

# **My Hamster's A Genius**

**A play by Dave Lowe**



FOR ALL ENQUIRIES CONTACT: ORiGiN™ Theatrical  
PO BOX Q1235, QVB Post Office, Sydney, NSW, 1230, Australia  
Phone: (61 2) 8514 5201 Fax: (61 2) 9299 2920  
[enquiries@originmusic.com.au](mailto:enquiries@originmusic.com.au) [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au)

Part of the ORiGiN™ Music Group  
An Australian Independent Music Company

# IMPORTANT NOTICE

Published © 2020 ORiGiN™ Theatrical

The amateur and professional acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by ORiGiN™ Theatrical (the publisher). Permission in writing is required by ORiGiN™ Theatrical, or their agent, before a performance is given. A performance is given any time it is acted before an audience. A royalty fee is payable before each and every performance regardless of whether it is for a non-profit organisation or if an admission is charged.

The publication of this play does not mean that the amateur and professional performance rights are available. It is highly recommended that you apply for performance rights before starting rehearsals and/or booking rehearsal or performance spaces.

Visit the ORiGiN™ Theatrical website for applications and information [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au) or address your inquiry to ORiGiN™ Theatrical, PO Box Q1235, QVB Post Office, Sydney, NSW 1230, Australia.

This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, substitutions or deletions can be made to this work without the prior consent of the publisher. It is expressly prohibited to broadcast, televise, film, videotape, record, translate or transmit to subscribers through a diffusion service that currently exists or is yet to be invented, this work or any portion thereof whatsoever without permission in writing from the publisher.

Copying or reproducing, without permission, of all or any part of this book, in any form, is an infringement of copyright. Copyright provides the creators with an incentive to invest their time, talent and other resources to create new works. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of the work. Copyright law provides a legal framework for control of their creations.

Whenever this play is produced, the billing and credit requirements *must* appear on all programs distributed in connection with the performance and in all instances in which the title of the play appears for the purposes of advertising, seeking publicity for the play or otherwise exploiting the play and/or a performance(s).

While this play may contain references to brand names or trademarks owned by third parties, or make reference to public figures, ORiGiN™ Theatrical should not be considered to be necessarily endorsing or otherwise attempting to promote an affiliation with any of the owners of the brand names or trademarks or public figures. Such references are solely for use in a dramatic context.

## ***LANGUAGE NOTE***

Licenses are welcome to make small alterations to the language that is used in this play so as to make it suitable for a younger cast and/or audience.

### ***MUSIC USE NOTE***

Licensees are solely responsible for obtaining formal written permission from copyright owners to use copyrighted music in the performance of this play and are strongly cautioned to do so. If no such permission is obtained by the licensee, then the licensee must use only original music that the licensee owns and controls. Licensees are solely responsible and liable for all music clearances and shall indemnify the copyright owners of the play(s) and their licensing agent, ORiGiN™ Theatrical, against any costs, expenses, losses and liabilities arising from the use of music by licensees. Please contact the appropriate music licensing authority in your territory for the rights to any incidental music. In Australia and New Zealand, contact APRA AMCOS [apraamcos.com.au](http://apraamcos.com.au).

If you are in any doubt about any of the above then contact ORiGiN™ Theatrical.

For complete listing of plays and musicals available to perform and all licence enquiries, contact ORiGiN™ Theatrical.

**[www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au)**  
**+ 61 2 8514 5201**

## **AND HERE ARE THE RULES** **IN PLAIN ENGLISH FOR YOU...**

**DO NOT** perform this play without getting permission from ORiGiN™ Theatrical first. In 99% of cases you'll need to pay us money to be allowed to stage a performance. This money goes to the author(s) of the show who shed blood, sweat and tears creating this play. Please don't rob them of their livelihood.

Go online [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au) or call +61 2 8514 5201

**DO NOT** make a copy of this book by photocopying, scanning, taking a photo, retyping (on a computer or a typewriter), or using a pencil, pen or chalkboard. If you want to purchase more copies contact ORiGiN™ Theatrical.

Go online [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au) or call +61 2 8514 5201

**DO NOT** make any changes to the text without first getting permission from ORiGiN™ Theatrical in writing. Sometimes you'll be allowed to make changes and sometimes you won't. Please always check with us first.

Go online [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au) or call +61 2 8514 5201

**DO NOT** record your performances or rehearsals in anyway without first getting permission from ORiGiN™ Theatrical. We know everyone wants to try and record everything on their phones these days. We get it. But please don't encourage them or give them permission. Sometimes there are important contractual reasons as to why we can't give you permission to record it. And sometimes there aren't any reasons and we can say YES. Please just check with us first.

Go online [www.origintheatrical.com.au](http://www.origintheatrical.com.au) or call +61 2 8514 5201

**DO** contact ORiGiN™ Theatrical if you have any questions about anything. At all. And we mean anything. One of us that works here (not me) has a peculiar interest in recording the unusual bird calls of the adult hoatzin (a species of tropical bird found in wet forest and mangrove of the Amazon and the Orinoco delta in South America) so we should be able to answer any questions you have about the Hoatzin. Plus we know some things about some other things too.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

## **AUTHOR – DAVE LOWE**

Dave Lowe is a Brisbane-based children's author, playwright and writer for TV, with books published in the UK and Australia, and translated into six languages. The 'Stinky & Jinks' series, of which 'My Hamster is a Genius' is the first book, has sold over 150,000 copies worldwide.

reading sample - do not copy

## CAST

Ben (11, but should be played by an older kid/adult)

Lucy (9, ditto)

Tyson (11, ditto)

Mum

Dad

Beardy McCreedy

Stinky (puppet, though the puppeteer is visible whenever Stinky is on stage)

Sasha / Extra student

O'Malley

3<sup>rd</sup> Penguin / Meerkat

Police officer

The stage is split between Ben's small bedroom and the rest of the stage, where all the other action (Lucy's performances, the scenes inside and outside school) take place. The only room in Ben's house we ever see, however, is Ben's room: all other action in the house is off-stage.

## ACT ONE

### SCENE ONE

*We're in BEN's bedroom – it's pretty messy. There's a desk and a chair and a single bed – on which (sticky-taped to it, in fact) is BEN's little sister, LUCY. BEN faces the audience.*

BEN            Never – never sticky-tape your little sister to your bed: even if she asks you to. I did, and my mum is about to go absolutely bananas. She has a long history of unusual punishments. Once, when she caught me giving Lucy's Barbie doll a haircut – she sat *me* down and cut *my* hair in the same style...

*MUM enters. LUCY is wriggling but apparently not able to get free.*

MUM            *(Almost speechless)* What...? Why...?

BEN            She asked me to. Tell her, Luce.

*LUCY wriggles some more.*

MUM            Right, Ben. The last straw. That's it – I'm... I'm buying you a pet!

BEN            *(Expecting a severe punishment)* No, Mum! Anything but... – wait, what?

MUM            I'm taking away all your things...

*(She picks up toys from the floor and then the X-Box)*

BEN            Please! No! Not the X-Box...!

MUM            For you, Benjamin, it's an *ex-X-box*...

LUCY            Good one, Mum.

MUM            *(To BEN)* ... You're eleven years old, for heaven's sake! You'll only get all this back when you show me you can take care of something other than yourself!

LUCY           Hello? I'm stuck here! I'm literally stuck to the bed!

MUM           Ben – release your sister.

*MUM storms out – BEN untapes LUCY, who runs out, blowing him a raspberry. BEN, alone in his room, deflated, takes a piece of paper, sits at his desk, and writes out a list.*

BEN            *(To himself)* Now – what pet to get?

## SCENE TWO

*It's later that day. BEN is in his bedroom. MUM enters, followed by DAD and LUCY (who is now wearing a penguin costume). BEN stares at LUCY.*

BEN            Lucy?

LUCY           It's for the new show – 'Cheerful Feet'...

DAD            They couldn't get the rights to 'Happy Feet'.

LUCY           Mum's doing the costumes again – I'm trying it for size. I'm 'penguin on the left'. Sasha Collins got middle penguin. Sasha – again! *(To MUM)* So, about the pet, Mum – I was wondering, can we get a...?

MUM            A penguin? In Brisbane? Of course not.

LUCY           I was going to say 'unicorn'.

MUM            They don't exist, Lucy.



LUCY        Ponies exist.

MUM        (*Looking around the room*) And where would Ben keep a pony – in his socks-and-pants drawer?

DAD        What about a greyhound? 'Cos I know a bloke from the TAB who...

MUM        No, Derek.

*BEN hands MUM the list.*

BEN        Just a few ideas.

MUM        (*Reading*) Octopus?

BEN        We'd obviously need a swimming pool too...

MUM        Husky dog?

BEN        And a pair of rollerblades, so I wouldn't have to walk to school anymore.

MUM        Platypus? Monkey? Bumble bee? No, Ben. Anyway, I've already been to the pet shop. (*She leaves and comes back in with the cage containing STINKY. The cage is proportionate to the size of the hamster. There's a little house and a wheel.*) Da-dah!

BEN        What is it?

MUM        A hamster.

*MUM places the cage on the desk.*

BEN        Does it do anything?

DAD           *(Sarcastically)* Yes, it tap-dances, juggles and plays the ukulele. *(Beat)* I imagine it sleeps a lot, eats a lot and poos a lot.

LUCY          Can we call her Chloe?

MUM          No – because it’s a boy.

DAD          How do you know?

MUM          How do you think?

*DAD lifts the hamster out of its cage and inspects the hamster’s undercarriage.*

DAD          It must be very small. His – umm – you know...his doodle. *(He puts the hamster back.)* How about calling him ‘Winx’ – like the racehorse? Or Black Caviar? *Brown Caviar?* Phar Lap? *Fur Lap?*

BEN          Wait – if he’s my pet – and I have to look after him...

MUM          You most certainly do.

BEN          ...then can’t I call him whatever I want?

LUCY         Not fair – it’s a punishment pet, remember!

*MUM looks at DAD, who shrugs.*

MUM          So, Ben – what are you going to call him?

*BEN gives this a lot of thought.*

BEN          Jasper Stinkybottom!

*LUCY giggles. MUM and DAD sigh etc. LUCY, MUM and DAD exit.*

### SCENE THREE

*It's later. BEN is sitting on his bed, bored. STINKY is asleep.*

BEN            Nothing to do. And my new pet – snoring his tiny head off. I might have to resort to – (*grimaces – in mock horror*) my homework. (*He takes out his books.*) Maths. Question One. (*Scratches his head.*) Eighty-five minus twenty-eight. Eighty-five minus twenty-eight.

STINKY        (*Mildly irritated*) Fifty-seven.

BEN            (*Mumbles*) Fifty-seven.

*BEN writes this down, moves onto Question Two.*

BEN            One hundred and twelve minus seventy-four.

STINKY        Thirty-eight.

BEN            Thirty-eight. Thanks.

*BEN writes this down too – then pauses, startled. He shakes his head – he must have imagined it.*

BEN            Ninety-three minus sixty-five.

STINKY        Twenty-eight.

*BEN jumps up, flustered, looks around – under his bed, in a cupboard, outside the door.*

BEN            (*On edge*) Ninety-three minus...

STINKY        For goodness sake! It's twenty-eight.

*BEN looks around, even more flustered, before staring at the hamster, wide-eyed.*

It's rude to stare.

*BEN points at him, speechless.*

Also, it's rude to point.

BEN           *(Astonished)* Not you?

*STINKY looks behind him, as if there might be another talking hamster around.*

STINKY       I don't see anyone else here.

BEN           You know how to...?

STINKY       Do very basic maths?

BEN           I was going to say 'talk'.

STINKY       I can hear things too as it happens. Like your dad discussing my...

BEN           *(Blushing)* Sorry.

STINKY       And 'Jasper Stinkybottom'? Really? How would you like it if you were called  
– for example – 'Roger Smellington' or 'Sebastian Poo-Poo'?

BEN           Not much – especially not 'Sebastian Poo-Poo'. Sebastian's a terrible name.

STINKY       But what's done is done I suppose – you may call me 'Stinky'.

BEN           I'm Ben. High five!

*STINKY stares at him.*

STINKY      Hamsters only have four fingers.

BEN          High four!

*STINKY sighs.*

STINKY      Ben – you couldn't get me *out* of here, could you?

BEN          Sure.

*He takes Stinky out of the cage and puts him on the desk.*

STINKY      Careful – I'm not a toy, you know. So – you're not very good at maths, I take it?

BEN          Or spelling. Or art. Or anything really.

STINKY      From what little I've seen of you so far, you seem to have a real talent for nose-picking. You can even get your *thumb* up there. It's quite impressive really. Twenty-eight.

BEN          Sorry?

STINKY      The answer to your question.

BEN          Oh. Right. Thanks. (*He sits down and writes.*) I need to show the working-out too, if you don't mind. Otherwise Beardy McCreedy will think I used a calculator. He's very suspicious like that.

STINKY      Beardy McCreedy?

BEN My teacher – he’s got this enormous beard – you could hide a medium-sized possum in it. And he hates kids. I’ve got Japanese homework for tomorrow too. Don’t suppose you speak Japanese, do you?

STINKY Hamusutaa ni shite wa, watashi no nihongo umai desu yo.

BEN Sorry?

STINKY I said, ‘My Japanese isn’t bad, for a hamster’.

*Spotlight on BEN, who is addressing the audience.*

BEN When you have a genius hamster in your room, you really don’t need an X-Box anymore. I rush home from school each day to hang out with him. He helps me with my homework – okay, who am I kidding? – he *does* my homework, in return for a steady supply of carrots.

*BEN turns to STINKY, who is sleeping.*

I’m home, buddy. (*STINKY doesn’t wake.*) English homework today –  
*Describe your house in detail.*

*BEN sighs. No answer from STINKY.*

Stinky? I’m home! (*Increasingly concerned*) Are you okay? (*To audience*)  
Maybe I killed him with too much homework. Is that even a thing? I always told Mum it might kill me. Stinky?! Are you – dead?

STINKY I wish.

*BEN is hugely relieved.*

BEN Oh, thank goodness.

STINKY I am trying to sleep.

BEN Sorry.

STINKY ‘Unkempt’, by the way.

BEN Pardon?

STINKY It means ‘messy’. *Describe your house.* The homework. Your room, like your hair, is ‘unkempt’.

BEN Oh. Nice word. How do you spell that?

STINKY Later. I’m going back to sleep. I was dreaming about carrots.

BEN You’re always asleep.

STINKY I’m crepuscular, in case you hadn’t noticed.

BEN Crep-what?

STINKY Crepuscular. It means we’re active at dawn and dusk – you know, like kangaroos. Basically, we need an afternoon nap. Which you are currently disturbing – yet again...

MUM (*Off-stage, yelling*) You did what?! What on earth were you thinking?

STINKY ...and if it’s it not *you* disturbing my sleep, it’s your sister’s incessant tap-dancing, like someone’s knocking at the door but never coming in – or it’s your mum, who really doesn’t seem to have an ‘inside voice’.

MUM (*Off-stage, loudly*) No – of course – you *weren’t* thinking, Derek! As usual!

BEN It’s just Dad in trouble again. Nothing for us to worry...

*MUM bursts in, followed by a sheepish DAD.*

MUM Tell him, Derek.

DAD Well, where to start...?

MUM (*Impatiently*) Is anyone helping you with your homework, Ben?

BEN Nope. No *person* is helping me with my homework. No, Mum. I swear on Lucy's life.

MUM Good, because your father has made a really stupid bet.

DAD I bumped into your teacher at the TAB. Herbert McCreedy. I went to school with him. Mum too. He had a crush on Mum...

MUM He's only human.

DAD Barely. He was just the same, even back then. No beard, obviously. But the same absolute...

MUM Derek.

DAD And he said to me in the TAB today, he said – 'your son's homework has been consistently excellent these past few weeks'. And I said – 'brilliant'. And he said – 'oh, it's not a compliment: the boy is obviously cheating'. And I said, 'How dare you?' Or words to that effect. And then he said – 'The apple never falls far from the tree'...

BEN Apples? Trees?

DAD That's exactly what *I* said. Apparently, it means...



MUM It means, kids always turn out like their parents.

BEN Is that true? (*Looks at MUM and DAD*) Say it's not true, Mum.

MUM It's not true.

BEN Phew.

MUM But instead of walking away from Mr McCreedy, like an actual grown-up might have done...

DAD I made a bet.

BEN Oh?

DAD He's giving you a maths test in class tomorrow...

BEN What?!

DAD ...and if you pass, he'll dye his beard bright pink.

*BEN chuckles, then frowns.*

BEN And, if I don't...

DAD Then we'll have to wash his car. You and I.

BEN Phew. Because I was worried it was going to be something...

DAD Wash his car with toothbrushes.

BEN What?

DAD            In front of the school. In outfits of his choosing. But – look, you haven't been cheating – so there's absolutely nothing to worry about. Good lad.

*MUM and DAD leave. MUM apologetically, DAD sheepish. STINKY looks at BEN.*

STINKY        Why are you so calm? Even someone as smart as I am can't teach an idiot like you mathematics in just one evening.

BEN            You don't need to. I've got a brilliant plan.

#### **SCENE FOUR**

*We're in the hall outside BEN's classroom. BEN is sitting with a lunchbox on his lap (holes have been poked into the lid. STINKY is inside it. The puppeteer is on-stage but BEN is addressing the lunchbox). BEN is anxious, fidgety.*

STINKY        Even by your standards, this is a completely terrible idea. It smells of old sandwiches in here...

BEN            It's nearly time, Stinky.

STINKY        and it's very dark...

BEN            So, have a nap.

STINKY        It's impossible to sleep when you're constantly being jiggled around...

BEN            Sorry – I'm a bit nervous.

STINKY        *You're nervous?* How would you like to be trapped in a lunchbox all day?

BEN            I wouldn't.

STINKY        Though it's hardly much worse than being at home in my prison.

BEN We've discussed this, Stinky. It's called a 'cage'. Not a prison.

STINKY How would you like to sleep twenty-seven centimetres from your own poo...?

BEN Not much.

STINKY It's been three days since you cleaned it out – and the newspaper that's currently lining it is *The Sunday Mail*, for goodness sake. And, even worse, the *sports* section! One thing you need to know about rodents, Ben, is that we're not even slightly interested in rugby league.

BEN You don't *have* to be in the cage. I'd really miss you, but I've offered – loads of times, now – to release you into the wild...

STINKY Do you have any idea what would happen to me in the wild? Do you know which animals like to eat hamsters? Practically all of them. Cats, birds, dogs... I'd be a furry little snack within minutes...

BEN Look – the bell's about to go. I'll pop you – gently – into my shirt pocket, you'll whisper the answers to me, and then we'll go home to a freshly-cleaned cage and as many delicious carrots as you can eat...

*We hear TYSON approaching.*

It's Tyson – the horrible kid in my class I was telling you about.

TYSON *(from off-stage)* Benjamin Jinks.

STINKY He's *eleven*? He's got a very deep voice.

BEN He's been kept back a few years. Now – shush.

*TYSON enters, swaggers over to BEN and grins broadly when he sees the lunchbox.*

TYSON        And they say that there's no such thing as a free lunch. What you got in there for me?

BEN            Nothing. It's totally empty.

*The following happens in slow-motion: TYSON distracts BEN, takes off the lid. STINKY leaps out, bites him on the finger.*

TYSON        Ow! Ow! Ow!

*STINKY scurries off stage. BEN jumps up. TYSON is hopping in pain.*

I'll get you for this!

*TYSON searches for STINKY, but gives up.*

And when I get hold of that rat I'll wring its neck!

*TYSON stomps off, holding his finger.*

Seriously: Ow!

BEN            Stinky. Stinky! (*He gets on all fours, searching frantically.*) It's safe. There's no one here. Quick!

*He can't find the hamster. BEARDY enters.*

BEN            He's gone, Stinky. Come here, boy!

*BEN notices BEARDY.*

BEARDY      Jinks!

BEN Sir?

*BEN stands up.*

BEARDY What are you looking for down there? Your brain?

BEN No, sir.

BEARDY Because – I hate to tell you – that may be a lost cause.

*The bell rings. BEARDY rubs his hands together.*

Ah – showtime! I parked the BMW under a tree today – the tree was full of cockatoos. Cockatoo poo – an absolute a devil to clean. Come on, boy – this way. (*He shoos BEN into class and addresses the audience*). They say revenge is a dish best served cold – and I’ve been waiting thirty years to humiliate my one-time nemesis, Derek Jinks.

## SCENE FIVE

*MUM is tidying BEN’s room. STINKY isn’t there. As she talks, she’s making the bed, picking up clothes from the floor etc.*

MUM Hiya, Stinky.

*She looks in his cage but she can’t see him.*

You must be curled up in that little house of yours, snug as a bug. Don’t blame ya, mate. Sorry about your name, by the way. I’m not too happy with Brenda, to be honest. This room, honestly: I’ll tell you something – you’re the lowest maintenance one in this family, by a long way. Lucy, I love her, but – my goodness she’s whiny. (*She impersonates Lucy*:) ‘Mum, Ben just...’ ‘Mum, I need a...’ ‘Mum, Sasha’s mum lets her...’

And as for my son – your owner – bone-idle. I mean, look at the state of this room – it’s a pig-sty. A guinea-pig sty, *you* might call it. Get it? And as for Derek – it’s just like having three kids. Sometime I’m not even sure why I... Ah, you don’t need to hear this. So, this is what it’s come to, using a rodent as a psychologist. Sometimes, with this family, though, it’s just nice to talk to someone who can’t answer back. (*She looks at her watch.*)

Right – I’ve gotta pay the electricity bill, then off to the supermarket. Somehow squeeze in two hours of work. Take Lucy to dance class. Sometimes, you know, *I’d* like to be the one dancing. I had all the moves, back in the day. (*She does a dance move as she tidies.*) I used to shake it like a polaroid picture. (*She waggles her bum rhythmically at the cage/the audience.*) See?

Where was I? Lucy’s dance class. Right. Then home to cook dinner. Ben will probably pull a face. (*Impersonation of Ben:*) ‘Broccoli? Yuck. Broccoli looks like a cartoon fart.’

You know, Stinky, sometimes it feels like I’m running on a wheel too: always on the go but never actually getting anywhere.

*She signs and exits with an armful of dirty clothes.*

## **SCENE SIX**

*We’re in class. TYSON – finger bandaged – is at the desk next to BEN, scowling at him. Two other STUDENTS are also in class – one is O’MALLEY (but it’s implied that it’s a full and noisy class).*

BEARDY (To class) Settle down! Settle down!

(*STUDENTS are holding noses etc – someone has farted.*)

*(He winces)* Oh, for crying out loud – that smells like one of yours, O'Malley. Put a cork in it, son. *(To the class)* Settle down! *(They settle down)* Just one more hour of this torture to get through – then we can all go home and do things we actually like. Oy! Quiet reading time – books open, mouths shut.

I said 'mouths shut, O'Malley. I'm sure if you really put your mind to it, you could breathe with your mouth closed. It's called 'Evolution'. Tyson – *book* –

*TYSON is reading the book upside-down. BEARDY turns it around.*

Just look at the pictures.

Jinks here has a special test – so we can find out once and for all if, as I strongly suspect, he's a sneaky little cheat, like his father. *(He slams the test paper onto BEN's desk.)* Clock's ticking, son.

*We hear the clock ticking. BEARDY, feet up on his desk, is reading the form guide while occasionally checking on BEN. TYSON is occasionally glaring at BEN and making threatening gestures. Ben is obviously struggling with the test – flitting between trying to answer by himself and looking around the classroom for STINKY. Eventually – the implication is that quite a lot of time has passed – BEN spots STINKY in the corner of the room. When nobody is looking, BEN beckons the hamster over. STINKY navigates an assault course, around table-legs, chair-legs, schoolbags, feet etc, until he reaches BEN, who leans forward to scoop him up. But...*

BEARDY      Jinks! Will you sit up straight!

*When BEN thinks that nobody is watching, he leans forward again. TYSON sees this (but doesn't see the hamster on the floor). He points to BEN.*

TYSON      Mr McCreeady.

BEARDY      Jinks!

*BEN sits up. TYSON and BEARDY are now both keeping a close eye on him. So STINKY makes a decision – to climb up inside BEN’s trouser leg. The puppeteer moves discreetly away.*

BEN           (Whispering) Stinky! Not up the trousers! Ow!

BEARDY       Boy!

BEN           Cramp, sir. My calf. *(To STINKY, whispering)* That’s my thigh, Stinky. Be careful up there – very careful. *(He jumps up)* Yeeooww!

BEARDY       Boy! Do you have ants in your pants?!

BEN           Not ants, sir.

*STINKY is now climbing up inside BEN’s shirt. BEN winces.*

*(Whispers, pleading)* Careful with the nipples, Stinky. Right – I’ll tell you when the coast is clear.

*BEN is waiting for the moment when both TYSON and BEARDY are distracted. (O’MALLEY knocks something heavy off the desk.)*

O’MALLEY     Sorry!

*TYSON and BEARDY look over to O’MALLEY.*

BEN           (Whispers) Now.

*We seem to go into slow-motion. Eg O’MALLEY picks up the book in slow-motion. Perhaps the clock can tick in slow motion too. With assistance from the puppeteer, STINKY leaps out from inside the shirt, does a double-somersault and lands in BEN’s pocket.*

*(Whispers)* Right – quick. Question One.



*STINKY, however, is now fast asleep and snoring. Nothing that BEN can do – prodding, whispering – can wake the hamster up.*

*The bell rings. BEN leaves disconsolately, avoiding TYSON. O'MALLEY trips. BEARDY picks up BEN's test paper and reads through it – a broad grin spreads across his face, which turns into a satisfied chuckle.*

## **SCENE SEVEN**

*We're in BEN's bedroom. We see that he's got his things back – X-Box, toys etc. BEN is wearing a bright T-shirt with, in big letters, I AM A CHEAT. He has a bucket and a toothbrush and is glaring at STINKY*

STINKY      I told you I was crepuscular.

*DAD enters. He's wearing a tutu and a T-shirt with 'Like father, like son' on it. He also has a bucket and a toothbrush.*

DAD            (With a sigh) Come on, son. A bet's a bet.

*MUM and LUCY enter. DAD and BEN are surprised.*

MUM          We're coming, too.

BEN          To laugh at us?

MUM          To support you. That's what families do, Ben. Through thick and thin. Or, in our case, through thick and thick.

*LUCY nods, then waggles her head, equivocating.*

LUCY          I might accidentally laugh a bit.

*They all leave.*

*The following action takes place beside BEARDY's car (which is off-stage), and in BEN's bedroom – the focus switches between the two. Beside BEARDY's car we see MUM, LUCY, BEARDY, TYSON and a couple of STUDENTS. It's implied that they're all watching BEN and DAD clean the car. (O'MALLEY might be taking selfies with BEN and DAD in the background. TYSON has a schoolbag – when he sees that the entire Jinks family is there, he slips away.*

BEARDY      And there are people who say that teaching isn't a rewarding profession. Still think you made the right choice, Brenda, all those years ago?

MUM          Oh, yes. He looks great in a tutu. Cracking legs. You were never my type, Herbert.

BEARDY      Luxury car. Luxuriant beard. Long holidays. Your loss. *(To DAD, shouts)*  
Missed a bit, Derek! Put your back into it, old man!

*BEN's bedroom. TYSON enters. He's robbing the house. His large schoolbag is now full of things stolen from other rooms. He takes the X-Box and stuffs it into the bag. He is about to leave when he notices STINKY in the cage.*

TYSON      You, I'm gonna wring yer scrawny neck. *(He inserts a hand into the cage. STINKY bites it. TYSON withdraws his hand, hopping and yelping.)* Right. That's it. You're dead... *(He's about to insert his hand into the cage again when his phone goes. He answers it.)* I'm in the middle of – oh. On their way? Right. *(He hangs up. Points at STINKY.)* Lucky. Very lucky.

*TYSON slips out of the bedroom. MUM, DAD, BEN and LUCY arrive home from their car-washing ordeal but are off-stage (ie not in Ben's bedroom). STINKY (and the puppeteer) are reacting with growing impatience to how slowly the penny is dropping for them.*

MUM          Ben, did you leave that window open?

BEN No.

MUM Lucy?

LUCY It was probably Ben.

BEN No it...

MUM Maybe it was me, letting a bit of fresh air in.

BEN Did someone move the computer?

LUCY Not me.

MUM Who left that drawer open?

DAD Crumbs! We've been burgled!

*We hear footsteps – they're all running to investigate.*

LUCY My I-pad!

MUM My jewellery!

*BEN bursts into his bedroom.*

BEN My X-Box! No! (Pause) Stinky! You're safe!

STINKY That's the order of importance, is it? Right...

BEN No – I just...

STINKY I know who it was. The burglar.

BEN You know the...?

STINKY Tyson.

*BEN takes a while to comprehend this.*

BEN But – what...? Why...? How...? I'll call the police and tell them...

STINKY Tell them what? 'My hamster can identify the thief'? If anyone finds out I can talk – even your own family – I'll be taken away and have experiments performed upon me. Rodents in science labs, Ben – it never ends well...

BEN Right. So...?

STINKY He received a phone call, right here – a call that just about saved my life. He has an accomplice.

BEN A what?

STINKY A helper. Someone who is clearly the brains of the outfit.

BEN Right. So...?

STINKY So someone needs to follow Tyson, after school – like a spy. See where he goes, what he does, who he meets...

BEN And you'd be willing to *do* that? You said you never wanted to go outside again...

STINKY I'm not talking about *me* Ben – I'm talking about *you*.

## **SCENE EIGHT**

*It's Cheerful Feet, the musical. LUCY and two dancers (one of whom – the one in the middle – is LUCY's nemesis, SASHA) do a tap-dance routine. LUCY keeps trying to get in the limelight, but SASHA keeps (subtly) pushing her out. LUCY gets more and more frustrated – she finally gets to the front when the music stops, but SASHA steps in front of LUCY as they take their bows.*

## **SCENE NINE**

*The action is split between Ben's bedroom (STINKY is in the cage, with a walkie-talkie) and the school grounds, where BEN is hiding behind a tree, spying on TYSON, who is leaning against a wall, looking shifty. BEN talks to STINKY by walkie-talkie.*

BEN            He hates school – but he's still here, twenty-five minutes after the final bell? It doesn't make sense. Plus, I think it's going to rain.

STINKY        Yes – a ninety percent probability.

BEN            How do *you* know that?

STINKY        We animals just know these things. Dogs, birds, hamsters – we can all sense when a storm's coming – I get a tingle in my fur.

BEN            Really?

STINKY        No. I just read it right here, you dingbat, because you lined my prison...

BEN            Cage.

STINKY        ...with the weather-and-horoscope page of yesterday's newspaper.

BEN            I thought that being a spy might be fun – it *seems* fun, in the movies – but in real-life it's actually half terrifying, half really boring.

STINKY      *You're* bored?! I've been stuck here all day as usual with absolutely nothing to do.

BEN            You've got a wheel.

STINKY      (*Sarcastically*) Woo-hoo! Going round and round all day and getting absolutely nowhere. Brilliant! And – the *horoscope* section? 'Scorpio – today's your lucky day.' No it isn't. 'You'll make an important new friend...' No, I won't – 'and discover new horizons' – not while I'm stuck in here I won't. Plus, your little sister will be back at any moment: and when *you're* not around, she sneaks in here and dresses me up in her dolls' clothes. And *you're* talking about a combination of boredom and terror? You should try being me for a...

BEN            Shh. I think someone's coming.

STINKY      Right. Take photographs. Evidence.

BEN            Will do. Over and out.

*BEARDY walks over to TYSON, who hands him the bag of stolen things. BEARDY hands TYSON a document folder and some money. BEN snaps a photo and ducks back behind the tree. But the flash goes. BEARDY and TYSON react.*

BEARDY      What was that?

TYSON        Dunno. I'll check it out.

*TYSON walks purposefully over to BEN'S tree. The lights go out.*

**END OF ACT ONE**

## ACT TWO

### SCENE ONE

*We pick up just before we left off: BEN takes the photo, the flash goes off:*

BEARDY      What was that?

TYSON        Dunno. I'll check it out.

*TYSON walks over to BEN'S tree. As he's one step away, there's a flash of lightning, followed quickly by a rumble of thunder.*

BEARDY      *(Shouts)* It's just a storm. Let's get out of here.

*BEARDY walks off. TYSON hurries off in the other direction – past BEN's tree, but thankfully doesn't look back. BEN slumps in relief. There's the sound of heavy rain. BEN leaves.*

### SCENE TWO

*In Ben's room, LUCY enters, checking that BEN isn't home. She's holding a Barbie and some dolls' clothes. She takes STINKY out of the cage – shaking her head, baffled, at the walkie-talkie. She dresses STINKY up and does a role-play between Barbie (who is Lucy) and STINKY (who is given the role of Sasha). STINKY doesn't speak, however – LUCY does both voices – like a bad actor.*

BARBIE      Hi, Sasha.

STINKY      Hi, Lucy, how are you?

BARBIE      I'm fine thanks. What about you?

STINKY Well, funny you should ask. I've just realised that I'm really not good at dancing and I'm actually a bit of a big-head. Also, I'm very spoilt. And I think you should take the lead role in the next show.

BARBIE Me? Oh, I absolutely couldn't.

STINKY But you completely deserve it, Lucy – you're a brilliant dancer and a really nice person. Modest, too.

BARBIE *(With false modesty that continues throughout 'Sasha's' compliments)* Ah, you're just saying that.

STINKY And you're really pretty...

BARBIE Ah, thank you, but I'm really not.

STINKY ...Like a young Ariana Grande.

BARBIE Oh, you...

STINKY Everyone says so.

BARBIE Oh no, I'm absolutely sure they d... Who says so?

STINKY Everyone. Lilah, Layla, Leela, Lola – everyone.

BARBIE Well, if you're completely certain.

*BEN enters, wet.*

BEN Lucy?! We've talked about this. Put him down. Stinky doesn't like dress-ups.

LUCY Is it raining?



BEN           *(Sarcastically)* No, I just had a shower in my clothes.

*BEN carefully takes STINKY off LUCY.*

LUCY           How do you know he doesn't like dress-ups? He's always got the same look on his face. Like this:

*She does an impression of STINKY.*

*(Teasing)* And I hear you talking to him, you know – you put on this funny voice so it's like he's talking back. Weirdo.

BEN           Out!

*LUCY exits with her Barbie.*

LUCY           Mum, Ben's a weirdo!

MUM           *(Off-stage)* I know, dear!

STINKY        Can you take this thing off?

BEN           But that dress really suits you, Stinky.

*STINKY glares at him. BEN takes the dress off.*

STINKY        Get caught in the rain, did you?

*BEN glares at him. Then remembers that he hasn't yet reported back.*

BEN           You'll never guess who Tyson was meeting.

STINKY        Your teacher, Beardy McCreedy.

BEN It was... (*Surprised*) Yeah, how did you know?

STINKY I put two and two together. (*Pause.*) It's four, by the way.

BEN You're like a rodent Sherlock Holmes. *Furlock* Holmes.

*BEN is pleased with the joke. STINKY sighs.*

How did you work it out?

STINKY Firstly, there was the homework: 'Describe your house in detail'? He was gathering information.

BEN Today's homework is actually 'Your most valuable possession'.

STINKY Exactly. And he'd be able to find out everyone's address from the school computer system. Secondly – you aren't the only family in your class to be burgled. I heard your mum saying that the O'Malleys were broken into, last week. And, finally, how many teachers do you know who have a new BMW? They're not *that* well-paid, are they?

BEN Beardy – a criminal mastermind!

STINKY But he won't be a match for *one particular* mind.

BEN (*Points to his own brain.*) *This one?*

*STINKY gives him a look.*

Oh.

STINKY It's time to do your homework, Ben.

BEN This is no time for homework.

STINKY 'Your most valuable possession'. And, isn't Lucy in another show next week?

BEN Yeah. 'The Tiger Queen' - they couldn't get the rights to The Lion King. Instead of 'Circle of Life', they've got a song called 'Square of Existence'.

STINKY So, we set a trap. We'll tell Beardy about something valuable that Tyson missed the first time, and let him know when the house will be empty... I'll dictate it to you, if you like.

BEN No, Stinky. I realised something, as I was cleaning Beardy's car; I need to do my own work from now on.

*BEN takes out his exercise book and writes as he says the following:*

'Next Friday night, we are all going out to the theatre' – wait, how do you spell 'theatre'?

STINKY T.H.E.A.T.R.E.

BEN Thanks.

STINKY You're welcome.

BEN '...to watch my sister perform – she wants to wear Mum's diamond necklace. But Mum says it's much too valuable...'

STINKY V.A.L.U.A.B.L.E.

BEN Thanks. You're like a furry little spellcheck. 'It's sticky-taped under my bed, to keep it safe. So Lucy will go to the show, which starts at 7pm, without the necklace.'

STINKY (Surprised) Nice job. Now – nap time.

*STINKY starts snoring immediately. A tap-tapping sound comes from off-stage and he wakes.*

I wish he'd stolen those tap-shoes.

BEN I'll go ask her to be quiet.

*BEN leaves. DAD enters, sits on the bed and addresses STINKY, awkwardly.*

DAD Hi Stinky. My mate, Russell Jackson – he's got a Jack Russell, called Jack. Russell, my mate, confides in Jack – the Jack Russell – when they go for long walks – Russell says it's really therapeutic: you know, talking things through with Jack – the Jack Russell. And I know you've only got a pea-sized brain, Stinky, but – here goes...

So, I'm giving up betting. After the Herbert McCreedy incident. It's got to stop. I'm still in the doghouse with Brenda. And I can't say I blame her. I just want to make it up to her somehow. Was thinking of writing her a song – what do you think? Actually, more like a rap. I've always secretly wanted to be a rapper.

*DAD picks up a cap that BEN has left on the floor and puts it on backwards.*

'Yo, Brenda.' What rhymes with Brenda? Lender? Mender? 'Yo Brenda – you mix me up like a food-blender.' Or what about: 'Yo Brenda, you're my favourite person of the female gender'? Oh, that's good. 'For you, I'm giving up betting.' Hmm. What rhymes with 'betting'? Forgetting? (*Loudly*) Heavy petting?

*As DAD is saying 'heavy petting', BEN walks in.*

BEN (*Surprised*) Hi Dad.

DAD           *(Embarrassed.)* Son. Just checking your room was tidy. And it's not. Well done.

*DAD takes cap off, places it on the bed, and exits.*

BEN           What?

STINKY       You really don't want to know. *(Pause)* Have you ever considered putting a lock on your door?

### SCENE THREE

*It's next Friday evening. BEN is in bed, faking illness. LUCY comes in, dressed as a giraffe, followed by MUM and DAD.*

BEN           *(Croaking)* Giraffe?

LUCY         Sasha Collins is the 'Tiger Queen'. Sasha, Sasha, Sasha. Cinderella? Sasha. Who was an ugly sister? Me, that's who...

BEN           Well...

LUCY         Who was Snow White?

DAD           Sasha?

LUCY         Yes. Who was 'Dopey?'

DAD           You.

LUCY         Correct.

DAD           *(This has been troubling him for a while.)* I don't remember a giraffe in The Lion King.

*MUM and LUCY glare at him.*

What?

BEN I just wish I was well enough...

DAD (*Too enthusiastically*) I can stay and look after him, if you like.

MUM No, Derek.

BEN I'm fine. I mean, not fine. But I just need to rest in peace. Not 'Rest in Peace'. I mean, just – have a bit of peace and quiet.

DAD But...

MUM We've discussed this, Derek. Ben's proved he can be responsible now. I trust him to stay home alone for an hour or so and not get into trouble...

BEN Thanks, Mum.

MUM (*To DAD*) Leave him your phone, like we agreed, and he'll call if there's a problem. Won't you, Ben?

BEN Yes, Mum. (*To LUCY*) Break a leg.

LUCY I will. *Sasha's* leg.

MUM *Lucy.*

LUCY Joke. (*Mouths to audience*) I really will.

*MUM, DAD and LUCY all leave.*

STINKY      Let's do it. Thumbtacks.

*BEN sprinkles them under the bed.*

STINKY      Walkie-talkies.

BEN          Check.

STINKY      Phone, to call the police.

BEN          Check. *(He takes STINKY out of the cage and places him on the desk – then picks up one of the walkie-talkies and the phone and is about to leave, when he stops.)* Are you sure about this, Stinky? You're putting yourself in great danger.

STINKY      When you spend your life in an eleven-year-old's bedroom, locked in a – cage... you have to take any opportunity for a bit of excitement. And those two villains need to be stopped.

*BEN cuddles STINKY.*

*Careful* – there's a very fine line between a hug and a throttle, you know.

BEN          Sorry. *(He takes another look at STINKY.)* You look twitchy.

STINKY      I'm a hamster. We twitch. That's what we do. You, on the other hand, look incredibly worried.

BEN          I'm a human. We worry. That's what we do. *(Pause.)* Good luck, then, Stinky. I'll be in the shed, waiting for your signal.

STINKY      Lightbulb out.

*BEN stands on the chair, untwists the lightbulb.*

## SCENE FOUR

*LUCY (Giraffe), SASHA (Tiger) and other kid (Meerkat) tap-dancing to 'The Square of Existence' (a bit like 'Circle of Life'). LUCY is again manoeuvred to the outer by SASHA, though this time, in doing so, SASHA twists her ankle (it's not LUCY's fault) and LUCY is super-excited to be centre-stage for the finale. Then they take their bows and stand to the side of the stage.*

ANNOUNCEMENT (*off-stage*): We finish this show with a special presentation to our long-time costume supervisor, Brenda Jinks, to be made by her husband Derek. Come up and take a bow, Brenda.

*MUM is in the audience. She gets up, embarrassed and walks onto the stage. DAD walks onto the stage wearing a cap and holding a bunch of flowers. He hands her the flowers. In his other hand, behind his back, is a microphone. LUCY is mortified.*

DAD This goes out to my sweet, sweet, Brenda.

*He turns the cap so it's on backwards.*

LUCY Please, Dad. Not rapping – not in public.

DAD Yo, Brenda Jinks  
Everybody thinks  
You're absolutely great – including me.  
You make all the costumes and you don't charge a fee  
(except for the materials, which is completely understandable).  
You're 'sew' amazing. That's 'S.E.W.' so –  
Without your creations, there would never be a show.  
Brenda, you're smart, you're strong and super-funny,  
You're creative, you're kind and you're really good with money –



The opposite of me. But from now on, you see,  
I'm never gonna go to the TAB.  
I'll never, ever gamble, never be in debt  
'Cos you, my darling Brenda, you are my winning bet.  
So this goes out to the incredible Brenda.  
You're a force of nature, a wonderful friend, a  
brilliant mum.  
You've got a really cute...

LUCY       Dad!

DAD         And you don't have to be a fortune-teller  
To see that you and me are a winning quinella.  
Brenda Jinks, you're a spectacular wife.  
Yo, Brenda – you're the best thing in my life!

LUCY       (*Having had enough embarrassment*) Dad!

DAD         But now it's time for me to stop.  
Thanks everybody. Mic drop!

*DAD does a mic-drop. LUCY, despite herself, laughs. MUM hugs DAD. The MEERKAT leads SASHA limping off.*

## **SCENE FIVE**

*STINKY is in the bedroom. BEN is in the shed, pacing, shivering, with the walkie-talkie.*

BEN         Anything happening?

STINKY     Not yet. How's the shed?

BEN         Colder than a polar bear's bum. Ah – a costume from Cheerful Feet. That should keep me warm.

STINKY        Here *I* am, about to come face-to-face with a boy who has already threatened to kill me – twice – and you’re complaining about the *cold*.

BEN            It’s okay for you – you’ve got fur. You probably don’t know what it’s like to be cold. It’s like you live your entire life wearing a cute little hamster onesie. Adorable.

*BEN spots some of the costumes his mum made for previous shows. He puts down the walkie-talkie and puts on a penguin costume.*

STINKY        ‘Adorable?’ ‘Cute?’ I’ll have you know, these teeth are sharp like razors. I’m a lean, mean biting machine. These claws of mine, like tiny knives. You should see the damage I can do to a carrot. I’ll slice it, I’ll dice it, I’ll...julienne it...

*STINKY does some martial arts moves, with ‘Miss Piggy’ karate noises.*

They call me the carrot-y kid.

*BEN is now in the penguin costume and has picked up the walkie-talkie.*

BEN            (To STINKY, Patronisingly) Ah, bless.

*BEN looks around. He sees a box of his old toys. He takes out a Slinky, a whoopee cushion, a fake dog poo etc.*

I was wondering where all this stuff went.

STINKY        (On the walkie-talkie, urgently) I can hear something.

*BEN is lost in reminiscing and doesn’t seem to hear STINKY. He pulls out a water-pistol – in a certain light, it could just about pass for a gun.*

This water pistol - always guaranteed to make Lucy mad. Great times.

STINKY I can hear something!

*We hear someone breaking in.*

Call the police, Ben.

*BEN uses the walkie-talkie.*

BEN Right. *(Pause.)* What's the...?

STINKY Triple zero.

BEN Right. I knew that.

STINKY And don't use the walkie-talkie from now.

BEN Right.

STINKY Like, from *now*.

BEN *(Into walkie-talkie.)* Got it. No walkie-talkie. *(Realises)* Sorry. Over and out.

*BEN puts down the walkie-talkie, but he can still hear what's happening with STINKY. BEN tries to use the phone but it's not easy, with the flippers of the penguin costume getting in the way. He fumbles the phone, bends to pick it up, topples over, finds it hard to get up again.*

*Meanwhile, TYSON enters the bedroom. It's dark. He flicks the light switch but the light doesn't come on, so he uses the torch on his phone instead. Crawls under the bed.*

TYSON Ow! Ow! Ouch! Ow!

*He gropes around for the diamond, but eventually realises it's not there. He crawls out.*

Ouch! Aarghh!

*He stands up, shines the torch around the room. Focuses on the cage. Lifts the roof off the house.*

Where's the rat?

*In the shed, BEN, finally calls the police.*

BEN           Police. Yes. A burglary at 15 Palm Road, Spring Hill. Yes – now. Right now. Hurry!

*Back in the bedroom, TYSON glimpses STINKY on the desk.*

TYSON       A-ha. There you are. It won't have been a complete waste of time if I get to squish you...

*STINKY leaps off the desk, scurries around the bedroom. TYSON chases after him for a while, until he has STINKY cornered. He reaches out.*

TYSON       I've got you now, you little...

STINKY      Step away, brute – or I'll bite your hand off.

TYSON       It spoke! It spoke?

*TYSON slaps himself.*

STINKY      I'll do more than speak, dimwit, if you don't scam.

TYSON       *(Gibbering)* A – a talking rat.

STINKY Hamster. I'm a hamster, you numbskull. And – what is more – I know everything, Tyson. Everything.

TYSON You know my name?

STINKY And all about your nefarious scheme – you and that hairy teacher.

*TYSON is shocked. Then he calms down.*

TYSON Wait. In case you hadn't noticed, I'm about ten times bigger than ya.

STINKY And about a hundred times dumber.

TYSON Yeah. Well – you know too much. So – bye-bye rat.

*TYSON is about to squish STINKY. BEN picks up the water-pistol, dashes out of the shed, and bursts into the bedroom.*

BEN *(Deep voice)* Step away from the rat!

STINKY Hamster.

BEN Hamster.

TYSON Aaah! A talking penguin!

BEN I'll do more than talk if you don't leave my friend alone. Hands up!

TYSON A penguin? In Brisbane? With a gun? What's happening to me?

*He runs from the bedroom, arms in the air. We see the flashing blue light and hear the siren followed by the clink of handcuffs.*

POLICE You're under arrest. You have the right to remain silent...

TYSON I'll tell you everything! Just get those crazy talking animals away from me!

*We hear a car pull up. It's MUM, DAD and LUCY. The car door opens.*

MUM What on earth?

DAD Huh?

LUCY Tyson?!

TYSON Aaah! A talking giraffe!

*In BEN's room, BEN quickly tidies up the thumbtacks, replaces the lightbulb, stuffs the penguin costume under the bed, puts STINKY back in the cage and is now lying in bed, trying to look sick.*

## SCENE SIX

*BEN is now sitting up in bed, STINKY in the cage, MUM sitting next to BEN on the bed, DAD and LUCY are hovering. They're all in a state of shock.*

MUM I'm never, ever leaving you alone again – not until you're at least twenty-one.

BEN I'm fine, Mum.

MUM Twenty-two. Honestly, I'd never have forgiven myself.

*She hugs him, very tightly.*

BEN There's a fine line between a hug and a throttle, Mum.

DAD *(Puzzled, in 'Columbo' mode)* So, you were lying in bed when the burglar burst in...?

BEN           Correct.

DAD           And he was so shocked to see you that he ran off? And immediately confessed? It's a boy from your class? Herbert McCreedy is behind the whole thing? Which, I must say, is not as surprising as you might think, knowing the man. Probably feeding his gambling habit...

*MUM shoots DAD a look.*

## SCENE SEVEN

*BEARDY, wearing a hat, is pursued by the POLICE OFFICER. There's a chance for a bit of slapstick – it ends with his arrest. The POLICE OFFICER whips the hat off.*

POLICE       It'll take more than a disguise to escape the law.

*She attempts to tug his beard off.*

BEARDY      Ow! It's real! It's real!

*The beard comes off.*

Oh. (He sighs, knowing that the game is up. Shrugs.) At least in prison, I won't have to teach kids anymore.

## SCENE EIGHT

*In the bedroom, everyone is where we left them. LUCY is scanning the room, like a detective in a TV show.*

LUCY        What's the penguin costume doing here?

BEN         I like dressing up as penguins.

LUCY           And the water pistol? And the walkie-talkie? It doesn't make sense?

MUM           It really doesn't.

*BEN gets out of bed and addresses the audience. (The family doesn't acknowledge this.)*

BEN           It wears you out, doesn't it? Telling fibs. You tell a tiny little lie, and then you need to tell another lie to cover up the first lie, and then a slightly bigger lie, and before long there's a penguin costume under your bed...

*He sits back on the bed, next to MUM and, after taking a deep breath, addresses her and DAD.*

The truth is, we set a trap for the burglar tonight.

DAD           You – you set a trap?

MUM           We?

BEN           Me and my hamster.

MUM           You – and...?

BEN           Stinky here. He's an actual genius.

MUM           And you know he's a genius because...?

BEN           He talks.

DAD           In English?

BEN           And Japanese actually. Come on, Stinky. Say something.



*Everyone stares at the cage. STINKY doesn't respond. They all look back at BEN.*

MUM           Derek, call the home doctor.

BEN            No, no, Mum. I'm okay. Really. I can explain. It was like this – I was in the shed in the penguin costume, and Stinky was telling me what was happening – on the walkie-talkie.

MUM           There, there, Ben. Mummy's here. It'll be okay. You've just had a nasty fright, that's all. A burglar in the house – it's enough to give anyone a shock.

BEN            I'm telling the truth, Mum. Honest. Tell them, Stinky. Say something... (*He looks at Stinky, imploringly*) He must be traumatised...

DAD            *Someone's* definitely traumatised.

BEN            Stinky! Tell them!

*MUM hugs BEN.*

DAD            I'm calling the doc.

BEN            Okay – sorry. Mum's right. Maybe I just need to rest.

*DAD sighs with relief. MUM hugs him tighter.*

DAD            Good lad. Come on, Lucy – let's give your brother some space.

*LUCY is not convinced, but leaves with DAD. MUM tucks BEN in and strokes his head. Then she leaves the room. BEN waits until he's sure no one can hear, then sits up.*

BEN            Thanks a lot, Stinky. Now they all think I've gone bananas.

STINKY      You must have. Why else would you tell them about me? Do you really think they're capable of keeping a secret? Your sister would tell the whole school in five minutes flat and I'd be in all the newspapers and on the TV and scientists would take me away and...

BEN          All right, all right. Calm down.

*They glare at each other, until:*

We did it though, Stinky – didn't we?

STINKY      We did. We certainly did. High four.

*They high five each other.*

## SCENE NINE

*We're in BEN's room a week later – BEN's not in, but STINKY is in the cage. MUM comes in with a carrot, singing tunelessly (making up the song as she goes) and wiggling, latin dance style. She's clearly in a great mood. STINKY (via the puppeteer) is traumatised by the content of MUM's song. She initially uses the carrot as a microphone, then puts it in the cage and goes on to tidy the room.*

MUM          (Singing) Hey, Stinky, have a carrot!  
Derek and I are doing latin dance together, twice a week!  
Our marriage is back on track – he's got really good technique!

*MUM exits, with dirty clothes. DAD enters, whistling contentedly.*

DAD          (To STINKY) Just wanted to say thanks for listening the other day – it worked an absolute treat. I've actually been working on a follow-up rap...

*Thankfully, from STINKY's point of view, DAD is interrupted before he can start – LUCY enters, wearing Sasha's tiger costume. DAD squeals in fright.*

LUCY           It's just me, Dad – Lucy. Sasha unfortunately has to rest her ankle, so I'm the Tiger Queen now. Where's Ben? I wanted to show him.

*DAD shrugs. They exit. BEN enters.*

STINKY        We really need to talk about getting a lock on your door. How was your day?

BEN            Great. No Tyson, of course. My new teacher is brilliant: Miss Miles – she's funny and kind and a lot less hairy than the last one. Also, much less evil. How are you doing?

STINKY        Fine. I'm planning to spend a bit of quality time with the Carrot family, here. A bit of napping. Several poos.

BEN            Great.

*BEN smiles. LUCY enters.*

LUCY         Mum! Ben is talking to his hamster again.

MUM         *(Off-stage)* Lucy – be nice to your brother – he's been through a lot, remember.

BEN         Thanks, Mum!

*LUCY pulls a face. She hovers in the room. She's clearly bored.*

BEN         *(Not maliciously)* Fancy being sticky-taped to the bed again?

LUCY         *(Shrugs)* Sure.

*STINKY looks at the audience and sighs.*

STINKY      Here we go again.

**THE END**

reading sample - do not copy