

The Shooky

by

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with the 5-7 year olds of Birmingham

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Cast of Characters

Iccy – a twin sister

Onga – a twin brother.

Mercedes – an orange ladybird

Bradley – The Chief Ranger of The Shooky

The Fooglepeas [Foogle and Peas] - The senior under-rangers.

Megan – The twin's mother.

Young Bradley

Stanley - The Spider that is afraid of itself

Balzur – a caterpillar

Loskin – a three-legged beetle

Donna – a fruitfly

The Tiger

[The Voice of the Shooky is spread amongst the actors]

**The action of the play all takes place at or around or above
The Shooky.**

[Pre-play action. In the auditorium and foyer, establishing The Shooky with the audience. Staff in role as 'fooglepeas' [under-rangers] making sure everyone is clear about the rules of the Shooky. 'Welcome to The Shooky', 'Please make sure you stay in the safe areas', 'be aware of the rules of 'The Shooky', 'Bradley says.....etc']

Scene One The Shooky – daytime

[The Shooky is a public space in the city. It is partly natural, partly man-made, partly organic, partly industrial. It is a civic place and a wilderness.

In The Shooky, children are playing, exploring, enjoying themselves, but they are constricted. As far as possible, it feels as if the audience is among these people, while the Shooky is open, and they can be acknowledged by the characters. When it is closed, only Iccy and the Shooky itself retain that link.

The Voice of the Shooky is shared between actors]

Shooky: Between the temple and the leisure centre,
Under the flyover, opposite Pizza Hut,
Behind the railings at the end of our street,
Is The Shooky.

[The twins are accompanied by Megan, their mother. She is permanently concerned.]

Megan: This is the place. It's completely closed in, so you should be safe. I want you to promise me you won't go running off. Iccy?

Iccy: *OK*

Megan: I'm relying on you, Onga. Make sure she wears her coat. Don't get dirty. Don't talk to anyone.

[Iccy is in The Shooky for the first time, running about. There is something about Iccy that makes people do what she wants. She doesn't speak. She has her own system of signs, which her brother understands. Her signs are written as lines in the script.]

Iccy: *Onga, Onga.*

Shooky: Our mums and dads played in this place,
 Fenced between the flats and the factory,
 Witches stirred in the corners of the walls here,
 And little wolves lurked in these woods,
 Pirates sailed the seven ponds,
 And from the bins, cowboys shot at crocodiles,
 Goblins pushed princesses on those swings,
 Until the call for tea or bedtime came,
 From grown-ups waiting safely
 Outside the Shooky.....

Megan: Iccy, Iccy, put on the coat

 Iccy, Iccy, put on the coat

 Put on the coat, put on the coat

 Put it on, put it on, put it on,

 [To audience] Ooh that girl.

 [Onga is exploring less enthusiastically. He has tended to be labelled as 'difficult', and has that look about him. He looks as if he would be afraid of nothing, but he has a thread of caution running through him.]

Iccy: *A tree, look.*

Onga: Yes, a tree.

Iccy: *A brick, look.*

Onga: Aww

Iccy: *A puddle, look.*

Onga: Wow..a puddle.

Iccy: [To audience] *Isn't it great?*

Onga: Iccy! What's so great about it?

Iccy: *Brilliant*

Onga: Boring.

Iccy: [To audience] *Look you can run about here. And twirl here.*

Onga: [To audience] Yes, you can run and twirl. Or you can sit here.

[He sits.]

Shooky: Open spaces, secret places,
Balls and pine-cones, kicked and thrown,
Scary chases, wind-red faces,
Mud and tarmac, grass and stone.

Megan: Twins! Twins! I'm going now.

Onga: I thought you'd gone.

Megan: Kiss, kiss.

Onga: Mom!

Megan: Iccy. Make sure you wear your coat. Make sure she wears her coat.

[To audience] I'm not sure about this place. I wish I hadn't said they could come here.

She'll get ill.

Catch a chill.

I know she will.

[She goes, anxiously, looking back. Onga sees her off]

[Iccy takes off her coat, and starts looking for picnic spots]

Iccy: *How about here?*

Onga: No.

Iccy: *Here? This is perfect.*

Onga: No.

[Iccy finds a soccer goal and swings on it]

A real goal!

[Onga takes a ball from his rucksack and goes towards the goal. He starts to play, commentating on himself as he does]

Onga: Ronaldo to Zidane, reverse Cruyff, Luis Figo silky skills down the left, then across, and Ronaldinho's there...

Shooky: Our mums and dads played in this place,
When they were small and smiled more.
But now the Shooky has changed.....

[Iccy moves over, and starts preparing the ground for the picnic. An ice cream van sound. Onga and Iccy freeze in unison and turn to the noise]

Iccy: *I'll go.*

[She rushes off]

Onga: Iccy. Watch where you go!

[He returns to his football fantasy]

[Foogle and Peas appear. They are the senior under-rangers, Bradley's main side-kicks. They approach Onga.]

Foogle: Do you see what I see, Miss Peas?

Peas: Mr Foogle I do.

Foogle: Shall I, Miss Peas?

Peas: Go ahead, Mr Foogle, please.

Foogle: [Approaching Onga] Sorry son. No football in The Shooky

Onga: But there's a goal.

Foogle: It's a trap.

Onga: A trap?

Peas: I'll have that.

Onga: What do you mean, a trap? Oi!

[Peas takes the ball and they go away]

Foogle: Mr Bradley doesn't allow footballs.

Onga: Who's Mr Bradley? Hey!

[They have gone]

[To audience] Did you see that?

[Iccy returns with ice-creams]

Iccy, did you see that?

Those two took my ball.

Iccy: *Who?*

Onga: Twowhatsits. They were there. You saw them, didn't you? I was playing with it and they grabbed it. They said football isn't allowed.

[Iccy gives him an icecream]

Iccy: What whatsits?

Onga: I don't know. Rangers or something. One of them was kind of small and creepy, the other had a long nose with big teeth and things. You must've seen them.

[Iccy is back into her picnic preparation. She sees Foogle and Peas returning as Onga goes on about them]

He said it was a trap. Why have a goal if you can't play football? Oh man. That was my champions league ball. He was really ugly. Great big slobbering disgusting...

Iccy: *Like these two?*

[Foogle appears. Peas grabs Onga's icecream. Confiscates it]

Peas: I'll have that!

Onga: Hey!

Foogle: Mr Bradley does not allow ice-cream.

Onga: Ice cream?

Peas: Oh no.

Onga: Why not?

Foogle: Because, young man, it is messy and unhealthy. Think of your waist.

Peas: Your waist.

Foogle: Think of your teeth.

Peas: Yes, teeth, teeth.

Foogle: On top of which, it is dangerous.

Onga: Ice-cream, dangerous?

Peas: Oh yes.

Foogle: Oh yes. Imagine, if this little girl dripped melting ice-cream, here, in the public thoroughfare. There would be a danger. Suppose that an elderly person, maybe someone who is one hundred years old....

Peas: Maybe it is her birthday, Mr Foogle.

Foogle: Yes, Miss Peas, quite. A lady innocently trying to celebrate her one hundredth birthday with a nice, calm, safe, walk here in The Shooky, places her little brown comfortable shoe on your discarded ice-cream slick, and 'whoof'! Her legs fly into the air, her poor, fragile body hurtles across the pathway, striking the hard edge of that bin over there with a sickening crunch,

and she falls lifeless to the floor....dead. You killed her, young lady, with your ice-cream.

Peas: I'll have that.

Foogle: Better take that while you are about it, Peas.

Onga: The picnic rug?

Foogle: I prefer to call it, 'the trip-hazard'.

Iccy: *Onga, are you going to let him take our stuff?*

Onga: Well, he has got a point, Iccy. Think about that poor old lady.

Iccy: *What're you talking about? He made her up.*

Onga: I never realised how dangerous ice-cream was.

Foogle: No.

Iccy: *Onga! What about your ball? The picnic? Hey...our stuff!*

Peas: These have been confiscated.

Iccy: *What?*

Foogle: Confiscated. You will have to take it up with Mr Bradley.

Onga: We'd better go. Mom will be worrying.

Iccy: *But our picnic. We haven't had it yet.*

Onga: You know what she's like. Come on.

[They leave, Iccy very reluctantly. Foogle and Peas finish clearing up]

Foogle: Rug, please.

Peas: It's 'Peas'.

Foogle: What is Peas?

Peas: Get my name right, please.

Foogle: I thought it was Peas.

Peas: It is.

[We don't see Bradley distinctly, but he roars from out of the shadows]

Bradley: [Banging a drum] Fooglepeas!

Foogle/Peas: Mr Bradley!

Bradley: Bring it all to me.

Shooky: As the daylight fades
In the shooky shades
Bradley the chief ranger, prowls
Around the shadows. Growls
His gruff rules
At all these

Bradley: FOOLS! Close up, close up. Now. Let's get all these wretched children out of here. Foogle. Peas. Shut the Shooky!

[Foogle and Peas get in each other's way, as they try and carry out his orders]

Foogle: Shut the Shooky.

Peas: Shut the Shooky.

Foogle: Out you go, the Shooky is shutting.

Peas: Out you go, the Shooky's shut.

Shooky: As the daylight fades
In the shooky shades
Evening sun glows
The gates close

[There is some kind of ceremonial closing of the Shooky, with music, until...]

Bradley: Stop that music! Stop! Let's have some peace.

Scene Two Outside the Shooky – evening

Shooky: Darkness falls
Inside the Shooky walls.
Listen to the peace

[Iccy arrives with bags.]

Shhh!

And a young girl returns

[She stops. Looks around]

Deep inside she yearns
For something somewhere,
Some magic she has breathed
In the Shooky air

[There is a movement in the shadows. A growl. She backs off. Trying to go in, but scared. She realises she is being observed. She goes into the shadows and

holds her breath. Onga arrives, hesitantly. They jump at each other in fear before realising]

Onga: Iccy, oh thank god, it's you.

What're you doing?

Iccy: *Leave me alone.*

Onga: You're running away?

Because of some stupid argument about wearing a coat?

Iccy: *Not just that. I have to come here. Did you tell Mom?*

Onga: Of course not. I followed you, on my own. Iccy, why? What's so important about coming here?

Iccy: *It just is.*

Onga: Here?

Iccy: *It's a good place. Something in the air here. There is something I have to do.*

Onga: Iccy, Iccy, Iccy. You'll make things worse. It's the middle of the night.

Iccy: *He said*

Onga: Who said?

[Iccy makes a sign that seems to take Onga by surprise, but he understands immediately]

Oh Iccy. You can't..... look you're not dressed for wandering around outside at night. I know things have been bad, but there's no point in....

[Iccy starts to try again to get into the Shooky. She is interrupted by Mercedes, who appears suddenly, inside the Shooky. She is a sassy, colourful ladybird. Like all ladybirds, her bright colours are a danger signal to would-be predators. She is expecting her.]

Mercedes: Glad you turned up. I've brought my stuff.

Iccy: *Stuff?*

Mercedes: I heard about the picnic, so I came along. I love picnics.

Iccy: *Heard about it?*

[Mercedes looks puzzled]

Onga: She says what do you mean, you heard about it?

Mercedes: Oh. One of the ants. Was listening. Said there were some new kids in the Shooky, planning a picnic. The ants listen out for picnics.

Iccy: *Why?*

Mercedes: Coz of the crumbs, of course.

Iccy: *Oh yes.*

Mercedes: [To Onga] You coming too, boy?

Onga: No. No-one is having a picnic. I'm taking her back. This is stupid.

Iccy: *Through here?*

Mercedes: You can't get in that way. You'll have to come over here. Come on. Yazz!

Onga: Come back, Iccy, or I'll tell Mom.

Mercedes: Do you want me to sting that boy for you?

Onga: Ladybirds don't sting.

Mercedes: Perhaps not....Want to risk it?

Onga: Iccy. Last chance. Come back with me.

Iccy: *Sorry, Onga. I have to. I'll be fine.*

[She follows Mercedes]

Onga: Well, I'm coming with you then. Make sure you get into no trouble.

[Mercedes guides Iccy over and through. Onga follows, hesitantly. They make their way into the Shooky.]

This is mad, Iccy, mad. It's dark.

Scene Three – In the Shooky at night

Shooky: It is different after dark,
At night in the Shooky,
What was there in daylight,
Is changed,
Made magic,
Brought to life,
What should be dark, glows or shines,
And what should be silent, hums
With secrets and excitement
Listen, listen.
It's different after dark.

[The children, and ladybird, are exploring the area, which is transformed and transforming. This section is full of music and action, with little dialogue along the

way. What is said will depend on what exactly is there....]

Mercedes: Stay close to the trees. Over there are the ponds. We must just keep clear of that shed in the shadows....

Onga: You've done this before, haven't you?

Mercedes: Ukk. I almost live here. Every night, when all the children have gone, the place is ours.

Onga: The ladybirds?

Mercedes: All of us.

Onga: So it's safe to be here?

Mercedes: Much safer without the people. As long as Bradley is asleep, it's buffty.

Onga: Bradley?

Mercedes: The Chief Ranger.

Onga: Oh yes.

Mercedes: Have you seen him?

Iccy: *I have.*

Onga: I think I heard him. We met his... assistants.

Mercedes: The fooglepeas? [sucks teeth] Forget about them.

Onga: They took my ball. 'Confiscated'.

Mercedes: Yes, they would. He loves having them take stuff.

Onga: What will he do if he finds us here?

Mercedes: Don't worry, human boy, you're with Mercedes.

Onga: Who?

Mercedes: Me. Mercedes.

Onga: Oh. Me Onga. This is Iccy.

Mercedes: Whatever. Kapshida! Come on.

[They go in deeper]

Onga: It's different after dark

Mercedes: It's different after dark

Iccy: [beats out a rhythm] *Different after dark.*

[They move about, in the rhythm of the Shooky, continuing to discover things. The exploration is interrupted by the realisation that Bradley is coming]

Mercedes: Yazz! He's coming. Bradley.

[Bradley appears. He shuffles, weighed down by his coat of confiscations. He is collecting into his coat pockets everything that has been left by visitors or confiscated by the fooglepeas. He drags a box. The children hold their breath]

Bradley: Look at this place. Little litterbugs. Vandals. I will make the Shooky safe if it kills me. I will. There will be no playing monkeys. No making slides from leaves. No sticky aliens in gooey eggs.

[He passes close to where the children are hiding. Nearly catches them. Goes off. Iccy follows him.]

Onga: Iccy!

Iccy: *Just going to check the coast is clear.*

[Onga makes to follow]

Mercedes: She'll be fine.

[Onga stops. Paces]

Is she your girlfriend?

Onga: Ugh, no! Sister.

Mercedes: Why doesn't she chat?

Onga: Oh. Don't know.

Mercedes: Where do you bobs nest?

Onga: What? Er...just down the road.

Mercedes: Why haven't you been here before?

Onga: We just moved in.

Mercedes: Really?

Onga: Well, we have only been here about a year.

Mercedes: You've been here a year, and today was your first time in the Shooky?

Onga: Yes, well, Mom gets worried. She doesn't like us to go out.

Mercedes: Weird.

Onga: You know...Moms.

Mercedes: No. Not like that.

Onga: We had to move from where we were before, because of..things. That makes her worry more. Maybe it's different for..you know.

Mercedes: Ladybirds? Maybe. My sister got splatted a few weeks ago. My dad just said, 'bad things happen', and we carried on.

Onga: Splatted?

Mercedes: Big boot.

Onga: Really? I'm sorry.

Mercedes: Wasn't your fault, was it?

[Iccy comes back]

Iccy: *He's gone miles. Safely out of the way. Let's go in his shed.*

Mercedes: Not in Bradley's shed.

Onga: What's wrong? I thought you practically lived here.

[Mercedes looks shifty]

You haven't been in the shed, have you? Iccy, it's a bad idea.

Mercedes: Look let's go to the old tree-house, I'll take you there.

Onga: Tree-house?

Mercedes: Over the ponds, in the woods. We just need to fly over..oh..can you fly?

Onga: No.

Mercedes: Heeb. Well, we can walk, it just takes –

Iccy: *No, we're going in the shed.*

Mercedes: No.

Onga: What's so bad about this shed?

Mercedes: You don't understand. It's Bradley's.

Onga: And...?

Shooky: In the shooky's poisoned heart
Bradley shuffles in his sleep
Can you hear his stinking breath
Wheezing through his flappy mouth?

Many years ago, the birds
Came with claws as Bradley slept
Perched upon his snoring lips
And pecked the teeth from off his jaw

[Iccy moves towards the shed. Mercedes tries to stop her, but Onga holds her back]

Mercedes: You don't know Bradley.

Onga: You don't know my sister. She's decided.

You're not scared are you? What's the worst that can happen? You just get 'splatted'.

Mercedes: Scared? Wa. Mercedes? I'm scared of nothing.

[They break into Bradley's shed]

Scene Four – In The Shed

Shooky: Bradley's shed is a dusty lair

Filled with strange disturbing smells
Warlock's curses happen there
Goblin's screams and witch's spells

[They go into the shed. It is a dark and frightening place, full of Bradley's 'stuff'. Tools, and objects that he has collected. They look round. Out of the shadows comes a large spider.]

Onga: Let's go.

Mercedes: Stay there. He's fine. It's only Stanley.

Onga: Is he poisonous?

Mercedes: Yes, a little, but -

Onga: Oh no. Does he bite?

Mercedes: Well, sometimes. But, listen, calm down will you, Onga? We can frighten him off. I know how.

Onga: Oh yes? How do we do that?

Iccy: *Pull faces?*

Mercedes: No. He isn't scared of monsters. Or tigers. Or children.

Onga: So how do we frighten him off, Mercedes?

Mercedes: There's only one thing he's scared of.

Iccy: *Which is?*

Mercedes: Spiders.

Onga: Spiders? That's simple then. Where do we find a big spider? Let's go.

Mercedes: We can pretend.

[She and Onga try pretending to be a spider, not very successfully]

Iccy: *Onga!*

[Iccy has found a big ornate mirror. She holds it up in front of the spider as it is approaching Onga. It screams and runs away.. During the action, Onga and Iccy are moving in unison]

Onga: He's gone.

Did you know he was in here? Is that why you didn't want to come in?

Mercedes: No. That's just Stanley.

What is it with you two bobs?

Onga: What?

[Mercedes imitates what they did]

Oh. We're twins.

Mercedes: I see. That explains a lot.

Iccy: *Look. Look at the boxes.*

[They start looking round the place properly]

Onga: Wow, so many boxes of stuff

Mercedes: Yep, loads of junk in here.

Onga: There's something strange about these boxes. Shall we open some?

[They gather round. Iccy slowly opens the nearest box.
There is music. Bats fly out of it]

Mercedes: Wa, look at all this. All the stuff he's pinched.

[They start bringing things out of the boxes]

Onga: My football. Oh, look man, something has happened to it.

[The ball seems to move on its own]

Mercedes: Wa, bobs...we can use this for our picnic.

Onga: Hey, that's our rug.

Iccy: *My ice-cream. It hasn't melted.*

Onga: Radio-controlled car. Wicked. Skateboard. Bey blade.
So much gear.

Mercedes: Look at this, it's a map.

[There is a big old-looking map, which they unroll and examine.]

The Shooky. This is buffty.

Onga: 'The Shooky'. What's the big deal? He's the ranger.
He's got a map of the place – massive surprise.

Mercedes: No look. This isn't just an ordinary map. There are things on here that aren't in The Shooky. 'Cave of the Curse'. Those are the ponds there, but I've never heard of a cave on Tiger Island.

Onga: Tiger Island?

Mercedes: In the ponds, that way. No-one goes there. There's a story about it being bad luck. No-one ever returns.

Onga: You said no-one goes there.

Mercedes: Yes, and no-one ever comes back safe.

Onga: Why tiger?

Mercedes: You don't know anything do you? Years ago, there was a tiger that lived here. That's why it's called The Shooky.

[Onga and Iccy exchange a look]

'The Stepping Stones'? There aren't any stepping stones.

Onga: Why would you have a map with things that aren't there?

Mercedes: Maybe it's old. Maybe they were here.

Iccy: *Perhaps it's a plan.*

Onga: A plan? For building.

Mercedes: The 'swings of time'? That's just the swings. Why are they called that? [she reads] 'write in the sand the place and date...' Strange.

Iccy: *What about these?* [Taking a bag of stones from the box, and keeping them]

Stepping stones.

Mercedes: Just stones

Iccy: *This is great. We can use all these things to explore the place properly.*

Onga: Iccy, you're shivering. Put something on.

[Onga gets the picnic rug, and puts it over Iccy. She shrugs it off]

Iccy: A key, look.

[She picks it up]

Onga: Whatever. It's night-time. Mom will kill me. Put something on.

Iccy: *Don't you start.*

Onga: If you put something on, I won't make you go back home, OK?

Mercedes: There's so much here.

[She is looking through Bradley's clothes]

Hey. How about this?

[Mercedes holds up a coat, exactly like Bradley's. Iccy pulls a face]

Onga: Iccy. You're not going anywhere. You have to put something on.

[Iccy reluctantly takes the coat, and goes back to looking through stuff. The other two sit]

[Pause]

Mercedes: What you looking at me for, bob. What's the problem?

Onga: Nothing. I'm sitting in the dark with a ladybird in the middle of the night, we've broken into somebody's spooky shed, been attacked by a giant spider and my sister's freezing to death. No problem.

Mercedes: Heeb. It's not my fault.

Onga: I should have taken her home straight away. Mom will be worried.

Mercedes: She'll be asleep.

Onga: You don't know her. She comes and checks on us all the time.

Mercedes: Weird. [Seeing Iccy with Bradley's coat on] Hey, you look buffty, Iccy.

Iccy: [imitating Bradley] *Look at this place...disgusting. I hate children. No playing at monkeys. No laughing. No breathing.*

[Waving her stick at the others. Mercedes joins in. In the end, even Onga is laughing. Then they hear Bradley approaching, and just as he enters they look at each other. Mercedes and Onga duck down. Iccy freezes, then as Bradley moves, she pretends to be his reflection.]

Bradley: I thought I put that mirror over there.

[Sees the real mirror, shakes his head]

So much junk. More and more each day. Boxes and boxes of danger.

Bradley, Bradley. Do not let it get to you. It is only a job. They do not understand. Just keep collecting everything. Make it safe, so that when he comes....

[He goes through his bedtime routine. Hanging up his coat of confiscations. Brushing his teeth. He has a little song which goes with this, and a kind of dance.

We see glimpses of another side to him. He settles down for the night.]

[When he seems to be asleep, the children try to sneak out. Each time they move, he stirs.]

Bradley: Ah birds, birds go away. Not my fault if you got in the way of a spell. Agh my teeth, my teeth.

[Iccy comes out when he seems to be asleep, but as she passes he wakes up. For a moment he stares at her. Then she starts to sing to him, beautifully]

Iccy: There's a blue and purple world
Through a magic door
Where the sun shines at night
And you'll cry no more
Where the white rowing boats
Are lapped by the sea
Where he's waiting for me
In a world without coats

Where purple hens lay orange eggs
Where the zebra dances on caterpillar legs
Where popcorn flows from the sky

Through a magic door
There's a blue and purple sea
Where he's waiting for me
In a world without coats

[He sleeps]

[The children sneak out past him. Iccy returns, for the map and a book she has found]

Onga: What are you doing? Come on! What are you bringing that for?

Iccy: *We're going to need it.*

Shooky: Mr Bradley snores in peace.
Who knows what dreams are bubbling
Inside that fierce head?
Angel dreams of clean fire and flying,
Werewolf dreams of dragon's teeth and elephant heads,
Who knows the dreams?
Who knows the dreams?
Inside the ranger's head.

Scene Five –

[The twins and Mercedes are making their way through
a wooded area]

Onga: Where are you taking us?

Mercedes: Somewhere safe.

Onga: Yeah right.

Mercedes: Trust me, my friend.

Onga: Never trust a ladybird.

Iccy: *Come on...quick. He may wake up.*

Mercedes: This is safe... no-one can find the way through here
unless they know.

[Mercedes leads the way, to a maze. They follow her
through it]

Shooky: Moonbeams light the ways
Through the Shooky maze
Which way we go
Only we know

Mercedes: You can sing really well.

Iccy: *Thanks*

Mercedes: Buffy trick with the mirror too.

Iccy: *Yes it was*

[she re-enacts her triumph]

Mercedes: What you brought that stuff for?

Iccy: *We will need these things. We're going to change everything, I know*

Mercedes: What?

Iccy: *Bradley. The Shooky. We can sort it out.*

[Mercedes shakes her head]

Mercedes: Whatever.

Onga: If you two have finished, can I ask where we are going?

Mercedes: The old tree-house, of course. This way.

Onga: The old tree-house. Is that a house up a tree?

Mercedes: Ukk.

Onga: And that is supposed to be safe?

[Before Mercedes can answer, they are confronted by a fire in the trees.]

Mercedes: Fire, fire! Sound the alarm!

Bradley has started another fire....

[Noise and action. They bang things to make a noise, and run around trying to put out the fire]

Oh no...Butterflies....

[They watch as two butterflies are caught in the flames and perish]

Let's go in there...save them.

Onga: There's nothing we can do, Mercedes. Stay back.

Mercedes: I'm going in. My house is on fire, and my children are gone.

Onga: We can't. Look, the fooglepeas

[Foogle and Peas arrive, with fire equipment. They see the twins as they escape.]

Foogle: Miss Peas, the hose

Peas: Mr Foogle, the bucket – children! Did you see? Let's get them.

Foogle: First things first, Peas. Let's extinguish this fire.

Then, we can extinguish the children.

Peas: Yes, yes.

Shall I tell Bradley?

Foogle: Oh yes. Children in the Shooky at night.....I think Mr Bradley will want to know about that, won't he?

Scene Six – Escape

[The twins and Mercedes escape, and find a place by a tree.]

Onga: That's blown it. Now they know we're here....

Where now?

Mercedes: Like I said, the old tree-house. We'll be safe there.
Kapshida!

Quick. Quick.

[They go out]

Scene Seven – In the Tree-house

[The tree-house is another world, the insect culture has a different feel. There is a ceremony going on. The creatures are processing, carrying the wings of a butterfly. There is an assortment of creatures – including Loskin the three-legged beetle, Balzur the Caterpillar and the fruit-fly, Donna.]

Shooky: Safe above the branches
Is the old tree-house
No-one knows who built it
Once the den of wild children
Attic room in the roof of the woods
Smelling of warm pine
Now the haven and cathedral
Of the insects

Donna: [Seeing her friend and rushing up to her] Mercedes!
Wa!

Mercedes: Donna! Heeb baby heeb!

Others: Shhh!

Mercedes: What's going on?

Donna: The butterflies that burned.

Mercedes: Right.

Balzur: [Ceremonially] Wind blows and trees fall

Loskin: Sun keeps spinning through it all

Balzur: When the fire came
They flew into the flames
Their wings burned and they fell
Butterfly. Butterfly.
Farewell

Luli luli.

All: Joon joon

[Repeated and embellished as necessary. The ceremony ends with a sense of a collective shrug]

Loskin: Good. Nice send-away. What they would have wanted.

Balzur: So...what's to be done?

Loskin: About Bradley, that big swech.

Balzur: Are we sure he started the fire?

Loskin: Oh yes.

Balzur: On purpose?

[shaking his heads sagely] Why? It just seems to be getting worse. Shooky tree fire setting. Appalling.

[They discuss this, and the growing threat of Bradley.
Much tutting]

Onga: [whispering] Mercedes? Are you sure we are OK here?

Mercedes: Wa wa. You are safe here.

Onga: What are they talking about?

Mercedes: It's not the first fire, that's all. Bradley keeps lighting bonfires. We lost a couple more butters the other day.

Onga: Terrible.

Mercedes: Bad things happen.

Donna: Luli luli.

Mercedes: Enough seriousness.

Donna: So who are these two?

Loskin: [Approaching] Yes, Mercedes. What they doing?
Spying?

Balzur: She has Bradley's coat.

Loskin: Yes, the coat. Look. They must be his spies.

[The insects turn on the twins]

Onga: No, we took it.

Mercedes: Stole it

Onga: Borrowed it.

We're not spying

Iccy: *We came to sort out The Shooky.*

Balzur: What?

Onga: She says we came here to sort out the Shooky – [pulls a face at Iccy] ...Iccy what are you talking about? We just came...er ...for a picnic.

Balzur: Sort it out?

Iccy: Yes

Mercedes: She means, to explore.

Loskin: Picnic? What picnic?

Balzur: Explore. Hmmm

[Their fate hangs in the balance for a moment]

Excellent. If Mercedes trusts you...so do I.

[Much expression of agreement]

In fact. If you want to see The Shooky, we shall help with the showing-round. But first. Ladybirds and gentleflies, our mungous visitors have suggested a picnic, and I say that seems like a grand idea to send away the butters. A bad-things-happen picnic.

All: Yes, of course. Luli luli etc.

Balzur: Gather the needed!

[They start collecting picnic stuff]

Iccy: *I've got a lot of what we need.*

[She shares her stuff, and between them they get prepared]

Loskin: Look what we've got here.

[They start drawing stuff out of Iccy's coat pockets, and delightedly doing things with it. Iccy is agitated about the Fooglepeas]

Iccy: [To Onga] *I'm sure they are following us. We need to get -*

Balzur: [Interrupting] So, picnic girl. Where shall we go?

Iccy: *Somewhere sunny.*

Onga: Sunny, and comfortable to sit.

Balzur: Hmmm. Of course yazz yazz yazz. The perfect place. Somewhere sunny, comfortable to sit...of course...take hold of this.

[They take corners of the picnic rug, and induce another magical transformation. This time up onto the clouds, or pulling the cloud down to them]

Shooky: If a thread of colour
Falls from a rainbow
Hold on tight.
It can pull the rainbow
Clean from the sky.
Or if your mind has wings
It can haul you up
High high away
To where the colours live
Upon a cloud.

Scene Nine – Picnic on the cloud

[They arrive at the picnic on the cloud. This is a mad and glorious event. The cloud is bouncy, which causes

practical difficulties, with eating and drinking, but much entertainment. They have quavers, yoghurt, fizzy drinks and cake. They sing and dance]

Insects: Bad things sometimes happen,
Humans get upset.
Can't they be like we are,
Shrug their shoulders and forget?
Shrug their shoulders and forget
About it?
Bad things sometimes happen,
Doesn't mean a lot.
Bad things sometimes happen,
So what so what so what,
So what so what so what's
The big problem.....?

[After a while, the twins and Mercedes draw away from the main event.....]

Onga: I haven't had a picnic for ages. We used to have them with our dad.

[Iccy is sad, she moves away and sits on her own.]

Mercedes: What happened to your dad? Did someone tread on him?

Onga: Not exactly

Mercedes: Did they squeeze him, so they could use his juice for toothache?

Onga: No!

Mercedes: Was he sprayed?

Onga: He had an accident.

Mercedes: Oh. Is that why your mom is so weird?

Onga: Maybe. It was ages ago.

Mercedes: And Iccy's still bothered?

[Onga looks at her in disbelief]

Onga: It was him that sent her here.

[Mercedes looks puzzled]

She dreams about him. She says he told her to come here, and save the Shooky.

[Pause]

Mercedes: You could stay, you know. We could come here every night, have as many picnics as you wish for.

Onga: Maybe.....but, I don't think Bradley and his friends would like it much.....

[Onga goes and finds Iccy. She is sitting looking at a book. He sits with her]

Onga: We had our picnic after all, Iccy, like you wanted. Do you think this is why he told you to come here?

Iccy: *Look at the view*

[They look down on the Shooky]

Onga: Looks beautiful. The Shooky from the sky. We know it's here now, Iccy. We can come here whenever we want. Play. Imagine.

Iccy: *As if she would let us.*

Onga: She only wants to keep us safe.

Iccy: *I suppose so*

Onga: What have you got? This is Bradley's diary? Did you take it?

Iccy: *I found it. Borrowed it.*

[She has the bag of stones and is examining them]

Onga: Wow. What's it like?

[reading] 'I don't care what they say. I am going. It will be the biggest adventure ever. Me, across to Tiger Island. I found the stones, it must be meant to happen. Tomorrow is the day'

Mercedes: [who has arrived] Bradley wrote that? Must've been a long time ago.

Onga: Years ago. He was a kid.

Mercedes: Tiger Island? Wa.

Onga: Is that the place you were talking about, where the curse happened?

Mercedes: Yazo.

Onga: Bradley went there? Wow.

He sounds almost human in this.

Mercedes: Better. Sounds almost insect. Maybe he was alright in those days.

Onga: What happened when he went there? To Tiger Island. The cave of the curse.

Iccy: *The diary stops there. Last written-on page*

Mercedes: Shame.

Iccy: *Wish we could turn the clock back. We could do something about him if we knew more.*

Onga: What?

Iccy: *Change him*

Mercedes: What now?

Onga: She thinks we could change Bradley.

Mercedes: Yes?

Onga: All we have to do is go back in time, and change what happened.

Iccy: *That's it.*

Onga: Yeah right.

Iccy: *The swings. Remember, on the map.....*

Onga: Iccy, you are being...unless.... Maybe that's what it means.

Mercedes: What is she talking about?

Onga: The Swings of Time. Where's that map?

[Suddenly Foogle and Peas appear]

Peas: [grabbing the diary] I'll have that.

Foogle: Oh dear, oh dear. Mr Bradley's private diary.

Iccy: *I found it. It was in a pocket.*

Foogle: Yes - of Mr Bradley's special coat.

Onga: It's a spare one. He doesn't need more than one.

Foogle: Peas.

Peas: Please what?

Foogle: I said 'peas.

Peas: No need to snap, Mr Foogle.

Donna: I'll have that.

[She grabs the diary and throws it to Mercedes, who leads the twins through a quick escape route, while Donna delays the floundering fooglepeas.]

Scene Nine – To the Swings of Time

Iccy: *The swings of time, the swings of time.*

Mercedes: What's she on about?

Iccy: *Quick, quick.*

[Iccy points to the map]

Onga: What?

Mercedes: The swings yes. This way.

So, we're going to try this time-travel thing?

Onga: Now? Are you sure?

Mercedes: Why not? We have to try and change him. Bradley. Go back and see what happened.

Onga: Yes, but...

Mercedes: Quick.

[The roar of Bradley in the distance]

Scene Ten – The swings – Time Travel

Shooky: Back and forth
 On the swings
 Pulled and pushed
 Back and back the clock
 Tick tock tick tock
 When the swing swings
 And twists in time
 And back back back
 Spin the hands
 Of the clock

[They rush to the swings. Iccy is looking out for Bradley and the fooglepeas]

Mercedes: What does it say we have to do?

Onga: Write in the sand.

Mercedes: What?

Onga: The place and date

 Where we want to go

Shooky: And swing and believe
 Hear the earth breathe
 And its heart-beat stop
 It will sound as if
 Every tree in the shooky
 Is ticking like a clock

Mercedes: What does that mean?

Onga: I suppose we have to sit and listen. Until we hear the ticking sound.

Iccy: *What shall I write?*

Onga: Write the date

[Iccy copies the date from the diary in the sand]

Mercedes: Now sit and wait.

Onga: And listen

Shooky: Every tree in the shooky
Is ticking like a clock.

[The audience begins to 'tick' under the following.
They sit on the swings and wait for something to
happen]

'When the sound
Tick tock
Of the earth-heart-clock
Is in time with the rock
Of the swing
Out and in
Then the world will spin
Back back back back
You will land as planned
At the time in the sand'

'When the sound
Tick tock
Of the earth-heart-clock
Is in time with the rock
Of the swing
Out and in
Then the world will spin
Back back back back

You will land as planned
At the time in the sand'

Scene Eleven - back in time

[They arrive, tumbling, in the past]

Mercedes: Careful!

Onga: We haven't gone anywhere. Look. The swings are still there.

Iccy: *They look newer though. Don't you think?*

Onga: They don't look newer. You are imagining it.

Mercedes: Wait. Yazz!

[They try and get away. Young Bradley is there.
Recognisable, but different]

Mr Bradley?

Bradley: What're you guys doing here?

Onga: Mr Bradley, is that you?

Bradley: I'm Brad. What's with the 'Mr Bradley'.

Onga: Wow. Where's your coat?

Bradley: My what?

Onga: Your cloak thing, you know...your coat. You look different.

Bradley: Don't know why. I never wear a coat. Listen, are you here to come with me? Did you find my message in the tree-house?

Mercedes: You know about the tree-house?

Bradley: Know about it? Listen ladyfly, I built it. Are you coming or not?

Onga: Er...

Bradley: Tiger Island.

Mercedes: You're going to Tiger Island?

Bradley: Come on.

Onga: How are we getting there? I thought you said –

Mercedes: I did.

Bradley: We'll cross that bridge when we come to it.

Onga: There's a bridge?

[Bradley leads them off.]

Mercedes: Bradley built the tree-house? Heeb!

[As they travel to the ponds]

Shooky: Swans glide
Frogs sing
In the water, lit
By the moon-silver beams
Across the pond
The reflection gleams
And on beyond
To the island of dreams
Where the tiger roams free

Mercedes: Fantastic.

Onga: Is that it - Tiger Island?

Mercedes: Yep.

Onga: You said there was a bridge.

Bradley: I didn't.

[Iccy is excited, splashing in the edge of the pond. She is feeling freed in a particular way]

Shooky: Then the sweet dream wakes
The reflection smashes
When the clear water breaks
As the child splashes

[Bradley gets a bag of stones from his pocket. He throws one and it forms a stepping stone. Iccy produces her bag of stones, and joins in.]

Bradley: Wow. You got some too. Nice.

[They create a path of stepping-stones across the pond]

Shooky: The pond is wide
But their feet have wings
Swans glide
and frogs sing

Meanwhile
Underneath
Sharks and crocodiles
Snap teeth

[Iccy is already setting off across the stepping stones]

Onga: Iccy, wait. Why are we doing this?

Mercedes: If we never go to the island we won't know, will we?

Onga: No, but – caves, curses...tigers...

Iccy: *Adventure. Remember?*

[Again the sign that she did before]

Onga: Iccy that was a dream. You can't go somewhere dangerous, just because Dad told you in a dream.

Iccy: *Serious magic.*

Onga: Serious magic –

[But Iccy has already set off]

[They all follow the stones to the island. It is a difficult crossing, fraught with danger. As they cross the atmosphere changes, and becomes increasingly unnerving]

Shooky: Did the tiger prowl this island
In far off times
Pounce from the shadows
On those who dared to cross
The lines ?

Grrrrrrrrrrrrr.

[There is a cave in front of them]

Mercedes: I don't like it.

Onga: The Cave of the Curse.

Bradley: Come on. The tiger went, years ago. It's just a story.

Mercedes: We aren't supposed to go in here.

Bradley: Says who?

Mercedes: Er...everyone.

Bradley: I don't believe in rules, ladybird. I'm going in.

[He goes towards the cave. Mercedes stops. Iccy makes to follow, but Onga pulls her back and holds her. They watch as Bradley goes slowly inside.]

Onga: Is there a tiger in there?

Mercedes: You heard him. 'Brad'. It's just a story.

[They wait]

Iccy: *I'm going in*

Onga: No. No. I'll go.

Iccy: *Onga!*

Mercedes: Wa! Human boy

[He follows Bradley]

[A loud roar]

Shooky: You have stepped too far
You have crossed the line.
The cave is mine.

Trapped
Back cracked
Piled high
Cloaked and coated.
Cursed
The very worst

You are cursed to stay
To stop all play

Keep children away
Wear on your back
This heavy pack
Till your freedom you earn
With the tiger's return

[Bradley comes out, looking traumatised. He is dragging the coat behind him. He puts it on, transforms into the burdened and bitter creature we know, but still looking bewildered]

You are cursed to stay
Every night and day
Till your freedom you earn
With the tiger's return.

Scene Twelve – back in the present day Shooky - at the gates

Mercedes: What happened? Where are we? Wa. We back? Oh yep. Gates.

Iccy: *Where is Onga?*

Mercedes: Wa. Cursed of course.

Iccy: *Where's Onga?*

Mercedes: To stop all play.

Iccy: *Onga?*

Mercedes: 'Til the tiger returns...

Where is Onga?

Iccy: *He went in. Brave. Stupid..*

Mercedes: Oh.

[Pause]

Don't worry. Bad things happen—

Iccy: *What shall we do?*

Mercedes: Let me think.

Iccy: *The tiger*

[Mercedes looks at her. She makes the 'tiger' sign.
After a few attempts, she gets her to understand]

Mercedes: Tiger, yep. That's what happened to Bradley. Cursed by the tiger. To be Bradley. But we still don't know what to do about breaking the curse. You were right, girl, we need to get some serious magic.

Iccy: *Tiger! Tiger!*

Mercedes: Yes, yes. He won't be free until the tiger returns. Well there's no way a tiger is coming back here.

[Iccy gives up trying to explain and starts busily moving things around. It is not clear why, but in fact she is placing things. She checks on the map.]

Mercedes: What are you doing?

What happened to that brother of yours? Iccy. This is hardly the time to start tidying up.

Iccy: *Nearly. Nearly.*

Mercedes: If he finds out what we've been doing, it will need more than tidying up to keep him happy.

[Bradley arrives]

Bradley: What exactly have you been doing, spotted insect?

[Traps Mercedes and Iccy in the goal net.]

Mercedes: Mr Bradley.

Bradley: Yes

Mercedes: It's alright. We know why you are...like you are.

Bradley: You do, do you? Fascinating.

What are you wearing my coat for, girl? Take it off.

[Iccy starts to take off the coat]

Why am I like what then, bug? Strong, hard-working, maybe a little angry? I will tell you why. Because I care. Because I try to keep all of you safe. And what exactly do I get in return? Noise. Rubbish. Cheek. Insect bites. Chewing gum on the floor.

No, no no. When I have my way, there will be no children allowed in the Shooky. No children at all. No dogs. No buzzing ladybirds. Then this beautiful place will be just as it should be...quiet, peaceful....safe.

But Bradley, Bradley, you are forgetting these two caught in your net at night. What to do Hmmm. I wonder.

[As he rants, Onga has arrived, and gradually worked the net free. Iccy hugs Onga. Bradley sees that they are free.]

Bradley: Ah, the other half. I see. Have we met, boy?

Onga: We know about the curse.

Iccy: *Onga, I was so proud of you. So brave.*

Bradley: That is your little secret, is it? Well what difference does it make? What's done is done.

Onga: We want to help you, Mr Bradley. Let me take that. You can't walk with all that stuff on you. Let me take it.

Bradley: Oh how kind.

[Bradley seems about to give his coat to Onga, but suddenly roars instead. They run]

Where do you think you are going?

[He roars again]

Fooglepeas! Get them!

[Foogle and Peas arrive. There is an elaborate chase. Iccy seems determined to complete her task. They avoid the Fooglepeas for a while, but eventually they are caught]

Bradley: Right. Well, my small friends. I am afraid your adventure is over.

In here, I think.

[The fooglepeas bring a box, and put the twins and ladybird in]

Oh dear. Oh dear dear. It is almost sad. For you to end up confiscated.

Onga: You can't confiscate us.

Bradley: Can't I? Brave, brave, boy. Think about this. Maybe some time, some other brave and foolish children will sneak into my shed when the Shooky is closed, open this box, and find your bones.

Shut it!

Peas: I wasn't saying anything Mr Bradley –

Bradley: Shut the box!

[As the box is about to be closed, Iccy starts to sing. There is a moment in which the fooglepeas and Bradley are transfixed, and she takes advantage to escape. She is fiddling with the key, as Bradley approaches armed with a big shovel, about to finish her off. Just in time, she places the final piece in the picture she has been creating. Suddenly she roars incredibly loudly. At the same moment, the light of the dawn strikes the railings and boxes in such a way that the stage picture clearly takes the shape of a huge tiger]

Ivvy: Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

[Everyone freezes]

Bradley: The tiger! The tiger returns

Shooky: The tiger returns
The dawn sun burns
As the curse says
Eyes ablaze

[Bradley takes off his coat, and the weight of the curse is lifted from him. The confiscated items are freed, the shed breaks up and light comes in. Iccy plays a central role in freeing Bradley, and this transformation is played out in front of our eyes, as he shakes off the burden of the curse.]

Bradley: Twins. Ladybird. Is this a dream?

Onga: No. The tiger returned. Iccy brought him back.

[He goes over to Iccy]

Bradley: The tiger returns.... Oh oh oh.

[His voice rises into a little tune]

The tiger returns. Yes. Yes. Yes. It's true.

[He is dancing]

Foogle: Mr Bradley, Mr Bradley, it is opening time.

Bradley: So, open.

Peas: Are you OK, Mr Bradley?

Bradley: [testing out his body, noticing how light he feels] OK?
OK? Yep yep yep. Never better, Mr Foogle.

It's morning. Open the Shooky. Don't let's keep
anyone waiting.

Foogle: What about the shed, Mr Bradley? The boxes?
Everything has come out of them. All the things we
confiscated. They are at large, Mr Bradley.

Bradley: So sort it out Mr Foogle. Open the gates. Let
everyone in. Maybe they will want some of that junk.
Give it back.

Peas: Give it back?

Bradley: Give it back. Free it. Let it go. Unconfiscate it.

Foogle: Unconfiscate it?

Bradley: If anyone wants me, we'll be having a picnic... Twins.
Spotty thing. You like picnics don't you?

[He dances away]

Foogle: A picnic, Mr Bradley, but..... everything is going wrong.
It will be a disaster. Mr Bradley. It will be chaos.
Anarchy. You'll get no peace.

Peas: What have I done now?

Foogle: Not you, Peas. Peace. No Peace.

Peas: No piece of what?

Foogle: I'll have that!

[He grabs the Shooky key, throws it down, and they go off, squabbling. Bradley spins round and swoops for it]

Bradley: Looks like I will have to open up myself. Hold the picnic.

[He opens the gates, and welcomes in the children]

The Shooky is open.

Shooky: Morning sun
Pours through the gate
Like a smile
On the Shooky's face

Bradley: The Shooky is open. Come in. Come in.

Shooky: It breathes in fresh children
To run free, explore
Skip through the new day
Play like before....

[Megan arrives]

Megan: Twins, twins. Thank goodness you are safe.

Iccy: *Mom.*

Onga: Mom.

[They hug]

You're safe. You are safe. Iccy, you are even wearing a coat. I don't believe it.

[They try to tell Megan everything that has happened, introduce Mercedes, explain about the tiger, invite her for a picnic, all at once]

Megan: Tiger? Ladybird? Picnic? Who is...wait. Wooooaaa.

Shooky: Between the temple and the leisure centre,
Under the flyover, opposite Pizza Hut,
Behind the railings at the end of our street,
Is The Shooky.

Witches stir in the corners of the walls here,
And little wolves lurk in these woods,
Pirates sail the seven ponds,
And from the bins, cowboys shoot at crocodiles,
While goblins push princesses on those swings,

Open spaces, secret places,
Balls and pine-cones, kicked and thrown,
Scary chases, wind-red faces,
Mud and tarmac, grass and stone.

A ranger skips and dances in this place
Helping the magic....