

PLAY 4 ME!

Original Plays for children, teenagers, youth theatre and special needs groups by Emer Halpenny

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MODEL BEHAVIOUR

By Emer Halpenny

AGE: 8 – 12 years

GENDER: 4 female, 5 can be male or female (change names as necessary)

PARTS: 9

RUNNING TIME: just under 15 minutes

CHARACTERS:

IRIS POWER A high powered TV producer

KAT Production Assistant (PA) to IRIS, wants to be a TV producer

GINEEN Production Assistant (PA) to IRIS, wants to be a model

INSPECTOR SOOWRONG An out of work detective

DETECTIVE DUNNOMUCH His pal, also an out of work detective

MRS GORGEOUS A model mum

PATTI Her teenage model daughter

PIXIE Another teenage model daughter

POOCHIE Another teenage model daughter

Scene 1 : Studio floor

The Studio Floor of a TV set. A large poster sign says STUDIO 1 and under it : FABULOUS FASHION. A large camera is positioned centre stage left, a table with make up and a mirror is down stage left. Two chairs at the table. Another smaller table, centre, with a coffee pot and mug on it. A TV monitor centre. KAT, producer's assistant to IRIS POWER is sweeping the floor of Studio 1. We hear IRIS shouting off stage and KAT stops to listen.

IRIS *(offstage)* I don't care what you think it is, it doesn't taste like coffee!

KAT rolls her eyes and goes back to sweeping.

IRIS *(offstage)* Make my coffee the way I like it, NOW!!!

GINEEN, the other producer's assistant enters, carrying a mug. She is fed up.

GINEEN Did you hear the way she spoke to me?

KAT I heard.

GINEEN Who does she think she is? Doesn't she know who I am?

KAT She's the producer. She can do what she likes. You're just her assistant, Gineen, same as me.

GINEEN Well, not for long if she keeps speaking to me like that. Where's the coffee machine?

KAT Here. *(pours coffee)*

GINEEN Thanks Kat.

KAT No problem. Better look busy – here she comes.

IRIS *(storming on stage)* Coffee! *(GINEEN runs to give it to her. IRIS tastes it.)* Better. *(she flicks her hand to shoo GINEEN away)* Kat!

KAT Yes, Iris?
 IRIS Clean the studio. It's filthy.
 KAT I've just cleaned it!
 IRIS You call this clean? We're making the final 'Fabulous Fashion' TV programme here tomorrow. This place has got to look good.
 GINEEN This is the programme the Gorgeous Model family will be starring in.
 KAT Who are the Gorgeous Model family?
 GINEEN They're a whole family of gorgeous models!
 IRIS Yes, Mrs Gorgeous and her three daughters. They're the stars of the fashion world. You should know that Kat.
 KAT I'm not much into fashion. I just want to be a producer, like you Iris.
 IRIS Well, that's not likely to happen if you don't pull your socks up, dear. *(it is not said kindly)*
 GINEEN I want to be a model. Do you think I'll get discovered if Mrs Gorgeous sees me?
 IRIS Probably not. Now get to work you two! Rehearsal at 8am. *She breezes out of the studio. KAT and GINEEN sigh heavily.*
 GINEEN We're never going to get the jobs we want.
 KAT Not if we don't do something about it.
 GINEEN What do you mean?
 KAT Never mind. Come on, we'd better get this place ready.

Music as the lights fade on KAT and GINEEN sweeping the floor.

INSPECTOR SOOWRONG walks on from DSL. DETECTIVE DUNNOMUCH walks on from DSR. They meet DSC.

SOOWRONG Ah, my old colleague, Detective Dunnomuch!
 DUNNOMUCH And my good pal, Inspector Soowrong.
 BOTH *(shaking hands)* How are you? Good, good.
 SOOWRONG How's business?
 DUNNOMUCH Fantastic. Great. And you?
 SOOWRONG Couldn't be better.
 DUNNOMUCH Really?
 SOOWRONG Nah, I haven't worked for weeks.
 DUNNOMUCH Me neither.
 SOOWRONG Coffee?
 DUNNOMUCH Sure. If you're buying. *They exit, to sad music.*

Scene 2 : The Gorgeous Household, that night.

The Gorgeous Household is set up downstage centre and right. A full length free standing mirror downstage centre, divides the house from the studio floor.

MRS GORGEOUS *(looking into a mirror)* Uhuh, uhuh...I like it...yes, that's good. I look great for going to bed. *(looks at her watch and gasps)* Goodness! It's almost 7.30pm! We've got to get our beauty sleep. *(she calls)* Patti! *(PATTI runs in)*

PATTI Yes, mother?

MRS G Pixie!

PIXIE Yes, mother?

MRS G Poochie?

POOCHIE Yes, mother?

MRS G Girls, remember, we have a big day tomorrow.

PATTI We remember, we're starring in that...thing.

PIXIE Yeah, the TV fashion programme...whatever.

POOCHIE 'Fabulous Fashion.' Snore.

MRS G Yes girls. And I want you looking as gorgeous as possible. So, off to bed!

PATTI But mother! It's only 7.30! I wanted to go out.

PIXIE I wanted to watch TV.

POOCHIE I've got people to phone.

MRS G Not another word! Off to bed all of you.

GIRLS *(slowly, unhappily)* Night mother.

MRS G Wait!

GIRLS *(hopefully)* Yes, mother?

MRS G Have you brushed, flossed and whitened your teeth?

GIRLS Yes mother.

MRS G Have you washed your face, patted it dry and applied your night time face cream?

GIRLS Yes mother.

MRS G Have you shaved your legs and painted your toenails?

GIRLS MOTHER!

MRS G What? These are the things that have to be done.

PATTI We're going now mother.

PIXIE Goodnight, mother.

POOCHIE Goodnight mother.

MRS G Alarm clocks set for 5.30am!

Music as the girls walk towards exit, right, where they are each handed a dressing gown by backstage crew. They don't miss a step but continue to walk in a full circle, while they put on their dressing gowns until they are back where they started, downstage but with a gap between them and their mother. They all settle down to sleep, using eye covers, peg on nose, etc. Lights lower a little.

INSPECTOR SOOWRONG and DETECTIVE DUNNOMUCH enter and lie down, downstage centre – they are settling down for a night's rough sleeping – under newspapers just outside the studio. SOOWRONG tosses and turns for a bit then sits up.

SOOWRONG Dunnomuch! Dunnomuch!

DUNNOMUCH Me neither.

SOOWRONG Huh? Listen, Dunnomuch... this can't continue.
DUNNOMUCH I know what you mean... what do you mean?
SOOWRONG I mean, we've got to get some work, and fast.
DUNNOMUCH Yeah...how d'ya reckon we can do that?
SOOWRONG I've been having a bit of a think.
DUNNOMUCH Did it hurt?
SOOWRONG Not as much as you'd imagine.
DUNNOMUCH So, what's the plan?
SOOWRONG Well... *(he whispers the plan to DUNNOMUCH who pulls a variety of faces)*

The lights dim. Music for change of scene as they exit.

Scene 3 : The Gorgeous Household, very early next morning

We see MRS G and her 3 daughters all asleep. The alarm clock goes off. MRS G stops it with her hand but doesn't move. Nobody moves for 5 seconds. Then all 4 turn in the bed, same direction and at the same time. Lights down and they exit.

Scene 4 : The Studio Floor, 8.30am

IRIS *(shouting off to left) Kat! (shouting off to right) Gineen!*
They run on each from the left and right.
KAT Yes! Here! On time! Ready for duty!
GINEEN *(pause)* Here.
IRIS Why do I pay you two?
KAT But Iris, you don't pay us.
IRIS It's just as well. Look at this place.
They look around – the studio is a mess, as if it has been ransacked. KAT and GINEEN are clearly shocked.
KAT Oh no! The studio is a mess!
IRIS Exactly. I told you to have this place spotless.
GINEEN It was spotless. It gleamed.
IRIS So what happened?
Enter SOOWRONG and DUNNOMUCH.
SOOWRONG Perhaps we can be of assistance. *(he hands his card to IRIS)*
DUNNOMUCH *(also handing card)* At your service.
IRIS *(looking at cards, reads-)* "Bonzo and Billy-o Clown Hire. We do children's parties, holy communions, bah mitzvahs..."
DUNNOMUCH Ooops, wrong cards!
SOOWRONG Pretend you didn't see those ones. *(they give her another card each)*
IRIS Hmm, "Inspector Soowrong and Detective Dunnomuch".
KAT Perhaps you gentlemen can help us to find out what happened here.
SOOWRONG *(looking at DUNNOMUCH and winking- DUNNOMUCH winks back – they are very obvious)* Why, we'd be delighted.

DUNNOMUCH It looks to me like foul play...(to IRIS) Do you have any enemies?

IRIS (after a pause) Hundreds.

SOOWRONG A-ha! So someone wanted to upset you. Mess up your lovely tidy studio floor.

DUNNOMUCH Your gleaming beautiful studio with the cameras there and the coffee machine here...

KAT How do you know what it looked like before this?

DUNNOMUCH Uh...

SOOWRONG A ha ha! All studio floors look the same.

DUNNOMUCH Yeah. Seen one, you've seen 'em all.

IRIS Really? Anyway, the Gorgeous models will be here any ... (she looks at her watch) Hey! It's almost 9.00am! Where are the Gorgeouses? They should have been here at 8.30.

GINEEN It's not like them to be late.

SOOWRONG A-ha! Another mystery. Missing models, eh?
Just then, the GORGEOUS family run in out of breath, then stop, gather themselves, fix hair etc, and smile.

MRS G I'm sorry we're so late! The alarm clock, er, um, fell out the window. (polite laughter)

PATTI This place is disgusting!

PIXIE Like yeah! Where are we supposed to – you know – get ready?

POOCHIE I could murder a coffee.

DUNNOMUCH & SOOWRONG Murder?!

POOCHIE A Coffee. Yeah.

GINEEN Let me get you all a nice cup of coffee! (she runs to the coffee machine and picks it up and screams. The coffee is green)

GINEEN The coffee – the coffee – it's – it's

MODEL GIRLS Disgusting!

IRIS How am I going to get through the day? (she is beginning to panic) I can't function without coffee. What am I going to do?!

KAT Iris, calm down. I'll go to the café next door and get take-away.

IRIS Run... RUN!
(KAT and GINEEN both exit. The MODELS sit down and start putting on make-up. IRIS paces.)

MRS G Iris dear, which camera will I be in front of? I always like to make friends with it first.

IRIS Oh, that one – camera 4.

MRS G Girls, watch how I preen myself. (she preens herself and the GIRLS copy her)

IRIS I don't understand Detective. Who would have messed up my studio?

DUNNOMUCH Someone who was desperate.

IRIS And why would anyone poison my coffee?

SOOMUCH Leave it with us m'am and we'll find whoever did this.

IRIS Thank you. Enter KAT with the coffee.

IRIS Oh thank you! Thank you Kat!

KAT gives coffee out to everyone. DUNNOMUCH and SOOWRONG are taking notes.

MRS G Iris, dear. We're doing all this preening, but I can't see anything on the monitor.

IRIS I told you, Camera 4!

KAT Oh no! Someone has damaged the camera – they've covered the lens with ...

DUNNOMUCH & SOOWRONG Floam!*

IRIS Floam?

SOOWRONG Yes. We've seen this sort of thing before.

IRIS Who is doing this to me? Kat – who is doing this?

KAT I don't know Iris, but we have a TV show to shoot. The show must go on!

IRIS You're right. Where's Gineen? Oh no! She's been kidnapped!

PATTI Kidnapped? How exciting!

PIXIE Aw, why does nothing like that ever happen us?

POOCHIE We miss all the fun.

MRS G Nonsense. Now what shall we all wear? *(she looks at the fashion clothes and screams)* They're all ripped! Ripped to shreds!

POOCHIE *(very false)* Oh no, what a terrible thing to happen.

PIXIE *(very false)* Now we cannot wear those lovely clothes.

PATTI *(very false)* Oh dear oh dear. We will just have to go home.

KAT Wait a minute *(she has been checking the camera having gotten rid of the foam)* I have some film footage here. The camera was accidentally left on last night. I'll just play it back.

Everyone gathers around the TV monitor to watch, in a semi circle facing audience, so we see their reactions but not the footage.

KAT OK, there's the studio when I went home last night.

IRIS Spotless.

PATTI But who are they?

PIXIE Whoever they are, they sure are making a mess.

POOCHIE What's that they're pouring into the coffee?

Everyone turns around to look at SOOWRONG and DUNNOMUCH

SOOWRONG Well, we had better be going now.

DUNNOMUCH It's been great working with you...

IRIS Just a minute! It's You two! You did all this – why?

SOOWRONG We're not bad guys. We just need the work.

DUNNOMUCH We haven't eaten for days!

SOOWRONG But we didn't rip up the dresses.

DUNNOMUCH No, I wouldn't go near a dress.

MRS G Then who...*(they all turn to look at the TV)* Patti? Pixie?

Poochie? Why are you ripping up those clothes? *(she is pointing to the TV monitor)*

PATTI Mom! We hate modelling!

PIXIE We just want to be normal teenage girls doing normal teenage things.

POOCHIE And we want normal names too!

MRS G Well, I just thought you'd like to follow in your mother's footsteps.

GIRLS We wouldn't!

GINEEN (*entering, dressed as a model*) Tah dah!

IRIS Gineen what are you doing?

MRS G What a delightful girl! I could make you rich my dear!

GINEEN Really? Could you? I'd love to be a model.

GIRLS (*ad libbing*) Way to go! / Off you go / Be our guest / would you like my make up bag...
GINEEN and MRS G go off to preen.

PATTI Maybe now she'll leave us alone.

IRIS Kat, you stayed calm when everyone else lost their head.

KAT When you lost your head you mean.

IRIS Yes, well... I'm going to promote you, Kat. You take over this studio. I need a holiday.

KAT Really? Do you mean it?

IRIS Yes. And as for you two- (*SOOWRONG and DUNNOMUCH have been tiptoe-ing towards the door. They stop and wince*)

DUNNOMUCH Yes?

IRIS We clearly need someone to keep an eye on this place.

KAT Yes and keep it clean.

IRIS I'm going to hire you both as caretakers.

SOOWRONG & DUNNOMUCH Us?

IRIS Yes. And what's more – I'll even pay you.

DUNNOMUCH We'll eat like kings tonight!

SOOWRONG I told you my plan would work.

KAT It looks like everyone is happy.

GINEEN I got my modelling contract (*she waves a piece of paper*)

MRS G I got my model! (*She pats GINEEN on the head*)

GIRLS We got our lives back! (*They switch on phones, computer games etc.*)

SOOWRONG We got a job. (*Shakes hands with DUNNOMUCH*)

KAT I got promoted. (*Grabs the coffee mug from IRIS*)

IRIS And I'm going on holiday! *Arrivederci!* (*KAT hands her a nearby suitcase.*)

Music as the lights fade and everyone exits / goes about their business.

THE END

*Foam: this was all the craze when I wrote this play. Not sure if its still around, and it isn't going to be seen, just referred to. If no one knows what 'foam' is, change the word to 'playdo' or 'tar'...

PRODUCTION NOTES, SET AND PROPERTIES

If the stage area is large enough, you can set all scenes up on stage and leave them there:

STUDIO 1 positioned on the left side of the stage to the centre.
A poster on the back wall reads : STUDIO 1 and under it : FABULOUS FASHION. Far left is a freestanding studio camera and in front of it a table and 2 chairs. On the table : a small free standing mirror and some make up. Just left of centre stage is another smaller table with a coffee pot and mug on it. A little further left is a TV monitor with its back to the audience.

Studio camera : assuming you won't be able to get your hands on the real thing, a camera can be made from Styrofoam or a cereal box with toilet roll holders (remember it should be much bigger than a family video camera) Paint it black and print CAMERA 4 on it. Place it on top of a tall narrow object, like a plant or phone table – this can be covered with a black drape. It really is a case of working with whatever is available to you. Study the cameras when you next watch a studio show.

Coffee pot : For scene 1, the coffee pot can be filled with cola. It will have to be drunk. For scene 4 it needs to be filled with water and green food colouring. It will not be drunk.

TV monitor : It should be easy enough to get a TV or any kind of monitor. It doesn't need to work.

Messy Studio : When the studio is messed up in scene 4 – place the tables and chairs on their side and add some other items strewn about e.g. a bucket or two, a mop and sweeping brush, some old throws, boxes of paper with the paper falling out... put a tub of foam near the camera. A suitcase.

THE STREET where Inspector Soowrong and Detective Dunnomuch meet and sleep :

This should just be the area furthest downstage and centre. If the stage area is small it could be played on a small stage extension left or right, or if there are steps leading to the stage, on those. Try not to close curtains between scenes as it

interrupts the flow of the play, but if you have no alternative, the scene could be played out in front of the curtain.

GORGEOUS HOUSEHOLD positioned on the right side of the stage and towards the centre. A full-length freestanding mirror just right of centre will also indicate the division between the house and the studio. A large alarm clock positioned beside the mirror on the floor.

When the girls say goodnight to their mother, they should exit towards the wings to the right, where they pick up their dressing gowns and continue to walk, effectively in a full circle of their playing area (that is, within the gorgeous household set). They walk past Mrs G as she moves the mirror a little further upstage and then they all sit on the floor, Patti, Pixie and Poochie together in a line and Mrs G a little further left of them. They should face the audience, get ready for bed and lie down. They stay there (asleep) until after the scene with the detectives.

When the alarm clock goes off (this sound effect will come from the wings, not the onstage prop) Mrs G hits it and the sound stops. Actors should wait 5 seconds from the moment the alarm goes off, then all turn in the same direction and at the same time.

COSTUMES AND PERSONAL PROPS

IRIS	A suit or similar look – black with a white shirt under it. Red lipstick. A clipboard.
KAT	Jeans and a tee shirt. Carry on a sweeping brush.
GINEEN	Jeans and a teeshirt. Carry on a mug. Change into model type clothes.
DUNNOMUCH and	Rain mac with a trilby hat over jeans and top. For the end of scene 2: newspapers*.
SOOWRONG	2 business cards. Notebook and pencil.
MRS GORGEOUS	'Designer' tracksuit (e.g. velvet look with lots of jewellery). Dressing gown. Nose peg and eye cover in pocket. Watch. Handbag.
PATTI,	'Designer' tracksuit, dressing gown. Nose peg and eye cover in pocket. Handbag with
PIXIE & POOCHIE	phone or small handheld computer game, Gear bag with ripped up clothes.

* The newspapers that Soowrong and Dunnomuch sleep under could be taped together to make a manageable larger 'blanket'.

THE STARSHIP ENTERTAIN

By Emer Halpenny

AGE: 9 to 13

GENDER: can be mixed, apart from Percepta, who is female. You can change the pronouns as necessary

PARTS: 12

RUNNING TIME: 10 mins +

Note: This play was written just after 'The Big Snow' of 2010 and the water shortages that went with it. Please feel free to adapt the place to suit more recent occurrences, or make it an historical reflection!

CHARACTERS:

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT, Captain of the Starship Entertain

COMMANDER ASKER, second in command, Starship Entertain

LIEUTENANT MINDFUL, psychic counselor, Starship Entertain

O'JOY, Crew member, Starship Entertain

O'MAZING, Crew member, Starship Entertain

LIEUTENANT TOUGHNUT, Security, Starship Entertain

CAPTAIN MOROSE, Captain of the Starship Gasp

COMMANDER GLUM, second in command, Starship Gasp

LIEUTENANT THINKER, psychic counselor, Starship Gasp

McSAD, crewmember, Starship Gasp

O'WEEPY, crew member, Starship Gasp

PERCEPTA, an Alien Queen

The Bridge of the Starship Entertain. When the play opens, it is under attack – immediate lights up, bring up flashing red on and off, with an appropriate sound for RED ALERT. The crew should move about in their seats or if they are standing, as if they are being thrown around the bridge, a la star trek style. CAPTAIN OVERCOAT sits centre. COMANDER ASKER sits to his right, LIEUTENANT MINDFUL to his left. Downstage right and left are crewmembers O'JOY and O'MAZING at the helm. Upstage centre at the security controls is LIEUTENANT TOUGHNUT.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Report!

TOUGHNUT : We're under attack Captain! The shields are holding for now.

COMMANDER ASKER : Who would want to attack us?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Aliens! Some type of ruthless cold-blooded aliens!

O'JOY : Captain – I think they're trying to hail us.

TOUGHNUT : Be careful – it could be a trap!

O'MAZING : I have them on the com, Captain.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Try to unscramble it. Lieutenant Mindful, are you getting anything?

MINDFUL : *(with her hands to her temples, eyes closed)* I sense great frustration, Captain. And great – great – thirst.

TOUGHNUT : Thirst?

MINDFUL : Yes, thirst. Also a bit of a pong.

COMMANDER ASKER : You can sense that?

MINDFUL : Yes. My mind is very powerful.

O'MAZING : I have them on an open channel now Captain.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Patch it through.

We hear the sound of COMMANDER GLUM's voice

COMMANDER GLUM : Greetings.

COMMANDER ASKER : Who are you?

COMMANDER GLUM : I am Commander Glum. I speak for my Captain, the great Captain Morose.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : What do you want?

COMMANDER GLUM : A truce. And permission to come aboard. And a drink of water.

TOUGHNUT : It's a trap Captain. If they beam over here, they'll slaughter us here on our own ship.

MINDFUL : I do not sense that, Lieutenant Toughnut. I feel great remorse.

TOUGHNUT : Huh!

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : What do you think, Commander?

COMMANDER ASKER : What do I think?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : You're right. We'll invite them over.

O'JOY : You many beam across to these coordinates.

COMMANDER GLUM : Thank you. There will be five of us.

O'MAZING : Captain, should we stay on red alert?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : No, stand down. We've got to show we trust these aliens, whoever they are.

TOUGHNUT : I'll take O'Joy and O'Mazing with me to meet them all the same, Captain, if you don't mind.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Do it. *(They exit)* I want everyone to stay calm. Who knows what these aliens want or where they're from.

MINDFUL : I am always calm, Captain.

COMMANDER ASKER : But can you stay calm, Lieutenant? When the shooting starts, will you be calm then?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : There will be no shooting.

TOUGHNUT, O'JOY and O'MAZING return with the aliens. COMMANDER GLUM, LIEUTENANT THINKING, McSAD and O'WEEPY enter first. Everyone stands up to greet them. Then, CAPTAIN MOROSE enters.

CAPTAIN MOROSE : Captain Overcoat?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Yes – you are?

CAPTAIN MOROSE : Captain Morose, of the star ship Gasp. We are from the planet known as 'Earth'.

ALL ENTERTAIN CREW: Earth?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : We've never heard of it.

MINDFUL : I have always felt its presence however.

CAPTAIN MOROSE : Our planet dried up many years ago. We search the Galaxy for water. That is our mission.

COMMANDER ASKER : Why did you attack us?

COMMANDER GLUM : We are half mad with thirst most of the time. Actually, I couldn't get a glass of water, could I please?

The others all ask for a glass of water also and they drink greedily.

McSAD : I have our planet's history on file here. You can download it and learn about us.

O'JOY : I will show you our system. Here – *(she and McSAD download the file)*

MINDFUL : *(to L. THINKER)* You are like me, I think?

THINKER : Yes, my name is Lieutenant Thinker. I can help you all to feel the sorrow on our planet.

MINDFUL : My mind to your mind – and then so on, until everybody feels it.

THINKER : My mind to your mind...Here goes....

Everyone closes their eyes and holds their temples for about 5 seconds. Suitable music if possible.

TOUGHNUT : Dear God! What miserable creatures you are.

ASKER : Is there no joy in your lives?

O'WEEPY : We used to be happy. Back in the good old days before the Great Water Shortage of 2010.

McSAD : It all began after the Great Snow of Christmas '09. Practically all our systems failed.

COMMANDER GLUM : There's nothing joyful about trawling the galaxy looking for water.

CAPTAIN MOROSE : So you see, Captain, we have nothing to be happy about. May I ask, what is the mission of this crew?

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Our mission is to spread joy.

THINKER : I could feel great joy. I knew it.

MINDFUL : I knew you knew.

THINKER : I knew you knew I knew.

COMMANDER GLUM : That's it? You roam around outer space making people feel good?

O'JOY : It's a worthy mission.

O'MAZING : People appreciate what we do.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : This is the star ship Entertain, after all. And that's what we do. So why not, let us entertain you?

CUE : Song and Dance number. The Star Ship Entertain crewmembers teach the Star Ship Gasp how to enjoy the music. In the middle of this, PERCEPTA, enters and joins in the dance, unnoticed by everyone at first. PERCEPTA is an Alien Queen who roams the universe seeking out people to torment. Gradually the crew of the Entertain notice her and react with great fear.

PERCEPTA : Don't stop dancing on my account! *(she continues dancing for a few minutes with the crew of the Gasp until they also notice something not right.)*

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : What in the - ?

COMMANDER ASKER : Who's she?

COMMANDER GLUM : That's Percepta. Calls herself Queen of the Cosmos.

PERCEPTA : I *am* Queen of the Cosmos! And you'd do well to remember it. Where is your cute little Captain Morose?

CAPTAIN MOROSE : Here I am Percepta. You should not underestimate me.

PERCEPTA : No! It is *you* who should not underestimate *me*! All of you! I am Percepta! I know all things.

TOUGHNUT : You don't know how strong our weapons bank is or you would not have come aboard.

PERCEPTA : I know while you morons were dancing your socks off I disabled your weapons system. Ha ha! (*TOUGHNUT and McSAD run at her but she holds out her hand and they are flung backwards.*) Do not think you can win against me!

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : Lieutenant Mindful? What do you make of her?

MINDFUL : I cannot read her thoughts at all.

THINKER : Nor can I. What is wrong with us?

O'MAZING : It's not just you, Lieutenants. (*she has a reader 'thingie' which she holds up and down in front of PERCEPTA.*) I'm not getting any life signs from her at all. (*PERCEPTA turns her hand towards O'MAZING and she flies backwards also*). Aghhh!

O'JOY : Bad form! She didn't do anything! (*PERCEPTA flings her back also*).

McSAD : She's not just evil! She's insane!

TOUGHNUT : But there's only one of her – come on men! (*he lunges at her and again is flung back. Bit of fun here while she attacks everyone – ad-libbing and dramatics while bodies get flung everywhere. Except, that is, for Lieutenant O'WEEPY.*)

CAPTAIN MOROSE : O'Weepy! She doesn't seem to have any effect on you. See if you can sneak up behind her and –

O'WEEPY : I don't think so, Captain.

COMMANDER GLUM : Lieutenant! Obey your captain at once!

O'WEEPY : Oh be quiet Glum. (*she calmly goes straight up to PERCEPTA and 'switches' a button off at the back of her neck. PERCEPTA flops over*)

Everyone stay exactly where you are. This remote will turn her back on in a nano second.

COMMANDER ASKER : What is going on?

O'JOY : Is she Queen of the Cosmos or not?

McSAD : Why is she standing like that?

O'MAZING : Why are you pointing that thing at us, O'Weepy?

MINDFUL : I have a bad feeling...

THINKER : Me too...

O'WEEPY : Quiet! All of you! Captain Overcoat – out of that chair, I'll be sitting there from now on.

CAPTAIN OVERCOAT : You're going to take over my ship?

O'WEEPY : Yes! And the Star Ship Gasp too. Any ship I fancy, in fact. (*she switches on the remote and PERCEPTA stands up.*)

PERCEPTA : I am Percepta! I know all things –

O'WEEPY : Yes yes Percepta, it's alright. I've taken over the Entertain while you were off-line.

PERCEPTA : The mission was successful Mistress.

TOUGHNUT : Mistress!

O'WEEPY : Of course I'm her Mistress! She does whatever I say with a touch of a button. Percepta!

PERCEPTA : Yes my Mistress?

O'WEEPY : I want them all rounded up, down on their knees.

PERCEPTA : Easy Peesy. *(she holds out her hand and everyone is forced to their knees.)*

O'WEEPY : Wait! I want Captain Overcoat to bring me a bucket of water and a straw. And I want Captain Morose to massage my feet!

OVERCOAT : What the?

MOROSE : Dear God no! Those feet haven't been washed in a month! Please!

O'WEEPY : And you can file my toenails while you're at it.

MOROSE : *(getting weak and faint at the idea)* You're a monster, O'Weepy! *(McSAD catches her)* Very well then. I'm alright Lieutenant.

McSAD : *(quietly, without O'WEEPY hearing)* Keep her distracted, Captain. I think I might be able to disable Percepta. Plug her out, if you will. *(O'JOY and O'MAZING bring a basin, sponge and towel. They solemnly place them next to O'WEEPY who is taking her shoes off, and run off, holding their noses.)*

MOROSE : Make it so. *(she takes a deep breath, holds it, and begins washing O'WEEPY's feet)*

O'WEEPY : Where's my bucket of water?!

OVERCOAT : I have it here. *(quietly to TOUGHNUT)* Any ideas, Toughnut?

TOUGHNUT : I don't think Morose can hold out much longer. Looks like McSad is up to something though.

OVERCOAT : Be ready to give him back up. Signal the others. I'm going in. *(He takes a big breath and joins Morose).*

NOTE : all of the above must be done whilst on the knees, except for anyone actually getting anything, e.g. buckets and basins. McSAD gradually shifts around behind PERCEPTA who is standing in TOUGHNUT's security position. There are a lot of hand signals unbeknown to Percepta or O'Weepy. The following dialogue continues meanwhile ...

ASKER : How can she do that? *(of Morose, cleaning O'Weepy's feet)*

THINKER : She is incredibly brave.

MINDFUL : I knew she was, even before she came on board.

THINKER : I knew you knew.

MINDFUL : I knew you knew I knew.

McSAD 'disables' PERCEPTA suddenly, and TOUGHNUT and GLUM overpower O'WEEPY. O'MAZING and O'JOY 'rescue' MOROSE and OVERCOAT. They run downstage, gasping for air. ASKER helps McSAD.

PERCEPTA : *(as she goes off line)* Nooooooo! Mistress I'm being dismaaaaaaaaaa.....

O'WEEPY : What is the meaning of this!

OVERCOAT : Well done everyone. Throw her in the brig.

MOROSE : Wait! I want to ask...O'Weepy – why?

TOUGHNUT : Yes, why attack your own ship? Why so angry?

O'WEEPY : *(breaking down crying)* I've just been so BORED! Trawling the Galaxy searching for water is no fun, let me tell you. I'm almost out of my mind with boredom! Then I found Percepta on a planet we visited. At first, she was just a plaything, like a life size doll. But gradually I realized I could

programme her to do anything I wanted her to do. It started out as fun. I didn't mean any harm.

TOUGHNUT : You created a Queen of Evil and you didn't mean any harm?!

O'WEEPY : I don't expect you to understand.

OVERCOAT : Throw her in the Brig!

PERCEPTA : (*waking' up suddenly*) Stop!

O'WEEPY : I didn't do that.

PERCEPTA : No you didn't dear. You never did. I *am* Queen of the Cosmos, you see.

ASKER : I don't understand.

GLUM : Nobody understands!

PERCEPTA : I pretended to be an android, a simple robot. You see, I also get bored. I mean this Galaxy is pretty big. It can be centuries before anything fun happens.

O'WEEPY : It was a game to you?

PERCEPTA : Well....yes!

OVERCOAT : Wait a minute. Does this mean O'Weepy is innocent?

PERCEPTA : Don't be hard on her. She was just a pawn in all this.

MINDFUL : What do you want, Percepta? Like we don't already know.

THINKER : Yeah, we already know, you know.

PERCEPTA : Why, I just want to dance!

EVERYONE : (*ad-lib*) Huh? What? Etc.

PERCEPTA : It's so much fun! If you could teach me a few routines, it would keep me happy for a hundred years!

OVERCOAT : Say no more!

TOUGHNUT : If we can teach Earthlings to dance, we can teach anyone to dance.

MINDFUL : Even the Queen of the Cosmos!

OVERCOAT: And do we have your word, Percepta, that you'll leave us in peace?

PERCEPTA: Yep. I guarantee it!

MOROSE: Can we trust her, Captain?

PERCEPTA: What's more, I'll give you coordinates for a remote planet that's bursting with water!

OVERCOAT : Places everyone! We're going to dance, and that's an order!
Celebratory dance number

THE END

BREAKOUT

By Emer Halpenny

AGE: good for combining a junior and intermediate group, as young as 4 up to 14.

GENDER: Mixed as suits the group

CAST NUMBER: 22+ with room for a small non-speaking chorus

DURATION: 25 minutes, depending on dances and change of scenes

Note: At the time this play was written, we were in mid-recession and Ugg boots were a thing. Feel free to change things to keep it modern, or make it an historical commentary!

CHARACTERS:

ABBY, a prisoner

MARK, the prison guard

SUZANNA, a bank teller

GORETTI, a bank teller

MILES, leader of the X Gang

ALICE, member of the X Gang

TOM, member of the X Gang

CASSIE, member of the X Gang & twin of May

MAY, member of the X Gang & twin of Cassie

CLARA, leader of the Y Gang

SARA, member of the Y Gang

ASHA, member of the Y Gang

TARA, member of the Y Gang

MIA, member of the Y Gang

THE CHIMNEY SWEEP CHILDREN: (add or subtract numbers and names as necessary)

ROSE, the Great Elder

MARY

SOPHIE

LARRY

BOB

SCARLETT

ALYSSA

ADAM

ABBY is sitting in her prison cell, downstage right, looking mean and none too happy with her predicament. MARK, the prison guard is pacing up and down in front of her cell, swinging an oversized ring of keys, whistling contentedly. He stops to look at her, so that he is roughly downstage centre.

ABBY: Want something?

MARK: Nope. I'm fine.

ABBY: You sure?

MARK: You're sweet, Abs, but I'm quite happy out here in the open free world.

ABBY: Open? Free? You're stuck in a dead-end job; a prison guard.

MARK: Love it.

ABBY: Your job is to guard me – for life.

MARK: And I'm happy to do it, Abs. I've grown quite attached to you over the years.

ABBY: Sure.

MARK: After all the terrible things you've done, it's an honour to see to it that you spend the rest of your life behind bars.

ABBY: I'll get out of here someday! You'll see!

MARK: (*laughs manically*). Over my dead body.

ABBY: That would be the icing on the cake.

MARK: That's enough now. You'll hurt my feelings Abs. Now, it's 'quiet contemplation' time. Off you go now, and contemplate.

ABBY: Some day...

She turns on her stool so that her back is to us. Lights down stage right as MARK exits laughing.

Lights up downstage left on SUZANNA and GORETTI, two bank tellers. They are counting money and totting them up on an abacus. They work exactly in tandem. Nothing happens for a few minutes, except their silent counting. A bell goes off.

GORETTI: Eleven o one. It's late today. A whole minute late.

SUZANNA: I thought so. I could feel it in my fingers.

GORETTI: I felt it in my toes.

SUZANNA: How alike we are. Shall we go for coffee then?

GORETTI: You know I never drink coffee on Fridays. There's enough excitement what with the weekend off.

SUZANNA: I've put in for overtime.

GORETTI: Really?

SUZANNA: Yes, I'm on what they call 'the graveyard shift' tonight.

GORETTI: Sounds like fun.

SUZANNA: Oh it is. Nothing happens.

GORETTI: Bliss.

SUZANNA: Keep me company if you like.

GORETTI: I've got my book-keeping club tonight. We're reviewing Bertie Ahern's Autobiography.

SUZANNA: Your loss. Anyway, break time is nearly over. Come on, we'll miss all the fruitcake.

They exit. Lights down. Music up to strike set and re-set :

Sitting room of the X GANG: MILES, TOM, ALICE, CASSIE, MAY. A table, centre with a light hanging from above if possible. There is a large map of the prison set out on the table. The GANG stands around the table, facing audience, with MILES centre, TOM and MAY to his right, ALICE & CASSIE to his left.

MILES: Ok gang. This is it. Abby has rotted away in that stinking prison cell for long enough. Tonight, we break her out.

CASSIE & MAY: (*high fiving across the others*) Yes!

CASSIE: Gonna break her out.
MAY: Tonight's the night!
MILES: It's going to be tough, and it's going to be dangerous. I won't lie.
CASSIE & MAY touch fists across others
CASSIE: Tough: like me.
MAY: Danger: my middle name.
MILES: *(getting a little annoyed)* Now, I've got a plan. If we follow it, we'll be safe. But you've got to –
CASSIE & MAY do a complicated secret handshake that takes some time.
MILES: Will you two cut that out! *(slaps their hands away)*
CASSIE: Sorry Miles...ouch. *(rubbing her sore hand)*
MAY: The Trouble Twins are excited, that's all.
CASSIE: Been so long since we broke the law.
TOM: Been so long since any of us broke the law.
ALICE: Look; this gang has fallen apart since Abby went to prison. No offence Miles.
MILES: Offence very much taken, Alice.
ALICE: I'm just saying, is all.
MILES: Don't say; any of you. Just listen to the plan and everything will be fine. Ok? Ok? *(He looks at them and they nod sulkily.)* We'll enter the back of the prison house here, through the underground sewer system.
CASSIE & MAY: Euuuuww!
TOM: Come on! Call yourselves gangsters?
CASSIE: But it'll smell.
ALICE: But you smell... *(They threaten each other with gestures.)*
MILES: Old Mark guards the cell twenty four seven. But he always takes a break at midnight.
TOM: Why midnight? What's that about?
MILES: I don't know. He goes outside and stares at the moon for exactly three minutes. Every night.
ALICE: Weird.
MAY: So that's when we grab Abby?
MILES: It's not as simple as that. We've got to blast our way through the sewers to get to her.
CASSIE & MAY: Euuuuuwww!
TOM: I'm with them on this one.
ALICE: Yeah, what if we blow up, you know, all the sewer stuff.
MILES: You'll just have to trust me. Now, listen up: here's the plan...
Lights down. They exit. Crew adds tablecloth and lampshade to change look of the room.
It is the sitting room of the Y GANG: CLARA, SARA, ASHA, TARA and MIA. They are dressed head to toe in Hollister gear, Ugg boots etc. Really orange fake tan would be good, with hair casually tied up in a messy ponytail.
CLARA: So, like I was thinking. You know the way we love to wear, like all designer stuff and all?
GANG: Yuh huh?
CLARA: And like, you know the way we don't have any money, and our parents don't like, have money anymore?

SARA: Yuh, this recession thing stinks.
GANG: *(sadly)* Yah...
CLARA: So like I came up with a plan?
TARA: Like, what kind of a plan?
CLARA: Like a really *really* cool plan?
ASHA: Ok, but...are you asking us, or telling us?
CLARA: Telling you?
ASHA: I'm confused.
CLARA: Well I was thinking, like, you know the way there's like, loads of money in the bank?
SARA: Seriously, the banks have soooo much money.
TARA: Yah, like everyone says so.
ASHA: Genuinely, are we like, going to ask them for some?
CLARA: No. I already tried that and they like, laughed at me?
MIA: That's kind of rude.
CLARA: Yah hah? So, I thought, you know, we could like, break in and steal some instead?
(Silence for a few moments)
SARA: That is such a good plan!
TARA: Yeah, it makes so much sense, you know?
ASHA: It's weird we never thought of it before.
MIA: How are we going to do it, Clara?
CLARA: Well, I've worked out a way of getting in through the like, sewer system under the building?
GANG: Euuuwww!
CLARA: I'll just say one word: Ugg Boots. *(she holds her hand out)*
TARA: I'm in. *(puts her hand in)*
ASHA: I'm in. *(puts her hand in)*
MIA: I'm in. *(puts her hand in)*
SARA: Isn't that two words? *(they all look at her)*. Ok, I'm in! I'm in!
(they look at the plan as the lights fade.)
MUSIC while the stage is set is struck. A clear stage for the next scene:

SOPHIE: *(enters and stands centre)* Trapped for years, the chimney sweep children have made safe passageways in their underground world. But will they ever see the sun again?
Enter ROSE and MARY, dressed as chimney sweeps. To music, they mime the set up an elaborate system of tunnels, mainly upstage. KIDS enter and assist them but stay obscured, and ROSE exits. MARY moves downstage centre.

SOPHIE: It was a long time ago. So long ago, we have been forgotten. They call us...*(gradually, the KIDS appear)*... the Chimney sweep children.
LARRY: Which is weird, because there aren't actually any chimneys down here.
BOB: Yeah, we're in the sewers. Where are the chimneys?
MARY: So much time has passed in fact, that even some of the chimney sweep children themselves cannot remember why they came here.
SCARLETT: Mary, do you remember?

MARY: I remember some. But our eldest Rose, she remembers all.

ALYSSA: Can you tell us about it?

MAD: Not I. Wait, Rose will be here soon.

SOPHIE: Is it true there really is...sunlight?

SCARLETT: Of course not, that's just a story.

ADAM: I wish I could see the sun.

ROSE: *(appearing quietly)* Some day we will all see the sun. *(children react and rush to her.)* Hush now, my little ones. Hush. Settle yourselves and I'll tell you a story. *(they settle down around her.)*

MARY: Larry, you stand guard in the west block.

LARRY: On my way. *(he picks up his chimney brush and stands guard.)*

MARY: Bob, you stand guard in the east block.

BOB: On my way. *(he goes with his chimney brush)*

ROSE: Now little ones, are you ready to hear our story?

KIDS: Yes, ready!

ROSE: Once, we were free. We ran in the sunlight, felt the breeze of the air on our skin. We even laughed.

SCARLETT: I don't think I have ever laughed.

ROSE: Oh you have Scarlett, we used to call you 'Giddy Goat'. You had no worries, none of us had any worries. *(she will over enunciate words that are underlined, to make them more important.)* Then one day, we went for an explore. *(music, played low under dialogue, while the children mime the story.)* Some of us thought it looked dangerous, others thought it might be a Great Adventure. *(children divide into two groups, one group points one way & the others shake their head, pointing in the opposite direction: subtle, not dramatic).* So we decided we would go and explore. *(children unite and in a circle, put hands in centre.)* We made a pact that we would stay together, and that if anyone became afraid, we would turn back. We left a trail of M & M's so that we could find our way back. *(MARY leaves a trail)* But no one felt afraid. Our bravery was our downfall. We became lost, desperately lost. Mary looked for the trail of M & M's but they were gone.

MARY: They were eaten by the wild beast of the sewers.

ROSE: We never found our way back.

MARY: But we did find these chimney brushes, left behind from another time.

ROSE: Now, we spend every day burrowing through the underground, through every nook and every cranny.

MARY: And that is why we call ourselves The Chimney Sweep Children.

SOPHIE: It's such a sad story. I feel really sorry for us kids.

ALYSSA: You can't feel sorry for yourself.

SOPHIE: But I do all the same.

ADAM: What about the sunlight Rose? Is it real?

ROSE: It's real. We used to paint its picture, like a round yellow ball in the blue sky.

SCARLETT: What's a ball?

ADAM: What's a sky?

ROSE: *(aside to MARY)* They've forgotten almost everything Mary.

MARY: Sometimes I wonder if it was all just a beautiful dream, you know?

ROSE: We've got to get out of here. We've just got to.

MARY: Time for bed little ones. Larry, Bob: stand guard.

LARRY & BOB: Aye aye.

MUSIC: The children exit, sleepily. LARRY and BOB march across the stage for a moment and exit.

Set up Prison downstage right and Bank downstage left. Lights up stage right, ABBY and MARK are playing cards through the bars.

ABBY: Been thinking...

MARK: Did it hurt?

ABBY: Been thinking, when I bust out of here –

MARK: Snap!

ABBY: - 'aint gonna show you no mercy. Snap!

MARK: 'Aint gonna get an opportunity.

ABBY: Shouldn't you be outside by now, howling at the moon?

MARK: I don't howl at the moon. I look at it.

ABBY: Whatever.

MARK: I appreciate its beauty. It's a full one tonight. *(they look at each other, dangerously for a moment.)*

ABBY: Snap! Don't let me stop you.

MARK: Not quite midnight yet. *(they play on for a few hands, eyeing each other, then together:)*

ABBY & MARK: Snap!

Lights down on them, they stay there in comfortable freeze.

Lights up stage left. SUZANNA is playing patience with a deck of cards. Every so often we hear the howl of a wolf. She is clearly nervous.

SUZANNA: This graveyard shift is a little scary. I had no idea. *(there is a bang and a yelp and then a scream from off stage left. SUZANNA is frozen with fear.)*

SUZANNA: Who's there? *(nothing for a moment, then GORETTI appears)*

GORETTI: Hello!

SUZANNA: Goretti! What are you doing here? You scared me to death!

GORETTI: Oh yes, sorry about that. I tripped over your guard dog outside the door.

SUZANNA: What guard dog?

GORETTI: The cute grey one with the great big ears and large intelligent eyes.

SUZANNA: What guard dog?

GORETTI: He's huge! Pointy teeth.

SUZANNA: Really? Anyway, what about your book-keeping club?

GORETTI: I just kept thinking about you and the graveyard shift. I couldn't stay away!

SUZANNA: Well, I'm playing patience, and I have only one deck of cards.

GORETTI: Not to worry, I have my portable abacus! *(she takes it out and begins counting, while SUZANNA goes back to her cards. Lights down. They stay in a comfortable freeze.)*

Behind, we see the X GANG enter from upstage right. They are dressed in black, balaclavas and gloves, with rope and other burglary devices. At the

same time, the Y GANG enters from upstage left, dressed similarly, but with Ugg boots. To music we can see that they get confused, look at the plan, pass each other by without seeing each other, and end up in the wrong place: X GANG freeze upstage while Y GANG appear in the cell with ABBY.

TARA: This doesn't look like the bank to me...

ABBY: What the?

ASHA & MIA: Oh My GOD!

SARA: Where have you brought us Clara? This looks like a prison cell!

ABBY: Could I ask –

CLARA: I don't understand...

ASHA: Clara?

CLARA: I followed the plan exactly...

TARA: Show me that... *(she looks at the plan, then turns it upside down. They all cry, with ABBY telling them to shhhh.)*

Lights down stage right and up stage left. X GANG appears behind SUZANNA and GORETTI looking equally confused. SUZANNA and GORETTI turn very slowly to look at them. ALICE waves. MILES slaps her hand down.

CASSIE & MAY: Uh oh...

TOM: This isn't the prison.

MILES: Where are we?

GORETTI: In the bank.

SUZANNA: During the graveyard shift.

The Gang members rub their hands together, pleased.

Lights down and come up stage right.

ABBY: Will you all just pipe down!

ASHA: But we're in prison!

ABBY: You think I don't know that? Just calm down and let me handle this.

We can get out of here so long as Old Mark doesn't hear us.

Y TEAM: *(adlibbing loudly)* Who? So long as who doesn't hear us?

MARK appears.

MARK: What's going on in here? Who are these girls?

ABBY: Now look what you've done. We'll never get out now.

CLARA: I've got an idea. *(she takes her Ugg boot off)*. These things stink: we never take them off normally.

SARA: Good plan Clara, he'll pass out with the pong.

MARK: I'm made of pretty tough stuff. It'll take more than a few Ugg boots to

–

(he swoons as all the girls hold up one of their boots to his nose.)

ABBY: Excellent! Now come on, while he's comatose.

Lights down.

Lights up downstage left.

MILES: What do you mean there's no money?

TOM: Who ever heard of a bank with no money?

SUZANNA: It's kept in the safe, you see.

GORETTI: It's nothing to do with us.

MILES: What do you think?

ALICE: Well, they've seen us.

CASSIE: We should have kept our faces covered.

MAY: Want me to make them forget?
SUZANNA & GORETTI: eek!
ALICE: Yeah, and make it quick.
SUZANNA & GORETTI: *EEK!*
MILES: No, don't. We'll take them with us as hostages. We can swap them for Abby. Wherever she is.
ALICE: You're the boss.
MILES: And don't you forget it.
TOM: Come on, let's go.

Music while both groups make their way through the tunnels. The tension builds until they meet each other

MILES: What the?
CLARA: Who the?
ABBY: Miles?
LARRY & BOB appear from opposite wings.
LARRY: Halt! Who goes there?
GANGS scream and try to hide.
LARRY: Don't make me look for you. I'll find you. Then I'll...*(looking at chimney brush)*...use it...*(begins beating the ground with it.)*
BOB: Larry! Get a grip! What are you doing?
LARRY: I'm sorry. I don't know what came over me.
BOB: You can't lose control like that.
LARRY: I think the darkness is getting to me.
MARY: *(appearing)* It's getting to all of us.
BOB: Mary, there are strangers here.
SARA: Why, they're only kids! What are we hiding for?
TARA: Cause the kid with the giant hairbrush looks dangerous.
ABBY: Wait, wait a minute. Miles: what is going on?
MILES: We're going to break you out.
ALICE: Except we ended up in the bank.
ASHA: That's where we were going.
MIA: Shhh! It's supposed to be you know, hush hush.
TOM: Who are your friends?
ABBY: These dizzy dolls? They're not with me.
CLARA: You said you'd get us out of here.
ABBY: I don't know where I am.
MAY: Does anyone know where we are?
Everyone ad-libs that no, they haven't a clue where they are.
LARRY & BOB: Can we keep them?
MARK: A ha! Not just one criminal, but a whole bunch of criminals. This must be my lucky day.
CASSIE: You and who's army?
MARK: Me and my faithful hound *(we hear sounds of wolf howling, as MARK looks off stage).*
Y GANG: It's a wolf!
MARK: He was just a baby when I found him in the woods, his little paw was broken. I fixed him up and gave him a home in the prison. Thought he'd keep

me company. But then one day, he disappeared. I always knew I'd find him again. Didn't I Poochie?

TOM & MILES: Poochie?

ALL: It's a *wolf!*

MARK: It's my Poochie. And now, Poochie will round you all up and bring you back to the prison cell. I wouldn't argue with him.

ROSE: (*appearing suddenly with the rest of the KIDS*) Not so fast!

MAY: Who are you?

MARY: This is our Great Elder: Rose. Leader of the Chimney Sweep Children.

SARA: She's what, nine years old?

ROSE: Ten!

MARK: Well all you kids can come along too. I'm not having children loitering around the sewers.

ROSE: You are forgetting, this place is an impossible maze. You will never find your way out.

MARK: Poochie will get us back to the prison.

ROSE: Poochie, as you call him, will do as we say. He has quite the sweet tongue, and we have been feeding him M & M's for years.

MARY: We leave him one every day, and he brings us sandwiches.

MARK: That's where my sambos have been going! Poochie! How could you?

ALICE: That's all very nice, but how are we going to get out of here?

ROSE: Actually, we have a plan.

CASSIE: We?

ROSE: Little ones? We Chimney Sweep Kids are lucky! Didn't you know that?

MILES: Say, what?

MARY: Listen up:

Dance: Chim Chim Cheree from Mary Poppins

Everyone gradually joins in with the children.

ROSE: We're lucky. You got it?

AD LIBS: Okay, you're lucky...

BOB: Who wants to get out of here?

AD LIBS: Me!

ROSE: Well, come on!

CLARA: Thank God! This was turning into a nightmare, you know?

ALICE: The night's not over yet, it could still become a nightmare...you know?

TARA: Scary lady.

MILES: Just ignore her. She thinks she's tough.

ALICE: I'll show you tough.

MARK: Look, I don't mean to spoil all the fun, but do you think it might be better if we moved along?

MAY: Like, follow the little dirty kids?

CASSIE: They're so cute.

Y TEAM: Yah!

X TEAM: (*a sound, polar opposite*).

SCARLETTE: This way. Follow us.

SOPHIE: We're scared too.

MILES: We're not scared.

ALISSA: Yeah, sure.

(Wolf howl)

MILES: *(alone)* It's a wolf! *(recovers, embarrassed)*. Um, Abby?

ABBY: Yes?

MILES: Want to lead the way?

ABBY: Why don't we go together?

Adlibs of happy people getting on together, while everyone follows their way through the system until they 'arrive outside' – MUSIC: Hollywood Angels and so on.

SOPHIE: The Sun!

ALYSSA: The sky!

LARRY: Fresh air!

BOB: Space!

SCARLETTE: No pong!

ADAM: The Great Outdoors!

MARY: So it wasn't a dream.

ROSE: No. It was never a dream. It was always real.

SOPHIE: Freedom...

MARK: Yes. Lovely. However, Abby, you are not free.

CLARA: That is so mean.

SUZANNA: After all she's been through.

ASHA: Yeah, come on!

MIA: Give her a break.

TOM: Cut her some slack.

MARK: She's a really nasty criminal!

SARA: I don't believe that.

GORETTI: It's true. I read about her.

ABBY: Thanks.

SUZANNA: Can I have your autograph?

TARA: Wait! Take our photo...

MARK: I repeat: She is evil!

MILES: Hardly evil.

LARRY: Yeah, possibly mean...

MIA: Or misunderstood...

MARK: What?

SARA: Look, we nearly robbed a bank tonight.

CLARA: Out of sheer desperation.

BOB: Anyone could do it.

ABBY: Thing is, I was never actually all that bad; I just got caught all the time.

GORETTI: Wrong place, wrong time.

ABBY: I'm quite sweet, actually.

MARK: Don't push it.

ABBY: OK.

ALYSSA: So, you'll give her a break?

MARK: Well...

ROSE: I remember!

ALL: (*adlibs*) What?

ROSE: Something my mom used to say. Gosh, I miss my Mom...

BOB: What did she say?

ROSE: She said:

MUSIC suggestion: PRICE TAG by Jessie Jay

End with the CHIMNEY SWEEP CHILDREN reaching out to the sun – or perhaps their parents... on the closing notes of the song as the lights fade.

THE END

THE WITCH SWITCH

By Emer Halpenny

AGE: 8 - 12

GENDER: 2 male, 6 female

CAST NUMBER: 8

DURATION: 8 minutes, or 10 if you include dance at the end.

CHARACTERS:

MAGRIDELL, an evil witch

HEMLOCK, her assistant

RAGGY BOY, prisoner in Magridell's house

WARLO, boy band heart throb

GORMIGOG, a nice witch

FOXGLOVE, her assistant

GONERIL, a committee witch

REGAN, a committee witch

MAGRIDELL'S KITCHEN set up one side of the stage, while GORMIGOG's kitchen can be set up on the other. RAGGY BOY is behind bars either upstage and clearly seen on a level, or if downstage, a little more centre. MAGRIDELL is stirring things in a large cauldron.

MAGRIDELL Hemlock! Hemlock you filthy rag! Where are you?

RAGGYBOY Let me out of here! Hey, witch!

MAGRIDELL Be quiet, Raggy boy. I have work to do.

RAGGYBOY But what do you want with me? Why am I a prisoner?

MAGRIDELL Research.

RAGGYBOY What?

MAGRIDELL My research into pain. . . how much the human body can take and so on . . . I need to, um, work on you. Ha ha.

RAGGYBOY Help! Someone help me!

MAGRIDELL Yes, where is my helper? HEMLOCK!!! Get in here!

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell! Here I am, here I am!

MAGRIDELL Yes Magridell WHAT??

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell Oh Most Evil One.

MAGRIDELL That's better. Try not to forget the title. The title's important.

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell Oh Most -

MAGRIDELL Alright, alright. Not every time you open your mouth. Just when you walk into the room.

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell.

MAGRIDELL I have to have respect! Now get me my cauldron on the double. I have to make a spell.

HEMLOCK You have to make a smell?

RAGGYBOY *(laughing)* Nice one, Hemlock!

MAGRIDELL Spell! SPELL! You silly girl! Now get that cauldron!

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell. *(she runs off to fetch it)*

MAGRIDEL I'll give you smell. And you, Raggy Boy, you won't be laughing for long.

RAGGYBOY Look, Maggie – or whatever your name is . . . can't we talk about this? I'm a very important person you know. I could help you.

MAGRIDEL Yes, you are going to help me. In my pain research.

HEMLOCK Here we are. One large cauld-r-ahhhhh! *(she trips up as she enters)*

MAGRIDEL *(not looking)* Cauldrahhh? I want a cauldron. What are you doing on the floor? Really Hemlock, you are the most awkward apprentice I've ever had. What is wrong with you?

HEMLOCK I don't know Magridell. Honestly. I wasn't like this at Witch College. I've never been clumsy.

MAGRIDEL Well come over here quickly, I have to make that SPELL. It's the coven ball tonight, and I have to look my best.

HEMLOCK I thought you wanted to look ugly.

MAGRIDEL Just because I am an EVIL witch, doesn't mean I have to be ugly. I hope you don't think I'm ugly?

HEMLOCK No, no. Not at all.

MAGRIDEL I just want to look really good tonight. There's a particular Warlock going tonight that I really want to impress. Now, fetch my book.

RAGGYBOY Sorry, em . . . hello?

HEMLOCK Hello. Sorry about the cage. Magridell insists on it.

RAGGYBOY Look, can you help me escape? Apart from the research thing, I really have to be somewhere very important.

HEMLOCK But Magridell would be furious.

RAGGYBOY She's planning to cut me up into little pieces!

HEMLOCK Oh dear. Oh no. We can't have that. *(producing a large set of keys)* Look, you run out while I distract her. Quick!

RAGGYBOY Thank you. I won't forget this. I promise. *(he goes.)*

HEMLOCK What will you wear tonight Magridell? Something bright?

MAGRIDEL Never! We evil witches never wear anything but black. And sometimes navy.

HEMLOCK Yes Magridell. It's just dark colours are so....drab.

MAGRIDEL Everyone to their own. Now let me see...ah, here we are...to attract the favourable attention of a Warlock...ahem: a slice of bat's wing, a pinch of arson ash, two litres of contaminated river and a bunch of marigolds. Marigolds! I never stock marigolds! Do I?

HEMLOCK No, Magridell. We have everything else though.

MAGRIDEL Let me see...who would have a large supply of marigolds? It would have to be a NICE witch....ah yes, I know. Hemlock, get me the phone book.

HEMLOCK Who are you going to phone Magridell?

MAGRIDEL The only nice witch I know - Gormigog. She lives close by. *(she dials and we hear a phone ringing. FOXGLOVE enters in the room on the other side of the stage to answer it)*

FOXGLOVE Gormigog's residence. Make it quick - I'm busy.

MAGRIDEL Excuse me! This is Magridell. I wish to speak to your mistress.
 FOXGLOVE Hang on. GORMIGOG! PHONE!
 MAGRIDEL You should hear the way that girl speaks to Gormigog! Maybe I
 am lucky having you.
*(GORMIGOG enters - she is carrying a bunch of flowers and
 herbs)*

GORMIGOG Hello?
 MAGRIDEL Gormigog Darling! It's Magridell here.
 GORMIGOG Magridell! What an unexpected pleasure.
 MAGRIDELL Yes, isn't it?
 GORMIGOG Well, what can I do for you, Magridell? *(FOXGLOVE is dusting
 around GORMIGOG, trying to listen - she is being quite rude)*

FOXGLOVE Outta the way....excuse me....
 MAGRIDELL Are you going to the coven ball tonight Gormigog, dear?
 GORMIGOG Why yes I am. I was just wondering what to wear, actually.
 MAGRIDELL Blue dear. It always looks wonderful on you.
 GORMIGOG Do you think so?
 MAGRIDELL Of course....listen darling....I don't suppose you have any spare
 marigolds I could borrow?

GORMIGOG Yes indeed Magridell, I always have a great supply of them.
 Send your girl over for them right away.

MAGRIDELL Done! See you later.
 GORMIGOG Bye. *(putting down the phone)* Fancy Magridell wanting
 marigolds! Foxglove, would you be a dear and fetch a handful of
 marigolds from the larder?

FOXGLOVE Oh, get them yourself - can't you see I'm dusting?
 GORMIGOG Please dear?
 FOXGLOVE Humph! As if I don't have enough to do....*(she goes off)*
 GORMIGOG Now, what to wear tonight....there's a particular warlock I want
 to impress. *(there is a knock at the door)* Come in!

GONERIL Hello dear! Only your friendly coven ball committee members
 paying you a visit.

REGAN How are you Gormigog dear?
 GORMIGOG Goneril! Regan! What a pleasure to see you both. Sit down,
 please.

GONERIL Oh we can't stay long dear. Well, I'll just sit down for a second.
 Oh, all right then, a quick cup of tea.

REGAN We wanted to talk to you about the ball tonight.
 GONERIL And a biscuit.
 REGAN We're a little worried about Magridell.
 GONERIL Alright then, just a teensy slice of chocolate cake.
 REGAN Goneril please! We've only just arrived. *(FOXGLOVE enters with
 the marigolds)*

GORMIGOG Foxglove dear, we'll all have a nice cup of tea.
 G
 FOXGLOVE Who do you think I am?
 REGAN Well I thought you were Gormigog's assistant.

FOXGLOVE I assist enough. *(As she exits to make tea)* I'm treated like a slave around here.

GORMIGOG Thank you, dear. Regan, how can I help?

REGAN Well, as you know, Magridell spoils the coven ball every year for some reason or another.

GONERIL Yes, last year it was because the band played too much 'happy' music. The year before it was because someone tripped her up by accident. It was by accident, wasn't it Regan?

REGAN Oh yes, complete accident. Anyway, this year we expect trouble because she's got her eyes on a particular warlock.

GORMIGOG *(embarrassed)* Really?

GONERIL Yes, and not only that, but he's the lead singer of this new boy band. He's making his debut tonight at our coven ball!

REGAN Isn't it exciting?

GORMIGOG Very.

GONERIL We know you're Magridell's friend. Please, please try to keep her away from this particular warlock – at least until he's finished playing.

GORMIGOG I'll try, but I - *(HEMLOCK enters)* Oh, hello dear, can I help you?

HEMLOCK I'm Hemlock, Magridell's apprentice. She sent me over. For the marigolds.

GORMIGOG That was quick. She's very lucky to have such an enthusiastic apprentice.

REGAN We'll leave you to it, Gormigog. See you tonight.

GONERIL Remember what we said.

GORMIGOG Yes, I'll try. Goodbye ladies.

HEMLOCK What a beautiful book! May I have a look?

GORMIGOG Oh yes, my favourite: ***The Magic of Herbs and Flowers and Their Healing Powers.*** There's a marvellous potion on page 73 for back-ache....

HEMLOCK Is there really..?

FOXGLOVE *(entering with the tea)* What's *she* doing here?

GORMIGOG Hemlock is here to collect the marigolds Foxglove. Do try not to be so rude dear.

FOXGLOVE Just because she's interested in your silly cures. It's un-natural for a witch to want to heal people.

HEMLOCK Oh, look - what to do for a bad cough. My old auntie May can never shift her cough. What a pity I have to go.

GORMIGOG Perhaps Foxglove would take the marigolds to Magridell, would you dear?

FOXGLOVE What? Why should I?

GORMIGOG You might like to see Magridell's place....you know what kind of witch *she* is.....

FOXGLOVE Hmm, it might be interesting. OK, I'll go. But you needn't expect me to be back in time to help you dress. *(she is gone.)*

GORMIGOG That's alright, Hemlock will help me, won't you dear?

HEMLOCK I'd be delighted. Will you wear something bright?

GORMIGOG Of course....let's see what I have....*(they exit.)*

MAGRIDELL has entered, dressed up a bit (back-combed hair, a glittery shawl etc.)

MAGRIDELL Where is that brat of a girl? I need those marigolds.
FOXGLOVE *(entering)* You Magridell?
MAGRIDELL Why?
FOXGLOVE Might have something for you...
MAGRIDELL Who are you?
FOXGLOVE Foxglove. Gormigog sent me. Your Hemlock is drooling over her herb book of cures. It's making me sick.
MAGRIDELL Is it indeed? Perhaps you might be interested in this.....
FOXGLOVE Oh! ***The Book of Evil Spells and Harmful Ideas***. How wonderful!
MAGRIDELL Look at page 97....how to get revenge on a spiteful pet....
FOXGLOVE Amazing. Can I stay here for a while? I'll help you get ready for the coven ball.
MAGRIDELL I am ready. By the way, you haven't seen a raggy looking boy lurking around the place have you? I've lost one.
FOXGLOVE Afraid not. What shall I do with these flowers?
MAGRIDELL Ah, my marigolds. Very important. *(she puts them into the cauldron and stirs, smelling)* I'm out to impress a certain warlock.
FOXGLOVE Pah! Warlocks – they're all the same. Useless.
MAGRIDELL Not this one. *(she drinks from the ladle)* Look at the time! Let's get to that ball. *(they exit)*.

(The Coven Ball. Music. GONERIL, REGAN, and WARLO are chatting and sipping drinks. RAGGY BOY enters, a little more dressed up)

WARLO Oh hi Joe. Ladies, this is my manager, Joe Promo.
RAGGYBOY Hi girls. What do you think of our boy?
GONERIL He's wicked!
REGAN You've done a mean job on him alright.
WARLO Just so long as everyone has a good time tonight.
RAGGYBOY Especially you man, you deserve it. He's been recording for the last six months.
REGAN Goodness. I mean, evilness.
WARLO I couldn't have done any of it without Joe here. And I certainly couldn't have played tonight if he hadn't escaped.
GON & REG What?
WARLO Didn't you hear? Joe was kidnapped by one of our witches yesterday. Whoever she was, she planned to cut him up into little pieces.
GONERIL Which witch?
WARLO I don't know – Joe doesn't remember the name.
RAGGYBOY Her assistant was very nice though. She helped me escape.
WARLO I wish I knew who it was. I'd give her a piece of my mind.

RAGGYBOY Anyway, no harm done. I'm still in one piece. Hey! There's the girl who helped me.

GORMIGOG (*Entering with HEMLOCK.*) Hello ladies. Hello.

WARLO Hi there. We haven't been introduced.

GORMIGOG Oh! I'm Gormigog.

WARLO Call me Warlo. Nice to meet you. You're very lucky with your assistant there.

GORMIGOG Who Hemlock? Wonderful girl. But sadly she's not my assistant. I wish she was.

HEMLOCK I wish I was too. I'm miserable with Magridell.

RAGGYBOY That's it! It was Magridell who wanted to torture me. And this girl saved my life.

HEMLOCK Oh it's you Raggy Boy. I'm glad you managed to escape. What are you doing here?

REGAN This is Warlo's manager, his name is Joe Promo. He's very important.

GONERIL Yes, well done Hemlock. It's just as well you saved him, or there would be no ball tonight.

MAGRIDELL (*entering dramatically*) Darlings! I have arrived. Thank you all for waiting. (*to WARLO*) Well, hello, and who might you be?

WARLO Your worst nightmare.

MAGRIDELL Say what?

FOXGLOVE You watch how you speak to her. She's a real witch, not like some I could mention.

WARLO Oh yes, we know what kind of witch she is. The sort that goes around chopping up band managers.

MAGRIDELL What's that? Who? What do you mean?

RAGGYBOY Hello witchy. Tortured any more unfortunates lately?

MAGRIDELL You! You're Warlo's manager? (*he nods his head*) Well, how was I supposed to know that? Warlo – you won't hold it against me, will you?

WARLO Oh no. I'll just never have anything to do with you ever again. If you're lucky. The only reason I'm not going to turn you into a mosquito and swat you is because of your assistant Hemlock.

RAGGYBOY Yeah. If she hadn't saved me, Warlo would still be a nobody.

WARLO I wouldn't be nobody.

RAGGYBOY You know what I mean.

MAGRIDELL So Hemlock, I have you to thank.

GORMIGOG I suppose you do.

MAGRIDELL I know this is going to sound strange, but I'd like to do something for you. Tell me, what can I do?

REGAN Why don't you let her stay with Gormigog?

FOXGLOVE Could I stay with Magridell. Please? I hate it with Gormigog.

GONERIL I think that would be a perfect swop. What do you say ladies?

GORMIGOG I'm happy if you're happy Magridell.

MAGRIDELL Wel, I'm not a mosquito so...I'm ecstatic!

RAGGYBOY Is that all settled then?

HEMLOCK I think so. I think everyone's happy.

WARLO Good, because I have to go and perform. My band are waiting
 for me on stage.
GORMIGOG Good luck.
WARLO Would you like to dance later?
GORMIGOG Would I?!
WARLO Yes, would you?
GORMIGOG Yes I would.
WARLO Would. I mean, good. I gotta go.
RAGGY BOY Hemlock, how would you like me to turn you into a teen
 sensation?
HEMLOCK I'd love it!
RAGGY BOY OK – cause I owe you. We'll talk later. Everyone – party on!

Music as Warlo's band plays and everyone dances

T H E E N D