

**YOUNG SCARLETT HOOD**  
**(and the Desperately Wicked WOLVES)**

A Play

by

**ANDREW MANNERS**

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd**

15 Inglis Road, Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU

**[www.schoolplayproductions.co.uk](http://www.schoolplayproductions.co.uk)**

YOUNG SCARLETT HOOD  
(and the Desperately Wicked WOLVES)

Copyright Andrew Manners 1999

This play is fully protected by copyright.

*It is an infringement of the copyright to give any public performance or reading of this play in its entirety or in the form of excerpts without the prior consent in writing of the copyright owners.*

*No part of this publication may be transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, typescript, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owners.*

All rights are strictly reserved. Any enquiries about performing rights, professional or amateur, should be directed, before rehearsal, to

**SchoolPlay Productions Ltd,  
15 Inglis Road,  
Colchester, Essex CO3 3HU.**

No performance may be given unless a licence has been obtained.

ISBN 978 1 902472 15 7

Printed and published by  
**SchoolPlay Productions Limited,**  
15 Inglis Road,  
Colchester, Essex, CO3 3HU

## CAST

*In order of appearance*

Three Labourers  
Genie  
Foreman

### **The Wolves** (*dressed as gangsters*)

Frank *Leader*  
Charlie *Barman*  
Gruff  
Jake  
Scar  
William

Tim *Troll (1)*  
Tom *Troll*  
Scarlett Hood  
Mr Hood  
Mrs Hood

### **The Seven Little Kids** (*can be reduced*)

Billy  
Jilly  
Tilly  
Willy  
Nilly  
Filly  
Stuart  
Mother Goat (5)

Cindy Rellar  
Blanche White  
Jack Bean  
Foxy Loxy  
Mrs Wedwell  
Hopeful  
Bo-Peep (4)  
Wishful *Prince Charming*

Prince Oafish  
Ben *Bo-Peep's brother (3)*  
Traffic Warden (2)  
Courier (3)  
Two Policemen (1)  
Newsreader (3)  
Delilah Delve (4)  
Inspector Clue (5)  
Television Announcer (2)  
Bartholemew Farquarson-Smith  
Two Detectives (1)

*Further extras could be used in the party, the search for Scarlett and in the bar scenes.*

*Alternatively, if required, the cast of 46 speaking parts can be played by a cast of about 30, using doubling as indicated above*

The action takes place in: *Charlie's Bar,  
A wall near the town centre,  
Interior of Scarlett's house,  
Cindy Rellar's disco,  
Outside Mrs Wedwell's house in Glasslipper Street.*

**YOUNG SCARLETT HOOD  
(and the Desperately Wicked WOLVES)**

**by Andrew Manners**

**ACT I**

*SCENE 1*

*(The lights come up on three labourers sitting beside a "Men at Work" sign. They pour out tea from a flask and eat sandwiches).*

**Lab 1:** I tell 'ee, we works too 'ard. Still, you know wha' they says 'bout people wha' works too 'ard?

**Lab 2:** No, wors'at then?

**Lab 3:** Yeah, wors'at then?

**Lab 1:** They says it keeps a bloke young, like. You know, fit an' tha': attractive for the girls, like, you know, of the opposite sex, so to speak.

**Lab 2:** Well, I'll be alright then; I's been workin' all bloomin' week.

**Lab 3:** Wor' 'bout them two days you 'ad off last week? D'yum think thar'll have any effect on your prospects?

**Lab 2:** I 'opes not. 'Spose I'll find out when I goes out tonight, on the razzle, like.

**Lab 1:** Makes your brain expand an' all.

**Lab 3:** Don't like the sound o' tha' much.

**Lab 2:** Wha's that, then?

**Lab 1:** Work. Makes you more clever 'an you was 'afore. Makes your brain expand, like.

**Lab 3:** Sounds a bit painful, if you ask me.

**Lab 2:** I been workin' so 'ard this week, I wouldn't be surprised if my brain exploded, right now!

**Lab 3:** While you were at work?

**Lab 2:** Right 'ere, on the job. Biscuit?

*(A strange figure dressed in Persian silks wanders in to view. He seems to be looking for something. LABOURER 1 is the only one to notice and he stares, mouth open, in disbelief, pointing. The others carry on unaware).*

**Lab 3:** Cheers! Makes a cup o' tea to my mind.

**Lab 2:** I always dunks, meself.

**Lab 3:** I wouldn'a thought you'd fit in the mug, just lookin' at you.

**Lab 2:** No, me biscuit, yer wally! Anyways, I can't swim!

**Lab 3:** *(To LAB 1, but without any response)* 'Ere, wha's your problem? Someone nicked your flask? You seen a ghost, or wha'?

*(The FOREMAN enters and picks up the 'Men at Work' sign).*

**Foreman:** Come on you layabouts, see if you can earn a penny of the fortune I pay you.

**Lab 2:** Can't be long 'til lunch, lads.

*(They get up and shamble after the FOREMAN).*

## SCENE 2

*(In a seedy back-street bar, dimly lit and dilapidated, groups of dangerous looking folk are drinking and conducting their business in quiet animated whispers. They appear sly and wolfish; some are dressed sharply and others more raggedly, but all exhibit an air of great hunger and anticipation. There is a sudden increase in noise and excitement from one corner of the bar, as a group of drinkers dissolves into waves of laughter).*

**Frank:** Charlie! Over 'ere. Bring the brandy.

**Charlie:** You 'aven't paid for the last bottle yet.

**Frank:** Be reasonable, Charlie! It's hard times, Charlie. Hard times for us all ....

**Gruff:** Yer tellin' me!

**Jake:** I 'ad to sell me roller blades to pay the rent!

**Scar:** Times is tough!

**William:** Can't remember the last time I 'ad a decent lamb chop or a chicken leg!

**Charlie:** Nobody gets another drop until the account's paid off, not even you, Francis.

*(CHARLIE pushes a cork firmly into the open bottle and returns it to the shelf. He turns to find he is surrounded by a mean and ugly looking band).*

**Frank:** Nice bar you've got 'ere.

**Scar:** Yeah. Pity if it got spoilt.

**Gruff:** Fell down, you might say.

**Frank:** *(with a little menace)* When times is good, Charlie boy, you'll get your share. But just now we're in a recession.

**Jake:** And that means we need a little support ....

**William:** And understanding ....

**Frank:** From you .... Got that, Charlie? And the name's Frank, Charlie. And I'll be frank with you, if you'll pardon the expression, life 'as dealt me a poor hand. Not just me, Charlie, no. All of us. The cards we're looking at right now aren't as agreeable as they might be, if you take my meaning ....

*(CHARLIE doesn't look over-sympathetic).*

**Gruff:** Too bloomin' right they 'ain't. I 'aven't had the faintest whiff of luck for weeks. All the farms are like flamin' fortresses round 'ere.

**Jake:** Gruff, You couldn't get into a barn of geese if the door was left wide open!

**Gruff:** No, Jake, but at least if I was left in a room full of fat kid goats, I wouldn't leave one hiding in a grandfather clock bleating to it's mother so she'd come and find me, snip me open and stitch me up again full of stones!

*(Hackles rise as they posture and snarl at each other).*

**Scar:** What about you, Gruff? I 'eard you didn't do so well with those blinkin' pigs down by the stream!

**Gruff:** Tricked, I was. Out-witted by a snotty-nosed little porker. I won't forget that in a hurry. You'll see.

**William:** Why? What'ya gonna do? Climb down his chimney again?

*(General laughter and derision).*

**Frank:** Now, Charlie, the brandy, if you please.

**Charlie:** I told you, Francis .... Frank, I told you. Not another drop until you pay. You'll ruin me you will, you lot. Now if you've finished yer drinks, you can clear off before you do something you regret. Go on, get out!

**Jake:** Listen to that. All of a sudden, I don't feel very welcome. What do you think, boys?

**William:** I think Charlie 'as forgotten about putting 'is friends first.

**Gruff:** Yeah! Don't customer loyalty count for nothin' these days?

**Scar:** I've a good mind to take my custom somewhere where I'll be appreciated ....

**Charlie:** Allow me to hold the door open for you!

**Scar:** .... But I like it 'ere, know what I mean?

**Frank:** Yes, so we'll stay and sample some more of your friendly hospitality, if

you don't mind. Fill the glasses, Charlie, before my thirst makes me really angry.

*(FRANK lunges for the bottle and his supporters make a grab for the barman himself).*

**Charlie:** Help! Tom! Tim! I've a little local difficulty 'ere, if you wouldn't mind givin' me an 'and!

*(Two large and fierce looking trolls who have been sitting at a corner table, from where they have been watching events unfurl, step forward and make their presence felt).*

**Tom:** Sure fmg guv? Come on Tim, let's crack some bone!

**Tim:** Wade in, Tom, me lad, I'm right behind yer!

**Tom:** What's all the noise then?

**Frank:** You mind your business and we'll attend to ours, mister.

**Scar:** Yeah! Back off brother. This river's too wide for you to swim in!

**Tim:** Now I suggest you go and fight and argue in the gutter outside. I'm sure you'd feel a lot more at home there.

**Tom:** Poor old Charlie 'ere is 'aving a devil of a time tryin' to make this place into a respec'able waterin' hole and 'e just don't stand a chance wiv you 'ooligans clutterin' up the place like this. 'Tain't right, is it Tim?

**Tim:** Nope, 'tin't right at all, Tom.

**Tom:** Let's show these wide guys how wide it gets in the real world!

**Tim:** Come on boys, it's time to complete your education!

*(By this time they have two wolves each in their grasp and are heading with them towards the door).*

**Tom:** Not so tough now are yer Frankie?

**Frank:** Hey! Charlie! Call off your gorillas will yer? We can settle our differences without their 'elp.

**Charlie:** Until you settle your account 'ere, they're all the 'elp I need. Now get out, the lot of yer! You're all barred!

*(After the wolves have been evicted, CHARLIE pours three large drinks, for himself and the trolls. Lights fade).*

SCENE 3

*(Three figures are standing on the stage staring at each other. On stage right, a GIRL, dressed in red, glowers and scowls and generally looks defiantly at the two figures opposite - her PARENTS - who alternately look at the GIRL, then at each other, with puzzled and perplexed expressions that simmer with suppressed exasperation and anger. The GIRL shows signs of having been spoilt by her devoted and now desperate PARENTS: she stamps her feet; she makes faces; she hoists her nose to an unnatural degree; she makes a series of disgruntled noises. Her PARENTS try to alternately reason with her and assert themselves over her).*

**Father:** Scarlett! Try to see it from our point of view. We are simply concerned for your safety.

**Mother:** Have you any idea how much we worry about you?

**Father:** It's a dangerous world out there. You can't be expected to understand that at your age, but you must trust us. It's for your own good.

**Mother:** You've always had everything you wanted. You've never lacked for good food or pretty clothes. There's a cupboard full of toys and games upstairs we might as well give away ....

**Scarlett:** *(Swivelling to face her parents)* You dare!

*(SCARLETT turns away again and continues to sulk).*

**Father:** All we want is a little respect.

**Mother:** Co-operation.

**Father:** Meet us half way.

**Mother:** Give us a break!

*(SCARLETT pulls out a lipstick and starts applying it defiantly).*

**Scarlett:** I'm going and you aren't going to stop me. I'm old enough to make my own decisions. You never let me do anything. All you're worried about is whether I'll embarrass you in front of our nosy neighbours or our dreary relations.

**Mother:** Really, Scarlett!

**Father:** Steady on, Scarlett. That's hardly fair.

**Scarlett:** Fair! That's a joke. I want to choose my own friends and make up my own mind about where and when I go out. Anyway, it's only a party.

**Father:** That goes on all night!

**Mother:** That appears to be very inadequately supervised. I mean we don't know

anything about the other children who'll be there.

**Scarlett:** How come, when you use the word "children", it sounds so insulting?

*(SCARLETT begins to fold and pack some clothes into a small ruck-sack, while her parents continue to quiz her).*

**Father:** And this Sandra. We know nothing about her parents. What does her father do?

**Scarlett:** For the last time, her name's Cindy, and her father's dead. So's her mother, all right?

**Father:** Oh, so she lives alone does she?

**Scarlett:** No, she lives with her stepmother and stepsisters.

**Mother:** Well, at least that's something, I suppose. Are they nice?

**Scarlett:** No, they're creeps!

**Mother:** Who?

**Scarlett:** All of them. If you think I'm bad you should see her sisters. They can't see further than the width of their wardrobe and they're so selfish and insensitive.

**Father:** *(aside)* So, you've got something in common then.

*(For this comment he receives a sharp elbow in the solar plexus and a warning glare from his wife).*

**Mother:** Listen, Scarlett. We are your parents, we care about you, we want you to be safe and happy. We want you to enjoy life, but you're thirteen, we're in charge here and you're not going. Perhaps when you're older, we'll see.

**Scarlett:** *(sharply)* What's the point of being alive, when I'm not allowed to live how I choose?

**Mother:** You have to be careful in these times. The world's a wicked place. Can't you understand how we feel?

**Scarlett:** There, that's everything. I'm off! I've heard enough of this, "We're only thinking of you," rubbish. I'll see you tomorrow.

*(SCARLETT goes out in a jaunty confident manner).*

**Mother:** Wait! Remember the last time you went off.

**Father:** To your grandmother's.

**Mother:** Be careful. It's not a safe world.

**Both:** There are wolves out there!

*(Lights fade).*

SCENE 4

(SCARLETT enters, flings down her bag and sits down unhappily on a low garden wall).

**Scarlett:** What a day! What parents! Have you ever known anything like it? I mean, they treat me like a baby. Dad seems to think that since he rescueded me from the wolf that swallowed me and Gran he has to guide me through the terrors of the world, like a crusading knight. Do I look like the sort of girl who needs that kind of assistance? And Mum - well she seems to be worried that I'm always about to say or do something that's going to cause a major melt-down of her social circle. I don't know, where's the trust?

(Enter Seven [obnoxious!] LITTLE KIDS. They are playing with a ball and laughing and chattering. The ball hits SCARLETT on the head).

**Billy:** Ooops! Careful Jilly. Watch where you throw that thing!

**Jilly:** It wasn't me, Billy, it was Tilly!

**Tilly:** No, it wasn't, it was Willy!

**Willy:** Liar! Liar! You're always trying to get me into trouble.

**Scarlett:** Clear off, can't you, Kids. I want a bit of peace and quiet. Go and play with something dangerous!

**Nilly:** We always do! And we always come out unharmed too!

**Scarlett:** (aside) There's always a first time.

**Filly:** Yes! Electric carving knives, chisels ....

**Stuart:** Wolves!

**Billy:** Motorbikes ....

**Tilly:** Climbing trees ....

**Stuart:** And seeing off wolves!

**Jilly:** Sliding down the banisters ....

**Willy:** Swimming in the duck pond!

**Stuart:** And knocking off wolves!

**Nilly:** We're just good kids, doing what Mother tells us.

**Tilly:** She wants us to be independent.

**Filly:** And confident.

**Jilly:** So we can meet any challenge, Mother says ....

**All:** No matter how difficult ....

**Stuart:** (Now quite carried away) Like knobbling nasty wolves!!

**Billy:** All right Stuart, tell us all about your greatest moment.

*(LITTLE KIDS exeunt).*

**Scarlett:** *(to audience)* Hello again! I'm sorry about my outburst just now. Parents! I mean, embarrassing or what? Please accept my apologies for their awful behaviour. You can guess what they're saying now, can't you? "That girl, she's so ungrateful!" "She should have her pocket money stopped until she can learn to do as she's told." "Where did we go wrong?" "I could wring her neck! She doesn't appreciate how lucky she is." You don't believe me? Take a look for yourselves, then.

*(SCARLETT's PARENTS appear in a small pool of light on stage left, while the lights dim elsewhere).*

**Father:** That girl, she's so ungrateful!

**Mother:** She should have her pocket money stopped until she can learn to do as she's told!

**Father:** Where did we go wrong?

**Mother:** I could wring her neck! She doesn't appreciate how lucky she is.

*(Light is brought up on SCARLETT. She stays seated on the wall).*

**Scarlett:** You see what I mean! Predictable, insensitive and absolutely no understanding of the plight of the young today.

*(Light returns to MOTHER and FATHER and fades on SCARLETT).*

**Mother:** I don't know, perhaps we're being a bit harsh on her though. She's young. It's only natural that she should want to explore the world.

**Father:** Mmm, see how it ticks - look for a little adventure.

**Mother:** Do you remember the rows I used to have at home when I was not much older than Scarlett is now?

**Father:** Yes! I'm glad I was never pulled in for interrogation. It was right for you to sort out your problems as a family on your own.

**Mother:** What do you mean? I never had rows with them until I met you!

**Father:** Oh! I didn't realize.

**Mother:** *(linking arms with her husband)* Do you remember our first weekend away together?

**Father:** I'd just asked your father if I could marry you.

**Mother:** And you'd just told my mother we were going to a rock festival for the weekend.

**Father:** I can still see the look on her face. And her words are still ringing in my head.

**Mother:** *(a little embarrassed)* "I could wring her neck! She doesn't know how lucky she is!" Didn't I just say that?

**Father:** I'm afraid so. We both did.

**Mother:** We must start learning to give her more freedom, so she can learn to become a young adult. It's not easy when you care so much for someone, is it?

*(Light comes up on SCARLETT).*

**Scarlett:** I'm shocked! - They're human after all!

*(FATHER and MOTHER exeunt. General lighting returns. Enter CINDY RELLAR, JACK BEAN and BLANCHE WHITE. They are singing and dancing to a favourite song).*

**Cindy:** Hi, Scarlett!

**Scarlett:** Hello, Cindy. Hi, Blanche. I haven't seen you for ages.

**Blanche:** No, well I moved out into the forest a while back - I had a bit of a problem with my stepmother - I don't get into town as much as I'd like, but I'm getting a moped soon.

**Scarlett:** Talking of steps, how are yours, Cindy?

**Cindy:** Don't ask, it's like living in a zoo. They preen and scream like peacocks, blunder around the house like lost buffalo and snap at each other, though mostly at me, like moody rattle snakes!

**Blanche:** Ha, ha! A picture of heaven.

**Scarlett:** I'm so jealous!

**Cindy:** Don't tease, it's no laughing matter. To top it all, they look like sulky hippos - wallowing in silk and lace!

*(It may not be a laughing matter, but they all laugh openly at the idea).*

**Scarlett:** Who's your friend, Cindy? Do I get an introduction or are you keeping him to yourself?

**Cindy:** Oh, sorry. Scarlett, this is Jack, Jack Bean.

**Scarlett:** Nice to meet you, Jack.

**Jack:** You too. Cindy's told me lots about you.

**Scarlett:** I knew I couldn't trust her! Are you coming to the party, Jack?

**Jack:** You bet! Wild giants wouldn't keep me away!

**Blanche:** And you can stay late - your mum didn't kick up a fuss?

**Jack:** No. Actually, she threw me out of the house and told me not to come back.  
Well, not unless I brought Buttercup with me.

**Scarlett:** Who's Buttercup?

**Jack:** Our cow - I sold her, well swapped her, for a packet of seeds at the market.

**Cindy:** I can see why your mum went mad at you.

**Blanche:** I hope they were special seeds.

**Jack:** Well, the man said they were, but Mum wouldn't listen. She chucked them out the window and told me to go and get Buttercup back.

**Cindy:** We'll look for Buttercup tomorrow. Right now we've got a party to organize.

*(CINDY slaps JACK on the back as they leave noisily).*

#### SCENE 5

*(The dejected WOLVES alternately prowl about the stage or sit disconsolately on the wall, watching the world go by. And it seems, to them, to be travelling a good deal too slowly).*

**Frank:** Nothin' to do, nowhere to go. Boys, we are a sorry sight.

**Gruff:** If I was goin' past and saw us, I'd be dippin' me hand into me pocket and givin' us some jingle to buy us a cup of tea and a biscuit.

**Jake:** We look like a homeless, hardluck story.

**Scar:** That is precisely what we are, homeless and out of luck.

**William:** I s'pose we could try and get jobs.

**All:** What!

**Gruff:** 'Ave you been in the sun too long, William?

**Frank:** Yeah! What 'appened to your standards? We've got our reputations to think about. All we need is one spark of genius - which I'm workin' on right now - and like cream in milk we will rise, where we belong, to the very top.

*(Enter FOXY LOXY, looking elegant and well-heeled).*

**Foxy:** Or turn into cheese, which is the more likely outcome.

*(FOXY inspects the assembled party wryly).*

**Foxy:** Now, what on earth is going on here? Did someone die? I've never seen such misery on a set of faces. Has the sky fallen in? You may find you were merely struck by a stray acorn!

**Gruff:** It's all very well for you, Foxy Loxy, swannin' around in yer fancy clothes. It's easy for you to make jokes about those more unfortunate than yourself.

**Foxy:** (*wipes away mock tears*) Oh, dear me, Gruff. Do you know if you didn't feel so sorry for yourselves, you'd leave room for others to show some sympathy.

**Frank:** You don't know what we've been through.

**Foxy:** There's always someone worse off than you are, Frank .... well, usually there is.

**Scar:** It's just that every scam we've come up with recently 'as gone against us.

**Jake:** This morning we got banned from Charlie's Bar.

**Foxy:** That's not so good, Jake. Money, was it?

**Jake:** Yeah - and a punch up with his gorillas.

**Foxy:** Not very clever.

**Gruff:** No. Charlie was as mad as thunder.

**Foxy:** I suppose you're all hungry.

*(All jaws drop with salivating expectancy).*

**Foxy:** (*waving money*) Well, who's going for some fish and chips?

**All:** William!

**William:** Why's it always me who 'as to go? You go, Scar.

**Scar:** Me? I can't. I don't know me way.

**Jake:** Nor me.

**Gruff:** Me neither.

**William:** That's because you never go.

**Frank:** Come on, William. You know where it is, so you go and get it. And 'urry up. Me belly's preparin' itself for an overdose of 'addock.

*(WILLIAM goes off muttering darkly to himself while the others lick their lips with relish. The lights fade and when they come up again SCARLETT, CINDY, JACK and BLANCHE are standing outside the chip shop, eating from a shared bag of chips).*

**Jack:** Mmm, delicious!

*(JACK scrunches up the paper and throws it away carelessly on the ground. It disappears into a flowerbed).*

**Blanche:** Pick that up, Jack. Didn't anyone teach you to keep the place tidy?

**Jack:** My Mum just throws things out of the window when she doesn't want them any more.

**Cindy:** That explains a lot.

*(JACK goes to pick up the paper from under the bush. The three LABOURERS walk past and into the chip shop, chatting. Unnoticed, WILLIAM enters and watches from a distance. He looks puzzled).*

**William:** *(aside to the audience)* That girl in red. Looks sorta' familiar. Where 'ave I seen 'er before? I dunno, that's gonna bug me now, that is.

**Jack:** *(throwing the paper away as he emerges)* There we are! Look what I found under there as well.

**Scarlett:** What is it?

**Blanche:** Looks like an old torch.

**Cindy:** Does it work?

**Jack:** I wouldn't have thought so. Look how rusty it is. Must have been under there for ages. *(He tries to turn it on but nothing happens).* There you are, I told you so. I'll chuck it away.

**Scarlett:** Wait a minute, let's have a look. I'll keep it.

**Jack:** Are you feeling all right? It's rubbish.

**Scarlett:** *(embarrassed)* My Dad, pain he might be, collects old-fashioned tools, and things like this. He might be able to clean it up and make it work. It might take the heat off me when I get home too!

**Cindy:** Runs in the family, this illness, I suppose.

**Blanche:** I can't think of any other explanation.

**Scarlett:** Oh, belt up!

*(SCARLETT puts the torch into her bag).*

**William:** *(aside, excitedly)* I've got it. It's the Hood! Red Riding! Wait till the lads 'ear she's floatin' about in the neighbourhood. Ha! Neighbour-Hood! That's a good'un, that is! Watch'em William, watch'em!

*(At that moment the LABOURERS re-emerge from the chip shop eating their food).*

**Lab 2:** You all right? *(Turning to LAB 3).* 'Ee an't 'ardly said a word since tea break 'smornin'. Don't 'ee look a bit peculiar, to you?

**Lab 3:** Wha', more than usual, like?

**Lab 1:** *(absently)* Never guess wha' I seed when I's on me tea break 'smornin'?

**Lab 2:** Wors'at then?

**Lab 3:** Yeah, wors'at then?

**Lab 1:** Strangest lookin' fella I's ever set eyes on, I'm tellin' 'ee. Like one o' them figures from the Arabian Nights.

**Lab 2:** Like Lancelot an' Arthur an' that?

**Lab 3:** Aye, an' tha' bird, wha' were she called? .... Gulliver. Yeah, right corker she be'ed.

**Lab 2:** No, Guinevere. Tha' other fella were a bloke, wan'um.

**Lab 3:** Wor'ee??

*(LABOURERS exeunt still debating the issue).*

**Jack:** Ha! Either they were discussing the theory of relativity or my brain just curled up and died.

**Cindy:** Probably the second suggestion's nearer the truth. Anyway, you shouldn't eavesdrop on other people's conversations.

**Scarlett:** Another of his mother's omissions from his social education. I don't know why we hang around with him, he's such a lout!

**Blanche:** Must be something to do with his rugged looks!

**Scarlett:** I'm not convinced!

**Jack:** *(shows mock hurt feelings)* At least I don't go around collecting broken old bike lamps for my dad. That's quite worrying if you ask me.

**Cindy:** *(pushes JACK backwards off the wall into the flower-bed)* Well no one was, Jackie Boy. Come on it's party time!

*(SCARLETT, CINDY and BLANCHE leave laughing and JACK struggles to his feet and follows on afterwards, yelling, "Wait! Wait!").*

**William:** Follow'em, William. Follow'em. This could be the answer!

*(WILLIAM creeps gleefully after them. Lights fade).*

SCENE 6

*(MRS WEDWELL and her daughters, HOPEFUL and WISHFUL, are greeting people arriving at the front door for the eagerly awaited disco. Several people have arrived already. There is music playing in the background).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** And who have we here, Hopeful? Do please introduce.

**Hopeful:** Bo Beep, the farmer's daughter. She's in our class at school.

**Mrs Wedwell:** How do you do, my dear? What a pretty dress you're wearing, did you make it yourself? Simply charming.

**Bo Peep:** Why, thank you.

*(BO PEEP moves off to mix with the other guests).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** Shocking frock! What does she think she looks like? I trust you don't spend too much time with her at school, looking like that. Your reputation must always come first, remember.

**Hopeful:** She does have one thing worth having, though.

**Mrs Wedwell:** And that is?

**Hopeful:** A square-chinned, dark-eyed and handsome elder brother, who stands to inherit a substantial sheep farm and has a chest like a cider barrel!

**Mrs Wedwell:** Yes, well, I suppose we could come to terms with his little sister's short-comings .... given time.

*(More guests enter. WISHFUL rushes over).*

**Wishful:** Oh, Mummy, look who've just arrived.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Where?

**Wishful:** There. The Prince twins. Charming! Hi, over here, my darling, you dream-boat! Come and say hello to Mother.

*(CHARMING and his brother, OAFISH, turn and wave).*

**Charming:** Hello. *(aside to Oafish)* Let's make this painless, Oafish - try not to be embarrassing.

**Oafish:** Me? Have I ever let you down?

*(They approach the welcoming party. CHARMING drinking elegantly from a glass: OAFISH swigging from a bottle).*

**Charming:** *(taking WISHFUL's hand and kissing it)* Wishful, you are looking especially radiant tonight, if I may say so.

**Wishful:** Any time, Dream-machine.

**Mrs Wedwell:** That's enough of that. Where's your sense of decorum? Good evening, young man. I hope you're as gallant and civilised as your name suggests.

**Charming:** Well, madam I can ....

**Mrs Wedwell:** Because, if you're not, you'll never make any sort of impression on my girls.

**Charming:** Madam, I ....

**Mrs Wedwell:** Breeding and up-bringing: sets people apart, you know.

**Charming:** Quite.

**Mrs Wedwell:** But what would you know about that, young man?

**Charming:** I ....

**Mrs Wedwell:** Nothing at all, of course.

**Oafish:** *(to WISHFUL)* Who's that? What's she on about? - Wishful, is it? I tell you what, Wishful, go out with me and I'll make your life catch fire!

**Charming:** Oafish!

**Mrs Wedwell:** Wishful!

*(Loud music and wild dancing engulfs the stage. SCARLETT, CINDY, BLANCHE and JACK enter and join in with the others. On a sound and lighting cue all the dancers freeze in mid-step, except HOPEFUL and BO-PEEP's BROTHER. The music is lower so the audience can hear their conversation but they shout in order to hear each other).*

**Hopeful:** Bo-Peep's my best friend!

**Bo-Peep's Brother:** That's nice.

**Hopeful:** We go everywhere together. Inseparable, we are.

**Bo-Peep's Brother:** That's nice.

**Hopeful:** Almost sisters. In fact we would be .... if I married into your family!

**Bo-Peep's Brother:** That's not very likely, though, is it?

**Hopeful:** *(wounded)* Stranger things have happened.

*(Light and sound cues signal everybody to dance again. Then after a few seconds they all freeze once more. This time WISHFUL and CHARMING keep dancing).*

**Wishful:** I'm sorry about my Mother. She hasn't scared you away from me, then?

**Charming:** On the contrary, I like a challenge!

**Wishful:** Oh, Charming, you say the wickedest things.

**Charming:** And you - you're not put off by my brother, Oafish, and his antics?

**Wishful:** No, he's cute! - Not on your level though!

**Charming:** Now it's you that's being wicked.

*(Again the music and lights signal a return to the dancing. Yet again it is brought to a halt. SCARLETT makes her way to the front of the stage to speak to the audience. While she is speaking, and unbeknown to her, the figure seen earlier, dressed in Persian silks wanders in amongst the statuesque forms of the dancers. He seems to be searching for something).*

**Scarlett:** So, the party's going with a swing, and why not? Fine food, the best music and an interesting mixture of characters. You're not barred from having a good time just because you belong in a fairy tale, you know. And just between you and me, I know I was a bit rude about Jack Bean just now - but actually I think he's quite cute! I wonder what he thinks about me!

*(SCARLETT sighs and goes off into a little dream of her own. Meanwhile the GENIE, dressed in Persian silks, is seen searching amongst the statuesque figures of the dancers).*

**Genie:** Has anyone seen an old bicycle lamp? It's just that I feel a little misplaced without it. Lost. Homeless, in a way. Well, if you do, here's my card. *(Handing the card to a nearby member of the audience)* The name's Sultan, by the way. If you do happen to see an old bike lamp could you let me know? It may not seem much to you but it's home to me! You do me much honour. Salam, salam.

*(He backs out bowing. SCARLETT comes to).*

**Scarlett:** .... After all, that's what I'm trying to show you, that we're not just two-dimensional character cut-outs. Life in Fairy Tale Avenue is just as exciting as Reality Street. In fact, thinking about it, there's no contest!

*(The scene ends with wild dancing reaching a crescendo followed by a BLACKOUT .... when the lights come back up, the room is in disarray with people sleeping and snoring all over the place and MRS WEDWELL looking on in a state of perplexed bafflement!).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** Oh, my! Oh, my! - Hopeful! Wishful! Come here at once!

**Hopeful:** Mother?

**Wishful:** Mother?

*(They survey the scene of destruction, then an immediate BLACKOUT again before next scene).*

#### SCENE 7

*(The WOLVES and FOXY wait by the wall: sitting moodily or pacing hungrily. It is dark though a hint of dawn is beginning to filter into the eastern sky).*

**Gruff:** What a night, eh? Look, it's getting light at last.

**Frank:** Where's that fur brain gone for our flippin' fish? The Pacific Ocean?

**Scar:** 'E's been gone over twelve hours now.

**Gruff:** Yeah! When we says we want somethin' battered, it don't mean 'e's gotta pulverise it so its mother wouldn't recognise it.

**Jake:** I was 'opin' the fish'd be fresh, not antique.

**Foxy:** Well, Frank, have you come up with an unbeatable plan yet to raise your fortunes to a new plateau - out of the languishing valley and up to the sun-drenched hills of prosperity and wealth!

**Frank:** Don't mock, Foxy. Don't mock. We'll be there. We're nothin' if we ain't fighters an' triers. Ain't that right lads?

**Scar:** 'Sright, Frank. 'Ave been all our lives.

**Jake:** In an' out'a scrapes an' danger.

**Scar:** Yeah, trier, that's me. I were spotted early, me. All my teachers told me I was tryin' .... all the time. *(SCAR can't figure out why all the others are smirking and winking at each other.)* It's true! I once 'ad to go and see the 'ead Master, an' 'e tells me I'm the most tryin' boy 'e'd ever come across! So don't tell me we won't be there.

*(SCAR is amazed to see his friends collapsing all around in high mirth. In the middle of all this WILLIAM rushes in panting exhaustedly).*

**William:** Boys, it's me.

**Frank:** Oh, William, you finally made it. Express delivery!

**Jake:** Slowest fast food I've ever 'eard of. What time d' you call this?

**Gruff:** Never mind. I could eat a scabby 'orse right now!

**Scar:** You probably will! Now, where is the blinkin' nosh?

**William:** What? Nosh? What? .... Oh, no, I knew there was somethin' I forgot.

**All:** What!

**William:** I forgot, all right?

**Frank:** But you been gone hours.

**Jake:** How can you forget to buy fish and chips, if it's the only thing you've got to do? It's not possible.

**William:** Look, I did. O.K? I got side-tracked.

**Scar:** Side-tracked?

**William:** Yeah! I caught sight of an old friend, and I knew you'd be interested, so I followed her.

**Gruff:** We 'ain't interested in your pathetic love life, William. We're blinkin' famished.

**William:** Don't be a fool. Listen. I saw that little red-caped weasel of a girl. The Hood. I followed 'er and I know where she is - now!

**Foxy:** Oh, yes, Frank. Wasn't she the one whose granny you impersonated in that little incident you were involved in last spring? Turned out to be your Waterloo, rather, if I remember rightly.

*(Murmurs of amusement come from the others).*

**Frank:** It weren't my fault. How was I to know half 'er relations were woodcutters?

**Foxy:** Yes, a pity. And how are the scars healing?

**Frank:** Knock it off, Smarty! This is it. This is what I've been waiting for. Where did you see her then, William?

**William:** She went to a party last night with a couple of ugly cookies, at Seventeen Glasslipper Street. I 'ad to check it out. She stayed over .... well, they all did. Crashed out all over the 'ouse they were.

**Frank:** How far is this place from 'ere?

**William:** Only about five minutes, I found a short cut.

**Frank:** A short .... ? No, don't try to explain. Is she there now, the little red 'atted dwarf?

**William:** Who?

**Frank:** The Hood; you fool! Who else? She made a laughing-stock out of me and now she's made the mistake of turning up on my patch again. So now she's gotta pay.

**Scar:** How's she gonna do that, then?

**Frank:** She's gonna come with us until someone pays to 'ave her back. We're gonna take the little brat hostage!

**Jake:** What a plan - kidnap the "Hood"! D'you think it'll work?

**Frank:** 'Course it'll work. Someone's bound to want 'er back. She's a kid 'ain't she?

**Gruff:** Such a great name - Hood! I wish I was called Hood. It's better than Gruff. Names are important. I could be good at being bad with a name like Hood!

**Jake:** Listen, you don't need to be called Hood to be a hoodlum. You've got all the qualities you need. First, you're ugly.

**Scar:** Yeah, frightenin'.

**Jake:** Second, you're devious. And third .... well, you're even more ugly than I just said!

**Scar:** Ha! Ha! Ha!

*(The lights come up gradually as morning begins to brighten the sky).*

**Frank:** Okay boys, there's work to be done but first there's the little matter of breakfast. Back to Charlie's Bar. He's bound to let us in when he hears how close we are to eternal fame and fortune!

**Gruff:** But you haven't told us how we're gonna do it.

**Frank:** We'll dot the i's and cross the t's at Charlie's over 'am 'n' eggs!

*(A chorus of approval).*

**Foxy:** And how is this feast to be paid for? Great plans - but if you want to get anywhere in this world you've got to have results. You've got to be ahead of the game!

*(An officious looking traffic warden enters with an open notebook and a sharpened pencil at the ready).*

**Warden:** Any of you gentlemen drive a red Escort, registration, STYLE?

**Foxy:** Style's my middle name. I have that pleasure, why?

**Warden:** Not at the moment, you don't.

**Foxy:** What do you mean? Who's been messing around with my wheels?

**Warden:** The police are towing it away right now.

**Foxy:** What? Why?

**Warden:** I gave you a ticket for parking on a double yellow line.

**Foxy:** I was only there for five minutes. Be reasonable.

**Warden:** Twelve hours later it still hadn't been removed.

*(The WARDEN begins to move off with FOXY in agitated pursuit, much to the delight of the watching WOLVES).*

**Warden:** So now you'll have to pay them as well, if you want it back. Perhaps that'll teach you not to park illegally.

**Foxy:** You can't do this. You have no right. This is victimisation. I'll get the law involved!

**Warden:** They already are, mate, or haven't you been listening?

*(FOXY and the WARDEN exeunt noisily).*

**Frank:** *(calling after them)* What was that about Waterloo, Foxy?

*(The WOLVES leave in high spirits, and as they do the three LABOURERS enter with paint brushes and large tins of paint. They sit on the wall and get out mugs and flasks for an impromptu tea break).*

**Lab 1:** So, what were all that argy-bargy about then?

**Lab 2:** You lets me know when you find out, mate.

**Lab 3:** Aye, I've got the sun on me back, a cup of tea an' a piece of pasty in me fist. It beats me 'ow these people can't seem to see the finer things in life.

**Lab 2:** Chasin' moonbeams, as me mother would say, an' where would that get you to? I mean, at the end of the day, where will they be to?

**Lab 1:** No better 'n' back where they started I shouldn't wonder.

**Lab 3:** With less leather on their shoes, mind.

**Lab 2:** Aye, we seems to be livin' in a here today, gone tomorrow sort of world.

*(The FOREMAN enters unseen).*

**Lab 2:** People don't make time for important things no more ....

**Foreman:** Like work, you mean. Would it be rude of me to ask you to earn some of the money I pay you?

**Lab 3:** You see what I were sayin' - it's the pressure of responsibility makes a man go off like tha'.

**Foreman:** It's the pressure of paying three idle amateur philosophers that weighs me down so much. Now get out of bed and down to Mrs Wedwell's in Glasslipper Street and talk to the walls of her house about the meaning of life - while you paint them!

**Lab 2:** You know, I's noticed you's not as 'appy as you was 'afore.

**Foreman:** Really, well do some work - today - and I might be happy again.

**Lab 2:** No, "might's" not good enough for me, I wants you to be certain.

**Foreman:** Will gettin sacked be certain enough for you?

*(The workmen gather their things quickly and prepare to make their way to Glasslipper Street).*

**Lab 1:** All right, we gets the picture, but it be true, all work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy indeed!

**Foreman:** *(with an exasperated gesture)* Work! Try it! See how you like it, and then tell me in the morning if you'd like some more. Now go!

**Lab 3:** Come on lads, we knows when we's over-stayed ourselves. Paint the walls, you say. Shouldn't take too long. *(To LABOURER 1)* You all right now? Looked like you be'd havin' a nasty turn earlier.

**Lab 1:** Aye, probably somethin' I ate. Where's this Glasslipper Street to, anyroad?

**Lab 3:** Down 'ere. I knows.

*(LABOURERS exeunt, leaving a frowning FOREMAN watching them go. After a moment he sighs and sits resignedly on the wall. The lights fade).*

#### SCENE 8

*(Interior of Charlie's Bar. CHARLIE is standing at the bar, wiping a glass and looking anxiously at the assembled gang of WOLVES).*

**Charlie:** No, boys! I've told you already - pay your debts.

**Frank:** Charlie, my friend, don't pull out on us now. We've got a gold mine 'ere. Just a couple more days and you can 'ave yer money - there won't be no more debts.

**Charlie:** 'Aven't I 'eard that one before, Frank?

**Frank:** Charlie, this time it's different - this time we can't fail.

**Charlie:** So how's this little jaunt going to be so different from all the rest? You 'ave a failure rate second to none. All right, let's 'ear yer plan then Frank.

**Jake:** Yeah, go on Frank, lay it on 'im.

**Frank:** Knock it off, Jake.

**Charlie:** Well?

**Frank:** It's simple, Charlie. We know where that spiteful little squirt, Scarlett Hood, is currently in residence. We are about to pay 'er a surprise visit this mornin'. We're gonna kidnap 'er, set a ransom and then wait for the readies to roll in.

**Gruff:** I'm gonna be rich, I'm gonna be rich!

**Charlie:** The cops'll be all over you. Where are you gonna hide your prize while the heat is on?

*(The WOLVES all look expectantly at CHARLIE, the barman, and then towards the cellar).*

**Charlie:** No .... no! Oh, no! Not 'ere, they'll close me down.

**Frank:** They'll never know.

**Charlie:** It's madness. Policemen drink 'ere. One of my best friends is a detective. They're bound to find out.

**Frank:** Don't get tangled up in yer braces, Charlie. They don't go down into the cellar when they drink 'ere, do they?

**Charlie:** Madness, madness! It's doomed! I'll be closed down - sent to prison!

**Frank:** No you won't. Act the innocent. Serve the drinks. Be a good host - leave the rest to us! *(He gestures expansively to his motley selection of friends)*

**Charlie:** Oh! .... Oh!

**Frank:** *(grasping CHARLIE's hand to seal the bond)* Nice one, Charlie. This'll set you up for life!

**Charlie:** That's what I'm worried about!

*(BLACKOUT. Exeunt).*

## SCENE 9

*(A quiet corner of the garden at 17 Glasslipper Street. SCARLETT and JACK are having an awkward conversation, brought on by the awakening of their feelings for one another. SCARLETT makes JACK work though).*

**Jack:** Scarlett, you were wonderful last night.

**Scarlett:** But not so gorgeous in the light of day, huh?

**Jack:** No, I didn't mean it like that. You were .... I thought .... your eyes .... the way you had your hair .... when you danced .... so graceful ....

**Scarlett:** *(turning away and smiling secretly)* So, Jake, you noticed me dancing, then, while you were dancing with Blanche?

**Jack:** It didn't mean anything .... I mean, she's a nice girl. A friend .... not like you ....

**Scarlett:** Oh, I'm not a friend?

**Jack:** No .... Yes! I mean, you're different .... you know ....

*(LABOURERS appear - looking for a wall to paint - and observe and comment on proceedings from a secret vantage point).*

**Scarlett:** No, I'm not quite with you yet.

**Jack:** You're special, Scarlett.

**Scarlett:** Special. So why didn't you ask me to dance?

**Jack:** *(piteously)* I was frightened.

**Lab 3:** *(aside)* I loves a good love story, I does. So rheumatic!

**Lab 1 & 2:** Eh? Uh?

**Scarlett:** What's frightening about me?

**Jack:** *(shrugging pathetically)* I'd better be off now, Scarlett.

**Scarlett:** So that's it, is it? Just goodbye - no plans for the future?

**Jack:** Well, we could meet tomorrow - walk in the park?

**Scarlett:** Why not today?

**Jack:** I've got work to do. In the garden.

**Scarlett:** You know what they say about too much work.

**Jack:** No.

**Scarlett:** It makes Jack into a very dull boy! So don't do too much!

**Lab 1:** *(aside)* Good for you girl - just 'ow I feels!

**Scarlett:** Well, if you've got to go, Jack ....

**Jack:** It's not that I don't want to see you today -

**Scarlett:** *(laughs)* I know, I'll see you tomorrow, then, Jack.

**Jack:** *(leaving)* Bye, Scarlett.

**Scarlett:** *(turning)* Oh, and by the way, Jack, I saw you last night and you looked great when you were dancing too.

**Jack:** I did?

**Scarlett:** Yes.

**Jack:** Oh, wow!

*(JACK skips off gleefully. SCARLETT turns to the audience in mock alarm).*

**Scarlett:** What have I said?

*(SCARLETT then turns to leave but is brought up short by a fierce circle of wolfish ne'er-do-wells, who have gathered quietly around the stage).*

**Frank:** Scarlett Hood! I'd like a word with you!

**Scarlett:** *(alarmed)* Yeah, well I'm busy right now, you should have booked. Bye.

*(SCARLETT attempts to leave).*

**Frank:** Grab her lads! The brat's worth a fortune! We're on the up!

**Scarlett:** Get off me! Leave me alone! How dare you!

*(The WOLVES and SCARLETT exeunt. LABOURERS, having watched all this with growing astonishment come out to the centre of the stage, glancing about themselves nervously).*

**Lab 2:** I don't know what they's up to but I think we should know where they's takin' the poor little girl.

**Lab 1:** Well, let's be off. There's no time to waste.

*(LABOURERS hasten after the kidnapppers. Lights fade).*

## SCENE 10

*(The living room of Scarlett's parents. MR & MRS HOOD sit anxiously waiting for news. MR HOOD gets up and paces about like an imprisoned beast).*

**Mother:** Oh, sit down Harold, for heaven's sake.

**Father:** Well, what can I do?

**Mother:** Nothing. Wait. Sit down and stop making me giddy.

*(A knock on the door makes them both start and freeze. Another knock follows).*

**Mother:** Well, open it then.

*(MR HOOD goes to the door and lets in MRS WEDWELL, CINDY, WISHFUL and HOPEFUL).*

**Father:** It's Mrs Wedwell.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Is there any news?

**Mother:** None I'm afraid.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Police?

**Father:** Yes. They've begun enquires and have started searching.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Pity.

**Mother:** Pardon?

**Mrs Wedwell:** Pity. Newspapers and television will get hold of it. Make a soup out of water.

**Mother:** (*shocked*) What?

**Mrs Wedwell:** Publicity. None of it any good.

**Father:** Our daughter's gone missing after a party at your house, and all you can think about is the adverse publicity?

**Mrs Wedwell:** I can hardly be held responsible for her failure to get home. Anyway, it's a little early to be involving the police I would have thought.

**Cindy:** (*crossly*) Mum!

**Mrs Wedwell:** Be quiet, child!

**Father:** She's been missing since yesterday.

**Mrs Wedwell:** No sense of time, the young. I should think she's gone off to a friend's house.

**Hopeful:** So selfish!

**Wishful:** Unreliable!

**Mother:** She'd have phoned.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Well, she didn't, and now everyone will have a photographer in their back garden. That's not going to help the prospects of suitable marriage arrangements for one's daughters.

**Mother:** How appalling of you! Scarlett could be hurt or in danger.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Eating doughnuts with her feet up in front of the telly at a friend's house more likely. Meanwhile, I've got my girls to consider and my duty is to get them the best match I can.

**Mother:** I don't believe my ....

**Mrs Wedwell:** No-one will ever accuse me of leaving my girls to gather dust on the shelf.

(*MRS WEDWELL turns abruptly to leave.*)

**Wishful:** Well said Mama - come on.

**Mrs Wedwell:** (*turning*) And you, Cindy.

**Cindy:** Mum! My friend's gone missing. She's in trouble.

**Mrs Wedwell:** She certainly should be.

**Mother:** Oh .... !

**Father:** (*rather anxiously, for MRS WEDWELL is a formidable person*) Now that's enough. Leave at once, Mrs Wedwell, or .... or, I won't be

accountable for my actions.

*(MRS WEDWELL glares at MR HOOD haughtily, who stands his ground uncertainly. A knock at the door prevents an escalation of hostilities. A COURIER, dressed in motorbike leathers, enters hurriedly).*

**Courier:** Is there a Mr Hood present? I've a special delivery.

**Mother:** Oh, Scarlett!

**Father:** That's me.

**Courier:** If you could sign here for me please.

**Father:** Yes. *(He signs).*

**Mother:** What is it, dear?

**Father:** I don't know. I'll open it.

*(He tears open the envelope. The COURIER leaves but MR HOOD calls him back).*

**Father:** Hang on a minute, I may need you to take a reply.

*(All crowd around MR HOOD, whose face falls visibly).*

**Father:** Oh, no!

**Mother:** What does it say? Is it Scarlett?

**Father:** It's .... a ransom note. Someone's kidnapped her.

*(Gasps from on-lookers - even MRS WEDWELL looks shocked).*

**Mother:** What? Who has?

**Mrs Wedwell:** How dreadful!

**Cindy:** Poor Scarlett.

**Mother:** My baby!

**Father:** How dare they!

**Wishful & Hopeful:** *(not being the centre of attention)* Humph! Huh!

**Mother:** Tell me what it says. Quickly, read it!

**Father:** *(solemnly)* "We have your daughter. She is safe - for now. If you want her returned to you in a single piece you will pay us a ransom of one hundred thousand pounds. You will hear from us shortly." It's signed, "Wasters: Original Layabouts Vengeance Engineering Society, or W.O.L.V.E.S. for short".

**Mother:** *(furious)* I'll give them vengeance if they touch a hair of her head.

**Mrs Wedwell:** It's shocking, dear. Shocking! It used to be such a well cultivated

area. This is going to seriously dent my search for suitable partners for Hopeful and Wishful ....

**Mother:** I beg your pardon?

**Mrs Wedwell:** Oh, I'm sorry. I mean, It's dreadful that anything like this should have happened to your Scarlett. I'd be beside myself.

**Cindy:** *(aside)* Which is the position you're happiest in.

**Father:** *(scribbling hastily on the back of the envelope which contained the kidnappers' message)* Here, take this back to whoever sent this note.

*(He hands it to the waiting COURIER but MRS HOOD intercepts and snatches it out of the startled man's hand).*

**Mother:** *(to the courier)* You're not required any more, you may leave. *(To her husband)* You silly ass! They're hardly going to leave a forwarding address .... and we're not doing deals with spineless cowards. They'll regret laying hands on my precious Scarlett. If I find out who .... where .... Oh Scarlett, come home. I want my baby .... my baby!

*(Everyone looks on helplessly at the distraught figure of MRS HOOD as she sinks to the floor, burying her face in her hands. The lights fade to BLACKOUT).*

## SCENE 11

*(The scene is all quiet outside Charlie's Bar. In a sudden burst of commotion, SCARLETT is hustled onto the stage, through the door of Charlie's Bar and is locked away in the cellar. Watching all this from a distance are the three LABOURERS, who have been pursuing the gang).*

**Lab 1:** I don't like this, one bit.

**Lab 2:** I'm surprised the bar's even open this early.

**Lab 3:** Don't be simple! They's not goin' in there for a social visit.

**Lab 1:** No, she's obviously in some trouble and we gotta help.

**Lab 2:** Yeah, but how? I don't think they looks too friendly. I don't think they'd be too 'appy if we interfered with them.

**Lab 1:** What kind of soft talk is that? Where's your courage? You stick behind me, lad. It won't come to nowt anyways, I'll talk 'em round to sense, you'll see.

**Lab 2:** I 'opes your feelin' of confidence stands up better 'n a rickety fence in a gale.

**Lab 1:** 'Course 'e will. I's not about to be put off by a line of ugly dogs like tha'.  
The bark's worser 'n the bite, always is, you mark me.

*(FRANK sticks his nose out of the door with SCAR).*

**Lab 3:** There's two of 'em now.

**Frank:** I don't like it out 'ere - it's too quiet.

**Scar:** You want some noise, Boss?

**Frank:** No, belt up, you imbecile! - You 'ave to look .... and listen.

**Scar:** What can you see .... and hear?

**Frank:** Nothing. 'Cept a bunch of brickies, gawpin' at us - Oy! Clear off, before I  
fix your bones together in a different order.

**Lab 1:** *(retreating rapidly)* Come on boys, we'd better be gettin' back to work,  
before the foreman notices we're missin'.

**Lab 3:** But I thought the bark ....

**Frank:** Go on, get out of 'ere!

**Lab 1:** Is sometimes as bad as the bite! Come on let's go.

*(The LABOURERS exeunt sharply. Meanwhile several groups of people emerge, talking earnestly and looking about them anxiously. As the scene progresses, more and more people appear - on the stage and amongst the audience).*

**Frank:** News travels fast then - search parties out already.

**Scar:** What're they lookin' for, Frank?

**Frank:** Are you sure? Are you windin' me up? They're lookin' for the girl. But  
they'll never find 'er, not until they've paid. We're makin' history. All the  
fairy tales will 'ave to be re-written after today. From now on the wolves are  
gonna live 'appily ever after!

**Scar:** Where?

**Frank:** What?

**Scar:** Where?

**Frank:** Where, what?

**Scar:** Where will we live .... 'appily ever after?

**Frank:** Not next door if you're gonna ask me idiotic questions all the time.

*(Two uniformed POLICEMEN enter asking questions of the groups and taking notes).*

**Scar:** Oh, no. 'Ere comes the fuzz!

**Frank:** Yeah, so you just smile, look interested and keep shtum, while I feed 'em a line.

*(The POLICEMEN approach with their notebooks ready).*

**Policeman 1:** Good morning, Sir.

**Frank:** 'Ello, boys. Keepin' the world crime free, I 'ope.

**Policeman 2:** We're investigating a disappearance. A girl has gone missing - name of Scarlett Hood.

**Policeman 1:** We're making enquires to see if we can establish any idea of her whereabouts. Could I ask you to have a look at this recent photograph, Sir?

*(They examine the photograph).*

**Scar:** That's ....!

*(SCAR receives a sharp dig in the ribs).*

**Frank:** No, 'fraid not, boys, never seen 'er before, 'ave we, Scar. We'll keep an eye out though.

**Policeman 2:** Thank you, Sirs, sorry to have detained you.

*(The stage now rapidly fills with searching groups [most of the cast]; conversations loud and animated. As the hunt continues people call out, "Scarlett ... Scarlett!" until the whole group chants in unison):-*

**Searchers:** Scarlett! Scarlett! Scarlett! .... Where are you?

*(There is an immediate freeze on stage to capture the moment for several seconds before sudden BLACKOUT. Exeunt).*

**End of Act I**

## ACT II

### SCENE 1

*(The stage is set with several family groups sitting around imaginary television sets, watching the news. The wolves, the Hoods, the Wedwells, the Kids and their mother and the labourers. They are watching a news broadcast, which is being acted out somewhere centrally on stage).*

**Newsreader:** And finally, to return to our main story tonight - the kidnap of Taunton teenager, Scarlett Hood. It has been revealed that a ransom note was delivered to the parents of the girl and the kidnappers are believed to have demanded the payment of fifty thousand pounds ....

**All Wolves, Hoods and Wedwells:** *(Shouting at the televisions)* A hundred thousand!

*(The disruption subsides and the NEWSREADER continues).*

**Newsreader:** .... The police are following a number of leads ....

*(A POLICEMAN is seen being dragged across the stage by a busy sniffer dog).*

**Newsreader:** .... and are appealing for witnesses, who were in the area of Glasslipper Street on Saturday night or early Sunday morning, to come forward. We go now to our reporter in Taunton Delilah Delve. Delilah, what's the latest news you have?

*(A spotlight picks up the reporter on a separate part of the acting area while she speaks earnestly into a large microphone).*

**Delilah:** Thank you. Here in Taunton *[change to local town as appropriate]*, I can tell you that there is a great deal of police activity, with door-to-door inquiries being carried out. Now I have with me, here, Chief Inspector Ivor Clue, who is leading the investigation. Chief Inspector Clue, how far have you got with your inquiries into this kidnapping?

**Insp. Clue:** Naturally, we are doing everything within our powers to bring about a happy conclusion to this incident. My officers are working around the clock and will leave no stone unturned to bring these villains to justice.

**Delilah:** What do we know about the kidnappers?

**Insp. Clue:** They have identified themselves as W.O.L.V.E.S., which stands for

"Wasters: Original Layabouts Vengeance Engineering Society". Someone watching this programme must know where they are hiding or actually be helping to conceal them.

**Delilah:** How can the public help in this case?

**Insp. Clue:** I would ask anyone who knows anything, to come forward, so that the young girl can be safely re-united with her family.

**Delilah:** Would you say there's any significance in the name that the kidnapers have given themselves? Is there any reason they might want to be known as "Wolves"?

**Insp. Clue:** To me it says they're an isolated, violent and ruthless group of individuals ....

**Wolves:** You tell 'em Inspector! Nuff respect! etc.

**Insp. Clue:** .... but ultimately they are insecure, unbalanced, unfulfilled, lost, lonely and sad people who need help.

**Wolves:** (*In uproar*) What do you know, creep! My childhood's got nothing to do with what I'm like now! Rubbish! You need locking up!

**Delilah:** Thank you Inspector Clue. Now, back to the studio.

**Newsreader:** Thank you Delilah. And there will be more on that story and other news in our morning news programme, but in the meantime, a good night to you all.

**Announcer:** And now we present a party political broadcast on behalf of the Free-Market-Socio-Computo-Democratic Alliance Party, by its leader, the Right Honourable Bartholemew Farquarson-Smith.

*(The smooth and suited FARQUARSON-SMITH glides confidently into the glare of the spotlight).*

**Farq.-Smith:** Good evening. In our modern country, with its modern concerns and demands, at the fore-front of a modern world, it is only through the positive and incisive impetus of a modern party with new, interesting and modern ideas, thrust forward by the new generation of Socio-Computo men and women in the Free-Market-Socio-Computo Democratic Alliance, who have seen the way forward to the modern age, and with a sense of history in the making, will guide the people of this country to a more modern and sophisticated way of life. If, at this point you are saying, "Oh no, not another meaningless unintelligible bag of words!" I urge and implore you not to switch off until you have heard the full story ....

*(Lights immediately BLACKOUT on FARQUARSON-SMITH as all groups simultaneously switch off their sets. Characters on T.V. exeunt).*

**Kids:** What was that all about?

**Jake:** Who was that?

**Mrs Wedwell:** What a ghastly man!

**Lab 2:** I's not voting for no-one who talks a different language from the rest of us.

*(All other groups except the HOODS now freeze until the spotlight falls on them in turn).*

**Mother:** How could they possibly carry on like that, as though nothing had happened?

**Father:** The rest of the world won't stop turning, but that doesn't mean people care any less. You saw the report, my dear; people are out there working for us - for Scarlett.

**Mother:** If they knew how this felt, they wouldn't carry on as if nothing had happened. I'm sliding between fury and utter desperation. It's a roller-coaster!

**Father:** I know, I know.

**Mother:** No you don't. You haven't any idea. You just sit there so matter-of-factly. Why don't you do something?

**Father:** What?

**Mother:** Go and look for her, she's your daughter!

*(MRS HOOD storms out, too upset to continue the conversation. MR HOOD follows, despairingly).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** Shocking news. Dreadful politician. Awful people all around me. How is one supposed to try to present one's daughters in this atmosphere?

**Hopeful:** Do you think Scarlett will be set free?

**Wishful:** I shouldn't think her parents have got that sort of money.

**Hopeful:** *(shrugs)* Oh - well, that's that then.

**Cindy:** You two are incredible! How wrapped up in yourselves is it possible to get?

**Wishful:** Still, I always say, you get what's coming to you. You can't avoid it.

**Cindy:** And this is yours!

*(CINDY takes a swipe at WISHFUL and sends her sprawling across the floor. HOPEFUL is at once drawn into the fray which is immediately broken up by an imperious looking MRS WEDWELL).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** Stop this disgraceful behaviour at once. This is not how young ladies with prospects conduct themselves. Go to your rooms.

*(She ushers them out with a wave of her hand. She sighs).*

**Mrs Wedwell:** When I was a Deb .... Ah, where did those days go? *(She follows her daughters wistfully).*

**Lab 1:** Hey, lads! The missing kid. We knows where she be to.

**Lab 2:** Yeah, an' we knows where they kidnappers be to an' all. Charlie's Bar.

**Lab 3:** I wish we could do something to 'elp the poor lass.

**Lab 2:** I know, but what can we do? Best to leave it to the Police, I s'pose.

**Lab 3:** Aye. They knows what they's about.

**Lab 1:** Police!

**Lab 2:** Aye, like I said, leave it to they experts.

**Lab 1:** They's askin' for witnesses to come forward.

**Lab 3:** Well, I 'opes they do.

**Lab 1:** What?

**Lab 3:** Come forward, they witnesses.

**Lab 1:** We.

**Lab 3:** Sorry! We all 'opes they do.

**Lab 1:** No, you brick-'ead! Us, we's their missin' witnesses.

**Lab 2:** Aye, but what can we do about that?

**Lab 1:** Go to them.

**Lab 2:** Who?

**Lab 1:** The police.

**Lab 2:** The police?

**Lab 3:** Do you think we should?

**Lab 1:** We 'as information. The police need the information.

**Lab 3:** Well since you puts it like that, p'raps we'd better go to the police, then.

**Lab 2:** Good thinkin' lads. I'm right with you.

**Lab 1:** What are we waitin' for, then? Let's go.

*(The LABOURERS take a final gulp from their mugs of tea and depart briskly).*

**Charlie:** It's a mess, a total mess!

**Frank:** Calm down, Charlie, old son. Everythin's perfect.

**Charlie:** Perfect? There 'ain't nothin' perfect about it. It's a perfect shambles, that's what it is, Frank. Twenty years up in smoke, all for a hair-brained scam organised by a long-term non-paying customer.

**Frank:** Steady now, steady, Charlie. *(Becoming oratorical)* The hour 'as arrived; 'istory is about to be wrote; Charlie's Bar is on the up; all unpaid tabs are about to be cleared; a new age is upon us.

**Charlie:** Frank, if I wasn't so worried about myself, I'd be seriously concerned

about you.

**Scar:** So what do we do now?

**Jake:** Yeah, when do we cash in?

**Frank:** When the boys in blue realise what 'igh class crooks they're up against, that's when. When they can't find any trace of the little toad and bits of 'er start arrivin' through the post.

**Other Wolves:** Eeuch! Frank! That's goin' a bit far, 'ain't it?

**Frank:** We'll start with locks of hair and shoe laces and then if that don't impress 'em, we'll send some bits that are 'arder to detach.

**Charlie:** Please, Frank, listen! It 'ain't too late. We can call it all off. Release the girl and cover our tracks - get back to 'ow things were before.

**Frank:** Back to being a laughin' stock? Never, Charlie, never! There 'ain't no turnin' back now.

*(CHARLIE sinks into his seat and holds his head in despair).*

**Frank:** Right, Jake and Scar - get down to the cellar and make sure the girl's secure, but don't hurt 'er .... yet.

**Jake & Scar:** Okay, Charlie.

*(JAKE and SCAR exeunt).*

**Frank:** William, you take the entrance at the back, and Gruff, out the front. I want to 'ear as soon as you see anything interesting.

**William & Gruff:** Right, Boss.

*(WILLIAM and GRUFF exeunt).*

**Frank:** *(Leading away a disconsolate CHARLIE)* 'Ere, Charlie, it 'ain't that bad. Come on, me old china, I'll buy you a drink - the last one on my tab, eh?

*(The little KIDS now cluster excitedly around MOTHER GOAT).*

**Billy:** Mother, was that the nice girl we were talking to on the wall the other day?

**Mother Goat:** Yes, dear.

**Jilly:** Is she in danger?

**Tilly:** Why have they taken her away and hidden her?

**Filly:** Will they hurt her?

**Mother Goat:** Now, don't you worry your little muddle-heads. She'll be alright. You heard the policeman. The ones holding her have called themselves

wolves. And we all know what happens to naughty wolves, don't we.

**Stuart:** Yes, they get nobbled!

**Mother Goat:** Now, off to bed, all of you.

*(Greatly relieved and reassured, they all exeunt, leaving an empty stage, on which the lights fade slowly).*

## SCENE 2

*(Light rises dimly on a spare cellar. A number of crates, bottles and a barrel lie close at hand. In the centre, huddled up in a blanket is SCARLETT, who appears cold and disheartened. She gets up, with the blanket still wrapped around her and stares at her bleak surroundings. She peers through a small window, suspended in front of the stage, facing the audience, but sees nothing. She returns to her shoulder bag, which is in the middle of the floor. She sinks back to the floor and hugs the bag to her in a search for some small comfort. A key rattles in a lock and a door opens, letting in a little extra flood of light. JAKE and SCAR enter in the middle of a heated discussion).*

**Jake:** .... And I say it 'ain't gonna work.

**Scar:** 'Course it will, Jake. 'Ave faith, Son.

**Jake:** Faith? I don't like playin' with loaded dice when I'm not throwin' 'em. And quit callin' me "son". I can't concentrate on matters in hands as it is, without thinkin' that you might be me dad an' all.

**Scar:** Only a manner of speakin'. Anyway, you got the wrong ears!

**Jake:** Cut it out, Scar, before you regret openin' your big mouth. See to the girl, like Frank said.

**Scar:** Okay, okay.

*(SCAR takes a hurried inspection of SCARLETT, who stares back up at him sullenly)*

**Scar:** So, what does it feel like to be rich, Jake?

**Jake:** How would I know?

**Scar:** Well, you will be when they pay up .... the ransom, know what I mean?

**Jake:** I dunno. I got me doubts. What if they don't pay, and then ....

**Scar:** What?

**Jake:** .... and then, the police arrive.

**Scar:** You 'eard what Frank said ....

**Jake:** 'E don't always get things right. His C.V. 'ain't exactly a victory march, is it?  
I mean, woodcutters leap off every page.

**Scar:** No, well, when you put it like that - but this time things are gonna be different. We're gonna come out on top.

**Jake:** I wish I 'ad your confidence.

*(At this moment SCAR and JAKE's attention is called by muffled crying coming from SCARLETT, who is buried beneath her blanket).*

**Scar:** What's the matter with the girl?

**Jake:** Why don't you ask 'er?

**Scar:** Hey, what's the matter, kid?

**Scarlett:** I want to go home. I want my mum. Why do I have to be kept here against my will?

**Scar:** Stop that whingin'! You've 'ad it all your own way so far in life but things just took a change for the better - for us!

**Jake:** You'll be all right. When they pay up we'll let you go. Just stay calm. Come on Scar, lock up and go.

**Scarlett:** *(A sense of panic in her voice)* Wait, wait! Please don't leave me in the dark again - I can't stand it.

*(JAKE moves to a light switch, flicks it, but the light does not come on).*

**Scar:** 'Fraid it don't work Miss, you'll 'ave to grin and bear it.

**Scarlett:** *(desperately)* Have you got any batteries then? I've got a torch.

**Scar:** What sort?

**Scarlett:** I don't know. It's old.

*(SCARLETT takes the lamp out of her bag and hands it to SCAR).*

**Scar:** Ha! It'll take more than batteries to get this old thing to come to life. No, you'll 'ave to get used to the dark.

**Scarlett:** Oh, Oh!

*(SCAR throws her the torch. SCAR and JAKE leave and lock the room, leaving SCARLETT in a dim pool of light. She pulls her blanket around her and holds the old lamp in her hands. She begins absently to rub the lamp as if cleaning it).*

**Scarlett:** *(to audience)* Oh, this is rotten. Not how it's meant to be at all. What am I to do?

*(All of a sudden there is a mysterious sound in the air and the - pre-recorded - magnified voice of the GENIE fills the air).*

**Genie:** I am being summoned by the Guardian of the Lamp. I must follow and obey your commands.

**Scarlett:** What's that strange sound? Oh, I wish I had some light.

*(The GENIE enters through the audience and approaches the stage).*

**Genie:** The Lamp and its Guardian are close by - I can feel the summons most powerfully now. Most Gracious Guardian, I come to answer your bidding.

*(SCARLETT goes to the small window and looks out).*

**Scarlett:** Is anyone there? Please help me. I've been locked up against my will. Please help!

*(The GENIE stands up suddenly before the window and greets the startled prisoner).*

**Genie:** Salam!

*(SCARLETT screams and retreats rapidly to her blanket where she huddles in fear).*

**Scarlett:** Aah! Who are you?

**Genie:** Who I am and who you are are not the most pressing of questions - what is more important is, are you the Lamp's Guardian, for whom I must labour?

**Scarlett:** What?

**Genie:** I have sensed the summons of the Guardian of the Lamp. Are you the Guardian? Do you have the Lamp?

**Scarlett:** *(holding the lamp and looking puzzled)* What, this?

*(The GENIE falls to his knees, so SCARLETT can no longer see him).*

**Genie:** Great Lady and Guardian of the Lamp. It is my will and duty to serve you with all my powers. *(Rising to his feet again)* What can I do?

**Scarlett:** I haven't got time for games. Stop fooling around, whoever you are, and

get help - I'm in big trouble here.

**Genie:** I'm afraid I can't do that.

**Scarlett:** What do you mean, you can't do that?

**Genie:** It's not within my powers. They are rather limited by my social position in Persia just now.

**Scarlett:** I don't believe this. So, what is within your powers, Mr Genie?

**Genie:** To make people tell the truth.

**Scarlett:** Oh, wonderful!

**Genie:** A small gift, but indeed it is, Oh Mighty Guardian.

**Scarlett:** Oh, stop that idiotic bowing, will you?

**Genie:** Would you like me to demonstrate?

**Scarlett:** I'm a captive audience.

**Genie:** Then, what is your favourite colour?

**Scarlett:** Red.

**Genie:** There you are, you see - the truth.

**Scarlett:** Don't be ridiculous. You didn't make me tell the truth.

**Genie:** Didn't I?

**Scarlett:** No! To make me tell the truth I've got to want to keep a secret.

**Genie:** Very well. Who catches your eye, makes your heart beat faster - what is the name of your boyfriend?

**Scarlett:** Jack Bean - with any luck - Hey! How did you do that? That's not public knowledge.

**Genie:** Fear not, Great Lady and Guardian of the Lamp. I will not pass it on.

**Scarlett:** Oh, very reassuring.

**Genie:** So, My Most Gracious Guardian, what truth would you like revealed?

**Scarlett:** Get someone to tell the police where I am - that'd do for a start.

**Genie:** Your wish .... Don't go away.

**Scarlett:** Very funny.

*(The GENIE exits the same way he came in and leaves SCARLETT peering through the window of the cell, looking out towards the audience. The lights fade to BLACKOUT).*

SCENE 3

*(MR and MRS HOOD are seated in their living room, while INSPECTOR CLUE stands pensively before them).*

**Mother:** Where's Scarlett? Why haven't you found my daughter?

**Insp. Clue:** Mrs Hood, the detection of crime is not a straight-forward business.

**Mother:** Perhaps you're in the wrong job. I want my daughter back.

**Father:** Patience, Dear.

**Mother:** Now! I want her now!

**Father:** Inspector Clue, how long before we can expect some .... good news?

**Insp. Clue:** As I was saying to Mrs Hood, here, these things all take time. A crime is a puzzle - a maze. If you rush in too quickly you may come to a dead-end. However, with careful observation and deduction ....

**Mother:** If you don't get out of my house and find my Scarlett, there'll be another maze to consider, and it won't take a detective to find a way through it. Now get out!

**Insp. Clue:** *(backing out)* Mrs Hood. Mr Hood.

*(The INSPECTOR exits rapidly).*

**Mother:** *(suddenly vulnerable)* Is she all right?

**Father:** *(after a pause)* Yes, of course she is.

*(Lights BLACKOUT immediately).*

SCENE 4

*(Lights come up on Charlie's Bar. There is a great argument underway, with everyone speaking at once and no one listening. FRANK enters and raises his arms in a gesture to restore order. TOM and TIM, two trolls, are sitting oblivious to all this in the opposite corner, playing cards).*

**Frank:** All right, all right! 'Old yer 'orses! This ain't no way to run a business.

**Gruff:** What're we gonna do boss? What're we gonna say?

**Frank:** Do? Say? What's the matter - losin' yer nerve?

**William:** No way!

**Scar:** We just can't see round the next corner.

**Jake:** Yeah! How many coppers will there be comin' towards us?

**Gruff:** What questions will they ask?

**Jake:** What answers will we give?

**William:** Will they believe the answers we give?

**Scar:** What will happen if they don't believe the answers we give?

**Charlie:** That's the point, they won't believe a word you say - you're a rabble - doomed to fail.

**Frank:** Don't be so pessimistic, Charlie, me old son. Our success will be your salvation, ha ha!

**Charlie:** And your failure, my destruction.

**Frank:** Nonsense! When the police come sniffin' around, you say nothin'. Leave the talking to me. I'll 'ave 'em eatin' out of me 'and.

*(A sudden commotion erupts from the corner where the card game is taking place).*

**Tim:** *(standing and shouting)* I don't believe it!

*(Everyone looks round).*

**Tom:** Don't worry Tim. We all 'ave bad nights. Deal again - p'raps your luck will change.

**Frank:** Ha, ha! Just like ours! Charlie, more drinks!

*(Enter FOXY LOXY).*

**Foxy:** Well boys, how are things?

**All:** Lookin' up Foxy, lookin' up!

**Foxy:** So, where are you keepin' your bargainin' chip, then?

*(All eyes look towards the cellar door).*

**Foxy:** No! Surely not here? That's cool! If you get away with it, it'll be pure ice!

*(WISHFUL, HOPEFUL and the princes, CHARMING and OAFISH enter the bar).*

**Foxy:** What about the ransom?

**Frank:** They 'aven't paid yet, but we're close!

**Charming:** This doesn't seem much of a place. Shall we find something a little

more comfortable?

**Wishful:** You're beginning to sound just like my mother.

*(The WEDWELL DAUGHTERS' entry has caused a minor stir, of gestures, polite and not so polite - waves to wolf whistles).*

**Hopeful:** I don't see why we shouldn't stay a little while. *(She waves back).* Hello, boys!

**Oafish:** Hey! That behaviour's a bit cheap!

**Hopeful:** You pay for what you get. Why do you think I'm out with you?

*(GRUFF and JAKE approach their table with an affected swagger).*

**Gruff:** Can we get you sweet ladies anything?

**Jake:** Champagne?

**Wishful:** Oh, no! We don't drink. Too young.

**Hopeful:** Too innocent, too.

**Wishful:** I could murder a knickerbocker glory, though.

**Hopeful:** Mmm, and me! If you sell things like that.

**Jake:** Like that? 'Course we do! Back in a jiffy! *(to GRUFF)* Keep 'em talkin', Gruff!

*(JAKE moves to the bar. CHARLIE makes a gesture to indicate that such things are not found in his bar. JAKE exits hurriedly).*

**Charming:** Now look here, Wishful, I'm not sure about this pally banter with the locals.

**Wishful:** Why not? Do you want a knickerbocker glory as well? .... Oafish?

**Charming:** I thought you cared for your reputation.

**Wishful:** Mother does that for us.

**Charming:** *(getting up)* Come on, we're leaving. Your mother would be horrified to think that I'd brought you to a place like this.

**Wishful:** You didn't. I brought you here. You didn't even know this street existed, let alone Charlie's Bar.

**Charming:** That's not the point. Are you coming now or not?

**Wishful:** We haven't had our knickerbocker glories yet.

**Hopeful:** *(looking at the gangsters ranged about the bar)* And the decorations here are easy on the eye!

**Oafish:** Hey! I'm not having this!

**Hopeful:** No? Well, your brother's just leaving, I think, so you can go with him,

can't you.

**Charming:** Come on, Oafish! They'll be sorry when we've gone!

**Wishful:** I'm not so sure about that.

*(CHARMING and OAFISH leave the bar enraged, just as JAKE returns with two fabulous Knickerbocker Glories, which he places grandly in front of WISHFUL and HOPEFUL).*

**Jake:** Compliments of the 'ouse.

**Hopeful:** Oooh! I say!

**Wishful:** Care to join us gentlemen?

**Gruff:** It'd be a pleasure.

*(The scene ends and the lights fade slowly on a scene of murmuring conversations: WISHFUL, HOPEFUL, JAKE and GRUFF at a central table; TOM and TIM at their little card game; and FOXY LOXY and the remaining WOLVES up at the bar).*

## SCENE 5

*(The wall again. The lights come up and JACK, CINDY, BEN and BLANCHE enter. They have been searching but they pause to rest).*

**Cindy:** It's no use, we'll never find her. Oh, Scarlett! I may never see you again.

**Jack:** Don't talk like that. Of course you will.

**Cindy:** No I won't. She's been taken by these horrible people who call themselves wolves. Who knows what will happen?

**Blanche:** Wolves! Huh! Don't worry about them. I've had dealings with a wicked step-mother who turned into an even wickeder witch. It came out all right in the end.

**Cindy:** That may be my next problem but right now it's Scarlett I'm worried about.

**Jack:** Well, I've had a brush with an irate giant, and everything fell into place quite satisfactorily.

**Cindy:** But this is bigger.

**Blanche:** Nonsense! Even Ben here has had his share of tight corners. Haven't you Ben.

**Ben:** Um .... I, .... er ....

**Blanche:** Well, haven't you?

**Ben:** I .... well, no .... not exactly. I mean, Bo lost a lot of sheep once. It happens quite often, to be honest, but they always turn up again.

**Blanche:** There you are, Cindy. Stories to warm your heart and give you hope. We'll find her, Cindy. Believe me, we'll find her.

**Jack:** I hope you're right. Come on, we've got questions to ask and doors to knock on. We just can't leave it to the police.

*(CINDY, BEN and BLANCHE exeunt, purposefully. Enter the LABOURERS hurriedly, out of breath and looking at a map).*

**Lab 1:** I 'opes we's in time to save the little mite.

**Lab 2:** Well, we willn't if we can't even find the p'lice station.

**Lab 3:** 'Ow's a bloke s'posed to report a crime if they build a p'lice station so's nobody can find it when they need it.

*(Enter INSPECTOR CLUE, with a briefcase and two plain-clothes officers, in deep conversation).*

**Lab 1:** 'Allo! P'raps they gentlemen over there knows where 'tis.

**Lab 2:** I'll ask.

**Lab 3:** S'posing they's criminals?

**Lab 2:** Then they'll know, won't they?

*(SECOND LABOURER approaches the group of men, followed cautiously by his companions).*

**Lab 2:** *(polished accent)* Excuse me, sir. We're on a mission of public importance. We need to know directions for *(lowers voice)* the police station.

**Lab 3:** We 'ave a serious matter to report.

**Lab 1:** But we's innocent of any crime.

**Insp. Clue:** How can I help you?

**Lab 2:** Tell us where the p'lice station is, like I asked.

**Insp. Clue:** I am the police. You can tell me.

*(The LABOURERS examine him dubiously and without confidence).*

**Lab 3:** Well, you don't look like p'lice.

**Insp. Clue:** I'm a plain clothes detective. Here's my I.D.

**Lab 2:** I 'spose you be one of they under-cover types you see on the telly.

**Lab 1:** I don't know 'ow you solves they crimes so quickly. Only takes you 'alf an hour on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

**Insp. Clue:** It's not all glamour in reality. You have to work for results; pound the beat; lift every stone; rake through the evidence; put the jig-saw together. Now, what have you got for me? I'm conducting an important inquiry. I haven't got time to dawdle.

**Lab 3:** Hey! Wait a minute. You's the fella on the T.V. about the girl. That's what we come to find you and talk to you about.

**Lab 2:** The young girl, kidnapped she was.

**Insp. Clue:** Yes, I know. Now tell me something I don't know.

**Lab 2:** We saw 'er taken away from Glasslipper Street by a gang.

**Lab 1:** Nasty pieces of work.

**Lab 3:** Five or six of 'em at least.

**Detectives:** It's them! It must be!

**Insp. Clue:** The Wolves! Did you see which way they went?

**Lab 2:** We followed 'em.

**Lab 1:** To Charlie's Bar - down town.

**Lab 3:** But you should be careful ....

**Insp. Clue:** (*ignoring the labourers*) Let's go.

*(The police leave hurriedly and at once, without acknowledging their informants).*

**Lab 3:** (*calling after them*) They be dangerous!

*(Lights fade to BLACKOUT).*

## SCENE 6

*(Charlie's Bar. The nervousness and tension of the wolves is beginning to bubble over against FRANK. FOXY, HOPEFUL, WISHFUL, TOM and TIM look on. In the corner, a stranger sits quietly, concealed by a newspaper).*

**All Wolves:** (*in general disorder*) Hey, Frank! What's the score? What's gonna happen? When do we collect the ransom, give back the girl and get back to normal?

**Frank:** Normal? Normal? Don't you forget what normal is. It's havin' nothin'. No money, no recognition, no hope. Now, because of me, you may not have money or recognition yet, but you got hope. So shut your mouth, get back in line and wait for your future to unfold.

**Wishful:** I'm on the edge of my seat.

**Hopeful:** Tenterhooks, me.

**Charlie:** But 'ow long are you gonna keep the girl 'ere? You can't keep 'er 'ere for ever.

**Frank:** I'll keep 'er 'ere until I've paid off my slate. And that won't be until I'm 'oldin' the ransom money in my 'and. Got that?

**Charlie:** *(weakly)* Yeah, Frank.

**Frank:** Right, let's prepare for visitors. Scar! Jake! Make sure the girl's safe and quiet. Gruff! Keep a watch out front. I don't want them creepin' up on us.

**Foxy:** And you expect them just to hand over the money, do you?

**Frank:** They'll 'ave to, 'cause they won't get the girl until they do. And they'll not get their information until we're out of reach.

**Foxy:** Well, it sounds good in theory.

**Charlie:** I can't wait to see it in fact.

*(GRUFF enters suddenly, in excitement).*

**Gruff:** Boss, it's them! They're comin' this way. Three of 'em. One's carryin' a suitcase.

**Scar:** That'll be the dosh! Check your passports lads, the boat's comin' in.

**Charlie:** This is a nightmare.

**Frank:** Stay calm, keep cool .... enjoy your drinks.

*(Enter the three POLICE OFFICERS. They look around suspiciously. Everyone in the bar tries to appear innocent. There is a pause).*

**Insp. Clue:** A drink.

**Charlie:** A drink?

**Frank:** A drink!

**Insp. Clue:** Water.

**Charlie:** Water?

**Frank:** Water!

**Insp. Clue:** Popular place.

**Charlie:** So, so.

**Insp. Clue:** Business good?

**Charlie:** So, so.

**Insp. Clue:** (*showing identification*) We're looking for someone, a young girl: went missing.

**Frank:** 'Ardley likely to come in 'ere, is she?

**Insp. Clue:** No, but she could have been brought here, against her will.

**Frank:** What are you suggesting, Constable?

**Insp. Clue:** (*sharply*) Inspector. I'm not suggesting anything. I'm unearthing facts about a disappearance.

**Frank:** Well I hope you've got a strong spade, if you're doing a lot of digging. The ground's 'ard around 'ere.

(*There is a barely repressed snigger at this from the other WOLVES*).

**Insp. Clue:** We'll take a look around, if you've no objections.

**Frank:** Feel free.

(*The DETECTIVES begin their search but quickly come to the conclusion that there is nothing there to find*).

**Insp. Clue:** I'll be frank with you ....

**Frank:** You don't say! We're almost related!

**Insp. Clue:** I don't like you. I can smell decay and dishonesty in every dust particle of this dank institution.

(*INSPECTOR CLUE moves behind the bar, to get another perspective of the room. At that moment, MRS WEDWELL bursts in with CHARMING and OAFISH, sheepishly in tow. WISHFUL and HOPEFUL attempt to hide, but too late*).

**Mrs Wedwell:** So you are here! I had to see it for my own eyes. You'll be your mother's ruin and downfall. After all I've done for you - getting you into the right social circles - and this is how you repay me. Keeping company with rough and unsuitable people in a rough and unsuitable establishment. This is the thanks. How ungrateful! (*She threatens GRUFF and JAKE*). You'd better not have laid a finger on my girls.

(*They shrink away under this onslaught*).

**Mrs Wedwell:** And you (*she points at INSPECTOR CLUE who is still behind the bar and therefore mistaken for the barman*) should be ashamed of yourself. My daughters are obviously far too young to be in here, yet you carry on serving them. You don't deserve to have a licence. I shall be reporting this

incident to the police.

**Insp. Clue:** Madam, I ....

**Mrs Wedwell:** It's a shocking world and your activities only make it worse! Good day. *(To the stunned girls)* You two, move it! I want some explanations.

**Hopeful & Wishful:** Mum, we only had knickerbocker glories.

**Mrs Wedwell:** Shameless!

*(MRS WEDWELL exits with WISHFUL and HOPEFUL, who look bewildered, and the dumb-struck CHARMING and OAFISH. The WOLVES dissolve into raucous laughter. INSPECTOR CLUE tries to take control of a situation that seems to be getting away from him).*

**Frank:** And they say that 'umaniy 'as gone soft!

**Insp. Clue:** Right, I want some answers, and you are going to give them to me, before I lose my patience.

**Frank:** And if I don't .... can't?

**Insp. Clue:** Then I lose my patience.

**Frank:** Then, let's not waste time; fire away!

**Insp. Clue:** What were you doing between the hours of eight and nine o'clock on Sunday morning?

**Frank:** Watchin' cartoons on telly.

**Insp. Clue:** *(producing a photo)* Have you ever seen this girl?

**Frank:** No, why? What's she done?

**Insp. Clue:** She hasn't done anything. She's been kidnapped. We believe she may have been brought here.

**Frank:** Who by?

**Insp. Clue:** Well, for want of any other likely individual in the place, perhaps it was you, sir.

**Frank:** Is that a question?

**Insp. Clue:** *(impatiently)* Did you kidnap Scarlett Hood, bring her here against her will and demand a one-hundred-thousand pound reward for her safe return?

**Frank:** No, no, and once more, no!

**Insp. Clue:** *(to detectives)* Are you quite sure she's not here?

**Detectives:** Quite sure, Guv.

**Insp. Clue:** *(to Frank)* Where are you hiding her? You won't get away with this!

**Frank:** I don't know what you're talking about.

**Insp. Clue:** I'm this far from locking you up and throwing away the key.

**Frank:** *(showing him the door)* Haven't you got work to do?

*(Suddenly a booming voice erupts from behind the newspaper in the corner. The*

*GENIE now conducts the whole of the following exchange from behind the paper. At the first sound of the voice there is shocked reaction from everyone in the room as they try to locate its source. The INSPECTOR's previous questions are repeated in the same order).*

**Genie:** It is time you started giving some answers, like the Inspector said.

**Wolves:** Who said that?

**Genie:** We'll start with an easy one. What is your full name?

**Frank:** Francisco Hilary Hopdike. Hey! What's going on? I've never told anybody that before.

*(The other WOLVES try to hide their amusement).*

**Foxy:** I'm not surprised.

**Genie:** Now, what were you doing between the hours of eight and nine o'clock on Sunday morning?

**Frank:** I was down Glasslipper Street with my mates.

**Insp. Clue:** This is a different story.

**Genie:** Do you know the girl in the photograph you were shown?

**Frank:** Of course I do! It's that detestable tearaway, Scarlett Hood.

**Genie:** Did you kidnap Scarlett Hood?

**Frank:** Yes!

**Genie:** And did you bring her here against her will?

**Frank:** Yes!

**Genie:** And did you send a ransom note to her parents, demanding one-hundred-thousand pounds for her safe return?

**Frank:** Yes!

**Genie:** So, where are you hiding her?

**Frank:** In the cellar! What's going on? Who are you? How are you making me say all this? It's not fair!

*(The two DETECTIVES rush away to find SCARLETT).*

**Genie:** *(putting down the paper and standing)* Is it the truth?

**Frank:** Yes! But what good did the truth ever do?

**Genie:** It made a change from dishonesty and cheating.

**Frank:** What's that supposed to mean?

**Genie:** And it lets us know more about who and what we are. In your case, a small-time crook with an axe grind over incessant inability to succeed with any act of cowardice or deceit.

**Foxy:** If you'll excuse me, I've just remembered an important appointment.

**Tim:** Yeah, I've got a bridge to hide under.

**Tom:** Me too. See you later .... much later.

*(FOXY LOXY, TIM and TOM make hasty separate departures. The DETECTIVES bring in a frightened and confused SCARLETT HOOD).*

**Detective 1:** We've found her.

**Detective 2:** She seems okay, Guv.

**Insp. Clue:** Right, we have all the evidence we need. You're nailed to the wall; you're about to be jugged; it's porridge for you and your motley gang. In short, you're nicked!

*(INSPECTOR CLUE opens the briefcase and produces several sets of handcuffs, which are applied to the WOLVES).*

**Charlie:** My life's work, in ruins.

**Frank:** You 'aven't 'eard the last of this, Scarlett Hood!

**Insp. Clue:** Take them away.

*(The WOLVES are led away complaining bitterly).*

**Scarlett:** Oh, Genie, thank you! I don't know how I can repay you.

**Genie:** Well, you could start, Oh Great Guardian of the Lamp, by offering me my freedom. I haven't walked freely through the streets of my home town in Persia for a thousand years.

**Scarlett:** How do I do that?

**Genie:** Simply repeat these words: Jahalla Bab Eesaf Un! Oh Genie, I, the Guardian of the Lamp, do now bestow on your freedom.

**Scarlett:** And then?

**Genie:** And then, imshe! I am gone to begin my life of freedom, in the eastern city of my forefathers. Please, Oh Great Guardian of the Lamp. If Aladdin can do it, so can you. Free me, as I freed you just now.

**Scarlett:** Very well - what were the words again?

**Genie:** Jahalla Bab Eesaf Un! Oh Genie, I, The Guardian of the Lamp do now bestow on you your freedom.

**Scarlett:** Jahalla Bab Eesaf Un! Oh Genie, I, The Guardian of the Lamp do now bestow on you your freedom.

*(A tremendous swelling sound fills the room; lights flash and smoke swirls*

*atmospherically as the GENIE takes his leave).*

**Genie:** Goodbye and good luck!

*(SCARLETT is left alone with the old lamp in her hands. Suddenly the doors burst open and MR & MRS HOOD rush in. They hug and embrace her).*

**Mother:** Scarlett, my darling!

**Father:** Are you all right?

**Scarlett:** Mum! Dad! I've never been gladder to see you.

**Mother:** Did those awful wolves hurt you, my little lamb?

**Scarlett:** No, Mum, honestly. This is the real world of fairytales after all. So they never stood much of a chance of finishing ahead. I was a bit worried for a while, though.

**Mother:** Not as worried as we were. We thought we'd lost you.

**Father:** Well, I ....

**Mother:** Yes you did! You just like to make out nothing concerns you. I've been married to you for too long for you to be able to hide that sort of thing from me.

**Scarlett:** Oh, Mum, I will try to pay more attention to your advice and warnings in the future. *(Turning to her father).* Dad, here, this is for your collection of old relics and tools to be restored.

**Father:** Why thank you Scarlett. It's one of the very first bicycle lamps ever produced. I had one myself, just like it - lost it years ago. Thank you Scarlett. Let's get back to the workshop at once.

*(The family exit arm in arm. SCARLETT in the middle).*

*Lights fade.*

## SCENE 7

*(The wall. At one end sit SCARLETT, CINDY, BLANCHE, JACK and at the other sit the LABOURERS, all in conversation. MOTHER GOAT and her KIDS enter, chattering excitedly).*

**Billy:** Well, we won't be troubled by those wolves for quite some time.

**Jilly:** No, life'll be rather dull without them.

**Tilly:** They were fun to fool!

**Stuart:** I love walloping wolves!

**Mother Goat:** Now that's enough, kids! Not everyone's as fortunate as you are.  
Come on home. It's tea time!

*(The KIDS trail off after MOTHER GOAT).*

**Lab 1:** I don't know 'bout yous two but things 'ave been appenin' so fast lately, I feels like I've been carried along like a leaf in a gale.

**Lab 2:** Couldn't agree more. 'S been a busy week. I'm lookin' forward to puttin' my feet up at the weekend.

**Lab 3:** I've never felt so tired. I 'opes the boss gives us a slack time next week.  
Tea, anybody?

**Lab 1&2:** Aye, good idea.

*(They pour out and drink their tea with obvious satisfaction).*

**Lab 3:** Perks of the job!

*(The FOREMAN enters breathless with frustration).*

**Foreman:** Ah! So there you are.

**All Labs:** Hello matey, want some tea?

**Foreman:** Tea? Tea! The world wasn't built on tea! The walls and houses of this town weren't built and painted on tea! And, so that you cannot say you weren't told, your wages are not paid to you because you drink tea!

**Lab 1:** So that's a no, is it?

**Lab 2:** 'S alright, you can 'ave one later.

**Lab 3:** I always says: drinkin' tea gives you a different and clearer view of the world.

**Foreman:** And I always say: that tea drinkers need to be driven out to work, and watched like a hawk, so that some of the wages you pay them are earned by the work they complete.

**Lab 1:** So you don't like tea, then?

**Foreman:** Like tea! I don't have time for this nonsense. Now are you working for me or not?

**Lab 2:** Well, you pays our wages.

**Lab 3:** You're the boss.

**Foreman:** Then please pack up your picnics, step this way and I'll introduce you to

a paint brush each. And if you don't stop working for more than twenty minutes between now and knocking off time, I might just consider employing your questionable services tomorrow.

**Lab 2:** Fair enough.

**Lab 3:** That'll be a challenge.

**Lab 1:** I'm up for it.

**Foreman:** Well, let's go then. *(Sighing)* What's the point?

*(The FOREMAN exits with his LABOURERS).*

**Scarlett:** How's your stepmother, Cindy?

**Cindy:** Oh, she's all right. To tell you the truth she's so cross and feeling let down by Wishful and Hopeful the heat's been off me for a few days.

**Others:** Wow!

**Cindy:** She even took some time earlier to talk to me as an individual and not a servant. She actually took an interest in how I looked and what I was doing today - oh, and she said to say hello.

**Blanche:** Oh cripes! Look at the time. We're going to be late for the bus into town and then we'll miss the film.

**Jack:** What are you seeing?

**Blanche:** The latest Disney film: Sleeping Beauty.

**Cindy:** It's complete fantasy but it takes your mind off reality.

**Blanche:** Come on.

**Cindy:** See you, Scarlett. Bye Jack.

**Scarlett:** }

**Jack:** } See you later.

*(CINDY and BLANCHE exeunt together).*

**Scarlett:** So, Jack fancy a walk in the park and then a coffee? Or are you too busy?

**Jack:** Everything else is on hold. Let's go!

*(SCARLETT takes JACK's arm and they leave the stage together. Then SCARLETT returns alone).*

**Scarlett:** *(to audience)* Well there you are. Now you know the reality. It was never like this in the fairy tales you were told, was it! Anyway, I'll see you sometime. Bye.

*(SCARLETT runs off to catch up with JACK. The lights fade).*

SCENE 8

*(The lights come up on three LABOURERS sitting beside a "Men at Work" sign. They pour out tea from a flask and eat sandwiches).*

**Lab 1:** I tell 'ee, we works too 'ard. Still, you know wha' they says 'bout people wha' works too 'ard?

**Lab 2:** No, wors'at then?

**Lab 3:** Yeah, wors'at then?

**Lab 1:** They says it keeps a bloke young, like. You know, fit an' tha': attractive for the girls, like, you know, of the opposite sex, so to speak.

**Lab 2:** Well, I'll be alright then; I's been workin' all bloomin' week.

*(There are murmurs of approval at the wisdom of this statement and a clinking of tea mugs as the lights slowly fade).*

**THE END**











