

SCENE ONE: SLEEPY HEAD TOWN SQUARE

FULL SET: The backcloth shows an old-fashioned and charming town square surrounded by thatched cottages and quaint little shops selling flowers, fruit, sweets and bread. There is a large sign in the centre which reads 'Welcome to Sleepy Head'. This set can be dressed with old-fashioned lamp posts, flower beds or even a wishing well.

MUSICAL NUMBER – *Leopold and Hernia Swindell and all the circus performers.*

The routine ends with the Swindells centre stage surrounded by the other circus performers. Leopold, a rogue and expert confidence trickster, is confident and charismatic. His coarse sister, Hernia, has less charm than her brother but is even more unscrupulous and conniving.

LEOPOLD: Ok gang! We'll set the big top up over there. Let's get this show on the road – we open tonight!

The circus performers disperse and exit, leaving Leopold and Hernia on stage. Throughout the next dialogue, circus performers pass by in the background, carrying props and equipment.

LEOPOLD: Welcome to Sleepy Head. This is where we make our fortune.

HERNIA: (*Unconvinced*) What are you talking about? They're hardly flocking over to buy tickets.

LEOPOLD: Don't you worry about that sis! Once word spreads we'll be turning them away in their droves. Snoozing is one of the duller, most boring Kingdoms in the world and this town is its slowly beating heart.

HERNIA: It can't be worse than [*local town reference*].

LEOPOLD: Oh, it is. Believe me this place could make drying paint seem like the latest action adventure movie.

HERNIA: So, what makes you think the good townfolk of Sleepy Head are going to be the sort of people willing to part with their hard earned cash?

LEOPOLD: Because every single person in this tiresome, little place will be desperate to escape their humdrum lives for one evening of thrills and spills in the company of Swindell's Spectacular Circus.

HERNIA: (*Fiercely*) Well you better be right because we're skint, I'll be brutally frank . . .

LEOPOLD: And I'll be brutishly Fred . . .

HERNIA: Stop wasting your energy trying to be funny and start thinking of ways we can scam our punters out of every penny they've got. We need to find new ways to delight and deceive our audiences. Put your thinking cap on.

Leopold swaps ringmaster's top hat for a cloth cap he pulls out of his pocket.

HERNIA: I wish you take things more seriously. Our circus is falling apart and without money we can't put it right. The lions need flea powder, the plate spinner needs new plates, the clowns need custard pies and the sword swallower needs stitches.

LEOPOLD: Yes, it was rather an unfortunate moment to sneeze.

HERNIA: Everything needs patching up. I've even got a hole in my tights. I mean, where will it end?

LEOPOLD: At the knee?

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(From offstage)* Owww! That great big lump!

Enter Mrs Gigglebottom hobbling, supported by Dozy Rosy and Dizzy Lizzy

ROSY: Does it hurt?

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(Sarcastically)* Oh no! I'm just limping around for a laugh. *(Sharply)* Of course it hurts!

HERNIA: What happened to you?

GIGGLEBOTTOM: That dopey elephant just trod on my foot.

LIZZY: Hey! That reminds me of a joke. What do you call two elephants on a bicycle?

ROSY: Don't know.

LIZZY: Optimistic.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(Irritated)* Do you mind?

ROSY: I've got a better one. What did the peanut say to the elephant?

LIZZY: I don't know.

ROSY: Nothing. Peanuts can't talk.

Dozy Rosy and Dizzy Lizzy laugh helplessly, Mrs Gigglebottom is less amused.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: When you've quite finished, go and fetch me something to sit on, I'm in agony here. I'll probably never be able to do my funny walk again.

LEOPOLD: Have no fear Mrs Gigglebottom, I have the perfect cure here. *(Producing a small bottle)* Mr Fixter's Magic Mixture! This potion has the power to heal any aches, pains, sprains, strains, bruises, bumps and bangs.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: Balderdash.

LEOPOLD: Rub some of this on your balderdash and it'll be cleared up in a week.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(Reluctantly taking the bottle)* How much?

LEOPOLD: It normally sells at ten pounds a bottle but for you can have one for five.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: This better not be one of your cons, Leopold.

LEOPOLD: What are you saying? I wouldn't cheat one of our own – I have scruples you know.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: Well don't stand so close to me then. *(Handing over a fiver)* Here.

Mrs Gigglebottom hobbles off, glugging the bottle's contents.

HERNIA: What was in that bottle?

LEOPOLD: Pond water, honey and food dye.

HERNIA: (*Snatching the fiver*) I'll take that!

LEOPOLD: (*Annoyed*) Hey!

HERNIA: Share and share alike.

LEOPOLD: What have you ever given me?

HERNIA: I gave you a cold last month.

Enter Hercules Hurricane, carrying a large crate. He is the lumbering, slow-witted circus strong man. Hernia approaches him.

HERNIA: Hercules . . .

HERCULES: Yes Miss Swindell?

HERNIA: I want you to help put the big top up before you do anything else.

HERCULES: Righto.

HERNIA: Then you can set up the rows of seating.

HERCULES: Righto.

HERNIA: After that you can shift those sacks of sawdust.

HERCULES: Righto.

HERNIA: Why do you keep saying 'righto'?

LEOPOLD: Because your standing on his right toe.

HERNIA: Oh for goodness sake! Why didn't you say something? Clear off and get on with your jobs.

Exit Hercules, limping. Enter Mayor Rufus Bluster and his secretary, Miss Crumble. He is pompous and overbearing, she is fussy and birdlike.

BLUSTER: (*Addressing the Swindells*) Er . . . excuse me! I'd like to speak to whoever is in charge of this circus.

LEOPOLD: Then look no further mister, for that would be me.

HERNIA: Us.

LEOPOLD: Allow me to introduce myself, I am Leopold Swindell . . .

HERNIA: And I'm Hernia Swindell.

LEOPOLD: And we are the proprietors of Swindell's Spectacular Circus, high quality entertainment at a ridiculously low price. How many tickets do you want?

BLUSTER: I'm not here to purchase tickets, sir. I am Rufus Bluster, Mayor of Sleepy Head . . .

CRUMBLE: And a pillar of the local community.

BLUSTER: Thank you Miss Crumble. And I am here in my official capacity, as representative of the town council . . .

LEOPOLD: To welcome us to your charming neighbourhood.

BLUSTER: I'm afraid not, sir, quite the opposite. I am here to instruct you to vacate our town at your earliest convenience. With all due respect, you are not welcome here.

LEOPOLD: Now look here, mister . . .

BLUSTER: I am the Mayor, and you will refer to me as such.

LEOPOLD: Now look here Such, we have every right to earn a living.

BLUSTER: Not without permission.

HERNIA: Our big top is being set up on common ground.

CRUMBLE: You need to apply for a permit.

LEOPOLD: Where does it say that? Show me where that's written down.

CRUMBLE: We are a peaceful, law abiding community.

LEOPOLD: What are you saying exactly?

BLUSTER: To be blunt, we are saying that we don't want you here disrupting the status quo. We don't want any trouble from your sort.

HERNIA: Our sort? How dare you! I'm a lady of refinement and gentility so keep your gob shut or I'll give you a smack around the ear.

BLUSTER: That was a threat! Miss Crumble, take down everything they say.

HERNIA: (*Pointing to Mayor Bluster*) His trousers!

CRUMBLE: There is no need to be coarse.

LEOPOLD: Listen Mayor Bluster, we're not going anywhere so you might as well get used to it.

BLUSTER: Is that your final word, sir?

LEOPOLD: It is. We are not going to budge.

BLUSTER: We shall see about that.

SCENE TWO: CATNAP LANE

FRONT CLOTH: A winding country lane with overgrown bramble and rosehip hedges twisting around the occasional old, gnarled tree. There is a wooden signpost with three arms signalling the direction of Sleepy Head Town Square, Beetlefoot Forest and Much Snoring-in-the-Meadow.

Stella Spangle, one of the snooty trapeze sisters, is standing, filing her nails. Enter Alfredo Blade, an aging, short-sighted knife thrower followed by his weary and well-bandaged assistant, Flossie Flinch.

STELLA: *(To Alfredo)* Ah, I'm glad I've seen you. Remember that two pounds I loaned you?

ALFREDO: Yes, I remember it well. I lost it on the gee-gees.

STELLA: Well can I have it back now please? I need to buy some new lipstick.

ALFREDO: Oh, I'm broke at the moment. Wait a minute though, I might be able to sort it. *(To Flossie)* Can you lend me two pounds please?

FLOSSIE: *(Handing over a pound to Alfredo)* I haven't got two pounds but I can lend you a pound.

ALFREDO: Ta very much. That'll help. *(To Stella)* Now, I owe you two pounds; here's a pound of it and I still owe you a pound.

Alfredo hands the pound to Stella and exits. Enter Mrs Gigglebottom.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(To Stella)* I'm glad I've caught you. You owe me two pounds and I need it. Can you pay me?

STELLA: Well I haven't got two pounds but here is a pound and I'll still owe you a pound.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: I suppose that'll have to do.

Stella hands the pound over and exits as Alfredo returns.

ALFREDO: Ah there you are! I want you.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: What's the matter?

ALFREDO: You owe me two pounds and I need it.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: I've only got a pound. *(Handing the pound to Alfredo)* You can have that and I'll still owe you a pound.

ALFREDO: Better than nothing. Thanks! *(To Stella as she re-enters)* I'm glad you've come back, I owe you a pound, don't I?

STELLA: Yes, that's right.

ALFREDO: Well here it is. *(Handing pound to Stella)* That's you and I square.

STELLA: *(To Mrs Gigglebottom)* I still owe you a pound.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: You certainly do.

STELLA: Here you are. *(Handing over the pound)* That's you and I square.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: *(To Alfredo)* I still owe you a pound, don't I?

ALFREDO: Yep, you sure do.

GIGGLEBOTTOM: Well here it is. *(Handing over the pound)* That's you and I square.

ALFREDO: Remember that pound I borrowed off you?

FLOSSIE: Of course.

ALFREDO: Here it is. *(Hands over the pound)* Now we're all square.

SCENE THREE: THE WITCH'S KITCHEN

FULL SET: The backcloth shows a hearth with a large cauldron over a blazing log fire in the centre of a stone wall. There are some old, rickety shelves and cupboards containing various potion bottles and ingredients for magic spells. In the corners there are mops, buckets and brooms, and maybe an old mangle. The skirting board has several mouse holes in it and there are spider webs hanging from the ceiling. This set can be dressed with a variety of old wooden furniture such as a kitchen table and kitchen chairs.

Enter Dame Hilda Hogwash, a loud, brash, excitable woman with a big heart and a big mouth. She is wearing her overcoat and hat and is carrying a basket of groceries.

HILDA: *(To the audience)* Oh hello there! Let me just catch my breath. *(Bending down and resting her hands on her knees)* Oh dear! I'm absolutely knock . . . er . . . worn out! I'm sweating like a chicken in a stuffing factory. Let me take my coat off.

Dame Hilda removes her coat to reveal an outrageous dress beneath.

HILDA: Do you like my new dress? I've just picked it up in our local supermarket for a ridiculous figure. *(Reacting to audience)* Hey! Watch it! I spotted it while I was in the queue at the butcher's counter. I didn't need any meat, I just wanted to confront my phobia of German sausages – you see I fear the Wurst. Ha, ha! Actually, I did end up buying a sheep's head while I was there. I told the butcher to leave the eyes in, well at least then it might see us through the week! When I got to the check out, something terrible happened. The lady in front of me dropped down dead! She did! Oh, I did feel sorry for her – she'd just bought a bag for life. Anyway, I can't stand here gossiping, I need to sort out my perishables. If the mistress finds me talking to you lot, she'll play merry hell. And believe me you don't want to get on the wrong side of a witch. Yes, that's right, a witch! Who'd have ever thought that I, Dame Hilda Hogwash, would have ended up as a cook and housekeeper for a wicked witch?

Tilly Dilly-Dally bounces in. She is cheerful and cheeky.

HILDA: Hello Tilly.

TILLY: Oh, you're back!

HILDA: What's wrong with my back?

TILLY: No! I mean you've return from the shops.

HILDA: Yes, but I only just made it. I was attacked by this bloke on the way home – he threw milk and yogurt at me.

TILLY: How dairy!

HILDA: Then he threw a lump of mild cheddar at me.

TILLY: That wasn't very mature.

HILDA: I tried to retaliate by throwing a biscuit at him but he ducked down.

TILLY: Jammy dodger.

HILDA: In fact, I think I need a little lie down to get over the shock before I start supper. I'll leave you to get on with your chores.

TILLY: What chores?

HILDA: Very kind of you, I'll have a gin and tonic. Bring it up to me.

Exit Dame Hilda

TILLY: (*Addressing audience*) That's one crazy lady and I love her to bits! She's the nearest thing I've got to a Mum. You see, I lived in an orphanage until I was a teenager when Mistress Hemlock came and brought me back to this place. I've basically lived and worked here ever since. I'm not allowed out much so it gets really boring. Mind you, I'm allowed out more than Rapunzel. She's Mistress Hemlock's niece and she lives here too. She's not allowed to go anywhere! Her Auntie says it's not safe. She sometimes gets really down about it but I keep her smiling by doing loads of daft stuff. I get told off all the time for acting the fool. I hate getting told off. Hey! Maybe you lot can help me out? Every time I come on and shout, 'Hi Guys!' You can shout back, 'Don't be silly, Tilly!' And that'll help me remember to be as sensible as I can. Let's have a practice.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

TILLY: (*To the audience*) That's great everyone! Do it like that every time.

Enter Dame Hilda in her cook's outfit.

HILDA: Right Tilly Dilly-Dally, it's time for us to cook supper. I'm going to make sausage pie. You can knead the pastry while I fetch the sausages.

While Dame Hilda gets the sausages, Tilly puts a lump of dough on the table, climbs up on to the table and kneels up and down in the dough.

HILDA: (*Noticing*) What are you doing?

TILLY: I'm kneading the dough.

HILDA: Not like that! Here, let me show you. (*Kneading the dough*) Like this.

TILLY: You're so good with your hands. Speaking of which, how did you get on flirting with that supermarket manager?

HILDA: Do you know, he hardly even noticed me!

TILLY: Why don't you wear something a little more revealing next time?

HILDA: Oh no! You don't show them the canapés until you're ready to serve the main course. *(Returning to the pastry)* Right that should do it. Now where are my sausages?

Dame Hilda grabs her string of sausages off the table and walks away with them. Tilly is leaning on the other end of the sausages and they stretch.

HILDA: *(Realising)* Hey! Get off my sausages will you!

Tilly lifts his hand and the sausages ping towards Dame Hilda.

HILDA: Ok, we need to put the sausages into the pie dish and then cover them with the pastry.

Dame Hilda puts the sausages into the dish and one of them stands upright. As she pushes it down another sausage on the other side of the dish rises up. Tilly pushes this one down and the first one comes up again. They carry on with this business until Dame Hilda bashes the sausages down with a rolling pin.

HILDA: Quickly, put the pastry on top of them before one of them escapes. Now we've made the pie we need to wash it with egg for a glaze.

TILLY: *(Holding up an egg)* Here's an egg.

HILDA: Good. Now beat it.

Tilly begins to exit.

HILDA: Where are you going?

TILLY: You told me to beat it.

HILDA: I didn't mean beat it, you fool! *(Handing Tilly a whisk)* I meant beat the egg with a whisk.

TILLY: Well why didn't you say so?

Tilly hits the egg with the whisk and it smashes on the table, making a mess.

HILDA: What do you think you're doing, Tilly? Look at the mess you've made!

TILLY: I'm sorry, I got carried away.

HILDA: You'll get carried away on a hospital stretcher if you don't watch it.

TILLY: I'm very, very, very sorry, Dame Hilda. I'll clear it up immediately if not sooner. *(Wiping the smashed egg off the table into his hand)* You're angry with me aren't you?

HILDA: Well what do you expect?

TILLY: Please don't be angry with me. Let's be friends again.

HILDA: I don't know about that.

TILLY: Please. Friends again?

HILDA: Oh, go on then, friends again.

TILLY: Shake on it.

Tilly offers Dame Hilda his hand, which is full of the eggy mess and they shake. She laughs as Hilda screams. Enter Mistress Grimelda Hemlock, a selfish, vain witch with a cold heart and striking good looks. She is followed by a young, beautiful woman with long plaited golden hair.

GRIMELDA: (*Sharply*) What are you two layabouts doing this time? Up to no good I shouldn't wonder.

HILDA: Good evening Mistress, we were just preparing tonight's supper.

GRIMELDA: That's not what it sounded like; screaming and laughing.

RAPUNZEL: I think they were just having a bit of fun, Aunt Grimelda.

GRIMELDA: They are not here to have fun, Rapunzel. They're here to work, they are our servants.

RAPUNZEL: And our friends.

GRIMELDA: They are not friends of mine. I don't have any friends. I don't want friends.

TILLY: (*Under his breath*) That's lucky.

GRIMELDA: Friends are more trouble than they're worth.

RAPUNZEL: Don't you ever get lonely?

GRIMELDA: No, and I know where this is going so don't even start.

RAPUNZEL: What do you mean?

GRIMELDA: You were about to say how lonely you are and how bored you are and how you long to see the world.

RAPUNZEL: Well I am lonely and bored and longing to see the world.

GRIMELDA: Tough!

RAPUNZEL: Oh, please Aunt Grimelda! Let me go. Set me free to explore. The world is such a wonderful place and I want to see it.

GRIMELDA: The world is also a dangerous and unpredictable place. I made a promise to your parents to keep you safe and that is exactly what I am doing.

HILDA: We could take her on a day trip somewhere. How about Skeggy?

TILLY: Oh yes! I like the seaside. We could have a donkey ride.

HILDA: Get an ice cream . . .

GRIMELDA: (*Interrupting*) For the last time, Rapunzel is not going anywhere. And if you two buffoons don't stop encouraging her, I'll turn you both into worms and feed you to the crows.

RAPUNZEL: But I'll never live a full and exciting life if I'm trapped in this tower forever!

GRIMELDA: I'm afraid that's something you'll just have to get used to. I need to keep an eye on you so you don't come to any harm. Besides I like having you around – your youthful energy revitalises me and keeps me young.

TILLY: *(To Grimelda)* How old are you?

GRIMELDA: You should never ask a lady her age.

TILLY: Ok, how much do you weigh?

GRIMELDA: You really are a broken pencil.

TILLY: Eh?

GRIMELDA: Pointless.

Grimelda sweeps out of the room, cackling. Rapunzel is downcast.

HILDA: *(Comforting Rapunzel)* Try not to get too down hearted, dear. Shall I put the kettle on and make us a nice cup of tea? That'll cheer you up.

RAPUNZEL: I need freedom not tea, Dame Hilda. The only thing that will cheer me up is when I escape from this place. I want to discover all the wonderful places I've read about in my books.

TILLY: Well when you do get out of here, don't forget to take me with you. I want to travel the world too.

HILDA: And make sure you don't leave me behind either.

MUSICAL NUMBER – *Rapunzel, Tilly & Dame Hilda.*