

**'Mother Hubbard – Private Eye in
"Were Wolves Dare"'**

A pantomime

By Graham Parry

'Mother Hubbard – Private Eye' by Graham Parry

Characters

The Good Fairy
Tom Tom
Cat
The Big Bad Wolf
Mother Hubbard
Marge
Door
Window
Broomck
Villager
Scoop Daley
Airinck
Red Riding Hood
Tweedle
Daisy the Cow
Tree
Granny
Judge Day

Announcer
Newspaper Boy
Barmaid
Narrator
Tape
Humpty Dumpty
Wee Willie Winkie
Prompt

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PRE PRODUCTION SAFETY DEMONSTRATION

TWO PEOPLE STAND AT THE FRONT OF THE STAGE FOR THE SAFETY DEMO WHILST A PRE-RECORDED ANNOUNCEMENT LEADS THEM INTO EACH ACTION. THE VOICE IS FEMALE AND THE STYLE IS AS CLOSE TO AIRCRAFT SAFETY DEMO'S AS IS POSSIBLE.

VOICE. Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to Rackheath Village Hall. Our entire production this evening will take approximately three hours and refreshments and duty free items will be served during this time. May we take just a few moments of your time to demonstrate the Village Hall Safety Procedures, a copy of which can be found on a card in the seat pocket in front of you. The emergency exits are to be found at the rear of the hall and to the front. These will of course be securely locked whilst the pantomime is in progress.

If at any time during the evening the production looks as though it might be becoming too serious, a silly disguise will drop down in front of you. Place the disguise over your nose and mouth, loop the band over your head and breathe normally. The mask may be safely removed when the humour content has reached an acceptable level. At some point in the evening a warning siren will indicate a dangerously high amount of sheer lunacy. Upon hearing the siren, you should immediately place your protective bag over your head. A member of the cast will advise you when it is safe to remove it. To further ensure your safety, a member of the Red Cross will be in attendance throughout the evening and the Happsburgh Lifeboat has been out on standby.

May we ask you now to extinguish all cigarettes, make sure your bladders are empty and your chairs are in the upright position. On behalf of the Rackheath Players may I thank you for being with us this evening and very much hope you enjoy our production.

LAST MINUTE CHANGE ANNOUNCEMENT

ANNOUNCER. Ladies and gentlemen, I do have a couple of last minute programme changes to bring to your attention. Due to illness, Fido is unable to appear tonight. The part of Spot the Dog will, therefore, be read by Gemima the Duck. Jasmine Lock is also indisposed and so XXXX has agreed to play both Tweedle Dum and Tweedle Dee. I do hope these unforeseen alterations do not mar your enjoyment.

On a happier note, may I welcome to our audience the Theatrical Producer, Mr Bernie Thorpestein, who is busily casting for a West End "Best of the Musicals" show, and we are indeed honoured to have him with us tonight.

THE TABS ARE CLOSED AS A DRUM ROLL BUILDS TO A CRESCENDO. A SPOYLIGHT FOCUSES ON AN AREA D/R, WHERE THERE IS A SUDDEN FLASH AND A LARGE PUFF OF SMOKE, THEN AN EMBARRASSING PAUSE. A DISHEVELLED **FAIRY**, CARRYING A WAND AND A PLASTIC BAG, APPEARS D/L. SHE STRAIGHTENS HER DRESS, LOOKS AT HER WATCH, AND THEN NOTICES THE SPOTLIGHT D/R. AS SHE HURRIDLY CROSSES THE STAGE TO D/R, THE SPOTLIGHT MOVES IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AND ENDS UP D/L. ON REACHING HER SPOT AND FINDING THE LIGHT HAS MOVED, THE **FAIRY** LETS OUT A SHRILL WHISTLE AND BECKONS THE LIGHT TOWARDS HER. THE SPOTLIGHT OBEDIENTLY CROSSES THE STAGE AND STOPS WJEN FOCUSSED ON THE **FAIRY**.

FAIRY. Apologies to one and all
I'm late, I ache, my arms are dropping
My entrance would have been on queue
If I hadn't done my late night shopping

Debenhams was full as usual
As was Jarrolds, Bonds and Marks
And I must have done at least two circuits
Of all the city's short-term parks

I ended up in a multi-storey
With hardly room to swing a cat
And all I've got is a Fiat Uno
And I nearly took the paint off that!

But "hang about!" I hear you say

BUSINESS WITH AUDIENCE – "HANG ABOUT" RESPONSE

But (AUDIENCE SAYS "HANG ABOUT") I hear you say
The programme says that you're a Fairy
So why not use your magic wand
To shift yourself from here to there...ee?

The problem is when I wave my wand
I foul up my directional sense
Like yesterday, when I aimed for the market
And materialised inside the gents

*DURING THE NEXT VERSE, **TOM** AND **CAT** APPEAR D/L CARRYING A LARGE SACK BETWEEN THEM. THEY SNEAK ACROSS THE STAGE, READY TO POUNCE*

FAIRY. My puff of smoke was extra thick
So to clear it quick I flapped my wings
Then stood agog as the smoke dispersed
Saw my mistake... amongst other things.

I didn't know where to stick my wand...

*TRIUMPHANTLY, **TOM** AND **CAT** THROW THE SACK OVER THE **FAIRY** WHO STRUGGLES IN VAIN TO FREE HERSELF. THEY DRAG HER OUT THROUGH THE CENTRE TAB. THE TABS OPEN SLIGHTLY REVEALING A SET OF STEPS, DOWN WHICH THE **WOLF** MAKES A GRAND ENTRANCE, ACCOMPANIED BY BOOS AND HISSES*

WOLF. There's now a change to your evenings viewing
As my scheme advances helter-skelter
I've snatched the Fairy; such a blessing
She's got more mouth than the Amazon Delta!

So let me introduce proceedings
And set the scene for this evening's show
It's won't be a sugary sweet confection
Like certain tales you've come to know

For darkness has returned to nursery;
The land of rhymes and fairy tales
And I've come to terrorise these peasants
Or sing quite badly if all else fails!

Sit back and enjoy this entertainment
Relax, if you can, but remain alert!
For there's none more cunning than the Big Bad Wilf
And if I bite you... it won't half hurt!!

*THE **WOLF** EXITS UTTERING A BLOOD-CURDLING HOWL*

THE MUSIC FOR THE OPENING CHORUS BEGINS AND THE TABS OPEN TO REVEAL THE VILLAGE CENTRE

SONG – “NURSERY TIMES”

*THE SONG FINISHES AND THE PEOPLE GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS. A **NEWSPAPER BOY** STANDS D/S SELLING PAPERS. **MOTHER HUBBARD** ENTERS CARRYING SPOT UNDER HER ARM*

BOY. Extra! Extra! Read all about it! Fairy kidnap drama, shock, horror, speculation! Bo Peep baa’s all on Page 3!! Extra! Extra!

MOTHER. Here! Let’s have a shuftly. (*BUYS A PAPER*)

BOY. Aw, gee wiz, Ma, thanks! You’re the kindest, sweetest customer a paper boy ever had. Say would you like to see my tap routine?

MOTHER. Why, do you do plumbing as a sideline?

BOY. Aw, stop joshin’ me, Ma. Don’t y’know that someday I’m goin’ t’ be compared to Astair?

MOTHER. Yes. Thick and wooden and have people walk all over you!

BOY. Aw, gosh gee willikins! A feller jus’ can’t have any dreams any more!

***MOTHER HUBBARD** SHAKES HER HEAD IN DISBELIEF AND WALKS TO THE FRONT OF THE STAGE. WHILST SHE TALKS TO THE AUDIENCE THE PUB SCENE IS SET BEHIND HER*

MOTHER. (*SUDDENLY NOTICING THE AUDIENCE*) Oh, hello there. Have you not met your official guide yet? Oh that’s bad. It really is too much. How can they hope to build up the tourist industry when they don’t look after them when they’re here. I mean officially I shouldn’t be talking to you. Only appointed guides can chat to visitors. I could be in serious trouble if anyone saw me. So mum’s the word.

BOY. Extra, extra, read all about it. Visitors vexed by Verbal Violation. Hundreds Hurt in Hubbard Harassment!!

MOTHER. Excuse me one moment.

***MOTHER HUBBARD** GOES OVER TO THE **PAPER BOY** AND LIFTS HIM BY THE LAPEL*

MOTHER. Listen, Rupert Murdoch. Do you know what happened to the last little paper boy who incurred my wrath? (***BOY** SHAKES HIS HEAD*) He got blown away. (*SHE PUTS HIM DOWN*) Comprenez?

*THE **BOY** NODS VIGOROUSLY, GRABS HIS THINGS AND RUNS OFF.
MOTHER HUBBARD RETURNS TO THE AUDIENCE*

MOTHER. Huh! Bloody kids! (*SWEETLY*) Now then boys and girls. As you may have guessed my name is Mother Hubbard. (*SPOT QUICKS*) And this is Spot, my little chihuahua. I only popped into the village to meet my sister for a drink and a natter in the Rub a Dub Dub. You probably know of her. See-Saw Marjorie Daw. She used to be in the circus. Very talented girl. Part of a Hungarian acrobatic troupe. She married one of them. Didn't last long. The call of the circus was too strong and he left her to return to the Big Top. The big top of Wanda the Snake Charmer to be precise. Look, I can't stand her gossiping all day. I'll try and find out who your official guide is. Meanwhile, just to make sure you're alright, each time I see you I'll shout out "Hello Boys and Girls". Now just to keep the powers that be happy, you'd better not act too intimate, as it were, so just answer "Push off, you big dollop!". OK? Let's try it out. "Hello Boys and Girls". (*RESPONSE*) Wonderful, Said with feeling. In fact if anyone tries to get too friendly, and they're not wearing an Official Guide badge, give them the same reply. Saves any complications. Now, where has Marge got to?

*THERE IS MUCH SHOUTING FROM D/L IN THE MANNER OF A HUNGARIAN CIRCUS TROUPE AND THE RAISED END OF A SEE-SAW APPEARS. SOMEONE LEAPS ONTO IT AND WE HEAR SOMETHING WHISTLING THROUGH THE AIR. **MOTHER HUBBARD'S** GAZE TRACES THE ARC FROM D/L RO D/R. **MARJORIE** TUMBLES IN D/R AS IF LANDING FROM A GREAT HEIGHT. **MOTHER HUBBARD** HELPS HER SISTER GET TO HER FEET*

MOTHER. Are you alright dear?

MARGE. Yes, I think so.

MOTHER. Why can't you take the bus like everyone else?

MARGE. I like to keep my hand in.

MOTHER. Come on Batman, I'll buy you a drink.

*THEY WALK ACROSS THE STAGE BUT ARE CONFRONTED BY A **DOORMAN** WITH AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM*

MOTHER. What do you think you're doing?

DOORMAN. I'm a pub door. That's why I'm ajar!

HE SWINGS HIS ARM TO ALLOW THEM ACCESS. THEY ENTER THE BAR

MOTHER. You're very quiet for a door.

DOORMAN. (*SLIGHTLY TIPSY*) I know, I'm well oiled.

MARGE. You're quite adorable. Do you have a name?

DOORMAN. Matt.

MOTHER. Doe that make you a doormat or a matador?

DOORMAN. I swing both ways. Now, as much as I'd love to stay and chat, I have a date with two rather attractive front doors in the High Street. You know how it is; got to keep an eye out for any new openings.

MARGE. And what's so special about these two doors then?

DOORMAN. Big knockers! Bye. (*EXITS*)

MOTHER. Fancy playing up to him. You Dawes are definitely unhinged! (*THEY SIT DOWN*)

MARGE. I've just had a thought. If he's gone... how are we going to get out?

MOTHER. Oh don't be so stupid! We'll climb through the window.

*SHE POINTS TO A **MAN** ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BAR
STANDING WITH HIS ARM OUTSTRETCHED. HE BRINGS HIS OTHER
ARM TO CHECK THE TIME AND SOUNDS EVEN MORE TIPSY THAN
THE DOOR*

WINDOW. Well don't leave it too late. I want to get a couple of frames in down the snooker hall.

MOTHER. Some people can be a right pain in the glass. And have you been drinking as well?

WINDOW. Alright, I admit it. I'm a little smashed.

MOTHER. (*TO THE TWO MALE DRINKERS*) What's so funny?

TWO MEN. (*BURSTING INTO SONG*) There is nothing like a Dame
Nowhere in this world
There is nothing you can name
That is anything like a Dame

MARGE. I don't know what the world is coming to. Nursey used to be such a nice, wholesome, sober place to live. This all-day drinking will be the ruin of us all.

BARMAID. (*HANDING THEM THEIR DRINKS*) Here we are ladies. Two gin and tonics. Doubles!

MARGE. (*RAISING HER GLASS*) Cheers!

MOTHER. (*RAISING HERS*) Pussy's down the well! Now then... (*SHE STUDIES THE PAPER*) let's see what's happening in the world. (*PAUSE*) Oh dear. Oh no! Surely not! Oh how dreadful!

MARGE. Whatever is it? What's wrong?

MOTHER. They're showing another series of Terry and June.

*THERE IS A UNANIMOUS ROUND OF "OH NO" FROM ALL IN THE BAR AND EVERYONE TAKES A SWIG OF WHATEVER THEY'RE DRINKING.
MOTHER HUBBARD PUTS DOWN THE PAPER*

MOTHER. Anyway, how are things with you Marge?

MARGE. Oh you know. Up and down. I've joined this employment agency. The money's so-so but I'm tackling all sorts of varied and interesting jobs at the moment.

MOTHER. And how's young Jack? Is my nephew behaving himself?

MARGE. Oh dear. Such a worry. We haven't really been on speaking terms since he sold Daisy our cow for five magic beans. You've seen that beanstalk in the garden.

MOTHER. I should think everyone in a twelve mile radius has seen it.

MARGE. It's too big to chop down. The Council don't want to know. The only person to show any real interest is David Bellamy, and he wants to do a 50 minute documentary on it. Course, to top it off now, I've got Giants.

MOTHER. Oh no, big ones?

MARGE. Big enough. The first I knew about it was when one Fee-Fi-Fo-Fummed all over the back garden and squashed the outside karsey.

MOTHER. Do you know which one was responsible?

MARGE. No. I mean, I've got nothing to go on. It's difficult when all you can see is a pair of hairy legs.

MOTHER. Giants. Huh! Once you've got them they're harder to shift than cat's tiddle on your carpet. They're clumsy... they drop big smells... and they lower the value of your property! Or just lower your property.

MARGE. I could throttle that lad of mine. I lose Daisy, my main source of income, have a family of Giants playing squash in the backyard and Jack doesn't lift a finger to help. I'm sure he's fallen in with a bad crowd. Comes in at all hours, drinks a lot and the things he comes out with!

MOTHER. Kids! I wonder why we bother.

BROOMCK APPEARS OUTSIDE THE WINDOW. HE TAPS ON THE WINDOW AND MIMES CALLING OUT IN AN EFFORT TO ATTRACT MOTHER'S ATTENTION

MARGE. Talk of the devil. Isn't that Broomck outside?

MOTHER. Who?

MARGE. Your eldest.

MOTHER. Now what does he want? (*SHOUTING TOWARDS WINDOW*) Lower the window and climb in!

BROOMCK GETS THE MESSAGE AND FORCES DOWN THE ARMS OF THE WINDOW SO THAT THE WINDOW IS NOW SQUATTING. AS HE DOES THIS WE HEAR THE SOUND OF TRAFFIC NOISE. BECAUSE OF HIS DRESS – PRINCIPAL BOY, TUNIC AND TIGHTS – HE IS WATCHED WITH FASCINATION BY TWO MEN AT THE BAR AS HE CLIMBS IN OVER THE ARMS OF THE WINDOW. HE STRAIGHTENS HIS TUNIC AND THEN LIFTS UP THE WINDOW. THE NOISE STOPS ABRUPTLY.

MOTHER. I do wish you'd wear something more masculine.

BROOMCK. What's wrong with this? I think it's rather fetching.

MOTHER. I'll fetch you one in a minute.

BROOMCK. Oh thanks, Mum. I'll have a Babycham.

MOTHER. I worry about you, you know. Other lads of your age are off out joining gangs and fighting in the street, or joining the army... and fighting in the street. Or climbing mountains, slaying dragons, exploring uncharted territory...

BROOMCK. I just happen to find dressmaking more rewarding, that's all.

MARGE. I thought that strapless, Chiffon evening number you made for Snow White's 21st party was wonderful.

MOTHER. He didn't have to wear it himself though. I've never felt so embarrassed!

BROOMCK. I don't know why. I don't think many people recognised me.

MOTHER. I'm not surprised. Wearing that dark wig and with all that make up on, I nearly didn't recognise you!

BROOMCK. Anyway, Snow White was clearly taken with the dress. She couldn't take her eyes off it.

MOTHER. It wasn't the dress she was staring at; it was you dancing with the Prince most of the evening. You were two waltzes away from being cited in the divorce court! That would have put the "happy ever after" up the Swanee!

BROOMCK. *(BURSTING INTO SONG)* I could have danced all night
I could have danced all night
And still have begged for more

Jealousy, that's all. Anyway, I only came over to give you a phone message. *(TAKES OUT A PIECE OF PAPER AND READS IT CONSPIRATORIALLY)* "There's a queue in Tesco's"

MARGE. No, surely not. It's spelt T-E-S-C-O, isn't it?

BROOMCK. No, Auntie Marge, not that sort of queue!

MARGE. Ah, you're taking up snooker are you? Good thinking, Broomck. There's more money in snooker than there is in dressmaking. Look at that Sharon Davis.

BROOMCK. No, I'm not taking up snooker. It's just one of mother's *(LOOKS AROUND)* phone calls.

MARGE. Oo er! Heavy breathing?

MOTHER. *(RISING TO THE OCCASION)* No, Marge. He means I am being called upon once more to don the mantle of the ace super sleuth. To stand up for the weak and the oppressed against the forces of evil. To tackle crime and villainy wherever it may strike the Kingdom of Nursery, no matter what the risks to my own safety.

MARGE. Fancy. And all because Tesco's is extra busy!

MOTHER AND BROOMCK STARE AT MARGE AS THE TABS CLOSE. AFTER A PAUSE A VILLAGER EMERGES THROUGH THE TABS AND STANDS CENTRE STAGE. THERE IS A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY FROM THE AUDITORIUM AS REPORTERS JOSTLE FORWARDS. CAMERAS FLASH AND THE ODD MIC IS THRUST FORWARD

VILLAGER. I expect you're wondering why I have taken the unprecedented step of holding an impromptu press conference in the middle of this production. Well, while we wait for one scene to dissolve into another with all the alacrity of a snail on Mogadon, I wish to air certain grievances. I am a villager and have been for these past several years. During this time I have diligently carried out my role as a villager; filling in unsightly gaps on stage, walking to and fro chatting silently in the background about nothing in particular and bolstering a depleted and somewhat lackluster chorus at the first hint of a song. The time has come, however, to say enough is enough. It is no longer acceptable to say that we are there to make up the numbers. We want a greater say in all future productions and not to be fobbed off with less lines than a baby's bun! We demand greater access to the

downstage area and a higher profile in the spotlight. Finally, we want a two by two photo in the programme and a minimum 100 word biography to run underneath. These demands we make in the name of the V.L.O., Villagers Liberation On-Stage, and until these demands are met, we shall actively pursue a policy of protest and disruption within the context of this production. (*HAND OVER EYE, LOOKING OUT OVER THE AUDIENCE*) And can I just add that I am available for Summer Season and evening cabaret. Any questions?

SCOOP. Scoop Daley, Nursery Times. What's all this about?

VILLAGER. About two hours too long. Next?

SCOOP. Who did you sleep with to get this part?

VILLAGER. You'll rake up nothing improper in my private life. I just take Teddy to bed with me.

SCOOP. And what does Andy Pandy have to say about that?

VILLAGER. No comment. Now if you'll excuse me, the struggle goes on.

VILLAGER EXITS TO MORE FLASH GUNS AND HUB-BUB. EXIT REPORTERS

THE TABS PART LEAVING A GAP A FEW FEET ACROSS, WHICH IS FILLED BY A SOLITARY TREE. AIRINCK WALKS THROUGH THE GAP TO D/R TO SIT ON A LOG AND BEGIN READING A PLAYBOY MAGAZINE, OR SIMILAR!! ENTER RED RIDING HOOD THROUGH THE AUDITORIUM, BASKET IN HAND. SHE CLIMBS THE STAGE AND IS HALFWAY ACROSS BEFORE SHE NOTICES AIRINCK

RED. Oh, hello.

SHE FAILS TO BREAK THROUGH HIS CONCENTRATION AND THE OCCASIONAL "COR!"

RED. (*SWEETLY*) Yoo-hoo! Hello there!

NO RSPONSE SO SHE PICKS UP THE LARGE ROCK AND THROWS IT AT HIM, KNOCKING HIM OFF THE LOG

RED. (*HARSHLY*) Oi, cloth ears, I'm talking to you!

AIRINCK REGAINS HIS COMPOSURE AND HIDES THE MAGAZINE

AIRINCK. Who? What?

RED. (*SWEETLY AS BEFORE*) Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you. Please carry on reading. It must be a very interesting book.

AIRINCK. Er, no, not really. I was just looking at the pictures.

RED. What is it about?

AIRINCK. (*VAUGELY*) Oh, this and that, and some of the other. Birds mainly.

RED. How wonderful to find someone else interested in our little feathered friends. My favourites are Jenny Wren, Robin Redbreast and Tom Tit. Have you got those in your book?

AIRINCK. I don't think there's a Jenny Wren, no. Sorry, we haven't been introduced have we? I'm Airinck.

RED. They call me Little Red Riding Hood.

AIRINCK. That's a funny name. Why do they call you that?

RED. I don't know. Probably because if they called me Large Blue Anorak I wouldn't answer them. Anyway, how did you get a name like Earring? Are you an 18 carat sparkler, or just a stud?

AIRINCK. It's Airin-CK actually. I believe it's Dutch.

RED. Like Rembrandt!

AIRINCK. Not very much, no.

RED. I do so love being in the woods, don't you? I walk through them every day on my way to work.

AIRINCK. What do you do?

RED. I'm a nurse at the Nursery Hospital.

AIRINCK. Oh yes? My cousin Jack was in hospital recently. Head injuries. Perhaps you looked after him?

RED. I don't know. There are a lot of Jacks in Nursery. What was it, a motorbike accident?

AIRINCK. No, he went up this hill with his girlfriend Jill to get some water and he fell down and hurt his head.

RED. I remember him. Yes, I did look after him. I had to bandage his head with vinegar and brown paper.

AIRINCK. Vinegar? Brown paper? Is that a new form of treatment?

RED. No, it's my own recipe. Hurts like hell! And then I gave him a cold water enema!

AIRINCK. You what?

RED. You see, Jill happens to be my cousin and she told me what he really went up the hill for. That's when she hit him with the bucket! Only she slipped in the water and ended up in the same ward. That's how I found out what happened!

AIRINCK. Are they still going out together?

RED. Oh you could say I patched up their differences. I think Jack has learned to be a bit more respectful.

AIRINCK. You're really something else aren't you!

RED. What, do you mean like a plate of spotted dick, or a pile of rhino droppings, or what?

AIRINCK. You know what I mean. Special. Look, can I see you again? And I don't mean at the wrong end of a length of hose and a gallon of cold water! Outside of work. For a meal perhaps?

RED. Perhaps. Why not meet me here... (*BURSTS INTO SONG*)
Tomorrow, tomorrow
I'll meet you tomorrow
Tomorrow's a day away
...(NORMALLY) About the same time. It's my day off and I'll be going to visit my Granny.
You can come with me.

AIRINCK. Great. Til tomorrow then. Perhaps we can go for a meal afterwards?

RED. Are you buying?

AIRINCK. Well, I thought we'd go Dutch.

RED. See you tomorrow, Earring. Hang lose. (*EXITS*)

AIRINCK. She's mad about me! Absolutely besotted! I can feel it in my... well, maybe not. (*HE PICKS UP THE MAGAZINE AND THEN CASUALLY THROWS IT AWAY AGAIN*)
Welcome to the real world! (*EXITS*)

THE TABS OPEN TO REVEAL MOTHER HUBBARD'S CUPBOARD CENTRE STAGE. THE TABS ARE OPEN NO MORE THAN THE WIDTH OF THE CUPBOARD. THE NARRATOR'S VOICE IS HEARD OVER THE P.A.

NARRATOR. Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard... (*LONG PAUSE*) Sometime this evening if possible.

MOTHER. (OFF) Hang on, hang on.

MOTHER HUBBARD ENTERS S/L

MOTHER. I was in the men's room. Raised a few eyebrows in there! (TO AUDIENCE) Hello, boys and girls. (RESPONSE) Marvellous! If I didn't know you better, I'd think you meant it. Right, let's get on with it!

NARRATOR. As I was saying;
Old Mother Hubbard went to the cupboard
To get her door... (THE DUCK QUACKS)... ahem, doggy a bone
But when she got there, the cupboard was... bare?

***AS MOTHER HUBBARD OPENS THE DOOR WE SEE THE VILLAGER,
WHO PROMPTLY BURSTS INTO SONG***

VILLAGER. Consider yourself at home,
Consider yourself part of the furniture

***MOTHER HUBBARD SHUTS THE DOOR AND LEANS AGAINST IT.
THERE IS A MOMENTS PAUSE***

NARRATOR. (SLOWLY) But when she got there, the cupboard was...

***MOTHER HUBBARD OPENS THE DOOR AND WE SEE THE
VILLAGER HAS DISAPPEARED***

NARRATOR. Bare. Except for a tape recorder and some photographs.

***MOTHER HUBBARD TAKES OUT THE PHOTOS AND SWITCHES ON
THE TAPE***

TAPE. Good morning Mother Hubbard.

MOTHER. Morning.

SPOT QUACKS

TAPE. Oh yes, and Spot. (MORE QUACKS) The Big Bad Wolf. He's back and meaner than ever. We think he was involved with the mysterious disappearance of Dr Foster, the eminent surgeon, who vanished whilst on a routine journey to Gloucester. His car was found abandoned and there were wolf tracks leading away from the scene. We also think he masterminded the kidnap of the Good Fairy. A ransom note has just been received demanding 4,000 sheep and 6,000 assorted chickens and ducks!

LOUD AND AGITATED QUACKS FROM THE DUCK

MOTHER. I wish you hadn't said that. He does things when he gets nervous.

TAPE. His known associates are The Crooked Cat, (*CHANGE OF PHOTOGRAPH*) one time associate of The Crooked Man, and known to have been on the fiddle for some time now... (*CHANGE OF PHOTO*) and Tom Tom the Piper's son. Stole pigs when he was younger, then became a boxer. He got the name Tom Tom because he was beaten so often. (*CHANGE OF PHOTO*) Oh, and that's rather a good one of the wife and I on holiday in Llundudno last summer. (*CHANGE OF PHOTO*) And that's me getting into an altercation with a deck chair attendant.

MOTHER. Mmm. Very unseemly.

TAPE. It was his fault. He overcharged us! Anyway, your mission should you chose to accept it, which you will or else this production grinds to a halt midway through Act One, is to track down the Wolf and put an end to his campaign of terror. Good luck, Mother Hubbard, and, of course, I don't have to remind you that if you or your associates are killed or captured... well...tough!

MOTHER. No, you didn't have to remind me.

TAPE. This tape will self destruct in five seconds!

THE DUCK QUACKS OFF FIVE SECONDS AND A HAND HOLDING A Mallet, UNTIL THEN CONCEALED, BEGINS TO SMASH THE TAPE TO PIECES. MOTHER HUBBARD CLOSSES THE CUPBOARD DOOR

MOTHER. The Wolf. The Big Bad Wolf! The most feared creature in the kingdom. Oh dear. I think I've got one of my hot flushes coming on. Now don't panic. I shall have to call for assistance.

SHE TAKES THE ROLLING PIN OUT OF IT'S HOLSTER AND PULLS OUT AN ARIEL. SHE THEN USES IT LIKE A RADIO PHONE

MOTHER. Oh dear. Forgotten the number. I know. (*CHECKING WATCH*) I'll just wait for the next train. Should be one along any moment.

AN ORGAN PLAYS THE BRIDAL MARCH AS A BRIDE IN A LONG WEDDING DRESS WALKS ACROSS THE STAGE. TWO LITTLE BOYS DRESSED IN YELLOW FOLLOW HER, CARRYING THE TRAIN. THEY HAVE NUMBERS ON THEIR BACKS WHICH MOTHER HUBBARD MAKES A NOTE OF BEFORE THE WEDDING GROUP EXIT. SHE BEGINS PRESSING BUTTONS ON THE ROLLING PIN

MOTHER. Thank heaven for yellow pages. Hello, is that the Helping Hands Agency? Oh good. HELLPP!!

SHE PUTS THE ROLLING PIN BACK IN ITS HOLSTER. AS SHE DOES SO TWEEDLE DEE/DUM APPEARS D/R HUMMING THE DRAGNET THEME

TWEEDLE. Dum deed um dum. Dum deed um dum dummmmm!

MOTHER. Where did you two come from?

TWEEDLE. (DEE) To answer your call...
(DUM)...is why we've come
(DEE) We're Tweedle Dee
(DUM) and Tweedle Dum!
(DEE) With the compliments of the Helping hands Agency. So how can we help? Wash the ceilings?
(DUM) Paint the dishes?
(DEE) Unblock the dog?
(DUM) Take the drains for a walk?

MOTHER. Are you sure you're the best they can send?

TWEEDLE. (DEE) I'm so good, I'm bad!
(DUM) I'm better!
(DEE, BURSTING INTO SONG) Anything you can do, I can do better. I can do anything better than you.
(DUM) I can do anything better than you.
(DEE) No you can't.
(DUM) Yes I can.
(DEE) No you can't.
(DUM) Yes I can.

MOTHER. Alright, alright, I'll take your word for it. I want you to help me track down and capture the Big Bad Wolf.

TWEEDLE LOOKS LEFT AND RIGHT, THEN SINGING AGAIN HE MAKES AN EXIT

TWEEDLE. Farewell, goodbye, auf weidersehen, adieu! Adieu, adieu, to you and you and you.

MOTHER. Oi! Pinky and Perky! Get back here!

TWEEDLE. (*PEEPING ROUND THE CORNER*) (DEE) Pigs we can cope with. Mucking out, taking to market... but wolves...
(DUM) Wolves are not in our contract, you see. Nothing there about being gobbled up by a ruddy great wolf!

MOTHER. Do you know, I worked for Helping Hands once and I don't think their contract has changed one iota in all these years. Try the small print. Section 2, paragraph 4, sub-heading 3.

TWEEDLE TAKES OUT THE CONTRACT AND READS

TWEEDLE. (DEE) We, the third party...
(DUM) That's us
(DEE) ...do fully accept that being devoured whilst in the employ of the First Party
(DUM) That's her
(DEE) ...is an acceptable risk of being a non-starring role in a big production.

MOTHER. So until you get your own show...

TWEEDLE. (DEE) We see where you're coming from.

MOTHER. Right. Now get out into the village and put yourselves about a bit. Spread out, if that's possible, and get all the information you can on the Wolf. I want to know where he's been sighted, possible locations for his lair... in fact, everything! Right down to where he buys his shreddies.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Gotcha.
(DUM) We're on it!
(EXIT SINGING) Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf, the Big Bad Wolf...

*AS **TWEEDLE** GOES, **AIRINCK** ENTERS SINGING TO THE TUNE OF
"MARIA" FROM "WEST SIDE STORY"*

AIRINCK. Red Riding, I've just met a girl called Red Riding
And suddenly that name will never be the same again

MOTHER. Who have you just met?

AIRINCK. Oh, hi Mum. Red Riding Hood. She's a nurse at the hospital. She could bring me a bed pan any day. We've arranged to meet again tomorrow, to go and see her Grandma. She's the sweetest and the gentlest and the most beautiful girl in the whole world. Oh mother. I think I've scored!! (EXITS)

MOTHER. And they say romance is dead. Red Riding Hood. Why should I know that name? Why...?

***BROOMCK** ENTERS CARRYING A BUNCH OF FLOWERS*

BROOMCK. I'm back, Mum.

MOTHER. (SUDDENLY) Grandma!

BROOMCK. Alright, I'm back Grandma. Bit sudden isn't it? What's Airinck done now?

MOTHER. Red Riding Hood... woods... Grandma. Put them together and what do you get...?

BROOMCK. Er... red woods with a granny knot?

MOTHER. The Wolf! She'll be his next target, I'm sure of it, only he's so sneaky it would be just like him to snatch her somewhere other than the woods. The hospital!

BROOMCK. What?

MOTHER. Come on, I'll explain as we go. If I'm right we could have the Wolf locked up before tea.

BROOMCK. But I was just going to press these wild flowers.

MOTHER. Bring them with you. They'll help us get into the hospital. Come on!

THEY BOTH EXIT

*TABS OPEN TO A GENERAL ALL-PURPOSE AREA IN NURSERY HOSPITAL. SIMPLE CHARTS, ETC. ON THE BLOCKS INDICATE WHERE WE ARE. **RED RIDING HOOD** ENTERS, ACCOMPANIED BY THE **WOLF** AND **CAT**. THE **CAT** APPEARS TO BE CRYING INTO A LARGE SPOTTED HANDKERCHIEF. THE **WOLF** IS WEARING GLASSES AND THE DOG COLLAR OF A VICAR*

RED. (*COMFORTING **CAT***) There, there. You must be strong. It is possible that the hit and run victim we had bought in is not your brother and he could still turn up fit and well.

CAT. (*BLOWING NOSE*) I just fear the worst, that's all. Little Bobby's been missing for three days now. I just know something dreadful has happened.

RED. Well, we'll soon know. If you'd like to wait here I'll go and fetch the body.

CAT. Thank you, thank you. You're most kind

***CAT** DABS EYES AND SNIFFS AS **RED** EXITS*

WOLF. Alright, Sir John, there's no need to overdo it. This is a hospital theatre, not the National Theatre.

CAT. Oh come on, Boss. I thought it was purr-fect, and credit where credit's due. After hearing about that road accident on the radio, and how the cat hadn't been identified, what better pretext for gaining access to a nice quiet area of the Hospital and getting that Red Riding Hood alone. (*BLOWS NOSE*)

WOLF. Alright, alright. Just don't blow it. Have you got the chloroform?

***CAT** TAKES A SMALL PHIAL FROM HIS COAT*

CAT. Check.

WOLF. Good. Now when she returns I'll engage her in conversation, you chloroform her and we'll whisk her out of the building. Couldn't be simpler. Now get ready!

CAT. Right, Boss.

WOLF. *(POINTING TO COLLAR)* Reverend!

CAT. Sorry. Right, Reverend.

RED RETURNS PUSHING A TROLLEY, ON TOP OF WHICH IS A BODY COVERED BY A WHITE SHEET

RED. Are you sure you feel up to this?

CAT. *(DRAMATICALLY)* Yes. I must know for sure.

RED. Very well then. *(PULLS BACK ONE END OF THE SHEET REVEALING A PAIR OF FEET)* Is this him?

CAT. It's difficult to say. I never saw him in size 6 cerise stiletto slingbacks before.

RED. *(COVERING UP THE FEET, EMBARRASSED)* Sorry, wrong end.

RED LIFTS UP THE OTHER END OF THE SHEET AND REVEALS THE VILLAGER WHO PROMPTLY SITS UP AND WAVES AT THE AUDIENCE. RED PUSHES THE VILLAGER BACK DOWN ON THE TROLLEY AND KEEPS HER HAND ON THE VILLAGERS SHOULDER.

CAT. No, it's not him. He doesn't wear glasses.

THE WOLF PUTS HIS ARM ON RED'S SHOULDER AND DRAWS HER ATTENTION AWAY FROM THE CAT. DURING THE FOLLOWING THE CAT PREPARES THE HANDKERCHIEF WITH CHLOROFORM, REPLACES THE BOTTLE IN HIS POCKET AND SNEAKS UP BEHIND RED WITH HIS HAND RAISED TO CUP THE HANDKERCHIEF OVER HER MOUTH

WOLF. Tel me, Nurse... eh, what was your name again?

RED. Riding Hood.

WOLF. Of course. Riding Hood. How quaint. You're no relation to the Berkshire Riding Hoods are you?

RED. I don't think so.

WOLF. Oh. No, I just wondered if perhaps you had any other cats in the hospital. Perhaps one suffering from amnesia, who might just be the missing brother.

RED. Sorry, Vicar, I can't help you any further. We have no other cats in the hospital at the moment.

*JUST AS THE **CAT** IS ABOUT TO POUNCE, THE **VILLAGER** SITS UP, RAISING A PROTEST SIGN AT THE SAME TIME. THE EFFECT OF THIS IS TO CATCH THE **CAT** WITH HIS HAND IN FRONT OF HIS FACE. **RED** PUSHES THE **VILLAGER** BACK DOWN AND COVERS HER UP. THE **CAT** CAN BE SEEN WITH THE HANDKERCHIEF OVER HIS NOSE, SWAYING TO AND FRO. THE **WOLF** QUICKLY TAKES THE HANDKERCHIEF FROM HIM*

RED. Are you alright?

CAT. (STILL TOTTERING) Fine.

RED. Good. I'll be back in a moment.

***RED** WHEELS THE TROLLEY OUT*

WOLF. I can't rely on you to do anything can I. Now we'll have to try again when she returns.

CAT. (DAZED) When who returns?

*THE **WOLF** SHAKES HIS HEAD. THERE IS A LOUD CRASH FROM OFF STAGE AND A WOMAN'S SCREAM. **RED** RETURNS, RUBBING HER HANDS TOGETHER*

RED. Well, that takes care of that little problem. Now I suppose I'd...

***RED** PAUSES AS **BROOMCK** DASHES IN CARRYING A BUNCH OF FLOWERS. MEANWHILE THE **CAT** IS PREPARING THE HANDKERCHIEF ONCE MORE*

RED. Oh, hello. Can I help you?

BROOMCK. Eh, yes, you probably can. I was looking for the... the geriatric ward. I'm visiting my Aunty. She's sick.

RED. What's her name? I can probably tell you where she is?

BROOMCK. Her name? Um, her name... escapes me... (SUDDENLY) Houdini!

ALL. Houdini?

BROOMCK. Yes. Ethel Houdini. She got stuck in a milk churn.

RED. What was she doing in a milk churn?

BROOMCK. Trying to get out of course. Being underwater didn't help. It rusted the lock on the straitjacket.

RED. I don't recall anyone like that coming in.

BROOMCK. Oh. Well, looks like she did it again. Game old bird. 79 next birthday and still doing her one woman show. Well, looks as though I won't be needing these after all. Here, you take them Vicar. I'm sure you can find someone who'd appreciate them.

WOLF. (*TAKING THE FLOWERS*) Thank you, my son. A touching gesture. I will find a deserving recipient for them.

BROOMCK. I'll be off then. Thanks for your help. Bye. (*EXITS*)

WOLF. In more ways than one.
THE WOLF PUTS HIS HAND, THE ONE WITH THE FLOWERS, ON RED'S SHOULDER. WITH RED DISTRACTED, THE CAT BEGINS TO SNEAK UP AGAIN BUT WHEN HE GETS CLOSE HE GETS A FACE FULL OF FLOWERS

WOLF. Tell me, my child, as it is my first visit to your wonderful hospital, I wonder if you could direct me to the little boy's room.

RED. Oh Vicar, of course. You go along this corridor, turn left, up the first flight of stairs, second right and...

THE CAT HAS BEEN BUILDING UP A SNEEZE AND FINALLY HAS TO SUCCUMB IN A VERY LOUD FASHION

RED. (*MOMENTARILY STARTLED*) Bless you.

WOLF. I do believe that's my line.

CAT. Sorry. (*WIPES HIS NOSE ON THE HANDKERCHIEF*) I must be allergic to... (*PASSES OUT ON THE FLOOR*)

WOLF. (*REVERTING TO NORMAL*) You miserable moggie, I ought to wring... (*NOTICES RED AND BECOMES THE VICAR AGAIN*) to ring for a doctor I think.

RED. Don't worry, I'll go and fetch some help. Don't move him, I'll be right back.

WOLF. (*LOOKING ROUND FOR A SUITABLE METHOD OF REVIVAL*) Why do I bother? The most awesome villain Nursery has ever encountered and I'm saddled with an incompetent cat and Tom Tom the Piper's son, who makes Simple Simon look like a candidate for Mastermind.

*HE LOCATES A SPECIMEN BOTTLE AND PROCEEDS TO THROW THE CONTENTS OVER THE **CAT'S** FACE. THE **CAT** IMMEDIATELY BEGINS TO COME ROUND*

CAT. (*STILL DELIRIOUS*) Whoa, we're taking on water. Man the lifeboat, abandon ship!

WOLF. (*HELPING THE **CAT** TO HIS FEET*) Come on, let's get out of here. (*STARTS TO DRAG THE **CAT** OUT*)

CAT. The Owl. Where's the Owl? Such an elegant fowl. So very gentle. (*RUBS HIS TUMMY*) And so tender.

*THE **WOLF** AND **CAT** EXIT. **BROOMCK** AND **MOTHER HUBBARD** DASH IN, DRESSED IN SURGICAL GOWNS, CAPS AND MASKS*

BROOMCK. (*LOOKING ROUND*) They've gone.

MOTHER. (*TO AUDIENCE*) Hello, boys and girls. (*RESPONSE*) No, they're still here.

BROOMCK. It was them, the Wolf and the Cat. The Wolf was wearing a dog collar.

MOTHER. What a poser! It's only because he wants the lead.

BROOMCK. If they've gone, then there's no point in staying here. We'd better get these gowns off. If we're caught down here...

***RED** DASHES IN. **BROOMCK** PUTS A HAND UP TO HIS FACE*

RED. Ah, Doctor Rubber, you're back.

MOTHER. (*RUBBING HER BACK AND MIMICKING AN ITALIAN ACCENT*) Ah, that's a better.

RED. I'm surprised to see you Doctor Rubber. I thought you were on sick leave.

MOTHER. I just bounced back.

RED. Well I'm glad it's you, Doctor. There's an emergency case being brought down. You'll have to operate straight away.

MOTHER. Oh I don't know, I haven't really been keeping my hand in while I've been ill.

RED. You're the only one who can save him.

MOTHER. But what about my musicians?

RED. You're musicians?

MOTHER. I don't know if I can hold myself together without my rubber band. Oh, well, I suppose I can do it at a stretch.

RED. Do you need a scrubber?

MOTHER. I beg your pardon?

RED. To scrub your hands.

MOTHER. No, thank you. I'll go with these ones.

RED. But it's not very hygienic working with a dog under your arm surely?

MOTHER. Oh, how silly. (*PUTTING SPOT ON THE FLOOR*) There. Now, stay, there's a good boy. Can't say I'm not clean now. I'm spotless!

OFFSTAGE WE HEAR SOMEONE IMITATING A SIREN

RED. Here they come. Fetch the drip.

MOTHER. (*CALLING TO **BROOMCK***) Come here, you're wanted.

RED. No, the drip over there.

***MOTHER HUBBARD** GOES TO FETCH THE DRIP, WHICH IS A MILK BOTTLE, TURNED UPSIDE DOWN, ON A STAND. **MARGE** PUSHES IN A TROLLEY ON WHICH **HUMPTY DUMPTY** IS LAID. ALL THIS IS ACCOMPANIED BY THE "DR KILDARE" THEME WITH PAUSES IN THE ACTION ON MUSIC BREAKS*

MARGE. (*TO **RED***) What a carry on. No wonder hospital waiting lists are growing if you have to wait for the music each time. Oh, before I forget, there's a message from the front desk. The anesthetist hasn't turned up.

RED. What about Doctor Coma?

MARGE. He can't come round. I mean, I would do the job myself but it's not in my contract with Helping Hands, and anyway I must dash 'cause I've got to do a stint on the Municipal buses. See you Thursday. Bye. (*EXITS*)

RED. We can't operate without an anesthetist.

MOTHER. Then what a stroke of good fortune my friend Doctor Brahms Lullaby is here. He is a wiz with the gas. A knockout anesthetist!

RED. Then let's go.

BROOMCK. (*STARTING TO LEAVE*) Good idea!

MOTHER. (*HAULING HIM BACK*) Come back here. Right. Let the dog see the bone. (*UNCOVERS THE SHEET TO REVEAL **HUMPTY DUMPTY***) Ah, how thoughtful, breakfast!

RED. This is the patient, Doctor. (*CONSULTS NOTES*) Humpty Dumpty. Male, builder and all round good egg. He was laid 27 years ago.

MOTHER. No comment. What's he got? Salmonella?

RED. No, he fell off a wall. He was found by a troop of the King's men.

HUMPTY. (*SITTING UP, DELIRIOUS*) The soldiers. Where are my egg soldiers?

BROOMCK. Anesthetic.

MOTHER. (*HANDING **BROOMCK** THE ROLLING PIN*) Anesthetic.

BROOMCK RAPS HUMPTY OVER THE HEAD. HUMPTY COLLAPSES

RED. The patients delirious.

MOTHER. I just think he's a little cracked. Did he slip off the wall or was he pushed?

RED. It was the wind. He blew off.

MOTHER. Well, that's eggs for you.

THERE IS A PAUSE FOR A CURSORY EXAMINATION INCLUDING TAPPING WITH A TEASPOON

BROOMCK. What do you make of him?

MOTHER. I must say I'm torn between a soufflé and an omelette.

RED. Can you save him?

MOTHER. I don't think he'll keep. However, time to go to work on an egg. Scalpel!

RED. (*HANDING OVER SCALPEL*) Scalpel.

MOTHER. (*SINGING*) We're going well. We're going well. We're going well on shell, shell, shell! Take his temperature.

RED. (*POPPING IN THERMOMETER*) 100 degrees! He's boiling!

MOTHER. (*PRODUCING AN EGG TIMER*) Marvellous. Another 3¹/₂ minutes and he'll be done nicely.

RED. I think that head wound needs covering.

MOTHER. Good idea. (*TAKES OUT A LARGE WOOLEN HAT AND PLACES IT ON HUMPTY'S HEAD*) There. That's cosy. Forceps!

RED. (*HANDING THEM OVER*) Forceps.

MOTHER. Forceps, five-ceps... (*TICKLES HUMPTY*) tickly under there.

HUMPTY SITS UP GIGGLING

MOTHER. Anesthetic.

BROOMCK. (*ADMINISTERING THE ANESTETIC*) An another stethic!

MOTHER. Nurse, I think you'd better have the police wait outside.

RED. What on earth for?

MOTHER. Cardiac arrest! But don't worry; I think I have the solution. I'll extract all the yoke; he should be all white then. The again, I'm no eggspert.

MARGE ENTERS AND WAVES AT RED

MARGE. Yoo-hoo. Hope I'm not interrupting anything, only I've just remembered there was a telephone call for you from a Doctor Rubber. He said you could start re-scheduling operations from tomorrow as he'd be back off sick leave first thing in the morning. Bye. (*EXITS*)

RED. Wait a minute. There's something funny going on here.

MOTHER. I know. Even the patients in stitches.

RED. If Doctor Rubber is still at home... who are you?

MOTHER. Doctor Blubber.

RED. Doctor Blubber? Never heard of you. Where are you from?

MOTHER. Wales.

RED. And what's your specialised subject?

MOTHER. The sex life of the orang-u-tang.

RED. Just a minute.

MOTHER. Oh no, much longer than that.

RED. You're not a Doctor at all. Who are you?

MOTHER. Alright. I'm Mother Hubbard, Private Investigator.

RED. (*TO BROOMCK*) And who are you?

BROOMCK. Her son, Broomck.

SCOOP EMERGES FROM UNDER THE TROLLEY

SCOOP. Do you spell that with two k's?

ALL. Who are you?

SCOOP. Scoop Daley, Nursery Times. And what an exclusive! Humpty Has The Hots For Hoaxer Hubbard! Says happy Humpty, "She got inside my tough exterior".

MOTHER. You can't print that!

SCOOP. Why? Have I missed something out?

MOTHER. Yes, the truth.

SCOOP. That's where you're wrong. It's exactly how it happened. Now, I must be off. Oh, by the way. (*TO RED*) You don't fancy doing a naughty nurse feature for page 3 do you?

RED. Certainly not! Get out of here!

SCOOP. Just thought I'd ask. Never mind. It'll have to be Little Miss Muffett, eating her curds and wha-hay!! (*EXITS*)

RED. What on earth is going on here?

HUMPTY. (*SITTING UP*) That's what I want to know.

BROOMCK. (*HITTING HIM ON THE HEAD*) Oh, shhh!

HUMPTY. (*GRABBING THE ROLLING PIN AND HITTING **BROOMCK***) Oh shhh yourself! I'm not staying here. Phoney doctors, hidden reporters... call this place a hospital? Well you won't catch me back here again. Next time I'm off the wall I'm going private!! (*EXITS*)

BROOMCK. Phew! What's that funny smell?

MOTHER. I think the eggs just gone off!

TABS

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

ANNOUNCER. (VO) Ladies and Gentlemen, can I just have your attention for a moment. I do have a correction to my earlier announcement. Our special guest this evening, Mr Bernie Thorpestein, tells me that his next production will be Shakesperian, and not musical. We do apologise for any misunderstanding.

TABS OPEN TO REVEAL THE BIG BAD WOLF'S LAIR. IT'S SITUATED UNDERGROUND AND THE EFFECT IS DARK AND FOREBODING – A GROTTO WITH VARIOUS CAVES LEADING OFF. THE FAIRY HAS BEEN MANACLED AND IS SITTING DOWN UPSTAGE. THE CAT IS STIRRING A LARGE COOKING POT DOWN CENTRE AND, FOLLOWING A RECIPE BOOK, ALTERNATELY STIRRING AND DROPPING IN INGREDIENTS. THE CAVERN IS LIT BY AN EEIRE GLOW AND THE STIRRING IS PUNCTATED BY CLAPS OF THUNDER AND FLASHES OF LIGHTNING

CAT. Hubble, bubble, toilet trouble! In the cauldron boil and bubble! Eye of newt and skin of toad! Remains of hedgehog in the road!

THE WOLF EMERGES FROM HIS LAIR

WOLF. For goodness sake turn that racket off! I can't hear myself plot!

THE CAT FLICKS A COUPLE OF SWITCHES ON THE WALL AND THE GREEN GLOW DISAPPEARS, AS DO THE THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

CAT. Sorry Boss. Just thought I'd give the place a little atmosphere.

WOLF. Did I hear you say "eye of newt"?

CAT. It was all I could get on the housekeeping, Boss. Anyway, it'll see you through the week.

THE WOLF EXITS, SHAKING HIS HEAD. THE CAT DIPS A PAW IN THE POT AND LICKS IT TO TASTE. HE THEN GIVES A "SO-SO" GESTURE. LOOKING ROUND HE SPOTS WHAT HE WANTS, MOVES OVER TO IT, PICKS UP AN ARM, RETURNS TO THE POT AND DROPS IT IN

FAIRY. (DISGUSTED) Ugh! Why did you put that in?

CAT. (STIRRING) Mmmm. Gives it a bit of body. Anyway, the Boss gets very upset if tea time comes along and there's no 'arm done. And at the end of the meal when he pushes his plate away with the immortal words "Who do I have to thank for this fabulous repast?" I shall answer quite modestly, "Well Boss, I did have a hand in it".

FAIRY. You're disgusting.

CAT. (*BOWING TO HER*) One does ones best.

FAIRY. (*HOLDING A PLATE FULL OF GREENS*) And so is this muck. I hate spinach.

CAT. Look, eat it up and stop complaining. Any more lip from you and I'll pop you in the blender and we'll make our own Fairy liquid.

FAIRY. You think you're so clever. You'll be laughing on the other side of your whiskers when I get out of here. I am bustin' out, you know.

CAT. In that outfit, I wouldn't be at all surprised. No, you're not going anywhere, and don't rely on anyone else coming to the rescue either. They could never find this place. We are hidden two hundred feet below Nursery. Located in a huge maze of twisting passages and underground caverns. No-one could find it. Not in a million years.

AT THIS POINT THE **VILLAGER** ENTERS WEARING AN OFFICIAL GUIDE BADGE AND LEADING A SMALL GROUP OF **TOURISTS**, WHO ARE CARRYING CAMERAS AND STUDYING GUIDE BOOKS, ETC.

VILLAGER. This way please. Do try to keep together here, it's very easy to get lost in these caverns. We are in fact standing in the largest cavern of it's kind in Nursery, known affectionately to the locals as Nookie Hole. We think this is probably a natural cave formation, rather than a man-made excavation, and it dates from the Early Plasticine Period. It is currently being used as a secret lair by the Big Bad Wolf and it is from here that he plans most of his nefarious deeds. Can I please ask you not to feed the cat. Right, if you'll follow me, we'll head back to the coach and then on to our next stop, The Gingerbread House, for a cup of tea and a slice of front porch. (*EXITS LEADING PARTY*)

CAT. As I was saying, no-one sill ever find you here.

*THE **WOLF** ENTERS CARRYING THE WAND AND HOLDING A LARGE BOOK*

WOLF. I have it! This time I have it!

CAT. It's not contagious is it, Boss?

WOLF. The wand, you feline fool. The secret is finally mine! Don't you understand? I have the power of the Ancients!

CAT. I've got some Alka-seltzer in the bathroom.

WOLF. No you idiot! I have discovered how to manipulate the power of the Fairy's wand.

FAIRY. (*ALARMED*) No, you can't have. The wand can only be used for the power of good! It immediately senses the aura of the person holding it and will only operate successfully if it detects good vibrations. At least, that's what the guarantee says.

WOLF. So you thought, until now. By studying the works of the great Masters of mysticism I have learned enough to overcome any built in safeguards the wand possesses. You are indeed privileged, for you will be the first to witness the next, and most awesome, phase of my campaign of terror. Cat, hold the book open in front of me.

THE CAT HOLDS UP THE OPEN BOOK. THE WOLF HOLDS THE WAND TWO-HANDED ABOVE HIS HEAD. AS HE SPEAKS THE GENERAL LIGHTING DIMS AND HE IS LEFT FOCUSED IN THE EEIRE GREEN GLOW

WOLF. First, the mystic incantation. (*DRAMATIC PAUSE*) There was a young lady from Frettenham... the next page, you moron! (*THE CAT TURNS THE PAGE*)

Forces culled from the dark within,
Summon forth to charge the wand,
Surging then through every sinew,
Magic power at my command

Now my supreme moment of glory. The power of Good transformed into that of evil.
NURSERY IS DOOMED!!

THE WAND BURSTS INTO FLAME, THE WOLF HOWLS AND BLOWS ON HIS FINGERS

WOLF. Ah, ooh, ooh, oh blast that's hot! (*TO THE FAIRY*) Don't you dare open your mouth. One little hint of "I told you so" and you'll find out first hand how Fairies get on top of the Christmas tree. Mark my words. The power of the wand will be mine. It's just a matter of time.

CAT. What went wrong, Boss?

WOLF. I don't know. I was following the book to the letter. It should have worked.

CAT. What, this book?

WOLF. Yes. The Paul Daniels Compendium of 53 Best Party Tricks.

CAT. Oh. Should have worked then.

WOLF. I'll try again later. Meanwhile, there is still Red Riding Hood to deal with. After that fiasco at the hospital I shall have to revert to my original plan and intercept her in the woods.

TOM TOM ENTERS WITH SHOPPING BAG

TOM TOM. Oh, hiya, Boss. I'm back.

WOLF. So I see. And have you bought recruits to my personal army as I asked you?

TOM TOM. Er, well, Boss, it's not that easy.

WOLF. Not that easy? The task I set you was so simple. Go out and bring me the most evil, fearsome and violent bunch of wrongdoers ever to be assembled in Nursery. So where are they?

TOM TOM. They're a bit hard to find, Boss.

WOLF. But surely there must be someone out there with a criminal record?

TOM TOM. I didn't know how to contact Kylie Minogue. However, my Aunt Edie promised she'd think about it.

WOLF. Your Aunt Edie?

TOM TOM. Yes. She's having to lie low at the moment until she's sure the fuss has died down.

WOLF. Who's after her?

TOM TOM. The people from the library. She's got a Hammond Innes that's three weeks overdue.

WOLF. And that's the best you can do? One frail old biddy who's late with her library book?

TOM TOM. But there's so many nice people in Nursery.

WOLF. (*GRABBING TOM TOM BY THE THROAT*) But I don't want nice people. I hate and despise nice people. I want those that are evil and corrupt; bandits, brigands, cut-throats, thugs, hooligans, renegades, terrorists, mercenaries and murderers! The scum of the Earth!

TOM TOM. (*THOUGHTFUL PAUSE*) So you don't want Aunty Edie then?

WOLF. No, I don't want Aunty Edie then!

TOM TOM. She'll be very disappointed. She was looking forward to a bit of mayhem and gratuitous violence. The Knitting Circle and Whist Drives don't offer her the same sort of "buzz".

WOLF. Picture it, if you can. Aunt Edie, going off on an errand for me. (*MIMICKING AUNT EDIE*) Could the Wolf please have the protection money, if it's not too much trouble, otherwise I'm going to have to knit you a pullover. (*AS HIMSELF*) Doesn't quite have the same ring as "...otherwise I'll nail you to the television set!"

TOM TOM. I'll tell her she's first reserve then. Lessen the blow.

WOLF. So that's it is it? The sum total of your efforts today.

TOM TOM. Not quite, Boss. I couldn't find any drug runners, or any gun runners but... (*PRODUCING SOMETHING OUT OF THE BAG*) ...viola!

WOLF. What's that?

TOM TOM. Curtain runners!

WOLF. I think I am going to do something very unpleasant, and most certainly painful, to you right now.

TOM TOM. Oh, right-o then. Just hang on a minute while I fetch your wheels.

WOLF. Wheels?

TOM TOM. For the get-away.

TOM TOM EXITS AND RETURNS RIDING A BICYCLE

CAT. Oh look, we do have a new recruit. It's a dope peddler.

TOM TOM. Bit tasty, eh, Boss?

WOLF. I don't believe it.

TOM TOM. I thought you'd be staggered. Do nought to sixty in then minutes this... well, downhill, with a following wind.

CAT. You won't catch me on that.

TOM TOM. That's the idea, isn't it. We'll be too quick for them. I'll work on it in your lair, Boss. Soup it up a bit.

TOM TOM STARTS TO LEAVE THEN PAUSES BY THE COOKING POT

TOM TOM. Talking of soup, how's my boxers doing? (*LIFTS OUT A PAIR OF BOXER SHORTS*)
Mmm. Just a bit more.

TOM TOM PUTS THEM BACK AND EXITS WITH THE BIKE

WOLF. I think I'll just have the Bernard Matthews' Sweet and Sour Turkey Giblets for dinner.
(*EXITS TO LAIR*)

CAT. *(THROWING STIRRER IN THE POT)* I don't know why I bother. It's pointless trying some Nouveau Cuisine down here. It's never appreciated. Oh, blow it! I think I'll go and torment the goldfish.

*THE **CAT** EXITS. THE **FAIRY** NOTICES THE WAND ON THE FLOOR, BUT NO MATTER HOW HARD SHE STRETCHES, SHE CANNOT REACH IT. THEN SHE LOOKS AT THE PLATE AND LIFTS IT UP.*

FAIRY. I wonder.

*SHE EATS A MOUTHFUL OF SPINACH. A QUICK BURST OF THE POPEYE THEME AND SHE FLEXES HER MUSCLES. SHE THEN GRABS THE MANACLE AND PULLS. THE FLAT MOVES AS SHE PULLS UNTIL SHE CAN REACH THE WAND. SHE GRABS HOLD OF IT. THE **CAT** ENTERS RAWING A GOLDFISH BOWL.*

CAT. Come on, Arnold, walkies. There's a good boy.

FAIRY. *(HOLDING THE WAND LIKE A GUN)* Freeze, fur brain!

CAT. Sorry, are you talking to me or Arnold?

FAIRY. Quiet. I told you I was getting out of here.

CAT. Aren't you overlooking something?

FAIRY. Chains can't hold me. I have the wand. *(WAVING THE WAND AT HER FEET)* Phoney Maroney, it's only Baloney.

*THE RING, WHERE THE CHAIN IS ATTACHED TO THE WALL, DROPS TO THE GROUND. THE **FAIRY** CAN WALK AROUND NOW BUT STILL WITH A LENGTH OF CHAIN ATTACHED.*

FAIRY. Ah well. Near enough. *(WALKING ROUND TO THE ENTRANCE OF THE LAIR, POINTING THE WAND AT THE **CAT**)* Now, unless you want to be turned into a sprinkling of fish food, I suggest you escort me out of here.

WOLF. (OFF) Tom Tom, look at thios back wheel. How can we use it at all with a flat tyre?

TOM TOM. (OFF) Sorry, Boss, I hadn't noticed.

FAIRY. Let's go, while those two are otherwise occupied.

WOLF. (OFF) Well don't just stand there. Blow it up!

TOM TOM. Oh, righto, Boss.

CAT AND THE FAIRY ARE MOVING TOWARDS THE OPPOSITE EXIT WHEN THERE IS AN EXPLOSION FROM THE LAIR AND A LOT OF SMOKE. THE FAIRY TURNS ROUND AND AS SHE DOES SO THE CAT SEIZES THE WAND. A BICYCLE WHEEL ROLLS OUT OF THE LAIR AND THERE IS THE SOUND OF COUGHING FROM WITHIN. TOM TOM RUSHES OUT WITH A BLACKENED FACE AND DISHEVELLED CLOTHING, PATTING HIS BODY WHERE IT IS BURNING.

TOM TOM. Water! Water!

HE SEES THE GOLDFISH BOWL, SNATCHES IT, THROWS ARNOLD ONTO THE FLOOR, AND BEGINS TO SPLASH HIMSELF WITH THE WATER, UTTERING THE OCCASIONAL "Oh!" AND "Ow!"

WOLF. (OFF) Tom Tom, you gormless halfwit!!

THE WOLF RUSHES IN. MOST OF HIS GARMENTS ARE IN TATTERS BUT WE CAN SEE CLEARLY THAT HE IS WEARING A SUSPENDER BELT AND FISH NET STOCKINGS UNDER NEATH THE SHREDDED REMAINS OF HIS TROUSERS. AS HE DASHES IN, HE STEPS ON ARNOLD, LOSES HIS BALANCE AND FALLS OVER. TOM TOM RUSHES TO HELP HIM UP BUT HE BRUSHES THE HELP ASIDE. AS HE STANDS UP HE REALISES THAT ALL THREE ARE STARING AT HIM AND HE REALSIES HIS UNDERGARMENT SECRET IS OUT

WOLF. (BACKING OFF INTO HIS LAIR) Not a word from any of you. Not one syllable. Any mention of this and I'll see you suffer. Understood?

ALL THREE NOD VIGOROUSLY AS HE EXITS

CAT. (POINTING THE WAND AT THE FAIRY) Right, Twinkletoes. Let's have you back where you belong.

HE PRODS HER TOAWRDS THE BACK WALL. HE PUTS THE CHAIN IN POSITION AT THE FOOT OF THE WALL THEN STEPS BACK. HE WAVES THE WAND

CAT. Don't be downhearted. You're back where you started.

THE CHAIN RISES AND ATTACHES ITSELF TO THE WALL IN ITS ORIGINAL POSITION

FAIRY. How did you do that?

CAT. The Wolf's not the only one who studies Paul Daniels. (TO TOM TOM). You had better make yourself scarce for the next few hours. The less he sees of you the better.

TOM TOM. Good ideas. You don't think I ought to tell him he had a hole in his stocking? (**CAT SHAKES HIS HEAD**) Right. See you later.

TOM TOM EXITS. THE CAT PICKS ARNOLD OFF THE FLOOR

CAT. Poor little Arnold. He was always so happy-go-lucky, so full of life. I'll miss taking him for walks. Changing his water for gin on April Fools Day. The stimulating discussions on World Affairs. Ah well, waste not want not.

THE CAT DROPS ARNOLD INTO HIS MOUTH AND RUBS HIS TUM AS THE TABS CLOSE

TWEEDLE ENTERS FRONT OF STAGE, SINGING NERVOUSLY AS HE CROSSES THE STAGE

TWEEDLE. Who's afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?

FROM BEHIND THE TABS COMES A LOUD "MOO"

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Was that you?
(DUM) Certainly not.
(DEE) Only you had that chicken curry lunchtime.
(DUM) It wasn't me.

THERE IS ANOTHER LOUD "MOO"

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Well it certainly isn't me.
(DUM) You don't think it's the W.O.L.F. do you?
(DEE) Bteer not take any chances, eh? Let's split!
(DUM) That could prove interesting.

SUDDENLY DAISY POKES HER HEAD THROUGH THE CURTAIN ABOUT 10 TO 15 FEET UP. SHE UTTERS ANOTHER "MOO".

TWEEDLE LOOKS UP

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh, it's Daisy the Cow. Hi!
(DUM) She certainly looks it.
(DEE) What's she doing up there?

A LONG "MOO"

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Trying to get down.
(DEE) Well let's see if we can find a way round the back and help her,
(DUM) That's a good idea,

TWEEDLE EXITS ROUND THE BACK OF THE TABS. SUDDENLY THE TABS BEGIN TO MOVE AS THEY ARE LEANED ON BY SOMEONE BACKSTAGE

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (OFF) We're getting there. The bushes are very thick here. Pass me that stick. That's it. I'll just poke around for a moment.

THE TABS ARE PRODDED ONCE OR TWICE FROM BEHIND. THEN **DAISY** LETS OUT A PAINED "MOO" – HER EYES WATERING IF AT ALL POSSIBLE

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (OFF) I've found her.
(DUM) (OFF) See if you can pull her out.
(DEE) (OFF) Hold on. I've got her tail.

ANOTHER SURPRISED "MOO". WE HEAR CRIES OF "TAKE THE STRAIN. PULL". AFTER MUCH EFFORT BACKSTAGE **TWEEDLE** ENTERS PULLING THE TAIL END. WE CAN JUST SEE THE REAR END OF **DAISY** APPEAR. THE HEAD IS "MOOING" FRANTICALLY

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (LOOKING AT THE HEAD, THEN AT THE TAIL) I think this might be stretching things too far.

TWEEDLE UTTERS A "WHOA!" AS THE BODY IS WHIPPED OFF STAGE. MORE PUSHING OF THE TABS

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (OFF) Hang about.

DAISY MOOS

TWEEDLE. (DUM) (OFF) I don't think she can do anything else.
(DEE) (OFF) Let me climb up here and see if I can free her from above.

THE TABS ARE PUSHED AS THOUGH SOMEONE IS CLIMBING AGAINST THEM

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (OFF) Yes, I think I can see the problem. If I can just break this branch here...

THERE IS A CRY, A MOO, **DAISY'S** HEAD DISAPPEARS, AND A LOT OF CRASHING ABOUT. AFTER A MOMENT...

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (OFF) She's down. There. I thin we deserve a pat on the back.
(DUM) (OFF) I hate to say this but I think we've just got one... urrghh!

A MOMENT LATER **TWEEDLE** STAGGERS ON

TWEEDLE. (DEE) I think I've done some damage.
(DUM) Well if you have there's no way I've escaped unscathed.

**DAISY STAGGERS ON FROM THE OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STAGE,
LEGS A-KIMBO**

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Is this a stagger I see before me.
(DUM) I tell you what, I've built up a thirst with all that effort and they do say that Daisy produces a great pinta.
(DEE) Good idea. Come on Daisy, what do you say? How about a pint of gold top?

DAISY UTTERS A DESPAIRING "MOO" AND TRUNDLES OFF

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh come on Dais, you owe us. Just a pint. (EXITS)

**THE TABS OPEN JUST WIDE ENOUGH TO REVEAL THE TREE IN
THE BRANCHES OF WHICH REST TWO MICROPHONES. AIRINCK
ENTERS, STANDS DOWNSTAGE AND CHECKS HIS WATCH.
SUDDENLY HE CATCHES SIGHT OF RED ENTERING VIA THE
AUDIENCE. HE WAVES AND SHE ACKNOWLEDGES. SHE IS
CARRYING A BASKET LADEN WITH GOODIES. AS SHE REACHES
THE STAGE SHE DROPS A BOX**

RED. (PICKING IT UP) Oh dear, the cheesecake.

AIRINCK. YOU MADE IT THEN.

RED. (LOOKING AT THE BOX) No, it's Marks and Spencers.

AIRINCK. Goodies for Grandma, eh?

RED. She doesn't get out much, bless her, not at her age. The annual run to the Isle of Man TT, when she can get the bike started. The occasional Acid House party. She shouldn't be living on her own in that house, it's far too big for her. She does have a lady who comes in to clean, and the family take turns to bring her groceries, but we all think she'd be happier living closer to us in a smaller house and, preferably, one that wasn't haunted.

AIRINCK. Haunted?

RED. Yes, she lives in Shockham Hall. Do you know it?

AIRINCK. What that huge grey mansion in the middle of the woods, with the turrets and spires, and the eerie glow at night, and the flashes of lightning?

RED. Yes, that's it.

AIRINCK. No, don't think I do. Don't think I want to either.

RED. You're not scared, are you?

AIRINCK. Who me? Scared? Petrified!

RED. No need to be. It's quite a nice house really.

AIRINCK. Don't you get frightened?

RED. No. Not when I've got my friends to look after me.

AIRINCK. What friends?

RED. (INDICATING THE AUDIENCE) Our visitors.

AIRINCK. The tourists? Unauthorised personnel mustn't talk to the Tourists. They could turn nasty.

RED. Nonsense. They're friendly, I can tell. (TO AUDIENCE) Hello, Boys and Girls. (RESPONSE) Oh dear. Maybe your right.

AIRINCK. Of course I am. They're more trouble than they're worth. I don't know why they're allowed in,

RED. We need the money.

AIRINCK. Not that badly. They're always so argumentative. Look, I'll show you. (TO THE AUDIENCE) You're the ugliest bunch of Tourists we've seen this week. (RESPONSE) Oh yes you are! (RESPONSE) (TO RED) See? They'll happily keep that up all night if you let them. And they keep seeing things behind your back and shouting "Behind you!" every five minutes. I think they're all daft, personally.

RED. I'm sure they're not as bad as that. If I could just spend a few minutes with them.

AIRINCK. (HANDING HER A BERET) Put this on.

RED. A Guides hat. (PUTTING IT ON) Are you with the Official Guides?

AIRINCK. No, the Girl Guides. I'm not daft.

A MUSICAL INTRO STARTS AND RED MOVES TO THE TREE

AIRINCK. Can you hear music?

RED. (TAKING A MICROPHONE AND HANDING ONE TO AIRINCK) Music, microphones, a ready-made audience and romance in the air. I think that's a cue for a song, don't you?

AIRINCK. Oh, right! (BURSTING INTO "EN ROUTIE TUITIE FRUITIE") Wop Bop A Loo Bop A Wop Lam Bam...

RED. (*PICKING UP THE ROCK AND THROWING IT AT HIM*) No, no, no! Something lighter.

AIRINCK. Oh. Not heavy rock. Ballads!

RED. Pardon?

AIRINCK. A romantic love song.

RED. What else? (*TO AUDIENCE*) I'd like to sing a song that's been a favourite of mine for some time now and I hope it's one of your favourites too.

AIRINCK. Bit over-the-top isn't it?

***RED** SINGS HER SONG. HALFWAY THROUGH SMOKE BEGINS TO BILLOW FROM THE TREE. **AIRINCK** TRIES TO MENTION IT TO **RED** BUT SHE CARRIES ON SINGING. **AIRINCK** EXAMINES THE TREE. AS HE DOES SO IT BEGINS TO OPEN. THE TRUNK SLOWLY SWINGS OPEN TO REVEAL THE **WOLF** INSIDE, SURROUNDED BY BRIGHT LIGHT AND SMOKE. THE **WOLF** PRESSES SOMETHING INTO **AIRINCK'S** HAND, WHO IMMEDIATELY BECOMES DICORIENTATED. THE **WOLF** STEPS TO ONE SIDE AND **AIRINCK** STAGGERS INTO THE TREE AS IT CLOSES UP. THE **WOLF** WAITS PATIENTLY FOR **RED** TO FINISH SINGING.*

WOLF. (*CLAPPING POLITELY*) Bravo, my Dear, bravo.

RED. (*STARTLED*) Who are you?

WOLF. Sorry, I didn't mean to startle you. Allow me to introduce myself. I am the Big Bad Wolf, but you can call me... Big.

RED. Wait a minute, I've seen you before. At the hospital. You said you were the Reverend Samuel Tool.

WOLF. Yes, I quite often put on my Tool kit. One of my favourite disguises.

RED. I don't understand.

WOLF. (*HANDING HER A CARD*) I think my card will help explain.

RED. (*READING THE CARD*) Big Bad Wolf Private Investigations. Oh heavens, you're a big dick.

WOLF. Pardon? Oh, I see, yes. Hence the disguise. I often need to travel incognito in my line of work.

RED. Are you working on something at the moment?

WOLF. I am indeed, but hush hush. You understand.

RED. Of course. How exciting.

WOLF. So, what brings you into the woods today?

RED. I'm taking some groceries to my Granny. She lives in Shockham Hall on the other side of the woods. It's quite a walk but I do so enjoy the countryside, and it is beautiful here. I'm very much a conservationist. Our woods and forests are such an important national asset. Don't you agree?

WOLF. Very much so. (GLANCING AT THE TREE) You could say I'm into trees myself.

RED. And so is my friend Airinck, aren't you... oh, where is he?

WOLF. Alas poor Airinck, I knew him well. If he was the young man who was here a moment ago, he had to dash to make a telephone call.

RED. Out here?

WOLF. A truck call I believe. Anyway, he sent his apologies and said he would catch you later.

RED. But he was going to escort me to Granny's.

WOLF. Then may I be permitted that honour? I do have some time to spare and I would be delighted if you would point out the local beauty spots as we go.

RED. That's very kind of you Big. Shall we go?

WOLF. After you my, dear.

*THEY BOTH EXIT. A MOMENT LATER **DAISY** RUNS PAST THE BACK OF THE TREE FOLLOWED BY **TWEEDLE**. THEY RUN PAST BUT **TWEEDLE** LETS **DAISY** GO AND RESTS AGAINST THE TREE, PANTING HEAVILY. SUDDENLY THE TREE BEGINS TO OPEN AND **AIRINCK** EMERGES, DAZED AND UNSTEADY. AT THIS POINT THE ACTION FREEZES WHILE SOMEONE DRESSED AS A **TREE** STEPS FORWARD*

TREE. Ladies, Gentlemen and Twiglets. As we are in the middle of the Rackheath Tree-ennial Festival, which also coincides with European Tree Week, it was felt the occasion should be marked during this production. To that end, there now follows an attempt on the World Record for the number of trees mentioned in a two-minute section of pantomime script. So, if everyone's ready, let the attempt begin!

AIRINCK. A horse, a horse! My kingdom for a horse chestnut.

TWEEDLE. Are yew oak-a?

AIRINCK. Once more unto the beech dear friends.

TWEEDLE. You look ash-en.

AIRINCK. Lime oak-a, although aspen terrible. Cedar way my palms are shaking?

TWEEDLE. Easy to ex-plane. It's just wisteria.

AIRINCK. Spruce so but ivy splinter.

TWEEDLE. (*EXAMING THE HAND*) By gum. A larch one.

AIRINCK. Elm unwell. Redwood know what to do.

TWEEDLE. Don't pine. It maple out. (*TAKES OUT PLIERS*)

AIRINCK. Birch you can't.

TWEEDLE. Hazel do. (*GRABS AIRINCK'S HAND*) Ebony hand. This walnut teak long. (*BEGINS TO EXTRACT THE SPLINTER*)

AIRINCK. Arrgh! I'm not syc...amore right.

TWEEDLE. There! Holly moses, willow look at that.

AIRINCK. Elm fir-tunate you two were here.

TWEEDLE. We're very poplar.

A GONG SOUNDS, OR SIMILAR, AND THE ACTION FREEZES

TREE. A great effort, but lime nut sure if the record's been broken. I must leaf you for a while to conifer with our celebrity panel, Twiggy, Leslie Ash, Rowan Atkinson in Linden, and President Bush in Hollywood. Bark in a moment.

AIRINCK. I remember now. The Wolf stuck that splinter in my hand. He drugged me and out me in the tree. I'd still be there if you two hadn't pulled me out. Thank you.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) It was nothing.
(DUM) Just doing our job.

AIRINCK. I'm Airinck, by the way. Airinck Hubbard.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Tweedle Dee.
(DUM) And Tweedle Dum.
(DEE) You must be Mother Hubbard's son.

AIRINCK. That's me.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) We've been hired by your Mum to help capture the Wolf.

AIRINCK. Then there's no time to lose. The Wolf is going to Shockham Hall with Red Riding Hood.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Well, nothing surprises me these days.

AIRINCK. No, you don't understand. She's in danger. We must stop him. Dee, you get back to Mum and tell her what's happened. Tell her to meet us at Shockham hall. Dum, you come with me!

TWEEDLE. (DEE) When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning or in rain

AIRINCK. No, we'll wait til the weather clears up.

TWEEDLE. (DUM_ Right. Hang on a moment.

***TWEEDLE** EXITS, THEN RETURNS, REVEALING ONLY THE DUM PERSONA*

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Just had to point him in the right direction.

AIRINCK. Right. Let's catch us a Wolf!

*THEY BOTH EXIT, WITH **TWEEDLE** HAVING TO EXIT BACKWARDS TO MAINTAIN THE FACE OF DUM*

*THE TABS OPEN TO REVEAL GRANNY'S BEDROOM IN SHOCKHAM HALL. **GRANNY** IS SITTING UP IN BED READING A MOTOR CYCLE MAGAZINE. THE **VILLAGER** SITS CENTRE STAGE HOLDING UP A PROTEST SIGN. THE **VILLAGER** IS IGNORED BY EVERYONE, UNLESS THEY TRIP OVER HER. **MARGE** ENTERS*

MARGE. All finished Granny. I've hovered and dusted downstairs and I'll sort out upstairs on Wednesday. Is there anything you need before I go?

GRANNY. Well there is one thing. Perhaps before you come again you could ring Langleys in the Arcade, Norwich. Here's the number. (*HANDS **MARGE** A PIECE OF PAPER*) I rang them a fortnight ago and asked them to send me a Toy Boy. I haven't heard a dickie bird. You just don't get the service like you used to.

MARGE. No. I'll chase them up for you. Probably out of stock. Well I'd better be moving along. It'll soon be dark and I don't like to hang around too long. (*SHE STARTS TO LEAVE*) You know, you really shouldn't be here (*BUMPS INTO VILLAGER*) excuse me, on your own. We worry about you.

GRANNY. I'm fine dear, just fine. You run along. Oh, Marge (*MARGE PAUSES*) if they haven't got a Toy Boy and Action man will do...as long as he's got moveable parts.

MARGE NODS AND EXITS. GRANNY PUTS HER MAGAZINE AWAY AND LIE DOWN AS THE LIGHTS DIM. A CLOCK BEGINS TO STRIKE TWELVE, AND SUNDRY GHOSTS AND GHOULS ENTER TO A SUITABLY CREEPY ACCOMPANYMENT. SUDDENLY, GRANNY SITS BOLT UPRIGHT. THE LIGHTS GO BACK UP

GRANNY. Hold on, hold on. I forgot to take my teeth out.

THE GHOULS SIGH AND MOAN AND RELAX WHILE GRANNY TAKES HER TEETH OUT AND POPS THEM IN A GLASS

GRANNY. 'has berrer. Nigh' nigh' erryone.

GRANNY LIES DOWN. THE GHOSTS STOP READING THEIR PAPERS AND PLAYING CARDS AND RESUME THEIR CREEPING

MUSIC – "GHOST DANCE"

WHEN THE DANCE IS OVER THERE IS A GHOST VERY CLOSE TO GRANNY, HOWLING AND MOANING AND RATTLING A CHAIN. GRANNY WAKES UP, REACHES DOWN, PICKS UP A CHAMBER PIT AND HITS THE GHOST

GRANNY. Go on, clear off. Buzz off the lot of you. (*THEY HURRIDLY EXIT*) How can anyone sleep with that racket going on! Ruddy ghosts! I can't sleep now. I need a drink.

GRANNY PUTS DOWN THE POT AND REACHES FOR HER GLASS OF WATER. SHE RAISES IT TO HER LIPS THEN SHRIEKS AS SHE SEES THE TEETH. SHE PICKS OUT THE TEETH AND PUTS THEM BACK IN HER MOUTH. SHE THEN GETS OUT OF BED

GRANNY. Brrr, it's cold. Must wrap up warm.

GRANNY IS ON THE FAR SIDE OF THE BED. SHE HOBBLER A FEW FEET, THEN REACHES DOWN SLOWLY TO GET SOMETHING. A MOMENT LATER SHE EXITS SPEEDILY, RIDING ON A SKATEBOARD. AFTER A SHORT PAUSE THE LIGHTS FLICKER AND DIM RIGHT DOWN. A FIGURE ENTERS, COVERED BY A WHITE SHEET. THE FIGURE LIFTS THE SHEET OFF HIS FACE AND WE SEE IT IS

AIRINCK. *SUDDENLY WE HEAR THE SOUND OF A WINDOW SMASHING AND A TORCH IS THROWN ON STAGE.*

AIRINCK. Hark. What light through yonder window breaks?

TWEEDLE. (DUM) (*PEERING ROUND THE CORNER*) Sorry. My torch slipped.

AIRINCK. Well pick it up then. (*TWEEDLE DOES SO*) No sign of Granny, or Red or the Wolf. (*STANDING OVER THE VILLAGER*) In the fact the place looks (*CAN'T SEE TWEEDLE BECAUSE OF THE SIGN AND SO PUSHES IT AWAY*) excuse me, deserted. We'd better search the rest of the house. Come on.

TWEEDLE. (DUM) I thought you said we should dress up as ghosts? Where's my disguise?

AIRINCK. I've got the sheets.

TWEEDLE. (DUM) I know, it's enough to give anyone the willies here.

AIRINCK. No. This is yours. (*THROWS TWEEDLE A SHEET*) Now let's get on with it.

THEY BOTH SNEAK OFF. AFTER A SHORT PAUSE TWO MORE FIGURES DRESSED IN WHITE SHEETS ENTER. ONE OF THEM OBVIOUSLY HAS DIFFICULTY SEEING AND TRIPS OVER THE VILLAGER. THIS IS TOM TOM, AND THE OTHER "GHOST" IS CAT

TOM TOM. Oh bum!

CAT. Shhhhh! We're supposed to be ghosts. Ghosts don't shout "oh bum!" when they fall over! Come to think of it, ghosts don't fall over.

TOM TOM. But I can't see a thing.

CAT. That's because your sheet is on the wrong way round.

CAT TURNS THE SHEET ROUND SO THAT TOM TOM CAN SEE THROUGH THE HOLES

CAT. There!

TOM TOM. I still can't see. It's pitch black.

CAT. Wait a minute. (*LOOKS AROUND*) Lucky one of us can see in the dark. Come over here.

THE CAT LEADS TOM TOM TO A TABLE ON WHICH STANDS A CANDLE

CAT. There's a candle here. Have you got a match?

TOM TOM FINDS A BOX OF MATCHES IN HIS POCKET. HE STRIKES ONE BUT BEFORE HE CAN LIGHT THE CANDLE THE MATCH IS BLOWN OUT BY A MISCHIEVOUS **GHOST**, WHO REMAINS UNSEEN BY THE OTHER TWO. THE LIGHTING AND BLOWING DEVELOPS INTO AS MINI ROUTINE. FINALLY THE **CAT** GIVES UP

CAT. It's no use, leave it. Just hold on to me. (**TOM TOM** PUTS HIS ARMS ROUND THE **CAT'S** FACE, SO **CAT** CAN'T SEE) Not there, you idiot. Hold my arm.
*THEY EXIT. AFTER A SHORT PAUSE ANOTHER SHEET COVERED PERSON ENTERS, **SCOOP DALEY***

SCOOP. Got to be a story here somewhere. (*SEEING **VILLAGER***) Aha! Villagers Vigil in House of Horrors! Blast, me pencil's bust. (*TAKES OUT TWO MORE*) 2B or not 2B, that is the question. (*SELECTS A PENCIL AND SCRIBBLES, THEN REACHES INSIDE HIS MAC*) Now for a quick flash.

VILLAGER. (*APPALLED*) Not blooming likely! You pervert! (*RAPS **SCOOP** WITH SIGN*) Shouldn't be allowed! (*HURRIES OFF*)

SCOOP. (*PULLING OUT HIS FLASH CAMERA*) Ah well. I'll have to sniff out another story. Perhaps, Samantha, the Sexy, See-through Spectre for Page Three? Puts a whole new meaning on ghost buster (*EXITS*)

*ANOTHER PAUSE AND **MOTHER HUBBARD, BROOMCK AND TWEEDLE DEE** ENTER, COVERED IN THE OBLIGATORY WHITE SHEETS. MOTHER'S ROLLING PIN IS LIT UP LIKE A TORCH.*

TWEEDLE. (*DEE*) (*LOOKING OFF*) Your little dog is still following us.

MOTHER. (*SHOUTING OFF*) Spot, go back! Go back! I told you to guard the front door. Now get back there, go on! Out, out, damn Spot! (*LOOKING ROUND THE BEDROOM*) This is Granny's bedroom, but no sign of her.

TWEEDLE. (*DEE*) Perhaps the Wolf got her.

MOTHER. If he has, why hasn't he put on her nightie and her glasses and hopped into bed like he's supposed to?

TWEEDLE. (*DEE*) Perhaps he had to answer the call.

MOTHER. What, the call of the wild?

TWEEDLE. (*DEE*) No, the call of nature. He's probably down the corridor.

MOTHER. I don't think so somehow. Wolves are not renowned for tip-toeing down to the bathroom when they want to go. They just go. But he's around here somewhere. I can smell it.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh dear. Mind where you tread then.

THE TORCH GOES OUT

MOTHER. Blast it! My rolling pin's gone out.

BROOMCK. This is ridiculous, there must be a light here somewhere. (A **GHOST CREEPS IN AND GIVES BROOMCK A TABLE LAMP WITH A SHADE**) Thank you. (REALISES WHERE IT CAME FROM) Oh er!

MOTHER. What have you got there?

BROOMCK. I think it's a spirit lamp. Hang on.

BROOMCK TAKES OUT THE LIGHT BULB AND PUTS THE LAMP AWAY. WHEN THE LIGHTBULB IS HELD IT LIGHTS UP

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Kinda spooky, ain't it?

MOTHER. After today, nothing surprises me.

BROOMCK. I wish I could do something about this white sheet. I mean, it does nothing for me at all. If you'd given me enough warning I could have put a couple of tucks in it, adjusted the hem and perhaps worn it off the shoulder.

MOTHER. You're supposed to be a frightening apparition, not prancing around like a reject from The Clothes Show.

BROOMCK. Well, if I'm supposed to be a ghost, perhaps I could knock up a stunning see-through number.

MOTHER. What if I knock your head off so you can carry it under your arm!

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh, that's a good idea. It would look really authentic.

MOTHER. I give up. Tackling the Wolf with you two is like David squaring up to Goliath with a sling-shot full of jelly babies. Come on, let's go.

*THEY EXIT. THE NEXT COUPLE OF MINUTES ARE CHOREOGRAPHED TO "THE MARCH" FROM THE NUTCRACKER SUITE. GHOSTS AND CHARACTERS CHARGE ON AND OFF, INCLUDING **DAISY THE COW, THE VILLAGER, THE PRINCIPALS AND ANYONE ELSE WHO CAN CARRY A WHITE SHEET WITH CONVICTION. AT THE VERY END TWO CHARACTERS COLLIDE CENTRE STAGE AND FALL DOWN. MOTHER HUBBARD REMOVES HER SHEET AND EXAMINES A FURRY TAIL PROTRUDING UNDER THE WHITE SHEET NEXT TO HER***

MOTHER. Ha! Gotch you, Mr Clever Dick Wolf! Not quite so fearsome now, are we?

***MOTHER** LIFTS THE SHEET TO REVEAL **GRANNY**, CARRYING A FOX FUR AND HAVING A NIP FROM A FLASK TO STEADY HER NERVES*

MOTHER. Granny!

GRANNY. Maybe I ought to think about moving to sheltered accommodation.

***SCOOP** DASHES IN, CAMERA POISED*

SCOOP. Hold it.

*THE CAMERA FLASHES, **MOTHER HUBBARD** SHAKES HER HEAD, A BLUE LIGHT FLASHES OUTSIDE AND APPROACHING POLICE SIRENS ACCOMPANY THE SLOWLY CLOSING TABS*

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

ANNOUNCER. Ladies and Gentlemen, before the conclusion of tonight's entertainment, I do have some exciting news to impart. Mr Bernie Thorpestein, our honoured guest this evening, has had to take his leave of us to return to London. However, before he left he complemented the company for their efforts tonight and intimated that one or two had been earmarked for his next series of auditions. (*MOVEMENT BEHIND TABS AND SOUNDS OF EXCITEMENT*) He did just correct me on one point. His next extravaganza will be co-produced by the well known King of theatrical titillation, the Middle Eastern entrepreneur, Sheik Sperian, and the show is going to be a modern, uninhibited version of "Oh Calcutta!"

FROM BEHIND THE TABS WE HEAR A CHORUS OF "Forget it!", "No way!" AND "You must be joking!"

TABS OPEN TO REVEAL A COURT ROOM. THE JUDGE'S BENCH IS BACK STAGE WITH THE WITNESS BOX TO THE RIGHT

ANNOUNCER. Ladies and Gentlemen. Live from the Nursery Court House... where every trial is a show trial and the lawyers hit the jackpot every time... it's JUDGEMENT DAY...and here's your host... JUDGE JERRY DAY!!!

DAY ENTERS TO RAPTUROUS CANNED APPLAUSE WHICH HE EVENTUALLY SILENCES WITH A GESTURE

DAY. Thank you. Thank you very much. Whoa! What a wonderful gallery. You're the best we've had tonight. Welcome to Judgement Day. Before we meet our defendants, let's hear about some of the sentences they could be walking into tonight.

ANNOUNCER. Well, Jerry, behind the bars tonight we have 5 years, with remission, in Dartmoor (*"OOH'S FROM THE AUDIENCE*) 10 years in a Turkish jail with hard labour (*MORE "OOH'S"*) And tonight's star prize... a ritual beheading in Saudi Arabia with the partner of your choice! (*"OOH'S" AND APPLAUSE*)

DAY. Someone could be sticking their neck out tonight. (*CANNED LAUGHS*) So, without further ado... let's sit in judgement!

MUSIC AND APPLAUSE AS DAY GOES TO HIS BENCH AND SITS DOWN. HE PICKS UP HIS GAVEL AND BANGS IT THREE TIMES

DAY. So, who's going to be first in the Hickory Dickory Dock tonight? To find out let's meet our new hostess with the moistest. As you know little Penny has left us to pursue her career.

SCOOP. Scoop Daley, Nursery Times. Is it not true Judge, that not so little 38-24-36 pouting Penny has quit Judgement Day to have your love child?

DAY. Silence in court.

SCOOP. A pregnant pause! Are you supporting her? Where will you be when she delivers?

DAY. I don't know where I'll be.

SCOOP. Day's in a Daze as Penny Drops! Hold the front page! (*EXITS*)

DAY. So...eh...let's meet our new Darling of the Dock, who's always guilty of leading people on... Marjorie Daw!

MARGE ENTERS WEARING A CLOAK COVERING A SPANGLED LEOTARD AND A WIG. THERE IS MORE APPLAUSE. WEE WILLIE WINKIE APPEARS IN THE BOX, ALTHOUGH WE CAN ONLY SEE HIS HANDS AND THE TOP OF HIS HEAD

MARGE. Thank you Jerry. I just hope I can remembered all those rehearsed Ab-libs I have to feed you. Now then. Our first defendant is William Winkie, alias Wee Willie, who is charged with several public decency offenses. His hobbies are train spotting and listening to Radio 3 and when he grows up he wants to assist in the Fitting Rooms at Laura Ashley's. (*SHE EXITS TO MORE APPLAUSE*)

DAY. Don't be shy, Willie. Stand up.

WILLIE. I am standing up.

DAY. Well, I'll just have to talk down to you then. Now on your charge sheet it says you've been a naughty boy. Running around town in the early hours in nothing but your nightshirt. Upstairs and downstairs, in lady's chambers.

WILLIE. That was Goosey Goosey Gander!

DAY. Willie! Surely you're not trying to tell us that someone put you up to it?

WILLIE. But I'm innocent! I just knock them up!

DAY. So we understand, Willie. And what an unwelcome surprise it must be. Woken at three in the morning by a demented midget, nightshirt a-kimbo!

WILLIE. My dungarees were at the cleaners.

DAY. No defence, my miniscule mischief maker. I'm afraid you're going down for a long time.
DAY PULLS A LEVER AND WILLIE DISAPPEARS FROM VIEW. WE HEAR THE SFX OF SOMEONE FALLING DOWN A DEEP SHAFT. ENDING IN A SPLASH. MORE APPLAUSE

DAY. And the next one please, Marge.

MARGE ENTERS ALONE AND READS FROM A CARD

MARGE. Our next offender, Jerry, is Daisy Kirk Spock McCoy Scott Sulu Chekov Uhura. She is sweet sixteen, enjoys being milked and journeying among the outer reaches of the Solar System. Her favourite television programme is, not surprisingly, Emmerdale.

DAY. Where is she then?

MARGE. Ooo er. (*CALLING OFF STAGE*) Daisy! Daisy!

DAISY WALTZES ON DL TO THE STRAINS OF "DAISY, DAISY", MOVES CENTRE STAGE AND TAKES A BOW. MARGE MOVES DOWN TO HER

MARGE. Daisy. What on earth are you doing here?

DAY. What on earth indeed Marge! Daisy appears before us on a number of charges. To wit.. jumping over the Moon and getting a bigger viewing audience than I do, flying without due care and attention and not making any special toiletry arrangements, overtaking a space shuttle in the slow lane, taking out several satellite TV dishes after re-entry, damage to property on landing and smashing the Nursery Park railings. She has asked for five similar fences to be taken into consideration.

MARGE. But she's not a bad girl, Jerry. (*DAISY NODS*) She's a fine, upstanding cow. (*DAISY FALLS TO HER KNEES AND MARGE HELPS HER UP*) When she's found her land legs. As for jumping over the Moon, well she certainly did when she got that part in "All Creatures Great And Small". I mean to say, you'd lift off if you had Christopher Timothy stick his arm up you...

DAY. Yes, thank you Marge. I think we get the picture. Daisy, will you kindly step into the Hickory Dickory Dock to face sentence.

DAISY AMBLES OFF UL AND RE-APPEARS IN THE DOCK. MARGE MOVES UC

DAY. Daisy the Cow, you have broken a number of laws. The law of gravity and several laws of physics to name a few. However, we have reached that moment in the Show when we ask our Studio Audience to give their verdict. If it's against you, here's what happens. I'll ask you three questions on your specialised subject while you throw nine darts for charity in between negotiating an assault course, naming popular tunes in seven notes and selecting three top answers taken from a random survey of one hundred game show hosts. You can then take your pick from Bully's prize board, providing you can track down five clues from a helicopter and double your money on the wheel of fortune! However, our studio audience must first decide your fate. Audience, if you think Daisy is guilty I want you to give the thumbs down sign and blow a raspberry. If you think she is innocent then give the thumbs up sign and shout "Ex-Lax". You shout "Ex-Lax" because she'll be free to go. And what's more she won't be bound over. So after three, one two, three... (*PRESUMABLY NOT*

GUILTY – AD LIB RESULT) Daisy, it is the verdict of this audience that you are not guilty. Therefore, on this occasion, I'm going to let you off with a warning. LOOK OUT!

*HE PRESSES A BUTTON, THERE'S A LOUD EXPLOSION, A GREAT DEAL OF SMOKE AND **DAISY** IS LAUNCHED OUT OF THE DOCK*

DAY. And the next one please, Marge.

***MARGE** IS STARING INTO SPACE, WATCHING DAISY'S PROGRESS*

DAY. Marge?

MARGE. Yes? Oh sorry. (*READS HER CARD*) And our next miscreant, Jerry, is Mother Hubbard.

***MOTHER HUBBARD** ENTERS THE DOCK*

MOTHER. One of your odd jobs Marge?

MARGE. What are you doing here?

MOTHER. You could say I was following a lead which became a bit tangled and ended in a Granny knot!

DAY. Ladies... if you don't mind.

MARGE. Right. Mother Hubbard is a widow with two sons and admits to being 34?... and the rest. She is registered as a Private Investigator and holds a rolling pin licence. Her ambition is to see her feet again.

***MARGE** EXITS. **MOTHER HUBBARD** WAVES HER HAND IN FRONT OF HER*

DAY. Don't tell me you have a smoking problem?

MOTHER. It's not the smoke. (*LOOKING DOWN*) It's what I've just trodden in!

DAY. By golly, Mother H, you're a well built woman. A widow with two sons? You look more like a planet with two suns. (*LAUGHTER*) I haven't seen anything as big as that in the dock since the QE2 berthed. (*MORE LAUGHTER*)

THE DUCK QUACKS LOUDLY

DAY. Ah, I see you have your...er...mascot with you.

MOTHER. Spot the Dog.

DAY. That's a tricky one, it's difficult to choose between you. (*MORE LAUGHTER*) So, you fancy yourself as a Private Eye. In the shape you're in? You make Frank Cannon look positively anorexic. (*LAUGHTER*) But to be serious for a moment. You seem to be under the impression that your license gives you the right to burst into the homes of helpless old pensioners and scare them half to death? Well this time you've overstepped the mark, Mother Hubbard. This time it's going to be...

A LOUD CLAXON SOUNDS MAKING EVERYONE JUMP

DAY. (*CLIMBING DOWN FROM HIS BENCH*) Oh my, oh my! Ladies and Gentlemen, we are right out of time for this show. Mother Hubbard, can you come back next week?

MOTHER. I'm not sure, let me just check my social diary...

DAY. Good! And I hope you can join Marge and me, Jerry Day, same time, same channel, when Mother Hubbard faces sentence. Will she be hopping on a plane to Saudi and getting the big chopper she's always dreamt of? Find out next week on JUDGEMENT DAY.

MUSIC, APPLAUSE. JERRY AND MARGE WAVING. MOTHER HUBBARD APPREHENSIVELY HOLDING HER NECK. THE TABS CLOSE

TREE ENTERS IN FRONT OF THE TABS

TREE. Ladies, Gentlemen and Saplings. It gives me the greatest of pleasure to confirm that Rackheath Players have indeed broken the world record for the number of trees mentioned in a two-minute section of pantomime script. However, they held the record for only three minutes at which time news reached us that a new record had been set by the Burnham-On-Crouch Over-80s Naturists Theatre Company's production of "Babes in the Wood". In a frenetic excerpt they mentioned no fewer than 43 deciduous varieties, 15 evergreens, 8 conifers, 14 bushes, 3 hedges and two flowering shrubs. So hearty congratulations to all their members.

THE PUB DOOR ENTERS, READING A NEWSPAPER

TREE. Matt? Matt, Son, what are you doing here?

DOOR. Oh, hello, Dad. Just making an entrance. What brings you to Nursery?

TREE. Just visiting. Heard so much about the place I felt I had to see it for myself.

DOOR. Is Mum with you?

TREE. You know your Mother. Once she puts down roots you can't shift her. I had to leaf her. She sends her love.

DOOR. Is she still disappointed in me?

TREE. I can't deny, we both are, Son. When you packed your trunk and stalked out of the garden we were heartbroken. We always thought you were going to settle down with that lemon tree from next door.

DOOR. Is she still very bitter? (**TREE NODS**) I think she twigged early on that I was unsettled. I wanted to see more of the world.

TREE. And look at you now. A pub door. You can do better than that. I mean, look at your Uncle Arthur, the door to Number 10 Downing Street no less. He's famous. On the telly nearly every night. A policeman to guard him. Special Branch of course.

DOOR. Don't go on so, Dad. I'm fine.

TREE. You've never been one to listen to advice have you. You're worse than your Grandad. He doesn't listen. Deaf as a gate post.

DOOR. He is a gate post.

TREE. Yes, well that's as maybe but that's no reason for you to be the same.

DOOR. I suppose Kevin's doing really well. He always was your favourite.

TREE. Your brother has sweated sap to try and get on. He's at Reading University now you know.

DOOR. He always was the brains of the family. What's he studying?

TREE. Not a lot. He's a desk. At least he's standing on his own four legs.

DOOR. Yes, well I'd better get to work. It's nearly opening time. Oh sorry, I'm forgetting my manners, you haven't met Clive have you? (**LIFTS THE PAPER**) He was pulped two years ago and became a Times Educational Supplement. He's just been recycled into a Late Final edition of the Nursery Times.

TREE. Pleased to meet you Clive. I sometimes wish young Matt here had got into print. Made something more of himself.

DOOR. Sorry Dad, we must go. I'll see you later.

TREE. You know where we are if you need us.

DOOR. Don't worry, you'll be the first ones I call if I get into a jam.

*AS THEY SAY THEIR GOODBYES TO EACH OTHER, THE TABS OPEN. THE **TREE** EXITS AND THE **DOOR** TAKES UP POSITION OUTSIDE THE PUB. THE PUB IS SET AS FOR THE FIRST SCENE. ENTER **AIRINCK**, **BROOMCK** AND **TWEEDLE***

BROOMCK. There must be something we can do.

AIRINCK. The Wolf outsmarted us. We all expected him to go to Granny's house, swap places with her and wait for Red Riding Hood.

BROOMCK. He obviously doesn't know the story.

AIRINCK. Instead he simply saves time and kidnaps Red Riding Hood in the woods.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Well according to the story, he did know a short cut.

AIRINCK. Thank you. We didn't want to hear that. Now we have to rescue Red.

BROOMCK. Not forgetting the Fairy and getting Mum off the hook. She's only out on bail you know.

AIRINCK. I know, I know! It's just that my life changed the first time I saw Red.

BROOMCK. Oh dear, you have got it bad. We'd better work out a plan of action and fast!

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Tell you what. Our Uncle runs the Rub-A-Dub-Dub. He won't be in yet. We can have the place to ourselves and not be disturbed.

AIRINCK. If you're sure it's ok.

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Course it is. Come on.

TWEEDLE TRIES TO PUSH THE DOOR BUT HE WON'T BUDGE

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh, come on, Door, open up!

DOOR. You haven't got a key, have you?

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Stop messing about. Are you going to let us in?

DOOR. Nope. Not without a key.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh, alright then. But I must go. Where's the nearest loo?

DOOR. (*TURNING INWARDS TO POINT*) Just down the road, turn left...

TWEEDLE. (DUM) (*LEADING EVERYONE IN*) Thank you. Works every time. Huh, pub doors! Thick as two planks!

AIRINCK. Right, now we're in let's make sure we're not disturbed. I'll lock the door while you three set the tables up.

BROOMCK. Good idea.

BROOMCK AND TWEEDLE BEGIN TO RE-ARRANGE THE BLOCKS. AIRINCK PICKS UP SOME CHAIN AND A PAIR OF HANDCUFFS AND TAKES THEM TO THE DOOR, JUST AS THE WINDOW ARRIVES. AS THE WINDOW TRIES TO ENTER, AIRINCK BLOCKS THE WAY

WINDOW. Excuse me, I'm late enough as it is.

AIRINCK. Sorry, you can't come in.

WINDOW. Don't talk daft, I'm the window. I've got to be here.

AIRINCK. No, you haven't. It'll be dark soon and you'll be covered by a curtain anyway. Go on, take the night off.

WINDOW. But this is ridiculous.

AIRINCK. You're telling me. Now buzz off before I take your putty out!

WINDOW. Well, really! (EXITS)

AIRINCK. (HOLDING UP THE CHAIN TO THE DOOR) Now let's sort you out.

DOOR. Not bloomin' likely

THE DOOR RUSHES OFF. AIRINCK PICKS UP A LETTER BLOCK. OTHER BLOCKS HAVE BEEN SET UP BY BROOMCK AND TWEEDLE SO THAT A LETTER BLOCK WILL BE IN FRONT OF EACH PERSON. AT THIS TIME THEY READ S H T, WITH A BLOCK OF BE FITTED IN

BROOMCK. Is everything secure?

AIRINCK. Yep. The window's barred and the door's bolted! The place is well and truly closed.

AIRINCK HAS APPROACHED THE OTHERS HOLDING HIS BLOCK WITH THE LETTER "I" FACING FORWARDS. AS HE SAYS "CLOSED" HE FLIPS THE BLOCK TO SHOW A "U" AND BE BRINGS IT INTO PLACE. THE PLACINGS ARE NOW DEE, BROOMCK, AIRINCK AND DUM. TWEEDLE IS ACTUALLY IN THE DUM POSITION

BROOMCK. (REPROACHFULLY) Airinck! If you must play with the blocks the no naughties. (CHANGES H TO M)

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Ooh er. Hadn't noticed that. (CHANGES T FOR G) Pretty good eh?

AIRINCK. (O FOR U) Can't see it myself.

- BROOMCK.** Stop messing around! We must concentrate our efforts. Capturing the Wolf is going to be a hard job. (*L FOR M*)
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) (*DASHING INTO DEE POSITION*) Don't worry. Between us we can whip him good! (*F FOR S*)
- AIRINCK.** We mustn't let our resolve fade. (*A FOR O*) I think I feel a rousing song coming on.
- TWEEDLE.** (*DUM*) (*DASHING INTO DUM POSITION*) No thank you. We know what your singings like. (*T FOR G*)
- AIRINCK.** I'll have you know I sing like a nightingale.
- TWEEDLE.** (*DUM*) More like a cat stuck in a... (*T FOR P*)
 (*DEE*) (*DASHING INTO DEE POSITION*) that's pretty good. I think that deserves a round of applause. (*C FOR F*)
- BROOMCK.** Will you stop talking rubbish! (*R FOR L*)
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) (*REACTING IMMEDIATELY BY CHANGING T FOR C*) T anyone?
- AIRINCK.** Wait a minute! That's it! We lay a snare for the Wolf, being careful we don't fall in (*I FOR A*) ourselves.
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) Right! We must take a firm hold. (*G FOR T*)
 (*DUM*) (*DASHING TO DUM POSITION*) Show what we're made of. (*T FOR P*)
- AIRINCK.** What, budgie seed?
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) (*DASHING TO DEE POSITION*) And stick to our task! (*P FOR G*) (*PANTING FOR BREATH*) Do you know, I hope I get a decent review for all this effort. (*C FOR P*)
- BROOMCK.** For goodness sake. This is a serious matter. There's no time for idle... (*H FOR R*)
- AIRINCK.** (*A FOR I*) Precisely.
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) Sorry. Let's get back to trapping the Wolf. Huh, some chance. (*P FOR C*)
- BROOMCK.** (*AFTER A PUZZLED LOOK AT THE LETTERS*) And what is that, pray?
- TWEEDLE.** (*DEE*) Phat.
- BROOMCK.** It's spelt with an F. As in fulmination, funambulist...
- TWEEDLE.** (*DUM*) (*RUSHING TO DUM POSITION*) And phone, feathers and phan. (*N FOR T*)

AIRINCK. There's no F in phone.

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Not here there isn't, but you could always use the one down the road.

BROOMCK. Of course, that's it! Feathers!

AIRINCK. What?

BROOMCK. I think I've found a way to get to the Wolf. Now listen, you lot, here's what we have to do...
(L FOR H)

*THE TABS CLOSE AS THEY GO INTO A HUDDLE
THE **VILLAGER** APPEARS STAGE CENTRE TO MORE CAMERA
FLASHES*

VILLAGER. Ladies and, I use the word loosely, Gentleman of the Press. After protracted negotiations, lengthy consultations and occasional inebriation, a formula has been found whereby the consultative committee, under the jurisdiction of...

SCOOP. Get on with it yer daft bat!

VILLAGER. Ahem. To put it simply, the Stage Management have acceded to our demands. We've won! (*CHEERS FROM BACKSTAGE*) As from next year, the Villagers will be very much to the fore, with our own individual dressing rooms and an interview with Melvyn Bragg. Plus our names up in lights outside the Hall. The question of salary is also under review. This does, of course, mean that our dispute is off and there will be no further interruptions.

MOTHER HUBBARD ENTERS

MOTHER. That is good news. Perhaps now we can return to the plot and you can get out of my kitchen.

VILLAGER. Kitchen?

MOTHER. Yes, kitchen. Act Three, Scene Four, Mother Hubbard's kitchen. Mother Hubbard enters and anxiously paces up and down. I can't do that with you here.

VILLAGER. But I am here. Therefore, I should be here, otherwise we wouldn't be having this conversation in the first place.

MOTHER. I think I'm going to have one of my turns. Look, dear, you should be in the village, villaging, like villagers are supposed to. Anyway, what possible reason could you have for being in my kitchen? Ha! Got you there!

PROMPT ENTERS

PROMPT. Excuse me, but she should be here.

MOTHER. Who the heck are you?

PROMPT. You know who I am. I'm the Prompt.

MOTHER. (*UNDER HER BREATH*) What are you doing out here?

PROMPT. Talking to you, like it says here. Prompt enters and says "Excuse me, but she should be here."

MOTHER. And what about my anxious pacing? I've got no room to breathe, let alone pace!

PROMPT. It's alright, that comes next. You say here...

MOTHER. (*READING THE PROMPT'S SCRIPT*) For goodness sake something off, both of you.

PROMPT. I think that's "Buzz".

MOTHER. Oh right. For goodness sake, buzz off, both of you! If I haven't got enough problems.

***PROMPT AND VILLAGER EXIT. MOTHER PACES ANXIOUSLY.
BROOMCK ENTERS***

BROOMCK. Mother, your worries are over.

MOTHER. You're going to see a specialist?

BROOMCK. No. We've come up with a plan to capture the Wolf, free the hostages and get you off the hook.

MOTHER. Don't tell me. It's Anneka Rice's next Challenge.

BROOMCK. No. We're going to set a trap for the Wolf and Airinck's agreed to be the bait.

MOTHER. That was uncommonly brave of him.

BROOMCK. Not really. He drew the short straw.

TWEEDLE ENTERS

TWEEDLE. (DEE) He's all set.

BROOMCK. Well bring him in then.

TWEEDLE. (DUM) Airinck Hubbard, come on down!

AIRINCK. (OFF) I can't do it.

BROOMCK. Of course you can, now get in here!

AIRINCK. (OFF) I look a right plonker in this.

BROOMCK. Never mind that, you agreed to do it. Or maybe you're just a little bit chicken?

AIRINCK ENTRES WEARING A CHICKEN SUIT

AIRINCK. Who says I'm chicken?

MOTHER. Now I've seen everything. I'll say this for you, to run around like that takes a great deal of pluck.

AIRINCK. Oh don't you start. It's all I've had from these three for the past hour.

MOTHER. But what's it all in aid of?

BROOMCK. From various sightings of the Wolf we think we have a rough idea of where his lair is. We let Airinck wander round, keeping watch from a discreet distance. The Wolf, unable to resist such a plump, tasty looking bird, will capture him and take him back to the lair. We follow, rush in, capture the Wolf and his gang, rescue the Fairy and Red Riding Hood, give you the credit and the Powers that be drop their charges against you in gratitude.

MOTHER. I think I preferred Anneka Rice.

AIRINCK. We've got no choice. If I'm prepared to make an idiot of myself, the least you can do is go along with it.

MOTHER. You're right. We don't have any alternatives. Let's give it a try.

BROOMCK. Good on yer, Mum. If we go down, let's go down fighting!

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (TO **AIRINCK**) I suppose you'll be fighting at bantam weight?

AIRINCK. How would you like a good pecking?

MOTHER. Stop it you two. Save the agro for the Wolf.

BROOMCK. Right then. Let's go get 'em.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) (TO **AIRINCK**) Don't get too close will you. That's a foul smell you've got.

AIRINCK. I warned you.

AIRINCK CHASES TWEEDLE AS BEST HE CAN AND EVERYONE EXITS

*THE TABS OPEN ONCE MORE ON THE LAIR OF THE BIG BAD WOLF. THE **FAIRY** AND **RED** ARE CHAINED AT THE BACK, **TOM TOM** IS STUDYING WHAT APPEARS TO BE A TV MONITOR OF SOME SORT, THE **CAT** IS SITTING BY THE GOLDFISH BOWL DANGLING A FISHING LINE, THE **WOLF** IS CENTRE STAGE*

WOLF. I can't believe how well it's all proceeded. Mother Hubbard arrested (**TO RED AND FAIRY**) you two held hostage and Nursery ready to surrender itself to my authority.

FAIRY. Never! The people of Nursery will fight to the bitter end. You'll never win!

WOLF. Do you know, I am growing increasingly tired of your rantings. As soon as I have taken complete control of Nursery, there will be no need to keep you alive. My cauldron can take birds of any size. And I must say I am very partial to fairy lights.

RED. Ughh! You're despicable, do you know that?

WOLF. Of course. It does has its advantages. I'll never appear on Esther Ranzen's Hearts of Gold.

RED. Good point.

TOM TOM. Hey Boss, I think I've got something.

WOLF. I know you have. One needs to be vaccinated to be in the same room as you.

TOM TOM. It's a chicken!

WOLF. Oh whoopee cushions! We'll give it a twenty-one gun salute and a civic reception, shall we?

TOM TOM. But it's enormous!

WOLF. What are you talking about?

TOM TOM. Have a butchers yourself. It's a giant chicken!

WOLF. Let me see. (*STUDIES MONITOR*) Giant chicken my... goodness me! How bizarre. A giant chicken. Quick, Tom Tom, bring it down here. Let's grab it before Colonel Sanders does.

TOM TOM. Right Boss. (*STUDYING MONITOR*) Come on, Chicky. Here chick, chick, chick. Left a bit. Right a bit. Trapdoor open!

*WE HEAR THE SOUND OF SOMETHING DESCENDING A LONG CHUTE. SUDDENLY **AIRINCK** SLIDES INTO VIEW, CLUCKING LOUDLY*

CAT. (*LEAVING THE FISHING*) Will you look at the size of that. Let me get my recipe book. I'll need another dozen packets of Paxo to start with.

WOLF. Just a minute. Tender though this bird undoubtedly is, it might be of value to us in another way.

CAT. I don't follow you.

WOLF. Does it not strike that miniscule speck you call a brain that this chicken is extremely unusual. Its size alone suggests that it could be... magical.

CAT. Yeah, really magic with some sage and onion stuffing and all the trimmings.

WOLF. Just forget food for a moment. What if this hen lays golden eggs? We could dine out at the best restaurants for the rest of our lives.

CAT. I still think we ought to eat it.

FAIRY. Like you ate (*DRAMATIC PAUSE*) the Owl? (*DRAMATIC CHORD*)

CAT. What?

FAIRY. You are the same Cat that went on that fateful voyage, aren't you?

RED. I remember that story. The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea in a beautiful pea-green boat.

CAT. The story got distorted in the press. And the boat was dark brown if you must know. And I did not eat the Owl.

FAIRY. That isn't the way I heard it. The Owl and the Pussycat went to sea, but only the Cat came back.

CAT. We had a row and the Owl flew off!

FAIRY. You returned three stone heavier than you left.

CAT. Fish! I ate fish!

WOLF. Please, please! Can we continue this fascinating argument at another time?

CAT. Well, I get blamed for everything. They even said it was me that crept in the crypt.

WOLF. Yes, quite. But to return to our feathered friend here, I think a detailed scientific analysis might be in order. I shall prepare my laboratory. If this creature has a magic power then I want it! Tom Tom, I'll need your help to set up the equipment.

TOM TOM. Sure, Boss.

*THE **WOLF** EXITS WITH **TOM TOM**. THE **CAT** RETURNS TO ITS FISHING. **AIRINCK** CLUCKS AND WADDLES AROUND, ENDING UP BY THE MONITOR. HE TAKES A QUICK LOOK ROUND, THEN FLICKS A SWITCH. MORE SOUNDS OF DESCENT AND **BROOMCK** SLIDES IN*

BROOMCK. Ouch! Oh, isn't that just typical, I've ruined these tights!

CAT. (*RUSHING TO GRAB **BROOMCK***) Not so fast, Pal. Thought you'd sneak in, eh? You have to get up early in the morning to catch cat napping.

*AT THIS MOMENT **TWEEDLE DEE** SLIDES IN, KNOCKING OVER **CAT** AND **BROOMCK***

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oops! Sorry, didn't see you there.

CAT. Well now you're here you can join our other guests. I don't know what you hope to achieve but...

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Yes, just hand on a minute... (*EXITS*)

CAT. What is going on here? You can't leave... (*TO **BROOMCK***) Nobody leaves here. Only three of us know the way out. You can't just...

***TWEEDLE DUM** SLIDES IN AND AGAIN THE **CAT** IS KNOCKED OVER*

CAT. Another one? What is this, open house?

MOTHER. (OFF) Geronimo!

CAT. (*STEPPING TO THE SIDE OF THE CHUTE*) Oh no, not this time.

***MOTHER HUBBARD** SLIDES IN. AS SHE REACHES THE BOTTOM, SPOT REACHES OUT AND GRABS THE **CAT'S** LEG AND THEY END IN A HEAP ON THE FLOOR*

MOTHER. (*TO AUDIENCE*) Hello, Boys and Girls. (*RESPONSE*) I love you too. Right, moggy, end of the line. You're nicked!

***TOM TOM** RUSHES IN*

TOM TOM. Hello. Nobody mentioned a party. Oh goody! (*PULLS A COUPLE OF PARTY POPPERS*) What games are we playing?

CAT. It's not a party, you idiot. We're under attack! get 'em!

TOM TOM. Oh, brilliant, a bundle! (*TAKES UP A BOXING STANCE*) Seconds away, round one!

*CHOREOGRAPHED MAYHEM AS A PUNCH UP ENSUES. AT THE CONCLUSION OF WHICH, **CAT** AND **TOM TOM** ARE CAPTURED*

MOTHER. Now then. Where's your master?

*THE **WOLF** CASUALLY SAUNTERS ON*

WOLF. Looking for me, Mrs Hubbard?

MOTHER. So, we finally meet.

THE OTHERS MOVE BACK AND THE TWO PRINCIPALS ARE FACE TO FACE

WOLF. As they say in all the best westerns, make your move Stranger.

MOTHER. Personally I've never stayed in a Best Western, so I wouldn't know. But I have come packing heat.

***MOTHER HUBBARD** REACHES INTO HER DRESS AND PULLS OUT A STRING OF SAUSAGES, MUCH TO HER AMAZEMENT. THE **WOLF** SLOWLY BRINGS HIS HAND OUT FROM BEHIND HIS BACK TO REVEAL A ROLLING PIN*

WOLF. Was this what you were looking for? Your famous Smith & Craddock Rolling Pin. (*EXAMINING THE PIN*) Delia Smith and Fanny Craddock.

MOTHER. But how did you...?

WOLF. Don't underestimate my power, Mother Hubbard. A power that is soon to be released upon Nursery.

AIRINCK** CHOOSES THIS MOMENT TO ATTACK, PECKING THE **WOLF** FOR ALL HE'S WORTH. **MOTHER HUBBARD** JOINS IN AND THE **WOLF** IS OVERPOWERED. **AIRINCK** DASHES TO **RED

RED. Oh Airinck, you were so... different!

AIRINCK. I know. Let's get you out of these chains.

BROOMCK** AND **AIRINCK** FREE **RED** AND THE **FAIRY

MOTHER. You appear to have suffered a power cut, Fido?

WOLF. I told you not to underestimate me, Mother Hubbard. And I also said right at the beginning what I would do if I was really desperate.

MOTHER. And what is that?

*THE PIANO PLAYS THE INTRO AND THE **WOLF** LAUNCHES INTO AN EXCRUTIATING VERSION OF "MY WAY. AFTER ONLY A FEW BARS, EVERYONE ELSE IS TRYING TO BLOCK OUT THE NOISE AND SUFFERING EXTREME DISCOMFORT, WHILE THEY CROUCH ON THE FLOOR, THE **WOLF** PICKS UP THE FAIRY'S WAND AND STANDS ON THE RAISED AREA AT THE REAR OF THE STAGE*

WOLF. Once more the tables are turned, Mother Hubbard. I think power has just been restored. Let me demonstrate.

*THE **WOLF** POINTS THE WAND AT DIFFERENT AREAS DOWNSTAGE AND CREATES MINOR EXPLOSIONS. THE LAST ONE OCCURS IN CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE GOLDFISH BOWL, CAUSING A FISH TO FLY OUT OF THE WATER AND OFF STAGE*

BROOMCK. Not bad. Not bad at all. I for one am certainly impressed.

WOLF. You and your family have caused me a great deal of inconvenience, Mother Hubbard. But now it ends. I think your epitaph should read, "Here lies Mother Hubbard, P.I. Past It!"

A SIREN SOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE AUDITORIUM

WOLF. What the...?

MOTHER. It's a lunacy alert!

WOLF. A what?

AIRINCK. The cow has jumped over the moon and is about to begin re-entry. The result of this activity is known as Lunar-C.

BROOMCK. Quick. Put on the protective headgear!

MOTHER. *(TO AUDIENCE)* That applies to you lot as well. As quickly as you can don your head protection. There's not a moment to lose.

*ON STAGE EVERYONE, EXCEPT THE **WOLF**, **CAT** AND **TOM TOM** GRAB BAGS AND PUT THEM ON THEIR HEADS*

WOLF. Alright, this has gone far enough. Lunacy. Cows in space. You must think I'm a yo-yo to fall for that rubbish!

*THE **WOLF** GRABS THE **FAIRY**, LEADS HER ONTO THE RAISED SECTION AND HOLDS THE WAND AGAINST HER HEAD*

WOLF. Stop this nonsense. Stop it, I say, or Tinkerbell gets zapped!

***DAISY THE COW** FLIES ONTO THE STAGE LANDING ON THE **WOLF** AND THE **FAIRY** IN A CLOUD OF SMOKE. THE **WOLF** IS EFFECTIVELY KNOCKED OUT OF SIGHT OFF STAGE. THE SIREN STOPS AND THE CAST REMOVE THE BAGS FROM THEIR HEADS*

MOTHER. *(TO THE AUDIENCE)* It's alright. Everything's back to normal, You can remove the headgear.

FAIRY. *(STUCK UNDER THE COW)* Help! I can't move.

BROOMCK. Hold on. We'll get you out.

***BROOMCK, RED AND TWEEDLE** TRY TO BUDGE **DAISY** BUT FAIL*

RED. She won't budge.

MOTHER. Hold on. I think I can help. *(TO THE AUDIENCE)* Really loud this time. Hello Boys and Girls.

*THE AUDIENCE RESPOND. **DAISY** MOOS INDIGNANTLY AND STANDS UP. THE **FAIRY** PICKS HERSELF AND HER WAND OFF THE FLOOR*

FAIRY. Ooh that's better.

AIRINCK. Do you think you could help me out of this costume. I can't shift this zipper.

BROOMCK. Pullett!

AIRINCK. Ho ho ho! Highly amusing I'm sure. Meanwhile I'm getting extremely hot in this thing.

BROOMCK. How unusual. A chicken roasting from the inside out.

RED. Don't worry, I'll help you.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Eh, we don't want to worry you but...
(DUM) We've been thinking and...
(DEE) Unless anyone knows the way out...
(DUM) We're going to be stuck in here!

MOTHER. It's alright, Cat and Tom Tom will show us *(FINDING **CAT** AND **TOM TOM** ON THE FLOOR)* won't you!

**CAT AND TOM TOM SIMPLY ROLL ON THE FLOOR SPEAKING IN
BABY TALK AND BLOWING BUBBLES**

TWEEDLE. (DEE) That's the problem.
(DUM) They didn't wear any protection.

MOTHER. Oh dear, oh dear. They're completely do-lally.

AIRINCK. We can't climb that slide, it's too steep.

MOTHER. But there has to be a way out somewhere.

**MARGE ENTERS, EITHER SWEEPING OR HOOVERING AND
HUMMING TO HERSELF. SHE SUDDENLY IS AWARE OF THE
OTHERS**

MARGE. Oh, hello, Sis. What are you doing here?

MOTHER. I might ask you the same question.

MARGE. Oh I clean here twice a week for that nice Mr Wolf. Have been for the last month now.
Lovely chap, very generous.

MOTHER. You mean to tell me that you knew this place existed and actually had a key to let yourself
in?

MARGE. Oh, yes. Mr Wolf is very trusting. He just lets me come and go as I wish. He doesn't mind
as long as I do the work properly.

MOTHER. I think I need a tablet and a lie down.

MARGE. Where is he by the way?

**DOCTOR FOSTER ENTERS FROM BACKSTAGE LOOKING
CONFUSED**

FOSTER. Ooh my head. Where am I? How did I get here?

MARGE. Oooh, it's Doctor Foster. I thought you were on holiday or off sick as you hadn't been in
your surgery. I wanted to see you about this rash on my...

MOTHER. Not now Marge. Doctor Foster, we thought you'd disappeared for good. What happened to
you?

FOSTER. I don't know for sure. I was in my car. A large dog ran into the road and I hit it. I got out and
when I bent down to examine it, it bit me and then vanished in a puff of smoke. The rest is
like a dream. I kept thinking I was an animal of some sort. I kept fancying raw steak and

I'm a vegetarian! I...I was a wolf, wasn't I! And I would've taken over Nursery if that cow hadn't stopped me.

TWEEDLE. (DEE) Oh come on, Mother Hubbard was only doing her job.

MOTHER. Thank you. So that's it, Goodbye Big Bad Wolf, welcome back Doctor Foster.

BROOMCK. End of story, I guess.

AIRINCK. Not quite. Mother has still got that sentence hanging over her.

MARGE. Oh no, not any more, didn't you hear. Judgement Day has been cancelled forthwith due to poor ratings, and Red Riding Hood's Granny dropped all the charges against you anyway. That is after I'd had a word with her and explained everything.

BROOMCK. All's well that ends well.

SCOOP. (*RUSHING IN*) What a scoop! What a story! Hold it everyone.

*THE CAST POSE AS **SCOOP** TAKES A FLASH PHOTO*

SCOOP. Just in time for the Late Edition.

MARGE. (*WHIPPING HIS HAT OFF*) So this is what you've been getting up to is it? And just look at the state of your hair! Don't you ever run a comb through it?

SCOOP. (*SNATCHING HIS HAT BACK*) For heaven's sake, don't fuss, Mum.

RED. Jack Daw. I thought I'd seen you before at the hospital. How's your head?

MARGE. It'll need repapering after I've finished with him.

SCOOP. Yes, well, er, can't stop. Got a deadline to meet. Catch you later. (*EXITS*)

MARGE. Not if I catch up with you first! I want a few words with you, my lad! (*EXITS*)

MOTHER. (*HAVING UNSCREWED THE ROLLING PIN, REMOVED A FLASK, PUT IT TO HER LIPS THEN TIPPED IT UP TO SHOW IT WAS EMPTY*) Come on, folks. Let's return to the village. I think I'm in need of a refill.

FAIRY. You go on ahead and I'll catch you up. There's something I must do first.

*AS THE OTHERS MAKE THEIR WAY OFF, THE **FAIRY** MOVES FORWARD TO FRONT OF TABS AND THEY SLOWLY CLOSE BEHIND HER*

FAIRY. Could I have a spotlight, please?

SOMEONE WALKS ON WITH A SPOTLIGHT AND HANDS IT TO HER

FAIRY. Thank you.

A trio of rodents are mutilated
The heir to the throne steals tarts
Two dozen birds in a pastry crust
That's how the headline starts

Yes, Nursery has returned to normal
To bring young children tales bizarre
Of death, destruction and mutilation
And they say that TV goes too far

And all this, thanks to Mother Hubbard
A Private Eye extraordinaire
Who conducted the search for the Big Bad Wolf
And punched his ticket inside the lair

To all our visitors today, goodbye
For the time has come to let you go
And if a large dog should cross your pass
Make sure it's not someone you know

Come back and see us another time
But before you have to dash away
Just spare a moment to meet again
Our looney toons who came out to play

*THE TABS OPEN ON AN OPEN STAGE AND THE ENTIRE ENSAMBLE
ENTER, AS DIRECTED, TO TAKE A CURTAIN CALL, BEFORE
EVERYONE JOINS IN THE FINALE*

THE END