

"THE WITCHES"

screenplay by
Allan Scott
from the novel
by Roald Dahl
(revised)
1 October 1987

1 EXT. NORWAY. DAY.

In DARKNESS a boy's VOICE OVER.

LUKE

(over)

You won't believe it - but this is a true story. It happened to me. It is still happening to me.

Majesty and a bleak emptiness combine as the CAMERA SWOOPS over the spectacular winter countryside, encompassing the sharp carved edges of fjords with their dark impenetrable waters, rises over vast and brooding black mountains and PANS OVER the endless, long-shadowed landscape of the midnight sun.

The voice over is that of LUKE, our hero, an American boy of ten years old.

LUKE

(over)

We were living in England because my dad was on assignment there from the State Department. England was pretty neat but what I liked specially was it meant we could visit my dad's mother in Norway for Christmas. Nobody in England does any work for like two weeks over Christmas, so dad said we could have an extra vacation with my grandmother.

(pause)

It was the first time she told me about witches.

Dissolving over the boy's voice, we now hear a woman's voice; she speaks with real intensity. Her English is almost fluent, but its very fluency with occasional false emphases makes clear that this is not her first language.

HELGA

(over)

The most important thing you should know about real witches is this. Listen very carefully. Never forget what is coming next....

2 EXT. BERGEN STREET, NORWAY. DAY.

As she continues speaking we DISSOLVE SLOWLY to a narrow cobbled street in Bergen, a fine old town where history is still visible in the tidily-painted 18th century buildings.

HELGA

(over)

Real witches dress in ordinary clothes
and look very much like ordinary women.
They live in ordinary houses and work in
ordinary jobs....

At the end of the street stands an unpretentious house.
The CAMERA MOVES to a window high in the attic of the
house.

3 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN HOUSE. NIGHT.

Luke, nine years old, sits in bed listening to his
grandmother, HELGA, tell him his bed time story. Luke
wears glasses and has two teeth fixed with a dental brace.
He wears his hair long and on one side of his head it rises
in a tuft which annoys him and which he is constantly
trying to flatten.

Helga is an elderly, plumply energetic woman of immense
character and charm. Anyone's ideal granny: alert and yet
comforting, unassuming and yet a spellbinder. As she tells
these tales with Luke huddled in the warmth of her arms,
she puffs eccentrically on a small black cigar. The
bedroom is simple though there is evidence of a recent pile
of Christmas presents hoarded onto the table, wrapping and
cards carefully sorted. The room is in the eaves of a
small Norwegian house and snow is falling heavily outside.

HELGA

They spend their time plotting to kill
children. Stalking the wretched child like
a hunter stalks a bird in the forest....

Luke is wide-eyed with devout interest.

4 INT. EVA'S KITCHEN (1930'S). DAY.

A knife drawer opens. Glittering, finely honed blades lie
in a tidy array.

The hand that reaches for one of the knives is hideous,
barely human. Raw skinless flesh and muscle tissue support
thin, jagged fingers with claw-tipped nails.

The drawer snaps shut. The knife rests on the table. A
pair of gloves are pulled onto the gnarled and awful hands
transforming them into normal-looking woman's hands. As
she picks up the knife again, the CAMERA PANS UP to the
face of an ordinary-looking WOMAN (EVA.) A plain but not
unpleasant woman who wears a woollen scarf over her dyed
hair.

HELGA
(over)
Real witches hate children.

The rasping conviction with which these last words are spoken lead to a SHARP CUT to:

5 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN HOUSE. NIGHT.

Luke jumps with fright, settling back in enjoyment of his grandmother's vivid storytelling.

HELGA
Real witches are quite bald, although of course they wear wigs which itch and cause them scalp rash.

6 INT. EVA'S KITCHEN. DAY.

Eva looks out the window. Peering down into the street below.

HER P.O.V. Half a dozen CHILDREN play in the street. Simple games with sticks and chalk marks on the cobblestones. Just beyond the group of laughing children, a solitary girl of nine - ERICA - sits on the gatepost of her house, watching enviously.

HELGA (over)
They are hideous beneath their human face masks. They conceal their sharp, terrible claw-like fingernails beneath gloves and can only be distinguished from ordinary women if you are sharp enough to spot the purple tinge to their eyes.

On the window ledge of the kitchen there are little lines etched into the woodwork with a knife. Groups of seven vertical lines each crossed out with a single stroke. As Eva looks down she scratches a new line. Her victim has been chosen.

Eva smiles as she looks down on her next prospective victim. Is there a purplish glint in her eye? She puts the knife down. Starts with surprise as she looks back again.

7 EXT. BERGEN STREET (1930). DAY.

Erica is running up the path to her front door as a repeated call comes from inside the house. The gatepost is empty.

HELGA

(over)

. When I was little, I lived beside a girl called Erica who was taken by a witch. Erica had very strict parents - all parents were strict in those days - but even that did not save poor Erica. Because when a witch chooses a victim, there is only one hope of escape. Knowing everything about them that I am telling you. Warning you.

8 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE. DAY.

Erica's FATHER is stern and straight. He is examining a painting which he has just finished hanging in the plain, bare living room.

It is a farmyard scene. Some cattle, a barn, a small pond with ducks.

Erica stands politely awaiting his orders. Looking at the painting with some approval.

FATHER

(in Norwegian)

Do you like my new acquisition?

ERICA

(in Norwegian)

It's very nice, father.

The Father takes a coin from his pocket.

FATHER

(in Norwegian)

Go to Larsen's and buy a litre of fresh milk. Come straight home.

Erica takes the money and with something between a curtsy and a nod she turns and runs from the house. The Father remains admiring his painting.

9 EXT. BERGEN ALLEY. DAY.

Erica passes the Children in the street and turns towards a long, narrow alley. It is a dark alley with darker doorways looming ominously on either side. The end of the alley is a mere sliver of light as the pathway curves sharply.

HELGA

(over)

Real witches have no toes. Their feet have square ends, revolting stumps where their toes should be. So they never wear pointed or pretty shoes. Just plain, sensible shoes. Remember these things. Perhaps if Erica had known them...

Erica hesitates, hating this journey that she makes so often. She enters the shadowy and empty place with childlike unease.

But she walks safely past the first and second doorways. Dark holes in the old stone, with staircase rising to unknowable interiors.

She passes the next doorways - closed and blank. Her pace quickens as she turns the corner in the centre of the alley.

A pair of stockinged feet in plain brown flat-ended brogues, lurk in the next doorway.

And then a gloved hand snakes out, grabbing Erica. Another gloved hand smothers her mouth. Until only her frightened eyes can be seen.

10 EXT. BERGEN STREET (1930). DAY.

Erica is missing. POLICEMEN are searching from house to house.

Erica's MOTHER and Father stand by their gate calling out her name. The Children who were playing earlier search in garbage tips, behind fences and in back yards.

HELGA

(over)

For six weeks they searched. But witches do not murder children with knives or guns. That is for people who get caught. And witches never get caught.

11 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE. DAY.

Two further POLICEMEN are searching the house. - One of them emerges from the cellar by trapdoor. Shakes his head. No sign of her. The second Policeman has been looking inside a closet.

They stand for a moment beside the farmyard painting. One of the Policemen idly lifts the painting to check that there is no secret doorway behind. Then they step forward to report their lack of success.

12 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

The Mother weeps. The Father tries to console her.

HELGA

(over)

I was there six weeks later - in the house
- I was her best friend when it all
happened....

The Father goes to answer the door. A little girl (Helga as a child) enters and smiles a hopeful query. The Father shakes his head. No news. Little Helga hangs her head sadly.

And then the Father screams. A cry of utter horror. Stumbling back, half falling on a chair, clutching at his face as if he had suddenly been blinded.

The Mother leaps to his assistance, frightened by the groaning terror.

He finally looks up - stabbing a finger directly at the farmyard painting on the wall above little Helga's head.

There in the middle of the picture, standing beside the duck pond is a figure. Erica. Their lost daughter, dressed as a milkmaid. Erica, frozen in oils, stares out. Locked forever inside the painting.

HELGA

(over)

...Locked forever inside the painting!

13 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN. NIGHT.

Luke is hunched forward, wide-eyed and bursting with contained questions.

LUKE

I don't believe it! You saw her in the painting, Grandma?

HELGA

Many times. And the peculiar thing was that little Erica kept changing her position in the picture. One day she would be feeding the ducks, another she'd be inside the farm house looking out a window.

LUKE

Did you see her moving in the picture?

HELGA

Nobody did. She was always just a figure,
motionless in the painting. Very strange.
And most strange of all - as the years
went by...

14 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE. DAY.

The girl in the painting has aged. She is now a young
woman.

HELGA

(over)

...Erica grew older, too.

The CAMERA MOVES from the painting to the little parlor
room where a MAN IN BLACK is closing the lid of a coffin.
The Mother and several MOURNERS stand back as the coffin
is carried from the room. The Mother weeps as she follows
it into the street.

The painting. The woman in the painting, too, has tears
coursing down her cheeks.

15 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN. NIGHT.

Helga is moist-eyed as she remembers. Luke is rivetted.

HELGA

And only five or six years ago...

16 INT. ERICA'S HOUSE. DAY.

HELGA

(over)

...the old woman as Erica had now become,
bent and frail in the painting, began to
disappear.

The painting is as described. The figure strangely faded.

HELGA

(over)

Until one morning. She was gone.

The figure has vanished from the painting.

17 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN. NIGHT.

LUKE

You mean she died?

HELGA

Who knows? Mysterious things go on in
the world of witches.

The bedroom door opens and LUKE'S MOTHER enters, dressed for an evening out, with a fine fur wrap loosely draping her shoulders. She is a handsome American woman in her late thirties. Her firmness is gentle.

LUKE'S MOTHER
It's almost nine o'clock!

LUKE
(enthusiastically)
Grandma's been telling me about witches,
mum! It's really scary!

Luke's mother bends to kiss him goodnight. He strokes her fur wrap lovingly - clearly a sensation he has enjoyed before, the voluptuous touch of fine mink.

LUKE'S MOTHER
Well she's finished now.

LUKE
Oh please. Just one more.

LUKE'S MOTHER
No more. You won't sleep at all.

LUKE
Granny? Please!

HELGA
No no, I've finished.

Luke is crestfallen, letting go the fur wrap as his mother walks back to the door, finger poised on the light switch.

LUKE'S MOTHER
Good night, darling.

His FATHER, a very tall thin man peers round the door and adds his goodnight. Helga rises from the chair she has been sitting in. The light goes out. Luke's parents leave the house.

As soon as the door closes behind them, Helga turns back to the boy in bed and kisses his glum face.

HELGA
One more. Very short.

Luke bounces up in bed, thrilled, and gestures to the chair signalling her to sit down again. She shakes her head.

HELGA
Witches are very cruel. And they have
a highly developed sense of smell.

Luke settles back.

HELGA

A real witch can smell a child across the street on a pitch black night.

LUKE

She couldn't smell me. I've just had a bath.

HELGA

Oh yes she could. The cleaner you are the more a witch can smell you.

LUKE

That doesn't make sense.

HELGA

Yes it does. A dirty child - it's the dirt she smells. A clean child, it's the child.

LUKE

I'll never have a bath again.

HELGA

Just not too often. Once a month is probably safe.

LUKE

Could a witch smell me now?

HELGA

Well to me you smell of raspberries and cream. But to a witch you would smell absolutely disgusting.

LUKE

What would I smell of?

HELGA

Dogs' droppings.

LUKE

Dog's droppings! I don't smell of dogs' droppings. I don't believe it.

HELGA

What's more - to a witch you smell of fresh dog's droppings.

LUKE

That's not true.

HELGA

There's no point arguing. It's a fact of life. So if you see a woman in the street holding her nose as she passes you....she could easily be a witch.

Luke considers this prospect carefully.

HELGA

Now it's bedtime.

LUKE

Goodnight, grandma.

HELGA

Did I tell you about Leif?

Happiness once more.

18 EXT. WOODLAND. DAY.

A beautiful, blond boy - LEIF - is walking through an idyllic wood when suddenly a gnarled and almost disembodied hand reaches from behind a tree and grabs him.

HELGA

(over)

The cruelty of witches is unimaginable. Little Leif was caught in the forest one day.

The CAMERA PANS over the woodland. SOUNDS of approaching footsteps.

HELGA

(over)

They turned him into a pheasant. And released him....

A plump cock pheasant comes scuttling out from the very tree behind which Leif disappeared. The pheasant looks perplexed. Flaps its wings. And flies.

HELGA

(over)

....on the very first day of the shooting season.

Three HUNTERS in plus-fours break through the undergrowth and see the bird at the same time. The thunder of four gunshots simultaneously. The pheasant plummets to the ground.

19 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN. NIGHT.

Helga is at the door. Blows a kiss and exits.

Luke lies in the bed, not at all disturbed by these vivid stories. He is indeed smiling with content as he closes his eyes.

20 EXT. BERGEN STREETS. DAY.

Snow lies thickly on the ground. The blizzard has stopped and the day is bright and piercingly white. The streets of Bergen have been cleared already, though snow ploughs and carts are still doing their work.

Through this white wonderland a yellow POLICE CAR moves at speed, its siren wailing. The CAMERA PANS with the car as it turns into the street where Helga's house is situated.

21 INT. HELGA'S HOUSE. DAY.

Luke is in his pyjamas as he comes out of his bedroom and shuffles along the hallway. He is faintly surprised to see the door to his parents' room open.

He looks inside.

22 INT. PARENTS' ROOM. DAY.

The bed is tidily made. It has not been slept in.

Luke turns, puzzled.

LUKE

Mum? Dad?

23 EXT. HELGA'S HOUSE. DAY.

A POLICEMAN and POLICEWOMAN emerge from the car and rap at the front door. The Policeman holds the fur wrap which Luke's mother was wearing the previous evening.

Helga answers the door. The Policeman speaks to her. Helga stumbles in shock and is supported by the Policewoman. They go into the house. The CAMERA remains holding the house in steady shot, like an enlarged doll's house against the snowy cityscape.

LUKE

(over)

It was December the twenty seventh when my parents died. They brought my mother's fur to the house....

24 EXT. BERGEN CEMETERY. DAY.

The brown earth from the open grave is a livid scar on the snow covered ground. Luke clutches his grandmother's hand, tears coursing down his face freely, as the ceremony concludes. There are a dozen MOURNERS at the grave side.

Helga is resolute, determined not to give in to her emotion for the sake of the child who clings to her. Yet she shivers involuntarily and not only from the cold.

25 INT. HELGA'S HOUSE. DAY.

The brittle and empty aftermath. Helga is packing away a final suitcase in the parents' bedroom.

Luke, crouched on the floor, fingers random belongings of his parents as if they were his last contact. A hair brush. His father's diary. His mother's fur.

On the dressing table stands a large child's painting with the words "Mummy and Daddy, Happy Xmas love Luke." Helga moves rapidly to slip this into the suitcase unobserved.

26 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM, BERGEN. NIGHT.

The house is silent as Luke awakens in the dark. Sitting up he can hear faint, muffled SOUNDS. He gets out of bed and walks to the door.

27 INT. LIVING ROOM, BERGEN HOUSE. NIGHT.

Luke enters the room quietly and stands a moment in the doorway.

Helga is seated in a chair, her head bent in sobbing which she tries to stifle with a lace handkerchief. A single low table light casts a glow of rich shadows over the room.

Luke goes to her. She takes him in her arms silently and together they remain, holding each other in the fastness of the long wintry night.

28 EXT. HELGA'S HOUSE, BERGEN. NIGHT.

A single light burns in the window.

LUKE

(over)

I didn't really mean to be selfish. But it was only that night I remembered that my father....was also grandma's only son.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

29 EXT. SURREY HOUSE, ENGLAND. DAY.

A slightly eccentric house in the folds of a Surrey hill, set within its own grounds and standing well back from the country lane which runs at the foot of the garden. It is Spring.

LUKE

(over)

Grandma took me back to England a week later. She said she felt safer in England than the States - because she'd lived there when she was younger - and anyway the house dad had rented was ours for the rest of the year. I started at the new school my parents had chosen before they....before we went on vacation.

Luke goes flying out of the house, late for school, and jumps on his bike which is parked near the gate. He carries a satchel on his back and wears a bottle green uniform and cap.

30 EXT. SURREY LANE. DAY.

He bicycles fiercely for fifty yards where another boy on a bike, JAMES, is waiting for him. The two of them pedal towards the new estate about half a mile away.

LUKE

(over)

I learned a lot about witches. Every night grandma told me about them. And every day I told James...

31 EXT. NEW ESTATE, SURREY. DAY.

The two boys turn down a lane towards the school, a mixture of fine mansion and modern buildings.

LUKE

They're always bald, that's another thing.

JAMES

Bald?

LUKE

That's why they have to wear wigs. Really good wigs so you can't tell. Except that they itch and scratch a lot.

James laughs at this image as they wheel through the school gates, joining streams of other uniformed CHILDREN.

JAMES

I saw a woman yesterday with purple eyes.
She was scary.

LUKE

Purple in the middle? Almost black except
when there's a strong light?

JAMES

I think so. Anyway she was having a
meeting with my Dad and she was very upset
I'd seen her.

LUKE

Did she hold her nose when you got near
her?

JAMES

I think so. She jumped out of his car and
sort of walked away in a huff. Her eyes
looked purple. But I didn't know about
if she had a wig.

LUKE

Your dad wouldn't have a meeting with a
witch.

JAMES

He was actually touching her hair when
I saw them! I bet it was to see if she
was wearing a wig. Anyway you told me
grown-ups were safe from witches.

LUKE

I think so.

They park their bikes and enter the school building as a
bell sounds deep within the echoing corridors.

32 INT. SCHOOL ASSEMBLY HALL. DAY.

The morning hymn is being sung. The treble voices of the
boys ring to the rafters of the fine 19th century hall.

Luke and James are two of a clique of six BOYS who, as they
sing, are laughing at the game they play: tying a long ball
of string around each of themselves and then the next boy
until all six are bound together in a mess of loops and
knots. The tallest boy, DOMINIC, has had his ankles and
knees bound heavily and as the song reaches its end there
is some shuffling which sends Dominic tumbling. Then
scrambling to get upright again under the baleful glare
of the HEADMASTER on the platform with the other TEACHERS.

Thumping the piano to keep ahead of the singing is the HEADMASTER'S WIFE, a plain tweedy woman. She gladly strikes the coda cords of the hymn.

The shuffling subsides in the silence which follows the hymn.

HEADMASTER

I want to see all form leaders in my study during break. Mrs Grange is ill so her classes are being taken by Mr Ramage in his room. Going to the wrong room is not an excuse for being late. The next time I find any more obscenities in the changing room toilets I shall have the whole school kept in late. If you haven't got rude words out of your system by now - the changing room is not the place to begin. Our latest feeble little author can't even spell properly. Don't forget to return open day raffle tickets before open day. Thank you.

The assembly breaks up with a sudden gale of noise as Children scuttle from the room.

Luke and his gang untangle themselves rapidly. Luke has dropped his glasses - he is a clumsy boy - and having picked them up, he is left to pick up the bits of string. As he straightens from this task he finds the Headmaster looming directly over him. Luke pats his annoying tuft of hair flat.

HEADMASTER

Warned.

Luke opens his mouth to respond - but the Headmaster has swept from the room. As Luke collects a last piece of string he finds himself at eye level with the Headmaster's Wife as she is talking to another Teacher.

Her shoes are flat-toed brogues.

Luke gazes slowly up at her. She scratches her hair. Luke steps back a pace instinctively. She waves her bare hands to emphasize a point. Luke turns and walks quickly from the room.

33 INT. LUKE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

A photograph of Luke's father and mother stands on the table beside his bed.. It is obscured as the lights go out.

Helga is closing the curtains and turning off the lights as Luke settles down for the night.

She has a nasty cough which causes her to pause in her step. Finally she tucks in the loose bedclothes.

LUKE

Granny - do witches always wear gloves?

HELGA

Always.

LUKE

Oh.

HELGA

But sometimes a witch will wear gloves that don't look like gloves. They're skin-coloured. Perfectly made to look like ordinary hands. You could only tell the difference if you pulled their fingers.

LUKE

Do you think Mrs Harringey is a witch?

HELGA

The headmaster's wife? No. How could she possibly be? The stink of all those children - all the time - right under her nose? She'd be dizzy from disgust.

Helga leans over the bed and kisses him goodnight.

LUKE

Granny?

HELGA

Yes?

He just smiles at her in the dark, reassured by the fact of her presence. She goes out, her hacking cough resuming as she moves down the hall and enters her own room.

34 EXT. GARDEN OF SURREY HOUSE. DAY.

Luke is half way up a spreading oak tree. He is hauling on a rope which has a plank of wood attached to it. He is building a tree house. His glasses keep slipping down his nose.

The plank is lifted into place. It completes the formation of a platform spread between the thick branches of the budding oak. Luke reaches for the hammer and nails. Takes off his glasses and hooks them over a twig as he begins to hammer.

The garden looks verdant in this first blush of Spring. The oak tree completely conceals Luke from the world except for the thump of the hammer. An idyll of an English summer's day.

35 EXT. LANE BY GARDEN. DAY.

A WOMAN dressed in black walks slowly down the lane. She is an ordinary-looking woman. But she is smelling the air, sniffing like a dog as she approaches the boundary line around Luke's house. Her steps slow as she reaches into her bag and produces a pair of tinted glass through which she peers towards the sound of hammering.

36 EXT. GARDEN/LANE/TREE. DAY.

The last nail is driven home. The plank in place, Luke now tests it with his weight. It holds firmly. He drops the hammer in surprise as a voice nearby calls out a greeting.

WOMAN IN BLACK

Hello, young man.

Luke can't see her properly without his glasses which he picks off the branch and puts on. He peers down through the branches to see the Woman standing on the far side of the boundary hedge, her hands behind her back, looking up at him through her tinted specs.

WOMAN IN BLACK (cont'd)

What a nice tree house.

LUKE

Thank you.

WOMAN IN BLACK

Did you make it yourself?

LUKE

Yes.

The woman's hands are revealed as she holds onto the top of the stone wall.

She is wearing gloves.

WOMAN IN BLACK

I've got something for you here.
Something I think you'll like.

Luke edges forward on his tree house and squints down, trying to see the woman's feet.

HIS P.O.V. She is wearing square-toed sensible shoes.

He leans back, gasping with sudden fear.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Jump down and I'll show you.

LUKE
No thank you.

WOMAN IN BLACK
What?

LUKE
No thank you very much.

WOMAN IN BLACK
It's worth a lot of money.

Luke looks towards the house. It's a long way off. And when he looks back.....the Woman in Black is inside the garden standing just beneath his tree!

LUKE
This is private property.

WOMAN IN BLACK
There's nothing to be frightened of. I just want to give you this. I found it on my walk.

She holds up a bright green grass snake.

WOMAN IN BLACK
It's quite harmless. They cost ten pounds at the pet shop. Little boys love snakes. Here. It's yours.

Luke climbs up a branch higher than the tree house platform. He calls out as loud as he can.

LUKE
Grandma....! Granny!

WOMAN IN BLACK
Look. I'll leave it here, if you like. Then you can come down on your own and get it. But they wriggle away quite quickly....

(she smiles a sinister smile)
Unless you tell them not to.

She mumbles some words at the snake's head. Lays it on the ground where it wriggles without moving away.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Perhaps you'd like some chocolate instead?

LUKE
(shouts in real fear
now)
Gr-a-a-a-n-n-n-yyyy!!

But there is no response from the house. The Woman in Black walks to the gate and lets herself out, circling round on the lane to resume her place just on the far side of the wall.

WOMAN IN BLACK
She can't hear you.

Luke reaches for a yet higher branch. Misses his footing. His body shoots out from the tree - dangling in space almost directly above the woman. But he manages to hang on with his hands. Then work his way back to safety.

WOMAN IN BLACK
You're not English, are you?

Luke says nothing.

WOMAN IN BLACK
What's your name?

He doesn't reply.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Is it.....Luke?

He gasps with surprise.

WOMAN IN BLACK
Thought so. Here you are, Luke, a big bar of chocolate if you....

There is a call from the house.

HELGA
Luke! Tea time!

The Woman in Black stiffens. Then she backs into the lane, turns and walks quickly away, striding towards the town in the distance without another word. As she looks back once, she has removed her glasses. The flash of bright purple in her eyes must only be in our imagination....

Helga comes down the path.

HELGA
Tea time, darling!

Luke is almost limp with relief as he clambers down.

He drops to the ground just beside the spot where the grass snake lay. But it has vanished.

He runs as quickly as he can towards his Grandmother.

LUKE

Grandma....you won't believe it!....

He falls into her welcoming - and safe - arms.

37 INT. DINING ROOM, SURREY HOUSE. DAY.

Luke sits alone at the head of the table. His place has a fading arrangement of garden greenery and flowers around it. He has his hands over his eyes. The sound of Helga's voice is thinner and more quavery than usual.

HELGA

(off, singing)

Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to
you, Happy Birthday, dear Luke, Happy
Birthday to you.

She enters carrying a large box with a piece of satin draped over it. She puts this on the table at his place.

HELGA

There.

Luke opens his eyes. Lifts the cloth off to reveal a cage containing two white mice. They peer up at him curiously for a moment, twitching their noses. Then one of them jumps on the wheel and treadmills furiously for a moment - showing off his exceptional skill.

LUKE

Oh Granny!

He kisses her warmly and then unlatches the door of the cage to examine the mice more closely.

LUKE

I'm going to build them a whole circus.
Teach them tricks, acrobatics and stuff.
Then I'll rig up a room with....

Helga's hand splay onto the table beside the cage as she suddenly seems to lose balance.

And then with a frightening crash, she falls to the floor, toppling crockery and birthday cards.

LUKE
(a wail of fear)
Granny!

He leaps to her fallen body.

Helga's eyes are glazed, her mouth working emptily as she struggles for consciousness.

LUKE
(a shuddering sob)
Granny.....

Utterly lost, the boy holds his grandmother's hand beneath the turmoil of the table.

A tableau as the child, sobbing over her fallen body, strokes her face tenderly. Completely uncertain what to do next but to love her.

38 INT. HELGA'S ROOM. DAY.

The DOCTOR is putting away his instruments as Luke is permitted into the room.

Helga lies in bed. She raises her head and smiles at Luke, giving him a wave of welcome. Luke runs to her and is embraced.

The Doctor touches Luke's shoulder before talking to him.

DOCTOR
Your granny's got a very mild case of diabetes. Old people sometimes get it and it's nothing to worry about. She'll have a good rest now - and in two days she'll be right as rain.

LUKE
(to Helga)
You're going to be better!

DOCTOR
(to Helga)
I'll be putting you a special diet and there'll be some pills to take. With that you'll be good as new.
(to Luke)

Now then - leave your granny to get her beauty sleep and perhaps you'll bring her breakfast in bed in the morning. By tomorrow afternoon you can boss her around like before.

HELGA

Poor Luke, you got such a fright. But there you are. I'm fine now and sorry for spoiling your birthday.

With a final kiss, Luke runs from the room. Helga thanks the doctor as he closes his bag.

39 INT. LUKE'S ROOM. NIGHT.

The floor is a mass of string, cardboard cereal boxes, wire, Q-tips, cotton reels, ladders made from matchsticks etc. He is building an elaborate and excellent mouse circus. The only trouble is the mice themselves aren't very keen on the various pieces of equipment. They scuttle hither and thither, nipping back to the safety of their cage up a rampway from time to time.

Luke now blocks this rampway with a cotton reel meshed into a second and third cotton reel which turns the propeller of one of his toy aircraft.

By putting a crumb of cake in the cage - he persuades the mice to run up and scramble over his little treadmill.

Hey presto - the airplane propeller turns.

Luke gives a grunt of satisfaction and puts the mice inside the cage for their reward.

His bespectacled face looms large through the bars of the cage as he shines with happiness at his gift and the little mice scurry about their - as yet - inscrutable business.

40 INT. KITCHEN, SURREY HOUSE. DAY.

Helga holds an empty cup as she comes into the kitchen in her bathrobe where Luke is eating his cereal.

HELGA

I hate coffee without sugar.

LUKE

Granny! You're meant to be in bed!

HELGA

Bed is boring to the very young and the very old. This diet is disgusting.

Luke has the doctor's diet sheet on the kitchen table.

LUKE

Poor old granny. No desserts either.

HELGA
No cakes.

LUKE
No ice cream.

HELGA
No jam.

LUKE
And no candies.

HELGA
No candies? I can't live without my mints
after lunch!

Luke jumps up, reaching for his cap and blazer.

LUKE
I'm going to be late.

HELGA
But the good news is - The doctor says
I'm to have a month at the seaside. As
soon as your holidays begin.

LUKE
(still just happy for
her)
Terrific, Granny....

He blows her a kiss and exits. Helga switches the kettle
on and is startled as Luke returns.

LUKE
Can William and Mary come with us, too?

HELGA
William and...?

Luke tugs the two white mice from his pocket. They scamper
up his arm.

HELGA
Of course they come.

He tucks the mice back into his pocket and waves her
goodbye once again.

HELGA
I can hardly wait. Sunshine, sea air and
cream scones for tea.

Luke is at the door as he turns back. They laugh as they
chorus together:

LUKE & HELGA
No scones!

41 EXT. BOURNEMOUTH SEA FRONT. DAY.

There is no sunshine either. Just the misty blur of rain sweeping over the dismal slate gray sea. Empty beaches and wet pavements. An English seaside resort in early summer.

A taxi wheezes down the wide esplanade with its fine white-coated hotels and guest houses. Luke peers excitedly out the taxi window at the bleak scene.

42 EXT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL, BOURNEMOUTH. DAY.

A UNIFORMED DOORMAN jumps to take the luggage. Helga, supported by a walking stick, marches into the hotel as Luke inspects the fine grounds in which the hotel is set.

43 INT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL. DAY.

The hotel was built in the days when lobbies were large and impressive, rooms designed with real space and balconies over the gardens and the seafront, elegance and slight dilapidation in every corner of the fine old building.

A MIDGET CALLBOY in elaborate uniform walks through the lobby ringing a small bell to draw attention to the handwritten card which he carries on the prong of a long fork. It has somebody's name on it. Luke smiles at the little man - who smiles back pleasantly as he heads towards the library.

Luke wonders round the recesses of the lobby until a piercing whistle from Helga summons him back to her side and they ride in the wrought-iron elevator with a smirking BELLBOY and their luggage.

As the elevator disappears upstairs the CAMERA REMAINS in the lobby where TWO WOMEN are seated at a registration desk beneath the sign: "CONVENTION DELEGATES REGISTER HERE." Just beyond the desk is their logo and the words "ROYAL SOCIETY, PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO CHILDREN, 5TH NATIONAL CONVENTION."

Half a dozen DELEGATES are chattering, signing the register and greeting each other.

A WOMAN enters the front door of the hotel. This is MISS ERNST and she is astoundingly glamorous, a real movie star, as she sweeps to the desk and gestures the PORTERS to put her huge array of luggage down.

The RECEPTIONIST bows low - this is an honoured and familiar guest.

44 INT. HELGA'S HOTEL ROOM (608). DAY.

French doors open onto a small balcony. The room is on the fifth floor and has a fine sea view - when the sea is visible that is. Adjoining doors lead to an annex room where Luke has a simply furnished room to himself.

The Bellboy holds the mouse cage up with laboured irony.

BELLBOY

Does this stay in madam's room?

LUKE

I'll take it. Thanks.

The Bellboy hands it over. Finishes unloading the other cases and waits as Helga fetches him a tip.

BELLBOY

(bored with long practice)

My name is George. Please ask for me if there's anything I can do to make your stay more enjoyable.

He goes out.

LUKE

He was nice.

Why should a child hear the insincerity and routine of the words?

HELGA

I'm going to have a wash and brush while you explore. Then we'll have tea together and you can show me round. All right?

LUKE

Don't lock me out.

HELGA

I won't.

Luke carries the mouse cage and his small suitcase into his own room and closes the door.

45 INT. LOBBY OF HOTEL. DAY.

Miss Ernst has finished checking in and is being greeted by three obsequious LADIES as she strides to the elevator.

LADY 1

You look wonderful, Miss Ernst.

LADY 2

We are looking forward to this afternoon.

Miss Ernst stops in her tracks, peers at a painting on the wall by the elevator. Then she does something odd: she taps it.

The painting shows a rural scene. There is a small, shrivelled dwarf in 18th century peasant dress beside the river.

Miss Ernst grimaces with satisfaction. Steps into the elevator and lets it whisk her away from her fan club.

46 INT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL. DAY.

Luke checks out the main floor which is a labyrinth of rooms, each with a formal sign on the door proclaiming its purpose: The Smoking Room, The Card Room, The Reading Room, The Drawing Room etc.

The doors are massive pieces of figured mahogany. Stained glass and velvet drapery abounds. The rooms within are strangely empty as if the hotel is not doing very much business for the time of year.

47 INT. LOUNGE, EXCELSIOR HOTEL. DAY.

As Luke opens the door of the room marked "Lounge" he discovers only one other person there: a boy of his own age, who is examining and then nibbling the edges of small cakes on the linen-covered tea trolley. He is BRUNO JENKINS, gourmand and egotist.

LUKE

Hello.

BRUNO

The raisins are all round the edge of these cakes. They're really good and if you don't get in quick it's all gone by the time the grown-ups come.

LUKE

Well, I....thanks.

Luke doesn't in fact take anything. Bruno resumes his study of the cakes, selecting only those with the highest concentration of raisins.

LUKE

Hi, my name's Luke.

BRUNO

Bruno Jenkins. The cucumber sandwiches are all right too except when they use margarine instead of butter. I hate margarine.

LUKE

I better wait till my grandmother comes down.

Luke pats down his tuft of hair in the momentary silence which follows. Then Bruno speaks again:

BRUNO

Have you got any comics?

LUKE

No.

BRUNO

You're not English, are you?

LUKE

I'm American. But we live in...

BRUNO

I'd like some Americanb comics. Why haven't you got any?

LUKE

I don't know. I like comics. It's just....

BRUNO

How much pocket money do you get? My dad's rich but he's jolly mean. We've got three cars. Oh-oh...

He leaps away from the trolley and scoops up a magazine, squatting in the window seat and pretending to be completely absorbed.

A uniformed MAID enters with two silver tea pots. She is followed by another MAID with the hot water jugs.

MAID

Hello, boys.

LUKE

Hello.

BRUNO

I hope there's butter in the sandwiches today. Yanks never eat margarine.

The maids exchange a look.

LUKE
I better fetch my....

He starts from the room as Bruno stalks towards the trolley once more.

BRUNO
Ah. You've got those excellent cakes again. Good-oh.

48 INT. HOTEL CORRIDOR. DAY.

As Luke comes out of the elevator and walks towards his room there is a scream of sheer terror. He runs forward just as the CHAMBERMAID, screaming hysterically, leaps from his room.

CHAMBERMAID
Aaagh! Mice! Mice! Urggh...

The hotel manager, MR STRINGER, comes running down the hallway to see what the commotion is. The Chambermaid manages to repeat her phobic allegation in calmer tones. Luke has already dashed into his bedroom.

CHAMBERMAID
I went to turn down the bed...they were there! White, disgusting...

49 INT. LUKE'S HOTEL ROOM. DAY.

Helga has come through from her room as Luke searches the bed and quickly puts his mice into their cage. The knock on his door is instantly followed by Mr Stringer.

MR STRINGER
Is this your room?

LUKE
Yes.

Mr Stringer registers the cage as the mice do their party number on the treadmill, like taking a bow.

MR STRINGER
Ah. I see. I'm afraid, madam, I cannot permit mice in my hotel.

Helga looks at Luke's utter despair. Faces up to the sallow faced manager.

HELGA

How dare you say that when your rotten hotel is full of rats anyway!

MR STRINGER

Rats!? There are no rats in this hotel.

HELGA

I saw one this morning. It was running down the corridor into the kitchen.

MR STRINGER

Madam - I believe you only arrived in the hotel this afternoon.

HELGA

Morning, afternoon. I saw a rat in your hotel. And unless matters improve I shall have to report it to the Public Health Authorities....

Mr Stringer quickly turns and closes the door to keep this conversation private.

MR STRINGER

Madam I refuse to....

LUKE

The cakes in the lounge were nibbled round the edges, too. I can show you.

HELGA

If you're not careful the Health people will be ordering the whole hotel closed before everyone gets typhoid fever.

MR STRINGER

You can't be serious, madam.

HELGA

I was never more serious in my life. Now. Are you or are you not going to allow my grandson to keep his hygienic, and entirely harmless pet mice?

Mr Stringer hesitates and is lost.

MR STRINGER

If they are kept in the cage. And only in his room....?

HELGA

Agreed.

MR STRINGER

Very well.

He exits rapidly.

LUKE

Granny - I can't train my mice if they're in a cage!

HELGA

(chuckling)

Nibbled cakes indeed!

LUKE

They were. Only it was a boy called Bruno Jenkins. But I'm teaching William and Mary how to be tightrope walkers. I brought the whole circus I built with me....

He dashes to a suitcase and pulls out furled plans and designs.

LUKE

Look - I've been planning them a whole house. Rampways here. A bath. I think this elevator's quite good....

Helga studies the plans a moment, impressed.

HELGA

You did this yourself? They're... excellent.

(she gives him a kiss)

Of course you must train them. Just don't get caught. And don't do it in here. If that hysterical maid comes back....

(smiles)

Now. Teatime. I love English hotel teas. Then I shall have a snooze.

They start from the room. Luke dives back and takes his mice, slipping them into his pocket.

HELGA

I'd like to study those designs later. They're really good....

50 INT. LOUNGE. DAY.

A group of HOTEL GUESTS are sipping their tea as Mr Stringer enters and inspects the cakes. . . .

There are indeed several with little nibbled bits missing from the edges. Mr Stringer looks very unhappy.

He exits guiltily as Luke and Helga join the throng at the tea trolley.

Luke points out Bruno, sitting at the window table with his parents. MR JENKINS is a vulgar man with firm opinions. MRS JENKINS whines and complains a lot, mainly about her son since he's nearest in her line of fire.

As the tea line shuffles patiently forward Mr Jenkins approaches with his empty cup.

MR JENKINS

That's the trouble with this country.
Queue for everything. Never cross their
minds to have two tea trolleys. That'd
be too convenient for the paying guests,
eh? They'll be wanting two lumps of ice
with their whisky next.

He chortles gleefully, pushes ahead anyhow and gets a refill.

MR JENKINS

Queue for their funerals if they could.

As he returns to the window seat, Mrs Jenkins' voice rises.

MRS JENKINS

(to Bruno)

You'll have some fresh air if I have to
lead you out by your ear! We didn't come
here for you to sit eating and watching
the telly all day....

Luke glances thankfully up at his serene Grandmother as they finally reach the front of the queue.

But Helga is staring intently at something else.

Miss Ernst sits in a corner with two women DELEGATES on either side of her. They are poring over documents in earnest conversation.

LUKE

What is it?

HELGA

(frowns)

I know that young lady from somewhere.

LUKE

Which one? -In the middle?~

For an instant Miss Ernst and Helga's eyes meet. They stare at each other without expression, then Helga shakes her head and looks away.

HELGA

(nods)

My memory's going. I'm sure I've met her....

(then firmly)

But she's probably on TV or something.

They collect their tea and sandwiches. Helga examines hers with pleasure.

HELGA

Oh yum, fresh cucumber sandwiches.

She takes two on her plate and they move to a table by the unlit fireplace.

As they sit down, Helga looks up again.

Miss Ernst and her colleagues have gone.

Helga shrugs and bites into her sandwich.

HELGA

Urggh!

She looks at the sandwich.

HELGA

Fishpaste!

LUKE

You got the wrong ones. Here. I'll get you cucumber.

He runs back to the trolley, leaving Helga to ponder her sandwiches. She is damned sure she selected cucumber and stares at them mystified.

As Luke returns with the sandwiches, Helga smiles her gratitude and takes a sip of tea. She spits the tea out.

HELGA

Aaargh - sugar!

LUKE

Granny! Sugar can kill you!

HELGA

It's all right, dear. It was just a tiny bit, it's all right.

(more)

HELGA (Cont'd)
(she frowns solemnly)
Something very odd is going on.

She pushes the cup away.

The hotel CALLBOY enters with another message on his forked stick.

51 INT. CORRIDOR/ELEVATOR. DAY.

Luke and Helga emerge from the elevator on their floor. They pass a clutch of LADIES coming the other way who greet them with cheerful smiles.

A FLOOR WAITER emerges from a closet. He has just laid two mouse-traps.

Luke exchanges a grimace with Helga and they enter her room.

52 INT. HELGA'S ROOM. DAY.

Helga settles back on the bed with a sigh of gratitude for her afternoon nap.

LUKE
You sure you're all right, granny?

HELGA
(pats him)
I'm fine, dear. Now don't get into trouble will you?

LUKE
I'm going to take William and Mary to explore. But I'll keep them hidden.

She smiles and closes her eyes. Luke exits quietly.

53 INT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL. DAY.

Tea is over and the dishes clatter as they are collected. Luke meanders through the corridors and lobbies, peering into other public rooms.

All of them seem to have a few GUESTS occupying their favourite corners or chairs. Guests who gaze balefully at a little boy looking for a private corner to himself.

In the billiard room - two DRUNKS gesture Luke to join them and are miffed at his speedy withdrawal.

He opens an unmarked doorway and finds himself looking into the vast hotel kitchens.

A couple of KITCHEN STAFF are smoking and playing cards over one of the cookers. The Floor Waiter is laying more mouse-traps under the baleful eye of Mr Stringer.

Back in the main lobby Luke stops and looks at the painting which Miss Ernst examined earlier.

We can now see that the dwarf in the painting is not a dwarf - but a child. Tears on the little boy's cheeks as he stares out of the painting.

Luke gives a shiver of remembered horror and moves rapidly away.

He sees Bruno sitting in a chair near the main entrance.

LUKE

Hi.

Bruno is stuffing his mouth with a large bar of chocolate. He licks his fingers delicately.

BRUNO

Somebody just gave me a whole bar of cream whip hazelnut milk chocolate!

LUKE

That's nice.

BRUNO

I'm getting some more later, too. What are you doing?

LUKE

I was just looking round. Do you like mice? I've got two pet mice....

BRUNO

Not much.

LUKE

Oh.

BRUNO

I've got to go for a walk.

Mrs Jenkins arrives in the elevator and gives a warning call.

MRS JENKINS

Bruno!

BRUNO

(mutters to Luke)

It's like a bloody prison. Thirty minutes exercise before you get locked back inside.

He stands and joins his mother at the doorway. Mrs Jenkins looks at Luke disapprovingly.

MRS JENKINS

Did that boy give you chocolate?

BRUNO

(utter innocence)

What chocolate?

MRS JENKINS

Don't lie to me! Look at your face....

BRUNO

It was the cake from tea time....

He wipes his mouth with an arm. His mother jerks his jumper and pushes him out the door ahead of her. Bruno manages a last folorn glance back at Luke before he is frogmarched down the drive.

Luke, alone again, strolls across the lobby and pauses at a vast doorway with a large sign outside.

OC "ANNUAL MEETING. ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY -
(R.S.P.C.C.)."

He looks in.

54 INT. BALLROOM. DAY.

It is a colossal room with rows of chairs set facing the elevated stage at the far end. There are room-height windows letting onto the terrace of the hotel, though these are now shuttered so that only artificial light illuminates the room.

At the back of the ballroom, to the right side of the podium is a large folding screen, shutting off the corner section of the room.

There is nobody in the place.

Luke reckons he has finally found a private sanctuary. He closes the door behind himself and walks down the room, past the rows of blank chairs. He stops by the stage, feeling a little exposed, then examines the corner behind the screen. Perfect. He slips around the edge concealing himself behind the screen.

BEHIND SCREEN.

This is a perfect secret place. Ideal for mouse training. From his top pocket, Luke removes a length of string. Then he fetches one of the mice and, holding it in his left hand, he reaches into another pocket with his right hand and withdraws a few crumbs of cake.

He holds his hands just above the carpet and a few inches apart in front of himself. The mouse's nose twitches. It can almost reach the cake by leaning forward - but not quite. Then it places a paw on the string. And another paw. With that small distance accomplished it can reach the reward and does so.

LUKE

Good. Now try again.

Taking some more crumbs out, he repeats the exercise with the string slightly lengthened. The mouse hesitates - and then walks across the string easily.

LUKE

Well done, William! Once more.

This time he holds his hands a good two feet apart. And this time William accomplishes the tightrope walk with great ease.

Giving William an extra reward, he slips him back into a pocket and lifts Mary out. He repeats stage one. But as he does so there is a commotion at the far end of the ballroom. And the dreaded voice of Mr Stringer.

Luke peers underneath the gap at the bottom of the screen.

55 INT. BALLROOM. DAY.

A LARGE GROUP OF RSPCC DELEGATES are entering the ballroom, led by Mr Stringer.

MR STRINGER

I'm sure your delegates will be comfortable in here. If there's anything we can do, please don't hesitate to let me know personally. Drinks will be served on the terrace after you have concluded your meeting. The sky is clearing, I'm glad to say. And we've prepared a very nice banquet for you tonight. Our chef's special soup followed by vol au vents, lamb and fresh raspberries.

The hotel CALLBOY comes up behind him and peers at the delegates.

CALLBOY

There's no Mr Cameron here, is there?

He wanders off again.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke is trapped behind the screen. But he isn't that concerned, shrugging his shoulders philosophically as the SOUNDS of the delegates arriving drift around him. The VOICES are predominantly female, with much excited greeting and chattering. He resumes his training programme with Mary, enticing her onto the short string with a cake crumb.

The hubbub of delegates taking their places continues on the far side of Luke's secure little corner. He peers between the crack of the screen.

HIS P.O.V. Two floral hatted WOMEN sit on the chairs nearest to him and they are chattering animatedly. They are MILLIE and BEATRICE.

MILLIE

Beatrice dear, I haven't seen you since last year's meeting....

BEATRICE

What an adorable dress!

HIS P.O.V. By squinting sideways, Luke can see another woman - JANICE, a large boned Australian blonde who is talking to somebody else out of his range of vision. The buzz of conversation in the room grows louder and louder. The double doors are closed.

Interested now, Luke sits back on his haunches, tucking the white mouse away. By half lying on his tummy he gets a better view of the room from beneath the screen.

But all he can see at first are rows and rows of feet, shoes, shuffling and moving as the delegates settle.

By leaning closer he can see more.

HIS P.O.V. The chairs are turned slightly sideways to him for a full view of the stage. The section of audience here are entirely women. And several of the woman seem to be scratching their heads.

Luke crawls forward.

The back of the head of Janice is close by. Her fingers itch her scalp - and suddenly her hair lifts off. It is a wig.

The shoes. They are all square-toed sensible shoes.

And as Millie turns to greet a woman on her left - the certain flash of purple from her eyes is dread confirmation.

Furthermore - the woman to whom she speaks....is the Woman in Black who tried to entice him out of his tree house at home!

There is a strange whirring and palpating SOUND. Louder and louder. And then all the women in the ballroom - and there are only women in the ballroom - break into excited applause.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

Miss Ernst, beautiful, svelte with her straight black hair and delicate bones, now dressed in a long black satin dress, stands on the stage, her head inclining briefly to acknowledge the thunderous greeting.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke has a clear view of the stage through the top of the side panel of the screen. He stares at this lovely woman, cold horror causing him to shake with certainty. And then his certainty is confirmed.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

Miss Ernst on the stage raises her gloved fingers to the back of her head as if unhooking something. Then the tips of her fingers go to her cheeks where she takes a pinch of skin and lifts her entire face off her head as if removing a mask.

She places the mask on a little table where its perfect features and dazzling eyes continue to stare upwards blankly as if she had been decapitated.

When she turns back, to renewed storms of applause, her real face can be seen for the first time. A hideous, wizened, shrivelled face, the skeletal bones draped in cankerous crepe-like skin.

The hole that is her mouth opens as the applause subsides.
Her voice is strong and penetrating.

GRAND HIGH WITCH (MISS ERNST)
Ze doors! Are zey chained and bolted?

In the silence that follows, a single quavering voice from the rear of the room.

WITCH
Chained and bolted, your Grandness.

The flashing purple eyes survey the room.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
You may ree-remove your gloves!

Following her lead, everyone in the room tugs off their gloves. Revealing those same, hideous prehensile hands we have seen before. Sharp claws and raw flesh.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
(doing so herself)
You may ree-emoof your shoes!

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke looks beneath the screen, squinting as his glasses ride up on his face.

HIS P.O.V. Shoes being kicked off. Revealing extraordinarily deformed toeless feet. Some are concealed in thick stockings. But some are visible through the fine mesh of nylons: fleshy lumps where toes might once have grown.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
(over)
You may ree-moof your vigs!

She lifts her wig away from her hideous head to revealed a bald, carbuncled pate of patchy scaly skin.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

The little side table is more and more taking on the appearance of some disconnected half human monster: the disembodied gloved arms on either side, footless shoes tidily placed beneath and now the mass of wig hair placed above the staring face.

The audience of witches, now bereft of gloves, wigs and shoes are a seething mass of ugliness and menace. Their bald heads and scabby scalps give them a curiously sexless aspect. But this is in weird contrast to their jewellery, pretty blouses and feminine apparel.

The Grand High Witch paces the stage a moment, waiting for silence to return. Finally she has the undivided attention of her audience and steps forward.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Vitches of Inkland....you are a disgrrace!
Miserrable vitches - you are good for
nothing vurms!

A shudder goes through the room. They are genuinely
frightened of this intense, angry demonic form who insults
them, spitting a livid blue spittle as she fulminates.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Everywhere I look - the reeevolting sight
of hundreds, thousands of reepulsive
little children! I ask you: why?

No answer.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Vun child a veek is no good to me! Is
that the best you can do?

Eventually a lone voice replies:

WITCH

We will do better. We will do much
better.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Better is no good either! I demand
maximum rree-sults! So here are my
orders.

She pauses for dramatic emphasis, wanting her pronouncement
to have maximum effect.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

My orders are that every child in Inkland
shall be rrubbed out, destrroyed....before
the year is out. Every single child -
eliminated.

A great gasp from the audience.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Do I make myself clear?

One of the less overawed witches, a chunky lady named DORA
speaks before thinking.

DORA

We can't possibly wipe out all of them...

The Grand High Witch stops in her tracks. Her voice drops
to a growl of fury.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Who said that?

No reply.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Who dares to argue with me?

Her blazing purple eyes swivel to a Witch in the second row.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
It vos you?

DORA
I didn't mean to argue, Your Grandness.
I was just talking to myself.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
You dared to argue vith me!

DORA
No, honestly, it just was...

The Grand High Witch stalks to the front of the stage and raises a claw.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
(screams)
A stupid vitch who answers back
Must burn until her bones are black!

DORA
(begs)
No! No!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
A foolish vitch without a brain
Must sizzle in the fiery flame!

DORA
Save me!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
An idiotic vitch like you
Must rroast upon the barbecue!

DORA
Forgive me! Please!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
A vitch who dares to say I'm wrrong Vill not be with us very long!

Her eyes focus, blazing with purple light. A stream of sparks like tiny white-hot metal-filings come shooting out of the Grand High Witch's eyes, flying straight towards the unfortunate Dora.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke winces in terror.

BALLROOM/STAGE

The torrent of sparks strike Dora. She emits a horrifying scream.

And incinerates almost instantly.

For a moment there is just a writhing skeleton enveloped in smoke and flame. Her howling takes on an echoing, other-worldly sound. And then she is gone in a puff of smoke.

There is a groan of respectful horror. The little pile of ash, which is all that remains of Dora, lies on the seat of the chair. In moments it has burned a hole through the upholstered seat. Then it, too, is gone.

In the numb, awed silence which follows the Grand High Witch stalks back to stand centre stage beside the little table. Her voice is almost conversational.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

(mildly)

I hope nobody else is going to make me cross today.

Nobody is likely to.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke is quivering with fear. He eventually opens his eyes to confirm the truth of the horrible sight he has just witnessed, squinting through the slit in the screen.

So appalled and frightened is he, trying both to see and not be seen, that he doesn't notice when....

...one of his white mice peeps out of his jacket pocket and slithers to the ground after the cake crumbs. Nor does he see the second mouse following its companion to the floor.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

The Grand High Witch resumes her harangue in a softer tone.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

So now I am having a plan. A plan for getting rid of every disgusting little child in Inkland.

Polite applause greets this bold announcement.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Each of you will go back to your homes and ree-sign from your jobs. Give notice. Rree-tire!

She opens a small valise. It is crammed with banknotes.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

You will then buy with the money I give you - sweet shops. Candy stores. The very best and most respectable sweet shops in Inkland.

She lets the money cascade around herself - demonstrating the complete ease with which she can produce it. Bank notes flutter hither and thither everywhere for a moment.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Upstairs I have a trunk load of this Inklish money.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Several bank notes drift behind the screen where Luke examines them. They are fifty pound notes. Three or four of them which he collects quietly.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

So you will be able to offer three, four times what these shops are wurth.

The witches are all listening intently. Hunched forward on the edge of their seats as she unveils her plan.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

On a certain day, when all our plans are prepared...you will announce a Great Gala Opening. With freee candies, sweets and chocolates for every child!

A buzz of anticipation and glee. One of the witches, HENRIETTA, is excited by this prospect that she bursts out gleefully.

HENRIETTA
Poison sweets! We'll wipe them out like weasels!

The body of the Grand High Witch stiffens. A prickly silence falls.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Who spoke?

HENRIETTA
It's brilliant!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Poison....is brilliant?

Her sarcasm is penetrating.

HENRIETTA
(unsure now)
Yes.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Poison. And you don't mind being caught?
Exposed? Vilified?

HENRIETTA
Well I just....

GRAND HIGH WITCH
You blithering bumpkin! You brrainless bogvumper! Stupid! No wonder Inkland is swarming with...ugggh.

Her long shudder of repugnance leads her back to her instructions.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Everything you sell that day will have been treated with my very latest and very greatest magic formula.
(sneers at Henrietta)
Vitches vurk only with magic!

She takes a small medicine bottle of dark blue glass from her bag and holds it up.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke has almost knocked his glasses off in efforts to peer through the slits in the screen.

He pushes them onto his face.

Then a terrible thought dawns. He searches his pockets, slowly realizing the awful fact that his mice have escaped. They are not in his pocket. He searches frantically.

Sees them. Just as they scuttle away beneath the screen. He dare not reach for them without exposing himself.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

The Grand High Witch gazes at the little medicine bottle as if it were a holy talisman.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Formula 66. My greatest triumph. A vurk of genius. Formula 66. In this bottle - five hundred doses. With a delay mechanism that prevents it from vurking until two hours after it is taken.

With an unerring sense of the theatrical she puts the bottle down and paces towards the back of the stage - deliberately teasing them by refraining from telling them what it is.

MILLIE

What does it do, oh genius one?

OTHERS

What happens, Your Grandness?

OTHERS

Tell us! Please!

The Grand High Witch turns to face them again.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

The doses must be given carefully. One dose - and the two hour delay vurks to the second. But more than five doses breaks the delay barrier - and the formula works instantly.

WITCHES

What? What? Please! Tell us what it does! Ohhh.....

She smiles in the momentary silence that falls.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Child starts to shrrrink....

WITCHES

To shrink!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Child starts to grow fur!

WITCHES
Fur!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Starts growing a tail...

WITCHES
A tail!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
All is happening in prrecisely twenty five
seconds....

WITCHES
...seconds...yes...

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Shrinking more.

WITCHES
More!

She holds out finger a thumb to indicate the size.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Child is no longer a child. It is...
a mouse!

A wail of satisfied delight.

WITCHES
A mouse!!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
A plain, drab little brown-furred mouse.

The cheering that breaks around the room is tremendous.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
And vot is happening around the country?

WITCHES
What? (Vot?)

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Mouse traps.

Groans of appreciative delight.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

In every home. In every school. All over
Inkland the sound of mouse traps breaking
their necks will be heard!

The cheering goes on. Witch enthuses to witch. Applauds
their leader. Revels in the notion. Dance little jigs
of delight.

The Grand High Witch stands on the stage, motionless,
letting the applause and excitement wash over her. A
toothless grin is her only visible sign of pleasure.

One of the Witches suddenly screams with surprise.

A second and third have seen the same thing.

Luke's two white mice, William and Mary, are scuttling over
the stage. Less than two yards from the Grand High Witch
herself.

WITCH 1

Two children! You have done it already!
There they are!

Further applause as the witches see William and Mary
darting uncertainly around the stage.

At first the Grand High Witch doesn't understand the cause
of this additional wave of approval.

WITCH 2

Brilliant! We see them, oh Great One!

WITCH 3

Fetch the mouse traps!

Slowly the Grand High Witch looks down to where everyone
is pointing. Sees the white mice. Freezes.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

No! These have nothing to do with me.
These are pet mice. Some filthy, smelly
little boy in the hotel!

WITCHES

Yuggh! Frazzle him! Squish him! Turn
him into whitebait and fry him!

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Perhaps the very boy I will soon be
showing you!

She leaps at the mice with extraordinary agility and takes
a tremendous kick at them.

Catching them both with the flat front of her feet.

The two tiny creatures fly across the stage, thumping against the far wall. They recover and scuttle beneath the stage to safety.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Silence!

The hubbub subsides quickly.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

This afternoon at prreecisely four fifteen I have put one dose of my Formula on a chocolate bar. I have given it to a rreeepulsive, smelly boy who is in the lobby...He ate the chocolate in two disgusting bites. "Vos that good?" I am asking. "Got any more?" says the nauseating child. "Six more bars like that one," I am tellink him.

She looks at her watch.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

In two minutes time this appalling foul-smelling creature is coming to collect his reward! In five minutes from now you vill see my magic formula in action!

She cuts off the growing cheer.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Quvickly! Vigs! Gloves! The appalling child vill be here - and you vill see my miracle!

There is tremendous activity. The Grand High Witch herself replaces the mask face, wig etc. The others tug and pull and primp, excitedly chattering at the prospect before them.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke is pale with fear and anticipation. He looks desperately around. Tugs at a floor board which blocks any passage beneath the stage. It begins to come away. Then makes a groaning noise. He stops instantly. Suddenly aware that in the quiet of the room he could be heard. There is no escape.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

A thumping knock at the double doors.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Ready?

Everyone is prepared. A hundred false smiles prepare themselves.

The Woman nearest the door unbolts it.

Bruno Jenkins comes stomping into the room.

WOMAN

Hello. What's your name?

BRUNO

That lady promised me six bars of cream whip hazelnut milk chocolate. I've come to collect.

The Grand High Witch beckons him smilingly.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Ladies - may I introduce Bruno. Come up, Bruno.. I have the chocolate here. I said six fifteen. And that is in thirty seconds from now. You are in for a treat.

(with a dry laugh)

We all are.

The witches all giggle at this inside jest. Bruno strides down the aisle and clumps onto the stage. He holds out both hands.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Fifteen seconds.

BRUNO

What's going on?

He looks vaguely troubled.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke, desperate to get a clear view, pushes the screen too far. It tilts and begins to fall outwards. He grabs it by the corner and holds it.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

No one has noticed, so intently are they all watching Bruno on the stage.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Just a few moments.

BRUNO
I can't even see any chocolate. Will one
of you crazy punks tell me what on
earth....?

WITCHES
Five...four....three...two...

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Vun....zero. Vee haf ignition!

Bruno gives a sudden involuntary jump, as if a mule had
kicked him in the stomach.

BRUNO
Ow!

His body begins to twitch. His arms pump upwards once -
and then begin to shrivel. His torso trembles violently
and then becomes still.

His whole body begins to shrink. The Grand High Witch
dances gleefully.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
This smelly brrrat, this filthy scum
This horrid little louse
Vill very very soon become
A lovely little MOUSE!

Bruno's clothes have begun to disappear. Patches of skin
sprout hair. He continues to diminish.

A tail bursts through, elongating and twitching.

- His shrunken arms now covered in brown fur, transform into
a pair of paws.

The evolving mutation begins to move again, scuttling to
and fro as the final stages take place.

And then he is a mouse. He sniffs and twitches. And runs
round in circles. A plain little brown mouse.

WITCHES
Bravo! Brilliant! She's done it!
Fantastic. etc.

The Grand High Witch produces a mouse trap. But as she
searches for her victim.....he has scampered to the side
of the stage and dropped from sight.

The Grand High Witch tosses the mousetrap away and it clatters behind the screen.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Enough! Silence!

She waits for order to be restored.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Before the banquet tonight - you will come to my room in groups of ten. Room number 508.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke registers the room number.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
I will give you each a bottle containing one thousand doses. Also plenty of money. Do not forget your nose plugs for the dinner. The dining rrroom will be full of filthy children and vithout nose plugs the stink will be unbearrable. Now. Ve have drinks on the terrace with that rrridiculous Manager. Are there any qvestions?

A pause. Finally Millie summons up enough courage to speak.

MILLIE
What happens if one of the chocolates we give away is accidentally eaten by a grown-up?

The Grand High Witch smiles evilly.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
That's just too bad for the grrown-up. The meeting is over. Until next year!

WITCHES
Until next year!

BEHIND SCREEN.

Relief as Luke hears the chairs scraping and people standing up preparatory to leaving.

HIS P.O.V. Through the crack in the screen, he can see the women gathering their purses and wraps, adjusting their gloves and wigs. They begin to move towards the terrace.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

The terrace shutters are opened. Evening light floods into the room. One of the younger witches, a beautiful woman named NICOLA, takes a piece of buttered bread from her handbag and shows it to her companion.

NICOLA

Look what I have perfected.

She drops it by removing her hand so that it falls un-buttered side down. But at the last instant it turns over magically and lands buttered-side down.

NICOLA

It always lands buttered side down!

COMPANION

(giggling with delight)

That's wonderful! You must show me how to do it....

The Witches prepare to file outside onto the terrace where a table of drinks has been laid.

BEHIND SCREEN.

Soon Luke will be able to escape. He prepares for action when suddenly a lone voice cries out:

WITCH

Wait!

BALLROOM/STAGE.

It is ELSIE, an elderly harriidan, tall and thin, who has dropped an earring very close to the corner screen. As she bends to pick it up, her nose twitches vehemently.

ELSIE

Wait!

The terrace doors are closed again. The Witches turn.

ELSIE

Dogs droppings! I smell....

ANOTHER WITCH

Yes! I smell them, too!

ANOTHER

Poooh!

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke, in terror, backs into the corner. The cries of other witches who have caught the scent. Desperate and trapped, he begins to tug at the plank of the stage. It rips away.

But the aperture is too narrow.

BALLROOM/STAGE.

The Grand High Witch cuts a swathe through the assembly, her nose sniffing actively.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

She's right. Rrrrootle out this small lump of dung.

(screams)

Find it! It must be exterminated immediately!

OTHER WITCHES

Ohhh the smell....!

BEHIND SCREEN.

Luke decides there is only one avenue of escape - over the stage. But as he starts forward, he trips and stumbles against the screen.

The screen crashes to the floor.

He is utterly exposed.

And the four or five Witches on the stage turn, blocking his path that way.

A LINE OF WITCHES move towards him.

One of them lunges for him.

Luke dives. Hits the floor and wriggles beneath the legs of the advancing wall of witches. His glasses fly from his face.

He bounds out the far side and flinging chairs in every direction dashes for the double doors, weaving and ducking, outstretched hands and looming faces.

But the doors are bolted. And a nearby Witch waves the large key gloatingly in his face.

He must run again. Scrambling and vaulting; weaving and dodging, he races towards the terrace windows.

A witchy foot crunches over Luke's abandoned glasses, smashing them.

One of the french windows has had its curtains drawn aside. Luke hesitates only a moment before he picks up a chair and flings it forward.

The window shatters with a report like a field gun. A huge hole - large enough to escape through.

With a final wrench from clasping hands - he dives through the hole and is free.

56 EXT. HOTEL TERRACE/GROUNDS. DAY.

Luke literally somersaults across the terrace, smashing down the drinks table with its glassware and jugs of punch, through the wooden railings and plummeting five feet to the rose bed beyond.

Several of the Witches leap after him, scrambling through the window, diving under the table and grabbing at him in the flower bed beneath.

His jacket rips as a bony hand clutches it.

The livid streak of blood which erupts on the hand is caused not by Luke but by the thorns of the rosebush.

Luke jerks himself free and runs.

Weaving between ornamental stonework, hedges and fountains, Luke races through the grounds.

A posse of SIX WOMEN in hot pursuit.

57 EXT. GROUNDS/SEAFRONT ROAD. DAY.

A UNIFORMED POLICEMAN stands on the sidewalk watching the hullabaloo with mild interest.

58 EXT. HOTEL GROUNDS. DAY.

Luke sees the Policeman, changes course rapidly towards him.

The pursuing Women (Witches) instantly slow from a run to a saunter.

59 EXT. GROUNDS/SEAFRONT ROAD. DAY.

Luke vaults the low wall and almost crashes into the Policeman.

POLICEMAN
Careful now, laddie.

LUKE
They're after me! Witches!

POLICEMAN
Easy now - keep your games off the street,
there's a good lad. Now then. Just get
your breath back.

The Policeman looms over Luke, waiting patiently to hear
what the panic-stricken boy has to say.

LUKE
There's hundreds of them. They have a
terrible plan to....You have to believe
me. I saw them! They....they changed
a boy called Bruno Jenkins....
(realizing it's
hopeless)
They're not real women....they're....
they're....

He tapers off: it's still hopeless. No one is going to
believe him. And, worse, the Women are walking towards
him. Smiling and charming and attractive women.

WOMAN 1
Evening, constable.

POLICEMAN
I'm telling him not to play on the public
streets.

WOMAN 2
That's right. Keep our little game inside
the hotel grounds....Luke.

He looks astounded at her witchy knowledge.

WOMAN 1
Come on, dear....come along... dear....

Luke is trapped. Especially as the Policeman kindly lifts
him bodily back onto the wall of the hotel grounds.

~~He stands there a moment, encircled by the six Women all~~
grinning evilly at him.

Then he grabs the policeman's hat, rips it off his head
and flings it into the street. A car screeches to a halt.
Another stops behind the first. There is an instant traffic
jam.

But Luke isn't there to see. He has leapt back to the sidewalk and raced off along the seafront.

The witches screech and follow, running inside the hotel grounds.

But when they reach the corner where the roads intersect on either side of the grounds.....Luke has vanished from sight altogether.

60 INT. DISUSED SEWER TUNNEL. DAY.

Luke crawls away from the sidewalk up the old sewer which runs directly beneath the hotel grounds and back into the hotel itself. The diameter of the tunnel is small and once he is past the garbage tip of the street entrance his progress is no easier. The tunnel is on quite a steep upwards slope.

His body becomes wedged briefly, but by tearing off his jacket he is able to wriggle through the narrowed gap up towards the faint luminosity at the end of the tunnel.

61 EXT. GROUNDS/SEAFRONT. DAY.

The witches cannot find him. Finally one of those who have leapt down sees the open sewer tunnel and raises the alarm.

62 INT. HOTEL PANTRY. DAY.

The old kitchens where open drains once ran directly into the sewer. It is now a dry store room.

Luke breaks through the flimsy wire sealing off the tunnel end. But he is a tight fit through the outlet to the room. And the SOUND OF PURSUIT is behind him, echoing inside the tunnel.

He fights and squeezes and tugs. Eventually, like a cork, his body pops free and he scrambles up from the tunnel and into the pantry.

But the pantry door to the hotel is locked. And the wittering CRIES of approaching witches echo ominously close.

Luke reaches for the first of the three industrial size containers of cooking oil. He drags it to the tunnel entrance, rips off the top and tips the oil down.

Two containers are left at the tunnel entrance glugging out their contents to SCREAMS OF DISMAY deep within.

The third oil container, Luke struggles to get onto his shoulder and staggers to the door.

Then he manages to heave it against the door itself.

One of the ancient panels breaks. A hefty kick with his foot - and Luke is through.

63 INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAY.

The elevator is descending. Elderly WOMEN emerge and scatter as if searching. One of them remains inside the elevator cage which whirs into action, doors closing as it is taken up again.

The coast is clear. Luke races out from behind a pillar and takes the stairs four at a time. Towards the safety of the only person who will certainly believe him.....

64 INT. HOTEL 1ST FLOOR CORRIDOR. DAY.

There are two SINISTER WOMEN at either end of the corridor, sauntering in apparent innocence but in fact patrolling the area in search of him.

As Luke manages a quick unseen peep round the corner, before flattening himself against the staircase wall he realizes that his way is completely barred by them.

He slinks back down the staircase.

65 INT. HOTEL LOBBY. DAY.

Four GUESTS enter the elevator, acknowledging the presence of the lone (witch) Woman who remains at her vigilant post.

The Callboy squeezes in just as the door is closing. The sign on his forked stick still has a message for "MR CAMERON."

The CAMERA PANS DOWN to reveal Luke, in the borrowed uniform.

66 INT. 6TH FLOOR CORRIDOR. DAY.

Luke - as the Callboy - emerges from the elevator bending his head to avert eye contact with the (witch) woman on guard on this floor. She doesn't give him a second glance, well accustomed to seeing the Callboy on his rounds.

Luke strides past her and raps firmly at Helga's door. There is no reply.

By the elevator the (witch) woman begins to wonder: looking back at the Callboy.

Luke tries the doorhandle, but the door is locked. He moves to his own door and using his own key enters.

67 INT. LUKE'S ROOM/HELGA'S ROOM. DAY.

Luke throws off the cap and races through the adjoining doors.

LUKE
Granny.....!

Helga lies asleep on the bed. She doesn't stir as Luke shakes her.

LUKE
Please God, please....
(shakes her again)
Granny - wake up!

The SOUND of the adjoining door slamming makes him spin round.

The Grand High Witch (Miss Ernst) smiles evilly. She has trapped him completely.

LUKE
(alarmed)
My Granny!

GRAND HIGH WITCH
(gestures to her)
An old adversary, I haf discovered.
(dismissing her)
Verry old.

LUKE
If you've harmed my....

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Silence little brrrratt!

She wraps her long black mantle around Luke and herself. He struggles - but her grip is tight.

68 INT. BALLROOM. DAY.

A puff of smoke - and Luke and the Grand High Witch appear on the ballroom stage to a thunderous ovation of delight and cheers.

The terrace curtains have been closed once more. Most of the witches have returned and rub their hands in glee.

Luke, momentarily freed, is pinned to the floor by half a dozen willing helpers. The Grand High Witch opens the dread little medicine bottle. Gloved fingers pin his nose.

Formula 66 is rammed down his throat. Luke spits and struggles. But to no avail. An involuntary cry explodes from him - a yell exactly like Bruno's before his transformation began.

The Witches let him free, standing back.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Five hundred doses! This stinking little carbuncle has had five hundred doses! Vee are having instantaneous action! Look!

Unlike Bruno's transformation - Luke's takes only seconds. He shrivels, sprouts, twitches. His loud cry becomes a thin wail and then a mouse's shriek.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Kill him!

She leaps forward to stamp on the tiny brown creature that lies, panting, on the stage.

Other witches bustle forward to slam their on him.

Luke (henceforth Luke-Mouse) manages to leap aside avoiding the first stamping foot.

(NOTE: The SCALE OF THE WHOLE WORLD CHANGES in this perspective. From this point on, use of scaled-up sets and props as well as miniature POV CAMERA will be used to enhance the effect of Luke-Mouse's adventure. The problems of scale which he confronts will be detailed, though otherwise it must be borne in mind that Luke-Mouse is now barely two inches high.)

LUKE-MOUSE-MOUSE' P.O.V. Gigantic feet smash the floor around him. The thunder of sound is awesome. Enormous spiky heels crack down bare millimeters from his body. Dodging between them, uncertain on his four new paws, Luke-Mouse manages to avoid instant death by crushing.

Clouds of dust like sandstorms spiral upwards. The very grain of the wood is enlarged in this perspective; the floorboard gaps run like huge black lines into infinity.

Twisting and running as feet explode around him, Luke-Mouse manages to scuttle beyond the menacing forest of flat-toed terror.

Zigzagging to avoid other attackers, he flees to the very edge of the stage. He manages to scramble down from the - terrifyingly high parapet. What was recently a mere footstep is now a cliff.

He tumbles to the floor, badly winded, but quick enough to pick himself up and run for safety.

The gap under the stage floor is like a vast cavern now. He races into the dark interior.

69 INT. UNDERFLOOR OF STAGE. DAY.

The ceiling above him is cathedral-like with its thin, long white lines of light barely penetrating the gloomy recesses. Cigarette ends are the size of kitchen rolls. Running to a corner he tries to take refuge behind an empty Kleenex box.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

(voice over, from above)

Leave the little stinkpot. It is not wurth bothering about. Come. Some visky and champagne to celebrate! Today - those two little nasties. But tomorrow - the vurld!

The thunder of feet treading above his head shakes Luke-Mouse to his newly-acquired roots. Sitting on his hind legs in the shadowy underfloor, he examines himself as best he can.

What he can't see - but which makes him indisputably the former Luke - is the tuft of hair placed exactly on his mouse head as it was on his human one!

His tail swishes at his command and for a moment he enjoys this unusual power.

Tentatively wrapping his tail round one of the cross struts underpinning the stage Luke-Mouse tests it. He can swing from it!

Finally the ballroom is empty. The terrace doors close and the sound of the witches at their celebration is shut out.

Luke-Mouse's nose quivers sensitively. He has seen something moving in the far recesses.

LUKE-MOUSE

Bruno...?

(a gasp of astonishment)

I can speak!

(tries again)

Bruno!

(delight)

I can talk I can talk!

His voice is indeed the voice he has always spoken with though now, because of the tiny larynx and lesser resonance of his size the voice is slightly higher pitched. (Not a cartoon mouse, just a marginally higher boy's treble voice.)

He scampers deeper into the underfloor region.

LUKE-MOUSE
Bruno - it's me, Luke!

He stops, suddenly realizing something else about himself.

LUKE-MOUSE
I can see! I can see perfectly!

Sure enough, wholly preoccupied by some wedding cake icing which has found its way beneath the stage, Bruno-Mouse is nibbling furiously. He looks up.

BRUNO-MOUSE
This icing is terrific.

LUKE-MOUSE
Are you all right?

BRUNO-MOUSE
Well I'm not very keen on being a mouse. But the grub's good. How long before we change back do you think?

LUKE-MOUSE
I don't think we will. Change back.

BRUNO-MOUSE
Of course we will. Don't be silly. Or wake up. Or something.

LUKE-MOUSE
No. I'm afraid you're going to stay a mouse.

BRUNO-MOUSE
I won't. You wait till my father hears about this. I refuse to be a mouse. I'm Bruno Jenkins.

LUKE-MOUSE
It might not be so bad.

Gestures to the wedding cake.

LUKE-MOUSE
I mean for a start there won't be any school from now on.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Good-oh.

LUKE-MOUSE

No hair washing or toothbrushing or
learning boring poems.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Good-oh.

LUKE-MOUSE

No exams or anything like that.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Excellent.

LUKE-MOUSE

And when we're grown-up we won't have to
fight in wars or anything. In fact I
think we've only got two enemies. Humans
and cats.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Yikes. We've got three cats at home.

LUKE-MOUSE

They'll have to go.

BRUNO-MOUSE

My mother loves them.

LUKE-MOUSE

And think of the grub. You'll be able
to nibble through cartons and packets or
raisins and corn flakes and chocolate
biscuits....

BRUNO-MOUSE

But I won't be able to open the fridge
and get at the cold chicken and leftovers,
will I?

LUKE-MOUSE

Well perhaps your father could afford a
special mouse-size fridge.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Good Idea. He's rich. He can afford
anything I could possibly want now.

(pause)

But he's going to be jolly put out. I
shan't be able to join him in running the
business or anything.

LUKE-MOUSE
What about your mother?

BRUNO-MOUSE
She's terrified of mice.

Bruno-Mouse surveys Luke-Mouse for a moment, making a fresh assessment.

BRUNO-MOUSE
Did you eat the chocolate as well? It was delicious chocolate. Almost worth....

LUKE-MOUSE
No. They caught me. They're going to try and turn ever child in England into mice.

BRUNO-MOUSE
They can't.

LUKE-MOUSE
They can. And we've got to stop them.

BRUNO-MOUSE
Not me. It's not my problem. Look, I saw a really nice mouldy fish paste sandwich over there. Shall we go and...?

LUKE-MOUSE
No. We've got to get upstairs and wake my grandmother. I hope she's all right....

BRUNO-MOUSE
Actually I'd rather stay here a bit. There's a...

LUKE-MOUSE
My grandmother's got some fresh fruit in her room. And my Smarties. You can have those.

BRUNO-MOUSE
Hmm.

LUKE-MOUSE
I'm very worried about her. She's got diabetes and she didn't wake up when I.... she's got some peanuts too....

BRUNO-MOUSE
Dry roasted?

LUKE-MOUSE

Yes.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Oh all right.

Relieved that his persuasion tactics were so simple, Luke-Mouse starts to lead the way. Bruno-Mouse follows close behind. Luke-Mouse is hardly ten paces forward when he leaps with sudden fear.

His own two white mice - William and Mary - loom out of the dark like wraiths.

LUKE-MOUSE

William and Mary!

BRUNO-MOUSE

(almost bumping into
his tail)

Crikey! Did they eat the chocolate as well?

Luke-Mouse approaches the white mice tentatively.

LUKE-MOUSE

Hello. It's me. Luke.

The white mice glance at him, then turn to some crumbs nearby and start nibbling.

LUKE-MOUSE

Are you two all right?

No answer. Luke-Mouse looks round at Bruno-Mouse.

LUKE-MOUSE

They were my pet mice. But they can't talk like we can. That's something, I suppose. At least we're super-intelligent mice. Bye.

With a farewell to the white mice who ignore them, Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse scuttle to the aperture of the stage floor.

70 INT. BALLROOM. EVENING.

The two of them race across the floor. It is a considerable journey. But there are no human perils in sight.

Running like the athletes in Chariots of Fire they dash past the forest of chair legs, leaping like steeplechasers over random objects and finish, panting and out of breath in the corner of the doorway.

71 INT. LOBBY, EXCELSIOR HOTEL. EVENING.

Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse dash across the hallway and stop at the foot of the stairs.

THEIR P.O.V. The stairs stretch upwards like a series of cliffs, an infinite rise higher than a mountain peak.

LUKE-MOUSE

Oh dear.

BRUNO-MOUSE

I can't climb those.

LUKE-MOUSE

No.

They spin round at the SOUND of a familiar voice nearby.

Mr Jenkins has cornered an ASSISTANT MANAGERESS.

MR JENKINS

...I don't know what I'm paying for I really don't. An over-heated room with stains on the carpet, a bath tap that drips all night long... if I went down to the kitchen and made my own breakfast it'd be quicker than so called room service...

The moment Bruno-Mouse sees his father he starts to run forward. But Luke-Mouse leaps onto his back, flattening him and with a paw tugging Bruno-Mouse's tail pulling him back out of sight behind the staircase.

LUKE-MOUSE

He'll kill you!

BRUNO-MOUSE

My own father?

LUKE-MOUSE

He doesn't know what's happened.

BRUNO-MOUSE

I'm going to tell him. He'll put a stop to it.

LUKE-MOUSE

Not here. Not now. Trust me, Bruno.
Please. He'll stamp on you the moment
he sees you. Squish you.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Oh.

(he sighs)

But I can't climb those stairs.

LUKE-MOUSE

It's going to be a lot easier getting up
there than it was five minutes ago.

(he leads the way)

Come on. Look. It's empty.

The elevator doors are open and the lift cage empty. The
two mice scuttle into the lift.

72 INT. LIFT, EXCELSIOR. EVENING.

There is a crumpled paper bag in the corner and Luke-Mouse
and Bruno-Mouse hide behind this. They are just in time.
Several PAIRS OF ENORMOUS FEET enter, shuffling perilously
close to their hiding place.

One of the pairs of feet which loom closest to them has
suspiciously flat toes.

Luke-Mouse peeps out, looking up. This is the hell of a
lot easier than the last time he rode the elevator
secretly!

The WOMAN beside him is tall as a building. As her glance
moves downwards to the floor, Luke-Mouse dips behind the
paper bag which rustles with the movement.

The Woman frowns. Did she imagine the spontaneous movement
of the bag?

The lift stops on the third floor and the Woman together
with another passenger exit.

It stops again on the sixth floor where the remaining
passengers get out.

73 INT. SIXTH FLOOR, EXCELSIOR. EVENING.

Just as the automatic doors are about to close again -
Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse scoot from their concealment.
Bruno-Mouse pauses outside the lift and Luke-Mouse jerks
his tail free of the doors inches before they clamp shut.
on it!

BRUNO-MOUSE
Gosh. I forgot about it.

He twitches his tail to remind himself of his new power.

LUKE-MOUSE
We're a floor too high. We'll have to
run down the stairs.

They scamper to the top of the stairs - the coast is clear
-and start down.

74 INT. STAIRCASE, EXCELSIOR. EVENING.

Before the third step, Bruno-Mouse loses his footing and starts to tumble. Luke-Mouse only manages one more step himself before falling. The two mice bounce and fall, somersaulting down the stairs, around the curve and landing with the softest of thumps on the fifth floor corridor. They are completely unhurt.

BRUNO-MOUSE
That was fun. Can we do it again?

LUKE-MOUSE
Later. Come on.

They start up the corridor - the massive, vaulted corridor. The door to Helga's room, 554, is closed. There is no gap beneath the door and no means of making enough noise to gain entry. Only her shoes placed tidily outside the door for cleaning indicate her presence.

As Luke-Mouse ponders the problem the door of an adjoining room opens and Mr Stringer the Manager emerges alongside the Chambermaid.

Thinking fast Luke-Mouse dives into one of Helga's shoes. Bruno-Mouse follows, squeezing out of sight.

MR STRINGER
(to Chambermaid)
You could take your afternoon off tomorrow. I'll ask Pinker if he'll let us have a room for the night...

The Chambermaid gives him a peck on the cheek as they part.
Then she bends to pick up Helga's shoes.

INSIDE SHOE.

Luke-Mouse is so startled by the two huge fingers that probe into the shoe - he acts instinctively. Biting the nearest finger.

75 INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR. EVENING.

With a yell of surprised pain the Chambermaid drops the shoes.

INSIDE SHOE.

Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse tumble as the shoe falls, scrambling back into concealment.

76 INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR. EVENING.

Mr Stringer comes running. The Chambermaid yells again, having seen the little brown mice dive back inside the shoe.

CHAMBERMAID

It bit me! Ow ow! It bit me!

MR STRINGER

What? What bit you?

The door of Helga's room opens as she comes out to see what this new fuss is about. She is wearing her evening clothes, a black lace dress with a loose shawl.

The moment the door opens, Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse dive through it, unseen.

The Chambermaid points at the shoe.

CHAMBERMAID

A mouse! Inside that shoe!

Mr Stringer picks up the shoes. But there is nothing there.

Helga looks at the Chambermaid, then at Mr Stringer.

HELGA

Is she sober?

Without waiting for an answer, Helga steps back into her room and closes the door.

77 INT. HELGA'S ROOM. EVENING.

Luke-Mouse is climbing the bedcover. It is a cliff face. But like a reliable little mountaineer he scrambles to the top, turning as he reaches the summit of the bed. As soon as Helga has closed the door, Luke-Mouse calls out.

LUKE-MOUSE

Grandma! Granny! It's me - Luke! I'm so glad you're all right!

Helga's hand is still on the doorknob as she turns to look for the voice.

LUKE-MOUSE

Here! On your bed, granny!

Helga sees the little brown mouse on her bed.

HELGA

(faint, horrified)

Luke....?

LUKE-MOUSE

It's me, granny!

HELGA

(a muffled shriek)

Luke!

LUKE

The Grand High Witch! She's in this hotel!

Helga's eyes close and she slowly slides to the floor in a faint.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

78 INT. HELGA'S ROOM. NIGHT.

Helga sips water, lying on her bed, recovering. She has been crying but her eyes are now dry. Luke-Mouse is on the pillow beside her head. Bruno-Mouse is sitting on his haunches on the bedside table where he is tackling a large banana with enthusiasm.

LUKE-MOUSE

Granny - we've got to do something. They leave tomorrow. With piles of money and gallons of that formula. We've got to stop them from turning every child in England into mice.

HELGA

Yes.

(distractedly)

Does that boy never stop eating?

She pulls herself off the bed. Looks back at Luke-Mouse and immediately bursts into tears again.

LUKE-MOUSE

It's all right, granny, I promise! I don't feel bad or angry about it. I've got perfect eyesight - I'll never need to wear glasses again!

He scampers up the bed head, dangling wildly by his tail from the top.

LUKE-MOUSE

Look at the things I can do! It's a great feeling. I know it's strange but... ask Bruno.

BRUNO-MOUSE

It's terrific actually. Luke doesn't think we'll ever change back.

LUKE-MOUSE

I don't think so.

HELGA

Nor do I.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Good.

Helga sits on the edge of the bed again, wiping her eyes.

LUKE-MOUSE

I mean we can still talk and think just like we always did.

Helga looks back at him.

HELGA

They weren't able to change you completely. You've still got your own voice and brain and.... they just shrunk you and gave you fur and... oh my little boy...!

LUKE-MOUSE

I'm not really a mouse. I'm a sort of mouse-person. A human in mouse's clothing. William and Mary couldn't understand us at all.

(he smiles

encouragingly)

But as long as there's always you to look after me....

HELGA

Oh my darling, of course....

LUKE-MOUSE

Granny - are you all right now?

HELGA

Yes. Yes, I'm all right. The Grand High Witch must have hypnotized me....

LUKE-MOUSE

I was so frightened when you didn't wake up....

HELGA

I'm fine, my darling, honestly.

79 Luke-Mouse takes a flying leap from the top of the bed head, sailing through the air he lands with a squeal of delight on the soft feather pillow. It is a leap the equivalent to sailing from the top of a building and Helga is mightily relieved when Luke-Mouse scrambles forward to carry on their conversation.

LUKE-MOUSE

Good. Because I've got a plan to beat them all.

HELGA

An old lady and two...and you two? We can't take on the Grand High Witch by ourselves.

LUKE-MOUSE

Yes we can. We've got to. No one else is even going to believe us...

He runs down the bed towards the foot of it where Helga's knitting has been laid aside.

LUKE-MOUSE

Granny - where are the socks you were knitting for me?

Helga lifts the bedcover to find them - almost throwing Luke-Mouse to the floor. But he manages to keep hold. She produces a half-knitted sock.

80 EXT. SIDE OF EXCELSIOR HOTEL. NIGHT.

Luke-Mouse is being lowered from Helga's balcony inside the sock. The knitting wool is let out and inch by inch the sock with Luke-Mouse inside it descends to the balcony immediately below.

LUKE-MOUSE'S PERSPECTIVE. The descent is awesome. Thousands of feet seem to stretch between himself and the ground. Each brick is large as a table.

The wool strands - large as a thick rope - can be seen to be fraying.

Miles below he can see people strolling on the beach; they are the size of beetles.

The little woollen cradle swings and swirls in the wind, occasionally bumping him against the wall of the hotel. But eventually he lands softly on the floor of the fourth floor balcony.

81 EXT. BALCONY. NIGHT.

The French windows are ajar. Luke-Mouse runs directly into the room.

82 INT. ROOM 454. NIGHT.

With heart-stopping suddenness, a huge black cat - the size of a tiger - launches itself off the bed, flying at the tiny mouse which dares to scuttle into the room. The yowl of the cat as it leaps sounds like an otherworldly roar.

Luke-Mouse flings himself sideways. The cat's giant paw sweeping past him by less than a millimetre.

As the cat slithers to a halt, Luke-Mouse is on the balcony and leaping for safety as he scoots up the wooden tub with its ornamental tree.

83 EXT. BALCONY. NIGHT.

The cat comes in pursuit. A single jump takes it into the tub. But by this time Luke-Mouse has scaled the thin little tree and clings to its uppermost branch.

The cat's weight would collapse the tree and the most it can do is stretch upwards towards the terrified creature.

LUKE-MOUSE

Help! Granny - help!

The cat shakes the tree.

The entire spindly trunk bends. Luke-Mouse is almost in reach. And then Helga's voice comes from above.

HELGA

Here, pussy pussy....

She jerks the knitting line with the half made sock.

The cat registers a new and interesting toy. Leaps in pursuit of the woollen sock just as it is jerked out of reach. Only just out of reach.

With the cat thus distracted - chasing Helga's knitting in the corner of the little balcony - Luke-Mouse is able to make a tentative escape.

He drops to the lip of the tub, then leaps for the gauze curtains which billow out of the door. He can scramble up these easily enough. But when he looks back, the cat is completely focussed on its game with the knitting.

84 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

Keeping as far as possible off the danger area of floor level, Luke-Mouse scurries about searching the room. There is no sign of any medicine bottle.

As he peers under a low chair - Luke-Mouse jumps with heart stopping terror.

85 INT. BENEATH CHAIR. NIGHT.

Three mournful FROGS gaze out from the dark, their enormous eyes drip with sadness or slime. Their communal croak sounds like a cry of distress.

LUKE-MOUSE
I don't believe it!

He recovers his poise since the frogs seem to be no threat.

LUKE-MOUSE
She didn't turn you into....into... who are you?

The frogs croak animatedly, but convey no meaning.

LUKE-MOUSE
I'll try and free you as soon as I've found.... I'll be back.

86 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

He continues his search of the room. The frogs hop out from beneath the chair to gaze at his whirlwind activity.

Luke-Mouse is startled by the contents of one of the open drawers: two spare mask "faces" lie staring up at him like the disembodied head of the Grand High Witch. As if she were still patrolling her domain.

In a corner stands a large black cabin trunk.

Luke-Mouse inspects this, but cannot gain access to it. There is a key in the lock and he manages to lever this out. He squints through the keyhole of the trunk. There are evidently no bottles of the formula 66 inside.

He jumps onto the bed, scouring the crumpled linen for any sign of the medicine bottles. He discovers a lump near the foot of the bed.

He crawls beneath the sheet.

87 INT. BETWEEN SHEET & MATTRESS. NIGHT.

In the gloomy recesses of the bed, enfolded by endless white sheet, Luke-Mouse returns to the lumpy area of mattress.

LUKE-MOUSE

She's sewn them into the mattress!

His sharp teeth quickly rip a gash in the ticking.

LUKE-MOUSE

These teeth are useful!

In moments he has chewed open the mattress to expose four little medicine bottles.

He levers one of them out and pushes it to the edge of the mattress.

88 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

The bottle tumbles from beneath the linen and falls onto the carpeted floor.

Luke-Mouse emerges moments later pushing the bottle with his nose to roll it out of sight under the bed. He does this under the befuddled gaze of the frogs who hop out of his way.

But before it is tucked away - the room door opens.

The Grand High Witch enters.

UNDER BED.

Luke-Mouse tucks himself behind the bottle, his whiskers trembling as he tries not to breath.

89 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

The frogs leap out of the Grand High Witch's way as she strides into the room and slams the door behind her. She peers at them. Luke, concealed behind the leg of the bed, just manages to avoid being seen.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

So, there you are my little frroggies.
You can stay here until I go to bed
tonight, then I shall throw you out of
the vindow and the seagulls can have you
for supper.

The Grand High Witch strides to the window.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Liebschen! Was ist das...?

90 EXT. BALCONY. NIGHT.

The cat looks round as the Grand High Witch steps onto the balcony and looks up at Helga's pink face.

HELGA

I'm so sorry. I dropped my knitting.
Your cat was....

GRAND HIGH WITCH

You!

The Grand High Witch and Helga stare at each other. But Helga is forced to pretend ignorance.

HELGA

I'm knitting something for my grandson.
You haven't seen him, have you? A very
nice little American boy....?

The Grand High Witch enjoys her private smile of victory.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Seen him? No no.

HELGA

I expect you've got your own children to
worry about.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

No!

(then she purrs to the
cat)

Komm, liebschen.

HELGA

I do apologize.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

Quvite all rrrright. If I see your
grandson I will....

She scoops the cat into her arms and returns to the bedroom so that Helga cannot hear her final words.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
....turn him into a mouse!

She closes the French windows firmly.

91 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

She tosses the cat onto the bed where it curls up sedately, watching her every move with baleful eyes.

GRAND HIGH WITCH
And you - meddling old woman - I vill deal
with later!

The curse makes her feel much better. She is actually smiling to herself as she draws the curtains.

Then she unlatches her mask face, placing it on the dressing table. But no sooner has she done this, than there is a knocking at her door.

WOMAN
(off)
Miss Ernst?

GRAND HIGH WITCH
Who is this?

WITCH
You told us to come up after the drinks.

UNDER BED.

Luke-Mouse recognizes his opportunity. He lifts the medicine bottle in his two front paws and takes a few awkward steps forward to the very edge of the bed overhang. He whispers a quick apology to the nearest frog.

LUKE-MOUSE
Sorry - I'll try and come back later.

92 INT. ROOM 508. NIGHT.

The Grand High Witch opens the door, urging the two OLD CRONES into the room.

Scooting past their feet in the corner of the door, Luke-Mouse exits the room at speed, clutching the medicine bottle.

The cat gives a yelp and leaps in pursuit. But the Grand High Witch grabs it in mid flight and cuffs it angrily back onto the bed.

She closes the door. Luke-Mouse is safely in the corridor outside.

93 INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

Escaping from one danger, Luke-Mouse finds himself facing another.

The Chambermaid returning polished shoes to their owners' doors.

He dives under a corner of carpet. Barely a bump.

BENEATH CARPET.

The hiding place is safe and complete. Luke-Mouse pushes the tiny medicine bottle away from him and cowers as flat as he can.

94 INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

The Chambermaid stops to polish a doorknob. She looks up.

A phalanx of FIVE BUSINESSMEN emerge from the elevator and are marching down the corridor abreast.

Their feet pound the floor.

The little lump beneath the carpet is directly in their line and will certainly be crushed.

BENEATH CARPET.

But the little lump himself is utterly unaware of this impending disaster.

95 INT. FIFTH FLOOR CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

The Businessmen are merry.

Their feet pound the floor mercilessly.

Inches before Luke-Mouse is extinguished, one of them stops to greet the Chambermaid.

BUSINESSMAN

How about a drink when you're off duty,
love?

CHAMBERMAID

Sir?

The other Businessmen move on. The one who was about to crush Luke-Mouse steps towards the Chambermaid and out of the path of danger.

BUSINESSMAN

Not married are you?

CHAMBERMAID

Oh sir.

BUSINESSMAN

I am. But practice makes perfect.

His snigger becomes a chortle as he walks on. The Chambermaid simpers for a moment as she enters the staff lift.

96 INT. STAIRS TO SIXTH FLOOR. DAY.

It's a rather grand staircase with a fine carpet running up the centre of the stairs and highly polished wood on either side. The bannisters are wrought iron and polished wood.

Luke-Mouse is having some difficulty climbing the stairs with the medicine bottle. He has to lift it with one paw and wedge it before climbing himself to the next step and retrieving it.

He is on the second to last step when there is a SOUND above him. PEOPLE are coming down the stairs! And there is nowhere to hide.

Frantic, he wedges the tiny bottle at the edge of the iron balustrade and tries to hide behind it himself.

Feet approaching.

Then Luke-Mouse slips on the polished wood.

He hurtles between the gap in the ironwork, plunging outwards to certain death.

At the last instant, his tail manages a grip around the ironwork. Gripping desperately.

He hangs suspended by only his tail, dangling over the stairwell, as the FEET clump down the stairs and past him. But already his tail is losing its grip, unravelling.

He swings his body like a trapeze artist. And finally manages to grab a paw-hold of the stair...

The people have gone as he drags himself back to safety and retrieves the medicine bottle.

97 INT. HELGA'S ROOM. NIGHT.

The door has been propped ajar by a hairbrush and Luke-Mouse clears this like a showjumper as he races into the room, the tiny medicine bottle still clutched in his front paws.

Bruno-Mouse is nowhere to be seen and Helga still hovers unhappily on the balcony.

Luke-Mouse stands the bottle of formula 66 upright by the bed and runs out to jump on Helga's shoes.

LUKE-MOUSE
Granny, I'm back!

She scoops him up and kisses him with relief.

HELGA
Oh thank God. I was just about to go down and....

LUKE-MOUSE
I got it, Granny! Look. By the bed!

She crosses to the bed and picks up the tiny bottle. Then she puts it carefully in the pocket of her cardigan.

LUKE-MOUSE
Five hundred doses!

Perched safely in Helga's hand, Luke-Mouse looks about the room.

LUKE-MOUSE
Where's Bruno?

Helga is startled to remember.

HELGA
I.... he was eating the other banana...

There are two banana skins on the bedside table. But no Bruno-Mouse.

HELGA
(calls out)
Bruno! Bruno?

Helga's handbag, which is on the bed, topples over and Bruno-Mouse peers out from it.

BRUNO-MOUSE

There's some jolly good biscuit crumbs
in the bottom of your bag. I was just
uhm tidying up for you. What's happening?

He is a plump little mouse. Crumbs hang from his whiskers.

HELGA

Nothing until dinner time. Now we've got
to get you back to your parents.

BRUNO-MOUSE

What time is it?

HELGA

Seven o'clock.

BRUNO-MOUSE

They'll be in the bar. Two large malt
whiskies and soda at seven sharp. It
gives you an appetite.

HELGA

Does it. Come on. Back into my handbag
both of you. This is going to be
difficult.

Bruno-Mouse disappears back inside the handbag as she drops
Luke-Mouse in and picks the bag up. No sooner has she done
so than Bruno-Mouse pops his head out again.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Luke said you had dry-roasted peanuts.
He promised me some. I usually get a bag
of peanuts when they're drinking their
malt whiskies.

Helga is about to refuse his request when she thinks better
of it and crosses to a drawer.

Crisps and peanuts abound. Her little midnight snack
drawer. She puts a small bag of peanuts into the handbag.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Great!

HELGA

Just remember - you're a mouse now. A
whole bag may be all right for a hungry
boy - but you're not even one hundredth
the size you used to be.

There is no reply from Bruno-Mouse who has dived into the
bag and started gnawing away at the wrapping.

Helga pats her cardigan pocket to remind herself where the bottle of Formula 66 nestles, then starts out of the room.

98 INT. HOTEL LOBBY. NIGHT.

Helga comes out of the elevator and looks around for the bar.

Luke-Mouse, peering from the top of her handbag, calls out.

LUKE-MOUSE
It's down that way!

HELGA
Ssshhh.

She pushes him out of sight as she turns down to the rear of the hotel.

HELGA
You're not to say a word. You hear me?
Not a single word.

Luke-Mouse pops up again moments later, revelling in this new method of transportation.

99 INT. HOTEL BAR. NIGHT.

There are only half a dozen people in the well-lit rather plain room.

Helga enters and looks around, lifting her handbag almost level with her ear.

HELGA
Is that them?

LUKE-MOUSE
Yes.

A WAITRESS is pouring Mr Jenkins' soda water into the whisky as he settles into the armchair at a corner table beside his wife.

MR JENKINS
Don't drown it!

He pushes the Waitress' hand away and some of the soda water is spilled.

MRS JENKINS
Oh look what you've done now.

MR JENKINS
She was drowning it.

The Waitress retreats as Helga moves towards the Jenkins' table.

HELGA

Are you Mr and Mrs Jenkins?

MR JENKINS

Hole in one, madame. What can we do for you?

HELGA

I'd like to have a word with you. About your son.

MR JENKINS

(expansive)

Sit down, sit down. What's the little tyke been up to now? Raiding the kitchen I suppose.

HELGA

If we could go somewhere more private...

MRS JENKINS

Private?

MR JENKINS

We're very comfy here. No secrets in a Bournemouth hotel, I say. Come on then, out with it.

HELGA

It's a rather delicate, uhm, personal matter.

MR JENKINS

(getting irritated)

Look, Mrs whatever your name is, if Bruno's broken a window or smashed your specs - I'll pay for it. But I'm not budging out of this seat. We always sit at this table.

MRS JENKINS

Where is Bruno anyhow? Tell him to come here and see me.

Helga sits down reluctantly.

HELGA

He's here already.

MRS JENKINS

What?

HELGA
In my handbag.

The Jenkins stare at her a moment assessing the degree of barminess they are clearly dealing with.

MR JENKINS
(to his wife)
Must have been funny before the first world war.

HELGA
Your son has suffered a mishap.

MR JENKINS
He's always suffering mishaps. Overeating and then wind. You should hear him after supper. Sounds like a brass band. Where is the little beggar?

HELGA
Before you see him - in his present state - I think it might be best....

MRS JENKINS
The woman's mad. Tell her to go away.

HELGA
Your son...has been drastically altered.

MR JENKINS
Altered? What do you mean - altered?

MRS JENKINS
Go away, you silly old woman.

HELGA
I'm trying to tell you as gently as possible. My own son saw them doing it to him.

MR JENKINS
Saw who doing what? Are you senile?

HELGA
Saw the witches turn him into a mouse.

~~Mr Jenkins slumps back in his seat.~~

MR JENKINS
Call the Manager, dear. Have him throw this mad woman out of the hotel. You need a funny farm, you do.

Helga's patience is exhausted. She reaches into the handbag and lifts Bruno-Mouse out, mouth crammed with peanuts, and puts him on the table.

HELGA
Tell them, Bruno.

Mrs Jenkins screeches, flinging herself away.

MRS JENKINS
It's a mouse! I can't stand them! Get her away! Stop her, Norman!

HELGA
It's Bruno! Tell them!

MR JENKINS
You nasty old dingbat! Get out of here! How dare you? Go on - take your stupid little.... Out! This instant!

HELGA
(pleading)
Bruno! Please!

But Bruno-Mouse says nothing. Scooping up a fallen peanut. Mr Jenkins starts attacking Helga with a furled up newspaper.

MR JENKINS
Out out! Before I call the police! Go on! Barmy old loony!
(the final insult)
Piss....off!

Helga scoops Bruno-Mouse up and drops him back into her handbag.

HELGA
Well, I did my best.

She turns and sails out of the room. Leaving the spluttering Jenkins expostulating about this cranky madwoman.

100 INT. LOBBY, EXCELSIOR HOTEL. NIGHT.

As Helga stomps out of the bar she finds herself amid a seething ocean of WOMEN - all "RSPCC delegates." They are gathering in groups, awaiting their leader and the summons to dinner.

Helga checks her watch, alarmed at the time. She walks through the lobby and down a back corridor.

101 INT. BACK CORRIDOR. NIGHT.

There is a lot of activity at the far end of the corridor. STAFF coming and going, preparing and calling out to each other.

Helga enters a door marked LADIES.

102 INT. STAFF BATHROOM. NIGHT.

Helga locks the door and puts the handbag on a shelf just as Luke-Mouse pokes his head out the top.

HELGA

What's the matter with him? Bruno? Why on earth didn't you....?

LUKE-MOUSE

Actually, Granny, it was me. I told him not to say a word. Because if he did speak, there would have been one hell of a fuss. Think about it. His mother fainting, his father shouting. The witches would have found out about us. And maybe the missing bottle. Then our whole plan....

HELGA

...would have failed. Bruno you were clever.

Bruno-Mouse pops over the lip of the purse.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Thanks.

Then he disappears again. Luke-Mouse jumps out of the handbag altogether.

LUKE-MOUSE

Granny - it's getting late. It's time...

Helga is very hesitant.

HELGA

Luke, darling, perhaps we should think again. It's too dangerous. And if they catch you....

LUKE-MOUSE

They won't.

HELGA

You could be killed!

He says nothing.

HELGA

And then I'd be....completely alone.

Luke-Mouse looks up at her with moist eyes.

LUKE-MOUSE

But if I don't try - or if I fail....
every mother and father in England ...will
have lost their children.

He takes a flying leap from the shelf and lands on Helga's
lace top. He scoots down towards her pocket and emerges
a moment later, clutching the formula 66 bottle in his
front paws.

LUKE-MOUSE

Let's go!

HELGA

Surely Bruno should help you.

Once again, Bruno-Mouse pops his head out of the purse.

BRUNO-MOUSE

No fear. These peanuts are terrific.

LUKE-MOUSE

Just keep him happy. He eats anything.
(Jack Hawkins, 1943:)
I'm afraid it's up to me now. To bring
the witches and their evil leader to
justice!

With his noble words ringing in her ears, Helga picks up
her bag and opens the door.

103 INT. KITCHENS, EXCELSIOR HOTEL. DAY.

There are at least TEN CHEFS besides KITCHEN ASSISTANTS,
WAITERS etc. The level of activity is high. Orders are
shouted, plates and dishes clatter. Steam, noise, shouts
and clatter.

If anyone were looking, which they are not, Helga could
be seen peering through the porthole window of the double
doors. She is conferring with (unseen) Luke-Mouse,
agreeing to the final detail of their plan. With a
tightening of her shoulders she steps back and plunges into
the kitchen.

HELGA

Oh. I thought this was the dining room.

HEAD CHEF

Down the corridor, second door on the left, madam.

Helga's left hand seeks out one of the large potato sacks under a shelf. She drops Luke-Mouse (plus bottle) onto the sack and he promptly disappears from sight.

HELGA

So sorry. What a nice kitchen. Everything looks delicious.

HEAD CHEF

Guests are not permitted, madam. I'm sorry but...

The Head Chef has a fruity French accent which he wields with authority.

Just at that moment the midget Callboy appears beside Helga in the doorway.

CALLBOY

Hello, ma'am. Is your son all right? I haven't seen him since we.....

HELGA

He's just fine, thank you. He told me how kind you were. He's fine.

CALLBOY

Glad to hear it.

HELGA

Well, I'll be off. Goodbye. Goodbye.

Her elaborate farewells are obviously not directed at the slightly bemused Kitchen Staff. They are a very anxious valediction to her unseen grandson.

KITCHEN SHELVES.

Luke-Mouse scrambles from the potato sack up a narrow fissure in the wall and swings onto the eye-level shelf which runs the length of the main kitchen wall.

The shelf is laden with boxes, cans and cooking implements. It is a real obstacle course. The bottle is the most difficult item and eventually Luke-Mouse lodges it behind a plastic jar full of rice.

INDIAN WAITER

(entering)

Table five says the veal's too tough.

HEAD CHEF

I will take care of this personally.

High on his shelf Luke-Mouse stares in horror as the Head Chef takes the piece of veal off the plate and slams it vigorously against the side of a garbage can. Then he returns it to the plate, dollops some gravy on and adds a piece of parsley.

HEAD CHEF

Voila. He will adore it now. Ze magic touch, n'est ce pas?

The Indian Waiter shrugs and exits, almost colliding with an ELDERLY WAITER entering from the dining room.

ELDERLY WAITER

The RSPCC party are all having the soup.

YOUNG CHEF

Eighty seven watercress. Joey - fetch the soup bowls over.

The Young Chef stirs a huge pot of potage. It is on a cooking range half way across the kitchen below another shelf.

A HAND looms next to Luke-Mouse's nose and he leaps back with a tiny grunt of fear.

The hand removes the jar of rice. The blue medicine bottle is revealed.

But the Young Chef takes no notice as he crosses to the cooker and tips some of the rice into the soup and stirs. Then he crosses to another shelf, searching for a spice bottle.

Luke-Mouse leaps into the open. Grabs the bottle and dashes down to the far end of the shelf.

From here he executes a daring series of trapeze-like manoeuvres. Using his tail he swings from one object to another, almost flying across the room at great height. Scuttling over the top of a cupboard. Leaping. Swinging from random hooks and eyes. Until he lands firmly on the shelf over the cooker.

But the soup pot is too far out from the wall for him to reach it.

A long curved spatula, hanging from the shelf, has an arm that stretches out directly over the pot.

Soup bowls clatter as they are wheeled over on a trolley.

There is nothing for it but daring.

Luke-Mouse slides down the spatula and starts crawling towards its tip. He slips. Then uses his tail again.

Curling the tail around the arm of the spatula, he manages a fine grip. And from here it takes only a second to uncork the bottle and drain the colourless contents into the soup pot from four feet above.

The Young Chef returns and tips a generous quantity of spice into the soup, stirring it carefully. Finally he dips his index finger into the pot, stirs a moment longer and removes his finger to taste. He likes it. Dips his finger in again and has another taste. He approves.

Luke-Mouse is unseen as he crawls back up the spatula - dangling barely inches from the Young Chef's head as he now ladles the soup into a giant tureen.

Waiters stand in line, lifting four plates of soup at a time and wafting them into the dining room. As the double doors open and close we can glimpse the women welcoming their first course, nattering and revelling in their concluding banquet.

Luke-Mouse looks up at the kitchen clock which is directly above his head. Eight twenty six. He turns to look at the far corner of the kitchen.

A red plastic dustpan and brush lies in the corner near the bag of potatoes.

He heads towards this, swinging and leaping and scuttling with new-found confidence. He has stopped to catch his breath on a lower shelf when suddenly....

A meat cleaver arcs through the air. A massive glittering blade.

Luke-Mouse jumps. But the tip of his tail is caught. A howl of pain as the cleaver slices into his tail. Blood spurts.

YOUNG CHEF

A mouse! There's a dirty little mouse!

The cleaver has struck the shelf with such force that it tilts.

Luke-Mouse crashes to the floor.

A ring of menacing feet, rolling pins and pans swoop towards him as the cry goes up.

SEVERAL VOICES

Get it! Kill it!

Stunned and dizzy, Luke-Mouse barely has time to think.
He darts to the nearest foot.

And runs right up a trouser leg.

It happens to be the Head Chef's trousers.

HEAD CHEF
Aaagh! Ow! Ohh!

He dances and shouts, wriggles and slaps at his ankle -
then his knee - finally his thigh.

104 INT. TROUSER LEG.

It's dark between the flannel cloth and hairy skin as Luke-Mouse scrambles up the man's leg. He climbs right up to the crotch and then plunges down the far leg.

105 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

The Head Chef twitches and wriggles insanely. Performing an insane tribal dance in the middle of the kitchen. All remnants of his "French" accent have vanished.

HEAD CHEF
It's in my underpants! It's running round
my bloody underpants! Get it out!
Somebody help me!

WAITER
Take off your trousers, you silly slob!

The Head Chef struggles with his belt buckle.

But unseen by them all, Luke-Mouse emerges from the rear of the far leg and dives to concealment by the bag of potatoes.

The Head Chef's dance continues.

WAITRESS
Pull down your pants and we'll soon catch
it.

HEAD CHEF
(writhing)
Will somebody please get it out before
it bites me!

He finally frees his belt buckle and rips the trousers down to hoots of laughter from his colleagues.

Only the Young Chef fails to join in the laughter because something peculiar has happened to him.

He has sprouted a curious set of mouse-like whiskers. No other change than that. He peers at this extraordinary growth in the reflection of cooking pot.

The Head Chef searches his trousers. There is no sign of a mouse. He clutches himself, twisting away for modesty to face further GALES OF LAUGHTER from the other side of the kitchen.

WAITER

Nothing much there.

HEAD CHEF

It's gone!

The Head Chef stamps on his trousers, then searches them. But there is no mouse anywhere to be found.

The kitchen clock now reads eight thirty exactly.

106 INT. DINING ROOM, EXCELSIOR. NIGHT.

Helga has finished her first course and now checks her watch. The dining room is full of guests at dinner. Yet the luxuriousness and grandeur of the room seems to have intimidated people into a reverential quiet.

Mr and Mrs Jenkins, however, are undeterred. Mr Jenkins is haranguing the Elderly Waiter.

MR JENKINS

Look - I heard them ordering cress soup -and I'd like the cress soup. It's as simple as that.

ELDERLY WAITER

But their soup, sir, was specially ordered for their party. The soup on the menu tonight is Cock a Leekie....

MR JENKINS

I don't want Cock a Leekie. I don't like Cock a Leekie. I like cress. Now just go back in the kitchen and tell chef there's one more order for the cress soup, there's a laddie.

The Elderly Waiter shrugs and goes off as bidden. As he passes Helga's table, he does not see her slipping some melba toast into her handbag. She checks her watch. It's time.

Helga "accidentally" knocks an empty wine glass to the floor. The Elderly Waiter scurries solicitously to her side.

107 INT. KITCHEN. NIGHT.

As the dining room doors open, the SOUND of her BREAKING GLASS can be distinctly heard.

The kitchen is returning to normal, though many of the STAFF have been pressed into service laying mouse-traps in every corner, shelf and closet.

Luke-Mouse slithers from his hiding place and jumps nimbly into the red plastic dustpan, well concealed behind the bristly brush.

The Indian Waiter returns to the kitchen with a pile of empty plates. He grins at the Head Chef.

INDIAN WAITER

Table five said the second piece of veal was delicious.

The Head Chef takes some consolation from this. He stands aside as the Elderly Waiter passes them and reaches for the dustpan and brush.

108 INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

Luke-Mouse cannot resist peering from the dustpan as he is carried right past the Witches tables.

All are scoffing their soup.

As the Elderly Waiter arrives at Helga's table, he starts to bend down and sweep up the broken glass. But Helga moves quickly, gesturing across the room.

HELGA

Oh look!

The Waiter turns to follow the direction of her gaze. Helga just takes the dustpan out of his limp hand and concludes feebly.

HELGA

What a pretty colour.

As she passes the dustpan over her lap, Luke-Mouse jumps out and onto the soft folds of her dress. From here he jumps into her handbag, hanging over the back of the chair.

The Waiter is completely baffled by her pointing in one direction to admire something as undistinguished as a dustpan in another direction. But he is of the old school.

ELDERLY WAITER

Isn't it, madam.

He takes the pan from her again and bends to sweep up the broken pieces of glass.

ELDERLY WAITER

Red.

INSIDE HANDBAG.

Bruno-Mouse acknowledges Luke-Mouse's arrival by leaning back with a sigh of contentment.

BRUNO-MOUSE

I don't half like your grandma. She's given me nuts, cake, melba toast, two prawns, a finger of mayonnaise, a delicious piece of smoked salmon....

LUKE-MOUSE

I've done it, Bruno!

BRUNO-MOUSE

Done what?

LUKE-MOUSE

The witches!

BRUNO-MOUSE

Oh them. Gosh I'm full.

LUKE-MOUSE

They're eating it now....their own mouse-making formula!

BRUNO-MOUSE

I could do with a snooze now.

He is a hopeless case. Luke-Mouse takes a nibble of melba toast and pokes his head out the top of the handbag again.

109 INT. DINING ROOM. NIGHT.

The Elderly Waiter finishes clearing up.

HELGA

(to Waiter)

I'm so sorry...

ELDERLY WAITER

Quite all right, madam. These little accidents do happen.

He moves away, collects a plate of soup from one of the other Waiters and conveys it to Mr Jenkins. As soon as he is out of earshot, Luke-Mouse is free to talk.

HELGA
Well?

LUKE-MOUSE
I did it. In the soup.

HELGA
The whole bottle?

LUKE-MOUSE
Every drop!

HELGA
You angel.

She sees his injured tail and reacts with alarm.

HELGA
You're bleeding!

LUKE-MOUSE
It doesn't hurt. One of the cooks tried
to cut off my tail with a carving knife.
(excitedly, pointing)
Look! The Grand High Witch is eating the
soup!

HELGA
They all are.

LUKE-MOUSE
Any moment now....!

Helga suddenly freezes.

HELGA
Ohmigod.

LUKE
What?

HELGA
Bruno's father is about to eat the soup.
too!

LUKE
Stop him!

Helga leaps to her feet and rushes over to Mr Jenkins
table.

Mr Jenkins is poised to take his first mouthful. Helga
dashes the spoon from his hand.

HELGA
Don't touch it!

MR JENKINS
Wha.....?

Helga jerks the soup plate away from him, spilling soup all over the table.

MR JENKINS
She's a loony. I told you she was loony!
Look - my bloody soup!

HELGA
I'm sorry, Mr Jenkins. But you'll thank me soon enough.

Mr Jenkins rises in a towering if suppressed rage.

MR JENKINS
Thank you?! For that disgusting trick you played on my poor wife? For ruining my meal?

Helga's sublime smile of confidence, eyes still on the table of witches, is designed to infuriate him further.

MR JENKINS
And where in hell is our son Bruno?

HELGA
(watching the witches)
Can we talk about this later?

MR JENKINS
Do I have to call the police? Abduction of a minor is an extremely...

She flourishes her handbag in his face.

HELGA
I told you. Bruno has been turned into...

MR JENKINS
He has not been turned into a mouse!

Bruno-Mouse finally emerges from the handbag.

BRUNO-MOUSE
Yes I have. Hello Dad.

Mr Jenkins leaps back. Then peers forward. Mrs Jenkins gives a scream and faints dead away, tumbling backwards in her chair. Mr Jenkins slumps, pale and breathing shallowly.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Don't worry, dad, it isn't as bad as all that. Just so long as the cat doesn't get me.

MR JENKINS

B-b-b-bruno...?

Bruno-Mouse jumps onto the table, reaching for some of the crumbs and standing up to his mouse-knees in spilled soup.

BRUNO-MOUSE

No more school. No more homework. I'll live in the kitchen cupboard.

MR JENKINS

I can't....this can't...it's a trick. It's the whisky.

Helga is barely paying this dialogue any heed - because the witches have finished their soup. And nothing is happening!

Then she sees one of the tiniest women twitch suddenly.

LUKE-MOUSE

(who has been watching)

It's working!

HELGA

(to Mr Jenkins)

Would you like to know who did this to Bruno?

She points dramatically at the Grand High Witch, putting her handbag down on the table.

HELGA

That woman there!

LUKE-MOUSE

(terrified for her)

Granny!

Helga strides forward to face the evil Grand High Witch.

HELGA

She did it to Bruno! She is the Grand High Witch!

LUKE-MOUSE

(an appalled gasp)

Granny!

The Grand High Witch straightens slowly with an evil grin, certain of her ability to confront this challenge in the sudden silence of the dining room.

But Helga is unafraid.

HELGA

Bruno - and the thousands of children before him! Down the decades from my little friends Erica and Leif!

(declaiming to the room)

Know her for what she is! The most evil and appalling woman in the world - a disgrace to her sex - a loathsome - cowardly - hideous....disgrace....

Mr Jenkins, rocked back on his heels, turns to his stirring wife almost conversationally.

MR JENKINS

She really is quite barmy.

The Grand High Witch cackles hideously, her eyes blazing with purple light.

GRAND HIGH WITCH

You are doomed old vun! Doomed for ever!

She raises her arm, just as she did before evaporating her fellow witch earlier in the evening.

Helga stands her ground.

HELGA

No. This time -. at last - it is your turn.

With a sudden involuntary cry the Grand High Witch twitches violently.

Others of her colleagues scream at the same moment. Their bodies contorting violently.

Luke-Mouse cries out in ecstasy.

LUKE-MOUSE

It's working!

He scampers to and fro on the table cloth. Bruno-Mouse jumps up to join him.

The two little mice dance a victory jig together.

Some of the witches jump on their chairs, some on the table, some remain standing. The transformations begin.

Tails. Bursting scalps. Sprouting hair. They begin to shrink.

The Grand High Witch's eyes blaze, sparks rising from them as she fights. But this time the sparks fizzle emptily on the floor. Her mask is ripped as a mouse-face emerges behind it.

She shrinks. Smaller and smaller.

The witches have become mice. Hideous, scabby, bald-headed mice.

They scatter, whirling and running as WAITERS pounce on them with feet and knives. One or two are squished instantly. Others race for safety.

WAITERS

Mice!

MR STRINGER

Get the mice!

He skewers a nearby mouse with his fork.

Helga dashes to her table and scoops the still-cheering Luke-Mouse and Bruno-Mouse to safety in her handbag.

The dining room is chaotic. Dozens of stump-toed mice squeaking and scampering hither and thither, pursued by Waiters who have now been joined by Kitchen Staff. The hunt is on.

HELGA

I think it's time to return you to your family, Bruno.

BRUNO

My Mum's not very crazy about mice.

HELGA

So I see.

As Helga weaves her way towards the corner we can see Mrs Jenkins, standing on her chair screaming hysterically.

MRS JENKINS

~~Herbert!~~ Herbert! Do something!

Mr Jenkins stands beside her, flailing at any mice in the area. He stops as Helga approaches.

HELGA

Here's Bruno. He needs to go on a diet.

She drops him into Mr Jenkins' shaking hands.

Bruno, in the palm of his father's hand, looks up cheerfully.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Hi, dad. Hi, mum.

Mrs Jenkins screams even louder.

MR JENKINS

Stop it now! This is our Bruno!

BRUNO-MOUSE

You'll get used to me, mum.

As Helga turns to leave, Luke-Mouse pops out of her handbag and waves a paw.

LUKE-MOUSE

Bye, Bruno!

More screams.

BRUNO-MOUSE

Bye.

(he turns to pacify his mother)

Oh mum....you always wanted me to lose weight...well look at me now!

As Luke-Mouse finishes waving goodbye - he looks down and sees something.

LUKE-MOUSE

Gran! It's her!

The Grand High Witch, still recognizable even as a mouse because of her special hideousness, is tip toeing towards the terrace door.

Luke-Mouse takes a flying leap from the handbag.

And lands - splat - right on top of her. She spins free and whirls on him.

GRAND HIGH WITCH-MOUSE

I will turn you into a cockroach!

She stands on her hind legs and strains. But nothing happens. Her witchly powers have gone. No matter how she contorts herself and makes peculiar noises - she is merely a very ugly little brown mouse.

GRAND HIGH WITCH-MOUSE
Svine! I haf lost my powers!

Luke-Mouse jumps back as a glass vase is slammed over her, water and all, pinning her in captivity. She can be seen yelling and screaming from within her watery prison. But she cannot escape.

Helga scoops her grand-mouse up and moves rapidly through the chaos of guests, mice and staff. She turns just before leaving the dining room and surveys the scene with a smile of sublime contentment. Mr Stringer is nearby.

HELGA
Manager!

He looks up from trying to prise one of the mice out from behind a dresser.

HELGA
There's a particularly infectious little one - over there. Trapped under a flower vase.

MR STRINGER
Thank you, madam. Thank you very much.

He stalks towards his prey flourishing a blood-stained kitchen knife. Helga with a beam of satisfaction sails out of the room.

110 INT. HELGA'S HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT.

Helga in her nightdress sits at the table writing her name and address on a sticky label. She finishes and hands this to Luke-Mouse.

HELGA
There. I still don't understand....

LUKE-MOUSE
I won't be long.

He takes the label from her. Looks at it.

LUKE-MOUSE
I bet I can work out how to write myself.
I'll have to invent a special pen. Can
I have roll of cotton thread, too?

Helga, mystified, hands him the cotton. Luke-Mouse leaps down from the table and races out the door.

Helga, alone in the room, sinks quietly back onto the chair, reflecting on the astounding events of the day.

111 INT/EXT. ROOM 508/BALCONY. NIGHT.

Luke-Mouse struggles up over the balcony. He ties the cotton around one of the uprights. Checks the coast is clear - and whistles.

The three Frogs come lolloping onto the balcony.

LUKE-MOUSE

It's the best I can do, I'm afraid.

The nearest Frog croaks its gratitude and leads the others to the edge of the balcony.

112 EXT. HOTEL GARDEN/BALCONY. NIGHT.

Luke-Mouse has arranged a tramline trapeze of thread running from the fifth floor balcony down to the floodlit ornamental pond in the hotel grounds where the twin lines of thread wrap around a bush and return back to the balcony.

The first Frog flattens itself over the cotton - and launches itself outwards. It goes skidding down the lines - and lands with a delighted splash in the water.

The other two follow moments later.

113 INT/EXT. ROOM 508/BALCONY. NIGHT.

Luke-Mouse waves them farewell as they plummet to the water far below. Then he turns and picks up the label his grandmother wrote for him before scuttling into the room.

114 EXT. EXCELSIOR HOTEL/BOURNEMOUTH. DAY.

An elderly taxi drives away from the hotel. Helga lifts her handbag onto the rear shelf so that the tiny Luke-Mouse can peer out at the passing scenery.

The Excelsior Hotel driveway is lined with a dozen Pest Control and Extermination vans. Health Officers and their equipment are moving towards the hotel.

Amidst the chaos of people and traffic, the Callboy waves his farewell.

Luke-Mouse instinctively waves back from the rear shelf of the taxi.

As the taxi turns onto the front we can see that it is a fine day and the beaches are already crowded.

115 INT. LUKE'S HOUSE. DAY.

The place is transformed. In the corner of the staircase, a rampway - taken from Luke's own drawings - rises to the first floor. Luke-Mouse comes slithering down the ramp, enjoying it like a helter-skelter.

He lands on a small trolley which is guided by a wire rail and this scoots him across the hallway to the kitchen.

116 INT. KITCHEN. DAY.

Helga has finished preparing lunch. She puts her own plate of salad down on the breakfast table as Luke-Mouse sweeps in on his trolley.

In the corner of the room a perfect kitchen in miniature. Refrigerator, cooker, store cupboards.

Luke-Mouse takes a tiny carton of juice from this and then, abandoning his trolley, walks to the side of the breakfast table.

He jumps on a trapeze rope which swings in a small arc. From this he leaps to a longer rope with a small platform. The arc of this swings even higher and by a series of further trapeze ropes, dizzying leaps and nimble climbing Luke-Mouse is finally delivered to the table top with a Tarzan-like leap. He slides across the polished surface and lands with a bump against Helga's water glass.

HELGA

Can't you think of an easier way to sit at table?

LUKE-MOUSE

It's fun.

He tucks into his tiny plate of food with relish.

LUKE-MOUSE

What did the doctor say?

HELGA

The doctor said I was a hundred per cent and perhaps my grandson and I should spend more time on holidays. I told him it'd be fine if we could afford it.

Luke-Mouse looks up at her but says nothing. The two of them continue eating in silence.

117 INT. HELGA'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Helga has settled into bed and sits up reading a book.

On the floor in the corner Luke-Mouse, too, is reading. He has to run from line to line as he reads and occasionally he pauses for rest. But the book absorbs him and he reads to the end of the chapter.

There are ladders, swings, rampways etc all over the room, each designed to facilitate a task for Luke-Mouse.

HELGA
(stretches)
I'm tired.

Luke-Mouse closes his book. Scuttles to the edge of the bed. In the corner is a mouse cage with two little white mice (perhaps William and Mary.) A peculiar contraption of wires and cardboard platforms rises from the floor to the bed.

Luke-Mouse stands on the platform device and whistles at the white mice which immediately jump onto the treadmill.

By a series of interlinking cogs, the treadmill turns wheels which in turn hauls on a piece of string. This raises the elevator at speed from the floor to bed level.

Luke-Mouse hops out onto the pillows and runs to his grandmother.

LUKE-MOUSE
Goodnight, Granny.

HELGA
Goodnight, dear.

He gives her a peck on the cheek. Steps back into the elevator which hurtles downwards again.

Luke-Mouse's bed is beneath his grandmother's. A miniature light allows him to read in bed. A tiny bedside table, dressing table and bedroom suite in miniature.

HELGA
(turning off light)
You know my darling - that you and I still
have a lot of work to do.

LUKE-MOUSE
I know. The witches of America, Norway,
France....

HELGA
Thousands of them. But somehow or another
we'll need to find some money. Travelling
is very expensive.

LUKE-MOUSE
I'll think of something.

He is smiling as he puts his own little light out.

118 INT. LUKE'S HOUSE HALLWAY. DAY.

CLOSE SHOT of the label which Helga wrote. It is attached
to the huge black cabin trunk which stood in the Grand High
Witch's room.

As the front door closes, letting two DELIVERY MEN leave
the house, Helga stares in perplexity at the trunk.

Luke-Mouse on her shoulder is laughing.

LUKE-MOUSE
Open it, Granny.

She unlatches it.

Millions and millions of crisp banknotes.

HELGA
Luke!

LUKE-MOUSE
I saw it when I was in the Grand High
Witches room. I thought we could put it
to good use. When we travel to America.

HELGA
America?

LUKE
Yes. That's where we've got to go next,
granny. Home. Because....look.

He dives into the money and tugs out a booklet which Helga
takes from him.

LUKE
It was the Grand High Witch's. And it's
got the name and address of every witch
in America!

Helga is delighted and impressed.

HELGA
Luke - you are a genius.

LUKE
Can we travel to New York by ship?

HELGA
First class!

LUKE-MOUSE
Captain's table?

HELGA
The best cabin!

She smothers him with kisses.

HELGA
Oh you brilliant little thing!

She dances with him for a moment.

HELGA
Look out, American witches - here we come!

LUKE-MOUSE
Here we come!

Helga flings banknotes in the air, dancing around the hallway with her tiny partner. Celebrating the beginning of their real adventure.

THE END