

**The Greatest (Bedtime) Story Ever Told**

**By Brian T. Schultz**



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**CAST of CHARACTERS**

(in order of appearance)

Greta	Jane
Hank	Esmerelda
Katherine	Jasmine
Prunella	Pocohontas
Tortoise	Megara
Pirate	Alice
Evil Queen	Sleeping Beauty
1 <sup>st</sup> Little Pig	Ariel
Jack's Mother	2 <sup>nd</sup> Little Pig
Narco	Handsome Prince
Manic	Driselda
Smiley	Papa Bear
Fabio	Goldilocks
Crazy Old Dwarf	Hare
Drippy	Fox
Special	Big Bad Wolf
King	Snow White
Wicked Stepmother	3 <sup>rd</sup> Little Pig
Fairy Godmother	Mama Bear
Puss in Boots	Jack
Belle	Cinderella
Mulan	Gingerbread Man
Wendy	Baby Bear

**TIME**

Now and Once Upon a Time

**PLACE**

Greta and Hank's bedroom  
The Forest  
The Castle  
The Bridge  
... and beyond

*"The Greatest (Bedtime) Story Ever Told" was originally produced by Aberdeen Community Theatre's Young People's Theatre under the direction of Brian T. Schultz. It premiered on August 29, 2009 at the Capitol Theatre, Aberdeen, South Dakota.*

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A bed sits downstage right. KATHERINE, the babysitter, enters. She looks around and with a sigh of disgust, exits.

KATHERINE: (from offstage) Greta! Hank! Where are you little punks?

Silence. Then there is the sound of laughter as one little freak, GRETA pops out from behind the bed and another little freak, HANK, pops out from under it. They look at each other, laugh, run around the bed and begin jumping up and down on top of it. From offstage, we hear...

KATHERINE: Ah-ha! I've found you little freaks!

GRETA and HANK scream in mock terror and plop down on the bed and KATHERINE descends upon them with a snarl. They begin wrestling on the bed.

KATHERINE: I thought I told you little cretins to take a nap.

GRETA: We don't want to take a nap!

HANK: We wanna play!

KATHERINE: Playtime is over!

HANK: I hafta go to the bathroom!

KATHERINE: You just went.

HANK: I gotta go again.

KATHERINE: No you don't.

HANK: I'm gonna wet my pants.

KATHERINE: You can hold it until naptime's over.

HANK: What do you want from me? I'm just a little person.

KATHERINE: Why, you little... Then go!

*HANK jumps up to go.*

GRETA: Can I get a drink of water?

KATHERINE: No more water until after nap.

GRETA: But I'm thirsty! I'm dying of thirst.

KATHERINE: You'll be fine.

GRETA: Argh! I'm dying. I'm a desert. I'm sand. I have no more liquid left in my body. Don't touch me - I'll disintegrate!

KATHERINE: You're staying in the bed.

GRETA: But Hank gets to get up.

KATHERINE: That's because Hank has to go to the bathroom.

GRETA: Can I go to the bathroom too?

KATHERINE: No.

GRETA: But I might explode.

KATHERINE: Yeah, right.

GRETA: *(opening mouth really wide)* Can't you see my teeth are floating? Are my eyes turning yellow? I have so much liquid in my body I feel bloated! I really gotta go, Katherine!

KATHERINE: Fine! Go then. *(trying to scare them)* But you better hurry up and get back in the bed or this whole carpet will turn into hot lava and you'll melt and be burning and burning forever. That's where nasty little children go, did you know that? They melt and they go down and there's burning and burning and fire and your hair is burning and your eyes are burning...

*Beat.*

GRETA: Nuh-uh.

KATHERINE: Yuh-huh!

HANK: You're such a liar.

KATHERINE: I am not. *(notices HANK)* What are you doing here? I thought you had to go to the bathroom.

HANK: *(shrugging)* I don't anymore.

KATHERINE: That's it! I've had it.

*KATHERINE picks up GRETA and HANK and hurls them into the bed. She tucks them in like burritos and then, down in their face...*

KATHERINE: Stay in the bed!

*KATHERINE turns to exit, then...*

GRETA: *(timidly)* Katherine?

KATHERINE: What?

GRETA: Is there really fire and burning and lava?

KATHERINE: Well...

HANK: We're not supposed to be scared like that before bed. It gives us bad dreams.

KATHERINE: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

GRETA: I'm telling Mom you scared us.

HANK: Yeah! Some babysitter you are! What kind of lousy babysitter scares little kids like that and then puts them to bed?

GRETA: And we're family.

KATHERINE: Only cousins.

HANK: If you're going to fill our heads full of deceit and falsehood, why don't you put it to some sort of practical use?

KATHERINE: What do you mean?

GRETA: Oh, I think a bedtime story would properly allay my fears.

KATHERINE: Fine. I'll tell you a story after nap.

GRETA: Oh heavens, no. I'm far too upset to sleep now. I'm afraid I'll never be able to take a nap in my condition.

HANK: That's right, Katherine. Either you tell us a story or we'll tell our mom you tried to scare us and then she'll tell your mom and then you'll be in biiiigggg trouble.

*KATHERINE thinks for a moment. She's trapped.*

KATHERINE: Fine. I'll play along with your little blackmail. But you'll pay for this later. *(riffling through books)* What'll it be? Snow White? Jack and the Beanstalk? Three Bears?

GRETA: We've heard all those stories before. They're boring. We want to hear a new story.

HANK: Yeah. Make one up. Tell us one we've never heard before.

KATHERINE: Fine. *(sits on bed beside GRETA and HANK)* Uhh... once upon a time..

HANK: *(sarcastic)* Strong start.

GRETA: I can tell this is gonna be good.

KATHERINE: A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away..

GRETA: You can't be serious.

HANK: That's so cliché.

KATHERINE: Do you want this story or not?

GRETA: Fine. Tell it your way, then.

HANK: It won't be our fault if your story stinks.

KATHERINE: Let's see... Uh... There once was a magical kingdom with a prince named Hank and a princess named Greta and..

HANK: Oh, no you don't!

KATHERINE: What?

HANK: Don't think you can wow us with your phony 'put our names in the story' nonsense.

GRETA: That's so predictable.

HANK: This is your last chance to tell us a real story.

KATHERINE: Ugh. Okay... There once was a King...

*KING enters.*

HANK: Nope.

*KING exits.*

KATHERINE: Princess?

*SNOW WHITE enters.*

GRETA: No good.

*SNOW WHITE exits.*

KATHERINE: Peasant boy?

*JACK enters.*

HANK: Nuh-uh.

*JACK exits.*

KATHERINE: Woodcutter?

*HANDSOME PRINCE enters.*

GRETA: Please.

*HANDSOME PRINCE exits.*

KATHERINE: What then?

HANK: *(slowly, deliberately, trying to throw KATHERINE for a loop)* Ugly stepsister.

KATHERINE: You want a story about one of the ugly stepsisters?

HANK: Feel free to use your own name if you like.

KATHERINE: Very funny. All right... There was an ugly stepsister named...

GRETA: Prunella.

KATHERINE: Prunella?

GRETA: Yeah. From the movie? Prunella.

KATHERINE: If you say so. So there was this ugly stepsister, Prunella.

*PRUNELLA enters.*

KATHERINE: Now, she wasn't the sharpest knife in the drawer, if you know what I mean.

GRETA/PRUNELLA: I don't know what you mean.

KATHERINE: It means that she wasn't that smart.

PRUNELLA: *(happily)* Oh!

KATHERINE: Luckily, Prunella had a best friend, because everybody should have a best friend. Her best friend was a beautiful...

HANK: Tortoise.

KATHERINE/PRUNELLA: What?

HANK: Tortoise. You know, from 'The Tortoise and the Hare?'

KATHERINE: Fine. A Tortoise. Named... uh... Tortoise.

TORTOISE: *(from offstage)* I'm coming, I'm coming. Slow and steady wins the race and all that.

KATHERINE: Now despite the fact that he was a tortoise, he was still Prunella's best friend. What he lacked in speed, he made up for in street smarts. His age probably had something to do with it. Did you know tortoises can live to be hundreds of years old? He'd been around, you see, so he was very wise. He looked out for Prunella.

*TORTOISE finally enters, huffing and puffing.*

TORTOISE: That's very kind of you to say. *(to PRUNELLA)* And how are you today, my dear?

PRUNELLA: Just fine, Tortoise. You are my best friend in all the world.

TORTOISE: And you are mine.

HANK: This dialogue needs some help. Get on with it, will ya?

KATHERINE: Give me a break! You've got a tortoise hanging out with an ugly stepsister. I'm making this up on the fly.

HANK: I'm just saying...

KATHERINE: Just chill. Anyway, Prunella and Tortoise were the very best of friends. They spent every waking moment together. One day, while they were out frolicking in the woods...

PRUNELLA: What a lovely time we're having frolicking in the woods.

TORTOISE: Yes, I can't remember when I've had such a lovely frolic.

PRUNELLA: Let us frolic even farther in the woods, on the road less traveled.

TORTOISE: Are you sure? We've never taken that road before.

PRUNELLA: But if we take the road less traveled, that could make all the difference.

TORTOISE: Fine. (*rummaging around his shell*) I think I've got my compass here somewhere. So we don't get lost, you see.

PRUNELLA: Oh, Tortoise, you're so wise. That's why you are my best friend in all the world.

TORTOISE: And you are mine.

GRETA: Oh, please!

HANK: This is so lame.

KATHERINE: All right, all right! So they took the road less traveled. And it did make all the difference, because it wasn't long before they came upon...

GRETA: A house made out of straw.  
*A straw house is set.*

HANK: That had been blown to smithereens.  
*The straw house is knocked down.*

KATHERINE: You guys are sick.

TORTOISE: Oh, my. What's happened here? It looks like this straw house has been blown to smithereens.

PRUNELLA: And fell down!

TORTOISE: Right...

PRUNELLA: Do you suppose anybody lived here?

TORTOISE: Only one way to find out.  
*They begin poking around the straw. TORTOISE is moving piles of straw, looking for pictures, books - anything to give clues about who lived here. PRUNELLA is moving one piece of straw at a time.*

PRUNELLA: (*picking up a piece of straw*) Hello? Anybody here? Hmm. There's no one here. (*picking up another piece of straw*) Hello? Anybody here? Hmm. No one here, either.

KATHERINE: And then suddenly, they heard a mysterious voice coming out of the woods. It was a mysterious stranger who had been living in the straw house.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: (*from offstage*) Halllooooooo...

PRUNELLA: *(looking under a piece of straw)* Tortoise! Come here. I think I've found something.

TORTOISE: *(hurrying over as fast as a tortoise can)* What is it?

PRUNELLA: I think I've found whoever used to live in this straw house.

TORTOISE: *(squinting at the straw)* Are you sure? I don't see anything.

PRUNELLA: I saw a voice. *(TORTOISE reacts)* Coming from this straw.

TORTOISE: Uh...

PRUNELLA: It called out to me. It said...

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Hallllooooooo...

PRUNELLA: See? There it was again! *(talking to the straw, loudly)* I can't see you, but I can hear you. Halloooo!

TORTOISE: My dear Prunella, that voice isn't coming from the straw, it's coming from the woods.

PRUNELLA: Are you sure?

TORTOISE: Listen.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Hallllooooooo...

PRUNELLA: Tortoise! That voice isn't coming from the straw, it's coming from the woods.

KATHERINE: Prunella was right. The voice was coming from the woods. And the voice belonged to none other than the first little p-

HANK: Pirate!

KATHERINE: Pirate?

*PIRATE enters.*

PIRATE: *(in mostly a pirate voice)* Halt! Who goes there?

GRETA: That's not how pirates talk.

KATHERINE: Sorry.

PIRATE: *(in a real pirate voice)* Halt! Who goes thar?

PRUNELLA: Just us.

PIRATE: And who be us? Speak up, or I'll give ye a taste o' me broadsword! I'll keelhaul ye lily-livered varmints fer rummagin' through me personal effects.

PRUNELLA: You live here?

PIRATE: And what of it? Ye never seen a bloodthirsty pirate livin' in a house o' straw before?

TORTOISE: What happened?

PIRATE: *(dramatically)* A terrible scourge it was. Came rappin' at me door beggin' to come in. I told the scalawag 'not by the hairs o' me chinny-chin-chin.' The louse then replied that he'd huff and puff and blow me house in!

HANK: No, he didn't.

KATHERINE/PIRATE: He didn't?

GRETA: Nope. It wasn't the Big Bad Wolf.

KATHERINE: Who was it then?

HANK: I don't know. You figure it out.

GRETA: But it wasn't the Big Bad Wolf.

KATHERINE: Fine, have it your way. So, let's see... The pirate said..

KATHERINE/PIRATE: A terrible scourge it was. Came rappin' at me door beggin' to come in.

PIRATE: I told the scalawag 'not by the hairs o' me chinny-chin-chin.' The louse then replied that he... *(thinking for a new direction to go with the story)* ...knew where a secret treasure was buried. Lured me out o' me home, he did. And when I came back, me house was blown to smithereens.

PRUNELLA: That's awful.

PIRATE: I know. *(revealing a secret)* I don't think there ever was a real treasure, either. *(suddenly angry)* But I'll tell ye this - if I ever find out who done the dirty deed, I'll make 'im walk the plank, I will!

PRUNELLA: Well, we'll help you find whoever did this to your home. My friend, Tortoise, and I are just out frolicking in the woods along the road less traveled. I'm sure if you come along with us, we'll find out who did this.

PIRATE: Tortoise? Did ye say... Tortoise? *(he looks suspiciously at TORTOISE; PIRATE walks right up to TORTOISE, circling, looking him up and down)* Do I know ye?

TORTOISE: *(staring straight ahead)* I don't know. Do you?

PIRATE: I'm sure I know ye. Have we met somewhere before?

TORTOISE: I'm sure I don't know.

PIRATE: It seems I was shipwrecked nigh on to thirteen years ago. Me sailin' vessel was waterlogged; I'd lost all me crew. I surely would have gone down with the ship into Davy Jones' locker and met me watery grave had it not been for a friendly sea turtle.

PRUNELLA/  
GRETA/HANK: Sea turtle?

KATHERINE: Hey, now. I'm telling this story.

HANK: But a sea turtle?

KATHERINE: Listen, buster. I'm working off of what you gave me. Now deal with it.

HANK: Whatever.

PIRATE: Aye, a sea turtle. Plucked me out of the water, he did. Swam to a distant shore with me on 'is back. Dropped me off, never to be seen again. I never did get a chance to properly thank 'im fer his kindness. *(nose to nose with TORTOISE)* Be ye that turtle?

TORTOISE: Could be.

PIRATE: *(exploding with joy)* Aye! 'Tis you! I knowed it from the moment I set me eyes upon ye. I never ferget a face - especially a turtle face.

TORTOISE: Tortoise, actually. But close enough.

PIRATE: Aye! Close enough, indeed. How can I ever repay ye fer savin' me life all those years ago?

PRUNELLA: You saved his life?

TORTOISE: *(starting to get embarrassed)* It was nothing, really. No thanks necessary.

PIRATE: Nothing? Why, if it hadn't been fer yer darin' rescue I wouldn't be standin' here today. After ye rescued me I decided that me sailin' days were over ferever. I built me a simple straw house here in the woods where I been livin' ever since. *(hugging TORTOISE, getting a little tearful)* Thank ye. Thank ye.

PRUNELLA: But now what are you going to do? Your house is gone.

PIRATE: Aye, 'tis gone indeed. Well, that's that. I'll join ye on yer journey and we'll get to the bottom of this mystery.

TORTOISE: Actually, we should really be heading back.

PIRATE: Nonsense! Ye've come this far. Only way back is to keep movin' forward. We'd best be shovin' off. I fear we've a long way to go and a short time to get thar.

PRUNELLA: Come on, Tortoise. This should be fun. Gee, a real mystery. I've never solved a mystery before.

TORTOISE: It could be dangerous.

PIRATE: *(quiet and ominous)* Aye, it could be very dangerous, indeed. Horrible, bad things could happen. We may not make it back alive. *(beat; loud and excited)* What're we waitin' fer?

PRUNELLA: Please?

TORTOISE: All right, all right, all right! But if you get yourself killed, don't come running to me.

PRUNELLA: Hooray!

PIRATE: Let's be shovin' off then!

KATHERINE: And so, the unlikely threesome of an ugly stepsister, a slow-moving tortoise and bloodthirsty pirate set off through the woods down the road less traveled. And it wasn't long before they came upon a house of sticks...

*A stick house is set.*

KATHERINE: That was also blown to smithereens.

*The stick house is knocked down.*

TORTOISE: Oh, my. What's happened here? It looks like this stick house has been blown to smithereens.

PRUNELLA: And fell down!

PIRATE: Right...

PRUNELLA: Do you suppose anybody lived here?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: Help!

PRUNELLA: Another mysterious voice!

TORTOISE: Where's it coming from?

PIRATE: Over here! Under this pile o' sticks.

TORTOISE: Seems logical.

KATHERINE: And so they moved aside the pile of sticks to reveal... uh...

GRETA: The evil queen!

KATHERINE/PRUNELLA: The evil queen!

EVIL QUEEN: You were, perhaps, expecting someone else?

TORTOISE: Well, Evil Queen, we weren't expecting someone of your... er... evil-ness to be living in a house of sticks.

EVIL QUEEN: I wasn't living in this house of sticks, you foolish turtle.

TORTOISE: Tortoise, actually.

EVIL QUEEN: Silence! I was taking a stroll through the woods...

PRUNELLA: We were frolicking.

EVIL QUEEN: *(getting impatient with the interruptions)* Well I was strolling! And I was just talking to my magic mirror... Oh no. Where is my magic mirror? It was right here with me? Where could it have gone?

PIRATE: How big was it?

EVIL QUEEN: Oh, it was about yay by yay... Oh I don't know! It was mirror-size, okay? Just stop yapping and help me find it. We must find my magic mirror. It's magic, you know.

PIRATE: Aye, ye mentioned that.

*They dig around the pile of sticks. PRUNELLA finds it - about hand-mirror size - and holds it aloft triumphantly.*

PRUNELLA: I found it! I found it! It's right here! *(looking at the mirror)* Ooh, are you a magic mirror?

*Note: MAGIC MIRROR should be a pre-recorded voice.*

MAGIC MIRROR: Who wants to know?

PRUNELLA: *(flouncing and preening herself)* Oh, mirror, mirror in my hand; who's the fairest in all the land?

MAGIC MIRROR: I can tell you that it's definitely not...

EVIL QUEEN: *(snatching the mirror out of PRUNELLA's hand)* Ah-ah-ah! I'm the only one allowed to ask that question.

PIRATE: *(snatching the mirror out of EVIL QUEEN's hand)* Oh yeah? Mirror, mirror in my hand, who's the fairest in all the land?

MAGIC MIRROR: Egad! You're even uglier yet!

PIRATE: Watch it now, or I'll break ye into a million pieces.

MAGIC MIRROR: You do and that's seven years bad luck for you.

PIRATE: Curses!

MAGIC MIRROR: Nyah-nyah!

EVIL QUEEN: *(grabbing her mirror back)* Give me that! It's my mirror, you understand? Mine!

TORTOISE: Excuse me, Evil Queen. But you have your mirror back now. You were telling us how you ended up here.

EVIL QUEEN: Ah, yes. Well, I was strolling about the woods talking to my magic mirror...

MAGIC MIRROR: A rather one-sided conversation, if you ask me. *(MIRROR bursts out with laughter; nobody joins in)*

EVIL QUEEN: Anywho... When suddenly I heard a voice coming from inside this stick house, calling for help. So I ran inside to see what was the matter. When I did, I found it empty; and before I could leave, the whole house collapsed around me.

PRUNELLA: That's terrible!

EVIL QUEEN: It was a trap! A trap, I tell you.

PIRATE: Fear not, yer wickedness.

EVIL QUEEN: Evilness.

PIRATE: Whatever. I, too, have lost me home and we're on our way to find the dirty culprit.

PRUNELLA: Would you like to join us?

EVIL QUEEN: Gracious, no. I've had too much excitement for one day already. I just want to go home to my palace and soak in a nice, hot bath and plot more evil things to do.

MAGIC MIRROR: And besides, I've been smudged.

EVIL QUEEN: But if you do find the nasty culprit, bring him to me. I have an apple pie that is to die for!

KATHERINE: And with that, the evil queen disappeared into the woods, laughing wickedly.

GRETA/HANK: Evilily.

KATHERINE: Whatever.

*EVIL QUEEN exits, laughing evilily.*

PRUNELLA: Well! What do you make of that?

TORTOISE:                   Whoever is behind all of these shenanigans is up to no good. We have to figure out who it is... and soon.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:        (*from offstage*) Excuse me.

PIRATE:                   Who's there?

GRETA:                   Don't forget the pirate voice!

PIRATE:                   Who's thar?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:        (*from offstage*) I was wondering if you could point the way to Granny's house. It's a small brick house in the woods.

TORTOISE:                 Careful, it could be our prankster.

PIRATE:                   Who might ye be? Show yerself!

KATHERINE:                The mysterious stranger stepped out from the woods. And it was none other than...

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG enters.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG/  
KATHERINE:                A pig!

HANK:                    Wait just a minute! Brick house? A pig? No way. We wouldn't let you bring a pig to the other houses, don't think we're going to let you off the hook now!

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG:         The First Little Pig, to be precise.

KATHERINE:                Ha! Deal with it!

HANK:                    (*defeated*) Oh.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG:         Good day, Prunella, Tortoise, Sir Pirate.

PIRATE:                   Sir Pirate?

PRUNELLA:                How do you know our names?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG:         It moves the story along faster if you already know these things.

TORTOISE:                 What are you doing here in the woods?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG:         I mean you no harm. I am simply on my way through the woods on the road less traveled to get to my dear, sweet granny's house. She's fallen ill, don't you know, so I am on my way to her small brick house to offer her comfort. Only problem is, I seem to have gotten lost. Might you be able to help?

PRUNELLA:                We've never been to Granny's house. In fact, we've never been on the road less traveled

before. I'm afraid we don't know where your dear, sweet old granny lives.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: No problem. I see that the road is right here under my feet. How about that? Well, I guess I'll continue on, then. Good day.

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG exits.*

PIRATE: I've got a bad feelin' about this. After me straw house and this here stick house, doesn't it seem rather suspicious that suddenly there's someone really interested in a brick house?

PRUNELLA: I think we should consider that pig a 'character of interest' in this case. Isn't that what they say in all the detective shows on TV?

PIRATE: How would I know? Do TVs exist in this story?

PRUNELLA: Beats me.

TORTOISE: Never mind. We'd better hurry. If we can make it to Granny's house before the pig, maybe we can stop him!

PRUNELLA: But the pig already has a head start down the road less traveled!

TORTOISE: Don't worry, I know a shortcut!

PIRATE: How do ye know that?

TORTOISE: Didn't you hear the pig? It moves the story along faster if you already know these things! Come on!

KATHERINE: And with that, Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate took off along the shortcut through the woods to Granny's house.

GRETA: The first little pig. Pretty clever.

KATHERINE: I think I'm finally getting the swing of things.

HANK: We'll see about that. What happens next?

KATHERINE: Not many people knew about the shortcut, you see, so other inhabitants of the woods thought that they were safe to hold their secret meetings; away from prying eyes. Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate accidentally stumbled upon one of the deep, dark, secret meetings.

*During the above monologue, the DWARVES and JACK's MOTHER set up chairs in a circle.*

JACK's MOTHER: Okay, now, group. Group! Let's come to order... okay?

*Seven DWARVES settle down.*

JACK's MOTHER: Now, we've made some really good progress so far. We've dealt with your unemployment issues and we've all agreed that strip-mining is an outdated and non-environmentally sound career path... okay? Now let's take a look at your identity issues, shall we?

*DWARVES grunt their approval. PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE accidentally stumble in.*

TORTOISE: Shh! We've accidentally stumbled upon one the secret meetings held here in the woods.

PIRATE: What do they meet about?

PRUNELLA: If they told you, it wouldn't be a secret then, would it?

PIRATE: Then let's find out what the secret's all about.

TORTOISE: Keep your voices down. It may give us a clue about our mysterious prankster.

*PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE crouch down and watch.*

JACK's MOTHER: Okay... very good. Let's begin. Now believe me, I know how difficult it is to lose oneself. Take me, for instance. Why, it seems like just yesterday it was just me and my son, Jack. We were very poor and didn't know where our next meal was coming from. So I sent my one and only son into the village to sell the cow and I haven't heard from him since... okay? Any normal person would have considered themselves a goner; done for. But not me. I picked myself up by the bootstraps - if you'll forgive the expression...

*DWARVES grunt.*

JACK's MOTHER: ... and decided that I could either continue my life a poor, starving widow... okay? Or... I could assert my true identity and make something of myself. So I stood up and said, 'I'm not just some poor, starving widow! I am Jack's mother!' So I bought a large shoe, set up a shingle and began my therapy practice. Now I have so many clients I don't know what to do... okay?

*One of the DWARVES has fallen asleep and is snoring loudly.*

JACK's MOTHER: Narco! Wake up! Maybe you don't think my little story applies to you... okay? But I can assure you that it does... okay? It does.

NARCO: Sorry. I can't help myself. Since losing my job, I've just been so sleepy.

JACK's MOTHER: I understand what it's like to be sleepy, Narco. But not during my life-affirming story.

MANIC: *(swatting NARCO, laughing)* Yeah, man! Can't you tell she's trying to help us? And I love it. *(to JACK's MOTHER)* Thank you, Jack's Mother, for helping me see the light at the end of the tunnel. I feel so great, I feel like I could fly! *(he begins jumping up and down and flying around)* I feel happy! I feel happy!

JACK's MOTHER: That's good, Manic. But do try to come down for a bit... okay? Let's try to help the others find their inner peace as well.

*MANIC sits, but is unable to keep from smiling and bouncing, bouncing and smiling.*

SMILEY: *(to MANIC, angry)* Sit down, will ya? Sheesh! You're driving me crazy!

JACK's MOTHER: Smiley! There's no need to be grumpy... okay? Remember, this is a safe environment; we're here to help each other.

SMILEY: *(yelling)* Who are you calling grumpy? This is the best I've felt in three weeks!

MANIC: Ha ha! It's true, it's true! I love it!

*MANIC is laughing so hard he falls out of his chair, which makes him laugh even harder. Other DWARVES laugh at MANIC's pratfall, except one - FABIO - who sulks in a corner.*

JACK's MOTHER: Well, hey there, little fella. You've been awfully quiet. Is there anything you want to share today?

*FABIO squirms uncomfortably.*

JACK's MOTHER: I know what it's like to be bashful, Fabio. But there's no need to be a wallflower.

*FABIO squirms again. He is swatted by CRAZY OLD DWARF.*

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Speak up, sonny! The nice lady's talkin' to ye!

JACK's MOTHER: Now, now, Crazy Old Dwarf. Just because you're the oldest doesn't mean that you're the leader of the group... okay?

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Don't talk back to me, Fabio, or I'll give the taste of the back of me hand!

JACK's MOTHER: Fabio didn't say anything, Crazy Old Dwarf.

CRAZY OLD DWARF: He didn't?

SMILEY: (enraged) No, he didn't!

CRAZY: Well, why didn't ya say so?

DRIPPY: Maybe it's because I just sneezed.

JACK's MOTHER: Oh, are you sneezy today?

DRIPPY: (pulling out a handkerchief) No, I'm Drippy.

JACK's MOTHER: I know that. But are you sneezy?

DRIPPY: (wiping his nose) I'm not sneezy, I'm Drippy.

JACK's MOTHER: I meant are you feeling sneezy, Drippy?

DRIPPY: Stuffy.

JACK's MOTHER: I beg your pardon?

DRIPPY: I'm feeling stuffy.

JACK's MOTHER: Oh! You're feeling stuffy, Drippy?

*DRIPPY blows his nose in reply.*

JACK's MOTHER: We'll come back to you... okay? (to SPECIAL) How about you? How's Special today?

SPECIAL: Pennies are shiny!

JACK's MOTHER: Yes they are. Yes they are!

SPECIAL: My cat's breath smells like cat food!

JACK's MOTHER: Indeed it does.

CRAZY OLD DWARF: He certainly is dopey!

JACK's MOTHER: That's not very nice, Crazy Old Dwarf. He's not dopey, he's Special.

SPECIAL: My doctor said I wouldn't get so many nosebleeds if I kept my finger out of there!

SMILEY: Oh, for pete's sake!

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Will somebody give him a cookie and shut him up?

JACK's MOTHER: Now, now, just try to remember that we're all unique individuals, Crazy Old Dwarf. It's okay for Special to be... erm... a little dopey... okay? And it's okay that Drippy's stuffy, and for Fabio to be bashful, for Smiley to be grumpy, Narco to be sleepy and for Manic to be... uh... really manic. But what about you, Crazy Old Dwarf? Are you the doc? Hm? Are you?

CRAZY OLD DWARF: That's it! I've had enough of this cock-a-doodle-doo! I'm outta here! We can find us a new job like that! Who's with me?

*Everybody just stares at CRAZY OLD DWARF.*

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Come on! We don't need this crazy psycho-babble to tell us who we are! Are we dwarves or are we men?

*Beat. Everybody looks at each other, not sure how to respond. Finally, DRIPPY raises his hand.*

DRIPPY: We're... dwarves?

CRAZY OLD DWARF: That's right! Now let's go find us some work! What do you say?

MANIC: Aye!

SMILEY: Aye!

DRIPPY: Aye!

NARCO: *(being jolted awake by SMILEY)* Aye!

*All look at FABIO, who nods vigorously.*

CRAZY OLD DWARF: What about you, Special?

SPECIAL: *(jumping up on his chair, proclaiming for all the world to hear)* When I grow up I either want to be a principal... or a caterpillar!

*Beat. Then the DWARVES erupt in a thunderous cheer and exit boisterously, leaving JACK's mother.*

JACK's MOTHER: No! Wait! Come back! Group? Oh, Group! Come back; you need me! Come back, group! Group!

*Too late. They're gone.*

JACK's MOTHER: *(exiting after them)* I'm very proud of this show of independence!

PRUNELLA/

HANK/GRETA: Okay, that was just weird.

TORTOISE: It does confirm one thing.

PIRATE: What be that?

TORTOISE: That things are definitely not right here. We better hurry to Granny's brick house.

KATHERINE: And hurry they did. Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate left the road less traveled and took a shortcut through the woods... and it wasn't long before they arrived at the brick house. But were they too late?

TORTOISE: Whew, we're just in time. Granny's brick house is still standing.

KING: You're too late! The Fairy Godmother has taken a bite out of a poisoned apple and is now in a deep sleep - perhaps forever.

PRUNELLA: Oh no! Not the Fairy Godmother.

TORTOISE: Your majesty? What are you doing here?

KING: (*duh*) I'm the King.

TORTOISE: Oh.

KING: Come, we must hurry.

*They hurry over to where the FAIRY GODMOTHER lay.*

PIRATE: What be the rush?

KING: We have to get back to mourning.

PIRATE: But it already be afternoon.

KING: (*whispering*) Keep your voices down, now.

PRUNELLA: (*whispering*) Why are we whispering?

PIRATE: (*whispering*) It be that she's sleeping. She might wake up.

TORTOISE: (*whispering*) Don't we want her to wake up?

KING: (*whispering*) Yes.

TORTOISE: (*whispering*) Then why do we have to whisper?

KING: (*whispering*) Because I wanted to see if you would whisper if I whispered.

TORTOISE: (*whispering*) It seems like I would.

PIRATE: (*shouting*) Enough of this foolishness! (*shaking FAIRY GODMOTHER, in her face*) Wake up, ye hear me? Wake up! Wake up, wake up, wake up! Wake! Up! (*beat; to others*) She's not waking up.

KING: That's because she took a bite out of the poison apple.

TORTOISE: Where is the apple?

PRUNELLA: Is this it? (*picks up an apple; looking at it*) It doesn't look poisonous.

PIRATE: (*yanking the apple away from PRUNELLA*) Gimme that! Ye're not supposed to touch poison. (*sniffs the apple several times*) That's what I thought. It's been dipped in iocane powder. It's odorless, tasteless, nearly invisible and one of the world's deadliest poisons. (*he licks the apple*) Yep. Iocane powder. I'd bet me life on it. There is an antidote, but ye have to work fast or else...

*PIRATE freezes and topples over, stiff as a board.*

TORTOISE: Inconceivable.

KING: That's what happened to the Fairy Godmother.

PRUNELLA: Now what do we do?

*There is a sudden blast of smoke and loud rock music. WICKED STEPMOTHER enters clad in biker outfit, helmet and gloves.*

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Somebody call for me?

*The others look around at each other for a moment.*

PRUNELLA: No, I don't think so.

KING: Oh, Wicked Stepmother. I'm glad you're here, really I am; but you're too late. The Fairy Godmother has taken a bite out of a poisoned apple and is now in a deep sleep - perhaps forever.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: *(looking at PIRATE)* What's up with him?

PRUNELLA: He's been poisoned, too.

KING: He seemed to identify the poison as iocane powder. He tasted some to make certain.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Oh, good grief. Have you tried waking them?

KING: Yes.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: But it didn't work?

KING: No.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: How did you do it?

PRUNELLA: We tried shaking them and yelling 'wake up!'

WICKED STEPMOTHER: For heaven's sake. Don't you know that the only way to wake somebody up from a deep sleep is by true love's kiss?

PRUNELLA: Eww.

TORTOISE: Who would be in love with a Fairy Godmother or a pirate?

PRUNELLA: Not me.

KING: The turtle brings up a valid point.

TORTOISE: Tortoise.

KING: Whatever.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: *(pulling out a book; riffling through pages)* Hang on a minute. Let me check another version of the story.

GRETA: Hey! Wait just a minute!

*KATHERINE is thumbing through a book.*

GRETA: You're looking in a book. That's cheating.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: What do you want from me? This isn't even my story. I'm Cinderella's wicked stepmother and the poison apple was in Snow White.

HANK: You're supposed to make up this story on your own.

KATHERINE: Give me a break, will you? I know there's another version of Snow White other than the Disney one.

GRETA: That's heresy!

HANK: She's a witch!

GRETA/HANK: Burn her!

WICKED STEPMOTHER/  
KATHERINE: Who are you calling a witch?

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Snow White's mother was the witch!

*EVIL QUEEN enters.*

EVIL QUEEN: Who are you calling a witch, you hussy!

KATHERINE: *(frantically reading, turning pages)* Gotta find it, gotta find it!

WICKED STEPMOTHER: If the broom fits...

EVIL QUEEN: Say that again.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: If. The. Broom. Fits.

PRUNELLA: Oh, man. You do not want to see her angry.

TORTOISE: Who?

PRUNELLA: Either one.

EVIL QUEEN: Do you know who you're dealing with?

GRETA: Get her, Queenie, get her!

HANK: Show her who's boss, Stepmama!

GRETA/HANK: Fight! Fight! Fight!

WICKED STEPMOTHER: You're so vain. You probably think this story's about you.

EVIL QUEEN: How dare you! I ought to turn you into a newt!

KATHERINE: *(jumping up in triumph)* Ah-ha! I found it!

*Nobody's listening to her. WICKED STEPMOTHER and EVIL QUEEN are circling each other, hurling insults. PRUNELLA and TORTOISE are huddling in a corner near FAIRY GODMOTHER and PIRATE. GRETA and HANK are cheering on their favorites. Only the KING seems occasionally interested. Other times, he is thinking about soup. KATHERINE sees her chance.*

KATHERINE: Your majesty... Your majesty!

*The KING seems not to notice. KATHERINE crosses directly to the KING.*

KATHERINE: Hey! Yoo-hoo! *(finally, an idea)* Hey, look! It's the other Boleyn girl!

KING: Where? *(seeing nobody)* You've tricked me, young lady.

KATHERINE: Please, your majesty, look at this.

*KATHERINE hands KING the book. He reads, nods, mumbles to himself.*

KING: Of course. It makes perfect sense. *(to everyone else)* Your attention, your attention please.

*Nobody seems to care. Finally...*

KING: Silence!

*Everybody freezes.*

KING: *(clearing his throat)* I am the king, after all. This young lady has something to say.

KATHERINE: Well, it says here... *(reading from book)* 'One of the dwarves sat Snow White up...'

*The DWARVES enter.*

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Somebody call for a dwarf?

PRUNELLA: No, I don't think so.

MANIC: How about seven dwarves? Hee-hee-hee!

PRUNELLA: No, we're good here, thanks.

SMILEY: *(swatting CRAZY OLD DWARF as they exit)* Find a job in no time, eh?

CRAZY OLD DWARF: I thought I heard them say, 'dwarf.'

SPECIAL: Fetch me a fork and some garden hose!

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Who asked you?

*The DWARVES are gone.*

KING: Most peculiar. *(to KATHERINE)* Do continue.

KATHERINE: Right. Well, it says here... *(reading from book)* 'One of the dwarves sat Snow White up and the piece of apple fell out of her mouth, instantly reviving her.'

GRETA: So?

KING: Isn't obvious? They're choking to death. *(to KATHERINE)* Come here and help me.

*KATHERINE and KING cross to the FAIRY GODMOTHER and sit her up.*

KING: I think I saw Burt Lancaster do this in a movie once, but I'm sure the method is, by now, outdated.

KATHERINE: Who's Burt Lancaster?

KING: *(indicating AUDIENCE)* Ask one of them. *(speaking directly to AUDIENCE)* I hear there may be a prize for whoever can correctly name the film. But not now, this story's already weird enough without adding other characters who technically don't exist in our world. *(to KATHERINE)* Prop her mouth open.

*KATHERINE props FAIRY GODMOTHER's mouth open, KING slaps her on the back three times. A large chunk of apple goes flying out, hitting EVIL QUEEN.*

EVIL QUEEN: Augh! This is disgusting. I'm out of here.

*EVIL QUEEN exits.*

KING: *(indicating FAIRY GODMOTHER)* I think she's coming out of it.

KATHERINE: How can you tell?

KING: Listen.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Ohhh... I think I'm coming out of it.

KING: *(to KATHERINE)* Thank you for your help.

*KATHERINE returns to the bed. It suddenly dawns on her what just happened. She looks back.*

KATHERINE: Weird.

HANK: Aw, nuts. I was hoping to see a good cat fight.

*PUSS IN BOOTS enters with a sword.*

PUSS IN BOOTS: *(waving sword menacingly)* Did you want to see a cat fight? Hyah! Hyah! Parry! Dodge! Spin! Dodge! Thrust! Ha-ha! I have you beaten!

HANK: Not that kind of cat fight.

PUSS: Oh-ho! But you forget I am a puss - in boots - and I can both swash and buckle!

PIRATE: Already have that part covered, matey. Thanks fer playin'.

PUSS IN BOOTS: But my boots! My boots! Don't you like my boots?

PIRATE: No, not really.

PUSS IN BOOTS: Ohhh phooey on you!

*PUSS exits, depressed.*

HANK: That could have been cool, Greta.

GRETA: Never mind. What happened next, Katherine?

KATHERINE: Well... *(shaking her head to clear the cobwebs; it must have just been her imagination)* It seemed the Fairy Godmother was beginning to come out of it.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I think I'm coming out of it.

KATHERINE: They then revived the Pirate in the same fashion.

GRETA: You mean we don't get to see it?

KING: Sorry, but we need to jump ahead. The story's fallen a bit behind, you see.

GRETA: What a bummer.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Thank you, my friends, for reviving me. I wish I could properly thank you.

PRUNELLA: You could grant us each three wishes.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I would, except I'm Cinderella's Fairy Godmother, not yours.

PRUNELLA: I won't tell.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Unfortunately, my magic wand is missing as well; so I couldn't even if I wanted to.

TORTOISE: Strange things like that have been happening all over. We're trying to get to the bottom of things.

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG enters.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(noticing the others)* Oh. It seems you've beaten me here.

PIRATE: Ye seem disappointed. Did we ruin yer scheme?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Scheme? I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about. There is no scheme. But how did you get here so fast?

PRUNELLA: We took a shortcut.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Interesting. Well, I best be on my way. I still have a long way to go, with many important things to do.

TORTOISE: Like what?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Can't explain now. I mustn't tarry any longer. I must get to the castle before nightfall.

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG exits.*

FAIRY GODMOTHER: If I were you, I would head for the castle as quickly as possible. I fear that little pig may be up to no good.

PIRATE: Do ye think that he be the dirty prankster we're after?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: I don't know, but if he's heading for the castle it seems like a logical place to start.

TORTOISE: He certainly seems to be acting in a most peculiar fashion.

PRUNELLA: I told you he was a 'character of interest!'

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Then you best get to the castle as soon as you can.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: I think she's right. I just came from there and things are really weird.

TORTOISE: How weird?

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Ah-ah-ah. I can't give too much of the story away now, can I?

FAIRY GODMOTHER: It's best if you hurry. I fear we haven't much time.

PRUNELLA: Tortoise, do you know another shortcut?

TORTOISE: Of course I do. Got to help keep the plot moving, don't I?

PIRATE: Then let's get goin'!

KATHERINE: And so, Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate left the house of bricks and took another shortcut through the woods. In the blink of an eye, they found themselves at the castle. And it turned out that the Wicked Stepmother was absolutely right - things were really weird. As they approached the reception area...

*DISNEY GIRLS are sitting at a long table, answering phones. There are two empty chairs. They all talk on top of each other.*

DISNEY GIRLS: Castle, hold please. Castle, hold please. Castle, hold please. Yes, things are weird all over. Yes, we've gotten several calls on that. No, we don't have any answers for you yet. Etc.

PRUNELLA: Excuse me.

DISNEY GIRLS: Castle, hold please. Castle, hold please. Castle, hold please. Yes, things are weird all over. Yes, we've gotten several calls on that. No, we don't have any answers for you yet. Etc.

PIRATE: *(shouting over the noise)* Hey! Ladies!  
*They all stop and take notice of PIRATE.*

DISNEY GIRLS: Ooh! A man!

PIRATE: Wha-?

TORTOISE: Who are you?

BELLE: We're unemployed Disney girls, turtlehead.

TORTOISE: Tortoise.

BELLE: Whatever. We all lost our jobs when things started acting weird and all the stories got messed up.

MULAN: So we took these temp jobs 'til things settle down.

PRUNELLA: I'm so sorry.

BELLE: Nah. Don't be. I was stuck in a castle with a horrible beast anyway.

WENDY: You think you had it bad? I was chasing Peter Pan's shadow and it led me right to the unemployment line. That's what happens when you chase the shadow and not the man.

DISNEY GIRLS: Here, here!

JANE: I lost funding for my gorilla research.

ESMERELDA: Gorilla research, huh? That sounds like more fun than that bell ringing gig I had with Quasimodo.

JASMINE: Well, at least you had a gig. The so-called sultan, Aladdin turned out to be a deadbeat street rat, so guess who had to pick up a job to pay the bills!

POCOHONTAS: You don't have to tell me about deadbeats! I left my home and family and came here with Captain John Smith. And what does the chump do? He puts me to work so he could pick up some other babe in the east Indies.

MEGARA: That's nothing. I had to trade my soul to Hades to get this job.

DISNEY GIRLS: Ooh.

ALICE: Some days I get up in the morning and look in the looking glass and wonder how long things will remain this curious.

MULAN: I'm just glad to have a job and that they haven't been sent overseas to China! It's tough for women to get any respect over there.

*DISNEY GIRLS murmur their agreement. Sleeping Beauty enters, breathless.*

BELLE: Well, Sleeping Beauty! It's about time you showed up!

SLEEPING BEAUTY: I am sooo sorry I overslept! I totally slept through my alarm. I don't understand - I set it each night but I just can't hear it.

*DISNEY GIRLS giggle amongst themselves.*

JANE: You better figure something out - and fast. 'Cause you know what happens to girls who can't make it on time? They get an ear toss! That's right. They're tossed right out on their ear. Do you want to be tossed right out on your ear?

SLEEPING BEAUTY: No, I don't.

ESMERELDA: Then get it together, girl!

SLEEPING BEAUTY: I'm sorry.

BELLE: Good help is so hard to find.

PRUNELLA: Who sits in the last chair?

BELLE: Oh, that's Ariel. She's in the bathroom. *(looking offstage)* Here she comes now.

*ARIEL comes flopping onstage.*

ARIEL: *(rasping and coughing)* Water! Water! I need some water!

*ARIEL flops offstage.*

BELLE: Poor girl. I don't think she's right for this job. She's like a fish out of water.

*DISNEY GIRLS laugh.*

TORTOISE: Well, ladies, we're trying to get to the bottom of this mystery as quick as we can. The Fairy Godmother said that we should start here.

PRUNELLA: And the Wicked Stepmother said that things were strange here.

JANE: And she was right, honey. You think we're strange? Take a look around!

ESMERELDA: Just follow the hallway, second door on the right. You'll see what we mean.

TORTOISE: Thank you. We'll try to get to the bottom of this and get you back where you belong.

PIRATE: Good day, me fair lasses.

DISNEY GIRLS: Goodbye, Mister Pirate. *(they explode in a fit of giggles)*

PIRATE: *(rushing PRUNELLA and TORTOISE)* Let's get out of here.  
This place is givin' me the willies!

*PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE cross to a different room. 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG and HANDSOME PRINCE are playing cards when DRISELDA enters, waving a piece of paper excitedly.*

DRISELDA: You'll never believe it! We've just been invited to attend a ball.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: A ball? A ball? I've never been to a ball before. I've played ball and I've had a ball but I've never been to a ball. What does one do at a ball?

HANDSOME PRINCE: No big deal, really. It's just a whole bunch of people dancing.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Do they dance in a circle?

HANDSOME PRINCE: A circle?

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Why else would they call it a ball if they didn't dance in a circle? If they dance in a square it's called square dancing, right?

HANDSOME PRINCE: I've never thought of it that way..

DRISELDA: That's not all. It's a really fancy ball and we all have to dress up.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: As what?

DRISELDA: Huh?

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: You said we have to dress up. Dress up as what?

HANDSOME PRINCE: You don't dress up as anything. It means you wear your fanciest clothes.

DRISELDA: I know what I'm wearing! *(pulling a garment out)*  
I'm going to wear the tuxedo dress.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: What do I get to wear?

HANDSOME PRINCE: How come you get to wear the tuxedo dress?

DRISELDA: Because it's a dress, silly.

HANDSOME PRINCE: *(grabbing it from DRISELDA)* But it's also a tuxedo.  
So I should get to wear it.

*A tug-of-war begins over the tuxedo dress.*

DRISELDA: It's only half tuxedo.

HANDSOME PRINCE: Well, it's only half dress!

DRISELDA: Too bad. I called it first so I'm wearing it.

HANDSOME PRINCE: No you're not; I'm going to wear it.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: I could wear it.

DRISELDA: But you already have a crown.

HANDSOME PRINCE: And the tuxedo dress completes the ensemble!

DRISELDA: Well, the tuxedo dress accents my eyes.

HANDSOME PRINCE: I'll give you two black eyes; then they'll really match! Now hand it over!

DRISELDA: Over my dead body!

HANDSOME PRINCE: That can be arranged!

*By now, it's all-out war as they fight over the tuxedo dress.*

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: If I wore it, then you wouldn't have to fight over it.

DRISELDA: Give me the tuxedo dress!

HANDSOME PRINCE: Never!

HANDSOME PRINCE/  
DRISELDA: It's mine!

*The tuxedo dress rips in half. HANDSOME PRINCE has the upper half - the tuxedo, DRISELDA has the lower half - the skirt. They each stare at their own halves, then at each other's halves. A beat.*

DRISELDA: Trade ya.

HANDSOME PRINCE: Okay.

*They trade. DRISELDA puts on the tuxedo half, HANDSOME PRINCE puts on the dress half. They look at each other.*

HANDSOME PRINCE/  
DRISELDA: Perfect.

*HANDSOME PRINCE and DRISELDA exit, arm in arm, leaving 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG standing there alone.*

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: What am I going to wear? Now I'll never get to go to the ball.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Little pig, little pig, never you cry; we'll get you to the ball by and by.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Hark! I see a voice. *(beat)* But from where?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* I'm offstage.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Can I see you?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* I'd really prefer that you didn't.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Why not?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Let's just say that it would be best for all concerned if I don't appear.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Then how are you going to get me to the ball?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Just hold out your arms.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG holds out his arms. A ball outfit is hurled onstage, but falls way short.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Uh... thank you?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: (offstage, to someone unseen) Do I have to? (beat)  
No, I ain't gonna do it. (beat) You can't make me! (beat) Fine!

PAPA BEAR enters. The biggest, burliest, huskiest PAPA BEAR possible, replete with ill-fitting tutu, crappy wings, broken tiara and magic wand. It is evident that he's not thrilled with his role. He shuffles over to the ball outfit, picks it up and hastily smooths it out. He receives another instruction from offstage.

PAPA BEAR: Really? (beat) You ain't serious. (beat)  
Whatever. But I ain't smiling.

With a sigh of disgust, PAPA BEAR pirouettes and 'moves like a fairy' over to the 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG.

PAPA BEAR: (in his huskiest voice) Here you go, little pig.  
Don't you cry at all. You will surely be the fairest pig at the ball.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: (trying to be overjoyed, but more confused) Uhh... thank you, O Fairy God... Papa... Bear. You have made all my dreams come true... for the most part. But how will I get to the ball?

PAPA BEAR: (clearly hating this) With a wave of my magic wand... (hasty wave) ... a magical coach shall appear to take you to the ball.

Nothing happens.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: (sotto voce) Maybe you could try the magical pixie dust.

PAPA BEAR: (angry) I'm not trying the magical pixie dust, all right? I ain't got no magical pixie dust. This ain't my wand, these ain't my wings and this ain't my gig! So just forget about it!

TORTOISE: (whispering) Do you suppose that's the Fairy Godmother's magic wand?

PRUNELLA: It could be. How did Papa Bear get it?

PIRATE: I dunno. But be sure he looks mighty fetchin' in that get-up. Yar-har-har!

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: So how am I supposed to get to the ball?

PAPA BEAR: (with a growl of disgust) Fine! C'mon, let's go.

PAPA BEAR heaves 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG over his shoulder.

PAPA BEAR: If you tell anyone about this, I'll tell you a story about a pig in a blanket!

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Ooh! Sounds delicious.

*PAPA BEAR and 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG exit.*

TORTOISE: We should probably follow them. We need to find out why Papa Bear has the Fairy Godmother's magic wand. But we need to be careful and not get caught.

GRETA/PRUNELLA: This is so weird.

KATHERINE: But it's about to get weirder! Because before Prunella, the Tortoise and Pirate could leave, in came Goldilocks followed by...

GRETA: A hare!

HANK: A fox!

GRETA/HANK: And the Big Bad Wolf!

KATHERINE: Okay. That is weird. Not quite what I had in mind, but...

*GOLDILOCKS enters, followed by HARE, FOX and BIG BAD WOLF excitedly crowding around her.*

GOLDILOCKS: All right, all right - everybody settle down! Now the way this works is very simple. Whosever foot these shoes fit will help me find my way back home.

HARE: I hope they're sneakers 'cause I really need a new pair of sneakers really bad 'cause I have a race coming up in a couple of weeks and I need to train! I'm the fastest hare in the world don't you know. I just love sneakers 'cause they help me run fast. I can run, stop on a dime and give you nine cents change. See this water bottle? I carry it around with me so my pants don't catch fire 'cause I run so fast!

PIRATE: Kinda an excitable little varmint, isn't he?

TORTOISE: And he's like that all the time.

PRUNELLA: You know him?

TORTOISE: Yes, I'm afraid I do. I'm the one he's going to race in a couple of weeks.

PRUNELLA: Are you crazy? Aren't you afraid he's going to beat you?

TORTOISE: Nah. Slow and steady wins the race.

HANK: Yeah, right. He doesn't know what he's talking about.

GRETA: Haven't you heard that story before?

KATHERINE:           Quit interrupting.    So the Pirate looked at the Hare and said..

PIRATE:             Well, that bunny be lookin' like he'd make good hasenpfeffer to me.

FOX:                I'm fairly certain those shoes will fit me.  I'll even bet they're my shoes.  You see, I lost my shoes recently and I can't find them anywhere.  It's a good thing you found my shoes, Goldilocks, because I need to get going and I can't get where I'm going without my shoes.

GOLDILOCKS:        Where are you going?

FOX:                I forget.  But without those shoes, I'm lost.

HARE:               Why don't you tell me where you're going, Fox, and I'll race you there.

FOX:                I couldn't say.

HARE:               Couldn't say or wouldn't say?

FOX:                I just can't remember until I get my shoes back.

HARE:               Why?

FOX:                I don't know.

BIG BAD WOLF:       Can we just get on with it?

GOLDILOCKS:        I agree.  Now everybody have a seat.  Hare, you try the shoes on first.

*HARE tries the shoes on.  They are way too big.  He tries to walk around in them, but they're so floppy that he trips and falls several times.  He finally kicks them off in disgust.*

GOLDILOCKS:        I'm sorry, Hare, but these aren't your shoes.

HARE:               *(trying not to sound disappointed)*  Who cares?  I didn't want these old raggedy shoes anyway.  I wanted sneakers.  I can't win a race in these stupid old shoes anyway.

FOX:                That's because they're not racing shoes, silly rabbit.  They're 'going' shoes.  And the shoes I lost were 'going' shoes.  Ergo, those shoes are my shoes.

GOLDILOCKS:        We'll see about that.  Fox, go ahead and try these shoes on.

*FOX tries the shoes on.  It becomes apparent that they are far too small.  He struggles and strains, pulls and tugs, but they just don't seem to fit.  Finally after a mighty pull and a scream of pain, FOX finally gets the shoes on his feet.  GOLDILOCKS gasps in excitement, FOX gasps in pain.  He tries to get up and walk around.*

FOX: *(in agony)* Wonderful! These are the perfect fit. I've missed my shoes. I'm now ready to go. *(begins walking, with much difficulty)* You see? See how I can go? Boy, oh, boy, can I really go.

*Finally, FOX can take it no longer. He collapses to the floor, howling in pain. He rips the shoes off and begins rubbing and kissing his feet.*

FOX: *(weakly)* I think I need some band-aids.

HARE: *(helping FOX up)* Come on, Fox. I'll race you to the podiatrist.

FOX: The who?

HARE: Foot doctor. Let's go.

*HARE and FOX exit.*

GOLDILOCKS: Oh dear. What am I to do? If I can't find whose feet these ruby slippers fit, I'll never find my way back home.

GRETA: What? Goldilocks has ruby slippers? That's the wrong story!

HANK: And if she wanted to find her way home, shouldn't she wear the slippers?

KATHERINE: Hey, nothing's made sense so far, why start now? Just listen. Goldilocks turned to the Big Bad Wolf and said..

GOLDILOCKS: Well, Big Bad Wolf, it's your turn. Would you like to try the shoes on?

BIG BAD WOLF: Whatever. I don't really care. I'm just here for the cake.

GOLDILOCKS: What cake?

BIG BAD WOLF: Somebody said there was free cake, so I just got in line and followed the crowd.

GOLDILOCKS: There's no free cake.

PRUNELLA: Another trick by our prankster?

TORTOISE: Shh. The cake was a lie.

BIG BAD WOLF: No free cake? Then I'm outta here. *(turns to exit)*

GOLDILOCKS: Wait! As long as you're here, won't you please just try on the shoes?

BIG BAD WOLF: Nah. Not interested.

GOLDILOCKS: *(beginning to cry)* Then how will I ever find my way home?

BIG BAD WOLF: I don't really care.

GOLDILOCKS:           *(really turning on the water works)*     Then I shall remain lost forever!

BIG BAD WOLF:         Don't think your little crying act is going to work on me, sister. I've got three whiny little wolf pups at home, so I'm immune to your blubbering. I told you, I'm just here for the free cake. Since there's no cake, I'm not sticking around.

GOLDILOCKS:           *(wailing even louder)*     But I wanna go home!

BIG BAD WOLF:         Not my problem.

GOLDILOCKS:           *(suddenly turning frightening and scary; grabbing BIG BAD WOLF by the collar and pulling him down to her eye level)*  
Listen here, wolfie. You try on those shoes right now or I'm going to teach you the true meaning of big and bad, dig?

BIG BAD WOLF:         *(truly terrified)*     Okay, okay. Sheesh.

*BIG BAD WOLF sits down to try on the ruby slippers. They are a perfect fit. SOUND EFFECT: magical ting and harp glissando. BIG BAD WOLF and GOLDILOCKS look at each other. SOUND EFFECT: love music. Through the following exchange, they move closer and closer together.*

BIG BAD WOLF:         Darling!

GOLDILOCKS:           Darling!

BIG BAD WOLF:         I love you more than life itself.

GOLDILOCKS:           I love you more.

BIG BAD WOLF:         Not as much as I love you.

GOLDILOCKS:           It's impossible for you to love me more than I love you.

BIG BAD WOLF:         I love you so much that I'll let you love me more, just to prove how much I love you.

GRETA:                 But that doesn't make any sense.

KATHERINE:            It's love - it doesn't have to make sense.

GOLDILOCKS:           Come with me, wolfie-poo! Help me find my way home.

BIG BAD WOLF:         Anything for you! I would follow you to the ends of the earth.

GOLDILOCKS:           Let's get married!

BIG BAD WOLF:         Will there be cake?

GOLDILOCKS:           Yes - and it will be free!

BIG BAD WOLF:         I love you!

GOLDILOCKS:           I love you!

*They lean in for true love's kiss. SOUND EFFECT: record scratch.*

HANK: That's enough, thank you!

KATHERINE: What's the matter? Don't you think it's romantic?

GRETA: I think it's gross! No more kissing.

HANK: That's right. You try to sneak in any more kissing and we'll make you start this story over from the beginning.

KATHERINE: Fine, no kissing. Sheesh. You guys are such weenies. I'll just skip ahead. Goldilocks and the Big Bad Wolf were to be married right away. Everyone was in attendance.

*All previous characters enter; wedding tableau.*

HANK: I thought we said no more kissing!

KATHERINE: Just hold your horses. Just as the ceremony was about to start, they were interrupted by a surprise announcement.

*SNOW WHITE enters and blows a kazoo.*

SNOW WHITE: Hear ye! Hear ye! We are about to hear a royal proclamation from the ruler of all the land!

*SNOW WHITE begins blowing an elaborate fanfare on the kazoo. 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG enters, regally. Tries several times to begin speaking, but the fanfare continues on, morphing into an improvisational jazz solo. SNOW WHITE is really wailing away, not paying any attention to her surroundings. 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG becomes exasperated, grabs the kazoo from SNOW WHITE and hurls it offstage. SNOW WHITE looks around sheepishly and joins the tableau.*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: As you're all well aware, my friends, a mysterious prankster has been running roughshod over all the land. Homes are destroyed, people are lost, things are missing and people aren't where they're supposed to be. In fact, stories have never been stranger. Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate have identified a 'character of interest,' but that is our only lead so far.

PRUNELLA: How did you know that?

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: Don't you know by now? It moves the story along faster if you already know these things.

PIRATE: *(muttering)* Must run in the family.

FOX: Who is this 'character of interest?'

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: In the interest of protecting the integrity of our evidence, we are not at liberty of revealing the character's identity at this time.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: What are you talking about?

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: The character may have an accomplice. It may be any one of you assembled here. (*Characters begin looking at each other suspiciously*) We don't want to give our culprit any advance warning. But know this - if any of you are in cahoots with the mysterious prankster, we are onto you. We know who you are!

KING: Who are you talking to?

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: I have no idea. But for now, I need some brave volunteers to finish the task and bring this wily hoodlum to justice. Do I have any volunteers? (*no one moves*) Okay... Anybody who is brave enough to bring this story to completion shall be richly rewarded!

DRISELDA: What kind of reward?

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: A rich one. Will our volunteers please step forward?

*Everybody takes one step backward, except PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE.*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: (*to audience*) You saw that coming, didn't you? (*to PRUNELLA, TORTOISE, PIRATE*) Thank you for your bravery. Best of luck to you on your adventure.

*All other characters exit, except for 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG and 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG. They all wish PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE luck, then exit, shaking their heads gravely, offering pity, tsk-tsking, etc.*

PRUNELLA: But we don't know where to go from here.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: I may be able to help!

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG enters, breathless.*

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Brother, what are you doing here?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I've found our culprit!

PIRATE: Where?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Don't forget your pirate voice.

PIRATE: (*groaning in disgust*) Whar?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Living just beyond the bridge! But I must warn you. The bridge is heavily guarded. You won't have an easy time crossing.

TORTOISE: It seems an odd coincidence that you always seem to know these things.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Isn't that what a 'character of interest' is supposed to do?

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: You've always been the trouble-maker, haven't you, brother?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I assure you that I had nothing to do with all the mysterious happenings.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: Didn't I warn you against meddling?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I haven't been meddling.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: We'll see about that.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Question my honor, will you? Draw!

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(pulling out paper and pencil)* With pleasure.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: That's not what I meant.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(embarrassed)* Oh, right. My bad.

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG and 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG draw their lightsabers and begin circling each other.*

KATHERINE: Are you kidding me? Lightsabers?

HANK: Hey, that's what you get for trying to sneak in a kissing scene.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: I thought you'd learned your lesson the last time we met like this.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I have been in training since then.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: Always the arrogant fool. I guess I'll have to teach you another lesson.

*They duel.*

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Oh, I hate it when you two fight! I'm telling mother.

*2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG exits. 1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG and 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG duel some more.*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: I'll teach you to play pranks and mess up stories.

*They duel some more.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I tell you I'm innocent. I'm only trying to help.

*They duel some more. They wind up mere inches away from being able to run each other through. They look at each other for a moment. Then...*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: All right, we'll call it a draw.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(to PRUNELLA, TORTOISE, PIRATE)* Hurry. You must make it to the bridge. There isn't much time!

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG breaks away from the duel and exits, running. 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG gives chase. PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE are left alone. They look at each other for a moment.*

PRUNELLA: I have a bad feeling about this.

PIRATE: Well, we've come this far. Only way back is to keep movin' forward. We'd best be shovin' off. I fear we've a long way to go and a short time to get thar.

KATHERINE: And so Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate left the castle and returned to the woods. They walked for miles and miles and miles. They walked until the sun went down and still they kept walking. They walked all through the night. The sun came up the next morning to find them still walking.

HANK: You know, if they ran, we wouldn't be wasting all this time waiting for them to walk.

KATHERINE: Fine. And so they ran.

TORTOISE: Oh come on!

KATHERINE: *(to TORTOISE)* Just do the best you can. *(continuing with her narration)* So Prunella and the Pirate ran, while the Tortoise plodded along at his 'slow and steady wins the race' pace. *(to TORTOISE again)* Is that better?

TORTOISE: *(sarcastically)* Gee, thanks.

KATHERINE: Finally, they reached the bridge, where they met an unlikely group trying to get across.

*CINDERELLA, JACK and his cow and MAMA BEAR are standing in line at the foot of the bridge. There is a ruby slipper on the middle of the bridge.*

MAMA BEAR: C'mon, let's get moving! What's the holdup?

JACK: Don't look at me, lady. I'm just waiting my turn.

MAMA BEAR: Well, I've got this steamy bowl of porridge I have to get to my dear, sweet granny's house before it gets cold. If it gets cold, the only thing porridge is good for is brick mortar.

JACK: I'm not letting you cut in front of me if that's what you're hinting at.

MAMA BEAR: How many people are in front of you?

JACK: Just one.

MAMA BEAR: What's taking so long?

JACK: Beats me. *(pointing at CINDERELLA)* You should ask her.

MAMA BEAR: You've been a tremendous help. (to CINDERELLA)  
Excuse me, young lady. What seems to be the  
problem?

CINDERELLA: I've lost my shoe.

MAMA BEAR: Is it that ruby slipper on the bridge?

CINDERELLA: Yes.

MAMA BEAR: Then just go get it. Hurry up now, there are  
others waiting to cross this bridge.

CINDERELLA: I can't.

MAMA BEAR: Why not?

CINDERELLA: He won't let me.

MAMA BEAR: Who?

CINDERELLA: (pointing) Him.  
*There's nobody there. Beat.*

MAMA BEAR: Him who?

CINDERELLA: Him!

MAMA BEAR: I don't see anybody. Why don't you just go?

CINDERELLA: Because he'll get me.

MAMA BEAR: (exasperated) But there's nobody there!

*PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE arrive at bridge.*

PIRATE: Here be the bridge. What be all these people  
doin' here?

JACK: We're waiting to get across the bridge.

PIRATE: What be the holdup?

JACK: I dunno. (pointing at CINDERELLA) Ask her.

PIRATE: (hollering) Hey, lady! Get the lead out, will  
'ya?

TORTOISE: I'll handle this. (clearing throat) Excuse me,  
young lady. What seems to be the problem?

CINDERELLA: I've lost my shoe.

TORTOISE: Is it that ruby slipper on the bridge?

CINDERELLA: Yes.

TORTOISE: Then just go get it. Hurry up now, there are  
others waiting to cross this bridge.

CINDERELLA: I can't.

TORTOISE: Why not?

CINDERELLA: He won't let me.

TORTOISE: Who?

CINDERELLA: *(pointing)* Him.  
*There's nobody there. Beat.*

TORTOISE: Him who?

CINDERELLA: Him!

TORTOISE: I don't see anybody. Why don't you just go?

CINDERELLA: Because he'll get me.

TORTOISE: *(exasperated)* But there's nobody there!

MAMA BEAR: I just had this exact same conversation.

JACK: Me, too.

TORTOISE: Why didn't you say something?

JACK: Nobody asked.

PRUNELLA: Do you suppose that 'him' is whoever is guarding the bridge?

TORTOISE: It's possible.

PIRATE: Bah! How tough could he be? I'll deal with 'im!  
*PIRATE begins charging the bridge. Jack cuts him off.*

JACK: Nuh-uh, buster. No cutting in line. You gotta wait your turn.

PIRATE: *(drawing his sword)* Step aside or I'll stretch yer hide from end to end over this bridge.

JACK: Okay, okay. Jeez, you don't have to get violent.

PRUNELLA: You'll have to forgive him. He is a pirate, after all.

*PIRATE begins crossing the bridge. He picks up the ruby slipper and holds it aloft triumphantly. He turns to CINDERELLA and the others.*

PIRATE: See? Nothin' to it!

KATHERINE: *(excitedly, really into the story)* Just then, the bridge guard popped up from underneath. He was a mean and nasty...

GRETA: Gingerbread Man!

KATHERINE: *(distracted)* What?

GRETA: The bridge was guarded by the Gingerbread Man.

KATHERINE: No, let's not make it the Gingerbread Man. I've got a better idea.

GRETA: No, I want it to be the Gingerbread Man.

KATHERINE: But you'll like my idea. It's funnier.  
GRETA: Gingerbread Man! Gingerbread Man!  
KATHERINE: Just listen...  
GRETA: Gingerbread Man! Gingerbread Man!  
KATHERINE: Fine! We'll do the stupid Gingerbread Man, then.  
HANK: Better idea! Gingerbread Ninja!  
GRETA: Yeah! Gingerbread Ninja!  
GRETA/HANK: Gingerbread Ninja! Gingerbread Ninja!  
KATHERINE: (*angry*) You want the Gingerbread Ninja? I'll give you the Gingerbread Ninja.

*KATHERINE has lost all interest in continuing the story. Angry at not getting her way, she accelerates the pace of the story.*

KATHERINE: The Gingerbread Ninja leapt atop the bridge, waving his... licorice rope nunchucks menacingly.

GINGERBREAD MAN: Waaaaahhh!

KATHERINE/

GINGERBREAD MAN: And with blazing ninja-like speed and agility, sent the Pirate over the rail and into the icy water below.

PIRATE: Yarr!! Glub-glub-glub.

GRETA: But he got back out again... didn't he?

KATHERINE: This Pirate couldn't swim. It was his deep, dark secret. Anyway, Cinderella, enraged at losing her shoe, charged at the Gingerbread Ninja.

CINDERELLA: I am enraged at losing my shoe!

*CINDERELLA charges at GINGERBREAD MAN.*

GINGERBREAD MAN: Hi-yah!

*He waves his licorice rope nunchucks and sends CINDERELLA over the rail.*

CINDERELLA: Aaahh!

JACK: Listen here, pal. I just need to get my cow over to the other side of your bridge to a greener pasture.

GINGERBREAD MAN: A-ha! You shall never cross my bridge. I forbid it.

JACK: I'll trade you for some magic beans.

GINGERBREAD MAN: Try to bribe me, will you? Ha-ha. I will show you the foolishness of your ways. Taste the wrath of my icing!

*GINGERBREAD MAN pulls out his icing shooter (silly string) and sprays JACK. JACK coughs and sputters as GINGERBREAD MAN pulls off more ninja moves, sending JACK over the rail.*

JACK: Mm-mmff!

GINGERBREAD MAN: Ha-ha! Foolish mortal. For me there will be Kobe beef tonight.

MAMA BEAR: See here, you little cookie. My porridge is getting cold and there's no way I'm going to let a little dessert get in my way.

GINGERBREAD MAN: I don't fear you or your cold oatmeal.

MAMA BEAR: *(stepping on the bridge, growling)* Remember, I am a bear.

GINGERBREAD MAN: Come no closer, she-bear.

MAMA BEAR: Didn't your mama teach you any manners? A good spanking is what you need.

*MAMA BEAR swipes at GINGERBREAD MAN, who dodges nimbly out of the way.*

GINGERBREAD MAN: Swipe, nip, claw as fast as you can; you can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread... Ninja! Hiii-yaaaahhhh!

*MAMA BEAR is over the rail. GINGERBREAD MAN disappears. PRUNELLA and TORTOISE are left alone.*

TORTOISE: That was gruesome.

PRUNELLA: Where did the Gingerbread Ninja go?

TORTOISE: *(pointing)* I think he ran off in that direction. We'd better hurry across the bridge before he comes back.

PRUNELLA: I'm scared.

TORTOISE: Prunella, we're almost there. Remember what our friend the Pirate would say.

PRUNELLA: He'd say *(in a pirate voice)* 'the only way back is to keep movin' forward.'

TORTOISE: Right. So let's go.

*PRUNELLA and TORTOISE step on the bridge. GINGERBREAD MAN comes back with a box. The box has a handle and the letters 'T N T' emblazoned on it.*

KATHERINE: Prunella and the Tortoise were just about to the middle of the bridge when the Gingerbread Ninja came back with his dynamite. He pushed down the handle...

PRUNELLA/TORTOISE: Uh-oh.

*SOUND EFFECT: explosion. Blackout.*

KATHERINE: The end. Goodnight.

GRETA: The end? Whaddya mean, 'the end?'

HANK: That's the end of the story?

KATHERINE: Yep.

GRETA: But what happened to Prunella and the Tortoise?

KATHERINE: Kaboom.

HANK: And the bridge?

KATHERINE: Kaboom.

GRETA: So the Gingerbread Ninja got away?

KATHERINE: Nope. He went kaboom, too.

*Beat.*

GRETA: So did all the characters go back to normal?

KATHERINE: Beats me.

HANK: Do they ever catch the mysterious prankster?

KATHERINE: I dunno.

GRETA: Who was it?

HANK: I bet it was the Gingerbread Ninja.

GRETA: I think it was the 1<sup>st</sup> Little Pig, leading them on a wild goose chase.

HANK: Was it, Katherine?

KATHERINE: Was what?

HANK: So was the mysterious prankster the 1<sup>st</sup> Little Pig or the Gingerbread Ninja?

KATHERINE: I guess we'll never know because the story's over.

GRETA: Completely over?

KATHERINE: Over. Done. Complete. Fin.

*Beat.*

HANK: That's such a stupid ending!

KATHERINE: Hey - you wanted the Gingerbread Ninja. I just worked with what you gave me.

GRETA: You made everything else work. And it was a really good story, too, Katherine.

HANK: Yeah, it was pretty good.

KATHERINE: I had a really good idea but you guys ruined it.

HANK: What was it?

KATHERINE: The moment's gone. I can't remember it now. It's too late.

GRETA: Oh, come on. Just tell us.

HANK: What was your big idea?

KATHERINE: Forget it. You guys wrecked the story. Now it's bedtime. Go to sleep.

*KATHERINE exits.*

HANK: *(punching GRETA)* Way to go, Greta. You ruined it for both of us. You had to insist on the Gingerbread Man.

GRETA: You're the one that went even stupider with the whole Gingerbread Ninja thing. Whoever heard of a Gingerbread Ninja?

HANK: Boy, Katherine was pretty mad, too. I didn't think she'd kill everybody off.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* They're not quite dead.

GRETA: *(to HANK)* What do you mean they're not quite dead?

HANK: What are you talking about? I didn't say anything.

GRETA: *(calling out)* Katherine? Was that you?

KATHERINE: *(from offstage)* I didn't say anything. Go to sleep!

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* They're not quite dead.

HANK: That does it. Katherine wants us to go to sleep but she keeps acting like the story's still going. I'm going to get to the bottom of this.

*HANK exits. GRETA is left alone onstage.*

GRETA: This is so weird.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Strange things like this have been happening for quite some time. It's up to you, Greta, to get to the bottom of the mystery.

GRETA: Who said that?

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG enters.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I did. *(GRETA starts freaking out)* Calm down. We've experienced an unexpected setback and now we need you to finish the story.

GRETA: But you're not real.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: That's such a relative term. What is reality anyway? Will you help us?

GRETA: What do I have to do?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: You must help us find the mysterious prankster.  
GRETA: You mean I have to fight the Gingerbread Ninja?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: You're not strong enough to face him alone.  
GRETA: So I should get Hank and Katherine to help me?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: I'm afraid they're gone. You're going to have to find them.  
GRETA: Where did they go?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Weren't you listening? I said you're going to have to find them.  
GRETA: How do I do that?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: It's best to start at the beginning.

*NOTE: The story is replayed, but as fast as possible.*

\* \* \* \* \*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Once upon a time there was a girl named Greta and she had a brother and best friend, Hank.

*HANK enters.*

HANK: What's going on?  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Just chill. One day, while they were out frolicking in the woods...  
GRETA: What a lovely time we're having frolicking in the woods.  
HANK: Don't tell me we have to listen to this stupid dialogue again!  
GRETA: Let us frolic even farther in the woods, on the road less traveled.  
HANK: Are you sure? We've never taken that road before.  
GRETA: But if we take the road less traveled, that could make all the difference.  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: So they took the road less traveled. And it wasn't long before they came upon a house made out of straw that had been blown to smithereens.

*The straw house is hurled onstage.*

HANK: Why are we doing this?  
MYSTERIOUS VOICE: *(from offstage)* Hallllooooooo...  
1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: And then suddenly, they heard a mysterious voice coming out of the woods.

*KATHERINE enters in pirate costume.*

KATHERINE: *(in mostly a pirate voice)* Halt! Who goes there?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: That's not how pirates talk.

KATHERINE: *(muttering to GRETA and HANK)* You're going to pay for this. *(in a real pirate voice)* Halt! Who goes thar?

HANK: What happened?

KATHERINE: A terrible scourge it was. Came rappin' at me door beggin' to come in. I told the scalawag 'not by the hairs o' me chinny-chin-chin.' The louse then replied that he knew where a secret treasure was buried. Lured me out o' me home, he did. And when I came back, me house was blown to smithereens.

GRETA: That's awful.

KATHERINE: I know. *(revealing a secret)* I don't think there ever was a real treasure, either.

GRETA: I'm sure if you come along with us, we'll find out who did this.

HANK: Actually, I don't think I want to go through this whole story again.

KATHERINE: Nonsense! Ye've come this far. Only way back is to keep movin' forward.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: And so, they set off through the woods down the road less traveled. And it wasn't long before they came upon a house of sticks that was also blown to smithereens.

*A stick house is hurled onstage.*

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: Help!

KATHERINE: Over here!

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: And so they moved aside a pile of sticks to reveal...

GRETA: The evil queen!

EVIL QUEEN: Silence! I was taking a stroll through the woods when suddenly I heard a voice coming from inside this stick house, calling for help. So I ran inside to see what was the matter. When I did, I found it empty; and before I could leave, the whole house collapsed around me. It was a trap! A trap, I tell you.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Here's where I come in. (*crossing to GRETA, HANK and KATHERINE*) I was wondering if you could point the way to Granny's house. It's a small brick house in the woods.

GRETA: We've never been to Granny's house.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: No problem. I see that the road is right here under my feet. Good day.

*1<sup>ST</sup> PIG crosses back to bed.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Suddenly, Prunella, the Tortoise and the Pirate accidentally stumbled upon a deep, dark, secret meeting.

*During the above monologue, the DWARVES and JACK's MOTHER set up chairs in a circle.*

JACK's MOTHER: Okay, now, group. Group! Let's come to order... okay? Narco! Wake up!

NARCO: Sorry.

MANIC: (*swatting NARCO, laughing*) Yeah, man! I love it. I feel happy! I feel happy!

SMILEY: (*to MANIC, angry*) Sit down!

JACK's MOTHER: Easy, now. Are you feeling stuffy, Drippy?

*DRIPPY blows his nose in reply.*

SPECIAL: Pennies are shiny!

JACK's MOTHER: Yes they are.

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Will somebody give him a cookie and shut him up?

JACK's MOTHER: Are you the doc? Hm? Are you?

CRAZY OLD DWARF: That's it! I've had enough of this cock-a-doodle-doo! Now let's go find us some work! What do you say?

MANIC: Aye!

SMILEY: Aye!

DRIPPY: Aye!

NARCO: (*being jolted awake by SMILEY*) Aye!

*All look at FABIO, who nods vigorously.*

SPECIAL: (*jumping up on his chair, proclaiming for all the world to hear*) I wanna be a caterpillar!

*Beat. Then the DWARVES erupt in a thunderous cheer and exit boisterously.*

GRETA: That was still weird.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: And with that, they took off along the shortcut through the woods to beat the pig to Granny's brick house. But were they too late?

HANK: Ah, we're just in time.

KING: You're too late! The Fairy Godmother has taken a bite out of a poisoned apple and is now in a deep sleep - perhaps forever.

HANK: Where is the apple?

GRETA: Is this it? (*picks up an apple; looking at it*)

KATHERINE: (*yanking the apple away from GRETA*) Gimme that! (*sniffs the apple several times*) Yep. Iocane powder. I'd bet me life on it.

*KATHERINE freezes and topples over, stiff as a board.*

HANK: Inconceivable.

*There is a sudden blast of smoke and loud rock music. WICKED STEPMOTHER enters clad in biker outfit, helmet and gloves.*

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Somebody call for me this time?

HANK: Nope.

KING: Oh, Wicked Stepmother! The Fairy Godmother has taken a bite out of a poisoned apple and is now in a deep sleep - perhaps forever.

WICKED STEPMOTHER: Duh! She's choking to death. (*to GRETA and KING*) Don't you remember this from last time?

*DWARVES enter.*

CRAZY OLD DWARF: Somebody call for a dwarf?

ALL: Get out of here!

*DWARVES exit. GRETA and KING cross to the FAIRY GODMOTHER and sit her up. GRETA props FAIRY GODMOTHER's mouth open, KING slaps her on the back three times. A large chunk of apple goes flying out. PUSS IN BOOTS enters.*

PUSS IN BOOTS: You got apple goo on my new boots!

PIRATE (*coming back to life*) Why, you little...

*PIRATE chases PUSS IN BOOTS offstage.*

KING: (*indicating FAIRY GODMOTHER*) I think she's coming out of it. Listen.

FAIRY GODMOTHER: Ohhh... I think I'm coming out of it. (*shaking the cobwebs loose*) Thank you, my friends, for reviving me. I wish I could properly thank you, but my magic wand is missing.

1<sup>ST</sup> PIG: (*calling from bed*) You must get to the castle before nightfall. And so, they left the house of

bricks and took another shortcut through the woods to the castle.

*DISNEY GIRLS are sitting at a long table, answering phones. There are two empty chairs. They all talk on top of each other.*

PRUNELLA: Excuse me.

DISNEY GIRLS: Castle, hold please.

PIRATE: *(shouting over the noise)* Hey! Ladies!

*They all stop and take notice of PIRATE.*

DISNEY GIRLS: Ooh! A man!

PIRATE: Wha-?

TORTOISE: Who are you?

BELLE: We're unemployed Disney girls.

PRUNELLA: Where's Ariel?

*ARIEL comes flopping onstage.*

ARIEL: *(rasping and coughing)* Water! Water! I need some water!

*ARIEL flops offstage.*

DISNEY GIRLS: Goodbye, Mister Pirate. *(they explode in a fit of giggles)*

PIRATE: *(rushing PRUNELLA and TORTOISE)* Let's get out of here. This place is givin' me the willies!

*PRUNELLA, TORTOISE and PIRATE cross to a different room. 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG and HANDSOME PRINCE are playing cards when DRISELDA enters, waving a piece of paper excitedly.*

DRISELDA: You'll never believe it! We've just been invited to attend a ball. I'm going to wear the tuxedo dress.

HANDSOME PRINCE: How come you get to wear the tuxedo dress?

DRISELDA: I called it first so I'm wearing it.

HANDSOME PRINCE: No you're not; I'm going to wear it.

DRISELDA: Give me the tuxedo dress!

HANDSOME PRINCE: Never!

HANDSOME PRINCE/  
DRISELDA: It's mine!

*The tuxedo dress rips in half. HANDSOME PRINCE has the upper half - the tuxedo, DRISELDA has the lower half - the skirt. They each stare at their own halves, then at each other's halves. A beat.*

DRISELDA: Trade ya.

HANDSOME PRINCE: Okay.

HANDSOME PRINCE and DRISELDA exit, arm in arm, leaving 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG standing there alone.

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG:           What am I going to wear? Now I'll never get to go to the ball.

MYSTERIOUS VOICE:       *(from offstage)* Quit cryin', pig!

*PAPA BEAR enters, pirouettes and 'moves like a fairy' over to the 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG.*

PAPA BEAR:               *(in his huskiest voice, hurling an outfit)* Here!

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG:           But how will I get to the ball?

PAPA BEAR:               *(with a growl of disgust)* Fine! C'mon, let's go.

*PAPA BEAR heaves 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG over his shoulder; they exit. GOLDILOCKS enters, followed by HARE, FOX and BIG BAD WOLF.*

GOLDILOCKS:             Whosever foot these shoes fit will help me find my way back home.

HARE:                    I hope they're sneakers

FOX:                     Nah - I bet they're my shoes.

BIG BAD WOLF:           Can we just get on with it?

GOLDILOCKS:             I agree. Hare, you try the shoes on first.

*HARE tries the shoes on. They are way too big. He kicks them off in disgust.*

GOLDILOCKS:             Sorry, Hare. Fox, go ahead and try these shoes on.

FOX:                     No way! My feet haven't healed from the last time.

*HARE and FOX exit.*

GOLDILOCKS:             Well, Big Bad Wolf, it's your turn.

BIG BAD WOLF:           I'm just here for the free cake.

GOLDILOCKS:             *(suddenly turning frightening and scary; grabbing BIG BAD WOLF by the collar and pulling him down to her eye level)*  
Put 'em on!

*BIG BAD WOLF sits down to try on the ruby slippers. They are a perfect fit. SOUND EFFECT: magical ting and harp glissando. BIG BAD WOLF and GOLDILOCKS look at each other. SOUND EFFECT: love music. Through the following exchange, they move closer and closer together.*

BIG BAD WOLF:           Darling!

GOLDILOCKS:             Darling!

BIG BAD WOLF:           I love you more than life itself.

GOLDILOCKS:             Let's get married!

*All previous characters enter; wedding tableau.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG:           Just as the ceremony was about to start, they were interrupted by a surprise announcement.

*SNOW WHITE enters and blows a kazoo.*

SNOW WHITE: Hear ye! Hear ye!

*SNOW WHITE begins blowing an elaborate fanfare on the kazoo. 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG enters, regally, hitting SNOW WHITE.*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: A mysterious prankster has been running roughshod over all the land. I need some brave volunteers to finish the task and bring this wily hoodlum to justice. Will our volunteers please step forward?

*Everybody takes one step backward, except GRETA, HANK and KATHERINE.*

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: Thank you for your bravery. Best of luck to you on your adventure.

*All other characters exit, except for 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG and 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG. They all wish GRETA, HANK and KATHERINE luck, then exit, shaking their heads gravely, offering pity, tsk-tsking, etc.*

GRETA: But we don't know where to go from here.

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG runs over, drawing his lightsaber.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: The mysterious prankster lives just beyond the bridge. But I must warn you. The bridge is heavily guarded. You won't have an easy time crossing.

3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(drawing his lightsaber)* You again?  
*They duel.*

2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG: Oh, I hate it when you two fight! I'm telling mother.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Meanwhile, at the bridge...

*1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG breaks away from the duel and exits, running. 2<sup>ND</sup> LITTLE PIG and 3<sup>RD</sup> LITTLE PIG gives chase. GRETA, HANK and KATHERINE cross to the bridge. CINDERELLA, JACK and his cow and MAMA BEAR are standing in line at the foot of the bridge. There is a ruby slipper on the middle of the bridge.*

MAMA BEAR: C'mon, let's get moving! What's the holdup?

JACK: Beats me. *(pointing at CINDERELLA)* Ask her.

MAMA BEAR: *(to CINDERELLA)* What seems to be the problem?

CINDERELLA: I've lost my shoe.

MAMA BEAR: Is it that ruby slipper on the bridge?

CINDERELLA: Yes.

MAMA BEAR: Then just go get it.

CINDERELLA: I can't.

MAMA BEAR: Why not?

CINDERELLA: He won't let me.

MAMA BEAR: Who?

CINDERELLA: *(pointing)* Him.

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: *(running back onstage)* Just then, the bridge guard popped up from underneath. He was a mean and nasty...

ALL: Gingerbread Ninja!

GINGERBREAD MAN: Waaaaahhh!

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: The Gingerbread Ninja leapt atop the bridge, waving his licorice rope nunchucks menacingly.

\* \* \* \*

GINGERBREAD MAN: A-ha! You shall never cross my bridge. I forbid it.

JACK: I'll trade you for some magic beans.

GINGERBREAD MAN: Try to bribe me, will you? Ha-ha. I will show you the foolishness of your ways.

GRETA: He's just a cookie!

HANK: Get him!

GINGERBREAD MAN: Swipe, swipe, swipe as fast as you can; you can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread... Ninja! Hiii-yaaaahhh!

*GRETA and HANK step on the bridge. GINGERBREAD MAN pulls out the box has with the handle and the familiar letters 'T N T' emblazoned on it.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Greta and Hank were just about to the middle of the bridge when the Gingerbread Ninja pulled out his dynamite.

KATHERINE: *(to JACK)* Quick! Let me borrow your cow.

JACK: Well, I don't know... she's awful persnickety.

KATHERINE: Move it!

*KATHERINE pushes JACK out of the way and reaches behind the cow, pulling out a glass of milk.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: The Gingerbread Ninja pushed down the handle...

KATHERINE: Not this time, you over-puffed pastry!

*KATHERINE dashes onto the bridge, splashing the GINGERBREAD MAN with the glass of milk!*

GINGERBREAD MAN: Argh! Milk! Who told you that the Gingerbread Ninja's one weakness was a glass of milk?

KATHERINE: Just lucky, I guess.

GINGERBREAD MAN: I am soggy! I have brought dishonor to the mysterious prankster. I no longer deserve to defend the bridge.

*GINGERBREAD MAN hurls himself over the rail into the water. FOX enters wearing flippers.*

FOX: I found my shoes! (*seeing GINGERBREAD MAN in the water*)  
Ah-ha! I knew I'd remember once I found my shoes.

*FOX dives into the water and catches GINGERBREAD MAN.*

FOX: Eww. You're all soggy. What am I going to do with a soggy gingerbread man cookie?

ALL: Eat it!

FOX: Very well. (*to GINGERBREAD MAN*) Come along with me, I'd love to have you for lunch!

*FOX and GINGERBREAD MAN swim off.*

GRETA: You did it, Katherine!

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: Hurry! You haven't much time.

*GRETA, HANK and KATHERINE cross the bridge. They are stopped by fog, flashing lights and a roll of thunder.*

KATHERINE: What was that?

MYSTERIOUS VOICE: (*a thunderous voice from offstage*) So, you have found me at last!

*Lights and curtains rise to reveal draperies upstage with ominous lighting and more fog.*

HANK: It's the mysterious prankster! We found him! We found him!

GRETA: Now what do we do?

HANK: (*sotto voce to GRETA*) Follow me.

*GRETA and HANK sneak off. 1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG crosses to KATHERINE.*

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: What happens next?

KATHERINE: Don't you know?

1<sup>ST</sup> LITTLE PIG: This is your story. Now finish it.

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