

## LITTLE RED RIDING HOOD

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### Act I - Scene 1

#### The village of Much Twittering by the Sea

*There is a seaside prom across the back of the stage with steps, right of centre, a finger post: To the sea - five miles, and, perhaps, a hoarding with poster: End of the Pier Show -CANCELLED. Red Riding Hood's cottage on the left has a practical door with a giant flower pot beside it, and a watering can alongside. The villagers are discovered on stage.*

#### SONG A: I Do Like to be Beside the Seaside.

*After the number, enter Muddles down right, with a paper boy's sack full of newspapers and magazines over his shoulder.*

**Muddles:** Oh, what a bit of luck - everyone's here together! Save me walking up all those long garden paths. Here you are (*briskly handing out the papers*) - Telegraph for Mrs Muggins (*handing it to small child*), Beano for little Johnny (*handing it to woman*) Millers' Monthly for Nellie Dean, Heavy Metal Monthly for you, Mr Musical Director, and Drum Weekly Mr Percussionist. Financial Times for Mrs Moneybags; Hard Times for Mr Skinflint. And, last but not least, the Much Twittering Gazette for Little Red Riding Hood. She lives in that cottage there with (*big sigh, clutching paper ecstatically to his chest*) her sister Mary. (*confidentially*) I'm in love with Mary, but she can't make up her mind whether she wants to be my girlfriend. I can't blame her - after all I'm only a humble shepherd's son. But I do have this paper round on the side. My name's Muddles by the way. They call me Muddles because I'm always getting confused.

*Behind him the villagers have been looking at their papers, and begin to grumble.*

**Muddles:** Hark at them! Now you know why it's called Much Twittering!

**1st villager:** Hey, Muddles. This isn't right!

**Villagers** (*variously*): No, I don't want the Times! Mine's an Echo! I should have a Dandy! Where's my Woman's Weekly? Here, what have you got? That's mine! Has anyone got my Private Eye?*(they mill about exchanging papers. The cottage door opens and Red appears, followed by Mary, who wears her gymslip).*

**Red:** Gracious me, what a noise!

**1st villager:** Sorry, Red, but Muddles has got all the newspapers mixed up AGAIN!

**Red:** Oh, dear. But I'm sure it can soon be sorted out. And it's much too nice a day to complain. Isn't it a lovely morning, Mary?

**Mary:** No it isn't!

**2nd villager:** But it's so warm and sunny.

**Mary:** Well I want it to rain. (*Villagers groan*)

**Red** (*laughing*): Oh, Mary, you're always so contrary. If it was raining you'd want something else. Is that my Gazette, Muddles?

*Muddles, who has been standing gazing open-mouthed at Mary, comes to and hurriedly hands it over.*

**Muddles:** Sorry Red - I was miles away. Hello Mary. Have you thought any more about being my girlfriend?

**Mary:** Yes, I have - and I think I just might say yes!

**Muddles:** (*excited*) Really?

**Mary:** But there again, I might not! (*Sticks her tongue out at him*)

**Muddles:** (*sighing*) Isn't she lovely?

(*Red has been looking through her paper and now exclaims*)

**Red:** Oh no!

**Mary:** What is it, Red? (*She and Muddles come round and look over her shoulders*)

**Red:** This is serious. Listen everyone: "It is with regret that we have to report the Big Bad Wolf has again been seen prowling in the vicinity of Much Twittering. Police are advising villagers to keep their doors and windows locked - and on no account to venture into the woods.

**Villagers** (*variously*): Oh no! The Wolf! Not again! What are we going to do?

**Red:** Has anyone seen the Wolf?

**3rd villager:** No, but I had five chickens stolen from my hen house last week.

**4th villager:** And I thought I heard a sort of howling.

**Muddles:** And we all know what happened to the Three Little Pigs!

**5th villager:** What's that?

**Muddles:** They lived happily ever after.

**Mary:** No, Muddles, that's not right. They were never seen AGAIN! (*consternation, and cutting through it, the Wolf howls offstage. Shrieks of dismay and the villagers huddle together. Mary runs to Red who puts comforting arm round her.*)

**Muddles** (*striking strong-man pose*): Don't worry Mary - I'll look after you.

**Mary:** But I've got Red to look after me.

**Muddles** (*cunning*): But if Red got married, you'd be all alone. And lots of men want to marry Red, she's so beautiful.

**Red** (*shaking her head sadly*): No, Muddles, that was only when we were rich. Since we lost our fortune, they've all lost interest. They only wanted to marry me for my money.

**1st villager:** Cheer up, Red. Mr Right will come along one day.

**Red** (*brightly*): Maybe he will. And meanwhile Mary and I have enough to do taking care of each other.

### **Song B: Sisters**

**Red:** Well, I can't stand around chatting. Granny's coming to the village today to do her shopping. I must look out for her and warn her about the Wolf. And you must hurry Mary or you'll be late for school.

**Mary** (*stubborn*): I'm not going to school today.

**Red:** Don't be silly, you have - (*aside*) ah, wait a minute, I know what to do. (*turning back to Mary*) That's all right, dear. There's no need to go. You **MUST** stay at home today. Come on everyone, help me find Granny. (*Red and villagers exit, right*).

**Mary:** Stay at home? Not likely - I'm going to school just as soon as I've watered my garden. (*she picks up watering can. As she waters the plant pot, Muddles recites*)

**Muddles:** Mary, Mary quite contrary,  
How does your garden grow?

**Mary** (*peering at it anxiously*): Not very well, Muddles. I've been trying to grow some silver bells and cockle shells for AGES. But as soon as anything sprouts, your father's sheep come along and eat it.

**Muddles:** Perhaps you ought to move it somewhere a bit safer. (*He looks round and points down left*) How about there? I'll help you move it. (*between them they shift the pot down to the front of the proscenium arch. Mary waters it again. Growing music, or swanee whistle, and green shoots appear. She leaves can by plant*)

**Muddles:** There! It feels better already.

**Mary:** But will it really be safe?

**Muddles:** I know. I'll get my new friends to help. *(to audience)* Will you help look after Mary's garden?

**Audience:** Yes. *(we hope!)*

**Muddles:** If you see someone sneak up like this *(demonstrates)* and try to steal the plants in Mary's garden, you must all shout: "How does your garden grow?" as loud as you can. Would you do that?

**Audience:** Yes.

**Mary:** I think they'd better practice it, Muddles.

**Muddles:** I'll hide, and when Mary sneaks up and pretends to steal the plant, you all shout: "How does your garden grow?" *(he goes off down right, Mary sneaks up)*

**Audience:** How does your garden grow?

**Muddles** *(popping head round wing)*: Have they shouted yet, Mary?

**Mary:** I didn't hear anything.

**Muddles:** You'll have to shout louder than that! Let's try again. *(he hides, Mary sneaks)*

**Audience:** How does your garden grow?

**Muddles** *(comes running on)*: That's much better! Thank you everyone. Now, don't forget will you? *(They go off down right. Enter Daisy up right. She spots the plant and trots down, sticking her nose into the pot.)*

**Audience:** How does your garden grow? *(Daisy is startled and runs off down left. Muddles and Mary run on right)*

**Muddles:** Thanks - that was brilliant! Did you see who it was?

**Audience** *(led by band if necessary)*: A cow! *(Muddles and Mary look at one another puzzled)*

**Muddles:** A cow?

**Mary:** But there aren't any cows in the village!

**Muddles:** Are you sure it was a cow? *(Daisy trots across the stage, left to right)*

**Audience:** Yes!

**Muddles and Mary:** Don't be silly! *(as audience continue to shout, they look round, look back, then do a BIG double take. Look at one another and shrug.)*

**Muddles:** Well, I never. Keep up the good work, and we'll get along just fine. See you later! *(They exit up right. Enter Granny down right pushing a laden supermarket trolley, which she is having difficulty controlling).*

**Granny:** Drat the thing, it's got a life of its own! Oh, hello, I didn't see you there! Welcome to the village of Much Twittering by the Sea. Well, it used to be by the sea, but one day the tide went out and forgot to come back! If we want to go for a paddle it's a five mile walk there and a seven mile walk back - well it always SEEMS further coming back. Still, it makes it more of an outing, I always say. And we do still have a lovely prom, *(points it out)* although the brass band no longer goes tiddly pom on it. *(pauses for thought)* Mmm. P'rhaps it's just as well. I'm Granny Hood *(does a little curtsey)*. Delighted to meet you - all *(does a rapid head count)* 513 *(OR CAPACITY OF HALL)* of you. Now I know there are probably lots of mums and dads and darling little kiddies among you - but are there any young men out there? Come on, don't be shy - own up. *(Band members put their hands up)* And it's no good you lot putting your hands up - haven't you heard of the trade descriptions act? I'm on the look-out for a nice strong young man - you see, I need a new woodcutter but I'm not having any luck finding one. I did put an advert in the Gazette. That was three months ago and I'm getting a bit desperate. Well, winter draws on. Now, can anyone guess where I've been? That's right - I've been down the Co-op *(OR OTHER LOCAL SHOP)*. Of course, I had to get my pension first. I hunted high and low for my pension book and

do you know where I found it? In the dustbin. *(takes it out of trolley)* I've no idea how it got there and I did dust it off, but the young man at the counter was SO cheeky! He said *(she holds the offending article gingerly out at arm's length in imitation)* "I can't cash that - it's covered in germs." Well I told him! I said: "Don't be ridiculous - germs couldn't live on THAT pension." I've bought lots of things for my grand-daughters, Little Red Riding Hood and Mary Quite Contrary. Have you met them? Lovely girls aren't they? But I do worry about them. You know what WE young girls are like for dieting! So I like to see they get a good square meal when I come to visit. *(holds up giant Oxo cube)*. And there's some milk and sugar for them - well, they told me they're watching a serial on the telly. This is for me. *(holds up large can of Diet Coke)* I just can't get through the day without my Diet Coke break. There's another 15 of these in there! And I've been buying a bit extra this week because it's the annual Village Picnic tomorrow. Everyone from the village goes out to the big meadow on the edge of the forest and we have lots of fun and games, and we eat, drink and make merry, then sing jolly songs all the way home. *(pause)* I got a wee bit tiddly last year and made such a fool of myself. *(shamefaced)*. I was flirting with a young man. I said: "In my younger days I was all pink and dimples". And he said: "Yes, but now you're all drink and pimples." Anyway I do like to make sure I've got a treat for everyone. I've got lots of crisps. Anyone called Walker? Yes? Here, have a packet. *(throws one out)* And is there anyone musical? Here's some Tunes. *(throws them out.)* And would anyone say no to a toffee? I thought not! Here you are. *(throws a handful out)*. Last one! Tell you what *(tosses it to person on end of front row)*. Pass it down the row and you can all have a suck. Well, I'd better get my trolley parked up. *(Villagers are coming on and two of them take the trolley and push it up beside the cottage.)* Thank you dears - mind you don't leave it on a double yellow. Last time I had to go and see that nice PC *(LOCAL OFFICER)* at the police station and plead with him for hours. He warned me: "Anything you say will be taken down in evidence." So I said: "Knickers." Oh, I nearly forgot. *(rummages in pinny pocket)* Who likes chewing gum? *(holds up a giant packet. Village kids come running on and cluster round her)*

**Kids:** We do Granny!

**Granny:** I thought you might! There's something I've always wondered about chewing gum.

**1st kid:** What's that Granny?

**Song C: Does your Chewing Gum Lose its Flavour on the Bedpost Overnight?**

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