

Side 1

The Child
Nana
Rabbit
Skin Horse

Scene 2:
AT NIGHT

(THE CHILD bursts onto the stage.)

THE CHILD:

But I don't want to go to bed.

(Enter NANA.)

NANA:

I didn't ask if ye wanted to go to bed, I said it was time to go to bed.

THE CHILD:

Where's my china dog?

(looks)

I can't sleep without my china dog. And I can't find it anywhere.

NANA:

So choose summat else.

(THE CHILD picks up the WIND-UP MOUSE and hugs it.)

THE CHILD:

Too hard.

(picks up TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION)

Too wooden.

(picks up DINOSAUR)

Too pointy.

(looks at the MODEL BOAT)

START

Side 1, con't.

NANA:

What about the rabbit?

THE CHILD:

What about the rabbit?

NANA:

Them's as good as any.

THE CHILD:

She's no fun, she fell right over.

NANA:

It's made of nice, sweet velveteen, plus good sawdust insides. It'll do ye fine.

(THE CHILD crosses to THE RABBIT and drags IT to the bed and, reluctantly, gets in.)

NANA:

G'night.

(Exit NANA. Lights shift and it is night. We can clearly see THE RABBIT and THE SKIN HORSE.)

THE RABBIT:

What's happening?

THE SKIN HORSE:

You're sleeping on the bed.

THE RABBIT:

She's squeezing me very tightly. What if she rips my velveteen?

THE SKIN HORSE:

What if she does? As you can see, I've been ridden and tugged and knocked so much you can see my seams. Trust me, to sleep in the bed is a great honor.

THE RABBIT:

She doesn't seem to like me very much. I guess it's because I don't whir and buzz and move on my own.

THE SKIN HORSE:

And yet, you were chosen for the bed.

THE RABBIT:

...Her hug is ever so nice.

Side 2 Rabbit Skin Horse

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THE CHILD:

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THE SKIN HORSE:

And yet, you were chosen for the bed.

THE RABBIT:

...Her hug is ever so nice.

THE SKIN HORSE:

And she could not hug the mouse or the boat or the dinosaur like that. Believe me, my young friend, I have seen a long succession of mechanical toys arrive to boast and swagger, and by-and-by break their mainsprings and pass away. They're only toys. They can never be Real.

THE RABBIT:

Can I be Real? But the mouse said you need to be able to move on your own. I wish I had wheels so I could move.

THE SKIN HORSE:

It has nothing to do with wheels or things that buzz or any such thing. If a child loves you, you can move faster and jump higher than any toy with wheels. Real isn't how you are made, it's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but truly loves you, then you become Real.

THE RABBIT:

Does it happen all at once, like being wound up?

THE SKIN HORSE:

It takes a very long time. That's why it doesn't often happen to toys who break easily or have sharp edges. Usually by the time you are Real most of your hair has been loved off and your eyes drop out.

THE RABBIT:

Does it hurt?

THE SKIN HORSE:

When you are Real, you don't mind being hurt.

THE RABBIT:

It sounds so uncomfortable and ugly.

THE SKIN HORSE:

There is nothing more comfortable in the world. And when you are Real, you cannot be ugly because you are loved for who you are, not how you look.

THE RABBIT:

I suppose you are Real.

(THE SKIN HORSE smiles.)

THE RABBIT:

Have I said something amiss?

Side 3

Rabbit Toys (4)

Skin Horse

THE CHILD:

That croc who bit off me...

(THE RABBIT slowly falls over again. THE CHILD straightens IT up again. Beat. IT very slowly falls over again. The music fades.)

THE RABBIT:

Sorry.

(THE RABBIT rights ITSELF but falls over again.)

THE CHILD:

Can't you even stand up on your own?

THE RABBIT:

I fear not. Maybe you could help me?

(Enter NANA.)

NANA:

Haddaway, child! This room's a fright. Get outta those whatchawearings and come down to your parents!

THE CHILD:

Five more minutes!

NANA:

Geet yerself down or you'll get wrang off me, ya hear?

THE CHILD:

Who wants an old stuffed rabbit anyway?

(THE CHILD drops her sword and hanger. Exeunt THE CHILD and NANA. Beat. THE RABBIT manages to right ITSELF and maintain a precarious balance but does not change position on stage. The TOYS spin and buzz around. THE SKIN HORSE looks on with mild interest. The TOYS surround THE RABBIT.)

THE RABBIT:

Hello. Hello.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

What are you, then?

THE RABBIT:

I'm a rabbit. (proud) Made of velveteen.

DINOSAUR:

G'arn, you're posh. Aren'tcha?

Side 3 con't.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

So posh it can't even move.

THE SKIN HORSE:

Leave the poor thing alone.

THE RABBIT:

I can move...Well, my top half can move.

DINOSAUR:

So you're not real, then?

THE RABBIT:

I'm not? Oh dear.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

Real things can move all around on their own. I can move so I'm a real mouse.

MODEL BOAT:

Real mice aren't shiny. They're brown and soft like the rabbit.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

You're one to talk. Boats are big. You're all tiny like.

MODEL BOAT:

Do not judge me by my size, sir. I may not be in the same class as one of His Majesty's prize vessels but I am the very model of a modern major battleship. My keel and rigs and mizzenmast are marks of modern craftsmanship. I am never known to quail at the fury of a gale and I'm never, ever sick at sea.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

What, never?

MODEL BOAT:

No, never.

ALL:

What, never?

MODEL BOAT:

Well, hardly ever.

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

You do have a pleasing shape, what is your stuffing?

THE RABBIT:

(proud) Sawdust.

Side 3 con't. con't.

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

Oh, dear. None of the best animals are stuffed with sawdust these days.

THE RABBIT:

What should I be stuffed with?

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

Cotton or goose down is preferred.

THE RABBIT:

Oh my. I hope it doesn't tarnish my velveteen coat.

DINOSAUR:

Just because you've got joints, that don't make you a real lion, you know.

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

And just because you've got sharp teeth, that doesn't make you a Jabberwocky.

DINOSAUR:

What'd he call me?

Side 4

The Child Rabbit

NANA:

Now listen, you're being a propa workyticket you are. Take the Rabbit or don't take the Rabbit. But if you wanna go out and play with a toy, this is the best yer gonna get. And be sure yer back f' tea.

(Transition to outside; the nursery and TOYS dissolve away, leaving just THE CHILD and THE RABBIT. THE CHILD immediately runs around the stage, jumping on and off things and playing while THE RABBIT watches with great interest.)

THE CHILD:

You don't do much, do you?

THE RABBIT:

What do you want me to do?

THE CHILD:

Run around.

THE RABBIT:

I don't think I have legs. At least not ones fit for running.

THE CHILD:

That bird looks familiar.

THE RABBIT:

Yes?

THE CHILD:

It looks just like the one that used to be in the nursery. It was my grandfather's. It's gone now.

THE RABBIT:

And that's it up there?

THE CHILD:

No, it was a toy. Not a real bird. Do you know who Robin Hood is?

THE RABBIT:

Does she live in the nursery?

THE CHILD:

Robin Hood lives in Sherwood Forest with his band of Merry Men and robs from the rich and gives to the poor and fights the evil Sheriff of Nottingham.

THE RABBIT:

Sounds exciting.

Side 5

Toys (4)

Rabbit

Skin Horse

WIND-UP MOUSE:

Don't listen, they's just jealous.

DINOSAUR:

Tell us more about the tree and the climbing.

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

Kiss-ups.

MODEL BOAT:

Quite.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

Ooooh, they's testy, aren't they?

DINOSAUR:

S'what 'appens when you ain't been played wiff in donkey's.

TIMOTHY, THE JOINTED WOODEN LION:

Lions are indoor animals, everyone knows that.

MODEL BOAT:

And I am not an every-day vessel, sir, but a soaring soul, free as a mountain bird.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

A mountain bird collecting dust on a shelf.

DINOSAUR:

Put a sock innit, I can't hear the rabbit. Did you leave your legs outside, d'ya think?

THE RABBIT:

Possibly. I swear I had them with me when we came in.

THE SKIN HORSE:

The child gave you legs. She needs to be with you for the magic to work.

THE RABBIT:

But she's right here.

THE SKIN HORSE:

She's asleep. It doesn't work if she's asleep. But your legs will return when she wakes, have no fear.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

(to *DINOSAUR*) What's he talking about?

DINOSAUR:

Lotta nonsense if you ask me.

WIND-UP MOUSE:

(to *THE RABBIT*) What are you doing tomorrow, then?

THE RABBIT:

Tomorrow we're going exploring at the river.

(to *THE SKIN HORSE*) Have you ever been to the river?

THE SKIN HORSE:

No. Though, from what I understand, it's more of a stream in the woods than a river per se.

THE RABBIT:

I don't care what it is, I can't wait to get my legs back and go outside!

(Thunderbolt and lightning.)

Side 6

The Child
Nana

THE CHILD (O.S.):
Where are you?

NANA (O.S.):
Get back here!

THE CHILD:
(entering) I have to find my rabbit!

NANA:
Come back this instant! You'll catch your death.

THE CHILD:
We argued and I left--

(Sees THE RABBIT.)

Oh my goodness! There you are.

(THEY embrace. THE CHILD coughs. Enter NANA.)

NANA:
Good lord, child. Get ye back inside this moment. Y'not dressed for this torrent. You'll need a warm bath right now.

THE CHILD:
(to THE RABBIT) I'm sorry I was cross. I'm sorry I left you. I'll never do it again. I'm so sorry. *(coughs)*

NANA:
Come along.

Side 7 Shakespeare
Mozart
Rabbit

SHAKESPEARE:

How many trips around the sun has the most excellent youth taken thus far?

THE RABBIT:

...Pardon?

MOZART:

(sung, "Der Hölle Rache" K620)

WHAT MY FRIEND IS TRYING TO COMMUNICATE
EEZ / VEE VISH TO—

SHAKESPEARE:

Oh, will you stop singing! Everyone knows you wrote all those great tunes but you don't have sing them all the time. And there's no way you're going to be able to hit the note at the end of that line so just stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it. Stop it!

MOZART:

...How old ees zee child?

THE RABBIT:

Old? Oh, I don't know. Is it important?

SHAKESPEARE:

Age is but a number by which we gauge our expectations.

MOZART:

If I can't sing, you can't talk like zhat.

SHAKESPEARE:

As you like it.

THE RABBIT:

I'm sorry but what is "age?"

MOZART:

Every day, we get older.

SHAKESPEARE:

The child is growing up. Changing from a youth to an adult.

MOZART:

Have you not noticed her height increasing? Her interests changing?

THE RABBIT:

Oh my, I cannot imagine her getting much taller. She won't fit in the bed.

Side 8

Cambridge Bunny

Oxford Bunny Rabbit

CAMBRIDGE BUNNY:

I thought I knew all the rabbits in the hollow. Are you up from London for the season?

THE RABBIT:

I don't think so.

OXFORD BUNNY:

Are you from the house?

THE RABBIT:

Yes.

CAMBRIDGE BUNNY:

Oh, wonderful.

OXFORD BUNNY:

A civilized rabbit.

CAMBRIDGE BUNNY:

You must come for tea, old chap.

THE RABBIT:

I do like tea.

OXFORD BUNNY:

Of course you do, old boy. Of course you do.

THE RABBIT:

I've never seen rabbits like you. Are you brand new? I don't see your seams at all.

OXFORD BUNNY:

New? No, old boy. We're hardly new. Are we?

CAMBRIDGE BUNNY:

Hardly, old chap. We're both getting a bit long in the tooth, these days.

OXFORD BUNNY:

Even for rabbits!

(THEY laugh. THE RABBIT enjoys the laughter but does not get the joke.)

OXFORD BUNNY:

Speaking of which, I say, old boy, you have very small teeth indeed.

Side 9

The Child Nana Doctor

THE CHILD:

(coughing) Hello? Hello?

(Enter NANA.)

NANA:

Oh! Oh my! Doctor! Doctor!!

(Enter DOCTOR.)

NANA:

She's awake.

DOCTOR:

Her fever's broken.

NANA:

Wondrous day! Callooh! Callay!

(Exit NANA and DOCTOR. THE RABBIT hugs THE CHILD. THEY get out of the bed. THE RABBIT takes a book from the shelf and THEY sit on the floor reading it together. Re-enter NANA and DOCTOR.)

NANA:

She's better every day.

DOCTOR:

It is a remarkable recovery, no doubt. I'm glad her parents took my advice to travel to the seaside.

THE RABBIT:

What's the seaside?

THE CHILD:

Oh, you'll love it. There's boats and sandy beaches.

THE RABBIT:

I can't wait.

DOCTOR:

While they are away, this room must be sterilized. Anything she touched must be burned.

NANA:

(to THE CHILD) Come along. Ye must catch yer train.

THE CHILD:

But I'm not packed.