ETHAN 7

 (Responds absentmindedly.)

 Yes.

ALFRED

 I hope that you rested well through the night. Breakfast

 good?

 ETHAN

 (Distractedly fools with his pocket.)

Yes. Thank you.

ALFRED

 So shall we begin with the order of the day?

ETHAN

 Mmm..hmm.

 (As ALFRED speaks, ETHAN

 continues to reach discreetly

 for his pocket in an attempt

 to keep hidden a live frog

 that is trying to free itself.)

 ALFRED

 This morning is the weekly audience with the king, where

 you hear the complaints of the people, collect the

 customary chicken or goat as gratitude. After that, an

 etiquette lesson with your mother. Noon meal in the great

 hall. Then off to the library for arithmetic and geography,

 followed by sword fighting, archery. Then...what is that?

 (ALFRED motions to ETHAN’S pocket)

ETHAN

 Excuse me?

ALFRED

 What is that?

ETHAN 8

 What is what?

 ALFRED

 In your pocket?

ETHAN

 In my pocket?

 ALFRED

 Yes, Your Majesty, in your pocket.

ETHAN

 Oh, that...nothing really...just...

 ALFRED

 Yes?

ETHAN

 Just...a frog.

ALFRED

 Really? And has this frog agreed to attend you through all

 your kingly duties today?

 (ETHAN is silent.)

 Perhaps it would be happier back in the creek from which it

 came?

 (ETHAN reluctantly reaches for

 his pocket pulling out the

 frog. ALFRED makes a gesture

 with his hand and up runs a

 servant who takes the frog from

 ETHAN. After a few steps, the 9

 frog escapes and the servant

 scurries after as it hops

 zig zaggedly off stage.

 ETHAN suppresses a laugh,

 ALFRED rolls his eyes. Stage

 left, enter QUEEN SARAH, late

 30's, attractive, regal, yet

 warm hearted and approachable.

 She smiles invitingly at both

 ALFRED and ETHAN.)

QUEEN SARAH

 Another lovely day.

 (ETHAN and ALFRED cross stage to

 greet her, bowing.)

ETHAN

 Good morning, Mother.

 ALFRED

 Good morning, Your Majesty. You look beautiful, as usual.

QUEEN SARAH

 Thank you, Alfred. And you, gracious with your

 compliments, as usual. Have the men begun repairing the

 road just west of the main gate?

ALFRED

 As you requested.

QUEEN SARAH

 Very good.

 (Turning to address ETHAN with a

 twinkle in her eye.)

 The day is getting away from us! Shall we press on? There

 is a crowd of villagers already awaiting your presence.

(ETHAN and QUEEN SARAH begin 10

 walking stage right, ALFRED

 following behind.)

ETHAN

 (Laughing)

 Do you think a pig will get loose again in the great hall?

 I thought they would never catch it.

QUEEN SARAH

 (laughing)

 Whatever the day holds, I'm sure it will be full of

 surprises.

ETHAN

 May I ask you a question?

 (ETHAN looks back at ALFRED, who

 falls back to give ETHAN privacy.)

QUEEN SARAH

 Of course.

ETHAN

 (A bit self consciously)

 The stories you've told me about my father and the kings

 and queens that came before him, all the great things they

 accomplished...were they always so sure of themselves? Did

 they make mistakes? What if I do? What if I’m a terrible

 king?

 (QUEEN SARAH stops walking to face

 ETHAN, placing her hands on his

 shoulders or making some other

 gesture of physical intimacy and

 assurance.)

QUEEN SARAH

 It is easy to tell a story when you already know the

 ending. I cannot tell you what your future holds but you

QUEEN SARAH (CONT.) 11

 must have faith and hold true to what you know to be right

 and good. That is all one can ever do.

 (QUEEN SARAH, ALFRED and ETHAN

 are now stage right. A loud

 monstrous roar is heard

 offstage.)

What was that?

 (ALFRED, QUEEN SARAH and ETHAN

 look up and around. Another roar.

 Lights rise on TOWNSPEOPLE who

 begin to appear upstage as if

 they are coming out of their

 houses and shops, staring up at

 the sky, pointing, straining

 to get a look at where the

 sound is coming from.)

 ALFRED

 I've heard that sound only once before, as a small boy.

 (Another roar)

ETHAN

 What is it, Alfred?

 (A townsperson screams, then

 another as they see the

 dragon in the air.)

TOWNSPERSON #1

 I see it!

TOWNSPERSON #2

 What is it?

TOWNSPERSON #3 12

 It's coming round again!

TOWNSPERSON #4

 (Enter stage)

 The fields are on fire! The fields are on fire!

TOWNSPERSON #5

 Quick, we need water!

TOWNSPERSON #6

 Buckets! Buckets! To the river!

 (Several people run off stage

 while others remain, some

 cowering.)

 ALFRED

 It is...your mortal enemy...Your Highness.

 (Center stage--Townspeople now

 form a crowd facing the audience

 as if they are storming the gate.

 They begin to pantomime pounding

 on the doors of the castle.

 We hear loud pounding off stage.)