

The Witches

Roald Dahl Adapted by David Wood

First performed at the Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield in 1992 and then at the Duke of York's Theatre, London. BOY and his grandmother are staying at The Hotel Magnificent, where the Witches are holding their annual meeting, supposedly of The Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is presided over by the Grand High Witch, who is planning to 'rub out' every child in England with her latest formula, which will turn them all into mice. This potion is to be injected into tasty sweets and chocs. A greedy boy, Bruno Jenkins is also staying with his parents at the hotel and becomes her first victim. BOY, who has been searching for his missing pet mice, William and Mary, has wandered into the ballroom where the meeting is being held and quickly hides behind a screen. But the Witches smell him out and force him to drink the rest of the potion.

In this scene, BOY comes scampering back into the ballroom as a 'mouse'. He sniffs around, calling for Bruno. He meets Bruno, now also a 'mouse', eating a chunk of bread. At first Bruno refuses to believe what has happened to him and then begins to cry. BOY tries to explain the advantages of being a mouse and then plans their escape.

BOY

(Calling) Bruno! Bruno Jenkins! *(No reply. BOY frisks around happily. To the audience)* I should be sad. I should feel desperate. I mean, I've never dreamed of being a mouse, like I've dreamed of being, say, a film star. But now that I *am* one, I'm beginning to see the advantages. I know mice sometimes get poisoned or caught in traps but boys sometimes get killed too - run over or get some awful illness. Boys have to go to school. Mice don't. Mice don't have to pass exams. When mice grow up they don't have to go out to work. Mm. It's no bad thing to be a mouse. I'm as free as William and Mary. Hope they're all right. *(Bruno, dressed as a mouse, enters eating a chunk of bread - to Bruno)* Hallo, Bruno. *(Bruno nods)* What have you found? . . . An ancient fish paste sandwich. Pretty good. Bit pongy . . . Listen, Bruno. Now we're both mice, I think we ought to start thinking about the future ... *(Bruno stops eating)* But you're a mouse too, Bruno . . . Look at your paws . . . Don't be silly, Bruno. There are worse things than being a mouse. You can live in a hole ... And you can creep into the larder at night and nibble through all the packets of biscuits and cornflakes and stuff. You can stuff yourself silly . . . Maybe your rich father will get you a special little mouse-fridge all to yourself. One you can open . . . We'll go and see my grandmother. She'll understand. She knows all about witches . . . The witches who turned us into mice. The Grand High Witch gave you a chocolate, remember? ... Follow me to Grandmother's room. Down the corridor, run like mad ... No talking. And don't let anyone see you. Don't forget that anyone who catches you will try to kill you! . . . Come on.

George's Marvelous Medicine

Roald Dahl Adapted for stage by Stuart Paterson

First performed by the Borderline Theatre Company in 1990. GEORGE lives in a farmhouse with his Mother and Father and Grandma - a horrible old lady who is particularly horrible to GEORGE, especially when he is left on his own with her.

GEORGE'S Mother and Father have gone shopping in the village, leaving GEORGE to take care of Grandma and give her her medicine at eleven o'clock. As soon as she wakes up she is demanding a cup of tea - sending GEORGE backwards and forwards to the kitchen for more sugar, a saucer and then a teaspoon. As she stirs her tea she accuses him of growing too fast. 'Boys who grow too fast are stupid and lazy' She beckons to GEORGE to come closer to her and starts to tell him about magic powers and 'dark places where dark things live and squirm and slither all over each other ...' In terror GEORGE runs out into the kitchen and slams the door after him. He is now quite sure that Grandma is a witch. Suddenly he remembers her medicine. If only he could invent a medicine so strong and so fierce that it would either cure her or blow the top of her head right off!

In this scene GEORGE has almost completed his marvelous medicine and is stirring the mixture with a long wooden spoon. A rich blue smoke rises from the surface of the liquid. He inhales deeply, coughs and splutters, then inhales again.

GEORGE

Oh I bet nothing's ever smelled like that before in the whole history of the world, except maybe a witch's big black cauldron. Just one whiff sets your brain on fire and sends prickles down the backs of your legs. *(He shivers, and stirs more quickly, dancing from foot to foot)* I can see sparks flashing in the foam. There it is again - like lightning in a storm! This is wonderful! It's the best, the best, the best, the best, the best thing ever!

(He has begun to dance around the steaming pot. Lost in mischief's magic spell, he begins to dance around the kitchen)

(Clutching his head) Calm down, George. I've got to stay calm. *(He takes a deep breath)* I mustn't make any mistakes now. Think, George, think! *(He turns off the flame under the pan)* It'll need plenty of time to cool down *(He waves away the steam, stirs away the froth, and peers in at his medicine)* But it's blue, the deepest blue you've ever seen. It needs more brown! It has to be brown or she'll get suspicious. *(GEORGE dashes out to the shed)* *(From inside the shed)* Brown paint, brown paint - please let there be brown paint! *(GEORGE emerges from the shed clutching an old, dirty can. He reads its label)* DARK BROWN GLOSS PAINT - ONE QUART. In it goes! *(He prises off the lid and pours the paint into the saucepan. He stirs the paint gently into the mixture with the long wooden spoon)* It's working! It's all turning brown! A lovely thick creamy brown! . . . I'm coming, Grandma . . . I'm not forgetting you, Grandma. I'm thinking about you all the time . . . *(GEORGE snatches the bottle of Grandma's real medicine from the sideboard, takes out the cork and pours it all down the sink)* We won't be needing you any more. We've got something much better than you! Oh boy, haven't we just! *(He pours the mixture into the medicine bottle and replaces the cork)* I've done it, I've done it! *(He touches the bottle, burns himself)* Ouch! It's still boiling hot, and it's nearly eleven o'clock . . . It won't be long now, Grandma *(Quietly, tense with excitement)* Under the tap - that's it! Under the cold tap! *(He runs cold water from the tap over the bottle)* If only the glass doesn't break. Please, please, don't let the glass break . . . It's cooler already. I can put my hand right round it. *(He keeps the bottle under the cold water)* I think we've done it! I think we've really done it. *(GEORGE turns off the tap and dries the bottle with a dishcloth)* Grandma - it's medicine time!

James and the Giant Peach

Roald Dahl Adapted by Richard R. George

Written in 1961 and adapted as a play in 1982 by American school teacher, Richard George.

JAMES has escaped from his dreadful guardians, Aunt Spiker and Aunt Sponge and sets off inside the Giant Peach on his amazing adventures. He is accompanied by his friends, Earthworm, Centipede, Old-Green-Grasshopper, Spider, Ladybird and Glow-Worm,

In this scene, the Peach has broken through the garden fence, rolled down the hill and on and on towards Dover, where it hurtles over the white cliffs and into the sea. Now it is floating further and further out, bobbing along on the waves, JAMES and his friends have climbed out and are sitting on top of it, when the Centipede looks towards the horizon and sees a thin black thing moving towards them. It is a shark. Soon there are more sharks and they begin to attack the Peach. Ladybird appeals to JAMES. Surely he can think of something before they are all eaten alive.

JAMES

There *is* something that I believe we might try. I'm not saying it'll work ... 1 ... I ... I'm afraid it's no good ... after all ... *(Shaking his head)* I'm terribly sorry. I forgot. We don't have any string. We'd need hundreds of yards of string to make this work ... The Silkworm? You can wake him up and make him spin? And you, Spider, can spin just as well as any Silkworm! Can you make enough between you? And would it be strong? ... I'm going to lift this Peach clear out of the water! With seagulls! the place is full of them. Look up there! *(Pointing towards the sky)* I'm going to take a long silk string and I'm going to loop one end of it around a seagull's neck. And then I'm going to tie the other end to the stem of the Peach. *(JAMES points to the Peach stem, which is standing up like a mast in the middle of the stage)* It's like balloons. You give someone enough balloons to hold, I mean *really* enough, then up he goes. And a seagull has far more lifting power than a balloon, If only we have *time* to do it. ... We'll do it with bait. With a worm, of course. Seagulls love worms, didn't you know that? And luckily for us, we have here the biggest, fattest, juiciest Earthworm ... *(He puts his arm around Earthworm)* I won't let them *touch* you. I promise I won't! But we've got to hurry! Look down there! Action stations! There's not a moment to lose! All hands below deck except Earthworm!

Toad of Toad Had

A Play from. Kenneth Grahame's Book *The Wind in the Willows* A.A. Milne

First produced at the Liverpool Playhouse in 1929, it is based around the adventures of the foolish Toad and his friends: the kindly Rat, the wise Badger and the gentle, but very nervous, MOLE.

This scene takes place at night in the middle of the Wild Wood -a frightening place in the moonlight - with the snow thick on the ground. MOLE comes limping in through the trees, looking over his shoulder as he hears the mocking laughter of the creatures who inhabit the wood. His friends had warned him not to toe here and now he is hopelessly lost.

MOLE

{Hopefully} Ratty! *(In sudden panic as a bal crosses the stage)* What's that? Pooh! It's nothing! *I'm* not frightened!... I do wish Ratty was here. He's so comforting, is Ratty. Or the brave Mr Toad. *He'd* frighten them all away. *(He seems to hear the sound of mocking laughter)* What's that? *(He looks round anxiously)* Ratty always said, 'Don't go into the Wild Wood.' That's what he always said. 'Not by yourself,' he said. 'It isn't safe,' he said. 'We *never* do/ he said. That's what Ratty said. But I thought I knew better. There he was, dear old Rat, dozing in front of the fire, and I thought if I just slipped out, just to see what the Wild Wood was like - what's that - ? *(He breaks off suddenly and turns up stage, fearing an attack from behind. There is nothing)* I should be safer up against a tree. Why didn't I think of that before? *(He settles himself at the foot of a tree)* Ratty would have thought of it, he's so wise. Oh, Ratty, I wish you were here! It's so much more friendly with two! *(His head droops on his chest)* . . . *(waking up suddenly)* What's that? . . . *(frightened)* Who is it? ... *(Rat enters and crosses to Mole. He has a lantern in his hand and a cudgel over his shoulder, MOLE is crawling around distraught, almost in tears)* Oh, Rat! . . . Oh, Ratty, I've been so frightened, you can't think . . . *(sitting)* Oh, Ratty. I don't know how to tell you, but I'm afraid you'll never want me for a companion again, but I can't, I simply *can't* go all that way back home now . . . I'm aching all over. Oh, Ratty, do forgive me. I feel as if I must just sit here for ever and ever and ever, and I'm not a bit frightened now you're with me - and -and I think I want to go to sleep.

Whizziwig

Malorie Blackman

Published in 1995, *Whizziwig* is now a children's serial on Carlton Television.

WHIZZIWIG is a small, friendly alien whose space-ship has just crash-landed on Ben's roof. She is described as more 'girl' than 'boy' - but then they don't have girls or boys on their planet. Ben has complained to his Mum and Dad that a small furry thing is bouncing about in his bedroom, but they tell him to lie down and go to sleep. The bouncing continues.

In this scene WHIZZIWIG appears for the first time on top of Ben's wardrobe and insists on introducing herself.

WHIZZIWIG

My name is Whizziwig. I am sorry if I frightened you. I did not mean to. I would have spoken to you before, but it has taken me this long to learn all the spoken languages on this planet... I'm on top of the wardrobe. Can I come down now? (*WHIZZIWIG bounces down from the wardrobe and bounces towards Ben's bed*) I am an Oricon. What the people on your world would call a wish-giver ... I was passing your planet four days ago on my way to visit my auntie, when some space debris hit my ship and I had to make an emergency landing on your roof... It is still up on your roof. It will have to stay there until I can fix it. (*WHIZZIWIG sighs*) I have been bouncing around this immediate area ever since I arrived and I have yet to fix a single thing ... It will take wishes to fix my ship. And I can only fix it by giving people whatever they wish for ... I can't give you a new bike. (*WHIZZIWIG rocks to the left and then to the right*) Nope ... I can only grant wishes if you make a wish for someone else . . . You have to wish almost without realising what you're doing - it has to be unselfish wishing . . . That's the way it works ... I am an accidental wish-maker . . . There are different types of Oricons. Some make dreams come true, others make daydreams come true, some give you exactly what you want, some give you the exact opposite of what you want. I grant wishes - but only to those who make wishes for someone else . . . that is my job. It is tough, but someone has to do it!