

Girl in the Hood

Pantomime

By

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Characters:

Red Riding Hood

Evil Queen

Mother

Goldilocks

Sleeping Beauty

Narrator/Father

Prince Charming

Jack

Henchman 1

Henchman 2

Henchman 3

Evil Witch

Rapunzel

Big Bad Wolf

Forest Ranger

Nana

Stagehand

Note: topical references in the script are for a contemporary British audience, and have been underlined. Productions can change topical references to suit their own time, place and taste.

Scene 1 – The living area of a modest cottage.

(Narrator stands to the side of the stage reading from a book. At centre stage is a dining table and two chairs.)

Narrator: Hello, boys and girls, mums and dads, and various hangers on.
If you haven't already guessed, I'll be your narrator for the show. Once upon a time in a little cottage on the edge of the woods, there lived a woman whose life was full of woe.

(Mother enters looking worried.)

Mother: Oh, my life is full of woe. I have so much woe, I don't know where to put it.

Narrator: Perhaps you'd like to tell us about your woe?

Mother: Oh no, you don't want to hear about my woe.

Narrator: **(To Audience.)** What do you think? Do you want to hear about her woe?

Mother: Oh no, you don't.

Narrator: Oh yes, we do.

Mother: Oh no, you don't.

Narrator: On second thoughts, maybe you're right, we don't need to hear about your woe. Moving right along, there was also a...

Mother: My woe began many years ago when I lost my husband.

Narrator: He passed away?

Mother: No, I lost him. We went on holiday and I lost him in the crowd; he must have just wandered off somewhere. Husbands can do that if you don't watch them.

Narrator: That's very sad.

Mother: And then I've had to raise my daughter Red Riding Hood all on my own.

Narrator: Yes, that's very...

Mother: And then I've had to deal with my wretched mother-in-law. The husband wanders off, but his mother sticks around, isn't that always the way? She lives by herself in the woods, and did I mention she is very demanding? I was never good enough for her son.

Narrator: That's all very...

Mother: And then there's the evil queen who rules these parts. She's always coming around here demanding more taxes so she can build more palaces. But we're so poor, what can we do?

Narrator: Well, I suppose...

Mother: And I'm sure all my woe deserves a big aww from the boys and girls out there. **(To audience.)** What do you think, boys and girls, can you give a poor woe begotten woman a big aww? **(Waits for aww.)** You can at least pretend like you mean it. I know some of you got dragged along to this, but you don't have to take it out on me. Shall we have one more go at a big aww? Remember, I'm a very woe begotten woman. On the count of three. One, two, three. **(Waits for aww.)** Well, I'll take what I can get. Luckily, I have my dear little Red Riding Hood to cheer me up. She's the single joy of my life, the one spark of light in my dark woe begotten existence, and she's good for running errands. In fact, I need her to go to her nana's house in the woods right now. Now where is she? Red Riding Hood! Red Riding Hood!

(Red Riding Hood enters.)

Riding Hood: Yes, Mother?

Mother: I want you to go visit your nana in the woods.

Riding Hood: I was just about to feed the chickens. Why can't you go?

Mother: Because your nana hates me. You know that.

Riding Hood: But the woods are full of wolves.

Mother: Don't be such a baby. Big, strong girl like you should be able to chase away a few little wolves.

Riding Hood: I suppose if I'm careful and blend in with the trees, I should be able to hide from the wolves.

Mother: Exactly. **(Taking out red riding hood.)** And I want you to wear this bright red riding hood.

Riding Hood: Mum! I'll stick out like a sore thumb in that bright red riding hood.

Mother: Don't talk nonsense, girl. Scarlet red is ideal for blending into a forest. And you'll catch your death of cold if you don't put something on.

Riding Hood: I'm not wearing that.

Mother: Your nana gave you this riding hood for your birthday, remember? Do you want to disappoint your nana?

Riding Hood: No, I suppose not.

Mother: You suppose right. And besides, if you don't wear this red riding hood, it would have been utterly pointless me calling you Red Riding Hood in the first place, wouldn't it have been?

Riding Hood: Yes, that's true. I can't argue with that logic. And if I'm really careful, I should avoid being seen by a wolf. Anyway, wolves usually hunt by smell.

Mother: **(Taking out steak.)** And I want you to take your nana this big juicy steak as well.

Riding Hood: I'm not taking that! A wolf is going to smell that big juicy steak a mile away.

Mother: Goodness me, girl, all I'm asking you to do is walk a couple of miles through wolf infested woods with some fresh meat. Honestly, you young people today don't even know you're alive. When I was your age, I had to trudge ten miles through alligator infested swamps with half a pig carcass

on my back, and I never complained. Now come on, your nana loves her steak. Do you want her to starve?

Riding Hood: Why can't nana live here?

Mother: I'm not having that old cow... I mean, we just don't have room for the old dear. And she smells funny.

Riding Hood: Oh look, here's my friend Goldilocks.

(Goldilocks enters running, breathing heavily. She checks out the window to see if anyone is following her.)

Mother: Here's trouble.

Riding Hood: Hi, Goldilocks.

Goldilocks: How's it going, Hoodsie? Have you by any chance seen three bears coming this way? **(Demonstrating with hand in descending order of height.)** One's this high, one's this high, and one's this high. They're extremely agitated, and they're extremely desirous to speak with me.

Riding Hood: I haven't seen any bears around here.

Goldilocks: Good, I must have lost them.

Mother: Have you been breaking and entering again, Goldilocks?

Goldilocks: No, I haven't. And I resent that accusation. The door was wide open.

Mother: And you entered uninvited?

Goldilocks: No, not exactly. An open door is practically an invite. And is it my fault those bears left three perfectly decent bowls of porridge out on the table? Even though one bowl was a bit hot and another bowl was a little bit cold. I mean, who leaves three bowls of porridge on the table and then walks out into the woods? They were practically begging me to finish their breakfast. In fact, I was doing them a favour.

Mother: So why are they chasing you?

- Goldilocks: That's exactly my question. If you ask me, it's all just a big misunderstanding. Bears are very sensitive nowadays. I burnt my tongue on their hot porridge, and am I complaining? No. I'm graciously willing to let it go, and I have to tell you, I'm getting none of that graciousness back. **(Notices audience.)** Oh hello, children, how are you today? Now, I wonder if you could do me a small favour. It's very important that I'm not seen in these parts, so if anyone asks you if you've seen me today, can you say you haven't seen me? Okay? You haven't seen me, and I haven't been around here today. Can you do that for me?
- Mother: Excuse me, young lady, but are you asking those children to lie?
- Goldilocks: No, of course not, not right in front of their parents and guardians and various hangers on. Lying is very wrong, but forgetting is perfectly okay. So, I'm just asking them to forget, which is a distinctly different thing from lying.
- Mother: No, it's not.
- Goldilocks: Well, it is in the House of Commons. **(To audience.)** I'll tell you what, kids, you know what makes me forget? Sweets. When I have sweets, I forget a whole bunch of stuff. So, if I give you some sweets, do you think you'll forget you ever saw me here? Good.
- Mother: Am I hearing correctly? Are you attempting to bribe and corrupt those poor innocent children?
- Goldilocks: I'm doing nothing of the sort. I'm just giving these darling little children some sweets. It's not my fault sweets make you forget things, don't they, children?
- Mother: They do not.
- Goldilocks: Oh yes, they do.
- Mother: Oh no, they don't.
- Goldilocks: Oh yes, they do. I'll even prove it to you. Here's some sweets, kids. Share them around. **(Throws sweets to audience.)** Make sure everyone gets one. I want you all to be good little forgetters. **(To Mother.)** And now you'll see they'll forget they ever saw me.

- Riding Hood: See, Mum, it's all above board.
- Mother: Don't you go encouraging her. **(To Goldilocks.)** And what are you doing here anyway?
- Goldilocks: I'm hiding out from... I mean, I just want to go hang out with my good mate, Hoodsie.
- Mother: You're not having anything to do with my daughter. You're a bad influence.
- Riding Hood: Oh please, Mum, can I hang out with Goldilocks?
- Goldilocks: I'm a good girl, aren't I, kids?
- Mother: Those children have been bribed to the hilt; they'll agree with anything you say.
- Goldilocks: Wait a minute. I sense danger. **(Peeks out the door.)** It's the evil queen. The evil queen is coming!
- Mother: Is she after you as well?
- Goldilocks: A lot of people are after me. But it's all just big misunderstandings. Well, I better make myself scarce. And remember, kids, don't forget to forget.
- (Goldilocks exits.)**
- Mother: I hate it when the evil queen comes around. It's always bad news.
- Riding Hood: I wonder what she wants?
- Mother: It's usually money for her palaces.
- (Evil Queen enters.)**
- Queen: Stand aside, you pathetic wench! **(Pushes Mother out of the way.)**
- Riding Hood: Don't push my mum like that.

- Queen: Silence, peasant girl! **(Looking around.)** What a complete dump this place is. I'd be ashamed to let my dog live here. **(To audience.)** And you little brats can boo me all you like. Go on. I've been booed by Premier League booers; you're just a bunch of Sunday kickabout hacks. And what a particularly ugly group of children you are. Oh, hello, mums and dads. Yes, I can see where these kids get their dreadful looks from. There must be something nasty in the gene pool around here. Toxic waste is my guess. And another thing...
- Narrator: Uh, Your Majesty, you do realise there's a script?
- Queen: Yes, I'm getting to that.
- Narrator: It's just that we need to kick things along a bit; we rent this theatre by the hour.
- Queen: Okay, okay. In fact, I have made a list of things to do today to make my time more efficient. **(Gets out list and reads from it.)** Right. One, get out of bed. Done. Two, pretty myself up with cosmetics tested on animals. Done. Three, berate audience; always fun. And four, start doing evil. Right, you miserable little peasants, I want more taxes from you.
- Mother: But we have nothing more to give. We're broke.
- Riding Hood: Yeah, stop being so mean.
- Queen: Butt out, brat. I've told you before about that bad attitude of yours. You miserable peasants live in my kingdom, you pay taxes to me. That's the way it goes around here. I need more luxuries, and you're all going to pay for it.
- Riding Hood: Why don't you spend our taxes on important infrastructure projects?
- Queen: I am; I'm getting my new bathroom plated with gold. I will not have the royal bum sitting on a non-gold-plated toilet.
- Riding Hood: Why should we have to pay for that?
- Queen: Listen, brat, hear me now and hear me good, the royal bum deserves gold, and the royal bum will get gold.

Mother: But we're so poor, we barely have enough to eat as it is. We dress in rags, our house is cold and draughty, and I still cry myself to sleep thinking about my poor lost husband. Oh, I'm so unhappy. **(Weeps.)**

Narrator: I think that tale of woe deserves a really big aww.

Queen: **(To audience.)** Don't 'aww' that. She's just doing it to get attention. And you know what, I don't have it so good myself. Yes, I too have a sad story to tell. Listen to this tearjerker: some of my servants are lazy, my equities portfolio dropped two points this morning, my gold mining speculations have performed indifferently, and I have only got five measly castles, **(tearing up)** and one of them is in Scotland. Honestly, it's embarrassing entertaining dignitaries up there. It's always raining in Scotland. Well? Is that not a sad story full of woe? Give me an aww, you little brats, give me an aww. Uh, I don't need your awws, you can stick your awws where the sun don't shine, which is everywhere in Scotland. **(To Mother.)** So anyway, give me some more tax.

Riding Hood: What if we don't?

Queen: You're a feisty one, aren't you? Then I'll set my henchmen onto you.

Riding Hood: What henchmen?

Queen: **(Looks behind her.)** Actually, that's a good point. Henchmen! Henchmen! Where are they? They were right behind me. You see, this is exactly what I mean about lazy servants. I expect better for the minimum wage I pay them. Henchmen!

(Henchman 1, Henchman 2 and Henchman 3 enter running and bumping into each other. Henchman 3 is carrying a bunch of flowers.)

Queen: Where have you people been? You were meant to be right behind me.

Henchman 1: I got lost.

Henchman 2: I fell over.

Henchman 3: I stopped to pick some pretty wild flowers.

Queen: **(Queen slaps each Henchman until Henchman 3.)** Idiot, buffoon, m... what's going on here? What are those things on your chest?

Henchman 3: What do you mean?

Queen: They're boobs. **(Sideways glance at Mother.)** *Real* boobs.

Mother: **(Adjusts her fake breasts defiantly.)** Hmph!

Henchman 3: So what if they are?

Queen: Sorry, no chicks allowed in my henchmen. You're meant to be a henchman, not a henchwoman. Women just aren't evil enough.

Henchman 3: But you're a woman and you're evil.

Queen: That's because I'm a leader. For some reason this country has always liked their women leaders to be evil. It's just the way things are done around here. And get rid of those stupid flowers. They make you look like a girl.

Henchman 3: But I am a girl.

Queen: And that's the problem, you can't be evil.

Henchman 3: I so too can be evil.

Queen: Okay, if you want to prove how evil you can be, go and berate those pesky little children.

Henchman 3: Fine, I can do that. You just watch me.

Queen: I'm watching.

Henchman 3: **(To audience; starts out rough, but sweetens.)** Right, you little... oh look how sweet you all are. What a bunch of cuties. Hello, boys and girls, are you having a good time?

Queen: What's going on? You're meant to be berating them. Go on, berate, berate!

- Henchman 3: But look how cute they all are. Look at those sweet little faces.
- Queen: That's a pathetic display for a henchman. You should be ashamed of yourself. And I'll tell you what, you may think those children are cute now, but look at those mums and dads out there, **(points to mums and dads)** that's what they turn into.
- Henchman 3: **(Recoils on seeing mums and dads.)** Goodness me, well, there's something in that, I suppose.
- Queen: Go and stand with the other henchmen, and I'm watching you. One more act of kindness from you and you're out.
- Henchman 3: I don't want to just stand around. Evil people can have fun too. I can sing and I can dance and I can...
- Queen: Shut up, that's what you can do, you can just stand there and shut up.
- Henchman 3: But I've got a dance routine figured out, and a song to go with it. Shall I show you?
- Queen: Look, I'm an evil queen, but not even I would put that poor audience through one of your lame dance routines.
- Henchman 3: Why do you have to be so mean and put everybody else down?
- Queen: **(Beckoning in a restrained fashion.)** Come here, sweetie, come on, come here.
- (Henchman 3 walks over to Queen.)**
- Queen: Because I am evil, idiot! **(Knuckles Henchman 3 on the head.)**
- Henchman 3: Ow!
- Queen: Now go and stand with the other henchmen. **(To audience.)** Oh, by the way, kids, you haven't seen a criminal with long golden hair come this way, have you? A young woman about this high? Medium build? Goes by the moniker Goldilocks? Have you seen her? No? Are you sure? Absolutely, positively sure? I see some of you eating sweets. You haven't been bribed have you?

- Riding Hood: These are innocent children. They don't take bribes from criminals.
- Queen: I'm not asking you anything, peasant girl. Well, we'll leave that for now. Now I've forgotten what I came in here for. I hate that. Oh yes, tax. I want money from you all. Look at me, I'm dressed in rags almost, I need more finery.
- Riding Hood: You're so greedy. I'm surprised you haven't introduced a poll tax.
- Queen: Hey, I might be an evil queen, but I'm not that bad.
- Mother: Well, poll tax or not, we have nothing to give.
- Queen: That's not my problem. I want money by next week, or you're all going to jail for tax avoidance.
- Riding Hood: You don't frighten me; I can do jail time.
- Queen: And did I mention I make all my prisoners read the complete works of Jeremy Clarkson?
- Mother: But that's torture.
- Queen: Well, I am an evil queen.
- Mother: Oh, what are we going to do?
- Queen: That's not my concern. Come on, henchmen, let's go to the next house. I love being evil. **(Laughs.) (To Henchmen.)** Well, laugh evilly with me. I don't want to be the only one laughing, it sounds lame.
- (Henchmen laugh.)**
- Queen: That's better.
- (Queen and Henchmen exit laughing. Henchman 1 pushes over a chair on his way out.)**
- Mother: **(Picking up chair.)** This is terrible.

Riding Hood: Perhaps I shouldn't go to Nana's house. We need to sort out how to pay our tax.

Mother: No, you'll go to Nana's house. She gets lonely. She needs a visitor. If she doesn't have a visitor, she usually comes over here complaining to me. About me. **(Puts steak and steak knife in a basket and gives it to Riding Hood.)** Here's the steak, and a good steak knife, now take this to your Nana.

(Goldilocks enters.)

Goldilocks: Has the queen gone?

Riding Hood: Yes.

Goldilocks: Good. There was just a little bit of a misunderstanding between her and me concerning property rights. **(To audience.)** Did you tell the queen you haven't seen me, kids? You forgot nicely? That's good. Have some more forgetting sweets. **(Throws out sweets to audience.)** You'll all make very good politicians one day.

Riding Hood: Can Goldilocks come with me to Nana's house?

Mother: Certainly not. She's a one girl crimewave.

Riding Hood: Please. It will be much safer if I go with a friend. The woods are full of angry bears.

Mother: And she's the one who made them angry.

Riding Hood: Please.

Goldilocks: I'd love to come along. I'm good at helping.

Mother: You haven't helped anyone in your life.

Goldilocks: I have too helped plenty of people.

Mother: The only people you're likely to help are the police with their inquiries.

Goldilocks: I resent that. I want to go with Hoodsie.

Mother: I don't like the type of people you consort with. My dear little sweetie is a beautiful young woman, and she may be led astray by dubious men.

Riding Hood: That's going not to happen, Mum.

Mother: Ha, you may say that, but those ruffians can be charming. I had that kind of trouble myself when I was your age. Yes, I was once a famous beauty.

Goldilocks: Are you sure?

Mother: Of course, I'm sure. When I was Riding Hood's age, I had all the young men stampeding.

Goldilocks: Well, I don't doubt that.

Riding Hood: Mum, I'm not going to get into trouble, so can Goldilocks come with me?

Mother: Oh, okay then.

Riding Hood: There might be a wolf out there, though.

Goldilocks: I've already got three angry bears after me. One little wolf won't make much of a difference.

Riding Hood: Right, let's go. Bye-bye, Mum.

Mother: Bye-bye, dear. Remember to pick some pretty flowers for me. And you keep out of trouble, Goldilocks; and no dubious men.

Goldilocks: I resent that. I'm a good girl. Aren't I, kids?

(Riding Hood and Goldilocks exit.)

Mother: Oh, what's to become of us? How are we going to get any money by next week? I'm afraid it's jail for us all, and monthly instalments of Jeremy Clarkson, the worst book club in existence.

Narrator: Are you talking to me?

Mother: No, I'm just talking to myself.

(End of Scene.)

Narrator: And so, while Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks walked to Nana's house, the evil queen and her henchmen marched through the kingdom demanding tax for her golden throne.

(Queen and Henchmen enter marching.)

Queen: Come on, men, let's hear your chant. All henchmen need a good evil chant. One, two, three...

Henchman 1: } **(Chanting together.)**

Henchman 2: }

Henchman 3: } Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do bad things.
Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do bad things.

Queen: Not bad, not bad, but just a trifle more menace, if you please. **(Sees audience and stops. To audience.)** Oh, I see you brats are still with us. Don't you have homes to go to? Or should I say hovels. I hope you're not hanging around because you think this is going to end well for Red Riding Hood and her awful mother, because it won't.

Narrator: Oh yes, it will.

Queen: Oh no, it won't.

Narrator: Oh yes, it will.

Queen: Oh, shut up and get back to your narrating.

Narrator: Very well. The queen and her henchmen...

Henchman 3: And henchwoman.

Narrator: And henchwoman, soon found themselves in the middle of the forest.

Queen: Doesn't look like we're in the middle of the forest to me.

(Stagehand enters with a prop tree. Puts it in the middle of the stage and exits.)

Queen: Uh, we're in the middle of the forest.

Henchman 3: **(Waving to audience.)** Hello, boys and girls.

Queen: Stop doing that. You're meant to be evil and menacing, remember? Not happy and affable. Now, I hear Red Riding Hood's nana lives in my forest, so we'll find her house and threaten her and do general evil things to her.

Henchman 3: But why are we threatening a frail old lady?

Queen: You're just not getting this evil thing, are you? I don't like Red Riding Hood, so I'm going to tax her nana and then maybe rough her up a bit, or more to the point, you are. And then nobody will dare defy me.
(Laughs.)

(Henchmen don't laugh.)

Queen: Oh, come on, guys, laugh with me, we've just talked about this.

(Henchmen laugh.)

Queen: That's better. Right, let's go find that old woman's shack. See you later, brats. We're off to pick on a little old lady, and there's nothing you can do about it. **(Laughs.)**

(Henchmen don't laugh.)

Queen: Oh, for crying out loud. Laugh with me.

Henchman 1: But we just don't know when you're being funny.

Queen: Enough of that. Just laugh.

(Henchmen laugh.)

Queen: Honestly, it's like blood from a stone.

(Queen and Henchmen exit. Stagehand enters, takes prop tree, and exits.)

Scene 2 – Inside Nana’s house.

(Wolf is lying in Nana’s bed dressed in a nightie and nightcap.)

Narrator: Meanwhile, in Nana’s cottage in the forest, the Big Bad Wolf has eaten Nana whole and is lying in wait for Red Riding Hood.

Wolf: Never underestimate the intelligence of your average Big Bad Wolf. I have devised a fiendish plan to eat Red Riding Hood. First, I have gobbled up her nana whole, and now I’m wearing her nana’s nightie to fool her into thinking I am her nana, and then I am going to eat Red Riding Hood when I have her in my clutches.

Narrator: Your plan will never work. You’re obviously a wolf.

Wolf: It will work, don’t be such a pessimist. Now be quiet, here she comes.

Narrator: I’m meant to tell the audience about the plot.

Wolf: Well, do your job then.

Narrator: It wasn’t long before Red Riding Hood and her friend Goldilocks arrived at Nana’s cottage. But little did they know that a badly disguised wolf was waiting for them inside.

(Riding Hood and Goldilocks enter.)

Riding Hood: Hello, Nana, I’ve brought you a... what’s going on here?

Wolf: **(Affecting voice of an old woman.)** Oh hello, my child.

Riding Hood: What have you done with Nana?

Wolf: But I am your nana. Come closer, dear.

Riding Hood: Don’t be ridiculous. You are clearly a Big Bad Wolf.

Narrator: I told you it wouldn’t work.

Wolf: Shut up. **(To Riding Hood.)** No, you are mistaken, my child. I am your nana. Come closer so I can...

Goldilocks: Oh, for goodness' sake. Do you seriously think we'd be fooled by such a feeble disguise?

Riding Hood: What have you done with my nana?

Nana: **(Unseen.)** Hello, Red Riding Hood, is that you?

Riding Hood: Nana! Where are you?

Nana: I'm inside the wolf.

Riding Hood: **(To Wolf.)** You ate my nana?

Wolf: **(Jumps up from the bed. In normal voice.)** And now I'm going to eat you!

Riding Hood: Oh no, you're not.

Wolf: Oh yes, I am.

Riding Hood: Oh no, you're not.

Wolf: Oh yes, I am.

Riding Hood: Oh no, you're not. Quick, get the steak knife, Goldilocks.

(Goldilocks brandishes the steak knife.)

Riding Hood: Don't worry, Nana, we'll soon cut you out of there.

Goldilocks: Let me do the carving, Hoodsie; I can always sell another wolf's pelt.

Wolf: Uh, this plan is starting to backfire rather spectacularly.

Narrator: I did warn you.

Wolf: That gloating doesn't help me right now.

Narrator: But it makes me feel better.

Riding Hood: Go on, Goldilocks, start cutting.

Wolf: I could really do with an interruption.

(Knocking on the door.)

Riding Hood: I wonder who that could be?

(Ranger enters.)

Ranger: Hello, I'm the forest ranger. I'm investigating some poaching that's been going on in the queen's forest.

Goldilocks: Poaching? I wonder who could be doing that?

Ranger: The suspect is said to be female, of medium height with a large shock of golden hair, last seen being chased by three angry bears.

Goldilocks: I haven't seen anyone like that. Have you seen anyone like that, children? **(Gestures for audience to say 'no'.)** See, they haven't seen anyone like that.

Ranger: What are all those kids doing in here anyway?

Riding Hood: Never mind all that. That badly disguised wolf has just eaten my nana. We're going to cut him open.

Ranger: Oh no, you won't.

Riding Hood: Oh yes, we will.

Ranger: No, you won't. That is a Big Bad Wolf, and it's a protected species. You can't harm it.

Riding Hood: But he's eaten my nana.

Ranger: I don't care who he's eaten. There are plenty of nanas in this world, but there are only twenty-six breeding pairs of Big Bad Wolves. I'm sorry,

but they can't be harmed. Look, they've even been individually tagged and monitored.

(Wolf holds up wrist with tag on it.)

Goldilocks: Rare, you say? I wonder how much their pelts would fetch? Just asking for a friend.

Riding Hood: But I need to get nana out of there.

Ranger: Sorry, the only way you can get your nana out of that wolf without hurting him is by magic.

Wolf: And you're not a witch, so you're bugged.

Goldilocks: But we can find a witch who will help us.

Riding Hood: Where can we find a witch?

Goldilocks: Well, where there's magic, there's got to be a witch.

Ranger: I know where there's some magic. There's a castle just to the north of here with a princess inside who's been asleep for a hundred years. That's got to be magic.

Riding Hood: We'll go to that castle right now, there's bound to be a witch hanging around there. Don't worry, Nana, we'll soon get you out of there. I'm going to find a witch.

Nana: Okay, dear. Have you got your red riding hood on? It's very chilly out. You young girls today don't wear enough.

Riding Hood: Yes, I have got my hood on. We'll be back as soon as we can, Nana.

Nana: Don't worry about me. The Big Bad Wolf swallowed up my knitting as well, so I'm knitting you a new pair of socks. It's not like that useless mother of yours does any knitting for you.

Riding Hood: Thank you, Nana, bye-bye. **(To Goldilocks.)** Quick, let's go.

(Riding Hood and Goldilocks exit.)

Ranger: I suppose I should have told them about the forest of thorns surrounding that castle. Oh well, they'll find out about it soon enough. Now I've forgotten why I came in here. I hate it when that happens. Oh, that's right, I'm looking for a poacher of medium build with long golden hair. You'd think someone like that would be easy to spot. **(To audience.)** Are you sure you haven't seen anyone with long golden hair, kids?

(Evil Queen enters.)

Queen: Right, you miserable peasant, give me some tax. What a minute, you're a wolf. I thought Red Riding Hood's nana lived here.

Wolf: She did, but I ate her.

Queen: Why did you do that?

Wolf: Because I wanted to eat Red Riding Hood.

Queen: So, who am I meant to tax now?

Wolf: Nana is still alive in my belly.

Queen: Is she? Nana, give me some tax.

Nana: No. Don't be such a big bully.

Queen: I'll show you bully. I'll get my henchmen onto you.

Wolf: What henchmen?

Queen: The ones right... **(looks behind her)** oh, for goodness sakes, they were right behind me. Henchmen!

(Henchmen enter bumping into each other.)

Queen: Where were you?

Henchman 1: We got lost.

Queen: Idiots. Well, there's no easy spoils around here. We should stop raiding peasant houses anyway. They hardly have any money; although it is fun to take what little they do have.

Ranger: If you want to tax some rich people, there's a castle not far from here, just to the north.

Queen: Taxing rich people, eh? Now there's a novelty. And who are you?

Ranger: I'm a ranger. I stop people poaching animals in your forest, especially animals like this Big Bad Wolf, which is a protected species. In fact, right now I'm after a poacher with long golden hair.

Queen: Long golden hair, eh? Hmm, sounds like the broad I'm after. You keep up the good work and catch those poachers. I am very particular who I let into my forest. Right, henchmen, off we go to the castle, and keep close to me this time. Onward, men.

Henchman 3: And woman.

Queen: Yes, I'm still not happy about that. Nevertheless, let's go tax some rich people. It'll be a change, if nothing else.

(Queen and Henchmen exit.)

Ranger: Oh, I probably should have told them about those thorns. Oh well, they'll find out about them sooner or later. I better go look for that golden-haired poacher.

(Ranger exits.)

Narrator: Told you that feeble disguise wouldn't work.

Wolf: I bet you tipped them off.

Narrator: I think you just like wearing a nightie. And so, both the goodies and the baddies were heading for the castle covered in thorns.

(End of scene.)

(Queen and Henchmen enter.)

Henchman 1: } **(Chanting together.)**
 Henchman 2: }
 Henchman 3: } Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do bad things.
 Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do things.

Queen: That's better, that's better. There's nothing like a good chant to get the evil pumping through our veins. **(Notices audience.)** Oh, I don't believe it, it's the brats, back again. You still think this is going to end happily ever after for the good guys? I don't see how it can. Nana has been eaten by a Big Bad Wolf, and there's nothing Red Riding Hood can do about it. **(Laughs.)**

(Henchmen don't laugh.)

Queen: **(To Henchmen.)** How many times do I have to tell you? Laugh with me.

(Henchmen laugh.)

Queen: No, no, no, it's too late now. Your evil timing is way off. Look, guys...

Henchman 3: And girl.

Queen: Shut up. Look, guys, it's Evil 101. A henchman must have a good evil laugh. And to be quite frank, your evil laughs are very average. I bet you even the brats out there have better evil laughs than you henchmen.

Henchman 2: Oh no, they don't.

Queen: Oh yes, they do. In fact, we'll test it out. **(To audience.)** Right, boys and girls, do you think you can laugh more evilly than these poor excuses for henchmen? Okay, we'll have an evil laugh off. You'll laugh, and then my so-called henchmen will laugh, and we'll see who's better. Now, I'll say I'm off to do something evil, and then you kids will laugh evilly with me, okay? Good. Here goes. I'm off to do something evil. **(Laughs gesturing for kids in audience to join her.)** Well, that was a pretty feeble attempt, guys. What's say we put that down as a warmup. We'll try again, shall we? And this time put something into it. Right, I'm off to do something evil. **(Laughs gesturing for kids in audience to join in.)** You know, you're not setting the bar very high. Well, we'll see if my

henchmen can beat that pitiful display. Ready, Henchmen? I'm off to do something evil. **(Laughs.)**

(Henchmen don't laugh.)

Queen: Well, laugh for goodness sakes. Are you that stupid? Even the brats could follow their cue.

Henchman 1: Oh, we thought... what did we think?

Henchman 2: I'm not thinking about anything.

Henchman 3: There's such pretty flowers in the forest.

Queen: **(To audience.)** I'll tell you what, mums and dads and various hangers on, if you think your little brats can be a handful, just try working with my empty-headed henchmen. **(To Henchmen.)** Listen up, guys, we're going to do this, and we're going to keep doing this until we get it right. Now, I say we're going to do something evil, and then you laugh with me. It's very simple. Do you think you can do that?

Henchman 1: Of course we can do that.

Henchman 2: We're not stupid.

Queen: That's yet to be proven. Okay, guys, here goes. We're off to do something evil. **(Laughs.)**

(Henchmen don't laugh.)

Queen: Well?

Henchman 3: Oh, you want us to laugh *now*?

Queen: Oh my days. Well, we'll just have to leave that for now; we've got to get to the castle. Can you at least give me a chant? Can you do that one simple thing for me?

Henchman 1: I think we probably could.

Queen: Then let's go.

Henchman 1: } **(Chanting together.)**
 Henchman 2: }
 Henchman 3: } Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do bad things.
 Weeeeeeee are evil, we like to do bad things, we like to do bad things.

(Queen and Henchmen exit.)

Scene 3 - A bedroom inside a castle.

(Sleeping Beauty lies asleep on a bed.)

Narrator: Luckily for the goodies, Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks don't have to practice laughing evilly at fiendish plots, so they arrive at the castle first, where they found a beautiful princess fast asleep.

(Riding Hood and Goldilocks enter.)

Riding Hood: I wish the forest ranger had warned us about that forest of thorns.

Goldilocks: What are you talking about? I found us a way in, didn't I? If there's one thing I'm good at, it's finding the easy way into a building.

Riding Hood: Yes, I'm beginning to think Mum was right about you.

Goldilocks: I resent that.

Riding Hood: Well, I guess we're here now, and here's the sleeping beauty. My goodness, she's beautiful.

Goldilocks: Ah, all these posh broads look the same to me. Where's the witch? We need the witch.

Riding Hood: What witch?

Goldilocks: Hey, snap out of it. Stop gawking at the somnolent wench, and let's find the witch.

Riding Hood: Do you believe in love at first sight?

Goldilocks: No, but I do believe in ill-judged short-lived marriages.

Riding Hood: But she's just so beautiful.

Goldilocks: What's the matter with you? Wait a minute, someone's coming.

(Prince enters.)

Prince: **(To Jack offstage.)** Will you hurry up, man; honestly it was only a few thorns.

(Jack enters.)

Jack: Sorry, sir, but I had to hack my way through that forest of thorns all by myself. I'm scratched quite badly.

Prince: You mean I hacked my way in. Remember our deal? You do all the work and I get all the credit.

Jack: That doesn't seem fair.

Prince: Fair? The world is not meant to be fair. **(To Goldilocks and Riding Hood.)** Would you listen to this guy? You pay them minimum wage and they still think it's not enough. Hang on, who are you people anyway?

Goldilocks: I'm Goldilocks, and this is my friend Red Riding Hood, and we're looking for a witch. Who are you?

Prince: I am Prince Charming; you must have heard of me, I'm strikingly handsome, I've got piles of cash, and I'm looking for a beautiful bride. Oh, and this is my retainer. I forget what his name is.

Jack: Jack, it's Jack. I've been working for you for five years.

Prince: Oh, complaints, complaints, complaints. You treat them like dirt and they still complain. Anyway, yes, this is Jack, he's a decent enough worker, just don't get him to sell livestock on your behalf. The man cannot haggle.

Jack: That deal turned out alright in the end.

- Prince: I do not like beans. Now, down to business, stand aside, peasants, I'm going to wake up this beautiful princess with a kiss and she's going to marry me.
- Riding Hood: Wait a moment. She may want to marry me. Maybe I should wake her up with a kiss.
- Prince: You? No, she wants to marry me. I am a man of greatness, while you, you are a nothing, a nobody, a peasant, a non-entity. You, my smelly little friend, are dirt.
- Riding Hood: Hey, I may be covered in dirt, and I might smell like dirt, but it doesn't necessarily mean I am dirt. I want to kiss the princess.
- Prince: No, that's not going to happen. I didn't heroically cut my way through all those thorns just to let a lowly, grubby peasant girl snatch my bride away from me.
- Jack: I cut our way through the thorns, sir.
- Prince: Remember our *deal*, Jack. You the work, me the credit. And I'm doing the kissing.
- Riding Hood: No, I'm doing the kissing.
- Goldilocks: Well, if someone has to kiss this upper-class bint, it might as well be me.
- (Goldilocks kisses Sleeping Beauty. Sleeping Beauty wakes up, yawns.)**
- Sleeping Beauty: Oh, that was such a good sleep. And I had the weirdest dreams. I was back at school and I hadn't studied all term, and I had all these exams to sit, but it wasn't really school, it was like back here in the castle, you know? But then...
- Prince: My princess, she's awake!
- Sleeping Beauty: Who are you?
- Prince: I'm a great heroic prince, and I've come to rescue you. I braved a witch's dark magic, and I fearlessly cut my way through a forest of thorns.

Jack: But it was me who...

Prince: Deal, Jack, deal! Anyway, I've got a great fortune and much property.

Sleeping Beauty: That doesn't impress me. I've got stacks of cash of my own. And it's been accumulating compound interest for a hundred years.

Prince: But look at me, I'm amazingly handsome.

Sleeping Beauty: Sorry, I don't like you. **(To Riding Hood.)** You I like. You're so earthy and intriguing.

Prince: That's because she's covered in dirt.

Sleeping Beauty: I like a bit of dirt.

Riding Hood: I like you too. In fact, I've loved you since I first set eyes on you about two minutes ago.

Sleeping Beauty: Me too. Kiss me.

(Sleeping Beauty and Riding Hood kiss.)

Prince: But what about me? I cut my way through all those thorns.

Jack: But I...

Prince: Deal!

Sleeping Beauty: I'm sorry, Prince, but to be quite honest, it was a tiny prick that got me into this mess to start with.

Prince: I can't believe I've been so insulted.

Jack: I can't believe that joke got past the censors.

Prince: Of all the rotten luck. I've had my bride stolen from me. And by a lowly peasant no less.

Goldilocks: What makes you think you're entitled to a princess?

- Prince: I beg your pardon? I am a prince, a giant, neigh, a titan among men. I am destined for greatness, neigh, magnificence. **(To audience.)** I'm not like you common folk out there, happy with your mundane dreary lives. I am of the aristocracy, the elite; I am of the intelligentsia, the glitterati and the literati and all the other ratis, and I am entitled to nothing but the best in marriage; only the most beautiful woman with the most distinguished breeding is good enough for me. Look at you small men out there. What would you know about the burden of greatness? I'll bet you the biggest decision you've made today is whether or not to wear a collared shirt to this thing, and I'll bet your wife decided that for you anyway. In fact...
- Goldilocks: Can we get on with it, please?
- Prince: How dare you interrupt my soliloquy!
- Goldilocks: It's just that we need to find a witch.
- Riding Hood: Oh, that's right, yeah, my nana has been eaten by a Big Bad Wolf, so we have to find a witch to get her out by magic.
- Sleeping Beauty: What a lot of strange things have gone on since I've been sleeping.
- Prince: But that's got nothing to do with me. I can't believe you interrupted my soliloquy for your petty little peasant problems.
- Riding Hood: We thought there would be a witch around here, but there isn't.
- Jack: If I could make a suggestion?
- Prince: No, you can't, you're just a retainer. Know your place.
- Goldilocks: What's your suggestion, Jack?
- Jack: I've heard a story of a young woman trapped in a tower by a witch.
- Riding Hood: There's our witch. Quick, let's go.
- Prince: But what has this got to do with me? I'm the hero of this story, remember?

Jack: Did I mention that the young woman is very attractive, single and looking? And, from what I hear, a shameless gold digger? **(Aside.)** Among other things.

Prince: Now you're speaking my language, that's just my kind of woman. Let's go.

Sleeping Beauty: By the way, what happened to all my family and friends?

Goldilocks: You've been asleep for a hundred years, right?

Sleeping Beauty: Give or take.

Goldilocks: I'd say they're all dead.

Sleeping Beauty: Easy come, easy go.

(Prince, Jack, Riding Hood, Goldilocks and Sleeping Beauty exit.)

(Queen enters.)

Queen: Right, you miserable rich people, pay your tax. Wait a minute, where is everybody?

Narrator: There's no one here.

Queen: I can see that. You mean this whole castle is deserted?

Narrator: Red Riding Hood was here before, but you missed her.

Queen: What was that little brat doing here? Oh, now I remember this place, the forest of thorns gives it away. This is where that beautiful princess was put to sleep by the witch. But it looks like she's woken up.

Narrator: Who are you talking to?

Queen: You of course.

Narrator: Technically, I'm not here either, well not from your point of view.

Queen: It's becoming very fashionable to be not here. Then I'm talking to my henchmen, okay?

Narrator: What henchmen?

Queen: **(Notices Henchmen aren't there.)** Where have they gone now? Henchmen! Henchmen!

(Henchmen enter bumping into each other.)

Queen: Is this to become a running gag, is it? Where have you lot been?

Henchman 1: We had to cut our way through all those thorns.

Henchman 2: It was very painful.

Henchman 3: And we got no help from you.

Queen: I am an evil queen; I don't help anyone, not peasants, not princesses, and certainly not you.

Henchman 1: But I got a prick in my arm.

Henchman 2: I got a prick in my leg.

Henchman 3: And I got a big prick in my bum.

Queen: I don't care. I don't care about your arm, I don't care about your leg, and I certainly don't care about your bum. Now, I've been thinking.

Henchman 1: Thinking about giving us a pay rise?

Queen: Don't try and be funny.

(Henchman 3 waves and audience.)

Henchman 3: Hello, boys and girls.

Queen: And don't wave at the children. I've talked to you before about that. Just ignore them. Now, I've been thinking about Red Riding Hood. We went

to her nana's house and found out her nana has been eaten by a Big Bad Wolf.

Henchman 3: Which was terrible.

Queen: I know, I feel it as well; people can't pay tax when they've been eaten by wolves. But now I find out that Red Riding Hood has come here. Why would she do that?

Henchman 1: I don't know, why are you asking us for? We're idiots.

Queen: It was a rhetorical question, idiot. And now I'm going to tell you the answer. She's looking for a witch to try and get her nana out of the wolf. But the witch isn't here, and I know exactly where the witch is. She's at her tower guarding that gold digging degenerate Rapunzel.

Henchman 3: What's this got to do with us?

Queen: I'm going to stop Red Riding Hood from saving her nana.

Henchman 1: Why don't you like Red Riding Hood?

Queen: Because she defies me, and for any tyrant, defiance is a contagion.

Henchman 2: What's a contagion?

Queen: It means when someone starts to do it, it causes other people to join in, like booing. All it takes is for one little brat out there to start booing me, and they all join in. So, I'm going to stop Red Riding Hood, and I'm going to break her spirit, or, more to the point, you are. I want you people to go to the tower and stop the witch from helping Red Riding Hood.

Henchman 3: Why can't you do it?

Queen: Because I have to go and tax more people. I can't be everywhere.

Henchman 2: You could just hire a tax collector.

Queen: No, I like to do it myself; I like to see the sad, pathetic look in their eyes when I tell them I want all the money they've got. It's so much fun. Now, can I trust you people to carry out my one single order with diligence and

competence? Because I don't want this to be one of those stories where the evil side is thwarted by the bungling incompetence of the henchmen. So, can I trust you guys to do this one single thing I'm asking you to do?