



**Sample Pages from
Grim and Gruesome Grimm**

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GRIM AND GRUESOME GRIMM

ADAPTED BY
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FROM
Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm



Grim and Gruesome Grimm
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Casting

Maximum: 8M+12W + 2I Any Gender (including Grimms)

Minimum: 4M+5W+ 9 Any Gender (including Grimms)

Feel free to modify the doubling suggestions below.

4 M (you can further double roles to go down to 2M)

Wizard/Horst	Otto/Prince
Skipper/Jacob,Bird	Hans/Carl

5W (you can further double roles to go down to 3W)

Else/Queen/Gertrud	Ingeborg/Marlinchen
Herta/Elke	Sophie/Anna
Katrin/Barbara	

9 Any Gender (this is the minimum number of AG actors)

Ghastly	Fox/Waggoner/Robber
Grisly	Mouse/Spouse/Robber
Dire	Royal/Rabbit/Dog
Rooster/Bird/Robber	Servant/Straw,Coal,Stone/Curdken
Hen/Sparrow/Fairy	

It is the intention of the author that the characters can be played by any gender. You have permission to change pronouns, change honorifics (including non-gendered honorifics) and have any actor play any role.

Character List

GRIMS (AG): Ghastly, Grisly, Dire

The Grimms should take part in each of the stories. Roles have been identified for them in each story, but you can change this. Give the Grimms more roles or fewer. The important thing is that we see the Grimms in each story.

The Grimms should also portray any effects in the tales. They are the fire, the moving stream, any necessary magic. They are the embodiment of “play.”

CHARACTER IDENTITY: While some roles are identified as male and female (he/she) feel free to expand any identity. Roles can be male, female, or non-binary. Two of the stories, *The Death of Little Hen*, and *The Dog and the Sparrow* are specifically non-gendered.

Fitcher's Bird

4+Grimms+rest of cast

Wizard/Beggar (M)

Else (W)

Herta (W)

Katrin (W)

Guest (played by Grisly)

Family (rest of cast)

The Three-Snake Leaves

5+Grimms+rest of cast

Otto (M)

Soldiers (The Grimms + rest of cast)

Royal (AG)

Ingeborg (W)

Guards (played by Ghostly/Grisly)

Snakes (played by Dire/Ghostly)

Skipper (M)

Servant (AG)

The Death of Little Hen

6+Grimms+rest of cast

Rooster (AG)

Hen (AG)

Stream (played by Ghostly/Grisly)

Bride (played by Dire)

Fox (AG)

Mouse (AG)

Rabbit (AG)

Straw/Coal/Stone (AG one actor)

The Robber Bridegroom

8+Grimms+rest of cast

Sophie (W)

Horst (M)

Hans (M)

Bird (AG)

Forest (rest of cast)

Old Woman (W)

Robbers x3 (AG)

Wedding Guests (rest of cast)

The Goose Girl

6+Grimms+rest of cast

Queen (W)

Elke (W)

Fairy (AG)

Barbara (W)

Falada (played by Dire)

Barbara's horse (played by Ghostly)

Prince (M)

Curdken (AG)

Court (rest of cast)

The Dog and the Sparrow

4+Grimms+rest of cast

Dog (AG)

Sparrow (AG)

Waggoner (AG)

Spouse (AG)

Birds (rest of cast)

Butcher (played by Dire)

Baker (played by Ghostly)

Horse (played by Grisly)

Townspople (rest of cast)

The Juniper Tree

5+Grimms+4-5 cast

Carl (M)

Anna (W)

Gertrud (W)

Jacob/Bird (M)

Marlinchen (W)

Juniper Tree (4-5 cast members)

Goldsmith (played by Ghostly)

Shoemaker (played by Dire)

Miller (played by Grisly)

Setting

I suggest a unit set that has anything and everything you need for the separate stories within hand's reach. Many of the props and costume pieces should be onstage at the start of the play. The Grimms (Ghastly, Grisly and Dire) deliver and remove any of the props, costumes or set pieces to the characters. Make the transactions visible and part of the world of the play. Someone puts on a cape and they become a witch, they take off the cape and they are neutral again.

Lighting

Each story purposefully ends with a blackout, in the sense that we are plunged into darkness at the end of a scary tale. The blackouts are purely mood-driven and should be no longer than 3 seconds. There should be no set or costume changes that happen in-between tales.

Start the next tale as quickly as possible with the Grim holding the flashlight underneath their chin (another horror device). On that note, the three Grimms should have easy access to flashlights throughout the play.

Consider other opportunities in your production for handheld lighting.

Sound

Use a lot of sound. Use creepy music. Use actor-generated sound effects. Try to incorporate live sounds: door creaks, door knocks, horse sounds, trumpet calls, etc. Again it's part of the notion of "play" - when you don't have a real door, you make the sound of a creak or you stamp as you mime knocking on a door and everyone knows exactly what's going on. It's theatre, not reality.

Costumes

Think about costuming the play as if pulling pieces from a common trunk. Re-use pieces, choose simple pieces (e.g. a crown for royalty), choose atmosphere over authenticity. Strive for a rustic look.

Cutting for Competition

You have permission to cut stories in their entirety in order to fit a specific running time for competition. A suggested competition cutting is in the Appendix at the end of the play.

Content Changes

If your admin gets easily squeamish, or you're concerned about parent reaction to decapitations and cannibalism, this is not the play for you. Do not ask for a watered down version or content amendments. Find another play.

Dark music. A dark stage. Stage right, a flashlight clicks on under DIRE's face, one of the GRIMS.

DIRE: The eldest tried to put on the glass slipper but her foot was too large. Her mother gave her a knife and said, "Cut off your toe; when you are Queen you'll never have to walk again."

DIRE clicks off the flashlight. Stage left, a flashlight clicks on under GHASTLY's face.

GHASTLY: The huntsman took a pair of scissors, and cut open the stomach of the sleeping wolf. Little Red Riding Hood sprang out, crying, "Ah, how frightened I have been! How dark it was inside the wolf!"

GHASTLY clicks off the flashlight. Centre stage, a flashlight clicks on under GRISLY's face.

GRISLY: "Perhaps your name is Rumpelstiltskin?" "The devil has told you that!" cried the little man, and in his anger he plunged his right foot deep into the earth; in rage he pulled at his left leg so hard that he tore himself in two.

The lights come up as GRISLY clicks off the flashlight. The three GRIMS move centre stage. Music fades.

GRIMS: Fairy Tales.

DIRE: So childish.

GHASTLY: So charming.

GRISLY: So innocent.

GRIMS: Ha!

DIRE: You've been fooled.

GHASTLY: Duped.

GRISLY: The wool is over your eyes.

DIRE: You don't know the real stories.

GHASTLY: The grim Grimms.

GRISLY: Gave me nightmares for weeks. I have a pretty strong stomach but there's only so many dead bodies a person can take.

DIRE: Grisly!

GRISLY: (referring to the audience) They need to know what they're getting into.

GHASTLY: That's true. We're not here to present the sugar and spice.

DIRE: The sweet and syrupy.

GRISLY: It's grisly.

GHASTLY: Ghastly.

DIRE: Gruesome Grimm.

GHASTLY: These are not your grandmother's fairy tales.

GRISLY: Since the Grimm brothers were collecting tales in the early 1800's, it would be not your great-great-great-great-great grandmother's –

DIRE: We get it.

GHASTLY: Grim and Gruesome Grimm.

GRISLY: Don't keep a body count. You'll lose track.

Blackout. A flashlight clicks on under GHASTLY's face.

GHASTLY: Fitcher's Bird.

The flashlight clicks off. Thunder is heard and lightning strikes. Lights come up dimly on an BEGGAR in a long cloak stumping across the stage with a huge basket on his back. DIRE, GRISLY, and GHASTLY stand stage right.

The BEGGAR mimes knocking on a door. DIRE, GRISLY and GHASTLY stomp on the ground to mimic the sound of knocking.

BEGGAR: A small bit of food for a poor beggar! A small bit of food!

ELSE enters.

ELSE: Here's a piece of bread.

BEGGAR: Thank you, dear child.

The BEGGAR holds out his hand and as soon as ELSE touches the hand, DIRE rings a bell (or triangle). GHASTLY and GRISLY form a "basket" with their arms, and scoop up ELSE. The BEGGAR throws off his cloak and takes his true form, a powerful WIZARD.

ELSE: Why can't I move? How did I get in this basket? What have you done?

WIZARD: Plenty of time to talk on the way to your new home.

He laughs and everyone freezes.

DIRE: The Wizard spent his days catching and carrying young women into the dark wood. Where exactly? No one knows. None of them were ever seen again.

GHAUSTLY and GRISLY "let go" and ELSE tumbles to the floor. They are now in the WIZARD's home. DIRE picks up a key ring and a large egg from the set.

WIZARD: My darling, do not despair. You will be happy here and want for nothing.

ELSE: (*standing up, looking around*) I must admit, it is beautiful.

DIRE steps forward holding the egg and key ring.

WIZARD: Now. I must leave for a few days. (*DIRE holds up a key ring, holding it by a rather large key*) Here are the keys to the house. You may enjoy and explore every part of the house except for one room. (*referring to the larger key that DIRE holds*) This is the key for that room. I forbid you to go in there on pain of death. (*DIRE holds up a large egg*) And while I'm gone, please hold this egg. A great misfortune if it is ever lost.

ELSE: (*taking the key ring and the egg*) All right. (*the WIZARD exits*) I didn't choose to be here, but I might as well look around. Who knows what I'll find?

DIRE, GHAUSTLY and GRISLY move downstage and stand one beside the other to represent different "doors" in the house. ELSE moves behind DIRE, who "swings" open as if a door is opened. ELSE walks into the "room."

ELSE: Oh my goodness! So much silver! I've never seen so much.

DIRE exits. ELSE moves behind GHAUSTLY and the door action is repeated.

ELSE: Oh my goodness! So much gold! How it shines!

GHAUSTLY exits. ELSE moves this time, to stand in front of GRISLY. This is the forbidden door.

ELSE: The very last door. It must be the forbidden room. (*starts to walk away*) I'll just pass on by and not even... (*she turns back, curious*) What could be in there? It can't be that bad. Could it? I shouldn't go in. (*she turns away and then turns back*) Why shouldn't I? This man took me from my home, my family, my sisters, why should I follow his rules? Just because he said I shouldn't go in... I'll take a little peek. What harm could there be in that?

GRISLY springs open and moves out of the way. Creepy music plays. At the same time DIRE and GHASTLY push a cart onstage. It is filled with bloody body parts such as mannequins or similar. NOTE: The cart must be able to support Else and Herta, who will (spoiler alert) soon be dead.

ELSE: Oh no!

ELSE turns and comes face-to-face with GRISLY, holding a bowl of "blood" (a bowl filled with red scarves).

ELSE: Oh! What's in that bowl!

She drops the egg in the bowl.

ELSE: I have to get out of here!

ELSE grabs the egg and one of the red scarves out of the bowl and runs to the side of the stage. GRISLY puts the bowl off to the side. DIRE and GHASTLY pull the cart offstage.

ELSE kneels at the corner of the stage, and mimes trying to rub the "blood" off the egg.

ELSE: Why won't this blood come off?

WIZARD: (*offstage*) My darling, I am home!

ELSE: Oh no.

WIZARD: (*offstage*) Darling, where are you?

ELSE: (*to self*) Don't come in here, don't come in...

WIZARD: (*entering*) Ah, there you are. I have so much to tell you about my travels. But first, where are the keys and the egg?

ELSE: (*standing*) I have them...

WIZARD: Show me.

ELSE: Here are the keys.

GRISLY steps forward and takes the keys.

WIZARD: And the egg?

ELSE holds out her hand, trembling. GRISLY takes the egg.

WIZARD: There's blood on it.

ELSE: I cut my finger.

WIZARD: You went into the forbidden room.

ELSE: I didn't.

WIZARD: I told you not to go in there.

ELSE: I'm sorry. I'll never do it again.

WIZARD: Since you went in there against my will, you'll now go in against your own.

The WIZARD grabs ELSE and drags her screaming offstage. DIRE, GHASTLY have entered to join GRISLY. The music fades.

DIRE: The wizard cut off Else's head.

GHASTLY: Chopped her body to bits.

GRISLY: Added her blood to the bowl.

THE WIZARD enters putting his cloak over his head.

DIRE: And went to fetch the second sister.

DIRE, GRISLY and GHASTLY stomp on the ground to mimic the sound of knocking. DIRE and GHASTLY exit.

WIZARD: A small bit of food for a poor beggar!

HERTA: (*entering*) Here's a piece of bread.

DIRE rings a bell (or triangle). The WIZARD grabs HERTA by the hand and pulls her. GRISLY steps forward holding up the egg and the key ring.

WIZARD: And while I'm gone, please hold this egg. A great misfortune if it is ever lost.

HERTA: (*taking the key ring and the egg*) All right. (*the WIZARD exits*) I didn't choose to be here, but I might as well look around. Who knows what I'll find?

*GRISLY becomes the door to the forbidden room.
HERTA moves in front of GRISLY.*

HERTA: This must be the forbidden room. How bad could it be?

DIRE and GHASTLY push on the cart with the bloody body parts. We now see ELSE's body is added to the pile. This cart should be pushed "just" onstage, don't go too far.

HERTA: Oh no!

DIRE and GHASTLY pull the cart offstage. At the same time HERTA turns to face GRISLY, who holds the bowl of "blood" (red scarves). HERTA is so startled she drops the egg in the bowl.

HERTA: I have to get out of here!

HERTA grabs the egg and a red scarf and runs but she comes face-to-face with the WIZARD.

WIZARD: Since you went in there against my will, you'll now go in against your own.

Creepy music plays. The WIZARD grabs HERTA and drags her screaming offstage.

DIRE, GHASTLY re-enter and stand with GRISLY.

DIRE: The wizard cut off Herta's head.

GHASTLY: Chopped her body to bits.

GRISLY: Added her blood to the bowl.

GHASTLY: And went to fetch the third sister.

Music fades. KATRIN enters. GRISLY and GHASTLY exit.

KATRIN: (*entering holding the key ring and the egg*) I didn't choose to be here, but I might as well look around. Who knows what I'll find? Oh, but first, I better put this egg in a safe place. I don't want anything to happen to it. (*she gives the egg back to DIRE*)

DIRE: Katrin was not like her sisters.

KATRIN: This must be the forbidden room. Let's see what's inside.

GHASTLY and GRISLY push on the cart with the bloody body parts including ELSE and HERTA.

KATRIN: Else! Herta! This will never do. I will not stand to see you piled this way. (*she stands with her back to the audience over the cart*)

DIRE: Katrin was not at all like her sisters.

GHASTLY: She immediately got to work putting the pieces of Else and Herta back together.

KATRIN: (*taking a step back*) There! That's better. Take my hand sisters!

ELSE and HERTA have gotten off the cart. All three hug. GHASTLY and GRISLY pull the cart offstage, and reenter.

ELSE: We're alive!

HERTA: How is that possible?

KATRIN: The house is magical just like that foul wizard. It's time to deal with him, but we're going to need help. We must get you home.

ELSE: How?

HERTA: We were carried here. I don't remember the way.

WIZARD: (*offstage*) My darling, I am home!

ELSE: Oh no.

WIZARD: (*offstage*) Darling, where are you?

HERTA: What do we do?

KATRIN: Quick, hide!

GRISLY and GHASTLY hold up a curtain, which ELSE and HERTA run behind as the WIZARD enters.

WIZARD: Ah, there you are. I have so much to tell you about my travels. But first, where are the keys and the egg?

KATRIN: (*DIRE brings them forward*) Here they are.

WIZARD: (*taking them*) This egg is pristine. (*a little taken aback*) You have passed my test and you will be my bride...

KATRIN: Isn't that great! (*DIRE hits a bell or triangle. KATRIN shudders and looks around.*) What just happened to me?

WIZARD: Um, nothing?

KATRIN: All of a sudden I feel free. I am free, aren't I? I'm no longer in your power?

WIZARD: No one has ever passed my test before...

KATRIN: Now that I've passed your test you must give me whatever I desire. Isn't that true?

WIZARD: It is, as long as you remain my bride.

KATRIN: Oh I wouldn't dream of leaving. (*beat*) You will deliver a basket full of gold to my father and mother.

WIZARD: Done! I will have it delivered at once.

KATRIN: Oh no! You must... deliver it yourself.

WIZARD: I suppose I can do that...

KATRIN: That is exactly what you must do.

GHASTLY brings the big basket forward and ELSE and HERTA mime getting into it.

KATRIN: And this is the basket you're going to use.

GHASTLY puts the basket on the WIZARD'S back. ELSE and HERTA sneak behind, as if they are in the basket.

WIZARD: Why is this basket so heavy?

KATRIN: Gold is heavy. In the meantime, I will prepare for the wedding. Safe travels! And don't take any breaks. I'll be watching from my little window to see if you rest. (*whispering to the sisters*) Keep the gold over you. And when you get home, send help!

WIZARD: What?

KATRIN: Nothing!

The WIZARD starts to walk in place with the sisters sneaking after. The WIZARD stops walking.

WIZARD: (*groaning*) I must sit down and rest a while.

HERTA: (*quietly*) Oh no!

ELSE: (*as KATRIN*) Uh...I am looking through my little window and I see you resting! You must carry on at once!

ELSE and HERTA look at each other – will it work?

WIZARD: Yes, my bride.

The WIZARD starts walking in place again. ELSE looks back at HERTA, who shrugs. The WIZARD suddenly stops.

WIZARD: I have been walking for so long! I'll just sit for a second.

HERTA: (*as KATRIN*) I am looking through my little window and I see you resting! You must carry on at once!

WIZARD: Yes, my bride.

The WIZARD starts walking and this time carries on offstage. ELSE and HERTA give each other a quiet hi-five as they also exit. KATRIN enters from the other side of the stage leafing through a big book.

GHASTLY: This gave Katrin time to plan a wedding and her revenge.

KATRIN: The Wizard's spell book is going to come in handy.

DIRE: She learned how to turn herself into a bird. She also put an image of herself in the little attic window.

KATRIN hands the book to DIRE and starts to fly around the stage.

GHASTLY: When the wedding day came, she flew down the lane to see the upcoming guests, all friends of the wizard.

GRISLY: (*as a Guest*) Ho there bird, how came you here?

KATRIN: (*flying around*) I come from Fitcher's house nearby.

GRISLY: (*as Guest*) And what is the young bride doing?

KATRIN: She's cleaned the house from bottom to top and now she watches from the attic window. See? She's expecting you, go right on in.

GRISLY joins GHASTLY and DIRE as The WIZARD enters.

WIZARD: Finally, I am home again! (*as KATRIN flies by*) Ho there bird, how came you here?

KATRIN: I come from Fitcher's house nearby.

WIZARD: And what is the young bride doing?

KATRIN: She's cleaned the house from bottom to top and now she watches from the attic window. See? She's expecting you, go right on in.

WIZARD: Wonderful! And I see all my friends inside!

KATRIN: Yes you do.

The WIZARD exits.

KATRIN: (*calling off*) Now, everyone! Lock the doors! Set fire to the house!

ELSE, HERTA and their family rush across the stage following the WIZARD off.

KATRIN: And now we burn them alive! (*exiting*)

DIRE: And that's just what happened.

GHASTLY: The Wizard and all his friends were locked inside the house with no means of escape.

GRISLY: And they burned to death. Every last one of them. The end.

Blackout. A flashlight clicks on under GHASTLY's face.

GHASTLY: The Three Snake Leaves.

GHASTLY clicks off the flashlight as lights snap to full and the horns of war are heard. Everyone in the cast roars onstage as if they were in the middle of a battle.

DIRE: (*as a SOLDIER*) There's too many of them.

GRISLY: (*as a SOLDIER*) We're not going to win.

GHASTLY: (*as a SOLDIER*) The sooner we retreat the better.

OTTO stands on a riser and raises his sword.

OTTO: No! No! We will not retreat. We will not let our kingdom be ruined! We will fight and conquer our enemies. Who's with me!

Everyone onstage cheers and runs off with OTTO. The GRIMS stand together.

DIRE: There was a young man whose father was so poor, he could not support his son.

GHASTLY: The young man went out into the world to make his own way,

GRISLY: And he ended up in a war.

DIRE: The winning side of a war.

The ROYAL and OTTO enter. The GRIMS stand as GUARDS.

ROYAL: We owe this victory to your bravery, Otto.

OTTO: Think nothing of it, your Majesty.

ROYAL: I think quite a lot of it. You shall never want for anything, as long as I rule.

INGEBORG enters.

INGEBORG: Is this the man who saved our kingdom?

ROYAL: It is indeed.

INGEBORG: A hero would make a fine suitor, wouldn't he?

OTTO: *(taking INGEORG's hand)* I would be honoured to take the hand of your daughter.

ROYAL: *(removing OTTO's hand from INGEORG's)* Otto, you need to know something first.

INGEBORG: *(grabbing OTTO's hand)* Are you trying to scare him away?

KING: He has a right to know. *(to OTTO)* My daughter has made a particular marriage vow. *(to INGEORG)* Tell him.

INGEBORG: Fine. *(posing)* I have vowed to take no husband who does not promise, if I die first, to let himself be buried alive in my tomb. If a man loves me with all his heart, what use will life be to him afterward?

ROYAL: As you can imagine, she hasn't had much interest.

INGEBORG: *(not as convincing)* And I would do the same, if the situation were reversed. It's only right.

ROYAL: What say you, Otto?

OTTO: (*taking INGEBORG by the hands*) What should any such oath scare me?

ROYAL: You do understand what's being asked of you?

OTTO: I must be buried alive in the royal crypt if Ingeborg dies before me. But if I have someone as beautiful as her by my side, why, I should be able to manage anything. My love is so great I do not mind the danger.

INGEBORG: It's settled!

OTTO, the ROYAL and INGEBORG freeze in a pose.

DIRE: And so they were married.

GHAUSTLY: And lived happy and content.

GRISLY: Until one day, young Ingeborg was attacked by a fatal illness.

INGEBORG collapses into OTTO's arms.

DIRE: And no physician could save her.

DIRE steps forward and places a white gauze shroud over INGEBORG and leads her to lie on a riser (or two cubes) to act as her bier.

GHAUSTLY: And no magic could save Otto from the royal crypt.

GHAUSTLY and GRISLY step forward as GUARDS and grab OTTO.

ROYAL: You will have four candles, four loaves of bread and four bottles of wine. When this comes to an end you will die of hunger.

OTTO: I understand...

ROYAL: You knew what you were getting into. Guards! Take him.

GRISLY and GHAUSTLY throw OTTO down in front of INGEBORG, mime closing and bolting the gates and turn their backs to stand guard. The ROYAL exits.

OTTO stands and looks around.

OTTO: Four candles, four loaves of bread and four bottles of wine. Then death. Just as I promised, dear Ingeborg.

DIRE: Otto tried to last as long as he could. But there's only so far four candles, four loaves of bread and four bottles of wine will go.

OTTO: Maybe I made a mistake...

DIRE: One day a snake crept out of a corner of the vault.

DIRE enters the crypt as the snake.

OTTO: Who's there? Oh. Perhaps I could eat you, snake.

DIRE starts to move, hissing, toward INGEBORG.

OTTO: Hey! Stay away from my love. *(drawing his sword)* As long as I live you will not touch her!

OTTO brings his sword down as if hacking at the snake. DIRE falls to the floor. GRISLY and GHASTLY turn forward.

GRISLY: Otto hacked the snake into three pieces. But before he could eat it, a second snake slithered in with three green leaves in its mouth.

GHASTLY holds up three green leaves and moves forward as the second snake. GHASTLY places the leaves on DIRE, who jolts up, becoming alive. The two snakes leave the crypt. GHASTLY again becomes one of the GUARDS. DIRE stands to the side to watch.

OTTO: *(amazed)* How is that possible? Three green leaves placed just so brought that snake back to life. *(picking up the leaves)* I wonder, if they work on a snake could they not...

OTTO hurries to the bier and places the leaves on the mouth and eyes of INGEBORG.

INGEBORG: *(suddenly sitting up)* Where am I?

OTTO removes the shroud gauze from INGEBORG.

OTTO: You are with me. And you are alive!

INGEBORG: I can't believe it!

They hug. OTTO then grabs her hand and the two bang on the gates (the backs of the GUARDS) shouting:

OTTO & INGEBORG: Let us out! Let us out!

The ROYAL rushes on as OTTO and INGEBORG are let out of the tomb. They freeze in a hug.

DIRE: Everything was happy again!

GHASTLY: Otto and Ingeborg were together!

GRISLY: Just as all fairy tales should end!

DIRE: Right?

The trio unfreezes. The SKIPPER enters, along with a SERVANT.

SKIPPER: Are you ready for your journey, Sire?

OTTO: Indeed, Skipper.

The SKIPPER gives a short bow and crosses the stage. INGEBORG stares after him.

OTTO: I'm glad you're coming to visit my family. It's going to be a wonderful trip, don't you think?

INGEBORG: *(turning back to OTTO)* Huh? Oh I guess.

OTTO: Is everything all right, my dear?

INGEBORG: Yes, yes, stop pestering me. *(to ROYAL)* Farewell!

INGEBORG hugs the ROYAL and runs after the SKIPPER. The two exit together. No one else notices this.

ROYAL: Farewell Otto. Safe travels!

OTTO bows, and the ROYAL exits. OTTO beckons to the SERVANT.

OTTO: *(giving the leaves to the SERVANT)* Take these three green leaves and keep them with you always. They were of great service to me, who knows when we may need them again.

The SERVANT bows and OTTO exits. The SERVANT kneels to bring out a pouch from their costume to put the leaves into.

At the same time, moody music plays as the lights change to night. INGEBORG and the SKIPPER sneak onstage, hand in hand. The SERVANT sees them and hides.

SKIPPER: Do you really want to do this?

INGEBORG: Yes, I tell you. He's in the way of our happiness. All you have to do is take him by the shoulders, I'll take him by the feet, and we'll throw him into the sea. He will drown and die.

SKIPPER: Didn't he save your life?

INGEBORG: Oh so what. (*beat*) We'll return home and say he fell ill and perished. I'll sing your praises and you'll be heir to the throne. You'll be rich beyond your wildest dreams.

SKIPPER: Sounds good to me!

They exit and the SERVANT comes out of hiding.

SERVANT: What a horrible pair.

GRIMS: 1, 2, 3!

The GRIMS make the sound of a big splash.

SERVANT: Sir Otto! I must save him.

Music plays. The GRIMS give SERVANT an oar. SERVANT sits on a cube and it becomes a small boat. The SERVANT begins to paddle, and OTTO "floats onstage" as a dead body. The SERVANT gets OTTO, lays him on the ground and puts the three leaves on his eyes and mouth. Music fades.

SERVANT: I hope this actually works...

OTTO: (*sitting up*) Where am I? What happened?

DIRE: The servant explained everything.

The SERVANT and OTTO sit in the small boat. GHASTLY now gives OTTO an oar and the two mime rowing.

GHASTLY: And they both rowed with all their strength day and night.

GRISLY: They rowed so hard, they arrived back home before Ingeborg and the Skipper.

The ROYAL has entered and OTTO and the SERVANT stand to bow.

ROYAL: I cannot believe she would behave that appallingly. But the truth will come to light.

GHASTLY and GRISLY hold up a curtain. OTTO and the SERVANT hide behind it as INGEBORG and the SKIPPER enter.

INGEBORG: (*overdramatic*) Ohhhhhhhh, what we have been through!

ROYAL: Why have you come back alone? Where is your husband?

INGEBORG: (*posing, dramatically*) I come home with such a weight of tragic grief. During the voyage Otto became suddenly ill and died. (*pulling the SKIPPER forward*) If the good Skipper had not given me his help, it would have been devastating.

SKIPPER: Your Majesty, I was present at his death and can tell all.

ROYAL: Can you now. I can do you one better. I can make the dead come back to life.

GHASTLY and GRISLY drop the curtain to reveal OTTO and the SERVANT. INGEBORG and the SKIPPER fall to their knees.

INGEBORG: Mercy!

SKIPPER: Please spare us!

ROYAL: He was prepared to die with you and found a way to restore your life. And you try to murder him in his sleep? You shall receive the mercy you deserve. Guards!

GRISLY and GHASTLY step forward and drag INGEBORG and the SKIPPER offstage. The two continue to plead for mercy. The ROYAL, OTTO and the SERVANT follow off.

DIRE: The princess and her accomplice were placed on a ship that had been punched full of holes and sent out to sea, where they soon sank and disappeared among the waves. The mercy they deserve was a miserable death. The end.

Blackout. DIRE clicks on a flashlight under their face.

DIRE: The Death of the Little Hen.

DIRE clicks off the flashlight as the lights come up. The HEN enters from stage right and the ROOSTER enters from stage left. GHASTLY and GRISLY enter quietly to join DIRE.

HEN: Hello Rooster.

ROOSTER: Hello Hen.

HEN: Would you like to go to nut-hill with me?

ROOSTER: I would very much enjoy that.

HEN: Let's make a deal. Whoever finds a kernel, they must share it with the other.

ROOSTER: Deal!

HEN: Let's split up, shall we? We have more of a chance to find a nut that way.

ROOSTER: I'll go this way.

HEN: And I'll go over here. *(the two split and HEN immediately sees something)* What's this? *(looking around)* Quiet, Hen! Don't give yourself away. And don't give that kernel away! What a large nut, all for me!

The HEN mimes swooping up the nut and putting it in their mouth. But the nut is too big to swallow and the HEN begins to choke and cluck.

HEN: The nut is too great *(i.e. large)*! Rooster!

ROOSTER: *(running over)* Hen, are you all right?

HEN: Rooster, run as fast as you can and fetch me some water or I shall choke.

ROOSTER: Yes, of course.

ROOSTER runs to the side where GHASTLY and GRISLY hold a blue cloth between them, representing a stream. Throughout the following, find moments for the HEN to gasp, cluck and choke audibly. Put the HEN above the action on a riser.

ROOSTER: Stream! Give me some water, the little hen has swallowed a great nut and is choking!

GHASTLY: First, run to the bride and get her to give you some red silk.

ROOSTER: Yes, of course.

The ROOSTER runs across the stage where DIRE stands as the bride.

ROOSTER: Bride! Give me some red silk. I need to give red silk to the stream, so the stream will give me some water, and I will take the water to the little hen who has swallowed a great nut and is choking!

DIRE: First, run and bring me my little wreath, which is hanging on the willow.

ROOSTER: Yes, of course.

The ROOSTER runs across the stage, gets the wreath from GHASTLY, the runs back across the stage to give it to DIRE.

ROOSTER: Here's the wreath, give me the silk!

DIRE takes the wreath, and gives the ROOSTER the silk. The ROOSTER runs across the stage.

ROOSTER: Here's the silk, give me the water!

ROOSTER gives GRISLY the red silk and GRISLY gives ROOSTER a small section of blue cloth. By this point the HEN has gone into a death spiral. ROOSTER runs to the HEN.

ROOSTER: Little Hen here's the –

The HEN gives one final gasp and falls over dead.

ROOSTER: Oh no!

The ROOSTER sinks to the ground. A RABBIT, MOUSE, FOX run onstage.

RABBIT: What's the matter?

MOUSE: What happened?

ROOSTER: Little Hen choked to death on a nut. I must cross the stream to dig a grave. Will you help?

ANIMALS: Yes, of course!

The ANIMALS gather to “carry” HEN (they gather around HEN, who stands and moves with the group). As they start walking, GHASTLY and GRISLY take the blue cloth representing the stream and stretch it out between them across the front of the stage. Have the GRIMS hold the cloth so it goes all the way to the ground because various characters will end up hiding behind the cloth.

To that end, the actor playing the STRAW, the COAL and the STONE enters and crouches behind the “stream.” Note: The STRAW, the COAL and the STONE are all played by the same actor.

FOX: How are we to get over the stream?

STRAW: (*standing up*) Oh pity on you, Rooster.

ROOSTER: Thank you, Straw.

STRAW: I will lay myself down as a bridge and you'll be able to cross the stream.

MOUSE: Let the mouse test the way.

The STRAW crouches down again out of sight behind the blue cloth. The MOUSE mimes trying to swim across the stream.

MOUSE: Oh no, oh no, the straw is slipping, it's slipping...

RABBIT: Don't fall into the water!

The MOUSE falls into the "water" and is drowned.

ANIMALS: Oh no!

FOX: The mouse is drowned.

RABBIT: The piece of straw too.

COAL: (*standing up*) Oh pity on you, Rooster.

ROOSTER: Thank you, Coal.

COAL: I will lay myself down as a bridge and you'll be able to cross the stream.

FOX: You seem large enough. Let's give it a try.

The COAL crouches down out of sight. The COAL starts to cry out.

FOX: What's happening!

RABBIT: Coal and water don't mix...

The COAL gives a slow death cry.

RABBIT: The coal is dead.

STONE: (*standing up*) Oh pity on you Rooster. Try walking across my back.

ROOSTER: Thank you, Stone. I will carry the little hen across.

The STONE crouches down. The ROOSTER and the HEN "swim" across the stream and make it to the other side. The ANIMALS cheer.

FOX: It's my turn now.

RABBIT: No my turn.

FOX: We'll go together.

STONE: No!

The FOX and RABBIT jump at once. They fall into the stream and drown, with a long in unison death cry. GHASTLY and GRISLY remove the cloth and all the drowned characters exit. The ROOSTER is left alone with the dead HEN.

ROOSTER: What? All drowned! I am all alone. Oh Little Hen.
Ohhhhhhhhhhh.

The ROOSTER falls on top of the HEN.

DIRE: The Rooster dug a grave for the little hen.

ROOSTER: Ohhhhhhhhhhh.

DIRE: Rooster fretted so much until...

ROOSTER: Ohhhhhhhhhhh – (ROOSTER gives a death jerk and falls to the ground)

GHASTLY: And everyone was dead. The end.

Blackout. A flashlight comes up underneath DIRE's face.

DIRE: The Robber Bridegroom.

The flashlight clicks off as the lights come up. HORST, a miller, and his daughter, SOPHIE, enter.

HORST: My daughter, you are beautiful and smart.

SOPHIE: Thank you, father.

HORST: I wish that you were well provided for.

SOPHIE: I am, father.

HORST: I wish you were married.

SOPHIE: Oh drat.

HORST: If any good suitor comes and asks for you, I will give you to them.

SOPHIE: Don't I get a say in this?

There is a knock at the door.

HORST: Who's that?

HANS enters, with arrogance and attitude.

HANS: Miller, I understand you have a daughter you wish to be married.

HORST: News travels fast.

HANS: (*not trustworthy at all*) I am rich and can provide your daughter with a life that will never worry you.

HORST: I can find no fault in that. Sophie is yours.

SOPHIE: Sophie is not happy about this.

HORST and HANS shake hands.

HANS: You are now my betrothed. You will visit me this Sunday at my house in the dark forest.

SOPHIE: I don't know the way.

HANS: You'll find it. I'll lay ashes along the path.

SOPHIE: Sunday's really not good.

HANS: You must come. I've already invited... guests. (*exits*)

SOPHIE: I really don't get a say in this?

HORST: What's the matter? He's rich and will provide a worry-free life.

SOPHIE: For you. Worry free for you.

DIRE: Sunday came. Sophie knew she had to set out, but became uneasy and knew not why.

SOPHIE: (*to DIRE*) Oh come on, I know why. I know exactly why. It's not that hard to figure out.

HORST: Sophie, you must go, your groom expects you.

SOPHIE: I have a headache.

HORST: You must go, you are his bride.

SOPHIE: I wish that was an incentive.

HORST: Go!

SOPHIE: Fine! But if something bad happens to me, I'm going to haunt you super hard.

SOPHIE crosses the stage and the FOREST enters to crowd in around her.

SOPHIE: Dark forest. Everyone loves a dark forest. There are the ashes. I don't trust this guy as far as I can throw him. I'm going to put down my own path with peas.

SOPHIE walks in place and the FOREST changes position around her.

GHASTLY: As Sophie followed the path of ashes, she threw down peas with every step.

GRISLY: She walked all day until she came to the deepest, darkest part of the forest.

SOPHIE: I can't believe how long that took! There's the house. And what a surprise, it's dismal. Can't wait to spend the rest of my life here...

The FOREST melts upstage and stands in neutral. SOPHIE is now in the house.

SOPHIE: Hello? Anyone here? Anyone? I don't know whether to be relieved or terrified. Mix of both? Mix of both.

The BIRD, who was among the FOREST flies forward.

BIRD: Turn back, turn back, young maiden fair, Linger not in this murderers' lair!

SOPHIE: You're not helping my terror and panic, dear bird.

BIRD: Turn back, turn back, young maiden fair, Linger not in this murderers' lair!

SOPHIE: Heard you the first time. I don't think anyone's home though, let's see what I can find.

The BIRD flies off. SOPHIE continues to look around. An OLD WOMAN comes forward. DIRE brings a stool for her to sit.

DIRE: Sophie went from room to room in the house, but they were all empty. At last she came to the cellar.

SOPHIE: Ma'am why are you sitting all alone in the basement?

OLD WOMAN: I'm just an old woman. No one cares about me.

SOPHIE: What a thing to say. Do you need a blanket, you shake so!
Can I bring you closer to the fire?

OLD WOMAN: Oh my child, why have you come?

SOPHIE: I'm supposed to marry the man who lives here.

OLD WOMAN: You are in a murderer's den. You think you are soon
to be married –

SOPHIE: Really, I had no say.

OLD WOMAN: But the only wedding you will keep is with death.

SOPHIE: Well. Can't say I'm surprised.

OLD WOMAN: I have been forced to put a great kettle on there with
boiling water. When they have you in their power, they will cut
you to pieces without mercy, cook and eat you.

SOPHIE: They're cannibals too? Better and better. There's nothing I can
do about this?

OLD WOMAN: No one's ever lived long enough to ask. We could help
each other escape, yes?

SOPHIE: Most definitely, yes.

OLD WOMAN: Crouch down behind that wine cask. Do not make a
sound or move or it will be the knife for you.

*There is a noise offstage of a rowdy group and
someone crying.*

OLD WOMAN: Quick! Hide!

*SOPHIE runs to hide behind a cube. She watches the
whole scene, and the audience should be able to see
her.*

*Ominous music plays. DIRE, GHASTLY and GRISLY
hold up a screen. The next sequence should be done
with some poetic movement behind a screen in
shadow, perhaps using shadow puppets. Don't show it.*

The sequence of events is this:

The robbers drag a girl in.

They give her a glass of white liquid, a glass of red liquid and a glass of yellow liquid.

Her heart explodes and she dies.

The robbers cut her into pieces and sprinkle salt on her.

They eat.

The music fades. The GRIMS remove the screen and we see the ROBBERS after the meal, all full and licking their fingers. DIRE gives ROBBER 1 a bloody hand, which wears a ring on one finger.

ROBBER 3: That was tasty. (burps)

ROBBER 1: (holding up the hand) Hey look! A gold ring.

ROBBER 2: Take it off. She won't need it anymore.

ROBBER 3: Hurry up!

ROBBER 1: (trying to take the ring off the hand) I'm trying, it won't come off.

HANS: (grabbing the hand) Do I have to do everything myself?

GRISLY gives HANS an axe. He takes the axe, puts the hand on a table, and brings down the axe on the table, as if "cutting" off the girl's finger. But the force causes the finger to fly into the air. The finger itself doesn't fly, but everyone follows it in the air as if it did. SOPHIE then holds up the finger to the audience (set previously) and looks at it with horror. She puts the finger in her pocket.

ROBBER 1: Where did it go?

ROBBER 2: It went up, where did it land?

HANS: Search for the ring!

The ROBBERS look around.

ROBBER 3: Have you looked behind the cask?

SOPHIE looks out in horror.

OLD WOMAN: (banging on a pot) Come and get something to drink. Leave it till morning, the finger won't run away from you.

HANS: The old woman is right.

OLD WOMAN: (*pouring drinks*) Drink up! Drink up my boys, drink up...

One by one the ROBBERS slowly slide down to the floor in a dead sleep.

OLD WOMAN: (*to SOPHIE*) You can come out. They won't wake till morning; I gave them a double dose of my sleeping drug.

SOPHIE: (*rising*) That was the most terrifying thing I've ever seen.

OLD WOMAN: Wait till you've lived as long as me.

SOPHIE: On that, we should leave. Now.

The ROBBERS all snore in unison. SOPHIE and the OLD WOMAN step their way carefully and slowly through the sleeping bodies. A ROBBER turns over, right in front of SOPHIE. HANS sits up in his sleep.

HANS: Don't take the pony!

And he falls right back down to sleep. SOPHIE and the OLD WOMAN continue to step their way through the bodies and make it through.

The FOREST moves forward around SOPHIE and the OLD WOMAN and in front of the ROBBERS. The ROBBERS sit up in neutral and exit.

OLD WOMAN: Which way do we go?

SOPHIE: The ashes have been blown away... but there are the peas! See how they shine in the moonlight? We'll be home by morning and that monster will never know I was there.

DIRE: They walked the whole night, and come morning arrived at the mill.

The FOREST turns their back on the audience. HORST enters.

GHASTLY: Sophie told her father everything exactly as it had happened.

HORST: He seemed so nice. (*with a sigh*) I guess no wedding them.

SOPHIE: Oh there'll be a wedding, all right.

GRISLY: And when the wedding day came, the bridegroom appeared.

HANS: (*entering*) I've been waiting for this day! Huzzah!

The actors playing the FOREST turn around with a cheer. They are now wedding GUESTS. The OLD WOMAN melts into the crowd. DIRE puts a wedding veil on SOPHIE.

GHASTLY: The Miller had invited all his relations and friends.

HORST: Come, come it's time to celebrate.

Everyone cheers.

HANS: It is a tradition in my family that we tell stories at weddings. Each person must tell a story, where shall we start?

Everyone talks at once, volunteering to be the first storyteller.

HANS: It must be the bride! Sophie, what story do you have to tell?

Everyone cheers and encourages SOPHIE to go first. SOPHIE says nothing.

HANS: Surely you have something to say, my darling. You must know a story.

Everyone cheers and encourages SOPHIE to go first. SOPHIE finally steps forward. The others who speak in this story move downstage.

SOPHIE: I do know a story. Let me tell you a dream I had. I was walking alone through a wood, and at last I came to a house where there wasn't a living soul. A bird flew by my head and cried:

SOPHIE & BIRD: Turn back, turn back, young maiden fair, Linger not in this murderers' lair!

SOPHIE: (*to HANS*) My darling, I only dreamt this. Then I went through all the rooms and even though they were empty, there was such a feeling of dread! I went down to the cellar where an old woman told me:

SOPHIE & OLD WOMAN: He will cut you into pieces. Kill you, cook and eat you.

SOPHIE: (*to HANS*) My darling I only dreamt this! The old woman hid me behind a cask and the robbers came home. They dragged in a girl, gave her three types of drink, cut her into pieces and ate her. And one of the robbers saw there was still a ring on her little finger and this man, (*pointing to HANS*) took an axe and cut it off.

But the finger flew up in the air, dropped behind the cask and fell in my lap. (*holding up the finger with the ring*) This is the finger with the ring.

She holds up the finger. Everybody gasps. HANS leaps to his feet and tries to escape, but the crowd of GUESTS is in on the trap and they move forward to hold him tight.

SOPHIE: And this man is planning on doing the same thing to me. (*beat*) My darling, I lied a little. I didn't dream this. And I certainly didn't dream what's going to happen next.

The GUESTS drag HANS off, as he shouts for his freedom. SOPHIE and the rest of the characters also exit.

DIRE: The guests at the wedding delivered the robbers over to justice.

GHASTLY: Who were hanged for their infamous deeds. The end.

Blackout A flashlight comes up underneath GRISLY's face.

GRISLY: The Goose Girl.

The flashlight clicks off. Lights up on the QUEEN and ELKE entering. FAIRY and BARBARA follow behind. BARBARA looks sour and pouts. (Note: Feel free to change QUEEN to ROYAL for an additional any gendered role.)

GRISLY: There once was a princess who had to travel a fair distance to meet the prince she was going to marry.

QUEEN: My child, it is time for you to travel to meet your prince.

ELKE: I have known this day will come.

QUEEN: We have packed your jewels, gold and silver, trinkets, fine dresses, everything to become a royal bride.

ELKE: Will I have to travel alone?

QUEEN: Absolutely not! Barbara will be your waiting-maid, and you will have gifts from your fairy consort.

BARBARA looks extremely sour, and makes a face out of sight of the QUEEN.

ELKE: Oh I'm glad. The thought of travelling alone is not pleasant.

FAIRY: Princess, here are my gifts. A special horse to carry you to the prince's kingdom, this is Falada.

DIRE steps forward as FALADA.

FALADA: (*played by DIRE*) Hello Princess.

ELKE: You speak? How wonderful!

FAIRY: And here is a lock of my hair. (*the FAIRY puts the "lock" into a locket and hangs the locket around ELKE's neck*) The hair is a charm that may be of use to you on the road. (*hugging ELKE*) Safe travels, dear princess.

QUEEN: Take care, my child. (*hugging ELKE*) Barbara! It is time to go.

BARBARA steps forward with a sigh. GHASTLY stands in for BARBARA's horse.

QUEEN: Deliver her safely to her prince, Barbara. We're counting on you.

BARBARA: Sure.

GRISLY: They all took a sorrowful leave of the princess, who got upon her horse and set off to her bridegroom's kingdom.

The QUEEN and the FAIRY hug ELKE and exit. BARBARA continues to look sour. BARBARA and ELKE stand on cubes, with their horses standing in front of them, to mimic "riding horses"

ELKE: Barbara, I am so thirsty. Pray, get down and fetch me some water from that brook.

BARBARA: If you're thirsty, get it yourself. I won't wait on you any longer.

ELKE: Oh. All right then.

ELKE steps off the cube and moves to the side. FALADA looks at BARBARA.

BARBARA: What are you looking at, horse?

FALADA: Nothing. Nothing at all.

ELKE: (*kneeling*) Oh the water moves so fast. (*she scoops her hand into the water and brings it to her mouth*) What will become of me if Barbara is no longer my waiting-maid?

GRISLY: (*moving forward*) And the magic lock of hair answered, (*bending down by ELKE*) Alas, alas! If your mother knew, her heart would break in two.

ELKE: I can't say anything. Barbara is my companion and I don't want to travel alone.

ELKE moves back to FALADA. All four continue on.

GRISLY: And they continued to travel together. They traveled on into the day as the sun rose higher into the sky.

ELKE: How hot the sun is! I'm so thirsty – Barbara, pray get down and fetch me some water.

BARBARA: Drink if you will, but I will not fetch anything for you.

ELKE: Oh. All right then.

ELKE mimes getting off her horse and moving off to the side. FALADA looks at BARBARA.

BARBARA: What are you looking at, horse?

FALADA: Nothing. Nothing at all.

ELKE: (*kneeling*) Oh what is to become of me?

GRISLY: And the magic lock of hair answered, (*bending down by ELKE*) Alas, alas! If your mother knew, her heart would break in two.

ELKE: I can't say anything. Barbara is my companion. I don't want to travel alone. (*She bends over to drink water*)

GRISLY: But as Elke leaned down to drink, the locket fell from around her neck and floated away with the water. (*GRISLY takes the locket off of ELKE*)

BARBARA, who has been watching, sees the locket float away.

BARBARA: Ah ha! The charm is gone! Now we'll see who's really in power. (*sees FALADA looking at her*) What are you looking at, horse?

FALADA: Nothing, nothing at all.

ELKE moves toward her horse. BARBARA mimes getting off her horse.

BARBARA: Oh no. That is not your horse any longer. You will take mine.

ELKE: Oh. All right then.

BARBARA: And you're going to give me your cloak. You'll wear mine instead.

ELKE: Oh. All right then.

They switch cloaks.

BARBARA: And you better not say a word. Because I'll kill you if you do. (to FALADA) Stop looking at me!

GRISLY: At last they arrived at the Prince's palace!

Everyone enters as members of the COURT with much fanfare, cheering, and waving of flags. The PRINCE goes right up to BARBARA who climbs off FALADA.

PRINCE: Princess Elke!

BARBARA: That's right, that's me.

PRINCE: Welcome to our kingdom. Please come this way, you must be tired from your long journey.

BARBARA: If you would, give my wretched companion some work to do. I don't want her to grow lazy with idleness.

PRINCE: I can't think of anything – oh! I have someone who takes care of my geese. She could be of help there.

BARBARA: Thank you, that is gracious. Dear husband, one more kindness?

PRINCE: Whatever you desire.

BARBARA: Task someone to cut off the head of my horse. It was terribly unruly and plagued me the entire trip.

ELKE: What?

BARBARA: Do you have something to say, peasant?

ELKE: No...

PRINCE: It shall be done.

The PRINCE leads BARBARA and the rest of the COURT offstage. ELKE sinks to the floor in misery. DIRE, GHASTLY and GRISLY move downstage.

DIRE: Barbara was afraid Falada would speak the truth.

GRISLY: Thus her grisly request.

GHASTLY: Barbara's wish was carried out.

GRISLY: And Elke was so distraught, she begged for Falada's head to be nailed against the large city gate.

DIRE: So she could see it every morning and evening.

GHASTLY: That's rather... ghastrly.

CURDKEN: (*entering*) Goose Girl, it's time to head to the meadow.

ELKE stands and DIRE stands on a cube, posing as FALADA's head.

ELKE: Good morning, Falada.

FALADA: Good morning.

ELKE: Oh what is to become of me?

FALADA: Alas, alas! If your mother knew, her heart would break in two.

CURDKEN: Did that horse head just talk?

ELKE: The geese are getting away!

ELKE runs offstage, leaving CURDKEN staring at FALADA.

GRISLY: This happened every morning and evening. Elke spoke to Falada's head and the head answered back.

FALADA: Alas, alas! If your mother knew, her heart would break in two.

GHASTLY: One day, Curdken could take it no longer and requested council with the Prince.

The PRINCE enters and CURDKEN stalks over to him.

CURDKEN: (*bowing*) Your Majesty, I cannot have that strange girl help me with the geese any longer.

PRINCE: Why?

CURDKEN: Because she cries and mopes all day. And she can make the horse's head talk.

PRINCE: Which horse head?

CURDKEN: The one you cut off for your bride.

PRINCE: It talks?

CURDKEN: I know!

PRINCE: Hmmm. Do it for one more day.

CURDKEN huffs in frustration and exits. The PRINCE sneaks to hide behind FALADA.

PRINCE: So you're a talking horse head? Are you magical?

FALADA says nothing.

PRINCE: You're just a head, right?

FALADA says nothing. CURDKEN enters, crosses the stage without even looking at FALADA, and exits. ELKE enters slowly following behind. She reaches FALADA.

ELKE: Good morning, Falada.

FALADA: Good morning.

ELKE: Oh what is to become of me?

FALADA: Alas, alas! If your mother knew, her heart would break in two.

The PRINCE jumps out.

PRINCE: You do talk! (to ELKE) Who are you?

ELKE: I cannot tell you! If I say, I shall lose my life.

PRINCE: Nonsense. Who has all this power to threaten you?

ELKE: No one I suppose.

PRINCE: Tell me everything.

The PRINCE and ELKE exit.

GRISLY: Elke told the whole story of her journey and everything Barbara did.

DIRE: And the Prince realized at once that he had been courting a false bride.

The GRIMS make a sound of trumpet fanfare. The entire COURT enters, talking quietly with one another.

GRISLY: The royal Prince and his future bride!

The COURT applauds as the PRINCE and BARBARA enter.

BARBARA: My prince, what a wonderful feast!

PRINCE: Did you like it?

BARBARA: I'm stuffed! (*trying to recover her "princess" persona*) Er, will we eat like that often?

PRINCE: Not often. But it is a special occasion after all. (*speaking louder for all to hear*) For we must celebrate my bride-to-be!

The COURT applauds. At the same time, ELKE enters in a fancy, royal-looking cloak.

BARBARA: Who is that?

PRINCE: Do you not recognize her? Perhaps I did not introduce you. She is a distant cousin.

BARBARA: She is beautiful.

PRINCE: She is indeed. She is the most beautiful girl I have ever met. Aside from you.

BARBARA: Thank you, my prince.

PRINCE: My bride-to-be, I have a question for you. What do you think should happen to those who are false?

BARBARA: Why, what do you mean?

PRINCE: If someone is false, if they are not who they say they are, if they take someone else's place and claim it as their own – what do you think the punishment should be?

BARBARA: (*not getting it*) It should be swift and severe, my prince.

PRINCE: Is that so?

BARBARA: Why, that person should be thrown into a cask stuck round with sharp nails.

PRINCE: Is that right?

BARBARA: Absolutely. And, they should be dragged through the street by two white horses until they are dead. That is the punishment for the false.

PRINCE: And thus you have decided your own punishment. For this
(*pointing at ELKE*) is my true bride and you have been false by
taking her place.

BARBARA: I didn't mean it!

PRINCE: Take her away and execute her punishment.

BARBARA is dragged off by the COURT.

BARBARA: (*as she is dragged off*) No, please! Princess! Elke! Help me!
Don't let them kill me!

GRISLY: And the prince was married to his true bride.

GHAUSTLY: And they reigned over the kingdom in peace and happiness
all their lives.

DIRE: And the good fairy came to see them and brought Falada back to
life.

GRIMS: And Barabara was dead. The end.

Blackout. A flashlight clicks on underneath DIRE's face.

DIRE: The Dog and the Sparrow.

*The flashlight clicks off as the lights come up. DOG
lopes slowly onstage. DIRE stands with GRISLY and
GHAUSTLY.*

GRISLY: There once was a sheepdog with a terrible master.

DOG: I don't want to leave my home. But there's only so much a dog
can take.

*The DOG slowly crosses the stage. The SPARROW
enters and flies around the DOG.*

SPARROW: Hello, Friend Dog.

DOG: (*sadly*) Hello, Friend Sparrow.

SPARROW: Why are you sad?

DOG: I am hungry and have nothing to eat.

SPARROW: I can help. Come to town with me.

*The stage comes alive with townspeople walking
about. A BUTCHER (played by DIRE) and a BAKER*

(played by GHASTLY) hold up signs for their respective shops.

SPARROW: *(pointing)* There Dog! The butcher will give you meat.

DOG: He never will, Sparrow. He'll scorn me and drive me away.

SPARROW: I will peck a bit of meat for you from that shank when no one is watching.

The SPARROW flies toward the BUTCHER and behind their back, mimes pecking at a shank and a piece of "meat" falls to the ground.

SPARROW: Grab it Dog, grab it!

The DOG runs forward, grabs the "meat" and runs to the other side of the stage with the SPARROW creating a diversion in front of the BUTCHER flying and pecking at them.

SPARROW: *(creating a diversion)* Nothing to see here! Cheep chirrup! Cheep chirrup!

The BUTCHER runs offstage.

DOG: Oh thank you, Sparrow.

SPARROW: Have you had enough, Dog?

DOG: Yes, I have had meat enough. But oh for a little bit of bread.

SPARROW: Come with me. The baker will give you bread.

DOG: He never will. He'll scorn me and drive me away.

SPARROW: I will peck at a roll for you when no one is watching.

The SPARROW flies over to the BAKER and behind their back, mimes pecking at a roll of bread until the "roll" falls on the ground.

SPARROW: Get it, Dog!

The DOG runs forward, grabs the "roll" and runs to the other side of the stage with the SPARROW creating a diversion in front of the BAKER flying and pecking.

SPARROW: *(creating a diversion)* Nothing to see here! Cheep chirrup! Cheep chirrup!

The BAKER runs offstage. The Townspeople exit.

DOG: Oh thank you, Sparrow.

SPARROW: Have you had enough, Dog?

DOG: Yes, I have had bread enough. Let us walk a bit.

The DOG lopes slowly and the SPARROW flies around.

SPARROW: Certainly. It is a beautiful day. Even though it is quite warm out.

DOG: It is. Friend Sparrow, *(a big stretch and yawn)* I am tired and would like to sleep. I'm going to take a nap in the road.

SPARROW: Do then, Friend Dog. I will wait for you.

The DOG lies down and the SPARROW circles. Suddenly there is the noise of a wagon approaching. This should be created by the GRIMS. For example, they slap on a table to mimic horse hooves, or hit a wood block, or hit a snare drum, or cup their hands and slap on their legs. Whatever works best for you.

SPARROW: *(looking off)* Look how fast this waggoner comes. They're heading right for you, Dog. *(realizing with alarm)* They're heading right for you!

The WAGGONER enters, miming holding the reins of a horse, cracking the whip. GRISLY acts as the horse. DIRE is behind the WAGGONER, with a cardboard shaped cart and moves it along with the WAGGONER. It should not be a real cart. The SPARROW flies around the WAGGONER.

SPARROW: Watch where you're going! Move to the side! Don't you see there's a dog in the road? Cheep chirrup!

WAGGONER: Get out of here Sparrow! Git!

SPARROW: Waggoner, move to the side! If you don't, I will make you poor.

WAGGONER: You're just a bird. You can't make me poor.

The WAGGONER gives a loud "Yee-ha!", cracks the whip and runs right over the DOG, causing the DOG to cry out and roll away. The WAGGONER keeps on. Note: At this point, the WAGGONER stays in place, and mimes as if moving forward.

SPARROW: (*crying out*) Dog! (*flying at the WAGGONER*) You killed my friend! This will cost you dear.

WAGGONER: Cost me? You can't do me any harm. You're just a bird!

The WAGGONER gives a loud "Yee-ha!" and cracks the whip.

SPARROW: Let's see how you sell any wine from that barrel if the wine is missing.

The SPARROW flies to the back of the "cart" as the WAGGONER continues on, cracking the whip and yelling "Yee-aa!" The SPARROW "pecks" at the cart and "wine" begins to flow out. DIRE lets go a trail of purple cloth to represent the leaking wine.

SPARROW: Cheep chirrup! Farewell wine! Cheep chirrup!

WAGGONER: What's this?

The WAGGONER pulls up on the reins, stops the HORSE, and runs to the back of the cart.

WAGGONER: An empty cask! Oh how unfortunate am I!

SPARROW: Not unfortunate enough.

The SPARROW goes to the HORSE and pecks its eyes out.

SPARROW: Cheep chirrup! Farewell eyesight! Cheep chirrup!

GRISLY: (*as HORSE crying out*) Neeeeeeigh! Neeeeeeigh!

If you can, give GRISLY a painted eye mask to show blood red eyes.

WAGGONER: Sparrow! How dare you blind my horse.

GHASTLY gives The WAGGONER an axe. The WAGGONER goes after the SPARROW.

SPARROW: (*moving out of the way*) Cheep chirrup! Cheep chirrup!

The WAGGONER swings the axe. It appears that the axe hits the HORSE instead.

GRISLY: (*as HORSE crying out*) Neeeeeeigh!

The HORSE falls to the ground and dies.

SPARROW: Farewell horse!

WAGGONER: What? Oh how unfortunate am I!

SPARROW: Not unfortunate enough! Cheep chirrup! (exits)

DIRE, GHASTLY and GRISLY move all the horse and waggon material out of the way.

WAGGONER: (walking in place) No horse. No wine. And I must leave my cart. What else could happen?

The SPOUSE enters in a panic.

SPOUSE: Oh what misfortunes I have had. Look!

The SPARROW enters with as many other birds as you can manage in the cast. They fly across the stage in a flurry of sound and wings, peck at the WAGGONER and the SPOUSE and exit.

SPOUSE: They have got into our loft and eaten all our corn. We have nothing left!

WAGGONER: Oh, how unfortunate am I!

SPARROW: (entering and flying around the WAGGONER) Not unfortunate enough! Cheep chirrup! Waggoner, you will die for what you have done.

WAGGONER: I've had about enough of you.

The WAGGONER grabs the axe and starts to chase the SPARROW.

SPARROW: You will die!

The WAGGONER hits out at the SPARROW, misses.

SPARROW: You will die!

The WAGGONER hits out at the SPARROW, misses.

SPARROW: You will die!

The WAGGONER hits out at the SPARROW, misses and hits an object. The axe gets stuck in the object.

SPARROW: You will –

The WAGGONER grabs the SPARROW by the neck.

SPARROW: Cheep chirrup!

WAGGONER: Ah ha! Who will die now, Sparrow!

SPOUSE: (*grabbing the axe*) Shall I kill it?

WAGGONER: No! That would be too merciful. It shall die much more cruelly when I swallow it whole!

The WAGGONER mimes eating the bird. The SPARROW moves behind the WAGGONER.

SPARROW: No, Waggoner!

The SPARROW peaks their head out from behind the WAGGONER.

SPARROW: You haven't gotten rid of me yet!

WAGGONER: Stay down! Agh! (*to SPOUSE*) Kill the bird in my mouth! Kill it!

SPARROW: You will die for this!

WAGGONER: Kill it!

The SPOUSE swings the axe and hits the WAGGONER square in the head. (Obviously not. But that's the impression.)

WAGGONER & SPOUSE: Oh. No.

The WAGGONER falls down dead and the SPOUSE runs off in a panic.

SPARROW: That's what you get, Waggoner, when you kill a friend.
(*exits*)

DIRE: Exactly. That's what you get. No horse, no wine, no corn, no life.

GHASTLY: The end.

Blackout.

NOTE: This next tale requires a magical Juniper tree that pulses, breaks apart, comes together in different forms and returns to a tree. Whenever the Juniper Tree is mentioned, you want about 4-5 actors creating the tree. Don't be secretive about it, create the tree and show the actions of the tree in full light. When the tree is not in action, the actors stand in neutral. This is the magic of play – someone says I'm a tree and we

believe. This is a great opportunity to have some fun with physical action as an ensemble.

A flashlight clicks on underneath GRISLY's face.

GRISLY: The Juniper Tree.

The flashlight clicks off as the lights come up. CARL and ANNA enter, arm in arm.

CARL: My dear, how are you feeling?

ANNA: Better, and better, my true one. *(she stumbles a bit and CARL catches her)*

CARL: Oh my dear.

ANNA: Don't worry my true one... I'm fine. I love walking the grounds with you.

The actors playing the JUNIPER TREE enter and theatrically form the Tree.

CARL: This juniper tree has been in my family for generations.

ANNA: It's my favourite one. If only we had children to play beneath it.

CARL: One day, my dear.

ANNA: Do you think? It is my greatest sorrow, Carl.

CARL: I know it will happen.

ANNA: I will pray to make it so. If I had but one child as red as blood and as white as snow.

The tree pulses and reaches out toward ANNA with its branches. ANNA also reaches out. She lets out a cry as she crumples to the ground.

CARL: Anna!

ANNA: Promise me that if I die, you'll bury me under the juniper tree.

CARL: You're going to live a long time yet.

ANNA: Don't be sad, I feel my wish has been granted. I'm happy and at peace.

Music plays. Or perhaps the tree sings! CARL helps ANNA up. They hold each other. ANNA breaks the embrace and walks backwards a few steps, before

slowly turning and exiting. The tree sways and reaches out to her as she goes, before returning to a tree shape.

GHASTLY: Anna's wish did come true. A child red as blood and white as snow. A son.

GHASTLY hands CARL a baby swaddled in a blanket – JACOB.

CARL: If only you could have lived to see him! I will call him Jacob.
(exits)

DIRE: Carl kept his promise and buried Anna beneath the juniper tree.

GRISLY: At first he wept himself sore. And then after some time he could bear the loss.

GHASTLY: And then after some time longer still, he took another wife. And had another child.

A boy runs on this is JACOB ten years later.

JACOB: Marli! Marli, where are you?

MARLINCHEN runs in.

JACOB: There you are!

MARLINCHEN: Jacob, why must we always play here?

JACOB: The tree brings me peace.

MARLINCHEN: Mama doesn't like it. Let's go to the river.

GERTRUD enters.

GERTRUD: Marli! Come here my dove! (*MARLINCHEN runs over*)
There's a treat for you in the kitchen. You've been such a good girl.

MARLINCHEN: Thank you, Mama! (*runs off*)

GERTRUD turns to JACOB with her fists clenched and a face full of anger.

GERTRUD: You! Useless lump of coal. How dare you think you can play when there are chores to be done.

JACOB: I'm sorry!

GERTRUD: (*chases him*) Get out of my sight you miserable little idiot!

JACOB runs off.

GERTRUD: Stupid little monster! Oh! It pierces my heart to think he will always stand in the way of my Marli getting what she deserves. She deserves everything.

GERTRUD moves stage right (away from the TREE). The actors playing the TREE look at one another in anger. When the action moves away from them, they relax and stand in a neutral position.

DIRE, GRISLY and GHASTLY put a kitchen table and chair into place. Then between the three of them they form a large heavy chest with a lid that goes up and slams down. Note: It's important that the chest is human-created, rather than a real chest with a lid, as you'll soon see.

MARLINCHEN skips on.

MARLINCHEN: Mama, may I have an apple?

GERTRUD: Yes, my child.

GERTRUD gestures opening the lid of the chest.

DIRE, GRISLY, GHASTLY: *(sound of chest opening)* Creeeak.

GERTRUD pulls out an apple (mimed) and lets the lid go.

DIRE, GRISLY, GHASTLY: *(sound of chest closing)* Slam!

MARLINCHEN: That lid is so heavy.

GERTRUD: It is, my child. Keep your fingers far away. *(teasing)* If I let go of this lid it'll snap them clean off!

MARLINCHEN: Goodness! May Jacob have an apple too?

GERTRUD: HIm? An apple? No! *(a thought comes over her)* Why... yes. Yes he can. When he comes home from school.

MARLINCHEN: *(looking out as if at a window)* I see him on the hill.

GERTRUD: *(distracted)* Go wash up, Marli.

MARLINCHEN: But I want to play with Jacob.

GERTRUD: *(taking the "apple" away from MARLINCHEN)* Go wash! Now!

MARLINCHEN exits with a pout. GERTRUD goes to the chest and opens the lid.

DIRE, GRISLY, GHASTLY: (sound of chest opening) Creeeek.

GERTRUD throws the “apple” back in and lets the lid go.

DIRE, GRISLY, GHASTLY: (sound of chest closing) Slam!

JACOB enters.

GERTRUD: Jacob! My boy! My dear son!

JACOB: (not used to this) Yes?

GERTRUD: My dear son, call me Mother.

JACOB: Ok... Mother.

GERTRUD: It is good to see you. Did you have a good day at school?

JACOB: Yes... (GERTRUD prompts him)... Mother.

GERTRUD: You must be hungry. Will you have an apple?

JACOB: What's the matter?

GERTRUD: Why, nothing.

JACOB: You look... dreadful, Mother.

GERTRUD: Come now, I am offering you a fresh, beautiful, tasty apple from the chest. Don't you want one? Aren't you hungry, after that long walk?

JACOB: Yes... All right, give me an apple.

GERTRUD lifts the lid of the chest.

DIRE, GRISLY, GHASTLY: (sound of chest opening) Creeeek.

GERTRUD: Take one out for yourself.

JACOB keeps looking at her but moves forward. He reaches the chest, looks at her one more time, and slowly reaches just his hand into the chest.

GERTRUD: One from the bottom, Jacob. They're the best.

JACOB slowly leans over into the “trunk.” AND CRASH! GERTRUD slams the lid down.

EVERYONE: (*Onstage and off. A big bombastic sound.*) SLAM!

JACOB jerks about and then lies still. DIRE places a cloth bag over JACOB's head, to indicate that his head has been sliced clean off. Then DIRE, GHASTLY and GRISLY get out of the way so all we see is JACOB's body lying on the floor. Remember! Go with the aspect of "play." It can't be real, and no one is going to think it's real, but how can it be staged?

GERTRUD stumbles back, holding her hands to her chest in horror.

GERTRUD: Jacob? Jacob?

GERTRUD moves forward and gingerly pokes JACOB with her foot. Nothing happens.

GERTRUD: His head! His head! (*she starts laughing*) His head is snapped clean off! (*she stops*) His head is gone and Jacob is gone! (*she laughs*) What am I going to do? I can't let anyone find out.

Music plays. GERTRUD gets a chair and pulls JACOB's lifeless body onto it, the cloth still over his head. The body keeps sliding and GERTRUD keeps stuffing it back into the chair.

GERTRUD: (*as she struggles*) Come on, you. Stay still! Stay! (*she looks at the body*) If I put his head back on and bind it with a handkerchief no one will know.

GERTRUD pulls off her scarf. As she ties a scarf around JACOB's neck, DIRE takes the cloth off of JACOB's head. When they step away, we see JACOB's face in a look of horror. GERTRUD tries to fix JACOB's face. She cannot. She puts an apple in his hand.

Music fades. MARLINCHEN calls from offstage.

MARLINCHEN: Mama!

GERTRUD jumps and runs over to the table trying to look busy. MARLINCHEN enters.

MARLINCHEN: Mama I want – what's wrong with Jacob?

GERTRUD: Nothing. He looks the same as he always does.

MARLINCHEN: He looks so pale.

GERTRUD: He's fine.



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