

Plays for Young Audiences

A PARTNERSHIP OF SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE AND CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY-MINNEAPOLIS

2400 THIRD AVENUE SOUTH
MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA 55404

612-872-5108
FAX 612-874-8119

Jack and the Beanstalk

By
Toby Hulse

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DRAMATIS PERSONAE

LUKE BOXER	Co-director, co-producer and lead performer of Box of Delights Theatre Company. The husband of...
DEIRDRE LIGHTS	Co-director, co-producer and lead performer of Box of Delights Theatre Company.
DANNY COLLIER	Actor and long-time collaborator with Box of Delights Theatre Company.
IVOR TOOLBOX	Newly recruited stage manager.

Also...

FRANK	A cabbie.
BRIAN GUSSET	His passenger.

And...

THE TECHNICAL AND STAGE MANAGEMENT CREW THE

FRONT OF HOUSE TEAM

THE MEXICAN JUMPING BEANS

PRESHOW

As we enter the foyer we are greeted by a delightful array of pre-show entertainment – balloon modellers, carol singers, jugglers and the like. Every so often members of the stage crew walk awkwardly through the foyer carrying ridiculous props and pieces of set. The entertainment though is a front, for as we gather to enjoy it we find that members of the FOH team in Box Of Delights Theatre Company t-shirts are surreptitiously searching us with beeping wand scanners.

They are looking for an undercover Panto Inspector. Through challenging what they are doing, and overhearing their conversations, we understand that the Panto Inspector is likely to be wearing an ill-fitting suit and carrying a briefcase whose contents are clearly top secret. Despite some good-natured harassment, particularly of the more long-suffering dads, we are all ushered towards the auditorium.

*Our entrance though is blocked by the stage manager, **IVOR**, a particularly grumpy individual, engaged in a protracted conversation to someone called **FRANK** on his mobile. **IVOR** simply points at a sign that reads 'Rehearsals In Progress'. Members of the FOH team lead us through the back way. The corridors are littered with half-finished props, pages of script covered in pencilled crossings-out and half-finished cups of cold coffee. We reach a door clearly signed 'Stage Right. Actors Only. Quiet On Stage'. It is through this door that we enter the auditorium.*

*Once inside the auditorium though it is clear that all is not as it should be. Rather than the beautifully painted and lit front cloth that we would usually expect of a pantomime, the stage is littered with work in progress. The working lights are on; unfinished pieces of set litter the floor; the costumes, hanging on rails, are hastily being steam-cleaned; rehearsal props, clearly labelled as to what they represent, are being placed on props tables; a technician is up a ladder focusing the lamps; **DANNY COLLIER** is running through his lines with **LUKE BOXER**, co-director, co-producer and lead performer of Box of Delights Theatre. **LUKE** is in a foul mood. In the midst of it all is **DEIRDRELIGHTS**, the other co-director, co-producer and lead performer of Box of Delights Theatre. She is in an advanced state of agitation, unable to focus, compulsively searching and re-searching the audience for signs of a Panto Inspector. Although this hive of slightly frenetic activity is in itself fascinating, we would be forgiven for being somewhat puzzled and a little disappointed.*

*With a nod to the box, **DEIRDRE** takes out the workers, and after a little conversation between her and the box, brings a bright panto state up on stage. We are ready to start, after a fashion.*

ACT ONE

SONG: P.A.N.T.O.

THE CAST

[Singing.]

Young man, there's no need to feel down.
I said, young man, pick yourself off the ground.
Because, young man, now the panto's in town
There's no need to be unhappy.
Young man, there's a place you can go.
I said, young man, get yourself in the show.
Come and join us, and I'm sure you will find
Many ways to have a good time.

It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
Songs, jokes and dancing for you to enjoy,
And a girl dressed up as a boy...
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
Oh no, it's not! Oh yes, it is!
The greatest show in the biz...

Our hero is poor Jack with his beans,
There's a giant, who is scary and mean,
And a Fairy who can make real your dreams.
And of course the old cow, Daisy.
Jack's mum is the lovely Dame Trott, A
rare beauty, in her time she was hot,
You will love her, but, in case you forgot,
She's a man in a fancy frock...

It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
Songs, jokes and dancing for you to enjoy,
And a girl dressed up as a boy...
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
Oh no, it's not! Oh yes, it is!
The greatest show in the biz...

It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.
Songs, jokes and dancing for you to enjoy,
And a girl dressed up as a boy...
It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O.

It's fun to be in a P.A.N.T.O. Oh
no, it's not! Oh yes, it is! The
greatest show in the biz...

The song ends with riotous applause, and then an awful silence. No one seems to know what should happen next.

*The awkwardness is broken by **IVOR** running on to stage.*

IVOR Dee, it's all sorted. The Panto Inspector hasn't made it into the show. I've got him in the back of Frank's cab. Frank's planning to get him lost.

DEIRDRE How long have we got?

IVOR I'll check. There's only so long a cab driver can drive round the Heygate Estate before the passenger gets suspicious.

***IVOR** speaks into his radio. We hear **FRANK**'s voice amplified over the theatre PA. Also, from the backseat of the cab we can hear the passenger, **BRIAN GUSSET**.*

Frank? It's Ivor. Where exactly are you?

FRANK [v/o] No flippin' idea, mate. It's all just boarded up flats and stuff –

BRIAN [v/o] – excuse me, I know this area really rather well –

LUKE [Aside to **DANNY**.] Is that him?

DANNY [Aside to **LUKE**.] It must be.

LUKE [Aside to **DANNY**.] I hate him.

FRANK [v/o] – I mean, like, I can't quite get a handle on where I am, you know what I mean? All looks the bleedin' same to me –

BRIAN [v/o] – yes, to the newcomer maybe, but to one born and bred –

FRANK [v/o] – some kind of Corbusian neo-brutalist architectural nightmare.

Beat.

Innit?

IVOR So, how long do you reckon it's going to take you to get here?

FRANK [v/o] Forty minutes?

BRIAN [v/o] We really are just around the corner...

IVOR Perfect. See you in forty minutes.

BRIAN [v/o] ... if you double back here...

FRANK [v/o] Straight on. Cheers, mate.

A crackle of static and the radio link is gone.

IVOR You've got forty minutes.

DEIRDRE Thanks, Ivor.

DEIRDRE turns to talk to us.

Sorry to keep you waiting. It's important to know how long we've got before the Panto Inspector arrives.

LUKE I can't believe he's coming tonight. It's going to be a complete disaster. I've never be so unprepared in my life.

DEIRDRE Luke, calm down. With the help of this lot, *[Indicating us.]* we'll soon have everything sorted.

LUKE But the man in the back of that cab isthe Panto Inspector! The Panto Inspector! I don't think you get it. I'm stunned. I just didn't expect it.

DANNY No one expects it.

LUKE It shows no respect.

DANNY You expect respect?

LUKE I do.

DANNY From a man who inspects?

LUKE I do. I do.

DANNY You expect respect from a man who inspects?

LUKE I do. I do. I do.

DANNY Do you want some loo roll to go with those do-dos?

LUKE *[Aside to **DANNY**.]Nice gag.*

DANNY Thank you.

LUKE And... it makes me suspect!

DANNY Suspect what?

LUKE That somebody, maybe, I don't know, tipped them off...

DANNY Tipped them off? Don't be ridiculous. Who would do that?

LUKE No, no , that is ridiculous...

DEIRDRE Will you two be quiet? We need to get started. We're running out of time.

LUKE & DANNY Sorry, Dee.

DEIRDRE When you two get together you're like an old couple.

LUKE & DANNY Sorry, Dee.

DEIRDRE Okay.

She turns to us again.

Hello. Sorry to keep you waiting. Again. I think perhaps we owe you a bit of an explanation. Thank you. I'll start with a few introductions. We are Box of Delights Theatre Company. This is Luke Boxer, my co-director, co-producer, one of our lead actors.

LUKE Hello. Luke Boxer. We're married.

DEIRDRE Why do you always have to say that? Is that relevant?

LUKE No.

DEIRDRE I'm Deirdre Lights. People usually shorten it to Dee. Lights isn't my real name, obviously.

DANNY Really?

DEIRDRE Danny, no one actually has the surname 'Lights'. *[To us.]* Google it if you don't believe me. I changed it –

DANNY – so you could tell your parents that, at last, you had your name up in lights –

DEIRDRE No. For the company. Box of Delights.

DANNY Yes. I understand.

DEIRDRE Do you understand?

DANNY Yes. I understand.

DEIRDRE Really?

DANNY No. I don't understand.

DEIRDRE Let me say it again. Box of Delights.

DANNY Er... say it again.

DEIRDRE Box-a-Delights.

DANNY No, sorry, I can't quite...

DEIRDRE Boxer Delights.

DANNY Again?

DEIRDRE Boxer, Dee Lights.

A pause followed by a light bulb moment.

DANNY Oh, I get it. That's really rather clever.

DEIRDRE Well, it seemed like a good idea at the time.

DANNY It's a pun, isn't it?

DEIRDRE Yes, Danny.

DANNY I like it.

DEIRDRE Well, I hate it.

DANNY Very witty.

DEIRDRE Still it's better than being called Boxer.

LUKE Really? That's my surname...

DEIRDRE *[Significantly.]*Yes it is, beloved husband of mine.

DANNY I rather like the name Boxer. It's masterful. A touch of the Stallones...

LUKE and DANNY drop into their favourite moment from Rocky.

LUKE Adrian!

DANNY Rocky!

LUKE Adrian!

DANNY Rocky!

LUKE Adrian!

DANNY Rocky!

DEIRDRE Shut up you two.

LUKE & DANNY Sorry...

DEIRDRE And this is our stage manager, Ivor. He's the new boy of the company.

IVOR Hello.

DEIRDRE We've brought him in for this show, after our usual stage manager disappeared under very mysterious circumstances.

IVOR Gaffa tape can be highly dangerous if you don't do the appropriate health and safety checks.

DANNY You don't say.

IVOR I knew a chap working on *The Mousetrap* who got taped to the back of the set. He heard the same play eight times a week for over ten months.

DANNY How awful!

IVOR And he never worked out whodunit...

DANNY It was the butler, wasn't it? It's always the butler.

LUKE Why would a butler gaffa tape a stage manager to the back of the set?

DEIRDRE Enough!

She turns to us again.

As you can probably tell, we're a little bit behind in getting the show ready. Well, a lot behind if I'm honest. We were thinking about cancelling this evening, but we've just heard that we've got the Panto Inspector in tonight and –

LUKE I hate the Panto Inspector!

DEIRDRE Luke, he's only doing his job. Someone has to make sure that pantomimes are up-to-scratch: that the jokes are so bad they make you groan, that the goop is really goopy, that the principal boy has long enough legs and slaps her thigh with just the required amount of force, that the Dame's walk down dress is truly outrageous –

DANNY – Dee, about my dress –

DEIRDRE – please don't interrupt me, Danny –

DANNY – but –

DEIRDRE – please –

LUKE – He's going to ruin us all. There's no way our panto is going to pass an inspection. He will close down the show, and we'll all end up living on the streets...

DEIRDRE That's a bit melodramatic, Luke. We won't end up living on the streets. We'll just have to get some temp work in a call centre to tide us over Christmas...

LUKE Dee... there's something you don't know...

DEIRDRE Luke, I know that voice. What have you done?

LUKE Yes... I... er...

DEIRDRE What?

LUKE Well...

DEIRDRE Out with it!

LUKE Well, you know how our last few shows haven't been a total success...

DEIRDRE You don't say. Your production of *Oliver Twist* –

LUKE – was universally praised by the critics –

DEIRDRE – nearly every performance had more people on the stage than in the audience.

LUKE That can happen, even in the most critically successful productions.

DEIRDRE Luke, it was a one man show!

LUKE Fair point.

DEIRDRE And what about your production of Three Sisters?

LUKE It was a community show. I needed a lot of good parts for women. You know what these community groups are like.

DEIRDRE But Three Thousand, Three Hundred and Thirty Three Sisters?

LUKE I admit that I may have bitten off more than I could chew.

DEIRDRE You couldn't fit them all on stage, let alone in the dressing room.

LUKE No wonder there was a riot.

DEIRDRE No wonder.

LUKE I do think that the police's use of water cannon was a little excessive though.

DEIRDRE And what about your schools' production of Little Red Riding Hood?

LUKE It stands to reason that if the wolf is wearing Granny's clothes, then she must have been naked when he ate her.

DEIRDRE True. But did we actually have to see that on stage? We've been banned from working in any primary school in the Greater London area.

LUKE Yes, sorry.

DEIRDRE So, to say that our last few shows haven't been a total success is a complete understatement. They've been a disaster. Thank goodness we've still got the savings in the sweetie tin on the top shelf in the kitchen which nobody can reach.

LUKE Ah...

DEIRDRE What?

LUKE I spent the savings in the sweetie tin on the top shelf in the kitchen which nobody can reach.

DEIRDRE How?

LUKE I could reach it...

DEIRDRE No!

LUKE Actually, it's worse than that... The landlord's threatening to throw us out if we don't pay the rent by the end of the week. So this pantomime has to succeed. We desperately need to earn some money. And fast. But if the Panto Inspector comes tonight and sees this mess...

DEIRDRE Money! It's always money, isn't it? It always comes down to money. Luke, I work my fingers to the bone for you. And what have I got to show for it?

DANNY Bony fingers?

DEIRDRE I work all night. I work all day to pay the bills I have to pay. Money, money, money...

A moment.

DANNY You know, if this was a panto we would all burst into song right now.

DEIRDRE Yes, but this isn't a panto, is it? This is real life. Luke, I can't believe you didn't tell me about this!

LUKE Sorry...

An awkward pause.

The pause is broken by a crackle of static.

FRANK [v/o]Ivor? Ivor?

IVOR Yes, Frank?

FRANK [v/o] I took a wrong turn, mate. Well, a right turn. I'm back on Walworth Road.

IVOR Is that bad?

FRANK [v/o]It's close... How much longer do you need?

IVOR They haven't even started. How much longer can you give us?

FRANK [v/o] I'll see what I can do, mate. Thinking... thinking... thinking... still thinking... yes, got it!

BRIAN [v/o] Watch out for that bollard!

FRANK [v/o] What bollard, mate?

An agonising crunch of metal.

Oh, that bollard... Ivor, you've got thirty minutes.

A crackle of static and the radio link is gone.

IVOR Dee, you've got thirty minutes. Get a move on.

DEIRDRE Thirty minutes. Okay. In thirty minutes time the Panto Inspector is going to be here, and we need to convince him that not only is our pantomime ready to be performed, but that it is the best pantomime in London, with the poshest audience he's ever seen –

DANNY The poshest audience he's ever seen? We're going to have a bit of trouble there, aren't we? This lot wouldn't make the bargain bin at Poundland.

DEIRDRE Danny, you can't insult the audience like that. We're trying to get them to help us.

DANNY Oh, be quiet. They love it.

DEIRDRE Danny, that isn't how you get the audience's help.

DANNY What, do I just ask them?

DEIRDRE You could always try.

***DANNY** turns to us.*

DANNY We're in a bit of a spot of bother. Will you help us?

AUDIENCE Yes!

DANNY *[I think the following will be funnier if delivered with complete truth, but I may well be wrong...]* Sorry, I can't hear you. Will you help us?

AUDIENCE Yes!!

DANNY Glue ear as a child, grommets, terrible scarring. I can't hear you. Will you help us?

AUDIENCE Yes!!!

DANNY I heard something. A fly maybe? Will you help us?

AUDIENCE YES!!!

DANNY Okay, okay, there's no need to shout... *[To DEIRDRE.]* They'll help us.

DEIRDRE Of course they will. *[To us.]* Thank you. We're going to all need to pull together if we're going to fool the Panto Inspector. Luke has drawn up a list of what needs doing. Luke, could you read out the list, please?

LUKE fishes in his pocket.

LUKE Here we go. *[Reading.]* 'Bread, milk, eggs, butter, a pound of Brussels sprouts, a rubber chicken...' Oops, sorry, wrong list.

DANNY A rubber chicken?

LUKE You can't do a show without a rubber chicken.

LUKE fishes in his pocket again.

Here we go. *[Reading.]* 'Sir Ian McKellan's Top Ten Tips to be a better actor. No. 1 Act better. No. 2 See number one...' No, that's not it either.

He fishes in his pocket a third time.

Aah, here we go.

He unfolds the list. It is enormous, big enough to be displayed so that the audience can read it. He reads it for our benefit.

1. We haven't got enough actors.

2. We haven't finished the set.
3. We haven't got a giant.
4. We haven't got a beanstalk.
5. We haven't got a posh audience.

But other than that, we are fine...

Beat.

It's going to be a complete disaster! You know, Dee, I'm prepared to fight the Panto Inspector if it comes to it. Perhaps even kill him. You know how much I hate the Panto Inspector.

DANNY And I'll be right there beside you. Holding your coat.

DEIRDRE It won't come to that, at least I hope not.

DANNY There is another problem. It's about the walk down...

DEIRDRE Is it important?

DANNY / think so.

DEIRDRE Well then, we can ignore it. I think five problems is more than enough to deal with. Let's look at them one by one. 'We haven't got enough actors.' How many actors do we have?

LUKE Since they all walked out, on the infamous day of Casting-gate?

DANNY I only commented on the size of his part.

LUKE It was the way you said it.

DANNY I'm sure I don't know what you mean.

LUKE Dee, we've only got three actors left. Me, you and Danny.Three.

DEIRDRE Four.

LUKE Four actors?

DEIRDRE You didn't count Ivor.

LUKE Ivor?

DEIRDRE He could be an acting stage manager – couldn't you, Ivor?

IVOR No way. There is absolutely no way you are getting me on a stage. I hate acting. And as for actors...

DEIRDRE So that's decided then. Four actors. And what characters do we need?

LUKE Well, there's Jack...

DEIRDRE ... principal boy: me...

LUKE ... Dame Trott, Jack's mother...

DEIRDRE ... pantomime dame: Danny...

LUKE ... Squire Grabbum, the evil landlord...

DEIRDRE ... stupid comedy villain: you...

LUKE What?

DEIRDRE Sorry, deeply troubled man, haunted by the ghosts of his past, requiring an exceptional actor of great talent and sensitivity.

LUKE Me.

DEIRDRE That's right.

LUKE The giant...

DEIRDRE We'll get to that.

LUKE ... the Good Fairy...

DEIRDRE Ivor...

IVOR No! No way am I wearing a dress.

LUKE ... the mysterious old man with the magic beans...

DEIRDRE ... walk on part: Ivor...

IVOR No! I told you – I hate acting.

LUKE ...Daisy the cow...

DEIRDRE You can be the front end, Luke, and Ivor, you can be the back end.

IVOR But –

DANNY Exactly, Ivor.

IVOR – I’m not doing it.

DANNY Cheeky.

DEIRDRE Someone’s got to do it, Ivor.

IVOR But not me.

DANNY We’ll never rear the end of this.

DEIRDRE Why not?

IVOR I’m not being the back end of a cow.

DANNY That’s a bit of a bummer.

DEIRDRE Danny, will you be quiet with the backside jokes.

DANNY Ok. I was scraping the bottom of the barrel anyway...

DEIRDRE Danny!

DANNY Sorry.

DEIRDRE Ivor, why won’t you be the back end of Daisy?

IVOR I don’t act.

DANNY Frightened of being type c-arse-t?

DEIRDRE Danny, if you interrupt me again, I don’t know what I’m going to do.

DANNY Sorry, Dee, don't have a cow...

***DANNY** narrowly avoids being clipped round the earhole.*

IVOR Besides it's impossible.

DEIRDRE Impossible?

IVOR If I'm the mysterious old man with the magic beans then I'm already in that scene. I can't be both characters at the same time.

DEIRDRE A minor point. You'll sort it out, I'm sure.

IVOR I'm not doing it. It's as simple as that.

DEIRDRE *[Ignoring him.]* So, Luke, do we need any other characters?

LUKE The giant's wife?

DEIRDRE Cut.

LUKE Jack's stupid brother, Simple Simon?

DEIRDRE Cut.

LUKE Marigold, Squire Grabbum's daughter.

DEIRDRE Cut.

LUKE You've cut the love interest?

DEIRDRE Yes.

LUKE Really?

DEIRDRE I don't think they'll miss her. Is there anyone who actually likes the sappy ballad number? It's just an excuse to chewa toffee, crinkle the wrapper and check your mobile phone.

LUKE I like the love stuff.

DEIRDRE You would. Anyone other characters?

LUKE All the villagers who are terrified of the giant.

DEIRDRE Cut.

DANNY Dee, with respect, I don't think we can cut the villagers.

DEIRDRE Really?

DANNY What else would all the frighteningly bendy teenagers do at Christmas if they couldn't scrape their hair into a bun, dress up in a shiny leotard and do panto?

DEIRDRE I'm not convinced we need the villagers...

LUKE Dee! They've got three big dance numbers: at the beginning of the show, at the beginning of the second half and at the walk down finale. What will the Panto Inspector think if there isn't a dance at the walk down finale?

DEIRDRE We could do the dance.

LUKE Four of us?

DANNY Three. I'll be doing the walk down.

IVOR Two. I don't act, and I definitely don't dance

LUKE Two of us! It will look rubbish, and we'll definitely fail the inspection.

DEIRDRE Okay, we need the villagers. *[To us.]*We'll just have to ask you lot to dance.

LUKE They did agree to help.

DEIRDRE And I'm sure they will.

DANNY Dee, about the walk down...

DEIRDRE Danny, be quiet.

DANNY It is important.

DEIRDRE This is more important. So, that's the casting sorted out. What's next on the list?

LUKE Shouldn't we rehearse them first?

DEIRDRE Who?

LUKE The villagers.

DEIRDRE Of course we should. That's exactly what I said. [*To LUKE.*] Get the script, you idiot. We need to rehearse the villagers. Don't you know anything? [*To us.*] You're also in the scene in the play when Jack takes the cow to the market. We'll do that first. It's pretty simple really. You hear the giant's voice up above, and a mysterious old man – that's you, Ivor, you'll need to learn this – asks you what it is.

LUKE hands DEIRDRE the script.

Okay, so, when you hear the giant rumbling up above, you all have to hide under your seats and gibber like you're frightened. Let's have a go at that. Rumbling, rumbling, rumbling...

We rehearse hiding and gibbering.

Then Ivor says, 'What made that terrible rumbling noise?' and you reply, 'That was the evil giant, Giant Thunderpants'.

DEIRDRE rehearses the line with us.

He then asks, 'What is it that he wants you to do?', and you reply, 'We have to pay his evil lackey Squire Grabbum exactly half our meagre salaries every month, money that we earn through honest toil in the fields. If we don't the giant has threatened to bite our heads off and make our insides our outsides and our frontsides our backsides.' Okay? 'What is it that he wants?'

We attempt to remember the line.

Hmm... that line is quite tricky. Ivor, bring the song sheet in.

IVOR does so. As it descends we see that it has the words for Chick-Chick-Chick-Chicken on it.

Turn it over and write the words on the back. Then all they'll have to do is read what's written on the song sheet.

IVOR Okay.

IVOR begins to write the words on the back of the song sheet.

DEIRDRE Just remember, when it comes to that scene just read what's written on the song sheet. That'll work. Oh, and another thing. We can't afford any pyros, so there won't be big flashes and bangs when the fairy and the baddy come on at the beginning. So, when you hear them say, 'FLASH!', could you all jump in your seats and say 'AA-AA! My eyes!'? Thank you.

We rehearse this moment.

A crackle of static, and we hear FRANK's voice over the PA.

FRANK [v/o] Ivor? We're on the move again, mate. Twenty minutes?

IVOR Ok, Frank.

A crackle of static and the radio link is gone.

DEIRDRE We need to work faster. We'll do the finale dance later. [Looking at the list.] The set. Ivor, finish painting the set for Dame Trott's cottage. Danny, help him out. Luke, come and help me out backstage with some extra costumes we're going to need.

DEIRDRE and LUKE go backstage.

IVOR The buckets and brushes are over there.

DANNY [Mimicking him.] 'The buckets and brushes are over there.' Paint the set? This is definitely not part of my contract.

IVOR Actors! I've seen your contract. It's not worth the paper it's written on.

DANNY It most certainly is.

IVOR It's written on toilet paper...

DANNY Hey!

IVOR ... second hand toilet paper...

DANNY Shut it, you. Why don't you just get on with your terribly important writing job? *[Mimicking him.]* 'The buckets and brushes are over there.'

***DANNY** fetches three buckets and a box labelled 'Brushes'.*

IVOR And we'll need to move that ladder.

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'You'll need to move that ladder.' What do you think I am? Some sort of techie?

IVOR Better than being some sort of actor.

DANNY I'm classically trained. I went to RADA, you know...

IVOR ASDA, more like.

DANNY ... I have played the Dane...

IVOR The great dane.

DANNY ... and I swept the board at the Oliviers!

IVOR You swept the floor at the Oliviers.

DANNY Oh, be quiet.

IVOR The ladder...

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'The ladder...'

***DANNY** moves the ladder next to the piece of set that needs painting.*

You know, this isn't my real ladder. This is my step ladder. Do you get it? Never mind...

IVOR And the paint's over there.

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'And the paint's over there.'

IVOR Is there a funny echo in here?

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'Is there a funny echo in here?'

IVOR Hello?

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'Hello?'

IVOR Hello??

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'Hello??'

IVOR Hello???

DANNY *[Mimicking him.]* 'Hello???'

IVOR Oompaoompa.

DANNY Stick it up your jumper.

IVOR You couldn't resist it, could you? Actors... Go and fetch the paint. I'll get the song sheet out of the way.

***DANNY** goes to fetch a large can of paint. **IVOR** flies the song sheet out.*

DANNY Did you hear about the man who crossed the Dulux dog with the Andrex puppy? His decorating was appalling, but he had a very colourful bottom.

***IVOR** hands **DANNY** a large waterproof sheet.*

IVOR Spread this out where we're going to be working. Correct preparation is more than half the job.

DANNY Preparation?

IVOR It might get messy.

DANNY It might get messy? Oh, I seriously doubt that...

***IVOR** and **DANNY** spread the sheet out.*

***IVOR** fetches two hard hats.*

IVOR And put this on.

DANNY Why?

IVOR We will be working at height. A hard hat is standard Health and Safety procedure.

DANNY But they're so unflattering. They'll ruin my hair.

IVOR You haven't got any hair.

DANNY A girl can dream...

IVOR No hat, no work.

DANNY Like I care...

He puts it on anyway.

IVOR Now, hold the bucket whilst I pour the paint in.

***DANNY** holds the first bucket whilst **IVOR** pours the paint in. There is a hole in the bottom of the bucket. It goes all over **DANNY**'s feet.*

DANNY My Jimmy Choos!

IVOR Get another bucket.

***DANNY** gets the second bucket. **IVOR** pours paint in it. There is a small hole in the side of the bucket which the actor playing **IVOR** puts his thumb over.*

Foot the ladder whilst I climb it. You must always foot a ladder if you're going above the second rung.

***DANNY** foots the ladder whilst **IVOR** climbs it.*

DANNY *[Removing his hard hat.]* Hot work this...

*The actor playing **IVOR** takes his thumb off the hole. A steady stream of paint pours out of the bucket into **DANNY**'s hard hat.*

IVOR Better put your hard hat back on. No hat, no work. It's standard Health and Safety procedure.

***DANNY** puts his hard hat on. The paint trickles pleasingly all over his face.*

***IVOR** looks in the bucket he is holding. It is empty.*

There's something wrong with this bucket. Get another one.

***DANNY** gets the third bucket. **IVOR** comes down the ladder. They fill the third bucket with paint.*

DANNY Ivor, please can I have a look at your hard hat?

IVOR Of course.

*He hands him his hard hat. **DANNY** fills it with paint from the bucket.*

DANNY Better put your hard hat back on. No hat, no work. It's standard Health and Safety procedure.

IVOR Wise words. For an actor.

***IVOR** puts his hard hat back on. There is a small hole in the top so that when he pushes it down the paint squirts out all over the set.*

DANNY Now look what you've done. You'd better get that painted before Dee comes back.

IVOR Give me a brush.

***DANNY** hands **IVOR** a brush. He dips it in the paint and flicks it all over **DANNY**.*

***DANNY** takes a brush and flicks paint all over **IVOR**.*

A riot of paint flicking. The paint goes everywhere, on faces, down trousers and all over the set.

*A crackle of static, and we hear **FRANK**'s voice over the PA.*

FRANK [v/o]Ivor. I'm going to stop for petrol, mate, but you've still only got fifteen minutes...

A crackle of static and the radio link is gone.

LUKE and DEIRDRE run back on.

LUKE That was him, wasn't it? The guy with the Panto Inspector in his cab.

IVOR Yes, you've only got fifteen minutes.

DEIRDRE How's the set coming on?

She sees it.

Oh. What have you two been doing? You've splashed paint all over the set. It looks like a load of Jackson Pollocks... This will never get finished in time. We're just going to have to leave it. If the Panto Inspector asks, it's all part of the concept... You two – get cleaned up, whilst Luke and I work out how to do the giant.

IVOR and DANNY exit to clean up. Before they do they hang up the slosh sheet.

LUKE I'll play the giant.

DEIRDRE You're not very tall.

LUKE That doesn't matter. Watch. You play Jack, and I'll be the giant.

'GIANT' Fee-fi-fo-fum, I smell the blood of an Englishman.

'JACK' Who are you?

'GIANT' I am Giant Thunderpants.

'JACK' You're not very tall.

'GIANT' No, for I am the shortest giant in the whole wide world of giants!

'JACK' The shortest giant in the whole wide world of giants?

'GIANT' Exactly. You should meet my brother, the tallest dwarf in the whole wide world of dwarfs. Just wait there.

LUKE exits...

DEIRDRE I hate to think where this is going...

... and comes straight back on again.

'DWARF' Fee-fi-fo-fattom, I smell the blood of a single atom. I am the tallest dwarf in the whole wide world of dwarfs. You should meet my brother, the fattestthin man in the whole wide world of thin men. Just wait there.

LUKE exits...

DEIRDRE Do you ever get a horrible feeling that you know exactly what is about to happen?

... and comes straight back on again.

'THIN MAN' Fee-fi-fo-feel, I smell the blood of a Weight Watcher's Meal. I am the thinnest fat man in the whole wide world of fat men. You should meet my brother –

DEIRDRE Is he, by any chance, the thinnestfat man in the whole wide world of thin men?

'FAT MAN' He is! How did you know?

DEIRDRE Lucky guess... Luke, this isn't going to work! You know how fussy the Panto Inspector is, better than anyone. All pantomimes have to have their special gimmicks: Aladdin has to have a genie, a flying carpet ride and a magical cave; Cinderella has to have a horse, two dames and a rags-to-riches transformation; and Jack and the Beanstalk has to have a cow, a beanstalk that grows and a giant. We will fail the inspection for certain if we don't have a proper giant. And you calling yourself the shortest giant in the whole wide world just isn't going to cut it.

LUKE Could we all be really reallyreally small so the giant looks tall in contrast?

DEIRDRE But we're not really reallyreally small.

LUKE Unless we're the tallest small people in the whole wide world of small people.

DEIRDRE No, Luke.

LUKE We could get mice to play all the other parts?

DEIRDRE No, Luke.

LUKE Tap dancing mice?

DEIRDRE No, Luke.

LUKE Righto.

DEIRDRE I tell you what, this might work. I'm going to need a volunteer from the audience.

***DEIRDRE** selects a volunteer, ideally the smallest, cutest child who puts their hand up. She brings the volunteer on stage. We find out his/her name.*

Luke, we're going backstage for a moment to have a chat with Ivor. Could you run the scene where Jack first goes into the giant's castle and sees him asleep?

***DEIRDRE** and the volunteer go backstage. **LUKE** gets us all to snore. **LUKE** takes on the role of **'JACK'**.*

'JACK' This must be the castle of Giant Thunderpants, the monster who killed my father and stole all his money. And if I'm not much mistaken, those are the snores of the giant, fast asleep. Perhaps if I can find where he keeps his money bags, and escape with them before he wakes up. This way I think... Look – there is the money bag I have come to get, under the chair of the monster who killed my father. I mustn't let my courage fail me now. Ssshhh... Quietly does it...

From offstage a terrifying 'Fee-fi-fo-fumming'. An immense shadow falls across the sloss sheet.

LUKE Aargh! He's woken up! Quick everyone, hide under your seats. Don't let him see you.

*The volunteer walks on. She holds a microphone and is backlit. **DEIRDRE**, **IVOR** and **DANNY** follow her on.*

IVOR If in doubt ask a techie...

LUKE That is brilliant. For a moment I thought it actually was a giant.

IVOR Thank you.

*A crackle of static. We hear **BRIAN** trying to wrestle the radio from **FRANK**. The grunts and groans of their struggle are terrifying and more than a little giant-like.*

BRIAN [v/o] Give me the radio –

FRANK [v/o] – you can't have it –

BRIAN [v/o] – give it to me, I say –

FRANK [v/o] – that's official hackney cab equipment, you can't –

BRIAN [v/o] – give me the radio –

FRANK [v/o] – get your hands off my –

BRIAN [v/o] – got it! –

FRANK [v/o] – OW!

BRIAN [v/o] Ivan?

IVOR Ivor.

BRIAN [v/o] Whatever your name is. Now, I don't know what's going on here but this cabby is trying to prevent me from seeing your show. I've got a ticket so I believe I am legally entitled to come in. But what with him driving me around all over the place, I've nearly missed the first half.

IVOR Ah, don't worry. We were delayed starting. Erm... emergency evacuation.

BRIAN [v/o] A fire?

IVOR False alarm.

DEIRDRE But the evacuation went really well. Text book. Couldn't be faulted.

IVOR So we haven't actually started yet.

BRIAN [v/o] Thank goodness. You can't imagine what a relief that is, Ivan.

IVOR Ivor.

BRIAN *[v/o]* I'm coming straight to the theatre. Cabby, we are ten minutes away. Take me straight to the Southwark Playhouse, and no detours or wrong turnings. Ivan, I'll be there in ten minutes.

IVOR Ivor.

BRIAN *[v/o]* Ivor.

IVOR We're looking forward to meeting you.

BRIAN *[v/o]* And I can't wait to see the show. I love a good traditional pantomime. In fact, I've seen so many you could almost call me an expert. Thank you, Ivan.

IVOR Ivor. It's Ivor. Ivor Toolbox.

DANNY starts to suppress a giggle.

BRIAN *[v/o]* Sorry. Ivor. Er... over and out.

A crackle of static and the radio link is gone.

LUKE Did you hear that? 'I love a good traditional pantomime... you could almost call me an expert'. He's the Panto Inspector for sure. God, I hate him, him and all his kind. I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

DEIRDRE Focus, Luke, focus. We only have ten minutes. We've got to sort out the beanstalk, turn this lot into the poshest audience in London and rehearse the finale dance.

LUKE But what about the other dance numbers? We haven't got any frighteningly bendy girls with scrappy buns and shiny leotards.

A pause for thought.

DEIRDRE How much did we take on the door tonight?

LUKE £500.

DEIRDRE Right. I'm taking that money and I'm going to get us some dancers.

LUKE That's the only cash we've got. What about the rent?

DEIRDRE Luke, you have no right to talk to me about the rent. I'll be back before the interval.

***DEIRDRE** runs off towards front of house to collect the money from the box office and find some frighteningly bendy girls.*

***DANNY** can contain it no longer and bursts into laughter.*

DANNY Ivor Toolbox?! Ivor Toolbox?! Are you really called Ivor Toolbox?

IVOR Yes. What's so funny about that?

DANNY Well, I've got a great big lunchbox, but I don't go around boasting about it.

IVOR It's my name.

DANNY Seriously? You're a stage manager called Ivor Toolbox?

IVOR I tell you, it's my name.

DANNY It's just so appropriate. *[With sudden deathly seriousness.]* It's almost like you've made it up...

IVOR No, no, no. It's my real name. Definitely my real name.

***DANNY** gives a nod of acceptance.*

DANNY Okay. Fair enough. It's a good thing you ended up as a stage manager then.

IVOR Yes it is.

DANNY Not a spy.Or an impostor.Or an undercover agent of evil.

IVOR Exactly.

DANNY Because that would just sound rubbish – Ivor Toolbox, international man of mystery. Not.

IVOR *[Nervously laughing.]*Very good, Danny.I've just got to go and sort out

the beanstalk.

IVOR exits.

LUKE is still in a major state of shock.

LUKE 'I love a good traditional pantomime... you could almost call me an expert'. The Panto Inspector. The bloomin' Panto Inspector.

DANNY Luke, I've been meaning to ask you. Why do you hate the Panto Inspector so much? I mean, it's a bit of a pain that he's coming tonight, and I wouldn't want the show closed down or anything, but how you feel about him is almost pathological.

LUKE It is pathological. The Panto Inspector killed my father.

DANNY What?!

LUKE A young actor, who was a pupil of his until he turned to evil, betrayed and murdered my father.

DANNY Evil?

LUKE The evil that is the Panto Inspectorate.

DANNY Blimey.

A sombre pause.

Hang on a second. Your father isn't dead. We had tea with him just last week.

LUKE Metaphorically! After a visit from the Panto Inspector he never acted again. He might as well be dead. And that is why I hate the Panto Inspectors, and have sworn to kill all those who cross my path. Let that monstrosity of a man dare to enter the theatre tonight!

DANNY Steady on. You'll do yourself an injury with all that acting.

IVOR enters with a large pot.

IVOR There you go. One beanstalk.

DANNY That's just a pot.

IVOR No, that's a beanstalk. You've got to cue it by saying the magic words.

DANNY Magic words?!

IVOR Yes, the magic words.

DANNY There's no such thing as magic.

IVOR The magic of theatre. Go on, try it. Say the magic words.

DANNY What are they?

IVOR 'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

DANNY That's just stupid.

IVOR I know. Really stupid. But you've got to say them, otherwise the
beanstalk won't grow. Go on:

'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

DANNY I'm not going to.

LUKE Danny – the Panto Inspector!

IVOR Go on:

'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

DANNY We can't write some better magic words?

IVOR No. This lot will say it, won't you?

AUDIENCE Yes!

IVOR But only if you say it too, isn't that right?

DANNY Okay, okay. I'll say it with the audience.

DANNY turns to face us so that the pot is behind him.

IVOR Altogether now...

DANNY & AUDIENCE 'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

A beanstalk magically grows from the pot.

IVOR There you are. A beanstalk. Magic.

DANNY turns around. The beanstalk disappears.

DANNY There's nothing there.

IVOR No, it's gone now. Try saying the magic words again.

DANNY turns to face us again.

DANNY & AUDIENCE 'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

The beanstalk grows again.

IVOR See. A beanstalk.

DANNY turns around. The beanstalk disappears.

DANNY There's still nothing there.

IVOR But there was something there. A beanstalk. Try saying the magic words again.

DANNY turns to face us a third time.

DANNY & AUDIENCE 'Biggity, boggity, biggity, bye,
Grow me a beanstalk to reach to the sky.'

The beanstalk grows again.

IVOR A beanstalk. As large as you like.

DANNY turns around. The beanstalk disappears.

DANNY You're just having me on.

He turns to face us. The beanstalk pops up.

IVOR Look – it's grown again. It's behind you!

DANNY Nonsense.

He turns round. The beanstalk disappears.

He turns to face us.

See...

The beanstalk pops up.

IVOR It's grown again. Behind you!

DANNY Poppycock.

He turns round. The beanstalk disappears.

He turns to face us.

What did I say...

The beanstalk pops up.

IVOR It's behind you!

DANNY There's nothing behind me.

IVOR There is. There's a beanstalk. It's behind you!

DANNY Rubbish.

IVOR Tell him everyone – it's behind you!

AUDIENCE It's behind you!

DANNY Tosh.

The beanstalk starts to do a little dance.

IVOR Danny, it's doing a little dance. Turn round now.

DANNY Piffle.

*The beanstalk starts laughing at **DANNY**.*

IVOR Danny, it's laughing at you now. Turn round.

DANNY Bunkum.

*One leaf on the beanstalk starts making rude gestures at **DANNY**.*

IVOR Danny, it's being really rude. Turn round.

DANNY Balderdash. You're telling me that if I turn round now I'll see a magical beanstalk doing a little dance, laughing and being rude?

IVOR Yes. Turn round!

DANNY What, now?

IVOR Yes, now!

***DANNY** turns round. He sees the beanstalk.*

See.

DANNY Blimey.

IVOR I told you there is such a thing as magic.

DANNY Oh no, there isn't.

IVOR Oh yes, there is.

DANNY Oh no, there isn't.

IVOR Oh yes, there is.

DANNY Oh no, there isn't – because I can see the wire holding the beanstalk

up.

IVOR I never said it was real magic. It's the magic of theatre.

DANNY Yeah, yeah, yeah.

LUKE So, have we got a beanstalk now?

IVOR Yes.

LUKE Then we just need to rehearse the audience into the finale. Ivor, go and sort out the music.

IVOR heads up to the box.

DANNY Luke, there's a problem with the walk down in the finale. I've been trying to tell Dee, but she just won't listen.

LUKE She doesn't listen. She never listens.

DANNY I listen.

LUKE Yes, Danny, you do. It's one of the reasons I insist that you're in every show we make.

DANNY Apart from your one man Oliver Twist.

LUKE You were doing the summer season in Reigate.

DANNY I would have dropped it all for you.

LUKE Do you remember our first show together?

DANNY Edinburgh, 2002...

LUKE I still have the photos...

DANNY I had hair then...

LUKE You looked so good in black and white striped leggings and white face paint...

DANNY As did you...

A moment.

They both laugh it off.

Luke, I can't find the dress for the walk down.

LUKE What?! We spent over half our budget on that dress.

DANNY It's not in my dressing room anymore. I think someone has stolen it.

LUKE Who would steal a green leafy beanstalk dress in a size [*Mumbles something tactfully inaudible.*]?

DANNY Someone trying to sabotage the show?

LUKE Don't be silly. Who would be trying to sabotage the show?

DANNY I don't know. But the dress is definitely not there. How am I going to do the walk down without my finale dress? Seeing the Dame in a new outrageous dress is what the walk down's all about.

LUKE Have you asked Ivor?

DANNY Yes, and he says he doesn't know anything about it.

LUKE What are you going to do?

DANNY I just don't know...

***IVOR** comes back onstage.*

IVOR The music's ready to go.

DANNY Luke, you're our movement specialist –

LUKE – well, a term at Dartington –

DANNY – can you lead this?

LUKE Okay. [*To us.*] The finale dance is basically a *pasadoble*. You'll pick up the moves quite quickly. I'm sure you'll recognise the tune...

***LUKE** rehearses the audience in to a simple dance to 'Love Is In The Air.'*

DANNY *[To us.]*That is brilliant. Now, to make you posh...

IVOR Dee and I have put some posh clothes out in the foyer.

DANNY *[To us.]* When we break, dress up to the nines. And you'll need to learn these two phrases. Grownups, you're going to say, 'Air hair lair'. And boys and girls you say, 'My Daddy's got a Porsche.' Let's practise that now.

We practise being posh, with appropriate gestures. We learn to give our responses to the cues 'Hello big people' and 'Hello boys and girls'. The rehearsal goes brilliantly.

*As we applaud our success, **DEIRDRE** enters, with a weird assortment of young people in matching tracksuits. They are the street dance troupe, the **MEXICAN JUMPING BEANS**.*

DEIRDRE That's sounding really good. Well done.

DANNY Dee, who on earth are these people?

DEIRDRE These people are our dancers.

DANNY What?!

DEIRDRE I told you that I would get dancers, and dancers I have got. Meet The Mexican Jumping Beans.

DANNY The Mexican Jumping Beans!!! But their hair isn't scraped into a bun, they're not wearing shiny leotards and they look about as bendy as a breeze block.

DEIRDRE I met their manager. He said these Beans were magic.

DANNY They are magic? How do you know?

DEIRDRE How do I know? Watch.

She gives an instruction to the leader of the troupe in incomprehensible yooof speak. The leader's reply is similarly incomprehensible.

[Translating for us.] They are going to show us what they've got...

***THE MEXICAN JUMPING BEANS** perform a truly terrible routine, combining everything we hate about street dance with more than a whiff of stereotypical Mexicanity.*

DANNY Awful. Absolutely totally unrelentingly awful. You spent £500 on this? You've been conned. There's nothing magic about these Beans. Get rid of them. Get rid of them at once.

DEIRDRE Danny! How dare you speak to me like that? Luke, do something about it!

***LUKE** does nothing.*

DANNY Dee, I've been wanting to say this for a long time. You are a –

*Whatever deadly insults **DANNY** is throwing at **DEIRDRE** are drowned out by a deafening crackle of static.*

FRANK [v/o] Ivor! Ivor! I'm just pulling up outside. Ivor, mate, I'm here.

LUKE And so is the Panto Inspector! AND SO IS THE PANTO INSPECTOR!!!

DEIRDRE Quick everyone, out into the foyer. Pretend you haven't been inside the theatre yet. We can do this if we all work together. Ivor, can we do something with the set?

IVOR Yes, I think so. What shall I say to these dancers?

DANNY We're just going to have to use them. We've got no choice.

LUKE It's going to be awful! IT'S GOING TO BE AWFUL!!!

DANNY Luke, I'm buying you a brandy. [To us.] Remember, you're the poshest audience in London. You'll find all the clothes you need outside. And don't forget anything we've rehearsed. See you in fifteen minutes. Break a leg everyone.

END OF ACT ONE

THE INTERVAL

*As we come out of the auditorium we see **BRIAN**, sitting on his own, writing in a notebook. He is wearing an ill-fitting suit and has a briefcase whose contents are clearly top secret.*

In addition to stretching our legs, going to the toilet and eating an ice cream we dress ourselves up from the variety of posh clothes that we find hanging on rails and spilling out of boxes in the foyer.

Perhaps the members of the Box of Delights Theatre Company are there too, to help us rehearse our posh responses.

The bell goes and we re-enter the auditorium.

***IVOR** and his stage management team have effected a miraculous transformation. The stage is clear of all the rubbish of rehearsals. A beautiful backcloth has been hung up. The lighting and sound presets are wonderful. We have a show on our hands...*