



Pinocchio

by David Swan

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Foreword

Unfortunately, we cannot be with our children every minute of the day and so guarantee their complete safety. Sooner or later they will encounter dangerous situations on their **own** and need to know how to keep themselves safe. We may warn them, for example, of the dangers of water ... of strong currents that can pull them under a river or drag them out to sea. But a warning alone is not enough: we also teach our children to swim! The best protected child is the one who not only understands the risks but knows how to deal with them.

In this version of "Pinocchio" I am promoting the most important safety lesson of all. Colodi's original story, published in 1883, preached the "virtue" of unquestioning obedience to adults and the dire consequences of disobedience. This message is inappropriate for a modern audience of children. Whilst the main purpose of this script is to entertain, it's underlying theme is very serious ... to show children what to do when strangers, and even people they know, try to harm them.

Pantomime is the **only** theatrical form in which the audience actively, and willingly, take part. Besides providing examples of dangerous situations and the strategies for dealing with them, "Pinocchio" also gives children the unique opportunity of putting "good sense defence" into practice by participating in the show and interacting with all the characters onstage, both good and bad.

Concerned adults will find suggestions for further reading in Appendix E.

I am indebted to Michele Elliot of "Kidscape" for her valuable help and advice in the production of this script.

David Swan

November, 1989

Description of Characters

Jimmy Crankit, principal boy. Though downtrodden by Verruca, his irrepressible good nature holds him up. He is quick-witted, full of vitality, excitable and constantly on the move.

Grazia, principal girl, is a self-possessed heroine. She has great determination and courage: there is an important job to be done! Behind the professional facade, she is warm-hearted and generous.

Verruca must be believably nice at first and not instantly recognisable as a 'baddy'. His true nature should become gradually apparent to the audience ... ingratiating on the outside and utterly ruthless within.

Geppetto: Though physically old, Geppetto has many child-like qualities ... innocence, a vivid imagination and a ludicrous sense of humour. The children in the audience should respond to him because he is genuinely on their level and doesn't condescend.

Fungus, the fox, oozes charm and oily politeness. He is a disreputable gentleman, using his impeccable manners to hide his true nature: sly and cunning.

Maggot is a ferocious, battle-scarred alley-cat and is always spoiling for a fight. He could be really lethal if he wasn't so stupid.

Mama Scrumpi, the dame, was once Geppetto's childhood sweetheart, though she'd hate anyone to find out. This isn't snobbery, even though she is rich and famous and he's a 'nobody'. It's just that she prides herself on looking years younger! Vanity is her only fault ... otherwise she is perfectly ordinary megastar! She has given up the bright lights to open a "fame" school ...

The Schoolchildren can be played exclusively by children, or adults, or a mixture of both. Each character embodies two stereotypes, one from the classroom and the other from the world of entertainment:

Baby Dimples is a teacher's pet/spoilt brat and precocious child-star, following in Shirley Temple's footsteps.

Charlie is the classroom clown and silent-movie comic: a pastiche of Charlie Chaplin. Apart from the songs, he performs totally in mime.

Confetti is the school rebel and a would-be rock star. She can embody current trends or be any easily recognisable style from the 50's upwards.

Semolina is a tomboy/bully and is being groomed as a "dumb-blond". Her glamorous appearance is contradicted by her wild behaviour.

Rambino is a dunce and therefore mentally suited to his role as 'macho' war-hero. Physically, he is mismatched, being either fat slob or a puny weakling.

Sapphire, the Blue Fairy, is a bit of scatterbrain. She should be played with humour but not made ridiculous ... she has some very important information to impart and the audience must be able to take her seriously as well.

Pinocchio has a fresh and innocent view of the world: he has a lot to learn before he can become a 'real boy'. He isn't stupid or naughty, just inexperienced. His insatiable curiosity makes him easily lead and puts him in danger. He should use a 'mechanical' voice when consulting his "encyclopaedic" memory and punctuate his speech with odd noises, as indicated in the script. (e.g. "Mimi" like Road Runner)

CHARACTERS

Jimmy Crankit	<i>a lift operator (principal boy)</i>	(F)
Grazia	<i>a shop assistant (principal girl)</i>	(F)
Signor Verruca	<i>a storekeeper</i>	(M)
Geppetto	<i>an old toymaker</i>	(M)
Charlie	<i>a schoolboy</i>	(M/F)
Semolina	<i>a schoolgirl</i>	(F)
Confetti	<i>a schoolgirl</i>	(F)
Rambino	<i>a schoolboy</i>	(M)
Baby Dimples	<i>a schoolgirl</i>	(F)
Mama Scrumpi	<i>a schoolmistress (dame)</i>	(M)
Fungus	<i>a fox</i>	(M/F)
Maggot	<i>a cat</i>	(M/F)
Sapphire	<i>The Blue Fairy</i>	(F)
Pinocchio	<i>a puppet</i>	(M/F)

Chorus and Dancers: customers, a tannoy, schoolchildren, toys, a gondolier, an octopus.

The Chorus includes small speaking parts.

14 Principals: 6 female, 4 male and 4 male/female

ACT ONE

All one scene Verruca's Toy Department (*full-stage*)

ACT TWO

Scene 1	Verruca's Toy Department	(<i>as Act One</i>)
Scene 2	The Harbour	(<i>front of tabs</i>) *
Scene 3	The Whale's Tum	(<i>full-stage</i>)
Scene 4	Songsheet	(<i>front of tabs</i>)
Finale	Geppetto's Toy Department	(<i>as Act One</i>)

* *An optional Underwater U.V. Scene can be inserted here: see Appendix A.*

Act One

Scene 1

Verruca's Toy Department

(The ground floor of Verruca's old-fashioned department store, somewhere in Italy, a few weeks before Christmas.

A large sign reads: "VERRUCA'S TOY DEPARTMENT". There are five exits:

- 1) Up Left, to the "Beauty Department", with a sign and an arrow.*
- 2) Up Centre: the "Lift". (see below)*
- 3) Up Right, "Exit" to street, with a sign.*
- 4) Down Left: with "Workshop" sign.*
- 5) Down Right: behind counter which butts into wings for concealed access.*

GRAZIA is behind the counter, dressed in an overall. She is serving customers and operating the till. On top of the counter is a prominent display of the toys which will "come to life" later in the scene (e.g. a teddy-bear, a rag-doll, a toy soldier). The rest of the stage should be dressed with a wide variety of toys.

The lift consists of:

- a) sliding doors which are moved from behind.*
- b) a "floor indicator": "G", "1", "2" and "3" with a pointer which can be moved up and down from behind as the lift supposedly rises and descends.*
- c) a large wheel, which JIMMY CRANKIT turns to raise and lower the imaginary lift.*

JIMMY is dressed in a green "bell-hop" uniform and appears far too puny for such a strenuous task. Each operation of the lift should be accompanied by appropriate sound effects but not distract from any other action onstage. See Production Notes (Appendix A) for full details.

A Christmas-tree, with a pile of presents under it, is set front of house tabs and is visible to the audience throughout the performance. SIGNOR VERRUCA is adding more decorations to the tree.

The CHORUS of adult customers are onstage, moving around the department, examining and buying merchandise.)

SONG A

Ensemble

Jimmy *(over applause)* Going up! Foods. Fashions. Fabrics. Furniture.
(A "ding dong". The CUSTOMERS stop and listen)

Tannoy *(posh female voice)* Good afternoon, shoppers and welcome to Verruca's. Why not hurry along to our Beauty Department where it's half price at the "Festy Crawler" counter? *(CUSTOMERS murmur excitedly)*

Lady 1 Half price!

Lady 2 They can't mean it!

Tannoy Oh yes we do. Half price on all "Festy Crawler" perfumes and moisturisers. While stocks last. *(A "ding dong")*
(The CUSTOMERS jostle and elbow each other in a mad dash to "Beauty Department")

Customers *(variously)* Come on, quick! Out of my way! Mind where you're going! Stop shoving! Who do you think you're pushing? I was here first! Back of the queue!
(together as they exit)

Jimmy Corr! Look at them go!

Grazia It's the Christmas rush.
(VERRUCA stands back from the Christmas tree and admires his work)

Verruca Yes, "Christmas"! How I love it ... the season of buying and full tills. *(adds the tinsel to the tree)* All the customers cramming my store. *(adds a glass ball)* And all the bambinos screaming for more. *(puts a final piece of tinsel on the tree)* Finished! *(to audience)* What do you think? She is beautiful, yes? *(audience responds weakly)* Oh dear! You don't sound too sure. What do you think of my Christmas tree? Is she not beautiful?

Audience Yes!

Verruca *(bowing)* Thank you. Grazie.

Grazia *(moving to him)* Yes, Signor Verruca?

Verruca Not you, Grazia. I was saying "thank you" in Italian ... you know, "Grazie". *(indicating audience)* They were admiring my work of art. She is the best dressed tree in the whole of Italy. *(kisses fingers)*
(JIMMY joins them)

Grazia "She" looks a bit bare if you ask me.

Jimmy *(nodding)* Naked!

Verruca Nonsense. She is bellissimo! *(kisses a branch as if it were a lady's hand)*

Grazia Well, I've never seen a Christmas tree without a fairy on top.

Jimmy *(shaking head)* Me neither!
(“Banging” noises offstage)

Verruca Mama mia! *(strikes forehead)* The fairy! Where is she? *(calling into Workshop)*
Mr. Geppetto! Mr. Geppetto! *(JIMMY follows)*
(GRAZIA crouches and stealthily examines the presents under the tree, making notes in a notebook)

Geppetto *(poking head onstage)* Who?

Verruca That's you!

Geppetto Oh, yes!
(GEPPELTO steps onstage. He is wearing an ankle length apron, carries an axe and a large piece of wood. A pair of spectacles hang round his neck on a chain)

Verruca Where is the fairy for the Christmas tree?

Geppetto Oh! Sorry, Signor ... I forgot!

Verruca *(to audience)* He forgets everything.

Geppetto I've been busy chopping wood.

Verruca Chopping wood?

Geppetto To make new toys. There aren't many chopping days till Christmas. *(JIMMY groans)* I'm making a wonderful wooden puppet!

Verruca Puppet?

Geppetto I'm going to call him Pinocchio ...

Verruca *(interrupting)* Puppets! Kids nowadays don't want puppets! They want "Barbie Dolls" and "Transformers" and "My Little Ponies"! *(or substitute current 'fad' toys)* How many more times do I have to tell you?

Geppetto I'm sorry, Signor ...

Geppetto
& I/You forgot! *(together)*
Verruca
Verruca Well, forget the puppet and find the fairy!
Geppetto Si, signor.
(He exits backwards, bowing. A buzzer sounds.)
Verruca *(to JIMMY)* Get that lift.
Jimmy What?
Verruca Lift, boy, lift!
Jimmy Alright. *(tries to lift him)*
Verruca *(pushing him away)* Not me! *(points U.S.)* The lift.
Jimmy Si, signor.
(During the next section, he turns the handle: the doors close and the pointer moves to "2". He waits, turns the handle in the opposite direction and the pointer returns to "G". Enter GEPPETTO from Workshop)
Geppetto Found it! *(holding up undressed doll)* Here she is!
Verruca *(taking doll)* Grazie!
(GRAZIA jumps guiltily away from the presents and hides the notebook)
Grazia Si, signor?
Verruca Not you! *(examining doll)* Soggy semolina! Look at her. Not a stitch of clothing. *(chastely covers his eyes and holds out doll)*
Geppetto *(taking doll)* Oh dear. I forgot to dress it.
Verruca *(to audience)* He forgot to dress it! *(cracking 'joke')* One day he'll be forget to dress himself and come to work in his underwear! Ha ha!
Geppetto I'll finish it right away, signor. *(He turns and we see that he is dressed only in a shirt, lacy boxer shorts and long socks)*
Verruca *(horrified)* Vermicelli! Where are your trousers?
Geppetto *(turning and lifting apron)* Oh dear! I forgot to put them on. *(giggles)*
(The lift doors open and two CUSTOMERS step out)
Verruca What if my customers see you like that? They'll run away screaming and never come back. *(The CUSTOMERS see GEPPETTO, look shocked, scream and exit, averting their faces)* Now look what you've done! *(pushing him off)* Stay out of sight until closing time. And finish that fairy.
Geppetto Si, signor.
(GRAZIA stands up, holding one of the presents)
Grazia I wonder what's inside this one? *(she shakes the parcel: sound of a donkey braying)* That's strange.
Verruca Ravioli! *(dashing to tree)* No, no, ... these must not be opened till Christmas! *(snatches present back)*
Grazia I was just looking. *(hastily stuffs notebook into her pocket)*
Verruca You look with your eyes, not your fingers! *(GRAZIA returns to her counter)*
Nosey-parker! These gifts will have to be guarded. *(calls to JIMMY)* Crankit!
Jimmy Si, Signor?
Verruca Come here! *(JIMMY moves to him)* I have something to give you.

Jimmy *(snatching present)* A present? For me? You shouldn't have!

Verruca *(snatching it back)* Hands off! I'm not giving you this ... I'm giving you another job.

Jimmy Oh, thank you. I get really tired cranking that lift all day ...

Verruca I'm not giving you a new job. I'm giving you another one.

Jimmy Two jobs! Does that mean I get paid more?

Verruca Alright, I'll double your salary.

Jimmy Thanks!

Verruca Instead of £10 a week, you'll get £10 every two weeks. *(JIMMY pulls a face)*
Now make sure nobody touches these presents.

Jimmy *(pointing to lift)* But I can't be two places at once.

Verruca Keep your mouth shut and your eyes open or you'll be out on your ear!
(VERRUCA moves up to the lift. Three CUSTOMERS re-enter from the "Beauty Department")

Jimmy *(to audience)* It's not fair. It's hard enough to shift the lift but now I've got to guard the gifts. *(starts to go and changes his mind)* Here! I've got an idea ... will you help me?

Audience Yes.

Jimmy Thanks. If you see anyone touching these presents, shout: "hands off". Will you do that?

Audience Yes.

Jimmy Excellent. What is it you shout?

Audience Hand's off!

Jimmy *(cupping hand to ear)* I can't hear you! What do you shout?

Audience Hands off!
(JIMMY staggers as if blown by a gale of shouts)

Jimmy Brilliant!

Verruca Crankit! *(he signals "after you" to two CUSTOMERS and they enter the lift)*

Jimmy *(dashing U.S.)* Coming, signor! Going up! Girdles! Gumboots! Grub! *(grasps handle)*

Verruca Keep tight-hold. We don't want have a nasty accident. *(enters lift)*

Jimmy Si, signor.
(He turns the handle and the doors slide shut. The pointer starts to move to "3". GEPPETTO enters with another fairy doll, dressed in blue and set against a large, glittering star)

Geppetto The festive fairy is finished!

Grazia That was quick. *(a CUSTOMER moves to her counter)*

Customer Excuse me, have you got any "Care Bears".

Grazia *(shaking head)* Sorry, madam ... we've only got careless ones.

Customer Careless?

Grazia Yes, they keep having little accidents.

Customer Not today, thank you.

Geppetto *(facing CUSTOMER)* How about a puppet?

Customer *(disdainfully)* Puppets are too old fashioned.

- Geppetto *(turning away)* Suit yourself! *(The CUSTOMER sees GEPPETTO from behind, looks shocked, screams and exits)* Well, I only asked. *(moves towards tree)* Now to put the fairy on the tree. *(sees presents)* Presents! I wonder if there's one for me? *(stoops and touches presents)*
- Audience Hands off!
- Geppetto *(squinting at audience)* Who said that?
- Jimmy Don't touch those. *(Reverses the handle to the lift)* Thanks a lot, boys and girls. *(the doors open and he comes D.S.)*
- Geppetto What boys and girls? They're all at school.
- Jimmy Not all of them. *(lifting GEPPETTO's spectacles)* There's some out there! *(GRAZIA looks curiously at the audience)*
- Geppetto *(adjusting spectacles)* Why, bless me, so there is.
- Grazia *(to herself)* Oh dear! There's hundreds of them!
- Geppetto *(to audience)* Why aren't you at school?
- Jimmy They must be skiving off!
- Geppetto You'd better not let Mama Scrumpi catch you!
- Jimmy She's our local teacher and best customer. She comes in here every day. You'd better make a run for it!
- Geppetto But they've only just got here. *(to audience)* Don't worry, if the teacher comes, we'll think up a good excuse. You do want to stay, don't you?
- Audience Yes.
- Geppetto Of course you do. *(to JIMMY)* All children love toys. *(gives fairy to him and exits to Workshop)*
(GRAZIA gets out her notebook and counts the audience, anxiously making notes)
- Jimmy *(to audience, moving D.C.)* Well you've come to the right place. This is Verruca's Department Store ... the biggest shop in the whole of Italy. We sell anything and everything to anyone that wants it. Our motto is: "don't go elsewhere and get robbed ... try us first!" There's more floors above this one but you can't see them unless you go up in the lift. *(GEPPETTO returns with a step ladder)* That's my job. *(miming)* I turn the handle this way to crank it up and turn that way to crank it down.
- Geppetto That's why he's called Jimmy Cricket.
- Jimmy "Crankit"! A cricket's an insect that looks like a grasshopper.
- Geppetto You look like a grasshopper in that uniform!
- Grazia *(aside)* Fifty one, fifty two ...
- Geppetto *(to audience, pointing at GRAZIA)* And over there is our new shop assistant ... what's her name ... she just started this morning. *(give ladders to JIMMY)*
- Jimmy *(romantically)* Grazia. *(moves steps to Christmas tree)*
- Geppetto Don't mention it. *(moves to GRAZIA)*
- Grazia Sixty three, sixty four ...
- Geppetto *(to GRAZIA)* What are you doing?
- Grazia *(hiding notebook)* I was just talking to myself.
- Geppetto I do that too. My mind often wanders.

Jimmy Yes, but it's too weak to go very far! *(returns D.C.)*
Geppetto *(to audience)* This is Grazia.
Grazia *(nodding to audience)* How do you do. *(busies herself behind the counter)*
Geppetto And I'm ... well, do you know what my name is? *(audience responds, prompted by JIMMY if necessary)* Geppetto? Are you sure? Oh good, I forgot! I've got a terrible memory. I know! If I say, "hello boys and girls" you shout back "hello, Geppetto" and that'll remind me. Will you do that? Thanks. *(waving)* Hello, boys and girls.
Audience Hello, Geppetto.
Geppetto That's me! Geppetto, the toy-maker. *(looks for steps)*
Jimmy He made all the toys in the shop. He's dead clever.
Geppetto My ladders have vanished!
Jimmy I took them.
Geppetto Well, give them back or steps will be taken! *(laughs)*
Jimmy *(leading him to tree)* Here they are.
Geppetto Ah, yes. *(struggles up ladder)*
Jimmy You want me to do that?
Geppetto I can manage.
Jimmy Well, if you fall and break your legs, don't come running to me!
Geppetto Hand me the Blue Fairy.
Jimmy The "blue" fairy? *(hands him the fairy)*
Geppetto Yes. She's extra-super-magical.
Jimmy What's so magical about her?
Geppetto She lives in this star on top of the tree. Every night, when all the world is fast asleep, she wakes all the toys up and they have a wonderful time, singing and dancing and playing ...
Jimmy *(interrupting)* You don't believe that, do you?
Geppetto Of course! Fairies can do anything. And if you believe in them, they'll make your dearest dreams come true.
Jimmy Really?
Geppetto Really! *(to audience)* You believe in fairies, don't you?
Audience Yes.

SONG B

Geppetto

(During the song, GEPPETTO places the fairy on top of the tree, at the same time attaching a strong nylon thread to it so that it can be 'flown' later in the scene. The song ends and he descends. GRAZIA continues counting the audience, moving D.S. and making notes)

Jimmy You know what I wish? *(cooly)* I wish that Grazia would be my girlfriend. She's fantabulosa.
Geppetto Why don't you ask her?
Jimmy She wouldn't be interested in me. *(in awe)* She's a shop assistant ... and I'm just a lift-cranker.

Geppetto Ahhhh! Don't be shy or you'll end up old and lonely, like me. Many years ago, I too was in love with a girl ... but I never told her.
(*GRAZIA backs across the stage*)

Jimmy What happened?

Geppetto She became rich and famous. She made it to the top of the ladder and I was left on the bottom rung. (*takes steps*) Go on ... she won't bite. (*exits with steps*)
(*JIMMY moves nervously to GRAZIA*)

Jimmy Hello!

Grazia (*turning, startled*) Hello! (*a short, embarrassed pause*)

Both Do you like being a ...

Jimmy Sorry.

Grazia No, after you.

Jimmy Do you like being a shop-assistant?

Grazia Oh yes. I like toys. And I love children. How about you?

Jimmy I love kids too.

Grazia I mean, do you like being a lift-operator?

Jimmy It has its ups and downs! (*they laugh*) But there's one good thing about it.

Grazia What's that?

Jimmy It's fun telling people where to get off! (*they laugh again*) What's that you're writing? (*GRAZIA hastily pockets the notebook*) Is it a love letter to me?

Grazia No.

Jimmy (*crestfallen*) Oh!

Grazia I was just counting the children. (*points at audience*)

Jimmy What for?

Grazia (*hesitantly*) Well ... can you keep a secret?

Jimmy Cross my heart.

Grazia (*confidentially*) I was counting them in case they disappear!

Jimmy Disappear? (*to audience*) You're not going to vanish, are you?

Audience No.

Jimmy (*to GRAZIA*) There you are!

Grazia But somebody might make them vanish!

Jimmy Who?

Grazia I'd better explain. You see, I'm not really a shop assistant.

Jimmy You're not?

Grazia (*mysteriously*) I'm infiltrating.

Jimmy Oh dear ... have you seen a doctor?

Grazia No ... I'm in plain clothes.

Jimmy (*indicating her costume*) I think they're quite pretty.

Grazia (*saluting*) I'm Police Officer Grazia of the Bambino Squad.

Jimmy Corr! What are you doing here?
(*GRAZIA quickly checks that the stage is empty and beckons JIMMY over to the Christmas tree*)

Grazia (*loud whisper*) I'm protecting the children from ... the Raffia! (*a sinister fanfare*)

Jimmy *(shocked)* The Raffia!! You don't mean that dangerous band of criminals who steal table-mats and lampshades?

Grazia The very same. But now they've got a new racket!

Jimmy Tennis?

Grazia No ... kiddy-snatching! Children have been vanishing all over Italy.

Jimmy What happens to them?

Grazia *(sadly shaking head)* Nobody knows. *(looks at Christmas presents)* They've never been seen or heard of again.

Jimmy That's terrible!

Grazia But now I'm hot on the trail of the Godfather.

Jimmy The Godfather? Who's he?

Grazia The leader of the Raffia. I don't know who he is yet. *(moving towards workshop and looking off)* But it must be somebody who's close to children. Someone who appears to love them but really doesn't. *(turning back)* Will you help me to find out who it is?

Jimmy Of course. *(to audience)* And so will you, won't you?

Audience Yes.

Jimmy They can all shout out if they see anything ...

Grazia *(interrupting, to audience)* No, no. Don't do that. You'll give the game away. I've got to catch the villains red-handed. But keep your eyes open. If you see anything suspicious, tell me about it when we're on our own. Will you do that?

Audience Yes.

Grazia Grazie. And be careful. Don't trust everybody you meet. Use your common-sense. The Raffia are very cunning.

Jimmy *(looking to exit)* Shsh! Here's some customers.
(Enter FUNGUS, the fox. They glance at him and continue talking silently. FUNGUS looks suave and seedy in his battered top hat and patched tails. A monocle hangs round his neck and he is carrying a walking stick)

Fungus Best paw forward, kitty. Do come along!

(Enter MAGGOT, dragging a heavy sack. He is a battle-scarred alley cat and is wearing an eye patch)

Maggot Is we there yet? *(stops and pants)*

Fungus *(moving D.S.)* I shall ascertain. *(polite cough and raising hat to GRAZIA)* Excuse I, fair maid.

Grazia Yes, sir?

Fungus Where are we situated, exactly speaking?

Grazia *(pointing at sign)* The Toy Department, sir.
(FUNGUS lifts monocle and peers at the sign.)

Fungus Ah yes! *(bowing)* Grazie. *(moves to opposite side of stage)*

Grazia *(to JIMMY)* How did he know my name?
(JIMMY shrugs. They watch FUNGUS and MAGGOT with increasing suspicion)

Fungus *(to MAGGOT, removing gloves)* Come along, Maggot. *(MAGGOT drags the sack D.S.)* This is it: the pocket-money emporium for tiny-tots.

Maggot Eh?

Fungus The "Toy Department", flea-brain. *(hits him with gloves)* The very place for a bit of kiddy-spotting.

Maggot *(grimacing)* Kiddies? *(spits)*

Fungus *(amused reprimand)* Now, now. You love them really. You know you do.

Maggot Yeah. Love 'em to pieces! *(yowls scratches the air)*
(GRAZIA and JIMMY move a few steps nearer)

Fungus *(catching his collar and choking him)* Stop! You're attracting attention, idiot. Show a little decorum.

Maggot *(pulling lining out of pockets)* I ain't go no "decorum".

Fungus Exactly. There's nothing in the kitty. *(taps him in head with cane)*

Grazia Can I help you gentlemen?

Fungus *(produces a cigar)* Maybe yes. Maybe no. *(puffs on cigar)*

Grazia I'm sorry, sir ... smoking isn't allowed.

Fungus I'll do it quietly then.

Jimmy You can't smoke in the shop.

Fungus This? A mere trifle. All for show. *(Helps the image, don't you know? Suave. Dignified. Debonaire. (holds cigar up and strikes a pose)*

Jimmy You mean it's not a real one?

Fungus I should say! It's chocolate.

Maggot *(drooling)* Chocky, chocky!

Fungus I always keep a chocky handy. *(aside)* Sweets for the sweet. Kiddies love 'em so!

Maggot Kiddies? *(spits)*

Fungus Want a nibble? *(JIMMY and GRAZIE shake their heads. MAGGOT nods and begs)* Suit yourselves. *(bites into cigar)* Delectable. *(whisks handkerchief out of top pocket and dabs his mouth)* A trifle sweet but toothsome, non the less. *(Tosses the cigar away. MAGGOT catches it and stuffs it in his mouth)*

Grazia What can we do for you? Do you want buy some toys?

Fungus "Buy" ... no! "Deliver" ... yes. *(points at sack)* Special delivery for the Toy Department.

Jimmy But that's impossible ... Geppetto makes all our toys.

Grazia He's a wonderful craftsman.

Jimmy You should see his puppets.

Maggot *(grimacing)* Puppets? *(spits)*

Fungus He might be clever but I bet he can't make toys that talk! *(prods sack with stick: sound of donkeys braying)* Listen to them! The little darlings can't wait to get put on the shelf. *(GRAZIA looks puzzled and glances at the Christmas presents)*

Oh, do be quiet. You're giving me a headache!

Maggot *(opening sack and shouting inside)* Shut up! *(the braying stops)*

Jimmy *(trying to see)* What kind of toys are they?

(MAGGOT closes the sack and clutches it tightly)

Fungus *(pushing JIMMY back)* Best sellers, that's what!

Jimmy Geppetto won't be very pleased.

Fungus But Signor Verruca will be delighted.

Grazia We'll see about that. I'll fetch him for you.

Fungus How kind. (*bowing*) Grazie!
Grazia "Signorina", to you! (*JIMMY and GRAZIA move to the lift*)
Jimmy (*to GRAZIA*) I don't trust them.
Grazia Me neither. Keep watch till I get back. (*enters lift*)
Jimmy You can count on me.
(Winds the handle. The doors close and the pointer rises to "3". A bell rings off-stage)
Fungus (*cupping ear*) Hark at that, kitty. The sound of music to my ears.
Maggot That ain't music. It's a bell.
Fungus Ah ... but what sort?
Maggot A ding-dong bell.
Fungus (*hits him*) Idiot! It's the school bell. (*distant sound of children laughing and shouting*) Listen to 'em. A cacophony of kiddies.
Maggot Kiddies? (*spits*)
Fungus Those innocent voices raised in fun. What would we do without 'em? (*digging MAGGOT in the ribs*) Eh, kitty?

Song C

(Tune of "Hundreds and Hundreds of Girls" - lyrics by Bill Slater)

Fungus and Maggot

What makes us both dance with delight?
 No, it's not Christmas ... it's simply the sight
 Of these hundreds and hundreds of kids.
 We'll stuff 'em all into our sack
 Haul 'em away and they'll never come back!
 Not those hundreds and hundreds of kids.
 Give us a brat ... a Peter, Peggy, Penny, Percy or Pat.
 It doesn't matter if they're thin or they're fat,
 We're never fussy 'bout the size of the shape or weight,
 We don't discriminate!
 What makes this puss sharpen his claws and sets Fungus howling?
 It's when our big paws are 'round hundreds and hundreds of kids!
 We'll take those brats back to our den.
 They'll never see Mum or Daddy again!
 Not those hundreds and hundreds of kids.
 We'll keep 'em all tied up in chains,
 Scratch 'em and bite 'em and whack 'em with canes!
 All those hundreds and hundreds of kids.
 Give us a tot ... a Daisy, David, Dickie, Debbie or Dot,
 A clever-clogs or just the clumsiest clot!
 We never care about the size of their intellect.
 Any kid we'll select.
 Give 'em to us ... we'll take 'em all
 Pack 'em and post 'em or give us a call
 We'll collect them ... those hundreds of kids!

The song ends. FUNGUS and MAGGOT are swept aside by the rowdy pupils of "Scrumpti's Stage School".

The children are dressed in a variety of costumes to represent both schoolroom and entertainment stereotypes. The characters can be played exclusively by children, adults, or a mixture of both.

There are five main characters:

CHARLIE is the classroom clown and silent comic: he is dressed like Charlie Chaplin, carries a cane and performs totally in mime.

BABY DIMPLES is teacher's pet and a precocious child star: she wears tap-shoes, short socks, a lacey frock and her hair is a confection of ribbons and ringlets.

CONFETTI is a rebel and would-be rock star. Her appearance can reflect current trends or be any easily recognisable style from the 50's upwards. She carries a toy guitar.

SEMOLINA is a tomboy/bully and is obviously uncomfortable being cast in the role of "dumb-blonde". Her glamorous appearance is contrasted by her wild behaviour.

RAMBINO is a dunce and therefore mentally suited to his role as 'macho' war-hero. Physically, he is mismatched, being either a fat slob or a puny weakling. He is heavily armed, has a scarf tied round his head and is dressed in ill-fitting camouflage shorts and vest.

If other children or members of the chorus are be used to swell the ranks, their attire and behaviour should carry on the "showbiz" theme, for example: a ballerina, a punk, a clown, a monster, a geisha-girl, a sheik, a squaw, a cowboy, etc.

A few moments of bedlam. **RAMBINO** fires a machine-gun and tosses imaginary grenades at the audience, making appropriate noises. **CONFETTI** plucks at her guitar and sings. **BABY DIMPLES** tap-dances madly, stomps on **SEMOLINA**'s toes and a fight ensues. Any other children shout and squabble. **FUNGUS** and **MAGGOT** watch from the side of the stage)

Jimmy (moving D.S.) Alright, settle down. Behave yourselves! Stop that! (bellowing) Quiet! (A momentary lull. **CONFETTI** continues singing: **JIMMY** shouts in her ear) Quiet! (she winces) Where's your teacher?

Dimples Window shopping

Jimmy Well, behave yourselves until she gets here.

Rambino (threatening with gun) Make us!

(**CHARLIE** shoves **JIMMY**)

Semolina We'll do whatever we want! (pokes tongue out)

Confetti Yeah. Buzz off!

(The lift buzzes and **JIMMY** turns to go)

Semolina Where are you going, mister?

Jimmy I'm buzzing off!

(**SEMOLINA** follows him to the lift and watches as he turns the handle. **CONFETTI** tunes her guitar. **CHARLIE** waddles over to Christmas tree and admires it. **RAMBINO** drops to the ground and crawls on his belly through imaginary undergrowth. **DIMPLES** fluffs up her costume and hair and practices a curtsy.

The following in quick succession:)

Semolina What are you doing?

Jimmy Working the lift.

Semolina Give me a shot. (tries to push him aside)

Jimmy You're too small. Get off! (they struggle)

(**DIMPLES** tap dances towards **FUNGUS** and **MAGGOT**. **CHARLIE** spots the presents and looks curious)

Dimples *(singing)* On the good ship "Lollipop"
It's a nice trip to a candy shop ... *(FUNGUS trips her with his cane)* Ow!

Fungus Oops! Silly me.

Dimples *(lispng)* Oh my goodness! Look at my dress. It's filthy! *(sobs)*

Fungus Don't cry, cherubim. Let me help you up. *(offers hand to DIMPLES)*

Dimples No! *(gets up)*

Fungus What's your name, my little diplodocus?

Dimples None of your business. *(flounces away)*
(RAMBINO stands up behind FUNGUS and MAGGOT and fires a gun. They shriek and raise their hands. CONFETTI sings. DIMPLES tap-dances. CHARLIE fights temptation. The lift doors opens. GRAZIA and VERRUCA emerge)

Verruca *(shouting)* Mama mia! What's going on here? *(ALL stop and look at him. GRAZIA moves D.S.)* This is a shop, not a playground.
(CHARLIE pokes presents with his cane)

Audience Hands off!

Jimmy *(dashing D.S.)* Don't touch those presents. *(he shoves CHARLIE and is shoved back.)*

Semolina Now it's my turn! *(she pushes VERRUCA back into the lift and grabs the handle)*

Grazia Don't touch that!

Semolina Wheee!
(SEMOLINA winds the handle furiously. The doors close. Shrieks offstage and grinding sound effects. The children follow the pointer with their heads)

Jimmy *(to CHARLIE)* Stop shoving!

Grazia Jimmy!

Jimmy *(turning)* What is it? Oh no! Get away from there. You'll cause a terrible accident! *(the pointer is at "3")* Let go of that handle!

Semolina Spoil sport! *(she stands back)*

Jimmy No, no ... don't let go! Arrgh! Too late!
(The handle turns on its own. Swanee whistle and drumroll. The pointer descends quickly and "bounces". ALL follow its movement with their heads. Crashing noises, shrieks and groans offstage. JIMMY and GRAZIA move to the lift)

Grazia Oh dear!

Jimmy I hope he's still in one piece!
(The lift doors open. A miniature Verruca emerges: a small child, indentially dressed and made-up. He staggers D.S.)

Jimmy *(to SEMOLINA)* Now look what you've done!

Grazia Poor Signor Verruca.
(Mini-Verruca cries and rubs eyes. CHARLIE pats his head)

Dimples *(jeering)* Cry-baby!

Jimmy What are we going to do?

Rambino *(brandishing gun)* Put him out of his misery! *(JIMMY pulls him back)*

Confetti He could come to school with us.

Semolina Don't be daft. He's grown-up ... he's got a job to do.

Jimmy Yes. And he can't do it like that.

Dimples He could get a new job.

Jimmy What as? A hod carrier for "Lego"?
(CHARLIE gives a hanky to Mini-Verruca)

Grazia Come on. Dry your eyes. And blow you nose. (Mini-Verruca does so)

Dimples Pull yourself together.

Semolina That's it! We'll pull him back together!

Rambino Yeah! (holding Mini-Verruca's arms) Grab that end.

Jimmy Be careful!
(SEMOLINA lifts Mini-Verruca's feet. VERRUCA enters behind Grazia's counter, unseen by the audience)

Rambino Ready? One! Two! Er... what comes after two?

Dimples Three, idiot!

Rambino One! Two! Threedioid! Pull! (SEMOLINA is pulled behind the counter)

Semolina Wait! Stop! You're too strong for me. (they lay Mini-Verruca behind the counter) Come on you lot!
(The other children form a line behind her, holding each other around the waist. JIMMY and GRAZIA watch anxiously)

Rambino Ready?
(They bend to lift an imaginary body: SEMOLINA takes hold of a false pair of legs)

Others Ready!

Rambino Pull!

All (singing) Yo-oh-heave ho! Yo-oh-heave ho!
(“Stretching” noises as they sing. VERRUCA groans. The line of children move back. SEMOLINA is holding the feet of an incredibly long pair of legs...)

Jimmy Stop! You've gone too far. (they stop) Let go!
(SEMOLINA releases the legs and topples backwards, knocking the other children over. The legs spring back behind the counter, pulled by RAMBINO. “Twanging” noises. JIMMY and GRAZIA move to the counter)

Rambino I've fixed him! (flexes his muscles)
(VERRUCA's head and shoulders appear.)

Verruca I'll fix you in a minute, you little monkey. (RAMBINO retreats. To JIMMY and GRAZIA) Don't just stand there, Crankit. Give me a hand!

Jimmy Si, signor. (Claps hands. The children applaud)

Verruca No, no. Help me up.
(JIMMY and GRAZIA move behind the counter and assist him)

Grazia Are you alright, Signor Verruca?

Verruca Of course! Don't I look alright? (He straightens up. He is standing on a stool and appears a lot taller) I'm completely back to normal. (He brings his incredibly long arms into view: these are extensions to his costume, see Appendix A. The children fall about laughing.) What's wrong? Why is everybody laughing?

Grazia Haven't you noticed?

Verruca Noticed what?

Jimmy (hesitantly) I mean ... are you sure you're feeling alright?

Verruca (thoughtfully) Well now that you mention it ...

Jimmy & Grazia (apprehensively) Yes?

Verruca My back is a bit itchy.

Jimmy Let me scratch it for you.

Verruca I can reach. (scratches back) Ahh, that's better. That's one of the advantages of having six foot arms. (horrified) Six foot arms? Arrgh! What am I going to do? I can't run a shop like this.

Jimmy You could always get a job as a policeman. (to audience) The long arm of the law!

Verruca This is ridiculous!

Jimmy I know. (to audience) And it gets worse.

Scrumpi (voice off) Yoo-hoo! Where are you?

Jimmy (to audience) What did I tell you? Here comes Mama Scrumpi!
(Enter MAMA SCRUMPI carrying a prop window. She is visibly wealthy and flamboyantly over-dressed.)

Scrumpi Hello, children! I hope you've been good.

Children (except DIMPLES) Yes, Mama Scrumpi. (they clasp hands angelically and look skywards)

Scrumpi (to audience) I'm terribly sorry I'm late. (holding up window) I've been window shopping. (looking around) Where's Signor Verruca? He's usually here to welcome me with open arms. (JIMMY points) Oh, how nice! They're open longer than usual. (to audience) Well, it is late night shopping. (VERRUCA groans) What's wrong with him?

Jimmy There's been a bit of an accident.

Scrumpi Maybe I can help? (to audience) I used to be a nurse before I became a mega-star. (to VERRUCA) Where does it hurt?

Verruca All over.

Scrumpi Well just stick your head through this window and the pane disappear! (She puts the window over his head. Sound of breaking glass. Swanee whistle. VERRUCA "shrinks" to his normal size and drops the false arms) What did I tell you? Still in one piece?

Verruca Just.

Scrumpi Now children, apologise to Signor Verruca.

Children We're sorry, Signor Verruca.

Verruca (beaming) That's alright.

Scrumpi You're not angry with them?

Verruca Of course not. I love kiddies. They're my favourites. Apart from your gorgeous self, of course!

Scrumpi (fluttering) Oh, Valentino!

Verruca Signora Scrumptious! (kisses her hand)

Scrumpi (prodding him) Don't be so formal. Call me "Scrumpi". Everyone else does.

Verruca I prefer your full name.

- Scrumpi** Ah, yes ... (*vamping*) "Scrumptious" by name ... and by nature! (*to audience*) I am the legendary Lucrezia Scrumptious, star of stage, screen and the *local theatre in local town!* (*aside*) Oh that I should sink so low!
- Grazia** (*making a note*) Who did you say?
- Scrumpi** (*offended*) Don't you recognise me? You must have seen me at the cinema.
- Grazia** No ... where do you usually sit?
(*SCRUMPI looks mortified. VERRUCA pushes GRAZIA aside*)
- Verruca** Forgive her, Mama. She's too young to remember. (*to GRAZIA*) She was very big in the movies.
- Scrumpi** I'm still big ... it was the movies that got small! (*to audience*) But I gave up the bright lights to devote myself to education. I am nurturing the stars of tomorrow. And these are them: the pupils of Scrumpi's Stage School for *perspiring* young talents.
(*The children bow and curtsy. CHARLIE moves away from the others, takes a banana from his pocket. He peels and eats it slowly during the next section. RAMBINO starts to crawl towards the Christmas tree*)
- Verruca** Don't you mean "aspiring"?
- Scrumpi** No, I make them sweat! There's only two ways to get your name up in lights: work hard or change your name to "Exit".
(*RAMBINO grabs a Christmas present*)
- Audience** Hands off!
- Jimmy** (*moving D.S.*) Don't touch those! (*to audience*) Thanks a lot, boys and girls.
- Scrumpi** (*peering at audience*) Boys and girls? Arrgh! The place is full of children!
- Jimmy** Oh dear! (*thinks quickly*)
- Scrumpi** Why weren't you at school today? Everyone else was. (*hands on hip and tapping foot*) Well? I'm waiting!
- Jimmy** Er ... they couldn't come today. They haven't been well!
- Scrumpi** (*scanning audience*) They look alright to me! The picture of health.
- Jimmy** (*to audience*) Quick! Pretend you've got a cold. You go "atishoo" when I tell you. (*holds up hand*)
- Scrumpi** There's nothing wrong with them!
- Jimmy** Yes there is. They've got terrible colds. (*to audience*) Now! "Atishoo"!
- Audience** Atishsoo! (*ALL onstage wipe their faces*)
- Scrumpi** Manners! You should cover you mouth when you sneeze. But no more excuses ... I'll expect you tomorrow morning, bright and early. (*pointing to children onstage*) You can join my "fame" class and if you work hard, I'll turn you all into stars, like the rest of them. (*pushing CONFETTI forward*) This is Confetti ...
(*As each of the children are introduced, GRAZIA makes a note of the name and FUNGUS and MAGGOT also pay special attention. CONFETTI strums her guitar and sings a couple of lines from a current "hit" single. Her voice is painfully off-key and her movements totally unco-ordinated. The others block their ears.*)
- Scrumpi** (*patting CONFETTI proudly*) She'll make a great rock-star ... she's tone deaf and can't read a note of music.
- Grazia** Does she play by ear?

- Scrumpi** No ... she plays by the window to annoy the neighbours. *(to audience, pushing RAMBINO forward)* And this is our mean, macho super-hero ... Rambino. *(RAMBINO flexes his muscles)* He's so tough, every time he pokes his tongue out, he breaks a tooth!
- Rambino** *(to audience)* You wanna fight? Come on then! I'll take you all on!
- Scrumpi** *(dragging him back)* Enough! *(to audience)* Give him an inch and he thinks he's a ruler! Now where's my little protégé?
- Dimples & Semolina** Here, Mama. *(SEMOLINA picks her nose)*
- Scrumpi** Not you, Semolina. *(slaps her hand away)* And how many more times do I have to tell you ... blonde bombshells don't pick noses. *(to DIMPLES)* Go ahead, Baby.
- Dimples** *(waving at audience)* Hello, everybody! Other kids are scruffy pigs, With faces full of pimples! But me, I'm nice, I'm sugar and spice: My name is Baby Dimples! *(Music. DIMPLES breaks into song and tap-dances, as before. The others look nauseous. Without looking, CHARLIE tosses the banana skin over his shoulder and dabs at his mouth with a handkerchief. DIMPLES slips on the skin and falls over and sobs loudly. The other children giggle. GRAZIA goes to her assistance)*
- Scrumpi** *(to DIMPLES)* Don't start crying or you'll be a flop: just keep on trying and you'll reach the top.
- Dimples** *(snivelling)* I can't do it, Mama.
- Scrumpi** Of course you can. Nothing is impossible I have found so when your chin is on the ground just ...
- All** *(singing)* Pick yourself up! Dust yourself off! And start all over again! *(stamp foot and extend arm to DIMPLES)* Yeah! *(DIMPLES gets up)*
- Scrumpi** When I was your age, I ran away with the circus. *(to audience)* But they made me bring it back again. So I went to London and became an overnight sensation. The Royal Shakespeare Company gave me a leading part.
- Semolina** Head usherette?
- Scrumpi** No ... that famous Scottish character.
- Rambino** The Loch Ness Monster!
- Scrumpi** *(hitting him)* Lady Macbeth! I've played all the Shakespearean 'biggies'.
- Dimples** What were your favourite roles?
- Scrumpi** Juliette and egg mayonnaise. Anyway, one night I was playing Cleopatra ...
- Confetti** *(interrupting)* Really? Who won?
- Scrumpi** Do you want to hear my "rags-to-riches" story or not?
- Children** No!
- Scrumpi** *(pointing at audience)* Well, they want to ... don't you? *(The children prompt the audience to respond)*

Audience No!

Scrumpi (*pointedly ignoring them*) As I was saying ... there I was playing Cleopatra, the siren of Nile, when suddenly this movie director comes up to me and says, "Your the best siren I've ever seen, are you ready to go off?" So we did. To Hollywood. I made hundreds of movies and millions of dollars! I had dozens of husbands and thousands of admirers. Why, even Rudolf Valentino had a soft spot for me!

Semolina His head!

Scrumpi But I had to give it all up, on account of sickness.

Confetti Hollywood got sick of her!

Scrumpi No. I got sick of Hollywood. (*intro music*) It's not the same as it used to be. Times change.

SONG D

Mama Scrumpi and Children

(During the song the CUSTOMERS re-enter and point at MAMA SCRUMPI in excitement. The song ends and the CUSTOMERS clamour for autographs.)

Verruca (*applauding*) Bravo! Bellissimo!

Scrumpi (*signing*) One at time please.
(*GRAZIA moves in front of VERRUCA. MAGGOT and FUNGUS move behind him*)

Grazia Signor ...

Verruca Not now ... I'm enthusing. (*applauds*) Bravo!

Grazia But there's two "gentlemen" to see you.

Verruca (*turning*) Gentlemen?

Maggot (*falling to knees*) Sin Verrucs! (*ferverly kisses his hand*)

Verruca (*loud whisper*) Get up, idiot! You don't know me.

Maggot 'Course I knows ya ... (*VERRUCA kicks him and he yowls*)

Verruca Oh dear, my foot slipped. (*false laugh*) Ha! Ha! Alright, Grazia, I'll deal with this. (*Pushing FUNGUS and MAGGOT aside and speaking loudly*) Now then, gentlemen ... have you got the goods?
(*GRAZIA and JIMMY watch suspiciously*)

Maggot Yes, boss we gotta dem good. (*points at sack*)

Verruca (*beaming*) Excellenti! (*furious whisper*) And don't call me "boss". You're supposed to be in disguise. (*goes to sack*)

Maggot I thought we was "in de shop".

Verruca (*looking into sack, angrily*) That's not enough! I'll be sold out in not time.

Fungus Can't be helped, dear sir. It's hard to get our hands on the ... (*indicates children*) "raw materials". (*MAGGOT spits*)

Verruca Idiots! Must I do everything myself? Wait outside. I'll see what I can do.
(*Exit FUNGUS and MAGGOT. VERRUCA takes hold of the sack*)

Scrumpi (*still signing*) That's enough! (*groans of disappointment*) Sorry. (*like Garbo*) I want to be alone. (*CUSTOMERS return U.S. To audience*) Phew! It's hot work being a celebrity, even with so many fans to cool you down! (*to JIMMY*) Now then, where is Mr. Geppetto? (*pointing off*) Is he without?

Jimmy *(tugging at his trousers)* You could say that. *(sniggers)* I'll fetch him for you.

Verruca Mama mia! *(stopping JIMMY)* Stop! *(to SCRUMPI)* Mr. Geppetto's not available right now. He's incommunicado.

Scrumpi Well shout through the keyhole and tell him I want to see him.

Verruca No, no ... you don't want to see him.

Scrumpi Well, I don't ... but my pupils do.

Verruca *(examining her eyes)* Your pupils? Ah, yes ... what a beautiful shade of blue.

Jimmy *(calling)* Mr. Geppetto!

Geppetto *(voice off)* Coming!
(Enter GEPPETTO with a wheelbarrow on which PINOCCHIO is lying, covered by a sheet)

Verruca Oh no!

Geppetto *(to audience)* Hello, everybody.

Audience Hello, Geppetto.

Geppetto Geppetto? *(checks himself)* Oh yes, that's me!

Confetti What's that you've got, mister?

Geppetto A new toy.

Dimples What kind of toy?

Geppetto *(untying apron)* I'll just take my apron off and show you.

Verruca *(aside)* Oh no! They'll run away screaming and never come back! *(covers eyes)*
(GEPPETTO removes the apron. He is now wearing trousers. VERRUCA listens to the following exchange with mounting horror. GEPPETTO removes the sheet covering PINOCCHIO: a live performer with velcroed "strings" attached to the head and arms ... see Appendix A. ALL gasp)

Geppetto What do you think of that?

Scrumpi I've never seen anything like it! It's outrageous! So daring! What an absolutely ... marvellous marionette!

Verruca *(turning)* "Marionette"? *(sighs with and mops brow)* Phew!

Geppetto I call him "Pinocchio". *(pulls the "strings", making PINOCCHIO rise)*

Verruca *(annoyed)* "Pinocchio"!

Geppetto He's a little wooden-head.

Verruca And you're a blockhead! I told to forget about puppets and make real toys.

Geppetto But he is real. Or almost ... he's a toy-boy.

Scrumpi *(with greater interest)* Really?

Geppetto Everyone loves puppets. *(to CHILDREN)* Don't you? *(they shake their heads)*

Rambino Naah!

Semolina That's kids stuff!

Dimples They're boring!

Confetti Old fashioned!

Dimples Stupid!

Geppetto Of course he's not stupid. *(moving PINOCCHIO)* See? He can walk like you. And talk like you. *(impersonating DIMPLES and making PINOCCHIO wave)* Hello everybody, my name's "Pinocchio"! *(normal voice)* And he can dance better than you.

Dimples Phooey!

SONG E

Geppetto

(During the short song, GEPPETTO makes PINOCCHIO dance. All except MAMA SCRUMPI, GRAZIA and JIMMY look bored. The CHILDREN lean against each other and pretend to fall asleep)

Scrumpi *(only one applauding)* Bravo! Bellissimo! Is it hard to become a puppeteer?

Geppetto No ... you just pull a few strings.

Scrumpi *(to CHILDREN)* Isn't he clever, children? *(loud snoring)* Children! *(they wake up)*

Geppetto *(to CUSTOMERS)* Now then Ladies and Gentlemen, who would like to order a puppet for Christmas?

(MAMA SCRUMPI raises her hand. The CUSTOMERS shake their heads)

Customers *(together)* No thanks. Not likely! What a waste of money. You must be joking! Not me!

(GEPPETTO is crestfallen)

Verruca There! What did I tell you? Nobody wants puppets nowadays ... they want "He-Men" and "She-Ra", and "Ghostbusters" *(or substitute current "fad" toys)* and ... *(Opens sack. A short drum roll)* ... "My Little Donkey"! *(produces a donkey from the sack)*

(Gasps of pleasure from the CHILDREN and CUSTOMERS as they gather round VERRUCA. GRAZIA looks puzzled. GEPPETTO sits miserably in the wheelbarrow with PINOCCHIO slumped at his feet)

Children *(variously)* Ah, isn't it cute? Brilliant! Wow! I want one, Mama!

Scrumpi We'll see.

Dimples Pleeeeee!

Verruca *(to GEPPETTO)* There! What did I tell you? *(to CUSTOMERS, launching into sales-spiel)* These delightful donkeys are 100% cuddly-acrylic and fully machine-washable. Guaranteed to bring hours of fun and laughter. Have you ever seen such a jocular jackass?

Scrumpi *(examining donkey)* It looks a bit miserable to me. What a sad little face. *(looking closer, in amazement)* And look ... it's crying!

Children Ahhh!

Verruca Of course. It's crying out to be loved! "My Little Donkey" is guaranteed to cry real tears, or your money back.

Scrumpi How original!

Verruca *(hand on breast)* These miserable mules will melt the hardest heart. But this is no dumb animal. *(stands donkey on ground)* "My Little Donkey" is the world's first talking toy. And no expensive batteries required. You can just kick-start it. *(kicks the donkey: "braying")* You see?

All Ahhh!

Dimples What's it saying?

Verruca "Ouch!" *(picking up donkey)* And switching it off couldn't be simpler. *(shaking the donkey nastily)* Be quiet or I'll wring your scrawny little neck! *(the braying stops)*

Scrumpi How much are they?

Verruca They usually retail at £5. But seeing as it's Christmas ... £10 each! *(goes behind counter with sack)* Hurry, hurry ... while stocks last!

Customers *(together)* I'll have two! I was here first! Give me one! Stop shoving. Back of the queue. *(etc)*

Verruca One at a time, please. First come first served.
(CUSTOMERS clamour and jostle each other. SCRUMPI and the CHILDREN join them. VERRUCA produces wrapped shapes from sack, collects money and puts it in the till ... ringing sound. GRAZIA stands apart and consults her notebook)

Jimmy *(to GEPPETTO)* Cheer up, Geppetto.

Geppetto *(sadly)* Nobody cares about craftsmanship anymore.

Jimmy It's just a passing fashion. It won't last. One day your puppet will be a winner. You'll see.

Grazia *(to JIMMY)* Pssst! *(beckons him over)*

Jimmy *(joining her)* What is it?

Grazia *(looking around)* Shsh! Walls have ears.

Jimmy No! I thought they made sausages! *(laughs)*

Grazia Shsh! Don't make jokes about The Raffia. *(a sinister fanfare)*

Jimmy *(nervously)* Oo-er! Have you found out who the Godfather is?

Grazia *(glancing at MAMA SCRUMPI)* Or Godmother!

Jimmy Eh? You don't mean Mama Scrumpi!!

Grazia Could be. Or Mr. Geppetto.

Jimmy Never!

Grazia Or Signor Verruca.

Jimmy Impossible! They're all such nice people.

Grazia One of them must be two-faced. But which one? *(to audience)* Do you have any idea? *(audience responds)* Who? Just a minute. I can't hear when you all shout at once. *(pointing at each person on turn)* Do you think it's Mr. Geppetto?

Audience No!

Grazia How about Mama Scrumpi?

Audience No!

Grazia Signor Verruca?

Audience Yes!

Jimmy But that's impossible. He couldn't be a kiddy-snatcher. He loves children. And all the grown-ups like him.

Grazia Are you sure it's him?

Audience Yes.

Grazia There you are. *(to audience)* Thank you. Now all we have to do is prove it and catch him red-handed.

Verruca *(emerging from behind counter)* That's it. I'm sorry! We're sold out. *(groans of disappointment from CUSTOMERS)* Come back tomorrow. Perhaps we'll have a fresh supply. *(pats DIMPLES on the head)*
(A "ding-dong". Everyone stops and listens)