

George's Marvelous Medicine

Roald Dahl Adapted for stage by Stuart Paterson

First performed by the Borderline Theatre Company in 1990. GEORGE lives in a farmhouse with his Mother and Father and Grandma - a horrible old lady who is particularly horrible to GEORGE, especially when he is left on his own with her.

GEORGE'S Mother and Father have gone shopping in the village, leaving GEORGE to take care of Grandma and give her her medicine at eleven o'clock. As soon as she wakes up she is demanding a cup of tea - sending GEORGE backwards and forwards to the kitchen for more sugar, a saucer and then a teaspoon. As she stirs her tea she accuses him of growing too fast. 'Boys who grow too fast are stupid and lazy' She beckons to GEORGE to come closer to her and starts to tell him about magic powers and 'dark places where dark things live and squirm and slither all over each other ...' In terror GEORGE runs out into the kitchen and slams the door after him. He is now quite sure that Grandma is a witch. Suddenly he remembers her medicine. If only he could invent a medicine so strong and so fierce that it would either cure her or blow the top of her head right off!

In this scene GEORGE has almost completed his marvelous medicine and is stirring the mixture with a long wooden spoon. A rich blue smoke rises from the surface of the liquid. He inhales deeply, coughs and splutters, then inhales again.

GEORGE

Oh I bet nothing's ever smelled like that before in the whole history of the world, except maybe a witch's big black cauldron. Just one whiff sets your brain on fire and sends prickles down the backs of your legs. *(He shivers, and stirs more quickly, dancing from foot to foot)* I can see sparks flashing in the foam. There it is again - like lightning in a storm! This is wonderful! It's the best, the best, the best, the best, the best thing ever!

(He has begun to dance around the steaming pot. Lost in mischief's magic spell, he begins to dance around the kitchen)

(Clutching his head) Calm down, George. I've got to stay calm. *(He takes a deep breath)* I mustn't make any mistakes now. Think, George, think! *(He turns off the flame under the pan)* It'll need plenty of time to cool down *(He waves away the steam, stirs away the froth, and peers in at his medicine)* But it's blue, the deepest blue you've ever seen. It needs more brown! It has to be brown or she'll get suspicious. *(GEORGE dashes out to the shed)* *(From inside the shed)* Brown paint, brown paint - please let there be brown paint! *(GEORGE emerges from the shed clutching an old, dirty can. He reads its label)* DARK BROWN GLOSS PAINT - ONE QUART. In it goes! *(He prises off the lid and pours the paint into the saucepan. He stirs the paint gently into the mixture with the long wooden spoon)* It's working! It's all turning brown! A lovely thick creamy brown! . . . I'm coming, Grandma . . . I'm not forgetting you, Grandma. I'm thinking about you all the time . . . *(GEORGE snatches the bottle of Grandma's real medicine from the sideboard, takes out the cork and pours it all down the sink)* We won't be needing you any more. We've got something much better than you! Oh boy, haven't we just! *(He pours the mixture into the medicine bottle and replaces the cork)* I've done it, I've done it! *(He touches the bottle, burns himself)* Ouch! It's still boiling hot, and it's nearly eleven o'clock . . . It won't be long now, Grandma *(Quietly, tense with excitement)* Under the tap - that's it! Under the cold tap! *(He runs cold water from the tap over the bottle)* If only the glass doesn't break. Please, please, don't let the glass break . . . It's cooler already. I can put my hand right round it. *(He keeps the bottle under the cold water)* I think we've done it! I think we've really done it. *(GEORGE turns off the tap and dries the bottle with a dishcloth)* Grandma - it's medicine time!