

Assipattle & The Stoorworm

A play in one act

Written by Ron Nicol

Spotlight Publications

Assipattle & The Stoorworm

CAST (in order of appearance)

Assipattle

Fingal, his older brother

Freya, his sister

Mother

Father

King Magnus

Princess Gemdelovely

Queen Beitris, her stepmother

The Bailie

The Minister

Murdo the Sorcerer

Servants (*non-speaking*)

Courtiers and citizens may be used in the court and outdoor scenes if desired

M 7 F 4 plus optional extras

Time: Scotland in the epic past

Author's note: Assipattle is an Orcadian folk hero, and the Stoorworm is a Scandinavian sea-serpent, or dragon. The story goes that when the giant Stoorworm died, its tongue fell out, making a trench which was filled by the sea to become the Skagerrak, the kyle which separates Denmark from Norway and Sweden. The Stoorworm's teeth fell into the sea and formed the islands we now call Orkney and the Shetlands. Its dead body became what we now know as Iceland, and the fire Assipattle started in its stomach is the reason for the volcanic activity on the island.

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As the lights slowly fade up, Assipattle wanders on. He is slightly built and shabbily dressed. He lies down and examines the ground, then turns over onto his back with his hands behind his head and stares up at the sky. Fingal, a burly young man with more brawn than brains, enters angrily

Fingal I might've guessed! Doing nothing - as usual! I slave every day - doing all the work on the farm - while you just lie here dreaming... *(he pulls Assipattle to his feet and pushes him backwards)* ...about giants, and dragons, and heroes. There's no such things! All lies!

Freya enters, shoving Fingal aside and standing between him and Assipattle

Freya That's enough! Leave him be and get away with you!

Fingal Yah! Needs his wee sister to stand up for him!

Freya Get away - unless you're wanting a skelp on the lug! You know you're afraid of me!

Fingal starts to move in. Freya glowers and suddenly steps forward, and Fingal runs off as Mother enters, her arms full of clothes for washing

Mother Now then, what's all these goings on? Freya, you mustn't frighten your brother.

Freya But mother, he's always tearing into him!

Mother Assipattle, you can't just lie about. There's work to be done - floors to wash, peats to fetch, water from the well, and a thousand wee things nobody else'll do. Get up on your hind legs and help me - *please!*

Assipattle *(sulking)* Aye, mother.

Mother And don't stick out your petted lip!

Assipattle No, mother.

Mother exits

Freya helps Assipattle to his feet and brushes him down

Och, Freya, why do I have such a hard life?

Freya A hard life! You?

Assipattle I'm not big and strong like my brother. I can't fetch and carry and howk and plough like him. *(He shyly shows his biceps)* Look at these muscles - there's nothing there!

Freya Aye, like sparrows' kneecaps, those! But don't worry - you're no farmhand, you're a storyteller - it's wonderful stories you tell.

Assipattle Fingal says they're all lies.

Freya Take no heed of him - I could listen to your tales all day long.

Assipattle You're so good to me, Freya. I'd be miserable without you.

Father enters with Princess Gemdelovely

Father Freya, a word with you. Come you over here.

As Freya and Father speak with Princess Gemdelovely, Assipattle tries to make himself more presentable by smoothing down his hair and brushing his clothes. Father eventually leads the Princess away

Assipattle *(nonchalantly)* Who was yonder lady?

Freya *(teasing)* What lady?

Assipattle The one you were talking with.

Freya Oh, yonder lady! Princess Gemdelovely.

Assipattle *(keen)* Aye, she is that! *(Dreamily)* She's lovely.

Freya You're not! You're never! You are! You have! You've a notion of the lady!

Assipattle I have no!

Freya You have so! You've been taken with a fancy for her! You daft loon - you're surely in love.

Assipattle Och, Freya ... (*Moves away in confusion, then turns back*) I've never been in love afore. What d'you do?

Freya Just like in your stories - when your sweetheart's in danger, you ride up on your bonny white horse and rescue her.

Assipattle And what then - when I've rescued her?

Freya (*mischievously*) I'll tell you later - when there's nobody to hearken.

Assipattle But what was it she wanted?

Freya Well... (*All in one breath*) She needs a serving maid and she saw me the other day and she likes me and she wants me to be her maid and she's asked Father and he agreed and they're off to tell Mother. (*Huge breath*) I'm to bide up at the castle!

Assipattle But you can't go away!

Freya I have to - Father's agreed. He's to buy me new clothes -and he's making me a pair of slippers. I'm to wear them when I wait on the Princess. Well, I can't go barefoot up at the castle, now can I? Are you not pleased for me?

Assipattle Aye, I suppose - but I'll sorely miss you, Freya.

Freya Och, I'll see you now and then, and I can visit you forby. Just be sure not to let everybody get you down.

Assipattle (*doubtfully*) I'll try.

Freya Come help me pack - you can surely do that, can't you?

Assipattle Well, I suppose...

Freya Come on!

Freya and Assipattle exit as the lights fade

Pause

As the lights are restored, the Minister, a very small man, and the Bailie, very large, enter excitedly. They're followed by a crowd of citizens

Minister King Magnus! Your Grace!

Bailie Your Grace! King Magnus!

King Magnus enters. He's seventy years old, though his wits are still sharp. His clothes are too big for his stooped body and his cloak often slides off his shoulder. Sometimes he has difficulty pulling his arm out of its folds. Because he gets tired and breathless with any activity, he sometimes adds the final word to his sentences after everybody thinks he's finished. He's attended by courtiers

Magnus What's all this. About?

Bailie We're doomed!

Minister Doomed! Aye!

Magnus Well now, if we're all doomed, let's hearken for why. Tell me - slowly and clearly - just what's happened.

Bailie Two fishermen - out in their boat - saw the biggest - mightiest - most monstrous - muckle great sea serpent!

Minister The Mester Stoorworm himself!

Bailie The great muckle beast turned its great muckle head toward them - and opened its great muckle mouth - and yawned a great muckle yawn!

Minister Like it was hungry!

The Minister demonstrates

Bailie And it showed its great muckle teeth - great muckle pointed teeth - in great muckle rows, and great muckle flames came out its mouth - great muckle clouds of reek - and it roared a great muckle roar!

Minister (*enthusiastically*) Roooarr!

Taken unawares, the listeners leap back

Bailie Just like that! They surely thought their time had come.
Minister We're doomed!
Bailie Aye! Doomed!
Magnus What is this - this Mester Stoorworm?
Bailie It's a great muckle beast.
Minister The greatest of sea serpents, your Grace - it's enormous - monstrous.
Bailie Promiscuous. It stretches from the river mouth to the point of the ness.
Minister It could reach the fourth part around the world. In the Good Book it's the creature called Leviathan! "And he shall send a great beast to walk amongst us, and none shall withstand its coming, saith the prophet." We're doomed!
Bailie Doomed! Aye!
Magnus And why should such a beast be a threat to our kingdom?
Minister It'll swim about our shores demanding to be fed...
Bailie If it should come ashore and lift its head and breathe upon the land...
Minister It'll destroy every man - every beast of the field - every living thing...
Bailie It'll discriminate all it sees! We're doomed!
Minister Aye! Doomed! "And the wise men saith - how shall we withstand the rising of the beast? For it shall cause ruin and contagion, and all shall be destroyed - even till the very last stone shall all be brought down about you!"
Magnus Peace! We must discuss what's to be done. Come to the Council. Chamber.

He exits with his courtiers

Bailie (*looking off*) Mind yourself, here comes Queen Beitris!
Minister Should we tell her the news?
Bailie I'm not wanting to be speaking with the Queen! A powerful lady that, with no liking for common folk. And that warlock's worse. An evil scheming black-hearted man that's as like to give you his boot up the bahookie as soon as look at you! Let's away!

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Plot Summary

Assipattle, a simple farmer's son, dreams of becoming a hero, but is bullied by his older brother Fingal. When his sister Freya becomes maid to Princess Gemdelovely, Assipattle falls in love with the Princess. The kingdom is threatened by a ferocious sea-monster, and Queen Beatrix and Murdo the sorcerer plot to have the Princess sacrificed to the creature. Assipattle determines to rescue her. Based on a Scottish folk tale. Though written with youth groups in mind, the play could also be performed by mixed groups of young people and adults.

Running time: 30 minutes