

LASHINGS OF GINGER ALE

A satirical comedy for younger players

by

Stuart G Smith

Published by:
New Playwrights' Network

Cresselles Publishing Co Ltd
10 Station Road Industrial Estate, Colwall, Malvern
Worcestershire WR13 6RN Telephone: 01684 540154

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First published by New Playwrights' Network
10 Station Road Industrial Estate, Colwall, Near Malvern, WR13 6RN
Telephone/Fax: (01684) 540154

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A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-0-86319-167-1

Printed in the UK by Cresswell Publishing Company Ltd.

CAST LIST

JIM A boy

GINGER A girl

GUS A boy

GEORGE A girl

NIGEL A boy

MARCIE A girl

TROLL

The WITCH of the North (WOTN)

The BLACK WITCH

The Good FAIRY of The Potting Shed

The PIRATE

SULTAN 1

SULTAN 2

If required, some of the children can double up to take the character parts.

AUTHORS' NOTES

This piece should be played with plenty of pace since it's based upon a single theme, namely that children are so busy searching for an adventure that they do not really notice all of the amazing things going on around them. Most of the comedy in the piece is based upon this fact and so it should not be overly long. Twenty five minutes maximum is suggested.

There are some excellent character parts which the young players should very much enjoy. Most of them are fairly obvious, but here are a few pointers:

PIRATE - very much larger than life, and typically picture book. The player who attempts this part should particularly emphasise the manner of speaking common to all pirates!

TROLL - a vital comedy part. I envisage this like one of those large "Muppets", with a huge mouth and great big eyes.

WITCH of the North - Very stern, regal and majestic.

GOOD FAIRY - like all good fairies everywhere.

BLACK WITCH - not a speaking part, so costume needs to be good to get the effect across.

JIM - the leader.

GINGER - open to interpretation.

GUS - typical "nasty" little boy. He hates girls.

GEORGE - a bit of a tomboy.

NIGEL - very "old school tie", even though he's still wearing one!

MARCIE - sensible.

SETTING

In order to be a really effective comedy piece, a great deal of attention needs to be paid to the set. This should be as real and solid as possible, not leaving much to the imagination. Since a lot of the comedy comes from 'tricks', particular attention should be paid to the detail of these. Do not skimp the effects.

For example: the 'Door To Another Land' really should give the impression that there is a whole different world behind it. To this end dry ice smoke effects prove useful, if at all accessible. Ethereal music, mysterious wind effects and 'magical' lighting should also be employed.

The Sailing Ship effect should be right on cue. The effect aimed for is that opening the drawer also reveals the treasure map by operating a secret panel behind the painting.

The Good FAIRY should enter and exit with a bright flash and a musical 'stings. Try not to omit the flash, even though technically it may be a nuisance.

The gold coins in the chest will be a tough one! Lots of bright two pence pieces could be used, or sacks containing fake coins. Whatever you use, it should be very obvious that the chest was full of gold.

The lunch scene will need the most work, eating on stage is always fraught with danger! If you find they have hardly started the caviare etc. before it is time to ask if they want apple pie, JIM can always cut GEORGE her piece of pie and put it to one side, as though she were going to eat it later.

LASHINGS OF GINGER ALE

The curtain opens to reveal the interior of the Jackson's potting shed. There are various shelves with flower pots etc. on them, garden tools hung around the place, sacks of peat etc. In fact, all of the usual items found in a garden shed.

UR is an old battered kitchen unit with cupboards below, and two drawers. Above this is a picture of a sailing ship. DL is an old wardrobe or broom cupboard, hanging on the door of which is an old garden spade. CS is a low table. UL a window looks out onto the garden. The entrance to the potting shed is R.

Closer inspection of the set reveals one or two unlikely items. For example, there is a chest or wooden box marked "PIECES OF EIGHT", one or two jars on the shelves clearly marked "INVISIBLE OINTMENT", "BATS WINGS", "FLYING CREAM" etc. Use these effects sparingly so that they are not glaringly obvious, but are noticeable.

As the curtain rises a PIRATE is discovered, sitting on a box at the centre table, counting gold coins into piles. Lighting is dim and mysterious.

PIRATE: Thirty-one, thirty-two, thirty-three...Aaarghh,, lots and lots of beautiful gold pieces, eh me 'earties? And only me and Dick 'Dead-Eye' Hawkins knowing where the treasure island lays hid! (He cackles) Only old 'Dead-Eye' b'aint be telling a no-one because I seen

him to a very deep and watery grave. *(He laughs evilly)* Lucky I stumbled across this old potting shed to hide me treasure in. I mean...who'd think of looking for pirate treasure in a potting shed eh? Haar haar.

GEORGE: *(Off)* Can't catch me for a toffee flea!

PIRATE: Scupper me! If it ain't them blasted little scoundrels from the big house. Better not let them catch me here with all this treasure. You know what kids is like for a bit of adventure. Afore you know it, they'll have found me secret treasure map and be pinching me doubloons!

Lighting up to full. Enter GEORGE (A girl) who 'locks' the shed door after her.

GEORGE: I'm the Queen of the castle, stay out you dirty rascals.

She dances around the shed, delighted.

JIM: *(Off. He raps loudly on the door)* George! Open this door at once!

GEORGE: Shan't!

JIM: If you don't open this door at once, George, I am going to get very angry!

GINGER: He'll get very angry!

GEORGE: How angry?

GINGER: She says 'how angry'?

JIM: I heard her myself! *(Shouting)* Very angry indeed!

GEORGE: What...really, really angry? *(Groans from outside)*

NIGEL: Come on George, be a brick and let us in, what?

GEORGE: Oh, all right. *(She sighs and goes to 'unlock' the shed door)* It's boring in here anyway.

Enter JIM, NIGEL, GINGER and GUS.

JIM: About time too!

NIGEL: Honestly George, you can be perfectly beastly when you want to!

GUS: Typical girl!

GEORGE: What? Beating you at running to the shed?

GUS: Only because I let you. You've got to let girls win sometimes

because they're so weedy they cry if they lose.

GINGER: Says who?

GUS: Says me!

GEORGE: Yeah?

GUS: Yeah!

NIGEL: Now stop it you three. We've had a perfectly wizard hol so far, let's not spoil it by arguing.

JIM: Nigel's right. Let's think of something to do.

GUS: What?

GEORGE: Tease the servants!

GUS: Typical girl!

GEORGE: It is not!

GUS: Yes it is!

JIM: Pack it in you two. We can't tease the servants anyway, because they're not here.

GINGER: What, none of them?

NIGEL: What beastly luck!

JIM: Cook and Mrs Hedges have gone into town. Lucy and Mary are over at the Simpsons...

GEORGE: Rawlings, Benson and Hargreaves have gone shooting with Daddy.

GUS: Mrs Jones, old Nick and Potts are on holiday.

JIM: ...and Mrs Smith, Dobbs, Rowntree and Ted are in town buying plants for the shrubbery...

GINGER: Yes, but what about the others?

JIM: Cruising on Daddy's yacht.

GINGER: What all of them?

JIM: Staff outing.

GINGER: Oh.

NIGEL: What double beastly luck.

GUS: So what are we going to do?

GEORGE: I wish we could have an adventure!

GUS: Typical girl!

GINGER: What sort of an adventure?

GEORGE: You know...discover a lost land...find some hidden treasure...something exciting!

GUS: *(Snorts)* Pah! That sort of thing only happens in books.

JIM: I know! We'll make our own adventure! I hereby call a secret meeting of the Sensational Six Adventure Committee.

NIGEL: Wizard!

They all sit around the table, pulling up various orange boxes etc. to sit on. JIM sits at L end, GEORGE, GINGER and GUS sit facing the audience, NIGEL will sit R end. They all sit down except NIGEL. The remaining possible box for a seat is the one labelled 'PIECES OF EIGHT' NIGEL seems to have difficulty in dragging it over to the table.

GUS: Come on Nigel, hurry up!

NIGEL: I can't seem to move this. It's really heavy.

JIM: Well open it up and see what's inside then!

NIGEL opens the chest and pulls out a handful of gold coins.

NIGEL: Seems to be full of gold coins.

JIM: Well for goodness sake, empty them out and come and sit down; the meeting's about to start!

NIGEL tips the chest over and empties it of gold pieces. There should be as many of these as possible to make a really convincing pile. They can be augmented with strings of pearls etc. NIGEL pulls up the empty chest and sits down.

JIM: Right. I hereby call this meeting of the Sensational Six Adven...

GEORGE: Five.

JIM: What?

GEORGE: Sensational Five. There are only five of us.

GUS: We can't be called the Sensational Five you stupid girl; it doesn't rhyme!

GINGER: Neither does six.

GUS: Yes it does!

GEORGE: No it doesn't. Six rhymes with 'fix' and 'mix' not 'sensational'

GUS: Well, I didn't mean rhyme did I?

GEORGE: Well, that's what you said, didn't he Ginger?

NIGEL: Oh do be quiet you three. Such a beastly row!

JIM: Where is Marcie?

GEORGE: She's up at the house helping Mummy. She said she'd come along later.

JIM: Well until she comes, we'll have to pretend she's here. That way we can still call ourselves the Sensational Six.

All right?

ALL: All right.

JIM: Good. I hereby call this meeting of the Sensational Six Adventure Committee to order. What is the first resolution?

NIGEL: To have a wizard wheeze!

GEORGE: A spiffing lark.

GINGER: A jolly jape!

GUS: (*Hesitating*) Ummm ... rather a nice time?

Pause whilst they all look at him.

JIM: Right. We need something to write all this down in. Fetch the minutes book from the drawer will you Nigel?

NIGEL gets up and goes over to the kitchen unit drawer. As he pulls it open, the sailing ship in the picture disappears and is replaced by the treasure map. (This should be large and obvious) He rummages around in the drawer and cannot find the book and pen. He shuts the drawer and the sailing ship returns. No-one notices a thing.

GINGER: What sort of adventure shall we have?

JIM: Who knows? Anything could happen. This very shed could contain the key to untold mysteries. Buried treasure, secret lands, strange magic powers.

GEORGE: Super! When can we start?

JIM: Not yet. We need some sort of a clue...something to start us on our way...a pointer in the right...

NIGEL: I can't find it here.

JIM: Well look in the cupboard then... As I was saying, we really need something to get us started...but what?

GEORGE: In books they usually find a treasure map, or a secret panel or something.

GUS: Typical girl!

GINGER: No she's not! I think it's a great idea. The Billiards room has panels, let's try looking in there.

NIGEL has crossed to the broom cupboard and opens it. The PIRATE is clearly visible. He remains in the cupboard but holds a cutlass to NIGEL's throat and makes various threatening noises.

NIGEL: (*Nervously*) Err... Jim...

GUS: Don't be stupid! The ballroom, library and all three dining rooms have panels as well. It would take weeks to try them all.

PIRATE: Ahaar!

NIGEL: Err... Jim...

GINGER: Exactly! That probably means that no-one has tried them before. There could be all sorts of things behind them.

(*GUS snorts*)

JIM: Mother says that the library wing dates back to Babylonian times, it might be worth a try...

NIGEL: (*Desperate*) JIM!

JIM: (*Annoyed*) What is it?

NIGEL: There appears to be some sort of Pirate chappie in the broom cupboard.

JIM: Some sort of what?

NIGEL: Pirate chappie. He's got a sword or cutlass or something and he doesn't look very pleased.

The PIRATE steps out of the cupboard and marches NIGEL back across the stage at swordpoint. He occasionally turns to the others and brandishes his sword. All of this punctuated liberally with 'Ahhaaarghs'.

JIM: Good Lord!

GINGER: How extraordinary!

GEORGE: Who on earth do you suppose he is?

JIM: I say! You there! What are you doing in the Jackson's potting shed?

PIRATE: What am I a-doing 'ere?

JIM: That's what I said, yes.

PIRATE: There b'aint be a living soul that could drag that secret from me, not no way, no how, ahaaarr.

GEORGE: What secret?

PIRATE: The secret location of the treasure island, the only known map of which is concealed behind that picture over there on the wall ahaaarr. But you'll never get me to tell 'ee that...and you'll never drag from my lips that all my ill-gotten gains are hidden away from prying eyes in that ch... (*He sees all the gold on the floor*) ...in that pile over there on the floor...no Sir...I'll never tell 'ee!

JIM: Yes, yes, yes, this is all very interesting but what are you doing here?

PIRATE: You mean you haven't guessed?

GUS: No. Who are you?

JIM: Did Daddy send you?

PIRATE: (*Uncomprehending*) Daddy?

GEORGE: Yes. Daddy.

PIRATE: (*Seizing on this*) Oh! Aargh! That's right; I completely forgot; silly old me. I'm from Daddy, ahaar, that's it; they sent me all right!

JIM: Oh; that's fine then.

GINGER: For a moment we thought you were an intruder.

PIRATE: An intruder? Bless your 'earts no. (*He laughs somewhat maniacally*)

JIM: What exactly are you doing here?

PIRATE: Me?

JIM: Yes.

PIRATE: Well...I'm er...testing for dry rot in yer cupboards 'ere.

JIM: (*Suddenly understanding*) Oh, I see. So that's what the piece of metal is then.

PIRATE: What piece of metal be that then?

JIM: (*Indicating the cutlass*) That piece in your hand there, it must be a dry rot tester.

PIRATE: What this? Aarr, that's right, that's what it be all right...the finest dry rot tester made this be!

GINGER: Nigel thought it was a cutlass!

They all laugh, the PIRATE somewhat lamely and a little too long.

PIRATE: A cutlass! Ha ha ha, bless your hearts! Now what would an up and coming young dry rot tester like myself be wanting with a cutlass?

NIGEL: (*Sulky*) I only said it looked like a cutlass!

PIRATE makes great pretence of tapping around the cupboard with his cutlass.

PIRATE: Aarr, well...that all seems to be all in order; so if you masters don't a'mind I'll be cutting along. My ship sails with the evening tide.

GUS: Ship?

PIRATE: Did I say ship? Silly me...I meant...van of course. (*PIRATE turns to go*)

NIGEL: Well jolly nice to have met you, what?

GEORGE: Yes, do drop in again for a chat won't you?

PIRATE: Aarr, I might just do that. (*Exit PIRATE, shaking his head*)

JIM: (*Calling after him*) Sir! Oh Sir! (*PIRATE enters*)

PIRATE: What be the matter now?

JIM: (*Indicates pile of gold on floor*) All these gold thingies here. Are they yours?

PIRATE: (*Suddenly threatening again*) Oh aary. They're mine all right. You won't be stealing them now will you?

GEORGE: Oh no. Mummy told us never to steal.

GUS: What do you use them for?

PIRATE: Those? Oh...er...when you've found some dry rot, you scoops it out and replaces it with one of them little round gold things. That stops the dry rot coming back again you see?

GINGER: I've never noticed any dry rot in the house.

PIRATE: Effective aren't they? Well, I'll be off now. Make sure you put all them gold piec...dry rot plugs...back where you found them now, won't you?

Exit PIRATE to cries of 'We will', 'Don't worry', 'Goodbye' etc.

JIM: Now then ... where were we?

GUS: Trying to find a clue.

JIM: That's right. What we need is a secret message which we can try and decipher.

A brick is tossed through the window with a very obvious message attached to it.

GINGER: Now what!

JIM: (*Resignedly*) See what it says will you Nigel.

NIGEL goes and unwraps the message.

NIGEL: (*Reading*) "If you do the dirty on us by trying to search for the fabled diamond ring of Zan behind the fourth panel along on the left hand side of the library, we will really take you to the cleaners ... Signed ... The Black Hand Gang".

GEORGE: What does it mean?

GUS: It's obviously an advertisement you stupid girl.

GINGER: An advertisement? What for?

GUS: Don't you get it? 'Do the dirty', 'Take you to the cleaners', 'The Black Hand Gang'? It's obviously an advertisement for soap!

GINGER and GEORGE: Oh!

NIGEL: How are we going to find a clue, Jim?

JIM: We have to keep our eyes and ears open and watch very carefully. I think the clue will lie in something we see or hear every day, that's how we keep missing it. Let's all put our heads down and concentrate...

Enter BLACK WITCH.

They all adopt various intense positions of concentration with hands over eyes etc. During this, the BLACK WITCH, complete with broomstick strolls over to the shelves, thinks for a moment and takes down a jar of 'Flying Ointment', seems satisfied, and walks out. She should not creep in, but just act as if the children were not there, and that it was perfectly normal for her to pop in and pick something up.

Exit BLACK WITCH.

GEORGE: (*Looking up*) It's hopeless...Why can't things happen like they do in the books?

GUS: Typical girl!

Enter MARCIE.

MARCIE: Jim, Mummy says that it is time to come in for lunch.

All get up apart from JIM and make as though to leave.

JIM: WAIT! What did you just say, Marcie?

MARCIE: Mummy says 'luncheon is ready, ask the world famous ravening horde ...if...they...need...to...eat'.

JIM grabs pencil and paper from drawer next to the one in which Nigel previously looked. Treasure map appears momentarily. He sits down and starts scribbling furiously. All look at him like he has gone mad.

JIM: (*Slowly*) Luncheon is ready, ask the world famous ravening horde...if...they...need...to...eat!

GUS: What on earth are you doing?

JIM: *THAT'S IT!*

GEORGE: What is?

JIM: Don't you see? - ask the world famous ravening horde if they need to eat!

MARCIE: Sounds like he's raving, not ravening. What's he doing?

GINGER: Trying to find a clue to a secret adventure. What have you found, Jim?

JIM: *(Scribbling furiously)* This may seem at first sight to be a simple message...but if we rearrange the letters...

Loud knock on door. Everyone ignores it and becomes interested in what JIM has found.

NIGEL: An anagram!

GEORGE: What does it say?

JIM: *(Concentrating hard)* 'O seek you wide and you shall find the ancient earth-mover of the Renedrag'.

GINGER: Wow! That's fantastic! *(Pause)* What does it mean?

GUS: It's obvious you stupid girl!

GEORGE: Oh yes? If you're so clever, why don't you tell us then?

GUS: Well...er...the Renedrag are obviously an ancient race of sorcerers...

JIM: That's right! And the ancient earth-mover is probably a spell for causing earthquakes.

GINGER: Or a beam for moving the planets from their orbits...

GUS: ...or a magical tool used to build the pyramids...

MARCIE: ...or a rusty old wheel barrow! You've all gone mad! This is a simple message from Mother asking us to come in for lunch.

Slightly louder and more impatient knock on the door which they all ignore and look at MARCIE as if she were stupid.

JIM: *(Meaningfully)* Did you actually see Mother?

MARCIE: Well - no. She shouted it out of the window.

GUS: There you are then! It could have been anyone!

MARCIE: Well, it sounded like Mother.

JIM: Anyone can fake a voice.

GEORGE: Don't you see, Marcie? This is the clue we've been waiting for, the start of our great adventure.

MARCIE: Well...

Very loud and very impatient knocking at door. This should go on for quite some time, at least twenty knocks.

GUS: There's someone at the door.

JIM: See who that is will you Marcie?

MARCIE exits to the door. All gather around JIM and examine the paper he is writing on.

GUS: This is fantastic! We're really onto something here.

GINGER: The ancient earth-mover of the Renedrag! It sounds wonderful!

GEORGE: But how do we find it? Does it say anything about where we start looking?

JIM: *(Examining paper)* No. There's nothing else. It just says 'seek and ye shall find'. I suppose there could be a secret panel somewhere...

GUS: Typical girl!

JIM: Pardon?

GUS: I said typical girl!

JIM: What is?

GUS: Well, expecting there to be a secret panel...Ha-ha.

JIM: But I said that!

GUS: What?

JIM: I just said that there could be a secret panel.

GUS: *(Realising)* Oh! A secret panel...is that what you said? Yes - a very sensible idea, a secret panel. Not at all typical of a girl, even if you were one...which you're not of course, it's just that if you had been one, it would have been typical wouldn't it? I mean...

This is interrupted by the reappearance of MARCIE.

MARCIE: There's a man outside with a really ugly face.

GINGER: Tell him you've already got one. *(She laughs hugely at this)*

MARCIE: Very funny!

NIGEL: What sort of man?

MARCIE: A monk, dressed in a black habit, with a face like death.

JIM: What did he say?

MARCIE: He said 'Over fire, through water, press on, for right will prevail'.

Another loud knock on the door. MARCIE goes to answer.

GINGER: What's that supposed to mean? Over fire, through water, press on, for right will prevail?

GUS: Probably a Jehovah's witness.

GEORGE: I wish we could get on with finding the secret panel!

JIM: We haven't decided there is one yet. We know what we're looking for...we just need to know where to look for it!

Enter MARCIE.

MARCIE: It was the monk again. He said that 'over fire' might have something to do with the fireplace in the gun cleaning room. *(Another knock on the door)*

GEORGE: The trouble is, we don't know how big the earth-mover is, so that makes it very difficult to look for.

GINGER: It could be any size.

GUS: *(Sighs)* We need more clues.

NIGEL: Where do we start looking? We need a centre from which to work

JIM: BRILLIANT!

ALL: What?

JIM: Don't you see? A centre. We start looking from the centre of the shed.

NIGEL: Why?

JIM: Because you just said so of course.

NIGEL: *(Genuinely confused)* But I could have said anything.

JIM: *(Patiently explaining)* You could have said anything, but you said 'We must start looking from the centre'. The secret knowledge of the Renedrag is obviously buried in your subconscious.

NIGEL: Golly!

Enter MARCIE.

MARCIE: It was the monk again. He said that if you examine carefully the tiles over the fireplace in the gun cleaning room, you will find that some of them have a wave pattern on them, and that 'through water' might refer to this.

Another knock on the door. Exit MARCIE to investigate.

GINGER: *(Impatiently)* Why don't you tell him to go away? Can't you see that we're onto something really important here?

JIM: Right, come on, help me, Nigel. *(Together they move the table from CS to slightly US. JIM standing in centre of room)* Now then, where do we go from here?

GINGER: Well, I still think there's a secret panel somewhere.

GUS: Typical girl!

Enter MARCIE.

MARCIE: He says that 'Press on, for right will prevail' means that if you press the right hand tile with the wave pattern above the fireplace in the gun cleaning room, something interesting might happen to the large oak panel in the centre.

JIM: Have you been talking to that monk again?

MARCIE: Yes.

GUS: Did he say anything else?

MARCIE: He said 'Have a nice day' and then he grinned hideously. *(Pause)*

JIM: "Have a nice day"! That's IT!

ALL: What?

JIM: It's obvious. Day! Don't you see? We must stand in the centre of the room and face the day. The door. We must face the door. *(He does so)*

NIGEL: Now what?

JIM: *(Deflated)* I don't know.

GEORGE: *(Looking at her watch)* Marcie, you'd better go and ask Mum if we can have a picnic lunch. It seems like we're going to be here for some time.

MARCIE: What about the monk?

GEORGE: Ask Mum to put in an extra portion.

MARCIE: No, I mean how am I going to get past him? He looked pretty nasty to me.

GINGER: Hmm...good point. What we need is a signal to let us know that you've got through safely.

GUS: *(Pushing his way through)* This requires intelligence. Obviously a job for a boy, girls are useless at planning...now let me see... *(He thinks)* I've got it! If you manage to get past the monk, let out a jolly old yell. We're bound to hear that and then we'll know you're safe.

MARCIE: Okay. *(She exits)*

GINGER: I still think there's a secret panel somewhere and until lunch comes, I'm going to see if I can find one.

She starts walking round the shed tapping various walls etc.

GUS: How can you find a secret panel in a shed? The walls are only half an inch thick.

GINGER: So what? In 'Famous Five Go Camping' Kate found a secret panel in a tent.

GUS: Rubbish!

GEORGE: It's true! I read the book as well.

GUS: How can you find a secret panel in a tent?

GEORGE: It was just above the door flap if I remember...

A blood curdling scream from MARCIE is heard off stage.

NIGEL: What on earth was that?

GUS: It's Marcie. Just letting us know that she's okay.

NIGEL: Oh.

JIM: I wish you'd all try and concentrate. We're nearly there. Now then... stand in the centre of room, face door... and...

GUS: And what?

JIM: That's just it! I don't know. We need the next part of the clue.

During the above GINGER taps a part of the upstage wall and a revolving door opens. Ideally the rear of this door should be lit in bright green and dry ice smoke effect should pour into the shed. The whole impression is one of a door to another land. GINGER exits through this door in wonder, leaving it open.

GEORGE: It's not very warm in here, is it?

NIGEL: No wonder! That door's open. *(He goes and closes it)*

GUS: I'm fed up with this. We don't seem to be getting anywhere at all. I mean we don't even know what the ancient earth mover of the Renedrag is! *(He picks up an old book from the shelf)* I'd rather read this than waste any more time on a wild goose chase.

GEORGE: What is it?

NIGEL: Probably an ancient satanic manuscript!

GEORGE: Or a secret guide to an underground kingdom!

GUS: *(Blows dust of cover and reads)* "Four Steps To Better

Gardening"

ALL register disappointment, pause and then...

ALL: Four steps to better gardening!

JIM: Right, Clear a path!

(He stands in the centre of the room, facing the door, and carefully paces out four steps towards the door)

One...two...three...four.

(He ends up about three paces from the door and nowhere in particular.

He looks all around)

Well, there's nothing here. I wish we had more to go on.

There is a blinding flash and a puff of smoke. Enter GOOD FAIRY (usual white dress, wand with star etc.) She materialises by the door.

FAIRY: I am the good fairy of the potting shed and I have come to grant you three wishes.

GUS: That's very good, Marcie! How on earth did you do that?

FAIRY: My name is not Marcie, Sir, but Gwenethegiog.

JIM: Come off it, Marcie, stop messing around! Where's Ginger? I bet she's in on this as well.

FAIRY: Ginger is not "in" on anything that I know about, Sir.

GEORGE: I thought you'd gone to organise lunch?

FAIRY: I can organise anything which you command. Now, what are your three wishes?

JIM: I wish you'd clear off out of here and fetch us a picnic lunch.

FAIRY: And your second wish, sir?

GUS: I wish you'd throw yourself in the lake on the way!

They ALL laugh loudly at this. FAIRY looks very dejected. She has a definite air of "A different class of people nowadays" about her.

FAIRY: Your wish is my command. *(She exits, preferably to more flash effects)*

JIM: Marcie certainly likes her fun, doesn't she?

GEORGE: I wish she'd hurry up with lunch. I'm starving!

GUS: Me too!

SOUND EFFECT: Loud splashing, as though someone had jumped

into a lake.

GEORGE: Did you hear a splash?

JIM: Probably just a spot of rain.

GEORGE: Oh.

NIGEL: Where were we? All these interruptions are getting tedious.

JIM: I don't understand it. The instructions are quite clear. Four paces from the centre of the room towards the door. *(He paces it out again)* One...two...three...four. *(He arrives at the same spot)*

SOUND EFFECT: Resounding gong crash. Enter two 'SULTANS' bearing a wicker picnic hamper. They set it down on the table (or floor). Taped to the lid is a large, readable notice which will be seen by the audience as soon as the hamper lid is opened. The notice reads:

BEFORE YOU REACH THE APPLE PIE, ONE OF YOU WILL SURELY DIE. SIGNED: THE WET FAIRY OF THE POTTING SHED.

Exit two SULTANS.

GEORGE: Lunch! Super!

GUS: I didn't recognise those two, did you?

NIGEL: Probably temporary help while the others are away.

They ALL gather round the picnic hamper and pull out various things. GUS notices the note and tears it off. He reads it with the wrong emphasis...

GUS: What's this? ..."Before you reach the apple pie one of you; will Shirley die?"

JIM: Another one of Marcie's jokes I expect.

GUS: Anyone here called Shirley?

They ALL look around at each other and shake their heads.

GUS: That's okay then. Come on, let's get on with lunch.

During the next scene an ugly TROLL passes the window. He looks in and is obviously hungry. He creeps in through the door and positions

himself behind them making various attempts to reach over their shoulders for various bits of food. He is largely unsuccessful; every time one of the FOUR sees a hand coming over their shoulder to grab food they smack it, as though it were a particularly annoying fly. Much can be made of this scene, especially if the TROLL is huge and Muppet-like.

GEORGE: Pass the plates, Jim.

JIM: Okay. Here you are...Gus...Nigel...George.

ALL: Thanks *(As they get their plate)*

JIM: Now then, let's see what cook has packed for us. *(He pulls out a tub)* What's this...Buttercup fondue with beeswing...? I don't like the sound of that!

GEORGE: *(Also pulling out a package)* Lilac blossom blancmange? How odd!

NIGEL: Batswing butter with stardust...?

JIM: *(Pulling out a tin)* Cowbell's cream of toadstool soup?

GUS: What on earth is cook playing at?

GEORGE: I wish this were more like the plain old food we're used to...

STING!

JIM: Aha! Paté de fois gras! That's more like it!

GEORGE: Caviare!

GUS: Grouse sandwiches! Good old cook!

NIGEL: Afghanistanian goats' milk cheese! Super!

GEORGE: What's the wine?

JIM: There's Champagne...Chateau Latour...1945 Hmm must be one of the last remaining bottles, Chateau Lafitte... 1949... we'll have that later...what's this...ginger ale? Now who on earth would have put ginger ale in our lunch basket? That stuff's poisonous! *(He throws it away, uncorks the wine and pours them each a glass, preferably in expensive looking glasses rather than paper cups)*

GUS: Pass the caviare George.

GEORGE: There you are.

NIGEL: Slide over a jolly old grouse sandwich would you old boy?

GUS: Coming right over...

JIM: Cheers everyone!

ALL: Cheers!

GEORGE: Here's to the success of the Sensational Seven!

GUS: Here's to the Renedrag! Whoever they are!

ALL: To the Renedrag!

JIM: We can't be very far away now. I'm sure that the final clue lies under our very noses!

(Good cue here for TROLL to reach over JIM's shoulder)

GUS: Caviare Jim?

JIM: Thanks.

GEORGE: I wonder how many of our friends are having a real adventure like us?

GUS: Hardly any I should think.

NIGEL: Frightfully good wine t|j|s

During the next sequence, the hapless and hungry TROLL decides that the only way it is going to get something to eat is by eating one of the children, he duly carries off NIGEL.

JIM: Who said real adventure only happens in books eh? Look at us. We've decoded a secret message from a mysterious person disguised as Mother...

GEORGE: Tuned into a subconscious telepathic communication from the Renedrag telling us to start searching in the centre of the potting shed...

GUS: Received a message from a mysterious monk telling us to walk from the centre to the door...

JIM: And unearthed an ancient manuscript telling us the exact number of paces from the centre.

GEORGE: All we have to do now is find the final part of the clue...what do you think Nigel...Nigel?... Now where on earth has he gone?

JIM: Probably popped off to get Marcie and Ginger.

(During the next sequence, GUS suddenly acts as though he has been poisoned and keels over, dead)

Apple pie, George?

GEORGE: Mmm.. Don't mind if I do.

JIM: Cream?

GEORGE: Thanks. This is a wizard feast. I wonder where the others are?

JIM: Probably up at the house looking for secret panels! Apple pie

Gus? Gus?

GEORGE: What's the matter with him?

JIM: It's the wine, probably gone to his head. Let him sleep it off.

The door to another land opens, as many effects as possible. Enter the WITCH OF THE NORTH.

WOTN: *(Very regally)* I am the Witch of the North. I come to give warning to you mortal children that one of you must return with me to the land of Nevernear!

JIM and GEORGE leap to their feet.

JIM: What did you say?

WOTN: *(Slightly impatient)* I said...I am the Witch of the North. I come to give warning to you mortal...

JIM: That's terribly bad grammar you know.

WOTN: What is?

GEORGE: Mummy says that you can't say "The which" just like you can't say "The were" or "The was",...it's frightfully poor.

JIM: You can say..."I am from the North", that's all right.

WOTN: *(Taking deep breath)* I am from the North and I am a Witch which has come to warn you...

JIM: You see there you go again. You wouldn't say "I am a was" or "I am a were" now would you?

GEORGE: Perhaps she means she is from Northwich?

WOTN: I am a Witch which was from the North but now comes to...

JIM: Which which was I? Where on earth did you go to school?

WOTN: *(Frostily)* Nevernear.

GEORGE: That's near Manchester isn't it?

WOTN: *(Silence foolish girl!)* I come from a place where cold winds blow throughout the year, where the snow lies so thick on the ground that few people want to visit, and those that do, rarely leave alive...
(She cackles)

GEORGE: *(Whispering)* She is from Manchester!

WOTN: But now. Enough of this gay banter. I come to serve notice on you that one of you backward children must accompany me to the land of Nevernear to be my slave for evermore...

During next bit, WOTN puts 'sting' on GEORGE who follows her

hypnotically through the door to another land. The door closes behind them. JIM misses this because he turns away in excitement at something the WOTN has said.

JIM: Backward! That's it! That's the final clue! To think that I missed it all along when it was there right before my eyes. You have to walk backward from the centre of the room! *He walks to the centre and paces backwards* One...two...three...four. *(He arrives with his back to the cupboard and turns round. He is facing the old spade which is hanging from the door)* The ancient earth mover of the Renedrag Renedrag...Renedrag... That's it! Renedrag is gardener backwards. The ancient earth mover of the gardener. *(Triumphant)* The gardener's spade! I've found it! The gardener's spade! I've found it! *(He takes it down with great reverence)* George, George, I've found the gardener's spade! George...George? Where are you? *(He looks around)* That's typical! No-one's interested in real adventure anymore.

CURTAIN.

PROPERTIES LIST

Pirate's gold pieces - Treasure chest full of gold.
 Minutes book and pen.
 Trick picture/treasure map.
 Pirate's cutlass.
 Brick or stone with message tied to it.
 Wicker picnic hamper packed with at least those items mentioned in the lunch scene. Message for top of hamper.
 Book 'Four Steps To Better Gardening'.
 Fairy wand.
 Old garden spade.
 Various items to make the shed look like a typical potting shed