



MURRAY J. RIVETTE

A wacky adaptation of the children's classic, RAPUNZEL

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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BIG DOG PUBLISHING

P.O. Box 1400

TALLEVAST, FL 34270

“Great! So I get a dragon
with poor personal hygiene
and bad breath!”

—Witch

Gildersnort

CHILDREN'S COMEDY. When the Baker ventures into a witch's garden to fetch rutabagas for his wife, the wicked Witch of the Winds catches him and demands just one thing in exchange for the rutabagas—the Baker's daughter, Gildersnort! The witch imprisons Gildersnort in a tower guarded by a fierce dragon. But wait a minute! This dragon isn't fierce! It turns out Daryl D. Dragon isn't as scary-looking or fierce as the temp agency promised. In fact, he can't even breathe fire because he drinks too much Pepto Bismol for his upset stomach. But just as everything looks rotten for Gildersnort, a prince, formerly known as Artist, arrives on the scene. Will he be able to remember the secret code and free Gildersnort from the tower?

Performance Time: Approximately 60 minutes.

Cast of Characters

(3 m, 4 f, 3 flexible)

STORYTELLER: Flexible role.

BERTIE: Helps with the props; flexible role.

ECHO: Helps with the props; can't stop echoing everything Bertie says; flexible role.

BAKER: A bit henpecked and not too bright.

BAKER'S WIFE: Fat, loves rutabagas; a bit of a nag.

WICKED WITCH OF THE WINDS: Super mean and scary; carries a foam baseball bat, which she uses as a staff.

GILDERSNORT: Wears a wig with long blonde braids and has a really silly name.

GIRL SCOUT GUIDE: Sells cookies door to door.

DARRYL D. DRAGON: Not very scary; drank too much Pepto Bismol and can no longer breathe fire.

PRINCE: A really bad artist but has a good heart.

Synopsis of Scenes

SCENE 1: Baker's house.

SCENE 2: Witch's garden.

SCENE 3: Baker's house.

SCENE 4: Baker's house, 16 years later.

SCENE 5: Witch's den.

SCENE 6: Baker's house.

Props

Sack	Locket
Cutout of a small hill	Toothbrush
Narrow piece of blue cloth	Tree stump
2 Small tree branches	Boxes of cookies
Foam baseball bat, for Witch's staff	3 Handkerchiefs
Rutabagas	Wig with long blonde braids
2 Sets of pompons	Map
Chair	Business card
Table	Ladder
Muffin with a birthday candle in it	Food for dragon
Napkin	Feather duster
	A bad painting

Sound Effects

Loud crash
Instrumental version of "Memory," optional.

Scène 1

(AT RISE: Baker's House. Storyteller enters.)

STORYTELLER: Good morning, boys and girls, moms and dads, and grandmas and grandpas, too! Today we're going to be telling you the story of Rumpelstiltskin, the terrible little man who spins straw into gold –

(Bertie and Echo enter.)

BERTIE: No, no...we're not doing Rumpelstiltskin!

ECHO: ...not doing Rumpelstiltskin!

STORYTELLER: Oh, sorry. All right, then, today we shall tell you the story of the Flibbertygibbet –

BERTIE: No, no, we're not doing Flibbertygibbet!

ECHO: ...not doing Flibbertygibbet!

STORYTELLER: Oh, dear. Well, if we're not doing Rumpelstiltskin or Flibbertygibbet, then what story *are* we doing today?

BERTIE: *(Stage whisper.)* Gildersnort!

ECHO: *(Stage whisper.)* Gildersnort!

STORYTELLER: Oh, yes, of course! Gildersnort! That's it. I knew it was one of those strange, long names! Oh, and by the way, who are you two?

BERTIE: I'm Bertie, and I'm here to help with the story. *(Indicates Echo.)* And she's Echo.

ECHO: ...here to help with the story. And she's Echo.

(Bertie claps her hands over Echo's ears. Echo shakes hands with children, dragging Bertie.)

BERTIE: Don't let her confuse you. She's Echo and she always Echoes everything I say...and sometimes what

anyone says! But *you* have to ask her. Poor girl has never had an original thought of her own. (*Removes her hands.*)

STORYTELLER: Oh, dear. I can see where that *would* be very confusing.

BERTIE: It could be at times...

ECHO: ...could be at times...

BERTIE: ...but if you can overlook it, it saves you from repeating lots of things.

ECHO: ...saves you from repeating lots of things.

STORYTELLER: Well, suppose I *were* to ask her—

BERTIE: Don't do it!

ECHO: Don't do it!

BERTIE: Do it *only* when necessary, and never at *any* other time.

ECHO: ...never at *any* other time.

STORYTELLER: All right, if you say so. Then let's get on with our story, shall we? Our tale begins like this: Once upon a time...in a far off forest, there lived a jolly Baker and his somewhat jolly wife... (*Indicates house. Storyteller, Bertie and Echo exit. Baker and wife enter.*)

BAKER: (*To audience.*) Oh, I am so happy. My wife and I are expecting our first child, and I can hardly wait to see if it will be a boy or a girl.

WIFE: I want a girl. But I don't care, as long as she's healthy!

BAKER: I don't care either... (*Aside to audience.*) ...as long as *he's* healthy!

WIFE: But I am so hungry.

BAKER: Again? But you just ate breakfast and lunch...and you had a snack, too!

WIFE: Oh, I know, but I still have a craving for...

BAKER: Pickles and ice cream?

WIFE: No. I had that all last week.

BAKER: Buttermilk pancakes and sauerkraut?

WIFE: No, I had those two weeks ago. I want something different this week...

BAKER: Peanut butter and onions...?

WIFE: No... Oh, I know! Rutabagas!

BAKER: What? Rutabagas?

WIFE: Yes, you heard me! Rutabagas! That is what I crave the most. Delicious, sweet, succulent...rutabagas!

BAKER: Rutabagas? Of all things...but my dear, they're not even in season. It's the month of August, and there's no "R" in August.

WIFE: Well, then, put one in there. Call it *aur-gust*!

BAKER: But you can't just put an "R" in a month that doesn't have—

WIFE: Just do as I tell you and put one in! And get me rutabagas!

BAKER: Yes, my dear. But where would I possibly find rutabagas if they're not in season?

WIFE: Oh, I think you know where...

BAKER: I do? (*Dawns on him.*) Oh, no! The Witch's garden? You want me to get rutabagas from the Witch of the Winds' garden? She'll never sell me any rutabagas or, for that matter, anything else from her garden. She is *not* a nice person!

WIFE: Well, then, don't ask her for them...just take them!

BAKER: Take them? But that would be stealing!

WIFE: Oh, she'll never miss a few rutabagas. She has such a large garden, with all kinds of other vegetables, anyway. What's a few rutabagas to her? The old bag is loaded with veggies!

BAKER: Dear, I love you very much, but you are asking me to steal...and that's wrong.

WIFE: Would you rather I nagged you for the rest of your life, husband?

(*He thinks.*)

BAKER: Okay. You sure do present a good argument. So, how many rutabagas would you like?

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WIFE: Get me seven...enough to last for an entire week. And maybe next week, I'll crave something different. Brussels sprouts, perhaps.

BAKER: *(Sighs.)* Yes, dear. I'll go get the rutabagas as soon as it gets dark.

WIFE: Somehow, I thought you'd see it my way. And be sure to avoid the old bat at all costs. You know how cantankerous she can be.

BAKER: Yes, dear.

(Baker and Wife exit; storyteller enters.)

STORYTELLER: Did you hear that, boys and girls? The Baker's wife wants him to steal rutabagas from the Witch's garden! Can you imagine that? We all know that stealing is wrong, and I just hope that the Witch doesn't catch him. Because if she does... *(Cuts across throat.)* ...skriicchhh! Well, as soon as night falls, the Baker will be on his way. *(Sound effect of loud crash.)* Ah, there's night falling now...and here he is, ready to go to the Witch's garden. *(Baker enters carrying a sack. Bertie and Echo assist Storyteller by bringing in props as the story unfolds.)* Now, the Witch doesn't live just around the corner, so the Baker has a long trip ahead of him... *(As the storyteller narrates the story, the Baker does the stage actions, helped by the props brought on by Bertie and Echo.)* Our friend, the Baker, has a very treacherous journey, which begins at the foot of a high mountain. In fact, the mountain is huge! It's tremendous! It's humungous! It rivals Mount Everest in size... *(Bertie and Echo bring in a small hill and set it in place.)* ...in fact, it is so high... *(Sees hill. Pause. To Bertie and Echo.)* This is the tall mountain? *(Bertie and Echo nod "yes.")* Hmm... *(Pause. To audience.)* Actually, it was a lovely little hill that posed no problem at all for the Baker to climb, and so he simply stepped over it. *(Baker steps over hill.)* Ah, but then the Baker came to a wide raging river. A torrent of whitewater, foaming rapids... *(Bertie and Echo have*

a narrow piece of blue cloth that they stretch across the stage – storyteller sees river. Pause. To Bertie and Echo.) This is the raging river? (Both Bertie and Echo nod “yes.”) Hmmm... (To audience.) ...as I was saying, the Baker came to this lovely, little brook and just jumped right over it. (Baker jumps across the blue cloth.) Oh, but there was still the Black Forest. The Baker was well aware of the strange thicket of trees that could swallow up a person in their dense foliage, and that person would never be heard from again! Ha, ha, ha! (Bertie and Echo bring in two small tree branches.) And this great forest... (Sees branches. Pause.) ...and this great, dense, thick forest... (To audience.) Excuse me for just one moment, please. (To Bertie and Echo.) Is this a joke? I ask for a huge, towering mountain, and you bring in this dinky little hill. I ask for a wide raging river, and you bring me a teensy little brook. And I ask for a thick dense forest, and you bring me two moth-eaten little shrubs! What's going on?

BERTIE: Union rules.

ECHO: ...Union rules.

STORYTELLER: Union rules?

BERTIE: That's right. We're not allowed to carry anything heavy. Sorry.

ECHO: ...anything heavy. Sorry.

STORYTELLER: Oh, dear. That is too bad, but I certainly wouldn't want you to hurt yourselves. Well then, I suppose we'll just have to make do with what we have. Thank you both, anyway.

BERTIE: You're welcome.

ECHO: You're welcome.

(Bertie and Echo exit.)

STORYTELLER: *(To audience.)* All right, let's get on with the story, shall we? The Baker has reached the Witch's garden and is looking for the rutabagas that his demanding wife so

desperately craves. But he'd better keep a sharp lookout for the Witch. I'd better go, too. (*Exits.*)

(Lights fade to black.)

Scène 2

(AT RISE: *The Witch's Garden.*)

BAKER: (*Aside.*) Now where would those rutabagas be? Hmm. Perhaps over here? (*Looks.*) No. I don't think that those are rutabagas. Those are Brussels sprouts. Actually, I don't really know what rutabagas look like. But I know what other vegetables look like, so all I have to do is to find the ones I don't know, and those would have to be the rutabagas, right? Boy, am I smart! Now where could they be? (*Looks around. Spies them.*) Aha, these must be them, because I've never seen these vegetables before. (*Starts to put them in his sack when he hears the Witch offstage.*)

WITCH: (*Offstage. Screams.*) What is that I hear in my garden?!

BAKER: Oh, no! It's the Witch! Oh, I must hide! Boys and girls, please don't tell her I'm here, for if she catches me... (*Runs finger across throat.*) ...skriicchh!

(*Baker freezes in a pose like a scarecrow. Witch enters, carrying a baseball bat.*)

WITCH: Did I hear someone tramping through my beautiful vegetables? (*Aside.*) That's very strange. I could have sworn I heard someone or something out here. (*To audience.*) Ah, children! Hello, children! I just love children! Do you remember my cousin Esmerelda from Hansel and Gretel? She loved children, too! Preferably baked! (*Wild cackle.*) But she had a self-cleaning oven. Personally, I like 'em boiled! (*Wilder cackle.*) Have you seen anyone around here in my garden? (*She waits for an answer. The Baker desperately shushes them.*) If I should catch anyone here, they would be severely punished! (*Wild cackle. She looks around the garden and spies*

missing rutabagas.) What's this? Someone has been rooting
in my rutabagas!

(Bertie and Echo enter with pompoms.)

BERTIE: Rutabagas, rutabagas, rah, rah, rah!

ECHO: Rutabagas, rutabagas, rah, rah, rah!

BERTIE: ...Rutabagas, rutaba...

ECHO: ...Rutabagas, rutaba...

(Storyteller enters.)

STORYTELLER: What on earth are you two doing?

BERTIE: We're rooting for the rutabagas!

ECHO: ...for the rutabagas!

STORYTELLER: No, no...she said rooting *in* her
rutabagas...not rooting for them!

BERTIE: Oh. Never mind!

ECHO: ...Never mind!

(Bertie and Echo exit. Storyteller mimes apology as he exits.)

WITCH: *(To audience.)* Don't you just hate ridiculous
interruptions?

BAKER: Absolutely. *(Realizes he has spoken.)* Oh, no! *(Begins
to pray.)*

WITCH: *(Turns to Baker.)* Well, well, well. What have we
here? Oh my, oh my, oh my. What a strange-looking
scarecrow. But! I don't remember ever having a scarecrow
in my garden. Hello, scarecrow!

(Hits him on head with soft foam rubber bat she uses as staff.)

BAKER: Ouch! Hey, that hurts!

WITCH: No! Does it really?

BAKER: Yes, it does...ma'am.

WITCH: Ha! So I did hear something out here, eh? And if I'm not mistaken, from the looks of my garden, you have a sack full of turnips!

BAKER: Ha! Shows how much you know. These aren't turnips, they're rutabagas. And the sack isn't even full, there's only seven of them...

WITCH: Silence!

BAKER: Wow, you're so touchy! Sorry.

WITCH: I said quiet! You should be sorry, you miserable, wretched poor excuse for a common thief! No good has ever come from stealing, and if this were Bobblewobbleburg, you would have your hands cut off for stealing someone else's property.

(Baker hides his hands behind his back.)

BAKER: Uhhh...I don't think rutabagas are worth that.

WITCH: Well, of course they're not worth that, you simpleton. But you will be punished for your theft.

BAKER: Isn't an apology enough? I mean, give me a break, huh? My wife is expecting our first child and, oh yeah, I've got these awful pains that start right about here and go all the way down to...

WITCH: No.

BAKER: Oh. I mean, even if I say I am really, really, really sorry?

WITCH: *(Roars.)* I said, no! Now let me think... *(Thinks.)* Aha! As a punishment, you and your wife will be the parents of a beautiful baby daughter, and you will raise her from an infant through all the years—

BAKER: Hey, that's no problem! Thanks a lot.

WITCH: I'm not done yet!

BAKER: Excuse me.

WITCH: You will enjoy your lovely daughter every day of her life...until she is 16, and on her 16th birthday, I will come to

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claim her as mine...and the name you will give her is...
(Dramatic.) ...Gildersnort.

BAKER: Gildersnort? What kind of a name is Gildersnort?

WITCH: I think it's Hungarian or German...I don't really know. It means "salad greens." And I just *love* salad greens!

BAKER: So because you love salad greens, I have to have a kid named after rabbit food? Boy! Why do you want her, anyway?

WITCH: It's very simple. I can't have any children of my own because of my line of work—

BAKER: You mean witchcraft?

WITCH: Hush up! Don't ever say that again, do you understand? Yes, that...craft, if you must know...and so I will take your daughter for my own. She will tend to my every need in my old age, and she will care for me in the manner to which I *will* become accustomed. So, you get her for the first 16 years, and I get her for the rest of her life...or *my* life, whichever comes first. But you, you lucky guy, you also get a week's supply of rutabagas! (Gets audience approval. Audience cheers.)

BAKER: That hardly seems like a fair trade.

WITCH: Trade, shmade. You stole from me! Now before I get angry and turn you into a cockroach, and sic the men in black on you, get out of here with your ill-gotten rutabagas.

BAKER: You could actually do that? You could turn me into a cockroach?

WITCH: It's been known to happen in fairy tales, so don't press your luck! Now go home to your greedy, fat little wife. Go! Go! Go!

(Witch exits cackling. Bertie and Echo enter. Again, they set up the props for the forest, river and mountain, and running around like crazy. The Baker screams as he runs through the "forest," crosses the "river," and jumps over the "mountain." He exits. Lights fade to blackout.)

Scenę 3

(AT RISE: The Baker's house. The Baker arrives "home." Bertie and Echo drop to the stage exhausted. Wife enters.)

WIFE: What's all the screaming about? Did you just see a ghost or something?

BAKER: Worse. I saw the Witch of the Winds.

WIFE: I thought I told you to avoid her.

(She grabs a rutabaga from the sack and happily nibbles at it during the following exchange.)

BAKER: Believe me, meeting her was the last thing I wanted to do! I think she was going to murder me with a baseball bat, but she made a bargain with me.

WIFE: Oh? What sort of bargain?

BAKER: Well, we get to have a daughter...

WIFE: A daughter? Wonderful... *(Takes a bite.)* Mmmm, this rutabaga is yummy.

BAKER: ...and...

WIFE: It's so juicy. Yes...?

BAKER: ... and she'll be healthy and beautiful...

WIFE: Terrific. *(Takes another bite.)* Mmmmm, really delicious.

BAKER: ...but...

WIFE: Yes...?

BAKER: ...but on her 16th birthday...

WIFE: Yes...?

BAKER: *(Rapidly.)* The old Witch comes and claims her for her own!

(Pause.)

WIFE: That's it? That's the bargain? *(Takes a bite.)* Oh, this rutabaga is scrumptious.

BAKER: That's the bargain.

WIFE: Well, a lot of things can happen in 16 years. So I guess we'll just have to make the best of it.

BAKER: So you're not angry?

WIFE: Well, husband, you got the rutabagas, didn't you? *(Takes a bite.)* Mmmmm...it's exquisite.

BAKER: Yes, I did. A whole week's supply.

WIFE: So it wasn't a total loss. Life goes on. All right. As I said, we'll just have to make the best of a bad situation. And we have 16 years before we even have to worry about it.

BAKER: Phew! I thought you'd be really angry at me.

WIFE: Why? You had no other choice, did you?

BAKER: Outside of getting slugged with a baseball bat or getting my hands chopped off...no.

WIFE: Well, then, I think you did fine. There's nothing to get upset about. *(Takes a bite.)* Ummm-mm.

BAKER: There was one other thing, I think I should tell you about...she insists that we name our daughter... *(Dramatic.)* ...Gildersnort.

WIFE: Gildersnort? What kind of a name is that?

BAKER: I think it's either Lithuanian or French. It means "salad greens."

WIFE: So, we'll have a kid named after a head of lettuce?

BAKER: I really didn't have much choice. She frightened me and threatened me. Boy, was I scared. She made all kinds of threats...she even said she would turn me into a cockroach.

WIFE: Oh, you poor dear. But, like I said...nothing to get upset about.

BAKER: Yeah. And the last thing she said was to go home to your greedy...

WIFE: Unh-huh...?

BAKER: ...fat...

WIFE: Unh-huh?

BAKER: ...little...

WIFE: Fat?! That old bag called me fat?! The nerve of some people! I'll kill her! I'll murderize her! I'll even hurt her real bad! Just wait until I get my hands on her...oooohh, I could scream! In fact...I will!

(Screams. They exit. Blackout.)

Scenę 4

(AT RISE: *The Baker's House, 16 years later. Storyteller enters.*)

STORYTELLER: Well, it seems as if the Baker's wife is a bit upset about the old Witch of the Winds calling her fat. I think I'd be upset, too. Oh, well. Our story now jumps ahead 16 years, and luckily, it looks like we've come back to the exact time for a birthday celebration. Let's see what the Baker and his wife are doing on this big day. *(Exits.)*

BAKER: Well, Wife, here it is...the big day.

WIFE: Yes, dear. It's the big one all right. *(Sighs.)*

BAKER: I never thought I'd see this day come.

WIFE: Neither did I. But here it is.

BAKER: Where did the time go?

WIFE: Heaven only knows. But it had to get here sooner or later.

BAKER: And here it is.

WIFE: Finally.

BAKER: Finally.

WIFE: So when are you going?

BAKER: What? I'm not going anywhere.

WIFE: You're not?

BAKER: No. *(Pause.)* What are you talking about?

WIFE: Isn't this the day you were going to get your hair cut?

BAKER: Oh, for goodness sake! I wasn't talking about getting a haircut!

WIFE: You weren't?

BAKER: Of course not!

WIFE: Then what were you talking about?

BAKER: I was talking about our daughter, Gildersnort! The Witch! Remember? It's been 16 years today!

WIFE: Oh, that! That's right, it is her birthday, isn't it?

BAKER: Yes. And her birthday has to be very special. How could you possibly forget?

WIFE: I didn't really forget. I just tried so hard to put it out of my mind. I'm certainly not looking forward to having my child taken away, you know! Even though she is a teenager.

BAKER: I know, I know! Well, we should try to make this a very special day for Gildersnort before you-know-who puts in an appearance.

WIFE: What do you have in mind?

BAKER: I've already baked a birthday muffin for her, and we can put a candle in it and sing the birthday song to her.

WIFE: That's a wonderful idea, husband. And I shall give her my great-grandmother's locket to remember us by when she is gone.

BAKER: Hush! Say no more. I think I hear Gildersnort coming.

(Gildersnort enters.)

GILDERSNORT: Good morning, Mother and Father.

(She kisses them both.)

BAKER: Good morning, daughter...

WIFE: Good morning, Gildersnort.

BAKER: ...and a happy birthday morning to you!

WIFE: Yes. Happy birthday, sweetheart.

GILDERSNORT: You remembered my birthday!

BAKER/WIFE: Of course we did.

WIFE: Certainly. We could never forget that.

BAKER: And we have something special for you. Now, you wait right here.

WIFE: Yes, sit down and close your eyes. You can open them in just a minute.

(They exit. Gildersnort sits and hides her eyes.)

GILDERSNORT: I just love surprises! I do hope that they haven't gone to a lot of trouble for me. After all, it's only a birthday!

(Baker and Wife enter, carrying a muffin with candle stuck in it.)

BAKER/WIFE: *(Singing.)* "Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday, dear Gildersnort. Happy birthday to you."

GILDERSNORT: Oh, my goodness, dear Mother and...

BAKER/WIFE: *(Singing.)* "How old are you now? How old are you now? How old are you, Gildersnort? How old are you now?"

GILDERSNORT: Dear Mother and Father...

BAKER/WIFE: *(Singing.)* "So happy birthday to you. Happy birthday..."

GILDERSNORT: Thank you! Lovely song! Mother, Father, you shouldn't have gone to all this trouble. Oh, look! You baked a special birthday muffin, just for me?

WIFE: Of course, my dear. We wanted you to have the happiest birthday possible.

BAKER: I used only the freshest ingredients I could find to make it special for you, dear daughter.

GILDERSNORT: Oh, thank you both for a wonderful...muffin! Now, I will need to break it into three even pieces so that we can all share it equally.

WIFE: Oh, no, that isn't necessary. It was made just for you.

BAKER: Yes, for you and you alone. And it was made with all our love, too!

GILDERSNORT: Oh, thank you! I'll just eat a little of it now and save the rest for a time when I am very hungry. *(She takes a small bite and wraps the rest in a napkin and puts it in her pocket.)*

BAKER: And that's not all, either. We have a very special present in honor of your 16th birthday. *(To Wife.)* Give it to her, dear.

(Wife hands Gildersnort a locket.)

WIFE: Sorry that we didn't get a chance to gift wrap it, but it's the thought that counts, isn't it? It was my great-grandmother's.

GILDERSNORT: Oh, Father...Mother, it's a beautiful locket! I shall put it on immediately and cherish it always! *(Puts it on.)*

WIFE: I'm so glad you like it. We thought it would be a nice going-away pres—

BAKER: *(To Wife.)* Hush! Say nothing!

GILDERSNORT: Excuse me? What was that, Mother? It sounded almost as if you said, "going-away pres—." Present? Was that what you were saying? A going-away present? What did you mean by that? Please tell me! I'm 16 years old now and able to bear the responsibilities that go with advanced middle age.

BAKER: Yes, that's true. Well, then, I guess we should tell you what's up. *(To Wife.)* Don't you think so?

WIFE: Yes, I think the time has come. So go ahead and tell her.

BAKER: Me? But you're her mother!

(Wife pokes him and both circle Gildersnort.)

WIFE: And you're her father! And it was all your fault that she has to go with the Witch of the Winds.

BAKER: *(Reverse circle.)* My fault, my foot! You're the one who wanted the rutabagas! You're the one who sent me into the Witch's garden to steal them! You should be the one to tell her!

WIFE: *(Reverse.)* I'm not going to be the one to tell Gildersnort that the Witch threatened to take her away from us on her 16th birthday! And all because you got careless and she caught you stealing her rutabagas from her garden!

BAKER: (*Reverse.*) Yes, but you should be the one to explain to her that it was because you were tired of eating pickles and ice cream for a whole week, and buttermilk pancakes and sauerkraut, also for an entire week, not to mention peanut butter and onions for the same length of time, that you just *had* to have rutabagas!

WIFE: Oh, yeah?

BAKER: Yeah!

GILDERSNORT: Hold it! Hold it! Mother, Father, please don't argue. (*To Father.*) Father, dear, are you saying that Mother had a craving for rutabagas because she couldn't stand pickles and ice cream anymore because she had eaten them for a whole week or buttermilk pancakes and sauerkraut because she had also pigged out on them for another week, or peanut butter and onions for the same stupid reason, and so... (*To Mother.*) ...Mother, dear, you sent Father into the garden of the Witch of the Winds and he was actually stealing her vegetables, and then she caught him and threatened to take me away with her on my 16th birthday?

BAKER/WIFE: (*Together, to audience.*) How did she guess?

GILDERSNORT: Wait a minute. Let me digest this. The Witch of the Winds is going to take me away with her? Today? On my birthday? That hardly seems fair!

BAKER: Well, it was either that or you would have had a cockroach for a father. And she's the one who insisted that we name you Gildersnort.

GILDERSNORT: Oh?

BAKER: Yes, it means "salad greens" in some foreign language—Spanish or Czechoslovakian, I think.

WIFE: We're truly sorry, dear daughter, but I wanted your father in one piece as a human being...I'm not that fond of cockroaches, as you know.

GILDERSNORT: But perhaps the Witch has forgotten all about it. After all, it has been 16 years.

WIFE: Unfortunately, Witches *never* forget. They're like elephants in that respect.

GILDERSNORT: Oh, dear.

(Witch enters, cackling.)

WITCH: I'm baaaack! And you're absolutely right, my dear. There's no way I would ever forget. *(To Gildersnort.)* So this is my precious daughter, eh? Oh my, oh my, oh my. This is my lucky day!

GILDERSNORT: Well, zippety-doo-dah to you, Witchie! You just listen to me. My mother and father raised me to be a decent, respectful person, and I think it's terrible for you to just come in here unannounced like this and try to take me from my home in this manner. You should be ashamed!

WITCH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Look at me...I'm so ashamed. Not! Are you packed yet? Have you got your toothbrush, kid? Time is flying, so let's get a move on. I need to have my house swept, the chimney flue cleaned, the carpets vacuumed, the dishes, pots and pans washed and scrubbed...a whole bunch of stuff to do...and you're it!

GILDERSNORT: Do you mean to tell me that that's all you want me for...just a...a scullery maid? Do I look like Cinderella to you? What if I refuse to go?

WITCH: Well, let's see. Your father gets changed into a creepy cockroach, I'll turn your mother into a cross-eyed lizard, and I'll turn you into a fat smelly toad!

GILDERSNORT: Hey, I'm packed! *(Holds up toothbrush.)* When do we leave?

WITCH: Right now. We're catching the 10:30 broom.

(They exit.)

WIFE: Goodbye, Gildersnort. Stay well.

BAKER: Keep warm and come visit when you can. *(Pause.)* Oh, dear. She's gone. I wonder if we'll ever see her again...

WIFE: (*Crying.*) I wish I'd never heard of rutabagas!
Waaaaaah!

(*Wife and Baker exit. Blackout.*)

Scenę 5

(At rise: Witch's den. Storyteller enters and sits on a tree stump.)

STORYTELLER: Oh, dear. It looks as if the nasty old Witch has made good on her promise to take Gildersnort from her loving parents. What a terrible thing it must be for them to lose a daughter.

(Storyteller takes out handkerchief and blows his nose. Bertie and Echo enter.)

BERTIE: We just remembered that today is Gildersnort's 16th birthday. Is there anything we can do to keep the Witch from taking her away?

ECHO: ...from taking her away?

STORYTELLER: No, I'm afraid it's too late. She's already gone. They had a 10:30 broom to catch.

BERTIE: Oh, what a shame! *(Takes out a handkerchief and blows her nose.)*

ECHO: ...what a shame! *(Takes out her handkerchief and blows her nose.)*

STORYTELLER: Yes, but life goes on. And so does this story. The Witch has brought Gildersnort to her home in the forest, and is showing her about. Let's look in on them...

(Storyteller, Bertie, and Echo exit. Witch enters with Gildersnort.)

WITCH: Well, Gildersnort, here we are! Home sweet home!

GILDERSNORT: This is home? What a dump! Is this the low-rent district? *(Sniffing the air.)* Oh! My goodness, what is that terrible, terrible odor?

WITCH: *(Checks armpit.)* Like you said, it's the dump...the trash dump. It's just a big landfill over on the other side of the mountain. But don't you worry, dearie. You'll get used

to it after a time. Just don't take a shower for a few days, and you'll never notice it.

GILDERSNORT: Yucchh! I don't like it...and I don't like *you*, either! You're mean and nasty...and ugly. And those are your good points! So there! *(Sits on stump, pouting.)*

WITCH: Well, so that's the way it's going to be, is it? All right. I had big plans for you, but you can forget them now. I was going to give you dancing lessons and baton twirling lessons...after you completed your chores, of course, but that's all out the window now. You've hurt my feelings. And I'm a very sensitive witch. So, instead, I'll lock you up in a tower, and you won't be allowed to see or speak with any human being but me for the rest of your life! *(Cackles.)*

GILDERSNORT: Anything would be better than having to look at your ugly face! You...you...ugly nasty old witch!

WITCH: Oh! Thank you. Yes, I am! Aren't I? *(Cackles.)* And to make sure that you can't escape, I'll take out the stairs. There'll be no steps at all, and definitely no elevator. The only way into the tower will be for me to climb up on your long golden braids. I will use a secret code, and you will obey it! It will be "Gildersnort, Gildersnort, throw down your golden hair!" *(Gildersnort throws down her wig. Pause.)* Okay, bad choice of words. The *new* secret code is Gildersnort, Gildersnort, *let* down your golden hair! *(Gives her back the wig.)* Now take this and get in there before I remove the stairs. *(Pushes her into the tower.)* And now for the spell... *(Girl Scout Guide enters with a plain cardboard box. Witch raises her staff.)* Ugga, ugga bee. Ugga, ugga boo! Now there are...

(Girl Scout Guide pulls Witch's dress.)

GIRL GUIDE: Excuse me.

WITCH: What? Go away kid, you bother me! *(Back to spell.)*

Ugga, ugga bee...

GIRL GUIDE: *(Shouts.)* Excuse me!

WITCH: Hey, I'm in the middle of a spell here! What's your problem?

GIRL GUIDE: Would you like to buy some Girl Guides' cookies? All proceeds go to the study for cleaner air. *(Sniffs.)* And boy, this place could sure use help!

WITCH: I don't want any of your cookies! Now get out of here!

GILDERSNORT: Do you have any of those yummy Samoas [Thin Mints, shortbread, etc]?

GIRL GUIDE: I'm sorry. I just sold the last box to Jack Sprat. I only have peanut butter...

WITCH: *(To Gildersnort.)* Hey, you're not getting nothing, no way, no how! *(To Girl Guide.)* And I told you to get out! Now, before I rub your skinny little stick legs together and set you on fire, scat!

(Girl Guide starts to exit and turns to Witch.)

GIRL GUIDE: Cheapskate! *(Heads toward exit but stops at the table by stage. To audience.)* Would you like to buy some Girl Guides' cookies?

WITCH: Hey! I said scat, brat! *(Girl runs off.)* Boy! Those pushy green pests are all over the place.

GILDERSNORT: You could have bought one box, you know. It was for a good cause.

WITCH: Listen, kiddo. My cousin Esmerelda is their cookie supplier and, believe me, you don't want to know what goes into those things! Now, where was I? Oh, yes, the spell. *(Raises staff.)* Ugga, ugga bee. Ugga, ugga boo. Now there are no stairs for you! *(Cackles.)*

GILDERSNORT: Well, as far as I'm concerned, you can just keep your ugly face away from here altogether, and I won't have contact with anyone or anything. But the first chance I get to escape, I will do so!

WITCH: Oh, I don't think so! I'm going to have you guarded day and night. At first I thought I'd use wild animals...like lions...and tigers...and bears!

GILDERSNORT: Oh, my!

WITCH: But they eat too much, and my budget won't stand it. The feed bill would be enormous! So I have come up with the perfect one to guard this tower...a fierce, fire-breathing, maiden-devouring...dragon! Yeah! As a matter of fact, he's overdue. (*Looks at watch.*) He should have been here an hour ago.

(*Dragon enters with unfolded map.*)

DRAGON: Excuse me. But I seem to be a bit lost. The map shows that I am in the vicinity of that which I seek.

WITCH: Ah, enter the dragon! So nice of you to put in an appearance.

DRAGON: Oh, thank you. Then can you tell me if this is that which I seek?

WITCH: I am that witch that you seek.

DRAGON: That which I seek is the Witch of the Winds.

WITCH: (*Annoyed.*) And I just said that I am that witch!

DRAGON: Oh. Then this is the home of that witch that I seek?

WITCH: I just told you that, you simpleton!

DRAGON: Well, I wasn't sure, you see, for I don't read maps too well, but if you are that witch that I seek...

WITCH: Yes, yes, yes...I am that which...

GILDERSNORT: Hey! Hey, guys! Hold it just a minute. This is very confusing. Dragon, this old bat *is* the Witch of the Winds. Now, what is *your* name?

(*Looks for business card.*)

DRAGON: Here, this is my card.

(Gives Witch jack of diamonds from deck of cards.)

WITCH: You're the Jack of Diamonds?

DRAGON: Woops! Wrong card! *(Can't find business card.)*

Oh, dear, I must have left it in my other skin when I molted last month. I am Darryl D. Dragon. The Acme Employment Agency sent me.

WITCH: What does the "D" stand for?

DRAGON: Dragon.

WITCH: Darryl Dragon Dragon?

DRAGON: That is correct. When I was born, my dad was so excited that when they asked him what name they wanted on the birth certificate, he stuttered. Darryl Dragon Dragon! Has a nice ring to it, doesn't it?

WITCH: Terrific! But I asked the agency to send me a fierce, fire-breathing dragon. And I don't know about you. You don't look the least little bit fierce to me. I need someone to frighten people away from here and guard Gildersnort.

DRAGON: Guard...what?

WITCH: Not what...who!

DRAGON: Who?

WITCH: *(Points.)* Her.

DRAGON: Oh, her.

WITCH: Yes, her. Gildersnort.

DRAGON: What did you say her name was?

WITCH: Gildersnort.

(Dragon takes Witch aside.)

DRAGON: I don't mean to be rude, but what kind of a name is Gildersnort?

WITCH: It's either Swiss or Lebanese. I'm not really sure. It means "salad greens."

GILDERSNORT: Hey, you two! Quit talking about me!

DRAGON: Sorry.

WITCH: So am I, Darryl. I don't think you're qualified for the job. You're not scary.

DRAGON: Oh, I can be frightening. Watch. *(He shakes hands with children in the audience.)* Hello, my name is Darryl D. Dragon, and I'm here to frighten you. Woof! *(To Witch.)* There, how was that?

WITCH: How was what? I'm shaking in my boots! I thought that kid was going to kill you! And what was that "woof"? I need a dragon who can shake the rafters and wake the dead with a mighty roar! Not a dinky little "woof"!

(Witch hits him with foam staff.)

DRAGON: Ouch! Hey, that hurt. I wasn't properly warmed up. Mi, mi. Mi. *(Clears throat.)* Actually, I have this slight raspiness in my throat...a little raw... *(She bops him again with her staff.)* Ow!

WITCH: I don't want to hear any flimsy excuses. It was a lousy roar...and where's the fire-breathing part? I specifically asked for a fire-breathing dragon!

DRAGON: Oh, well, you see, when my throat started getting a little hoarse, I panicked. And when I panic, I get a little queasy in my tummy, so I was chugging a lot of Pepto-Bismol. And...I'm afraid that stuff put out my pilot light.

WITCH: You've gotta be kidding! Not only does the employment agency send me a dragon who can't frighten a mouse, but they send one whose pilot light is on the fritz! Get out of here! I can't use you!

DRAGON: Oh, please. *(Gets on his knees.)* I really need this job. I haven't eaten a thing in days. I'll scare people, honest I will. *(Tries to frighten audience again. Yells.)* I haven't taken a bath in weeks, and I'm so rotten and smelly that my skin is stuck to my body! *(To Witch.)* How's that? And I'll eat lots of garlic and onions to keep the people away, too.

WITCH: Great! So I get a dragon with poor personal hygiene and bad breath! Just get out— *(About ready to bop him with her staff again.)*

DRAGON: And I'll give you a discount, too.

WITCH: ...of here. *(Pause.)* Discount? Did you say...discount?

DRAGON: Yes, yes. The contract calls for 10 food morsels a day with an extra two on Sundays...so I'll give you a 20 percent discount. I'll do the job for eight morsels a day...and you can forget Sundays! How does that sound?

WITCH: Done! You've got yourself a deal! Eight morsels per day, including Sunday.

DRAGON: Payable one day in advance. I'm really, really hungry!

WITCH: You got it, Darryl. *(Gives him some food.)* Here you go. One day's advance.

(Dragon eats food.)

DRAGON: Ah, what food these morsels be. Delicious.

WITCH: I'm leaving now, and I'm leaving Gildersnort in your care. Watch her. Only I, who know the secret code, have access to the tower.

DRAGON: Secret code?

WITCH: Yeah, it's, "Gildersnort, Gildersnort, let down your golden hair!" Now, remember, don't let *anybody* near her, understand? Have a nice day!

(Witch bops dragon on the head with her staff and exits.)

DRAGON: Ow! Okay, okay, I hear you! Boy, she is one mean cookie! *(Marching by tower.)* One, two, one, two...ooooh, I hate this chicken outfit!

GILDERSNORT: Oh, Darryl!

DRAGON: One, two, one...what?

GILDERSNORT: Why don't you be a good dragon and help me get down from here?

DRAGON: Sorry. Can't do that. Under orders.

GILDERSNORT: I don't care about any orders. Do you know how much time I've spent in here already?

DRAGON: Time? Hey, that reminds me. I forgot to take my break. It's break time! And my union don't take no guff from nobody.

GILDERSNORT: How can it be break time? You've only been here three minutes.

DRAGON: Right! And the official "Guardian Dragon's Handbook" calls for a 3-minute break every two minutes...so I'm actually a minute overdue. Bye.

(Sings to himself as he exits.)

GILDERSNORT: Oh, well. I guess I'll just have to amuse myself.

(Starts to hum a song like "Memory" – la, la, la – and plays with her fingers. Prince enters.)

PRINCE: What is that I hear? It is the voice of an angel!
(Looks around.) Where is that lovely music coming from?

(Gildersnort, still humming, sees him.)

GILDERSNORT: Oh, hello, stranger.

PRINCE: What? Who calls? Where are you hiding?

GILDERSNORT: I'm up here...in the tower. Look up!

PRINCE: Ah, there you are! I see you now. Hello, lovely maiden. I heard your beautiful singing.

GILDERSNORT: No.

PRINCE: No?

GILDERSNORT: Yes. No.

PRINCE: Yes, no?

GILDERSNORT: Yes, you heard me. No, I wasn't singing.

PRINCE: No?

GILDERSNORT: No.

PRINCE: Oh.

GILDERSNORT: I was humming.

PRINCE: Humming?

GILDERSNORT: Yes.

PRINCE: Humming, singing? What's the difference?

GILDERSNORT: This is humming. (*Hums.*) This is singing. (*Sings loudly, "He loves me, yeah, yeah, yeah."*) See the difference?

PRINCE: Oh, yeah! Well, it is of no matter. Who are you?

GILDERSNORT: My name is Gildersnort.

PRINCE: Gildersnort? No disrespect, ma'am, but what kind of a name is that?

GILDERSNORT: It's either Romanian or Arabic. No one around here really knows for sure. It means "salad greens."

PRINCE: Well, what's in a name? Your name could even be Rose for all I care. But tell me more about yourself, please, fair maiden.

GILDERSNORT: Well, I'm five foot two, eyes of blue, but oh, what these two eyes can do...and how about you, handsome stranger?

PRINCE: I am a prince. My name is Edward, and I have an island kingdom named after me many leagues north of here. My uncle rules in my place until I can return with a bride to share my throne and my kingdom. That's why I'm scouring the countryside...looking for a suitable bride.

GILDERSNORT: How nice. Any luck so far, Prince?

PRINCE: No. But I must tell you, in all honesty, that I was not always a prince. I once lived among the common folk to learn how the simple people lived, so that I may rule them justly and properly when my time came to ascend to the throne upon my father's death. I wasn't even aware of my noble heritage until my father passed away and my loyal

uncle, Remus the Third, returned from the wars to find me and bring me to my rightful inheritance.

GILDERSNORT: What are these wars that you speak of?

PRINCE: Oh, the wars are where men fight and kill one another for the acquisition of added wealth and property. Why, my great-grandfather fought with Hannibal, my grandfather fought with Alexander, and my father fought with Caesar.

GILDERSNORT: Couldn't your family get along with anyone?

PRINCE: You don't understand...it's difficult to explain. To some, war is a noble thing.

GILDERSNORT: I see. And whom do *you* fight with?

PRINCE: I fight with no one. I think war is wrong.

GILDERSNORT: And it sounds like terrible a waste of time.

But if you lived among the common people, how did you live? What did you subsist on?

PRINCE: Oh, I was a well-known painter.

GILDERSNORT: Portraits? Landscapes? Still-lives?

PRINCE: Mostly walls and ceilings. An occasional bathroom or two. But I was so creative in my choice of color and design, that everyone referred to me as...Artist.

GILDERSNORT: So you are the prince formerly known as Artist? I believe I have heard of you. Your fame is widespread. But enough small talk. Can you get me out of here? I want to get away from the Witch of the Winds.

PRINCE: I'm not afraid of any old witch. I scorn witches. (*Checks for Witch.*) Ha! (*Snaps fingers.*) Come down from the tower so that I may take you with me.

GILDERSNORT: Well, the problem with that is that there are no steps to climb down. And I don't think there is an elevator. At least, not yet.

PRINCE: Then may I come up to see you?

GILDERSNORT: My prince, doesn't it stand to reason that if there are no stairs for climbing *down*, then there are also none for climbing *up*?

PRINCE: Ah! Good point! You have brains as well as beauty,
my fair maiden!

(Dragon enters.)

DRAGON: Ah, what a pleasant break. *(Sees Prince.)* Hey,
hey, hey! Who are you, and what are you doing here?
You're not supposed to be here. Be gone with you before I
breathe fire on you!

PRINCE: You can do that?

DRAGON: Yes, I can!

GILDERSNORT: No, you can't!

DRAGON: Ohhhh! You're not supposed to tell. What a
snitch!

GILDERSNORT: But he does have very bad breath from what
I understand, so keep your distance, my prince.

DRAGON: Hey, look, I've got a job to do here, so just get a
move on. The Witch said not to let *anybody* near her.

PRINCE: Ah, then it's all right. For I am not just *anybody*! I
am the prince!

DRAGON: Well, whaddaya know? I think you've just hit
upon a loophole. You should have been a lawyer.

GILDERSNORT: He was an artist before he was a prince. Is
that the same?

DRAGON: No, that's a different kind of artist. What did you
do?

PRINCE: I was a painter.

DRAGON: Oh? Landscapes? Portraits? Still-lives?

PRINCE: No, mostly walls and ceilings. An occasional
bathroom or two. But very creative with color and design in
my work.

DRAGON: Oh. Oh! Ohmigosh, are you the prince formerly
known as Artist?

PRINCE: Why, yes, that's me.

DRAGON: Oh, wow! You're so much taller in person!

PRINCE: Well, I am rather tall for my height.

GILDERSNORT: Hey, can you two stop schmoozing long enough to get me down from here?

DRAGON: Well, he's got to say the secret code for you to let down your hair. I can't do a thing. My paws are tied. The escalator's broken and there are no stairs.

PRINCE: Well, what is the secret code?

DRAGON: Oh, I can't tell you the secret code!

PRINCE: Why not?

DRAGON: Because then it wouldn't be a secret, silly!

GILDERSNORT: Prince, the secret code is Gildersnort, Gildersnort, let down your golden hair!

DRAGON: Hey, you weren't supposed to tell him. You weren't supposed to tell anybody!

GILDERSNORT: But he's not just anybody, remember? He's the prince.

DRAGON: Son of a gun! You got me again on a technicality! You know, if I help you and the Witch finds out...

GILDERSNORT: She'll probably bop you on the head. But she'll probably bop you on the head anytime she's displeased with you. And I'm sure that isn't a very pleasant thing. She's not a nice person. And the longer you hang around here, the more you'll find out the truth in those words.

DRAGON: Oh, gosh. I don't know. She can be very nasty!

GILDERSNORT: Darryl...oh, Darryl.

(She shows him her leftover birthday muffin.)

DRAGON: Yes? *(Catches his breath.)* Oh! Oh! Oh! Is that a birthday muffin I see?

GILDERSNORT: Yes, it is, Darryl.

DRAGON: I just love birthday muffins!

GILDERSNORT: Help me get out of this tower, and it's all...yours!

DRAGON: Ooooooh! Such temptation. Birthday muffins are what dragons live for! They're one of a dragon's four basic

food groups: Chili dogs, chocolate-chip cookies, hot-fudge
sundaes and birthday muffins! All high in fiber, you know!
And you're right! The Witch is *not* a nice person.

[End of Freeview]