

The Devil with the Three Golden Hairs

a Grimm brothers' story adapted for the stage by Mike Riepl

PLAYERS:

2 women (one young – 18-22 years, one older – 50+.)

3 men (one young – 18-22 years, one indeterminate age - A, one older - B)

CHARACTERS:

Father of lucky child – Young man

Peasant woman – Old woman

King – Old man B

Mother of lucky child – Young woman

Millers' girl – Young woman

Miller – Man A

Millers' wife – Old woman

Lucky child – Young man

Robbers' housekeeper – Old woman

Robber 1 – Man A

Robber 2 – Old man B

Queen – Old woman

Princess – Young woman

Royal guardsman – Man A

Guardsman 1 – Man A

Guardsman 2 – Man A

Ferryman – Man A

Devil – Old man B

Devils' grandmother – Old woman

Messenger – Young woman

(This play has many characters but is intended to be performed by only 5 actors and actresses – see above. The play is written to be produced in a minimalistic style: instead of elaborate stage sets and detailed props, the various characters each actor has to portray should be performed using different accents, dialects, facial expressions, costumes – or even just accessories - and with as much mime as possible. Indeed, it shouldn't be necessary to use a stage set at all – a simple backdrop ought to suffice for all scenes.

Any props used should be simplistic, i.e. boxes of various shapes and sizes, pieces of wood, bits of paper etc.

Scene changes should be as swift as possible, perhaps just a quick dropping of the lights and/or a sound cue)

SCENE 1 – BIRTH / TREACHERY

(As curtain opens we see the Father of the Lucky Child pacing the stage with a baby in his arms – this should be acted rather than represented by a prop)

FATHER *(To baby)* Oh! You make me so happy! I can't believe it! I can't believe how lucky we are to have you! *(Stops pacing. Proud to bursting)* God bless you wife! A healthy son! But, not just *any* son. No, you have a strange light in your skin...not pale... no, it... it glows! It's not normal! It's, it's a...a... lucky skin. It has to be! Who ever saw or heard of anything like it before?!

(Enter peasant woman)

PEASANT WOMAN What's that you say? Like what?

FATHER I said, my son has a lucky skin. Look! I know he's all wrapped up at the moment, but you can see his skin glow. *(Goes over to show her)*

PEASANT WOMAN *(Impressed)* Ooooo, I say! You're right there! A lucky skin it is! Either that or you'll never need to buy candles again.

FATHER Candles?

PEASANT WOMAN Stand 'im in the corner with a lampshade on his head and... *(Father doesn't understand)*... never mind. *(Beat)* I tell you what though.

FATHER What?

PEASANT WOMAN *(Dramatic)* This is the kind of child... that can go far!

FATHER Far?

PEASANT WOMAN Far. As in... *(Slowly. Explanatory)* a... long... way. *(Incomprehension on part of Father)* Beyond the end of the lane? *(Beat)* I can see you need more than just a bit of help.

FATHER indeed. We are but poor people.

PEASANT WOMAN Figures. *(Beat)* Well, I would say... *(Dramatic tone again)* that this is the kind of child... that will marry the kings' daughter one day.

FATHER Really! You think so?

PEASANT WOMAN I do. In fact, you get me a piece of parchment, I'll even write it down for you. That way it's official. A prophecy. Prophecy is a little side line of mine.

FATHER You tell the future? And you'll write it down? And it'll come true?

PEASANT WOMAN Yes. I'll write it down *(for, oh let's say a couple of nights bed and board perhaps...)* and "yes" it would be real...as real as... the brain in your head.

FATHER Well then, of course! *(Jumps about for glee)* It's true, it's true! My son is a lucky child! He has a lucky skin! And he's going to marry the kings' daughter when he grows up!

(The king, unbeknown to the others and not dressed in regal manner, has in the meantime overheard the last of this from the wings. He is however as yet unseen by the actors on stage)

PEASANT WOMAN Hey, keep your hair on! *(Sotto voce)* You have to watch out: the king is a bit of a nasty piece. Always scurrying around disguised as a peasant, listening in on peoples secrets...

(The king enters interrupting the conversation)

KING I'm sorry, but did I hear you say that you have a lucky child?

FATHER With a lucky skin! Look! (*Shows*)

KING Well how unusual.

FATHER Yes, and he's going to marry the kings' daughter one day!

KING You don't say.

FATHER I do! This woman here has prophecied it. Isn't it wonderful?

KING (*Unenthusiastic*) Sounds fantastic.

PEASANT WOMAN Hey! Hang about! Don't I know you? I'm sure I've seen your picture in the *Daily Parchment*...

KING No, no, no... Not possible. I am not from these parts. I am simply a nobleman travelling through this area. And I have wonderful news for you (*to Father*) I am in a position to offer your son a golden future fitting to his golden skin.

FATHER You are?

KING Yes indeed, but first you must fetch your good wife. (*Beat as he hesitates*) Go on!

FATHER Alright... I will. (*Exits*)

PEASANT WOMAN (*Shouts after him, but too late*) Hey, wait a second!

KING So, you are a prophetess?

PEASANT WOMAN Yes, I have quite a reputation around here. The *Daily Parchment* ran a series on me only last month. I have a better reputation than that French upstart Nostradamus. He only prophecies the far future – clever trick. Me, I stick to the next few years. (*Beat*) Hey, now I know who you are! Aren't you the king his self?

KING The king? The king?! (*Laughs*) Oh dear old woman, how ridiculous! Where is my crown? (*Mockingly*) Am I dressed in rags? No, you'll find I'm just a simple nobleman. That's all. Really.

(*Father returns with Mother. This time Mother is carrying the child*)

FATHER Here's my wife!

KING I am delighted to meet you! (*Bows, kisses her hand...*) You are still radiant from the birth. Rich in motherly love!

MOTHER Oh no sir, I'm just a poor peasant. But God has been kind to us. He has blessed us with a lucky child.

KING Indeed. And I would like to offer your child a golden future.

MOTHER How do you mean sir?

KING I am a rich man, with many lands and many... employees. But I am in need of an heir. I am unfortunately unable to have children.

PEASANT WOMAN Tell that to the queen! What about your daughter? (*King glares at peasant woman*)

MOTHER What do you mean?

KING Oh nothing! This woman is of the ridiculous notion that I am the king, disguised. Quite absurd I assure you! She obviously reads too many fairy stories!

FATHER I'm sure she's mistaken. What would the king be doing here anyway?

KING Quite right... Besides, look inside my clothes (*Shows*) – all you can see are sacks of various sizes filled with gold coins and precious jewels. No sign of a hidden crown.

FATHER/MOTHER/PEASANT WOMAN (*Impressed*) Oh!

KING Now, if you were to hand your child over to me, then I would give you one or maybe even two of these sacks in exchange.

FATHER/MOTHER/PEASANT WOMAN (*Even more impressed*) Oh!!

KING Your child would grow up to take over my lands and my... er ... employees. And just think what *you* could do with the wealth I am offering you.

PEASANT WOMAN Don't listen to him! He's the king! He's a trickster! He's just trying to... (*The king smothers her*)

KING And I'm sure this prophetess is right: the child is a lucky child. And as such, my appearing just now was only the first of the many lucky things that will happen to him.

PEASANT WOMAN (*Struggling*) Let me go!

KING I think the pronouncer of the wonderful prophecy should also not go unrewarded, assuming she sees with her wonderous powers the truth of all I say. (*Sotto voce*) Shall we say one sack of gold?

(*Peasant woman stops struggling, but the king still holds her. Sotto voce*)

PEASANT WOMAN Two.

KING Two.

(*Peasant woman smiles, the king releases her. Return to normal voices*)

PEASANT WOMAN Well, now you mention it, strangely enough I do see a great house and happy...er... employees and a future where this child rules with wisdom and mercy. (*Suddenly really seeing it*) Oh, Yes! Yes! It really *is* true! It would be for the child's benefit if this man took him!

FATHER Well, then that's settled then!

MOTHER I'm not so sure.

FATHER Oh come on love. I'm sure we'll be able to visit our son now and again. And think of how he'll grow up – as a nobleman!

KING I also have a... er... niece. She is already at her early age a most attractive child. Perhaps in years to come...

PEASANT WOMAN I really do think it's for the best! Believe me!

(*Pause*)

MOTHER Oh, alright.

KING Excellent! Perhaps you can prepare the child for the way. Have you a box in which I could place him? Then he will be protected from the cold.

MOTHER I have a wooden box that would be perfect. I'll just go and fetch it and line it with down. (*Exits*)

PEASANT WOMAN In the meantime, I think the financial transactions need completing...

(*The king hands over the various sacks – two to the peasant woman and two to the father. These should be mimed*)

FATHER Many, many thanks good sir.

PEASANT WOMAN Yes, thank-you good sir. May your "niece" prosper. (*She bows and exits*)

(*The mother returns with the box and hands it over – still somewhat reluctantly – to the king*)

MOTHER You will take good care of him, won't you sir?

KING Rest assured, he will be in the best of hands. Goodbye, I must take my leave.

MOTHER/FATHER Goodbye sir.

(The king exits. The parents stand waving goodbye. Blackout)

SCENE 4 – ROBBERS

(The Lucky Child walks through a forest. It is getting dark. He is extremely tired. He sees a house ahead of him, with a light in, and heads towards it. He knocks on the door. It is opened by an old woman. Unbeknown to him, she is housekeeper to a den of robbers)

HOUSEKEEPER Who are you? Where have you come from? What do you want?

LUCKY CHILD So many questions! Very well, I have travelled from the miller and have a letter for the queen. *(Gets out to show her)* But I have lost my way in this forest and nightfall is close and I have nowhere to stay. Might I perhaps come in just for the one night? I shall take my leave as soon as the sun rises.

HOUSEKEEPER You poor child! Fortune is not with you! You have come to a house of robbers and thieves. One of them is my son and I keep house for him and his compatriots, but you they will surely kill if they find you here!

LUCKY CHILD Old woman, that is a risk I must take. I am so tired I cannot walk any further. *(He collapses on the floor and falls instantly asleep. The housekeeper gets a blanket to cover him with. Just as she has finished covering him, two of the robbers return)*

ROBBER 1 Old woman get me my ale!

HOUSEKEEPER Yes son, straight away, but first...

ROBBER 1 What's this?! There's a young man lying on the floor asleep! Bloody strange looking as well.

ROBBER 2 Where's he come from? Has he any money? Let's slit his throat and have a look in his purse.

HOUSEKEEPER No! You musn't! This poor child got lost in the forest and I took pity on him and let him in. As soon as he came in, he fell down asleep on the floor, so exhausted he was.

ROBBER 2 No doubt drunk as a lord! Let's slit his belly open!

ROBBER 1 No wait... maybe we can sell him to the gypsies?

HOUSEKEEPER No, please have mercy on him! He was on a mission. Look, he has a letter in his hand which he said was for the queen.

ROBBER 2 Aye, I bet... more like a begging note! Let's slit his chest open and feed his heart to the swine!

ROBBER 1 Look, will you shut your blood-thirsty gob up for a moment!

ROBBER 2 Oh yeah! And are you gonna make me?!

ROBBER 1 No, look let's have a gander at this letter of his first, before we decide what to do with him, alright?

ROBBER 2 (*Sulkily*) Oh, alright then.

(*Robber 1 extracts the letter from the child's hand and glances over it*)

ROBBER 1 Hey up! It really is from the king, addressed to the queen – look here, it has the king's seal on it.

ROBBER 2 Probably a forgery.

ROBBER 1 Don't be stupid! Who the hell round here has the technology to forge something like that?

ROBBER 2 We sometimes forge letters.

ROBBER 1 But not a bloody wax seal from the king! Look at the detail in that, the different textures, the lettering... that's real craftsmanship that is.

ROBBER 2 Bugger the seal, what does the letter say?

ROBBER 1 Gimme a chance will you! (*Pause as he reads on*) Well, well, well...

what a bastard that king is! This young man obviously can't read. It says here that as soon as he appears before the queen, she should see to it... that he's executed!

ROBBER 2 They're all the same these bloody royals. Slit your throat as soon as they look at you.

ROBBER 1 And what was it you wanted to do with him, eh?

ROBBER 2 That's different. We wanted to rob 'im. We need his dosh.

ROBBER 1 You don't even know if he's got any. Chances are he's as poor as we are. Or at least would be if we didn't steal all the time. (*Beat*) Hey, tell you what. I've an idea. Instead of doing this one in, or letting the queen kill 'im, let's play a trick on the king. Let's cut this seal out and stick it on a new letter. Do it carefully it should look alright.

ROBBER 2 And what are we gonna write in the new letter?

ROBBER 1 Oh, now that's a good question!

(*Pause as all contemplate the possibilities*)

HOUSEKEEPER I know! Why don't you tell the queen, she should marry her daughter to him soon as possible and with a big celebration? I hear the princess is about his age.

(*The robbers laugh out loudly*)

ROBBER 1 Ha,ha,ha... (*Trying to contain himself*) Mother, you're a genius! That's exactly what we'll do! What a great trick! Wait till he finds out! He'll be livid! Come on, let's get some parchment now and a quill, we'll finish the letter before the lad awakes...

(*Lights fade out quickly*)

SCENE 5 – MARRIAGE TO THE PRINCESS

(*The queen is standing reading the letter that the thieves have forged. The princess is by her side. A royal guardsman stands to one side. The Lucky Child is kneeling before the two women*)

QUEEN Well, this is highly unusual. It says here, that for duties performed in service to the king, we should marry the bearer of this letter to our only daughter, the princess. And, that we should do this without delay and without awaiting the return of the king!

PRINCESS Let me see mummy.

(The queen hands her the letter. The princess scans the letter without reading it in detail)

PRINCESS The letter has daddy's seal mummy, so it must be alright. And you know how cross daddy gets if his will isn't followed absolutely to the letter. *(She glances at the young man, a certain attraction is evident)*

QUEEN I suppose you're right. *(Beat)* Very well young man, I have no option but to welcome you into our family.

LUCKY CHILD *(Slowly rises)* I am deeply honoured your majesty. The beauty of the princess is matched only by that of her mother.

QUEEN *(Pleased, but trying not to show it)* Oh, you are most charming!

PRINCESS Mummy, might I take my future husband and show him round the palace?

QUEEN But of course darling, whyever not?

PRINCESS And might I show him the royal shrubberies? And the royal balcony?

QUEEN Darling, yes! Show him what you like!

PRINCESS *(With a seductive glance at Lucky Child)* Very good mummy. Your command will be followed absolutely to the letter.

(The princess holds out her hand and pulls the young man toward her. They walk offstage eyes only for each other)

QUEEN You! *(She addresses the guardsman)*

GUARDSMAN Your highness?

QUEEN Go at once and spread the news. My daughter is to be married tomorrow. You must also call my advisors. Preparations must begin at once.

GUARDSMAN Right away your majesty! *(He exits. Blackout)*

SCENE 7 – THE JOURNEY TO HELL

(The Lucky Child enters stage R walking wearily. Centre, but also slightly stage L is guardsman 1)

GUARDSMAN 1 Hold! Before you enter this town, you must answer me this: what is your trade and what else might you know?

LUCKY CHILD Why do you ask, good sir?

GUARDSMAN 1 Well, we get a lot of funny types around here. False prophets, religious fanatics, philosophers, journalists... I'm beholden to ask what trade you have.

LUCKY CHILD And what else I might know?

GUARDSMAN 1 News from far away, secret potions, treasure maps, ravishing young princesses to be rescued, keys for chastity belts ... The usual things.

LUCKY CHILD I am a miller by trade and I know... everything!

GUARDSMAN 1 (*Bursts out laughing*) Everything is it? (*Sarcastic*) Not a bit cocky are you? Hey, you're not one of those damn journalist types are you? If you value your life, you'd better be just a simple prophet...

LUCKY CHILD No, I am neither. But please, test me. I can help you with anything.

GUARDSMAN 1 (*Sarcastic*) Oh right, with anything! Well if you're so clever mate, then answer me this: we have a fountain in the middle of our town which has dried up... but get this: it didn't used to pour forth water, but wine! Real wine! Bloody fantastic it was too. Now if you know everything, then I'm sure you can tell me, why it's dried up. Not a drop of anything comes out any more. One day it just seized up and no-one knows why. (*Beat*) Come on then clever clogs, what's the solution eh? Don't know, do you?

LUCKY CHILD You will get your answer when I return.

GUARDSMAN 1 (*Scoffingly*) Oh yes? Nice try! Playing for time, eh? Good policy, mate! Think if I claimed to know everything, that's exactly what I'd do. You know you ought to go into politics pal, you'd be a natural. In fact, you lot are always cap in hand with them damned journalists. I think I ought to run you out of town, hey where you going? Come on, I didn't mean it like that. Perhaps you can tell me a cure for warts or where to find dragons teeth... or... or...

(During the above ranting, the Lucky Child wanders off and the lights fade. There is a short blackout. The guardsman stays standing, but changes his costume in some way to indicate a new situation. The lights come up again. When the guardsman speaks he should have a completely different accent to the first guardsman)

GUARDSMAN 2 Hold! Before you enter this city, you must answer me this: what is your trade and what else might you know?

LUCKY CHILD Why do you ask, good sir?

GUARDSMAN 2 We don't want any layabouts in this town. There's plenty of idle folk wandering the country. Beggars, tramps, lepers, down-at-heel noblemen... If you want to come in here, you've got to make use of yourself.

LUCKY CHILD And what else I might know?

GUARDSMAN 2 The mayor here has a saying: better to let it all out at the city gate, than have it dragged out of you under torture in the city dungeon.

LUCKY CHILD I am a miller by trade, but I am afraid the remainder of your watch would be insufficient to tell you all I know, for I know... everything!

GUARDSMAN 2 What... everything?

LUCKY CHILD Everything.

GUARDSMAN 2 You're not God himself are you? Come down in human form?

LUCKY CHILD No, I am a man like yourself, but born with a lucky skin – see how it glows?

GUARDSMAN 2 You do look rather... peculiar. Sure you're not even, well... related to God?

LUCKY CHILD No, as far as I know, I am not related to God.

GUARDSMAN 2 Hey, hang about. I thought you said you knew everything?

LUCKY CHILD Er... yes, that's right. Everything.

GUARDSMAN 2 Well how come you don't know if you're related to God or not?

LUCKY CHILD (*Hesitatingly*) Well... er... because God himself does not know.

GUARDSMAN 2 God doesn't know if he's related to you? But that means he doesn't know everything either! How does that fit in with an omniscient God? And anyway, how can you know that?

LUCKY CHILD (*Uncertainly*) Because I... know God?

GUARDSMAN 2 Wait a minute... if you know God, then you must know the cardinality of the relationship you have with God and more importantly, he must know you and the intrinsic nature of the relationship he has with you! I think you're having me on – the truth of the matter must be that God knows what relationship he has to you (because per definition God is omniscient), but you don't know what relationship you have with him, because you don't know everything after all. Unless of course there is no God, which means you're lying on at least two scores...

LUCKY CHILD Look, I don't really have time for theological debates, can I come into the city or not?

GUARDSMAN 2 Not so quick, mate! First, if you know so much then answer me this riddle: we have a tree in the middle of the city which used to bear golden apples. Now it doesn't even bear leaves. If you can tell me why, I'll believe you're God after all.

LUCKY CHILD But, I didn't say I was God!

GUARDSMAN 2 Well an angel then.

LUCKY CHILD But I didn't mention angels!

GUARDSMAN The devil perhaps?

LUCKY CHILD No! Although, I'll tell you this: I am looking for him. And as soon as I have found him and got from him what I seek, I shall return and you shall have the answer to your riddle.

GUARDSMAN 2 You're looking for the devil? But surely the only way to find the devil is to transcend life itself? How do you plan to come back? You can't just resurrect yourself you know! And in any case, how do you know that there's a life after death at all? Do we even possess an immortal soul? Does God really exist? (*Beat*) Hey, come back, perhaps we could discuss the cosmological argument? ... The teleological? ... Not even the ontological argument?

(During the above ranting, the Lucky Child wanders off and the lights fade. There is a short blackout. The guardsman stays standing, but changes his costume to indicate the change to the ferryman. The ferryman should carry an oar – or something approximating to it. The lights come up again. When the ferryman speaks he should have a different accent to the two guardsmen)

LUCKY CHILD Wait! Before you speak. I know everything! I know what you are going to ask me!

FERRYMAN You do?

LUCKY CHILD Yes. You're going to say "Hold! Before I row you across this great lake, you must answer me this: what is your trade and what else might you know?" Am I right?

FERRYMAN Well, bugger me! That's exactly right! How did you know that?

LUCKY CHILD I told you. I know everything.

FERRYMAN Well, then if that's the case, perhaps you can also tell me why it is I have to take people across this lake in a boat, back and forth, day in, day out without anyone to relieve me?

LUCKY CHILD Wait until I return from my mission and I will tell you why. But now, please ferry me across the water. By the way: miller. My trade.

FERRYMAN Bloody hell! And you have to know everything?! They expect damn high qualifications for the simplest of jobs these days, don't they? Alright, hop in the boat and I'll row you across.

(Blackout. Exit all)

SCENE 8 – IN HELL

(The lighting should be dimmer for this scene, with red tones. The Lucky Child enters. The devil's grandmother is sitting on a seat - a large box - towards the other side of the stage. The box is one of several onstage at this moment. The Lucky Child doesn't notice the old woman at first. She notices him however straight away)

LUCKY CHILD *(To himself)* The entrance to hell wasn't difficult to find after getting off the boat, but inside... it's full of tunnels... *(Notices grandmother)* Oh, hello! Who are you?

GRANDMOTHER *(Brusque)* I, young man, am the devil's grandmother.

LUCKY CHILD The devil's grandmother! I didn't know he had one!

GRANDMOTHER And yet you claim to know everything.

LUCKY CHILD *(Abashed)* Oh, that. Well, I suppose that was just a way of getting people's attention... Provoking a reaction and all that. *(Beat)* I suppose it won't wash with you.

GRANDMOTHER No, it certainly won't young man! Strange though it may sound, the only thing that will help you with me, is absolute honesty. *(Beat)* What is it you want?

LUCKY CHILD I am on a mission from the king. I may only keep his daughter as my wife, if I bring him three golden hairs from the head of the devil.

GRANDMOTHER *(Milder)* Hmm, that's asking an awful lot. I suspect the king thought himself rid of you by setting you this absurd mission. But perhaps we can spoil his plans... I like you young man and the king has deserved to be set down a peg or two for years now. I will see if I can't help you after all. However, if the devil returns home and finds you here, he will roast you on a spit. We must hide you.

(Pause as she considers how) I know, I will turn you into an ant and then you can hide in the folds of my dress.

(She raises herself up and waves her arms in a magical fashion. There is an elaborate lighting and sound effect, followed by a short blackout during which the Lucky Child "vanishes" – i.e. exits)

GRANDMOTHER *(Holding out her finger with the "ant" on it)* There! That will do nicely! Now, crawl as deeply as you can into my dress. You'll be safe there. *(She sits*

and then sticks her finger into her dress for a moment until satisfied the Lucky Child has hidden)

LUCKY CHILD (*From offstage*) Thank-you! You are more than kind! But, before the devil returns, please tell me the answer to three mysteries: why does a fountain, that used to pour wine, now not even bring forth water? Why a tree that used to produce golden apples, no longer bears a single leaf? And why a ferryman rows to and fro without being relieved?

GRANDMOTHER Those are difficult questions, but keep still, remain quiet and pay attention to what the devil says when I pull the three hairs from his head. (*Sotto voce*) Quiet! I hear him coming!

(Pause, after which the devil appears)

DEVIL (*Sniffs the air*) Hello?! What's this? I smell... I smell something familiar. What is it? (*Realisation*) Ah yes! I smell human flesh! (*To grandmother*) Alright, where is it?

GRANDMOTHER Whatever are you talking about?

DEVIL Come on, you can't fool me, I'm the devil! I recognise the smell of a human being. After all, I've been roasting them for thousands of years!

GRANDMOTHER You're imagining things! Perhaps you've eaten too much human meat – you smell it now even when it's not there.

DEVIL Grandmother, much as I respect you, I am the one who is second in charge in the universe! I'm convinced there's been a human here just recently. (*He begins searching about, but finds nothing*) Come on out, wherever you are! I know you're there!

GRANDMOTHER Perhaps you eat too much human flesh? I've always told you, you ought to eat more greens. Perhaps the smell has got stuck in your nostrils.

DEVIL (*Angry*) Don't try to be clever with me!! I know what I smell! (*Searches even more frantically, but again finds nothing*)

GRANDMOTHER Look, why don't you eat the tea I've prepared you. You're probably so hungry you can't help but smell your favourite food.

DEVIL Oh, very well! (*He sits down at a box and begins to eat the "food" upon another box downstage of the one he sits on. He eats and drinks noisily and greedily. While he eats there is silence. As he finishes...*)

DEVIL Ah, that was good! I deserved that after a good day of evil deeds. Now grandmama, please pick a few of the lice out of my fell.

GRANDMOTHER Very good. Come here and lay your head in my lap.

(He does as suggested and as she pretends to search through his hair, he slowly, but obviously falls fast asleep. The old woman then demonstratively pulls a hair from his head and places it to her side. The devil wakes up with a shock)

DEVIL Owww!! What the hell was that all about?

GRANDMOTHER My dear, I'm sorry. I too fell asleep. I had a strange dream and suddenly pulled on your hair.

DEVIL What did you dream?

GRANDMOTHER I dreamt that there was a town. And in this town there was a fountain out of which poured wine. But one day the fountain siezed up and not even water came out anymore. What would cause something like that?

DEVIL Ha, ha, ha! If only they knew! A great toad sits underneath a stone at the bottom of the fountain. As long as the toad lives there and sits over the spring, the wine will not flow. If the townsfolk were to kill the toad, then the wine would soon flow again. *(Beat)* What a strange dream for you to have grandmother. Settle yourself and devote yourself to picking lice again. *(He rests his head again in her lap and before long falls asleep once more. The old woman once again demonstratively pulls a hair from his head and places it to her side. The devil wakes up a second time with a shock)*

DEVIL Owww!!! For God's sake, what was that all about?

GRANDMOTHER My dear, I'm sorry. I fell asleep again. Once again I had a strange dream and without wishing it, I suddenly pulled on your hair.

DEVIL *(Angrily)* What did you dream this time?

GRANDMOTHER I dreamt that there was a great city. And in this city there grew a tree from which golden apples fell. But the apples stopped growing and not even a leaf appeared on the tree. Why would that be do you think?

DEVIL Ha, ha, ha! If only they knew! There is a mouse which lives in the roots of the tree. The mouse chews on the roots of the tree and stops it producing the golden apples. If the mouse carries on chewing the roots much longer the tree will wither and die. *(Beat. Angrily)* But leave me alone with your infernal dreams grandmother! If you wake me up again, I'll box you round the ears!

GRANDMOTHER Dearest I'm terribly sorry, I don't know what came over me. Come, place your head again on my lap and let me see to your fell once more.

DEVIL But make sure you don't fall asleep again old woman!

GRANDMOTHER I shall do my best to stay awake. Come!

(The devil reluctantly gives in and lays his head again upon the grandmothers' lap. After a short bout of lice-picking the devil is asleep again. For the third time the old woman demonstratively pulls a hair from his head and places it to her side. This time the devil wakes in a ferocious rage)

DEVIL This time you have gone too far!! My own flesh and blood or not, I shall roll you into a pit of burning tar! *(He grabs hold of her, shakes her and attempts to raise her up from her seat. She resists)*

GRANDMOTHER No! Stop, please think dearest grandson! Wait! Wait, who can do anything about their nightmares? Please, if you throw me into a pit of tar, who will make you your meals every day?

(The devil stops shaking her but keeps hold of her arm)

DEVIL Very well! A nightmare? What was it this time?

GRANDMOTHER I dreamt there was a ferryman who complained he had to ferry people back and forth, day in, day out and was never relieved of his duty. The man had spent many years ferrying and was extremely weary of it all. What would cause something like that?

DEVIL Ha! If the old fool only knew! All he has to do is to press the handle of his oar into someone else's hand! He will be free and the other idiot will have to take his place. *(Beat)* But I am tired now old woman. You have robbed me of too much sleep!

I shall go and lie down near the lake of burning souls. Their screams shall sooth me into slumber. Make sure my breakfast is ready for me in the morning!

GRANDMOTHER Very good, I will. I promise.

(The devil stomps off. Pause. The old woman searches for, finds and pulls the ant out of her dress folds. She then waves elaborately with the other hand and there is the same lighting/sound effect as before, including the blackout. The Lucky Child appears once more)

GRANDMOTHER Here are the three golden hairs. *(She hands him them)* The answers to your questions you will no doubt have heard.

LUCKY CHILD A thousand grateful thanks! I have heard and will remember all!

GRANDMOTHER Then you have fulfilled your task. You must leave here as soon as possible.

LUCKY CHILD I will! May God be with you! *(Grandmother raises eyebrows, looks suddenly scornful)* Oh, beg pardon! I mean, may your grandson prosper and be with you always! *(Grandmother smiles benevolently. He is about to exit the same way as the devil)*

GRANDMOTHER Not that way! The other way! *(Lucky Child recrosses and exits from other side of the stage. Blackout)*