

ONCE UPON A GRAPEVINE

By Thomas Hischak

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ISBN: 1-60003-429-2

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CHARACTERS

(6 - 19 Females, 2 - 12 Males)

Little Red	Dwarf 1 (Shorty)*
Wolf	Dwarf 2*
Grandmother	Dwarf 3*
Woodsman	Dwarf 4*
Stepmother	Dwarf 5*
Cinderella	Dwarf 6*
Stepsister 1	Snow White
Stepsister 2	Mother Pig
Witch	Pig 1*
Rapunzel	Pig 2*
Squirty the Dwarf*	Pig 3*

*can be played by male or female performers

DOUBLING PLAN

(for a cast of 9 Females and 5 Males)

FEMALES

Little Red
Grandmother
Stepmother
Stepsister 1/Mama Pig
Stepsister 2/Snow White
Cinderella/Dwarf 1
Witch/Dwarf 2
Rapunzel/Dwarf 4
Pig 2/Dwarf 6

MALES

Wolf
Woodsman
Squirty
Dwarf 3
Pig 1/Dwarf 5

PLACE

A fairy tale forest

TIME

Once upon a time

FURNITURE AND PROPERTIES

FOR RED

Basket with cloth, treats inside

FOR WOODSMAN

Axe

COTTAGE FURNITURE

Table

Three stools

Bed

COTTAGE PROPS

Tea pot

Three cups

Plates

Pillow

Blanket

CINDERELLA FURNITURE

Two stools

CINDERELLA PROPS

Nail polish

Bucket

Scrub brush

RAPUNZEL FURNITURE

One chair

SNOW WHITE FURNITURE

One stool

SNOW WHITE PROP

Large storybook

COSTUME PLOT

WOLF - dark suit and tie, top hat with fur ears

RED - white knee-length dress, red cape with hood

GRANDMOTHER - long white nightgown, white cap

WOODSMAN - overalls, plaid flannel shirt

STEPMOTHER - elaborate maroon full-length period dress

STEPSISTER 1 - less elaborate yellow full-length period dress

STEPSISTER - similar purple full-length period dress

CINDERELLA - simple and worn blue dress with white apron

WITCH - black dress, cape, pointed hat

RAPUNZEL - elegant white full-length period dress, long hair piece

SQUIRTY & OTHER DWARFS - rough brown tunics, dark tights, brown hats

SNOW WHITE - simple yellow period dress, white apron

MAMA PIG - simple pink dress, white apron, plastic pig nose

3 LITTLE PIGS - overalls, blue work shirts, plastic pig noses

PRODUCTION NOTES

An open stage works best and if there is any scenery it ought to suggest a forest. Simple pieces of furniture and props are set up by the characters in the forest. Costumes should suggest a fairy tale world without being too elaborate. The animal characters are stylized using plastic pig noses and perhaps fur ears on a cap for the wolf. A recurring musical theme is heard at the beginning and end of each sequence.

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The musical theme is heard as LITTLE RED skips in on one side and the WOLF enters on the opposite side. SHE wears her traditional red cape and hood and carries a basket. THEY meet center and the music stops. BOTH act very sophisticated and overly civilized.

RED: Mr. Wolf, what an unexpected pleasure!

WOLF: My sentiments exactly, Little Miss Red! A pleasant surprise to run across a friendly face in this rather unseemly part of the forest.

RED: Yes. I was quite prepared to endure a lonely walk to my grandmother's cottage. It is such an out of the way place, you know.

WOLF: Rather. Almost desolate.

RED: Exactly. So I am delighted to see you, Mr. Wolf.

WOLF: The delight is all mine. I confess I was rather in a blue mood and thought a stroll in the forest would do the trick. But I found that my solitude was far from satisfying so it is with great relief, not to say joy, to run across a charming person such as yourself.

RED: You are too kind.

WOLF: And may I inquire how your grandmother is doing these days?

RED: You certainly may, Mr. Wolf. She is quite the same. That is to say, no better or no worse. She hardly ever goes out and my weekly visits to bring her these simple but well-meaning goodies are the only bright moments in her life.

WOLF: Such a fortunate soul to have such a caring granddaughter, I must say.

RED: Oh, it is nothing of consequence. Besides it gives me a chance to wear my favorite piece of attire, my red riding cape and hood.

WOLF: And a very becoming outfit it is, if I may venture an opinion.

RED: I'm so glad you like it. I know red may be a bit, as they say, tres gauche. But it is my favorite color so I will risk comment and wear it as I like.

WOLF: Very noble of you, Little Miss Red. I admire your spirit.

RED: I have just had a rather excellent idea, Mr. Wolf.

WOLF: Pray tell, what is it?

RED: Why don't you accompany me to my grandmother's cottage and then stay and join us for a humble but nourishing repast?

WOLF: Oh, I would not dare to intrude –

RED: Nonsense. Grandmother would be delighted with the company. She used to be such a social person before she retreated to her seclusion in the forest.

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 5

WOLF: If you don't think it would be an imposition . . . ?

RED: Certainly not. And while we travel you can entertain me with one of those delectable stories you are so known for.

WOLF: You flatter me! They are nothing. I only aim to give modest pleasure.

RED: Your story about the time you dined with the Duchess is quite droll. You must repeat it for grandmother.

WOLF: Only if you insist.

RED: I do. Now let us be on our way. If I am very late it causes no little distress on grandmother's part.

WOLF: Then let us proceed without delay.

RED: To grandmother's house!

WOLF: To grandmother's house!

(The musical theme returns and the two cross the stage a few times while the cottage is set up at the center of the stage. All that is needed is a table with three stools and a narrow bed near by. GRANDMOTHER wears a long white nightgown, a shawl, and a cap on her head. SHE sits at one of the stools and RED and the WOLF join her and sit at the other two. The music stops.)

So then I said to the Duchess, "My, what a lovely silver tea set you have!" And she said to me, "Why, Mr. Wolf, all the better to see your reflection!" *(ALL three laugh)* Then the Duchess offered me more tea cakes and I said, "My, what luscious looking tea cakes you have!" And she said, "Well, all the better to fill your wolf-like appetite!" *(ALL three laugh.)* Oh, the Duchess is so witty!

GRANDMOTHER: My, but that is hilarious! *(continues laughing)*

RED: Didn't I tell you, Grandmother, that Mr. Wolf tells the most entertaining stories?

WOLF: Please, you shall make me blush!

GRANDMOTHER: You really know how to cheer an old girl up, I must say, Mr. Wolf. I am so glad my granddaughter brought you along.

WOLF: The pleasure is all mine.

RED: Everyone have some more Rice Krispie treats. I made them myself.

GRANDMOTHER: Did you, dear? In that case I will indulge myself. Mr. Wolf?

WOLF: I cannot eat another bite. Even my wolf-like appetite has its limits! *(ALL three laugh uproariously.)*

(The WOODSMAN enters carrying an axe. HE peeks into the cottage. HE is friendly and polite.)

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 6

WOODSMAN: Hello, hello!

RED: Why it's the Woodsman!

WOODSMAN: I don't mean to intrude. I was just passing the cottage on my way to town, and I thought I'd stop and see how the old woman was getting on. Then I heard such delightful laughter that I had to come in and see what was going on. Please excuse my curiosity.

GRANDMOTHER: Not at all. I am just having a jolly visit with my granddaughter, Little Red, and she has brought along the delightful Mr. Wolf with her. We have been having a rousing good time.

RED: Won't you join us for some Rice Krispie treats? I made them myself.

WOODSMAN: Thanks awfully, ma'am. You sure do know how to tempt a guy. But I am late in delivering some firewood to the rich lady who lives in the chateau at the edge of town. Thank you all the same for the kind invitation.

WOLF: Perhaps you could bring a Rice Krispie treat or two with you. I would be happy to wrap up a few for your journey.

RED: Such an excellent idea!

WOODSMAN: Oh, you are too kind.

(WOLF and RED wrap up some treats in a cloth and give it to the WOODSMAN.)

GRANDMOTHER: Thank you so much for stopping in, Woodsman. I am always pleased to see a friendly face.

WOODSMAN: It's nothing, ma'am. *(taking the treats)* Thank you again. And good day to you all.

OTHERS: Good day!

(WOODSMAN exits.)

RED: I am so glad there is someone to keep an eye on you, Grandmother. Living all alone in this secluded part of the forest, I worry about you.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, what is there to worry about? Honest, Mr. Wolf, the way my granddaughter talks you'd think I was going to be attacked by some ferocious beast!

(SHE laughs and the WOLF joins her.)

RED: I suppose I am just a silly little thing. I'll say no more. Another cup of tea with your Rice Krispie treats?

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 7

(The music plays and the three of them exit, but the cottage remains set up and will remain so for the rest of the play. At one side of the stage two stools are set up. STEPSISTERS 1 and 2 enter and sit on them as CINDERELLA enters with a pail of water and scrubs the floor nearby. STEPSISTER 1 is painting the toenails of STEPSISTER 2 as the music stops and STEPMOTHER enters with the WOODSMAN who is finishing eating the Rice Krispie treats.)

STEMOTHER: I cannot believe what you say, Woodsman. He was actually sitting and having tea with them?

WOODSMAN: Yes, ma'am.

STEPSISTER 1: Who's that, Mama?

STEPSISTER 2: Who's he talking about?

CINDERELLA: Please tell us.

STEMOTHER: Cinderella!

CINDERELLA: Yes, Stepmother?

STEMOTHER: Shut up.

(CINDERELLA goes back to her scrubbing.)

STEPSISTER 1: Who was having tea with who?

STEPSISTER 2: I want to know!

WOODSMAN: The Wolf.

STEMOTHER: Having tea with that obnoxious brat Little Red and her tiresome grandmother.

STEPSISTER 1: Having tea with a wolf? Yeeech!!

STEPSISTER 2: Now look what you did! You painted my whole toe and not just the nail!

STEPSISTER 1: If you would just sit still!

STEPSISTER 2: Look, Mama! Look what she did!

CINDERELLA: I can wash it off with this. *(holds up her brush)*

STEMOTHER: Cinderella!

CINDERELLA: Yes, Stepmother?

STEMOTHER: Shut up.

(CINDERELLA goes back to her scrubbing.)

WOODSMAN: Yes, I was mighty surprised to see it. I heard this laughing and thought I had better check on the old lady and there he was, the Wolf. He was telling some funny story about the Duchess –

STEMOTHER: What is the world coming to when they invite the Wolf in for tea? Next they'll be asking the three little pigs over for barbecue.

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 8

WOODSMAN: I must say the Wolf was behaving quite civilized. Not the sort of thing you expect from such a beast.

STEPSISTER 1: Maybe he was just pretending to be nice because you were there with your axe.

STEPSISTER 2: Yes! And after you left he pounced on the old lady and gobbled her up then he attacked Little Red and ripped her to pieces!

STEPMOTHER: Serve her right, the hussy.

WOODSMAN: Oh, I don't think so.

STEPMOTHER: What could you possibly know, Woodsman? You can't even deliver my firewood on time.

WOODSMAN: I am sorry about that, ma'am –

STEPMOTHER: Just don't let it happen again.

STEPSISTER 1: There! All done. *(closes bottle of nail polish)*

STEPSISTER 2: Oh, I love purple! What do you think, Mama?

STEPMOTHER: Too cheap looking. I told you to try the silver nail polish.

STEPSISTER 2: But I like purple!

STEPSISTER 1: I don't know what difference it makes. Once you put on your shoes no one can see what color it is anyway.

STEPSISTER 2: Well, someday I hope to buy a pair of glass slippers. Then everyone will see!

STEPSISTER 1: Oh, that would be nice!

STEPMOTHER: Glass slippers! Honestly, sometimes you girls are a trial to me.

CINDERELLA: I think the purple is very becoming.

STEPMOTHER: Cinderella!

CINDERELLA: Yes, Stepmother?

STEPMOTHER & STEPSISTERS: Shut up!

(Music plays and ALL exit except the STEPMOTHER who crosses to the other side of the stage where a chair is set and RAPUNZEL stands on it. She has long hair. The WITCH enters and meets up with the STEPMOTHER to converse in front of the chair.)

RAPUNZEL: *(a half-hearted plea)* Help. Someone save me . . .

WITCH: The Wolf, you say?

STEPMOTHER: Right there in the cottage. It's a wonder that snotty Little Red and her looney grandmother were not eaten alive!

WITCH: How did the Wolf get in the cottage? Surely the old woman knows better than to open the door to strangers.

STEPMOTHER: It was Red. He got in with Little Red!

RAPUNZEL: Help. Someone save me . . .

WITCH: Be quiet, Rapunzel. No one can hear you. Stop that racket and go and brush your hair.

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 9

RAPUNZEL: Help. Someone save me . . .

STEPMOTHER: I heard it from the Woodsman himself. Evidently the Wolf followed Red to the cottage.

WITCH: He's a sly one, all right.

STEPMOTHER: Then when they were having tea he managed to worm his way in.

WITCH: You don't say!

RAPUNZEL: Help. Someone save me . . .

(The three of them freeze. RED and GRANDMOTHER enter and sit at the cottage table. The WOLF enters. THEY are all a little less polite than before.)

WOLF: Having a cozy little tea, I see. How sweet. How domestic. How appetizing.

RED: What are you doing here, Mr. Wolf?

WOLF: Just checking up on the old lady. Someone's got to keep an eye on her. Who knows what kind of mischief may come her way.

GRANDMOTHER: I don't need any Wolf to take care of me. I've got my granddaughter, Little Red, here.

RED: And there's a Woodsman in the forest who checks up on Grandmama. So thank you very much, Mr. Wolf, but we don't need you.

WOLF: Now is that a way to talk to a surprise guest? One would think you weren't happy to see me.

GRANDMOTHER: It's no business of yours what makes us happy. Good day, Mr. Wolf.

WOLF: But just look at those delicious Rice Krispie treats. *(comes over to the table)* Your own special recipe, old girl?

GRANDMOTHER: My granddaughter made them. And they are hardly on the diet for a Wolf!

WOLF: True. Rice Krispie treats never seems to show up on the food chain. All the same, I am rather hungry and one cannot be too particular in situations such as these.

RED: Here. Take two of them and be on your way!

WOLF: Eat and run? That would not be polite. *(sits at the table with them)* Besides, I am also thirsty and a cup of tea would go very nicely with a few Rice Krispie treats.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, you are insufferable! *(pours him some tea)* Drink up and then be gone!

WOLF: Hmmmm. *(chews)* Very good, Red. Crunchy without being too gooey. *(drinks)* And the tea is just strong enough. As I was saying to the Duchess when I had tea with her last week, I said "My, what

yummy tea cakes you have!” And do you know what she said to me?

RED: No.

WOLF: She said, “The better to keep you from eating me!” (*laughs; the other two do not join him*) So witty, the Duchess.

RED: You’re finished. You can go now.

WOLF: The problem is, these tasty little treats are more an appetizer than an entree. Don’t you agree? They leave you wanting something more . . . substantial.

GRANDMOTHER: Well, there’s no more food in the house. So get!

WOLF: Oh, but Grandmama, how wrong you are. (*stands up*) I believe there are two wonderful entrees right before my eyes!

GRANDMOTHER & RED: What?

(*The WOODSMAN enters with his axe, a bit more rough than earlier.*)

WOODSMAN: What’s all this, then? A Wolf in the house! Not the usual thing. Are you ladies all right?

GRANDMOTHER & RED: We . . . ! We . . . !

WOLF: I was just leaving! Good day, ladies. Thanks for the tea. Gotta run! (*runs off*)

WOODSMAN: What was that all about?

GRANDMOTHER: He . . . he . . . (*faints to the floor*)

RED: Oh, Grandmama!!

(*Light down on the cottage and up on the WITCH and STEPMOTHER. RED, WOODSMAN and GRANDMOTHER exit.*)

STPMOTHER: If the Woodsman had not shown up at that moment, those two fools would have been dinner!

WITCH: Fools, indeed! To be tricked by a Wolf like that!

RAPUNZEL: Help. Someone save me . . .

WITCH: Be quiet, Rapunzel. Your hair needs brushing. (*to STEPMOTHER*) That’s quite a story.

STPMOTHER: It’s no story. It’s the truth! The Woodsman told me so himself.

WITCH: Well, he ought to know. Come into the kitchen. I’ve got something brewing on the stove. Just a little something you might want to take home to the girls.

STPMOTHER: Is it foul tasting?

WITCH: Of course!

STPMOTHER: Then I’ll feed it to Cinderella. (*exits with WITCH*)

RAPUNZEL: Help. Someone save me . . . Anyone. Anyone at all. Preferably a tall person. Or someone with a ladder. Help . . .

(SQUIRTY the dwarf enters and stands near the chair. SQUIRTY could play the scene on his/her knees, looking up to RAPUNZEL standing on the chair.)

SQUIRTY: Are you talking to me?

RAPUNZEL: Who is it? Is someone there?

SQUIRTY: Down here. Wow. What long hair you have.

RAPUNZEL: Wow. What short legs you have.

SQUIRTY: That's because I'm a dwarf. I'm one of the famous seven dwarfs.

RAPUNZEL: I've heard of you! Which one are you? Squinty? Pudgy? Flopsy?

SQUIRTY: I'm Squirty. They call me that because I'm so short. Which makes no sense because the other seven are just as short.

RAPUNZEL: But I need a tall person. A very tall person. To help me escape from this tower where my mother the Witch has imprisoned me!

SQUIRTY: Sorry.

RAPUNZEL: Do you happen to have a ladder on you?

SQUIRTY: I don't think so.

RAPUNZEL: Just my luck. I guess I will just have to wait for a prince to come and rescue me. A handsome prince. A rich and handsome prince. A tall and rich and handsome prince. Preferably one with a ladder.

SQUIRTY: Good luck. *(starts to exit)*

RAPUNZEL: Wait!

(SQUIRTY stops.)

Do you want to hear a true story?

SQUIRTY: Is it about dwarfs and witches and stuff?

RAPUNZEL: No.

SQUIRTY: Good. I'm tired of those true stories.

RAPUNZEL: This is about a Wolf and Little Red and her grandmother.

And it's true! I heard from the lady who heard it from the Woodsman.

SQUIRTY: Sounds good to me.

RAPUNZEL: It all started this morning in the forest not far from here.

(THEY freeze and the WOLF and RED enter from the other side of the stage. Neither are very polite now.)

WOLF: Hi there, Little Red. What's your hurry?

RED: Mr. Wolf! You startled me!

WOLF: That's what all the girls say. Where you off to?

Once Upon a Grapevine – Page 12

RED: I'm going to my Grandma's cottage in the forest. I've got a basket of Rice Krispie treats to bring her.

WOLF: Meals on Wheels, eh?

RED: And I don't have time to stop and talk because she is expecting me soon and I am late as it is.

WOLF: Don't let me hold you up.

RED: Thank you.

WOLF: I'll just come along with you.

RED: Well . . .

WOLF: You don't want to walk through this forest alone, do you? There are some dangerous critters out there. I'll keep you company.

RED: I guess it's okay. But we've got to hurry!

WOLF: I'm right behind you!

(THEY exit and GRANDMOTHER enters the cottage and gets in the bed.)

SQUIRTY: She didn't run away from the Wolf? What's the matter with this girl?

RAPUNZEL: It gets better.

(RED and WOLF enter and stop outside the cottage.)

RED: This is Grandma's cottage. Thank you, Mr. Wolf. Good day.

WOLF: Wait a minute, Red. Aren't you going to invite me in?

RED: I don't think I should.

WOLF: That was quite a hike through the forest and I could sure use one of those Rice Krispie treats to tide me over until dinner.

RED: Well . . . Here take one. Goodbye!

(RED rushes into the cottage while the WOLF remains outside eating the treat.)

GRANDMOTHER: Who is it? Help! Help!

RED: It's me, Grandma. Little Red.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh, you gave me such a fright. You can't be too careful these days. *(gets out of bed)* Give your old Grandma a hug.

(THEY embrace.)

RED: Look what I brought you!

GRANDMOTHER: Something to eat? Terrific. I'm starved. Anything but those goopy . . . *(opens the basket; disappointed)* Rice Krispie treats.

RED: I made them myself.

GRANDMOTHER: You always do, dear. I'm not hungry right now. I'll save them for later.

RED: Grandma, I saw Mr. Wolf on my way here.

GRANDMOTHER: Wolf! I hope he didn't see you.

RED: He did. And he followed me here.

GRANDMOTHER: What!

RED: He wanted to come in but I didn't let him.

GRANDMOTHER: The Wolf followed you here! To my house!

RED: It's only a cottage.

GRANDMOTHER: Lock the door! Quick!

WOLF: *(entering the cottage)* Surprise!

RED: What do you want now? More Rice Krispie treats?

WOLF: That was just the appetizer. I've come for the main entree!

GRANDMOTHER: Help! Help!

RED: I don't think Grandma is happy to see you, Mr. Wolf. You had better leave right away.

WOLF: But I've come for dinner. Even though you forgot to invite me.

GRANDMOTHER: Help! Help!

RED: Now you've got Grandma all upset.

WOLF: My, Grandma, what a loud voice you have.

GRANDMOTHER: The better to yell for help. HELP!

WOLF: As I was saying to the Duchess just the other day –

RED: Help!

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