

# **JUST WILLIAM'S LUCK**

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **RICHMAL CROMPTON**

ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY **JONATHAN MASSEY & MATTHEW BARNES**

DOUGLAS/ROBERT/PETWORTH/DETECTIVE  
GINGER/ETHEL/TONKS  
HENRY/MR. BROWN/HOBBS/BOSS  
VIOLET ELIZABETH/MRS. BROWN/GLORIA GAYE  
WILLIAM BROWN

**DAVEY LIAS**  
**THOMAS GUTTRIDGE**  
**GREG ARUNDELL**  
**LOUISE WALLER**  
**JONATHAN MASSEY**

DEvised BY **THE COMPANY**

COSTUME DESIGN BY **EMILY MORLEY**

PRODUCED BY **MATTHEW BARNES, TIM VAUGHN, JONATHAN MASSEY, SAMUEL JOHNSON & JONATHAN SIDDAL**

/ - interrupting

\_ - narration directly from the original text

() - stage directions - not final, merely ideas

*An old barn. Dilapidated wooden crates, packing cases and various bits of farming equipment litter the stage, organised in a rough semi circle. Strewn amongst the rough hay around them are seemingly random objects, some of which look as though they have carefully “borrowed” from unknowing relatives or fashioned lovingly by rather unskilled hands. An old lectern stands to one side with a handwritten notice pinned to the front reading “Theatur.”*

*Four grubby boys can, sadly, be seen hiding quite unsuccessfully behind some of the boxes. They are WILLIAM, GINGER, DOUGLAS and HENRY, but are known collectively as THE OUTLAWS.*

*(WILLIAM walks on stage and fumbles about with his hands in his pockets trying to look nonchalant)*

**William:** Oh hello, erm... yes. I am him... Laurence...O-Oliver. That's right. I only look like a boy because I'm in costume for my next role. I'm the most important person in the play I'm in... which is this one. I've got lots and lots of lines and long famous speeches that go on for pages and pages and hardly ever stop. So... stop rustlin' about, an' if you've got any sweets send em up the front - because famous actors like I am, they - need things like that to keep em' actin' well/

**Ginger:** *(whispering from the “wings”)* /William! The time!

**William:** Right! Gosh! It's a long story and I've only got an hour... actc'lly, Ginger kind of spoiled the ending -which was going to be a jolly big shock- I'm actually William Brown... I 'spect you've heard of me; or you will after this! Me and the Outlaws are playing all the parts actu'lly -even ourselves!- we made the costumes an' all the scenery... it's quite good really, prob'ly a jolly sight better than what you get in Lundun, - I 'spect they'll hear about us all over the world!

**Henry:** Peru!

**Douglas:** Mongolia!

**Ginger:** Plymouth!

**William:** Ssssh! It's about us and our adventure - and' it's a fine play, if I don't say so myself...

Right, I s'pose I'll start...William Brown! thats me. Stood in The Old Barn, brandishing a bread knife (he holds bread knife up and smiles) Henry, one of his boon companions sat on an upturned packing case. (HENRY sits) Douglas another boon companions sat on the floor (DOUGLAS sits) Ginger (GINGER makes a move) the fourth of the quartet known collectively as “The Outlaws” - had not yet arrived!

*(GINGER realising his mistake, apologetically exits. WILLIAM walks on to the stage and takes his first position. They are all listening to him tell a rather muddled story)*

**William:** Well, then this man called Arthur, Found this sword called ex-ex-excelsior, well, he found this sword called excelsior stuck in a solid rock. Like this...

*(WILLIAM quickly abducts two bricks from the set and puts them together, with the bread knife wedged between them)*

**William:** An' all the others pulled an' pulled an' couldn't get it out an'!

**Douglas:** /What did you say the sword was called?

**William:** Excelsior.

**Douglas:** Why?

**William:** Why what?

**Douglas:** Why was it called Excelsior?

**William:** Well why shouldn't it be?

**Douglas:** Why should it be called anything?

**William:** Well it was! You're called something aren't you?

**Douglas:** Yes, but I'm a boy, not a sword. Boys are called things.

**Henry:** I thought Excelsior was the name of that man in po'try that carried a strange device over a raging torment?

**William:** Look here! Are you going to let me tell this story or aren't you?

**Henry:** Oh, all right, go on.

**William:** *(Ignoring him)* Well, all the others pulled an' pulled an' pulled an' couldn't get it out!

**Douglas:** /You said that before.

**William:** The next time you int'rupt! – Great. I've lost my place now – *(He walks towards the podium in an attempt to start over but gives up)* – you asked me to tell this story didn't you?

**Douglas:** We didn't ask you to go on saying the same thing over and over again (*He pauses*) You might as well call a coal shovel Arthur as a sword.

**William:** The *sword* wasn't called Arthur, the *Man* was called Arthur, the sword was called Excelsior/

**Henry:** /It must have had the same name as this other man I know of, this other man was called Excelsior, 'cause I learnt it once "The shades of night were falling fast an he met an awful avalanche." I forget the rest but it was jolly excitin'!

**William:** /Gosh! Do you want to hear this story?

**Henry:** All right, go on.

**William:** Well all the others pulled and pulled and couldn't get it out. (*DOUGLAS opens his mouth to speak but WILLIAM cuts him off loudly*) An this man Arthur comes along and pulls it out like this. (*WILLIAM walks over to the bread knife. Spits on his hands and then makes a real effort to pull the knife out*) Like this. An they made him king.

**Douglas:** Why?

**William:** What do you mean why?

**Douglas:** Why did they make this excelsior man king?

**William:** It was Arthur they made king, you fat head! They made him king because he pulled this excelsior thing out.

**Douglas:** Looked easy enough, I could've done it.

**William:** Well he did, they made him king and then they started knights.

**Douglas:** What do you mean they started nights? There have been nights and days ever since the world began.

**William:** Don't be a chump. I mean Knights beginning with a G! Same with G-nat and G-naw and... G-nife! He called 'em Knights of the Round Table, an' they went about righting wrongs and rescuing women. It's no use trying to tell you interestin' tales, you havn't any brains.

**Douglas:** Oh havn't we? (*getting up to fight*)

**William:** No you havn't (*Also ready to fight*) If you had any brains, you'd understand an ordin'ry story about a man an a sword like this. You're bats, both of you, that's what you are.

*(They start to fight, rolling around the stage, DOUGLAS wins, kneeling on top of WILLIAM. HENRY, using the breadknife, taps him sharply on the head)*

**Henry:** Arise, Sir Douglas!

**William:** Gosh! You don't seem to know the difference between knightin and executin' Well, you've got no business to go knightin' people, only the king is allowed to knight people.

*(Takes knife off HENRY. WILLIAM and DOUGLAS move to the other side of the stage)*

**Henry:** Well I am king, I am King Henry, it's the same as King Arthur, but with a different name.

**William:** You can't be king.

**Henry:** Why should *you* be king?

**William:** Because I'm King William - an' who pulled the sword out of solid rock? An' who's Ex-spresso is it?

**Douglas:** I thought you said it was Excellciour?

**William:** I know what I mean!

**Henry:** An' anyway - It wasn't solid rock, it was two bricks, an anyone could've done it. You didn't give anyone else a chance.

*(A high pitched dog bark sounds offstage)*

**Douglas:** Someone's comin'!

**William:** Action stations!

*(HENRY and WILLIAM take defensive positions facing towards an invisible door at the back of the stage - as though waiting for an imminent attack of some kind that may come at any moment)*

**Henry:** Hold on. It's a girl!

**William:** Urgh... It isn't even a girl... It's Violet Elizabeth Bott.

*(HENRY, DOUGLAS and WILLIAM groan)*

**Douglas:** *(Gesturing towards a yet unseen character of their creation that is supposed to emerge. The sound of monstrous footsteps are heard, as this fabricated beast approaches)*

Violet Elizabeth was a child of six, with a dominating personality, a ruthless will and a misleadingly wins/ome

*(The real VIOLET E. enters from her seat in the audience. She's been waiting, unbeknownst to the others, in uncharacteristic silence the whole time. Longing for a chance to impose herself onto the proceedings and eating a bag of sweets)*

**William:** Wait! Wait! Stop the show.

**Douglas:** What are *you* doing here?

**Violet:** I am Violet Elizabeth.

**William:** Well, we've got a Violet Elizabeth so go away.

*(He gestures towards GINGER who has walked on, unhappily, with a mop head in lieu of a wig on his head and a sheet draped around him. He holds a crude and rather offensively drawn mask)*

**Violet:** But I've come thee you, William.

**William:** Well now you've come you can go away again.

**Violet:** But I don't want to, I want to thtay here and be in your play. My mummy sayth that I have the clearetht diction and best vocabulary when reading at thcool.

**William:** *(Dismissing her)* You can't play Violet Elizabeth, you're a girl.

**Violet:** Thath's no reason...

**Ginger:** ...Well actually, William - it wouldn't be a bad idea for Violet Elizabeth to play...Violet Elizabeth.

**Henry:** And there are quite a lot of characters in the play. Including Ginger. It would be a jolly sight easier for Ginger to play Ginger and Violet Elizabeth to play Violet Elizabeth.

**Douglas:** *(Aside to WILLIAM)* It's alright, she'll prob'ly fall in the breach.

**William:** What?

**Douglas:** The breach. My father told me once. There was this famous Shakespeare actor in London who got sick once and couldn't go on stage, so he said this other actor then "stepped into the breach" - which prob'ly hurt a lot. Well, she's smaller, so she'll prob'ly fall in and we can leave her there.

*(WILLIAM turns back to VIOLET ELIZABETH)*

**William:** Well...fine. But *if* you are in this play, you have to do as I say.

**Violet:** Yeth, William.

**William:** I am the director and master playwright.

**Violet:** Yeth, William.

*(VIOLET E takes the mask from GINGER who leaves to get ready for his actual entrance. She looks at it, pulls a face and flings it off to one side of the stage)*

**William:** So you should just stand over there – no a bit further. And don't you even dare think of stealin' the scene. Right. Back to the play - where were we?

**Ginger:** We want to be Gnites of the round table. Violet Elizabeth tries to mess it all up, as usual.

*(There is a short awkward pause and nods of agreement are exchanged, before she leaps into "the part" with gusto)*

**Violet:** I'll be a lady knight then.

**William:** No you won't, 'cause there weren't any.

**Violet:** There would be if I wath one.

**William:** They were *knights* I tell you, and knights means *men*, you couldn't do the things knights did anyway.

**Henry:** They went about rescuing damsels in distress.

**Violet:** I'll be a damthel in distreth then shall I, and then you can rethcue me?

**William:** Well, we jolly well don't want to rescue you.

**Violet:** Why not?

**William:** 'Cause we don't, that's why not.

**Violet:** If you haven't got any damthilth in distreth to rethcue, then you can't be knights.

**William:** Stop talkin' and go away.

**Violet:** Alright... well. if I can't be a lady knight, and I can't be a damsel in distress then I'll thcream and thcream and thcream, till I'm sthick - and I can.

*(THE OUTLAWS look at each other, defeated. They know she can... )*

**Henry:** ...We'd better let her William, if she starts screaming someone will hear and come along and make a row, they always do.

**Violet:** Can I be a lady knight, William?

**William:** ... Yes. But we jolly well don't want you - remember that.

**Violet:** I'm a lady knight! I'm a lady knight!*(repeats)*

**Henry:** *(interrupting)* Suddenly, Douglas, who was standing near the door gave a shout.

**Douglas:** Look who's coming down the lane!

**Henry:** William and Henry ran to join him in the doorway.

**William:** It's Ginger!

**Henry:** said William.

**Douglas:** On a bicycle!

**Henry:** ...said Douglas. The figure turned at the open gate, and made it's way across the field towards the old barn. Then, in an excess of self-confidence and exultation, it took it's hands from the handle-bars and zigzagged wildly to the open doorway. There was a shout, a crash, and the bicycle and its rider rolled to the ground. Lying there several feet apart.

*(The narrated scene is played out as it is read. GINGER enters holding a set of handlebars. WILLIAM and DOUGLAS scramble around the set and procure "wheels" which they position*

*appropriately to become "The Bike" - VIOLET ELIZABETH soon eagerly follows with the seat.  
The group all work in unison to portray it's narrated journey)*

**William:** Gosh! - it's a beauty!

**Douglas:** The mudguard's a bit bent. But that's all.

**Henry:** You are an idiot, you might have smashed the whole thing!

**Ginger:** I might be dead for all you seem to care.

**William:** Well you deserve to be! Fooling about with a brilliant bike like this!

**Douglas:** It's got a three speed gear!

**Henry:** And look at these boxing gloves!

**Douglas:** Look at it's tires!

**Ginger:** I believe I've broken my neck...

**William:** Well, the bike isn't broken and that's all that matters.

**Ginger:** Leave it alone!

**Henry:** Whose is it?

**Ginger:** It's mine (*taking the boxing gloves off HENRY*) Those are mine too.

**Douglas:** You'll get in a row if someone finds you've taken them.

**Ginger:** I tell you there mine! My brother gave them me.

**All:** Your brother?

**Douglas:** Is he dying? I once read a tale about a man what was dying? And he gave all his things away and then he got better and wanted em' back.

**Ginger:** No! He's getting married.

**William:** But why's he givin' you them?

**Ginger:** Someone's givin' him a motorbike for a weddin' present, so he doesn't want an old push bike.

**Henry:** And what about the boxing gloves?

**Ginger:** She doesn't like violence.

**Douglas:** Who doesn't?

**Ginger:** The girl he's marry'n. She doesn't take interest in anythin' sensible. She wasn't even interested in that dead rat we found and it was a smashin' one.

**William:** Fancy people marryin 'em! ...girls not rats.

**Violet:** Hello, Ginger you did make a futh about falling off your bithcle, I did see a real accident once with real blood and ambulance.

**Ginger:** Whats *she* doing here?

**Violet:** I'm a lady knight.

**Ginger:** What's are you talking about?

**William:** Well, we're knights of the round table. Tell you what, we'll have that -and it's square, (*finds a square chest table, that VIOLET E. is sitting on*) so we'll be knights of the square table (*To VIOLET E. whilst pushing her off*) and they didn't sit on it either.

**Henry:** Just like the knights, we've going to go about rigtin' wrongs.

**Ginger:** What sort of wrongs did they right?

**Henry:** Well, er... people put in dungeons and that sort of thing.

**Violet:** And puthing people off tabelths.

*(WILLIAM climbs onto the "square table" and the group proceeds in a manner that they imagine to look both incredibly heroic and morally self sacrificing)*

**William:** So when somethin' is happening that is wrong, King Arthur would always come in and stop it, like we will. So when my brother Robert took my football off me, after I only *accidentally* spoiled his picnic with that soppo Rosalyn girl he liked. Arthur would jolly well have got my football back. After all, it's not *my* fault they were sitting next to the goal, was it?

(They cheer)

**Ginger:** Crumbs! If anythin', William - they should have congratulated you. It's always adults that mind things. My father docked by pocket money for a *whole month* once just for shaving the cat! I was only trying to help. It was baking hot in all that fur. I bet that's a wrong if there was one!

(They cheer)

**Douglas:** Well it's like the way they give penshuns to old people just for being old and won't give em' to young people just for being young. Penshuns for boys is a jolly good idea.

(They cheer)

**Henry:** Let's fix the awful levels of unemployment, rehouse the homeless and fix the dreadful state of the economy!

(There is a general nodding and murmur of confused agreement. *VIOLET ELIZABETH is just about to say something, when...*) □□**William:** Knights of the Square Table! I've had an idea, I've been thinkin' and I've got...

**All:** Yes? □□**William:** We *all* get bikes!

**All:** How? □□**William:** Well, listen -Ginger got his bike 'cause his brother was getting married, didn't he? □□**All:** Yes?

**William:** Well, we'll get 'em all married. Then we'll all get bikes.

**Henry:** It's not as easy as that.

**William:** That's right, start making objection. There's me wearin' out my brain thinkin' out a good idea to get us bikes, an' all you can do is to make objection. □□**Henry:** I only said it wasn't easy as all that, and it isn't.

**Douglas:** Doesn't even sound possible to me, you can't get married jus' 'cause you want their bikes. If you could everyone would be married and everyone would have bikes.

**William:** Oh, Shut up arguin'.

**Ginger:** What's all this got to do with rightin' wrongs? □□**William:** It's got a jolly lot to do with rightin' wrongs - you've got a bike an' we haven't an' that's a jolly big wrong and we're goin' to right it. □We will help other people too. 'And we are helpin' em anyway -our brothers- by finding em' people to marry? I think it's a jolly good wrong to start with!

**Ginger:** And there'll be hundreds! Thousands I 'spect?

**William:** I don't mind how many wrongs I right, once I get started. I bet they'll be comin' to us from all over the world! Once they know about us rightin' wrongs.

**Douglas:** How'll they get to know? □□ **William:** ...We'll put up a notice. I'll make it now. I'm jolly good at notices.

*(William gets an old plank and starts painting)* □□ **Henry:** I think we ought to charge for it. I mean they have to pay for havin' their windows mended and their chimneys swept, so I think they ought to pay for havin' their wrongs righted. It stands to reason - I don't think it's fair to the people who mend windows an' sweep chimneys; if we right wrongs for nothin' □

**Douglas:** Did the real knights charge? □□ **Ginger:** I bet they did. I bet they had a notice stuck to the door same as this one. □

*(The notice is held aloft. It reads...)* □

GNITES OF THE SQUARE TABLE

RONGS WRIGHTED

SMALL RONGS 6d

BIG RONGS 1s

PLEASE GNOCK

*William hangs it on the set)*

**Douglas:** What about this getting our brothers marrid' then? We've been forgotten about that.

**William:** Oh yes. We've got to fix that up - it's quite easy. What girl is your brother keen on?

**Douglas:** I've forgotten. It's a different one each week.

**William:** Well, find out which one it is this week.

**Henry:** And what then? What about my brother?

**William:** Listen... and I'll tell you.

*(THE OUTLAWS all huddle, conspiratorially. VIOLET E. tries to jump in and hear what is surely an utterly brilliant plan)*

**The Outlaws:** YES!

**Henry:** It's a jolly good idea.

**William:** I always have jolly good ideas.

*(Everyone stares at him and open their mouths to speak to the contrary)*

**William:** Well...uh, the ideas are alright but people sometimes mess em' up.

**Violet:** William... I want to you to right a wrong for me. □ □ **William:** I'm awf'ly busy. What is it? □

**Violet:** I want to play, but I don't have an older brother. Tho I can't. It'th not fair, if you get to do thith and I don't. □ □ **William:** ...Well, thats a big wrong so it'll cost you, so, sorry you won't be able to afford it. □ □ **Violet:** I'll give you two bulleyes. □

*(She holds out her brown paper bag of sweets)*

**William:** Oh... well. Alright then. □

*(A distant country church bell sounds)*

**William:** Gosh! The time... We'll all meet again later! I'll get in a row if I'm not back by lunch time...

*(The bell chimes slowly through the next piece. It's a race against time.*

*WILLIAM runs in place and DOUGLAS runs to the lectern; the rest of the company dart off to various sides of the stage to change costume and start assembling the next scene around WILLIAM during the transition)*

**Douglas:** William flew out the door of the barn, and sped up the road like an arrow from a bow. He fled breathlessly up the hill and round the group of nearby cottages. Then, deciding his usual route home was perhaps not going to save him, he...

Leapt over a nearby fence,  
Then over a small creek  
and through a muddy field belonging to Farmer Jenks, who quickly gave chase.  
Disturbing a herd of distressed sheep, William  
Dodged his foe, and  
Dived quickly under a prickly row of hedges.  
He sprinted across the narrow road  
Narrowly avoiding a speeding motorcar.  
And bounded through the front door.  
He was just in time.

*(This narration could be read by different characters who take a line or so each. The physical efforts are all perhaps played out as they are read with the world of the characters, soundscape and obstacles created by the cast with whatever is in their grasp. It needs to be alive and full of energy. A faint and growing murmur starts as WILLIAM dives home, out of breath. GINGER,*

*DOUGLAS, HENRY and VIOLET E. are now playing his family -his parents, MR. BROWN and MRS. BROWN; and adult siblings, ETHEL and ROBERT. They are sitting down to lunch at a table they have made of boxes or a taut sheet. For the sake of a coherent play, they are very good actors)*

**William:** Hullo, Father. Sorry I'm a bit late.

**Mr. Brown:** Don't apologise. The shock of seeing you on time for anything would prostrate us for weeks...

**Mrs. Brown:** *(resuming their prior conversation)* I think we have to go.

**William:** Go where?

**Mrs. Brown:** Be quiet, William. No one was speaking to you. □□**William:** Alright, I only said 'go where?'

**Mrs. Brown:** Well, dear, it's a party she's getting up specially to meet this film star.

**William:** What film star?

**Mrs. Brown:** Please, be quiet William.

**William:** Alright. I only said, '*what film star?*'

**Mr. Brown:** The effect on the nerves of the continual sound of your voice is something that beggars belief.

**Mrs. Brown:** Your father means you mustn't talk so much, dear.

**William:** Oh.

**Ethel:** She's rented Honeysuckle cottage for the summer, you know.

**William:** I know that place/

**Mr. Brown:** Wil/ Who has? I don't think much of these potatoes.

**Mrs. Brown:** This Gloria Gaye. I got them from the green grocers as usual.

**Mr. Brown:** What Gloria Gaye? There's no taste in them at all

**Mrs. Brown:** She's a film star. Perhaps it's the weather. It does affect them.

**Mr. Brown:** Never heard of her, and I think you ought to speak very strongly to him about it. Might as well be eating mangel-worzels

**William:** I've eaten mangel-worzels, they aren't bad.

**Mr. Brown:** Be quiet William.

**William:** All right - I only said I'd/ (*he meets his father's eye*)

**Mrs. Brown:** Have you heard of her Robert? □□**Robert:** Who? □□**Ethel:** Whom (*Correcting him*)

**Robert:** Who.

**Mrs. Brown:** Gloria Gaye□□**Robert:** Yes. (*remembering a fond evening*) Yes, she was in "Love in a Mist"

**Mr. Brown:** Well if you think I'm going to waste a Sunday afternoon in this way...

**Mrs. Brown:** I think we ought to, dear.□

**Robert:** I do too. I mean - she's a stranger in the neighbourhood. She probably feels a little lonely, and well, one does owe a sort of duty to one's neighbours.

**Ethel:** I didn't notice the same interest in the new tenant at the manor.

**Robert:** That's different, he's a flash, foul mouthed town type. With a big car and big friends. He can look after himself.

**Ethel:** And I suppose Gloria Gaye can't?□□**Robert:** Well, she's only a girl.

**Ethel:** And what's is that supposed to mean?

**Robert:** What I'm saying is/

**Mrs. Brown:** Children!

**Robert:** What I mean is/ □

**Ethel:** What you *mean* is that she's the most strong and wonderful girl you've ever seen in your life, an/

**Robert:** /Oh, Shut up.

*(WILLIAM slowly turns to the audience in the style of a Shakespearean anti-hero. He has been wearing an inspired smile for some time)*

**William:** So... now is the winter of my bike less day, made glorious... somethin'... by this Gloria Gaye. If I can get *them married*- Robert will give me his bike and... aan that's it really. Rememberin' po'try is jolly hard.

*(The scene continues as normal. William is still manically grinning)*

**Ethel:** Just what are you smiling at?

**William:** Me? Was I smiling? I don't know what I'm smiling at. I once heard of a man wh/

**Mr. Brown:** /That'll do. We don't want a lecture on it. You're finished?

**William:** Can I go please? □□**Mrs. Brown:** Yes, fold up your table napkin. Fold it, dear. *(If a sheet is used for the table, William roughly folds the the whole thing and hands it to his mother)* Don't maul it. All right you can go.

*(WILLIAM exits in preparation, leaving the others alone )* □□**Ethel:** Can't we do anything about William? Can't we send him to an orphanage or something? □□**Mrs. Brown:** No dear, you see he isn't an orphan.

**Mr. Brown:** He soon will be at this rate, two broken windows in a week.

**Mrs. Brown:** He means well, and when he's got his best suit on and just had his hair cut I sometimes think he looks quite sweet. *(The others laugh fondly and she does join in)* Well I do.

*(MR. BROWN, MRS. BROWN and ETHEL exit, shed character and prepare for their next scenes or take up instruments. ROBERT tenderly gets a chair and faces away from the stage. He's hard at work on his cricket club's accounts and is muttering sums to himself)*

**Robert:** Haven't you got anything to do? □□**William:** No.

**Robert:** Can't you go play with your friends?

**William:** No.. they're busy... How old are you? □□**Robert:** Twenty one.

**William:** TWENTY ONE! *(He emits a long whistle in surprise)* □□**Robert:** Well, why shouldn't I be twenty one?

**William:** (*gives a short laugh*) Well I must say I didn't think you'd be quite as old as all that. Twenty one is jolly old not to be married, seems to me most people are married by the time they've got to that age. Twenty one! Gosh! □

**Robert:** Women are a confounding breed, William. I'll tell you that for free. It doesn't matter how many dinners or perfect nights at the pictures you have, they'll still won't talk to you for days af/ ...your damn football! don't you ever think of anyone besides yourself?

**William:** It's *you* I'm thinkin' of, Robert. Now - that Gloria Gaye is a beautiful girl, I've seen her in films. She's jolly good isn't she? If I was twenty one, Robert I would want to marry her before I got so old she wouldn't have me....

(*Silence. ROBERT is now doing his best to ignore him*)

**William:** They like flowers.

**Robert:** ...I'm going to sit in the garden and if you come ten yards of me, so help me I'll crown you. □ □ (*ROBERT moves yet again and sits at the front of the stage. WILLIAM slowly opens a window behind him*)

**William:** Fancy! Twenty one and not married.

(*This could go one of two ways. ROBERT, could launch his pocket book at WILLIAM in a symbol-crash esque moment. Or simply sigh and walk off*)

**Ginger:** William now set to work on the second part of his program. He had he hoped planted a seed in Robert's mind that would eventually flower and bear fruit. After their long and confidential conversation Robert's thoughts *must* surely be turning to marriage and Gloria Gaye was the obvious goal to which those thoughts must tend. Robert must be firmly established in Gloria's eyes as her suitor. William had reached the garden and drew a sigh of relief when he saw it was empty. Then cautiously glancing at all the windows to make sure no one was watching him, he sidled up to the rosebed.

(*WILLIAM creeps slowly towards an imagined flower bed at the front of the stage*)

**Hobbins:** (*a disembodied voice*) You leave them roses alone!

(*WILLIAM jolts in surprise*)

**Ginger:** William had forgotten that it was one of the two days a week on which Hobbins, a jobbing gardener came to the Browns house. He was a small ferocious man.

(*HOBBINS enters. He is clearly HENRY and DOUGLAS, the former atop the other's shoulders. They are wrapped in an oversized coat and hat*)

**Douglas:** *(his whispering head appearing through the buttons)* William, you said he was tall and scary.

*(GINGER pushes DOUGLAS's head back in)*

**Hobbins:** I said leave 'em alone.

**William:** Alright, I was only lookin' at 'em. That's what they're there for - isn't it? - to be looked at? I thought that was what people put in gardens for - for people to look at 'em. Ha! it's news to me you can't look at flowers...

*(HOBBS growls and returns to gardening with his back turned. WILLIAM makes another move towards the roses) □*

**Hobbins:** *(swiftly turning)* You leave them roses alone!

**William:** Can I have those? *(Gesturing towards a pile to his left)*

**Henry:** Hobbins has spent the morning 'clearing out the 'seeded' forget me nots from the borders. And they lay in heaps on the rubbish pile. They could still at a pinch be called flowers...

**Hobbins:** What do you want them for? □□**William:** I want to take 'em to a friend. People take flowers to people when they're... ill, don't they?

**Hobbins:** What's the matter with yer friend? □□**William:** They don't know yet. Doctors can't tell straight off what's wrong with people can they? It might be measles or-or-or -

**Ginger:** William then remembered a lecture given recently by a missionary at school...

**William:** Leprosy. It's prob'ly Leprosy. Well, if you grudge a few rotten ole flowers to a poor person what's ill with leprosy...

*(HOBBS grunts and gestures he can take them, keeping his distance he quickly exits. WILLIAM triumphantly snatches them up and there is an explosion of glamorous music and song as the next scene is assembled by WILLIAM. This should include either a sheet held aloft by hidden Outlaws, or a free standing vanity screen)*

*(GINGER, DOUGLAS and HENRY have hopefully taken up instruments and are playing in a singing and dancing VIOLET E. who now plays the film star GLORIA GAYE. She is accompanied by PETWORTH, the film star's long time and bitter assistant, played by DOUGLAS in a beret and spectacles)*

**Gaye:** Not the fan-mail for heaven's sake, Petworth. I've come to this cottage for a rest cure. Answer them, forge my signature, send my photograph, but, for heaven's sake, don't read them to me. Anything else?

**Petworth:** A few bills?

**Gaye:** Burn them. □

**Petworth:** Press cuttings?

**Gaye:** Keep anything sensible and burn the rest.

**Petworth:** By sensible, I presume you mean such as recognise your genius, your beauty and your Cleopatra like charm?

□ **Gaye:** (*she laughs. Her well known "musical ripple"*) How well you know me, darling. Anything else? □ □ **Petworth:** Someone says they've seen your film 'Love in a Mist' fifteen times and cried each time.

**Gaye:** Tell them to see a doctor, anything else? □ □ (*A loud thunderous knocking sound. The front door*) □

**Gaye:** *Heavens alive! What's that?*

*(A second series of thundering knocks is heard)*

**Gaye:** My god! I can't stand this. Go - Quickly - before it happens again.

*(PETWORTH walks to the other side of the stage to see William with the door frame, he's holding the flowers)*

**William:** I've brought these flowers for Miss Gloria Gaye, an' I want to speak to her.

**Petworth:** Miss Gaye's a very busy person, you know.

**William:** Don't worry - I'm busy too. □

**Petworth:** And she's come to this village because she wants to rest.

**William:** Well she can rest, she can go on resting while I talk to her.

**Petworth:** You don't look like a very restful person.

**William:** Well it's not me that wants to rest is it? It's her, Tell her I won't stop her restin'.

**Petworth:** What do you want to speak to her about?

**William:** About her gettin' married.

**Petworth:** About what? □□ **William:** *(irritably)* About her gettin' married.

**Petworth:** But how? Why? I mean/

**William:** /Look here, it's no use me wastin' my time sayin' it all to you, when it's her I've come to say it to, is it?

□ **Petworth:** *(Sensing an opportunity)* I'll tell her you're here.

*(PETWORTH leaves WILLIAM at the front of the stage and walks to the screen at the back. WILLIAM is oblivious to the conversation)*

**Petworth:** It's a young man, Miss Gaye. He wants to see you.

**Gaye:** Who is it? □

**Petworth:** I don't know, he didn't give his name. I've never seen him before. □□ **Gaye:** A new one? □□ **Petworth:** A new one.

**Gaye:** What does this young man want?

**Petworth:** I gather that he wants to marry you.

**Gaye:** My god! Another of them?

**Petworth:** *(sighing sadly)* I think you must see him, dear. He obviously isn't going away until you have done.

**Gaye:** Oh very well.

*(PETWORTH nods and beckons to WILLIAM, she then swiftly exits)*

**Gaye:** You may enter.

*(WILLIAM walks to the the screen and presents the flowers)*

**William:** These forget me nots are from someone who loves you with a most devouring passion.

*(A long white gloved hand belonging to GLORIA GAYE slides out from behind the screen and hesitantly takes the flowers)*

**William:** *(An obviously rehearsed speech)* It's from someone who thinks you are the apple of his life - an' wants to marry you.

*(A glamorous head pops out at the top of the screen. It's GLORIA GAYE. She is not a fan of children, but still has a public image to uphold)*

**Gaye:** I think *(she notices the blade tucked in his jacket)* is that a breadknife?

**William:** No. It's exaggerator!

**Gaye:** Oh. You mean Excalibur?

**William:** I know what I mean! *(suddenly remembering)* Go on restin' I don't want to stop you restin'.

**Gaye:** Well, I think it's all very *sweet* of you but don't you think I'm rather old to marry you?

**William:** ME? Gosh! I don't want to marry you.

**Gaye:** I thought that was the idea.

**William:** No! I'm never goin' to marry. I don't like girls -'cept my mother. No. It's Robert.

**Gaye:** Robert?

**William:** Yes, it's Robert that wants to marry you.

**Gaye:** Who's Robert?

**William:** He's my brother.

**Gaye:** He's your - younger brother perhaps? □□**William:** Young? No, he's old. Well, middle-aged. He's twenty one.

**Gaye:** And he couldn't tell me this himself?

**William:** He's shy. That's the thing - he wants to a bit of help from you. I mean, when you meet him, don't say anythin' about what I've told you an' don't mind if he seems different to what I've said about him, 'cause he loves you all right, an' he wants to marry you - nex' week, if you can fix it up.

**Gaye:** I see...

**William:** Do marry him, *please*. Jus' for kindness... He's dyin' out of slow love for you. He's gettin' thinner an' thinner. 'F you don't be engaged to him soon he'll be stone dead. He'll die out of love like what they do in the tales an' then you'll prob'ly get hung for murder.

**Gaye:** Good heavens...

**William:** Well, I *hope* you won't - an' I'll do all I can to save you if you are, but 'f you kill Robert with not gettin' engaged to him prob'ly you will be.

**Gaye:** ...

**William:** Go on restin', I've not stopped you restin' have I? Well - good bye. □

*(WILLIAM exits. GLORIA GAY just stares ahead of herself; holding the dead blooms for a few moments) □*

*(-----NEEDS TRANSITION-----)*

*(We are back in the Brown family household. This time in the company of ETHEL. She is played by GINGER, who doesn't look in the least bit happy about his role)*

**Douglas:** William's elder sister Ethel was sitting curled up in an armchair/

**Ginger:** Why do I have to play Ethel?

**William:** Shh – We have no one else. You play a jolly good Ethel.

*(GINGER reluctantly settles into the role and does it rather well. She is concentrating on her "knitting" as MRS. BROWN enters)*

**Mrs. Brown:** I'm awfully sorry, dear - but you haven't seen the breadknife have you? -Oh, the pullover is looking lovely- I can't find it anywhere. Only, I'm trying to make a peace offering to those dreadful new tenants at the manor.

**Ethel:** A peace offering? They nearly ran you down in that garish motorcar of theirs!

**Mrs. Brown:** Yes, dear. I'm sure it was an accident.

**Ethel:** The swearing wasn't!

**Mrs. Brown:** Well, no. But they seem very busy and I'm sure if we just reached out... after all one does owe a duty to make them feel welcome in the village/

*(A series of thunderous knocks occur from stage left)*

**Mrs. Brown:** Heavens! That was the front door wasn't it? I shall have to go and see who it is.

*(HENRY is now standing at the door on stage left, with an impressive bouquet of flowers in his grubby hands)* □ □ **Mrs. Brown:** Come in, Henry.

*(HENRY enters the space, politely taking off his cap as he does so)*

**Henry:** Thank you awfully, Mrs. Brown *(To Ethel)* Ethel - These are for you from my brother John - with his love.

□ **Mrs. Brown:** My goodness!

**Ethel:** Thank him for me very much, won't you, Henry?

**Henry:** Yes.

*(He takes a seat, patiently waiting for a moment alone with ETHEL)*

*(An awkward silence)*

**Ethel:** Are you well, Henry?

**Henry:** Yes thanks, are you?

**Ethel:** Yes, thanks.

**Henry:** *(Feeling like he should contribute some small talk to the occasion)* Are you... well, Mrs. Brown?

**Mrs. Brown:** Very well. Thank you, Henry. This is very kind of your brother - But your lovely mother will be expecting you back, won't she?

**Henry:** No.

**Ethel:** ... Shouldn't you to be out in the fresh air on a day like this?

**Henry:** No, I'm all right thanks. *(Inhaling heavily through his nostrils)* Smells quite fresh in here.

**Ethel:** Don't your friends want you?

**Henry:** No, they're busy.

**Ethel:** Doesn't anybody want you?

**Henry:** No.

**Ethel:** ...How sweet of your brother to have sent me these flowers.

**Henry:** It's quite all right.

*(Slight pause)*

**Mrs. Brown:** *(With obvious tact to Henry)* Well, dear. As nice as it is to see you/

**Henry:** *(Jumping to his feet)* I've got a message from my brother John to Ethel that I was to give to her when no one else is was here.

**Mrs. Brown:** Oh.

**Ethel:** Just come over here, Henry *(She leads him to the other side of the stage)* Well?

**Henry:** My brother says he loves you with the most devouring passion. He says you are the apple of his life an' he's too shy to tell you himself an' an' will you marry him?

**Ethel:** ...

**Henry:** P'raps you'd like some more time.

**Ethel:** *(Knowing something is afoot)* I think I should.

**Henry:** All right I'll go away an' come back.

*(HENRY exits and the suspicious ETHEL returns to her trusting and slightly flustered mother)*

**Mrs. Brown:** Ethel! What do you suppose this means? Bouquets like this go for nearly twenty shillings in Hadley. Your father used to get them when - My dear, you don't think he's/

*(Another thunderous knock sounds. This time from stage right)*

**Ethel:** That's the back door this time.

*(ETHEL walks to stage left. DOUGLAS appears, also holding flowers)*

**Douglas:** This is a present from my brother George.

**Ethel:** How kind of him, won't you come in?

**Douglas:** No, I don't think I will, thanks, but I gotta say somethin' with it. Uh... here we are... no, wait... *(He starts turning out his pockets and pulls out a grubby piece of paper)* "Maidstone on the Medway" no that's my g'ography, wait a minute...

*(He continues to pull bits out of his pockets. But ETHEL has it all figured out...)*

**Ethel:** Don't bother Douglas. I'll say it for you. You were to tell me that George loves me with a most devouring passion, that I'm the apple of his life and that he's too shy to tell me himself but he wants me to marry him.

**Douglas:** *(Staring at her in disbelief)* Yes, that was it. How did you know?

*(The hammering door from stage left sounds again. A worn out HENRY is standing there, expectantly)*

**Henry:** Have you finished thinkin' about it? *(Noticing DOUGLAS)* What's *he* doing here?

**Ethel:** The same as you. Now I don't know what you kids are playing at and I don't care, but I'll give you just ten seconds' start and if you aren't out of sight by then...

*(HENRY and DOUGLAS scamper off. MRS. BROWN and ETHEL exit)*

*(This transition could take the form of a fight between DOUGLAS and HENRY as they flee/struggle down the road facing the audience. They encounter VIOLET ELIZABETH, WILLIAM and eventually GINGER. The group walk in place. )*

**Douglas:** *(Mid scuffle)* I didn't know you were goin' there! You might have told me?

**Henry:** Well, I thought you knew my brother was crazy on Ethel! He always has been!

**Douglas:** So's my brother always been! I bet there's no chance of her marry'n any of em' now, thanks to you.

**Henry:** An' I'll get in an awful row for taking those flowers. I could of got them back if you hadn't messed it all up.

**Douglas:** Pr'aps we'll all have to share Ginger's bike. Anyway, we're knights. I think we have to share things.

**Henry:** You're thinking of communists!

**William:** Ethel! Ha! Dunno why you went to *her*. She's the worst tempered girl I've ever met. Dunno what all those men see in her.

**Ginger:** Well she *looks* sort of nice.

**William:** She looks about as nice as this road.

**Douglas:** And b'sides - how did *you* get on?

**William:** I asked that Gloria Gaye. She... (*optimistically*) She didn't say she *wouldn't* marry him, anyway. An' she took the flowers.

**Douglas:** Makes you wonder if it's all worth it.

**Henry:** You're jolly lucky not bein' in this getting people married business, Ginger.

**Ginger:** Well I am sort of in it.

**William:** What d'you mean?

**Ginger:** Well I thought I'd right a wrong by getting my cousin married - he's got a bugle, I always wanted one, an' well, married people don't need bugles. I've never heard of a married person with a bugle.

**Violet:** You've not heard of everyone in the world. Why thoudent married people have bugelth?

**Ginger:** I don't think their wives and such let them. My parents are always sayin' my mouth organ goes through an' through their heads.

**Henry:** There's somthin' in that... How did you get on?

**Ginger:** Well, I thought I'd bring this Valerie girl he was keen on fruit. It's what my father used to give my mother. So I found an old pineapple behind the grocers - an' you wouldn't have known from the outside that there was much wrong with it! Not *very* much anyway. Anyway, you could see it *had* been a pineapple. I've eaten worse things.

**Douglas:** We all have. Mackerel and custard.

**Henry:** Sardines and honey.

**Violet:** Athparaguth.

**Ginger:** Well, I took it to this Valerie girl an' said "this is from my cousin, Richard, with "his love" - an' gosh! The way she carried on! Wouldn't even let me say those things you'd made up for us to say. You'd've thought I'd murdered her by the way she went on. She said he was de-gener-at - an' where were they supposed to live? That pineapple? It's not big enough to swing a cat in!

**Violet:** Ith cruel to thwing cats!/

**William:** /Wait! I'm thinkin' - that gives me a jolly good idea. It's houses! It's houses that's the trouble. People won't get married till they've got a house - stands to reason. I bet if I'd've told Gloria Gay that she and Robert had a house - they'd be engaged already.

**Henry:** Well, I don't see how we can get them proper houses, William - they're lived in by people already.

**William:** People go out of houses sometimes, don't they? There wouldn't be any removin' vans if they didn't...

**Douglas:** They die, sometimes.

**William:** (*Actually considering this*) I don't think we ought to axshully kill anyone.

**Ginger:** We could build em' a house, William. I've got a hammer somewhere and we've still got that paint from the sign. It'd be jolly easy.

(*WILLIAM is strongly considering this when...*)

**Violet:** My auntie once left a houth becauth it wath *haunted*. My mummy told me.

**William:** ...Tell you what! I bet we could act'ly haunt a house. That'd get the people out jolly easy. Stands to reason they'd leave a house, if they thought it was *haunted*! (*Noticing VIOLET ELIZABETH, who is beaming with pride*) I was goin' to sugges' that first, actu'ly.

**Henry:** But who do we haunt? We can't just turn any ol' person out. We'd have to choose someone that hadn't been in the village long, an' that other people wouldn't want to help.

(*Suddenly, the lights drop and a motorcar is heard and headlights flash at THE OUTLAWS as they all desperately dive to separate sides of the stage. General cluttered curses are thrown from "the car" as it speeds past. THE OUTLAWS can only stare as it goes by, in disbelief*)

**William:** Gosh! Fancy carryin' on like that when we weren't doin' anythin' but walkin' down the road.

**Ginger:** Crumbs! Did you hear em'?

**Violet:** Itth thoth nasty new men from the manor.

**Henry:** They might have killed us!

**Douglas:** Wouldn' of cared if they had.

**Ginger:** He had an awful face! Like a goat!

**Douglas:** His chauffeur's wasn't much better.

**Violet:** Hith cthauffeur had a faith like a toad.

**Henry:** I say! We could haunt *them*. My fathers always sayin' how they're doin' nothin' for the village and th/

**William:** /Yes! That's a jolly good idea. Nobody likes em', It would serve em' right. B'sides - I bet clearin' em' out would/

**Ginger:** It would count as righting a big wrong!

**William:** 'Xactly! The whole village would thank us! an' I bet Robert would be so grateful we found him a house - he'd probably give us all bikes.

**Henry:** I 'spect he would. Proper housing agents make people pay a good deal more than that. They call it a premium. I've heard grown-ups talkin' about it.

**Douglas:** But how do we haunt em' and make sure they leave?

**Violet:** Torcher them!

**William:** Shut up. Just moanin' and groanin', an movin' things about/

**Violet:** /Thitck pinth in them!

**Ginger:** We've got to have a real ghost for haunting.

**Violet:** The kind that pullth out teeth!

**William:** Shhh! (*Beckoning a huddle*) I've been thinking and I've got an idea. We could take our bed sheets... (*This descends into inspired whispering. They all nod along*) We meet back here at midnight - Tonight!

**Douglas:** Midnight? But we'll be in bed.

**William:** Well we can get up, can't we? We're knights of the square table! We're Outlaws! 'Sides - this is bigger than rotten ol' bed! You lot go and get the things I told you - and me and Douglas will go and case the manor. Unless you're scared?

**Douglas:** I am not!

*(VIOLET ELIZABETH, GINGER and HENRY exit. WILLIAM and DOUGLAS crouch down and peer over some "hedges" investigating the manor)*

**Douglas:** I still think we ought' to make quite sure no one's in.

**William:** They'll have to be in when we haunt them. It's not much use hauntin' a house if no one's in- is it? B'sides - King Arthur would of done it.

**Douglas:** I s'pose they would of gone through a bit of danger for a bike. - But I still can't help thinkin' this'll all end in death.

**Tonks:** Oi!

*(A gruff voice shouts across the stage and out emerges TONKS, or "Toad-Face" as The Outlaws" have christened him. WILLIAM and DOUGLAS swiftly exit. TONKS looks somewhat paranoid, he walks to the middle of the stage, yelling after them, to make sure they've gone)*

**Tonks:** If I find any more of you kids here. I'll cut your livers out! See? I'll cut your livers out and skin you alive.

*(THE BOSS, or "Goat-Face" enters)*

**Boss:** What was it, Tonks?

**Tonks:** Sorry, Boss - it was those kids from the village. The ones what were in the road. I don't think they'll come again. I gave em' something to remember.

**Boss:** And I told you I don't want scenes. The less notice this place gets the better.

**Tonks:** Yes, Boss.

**Boss:** And stop being so twitchy.

**Tonks:** Sorry, Boss. Cripes, this place gives me the willies good and proper. I should be glad when we get out of here.

**Boss:** Well, steady yourself. You've got to be on your toes tonight. I must be off. I'll come back with Syd and the pick up convoy later. Calm yourself down, have a drink - there's nothing there - we will get ten years if you botch tonight.

*(THE BOSS exits. Leaving TONKS onstage for a moment, he looks about nervously, muttering "cripes" to himself, before exiting, leaving the stage in darkness)*

*(A lamp is turned on, WILLIAM is laying in bed. A clock chimes midnight and can be heard ticking as he sits up. Bundling up his sheet he creeps quietly across the stage, sneaking through the corridor. It's very quiet. WILLIAM drops suddenly as he hears ROBERT on the telephone to an obviously distressed girl. Another lamp lights up to illuminate him, snuffing the previous one)*

**Robert:** I swear! I've not done anything of the sort! Honestly, Rosalyn - I'm not exactly in the habit of proposing to famous film stars! Much less giving them bouquets of dead flowers! I tell you - I'm not in love with Gloria Gaye!

*(WILLIAM has continued to crawl along during this restrained tirade. Of course missing the crucial bits of information. He freezes again suddenly as ETHEL is lit up, having been awoken by her elder brothers conversation. She could talk through the wall, to herself, or march to his room)*

**Ethel:** Would you keep your frightful voice down! My nerves are shredded as they are. You think you can talk about flowers and proposals - well I've had two today! Two! Those filthy friends of William's have been hanging on the door all afternoon and I can't for the life of me figure out why. Imagine what everyone in the village will be saying about me!

*(Their arguments turn to hushed aggression as WILLIAM quickens his pace past his parents room. A third lamp switches as MR. BROWN and MRS. BROWN sit up. WILLIAM freezes again)*

**Mr. Brown:** What on earth/

**Mrs. Brown:** /Oh, John, dear. It's just the children.

**Mr. Brown:** It's a shambles. Waking us at midnight. I'll send them to sea, to the colonies/

**Mrs. Brown:** /Now, John. You know how quickly the time goes, and in a few years they'll all of left us and we will look back on these nights and think - think how happy we all were.

**Mr. Brown:** Perhaps you're right, my dear. I can be a touch tough on them, especially/

*(A huge crash is heard as WILLIAM knocks over some boxes or a ladder. He runs offstage)*

**All:** ...WILLIAM!

*(GINGER, DOUGLAS, HENRY and VIOLET ELIZABETH all sneak onto stage with sheets under arm... in darkness? somehow? and are eventually joined by WILLIAM. They could gather on top and around a pile of boxes. Staring down into the audience...)*

**Ginger:** Crumbs. Thought you were never coming.

**William:** I had a bit of a job gettin' out. Are we ready, knights? Got our things? Where's that ol' coal shoot. We can get in there.

**Douglas:** There's no lights on. P'raps there *is* no one in. Well, it'd be a pity to waste time hauntin' it if there's no one in.

**Violet:** Yeth there is. Goat-Fathe ith in. Old Toad-Fathe went out in the car and heth not back yet. I've been watching from our house. You can thee it all nearly from my window. I'm a *jolly* good lady knight, aren't I, William?

**William:** *(grunts)*

**Henry:** The coal shoot is over here - We can get into the cellar that way. But it looks like a very long way down - Who'll go first?

**Violet:** I'll go firtht! Lady knights are the bravetht.

**William:** No they're not. I'll go first! I'm King William and I've got Ex-ma! (eczema)

**Violet:** You said it wath Exthelthior!

**William:** I know what I mean!

**Violet:** *(At breakneck speed)* Well, I'm juth as brave as you, William Brown! I've done all sorths of thingth that you couldn't do in a million yearths! You're juth a rotten boy with a thilly breadknife, an' I know you didn't pull it out of tholid rock, 'Cauth I've seen it at your houthe when I went to tea an'all I've theeny you pull it out of is tholid bread! An' you never give me any recogithian or want to play my gameth - I'm tired of it! I could be a far better king than Any of you, 'cauth I'd be a queen an' think of far eather ways to get biketh than all thith meth that maketh no thence at all- an' if you don't let me go firth, I'll thcream and I'll thcream till I'm/

*(VIOLET ELIZABETH quickly dives down the coal shoot. THE OUTLAWS stare after her and then WILLIAM follows suit, quickly joined by GINGER, HENRY and finally DOUGLAS. How this is done on stage is a mystery. It could cut to black with sound effects or played out in a devised physical manner, involving rolling or jumping off the boxes they're on. Imagination!)*

*(Silence and darkness)*

**Ginger:** *(Whispering)* Are you all right, William?

**William:** Yes. I've fallen on somthin' soft.

**Ginger:** What is it?

**Douglas:** I knew it. We've crushed Violet Elizabeth. I knew it...

**William:** ...Violet Elizabeth?

**Ginger:** Hang on. I've found the light switches.

*(The light suddenly switches on. Revealing a terrifying fur covered figure. THE OUTLAWS jump. They too are laying on a variety of fur coats, scarves and jackets. The figure giggles and is revealed to be VIOLET ELIZABETH)*

**Violet:** You all looked tho thcared! I told you I could be juth a thcary ath any of you!

**William:** Sshh! We've got to be quiet, ol' Toad- Face is prob'ly asleep...  
An' you didn't scare us...

**Violet:** He's thure got a lot of pretty coatthth hathent he, William? How do I look?

*(WILLIAM ignores her)*

**Ginger:** P'raps Goat-Face feels the cold.

**Henry:** I've got an aunt that feels the cold. Grown ups seem to do that, P'raps he's got these coats as Christmas presents for people. He might have got a lot of aunts...

**Douglas:** Gosh! It's jolly spooky here. P'raps it's haunted.

**William:** Course it is, we're hauntin' it aren't we? Now we've got to go all over the house and get into our positions. When he gets out, I'll give the signal - an' we'll give him a jolly good scare jus' like I told you. Violet Elizabeth, if you still *have* to be here - you know what to do.

*(THE OUTLAWS and VIOLET ELIZABETH all exit to different corners of the stage... darkness and silence... a sinister noise sounds and a lamp is switched on illuminating TONKS who wakes with a gasp)*

**Tonks:** Hullo?

*(Silence)*

*(Something akin to a piano chord is struck)*

**Tonks:** Boss? Is that you?

*(Silence)*

**Tonks:** *(To himself)* Conca' your fears. There's nufin' there, there's nufin' there.

*(Suddenly the lights start switching on and off and the noises grow frequent and louder. Strange otherworldly sounds echo from all around him, low groans cut through the air)*

**Tonks:** What! Who? CRIPES!

*(TONKS swiftly exits mid scream. Darkness and the sound of running... for a moment. TONKS, still running, in darkness, gets to different sections of the stage which spark into sound, light and frightful action as he reaches them. White figures rush past him, his face is a mask of terror. He suddenly comes face to face with VIOLET ELIZABETH, dressed as a ghost, she screams and screams in an ear piercing pitch)*

**Tonks:** Cripes! Criiipes! C-c-c-ripes!

*(TONKS exits - pursued by WILLIAM and VIOLET ELIZABETH who then crouch, exhausted, but happy, behind some crates. They switch on a lamp. GINGER, DOUGLAS and HENRY sit offstage in the dark)*

**William:** Well, he's gone. We've done it, knights!

*(They all rejoice)*

**Ginger:** *(His voice cutting through the dark)* Crumbs! He looked jolly funny. So what do we do next? Do we go an' tell Robert and Gloria Gaye that the house is ready for them?

**William:** *(Never having imagined getting this far)* I-I s'pose so...

**Henry:** There's a jolly lot more furs over here. They look like mink.

**Douglas:** Same as over here. An' how can you tell? I think minks are supposed to smell, aren't they?

**Ginger:** P'raps they've got extravagant wives - an' you're thinkin' of skunks, Douglas. I bet we could sell em' for a lot - the furs, I mean.

**Douglas:** No, I think we ought to be gettin' home. I sort of feel somethin' might *happen* if we don't.

*(They continue to argue. WILLIAM sits still, a grin across his face, he can't quite believe his luck - it's all worked out. VIOLET ELIZABETH, also grinning, turns to him)*

**Violet:** William? I did well, didn't I? I helped. I thcared that nathty man.

**William:** Uh, yes. You did sort of well, I s'pose.

**Violet:** I'm a very good and brave knight. Aren't I William?

**William:** ... Yes. But don' go tellin' people I said that. Else you'll be x'cuted.

**Violet:** ...You like all lady knighth- don't you?

**William:** ...

**Violet:** Kith me...

*(Suddenly we hear a truck skid to a halt and sound of slamming doors offstage. The disembodied voices of THE BOSS and TONKS can be heard)*

**Boss:** Tonks! Tonks, you damn fool!

**Tonks:** I'm s-sorry, Boss!

**Boss:** I told you to stay here with the merchandise! Instead I find you halfway up the road, raving on about ghosts and ghouls! - it's the drink, Tonks, I'm telling you. You're an embarrassment.

**Tonks:** B-boss...

**Boss:** When these furs reach Belgium you're out, Tonks. You're not worth the risk. Do you know how many coppers you could have bought down on our heads? We all would've been locked up, sharpish -illegal trafficking- twenty years, just like that. You're done.

*(WILLIAM turns and whispers to VIOLET ELIZABETH)*

**William:** They're fur thieves! That's what they are. We've gotter' let the police know somehow - This is jus' like a knights adventure, we've got to stop them takin' those furs to Belgium.

**Violet:** Wherth Belgium?

**William:** How should I know? I'm not a fur thief. I saw a phone over there somewhere. But how do we get to it?

*(A sudden commotion sounds on stage. GINGER, DOUGLAS and HENRY can be heard struggling along with various profanities from BOSS)*

**Boss:** Oi! I think I've found your ghosts, Tonks! Come an' gimmie me a hand?

*(Running footsteps are heard onstage)*

**Tonks:** I-I... cripes... it's those kids.

**Boss:** Blimey. You weren't half legless were you? They've just got sheets an' all... I'll tie 'em up in the back of the van with the furs.

**Tonks:** But what happens when we reach the border?

**Boss:** We can't leave 'em here!

**Tonks:** B-Boss?!

**Boss:** Tonks! Listen to me. I know. We can figure out what to do with 'em later. Just sober up, practice your best innocent smile and pack the rest of the furs away in the flour -

**Tonks:** -But, Boss-

**Boss:** - No one will suspect a thing. □  
(BOSS exits)

**Tonks:** Cripes...

*(TONKS turns on a lamp across the stage, illuminating a telephone next to it. He starts nervously putting the furs into a large sack, practising his defence for the Belgian border as he goes...)*

**Tonks:** Go-o-oeden Avond, Officer! Yep! Nothin' in these ol' sacks but good English flour! See! You can even open em'! ...I'm jus' a regular delivery driver makin' a regular delivery... oh, cripes...

*(Whenever his back is turned a large coat and blanket move awkwardly across the stage towards the telephone. It's WILLIAM and VIOLET ELIZABETH)*

**Tonks:** *(Upon noticing it's altered position)* Strike me pink! The pesky 'fings seem to move about!

*(TONKS exits)*

*(The coat and blanket reach the telephone and WILLIAM stealthily dials 999. However as he tries to speak they are set upon by BOSS and TONKS. The lamp is switched off. Darkness)*

*(The sound of a motor can be heard (FOLEY onstage) Lights come up on THE OUTLAWS and VIOLET ELIZABETH tied in a group together with a large piece of rope - this could be mimed/imagined. They sway with the motion of a truck that is driving down a winding country road)*

**Douglas:** I *told* you. I said it was dangerous. 'Spect we're nearly at the sea by now. All of this for bikes! I 'spect they'll make us work for 'em, stealin' an' such, but they'll starve us firs' , or only feed us on this flour - so we can fit through small windows an', an... Well that or they'll prob'ly jus' kill us. It's rotten luck.

**Henry:** No one will hear from us again. Grown ups are always sayin' about missing persons...

**Ginger:** Well, it could be a jolly good adventure!

**Henry:** /But! I say! - William? Have you still got - ex-ex-exc... what did you say it was called?

**Ginger:** *(joining in)* Exa-es-ex...

*(A heavy pause. WILLIAM only stares at his shoes, seemingly defeated)*

**Violet:** Yeth, William! Use the thilly bread knife to cut the rope!

**Douglas:**  
*(Together)* It's called Excelsior!

**William:**

*(WILLIAM cuts the rope loose and they all spring to their feet - although grouped and obviously still in a traveling van)*

**William:** I've got an idea! Knights! We can spill this flour onto the road and that's got to attrac' someone! It'll make a trail! Stands to reason!

*(The scene "rotates" suddenly around and everyone disbands. Except WILLIAM who billows a sack to represent the flour, he now stands back to back with GINGER and HENRY who are now playing BOSS and TONKS in the "front" of the van. VIOLET ELIZABETH and DOUGLAS run to stage left and don helmets, they become POLICEMAN and DETECTIVE)*

**Policeman:** It was just a dead line, sir. No one on the other end. We traced the call to the manor and it looks like/

**Detective:** /It's them alright. The scoundrels I've been hunting for years. The furs will be god knows where now - if only we knew/

**Policeman:** /Sir! Look! *(Pointing into the distance ahead)*

*(The scene quickly switches across to BOSS and TONKS in the front of the van. They take centre stage. The motor can be heard (FOLEY) Unawares to them, WILLIAM is still billowing the "flour" behind them)*

**Boss:** I'm glad to be rid of that village. Too many people not minding their own business. I mean, those kids in the back - we've got/

*(TONKS, who is driving the van, swerves suddenly)*

**Boss:** Tonks, you bleeding idiot! What in the he/

**Tonks:** /But Boss, it's the co-co-co...

**Boss:** Step on it, Tonks!

**Tonks:** I'm going as fast as I can!

*(A siren blares to life and a pair of "headlights" appear behind the truck)*

**William:** Look! A police car! Gosh! I believe they've seen us!

*(A chase ensues, consisting of over the top action. It's very busy. The Foley of sirens and motors are still constantly heard. A large comic scroll is unravelled with the Outlaws drawn depictions, play by play)*

**William:** It was the sort of police car chase that William had seen time and time again, on the pictures and read of in pulp thrillers, but in which he never dreamed he would actually take part. They shot wildly from side to side, they zigzagged across the road, they swerved into lanes and out of lanes and the police car followed. No matter how many manoeuvres were attempted or back roads taken, the law seemed always one step ahead. Thanks in no small part to the outlaws and the keen trail of flour that poured into the night...

Then came the grand culmination of the whole evening... the wild swerve into a ditch... the glorious sight of the Boss and Tonks being shamelessly led from the wreck of their lorry by a stalwart police-man, the other left standing, scratching his head and saying...

**Policeman:** We've got them, sir. But... strewth, am I dreaming? Or are there really five kids in here?

**All:** We're Outlaws!

*(We are back in the Brown Family household. MR. BROWN, MRS. BROWN, ROBERT and ETHEL are still awake. It's the middle of the night and their voices can be heard from the darkness as lamps are switched on one by one)*

**Mr. Brown:** What could've happened? Well, the boy's obviously off on some piece of mischief. He's taken his sheet with him which proves that he arranged some *prank* or other.

**Ethel:** He's *quite* impossible! I'm sure he was behind all that business with Henry and Douglas this afternoon.

**Mrs. Brown:** It might have been a kind thought, Ethel. They were very *nice* flowers after all. They were probably confused, children often/

**Robert:** /I'll kill him, if the police don't find him first. Rosalyn will never speak to me again. I'm sure he's got something to do with it.

*(A series of loud knocks come from the front door. They all rush to WILLIAM who stands firm in the "doorway," having expected something like this to happen. They cluster around him, obscuring him completely during the next speedy and overlapping exchange)*

**Mr. Brown:** Disgraceful! When I was your age...

**Robert:** You little blighter!

**Mr. Brown:** Your mother's anxiety!

**Ethel:** Hardly a wink of sleep...

**Robert:** What on earth were you thinking of to...

**Ethel:** Those flowers! I don't think anyone will ever speak to me again!

**Mr. Brown:** The boy's armed! The youth of today...

**Mrs. Brown:** The breadknife!

**William:** It's Excelsior!

**Mrs. Brown:** And the *sheet*, William...

*(WILLIAM sinks to the ground and escapes under his family's legs, whilst protesting...)*

**William:** I've been rightin' wrongs and catchin' crim'nals. Just like/

**Mr. Brown:** /Outrageous!

**Mrs. Brown:** John...

**William:** Speak to *him*!

*(WILLIAM gestures back towards the "door." The DETECTIVE now stands there, looking rather shell shocked. He beckons the family to join him)*

**Detective:** So about your son...

**Mrs. Brown:** Whatever he's done. He didn't *mean* to!

**Ginger:** The Detective told them what he'd *done*... then, having answered the resultant fire of questions as well as he could, took his departure...

**Mrs. Brown:** I've always said he meant well!

**Mr. Brown:** The boy is a credit to the family. I knew he'd got it in him of course.

**Ethel:** The rest of you never gave the *sweet* child a chance.

**Robert:** And the *courage* of it! He always was a plucky kid. How did you all come to be mixed up in it?

**William:** We were hauntin' a house.

**Mrs. Brown:** Why, dear?

**William:** B'cause we wanted bicycles...

(ETHEL, ROBERT and MR. and MRS. BROWN look nonplussed at the boy for a moment. WILLIAM looks directly to the audience...)

**William:** Then, as well as he could through the mouthfuls of cake, chocolate biscuits and dates that were to come, gesticulating dramatically and perhaps slightly embellishing, William told them all about it...

*(WILLIAM, VIOLET ELIZABETH, DOUGLAS, GINGER and HENRY all sheepishly break "character", take their bows and start lazily packing their set away)*

**William:** (Remembering he should probably say something) Well, that was it. That was our adventure. I hope you jolly well enjoyed it. I did want to add a lot more excitin' things like murders an' sea battles! An' people jumpin' out of trapdoors an' dreadful poisonin's - things like that. But we didn't really have time in the end and they didn't really happen... but it would have been jolly good all the same! ...maybe next time. If you liked us a lot, you can leave us a review on the g-net, I hear it's a jolly good thing... well... enjoy the rest of your day. Goodbye!

**THE END**





