

The Witches

Roald Dahl Adapted by David Wood

First performed at the Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield in 1992 and then at the Duke of York's Theatre, London. BOY and his grandmother are staying at The Hotel Magnificent, where the Witches are holding their annual meeting, supposedly of The Royal Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. It is presided over by the Grand High Witch, who is planning to 'rub out' every child in England with her latest formula, which will turn them all into mice. This potion is to be injected into tasty sweets and chocs. A greedy boy, Bruno Jenkins is also staying with his parents at the hotel and becomes her first victim. BOY, who has been searching for his missing pet mice, William and Mary, has wandered into the ballroom where the meeting is being held and quickly hides behind a screen. But the Witches smell him out and force him to drink the rest of the potion.

In this scene, BOY comes scampering back into the ballroom as a 'mouse'. He sniffs around, calling for Bruno. He meets Bruno, now also a 'mouse', eating a chunk of bread. At first Bruno refuses to believe what has happened to him and then begins to cry. BOY tries to explain the advantages of being a mouse and then plans their escape.

BOY

(Calling) Bruno! Bruno Jenkins! *(No reply. BOY frisks around happily. To the audience)* I should be sad. I should feel desperate. I mean, I've never dreamed of being a mouse, like I've dreamed of being, say, a film star. But now that I *am* one, I'm beginning to see the advantages. I know mice sometimes get poisoned or caught in traps but boys sometimes get killed too - run over or get some awful illness. Boys have to go to school. Mice don't. Mice don't have to pass exams. When mice grow up they don't have to go out to work. Mm. It's no bad thing to be a mouse. I'm as free as William and Mary. Hope they're all right. *(Bruno, dressed as a mouse, enters eating a chunk of bread - to Bruno)* Hallo, Bruno. *(Bruno nods)* What have you found? . . . An ancient fish paste sandwich. Pretty good. Bit pongy . . . Listen, Bruno. Now we're both mice, I think we ought to start thinking about the future ... *(Bruno stops eating)* But you're a mouse too, Bruno . . . Look at your paws . . . Don't be silly, Bruno. There are worse things than being a mouse. You can live in a hole ... And you can creep into the larder at night and nibble through all the packets of biscuits and cornflakes and stuff. You can stuff yourself silly . . . Maybe your rich father will get you a special little mouse-fridge all to yourself. One you can open . . . We'll go and see my grandmother. She'll understand. She knows all about witches . . . The witches who turned us into mice. The Grand High Witch gave you a chocolate, remember? ... Follow me to Grandmother's room. Down the corridor, run like mad ... No talking. And don't let anyone see you. Don't forget that anyone who catches you will try to kill you! . . . Come on.