surely would have noticed any young woman, old woman, man or child who came in, but it's only been me and my broom here, and of course a few horses over in the stalls there--

OLGA: **(annoyed by his chattiness, turning to LECH)** Lech. I thought you said she went in here!

LECH: I said, Mistress, that a man on the street saw a young woman fitting the description walk this way, **(with more meaning than BEN would understand)** and seem to vanish as she came toward the stable here.

OLGA: **(understanding)** Ah. Then we must search. **(They begin moving about the room, waving their hands from side to side. BEN watches with confusion.)** Marta. Marta, you cannot do this. You have responsibilities!

BEN: Excuse me, ma'am, but what is it that you're doing?

OLGA: **(ignoring him)** Any luck, Lech?

**(LECH shakes his head. They continue waving as they walk about the room. BEN goes to LECH and speaks confidentially, servant to servant.)**

BEN: Say, my fine fellow, what exactly goes on here?

LECH: **(while waving his arms about)** Goes on?

BEN: **(imitating the arm waving movements)** All this?

LECH: We are searching.

BEN: **(as if humoring an insane person)** Ah, yes, searching.

LECH: A young woman, a very important young woman, was supposed to be waiting in the carriage while Madame Chefsky was shopping, but she seems to have gone off on her own.

OLGA: Lech?

LECH: **(reporting back)** Nothing, Madame.

BEN: Is there something wrong with your mistress? You know, all the gears in her clock not spinning right, a couple of cobs shy of a bushel?

**(LECH doesn't understand and keeps searching.)**

OLGA: Oh, I knew we should have never visited this dreadful country! A birthday wish, she said! Pah! I tried to get her to go to Paris, but no, it had to be America! Young man.

BEN: **(coming to her)** Yes?

OLGA: If you see a young lady--about a head shorter than you, finely dressed, wearing a cape--please report to me immediately. I am staying at the Crossed Arms. Ask for Duchess Olga Chefsky.

BEN: Duchess Olga Chefsky.

OLGA: There is a reward for this information.

BEN: **(interested)** A reward?

OLGA: Ten gold *reales*.

BEN: Ten gold pieces!

OLGA: If you bring her to me, I will make it twenty.

BEN: Twenty! Yes, ma'am--er, your Dutchliness--um-- **(HE bows to get out of his confusion)**

OLGA: Come, Lech.

**(They exit. After a moment, MARTA rises from the barrel. SHE has taken off the crown and is rubbing the temples of her head as if in pain. BEN sees her as SHE turns.)**

BEN: Marta! So that's where you went. How did you get in that barrel so fast? One moment you were behind me and the next--poof! You must have literally jumped into that barrel in one leap. Well, if it is this Duchess Olga you are hiding from, I don't blame you one bit. She reminds me of my master. Did you bump your head? Are you all right?

**(SHE nods, reaches out her hand, and HE helps her from the barrel.)**

MARTA: Why didn't you tell them you'd seen me?

BEN: You know... I don't know. Ten gold pieces could buy me out of bondage. Twenty... well, twenty!

MARTA: Bondage?

BEN: **(bowing)** I am an indentured servant. My parents were in debt and were facing prison, so I became my master's servant, and he paid their debts and brought me here. Of course, I haven't been able to see them since then, but I hope they are well.

MARTA: Why didn't your parents become the servants?

BEN: Well, you see, I've got younger brothers and sisters...

MARTA: I am an only child.... How long have you worked for your master?

BEN: Two years.

MARTA: Two years! And how much longer must you work for him?

BEN: Five.

MARTA: Five years!

BEN: Well, you see, he pays himself back out of what he says would have been my wages, and, of course, there are deductions for my room, such as it is, and my board. But it's not all as bad as that. He only beats me on occasion, and I probably deserve it on account of my laziness and all.

MARTA: You could have earned your freedom by revealing me, and yet you let me keep mine. You say you are lazy, but I consider you a man of honor. **(This makes BEN blush and HE suddenly becomes speechless.)** I have made you speechless!?

BEN: **(trying to recover)** Why--uh--no--uh--say, what did this woman want with you anyway? She said something about responsibilities?

MARTA: I am in a kind of bondage, too.

BEN: You?

MARTA: In my country, I am a princess.

BEN: Princess! I heard the Duchess say you were visiting. But you don't sound foreign at all, Princess. I've heard some of them Dutchies, and they've got a real brogue.

MARTA: A princess, especially a princess who will one day rule her kingdom as queen, is educated in all manners of things, including the important languages of the world,.

BEN: Great gobs of Jerusalem! A queen! Excuse me, Your Highness. I tend to burst out with things.

MARTA: **(amused)** I noticed that, Ben. It is quite all right. Though it may sound exciting and important, for me it is as much a prison as your servitude... though the Duchess doesn't, how did you say, strap me... at least not physically.

BEN: Who is she?

MARTA: The sister of my father... who was king.

BEN: Was?

MARTA: He died several years ago. He and my mother both... drowned in a boating accident.

BEN: I'm sorry, Your Highness.

MARTA: Please, Ben, call me Marta. The Duchess Chefsky and her husband the Duke have been acting as Regent until I come of age. I fear they will still exert their influence even then. They have obtained great power in the kingdom since they took the role of

Regent. I do not believe they will want to give up that power when I become queen. And, Ben, I don't care! I am tired of being told to do this, behave in this way, go to this event, do, do, do!

BEN: Whew! I thought I was a talker, but you can get going, too!

MARTA: I'm sorry to burden you with all this, Ben, but you have been kind to me. I convinced my aunt, the Duchess, to take me on a visit to your America because I had heard so much about your freedom. America might be a place where I can escape.

BEN: Well, we're not as free as you might have heard... though there are many who are more than ready to turn things upside down, if you know what I mean.

MARTA: I'm not sure I do.

BEN: We don't much like our king, begging your pardon, Your Majesty, I mean, Marta, you being a future queen and all.

***(BEN sees something offstage.)***

BEN: Marta...

MARTA: What?

BEN: Back in the barrel.

MARTA: What!?

BEN: I think I saw my master coming 'round the corner there.

MARTA: Oh. Goodness.

BEN: Here. I'll help you. ***(They have a difficult time getting MARTA back into the barrel.)*** How on earth did you get into this thing so fast the last time? All right now, not a peep out of you.

***(SHE ducks down into the barrel. After a moment, MASTER MASTERS enters. HE is a crotchety old man who pinches every coin that ever came into his pocket. HE hates it when BEN uses the name "MASTER MASTERS," but BEN uses it with relish. As HE enters, BEN is furiously sweeping.)***

MASTERS: Boy!

BEN: ***(looks up)*** Yes, Master Masters?

MASTERS: ***(annoyed)*** Please, how many times have I told you? Just "Master."

BEN: Yes, Master?

MASTERS: Haven't you finished in here? You should have finished sweeping an hour ago. Why look: you've barely scratched the surface! What have you been doing? Have you been napping again?

***(MASTERS approaches threateningly as if to strike BEN. As HE nears the barrel, BEN moves in front of it, sweeping vigorously. HE looks up, sees MASTERS' look, cringes and speaks.)***

BEN: Oh, no, sir. I--I was interrupted by the Duchess Olga Chefsky.

MASTERS: What is this nonsense? Another of your lies? Your wild tales? Quit that sweeping. Explain yourself.

BEN: ***(sweeping so fast, HE brushes MASTERS back)*** I thought you wanted me to finish here.

MASTERS: I do, I do. But I will not have servants lying. I have told you that. I may have to teach you a lesson.

BEN: I'm not lying, Master. This woman, who told me she was the Duchess Olga Chefsky, came in, along with her servant, Lech.

MASTERS: Lech?

BEN: Lech, sir. The Duchess, she said she was looking for a young lady, and she offered a reward.

MASTERS: A reward, you say? How much?

BEN: ***(HE knows HE shouldn't tell)*** I-I don't know, sir. I told her I hadn't seen the young lady, and she went on her way.

***(MASTERS again moves to strike BEN.)***

MASTERS: That is the most ridiculous story you have ever concocted to cover your napping and laziness. I'll teach you not to do that again.

***(As MASTERS approaches, BEN again maneuvers in front of the barrel so that MASTERS can't see into it.)***

BEN: No, it's true, sir. She is staying at the Crossed Arms and said that if I learned of anything to come to her there.

***(MASTERS notices how BEN is protecting the barrel.)***

MASTERS: Say, what is it you're doing there? Are you sneaking food off and hiding it again so you can have your little snacks and naps when you're supposed to be working?

BEN: No, Master. (**MASTERS pushes BEN out of the way and leans toward the barrel**) There's no food-- (**Now HE knows HE's been caught and speaks with courage.**) It's just that, well, sir, it was a matter of honor.

**(MASTERS has peered into the barrel. HE sees nothing.)**

MASTERS: Matter of honor? What the devil are you talking about? (**BEN cannot conceive of how MASTERS has not discovered MARTA, and HE stands wide-eyed.**) I am going to check your story, boy. The Crossed Arms, you say?

BEN: Y-Yes, sir.

MASTERS: And if you're lying, I will whale your backside, do you hear me?

BEN: Y-Yes, sir.

MASTERS: A reward, you say?

BEN: Yes, sir.

MASTERS: If you are lying... (**BEN holds his hand up in a swearing position and crosses his heart.**) Now sweep! This place had better be spotless before I return.

**(BEN again begins furiously sweeping. MASTERS exits, grumbling. BEN flicks up a glance as HE sweeps to be sure that MASTERS is gone. After a moment:)**

BEN: (**whispering**) Princess!? Marta? (**MARTA comes out of the barrel, again rubbing her temples, this time literally moaning in pain.**) That was unbelievable! Master Masters must be getting older than I thought. His eyes must truly be going bad. He looked right into the barrel. How could he have missed you? Even if he were blind--

MARTA: He didn't see me.

BEN: Right, I know. I thought we were goners there, especially when I had to tell him about the Duchess and her reward. Oh, why

couldn't I have made up a tasty lie and taken my beating? When he looked right into the barrel...

MARTA: He didn't see me because I was invisible.

BEN: Well, of course. You'd have had to be to--What? What on earth are you talking about, Princess?

MARTA: Here, help me. Oh, my head.

BEN: You hurt it again, did you?

***(BEN helps MARTA out of the barrel)***

MARTA: Ben, I'm going to tell you something that only a few people in the world know about, something very secret.

BEN: I don't know, Princess--Marta. I'm not very good with secrets. You know how I gab and all, just talk, talk, talk, sometimes not even thinking--

MARTA: Ben, as I said before, I believe you are a man of honor.

BEN: I'm really only a boy, Marta, a lazy boy.

MARTA: You have honor and that's what counts. I believe I can trust you to keep this secret.

BEN: Well, if you believe it, it must be all right. I've never met anyone quite like you.

MARTA: Thank you, Ben. Now... the reason your master didn't see me was because I really was invisible.

BEN: You mean you disappeared?

MARTA: Yes. ***(SHE pulls out the tiara-like crown from her handbag.)*** Many, many years ago, when my great-great-great grandfather was ruler of the kingdom, a powerful magician fashioned this crown. He made it especially for the royal family, and whoever of us wears it becomes invisible.

BEN: A mighty small crown for a king.

MARTA: I can't explain it, but when I wear it, it fits me. When my father wore it, it fit him and his father and his father. It has kept our kingdom at peace for a hundred years.

BEN: A crown keeping peace?

MARTA: Ben, imagine being able to walk out among the people and not be seen. A king... or queen, sitting on a throne hears only what people think he wants to hear... But to move freely... unseen... Well, no plotting to overthrow or any injustice done by a noble to

his servants or dissatisfactions about taxes or... well, anything...  
The king would know everything.

BEN: Or queen.

MARTA: My aunt, the Duchess, has wanted this crown since my father died. She didn't know he had secretly entrusted it to me. She had the lake where my parents drowned scoured, thinking it might have been with them when they died. She has searched through my parents' belongings at the castle.

BEN: You live in a castle?

MARTA: It's not so wonderful as it sounds. I have kept this hidden until now, on this trip to America. It was my chance to escape. I put it on and walked away from them.

BEN: Ah, and that's what you did when the Duchess and Lech-- **(HE makes the arm-waving motion.)**

MARTA: Yes.

BEN: I thought they were crazy.

MARTA: It means they know I have the crown, which means they'll search twice as hard. They'll offer a reward of a hundred gold coins to find me.

BEN: A hundred?!

MARTA: **(as if measuring him)** Yes.

BEN: **(sees this)** Well, that is no matter to me. I am a man of honor after all...

MARTA: There is only one problem.

BEN: With being a man of honor?

MARTA: No. With the crown. You see, when one wears it, it causes terrible pains in the head. The longer one wears it, the more the pain lingers. It was only meant for brief usage. It is said that if one wears it too long, it could mean death.

BEN: That is a big problem.

MARTA: Yes.

BEN: I would love to see it work... but I wouldn't dare want to cause you pain.

MARTA: You've already seen it work...twice.

BEN: **(understanding)** The barrel!

MARTA: **(nodding)** I must have time to rest before I can use it again.

BEN: Well, I believe I can help you there. Over the course of my two years here, I've found many good hiding places in and around the

Master's house, barn, and stable. I've got bits of food stashed here and there, too.

MARTA: I am hungry.

BEN: Not for long. Come with me. *(HE leads her offstage as the lights fade to black)*

## SCENE TWO

**SCENE:** The same, that evening. MASTERS enters with OLGA and LECH.

OLGA: I thought you were offering me dinner, not a tour of your stable.

MASTERS: Of course, of course, Duchess. It's just that... for so great a reward, I want to leave no stone unturned. *(to LECH)* You say a man saw her go in here?

LECH: Yes, sir. The way he said she looked... that was the princess.

MASTERS: And when you came in my boy was here.

OLGA: If you mean that ragged young thing with the broom...

MASTERS: Yes, yes. And he saw nothing?

OLGA: That is what he said. And I told him there was a reward.

MASTERS: You didn't mention one hundred gold coins?

OLGA: *(SHE knows this man is a money-grubber)* Well, no.

MASTERS: Good. Good. He probably would have made up some tale if you had. *(HE shouts offstage)* Boy! *(back to OLGA)* He has some kind of imagination, that one. Talks to brooms.

OLGA: Brooms?

MASTERS: I sometimes think he is addled. *(HE makes a circling gesture around his ear)*

OLGA: Ah.

MASTERS: Boy!

*(BEN enters and sees the situation.)*

BEN: Yes, Master Masters?

***(Though this annoys MASTERS, HE tries to be sweet.)***

MASTERS: Well, it turns out your little tale was true. You remember Duchess Chefsky?

BEN: Certainly. Wonderful to see you again, your Dutchiness. You too, Lech. ***(LECH bows uncertainly.)***

MASTERS: Yes, yes. Well, the Duchess here tells me that a young woman was seen entering these stables. She also tells me that when she, the Duchess that is, came in to look for her you said you saw no one.

BEN: That's right, sir.

MASTERS: Now, boy, this is very important. Was there anything, just anything that you might recall? I could be very generous, perhaps even reducing your time of service by, uh, say six months.

BEN: ***(totally acting)*** Six months! Oh, that is very generous indeed. Why that would mean I would only have four and a half years left to repay my indebtedness to you. Why, that would mean that I would be...let's see, how old? ***(HE begins counting on his fingers)*** Let's see, with my birthday in March--

MASTERS: ***(angered)*** Boy! ***(but HE eases)*** Can you remember anything at all? Perhaps a young lady came in and went out?

BEN: ***(acting like HE's thinking, but HE's playing)*** Hmmm...well, I did think I heard footsteps walk right across the floor, but I'm sure I was mistaken.

MASTERS: Boy, I don't want nonsense. I'm looking for--

***(OLGA perked up when SHE heard BEN's words.)***

OLGA: Footsteps, you say? And in which direction did they go?

MASTERS: Madame Chefsky, the boy is--

OLGA: Mister Masters!

***(MASTERS stops, scolded, but not understanding it all.)***

OLGA: Now, young man, you remember I said there was a reward?

BEN: Yes, your Dutchnesty.

MASTERS: Now, now, Madame Chefsky, since the boy works for me, any reward--

OLGA: Mr. Masters, this is very important. You needn't fear being left out, but, boy, tell me everything you heard.

BEN: Well, at first, I thought it might be the wind. You see, I was busily sweeping, working hard for Master Masters here, when I heard a rustling. It sounded like the silk skirts of the fancy ladies I see in town sometimes, you know with the petticoats and brocade and what not--

***(OLGA is very interested, but interrupts.)***

OLGA: Yes, yes, but then you said footsteps?

BEN: Yes, ma'am, your most Duchy one, but I didn't want to say anything, you know. If you say you've been hearing footsteps when there's nothing there, well, you might get accused of being witchified or dealing with hobgoblins or ghosties--

OLGA: Young man! Please. ***(then SHE softens)*** I know you won't understand, but this could be a clue.

BEN: A clue, ma'am?

OLGA: ***(slowly, as if to a child)*** Which way did the footsteps go?

BEN: Why, straight out the back door. Scared me, it did. I could have sworn I saw little puffs of dirt in the road right after that, as if little breaths of wind were stirring the dirt, going right toward the woods.

***(OLGA looks at LECH significantly. LECH nods. OLGA turns to MASTERS.)***

OLGA: Where do those woods go?

MASTERS: Go? Why, they go to the woods.

OLGA: Woods go to the woods?

MASTERS: Well, this is still a wild country, Madame. Not like your civilized Europe. At the edges of our towns are woods that stretch off into... woods. Now, of course, I do my best here in my little spot of civilization to provide for my table in the best manner possible.

OLGA: If she went into the woods, where would it take her?

MASTERS: Well, into brambles and brush and thickets. Nothing that a Prin-- ***(HE stops himself, looking at BEN)*** Er, young lady would want to deal with. Besides, the boy here is spouting nonsense, all about footsteps and puffs of dirt. I'll wager he's making it all up.

BEN: Oh, no, Master Masters.

OLGA: Mister Masters. I want that woods searched.

MASTERS: But, Madame Chefsky--

OLGA: I will pay well. Can you hire men to do this?

MASTERS: **(suddenly shifting, seeing profit)** It may be very costly.

OLGA: Don't worry about expenses... if they are reasonable.

MASTERS: Of course, Madame Chefsky. I'll gather a search party, and we'll scour the woods.

BEN: Speaking of expenses, your Dutchliest... **(OLGA turns and looks at him as though HE just appeared.)** Did my information qualify for that reward you spoke of?

OLGA: **(dismissively)** Lech. Give the boy a coin.

**(LECH pulls out a jingling bag, takes a coin, and tosses it to BEN who bites it for authenticity. MASTERS glares at him.)**

MASTERS: **(turning sweet again)** Now, Madame Chefsky, that dinner I promised you. And after that, we'll discuss what kind of funds I'll need to pay for such a search party as I've promised. Don't worry. If she's gone into those woods, she won't get far. **(HE ushers them offstage)** I'll be with you in one moment. I'm going to send the boy around to places in town where I know there are men available. **(They exit and MASTERS whirls on BEN.)** Go down to the Boar's Tail and round up all the ne'er-do-wells hanging around. Tell them Mister Masters will buy them all... a bucket of beer for an evening's work.

BEN: Yes, sir. **(BEN starts to exit)**

MASTERS: And boy?

**(BEN turns. MASTERS holds out his hand. BEN reluctantly hands over the coin.)**

BEN: Will that be for the six months you promised me?

MASTERS: For a story about footsteps and wind? Pah! This will just about cover the meal I'm about to serve that old battle ax. Now, if you could find that young lady she's looking for, I might consider a real reward... perhaps a full year off the five left.

BEN: A year?



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