

BOOKWORMS AND BUNIONS

A FANTASY

by **Bryan Cleary**

SchoolPlay Productions Ltd

BOOKWORMS AND BUNIONS

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BOOKWORMS AND BUNIONS

a fantasy by Bryan Cleary

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Miss Bunion, *Afterwards Daisy Cornplaster, a witch*

Aurora, *Our Heroine*

Boris, *A Bookworm*

Hamlet, *Prince of Denmark*

Cornelius, *A Crow*

Agatha & Hilda, *Cinderella's Ugly Sisters*

Robert, *A Footman*

The Lecturer

King of Hearts

Cook

White Rabbit

Dormouse

Frog

The Frog Princess

Schoolgirls, Wonderland and Woodland Characters

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ACT I

(The House Lights go down. In the darkness the following is heard, greatly amplified, through the loudspeakers)

Miss Bunion: Aurora Jones - I am tired of seeing you gazing out of the window during my lessons. At the end of school today you will go to the library with your History text book, you will read and make notes on Chapter Eight and you will not be released until you have completed the work to my satisfaction. That is all; you may go.

(Follow spot illuminates a single desk. AURORA comes slowly in with her books, sits down at the desk and opens her text book. She settles down, resting her head on her hands. Enter several other girls. Lights up.)

1st Girl: Yah - who's got to stay in for old Bunion then? Dopey!

2nd Girl: Oh leave her alone - she asked for it.

3rd Girl: She can't help it, she's got a screw loose!

2nd Girl: Even so, you'd think she'd have enough sense not to get caught so often.

(The scene here degenerates into whatever mayhem suits the director: previous productions have employed a game of polo played piggy-back with hockey sticks and screwed-up paper torn from Aurora's exercise book. Enter MISS BUNION, when order is restored.)

Miss Bunion: Good evening girls.

All: Good evening Miss Bunion.

Miss Bunion: Now run along all of you - except Aurora Jones.

All: Yes, Miss Bunion; thank you Miss Bunion; good night Miss Bunion.

(Exit girls)

Miss Bunion: Now then, Aurora, perhaps you will be good enough to tell me just what is so fascinating about the view from the window?

Aurora: Nothing Miss Bunion.

Miss Bunion: Don't be impertinent girl!

Aurora: I mean...well, there are the birds and the trees and...

Miss Bunion: All of which are more interesting than my history lesson.

Aurora: Yes....I mean no, Miss Bunion.

Miss Bunion: You are a rude and lazy girl and I shall lock you in this room until you have completed the work which I set you - now begin!

(MISS BUNION steps melodramatically forward to the audience)

Ah-ha! Little does she know that I am not really Ermintrude Bunion and that I have no intention of releasing her - ever! *(MISS BUNION sweeps offstage).*

Aurora: Oh dear! I shall never be able to do this history I know. I don't understand it at all, and I hate horrid, horrid, horrid Miss Bunion!

A Voice: Yes, I really think we ought to try to get you out of this.

Aurora: Who's there? Who are you?

The Voice: I'm not sure that I want to come out into the open just yet.

Aurora: Why not? What are you afraid of? Oh do please tell me who you are!

The Voice: Well actually I'm a bookworm and I live here in the library.

Aurora: Why don't you want to come out?

The Voice: People are so squeamish about creepy-crawlies that they generally squash us first and ask questions afterwards.

Aurora: But I won't squash you Mr. Bookworm.

The Voice: Are you sure?

Aurora: Absolutely positive.

The Voice: And you haven't got any slug pellets or insect repellent in your pockets?

Aurora: Certainly not!

The Voice: Not the tiniest bit of DDT?

Aurora: None at all.

The Voice: All right then, I'll chance it. (*The Voice, that is THE BOOKWORM, emerges. He is very bookish and even more wormish*). Here I am. Now you're sure you don't feel frightened?

Aurora: Not at all.

Bookworm: That's good. But if you should change your mind and feel that you are getting a squashing feeling coming on, you'll let me know won't you? I mean I can always crawl back and chew on the odd maths book.

Aurora: I will, I promise.

Bookworm: Thank you. Perhaps I'll sit down and put my feet up then.

Aurora: What's your name Mr. Bookworm?

Bookworm: My real name's Pasternak, but you can call me Boris if you like.

Aurora: Well, Boris, what did you mean when you said that I ought to get out of here?

Boris: Ah, yes. That Miss Bunion is a very dangerous woman you know.

Aurora: Oh, I know! Last Friday I was a MINUTE late for lunch and do you know what she did? She....

Boris: No, no! I mean REALLY dangerous. (*Looks round nervously*) For a start, she isn't really called Miss Bunion.

Aurora: No?

Boris: No. And she isn't really a schoolteacher.

Aurora: Really?

Boris: Really.

Aurora: But who is she then?

Boris: I daren't tell you that because if she ever found out I don't know what she'd do to me. But I have a feeling that you're going to find out who she is for yourself before too long.

Aurora: Why do you say that?

Boris: She has it in for you, that's why.

Aurora: Oh don't talk like that! You're frightening me and it's getting dark.

Boris: Sorry. *(Pause)* But be careful - if you knew everything that I do....

Aurora: Boris!

Boris: Yes, of course.

(Pause)

Aurora: What DO you know, exactly?

Boris: Oh, I can't tell you - you'll have to ask someone else.

Aurora: Bur I CAN'T ask anyone else because there isn't anyone else here.

Boris: There isn't anyone else here? Did you say there isn't anyone else here? Why. this is a library isn't it? Hundreds and hundreds of books and everyone one of them crammed with people.

Aurora: Oh but that's different isn't it? I mean people in books aren't REAL....

Boris: Have you ever read a book?

Aurora: Oh yes, lots.

Boris: What sort of books do you like best?

Aurora: Stories about....about beautiful princesses and handsome princes.

Boris: And do you sometimes wish you could be a beautiful princess?

Aurora: Oh yes - I imagine that the story is about me and that the handsome prince is riding over the hills on his white horse to rescue me from the wicked baron: it's as if I'm really there.

Boris: But you just said that people in books aren't real - if you can imagine yourself IN a book, why can't someone in a book imagine themselves OUT of it?

Aurora: *(Doubtfully)* Yes, but....

Boris: No buts....Wait a minute, I think I can hear someone coming. If it's Her I'd better get out of here: quick, hold my hand.

Aurora: Which one?

Boris: Any, it doesn't matter!

Aurora: here are we going?

Boris: Into a book.

Aurora: Which book?

Boris: The nearest one - come on and don't argue!

(AURORA and BORIS rush off hand in hand. Quick blackout. When the lights come up we find a young man in black doublet and hose, deep in thought. His first

words establish the scene as Hamlet Act III Scene I. This scene should be played very melodramatically - there should be no doubt of his insanity.)

Hamlet: To be, or not to be; that is the question;
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them.
To die, to sleep -
No more - and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to! 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep -
To sleep - perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life:
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of offence and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have,
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment,
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

(Enter, unwillingly, AURORA as OPHELIA, propelled by BORIS)

Soft you now,
The fair Ophelia - Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered.

Ophelia: Good my lord, How does your honour for this many a day?

Hamlet: I humbly thank you; well, well, well.

Ophelia: My lord, I have remembrances of yours
That I have longed long to redeliver.
I pray you now, receive them.

Hamlet: No, not I,
I never gave you aught.

Ophelia: My honoured lord, you know right well you did,
And with them words of so sweet breath composed
As made these things more rich. Their perfume lost,
Take these again, for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
There my lord.

Hamlet: Ha, ha! Are you honest?

Ophelia: My lord?

Hamlet: Are you fair?

Ophelia: What means your lordship?

Hamlet: That if you be honest and fair, your honesty should admit no discourse to
your beauty. I did love you once.

Ophelia: Indeed, my lord, you made me believe so.

Hamlet: You should not have believed me, for virtue cannot so inoculate our old
stock but we shall relish of it. I loved you not.

Ophelia: I was the more deceived.

Hamlet: Get thee to a nunnery. Why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners? I am
myself indifferent honest, but yet I could accuse me of such things that it
were better my mother had not borne me: I am very proud, revengeful,
ambitious, with more offences at my back than I have thoughts to put them in,
imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such
fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven? We are arrant knaves all;
believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father?

Ophelia: At home, my lord.

Hamlet: Let the doors be shut upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in's
own house. Farewell.

Ophelia: Oh help him, you sweet heavens!

Hamlet: If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry; be thou as
chaste as ice, pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a
nunnery. Go, farewell. Or if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool, for wise
men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go,
and quickly too. Farewell.

(Quick fade to blackout. When the lights come up we are back in the library. MISS

BUNION is centre stage.)

Miss Bunion: Escaped heh? Now I wonder how. She can't have escaped on her own, so who's been helping her I ask myself? Time to have a look round. (*MISS BUNION elaborately searches the stage - ad libs of 'Not here': 'Nothing': 'No-one there' etc.*) So we shall have to seek a little help shan't we? Crow! Come here! (*Silence*) Drat that bird. Crow! Where are you?

Voice off: Caw!

Miss Bunion: Oh, you are there then? Come here!

Voice: Shan't!

Miss Bunion: (*Imperatively*) AT ONCE!

Voice: Not if you keep calling me Crow. I do have a name.

Miss Bunion: Well you are a crow. Whoever heard of a crow called Cornelius? Ha!

Voice: If we're going to get personal, whoever heard of a witch called Daisy....

Miss Bunion: Sh! Fool! That's a secret.

Voice: I'm not surprised: Daisy Cornplaster indeed! Not exactly awe-inspiring for someone as WICKED as you.

Miss Bunion: That's enough. Now let's stop all this shenanigans - I need help.

Voice: Then ask for it nicely.

Miss Bunion: Oh!!! (*Deep breath - then, with obvious effort*) Dear Cornelius, I should esteem it a great favour if you would be willing to assist me in a small magical experiment. Of course, if it's too much trouble, I would not dream of imposing....

Cornelius: (*Coming on stage: he is indeed a crow*) That's better. Now what seems to be the trouble?

Miss Bunion: (*Hereafter DAISY CORNPLASTER*) This girl Aurora. It's most important that I find her.

Cornelius: Why?

Daisy: I need her for a spell.

Cornelius: Which spell?

Daisy: (*Hesitation - then rather shamefacedly*)Number 13 in Spells, Ancient and Modern.

Cornelius: Oh - THAT spell.

Daisy: Yes.

Cornelius: Well, if you INSIST on trying that....Where did you lose her?

Daisy: I didn't LOSE her, fathead!

Cornelius: Now, now!

Daisy: Sorry. I locked her in here, in this room - and she's escaped. Someone's helping her.

Cornelius: And you want to know who?

Daisy: Yes.

Cornelius: Well I think you are just about to find out - you'd better hide.

(DAISY and CORNELIUS hide. Enter BORIS and AURORA)

Aurora: Well I didn't like THAT book: I didn't even understand what he was talking about! Come to that I didn't even understand what *I* was talking about!

Boris: You have to make allowances you know - he's quite mad.

Aurora: Mad?

Boris: Absolutely! Nutty as a fruit cake.

Aurora: And you let me stay there with him?

Boris: Well you escaped from Daisy didn't you? Oops, it slipped out!

Aurora: Who's Daisy? You'd better tell me everything now.

Boris: Miss Bunion. Her real name's Daisy Cornplaster and she's a witch. A very wicked witch.

Aurora: Well I still don't think you should have left me alone with HIM. You never know what might have happened!

Boris: Oh but I do! You see I've read the book. He kills your father and you fall out of a tree and drown.

Aurora: !!!!

Boris: But not until Act Four: That was only Act Three.

Aurora: I'd have been safer with Daisy What's-her-name.

Daisy: *(Leaping out of hiding)* Of course you would my dear!

Boris: Quick - into this book!

(BORIS grabs AURORA and drags her off)

Daisy: Oh-ho! So that's the game is it? Well two can play at that!

(DAISY rushes after them. CORNELIUS comes out of hiding)

Cornelius: Huh! Humans!

(Blackout. When the lights come up the stage is empty)

Voice off: Agatha! Aren't you ready yet?

Voice opposite: Coming Hilda.

(CINDERELLA'S ugly sisters enter from opposite sides)

Agatha: My dear, you're not going like that!

Hilda: And why not?

Agatha: But just LOOK at yourself! You know perfectly well that green doesn't suit you; you look quite frightful!

Hilda: Oh do I? Well you're no oil painting yourself - you've got bags under your eyes like coal sacks and you'll have to lay off the gin - your nose looks like a road map.

Agatha: Oh yes? Well I'm not going out with you - you'll frighten the horses.

Hilda: Well at least they'll know I'm not one of them!

Agatha: Call me a horse would you?

Hilda: All right, you're a horse.

Agatha: Oooh! take that - and that....

(There follows an ad lib battle with handbags etc. which continues until a footman enters)

Footman: Ahem!

(When the SISTERS realise they are being watched they compose themselves: all is sweetness and light)

Agatha: What is it Robert?

Footman: This was delivered to you my ladies - by special messenger. From the palace.

Hilda: From the palace!

Agatha: Here, let me see.

(The battle shows every sign of breaking out again but the SISTERS remember themselves. AGATHA opens it.)

Agatha: It's an invitation - to a ball.

(HILDA snatches the invitation)

Hilda: 'His Majesty requests the pleasure'....'coming of age of his son'....but Agatha, it's addressed to THREE of us!

Agatha: THREE of us? But there are only TWO of us!

Hilda: You don't think it means Cinders?

Agatha: Cinders? Impossible - quite out of the question - it's a mistake - what a ridiculous idea!

Hilda: Yes of course, ridiculous!

Agatha: Where is the girl anyway? She must help us to get ready: there'll be a lot of sewing to do.

Hilda: It's going to take me WEEKS to prepare - and my hair's so out of condition!

Agatha: Yes - I see what you mean.

Hilda: Well there's no need to be like that.

Agatha: Oh come on Hilda, we've too much to do.

(AGATHA forcefully escorts HILDA off stage. Enter AURORA as CINDERELLA. She carries a broom)

Cinderella: Oh, a ball! At the palace! THEY think I didn't hear but I did - and I AM invited! But what's the use? I'd never be allowed to go; I'm just a slave - made to do this and that; bring this, bring that - all day long. But oh, how I wish that just for once I could go to a ball! Perhaps even dance with the prince himself!

(She shakes herself back to reality and sweeps her way off stage.)

(BORIS is spotlighted, reading from 'the book')

Boris: 'For many days the house was full of hustle and a great deal of bustle'....

(Enter AGATHA in corsets and bloomers)

Agatha: Hilda! Help me into these corsets.

Hilda: *(Entering in curlers)* Why can't you get Cinders to do it? You know I'm in the middle of a shampoo and set!

Agatha: Never mind that - get hold of these laces and pull - harder! - ooh - harder!
(ROBERT enters)

Agatha: *(Still in an undignified position)* What is it now?

Robert: I beg your pardon madam, but the dressmaker is here.

Agatha: Oh, hear that Hilda? Come on.!

Hilda: Me first! Oh I just know I shall look stunning in purple satin!

Agatha: Humph! You'll look about as stunning as a sledgehammer dropped off the stable roof....

(By this time the SISTERS are off stage leaving the FOOTMAN staring after them)

Robert: It's all a waste of time - if they had the best dressmaker in the world, they'd still look dreadful. *(Enter CINDERELLA carrying a large basket of clean linen).* Why, Miss Cinderella - here, let me take that....

Cinderella: Oh, thank you Robert, just put it over there please.

Robert: Aren't you going to the ball Miss? You were invited you know.

Cinderella: Oh I wish that I were! But no-one takes any notice of me - I have to stay here and do all the cleaning and mending.

Robert: But why don't you just go anyway?

Cinderella: If only I could! If I could just drive up to the palace in my own carriage and see all those grand people in wonderful clothes and all the candles burning in the crystal chandeliers and hear the music and....oh, but Robert, I would be most terribly afraid -

Robert: Afraid? Of what?

Cinderella: That no-one would want to dance with me!

Robert: I should like to dance with you.

Cinderella: Would you?

Robert: Yes. *(Gently, he bows to her and she returns a curtsey, then he takes her in his arms and they waltz gracefully round the stage. The dance ends and he continues to hold her tenderly....)*

Cinderella: Thank you Robert, but it's all a dream - I could never go dressed like this.

(There is a flash and a bang and DAISY appears as the Fairy Godmother)

Daisy: But you SHALL go to the ball!

Cinderella: Oh! Who are you?

Daisy: My dear, I'm your Fairy Godmother!

Cinderella: Just a minute....oh no you're not! You're Miss Bunion - I mean Daisy Cornplaster! You're a witch!

Daisy: My child! How could you think that? Come here....

Cinderella: Get away from me! Robert, come with me, please!

Robert: Anything you say princess, but where are we going?

Cinderella: *(Wildly)* Anywhere - this way! *(They rush off stage)*

Daisy: *(In a temper)* Oh BOTHER the girl, NOW where's she gone? Cornelius! Oh where are you, you wretched crow? *(She stamps off)*

(Blackout. When the lights come up again we find the stage empty except for a gentleman in academic dress drawing complicated diagrams on a blackboard. The subject can be any encyclopaedia entry. Enter AURORA and ROBERT)

Robert: Where are we?

Aurora: I haven't the slightest idea - but at least we seem to have given Daisy the slip.

Robert: That's all very well but what do we do now?

Aurora: I don't know. Haven't you got any ideas?

Robert: I'm afraid not - you see, I'm only a character in a book: I've never been out of my own story before.

Aurora: But you MUST have some ideas!

Robert: None. It's always been very simple before: the Fairy Godmother dressed you in beautiful clothes and gave you a coach made out of a pumpkin and sent you to the ball where the prince fell in love with you and you forgot all about me.

Aurora: Oh, Robert!

Robert: Oh it doesn't matter - I'm used to being forgotten - that's the way it was written. But now Daisy has changed everything and I don't know what happens next.

Aurora: Neither do I but we're going to MAKE something happen.

Robert: I say, are we? That'll be something! - but how?

Aurora: I don't know yet - but I'm beginning to get an idea. Come on, we've got to find someone.

Robert: Who?

Aurora: Someone who can help us.

Robert: Where do we find this person?

Aurora: He's not a person; he's a worm.

Robert: Ugh!

Aurora: A BOOKworm.

Robert: Where do we look?

Aurora: Anywhere.

Robert: Doesn't sound much to go on.

Aurora: I'll try calling him. Boris!

Robert: Ssh! Suppose Daisy hears you?

Aurora: We'll just have to risk that.

Robert: O.K. What did you say his name was?

Aurora: Boris. You go over there and call, and I'll go over here. Right?

Robert: Right.

(They go to opposite sides of the stage and begin to call 'Boris'. BORIS enters behind them)

Boris: Boo!

Aurora: } Boris!

Robert: } Ow!

Boris: Hello.

Aurora: Don't ever do that again! You frightened us.

Boris: Sorry - just a little joke. I've been reading a book of ghost stories. What are you doing in an encyclopaedia?

Aurora: Is THAT where we are?

Boris: Yes. Encyclopaedia Britannica, volume nine. Don't come here much myself - gives me indigestion.

Aurora: Well we didn't choose to come here but we're still trying to get away from Daisy.

Boris: Oh yes, Daisy. You won't escape I'm afraid.

Robert: You mean she's going to catch us? Do you know where she is?

Boris: The last time I saw her she was in the middle of 'The Wizard of Oz' but I don't think she'll stay there long: she knows how that story ends.

Aurora: What do you mean?

Boris: Well the witch gets killed - pushed into her own cauldron you know.

Robert: So you think she'll get out before the end?

Boris: Wouldn't you?

Aurora: But what are we going to do? She can't chase us through every book in the library.

Boris: She will if she has to. You're as safe here as anywhere.

Aurora: But we can't stay here in the middle of a lecture on - on - whatever it IS on!

Robert: Why does Daisy want Aurora anyway?

Boris: Ah now that is a very interesting question. Opinions vary on the subject of witches' use of young girls. Clearly they are required for magical purposes, or spells, but as to the exact nature of those spells....

Aurora: Boris!

Boris: Sorry - but you did ask.

Aurora: It doesn't matter two hoots....

Boris: Don't say that!

Aurora: What?

Boris: Two hoots.

Aurora: Whyever not?

Boris: Owls. Owls are birds. Birds eat worms.

Aurora: Sorry.

Boris: Which reminds me - she's got that crow with her.

Aurora: Crow?

Boris: Yes, crow. A particularly nasty and morose bird. Black. Watch out for him.

Aurora: Have you any idea at all about how we can escape from Daisy?

Boris: Yes.

Aurora: Then TELL us!

Boris: Don't shout at me or I shall go back to Jane Austen and SHE has some VERY cutting things to say about young girls! Nice woman though - once referred to me as 'gentle reader' - that's nice you know....

Aurora: Please, Boris, tell us how to outwit Daisy!

Boris: Well, all right. You have to trap her.

Robert: How?

Boris: By getting her to follow you into a book which she hasn't read.

Robert: I don't follow you.

Boris: No, SHE follows YOU.

Aurora: Oh, PLEASE explain, Boris!

Boris: Well, if you can get her to chase you into a book where the witch comes to a sticky end....

Aurora: Like 'The Wizard of Oz'?

Robert: And she doesn't KNOW what's going to happen....

Aurora: Then it will have happened before she realises it!

Boris: Precisely.

Aurora: Boris, you're a genius!

Boris: Oh not really. I just read a lot.

Aurora: Oh, but there's another problem.

Boris: What's that?

Aurora: I don't know any books like that. And even if I did, how do we know that Daisy hasn't read them?

Boris: Easy. What IS Daisy?

Robert: A witch of course!

Boris: But what else is she?

Aurora: A schoolteacher?

Boris: Exactly! So it follows that she won't have read any really INTERESTING books doesn't it?

Aurora: W-e-ll; if you say so. What do you suggest?

Boris: Do you remember 'Alice in Wonderland'?

Aurora: Yes, but there aren't any witches in that.

Boris: But don't you see, if Daisy is to follow you into a book she must become one of the characters? Now who is the most unpleasant character in 'Alice in Wonderland'?

Aurora: The Queen I suppose.

Boris: Right - and what happens at the end?

Aurora: There's a trial scene.

Boris: Right again. And what happens to the Queen?

Aurora: I don't remember.

Boris: Oh dear, oh dear - we'll have to look it up. Now there must be a copy around here somewhere - come on, let's get out of this encyclopaedia, this chap's giving me an inferiority complex.

(Exeunt. Fade to blackout. when the lights come up the stage is again empty. Enter BORIS, AURORA and ROBERT - BORIS is carrying a book)

Boris: Here we are; now let me see, last page but one, yes: now read that.

Aurora: *(Takes book and reads)* 'Let the jury consider their verdict', the King said, for about the twentieth time that day. 'No,no!' said the Queen. 'Sentence first - verdict afterwards.'

'Stuff and nonsense!' said Alice loudly. 'The idea of having the sentence first!'

'Hold your tongue!' said the Queen, turning purple.

'I won't!' said Alice. 'Off with her head!' the Queen shouted at the top of her voice. Nobody moved.

'Who cares for you?' said Alice, 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'

At this the whole pack rose up in the air, and came flying down upon her; she gave a little scream, half of fright and half of anger, and tried to beat them off, and found herself lying on the bank, with her head in the lap of her sister, who was gently brushing away some dead leaves that had fluttered down from the trees upon her face.

'Wake up, Alice dear!' said her sister. 'Why, what a long sleep you've had!'

'Oh I've had such a curious dream!' said Alice....

Robert: So Daisy finishes up as a playing card....

Aurora:and it was all a dream!

Robert: It might work.

Aurora: It HAS to work - oh Boris, thank you! Boris? What's the matter?

Boris: By the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked this way comes - it's Daisy, but more to the point she's got that confounded bird with her - sorry, but I must be off! Good luck! *(BORIS scuttles off)*

Daisy: *(off)* There they are, after them!

(In her hurry to escape, AURORA drops the book. Blackout. Lights up on Library.)

Enter SCHOOLGIRLS)

1st Girl: Jonesy! Hey - Rory!

2nd Girl: Funny - where's she gone?

3rd Girl: She's hiding. Another of her stupid jokes. Come on out, we know you're here!

2nd Girl: (*Ostentatiously loudly*) Well, if she doesn't WANT to know that old Bunion's done a bunk....

1st Girl:and that she doesn't HAVE to stay here in this boring old library....

3rd Girl:then why should WE care?

(They wait, listening for some response from AURORA)

4th Girl: Perhaps Bunion's kidnapped her?

1st Girl: And locked her up in a dark dungeon!

3rd Girl: Or sold her as a slave to an Arab Sheik!

2nd Girl: She's crazy! I bet she's just wandered off somewhere.

4th Girl: How could she? The door was locked and the key was on the outside.

2nd Girl: She could have climbed through the window.

1st Girl: Oh, come on: it's Friday night and I've got better things to do than hang around school.

2nd Girl: Better pick this book up. (*Picks 'Alice' off the floor where AURORA dropped it and flicks through*) Hey, look at this picture!

4th Girl: What about it?

2nd Girl: Well, does it remind you of anyone?

4th Girl: (*takes book and glances at the cover*) 'Alice in Wonderland' (*looks at the picture*) Hey! It's Bunion!

2nd Girl: And? Who else?

3rd Girl: Here, let me see - Jonesy! (*They crowd round, laughing at the picture*)

4th Girl: It's Bunion all right - I'd know those ears anywhere!

2nd Girl: (*MISS BUNION impression*) Aurora Jones, you have not handed in your History homework. Off with her head! (*General laughter*)

1st Girl: Oh, come on you lot; last one to the bus stop pays the fares!

(Laughter changes to squeals of excitement as they rush out, dropping the book once more on the floor. Blackout. Lights up. Enter DAISY, followed by CORNELIUS)

Daisy: Quick, that way!

(CORNELIUS stops to pick up the book)

Oh what is it? Come on, we haven't time to waste looking at books - follow me! Tally-ho!

(CORNELIUS is looking curiously at the book, obviously reading the end. He looks darkly after DAISY)

Cornelius: You might just be glad I picked this up! (*Walks thoughtfully after*

DAISY).
(Blackout)
END OF ACT I

ACT II

(The Act begins in darkness with confused chatter and a great deal of sneezing. Slowly a spot comes up on Alice [AURORA] who is standing on a high rostrum at the front of the stage)

King: Give your evidence.

Cook: Shan't.

White Rabbit: Your Majesty must cross-examine this witness.

King: Well, if I must, I must. What are the tarts made of?

Cook: Pepper mostly.

Dormouse: Treacle.

Queen (Daisy): Collar that dormouse! Behead that dormouse! Turn that dormouse out of court! Suppress him! Pinch him! Off with his whiskers!

(Much confusion as the court assembles, still in the dark, on the stage)

White Rabbit: I'm afraid, Your Majesty, that the Cook has disappeared.

King: Never mind. Call the next witness. Really my dear, you must cross-examine the next witness. It quite makes my forehead ache!

Alice: Well they haven't got much evidence yet!

White Rabbit: The next witness is - Alice!

(At this the lights come up suddenly to reveal a motley crew, 'Wonderland characters' reacting as if they had been physically hit by the light - cowering, falling backwards off seats etc. - creating still more confusion)

Alice: Oh, I do beg your pardon! I didn't mean to startle you.

King: The trial cannot proceed until ALL the jurymen are back in their proper places! *(The chaos slowly subsides)* What do you know about this business?

Alice: Nothing.

King: Nothing whatever?

Alice: Nothing whatever.

King: *(to jury)* That's very important.

White Rabbit: UNimportant, Your Majesty means, of course.

King: UNimportant, of course, I meant. *(To himself)* Unimportant? Important? Unimportant? *(ad libs of 'What does he mean?': 'Does he mean Important?' etc. from the jury)* Silence! *(reads)* Rule forty-two: 'All persons more than a mile high to leave the court!'

Alice: I'm not a mile high!

King: You are!

Queen: Nearly two miles high.

Alice: Well I shan't go at any rate: besides that's not a regular rule: you invented it just now!

King: It's the oldest rule in the book!

Alice: Then it ought to be number One.

King: *(to jury)* Consider your verdict.

White Rabbit: There's more evidence to come yet. Your Majesty: this paper has just been picked up.

Queen: What's in it?

White Rabbit: I haven't opened it yet but it seems to be a letter, written by the prisoner to - to somebody.

King: It must have been that, unless it was written to nobody, which isn't usual you know.

Queen: Who is it directed to?

White Rabbit: It isn't directed at all. In fact there isn't anything written on the OUTSIDE. *(Unfolds the paper)* It isn't a letter after all: it's a set of verses.

Queen: Are they in the prisoner's handwriting?

White Rabbit: No they're not, and that's the queerest thing about it.

King: He must have imitated someone else's hand.

Knave: *(the prisoner at the bar - ROBERT)* Please Your Majesty, I didn't write it, and they can't prove that I did: there's no name signed at the end.

King: If you didn't sign it that only makes the matter worse. You MUST have meant some mischief, or else you'd have signed your name like an honest man.

Queen: This proves his guilt of course, so off with his....

Alice: It doesn't prove anything of the sort - why, you don't even know what they're about!

King: Read them.

White Rabbit: Where shall I begin, please, Your Majesty?

King: Begin at the beginning and go on till you come to the end: then stop.

White Rabbit: *(reads)*

'They told me you had been to her
And mentioned me to him:
She gave me a good character,
But said I could not swim.

He sent them word I had not gone
(We know it to be true):
If she should push the matter on,
What would become of you?

I gave her one, they gave him two,
You gave us three or more:
They all returned from him to you

Though they were mine before.

If I or she should chance to be
Involved in this affair,
He trusts to you to set them free
Exactly as we were.

My motion was that you had been
(Before she had this fit)
An obstacle that came between
Him, and ourselves, and it.

Don't let him know she liked them best,
For this must ever be
A secret, kept from all the rest,
Between yourself and me.'

King: That's the most important piece of evidence we've heard yet - so now let the jury....

Alice: If any of them can explain it, I'll give him sixpence. I don't believe there's an atom of meaning in it.

King: If there's no meaning in it, that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn't try to find any. And yet I don't know - I seem to see some meaning in them after all - 'said I could not swim' - (*to KNAVE*) you CAN'T swim can you?

Knave: No.

King: All right so far - 'We know it to be true' - that's the jury of course - 'If she should push the matter on' - that must be the Queen - 'What would become of you?' What indeed! - 'I gave her one, they gave him two' - why, that must be what he did with the tarts you know -

Alice: But it goes on 'They all returned from him to you'....

King: Why there they are (*pointing at the tarts*). Nothing can be clearer than that. Then again - 'Before she had this fit' - you never had fits, my dear, I think?

Queen: Never!

King: Then the words don't FIT you. (*Triumphantly: then, as he is met only by a puzzled silence*) It's a pun! (*General laughter*) Let the jury consider their verdict.

Queen: No, no! Sentence first - verdict afterwards.

Alice: Stuff and nonsense! The idea of having the sentence first!

Queen: Hold your tongue!

Alice: I won't!

Cornelius: *(who has been standing at the back of the court, still holding the book)*
Ahem! If I might have a word your Majesty.

Queen: Be quiet! Off with her....

Cornelius: *(warning)* Your Majesty!

Queen: Oh what is it?

CORNELIUS goes over and whispers in the Queen's ear - her eyes grow wider and wider - he shows her the book) So that's the plan! Why you! Just you wait!
Clear out, all of you!

(There is again general confusion as everyone tries to leave the stage at once. DAISY, dropping all pretence of being the QUEEN, tries to scramble onto the rostrum occupied by 'ALICE' but slips and falls)

Daisy: Ow! - Oh, my leg!

(ROBERT helps AURORA off the rostrum and they dash off)

Cornelius! Help me up!

Cornelius: *(Helping DAISY, who, with much grunting and effort, eventually manages to stand up)* What now?

Daisy: What now? By all that's wicked, after them!

Cornelius: Don't you think you ought to give up?

Daisy: Give up? What are you, man or mouse?

Cornelius: Bird, actually.

Daisy: Oh, come on! Ow! *(She finds difficulty in walking)* Fetch my broomstick!

Cornelius: You left it in Oz.

Daisy: Then you'll have to carry me.

Cornelius: CARRY you?

Daisy: Yes, come here. *(With some difficulty she succeeds in getting on his back, piggy-back fashion)* Now fly! *(They run off giving as good an impression of a heavily loaded aeroplane taking off from a very short runway as possible. The stage is bare. After a short pause, enter BORIS who stands and looks sadly round).*

Boris: Oh dear!

(Blackout. When the lights come up again, AURORA is lying on the rostrum, apparently dead. DAISY and CORNELIUS 'fly' across the stage)

Daisy: Tarantara! Tally Ho! View Haloo! Up and at 'em! etc. *(Just before they exit, DAISY double-takes)* Whoa! what have we here midears? *(Dismounts - CORNELIUS staggers and finally sits down in a most undignified and uncrowlike position)*

Cornelius: Phew! Either I'm getting old or SHE'S getting fat.

Daisy: Well, well! Now isn't this interesting? Our pretty little runaway fast asleep!
Cornelius! Cornelius!

Cornelius: *(resigned)* What?

Daisy: Don't you speak to me like that! You overgrown budgerigar! Get me my magic bag.

Cornelius: You left that in Oz too.

Daisy: What? You, you incompetent, feather-brained nincompoop!

Cornelius: So! I'm feather-brained! What else does she expect a bird to be?

Daisy: Why didn't you remember to bring it?

Cornelius: Why didn't *I* remember to bring it?

Daisy: Oh, it doesn't matter - give me a pair of scissors.

Cornelius: Scissors?

Daisy: Scissors. *(to a very dim pupil)* S-I-Z-E-R-S. Scissors! to cut off her hair - which I need for spell number 13!

Cornelius: In 'Spells, Ancient and Modern'?

Daisy: Precisely. Now GIVE ME SOME SCISSORS!

Cornelius: I haven't got any.

Daisy: Blistering Bunions, you feathered fathead, I need SCISSORS!

Cornelius: Ssh! *(indicating AURORA)*

Daisy: !!!! *(Torn between rage and the need for silence)*

Cornelius: Perhaps they've got some.

Daisy: Who?

Cornelius: That lot. *(Indicates audience)*

Daisy: Who are they?

Cornelius: No idea.

Daisy: Oh well, it's worth a try. You take that side. *(DAISY and CORNELIUS move through the audience asking for scissors - DAISY aggressively, CORNELIUS apologetically. A pair must be 'planted' somewhere for DAISY to find. With a scream of triumphant delight....)* Got some! Aha! And now for Aurora!

(During the search for the scissors, BORIS has come on and is now holding AURORA'S wrist very medically and checking her pulse with the aid of an enormous watch. As DAISY and CORNELIUS return rapidly to the stage, they see BORIS and screech to a halt)

Cornelius: Food! Yum-yum! *(Advances slowly and menacingly)*

Daisy: You! What do you want? Get away from that girl!

Boris: Certainly madam, but you are wasting your time.

Daisy: What do you mean?

Boris: If you will call off your tame vulture, then I will explain.

Daisy: All right - pack it in Cornelius.

Cornelius: *(Who has by this time tied a napkin round his neck and is brandishing a knife and fork)* Ohhh! *(tears off napkin, throws knife, fork and napkin on the floor, turns round and sulks)*

Daisy: Now what do you mean, I'm wasting my time? Daisy Cornplaster never

wastes time!

Boris: Am I correct in assuming that you require this girl for some magical experiment?

Daisy: I certainly do. I need her hair.

Boris: Am I correct in also assuming that for the practice of magic the subject, or victim, must be in good health?

Daisy: Yes - (*impatently*) Now get out of my way before she wakes up.

Boris: Well that, I'm afraid, is rather the point.

Daisy: What is?

Boris: She isn't going to wake up.

Daisy: What do you mean, 'she isn't going to wake up'?

Boris: She appears to be dead.

Daisy: WHAT? (*Grabs hold of Aurora's wrist*) What kind of book is this? Cornelius - fly back to the beginning and see which book we're in!

Cornelius: Shan't.

Daisy: Oh, you won't eh? Then I shall just have to cut all your feathers, one by one. (*Dashes over and grabs his 'tail'*)

Cornelius: Caw! (*They exit, pursued and pursuer*)

Boris: Phew! I'm glad that bird's gone - that was a near thing. Now I'd better find Robert. (*Exit. After a pause, Robert enters from the opposite side*)

Robert: Aurora! Aurora! (*sees her*) Aurora! Wake up! (*Examines her closely*) Oh no! She's....she's dead! Now what do I do? I'm in the wrong book and I'm on my own. Oh dear - it looks as if Daisy has won after all - she must be responsible for this. But I can't leave her here - there must be something I can do. Oh, if only I hadn't lost Boris as well! (*Sees the audience for the first time*) Hello! I wonder whether you can help me - have you seen Boris? Do you know who I mean? Has he been here? Which way did he go? (*ad lib as necessary until a direction is established*) That way? Thank you.

(*Exit. DAISY swoops in*)

Daisy: So, my Sleeping Beauty! But you're still no use to me like that! We must get you out of this spell immediately - restore you to your health and strength - ha-ha! Now then Cornelius - Cornelius! Drat that bird, where is he now?

Cornelius: (*Who has come quietly on from the opposite direction to that in which Daisy is looking*) Here.

Daisy: (*startled*) Ooo! Come here. Now all we have to do is to find the antidote to the sleeping spell, then when she wakes up we grab her and cut her hair off! Easy.

Cornelius: No.

Daisy: What do you mean?

Cornelius: It is the opinion of my late tutor, Professor Lucifer of the University of

Oxford, a man I might say of international reputation in the field of magic, that there is only one known antidote to this type of spell.

Daisy: And what does your famous professor say it is?

Cornelius: That the victim can only be awakened by a kiss from a prince.

Daisy: Rubbish.

Cornelius: I can only remind you that Professor Lucifer is....

Daisy:a man of international reputation - I know! But Daisy Cornplaster knows a trick or two as well. First we'll try pepper.

Cornelius: (*dropping his urbanity in his surprise*) Pepper? Caw!

Daisy: And I think I might just have some here. (*Produces 'pepper' from her copious costume*) Now, watch this. (*Shakes 'pepper' liberally around the stage: no effect on AURORA but reduces both DAISY and CORNELIUS to fits of sneezing. Eventually after the sneezing has been 'milked' for all it is worth:*)

Cornelius: That didn't work.

Daisy: I can see that, you fatuous fool!

Cornelius: What next?

Daisy: Burning feathers sometimes works.

Cornelius: But we haven't any - oh, no! No!

Daisy: Oh come here, I only want one!

(*A chase brought abruptly to a close by CORNELIUS*)

Cornelius: But we haven't any matches!

Daisy: Then why didn't you say so at first?

Cornelius: May I suggest a prince?

Daisy: And where do we find a prince? (*To audience*) Excuse me, but is there a prince in the house? You feather-brained apology for a parrot! Well?

Cornelius: Well, this is a castle -

Daisy: I didn't think it was Heathrow Airport.

Cornelius: - so it will have a moat -

Daisy: Into which I shall throw YOU if you don't come up with some sensible ideas.

Cornelius: - in which there will be frogs.

Daisy: (*It is DAISY'S turn to be astounded*) Frogs!

Cornelius: It is a well-known fact, to REAL magicians, that princes are easily turned into frogs so presumably the converse is also true.

Daisy: That must be just about the daftest idea you've ever had.

Cornelius: Have you a better one?

Daisy: Find me a frog.

(*Fade. Lights come up: the scene is the same but DAISY and CORNELIUS have gone. BORIS enters warily - realising that he is alone he becomes bolder and*

steps forward to address the audience)

Boris: Ahem! Excuse me. I realise that you have come here to enjoy yourselves and I really hate to bother you at a time like this but have you seen Robert? (*ad lib if necessary until an affirmative answer is received*) You have? Oh good. I wonder whether you would mind very much telling me which way he went? (*ad lib again*) That way? This way?

(*By this time ROBERT has entered from the rear looking behind him: they circle round the rostrum, backs to each other, until they collide*)

Boris: } Oh!! Where have you been?

Robert: } There you are! Thank goodness I've found you!

(*Pause*)

Robert: } Something dreadful's happened to Aurora....

Boris: } We've got to do something quickly....

(*Pause*)

Boris: } I'm terribly sorry old man....

Robert: } After you....

(*Pause*)

Boris: We've got to do something quickly before Daisy gets back.

Robert: What can we do? Aurora's dead and I'm in the wrong story and that horrible witch is still around and....and....(*sob*)

(*BORIS produces an enormous handkerchief: ROBERT blows his nose noisily*)

Boris: Have you finished?

Robert: Yes.

Boris: Well then. Aurora isn't dead.

Robert: Isn't dead?

Boris: No. We're in a story called 'The Sleeping Beauty'. She's only asleep.

Robert: Then all we have to do is wake her up!

Boris: Ah, well, that's the snag you see.

Robert: No, I don't see.

Boris: According to the story, she will sleep until she is awakened by a kiss from a prince.

Robert: (*With heavy sarcasm*) Oh, that's just great - where do we find a prince?

Boris: Well....

Robert: Yes?

Boris: I don't know. But let me think.

Robert: All right, but think quickly.

(*BORIS settles down to 'think'. ROBERT paces up and down*)

Robert: Have you thought?

Boris: Not yet. (*More pacing*)

Robert: Well?

Boris: Oh do be quiet!

Robert: Be quiet! That's marvellous that is! We've got a comatose princess and a psychotic witch on our hands and I'm supposed to be quiet while he thinks where to find an out-of-work prince!

Boris: That's it.

Robert: What is?

Boris: Say it again.

Robert: Say what again?

Boris: What you just said.

Robert: You mean 'what is'?

Boris: No, before that!

Robert: I can't remember.

Boris: Something about a comatose princess and a psychotic witch and....

Robert: An out-of-work prince.

Boris: That's it! An out-of-work prince

Robert: I don't see how that helps.

Boris: I think I might just be able to find one.

Robert: Where?

Boris: Come with me.

Robert: This is ridiculous! You don't just find them hanging around street corners you know.

Boris: This one does - now are you coming or not?

Robert: No.

Daisy: (*off stage*) Come on, this way - careful! Idiot!

Robert: I mean yes!

Boris: Right. (*DAISY enters from the same direction which the two are about to take*) Good afternoon ma'am (*exit*)

(*CORNELIUS, who is following DAISY, stops and stares at ROBERT who is following BORIS. ROBERT is frozen in indecision*)

Cornelius: Mistress!

Robert: Boris! (*BORIS pops his head back*)

Cornelius: } We can't let them get away....

Robert: } We can't leave Aurora here with them....

Daisy: } Let them go!

Boris: } Are you coming or not?

(*ROBERT exits*)

Daisy: Now bring that frog here. (*CORNELIUS, who is holding a long rope, hauls on it. THE FROG hops into view. DAISY positions herself in front of it*) Now listen here frog. You're to do exactly as I say. Do you understand?

Frog: Croak!

Daisy: Stay there. Now what did I do with that recipe book? *(During DAISY'S frantic search through her cloak, the FROG calmly hops away)* Hey! Come back here! Pull on that rope you fool!*(CORNELIUS pulls but the frog is too strong and he is pulled wildly round the stage in pursuit. DAISY joins in - complete chaos reigns until the frog is overpowered and DAISY sits on it to the accompaniment of much croaking)* Right you tie it up! *(CORNELIUS ties it - much ad libbing of 'tighter'; 'I can't'; 'hurry up'; 'I'm doing my best' etc.)* There now, get out of that!

Frog: *(subdued)* Croak.

Daisy: Right, where were we? Oh yes. Ah, here it is: 'The Compleat Conjuror' or 'The Witch's Vade Mecum'. Now, let me see: 'Parsnips; pentacles; pimples; princes' - here we are: 'to change frogs into princes: take one frog' - we've got that - 'place him in the centre of a magic circle' - right - *(DAISY 'draws' a circle on the ground)* You! In there! *(They bundle the FROG into the 'circle')* 'Weave a circle round him thrice' *(mysterious passes - much mumbling)* 'Put your right leg in, put your right leg out, in, out, in, out, and shake it all about' *(They both do)* And say the magic word: ATISHOO!

Cornelius: Bless you!

(Tremendous bang as the lights go out to complete blackout - when they come up again, a PRINCESS is standing where the frog was before)

(Horried silence)

Daisy: Of all the incompetent, idiotic, and downright stupid things you've ever done, this the stupidest!

Cornelius: Now just a minute! It isn't my fault that you can't get a simple spell right.

Daisy: Isn't your fault? Isn't your fault? Oh, no - you just brought THE WRONG SEX OF FROG!

Cornelius: Well won't she do as well as Aurora?

Daisy: Of course not! Look at her hair! I can't use hair that colour! *(It is, of course, green)*

Cornelius: Oh well, if you're going to be so particular...

Daisy: Get moving!

Cornelius: Where to?

Daisy: You are going to catch another frog!

(CORNELIUS is pushed off by DAISY)

(ROBERT and BORIS enter with HAMLET)

Boris: It really is most kind of you to help us.

Hamlet: That's OK man: had a few scenes off anyway. Supposed to be on my way to England y'know - as long as I'm back in time to be captured by the pirates

- man, those guys are real mean.

Robert: Er, look; are you sure you're really a prince?

Hamlet: Sure I am - should have been king but my uncle got in first. Still, he's got it coming to him. Now where's this broad you want me to kiss?

Boris: Here - just a minute: who are you?

Frog Princess: I'm not sure: I - I think I ought to be a frog but something seems to have happened to me.

Boris: Daisy's doing, I'll bet. You'd better stay with us. Untie her Robert. (*ROBERT does so*) (*To HAMLET*) Now Your Highness, this is Aurora.

Hamlet: Say, she's a real cute chick - it'll be a pleasure. (*Prepares to give Aurora the full Valentino treatment*)

Boris: (*drily*) No need to indulge yourself, just a kiss will do.

Hamlet: Oh, sure, yeh. (*Kisses AURORA*)

Aurora: Where am I? (*Recognises HAMLET*) Aaagh! Not you again! (*She springs up - ROBERT rushes to her*)

Robert: It's all right Aurora, this is Prince Hamlet; I'll explain later.

Aurora: And who is this?

Boris: Unless I am very much mistaken, this young lady is one of Daisy's mistakes.

Robert: How do you mean?

Boris: You say that you are really a frog?

Frog Princess: Well I think so: I can remember swimming about in the castle moat and being caught by a horrible black bird and then an old woman changed me into....into what I am now.

Boris: She tried to change you into a prince but got a princess instead.

Frog Princess: You mean - I'm a princess?

Boris: I'm afraid so - a princess without a story.

Robert: But what are we going to do with her? Begging your pardon miss.

Boris: We shall have to take her with us.

Frog Princess: Oh no! I mean it's very kind of you I'm sure, but I belong here. I'd be too frightened to leave.

Robert: But we can't just leave you here.

Aurora: I think we could, Boris, could she not take my place, and then she WOULD have a story.

Boris: Of course! Why didn't I think of it? Would YOU like to be the Sleeping Beauty and stay here until your prince awakens you?

Frog Princess: Could I? Oh yes, please!

Boris: Right, well lie down just as Aurora was....(*She does so*) That's it; now....

Robert: But how do we put her to sleep?

Boris: Well in the story, the princess pricked her finger with an enchanted spindle.

Robert: And where do we find that?

Hamlet: Say, man, is this it? Found it lying by the couch.

Boris: Let me see; yes, this could be it. Now my dear, this won't hurt - are you ready?

Frog Princess: Yes, oh thank you! Goodbye everyone. (*BORIS 'pricks' the PRINCESS'S finger and she falls asleep*)

Boris: There we are - we have a Sleeping Beauty again.

Robert: But we still have Daisy to deal with.

(*Sounds off of 'Come along': 'this way' etc.*)

Aurora: And pretty soon.

Robert: Here we go again.

Hamlet: Leave this dame to me - I'll stall her.

Boris: Right, come along you two. (*Exeunt*)

(*Enter DAISY and CORNELIUS with another frog*)

Daisy: Right, into the circle - wait a minute: I smell trickery. What have we here? Why!!! (*A scream of rage*) I'll pay them back for this! I'll settle them! I'll turn them into....into....oh.... (*another scream of rage*)

Cornelius: Something wrong mistress?

Daisy: Something wrong? Something wrong? Can't you see you blithering blockhead? They've substituted the frog princess. (*HAMLET steps forward*) And who are you?

Hamlet: Mother.

Daisy: No, you're wrong: there's some mistake.

Hamlet: Mother.

Daisy: What do you want? (*To CORNELIUS*) Do something, sparrow-brain.

Hamlet: Mother.

Daisy: What have I done?

Hamlet: Such an act that blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite, takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
and sets a blister there, makes marriage vows
As false as dicers' oaths. O such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul
And sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words!

Daisy: Help! He's mad! Call him off somebody.

(*In confusion HAMLET pursues everyone off stage*)

Hamlet: Heaven's face does glow
O'er this solidity and compound mass
With heated visage, as against the doom

Is thoughtsick at the act.

(Fade to Blackout. The lights come up on a cold bare stage, AURORA, BORIS and ROBERT centre)

Robert: Now what?

Aurora: We've given Daisy the slip anyway.

Robert: But we're still lost! I'm still in the wrong story and you still have to get home.

Boris: I've got an idea for getting rid of Daisy for good.

Robert: We've heard THAT before!

Boris: But this time I'm certain it will work. Well - FAIRLY certain.

Robert: Well I wish to place it on record here and now that I have no confidence in your ideas for getting rid of Daisy.

Aurora: No, wait Robert - go on, Boris.

Boris: Have you ever heard of a story called 'Hansel and Gretel'?

Robert: No.

Aurora: Robert!

Robert: Sorry. Go on.

Boris: Well, in this story a boy and a girl discover a witch's cottage in a wood. The cottage is made of lollipops and treacle toffee.

Robert: A sticky situation. Ow! *(As AURORA nudges him)*

Boris: The witch catches the children, puts the boy in a cage to fatten him up for eating and sets the girl to doing housework.

Robert: I've heard enough! We go looking for Daisy and walk straight into a cooking pot! Sorry, but I'm not volunteering to be anyone's Sunday lunch.

Boris: Pity, because it could have worked. In the story you might say the witch cooks her own goose. Still, if you don't like my ideas I may as well say goodbye - I see that I can't help you any further.

Aurora: Wait a minute! Oh, Robert, please let's try.

Robert: Oh, very well, but remember I'm only doing it for you. I suppose the least I can do is to give Daisy a bad dose of indigestion. When do we start?

Boris: Well the book should be just along here....

(Exeunt. Fade to blackout. When the lights come up we see the witch's cottage from 'Hansel and Gretel'. Enter BORIS, AURORA and ROBERT)

Boris: Well here we are. All you have to do is hide and wait for Daisy.

Robert: Oh, that's ALL, is it? We wait for Daisy to come along and pop us into a nice casserole. I feel like a pound of sausage.

Boris: I've told you the book doesn't end like that!

Robert: I know what you've TOLD us, but suppose somebody's torn out the last page? Or suppose Daisy hasn't read the book?

Boris: Once Daisy enters that cottage she becomes part of the story - she HAS to do

what the book says.

Robert: And what about the 'Alice in Wonderland' fiasco? She managed to get out of THAT and WE nearly DIDN'T!

Boris: Er, well - an unfortunate incident, that...

Aurora: Oh come on Robert, it's worth a try. In fact I don't see that we have any choice.

Robert: Well I still don't like it: there's too much can go wrong.

Boris: Screw your courage to the sticking point, as the poet says.

Robert: I don't care what the poet says - he's not the one that's going to get eaten by Daisy.

Aurora: And neither are you. I'd rather give myself up than let her eat you.

Robert: Do you really mean that?

Aurora: Of course I do Robert.

Robert: Oh Aurora!

Aurora: Oh Robert!

Boris: Oh come on!

(DAISY'S voice off)

Robert: }

Aurora: } Oh crikey!

(They hide. DAISY zooms on and skids to a halt in front the cottage)

Daisy: What have we here? Oh nice! A desirable bijou residence with vacant possession. Let's take a look. *(DAISY disappears into the cottage and re-appears with a broom)* Nobody there! So I'll just tidy up a bit and move in.

(Enter CORNELIUS who watches DAISY for a while)

Cornelius: Women! She's forgotten all about me. She's probably forgotten about that girl she was so keen to catch as well. Oh well, I shouldn't complain I suppose - at least she's not bothering me. May as well have a snooze. *(He 'roosts')* Goodnight world.

(DAISY goes into the cottage - BORIS, ROBERT and AURORA emerge)

Boris: Right, off you go.

Robert: Where?

Boris: Go and knock on the door.

Robert: Oh, I see, sort of 'Hello Daisy, I'm your supper: would you like me stuffed or just as I am?'

Boris: Just knock on the door.

Aurora: What are you going to do?

Boris: Me? I'm going to sit and watch.

Robert: Charming!

(BORIS takes a seat in the audience. ROBERT goes to the door and grasps the knocker - it comes away in his hand. Gingerly he tests it with his finger, licks

his finger, likes it and starts to eat the knocker. DAISY emerges and captures him)

Daisy: Aha! Nibble my knocker would you? I shall have to deal with you before you eat me out of house and home!

Robert: But I only wanted....

Daisy: I'm not interested in what you only wanted. Hmm! a fair specimen: needs a little fattening up perhaps.

Aurora: Please, we're lost in the forest and we found your house. We're ever so hungry and we wondered whether you could spare us some food.

Daisy: Oho! Come for dinner have you? *(Laughs uproariously at her own joke)* Oh yes, YOU can have dinner and HE can BE dinner! But wait: I could do with some help now that I'm a woman of property. Hete! Clean the windows! *(Thrusts a bucket and cloth at AURORA)* And YOU, my pretty little chicken, come with me. *(Takes ROBERT into the cottage)*

(Fade to Blackout. Spot on BORIS who re-appears with the 'book')

Boris: *(As narrator)*....'So Hansel and Gretel fell into the clutches of the wicked witch who put Hansel into a cage and fed him well with all the choicest foods while Gretel was made to scrub the floors and chop the wood which was used to stoke the enormous oven. This went on for many weeks until one day the witch decided that Hansel was fat enough and announced that, as the following day was her birthday, she would celebrate it with an extra special dinner'.

(Lights up on the interior of the cottage. ROBERT is in a large cage and there is a huge oven. It is night and AURORA creeps in)

Aurora: Hansel, Hansel - are you awake?

Robert: What do you think? And I do wish you'd stop calling me Hansel.

Aurora: Well we have to stick to the story. Tomorrow's the day!

Robert: Don't remind me!

Aurora: I've stolen her keys. I'm going to unlock the cage door and then this is what we do....

(Fade as Hansel and Gretel whisper together through the bars of the cage. Spot on BORIS)

Boris: *(reading)* 'The day dawned and the wicked witch was up bright and early to complete the preparations for her birthday party....'

(Enter DAISY in high spirits)

Daisy: Happy Birthday to me, Happy Birthday to me....

(Enter AURORA with large mixing bowl)

You! - put that over there.

(Enter various woodland animals with flour, water and logs)

And you, over here....that's right. Now you lot, stoke up the fire.
(A procession of animals proceeds to stoke the fire while DAISY prepares to mix her batter)
 Nothing like a nice bit of Yorkshire pudding with a joint! Now, flour....and water....that should do. Oh I do like my puddings! Just a minute, no eggs!
(sees a hen) Hey you! Eggs!
(The hen, after suitable histrionics, lays a box of eggs)
 That's better. *(More mixing)* Right! And now for the roast beef! *(Goes to the cage)* Now my pretty, it's your turn: out you come.
(ROBERT comes out, quite resigned. DAISY seasons him with pepper and salt, sticks an apple in his mouth and trusses him)
 Right - to the oven!
(They move over to the oven)
 Now we'll just see whether it's hot enough....*(Opens the door and peers in)*....then in you go!
Aurora: }
Robert: } No, in YOU go!
(AURORA pushes and ROBERT kicks - DAISY flies into the oven. DAISY screams, everyone else cheers - Blackout)
(Spot on BORIS - ROBERT is untied)
Boris: 'And so the wicked witch was no more'
(Blackout. Follow spot on ROBERT and AURORA)
Robert: Well, that's that.
Aurora: I suppose so.
Robert: You'll be going back to the real world.
Aurora: And you'll be going back to being Cinderella's footman.
Robert: I suppose so.
Aurora: Robert?
Robert: Yes?
Aurora: Thank you.
(Pause)
Robert: I shall miss you, Aurora.
Aurora: I shall always remember you, Robert.
Robert: Will you? *(She kisses him gently: he takes her in his arms and they dance - a reprise of the Cinderella waltz. As the music fades he walks slowly backwards out of the spotlight)*
Aurora: Goodbye.
Robert: *(From the darkness)* Goodbye Aurora - and good luck!
(Slow fade to Blackout. A school bell rings. Hubbub of girls coming into school. Lights up)

1st Girl: Monday! I hate Mondays.

2nd Girl: Have you finished your French homework?

1st Girl: What do you think?

3rd Girl: You can copy mine if you like.

1st Girl: Not likely, I want to get it right.

2nd Girl: Pity Rory's disappeared: it's the one thing she was any use for.

4th Girl: That was weird - first old Bunion vanishing, and then Rory disappearing from a locked room....

1st Girl: Don't start that again - I thought we'd decided she'd climbed down the drainpipe.

4th Girl: YOU decided that!

1st Girl: Well, what other explanation is there? I suppose you think she was carried off by the fairies? (*General laughter. Enter 5TH GIRL*) Where have you been?

5th Girl: Had to hand a book in at the Staff Room - and guess what? I overheard them talking - old Bunion really has vanished. Nobody knows where she's gone.

2nd Girl: Better check the Trophy cupboard - she's probably in South America by now with all the school silver!

3rd Girl: Never mind that - the important thing is, no more History!

5th Girl: Don't you believe it - they've got somebody to take her place.

3rd Girl: Typical!

(*Enter AURORA. Stunned silence - then all talking at once - 'Hey Rory, where've you been?' 'What happened?' 'Do you know about Old Bunion' etc. until:*)

1st Girl: QUIET! (*Silence*) Now where've you been?

Aurora: You wouldn't believe me if I told you, but one thing I will say - we'll have no more trouble from Miss Bunion.

(*Again general confusion - 'How do you know?' 'Where is she?' 'What's happened to her?' 'Are you sure?' etc. Enter MISS BUNION. Gradually the girls fall silent in open-mouthed astonishment as they see her*)

Miss Bunion: That's better. Now girls, as you are probably aware, Miss Bunion has, er, gone away and I have been asked to take her place. As it happens, she is my sister, so my name is also Miss Bunion. Now which of you is Aurora Jones?

BLACKOUT

CURTAIN