

Ali and the Five Thieves

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Act 1

Scene 1

Characters: ALI – a teenage girl, FAIRY GODMOTHER (FGM) – a middle-aged man dressed as Fairy Godmother. A small mob of assorted CHILDREN.

EXT: The Alleyway – Evening.

(A grubby looking alleyway is strewn with OLD CARDBOARD BOXES. Off to one side is the big door to some kind of warehouse.)

ENTER CHILDREN: They burst onto the stage, chasing each other - then stop dead.

CHILD 1: Hello, what's all this?

CHILD 2: (Checking out surroundings) I think it's a show.

CHILD 3: Like a story?

CHILD 2: Ye, like a story.

ENTER ALI (Up stage): She's a TEENAGE GIRL wearing TRAINERS, JEANS, T-SHIRT and carries a small RUCKSACK.

CHILD 1: It's starting! Come on.

EXIT CHILDREN – dashing out.

ALI throws the RUCKSACK to the ground and starts to arrange the boxes into a rough `NEST' and removes a SLEEPINGBAG. Then looks up, scans the audience, then addresses it.

Ali: (To audience) I'm so tired! I can't tell you how tired I am. ... I'm so tired I don't even mind sleeping on the street – again. Mad that's what it is. London's supposed to be paved with gold – not cardboard. (Having a little fantasy) `Yes, I've recently moved into this really cool, architect designed cardboard box.' (She starts to organise some CARDBOARD BOXES) One day – you'll see. (She turns away and starts to climb into her nest of boxes)

ENTER FGM: He's a large man (we'll discover later that he's a policeman) dressed as a FAIRYGODMOTHER. His TUTU is over a police uniform. He carries a rubbishy SILVER WAND with a STAR on top. He is chewing GUM.

FGM: Best have some more of that nicotine gum. I'm sure giving up smoking wasn't supposed to be this difficult. (Starts trying to rummage in nonexistent pockets) Hell, it makes you want to cry! No fags - no gum - no nothing.

Ali: (from under BOXES) No peace!

FGM: Eh! What! (he looks around, startled – he trips over Ali. She rockets out from under her boxes, in a rage, taking up combat stance.)

Ali: Oi, you. What do you think you're doing kicking someone when they're sleeping?

FGM: Oh, now, look I'm really sorry mate. I didn't see you there.

Ali: Don't you call me `mate.'

FGM: Blimey - you're a girl!

Ali: (Speaks in a sarcastic tone) What! I'm a girl? I always wondered why all the other boys in the changing room looked at me funny. Of course I'm a girl, you great ... (beginning to take in the strange look of the guy before her) whatever you are.

FGM: Fairy Godmother

Ali: You, a fairy godmother? (Laughs) I don't think so.

FGM: Yeh, you're right; I'm not `A fairy godmother.' I'm THE Fairy Godmother

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Ali: OK, then how about granting me a wish (again with sarcasm).

FGM: Traditionally, it's three, Love.

Ali: And I'm not your Love.

FGM: Oh, yeah, sorry love. I forgot girls don't like being called that these days. Anyways, what's a nice girl like you doing sleeping out rough? No, no, don't tell me – your Mum. Your Mum had a new friend.

Ali: Dave – Dave slime. 'My friends call me Flash,' is what he used to say. Don't think he saw the joke.

FGM: Joke?

Ali: Yeah, you know you use Flash to clean Slime off the floor!

FGM: (Smiles) So what, you left and took to sofa surfing your friends?

Ali: Until I ran out of sofas and friends! (she sighs) So here I am.

FGM: You know you've chosen the worst possible place to doss. Move on girl, move on.

Ali: No, I'm staying right here.

FGM: Well, I won't make you. But you take care and stay out of trouble. You hear?

(FGM starts to walk away)

Ali: Got to get back to the top of your Christmas tree have you?

FGM: No. Panto – rehearsals.

EXIT FGM

Ali: (shouts after him) Hey, what about my three wishes?

FGM: (Off stage) Granted.

(Ali starts getting back under her boxes)

Ali: Granted! I didn't even tell him what they were! ... Fairy Godmother indeed! Mad Old Git's more like it.

Still, nice enough – even if he does look like a copper.

(Climbs back under her BOXES.)

Scene 2

EXT: The Alleyway – Later the Same Evening

Characters: Ali, Charlie (Chief villain – a young woman), Dougie, Billy and Eddie (3 villains of no particular age)

Charlie: (Off Stage) Come on. Get a move on!

(Ali springs up from out of her 'nest.')

Ali: (To audience.) What was that?!

Charlie: (Off Stage) Haven't got all night ... not unless you want to spend it in a nice warm cell that is, boys.

Ali: (To audience.) Oh, no. This cannot be good and just when I was having a beautiful dream, too.

(Ali dives behind a big PILE OF BOXES where she looks out from.)

Enter CHARLIE – she crosses to the opposite wall and stands next to the keypad. She is followed by DOUGIE, BILL and EDDIE who stagger comically under vast PILES of BOXES.

Charlie: (To audience?) I don't know why I put up with it. Truly I don't. Once I could have been someone. I could have been a villain so EVIL Tarantino himself would have been quaking in his boots. Now look at me - my whole evil empire is just (turning to her stooges and pauses...) three useless, spineless NINNIES.

(Dougie, Billy and Sam drop their BOXES and slip and slide around all over the place while trying to hide behind each other.)

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Charlie: (Turning to DOUGIE, BILL and EDDIE) Now, stand against the wall.

(Dougie, Bill and Eddie stand with their back to the wall)

Charlie: Faaa-cing it! With your eyes SHUT! (Unseen by the thieves Ali creeps from under her boxes and positions herself where she can see without being seen.) Because I don't want anyone being able to go off and tell their friends down the pub how you get into my little secret hideaway. And you know what happens if anyone finds out how to get in, don't you? DON'T YOU?

Dougie: Absolutely boss

Bill: Yeah,yeah.

Eddie: Yes, boss.

(They turn around, hands against the wall - like hoods being frisked in an American cop movie)

Charlie: And what happens if they do...(she turns quickly round and slams her hand on Dougie) Dougie?

Dougie: (his voice is shaking) Oh, it's terrible, terrible!

Charlie: Good! (turns and threatens Bill)... Bill would you like to expand?

Bill: (also responds shaking) Err, well no, not really (Then) Oh, yeah, see what you mean. It means you throw fruit at us.

Eddie: Excuse me Boss, but what kind of fruit would that be - exactly?

Charlie: Oh, excellent, a new recruit so keen to learn he asks questions. Tell him Bill.

Bill: Peaches, plums, cherries, fruits of the forest.

Eddie: Oh, that's nice -I like fruits.

Charlie: (Mimicking - very camp) Oh, that's nice - I like those fruits. (Then getting worked up) Here I am, an under-appreciated criminal mastermind with an original line in no-reward and punishment and the best he can come up with is (Mimicking again) "Oh, that's nice."

Eddie: Well it's not like they're coconuts!

Charlie: Coconuts! - No, wouldn't do. I only buy British.

Dougie: And past its sell by date, Guv. Has to be past its sell by date or you don't get the discount.

Eddie: (to audience) Well, you didn't think a criminal mastermind like Charlie would use fresh do you?

(Looking exasperated Charlie crosses to the keypad, taps in the code and opens the door. - If possible - Light streams out.)

(From behind CHARLIE we see ALI react as if blinded by what she has seen. Then she dives down behind her BOXES again.)

(Dougie, Bill and Eddie stand, doing nothing.)

Charlie: Ok, you useless ninnies - get it stashed. And don't drop anything.

(Dougie, Bill and Eddie carry the boxes in. As they do so a small box is dropped.)

(When they are out of sight Ali comes out from behind her boxes and enthuses about what she has seen.)

Ali: Did you see that? Did you? No, I suppose not. It was fantastic! Never mind all that old nonsense about gold and rubies - even if you don't do bling you'd do that lot. I-pads. I-phones, kindles, computers, top of the range music systems, designer furniture of all kinds. I've never seen anything like it. Oh, No they're coming back.

(Ali dives for cover as the four thieves come out of the LOCKUP.)

Charlie: Right you are boys. Let's get going.

EXIT 4 Thieves

Ali: (To audience) yeah, scary or what? Ooooh, what have we got here? It's a Combo X1000 - Fancy Music communications system. Don't see many of these around seeing as they're not even on the market yet.

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(Takes it out of the box and puts it in her pocket.) Nice one! (She goes to get into her sleeping bag.)

ENTER CHILDREN:

CHILD 2: She'll be alright.

CHILD 3: But - what if the thieves find her? She hasn't got a home, or a family or anything.

CHILD 2: Good point. Maybe the man from the police panto could work some magic.

CHILD 1: Policeman?

CHILD 2: Of course. When did you see a fairy godmother with boots like his?

CHILD 3: look - something's happening.

EXIT CHILDREN pretending to be policemen.

Scene 3

EXT: Outside Smart House – Day

Characters: CHARLIE, Ali, Fiona (a posh woman and the mother of Nigel) Nigel (a teenage boy.)

ENTER CHARLIE

(CHARLIE goes over and marks the ground in front of one of the houses. As she does so ALI ENTERS from the other side of the stage and walks towards the front passing Charlie who's leaving. They eyeball each other as they pass.)

Ali: (To audience) I've been looking for a job. Want to get out of where I'm living if you see what I mean. But it's always the same: too young, not enough experience, don't look like a middle aged supermodel with really big ... brains. Here's a house.

(Ali knocks on the door and waits, she whistles – eventually a smartly dressed woman in her late 30s – Fiona – comes to the door. During the following exchange a teenage boy, Nigel, comes out of the house and stands watching.)

Fiona: No. I don't want it.

Ali: Don't want what?

Fiona: It. It. Whatever it is you're selling.

Ali: But I'm not selling anything.

Fiona: Oh. Just banging the door for fun were you. Casing the joint I expect. Get a job – that's what you should do.

Ali: But I want a job – that's why I'm here.

Fiona: And what do you think you can do, girl?

Ali: Not bothered - cleaning, housekeeper, cook, security? I could be your own security – permanent on site. I'd be good at that. I'm good at that kind of thing.

Fiona: What rubbish. Be off with you.

(Fiona goes inside and Ali walks dejectedly away. After a moment or two Nigel walks off in the same direction as Ali.)

EXIT NIGEL

SCENE 4

Characters: Ali, Nigel.

Exterior: Alley – Day

Ali is sitting on her sleeping bag, looking sad and fed up. --- Nigel comes into the alley.

Ali: Oh, ye. I saw you at that ladies house. Sent you round to offer me a job did she?

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(Nigel stops quite a long way from Ali.)

Nigel: No.

Ali: Then what do you want?

Nigel: Nothing.

Ali: Then go away. You're not wanted.

Nigel: Sorry. (He starts to walk away – then turns) Look, I'm sorry.

Ali: What for?

Nigel: Mum. She had no right.

Ali: Ye, well, she didn't know I wasn't going to rob her, did she?

Nigel: I still think she was out of order. ... I brought you some food.

Ali: So now I'm a charity case.

Nigel: Sorry. (He starts to walk away.)

Ali: No, don't go. Show us what you've got.

(Nigel hands her a plastic bag)

Nigel: smoked salmon.

Ali: oh, very posh.

Nigel: Sorry

Ali: And you say sorry too much.

Nigel: sorry

(They laugh. They eat. Then as they put the rubbish in the bag)

Ali: What's your name, anyway?

Nigel: Nigel.

Ali: No, you're not la-di-da enough to be a Nigel. I'm going to call you 'Sorry Boy' and now Sorry Boy, seeing as how you've taken me out for a delicious meal and brought me home again there's something you have to ask me.

Nigel: I can see you again?

Ali: yeah, ok.

(Nigel walks slowly away. They have their backs to each other and make victory signs to the audience – as if each is thinking - 'I've pulled!')

EXIT NIGEL

ENTER CHILDREN – (HALF WAY THROUGH DISCUSSION)

Child 1: What do you mean she's pulled? It was Nigel.

Child 3: Wasn't ...

Child 1: Was ...

Child 2: Never mind about that. It must be time she looked in that lockup.

Child 1: How's she supposed to do that? Say 'Open says me' and walk in.

Child 3: No, she was watching Charlie – remember.

EXIT CHILDREN

SCENE 5

Characters - Bill, Dougie, Eddie and Ali:

Interior- LOCKUP – EVENING

The LOCKUP is full of BOXES on top of which are balanced a few VASES and other random items.

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(We see Ali moving between piles of Boxes covered with WHITE SHEETS. She lifts a sheet, opens a box, takes something out and puts it in her pocket, then puts the sheet back, carefully. She hears the THREE STOOGES coming and dives behind a box. They are talking as they enter carrying more boxes.)

Bill: Fancy Charlie letting us have the pin number to the lockup!

Eddie: Maybe it's a test.

Dougie: No, she's got a meeting – she says.

Eddie: Meeting?

Dougie: Yeh, someone's going to take all this stuff off her hands.

Bill: Even so, it's not like her, I reckon.

Eddie: Well, we're here. Let's get it put away and go. I don't like it. I feel like I'm being watched. (He stares at the audience?)

Dougie: Oh, yeah!

Eddie: Yeah, Charlie told me this place was built on a medieval grave yard ... and at night ... 'they' walk.

Dougie: Who would that be, Pal?

Eddie: Ghosts!

(From behind her boxes Ali gives a short frightened squeak.)

Bill: What was that?

Eddie: I didn't hear anything.

Dougie: That ... over there.

(He points in the general direction of Ali who squeaks again and changes her position. As she does so she moves a box slightly.)

Bill: It...

Dougie: m-moved.

Eddie: (sounding scared) I don't bbbelieve in ggghosts!

(Bill and Dougie start backing towards the exit.)

Dougie: Nor me but I believe in whatever's over there and I'M going TO scarper.

Bill: Me too.

Dougie: but if you want to go and shake hands with whatever that is – you're welcome.

(Eddie starts edging cautiously towards where Ali is hiding – trying to be brave. As he gets very near Ali, covered in a WHITE SHEET, jumps up screaming. The Three Stooges run for the exit, climbing over boxes and each other in their hurry to get out.)

(Ali takes the sheet off.)

Ali: Phew! – thought I was goner there for a moment!

Exit

ENTER CHILD 2 and CHILD 3

Child 3: Where do you think the other one's got to?

Child 2: Don't know. Must be around here somewhere.

(The look around them)

ENTER CHILD 1 - running

Child 3: Hey, guess what?

Child 1 & 2: what?

Child 3: While that was happening, just round the corner, at the very same moment

Child 2: Don't tell them.

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(2 3 clamps his hand over Child 3's mouth to stop him speaking and 1 and 2 take him off the stage.)

SCENE 6

Characters: DAVE SLIME, CHARLIE, CHELSEA and POLICEMAN.

EXT: Outside Nigel's House – Day

(Charlie is standing around outside Nigel's house trying to look casual.)

Enter CHELSEA (Ali's Mother) who is all short skirts and high heels and DAVE SLIME (CHELSEA'S boyfriend) who dresses in branded clothes and bling. They approach Charlie.

DAVE SLIME: Excuse me. Is your name...

CHARLIE: (interrupts before Dave can finish talking) Charlie! (she puts out her hand and shakes his) Yes - and you must be the famous Dave Slime. So glad you found my humble street. (she gestures to the street around her)

CHELSEA: (Impressed- speaking to Charlie) You live here?

CHARLIE: (Waves her hand towards a house as if modestly admitting ownership and nods) And you're his business partner?

CHELSEA: Oh, no. I'm not the business sort. No head for it. I'm strictly the other. That's me.

CHARLIE: Charming. (She indicates dislike)

DAVE SLIME: Quite. Now Chelsea love (He takes out his wallet and passes her a credit card) Charlie and I have to go and discuss some very dull business. Why don't you take that and buy something special for your pretty self and I'll see you later.

(DAVE and CHARLIE begin to walk away)

DAVE SLIME: (Quietly to Chelsea) Yes, a thing of beauty and I do like beautiful (he smiles at Charlie) but I think we might be 'apart-ners' very soon if she doesn't change her tune.

CHARLIE: What tune would that be, if you don't mind me asking?

DAVE SLIME: It's a nasty little number called 'Her daughter's gone missing and she seems to think I was involved,' which I wasn't. No way.

CHARLIE: Never mind all that, let's look at some products. My boys have been working hard.

DAVE SLIME: Glad to hear it. And I see you marked the house. Good. Very good.

EXIT CHARLIE and DAVE SLIME

(CHELSEA looks around wondering where to go.)

ENTER a young POLICEMAN - idling along

POLICEMAN: Excuse me, madam, are you lost.

CHELSEA: Lost? Lost – Yes Officer, I need to make a report.

POLICEMAN: Glue, madam.

CHELSEA: What?

POLICEMAN: Glue – if you want to make something you'll need glue. And a hammer I should think.

CHELSEA: Ehh? – No! I don't want to make a report.

POLICEMAN: Then why did you say you did? You're not trying to waste police time I hope madam? That's a very serious offence, that is!

CHELSEA: No, I want to report a missing person.

POLICEMAN fishes for his NOTEPAD in one pocket, then for a PENCIL in another. Then with pad and pencil poised he waits.

POLICEMAN: Right madam. What name is it?

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CHELSEA: The name's Buns – Chelsea Buns.

POLICEMAN: I see, we could have a bit of a sticky situation here!

CHELSEA: why might this be sticky?

POLICEMAN: well, you're missing Chelsea Buns and I'm missing my whole tea!

CHELSEA: But I'm not missing.

POLICEMAN: Then why did you say you were?

CHELSEA: I didn't! It's my daughter, Ali, who's missing.

POLICEMAN: Your daughter – oh, the poor little mite. (He starts to cry.) Lost, lost, lost.

CHELSEA: (comforting) Ahhh, there, there. We'll find her.

POLICEMAN: Do you really think so?

CHELSEA: Yes, but first we'll take you back to the police station and brew you a nice cup of tea.

EXIT– CHELSEA comforting POLICEMAN.

ENTER CHILDREN

Child 3: Did you hear that? That Chelsea is Ali's mum.

Child 1: Ye, and she's going to find her.

Child 2: And have a nice cup of tea.

Child 1: Tell you what, there won't be any nice cups of tea for Charlie's boys when she finds out that her stuffs going missing.

EXIT CHILDREN.

SCENE 7

(Characters: Charlie Eddie, Bill and Dougie)

INT: LOCKUP – DAY

Charlie, Bill, Dougie and Eddie are lined up against the back wall looking worried.

Charlie: OK, which one of you useless ninnies stole the X1000?

Eddie: We never. Well, I never.

Bill: I never neither boss!

Dougie: No – nor me...

Charlie: You're just a bunch of lowlife thieves. That's what you are.

Bill: No, no – we wouldn't do that!

Dougie: Not to you, Boss

Charlie: Working with thieves. It's so depressing!

Dougie: Och, Boss

Charlie: (Shaking her head) so boring.

Eddie: Only technically.

(Charlie goes very close to Eddie – very menacing.)

Charlie: Bill, go and fetch the pineapple chunks.

(Eddie gives a squeak of fear)

Bill: Yes, Boss.

Charlie: And leave them in the tin.

Eddie: But I didn't do nothing, Boss.

Charlie: No? Then who did?

Bill: Perhaps it was the g-g-g-ghost.

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Charlie: A g-g-g-ghost?

Dougie: We saw it with our own eyes, Boss!

Charlie: Really, and this g-g-g-ghost steals my mobile phones and listens to music while playing with its iplayer, does it?

Eddie: Oh, Boss, you don't think You don't think that we've been visited by a ghoul from the dark side, do you?

Charlie: I think we've been visited by a thief and if you don't catch him you blithering ninnies will be visiting the dark side sooner than you'd planned...if you take my meaning.

Dougie: Right you are, Boss.

Eddie: Right away, Boss.

Bill: Right...

Charlie: Well?.... FIND HIM!

(The Three thieves almost jump out of their skins – then EXIT running.)

ENTER CHILDREN

Child 1: look at them go.

Child 3: Where to

Child 2: pub, I should think.

Child 3: Pub?

Child 2: well they have to start looking somewhere and (looking off stage) it looks to me like they're starting in the White Horse.

EXIT CHILDREN

SCENE 8

Characters: Dave Slime, Mr Trader (a middle aged shopkeeper and Nigel's father) Fiona, Ali and Nigel.

EXT: street Outside Nigel's House – DAY

(DAVE SLIME is finishing a conversation with NIGEL'S FATHER – Mr TRADER who is a MIDDLE-AGED SHOPKEEPER. Also present is FIONA.)

Dave Slime: So, that's arranged then? I will bring my goods around to your shop and storage facility this evening, where you'll let me leave them over night? When would be a good time for you? After you've closed up for the day – perhaps?

ENTER ALI - She stops dead in her tracks, surprised, then moves to the side of the stage to watch.

Mr Trader: Shall we say seven o'clock?

Dave Slime: Seven – Perfect. (Shaking hands) And, Mr Trader, may I say how kind you are and that it's been a very real pleasure doing business with you.

Mr Trader: Oh, not at all. My pleasure, Mr Slime, I assure you.

EXIT DAVE SLIME and Mr TRADER

Ali: (To Audience) How did they get here? That was Mum standing there like a simpering cow next to the disgusting Mr David Slime. And what was all that about? I mean, wasn't he being charming? (Sticks finger in throat and mimics being sick noises & actions, then speaks sarcastically, mimicking what was said) 'A very real pleasure' I ask you! The only thing that gives him pleasure is ripping people off!

ENTER NIGEL

Ali: Sorry Boy!

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Nigel: Ali!

Ali: What are you doing here?

Nigel: I live here...remember?

Ali: Right. So the man I saw The Slime talking to must have been your Dad?

Nigel: Don't know. What did he look like?

Ali: (Describes Nigel's dad)

Nigel: Yeh, that's him. Why the sudden interest?

Ali: He was doing a deal, very charming, if you know what I mean.

Nigel: You mean the geezer he was talking to? – he's just going to be storing some stuff at our place, for safe keeping.

Ali: No such thing as 'just' with Dave Slime. Tell your dad not to let him in the house. Tell him, have nothing to do with him. Not if he wants to have anything left by morning.

Nigel: (Laughs) He's alright!

Ali: That's what they all say. But he will be sorry. (She starts to walk away) Remember I told you. See you around.

EXIT Ali

SCENE 9

EXT: street Outside Nigel's House – EVENING

Characters: Dave Slime, Mr Trader.

(Three large boxes are delivered and placed in the middle of the stage.)

Mr Trader: Have no fear, Mr Slime, your property will be quite safe with me. (To the delivery men) Please would you take those round the back and put them in the basement.

(The boxes are wheeled away)

Dave Slime: Thank you, Mr Trader, I'm so pleased to know that it's where thieves can't get at it.

Mr Trader:

(TRADER AND DAVE SLIME shake hands and go separate ways)

(The LIGHTS DIM – Time passes. The THREE STOOGES dressed in BLACK climb silently out of the BOXES and move around the stage.)

(They they hand each other objects which they place on a trolley which they silently wheel away. Then TABLES, CHAIRS, LAMPS –EVERYTHING is moved away. Finally in total silence the boxes the three stooges were delivered in are removed and they are gone.)

EXIT THIEVES

ENTER FGM

FGM: Did you see that? The house of Mr. Trader robbed while poor Ali sleeps on the cold ground and her mother searches in vain. – Will the thieves be caught? Will the mother find her daughter? Will there be a happy ending? Who knows? But what I do know is that right now we have a short break. So, be back in twenty minutes and all your questions will be answered. And if you don't come back I'll nick you.

EXIT FGM

END OF ACT 1 – BREAK FOR 20 MINS – ½ HOUR

ACT 2 SCENE 1

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Characters: FGM and Ali.

Ext: Alley – Evening

Fairy Godmother is standing in the alley chewing gum.

Ali climbs out from her BOXES.

FGM: Hello, girl. I thought you'd be gone by now.

Ali: what – when my box is so warm and cosy? (Silence) You're allowed to chew indoors, you know.

FGM: Old habits die hard. Besides, if they knew they'd tease me.

Ali: You mean - the other big fairies?

FGM: (Laughs, then looks at his watch) Right. Must fly – can't be late for rehearsals or they'll have me banged up in me own nick. (Starts to go – then) Oops, almost forgot. (Takes a pen from somewhere about him and writes on a piece of paper, which he hands to Ali) Any problems text me.

Ali: Can't I just wish or rub a lamp or something?

FGM: Don't be silly – this is the real world. There's going to be trouble. Text me.

Ali: How do you know that?

FGM: The same way I know your mother's looking for you and that I don't like her partner. Remember - text me.

(ALI climbs into her SLEEPING BAG yawns and goes to sleep.)

EXIT FGM

SCENE 2

Characters: Ali and Nigel.

Ext: Alley – Day

(ALI is in her SLEEPING BAG.)

Enter NIGEL – he doesn't wait for ALI to wake up but starts speaking even before he has arrived on stage.

Nigel: (angry) Happy now are you?

Ali: (speaks slowly as just waking up) What? Sorry Boy, what you doing here so early? It's hardly morning.

Nigel: (still angry) I asked if you were happy?

Ali: of course I'm not happy! Why would I be?

Nigel: Because everything in our house has been stolen!

Ali: (surprised) What?

Nigel: Everything in our house is stolen!

Ali: You mean like – gone...taken...all of it?

Nigel: Yeh, stolen!

Ali: Why the low down, lousy, filthy, slimy, scummy ...

Nigel: nasty.

Ali: Who you calling nasty?

Nigel: Lousy, filthy, scummy, slimy, nasty

Ali: Oh, yeah, that too. In fact he's so nasty I'm surprised they don't sell special little shovels for scraping him off the pavement! I'll kill him! I'll murder him! I'll rip out his guts and use them for violin strings!

Nigel: I thought that was cats?

Ali: You're right. They don't use rat guts.

Nigel: Well either way it's not going to happen. The insurance company is sending round a top investigator bloke. If Slime did it, he'll catch him.

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Ali: What?

Nigel: If he did it they'll catch him.

Ali: If...if he did it? Of course he did it! And no, no insurance investigator or the combined forces of the world's crack police forces are going to be able to catch the ...

Nigel: (interrupts)Lousy, filthy, scummy, slimy, nasty piece of stuff you need a special scooper to scrape off the pavement.

Ali: Yeh, a fast learner I see? You need to understand that they're not going to catch The Slime!

Nigel: They are not going to catch the slime.

Ali: Good. Now I have something I need to do...and whilst I'm away if you happen to see the Slime having a pleasant chat with your Dad then I need you to drop into the conversation the fact that you've learned that the police are planning to raid those lockups tomorrow night.

Nigel: Are they?

Ali: I don't know. I don't know they're not.

Nigel: I'll tell him.

EXIT Nigel and Ali.

ENTER CHILDREN

CHILD 1: well are they or aren't they? That's what I want to know.

CHILD 2: I think they will.

CHILD 3: I think it's a trick.

CHILD 2: Bet it's not. Bet she knows.

CHILD 1: How much?

CHILD 2: Anything.

CHILD 3: £1000!

CHILD 2: £10,000!

CHILD 1: You haven't got it.

CHILD 2: Ye, well, you're still wrong.

EXIT CHILDREN arguing.

SCENE 3

Ext: Outside Nigel's Dad's House – Day

Characters: Fiona, Mr Search (another policeman), Trader and Nigel.

(Fiona, Mr Search and Trader are talking in the street. While Fiona, Search and Trader are talking Nigel wanders in and stands at the back of the stage watching. Meanwhile, others, e.g. children and villains wander through from time to time to give a sense of street.)

Fiona: My dear young man, it was ghastly, just too ghastly! They took everything! We could all have been murdered in our beds....dreadful, dreadful....

Mr Search: No madam, I don't think there was any danger of that.

Trader: How so, Mr Search?

Mr Search: Well, for no.1, they took your beds!

Fiona: No they didn't!

Mr Search: But you just said they took everything? And if they took everything then that means that they took your beds and so you couldn't possibly have been murdered in them!

Fiona: Tsk! Well okay, everything except the beds!

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Mr Search: I see. Not everything, then? And do you happen to know how they got in ... or out?

Trader: well, no. that is a mystery?

Mr Search: A mystery you say. Yes, indeed.(pauses for thought) Unless someone let them in?

Fiona: Who? Who would do such a thing?

Mr Search: someone with access to the house, someone with keys, someone who stood to gain financially, wouldn't you say, Mr Trader. (As he says this he looks hard at Mr Trader.)

Trader: (Sounding offended) Oh, come on now! That's a preposterous suggestion!

Fiona: What's he saying, Honey Pooch? I didn't hear what he said?

Trader: (sarciastic tone) He's being very careful not to say that he thinks we engineered the robbery of our own house!

Mr Search: Or someone did it after you let them in?

Fiona: (Turns to Mr Search) you think we robbed our own house? Or Let someone in? Are you quite mad! Oh, you nasty, nasty little man. I never heard such a thing! (She starts hitting him, jumping on him and drives him off the stage.)

(Nigel walks towards the front of the stage.)

Nigel: Mum, Dad – Who was that?

Trader: Who do you mean, son?

Nigel: I mean the man Mum was beating black and blue.

Fiona: Not really black and blue.

Nigel: (To audience) That'll be just blue then! (ENTER DAVE SLIME and CHARLIE) Oh, look Dad. Here comes your new best friend.

Trader: Enough from you, Nigel, my boy. (To Dave Slime) My dear, Mr Slime...I don't know what to say...or how to tell you...but, we've been robbed!

Dave Slime: Robbed!! How awful! (He nudges Charlie)

Charlie: (she over exaggerates the shock of what she's heard, with insincerity in her tone) Oh, yeah. Awful, awful, outrageous, I just can't begin to get my head around the inconceivable dreadfulness of it all!

Dave Slime: (To Charlie, gently touching her on the shoulder to indicate that she was overacting) That'll do.

Charlie: (To Dave Slime) Oh, good. I was beginning to run out of steam anyway.

Trader: You must tell me what you had in your boxes and I will repay you for your loss?

Charlie: (surprised)He will?! (then questioning tone)You will?

Trader: It's the least I can do. I gave you my word and my word is my bond.

(Charlie starts to slobber and rub her hands together at the idea of all that money.)

Dave Slime: No, no. I wouldn't hear of such a thing. After all, what is a couple of hundred thousand between gentlemen?

Charlie: (shocked tone, takes a gasp to catch herself) A couple of hundred thousand?

(Dave Slime silences Charlie)

Trader: Mr Slime – what can I say?

Dave Slime: Say nothing because now, I fear, I must take you into my confidence. (He beckons Trader, Charlie and Fiona to him. Nigel goes over too.) I regret to say, I misled you.

Nigel: (Pretending) No, surely not.

Dave Slime: You see I was handling those boxes for the Ministry (the others draw in closer with interest) ...The Ministry of Defence!

Nigel: (Pretending surprise in a sarcastic tone) No, surely not?

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Fiona: (horrified) You mean, we were storing weapons?!

Dave Slime: No...not exactly, but it was top secret. But they have a special tracking device, so I'm confident that I will get them back. But I must ask you not to alert the police for fear of ...well you will understand don't you?

Fiona: But what about my furniture?

Dave Slime: (urging co-operation)...Well, I'm sure that in the interests of national security you'll comply with our request for now for silence?

Nigel: Don't worry mum. With those top secret tracking gizmos they'll track down the boxes and then Mr Slime will get our furniture back, faster than greased lightning. You see if he doesn't. Right?

Dave Slime: Err, something like that, I expect.

Nigel: Right. I knew it. Must be off, mum and Dad. Bye Mr Slime, I have to meet a friend of mine. I want to tell him about the police raid tomorrow night.

Dave Slime: (surprise) Police raid. Where exactly would that be, young man?

Nigel: Oh, the old lockups. Won't find anything, of course. Never do. Anyway, I must dash. Bye.

(Nigel dashes away)

Dave Slime: (suddenly in a panic) Ah, oh yes, is that the time? Must dash too, erm sorry about the fixtures and fittings...

(Dave Slime grabs Charlie by the arm and drags her away.)

Fiona: Isn't it strange, Squidgy-Pooh, how they all had to rush off?

Trader: Yes very odd.

EXIT FIONA and TRADER

(For a few moments nothing happens - then ENTER ALI pretending to be casual. ENTER NIGEL.)

Nigel: Hello, fancy meeting you here.

Ali: yes, what a coincidence. Ok, what happened?

Nigel: You were right. Flash Dave happened by with his business associate, the lovely Charlie. And you'll never guess what?

Ali: (sarcasm) The contents off Dave's boxes were worth hundreds of pounds?

Nigel: (almost laughing) Hundreds of thousands!

Ali: (deeper sarcasm) My, my, he has gone up in the world!

Nigel: And after I left I waited around the corner and he was very quick getting away.

Ali: Faster than Slime off a shovel, I'll bet! And that means that we can now go into phase two of the plan to treat Dave like the kipper he is.

Nigel: Eh?

Ali: We're going to stitch him up, stupid. Come on, back to my cardboard mansion and I'll tell you the plan...

EXIT ALI and NIGEL

SCENE 4

Characters: Ali, Dougie, Bill, Eddie, Children/Ghosts and Nigel.

EXT: LOCKUP - NIGHT

Bill: What do you reckon's going on then, boys?

Dougie: Damned if I know, laddy but I do know that our Charlie had the wind up her something terrible!

Eddie: heard about a police raid, that's what I reckon...

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Dougie: Could be. Hard to think what else would get her in such a flim-flam.

Bill: Well whatever it was, let's get the job done and get out of here.

(Wooo woooo is heard)

Bill: what was that??

(Ali stands up behind them)

Ali: Oh, that will be the ghosts.

Eddie: Who are you!

Ali: Oh, I live here. Didn't you know? I always enjoy watching you boys come and go. Of course you'll be go-ing down very soon.

Dougie: (threatening tone) Now listen, laddy

Ali: Lassie to you

Dougie: if you've grassed us up to the police

Ali: Police. Oh, no. No need of that. The ghosts and ghouls will get you. You do believe in ghosts, don't you?

Eddie: No, never.

Ali: Oh, I do. I've never seen them, of course. Only thieves can. That's what I've heard. Something to do with a curse I think it was.

Bill: Rubbish – that last one was only someone who had got in by mistake. That's what I think.

Dougie: Right, the lassie is just trying to put the wind up our kilts.

Ali: Oh, well I guess you'd better go in then. I won't watch.

(She turns her back to them as they key in the number. The door opens. About half a dozen small children dressed as ghosts swarm out and around the Three Stooges.)

(The three stooges try to run away but they keep being stopped by the `ghosts')

Ghosts: wooo, wooo, Billeeee, Dougieeee, Eddieeee, wooo

Eddie: (Frightened – squeaky) How do they know our names.

Ali: I suppose they would. Expect they know where you live to so they can haunt you.

Bill: (scared) Oh, no! Get them off me!

Ali: (calm firm tone) What? Get what off you?

All Three Stooges: (hysterical with fear) The ghosts, the ghosts! Get them off! Help (Adlibbed)

Ali: (informing tone) Ah well, if you want them to go away I remember that there's a way to break the curse.

All Three Stooges: (urgent and begging- all at once) What is it? Tell us! Tell us!

Ali: (patronising tone) I could...but first I need a magic word.

Dougie: (looking at one another confused) Magic word? We don't know any magic words!

Bill: Please, pleeease.

Ali: First time out- Well done!

Bill: Ok – so what do we do now?

Ali: It's obvious – Dumbo - you take the stolen property back.

Eddie: We're doing it.

Bill: Ye, ye we're doing it.

Dougie: On the case, lassie.

(Still followed by the GHOSTS BILL, DOUGIE and EDDIE, fall over themselves to grab CHAIRS covered in DUSTSHEETS and then run off the other side of the stage still being chased by Ghosts)

EXIT THIEVES and CHILDREN.

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ENTER NIGEL – laughing fit to bust.

Nigel: Where did you find the ghosts?

Ali: Live on the street and you make lots of friends in the most unlikely places. Now, Sorry Boy, what time do your parents get up in the morning?

Nigel: Well Dad says he needs all the sleep he can get but Mum gets up every day and makes a cup of tea at 7.30 sharp.

Ali: O.k. Outside your house. 7.30, on the nose, I'll be there.

ALI turns towards her BOXES.

EXIT NIGEL.

SCENE 5

EXT: Outside Nigel's House – Night

(On a dimly lit stage we see the thieves stealthily returning the property. They carry boxes and chairs and all kinds of things. As they do so the street scene is also being built.

ENTER CHILDREN.

Child 3: What are they doing?

Child 1: Returning the stuff.

Child 2: So they won't be haunted.

Child 3: But how are they going to get in?

Child 2: How do I know?

Child 1: It's a story!

Child 3: And those ghosts were just ...

Child 1 and 2: Shhh

Child 1 and 2 bundle Child 1 of the stage.

EXIT THIEVES – still moving stealthily.

The LIGHTING levels rise

EXT: Outside Nigel's House – Early Morning.

Characters: Ali, Fiona, Trader, Seeker, Nigel

(Ali is waiting outside Nigel's House. She checks her WATCH and starts a count down)

Ali: 7.29 and 55 seconds, and 56, 57, 58, 59 ...

(Ali cups one ear in her hand – from off stage (inside the house) an ear splitting scream is heard.)

Ali: yup – must be 7.30!

Trader: (off stage) What is it?

(From inside the house another ear splitting scream is heard.)

Trader: (off stage) I'm coming, My Sweet. What the ... ???

(Ali goes over and rings the doorbell – a moment later Trader comes to the door)

Ali: Excuse me, sorry to interrupt and all that, but I just heard a terrible sound.

Trader: You did?

Ali: Yes, sort of like a singing pig being strangled!

Trader: Listen you...Are you trying to make a monkey out of me?

(He starts walking towards her, closing the gap. She walks backward so they are moving around the stage.)

Ali: No!

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Trader: Well someone is.

Ali: well I never – what sort of monkey would that be, exactly? A marmoset, a tamarind, a ring tailed lemur? No perhaps not, they're a bit cuddly in the circumstances..

Trader: You...!

Ali: Perhaps more of a silver-back protecting its property

Trader: Against people like you.

ENTER FIONA

Fiona: Darling, why are you chasing that girl?

Trader: Girl?

Ali: Yes, the one you're chasing.

Trader: I'm not chasing a girl. You're the only one for me, my sweet.

Fiona: So why are you chasing her, then?

Ali: I heard a terrible sound and wondered if everything was alright.

Fiona: How very sweet of you, everything is back where it belongs.

Ali: I am glad.

Fiona: wait a minute; you're the girl who came to the house the other day.

Ali: Err

Trader: Looking to rob, steel and thief, no doubt?

Ali: I was looking for a job! Caretaking your house, cooking, security. I'm good at all that stuff, you know. But no-one wanted my skills.

Trader: Really?

ENTER NIGEL.

Nigel: (As if nothing particularly unusual has happened) Good morning, Mummy, Daddy, Ali. Lovely day, is that why we're all hanging out on the pavement? Good to see everything is back in the right places.

Fiona: Yes, I really don't understand it. Almost like magic, quite mysterious.

Ali: Just what I was thinking. (she turns to face Nigel) You alright Sorry Boy?

Fiona: What? Wait a minute. What is all this? Do you know each other?

Trader: and what's all this Sorry Boy?

Nigel: Sorry, Dad. That's what she calls me – says I'm always saying sorry so she calls me Sorry Boy

Ali: Yes, we're old friends. When you turned me away the other day he followed me home and gave me some food. He's kind and a bit cute you know. Always welcome around the Cardboard Mansion, is my Sorry Boy.

ENTER DAVE SLIME and CHARLIE

Ali: Oops, I must be off before it gets nasty.

Fiona: I must say, Nigel, you know some very peculiar people.

Nigel: Sorry Mummy – not!

Trader: Ah, Mr Slime, how good to see you. And this must be...

Dave Slime: Charlie, my partner

Trader: Your business partner

Dave Slime: Yes, of course.

(Charlie looks cross)

Fiona: Mr Slime, a quite extraordinary thing has happened... Everything has come back. Like magic! You must come in and see. No. I've a much better idea. Why don't you both come this evening and we'll all

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celebrate.

(Charlie takes Dave by the arm – as if he’s her new boyfriend – and stands very close to him.)

Charlie: We’d love to.

Fiona: (To Dave) And you must bring the charming Chelsea I’ve heard so much about. (Charlie is displeased.) You will come?

Dave Slime: Wonderful, yes, well come.

Fiona: Super

EXIT: Fiona, Trader, Charlie, and Nigel.

ENTER CHILDREN – arguing.

Child 1: Look sometimes in life you just have to accept things.

Child 3: But it’s not life.

Child 2: Right - it’s a story. And even in stories people are thick.

Child 3: so the posh lady’s just thick.

Child 1: Ye, why else would she go inviting people like that into her house?

Child 3: Right – but they’ll all be poisoned or robbed or something.

Child 2: May be.

EXIT: CHILDREN

SCENE 6

(Characters: Ali and Nigel)

EXT: Alley – DAY.

Ali: You mean they took them into the house? They don’t learn!

Nigel: Right after you left. And I’ll tell you something else. Dave and Charlie went pale, white as sheets, sick as parrots and all the time saying how fantastic it all was. - Oh, yes – and we must all celebrate their good fortune.

Ali: Ah, bless. And how exactly are they going to do that?

Nigel: Well it seems my parents get to pay for the food and drink – lucky them, and your friend Dave’s business partner

Ali: you mean Charlie girl?

Nigel: Yeah, she knows three really good waiters apparently...

Ali: Called Dougie, Bill and Eddie by any chance?

Nigel: Right! (sarcastic tone) how ever did you know that? –anyway they’re going to do the fancy bits.

Ali: Like poison everyone and steal everything so there can be no slipups this time!

Nigel: So do you think we should get the police involved now?

Ali: No – they wouldn’t be interested. No crimes been committed - yet.

Nigel: So how you going to get them this time?

Ali: Tell you later. But first I’ve got to circle the shopping centre and be back here inside forty minutes.

EXIT Nigel AND Ali.

ENTER CHILDREN

CHILD 1: What do you think’s going to happen, then?

CHILD 2: A police raid. That’s what I think.

CHILD 3: Want to put £10,000 on it do you?

CHILD 2: that was pretend money.

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CHILD 3: well, you still lost the bet.

CHILD 2: O.K. £10,000 pretend.

(They shake)

CHILD 3: Eaten by crocodiles.

CHILD 1: All the baddies decide to be good

CHILD 2 and 3: what!

EXIT CHILDREN

SCENE 7

(Characters: ALI, FGM: CHARLIE, DOUGIE, EDDIE, BILL: NIGEL, TRADER, FIONA, DAVE SLIME, CHELSEA, SEEKER and POLICEMAN)

INT: Nigel's HOUSE – EVENING.

(In the middle of the stage is a table covered with a white tablecloth and laid for a formal meal. At either end sit TRADER and FIONA. The other guests sitting around the table are CHARLIE and CHELSEA on either side of Trader and NIGEL and DAVE SLIME on either side of Fiona with DS and Chelsea facing each other. Behind the table stand DOUGIE, EDDIE, BILL dressed as waiters.)

Fiona: I am so pleased you could all come to share our good fortune with us – however, I have to apologise that we are without all our most precious valuables as my wonderful husband has taken them all to the bank and had them locked away in the very strongest, impenetrable vault possible to keep them safe!

(Dave Slime looks over at Charlie and makes strangling gestures. Fiona sees him and looks at him)

Dave Slime: It's my arthritis - brought on by too much time on the keyboard, writing reports for the ministry, you know.

Fiona: Now Darling, would a toast be in order?

Trader: Yes, indeed – (he raises his glass) 'Good fortune'.

All: (all raise their glasses and repeat the toast) 'Good fortune'. (Again, Charlie and DS practically growl at each other)

Trader: Now, I think we should eat some of that wonderful food I smelt being prepared earlier by the cook Chelsea and Dave sent.

Chelsea: (surprised) We Sent a cook?

Dave Slime: I did?

Fiona: That's what she said, quite clearly, that you'd sent her, is there a problem?

ENTER ALI – she is lightly disguised by wearing a wig and glasses.

Ali: No, Mrs Trader, I said I was here because of them.

Chelsea: Ali! My love – what are you doing here?

Ali: Mum.

Dave Slime: yeh, what are you doing here?

Ali: Taking care of people. That's something you wouldn't understand – Slime.

Dave Slime: (jumps up angry from the table) Why you.....

(Ali takes up combat stance then reaches into her pocket and takes out her mobile and seems to text a message with one hand.)

Charlie: Dave, not now!

(DOUGIE, EDDIE and BILL start to move forward)

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Dougie: Do you want us to take her outside and tell her off?

Bill: For being rude to you.

Eddie: No trouble, Boss – it would be our pleasure.

Nigel: (goes and stands by Ali) No- not now or later.

Fiona: Nigel, what are you doing?

Nigel: Making sure these thieves don't touch anyone here.

Charlie: Oh, dear Mrs Trader, do you think your nice looking boy has being buying drugs of some sort?

Trader: How dare you suggest such a thing!

Dave Slime: And how dare he suggest we're robbers!

Ali: You are. We'll prove it!

Chelsea: (surprised) My Dave a thief? – I thought he was a rich banker? (A collective gasp of horror) Sorry – only my little joke.

Charlie: No one here is that bad. But (pointing at Nigel) that big girl's blouse is away with the fairies.

ENTER FGM

FGM: There are worse things. (Everyone stares at him.) Hello, Ali, told you sending a text would be better than rubbing old lamps. ... Oh, yes, good evening, everyone. I'm you friendly chief inspector also known as THE Fairy Godmother. And I've come to do a spot of arresting. But first Ali made three wishes...

Dougie: One would have done it, Pall. I wish you'd...

FGM: (interrupts quickly and turns to face Ali) ..To Ali.

Ali: But I didn't make three wishes.

FGM: Oh, yes you did. The first was that we could rid the world of SLIME. To help us do that I've brought a few helpers.

(FGM waves his wand towards the door then throws it away and takes a truncheon from under his tutu. In comes Mr Seeker, the policeman and assorted panto characters one of whom is carrying the policeman's helmet which the FGM puts on.)

FGM: (deep tone) Alright, I'll keep it simple – you lot are nicked!

Bill: By a big fairy – I'll never live it down.

FGM: who you calling a big fairy? Let's get-em boys.

(There is a 'keystone cops' chase around the stage – truncheons are waived, whistles are blow and fists are shaken – until all the villains are rounded up.)

FGM: Right boys.

(Dave Slime reaches into his pocket and pulls out a fat envelope)

Dave Slime: Now I know you boys are only doing your very important job, but might I suggest a little something to oil the wheels of the police benevolent fund?

Policeman: Looks like money, to me.

Seeker: Lots of it.

FGM: Could be. Let's see what we have here and let's hope it's nothing that could be construed as a bribe (He removes a lot of newspaper) Page 3s (pause to build suspense)... of the Independent! That's got to be worth an extra ten years. Take them away.

(FGM starts to walk towards the door)

Ali: Hey – wait a minute!

FGM: Hang on we seem to have a problem.

Ali: What about my other two wishes?

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FGM: Oh, ye, right you are – err well let's see: you get to leave the alley and go home to your Mum because you never wanted to leave anyway, really.

(Chelsea runs over and hugs Ali)

Chelsea: Oh, Ali love, I'm sorry. I don't know what got into me? I never wanted all that.

Ali: I know Mum.

(Policemen and thieves sniff and wipe their eyes.)

FGM: And that leaves one more. That's it! True love will triumph. The girl gets the boy (he moves Ali and Nigel together) who would happily live with her forever in a cardboard mansion but they don't because the rich parents buy them a nice little studio in – let's say – Notting Hill Gate. That sounds suitably exotic.

(To audience) And now, if you'll forgive us, we have thieves to process and a pantomime to rehearse - so we'll wish you a Happy Ever After and a very GOOD NIGHT.

The cast start to EXIT

Enter the CHILDREN – arguing

Child 2: see I told you - £10,000

FGM: Not until we've had the GRAND FINALE.

(Cast throw themselves into the GRAND FINALE)

END